
Tellus4 National Report

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Introduction

The Department for Children, Schools and Families took over responsibility for the Tellus Survey from Ofsted in 2009 and commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), together with technical partners RM and disability/impairment specialists Triangle, to deliver the Tellus4 Survey on-line between 5 October and 20 November 2009 on the Department's behalf. The survey represents the views of 253,755 children and young people in school years 6, 8 and 10 in 3,699 schools and found the following.

Key findings

- ◆ Most children and young people feel happy about life, have good friends and are positive about their school in terms of giving them useful skills and knowledge, and giving them feedback on their progress.
- ◆ The majority plan to remain in learning and about six out of ten intend to go to university/higher education in future.
- ◆ Although some experience bullying, which is often at least weekly for those who do, most feel that their school deals well with bullying.
- ◆ Many are active both during and after school and at the weekends, particularly boys, and say that they eat some fruit and vegetables typically three to four pieces a day.
- ◆ The majority do not smoke or take drugs and the majority of those who have tried alcohol do not get drunk regularly.
- ◆ Around three out of five children and young people say that they participate in group activities led by an adult and around half are satisfied with parks and play areas.

Background to Tellus4

In consultation with key stakeholders a number of improvements were made to the design and delivery of Tellus4 to increase participation in, and support for, the survey by local authorities, schools and pupils. The aim was to improve the quality of the data the survey produces and to increase confidence in its use.

The changes made included:

- ◆ A dedicated Tellus website www.tellussurvey.org.uk
- ◆ Changing the survey live period from the summer to autumn term

- ◆ Improved access for disabled children and young people and children and young people with special educational needs (SEN)
- ◆ Giving local authorities and schools the option to add questions to personalise the survey to support their own priorities and self-evaluation
- ◆ The provision of materials so schools could deliver Tellus as part of the citizenship curriculum
- ◆ Providing schools with feedback about their own findings for the first time
- ◆ Giving local authorities and schools access to a web-based analytical tool to help with their analysis of their own data.

These changes have been successful in substantially increasing participation. The statistics calculated from Tellus4 and presented in the report are based on 253,755 individual responses received from children and young people in 3,699 schools across 151 local authorities. 11 Services Children Education Schools (SCE) also took part in Tellus4 but their findings are not included in the national sample because they are based in other countries.

The above response represents a substantial improvement in participation from the 2008 Tellus3 survey, which was completed by nearly 150,000 children and young people in just over 3,000 schools from 144 local authorities. The improvements to enhance accessibility for children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities, enabled 5,322 children to participate who might otherwise not have been able to.

Interest in the Tellus survey findings has grown since the survey's inception in 2007, as the measurement of user perceptions has become more widely accepted as a means of supporting improvement planning. Tellus4 has gathered the experiences and views of more than a quarter of a million children and young people about their life, school and local area across the five Every Child Matters outcomes: Be Healthy; Stay Safe; Enjoy and Achieve; Make a Positive Contribution and Achieve Economic Well-being.

What children and young people tell us about their lives and experiences is summarised below under main findings. Comparisons with the 2008 survey are provided where possible.

Research methodology

The Tellus4 survey was undertaken online by 253,755 children and young people in Years 6, 8 and 10 in 3699 primary, secondary and special schools and Pupil Referral Units in the 2009 autumn term.

A representative sample of 40 primary schools, 20 secondary schools, four special schools and two Pupil Referral Units were selected from across each of the 152 English local authorities to take part. Local authorities were also invited to extend this sample if they wished to, to include up to 60 primary schools and all secondary schools. Participating schools were asked to include a randomly selected class (one class of Year 6 pupils, two classes of Year 8 pupils and two classes of Year 10 pupils). Schools were however encouraged to extend this sample to include all pupils in these year groups where possible.

The survey responses were weighted using the following three strata: gender (male/female), year group (Y6, Y8, and Y10) and deprivation using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) (high/low IDACI school). Population data for 2008 from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) was used to derive the weights.

Some of the questions were changed between Tellus3 and Tellus4 and direct comparisons are not possible in every case. This is identified, where appropriate, in the main report.

Main Findings

Physical health

Most children and young people say that they ate some fruit and vegetables the previous day, most commonly three or four pieces, and this is broadly comparable with 2008. Children and young people who eat healthily also tend to be those who say they are active both in and out of school, while those who do not eat fruit and vegetables also tend to say that they are not active.

Boys are more likely than girls to say that they are active in and out of school, including at weekends. This is particularly the case at break times and lunch times in school when boys are more likely to say that they often do something active.

Emotional health

Most children and young people have relationships in their lives which support them – they say that they can talk to a parent or carer, their friends or to another adult when they are worried. More than eight out of ten have at least one person they could talk to. But about one in five children and young people feel they cannot discuss their worries with their parent or carer or do not know whether they can. Overall, children and young people who say that they are disabled are less likely to say that they are happy, and are less likely to say that they have support from their peers and parents.

Information: being healthy

Most young people (Years 8 and 10) say they have received information about a range of aspects relating to being healthy and had generally find it useful. However, about one in ten children and young people state that more advice about being healthy is one of three most important issues that would improve their life and about a quarter of children and young people say that they worry about being healthy. Generally, young people in Year 8 are more likely to find the health advice they have received in school helpful, compared to those in Year 10.

Drinking, smoking and drugs

About half of children and young people say they have never had a whole alcoholic drink, with about two in five reporting that they have. Getting drunk regularly does not appear to be the experience of the majority of children and young people but almost one in ten of all respondents say that they have been drunk at least twice in the previous four weeks.

Smoking is not widespread among children and young people but, as is the case with alcohol consumption, it increases with age. About nine out of ten Year 6 children say they have never smoked, compared to about six out of ten young people in Year 10. About one in ten young people (in Years 8 and 10) say they have taken drugs, but only a very small proportion say they often use drugs.

Bullying

Bullying is a problem for many children and young people as just under half say that they have been bullied at school at some point in their lives and about one in five say that they have been bullied at some point when not in school. For just over half of those who were bullied in school, this had occurred in the last year and almost one in five say that the bullying had occurred within the last four weeks. Of those who have been bullied outside school, about two-thirds say this was in the last year and one in four say that the bullying had occurred within the last four weeks.

Bullying inside and outside of school, for those who experience it, is often frequent. For about two-fifths of the children and young people who say they were bullied in school in the last year, the bullying occurred regularly (at least weekly). About one-third of those who say that they were bullied outside of school in the last year say this occurred regularly (at least weekly).

Most children and young people think that their school deals well with bullying and this figure has

increased noticeably since 2008 to almost three in five children and young people.

Staying safe in the local area

About nine out of ten children and young people say that they feel safe in school and feel safe on their way to and from school. Slightly fewer, but still a majority, eight out of ten, feel safe in the area where they live.

Views of school and learning

Children and young people's responses show that they are generally positive in terms of their school giving them useful skills, knowledge and feedback on their progress. Satisfaction with school, however, tends to decrease as children and young people get older. Equally, their responses show that children and young people increasingly worry about school work and exams as they get older.

Satisfaction with parks and play areas

Just over half of children and young people say that parks and play areas are good or very good and there is an increase in the percentage who say this in 2009, compared to 2008. Older young people are less satisfied with parks and play areas than their younger peers although they are as likely to say that they have used them in the last four weeks.

Participation in activities

Three in five children and young people say that they have recently participated in a group activity led by an adult outside of school lessons and this is similar to 2008.

Children and young people who are in Year 10, those who say they receive free school meals, and those who describe themselves as Asian / Asian British are less likely to say that they have participated in activities (either structured or unstructured) than all children and young people.

Young people who had participated in positive activities (structured activities led by an adult) in the previous four weeks were less likely to have been drunk within the same four week period or to have ever taken drugs. Additionally, a greater proportion of Year 10s who had been involved in general unstructured activities (such as going to a park or playground) used illicit substances, compared to those who had not been involved in general unstructured activities.

Young people gave mixed views about the quality and quantity of activities available for young people on Friday and Saturday nights. While two-fifths say that there are safe places to do activities on Friday and Saturday nights, only about a quarter say that there is a good choice of activities and a similar proportion say there are enough activities.

About two in five children and young people say that there are no barriers preventing them from participating in activities. Where they do say that there are barriers, the most frequently identified (by about a quarter of children and young people) are that the activities they want are not available in their area and that activities are too expensive.

Being listened to

Children and young people have mixed views about whether their ideas are listened to when they give them to a school council or by other means. While about a third feel that their views are listened to at least a little, a similar proportion say that their views are not listened to very much or at all and around a further quarter say that they have not given their ideas.

Whether young people say that they have been consulted was similar in 2008 and 2009. Questionnaires are the most common form of consultation with young people, but about a quarter report no involvement in consultation within the last year at all.

Planning for the future

About half of the children in Year 6 plan to continue in learning at college or sixth form after the end of Year 11, compared to almost two-thirds in Years 8 and 10. Across all three year groups, about six in ten children and young people think that they will go to university/higher education in the future compared to one in ten who say that they will not. In planning for the future, children and young people feel their family, friends and teachers provide the most help. Connexions Personal Advisers had been helpful to about one in five children in Year 6 and about one in four young people in Years 8 and 10.

Additional information

The full report (DCSF-RR218) can be accessed at www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/

Further information about this research can be obtained from Alison Thompson (email Alison.Thompson@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk).

The views expressed are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Children, Schools and Families.