

Set the children free: exploring children's independent movement

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Getting children out of the home

Why is it good?

- They get exercise, improving their health;
- They learn about the environment - physical and social; etc, etc.

Why is it good to do this without an adult?

- They learn to make independent decisions;
- They learn to explore and find their way around;
- They establish their own relationships; etc, etc.



The study - CAPABLE

- CAPABLE = Children's Activities, Perceptions And Behaviour in the Local Environment;
- Funded by EPSRC from August 2004 to December 2006;
- Uses various research instruments: questionnaires, interviews, GPS, activity monitors, drawings, etc;
- Study areas: Hertfordshire and Lewisham;
- Children in Years 4, 5, 6 and 7 (aged 8 to 12).

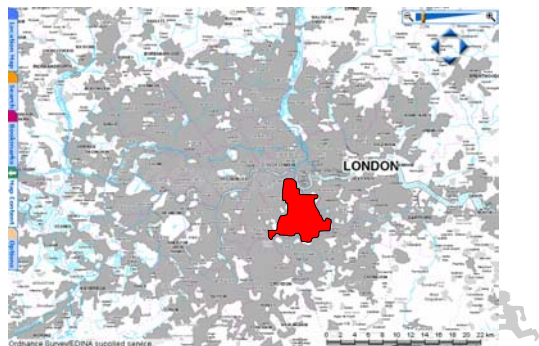


The research being presented here

- Based on questionnaires answered by children;
- Surveys conducted through schools in Lewisham;
- Results are for 383 Year 7 children (aged 11-12) - 194 boys, 189 girls.



Where is Lewisham?



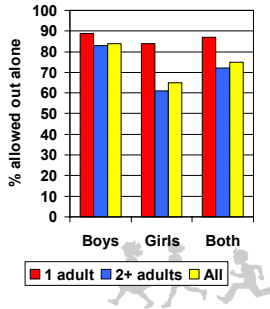
Factors that might affect children's propensity to be allowed out alone

- The number of adults at home;
- Having an older sibling;
- Having a car at home;
- Having a garden at home;
- Having access to a park or communal area to play in.



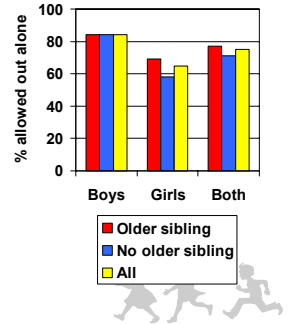
Effect of the number of adults at home

- More children from households with one adult at home are allowed out alone than those from other households.



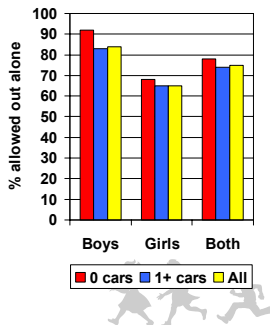
Effect of having an older sibling

- More girls with an older sibling are allowed out alone than those without;
- Similar proportions of boys with and without an older sibling are allowed out alone.



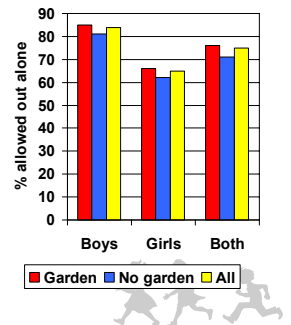
Effect of having a car

- More children living in households without a car are allowed to go out alone than those in households which own one or more cars.



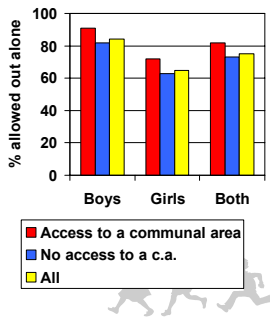
Effect of having a private garden

- More children living in dwellings with their own gardens are allowed out alone than those without a garden;
- This may be due to the different nature of the areas.



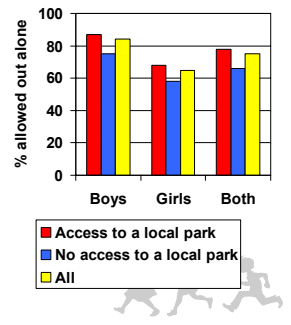
Effect of having access to a communal area

- More children living in dwellings with access to a communal area are allowed out alone than those without such access.



Effect of having access to a local park

- More children living in dwellings with access to a park are allowed out alone than those without such access.



Where do children go?

% of children who go to various places

	Boys	Girls
Local shops	92	93
Shopping centres	87	96
Cinema	86	92
Sports facilities	80	76
Park	84	72



Does being allowed out alone encourage boys to go to places?

	Boy allowed out alone?	
	Yes	No
Local shops	95	77
Shopping centres	89	77
Cinema	88	74
Sports facilities	83	65
Park	88	61



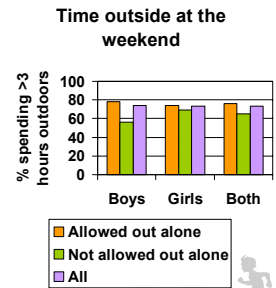
Does being allowed out alone encourage girls to go to places?

	Girl allowed out alone?	
	Yes	No
Local shops	95	89
Shopping centres	96	97
Cinema	93	89
Sports facilities	79	71
Park	84	50



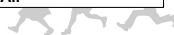
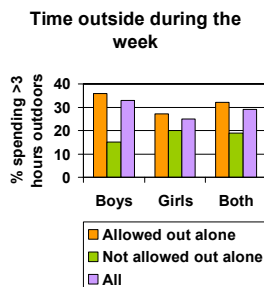
Time spent outdoors at the weekend

- More of the children who are allowed out alone spend more than three hours outdoors at the weekend than those who are not allowed out alone.



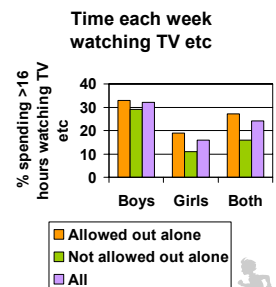
Time spent outdoors during the week

- More of the children who are allowed out alone spend more than three hours outdoors during the week than those who are not allowed out alone.



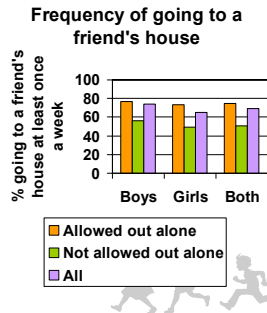
Time spent watching TV, on the computer and using games consoles

- More of the children who are allowed out alone spend more than sixteen hours a week watching TV etc than those who are not allowed out alone;
- This suggests it is not about tradeoffs in time use; perhaps it is about parental control.




Playing with friends

- More of the children who are allowed out alone go to a friend's house at least once a week than those who are not allowed out alone.




Summing up

The following seem to correlate with being allowed out alone:

- Living with one parent;
 - Having an older sibling (for girls);
 - Household not owning a car;
 - Dwelling having a garden;
 - Having access to a park or communal area.
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And...

Children who are allowed out alone seem to


- Go to more local places;
 - Spend more time outdoors;
 - Spend more time watching television, and playing with computers and games consoles;
 - Go to their friends' houses more often.
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So...

Letting out children out alone gives children

- Greater experience of a variety of places;
- More opportunity for exercise;
- More opportunity to be with friends.

But there are complicating factors:

- The nature of the area they live in;
 - Cultural factors, etc.
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For more information:

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Suggestions for further dissemination welcome

