"Teenage girls' self esteem is more than skin-deep…"

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

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DEMOS

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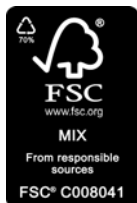
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Executive summary

Girls are significantly more successful than boys in making the transition to adulthood and their outcomes, especially in education and youth offending, reflect this. Girls do better in their exams, more of them go to university and, for the first time, women aged 22–29 have closed the gender pay gap, with young women getting paid 2.1 per cent more than their male peers.[1]

But alongside this success, British teenage girls experience worse rates of binge drinking, worse levels of physical inactivity and more frequent incidences of teen pregnancy than their European counterparts. In the course of this research, we found evidence that twice as many teenage girls as teenage boys suffer from 'teen angst'.

This generation of teenagers faces a more difficult environment in which to make that transition, especially in relation to the present labour market and to new technology, particularly online social networking via internet-enabled mobile phones.

There is currently a policy vacuum for teenagers in general and teenage girls in particular. This generation of teenagers is also being significantly affected by policy decisions as a result of the Coalition Government's deficit reduction plan.

A series of campaigns and reports have helped focus the spotlight on issues affecting girls. The Campaign for Body Confidence, *Cosmopolitan* magazine's Generation Angry Taskforce and reviews on the impact of the commercial world on children's wellbeing (by Professor David Buckingham), on the sexualisation of young people (by Dr Linda Papadopoulos), on child safety in a digital world (by Professor Tanya Byron) and on the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood (by the Mothers' Union Chief Executive, Reg Bailey) show the growing concern with the experiences of young women.[2]

This is coupled with recent criticisms of schools failing to help girls escape career stereotypes by Ofsted[3] and a warning from the Director of Public Prosecutions, Kier Starmer, that teen girls are now the group most at risk of domestic violence.[4]

The Coalition's youth strategy, due later this year, must address the growing calls for action to support young women and girls.

As part of this report, Demos commissioned original polling with 16–19-year-old girls, which finds:

· More teenage girls are unhappy compared with last year.
· Teenage girls from lower socioeconomic groups are less happy than those from higher socioeconomic groups.
· Teenage girls from lower socioeconomic groups are less happy than they were last year.
· One in five teenage girls is suffering particularly severe angst, with money their main concern.
· Teenage girls are more worried about getting a job than doing well in exams.
· Older teenage girls think experience, rather than qualifications, will get them the job they want.
· Teenage girls are more confident about how others judge their character and personality than how they look.
· Teenage girls like dressing up but don't think being attractive helps them get on in life.
· Teenage girls want more money to spend and a better boyfriend.
· Teenage girls prefer friends to family to cheer them up.
· Teenage girls don't want to be stay-at-home mums.
· Teenage girls are closest to their mums but friends are also important.
· Mothers are teenage girls' most trusted source of health advice.
· Teenage girls choose to spend time with friends rather than with family.
· Teenage girls value the phone in their bag and the computers in their room more than anything else.
· Teenage girls overwhelmingly use the internet to social network.

Our recommendations are focused on empowering young women and ensuring they receive the education, support and guidance they require to make a successful transition to adulthood. They are based on tackling poverty, supporting parents and improving teenage girls' relationships with their peers, mitigating the negative effects of peer influence.

We recommend that poverty is tackled by:

- reducing child poverty year-on-year and meeting the 2020 target prioritising tackling youth unemployment, through either a more adequate replacement to the Future Jobs Fund or tax incentives for employers to hire young people who are long-term unemployed
- reinstating reading and numeracy recovery programmes
- continuing the successful 'hot spot' strategy to target teenage pregnancy

We recommend that parents are supported by:

- maintaining Sure Start on the principle of progressive universalism
- focusing support services on parents whose children reach key transitions: from primary to secondary school and from school to work or further education
- extending parental leave and flexible working
- prioritising holistic early years and primary school interventions that build social and emotional resilience and improve literacy and numeracy
- meeting step-parents' needs through tailored support services

We recommend that girls are supported to build positive relationships with their peers and that the negative effects of peer influence are mitigated by:

- promoting and protecting extracurricular activities
- extending opportunities for teenage girls to undertake physical activity

- supporting women-only and social-networked advice and guidance services
- boosting careers advice and work experience
- improving messages around alcohol
- focusing on media literacy rather than labelling

1   Self-esteem

Introduction

Growing up and making the transition to adulthood can be a traumatic experience for teenagers and their families. In wider society, moral panic about the wellbeing of teenagers has always been a feature of social and political commentary – in no small part because of a poor understanding of the relationship between externalising behaviours and emotional development.

The observable physical changes that form a crucial part of adolescent development often encourage society to view teenagers in a new light and to place a more adult set of expectations on them about their ability to control their behaviour and take responsibility for their actions. Yet the neurological developments that actually enable adult thought processes and adult behaviours such as reasoning, self-control and regulation of emotions take much longer to develop – usually not until young people are well into their 20s. Because of this, there is a concentration of behavioural problems (crime and antisocial behaviour, bullying and disengagement from education) among young people aged between 14 and 19. No wonder, then, that there is a perennial belief that youth are in crisis.

But there is some evidence that, in the UK at least, the sense of unease about teenage wellbeing is greater than ever, in the context of growing youth unemployment and changing social context in which youth culture – revolving as it does around technology and new media – increasingly confounds adults.

At the heart of such debates is a concern about self-esteem and the extent to which our teenagers are more or less happy than in the past. The Coalition Government, led by David Cameron and Nick Clegg, has indicated that it is concerned about teenage girls in particular, and the way in which

advertising, consumerism and wider culture impacts on their sense of self and emotional health – something we explore later.

Whether or not this signals a change in direction for the role of the state in 'protecting' or intervening in the teenage years, there is a clear need to review the evidence and come to a contemporary understanding of how self-esteem and wellbeing are developed and maintained, and what role different institutions and influences play in their development.

This report explores what it is to be a teenage girl in Britain today and how it feels to be one. We ask what role self-esteem plays, how self-esteem is generated and what impact self-esteem has on how 'successful' teenage girls are in their transition to adulthood.

Throughout, we take a critical look at evidence from academic researchers and challenge public policy makers to consider the needs of this often misunderstood and ignored group. In the first chapter, we consider the current policy context. We then explore academic research into self-esteem. Finally, we look at what reliable evidence exists on the state of self-esteem for the five and a half million teenagers who live in the UK today and ask whether it is getting harder or easier to be a teenage girl.

Policy context

The last Labour Government (1997–2010) was highly active in developing and discussing an interventionist youth policy. From the creation of a national Sure Start network, the Every Child Matters programme and the Extended Schools Agenda, to ASBOs, behaviour orders, parenting contracts and parenting orders, minsters were clear that the state had an active role to play in providing services and ensuring appropriate interventions when the parenting of children went wrong.

Early years intervention was an attempt to get ahead of the problem of children going 'off the rails'. The Respect Agenda was an attempt to deal with antisocial behaviour and get troubled teens back on track. As well as wielding the power of the state's 'stick', the Government also saw its role as providing

teenagers with 'carrots' – like an entitlement to five hours a week of sport in schools and piloting a culture offer for creative activity through the Find Your Talent scheme. The culmination of the Labour Government's efforts to engage with teenage angst and smooth the transition of youth to adulthood was the creation of the Department for Children, Schools and Families, with its 2007 mission statement for active intervention: The Children's Plan.[5]

At the end of its time in office, the Labour Government had commissioned reviews on the impact of the commercial world on children's wellbeing (by Professor David Buckingham), on the sexualisation of young people (by Dr Linda Papadopoulos) and on child safety in a digital world (by Professor Tanya Byron).[6] In opposition, David Cameron pursued this agenda in speeches warning of the dangers of 'inappropriate sexualisation of children'.[7]

Since the last election, youth policy has been shaped by the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government. There is a slight divergence between LibDem and Tory approaches. The Conservatives have signalled a change in focus of their youth agenda, to employability and economic wellbeing, rather than emotional concerns. The Department for Children, Schools and Families has been renamed the Department for Education and has been refocused, under the leadership of Conservative Secretary of State Michael Gove, on the reform of school structures (including the extension of academy status to well-performing schools and the formation of new free schools) and on a reform of the secondary curriculum to create an English Baccalaureate that places more emphasis on history and languages.

The Government's flagship policy offer for disadvantaged young people is the pupil premium, a funding mechanism to give extra funding to schools depending on the number of children eligible for free school meals. This policy has been welcomed by teachers, although there are concerns that the funding will not always reach the children who need it and will struggle to bridge the gap left by cuts to school funding overall.[8] But there is another discernable strand emerging in the

Government's approach: in March 2011 Conservative Children's Minister Tim Laughton committed the Government to consult on a new youth strategy to be published this summer.[9]

Meanwhile, the Liberal Democrats have been engaged in a number of reviews of youth wellbeing, led by Nick Clegg's children and families taskforce. Most notable of these is the work by Liberal Democrat Children's Minister Sarah Teather and Liberal Democrat Equalities Minister Lynne Featherstone. Featherstone recently said that 'the constant pressure to look impossibly perfect, be like skinny celebrities and conform to imposed stereotypes is creating a rising tide of low self-esteem, depression and anxiety among young girls'.[10] The extent to which there is evidence to support the contention that there is 'a rising tide of low self-esteem', and that 'constant pressure to look impossibly perfect, be like skinny celebrities and conform to imposed stereotypes' is creating it, is a key question for our study.

Children's Minister Sarah Teather has been more measured in her comments and in December 2010 announced another review into the sexualisation and commercialisation of childhood by Reg Bailey, chief executive of the Mothers' Union.[11] Recommendations are expected in May 2011 and this report has been submitted as evidence.

Although it is too early to judge how far these various agendas will go in formulating a new youth policy, the Government has also ordered the Office for National Statistics to develop new measures of national wellbeing.[12] The so-called 'happiness agenda' is a government attempt to quantify non-material measures of wellbeing and is relevant to our assessment of self-esteem among teenage girls. This report has been submitted as evidence and we hope to see this review contribute to closing some of the data gaps we identify.

And while there is certainly the potential for a new agenda, the current state of youth policy leads us to conclude that there is currently a policy vacuum in the UK, with the Government waiting for the outcome of several reviews while proceeding with a deficit reduction plan. Recent evidence from the Local Government Association suggests that children's services and youth clubs are now receiving the biggest cuts,[13] following the

local government finance settlement freezing council tax and cutting the central government grant. Young people are also being affected by changes to student financing, such as the abolition of the Educational Maintenance Allowance and the trebling of the cap on university tuition fees. Most significantly, they also face rising youth unemployment and the abolition of the Future Jobs Fund. We will explore the new landscape faced by UK teenagers in more detail in chapter 2.

The academic context

Within this policy context, it is worth considering the most recent and robust academic evidence to see whether it is informing present policy.

Starting from first principles, academics define 'self-esteem' in numerous ways, and measure it using a variety of different scales and measuring techniques. Consequently, considerable variation is apparent in academic literature emanating from different disciplines and significant gaps in data exist.

A key question is whether self-esteem causes positive behaviour or if it is generated by positive outcomes. Researchers who undertook meta-analysis concluded that 'the design of much, perhaps most, published research means it cannot show whether self-esteem has a causal influence on behaviour patterns'.[14] As with much social science research, in the absence of causal data we are left to interpret correlations and recommend policy solutions based on a wider understanding of what works in social policy.

Self-esteem is often measured via snapshot self-reporting questionnaires. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the 'most informative evidence [on self-esteem] comes from longitudinal studies, following the same individuals over time'.[15]

Social psychologists Baumeister et al evaluating the concept explain:

Self-esteem is literally defined by how much value people place on themselves. It is the evaluative component of self knowledge. High self-esteem refers to a highly favorable global evaluation of the self. Low self-

esteem, by definition, refers to an unfavorable definition of the self. Whether this signifies an absolutely unfavorable or relatively unfavorable evaluation is a problematic distinction… Self-esteem does not carry any definitional requirement of accuracy whatsoever. Thus, high self-esteem may refer to an accurate, justified, balanced appreciation of one's worth as a person and one's successes and competencies, but it can also refer to an inflated, arrogant, grandiose, unwarranted sense of conceited superiority over others. By the same token, low self-esteem can be either an accurate, well-founded understanding of one's shortcomings as a person or a distorted, even pathological sense of insecurity and inferiority. Self-esteem is thus perception rather than reality. It refers to a person's belief about whether he or she is intelligent and attractive, for example, and it does not necessarily say anything about whether the person actually is intelligent and attractive. To show that self-esteem is itself important, then, research would have to demonstrate that people's beliefs about themselves have important consequences regardless of what the underlying realities are. Put more simply, there would have to be benefits that derive from believing that one is intelligent, regardless of whether one actually is intelligent.[16]

This is an important distinction because it demands that we question both whether self-esteem is a good thing and whether it is caused or created.

For instance, an over-inflated sense of self-esteem might lead teenagers to overreach themselves, suffering failure or putting themselves into harm's way. Equally, a lack of self-esteem might cause teenagers to hold themselves back or refuse to consider opportunities they felt were beyond their achievement.

So should our aim be to instill in teenagers an 'accurate' level of self-esteem? Or perhaps we should hope that teenagers will develop a 'moderate' level of self-esteem, so they might not get 'too big for their boots'?

Leaving aside for a moment the question of whether self-esteem can be affected by public policy initiatives or whether it is generated by a complex interaction of external interactions, is self-esteem a good thing, in and of itself? There is research to suggest that there are correlations between low self-esteem and suicide, depression, eating disorders and teenage pregnancy but there is no reliable research that suggests that the

relationship is causal.[17] Certainly, a lack of self-esteem seems to be a risk factor.

Research in the USA questioned whether there was any evidence of a causal link between low self-esteem and outcomes in areas such as violence, substance abuse and academic performance. Researchers concluded that there are indeed: 'some indications that self-esteem is a helpful attribute. It improves persistence in the face of failure. And individuals with high self-esteem sometimes perform better in groups than do those with low self-esteem.'[18]

Baumeister et al also conclude that self-esteem is helpful but point out the downsides too. They argue:

The benefits of high self-esteem can be tentatively summarized in terms of two main themes… First, high self-esteem appears to operate as a stock of positive feelings that can be a valuable resource under some conditions. In the face of failure or stress, people with high self-esteem seem able to bounce back better than people with low self-esteem… People with low self-esteem lack this stock of good feelings and as a result are more vulnerable. Second, high self-esteem appears linked to greater initiative. We suggested that people with high self-esteem are more prone to both prosocial and antisocial actions (e.g., both bullying and defending victims against bullies), compared with people with low self-esteem. They initiate interactions and relationships (and perhaps exit them, too). They speak up in groups. They experiment with sex and perhaps drugs. They try harder in response to initial failure, but they are also willing to switch to a new line of endeavor if the present one seems unpromising.[19]

So self-esteem can be useful for teenagers but can also be associated with behaviours that might endanger themselves and others. Resilience and initiative are two qualities that we might seek to encourage in teenagers but evidence suggests that self-esteem might be a prerequisite for involvement in bullying, drug taking and early sexual activity.

Other authoritative evidence from the UK suggests that self-esteem is an increasingly important 'soft' – or 'non-cognition' skill as they are known in psychology – that is linked to other personal and social skills that are becoming increasingly

important in the labour market.[20] Research shows a link between self-esteem and locus of control and demonstrates the importance of these to young people's ability to develop the soft skills that employers increasingly demand, like networking and teamwork. They also show that low locus of control correlates with involvement in antisocial behaviour.

Even if self-esteem is good for your teenager, is it good for others? Baumeister et al warned that 'self-esteem confers some benefits on the self, including feeling quite good, while its costs accrue to others. Having a firm sense of privileged superiority over everyone else may well be a pleasant, rewarding state, but having to live or work with someone who holds such an inflated self-view may have its drawbacks.'[21] That said, many parents worry about the self-esteem of their children and find a teenager who lacks self-esteem is also difficult to live with.

Baumeister et al conclude:

Raising self-esteem will not by itself make young people perform better in school, obey the law, stay out of trouble, get along better with their fellows, or respect the rights of others, among many other desirable outcomes. However, it does seem appropriate to try to boost people's self-esteem as a reward for ethical behavior and worthy achievements.[22]

So in public policy terms, self-esteem in teenagers is perhaps best used as a shorthand term to describe the experience of wellbeing and happiness during the transition to adulthood. While self-esteem is almost certainly helpful in achieving a successful transition to adulthood, it does not ensure it.

Gender differences in self-esteem

Self-esteem seems to manifest differently in boys and girls. Regardless of the level of self-esteem between genders (which we examine in the next section), the factors contributing to self-esteem and the ways in which teenagers assess and express it differs.

Evidence suggests that the gender difference between male and female self-esteem may be related to the increased

importance girls place on body image and peer relationships.[23] More recent evidence from the UK, which we explore in greater depth below, suggests that family relationships are also more significant for girls.[24]

Thomas and Daubman find that girls' self-esteem was significantly lower than boys' self-esteem and that girls rated their relationships as stronger, more interpersonally rewarding, and more stressful than boys did.[25] They suggest that because girls are socialised to value relationships more than boys, and to use these relationships to define themselves, friendship quality may affect the self-esteem of girls more than boys. They cite evidence that the quality of peer relationships in general predicts self-esteem in adolescent girls, but not boys.

Thomas and Daubman also cite extensive research showing that girls and women consistently report greater dissatisfaction with their appearance than do boys and men and highlight evidence demonstrating a larger correlation between perceptions of physical attractiveness and self-esteem in females than in males.

Research suggests that the divergence between boys and girls in their satisfaction with their own physical attractiveness could be caused by the different way that boys' and girls' bodies change during maturation for boys and girls. As Thomas and Daubman put it: 'during puberty, boys develop more muscle and move closer to the ideal masculine body. Girls, on the other hand, gain fat, moving them further from the socially constructed ideal of female beauty.'[26] Studies with twins in Finland also support these findings.[27]

Although the relationship between self-esteem and body image, appearance, and attractiveness has been well examined, few, if any, studies have been able to demonstrate a causal link between the two.[28]

This evidence gap has led researchers to conclude:

Much attention has been given to the impact of appearance on self-esteem and strong claims have been made about its effects among adolescents. The evidence, however, does not unequivocally support these claims. It does show clearly that self-esteem is related to beliefs about appearance. Yet it does not

rule out the plausible conclusion that these beliefs are themselves substantially determined by self-esteem.[29]

Others concur that 'the actual causal direction of the relationship between body dissatisfaction and self-esteem remains unclear for all age cohorts'.[30]

With such difficulty in directly attributing causation to varying levels of self-esteem, we need to dig deeper and wider in the quest for understanding what contributes to self-esteem. This report takes pains to move away from the easy answers suggested by some research that links body image and self-esteem. Instead, we attempt to take a more granulated approach to shed light on other potential contributing factors.

We begin by assessing the evidence of the extent to which self-esteem for teenage girls in the UK is substantively different from that for teenagers in other developed countries and from younger girls and older young women in the UK.

How much worse is the self-esteem of teenage girls in the UK?

Despite what we might sometimes think, the most recent data show that, overall, young people in the UK are generally satisfied with their lives: 70 per cent of 11–15-year-olds rate themselves as 'happy or very happy'.[31] Polling of 7–21-year-old girls in the UK shows that a third (34 per cent) claim to be 'very happy' most of the time and more than half (53 per cent) say they are 'quite happy' most of the time.[32]

Despite this, the UK is ranked at the bottom of Unicef's global index of young people's own subjective sense of wellbeing.[33] While teenagers in the UK might seem happy, there are strong grounds to judge them as the least happy teenagers in the developed world.

International evidence consistently shows that girls have marginally lower levels of self-esteem than boys, throughout their teenage years. Indeed, the distinction can be clearly seen in each of the limited number of datasets available from the UK.

Polling of children and young people in the UK reveals marked differences in the self-reported happiness and self-perceived sense of confidence that teenage boys and girls report.[34] There is strong evidence that teenage girls in the UK worry more than teenage boys.

Girls consistently report feeling sad and stressed more often than boys. Girls worry more about future employment,[35] report that they have been losing confidence in themselves[36] and that they have at one time found it 'difficult to cope'.[37]

Almost a third (27 per cent) of female 16–25-year-olds said they feel 'sad', compared with less than one in ten (9 per cent) of young men who feel 'sad'.[38] It is perhaps not surprising that young women are more able to express their emotions but a significantly higher proportion of female respondents than male respondents also said they worried about their future employment and felt 'stressed always'. Almost half of female 16–25-year-olds (45 per cent) said they felt 'stressed often', suggesting a significantly greater degree of angst among young women.

Girls become less happy as they age through their teenage years

Polling of 7–21-year-old girls in the UK shows that happiness declines as girls get older.[39] More than half of 7–8-year-olds (54 per cent) say they are 'very happy' most of the time. But just over one in five (21 per cent) 16–18-year-olds and less than one in five 19–21-year-olds say they are 'very happy' most of the time.

The same poll shows that unhappiness also grows with age, with just 4 per cent of 9–10-year-olds saying they are 'not very happy' most of the time compared with three times as many 16–18-year-olds (14 per cent) saying they are 'not very happy' most of the time. Most worrying is the 5 per cent of 19–21-year-olds who say they are 'not at all happy', almost twice as many as in any other age group.

Other evidence confirms that self-esteem is lowest among teenage females compared with younger and older age groups.[40] Evidence suggests that the widest gap between men and women's self-esteem is also to be found in the late teens.[41]

Twice as many teenage girls are suffering 'teen angst' as boys

Larger datasets also support this polling evidence.[42] For the first time, Demos analysis reveals the extent to which the self-esteem of teenagers in the UK differs between girls and boys.

For each measure, a significantly higher proportion of teenage girls aged 14–15 report feeling 'worthless', 'unhappy or depressed' or 'low in confidence', compared with male respondents.

The proportion of teenage girls (16 per cent) reporting feeling worthless 'rather more than usual' and 'much more than usual' was twice the number of teenage boys (7 per cent).

Most strikingly, almost a third (30 per cent) of girls report feeling 'unhappy and depressed' 'rather more than usual' and 'much more than usual'. This was also twice as much as boys (15 per cent).

More than a fifth (23 per cent) of teenage girls report that they have been losing confidence in themselves 'rather more than usual' and 'much more than usual', compared with just over one in ten (12 per cent) teenage boys.

Why is the self-esteem of teenage girls lower than boys?

Why is this? Can it be because of 'the constant pressure to look impossibly perfect, be like skinny celebrities and conform to imposed stereotypes', as Equalities Minister Lynne Featherstone has recently suggested? Or could it be that during puberty boys move closer to the ideal masculine body, while girls move further from the socially constructed ideal of female beauty, as academic researchers suggest?

Alternatively, rather than self-esteem relating to self-perception of body image, could it be that a mix of social and cultural factors is making girls more anxious and more unhappy?

Polling evidence suggests that, overall, women in the UK consider the following qualities as 'important attributes in making a woman beautiful':

· 'happiness'
· 'kindness'

· 'confidence'
· 'dignity'
· 'humor'
· 'intelligence'
· 'wisdom'[43]

These seven qualities all scored higher than 'appearance of skin', 'overall physical appearance' and 'facial appearance'.

But when comparing responses from women who are more satisfied with their own beauty against those who are less satisfied, researchers found that women who are more satisfied are significantly more likely to rate non-physical factors as important attributes. In comparison, women who are less satisfied with their beauty are significantly more likely than those who are more satisfied with their beauty to think that makeup and cosmetics make a woman beautiful.

Polling of teenage girls shows that almost half (47 per cent) of girls aged 7–21 feel that 'pressure to look attractive' is a disadvantage of being a girl.[44] But slightly more (52 per cent) feel that 'girls are expected to cook and clean' is a worse disadvantage and the worst disadvantage is 'periods, body changes, pains of being pregnant and giving birth' (67 per cent).

An in-depth analysis of the answers given by different age groups also casts doubt on the importance of the pressure to look attractive. The youngest girls in the sample (aged 7–8) are more disappointed by their perception that 'girls have less chance to play sports and games than boys do'. This concern is expressed by a quarter (25 per cent) of girls compared with just over one in ten (11 per cent) who feel 'pressure to look attractive' is a disadvantage.

Slightly older girls (aged 9–10) rate the 'pressure to look attractive' as the fifth disadvantage of being a girl, with 40 per cent rating 'girls have less chance to play sports and games than boys do' and almost a third (30 per cent) rating 'girls are expected to be mature and responsible' as bigger disadvantages than the 'pressure to look attractive'.

For older teenage girls (16–18-year-olds) the 'pressure to look attractive' is certainly felt most acutely, with 76 per cent

picking it as a disadvantage of being a girl/woman, but even among this age group it is not the top answer and the concern declines in the next age group (rated by 69 per cent of 19–21-year-olds).

The same girls (16–18-year-olds) are most likely to disagree (36 per cent) that 'girls and young women are portrayed fairly in the media' but even among this age group, just as many (36 per cent) 'neither agree nor disagree' that 'girls and young women are portrayed fairly in the media'. Overall, slightly more girls and young women (11–21-year-olds) agree that they are 'portrayed fairly in the media'.

When asked what 'qualities make someone a good role model' just one in four (26 per cent) of all age groups (7–21-year-olds) picked 'attractive'. This was the ninth most popular answer (only 'young', 'famous', 'married' and 'rich' scored lower). The top answer was 'helps others' (61 per cent), which actually scored highest among older age groups (16–19-year-olds and 19–21-year-olds). Other highly scoring qualities were 'brave/courageous' (59 per cent) and 'clever' (58 per cent), with 'overcoming hard times' rating higher for older age groups (16–19-year-olds and 19–21-year-olds).

When asked what helps girls 'be successful in life', less than a third (29 per cent) of 7–21-year-olds picked 'being attractive'. Again, this was the ninth most popular answer, with 'being famous' scoring the lowest among every age group older than 11.

So if the self-esteem of girls, teenagers and young women is affected by 'the constant pressure to look impossibly perfect [and] be like skinny celebrities', they do not seem aware of it, or they are not willing to admit they are conscious of it. They do, however, seem to object to 'imposed stereotypes' but these relate to 'cooking and cleaning' and 'the chance to play sports', rather than 'being attractive'. So what other factors might explain the difference in the self-esteem of teenage girls and boys?

The majority of teenage girls rank relationships with family and friends as most important to their overall happiness.[45] Of less importance to them, though still of concern, are their state of mind, money, physical health, accommodation, qualifications and community. The majority of female respondents rank

relationships with family (63 per cent) significantly higher than those with friends (51 per cent), but this was reversed for male respondents (49 per cent and 55 per cent respectively). This suggests that teenage girls may be more family oriented than teenage boys and that their self-esteem may be more influenced by family, rather than by friends. Family certainly seems more influential for girls than for boys.

The self-esteem of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) is of particular concern. Young people who are NEETs are almost twice as likely as those in work or education to lack a sense of belonging in life. More than a third of NEETs (37 per cent) lack a sense of identity, and this figure rises to nearly half (47 per cent) for those out of work a year or longer. More than a third of unemployed young people (34 per cent) feel isolated all or most of the time, increasing to 45 per cent for those who have been out of work for a year or longer. Almost half of young people not in work (48 per cent) claim that unemployment has caused problems including self-harm, insomnia, self-loathing and panic attacks. Young people are twice as likely to self-harm or suffer panic attacks when they have been unemployed for a year.[46]

This is even more concerning because the number of young people in England who are not in education, work or training is at a record high at almost one million young people – more than 15 per cent of 16–24-year-olds. Around one in ten 16–18-year-olds are NEET.[47] Internationally, the UK is at the bottom of the league table, with only four European Union nations having more.[48] NEETs are four times more likely to live in a household where no adults are working but half of female NEETs are looking after a family, usually as a result of teen pregnancy (compared with only 3 per cent of males).[49] The prevalence of UK teenage pregnancy and young women's employment prospects are considered further in chapter 2.

From polling and survey data, notable differences among girls of different ethnic backgrounds and among girls from different socioeconomic backgrounds emerge, particularly in attitudes towards the family, household responsibilities, relationships and marriage, and education and future plans.[50]

Other contributing factors highlighted in research include relationships with parents and parenting style,[51] peer group interaction,[52] and the experience of individual success or failure.[53] The breadth of factors relating to and affecting self-esteem, as well as the contention arising out of some of these claims, indicates the need for caution, rigour and an evidence-based approach to our conclusions. In chapter 4, we consider the likely drivers of self-esteem and draw conclusions and recommendations for policy makers.

Too much academic research on the self-esteem of teenage girls has been based on single snapshot experiments with American undergraduates and led to casual conclusions based on simple correlations. The 1980s and 1990s was dominated by academic social psychology and media studies research that sought to find connections between teenage angst and teenage media exposure. In chapter 3 we critique this body of evidence and question the extent to which media images can influence self-esteem.

In the UK, teenagers in general and teenage girls in particular are an under-represented group in rigorous research studies. This has led to a data gap and has no doubt contributed to the present public policy vacuum. There is a clear need for more longitudinal studies, in order to fully capture how self-esteem and other contributing factors change over time – a conclusion supported by previous researchers.[54]

With limited resources at our disposal, we have sought to build on existing data and plug some of the gaps by exploring the inter-relationship between self-esteem, childhood happiness and wellbeing. We commissioned original polling of older UK teenagers (aged 16–19), undertaken by YouGov, in order to better understand their experience of their teenage years and to assess what they value and what they fear. In chapter 4 we analyse our results.

It is clear there is more to varying levels of self-esteem than gender difference alone; the happiness, wellbeing and self-esteem of UK teenagers is interlinked with the extent to which they are making a successful transition to adulthood.

Every generation of teenagers is more technologically savvy than the last. But technological progress, growing affordability, media fragmentation, the accessibility of the internet and the penetration of internet-enabled mobile devices (including laptops, iphones and other smartphones) has substantively changed the modern teenage experience and the contemporary transition to adulthood.

In the next chapter we look in detail at UK data to try and develop a picture of what life is like for teenage girls living in Britain in 2011. We consider whether the current generation of teenagers is having a more difficult time than previous generations and whether being a teenager today is substantively more difficult than it was in the past, or whether this generation is wallowing in an unjustifiable teenage angst.

2 UK trends and the relationship between self-esteem and outcomes for teenagers

Introduction

It has become fashionable to talk about the economic and social wellbeing of the current generation of young people as being inferior to that of teenagers in the past. Several recent publications such as David Willetts' *The Pinch* and the much publicised *The Jilted Generation* paint a picture of today's teenagers as burdened by the behaviour of previous generations and suffering the ill effects of an ageing society, sluggish labour market and climate change.[55] Commentators also point to the changing social context – technological developments and more prolific advertising – to claim that life is much worse for today's young people.

Such claims form the backdrop to the analysis in this chapter: is it harder to be a teenager in Britain today than it was in the past or are those in this generation of teenagers the lucky ones? Does low self-esteem hold teenagers back? And if teenage girls in Britain are suffering lower self-esteem than teenage boys, is it stopping them from achieving, avoiding problems and succeeding in their lives?

In this chapter, we look at the following areas, as they relate to teenagers in the UK and their transition to adulthood:

· educational attainment
· jobs and the labour market
· graduate unemployment
· career aspirations
· teenage pregnancy and caring responsibilities
· child poverty and social mobility
· spending money and possessions
· bullying and criminal antisocial behaviour

· suicide, self-harm and mental health
· alcohol abuse, smoking and drug use
· physical health

We attempt to evaluate the significance and prevalence of these issues and consider whether things are getting better or worse. We also consider evidence that shows causal links and significant correlations with self-esteem.

In general, we conclude that girls are significantly more successful than boys in making the transition to adulthood and that, in aggregate, their outcomes are significantly better than boys across the board. We also find little to link self-esteem as a causal driver in the negative outcomes girls suffer. Instead we find parental poverty and the influence of poor parenting to be a far more significant driving force, something we explore in greater detail in chapter 5. The exceptions are non-violent bullying, mental and physical health, teenage pregnancy and caring responsibility, where girls seem to suffer in a significantly different way to boys.

Overall, we find that the current generation of teenagers faces a far more uncertain future than previous generations, with job prospects in particular the worst they have been for decades. This chapter illustrates the gulf between the difficulties faced by teenage girls in their transition to adulthood and the present policy vacuum, identified in chapter 1.

Educational attainment

A review in 2010 by the Equality and Human Rights Commission shows that teenage girls consistently perform better, academically, than boys.[56] There has been a steady improvement in the proportion of students getting good qualifications at age 16 (five or more grade A*–C GCSEs, or equivalent in Scotland, including in English or Welsh and maths). Girls are now ahead of boys in all three nations, a reversal of the situation for most of the post-war period.

More than half (54 per cent) of girls achieved five or more good GCSEs including in maths and English,

compared with less than half (47 per cent) of boys in England.

Girls outperform boys in nearly all ethnic groups. The largest differences were seen in 'Other Asian' and Chinese pupils where there was a gender gap of 14 per cent and in Black Caribbean pupils where there was a gender gap of 13 per cent.

The gender gap in educational performance opens up early. Girls are more likely to reach the expected national standard at Key Stage 1. The same is true at Key Stages 3 and 4, other than in mathematics at Key Stage 3 and science at Key Stage 4, where boys outperform girls by just one percentage point.[57]

The long-held performance gap at A-level between boys and girls is increasing and more girls are entering higher education than boys. Girls account for significantly more than half (57 per cent) of all higher education students, broadly unchanged since 2003/04.

Girls are more likely to do well – obtaining a higher second class or first class degree – and more women now have higher educational qualifications than men in every age group up to 44.

So with girls achieving far better qualifications than boys but having far lower self-esteem, it seems important to try and understand if self-esteem plays a role in academic performance. The evidence is unclear.

In their review of academic literature and meta-analysis of data Baumeister et al concluded that there are 'modest correlations between self-esteem and school performance' but that these 'do not indicate that high self-esteem leads to good performance'. Instead, they suggested that 'high self-esteem is partly the result of good school performance'.[58]

As we saw in chapter 1, self-esteem may provide teenagers with resilience in the face of failure and make them more persistent in trying to do better. But after drawing on a substantial volume of research, it is only possible to point

to a positive but weak and ambiguous relationship between self-esteem and school performance. Students with high self-esteem generally have done somewhat better in school and on school achievement tests than students with low self-esteem. The correlational findings do not indicate whether self-esteem is a cause or a result of school performance.[59]

Other researchers such as Pottebaum et al, using a sophisticated research design that tested a very large sample of high school students (more than 23,000) in the 10th grade and again in the 12th grade (the UK equivalents of Year 11 and 13), are even more sceptical. They concluded:

There is no significant causal relation between self-concept and academic achievement [in either direction], but rather that the observed relation is the result of one or more uncontrolled and unknown third variables.[60]

Evaluating self-esteem and other character traits, Twenge argued:

Self-control or the ability to persevere or keep going is a much better predictor of life outcomes than self-esteem. Children high in self-control make better grades and finish more years of education… self-control predicts all those things researchers had hoped self esteem would, but hasn't.[61]

Analysis of cohort UK data in the UK supports this view.[62] Self control, or 'locus of control' is not just important for academic achievement but also for avoidance of antisocial behavior and success in the labour market.

Jobs and the labour market

Research in the US by Mahaffy found that there is little correlation between female adolescent self-esteem and subsequent workplace success.[63] Using the High School and Beyond 1980 Sophomore Cohort Study, Mahaffy examined the relation between gender, adolescent self-esteem, and three outcomes: educational status, occupational status and income attainment. She found a positive association between gender, self-esteem and the socioeconomic outcomes initially. However, taking into account social context and individual-level factors, self-esteem in adolescence is not related to women's socioeconomic achievements.

Baumeister et al concluded that job performance in adults is sometimes related to self-esteem, although the correlations vary widely, and the direction of causality has not been

established. Occupational success may boost self-esteem rather than the reverse.[64]

There is some good news for the current generation of teenage girls in Britain with regards to the workplace. But not much. The latest figures show that the gender pay gap marginally decreased in 2010 by slightly less than 1 per cent (to 19.3 per cent from 20.1 per cent in 2009).[65] For women aged 22–29 earnings are actually 2.1 per cent higher than for men the same age in the UK, although this is the only age group for which this is the case.

That is where the good news ends. Job prospects for this generation of teenagers are the worst they have been for at least two decades. The latest official figures show that the unemployment rate reached 20 per cent among economically active youths aged 16 to 24, almost one million, the highest figure since comparable records began in 1992.[66]

The Chancellor announced 50,000 additional apprenticeships and 100,000 work placements for young people in the March 2011 budget but this has to be set in the context of the abolition of the Future Jobs Fund, which was set to provide 150,000 jobs for young people. The Treasury shows that the new apprenticeships and work placements will cost £40 million over two years,[67] while the Future Jobs Fund was a policy to invest £1 billion over two years to tackle youth unemployment.

With one in five young people now unemployed, teenagers entering the current labour market face the toughest conditions Britain has ever seen. There is also evidence that prospects are substantially worse for women than for men.

While previous recessions have seen employers make young men redundant before young women, TUC analysis[68] shows that unemployment rates among young women have risen much faster over the past two years. In the South West, the unemployment rate among 18–24-year-old women has almost trebled (from 5 per cent to 14 per cent), since early 2008, while it has almost doubled in the North West, Yorkshire, the West Midlands, the South East and Scotland. In the West Midlands, the unemployment rate among young women now matches that of men, with one in five out of work.

The TUC analysis suggests that women in part-time employment, who are over-represented in the public sector, are likely to be hit by the coming round of public sector job losses. Just under 40 per cent of women's jobs are in the public sector, compared with around 15 per cent of positions held by men.[69] The latest forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility show that 310,000 public sector jobs will be lost by 2015.[70]

It seems that teenage girls in Britain today face the worst job prospects of all because of rising youth unemployment and public sector job cuts combined. They also continue to face a long-term gender pay gap and a motherhood penalty.[71]

A recent Demos report warns that while 10–15 per cent levels of youth unemployment has been the norm throughout the 1990s, the current recession and education failures risk making 20 per cent youth unemployment 'the new normal', with spikes well above this.[72]

The Coalition Government's predictions for youth unemployment are highlighted in a prospectus issued by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for companies and voluntary groups bidding to take part in the Work Programme to find jobs for the long-term unemployed.[73] An annex to the prospectus estimates that between 140,000 and 200,000 young people aged 18 to 24 will be registered as having been unemployed for at least nine months or more between 2011 and 2012.

This at least doubles the number of young long-term unemployed. The forecast by the DWP suggests that the Government is bracing itself for young people to suffer disproportionately from public sector job cuts and from the slow level of overall economic growth forecast by the Office for Budget Responsibility.

As we showed in chapter 1, the self-esteem of young people who are not in education, work or training is of particular concern. The number of young people in England who are NEETs is already at a record high; almost one million young people – more than 15 per cent of 16–24-year-olds. Around one in ten 16–18-year-olds are NEET.[74] Internationally, the UK is at the

bottom of the league table, with only four European Union nations having more.[75]

NEETs are four times more likely to live in a household where no adults are working, but half of female NEETs are looking after family, usually as a result of teen pregnancy, compared with only 3 per cent of males.[76] Teenage pregnancy is examined in further detail below.

Graduate unemployment

As we saw in the previous section, more girls are going to university and are getting better degrees than boys but graduate unemployment is at its highest level for 17 years.[77] The poll by the Higher Education Careers Services Unit of almost 225,000 graduates (covering 82 per cent of those who completed an undergraduate degree in 2010) suggested that nearly one in 10 graduates are unemployed six months after leaving university – the highest proportion for 17 years. It showed that rising numbers are taking jobs that do not require degrees, including as waiters and checkout workers. The poll also found that male graduates were earning a higher starting salary than females, in all regions across the UK.[78]

The most recent figures from the Office for National Statistics show that one in five former students are still seeking work up to two years after leaving university.[79] Their preferred measure of graduate unemployment has reached its highest level since 1995. The figures show that almost twice as many new graduates were out of work in the third quarter of 2010 compared with the beginning of the recession in 2008, when one in ten was unemployed.

A poll of 200 employers by the Association of Graduate Recruiters in 2010 suggested there were an average of 70 applicants for each graduate vacancy.[80] In the most popular sectors there are 205 applicants for each job.

It is no wonder that teenagers in the UK (aged 14–15) say they are worried about their job prospects and that 'even if they do well at school' they will 'have a hard time getting a job'.[81]

Before the recession, more than a third (38 per cent) of teenagers agreed or strongly agreed. To test the latest sense of angst among teenage girls we commissioned original polling, the results of which are presented in chapter 4.

Career aspirations

The aspirations of teenage girls affect their performance in the labour market and the choices they make about which jobs to compete for. Recent survey-based research found that gender appears to be a more important differential than social class in accounting for differences in career aspirations. Boys are more likely than girls to expect to work in 'engineering, ICT, skilled trades, construction, architecture or as mechanics'. Girls are more likely to expect to work in 'teaching, hairdressing, beauty therapy, childcare, nursing and midwifery'.[82] These career choices have major implications for their employment trajectories and income levels.

Having children and raising families also has an impact. The proportion of women in associate professional jobs peaks between 26 and 44 years (at 19 per cent), tailing off subsequently to reach 12 per cent of those aged 56–59 years. In 2009 women held just over a third (34 per cent) of managerial positions, just over two-fifths of professional jobs, (43 per cent) and half of associate professional jobs (50 per cent).[83]

Overall women account for:

· 83 per cent of personal services posts
· 77 per cent of administrative and secretarial posts
· 65 per cent of sales posts

Although there are signs of improvement in women's presence in the professions, this varies widely across professional groups. The proportion of women in engineering, ICT and working as architects, planners and surveyors remains stubbornly low with women making up just:

· 6 per cent of engineering posts

· 13 per cent of ICT posts
· 14 per cent of architects, planners and surveyors

    Research suggests that girls still feel pushed into traditionally female roles and boys into traditionally male roles, when many of them would consider training or working in non-traditional areas.

    Platform 51 suggests that careers guidance and work experience are particularly important for girls and boys from disadvantaged backgrounds, who often have limited sources of advice about the variety of jobs available and often have strong assumptions being made on their behalf about their future career paths.[84]

Teenage pregnancy and caring responsibilities

As we have seen above, teen pregnancy is a major driver for young women in Britain to become NEET. Half of all female NEETs are caring for family.

    Spencer et al found a correlation between higher self-esteem and deferral of sexual activity.[85] By contrast, Baumeister et al canvassed a body of research that offers highly mixed results, including research to suggest that higher self-esteem correlates with increased sexual activity and risk taking.[86] Longitudinal research from the USA suggests that high self-esteem leads to more sexual activity among males but not females. Another longitudinal study of adolescents in New Zealand found no relationship between self-esteem at age 12 and self-reports of sexual intercourse by the age of 15.[87] In a survey of 1,000 girls and women, Kalil and Kunz found that unmarried teenage mothers were less likely than other girls and women to have high self-esteem.[88] In this case, self-esteem was measured after the person had engaged in sex and borne a child; in view of the prospective findings, Kalil and Kunz's results suggest that becoming an unwed teen mother causes a reduction in self-esteem.[89]

    The UK still has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the developed world, ranked fourth in the OECD (behind Turkey, the USA and Mexico).[90]

But the teenage pregnancy rate in the UK has recently fallen to a 30-year low.[91] In 2010 conceptions among under-18s decreased by 5.9 per cent to 38.3 per 1,000 women aged 15–17. This represents the steepest drop in 20 years and is estimated to be the lowest rate since the early 1980s.

The chief executive of the Family Planning Association has warned that the scrapping of the Labour Government's £280 million ten-year Teenage Pregnancy Strategy – focusing on hotspots of deprivation – is 'a significant cause for concern'.[92]

Evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study suggests that the poor outcomes experienced by teenage mothers and their children may have more to do with the mothers' disadvantaged social conditions than the age at which they have their first child.[93] Evidence shows that the teenagers who are most likely to get pregnant are from disadvantaged backgrounds. This suggests that many are choosing to have a child not as a positive option but because of limited prospects.

Evidence published in the *British Medical Journal* in 2009 showed that the main determinants for early pregnancy were dislike of school, poor material circumstances and unhappy childhood, and low expectations for the future.[94]

Care

Data show that caring for people other than their own children is also more widespread among teenage girls than teenage boys.[95] By the age of 17, more than one in five (27 per cent) young people have some kind of caring responsibility. Just 3 per cent have children of their own. More than one in ten (15 per cent) of girls say they are taking care of children under age 14 outside their own home (unpaid). This is almost twice as many as boys (8 per cent). Girls are also more likely to be caring for adults over age 15 who are ill, disabled or elderly.

Research for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) by the Young Foundation 2010 shows there are 175,000 young carers in the UK who regularly provide unpaid personal care, assistance or support to another family member and take on responsibilities 'beyond what is appropriate for their age'.[96]

Research shows that most of these young carers (56 per cent) are girls, whose average age is just 12 years old.

Socioeconomic factors surely play a part in the reliance on young people for personal care. And it is clear that child poverty continues to be a major cause of teen pregnancy and NEET status, both of which appear to have negative impacts on self-esteem.

Child poverty and social mobility

Knies suggests that the comparatively low levels of life satisfaction in children living in the UK may be explained by the relatively high prevalence of child poverty. But the research finds that 'after controlling for other factors, there is no association between young people's life satisfaction scores and household income, and none with either the household or child material deprivation indices'.[97]

This means that children of relatively wealthy families are just as likely to be dissatisfied with their lives as the children of poorer families. There is empirical evidence that parents shield their children from financial hardship by spending on their children rather than themselves.[98] But while poverty may not affect children's life satisfaction, it certainly affects their other outcomes.

Children growing up in poverty are more likely to suffer cycles of deprivation and intergenerational poverty.[99] With social mobility in the UK stalling, this problem is more acute for this generation of teenagers than previous ones.[100]

The UK has one of the highest rates of child poverty in the developed world. Among 24 member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the UK is topped only by the USA.[101]

The most recently published research by Save the Children UK shows that around 1.6m children in the UK are living in severe poverty.[102] Manchester has the highest proportion of children living in severe child poverty in the UK, with the London borough of Tower Hamlets a close second. In 29 local authorities across the country more than one in five children lives in severe poverty.

Using the conventional measure of household income, child poverty rates in the UK have been falling over the last decade (from 22 per cent in 1998/99 to 11 per cent in 2008/09). But this trend looks set to reverse. Despite the Coalition Agreement committing the Government to a national child poverty target, the Institute for Fiscal Studies is predicting that poverty for children aged under 16 will rise in 2011/12 and 2012/13.[103]

As we will explore further in chapter 5, parents who are materially deprived have been less and less able to develop the character traits required for success in their children. It is clear that child poverty is making and will continue to make the current generation of teenagers relatively worse off than previous generations.

Spending money, possessions and new media

The present generation of teenagers is widely considered to be more materialistic and brand conscious than previous generations. This is such a serious concern that the Government has launched a review into the commercialisation of childhood.[104] As we will see in chapter 4, our original polling showed that children's self-esteem is strongly linked to their relationship with their spending money, material possessions and use of new media.

But the commercialising of childhood is mitigated by the extent to which adults, and specifically parents, are allowing children discretion over the material goods they have access to. If children are exercising direct discretion, rather than simply exercising 'pester power', it is likely that these children's parents are putting the pounds in their pockets that are allowing them to become active consumers.

More than three-quarters (77 per cent) of children and young people receive an allowance from their parents,[105] often supplemented by gifts from family members, part-time work or grants and benefits. Those aged between 14 and 15 are most dependent on allowances; for 16–18-year-olds money earned from part-time jobs becomes more significant. The average amount of allowance, across all the ages, in 2007 was £8.43 per week – boys

received slightly more than girls, but this does not accurately reflect the amount of money that children have available to them each week. The average earnings (for those with part-time jobs) were £28.10 per week for boys and £25.70 for girls.

From their diaries, researchers found the average 11–13-year-old was able to spend £36.75 per week.[106] Those aged between 14 and 15 spent £43.38 while those over 16 spent on average £62.98 a week.

Where does all this money go? The most significant expenses for children and young people are clothes and entertainment.[107] Girls spent significantly more of their money than boys on clothes (72 per cent versus 35 per cent), accessories (43 per cent versus 10 per cent), magazines (36 per cent versus 22 per cent) and toiletries (39 per cent versus 4 per cent). Boys spent substantially more on games (48 per cent versus 10 per cent), sports and hobbies (36 per cent versus 15 per cent), downloads (19 per cent versus 8 per cent) and snacks or soft drinks (46 per cent versus 35 per cent).

The survey found that 16-year-olds spent the highest proportion of their money on clothes (61 per cent) and entertainment (60 per cent); 12-year-olds spent the highest proportion on snacks (58 per cent) and magazines (43 per cent); 11-year-olds spent the highest proportion on movies (46 per cent), gaming (48 per cent), accessories (39 per cent) and sports, hobbies and pastimes (37 per cent); and 18-year-olds, predictably perhaps, topped the poll when it came to spending money on eating out (46 per cent) and entrance fees to clubs (32 per cent).

The third highest category for what young people spend their money on is 'saving'. Over half of all young people say they commit 'most' of their money to saving; 14-year-olds are the biggest savers, with 60 per cent saying they put most of their money away rather than spending it immediately.

Researchers writing before the global financial crisis had already concluded:

Children are now growing up in an age of cautious prudence – quite differently from their parents whose attitudes to money were formed in the 'loadsamoney' days of the Thatcher era.[108]

Children and young people also influence how their parents spend their money. They feel they have a particularly strong influence on food purchases, pets, presents for family and friends, and where the family goes on holiday. Nearly a quarter of girls (but only 15 per cent of boys) think they had a say in which house or flat they live in. Parents, perhaps as expected, disagree. Less than one in ten says their children have a lot of influence on what the family eats and only 5 per cent say that choice of family holiday is strongly influenced by where their children want to go.

Almost two-thirds of children aged 5–16 now have their own computer (62 per cent, including 42 per cent with a laptop and 7 per cent with an iPad).[109] Laptop ownership is up 10 per cent in the last year alone. Half of all 7–16-year-olds can now access the internet in their own room, up from two in five in the last year.

Equally significant is that one in five (20 per cent) access the internet on their mobile phones. Other surveys suggest that as many as a third of 9–16-year-olds are accessing the web on a mobile device.[110] Nearly all 11–16-year-olds have mobile phones, seven in ten 5–16-year-olds and half of 5–10-year-olds.[111] These are likely to be due for upgrades over the next two years so these children will almost certainly acquire internet-enabled mobiles very soon. Around half (49 per cent) of parents with children under 18 who have internet-enabled mobile devices do not monitor their children's mobile internet usage.[112]

More than 90 per cent of children in the UK use the internet, with the average child doing so more than five times a week, and spending two hours a day online (slightly less than they spend watching TV, although this is increasingly done online, via on-demand services).[113] Social networking is the main online activity for 5–16-year-olds, with the proportion social networking the last time they were online doubling since last year. Facebook and YouTube are now the top favourite websites across all ages.

Researchers highlight the way that

social gaming sites are attracting children to take part in their safe interactive world, providing a springboard for the step up to social networking around age 11. Children flout the rules about minimum age limits, and their parents condone or actively encourage this.[114]

The way that this generation of teenagers relate to the money that they have to spend, the material goods they possess and their relationship to new technology is an important element of what makes them different from teenagers of the past. To explore this more extensively, we focus much of our original commissioned polling on these issues; it is presented in chapter 4.

Bullying and criminal antisocial behaviour

There is credible research linking low self-esteem with aggression, antisocial behaviour and delinquency.[115] But other academic analysis suggests that 'the highest and lowest rates of… bullying are found in different subcategories of high self-esteem'.[116] The very latest UK evidence suggests that sibling bullying in the home can have a relationship to both victimisation and bullying at school and elsewhere.[117]

Evidence shows that not all bullies are the same.[118] There is a small group of so-called 'pure bullies' who bully others but are not victims themselves. But more prevalent are 'bully-victims' who are victimised themselves and at other times bully others. These 'bully-victims' are the ones most at risk of low self-esteem and behaviour problems.

The latest UK data show that more than half of all siblings were involved in bullying (54 per cent) and that the most common pattern across the UK was to be both victim and bully (33.6 per cent).[119] Boys were more often pure bullies or 'bully-victims' while girls were slightly more likely to be pure victims.

Researchers found that being victimised at home significantly increased the odds of also being victimised in school.[120] Those who were either victimised in just one setting, either at home or at school, had double the likelihood of being unhappy. But adolescents (10–15-year-olds) who were bullied by

their siblings and in school by their peers were ten times more often 'unhappy' than those not victimised either at home or in school. For those victimised at home and at school there is little escape from bullying. Consequently, they have more behaviour problems than other children.

Recent polling evidence shows that two-thirds (66 per cent) of 16–19-year-old girls think bullying is one of the 'main causes of stress' among girls their age, although this was the fourth most popular answer after 'exams/tests', 'pressure to do well at school' and 'relationships'.[121]

Research for the EHRC points to gender difference for children's experiences of bullying outside school with girls experiencing less bullying than boys, in both inner city and suburban areas. But they suggest that bullying among girls is far more subtle and therefore harder to capture through research.[122]

Large-scale survey data support this (LSYPE, wave 2). Almost one in five (19 per cent) girls aged 16 reported being 'bullied, called names, sworn at or insulted' in the last 12 months, slightly more than boys (15 per cent). More than one in five (27 per cent) girls aged 14 to 15 reported being upset by name calling (including by text and email) in the last 12 months compared with 16 per cent of boys.

Analysis by Demos (of LSYPE, wave 2) shows that almost twice as many (33 per cent) of those girls reporting being upset by name calling, compared with just 16.6 per cent of boys, said that they had been feeling worthless 'rather more' or 'much more' than usual, compared with just 16.6 per cent of boys.

But boys are more than three times more likely (7 per cent) to report being 'mugged' in the last 12 months, compared with girls (just 2 per cent). And boys were almost twice as likely (29 per cent) to report having 'force used against them' in the last 12 months, compared with girls (15 per cent).

EHRC data in 2010 suggest that teenage girls are vulnerable to serious physical violence, above and beyond subtle bullying.[123] One in four women say they have experienced some form of domestic abuse in England and Wales since reaching the age of 16 and one in seven women in Scotland say they have experienced a physical form of partner abuse since reaching the

age of 16. Over a quarter of all rapes reported to the police in 2009/10 in England and Wales were committed against children aged under 16.

Although levels of 'less serious sexual assault' have fallen dramatically in England and Wales since 2005/06, levels of rape have remained stable over this period. Levels of domestic and partner abuse recorded in crime surveys have fallen only slightly; the number of cases being reported to the police or referred for prosecution is increasing.

Research for the NSPCC shows that girls are more likely than boys to be the recipient of serious physical and sexual violence and that girls are significantly more likely than boys to state they have experienced some form of family violence: 29 per cent compared with 16 per cent.[124]

The link between violent victimisation and offending in young people is highlighted by research for Victim Support UK.[125] This suggests that aspects of a young person's lifestyle and disposition were likely to increase their chances of becoming both a victim of crime and an offender. These aspects include spending time with delinquent peers, exposure to violent crime in the local area, weak social networks, being part of a gang and low school attendance.

Pathways between victimisation and offending were more likely to occur if young people believe that retaliatory violence is acceptable and that adults in authority will not provide protection. They also highlight how negative effects as a result of victimisation in turn impact self-esteem as a pathway to offending.

The research suggests that gender, social class and ethnicity have less influence on the relationship between offending and victimisation and cite evidence that gender is only a modest predictor of offending behaviour. They argued that this could be accounted for by the fact that females tend to have stronger protective factors than males. While risk and protective factors associated with gender could explain why males commit more crimes overall than females, they suggested that an individual's gender alone cannot explain why he or she commits a crime.

The EHRC claims that while women are much less likely to go to prison than men, the rate of imprisonment of women is

increasing faster than the rate of men, and many women are imprisoned for relatively minor offences. The number of women prisoners has nearly doubled since 1995 in England and Wales, and since 2000 in Scotland. But just 5 per cent of prisoners are currently women. The EHRC cites evidence that a higher proportion of women in prison have experienced domestic violence than have women in the population as a whole.[126]

The Offending Crime and Justice Survey 2009 asked young people aged 10–25 about 20 types of offence, and found that half of the young people (49 per cent) who took part in the four waves of the survey had committed an offence. Annual estimates of those admitting to committing offences in the previous 12 months varied from 21 per cent to 23 per cent.[127]

Assaults accounted for almost half of the offences (48 per cent). Drug crime (selling drugs) was the second most common offence, at one-fifth of all incidents. Burglary and robbery each accounted for just 1 per cent of the offences.

Far more teenage boys than girls admit to being offenders. Three-quarters (74 per cent) of men aged 16 or 17 had committed one or more offences in the previous 12 months. Even among those boys aged 10 or 11, almost a third (60 per cent) had committed an offence.

Among girls, half of those aged 11–15 had committed one or more offences, but the prevalence dropped to around one in three at age 20 and over.

Suicide, self-harm and mental health
Longitudinal research indicates that low self-esteem is a risk factor for suicide, suicide attempts and depression.[128]

Far more men commit suicide than women in Britain, with over 4,000 men and over 1,000 women taking their own lives each year. Suicide rates in the UK peaked for women in 1992, declining until 2008 but recently rising again.[129] The recession may well be to blame.

Suicide rates in those aged 10–19 in the UK declined by 28 per cent in the seven year period from 1997 to 2003, according to a study published in 2008 in the *Journal of Child Psychology and*

Psychiatry.[130] For every one adolescent female (aged 15–19 years) who commits suicide in the UK, there are three adolescent males. In total, there were 1,722 adolescent and juvenile deaths by suicide in the UK between 1997 and 2003.

Researchers at Sterling University suggest that more than one in ten (up to 14 per cent) of 15–16-year-olds across central Scotland have self-harmed.[131] Multivariate analysis of 737 teenagers showed that worries about sexual orientation, history of sexual abuse, family self-harm, anxiety and self-esteem were associated with repeat self-harm, but history of sexual abuse was the only factor predictive of first-time self-harm.

Almost half of young people not in work (48 per cent) claim that unemployment has caused problems including self-harm, insomnia, self-loathing and panic attacks.[132] Young people are twice as likely to self-harm or suffer panic attacks a year into unemployment.

Recent polling shows that more than one in ten (13 per cent) of girls and women who had experienced mental health problems had self-harmed.[133] Other recent polling evidence suggests that self-harm might be more prevalent, especially among teenage girls. More than one in five (23 per cent) 16–19-year-old girls said they had cut themselves on purpose.[134] National figures show rates of self-harm are on average two to three times higher in women than men.[135]

More than a third of 18–34-year-old women (35 per cent) claiming to be experiencing mental health problems admit to regularly drinking enough to get drunk as a result.[136]

Alcohol abuse, smoking and drug use
Alcohol abuse

Over the last decade (1998–2008) the proportion of girls aged 16–24 who had consumed no alcohol over the previous week increased slightly from 40 per cent to 48 per cent.[137] But the proportion of girls who had consumed the highest level of alcohol measured in the survey (over six drinks consumed on the last occasion drinking in the past week) increased from 17 per cent to more than a quarter (27 per cent).

The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs in 2009 is the most detailed international study of its kind, covering teenagers' drinking, smoking and drug-taking habits in 32 European countries.[138] The UK sample involves 1,004 boys and 1,175 girls aged 15 and 16.

UK teenagers ranked the third highest (after those in Denmark and the Isle of Man) for saying they had been drunk within 30 days of the survey, with a third (33 per cent) reporting such recent intoxication. Teenage girls in the UK (as well as in Ireland and the Isle of Man) were more likely than boys to have been binge-drinking in the previous 30 days. The latest survey shows that girls are maintaining this lead in the UK.

OECD research in 2009 concludes, 'Drunkenness [in the UK] is the highest in the OECD, with one in three 13 and 15 year olds having been drunk at least twice.'[139] Half (50 per cent) of 15-year-old girls in the UK have been drunk at least twice, almost double the OECD average of 29 per cent and higher than the proportion of boys in the UK (44 per cent).

British teenagers are more likely than those in all other European countries to claim they expected 'positive consequences' from drinking, such as 'feeling relaxed' and 'forgetting my problems'. But just over a quarter of UK teenagers (26 per cent) said they had suffered an accident or injury as a result of getting drunk, while more than one in ten (11 per cent) said they had had sex without a condom and the same proportion (11 per cent) said they had sex they later regretted. Almost one in five (18 per cent) said their drinking had caused problems with their parents.

The researchers conclude:

The fact that some teenage girls are 'binge' drinking even more than boys suggests that in the UK and elsewhere… it is clearly no longer socially unacceptable for females to drink heavily or to become intoxicated. This may reflect factors such as greater female social and economic empowerment and changing social roles as well as the marketing practices.[140]

Polling suggests that a third of girls aged 11 to 21 say they had drunk so much they had thrown up or lost control.[141] When

asked why girls did this, the top answer was 'pressure from friends' (70 per cent), with 'to feel more confident' (59 per cent) and 'stress/to forget worries' (54 per cent) also rating highly.[142]

Research indicates there is little to no relationship between self-esteem and alcohol abuse, neither as a significant predictor or moderator.[143] Even when findings do show a link between alcohol and self-esteem, they are mixed and inconclusive.

Smoking

Overall, cigarette use by European teenagers has fallen since 1999, and in the UK since 1995.[144] Girls are still slightly more likely to smoke than boys but the rate of smoking among young people is in decline. Over the last decade (1998–2008) the proportion of girls aged 16–24 who smoke fell from more than a third (38 per cent) to less than a quarter (25 per cent).[145] The proportion of girls aged 8–15 who have ever smoked also fell from one in five (21 per cent) to just over one in ten (13 per cent).

Meta-analysis shows there is no clear evidence to suggest there is any causal relationship between self-esteem and smoking.[146] Studies suggest there is a correlation between smoking and low self-esteem but do not show that low self-esteem clearly leads to subsequent smoking.

Drug use

The most recent data show there has been a decline in drug use by 11–15-year-olds since 2001.[147] In 2009 less than a quarter (22 per cent) had ever taken drugs, compared with 29 per cent in 2001. Over one in ten (15 per cent) reported taking drugs in the last year, while less than one in ten (8 per cent) took drugs in the last month. Boys are marginally more likely than girls to have taken drugs (16 per cent and 14 per cent respectively) in the last year.

Among young people 11–15-year-olds are most likely to have taken cannabis (8.9 per cent in the last year, down from 13.4 per cent in 2001) or to have sniffed glue, gas or other volatile substances (5.5 per cent in 2009). Less than 2 per cent have taken other drugs. Just 3.6 per cent have taken class A drugs in

the last year. This proportion has remained at a similar level since 2001. Most 11–15-year-olds who take drugs do so relatively infrequently. Around a third (36 per cent) of those who took drugs in the last year say they usually take them once a month or more (equivalent to 4 per cent of all 11–15-year-olds).

Longitudinal research indicates that low self-esteem is not a risk factor for drug use.[148] Academic analysis suggests that because feeling oneself to be in control of one's life might overlap with self-esteem and drug use, researchers might find correlations between self-esteem and drug use and mistakenly conclude that self-esteem, rather than feelings of control, is the important factor.[149] The only significant predictor of increase in substance abuse over time was lower levels of perceived control, not lower levels of self-esteem.

Physical health

Girls in Britain exercise less than boys.[150] Based on self-reported data, just under a third (31 per cent) of boys and 22 per cent of girls aged 4–15 met the government recommendations for children's physical activity (30 minutes or more of moderate or vigorous activity on at least five days a week). The results were almost the same when based on objective measures.

This trend is increasing and is worse for older teenage girls. Between 2002 and 2007 the proportion of 15-year-old girls who met government recommendations for children's physical activity fell slightly, from 50 per cent to 47 per cent. The proportion of 15-year-old girls who undertook the lowest level of exercise measured in the survey remained around one-third (falling from 34 per cent to 33 per cent).

But teenage girls are eating more healthily. Between 2001 and 2008 the proportion of girls aged 8–15 who ate five or more servings of fruit or vegetables a day almost doubled (increasing from 11 per cent to 20 per cent). The proportion of girls aged 8–15 who ate no servings of fruit or vegetables a day fell from 10 per cent to 4 per cent. But older teenage girls eat less healthily. The median number of servings consumed by girls aged 8–15 was 3.3 but for girls aged 16–24 it was 2.8.

The eating disorder charity beat says there is a 'serious lack of robust data about exactly how many people in the UK have an eating disorder' but estimates that 1.6 million people have one, of whom some 1.4 million are female.[151] Polling suggests that half of girls aged 11–21 say they have been on a very strict diet.[152] When asked why girls think other girls do this, the most common answer was 'to be more attractive to other people' (75 per cent).[153] This reason was followed fairly closely by 'because of the way the media portrays women' (66 per cent) and 'to be more attractive for themselves' (62 per cent). Also notable was 'pressure from friends' (52 per cent). We further explore the causes and effects of eating disorders in the next chapter.

Extremes of weight, both obesity and underweight, is increasing. Between 1998 and 2008 the proportion of girls aged 16–24 that was overweight or obese increased from 28 per cent to 33 per cent. The proportion that was obese increased from 5 per cent to 8 per cent, and the proportion that was underweight also increased, from 4 per cent to 7 per cent. Consequently, the proportion of girls aged 16–24 that were of normal weight fell from 68 per cent to 60 per cent in this period.

But obesity in younger girls has hardly changed. The proportion of 11–15-year-old girls who were overweight or obese increased by less than 1 per cent (from 33.6 per cent to 33.9 per cent) and the proportion who were obese also increased by less than 1 per cent (from 17.8 per cent to 18.3 per cent).

Evidence suggests that over 90 per cent of the excess weight in girls, and over 70 per cent in boys, is gained before the child ever gets to school age (5 years old). Time-lagged correlation research also finds that obesity leads to inactivity, rather than inactivity to obesity.[154]

Meta-analysis finds a positive effect of exercise on self-esteem. Interestingly, the effect is greater for physical-fitness-oriented programmes (including aerobic dance) than for motor skills- or sports-based programmes. Impact is particularly great for programmes that encourage mastery and self-development, rather than competition.[155] There is evidence that benefits could be greatest for girls with low self-esteem.

A systematic review to determine if exercise alone or as part of a comprehensive intervention can improve self-esteem in children and young people found that exercise alone may have short-term beneficial effects on self-esteem.[156]

A meta-analysis that statistically combines the results of multiple studies found a significant correlation between actual body weight and self-esteem.[157] But the correlation of self-esteem with self-rated body weight was much stronger. As researchers put it: 'People with high self-esteem are a little slimmer than others, but not nearly as much as they think.'[158]

Evidence suggests there may be a correlation between dissatisfaction with personal appearance and subsequent low self-esteem.[159] A temporal ordering study showed that adolescents who were less satisfied with their appearance at age 10 reported declines in self-esteem from age 10 to age 14. But adolescents with lower self-esteem at age 10 did not decline in appearance satisfaction.

Other research, using hierarchical regression analyses confirms that it is desire for thinness, not appearance satisfaction, that significantly predicted decrease in self-esteem.[160] The reverse relationship did not hold. Self-esteem did not predict desire for thinness or appearance satisfaction.

Overall, it is clear that girls are significantly more successful than boys in making the transition to adulthood and that, on aggregate, their outcomes are significantly better than boys across the board. There is little to link self-esteem as a causal driver in the negative outcomes that they do suffer. Instead parental poverty and the influence of poor parenting appear to be a far more significant driving force. The exceptions are in non-violent bullying, mental and physical health, teenage pregnancy and caring responsibility; where girls seem to suffer in a significantly different way to boys.

Overall, we find that the current generation of teenagers faces a far more uncertain future than previous generations, with job prospects in particular the worst they have been for decades.

In the next chapter, we look at the role of the media and the impact it has on the self-esteem of teenage girls.

3 Media images and self-esteem

As we have shown in the previous chapters, outcomes for girls are significantly more successful than those for boys when they make the transition to adulthood. We have found little to link self-esteem as a causal driver in the negative outcomes that teenage girls suffer but we have identified non-violent bullying, mental health and physical health outcomes where girls seem to suffer in a significantly different way from boys.

We have also identified a vacuum in UK youth policy that is waiting for the outcome of several reviews, being filled by ministerial rhetoric on the impact of the media on self-esteem. The Coalition Agreement's commitment to 'crack down on irresponsible advertising and marketing, especially to children'[161] is carrying much of the weight of the Government's youth agenda. The commitment has attracted campaigning on the form that such a 'crackdown' should take. One suggestion, by the Campaign for Body Confidence, is that there should be 'no altered, idealised models in advertising to children' and that there should be 'clear labeling of altered, idealised models in all other advertising'.[162] This call is echoed by the Royal College of Psychiatrists.[163]

This more recent regulatory campaign contrasts with previous campaigns that sought to pressure advertisers into accepting a commercial incentive to representing women as they really are, such as the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty.[164]

The Campaign for Body Confidence is likely to exert considerable political influence on the Coalition Government as it is headed by Liberal Democrat MP Jo Swinson and was supported in opposition by the now Liberal Democrat Minister for Children (Sarah Teather MP) and Minister for Equalities (Lynne Featherstone MP).

While it is intuitively attractive to accept that idealised images of female beauty impact on teenagers' aspirations and expectations about their looks, there has long been evidence that self-esteem and body confidence, as well as the more academically rigorous measures of wellbeing, are driven by much more deep-rooted factors, and an over-focus on advertising and images used within the beauty and fashion industries can be more of a distraction than a solution.

This chapter presents a review of evidence on both sides of the debate, in an attempt to understand how government and industry should respond to concerns about the wellbeing of teenage girls. It is worth noting that our findings should not be viewed as a 'get out clause' for the beauty and fashion industries, but rather as a warning to government to ensure that policy activity is focused on the most effective areas. The commercial world has a vital role in setting the context within which debates about beauty and health take place. Industry's responsibility is by no means diminished by the findings in this chapter.

A dossier of 174 abstracts from academic studies that link media exposure and lower body satisfaction has been published by the Campaign for Body Confidence to support its policy recommendations.[165] We have reviewed all of these studies in an attempt to assess the strength of this policy recommendation. Interestingly, we were not able to find clear evidence that the labelling of images would improve the self-esteem of teenage girls. None of the studies in the dossier test the proposition that labelled images have a less negative effect, though some do test altered against unaltered images. We discuss the implications of this below but it seems that teenage girls already understand that images are altered.

Moreover, much of the research is based on single snapshot experiments with American undergraduates conducted in the 1980s and 1990s. Most of the experiments use magazine images, soap operas or music videos, and most of the conclusions cited are dominated by academic social psychology and media studies research that seeks to find connections between teenage angst and teenage media exposure. However, altering of images has been common practice in advertising since

the 1950s. As we showed in the previous chapter, twenty-first-century British teenagers are increasingly interacting with the media via internet-enabled mobile phones and are predominately social networking, rather than passively consuming advertising imagery.

Most of the studies presented rely on a methodology using singular controlled experiment models to measure the relationship between body image and self-esteem. Many use a controlled exposure methodology – they create environments in which participants' self-esteem or body confidences is assessed, usually by questionnaire, before and after subjects have been exposed to media images of models or celebrities, in the form of video footage or magazine photographs.[166] Most of these studies, though not all, report a drop in self-esteem following exposure and thus conclude that there is a causal relationship between exposure to media images and levels of self-esteem.

While the simplicity of such studies is appealing, we are more sceptical. Causality is a difficult relationship to prove and requires rigorous analysis and a controlled environment. To give one example of oversimplifying a causal relationship, one relatively recent study, based on questionnaires completed by 1,400 secondary school pupils, concludes that 'time spent watching soap operas was related to drive for thinness in both genders'.[167] A year later, the same researcher, using questionnaires with 200 girls with a mean age of 14, concluded:

For this age group, media exposure and body image co-occur, but that neither one is temporally antecedent to the other. Thus the study demonstrated no causal role for media exposure in the body image of adolescent girls.[168]

To suggest a causal relationship between self-esteem and exposure to images does not take into account other factors contributing to self-esteem that cannot be controlled in the selection of participants and during the course of exposure experiments. The importance of tracking the longitudinal effects of media images is too often presumed, as are the causes of low self-esteem before the experimental exposure.

Studies rarely consider different media types or the differential impact of images. Do some images have a stronger effect than others? Is there a difference between exposure to video images and print images? Few studies take a granulated approach to this topic.[169] With media fragmentation, the rise of the internet and the penetration of internet-enabled mobile devices, does the purported source of an image make a difference? Are some sources more trusted than others? Does the new context of online social media have a different impact? There is a danger that without proper information, Government may take a policy position that fails to tackle the real issues but leaves us with a false sense of security about the level of protection we are giving teenagers.

We therefore exercise extreme caution when assessing studies with limited research methodologies. A significant number of the studies rely on results garnered from small sample sizes, some numbering just over 100 participants, and often collected across a limited or unrepresentative demographic. An example is a study based on focus groups with 15–16-year-olds in which they were asked to explore connections between their body satisfaction, dieting habits and their aspirations to be like media celebrities.[170] The most significant finding of this research, irrespective of its limited methodology, is the role of peer effects concerning body dissatisfaction and dieting. We explore peer effects in greater detail in chapter 5 but find no support for the effectiveness of labelling images in this study.

Another example is Clay et al's experimental exposure of digitally altered pictures of models, involving just 136 girls, from a single-sex state school in London in a largely middle-class neighbourhood. As the researchers acknowledge:

Our manipulation was comparatively minimal and naturalistic: the magazine covers – viewed for just 15 seconds each – were not dissimilar to images which many participants were likely to have been viewing anyway over much longer periods in their own time… we acknowledge that these findings do not demonstrate the impact of media images on body satisfaction and self-esteem over the long term. Studies such as this can only detect transient changes in these outcomes.[171]

As a result, they recommend 'early educational interventions to help girls to deconstruct advertising and media images', rather than labelling of altered images, and highlight the importance of 'parental and peer expectations, which were not measured'.[172]

Among the Campaign for Body Confidence's evidence base are studies that highlight the different ways that media images and self-esteem interact, further illustrating what a blunt instrument the labelling of advertising could be. Thornton and Maurice find:

Generally, when exposed to photographs of attractive women with idealized physiques, women's self-perceptions of their own physical attractiveness, social physique anxiety, and social self-esteem were each negatively affected. However, these negative contrast effects were most apparent among women with high public self-consciousness or high public self-awareness.[173]

As we saw in chapter 1, self-esteem is often in the eye of the beholder.

Any attempt to conclude a causal relationship between media images and self-esteem is curtly dismissed in Polivy and Herman's special issue on body image and eating disorders in the *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*:

The media are often blamed for spreading the message that women must be thin, and for making women feel badly about themselves. This view seems overly simplistic… ignoring the fact that women voluntarily expose themselves to thin media images, that such exposure can actually be pleasurable, and that most women exposed to this message do not develop eating disorders.[174]

Other research cited by the Campaign for Body Confidence supports this questioning of assumptions of causality. Wilcox and Laird observe:

Some women enjoy examining media depictions of extremely slender models, while others find such depictions produce feelings of inadequacy. The two

reactions appear to reflect differences in the impact of bodily information in generating feelings.[175]

Other studies confirm the coexisting relation between media images and self-esteem but declare it is not causal, as 'neither one is temporally antecedent to the other'.[176]

The question of whether body-type creates self-esteem or self-esteem mitigates body confidence more powerfully than body-type is further opened up by gender studies researchers, who conclude:

Despite the popular belief that the thin standard of female attractiveness currently presented in the media is a primary contributor to the high level of concern with body weight among women, experimental studies have not shown that exposure to media images increases women's weight concern.[177]

These researchers found that 'although most women reported higher weight concern when exposed to media vs. neutral images, women with low initial body dissatisfaction did not'. In conclusions that undermine the idea of the all-conquering media image, they declare:

Not all women… were susceptible to the manipulation. Women who were initially very satisfied with their bodies did not report more concern with weight following exposure to media images. Initially satisfied participants may have been immune to the manipulation for two reasons. First, a woman may have low body dissatisfaction because her body shape is similar to that of the standard depicted in the media… A second possibility is that even if a woman is substantially heavier than the media standard, she may possess low body dissatisfaction because body image issues are not important to her, because, for example, she is confident in her skills and abilities in other arenas. A female with low body dissatisfaction for either reason would not likely be threatened by exposure to media images, and increased weight concern would be unlikely.[178]

In public policy terms, research like this would point policy makers towards interventions that strengthen confidence in a woman's skills and abilities (their self-esteem), rather than those

that aim merely to weaken the media's attack on her. The same researchers conclude:

A perceived discrepancy may be effectively inconsequential because confidence in other arenas renders physical attractiveness unimportant… we would not expect that women satisfied with their bodies would exhibit adverse effects resulting from media exposure.[179]

Other research from the field of social psychology describes

an interaction model of social comparison effects that posits that the self-evaluative impact of physically attractive female body shapes is jointly determined by target features and perceiver features… Results show that both who the target is (professional models or normal women) and who the perceiver of that target is (satisfied or dissatisfied with her body) predict whether self-evaluations will be damaged. That is, it is especially those women who are dissatisfied with their body who are likely to suffer negative self-evaluative consequences from exposure to images of physically attractive female individuals.[180]

This points to an important principle that runs through the 2007 Byron Review of children and new technology. At the beginning of her final report to the Government, Tanya Byron, a clinical psychologist specialising in child and adolescent mental health, concluded:

Having considered the evidence I believe we need to move from a discussion about the media 'causing' harm to one which focuses on children and young people, what they bring to technology and how we can use our under-standing of how they develop to empower them to manage risks and make the digital world safer.[181]

The research with the most robust methodology cited by the Campaign for Body Confidence used a sample of 800 women aged 18–30 across four studies.[182] This study also points to the importance of self-belief and pre-existing self-discrepancies in mitigating negative media effects. Researchers found that 'women with larger appearance-related self-discrepancies became

more anxious about their body than those with smaller appearance-related self-discrepancies' but 'against expectation, exposure to average-sized models was also found to increase body anxiety'. They conclude 'this suggests that it is heavier women who become more anxious, presumably because they see even average-sized models as thin in comparison to themselves'. Self-discrepancy theory therefore suggests that 'both pre-existing self-beliefs as well as activation of self-beliefs related to body size are important psychological processes that affect women's responses to thin ideals in the media'.[183]

None of this critique is intended to question the need for the highest standards of regulation for advertising that targets children. But it is clear that the media's impact on self-esteem and body confidence is an interaction with pre-media exposure formation, rather than a simple causal factor.

However, some teenagers and young adults are clearly more vulnerable than others, especially those with eating disorders. There is a substantial body of evidence linking low self-esteem with eating disorders. But Baumeister et al showed that there is just as much debate 'as to whether low self-esteem is a cause or consequence of disordered eating'.[184]

Gual et al found a correlation between low self-esteem and eating disorders in their research with 2,800 12–21-year-old girls in Spain:

Low self-esteem is a risk factor in disordered eating, with evidence suggesting that the development of bulimic symptoms may be affected both directly by the presence of low self-esteem and indirectly by the interaction of low self-esteem with other factors. However, eating disorders are usually preceded by chronic dieting and body dissatisfaction, which themselves are related to low self-esteem. And it is also important to note that some women with eating disorders also have other disorders, such as anxiety and depression, that are also related to low self-esteem. In short, there is a complex set of relationships through which self-esteem has its effects on vulnerability to eating disorders. Nonetheless, on the whole, we conclude that low self-esteem is a concurrent and prospective risk factor for eating disorder symptoms.[185]

The media's role in affecting eating disorders is far from simplistic. There is certainly credible evidence that the media is a risk factor – not 'the cause' of a disorder as 'the agent' that directly brings about the undesirable outcome, but instead one of the 'variables that are reliably and usefully associated with an increase over time in the probability of a subsequent outcome'.[186]

Other research is even more counter-intuitive:

After looking at very thin models, chronic dieters report not only that they want to be thinner but that they are in fact thinner. It seems that, for the moment, restrained eaters' motivation to inhibit eating was decreased.[187]

Despite a comprehensive survey of evidence, researchers considering the media's influence on eating disorders are tentative in their conclusions:

After nearly 25 years of research on media and body image, we still know relatively little about the automatic, intentional, and motivational processes involved in the role of social comparison in media effects… Basic questions remain: What dispositional and situational factors determine when people will make upward social comparisons with highly dissimilar fashion models whose 'image' has been constructed by cosmetic surgeons, photographers, and computer experts? And under what circumstances will such comparisons result in negative effects (contrast) or positive effects (assimilation)?[188]

Their strongest conclusion is simply that 'engagement with mass media is probably best considered a variable risk factor that might well be later shown to be a causal risk factor'.[189]

Disengagement from the mass media is not a viable option for teenagers suffering from anything other than the most serious of eating disorders, perhaps being treated in clinics. This variable risk factor, however, would probably not be significantly reduced by the labelling of altered advertising imagery. Yet we cannot categorically draw conclusions because we have no evidence to measure the effectiveness of the labelling of altered advertising imagery.

In the next chapter we present the results of our original survey data. Limited, as we were, to a sample of 500 older teenage girls in the UK, we have not sought to try and provide conclusive evidence to the questions this chapter has explored. Instead, we have sought to complement the body of contemporary polling evidence presented in chapters 1 and 2 to give a sense of what it is like to be a teenage girl in Britain in 2011. Rather than ask teenage girls what they think are the best public policy solutions to their problems, we have attempted to give an insight into the ways in which their lives are different from those of previous generations. We ask directly about their happiness, their self-esteem and their relationships with family and friends. We also explore their material values and their relationship to new technology.

Putting aside the practicalities of how labelling of altered images would work online, via social media and on hand-held internet enabled devices and smartphones, our policy conclusion is that the regulation of advertising to children needs to be absolute (i.e. through banning and prescribing) to have any significant impact. However, we remain highly sceptical about the significance of the media in the formation of self-esteem and the extent to which the 'crackdown on irresponsible advertising and marketing', as promised in the Coalition Agreement, will fill the current youth policy void in the UK.

The contribution of other factors to the formation of self-esteem and the successful transition to adulthood, such as educational outcomes, labour market opportunities, child poverty, teenage pregnancy, binge drinking and physical inactivity highlighted in chapter 2 are being downplayed in current public policy debate.[190] As we will explain in chapter 5, family influence during early years and subsequent peer effects are the most important areas for youth policy to focus on.

4 Original polling

In this chapter, we present the results of our original survey data. The raw data are included in annex A.

We were limited to a sample of 500 teenage girls in the UK aged 16–19, so we have sought to complement the existing body of contemporary polling evidence presented in chapters 1 and 2 to give a sense of what it is like to be a teenage girl in Britain in 2011.

We are grateful to YouGov for conducting the polling and for their advice on our questionnaire. In devising the questions, we have drawn heavily on what we believe to be the three best data sources on the contemporary attitudes of teenage girls in Britain: the Department for Education's Longitudinal Survey of Young People in England (LSYPE), the Prince's Trust and YouGov's 'Youth Index' from 2008, and the Girlguiding UK and Childwise 'Girls' Attitude Survey' from 2009 and 2010.[191] We hope our data will help inform the design of future surveys.

Our polling, when compared with these other recent representative sample surveys of teenage girls in Britain, suggests that the current generation of teenagers is suffering a worse form of 'teen angst' than previous generations and is especially anxious about their job prospects. Combined with the analysis we presented in chapter 2 of recent trends in the UK labour market, we conclude that this increase in teen angst is based on objectively tougher conditions. We therefore assert that it is harder to be a teenage girl in Britain today than it has been in the recent past.

Rather than ask teenage girls what they think are the best public policy solutions to their problems, we have attempted to give an insight into the way in which their lives are different from previous generations. We asked about their material values, as well as their emotional relationships. We found that their

relationship with technology is uniquely different from that of previous generations and scope some of the resulting policy challenges that look set to emerge over the coming years.

Our commissioned polling asks teenage girls directly about their happiness and self-esteem and about their relationships with family and friends. We find that their strongest and most significant relationships are with their mothers and friends but that the nature of those bonds differs greatly. Combined with the analysis we presented in chapter 1, we conclude that parental influence and peer effects continue to be crucial for this generation's successful transition to adulthood.

Happiness and self-esteem

In order to better understand this generation of teenage girls we used a section of our commissioned polling to create a three-year longitudinal dataset, by repeating several questions from the Girlguiding and Childwise surveys of 2009 and 2010 word-for-word.[192]

By using exactly the same wording, we were able to compare answers to the same question over several years, giving us an insight into how teenage girls' feelings and perceptions might have changed over the last few years. While the Girlguiding survey has a larger overall sample size, because of its wider age range (7–21-year-olds), our survey has a slightly larger sample size for 16–19-year-olds. For the most accurate and reliable comparisons between datasets, percentages from the Girlguiding survey in 2010 relate to respondents aged over 16, and aged between 16 and 21 in the 2009 survey.

More teenage girls than last year are unhappy

Our original commissioned polling shows that over the last year (2010 to 2011) the overall happiness of girls in the UK has shifted. According to our survey, 64 per cent of respondents claimed to feel quite happy most of the time, whereas in the 2009 and 2010 Girlguiding survey only 57 per cent and 53 per cent responded this way, respectively. At first glance, this might

appear to be a shift in the direction of a higher proportion of girls feeling happier, but this is not the case.

Instead, the spread of feelings of happiness and unhappiness has condensed: half as many report feeling 'very happy' in our 2011 survey (17 per cent) as in the Girlguiding 2010 survey (34 per cent), and double the proportion of girls report feeling 'not very happy' in our 2011 survey (16 per cent) compared with the Girlguiding 2010 survey (8 per cent) and its 2009 poll (9 per cent). So, despite the fact that more girls feel 'quite happy' most of the time in 2011 compared with 2010 and 2009, there are fewer feeling 'very happy', and considerably more feeling 'unhappy'.

Teenage girls from lower socioeconomic groups are less happy than those from higher socioeconomic groups

The socioeconomic background of teenage girls' families markedly influences girls' self-reported happiness. According to our polling, more girls from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (ABC1) surveyed reported being 'very happy' most of the time (19 per cent) than girls from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (13 per cent). Similarly, girls surveyed from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to report being 'not very happy' most of the time (21 per cent) than girls from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (15 per cent).

Teenage girls from lower socioeconomic groups are less happy than last year

Our polling shows that far fewer teenage girls from lower socioeconomic backgrounds questioned report being 'very happy' (13 per cent) than in the 2010 Girlguiding survey (20 per cent). At the same time, the proportion of teenage girls from lower socioeconomic backgrounds questioned who say they are 'not very happy' most of the time (21 per cent) has doubled compared with the 2010 survey (12 per cent).

Teenage girls are more confident about how others judge their character and personality than how they look

As we expected, our polling confirms that teenage girls are more confident about how others judge their character and personality (52 per cent) than how others judge the way they look (37 per cent). Indeed, one in five 16–18-year-olds say they are 'not at all confident' about how others judge the way they look.

Teenage girls like dressing up but don't think being attractive helps them get on in life

Teenagers in both surveys say the best thing about being a girl is getting to 'wear nice clothes, make-up and hairstyles' (54 per cent Demos 2011; 63 per cent 2010 Girlguiding survey). Similarly, 'body changes, periods and giving birth' were ranked as the worst thing about being a girl in both surveys (84 per cent Demos 2011; 86 per cent 2010 Girlguiding survey).[193] In our survey, 'pressure to look attractive' was also ranked highly (74 per cent) as a disadvantage, in line with the 2010 Girlguiding survey (73 per cent), although for younger respondents (under 16) it was ranked significantly lower.

Yet when it comes to what teenage girls think will help them be successful in life, 'being attractive/good looking' continues to rank low down in both our poll and the 2010 Girlguiding poll. Instead, 'having good friends' and 'success at school/college/uni' continue to be the top two answers.

Teenage girls want more money to spend and a better boyfriend

We asked what would make teenage girls happiest. Top answer was 'having more money to spend' (27 per cent) with 'a good or better relationship with a boyfriend, girlfriend or partner' ranked second (26 per cent). Among 16–18-year-olds, the answers were reversed but still close, with 19-year-olds rating more money (32 per cent) considerably higher than a better partner (24 per cent).

Teenage girls prefer friends to family to cheer them up

We asked what teenage girls do to cheer themselves up. The top two answers were 'spend time with friends' and 'listen to music alone'. Both of these seem to be tactics to avoid spending time with family, which ranked only seventh. Surprisingly, a quarter of legally under-age girls (16–17) in our survey said that they 'drink alcohol' to cheer themselves up.

Future prospects

Our survey confirms that teenage girls feel that 'success at school/college/uni' (92 per cent), 'having good friends' (72 per cent) and 'being kind/helping people' (70 per cent) will help them be successful in life. These categories were also popular in the 2010 Girlguiding survey, in which success at school (80 per cent) and having good friends (80 per cent) also topped the list.

The cult of celebrity does not appeal to this 'post-Big Brother generation' of 16–19-year-olds, with 'being famous' (7 per cent) the least highly ranked answer for what helps with success in life.

Teenage girls are more worried about getting a job than doing well in exams

In chapter 2 we saw that teenagers in the UK aged 14–15 said they are worried about their job prospects and say that 'even if they do well at school' they will 'have a hard time getting a job' (LSYPE wave 2). More than a third (38 per cent) of teenagers 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed'.

Our original commissioned polling shows that 84 per cent are worried about 'being able to get the job you want in the future' and almost as many (81 per cent) are worried about 'doing well in exams'. More than a third of girls (38 per cent) said they were 'very worried' about being able to get the job they want in the future.

Given that teenagers are facing the most competitive job market in two decades and that part-time and public sector jobs with higher levels of female participation are facing the greatest

cuts, this 'teen angst' seems not to be based on myth but grounded in objective reality.

Over three-quarters (76 per cent) said they were worried about not having enough money. These concerns were deemed to be more important than more traditional forms of teenage angst such as finding a boyfriend, girlfriend or partner (38 per cent), raising a family (38 per cent), and even getting into university (57 per cent).

Similarly, almost half (48 per cent) of respondents said that they were 'not very' or 'not at all' confident about their ability to get the job they want in the future. This concern was particularly acute for older respondents. Over half (55 per cent) of 19-year-olds were not confident about this issue compared with 47 per cent of 16–17-year-olds. This may be because of their greater experience of the competitive nature of the current UK job market.

Respondents from lower socioeconomic groups (C2DE) were relatively more concerned about their job prospects with over half (54 per cent) saying they are not confident, compared with 46 per cent of those from higher socioeconomic groups (ABC1), though this anxiety seems widespread.

We repeated a question from the Girlguiding survey that asks girls to pick from a list to indicate 'the main cause of stress for girls your age'. Getting a job is not an option on the list but the most common answer 'exams/tests' has declined from 86 per cent in 2010 to 72 per cent in 2011. The other top answer 'pressure to do well at school' has also declined from 85 per cent to 67 per cent.

To test the counterfactual, we also asked if girls were confident in their ability to get the job they want and found that more than half of 19-year-olds (55 per cent) were not confident, with more than one in ten (13 per cent) 'not at all confident'.

These results indicate that teenage girls are extremely worried about their future job prospects.

One in five teenage girls are suffering particularly severe angst, with money their main concern

We compared these results with the group of teenage girls who seem to be suffering the worst sense of angst: worthlessness. Almost one in five (18 per cent) teenage girls said they had been 'often' thinking of themselves as a worthless person recently and 4 per cent saying they were feeling worthless 'all the time'. This group was more worried about having enough money to spend (86 per cent) than the average respondent (76 per cent) and about paying back debts (50 per cent compared with 40 per cent for the average). On all other measures, including worrying about exams, they were also slightly more worried but money and debt worried them far more. This group was twice as likely to say they were not confident about their future happiness (65 per cent compared with an overall average of 33 per cent) and significantly less confident about their ability to get the job they want (72 per cent compared with an overall average of 48 per cent).

Older teenage girls think experience, rather than qualifications, will get them the job they want

Our poll asked teenage girls about what they think will most help them to get the job they want in the future. Perhaps unsurprisingly, 'having experience' and 'having qualifications' were picked as the most important factors by 40 per cent and 37 per cent of respondents respectively. Contacts and soft skills were thought to be less important: 'having friends and contacts' was rated top by just 10 per cent, and having 'the gift of the gab' rated top by just 8 per cent. Just one teenage girl in our sample of 505 picked 'looking good'.

Nonetheless, older teenage girls were less likely to place an emphasis on qualifications. Less than a third (29 per cent) of 19-year-olds picked qualifications as the most important factor, compared with 41 per cent of 16–17-year-olds. These data are interesting as they indicate that older teenagers are becoming sceptical about the usefulness of qualifications in the context of the record UK graduate unemployment rate we showed in chapter 2. Instead, girls aged 19 placed more emphasis on work

experience with almost half (49 per cent) picking this as the most important factor in getting the job they want, compared with only 37 per cent of 16–17-year-olds. The catch 22 for this generation of teenagers is that such work experience is increasingly difficult to find.

Teenage girls don't want to be stay-at-home mums

Less than one in ten (7 per cent) teenage girls want to stay at home to look after children in the future. Almost half of 16–19-year-old girls (48 per cent) want to work full-time while more than a third (35 per cent) want to work part-time and look after children part-time.

This is a striking result because of the way it contrasts with recent polling of older generations. A recent YouGov poll for the *Sunday Times* asked a similar question ('Imagine you had young children and were in a financial position to be able to choose, would you rather stay at home to bring up your children or go out to work?') of adult women (aged 18+) but only gave them two options: 'stay at home and look after children' scored significantly higher for every age group, with over half wanting to stay at home and just over a third saying 'I would prefer to go out to work.'[194]

The exception in the YouGov poll for the *Sunday Times* was the youngest age group (18–24-year-old women), which was evenly split at 44 per cent. While this question is obviously flawed because it does not give respondents the option of doing both, our comparative data for 16–17-year-old girls suggest that 85 per cent want to go out to work (52 per cent full-time and 35 per cent part-time), while just 7 per cent want to stay at home and look after children. This represents a huge shift across generations.

Relationships with family and friends

Teenage girls say they are closest to their mothers (39 per cent) and would be likely to talk to them if they have a problem or special news to share, even more than their friends (26 per cent). Teenage girls in the North, Midlands and Wales are closest to

their mums (44 per cent). Teenage girls in London are the least close to their mothers (24 per cent) and are the closest to their friends (35 per cent).

This broadly mirrored the results of the 2010 Girlguiding survey and confirms that mothers and friends, in that order, are the people who teenage girls are closest to. Between the age of 7 and the age of 14, closeness to fathers and closeness to friends reverses. Girls aged between 14 and 21 are consistently second closest to friends after their mothers, but less close to fathers, who slip from second to fourth place, after boyfriends.

Teenage girls discuss school work stress with their mums but relationship stress with their friends

Mothers and best friends are also rated as the best source of advice when worried about school or college work (28 per cent picked their mums, while 20 per cent picked best friends). But when it comes to relationships, more than half of teenage girls would turn to their best friend (53 per cent), with just one in ten turning to their mother (11 per cent).

Mothers are teenage girls' most trusted source of health advice

Teenage girls (aged 16–19) are most likely to turn to their mothers for advice about their health (40 per cent), more than twice as many who would go to their doctor (18 per cent). It is interesting to note that when worrying about health problems, 15 per cent would go to the internet for advice, over and above friends. This willingness to rely on the internet particularly for health advice is evident also in the 2010 Girlguiding survey, in which the internet was the most popular resource for advice about health, although the question did not include family and friends as an answer option.

Teenage girls choose spending time with friends over family

Twice as many teenage girls say spending time with friends (63 per cent) cheers them up as girls who say that spending time

with family (36 per cent) cheers them up. Only half of teenage girls (54 per cent) think that 'getting on well with family' helps them be successful in life but 72 per cent think 'having good friends' helps.

More than one in ten (10 per cent) 16-year-old girls say they would *least* like to be stuck on a desert island with their mother but exactly the same proportion say they would *most* like to be stranded with their mum. Older teenage girls (aged 19) are less keen (15 per cent) on being marooned with mother and are more likely to choose being stuck with their dad (11 per cent). Top of the hate list for teenage girls is their teacher or boss (48 per cent). Mothers are third choice for the person teenage girls would *most* like to be stuck with, after their best friend (35 per cent) and their boyfriend, girlfriend or partner (31 per cent).

Significantly, the respondents who said they would want to be stuck on a desert island with their mother the least were disproportionately more likely to suffer from self-esteem problems. A quarter (25 per cent) reported being unhappy compared with the average of 18 per cent. Two-thirds (66 per cent) said they were not confident about how others feel about the way they look compared with the average of 59 per cent. Over a third (34 per cent) reported feeling worthless as a person recently compared with the average (22 per cent).

While significantly more teenage girls would prefer a holiday with their own family (68 per cent), rather than with their friend's family (16 per cent), a holiday with friends is the third most highly rated thing on the their wish-list, after their own home and their own car.

Curfews

One in five girls aged 16 and 17 (21 per cent) think their parents make them come home 'too early' on week nights. But two in five (39 per cent) have no curfew at all.

Just over one in ten 16–17-year-old girls (12 per cent) who have a curfew have to be home by 11pm but most (17 per cent) have a 10pm curfew. A quarter (26 per cent) think their parents

didn't give them the right amount of freedom when they were growing up but most feel they had the right amount of responsibility (76 per cent).

The extent to which mothers influence teenage girls

Surprisingly, given how close they say they are to their mothers, 16–17-year-old girls reject the idea that their mothers influence them: with almost half (49 per cent) disagreeing that the way their mothers feel about their body image affects the way they feel about their own. One in five (20 per cent) strongly disagrees that the way their mothers feel about their body image affects the way they feel about their own. Girls from families in lower socioeconomic groups (C2DE) were more likely (51 per cent) to think their mother's self-esteem did not affect their own, while girls from families in higher socioeconomic groups (ABC1) were more likely to think their mother's self-esteem had affected their own (49 per cent).

But there is also evidence in our poll of the strong bond that can result in mothers' individual self-perceptions being passed on to their teenage daughters. For example, almost two-fifths of respondents (39 per cent) agreed with the statement 'the way my mother feels about her body image has affected the way I feel about mine', while just over two-fifths (44 per cent) of respondents said that their mother's self-esteem had an effect on their own self-esteem.

Material values and new technology

Our original commissioned polling also explores the degree of importance that this generation of teenage girls place on material possessions and their purchasing power. This issue is of particular interest in the light of recent Demos research that suggests that today's young people are likely to be materially less well off in adulthood than the previous generation.[195]

Money matters to teenage girls' happiness

The results of our polling show that teenage girls place a significant emphasis on their ability to purchase material goods. When we asked 'what would make you the happiest?', the top answer, given by more than a quarter (27 per cent), was 'having more money'. This was against our expectations. 19-year-olds rate 'having more money' the highest (32 per cent) with the widest gap from the second most popular answer 'a good or better relationship with a boyfriend/girlfriend/partner' (24 per cent).

Related to this, the vast majority (84 per cent) of teenage girls say that having 'more money of your own to spend' is important to them. Fully 40 per cent of 19-year-olds say that having more money of their own to spend is 'very important'. This contrasts with far less importance placed on having a 'boyfriend/girlfriend/partner' given by all age groups and all socioeconomic backgrounds.

Having their own money may be important for teenage girls' sense of independence. When we asked what they would most want to have if money was no object, the top answer was 'your own home' for all age groups (33 per cent overall), with higher ratings for older age groups. The second most popular answer was 'a car' (25 per cent), with higher ratings from lower age groups.

However, a desire to buy material products seems widespread and significant. Over half (56 per cent) buy new clothes or cosmetics more than once a month. Almost two-thirds of those from higher socioeconomic groups (61 per cent) report this frequency of spending compared with less than half (49 per cent) of those from lower socioeconomic groups.

We also found that teenage girls placed an emphasis on particular types of products. More than a quarter (27 per cent) say that buying clothes and gadgets that are branded is important to them. Twice as many teenage girls in London (41 per cent) say that branded goods are important to them compared with those in all other regions.

Teenage girls value the phone in their bag and the computers in their room more than anything else

Being connected, via the phone in their bag and the computer in their room, is what teenage girls seem to value the most. More than half (55 per cent) say that their mobile phone was the most important item currently in their bag. Over two-thirds (69 per cent) agree with the statement, 'I could not live without my mobile phone.' This emphasis was especially the case for 18–19-year-olds, of whom almost three-quarters (74 per cent) agreed with the statement.

The second highest ranked possession in their bag was another technological product, an MP3 player or ipod; more than a fifth (21 per cent) said this was the most important item in their bag. Non-technological products were consistently reported to be relatively less important: books (5 per cent), makeup (5 per cent), jewellery (1 per cent) and photos (1 per cent).

A similar preference for technological products was indicated when we asked 'what is the most important item in your bedroom?' Almost half (49 per cent) said their computer or laptop was most important to them. Far less valued are photographs (15 per cent), clothes (7 per cent) and books (6 per cent).

Teenage girls overwhelmingly use the internet to social network

Nearly two-thirds (62 per cent) of teenage girls say their main use of the internet is for social networking. This greatly outnumbered other uses such as for school or work (12 per cent), listening or downloading music (6 per cent), tweeting (5 per cent), shopping (4 per cent), reading news (3 per cent) and gaming (2 per cent).

The results show that teenage girls overwhelmingly rely on social networking websites to interact with their peers. Almost three-quarters (74 per cent) say they use the internet for socialising with friends, networking and organising their social life. Almost half (49 per cent) of respondents say that they go online when they are feeling down, to cheer themselves up.

A staggering 95 per cent of the teenage girls we surveyed said they have a profile on Facebook. A recent YouGov poll for Kaspersky Lab, an antivirus company, suggested that as many as

54 per cent of 18–24-year-olds have online 'friends' they have never met in real life.[196] While our poll shows similarly that over half (57 per cent) of girls aged 16–19 admitted they had friends on Facebook whom they did not actually know in person, few see the internet as the best place to find a boyfriend, girlfriend, partner or new best friend.

Social networking does not appear to have a significant influence on self-esteem. For example, of those who said that social networking was their main use of the internet, 82 per cent reported being happy compared with 81 per cent for all respondents, 53 per cent said they are confident about how others think about their character and personality compared with 52 per cent for all respondents, and 37 per cent reported being confident about how others think about the way they look, the same as the overall average of 37 per cent.

A small but significant number (15 per cent) reported that online resources were their main source of health advice, presumably because of the guarantee of anonymity. But only 3 per cent use online resources for advice on relationships. Instead, teenage girls prefer to approach those who know them personally: over half (53 per cent) said they would turn to their best friend to seek relationship advice.

Using this contemporary polling, in combination with our review of academic literature in chapter 1 and UK trends data in chapter 2, we now have a multidimensional understanding of the way that teenage girls in Britain today live their lives. We have a better sense of the issues affecting teenage girls that are different from those in the past, and can assess the issues that remain crucial to the successful transition to adulthood. In our final chapter we assess the drivers of self-esteem and positive outcomes, draw conclusions from our research and make recommendations to fill the current youth policy vacuum.

5 Drivers of self-esteem, conclusions and recommendations

From our analysis of UK trends and data on the wellbeing and outcomes of teenage girls' transition to adulthood in chapter 2 we conclude that girls are significantly more successful than boys in making the transition to adulthood and that, on aggregate, their outcomes are significantly better than those of boys.

However, we have also found that this generation of teenagers faces a significantly more difficult environment in which to make that transition, especially in relation to the current labour market and to new technology, particularly online social networking via internet-enabled mobile phones.

We find little to link self-esteem as a causal driver in the negative outcomes that teenage girls suffer but significant correlations of self-esteem with other vital non-cognitions – also known as 'soft skills' or 'character capabilities', such as locus of control. We see the establishing of teenage girls' self-esteem and their successful transition to adulthood, such as child poverty, teenage pregnancy, educational outcomes, binge drinking and physical inactivity, as being driven by the character capabilities established in their early years.

In formulating the most effective response to our findings, we must set this report in a context of previous research on youth wellbeing. Evidence shows that three kinds of disadvantage inhibit the development of character capabilities in children's early years: poverty, psychology and parenting.[197] Previous research by Demos shows that the children of parents with a low income and/or low educational qualifications are less likely to develop these character capabilities. Children of parents with a 'tough love' approach are most likely to develop character capabilities and children of those with 'disengaged' parents least likely.

We therefore conclude that poverty, parents and peers are the most important areas for youth policy to focus on. We see parental poverty and the influence of poor parenting as crucial drivers of successful outcomes and the early formation of resilient self-esteem and we see subsequent peer effects during childhood as crucial influences at the key junctions in the successful transition to adulthood.

As we showed in chapter 1, there is currently a policy vacuum for teenagers in general and teenage girls in particular. However, teenagers are being affected by other policy decisions and have a distinct experience of the Coalition Government's deficit reduction plan. Widespread cuts to children and youth services run by local authorities, the withdrawal of extended schools funding,[198] the abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance, the trebling of higher education tuition fees, the cancellation of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy and 16 changes to welfare payments that negatively affect families with children[199] are all public policy choices that will affect children and young people.

Our recommendations are focused on empowering young women and ensuring that they receive the education, support and guidance they require to make a successful transition to adulthood. In line with the overarching principles of the Byron Review in 2007,[200] our conclusion is that teenagers need to be empowered to deal with the dangers of irresponsible marketing and advertising and the inappropriate content they are bound to encounter via their internet-enabled mobile phones.

Messages about beauty and lifestyle are too prolific and extend much deeper into young people's lives than merely advertising and traditional media. Increasingly, teenage girls' main consumption of these messages is through online social networking and the transition of these messages is coming through peers with whom young people already have trusted relationships.

The advertising industry has a shared responsibility for the wellbeing of young people and should not be defensive about its role. Instead, it should offer to do more to ensure they do not cause harm. We see no evidence that regulation of media and

advertising will provide adequate protection and instead, believe that Government should focus youth policy on building the capability of teenagers to make a successful transition to adulthood.

We hope that the following recommendations will inform the recently announced consultation on youth policy and that new policy will focus on filling the current policy vacuum and addressing the impact the deficit reduction strategy is having on teenagers' life chances.

Poverty

We make the following recommendations:

· Reduce child poverty year-on-year and meet the 2020 target.
· Prioritise tackling youth unemployment, either through a more adequate replacement to the Future Jobs Fund or tax incentives for employers to hire young people who are long-term unemployed.
· Maintain reading and numeracy recovery programmes.
· Continue the successful 'hot spot' strategy to target teenage pregnancy.

Reduce child poverty year-on-year

As we showed in chapter 2, despite the Coalition Agreement committing the Government to a national child poverty target, the Institute for Fiscal Studies is predicting that poverty for children aged under-16 will rise in 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14.[201] The Government must act to prevent this and should set a new target date if it is unwilling or unable to meet the 2020 target.

Prioritise tackling youth unemployment

As we showed in chapter 1, the measures announced in the March 2011 budget are inadequate to meet the current crisis in youth unemployment identified in chapter 2. The Government should prioritise a drive to reduce youth unemployment,

especially the long-term NEET status. If funding on the scale of the cancelled Future Jobs Fund cannot be found (£1 billion over two years), the Government should consider waiving employers' National Insurance contributions for employees aged 16–21, with contributions tapering for 22–25-year-olds. The upfront cost would rapidly be made up by preventing more young people from moving onto costly benefits.

Reinstate reading and numeracy recovery programmes

Evidence shows the importance of core literacy and numeracy skills for young people making the transition from school to work.[202] Investment in recovery programmes – such as Every Child a Reader and Every Child Counts – are crucial to tackle the flow of young people into NEET status. The Government should create an entitlement for children who qualify for free school meals to one-to-one catch-up tuition to ensure that the pupil premium is spent by headteachers on the children it is intended to help.

Continue with the successful 'hot spot' strategy to target teenage pregnancy

As we showed in chapter 2, the UK has one of the worst rates of teenage pregnancy in the developed world but conceptions are the lowest they have been in a decade. The Coalition Government should continue to focus on hotspots of deprivation. Funding cuts to other budgets will make this increasingly important to prevent the reversal of recent progress.

Parents

We make the following recommendations:

· Maintain Sure Start on the principle of progressive universalism.
· Focus support services for parents on children's key transitions: from primary to secondary school, and from school to work or further education.

- Extend parental leave and flexible working.
- Provide step-parents with tailored support services.
- Prioritise holistic early years and primary school interventions that build social and emotional resilience and improve literacy and numeracy.

Maintain Sure Start as a universal service on the basis of progressive universalism

To guarantee maximum engagement across the social spectrum, Sure Start should continue to provide a universal service to all families but with more resource-intensive services targeted at the families that need them most. Sure Start has proved the value of integrated service provision and the positive benefit of social mix generated by universal service provision. Despite budgetary pressure the Department for Education should ensure that local authorities maintain Sure Start on the principle of progressive universalism.

Universal and high quality early years provision is vital to the Government's social mobility agenda and will reduce welfare bills in the long term. The skills required for success have broadened and softened. The most sought-after skills today – soft skills like self-regulation, empathy and application – begin to develop in the very earliest years and parents play the primary role in developing them in children.[203] Evidence shows that children born into poor families are overtaken in their cogitative development by wealthier peers in their early childhood.[204] This requires a continued commitment to Sure Start as a universal service and continued investment in workforce development in the early years.

Government-commissioned research based on interviews with parents and service providers makes a compelling case for 'universal support that improves parents' awareness of adolescent development' and 'targeted support that is sufficiently resourced so that it can flexibly address the needs of families with teenagers confronting very serious problems'.[205]

The importance of universal provision of services is vital to avoid stigma and increase take up. Universal services for parents

are also crucial for generating positive peer effects that avoid ghettoisation.

Focus support services for parents on children's key transitions

It is clear from polling of girls across age ranges that self-esteem, happiness and wellbeing are jeopardised at two key transition points: from primary to secondary school, and from school to work or further education.[206] This has an impact on parents, as well as their children, and should be recognised in the design and provision of services to support them.

Demos' work on the early years highlights the importance of social networks to boost parental confidence.[207] Demos research also shows that parents need greater encouragement to continue good parenting as their children grow older.

Our polling shows that teenage girls turn to their mothers first for advice on a number of issues, making it particularly important that mothers are confident in the advice they give. To support parents we recommend that government should:

Set the standard for reliable parenting information and advice.[208]

Given the impact of parenting on child outcomes and the role they play in preparing and supporting their daughters through their teenage years, Government should reroute funds to support third sector organisations and online parenting forums to deliver information on effective parenting throughout their children's development. Government's role should be to set out clear guidelines on high quality parenting advice and safeguard the standard of information from third-party sources.

Develop a parenting 'booster' class.

In line with previous Demos recommendations on parenting booster classes for parents of primary school aged children, the Government should commission the development of a parenting class aimed at parents when their children first start secondary school. This would focus on helping parents to maintain and

update good parenting approaches as their children grow up and would provide an important opportunity for the school to establish a relationship with parents early on. Schools could train either their teachers or parent liaison officers to deliver evidence-based programmes, or could commission this service from voluntary and community sector organisations.

Extend parental leave and flexible working, especially for fathers

The importance of fathers in young men's lives is well documented and is the focus of many policies around young men's development. The transition to womanhood can be an awkward time for fathers and their daughters but by placing the onus on mothers, society risks excluding fathers from the crucial role they could play in boosting their daughters' self-esteem.

Bringing about greater opportunities for men to be involved in their children's lives will require support from women and employers, as well as an enabling public policy environment. Involving fathers in caring roles early on is key to sustaining this through the teenage years.

In a bid to cut bureaucracy, the green paper on growth by HM Treasury and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has scrapped regulations that would have given parents of children under 17 the right to request flexible working.[209]

Lexmond et al show that parenting has become less of a collective endeavour and that parents are now increasingly likely to 'go it alone'. They show how parenting is becoming a more isolated and anxious job and there is more pressure on parents' relationships with their partners and their children.[210] The research makes a compelling case for *extended flexible working and for 'use it or lose it' transferable parental leave*, based on the Icelandic model (which allows parental leave to be taken in three instalments of three months, with one designated to the mother, one to the father, and one that may be shared between parents).

Health visitors and Sure Start workers should always ask to register both the mother and father of the child. They should receive training on how to appeal to and encourage fathers and male carers as parents.[211]

Provide step-parents with tailored support services

Step-parents take on parenting responsibility at different times in their own and their step-children's life-cycles. As the divorce rate has risen and more children are born to cohabiting couples, family reformation is becoming an increasingly common experience for teenagers in Britain.[212] Specifically tailored support for step-parents is therefore becoming increasingly important. Our original commissioned polling suggests that teenage girls are not very close to their fathers, and step-fathers who take on responsibility for a teenage step-daughter will face a particularly difficult challenge in forging a close relationship.

Prioritise holistic early years and primary school interventions that build social and emotional resilience and improve literacy and numeracy

Birdwell et al show the risks of parental disengagement on the development of literacy and numeracy skills as well as the risks of NEET status for young people lacking literacy and numeracy skills.[213] The Prince's Trust shows the damaging long-term impact of NEET status on young people's wellbeing,[214] while the state of the current labour market makes youth unemployment a looming policy crisis that needs to be urgently addressed.

Peers

We make the following recommendations:

· Support, promote and protect extracurricular activities.
· Extend opportunities for teenage girls to undertake physical activity.
· Boost careers advice and work experience in schools.
· Improve messages around alcohol.
· Focus on media literacy rather than labelling.

Support, promote and protect extracurricular activities

Policy needs to find ways to inject adult mediation and mentoring into teenagers' leisure time. Youth policy should

support, promote and protect extracurricular activities that are purposeful, such as civic service. Girlguiding and Scouts are excellent examples of purposeful activities that are adult mediated and widely available to a younger cohort.

Recent polling suggests that young women with a female role model in their lives are less likely to feel anxious or experience rejection than their peers.[215] Margo et al 2006 show compelling evidence to suggest that uniformed activities with hierarchical leadership structures contribute to young people's development of non-cognitions, or soft skills.[216] The earning of competency badges serves to further reinforce achievement and develop persistence.

Being active in the community is a positive way for girls to build relationships and the characteristics our polling shows they admire, such as helping others, being brave and overcoming obstacles. The value of civic service to boosting life skills and self-esteem has been noted in previous Demos research. In *Service Nation*, Demos recommended a lifecycle approach to service including:

· service learning at school
· options to take part in full-time service opportunities as part of 16–18 compulsory education, leading to a vocational qualification
· post-18 gap-year-style service opportunities
· service for university undergraduates[217]

Implementing these recommendations would ensure that all teenagers were able to access the opportunities that civic service and community volunteering can offer. There is a need to ensure that within the Big Society agenda there are activities to attract older teenagers.

Extend opportunities for teenage girls to undertake physical activity

Less than 1 in 4 girls do the recommended weekly amount of physical activity. Sport and exercise can be an effective counter-balance to many of the negative trends in the teenage years, encouraging mixing across age groups, reducing stress and

improving girls' self-perception of their body image. Polling of younger girls in the UK suggests that they experience a lack of opportunity to participate in sports and physical activity in comparison with boys.[218] There is also evidence that girls in Britain take part in substantially less exercise than boys.[219] Finally, there is academic evidence to show a positive effect of exercise on self-esteem but the effect is greater for physical-fitness-oriented programmes, such as aerobic dance, than for motor skills or sports-based programmes. Impact is particularly great for programmes that encourage mastery and self-development, rather than competition.[220]

While team sports can clearly have positive impacts on leadership and teamwork skills, if they are the only options available to teenage girls, their levels of physical inactivity are likely to remain higher than boys. Instead, opportunities for girls to undertake physical activity should be expanded to be based on those that develop individual mastery, such as dance, yoga, tai-chi, martial arts, indoor rock climbing and so on.

Fit for Girls in Scotland is an example of a successful targeted programme run by 27 secondary schools, which resulted in an average increase of girls' participation from 18 per cent to 27 per cent within the first year.[221] The strategy was based on consultation with girls and resulted in creating 'girls only' sessions and girls' multi-activity clubs.

The 2012 Olympics is an opportunity for Sport England to showcase female role models excelling in non-team sports and to promote physical-fitness-oriented programmes that encourage mastery and self-development. Sport England should use the publicity surrounding the Olympics to encourage schools to trail Olympic branded girls-only multi-activity sessions, seek feedback and actively consult teenage girls about expanding their opportunities for physical activity.

Boost careers advice and work experience in schools

As grant cuts to local authorities lead to further cuts in local Connexions career advice services (for example, Lewisham in south London has made a 100 per cent cut[222]) the sense of a

national service or universal offer of advice and guidance for young people loses its relevance. The Government will need to address this void in its forthcoming youth policy review. The new commitment to establish an all-age careers service by April 2012 (in the Government's new Social Mobility Strategy[223]) should include specialised and tailored services for teenage girls.

In our survey, teenage girls highlighted the importance they place on qualifications. When they hit 19 years old, however, more picked experience as being important for getting the job they want over qualifications. This shows some scepticism about the ability of higher education to offer teenage girls the careers they want, which may be realistic given the current graduate labour market.

As well as making sure that girls do not feel stereotyped into traditionally female career roles (those taking part in our survey highlighted this as one of the disadvantages of being a girl), employers and careers advisers need to be able to offer teenage girls good quality, up-to-date advice about where the qualifications or work experience they choose is likely to take them in the future. We recommend that the Government makes career advice, employer engagement and work-related learning key components of assessing schools and colleges.[224]

Schools should be judged on the coherence and coordination of a work-related learning strategy that extends throughout Years 7–11, awarding points to schools that begin career advice and education much earlier in Key Stage 3.

The quality of work experience in schools should be vastly improved and more properly integrated with the curriculum and careers advice. There should be more preparation before a placement and debriefing and reflection time afterwards.

The Government and schools should consider expanding the offer of work experience from two weeks for some young people, and explore the possibility of offering work experience earlier in Key Stage 3. The Government should also continue to encourage new academies and free schools to explore more innovative approaches to work experience provision.

There is also a need to increase the opportunities for business leaders and adults in the local community to engage

with young people through schools. Businesses also benefit from engaging with schools. In line with Demos recommendations in *The Forgotten Half*, we recommend that schools and businesses give greater priority to these mutually beneficial alliances: schools, by becoming radically more open institutions with structures and processes facilitating this; businesses, by taking on a greater role in the education of young people.[225]

Responsible adult role models were shown to be significant in reducing feelings of anxiety or a sense of rejection among teens. The teenagers who took part in the Demos and Girl Guiding surveys did not rate celebrity or attractiveness as characteristics they looked for in role models, instead choosing attributes such as 'helps others', 'brave/courageous', 'clever' and 'overcoming hard times'.

But parental distancing and the exclusion of teenagers from many areas of public life means there are too few opportunities for them to mix with adults and older teenagers who display these characteristics and offer support and advice for teenage girls. At a point where young people are more susceptible to peer influence than any other, our research stresses the importance of cross-generation socialising for teenagers.

Previous Demos research has highlighted the important role that mentoring programmes can play in young people's wellbeing.

Government, businesses and charities should invest in mentoring schemes (eg Big Brother, Big Sister) for young people between the ages of 8 and 16[226]

It is clear from our original commissioned polling that teenage girls would benefit from both women-only face-to-face support – like that provided by Platform 51 – and support that is integrated with social networking sites, especially Facebook.

Platform 51's own polling suggests that two-thirds of 12–17-year-old girls would feel more comfortable speaking to a woman than a man about their problems, while just 3 per cent would be happier talking to a man.[227]

But our polling suggests that advice that can be shared by networks of friends would also have a major impact on this

generation of social networkers. With 95 per cent of those in our sample saying they have a Facebook profile and more than half saying they would consult friends for relationship advice, it seems that preventative advice that could be virally shared could have a significant impact.

Improve messages around alcohol

Particularly worrying is the evidence that girls under the age of 18 frequently turn to alcohol as a way to relax, forget their problems and cheer themselves up. As part of a wider drive to improve social attitudes around alcohol, the Government, schools and local authorities should promote opportunities for increased participation in activities that offer an alternative.

Reducing alcohol consumption among teenage girls could be helped by *government issuing advice to parents on drinking in front of children*. There is limited evidence that witnessing moderate drinking by adults (especially parents), rather than simply being told about it, helps to build expectations of moderate drinking behaviour among children and teenagers. This may not stop binge-drinking altogether, but it can create a counterweight to peer norms, making young people familiar with other ways of drinking. The evidence suggests that parents play a key role in this, particularly through leading by example and helping children to develop personal skills such as self-reliance, application and self-control from an early age.[228]

Support non-preachy social marketing campaigns.

Social marketing is best deployed via campaigns that focus on correcting misconceptions about other people's behaviour, harm reduction rather than cessation of drinking, and non-preachy messages that go with the grain of people's behaviour. These kinds of campaigns are premised on a more realistic and accurate understanding of why people behave in particular ways.

In respect of changing alcohol consumption among teenage girls, we believe social marketing might helpfully focus on *ensuring teenagers know how many units they consume when*

drinking and correcting perceptions about how much other people drink, such as *emphasising that the vast majority of people do not drink excessively*.

Encouraging a healthier relationship between teenage girls and alcohol requires social and attitudinal change that focuses on awareness and healthy relaxation alternatives. In parallel with this, laws against irresponsible retailing of alcohol to underage drinkers must be rigorously enforced.

Focus on media literacy rather than labelling

In surveying the evidence used by the Campaign for Body Confidence, we were not able to find evidence that the labelling of altered images would improve the self-esteem of teenage girls. There are also clear difficulties in implementing such a policy in the contemporary context, in which social and new media play increasingly prominent roles in young people's lives.

Our research suggests that the best approach to counteract the negative impact that altered media images may have on young women is to focus on boosting their emotional resilience and media literacy, not demanding radical change within advertising. This is already a focus of schools policy but we recommend schools and colleges encourage extracurricular activities that help build life skills, including media literacy. Schools and colleges should:

· follow the example of the BSix Baccalaureate programme and seek to develop 'enrichment' frameworks that help to prioritise and capture 'life skills'
· expand service learning opportunities for young people so they can gain access to the skills sets that would help boost their confidence in being able to participate in the labour market as well as their life skills and ability to navigate the adult world.[229]

The bombardment of media images that children are exposed to gives clear reason to *include media literacy earlier on in the PSHE syllabus at Key Stage 3*, rather than waiting until Key Stage 4.

Implementing these recommendations across the age ranges would ensure that teenage girls are armed as best as they can be for making the transition to adulthood with resource, parental and peer support.

Annex
YouGov/Demos Survey
Results

Sample Size: 505 Young Females
Fieldwork: 8th – 15th March 2011

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
Weighted Sample	505	250	125	129	353	152
Unweighted Sample	505	216	155	134	355	150
	%	%	%	%	%	%

How happy are you most of the time?

Very happy	17	19	15	16	19	13
Quite happy	64	59	71	69	65	62
Not very happy	16	20	14	12	15	21
Not at all happy	2	2	1	3	1	4

How worried, if at all, are you about...

Being able to get the job you want in the future

Very worried	38	37	36	40	35	45
Fairly worried	46	49	44	40	47	41
TOTAL WORRIED	84	86	80	80	82	86
Not very worried	11	10	12	12	11	10
Not at all worried	4	2	5	4	4	2
TOTAL NOT WORRIED	15	12	17	16	15	12
Don't know	2	2	2	3	2	3

Having enough money

Very worried	33	32	34	35	32	37
Fairly worried	43	45	43	40	44	42
TOTAL WORRIED	76	77	77	75	76	79
Not very worried	19	19	18	19	21	14
Not at all worried	3	3	3	3	3	5
TOTAL NOT WORRIED	22	22	21	22	24	19
Don't know	2	1	2	2	1	3

	Region					Working Status	
	London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
	57	161	113	132	43	268	135
	67	178	113	98	49	265	139
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	13	19	18	15	23	18	15
	65	59	68	71	54	61	71
	22	20	13	11	21	20	14
	0	2	1	2	2	1	0
	46	40	40	32	31	37	37
	39	43	42	54	48	47	45
	85	83	82	86	79	84	82
	11	12	11	7	17	11	13
	1	4	6	3	2	3	3
	12	16	17	10	19	14	16
	4	1	1	4	2	2	2
	21	35	38	34	29	34	28
	52	42	40	43	45	43	47
	73	77	78	77	74	77	75
	23	21	17	15	20	18	20
	0	3	5	4	4	4	3
	23	24	22	19	24	22	23
	4	0	1	3	2	1	2

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%

How worried, if at all, are you about... *continued*

Doing well in exams						
Very worried	49	56	46	37	52	41
Fairly worried	32	27	36	40	31	35
TOTAL WORRIED	81	83	82	77	83	76
Not very worried	11	12	10	10	11	11
Not at all worried	6	3	6	10	5	9
TOTAL NOT WORRIED	17	15	16	20	16	20
Don't know	2	2	2	3	1	4

Getting into university or college						
Very worried	34	48	32	11	35	34
Fairly worried	23	29	23	10	21	26
TOTAL WORRIED	57	77	55	21	56	60
Not very worried	14	14	13	17	14	16
Not at all worried	26	7	29	62	29	21
TOTAL NOT WORRIED	40	21	42	79	43	37
Don't know	2	2	3	1	2	4

Paying back debts						
Very worried	13	16	10	10	14	10
Fairly worried	27	21	26	40	30	21
TOTAL WORRIED	40	37	36	50	44	31
Not very worried	30	32	29	27	29	31
Not at all worried	24	24	31	18	22	28
TOTAL NOT WORRIED	54	56	60	45	51	59
Don't know	6	7	4	5	5	9

Finding a boyfriend/girlfriend						
Very worried	14	15	16	12	14	14
Fairly worried	24	25	25	22	23	27
TOTAL WORRIED	38	40	41	34	37	41
Not very worried	29	32	24	26	31	24
Not at all worried	30	26	30	37	30	30
TOTAL NOT WORRIED	59	58	54	63	61	54
Don't know	3	2	5	3	2	5

Region					Working Status	
London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
61	53	48	41	40	53	42
21	32	37	34	35	28	44
82	85	85	75	75	81	86
11	8	10	16	9	11	9
3	6	5	6	10	6	3
14	14	15	22	19	17	12
4	1	0	3	6	1	2
48	40	35	28	10	38	24
25	22	25	23	15	23	23
73	62	60	51	25	61	47
9	12	16	16	21	16	16
14	24	23	30	47	22	35
23	36	39	46	68	38	51
4	1	1	2	8	1	2
12	18	12	9	8	11	12
22	28	32	23	33	26	30
34	46	44	32	41	37	42
33	30	26	33	26	30	32
18	20	28	27	31	27	20
51	50	54	60	57	57	52
14	4	3	8	2	6	5
21	18	13	9	8	15	13
18	22	24	28	28	27	21
39	40	37	37	36	42	34
38	30	24	28	26	25	33
19	27	37	31	35	31	29
57	57	61	59	61	56	62
4	3	2	3	4	2	4

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%

How worried, if at all, are you about... *continued*

One day raising a family						
Very worried	8	10	9	5	7	11
Fairly worried	30	26	35	33	28	36
TOTAL WORRIED	38	36	44	38	35	47
Not very worried	40	43	38	36	43	33
Not at all worried	17	17	13	21	18	14
TOTAL NOT WORRIED	57	60	51	57	61	47
Don't know	5	4	4	5	4	7

Saving for a pension						
Very worried	5	5	8	2	4	6
Fairly worried	21	17	21	28	21	20
TOTAL WORRIED	26	22	29	30	25	26
Not very worried	42	42	44	39	42	41
Not at all worried	27	31	23	22	27	27
TOTAL NOT WORRIED	69	73	67	61	69	68
Don't know	6	5	5	8	6	6

Which of the following, if any, would make you the happiest?

	Total	16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
Having more money to spend	27	25	27	32	27	28
A good or better relationship with a boyfriend, girlfriend or partner	26	26	29	24	28	22
A better time at work, college or school	16	20	15	10	18	11
Better relationships with friends	12	12	9	13	12	11
Better relationships with family	6	5	5	7	5	7
Living in a nicer home	1	1	1	2	1	3
None of these	5	4	8	5	5	7
Don't know	6	6	7	7	5	10

Region					Working Status	
London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
7	9	11	6	7	7	7
27	34	28	31	28	30	34
34	43	39	37	35	37	41
42	36	40	43	42	44	34
17	18	18	14	18	16	19
59	54	58	57	60	60	53
7	3	3	7	6	3	6
9	5	3	4	8	5	4
15	20	25	20	23	18	28
24	25	28	24	31	23	32
34	42	41	46	37	43	38
28	28	29	22	27	28	26
62	70	70	68	64	71	64
15	5	1	8	4	6	4
26	25	24	32	31	26	24
21	27	21	29	34	28	28
23	16	18	13	15	18	13
11	13	13	11	6	12	14
7	4	11	2	6	6	3
3	1	1	2	0	0	2
3	8	7	2	5	6	5
6	5	6	9	2	4	10

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%

What do you do to cheer yourself up when you're feeling down?

Spend time with friends	63	63	65	61	66	55
Listen to music alone	60	66	55	53	59	62
Eat my favorite food	59	58	57	61	61	53
Watch TV	54	50	60	53	57	45
Go online	49	45	51	54	49	50
Shopping	46	40	49	55	50	37
Spend time with family	36	33	32	43	39	27
Drink alcohol	25	26	25	23	24	27
Sports or exercise	22	20	25	23	23	19
Other	10	12	9	8	10	12
Don't know	3	2	3	3	2	5

How confident, if at all, are you about…

Your future happiness						
Very confident	10	11	9	8	10	8
Fairly confident	51	50	50	53	51	51
TOTAL CONFIDENT	61	61	59	61	61	59
Not very confident	27	27	28	26	28	25
Not at all confident	6	8	4	6	5	11
TOTAL NOT CONFIDENT	33	35	32	32	33	36
Don't know	6	4	8	7	6	5
How others think about the way you look						
Very confident	6	5	6	6	6	5
Fairly confident	31	28	33	33	32	27
TOTAL CONFIDENT	37	33	39	39	38	32
Not very confident	39	41	33	39	39	38
Not at all confident	20	21	21	17	18	25
TOTAL NOT CONFIDENT	59	62	54	56	57	63
Don't know	5	5	6	5	5	6
How others think about your character and personality						
Very confident	6	7	7	3	6	7
Fairly confident	46	45	51	44	49	41
TOTAL CONFIDENT	52	52	58	47	55	48
Not very confident	32	32	27	37	32	32
Not at all confident	11	12	10	10	9	15
TOTAL NOT CONFIDENT	43	44	37	47	41	47
Don't know	4	3	4	6	4	6

Region					Working Status	
London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
63	64	64	60	67	66	65
68	56	60	60	66	61	56
56	59	52	59	73	61	58
57	55	51	47	68	53	57
48	49	42	52	59	49	46
43	43	48	45	54	45	43
32	35	32	39	41	38	34
21	22	25	27	39	26	27
21	22	23	18	30	20	25
13	10	12	7	13	11	8
3	1	2	5	2	3	2
9	10	14	5	10	10	8
51	53	46	56	43	50	55
60	63	60	61	53	60	63
26	26	29	26	34	29	26
6	7	8	4	9	7	3
32	33	37	30	43	36	29
9	5	3	9	4	4	8
3	4	8	4	10	6	6
33	32	27	32	30	28	34
36	36	35	36	40	34	40
39	39	41	36	37	42	37
19	20	20	20	16	20	16
58	59	61	56	53	62	53
6	4	3	7	7	3	7
9	6	7	5	7	7	4
46	46	46	50	40	46	45
55	52	53	55	47	53	49
32	35	30	32	27	32	36
9	11	11	9	19	11	11
41	46	41	41	46	43	47
4	2	6	5	6	3	4

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%

How confident, if at all, are you about... *continued*

Your ability to get the job you want
Very confident	6	6	6	5	6	4
Fairly confident	40	43	40	35	43	34
TOTAL CONFIDENT	46	49	46	40	49	38
Not very confident	38	38	35	42	38	38
Not at all confident	10	9	10	13	8	16
TOTAL NOT CONFIDENT	48	47	45	55	46	54
Don't know	6	5	9	6	5	8

How much, if at all, have you been thinking of yourself as...

A worthless person recently?
Never	15	13	19	13	15	15
Rarely	29	26	31	34	29	29
Occasionally	31	32	27	34	32	29
Often	18	21	15	16	19	17
All the time	4	5	5	2	3	7
Don't know	3	3	4	1	2	4

A physically attractive person recently?
Never	11	15	10	6	10	16
Rarely	39	42	39	33	36	44
Occasionally	31	27	32	39	34	25
Often	13	12	11	18	15	9
All the time	2	2	1	2	2	2
Don't know	3	3	6	2	3	5

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements...

The way my mother feels about her body-image has affected the way I feel about mine
Strongly agree	10	9	10	13	12	6
Tend to agree	29	29	29	30	32	23
TOTAL AGREE	39	38	39	43	44	29
Tend to disagree	30	29	31	30	31	28
Strongly disagree	18	20	18	13	15	25
TOTAL DISAGREE	48	49	49	43	46	53
Don't know	13	13	12	14	11	18

Region					Working Status	
London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
3	4	7	7	8	5	4
40	43	36	41	39	40	44
43	47	43	48	47	45	48
43	40	37	36	35	41	34
8	10	15	6	12	10	9
51	50	52	42	47	51	43
5	4	4	10	6	4	8
15	12	24	10	12	14	13
25	31	26	31	28	28	36
33	26	25	39	42	32	31
20	22	18	13	16	20	15
4	6	5	2	0	4	2
4	2	1	4	2	2	3
12	11	11	11	11	11	10
38	35	43	45	25	39	34
29	39	29	22	40	32	35
13	12	11	14	22	13	15
1	1	4	1	0	2	1
6	2	1	6	2	2	4
10	15	9	6	9	11	8
24	28	36	28	25	31	27
34	43	45	34	34	42	35
40	26	26	36	25	30	33
15	21	17	16	17	16	20
55	47	43	52	42	46	53
11	10	12	14	25	12	13

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements…*continued*

The way my mother feels about her self-esteem has affected the way I feel about my self-esteem

	Total	16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
Strongly agree	10	7	10	14	10	9
Tend to agree	34	33	35	35	39	21
TOTAL AGREE	44	40	45	49	49	30
Tend to disagree	28	29	30	24	28	29
Strongly disagree	14	15	12	13	11	22
TOTAL DISAGREE	42	44	42	37	39	51
Don't know	14	15	12	15	13	19

I feel like my parents gave me the right amount of freedom growing up

	Total	16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
Strongly agree	28	30	26	27	28	29
Tend to agree	41	39	45	42	44	34
TOTAL AGREE	69	69	71	69	72	63
Tend to disagree	18	20	14	19	18	19
Strongly disagree	8	6	10	8	6	12
TOTAL DISAGREE	26	26	24	27	24	31
Don't know	5	5	5	4	3	7

I feel like my parents gave me the right amount of responsibility growing up

	Total	16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
Strongly agree	27	26	26	29	28	26
Tend to agree	50	50	52	48	54	40
TOTAL AGREE	77	76	78	77	82	66
Tend to disagree	13	13	15	12	12	17
Strongly disagree	4	4	2	6	3	5
TOTAL DISAGREE	17	17	17	18	15	22
Don't know	6	7	4	5	3	12

When you are older, do you think you want to go out to work or stay at home looking after children?

	Total	16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
Work full-time	48	52	45	42	46	51
Work part-time and look after children part-time	35	33	32	40	39	26
Stay at home and look after children	7	7	11	4	6	9
None of these	2	2	1	1	1	4
Don't know	9	5	12	12	8	10

Region					Working Status	
London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
6	13	9	7	11	10	6
29	32	39	34	34	34	33
35	45	48	41	45	44	39
35	28	23	33	16	29	31
14	15	13	13	15	13	15
49	43	36	46	31	42	46
16	11	16	13	25	14	14
31	33	28	23	26	28	29
32	42	38	46	45	47	36
63	75	66	69	71	75	65
24	16	19	19	17	14	25
11	7	8	7	6	6	7
35	23	27	26	23	20	32
2	2	7	5	6	5	3
20	31	32	22	26	25	28
56	47	38	59	54	54	53
76	78	70	81	80	79	81
16	13	15	12	9	13	13
5	5	6	2	0	3	3
21	18	21	14	9	16	16
4	4	9	5	11	6	4
54	46	47	46	50	51	44
37	35	34	36	32	35	34
5	6	7	7	14	7	7
0	3	1	3	0	1	2
4	10	12	8	4	6	13

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%

What do you think will help you MOST to get the job you want?

Having experience	40	37	36	49	39	42
Having qualifications	37	41	38	29	42	28
Having friends and contacts	10	9	11	9	9	10
Being able to talk the talk or having 'the gift of the gab'	8	9	9	7	6	13
Looking good	0	0	0	1	0	1
Other	1	1	1	2	1	1
Don't know	4	3	6	3	3	6

Which would you prefer the most, a holiday with your own family or a holiday with one of your friend's families?

With my family	68	68	65	69	70	61
With my friend's family	16	19	14	12	15	17
Neither	11	9	13	13	11	11
Don't know	6	4	8	6	3	11

Where do you turn for advice when you are a worried about...

School, college or work						
Mother	28	28	30	25	29	24
Best friend	20	20	20	20	19	24
Staff at school or college	17	20	15	12	17	16
Boyfriend, girlfriend or partner	11	8	9	18	12	10
Father	6	5	9	7	8	3
Sister	4	4	4	3	3	4
Brother	2	1	1	3	2	2
The internet	2	2	3	3	3	2
Grandparent	0	0	1	1	0	1
Doctor	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	1	0	2	0	1	1
No one	6	8	2	5	5	8
Don't know	3	3	4	4	3	5

Region					Working Status	
London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
31	33	39	49	49	38	46
46	38	44	29	31	40	34
14	13	4	9	9	11	7
4	11	6	9	9	7	8
0	1	0	0	0	0	1
2	2	1	0	0	1	1
4	2	5	4	2	3	3
72	70	63	70	62	69	70
20	15	20	14	10	17	10
5	11	8	11	23	9	15
4	4	9	5	5	4	5
21	24	34	30	27	30	23
25	19	24	16	21	19	22
20	20	12	18	9	19	15
9	12	12	9	13	11	10
9	7	4	5	6	5	12
2	5	3	3	4	3	4
0	1	1	3	2	1	1
3	2	2	3	2	4	1
0	1	1	0	0	0	1
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	1	0	1	0	1	1
6	6	3	9	6	5	7
4	2	4	3	8	3	3

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%

Where do you turn for advice when you are a worried about… *continued*

Your health
Mother	40	39	41	42	41	40
Doctor	18	18	12	25	19	16
The internet	15	15	17	12	15	13
Boyfriend, girlfriend or partner	7	5	6	13	7	8
Best friend	4	6	5	1	4	6
Father	2	3	2	1	3	2
Sister	1	2	2	0	2	1
Brother	0	1	0	0	0	0
Grandparent	0	0	1	1	0	1
Staff at school or college	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	1	1	1	0	1	0
No one	6	9	5	3	5	10
Don't know	4	3	6	3	4	2

Relationships
Best friend	53	53	59	47	56	46
Mother	11	10	10	15	13	8
Boyfriend, girlfriend or partner	9	7	7	17	9	10
Sister	6	6	7	5	5	8
The internet	3	4	2	1	2	4
Father	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brother	0	1	0	0	0	0
Grandparent	0	0	1	1	0	1
Staff at school or college	0	0	0	1	0	1
Doctor	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	2	0	1	0
No one	12	16	8	9	11	17
Don't know	4	4	5	4	4	5

How important, if at all, is it to you to have…

A boyfriend, girlfriend or partner
Very important	21	19	21	27	21	23
Quite important	45	46	46	43	47	41
TOTAL IMPORTANT	66	65	67	70	68	64
Not very important	24	26	22	21	23	24
Not at all important	5	6	5	3	4	6
TOTAL NOT IMPORTANT	29	32	27	24	27	30
Don't know	5	3	6	6	4	5

Region					Working Status	
London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
44	34	44	46	32	41	43
18	20	15	19	17	17	20
11	16	17	11	23	17	13
5	8	8	5	12	5	8
5	4	8	2	4	6	3
6	4	0	2	0	3	1
0	2	1	2	2	1	2
0	0	0	1	0	0	0
0	1	1	0	0	0	1
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	2	0	1	0
6	6	5	8	7	6	5
4	5	2	3	4	3	4
61	53	53	50	50	57	52
10	10	12	12	12	10	13
3	12	11	8	9	9	10
5	4	11	4	6	5	7
0	4	1	3	2	3	2
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	1	0	0	0
0	1	1	0	0	0	1
0	1	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	1	0	1	1
17	11	9	15	15	12	9
4	4	2	6	6	3	5
20	21	20	23	24	19	22
47	46	41	45	54	49	46
67	67	61	68	78	68	68
27	23	30	20	15	23	19
2	5	2	9	4	4	7
29	28	32	29	19	27	26
4	5	8	3	2	3	7

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%

How important, if at all, is it to you to have… *continued*

More money of your own to spend

Very important	37	35	37	40	34	44
Quite important	47	51	42	43	48	43
TOTAL IMPORTANT	84	86	79	83	82	87
Not very important	13	11	16	14	15	10
Not at all important	1	1	1	1	1	0
TOTAL NOT IMPORTANT	14	12	17	15	16	10
Don't know	2	2	3	2	2	3

Generally speaking, where do you think you are most likely to find a…

Boyfriend, girlfriend or partner

At school, college or work	41	40	40	44	41	39
At an extracurricular activity, youth club or activity group	11	12	11	9	14	5
At a house party	10	16	5	5	11	9
At a pub, bar or club	10	9	10	11	8	13
Online	4	3	4	5	4	3
None of these	7	5	8	9	6	8
Don't know	18	15	22	18	16	23

New best friend

At school, college or work	71	76	66	67	73	68
At an extracurricular activity, youth club or activity group	12	13	10	12	13	10
Online	2	1	2	2	1	3
At a house party	2	2	2	1	1	3
At a pub, bar or club	1	1	1	2	1	1
None of these	3	2	3	5	2	4
Don't know	10	6	16	12	9	11

Region					Working Status	
London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
41	35	35	40	34	33	38
43	47	49	43	55	49	44
84	82	84	83	89	82	82
10	13	12	16	9	15	15
2	1	1	0	2	1	1
12	14	13	16	11	16	16
4	3	3	1	0	2	2
39	44	38	41	40	39	44
15	16	7	9	8	14	6
19	8	10	9	13	12	8
3	7	13	13	8	10	9
5	3	4	3	4	3	4
5	7	8	7	8	7	6
15	16	20	19	19	16	22
56	73	79	72	59	74	64
20	11	8	10	24	12	14
1	2	1	2	2	2	1
5	2	2	0	4	1	3
0	1	1	2	0	1	0
5	3	0	4	4	3	5
13	9	9	10	7	8	13

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%

Which one person would you…

MOST like to be stuck on a desert island with?

	Total	16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
Best friend	35	39	33	28	33	37
Boyfriend, girlfriend or partner	31	26	31	39	31	29
Mother	11	10	12	12	12	8
Sister	7	9	6	5	7	9
Father	3	3	3	3	3	3
Brother	3	3	2	4	3	3
Teacher or boss	0	1	0	0	1	0
Other	2	2	1	2	1	4
Don't know	8	7	11	8	9	7

LEAST like to be stuck on a desert island with?

	Total	16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
Teacher or boss	48	46	50	50	52	40
Father	15	17	14	11	14	15
Mother	12	10	12	15	11	14
Brother	4	5	4	2	3	7
Sister	4	4	2	5	3	5
Best friend	2	2	2	1	2	2
Boyfriend, girlfriend or partner	1	0	0	1	1	0
Other	6	6	8	6	6	6
Don't know	9	10	9	8	9	10

Generally speaking, what time, if any, do your parent(s) or guardian(s) insist you have to be home at night on week-nights?

	Total	16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
Earlier than 6pm	2	1	2	2	1	2
By 6pm	1	3	0	0	1	2
By 7pm	2	2	1	2	2	2
By 8pm	2	3	1	1	2	1
By 9pm	6	10	4	1	6	6
By 10pm	12	17	9	5	11	13
By 11pm	9	12	7	4	9	8
By midnight	5	4	7	3	5	5
By 1am	1	1	1	1	2	0
By 2am	1	1	1	0	1	2
Later than 2am	0	0	1	0	0	1
Not applicable – they do not insist I be in by a set time on a week-night	55	39	61	82	56	53
Don't know	4	5	5	1	3	6

Region					Working Status	
London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
39	38	36	28	36	36	32
23	29	32	33	35	31	26
12	8	12	12	15	9	18
5	10	7	6	4	8	6
5	2	3	3	4	3	5
3	3	3	3	2	4	1
2	0	0	1	0	1	0
1	3	2	2	0	1	2
10	7	6	11	4	6	11
40	52	44	54	38	49	50
13	16	12	15	18	16	13
15	14	11	8	14	9	13
6	3	7	2	4	4	5
1	4	4	3	5	4	3
4	0	2	2	4	3	1
2	1	0	0	0	0	1
7	4	9	7	4	8	4
12	6	12	9	12	8	10
7	2	1	0	0	1	1
9	1	0	1	0	2	0
3	1	2	2	0	1	1
11	1	0	1	0	1	1
5	6	9	7	0	8	4
13	8	8	18	17	14	9
8	8	12	6	13	11	7
5	8	5	3	0	4	9
3	0	1	1	4	2	0
1	1	0	2	0	1	2
0	0	0	1	0	0	0
34	60	60	52	64	52	62
2	4	3	6	2	3	5

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%

Thinking about the time your parent(s) or guardian(s) insist you be home by on a week-night, do you think this is too early, too late or about the right time to be home by? [Only those who have to be home by a certain time on a week night]

	Total	16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
Too early	21	21	18	24	22	19
Too late	1	2	0	0	1	2
About right	66	66	70	65	69	61
Don't know	12	11	13	11	8	19

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements…

I couldn't live without my mobile phone

	Total	16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
Strongly agree	27	28	27	25	27	28
Tend to agree	42	37	48	49	44	38
TOTAL AGREE	69	65	75	74	71	66
Neither agree or disagree	13	14	11	13	12	15
Tend to disagree	12	14	10	10	12	12
Strongly disagree	4	6	1	2	3	5
TOTAL DISAGREE	16	20	11	12	15	17
Don't know	2	1	3	1	1	3

I care about buying clothes and gadgets that are branded

	Total	16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
Strongly agree	6	8	6	3	7	4
Tend to agree	21	23	17	23	19	26
TOTAL AGREE	27	31	23	26	26	30
Neither agree or disagree	23	23	23	21	24	20
Tend to disagree	31	27	31	37	31	30
Strongly disagree	18	18	20	14	18	17
TOTAL DISAGREE	49	45	51	51	49	47
Don't know	2	1	3	2	2	3

I care about keeping up with the latest trend

	Total	16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
Strongly agree	5	6	6	4	5	6
Tend to agree	27	28	21	30	28	25
TOTAL AGREE	32	34	27	34	33	31
Neither agree or disagree	25	24	25	25	26	22
Tend to disagree	29	29	34	26	27	35
Strongly disagree	12	12	11	12	13	9
TOTAL DISAGREE	41	41	45	38	40	44
Don't know	2	1	4	2	2	3

Region					Working Status	
London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
27	15	21	21	25	22	16
3	2	2	0	0	2	0
62	72	65	64	62	69	64
8	11	12	14	12	6	20
37	28	27	21	28	27	24
27	40	41	53	45	38	46
64	68	68	74	73	65	70
16	12	18	11	8	16	10
19	14	11	7	12	13	15
0	6	1	6	4	5	4
19	20	12	13	16	18	19
1	1	3	2	2	2	2
13	5	8	3	4	5	6
28	21	21	20	16	18	19
41	26	29	23	20	23	25
19	19	28	23	25	26	18
26	32	25	37	26	29	36
12	22	14	15	27	19	20
38	54	39	52	53	48	56
1	1	4	2	2	2	2
7	5	7	3	6	4	7
32	31	21	27	22	26	23
39	36	28	30	28	30	30
23	21	29	28	18	28	19
28	28	31	30	28	28	35
8	13	9	10	23	12	15
36	41	40	40	51	40	50
1	1	4	2	2	3	2

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%

Which of the following activities do you use the internet for the MOST?

Social networking like Facebook, Bebo, etc.	62	61	65	60	64	56
School, college or work	12	11	11	14	12	11
Downloading or listening to music	6	7	4	6	6	7
Tweeting or blogging	5	6	6	3	5	6
Online shopping	4	5	4	2	4	4
Reading news websites	3	2	3	5	4	1
Online gaming	2	3	2	3	2	2
Other	4	4	3	5	2	8
Don't know	2	2	3	3	2	4

How many of your Facebook friends do you know in person, or do you not have a Facebook account?

All of them	36	36	31	39	38	30
Most of them	54	55	54	54	55	52
Some of them	2	2	4	1	1	4
A few of them	1	2	1	1	1	3
None of them	0	0	1	0	0	0
Not applicable – I do not have an account on Facebook	5	5	7	4	4	8
Don't know	1	0	1	1	0	3

How much, if at all, do you rely on the internet (including access from your mobile phone) for:

Friendships, networking and social life						
A lot	31	34	23	31	32	26
Quite a lot	43	42	45	43	44	42
TOTAL QUITE/ A LOT	74	76	68	74	76	68
Not very much	20	19	22	19	19	23
Not at all	4	3	6	3	3	5
TOTAL NOT MUCH/ AT ALL	24	22	28	22	22	28
Don't know	2	1	3	3	2	3

	Region					Working Status	
	London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	62	62	60	63	60	68	56
	12	12	13	10	10	10	17
	8	5	6	9	2	6	5
	5	6	3	4	12	5	7
	7	2	6	2	4	2	2
	4	2	4	3	2	2	5
	0	4	2	2	2	2	3
	0	6	3	4	2	3	3
	2	2	2	2	6	2	3
	33	42	32	31	39	34	40
	53	50	59	59	47	58	50
	3	1	2	2	6	2	1
	5	1	1	1	0	2	1
	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
	4	5	4	6	6	4	5
	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
	21	33	33	32	22	29	24
	46	42	44	43	46	46	49
	67	75	77	75	68	75	73
	26	18	19	21	23	20	20
	6	5	1	4	7	3	5
	32	23	20	25	30	23	25
	1	2	4	1	2	2	2

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%

How much, if at all, do you rely on the internet *continued*

Advice and guidance

	Total	16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
A lot	11	14	9	7	11	11
Quite a lot	34	33	31	38	35	32
TOTAL QUITE/ A LOT	45	47	40	45	46	43
Not very much	40	41	39	41	42	37
Not at all	12	11	16	9	9	17
TOTAL NOT MUCH/ AT ALL	52	52	55	50	51	54
Don't know	3	1	4	4	3	3

How often, if at all, do you buy new clothes or cosmetics with your own money?

	Total	16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
More than once a week	4	6	4	2	5	3
Once a week	11	10	10	12	12	7
Once every few weeks	41	40	42	44	42	39
Once a month	19	17	21	20	18	19
Less than once a month	22	24	20	18	19	27
Don't know	3	3	4	3	3	5

To what extent are you happy or unhappy with the amount of money you have to spend?

	Total	16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
Very happy	5	6	4	3	6	2
Fairly happy	30	34	30	22	32	25
TOTAL HAPPY	35	40	34	25	38	27
Neither happy or unhappy	26	24	24	33	27	24
Fairly unhappy	27	24	33	26	24	33
Very unhappy	10	10	6	14	9	11
TOTAL NOT HAPPY	37	34	39	40	33	44
Don't know	3	3	3	2	1	6

Region					Working Status	
London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
8	15	8	8	19	12	9
40	41	29	29	28	35	34
48	56	37	37	47	47	43
39	32	43	49	42	38	43
12	9	15	14	5	12	11
51	41	58	63	47	50	54
1	3	5	1	6	3	3
3	5	3	4	6	4	5
7	10	15	11	6	11	9
39	37	43	45	47	42	38
23	21	16	17	16	20	18
24	23	20	22	19	20	28
4	3	4	2	6	4	2
5	6	3	4	4	4	7
36	30	32	29	26	31	29
41	36	35	33	30	35	36
27	26	26	26	26	29	25
19	25	29	29	28	25	28
13	11	8	9	10	8	10
32	36	37	38	38	33	38
1	2	3	3	6	2	1

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%

To what extent are you happy or unhappy with the amount of …

Clothes and cosmetics that you have?						
Very happy	12	11	15	10	13	10
Fairly happy	47	51	44	44	50	42
TOTAL HAPPY	59	62	59	54	63	52
Neither happy or unhappy	19	18	19	22	20	18
Fairly unhappy	17	16	16	19	14	24
Very unhappy	3	3	3	3	2	4
TOTAL NOT HAPPY	20	19	19	22	16	28
Don't know	2	1	4	2	2	2

Gadgets and music that you have?						
Very happy	22	22	20	25	24	17
Fairly happy	51	50	54	49	49	55
TOTAL HAPPY	73	72	74	74	73	72
Neither happy or unhappy	18	19	16	17	17	19
Fairly unhappy	7	8	6	5	7	6
Very unhappy	1	1	1	2	1	2
TOTAL NOT HAPPY	8	9	7	7	8	8
Don't know	2	1	4	2	2	2

If money was no option, what would you MOST like to have that you don't already own?

Your own home	33	28	33	43	31	38
A car	25	29	26	18	23	31
A holiday for you & friends	18	17	18	20	22	9
A laptop	5	7	1	5	6	3
Designer clothes	4	4	3	4	4	2
A smartphone	4	5	5	2	4	5
Designer handbags	2	3	1	1	3	0
Designer shoes	2	1	5	2	3	2
Designer jewelry	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	4	4	4	3	3	5
Don't know	3	2	3	3	2	4

Region					Working Status	
London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
8	12	10	15	12	12	12
43	50	51	42	50	49	49
51	62	61	57	62	61	61
23	20	18	17	22	18	22
19	16	15	20	13	17	14
5	2	3	4	0	2	2
24	18	18	24	13	19	16
2	1	3	2	2	1	2
18	17	22	28	30	22	24
54	52	50	48	52	50	55
72	69	72	76	82	72	79
13	24	17	14	14	19	14
12	6	9	4	2	7	4
0	0	0	4	0	1	0
12	6	9	8	2	8	4
2	1	3	2	2	1	2
28	29	32	35	47	34	34
20	25	25	26	31	25	27
21	24	20	9	14	20	16
7	4	4	8	0	4	4
4	3	6	2	0	3	3
8	2	2	7	4	4	4
5	3	0	1	2	2	2
0	4	3	2	0	3	2
0	0	0	0	2	0	0
3	4	6	4	0	3	6
4	0	2	5	2	2	2

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%

What's the most important item to you which you currently have in your bag?

Phone or mobile	55	51	57	59	56	52
ipod or MP3 player	21	20	24	20	20	21
Make-up	5	8	1	4	4	9
Books	5	6	3	4	5	5
Computer or laptop	1	0	1	2	1	0
Jewelry	1	0	1	1	1	0
Photographs	1	1	1	1	1	0
Favorite clothes	0	0	0	1	0	0
Hi-Fi, stereo or CD player	0	0	0	0	0	0
Decorative paintings, pictures or posters	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	7	7	7	5	7	5
Don't know	5	6	5	4	4	8

Bedroom						
Computer or laptop	49	44	52	53	52	41
Photographs	15	15	15	14	15	15
Favorite clothes	7	9	7	5	6	9
Books	6	8	2	4	5	6
Phone or mobile	5	6	4	5	4	7
Decorative paintings, pictures or posters	3	3	3	1	2	3
Make-up	2	2	1	1	1	3
Jewelry	2	1	4	3	2	2
ipod or MP3 player	2	3	1	1	2	3
Hi-Fi, stereo or CD player	1	1	0	2	1	1
Other	4	4	4	6	4	5
Don't know	4	3	6	4	4	4

Who are the people that you are closest to? By this, we mean the people you would go to if you wanted to talk about a problem, or share special news etc. Please select 1 and 2 for your closest and second closest.

Dad/stepdad						
1	4	4	6	3	5	2
2	12	13	12	11	12	12

Mum/stepmum						
1	39	36	42	42	40	38
2	29	33	27	23	29	28

	Region					Working Status	
	London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	58	56	58	49	52	55	55
	15	20	21	23	24	21	23
	9	3	5	8	2	5	2
	7	4	5	3	7	5	3
	0	2	1	1	0	1	1
	1	2	1	0	0	0	3
	0	1	1	1	2	1	2
	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	5	8	4	8	6	7	7
	3	4	5	7	7	5	5
	49	47	55	43	57	49	52
	12	15	14	16	16	13	18
	11	7	8	8	0	7	8
	4	6	6	6	2	8	4
	8	5	2	6	9	5	2
	5	4	2	1	3	4	2
	2	2	1	2	2	2	1
	2	2	3	2	4	3	1
	2	3	2	2	0	2	1
	0	1	1	3	0	0	4
	0	5	4	5	4	3	4
	6	4	3	5	2	5	3
	8	5	3	3	4	4	6
	14	13	11	14	0	11	15
	24	39	44	44	35	41	43
	41	32	22	27	26	30	26

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%

Who are the people that you are closest to? By this, we mean the people you would go to if you wanted to talk about a problem, or share special news etc. *continued*

	Total	16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
Brother						
1	2	2	1	2	1	3
2	3	2	1	5	3	2
Sister						
1	6	8	5	5	6	8
2	10	8	10	14	11	8
Step brother or sister						
1	0	1	0	0	0	0
2	1	0	1	2	0	2
Friend						
1	26	31	27	18	25	28
2	25	25	28	23	25	24
Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Own Partner						
1	17	14	15	25	18	15
2	8	6	10	10	7	9
Cousin						
1	1	1	0	1	1	0
2	2	1	4	3	2	4
Aunt/Uncle						
1	0	0	1	0	0	1
2	1	2	0	1	1	2
Grandparents						
1	1	1	1	2	1	1
2	4	4	2	4	5	1
Carer						
1	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	1	0	1
Other						
1	0	0	1	1	0	1
2	2	1	2	2	1	3
No one						
1	3	3	1	2	2	4
2	3	4	3	2	2	5

Region					Working Status	
London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
3	1	0	1	9	2	1
0	3	5	1	2	2	2
8	9	5	5	2	6	5
12	11	7	9	19	11	14
0	0	0	1	0	0	1
0	1	1	2	0	0	1
35	27	27	21	26	27	23
18	22	32	25	27	26	27
14	15	19	19	20	17	17
1	9	9	8	10	8	6
3	1	0	0	0	0	1
7	1	2	1	5	2	2
1	0	1	0	0	0	1
0	1	3	1	0	1	2
0	1	1	1	2	1	0
1	3	3	5	6	5	1
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	2	0	0	0	0
1	1	0	0	0	0	1
3	2	2	1	0	2	1
1	2	0	6	2	2	2
3	2	1	6	5	3	3

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%

Which of these do you think would help you be successful in life?

Success at school/college/uni	92	94	90	90	93	88
Having good friends	72	72	72	71	73	68
Being kind/helping people	70	68	71	73	70	69
Being fit and active	61	58	65	65	64	56
Getting on well with family	54	51	57	58	58	46
Travelling/understanding other cultures	49	49	51	46	49	48
Being attractive/good looking	40	40	42	37	37	46
Having a boyfriend/girlfriend/partner	36	35	44	31	36	35
Being rich	29	29	27	28	29	29
Having children	25	24	30	24	26	24
Being good at sport/music/art	24	23	23	27	24	25
Having nice things e.g. the latest gadgets & clothes	19	22	19	14	20	17
Being famous	7	8	5	6	6	8

What are the advantages of being a girl/woman?

Get to wear nice clothes, make-up, hairstyles	54	55	50	57	54	54
More mature/responsible than boys	45	46	40	49	46	43
Can have children	40	37	44	44	44	31
Have good friends	36	37	35	34	37	32
Girls are better at exams and learning	24	27	18	24	24	24
Easier to get what you want	15	14	16	17	15	17
Wider choice of jobs and careers	7	9	4	7	8	6
Something else	5	4	4	6	6	2
None	9	9	9	9	8	13
Don't know	7	7	9	6	7	9

Region					Working Status	
London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
93	92	94	89	93	94	97
72	74	66	75	66	72	75
70	71	65	72	70	73	72
60	62	60	62	61	63	60
56	55	52	53	57	57	56
52	46	42	56	47	50	46
39	41	38	37	49	38	42
26	44	34	29	46	39	36
29	29	24	28	41	30	24
26	26	24	24	31	26	25
36	20	23	21	39	23	27
20	18	14	22	27	19	20
8	3	2	12	12	6	6
53	53	58	50	57	54	48
50	43	49	48	29	46	45
43	36	45	41	38	43	35
37	32	39	34	42	37	36
24	26	27	21	21	23	28
18	18	14	12	14	16	13
6	7	6	9	6	8	7
5	6	4	3	4	5	5
3	8	7	11	19	11	8
9	8	4	7	13	5	11

	Total	Age			Social Grade	
		16–17	18	19	ABC1	C2DE
	%	%	%	%	%	%

What are the disadvantages of being a girl/woman?

Periods, body changes and pains of being pregnant/giving birth	84	84	84	83	83	86
Pressure to look attractive	74	75	72	75	75	72
Women get paid less than men/lower salaries	57	52	55	67	56	57
Girls are expected to clean and cook	45	47	42	44	45	46
Fewer job opportunities for women than for men	42	42	38	45	41	42
Boys' friendships are more straightforward	34	37	31	31	35	32
Girls are expected to be mature and responsible	20	23	16	17	18	23
Girls have less chance to play sports and games than boys do	19	21	17	18	18	21
Something else	5	3	7	8	7	2
None	1	0	2	0	1	0
Don't know	3	3	4	3	3	4

What do you think are the main causes of stress among girls your age?

Exams/tests	72	76	71	66	74	68
Relationships	71	69	76	72	72	70
Pressure to do well at school	67	71	66	58	68	63
Growing up	51	54	53	43	51	50
Pressure from friends	49	50	48	48	51	44
Money problems	45	39	46	55	42	50
Parents/teachers going on at you	42	48	38	33	40	44
Pressure from family	38	41	34	35	38	36
Bullying	26	27	28	22	26	27
Something else	4	2	6	7	5	3
Don't know	3	4	3	3	3	6

Region					Working Status	
London	Rest of South	Midlands/ Wales	North	Scotland	Working full time	Full Time student
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
80	87	86	79	87	85	85
68	74	79	72	76	76	69
58	62	53	54	51	58	53
47	41	47	46	48	50	33
41	43	50	35	37	44	34
34	39	31	29	39	37	33
21	17	22	19	26	23	14
24	19	17	20	18	21	16
3	6	6	2	13	6	5
0	0	0	2	0	1	1
5	1	2	4	6	1	5
76	73	70	70	75	78	63
65	71	76	71	73	74	66
69	72	65	63	58	74	56
53	47	49	58	47	54	47
48	48	49	51	47	50	48
44	42	47	45	52	45	43
43	44	43	35	46	45	34
39	39	41	33	35	39	32
24	21	28	28	38	27	27
8	7	3	1	4	4	5
6	2	3	4	4	2	5

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Girls are significantly more successful than boys in making the transition to adulthood and their outcomes, especially in education and youth offending, reflect this. Girls do better in their exams, more of them go to university and, for the first time, women aged 22–29 have closed the gender pay gap, with young women getting paid 2.1 per cent more than their male peers.

But alongside this success, British teenage girls experience worse rates of binge drinking, worse levels of physical inactivity and more frequent incidences of teen pregnancy than their European counterparts. In the course of this research, we found evidence that twice as many teenage girls as teenage boys suffer from 'teen angst'.

This generation of teenagers has it tough, facing a more difficult environment in which to make that transition, especially in relation to the present labour market and to new technology, with online social networking opening a new and unregulated for their peer relationships and influences.

There has never been a more crucial time for effective and targeted youth policy. The Coalition's youth strategy, due later this year, must address the growing calls for action to support young women and girls. *Through the Looking Glass* recommends this is achieved through tackling child poverty and youth unemployment; supporting parents at key transition points in their children's development; and encouraging positive relationships with peers.

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