

Schools Omnibus 2001 - 2002  
(Wave 8)

A Research Study Among 11-16 Year Olds on  
behalf of  
Sutton Trust

January - March 2002



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# Introduction

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This report presents findings from the 2002 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 county, 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 14 January and 8 March 2002. Of the 250 schools approached, 83 declined to participate at the invitation stage (a letter sent to the headteacher) and a further 59 schools refused to participate during the fieldwork period. In total, 108 schools participated, giving a response rate of 43%. Overall, fully completed questionnaires were obtained from 2,670 pupils, an average of 25 pupils per class.

Data were weighted using a cell weight matrix of gender by age within Government Office Region. The weights for age, sex and region 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 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 so not all differences between sub-groups are statistically significant. A guide to statistical significance is included in this document.

In tables where percentages do not add up to 100% this is 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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# Summary of Findings

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## Likelihood of going into Higher Education

- Two-thirds (68%) of young people say they are likely to go into higher education when they are old enough, including one in three (35%) who say they are *very likely* to do so. Just 11% think it is unlikely, but around one in five young people (17%) have yet to decide either way.
- Unsurprisingly, pupils aged 13 and older, for whom the question is more salient, are more likely to think they will go into higher education than their younger peers.
- Girls are more likely than boys to think they will go into higher education (73% versus 64%).
- Respondents from minority ethnic backgrounds are more certain than white pupils to think they are *very* likely to go on to higher education (41% versus 34%).
- Young people living in two-parent households are more likely to think they will go on to higher education than those who live with one parent (72% versus 58%). Furthermore, respondents from two-parent households are significantly more likely to believe they are *very* likely to go into higher education (37% versus 28%).
- Pupils at grammar schools are more likely to think they will go into higher education than pupils at comprehensive, secondary modern and other types of secondary school.

## Reasons for going into Higher Education

- Decisions about going into higher education are career-driven for the majority of young people surveyed. Over four-fifths (86%) of those who are likely to go into higher education think *a degree would improve my chances of getting a well-paid job*, while 65% say they *need a degree to do the job I am considering*.
- In addition, three in five young people (61%) *like the idea of it* and half (50%) are being encouraged to go into higher education by their family.
- Awareness that a degree might improve their chances of getting a well-paid job, though high amongst younger respondents, increases as respondents mature: 89% of 14-16 year olds identify this as a reason for going into higher education compared with 76% of 11 year olds.

Older pupils are also more likely to identify liking the idea of university, encouragement by their family and teachers, and 'hearing someone from a university talk about higher education and thinking it sounds good' as key influences.

- Younger respondents, on the other hand, are more likely to be thinking about university because their parents went, or because their friends are planning to do so.
- Compared with white pupils, the decision to go into higher education by pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is more likely to be influenced by siblings (23% versus 10%) and friends (33% versus 23%). At the same time, however, these young people are also more likely to believe *people like me are expected to go to university* (37% versus 19%), that they are *clever enough* to do so (44% versus 37%), and to say their family (63% versus 48%) and teachers (26% versus 16%) are encouraging them to do so.
- Pupils in secondary modern schools (29%) are much less likely to be encouraged by their families to go into higher education than pupils in comprehensives (50%), grammar schools (58%) and other types of secondary school (52%).

## Reasons for not going into Higher Education

- Decisions by young people to not go into higher education are also largely career-driven. Over half (55%) of those who are unlikely to go into higher education say they *want to get into a job as soon as possible*, while two in five (42%) say they *do not need a degree to do the job I am considering*.
- Similar proportions do not like the idea of higher education (41%), believe they are not clever enough (39%) or simply do not enjoy learning (36%).
- Again, younger pupils appear to be strongly influenced by the example or expectations of others, with families, friends and teachers all cited as reasons for deciding to not go into higher education. For example, 39% of 11 year olds and 37% of 12 year olds say they are unlikely to go to university because their parents didn't, compared to 21% of 15-16 year olds.



## Sources of information about Higher Education

- Young people's main sources of information about higher education are their parents: 64% have received information from their mum or stepmum and 55% from their dad or stepdad.
- Surprisingly, perhaps, fewer than three in ten young people identify their form tutors or teachers as a source of information about higher education, while fewer than one in ten identify Careers Service careers advisers or university staff. However, the likelihood that young people will seek information from these sources increases as they mature and focus more on their post-school plans. For example, 25% of Year 11 pupils have used a Careers Service careers adviser to access information about higher education compared to seven per cent of Year 9 pupils and four per cent of Year 7s.
- Respondents in two-parent households are more likely to use their dad/stepdad as a source of information than those in single-parent households (61% versus 36%).
- The use of particular sources of information increases the probability that young people will say they are *very likely* to go into higher education, as can be seen in the table below:

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### ***Very likely to go into h.e. by source of information***

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<i>Base: All respondents (2,670)</i>	<i>(%)</i>
All	35
<i>Mum/stepmum</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Dad/stepdad</i>	<i>39</i>
Students from universities	47
Staff from universities	48
Careers Service careers adviser	49
Employer	50
Visiting a university	58
Prospectuses	61

*Source: MORI*

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## Usefulness of sources of information

- Generally speaking, young people are inclined to find all sources of information about higher education *useful* rather than *useless*.
- Cumulatively, young people rate their parents as the most useful (*very plus fairly*) source of information (87% highlight their mum/stepmum and 86% their dad/stepdad).

- However, visiting a university, university staff, Careers Service careers advisers, university students, employers, prospectuses and careers teachers at school are significantly more likely than mums and dads to be described by those who have used these sources as *very useful*.

## Finding out more about Higher Education

- Fewer than one in four young people identified any source of information as one from which they would like to find out more about higher education. Sources most frequently identified were: parents (24% say their mum/stepmum and 20% say their dad/stepdad), careers teachers in schools (18%), and form tutors, the internet and university students (all 13%).
- Girls are more likely than boys to want more information from their mums/stepmums (26% versus 22%), careers teachers (21% versus 15%) and form tutors (16% versus 11%), and university students (17% versus 10%).
- Respondents in two-parent households are more likely than those in one-parent households to want more information from their dads/stepdads (22% versus 13%).
- As pupils mature, their need for more information about higher education from what might be described as more informed sources increases. Thus, pupils in Years 9-11 are significantly more likely than those in Years 7-8 to want more information from their careers teacher at school, their Careers Service careers adviser, university students and prospectuses.

## Additional analyses

Additional analyses were undertaken to explore the relationship, if any, between respondents' ages, the type of school they attend and the nature of their responses. It should be noted that some analyses were based on small sub-groups and thus the findings that emerged should be treated with caution.

## Likelihood of going into higher education

- Sixteen year olds attending Foundation schools are significantly more likely than 16 year olds attending LEA schools to say they are likely (*very + fairly*) to go into higher education (100% versus 63%).
- Eleven year olds attending grammar schools are significantly more likely than 11 year olds attending comprehensive and secondary modern schools to say they are likely (*very + fairly*) to go into higher education (87% versus 64% and 38% respectively). Eleven year olds attending comprehensive schools are significantly more

likely than 11 year olds attending secondary modern schools to say they are likely (*very + fairly*) to go into higher education.

#### Reasons for going into higher education

- Sixteen year olds attending Foundation schools are significantly more likely than 16 year olds attending LEA schools to say they *like the idea of it* (92% versus 63%). They are also more likely to think *a degree would improve my chances of getting a well-paid job* (100% versus 87%).
- Fifteen and 16 year olds attending Foundation schools are significantly more likely than 15 and 16 year olds attending LEA schools to say they *my family are encouraging me* (65% and 75% versus 47% and 45% respectively).

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# Appendices

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## Sample Profile

	Number	Unweighted %	Weighted %
<b>Total</b>	2,670	100	100
<b>Age of Pupils</b>			
11	309	12	19
12	548	21	20
13	491	18	19
14	576	22	18
15	525	20	18
16	221	8	6
<b>Gender of Pupils</b>			
Male	1,308	49	51
Female	1,362	51	49
<b>Type of School Attended</b>			
LEA	1,617	61	61
Foundation	363	14	13
Other Fund Type	690	26	26
Comprehensive	1,801	67	68
Grammar	104	4	3
Secondary Modern	138	5	6
Other Secondary School	627	23	22
Co-educational	2,308	86	89
Boys only	110	4	3
Girl only	252	9	8
<b>Ethnic Origin</b>			
White	2,322	87	88
Black and Ethnic Minorities	332	12	11
<b>Region</b>			
London	229	9	7
South East	597	22	20
South West	255	10	9
North East	120	4	3
North West (incl. Merseyside)	428	16	14
Eastern (incl. Anglia)	197	7	9
East Midlands	248	9	9
West Midlands	252	9	11
Yorkshire & Humberside	270	10	11
Wales	74	3	7
<b>Family Composition</b>			
Both parents in household	2,066	77	78
Single parent in household	521	20	19
Sibling in household	2,255	84	85

*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, Middlesbrough, 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 are based	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	±	±	±
500 interviews	3	4	4
1,000 interviews	2	3	3
2,500 interviews	1	2	2
2,670 interviews ( <i>Schools Omnibus</i> )	1	2	2

*Source: MORI*

For example, with a sample of 2,670 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 below:

Size of sample compared	Differences required for significance at or near these percentage levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
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 2001

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, the law and criminal offences, the use of computers and the Internet.

I am writing to ask you for your school's participation in this important survey, due to begin on Monday 14 January. 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. Results are reported to only show **aggregate** results by school year, gender, size of school, type of school and region.

The survey is due to start on 14 January and continue until 22 February 2002. 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 web site after the survey has been completed. If you have any queries or would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Claire Tyrrell, Renuka Engineer, 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