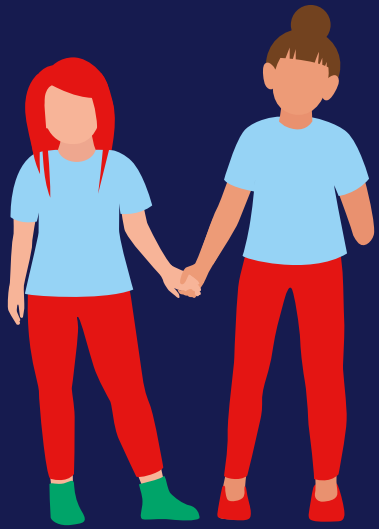
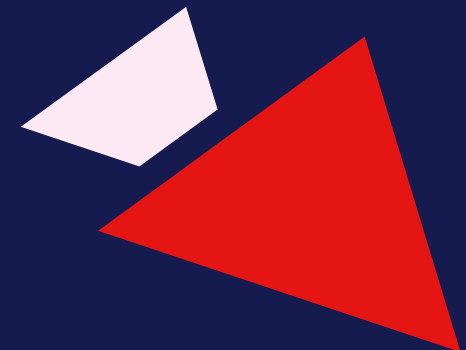


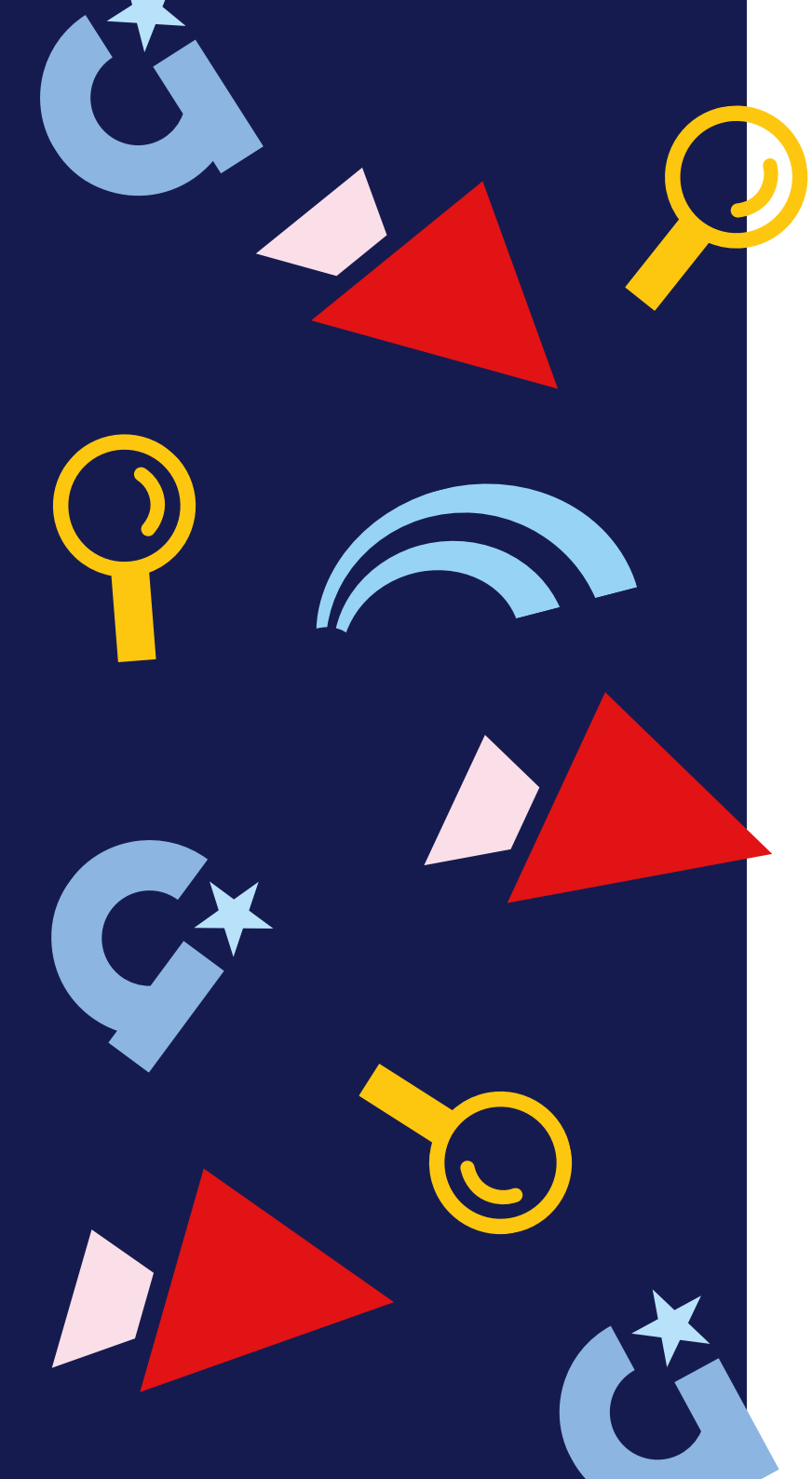


Girls' Attitudes Survey 2025



A girl's world:
sexism, misogyny and
the power of sisterhood



A decorative sidebar on the left side of the page. It features a dark blue background with various geometric shapes and icons. At the top, there is a large light blue 'G' with a white star inside. Below it, a yellow magnifying glass icon. Further down, a red triangle, a pink triangle, and a light blue arc. Another yellow magnifying glass icon is below that. Then, another red triangle, a pink triangle, and a light blue 'G' with a white star. At the bottom, there is a yellow magnifying glass icon, a red triangle, a pink triangle, and a light blue 'G' with a white star.

Contents

- 3 About Girlguiding and the Girls' Attitudes Survey**
- 4 Introduction**
- 5 A message from our advocates**
- 6 Executive summary**

Sexism, self-protection and sisterhood	8
--	---

Misogyny in schools	14
---------------------	----

Mental health and wellbeing	20
-----------------------------	----

Aspirations and role models	28
-----------------------------	----

- 32 How Girlguiding is supporting girls**
- 34 Methodology**
- 35 Our theory of change**

About Girlguiding

We're 300,000 girls aged between 4 and 18-years-old who come together to laugh, learn and have adventures.

We're 80,000 volunteers who make guiding happen by giving their time, talents, enthusiasm, and care for girls.

We're 23,000 local groups having fun and exploring activities week in, week out. We're her first night away, weekend camping adventures, summer music festivals, emails to her MP about the things she cares about.

We want to see an equal world where all girls feel happy, safe and can enjoy fulfilling lives. We're a powerful collective voice – by girls, for girls – changing the world for the better.

All girls have a home at Girlguiding. We're reaching a wider range of girls than ever through our work in schools, building confidence and showing we're there for every girl – whoever they are, and wherever they are.

We help all girls know they can do anything.

We're Girlguiding.

About the Girls' Attitudes Survey

Since 2009, Girlguiding has given girls and young women a platform to speak out on the issues that matter to them through the Girls' Attitudes Survey.

Our flagship research asks girls and young women how they feel about their everyday lives. Now in its 17th year, this year's survey asked over 2,500 girls and young women aged 7-21, representative of girls across the UK, about the challenges they face as a girl today.

We develop the Girls' Attitudes Survey with young members of our advocate panel. We'd like to thank advocates for their help shaping the themes and questions, and producing this report. You can find all the results from this and previous surveys on our website: girlguiding.org.uk/girls-making-change/girls-attitudes-survey

A huge thank you also to players of People's Postcode Lottery for their invaluable support for our Girls' Attitudes Survey 2025.



Introduction

For 17 years, we've asked girls and young women about their lives. They've told us about their aspirations, their concerns, and their passion for changing the world.

Today's girls and young women, particularly younger girls, feel brave and proud, with increased determination to become leaders. But society is failing them, and this year's report outlines how and why.

We've spotlighted sexism and misogyny in this report as prejudice against girls and women is sadly still all too commonplace, including in spaces where girls should feel most safe.

Girls are tirelessly managing the effects of misogyny. As a result, their confidence is suffering, and they're careful not to draw attention to themselves for fear of the repercussions. They're doing the same things their mothers and grandmothers did to keep themselves safe in public; like holding their keys when they walk or changing the way they dress to avoid unwanted attention. Little seems to have changed, even from when I was told these safety tips at school decades ago.

This year, our survey found that girls as young as 7 can fear for their safety due to the behaviours of others. And technological advancements mean this generation are also navigating a complex online world that forces them to adapt in new ways.



Girls want and deserve to see more action taken by politicians and decision makers to tackle sexism and misogyny. They want better discussions about consent and healthy relationships in schools. They want to feel safe after dark. These aren't unrealistic asks.

There is hope. Girls are showing the power of sisterhood. Their role models are women who help them feel empowered, and they're sticking up for other girls. At Girlguiding we build girls' confidence and wellbeing. We're proud that our research shows girls in Girlguiding are 28% more confident than other girls in the UK and 15% happier. We want to create an equal world for girls and young women and we're working hard to include even more girls – from communities we might not ordinarily reach.

Girls can do anything. But they shouldn't have to face so many obstacles. This year, we've included our asks of schools and decision makers because the results of this survey show we must demand change. Our asks are guided by what girls have told us and designed to let them live their lives to the fullest. We owe it to girls to do more to keep them safe, help them realise their ambitions and change the world.

At Girlguiding we'll continue to push to have girls' voices heard and the changes they want to see made into reality. Because girls deserve better.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Azeez'.

Amanda Azeez, acting CEO

A message from our advocates

Our advocates are a group of young Girlguiding members, aged 14–25, who speak out on issues affecting girls and campaign for change. Below some of our current advocates tell us what they think about this year's Girls' Attitudes Survey.



**Grace, 21,
Gloucester**

'It is heartbreaking to know that so many girls and young women are feeling sad and lonely. The insurmountable pressures that they are put under loom over so many parts of their lives. School work, relationships and appearance pressure all feed into the decline in young people's confidence and happiness. I am very concerned that so many girls feel that they don't fit the mould of what a girl should be. Feeling comfortable with who you are is key to positive wellbeing. It is clear that action must be taken to nurture our young people and create positive environments for them to thrive in.'



**Katie, 18,
County
Down**

'I really resonate with the girls who have said they feel unsafe to go outside when it's dark. Many times I have turned down the opportunity to go out in the evening with friends because it might be unsafe and sexual harassment is a very real issue. However I believe there is still hope for change. It is up to the government to make new legislation to prevent sexual harassment across the UK and ensure that girls feel comfortable to leave their homes. This isn't a challenge boys face every day, so why is avoiding harassment a "privilege" for girls?'



**Charlotte,
18, West
Sussex**

'Girls are facing harmful pressures and harassment in schools everyday, and this mirrors my experience as a young woman in STEM education. The findings are worrying but unfortunately they do not surprise me as, in my experience, girls are constantly being objectified and insulted in schools, and it needs to stop now. It is essential for everyone to have a wider recognition of the harmful effects that misogyny has on the quality of education that a girl receives, and a greater number of meaningful conversations need to be had over the consequences of inaction against misogyny in schools.'



**Staci, 21,
Aberdeen**

'82% of young women aged 17-21 have a role model outside their family, this is vital to developing their ambition and sense of self as they move forward towards a career. Having someone to look up to helps girls feel confident and empowered to be themselves – a key aim of Girlguiding. I look up to the volunteers who helped me during my time as a guide, and I hope as a leader I can continue the tradition of empowering girls and young women.'

Executive summary

This year our Girls' Attitudes Survey reveals **how far girls have to go to stay safe in a world where they face misogyny, abuse and harassment – when they're out, at school and online.**

The National Police Chiefs' Council and the National Audit Office have described violence against women and girls as a 'national emergency' and an 'epidemic'. That's why we're shining a spotlight on girls' experiences of misogyny (prejudice against women and girls).

Despite the challenges they face, **girls are more ambitious than ever.** They want to make space for their hopes and dreams, build their confidence and connect with one another. More than ever, **girls and young women want to be leaders and thrive in a more equal world.** In the face of sexism and misogyny, **girls are pulling together to stand up for one another.** There's a feeling of sisterhood, with girls showing solidarity with each other.

But they want others' behaviours to change rather than carrying the burden themselves.

In the past year, **68% of girls have changed their everyday behaviour to avoid sexual harassment.** They're cautious about what they do, what they say and where they go. The actions girls are taking to stay safe have become normalised. **The experiences they're having are limiting their lives and their potential.** And this can have a detrimental impact on their confidence, mental health and wellbeing.

Girls tell us:

- They regularly endure sexist and misogynistic behaviour that makes them uncomfortable and scared.
- They've intentionally missed school to reduce the risk of experiencing inappropriate behaviour or sexual harassment.
- They're cautious about appearing too smart or confident for fear of abuse.
- They avoid going out when it's dark.
- They don't feel safe on public transport.
- They avoid challenging misogyny because they're afraid of judgement.

This is why girls want politicians to do more to tackle inequality. They want to feel safe. They want to be heard. And they want more discussion and education in school about the impact of sexism and misogyny.

Girls also want to see greater representation of women across a range of sectors. **Girls tell us that women role models play a vital role in shaping their confidence** and help them feel like they can achieve their goals.

At Girlguiding we know that girls can do anything. And the evidence in this report shows we're needed more than ever. This year we outline the actions that can be taken to help us create a more equal world.

Find out what you can do to support girls:



Headline findings



Sexism, self-protection and sisterhood

In the past year, **68% of girls and young women aged 11-21** have changed their everyday behaviour to avoid sexual harassment.

More than half of girls and young women aged 11-21 don't feel safe on public transport on their own. **48%** say they always avoid going out when it's dark to keep themselves safe.

More than **2 in 3** supported another girl who may have experienced sexism or misogyny.

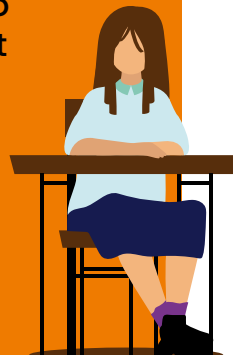


Misogyny in schools

1 in 10 girls aged 11-16 (10%) have missed school to avoid sexual harassment.

72% of girls aged 11-16 want more discussion about consent in schools.

Most girls and young women aged 11-16 (**54%**) agree that girls have to be careful about appearing too self-confident in front of boys for fear of abuse or mean comments.



Mental health and wellbeing

More girls aged 7-10 say they feel sad compared to a decade ago. More than 1 in 4 young girls feel sad most days or every day compared to 1 in 10 in 2015.

Girls feel more positive when they connect with friends and family.

80% of 7-21-year-olds say spending time in nature helps them to feel happy.



Aspirations and role models

64% of 7-21-year-olds want to be leaders in their chosen job.

Over half of girls and young women say they have a woman role model outside their family.

More than half of 11-21-year-olds (**58%**) want more support in building their skills and confidence so they can become leaders of the future.





Sexism, self-protection and sisterhood

Girls and young women take precautions to keep themselves safe and to avoid harassment and abuse.

From avoiding going out after dark to holding themselves back when sharing their views, girls have to adapt their behaviour because of sexism and misogyny they regularly face. Girls want politicians to do more to keep them safe. And yet girls feel a sense of sisterhood, standing together and supporting each other in the face of these challenges.



Girls increasingly feel unsafe on public transport, and avoid going out when it's dark

The majority (56%) of girls and young women aged 11-21 say they don't feel safe on public transport on their own. This has increased from 45% in 2022. Only 1 in 3 (34%) of the same age group say they feel safe outside on their own. The majority of girls (86%) have avoided going out at night or when it's dark to stay safe, with almost half (48%) saying they always do this and a further 38% sometimes doing this.

Girls are forced to take precautions because of fears for their safety

73% of girls aged 11-18 say they've had another woman in their life speak to them about how to keep themselves safe as a girl or young woman. It suggests that this has become an essential part of growing up as a girl or woman.

And it's evident that girls take a range of actions to keep themselves safe when they go out on their own. The most common action is to share their location with a friend or family member. 60% of 11-21-year-olds say they always do this.

Other common precautions include avoiding wearing headphones to hear what's going on, or pretending to listen to music or be on the phone to avoid conversations with others. At least 1 in 4 always hold their keys in their hands to use if they need to protect themselves.

“Take it [sexism and misogyny] seriously... girls need to feel safe.”

Girl aged 11-16

Girls of colour are much less likely to go out at night or when it's dark

Spotlight
on marginalised groups

I always avoid going out at night

45%
White girls

56%
Girls of colour

Girls and young women aged 11-21

In 2022
45%

of girls and young women aged 11-21 said **they didn't feel safe on public transport** on their own. This has increased to

56%
in 2025

What do you do to make yourself feel safer when out on your own?

Girls and young women aged 11-21

I share my location with friends or family

60%

26%

I avoid going out when it's dark

48%

38%

I am or pretend to be on the phone to someone

41%

42%

I pretend to listen to music so people don't talk to me

41%

36%

I don't wear headphones so I can hear what's going on

29%

50%

I hold keys in my hand to use if I need to protect myself

25%

34%

 I always do this  I sometimes do this

Girls and young women change behaviour to avoid sexual harassment

Girls and young women have taken a range of actions to avoid unwanted or inappropriate behaviour in the last year. This can limit their lives and what they do.

Approximately 1 in 3 girls and young women aged 11-21 have changed what they wear, and a similar proportion have avoided travelling on public transport alone. Their efforts to avoid unwanted and inappropriate behaviour can impact their social lives, both online and offline, and where and what exercise they do.

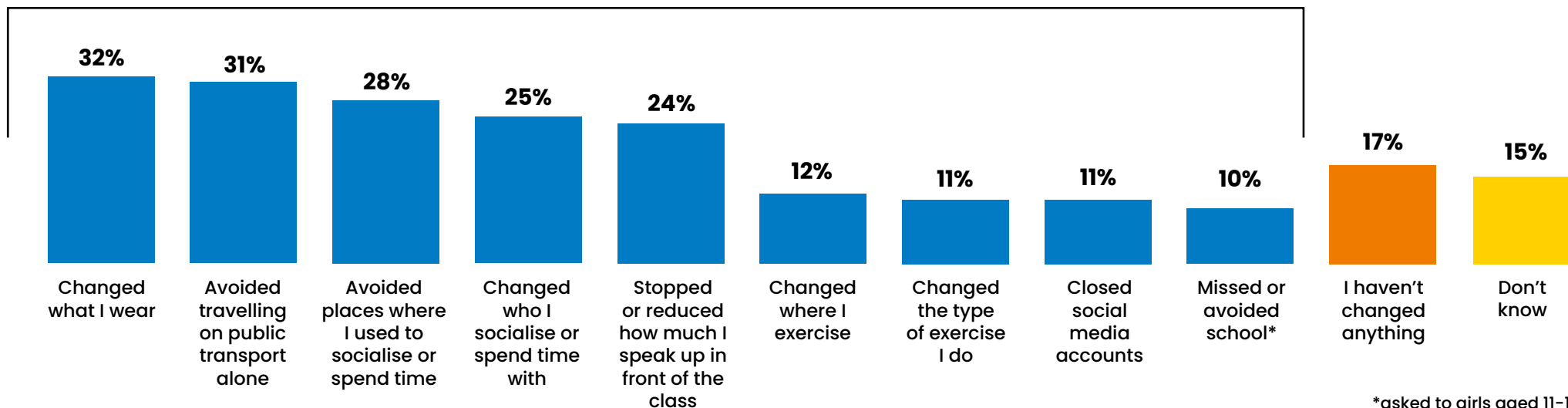
In almost all categories, except for not speaking up in class, 17-21-year-olds are more likely to have changed their behaviour. Girls who are disabled, neurodivergent or identify as LGBTQ+ are also more likely to have taken at least 1 action to avoid sexual harassment.

68% of 11-21-year-olds have changed their everyday behaviour in the last year to avoid sexual harassment

In the last year, to avoid sexual harassment, I have...

Girls and young women aged 11-21

68% of girls and young women have taken 1 of these actions



*asked to girls aged 11-16

“Making a joke that’ll make your friends laugh for less than a minute isn’t worth making a woman or girl feel uncomfortable and scared for the rest of their life.”

Girl aged 11-16

Only 17% of girls say they’ve not changed anything they’ve done in the last year to avoid sexual harassment. At the same time, girls and young women say they’re increasingly feeling sexual pressures. 53% of girls aged 13-21 say they’ve experienced this, compared to 41% in 2016.

Girls are restricting their online activity to protect themselves

Girls are used to taking measures to stay safe online, with 92% of girls and young women aged 11-21 saying they’ve taken at least 1 action to enhance their safety.

The majority (54%) block people they don’t know offline, and about half (48%) limit who can see their posts online. 2 in 5 girls and young women aged 11-21 (41%) have a private account alongside a public account.

Once again, girls feel they have to limit themselves and what they do to stay safe, with 35% saying they avoid talking or posting about certain subjects online. 29% say they avoid using certain apps and platforms to protect themselves. A further 1 in 3 girls avoid sharing photos of their face and 15% turn off or disable comments on their posts.

Girls of colour are less likely to share photos of their face to keep safe online

Spotlight
on marginalised groups

I avoid sharing photos of my face to stay safe online

28%
White girls

45%
Girls of colour

Girls and young women aged 11-21

41% of 11-21-year-olds have both public and private accounts to protect themselves online



Girls feel a sense of sisterhood and are standing up for one another

Girls are supporting one another in the face of sexism and discrimination. More than 2 in 3 girls and young women aged 11-21 (70%) have supported another girl or young woman who may have experienced sexism or misogyny. Most commonly they've stood up for a girl or friend who has been picked on for being a girl, or comforted a girl upset by sexism or misogyny.

Over a third (36%) have walked with or sat with a girl or young woman who feels unsafe because of sexist or misogynistic behaviour. Interestingly, girls are more likely to challenge sexist or misogynistic comments in person (30%) than online (24%).

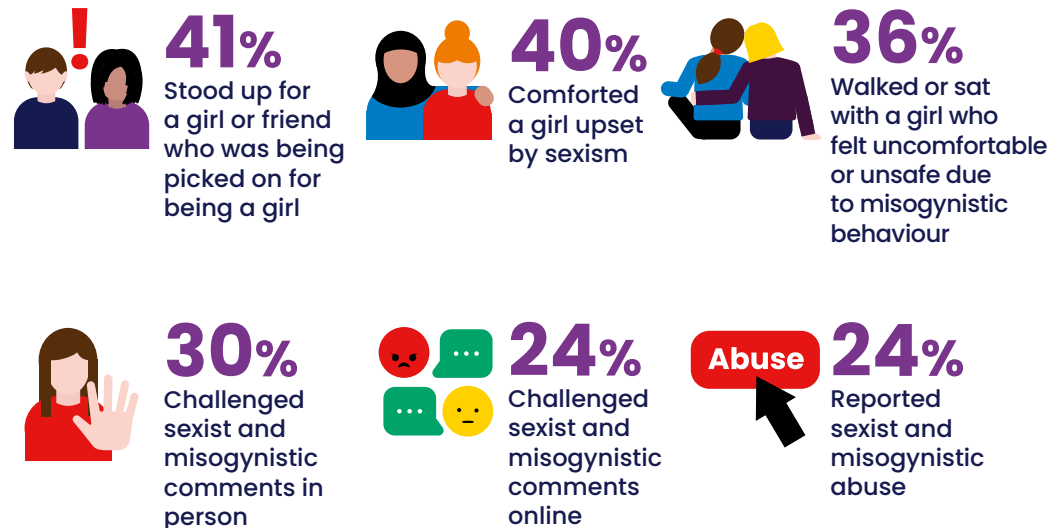
While girls are providing support for one another, they can still feel they should be cautious when challenging sexist or misogynistic behaviour. 1 in 3 girls aged 11-16 (32%) have stopped themselves challenging sexist behaviour because they're worried about being seen as 'too sensitive'. This rises to half (49%) of 17-18-year-olds. It's also more common among disabled, LGBTQ+ and neurodivergent girls.

This may explain why, despite the high level of sexist and misogynistic experiences girls are having, only 1 in 4 girls have reported sexist or misogynistic behaviour.

Friendships provide a place of safety for the majority of girls, with 92% saying they feel safe with their friends. And given their experiences it's unsurprising that most girls (62%) say they feel safer when they're just with girls.

70% of girls and young women aged 11-21 have stood in solidarity with a girl experiencing sexism or misogyny

How have you supported other girls and young women who have experienced sexism and misogyny?



What girls want to stop sexism and misogyny

“Actually doing something about sexism instead of brushing it off because “boys will be boys”.”

Girl aged 11–16

“Being able to tell someone without the fear of it getting worse.”

Girl aged 11–16

“Stop gaslighting [us] when we report problems.”

Girl aged 11–16

“Good government policy.”

Girl aged 11–16

“I think more education and better role models for boys to get talking about themselves.”

Girl aged 17–18

“Showing the boys the true extent of how comments and abuse/harassment can leave a great effect on our lives. Both emotionally and physically.”

Girl aged 11–16

Girls deserve to feel safe and want politicians to listen and act now to protect them

When asked how we tackle the problems of sexism, misogyny and harassment, girls were clear that others need to take more responsibility for the change. 70% of girls and young women aged 11–21 say politicians aren’t showing enough commitment to their promise to tackle misogyny and sexism.

41% of girls and young women think that by tackling sexism and misogyny, their mental health would be better, as they’d feel safer and more able to be themselves.

What can we do to make girls safer?

Girls are telling us they aren’t safe and want action to fix this. **On behalf of all girls, Girlguiding is asking** politicians and decision makers at every level to sign our **‘Commitment to Girls’** and show there’s no place for misogyny in the communities they represent. We’re also:

1. Asking local authorities to publish community-specific plans to tackle misogyny
2. Asking politicians and decision makers in charge of public transport to listen to girls and act to make their services safer
3. Asking the government to rate social media companies by how much they’re doing to keep young people safe online, with added powers to hold them accountable when they aren’t doing enough



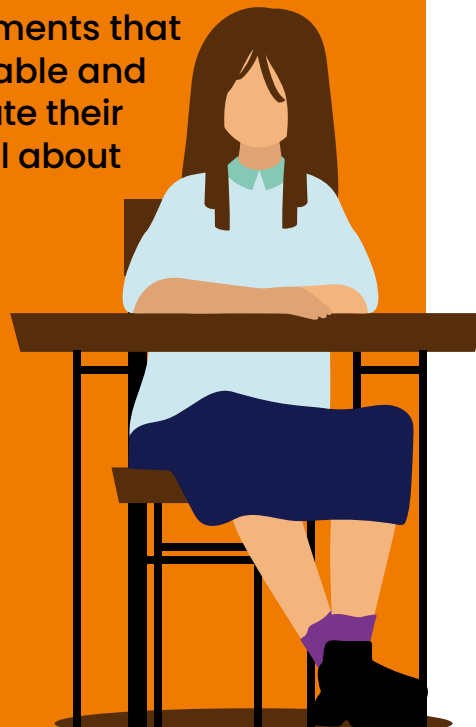


Misogyny in schools

Girls are regularly exposed to sexist and misogynistic behaviours at school. It starts as early as 7 years old and worsens as they get older.

They are subjected to comments that make them feel uncomfortable and scared. Girls have to navigate their environment, and be careful about appearing too smart or too self-confident. And this can negatively impact their mental health.

Girls want more support, discussions and education in schools about consent, sexism, misogyny and the impact it has on them.



Exposure to misogynistic behaviour at school starts early and increases with age

Experiences of misogyny start as young as 7 years old. 1 in 3 girls aged 7–10 (32%) have experienced a comment from boys at school that's made them uncomfortable. More than a quarter (28%) of the same age group say boys at their school regularly make mean comments about girls and women. One-fifth (20%) of young girls aged 7–10 say they've been made to feel stupid because they're a girl. And 15% have experienced comments that made them feel scared for their safety.

These experiences become more prevalent with age. The majority of girls and young women aged 11–18 have experienced boys at their school making comments they'd describe as toxic (58%), and which have made them feel uncomfortable (57%) – although both have decreased since 2023, down from 69% and 68% respectively.

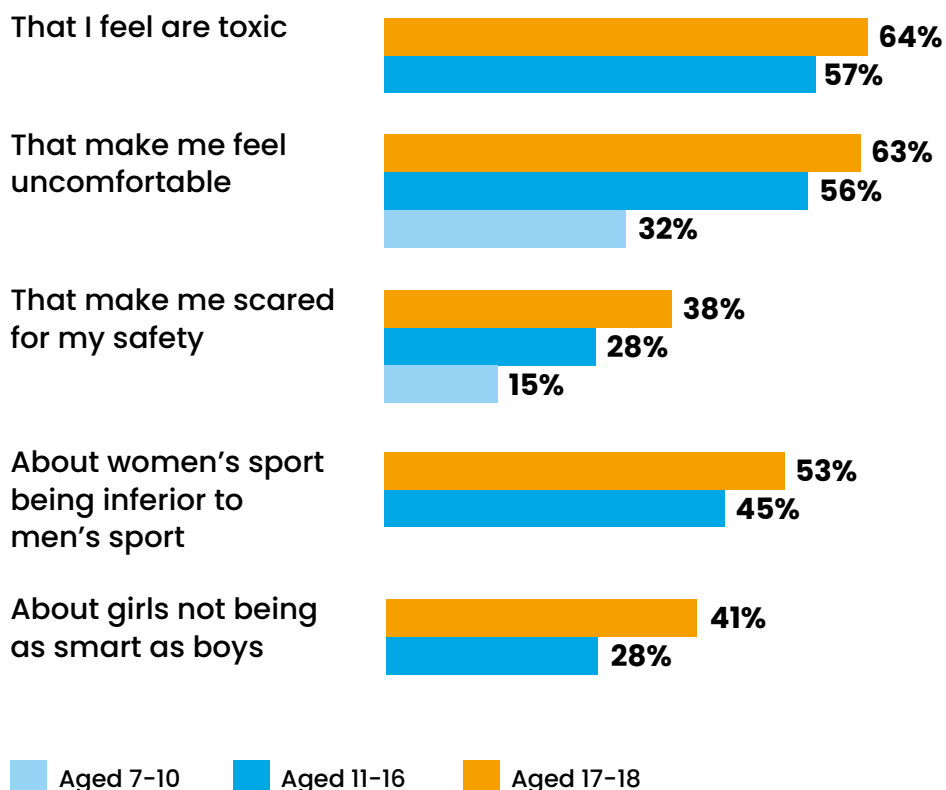
30% of girls and young women aged 11–18 have experienced comments about women and girls that have made them scared for their safety. This is even more common for girls who are disabled, neurodivergent or who identify as LGBTQ+.

Over half of 11–18-year-olds (53%) regularly hear comments about girls' and young women's bodies. Once again, younger girls are not immune with 17% of 7–10-year-olds also hearing comments about girls' bodies.



While the proportion of girls aged 11–16 who say they feel safe in school has risen from 68% in 2022 to 73%, it is still concerning that this proportion is so low. Moreover, 1 in 10 girls this age don't feel safe in schools. This rises to more than 2 in 10 for LGBTQ+ girls, and 3 in 10 for disabled girls. 1 in 10 girls aged 11–16 have missed or avoided school to avoid sexual harassment. And once again, this is more likely for neurodivergent, LGBTQ+ or disabled girls.

Boys at school or college regularly make comments...



1 in 10 girls aged 11–16 have missed school to avoid sexual harassment



Girls in some marginalised groups are more likely to have received comments that make them feel scared for their safety

Spotlight
on marginalised groups



Girls and young women aged 7–18

17% of 7–10-year-olds say that boys at school regularly make comments on girls' and young women's bodies

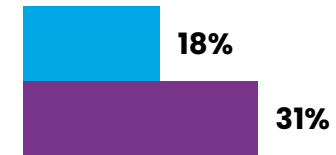
Girls are cautious about appearing too smart or confident for fear of abuse

The majority of girls aged 11–16 (54%) agree that girls have to be careful about appearing too self-confident for fear of abuse or mean comments. Almost 1 in 5 girls aged 11–16 (18%) have pretended to be less smart than they are to avoid abuse.

“These comments make girls lose so much confidence.”
Girl aged 11–16

What girls and young women feel they need to do to avoid abuse

I sometimes pretend to be less smart than I am to avoid abuse from boys



Girls have to be careful about appearing too self-confident in front of boys for fear of abuse



 Aged 11–16  Aged 17–18

Almost 1 in 5 girls aged 11–16 (18%) have pretended to be less smart than they are to avoid abuse



Girls witness teachers both making and receiving sexist and misogynistic comments

1 in 3 girls aged 11-18 (32%) have seen a teacher or member of school staff receiving sexist or misogynistic comments or abuse. But 30% have seen a teacher or school staff member making sexist comments.

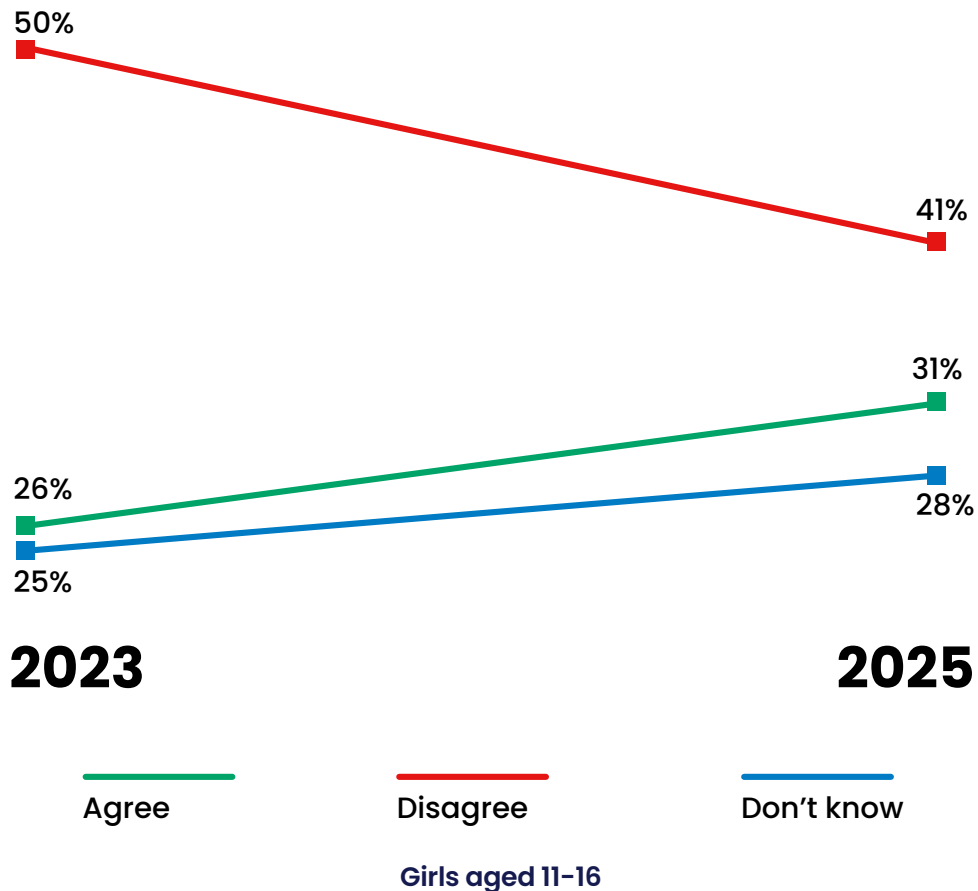
While 2 in 5 girls aged 11-18 (40%) often or sometimes see teachers or other school staff challenging sexist behaviour, a similar proportion (37%) say they've never seen a teacher challenging sexist behaviour. There has been some slight improvement in girls feeling sexist comments are taken seriously in schools since 2023. But girls are still more likely to disagree with this statement than agree.

32% of 11-18-year-olds have seen a teacher or member of school staff receiving sexist or misogynistic comments

“I feel like a girl won't tell a teacher if they go through sexism as they would be called a snitch... I think that's horrible.”

Girl aged 11-16

Do you think sexist comments are dealt with seriously at school?



“[Stop] telling girls that they can't wear certain clothes because it's too revealing and boys may get distracted.”

Girl aged 11-16

Sexism and misogyny impact girls' wellbeing

Given girls' experiences, it's understandable that 3 in 4 girls and young women aged 11-21 (75%) say they've experienced the feeling that they don't belong or get treated equally. Once again, disabled, LGBTQ+ and neurodivergent girls feel this even more strongly.

When asked why more girls their age were experiencing mental health and wellbeing challenges, 39% aged 11-18 said they thought the impact of sexism and misogyny was a reason.

A similar proportion (36%) said inequality and discrimination impacted on girls' mental health. 1 in 5 girls aged 11-18 (19%) said experiencing discrimination was most likely to impact their mental health or make them feel sad.

“Boys need to know that because they are a boy doesn't mean they can put down girls and make them feel bad about themselves.”

Girl aged 11-16

“[Sexism and misogyny] truly leave women and young girls uncomfortable and upset.”

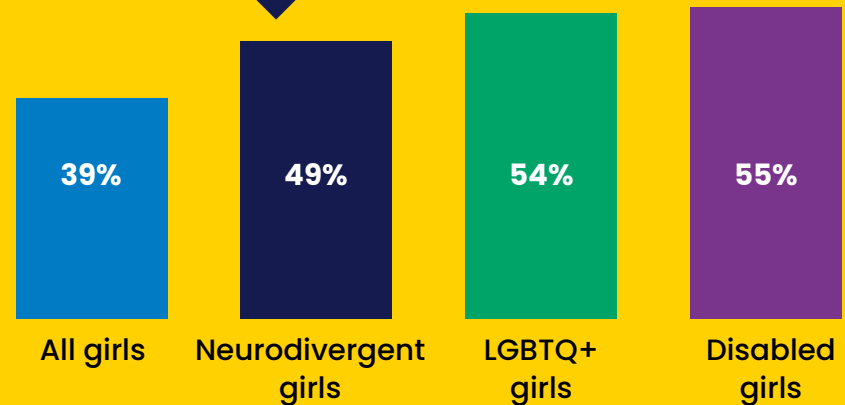
Girl aged 11-16



Why do you think more girls your age are experiencing mental health issues?

Spotlight
on marginalised groups

The impact of sexism and misogyny



Girls and young women aged 11-18



What girls want to see to stop sexism and misogyny in schools

“For it to be spoken about more, and for teachers to challenge it more often. And [for] it to be made a big deal, even if it's only a little comment [that is] made, as it's not right and not fair.’

Girl aged 11–16

“Organise discussions and awareness campaigns about sexism, and create safe spaces for students to report discrimination or bullying.’

Girl aged 11–16

“I think educating both girls and boys about harassment and equality and how they can impact a person's life.’

Girl aged 11–16

“I would have a day where we would have a talk about how sexism and misogyny affects girls' mental health.’

Girl aged 11–16

“Not trivialising comments by allowing the perpetrator to claim it's a one-off or that it's a joke.’

Young woman aged 17–21

Girls want more protection, and more education and discussion about the impact of sexism and misogyny

76% of 11–16-year-olds think there needs to be more discussion and education with boys in school about the impact of sexism and misogyny on girls. And 72% of 11–16-year-olds want more discussion about consent in schools. A similar proportion want schools to do more to protect girls and young women from sexism and misogyny.

What can schools do to protect girls?



Girls are telling us they want to be believed and protected against sexism and misogyny. They also want more education and discussion about consent, sexism, and its impact on them. **On behalf of girls, Girlguiding is asking** for 3 things from schools:

1. Listen to girls and accept that misogynistic abuse is a real concern.
2. Publish community-specific plans to tackle misogyny. This must start with listening to girls.
3. **Work with organisations like Girlguiding** to widen discussions and education about sexism, misogyny and consent while also protecting and safeguarding girls.



Mental health and wellbeing

Girls are often made to feel like they're not enough, which can negatively impact their wellbeing.

Young girls feel sad more often now than they did 10 years ago. The pressure on girls today affects how they feel about themselves.

A vast range of factors, from social media to appearance pressures, are impacting girls' mental health. Being with friends, family and in nature helps them to feel more positive. Girls want their concerns to be taken more seriously and better access to services that support their mental health.

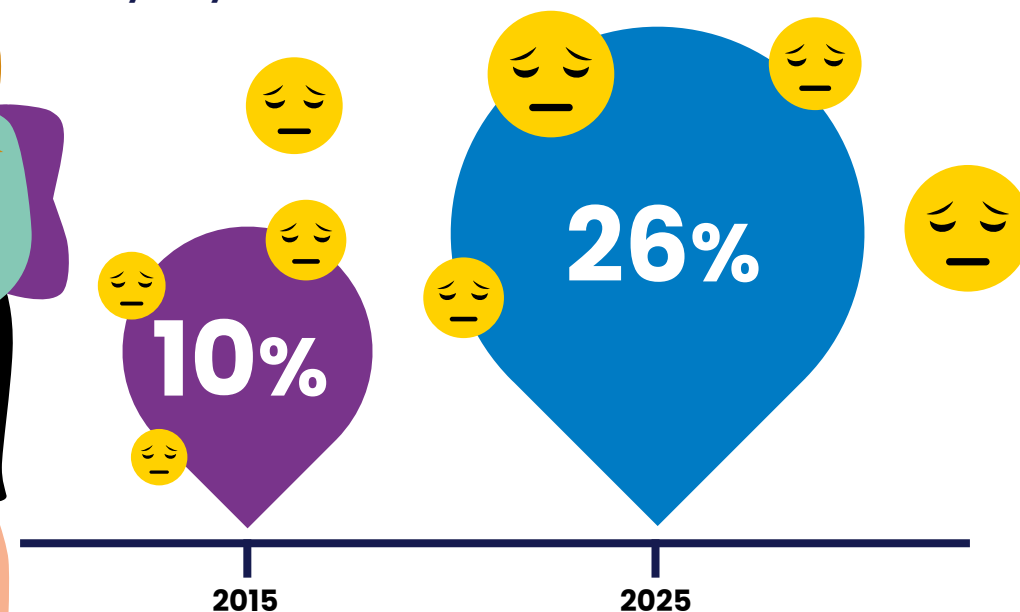


Girls are feeling sadder and lonelier

More than 1 in 3 older girls and young women aged 11–21 say they feel sad most days or every day. And more young girls say they feel sad and lonely compared to 10 years ago. 73% of girls aged 7–10 say they feel sad at least some of the time (compared to 52% in 2015). 79% feel lonely at least some of the time (compared to 66% in 2016).

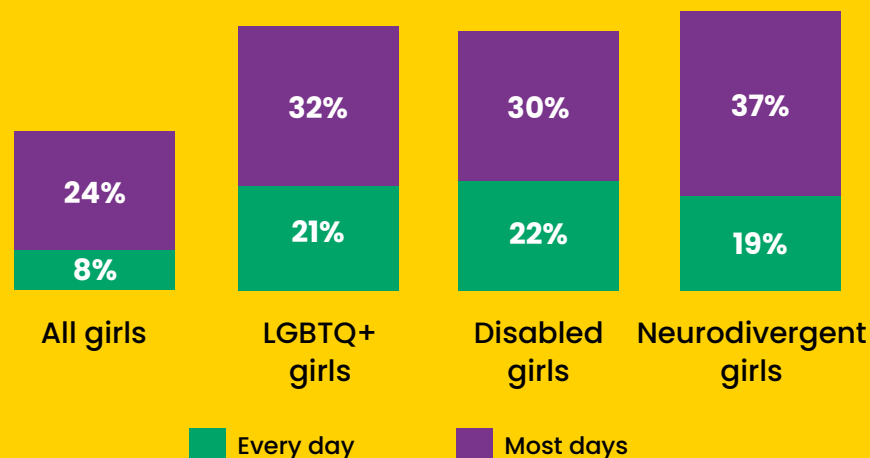
The number of 7–10-year-olds who told us they feel sad most days or every day has risen considerably, from 10% in 2015 to 26% in 2025. The proportion who feel lonely often or every day has risen from 16% in 2016 to 21% in 2025. Similarly, the proportion of girls aged 7–10 who say they never feel worried has dropped from 19% in 2016 to just 8%.

7–10-year-olds who say they feel sad most days or every day



Girls in some marginalised groups are more likely to feel sad

Spotlight
on marginalised groups



Girls and young women aged 7-21

“ [Social media] creates an unhealthy beauty standard that is way beyond expectations and is too normalised now, impacting young women critically.”
Girl aged 11-16

Appearance pressures are impacting girls as young as 7 years old

Over a quarter (28%) of 7-10-year-olds have experienced someone saying something mean about their body. So it's little surprise they grow up feeling like they need to lose weight. It's also unsurprising that older girls feel body image and weight have the greatest negative impact on their mental health.

53% of 11-21-year-olds say their body image or weight is most likely to negatively affect their mental health

74% of 11-21-year-olds feel like they need to lose weight. Nearly a third (32%) feel this way most of the time. 53% of 11-21-year-olds say their weight can have a negative impact on their mental health and 49% say appearance pressures make them feel down.

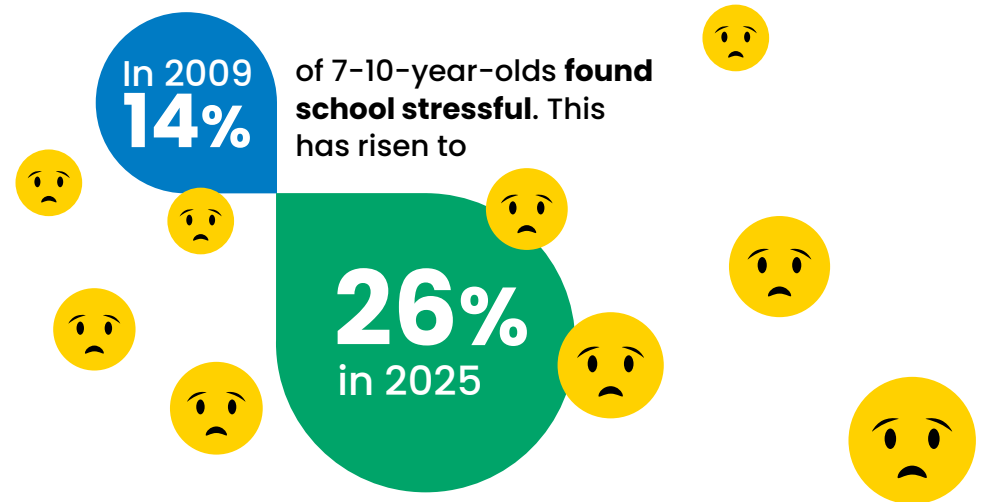
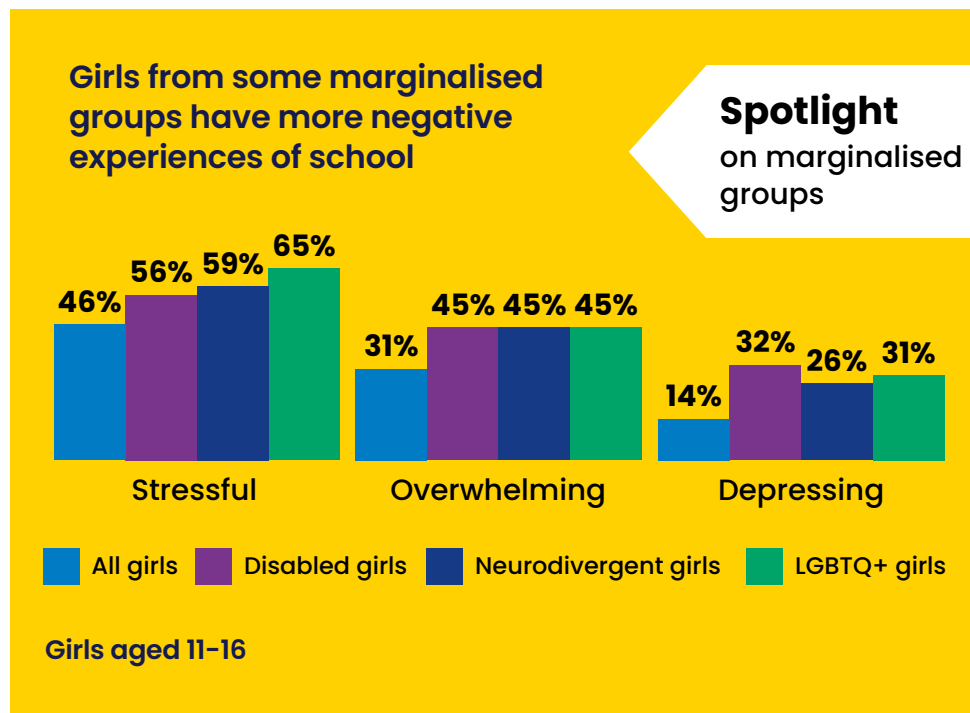
There's been a notable increase in the number of younger girls feeling like they're not pretty enough. 18% of 7-10-year-olds feel this way most of the time, an increase from 7% in 2016.

There appears to be a clear link between weight and appearance pressures and so many girls and young women feeling sad. Given the pressure that girls are facing it's understandable that the majority of 11-21-year-olds (83%) would like to build their self-confidence.

Girls are finding school more stressful than ever before

Another factor girls and young women say has a negative impact on their mental health is the pressure of school. 6 in 10 girls aged 11–16 say schoolwork is the factor that's most likely to negatively affect their mental health.

Young girls are more likely to describe their experience of school as stressful now compared to 2009. Similarly, nearly a third (31%) of 11–16-year-olds say school is overwhelming and 14% say it's depressing.



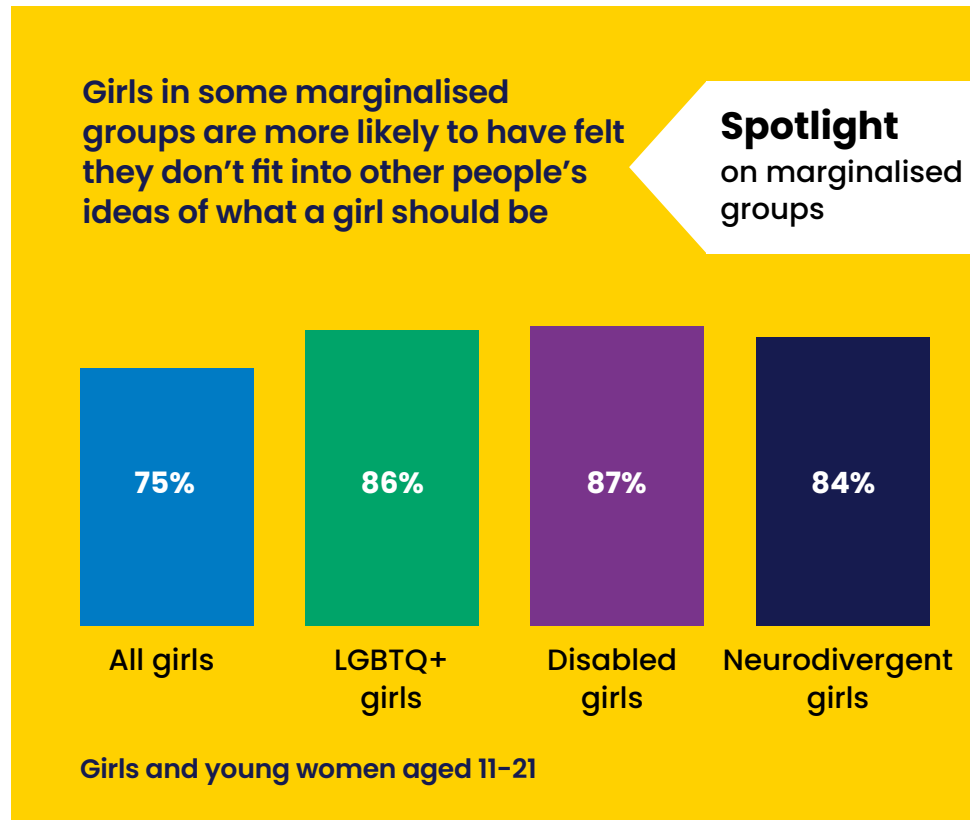
Girls are constrained by other people's judgements of what it means to be a girl

Nearly half of girls aged 7–10 (47%) agree that girls and women are judged more on what they look like than what they do. From an early age girls are also subject to others' expectations of what they should do as a girl. 38% of girls aged 7–10 have repeatedly received comments about how they shouldn't do or say something because they're a girl. This increases to 54% for 11–16-year-olds and 80% for 17–21-year-olds.

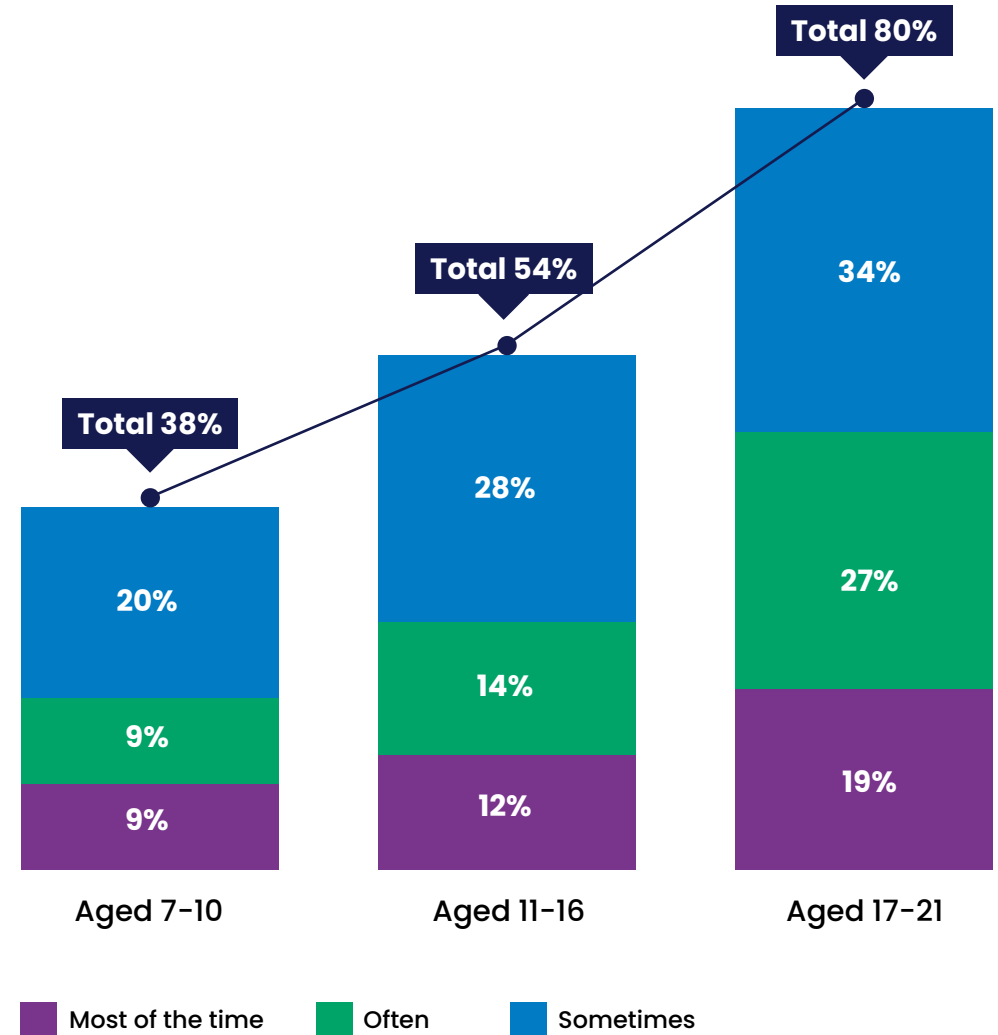
75% of 11–21-year-olds don't think they fit other people's ideas of what a girl should be

More than half of 11–21-year-olds (52%) think that to be successful, women need to be attractive as well as good at what they do, but this standard doesn't apply to men. This increases as girls get older, with 63% of 17–21-year-olds agreeing.

Exposure to these judgements and sexism at an early age may explain why 75% of older girls and young women (11–21) say they've felt like they don't fit into other people's idea of what a girl should be. Some marginalised girls feel this even more strongly.



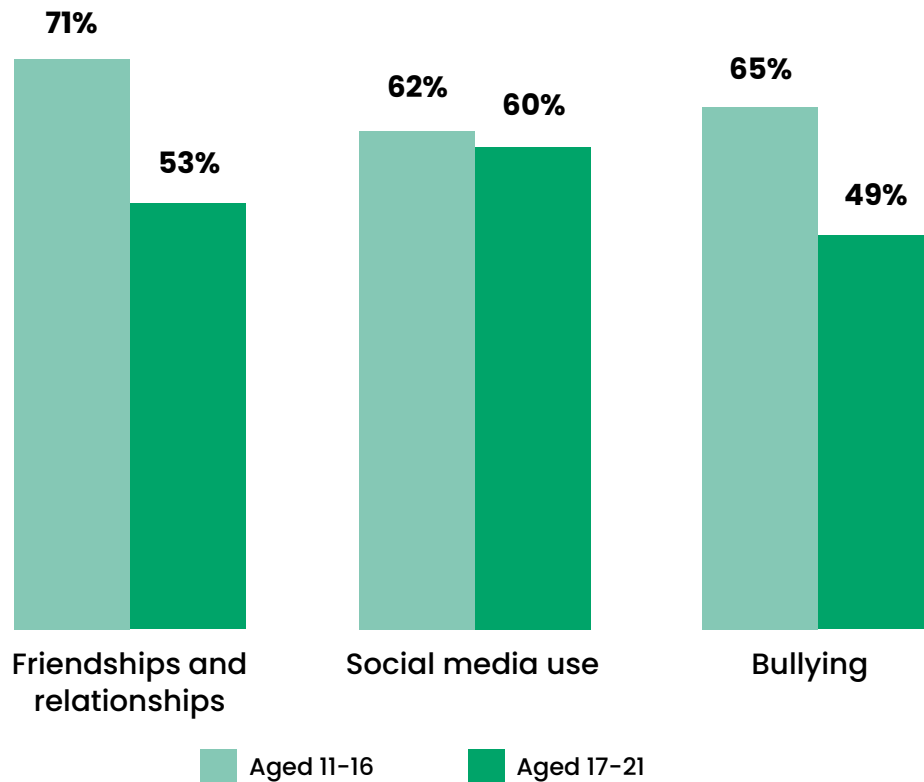
Have you experienced comments about how you shouldn't do or say something because you're a girl?



Social media can negatively impact girls' wellbeing but also helps them to connect with friends

Girls and young women believe a wide range of factors are responsible for the mental health issues they're experiencing. However, for girls and young women aged 11-21, the top 3 are friendships and relationships, social media and bullying.

Why do you think more girls your age are experiencing mental health issues?



“I feel like when people are on social media you could easily see something that could upset you and that's why I don't like going on my phone as much, as I don't think it helps with mental health and your wellbeing.”

Girl aged 11-16



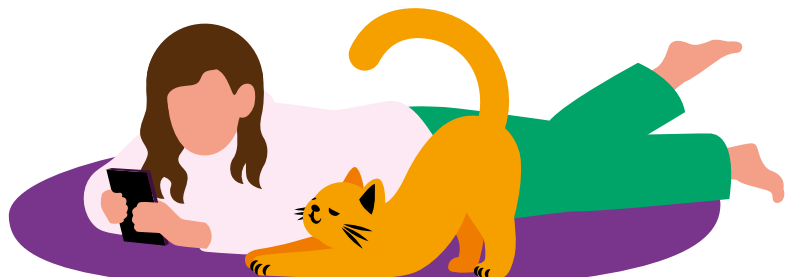
Over a third (36%) of 11–21-year-olds say they often feel depressed after spending time on social media. 1 in 10 say it makes them feel good when they take a break from being online. The majority of girls and young women (79%) also think they can access too much harmful content online.

Yet, there are also positive elements to social media for girls and young women. Although 82% of girls and young women aged 11–21 said they prefer to spend time with friends in person than online, 62% felt that social media and being online helped them maintain their friendships. And half feel as though their friendships would suffer without it. 63% of 11–21-year-olds also think adults need to trust young people to safely navigate the challenges of social media and being online.

While it can contribute to feelings of sadness, some girls also say social media can be a good distraction or a place to seek support when they are feeling unhappy.

“When I’m feeling down social media can get my mind off it and escape my reality.”
Girl aged 11–16

“Being online improves my life because I get to keep in touch with my friends outside of school. This further develops my friendships and stops me feeling left out.”
Girl aged 11–16



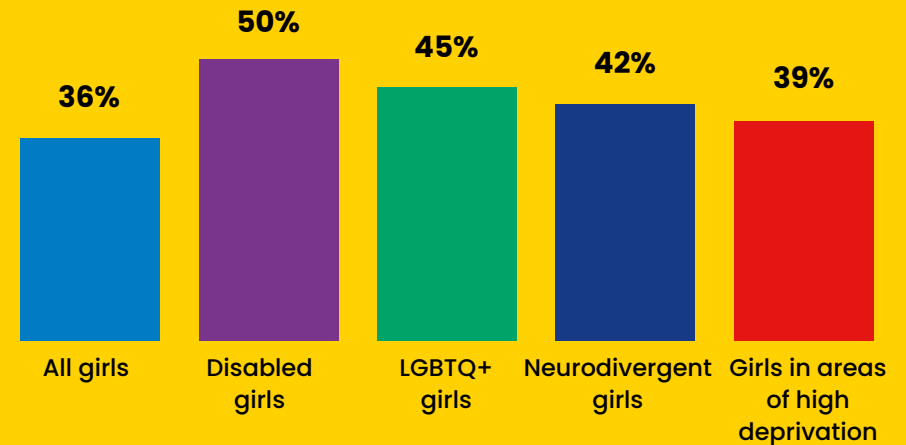
“[Being online or on social media] makes me insecure.”
Girl aged 11–16



Girls from some marginalised groups are more likely to be depressed by spending time on social media

Spotlight
on marginalised groups

I often feel depressed after spending time online or on social media



Girls and young women aged 11–21

Girls can feel better when they connect with people and nature

The things that can negatively impact girls' mental health and wellbeing can also have a positive impact. Spending time with friends and family is the thing most likely to make girls feel good. Feeling positive about their appearance is also rated highly by older girls. Spending time doing a hobby or being outdoors or in nature helps girls' wellbeing too. 80% of girls and young women aged 7-21 agree that 'being outdoors and in nature helps me to feel happy'. And 72% say they want more opportunities to be outdoors and in nature.



What makes you feel good or positive?

Girls aged 7-21



54%
Being with friends



42%
Spending time with family



40%
Feeling like I look good*



34%
Doing a hobby or activity I enjoy



27%
Being outdoors or in nature



24%
Getting enough sleep



23%
Doing sport and exercise



20%
Being online



19%
Talking to someone I trust about how I feel*

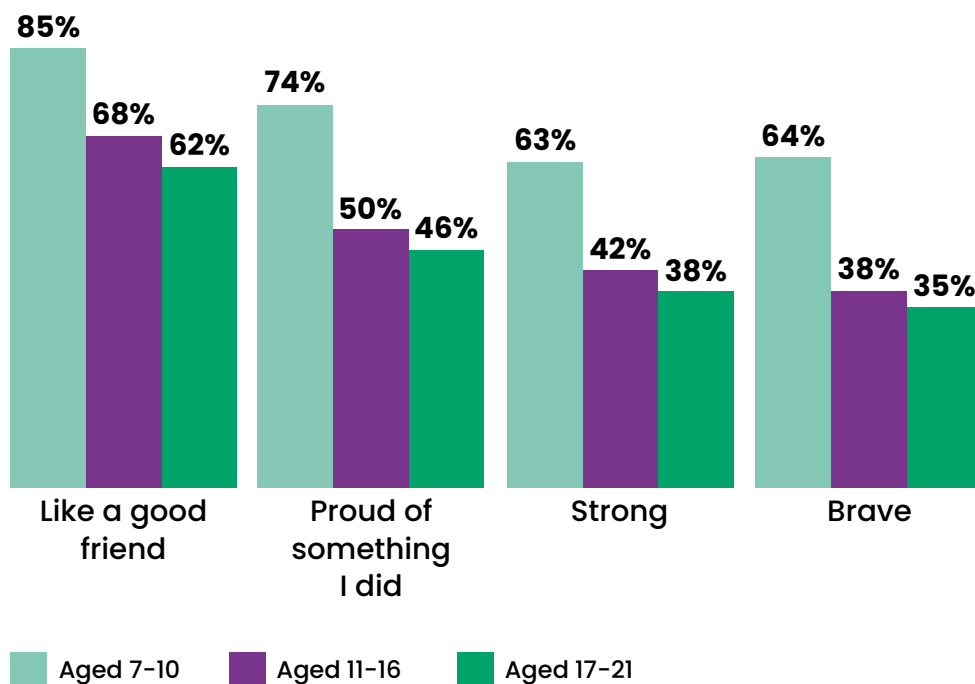


9%
Taking a break from being online

*only asked to girls and young women aged 11-21

Despite the pressures and challenges they're facing, once again, the majority of girls and young women feel a sense of friendship and connection. While it decreases with age, the majority of all age groups feel they're a good friend most of the time or often. Almost 3 in 4 girls aged 7–10 frequently feel proud of something they've done, as do half of 11–16-year-olds. And almost 2 in 3 girls aged 7–10 frequently feel strong or brave.

Most of the time/often I feel...



Girls want to be heard and want support for their mental health and wellbeing

Girls and young women aged 11–21-years-old told us they want:

- Adults to listen to and take their concerns seriously (51%)
- More mental health support and trained staff in schools (49%)
- Sexism and misogyny to be tackled to help them feel safe and able to be themselves (41%)
- More opportunities to spend time outdoors and in nature (72% of 7–21-year-olds)

What can we do to protect girls' mental health?

Girls are calling for their mental health needs to be addressed and for urgent action to solve the mental health crisis they face. They want to be able to access the help they need when they need it. **On behalf of girls, Girlguiding is asking** for 3 things:

1. Mental health professionals in every school with the right training to make sure girls' needs are spotted and taken seriously.
2. Girls to be included in the design of public spaces and be guaranteed safe access to the outdoors.
3. More access to inclusive, girl-only spaces for every girl. **You can help us achieve this by signing up for, or donating to, Girlguiding.**





Aspirations and role models

Girls are more ambitious than ever despite the challenges they face.

Girls have greater aspirations than ever and want to be leaders in their chosen professions. As they get older, they have not only more ambitious goals, but also a greater understanding that sexism may stop them.

Women role models play a vital role in helping to shape girls' confidence and aspirations. Girls want more support to develop their confidence and to connect with a network of girls to support each other.



Girls want to be leaders more than ever

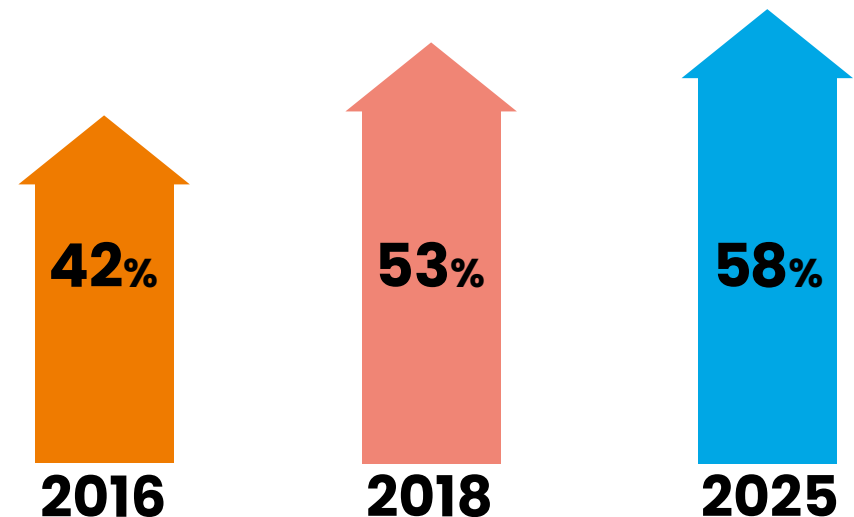
Almost two-thirds (64%) of girls and young women aged 7–21 want to be leaders in their chosen job, compared to 53% in 2018.

As they get older, girls recognise that sexism may make their aspirations more difficult. At 7–10 years old, 15% of girls think women and men don't have the same chances in life. At 11–16 years old, 43% think it will be hard for them to progress as a woman in a male-dominated industry. This rises to 66% in 17–21-year-olds.

However, these perceived difficulties don't affect their ambition. More girls want to be leaders in their chosen job as they get older. 58% of 7–10-year-olds want to be leaders, rising to 62% of 11–16-year-olds and 71% of 17–21-year-olds.

I want to be a leader in my chosen job

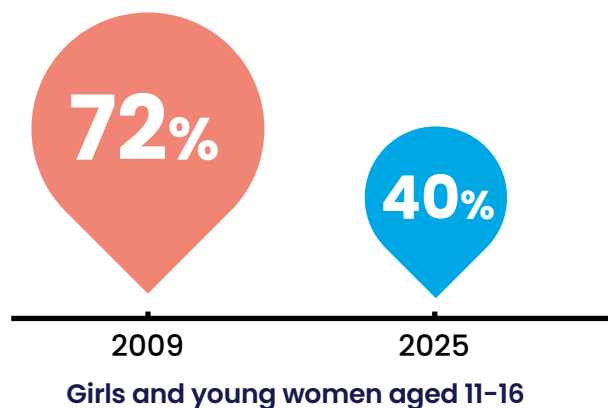
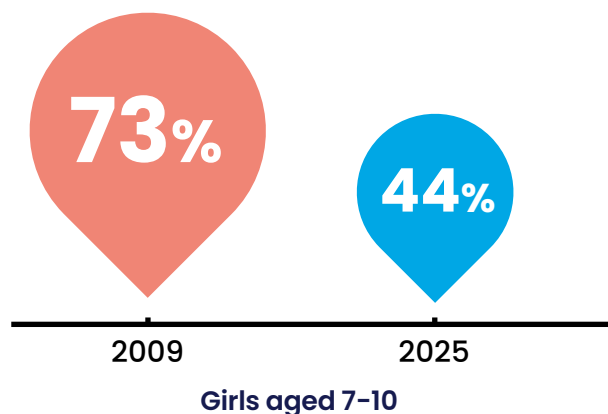
Girls aged 7–10



Girls are less likely to think school is important for their future success

Despite their aspirations, girls are less likely to see the relevance of school for their future success. Only 44% of 7–10-year-olds and 40% of 11–16 say school is important for their future, compared to 2009 where 73% and 72% agreed it was.

I think school is important for my future



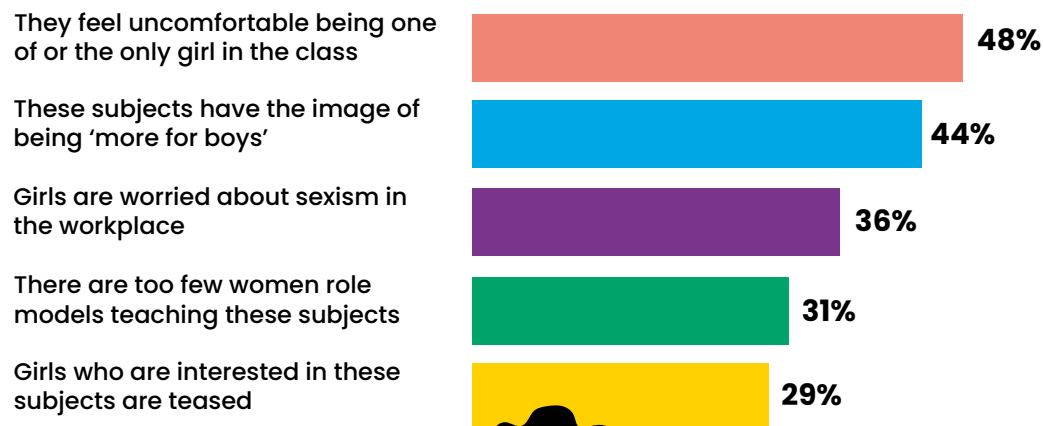
Girls think STEM is for everyone but feel uncomfortable in STEM spaces

When asked why more girls than boys drop Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects as they move through school, 48% of 11–21-year-olds say they think it's because girls feel uncomfortable being one of or the only girl in the class doing these subjects.

While the proportion of girls saying these subjects have the image of being more for boys is down from 52% in 2021, 44% of girls still think this is a barrier to girls taking part in these subjects.

Why do you think girls stop studying STEM?

Girls and young women aged 11–21



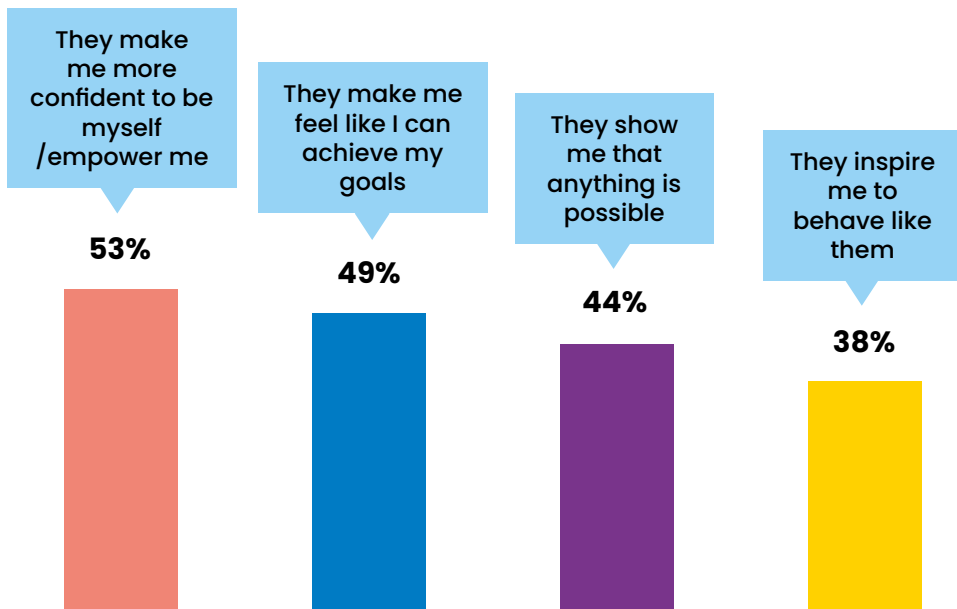
Girls are inspired and empowered by their women role models

Over half (56%) of girls and young women say they have a woman role model outside their family, and this rises to 82% of 17-21-year-olds. When asked about their role models, girls and young women were most likely to say their mum was their role model. However, girls of all ages have a wide range of people they look up to.

Girls and young women say their role models help them feel confident and empowered to be themselves (53%), make them feel like they can achieve their goals (49%) and show them that anything is possible (44%).

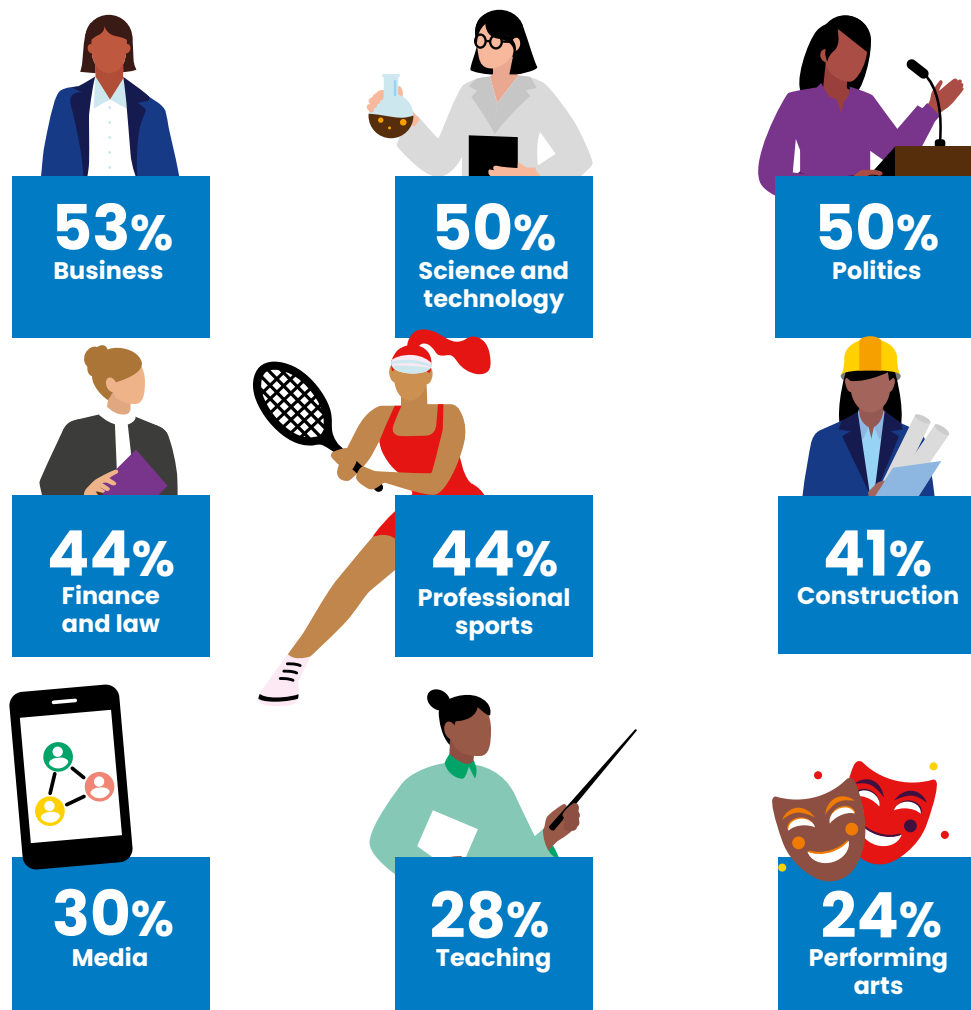
How does your role model help you?

Girls and young women aged 7-21



Role models play a significant role in girls' and young women's lives. This is why girls are demanding more visibility of women across sectors. The majority of girls and young women aged 7-21 want to see better representation of women in business, science and technology, and politics.

I would like to see more women role models in...



Girls' and young women's role models

Girls aged 7–10

Malala Yousafzai – 'She helped women and girls fight for their education, which I find very inspiring.'

My teacher – 'She's kind, helpful and wonderful.'

Katherine Johnson – 'Because she was the first woman to work for NASA and she was very smart.'

Ellie Simmonds – 'Because she's a great swimmer.'

Girls aged 11–16

Alessia Russo – 'I love her and watching the games. I really look up to her.'

Mum – 'Because she always supports me and encourages me to do new things and learn new skills.'

Sophia Duleep Singh – 'She fought for women's rights.'

Billie Eilish – 'She is a strong and independent woman who can stand up to bullies.'

Young women aged 17–21

Marie Curie – 'As the first woman to win a Nobel Prize and the only person to win in 2 scientific fields, she redefined what women could achieve in STEM.'

Rosa Parks – 'Because she stuck up for herself and didn't care what others thought.'

Kelly Holmes – 'She motivates me with her strength, overcoming [challenges] in sports and promoting mental health awareness and LGBTQ representation.'

Taylor Swift – 'She is a strong woman who has fought for her rights and has worked hard for what she has.'

Girls want more opportunities to build confidence and connect with other girls

When asked how to encourage more girls and women into leadership, girls and young women aged 11–21 echoed concerns raised in previous chapters. They called for an end to judging women based on their appearance (59%) and for action to challenge the abuse and harassment women in leadership positions face (52%).

They also asked for support in building the skills and confidence needed to become leaders (58%), as well as for a network of other girls and women who can support each other (48%).

How can we make girls confident and empowered?

Girls and young women say their role models help them feel confident and empowered to be themselves. At Girlguiding we work with girls and young women to let them know that whoever they are, wherever they're from, girls can do anything. We let the world know this too. **You can support girls and young women with Girlguiding by:**

1. Signing up to [volunteer for Girlguiding](#)
2. Encouraging a girl or young woman you know to [join us](#)
3. [Donating to Girlguiding](#) to let us reach even more girls



How Girlguiding is supporting girls

Our Girls' Attitudes Survey highlights the challenges girls are facing, and the actions you can take to make their world a more equal place.

Here's how Girlguiding plays its part:

A place where girls can feel safe and be themselves

Girls and young women in the UK tell us they feel safer when they're in a space for girls. **Girlguiding** provides girls with a safe, all-girl space, away from the pressures and challenges of being a girl.



Supporting girls' wellbeing

Girls say they're feeling more sad. **Girlguiding** girls aged 11-18 are, on average, 15% happier than girls in the UK. And they're 17% happier with their appearance and 22% happier with school compared to UK girls.



Building girls' confidence

Girls say they'd like to build their self-confidence. **Girlguiding** girls aged 11-18 are, on average, 28% more confident than other girls in the UK. 87% of our young members aged 4-18 say **Girlguiding** makes them feel good about themselves.



Women role models

Girls say their women role models help them feel more confident and empowered. At **Girlguiding** girls spend time with women leaders they can trust. And we've found a strong relationship between girls and their leaders brings many benefits, including better self-esteem and resilience.



We're here to help all girls know they can do anything. We believe in an equal world where all girls can be happy, feel safe, and fulfil their potential.

Bringing girls together

Girls say they want to connect with and support other girls. And that they prefer to see friends in person. **Girlguiding** brings girls together every week and 89% of our young members feel part of a team. Our young members are more likely to have positive social behaviours that support healthy relationships compared with UK girls.



Giving girls the lead

Girls want to be leaders in their chosen jobs. We give girls the opportunity to lead at every age. The majority of **Girlguiding** girls have been asked to organise and run or be in charge of activities in their unit.



Reconnecting with nature

Girls say they want more time outdoors and in nature to help them feel happy. 77% of **Girlguiding** girls explored nature with their unit in the last year and 74% took part in an adventure.



With our new strategy, by 2030, we'll reach more girls where they are, building their confidence when they need it the most, so more girls will know they can do anything. Find out more about our strategy at girlguiding.org.uk/about-us/work/girlguidings-strategy



Methodology

As in previous years, Girlguiding's youth panel, advocate, developed the themes and questions for this survey.

Girlguiding commissions CHILDWISE, leading specialists in research with children and young people, to conduct the Girls' Attitudes Survey each year. A total of 2,640 girls and young women aged between 7 and 21 took part in the 2025 survey.

Girls and young women completed their interviews online, with 7-16-year-olds doing this in school, while the older age group were interviewed via an online panel. Fieldwork took place between February and May 2025.

We adapted the questionnaire to be suitable for different age groups, 7-10 and 11-21. We asked core questions across the full age range, so we can track changes in attitudes as girls get older.

We weighted data at analysis to correct any imbalance in the final sample across the age range. We weighted the data of the different countries to make sure they're representative of the UK population. All percentages are based on those answering the question.

Our advocates also supported the analysis of findings and the key messages in this report.

*To define the areas of high deprivation we use the indices of multiple deprivation (IMD). IMD is a measure of relative deprivation for small, fixed geographic areas of the UK. IMD classifies these areas into 10 deciles based on relative disadvantage, with decile 1 being the most deprived and decile 10 being the least deprived. The areas we define as high deprivation are those with IMD scores 1-5. For girls completing the survey in schools the postcode of the school is used by default, as an indication of deprivation within the surrounding area.

Who we asked

Primary		Secondary		Post-16	
Age in years					
7-8	9-10	11-13	14-16	17-18	19-21
406	571	565	418	302	378
977		983		680	

Post-16-year-olds		
In education	Working	NEET
415	216	49

England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
1,636	354	303	347

	% of girls	% who preferred not to say
From areas of high deprivation*	49%	N/A
Girls and young women of colour	29%	12%
Disabled girls	11%	19%
Neurodivergent girls (only asked to girls aged 11+)	12%	27%
LGBTQ+ girls (only asked to girls aged 11+)	15%	27%



Theory of change

Mission

Through fun, friendship, challenge and adventure we **empower girls** to find **their voice**, inspiring them to discover the best in themselves and to make a **positive difference** in **their community**.

Who are we

We are the **UK's largest** youth organisation **dedicated completely** to girls.

1 Why do we exist?

The world is unequal for girls and young women. Every girl and young woman in the UK faces varying degrees and types of inequalities. They experience...

- Limiting gender norms and stereotypes
- Misogyny and harassment in their daily lives
- An uncertain future
- Exclusion from decisions that impact on their lives

This can lead to...

- Lower confidence
- A decline in their wellbeing

2 What we do

- We are a community of inclusive all-girl spaces that run girl-led activities.
- Girls try new things, explore new opportunities and step outside their comfort zones.
- Activities are facilitated by supportive volunteers, adults and girl role models.
- We understand girls' experiences and what's important to them, and make a platform for their voices to influence others.

3 The outcomes for girls

At Girlguiding, we want to support girls and young women to...

- Improve their confidence
- Improve their wellbeing
- Have fun
- Make friends
- Have tools and skills to navigate their futures
- Be included in decisions that are important to them
- Challenge gender norms and stereotypes

We want to work with decision makers and people across the UK to make changes that support girls and make the world a more equal place.

Girlguiding also wants to raise awareness about issues that affect girls and help change UK policy.

4 What is the result?

- Girls in the UK are more confident.
- Improved wellbeing for girls and everyone across the UK.
- Girls can adapt to a rapidly changing world.
- Girls' potential isn't limited by their gender.
- There are more women in leadership and taking the lead across the whole UK.
- Girls are involved in important decisions about their lives.

**A more equal UK
for women and girls**



Girlguiding

Published by Girlguiding

17-19 Buckingham Palace Road
London SW1W 0PT

info@girlguiding.org.uk

[girlguiding.org.uk](https://www.girlguiding.org.uk)

© Girlguiding 2025

Registered charity number 306016

Incorporated by Royal Charter

Find us on social media

 facebook.com/girlguidinguk

 tiktok.com/@girlguiding

 instagram.com/@girlguiding

 youtube.com/user/girlguiding

FSC logo