

Schools Omnibus 2003 (Wave
9)

A Research Study Among 11-16 Year Olds
on behalf of The Sutton Trust
Final Report (27.5.2003)

January - March 2003

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Introduction

This report presents findings from the 2003 Survey of Secondary School Pupils, carried out by Market and Opinion Research International (MORI) on behalf of the Sutton Trust. A survey topline (a marked-up questionnaire) and the computer tabulations can be found in a separate volume.

Methodology

The sample of schools comprised 250 middle and secondary state schools in England and Wales. The sampling universe included LEA, voluntary aided/controlled and foundation schools, but excluded special schools and sixth form colleges. This sampling frame was stratified by Government Office Regions (GORs) and, within each stratum, schools were selected proportional to the size of the school register, thus producing a nationally representative sample of secondary and middle schools.

The age groups included in the survey were 11-16 year olds in curriculum years 7 to 11. Each school was randomly allocated one of these curriculum years, from which MORI interviewers selected one class at random (using a random number grid) to be interviewed. Interviewing was carried out through self-completion questionnaires with the whole class in one classroom period. A MORI interviewer was present to explain the survey to pupils, to reassure them about the confidentiality of the survey, to assist them in completing the questionnaire, and to collect completed questionnaires. In classes where four or more children were absent during the self-completion session, up to two follow-up visits were arranged to interview absent pupils.

Fieldwork for the study was conducted between 15 January and 12 March 2003. Of the 250 schools approached, 81 declined to participate at the invitation stage (a letter sent to the headteacher) and a further 69 schools refused to participate during the fieldwork period. In total, 100 schools participated, giving a response rate of 40%. Overall, fully completed questionnaires were obtained from 2,469 pupils, an average of 25 pupils per class.

Data were weighted by gender, age and region. The weights were derived from data supplied by the Department for Education and Skills and the Welsh Office. The effect of weighting is shown in the sample profile in the Appendices and in the computer tables.

Acknowledgements

It is clear that schools are increasingly working under great pressure from a number of different sources. They also receive numerous requests to participate in surveys such as this. Consequently, we wish to record our gratitude to the many schools that took part and we are indebted to all pupils and staff who made this survey possible.

MORI would also like to thank Tessa Stone and Peter Lampl at the Sutton Trust for their help and involvement in the project.

Presentation and Interpretation of Data

When interpreting the findings it is important to remember that the results are based on a sample of the maintained school population, and not the entire population. Consequently, results are subject to sampling tolerances, and not all differences between sub-groups are therefore statistically significant. A guide to statistical significance is included in this document.

In tables where percentages do not add up to 100% this may be due to multiple answers, to computer rounding, or to the exclusion of 'Don't know' or 'No response' categories. Throughout the tables, an asterisk (*) denotes a value greater than zero, but less than 0.5%.

Publication of Data

As with all our studies, these results are subject to our Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract. Any publication of results requires the prior approval of MORI. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy and misrepresentation.

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Fiona Johnson

Summary of Findings

Likelihood of going into Higher Education

- As in 2002, the majority of young people say they are likely to go into higher education when they are old enough, including two in five young people (40%) who say they are *very likely* to do so. Overall, the proportion expecting to go into higher education rose significantly from 68% in 2002 to 71% in 2003.
- Although only a minority of young people – just over one in ten – think they are unlikely to go into higher education, the proportion of young people saying this also increased significantly compared to last year (13% versus 11% in 2002).
- Both these increases might be explained by the fact that respondents in 2003 were less equivocal than respondents in 2002 (that is, significantly fewer said they had yet to decide either way).
- Of all year groups, pupils in Years 11 are most likely to think they are unlikely to go into higher education. Nearly one in four (23%) thinks this, compared to one in six Year 10 pupils and around one in 10 pupils in Years 7-9.
- The proportion of boys saying they are likely (*very + fairly*) to go into higher education increased significantly between 2002 and 2003 (64% versus 70%), while the proportion of girls saying they would do so remained the same. Even so, girls are still more likely than boys to think they will go into higher education.
- Respondents from minority ethnic backgrounds are more certain than white pupils to think they are *very* likely to go on to higher education (55% versus 38%).
- Young people living in households where at least one adult is working are more likely than those living in households where no adult works to think they will go into higher education. Around six in ten young people (62%) living in households where no adult is working say they are likely to go into HE, compared to seven in ten young people (69%) living in households where one adult works, and three in four young people (75%) where two adults work.

Reasons for not going into Higher Education

Please note that – though this question was asked last year – the list of pre-codes from which young people could select reasons was amended (some items omitted, some added, the item order changed). As such, findings in 2003 cannot be compared directly with those from 2002.

- Amongst young people who think they are unlikely to go on to higher education, the reason most frequently given for not doing so is that they *want to start earning money as soon as possible* (40%).
- A similar proportion (39%) says they *prefer to do something practical rather than studying from books*. Year 11 pupils are significantly more likely than young people as a whole to give this as a reason for not wanting to go into higher education.
- To some extent, girls' reasons for thinking they are unlikely to go into higher education appear to be associated with a lack of confidence in their academic abilities. Girls are significantly more likely than boys to give *I won't get good enough exam results to get into a university* (37% versus 24%) and *I'm not clever enough* (35% versus 24%) as reasons for thinking this.
- Only a minority of young people (around one in seven) says that they are unlikely to go into higher education because they are *worried about getting into debt as a student*. Reassuringly, too, young people who live in households where no, or only one, adult is working are no more likely than those living in households where two parents work to say this.
- Similarly, only one in ten young people says they are unlikely to go into higher education because *my family can't afford to pay for me to be a student*.

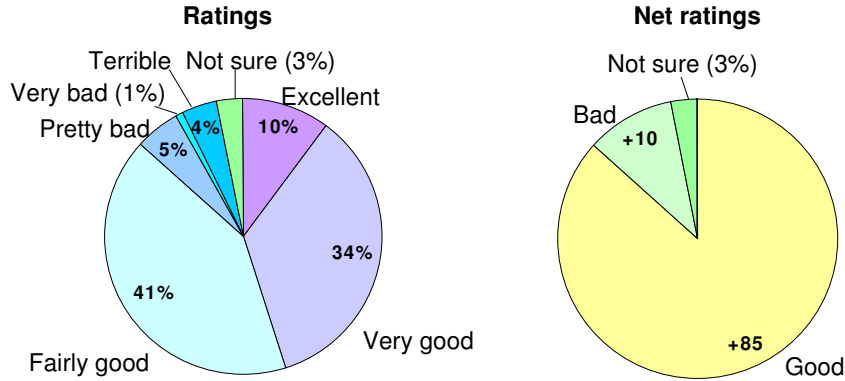
How do young people rate the quality of their school?

- The majority of young people regard their school as fairly good or better, with one in ten describing their school as *excellent* (see Figure 1).
- Girls, pupils in Years 7-9, pupils in urban schools, and those living in households with at least one working adult are particularly likely to think their school is good overall.
- Conversely, amongst the one in ten young people describing their school as bad, boys, pupils in Years 10 and 11 and those living in households where no adults work, appear more frequently.

Figure 1

Descriptions of Schools

Q Thinking about your school overall, how would you describe it?



Base: All (2,469)

Source: MORI

- Interestingly, there is a relationship between positive ratings of school and the likelihood that young people will go into higher education. Nearly three in four young people (74%) who think their school is good also think that they are likely to go on to university, compared to less than three in five young people (56%) rating their school as bad.

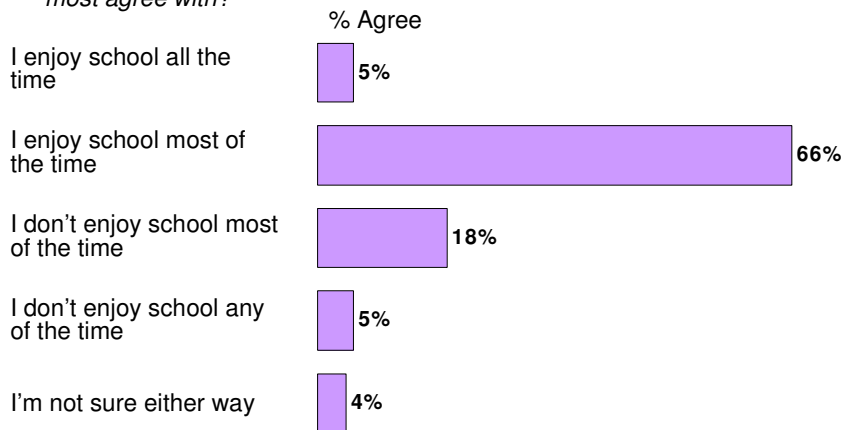
How do young people rate their enjoyment of school?

- Encouragingly, most young people (66%) say they enjoy school *most of the time*, with a further five per cent saying they enjoy it *all the time* (see Figure 2).
- Less encouragingly, nearly one in four young people say they don't enjoy school either *most of the time* or *at all*.
- Girls, pupils in Years 7-9, and those living in households with at least one working adult are all more likely to say they enjoy school than boys, pupils in Years 10-11 and those living in households with no working adults.

Figure 2

Enjoyment of School

Q Thinking about being at school, which of the following statements do you most agree with?



Base: All (2,469)

Source: MORI

- There is a relationship between enjoying school and the likelihood that young people will go on to university. Nearly four in five young people (78%) who largely enjoy school are also likely to think they will go in to higher education, compared to less than three in five young people (57%) who don't enjoy school.
- Nevertheless, it is reassuring that a negative experience of school is not a deterrent to continuing education for the majority of young people.
- Young people who do not enjoy school were asked to say what would make it more enjoyable for them. As might have been expected, the archetypal wish list of any self-respecting schoolchild emerged, namely:
 - Less homework (70%);
 - Fewer exams (41%);
 - Less strict teachers (39%); and
 - Easier lessons (33%)!
- At the same time, however, a suggestion that schools are not completely meeting the needs of some young people also emerged. For example, over half of respondents (54%) who said they do not enjoy school want *lessons that are more interesting* and over a third (36%) want *more choice over what subjects I study*. Nearly one in five young people (19%) would also like to see the provision of *more practical or vocational courses*.

- Pupils in Years 10 and 11, in particular, say that these features would make school more enjoyable.
- Young people in urban schools are twice as likely as those in rural schools to say that *smaller classes* would make school more enjoyable (24% versus 12%).

State versus private schools

- Only a minority of state school pupils would want to go to a private school if given the opportunity. Most (39%) *definitely would not*.
- Girls would be keener to do so than other respondents, as would minority ethnic pupils.
- Amongst young people who would take up an opportunity of this nature, most (61%) assume that to do so would enhance their exam results, with respondents in Year 11 significantly more likely than those in lower year groups to think this.
- ‘Pro-private’ respondents also assume that private schools would have better facilities and more equipment (57%), and smaller classes (48%).
- However, most ‘anti-private’ respondents would not want an opportunity of this kind because they don’t think they would enjoy it (67%).
- Younger pupils (those in Years 7 and 8) also tend to be concerned that their friends would be at different schools, and that *people would make fun of me*.
- Again, an apparent lack of confidence in their academic abilities emerges amongst girls who are significantly more likely to say they would not be *clever enough* to go to a private school.
- Similarly, young people living in households where no adult works are more likely than those living in households where at least one adult works to say they are not *clever enough* to go to a private school.

Appendices

Sample Profile

	Number	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Total	2,469	100	100
Gender of Pupils			
Male	1344	54	51
Female	1125	46	49
Age of Pupils			
11	312	13	19
12	557	23	19
13	450	18	19
14	424	17	19
15	472	19	15
16	254	10	8
Year of Pupils			
7	577	23	28
8	562	23	20
9	393	16	19
10	365	15	13
11	572	23	19
Ethnic Origin			
White	2182	88	87
Non-white	279	11	12
Household Composition			
Two parents in household	1941	79	78
Single parent in household	448	18	18
Sibling in household	2082	84	84
Work Status of Household			
Two parents work	1379	56	55
One parent works	766	31	32
No parent works	324	13	13
Area			
Rural	385	16	16
Urban	1635	66	66
Region			
London	256	10	14
South East	225	9	12
South West	224	9	9
North East	182	7	5
North West (incl. Merseyside)	422	17	14
Eastern (incl. Anglia)	292	12	10
East Midlands	231	9	8
West Midlands	336	14	11
Yorkshire & Humberside	100	4	10
Wales	201	8	6

Source: MORI

List of Local Education Authorities by Government Office Region

Eastern: Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Luton, Norfolk, Peterborough, Southend, Suffolk, Thurrock.

East Midlands: Derby, Derbyshire, Leicester, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, Rutland.

London: Barking, Barnet, Bexley, Brent, Bromley, Camden, Croydon, Ealing, Enfield, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, Harrow, Havering, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Kingston on Thames, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Newham, Redbridge, Richmond upon Thames, Southwark, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Wandsworth, Westminster.

North East: Darlington, Durham, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesborough, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Redcar & Cleveland, South Tyneside, Stockton-on-Tees, Sunderland.

North West (incl. Merseyside): Blackburn, Blackpool, Bolton, Bury, Cheshire, Cumbria, Halton, Knowsley, Lancashire, Liverpool, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, St Helens, Salford, Sefton, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Warrington, Wigan, Wirral.

South East: Bracknell Forest, Brighton and Hove, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Medway, Milton Keynes, Newbury, Oxfordshire, Portsmouth, Reading, Slough, Southampton, Surrey, West Berkshire, West Sussex, Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham.

South West: Bath and North-East Somerset, Bournemouth, Bristol, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Isles of Scilly, North Somerset, Plymouth, Poole, Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Swindon, Torbay, Wiltshire.

Wales: Anglesey, Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Conwyn, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Neath Port Talbot, Newport, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Swansea, Torfaen, Wrexham, Vale of Glamorgan.

West Midlands: Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Herefordshire, Sandwell, Shropshire, Solihull, Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Telford and Wrekin, Walsall, Warwickshire, Wolverhampton, Worcestershire.

Yorkshire and Humberside: Barnsley, Bradford, Calderdale, Doncaster, East Riding of Yorkshire, Kingston-upon-Hull, Kirklees, Leeds, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire, Rotherham, Sheffield, Wakefield, York.

Statistical Reliability

The respondents to the questionnaire are only samples of the total “population”, so we cannot be certain that the figures obtained are exactly those we would have if everybody had been interviewed (the “true” values). However, we can predict the variation between the sample results and the “true” values from a knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results are based and the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95% - that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the “true” value will fall within a specified range. The table below illustrates the predicted ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the “95% confidence interval”.

Size of sample on which survey results is based	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	±	±	±
100 interviews	6	9	10
500 interviews	3	4	4
1,000 interviews	2	3	3
2,469 interviews (<i>Schools Omnibus</i>)	1	2	2

Source: MORI

For example, with a sample of 2,469 where 30% give a particular answer, the chances are 19 in 20 that the “true” value (which would have been obtained if the whole population had been interviewed) will fall within the range of plus or minus 2 percentage points from the sample result.

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be “real”, or it may occur by chance (because not everyone in the population has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one, i.e. if it is “statistically significant”, we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentage giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume “95% confidence interval”, the differences between the two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table overleaf:

Size of sample compared	Differences required for significance at or near these percentage levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
250 and 100	7	11	12
500 and 250	5	7	8
500 and 500	4	6	6
1,000 and 500	3	5	5
1,000 and 1,000	3	4	4
1,500 and 1,000	2	4	4

Source: MORI

Letter to Schools

Name
Address 1
Address 2
Address 3
Postcode

December 2002

Dear

MORI National Schools Omnibus

MORI has been commissioned by a range of public and voluntary sector organisations to undertake a large-scale survey of pupils in compulsory secondary education (aged 11 to 16) throughout England and Wales. The survey will aim to discover what pupils think about a number of educational and social issues, including for example, higher education, careers, the law and criminal offences, and business.

I am writing to ask you for your school's participation in this important survey, due to begin on Wednesday 15th January 2003. Your school is one of 500 randomly selected to produce a nationally representative sample of schools in England and Wales. We aim to keep disruption to the school routine to an absolute minimum by randomly selecting **one class only** to participate in the survey during one school period. During that period a MORI interviewer will attend the class, explain the survey process and hand out a self-completion questionnaire. She/he will be on hand to answer any queries and will then collect the completed questionnaires at the end of the session.

Participation in the survey is completely confidential and your school and pupils will not be revealed to the organisations who have commissioned the survey, nor identified in any analysis.

The survey is due to start on 15th January and continue until 12th March 2003. We are extremely conscious of the heavy demands currently placed on pupils and teachers. We are therefore anxious to stress that **all the administration connected with the survey will be carried out by representatives from MORI.**

A MORI interviewer will be contacting you in the near future and will be able to explain the process to you in more detail. In the meantime, we would be grateful if you could complete the enclosed fax-back reply form to let us know whether or not you would be able to take part in the study.

I should stress that MORI will endeavour not to contact your school again in the current school year.

I very much hope that your school is able to take part in the study. A summary of the findings will be available on the MORI website (www.mori.com/schoolsomnibus) after the survey has been completed. If you have any queries or would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Abbie Nicholas, Helen Shaw, Claire Tyrrell, or myself at MORI on 020 7347 3000.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Stevens', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jane Stevens
Director of Schools Omnibus