

Playday 2010 opinion poll summary

This summary presents opinion poll findings conducted to inform and support the [Playday 2010](#) *Our place* campaign. Opinion poll questions were formulated from trends identified in a body of qualitative research, available to accompany this study.

Playday is the annual celebration of children's right to play, a national day highlighting the importance of play in children's lives, which this year takes place on Wednesday 4 August. The *Our place* campaign aims to tackle the restrictions faced by children wanting to play outside where they live, and is highlighting the role of communities in shaping childhood.

Playday is coordinated by [Play England](#), working in partnership with [Play Scotland](#), [Play Wales](#) and [PlayBoard Northern Ireland](#). The Playday opinion poll was conducted by ICM Research 16 - 22 June 2010, with 1034 adults and 1031 children aged 7-14.

Findings

Do children have friends nearby in their community that they can play with?

There has been a marked decline in the number of friends children can play with in their neighbourhood.

- Children have an average of 6 friends within walking distance of where they live. This compares with an average of 14 friends for adults when they were a child.
- 1 in 4 children (27%) have 2 or less friends within walking distance of where they live.

The impact of such a decline should further be considered in the context that whilst children may have six friends within walking distance, they cannot necessarily obtain permission to walk to play with these friends independently without an adult.

What's changed for children growing up now?

Opinions show that children are experiencing a very different childhood to previous generations, with freedom curtailed, and safety concerns exacerbated.

- 90% of adults played out regularly in their street as children. 29% of children (nearly 1 in 3) aged 7-14 say they don't play or hang out in their street at all. Nearly three quarters of children (73%) say they would like to spend more time playing or hanging out outside where they live.
- Nearly half (47%) of adults think it is unsafe for children to play outside without an adult. 30% of children aged 7-14, rising to 48% of 7-10 year olds think it is unsafe to play outside without an adult. Only 11% adults think that it was unsafe for children to play outside without an adult when they were growing up.

- 94% of adults believe that there was freedom for children to go and explore when they were growing up, but only 40% think this is true for today's children.
- 90% of adults believe that children of their generation mostly played outdoors rather than indoors, whereas only 33% perceive this to be true for children today.
- Over a quarter of children (29%) believe that adults generally disapprove of children playing, or hanging out, outside where they live, compared to 14% of adults' experience when they were growing up.
- 79% of adults believe that community spirit has weakened since they were a child, while 14% stated it has stayed the same and only 4% believe it has strengthened. This trend is more prominent amongst older generations.

Do children have freedom to play where they live?

Children's freedom to play outside where they live seems prohibited by safety concerns. It would seem that confidence is affected by parents' concerns that children of other families are not playing out. An ethos of collectively allowing neighbouring children to play out together improves confidence. There is also an element of parental concern that their children may annoy neighbours, though further stats show that in general neighbours are more, rather than less supportive of neighbourhood play.

Both adults and children perceive there to be dangers for children playing outside, which seems to prohibit children's freedom to play unsupervised. Some of the perceived dangers are backed up by statistics, such as an increase in road traffic; others are seemingly anecdotal.

- Half of parents do not let their children play outside without an adult (49%). Further more, over a third (37%) worry that their neighbours will judge them if they let their children play outside unsupervised.
- Over half (54%) of parents only feel confident letting their children play outside if other children are playing out too.
- One in six parents (15%) do not trust their neighbours.
- 55% of parents worry that their children making noise outside might upset the neighbours, even though 81% of parents claim that they did this when they were young. Similarly 90% of parents claim that they played ball games when they were children, yet 41% of parents are concerned this too might upset the neighbours. 40% of parents are even worried that chalking on the pavement would upset the neighbours, despite 80% of parents also stating that they did this when they were young.
- Over a quarter of adults (26%) believe that children commonly face the threat of being followed or abducted by strangers when playing outside where they live. For parents with children aged under five years old this figure is significantly higher (38%). The biggest threat that adults think children face when playing is road accidents (63% parents and 55% all adults).

- 71% of children worry about being followed or taken by strangers where they live, ranking higher than people taking drugs (70%), traffic (64%), big groups of kids (61%) bullying (60%) or knife crime (49%). 22% of children worried about all of these things. Children worry less about these things with age, yet still 60% 13-14 year olds worry about being followed or abducted by strangers where they live.

Do children experience barriers when playing out?

There is evidence that older children are often discriminated against or negatively judged by adults. Children are frequently chastised for playing out where they live; in some extreme cases, parents and children cited examples of negative reactions to chalking on the street and trampolining in the back garden.

- One in four children (24%) have been told off for playing ball games in their neighbourhood, and nearly 1 in 3 boys (31%). A similar number of children (25%) have also been told off for making noise when playing outside – raising to 33% of 13-14 year olds.
- Over a quarter of children (28%) say that when they are playing or hanging out with friends outside adults tend to think they are up to no good. Older children feel that adults treat them with the most hostility as this figure rises to (39%) of 13-14 year olds.
- 7% of children have been told off for chalking on the pavement where they live.

Do neighbours interact with each other?

Heightened sensitivity about ‘strangers’ impacts on community ties, especially interaction between men and neighbouring children. .

- 44% of men would be concerned to approach a child who needed assistance in their local neighbourhood because people might think they were trying to abduct them. 28% of women reported the same concerns.
- Nearly a third (30%) of adults would be hesitant about approaching a child who was in need of assistance in their neighbourhood as they would be worried the child might be abusive to them.
- 45% of men would simply walk past children without interacting when they pass them in the street near their home, compared to 23% of women. Nearly half (46%) of women would smile at children when they pass them in the street near their home, compared to 25% of men.

What do adults think of this generation of children?

There is a worrying inclination for adults to judge children using negative terms and children and young people seem to identify these negative adult perceptions of them.

- Whilst 70% of adults would describe children as friendly, a large proportion also describe children as disrespectful (54%), intimidating (40%) and ‘out of control’ (38%).

- Although 80% of children believe that adults would describe children as friendly, 44% also perceive that adults would describe them as out of control, 41% as disrespectful and 31% as intimidating. Older children have a more negative opinion about what adults thought of them. 53% of 13-14 year olds believe adults would describe them as 'out of control', 61% as 'disrespectful' and 50% as 'intimidating'.
- 48% of adults believe that children now do not have respect for the rest of their community, compared with 16% when asked about children of their own generation.

Do communities benefit from children playing outside?

There is overwhelming recognition of the benefits of children playing outside for children *and* their local communities.

- 88% of parents state that children playing outside help families to get to know each other in a community.
- 87% of parents and 80% non-parents believe when other children play out it gives parents the confidence to let their own children play out.
- 81% of adults believe that children playing outside help to improve community spirit.
- 70% of adults believe that children playing outside makes an area more desirable to live in. This breaks down to 75% of parents and 68% of non-parents.
- Non-parents are nearly twice as likely to think that children playing out in a community makes it more desirable to live in (68%), than that it is annoying to local residents (35%). This is despite parental concerns to the contrary.
- However, 31% of adults think children playing outside increases antisocial behaviour and a further 25% stated that it doesn't feel safe when there are kids around.

What would help children to play outside more in their community?

A range of solutions to help children play outside is backed by parents and non-parents alike.

- Adults believe that community fun days in a public space (87%) and creating new play spaces (86%) would help children to play outside more in their local area.
- The idea of neighbours working together to improve the local area (85%), local authorities consulting children and families on play (81%) and neighbours sharing supervision (76%) were also popular to help children to play outside more. Nearly half (49%) supported occasionally shutting the street to traffic so that children can play.
- Over half of adults are not in favour of 'no ball games' signs, with 56% stating that they are 'a bad thing' for neighbourhoods, and 36% stating they were a good thing. Those from higher social grades and private housing are most likely to consider them 'a bad thing'.

Notes

This research was commissioned to support the Playday 2010 Our place campaign.

1. ICM Research interviewed a random sample of 1034 adults aged 18 + by telephone between 16 – 17 June 2010. Interviews were conducted across the UK and the results have been weighted to the profile of all adults. They also interviewed a random sample of 1031 children and young people aged 7 – 14 across the UK by telephone between 16 – 22 June 2010. ICM is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Further information at www.icmresearch.co.uk.
2. Further research commissioned to support the *Our place* campaign will be available from the Playday website www.playday.org.uk or by request.
3. For more information about Playday and the *Our place* campaign, visit www.playday.org.uk or contact **Clare Quarrell on 020 7843 6044 or email cquarrell@ncb.org.uk** for press enquiries.
4. Playday is the national day for play, coordinated by Play England, part of NCB, working in partnership with PlayBoard Northern Ireland, Play Scotland and Play Wales. The national campaign involves thousands of children and young people getting out to play at locally organised events throughout the UK. Playday events range from small-scale neighbourhood get-togethers to large-scale public events organised by local authorities, national organisations and community groups. This year's Playday campaign theme, *Our place*, aims to tackle the restrictions faced by children wanting to play outside where they live, and is highlighting the role of communities in shaping childhood.
5. Play England is a charity that promotes excellent free play opportunities for all children and young people. Play England provides advice and support to promote good practice, and works to ensure that the importance of play is recognised by policy makers, planners and the public. Play England is part of NCB and is supported by the Big Lottery Fund. For further information call 020 7843 6300 or visit www.playengland.org.uk
6. NCB's mission is to advance the well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives. As the leading national charity which supports children, young people and families, and those who work with them, across England and Northern Ireland, we focus on identifying and communicating high impact, community and family-centred solutions. We work with organisations from across the voluntary, statutory and private sectors through our membership scheme, and through the sector-led specialist networks and partnership programmes that operate under our charitable status. For further information visit www.ncb.org.uk