

# GIRLS' ATTITUDES SURVEY

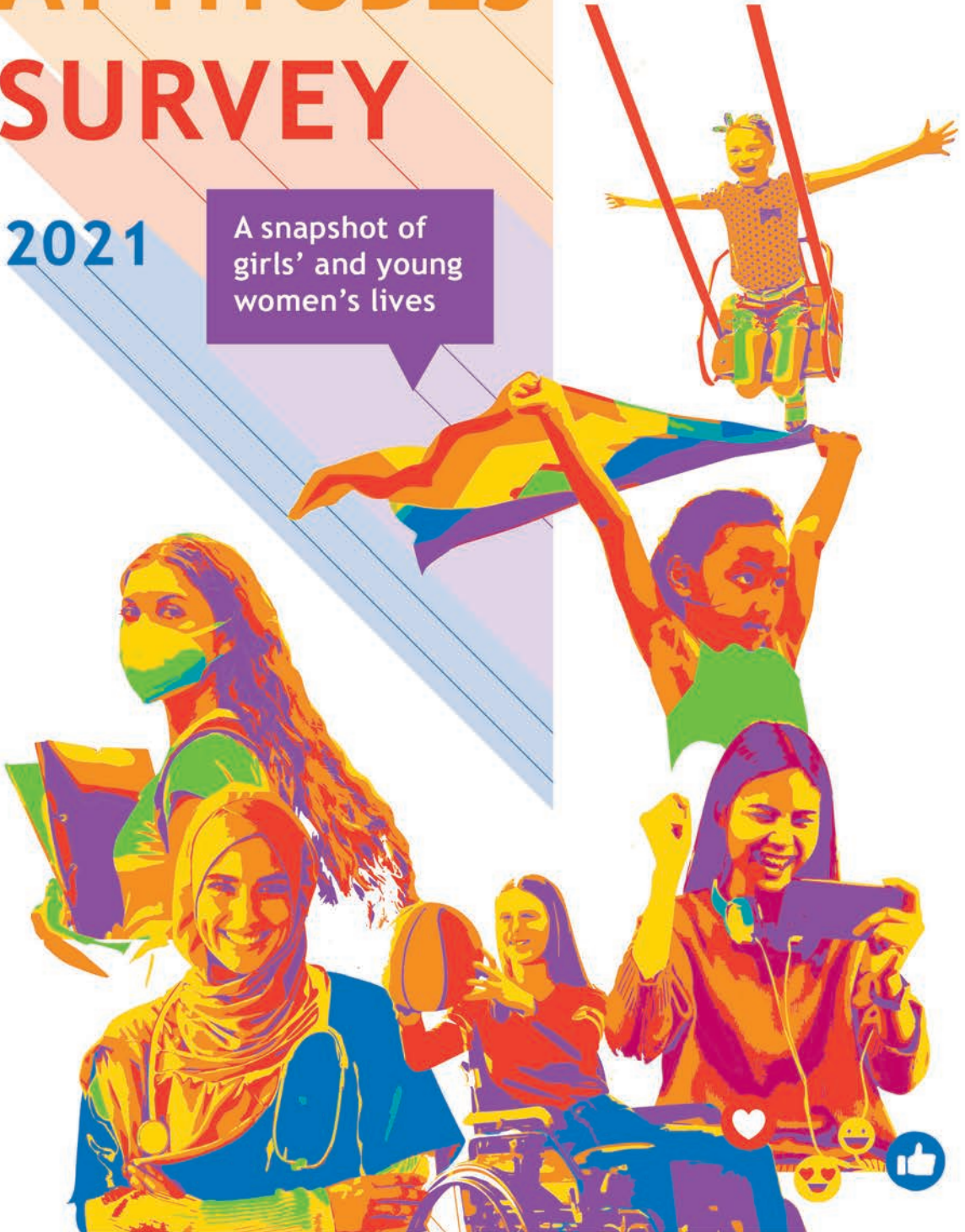
2021

A snapshot of  
girls' and young  
women's lives



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

Girlguiding



## ABOUT GIRLGUIDING

Girlguiding is the leading charity for girls and young women in the UK, with nearly a third of a million members. We're active in every part of the UK with more than 25,000 groups meeting weekly, powered by over 80,000 volunteers.

We offer 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 in 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.

## 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 13th 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, leads the development of the survey each year and analyses the results. You can find all the results from this and previous surveys on our website: [girlguiding.org.uk/girlsattitudes](http://girlguiding.org.uk/girlsattitudes)

A huge thank you to the players of People's Postcode Lottery for their invaluable support for our 2021 Girls' Attitudes Survey.



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## CEO foreword from Angela Salt



Covid-19 has significantly and profoundly changed girls' and young women's lives over the past 18 months. Our 2021 survey captures the pandemic's impact and offers a snapshot of how it has influenced girls' views about themselves and the world around them. It also tracks their attitudes on wider topics such as happiness levels and access to STEM subjects.

Throughout the pandemic, our research reports, including this one, have highlighted the need for greater consideration of the specific challenges girls and young women face. The results show that girls need more support with their education, mental health and in accessing opportunities as society opens up, so they can explore their interests, see new places, meet new people and develop essential skills for the future. The role of the youth sector, including Girlguiding, has never been so important in offering children and young people what they've missed.

It's heartening to see some positives in the past year and a

half. Some girls have benefited from increased connections online with family and friends. Others have been inspired to pursue new careers or take action on the things they care about, showing their resilience and ability to adapt to the challenges we've faced.

But it's also clear that the pandemic is taking its toll. Girls' mental health has been significantly impacted. Online harms have been exacerbated. It's critical that we address the decline in girls' happiness that we've observed since we started this research over a decade ago. I'm proud that Girlguiding has provided invaluable support for girls' mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic and into recovery - helping to build confidence, resilience and giving them a space to have fun, adventures and develop their skills. But society must do more to address this worrying downward trend.

It has increasingly stood out to me this year that different girls and young women face distinct pressures. Addressing the

concerns of all girls and young women must be front and centre for us as a society. As part of our own diversity and inclusion plan, we're committed to ensuring Girlguiding is a place where everyone is welcome, is free to be themselves, and has an equal sense of belonging. We want all girls to benefit from the amazing opportunities guiding provides.

This is the moment for us all to listen and act in the interest of girls and young women. This is the moment to create a more equal society where the concerns of children and young people are taken seriously. We must avoid a lost generation. Girls and young women are telling us how we can recover and grow - as a movement, and as a society - and we need to take heed.

*Angela Salt*

**Angela Salt OBE**  
Girlguiding Chief Executive



# Executive summary



‘I hope we’ll have more opportunities to do things after Covid-19.’

(Girl, 7-10)



‘Because of the pandemic, I feel like I won’t get the grades to be able to get a job that I want.’

(Girl, 14-16)



‘Everyone deserves to be treated with kindness and respect, no matter who they are.’

(Girl, 11-13)



67%

**OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN AGED 7 TO 21 FEEL MORE SAD, ANXIOUS OR WORRIED AS A RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC**

## Wellbeing and connections

Girls and young women are feeling less happy than they did a few years ago. They also know more girls and young women their age suffering with their mental health. Because of the pandemic they feel sadder, lonelier and are worried about their futures. However, they say being outdoors has helped them feel more positive and they hope communities will stay connected after the pandemic.

53%

**OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN AGED 11 TO 21 SAY THEY’VE MISSED OUT ON DEVELOPING SKILLS FOR THEIR FUTURE BECAUSE OF THE PANDEMIC**

## Education and opportunities

Girls and young women have found it hard to learn during the pandemic, especially online. They’re worried they’ve fallen behind at school. They tell us they’ve missed out on opportunities to learn and develop skills outside of school and that this has had a negative impact. They also tell us about the barriers they continue to face in studying Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM).

65%

**OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN AGED 7 TO 21 HAVE BEEN INSPIRED BY TEACHERS AND KEY WORKERS DURING THE PANDEMIC**

## Jobs and money

Girls and young women are worried they won’t have enough money because of the pandemic. It’s also made them think differently about their future jobs. Some are now considering working in the health sector while others are thinking about jobs they can do online. They also believe women still have to work much harder than men to succeed, and give us their opinions on starting their own businesses.

71%

**OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN AGED 7 TO 21 HAVE EXPERIENCED SOME FORM OF ONLINE HARM IN THE LAST YEAR**

## Online and social media

Girls and young women have connected with others more while being online during the pandemic. But they’ve also felt self-conscious when on video calls and the majority have experienced some form of online harm such as hate speech, images that made them insecure about how they look, harassment or bullying.

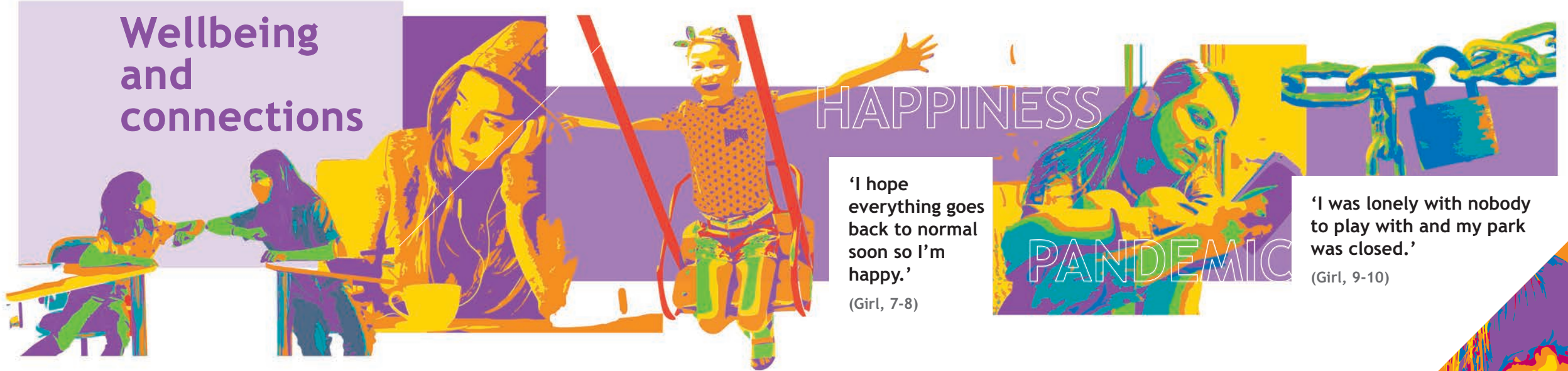
85%

**OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN AGED 11 TO 21 WANT YOUNG PEOPLE’S CONCERNS TO BE CENTRAL TO GOVERNMENT DECISIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE**

## Society and equality

Girls and young women believe people shouldn’t be discriminated against because of their race, age, disability or background. They also think inequality and social issues have worsened during the pandemic. But they’ve felt more informed about these issues and have been taking action. They want the government to listen to young people’s concerns as they make decisions about the future.

# Wellbeing and connections



**'I hope everything goes back to normal soon so I'm happy.'**

(Girl, 7-8)

**'I was lonely with nobody to play with and my park was closed.'**

(Girl, 9-10)

Girls' and young women's wellbeing has been in continuous decline since we first started to measure it in 2009. Fewer girls and young women are saying they're happy most of the time, especially in the past three years.

The pandemic has accelerated this trend.

More girls and young women now say they feel lonely, sad or anxious. They're also worried about their mental health in the future, as the effects of the pandemic are felt across their lives.

However, girls and young women are hopeful that the vaccine will stop the disruption caused by the virus. They're also

optimistic that communities will stay connected.

### Happiness

Girls' and young women's happiness has been in decline over the past decade. But their happiness has dropped drastically in the last three years since we asked about it in 2018. In 2009, almost nine in ten (88%) girls and young women aged 7 to 21 said they were happy most of the time. This decreased in 2018 to eight in ten (81%). This year, just over three in five (63%) say they're happy most of the time.

The decline is even steeper in the number of girls and young women who say they're very happy most of the time. 40% aged 7 to 21 said this in 2009, compared to only 14% in 2021. This decline was particularly sharp amongst the youngest girls, aged 7 to 10. Overall 32% of all girls feel unhappy most of the time compared to 17% in 2018 and 8% in 2009.

### Mental health

Girls and young women now know more girls and young women their age with anxiety disorders compared to when we last asked this in 2018. More than seven in ten (72%) aged 11 to 21 know girls and young women their age experiencing this, up from two thirds (64%) in 2018. 71% know girls and young

women their age with depression (the same as in 2018). Two thirds (65%) know girls and young women who have self-harmed – a slight drop from 67% in 2018. The number who know girls and young women their age with eating disorders has increased (58% compared to 52% in 2018).

Almost two in five (37%) aged 11 to 16 say they know girls and young women their age who have seen physical violence or emotional abuse at home. This increases to over half (54%) of 17 to 21s.

### Impact of the pandemic on mental health

The past year has tested girls and young women like no other. Over half (53%) of girls aged 7 to 10 say they've felt more sad, anxious or worried than they did before the pandemic. This increases to seven in ten (70%) for 11 to 16-year-olds and 78% for 17 to 21s.

A similar number aged 7 to 21 say they've felt more lonely (62%). This increases with age – 54% for 7 to 10s, 60% for 11 to 16s and



**During the pandemic I've felt more sad, anxious or worried**

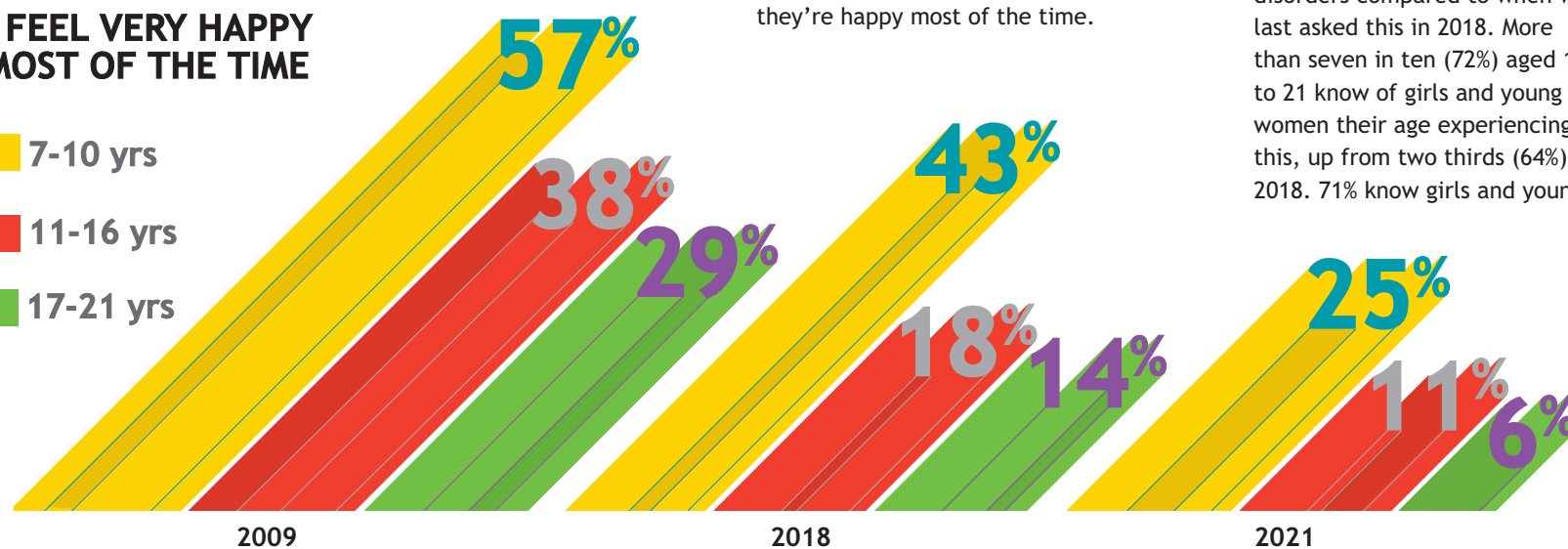
**7-21 yrs**

72% for 17 to 21s. LGBQ girls and young women were more likely to say this (77% compared to 63% of straight girls).

One in two (48%) girls and young women across all ages say they've felt more resilient and able to handle difficult situations in the last year, with similar numbers across the ages. But three in ten (31%) aged 7 to 21 disagree.

### I FEEL VERY HAPPY MOST OF THE TIME

- 7-10 yrs
- 11-16 yrs
- 17-21 yrs





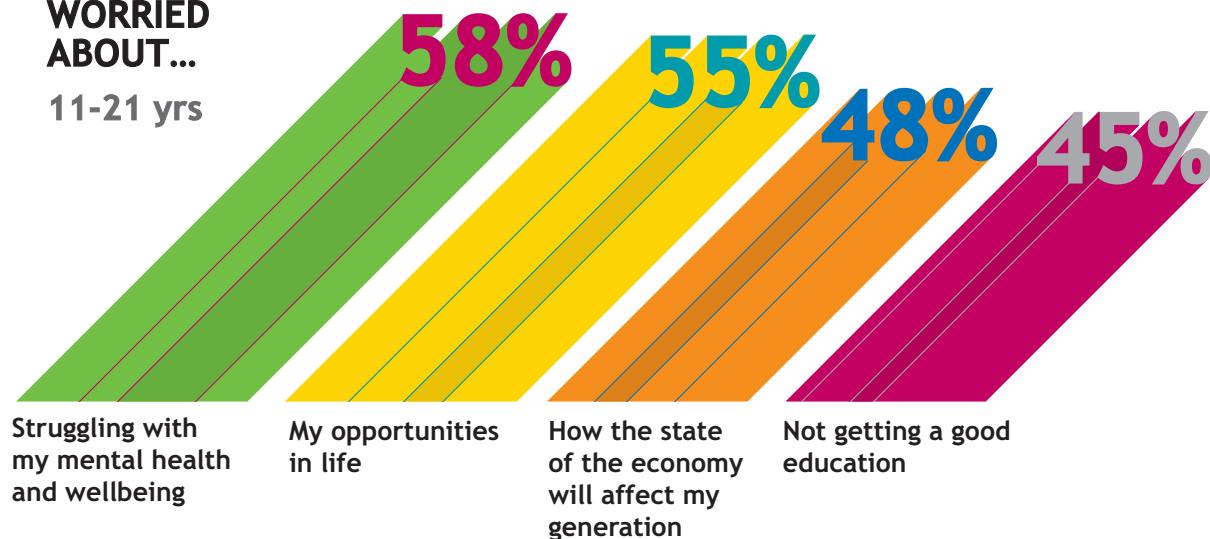


**Being outdoors and in nature has helped me feel more positive**

7-21 yrs

**FOLLOWING THE PANDEMIC I'M MOST WORRIED ABOUT...**

11-21 yrs



Struggling with my mental health and wellbeing

My opportunities in life

How the state of the economy will affect my generation

Not getting a good education



FAMILY WORRY



**'I'm worried that I won't achieve my dreams as I've missed out for a year.'**

(Girl, 9-10)

end, and about people close to them getting sick.

The most common worry amongst girls and young women aged 11 to 21 is struggling with their mental health and wellbeing as a consequence of the pandemic, with almost three in five (58%) saying it's a concern. This is higher for disabled girls and young women (73% compared to 55% for those without disabilities). LGBTQ girls and young women were also more likely to say this (78% compared to 52% of straight girls).

Additionally, over half (54%) of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 are worried they won't be able to find a job. More than two in five (45%) are worried they won't have a secure income or be able to afford a home. And three in ten (31%) are worried about having poorer health. Disabled girls and young women were more likely to say this – 47% compared to 28% of girls without disabilities.



FRIENDSHIP

**Girls' hopes for the future**

Despite these worries, girls and young women are still hopeful for the future after the pandemic. For girls aged 7 to 10, they're most hopeful that everything will 'get back to normal', including seeing their friends, taking part in activities and having adventures.

Over half (56%) aged 11 to 21 are hopeful that the rollout of the Covid-19 vaccine will stop the virus disrupting everyday life. A similar number (55%) hope more people will appreciate the simpler things in life, like spending time together. Half (48%) hope there will be more appreciation for nature, which will have a positive impact on the environment. Almost half (45%) hope people will be more caring after the pandemic.

Two fifths (42%) hope fewer people will be lonely because they can stay in touch more easily with digital technology.



**I'm hopeful that after the pandemic communities will stay connected**

11-21 yrs

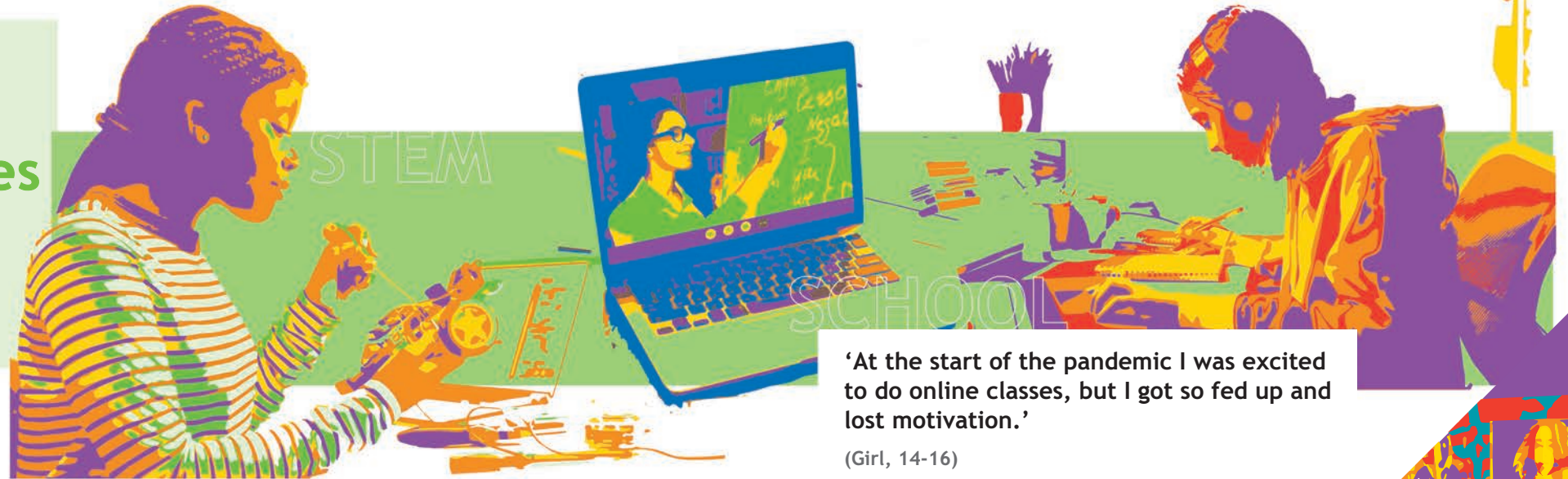
And one in three (34%) hope they'll continue to stay in touch with wider family members, such as grandparents, using digital technology. This is higher for girls aged 11 to 16, with 39% saying so compared to 28% aged 17 to 21.

**'I hope to get back to playing football with my friends.'**  
(Young woman, 19-21)

# Education and opportunities

'I've struggled trying to concentrate so hard on a screen.'

(Girl, 11-13)



'At the start of the pandemic I was excited to do online classes, but I got so fed up and lost motivation.'

(Girl, 14-16)

Girls and young women have faced additional pressures and hardships around their education during the pandemic and are worried about falling behind. They also say they've missed out on key moments in their life and opportunities to learn and develop life skills – like celebrating

with friends and seeing new places. As a result, they feel sad, less confident and like their world is smaller.

Girls and young women are still facing barriers when it comes to studying Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM).

These include being teased for studying these subjects and a lack of women role models.

### Learning during the pandemic

Girls and young women have found it difficult to take part in classes online during the pandemic. Almost half (46%) of girls aged 7 to 10 say this, rising to three in five (61%) aged 11 to

16 and seven in ten (71%) aged 17 to 21.

Over two in five (44%) aged 7 to 10 have found it hard to find time to relax away from their schoolwork. Separating school, college or university from home life has also been hard for the older age group, with 63% aged 11 to 16, and 76% aged 17 to 21 saying it was difficult.

Overall, almost two thirds (64%) of girls and young women aged 7 to 21 are worried they've fallen behind in their schoolwork. Disabled girls and young women are more likely to worry about this (74% compared to 63% of those without disabilities).

Thinking ahead, two out of three (65%) aged 14 to 21 are anxious about how exam cancellations will affect their future. Girls and young women of colour are more likely to be worried about this (71% compared to 64% of white girls). Girls aged 14 to 16 in

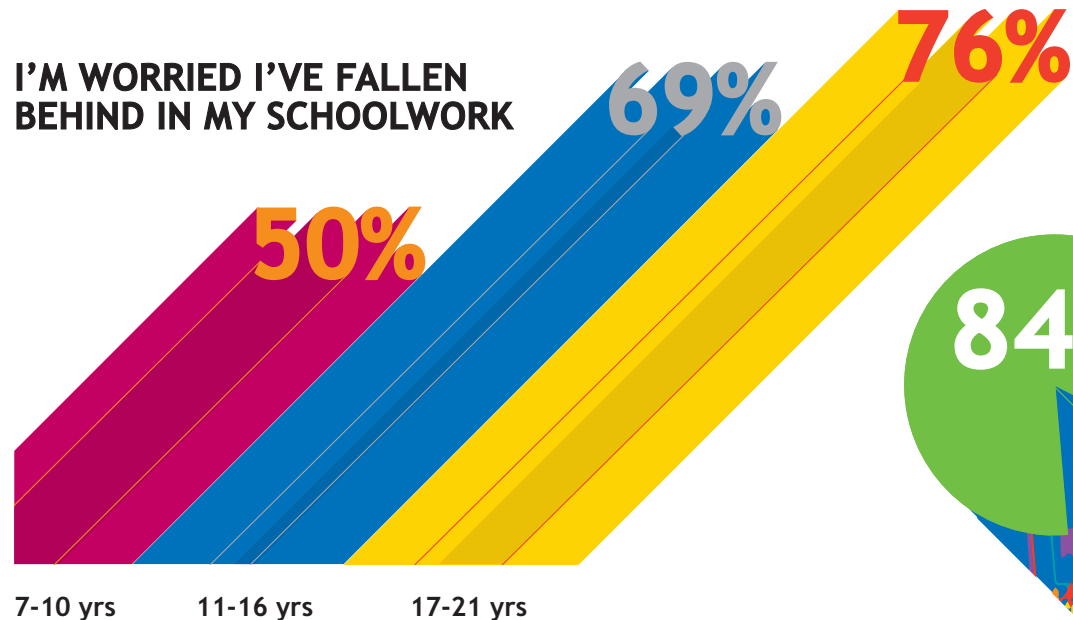
areas of high deprivation are also more likely to be worried, with 71% saying so compared to 61% of girls in less deprived areas.

### Missed opportunities

Girls and young women have missed out on opportunities to learn, develop and grow beyond their education. For example, the vast majority (84%) aged 11 to 21 feel they've missed out on the chance to celebrate key moments with their friends and peers at school, college or university.

Almost seven in ten (69%) aged 7 to 21 say they've missed out on opportunities to have fun with others. Girls aged 11 to 16 agreed with this the most – 78% said so compared to 60% aged 7 to 10 and 69% aged 17 to 21.

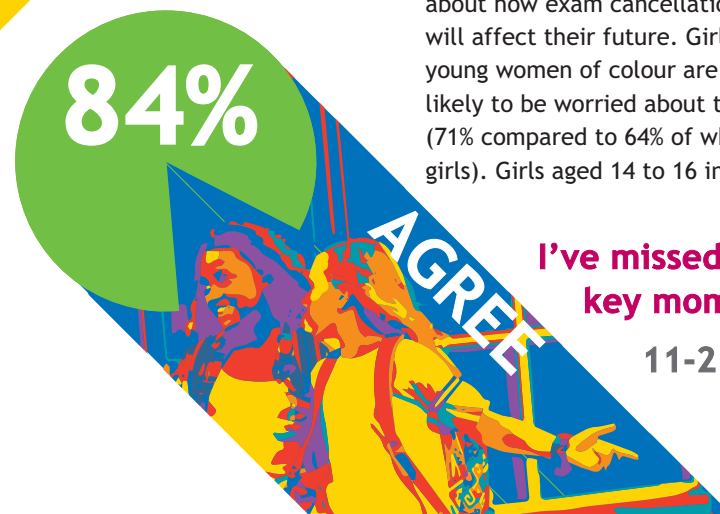
Two thirds (66%) of girls aged 7 to 10 feel they've missed out on exploring new places, including



7-10 yrs

11-16 yrs

17-21 yrs



**I've missed opportunities to celebrate key moments with friends at school**

11-21 yrs



**I find it hard to take part in classes online**

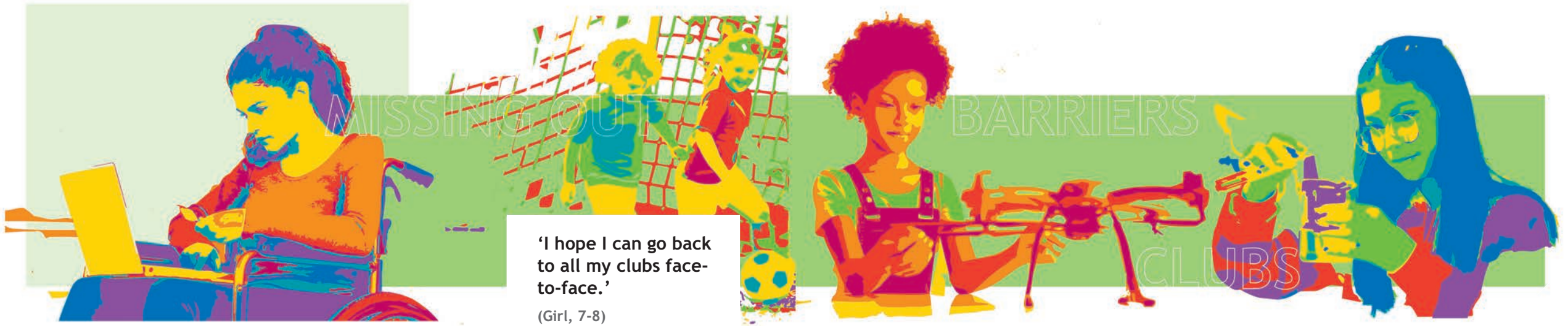
7-21 yrs

going on holidays, visiting museums and school trips. Just over seven in ten (73%) aged 11 to 21 feel this way too. And almost half (48%) aged 7 to 21

'I've missed out on a lot of work which has made me feel like I won't get far in the future.'

(Girl, 14-16)





**'I hope I can go back to all my clubs face-to-face.'**

(Girl, 7-8)

feel they've missed out on trying and learning new things, like taking up a new hobby, sport or class. Six in ten (61%) have missed taking part in face-to-face activities and clubs. This is especially true for those aged 11

to 16, with 65% saying so compared to 58% aged 7 to 10 and 60% aged 17 to 21.

More than half (55%) feel they've missed out on meeting new people and making friends with 46% aged 7 to 10 saying this,

increasing to 54% for 11 to 16s and 64% for 17 to 21s. One in three (33%) 11 to 21-year-olds feel the pandemic has impacted on their chances of starting a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend.

## MISSING OUT ON OPPORTUNITIES MEANS...

11-21 yrs



## How is missing out affecting girls?

Missing out on these things during the pandemic has affected girls and young women in many ways. Almost half (47%) of girls aged 7 to 10 say the circumstances have made them feel sad. Just under two fifths (38%) say it's made them lonely, and a similar number (37%) feel disappointed.

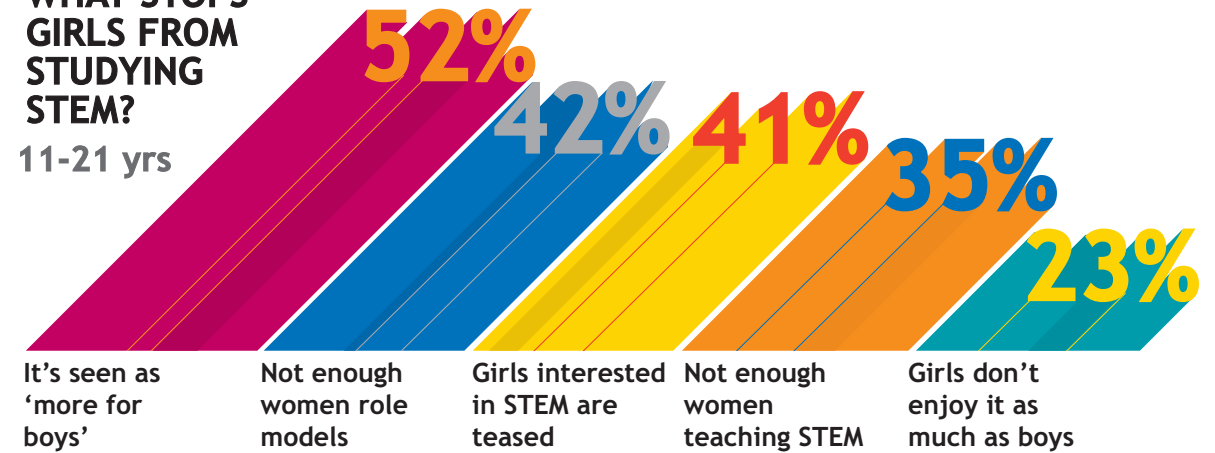
More than half (53%) aged 11 to 21 say it's meant they've not developed skills for their future, such as social skills and teamwork. Over half (52%) aged 11 to 16 say it's negatively affected their mental health. This increases to two in three (66%) for 17 to 21s.

## Barriers to STEM

As well as looking at the impact of the pandemic on girls'

## WHAT STOPS GIRLS FROM STUDYING STEM?

11-21 yrs



education, we also revisited why girls and young women think boys are more likely to continue with Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths subjects as they move through school. Only 13% of girls aged 7 to 10 say these subjects are seen as more for boys. However, this increases to over half (52%) of girls and young women aged 11 to 21. Disappointingly, this hasn't changed since we last asked this question in 2016.

A third (34%) aged 7 to 21 feel there's a lack of women in this area, with too few women role models (unchanged since 2016). Almost a fifth (18%) aged 7 to 10 agree with this, as do 37% aged

11 to 16 and 46% aged 17 to 21. Similarly, 13% aged 7 to 10 and 35% aged 11 to 21 think there aren't enough women role models teaching these subjects. Just over a quarter (27%) aged 7 to 21 think there are too few women scientists or doctors shown on TV talking about the pandemic. A fifth (20%) aged 7 to 10 agree with this, rising to three in ten (31%) aged 11 to 21.

One in five (19%) aged 7 to 10 say girls who are interested in STEM subjects are teased. This increases to two fifths (39%) for 11 to 16s and 42% for 17 to 21s. LGBTQ girls and young women are more likely to say this (56% compared to 36% of those who

are straight). The number who think girls don't tend to enjoy these subjects as much as boys has dropped marginally for ages 7 to 21 (21% compared to 27% in 2016). More than a quarter (27%) aged 11 to 21 believe teachers and career advisors often encourage girls to do different subjects to boys.

**'I feel I'm doing everything like getting my first job and learning how to drive much later than most people would at my age.'**

(Young woman, 17-18)



# Jobs and money



**'I'm worried that my nan and mum won't have enough money to pay bills.'**

(Girl, 9-10)



Girls and young women are worried about the pandemic's impact on their job opportunities and financial situations. Covid-19 has made many think differently about their career choices. Some have been inspired by keyworkers and the NHS. Some are now

considering a career they can do online. Others are feeling hopeless about their lack of experience and the opportunities available to them. Girls and young women also continue to think women have to work much harder than men to succeed – something that

hasn't changed since we last asked them in 2018.

### Financial impact of the pandemic

The pandemic's financial impact cannot be overlooked. In the last year, more than half (56%) of girls and young women aged 7 to 21 have worried about their family not having enough money.

Numbers rise rapidly with age - two in five (40%) aged 7 to 10 expressed their worry, while over half (51%) aged 11 to 16 agreed. By age 17 to 21, three quarters (75%) agree that they're worried about their own finances or those of their family.

### Changing aspirations following the pandemic

The pandemic has changed many girls' and young women's outlooks on their potential career. Almost two thirds (65%) aged 7 to 21 have felt inspired

by teachers and key workers during the pandemic. Some have been so inspired that they're now considering a job in science, medicine or the health sector. A fifth (21%) aged 7 to 10, and three in ten (29%) aged 11 to 21 say this. Girls and young women of colour were more likely to say this (39% compared to 24% of white girls and young women). Some girls and young women say they don't want to go into the sector after seeing the pressure on the NHS, and 'doctors and

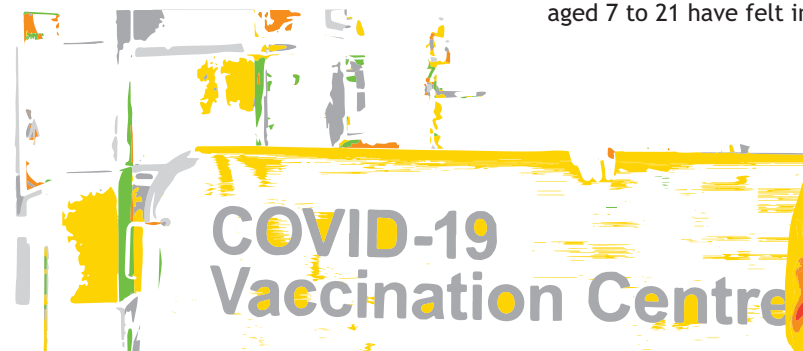
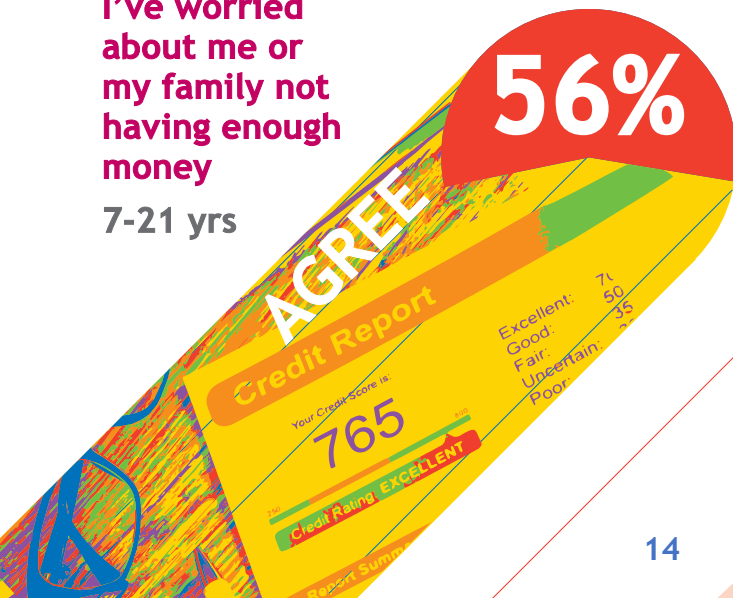
nurses not being appreciated'. Over half (52%) aged 7 to 21 say they're not considering a job in this sector.

Some girls and young women place more importance on job security now than previously, and want to find a job that will be future-proof if there's another pandemic. Others, particularly those who previously considered performing arts or professional sports, are worried about the stability of these industries and the lack of hands-on experience they've

**In the last year I've worried about me or my family not having enough money**

7-21 yrs

**56%**



**'The NHS has helped save so many lives and I'd love to be a part of something like that.'**

(Girl, 11-13)

**65%**

**I'VE FELT INSPIRED BY TEACHERS AND KEY WORKERS DURING THE PANDEMIC**

7-21 yrs







**'The pandemic has helped me look into jobs that are related to my hobbies and interests.'**

(Girl, 14-16)

**'I think there will be fewer opportunities as the pandemic has caused people to lose their jobs. What hope do young people like myself have for the future?'**

(Girl, 14-16)

**'I've always wanted to be a lawyer but recently I've realised girls have to work much harder than boys to get what they want.'**

(Girl, 14-16)

been able to have. A few are now considering making money by live streaming themselves playing online games to an audience, because they've been online so much this last year and it's something they can easily do at home.

The last year has made some girls and young women feel life

is short and that it's important to seize opportunities. Others have been able to use their time during the pandemic to develop their interests and hobbies or research a career they'd like to do.

However, the uncertainty and stress caused by the pandemic

has led many girls to feel less confident in themselves and the job opportunities available to them. Some are struggling with motivation and are worried how this will affect them. Others are feeling anxious about working with people, having not had much contact with others over the past year.

### Women in work

Almost three in four (73%) girls and young women aged 11 to 21 think women have to work much harder than men to succeed, including 38% who strongly agree. This increases slightly as girls get older, starting at 67% for those aged 11 to 16 and rising to 77% for 17 to 21-year-olds. Sadly, these figures haven't changed since we last asked the question in 2018.

Almost half (48%) of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 would like to start their own

business so they can be creative and do something they care about. A further two in five (40%) would like to start a business so they can make their own decisions. However, a quarter (24%) wouldn't start their own business because they see it as too risky. And one in eight (12%) are put off starting their own business because they don't see enough women entrepreneurs.

Only 15% aged 7 to 21 say they've had the opportunity to learn about managing money at

school. This implies that the majority have missed out on learning about money management and financial independence.

**'The pandemic has made me see I can have a successful business from home.'**

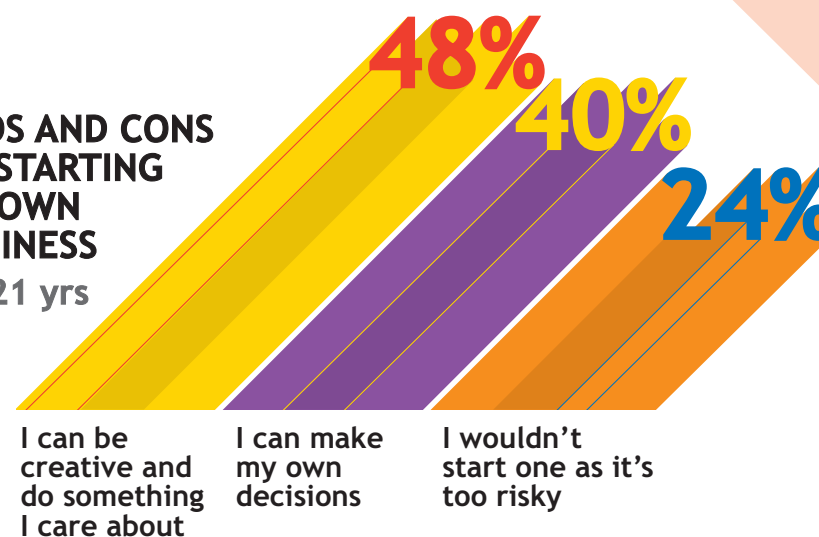
(Young woman, 19-21)



**'After doing everything online I've changed my perspective on my future - I now want to do streaming like online games on Twitch or YouTube.'**

(Girl, 11-13)

### PROS AND CONS OF STARTING MY OWN BUSINESS 11-21 yrs



# Online and social media



'I met a friend online over the holidays and she is super nice so my mam said after lockdown we could meet her with our parents.'

(Girl, 9-10)

Being online during the pandemic has allowed girls and young women to foster closer relationships with friends and family, including those they weren't in touch with often before. However, many have experienced harmful situations online during the last year, including hateful speech, harassment and bullying. They've also been exposed to body image-related harms which have negatively impacted their confidence and self-esteem. They'd like to see more done to protect children and young people from these harms.

## Connecting online during the pandemic

Almost a third (30%) of girls and young women aged 7 to 21 say being online more during the pandemic encouraged closer relationships with people they weren't in touch with as often before – such as family and friends who live far away.

One in five (19%) aged 11 to 21 say online forums and spaces have been an important source of support for them during the

pandemic. LGBTQ girls and young women were more likely to say this, with 27% feeling this way compared to 16% of straight girls and young women. Disabled girls and young women were also more likely to say this (26% compared to 19% without disabilities).

However, having their camera on during video calls makes girls and young women feel more self-conscious with one in five

## I'VE FELT SELF-CONSCIOUS ON VIDEO CALLS

11-21 yrs

51%



'I've video called my family and friends to make them happy during the pandemic.'

(Girl, 7-8)

## Online harms

Overall, seven in ten (71%) girls and young women aged 7 to 21 have experienced some form of harmful content while online in the last year. This includes half (49%) aged 7 to 10, rising to almost three quarters (73%) aged

(22%) aged 7 to 10 feeling this way, rising to more than half (51%) for 11 to 21s.

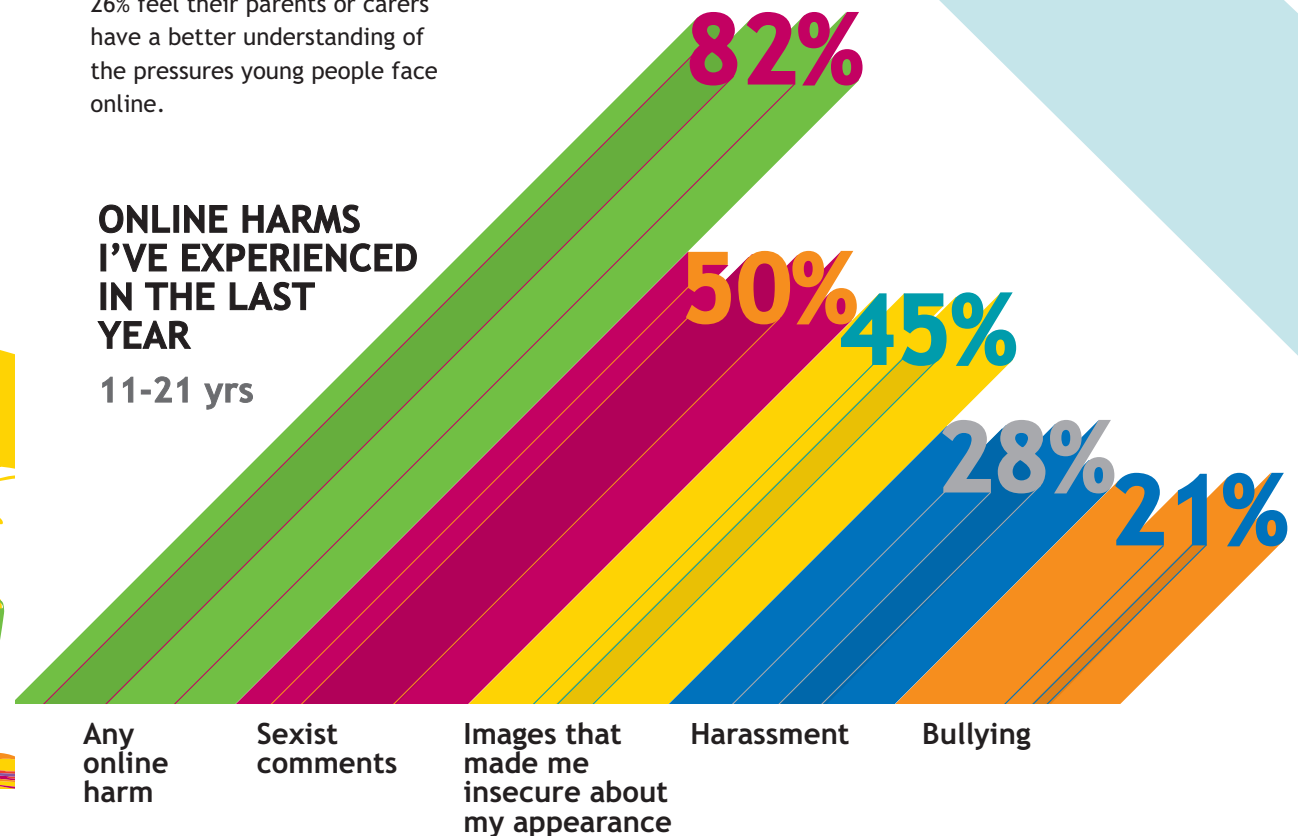
Three in ten (29%) aged 11 to 21 feel their parents or carers now have a better understanding of why it's important for young people to connect online. And 26% feel their parents or carers have a better understanding of the pressures young people face online.

'The pandemic has made me feel insecure and very self-conscious.'

(Girl, 11-13)

## ONLINE HARMS I'VE EXPERIENCED IN THE LAST YEAR

11-21 yrs







**More should be done to protect young people from body image pressures online**

11-21 yrs



11 to 16, and nine in ten (91%) 17 to 21s. These harms include misinformation and hate speech, appearance pressures, harassment and bullying.

Three quarters (74%) of girls aged 7 to 16 have been taught about online safety during the pandemic. However, a significant minority (18%) say they haven't.

Exposure to hate speech and hateful comments is the most common type of online harm girls and young woman have experienced. Almost half (48%) aged 11 to 16 and three in five

(59%) aged 17 to 21 say they've come across this.

Over a quarter (26%) of girls aged 7 to 10 have been exposed to fake information and news while online in the last year. This increases to half (49%) aged 11 to 16 and 61% aged 17 to 21.

Two in five (40%) girls aged 11 to 16 say they've seen images online that have made them feel insecure or less confident about themselves. This increases to half (50%) aged 17 to 21.

For the majority of girls, images showing the same 'perfected look' make them feel more insecure. LGBTQ girls and young

women aged 11 to 21 are more likely to feel pressured to look like what they see in these images (72% compared to 63% who are straight). Disabled girls and young women also say this more – 79% aged 11 to 21 compared to 63% of those without disabilities.

Over half aged 11 to 21 (55%) say the images make them feel insecure because they show an unattainably wealthy lifestyle, often with expensive clothes, holidays and products.

The majority (94%) of girls and young women aged 11 to 21

agree more should be done to protect young people from body image pressures online. With 90% agreement, there's also a strong consensus there should be stricter rules to stop advertisers bombarding girls and young women with weight loss or 'appearance-improving' adverts online.

Almost a quarter (23%) of girls aged 11 to 16 and a third (33%) of young women aged 17 to 21 have been harassed online in the

last year, such as getting unwanted messages or receiving threats. This is higher for LGBTQ girls and young women aged 11 to 21 – 42% compared to 24% who are straight. Disabled girls and young women are also more likely to be harassed online with two in five (40%) aged 11 to 21 saying so compared to 25% of those without disabilities.

Almost a fifth (18%) of girls aged 7 to 10 have experienced people pretending to be someone they're not online in the last year. This increases to almost three in ten (28%) aged 11 to 16 and 36% aged 17 to 21.

One in ten (11%) girls aged 7 to 10 have seen rude pictures online in the last year. And a fifth (19%) aged 11 to 16 have been sent unwanted sexual images – increasing to a third

(33%) of 17 to 21s. In addition, almost one in ten (9%) girls aged 13 to 16 have felt pressure to share images of themselves that they're not comfortable with. This increases to one in five (19%) for 17 to 21s.

When it comes to cyberstalking, one in ten (11%) girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say they've experienced this in the last year.

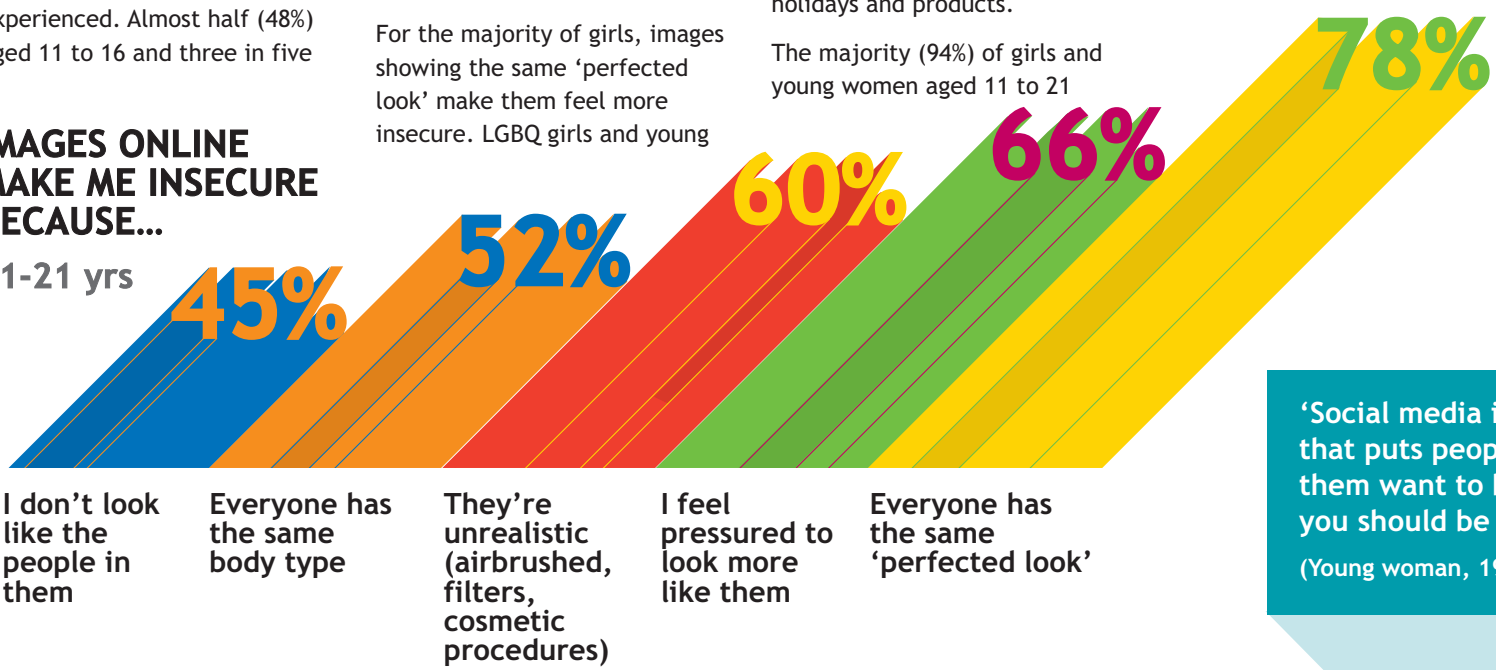
Three in ten (29%) girls aged 7 to 10 have received mean comments while online in the last year. And almost a fifth (18%) aged 11 to 16, and a quarter (24%) aged 17 to 21 say they've been bullied online in the last year. This is slightly higher for LGBTQ girls and young women with 29% aged 11 to 21 saying so compared to 20% who are straight. Over two in five (43%) girls aged 11 to 16 have seen sexist comments or 'jokes' in the last year, increasing to 57% aged 17 to 21. LGBTQ girls and young women aged 11 to 21 are more likely to have experienced this at 72% compared to 44% of those who identify as straight.

**'An influencer that inspires me is Jesy Nelson, she talks about body issues and mental health.'**

(Girl, 14-16)

**IMAGES ONLINE MAKE ME INSECURE BECAUSE...**

11-21 yrs



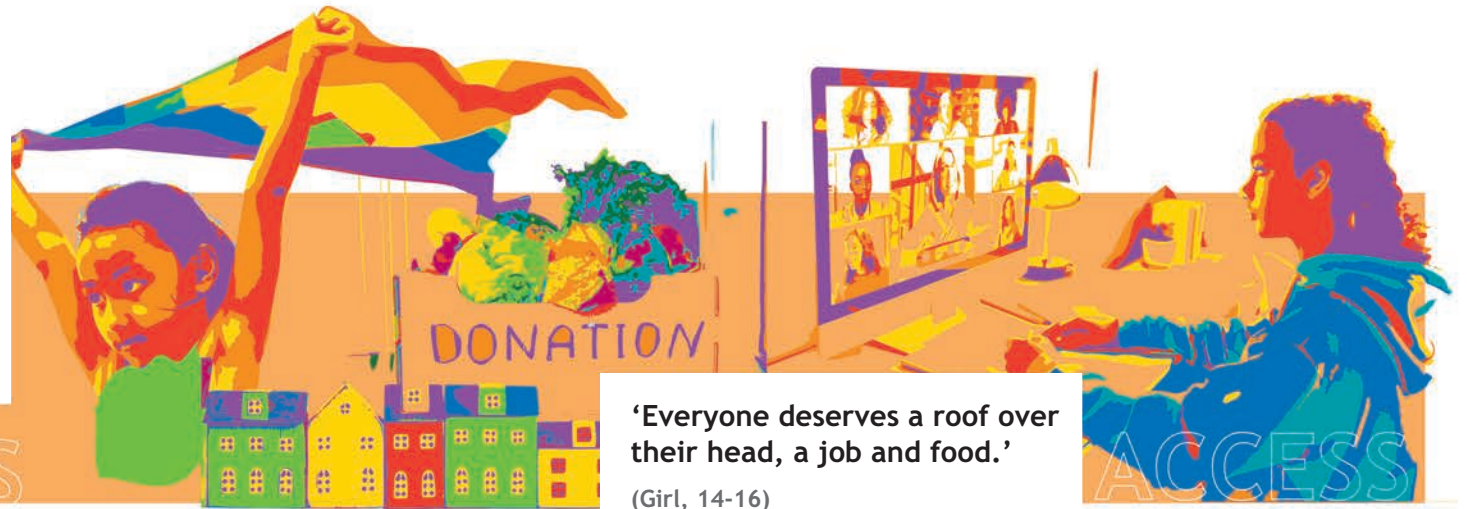
**'Social media is full of fakeness that puts people down and makes them want to be like others when you should be yourself.'**  
(Young woman, 19-21)



# Society and equality

‘People should be treated fairly because no matter your sexuality, race or religion, it doesn’t make you any different from others.’

(Girl, 9-10)



‘Everyone deserves a roof over their head, a job and food.’

(Girl, 14-16)

The overwhelming majority of girls and young women agree that people shouldn’t be discriminated against because of their race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation. And they’d like to see people be treated fairly.

Girls and young women feel that the pandemic has worsened issues such as digital inequality, food poverty and unemployment. However, they’ve felt more informed about global issues and movements such as Black Lives Matter and have been taking action to help

people in their communities.

Despite this, not all girls and young women are feeling more engaged with politics and the decisions the government makes. They would like the government to listen to children and young people’s concerns, and put them at the centre of decisions about the future as we recover from the pandemic.

## Discrimination

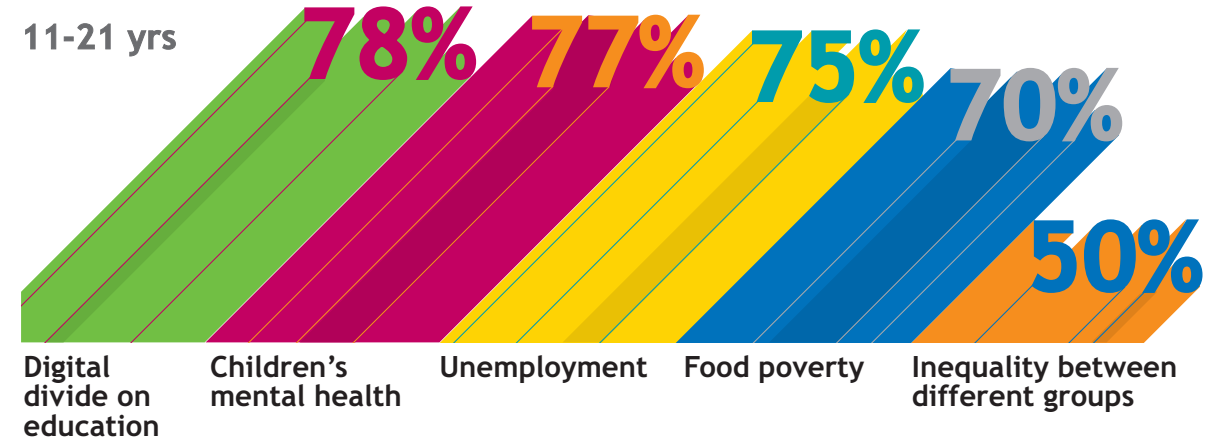
The vast majority (94%) of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 agree people shouldn’t be discriminated against because they’re a different race or ethnicity, with only 3% disagreeing. Similarly, 93% believe people shouldn’t be



**PEOPLE SHOULDN'T BE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST**

11-21 yrs

## I THINK THESE ISSUES HAVE BECOME WORSE DURING THE PANDEMIC



discriminated against because they have a different religion or because they’re not religious – only 3% disagree. The same numbers say people shouldn’t be discriminated against because of their gender or because they’re disabled. Nine in ten (90%) girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say people shouldn’t be discriminated against because they’re LGBTQ+, with only 4% disagreeing.

## Social issues

Girls and young women think the issue that has worsened the most during the pandemic is the widening achievement gap between children and young

people due to a lack of digital access. Almost eight in ten (78%) girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say children and young people falling behind on their schoolwork because they don’t have access to a computer or the internet has become worse during the pandemic.

Another issue they think has become worse is the wellbeing and mental health of children and young people. LGBTQ girls and young women were more likely to say it’s become much worse (64% compared to 45% of those who are straight).

Half (50%) of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 think

inequality between different groups of people (because of race, age, disability or background, for example) has become worse during the pandemic. Disabled girls and young women were more likely to say it’s become much worse (35% compared to 25% of those without disabilities). LGBTQ girls and young women were also more likely to say it’s become worse (34% compared to 24% of those who are straight).

The picture is more mixed when it comes to gender equality. Almost three in eight (36%) girls and young women aged 11 to 21 think gender inequality has become worse during the





**‘During the pandemic I think more people have learnt about feminism and what women go through.’**  
(Girl, 11-13)

**‘Being a girl I feel left out. I like football and basketball but I can never get included.’**  
(Girl, 11-13)

GENDER ROLES POLITICS

pandemic. Over a third (34%) think the issue has neither improved nor worsened during the pandemic. One in seven (14%) think the situation has become better.

When it comes to both parents sharing responsibilities for looking after children while working, three in ten (29%) say this has become worse during the pandemic. However, 28% say it’s stayed the same, and 26% say it’s become better.

Almost seven in ten (68%) girls and young women aged 11 to 21 think jobs women take up more

often than men – such as nursing, caring, teaching and working in supermarkets – have been valued and appreciated more.

**Gender roles and traits**

While some girls and young women feel certain characteristics are associated with both girls and boys, there’s a clear distinction between the traits mostly associated with girls and the ones mostly associated with boys. Girls and young women aged 7 to 21 say boys are more likely to be associated with risk-taking

(45%). In contrast, they are more likely to say girls are associated with being caring (55%).

**Social action**

Seven in ten (70%) girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say they’ve felt more informed about global issues during the pandemic, including Black Lives Matter, and are now more interested in learning about issues they care about.

Overall, more than three in four (77%) 7 to 21-year-olds have used their time over the last year to take action and help those around them. Two out of five (42%) have shown support

for the issues they care about, such as clapping for key workers. Almost three in ten (28%) girls aged 11 to 16 and more than half (51%) of 17 to 21s have signed petitions. Two fifths (40%) aged 13 to 21 have posted and shared on social media to take action. This increases from 29% of 13 to 16s to 51% aged 17 to 21. A quarter (24%) of girls and young women aged 7 to 21 have helped others in their community, such as by donating to food banks or keeping in touch with people who are lonely. Similarly, 24% say they’ve done something to help their neighbour in the past year.

One in eight (12%) aged 7 to 21 say they’ve raised money.

**Politics**

More than two in five (43%) girls and young women aged 11 to 21 say they’re now more engaged and interested in politics and the decisions the government makes. However, a significant number (42%) disagree. Interest in politics peaks among 17 to 21s, with half (51%) agreeing, and a third saying they’re not more engaged (35%).

**Children and young people’s concerns should be at the centre of government decisions about the future**

**11-21 yrs**

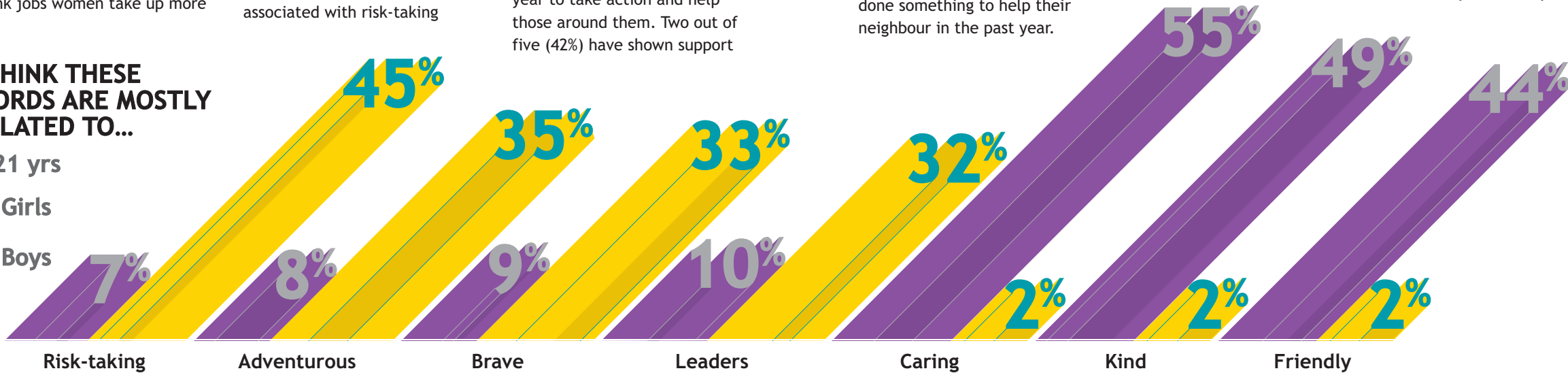
Despite not all girls and young women feeling engaged with politics, the majority aged 11 to 21 think that children and young people’s concerns should be at the centre of government decisions about the future and recovery from the pandemic.

**I THINK THESE WORDS ARE MOSTLY RELATED TO...**

7-21 yrs

Girls

Boys



# Advocates' postscript



**Advocate, our panel of young women aged 14 to 25, share their thoughts on this year's report.**

## Kate, 21

'The survey tells us girls are anxious about the impact of the pandemic on the future. Individual job prospects and worry about the economy more widely are big concerns for many girls who feel they've fallen behind academically this year. However, it's good to see they feel positive about the situation improving.'

## Emma, 21

'While it's upsetting to know girls' happiness is still declining, it's not shocking to see that the pandemic has perpetuated this issue. The disruption to normal life has undoubtedly given girls and young women more things to feel worried about. As we emerge from the pandemic, there's a clear need for better support, and measures to safeguard the wellbeing of girls and young women.'

## Phoebe, 21

'The pandemic has dramatically impacted our education and provision of extra-curricular activities. Girls have found it hard to learn online, and haven't been able to access work experience opportunities or celebrate their achievements. More must be done to guarantee girls and young women don't miss out on any other future milestones.'

## Francoise, 21

'The pandemic has caused girls and young women to rethink their outlook on jobs and money, including changing their career paths to become key workers, teachers and online personalities. Yet what has remained unchanged is the belief that women have to work harder than men to succeed, a disappointing and unfair prospect for their future. Action must be taken to make workplaces more equal.'

## Emily, 18

'While social media has been a crucial way for girls and young women to connect over lockdown, a rise in online harassment and appearance pressures have left many feeling isolated. The overwhelming demand for greater legislation to be put in place to protect girls and young women online must be acted on.'

## Amanda, 17

'Girls and young women believe that people should not be discriminated against, and an increased awareness of the current social and political climate has led to many taking action. Politicians must ensure that even more girls and young women feel engaged in politics and empowered to speak out, and that our concerns are centred in government decisions that affect us, including pandemic recovery.'

# Our methodology

**Girlguiding commissions CHILDWISE, leading specialists in research with children and young people, to do the Girls' Attitudes Survey each year. A total of 2,114 girls and young women aged between 7 and 21 took part in the 2021 survey.**

The survey was completed online. Most 7 to 16-year-olds did theirs in school, while the older age group took part via an online panel. Interviews with young women who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) were also included via the online panel.

The questionnaire was adapted to be suitable for different age groups, 7 to 10 and 11 to 21

years. Core questions were asked across the full age range, so that changes in attitudes as girls get older could be tracked.

Data was weighted at analysis to correct any imbalance in the final sample across the age range and within geographical region. Statistical testing was used to give an indication of significant differences at the standard 95% confidence level between different groups.

## Fieldwork took place in March and April 2021

Total	7-10 years	11-16 years	17-21 years		
2,114	651	843	620		
			In education	Working	NEET
			408	151	61

England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
1,366	291	269	188

Total (7-21)	High deprivation area	Moderate deprivation area	Low deprivation area
1,837	457	768	612

Total (7-21)	White	POC
1,848	1,420	428

Total (11-21)	Straight or heterosexual	LGBQ
1,314	968	346

Total (11-21)	Disabled	Non-disabled
1,870	183	1,687

The data in these last four tables are from the girls and young women who chose to tell us their postcode, ethnic background, sexual orientation and if they're disabled.



# We are Girlguiding

## 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.

## 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 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 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 DISCOVER, WE GROW

**Girlguiding**

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