

# Fit for Play?

## Playday 2005 Survey Report

**Findings from the survey conducted by the British Market Research Bureau for the Children's Play Council and The Children's Society, with support from the British Toy & Hobby Association.**

**3rd August 2005**

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There is currently much focus on the importance of physical activity for children's health and fitness and it has been established that outdoor play provides one of the best forms of exercise for children of all ages. The Playday 2005 survey sought to discover, from children themselves, how much opportunity they had for outdoor play, what, if any, were the barriers and what would enable them to play out more.

### The research

In June and July 2005 the British Market Research Bureau (BMRB) interviewed 671 children age 7-14 years old in Great Britain. In face-to-face interviews they asked the children questions about their outdoor play.

### Summary of findings

- During term-time nearly 1:5 (20%) children play out for less than one hour a week (including weekends)
- Even in the schools holidays 1:5 (22%) children play out for less than four hours a week (ie an approximate average 30 minutes a day).
- In the school holidays 35% - ie more than 1:3 children play out for less than an hour a day on average.
- 7% girls never play out during the school holidays (compared with 4% boys)
- Nearly 4:10 children (39%) do not play out as much as they would like to.
- Girls are more likely than boys to say they don't play out as much as they would like to (43% compared with 35%).
- The top priority for things that would make children play out more is 'if it was safer'. Over 1:5 children (22%) put this as their number one priority. Girls were more likely than boys to put this top (25% girls, 19% boys)
- When asked to choose the top three things that would make them play out more the most popular choices were all related to the quality of the environment:  
In their top three reasons
  - 48% chose 'If there were better places to play outside'
  - 47% chose 'If there was more to do outside'
  - 47% chose 'If it was safer'

- 45% chose 'If there were more play places outside'
- Less important were
  - If I had more time: chosen by 38%
  - If my friends played out more: chosen by 37%
- When asked why they didn't play out more only 22% (fewer than 1:4) said they played out as much as they wanted to.
- The top reasons for not playing out more were:
  - I like computer games and the internet more: 21%, 1:5 (boys more than girls: 27% compared with 14%)
  - My parents won't let me: 20%, 1:5
  - I like watching TV more: 20%, 1:5
  - Doing my homework and other planned activities: 20%, 1:5 (older children more than younger children 24% compared with 15%)
- Older children were twice as likely to give say their play areas were too far away from home (15% compared with 8%)

## Conclusions

Many children play out for very limited amounts of time both during term-time and in the school holidays. During term time eight per cent of 7-14 year old children never play out and 20 percent play out for an hour or less a week. Even During the holidays five percent never play out and 22 percent play out for less than four hours a week.

Although children play outdoors for limited amounts of time, they like playing outside and, given more choice, most of them would play out more than they do now. When asked a straight yes-no question, 40 per cent said they didn't play out as much as they would like, but when asked to identify things that would enable them to play out more only four per cent of the children interviewed said they already played out as much as they would like and that nothing would make them play out more. Only two per cent of the children interviewed said they did not like playing out. Girls were more likely than boys to say they didn't play out as much as they wanted to.

The biggest single factor that would encourage children to play out more was if they (or their parents) felt it was safer. This was particularly true for girls. Other environmental factors, more and better places to go and more to do, would also make a greater difference to children than non-environmental factors like having more time, or better access to their friends.

Outdoor play appears to compete for children's time with indoor activities including computers, television and homework but many parents simply do not let their children play out with their friends.

The appendix gives some of the detailed findings.

## Appendix

### Findings from BMRB survey of 7-14 year olds: 30 June to 27 July

Table 1: During term time, that is the weeks you are at school, about how many hours a week do you play outside with your friends after school and at the weekends?

	Total	Gender		Age	
		Male	Female	7-10	11-14
Total (wtd)	671 (100%)	344 (100%)	327 (100%)	334 (100%)	337 (100%)
Never	53 (8%)	21 (6%)	31 (10%)	20 (6%)	33 (10%)
1hr or less	79 (12%)	42 (12%)	37 (11%)	36 (11%)	43 (13%)
2-4 hours	182 (27%)	88 (26%)	93 (29%)	81 (24%)	101 (30%)
5-6 hours	85 (13%)	43 (13%)	42 (13%)	40 (12%)	46 (14%)
More than 6hrs	265 (39%)	145 (42%)	120 (37%)	156 (47%)	109 (32%)
Don't know	7 (1%)	3 (1%)	3 (1%)	2 (1%)	4 (1%)

Table 2: During the school holidays, about how many hours a week do you play outside with your friends – this includes weekdays and weekends?

	Total	Gender		Age	
		Male	Female	7-10	11-14
Total (wtd)	671 (100%)	344 (100%)	327 (100%)	334 (100%)	337 (100%)
Never	34 (5%)	12 (4%)	21 (7%)	16 (5%)	17 (5%)
1hr or less	35 (5%)	23 (7%)	12 (4%)	10 (3%)	25 (8%)
2-4 hours	82 (12%)	39 (11%)	44 (13%)	35 (10%)	47 (14%)
5-6 hours	81 (12%)	42 (12%)	39 (12%)	34 (10%)	47 (14%)
More than 6hrs	422 (65%)	227 (66%)	207 (63%)	237 (71%)	197 (58%)

Table 3. Do you play outside with your friends as much as you would like?

	Total	Gender		Age	
		Male	Female	7-10	11-14
Total (wtd)	671 (100%)	344 (100%)	327 (100%)	334 (100%)	337 (100%)
Yes	405 (60%)	221 (64%)	184 (56%)	212 (63%)	193 (57%)
No	261 (39%)	120 (35%)	141 (43%)	121 (36%)	140 (42%)
Don't know	5 (1%)				

Table 4: What would make you play out with your friends more often – most important factor?

	Total	Gender		Age	
		Male	Female	7-10	11-14
Total (wtd)	671 (100%)	344 (100%)	327 (100%)	334 (100%)	337 (100%)
If it was safer	146 (22%)	65 (19%)	82 (25%)	76 (23%)	70 (21%)
If there were more to do outside	102 (15%)	54 (16%)	47 (14%)	40 (12%)	61 (18%)
If I had more time	98 (15%)	55 (16%)	43 (13%)	55 (16%)	43 (13%)
If there were better places to play outside	94 (14%)	48 (14%)	46 (14%)	40 (12%)	54 (16%)
If there were more places to play outside	81 (12%)	46 (13%)	35 (11%)	40 (12%)	41 (12%)
If my friends played outside more often	70 (10%)	36 (11%)	34 (10%)	39 (12%)	31 (9%)
Other answers	45 (7%)				
Don't know	12 (2%)				
Don't want to play outside more	23 (3%)	13 (4%)	11 (3%)	16 (5%)	7 (2%)

Children were asked to mention the top three things that would make them play out with their friends more. In their top 3:

- 48% chose 'If there were better places to play outside'
- 47% chose 'If there was more to do outside'
- 47% chose 'If it was safer'
- 45% chose 'If there were more places to play outside'
- 38% chose 'If I had more time'
- 37% chose 'If my friends played outside more often'

Table 5. Why don't you play outside more often? (say two things)

Total		Gender		Age	
		Male	Female	7-10	11-14
Total (wtd)	671 (100%)	344 (100%)	327 (100%)	334 (100%)	337 (100%)
I play as much as I want to outside	142 (22%)	73 (21%)	74 (23%)	74 (22%)	73 (22%)
I like computer games and internet more	139 (21%)	92 (27%)	47 (14%)	63 (19%)	77 (23%)
My parents won't let me	133 (20%)	57 (17%)	76 (23%)	77 (23%)	56 (17%)
I like watching T V more	133 (20%)	77 (22%)	56 (17%)	69 (21%)	64 (19%)
I'm too busy doing homework or other planned activities	132 (20%)	63 (18%)	68 (21%)	51 (15%)	81 (24%)
I prefer to play indoors	84 (13%)	41 (12%)	43 (13%)	50 (15%)	34 ! 10%
Play areas are too far away from home	78 (12%)	35 (10%)	43 (13%)	28 (8%)	50 (15%)
I'm scared of being bullied	43 (8%)	18 (5%)	25 (8%)	24 (7%)	19 (6%)
I don't like playing outside	15 (2%)	9 (3%)	6 (2%)	4 (1%)	11 (3%)
Don't know	7 (1%)				

END

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