



WEST OF SCOTLAND SIXTEEN **PLUS** STUDY: YOUNG PEOPLE'S HEALTH

You were one of over 2,000 pupils first surveyed by the **West of Scotland 11 to 16 Study** in 1994-5. At that time you were in a P7 class in one of 135 primary schools. The study followed you up in S2 and S4 in 43 secondary schools, and once again in 2002-4, in the **16+ Study**.

The information you have provided at every stage has been very important, allowing us to build up a picture of the lives and health of today's teenagers and young people. Over the years, we have presented our results at conferences and in journals, as well as on tv, radio and in newspapers.

Thank you for taking part.

We hope to catch up with you again next year via a short questionnaire which you can fill in and post back to us. In the meantime, here are some results from **16+** (when you were aged around 19 years), which we hope will interest you.

Health

It has traditionally been assumed that young people are very healthy. However this has been challenged by the results of recent studies, including **16+**.

- Half of you described your health as 'good', around four-in-ten as 'fairly good' and one-in-ten as 'not good'.
- Around a fifth of you had an illness which had troubled you for a while, or was likely to affect your health in the future. By far the most common condition was asthma.
- Almost half reported a headache, a third a cold or flu, and a sixth an upset stomach or sickness in the past month.
- Over one-in-ten of you had been involved in an accident or had an injury in the past year. The most

common accidental injuries were sprains and strains, broken arms and head wounds. Most had no long-lasting effects.

- Around two-thirds reported having felt sad, unhappy or low, and nervous or tense, 'sometimes' or 'most of the time' in the past month. These feelings were more likely to be reported by females.

Home, family and relationships

- At the time of **16+**, over eight-in-ten of you were living with your parents. Of the rest, some had their own house or flat, and others lived in rented rooms or student accommodation. A few lived with other relatives or in a hostel.

- Almost one-in-twenty lived with a spouse or partner, and a similar number with their own children.
- Most had no major accommodation problems, although overcrowding and noise were reported by some.
- Most were also reasonably happy with the area they lived in. The most frequent problems with the area were alcohol or drug use and vandalism. Those living in student rooms or accommodation reported better local facilities for young people than those living elsewhere.
- We asked how safe you felt walking around the area after dark: more males than females felt 'very' or 'fairly' safe.

Transport

- Around a third of you had a full car driving licence and another third a provisional licence. Most of those without a licence said they would like to learn to drive.
- About a fifth of you had your own car. We asked what you thought it was worth – on average, you said £3,000. Two thirds of you paid your own insurance, but most of the rest had your insurance paid by parents.
- We asked those with licences about any driving offences in the past year. Almost one-in-ten reported driving without insurance, valid MOT or road tax; some had also driven when they thought they were over the alcohol limit or had taken drugs.

Getting into trouble

- The vast majority – around nine-in-ten of you – had not been in

trouble with the police in the past few years. Of those who had, around two-thirds had been charged.

- The most common offences among those who had been charged were breach of the peace and assault. Most of those who were convicted received a fine.
- We asked about experiences of crime in the past year. Three-quarters had not experienced anything, but almost one-in-ten of you reported a physical attack (much more likely among males), and one-in-twenty theft or vandalism to your property.

School and after school

- Around a fifth of you left school after 4th year, another fifth at the end of 5th year, and the rest after 6th year. Most felt you had had left at the best time. One-in-seven had felt unhappy in your final year of school, and one-in-ten reported skipping school for days or weeks at a time.
- At the time of the interview, four-in-ten were in higher education (university), three-in-ten were working and one-in-ten in further education (college). Of the remainder, most were on schemes including Skill-Seekers, New Deal or Modern Apprenticeships, unemployed or at home for other reasons (such as looking after children or long-term sickness). A handful were spending time travelling or on a 'gap' year.
- Almost one-in-ten of you reported having to spend time caring for other people. Although these were mainly your own children,

they also included parents, grandparents and others.

Spare time

- We gave you a list of things you might do in your spare time and asked how often you did them. The most popular were listening to music, reading papers, mags or comics and seeing friends.
- Two-thirds went to pubs or bars weekly or more often, the majority in Glasgow and with a mixed sex group of friends.
- Around half went to clubs weekly or more often, again mainly with a mixed sex group of friends. The main reasons for choosing a club were its music, people and the facts that it was inexpensive and easy to get to. We also asked you to tell us about a club you definitely wouldn't go to. The main reasons for not going were the people, its image and poor security.
- Over half of you used a home computer weekly or more; in fact you spent an average of an hour a day doing so. Almost three-quarters used the internet, mainly at home or college.
- Almost all of you watched tv, for an average of 3 hours a day. We asked about your favourite programmes – 'Eastenders' just won out over 'The Simpsons'.
- We asked about styles and music. At the time of the interview about one-in-ten of you said you were really heavily into clubbing and chart music, with fewer also heavily into hip-hop or rap, retro and indie.
- We also asked about brands – the sports brands you rated most desirable were Nike, Adidas and

Lacoste, top clothing brands included Armani, Gucci, FCUK and Diesel.

- Most of you had a mobile phone. Although these were mainly used for texting, you spent just over an hour a week on average chatting on your mobile.

Smoking, drinking and drugs

- A quarter were regular smokers and a further one-in-twenty occasional or social smokers. Current smokers smoked around 10 cigarettes a day on average. Two-thirds had tried to quit, but most had only managed a month or two.
- Over seven-in-ten of you had had a drink in the week before the interview. There was an enormous range in the amount consumed, but many – both males and females - drank a great deal, and certainly well over the current recommended weekly units. The main reasons for drinking were because you enjoyed the taste, to relax, as a treat or reward and to get drunk.
- We showed you a list of drugs. Over half had tried one or more of them. Cannabis was by far the most frequent; around a third had taken it in the past year. Ecstasy had been taken in the past year by almost one-in-ten, mainly in pubs and clubs. Other drugs were taken much less frequently. The main reasons for using drugs were out of curiosity, to relax and to get high.

Sport and exercise

- One-in-ten (both males and females) reported never taking

half an hour or more of moderate exercise, such as a brisk walk. Around a quarter of all males and almost half all females never did any vigorous exercise.

- The most popular sports were swimming, dancing, snooker, jogging and football. Of the 40 activities on the list we showed you, there was only one (curling) which none had done in the past month.
- Gym membership was popular – around a third of you were current members and a fifth had been members in the past.

Food, eating and weight

- One-in-five females reported worrying a great deal about putting on weight and one-in-ten were dieting. Among males, the rates were much lower. Only one-in-twenty males worried a

great deal about putting on weight and only a handful were dieting.

- Our height and weight measurements mean we know that around a third of you were overweight at the time of the interview. Interestingly, although females were far more worried about their weight, rates of overweight were similar for males and females.
- We asked how often you ate meals. One-in-six never ate breakfast.
- Around half had eaten fresh fruit the day before the interview. Similar numbers had eaten sweets or chocolate and crisps, quavers, corn snacks etc.
- Finally, most of you knew the answer to ‘how many portions of fruit and vegetables are recommended by health experts to be eaten every day?’ (it’s five).

Remember, the vital ingredients in this are all of you who have taken part.

Thanks again, and best wishes for 2006.



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