
Is the five minute shower an urban myth?

An ech₂o report • February 2010

We would like to thank everyone who answered the survey about how they use water, especially the school pupils who collected data about their families as well as completing the information about themselves.

Some of the school pupils who collected data did so as part of workshops we delivered under Thames Water's Water Makeover for Schools. We would like to thank Thames Water for allowing us to use the data in this analysis.

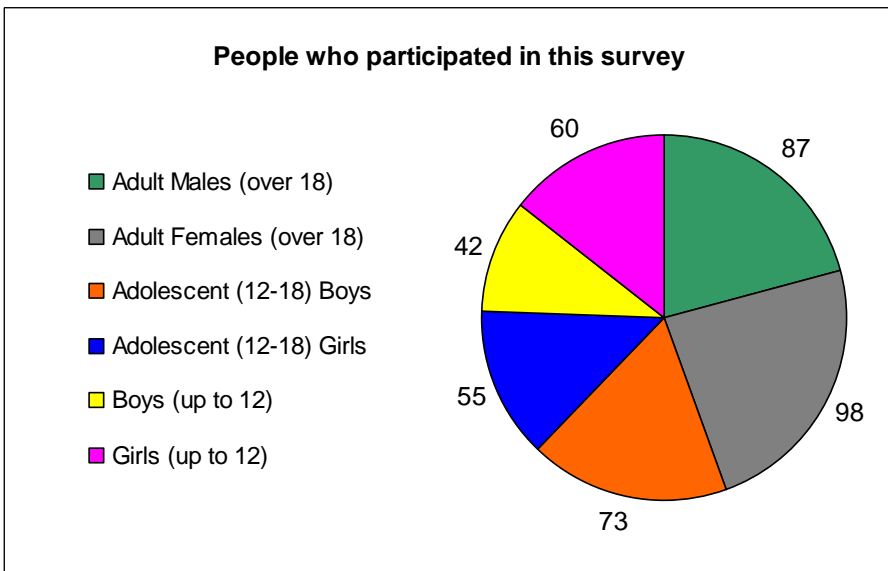
Also thank you to Trevon Jervis and Jon Ferrie of ech₂o for analysing the information.

All conclusions drawn in this report are by ech₂o.

How do we shower in the UK?

Over the past five years working with a range of stakeholders about how they use water, ech₂o began to realise that the UK average five minute shower, (on which so much policy and calculated water use has been based) is, in fact, an urban myth. As this realisation was based on anecdotal evidence, from August 2008 to December 2009, ech₂o collected data about how people use water at home, at school and in the office. We worked with school pupils to collect data about themselves and their families, and also questioned housing association tenants, students, design professionals and members of the general public. The data was collected across the whole range of different cultures and economic classes found in the UK today. However, our questionnaire only asked respondents to identify themselves by gender and age. About 85% of the respondents live in London, with the rest from various other parts of England and Wales.

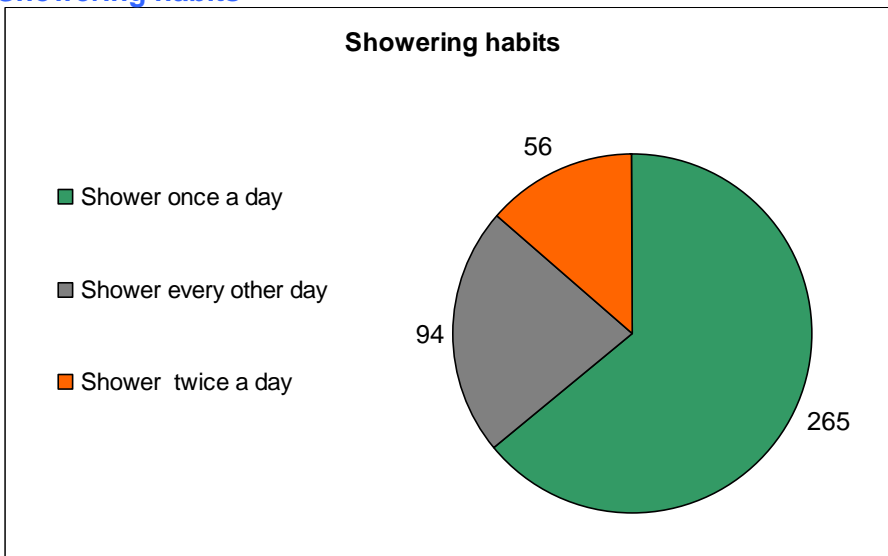
This short report analyses the data we have collected about shower use. The respondents in our survey have, on average, a thirteen minute shower. We are continuing to collect and analyse data about how people shower and will continue to make the results freely available.



This data about showers was taken from a survey of 649 people across 167 households. 415 of the respondents have showers. 378 (91%) only have showers; 37 have baths and showers.

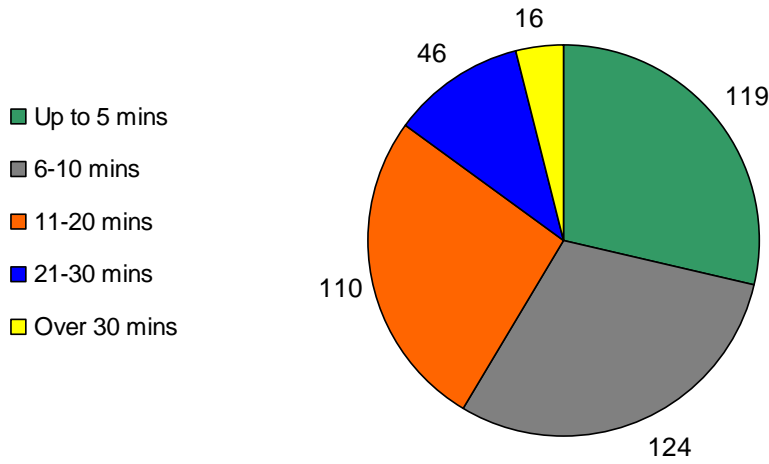
Data was collected from 202 males and 213 females. Most of the boys and girls were aged 9 to 11 when they answered the survey with about 25% being younger children.

Showering habits



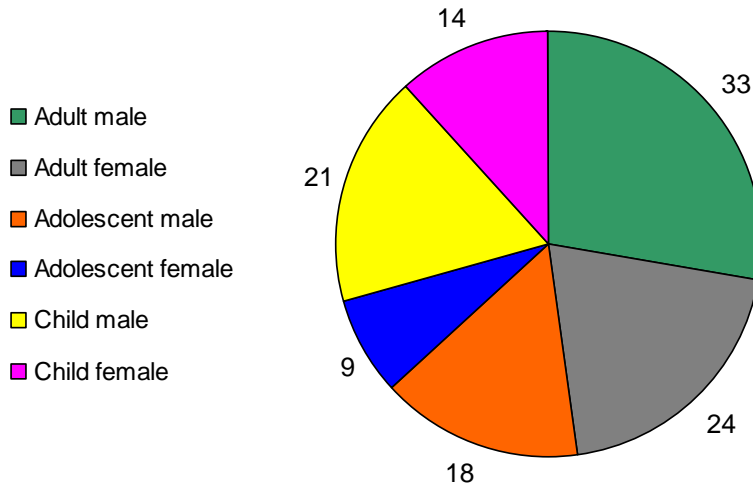
In this survey most people (64%) shower once a day, but a significant 13.5% bath or shower twice a day.

How long do people take in the showers?



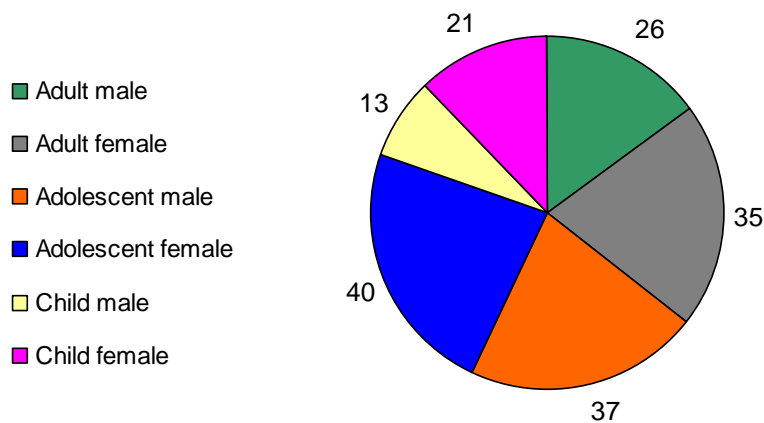
29% of the respondents in this survey have a shower that is 5 minutes or less, 30% have a shower between 6-10 minutes and 41% of people spend longer than 11 minutes in the shower. 4% of respondents spend over 30 minutes in the shower.

Who has short showers - 5 minutes or less?



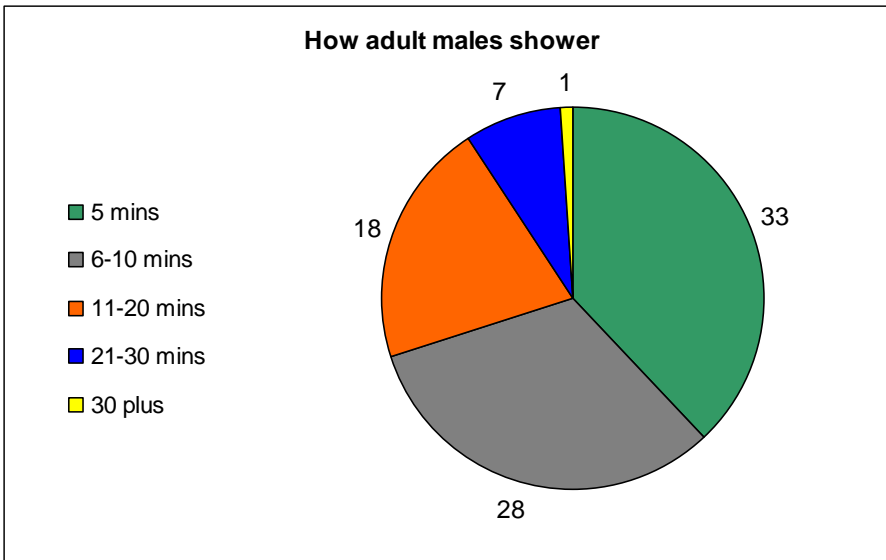
119 respondents in this survey (29%) have a shower that is 5 minutes or less. The percentage ranged from 16.4% of adolescent girls to 50% of boys aged up to 11.

Who has longer than 10 minutes in the shower?

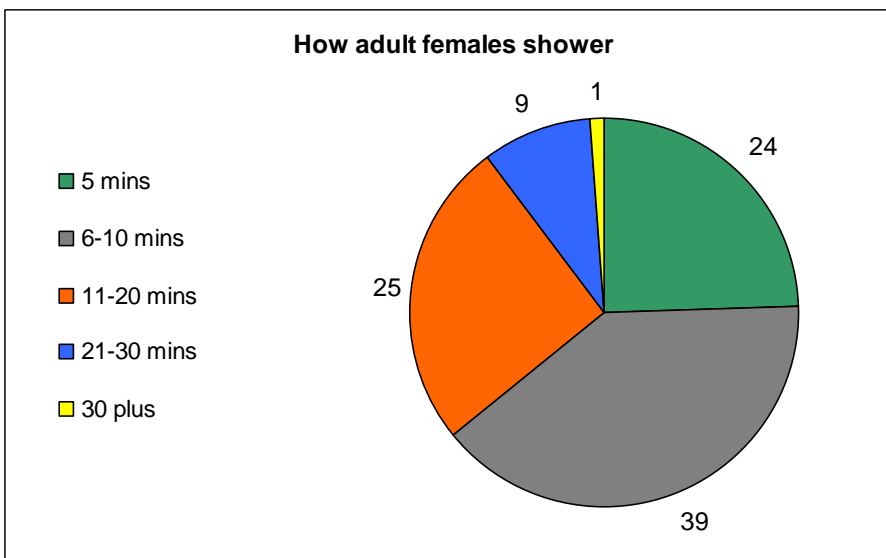


172 respondents in this survey (41.5%) have a shower that is longer than 10 minutes. The percentage ranged from 30% of adult males through to 73% of adolescent girls.

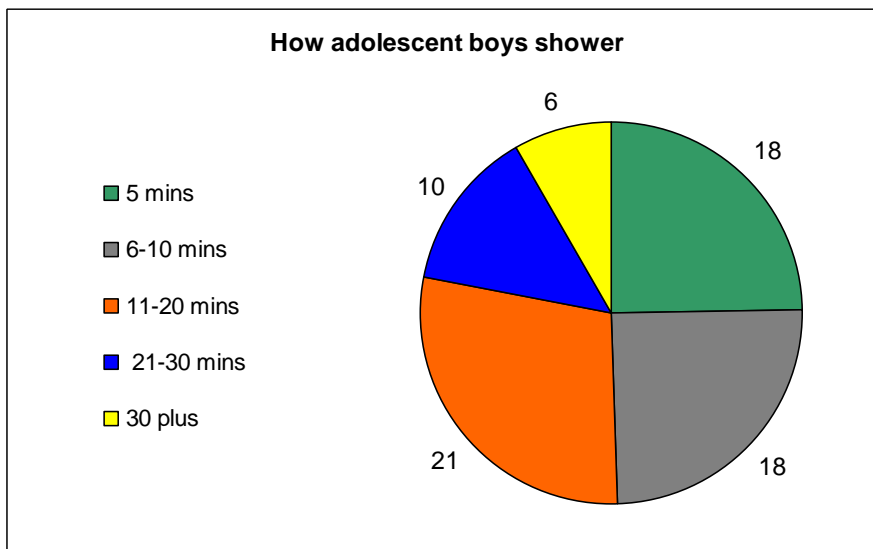
How each group showered



Adults are defined as 19 years and over. Over 70% of men in our survey have a shower that is 10 minutes or less. 38% of the men who answered the survey take less than 5 minutes in the shower as against an average of all respondents of 29.5%.

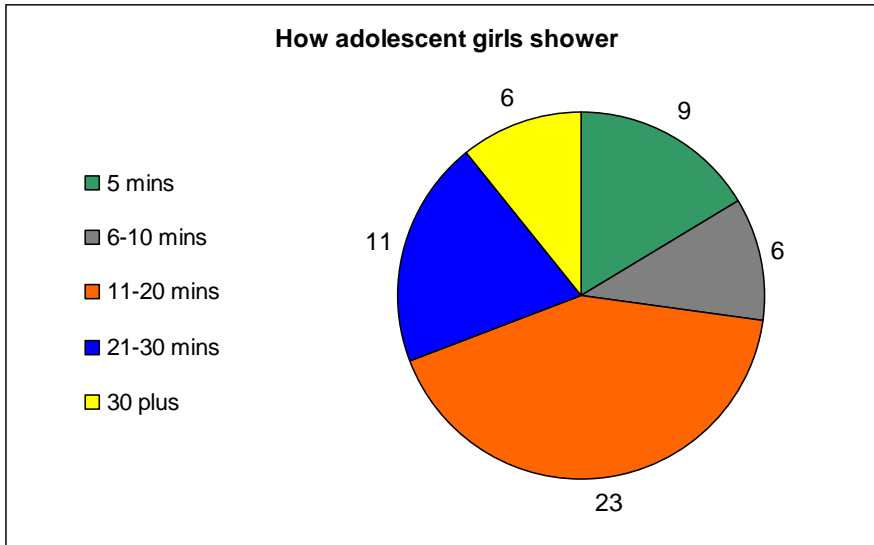


Over 65% of women in our survey spend ten minutes or less in the shower. 25% spend 5 minutes or less in the shower, and almost 40% have a shower that lasts between 6 and 10 minutes.

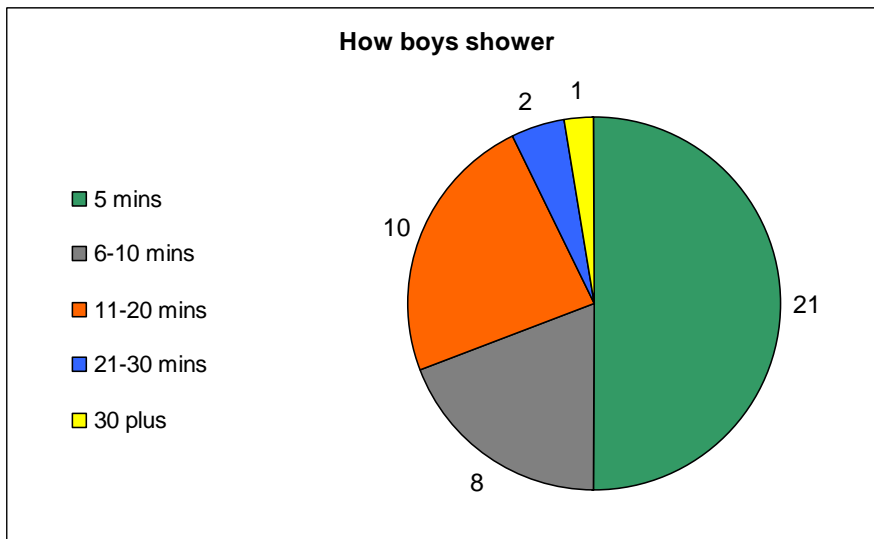


Adolescents are defined as ages 12-18. Over 49% of adolescent boys in this survey have a shower that last 10 minutes or less. However, 22% of adolescent boys spend more than 20 minutes in the shower.

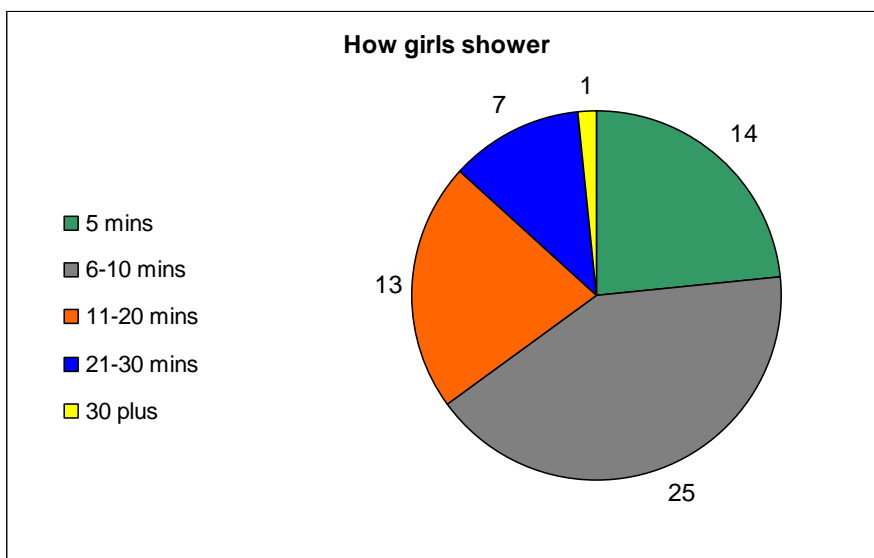
Is the five minute shower an urban myth?



Just 28% of adolescent girls in our survey have a shower that is 10 minutes or less. 42% have a shower that lasts between 11 and 20 minutes. This figure compares to an average of 27% across all categories.



Children are defined as ages 11 and younger. Over 69% of boys in this survey have a shower of 10 minutes or less, whilst 7% regularly have a shower that lasts more than 20 minutes.



Over 65% of girls in this survey have a shower of 10 minutes or less. However, the girls tend to stay in the shower longer than the boys. 42% of the girls spend 6-10 minutes in the shower compared to 19% of the boys.

Shower Analysis

Group	Number of people	Shower times				
		Up to 5 minutes	6-10 minutes	11-20 minutes	21-30 minutes	Over 30 minutes
Adult males	87	33	28	18	7	1
Adult females	98	24	39	25	9	1
Adolescent boys	73	18	18	21	10	6
Adolescent girls	55	9	6	23	11	6
Boys	42	21	8	10	2	1
Girls	60	14	25	13	7	1
Total	415	119	124	110	46	16

Shower Analysis

Group	Number of people	Shower times				
		Up to 5 minutes	6-10 minutes	11-20 minutes	21-30 minutes	Over 30 minutes
Adult males	87	37.9%	32.2%	20.7%	8.0%	1.1%
Adult females	98	24.5%	39.8%	25.5%	9.2%	1.0%
Adolescent boys	73	24.7%	24.7%	28.8%	13.7%	8.2%
Adolescent girls	55	16.4%	10.9%	41.8%	20.0%	10.9%
Boys	42	50.0%	19.0%	23.8%	4.8%	2.4%
Girls	60	23.3%	41.7%	21.7%	11.7%	1.7%
Average		29.5%	28.0%	27.0%	11.2%	4.2%
Total	415					

How long is your average shower time in minutes?

In Minutes	No. of People	In Minutes	No. of People
2	16	12	6
3	13	13	4
4	12	15	57
5	78	20	34
6	3	25	14
7	7	30	32
8	8	35	4
9	11	40	3
10	95	45	2
11	9	60	7
Total no of people answered			415
Average shower time in minutes			13

For many years the average shower time in the UK was estimated at five minutes; recent research by Waterwise has shown average times to be greater at about ten minutes. The people in this survey have a 13 minute shower on average.

Please contact us at info@ech2o.co.uk if you would like us to work with your school pupils, tenants or building users about how they use water.

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