



STATISTICAL PRESS RELEASE

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Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Survey Bulletin 2007

The Central Survey Unit (CSU) of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) today published the results of the third round of a survey of the behaviour and attitudes of young people in years 8-12 at school. The survey was commissioned by the cross-departmental Equality and Social Need Steering Group (ESNSG) and conducted by CSU. The first round of the survey was conducted in 2000 and the second in 2003.

1. The aim of the survey was to examine the behaviour and attitudes of young people towards a range of different topics including: demographics, social support, money, school, subject choices and further education, starting a business, nutrition, sport and physical activity, libraries, museums and arts, modern technology, the environment, travelling to school, road safety, policing, attitudes towards domestic violence, anti-social behaviour and personal safety, knife culture, smoking, alcohol, solvents and drugs and sexual experience and knowledge.

Some of the key findings of the survey include:

Demographics

- The majority (92%) of pupils were born in Northern Ireland and 85% of their fathers and 87% of their mothers were born in Northern Ireland.
- Just under two fifths (39%) of pupils reported that they live in a small city or town, a fifth of pupils live in a farm or home in the country and 16% of pupils live in a country village.
- Most pupils live at home with their mother (97%), their father (79%) and over half live with their brother(s) (59%) and sister(s) (57%).
- Nine percent of pupils reported that their household included persons from more than one community background.
- Eighty four percent of pupils' fathers and 69% of pupils' mothers currently are in employment.
- Twelve percent of pupils reported a long-standing illness or disability that has troubled them over a period of time or is likely to affect them in the future.

Social Support

- The majority of pupils feel that they have family/friends who do things to make them happy (96%), who make them feel loved (96%), who give them support and encouragement (95%), who would see that they are taken care of if they needed (94%), who accept them just as they are (94%), who make them feel an important part of their lives (91%) and who can be relied on no matter what happens (89%).
- During the 4 weeks prior to the survey, 16% of pupils felt badly (fairly/very) about their body and looks, 13% felt badly (fairly/very) about their ability to play sport and 12% felt badly (fairly/very) about their school work.
- Most pupils (92%) felt very or fairly good about their ability to be a friend to others and 90% felt very or fairly good about their friendships in the 4 weeks prior to the survey.

Money

- Sixty four percent of pupils are learning to manage money from their parents or guardians.
- If they got £100 as a present approximately half (52%) would save some and spend some while 29% would save it all and 17% would spend it all.
- If they borrowed £50 from their parents or guardians the majority of pupils (72%) would use their own money to pay it back while 12% would avoid paying it back.

School

- Seventy eight percent of pupils like school at present.
- The majority think school is a place where the things they learn are important to them (89%), they have learned things that will be useful to them (92%) and which will help them in their adult lives (90%).
- Eighty four percent of pupils feel a certain amount of stress due to the school work they have to do.
- Thirty seven percent have difficulty falling asleep at least sometimes because they are thinking about school.
- Thirty seven percent feel that their parent or guardians expect too much of them at school.
- Just over three quarters (77%) find school boring on at least some days.
- Twenty percent of pupils have skipped classes or school this term and 7% have been expelled or suspended from school.
- Sixty nine percent of pupils have received education in school on the culture and traditions of people of a different race or colour and, of these, 88% say that they know more about this as a result.
- Almost four fifths (79%) of pupils would feel comfortable being friends with someone of a different race or colour.
- 73% of pupils have a chance to give their views about issues that affect them, of these, 92% think that their views are listened to at least sometimes.
- 74% of pupils have a school council and 59% of these pupils think it is an effective way for pupils to get their views across.

Subject choices & Further education

- Four fifths of pupils in years 11 and 12 feel they have a good choice of subjects.
- Two thirds (66%) chose their subjects with a career area in mind.
- Just over half of pupils are content with the advice they got about their subject choices from their career teachers (53%) and their other teachers (58%).
- 72% of pupils in years 11 and 12 plan to do A Levels or AS Levels, 14% want to do NVQs and 11% are not planning to stay on in education.
- Almost a third (31%) of pupils said that they would only stay on at school or Further Education college if they received an Education Maintenance Allowance.
- Four fifths of pupils in years 11 and 12 think that the most important choice for getting a job with good pay would be to stay on in education and get as many qualifications as possible.
- Parents and guardians are most influential (72%) in encouraging pupils to think about going to Further Education College or University. Friends (10%) is the next most influential group.

Starting a business

- Fifty eight percent of pupils in years 11 and 12 are interested in starting their own business in the future. 68% of these pupils have a business idea with the most popular being in manufacturing or construction (25%) and health and beauty (20%).
- Just over half (52%) of pupils in years 11 and 12 are aware of support that is available to help them start their own business and two thirds (67%) recognised Invest NI as an organisation that offers business support.

Nutrition

- Just over half (55%) of pupils eat fruit at least once a day.
- 42% eat vegetables and salads at least once a day.
- Only 15% of pupils usually eat 5 or more portions of fruit or vegetables each day.
- Almost a quarter (23%) eat meat products every day and half eat fish less than once a week or never.
- Forty eight percent of pupils eat a school dinner and 40% take a packed lunch.
- The majority (84%) of pupils think that there is usually a good choice of food available in school
- Seventy percent stated that there is usually a food option available which they consider to be healthy. However, 41% would like to see more healthy food available in school.
- Eighteen percent of girls and 8% of boys are on a diet to lose weight.
- 43% of girls and 23% of boys think that they are too fat.

Sport and physical activity

- The majority (91%) of pupils generally enjoy doing sport or physical activity.

- The most popular sports/physical activities that pupils did during the week prior to the survey were walking for exercise (51%) and football (50%).
- During the week prior to the survey, 84% of pupils played sport, exercised or played actively that made them out of breath or hot and sweaty. Almost half (47%) of these pupils did so for a total of at least 60 minutes each day for 4 or more days that week.
- Just over half (52%) of pupils normally take part in PE/games lessons at school on 2 or more days in a school week and 22% normally stay behind at school for sports or other physical activities on 2 or more days in a school week.
- Approximately a fifth (21%) report being less physically active during school holidays than when they are at school.
- Almost half of pupils (47%) are a member of a school sports club or team.
- 59% are a member of other sports clubs or teams not connected with their school.
- On school days, almost a third (32%) of pupils watch TV, videos or DVDs for at least 2 hours and just under a quarter (23%) play computer or console games for at least 2 hours.

Libraries, Museums & Arts

- Seventeen percent of pupils go to a Public Library at least once a month, mainly to borrow books (66%) and look up information (38%).
- Over half (53%) of pupils never go to a Public Library.
- Almost four in ten (39%) pupils said that a better selection of books would encourage them to visit a Public Library more often and 38% said they would be encouraged to go if they had more free time.
- Almost two thirds (66%) of pupils had been to a museum in Northern Ireland in the 12 months prior to the survey and 44% of these pupils visited it as part of a trip organised by school.
- Eighty eight percent generally enjoyed their last visit to a museum.
- During the 12 months prior to the survey, 42% of pupils had taken part in painting, drawing, sculpture or printmaking in their free time and 41% had read for pleasure.
- Almost a fifth (19%) had not done or taken part in an Arts activity during that time.
- The majority of pupils (84%) had been to see a film at a cinema or other venue over that period while 10% had not been to an Arts event.

Modern Technology

- Ninety two percent of pupils have access to a personal computer/laptop at home. Of these, 95% have internet access either using a broadband connection (74%), a dialup connection (9%) while others don't know the type of access.
- Three quarters of pupils are a member of Bebo, Myspace, Faceparty or have a Weblog.
- Almost all pupils (93%) own or have access to a mobile phone with photo camera or video.
- Eighty five percent own or use a MP3 player or iPod and 69% of pupils own or have access to a digital photo camera.

The Environment

- The most important environmental issues for pupils are the loss of plants, animals and habitats (68%), followed by litter/waste management (62%).
- Two fifths think that through their own actions they can make a difference to the loss of plants, animals and habitats and 64% think they can make a difference to litter/waste management.
- Almost a third (31%) of pupils always dispose of their rubbish carefully, yet 28% never sort glass, newspapers etc for recycling.
- Just over half (54%) agree that there is too much packaging on food.
- Global warming is an important environmental issue for 62% of pupils and 43% think that through their own actions they can make a difference to it.
- Almost a third (32%) of pupils believe that a large proportion of the energy produced/used in Northern Ireland in the next 10 years will be renewable energy.
- Sixty three percent believe that renewable energy can help in fighting global warming while just under a third (30%) don't know.
- Fifty two percent learn most about environmental issues at school and 32% have participated in school trips which were related to the environment during the 12 months prior to the survey.

Travelling to school

- Approximately half of pupils usually travel most of the way to (46%) and from (51%) school by bus, compared to 18% who walk or cycle to school and 27% who walk or cycle from school.
- A third (34%) usually travel to school by car and 20% travel home by car.
- Sixty nine percent of pupils who travel to or from school by car do so with their siblings or friends/other pupils.
- Just under half (45%) of pupils qualify for free school transport and of these, 82% use this to or from school everyday.
- Of those pupils who travel to or from school by bus, 66% find it to be a pleasant experience while 20% feel unsafe mainly because of overcrowding (69%) and passenger behaviour (61%).
- Almost a quarter (24%) feel that their safety is at risk just before getting on or off the bus mainly because they could get pushed onto the road by other children (47%) or get run over by the bus (40%).

Road safety

- On at least some occasions, 49% of pupils use a mobile phone to text or make a call while crossing the road, 31% run across the road without checking for traffic and 53% carry on with friends while crossing the road.
- Approximately three quarters always wear a seatbelt in the front seat (77%) or back seat (71%) of a car.
- More than four in ten (44%) pupils never wear bright coloured clothes while cycling or walking at night, and 55% never wear a cycle helmet.
- In the 12 months prior to the survey, nearly half (47%) of pupils had some type of education on road safety in school, mostly provided by teachers (60%), and 71% of these pupils found it useful.

Policing

- More than half (52%) of pupils have spoken to, or been spoken to by, a police officer in Northern Ireland in the 12 months prior to the survey, mainly through attending a talk in school.
- More than half (53%) of pupils think the police in Northern Ireland treat young people very or quite fairly.
- 48% are very or quite satisfied with the way the police in Northern Ireland do their job.
- One in eight pupils (12%) would be interested in joining the police in Northern Ireland then they finish their education.

Attitudes towards domestic violence

- Approximately a tenth (11%) of pupils in years 11 and 12 think boyfriends who hit girlfriends once deserve a second chance in the relationship and slightly more think that husbands who hit wives once deserve a second chance in the relationship (14%).
- Less than a fifth (17%) of pupils in years 11 and 12 think it is okay for a man to hit his girlfriend/wife if she has slept with someone else.
- Nearly a third (30%) of pupils in years 11 and 12 think girlfriends who hit boyfriends once deserve a second chance in the relationship and 28% of pupils in years 11 and 12 think wives who hit husbands once deserve a second chance in the relationship.
- Almost two fifths (37%) of pupils in years 11 and 12 think it is okay for a woman to hit her boyfriend/husband if he has slept with someone else.

Anti-Social Behaviour and Personal Safety

- In the 12 months prior to the survey, just over a fifth of pupils (21%) have been noisy or rude near their home so that neighbours have complained.
- Seventeen percent of pupils have been noisy or rude in a public place so that they got into trouble.
- Sixteen percent of pupils have attacked, threatened or been rude to someone for a reason other than religion, race or skin colour.
- Fifteen percent of pupils have been involved in vandalism or deliberate damage to property.
- The majority of pupils (87%) feel very or quite safe in the area that they live and two thirds of pupils are not very or not at all worried about their safety going into their nearest town/city centre at night.
- Just over half (51%) of pupils thought that rubbish or litter lying around was a very or fairly big problem in their area.
- Respective percentages for other types of anti-social behaviour were: vandalism, graffiti or deliberate damage to property (39%), people being rowdy or drunk in public places (39%) and gangs of other people looking for trouble (37%).
- Fifty two percent of pupils are worried about having things stolen from them that they are carrying/wearing.
- 44% are worried about having their belongings damaged/deliberately broken and 44% worried about being knocked down by a car or other vehicle.

- 42% are worried about being threatened/hurt by someone with a knife and 42% are worried about being sexually or physically abused.
- In the 12 months prior to the survey, 16% of pupils have been bullied and over half of pupils (52%) have seen someone else being bullied.
- During the same period, 15% of pupils have been called names/harassed for some reason other than their religion, race or skin colour while 29% of pupils witnessed someone else being called names/harassed for some other reason; 10% of pupils have had their belongings damaged/deliberately broken while 27% have witnessed someone else having belongings damaged/deliberately broken; and 10% of pupils have had things stolen from them that they were carrying/wearing while nearly a quarter (24%) have seen someone else having things stolen.

Knife Culture

- Twelve percent of pupils have carried a knife as a weapon, of these, 4% have used a knife to injure someone and 18% have used a knife to threaten someone.
- 37 of the 63 pupils who have used a knife to threaten someone have done so somewhere outside (e.g. park, street) whilst 21 did so at home.
- Of those who carry a knife, just under half (49%) do so to help them feel safer.

Smoking

- Just under a quarter of pupils (24%) have smoked tobacco, with four fifths of those having smoked at 13 or under.
- Only 16% of pupils in Key stage 3 (Years 8, 9 and 10) have ever smoked compared to 37% (Year 11 and 12) in Key stage 4.
- Sixty-four percent of those who have smoked no longer do, whilst a quarter smoke everyday.
- Four fifths of pupils that smoke at least once a week would like to give up smoking cigarettes altogether.
- Just over a fifth of pupils (21%) agree that smoking can help you stay slim, 22% agree that smoking can put you in a better mood, 34% agree that smokers are more boring than people who don't smoke, 34% agree that smoking can help you calm down, 36% agree that smokers tend to be more 'hard' than people who don't smoke.
- Forty three percent of pupils live in a household with adults who smoke and of these adults 57% smoke inside the home.

Alcohol

- Just over half of pupils (54%) have taken an alcoholic drink (41% of Key stage 3 pupils and 73% of Key stage 4).
- Of those who have ever had an alcoholic drink, over three quarters (76%) were aged 13 or under when they had their first drink.
- A fifth of pupils who have drunk alcohol got their last alcoholic drink from friends whilst 17% got it from their mother/father.

- One fifth (20%) of these pupils were at home the last time they drank alcohol, almost one fifth (19%) of pupils were somewhere outside such as the park, street, in an entry, under a bridge, etc., while 16% were at someone else's house the last time they drank alcohol.
- Over half of pupils (56%) were with a friend (17%) or a group of friends (39%) the last time they had an alcoholic drink.
- Almost two fifths (38%) of pupils who have drunk alcohol have had a drink in the last week.
- Of those who have had an alcoholic drink, the majority (58%) have never been in trouble with their parents or family members, local people, school, police or friends due to alcohol.
- Nearly three quarters (73%) of pupils who have drunk alcohol have never bought alcohol for themselves.

Solvent & Drugs

- On at least one occasion, 15% of pupils have been offered solvents and 8% of pupils have inhaled solvents.
- Over half (55%) of those who have inhaled solvents no longer use them.
- Just over a quarter (24%) of pupils have been offered drugs (not counting solvents) on at least one occasion, of which just less than half (49%) have used or tried drugs at sometime.
- The four most common drugs for pupils to have ever used or tried are Cannabis (9%), Poppers (6%), Ecstasy (3%) and Cocaine (3%).
- Of the pupils that have used or tried Cannabis one in four (26%) use Cannabis at least a few times a month, one in four (24%) rarely use Cannabis (less than a few times a year) and two out of five (41%) no longer use Cannabis.

Sexual Experience and Knowledge

- Three quarters of pupils have had a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Nine percent of pupils have had sexual intercourse.
- Eighty one percent of these pupils had sexual intercourse for the first time between the ages of 13 and 15.
- Just over four fifths (83%) of those who have had sexual intercourse used something to prevent pregnancy.
- The majority (83%) of pupils used a condom and 16% used both a condom and the pill.
- Nearly three fifths (59%) of pupils said they would find it easy to get contraceptives, with just over half (53%) of pupils stating they would get them from shops/chemists.
- The majority of Year 11 and 12 pupils knew HIV (90%) and AIDS (89%) are sexually transmitted diseases whilst 30% knew that warts, 27% Syphilis and 24% Hepatitis B are sexually transmitted diseases.

Copies of the headline bulletin, top-line results and technical report (in PDF format) are available from the CSU website at:

<http://www.csu.nisra.gov.uk/survey.asp14.htm>

Results from the 2000 and 2003 surveys are also available at the above web address.

Further information and copies of the output can be obtained by contacting:

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CENTRAL SURVEY UNIT

YOUNG PERSONS' BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES SURVEY

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Commissioning of the research

The research was commissioned by the cross-departmental Equality and Social Need Steering Group. The survey was conducted by the Central Survey Unit of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

2. The aims and objectives of the research

The aim of the survey was to examine the behaviour and attitudes of young people towards a range of different topics including: demographics, social support, money, school, subject choices and further education, starting a business, nutrition, sport and physical activity, libraries, museums and arts, modern technology, the environment, travelling to school, road safety, policing, attitudes towards domestic violence, anti-social behaviour and personal safety, knife culture, smoking, alcohol, solvents and drugs and sexual experience and knowledge.

3. Methodology

Post-primary schools were randomly sampled, representative of school size, selection type (Secondary or Grammar), management group and Education and Library Board area.

A self-completion questionnaire was administered to 6902 post-primary school children in Northern Ireland. In the majority of participating schools, five year groups (Forms 1 – 5/Years 8 – 12) were sampled. In order to meet the demand for questions on the survey, it was decided to split the topics across two versions of the questionnaire and schools were randomly assigned one version.

4. Response

Seventy schools agreed to participate in the survey and one class from each year group was randomly selected. The fieldwork was conducted during October and November 2007, during which time a total of 6902 pupils were surveyed. Ninety one percent of pupils completed the entire questionnaire.