

Girls' Attitudes Survey

2015

About Girlguiding

Girlguiding is the leading charity for girls and young women in the UK. Thanks to the dedication and support of 100,000 amazing volunteers, we are active in every part of the UK, giving girls and young women a space where they can be themselves, have fun, build brilliant friendships, gain valuable life skills and make a positive difference to their lives and their communities. We build girls' confidence and raise their aspirations. We give them the chance to discover their full potential and encourage them to be a powerful force for good.

We are for all girls

We are for all girls and young women, whatever their background and circumstances. We offer them fun, exciting activities and the chance to make lifelong friends. You'll find us in every community, helping to give girls a head start in life and encouraging them to be happy, self-confident and curious about the world they live in and the difference they can make.

We change as the lives of girls change

We are relevant to today's girls because we listen to them and constantly evolve and adapt what we offer them without losing what makes us uniquely us. We provide support, comfort and friendship in what can often seem a complex world for girls as they grow up.

We give girls a voice

We give girls the confidence, skills and information to make informed decisions. We offer a supportive, inclusive and exciting environment where they can reach their own conclusions about the world. We show them how they can speak out and take positive action to improve their lives and the lives of others. We passionately believe that girls and young women can be a powerful force for good.

We give girls their own space

We give girls a place where they can really be themselves with other girls and share the experience of growing up as a girl in today's world. We provide a safe, non-judgemental environment where girls can explore the issues they care about while having lots of fun, enjoying new experiences and learning vital skills.

About the Girls' Attitudes Survey

Each year, Girlguiding's Girls' Attitudes Survey takes a snapshot of what girls and young women think on a wide range of issues. The survey gives girls' and young women's voices a platform to be heard and taken into account at the highest levels of decision-making across the UK. It empowers girls to speak out on the issues that really matter to them and affect their lives today. This major survey, now in its seventh year, canvasses the opinions of over 1,200 girls and young women aged 7 to 21, inside and outside guiding across the UK. The findings in 2015 build on those from 2014 and previous years. They give an insight into how girls feel about the specific and emerging pressures facing them today, and what these mean for their well-being and opportunities in life. Girlguiding's youth panel, Advocate, leads the development of the survey each year and analyses the results. All the results from this and previous surveys can be found on Girlguiding's website, www.girlguiding.org.uk/girlsattitudes.

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	4
<i>Executive summary</i>	5
<i>Health and well-being</i>	7
<i>Gender stereotypes and aspirations</i>	10
<i>Sexism and representation</i>	13
<i>Relationships and sex</i>	15
<i>Violence against women and girls</i>	17
<i>Community and social action</i>	20
<i>'If I could change one thing...'</i>	21
<i>Methodology</i>	23

Foreword

As the leading charity for girls and young women in the UK, we are privileged to hear daily from our young members as they share their views, develop their personalities, explore the world they find themselves in and shape their place within it. We feel a responsibility to girls - both within Girlguiding and outside - to provide a platform for them to make their voices heard. That's why we commission the Girls' Attitudes Survey - the UK's largest annual study of its kind - each year.

In this seventh Girls' Attitudes Survey, what stands out is how significantly girls' concerns have changed over the past few years - five years ago they were most worried about things like alcohol and drug use, but now their most commonly raised concern is mental health. It is clear that they feel they are living in an increasingly challenging world, and that this can be hugely detrimental to their well-being. What's more, many girls are telling us that they feel the adults around them are often not aware of the pressures they face.

Despite this, the survey reveals that girls and young women are taking action in their communities and beyond, and it is heartening to hear their eagerness to make change happen and carve out a better future for themselves and their peers. We asked them what one thing they would change if they could to make the world a better place for girls and young women. Their many ideas ranged from equal pay and changes to how the media represents women to more youth clubs and better access to mental health services.

But in order for any change to be achieved, we first have to really listen to what girls are saying. We were truly inspired by how many people spoke out during our recent Girls Matter campaign in the run-up to the General Election, which highlighted the big issues that so many girls and young women have said they care about. We must continue to listen as new challenges emerge in girls' lives.

From the five-year-old Rainbow discovering her independence to the member of The Senior Section feeding into policy at United Nations level, girls have a powerful role both individually and collectively. We hope you will add your voice to theirs and give them the support they need to ensure a brighter future for all.

Gill Slocombe
Chief Guide



Julie Bentley
Chief Executive



Executive summary

The Girls' Attitudes Survey this year finds that too many girls and young women are struggling with their mental health and well-being. The findings give a stark insight into the pressures girls and young women face today - gender stereotypes and sexism, anxiety about employment, fear of physical, emotional and sexual harm, and online threats such as cyberbullying and pornography.

Most damningly, girls say that the adults in their lives are out of touch with their concerns and not providing the information or support they need to remain resilient in the face of increasing pressures. Girls have made clear again that their voices are not being heard.

In spite of all this, there are positives. Girls are still taking action in their local communities and beyond to improve their lives and the lives of those around them, and we have included some of their ideas for change here.

Health and well-being

The issues affecting girls' and young women's health and well-being are wide-ranging. Whereas girls in 2010 were most worried about 'traditional' health risks like smoking, binge drinking and drug abuse, girls in 2015 highlight self-harming (75%), smoking (72%) and mental illness (69%) as top health issues. Girls say that the adults around them don't recognise the pressure young people today are under (82%). Almost half of those aged 11 to 16 report experiencing bullying through social media (45%) - yet girls feel their parents are more concerned about drug use, alcohol and smoking. Of those aged 11 to 21, 37% say they have personally needed help with their mental health, which is worrying when fewer than half of girls aged 11 to 16 say that they have talked about mental health during lessons at school (44%). Over half say they'd like to know more about where to get help and support (52%).



82%
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 feel that adults don't often recognise the pressure that young people are under

Gender stereotypes and aspirations

The pervasiveness of gender stereotypes can be clearly seen in this year's findings, especially among younger girls. The majority of girls aged 7 to 10 stick firmly to traditional gender lines when asked to choose characteristics that define girls and boys - listing words such as strong and brave for boys and shy and caring for girls. Their views on boys' and girls' aptitudes also reflect tradition, which may explain why just 15% of girls aged 7 to 10 chose engineer or architect (3%), scientist (6%), or lawyer (6%) in their top three potential careers. However, the majority of 7- to 12-year-olds agree that boys and girls have equal chances in life (70%), and 64% agree that they can do anything that a boy can do. Gender stereotypes affect older girls' aspirations more tangibly. In a crowded job market, 44% feel they must stay slim, 27% that they should wear high heels and 25% that they have to wear a lot of make-up to help their chances.



70%
of girls aged 7 to 12 agree that boys and girls do have equal chances in life

Sexism and representation

Girls and young women face a barrage of sexism every day. When asked about the week leading up to the survey, 81% reported experiencing or observing sexism, including 53% who had heard a degrading joke or comment in film or on TV, and 42% who said that they had read something that trivialised violence or abuse towards women. The proportion of girls and young women who think women are not portrayed fairly in the media has almost doubled in the past five years, rising from 27% to 48%. It is clear that the majority see a link between stereotyped and sexist representations in the media and unfair treatment of women in society - whether it's the lack of coverage of women's sport (74%) or suggestions that women are to blame for sexual violence if they're drunk (80%). Younger girls (7 to 10) are less certain of the connection between sexism and experience of inequality, but their awareness of the impact of sexism increases rapidly as they get older.



81%
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 report that in the past week they have experienced some form of everyday sexism

Relationships and sex

Again, there is a noticeable disconnect between what girls are concerned about and the provision of support and information by the adults around them. Healthy relationships, consent and sexual identity are all topics that large numbers of girls told us they should be taught in school, but a comparatively small number report that they actually have been. Girls say they believe their parents worry about teenage pregnancy, yet just 53% are taught about their choices if they were to become pregnant. Even provision of lessons about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) - compulsory in many secondary schools - falls short, given that only 67% say they have received it. Around one in four



90%
of girls and young women aged 13 to 21 agree that the government should make sure all schools are addressing sexual harassment and bullying in schools



73%
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 take part in social action or raise awareness of issues they care about

learn about pornography, something that 60% of girls aged 11 to 21 report having seen boys their age viewing on mobile devices (60%). Girls feel very strongly about the negative impact of pornography - they say it gives confusing messages about sexual consent (71%), normalises aggressive or violent behaviour towards women (71%) and promotes damaging views about what sexual relationships should be like (73%).

Violence against women and girls

Worryingly, girls feel that fear of emotional, physical or sexual harm can motivate behaviour in relationships, and can influence how they live their lives. Three quarters say anxiety about sexual harassment negatively affects their lives - whether it's their choice of clothing (51%), their body confidence (49%) or their freedom to go where they want on their own (43%). And when it comes to intimate relationships, a significant minority of girls aged 13 to 21 say that their partner has displayed controlling or coercive behaviour towards them. Among older girls, the results are especially concerning - 13% say that a partner has made them feel frightened or unsafe, and 11% have stayed in a relationship despite this. Two in three young women agree that popular culture tells boys that they are entitled to coerce or abuse their girlfriends (67%).

Community and social action

This year girls and young women report feeling increasingly insecure about their place in the local community. Whereas three in ten girls aged 11 to 21 felt part of their local community (30%) five years ago, this has now dropped to two in ten (20%), and over half say that they don't feel safe in parks on their own (51%). Just 38% feel that the UK is a good place to grow up. Three in four girls say that they don't think politicians listen to young people enough (77%), which may partly explain why a significant minority say they don't take social action. Despite this, many girls and young women continue to be active in their communities and beyond, and 32% are keen to tell others about the issues they care about. Overall nearly three quarters (73%) of girls and young women take part in at least one form of social action or raise awareness of issues they care about.

'If I could change one thing...'

We asked the 1,574 girls who took part in this survey what one thing they would change to make the world a better place for girls and young women. Some themes came up again and again: greater equality, action against stereotyping of girls and women across the media, more awareness of mental health and well-being issues, and to live free from fear and violence.

From talking to girls every day in guiding, we know that they are positive about the future and full of drive and energy. This survey shows another side of girls' experiences today, revealing the challenges that test their resilience and have negative impacts on their lives. It highlights that girls' voices must be taken seriously. When so many feel that adults are out of touch with their lives, it is imperative for those with the power to make change to listen to girls and young women, support them and act.

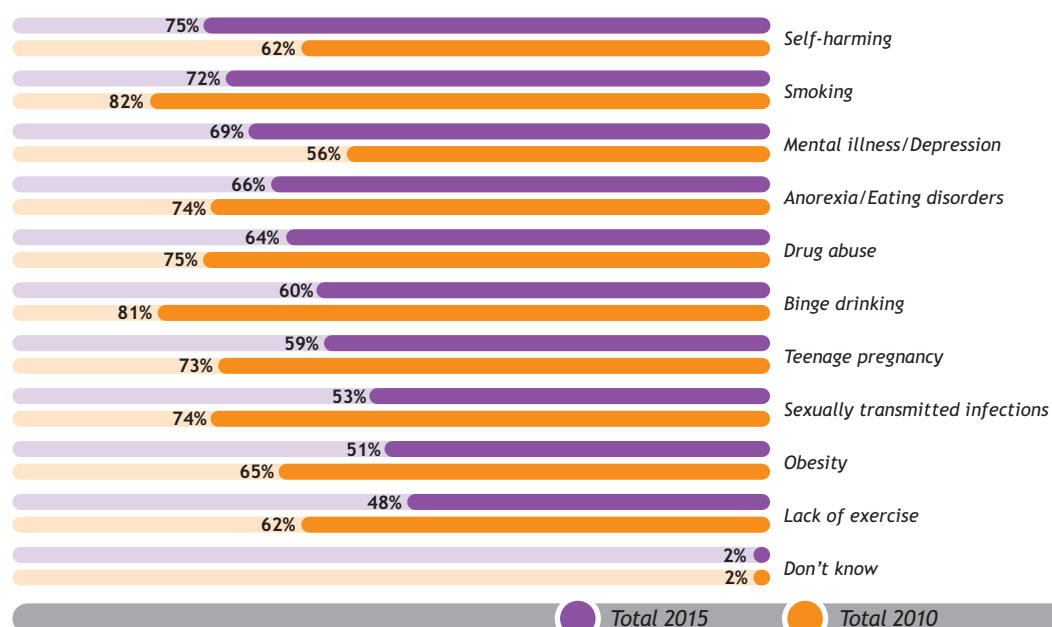
Health and well-being

Girls and young women perceive a significant generational divide when it comes to their health and well-being. Their views have changed markedly over the last five years, and they think their parents/carers are out of touch with their concerns and the pressures they face. Girls feel their parents are worried about 'traditional' risks like smoking, drug and alcohol use, and unplanned pregnancy, whereas their own top concerns for all young people today are mental health, cyberbullying and not being able to get a job.

Exploring health and well-being

In 2010, we gathered girls' views on serious health issues for young people, and those aged 11 to 21 chose smoking, binge drinking and drug abuse as their top three. This year, of the same list, only smoking remains in their top three, along with self-harming and mental illness/depression.

Girls in 2015 rate self-harming as the most serious health issue, with three quarters of girls saying it (75%). Smoking is rated second and mental illness/depression third, with around seven in ten saying this in both cases (72% and 69% respectively).



75%
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 rate self-harming as the most serious health issue for young people



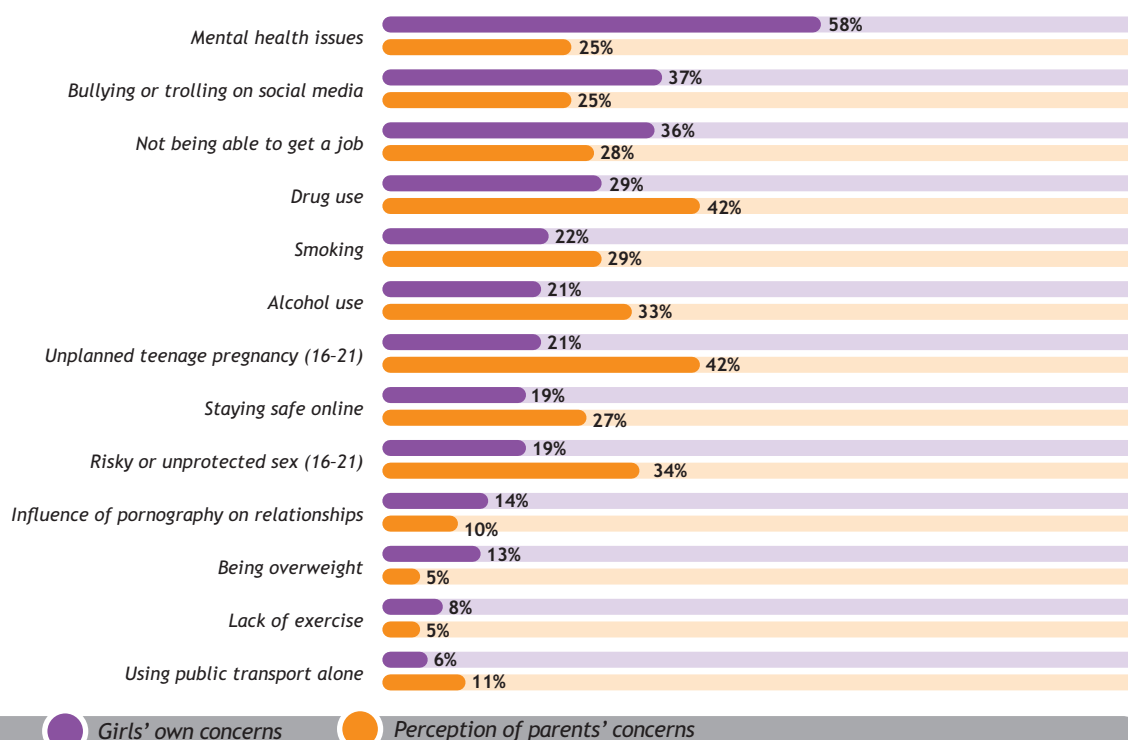
11-21 years
What girls say are serious health issues for young people

These results make it clear that girls' views on health have shifted significantly over the last five years. And this year, to widen our exploration of girls' views on health and well-being further, we also asked them about a much broader range of topics than in 2010. We asked what three issues facing young people today they are most concerned about, and also what they thought most concerned their parents.

The top concerns for girls aged 13 to 21 are mental health issues, cyberbullying and not being able to get a job, but they think that their parents are most concerned about drug use, alcohol use and smoking - the same three things that girls themselves felt were most serious when asked in 2010.

While girls' concerns remain constant across all the age ranges, what they say about their parents changes with girls' ages. Those aged 17 to 21 think the top three things their parents are concerned about are unplanned pregnancy (42%), drug use (41%) and - at 34% each - unprotected sex and not being able to get a job. For those under 17, the top three are smoking (46%), drug use (44%) and alcohol use (38%). Just one in four girls aged 11 to 21 think their parents are concerned about mental health issues (25%), despite it being the main concern among girls in their age group.

13-21 years
Girls' top concerns and perceptions of their parents' concerns



37%
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say they have personally needed help with their mental health

Mental health

Many girls say they have needed help with their own mental health but a large majority feel that adults don't understand the pressures they are under. Fewer than half the girls surveyed have talked about mental health in lessons at school despite the majority saying this is where they'd most like to get more information about it. The majority say they'd like to know more about where to get help and support.

Three in five girls aged 11 to 21 say that a girl or young woman they know has experienced a mental health problem (62%). This is largely consistent with last year's finding that the majority of girls reported knowing girls their age who have experienced self-harming (76%), depression (73%) or an eating disorder (66%).

Of most concern this year is the fact that two in five girls aged 11 to 21 say they have personally needed help with their mental health (37%). This increases with age - among 11- to 16-year-olds the figure is 28%, but among those aged 17 to 21 it is nearly half (46%). Yet the majority of girls across the age range feel that adults don't often recognise the pressure that young people are under - four in five 11- to 21-year-olds agree with this (82%), rising to 86% among those aged 17 to 21.

Fewer than half of girls aged 11 to 16 say that they have talked about mental health during lessons at school (44%). Nearly three in five girls aged 11 to 21 say that mental health is awkward to talk about (57%), rising to around two in three among 17- to 21-year-olds (66%). Just over half feel that they don't know enough about mental health problems among young people (53%), and that they would like to know more about where to get help and support for mental health issues (52%).

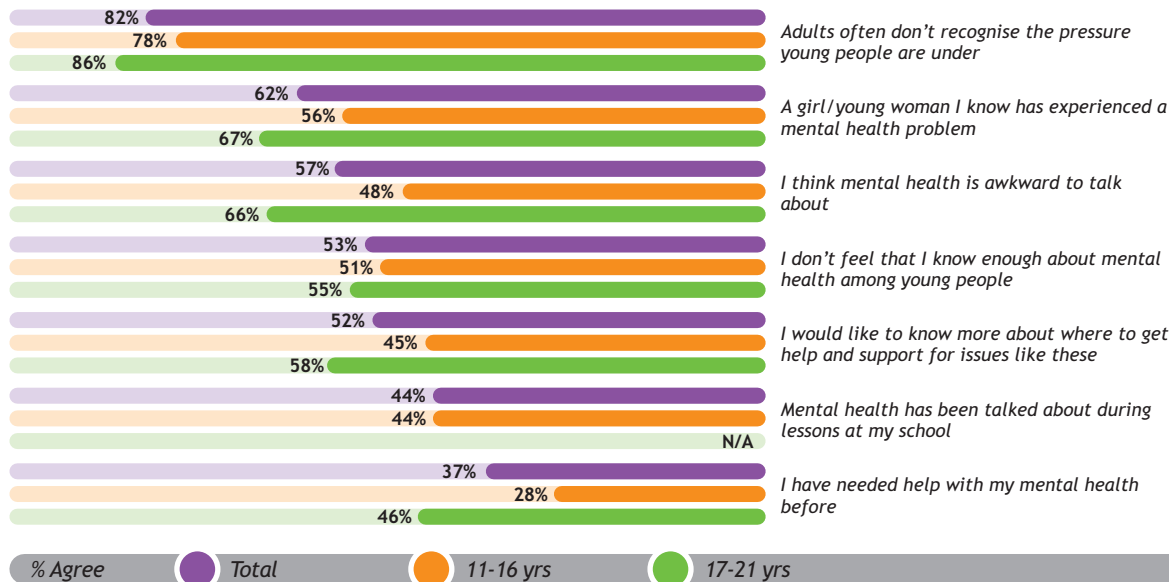
For those currently of secondary-school age, the top choice for where they'd like to get help and support would be school, with more than half choosing this (58%), followed by their GP (50%) and parents (43%). For older girls, informing themselves online is their top option (66%), and they are twice as likely as their younger counterparts to browse the web for mental health information (33% of those aged 11 to 16). For those over 16 their second preferred source of information would be their GP (63%), followed by school/college (54%). They also favour big public campaigns, with 40% wanting to get information this way, compared to just one in ten of those under 17 saying this (11%).

More than four in five 7- to 10-year-old girls say that they feel sad or down at least sometimes (83%).



82%
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 feel that adults don't often recognise the pressure that young people are under

This includes 7% who say they feel sad or down on most days, and 3% who feel like this every day. However, an upbeat 14% of girls say that they never feel sad or down.



11-21 years
Girls' views on mental health

The main reason this age group feels sad or down is because of trouble with their friends - one in two girls who feel down mention this (48%). For two in five girls, things going on in their family life make them feel down (38%). Three in ten girls say that people at school make them sad (30%), while one in four specifically blame school work (23%). Fewer say that their weight makes them feel sad or down (13%). For one in five (20%) aged 9 to 10, the way they look makes them feel like this, compared to fewer than one in six aged 7 to 8 (13%).

Cyberbullying

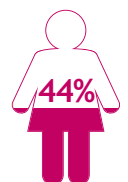
Among older girls and young women, cyberbullying is a significant issue, particularly for those of secondary-school age. It leaves them feeling isolated and lonely, can silence their voices or lead them to self-harm.

Among girls and young women aged 11 to 21, two in five say they have experienced bullying on social media (42%). This is particularly high among girls at secondary school aged 11 to 16 (45%), where underage use of social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter is very common.

More than one in four (28%) say they have experienced bullying by someone via their mobile phone (such as abusive texts or calls), and again this is most common among girls at secondary school (36%). One in four have been bullied on websites/chat forums (24%). Although it is less common among younger girls, a third of 7- to 10-year-olds have also experienced cyberbullying - on social media (13%), by mobile phone (12%) and on a website (8%). This is despite social media platforms requiring users to be 13 or older.

The main effect of this bullying is to leave the victim feeling isolated and lonely - more than four in five girls aged 11 to 21 who suffered bullying say this (85%), with two in five saying it made them feel like this a lot (44%). Around two in three say the bullying stopped them from speaking out about their views (69%), made them less interested in their school/college work (69%), or stopped them from going out with their friends (66%) - each of these effects were felt more among girls aged 17 upwards. Just under half (49%) say the bullying led to them taking more risks than they usually would.

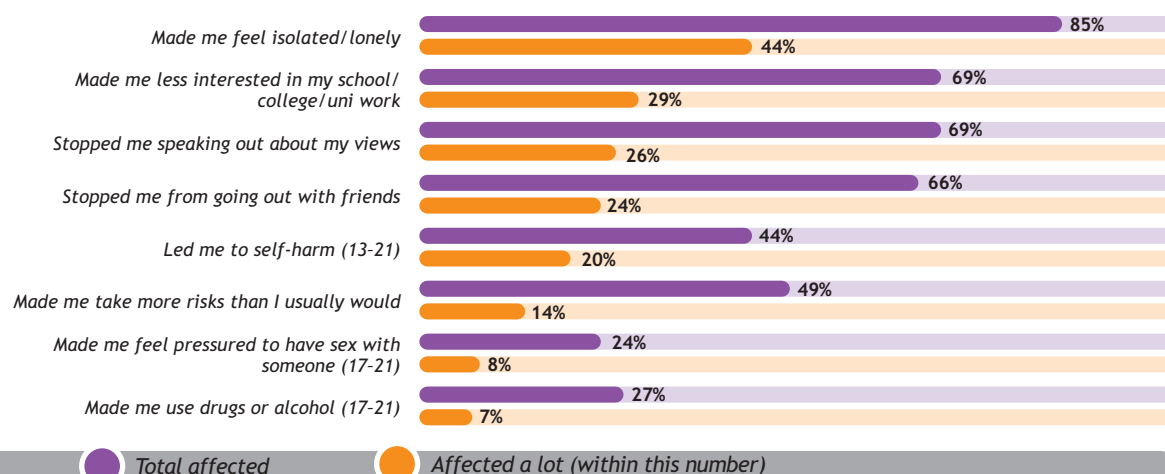
For a significant minority, cyberbullying had more serious consequences. Two in five girls aged 13 plus say that the cyberbullying led them to self-harm to some extent (44%), including those saying it did



44%
of girls and young women aged 13 and over say that cyberbullying has led them to self-harm to some extent



85%
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 who suffered bullying say its main effect is to leave the victim feeling isolated and lonely



so 'a little', 'somewhat' and 'a lot' - this rose to one in two young women aged 17 to 21 (49%), with 22% choosing 'a lot'.

One in four 17- to 21-year-olds say the pressure of bullying made them use drugs or alcohol (27%), or pressured them into having sex with someone (24%).

Gender stereotypes and aspirations

Gender stereotypes are strongly present in younger girls' lives, and three quarters of girls of primary-school age say they are treated differently from boys. Girls' views on what they think girls and boys are like and what they can be and do strongly reflect traditional gender stereotypes, and their career aspirations also follow this pattern. Yet at this age girls do not say they feel limited by these stereotypes and the majority say that girls can do anything boys can do.

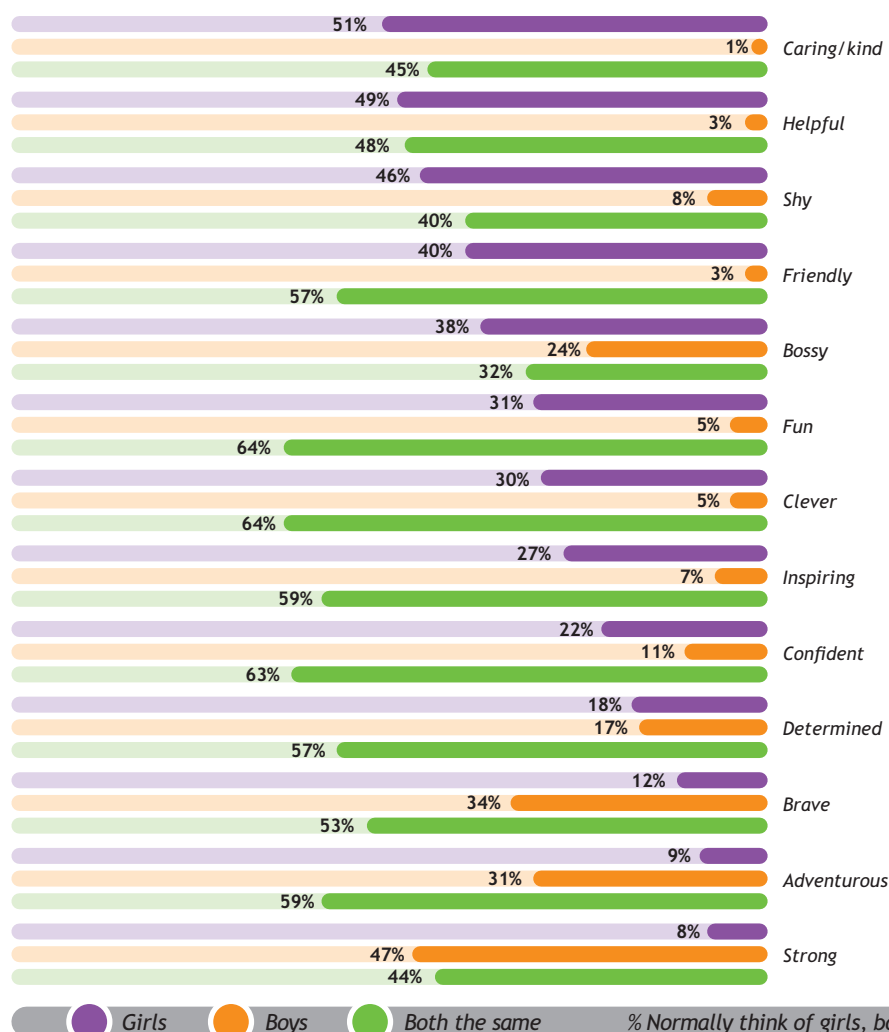
What girls and boys are like

Girls aged 7 to 10 clearly identify some character traits as belonging more to boys than girls - and vice versa. The majority of girls associate the words strong, brave and adventurous with boys more than with girls. The character traits most associated with girls, and least with boys, are caring, helpful and shy.

Nearly half of the girls in the survey (47%) normally associate strong with boys, compared to 8% who normally think of girls and 44% who normally think of both girls and boys. For brave, 34% normally think of boys, 12% think of girls and 53% both, and for adventurous the figures are 31% boys, 9% girls and 59% both.

Just 1% associate caring with boys, compared to 51% who normally associate it with girls and 45% with both boys and girls. Nearly half (49%) associate the word helpful with girls, compared to 3% with boys and 48% both girls and boys. Some 46% associate shy with girls, compared to 8% boys and 40% both.

Interestingly, the most strongly gendered trait - caring - comes among the top three qualities that the majority of girls of this age group say they admire in other people when asked to choose from a list. The qualities that girls admire the most in other people are being fun (65%), caring (64%) and being honest (61%), with around three in five girls choosing these over other qualities. The least important qualities were power (13%), looks (21%) and success (22%). Qualities rated in the middle, in descending order, were bravery, humour, talent, inspiring, says what they think, intelligence and bouncing back after hard times.



7-10 years

Girls' views on what girls and boys are like

What girls and boys can do

As with character traits, girls' views about whether certain aptitudes are gendered reflect traditional stereotypes to varying extents. When asked who is best at certain activities - girls, boys or both the same - at least around a third of girls in each case believe girls and boys are equally good, yet there are clear perceived differences for some activities.

Two thirds of girls aged 7 to 10 say that girls are better than boys at looking after children (64%) and cooking (63%), while more than half say they are better at being caring (56%) - all activities stereotypically associated with women. For each of these, only a handful of girls felt that boys were better (2-3%). Though less stark a contrast, girls also say they are better than boys at reading (39% girls better/3% boys better) and writing (44% girls better/3% boys better).

Girls' views of what boys are best at likewise reflect activities stereotypically associated with boys and men. Three in five girls say that boys are better at building things (57%), with only 6% of girls saying that they are better at this. Though a lesser contrast, girls also think boys are better at reading maps (39%/11%), sport (31%/8%), science (29%/13%) and adventure (28%/11%).

Despite all these perceived differences, when asked directly, the majority of girls aged 7 to 12 agree that they can do anything that a boy can do (64%). A significant minority of one in four disagree with this (26%).



64%

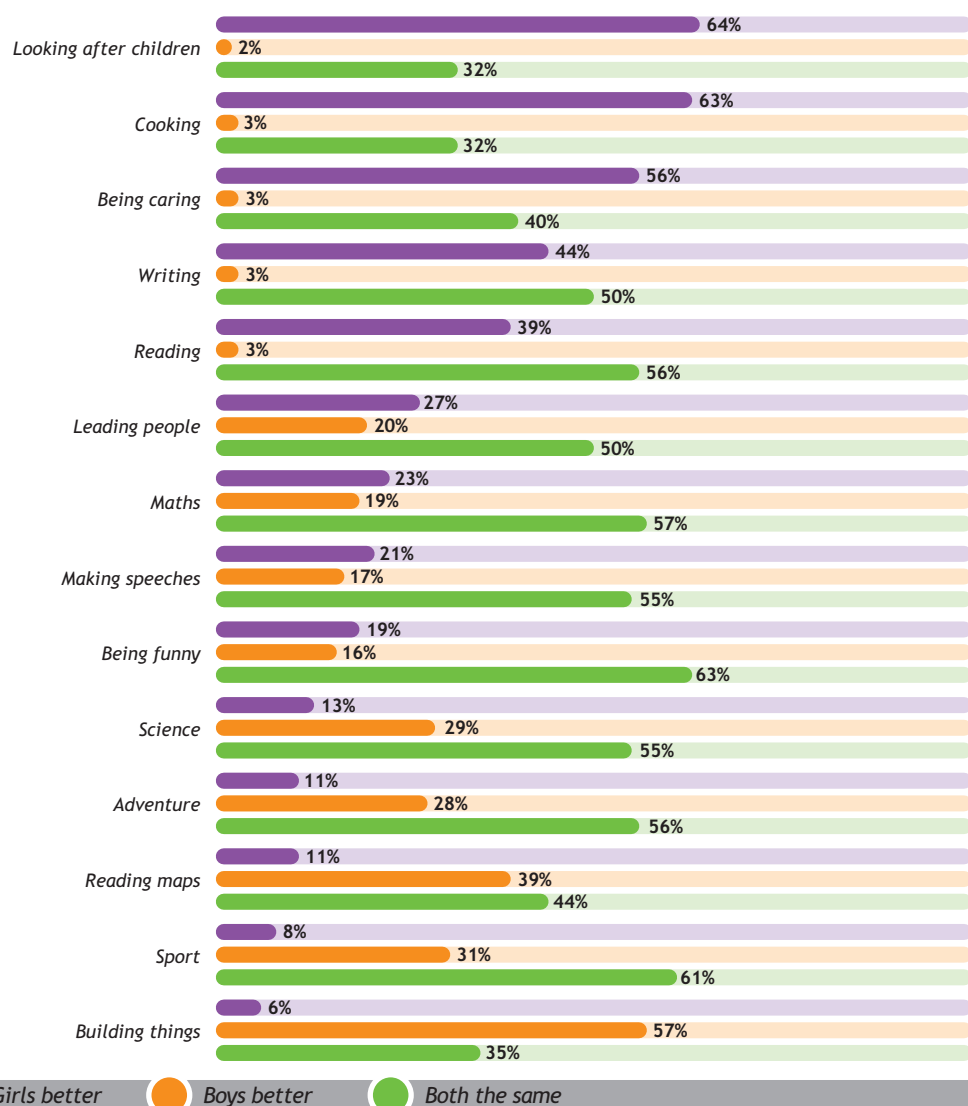
of girls aged 7 to 12 agree that they can do anything a boy can do



70%
of girls aged 7
to 12 agree that
boys and girls
have equal
chances in life



7-10
years
Girls' views on
who is better
at certain
activities



Younger girls' career aspirations

Younger girls also seem to reflect gender stereotypes in their choices about career aspirations. Few girls choose occupational areas that are traditionally male dominated and associated with male gender stereotypes.

When asked to choose their top three potential careers for when they grow up, fewer than one in ten girls chose engineer or architect (3%), scientist (6%) or lawyer (6%). This seems to correlate with the feeling that girls have that boys are better at some activities than girls.

Girls' top choices were singer or dancer (34%), teacher (29%) and vet (26%), with artist or designer (24%) and beautician or hairdresser (23%) close behind. A significant minority defy stereotypes in their choices, with one in ten choosing becoming a sportswoman (12%), or being a doctor in their top three careers (11%), and 2% of girls placing being the Prime Minister in their top three jobs.

In addition to perceived differences, the majority say that girls are treated differently to boys. Three in four girls aged 7 to 10 believe this (75%). Among these, one in ten believe that people always treat girls differently (11%), and a further one in ten think that this happens often (9%). Two in five feel this happens just sometimes (38%), and 17% say it happens only occasionally.

However, despite most of them feeling that they are treated differently to boys, the majority of 7- to 12-year-old girls agree that boys and girls do have equal chances in life (70%).



15%
of girls aged 7
to 10 chose
engineer or
architect (3%),
scientist (6%),
or lawyer (6%)
as one of their
top three
potential
careers



68%
of girls and young women aged 11 to 16 think it will be harder for them to get a job when they leave education today than it was for young people five years ago

Older girls' career pressures

Seven in ten girls aged 11 to 16 think it will be harder for them to get a job when they leave education today than it was for young people five years ago (68%), rising to three quarters of girls aged 14 to 16 (76%).

We asked girls whether they feel under pressure to do certain things to help them get a job, and told them to choose from a list of options. Nearly all of those aged 17 to 21 said they feel they have to do at least one of the things listed (89%). Two in three feel they need to do volunteer work to help boost their CV (63%), while one in three feel pressured to do a master's degree or do an internship without pay to help them get into the job market (33% and 31% respectively). Two in five young women feel under pressure to stay slim in order to have a better chance at job interviews (44%), while one in four feel they have to wear high heels (27%) or wear a lot of make-up (25%) to help their chances.

Two in three young women aged 13 to 21 think that the minimum wage should be the same for young people as it is for those aged 21 and over (68%).

Sexism and representation

While younger girls (aged 7 to 10) say they are treated differently to boys but don't feel that this limits their opportunities, older girls (aged 11 to 21) not only say that they are treated differently to boys and men but also identify that this has an impact on fairness and on their opportunities. They observe that sexist and stereotyped representations of women in the media and in public life cause women to be treated less than fairly, and nearly twice as many as five years ago think women aren't portrayed fairly in the media.

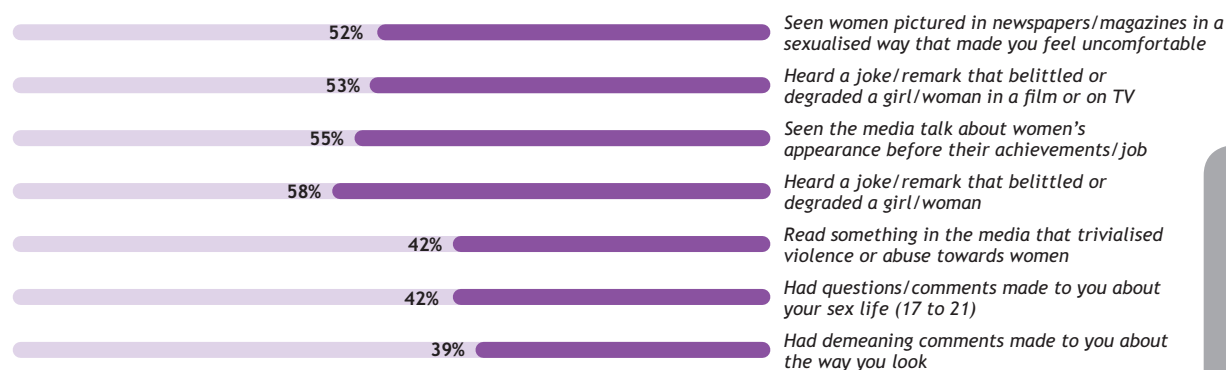
'In the past week...'

We asked girls about their experiences in the week before the survey was done. Their responses show that girls are facing a barrage of sexism, day-in, day-out. Nearly nine in ten young women had experienced or observed sexism in the week before completing the survey.

Four in five girls aged 11 to 21 report that in the past week they had experienced or observed some form of everyday sexism (81%), rising to nearly nine in ten 17- to 21-year-olds (87%). Three in five heard jokes or remarks that belittled or degraded girls and women first hand (58%), and half heard the same in a film or on TV (53%). More than half (55%) say that they had seen the media talk about women's appearance before their achievements, while half (52%) had seen women pictured in newspapers or magazines in a sexualised way that made them feel uncomfortable, and two in five (42%) had read something in the media that trivialised violence or abuse towards women. Two in five had demeaning comments made to them about the way they look in the last week (39%), or had questions or comments made about their sex lives (42% of 17- to 21- year-olds).



81%
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 report that in the past week they have experienced or observed some form of everyday sexism



11-21 years
In the past week have you...

Yes

In the past five years

We revisited a question from five years ago on the representation of women in the media. The proportion of girls and young women who don't think women are portrayed fairly in the media has almost doubled in the past five years.



80%
of girls and young women aged 13 to 21 feel that suggestions that women are to blame for sexual violence if they are drunk lead to them being treated less fairly than men

In this year's survey, around half of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say they do not think women are portrayed fairly in the media (48%), rising from two in five (42%) 11- to 16-year-olds, to more than half of those aged 17 to 21 (53%). Only one in five across the ages think they are portrayed fairly (19%) with 32% unsure. Views have shifted quite dramatically from when this question was last asked five years ago - in 2010, only one in four girls did not think women are portrayed fairly in the media (27%), while the same proportion felt that they were portrayed fairly, and nearly half were unsure.

This shift could indicate an escalation of sexist and stereotyped representations and/or increased recognition by girls and young women of sexism in the media following high-profile campaigns such as No More Page Three and the Everyday Sexism Project. Last year's survey found high levels of support for such campaigns among girls and young women.

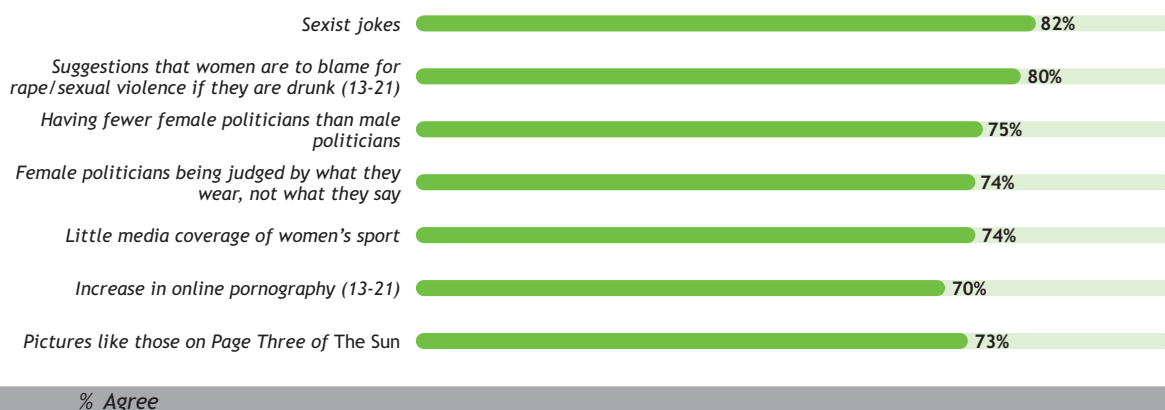
The impact of everyday sexism

The majority of girls and young women clearly think that everyday sexism and gender inequality - including stereotyped and sexist representations of girls and women in the media and public life - negatively affect how women are treated in society.

Sexist jokes and suggestions that women are to blame for sexual violence if they are drunk top the list of things that girls aged 11 to 21 feel lead to them being treated less fairly than men. Four in five agree that these have an effect (82% and 80% respectively). Within this three in five young women aged 13 to 21 agree a lot that blaming women for sexual violence leads to women being treated less fairly (59%).



11-21 years
Things that girls think lead to girls and women being treated less fairly than men



42%
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say they have read something in the media in the past week that trivialised violence or abuse towards women

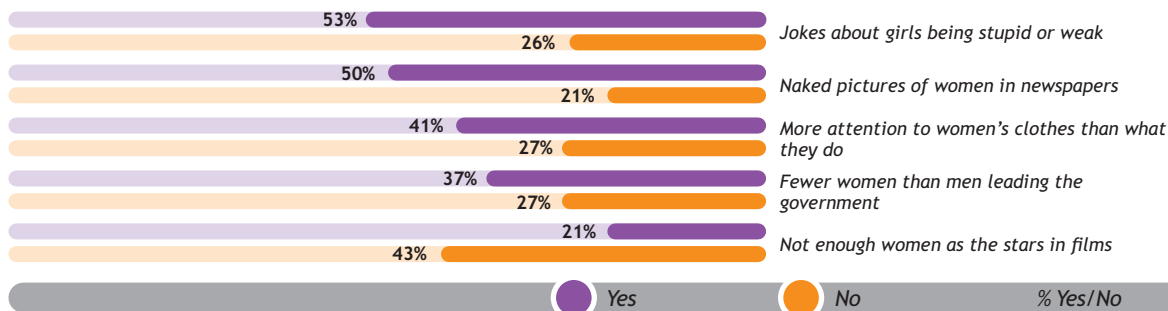
Three quarters of girls and young women agree that there being fewer female politicians (75%) - and these female politicians being judged on what they wear, not what they say (74%) - leads to unfair treatment of women. A similar proportion feels that the small amount of coverage of women's sport leads to girls and women being treated less fairly than men (74%). Seven in ten feel the increase in online pornography (70%) or pictures like those on Page Three of *The Sun* (73%) contribute to women being treated less fairly than men.

Younger girls aged 7 to 10 are not as convinced as their older counterparts that these things lead to girls and women receiving unfair treatment. However, the difference in views between those aged 7 to 8 and those aged 9 to 10 is marked, indicating a rapid increase in awareness of sexism across these years.

Around six in ten of those aged 9 to 10 think that jokes about girls being stupid or weak (61%) or naked pictures of women in newspapers (58%) lead to girls and women being treated differently, compared to around four in ten of the younger cohort who think this (44% and 41% respectively).

Two in five girls aged 7 to 10 say that people giving more attention to women's clothes than to what they do negatively affects how they are treated (41%), while one in three (37%) feel that fewer women than men in government leads to women being treated less fairly. One in five girls (21%) think that too few women as the stars in films has an effect, while twice this number (43%) disagree.


**7-10
years**

 Things that
negatively
affect the way
people treat
girls and
women


Relationships and sex

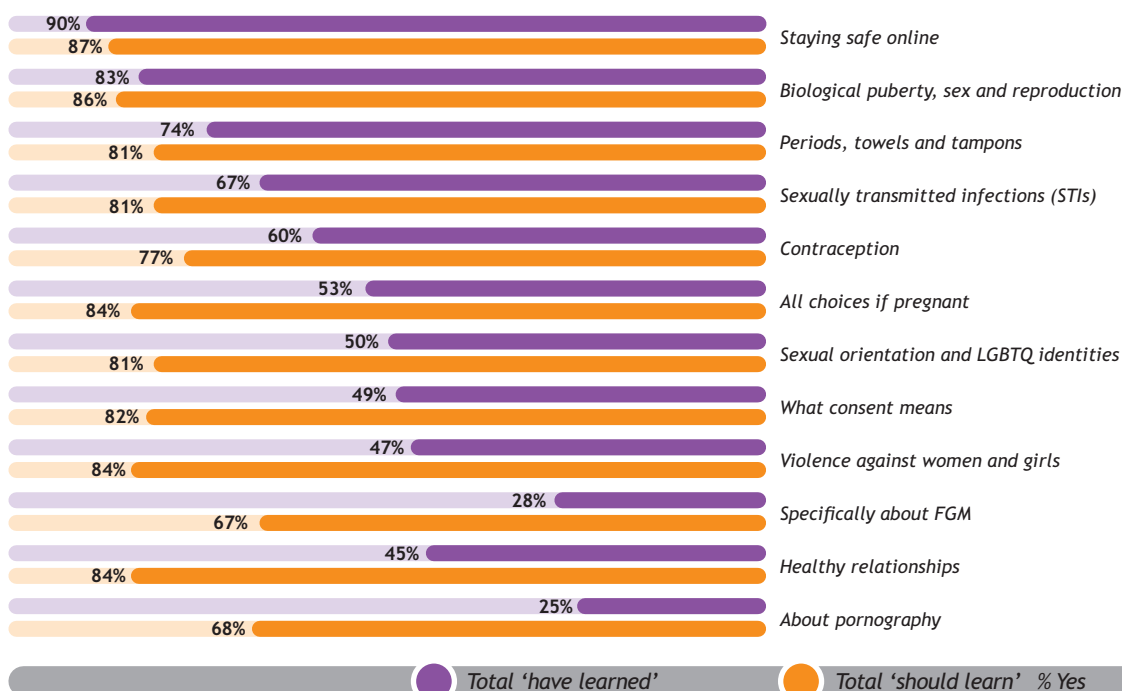
Girls aren't getting all the information they say they need about relationships and sex at school. There are significant gaps between what girls think they should learn at school and what is currently provided, including about pornography. This is particularly worrying because the survey reveals how strongly girls feel about the impact of pornography on teenage sexual relationships and gender equality.

Sex and Relationships Education

We showed girls aged 11 to 16 a list of topics from which to choose what they have been taught at school in Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) and then what they thought should be taught from the same list. For most of the topics on the list, a greater proportion of girls say they should be taught them than those who say they actually have been. There are significant differences on several topics, suggesting that urgent reform is needed in the area of how young people are taught SRE.

In some key areas - relationships, pornography, consent, and violence against women and girls - school provision is far out of touch with girls' expectations. Only around half are taught about their choices should they become pregnant (53%), sexual identities (50%), consent, rape and laws regarding sex (49%), violence against women and girls (47%), or understanding what is good and bad behaviour within relationships (45%), but in each case, around four in five girls feel these subjects should be taught to girls their age. Only around one in four learn about pornography, including the


53%

 of girls and
young women
are taught
about their
choices if
they were to
become
pregnant

**11-16
years**

 What girls
have learned
and think they
should learn at
school



71%
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 think that pornography normalises aggressive or violent behaviour towards women

values, messages and what is unrealistic about it, or about female genital mutilation (FGM) specifically, but two in three want these subjects taught in schools.

Expectations change as girls get older confirming the widely held view that provision should be tailored to the age of the girls. By the time girls are aged 14 to 16, nine in ten think the majority of the topics on the list should be taught in school.

Most secondary schools are required to provide an SRE programme that contains, as a minimum, lessons about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV and AIDS. However, only two in three girls say they are taught this statutory topic (67%), while more, eight in ten (81%), say it should be taught to them. Three in five learn about contraception (60%), with three in four feeling this should be taught (77%). Three in four learn about periods, towels and tampons (74%), with four in five (81%) feeling this should be taught.

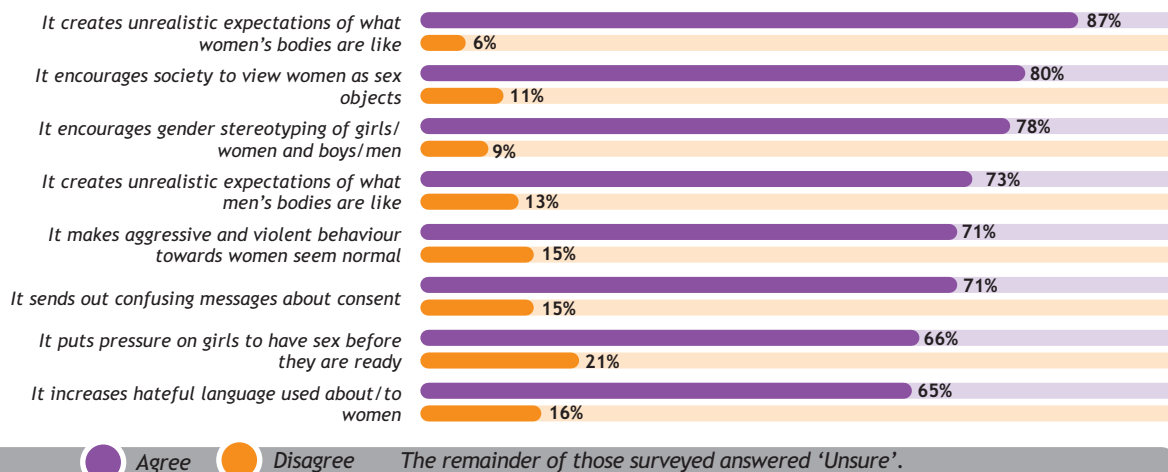
The topics on which schools are generally meeting girls' expectations are online safety (90% have been taught, 87% think they should) and the biological aspects of puberty, sex and reproduction - the latter are mandatory topics in the Science curriculum - (83% have been taught, 86% think they should be).

Pornography

Girls and young women today are often acutely aware of online pornography and are unable to choose to avoid it in the background of their day-to-day lives. The majority feel it has a strongly negative effect on gender equality and that access to it is damaging young people's views of sexual relationships.



17-21 years
Girls' views on online pornography



15%
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 report seeing boys looking at pornography most days

Three in five girls aged 11 to 21 say that they see boys their age viewing pornography on mobile devices such as phones or tablets (60%). This figure includes 15% seeing boys looking at pornography most days, 13% who see this happen most weeks and 32% who see this occasionally. Around 31% say they never see this. By contrast, only a quarter (27%) say that they see girls their age viewing pornography on mobile devices; 9% say they see this at least most weeks, 18% see this occasionally and 61% say they never see this.

Girls' views on the impact of online pornography are stark - the majority feel it encourages sexist stereotypes and harmful views. Nearly nine in ten young women aged 17 to 21 agree that pornography creates unrealistic expectations of what women's bodies are like (87%), while three in four (73%) think it creates unrealistic expectations about men's bodies. Four in five young women feel that pornography encourages society to view women as sex objects (80%), and that it encourages gender stereotyping of both women and men (78%).

Seven in ten think that pornography gives out confusing messages about sexual consent, or that it makes aggressive or violent behaviour towards women seem normal (both 71%). Two in three young women agree that pornography puts pressure on girls to have sex before they are ready (66%), or that it increases hateful language used about or to women (65%).

A majority of girls and young women aged 13 to 21 think that online pornography is damaging young people's views of what sexual relationships are like (73%), including three in ten (30%) who strongly

agree that this is the case. Only 14% of girls disagree. We asked girls and young women to tell us in their own words why they think this. Here are some of their voices.

I feel that when I am ready to have sex, I'm quite worried because boys will expect it in that way or certain ways that pornography shows so I would feel very alone and worried that I wouldn't do it right or he wouldn't enjoy himself so that would make me feel very uncomfortable.

It [pornography] creates unrealistic expectations and puts pressure on girls and boys. Porn is too violent and there are genres of porn like rape fantasies that make young boys think this is normal when it isn't.

It [pornography] is damaging because they [other young people] don't think about what a real and proper relationship is and they do things just to "experience" things when they don't need to at all.

I think it gives a wrong picture of today's youth. You don't have to take a half-naked photo to get more friends on your friendlist. You don't have to show what you have. You don't have to show yourself off to people who won't appreciate it.

Boys are expecting sexual relationships to be like in pornographic films. They "learn" from them and think girls would want to be treated how they are in them type of films.

Content controls

Despite the strong views expressed about online pornography, there are mixed views on the extent to which children and young people's access to online content should be restricted.

When thinking about how to better control online content that children and young people are exposed to, the majority of those aged 11 to 21 agree that children can access too much content online that should be for adults only (71%), yet only half agree that parents should be able to control what their children can view on the internet at home (50%). Fewer than half agree this parental control should extend to what their children can view on their mobile devices (46%). Among girls aged 11 to 16, more disagree with these sorts of parental controls than agree with them.

When it comes to whether music videos should be age-rated as films are, views are clearly split across the age range. Fewer than half of younger girls, aged 11 to 16, agree with this type of restriction (46%) but seven in ten of those aged 17 to 21 agree with it (70%).

Violence against women and girls

The results this year show that fear of harm - emotional, physical or sexual - is worryingly present in girls' lives. One reason girls and young women say their peers might tolerate coercive behaviour is that they fear physical or sexual abuse if they don't. In their own relationships, a minority of girls report experiencing controlling behaviours. Three quarters of girls and young women say anxiety about potentially experiencing sexual harassment negatively affects their lives.

Coercion and control

In a previous Girls' Attitudes Survey we asked girls for their views on acceptable behaviours in relationships and also published qualitative research on this topic in 2013 (*Care vs Control*). This year we revisited some of the topics asking about girls' personal experiences.



73% of girls and young women aged 13 to 21 think that online pornography is damaging young people's views of what sexual relationships are like

Of girls aged 13 to 21, one in six say that their boy/girlfriend has checked up on them on their phone or on social media (18%), while one in seven say their boy/girlfriend has tried to control who else they see or spend time with (14%). Among those aged 17 to 21, a worrying one in eight (13%) say that a boy/girlfriend has made them feel frightened or threatened, with one in ten staying in a relationship in which their partner has made them feel unsafe (11%).

We further explored this topic by asking young women about specific recent research led by an NSPCC researcher and carried out across five European countries over 24 months (Safeguarding Teenage Intimate Relationships, 2013-2015, www.stiritup.eu). The results in England, taken from a survey of 1,001 young people, found that 40% of teenage girls are coerced into sex acts by their boyfriends. We asked young women aged 17 to 21 whether they agreed or disagreed with a list of options exploring why this might be happening.

Around four in five young women agree that girls are coerced into sex acts because they are frightened their boyfriend will leave if they don't comply (85%), or that they will be bullied for being 'frigid' (79%). Seven in ten think that boys don't always respond when girls show they don't want to do things of a sexual nature (72%), or that girls are frightened of physical or sexual abuse from their boyfriend if they don't do what they are asked to do (71%). Two in three young women agree that popular culture sends a message to boys that they are entitled to treat their girlfriends in this way, or that it happens because consent is not covered in Sex and Relationships Education in schools (both 67%). More than half of young women (53%) agree that boys are copying what they see in pornography when they try to coerce their girlfriends into sex acts.

We also asked girls to tell us in their own words how they think the problem of teenage girls being coerced into sex acts can be addressed. Here are some of their voices.

Better education in schools, tighter regulations in porn and who can access it (some people's first sex education is from porn and so is very inaccurate). Also possibly wider campaigns about consent etc and better portrayal of sexual relationships in the media.

It needs to come from families, first of all. Less teaching to daughters about "how dangerous it is to have sex" and instead teaching to any teenager what consent is, and how you can explore sexually only if both parties agree to.

I think the message needs to be gotten across that it is okay to wait if that's what you are comfortable with, but equally, people shouldn't be made to feel bad if they don't want to wait. Issues of consent should be covered during sex education.

We need tighter controls on access to internet porn, changes in advertising and the media to stop sexualising women, and more about consent covered from a younger age.

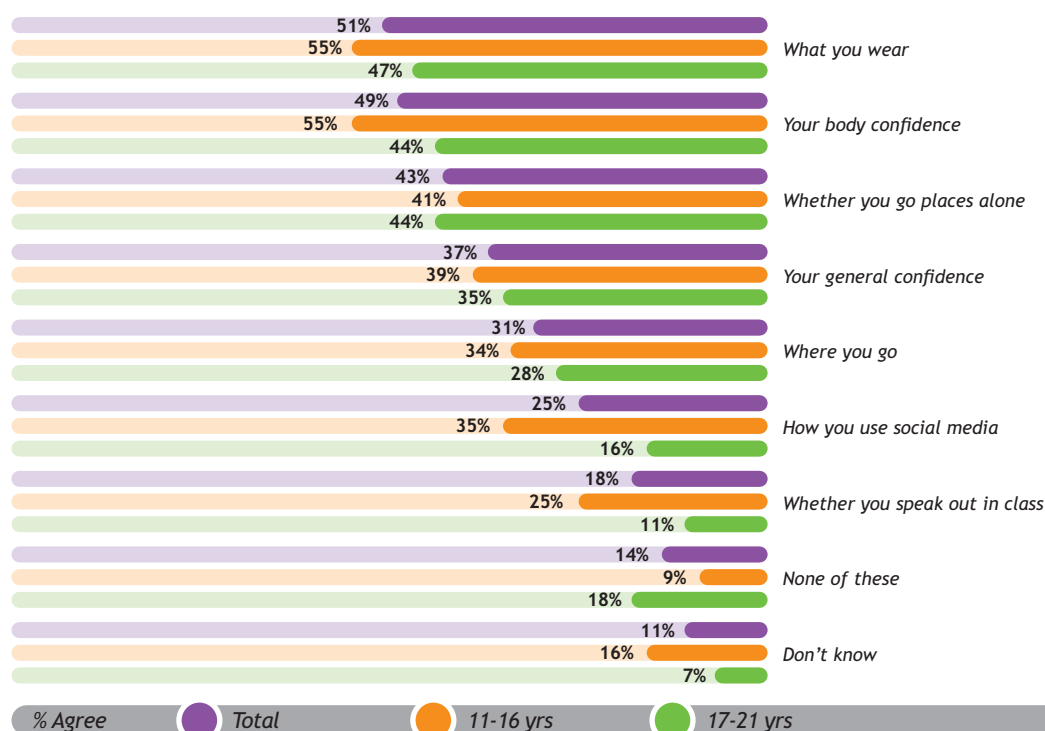
Girls and women need to know that they have somewhere to ask advice no matter how small the problem without being judged or victimised.

Teach boys and girls that sex acts are more special if you wait, and show clips of real people ending up in bad situations from having sex earlier (ie pregnancy, diseases or extreme feelings of hurt).

Sexual harassment

Previous Girls' Attitudes Surveys have shown that experience of sexual harassment among girls is widespread at school and in public places. This year we explored this further, asking whether anxiety about this harassment affects how girls feel and behave.

Three quarters of girls and young women say anxiety about potentially experiencing sexual harassment affects their lives in some way (75%), and the proportion of those aged 11 to 16 who worry about this is higher than among older girls. This anxiety is most likely to affect what girls and young women wear, and how they feel about their body.



75% of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say anxiety about potentially experiencing sexual harassment affects their lives in some way



11-21 years How anxiety about experiencing sexual harassment affects girls' lives

Half of 11- to 21-year-olds say that their choice of what to wear is linked to worry about sexual harassment (51%), that their body confidence is affected by this (49%), or to a lesser extent, that their confidence in general is influenced by it (37%). More than two in five say fear of sexual harassment affects whether they go to places on their own (43%), and for a third it affects where they choose to go (31%). A quarter (25%) say the way they use social media is affected by this, but this is more of a concern for younger girls (35% of those aged 11 to 16 mentioned this). A quarter of 11- to 16-year-olds say worry over potential sexual harassment makes them consider whether or not to speak out in class (25%).

Two thirds of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say they feel clear about what sexual harassment is (64%), with a third (32%) saying that they are uncertain.

Sadly, only 40% of girls and young women aged 13 to 21 agree with the statement 'I believe we can change society to be free from violence against women and girls in the future'. This suggests that this violence has become 'normalised' in society, such that the majority of girls see it as something that will always be a part of life for women and girls. However, almost all young women aged 13 to 21 agree that the government should make sure all schools are addressing sexual harassment and bullying in schools (90%), with only 4% disagreeing and the rest unsure.



90% of girls and young women aged 13 to 21 agree that the government should make sure all schools are addressing sexual harassment and bullying in schools



73%
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 take part in social action or raise awareness of issues they care about

Community and social action

Girls and young women are active in their communities and want to help change things for the better. The findings this year show that the majority of girls take part in social action in their communities and beyond, including speaking out on issues they care about to influence change. However, compared with five years ago, girls feel less a part of their community, and less positive about it and the country as a whole. Girls also report that they don't feel safe in community spaces and feel that their voices are not being heard enough.

Social action and voice

Girls take action to make a positive impact on their communities - and harness the power of the internet to raise awareness of campaigns that matter to them. At the same time, many more girls than last year say that they don't feel their voices are being heard by the people in power.

Nearly three quarters of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 take part in at least one form of social action or raise awareness of issues they care about (73%). This is the case for three in five 11- to 16-year-olds (63%), rising to four in five young women aged 17 to 21 (82%).

In their communities, nearly a third of girls (28%) aged 11 to 21 take part in informal voluntary activities, such as helping out their neighbours. Informal activities are more common among girls up to 16, while organised activities increase for those aged 16 and over. Over one in five 11- to 21-year-olds (21%) take part in more organised and regular voluntary activities - such as helping out at a youth club. Some 6% get involved in local democracy, for example by being on a local youth council.

More than half of girls aged 11 to 21 say they use their voices to influence change, choosing at least one of the activities listed in the table below (57%). Three in ten are keen to raise awareness about issues they care about by telling others about them (32%), and one in four share campaigns they care about on social media (25%).

Three in ten sign online petitions (30%), while a minority are more deeply active, going on demonstrations (5%) or writing to their MP or local politicians (4%).

Interest in politically minded activities increases with age - young women aged 17 to 21 are twice as likely to take part compared with their younger counterparts.

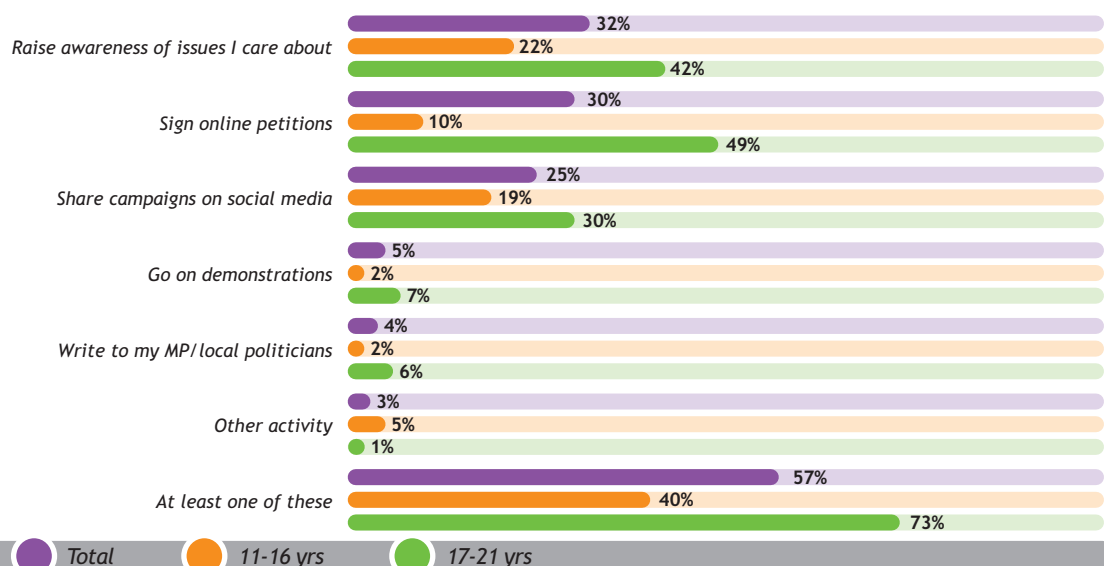
While many girls do speak out, a significant minority say they don't do any of the activities listed (37%). This may be linked to girls' views that their voices are not listened to enough by those in power. Three in four girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say that they don't think politicians listen to young people enough (77%). This shows a significant rise in sentiment from a year ago, when 57% of the same age group said this.



77%
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say that they don't think politicians listen to young people enough

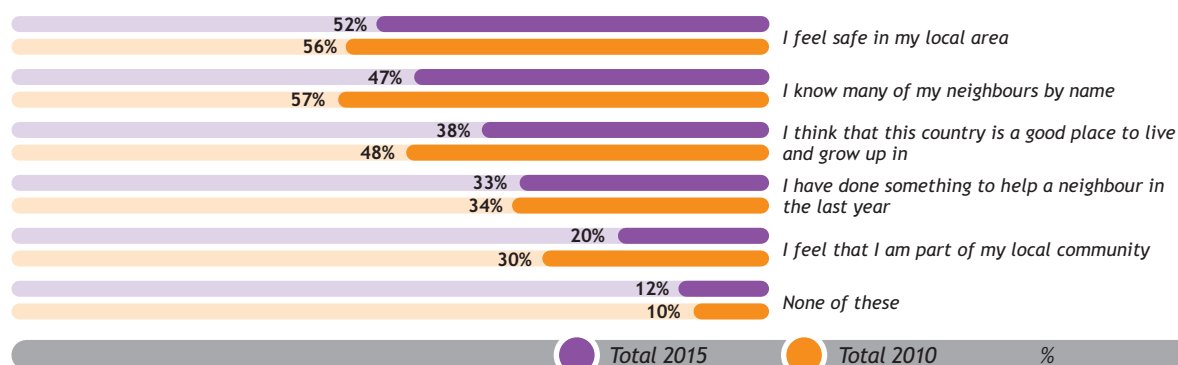


11-21 years
Girls using their voice to influence change



Community life and safety

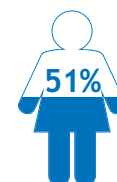
This year we revisited questions last asked in 2010 about how girls feel about living in their communities. The results show that girls are feeling less satisfied and less safe in their local areas than they were five years ago.



11-21 years
Girls' views on their communities

In 2011, half of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 said this country was a good place to grow up in (48%), but this has deteriorated to fewer than two in five (38%) today. More than half said in 2011 that they felt safe in their local area (56%), but this proportion has dropped to around half (52%) today. When asked specifically, more than half of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say that they don't feel safe being in parks on their own (51%).

More than half (57%) used to know many of their neighbours by name, but this has dropped to just under half (47%) over the last five years. While one in three still claim to have done something to help a neighbour in the last year (33%, 34% in 2010), only two in ten now feel part of the local community (20%), dropping from three in ten (30%) five years ago.



51%
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say that they don't feel safe being in parks on their own

'If I could change one thing...'

We asked girls what one thing they would change if they could to make the world a better place for girls and young women. Among a wide variety of responses, many of their answers follow similar themes and point in clear directions - tackling media sexism, mental health issues and violence against women and girls all feature prominently. Here are some of their voices.

'...It would be...'

Allow men and women to have equal opportunities, and make sure that everyone is paid the same for doing the same job and let women get to higher level careers.

More equality, less sexist comments.

No glass ceiling.

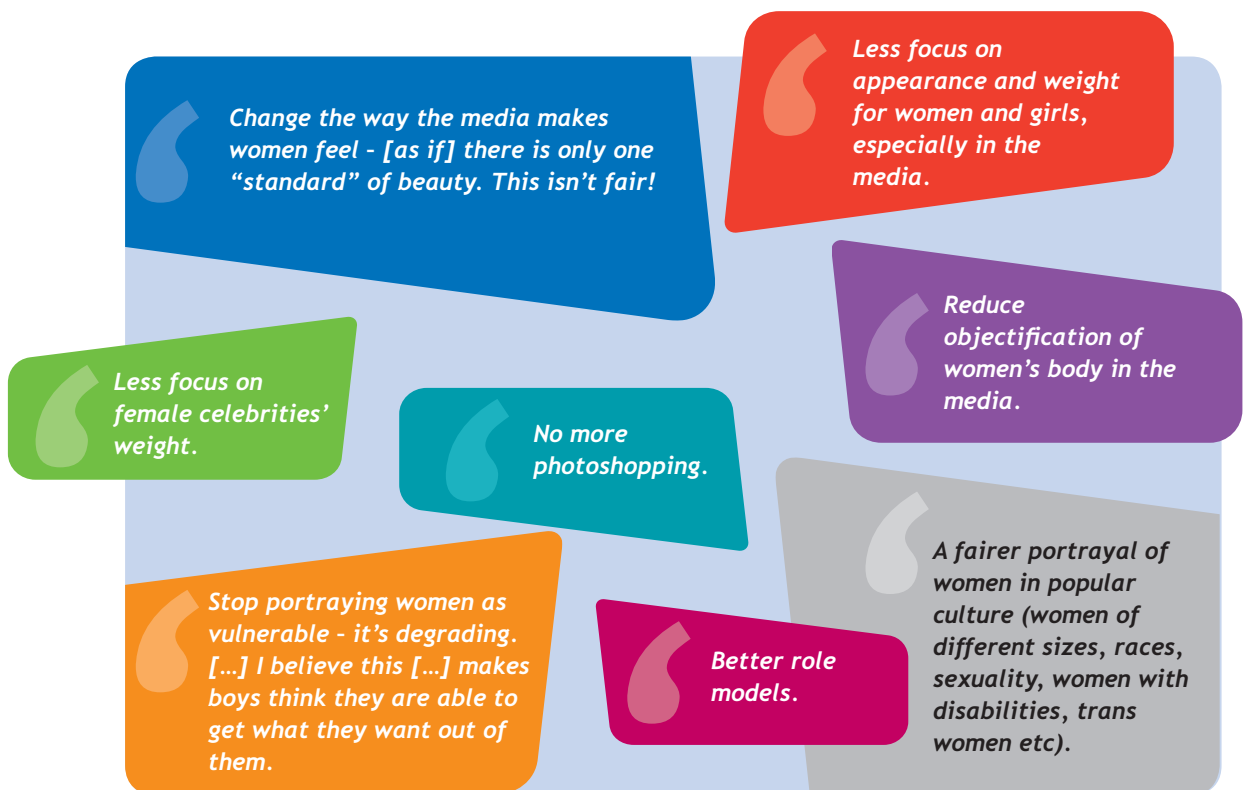
More opportunities in sports for young women and girls, eg football.

More women in power.

Better treatment of women in the workplace.

Less stereotyping.

Better education in school - there is still a lot of sexism about. For example, if a teacher asks someone to lift something they will ask a boy to do so and never a girl. When I was younger this gave me the impression that girls were weak.





Methodology

Girlguiding commissions ChildWise, leading specialists in research among children and young people, to conduct the Girls' Attitudes Survey each year. A total of 1,574 girls and young women aged between 7 and 21 took part in the 2015 survey.

The majority of interviews were completed online, with 7- to 16-year-olds doing this in school, while the older age group were interviewed via an online panel. Additional face-to-face interviews were carried out with young women who were not in education, employment, or training (NEET), to ensure that this potentially marginalised group was fully represented.

The questionnaire was adapted to be suitable for different age groups - 7 to 11, 11 to 16 and 17 to 21 years. Core questions were asked across the full age range, so that changes in attitudes as girls get older can be tracked.

Fieldwork took place during March to May 2015.

TOTAL	7-8 YRS	9-10 YRS	11-13 YRS	14-16 YRS	17-18 YRS	19-21 YRS
1,574	249	264	331	232	246	252
ENGLAND	WALES	SCOTLAND	NORTHERN IRELAND	URBAN	RURAL	
1,286	101	112	75	1,037	537	
7-16s	School performance:		Outstanding/Good		Satisfactory/Poor	N/A
1,076			915		156	5
16-21s	ABC1	C2DE	At school/Uni/FE		Working	NEET
498	272	226	329		86	83

ETHNIC BACKGROUND	
White British/Irish/Other	77%
Black British/Black African/Black Caribbean/Other Black	4%
Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi/Other Asian	6%
Mixed heritage	3%
Other	1%
Don't know/Prefer not to say	9%



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