

# Smoking in Teenage Boys

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**Smoking:** 'A custom loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs', said James I. Mr. A. J. Carr found that nearly 85 per cent. of all boys in a survey he made had smoked by their 14th birthday.

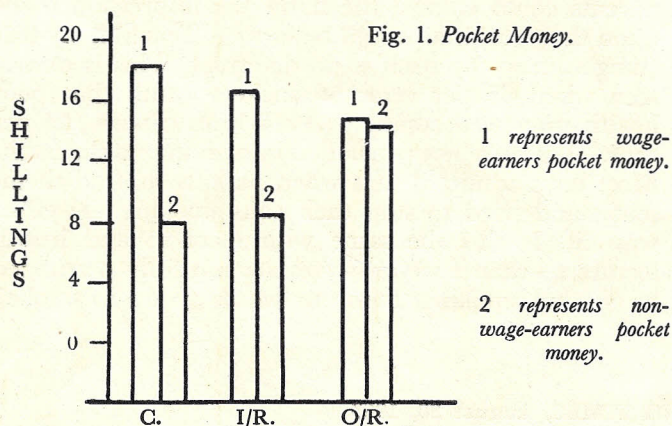
THIS SURVEY was conducted among 156 boys aged between 13 and 15 years old in three different areas of Birmingham. The project was to find out the spending habits of the boys in relation to smoking.

The areas were very well situated. The first was in the centre of the city in the redeveloping and changing section, the second on the inner ring road, and the third on the outskirts of the city on the outer ring road.

It must be clearly understood that the information given and the conclusions reached relate only to this cross-section of boys questioned and must not be mistaken for the habits of all boys of this age in Birmingham, although a large survey in this age group would no doubt reveal some very interesting facts.

The number of boys participating was reasonably distributed, as shown below.

Centre	Inner Ring Road	Outer Ring Road
35.8% (C)	38.4% (I/R)	25.6% (O/R)



To obtain the full co-operation of all the boys, the survey was conducted anonymously. The answer papers did not contain the name of the boy, his class, or school. The only identifying symbols used were C for Centre, I/R for Inner Ring and O/R for Outer Ring areas. The assurance was given that no teacher, parent or any other person apart from the writer would have access to the papers and that when the information was obtained the papers would be destroyed. All the boys seemed to enjoy answering the questions and no result appeared suspicious.

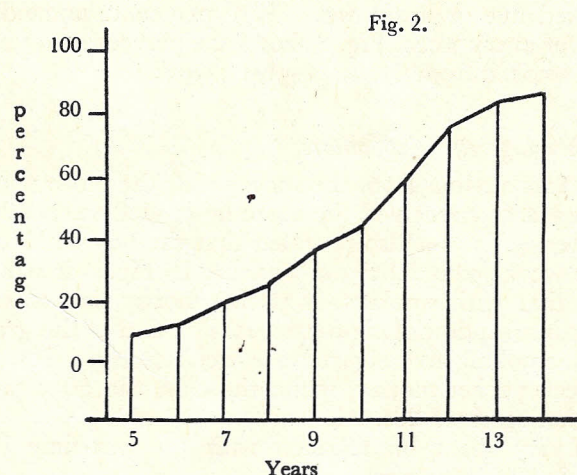
## Pocket Money

The average age of the 156 boys was 14 years and four months and they received each week an average of 11s. 5d. pocket money. When compared with various statements made from time to time about the large sums of pocket money school teenagers receive, this amount may well seem modest.

As shown in Fig. 1, the boys in C group had the largest amount of pocket money and a gradual decrease is noted as one moves out of the city. It is obvious from this graph that the largest percentage of pocket money in C group was in fact earned by the boys themselves. This to a lesser extent was true in the I/R group but when the O/R group is examined there seems very little monetary value in working while still at school.

## Wage-earners

The majority of boys (60 per cent.) do not undertake paid part-time work. The money earned by the remaining 40 per cent. supplements their pocket money. This is rather obvious because the pocket money of wage-earners is approximately 75 per cent. more than that of non-wage earners. One great disadvantage with this is that the more pocket money the boys have the more they tend to spend on tobacco.



## Cigarette Smoking

The average age when the boy had his first cigarette was nine years seven months. Looking at Fig. 2 it will be seen that many started smoking much earlier. The

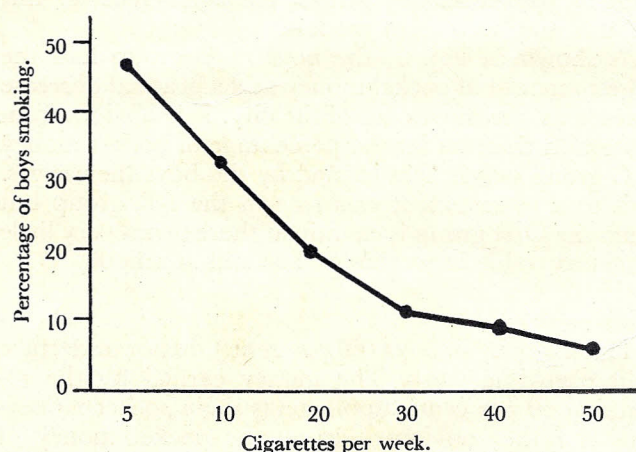


graph line shows both smokers and non-smokers. The main facts revealed are as follows.

- (a) Nearly 85 per cent. of all boys have smoked by their 14th birthday.
- (b) Of regular smokers, 7.5 per cent. stated they had smoked by the age of five years, and 25 per cent. had smoked by the age of seven.
- (c) Of all the boys, 33 per cent. have smoked by their ninth year, 50 per cent. by their 11th year and 75 per cent. by their 12th year.

The average percentage of boys who declared they had never smoked was 15. Non-smokers in C group amounted to 11 per cent., in the I/R group 18 per cent. and in the O/R group 22 per cent.

Fig. 3.



#### Regular Smoking

At the time of the survey, 51 per cent. of the boys smoked regularly every week. Of these, nearly half smoked five or less a week. Five per cent. smoked 50 or over every week. Fig. 3 shows the percentage of boys who smoked from five to 50-plus a week.

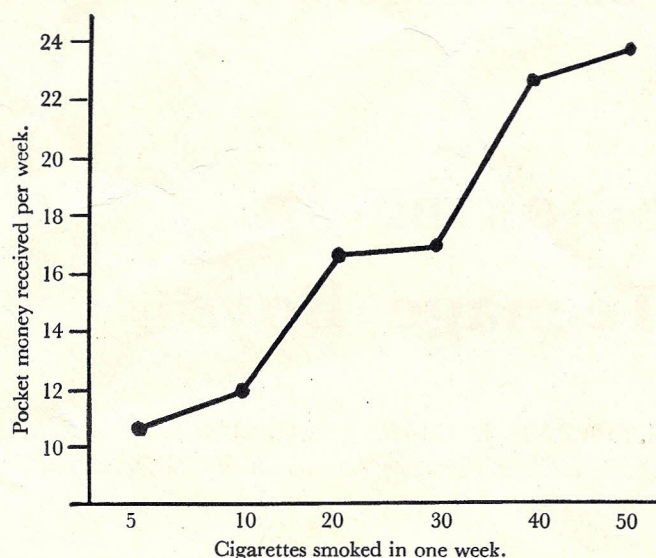
#### Weekly Cigarette Expenditure

It was obvious from the survey that the more pocket money a boy received the more he tended to spend on cigarettes. It was also revealed that the boy with part-time work spent more on tobacco. In Fig. 4 it will be seen that with smokers, as pocket money rises so does the consumption of cigarettes. At one end of the graph those smoking five cigarettes a week received 10s. 3d. a week pocket money, while those in the 50 a week bracket received 23s. 9d.

Money spent on tobacco with no part-time job:  
3s. 2d. (average).

Money spent on tobacco with a part-time job:  
4s. 5d. (average).

Fig. 4.



#### Smoking affecting Health

The three groups were asked if they had any idea if smoking affected health, and if so to give reasons for their answer. The results given below clearly indicate that they had readily formed opinions on this matter.

	Smokers	Non-smokers
Helps general and/or mental health ..	32%	2.6%
Smoking unhealthy	68%	97.4%
Causes lung cancer	43%	57.5%

#### Conclusions

The average pocket money received by the boys seemed very reasonable for their age. Most boys with part-time jobs gave their parents a percentage of the money earned.

The unfortunate trend in smoking more if the money is available gives a very poor outlook when the boys start earning real money at work. Also the number of boys who have smoked by the age of seven must give cause for concern. It appears that educating children effectively must start in the primary departments if the habit is to be made unfashionable. Even better, if parents could control the habit the impression made upon their children would be lasting. Teaching by fear (lung cancer) by itself is no deterrent. This is clearly seen when 68 per cent. of smokers admit that poor health may well result, or even lung cancer (43 per cent.), but were not persuaded into giving up the habit. Most boys admitted that when parents smoked themselves and tried to stop their sons smoking the effect was nil. Is this the same with teachers and health lecturers—that if we ourselves are not fully persuaded to give up smoking, then our words go up in smoke?