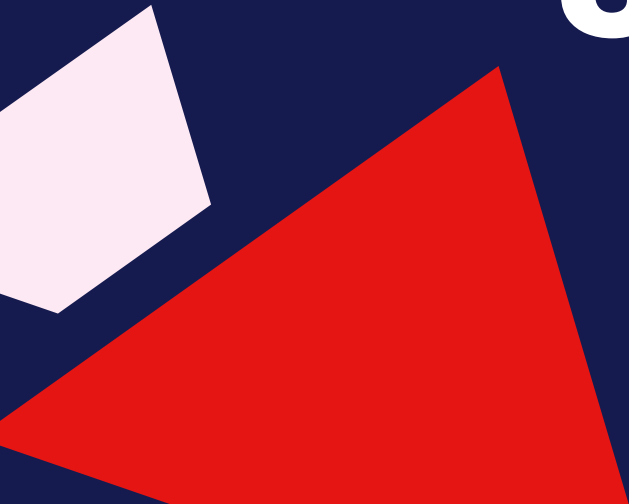


Girls' Attitudes Survey 2023

Girls' lives over **15 years**



We help all girls know they can do anything. We're Girlguiding.

We're over 300,000 girls from 4 to 18 who come together to laugh, learn, explore and have adventures. We're over 70,000 volunteers who make guiding happen by giving our time, talents, enthusiasm and care for girls. We're 25,000 local groups having fun and exploring activities week in, week out – from Aberdeen to Arundel and in between. We're her first night away, weekend camping adventures, summer music festivals, emails to her MP about the things she cares about. We're the badges she collects to capture the journey she's chosen – anything from mindfulness to rock-climbing to crafting to coding. We're a powerful collective voice – by girls, for girls – changing the world for the better.

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 asking girls and young women how they feel about their everyday lives.

This survey, now in its 15th year, asked over 2,000 girls and young women aged 7 to 21, both inside and outside of guiding, how they feel about the specific and emerging pressures facing them today, and what these mean for their happiness, wellbeing and opportunities in life.

Girlguiding's youth panel, advocate, influences the development of the survey each year. You can find all the results from this and previous surveys on our website: girlguiding.org.uk/girlsattitudes.

A huge thank you to the players of People's Postcode Lottery for their invaluable support for our Girls' Attitudes Survey 2023.



An introduction from our chief executive, **Angela Salt**



Welcome to our 15th Girls' Attitudes Survey. I'm proud to say that for a decade and a half, this unique research has allowed Girlguiding to explore how girls feel about their lives and show what it's like to grow up in today's world as a girl.

Since 2009, we've asked girls and young women about their lives, experiences and attitudes on a range of topics, covering their aspirations, wellbeing, safety and more. In this anniversary year, we asked girls the same questions we've asked in the past – as well as a few new ones – to directly compare how girls' and young women's lives have changed since 2009.

The message from our 2023 survey is clear: girls and young women have been let down. They're facing persistent issues that aren't going away and it's having a negative impact on their lives. It's devastating to hear that girls' happiness has steadily declined over the last 15 years and that more girls are feeling worried and anxious than before. It's clear girls are feeling pressures and experiencing challenges from all angles, from harm online, to appearance and sexual harassment. Not only are girls worried about their futures and the increased

cost of living, but they're experiencing unrealistic pressures and negative behaviours because they're girls.

Despite this, it's heartening to see some positives. More girls feel part of their local community than they did before, and many are actively involved in their communities through volunteering. It's also great to see girls are speaking out more and using their voices for change. As a volunteer delivered organisation, we play an important role in communities and in girls' lives. Now more than ever Girlguiding has an invaluable part to play in continuing to support girls' wellbeing and confidence. We're proud to be able to offer a space where girls can be themselves and have fun – all while developing essential skills for their future and helping to build resilience to navigate this difficult time and the relentless pressures they face.

We want an equal world where girls can make a positive difference, be happy and safe, and fulfil their potential. But we can't achieve this alone. Now is the time for us all to listen to girls and young women. Now is the time for us all to create a more equal society. Now is the time for us all to act.

Angela Salt

Angela Salt OBE
Chief executive

A message from our advocates

Our advocates are a group of young Girlguiding members aged 14-25-years-old. Our advocate panel was set up to shape our research and influence the direction of Girlguiding's advocacy.

Below some of our advocates tell us what they think about this year's Girls' Attitudes Survey.



Charlotte, 16

'Now more than ever girls are unhappy with how they look. This is because more girls are getting negative comments about their appearance and they're facing higher beauty standards. And it means that more girls are thinking of changing how they look or going on a diet. It's sad to see this number on the rise, and I think more needs to be done so that girls can feel happy with themselves again.'



Mary, 18

'I'm glad that young girls and women are able to feel more focused on their own aspirations. However, I'm very disappointed to find that the society we live in doesn't help them in those goals. Getting a job or owning a home shouldn't be something young women and girls worry about.'



Grace, 19

'I definitely wasn't shocked to see an increase in girls and young women feeling anxious, but these statistics are astonishingly high. Girls should be able to enjoy themselves through their developing lives, but anxiety and worries seem to be impacting them negatively. It's concerning to me seeing this amount of young people having to deal with these difficult emotions and I feel that something must change if we want girls' lives to improve.'



Molly, 20

'It's clear to see in our research that the safety of girls and young women is a growing concern, both in online spaces and physical spaces. I'm upset yet not surprised to find that the amount of sexist comments made towards girls has more than doubled since 2018 and 2013. Girls also tell us that their reports are not being taken seriously online. I think more needs to be done and I'd like to see action to make sure all girls feel safe!'

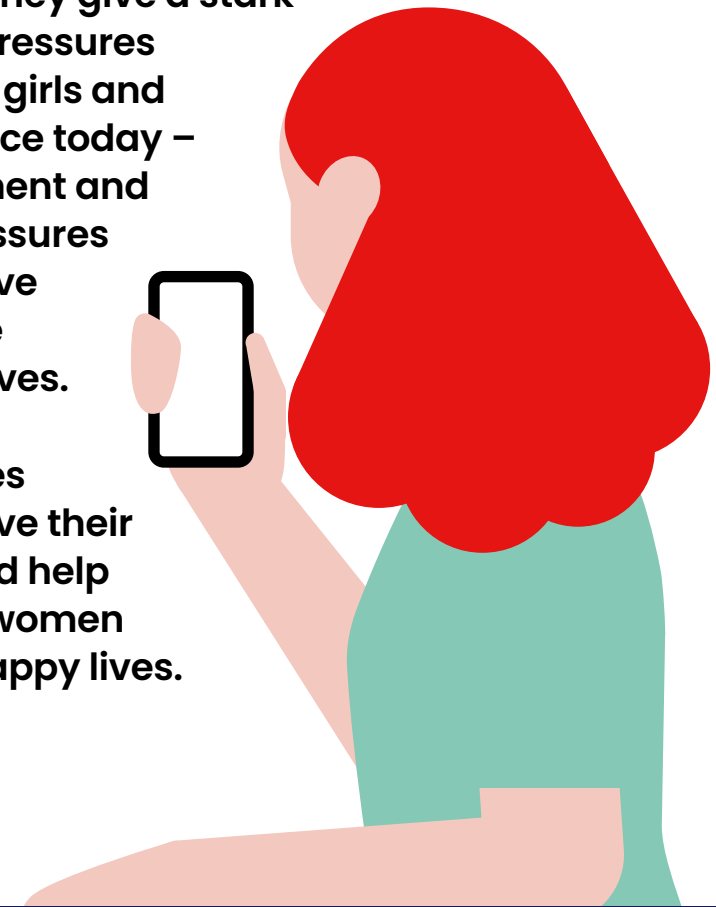


Lucy, 18

'It's great to see more girls feel part of their local communities and are active members of their communities, with many girls undertaking volunteering roles. It's really important that girls use their voices to speak out about issues they care about, and it's great to see many girls are passionate about climate change. Their increased activism and likelihood of speaking out will help to improve the world around them – a trend I hope will continue in the future.'

Executive summary

The Girls' Attitudes Survey 2023 shows how girls' and young women's lives have changed over the last 15 years. While there have been some improvements, the findings show many aspects of girls' and young women's lives have become worse. They give a stark insight into the pressures and experiences girls and young women face today – such as harassment and appearance pressures – and the negative impact these are having on their lives. The findings also show the changes needed to improve their opportunities and help girls and young women have safe and happy lives.

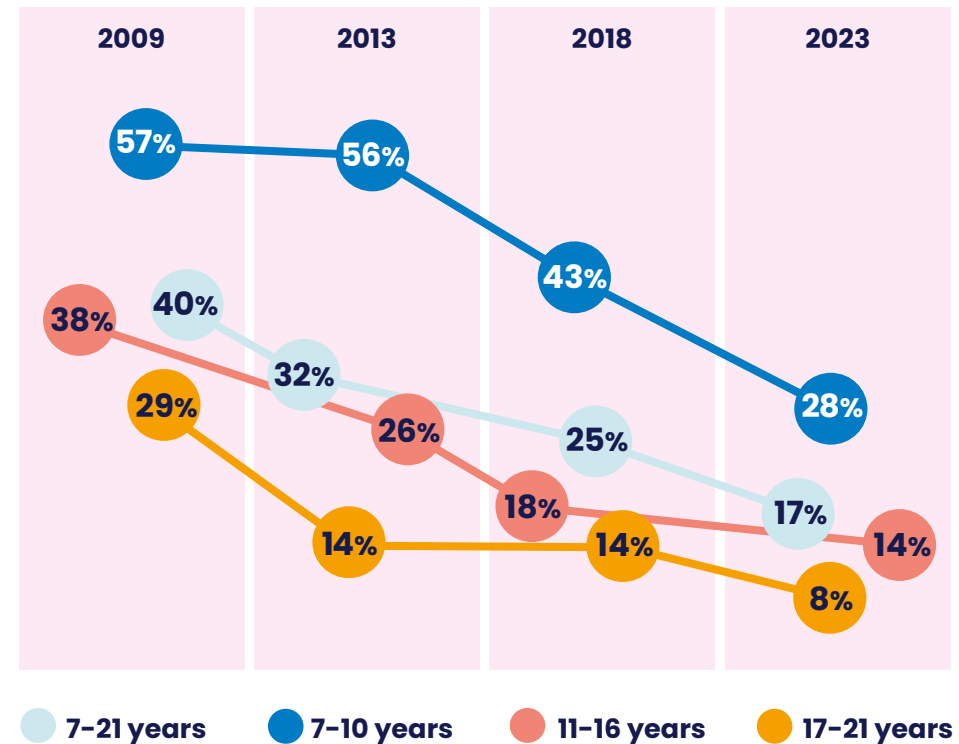


Fewer girls say they're very happy and more feel anxious

Since 2009, girls' and young women's happiness has been steadily declining. Their happiness levels are now at an all-time low. The number of girls who describe themselves as very happy has decreased, with the steepest decline in girls aged 7-10. Girls told us they often feel stressed, worried or anxious, and not good enough. Their worries range from doing well at school to being sexually harassed.



I'm very happy



89%

of girls and young women aged 7-21 feel generally worried or anxious compared to

78%
in 2016

Fewer girls are happy with how they look

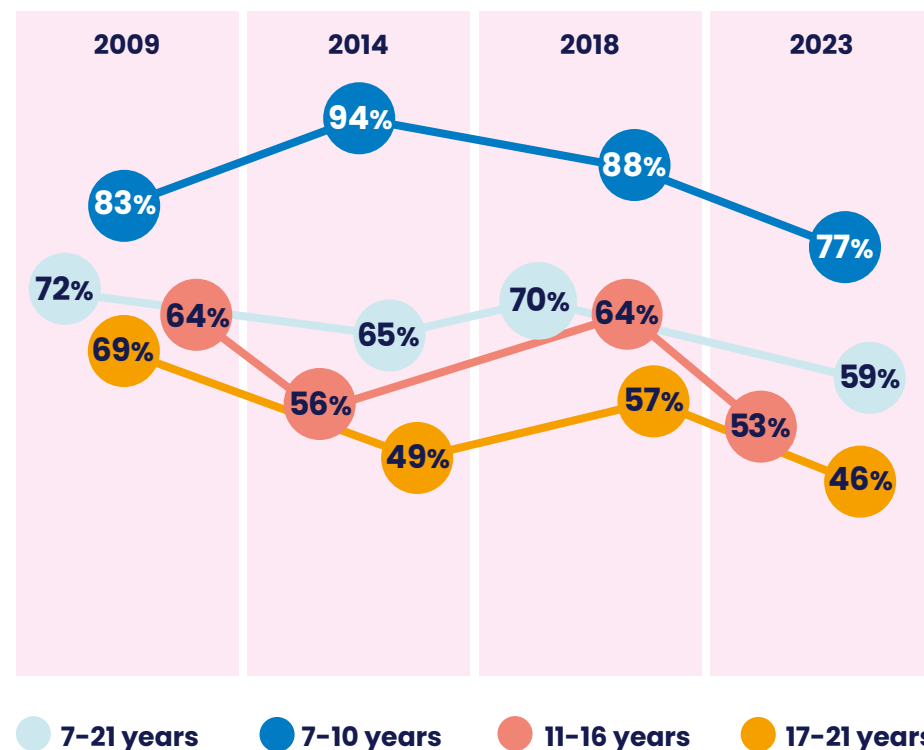
62%

of girls and young women aged 7-21 have been criticised or had mean things said about how they look compared to

49% in 2016

The number of girls who say they're happy with how they look has fallen since 2009. More girls are being criticised or have had mean things said about their appearance compared to 2016. Girls told us they feel ashamed of how they look because of unrealistic expectations and the images they see online and in the media. As a result, more girls are considering changing their appearance or dieting compared to 2018.

I'm happy with how I look



More girls are experiencing negative behaviours online

Girls told us they don't feel safe outside, at school or online. They say they've heard comments from boys that are toxic, make them uncomfortable or make them scared, and have experienced threatening or upsetting behaviour online. The number of girls who have received sexist comments online has more than doubled since 2018 and 2013. Girls also told us what would help them feel safer online, such as reports being taken seriously, and removing harmful content online.

81%

of girls and young women aged 11-21 have experienced some form of threatening or upsetting behaviour online, compared to

65% in 2018

More girls feel part of their local community

35%

of girls and young women aged 7-21 say they feel part of their local community, compared with

29%
in 2011

More girls say they feel part of their local community now compared to 2011, and many are actively involved in their communities through volunteering, whether formally or occasionally. Girls are also now more likely to speak out about issues they care about compared to 2018, for example through joining or promoting a movement, signing a petition, or supporting a cause online. A particular issue they care about is climate change. More are angry that the environment has been damaged compared to 2010.

Girls' aspirations have changed but they're still worried about their futures

Girls' and young women's aspirations over the last 15 years have changed. Fewer girls place having a partner or being married as their top priority. Instead, they're placing the greatest value on owning their own house. However, they're worried if they'll be able to afford this and think their future opportunities are worse now than they were 6 months ago. Girls also told us what opportunities they hope to have and the skills they'd like to develop.

48%

of girls and young women aged 11-16 think it'll be harder for them to get a job when they leave education than it was for young people 5 years ago

