

# Girls' Attitudes Survey 2014



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

Girlguiding



## 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 sixth 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 2014 build on those from 2013 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. They also show what changes girls support and would like to see in specific areas to improve their lives and those of their peers.

Girlguiding's youth panel, Advocate, leads the development of the survey each year and analyses the results. See the Afterword for what its members say about what this year's findings tell us about our society - and how we all need to respond. All the results from this and previous surveys can be found on Girlguiding's website, [www.girlguiding.org.uk/girlsattitudes](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk/girlsattitudes).

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## Foreword

Girlguiding is the UK's leading charity for girls and young women. Every day, thousands of our amazing volunteers dedicate their time to raising girls' aspirations, taking them on life-changing adventures, building their confidence and helping them to discover their full potential. They do this because everyone in Girlguiding knows that girls are amazing and inspiring. They can be leaders in any field they choose. Their ideas and actions can transform the world around them for the better.

When girls are in guiding, the world opens up for them. We work hard to inspire and empower them to believe they can do whatever they want. But sadly, our evidence continues to show that the world outside guiding is still not a fair place for girls.

Now in its sixth year, our Girls' Attitudes Survey is the UK's largest annual study into girls' opinions and experiences. We believe it is vital to understand the society girls live in today from their perspective - to give girls a voice about the issues affecting their lives.

This year's survey once again tells a story of inequality. The girls we surveyed continue to face high levels of sexism. They voice very serious concerns about violence against women and girls, body image and the representation of women in the media. They report the worrying impact of these, and other pressures, on their mental health and that of their peers. Perhaps most worrying of all, they say that all too often they are encouraged to see these things as just a normal aspect of being a girl.

But the good news is that many girls are now saying enough is enough. They know they should expect better. They know they should not accept a raw deal just because they are girls. They are excited by campaigns calling for equality for girls - and they have their own fantastic ideas about how to make things better. Girlguiding's own Girls Matter campaign is just one example of the amazing work young women are doing to stand up and be heard.

We know from watching and listening to girls every day - from the youngest Rainbow aged just four, through to our inspiring Advocates when they speak to MPs - that each of them has the potential to make a wonderful contribution to the world.

We hope you will join us in listening to what girls have to say this year - and that you will commit to playing your part in making things better for girls everywhere.

**Gill Slocombe**  
Chief Guide



**Julie Bentley**  
Chief Executive



## Executive summary

The Girls' Attitudes Survey this year shows that girls and young women continue to experience significant challenges in their lives, many of them because of their gender. The daily pressures and discrimination they face, as our new evidence shows, can have a serious impact on their well-being and affect how they behave and participate in different spheres of their lives. Many of those surveyed voice very serious concerns, and share disturbing experiences, on issues such as bullying, violence against women and girls, sex and relationships education, the representation of women in the media, body image and women's political participation. Too often, the data shows that girls and young women are told not to take these experiences seriously or are encouraged to normalise discrimination they face.

However, this year we also document how girls and young women think some of these persistent and emerging challenges could be tackled. They overwhelmingly support the vibrant campaigns currently in the headlines, the Everyday Sexism project and the No More Page Three campaign among them. The findings suggest that despite the challenges they face, girls are aware of their right to equality, know that they should expect better, have ideas for how to get there and are speaking out to demand change. We include many of their voices in the report.

### Well-being and mental health

The findings on well-being and mental health are shocking and very worrying. Three in four girls aged 11 to 21 know girls their age who self-harm (76%) or suffer from depression (73%), and two in three know someone with an eating disorder (66%). Bullying is reported as a major problem too. Significant numbers say that they know girls their age who have experienced racist bullying (42%), homophobic bullying (40%) and bullying about a disability (31%). Although many of these issues sadly also affect boys, this data indicates the toll these pressures take on the well-being of girls and young women specifically. Girls say that more education on mental health would be one way of helping them.

### Violence against women and girls

The findings on girls' and young women's experiences of gendered violence are also distressing. Three in five of those aged 13 to 21 (59%) have experienced sexual harassment at school, college or work in the last year. Despite the seriousness of the problem, 61% of girls of secondary-school age (11 to 16 years) say teachers or staff sometimes or always dismiss sexual harassment as just a bit of banter - 'boys mucking around'. Girls themselves overwhelmingly support campaigns that aim to change attitudes, and this report includes some of their ideas for tackling violence against them.

### Relationships and sex

The majority of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 think that all schools should have to teach about sex and relationships (74%). Girls and young women report that the Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) they get at school isn't good enough - with only 39% of those aged 13 to 21 saying the provision they had was good. They want to see SRE cover a wider range of issues relevant to their lives today, and some of their suggestions are included in this report.

### Everyday sexism

Overall, 85% of those aged 11 to 21 say they experience sexism in some aspect of their life. Girls report that the main arenas for this are the media (see 'Women in the media' for details), social media, schools and colleges, and public places. The negative impact of this experience is clear - girls feel angry, less confident, embarrassed or degraded, and less safe. Yet many girls clearly expect better and also report their appetite for fighting back, with the majority supporting campaigns that challenge sexism, and several saying that their experiences make them more determined to speak out.

### Women in the media

Girls and young women are critical of the ways in which the media portrays women, and report seeing widespread media sexism. Three quarters of those aged 11 to 21, and 48% of younger girls (7 to 10), think there are too many images of naked or nearly naked women in the media. They don't like the way women are disrespected in music videos (57%), and the majority are critical of victim-blaming in cases of sexual violence (58%). Instead, they want to see a greater diversity of women represented, and believe that both media organisations (89%) and the government (85%) have a role to play in making sure that the media represents all women fairly.



42%  
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say that they know girls their age who have experienced racist bullying.



59%  
of girls and young women aged 13 to 21 have experienced sexual harassment at school, college or work in the past year.



74%  
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 think that all schools should have to teach about sex and relationships.



39%  
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 do not take part in fun activities because they are self-conscious about their appearance.

### Appearance pressures

As in previous years, the findings show that girls and young women are feeling pressure to conform to body-image ideals and that this affects their behaviour and well-being. They feel pressure to be 'thin' and to go on diets, and to look more like celebrities they see in the media. This results in almost half of 11- to 21-year-olds sometimes feeling ashamed of the way they look (45%), and two in five (39%) not taking part in fun activities because they are self-conscious about their appearance. Lessons on self-esteem and more media responsibility in showing realistic images of women are among solutions from girls.

### Careers

It is clear that careers advice is largely failing girls and young women currently. Almost equal numbers of girls and young women rate their experience of careers advice as bad (26%) as they do good (29%). A shortage of up-to-date information about what types of jobs are available and gender bias in the provision of advice contribute to this dissatisfaction. We asked girls and young women for their views on why the gender gap among those studying science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects persists, and we report some of their ideas for what could help close that gap.

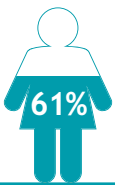
### Political participation

Though the data shows that only a minority of girls and young women are interested in politics (21%), it does indicate that there is considerable interest in specific political topics. Girls and young women feel they don't receive adequate political education, which the majority say they would like. More than half of those aged 11 to 21 feel that politicians do not listen to the views of girls and young women enough (57%). Most girls agree that there are not enough female MPs (67% of 11- to 21-year-olds) and that girls' voices would be listened to more if there were more female MPs (63%). Over half also say that more diversity in Parliament would encourage them to be more interested in politics.

### Girls are speaking out

The findings clearly show that girls and young women are getting a raw deal in many areas of their lives for many different reasons. But it's also clear that they can see how things could be improved for themselves and all young people. They have put forward some of their own ideas for change, and identify who else they believe needs to take action - including educators, politicians and the government, and media organisations.

**We can see that girls and young women are eager for change and that they see a place for themselves in making that happen. We all need to stand alongside them now and play a part in securing the rights and opportunities the next generation deserves.**



61%  
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 think that political parties should make sure there are more female MPs.

## Well-being and mental health

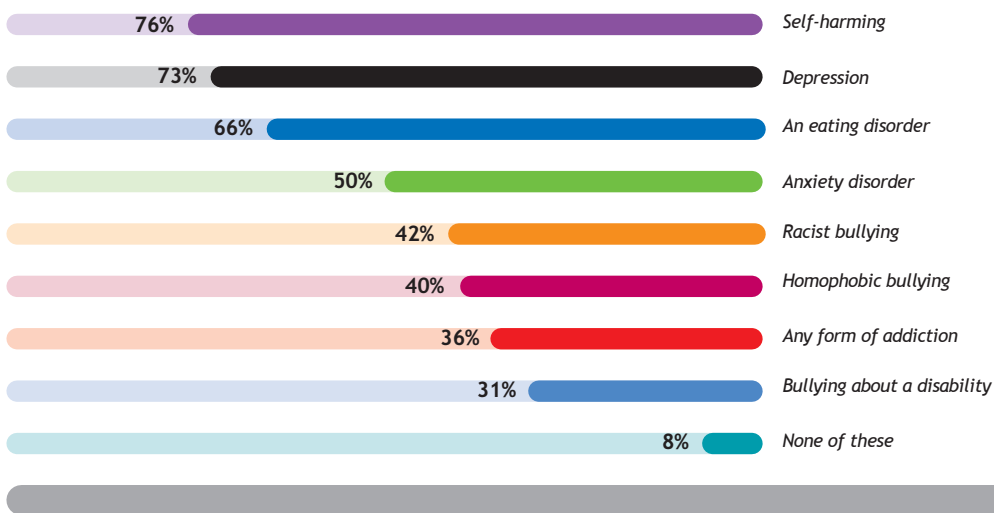
Over the last few years, the Girls' Attitudes Survey has asked girls and young women about their overall happiness and happiness with the way they look. This year we asked about experiences that may negatively affect their well-being and mental health, and looked at factors beyond appearance. Worryingly, girls and young women are aware of high levels of poor well-being and mental health among their peers, including instances of self-harm, depression and bullying. It is striking that only 8% of the girls and young women in the survey did not know of anyone who had experienced these issues.

Most of those aged 11 to 21 know girls their age who have had one or other of a list of adverse experiences. Three in four know someone who self-harms (76%) or suffers from depression (73%). Two in three know someone with an eating disorder (66%), half know someone with an anxiety disorder (50%), and over a third know girls their age who have experienced addiction (36%). Girls and young women are also facing high levels of sexual harassment and other forms of violence (see 'Violence against women and girls', page 8), which can negatively affect their well-being and mental health.

We asked girls and young women about their awareness of bullying among their peers. Significant numbers say that they know girls their age who have experienced racist bullying (42%), homophobic bullying (40%) and bullying about a disability (31%). Younger girls report being much more exposed to bullying about a disability (40% of those aged 11 to 16, falling to 23% of 17- to 21-year-olds). Among girls aged 7 to 12, one in four has been bullied because of her appearance (25%).



76%  
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 know girls their age who self-harm.



11-21 years  
Girls who know girls their age who have experienced these things

### Girls are speaking out

The girls and young women Girlguiding has spoken to are clear that they want and need more support with well-being and mental health issues. Here are some of their voices.

*There should be more education regarding mental health. I received none, and when my friend became depressed and suicidal in Year 10 I did not know what to do.*

*I'd like to see more information online for those supporting someone else with mental health problems, or who may be struggling as a result of caring for someone with them.*

*I think that people need to be educated in not putting people down when they choose to talk about their mental illness (eg saying that they're attention-seeking etc).*

*It is important to look at mental health problems from the perspective of the sufferers themselves, to help educate others about how the stigma surrounding this issue negatively impacts on the sufferer.*

## Violence against women and girls

Girls report shocking levels of violence in their own and their peers' lives. The majority of girls and young women have experienced sexual harassment in the last year and many say this is not being taken seriously enough. Girls have clear ideas of how this harassment could be tackled.

### Girls' awareness of violence

Over a third of survey respondents aged 11 to 21 know girls and young women their age who have experienced control or bullying from a partner (35%), a quarter know someone who has experienced violence from a partner (25%) and slightly fewer know someone who has been threatened with sexual violence (17%).

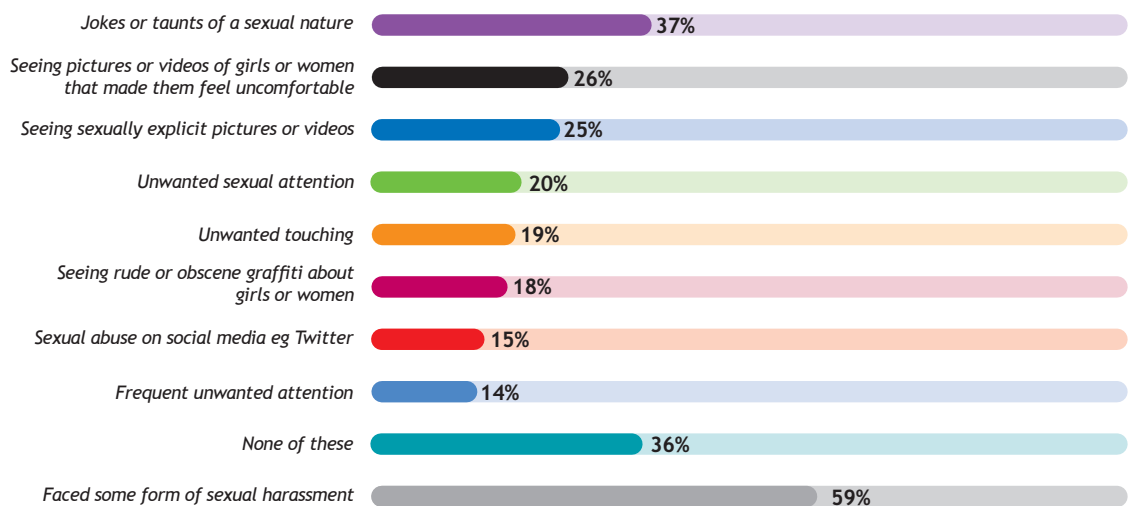
Three quarters of those aged 13 to 21 are aware that sexual exploitation happens to girls and young women their age in the UK (74%). Half of those aged 11 to 21 are aware that forced marriage happens to girls and young women in the UK (48%). Slightly fewer are aware that so-called honour-based violence (32%) and female genital mutilation (FGM) (28%) happen to girls and young women in the UK.

Levels of awareness increase with age, especially relating to forced marriage and FGM. Among those aged 7 to 10, four in ten have heard about forced marriage (39%), but few have heard of so-called honour-based violence (9%) or FGM (4%). It is likely that this widespread awareness among older girls of different forms of violence against women and girls shows the positive impact of awareness-raising campaigns.

### Girls' experiences of violence

Three in five girls and young women aged 13 to 21 have faced some form of sexual harassment at school or college in the past year (59%). Of these, over a third have experienced jokes or taunts of a sexual nature (37%), and one in four has seen pictures or videos of girls or women that made them feel uncomfortable (26%), or sexually explicit pictures or videos (25%). One in five has experienced unwanted sexual attention (20%), or unwanted touching (19%), or seen rude or obscene graffiti about girls or women (18%). Around one in seven has experienced sexual abuse on social media (15%), or has been subjected to frequent unwanted attention (14%).

One in five girls aged 7 to 12 has experienced jokes of a sexual nature from boys (22%). Other aspects are less common for younger girls but nevertheless affect around one in ten - seeing rude pictures or rude graffiti about girls and women (each 12%), or unwanted touching (10%).



35% of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 know girls their age who have experienced control or bullying from a partner.



74% of girls and young women aged 13 to 21 are aware that sexual exploitation happens to girls and young women in the UK.



13-21 years

Girls who have experienced any of the following at school/ university/ work in the past year

### Tackling sexual harassment

We asked girls about the ways in which their school, college or workplace handled incidents of sexual harassment, and the findings show that responses can vary considerably. Some say it is taken seriously but others say it can often be dismissed by those in positions of authority.



Two in three of those aged 7 to 21 say that incidents of sexual harassment are reported to teachers or staff (69%), though this is more likely to be sometimes (49%) than always (20%). Older girls and young women are less likely to report it: 81% of 7- to 10-year-olds say girls report it, but the figure falls to 73% for those aged 11 to 16, and to 54% for those aged 17 to 21. When asked whether such incidents are taken seriously by teachers or staff, 42% say that they are always taken seriously and 31% say they are sometimes taken seriously.

However, that's not the whole picture. Over half of those aged 7 to 21, but 64% of those aged 11 to 16, say that teachers or staff sometimes or always tell girls to ignore such behaviour (55%). Almost as many say that teachers or staff sometimes or always dismiss this as just a bit of banter - 'boys mucking around' (52%, including 13% who say this always happens).

Dismissal of sexual harassment as banter is most likely for girls of secondary-school age - 11 to 16 - with 61% saying this is what sometimes or always happens. Girls in this age group are also much more likely than others to think that those who report incidents of sexual harassment may be bullied or teased. Some 70% of those aged 13 to 16 think that those who report incidents of sexual harassment may be bullied or teased, compared to just over half (56%) saying this across the ages 13 to 21, with only a small number saying this is always the case (9%).

### Girls are speaking out

Young women are strongly supportive of campaigns to tackle violence against women and girls, and they have ideas for how to tackle it in their own lives. Some 85% of those aged 17 to 21 agree with the government's campaign, This is Abuse, which tells young people that abuse in relationships is not normal and is never acceptable. Only 7% disagree. Three in five of the same age group (61%) say they support the campaign run by Fahma Mohamed in February 2014 that called on the Education Minister to ask all headteachers to inform children and parents about the risks of FGM. Around one in seven disagrees (14%).

We asked survey respondents for their ideas on what would stop sexual harassment in school, college or their place of work. The answers included calls for education about harassment and on consent, better processes to prevent it and support victims at school, and training for teachers to tackle it in the classroom. Here are some of their voices.

*Lessons about respect and a way of reporting anonymously.*

*People don't treat it like a serious issue, but if it was taught in sex education lessons from an early age that that kind of thing is wrong ... then perhaps people would retain this information as they grow up.*

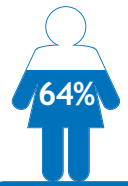
*If girls were made more aware about what actually counts as sexual harassment - as girls don't always know the signs - then they would be more likely to speak up.*

*Giving offenders more understanding of how sexual harassment actually affects victims.*

*Be clearer about what consent means. Stop the blame culture and offer supportive places where women can go to complain.*

*Stopping the ridiculous 'boys will be boys' phrasing, because it lets boys get away with these horrible things that girls would never get away with.*

*Staff not being so hesitant to combat the issue would help.*



**64%**  
of girls aged 11 to 16 say that teachers or staff sometimes or always tell girls to ignore incidents of sexual harassment.

*Don't draw attention to yourself.*

*Women should stop wearing provocative clothes!*

However, a few of the respondents said that girls themselves are in part responsible - even to blame - for the sexual harassment they experience. Their attitudes underline the continuing challenge that exists across society to prevent violence against women and girls.

*I don't think anything can be done because of the world we live in today.*



39% of girls and young women aged 13 to 21 say the Sex and Relationships Education they had was good.

## Relationships and sex

Girls and young women are strongly in favour of Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) in schools, yet less than half say that what their schools provided was good. There is wide support for improving SRE to include more topics relevant to their lives today.

The majority of those aged 11 to 21 think that all schools should have to teach about sex and relationships (74%). A similar number agree that parents should not be allowed to choose whether their child learns about these topics at school, although one in four thinks they should (27%). Just under half would like at least some of the lessons about sex and relationships to be taught in single-sex groups (46%). For two in five of those aged 13 to 21 (39%), the focus in SRE is/was too much on girls' (sexual) responsibility and not on equal responsibility between boys and girls.

The majority of those aged 13 to 21 don't rate the SRE they have/had at school as good. Only two in five rate it as good (39%), while 40% say it is/was okay, and 14% find/found it bad or very bad. This reinforces our findings from 2013 on this topic: 37% of those aged 16 to 21 reported that sex education at school had not prepared them well.

Among those aged 7 to 10, three in four have learned at school about personal safety on the internet (78%), and just over half have learned about the value of respect, love and care (54%). Two in five have learned about understanding what is good and bad behaviour in a relationship (42%) and how their bodies change as they grow up and in puberty (39%). Fewer have learned about different types of relationship and families (31%). For all of these, levels increase steeply from age 7-8 to age 9-10.



39% of girls and young women aged 13 to 21 say the focus in Sex and Relationships Education is too much on girls' (sexual) responsibility.

## Sexting

Social media is part and parcel of young people's relationships today. Sexting - sending sexually explicit photos or messages from a mobile phone - has become a widespread part of some young people's relationships. We asked survey respondents about the extent to which they were aware of sexting. Almost all of those aged 11 to 21 are aware of this (85%), with six in ten having taken part themselves or knowing others who have done so (61%).

One in five says that they have sent such messages themselves (18%), and three in ten have personally received such messages (30%). Half say that friends have sent or received messages like this (45%) or that they know about people at school, college or work who have sent or received them (50%). Just one in four who has heard of sexting does not know of anyone who is involved (24%).

## Girls are speaking out

The majority of girls and young women support change to improve SRE. Some 76% of those aged 17 to 21 support the *Daily Telegraph's* 2013 Better Sex Education campaign that called for the internet and social media to be included in teaching SRE.

We asked survey respondents aged 11 to 21 about what more they felt should be covered in SRE that is currently excluded or dealt with inadequately. They say they want discussion about pornography to be included in SRE lessons - the findings show 41% of those aged 11 to 21 know girls their age who have viewed pornography. Responses also include the varied nature of relationships, an appreciation of different sexual orientations, how to deal with controlling or violent relationships, and a sound understanding of topics such as contraception, sexually transmitted infections and understanding the 'opposite sex'. Here are some of their voices.

We need more info about gay/lesbian protection, what is necessary for safe sex.

I think this is an issue that needs more awareness - the fact that the blame of rape is put on a woman is just wrong, similarly the blame for an abusive relationship. These issues should be taught about in school more regularly and with a lot more emphasis.

How to spot abuse in other people's relationships and what to do about it. That it's okay not to be straight.

How to act in relationships in general - girls are sometimes seen as objects and boys need to learn that they are not and not to treat them as that.

It'd be good for sort of girls-only lessons where we learn more about gaslighting [manipulation], how sexism can be prevalent in relationships and how if someone you're dating is making you feel inadequate, that you don't deserve that.

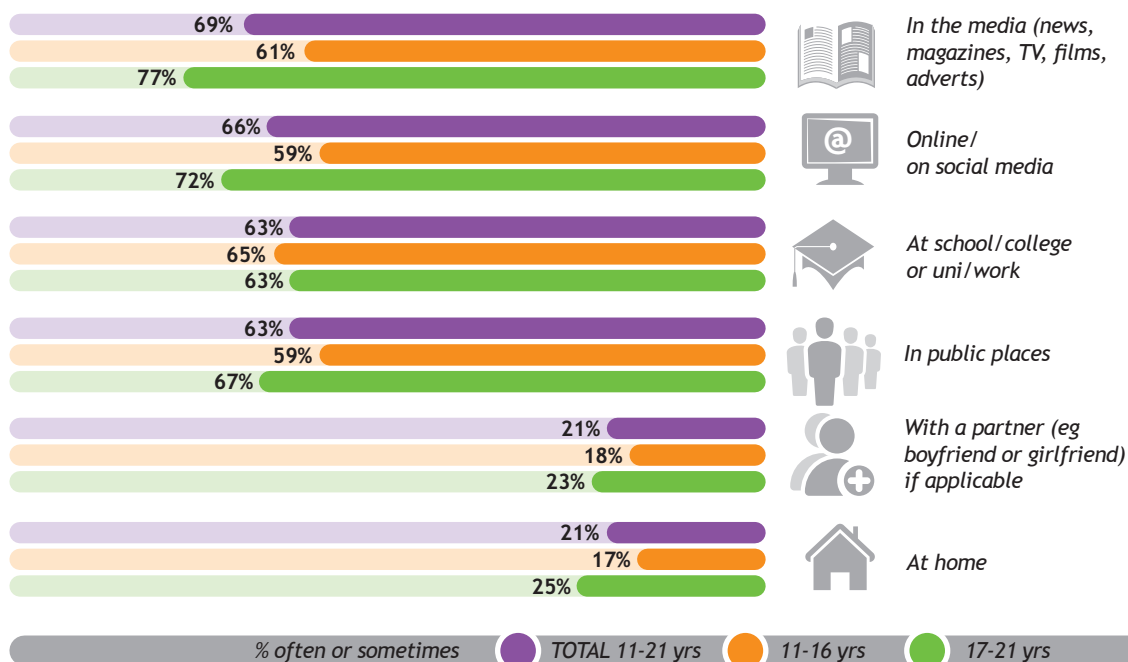
How to say no to someone who is forcing you.

### Everyday sexism

In last year's survey, three quarters of those aged 11 to 21 said that sexism affected most areas of their lives. This year, we asked girls about the specific aspects of their lives that are affected and how it makes them feel. They report that the main arenas are the media, social media, schools and public places. The negative impacts of this are clear, but many girls also report their appetite for fighting back.



41% of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 know girls their age who have viewed pornography.



11-21 years Girls and young women who see or experience sexism in these areas of their lives



66%  
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 see/experience sexism online or in social media.

Overall, 85% of those aged 11 to 21 say they see or experience sexism in some aspect of their life. Within this, around two in three say that they often or sometimes see/experience sexism in each of the broadcast media (69%) (see 'Women in the media' on page 13 for more details), online and in social media (66%), at school, college or work (63%), and in public places (63%). The only areas where they feel relatively free from sexism are at home and with their partner (if they have one) - but even here, around one in five experiences sexism at least on occasion (both 21%).

Girls and young women towards the top of the age range feel this the most intensely - three quarters of 17- to 21-year-olds see/experience sexism in the media (77%) or online (72%), and one in four does so at home (25%) or with their partner (23%).

### Girls are speaking out

Girls are being undermined by sexism but at the same time they know they should be free from it. The findings show that for many, their experience of sexism galvanises their resolve to speak out, fight back and succeed.

Everyday sexism has a huge impact on girls and young women: 53% of those who see/experience sexism say it makes them feel angry, and one in three feels less self-confident as a result (32%) or embarrassed or degraded (27%). Some say it makes them feel less important than the boys and men around them (18%) and less safe (17%), and that they won't achieve what they want to (17%).

At the same time, however, 45% say that it makes them more determined to succeed in what they want to do, and 31% are more determined to speak out because of this. And the majority of young women aged 17 to 21 support projects that help people to speak out and create change, such as the Everyday Sexism Project (64%), which catalogues people's experiences of sexism in their daily lives to make it visible and catalyse change. Only 14% do not support this campaign.

Other research done by Girlguiding clearly shows that girls and young women want to see an end to the many ways in which they are discriminated against in their everyday lives. Here are some of their voices.



31%  
of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say that experiencing sexism makes them more determined to speak out.



*Stop blaming girls for wearing the 'wrong' thing. Stop holding girls to double standards. Reduce the culture that's built around telling girls that the only thing they're valuable for is their looks, and then as soon as they start to value their looks call them shallow.*



*In this day and age, everyday sexism needs to be stamped out - forever.*



*When women stand up for themselves they are then seen in a negative light, ('bossy', 'prudish', 'serious', 'no sense of humour') and made to feel as though the issue is minor or all in their heads.*



*Education about gender equality is needed. Younger children should be taught that the way women are represented in video games and pornography is not how you should treat real girls.*

## Women in the media

Girls and young women are critical of the ways in which the media portrays women. They say there is too much female nudity, too little diversity and too few positive female role models in the women represented, and widespread victim-blaming. They want to see action to address all these issues.

Last year we found that 87% of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 think women are judged more for their looks than their ability, and so we decided to explore this further. This year our findings reveal that three out of four of those aged 11 to 21 say that there are too many images of naked or nearly naked women in the media (75%) and that the women usually shown are all too much alike, for example in body size and shape, ethnicity, age and profession (75%).

Two in three agree that too often women appear in the media only because they are the girlfriend or wife of a famous man (65%) and over half feel that there are not enough positive female role models in the media (55%). Over half (57%) don't like the way that many music videos present women, because they are disrespectful, with those aged 17 to 21 being the most critical (64%).

Many younger girls (those aged 7 to 10) hold similar views about how women are portrayed. Half think there are too many women on TV who don't have enough clothes on (48%), and 43% say that the women usually shown in magazines and on TV are all too much alike. One in three thinks that a lot of women on TV are there only because of their boyfriends or partners (31%), and that there aren't enough girls and women playing the main parts in films and on TV (31%).

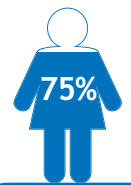
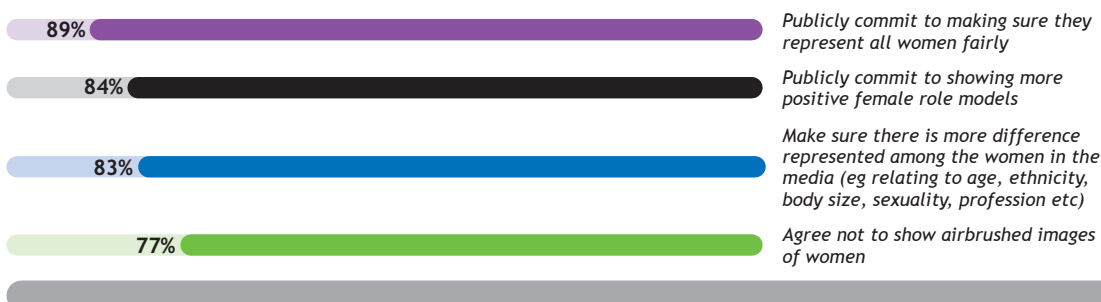
Among those aged 13 and above, nearly six in ten are critical of media coverage when women are attacked or raped, which they feel often blames women's own behaviour or appearance for having been attacked (58%).

### Abuse of women in the media

Almost half of those aged 13 to 21 say that they have heard about sexist abuse of women in the media on social media channels (45%). Around the same number say that this restricts what they do or aspire to in some way (49%). A quarter of girls say that this abuse makes them scared that they could also receive abuse online just for being a girl or young woman (27%), or have been put off wanting to be featured in the media themselves (26%). Others self-censor messages to lessen the risk of sexist abuse (18%) while a smaller number use social media less to avoid the risk of being targeted (14%).

### Girls are speaking out

The data shows loud and clear that young women want both media organisations and the government to take action to address media sexism. Among young women aged 17 to 21, almost nine in ten think that media organisations should publicly commit to making sure they represent all women fairly (89%). More than four in five think they should commit to showing more positive female role models (84%) and make sure that there is more difference represented among the women in the media (83%). Three in four agree that media organisations should agree not to show airbrushed images of women (77%). More than four in five think that the government has a role to play in making sure the media represents women fairly (85%). Regarding social media, just over half of those old enough to use social media sites think that social media companies should take more responsibility for making sure users are safe (55% of those aged 13 to 21).



75% of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say that there are too many images of naked or nearly naked women in the media.



75% of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say that the women usually shown in media are all too much alike.



17-21 years  
What young women think media organisations should do to tackle sexism



76% of young women aged 17 to 21 say that campaigns can make a real difference to improve how women are represented in the media.

Young women also strongly support grassroots action, with 76% of those aged 17 to 21 saying that campaigns can make a real difference to improve how women are represented in the media. Specifically, 64% say they support the No More Page Three campaign, which aims to persuade *The Sun* newspaper to stop printing photos of topless models on page 3, and 56% support the Lose the Lads' Mags campaign, which aims to stop high-street shops selling 'lads' mags' (magazines aimed at men with many pictures of naked or nearly naked women). Around 20% and 25% of young women do not support these campaigns respectively.

Girlguiding has spoken to many girls and young women about their views on how the media could represent women more fairly. Here are some of their voices.

*The media should stop sexualising and objectifying women because this kind of culture makes men feel that sexual harassment is okay.*

*I think that there need to be bigger campaigns to set standards on what is acceptable in the media. Both girls and boys should be taught from a young age that what they see in the media and adverts is not always real or the only way to be.*

*I think that the media, in particular TV advertisements and music videos, should be more heavily regulated in the way they portray women.*

*The media needs to stop photoshopping their images so much and girls should be made aware in schools about how there isn't a 'perfect' or 'normal' woman, because everyone is different.*

*Make the media stop judging people for the way they look - girls are more than their appearance.*



25% of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 feel pressure to dress in a sexy way.

### Appearance pressures

Over the six years of the Girls' Attitudes Survey, we have consistently found body confidence to be an important issue for girls and young women, and increasingly so as they get older - 17- to 21-year-olds are most affected by appearance pressures. This year we explored their views on how the pressures they feel affect their behaviour, and found that low body confidence can lead to lower participation in education and leisure activities.

Girls and young women face strong pressures to conform to body image ideals. The majority of those aged 11 to 21 say that they feel pressure to do more exercise to get a thin body (53%) and almost as many feel pressure to go on a diet (48%). Those aged 17 to 21 feel most pressure about dieting, with 56% saying this. Last year's Girls' Attitudes Survey found the same percentage of this age group had actually been on a diet, which may indicate a strong link between feeling pressure to diet and behaviour change. The figure for those aged 7 to 10 feeling pressure to diet is nearly one in six (15%). One in four of those aged 11 to 21 feels pressure to dress in a sexy way (25%, rising from 13% among girls aged 11 to 16 to 37% among those aged 17 to 21).

What girls see in the media has a big influence on body image. Over a third feel they should try to look more like the pictures of girls and women they see in the media (37%), and think they are more likely to be successful if they look like celebrities (33%, rising to 43% among those aged 17 to 21). Almost half sometimes feel ashamed of the way they look because they are not like girls and women

in the media (45%). The numbers who feel this way increase from 36% among those aged 11 to 16 to 52% of 17- to 21-year-olds.

These pressures can affect girls' behaviour, including the amount of time they spend on their appearance. The majority of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 (56%) feel that they should spend a lot of time getting ready before they go out (on make-up, hair, clothes); this increases from 50% in the 11 to 16 age group to 62% for those aged 17 to 21. Just one in four disagrees (27%). Two in five of those aged 11 to 21 (39%) often stop themselves taking part in fun activities because they are self-conscious about their appearance, and 30% take part less in the classroom/at work because they feel concerned about their appearance.

Younger girls' behaviour is less affected, but even among 7- to 10-year-olds, 16% agree that they think they are more likely to be successful if they look like celebrities, and 14% agree that they sometimes feel embarrassed about the way they look because they're not like the girls on TV. Just 4% don't often do fun activities because they are worried about messing up their appearance or take part less in the classroom because they worry about how they look.

### Girls are speaking out

Girlguiding has talked to many girls and young women about how they think low body confidence can be tackled. Here are some of their voices.

*Educate girls through activities on what being healthy really means rather than perceiving being stick thin as the only way to have a healthy body.*

*The government should take more action in ensuring that teenage girls feel comfortable in their own skin.*

*Individuals need to see that the sort of image presented in the media isn't realistic and virtually impossible to achieve because the amount of modification done online is extreme - and that the way they look is okay and perfectly normal.*

*Schools should teach body confidence for both girls and boys.*

*Airbrushed images should be banned.*

### Careers

This year, we asked girls about careers advice and their views on work experience. The findings show that gender stereotypes continue to have an impact and that there is dissatisfaction among girls. We also specifically asked respondents about the gender gap among those studying science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects and for their views on what could help close that gap.

Careers advice is rated good by 29% of 11- to 16-year-olds, but almost as many rate it as bad (26%). The majority of girls surveyed aged 11 to 21 think that they don't get enough up-to-date information about the types of jobs that are available (58%), or about the subjects that are needed to do different jobs (54%). Half feel that they are not given enough information about starting their own business as a career option (48%). Work experience doesn't seem to be plugging this information gap in careers advice. Opinions of work experience are rather mixed - 25% of those aged 11 to 16 rate it as good, 28% bad (plus 27% unable to give a view).

Girls can see potential gender bias in the careers advice they receive. One in three of those aged 11 to 21 says that girls are not encouraged to think about apprenticeships (35%), and that girls



of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 often stop themselves taking part in fun activities because they are self-conscious about their appearance.



of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say that girls and boys tend to get different careers advice, even when their interests and abilities are similar.

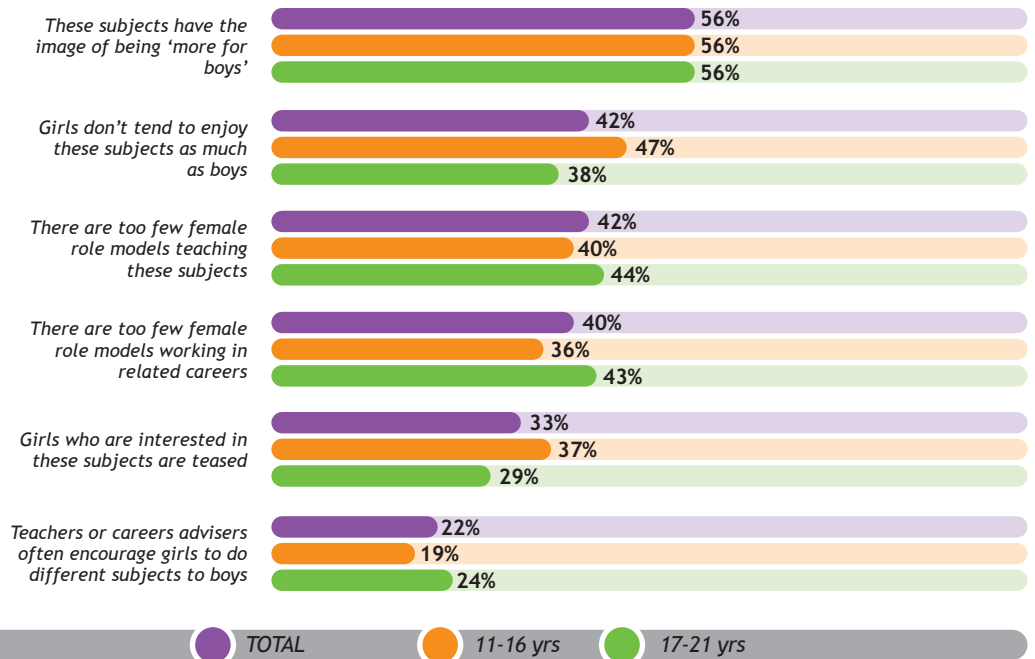
and boys tend to get different careers advice, even when their interests and abilities are similar (32%).

### Science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM)

We asked girls across the age range why they think more girls than boys drop STEM subjects as they move through education and higher education, despite being as competent as their male peers in such subjects. Over half of those aged 11 to 21 feel this is because such subjects have the image of being more for boys (56%), while two in five think that girls do not enjoy such subjects as much (42%) and that there are too few female role models teaching these subjects (42%) or working in related careers (40%). One in three thinks that girls who are interested in such subjects are teased (33%), and one in five thinks that teachers or careers advisers often encourage girls and boys who may have similar interests to choose different subjects (22%).

This stereotyping emerges from a young age. Among girls aged 7 to 10, 23% think that girls don't usually enjoy these subjects as much as boys, and 19% think that not many women have jobs in science and maths. However, just over one in ten in this age group thinks that girls are not usually as good at such subjects (11%) or that these subjects are more for boys (12%), and even fewer think that girls aren't meant to do these subjects (5%).

**11-21 years**  
Why girls and young women think fewer girls than boys study STEM subjects



### Girls are speaking out

We asked girls and young women for their views on what might help close the gender gap among those studying STEM subjects. Here are some of their voices.

*Making the career paths that continue from these subjects clearer.*

*Plan more exciting and fun lessons so girls will enjoy them more, like in technology making jewellery and in science learning about animals and more exciting experiments.*



Teachers not being sexist - a friend of mine wanted to take mechanics for GCSE and she was told there were already too many girls in the class when in fact there were none, and she was made to take childcare instead.

Encouragement from teachers, reminding girls that gendered stereotypes are constructed. Careers talks featuring women working in these fields talking to girls in schools.

It would help if there were more female role models and if we weren't teased if we enjoyed the subject. It would also help if they weren't classed as boys' lessons.

Encouragement from friends and family, and talking to other people who do the courses.



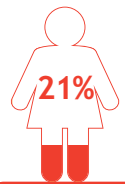
62% of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 think that schools should have to teach gender equality.

### Political participation

Over half of girls and young women say they don't feel listened to by politicians, and the majority report they are not interested in politics. At the same time, many express clear views about the cost of living and political education in schools, and most of them believe there should be greater female representation in politics.

Girls are in favour of wider political and citizenship education in schools. Three in five of those aged 11 to 21 think that schools should have to teach gender equality (62%), and more than half support more political education in schools (55%) and mandatory teaching about citizenship, democracy and human rights (54%).

Only a small number say that they are interested in politics (21%), and twice as many say that they don't fully understand how politics affects their life and opportunities (42%). Just over a third feel that they understand the term 'the economy' (38%). However, around half report being worried about the economy and the increased cost of living (44%, rising from 37% of those 11 to 16 to 51% among young women aged 17 to 21).



21% of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say that they are interested in politics.

### Girls are speaking out

Most girls agree that there are not enough female MPs (67% of 11- to 21-year-olds), that girls' voices would be listened to more if there were more female MPs (63%) and that political parties should make sure there are more female MPs (61%). Over half (56%) of 13- to 21-year-olds say more diversity (of sex, age, ethnicity etc) among politicians would encourage them to be more interested in politics.



11-21 years  
Girls' and young women's views on representation of women in Parliament

In other research done by Girlguiding, girls have been vocal that wider diversity in Parliament would help to make politics more relevant to them. Here are some of their voices.

*There are very few politicians at the moment who are female. This is discouraging for girls who would like this job. I believe that everyone should have a chance to do what they want. We don't have enough female role models to help inspire girls.*

*There are hardly any [female] leaders in business or politics, and girls won't aspire to take on one of these roles if there aren't already any women in these jobs.*

*There is little encouragement in helping women get into politics.*

*Politicians should make sure there are more women in Parliament.*

### Methodology

Girlguiding commissions ChildWise, leading specialists in research with children and young people, to conduct the Girls' Attitudes Survey each year. A total of 1,405 girls and young women aged between 7 and 21 took part in the 2014 survey.



The majority of interviews were completed online, with 7- to 16-year-olds doing this in school, while those in 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 16 to 21. 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 and April 2014.

### Sample details

TOTAL	7-8 YRS	9-10 YRS	11-13 YRS	14-16 YRS	17-18 YRS	19-21 YRS	
1,405	211	202	362	220	203	207	
ENGLAND	WALES	SCOTLAND	NORTHERN IRELAND		URBAN	RURAL	
1,214	81	58	52		944	459	
7-16s		School performance:		Outstanding/Good		Satisfactory/Poor	
995				677		316	
16-21s		ABC1	C2DE	At school/Uni/FE		Working	NEET
410		209	201	277		40	93

ETHNIC BACKGROUND	
White British/Irish/Other	78%
Black British/Black African/Black Caribbean/Other Black	6%
Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi/Other Asian	5%
Mixed heritage	3%
Other	2%
Don't know/Prefer not to say	6%

## Afterword

The 18 members of Girlguiding's youth panel, Advocate, are at the centre of designing the Girls' Attitudes Survey and analysing the results each year. Here they give their reflections on the results, what they feel the findings say about the world for girls and young women today, the actions that are already making a difference and what else needs to happen.

*The survey allows us to monitor young women's experience of the world in order to ensure that our campaigns fully represent their interests. It is a powerful reminder that equality is still out of reach and an encouragement that tackling the issues facing young women is the only way forward. Someone has to listen to the views of young women. Ellie, 18*

*To read that only 21% of girls feel that they are interested in politics is worrying, because in reality it is politics that shapes how we live. If girls aren't taking an interest now then how can we expect to see an increase in the number of female politicians in the future? Katherine, 18*

*The media influences everyone's opinions, so if all the women shown in the media look and act the same - as the survey suggests girls think is often the case - then people will start to believe that all women are and should be exactly the same. We have to take action to prevent this. Mathilde, 16*

*For me, violence against women and girls jumps out as extremely hard-hitting in the findings. Every week, if not every day, I hear the term 'it's just a bit of banter' about sexual harassment - this phrase has infiltrated its way into society and it's time we cast it out! Larissa, 16*

*I was shocked to see that over half of 17- to 21-year-olds feel ashamed about the way they look. This and other statistics are a testament to why teaching body confidence in schools is so important and why it should be part of the curriculum, as we're calling for in the Girls Matter campaign. Emma G, 23*

*What comes through loud and clear in the findings is that girls and young women are no longer sitting back and accepting sexism and inequality as something they have to face at some point in their lives. Hannah, 17*

*Whenever we talk about gender inequality at my Brownie unit I am always inspired and surprised by the depth of their feeling and passion about equality. Although they are young they're already aware of the challenges they face, and are always appalled at the situations women are put into across the world. They truly are the future. Emma C, 23*



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