

Children, violence and vulnerability 2024

How do boys and girls experience violence?



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Main findings and summary



Executive Summary

The Youth Endowment Fund surveyed over 10,000 teenage children (aged 13–17) in England and Wales about their experiences of violence.

The findings are detailed across five reports, each focusing on a different aspect.

In this report, we examine how experiences of violence differ for boys and girls, the prevalence of relationship violence among teenage children and what schools are doing to promote healthy relationships between young people.

Here's what we found.

Violence is experienced differently by boys and girls.

Both boys and girls are affected by violence, but gender plays a significant role in shaping these experiences. Although boys and girls share similar levels of concern about becoming victims – 68% of boys and 66% of girls worry about this – their actual experiences of violence vary considerably.

Boys are disproportionately affected, being more likely to both experience and perpetrate violence. Over the past 12 months, 24% of boys report being victims, compared to 16% of girls. The gap widens further when it comes to perpetration: 21% of boys admit to violent behaviour, nearly double the 11% of girls.

The types of violence they face also differ. Boys are more frequently victims of most forms of violence, including robbery, physical assault and incidents involving weapons. Sexual violence is the exception, with the rates being closer: 6% of boys and 7% of girls aged 13–17 report experiencing sexual violence in the past year.



I think the first time I was cat-called, I was 12. That was the start of when I realised that I did feel unsafe. Just underlying levels of feeling unsafe all the time when I'm out on my own.

Martha, Youth Endowment Fund Youth Advisory Board member



Online, the issue of sexual violence becomes even more pervasive – 27% of all 13-17-year-olds say they've seen images or threats of sexual assault. Additionally, 33% have encountered content that encourages violence against women and girls specifically, highlighting a concerning trend in digital spaces. [For an in-depth look at how violence on social media impacts children's lives, read our dedicated report in this series.](#)

Relationship violence is common for both boys and girls.

Of the teenage children we surveyed this year, 27% had been in a romantic relationship over the past year. Among these, nearly half (49%) have experienced violent or controlling behaviours from their partner.

Controlling behaviours are the most common, reported by 46% of those in relationships, and include behaviours such as having their partner check who they've been talking to on their phone or social media accounts (30%). They also include being afraid to disagree with their partner (27%) or being afraid to break up with them (26%).

One in three (31%) children in relationships have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence. Alarmingly, 20% of children in relationships report being pressured or forced into sexual activities they did not consent to. Nineteen per cent have experienced physical violence, such as being hit, kicked or shoved. Seventeen per cent have had explicit images or videos shared online by a partner without their consent.

Younger teens (aged 13-15) in relationships are significantly more likely to report violent or controlling experiences in their relationships (58%) than those aged 16-17 (42% of those in relationships). Surprisingly, boys in relationships are more likely to say they experience violent or controlling behaviours (57%) compared to girls (41%).

Schools teach lessons on healthy relationships, but topics such as consent may not be reaching those who most need it.

Our findings highlight the importance of education and support in promoting healthy relationships among children and young people. However, they also reveal that such lessons are not universally taught or consistently reaching those who need them the most.

While 76% of students report receiving some form of education on dating and relationships in the past year, the reach of these lessons is uneven. The most commonly taught topics – sexual consent and harassment – have only reached about half of 13-17-year-olds, with 55% receiving lessons on consent and 43% on harassment. Additionally, only 40% say they've received lessons on how to be in healthy and respectful romantic relationships.

Children who admit to perpetrating sexual violence are even less likely to say they've received lessons on consent and harassment than the average – only 39% and 31%, respectively. This indicates that while some efforts are underway, there is a pressing need for more targeted and thorough education to effectively support and safeguard young people in their relationships.



From Year 7, we had this lesson called Belief and Values, which is basically like RE and PHSE put together, and there would be a topic every year on healthy relationships. But it wasn't a prioritised topic, I don't think. A lot of the time, it was crammed into a couple of lessons, and it wasn't an engaging lesson either. It was more, 'This is on the curriculum. We have to teach it by law or by school policy, and we're going to get through it'. But there were a lot of jokes made in those lessons about consent and things that I don't think were shut down quite appropriately.



Martha, Youth Endowment Fund Youth Advisory Board member

Headline findings

Violence is experienced differently by boys and girls.

Boys are more likely to be involved in any violence, but rates are high for girls as well.

The majority of boys (68%) and girls (66%) are concerned about violence. 24% of boys and 16% of girls have been a victim of violence in the past year. 21% of boys and 11% of girls have perpetrated violence in the past year.

Boys and girls experience different types of violence.

Boys are more likely than girls to have been victims of physical assault (12% vs 7%), robbery (8% vs 4%) and weapons violence (7% vs 3%) but not sexual assault (6% vs 7%). While boys are more likely to experience violence in public spaces, boys (13%) and girls (16%) are equally as likely to experience violence in their homes.

Violence against women and girls is frequently seen on social media.

33% of teenage children have seen content on social media encouraging violence against women and girls. Girls are slightly more likely to say they've seen this content (34%) than boys (32%). 27% of all 13-17-year-olds say they've seen images or threats of sexual assault.

Relationship violence is common for both boys and girls.

Half of children in relationships say they've experienced violent or controlling behaviours...

27% of 13-17-year-olds say they've been in a relationship in the past 12 months. Half (49%) report experiencing violent or controlling behaviours from their partners. This translates to 13% of all children.

...ranging from constant messages to physical and sexual violence.

45% of children in relationships say their partner constantly sends messages, checking up on them. 27% are afraid to disagree with their partners in case they get angry. 20% have been pressured into sexual acts they didn't want. 19% have been hit, kicked or shoved. 17% have had intimate images of themselves shared online.

Younger teenagers report higher rates of violent and controlling relationship experiences.

Among those in relationships, 28% of 13-15-year-olds say they've been hit, kicked or shoved, compared to 12% of 16-17-year-olds. 35% of 13-year-olds in relationships say they've been pressured into sex, compared to 12% of 17-year-olds in relationships.

Schools teach lessons on healthy relationships, but topics such as consent may not be reaching those who most need it.

Half of children have had lessons about sexual consent.

76% of students have received some form of relationship education in the past year. The most common topics are sexual consent (55%), harassment (43%) and how to be in a healthy and respectful romantic relationship (40%).

But children who've perpetrated sexual violence are significantly less likely to say they've received lessons on consent.

Most children who've perpetrated sexual violence say they've had some form of lessons on dating and relationships in the past year (94%). But they're less likely to say they've received lessons on sexual consent (39%) and harassment (31%) than the average (55% and 43%, respectively).

Methods and detailed findings



About this report

What we wanted to find out

This is our third annual survey into young people's experience of violence. This year, we surveyed over 10,000 children aged 13–17 in England and Wales about their experiences over the past 12 months – compared to 7,500 last year. The greater number of responses provides more confidence in the findings.

This year, we're publishing the findings of the survey in five separate reports, covering:

1. [Who is affected by violence?](#)
2. [What role does social media play in violence affecting young people?](#)
3. [How are boys and girls affected by violence? \(this report\)](#)
4. [What do children and young people think about the police?](#)
5. [Who has access to positive activities, youth clubs and trusted adults?](#)

This is the third report in this year's series. It covers differences in how boys and girls experience violence, online content that promotes violence against women and girls, children's experiences of violent or controlling relationships and what schools teach about healthy relationships.

What we did

This year, a total of 10,387 children aged 13–17 responded to our survey. As with last year, this was an online survey. This year, we worked with a new surveying partner – Savanta. The survey took 15 minutes on average to complete and was live between 22 May and 2 July 2024. Questions typically related to children's experiences over the past 12 months.

To ensure the results were nationally representative, we did two things. Firstly, we set quotas for key groups. These were age, gender, ethnicity, region and socioeconomic status. The quotas were based on each group's share of the population using Census 2021 population estimates for 13–17-year-olds. Secondly, the results were weighted using the same characteristics to ensure they aligned exactly with their national population totals. For more details, see the [technical report](#).

How children were kept safe when taking part in the survey

Children were invited to take part in the survey and were made aware of the types of questions that would be asked. Anyone could refuse to take part if they wished. For all children aged under 16, a parent or guardian had to consent. Participants could drop out of the survey at any time. Participants were asked to complete the survey on their own and in a safe place where their responses could not be seen. Questions were presented so that responses would not remain visible once they'd been selected to protect their privacy. And it wasn't possible to look back at previous responses once questions had been answered. At the beginning and end and throughout the survey, participants were signposted to relevant support services.

Approach to reporting results

The smaller the number of responses, the less confident we are in the results. For this reason, no results are reported where the total number of responses to a particular question was less than 50. All group comparisons mentioned in the report are statistically significant at a 95% confidence level unless otherwise noted.

What to bear in mind when reading the findings

Like all research, our survey has some limitations. We're trying to understand what children across England and Wales have experienced. While our sample of 10,387 13-17-year-olds is large (for context, the Office for National Statistics' [Crime Survey of England and Wales](#) reached 1,528 10-15-year-olds in 2023/24 and has consistently reached around 3,000 young people in recent years), it still represents a small proportion of all children in the country. It's important, therefore, to remember these limitations when interpreting the results:

- Weights are applied to ensure that the results are broadly representative of the national populations of England and Wales. However, the weights applied only cover a limited number of factors.
- Like most surveys, those who respond are self-selecting. Respondents had the option not to take part. Applying weights helps to address this, but the self-selecting nature of the respondents may have biased the results in a way weighting couldn't account for.
- The sample size is significantly larger than last year's survey and other surveys of this kind. However, when we look at the results for some smaller subgroups (e.g. by region, ethnicity and age), these individual groups can be small. This makes it hard to make generalised conclusions for some smaller populations.
- The subject matter (children's experiences of violence) is sensitive. While we ensured the framing of the questions was suitable for children, it's possible that some may have been unwilling to respond openly and honestly, particularly about things they may have done.
- Caution should be taken when making comparisons between this year's survey and last year's. We cannot rule out that changes made to question order, survey length or respondents to the survey affected comparability between years.

What we found

Violence is experienced differently by boys and girls.

Boys are more likely to be involved in violence, but rates are high for girls as well.

In this year's survey, we continued to find notable gender differences in how children experience violence, although both boys and girls are affected.

As we've seen in our first [publication in the series](#), concern about violence is high across genders, with 68% of boys and 66% of girls expressing worry about becoming victims of violence. However, boys are significantly more likely to have directly experienced violence. In the past 12 months, 24% of teenage boys have been victims of violence, compared to 16% of girls, and 21% have perpetrated violence themselves, compared to 11% of girls.

How did we ask about gender in our survey?

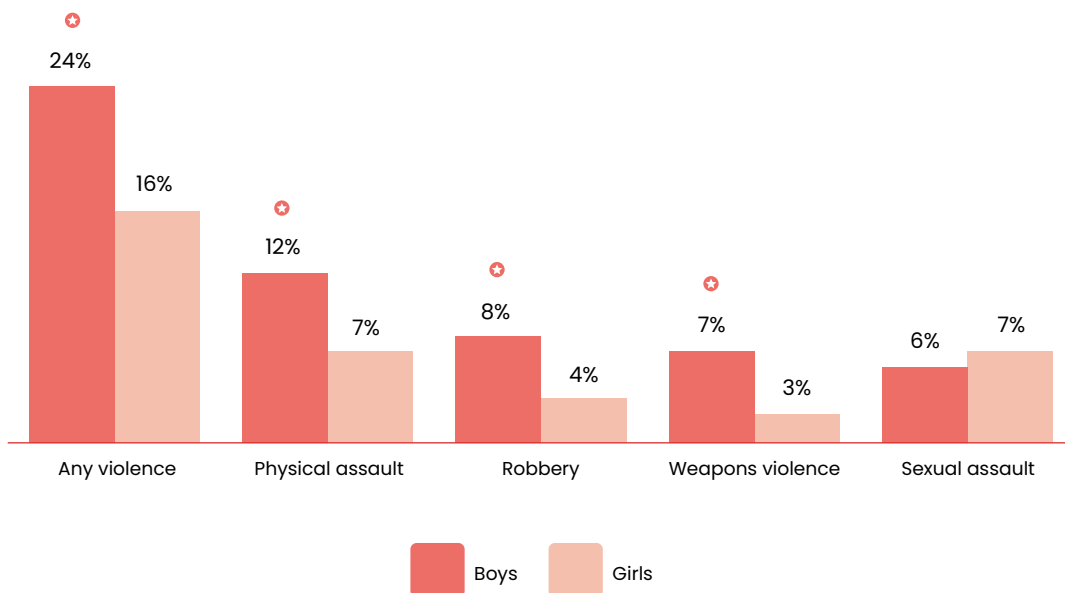
Different surveys measure gender in a variety of ways, particularly when it comes to children. For example, the [national census](#) only asks about gender identity for those aged 16 and above. For children aged under 16, only their sex as registered at birth is recorded. But we wanted to get a more accurate picture of gender identity in our survey, in part because of the important role that gender plays in experiences of violence.

In response to the question "What is your gender?" children responding to our survey could select one of four options: male, female, non-binary or other. Of the responses (before weighting), 5,287 (51%) identified as boys, 5,005 (48%) as girls and 68 (1%) as non-binary or other. Due to the low number of respondents who identified as non-binary or other, we've not reported separate figures for these children.

Boys and girls experience different types of violence.

Boys report higher rates of becoming victims of most types of violence, including robbery (8% for boys vs 4% for girls), physical violence (12% for boys vs 7% for girls) and weapons-related violence (7% for boys vs 3% for girls). Sexual violence is the exception, with boys (6%) and girls (7%) reporting similar rates. Boys also report higher rates of perpetrating all types of violence, including robbery (8% for boys vs 3% for girls), physical violence (14% for boys vs 7% for girls), weapons-related violence (7% for boys vs 2% for girls) and sexual violence (8% for boys vs 2% for girls).

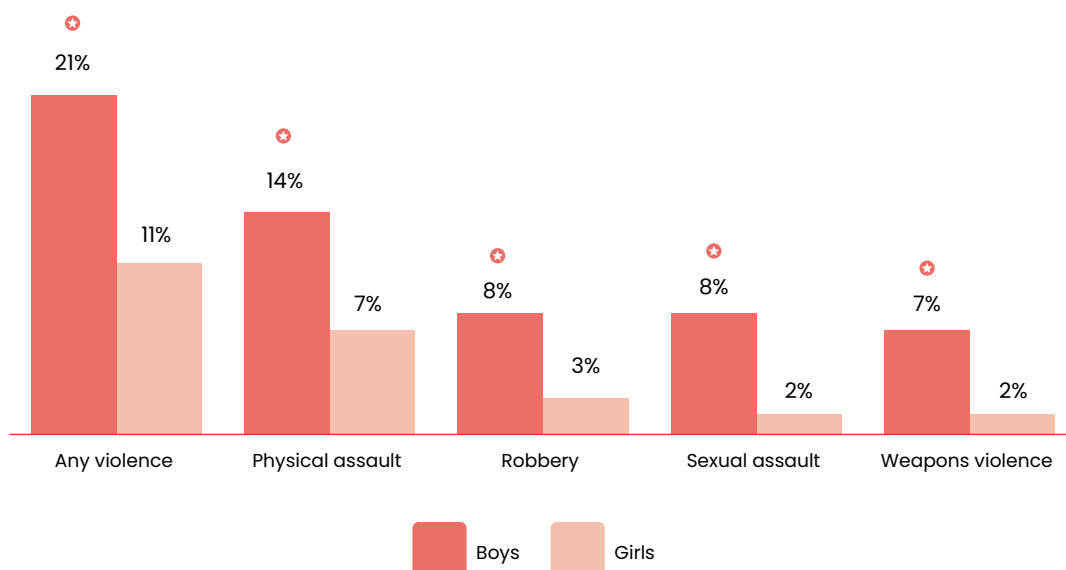
Figure 1.1: Proportion of 13-17-year-olds in England and Wales who have been victims of violence in the past 12 months by gender



Note. Stars above the bars indicate where estimates for the two groups are significantly different from one another at a 95% confidence level.

Boys are also more likely to have been involved in serious and repeated violence. In the past year, 68% of boys who were victims of violence say it led to physical injury, compared to 50% of girls. Thirty-three per cent of boys who were victims of violence say they've been victimised five or more times, compared to 22% of girls. Similarly, 55% of boys who've perpetrated violence say it led to physical injury, and 35% say they perpetrated violence five or more times, compared to 33% and 21% of girls, respectively.

Figure 1.2: Proportion of 13–17-year-olds in England and Wales who perpetrated violence in the past 12 months by gender



Note. Stars above the bars indicate where estimates for the two groups are significantly different from one another at a 95% confidence level.

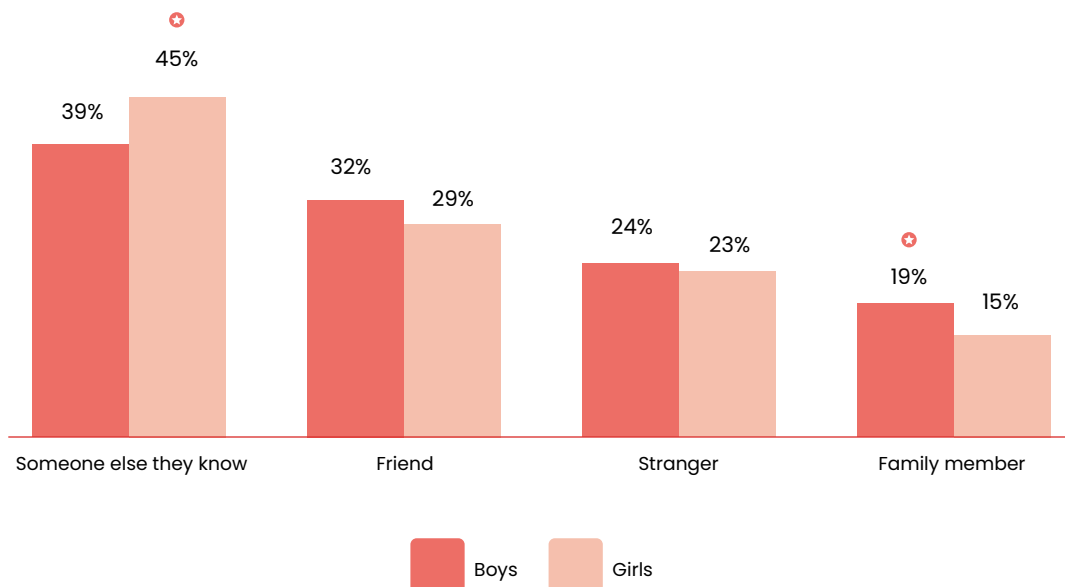
Gender differences in exposure to violence differ by ethnicity.

While boys are more likely than girls to experience most types of violence, this differs by ethnicity. For example, boys from Asian backgrounds (18%) are not significantly more likely to report being a victim when compared to girls from Asian backgrounds (15%). This is due to the lower victimisation rates reported by Asian boys compared to Black (24%), White (24%) and mixed ethnicity (28%) boys. There is also no significant gender difference when comparing victimisation rates among boys and girls from mixed ethnic backgrounds. This is due to the increased rates of victimisation among mixed ethnicity girls (22%) compared to girls from White (16%), Asian (15%) and Black (14%) backgrounds. Gender differences are more consistent when it comes to perpetration – boys from all ethnic groups are more likely than girls to say they’ve perpetrated violence.

Boys are more likely to have experienced violence from a family member, but boys and girls are equally as likely to have experienced violence in their homes.

Both boys and girls are most likely to have been the victim of violence by someone they know who isn’t a friend or relative. But boys are more likely than girls to report being victims of violence by family members (19% for boys vs 15% for girls), while girls are more likely to report experiencing violence by someone they know who isn’t a friend or relative (45% for girls vs 39% for boys).

Figure 1.3: Who committed violence against children who have been victims of violence in the past 12 months by gender*

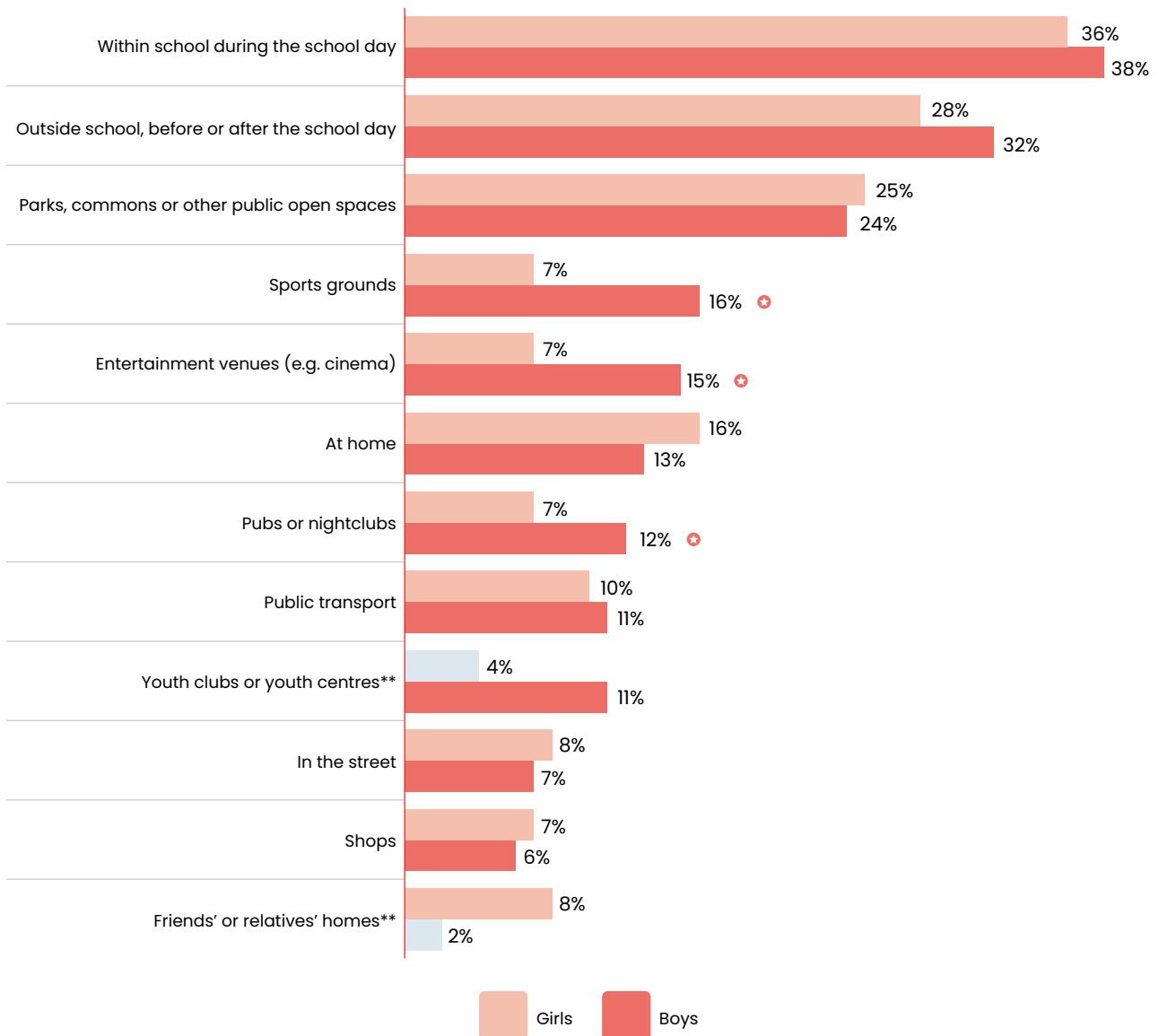


*Figures do not add up to 100%, as children may have been victimised more than once and by different perpetrators.

Note. Stars above the bars indicate where estimates for the two groups are significantly different from one another at a 95% confidence level.

The location of violent incidents also varies by gender. Boys who’ve been victims of violence report higher rates of violence in most public spaces, such as sports grounds (16% for boys vs 7% for girls) and entertainment venues (15% for boys vs 7% for girls). However, although boys are more likely to have been victimised by family members, boys and girls are equally likely to have experienced violence in their own homes (13% for boys vs 16% for girls).

Figure 1.4: Where children who have been victims in the past 12 months experienced violence by gender*



*Figures do not add up to 100%, as children may have experienced violence in multiple locations.

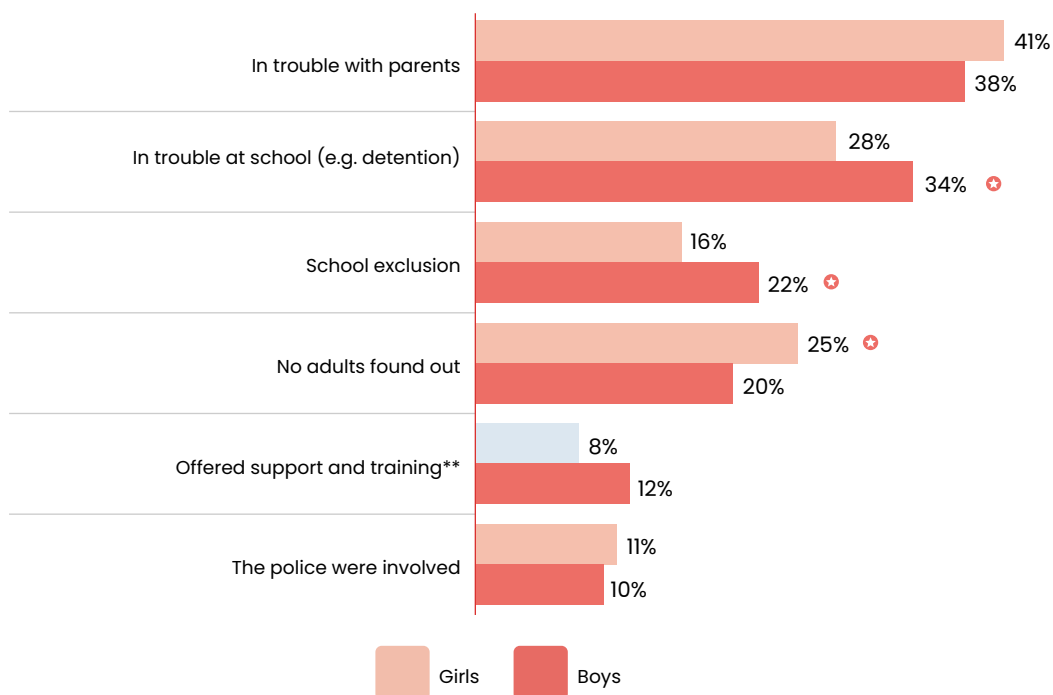
**Light blue bars represent small (<50) numbers of respondents, so they should be interpreted with caution.

Note. Stars beside the bars indicate where estimates for the two groups are significantly different from one another at a 95% confidence level.

Responses to and consequences of violence also differ by gender.

Girls who perpetrated violence are more likely to say that no adults in authority found out about it compared to boys (25% for girls vs 20% for boys). Boys who've perpetrated violence are more likely to face school-related consequences following violent incidents (34% for boys vs 28% for girls). It's worth noting that only a small percentage of children, regardless of gender, report receiving support or training following violent incidents (12% of boys vs 8% of girls).

Figure 1.5: Responses of adults to children who have perpetrated violence in the past 12 months by gender*



*Figures do not add up to 100%, as children may have experienced more than one outcome.

**Light blue bars represent small (<50) numbers of respondents, so they should be interpreted with caution.

Note. Stars beside the bars indicate where estimates for the two groups are significantly different from one another at a 95% confidence level.

A third of children were exposed to content promoting violence against women and girls on social media.

Twenty-seven per cent of teenage children say they’ve seen sexual violence on social media in the past year. Thirty-three per cent say they’ve seen material that encourages violence against women or girls. Boys (27%) and girls (27%) are equally likely to have seen sexually violent content or threats on social media. But, in line with what we found last year, girls (34%) are more likely than boys (32%) to have seen content encouraging violence specifically against women and girls. The older girls are, the more likely they are to say they’ve seen this content, whereas the opposite is true for boys. Thirty-three per cent of 13–15-year-old boys say they’ve seen social media content encouraging violence against women and girls in the last year, falling to 29% of 16–17-year-old boys. In contrast, 30% of 13–15-year-old girls say they’ve seen this content, increasing to 38% of 16–17-year-old girls.

Black (37%) and mixed ethnicity (41%) children are more likely to say they've seen content promoting violence against women and girls than White children (31%). Looking at gender differences by racial groups, boys and girls are equally likely to have seen such content among Black (38% of girls vs 36% of boys), mixed ethnicity (42% of girls vs 39% of boys) and White (31% of both boys and girls) children. But Asian girls are significantly more likely to say they've seen such content (39%) than Asian boys (27%).

Relationship violence is common for both boys and girls.

Half of children in relationships say they've experienced violent or controlling behaviours.

This year, as well as examining how experiences of violence differ for boys and girls, we wanted to better understand children's experiences of violence or abuse within romantic relationships. Twenty-seven per cent of children say they've been in a relationship in the past year. Of these, 49% say they've experienced violent or controlling behaviours from their partners. Forty-six per cent say they've experienced controlling behaviours, and 31% say they've experienced physical or sexual violence.

How do we define violent and controlling relationship behaviours?

We asked all 13-17-year-olds who say they've been in a romantic or sexual relationship in the past year whether they experienced violent or controlling behaviours from their partners. We only asked about experiences of victimisation, not about how they behaved towards their partners. The questions we used were adapted from a [Women's Aid survey](#) on unhealthy relationships between young people. In our analysis, we divided the responses into controlling behaviours and physical or sexual violence based on the responses below:

Controlling behaviours (“Did your partner ...”):

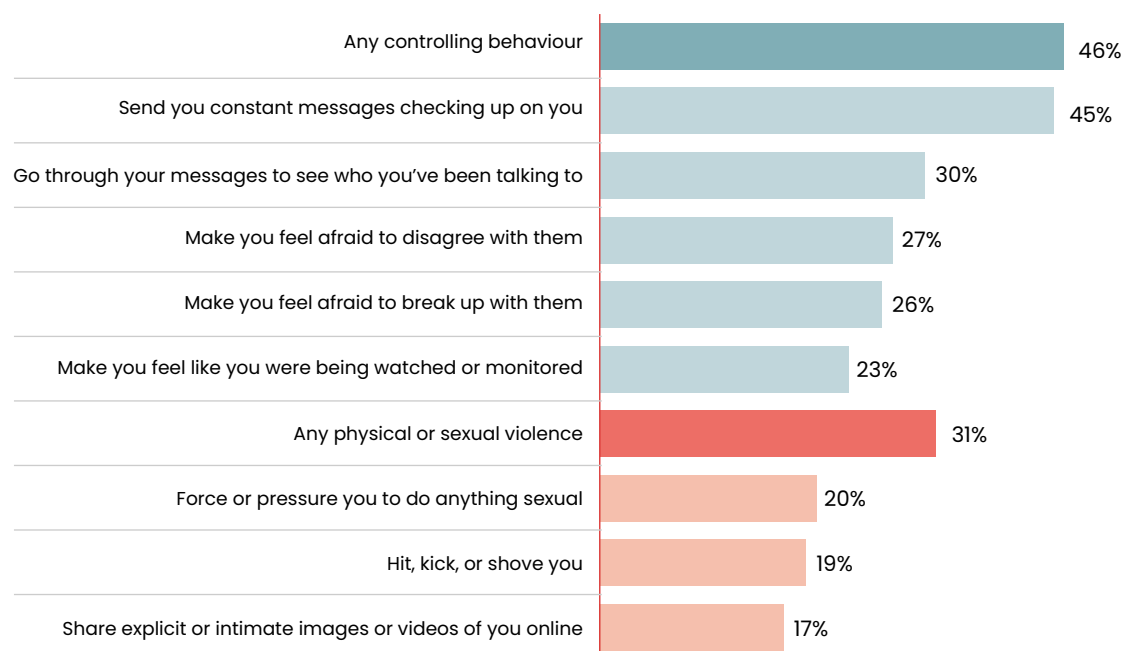
- “... send you constant messages checking up on you when you were not with them?”
- “... go through your phone or social media to see who you’ve been talking to?”
- “... make you feel like you were being watched or monitored?”
- “... make you feel afraid to disagree with them in case they get angry?”
- “... make you feel afraid to break up with them?”

Physical or sexual violence (“Did your partner ...”):

- “... post or share any explicit or intimate images or videos of you online?”
- “... hit, kick or shove you?”
- “... force or pressure you to do anything sexual that you didn’t want to do?”

The most commonly reported behaviour was sending constant messages when apart (45% of children in relationships). More concerning experiences were also reported, such as respondents feeling afraid to break up with their partners (26%) and feeling watched or monitored (23%). Twenty per cent of teenage children in relationships say they’ve been pressured or forced to do something sexual they didn’t want to. Nineteen per cent experienced physical violence, such as being hit, kicked or shoved. Seventeen per cent report having explicit images or videos of them shared online without their consent.

Figure 2.1: Proportion of children in relationships who have experienced different types of violent or controlling behaviour



Younger teenagers are more likely to say they've experienced violent or controlling behaviours in their relationships.

While younger teenagers are less likely to say they've been in a romantic or sexual relationship in the past year, those who have been are more likely to report experiencing violent or controlling behaviours than older teens. Of those in relationships, 58% of 13-year-olds, 59% of 14-year-olds and 49% of 15-year-olds say they've experienced controlling behaviours compared to 44% of 16-year-olds and 34% of 17-year-olds.

The difference by age is particularly stark for physical and sexual violence, with 47% of 13-year-olds, 46% of 14-year-olds and 37% of 15-year-olds in relationships reporting this type of experience compared to 22% of 16-year-olds and 19% of 17-year-olds in relationships. For example, one in three (35%) 13-year-olds in relationships say their partner has pressured them into doing something sexual they didn't want to, compared to 12% of 17-year-olds.

Relationship violence shows unexpected gender patterns.

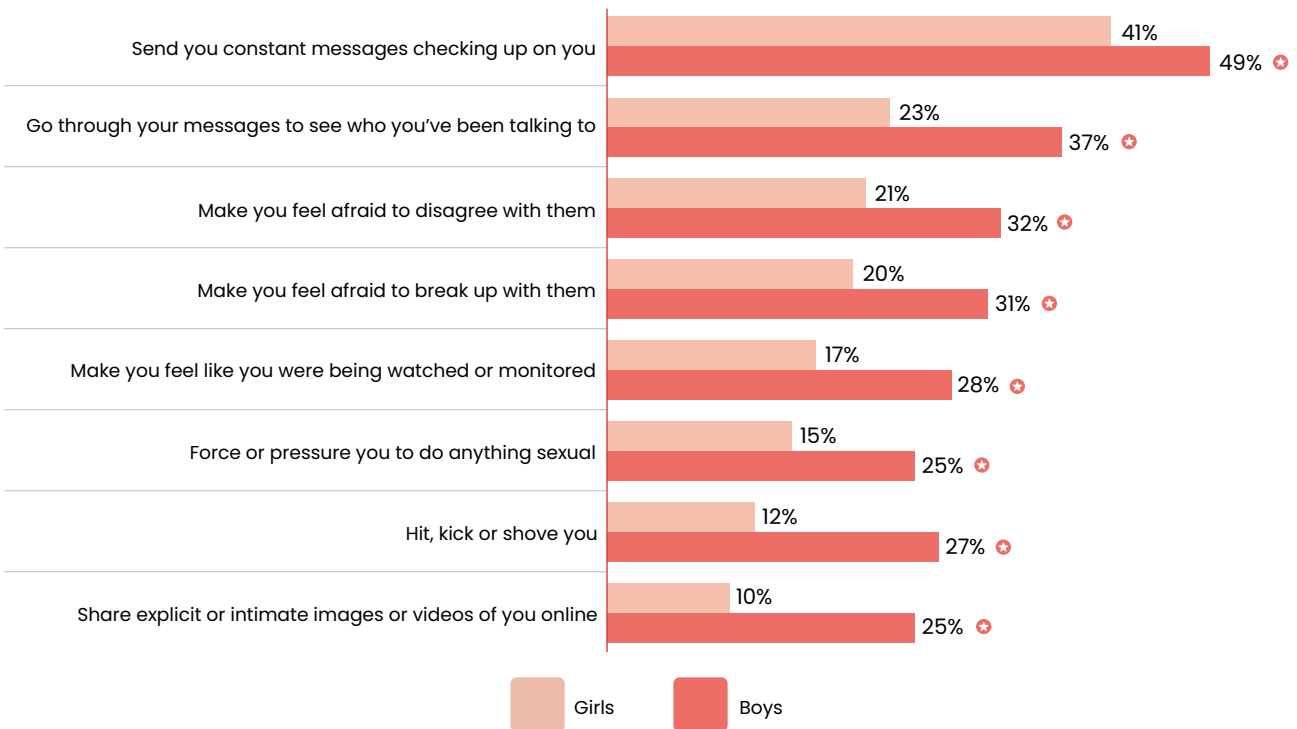
Contrary to common perceptions, boys report experiencing higher rates of violent and controlling behaviours from their partners compared to girls. Fifty-seven per cent of boys in relationships say they've experienced at least one violent or controlling behaviour from their partner, compared to 41% of girls. This is equivalent to 16% and 11% of all 13–17-year-old boys and girls, respectively.

Thirty-seven per cent of boys report that a partner has gone through their phone or social media, compared to 23% of girls. Thirty-one per cent of boys say they've been afraid to break up with their partner, compared to 20% of girls. Gender differences are also particularly large for physical and sexual violence. Twenty-five per cent of boys report experiencing sexual coercion, compared to 15% of girls. Twenty-seven per cent of boys report being hit, kicked or shoved, compared to 12% of girls.

It's important to note that these figures do not take into account the frequency, context or impact of incidents. So, while it may be that teenage boys are more likely to report experiencing some forms of relationship abuse, girls may experience more severe impacts. It's also possible that boys and girls have different thresholds for what they consider violence or abusive behaviour, leading boys to be more likely to report that they experienced abuse when surveyed (see How do these findings compare to other sources?).

Gender differences are most pronounced among younger teenagers. For 13–15-year-olds, 35% of boys in relationships report being hit, kicked or shoved by a partner, compared to 17% of girls. In the same age group, 34% of boys report experiencing sexual coercion, compared to 20% of girls.

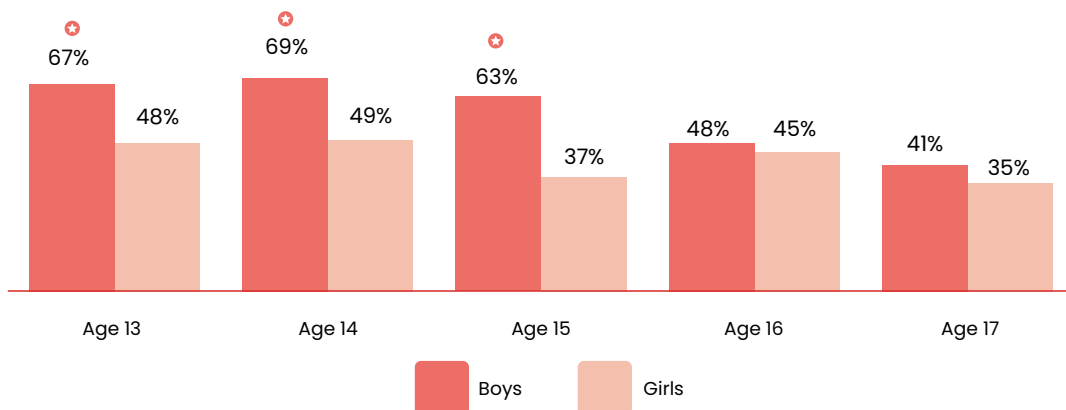
Figure 2.2: Proportion of children in relationships who have experienced different types of violent or controlling behaviour by gender



Note. Stars beside the bars indicate where estimates for the two groups are significantly different from one another at a 95% confidence level.

The gender gap narrows for 16–17-year-olds, although boys still report higher rates. For example, 16% of 16–17-year-old boys report physical violence, compared to 9% of 16–17-year-old girls. There are no differences between children of different ethnicities in overall rates of controlling behaviours or physical and sexual violence.

Figure 2.3: Proportion of children in relationships who have experienced any violent or controlling behaviour by age and gender



Note. Stars above the bars indicate where estimates for the two groups are significantly different from one another at a 95% confidence level.

How do these findings compare to other sources?

Overall prevalence of relationship violence

We found that 49% of teenage children in relationships experience controlling, abusive or violent behaviours – equivalent to 13% of all 13-17-year-olds or 15% when looking only at 16-17-year-olds. This is higher than the 4.7% of 16-19-year-olds who report partner abuse, according to the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) 2023, but differences in the age range and definitions mean these figures are not directly comparable. The CSEW's definition of partner abuse includes non-physical abuse, threats, force, sexual assault or stalking. In contrast, the survey questions we used were specifically adapted for young people and didn't directly measure experiences such as threats or stalking.

Estimates of dating and relationship violence among younger teenagers are rarer. One recent survey of 1,804 12-18-year-olds in the United States found that 17.5% report physical abuse, and 18% report sexual abuse by their current or recent partner. These rates are similar to the 19% physical violence and 20% sexual violence rates we found.

Differences between boys and girls

Our finding that boys report higher rates of violent or controlling relationship experiences than girls (15% of all boys vs 11% of all girls) may come as a surprise. CSEW estimates for those aged 16 and above indicate that women experience rates of partner abuse almost two times higher (4.0%) than men (2.1%).

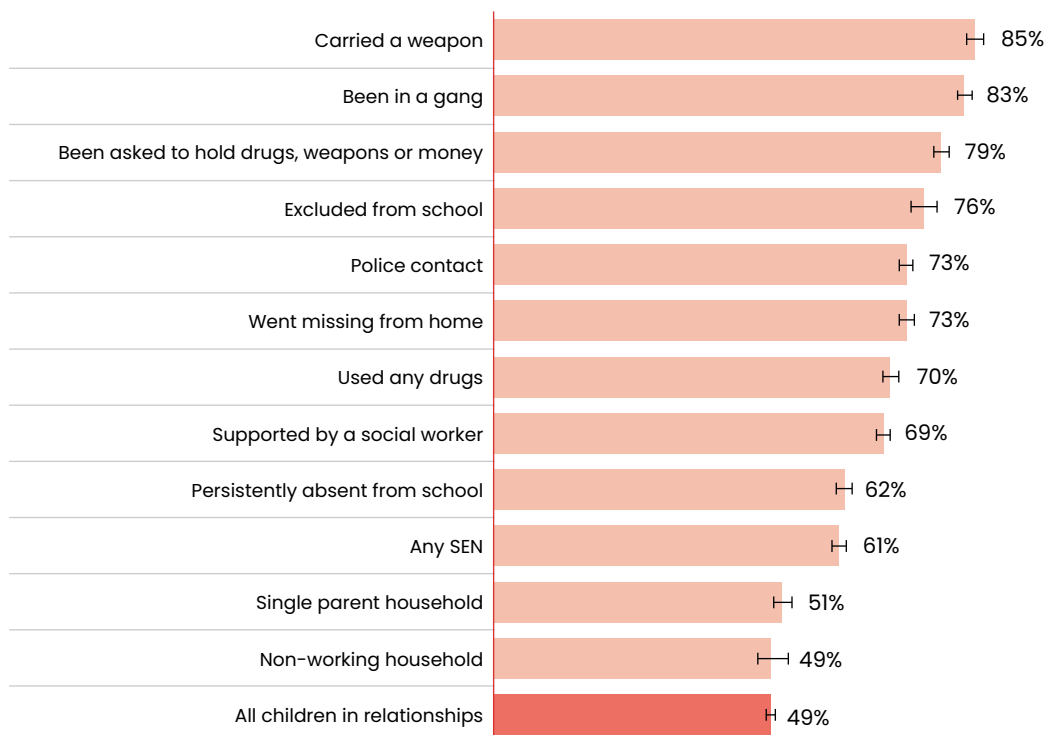
However, other research with adolescents has shown more equal rates of victimisation between boys and girls and sometimes higher rates in boys. In a survey conducted with 74,908 children aged 11-16 in Wales, 17% of boys with dating experience reported being a victim of physical abuse, compared to 12% of girls. In the United States survey cited above, boys reported higher rates of physical violence (20%) than girls (15%). The gender difference increased for younger respondents; 27% of 12-14-year-old boys in the United States survey reported experiencing physical violence from their partner, compared to 7% of 12-14-year-old girls.

Children with certain vulnerabilities are also more likely to experience violence in their relationships.

Children who face challenges in education and at home, who have special educational needs (SEN), and those at risk of becoming involved in violence are more likely to experience violent or controlling behaviours in their relationships.

For example, those supported by a social worker report higher rates of physical violence (36% vs 8% of those in relationships who’ve never been supported by a social worker), while children who’ve been excluded from school report experiencing physical violence at almost five times the rate of those who’ve never been excluded (48% of those excluded vs 9% of those never excluded). Children with SEN also report experiencing physical violence at a higher rate than their peers (29% of those with SEN vs 12% of those without SEN). Seventy-six per cent of children who report being in a gang¹ say they’ve experienced physical or sexual violence in their relationships, compared to 20% of those not in a gang.

Figure 2.4: Proportion of children in relationships who have experienced any violent or controlling behaviour by vulnerabilities to violence



Note. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the estimates to fall within.

¹ We used the following definition of being in a gang: “By a ‘gang’, we mean a group of young people who think of themselves as a gang, probably with a name, and are involved in violence or other crime.”

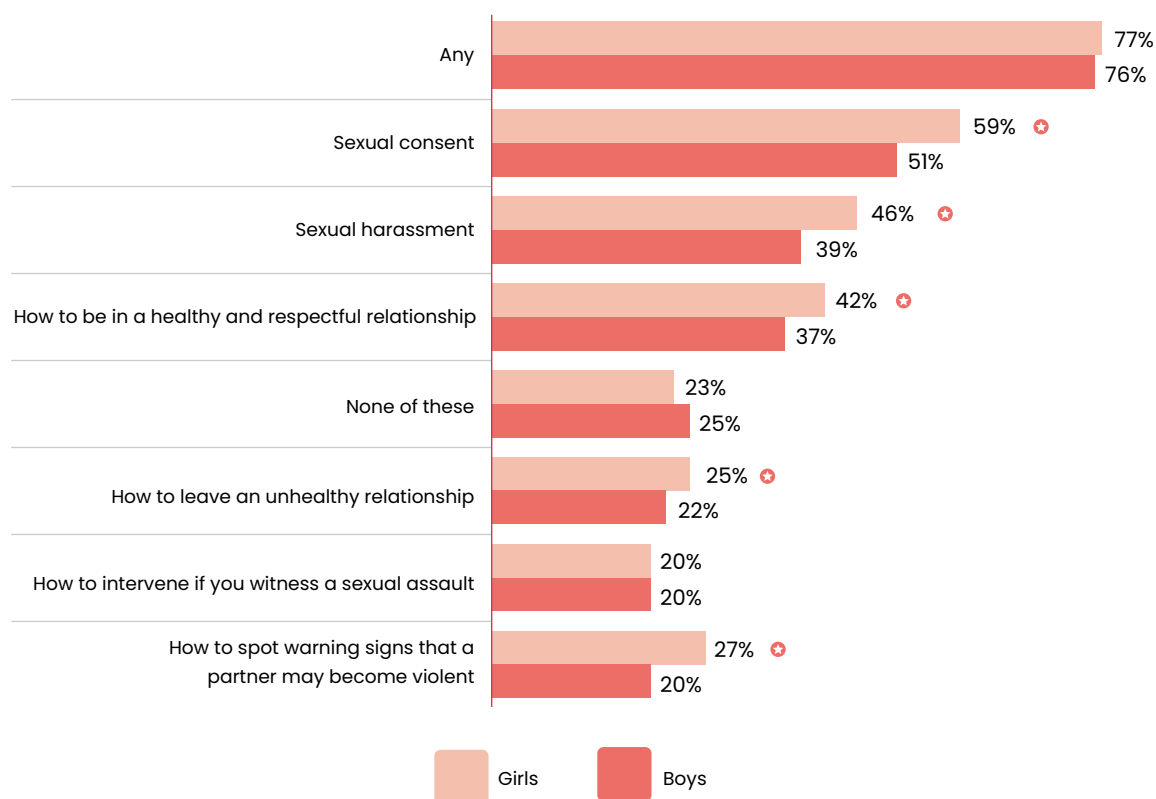
Schools teach lessons on healthy relationships, but topics such as consent may not be reaching those who most need it.

Three-quarters of children have had lessons about dating and relationships.

Seventy-six per cent of students have received some form of lessons on dating and relationships in the past year, but there are gaps in how widespread certain topics are.

The most common topics were sexual consent and harassment, reaching around half of 13-17-year-olds. Fifty-five per cent of teenage children² say they've had a lesson on sexual consent in the past year, and 43% say they've had a lesson on harassment. Forty per cent say they've had lessons on how to be in healthy and respectful romantic relationships. Practical advice around unhealthy relationships is less common.

Figure 3.1: Proportion of 13-17-year-olds who have had lessons on dating and relationships in school in the past year by gender



Note. Not including children receiving home schooling. Stars beside the bars indicate where estimates for the two groups are significantly different from one another at a 95% confidence level.

² Not including those who are home schooled.

Girls (77%) and boys (76%) are equally likely to have received lessons in the past year, but there are gender differences in the types of lessons they say they've had. Girls are significantly more likely than boys to say they've had lessons on sexual consent (59% of girls vs 51% of boys), sexual harassment (46% of girls vs 39% of boys), how to spot signs a partner may become violent (27% of girls vs 20% of boys), how to be in a healthy relationship (42% of girls vs 37% of boys) and how to leave an unhealthy relationship (25% of girls vs 22% of boys).

Most children who've experienced violent or controlling relationships say they've had these lessons.




Children who've experienced violent or controlling relationship behaviours are more likely to say they've received lessons about relationships in the past year. Eighty-eight per cent of those who've experienced controlling behaviours in their relationships say they've had some form of lessons. This rose to 92% of those who've experienced physical or sexual relationship violence. This could indicate that these lessons improve awareness and help children recognise unhealthy behaviours, but there are also several possible alternative explanations. For instance, it could be that children who've experienced unhealthy relationships are more likely to pay attention to and remember lessons on these topics.

But children who've perpetrated sexual violence are less likely to say they've received lessons on sexual consent.

These lessons may not be reaching those who need them most. As mentioned above, children who've been victims of violent or controlling behaviours in relationships are more likely than average to have had lessons on healthy relationships in school. And children who've been victims of sexual violence in general, not only in relationships, are also more likely than average to have had any type of lessons on relationships (88% of victims of sexual violence vs 76% of all 13-17-year-olds) and just as likely to have had lessons on sexual consent (53% of victims of sexual violence vs 55% of all 13-17-year-olds). But children who've perpetrated sexual violence themselves are significantly less likely than average to say they've received lessons on consent (39%). They're also less likely to say they've had lessons on sexual harassment (31%) compared to all children (43%). This also means that children who have received lessons on sexual consent (3%) and harassment (4%) are slightly less likely to say they've perpetrated sexual violence compared to all children (5%).



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Charitable Trust
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 youthendowmentfund.org.uk
 hello@youthendowmentfund.org.uk
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