

Much of the country was still recovering from bomb damage caused by the war. Many other areas of the country resembled building sites as Britain built blocks of new flats and new towns as well as motorways, schools and hospitals. Britain was still recovering from the war economically. Despite its victory against Hitler, Britain felt far from secure and during these early days of the Cold War the government was still spending a lot of the country's wealth on arms. There were still tight controls left over from wartime. Food rationing did not end until 1954 and some items continued to be rationed after that. National service (eighteen months military service for all young men aged 17–21) remained compulsory until 1960. Licensing hours for pubs were still controlled. The shops were not piled high with goods. Shopping was certainly not the leisure pursuit it is today.

In one sense there were no teenagers either. Obviously there were people of that age but they did not behave the way we think of teenagers behaving today. In the early 1950s most young people seemed like younger versions of their parents! They wore similar clothes to their parents, they went to the same schools as their parents had done. They followed many of the same routines, perhaps going to church on Sundays, visiting relatives, listening to the same music at dances. If they had left school they might well go on to work in the same place as their parents.

There was only one TV channel and so, if they had a TV at all, the whole family tended to sit together and watch the same programmes. There was not much choice of listening on the radio either, and again the family tended to listen to the same programmes together. If this sounds a bit dull to you as a teenager then it maybe felt dull for many of them too, although we should never assume that people in the past see things the way we do from the early twenty-first century

Key: Colour each factor and highlight the text linking to these categories

Food:

Parents & Teenagers:

Fashion:

Entertainment:

Education & Health: