Name_____ Class_____ Date _____

## READING PRACTICE 04

# Unhealthy, unhappy, with no self-esteem: British teenagers lag behind world's young

*They smoke too much, feel under massive work pressures and don't even really like each other – British children are among the unhealthiest and unhappiest in the world, according to a report published today.*

**A** The World Health Organisation (WHO) study of more than 150,000 young people in 35 countries found that the physical and mental health of children in the UK is more like that of adolescents in former communist nations than that of their western European neighbours. Teenagers in England, in particular, but also their counterparts in Scotland and Wales have some of the highest rates of drinking, smoking and drug use – and the lowest levels of life satisfaction, fruit consumption and feelings of physical well-being.

**B** The WHO survey on Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) is conducted every four years and interviews 11, 13 and 15-year-olds from the United States, Canada and nearly all eastern and western European countries. It is the largest international study of adolescent attitudes and provides an intriguing – and worrying – snapshot into the lives of British teenagers compared with their peers across the world.

**C** English 13-year-olds are the least likely in the world to believe their peers are 'kind and helpful', while only Russian 11-year-olds and Czech 15-year-olds had a lower opinion of their generation than the same age groups in England. Less than half of all the English adolescents saw each other as kind and helpful, compared with the study's average of 60 per cent. A third of English, Scottish and Welsh girls rated their health as only fair or poor, with only their peers in Ukraine, Lithuania and Latvia feeling worse off. Fewer than one in five girls in Spain, Italy and Switzerland feel the same way.

**D** When the children were asked about quality of life, England was in the bottom half of the league, while Dutch, Swedish and Greek young people were the happiest. English children struggle with a wide range of factors which reduce their quality of life. One in seven 11-year-olds, one in five 13-year-olds and one in four 15-year-olds are unhappy with their lives. A spokeswoman for the national children's charity *Childline* said: 'We counselled more than 120,000 children last year and the main reason for this was bullying. I think there is more that could be done to protect young people. Things like exam stress are also a big problem – children need to know that exams are not the only measure of success.'

**E** While English youngsters have below average hours of homework, with only a quarter of 15-year-olds spending more than three hours a day on after-school assignments, they feel under greater stress. Six out of ten boys and seven out of ten girls aged 15 in England say they feel pressured by schoolwork, with only Lithuanian and Welsh peers reporting greater stress.

**F** Campaigners said the failure to tackle public health problems affecting young people was causing a self-perpetuating cycle of abuse. One in five girls and one in seven boys aged 15 in England smoke every day. The average 15-year-old picked up the habit at the age of 12. A spokeswoman for the pressure group Action on smoking and Health said: 'We are puzzled by the Government's reluctance to introduce a smoking ban in public places because it would help reduce tobacco use among young people. It would also help to have a ban on the portrayal of smoking in films. The image of a Hollywood role model smoking on the big screen has a big impact on teenagers.'

**G** Throughout the survey, English children rated alongside children in Central Europe rather than with nations such as France, Germany, Italy and Spain. One in three children from all the age groups in England watches more than four hours of television per weekday, compared with the WHO average of one in five. A third of 11-year-old children from this country go without breakfast on school days, while 90 per cent of their Portuguese peers start every day with a morning meal. Only children from Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland eat less fruit than English and Welsh youngsters. More than half of teenage boys and a third of teenage girls in England admitted that they had been involved in a fight in the past 12 months – double the rate of German children.

**H** Health experts said the study should help countries to develop long-term policies to improve the health of young people. Marc Danzon, the WHO regional director, said: 'Looking after the health of young people is of vital importance. We know that attitudes, behaviour and lifestyle patterns strongly influence well-being and are shaped at an early age. It is important to know what factors determine these life-long patterns.'

LIVEWORKSHEETS

**Read and complete the summary, using the words from the list.**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| health | middle | peers | oldest |
| a quarter | affect | parents | less |
| appearance | study | studies | youngest |
| better than | half | more | comparable to |
| a fifth | find | three-quarters | grow |
| improve | worse than | | |

The results of the WHO survey show that the health of adolescents in Britain is not as good as that of children from other Western European countries and **1** _____ the health of children from Central Europe. Less than **2** _____ of girls from Spain, Italy and Switzerland said their health was average or poor, while one in three British children said the same. One in seven children from the **3** _____ group and as many as **4** _____ of 15-year-olds report that they are not happy. According to a national charity, sources of stress include their **5** _____ and their **6** _____. More than **7** _____ of the English teenagers interviewed reported that they worry about the latter, despite spending **8** _____ time than average working on this out of school hours. According to Marc Danzon, we need to **9** _____ ways to help young people because habits which **10** _____ health are formed when we are young.

**Read and write TRUE/FALSE/NOT GIVEN**

**11** Scottish adolescents report lower levels of life satisfaction than English teenagers.
**12** There are many reasons why English children are unhappy.
**13** English children need more protection from aggressive peers.
**14** A ban on showing smoking in films has helped to change the behaviour of teenagers.
**15** One in three British children eat breakfast at the weekends.

LIVEWORKSHEETS