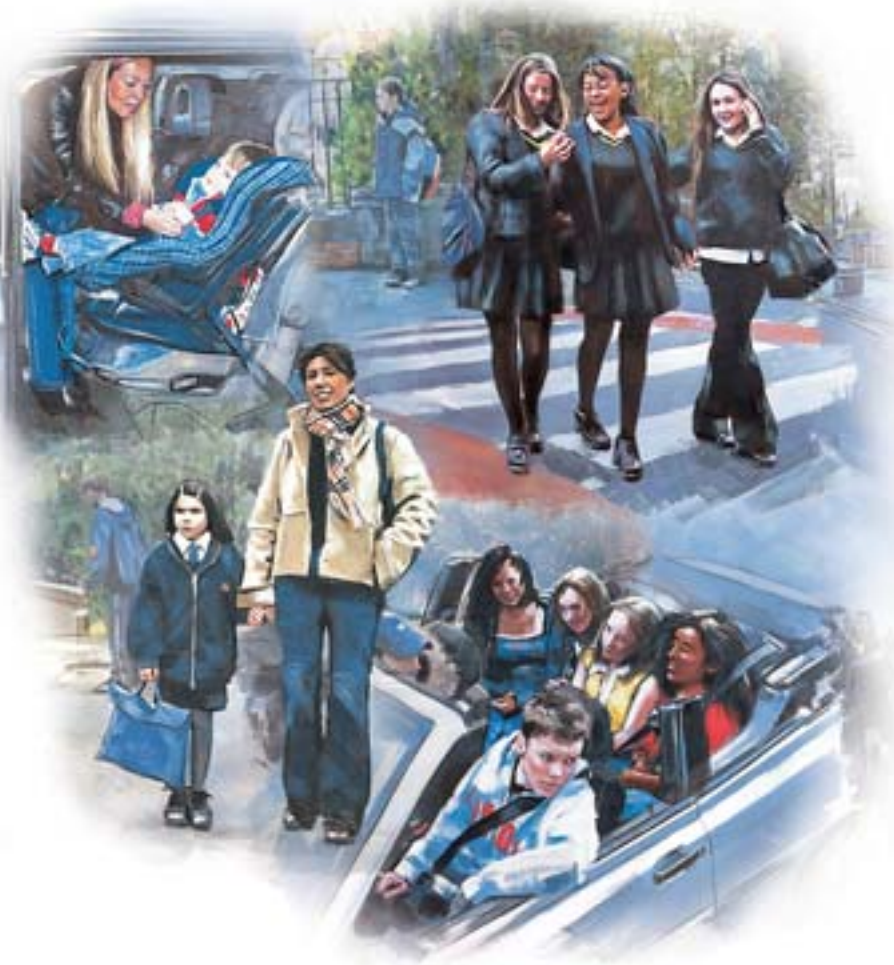
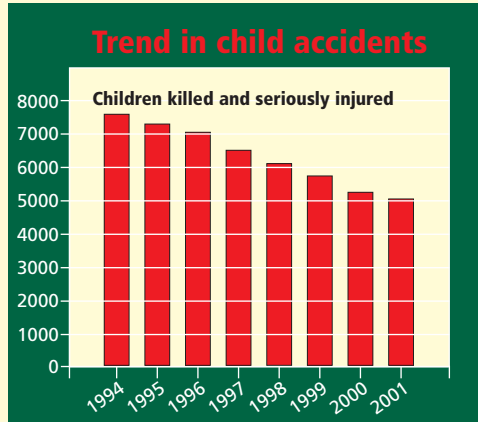




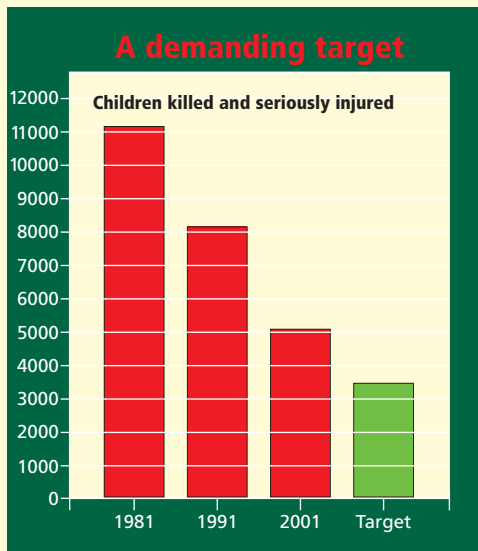
# The facts about road accidents and children



- Around 5,000 children under the age of 16 die or are seriously injured on Britain's roads each year
- Nearly two in three road accidents happen when children are walking or playing
- Almost two-thirds of child accident victims are boys
- As a child gets older the risk of a road accident increases
- A child from a low-income family is five times more likely than a child from a high-income family to be killed on the road
- Children from an ethnic minority are involved in up to twice as many accidents while walking or playing as the national average
- The risk of being involved in a road accident when walking or playing is more than 10 times greater for a child with hearing difficulties



The number of children killed and seriously injured on the roads has declined steadily for many years. The government's target for 2010 is one third of the level in 1981. It is a truly demanding target.



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### MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

Overall, Britain has one of the best road safety records in the world. But we do much less well at keeping our children safe while they are walking or playing, particularly in disadvantaged communities. That's why we set ourselves a challenging target to halve the number of children killed and seriously injured on our roads by 2010. I'm pleased that we are already more than half way there.

As government, we will continue to do our best to improve children's road safety, working closely with local authorities. For example, we have launched a new £18 million initiative for disadvantaged communities with the worst child safety problems. But we all need to do our part. All of us bringing up children – parents and relatives, teachers and carers – need to help develop their road safety knowledge and skills. As a starting point, that means knowing how, when, and where children are most at risk. I commend this booklet showing how risks change as they grow up, which I hope will be of great help to all concerned with children's and young people's safety.

TONY BLAIR

Statistical background to the research in this booklet can be found at [www.AAtrust.com](http://www.AAtrust.com).

For government information about teaching children road safety skills you can contact:

- [www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk/hedgehogs/factsheet](http://www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk/hedgehogs/factsheet)
- the Department for Transport enquiry line on 020 7944 8300
- or your local council's road safety officer

### The AA Motoring Trust

The AA established The AA Motoring Trust in 2002 as a charity to which it could donate its historic public interest motoring and road safety work.

In January 2003, The AA Motoring Trust also became the sole trustee of the AA Foundation for Road Safety Research bringing together the two charitable beneficiaries of the AA's important public interest legacy.

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The charity draws on Trustees from inside and outside the AA. Eminent Trustees from outside the AA bring to the charity wide experience of public life including government, policing and research. Trustees from the AA bring the charity a practical knowledge base drawn from operating Britain's largest motoring organisation.

The work of the charity is carried out on a day to day basis by the staff of the charity's wholly owned trading company, AA Motoring Trust Trading Ltd.

## Britain has one of the best road safety records in the world for both adults and children.

But despite this, children on foot are more likely to be killed in road accidents in Britain than in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany the Netherlands Spain or Sweden.

In 2001, as a result of road traffic accidents, nearly 5,000 children under the age of 16 were either killed, injured so seriously that they had to be detained in hospital, or required medical treatment for fractures, concussion, internal injury, severe cuts and lacerations or severe shock.

The 2001 road toll was about half the number of children killed or seriously injured in 1987, when the first government national casualty reduction target was set. Now an ambitious second target has been set – to reduce child deaths and serious injuries to 3,430 by the year 2010.

Some children are at special risk. Disability, poor play facilities, inadequate

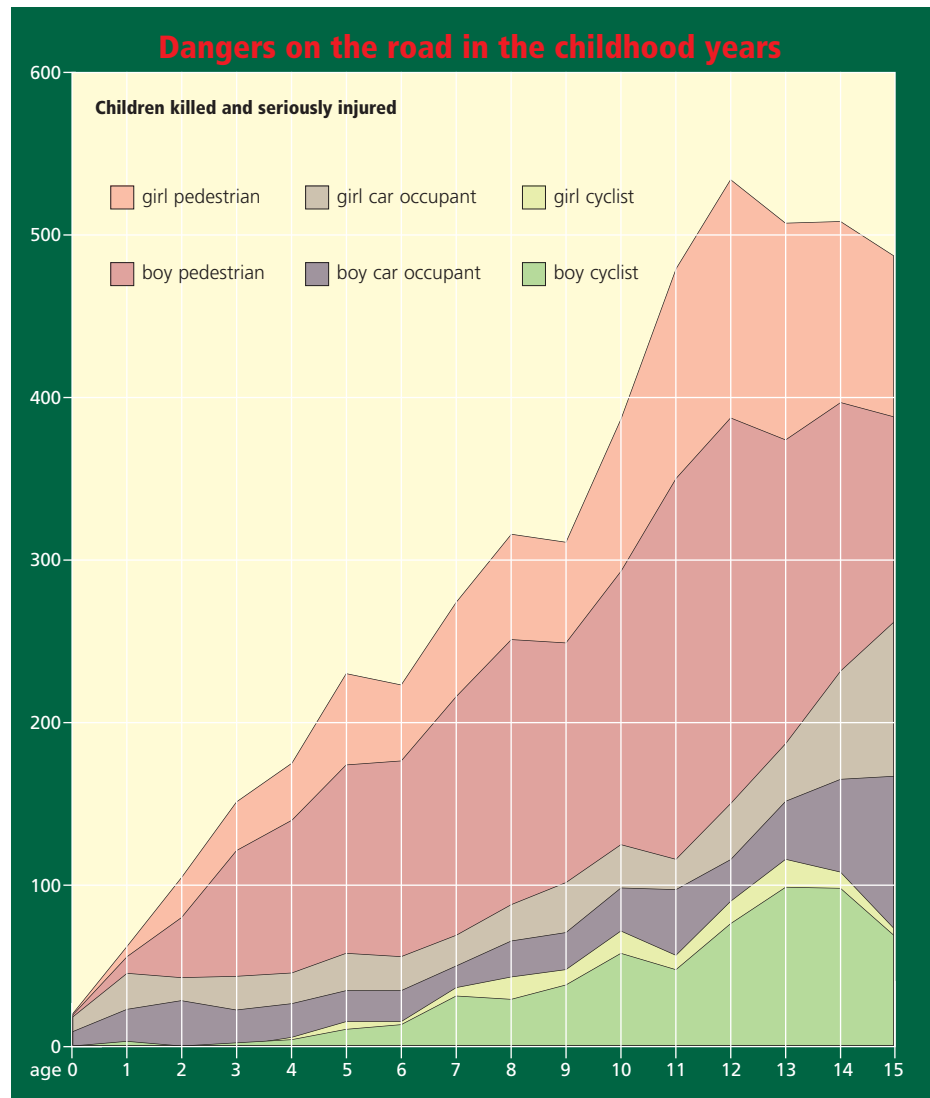
child supervision and old style housing all increase the danger. Children from low income families and ethnic minorities are at greater risk. Exactly why is not understood.

This booklet aims to increase understanding of child traffic accidents

among parents, teachers, elected officers, school governors and others interested in road safety. It aims to give the facts – to show how, when and where children have accidents.

“When an AA Foundation report showed that only a small minority of child accidents occurred on the way to school, it quickly became clear that many parents wanted a mental map of how, when and where child accidents did occur.”

John Dawson,  
Director, The AA Motoring Trust



## The under-5s

### At risk from poor supervision, being loose in the car or in badly-fitted child restraints

- The greatest risk for infants is travelling in a car
- 185 children under the age of five died or were seriously injured in 2001 while travelling as a passenger in a car
- Children who are sitting in the right child seat for their size, fitted properly, usually suffer only minor injuries in a car crash
- Around half of all child seats are not properly fitted
- By the age of two, children are most at risk when walking or playing
- Just over a third of pre-school children who are killed or seriously injured while walking or playing are accompanied by an adult. One third are alone

0-5 years

0-5 years

2

Pre-school children are least at risk of death or injury on the road. One reason is the almost universal use of car seats for the very young. As children grow older, however, they are more likely to travel without using a belt, or to use adult belts without a booster cushion, and casualties increase.

Rear-facing infant seats reduce the risk of fatal injury in a crash by more than 70 per cent, forward-facing toddler seats by more than 50 per cent and safety belts by 45 per cent. In the USA only 10 per cent of children under the age of five travel unrestrained – but they account for more than half of child deaths in cars.

Child restraints must also be used properly if they are to save young lives. This is not always the case.

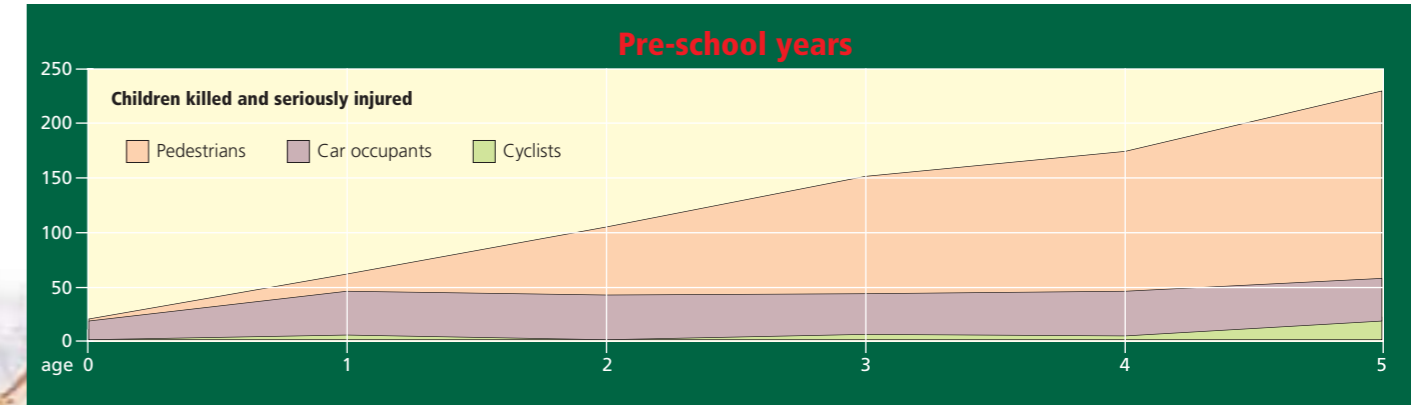
A study by the AA and Devon County Council found that 24 per cent of child car seats were too loose, 21 per cent of the harnesses were too loose, and 21 per cent of the buckles were not fitted properly.

As children grow older, the risk of them being killed or seriously injured in a traffic accident outside the car – while walking and playing, for example – increases much faster than for those travelling by car.

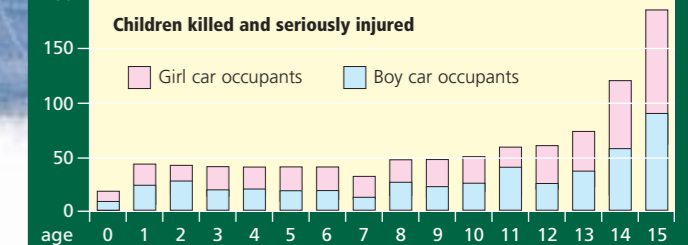


“Children who had properly constructed car seats – the under-5s in effect – usually have very minimal injuries and are only brought to the A&E for a check-up.”  
Dr Howard Sherriff, Accident and Emergency Consultant, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge.

3



### Children injured in cars



## Playing with danger

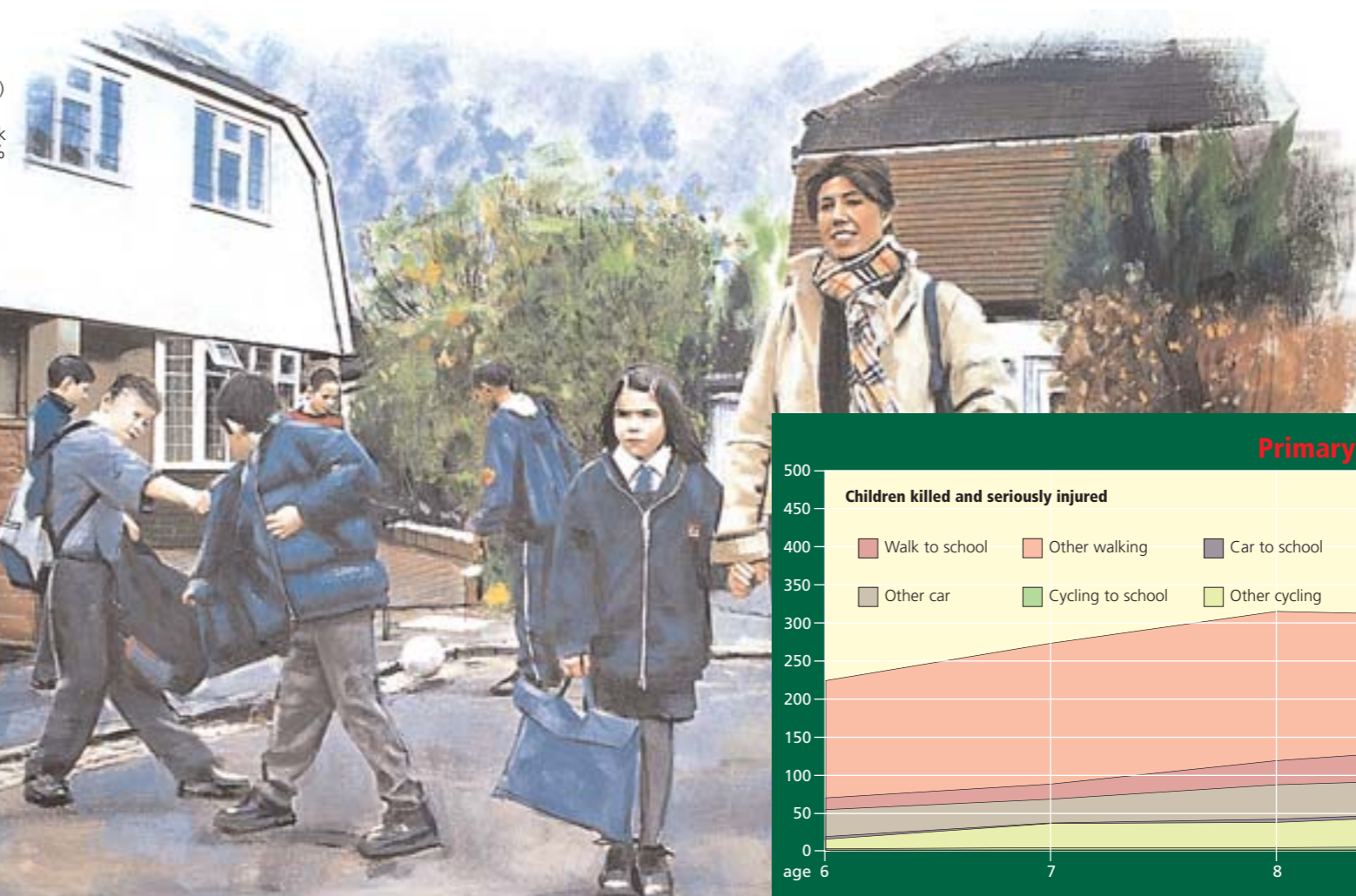
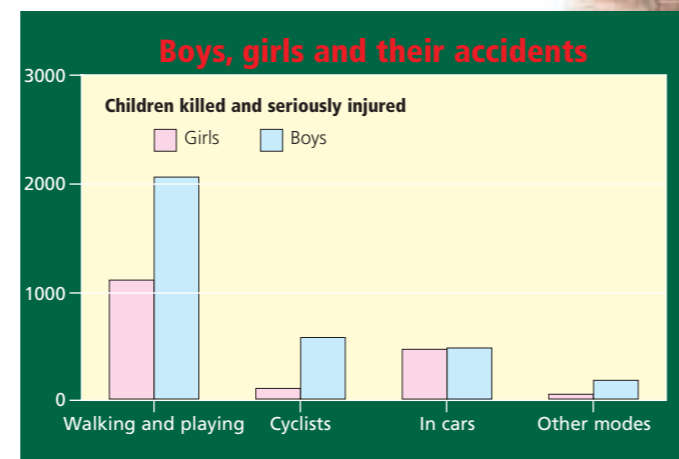
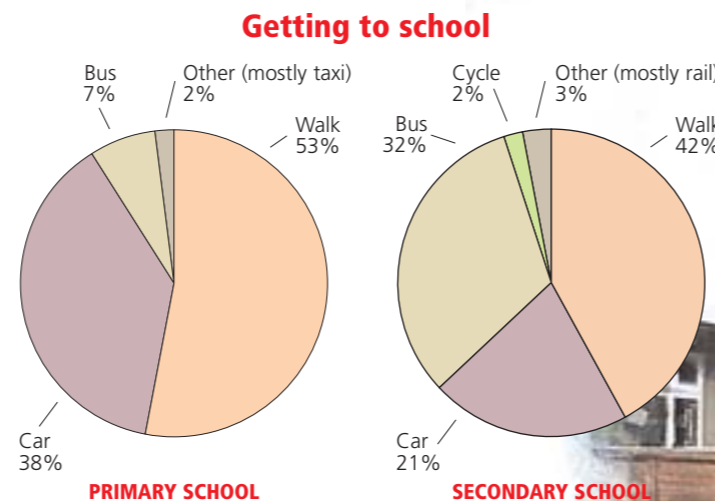
**For the over-5s, the risk is greater outside the school day – but boys are more at risk than girls**

- The journey to and from school accounts for just under 20 per cent of child casualties
- About 80 per cent of road deaths and serious injuries occur outside the school day
- The journey on the school bus is very safe, but the walk to the bus stop still poses risks
- Many accidents happen on light summer evenings when children are playing outside
- A third of children injured while crossing the road say that they did not stop before they stepped off the kerb – and as many say they did not look
- More than a third of children injured while walking or playing are alone at the time – and only one in 10 are with an adult
- Boys have nearly twice as many accidents as girls when they are walking or playing, and more than five times as many when riding bikes

6-10 years

6-10 years

**E**ighty per cent of accidents involving children occur during the school holidays, at weekends, and in the afternoon and evening on school days. Because so many parents take special care, the journey to school does not constitute a high risk for children aged under 11. Very few accidents occur outside the school itself.

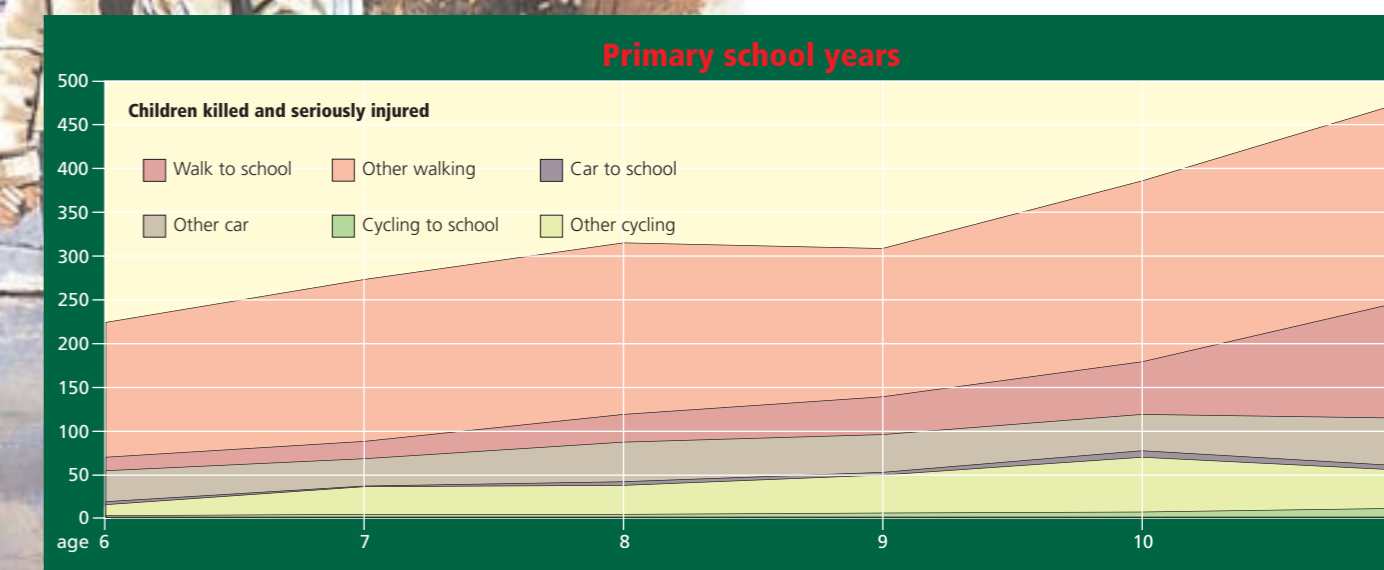
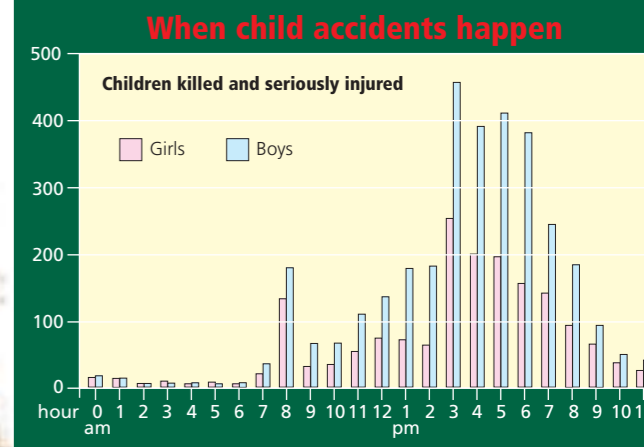


As children grow older, they become more independent, and spend more time away from home. Casualty rates rise with the longer evenings: on summer days, deaths and serious injuries to children can be up to 20 per cent higher than in winter. Children in inner-city areas are at much greater risk. They make more journeys on foot and spend

more time playing in the street because there are fewer play areas. There are also more cars parked in the street, reducing visibility and making crossing the road more hazardous. Most child victims live in the area where the traffic accident happened. But the older the child, the further from home the accident tends to be.

**“Boys are more likely than girls to walk to and from school, to cross roads on their own, to play out in the street and to ride a bike. That translates into big differences in accident rates.”**

Dr Rod Kimber, Director Science and Engineering, Transport Research Laboratory



## The risks of independence

The start of secondary school, and reduced supervision, means that ages 11-12 are the most dangerous years

- An 11-year-old is twice as likely as a 10-year-old to be killed or seriously injured in a road accident on the school journey
- Casualties outside the school journey also increase as children reach the age of 11
- For boys in particular, the risk is greatest during the autumn term
- As children grow older, the proportion of accidents they have crossing major roads increases
- The casualty rate for girl pedestrians and cyclists increases considerably from the age of 11 – but is much lower than for boys

11-12 years

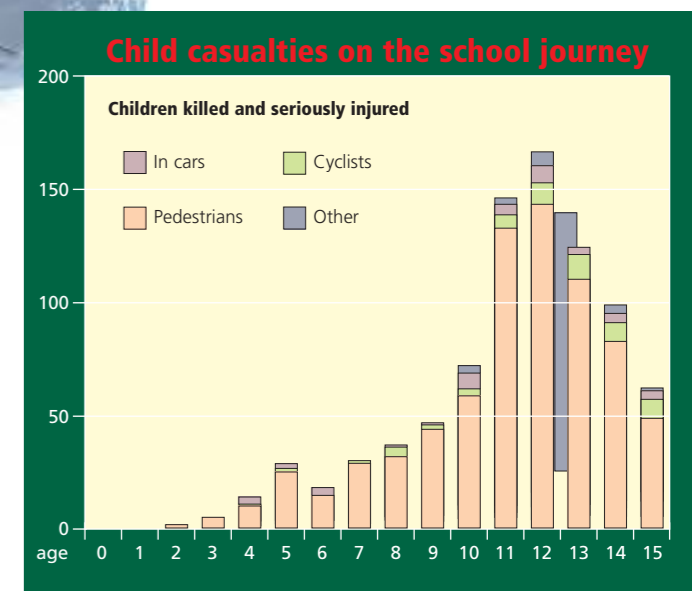
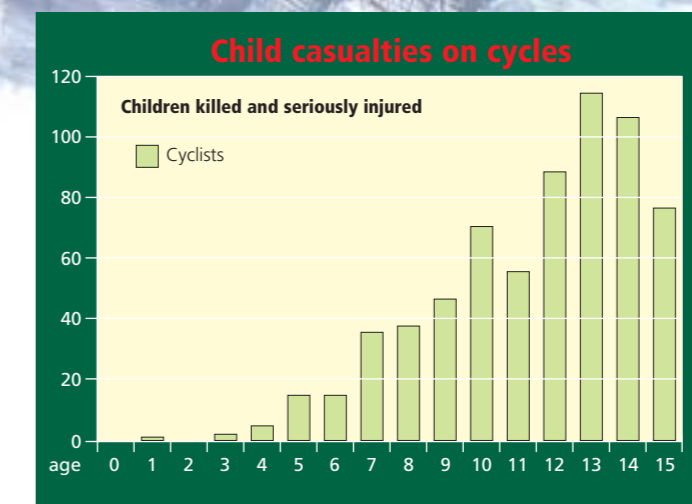
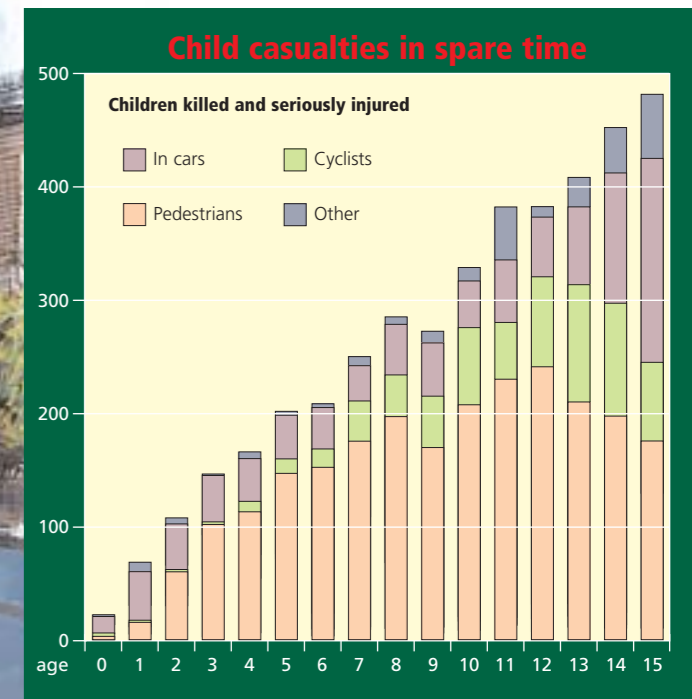
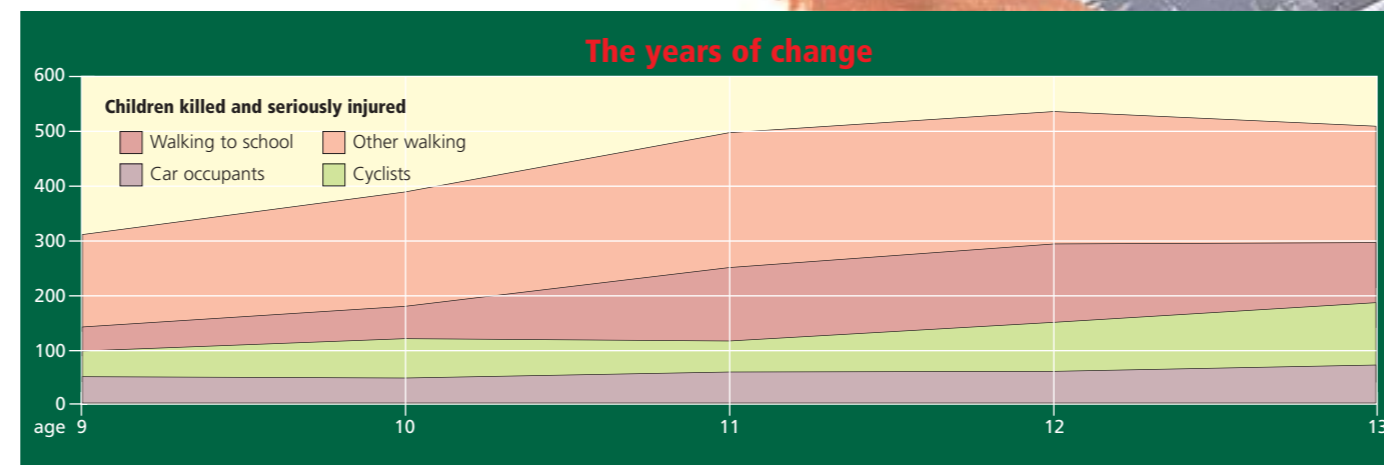
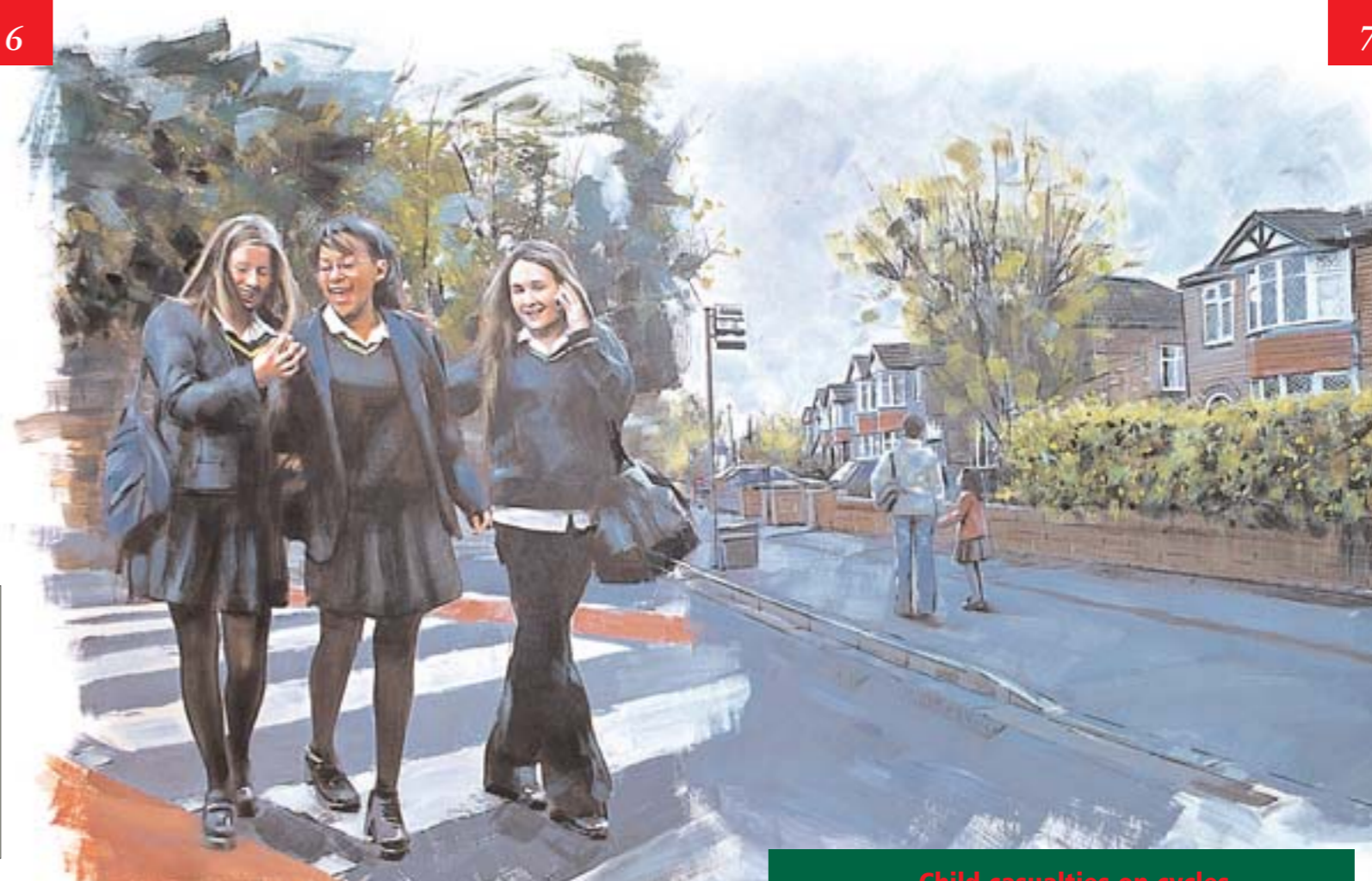
11-12 years

The move from primary to secondary school gives 11-year-olds new independence. They walk or cycle to school with friends rather than with parents, the school journey is longer, and they have greater freedom to be outside and to visit friends on their own.

But greater independence brings with it a hugely increased risk of being killed or seriously injured in a road accident. The dangerous years are 11 and 12 – by the time they reach the age of 13 they have become more aware of hazards, their social lives change and the risk of an accident reduces.

“Have I chosen the right school? Made sure the uniform's right? Has he taken the right books? PE Kit? Any sign of bullying? Homework OK? In the early days of secondary school all these things go through parents' minds. But do they realise that their child is at a time of peak risk on the roads?”

Andrew Howard MBE, Head of Road Safety, The AA Motoring Trust



## The teenage years

Many children are now streetwise, but show-off teenage drivers put young passengers' lives at risk.

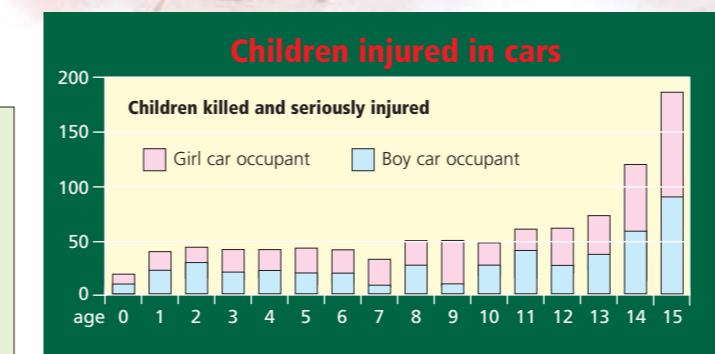
- When children travel by car the risk of death or serious injury is highest when they are aged 14 or 15
- A girl of 15 is almost three times as likely to be killed or seriously injured in a car as a girl of 13
- Over half the 15-year-olds killed or seriously injured in cars are being driven by drivers under 21
- Teenage girls cycle little. But boys cycle a lot. Boys cycling casualties peak in their early teens accounting for nearly 20 per cent of all casualties in that age group
- Pedestrian casualties decline from the age of 12 as they become more aware of the risks

13-15 years

13-15 years

“Car crashes are the major cause of death for young people. A car is a dangerous piece of equipment – and we give it to those who are at the peak of their sensation-seeking and at the peak of their anti-social tendencies.”

Professor Frank McKenna,  
Department of Psychology, University of Reading



In general children have most of their accidents in cars when being driven by people of their parents' age. But children of 14 and 15 begin to travel with drivers only a couple of years older than they are. Many of these 17 and 18-year-old drivers show off, usually by driving too fast - often because they believe this will impress their friends. Some are driving while underage, or without licences or insurance. Drink and drugs can also be involved. This behaviour, when mixed with the driver's inexperience, can have lethal consequences.

Young teenage girls travelling in cars driven by older teenage boys face particular risk. An increasingly sophisticated social life means many of these accidents happen after dark. Too often the cars are full of passengers.

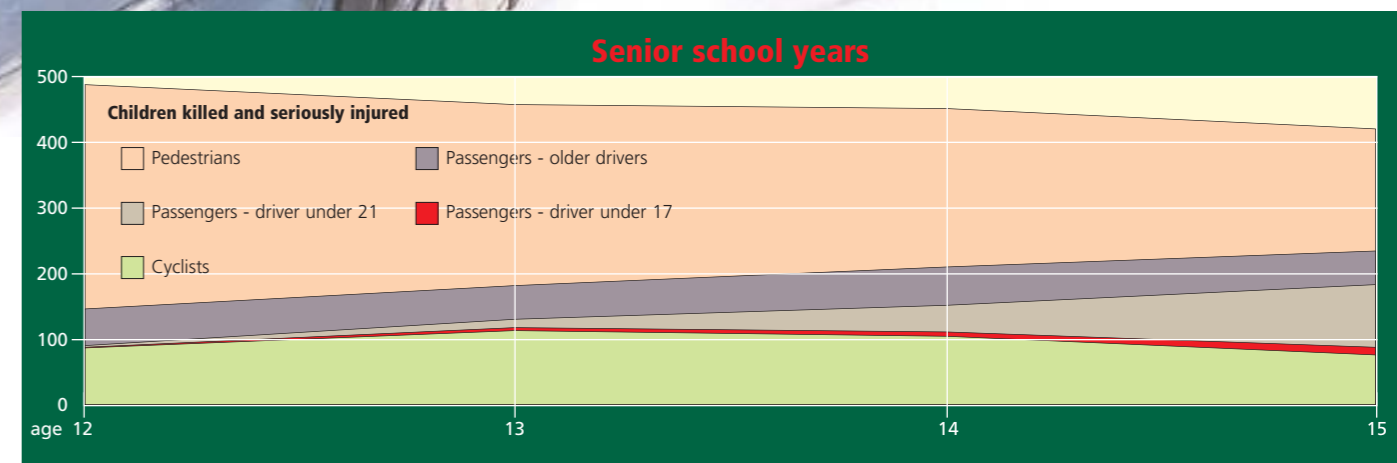
Put together this means that a quarter of all 15-year-olds killed and seriously injured in road accidents are passengers in cars, with an under-21 driver.

Out of the car, teenage girls tend not to ride bicycles but teenage boys do. One fatal or serious injury in five among 13 and 14-year-olds happens to teenage boys on bikes. Teenagers are safer on foot than younger children, but not on wheels.

8



9



### Helping make today's children tomorrow's safe drivers

Risks on the road do not end at 16. In fact they continue to increase. After 16 the risks increase further as young people gain driving licences.

Our 17 to 21-year-olds are the age group most at risk on the road, mainly because of inexperience and poor attitudes behind the wheel.

#### Parents can help prepare their children for this testing time by:

- Setting a good example with their own attitude showing driving to be a way of getting from A to B rather than a way to show off or to gain thrills.
- Helping them to learn to drive and get plenty of practice before they take their test – 100 hours, split between instructors and parents and on all types of road and in all conditions, is not excessive.

**over 16 years**

## How we can keep children safe

### AS PARENTS



We can set a good example and supervise them well.



We can teach them and talk to them about roads and safety.



We can influence or control who they are driven by – especially teenage drivers.



We can make sure they use the right safety equipment – reins, child seats and cycle helmets.



We can remember that 11 and 12 – the age they start secondary school – is the peak risk. New independence means new risks.

### AS CITIZENS



We can drive with courtesy and care, watching our speed especially in built up areas.



We can offer help where we can – from school crossing patrols to schemes that teach children to cross the road, people are needed to help.

**For more information see [www.AAtrust.com](http://www.AAtrust.com)**

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