



Diaries from Children and Young People Supplement of the Multinational Time Use Study

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Children and young people learn many of their adult behavioural routines while growing up, but the structure of the days of young people differs in many ways from the daily routines of adults. These unique routines partly arise from the particular needs and energies of young people, partly from the legal and social systems which place adults in charge of supervising and organising the time of young people, and partly as the experience of compulsory schooling and the near freedom from responsibility for most activities required for the functioning of households do not yet shape their daily behaviour.

Collection of time use data from young people differs in many ways from the collection of data from adults. Considerable debate exists in the field about the right age at which people can complete their own diary without assistance from an adult. The lower age range at which respondents are asked to complete their own diary varies from 8 to 20 (with examples on the Centre for Time Use Research table of time use studies <http://www-2009.timeuse.org/information/studies/>). Child and youth diaries more often are collected with interviewer assistance than is the case with adults. Some samples solely from young people collect data in schools or youth clubs, where teachers or youth workers oversee the diary entries. In some cases where diaries are collected from very young children (including the 1992-1995 National Human Activity Pattern Survey – NHAPS – in the USA, which covered the whole population aged 3 months and older, or the Growing Up In Australia Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children, which followed two cohorts, one aged 4 and one aged 3-6 months at baseline in 2004, or national samples collected by the Italian official statistical agency ISTAT in 1989 and 2002-2003 which sampled the national population aged 3 and older), parents are asked to complete the diaries on behalf of their young children. Other time use studies employed researchers and camera operators to follow young children and record their activities (such as the BBC documentary series *Child of Our Time*).

Diaries for young people regularly have different covers and instructions, including images and examples which are more likely to be relevant to the younger diarist's experiences than those which are included on the adult diaries. Surveys of young people often make use of more technology (such as portable devices prompting diarists to enter their activity on the device) earlier than tends to be the case with adult diary studies. Additionally, national sample diary surveys often ask for fewer details from the youngest



diarists. Many of the Harmonised European Time Use Studies (HETUS), for example, did not ask young diarists to record secondary activity or as many details of who else was present, while adults were asked to note main as well as secondary activities and more categories of others being present. In cases such as the HETUS surveys where young people and children completed less detailed diaries, for some surveys, the child diaries appear to have lower episode counts than the adult diaries, though this is an artefact of the different diary instruments – with fewer dimensions on which they could report a change in their behaviour, the children had less opportunity to accumulate episodes.

We have split the Multinational Time Use Study episode and aggregate versions into adult files (diarists aged 18 and older) and child and youth files (diarists aged less than 18). The separation of the Diaries from Children and Young People (DCYP) from the adult files partly serves the purpose of making the adult files more comparable across surveys and countries (few studies have a maximum age in the sample design, while the minimum age of diarists is highly variable). More importantly, the DCYP opens space for the Centre for Time Use Research team to add in the child and youth only surveys in future where these datasets can meaningfully be included in cross-time and comparative analysis.

Country and survey year	Age range	Total diaries / number of quality diaries
Austria 1992	10-17	2927 total, 2878 quality diaries
France 1998	15-17	810 total, 809 quality diaries
Germany 1991-92	12-17	3258 total, 3247 quality diaries
Israel 1991-92	14-17	620 total, 604 quality diaries
Italy 1989	3-17	8137 total, 8132 quality diaries
Netherlands 1975	12-17	1162 total, 1137 quality diaries
Netherlands 1980	12-17	2443 total, 2407 quality diaries
Netherlands 1985	12-17	2065 total; 2047 quality diaries
Netherlands 1990	12-17	1806 total; 1774 quality diaries
Netherlands 1995	12-17	1897 total; 1874 quality diaries
Netherlands 2000	11-17	840 total; 815 quality diaries
Netherlands 2005	12-17	2163 total; 2115 quality diaries
South Africa 2000	10-17	2900 total; 2785 quality diaries
Spain (Basque country) 1992-93	16-17	136 total; 132 quality diaries
Spain (Basque country) 1997-98	16-17	92 total; 92 quality diaries
Spain (Basque country) 2002-03	10-17	333 total; 333 quality diaries
Spain (national) 2002-03	10-17	4099 total; 4089 quality diaries
Spain (Basque country) 2008-09	10-17	459 total; 459 quality diaries
Spain (national) 2009-10	10-17	1436 total; 1432 quality diaries
United Kingdom 1974-75	5-17	5354 total, 5330 quality diaries
United Kingdom 1983-84	14-17	910 total, 774 quality diaries
United Kingdom 1987	14-17	799 total, 787 quality diaries



United Kingdom 1995	16-17	43 total, 40 quality diaries
United Kingdom 2000-01	8-17	3732 total, 3527 quality diaries
United Kingdom 2005	16-17	87 total; 86 quality diaries
USA 1985	11*-17	418 total; 399 quality diaries
USA 1992-94	0-17	1872 total; 1810 quality diaries
USA 2003-12	15-17	6350 total; 5729 quality diaries

*Two diarists are aged 10.

At the sixth release of MTUS in July 2013, 26 datasets have diaries from young people, though in two cases the number of diaries from young people is very small. These are detailed in the table above. Full documentation of the main surveys from which these diaries are drawn is on the main MTUS surveys included and documentation page.

The background variables in the child and the adult files are identical. At this time the activity categories also are identical, though when we add dedicated surveys of young people only in the future, we may add some additional child-specific breakdowns to supplement the existing activity codes. Nonetheless, by using the same base variable categories, this supplement allows users to compare the behaviour of younger people with adults in the same country or time period. Users should note that many of the background variables (marital status, family status, economic activity and the like) will have similar profiles for the majority of young people.

Users should exercise caution wherever the number of child diarists is small. Users also should check original survey documentation carefully - some surveys sample the whole population above a defined age, but other surveys only sample children where those children are present in the household of an initially sampled person.

In the case of the 1992-93 survey from the Basque country in Spain, no boys aged 16-17 completed a diary on a Thursday. In the 1997-97 survey from the Basque country in Spain, no girl aged 16-17 completed a diary on a Monday. The weights for the young people in these two surveys keep the two weekend days in proper proportion, but treat the four weekdays for boys in 1992-93 and the girls in 1997-98 as 1.5 days to keep weekday diaries in proper balance with their proportion of the days of the week. There is an imbalance with more diaries from Fridays than other days. Users should keep this in mind when using the diaries from the young people in these surveys.

Example research using the data from young people

We now consider some basic changes in the activities of young people in the United Kingdom between 1974-75 (measured by the BBC Audience Research Department Time Use Survey "The People's Activities and the Use of Time") and the Office of National Statistics UK element of HETUS, the UK Time Use Survey 2000-01. These are



preliminary explorations we offer only to inspire the more sophisticated use of this data. The daily activity means are calculated by appropriately weighting (on the basis of 41 weeks of school per year) primary activities for four different sorts of days: (i) weekdays with some school attendance (which we take to represent school term-time weekdays), (ii) weekdays with no school attendance (representing non-term weekdays), (iii) Saturdays and (iv) Sundays. Both surveys are sampled throughout the year, the 1974/5 survey with four seasonal waves of data collection and the 2001 survey with approximately equal numbers of cases each month.

In broad terms, as the histograms below indicate, time in personal care activities remained relatively constant. Both 8-11 and 12-15 year-olds slept for similar periods, while personal grooming time reduced slightly. School time also remained unchanged, but paid work virtually disappears for this age group, to be replaced by unpaid work within the home. By 2000-01, British young people spent more time travelling. There are some suggestions that more young people spend more time in sports, yet while the overall mean minutes in sports on the average day more than doubled from 16 to 34 minutes, the mean for participants reduced slightly from 131 minutes to 124 minutes, which implies that while young people are more likely to engage in some sport on any given day, they spend less time exercising when they are active. Other research using this same data, however, suggests that when you consider the full range of exercise, include physically active travel (walking and cycling) and active housework, young British people's overall exercise time has declined (Fisher 2002).

Computer-related activities grew enormously over the period — but *directly substituting* for hours previously devoted to television. This fact does not emerge from the conventional material on children's television time, because the conventional measure of television-watching from media research sources is "media exposure time", which corresponds to "primary plus secondary activity" viewing in the diaries.

Reference

Fisher, Kimberly. (2002) Chewing the fat: the story time diaries tell about physical activity in the United Kingdom. [Working papers of the Institute for Social and Economic Research. Paper 2002-13](#). Colchester, University of Essex, UK.

Histogram notes

School = education + travel to school.

Unpaid = housework+cooking+childcare+oddjobs.

Travel = domestic+other travel.

Food = eating at home +eatout+pubclubs

Wash, dress=wash+dress+medical.

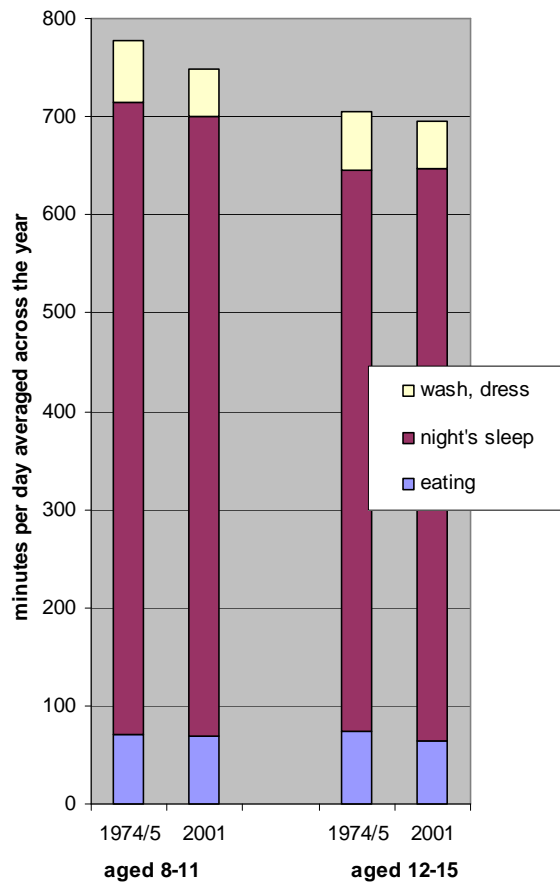
Watch cinema etc includes spectator sports and other performance

Day averages across the year weighted on the basis of:

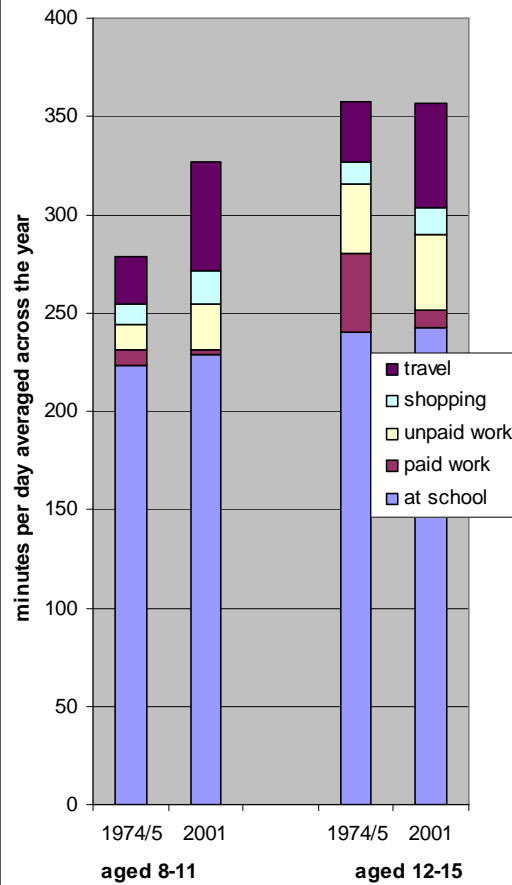
$$((\text{term weekdays} * 10/13) * 5 + (\text{non-term weekdays} * 3/13) * 5 + \text{Saturdays} + \text{Sundays}) / 7$$



UK Children's personal care activities



UK Children's work-type activities



UK children's leisure activities

