

Young People into 2009

*The Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire
results for 80,548 young people between the ages of 10 and 15*

CHAPTER 7 **Exercise and Sport**

Angela Balding and David Regis

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7 Exercise and Sport



There is widespread concern at what appear to be generally low levels of physical activity in the daily life of young people. If, as has been suggested, the four-year-olds starting in our primary schools will have a life expectancy in excess of a hundred years, then we need to ensure that they have a healthy respect for the role that physical fitness plays in their quality and enjoyment of life. Trends in physical activities can be found in 'Trends: Young People and Physical Activities 1987-2003'. The questions in this section cover physical activity, perceived fitness, and which sporting activities (if any) young people took part in out of school time.

Question

How much do you enjoy physical activities?	86
Sports and activities participated in during the past 12 months outside school	87
Sports and activities participated in during the past 12 months outside school	88
Sports and activities participated in during the past 12 months outside school	89
Sports and activities participated in during the past 12 months outside school	90
How fit do you think you are?	91
How many times last week did you exercise and have to breathe harder and faster?	92

Enjoying sport

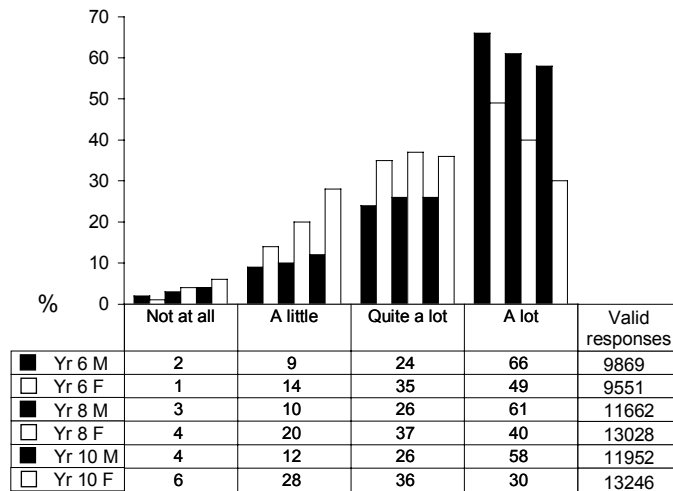
49% of the 10-11 year old females enjoy physical activities *a lot*

How much do you enjoy physical activities?

Comments

1. There is a large gender difference: far fewer females in each year group report liking sport *a lot*. The gender difference is already distinct in Year 6 (10-11 year olds) but the gap becomes wider as the age of the pupils increase.
2. The difference is especially marked in Year 10, nearly half as many females as males say they enjoy physical activities *a lot*.
3. It is noticeable, that as males get older slightly fewer respond that they enjoy physical activities *a lot*.
4. Nevertheless, over 84% of primary school pupils and over 66% of the secondary school pupils report enjoying sport *quite a lot* or *a lot*.

1. Is it uncool for females in secondary schools to show an interest in sport?
2. In 2008, 58% of 14-15 year old males report enjoying physical activities *a lot*. Since 1995, this percentage has ranged from 61% to 54% (2003).



Participation in active sports (1)

Jogging/Running becomes the new most popular activity for all pupils

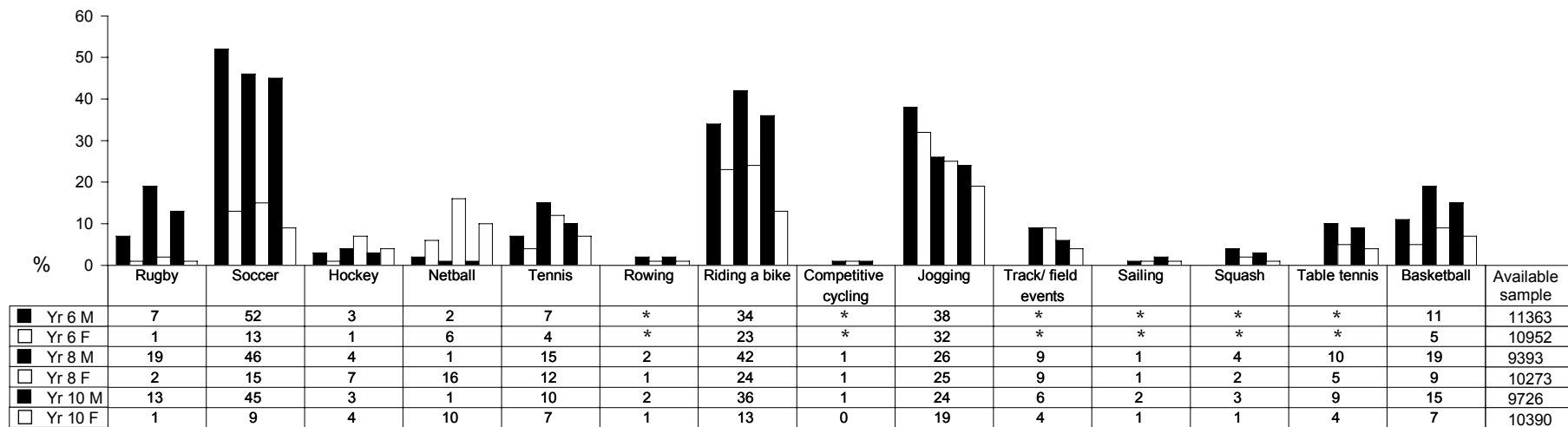
Sports and activities participated in, at least weekly, during the past 12 months outside school

The responses to this question have been divided into three pages.

1. These figures should be seen in the context of the figures on the following pages.
2. *Jogging/Running for exercise* replaces *Riding a bicycle* as the most popular activity for all groups.
3. *Jogging/Running for exercise*, like most other activities, drops in popularity as pupils get older.

Comments

1. These sports and activities are carried out in the pupils' own time or in school clubs and not in school lessons.
2. There is a decline in many of the activities from primary to secondary school – basketball and tennis are the only sports that hold an interest for both males and females as they move between schools.



** *Jogging* appears as *Running for exercise* for Year 6

Participation in active sports (2)

Swimming remains a popular activity with many young people

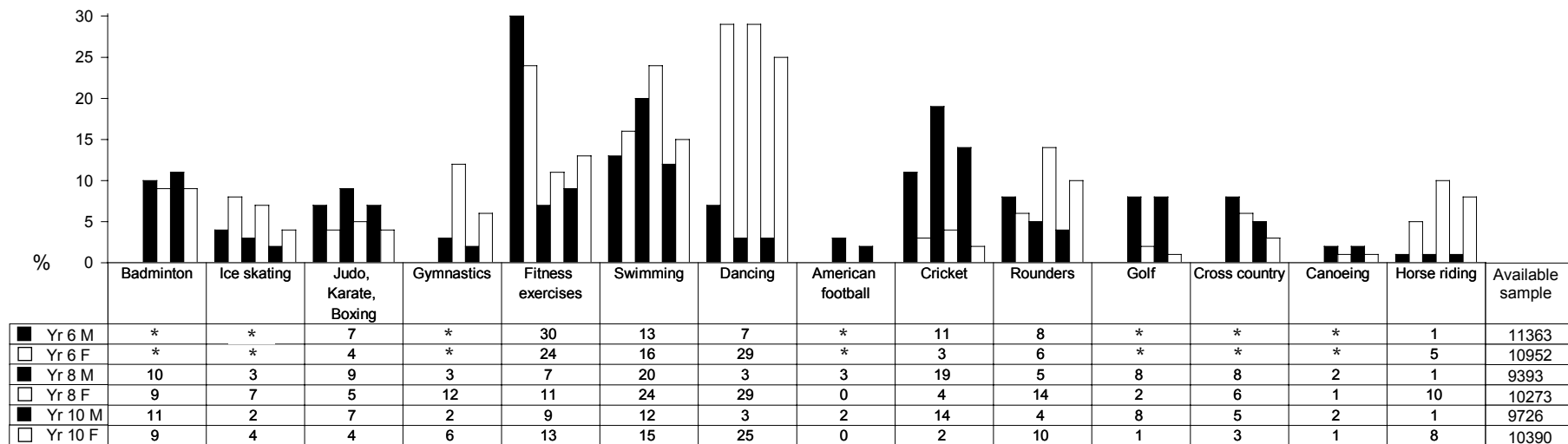
Sports and activities participated in, at least weekly, during the past 12 months outside school

The responses to this question have been divided into three pages.

1. *Swimming* is the most popular activity with most age groups and genders in this section followed by *fitness exercises* and *Dancing*.
2. *Fitness/aerobics* are undertaken, outside school, each week by 24% of Year 6 females. *Fitness exercises* is the only activity to show an upward trend for all pupils in the secondary age group in this section.
3. *Golf* continues to hold its appeal for a small percentage of males

Comments

1. Once again the figures refer to activities outside of school lessons and there is also a decline in many of the activities from primary to secondary school.
2. Data from 1987 show a slight decline in interest in Badminton but it is one of the few sports that remain constant as pupils get older.
3. Dancing remains popular with females across the age range. Although it declines as pupils get older, perhaps this is an activity that could be further encouraged in secondary schools.



* Options not available for Year 6

** *Gymnastics/Dancing* appears as one item for Year 6

Participation in active sports (3)

Up to 35% of older females choose *going for a walk*

Sports and activities participated in, at least weekly, during the past 12 months outside school

The responses to this question have been divided into three pages.

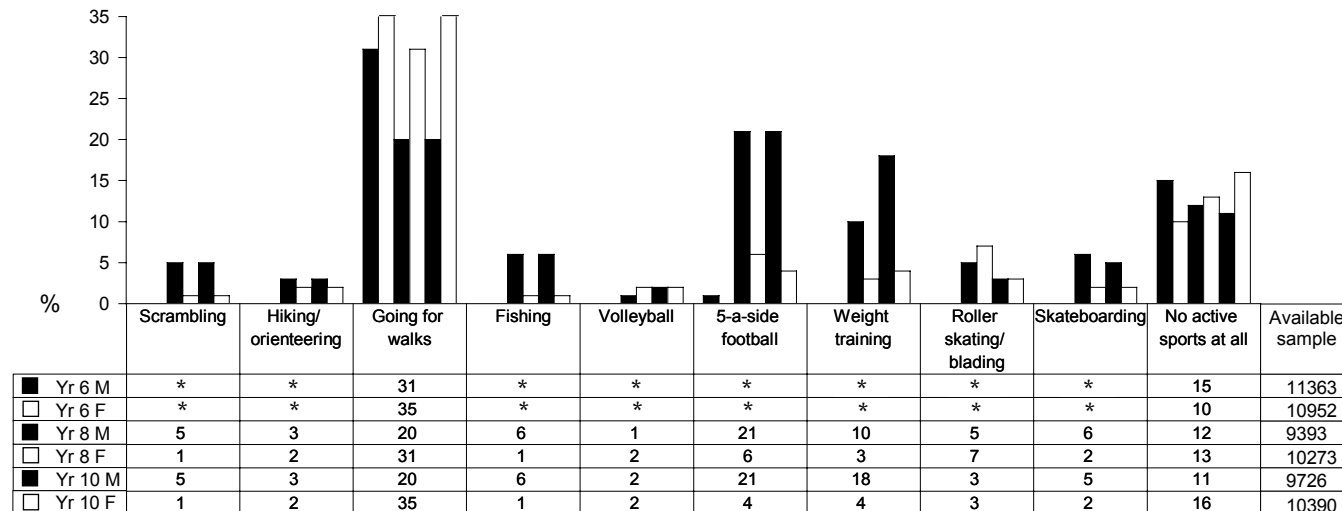
- 16% of the Year 10 females and 10% of the Year 6 females do not participate in any active sport on a weekly basis.
- The increase in popularity of Going for walks, 5-a-side football and weight training for the older males is against the general trend of decreasing involvement.
- Going for walks* was a new category in 2002 and is a popular activity with up to 35% of older females.

Comments

- Comparing the Year 10 female *no active sports at all* data since 1992 shows a range from 13% (2004) - 23% (1995). For further information see 'Trends: Young People and Physical Activities 1987-2003'.

1992	19%	2002	14%	2008	16%
1997	19%	2007	15%		

- Pupils were also asked about which activities they *would like to start doing or do more of*. Up to 32% of females said *roller/ice skating*, 24% of Year 6 females said *soccer*, and up to 20% of females said *netball*.



* Options not available for Year 6

** Rollerblading appears as Roller skating for Year 6

Participation in 'pub/club' sports

15% of males play pool each week

Sports and activities participated in, at least weekly, during the past 12 months outside school

1. There is a distinct gender difference seen in the data for these options.
2. 15% of the males play pool on a weekly basis.

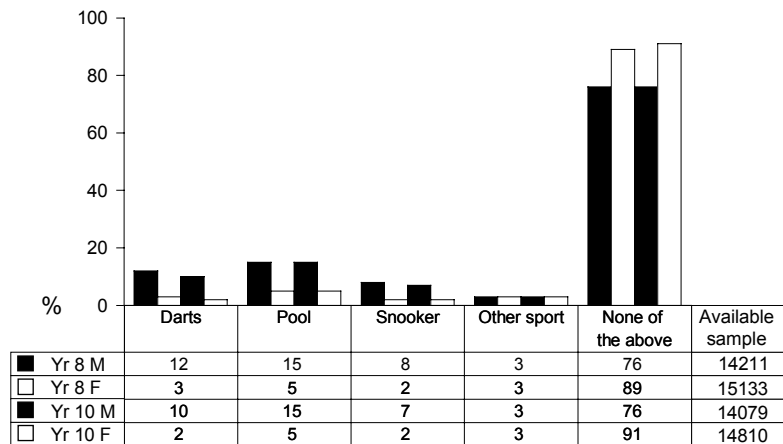
Comments

1. Are these activities being pursued within a pub setting, or at a youth club, or do these youngsters have access to pool tables etc at home? We can see that among Year 10 males that the more often they take part in these games, the more often they have drunk alcohol in the previous week:

Mean number of days drinking alcohol last week for different frequencies of 'pub and club' sports.

	Pool	Snooker	Darts
Never or hardly ever	0.71	0.72	0.76
Once or twice in a month	0.74	0.76	0.86
Weekly	0.88	0.99	0.88
Twice a week or more	0.99	1.03	1.16

2. These highly social games, like many computer games, also require hand and eye co-ordination skills, as well as some strategic thought.



Personal fitness

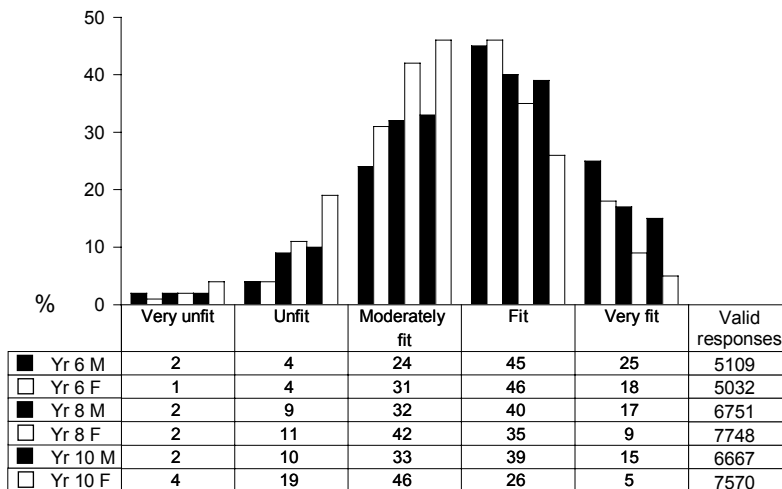
23% of 14-15 year old females think they are *unfit* or *very unfit*

How fit do you think you are?

1. More Year 6 males continue to assess themselves as *very fit* than any of the other groups.
2. 23% of the Year 10 (14-15 year old) females describe themselves as *unfit* or *very unfit*.
3. Perceived fitness declines with age in males and females.

Comments

1. The higher self-assessment of the males is consistent with their higher participation in sporting activities.
2. Do the females see themselves as less fit than the males because they participate in less physical activity or indeed are they less fit than the males?
3. This subjective method of assessing fitness may not seem very rigorous, but individual physiological measurements, in conjunction with similar questions, have shown good agreement.
4. Data from the Trends report, 'Young People and Physical Activity 1987-2003', showed an overall upward trend in reports of fitness levels. From 1991 onwards 14-15 year old females show an upward trend of those considering themselves to be 'unfit' (10% in 1991 to 20% in 2006).

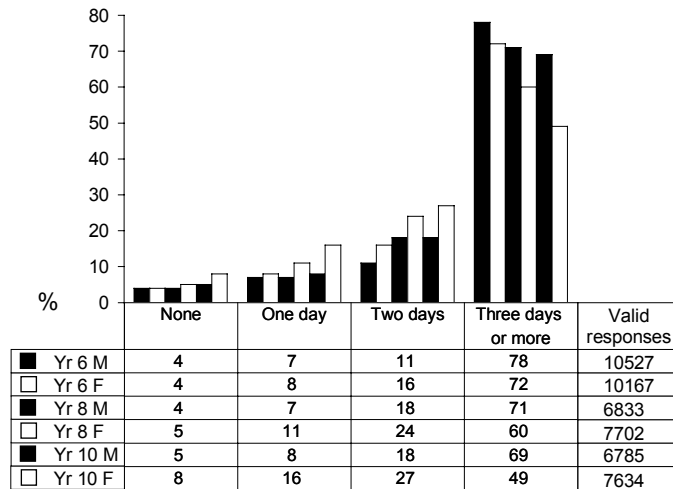


Aerobic exercise

Over 90% of 10-15 year olds report exercising at least on one day *last week*

How many days last week did you exercise and have to breathe harder and faster?

- Over 92% of all groups report exercising at least on one day last week, but again the gap is seen to widen between males and females among the frequent exercisers as they increase in age.
- Up to 8% of over 47,000 10-15 year olds, report taking no exercise *last week*.
- Up to 11% of all males and up to 16% of all females report exercising only on one day *last week*.



Comments

- There has been a question change from , ‘How many times last week...’, to ‘How many days last week...’.
- The data suggest that at least 69% of males, and at least 49% of females, report exercising vigorously on three or more days.
- We have increasing opportunities for youngsters to adopt sedentary lifestyles: many youngsters today have seemingly endless choices for the time they spend watching television with the increased viewing options available on satellite TV, they even have televisions in their rooms; or they spend time playing computer games; and indeed the popularity of surfing the Internet is increasing on a daily basis. But how much do young people depend on parents/carers for permission and support to be active?
- Are we observing the collection of mini time-bombs where youngsters are choosing leisure options that are likely to have a detrimental effect to their general health and fitness in the years to come?
- The question has in mind the old recommendation of exercising vigorously for at least 20 minutes a time, three times a week. Current recommendations are more likely to suggest *daily* exercise.