YOUTH ENDOWMENT FUND

Report 3

Children, violence and vulnerability 2026

Gender-based violence



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Main findings and summary



Executive summary

The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) surveyed nearly 10,000 children aged 13–17 in England and Wales to hear directly from them about their experiences of violence.

The results are being shared across four separate reports, each focusing on a different theme. This third report looks at **gender-based violence**: inside and outside relationships; the content children see online about women and girls; the attitudes they hold; and the support received by those who have perpetrated relationship abuse.

Here's what we found.

Sexual violence and relationship abuse remain far too common among teens.

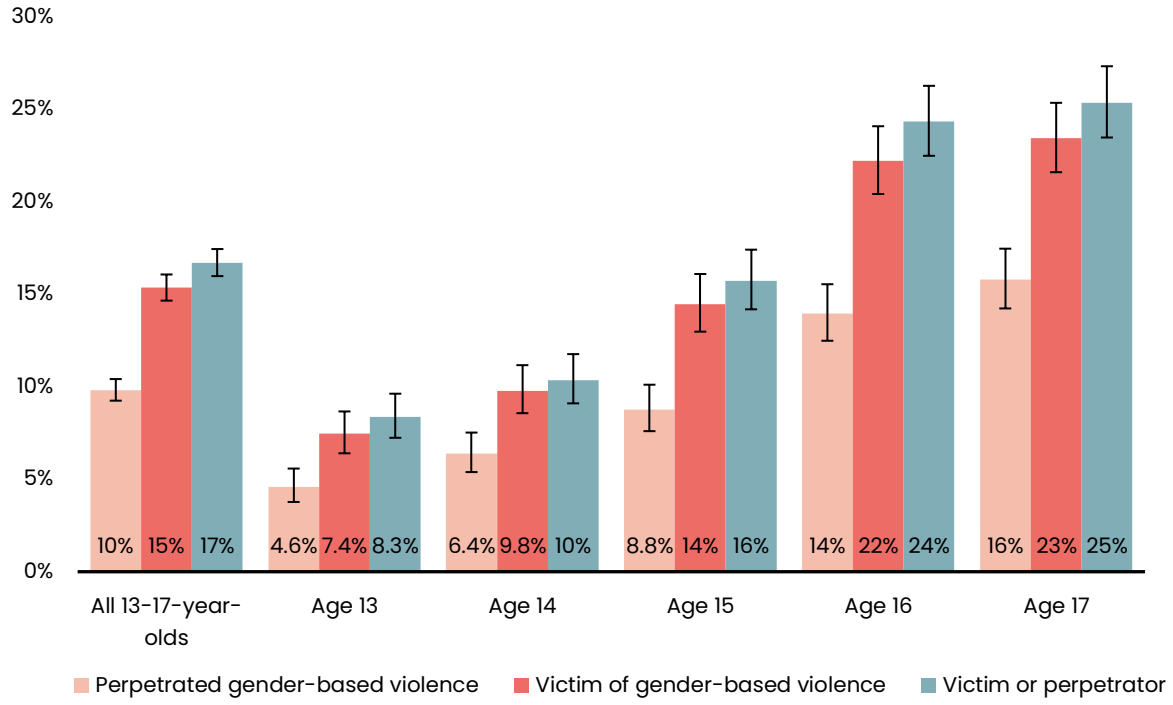
Teenage children's experiences of violence are gendered, and sexual violence is where that shows most clearly. In the past 12 months, 6.3% of girls aged 13–17 had been sexually assaulted, more than twice the rate for boys (2.9%). Perpetration ran the other way: 2.0% of boys said they had sexually assaulted someone, compared to 1.1% of girls.

Inside relationships, abuse was even more common. Just under a quarter of teenage children (23%) had been in a romantic or sexual relationship in the past 12 months. Of those, 58% experienced some form of abuse from a partner and 40% had been abusive themselves. Controlling and emotionally abusive behaviours were the most common, experienced by 56% and perpetrated by 39%, but 26% experienced physical or sexual abuse and 15% said they had perpetrated physical or sexual abuse themselves.

Bringing these together, we constructed a new measure this year that combines victimisation and perpetration of abuse within relationships with experience and perpetration of sexual violence in any setting, as a measure of gender-based violence (GBV). One in six (17%) 13–17-year-olds had experienced at least one of these, as a victim or a perpetrator.

One in six teens have experienced or perpetrated gender-based violence.

PROPORTION OF 13–17-YEAR-OLDS WHO'D EXPERIENCED AND PERPETRATED SEXUAL ASSAULT OR RELATIONSHIP ABUSE, BY AGE



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

When we spoke to young people about our findings, several thought that normalisation of certain behaviours and a lack of understanding of what healthy relationships look like are some of the reasons abuse is so common in teenagers' intimate relationships:

> ***A lot of discussion around abuse and violence centre on what the media say about abuse, but I think the conversation in schools should go further about what emotional and mental abuse can look like – especially with young men who may not realise that what they're doing is abusive, and making sure schools educate people so that they can have healthy relationships.***
>
> Elijah, YEF Youth Advisory Board member

Teens who'd been exposed to domestic abuse from parents were significantly more likely to also have experienced GBV. For example, 30% of 13–17-year-olds who'd witnessed domestic abuse between their parents or caregivers had also experienced relationship abuse or sexual assault and 21% had perpetrated it themselves. But it wasn't just those exposed to abuse in the home who were at increased risk. Teenage children who'd been exploited or in 'gangs' – difficulties associated with high risk of serious physical violence – were also among the most likely to have been affected by GBV specifically. Of those who'd been criminally exploited, 65% had also experienced relationship abuse or sexual assault and 63% had perpetrated it. Of those who self-identified as being in a 'gang', 75% had been a victim of GBV and 77% had perpetrated it.

Content that degrades or targets women and girls is widespread online.

Two in every three teenage children (66%) had seen at least one of seven types of content degrading, threatening or sexualising women and girls in the past 12 months – equivalent to around 2.5 million teenage children. The most common was influencer content about masculinity, the inferiority of women or how to be a 'high-value' male (47%), followed by content insulting, threatening or humiliating women and girls (44%). A third (33%) had seen content showing or encouraging 'real-world' violence against women and girls, and 32% had seen AI-generated sexual images, or deepfakes. Girls were more likely than boys to say they'd seen any of it (68% compared with 64%).

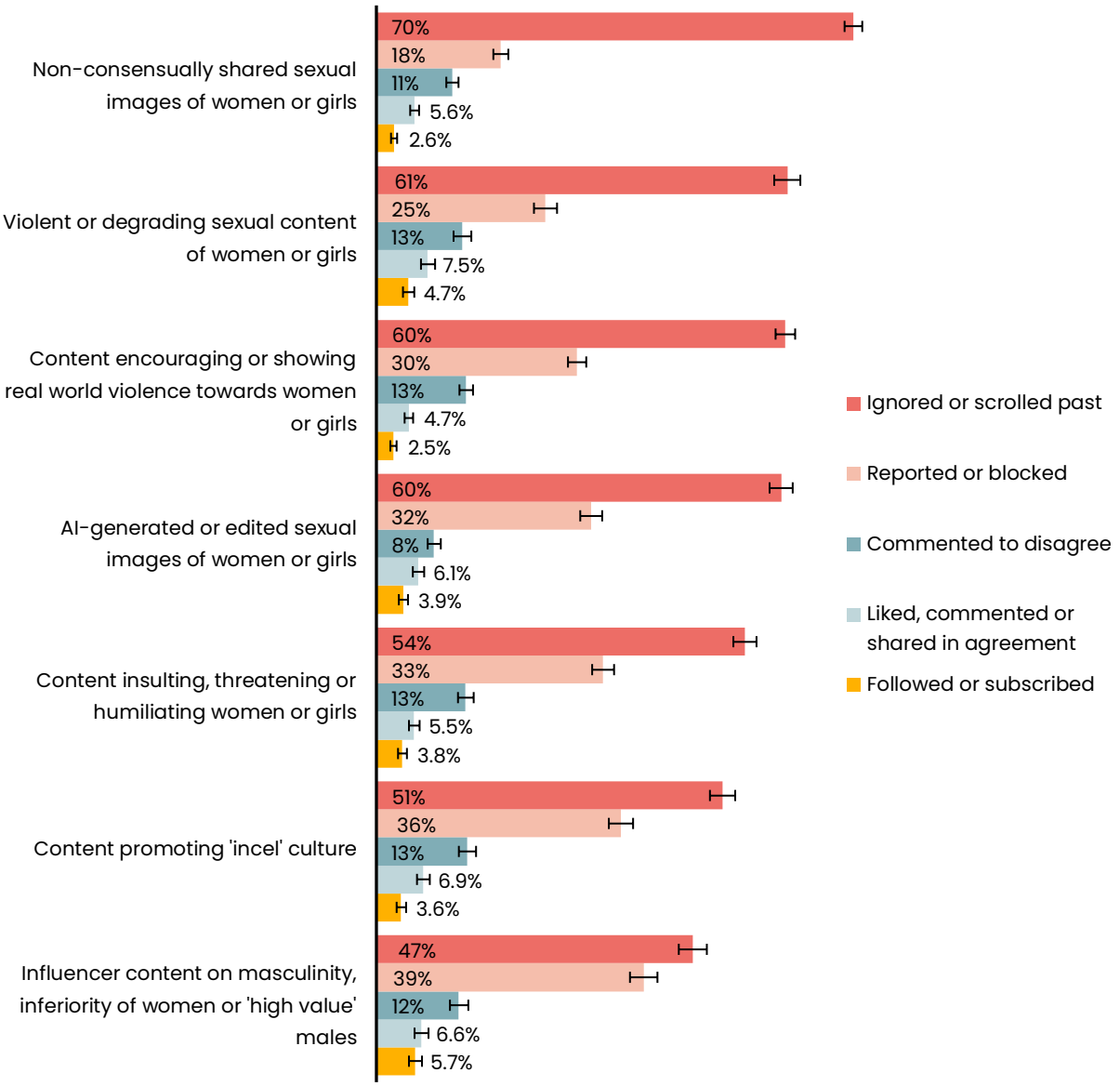
Most teenage children who saw this content scrolled past it – between 47% and 70%, depending on the type. Among those who did respond, rejecting the content was far more common than endorsing it: between 28% and 50% of those who saw it commented to disagree, reported it or blocked the account, compared to between 6.2% and 11% who liked, shared or followed. Girls were more likely to actively disagree or block the account.

Although most ignored or reacted negatively to the content, over one in 10 engaged positively with content promoting 'incel' culture (11% of those who saw it liked, commented or shared in agreement or followed or subscribed) and sexual images of women or girls shared without consent (11%). Boys were more likely to endorse such content. For example, 14% of boys who saw sexual images shared without consent engaged positively, compared with 7.6% of girls.

Teens who engaged positively with content targeting or degrading women and girls were more likely to have perpetrated GBV themselves. Overall, 10% of 13–17-year-olds said they'd perpetrated either sexual assault or relationship abuse. This rose to 19% of those who said they'd seen AI-generated sexual images – for example – and even further to 48% of those who'd engaged positively with such content by liking, commenting or following.

Most teens seeing misogynistic content scroll past, voice disagreement or block it.

HOW 13–17-YEAR-OLDS WHO SAW CONTENT ONLINE TARGETING OR DEGRADING WOMEN AND GIRLS RESPONDED TO IT



Note. Respondents could provide multiple responses to this question, so percentages don't add up to 100%. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the true value to fall within.

Our Youth Advisory Board members commented on how they think misogynistic content online negatively impacts young people, even those who aren't actively engaging in it. For example:

> ***No one's born innately misogynistic, it's learnt, and oftentimes it goes under the radar of how uncovered it is. You don't necessarily have to search up misogynistic content for it to come up on your feed, it just gets pushed to you and if you interact with it or watch it for a few seconds longer – your feed becomes controlled by it, and slowly you become desensitised to it and it becomes your new normal.***
>
> Simran, YEF Youth Advisory Board member

Misogynistic attitudes are held by many, but concentrate among those involved in violence.

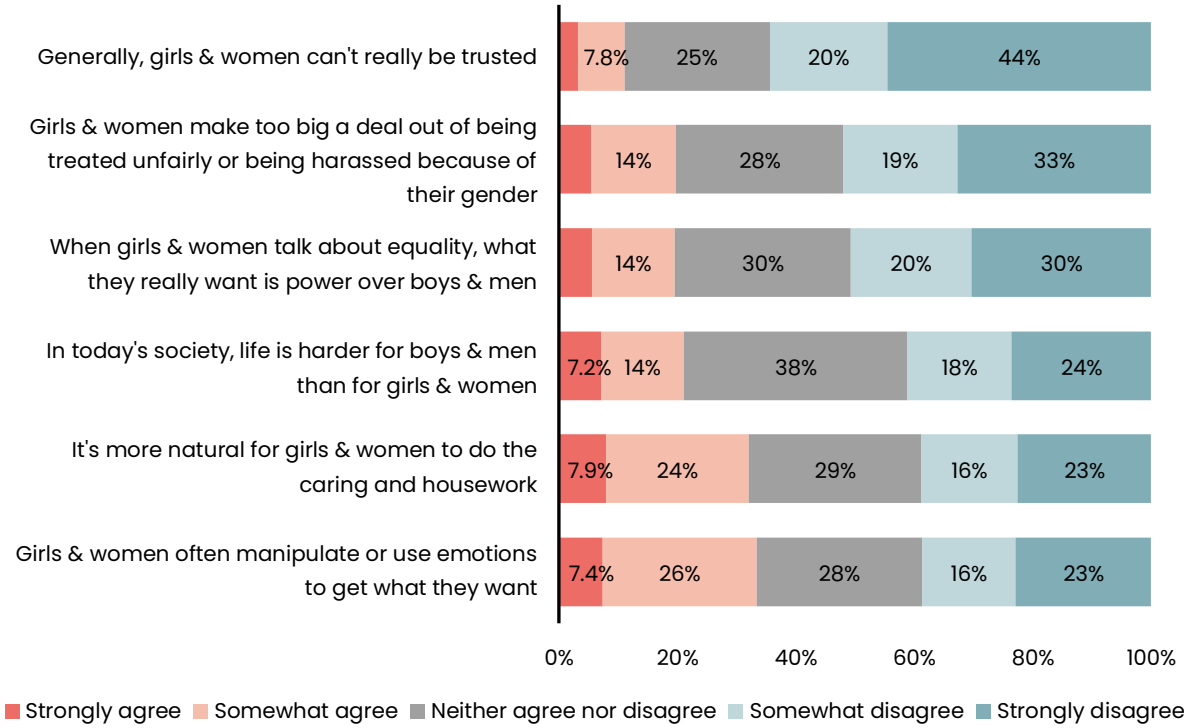
Around a third of teenage children agreed that girls and women often manipulate or use emotions to get what they want (33%), and that it is more natural for girls and women to do the caring and housework (32%). A fifth agreed that life is harder for boys and men (21%), that women talking about equality really want power over men (20%) and that women make too big a deal of unfair treatment or harassment (20%). One in 10 (11%) agreed that girls and women cannot be trusted. Overall, 56% somewhat or strongly agreed with at least one of these statements.

Boys agreed more than girls on every statement – for example, 29% agreed life is harder for men, compared with 13% of girls. But these views were not confined to boys. For example, 31% of girls agreed that caring and housework is more naturally women's role, almost as many as boys (34%).

Agreement was consistently higher among children exposed to GBV, whether they had seen misogynistic or sexually violent content online, or experienced or perpetrated sexual assault or relationship abuse. For example, 25% of those who hadn't seen any violent or degrading content online agreed that women manipulate or use emotions, rising to 38% of those who'd seen some form of this content, 46% of those who'd experienced GBV and 53% of those who'd perpetrated GBV. The difference was even more stark for the view that women and girls can't be trusted: 6.8% of teens who hadn't seen such content agreed with this, rising to 13% of those who'd seen misogynistic content, 21% of those who'd experienced GBV and 28% of those who'd perpetrated GBV.

Over half of teens agree with common misogynistic statements.

PROPORTION OF 13–17-YEAR-OLDS WHO AGREED OR DISAGREED WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT THE ROLES AND BEHAVIOUR OF WOMEN AND GIRLS



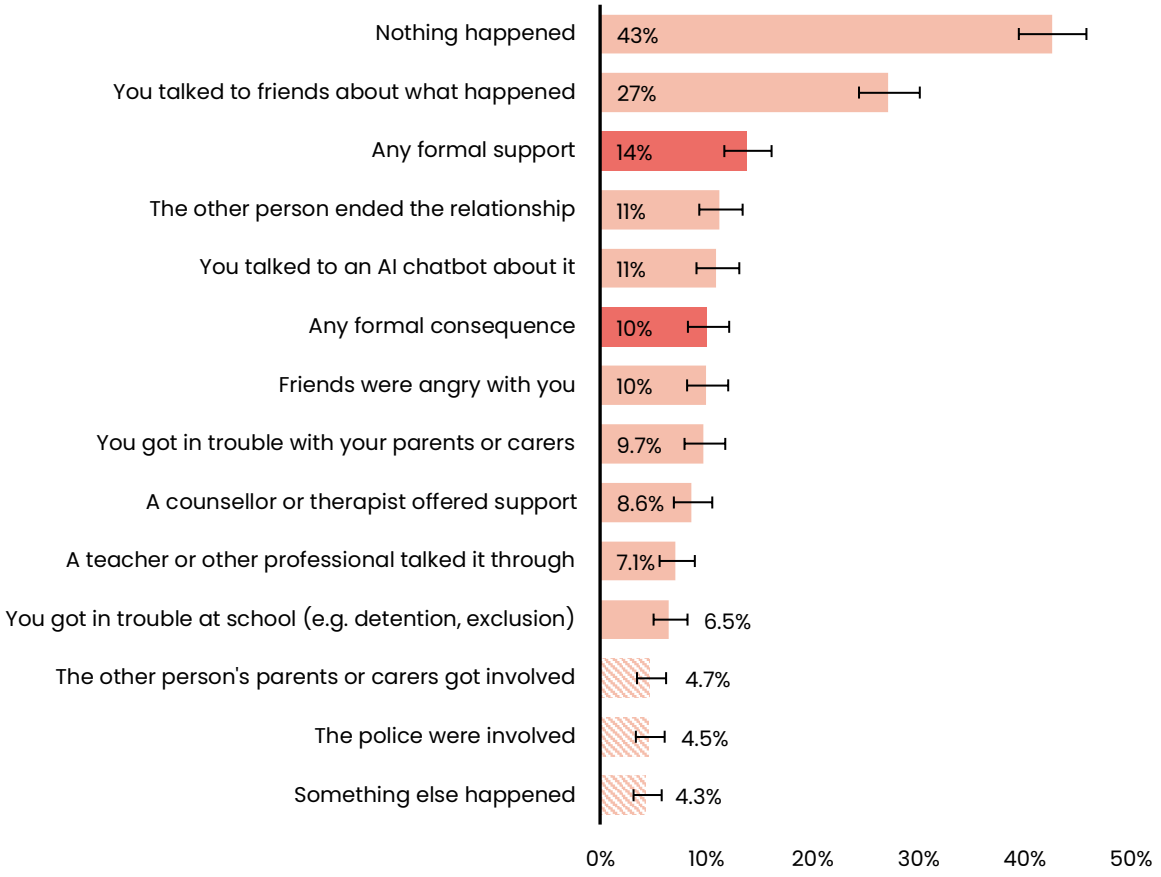
Most teenage children who've been abusive in a relationship get no formal support.

More than two in five (43%) of those who had been abusive towards a partner said nothing happened afterwards. Where anything did happen, it was usually informal: 27% talked to friends and 11% talked to an AI chatbot. Formal support and consequences were rare – 8.6% were offered counselling or therapy, 7.1% had a teacher, youth worker or other professional try to help them understand what had happened, 6.5% got into trouble at school and 4.5% had police involvement.

Younger children were more likely than older ones to be offered support: 21% of 13–15-year-olds who had perpetrated relationship abuse had support from a professional, compared with 9.0% of 16–17-year-olds. Differences by gender were smaller, though girls were more likely to talk to friends and boys more likely to talk to an AI chatbot.

For more than two in five teens engaging in relationship abuse, nothing happens as a result.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER 13–17-YEAR-OLDS PERPETRATED RELATIONSHIP ABUSE



Note. Bars with striped shading have cell counts of less than 50, so these figures should be interpreted with caution. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the true value to fall within.

Physical and sexual abuse was either more likely to come to the attention of others or be treated more seriously, compared with emotional abuse. Twenty per cent of those who'd perpetrated physical or sexual relationship abuse got in trouble with their school or the police, twice the rate for those who'd perpetrated emotional abuse (10%), and a quarter (25%) received offers of help from a teacher, youth worker, counsellor or therapist, compared to 14% of those who'd perpetrated emotional abuse. Even so, formal responses to teenage relationship abuse remained rare.

What works to prevent gender-based violence?

Gender-based violence and violence against women and girls (VAWG) are far too common among teenagers. Our findings show the importance of tackling harmful attitudes and behaviours early and making sure children have the knowledge and skills to build healthy relationships.

Our guidance for school leaders, policymakers and youth work commissioners outlines evidence-backed recommendations to help. This includes piloting and scaling up a grant for secondary schools, colleges and alternative provision settings to appoint and train a **violence against women and girls lead** to develop a whole-setting approach to preventing VAWG. It also means delivering **relationship violence prevention sessions** for secondary-age children using trained facilitators. These should challenge unhealthy attitudes, build relationship skills and use age-appropriate content covering topics such as consent, healthy relationships and active bystander skills. But prevention cannot sit with schools alone. Youth workers often support children experiencing overlapping forms of violence and need the **training, safeguarding skills and multi-agency support** to respond effectively.

In discussing possible solutions, our Youth Advisory Board members spoke about the importance of education, challenging stereotypes and having spaces where young people can build positive relationships, including with trusted adults.

> ***It's important that narratives are challenged, and we understand where they're getting their information from. If one young person is thinking like this, then there's going to be other young people thinking that way also… We need to embed a culture where we can change the narrative to female and male positivity and change the stereotypes being portrayed on social media.***
>
> Jess, YEF Youth Advisory Board member

The message across our guidance is clear: preventing violence against women and girls requires schools, youth services and other professionals working with children to have the confidence, training and support to do this well. This is essential both to preventing violence before it happens and to responding effectively when it does.

Headline findings

	Sexual violence and relationship abuse remain far too common among teens.
Girls are over twice as likely to be victims of sexual violence.	Girls were more than twice as likely as boys to have been sexually assaulted in the past 12 months: 6.3% of girls compared to 2.9% of boys. In contrast, boys were nearly twice as likely to report having perpetrated sexual assault in the past year: 2.0% compared to 1.1% of girls.
Violence remains common in relationships.	23% of 13–17-year-olds had been in a romantic or sexual relationship in the past 12 months. Of these, 58% experienced some form of relationship abuse and 40% engaged in abuse themselves. 56% of those in relationships experienced emotional abuse and 39% perpetrated it. 26% experienced physical or sexual abuse and 15% perpetrated it.
1 in 6 have experienced or perpetrated gender-based violence.	This year we constructed a new measure combining victimisation and perpetration of violent and abusive behaviour within relationships with overall experience and perpetration of sexual violence. 1 in 6 (17%) 13–17-year-olds had experienced or perpetrated sexual assault or relationship abuse – which we defined as gender-based violence (GBV).
	Content that degrades or targets women and girls is widespread online.
2 in 3 teens have seen content targeting women and girls.	66% of 13–17-year-olds had seen content online that degrades, threatens or sexualises women and girls in the past 12 months – around 2.5 million children. Most common was content on masculinity or the inferiority of women (47%), then content insulting, threatening or humiliating women and girls (44%), content showing or encouraging 'real-world' violence (33%) and AI-generated sexual images, or deepfakes (32%).
Most teens scroll past, voice disagreement, report or block it.	The most common response was scrolling past: 47% to 70% of those who saw each type of content. Next most common was rejecting the content: 28–50% commented to disagree, reported it or blocked the account, compared to 6.2–11% who liked, shared or followed. Girls rejected it more often than boys – 55% vs. 44% for sexual images shared without consent, 52% vs. 40% for violent or degrading sexual content.
Around 1 in 10 like or follow for more, and they're more likely to be boys.	Teens were most likely to react positively (liking, sharing or following) to content promoting 'incel' culture (11% of those who saw it), sexual images shared without consent (11%) and violent or degrading sexual content (9.1%). Boys were more likely than girls to engage positively: 14% vs. 7.9% for 'incel' content, 14% vs. 7.6% for sexual images shared without consent, and 12% vs. 6.7% for degrading sexual content.
Teens who engage positively with it are more likely to have been violent themselves.	Overall, 10% of 13–17-year-olds said they'd perpetrated sexual assault or relationship abuse (i.e. GBV). This rose to around 1 in 5 of those who'd seen content targeting or degrading women and girls and nearly half of those who'd engaged with it positively. For example, 19% of those who'd seen deepfakes and 48% of those who'd reacted positively to them had perpetrated sexual assault or relationship abuse, compared to 5.2% of those who hadn't seen it.

	Misogynistic attitudes are held by many, but concentrate among those involved in violence.
Over half of teens agree with common misogynistic beliefs.	33% of 13–17-year-olds agreed that girls and women often manipulate or use emotions to get what they want, and 32% that it is more natural for girls and women to do the caring and housework. 21% agreed that life is harder for boys and men, 20% that women talking about equality really want power over men, 20% that women make too big a deal of unfair treatment or harassment, and 11% that girls and women cannot be trusted. Overall, 56% somewhat or strongly agreed with at least one of these statements.
Boys agree more than girls, but these views aren't confined to boys.	Boys were consistently more likely to agree. For example, 37% of boys vs. 30% of girls agreed that women manipulate emotions, 29% of boys vs. 13% of girls that life is harder for men, and 24% of boys vs. 16% of girls that women make too big a deal of unfair treatment. But 31% of girls agreed that caring and housework is more naturally women's role – almost as many as boys (34%).
Agreement is higher among teens exposed to misogynistic content or abuse.	Agreement that women manipulate emotions rose from 33% of all teens to 38% of those who'd seen misogynistic or sexually violent content online, 46% of those who'd experienced GBV and 53% of those who'd perpetrated GBV. Agreement that girls and women can't be trusted rose from 11% of all teens to 13% of those who'd seen such content, 21% of those who'd experienced GBV and 28% of those who'd perpetrated GBV.
	Most teenage children who've been abusive in a relationship get no formal support.
For more than 2 in 5, nothing happens.	43% of teens who had been abusive towards a partner said nothing happened afterwards. Where anything did, it was usually informal: 27% talked to friends, 11% to an AI chatbot. Formal support and consequences were rare – 8.6% were offered counselling, 7.1% had a professional such as a teacher or youth worker help them understand what happened, with school (6.5%) or police (4.5%) involvement rarer still.
Younger teens are more likely to get any response.	21% of 13–15-year-olds who'd perpetrated relationship abuse were offered professional support (e.g. from a teacher, youth worker, counsellor or therapist), compared with 9.0% of 16–17-year-olds. Differences by gender were smaller, though girls were more likely to talk to friends (30% vs. 24%) and boys more likely to talk to an AI chatbot (13% vs. 9.1%).
Even for physical and sexual abuse, formal support is uncommon.	Consequences and support were more likely when the abuse was physical or sexual, but it was still the minority who received it. 20% of those who'd perpetrated physical or sexual relationship abuse got in trouble with their school or the police, compared to 10% of those who'd perpetrated emotional abuse. 25% of those who'd perpetrated physical or sexual relationship abuse were offered professional support, compared to 14% of those who'd perpetrated emotional abuse.

Methodology



About this year's survey

Question and thematic overview

This is our fifth annual survey of children's experiences of violence. This year we surveyed nearly 10,000 13–17-year-olds across England and Wales about their experiences over the past 12 months. We also surveyed around 4,000 18–21-year-olds, to hear how violence has affected them and what's changed since they were teenagers. We focused on the following themes.

- What's the scale and nature of violence experienced by teenage children, as victims and perpetrators? How has this changed? Which children are most affected, and how many are fixated on violence?
- How many teenage children see violent content on social media? What role does AI-generated content play? How do children view age restrictions on social media?
- How many teenage children are exposed to violence against women and girls, online and offline? What attitudes do they hold towards women and girls?
- What are teenage children's experiences of the care and youth justice systems? How much violence do they experience while they're there and what types of support do they receive?

This is the third report in this year's series. It covers how many children experience sexual assault and relationship abuse, as victims and perpetrators; how many see content online that degrades, threatens or sexualises women and girls, and how they respond to it; what attitudes teenage children hold towards women and girls; and what happens to those who have been abusive in a relationship.

What we did

This year, a total of 9,988 13–17-year-olds responded to our survey, compared to 10,835 last year. We also recruited an additional sample of 4,256 18–21-year-olds, to get their retrospective accounts of their childhood experiences.

As in previous years, we used an online survey conducted by our survey partner, Savanta. The median survey completion time was around 14 minutes, and the survey was live between May and July 2026. Questions typically related to children's experiences over the preceding 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.
- Secondly, we weighted the results to ensure overall representativeness. For more details on this, see the technical report on our website.

How children were kept safe

Participants 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. For all children aged 15 or under, a parent or guardian had to consent for them to take part. 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. 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, we generally don't report results where the total number of responses to a particular question was fewer than 50. All group comparisons mentioned in the report are statistically significant at a 95% confidence level, unless otherwise noted.

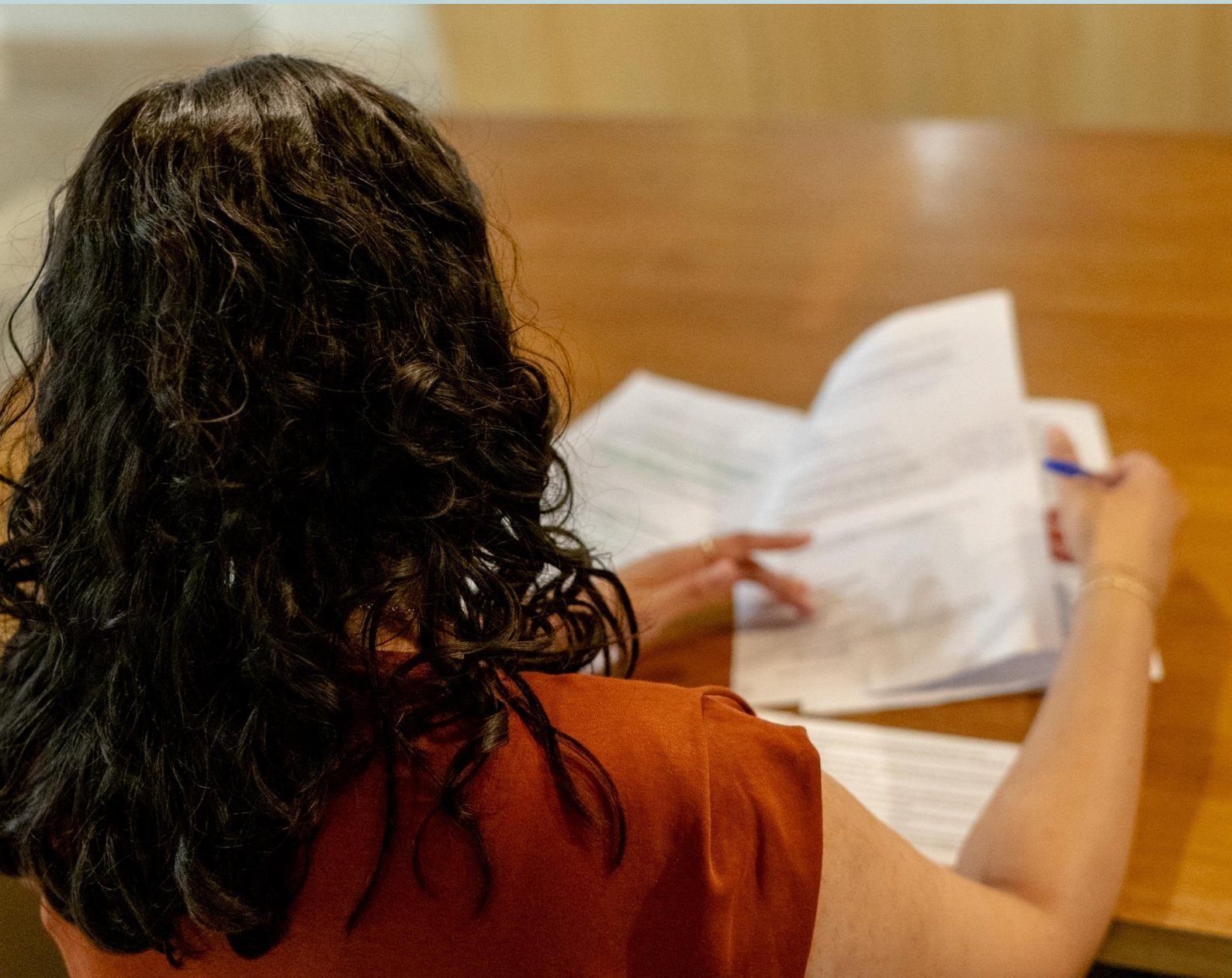
What to be aware of

Like all research, our survey has some limitations. We're trying to understand what teenage children across England and Wales have experienced, and while our sample of 9,988 13–17-year-olds is comparatively large for this type of survey, 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. We've refined the weighting strategy so we can more accurately speak to certain subgroups (e.g. by race). However, there are limits to the extent to which weights can be applied to cover variations across all interlocking characteristics. There should be particular caution when looking at results by region due to the challenge in applying interlocking weights at this level.
- The sample size is significantly larger than in 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 draw 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 or unable to respond openly and honestly, particularly about things they may have done.

For context, the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Children's Crime Survey for England and Wales (CCSEW) – the main national source on children's experiences of crime – stopped collecting data at the end of March 2025 and has been redesigned as an online survey of 10–15-year-olds sampled from administrative data. Its first results were published in September 2026 and cover children's online activity, exposure to harmful content, sexual messages and perceptions of safety, based on responses from 6,031 children. Questions measuring children's experiences of victimisation will be added at a later stage, meaning there are currently no national estimates of how many children are affected by crime and violence.

Detailed findings



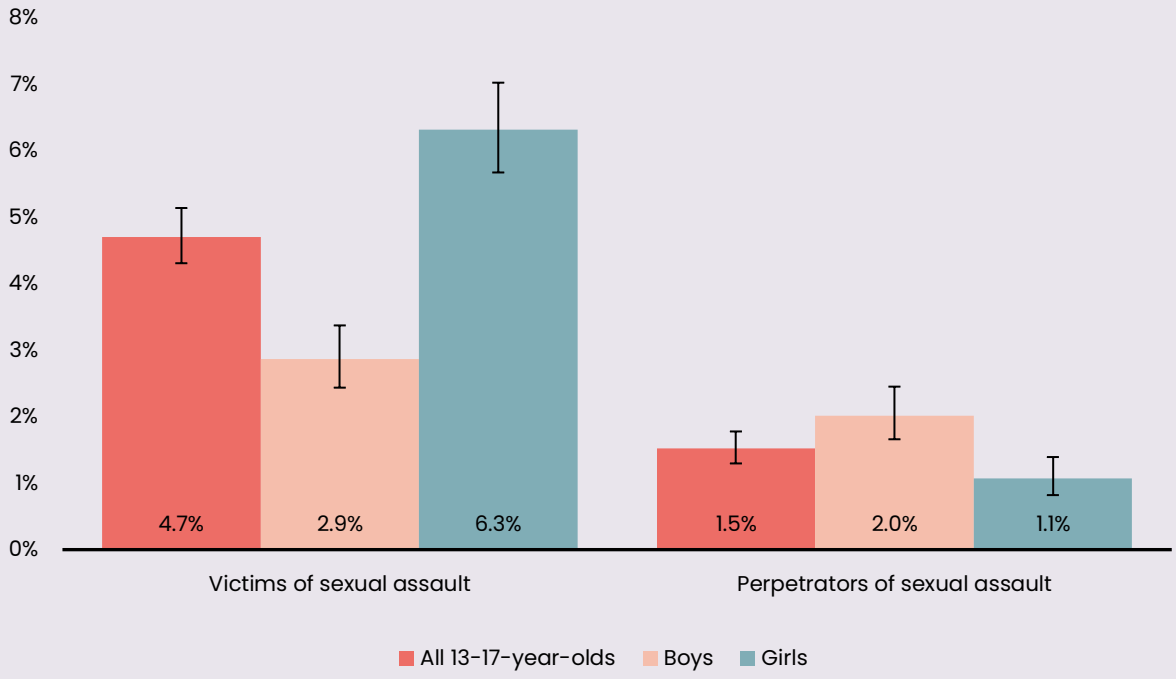
What we found

Sexual violence and relationship abuse remain far too common among teens.

Girls are over twice as likely to be victims of sexual violence.

As we saw in the first report in this year's series, teens' experiences of violence are gendered. Both boys' and girls' experiences of violence were far too common, but while boys were more likely to have been victims of robbery and weapons violence, girls were more likely to have been victims of sexual violence. In the past 12 months, 6.3% of 13–17-year-old girls experienced sexual assault, more than twice the rate for boys (2.9%). When we asked who had perpetrated sexual assault, the opposite was true: boys were nearly twice as likely to say they'd perpetrated sexual assault (2.0%) compared to girls (1.1%).

FIGURE 1.1: PROPORTION OF 13–17-YEAR-OLDS WHO'D BEEN VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT, BY GENDER



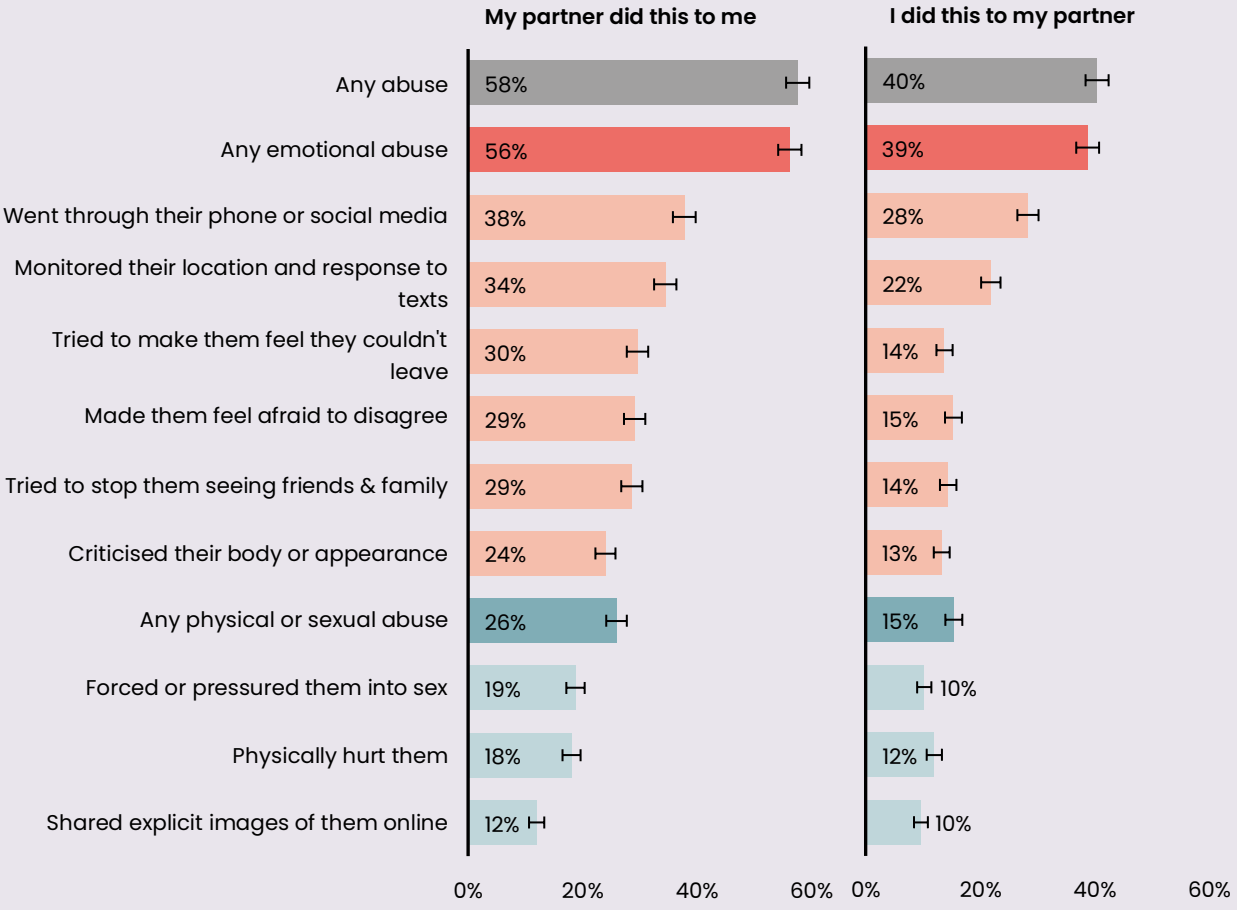
Note. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the true value to fall within.

Older teens aged 16–17 were more than twice as likely to have been victims of sexual violence (7.3%) compared to 13–15-year-olds (3.0%). In contrast, they were slightly less likely to say they'd perpetrated sexual violence (1.3% of 16–17-year-olds compared to 1.7% of 13–15-year-olds) but the difference was small and not statistically significant. Children from White (4.9%) and minority ethnic (4.1%) backgrounds were similarly likely to have been victims of sexual violence, but the number of respondents was too small to look at differences for perpetration or for different racially minoritised groups.

Violence remains common in relationships.

Just under a quarter – 23% – of teens said that they had been in a romantic or sexual relationship in the past 12 months. Of these, more than half (58%) experienced at least one form of violent or controlling behaviour in their relationships, equivalent to 13% of all teens or around 490,000 13–17-year-olds in England and Wales.[1] Fewer said they'd done these things themselves, with 40% saying they'd done at least one physically, sexually or emotionally abusive behaviour – equivalent to 9.2% of all 13–17-year-olds or around 350,000 13–17-year-olds across England and Wales.

FIGURE 1.2: PROPORTION OF 13–17-YEAR-OLDS IN RELATIONSHIPS WHO'D EXPERIENCED AND PERPETRATED RELATIONSHIP ABUSE



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

More than half of teens who'd been in a relationship (56%) said they'd experienced some form of emotional abuse and 39% said they'd engaged in at least some form of emotionally abusive behaviour. The most common experience was going through a partner's phone or social media to see who they'd been talking to – 38% said a partner did this to them and 28% said they'd done it to a partner – followed closely by monitoring where a partner was all the time, and getting angry if they didn't respond to messages fast enough – 34% said a partner did this to them and 22% said they'd done it to a partner.

[1] Estimates derived using Office for National Statistics mid-2025 population estimates.

Over a quarter (26%) of teens in relationships said they'd experienced physical or sexual abuse from a partner. This is equivalent to 5.9% of all teens or over 220,000 teens in England and Wales. Nearly one in five (19%) of those in relationships said a partner had forced or pressured them to do something sexually they didn't want to do. A similar proportion (18%) said a partner had physically hurt them in some way, such as by pinching, pushing, slapping, hitting or threatening to hurt them. Twelve per cent said a partner had posted or shared explicit or intimate images or videos of them online.

Rates of both victimisation and perpetration of relationship abuse were higher than last year, when 39% of teens in relationships reported being victims of any form of relationship abuse and 29% reported perpetrating it. We changed the way we asked this question this year, adding follow-up questions about how often each behaviour happened. We therefore cannot say whether the change reflects a real rise in prevalence or simply changes in how children responded to the revised question.

How do we define relationship abuse?

We asked all 13–17-year-olds who said they'd been in a romantic or sexual relationship in the past year whether they'd experienced or done any of the following behaviours. The questions were adapted from a Women's Aid healthy relationships survey and the Measure of Adolescent Relationship Harassment and Abuse. In our analysis, we divided the behaviours into emotional abuse and physical or sexual abuse as below:

Emotional abuse

- Went through the other person's phone or social media to see who they'd been talking to.
- Monitored where the other person was all the time, like tracking them on their phone.
- Tried to make the other person feel like they couldn't break up with them or get out of the relationship.
- Made the other person feel afraid to disagree, in case they got angry.
- Tried to stop the other person from spending time with their friends or family.
- Criticised the other person's body or the way they look.

Physical or sexual abuse

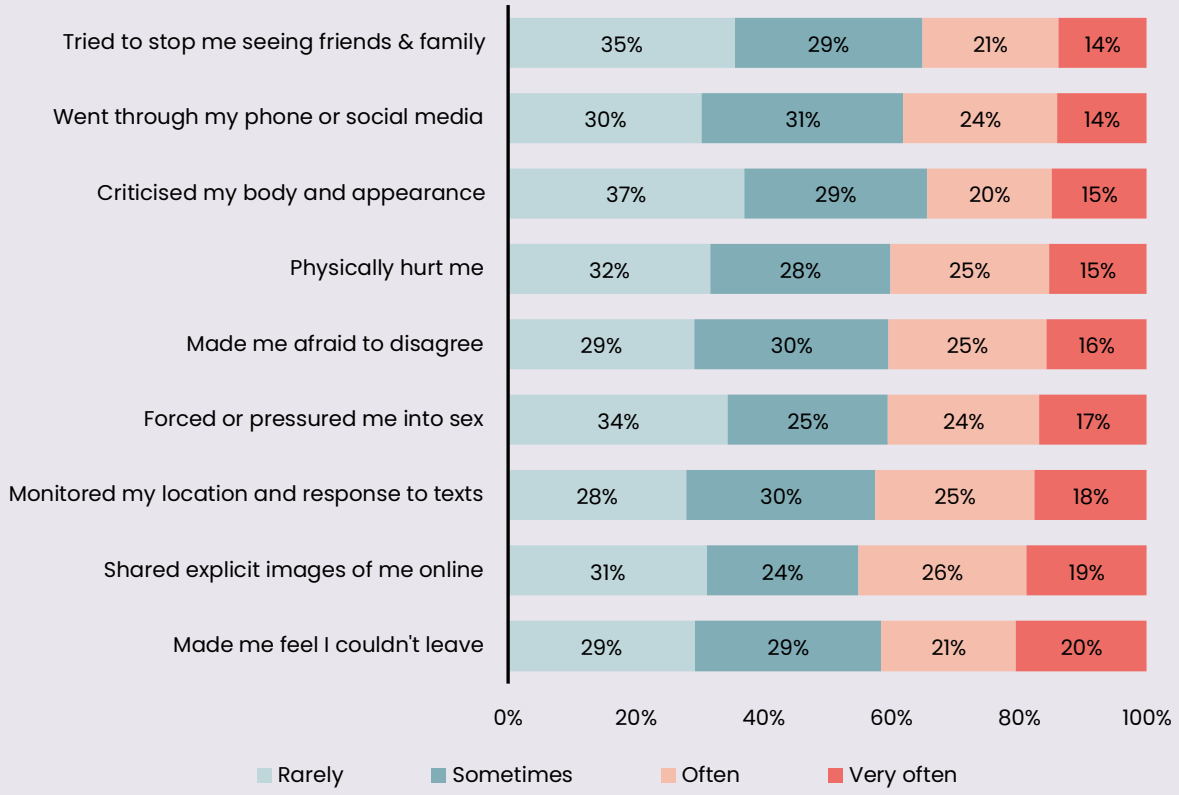
- Forced or pressured the other person to do something sexually that they didn't want to do.
- Physically hurt the other person e.g. pinched, pushed, slapped, hurt or threatened to hurt.
- Posted or shared any explicit or intimate images or videos of the other person online.

Most teens who experienced relationship abuse said that it happened at least once or twice a month, and a large proportion reported it happening weekly or more. This was particularly the case with having explicit or intimate images or videos shared online, with 45% of those who had experienced this saying it happened at least once a week. We don't know what these images were, or if this was the same image

being circulated. This was followed by being monitored by their partner (43%) and being made to feel that they could not break up with them or leave the relationship (42%).

Physical and sexual abuse was also frequently experienced with 41% of teens who had been forced or pressured to do something sexual reporting that this happened at least weekly. Similarly, 40% of those who had been physically hurt or threatened experienced this at least once a week.

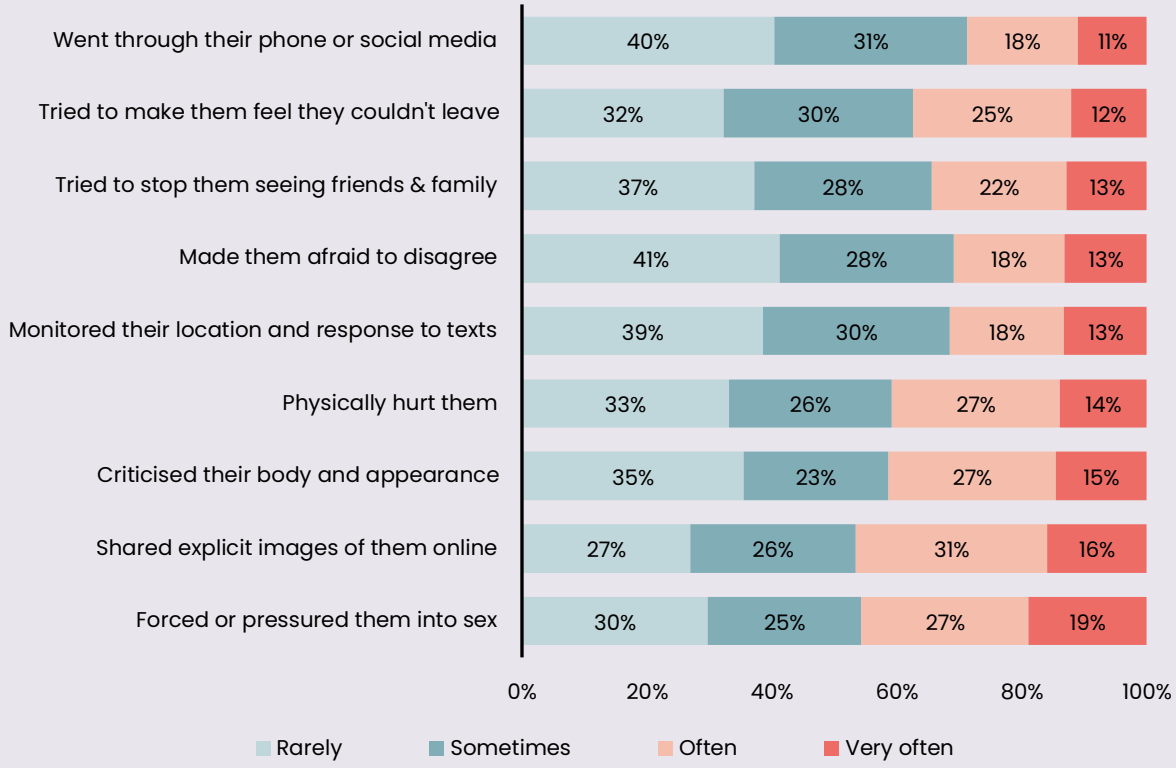
FIGURE 1.3: HOW OFTEN 13–17-YEAR-OLDS EXPERIENCED ABUSIVE BEHAVIOURS IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP



Note. Very often (daily or almost every day); often (at least once a week); sometimes (once or twice a month); rarely (once or twice in a year).

Similarly, many teens who reported perpetrating relationship abuse also said the behaviour happened regularly. This was most common for posting or sharing explicit images or videos of their partner online, with 47% of those who had done this saying it happened at least weekly. This was closely followed by forcing or pressuring their partner to do something sexual (46%), criticising their partner's body and appearance (41%) and physically hurting their partner (41%).

FIGURE 1.4: HOW OFTEN 13–17-YEAR-OLDS PERPETRATED ABUSIVE BEHAVIOURS IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP



Note. Very often (daily or almost every day); often (at least once a week); sometimes (once or twice a month); rarely (once or twice in a year).

Younger teens experience higher rates of relationship abuse.

In contrast with the pattern for experiences of sexual assault, younger teens were more likely to have experienced most forms of relationship abuse, including having their partner try to stop them seeing friends or family, criticise their body or appearance and hurt them or force or pressure them into sex. For example, 32% of 13–15-year-olds in relationships said their partner tried to stop them from spending time with friends or family, compared to 26% of 16–17-year-olds. The age difference was particularly stark for image abuse; 17% of 13–15-year-olds in relationships said their partner shared explicit images of them online, while 16–17-year-olds were around half as likely to say they'd experienced this from a partner in the past year (8.9%). These differences were statistically significant.

There was a similar pattern for perpetration. Younger teens were more likely than older teens to report engaging in most forms of abuse. For example, 19% of 13–15-year-olds in relationships said they'd tried to stop their partner spending time with their friends or family, compared to 11% of 16–17-year-olds. Differences were even greater for physical and sexual abuse. Thirteen- to fifteen-year-olds were more than twice as likely to report posting or sharing explicit images of their partner online (14% vs. 6.5%) or forcing or pressuring their partner to do something sexual (15% vs. 7.1%). They were also more likely to report physically hurting their partner (15% vs. 10%). The most common forms of abuse (going through their

partner's messages and monitoring their location) didn't show such age differences; they were common across all ages.

How do our results compare to other sources?

Our finding that 17% of 13–15-year-olds in relationships had explicit images shared or posted by a partner is equivalent to around 2.5% of all teenage children in this age group. This estimate is smaller than that in the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime's (MOPAC) 2021–22 'We Are London' Youth Survey, which found 6% of 14–16-year-olds in London said their nude pictures had been shared in a way they did not want – though their question covers sharing by anyone, not only a partner. Research published by Barnardo's in May 2026, based on 4,000 young people aged 13 to 20 across the UK, found that a quarter (25%) had seen nude images originally shared privately being passed on without consent, and one in eight girls (12%) had been threatened with images of them being shared.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported a much lower figure than either our survey or MOPAC's: 2% of 13–15-year-olds had sent a sexual message in the past 12 months, and 11% of those said it had been passed on without their agreement. The ONS measured something different, however, asking whether material children sent themselves was shared onwards rather than whether a partner shared images of them, and it counts only children who had sent something in the first place.

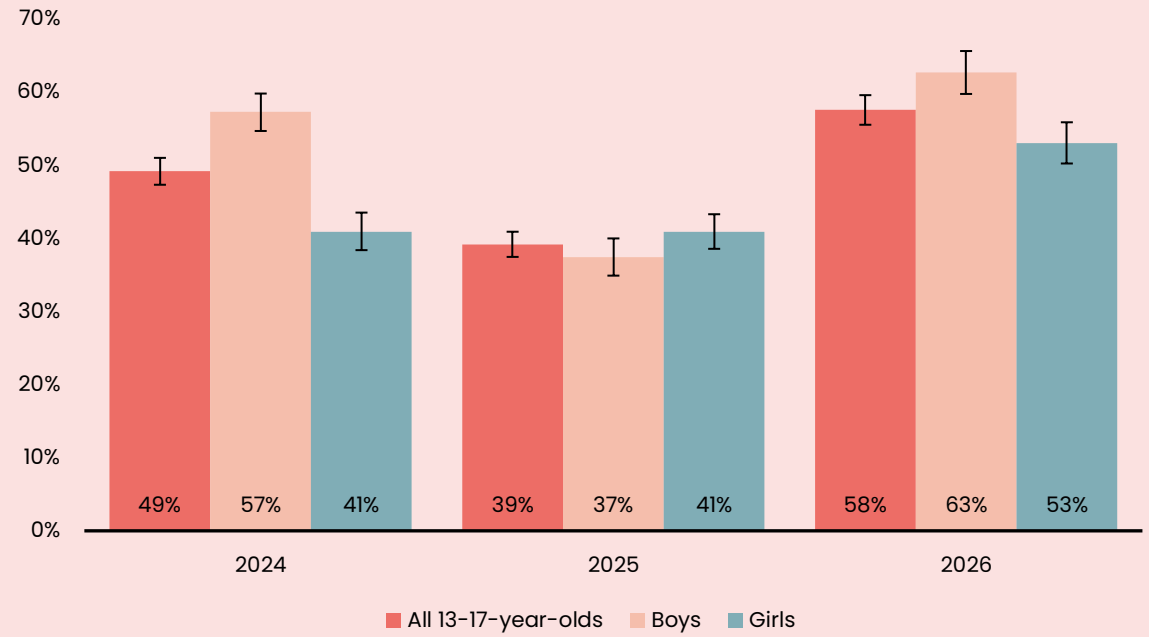
Boys report more victimisation than girls, but this pattern is inconsistent over time.

Overall, boys in relationships were more likely (63%) than girls in relationships (53%) to report experiencing relationship abuse. This applied to both emotional abuse (61% vs. 52%) and physical or sexual abuse (28% vs. 24%). In terms of individual types of experience, girls were a little more likely than boys to have experienced being forced to do something sexual without their consent (19% vs. 18%), but the difference wasn't statistically significant and boys were more likely to report experiencing most other abuse types.

How do our findings on gender differences compare with other sources?

The gender difference we see in rates of relationship abuse runs counter to what we see in experiences of sexual assault and in police-recorded relationship abuse data, which show girls are more likely to be affected. The exact gender difference we see in our own survey has shifted across years, but this year's results mirror those from 2024, with boys reporting higher rates of relationship abuse victimisation. However, as mentioned earlier, we changed the question this year (by asking about the frequency of the abuse), meaning the rates across years aren't fully comparable.

FIGURE 1.5: PROPORTION OF GIRLS AND BOYS IN RELATIONSHIPS WHO'D EXPERIENCED RELATIONSHIP ABUSE, BY SURVEY YEAR



Notes. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the true value to fall within. The relationship abuse measure was adapted in 2025 and again in 2026 so results aren't directly comparable between years.

Other surveys of young people similarly find boys report equal or greater rates of some forms of relationship abuse compared to girls. For example, the Welsh School Health Research Network survey found boys aged 11–16 reported higher rates of physical victimisation than girls. A survey of 12–18-year-olds in the United States found a similar pattern. However, when asked about the impact of relationship abuse, girls and young women tend to report more negative impacts than boys and young men. Our 2025 survey found girls who'd experienced relationship abuse were more likely to report it had impacted their life in some way, compared to boys.

Surveys of adults also find varying gender differences based on the exact behaviour being measured. For example, the Crime Survey for England and Wales found similar rates of any partner abuse from a current partner for men and women, but found women were significantly more likely to experience abuse overall. Women reported greater rates of certain types of abuse and abuse from ex-partners, and a greater number of incidents of abuse. Wider research among adults finds male victims of domestic abuse are frequently also perpetrators in other incidents with their partner whereas female victims are more likely to have experienced unidirectional domestic abuse (i.e. were identified solely as victims and not as perpetrators).

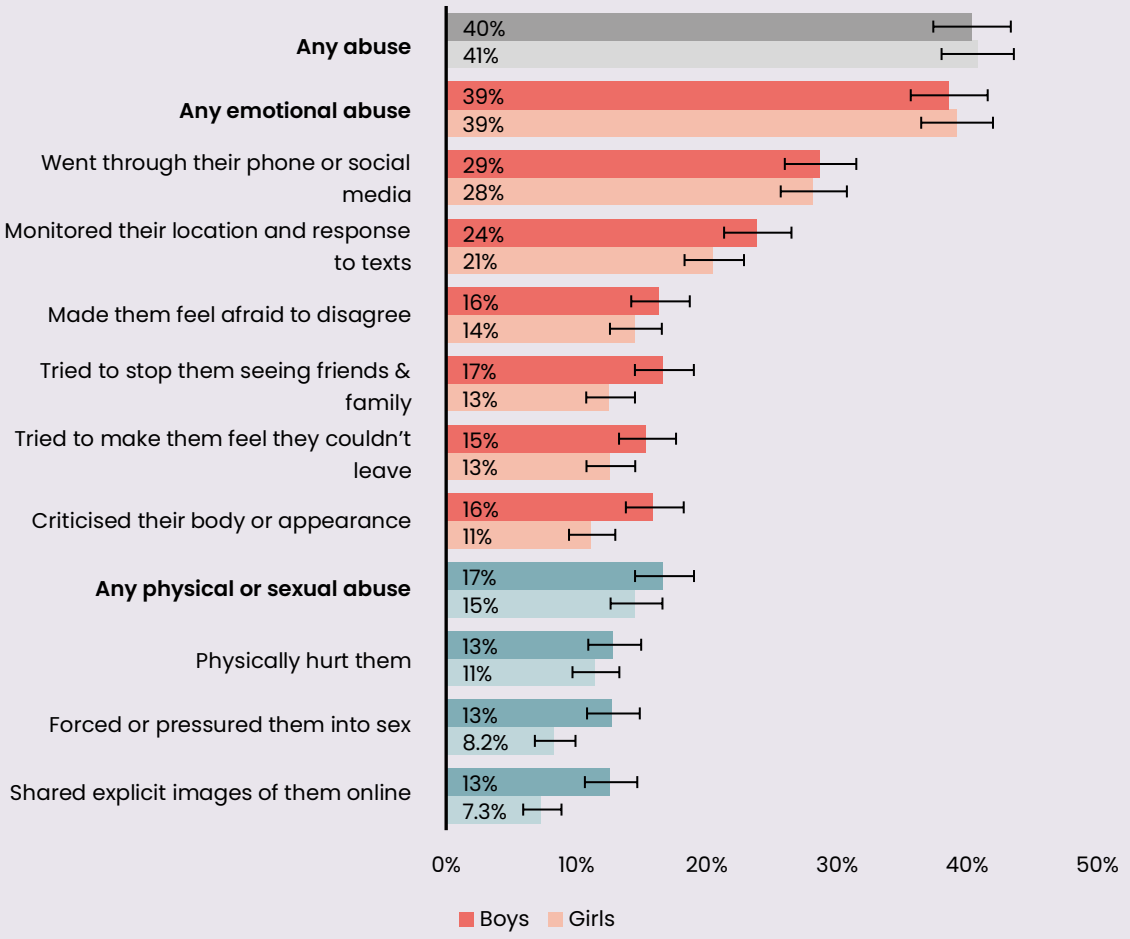
The higher rates of victimisation we see for boys may be a result of how behaviour is measured through the survey and how boys and girls recognise and respond to such questions, based on their experiences and expectations of relationships, rather than evidence of equivalent harm. Asking whether individual acts took place does not reflect the intention, severity or impact of the behaviour. It also cannot fully capture the context in which the event took place or tell us who might have initiated and who was responding.

Boys are more likely to perpetrate the most sexualised forms of abuse.

Overall levels of relationship abuse perpetration were similar for boys and girls, with 40% of boys and 41% of girls in relationships saying they'd engaged in any form of abuse. However, looking at individual behaviours, boys were significantly more likely than girls to report perpetrating several forms of relationship abuse.

The largest differences were in sharing explicit or intimate images of their partner without their consent (13% of boys in relationships vs. 7.3% of girls in relationships) and forcing or pressuring a partner to do something sexual (13% vs. 8.2%). Boys were also significantly more likely to criticise their partner's body or appearance (16% vs. 11%), try to stop them spending time with friends or family (17% vs. 13%), monitor where they were and become angry if they did not respond quickly enough (24% vs. 21%) and make them feel that they could not break up with them or leave the relationship (15% vs. 13%). These were all significant differences. Boys were also slightly more likely to report making their partners afraid to disagree with them (16% vs. 14%) and physically hurting them (13% vs. 11%), though these differences were not significant.

FIGURE 1.6: PROPORTION OF 13–17-YEAR-OLDS IN RELATIONSHIPS WHO'D PERPETRATED RELATIONSHIP ABUSE, BY GENDER



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

Small numbers of responses prevented us from identifying meaningful differences in experiences of relationship abuse by race. There weren't many differences in experience of relationship abuse by region, apart from London, where teens in relationships were the most likely to say they'd experienced relationship abuse as victims (68% compared to 58% of all 13–17-year-olds in relationships) and perpetrators (52% compared to 40% of all 13–17-year-olds in relationships).

One in six have experienced or perpetrated gender-based violence.

How do we define gender-based violence?

Gender-based violence (GBV) is an umbrella term for any harmful act perpetrated against a person that's based on socially ascribed gender differences. Violence against women and girls (VAWG) refers to any act of GBV that results in harm to women or girls. It includes, but isn't limited to, a range of behaviours such as domestic abuse, stalking, and sexual assault, harassment and exploitation. GBV and VAWG are sometimes used interchangeably because women and girls are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence. However, GBV is a broader umbrella term that also encompasses violence against men, boys and people of diverse sexual orientations or gender identities. Here, we're focusing on GBV (i.e. involving children of all gender identities) to provide us with a baseline prevalence estimate of GBV for our Violence Prevention Toolkit.

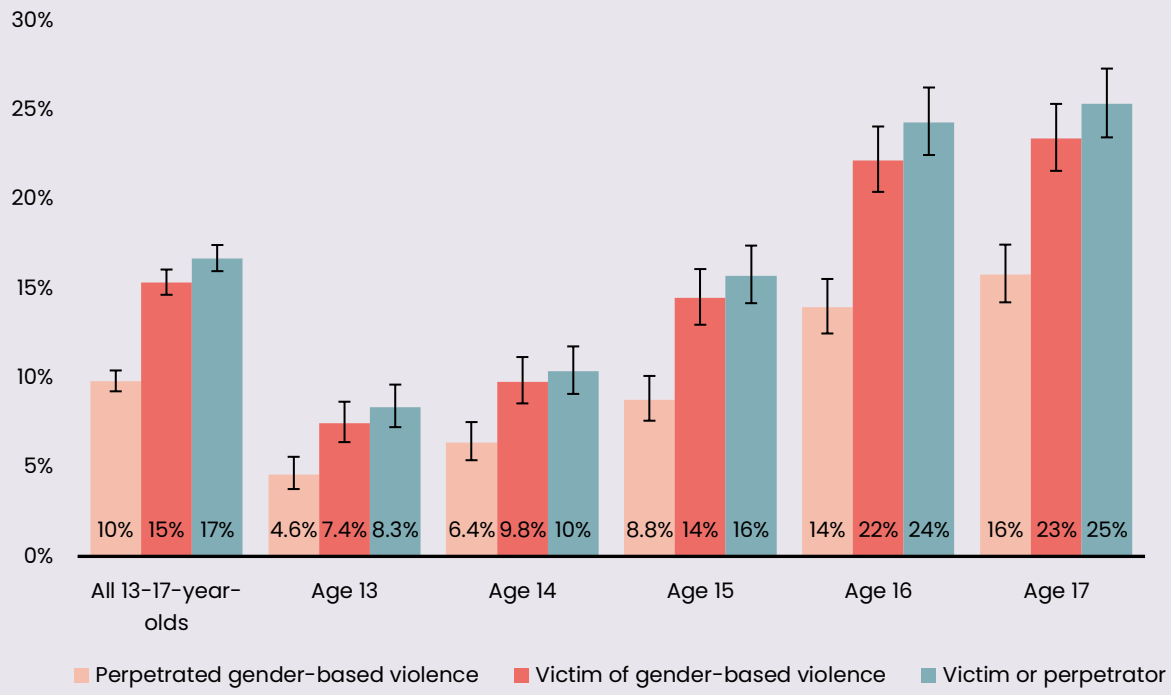
We know that VAWG and GBV more broadly are serious issues affecting children. However, as we explored in our Beyond the Headlines report earlier this year, there's very little data on the prevalence among children. Data from the justice system currently provides us with the most reliable national estimates, but we know that it vastly underestimates the true scale of the problem.

We didn't include a specific measure of GBV in our survey this year. However, combining our measure of abuse within relationships with our general sexual violence measure gives us a starting point with which to estimate the overall prevalence of a subset of GBV among 13–17-year-olds. Accordingly, we considered a child to have been affected by GBV if they had experienced and/or perpetrated any form of relationship abuse and/or sexual assault in the past 12 months. We will update this measure in future versions of the survey.

One in 10 (10%) 13–17-year-olds said they'd perpetrated sexual assault or relationship abuse in the past 12 months and 15% said they'd been a victim. Overall, 17% of 13–17-year-olds said they'd been affected by sexual assault or relationship abuse as victims or perpetrators in the past year – one in six, and equivalent to 630,000 13–17-year-olds across England and Wales. The majority of those who'd perpetrated sexual assault or relationship abuse had also been victims of it – 86%.

Girls were slightly more likely to have been affected (17%) than boys (16%), but the difference wasn't statistically significant. Exposure increased with age: 8.3% of 13-year-olds and 10% of 14-year-olds had been affected, rising to 16% of 15-year-olds and then rising even further to 24% of 16-year-olds and 25% of 17-year-olds. Teens from White (18%) and Mixed (18%) ethnic backgrounds were more likely to have been affected than those from Asian (11%) and Black (10%) backgrounds. There weren't any statistically significant differences by region.

FIGURE 1.7: PROPORTION OF 13–17-YEAR-OLDS WHO'D EXPERIENCED AND PERPETRATED SEXUAL ASSAULT OR RELATIONSHIP ABUSE, BY AGE



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

Teens who've experienced other forms of violence are far more likely to be affected by gender-based violence.

Teens who were most likely to be affected by overall and serious violence were also the most likely to be affected by GBV specifically. In the first report in this year's series, we saw that 13–17-year-olds experiencing or at risk of criminal exploitation were the most likely to have been affected by serious violence requiring medical treatment as victims and perpetrators, followed by those in contact with the justice system and with challenging home and social contexts. We saw the same pattern here. For example, 30% of 13–17-year-olds who'd witnessed domestic abuse between their parents or caregivers had also been a victim of relationship abuse or sexual assault and 21% had perpetrated relationship abuse or sexual assault themselves. This rose to 37% who'd been victims and 28% who'd perpetrated GBV among those who'd been a victim of domestic abuse from their parents or caregivers.[2] Among those who'd self-harmed or had suicidal thoughts, 40% had been victims of and 28% had perpetrated GBV and among those consuming alcohol weekly or more, half (50%) had been victims and 37% had perpetrated GBV.

[2] Section 3 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines a child as a victim of domestic abuse if they see or hear, or experience the effects of, abuse. We've kept witnessing domestic abuse between caregivers and being the direct target of abuse from a caregiver as separate experiences in our report, to look at how they individually relate to other experiences of violence.

Rates of GBV were highest for those experiencing exploitation: 65% of those who'd been criminally exploited and 75% of those who self-identified as being in a 'gang' had also been a victim of relationship abuse or sexual assault and 63% of those criminally exploited and 77% in a 'gang' had perpetrated GBV themselves.[3]

FIGURE 1.8: PROPORTION OF 13–17-YEAR-OLDS WHO'D EXPERIENCED AND PERPETRATED SEXUAL ASSAULT OR RELATIONSHIP ABUSE, BY VULNERABILITIES



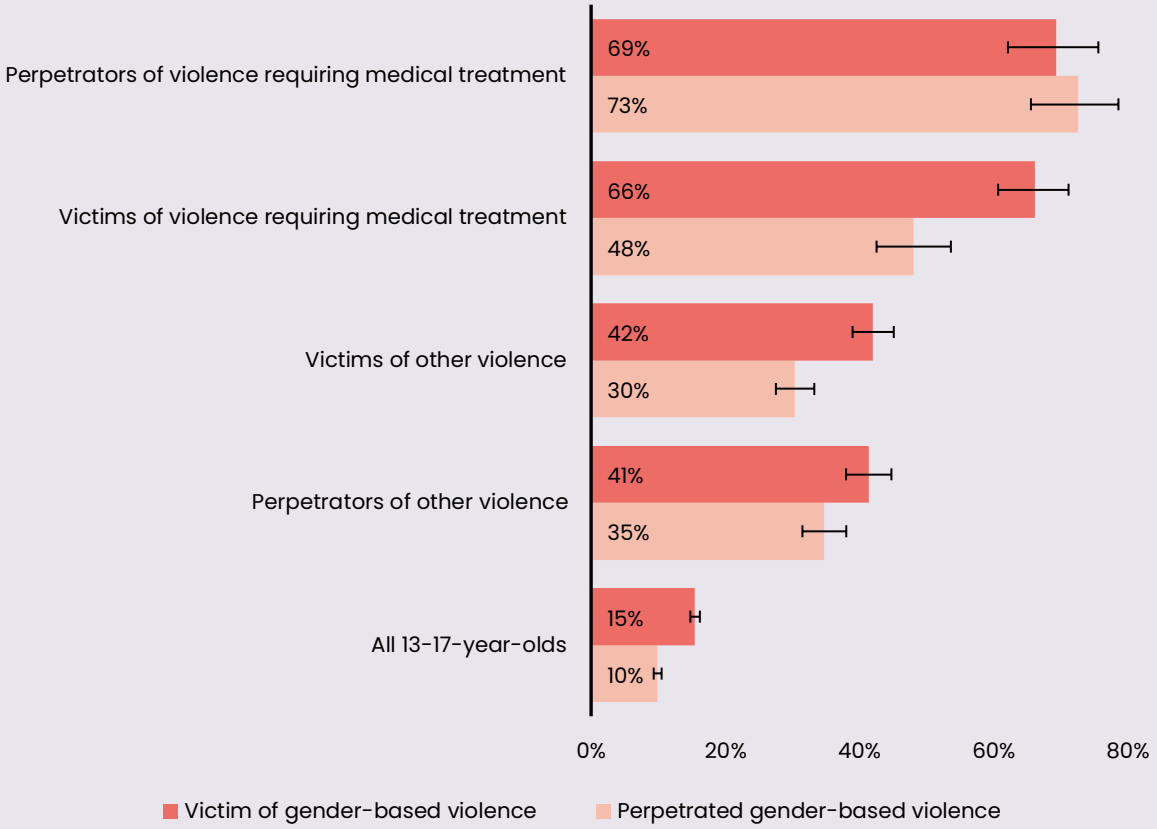
[1] Experienced domestic abuse defined as experiencing verbal abuse daily or physical abuse ever.

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

[3] To measure criminal exploitation, we asked whether children had been approached to sell drugs; transport drugs; or store drugs, weapons or money for someone else and whether they'd gone through with it.

Similarly, 13–17-year-olds who'd been affected by other forms of violence were significantly more likely to have been affected by GBV as well. Just over a third (35%) of 13–17-year-olds who'd perpetrated physical assault, robbery or weapons violence had also perpetrated sexual assault or relationship abuse and even more (41%) had been a victim of it. This rose even further for those who'd perpetrated violence that resulted in medical treatment by a doctor or hospital – 73% had also perpetrated GBV and 69% had been a victim of it.

FIGURE 1.9: PROPORTION OF 13–17-YEAR-OLDS WHO'D EXPERIENCED AND PERPETRATED SEXUAL ASSAULT OR RELATIONSHIP ABUSE, BY EXPERIENCE OF OTHER TYPES OF VIOLENCE



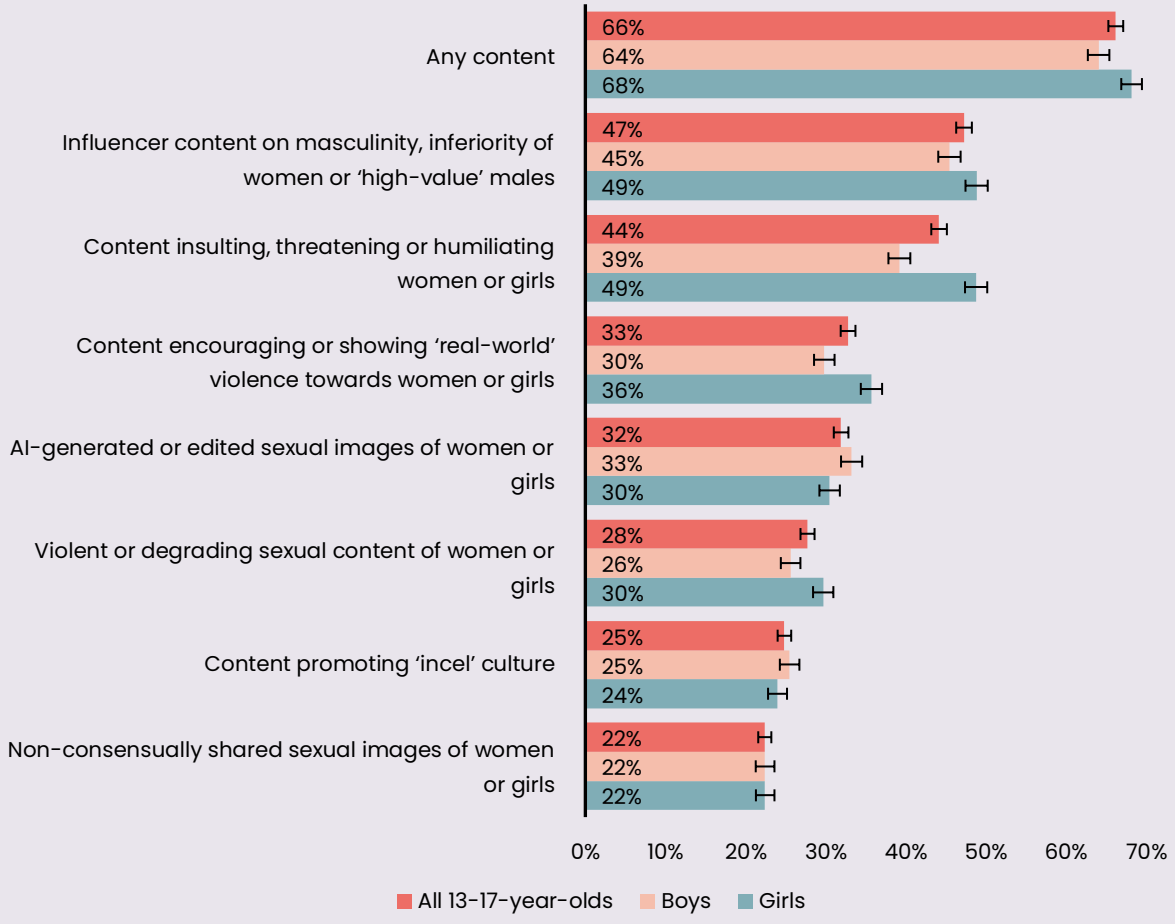
Note. Other violence includes physical assault, robbery or weapons violence (i.e. our core measure of violence from Report 1, excluding sexual assault). Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the true value to fall within.

Content that degrades or targets women and girls is widespread online.

Two in three teens have seen content targeting women and girls.

We asked teens whether they had seen a range of content on social media that degrades, threatens or sexualises women and girls. This included content that insults, threatens or humiliates women or girls; sexual images or videos of a woman or girl shared without her consent; AI-generated or edited sexual or nude images of a woman or girl (sometimes called deepfakes); sexual content where a woman or girl is treated in a violent or degrading way; content that encourages or shows 'real-world' violence towards women or girls; content from influencers who talk about masculinity, the inferiority of women or how to be a 'high-value' male; and posts, forums or groups that promote 'incel' culture.[4]

FIGURE 2.1: PROPORTION OF 13–17-YEAR-OLDS WHO'D SEEN ONLINE CONTENT TARGETING OR DEGRADING WOMEN AND GIRLS, BY GENDER



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

[4] 'Incel' (short for 'involuntary celibate') culture refers to online communities, typically formed of men and boys, who believe they cannot form romantic or sexual relationships and blame women for it. These spaces are often marked by intense misogyny and can glorify violence against women and girls. For more information, see here.

Two in three teens (66%) had seen at least one of these types of content, equivalent to around 2.5 million teenage children in England and Wales. The most seen content was from influencers who talk about masculinity, the inferiority of women or how to be a 'high-value' male (47% of all teens). Also common was content that insults, threatens or humiliates women and girls (44%). A third of all teens had seen content that encourages or shows 'real-world' violence towards women and girls (33%). A third (32%) were aware of having seen AI-generated sexual images of a woman or girl, known as deepfakes, and it's possible that even more had seen such content but not been able to identify that it was AI-generated.

Girls were significantly more likely than boys to say they'd seen this type of content online, although the difference wasn't large (68% vs. 64%). This could at least partly be due to girls being more likely to notice or recognise, and then remember seeing, this type of content. For example, the biggest gender gap came out in the proportion who'd seen content insulting, threatening or humiliating women and girls, which half (49%) of girls reported seeing, compared to 39% of boys. Girls and boys might have slightly different criteria, on average, as to what they consider to be content that's insulting or threatening to girls. There was just one type of content that boys were significantly more likely to have seen than girls: 33% of boys said they'd seen AI-generated or edited sexual or nude images of a woman or girl, known as deepfakes, compared to 30% of girls.

How do our findings compare with other sources?

Our finding that 66% of teenage children had seen content that degrades, threatens or sexualises women and girls is close to research published by Barnardo's in May 2026, based on a poll of 4,000 young people aged 13 to 20 across the UK. Their poll found around two-thirds (65%) had witnessed or come across harmful gender expectations online, and that a quarter of girls (25%) had been called degrading names online. The measure used by Barnardo's was "harmful gender expectations", which is broader than our "content that degrades, threatens or sexualises women and girls". A poll of 2,000 women aged 16 and above conducted by Refuge and the End Violence Against Women Coalition found that 36% of women had experienced some form of online VAWG, rising to 47% of 16-24-year-olds.

Older teens were more likely to say they'd seen all of these types of content. For example, 55% of 16–17-year-olds said they'd seen content from influencers about masculinity, the inferiority of women or how to be a 'high-value' male, compared to 42% of 13–15-year-olds. This age gap remained for sexually violent content – for example, 33% of 16–17-year-olds said they'd seen sexual content where a woman or girl is treated in a violent or degrading way, compared to 25% of 13–15-year-olds – as well as more general forms of violence – 38% of 16–17-year-olds said they'd seen content showing or encouraging 'real-world' violence against women and girls, compared to 29% of 13–15-year-olds.

Looking at differences by region, children in London tended to be more likely to report seeing these types of content. In particular, they were statistically significantly more likely to have seen posts, forums or groups promoting 'incel' culture (30%), sexual images or videos of a woman or girl shared without her consent (30%) and sexual content where a woman or girl is treated in a violent or degrading way (34%) than children from all other regions – where on average 24% had seen 'incel' content, 21% had seen non-consensual image sharing and 27% had seen violent or degrading sexual content.

Children from Black and Mixed ethnicity backgrounds were more likely than those from White and Asian backgrounds to have seen many of these types of content. Nearly three quarters (73%) of Black children and 70% of children from Mixed ethnic backgrounds had seen any of it, compared to 66% of White and 64% of Asian children. Black girls in particular were the most likely to have seen violent or misogynistic content. Specifically, they were statistically significantly more likely to have seen sexual content where a woman or girl is treated in a violent or degrading way (37%) compared to girls from Asian (30%) and White (28%) backgrounds and compared to boys from Black (29%), Mixed (28%), White (26%) and Asian (22%) backgrounds.

What do we know about racial differences in experiences of gender-based violence, online and offline?

We know that certain minoritised groups can be at greater risk of gender-based violence and that race and ethnicity can play a large role in children's experiences. The intersection of misogyny and racism can create unique risks for women and girls from racially minoritised groups. Surveys show that Black, Asian and other minority ethnic women experience certain forms of abuse at much greater rates, but barriers such as lack of trust in policing and cultural pressures mean victims from minority ethnic backgrounds can be underrepresented in crime data. According to the National Centre for Violence Against Women and Girls and Public Protection (NCVPP)'s recent Strategic Threat Risk Assessment, widening social divisions also mean that misogyny is increasingly likely to intersect with racism, homophobia and anti-migrant sentiment, creating even greater risks for women and girls from minoritised communities in particular.

Unfortunately, due to small numbers of responses, we haven't been able to report with confidence how experiences of gender-based violence differed by ethnicity for the children we surveyed. One of the key differences we have been able to observe is that children from Black and Mixed ethnicity backgrounds – and Black girls in particular – were significantly more likely than other children to have reported seeing content on social media degrading, threatening or sexualising women and girls. This fits with what we see from other data. According to the poll by Refuge and the End Violence Against Women Coalition mentioned above, 8% of women surveyed encountered content on their social media feeds that was humiliating, degrading or sexually violent towards women most or every time they used the platform. Black, Asian and minority ethnic women were even more likely to encounter this content most or every time they were online – 14%. Analysis of social media posts across platforms conducted by Glitch has also highlighted the prevalence of misogynoir[5] online. Out of approximately one million posts about women, 20% were labelled 'highly toxic' – meaning they were rude, aggressive, demeaning or degrading – and of these, a disproportionate number targeted Black women specifically.

Most teens scroll past, voice disagreement, report or block it.

We asked teens who had seen this content whether and how they had engaged with it. For every type of content, the most common response was to scroll past without actively engaging. Depending on the type of content, between 47% and 70% of teens who had seen it had simply scrolled past. This may suggest that

[5] Misogynoir is a term coined by Professor Moya Bailey to describe racialised misogyny aimed at Black women. It's used to acknowledge the ways Black women are uniquely discriminated against because of their gender and race.

for many teens, exposure to this type of content is incidental rather than something they are actively engaging with, although we cannot tell from the data whether they deliberately sought out the content in the first place.

How do teenage children come across this content?

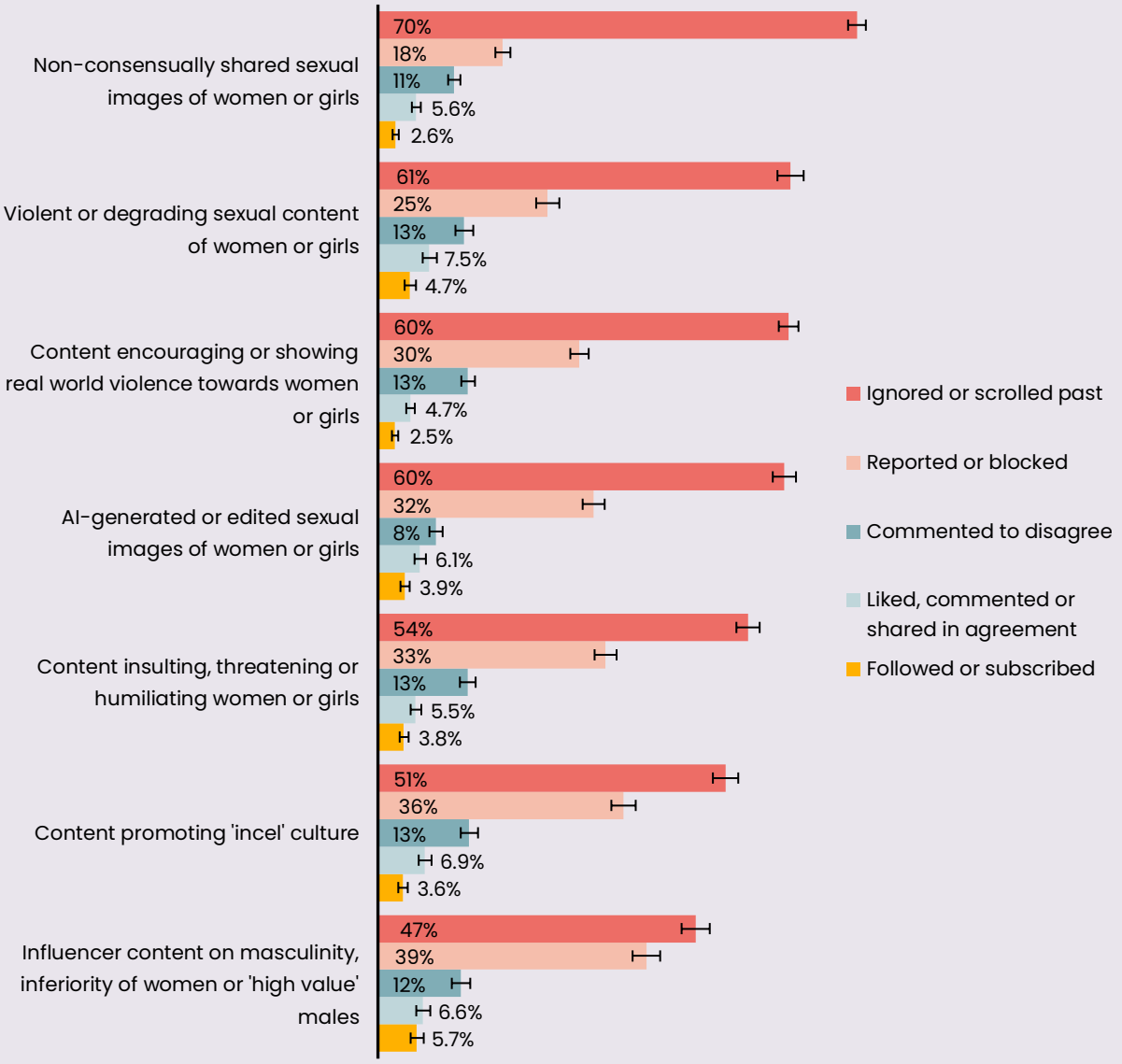
Results from our survey cannot tell us whether children actively seek out this content, have it sent to them by others or have it suggested to them by social media algorithms. In a study published in February 2024, researchers at University College London, the University of Kent and the Association of School and College Leaders set up TikTok accounts modelled on the interests of different types of teenage boy. Misogynistic content rose from 13% to 56% of the videos recommended on their 'For You' pages within five days, with the largest increases for the accounts whose profiles were built around loneliness and radical views. London's Violence Reduction Unit found the same pattern in interviews and focus groups, with 12–24-year-olds describing manosphere[6] content reaching them through feeds after they engaged with unrelated material such as fitness, gaming or music, and girls describing sexualised and appearance-focused content appearing unsolicited.

We have asked a version of this question in past surveys, though about violent content on social media generally rather than content targeting women and girls. In 2024, only 5.9% of teenage children who had seen violent content online said they had searched for it, while a quarter (25%) said the platform had pushed or suggested it to them. The ONS has since asked 13–15-year-olds directly and found that 80% of those who had seen sexual content and 88% of those who had seen hateful content came across at least some of it without meaning to.

Encouragingly, among teens who did actively interact with this type of content, negative engagement was consistently more common than positive engagement. Between 28% and 50% of those who saw it responded negatively, for example by commenting on the content to disagree, reporting it or blocking the account. This was particularly true for sexual images or videos of women or girls shared without their consent (50%), sexual content where a woman or girl was treated in a violent or degrading way (47%) and content that encouraged or showed 'real-world' violence to women or girls (44%). Girls were more likely than boys to respond negatively across all content types – 55% of girls compared with 44% of boys for sexual images shared without consent, and 52% compared with 40% for violent or degrading sexual content.

[6] According to the government's Educate Against Hate series, the manosphere is an international collection of online communities including websites, forums, blogs, and social media accounts that discuss the issues relating to men, masculinity and men's role in society. It has evolved into a space where misogynistic views are commonplace, and can provide a gateway for some young men to adopt increasingly extreme views.

FIGURE 2.2: HOW 13–17-YEAR-OLDS WHO SAW CONTENT ONLINE TARGETING OR DEGRADING WOMEN AND GIRLS RESPONDED TO IT



Note. Respondents could provide multiple responses to this question, so percentages don't add up to 100%. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the true value to fall within.

Around one in 10 like or follow for more, and they're more likely to be boys.

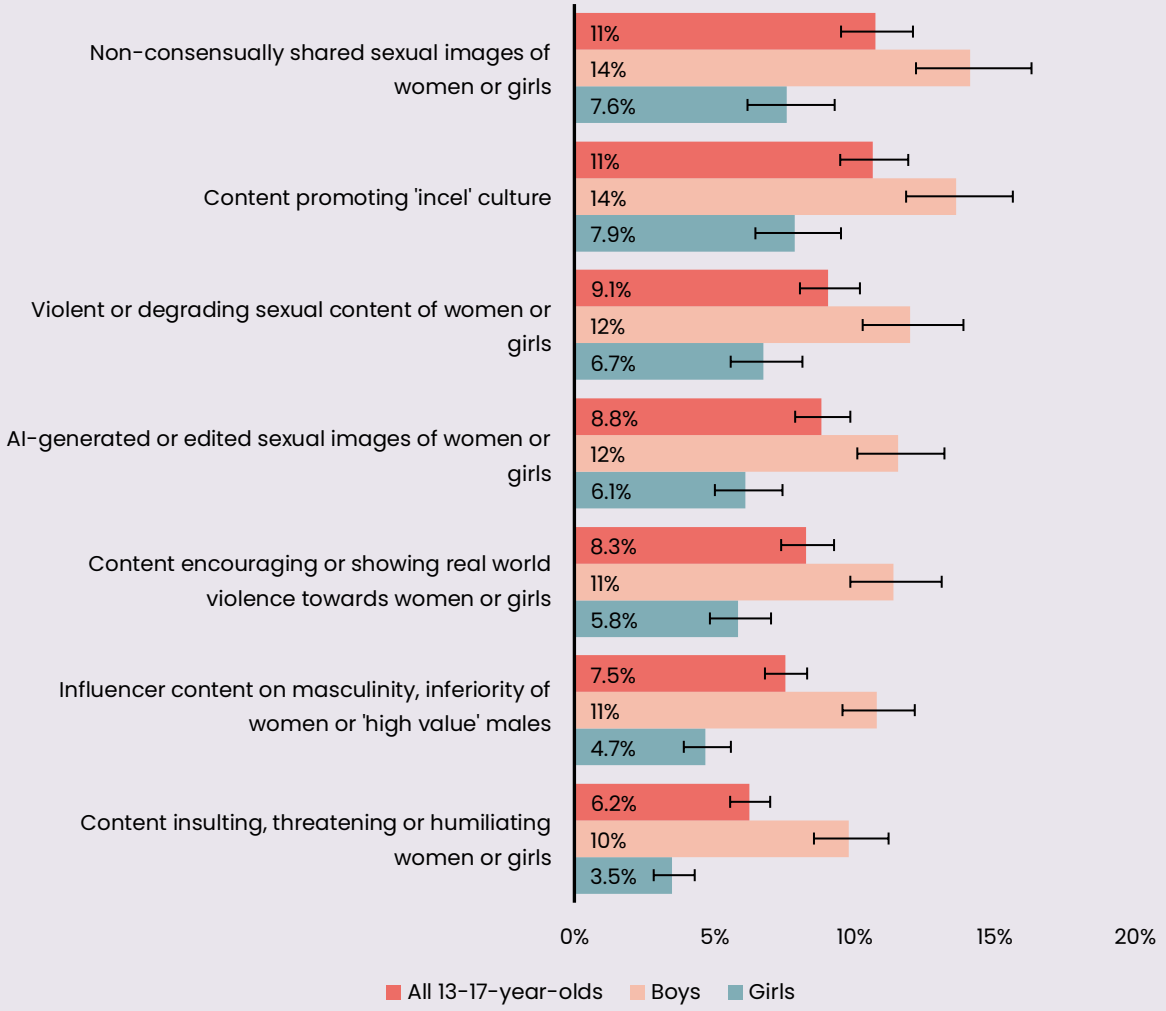
A smaller group of teens did engage positively with this type of content, for example by liking or sharing it or following the account that had posted it. Across the different forms of this content, between 6.2% and 11% of those who had seen it engaged positively. This was particularly the case for posts, forums or groups that

promote 'incel' culture (11%), sexual images or videos shared without consent (11%), and sexual content where a woman or girl is treated in a violent or degrading way (9.1%). While this represented a minority, some of this harmful content was being endorsed and amplified by some of the teens who encountered it.

Boys engage positively more often than girls, across every type of content.

Boys were more likely than girls to engage positively with all types of content, by liking it, sharing it or following the account that posted it. This was particularly true for sexual images shared without consent and content promoting 'incel' culture – 14% of boys who had seen either type of content engaged with it positively, compared to 7.6% and 7.9% of girls, respectively. Liking or sharing was the most common response among the boys who engaged positively – 66% for non-consensual images and 68% for 'incel' content – while nearly half said they followed or subscribed to the accounts posting it – 49% for non-consensual images and 46% for 'incel' content.

FIGURE 2.3: PROPORTION OF 13–17-YEAR-OLDS WHO RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO ONLINE CONTENT TARGETING OR DEGRADING WOMEN AND GIRLS, BY GENDER

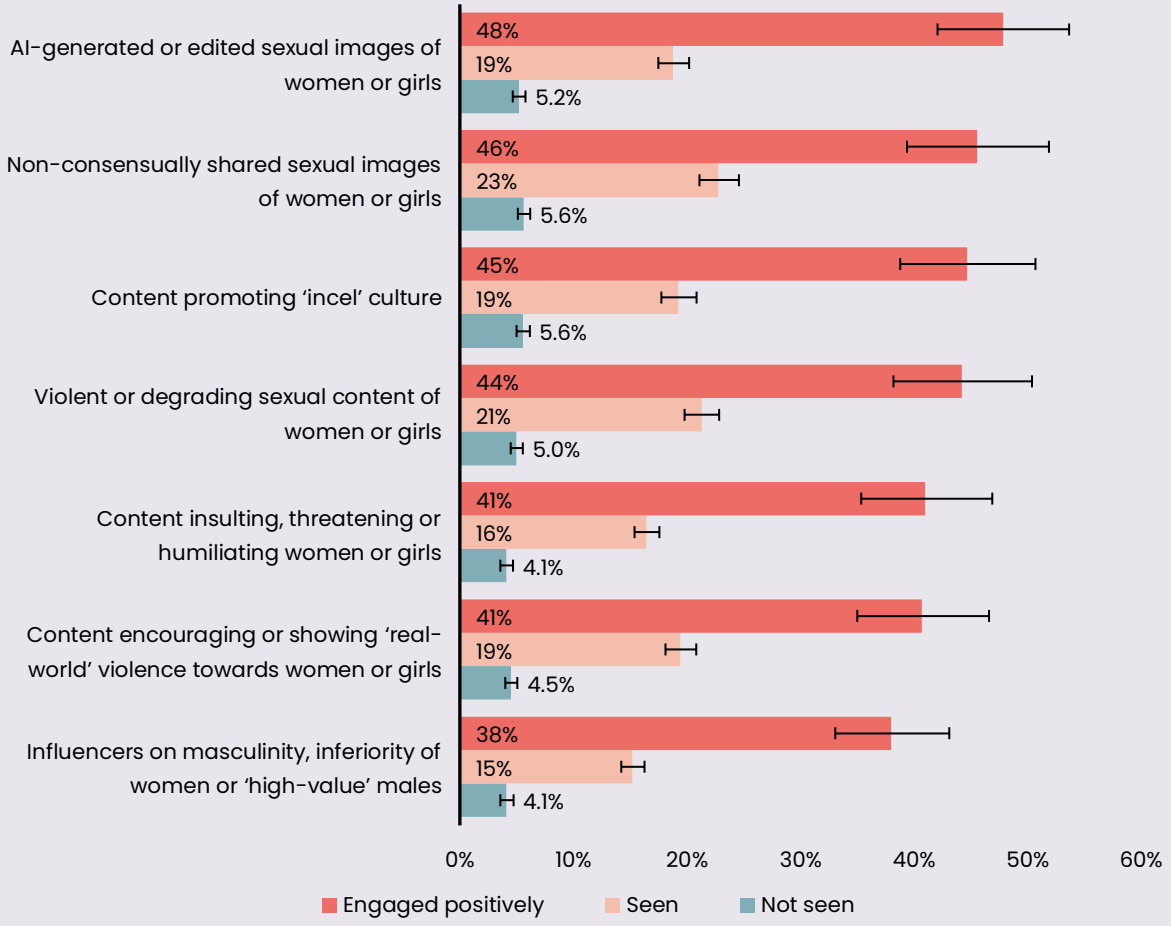


Note. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the true value to fall within.

Teens who engage positively with it are more likely to have been violent themselves.

Teens who'd seen all forms of misogynistic content online were more likely to have perpetrated GBV themselves. Overall, 10% of 13–17-year-olds said they'd perpetrated either sexual assault or relationship abuse. This rose for those who'd seen content targeting or degrading women and girls, and rose even further for those who'd engaged positively with such content. For example, 19% of those who said they'd seen AI-generated sexual images also said they'd perpetrated sexual assault or relationship abuse – well over three times the rate of GBV perpetration among those who hadn't seen such content (5.2%). Teens who'd engaged positively by liking, commenting or following were even more likely to have perpetrated GBV at 48% – over nine times the rate among those who hadn't seen the content at all.

FIGURE 2.4: PROPORTION OF 13–17-YEAR-OLDS WHO'D PERPETRATED SEXUAL ASSAULT OR RELATIONSHIP ABUSE, BY EXPOSURE TO AND ENGAGEMENT WITH ONLINE CONTENT TARGETING OR DEGRADING WOMEN AND GIRLS



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

It's important to note that we cannot say whether this content contributes to violence or is a broader reflection of existing behaviours. But young people involved in GBV seem more likely to occupy online spaces where misogyny and violence against women and girls are normalised.

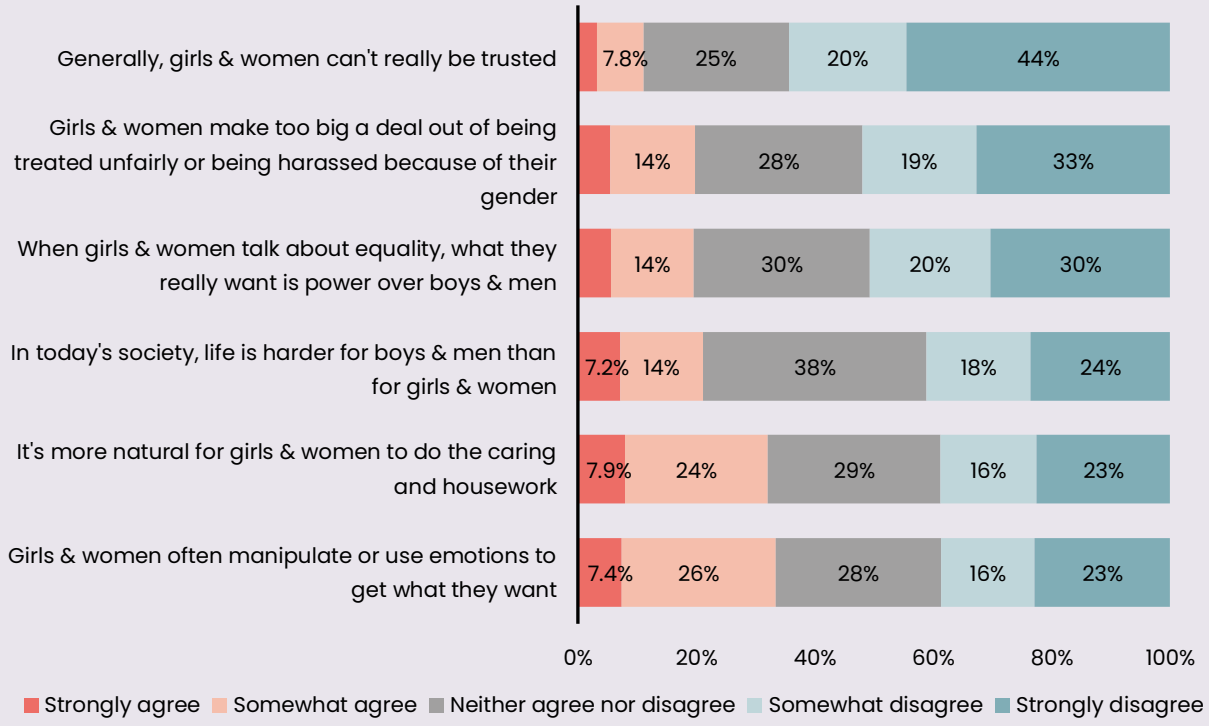
Misogynistic attitudes are held by many, but concentrate among those involved in violence.

Over half of teens agree with common misogynistic beliefs.

To investigate the extent to which 13–17-year-olds hold misogynistic views, we asked respondents whether they agreed with a range of statements about gender roles. Certain views were more common than others. For example, 13–17-year-olds were most likely to agree that girls and women often manipulate or use emotions to get what they want (33%) and that it's more natural for girls and women to do the caring and housework (32%).

Other views were less common. Twenty-one per cent of teens somewhat or strongly agreed that life is harder for boys than girls, 20% that when women and girls talk about equality what they really want is power, 20% that women and girls make too big a deal out of being treated unfairly, and 11% that women and girls cannot be trusted. Overall, over half (56%) of 13–17-year-olds either somewhat or strongly agreed with at least one of the statements.

FIGURE 3.1: PROPORTION OF 13–17-YEAR-OLDS WHO AGREED OR DISAGREED WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT THE ROLES AND BEHAVIOUR OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

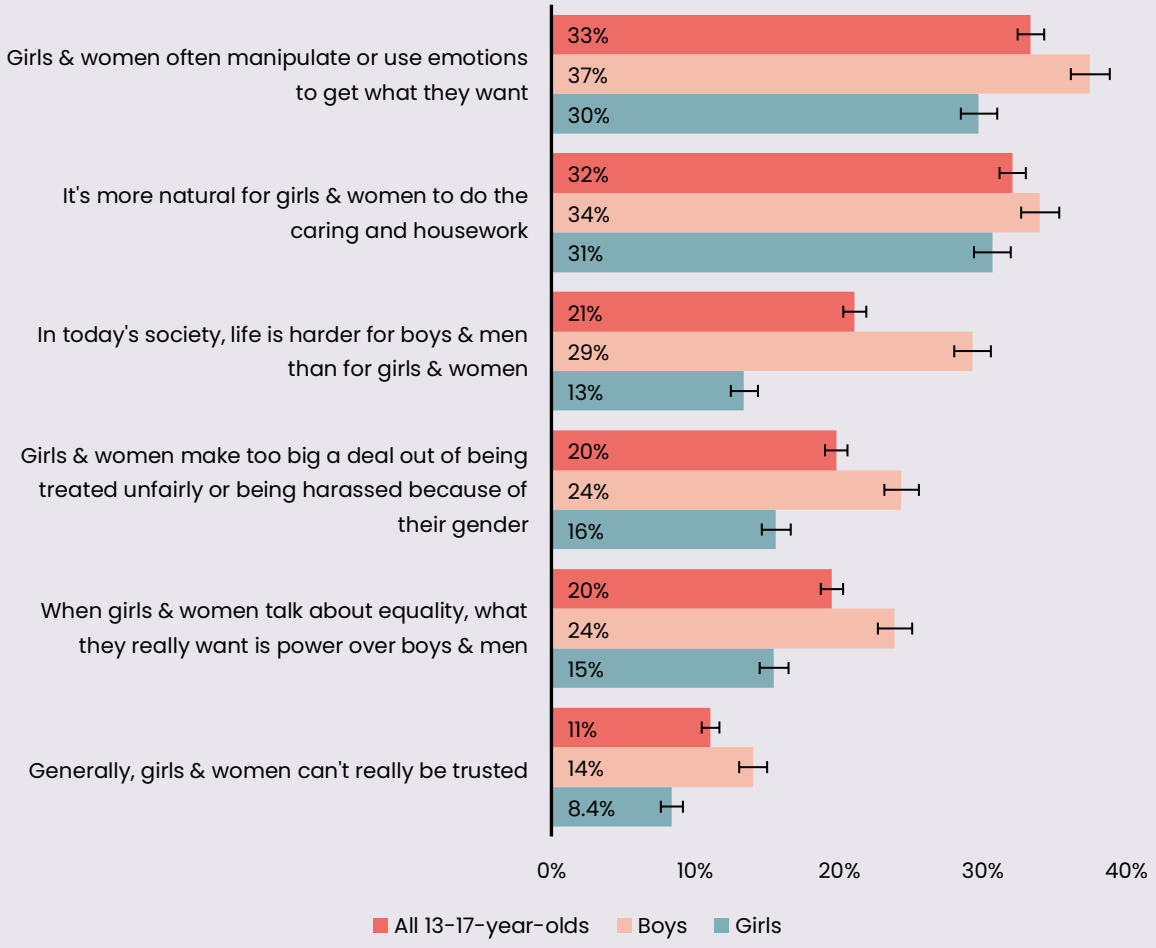


Boys agree more than girls, but these views aren't confined to boys.

Boys were more likely than girls to hold misogynistic views. However, these views were not confined to boys – while girls were generally less likely to agree, a minority still agreed with the statements. For example, 37% of boys agreed with the statement that women and girls often manipulate or use emotions to get what they want, while 32% disagreed. In comparison, nearly a third (30%) of girls agreed, though a greater proportion disagreed with the statement (45%). The biggest difference in opinion between boys and girls was on whether life is harder for men and boys in today's society. Three in 10 boys (29%) agreed with this statement, compared to 13% of girls.

Just under a quarter of boys (24%) agreed that women and girls make too big a deal out of being treated unfairly or being harassed because of their gender and that when women and girls talk about equality, what they really want is power over men and boys. Only 16% and 15% of girls agreed with those statements, respectively. Boys and girls were closer in agreeing that it is more natural for women and girls to do the caring and housework; 34% of boys agreed with this statement compared to 31% of girls.

FIGURE 3.2: PROPORTION OF 13–17-YEAR-OLDS WHO SOMEWHAT OR STRONGLY AGREED WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT THE ROLES AND BEHAVIOUR OF WOMEN AND GIRLS, BY GENDER



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

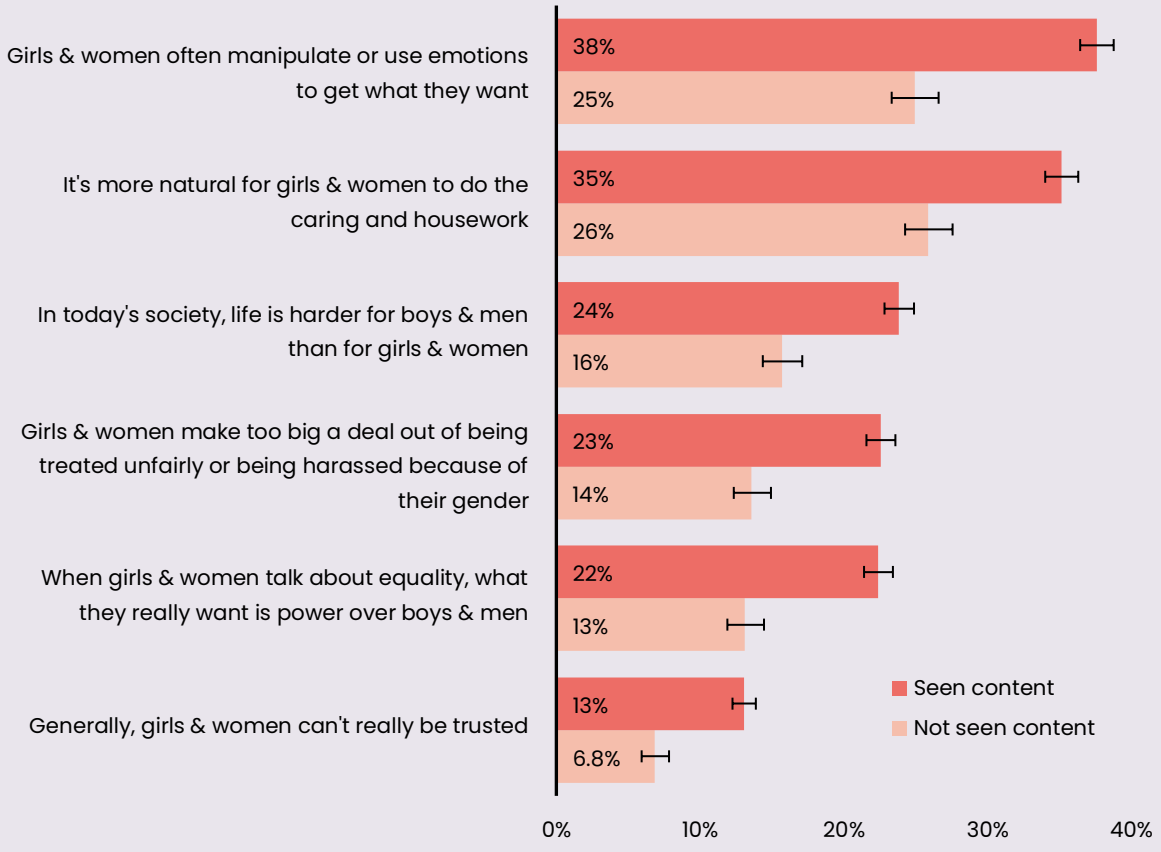
In general, younger teens were more likely to agree with these statements than older teens. For example, 36% of 13–15-year-olds agreed that it's more natural for women to do the caring and housework, compared to 26% of 16–17-year-olds; 23% agreed that in today's society, life is harder for boys and men than girls and women, compared to 18% of 16–17-year-olds; and 12% agreed that generally girls and women can't be trusted, compared to 9.6% of 16–17-year-olds. These differences were all statistically significant.

Agreement is higher among teens exposed to misogynistic content or abuse.

Teens who have seen this content online are more likely to agree.

Teens who had seen online content that degrades, threatens or sexualises women and girls were more likely than those who hadn't to agree with each of the statements we asked about. The biggest difference was for the least popular views; only 13% of 13–17-year-olds who'd seen misogynistic content online somewhat or strongly agreed that women and girls can't generally be trusted, but this was nearly double the rate for those who hadn't seen such content (6.8%). Similarly, 22% of those who'd seen such content agreed that when women and girls talk about equality what they really want is power over men, but this was only 13% among those who hadn't seen such content.

FIGURE 3.3: PROPORTION OF 13–17-YEAR-OLDS WHO AGREED WITH MISOGYNISTIC VIEWS, BY WHETHER THEY HAD SEEN ONLINE CONTENT TARGETING OR DEGRADING WOMEN AND GIRLS



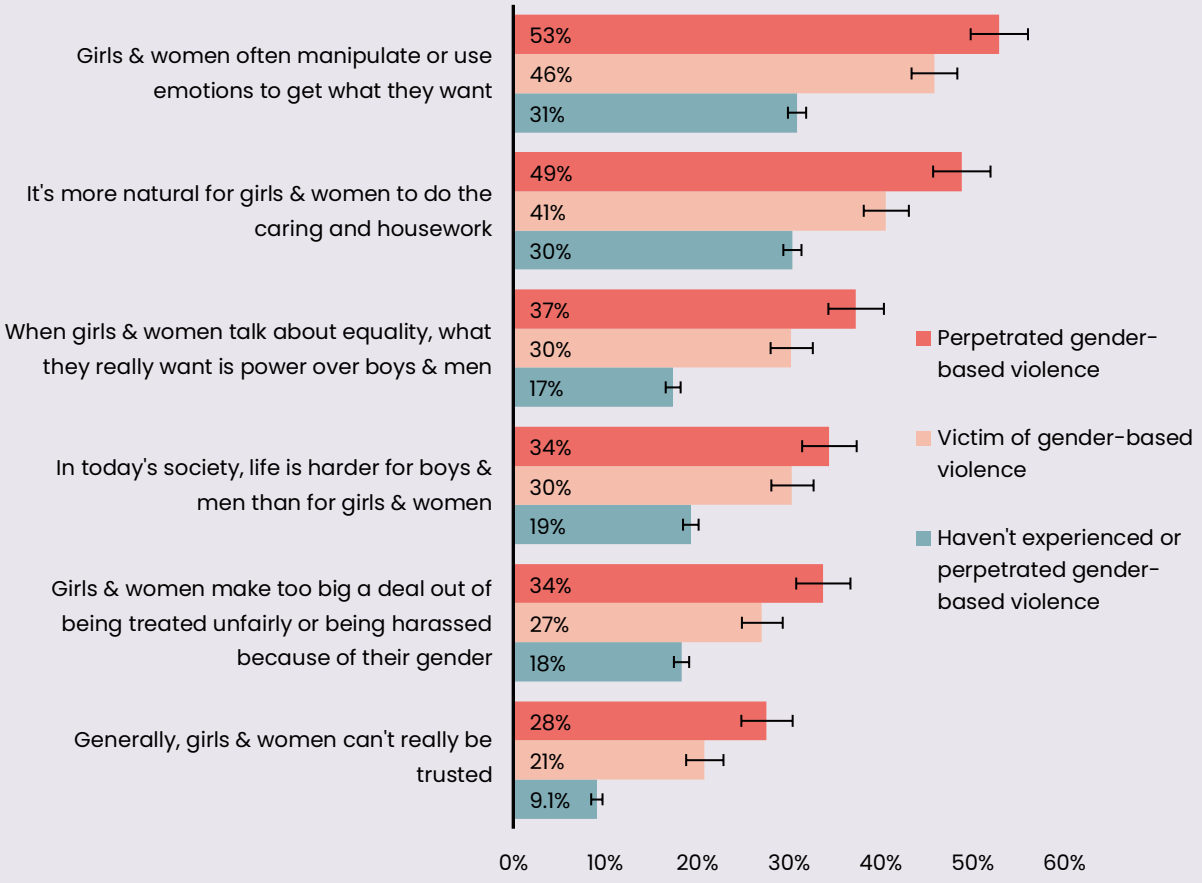
Note. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the true value to fall within.

There were also large differences for the most commonly endorsed views. For example, 35% of 13–17-year-olds who'd seen misogynistic content online somewhat or strongly agreed that it's more natural for girls and women to do the caring and housework, compared to 26% of those who hadn't seen this type of content.

So are teens who've been affected by gender-based violence.

Teens who'd experienced or perpetrated GBV were also more likely than those who hadn't to agree with each of the statements. Rates of agreement were also considerably higher than those seen among teens who had simply viewed misogynistic content online. For example, 31% of those who hadn't experienced or perpetrated GBV somewhat or strongly agreed that girls and women often manipulate or use emotions to get what they want. This rose to 46% of those who'd been victims of sexual assault or relationship abuse and rose even further to 53% of those who'd perpetrated it themselves. This pattern repeated for all the statements, but the biggest relative difference was for the view that girls and women can't really be trusted: those who'd been victims of GBV were more than twice as likely to agree with this view (21%) and those who'd perpetrated GBV were more than three times as likely to agree (28%) compared to those who hadn't been affected (9.1%).

FIGURE 3.4: PROPORTION OF 13–17-YEAR-OLDS WHO AGREED WITH MISOGYNISTIC VIEWS, BY WHETHER THEY HAD BEEN VICTIMS OF OR PERPETRATED SEXUAL ASSAULT OR RELATIONSHIP ABUSE



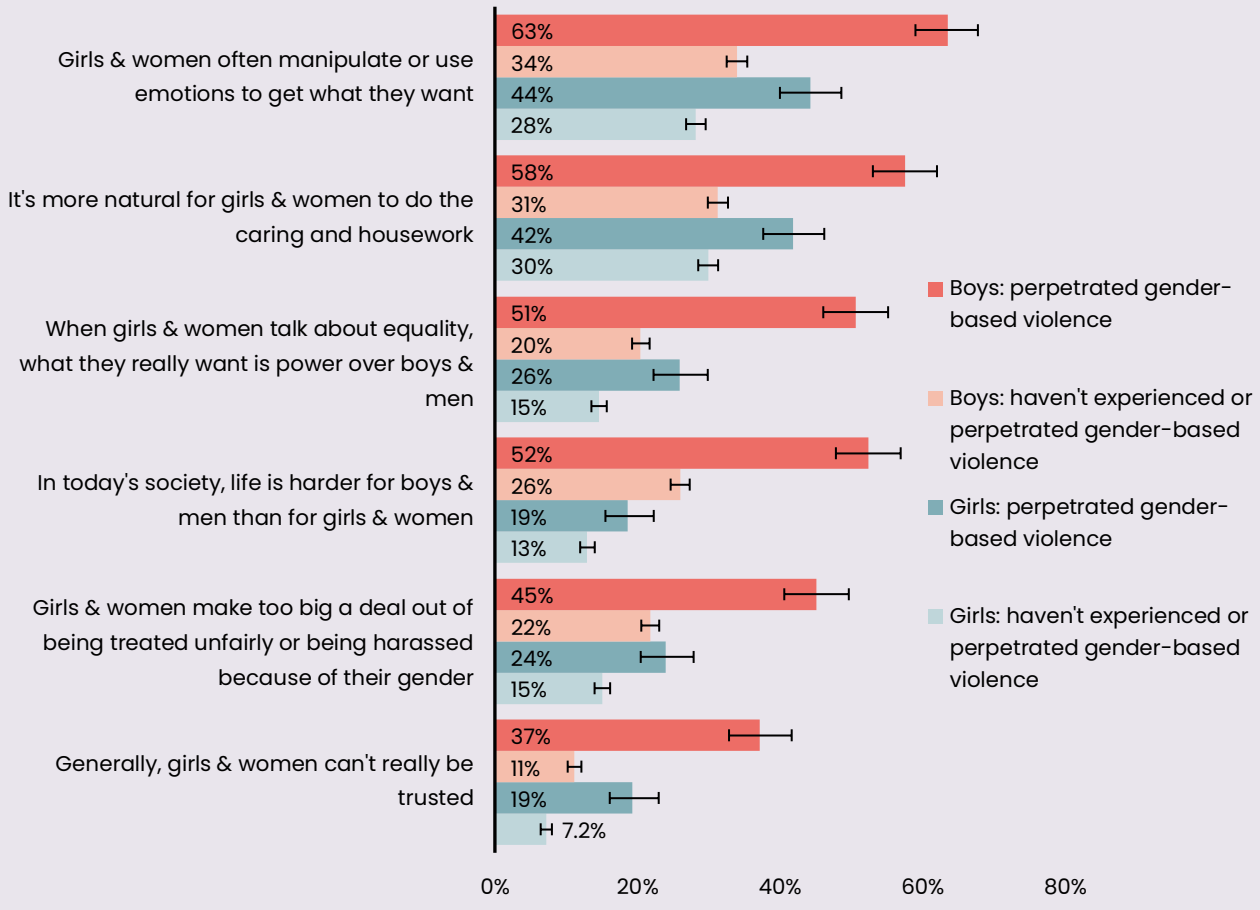
Note. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the true value to fall within.

Boys who have been abusive agree at much higher rates.

This pattern was particularly strong for boys. For example, half (51%) of boys who'd perpetrated sexual assault or relationship abuse agreed that when women and girls talk about equality, they actually want power over boys and men, making them more than twice as likely to agree with this viewpoint compared with boys who hadn't been affected by GBV (20%). Boys who'd perpetrated GBV were also twice as likely as those who hadn't to agree that in today's society life is harder for boys and men than for girls and women (52% vs. 26%). The least commonly endorsed view – that girls and women can't be trusted – showed the greatest difference. Boys who'd perpetrated GBV were over three times as likely to agree with this viewpoint (37%) compared to those who hadn't been affected (11%).

There was a similar pattern for girls who'd perpetrated GBV, but it wasn't as strong as for boys. For example, 19% of girls who'd perpetrated GBV agreed with the statement that girls and women can't be trusted compared to 7.2% of those who hadn't been affected. This suggests that teens – particularly boys – who perpetrate sexual assault or relationship abuse are much more likely to hold harmful opinions about girls and women. However, we can't say whether these views were one of the reasons children perpetrated abuse, or developed after or alongside it.

FIGURE 3.5: PROPORTION OF 13–17-YEAR-OLDS WHO AGREED WITH MISOGYNISTIC VIEWS, BY GENDER AND PERPETRATION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



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

Most teenage children who've been abusive in a relationship get no formal support.

For more than two in five, nothing happens.

To gain a better understanding of how teens are being helped to navigate their relationships, we asked what happened after they'd perpetrated relationship abuse. More than two in five (43%) said that nothing happened.

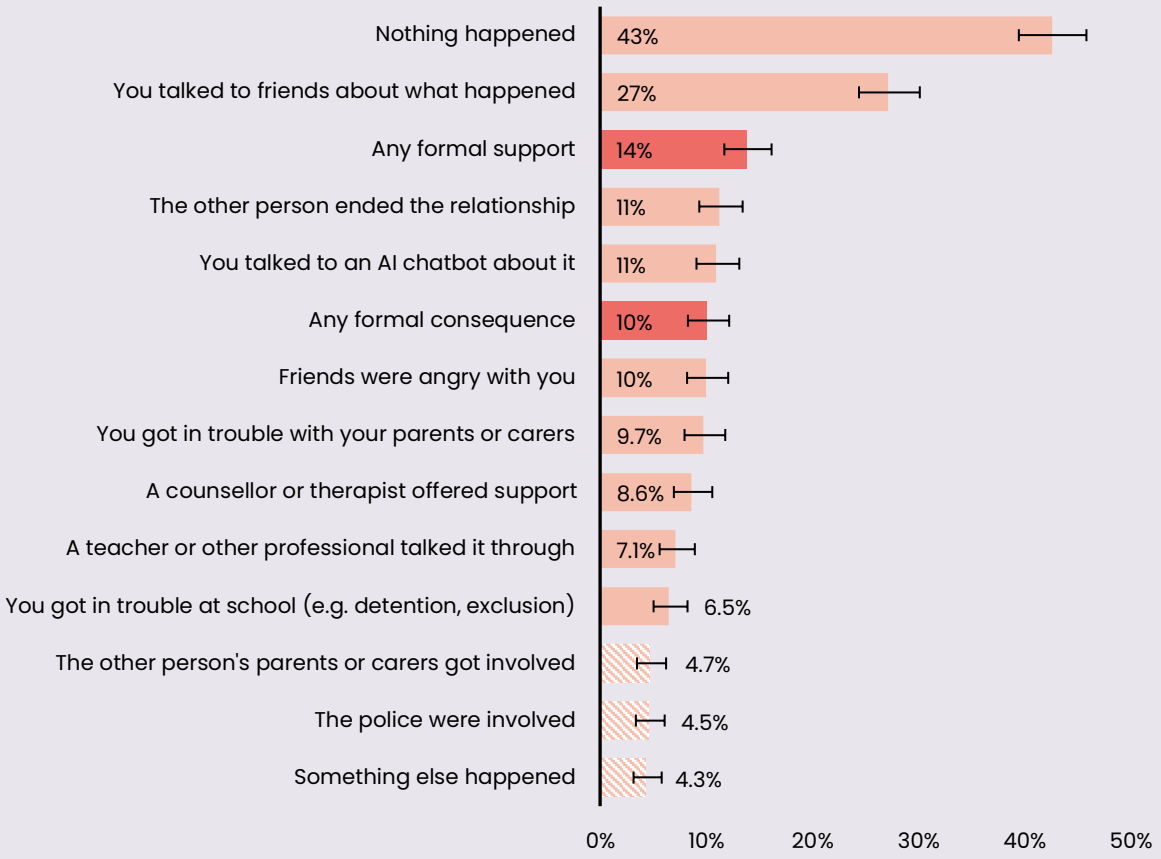
When something did happen, it tended to be informal. For example, just over a quarter of teens (27%) said that they had talked to friends about what had happened. Further, 11% talked to an AI chatbot about it. Eleven per cent said the other person ended the relationship. Formal support was less common: 8.6% were offered support from a counsellor or therapist and 7.1% had a teacher, youth worker or other professional try to help them understand what had happened. Formal consequences were rarer still: 6.5% got into trouble at school and 4.5% said the police became involved.

In total, 41% said they received some sort of support. Over a third (35%) sought informal support from friends or a chatbot and 14% said they were offered more formal support from professionals. Just under a third (30%) reported some kind of consequence; 27% said there were informal consequences such as getting in trouble with friends or parents or the other person ending the relationship and 10% reported formal consequences from school or the police. In comparison, as we saw in the first report in this year's series, 34% of 13–17-year-olds who'd perpetrated any form of physical assault, robbery, weapons violence or sexual assault received a formal consequence from school or the police and 25% were offered professional support.

Younger teens are more likely to get any response.

Younger teens were more likely than older teens to report a response of any kind. In particular, they were more likely to have been offered formal support: 21% of 13–15-year-olds who had perpetrated relationship abuse had support from a professional, compared with 9.0% of 16–17-year-olds. Younger teens were also more likely to say that the other person ended the relationship (15% vs. 8.8% of 16–17-year-olds) or that they had discussed what had happened with an AI chatbot (15% vs. 8.3%).

FIGURE 4.1: WHAT HAPPENED AFTER 13–17-YEAR-OLDS PERPETRATED RELATIONSHIP ABUSE



Notes. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the true value to fall within. Bars with striped shading have cell counts of less than 50, so these figures should be interpreted with caution.

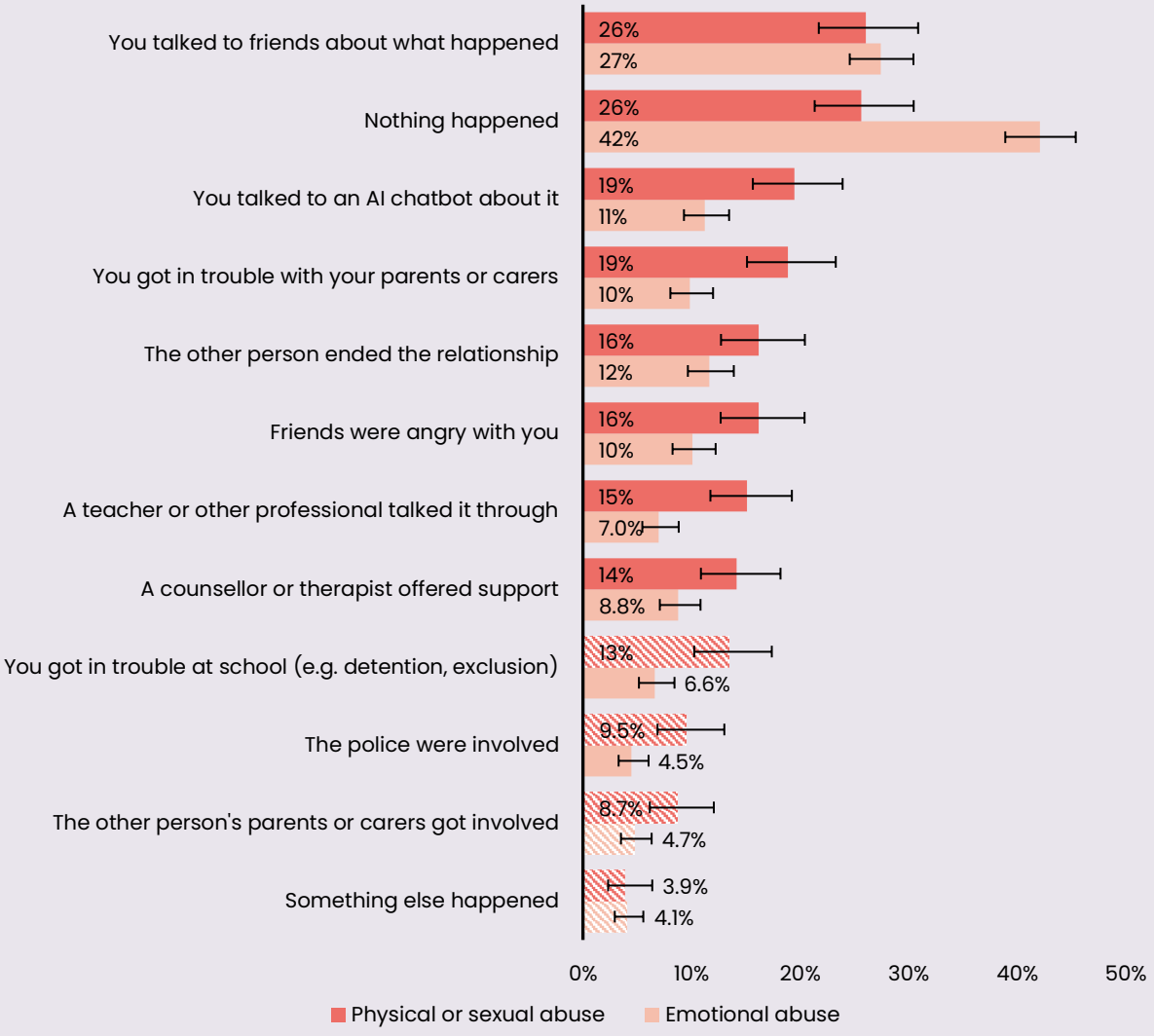
There weren't many significant differences between boys and girls in terms of what happened after perpetrating relationship abuse. There were a few exceptions to this; girls were more likely to have spoken to their friends about the incident (30% vs. 24% for boys) whereas boys were more likely to have talked to an AI chatbot about it (13% vs. 9.1% for girls). Response numbers were too small to look at any differences in consequences or support by race.

Even for physical and sexual abuse, formal support is uncommon.

Overall, 43% of teens who had perpetrated any type of relationship abuse (either emotional or controlling behaviour, or physical or sexual abuse) said that nothing happened. This dropped to 26% when the abuse was physical or sexual. Teens who'd engaged in physical or sexual abuse were more likely to report both consequences and support. In terms of informal consequences, around one in five (19%) perpetrators of physical or sexual abuse got into trouble with their parents or carers, compared with 10% of those who'd perpetrated emotional abuse. They were also more likely to say their friends were angry with them (16% vs. 10%) or that the other person ended the relationship (16% vs. 12%). Talking to friends was the exception, running at similar levels in both groups (26% vs. 27%).

The difference was even greater for more formal involvement from adults or services. For example, 15% of those who'd perpetrated physical or sexual abuse said a teacher, youth worker or other professional had tried to help them understand what had happened, compared to 7.0% of those who'd perpetrated emotional abuse. Similarly, 14% had been offered support from a counsellor or therapist, compared to 8.8% of those who'd perpetrated emotional abuse. In total, 25% had received formal support compared to 14% of those who'd perpetrated emotional abuse. They were also twice as likely to have received some form of formal consequence – 20% compared to 10% of those who'd perpetrated emotional abuse.

FIGURE 4.2: WHAT HAPPENED AFTER 13–17-YEAR-OLDS PERPETRATED RELATIONSHIP ABUSE, BY TYPE OF ABUSE



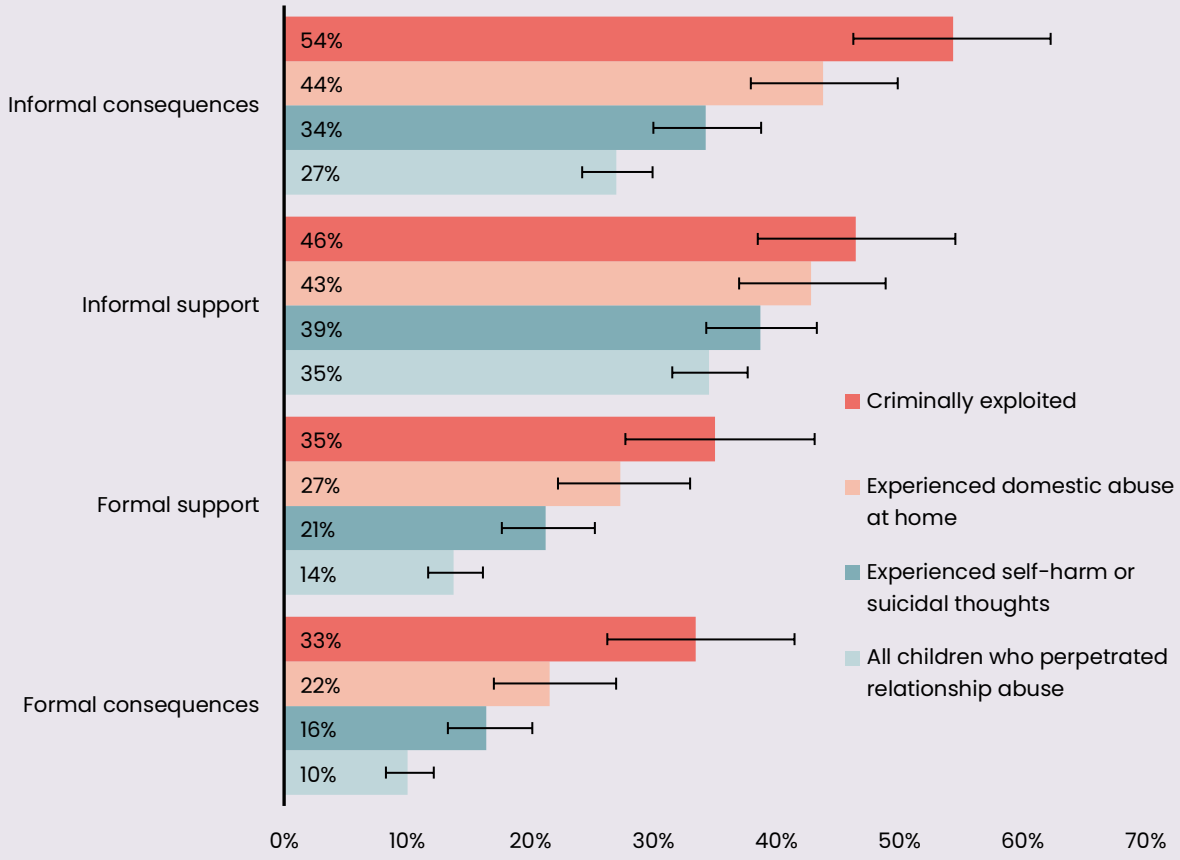
Notes. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals – this reflects the range we expect the true value to fall within. Bars with striped shading have cell counts of less than 50, so these figures should be interpreted with caution.

Teens with other vulnerabilities are more likely to get a response.

Teens with other vulnerabilities were also more likely to receive both support and consequences after perpetrating relationship abuse. For example, while 14% of all teens perpetrating relationship abuse said they'd been offered formal support, this rose to 21% of those who'd self-harmed or had suicidal thoughts in the past year, 27% of those experiencing domestic abuse in the home and 35% of those being criminally exploited. However, formal consequences were also more common for these groups; 10% of all perpetrators of relationship abuse reported formal consequences, rising to 16% of those self-harming or suicidal, 22% of those experiencing domestic abuse in the home and 33% of those criminally exploited.

This suggests that teens with additional vulnerabilities may be more likely to come to the attention of adults or services following relationship abuse. This may be because they were already in contact with services that are able to respond.

FIGURE 4.3: WHAT HAPPENED AFTER 13–17-YEAR-OLDS PERPETRATED RELATIONSHIP ABUSE, BY SELECTED VULNERABILITIES



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

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