



Girls' Attitudes Survey 2019



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

Girlguiding

About Girlguiding

Girlguiding is the leading charity for girls and young women in the UK.

Thanks to the dedication and support of 100,000 amazing volunteers, we are active in every part of the UK, giving girls and young women a space where they can be themselves, have fun, build brilliant friendships, gain valuable life skills and make a positive difference to their lives and their communities.

We build girls' confidence and raise their aspirations. We give them the chance to discover their full potential and encourage them to be a powerful force for good.

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About the Girls' Attitudes Survey

Each year, Girlguiding's Girls' Attitudes Survey takes a snapshot of what girls and young women think on a wide range of issues.

The survey gives girls' and young women's voices a platform to be heard and considered at the highest levels of decision-making across the UK. It empowers girls to speak out on the issues that really matter to them and affect their lives today.

This major survey, now in its 11th year, canvasses the opinions of over 2,000 girls and young women aged 7 to 21, inside and outside guiding across the UK. The findings in 2019 build on those from previous years. They give an insight into how girls feel about the specific and emerging pressures facing them today, and what these mean for their happiness, wellbeing and opportunities in life.

Girlguiding's youth panel, **Advocate**, leads the development of the survey each year and analyses the results.

All the results from this and previous surveys can be found on Girlguiding's website: girlguiding.org.uk/girlsattitudes



Advocates' foreword

Welcome to the 11th Girls' Attitudes Survey. As Girlguiding advocates, we have helped to shape this report, from the questions we've asked to the designs you see in front of you. We are proud to share it with you.

However, we are also shocked by some of its findings. The message from this year's survey results is clear: growing up as a girl today is stressful. This is made worse by the feeling sometimes that no one is listening. Nearly two thirds of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 think there is too much pressure and focus on doing well in exams. Just 21% say they are getting the help they need to manage the stress of tests and exams. Over half of girls say there shouldn't be adverts for plastic surgery or diet pills during shows aimed at young women. Yet those adverts are still there. And of the 79% of girls aged 7 to 21 who have experienced bullying or other unacceptable behaviours, 41% say this makes them feel lonely.

We need to make sure that girls are listened to, and feel they have a voice. As the UK's leading charity for girls and young women, Girlguiding is uniquely placed to help give them that voice. The Girls' Attitudes Survey is just one of the ways it strives to achieve that. But just listening to girls is not enough. We want to see action.

This year's Girls' Attitudes Survey explores the issues girls raised through Future Girl – Girlguiding's manifesto for change. It will enable girls and young women to make changes in areas such as access to adventure, promoting equality, and protecting the planet. The Girls' Attitudes Survey will help by providing the evidence needed to convince decision-makers to act.

It won't just be advocates speaking out and seeking change. In the Girls' Attitudes Survey, 87% of girls said there should be more opportunities in our daily lives to help the environment, and 88% said it's urgent we do more to protect it. Acting to protect the environment is exactly what Girlguiding is enabling girls to do, through our national campaign to tackle plastic pollution.

We hope you find the survey results interesting, and that they help you to understand girls and young women today. Girls told Girlguiding that action needs to be taken on the issues that girls and young women care about, and Girlguiding listened. Now, it's time for the rest of the world to listen too.



Executive summary

‘It’s scary how there isn’t much time left before the effects are irreversible’
(Young woman, 11-16)



Environmental action:
88% 

of girls and young women aged 7-21 feel it’s urgent that we all do more to protect the environment

Girls tell us they’re worried about the environment and want more to be done to protect it – whether that’s through decision-makers listening to them or by having opportunities to take action themselves in their daily lives.

Access to play and sport: 

47%

of girls aged 7-10 don’t have access to a playground with swings and a slide

Girls tell us what would encourage them to go outdoors more. We discover that girls want outdoor spaces that are cleaner, safer and easier to access, as well as more coverage of women’s sport on TV.




Life online and the media: 

45%

of girls and young women aged 11-21 feel they need to check their phone first thing in the morning and last thing at night

Girls tell us they want the internet to be a safer place that’s free from harmful content. They also tell us what pressures they face, including feeling like they have to look a certain way or to always be online.

Bullying and friendships: 

79%

of girls and young women aged 7-21 have experienced bullying or unacceptable behaviours

Girls tell us they often experience bullying and unacceptable behaviours – from name calling to controlling behaviour from a partner – and how this makes them feel less confident, lonely or less likely to go out.




Skills and education: 

64% 

of girls and young women aged 11-21 think there is too much pressure and focus on doing well in exams

Girls tell us they don’t get enough support at school when it comes to exams, or equal choices in subjects, careers advice and experience. We also find out why girls think there are fewer women in leadership positions.

‘I’d go outdoors more if there was more for me to do’
(Girl, 7-10)

‘There’s a lot of pressure on women to look or be a specific way’
(Young woman, 11-16)

‘I think a good friend is someone I can trust’
(Girl, 7-10)

‘I want more girls to have jobs that people think are ‘for boys’
(Young woman, 11-16)

Environmental action



88% of girls and young women aged 7-21 feel it's urgent that we all do more to protect the environment

69

I would go outdoors more if we could do more to help wildlife and recycle all the plastic bottles and bags

(Girl, aged 7-10)

Girls and young women are worried about the environment – water and ocean pollution, climate change and plastics in particular – and feel that urgent action needs to be taken to protect it.

Increasingly, girls are aware that change needs to be made to protect our environment and are going out of their way to make that change. The younger age group are more likely to say they've learned about how to help the environment at school compared to those aged 11 to 21. The overwhelming majority of girls and young women are willing to change their behaviour to protect the environment either now or in the future.

Encouragingly, nearly all girls and young women are keen to recycle and re-use as much as they can. Using less energy by turning off electrics and putting on an extra jumper are also high on their to-do list.

Eating less meat is another way some girls and young women are protecting their environment. One in five girls who say

they eat less or no meat, do so to help the environment, and almost a quarter do the same to help animals.

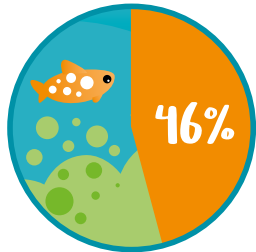
Although girls are willing to change their behaviour to help protect the environment, they feel that the government is most responsible for tackling these issues. Almost nine in ten girls also feel that schools should receive more guidance to help them do more to protect the environment.

Girls and young women want to be more involved and have their voices heard on this issue - with nearly nine in ten girls aged 7 to 21 wanting to be involved in school plans and in conversations with decision-makers.



Top environmental issues girls worry about

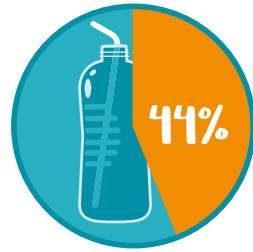
7-21 yrs



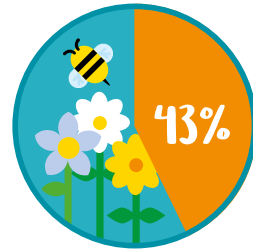
Water and ocean pollution



Climate change



Plastic pollution



Loss of nature and natural habitats

Who girls think are responsible for tackling environmental issues

11-21 yrs



49%
The government



20%
Individuals



19%
Companies/businesses

At school, girls...

● 7-10 yrs ● 11-21 yrs

Learn about the environment and what they can do to help



Learn about looking after natural habitats / nature



Would like to learn more about the environment at school and how they can help



Have opportunities to help the environment



Actions girls want

7-21 yrs



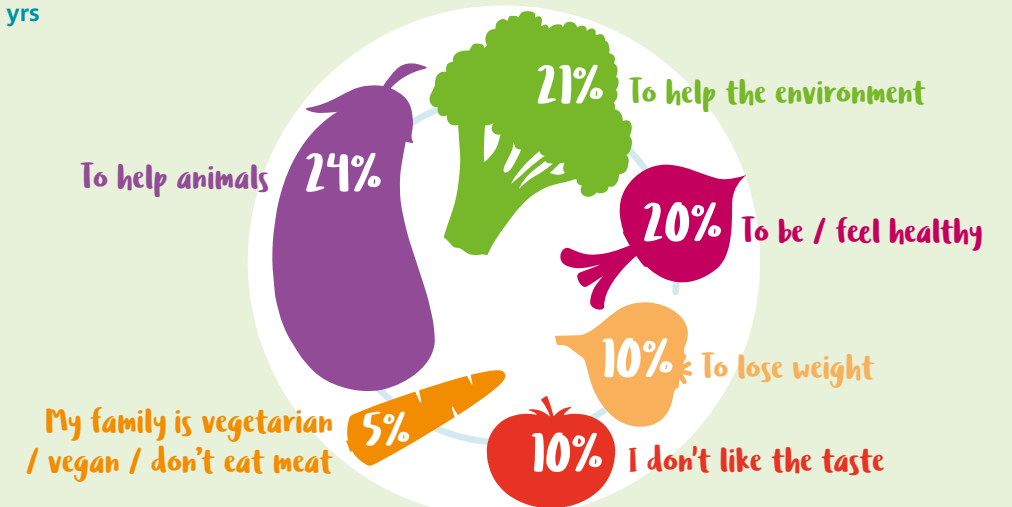
Girls that say they do this now or would in the future

7-21 yrs

98%	98%	95%	89%	86%	80%	67%
Turn off lights when leaving the room	Recycle and re-use more	Turn off TVs, computers and plugs when not in use	Put on an extra jumper, instead of the heating	Walk or cycle instead of going by car	Buy clothes from ethical retailers	Eat less meat

Reasons for eating less or no meat

7-21 yrs



Access to play and sport



47% of girls aged 7-10 don't have access to a playground with swings and a slide



69
I'd prefer my local area to have more facilities for young people nearby that can make them feel safer and they can easily get home

(Young woman, aged 11-16)

From playing on swings in a local park to feeling safe walking around their local neighbourhood, girls and young women want to be able to access play more easily.

A significant number of girls don't have access to outdoor spaces. One in three 7 to 10-year-olds don't have access to a park they can play in, while two in three 11 to 21-year-olds can't easily access an outdoor sports area they feel safe in.

Overall, a quarter of girls say they 'don't feel safe' to go outdoors, while a similar number say they simply 'prefer to stay indoors' - both of these responses increase with age. It's positive to see that a third of girls and young women say nothing stops them from playing or spending time outdoors.

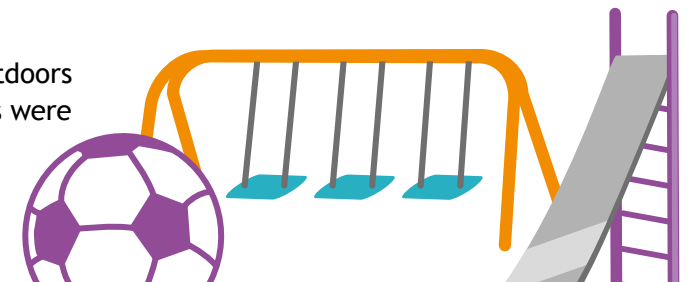
When it comes to creating a world where more girls are able to access and feel comfortable in outdoor spaces, they have plenty of ideas.

Girls of all ages say they would go outdoors in their local area more often if parks were cleaner and looked after better.

Younger girls called for more play areas to be created, as well as safer road crossings surrounding those spaces.

For older girls, safety was a prime concern. Young women aged 17 to 21 highlighted the need for more well-lit streets and say they would feel more comfortable outside if there was less crime and cat-calling.

By making sure girls and young women have access to play and sport at a younger age, it opens up opportunities for them to engage with sport as they get older. It's also important that young women see more sportswomen on screen, with more than half of girls saying the lack of women's football on TV makes it seem less important than the men's game.



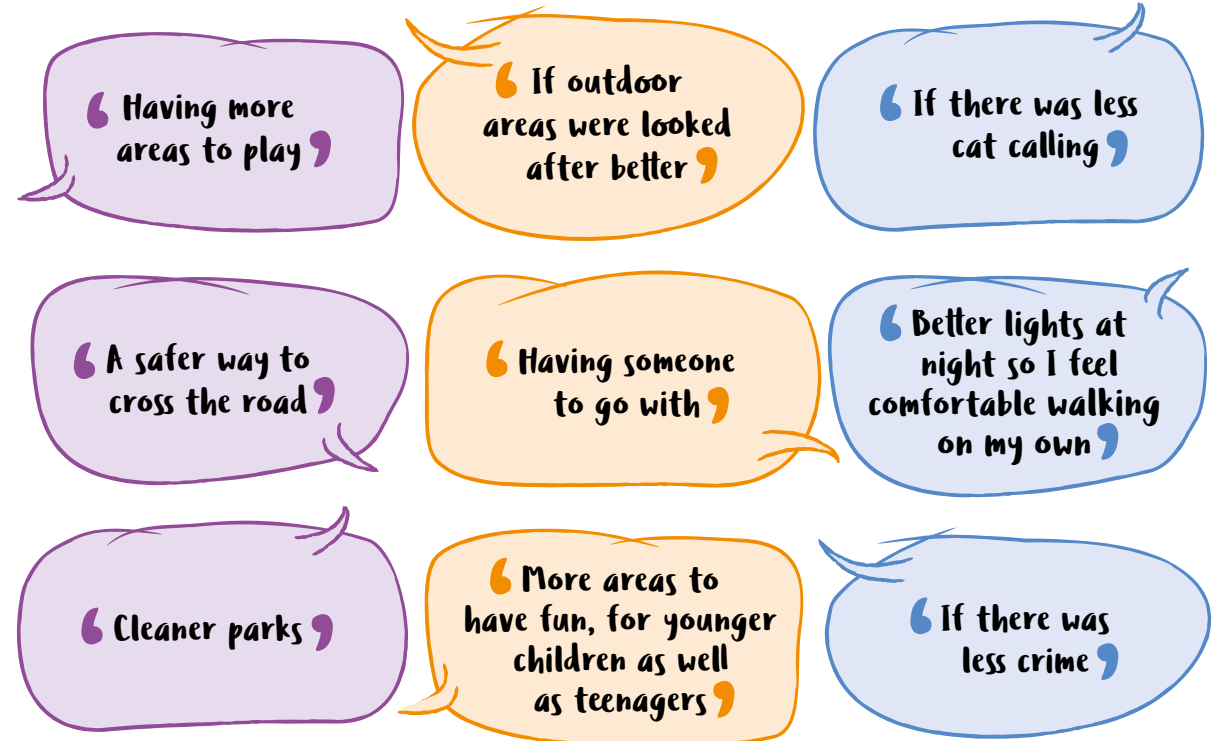
Outdoor spaces girls don't have access to

● 7-10 yrs ● 11-21 yrs



What would encourage girls to go outdoors more in their local area?

● 7-10 yrs ● 11-16 yrs ● 17-21 yrs



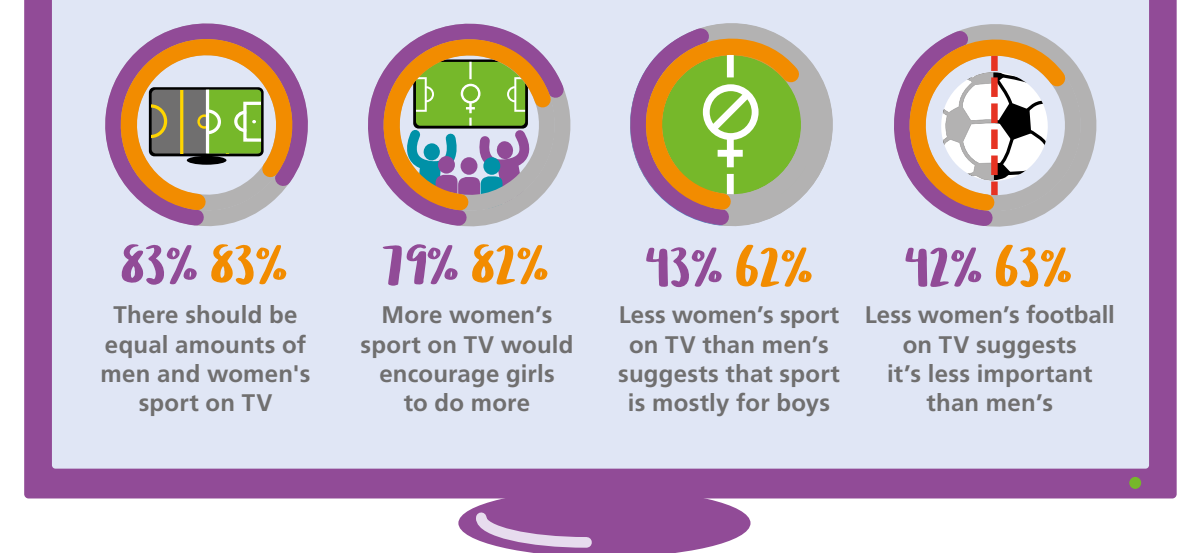
What stops girls from playing, having fun or going out?

● 7-10 yrs ● 11-21 yrs



What girls think about women's sport on TV

● 7-10 yrs ● 11-21 yrs



Life online and the media



45% of girls and young women aged 11-21 feel they need to check their phone first thing in the morning and last thing at night



69

Social media sets expectations that are unrealistic

(Young woman, aged 11-16)

Technology is playing an ever-increasing role in young women's lives, with almost half feeling the pressure to check their mobile phone as soon as they wake up and before they go to sleep.

Four in ten girls say they'd like to spend less time online. This could be because of the pressures they face, or the harmful content they come across.

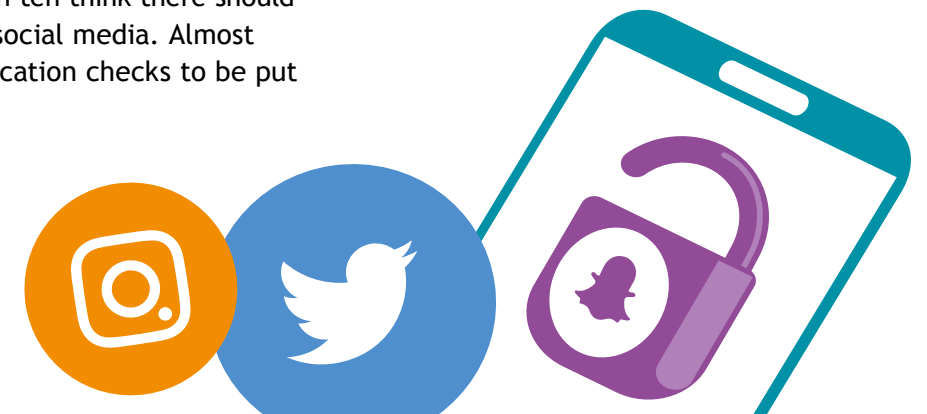
Girls are aware of how the content they come across online can negatively impact their wellbeing.

One in three have seen upsetting or harmful images or videos that they wish they hadn't, with the same number saying they regularly take breaks from using social media. Yet they also point to the positive effects of life online, with a third of girls aged 11 to 16 saying that being on social media makes them feel happy.

While one in ten girls and young women have pretended to be older than they are on social media, nine in ten think there should be an age limit on social media. Almost half want age verification checks to be put in place.

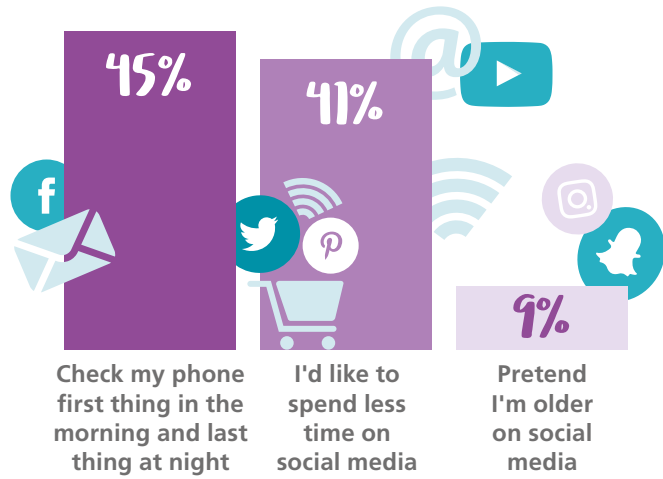
Privacy on the internet is a key concern for girls and young women. A third worry about how social media platforms could use their data, while a fifth have both public-facing and private social media accounts.

Girls and young women say they're aware of the difference between real life and what they see represented online and in the media. Almost half of girls regularly remind themselves that social media is not a real reflection of others' lives. One solution may be making sure airbrushed pictures are always labelled as such, with over half of girls agreeing to this. Nearly half of girls agreed there should be a more diverse range of people on screen too.



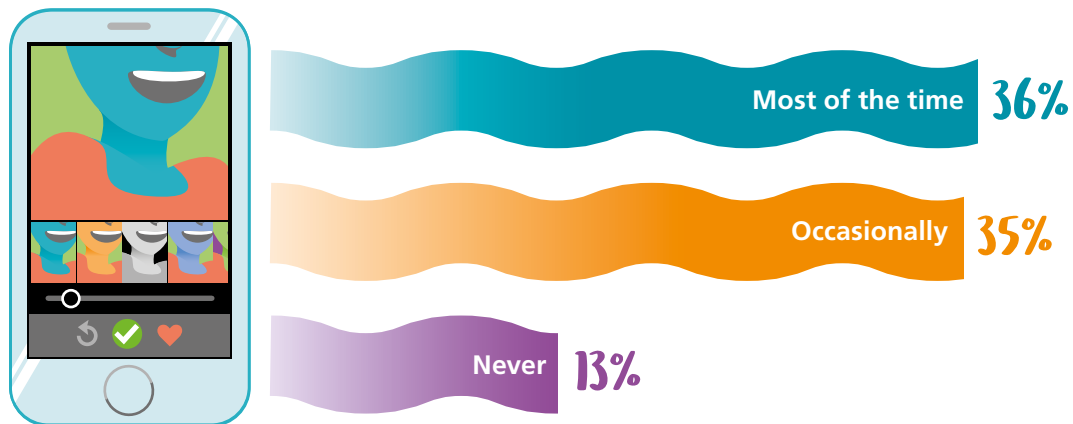
Girls' behaviour online

11-21 yrs



Girls filter the pictures they post...

11-21 yrs



Safety online

11-21 yrs



34%

I worry how social media platforms use my data



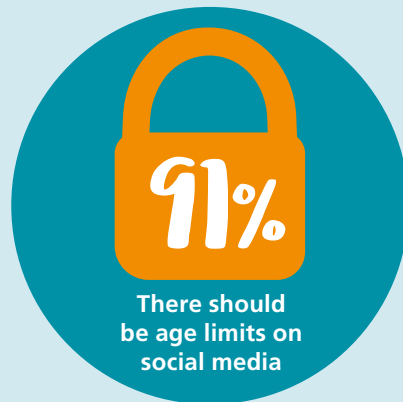
39%

I have seen upsetting or harmful images / videos online, which I wish I hadn't



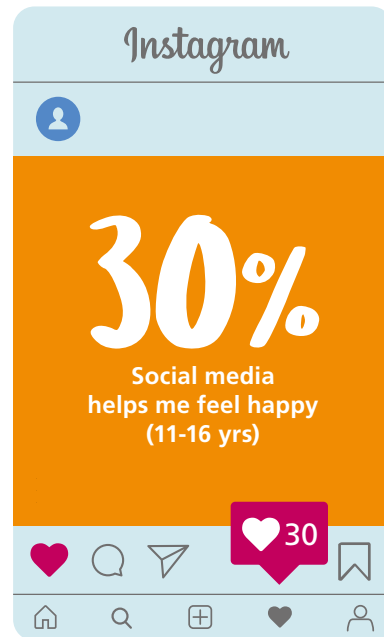
45%

There should be ways to check someone is old enough to use social media



91%

There should be age limits on social media



Pressures girls face online

11-16 yrs 17-21 yrs



Girls' responses to online pressures

11-21 yrs



47%

Make sure my privacy settings are high



46%

Remind myself that social media is not a reflection of reality



39%

Try to speak to my friends in person more than online



29%

Take breaks from using social media



21%

Have a public and private account on social media

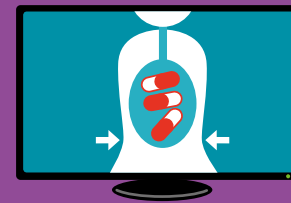


14%

Talk to my parents about how to use social media positively

Media responsibility

11-21 yrs



55%

There shouldn't be ads for plastic surgery or diet pills during shows for young women



52%

Airbrushed pictures should always be labelled to say they've been changed



44%

There should be more diversity in the media (ethnicities, LGBTQ+, disabilities)

Bullying and friendships



79% of girls and young women aged 7-21 have experienced bullying or unacceptable behaviours

#?!*

69

Bullying should be dealt with more severely as it makes people lonely and unhappy

(Young woman, aged 11-16)

A third of girls experience bullying frequently, whether that's online or offline. They tell us how this negatively impacts on their lives, from their confidence to the things they enjoy.

The most common forms of bullying girls say they have suffered include name-calling, insults and being left out by friends, while almost half of older girls say they have been bullied about their appearance.

One in five girls aged 7 to 10 have received mean comments online, with that number increasing as they get older. Girls of all ages are more likely to say they have experienced bullying in person than on the internet, however a quarter say they have been bullied both online and offline.

While bullying brings up a range of feelings and affects every girl differently, two in three girls and young women aged 11 to 21 said it made them feel hopeless and less confident. It makes some girls feel lonely or not want to go to school, college or work.

Most worryingly, a fifth of girls say bullying stops them from feeling like they can go out on their own.

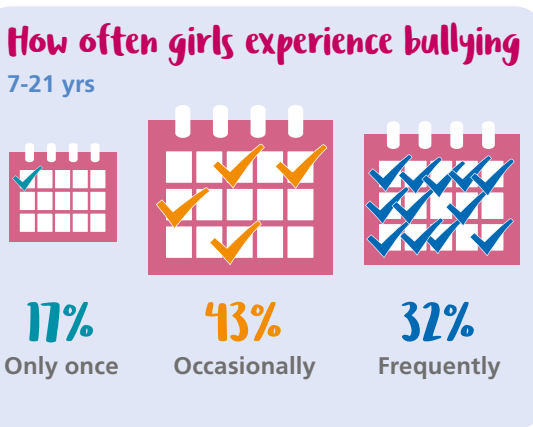
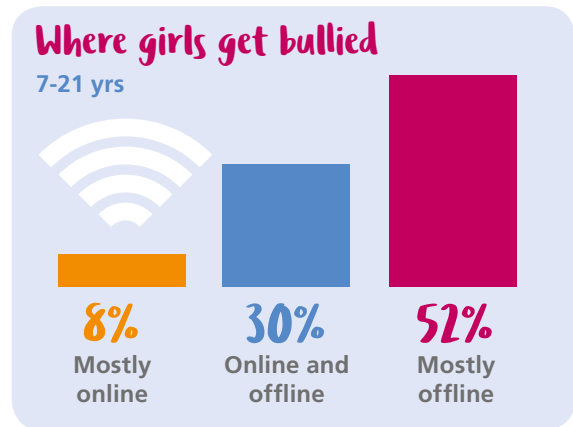
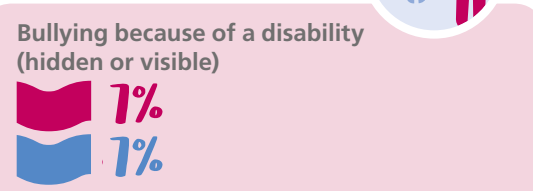
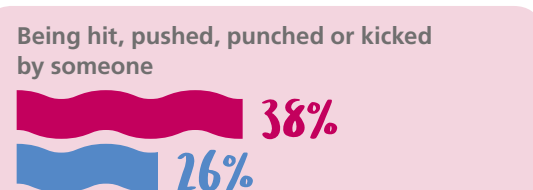
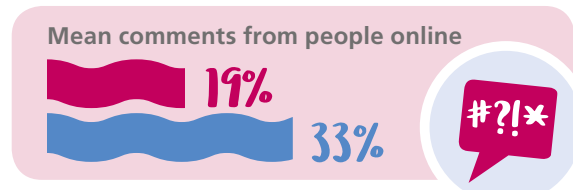
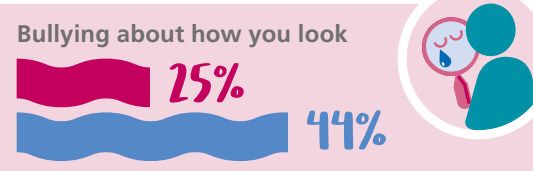
Encouragingly, almost half of girls say they would tell a parent if they were being bullied and a quarter would talk to their friends about it. Girls and young women are less likely to report controlling behaviour and online abuse, but this might be because of how they define bullying. Most girls think trust is an essential part of friendship, with a quarter saying they think finding someone who stands up for them and supports them is key.



Girls who have experienced...

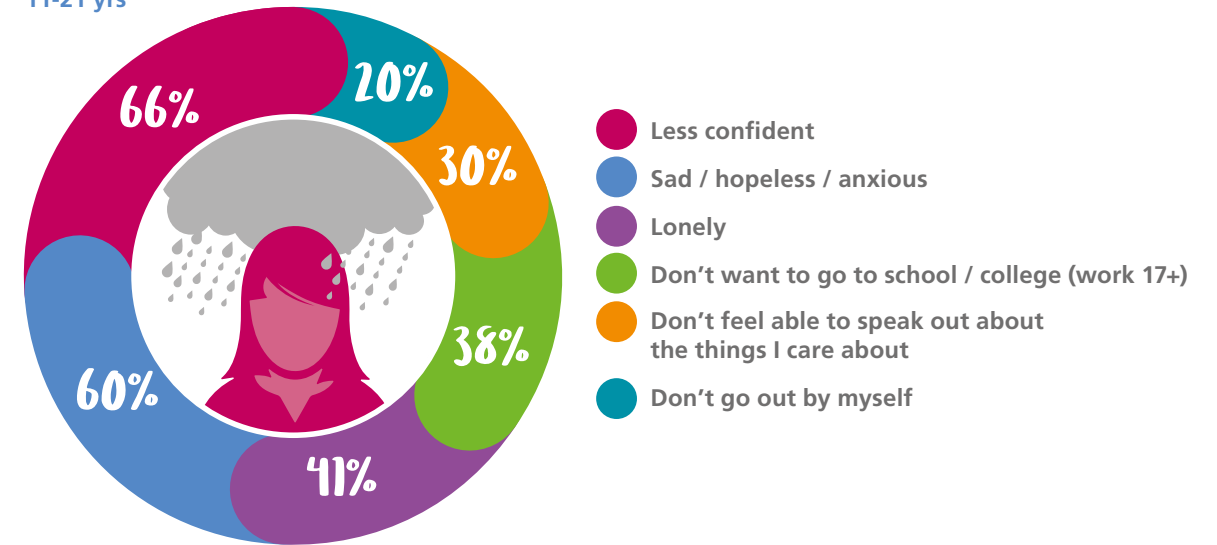


● 7-10 yrs ● 11-21 yrs



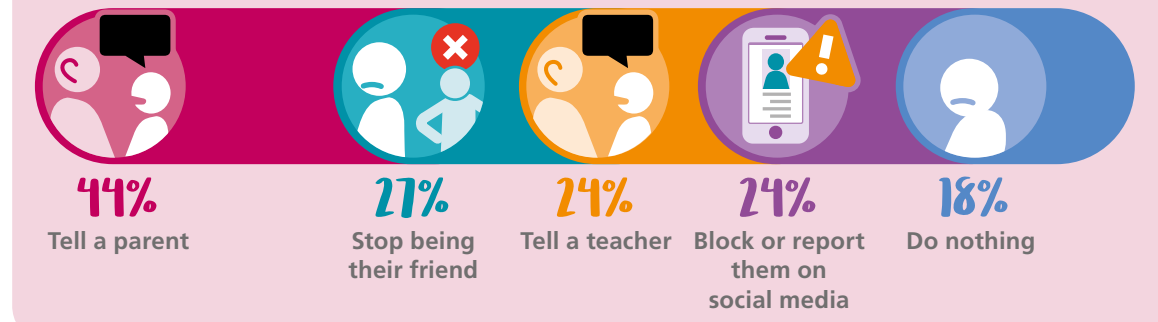
Bullying makes girls feel...

11-21 yrs



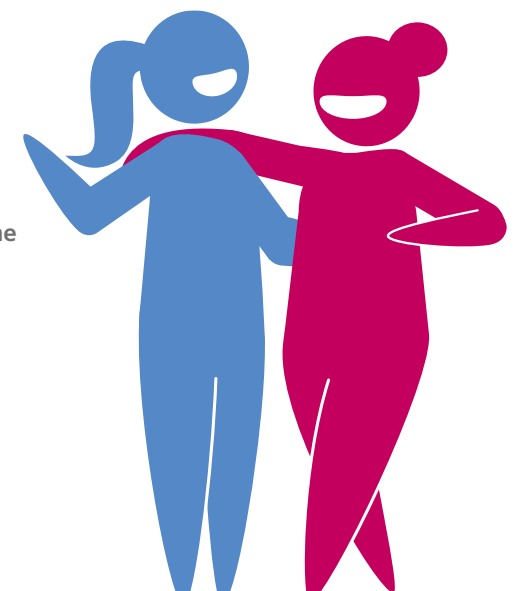
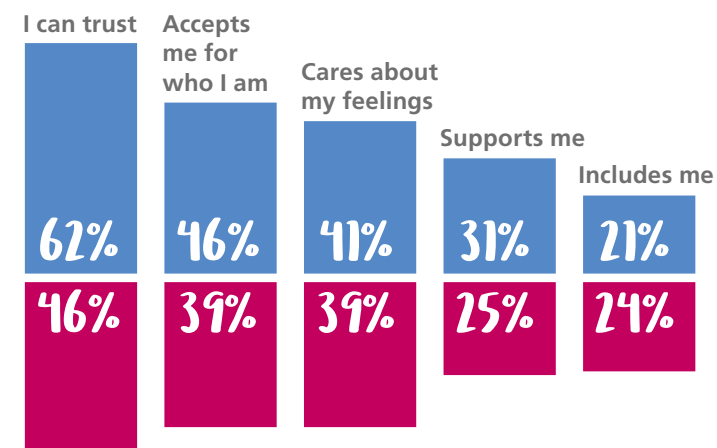
When girls are bullied, they...

11-21 yrs



A good friend is someone that...

● 7-10 yrs ● 11-21 yrs



Skills and education



64% of girls and young women aged 11-21 think there is too much pressure and focus on doing well in exams



69 I care about girls and boys having the same opportunities in life

(Young woman, aged 11-16)

Overall, girls are dissatisfied with the support they receive at school, whether it's with exams, careers advice or preparation for the world of work.

Two thirds of girls and young women say they face too much exam pressure, with most girls worrying that failing to achieve high grades will ruin their future chances. Despite the anxiety girls face, they don't feel they get enough support: only one in five say they get the help and support they need to manage exam-related stress.

Most girls say they don't have adequate access to work experience placements. More than two thirds of 11 to 16 year-olds say they haven't had the chance to do any work experience at all, despite wanting to, whereas a fifth aged 17 to 21 said this. When young women do get the opportunity, it often doesn't help them gain new skills or figure out which career path to follow.

Girls and young women are also keen for schools to be encouraged to give both girls and boys the same careers advice and support.

While girls are aware that fewer women still fill leadership positions, they don't blame individual women for it. Notably, only one in five girls think women are put off being leaders because they might not know what skills they need to be in charge. Instead, half of 11 to 16-year-olds say that women are likely to be discouraged from top roles because they feel female leaders are criticised more than their male counterparts, while one in three think women are judged more harshly when they make mistakes.

Encouragingly, girls and young women say they learn about people from different cultures and backgrounds in their lessons at school. However, progress still needs to be made in ensuring both women and those who identify as LGBTQ+ are included in the curriculum across all subjects.



Girls may be less likely to study physics, maths or computer science because...

● 11-16 yrs ● 17-21 yrs

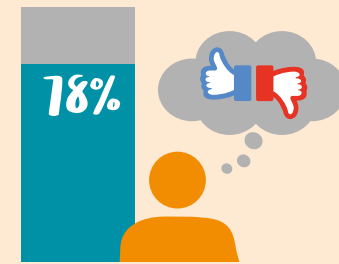


Equality in education

11-21 yrs



Schools should be assessed to ensure girls and boys get equal treatment in subject choices and careers advice



Adults who work with young people should get training to recognise conscious / unconscious bias

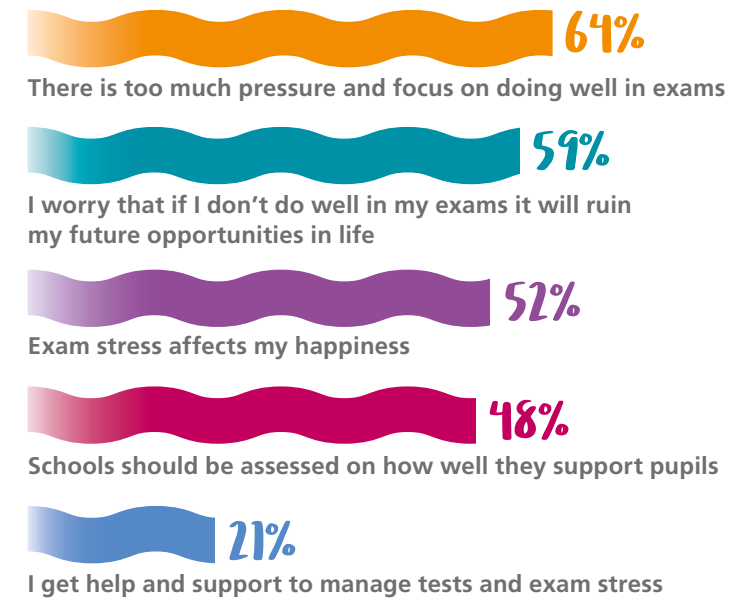
What girls have learned about in different subjects...

11-21 yrs



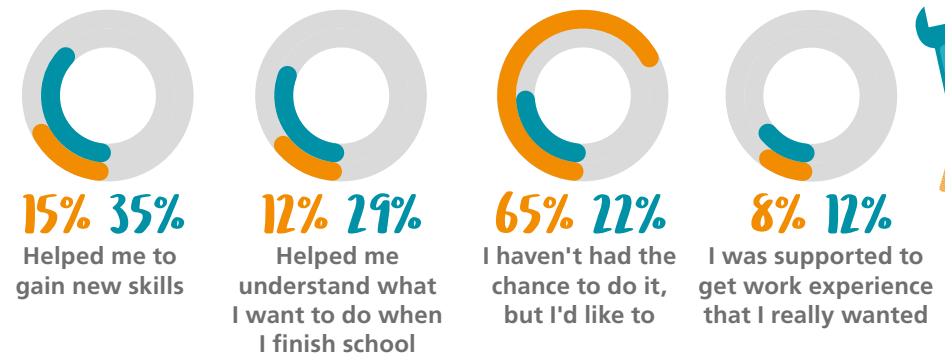
Exam pressure

11-21 yrs



Work experience...

● 11-16 yrs ● 17-21 yrs



Girls are put off being leaders because...

11-16 yrs



Our methodology

Girlguiding commissions CHILDWISE – leading specialists in research with children and young people – to conduct the Girls' Attitudes Survey each year.

A total of 2,118 girls and young women aged between 7 and 21 took part in the 2019 survey from all parts of the UK. Most interviews were completed online, with 7 to 16 year-olds doing this in school, while the older age group were interviewed through an online panel.

Additional face-to-face interviews were carried out with young women who were not in education, employment, or training (NEET), to ensure that this group was fully represented.

The questionnaire was adapted to be suitable for different age groups, 7 to 10, 11 to 16 and 17 to 21 years. Some questions were asked across the full age range, to track changes in attitudes as girls get older.

The full results can be found on the Girlguiding website.

Fieldwork took place from March to May 2019.

FUTURE GIRL

Created by girls, for girls, Future Girl is Girlguiding's manifesto for change. It's how we'll work with girls and young women to make the changes they want to see in the world. We'll come together as a 500,000 strong movement for change on the things girls really care about.

In 2018, we asked the girls in Girlguiding to tell us what they really cared about. They responded in their thousands: some 76,000 of them, aged 4 to 25. Taking better care of animals and our planet. Feeling safe – for example, outside and online – so they can relax and be themselves. Making sure no one feels excluded for being different.

A level playing field for girls and boys – in sport, in school, in the wider world. These are the kinds of things that matter to girls, and that matter to Girlguiding. And these have become the priorities for Future Girl. That's why we've used this year's Girls Attitudes Survey to explore these topics in more detail.

Our vision is to see a world where girls are happier and more confident. Where unfair pressures and limitations are fewer, and where girls know how to deal with them. Where girls and young women are not afraid to use their voice – and when they speak, people listen. And to know that the Girlguiding community has played a part in changing attitudes and in reshaping the world we live in, for the good of us all.

To learn more about Future Girl and its topics, visit girlguiding.org.uk/girls-making-change/future-girl

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 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 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.

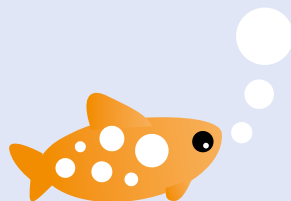


@girlguiding
#GirlsAttitudes
girlguiding.org.uk
girlsattitudes@girlguiding.org.uk



“ The Girls’ Attitudes Survey means we have a greater insight into how we can tackle the issues girls face and how this changes over time. ”

Girlguiding advocate



17-19 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 0PT

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