

Grampian Youth Lifestyle Survey 2007: Summary of Key Findings

Introduction

This is the fifth Grampian Youth Lifestyle Survey; previous surveys were conducted in 1992, 1995, 1998 and 2001. The aim of these surveys is to assess trends in health related lifestyle in young people in Grampian, to monitor the impact of health programmes and to provide information for planning to promote health. This report presents the findings for Grampian, separate reports are available for the three Community Health Partnerships in Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray. In 2007 the survey was for the first time extended to the 18 -25 year age group and a separate report is available for this extended group.

About the Survey

The survey included a 10% sample from all secondary schools in Grampian including independent schools from years S1 to S6 and was conducted during October and November 2007 by a team from the University of Aberdeen. The survey used a questionnaire which was completed under supervision during school hours. The questionnaire used questions from the previous 4 surveys and a number of new questions. Height and weight was measured in a 15% sample. 2, 341 participated in the survey with a response rate of 71%.

Key Findings

General Health

- One quarter of respondents expressed feelings of stress especially females in 5th and 6th years. Stress has consistently been reported as a reason for smoking, drinking alcohol and trying drugs.
- Boys have a better perception of good health and feel fit and healthy whereas girls are more apprehensive about their health and worry about gaining weight.
- 18% report a long term illness or disability.
- 10% report having asthma, 3% higher than in 2001.

Wellbeing

- Females are more interested and feel closer to other people but are not as optimistic of the future, relaxed or have as much spare energy as males.
- Males also feel they can deal well with problems, are clear thinking and confident, more so than females.
- Majority of respondents, 69%, fall into the 'medium' category for wellbeing, 16% into the 'high' category and 14% are in the 'low' wellbeing category.

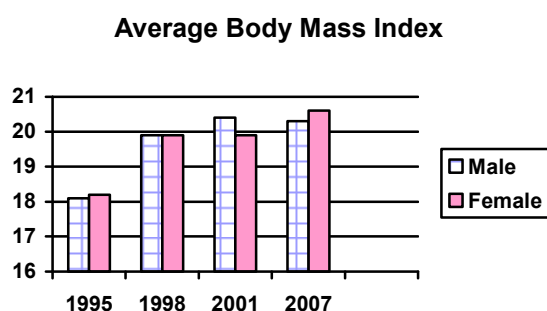
Dental Health

- Registration with a dentist and attendance of regular checkups contribute to good oral health. Nearly all, 91%, of children surveyed were registered with a dentist and 83% had attended a dentist in the last 6 months.

- Limiting sugary foods to meal times only and ensuring that snacks are sugar free is a key oral health message. The majority, 87%, of the children stated that they have chocolate bars/sweets as a snack at least once a day.
- Limiting or avoiding sugary fizzy drinks to prevent high levels of decay is recommended. Almost half of the children, 45%, said they never drink sugary fizzy drinks.

Body Weight

- Body weight measured by body mass index has steadily increased in both males and females.



- 16% of boys and 32% of girls think they are overweight.
- 24% of boys and 63% of girls worry about gaining weight.

Nutrition

- A quarter of the girls did not eat anything for breakfast but are more positive about healthy eating.
- Although, the boys generally have breakfast, they do tend to snack more and have fizzy drinks.
- About half of the boys and 60% of girls would like to eat 5 pieces of fruit and vegetables per day. Key motivators identified were the maintenance of a healthy weight, disease prevention and general well-being.
- Although, 57% eat fruit and 47% eat vegetables at least 3 times per day, only 10% of young people are close to meeting the minimum recommended number of portions of fruit and vegetables each day.
- The key ways that children believed their diet could be improved were by the provision of a greater choice of foods at school and home, clearly labelled healthier choices at school and being able to taste new products in the school canteen.
- Nearly 80% of all children expressed an interest for more opportunities to cook both at home and school.

Physical Activity

- Only 57% of boys and 34% of girls aged 16 years or less met the national recommendation of participating in physical activity of at least moderate intensity for one hour on 5 or more days per week. (The 2022 target is for 80% of children meeting the national recommendation.)
- Only 54% of boys and 30% of girls aged 17 years and over (and at school) met the national recommendation of participating in physical activity of at least moderate intensity for 30 minutes on 5 or more days per week.
- Females favour non-competitive while males prefer competitive forms of physical activity.
- The most prevalent reasons for children participating in physical activity are still 'to have fun' (95%) and 'to improve your health' (94%); however, 'maintaining a healthy weight/losing weight' (86%) and 'to improve your appearance' (85%) have become increasingly important motivators.
- There has been a considerable increase in how long females spend watching TV and playing computer games.
- 48% walk to school, 37% by bus, 13% by car and 2% cycle.

Smoking

- Although, smoking decreased overall to 12%, the number of cigarettes smoked by boys has increased considerably over the years.
- Stress was an underlying determinant for smoking.
- Respondents felt that less stress and encouragement from peers would help them to stop smoking.
- With the exception of 15-16 year old girls (whose smoking rate of 27% is currently twice the target level) the smoking rates of children are broadly in line with the new targets set for 2014 by the Scottish Government.

Alcohol

- The numbers drinking alcohol has decreased by 14% in young people compared to 2001, consistent with the SALSUS 2006 Grampian report.
- Of some concern is the fact that when they do drink, the average number of units consumed by young people has increased significantly since the Youth Lifestyle Survey in 1995 from 10.8 units to 18.5 units per week. Numbers of young people recorded to be drinking on 3 or more days per week have remained static since 1995.
- Since the 1998 survey 14% fewer young people think alcohol is expensive.

Sexual Health

- It is of concern that young people's knowledge of HIV appears to have decreased since the 2001 survey. Although, the majority (76%) knew that the use of a condom could protect against a sexually transmitted infection, this leaves almost a quarter (24%) of those who took part who were either unsure of this or answered incorrectly. Likewise, only 41% knew that the pill alone could not prevent a sexual transmission of infection, indicating that the majority are potentially vulnerable and at risk.
- In 2007 the majority of those involved in the survey (74%) reported never to have had sexual intercourse, the same level as in 2001.
- It is encouraging that 90% percent reporting to be sexually active use condoms, an increase of 15% since 2001, although, 75% report problems in obtaining condoms, highlighting an issue to be addressed by all working in the sexual health arena.

Drugs

- 34% of young people surveyed had been offered drugs in comparison with 42% in 2001. SALSUS 2006 also showed a decrease in those offered drugs. Only 14% had tried drugs compared to 21% in 2001 and 30% in 1998.
- Unsurprisingly cannabis was the most widely used drug but worryingly 14% said they had used cocaine and 19% had used gas/glue and other solvents. Solvent use can result in sudden death, even at the first time of using.

Conclusions

Findings of the survey indicate that many positive lifestyle changes have taken place since the previous surveys in 1992, 1995, 1998 and 2001. However there remain a number of areas for concern. There are important differences between boys and girls. Boys are optimistic, competitive and view themselves as being healthy. Girls are interested in other people and want to make healthy lifestyle choices. The results obtained from this survey will enable NHS Grampian and partners to identify priority issues and make plans for future work, so as to target shortcomings and continue to make progress towards the national targets for health.

The full report for the Grampian Youth Lifestyle Survey 2007, reports for Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray Community Health Partnerships and the report for the 18-25 years age group are available at:

www.nhsgrampian.org/youthlifestyle2007
www.abdn.ac.uk/public_health/pubhealth/youth_lifestyle.php
www.hi-netgrampian.org
www.nhsgrampian.org/youngpersonlifestyle2007

More information and/or further analysis on the survey may be obtained from:
stella.mchardy@nhs.net or l.aucott@abdn.ac.uk

This work was conducted by the NHS Grampian and the University of Aberdeen

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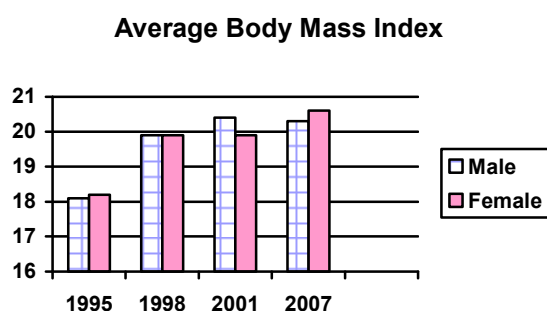
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