

# Smoking in Teenage Girls

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This survey is the second part of a project begun in 1963 among teenage boys and girls in Birmingham<sup>1</sup>, and was conducted among 158 girls with an average age of 14 years and three months.

The object of collecting this present information was threefold.

- (1) To study the smoking habit of teenage girls and the spending habits associated with it.
- (2) To obtain information regarding the habits of smoking among the girls' parents.
- (3) To compare the survey among boys in 1963 with this latest one.

Three schools were again chosen in approximately the same areas as the boys' schools. The symbols used for the areas are: (C) for the centre of the city, (I/R) for the inner ring, and (O) for the outskirts of the city. The girls were distributed as follows:

Centre	Inner Ring	Outer
36% (C)	22% (I/R)	42% (O)

The method of collecting the answers was the same as before. The papers did not contain the name of the school, class, the pupil's name, or any information that would lead to the writer's identification. The assurance was given that once the papers had been analysed by the author they would be destroyed without any other person seeing them. The heads of the schools involved in this survey were of immense value, and without their full co-operation this paper would have been impossible.

## Pocket Money

The average amount of pocket money received by the girls each week was 9s. 5d. Fig. 1 shows the average pocket money received by wage earners as against non-wage earners. As in the previous survey, wage-earners have more money to spend than the others. Fig. 2 shows pocket money received by smokers as against non-smokers, the average being 14s. 4d. for smokers and 9s. for non-smokers. Again it is proved by this survey that the more money a young person receives the more is spent on smoking.

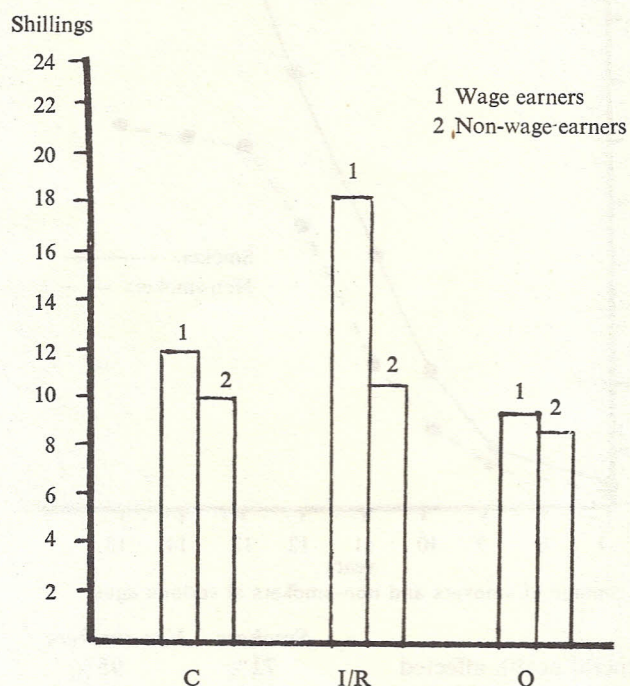
Of the girls who have smoked at some time or other, the average age of taking the first cigarette was 11 years and two months. The facts revealed are as follows.

- (a) Nearly 63 per cent. of girls have smoked by their 14th birthday.
- (b) Of smokers, only two per cent. have smoked by their seventh birthday, but 10 per cent. by their ninth birthday and over 20 per cent. by their 10th birthday.
- (c) Of all children, 26 per cent. have smoked by their 11th birthday, nearly 50 per cent. by their 12th birthday and 60 per cent. by their 13th birthday.

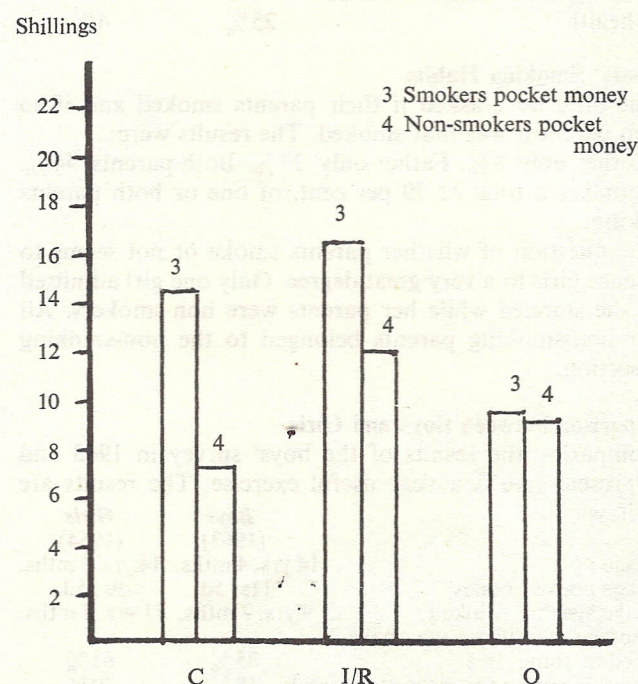
The non-smokers (37 per cent.) were divided as follows:

(C) 10%	(I/R) 10%	(O) 17%
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Nearly 26 per cent. of girls smoke regularly every week.



1 Pocket money—wage earners and non-wage earners

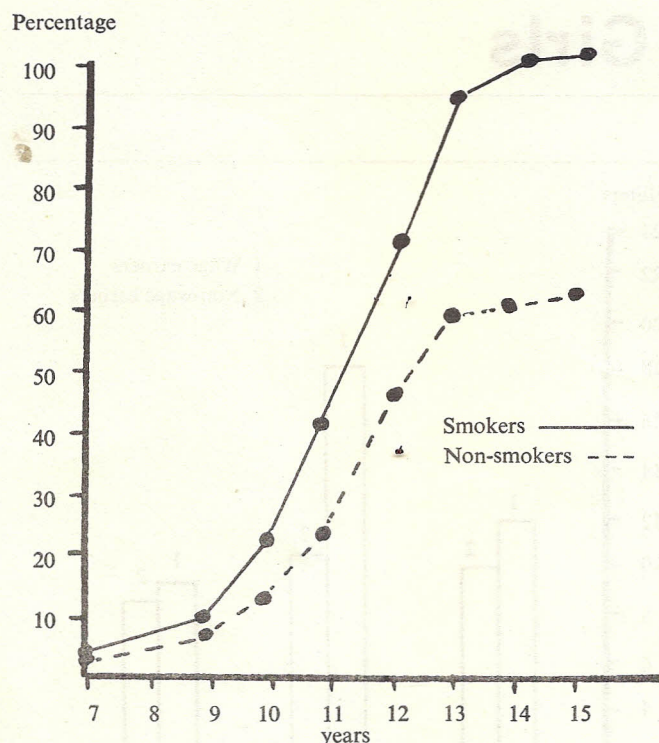


2 Pocket money—smokers and non-smokers

The amounts vary from two cigarettes a week (26 per cent.) to 50-plus a week (3.1 per cent.). It is also true that as pocket money rises, so does cigarette smoking (Fig. 4).

All the girls were asked if, in their opinion, smoking affected health. Most of them had strong ideas on this subject.





3 Percentage of smokers and non-smokers at various ages

	Smokers	Non-smokers
General health affected	72%	95%
Causes lung cancer	38%	55%
Helps general and/or mental health	25%	4%

#### Parents' Smoking Habits

The girls were asked if their parents smoked and if so which parent it was that smoked. The results were:

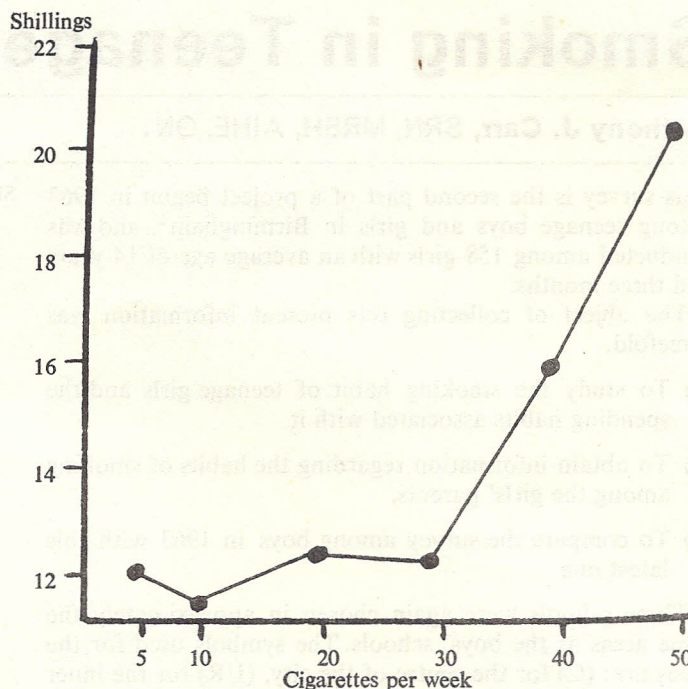
Mother only 8%. Father only 27%. Both parents 44%. This makes a total of 79 per cent. of one or both parents smoking.

The question of whether parents smoke or not seems to influence girls to a very great degree. Only one girl admitted that she smoked while her parents were non-smokers. All other non-smoking parents belonged to the non-smoking girl section.

#### Comparison between Boys and Girls

Comparing the results of the boys' survey in 1963 and this present one is a very useful exercise. The results are as follows:

	Boys (1963)	Girls (1964)
Average age	14 yrs. 4 mths.	14 yrs. 3 mths.
Average pocket money	11s. 5d.	9s. 5d.
Average age first smoked	9 yrs. 7 mths.	11 yrs. 2 mths.
Percentage of children who have smoked at some time	85%	63%
are smoking up to five cigarettes a week	48%	20%
are smoking up to 20 cigarettes a week	20%	11%
are smoking up to 50 cigarettes a week	5%	3%
Regular smokers	51%	26%
Smoking unhealthy (smokers)	68%	72%
(non-smokers)	97.4%	95%
Causes lung cancer (smokers)	43%	38%
(non-smokers)	57.5%	55%
Helps general and/or mental health (smokers)	32%	25%
(non-smokers)	2.6%	4%



4 Comparison between amount of pocket money and the number of cigarettes smoked

#### Conclusion

Boys in these particular areas in Birmingham receive more pocket money than the girls (11s. 5d. as against 9s. 5d.) but many more boys earn the extra pocket money with a part-time job. There were a few girls who received only 2s. 6d. to 5s. 0d. pocket money although they earned money on a part-time job, the rewards of which were given to the parents.

Girls tend to smoke two years later in life than boys. Even so, 63 per cent. of the girls have smoked by their 15th birthday and a quarter (26 per cent.) smoke regularly. The percentage of consumption of cigarettes by the girls who smoke regularly is about half the total of the boys. This will be seen if the figures of the boys are matched in the comparisons above.

The figures affecting health are remarkably similar. Here again, as with the boys, although 38 per cent. of girls who smoke admit that smoking causes lung cancer, they continue to smoke. This tends to prove, yet again, that anti-smoking habits should be formed in the primary schools just as much as washing hands after using the lavatory.

The example set by parents must shock many people who care for the health of children. The influence and example of parents over their own children is much greater than many care to admit. Because the instruction given by teachers, health visitors and health educators is so greatly off-set by the parents, there seems to be evidence for a concentrated, vigorous health education campaign specially aimed at parents.

This should also cause many senior medical and nursing colleagues to pause and think of the influence their smoking has on their juniors.

<sup>1</sup>CARR, A. J. Smoking in Teenage Boys. *Nursing Times*, Aug. 13, 1963, page 1093.