

# Young People into 2008

*The Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire  
results for 32,162 young people between the ages of 10 and 15*

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Health and Safety**

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# 3 Health and Safety



Many of the questions in this group reflect a traditional view of health – physical cleanliness, use of medicines, and common ailments. We also have questions about accidents, and the vulnerability of young cyclists is also a major concern.

Question

When you cycle, do you wear a safety helmet? .....	22
Do you have asthma? .....	23
How many hours sleep did you get last night? .....	24
Is the amount of sleep you normally get...enough for your health? .....	25
Is the amount of sleep you normally get...enough for your studies? .....	26
On how many days, in the last week, have you used remedies or medications? .....	27
When you run, do you 'wheeze' and have trouble breathing (not just feel out of breath)? .....	28
How do you rate your safety when going out during the day, and after dark, in the area where you live? .....	29
Do you have friends who carry weapons for protection when going out? .....	30
Do you ever feel afraid of going to school because of bullying? .....	31
Do you think others may fear going to school because of you? .....	32
In the past year, have you had any accidents that were treated by a doctor or at a hospital? .....	33
Do you try any of the following ways to avoid sunburn? .....	34

# Safety helmets

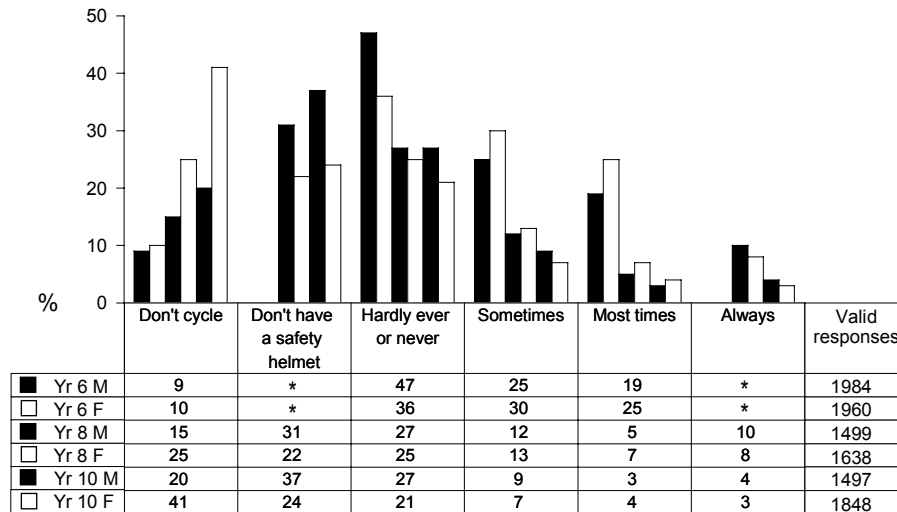
As they get older fewer cycle,  
37% of year 10 males don't have a safety helmet

## When you cycle do you wear a safety helmet?

1. Most of the respondents cycle, although by Year 10 this figure is down to 59% for the females.
2. With age the percentage of cyclists who at *most times* wear a safety helmet is seen to fall, e.g. from 25% of females in Year 6 to 4% of females in Year 10.

### Comments

1. Head injuries are the commonest cause of accidental death among young people.
2. Cycling seems to be currently fashionable, but does this extend to wearing a helmet? Over the years we have seen changes between years large enough to suggest that helmet-wearing may be a 'volatile' behaviour, sensitive to publicity campaigns and the opinions of others.
3. Cycling is environmentally friendly and promotes fitness, but it presents dangers to young people and is a cause of anxiety to their parents. Efforts to promote the wearing of cycle helmets have shown mixed results. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accident's website refer to research papers about cycle safety helmets:  
[http://www.rosopa.com/roadsafety/info/cycle\\_helmets.pdf](http://www.rosopa.com/roadsafety/info/cycle_helmets.pdf)



\* Year 6 not given this option



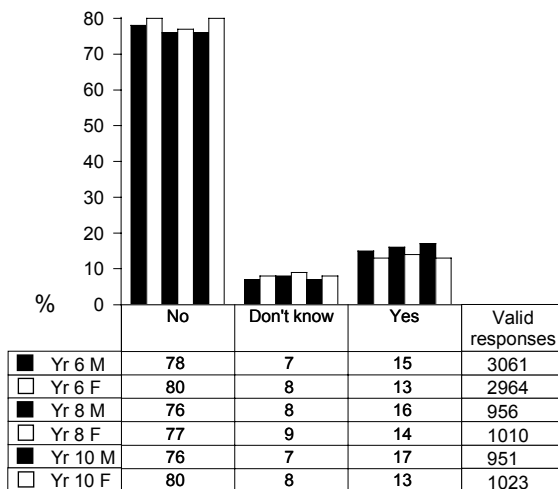
In an earlier book in this series we showed that young people who reported having been on a cycle training course were more likely to report wearing a cycle helmet at least most of the time.

# Asthma

Up to 17% of pupils say yes

## Do you have asthma?

1. Up to 17% of the year-gender groups report *yes*.
2. Slightly more males than females report that they have asthma.



## Comments

1. The young people may 'have asthma' but be free from symptoms.
2. There are several stages from the presence of symptoms to confirmation of asthma (e.g. *have symptoms* → *notice symptoms* → *report to parents* → *see GP for diagnosis* → *child reports this in survey*). It is not clear if the observed differences relate mainly or only to having asthma symptoms, as the young people's own reports are all we have to go on.
3. The frequency records of asthma medication taken in the previous week are shown on page ??.
4. An early report on young people and mental health (*No Worries?* Balding, 1998), describes a connection between general levels of worry and asthma and its symptoms. Figures for 2007 are shown below.

Asthma medication	Count	Percentage who worry about 5 or more topics
Males: No	4664	23%
Yes	608	26%
Females: No	5676	34%
Yes	679	37%

# Sleep

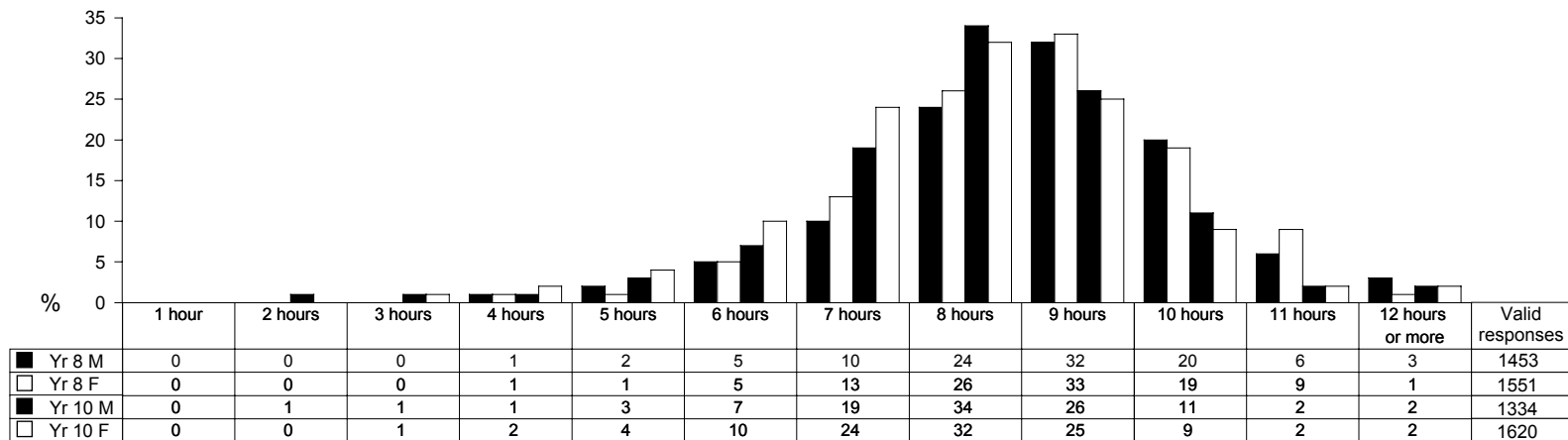
Around 32% report between 8-9 hours sleep *last night*

## How many hours sleep did you get last night?

### Comments

1. Between 8-9 hours sleep is reported by the majority of this sample.
2. Around 32% report between 8-9 hours sleep with 33% of 12-13 year old females saying they had 9 hours sleep 'last night'. This number drops to 25% of 14-15 year old females report having 9 hours sleep.
3. There are no clear age/gender differences although older females report higher percentages for sleeping between 5-7 hours.

1. This question, and the next two questions, were new editions in 2006 to the 'Young People' reports. Pupils are asked to write down the number of hours sleep they had 'last night'.



# Sleep - health

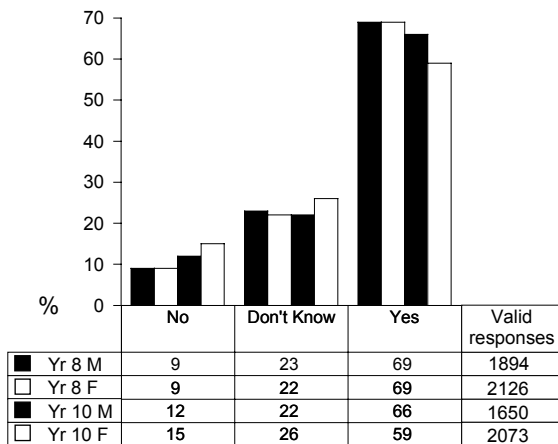
Between 59% - 69% of pupils say yes

## Is the amount of sleep you normally get...enough for your health?

### Comments

1. Up to 69% of this sample say they get enough sleep for their health.
2. There are age and gender differences. As they get older, more pupils (and females more than males) are likely to report needing more sleep for their health.
3. There is little difference between younger and older pupils who *don't know* if they are getting enough sleep for their health.

1. We have seen that around 32% report having between 8-9 hours sleep on the previous night. This question follows the question on the previous page.
2. As pupils get older, and in particular females, we see a difference of 10% (from 69% -59%) in those females reporting getting enough sleep for their health. There is also a 8% difference (33%-25%) between younger and older females sleeping for 9 hours (see previous page).



# Sleep - studies

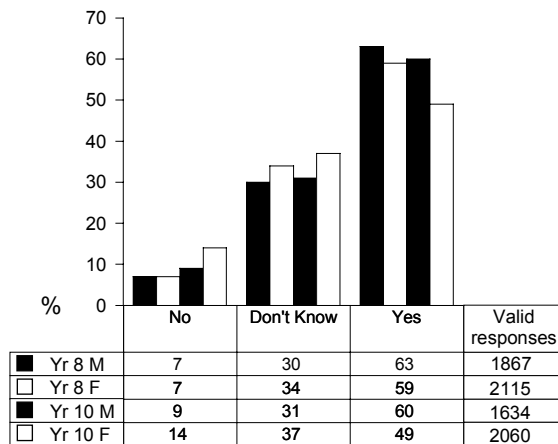
Up to 63% of pupils say yes

## Is the amount of sleep you normally get...enough for you to stay alert and concentrate on your school work?

1. Up to 63% of this sample say they get enough sleep for their studies.
2. There are age and gender differences. As they get older, more pupils (and males more than females) are likely to report getting enough sleep for their studies.
3. 14% of 14-15 year old females say they don't get enough sleep to stay alert and concentrate.

### Comments

1. Once again we see a 10% decline (59%-49%) between age groups and in particular females who report enough sleep for studies.
2. Based on the information from this page and the preceding two pages we can see that for females in particular there is around a 10% difference as they get older. From ages 12-15 it is suggested that if they slept for one extra hour (from 8-9 hours) it may reverse the 10% decline in those feeling they do not get enough sleep for their health (69%-59%) and those not having enough sleep for their studies (59%-49%).



# Remedies and medication

44% of 14–15 year old females report taking painkillers in the past week

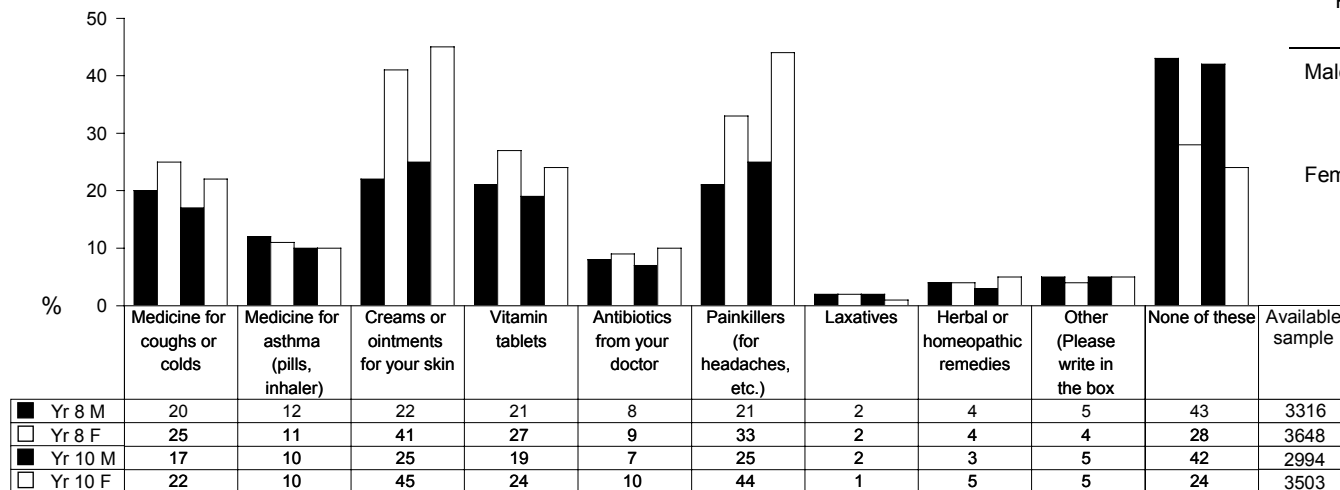
## On how many days, in the last week, have you used remedies or medications?

1. The 'remedies and medication' options now show *Painkillers* remaining the most frequently used remedy followed by medications for *Skin problems* and up to 27% report taking *Vitamin tablets* 'at least one day in the last week'.
2. In almost all cases, more females than males report having used these remedies and medications, the exceptions being 'Laxatives and 'Herbal'.

### Comments

1. This is the fifth year this question has been asked using the options shown below which were previously covered by two questions.
2. 44% of the 14-15 year old females are taking *Painkillers*, but they cannot all be suffering from period pains during the week before the survey. Assuming that up to a quarter are, the remainder must be taking them for other reasons, compared with 25% of older males.
3. Worries may literally prove to be a headache: when we look at the number of significant worries against painkiller use, there is an association:

Remedies/medications taken at least one day



	Painkillers	Count	% who worry about 5 or more topics
Males:	No	3748	24%
	Yes	1269	28%
Females:	No	3606	32%
	Yes	2498	38%



# ‘Wheezers’

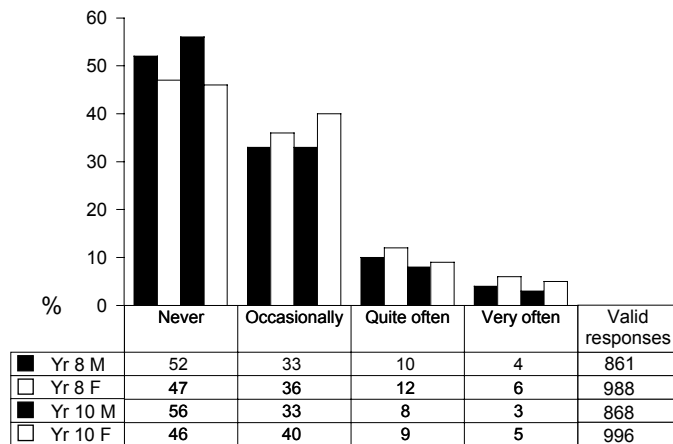
More females than males report some degree of discomfort

## When you run, do you ‘wheeze’ and have trouble breathing (not just feel out of breath)?

1. More females than males report some degree of discomfort.
2. Between 11% to 18% of the sample exhibit these symptoms *quite often* or *very often*.

### Comments

1. This question is valuable because of its use as a marker for asthma. It is a belief among many paediatricians that there is a degree of under-diagnosis of asthma, and thus also a population of young people who, if they sought medical support to manage their symptoms, could have a better quality of life. (See the medication question, page 27.)
2. The wheezy noise of asthma is characteristic; however, the difference between ‘wheezing’ and ‘breathlessness’ may not always be clear to young people, and this question is probably picking up some young people who are just unfit.
3. Good asthma control may reduce wheeziness, even during exertion.
4. The perceptible fall with age in the percentage reporting *quite often* and *very often* could be linked to (a) improvement in their asthmatic condition, (b) less running and vigorous activity generally, or (c) greater understanding among older pupils of the difference between wheezy breathlessness and just lack of fitness.

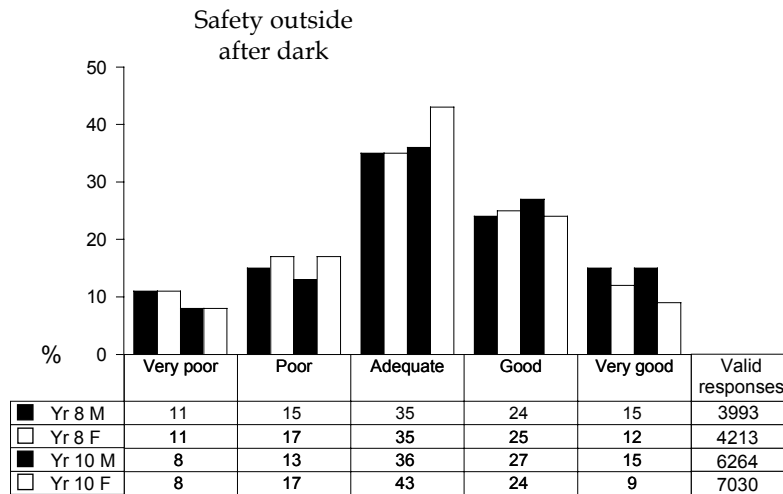


# Community safety

Up to 28% of young people say that safety after dark is *poor* or *very poor*

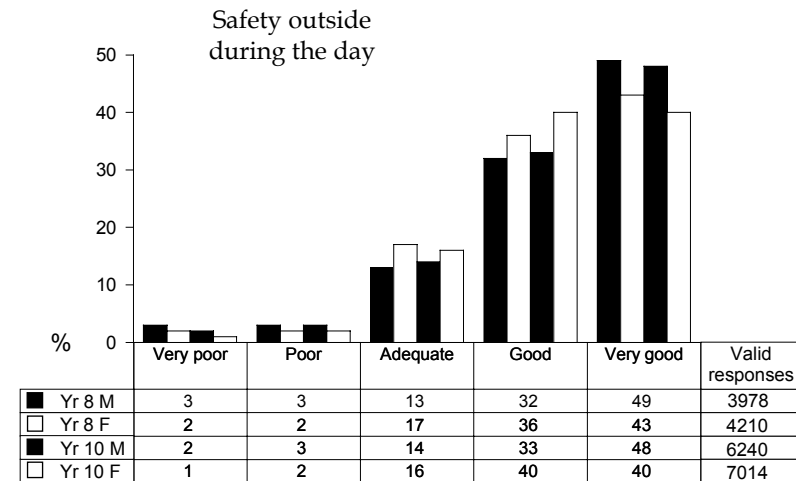
## How do you rate your safety when going out during the day, and after dark, in the area where you live?

1. Males are more likely to feel safe than females, and in general there is little difference in the perception of safety between the two age groups. Females report consistently for the 'OK' categories and similarly, males for the 'Very good' categories.
2. The perception of safety after dark is far lower than during the day for both age and gender groups.



## Comments

1. Whether perceived safety is related to actual safety, we do not know, but it is likely that perceived safety has an effect on young people's quality of life.
2. Are individual differences in perceived safety related to other attitudes and anxieties? We might expect those more anxious about safety to worry more about other matters.

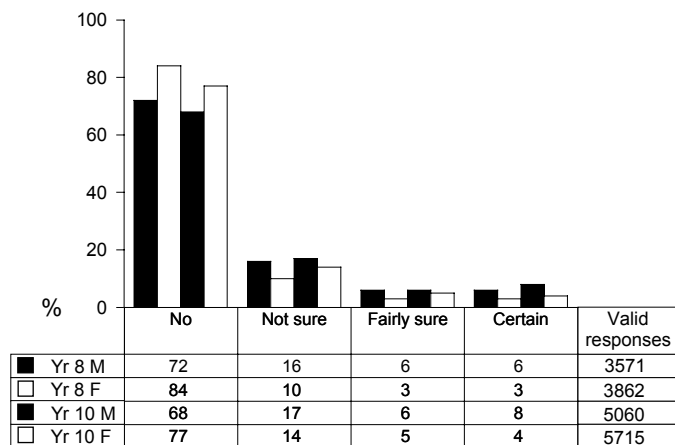


# Carrying weapons

14% of 14-15 year old males are 'fairly sure' or 'certain' that friends carry weapons

## Do you have friends who carry weapons for protection when going out?

- 14% of 14-15 year old males responded they were 'fairly sure' or 'certain' that friends did carry weapons.
- Up to 17% of the sample, were 'not sure' if their friends carried weapons for protection.
- There are clear gender and age differences with males reporting higher percentages across the 'fairly sure' or 'certain' options.



### Comments

- This is the fifth year we have asked a question, about friends carrying weapons, since 1996. A question in 1996 also contained an option - 'no friends carry weapons' (Cash and Carry, Balding 1996). The following show the question, option and percentage responses:

*Do any of your friends carry some protection, if so what?*

No friends carry weapons	%	Count
Yr. 8 M	70%	2709
Yr. 8 F	75%	2780
Yr. 10 M	57%	2146
Yr. 10 F	70%	2147

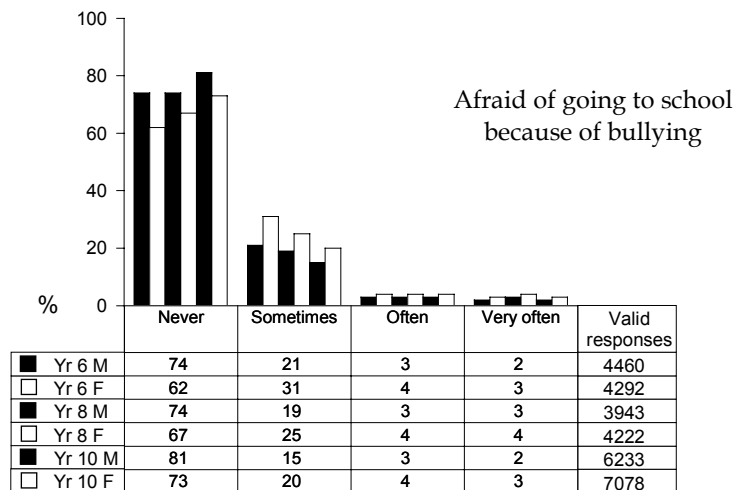
- Given that the 1996 and subsequent questions are worded differently and their placement in the questionnaire are not the same we have not drawn conclusions about differences but included the earlier data for comparison. In 1996, 57 % of older males specified that friends didn't carry some protection, suggesting 43% did. We also found that those who had friends that carried protection were more likely to be 'armed' themselves. We have no reason to think that this association has changed and view the current figures in this context.
- However the current figures are interpreted, from those who were 'not sure', in 2007 over 23% of over 10,000 14-15 year olds suggest that their friends may carry weapons when going out.

# Fear of being bullied

38% of the 10-11 year old females fear bullying at least *sometimes*

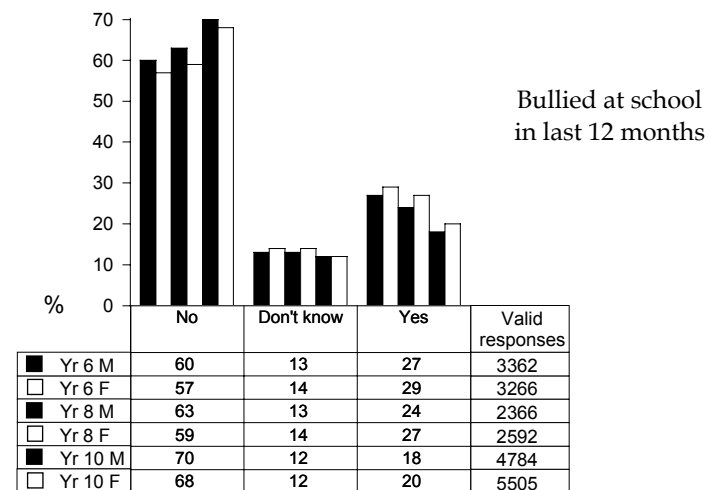
## Do you ever feel afraid of going to school because of bullying?

- 38% of the Year 6 females and 33% of the Year 8 females fear bullying at least *sometimes*.
- The females are more fearful than the males, and the older they get the less afraid they become.
- Up to 29% report being bullied in the last 12 months.



## Comments

- The proportion of pupils fearing bullying in different schools varies widely. Items in the survey have been linked with fear of bullying: low self-esteem and poor perceived control, and also asthma, eczema and birth order (*Bully Off*, Balding 1996).
- Since 1999, the figures for fear of being bullied, at least *sometimes*, show females remaining higher than males. For the Year 6 females (10-11 year olds), around 10% more females than males have reported feeling afraid of going to school because of bullying. (see also pages 32, 120-122.)
- The prevalence of experiences of bullying seems similar to the prevalence of the fear of bullying (see chart below).

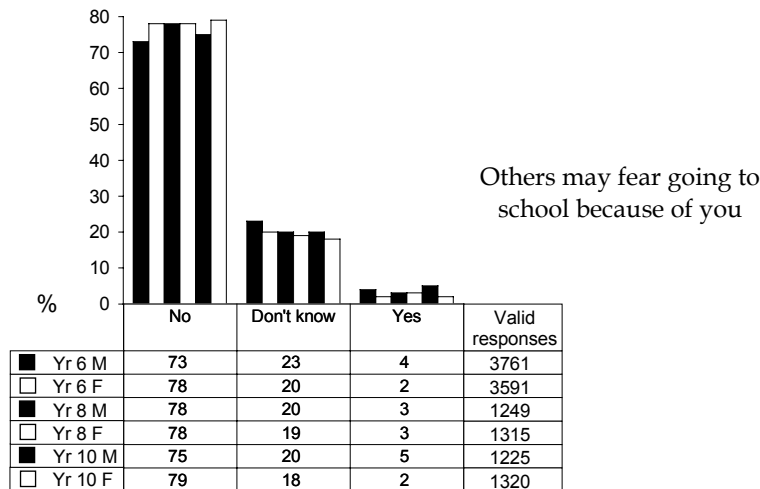


# Bullying

Slightly more males bully and 10% of older males say they bullied someone *last year*

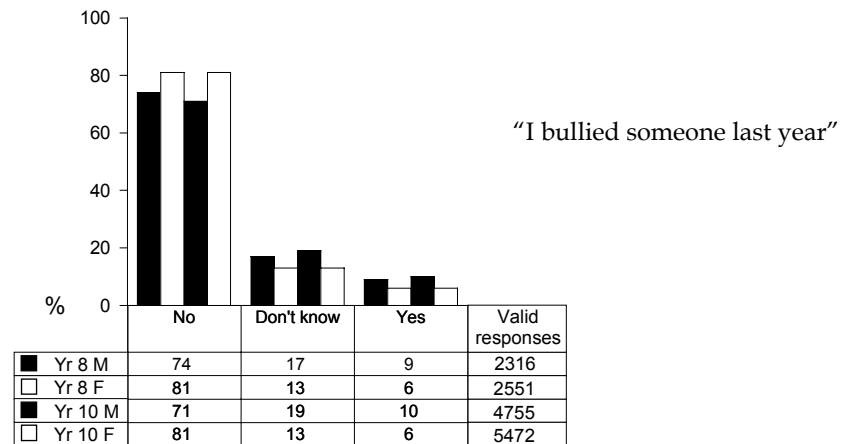
## Do you think others may fear going to school because of you?

1. Up to 5% report they are the cause of why others may fear going to school and up to 20% 'don't know'.
2. There are clear gender and age differences seen from those reporting 'No'.
3. Slightly more males than females report being bullies.
4. Up to 10% report that they bullied someone *last year*.



## Comments

1. Figures for older pupils from previous years show older males reporting higher percentages in the 'Yes' option but the differences between the genders is not great.
2. The 'don't know' responses could suggest honest lack of certainty or perhaps reluctance to admit a definite *Yes*. We now have an opportunity to compare this with reports of bullying by the young people (see chart below).

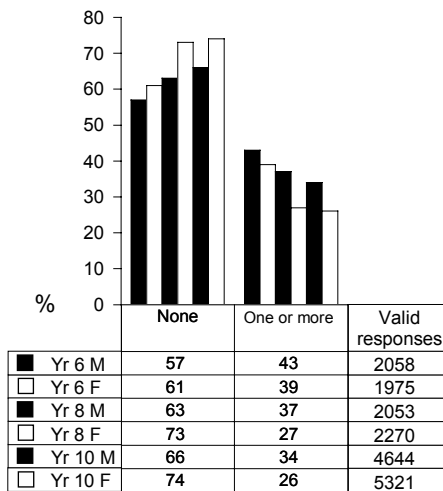


# Accidents

Up to 43% of the males had accidents

## In the past 12 months, how many accidents have you had which were treated by a doctor or at a hospital?

- Up to 43% of the respondents reported having an accident that needed some sort of treatment by a doctor or at a hospital.
- Consistently more males than females report involvement in such an accident.



### Comments

- Over half the fatal accidents in very young people occur at home, but once children reach school age there is an increase in deaths through road accidents, particularly head injuries. Road traffic crashes are the leading cause of death in young Europeans - in the 15-24-year age group, road deaths occur primarily among car occupants (59%) or motorcycle riders (19%) - [www.euro.who.int/mediacentre/PR/2007/20070420\\_1](http://www.euro.who.int/mediacentre/PR/2007/20070420_1)
- Males may well pursue activities with a higher risk of injury. Are older girls generally more risk-averse? Perhaps, but the picture is complex. Some health-risky behaviours, like smoking, are actually most frequent among older girls.
- We can support other research (Thom et al, 1999) and show links between reported accidents and health-risky behaviours relating to substance use: for example, pupils reporting a recent accident are more likely to report smoking and drinking in the last week, or ever having used illegal drugs, and these difference apply in all age groups. The figures in the table below are for the year 10 males:

Accident in last year?	Smoked last week	Drank last week	Ever used drugs
No	9%	30%	16%
Yes	15%	43%	25%

# Sunburn

Up to 20% *never* try to avoid sunburn

## Do you try any of the following ways to avoid sunburn?

1. Up to 20% *never* try to avoid sunburn and more males than females
2. More younger than older males and females try to avoid sunburn 'whenever possible'.
3. As they get older more pupils try to avoid sunburn 'sometimes' and 'usually'.

## Comments

1. This is an old question that has been rephrased.
2. In previous years pupils favoured *putting on sun screen* and males more than females preferred to *wear a hat* and *wear long sleeves*.
3. Despite the warnings, older pupils are choosing to risk exposure to the sun that may result in sunburn.

