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Coverage
United Kingdom
Theme
Social and Welfare

Two thirds of three and four-year-olds go to school

Children in the UK today are attending school earlier, using technology sooner and dealing with issues like drinking and obesity, according to a report published today.

Focus on Children, produced by the Office for National Statistics, shows that the proportion of three and four-year-olds enrolled in early years education in UK schools has risen from 21 per cent in 1970/71 to 64 per cent in 2007/08.

The report, which brings together a range of data on children in the UK, also shows that in 2007 more than half of eight to 11-year-olds (56 per cent) in the UK used a mobile phone and 90 per cent of 12 to 15-year-olds.

In addition, the figures indicate that more than a third of children aged 12 to 15 (37 per cent) in the UK in 2007 visited a social networking site every day.

Other statistics show the level of alcohol use among underage drinkers. When surveyed in 2007, one in five children aged 11 to 15 in England had drunk alcohol in the week prior to interview. This suggests that around 640,000 children had drunk alcohol during that week.

Additional health data show the proportion of boys aged two to 10 in England who were classed as obese rose to 16 per cent in 2007, up from 10 per cent in 1995. The proportion of girls aged two to 10 classed as obese rose to 14 per cent, also up from 10 per cent.

In terms of family formation, the report shows that there were 136,000 children in England and Wales aged under 16 who were involved in divorce in 2005. This is lower than the peak of 176,000 in 1993 but nearly twice the 1970 figure of 71,000.

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And only 7 per cent of 11 to 15-year-olds in England in 2007 said that spending time with their family was their preferred free time activity.

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. To access information on all the topics covered by *Focus on Children* go to: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=15232>
2. Children aged under five in pre-compulsory education includes pupils who are aged three and four (but may include some two-year-olds) at 31 December each year, with the exception of Scotland where reference dates differ over the period, and are presented as a proportion of all three and four-year-olds.
3. Data on drinking are based on secondary school pupils, aged 11 to 15.
4. The 1990 UK National BMI percentile classification is used for children aged under 16. This gives a threshold for each age, above which a child is considered overweight or obese. Those children within the 85th and 95th percentile are classified as overweight and those above the 95th percentile are classified as obese, compared with 1990 BMI UK reference data.
5. Children involved in divorce includes children in the family and children born to the couple divorcing (children outside marriage, children of previous marriages, and adopted children), provided that they were treated by both partners as children of their family.
6. **National Statistics** are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2009.