

Girls in Scotland

2020



Foreword



When Girlguiding Scotland released its first Girls in Scotland report in 2018, life was very different to today. At the time we were celebrating things like the Year of Young People (YoYP 2018), 100 years since women in the UK first gained the right to vote and the introduction of free period products in Scottish schools. While girls and young women told us they faced many issues and challenges, in some areas it felt like real change and progress was being made.

Today the world has changed drastically, but not in the ways we had hoped. Covid-19 has created previously unimaginable challenges and some issues highlighted in this latest report echo concerns raised in 2018. Girls are still pressured to look a certain way, feel underrepresented in politics and worry about their safety in their local communities. They also shared new concerns and pressures, such as the role of the media and social media in their lives, how they feel about the environment and their struggle to make their voice heard. And girls still don't feel they have the same opportunities as boys do.

No one understands what it's like to be a girl in Scotland better than girls themselves. At Girlguiding Scotland, we're proud to help girls develop their voice to make positive change. This research gives girls across Scotland a platform to voice not only their concerns, but also to share the solutions they'd like put in place now to create a better future.

As we move forward, we have a unique opportunity to create a more equal, fairer and kinder society. The views captured in this report must play a role in this recovery if we are to tackle the issues that affect girls' everyday lives once and for all. Now is the time for decision-makers, educators and everyone who is determined to create a better future for girls and young women to listen and take action.

Hannah Brisbane

Girlguiding Scotland
Lead Volunteer for Voice

Executive Summary

My Life and Wellbeing

Girls and young women in Scotland strongly believe they shouldn't feel pressured to change the way they look. Being bombarded with messages and images in the media and on social media is influencing how they feel about themselves and having a negative impact on their self-confidence. As girls get older, the pressure to look a certain way gets worse.

My Sport and Play

When it comes to sport and play, girls in Scotland feel constrained by gender stereotypes from a very young age. From gendered toys and different choices in PE to online games filled with gender stereotypes, girls told us this inequality gets worse as they get older.

My Planet and The Environment

Girls and young women are increasingly conscious consumers and are making efforts to reduce single-use plastic, avoid fast fashion and choose environmentally-friendly period products. Many have taken action to help the environment, like taking part in school climate strikes. They want governments and businesses to do more to tackle climate change.

My Community and Connections

Too many girls and young women in Scotland don't feel safe in their own communities or suffer from unwanted attention when out, especially after dark. They want to make sure their voice is heard on issues they care about, but as they get older, many feel they lack the skills to speak out.

My Voice and Future

Girls want to see an equal playing field for women and for people of diverse backgrounds, and more action to encourage women to take up leadership roles. They also want equal opportunities when it comes to both choosing subjects at school and choosing careers. They believe breaking down the barriers caused by gender stereotypes will lead to a brighter future.

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My Life and Wellbeing



There is a lot of pressure on girls and young women to change the way they look, and this has an impact on their wellbeing. Often this pressure stems from what girls are reading, watching and listening to in the media and online. As girls get older this pressure gets worse, and it can really dent their self-confidence.

Because the media plays a key role in shaping our views on the world, girls are worried about fake news and want to learn how to spot it.

Facing so many pressures, girls realise how important it is for their wellbeing to take time out and relax.

Self Care

Girls and young women understand taking time to chill out is vital for their health and wellbeing. But many are often too busy looking after others to take time for themselves. Worryingly, nearly a quarter of older girls feel guilty about relaxing and doing things they enjoy.

71%

said it's important to have time to relax and feel calm.



24%

of 11 to 21-year olds said they feel guilty taking time out for themselves or doing the things that they enjoy.



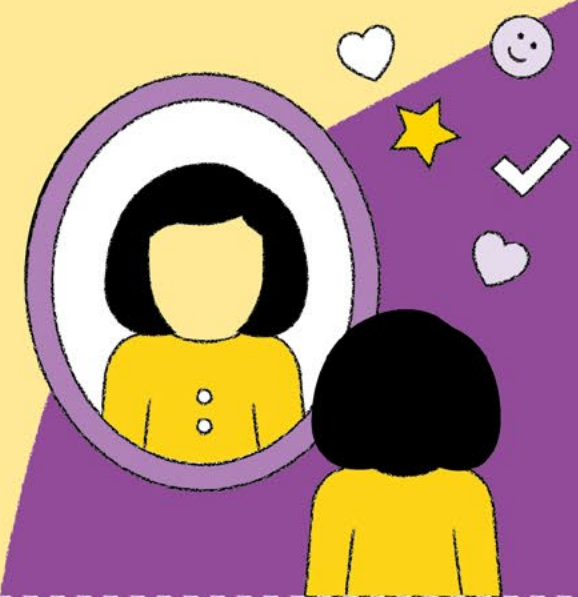
33%

said they often take care of others instead of taking care of themselves.



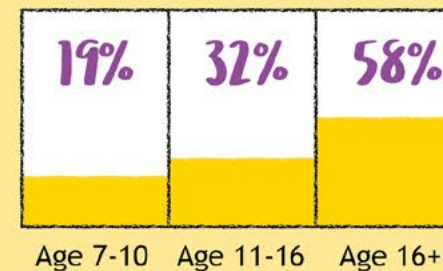
Confidence and Self-Belief

More than a third of all girls told us they struggle to be themselves. Their lack of self-confidence gets worse as they get older, with 58% of those over 16 feeling they simply can't be themselves. Learning to cope with life's challenges and finding inspiration in others helps girls with their self-esteem.



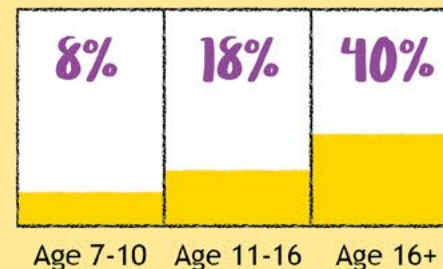
36%

of girls don't feel like they can be themselves wherever they go. The older they get, the more girls feel this way...



22%

of girls don't feel accepted by others. Again, this feeling of not being accepted increases with age...



Here are some things girls find challenging:

"I found being stuck at home with technology challenging. It makes you look at more videos online now." Girl, 11-12



"I find my weight really challenging. I am working out but sometimes I get tired. I just want to disappear. I want to lose my weight quickly because I am very cautious of my appearance." Girl, 19-21

"Watching so many people 'dress down' and take their make-up off exposing their 'flaws' when in reality they look absolutely gorgeous either way." Girl, 17-18



Body Image and Appearance Pressures

When it comes to body image, girls in Scotland are very torn. The vast majority believe they shouldn't feel under pressure to change the way they look, but many admit to using apps and filters to alter the image they present of themselves to the outside world. The older girls get, the more they feel this pressure to keep up appearances.

11 to 21-year old girls and young women told us about the pressure to look a certain way:

88%

said girls and young women shouldn't feel pressured to change the way they look.



75%

said there should be a minimum age of 18 for cosmetic procedures such as lip fillers and botox.



31%

don't post photos of themselves unless they've used an app or filter to change their appearance e.g. to change features, whiten teeth, etc.



23%

Age 11-16

40%

Age 16+

50%

regularly use apps or filters to make photos of themselves "look better".



41%

feel upset that they can't look the way they do online.

30% Age 11-16

51% Age 16+



The older girls get, the more likely they are to alter their appearance in photos. They're also more likely to feel upset that their actual appearance differs to altered images of themselves online.



We asked girls if they ever thought about changing their appearance, and if so, what was their reasoning...

55%

said to improve their confidence.

43%

Age 11-16

67%

Age 16+

51%

said to feel better about themselves.

39%

Age 11-16

63%

Age 16+

35%

said to feel accepted or to fit in better.

25%

Age 11-16

44%

Age 16+

Girls told us that fear of people criticising their body stops them from doing many things...



47%

wearing certain clothes they like.

35%

Age 11-16

59%

Age 16+



43%

having their picture taken.

29%

Age 11-16

56%

Age 16+



35%

speaking up in class, or at university or work.

30%

Age 11-16

41%

Age 16+



30%

taking part in sport or physical activity.

25%

Age 11-16

35%

Age 16+

Media and Social Media

Older girls and young women tell us that media and social media are powerful influences in their lives. They feel pressured about their looks and are frustrated that the media continues to promote gender stereotypes. Over half are concerned about the proliferation of fake news and many are worried they don't have the skills to determine what is real and what is not.



51%

of 11 to 21-year old girls have seen adverts online that pressured them to look different. This feeling of being pressured becomes significantly more common as girls get older.



71%

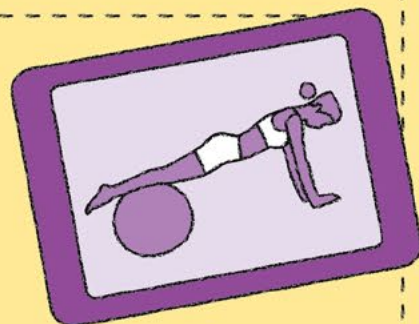
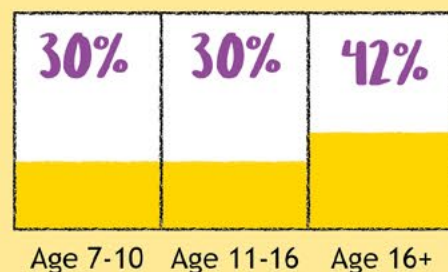
of 11 to 21-year old girls said diet products and weight loss clubs should not be advertised to children under 18.



Media and Image

34%

said the way women athletes are shown in the media, such as focusing on the way they look instead of their talent, puts them off going into sport. For young women, the impact is greater.



41%

of 11 to 21-year old girls feel pressured to take part in sport and physical activity because what they see on social media makes them want to change the way they look. As they get older, this pressure gets worse.



News Media

68%

of 11 to 21-year old girls and young women feel newspapers, magazines and influencers on social media need to do more to stop reinforcing gender stereotypes.



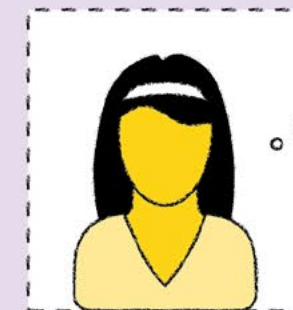
43%

of all girls aren't confident they have the skills to understand what is and isn't real in the news, media and online.



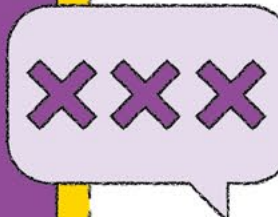
17%

of 11 to 21-year old girls and young women don't believe they have the skills and a further 22% said they don't know if they have the skills to be critical about what they read in the news, media and online.



51%

of 11 to 21-year old girls and young women are worried about fake news.



My Sport and Play

Most girls in Scotland lead an active lifestyle. Toys, sport and online gaming help girls develop new skills and learn about themselves. But many girls and young women still suffer from a lack of choice because parents, carers, schools and games companies continue to perpetuate gender stereotypes.

PE In School

A third of girls (32%) told us they don't enjoy or lack confidence to take part in PE and sport at school, college or university. As girls get older they are less likely to feel that they have the same PE and sports opportunities and choices as boys do.

32%

said they don't enjoy or don't feel confident taking part in PE, sport or physical activity at school, college or university. This increased as girls got older.

Age 7-10	11%
Age 11-16	34%
Age 16-21	50%



25%

said girls and boys don't have the same choices in sport and physical activity at their school. This increased as girls got older.

Age 7-10	11%
Age 11-16	25%
Age 16-21	39%



Role Models

Girls view women in sport as excellent role models. Three-quarters of young women over 16 said they are inspired by seeing women in sport.

84%

believe women in sport are good role models for girls.

75%

of over 16s said they are inspired by seeing women in sport.



We asked girls how watching women's sport on TV makes them feel...

"Good because it shows that your gender doesn't define your dreams."
Girl, 11-12

"I like it, I want to be a footballer for Scotland."
Girl, 9-10

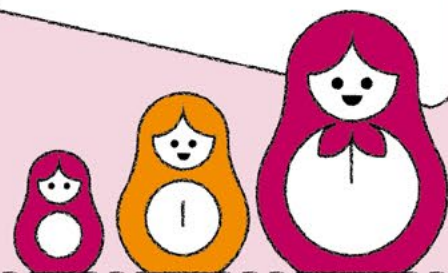
"It makes me feel proud for them and makes me want to have their drive and ambition, they are making good changes for women." Girl, 15-16



Gendered Toys

Dolls and crafts or cars and action figures? Girls in Scotland are concerned that being encouraged to play with certain types of toys has an impact on both girls and boys. Many feel this reinforcement of gender stereotypes prevents them from being themselves, developing skills and following their own interests.

"I feel pushed into a box."
Girl, 15-16



42%

of 11 to 21-year olds believe they limit their interest in different jobs and careers.

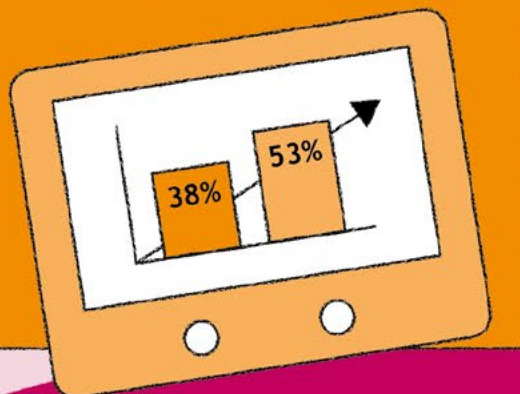


46%

of 7 to 10-year old girls said they don't get to play with toys they like - that's 11% higher than young girls in the rest of the UK.

38%

of 11 to 16-year olds said it makes it harder for girls and boys to be themselves. This rose to 53% of girls and young women over 16.



We asked girls how they felt about gendered toys:



56%

of 11 to 21-year olds said they encourage people to think gender stereotypes are true.

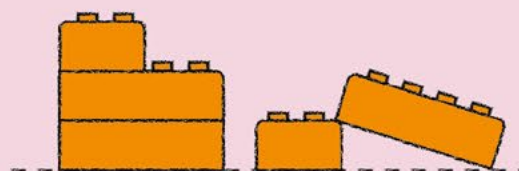
42%

of girls think they make it harder for girls and boys to find out or recognise what they're good at and what they enjoy.



46%

of over-16s said they stop girls and boys from developing a wide range of skills.



"I think that it is ridiculous that people are stereotyping the kinds of toys girls and boys should play with." Girl, 11-12

"It makes me feel annoyed because there is nothing wrong with trying new things. Boys can play what they want and so can girls. They don't need anyone telling them different." Girl, 11-12

Online Games

More than half of all girls in Scotland enjoy playing games online. However, many said their fun is being spoiled by the fact that many games are sexist and reinforce gender stereotypes. Girls and young women want gaming companies to make online gaming a safe and enjoyable space, free from discrimination and sexist comments.

55%

said playing games online is fun.



20%

said governments need to do more to make gaming safer and enjoyable for girls and young women.

19%

said they'd been told they can't play certain games because they're a girl or young woman.

26%

of girls over 16 have experienced sexist comments when playing games online.

33%

of 11 to 21-year old girls think gaming companies should not make games that are sexist and/or full of gender stereotypes.

My Planet and the Environment

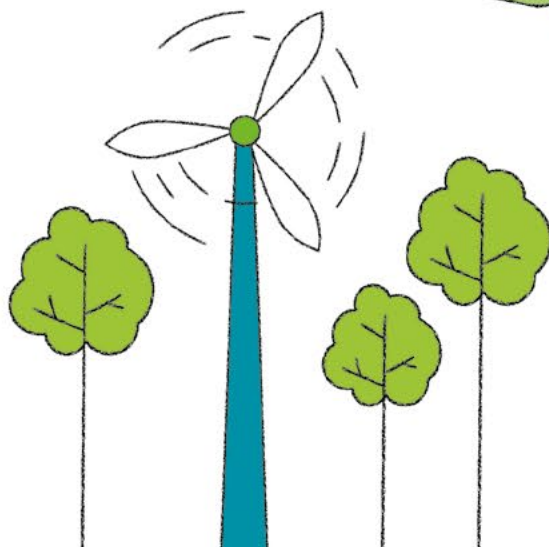
Girls in Scotland **really** care about the environment. **95% feel their lives are affected by climate change.** Some are angry, others are anxious and many are taking direct action. They know they play a vital role with their own lifestyle choices such as what they wear, how they get around and how much plastic they use in their daily lives. Their choice of fashion and what period products they use are two areas where girls see potential to make big improvements to benefit the environment.

While girls understand the impact of every individual playing their part, they want governments and businesses to make tackling the global crisis a priority.

"More green options at school at lunch: no plastic yoghurt tubs, no plastic straws and less wrappers at factories."
Girl, 7-8



"Stop cutting down trees in the Amazon rainforest. Make all cars electric to reduce CO2. Use renewable energy sources."
Girl, 13-14



Climate Change

The impact of single-use plastic on the environment is an issue girls feel very strongly about. While they are increasingly careful about what they buy and conscientious about recycling, girls feel that governments and businesses are failing to take the lead to reverse the harm being done to the environment.

"More needs to be done to educate older people about the dangers and damage that has already been done to the world. As a teenager I want myself and my children to grow up in a world that is changing for the better."
Girl, 13-14

However...

While girls are worried about what's happening to the planet, there is a glimmer of optimism. The fact that people are talking about climate change more and are trying to help is making 39% of girls aged 11-21 feel hopeful.



49%

are upset that the homes and habitats of animals are being destroyed.



34%

are angry that adults are not doing enough to tackle this issue.



20%

have taken action to do something to help the environment e.g. taking part in school climate strikes.



42%

of 7 to 10-year old girls are worried about climate change.



19%

of 11 to 21-year old girls are interested in studying or working in this area e.g. environmental sciences.



Period Products

Two-thirds of girls aged 11-21 in Scotland said they're aware of more environmentally-friendly period products such as menstrual cups, period pants, reusable pads and organic tampons. They want more women and girls to know about these choices, and to have better and more affordable access to sustainable period products.

Girls want manufacturers to take action...



82%

think manufacturers should be doing more to reduce plastic waste in period products.



78%

think manufacturers should list how much plastic is included in their products.

"Governments need to take more action by creating new laws to reduce carbon emissions and plastic." Girl, 13-14

What do 11-21 year old girls think about environment-friendly period products?

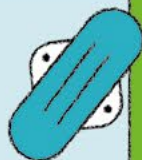


74%

would consider using them.

81%

think more should be available in shops.



78%

think there should be more education about them.

58%

think they're expensive.



34%

think they have a negative reputation e.g. they're seen as embarrassing.

Fast Fashion

Girls in Scotland feel pressured to buy the latest clothes and keep on top of trends. But when it comes to fast fashion, they are conscious consumers. Half of 16 to 21-year olds said they try to buy clothes that are recycled, second-hand or from charity shops.



Girls age 11-21 told us they are concerned about the culture of fast fashion:

56%

think fast fashion has a negative effect on the environment.

66%

said they want to buy clothes in a more environment-friendly way, but find it difficult.

86%

said they think companies should be doing more to produce clothes in an environment-friendly way.

84%

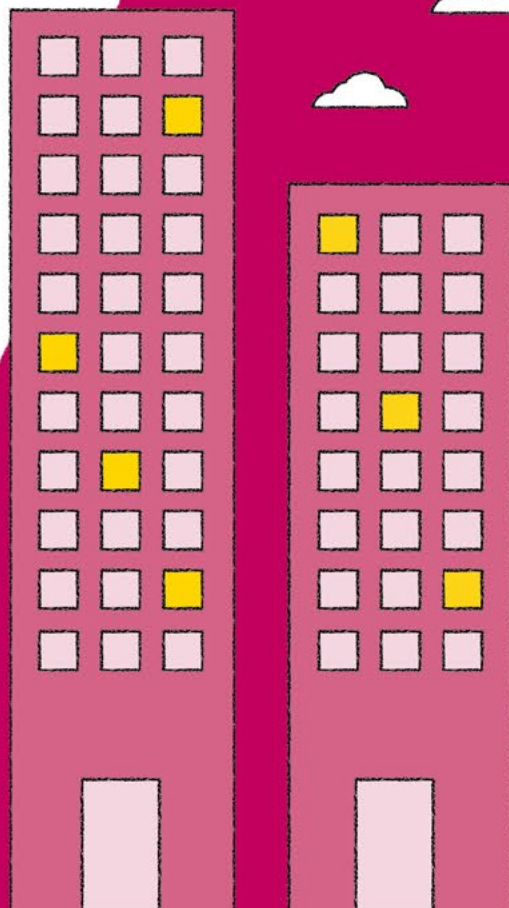
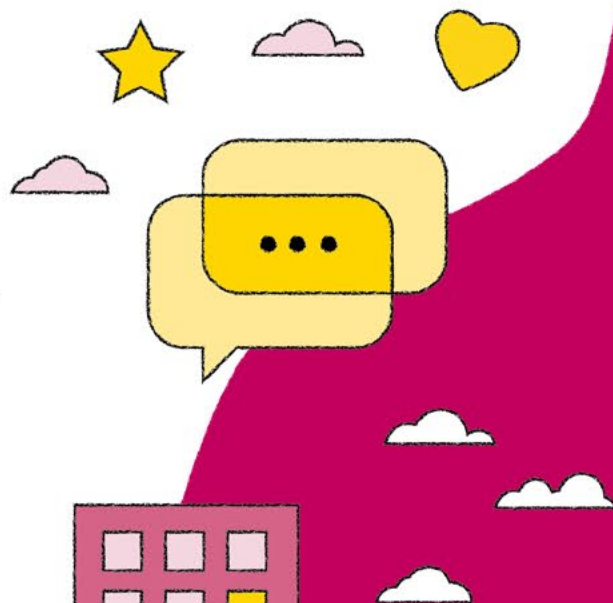
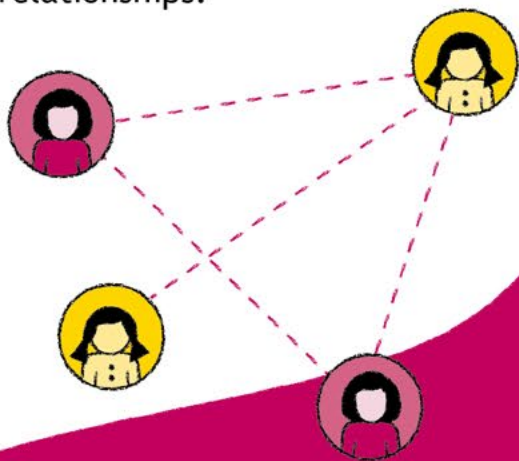
said companies should be doing more to reduce the amount of plastic in the clothes they produce.

"Consume and produce less, reuse more, travel less."
Girl, 11-12

My Community and Connections

Girls in Scotland should be able to feel safe in their community - wherever they are - but many don't. They want to have their voices heard on issues they care deeply about, but some girls and young women feel they lack the skills and confidence to do so. They also want to build friendships and relationships with both their peers and older generations, but many struggle with self-confidence.

Girls told us that more needs to be done to ensure everyone is safe, able to speak out about what is important to them and able to develop strong and healthy relationships.



Friendships and Relationships

Even from a young age, most girls want to be popular amongst their peers. But growing up, friendships can be tricky to navigate, especially when girls say they feel they're expected to compete against one another. Many told us that when they are with girls only it is easier to find their voice and be themselves.



46%

of all girls are more likely to speak up about things that are important to them if they are with girls only.

59%

of 7 to 10-year olds want to be popular with those around them.

55%

of all girls find it difficult to tell a friend they've upset them.



47%

said girls and women are expected to compete against each other. Girls over 16 were nearly twice as likely to feel this way as younger girls aged 7-10.



Age 7-10 Age 11-16 Age 16+

40%

of girls are more likely to gain confidence when taking part in something if they are with girls only.



47%

are more likely to feel comfortable to be themselves when taking part in something if they are with girls only.

Voices and Opinions



From climate change to gender stereotypes, girls know how important it is to speak out about the issues they care about and make a difference in their local community. Not all girls have had the chance to learn these skills at school, though. Many girls and young women also feel that young people have a bad reputation and older people simply don't listen to or respect what they have to say.

84%

of all girls said it's important to speak out about issues they care about.

77%



of 11 to 21-year olds think younger and older people spending more time together is a good way to tackle loneliness.

62%

of 11 to 21-year olds think young people their age have a bad reputation e.g. in the media. This rises from 57% of 11 to 16-year olds to 74% for those over the age of 16.

62%

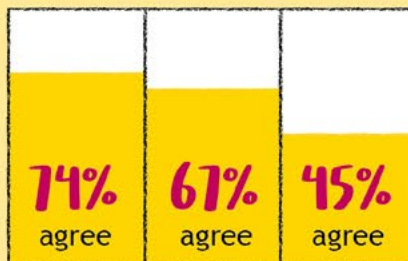
of all girls said they learned skills needed to speak out about the issues they care about at school. Younger girls feel they are learning these important skills more than older girls and young women.

53%

of 11 to 21-year olds feel older people don't listen to people their age or respect their opinions.



At school I learn (or have learnt) the skills needed to speak out about the issues I care about:



Age 7-10 Age 11-16 Age 16+

Community Safety

Personal safety is a serious concern for girls, especially for older girls and young women. Many are fearful about going out alone, going out in the dark and being harassed while they're out in their local area. They strongly believe that they should feel safe in their own community.

31%

of girls said they sometimes feel unsafe when spending time outside, and they're more likely to feel this way as they get older.



Age 7-10	20%
Age 11-16	31%
Age 16-21	43%

For young women (16-21) feeling unsafe outside is a very significant issue...

37%

said they're often stared at and receive unwanted attention when they go outside.

56%

feel worried when they're outside and it's dark.

53%

said more should be done so that girls and young women feel safe in their local area.



My Voice and Future



Subject Choice

Many girls feel frustrated that gender stereotypes still persist in schools. They feel pressure to choose certain subjects and careers, and this intensifies as they get older.

39%

of 11 to 21-year olds are influenced by their friends when choosing their subjects.

56%

of 11 to 21-year olds said their school should do more to tackle gender stereotypes.

44%

of 11 to 21-year olds have been patronised or made to feel stupid because they're a girl.

43%

of all girls believe there are certain subjects or careers they're expected to do because they're a girl. Those over 16 are much more likely to feel this pressure.

35%

Age 7-10

35%

Age 11-16

58%

Age 16+

Leadership

Women are born leaders just as much as men. But our research shows all too often barriers and challenges prevent them from taking on top roles. Girls in Scotland have clear ideas on how to encourage more girls and young women to be good leaders in the future.

54%

said challenge the abuse and harassment of women in leadership positions.

50%

said give more support to people who want to start a family and have a career.

60%

said help girls and young women to build on the skills and confidence they need to be a leader.

59%

said more opportunities should be available to involve young people in decisions that affect them.

We asked 11 to 21-year old girls what would encourage more girls and women to take up leadership roles?

64%

said stop judging women leaders by what they wear and how they look.

54%

said help girls and young women to see other women that look like them, who they can relate to in leadership positions.

Careers

Older girls and young women in Scotland feel their career prospects are being limited by a lack of opportunities in education and in their local communities. They're not being given the chance to explore jobs which are traditionally male-dominated, or they're not being fully informed of their options. More meaningful work experience would help address this issue.

63% feel, or felt pressured to make decisions about their future career at school, college or university.



51% of those over 16 said there are no meaningful work experience or part-time job opportunities in their area related to the career they want.



26% said they don't or didn't have many or any opportunities at school, college or university to explore careers traditionally targeted at men, such as engineering and manual jobs.



43% said there are certain subjects or careers they're expected to do because they're a girl.



Politics

Girls in Scotland have a keen interest in politics and want to play their part, but feel there is still work to be done to make political systems more equal and diverse. They think more political education in schools and more opportunities for young people to get involved in politics would ensure decision-makers take young people's views into account.

62% of girls think there should be more opportunities for young people to get involved in politics.



67% said there should be more opportunities for people from different backgrounds to get involved in politics.



73% of 11 to 21-year olds believe more needs to be done to make politics equal for men and women.



60% of 11 to 21-year olds said there should be more political education in schools.



Gender Stereotypes

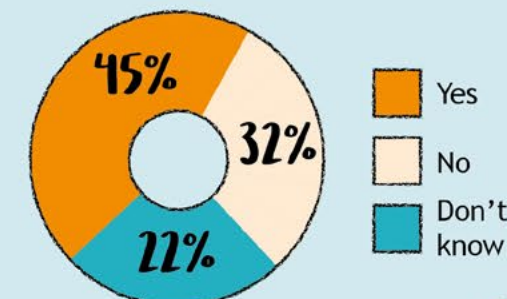
Girls and young women are talented individuals with diverse skills and knowledge, but even girls as young as 7 said they think women are judged more on their appearance than on their abilities. This early recognition of gender stereotyping is clearly having an impact when girls consider their own future.

50%

of 7 to 10-year old girls said women are judged more on what they look like than what they can do.



We asked girls if they would like or consider getting a job in technology such as an astronaut, video games tester, engineer, or web designer:



26%

said they are put off of working in technology because they don't know of many women working in that field.



We asked what is the one top thing you want to be different to make life better for girls?

"The way girls are portrayed on the media as it can affect the way people see themselves." Girl, 15-16

"I want to feel like what I say matters." Girl, 9-10

"More women politicians." Girl, 9-10

"Girls need to support each other instead of bringing each other down. we're all on the same team." Girl, 17-18

"For boys and girls to have the same chances and same paid jobs." Girl, 7-8

Our Methodology

Girls in Scotland 2020 is a subset of data from the Girls' Attitudes Survey 2020. A total of 527 girls and young women in Scotland aged between 7 and 21 took part in the 2020 survey.

Girlguiding commissioned CHILDWISE, leading specialists in research with children and young people, to conduct the survey.

Interviews were completed online, with data first collected in schools during March, and then via a large proprietary online panel - following the UK and Scottish governments' closure of schools due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Interviews with young women who were not in education, employment, or training (NEET) were also included via the online panel, ensuring representation of this potentially marginalised group.

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 can be tracked.

Fieldwork took place from March to April 2020.

Sample Details

Total	7-8 yrs	9-10 yrs	11-13 yrs	14-16 yrs	17-18 yrs	19-21 yrs
527	87	90	88	91	97	74
	7-10		11-16		Post 16	
	177		179		171	

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.

About Girlguiding Scotland



We're the leading organisation for girls and young women in Scotland with around 45,000 young members and 11,500 volunteers. We support girls to take on new challenges, learn new skills and realise their potential, all while having fun and making new friends in a safe, girl-only space.

Our programme, packed with badges and activities, aims to equip girls with the skills they need for life - with activities in everything from bushcraft to mindfulness, inventing to campaigning.

We're not only committed to supporting girls to develop their skills and confidence, but empowering them to speak out and take action in their communities and beyond.

We know that when girls use their voice they can make real and meaningful change. That's why we campaign on the issues our young members tell us matter to them and why we're working hard to make sure Scotland is the best possible place to be a girl.

Find out more at girlguidingscotland.org.uk



Girlguiding Scotland is the operating name of The Guide Association Scotland, Scottish charity number SC005548.

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