



Embargoed to 00:01hrs on Monday 3 March 2008

ONE IN FOUR ADULTS STRUGGLE WITH MENTAL ARITHMETIC

More than one in four adults in Britain and one out of three women (nearly double the proportion of men) admit they have difficulties with mental arithmetic, and over a quarter say that they sometimes struggle to add up prices in their heads when shopping. One in five adults do not know that 8 is the square root of 64.

These findings come from new research by KPMG, the accountancy firm, as background to the campaign Every Child Counts which is designed to overcome innumeracy in children.

Nearly half (47%) of the 2000-plus sample wish they had learnt more maths at school and of women asked mathematical questions by their children or children of family/friends, just over half (52%) say that they struggle to answer them. One in five adults in the 25-34 age range feel that greater ability in maths would have helped them get further on in their careers.

Women are much less confident (or perhaps more honest) than men - 34% said they have trouble working out sums in their heads as compared to 18% of men. Adults in Scotland are the most confident with 77% claiming to be confident or very confident at mental arithmetic as compared to 69% in London - the least confident region.

The research, which was carried out for KPMG by YouGov plc last month among 2006 adults aged 18 upwards, found that difficulties with maths spread across social classes and all ages. Three per cent of ABC1s and 4% of C2DEs said they had to struggle with

mental arithmetic in shops most of the time. One third of the lower social groups (32%) feel uncomfortable in shops some or most of the time as compared to 25% of the top social groups. Those aged 55+ are the most confident (77%) as compared to 64% of the 25-34 year-olds who are the least confident.

The survey included an on-the-spot question – what is the square root of 64? One in five respondents (21%) either did not know or got the answer wrong, with responses ranging from 2 right up to 4096.

John Griffith-Jones, chairman of the Every Child a Chance charity that is working with city funders and government to develop early one-to-one help with numeracy for struggling primary-aged children, said: “Adult innumeracy is one of the greatest scourges facing the country. The survey shows how essential it is that the business community gets involved in tackling the problem. Through the Every Child Counts programme we aim to find a long-term solution, spearheading resources of specially trained teachers to help the seven-year-olds who have the greatest difficulties with maths.”

Information for news editors:

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov plc. Total sample size was 2,006 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 1st- 4th February 2008. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

Every Child Counts was announced last November to develop a numeracy intervention scheme for children aged seven who have the greatest difficulties in mathematics, using highly trained teachers to teach children on a one to one basis for around 12 weeks. It aims to reach 30,000 a year in 2010-11 when it begins to roll out nationally.

It is backed by an unusual combination of charitable trusts, the business sector and the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF). Business and charitable sponsors include KPMG Foundation, Eureka Foundation, Lehman Brothers Europe Foundation, SHINE, Man Group plc Charitable Trust, Deutsche Bank and the Charles Dunstone Trust.

Following the publication of *World Class Skills* the Department for Innovation Universities and Skills has commissioned the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics to lead on the development of a national post-16 numeracy

strategy: Numeracy for Employability. This will be launched, along with a new national numeracy marketing campaign, in 2008. The strategy will consult widely and set out what needs to be done through our partners to tackle the numeracy challenge from all angles.

Further information from Tim Devlin, Press Officer, Every Child a Chance 07939 544 487.