

Young People in Scotland Survey 2012

School toilets

Summary Report for Scotland's Commissioner for
Children and Young People

March 2013

Introduction

This report contains the findings of an Ipsos MORI survey of secondary school pupils in Scotland, carried out for Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People. Questions focused on school toilets.

The sample of schools comprised 59 secondary schools throughout Scotland, in which 2,154 pupils completed questionnaires. The age groups included in the survey were 11-18 year olds in S1 to S6. Fieldwork was carried out between September and November 2012.

Interpretation of findings

When interpreting the findings, it is important to remember that the results are based only on a sample of the Scottish secondary school population, and not on the entire school population. Consequently, results are subject to sampling tolerances, and not all differences between subgroups are therefore significant.

When differences between estimates are specifically commented on in this report, these differences are statistically significant. For example, reporting that *'boys are more likely than girls to say they don't use their school toilets'* would indicate that the gender difference is significant at the 5% level.

Data are weighted by gender within year group, SIMD classification, and urban-rural classification, to Scottish Government pupil census data (2011). The effect of weighting is shown in the computer tables.

Where percentages do not sum up to 100%, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of don't know/not stated categories, or multiple answers.

For detail of the approach to sampling, see Appendix.

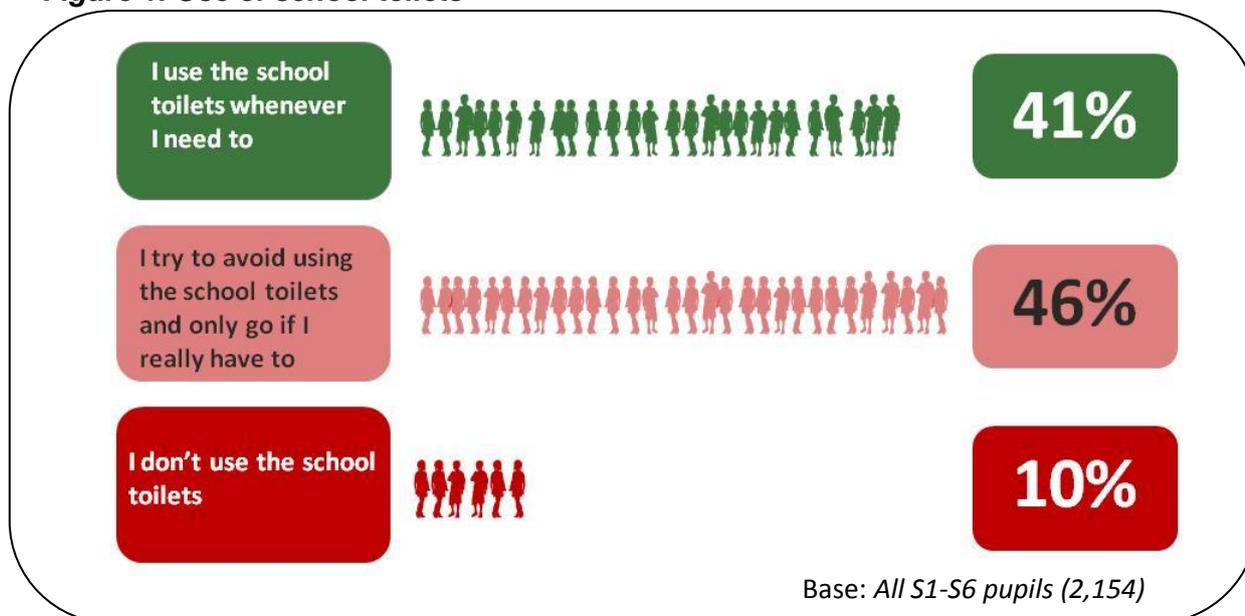
Overview of key findings

- Only 41% of pupils say they use their school toilets whenever they need to. A further 46% say they only use them if they really have to, and 10% say they *never* use their school toilets. Boys are more likely than girls to say they *never* use their school toilets.
- Among pupils who have to seek permission to go to the toilet during class, only around a third of pupils say they are *always* or *usually* allowed to go, 16% report *rarely* being allowed to go, and 2% say their teachers *never* let them go to the toilet during class.
- While two thirds of pupils say they do not tend to feel bothered about asking to go to the toilet, 14% report feeling embarrassed, 9% report feeling annoyed, and 7% report feeling worried. Boys are more likely than girls to say they are *not bothered*, while girls are substantially more likely than boys to feel embarrassed or worried.
- Although around half of pupils who use school toilets report *always* or *usually* feeling safe in them, 16% say they *rarely* or *never* feel safe in them, and a similar proportion (15%) that they only *sometimes* feel safe.
- While a slight majority of pupils rate their school toilets positively in terms of having warm water, hand drying facilities, and private cubicles, only a minority of pupils rate them positively in terms of cubicles having working locks, having enough toilet paper, provision of soap, and overall cleanliness. Asked to provide an overall rating of their school toilets, around a third of pupils rated them as *very good* or *good* (31%), and a similar proportion rated them as *OK* (32%), while only a slightly smaller proportion rated them as *poor* or *very poor* (27%).

Use of school toilets

As shown in *Figure 1*, around two in five pupils say they make use of their school toilets whenever they need to. A similar proportion say they try to avoid using their school toilets and only go if they really need to, while one in ten pupils say they never use their school toilets.

Figure 1: Use of school toilets



Boys are more likely than girls to say they *don't* use their school toilets (12% vs. 8%), while pupils living in the most deprived areas are around twice as likely as pupils living in the least deprived areas to report this (13% vs. 7%), and pupils attending schools in urban areas are twice as likely as those attending rural schools to report this (12% vs. 6%).

Whether school toilets are locked

Around one in ten pupils say that the toilets at their school are *always* or *usually* locked when they arrive at school in the morning and after the last class of the day (12% in each case). A slightly larger proportion (16%) report toilets being locked during lessons, while a much smaller proportion report toilets being locked at break or lunch (each 4%).

On the other hand, three quarters of pupils say their school toilets are *never* locked at break (73%) or lunch (74%), while around half (52%) say they are *never* locked during lessons. Around two in five report their school toilets *never* being locked at the start and end of the school day (each 27%).

Pupils attending urban schools are substantially more likely than those attending rural schools to report their toilets *always* or *usually* being locked in the morning (14% vs. 3%); during lessons (27% vs. 2%); and at the end of the day (15% vs. 6%).

Rules about when school toilets can be used

Around three in five pupils indicate that their school has rules about when pupils are allowed to use school toilets (57%), while around one in five say there are no rules (19%), or that they don't know whether there are any rules (21%).

Pupils in S6 are *least* likely to report there being rules about when toilets can be used (48%), while those living in more deprived areas are *more* likely than those living in less deprived areas to report there being rules in place (69% vs. 58%).

Permission to go to the toilet

The majority of pupils (81%) report *always* having to ask their teachers for permission to go to the toilet. A further 8% say they *usually* have to ask their teachers if they can go, while 3% say they *sometimes* have to ask, and 3% that they *rarely* have to ask. Two per cent of pupils say they *never* have to ask for permission to go to the toilet during class.

Among those who report ever having to seek permission to go to the toilet, 2% say their teachers *never* allow them to go to the toilet when they ask during class, a further 16% say they are *rarely* allowed to go, and 44% say they are only *sometimes* permitted to go. Just 3% say that their teachers *always* let them go, while 33% report *usually* being allowed to go.

Pupils in S6 are twice as likely as pupils in S1 to say that they are *always* or *usually* allowed to go to the toilet when they ask during class (60% vs. 29%), and pupils at rural schools are substantially more likely than pupils at urban schools to say this (64% vs. 28%).

The most common method that pupils use for requesting permission to go to the toilet during class is raising their hand and asking their teacher if they can go (54% of pupils who have to ask for permission report this). A further 40% say they approach their teacher to request permission, 2% use a special card or sign, and 1% report seeking permission in a different way.

Boys are slightly more likely than girls to say they put their hand up to ask for permission (57% vs. 52%), while girls are more likely than boys to say that they approach their teacher to ask if they can go to the toilet (43% vs. 36%).

Around two thirds of pupils (65%) say they *always* or *usually* feel *not bothered* about asking for permission to go to the toilet, while 14% report feeling embarrassed, 9% report feeling annoyed, and 7% report feeling worried.

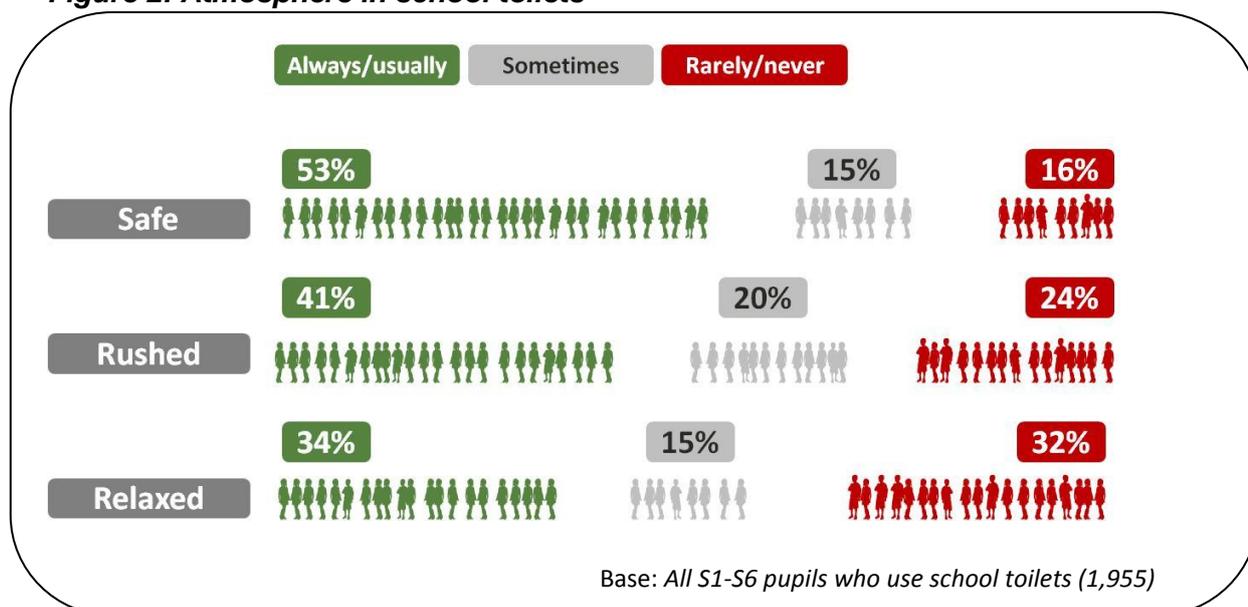
Girls are almost three times as likely as boys to say they *always* or *usually* feel embarrassed about asking to go (21% vs. 8%), and around twice as likely to feel worried about asking (9% vs. 4%). Boys are more inclined to say they are *always* or *usually not bothered* about having to seek permission to go to the toilet (73% vs. 59% of girls).

Older pupils are more inclined than younger pupils to say that they are *not bothered* about asking permission to go to the toilet (75% of pupils in S6 report *always* or *usually* feeling *not bothered*, vs. 61% of S1 pupils), and are also *less* likely than younger pupils to feel worried (82% of S6 pupils vs. 63% of S1 pupils are *rarely* or *never* worried), or embarrassed (64% of S6 pupils vs. 50% of S1 pupils are *rarely* or *never* embarrassed).

Atmosphere in school toilets

As shown in *Figure 2*, among pupils who say they use school toilets, around half (53%) report *always* or *usually* feeling safe in their school toilets, 41% report feeling rushed, and around a third (34%) say they feel relaxed. However, 16% of pupils say they *rarely* or *never* feel safe in their school toilets, and a similar proportion that they *sometimes* feel safe in them (15%).

Figure 2: Atmosphere in school toilets



Older pupils tend to be more likely than younger pupils to say they feel safe (73% of pupils in S6 who use school toilets say that they always or usually feel safe, compared with 47% of S1 pupils).

Availability of toilets

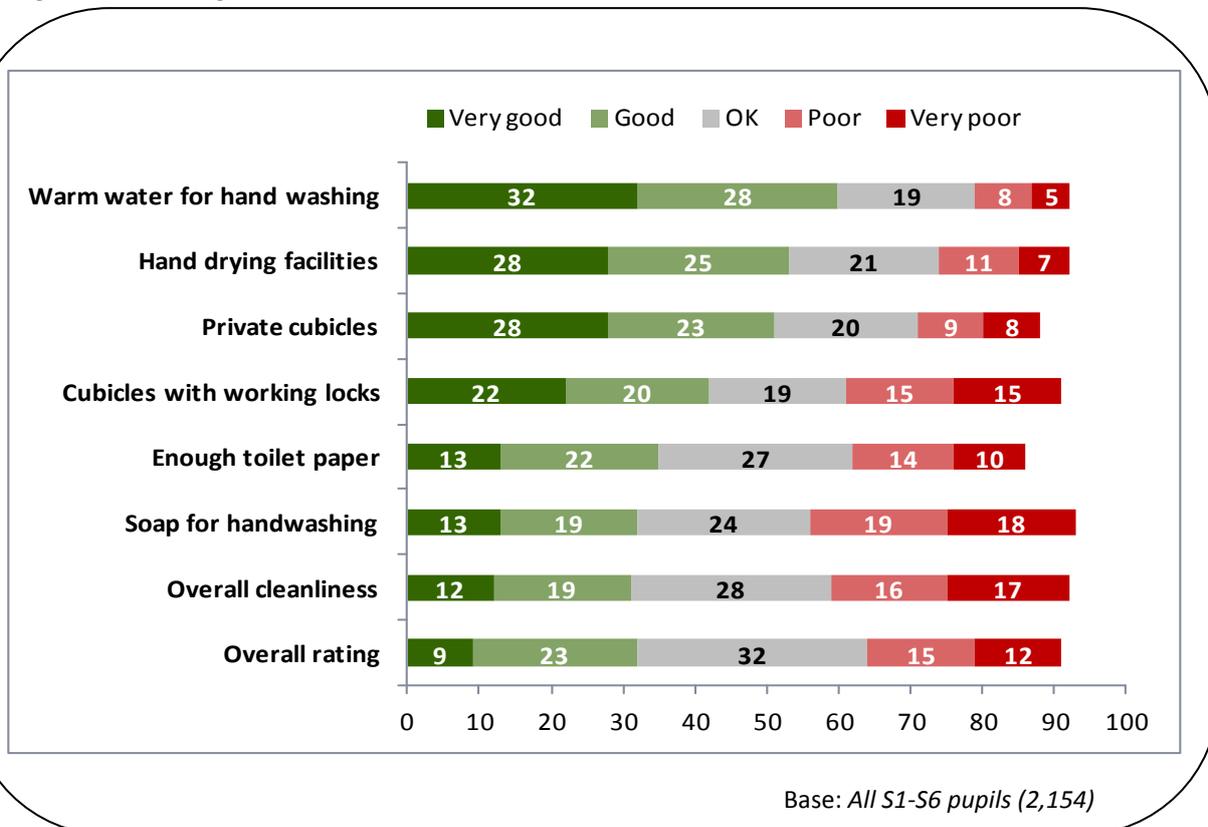
There is considerable variation in response regarding whether or not a sufficient number of toilets are available in schools: while a little over a quarter of pupils (27%) feel that there are enough toilets available for them to use *all the time*, and around third (35%) feel there are enough *most of the time*, one in five (20%) feel there are only *sometimes* enough, and around one in ten (8%) that there are *never* enough toilets available.

Boys are substantially more likely than girls to feel that a sufficient number of toilets are available *all the time* (33% vs. 22%).

Rating of school toilets

Pupils were asked to rate their school toilets on a number of aspects. *Figure 3* shows the overall results for this question.

Figure 3: Rating of school toilets



As shown in *Figure 3*, a slight majority of pupils rate their school toilets as *very good* or *good* in terms of having:

- warm water
- hand drying facilities
- private cubicles.

Only a minority of pupils rate their school toilets positively in terms of:

- cubicles having working locks
- having enough toilet paper
- provision of soap
- overall cleanliness.

Indeed, a slightly larger proportion of pupils rate their school toilets as *poor* or *very poor* than rate them as *good* or *very good* for having soap, and for overall cleanliness.

As shown in the bottom bar of *Figure 3*, when asked to provide an overall rating of their school toilets, 31% of pupils rated them as *very good* or *good*, 32% rated them as *OK*, and 27% rated them as *poor* or *very poor*.

For each aspect, younger pupils tend to be more positive than their older contemporaries, while girls are more inclined than boys to rate their toilets as *very good* or *good* in terms of:

- overall cleanliness (33% of girls vs. 28% of boys)
- having sufficient toilet paper (39% vs. 32%)
- having cubicle doors with working locks (47% vs. 36%).

Indeed, boys are twice as likely as girls to rate their school toilets as *poor* or *very poor* in terms of having cubicles that are private (24% vs. 11%), and are slightly more likely than girls to give their school toilets an overall rating of *poor* or *very poor* (30% vs. 24%).

Appendix

Sampling

The Scottish Government schools database was used as the sampling frame. All state funded secondary schools in Scotland were included in the sampling frame, while independent and special schools were excluded. The sampling universe thus comprised 367 state secondary schools throughout Scotland. This sampling frame was stratified by local authority, free school meal eligibility, school size, and urban-rural classification, and a random start point ensured a representative sample of secondary schools were produced.

The age groups included in the survey were 11-18 year olds in S1 to S6, with each school randomly allocated two of these year groups. The survey was administered by class teachers, using self-completion questionnaires in a mixed ability class such as Personal, Health and Social Education or Religious Education, during one classroom period. Teachers were provided with instructions on how to administer the questionnaire to their class. To ensure confidentiality, each pupil was provided with a sealable envelope for their completed questionnaire.

Publication of data

As with all our studies, there should be no publication of the data without the prior approval of Ipsos MORI Scotland. This would only be refused on the basis of inaccuracy and misinterpretation of the results.

Quality

All aspects of this study were carried out to the international quality standard for market research, ISO 20252.