

Streets are safe for play, adults claim

Contributed by BMRB
Monday, 01 November 2004

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Three-fifths of respondents to a survey carried out by BMRB Social Research said they thought it was safe for children aged eight and over to play outside without adult supervision.

The findings contradict previous studies that paint a picture of children held prisoner to video games, rarely going outside to play or interact.

Research commissioned last month by the Royal Bank of Scotland and NatWest found that nearly one-third of children questioned did not play outside, and three-quarters of parents said they thought children faced increased risk from unsupervised play compared to five years ago.

NCB chief executive Paul Ennals said the BMRB findings were `encouraging` but questioned why more children did not play outside. `The challenge now is finding out what stops parents from allowing and encouraging children to play outside,` he said.

Parents tended to be scared by reports of child abductions and traffic accidents, he added, although the number of children killed has remained relatively stable for the last 100 years.

`The fact that we don't see children playing outside doesn't bode well for the future,` he said.

The research also reveals that 62 per cent of respondents think children don't have enough opportunity to play outside.

BMRB social research director Graham Kelly said parents of under-10s were particularly concerned that children did not have sufficient opportunity to play outside.

The news comes as Children Now unveils its Play Charter (p20). Our campaign, supported by organisations including the Mayor of London and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, calls for children to be given time and space to play freely, with parents, communities and government ensuring children have a chance to play every day.

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