



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Young People in Scotland Survey 2021: young people's attitudes to violence against women and girls



EQUALITY AND WELFARE



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Executive summary

Background and methods

This report presents findings from the 2021 Young People in Scotland survey (YPIS) from a sub-set of questions investigating young people's attitudes towards violence against women and girls (VAWG). The YPIS was completed by a representative sample of 2,285 school pupils in 2014¹ and 1,386 school pupils in 2021 aged 11-18 years. Pupils were presented with the same scenarios as in the [2014 survey](#) to examine how attitudes have changed in the intervening seven years. Differences in attitudes across a number of characteristics are also examined, including gender, long-term physical or mental health condition, ethnicity, religious identity and area deprivation.²

Key findings

Significant differences across time and within groups are discussed in this report. Full data can be found in the Data Tables (see Supporting Documents). Key findings show that:

- A vast majority of pupils in 2021 viewed the behaviours described in most scenarios as 'wrong' and 'harmful' and were more likely to do so than pupils in 2014. However, there remains a very small minority of pupils (under 5% for all scenarios excluding those on commercial sexual exploitation) who viewed most behaviours as 'not wrong at all' and causing 'no harm at all'.
- pupils in 2021 were more likely to view the behaviours described in the majority of scenarios as 'wrong' and 'harmful' compared to pupils in 2014
- scenarios relating to sexual harassment and stalking were most likely to be viewed 'wrong' and 'harmful' by pupils in 2021 and 2014
 - sharing naked images online without consent was the most likely scenario to be rated as wrong and harmful in both 2021 (94% and 95%, respectively) and 2014 (89% and 91% respectively)
 - wolf-whistling at strangers on the street showed the biggest change over time, where the proportion of pupils who viewed the behaviour as 'wrong' increased to 84% in 2021 from 56% in 2014. The second biggest change over time was in the scenario where a man sent his ex partner unwanted gifts, where the proportion of pupils who thought this behaviour was wrong increased to 62% in 2021 from 36% in 2014
 - the proportion of pupils who viewed domestic abuse within a marriage as wrong also increased in 2021 (79% for both physical abuse and controlling behaviour compared to 69% and 65% respectively in 2014)
- for most scenarios, girls were more likely to rate the described behaviours as wrong compared to boys
- aside from differences by religious identity for some scenarios, attitudes did not tend to differ significantly within equality characteristics

¹ Fieldwork was carried out by Ipsos MORI between September and November 2014.

² The report only discusses significant differences between groups or across time, thus non-significant results have not been discussed. Statistical significance has been established by calculating confidence intervals at the 95% level - where confidence intervals do not overlap, users may assume the difference between percentage points is significant.

- the prevalence of stereotypical attitudes in pupils reduced between 2021 and 2014
 - a higher proportion of pupils reported they would buy a girl a toy truck without saying anything (79% in 2021, up from 53% in 2014)
 - a higher proportion of pupils would buy a boy a princess doll without saying anything (71% in 2021, up from 40% in 2014)

Introduction

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) remains a significant issue in Scotland. The COVID-19 pandemic created additional risks for women, including an increase in domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women.³ Women and girls continue to be the victims of a spectrum of violence, ranging from misogynistic attitudes to serious sexual and violent crime.⁴ Our understanding of VAWG is rooted in a gendered analysis, which acknowledges that women are at increased risk of certain types of violence and abuse (e.g. sexual assaults and domestic abuse) because they are women. A summary of Scottish Government policy initiatives and legislative developments to tackle VAWG can be found in [Annex A](#) and [Annex B](#) respectively.

While measuring the prevalence of abusive behaviour represents a vital pillar in the design of policy and practice in this area, understanding public attitudes is a key source of evidence. Data on attitudes towards VAWG among Scottish adults aged 16 and over was gathered in the [Scottish Social Attitudes Survey](#) in 2014 and 2019 (see [Annex C](#) for a summary of key findings).

This report presents the findings from the Young People in Scotland (YPIS) 2021 module on Scottish secondary school pupils' attitudes towards VAWG. The module of questions asked in 2021 replicated those asked in the 2014 YPIS, allowing for identification of changes in pupils' attitudes in the intervening seven years. This report also explores how attitudes vary by a range of pupil characteristics including gender⁵, presence of a long-term physical or mental health condition, ethnicity and religious identity.

Methodology and analysis

Methodology

The YPIS is an omnibus survey carried out annually by Ipsos MORI in 50 local authority secondary state schools across Scotland. It contains questions on a broad range of topics. The module of questions on attitudes towards VAWG (see [Annex D](#)) was included in the

³ Scottish Government (2021, November 30) [Domestic abuse: statistics recorded by the Police in Scotland - 2020/21](#). Scottish Government.

⁴ In 2020-21, Police Scotland recorded around 65,000 incidents of domestic abuse in Scotland, an increase of 4% compared to the [previous year](#). The number of domestic abuse incidents has been increasing for the past five consecutive years. Where gender information was recorded, [8 in 10 incidents of domestic abuse \(80%\) in 2020-21 had a female victim and a male accused](#). This decreased slightly from 82% in 2019-20.

⁵ Pupils responded to the following question "How would you describe your gender identity?" with options "Female", "Male", "In another way", "Prefer not to say."

self-completion section of the survey, which was completed by 2,285 pupils in 2014⁶ and 1,386 pupils in 2021.⁷

Schools were selected to achieve a representative sample of 11 to 18-year-old pupils. Two of the questions ([scenarios 8 and 9](#)), which relate to commercial sexual exploitation, were only presented to older pupils aged 16-18 (993 pupils in 2014 and 686 pupils in 2021). The questions on VAWG are a sub-set of the questions asked of adults in the [Scottish Social Attitudes Survey](#).

Pupils were presented with nine VAWG scenarios in which they were asked to imagine a specific behaviour and rate it on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 was 'not wrong at all' and 7 was 'very seriously wrong'. Four of the scenarios were followed up with a question on how much harm the behaviour causes the victim. Perceived harm was rated on a 5-point scale between 'a great deal' to 'none at all'.

There were notable changes in the YPIS methodology between 2014 and 2021 that could have impacted the results of the survey. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey was administered online in 2021 compared to on paper in 2014. Moreover, most pupils (77%) completed the survey at home due to remote learning in 2021, whereas the completion had taken place entirely in schools in 2014. This change in completion location could have had an impact on the results as it represents a major methodological change.

Some key shifts to the societal context have also occurred since 2014, including the public discussion of violence against women and girls. These include prominent movements such as #MeToo, campaigns led by public and third sector organisations in Scotland, including publicising new offences around the posting of intimate images without consent, and the changing nature of social media. These wider contextual factors may have impacted pupils' attitudes towards the scenarios presented in the YPIS, but it is not possible to attribute these attitudinal changes to the shifting societal context or the methodological changes outlined.

Furthermore, one of the questions on commercial sexual exploitation changed in content from 2014 to 2021. Pupils in 2014 responded to the following question: "How wrong do you personally think it is for an adult (18 or over) to read magazines that feature topless women, or is it not wrong at all?" whereas in 2021 pupils responded to "How wrong do you personally think it is for an adult (18 or over) to watch pornography at home, or is it not wrong at all?". Due to the rephrasing of the question, it is not possible to produce robust and reliable comparison across time, therefore this question was excluded from the 2014 vs. 2021 comparative analysis presented in this report.

Finally, the survey from 2021 collected equality data on ethnicity, religion, health status, urban/rural and area deprivation (see [Annex D](#) for questions used). These variables were not collected in 2014, therefore comparison across years within these characteristics is not available.

Analysis

Confidence intervals were calculated at the 95% level to estimate the precision of results obtained. It is usual practice to create confidence intervals at the 95% level, which means that 95% of the time our confidence intervals should contain the true value found in the population.⁸ Statistical significance can also be established by using confidence intervals –

⁶ Fieldwork was carried out between September and November 2014.

⁷ Fieldwork was carried out between February and April 2021.

⁸ The [Scottish Health Survey](#) provides further information on confidence intervals and how to use them.

where confidence intervals do not overlap, we may infer the two estimates to be significantly different. The term 'significant' is used to refer to statistical significance and is not intended to imply substantive importance. Only significant differences between groups or across time have been discussed in this report but full Data Tables can be found in the Supporting Documents.

Care must be applied when interpreting data points based on small sample sizes, as these produce wider and less reliable ranges. Only data points with sufficient sample sizes ($N > 100$) have been discussed in this report.

A cumulative response category was created to represent the proportion of pupils who rated a given behaviour as 'wrong' or 'harmful'. 'Wrong' refers to response options 5-7 on a 7-point Likert scale where 1 was 'not wrong at all' and 7 was 'very seriously wrong'. 'Harmful' refers to response options "a great deal", "quite a lot" and "some" on a 5-point scale between 'a great deal' to 'none at all'.

This allows for more robust interpretation of the data due to the pooled samples. This analytical approach is in line with that of the [Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2019: attitudes to violence against women](#).

Where data is presented in figures, data labels are presented for data points of 5% and above.

Results

Domestic abuse

Physical violence

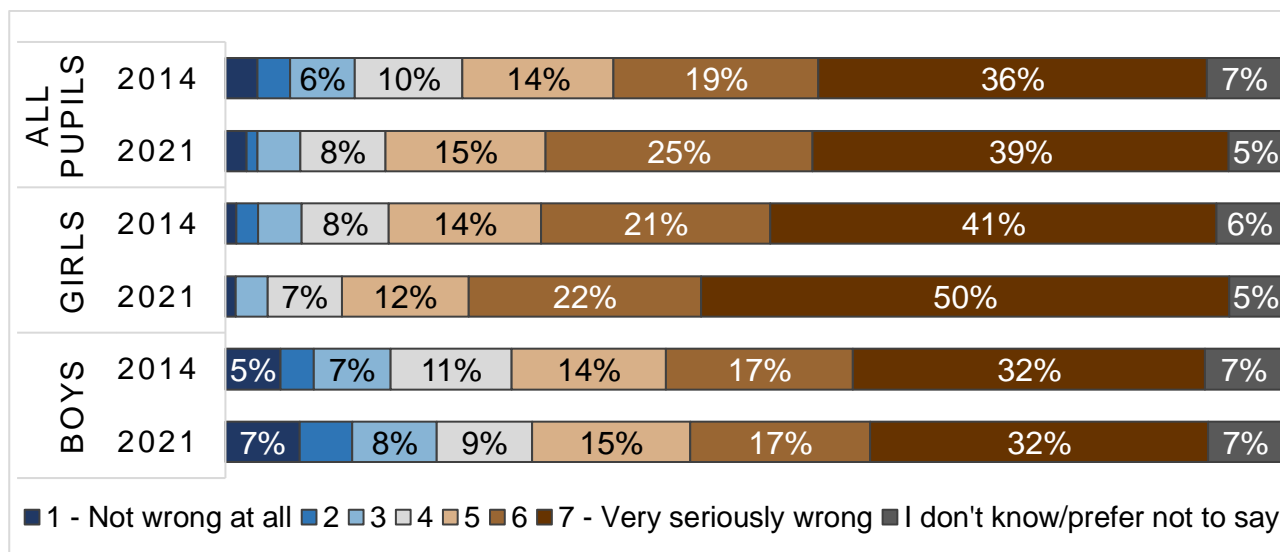
Two of the presented scenarios in the survey looked at attitudes to domestic abuse within a marriage. The first domestic abuse scenario covered physical violence:

"Imagine a married couple who have been together for a while. One evening the man's wife tells him she has been having an affair. He has never hit her before, but he responds to this news by slapping her in the face. Using the scale, choose one number to show what you think about the behaviour of the people in the situation described."

Pupils' responses were on a scale from 1 to 7 where 1 was 'not wrong at all' and 7 was 'very seriously wrong'. They were not asked how much harm they thought the man's behaviour caused the victim in this scenario.

As shown in Figure 1, more than three quarters (79%) of pupils in 2021 selected at least 5 on the 7-point scale (i.e. viewed the behaviour as 'wrong'), a statistically significant increase from 2014 (69%). This overall change in pupils' attitudes is driven by a change in girls where views have shifted significantly over time, whereas there has been no change over time among boys. Over 8 in 10 girls in 2021 (84%) thought the behaviour was wrong compared to 64% of boys. This is an increase from 76% among girls and from 63% among boys in 2014.

Figure 1: Attitudes towards physical abuse within a marriage in 2014 and 2021 for all pupils and gender disaggregated (pupils in S1-S6 aged 11-18).



When disaggregated by religion, non-religious pupils were less likely to view the behaviour as ‘wrong’ (69%) compared to Christian pupils (79%). There were no significant differences by ethnicity, health status, urban/rural, or area deprivation.

Controlling behaviour

The second domestic abuse scenario covered controlling behaviour in a marriage:

“Imagine a married woman who wants to go out with her friends for a meal in the evening. When she tells her husband about it, he gets very annoyed. He tells her that he doesn’t want her going out without him.”

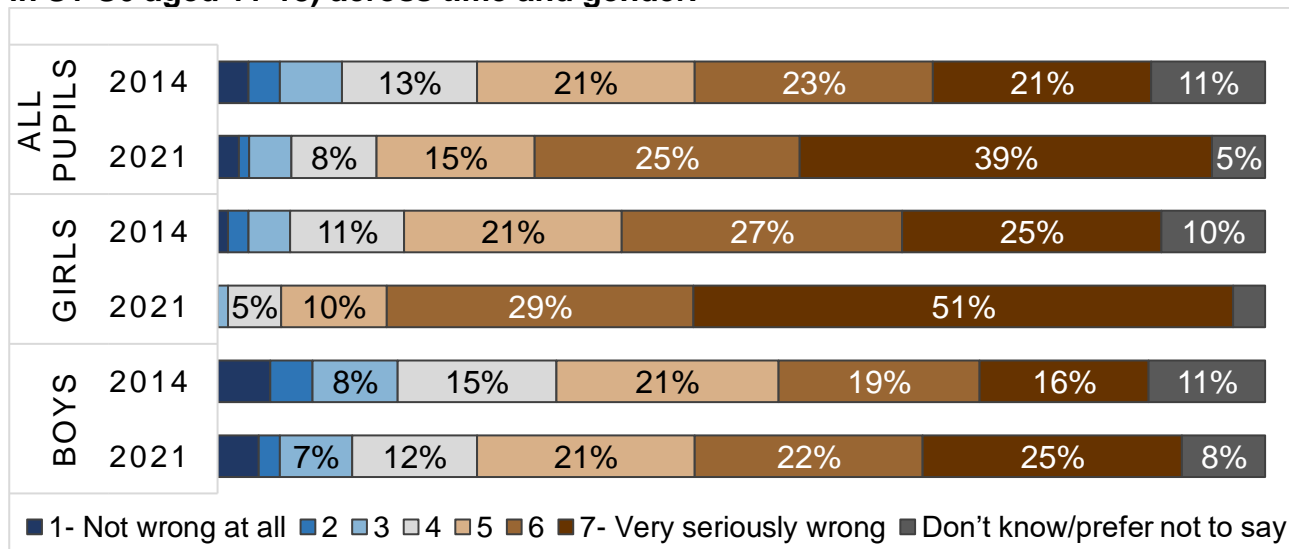
As shown in Figure 2, over three quarters (79%) of pupils in 2021 viewed controlling behaviour within a marriage as ‘wrong’, a significant increase from 65% in 2014.

Both girls and boys were significantly more likely to rate the behaviour of the perpetrator as ‘wrong’ in 2021 compared to 2014. The proportion of girls viewing the behaviour as ‘wrong’ increased from 73% in 2014 to 90% in 2021, and proportion of boys increased from 56% in 2014 to 68% in 2021.

As in the physical violence scenario, girls were more likely to view the behaviour as wrong compared to boys.

There were no significant differences by ethnicity, health status, urban/rural, religion or area deprivation.

Figure 2: Comparison of attitudes to controlling behaviour within a marriage (pupils in S1-S6 aged 11-18) across time and gender.

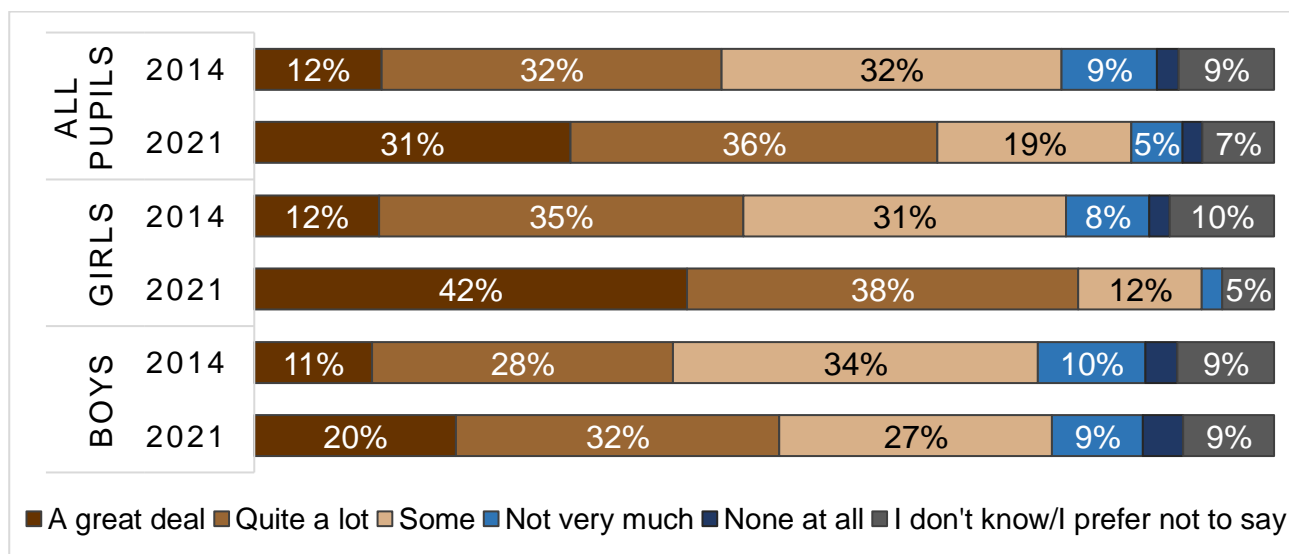


The scenario on controlling behaviour was followed with a question on the perceived harm the behaviour caused the victim. Pupils answered how much harm they thought the man's controlling behaviour caused the woman on a five-point scale ranging from 'a great deal' to 'none at all'.

As shown in Figure 3, 86% of all pupils viewed the behaviour as 'harmful' to the woman (combined responses for "a great deal", "quite a lot", "some"), a significant increase from 76% in 2014.

Girls were more likely to view the behaviour as 'harmful' compared to boys. Over 9 in 10 (92%) girls and almost 8 in 10 (79%) boys viewed the behaviour as harmful in 2021. This is an increase from 78% of girls and 73% of boys in 2014.

Figure 3: Perceived harm caused to the victim by controlling behaviour of a spouse within a marriage (pupils aged in S1-S6 11-18) across time and gender.



Stalking and harassment

Sending unwanted gifts

Three scenarios measured attitudes to stalking and harassment.

The first stalking and harassment scenario covered stalking by an ex-partner:

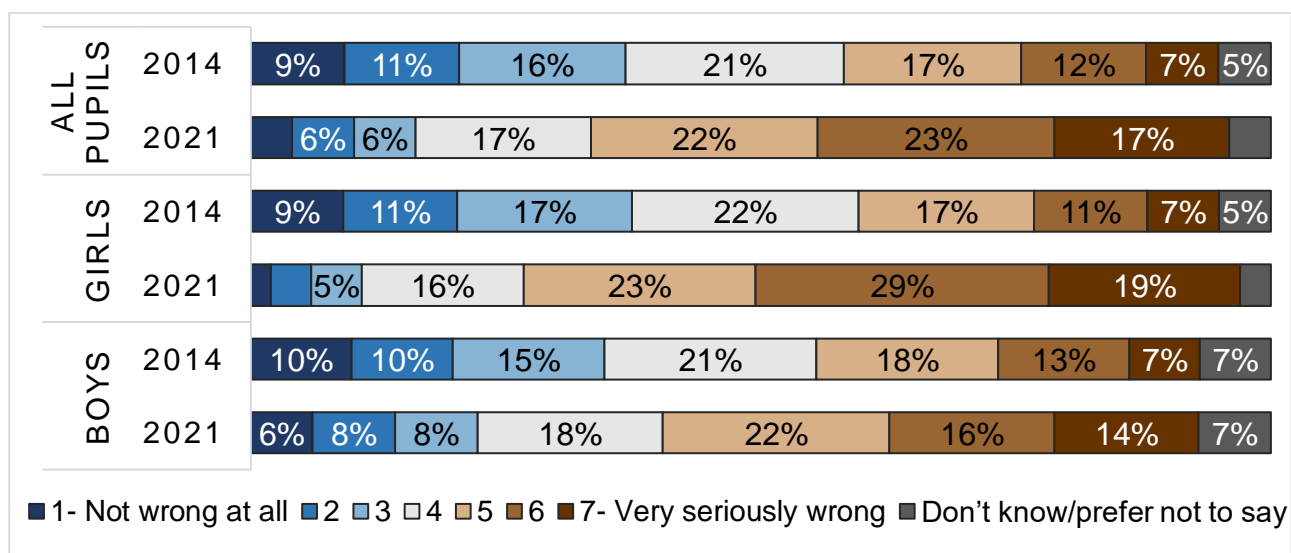
“Imagine a woman who broke up with her boyfriend a few months ago. He wants them to get back together, she does not. He has been sending flowers and gifts to her work and home even though she has told him she doesn't want them.”

As shown in Figure 4, just over 6 in 10 pupils in 2021 viewed the stalking scenario as ‘wrong’ (62%), a significant increase from 36% in 2014. The proportions of pupils who viewed this behaviour as wrong were lower than that for the domestic abuse scenarios.

Girls were more likely to view the behaviour as ‘wrong’ (71%) compared to boys (52%) in 2021. The proportions of girls and boys viewing the behaviour as wrong have increased significantly from 2014 (from 35% of girls and 38% of boys in 2014).

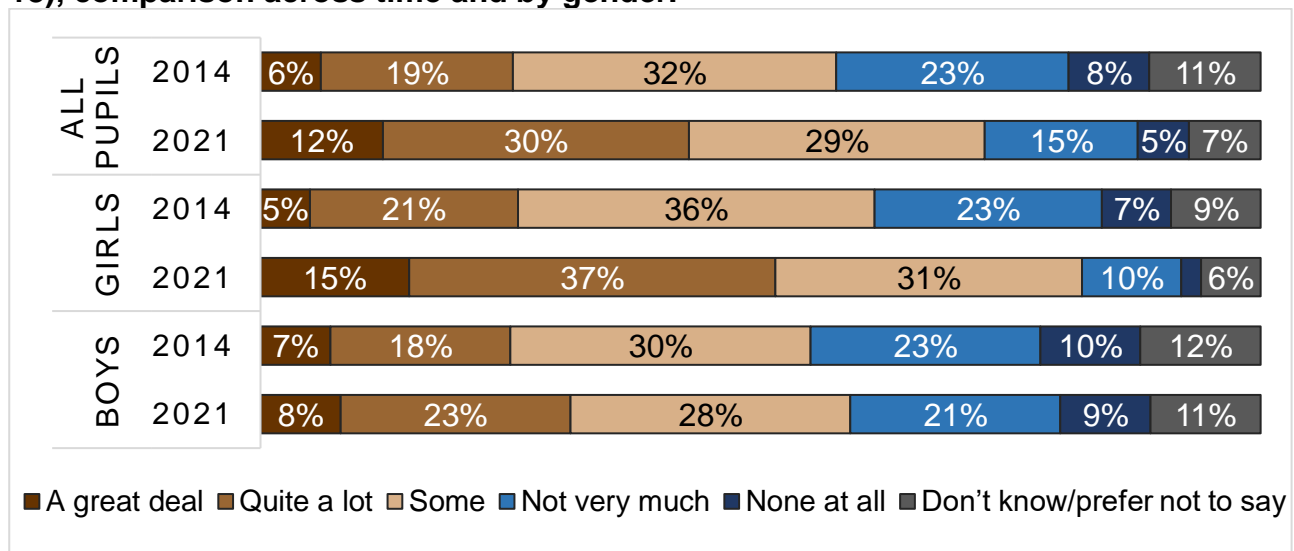
Pupils with a long-term physical or mental health condition were more likely to rate the behaviour as wrong (69%) compared to pupils without a health condition (61%). There were no significant differences in attitudes by ethnicity, urban/rural, religion or area deprivation.

Figure 4: Attitudes toward sending unwanted gifts and flowers to an ex-partner after the relationship had ended (pupils in S1-S6 aged 11-18), comparison between 2014 and 2021 by gender.



As shown in Figure 5, just over 7 in 10 (71%) pupils viewed the behaviour as ‘harmful’, a significant increase from 57% in 2014. This shift is primarily driven by attitudes among girls. Of girls, 83% viewed the behaviour as ‘harmful’ in 2021, a significant rise from 63% in 2014. Among boys, 59% viewed the behaviour as ‘harmful’ in 2021, a small and not statistically significant rise from 55% in 2014.

Figure 5: Perceived harm caused by an ex-boyfriend sending unwanted gifts and flowers to his ex-partner after the relationship had ended (pupils in S1-S6 aged 11-18), comparison across time and by gender.



Wolf-whistling

The second stalking and harassment scenario described a group of men wolf-whistling at a woman:

“Imagine a woman is walking down the street. She passes a group of men who start wolf-whistling and saying things like “hey sexy” to her.”

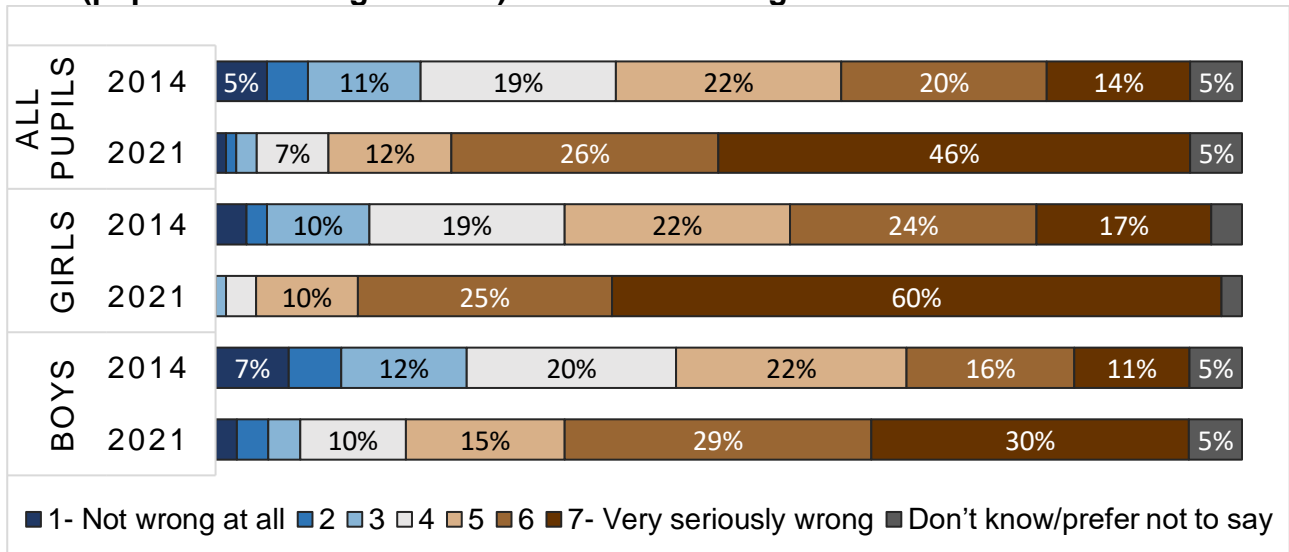
As shown in Figure 6, over 8 in 10 (84%) pupils viewed this behaviour as wrong. This is a significant increase from almost 6 in 10 pupils (56%) in 2014.

There was a substantial and significant increase in the proportions of both girls and boys who viewed the behaviour as ‘wrong’ between 2014 and 2021. Over 9 in 10 (95%) girls viewed the behaviour as ‘wrong’ in 2021, an increase of 32 percentage points compared to 2014 (63%). Likewise, more than 7 in 10 boys viewed the behaviour as wrong in 2021, a rise of 25 percentage points compared to 2014 (49%).

As for the domestic abuse and other stalking and harassment scenarios, girls were more likely than boys to view the behaviour as wrong.

There were no significant differences by ethnicity, health status, urban/rural, religion or area deprivation.

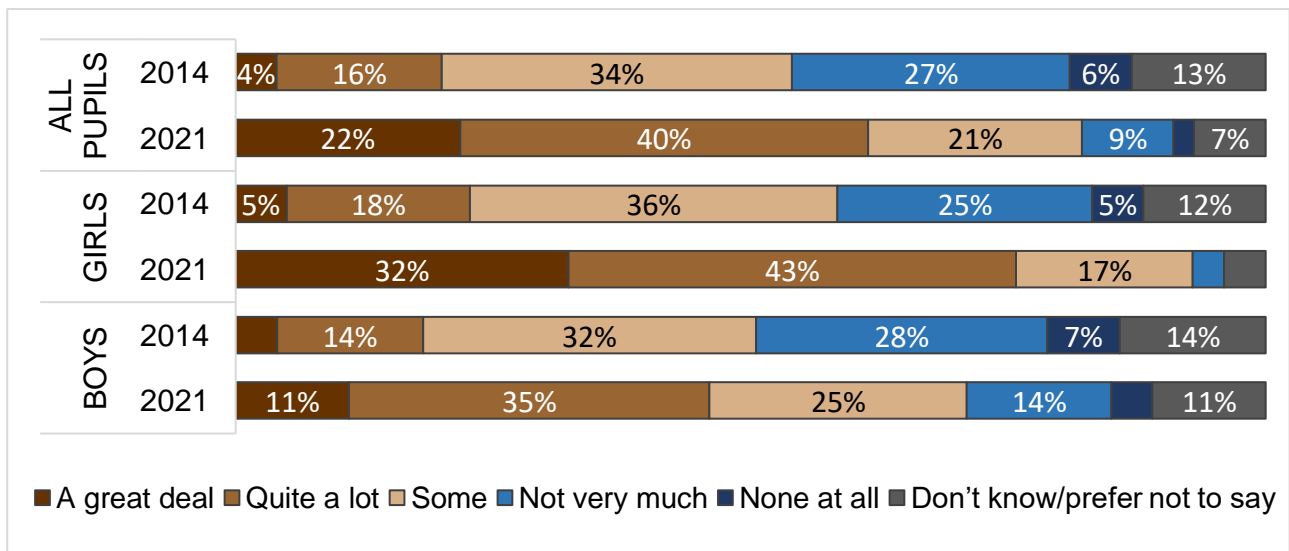
Figure 6: Attitudes towards harassment of a woman by a wolf-whistling group of men (pupils in S1-S6 aged 11-18) across time and gender.



Pupils were asked about the harm they thought a group of men wolf-whistling at a woman passing by would cause her and answered on a five-point scale ranging from ‘a great deal’ to ‘none at all’.

As shown in Figure 7, just over 8 in 10 pupils (83%) in 2021 viewed the behaviour as ‘harmful’, a significant increase from 54% in 2014. A greater proportion of girls and boys viewed the behaviour as harmful in 2021 (92% and 71%, respectively) than in 2014 (63% and 50%, respectively). The largest attitudinal shift over time has occurred among girls.

Figure 7: Perceptions of harm caused by a group of men wolf-whistling at a passing-by woman (pupils in S1-S6 aged 11-18), across time and gender.



Sharing naked photos online without consent

The third stalking and harassment scenario pupils responded to was non-consensual sharing of naked images online:

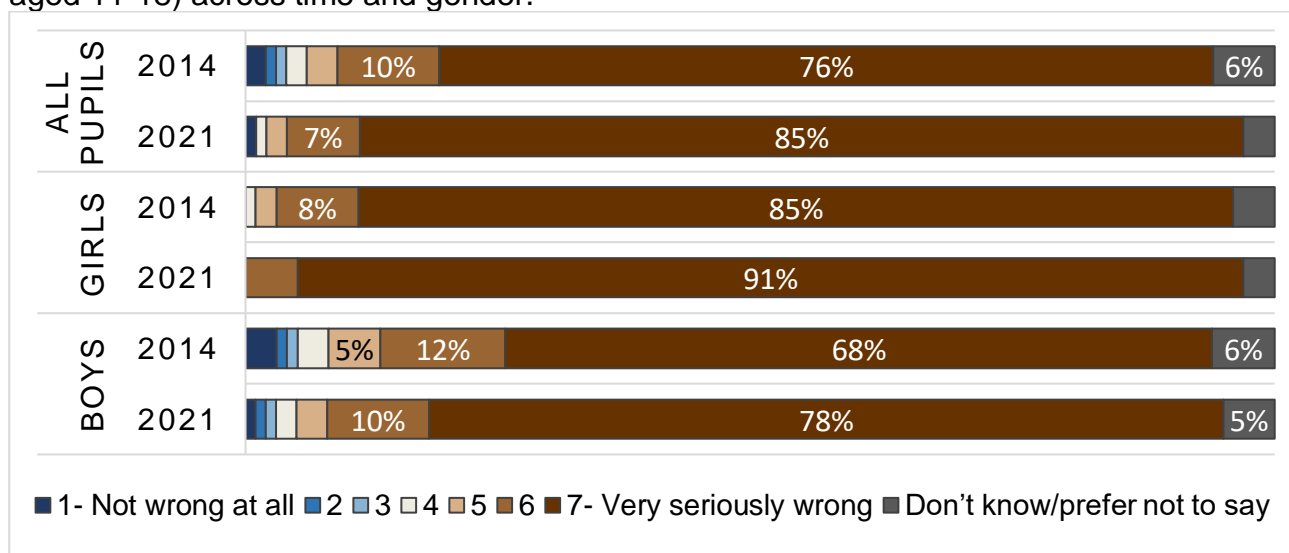
“Imagine a woman sent some naked photos of herself to her boyfriend. After they split up, he puts them on the internet without telling her, so that anyone could see them.”

As shown in Figure 8, over 9 in 10 pupils (94%) rated this behaviour as ‘wrong’, a small but significant increase from 89% in 2014. Unlike the other scenarios, this increase is driven by an attitudinal change among boys, not girls.

In 2021, 91% of boys rated this behaviour as wrong compared to 85% of boys in 2014. While girls were more likely than boys to view the behaviour as ‘wrong’ in 2021 and 2014, there was no change in girls’ attitudes over time.

There were no significant differences by ethnicity, health status, urban/rural, religion or area deprivation.

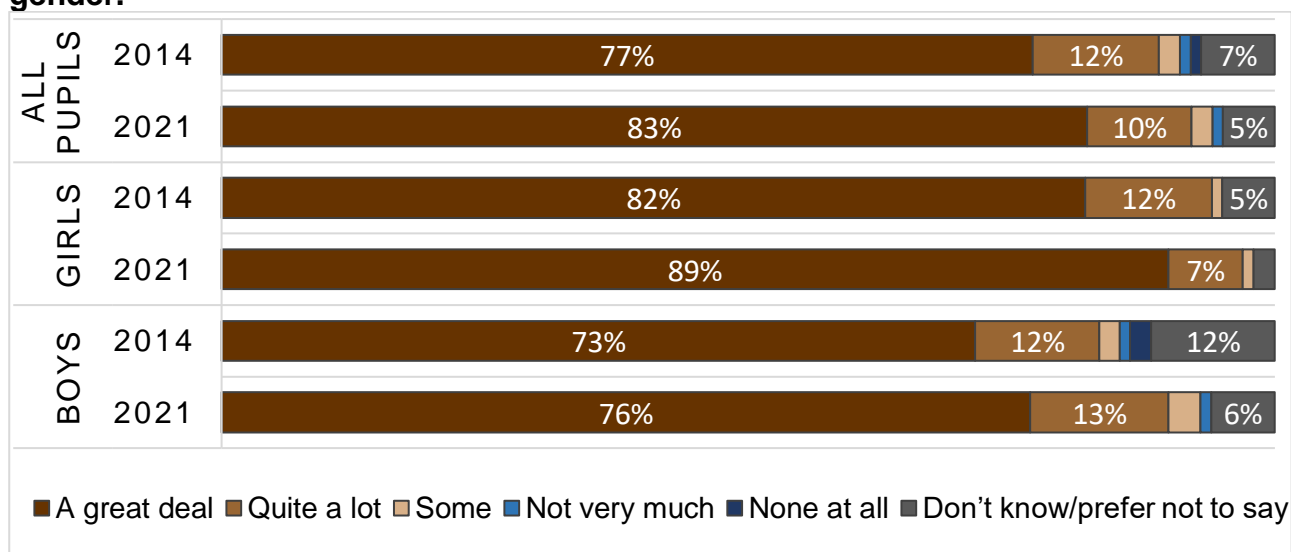
Figure 8: Attitudes towards sharing naked photos online without consent (pupils in S1-S6 aged 11-18) across time and gender.



There was also a small but significant rise in the proportion of pupils who viewed the behaviour as ‘harmful’ from 91% in 2014 to 95% in 2021. As with views on how wrong this behaviour is, this attitudinal change over time is driven mainly by a shift in views of boys.

Ninety-two percent of boys thought this behaviour was harmful, compared to 87% in 2014. There was no significant change in the proportion of girls who viewed the behaviour as ‘harmful’ between 2021 and 2014.

Figure 9: Perceptions towards the harm caused to the victim by non-consensual sharing of her naked images online (pupils in S1-S6 aged 11-18), across time and gender.



Commercial sexual exploitation

Pornography

Commercial sexual exploitation includes a wide range of often linked sexual activities, which (typically) men profit from or buy from women, and which objectify and cause harm to women. Pupils from S4 to S6, aged between 14 and 18 were asked about two forms of commercial sexual exploitation.

The first commercial sexual exploitation scenario involved an individual watching pornography at home:

“How wrong do you personally think it is for an adult (18 or over) to watch pornography at home, or is it not wrong at all?”

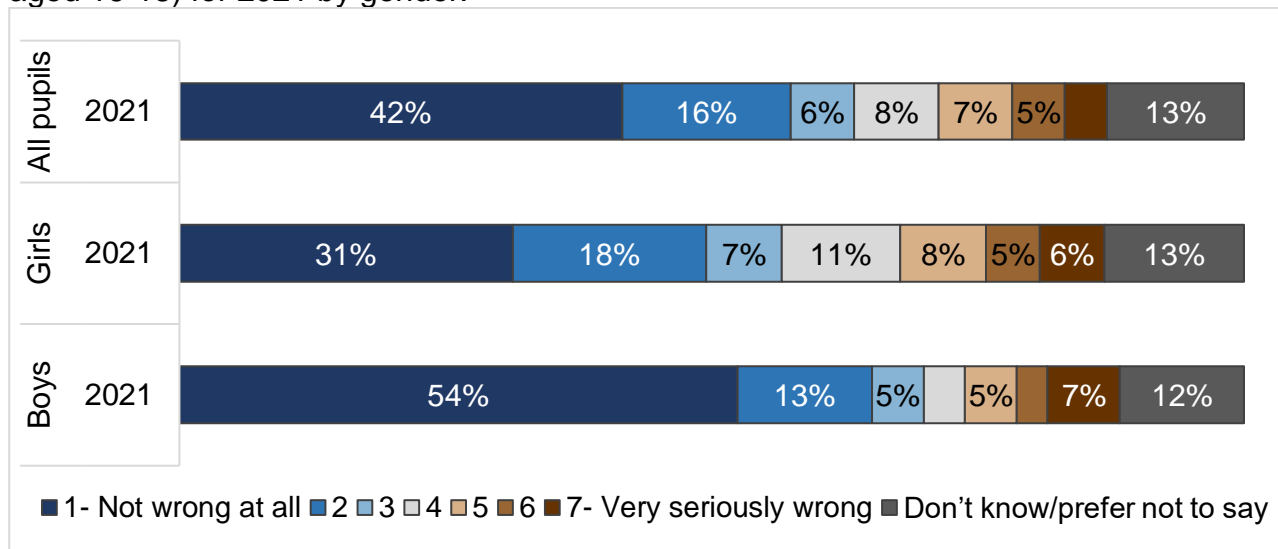
The content of this question in 2021 changed from the original question in 2014 (“How wrong do you personally think it is for an adult (18 or over) to read magazines that feature topless women, or is it not wrong at all?”). This means that a comparison of attitudes between 2021 and 2014 is not possible.

As shown in Figure 10, 16% of all pupils viewed the behaviour described in the scenarios as ‘wrong’. A greater proportion of girls viewed the behaviour as ‘wrong’ (19%) compared to boys (15%).

There was also a significant difference in views among pupils with a Christian faith compared to pupils with no religion. Just under a third of Christian pupils viewed the behaviour as ‘wrong’ (29%) compared to 11% of non-religious pupils.

There were no significant differences by ethnicity, health status, urban/rural, or area deprivation.

Figure 10: Attitudes towards pornography consumption by an individual (pupils in S4-S6 aged 16-18) for 2021 by gender.



Visiting a strip club

The second commercial sexual exploitation scenario involved men visiting a strip club to watch naked women:

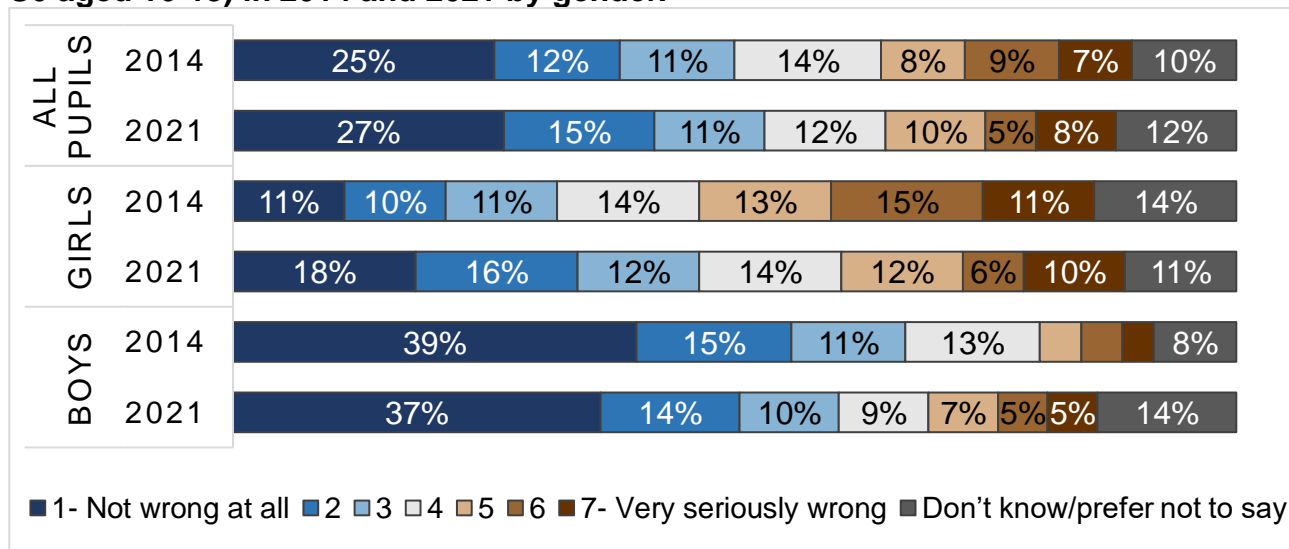
“How wrong do you personally think it is for a group of men (18 or over) to go to a strip club to watch naked women, or is it not wrong at all.”

Just under a quarter of all pupils viewed the behaviour described in the scenario as ‘wrong’ (23%) in 2021, which is comparable to the proportion of pupils who viewed the behaviour as ‘wrong’ in 2014 (24%). Unlike boys, there was a significant decrease in the proportion of girls who thought the behaviour was wrong in 2021 (28%) compared to 2014 (39%).

As for the pornography scenario, there was a significant difference in the attitudes of non-religious pupils and those of Christian faith. Christian pupils were more likely to rate this behaviour as wrong (41%) compared to non-religious pupils (16%).

There were no significant differences by ethnicity, health status, urban/rural, or area deprivation.

Figure 11: Attitudes towards a group of men visiting a female strip club (pupils in S4-S6 aged 16-18) in 2014 and 2021 by gender.



Gender stereotypes

Boy picks a princess doll

Stereotypical views on gender roles were measured by pupils' willingness, or otherwise, to buy a toy for a young child that is not traditionally associated with the child's gender. Pupils were presented with two scenarios where a 3-year-old child was asking for a toy less common for their gender and were asked how they would respond. The options included a non-stereotypical response ("buy the toy without saying anything") and two stereotype-affirming responses ("buy it but first try to get him/her to pick a toy more common for boys/girls" and "make him/her put back the doll/truck and pick a toy more common for boys/girls") or I don't know/prefer not to say. This section examines the scenario of a boy picking a princess doll:

"Imagine you are taking a 3-year-old boy to a shop to buy a toy. When you get there, he picks a princess doll. Which of the phrases below best describes what you would do?"

As shown in Figure 12, a significant change in the attitudes of all pupils has occurred since the previous survey in 2014:

- 71% of the pupils said they would "buy the toy for him without saying anything" (an increase from 40% in 2014)
- 15% would "buy it but first get him to pick a toy more common for boys" (a decrease from 34% in 2014)
- 7% would "make him put the doll back and pick a toy more common for boys" (a decrease from 15% in 2014)

The same significant increase over time was evident when the results were disaggregated by gender too:

- 87% of girls in 2021 reported they would “buy the toy for him without saying anything” (an increase from 52% in 2014)
- 54% of boys in 2021 said they would “buy the toy for him without saying anything” (an increase from 29% in 2014)
- 1% of girls and 12% of boys said they would “make him put the doll back and pick a toy more common for boys” (a decrease from 6% and 23% respectively in 2014)

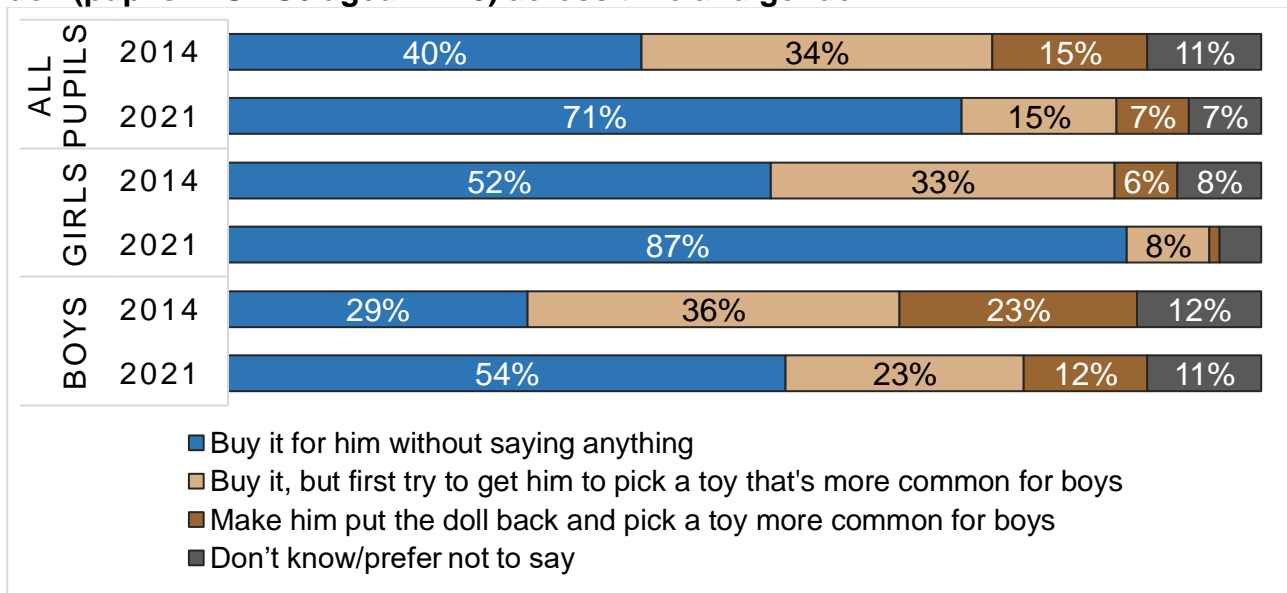
In both years girls were more likely to buy the toy without saying anything and less likely to refuse to buy the toy compared to boys.

Views on this scenario differed by religious identity and health condition:

- non-religious pupils were more likely to buy the princess doll without saying anything (76%) compared to pupils of any Christian faith (66%)
- Christian pupils were also more likely to refuse to buy the toy altogether (12%) compared to non-religious pupils (5%)
- pupils with a long-term physical or mental health condition were more likely to buy the toy without saying anything (77%) compared to those without a long-term health condition (68%)

There were no significant differences by urban/rural or area deprivation. The sample size was too small to examine differences by ethnicity.

Figure 12: Attitudes to gender stereotypes where a 3 year-old-boy picks a princess doll (pupils in S1-S6 aged 11-18) across time and gender



Girl picks a toy truck

The second scenario on gender stereotypes involved a girl picking a toy truck:

“Imagine you are taking a 3-year-old girl to a shop to buy a toy. When you get there, she picks a toy truck. Which of the phrases below best describes what you would do?”

Like the scenario involving a boy picking a princess doll, a significant shift in attitudes occurred between 2014 and 2021:

- 79% of pupils said that they would “buy the toy without saying anything” (an increase from 53% in 2014)
- 12% of pupils said they would “buy it but first try to get her to pick a toy more common for girls” (a decrease from 30% in 2014)
- 3% of pupils said they would “make her put the truck back and pick a toy more common for girls” (a decrease from 8% in 2014)

When disaggregated by gender, it is evident that this overall change in attitudes is driven by a shift in boys’ views but not those of girls:

- 67% of boys in 2021 said they would “buy the toy without saying anything” (an increase from 46% in 2014)
- 17% of boys said that they would “buy it but first try to get her to pick a toy more common for girls” (a decrease from 31% in 2014)
- 6% of boys said they would “make her put the truck back and pick a toy more common for girls” (a decrease from 11% in 2014)

The views of girls did not change significantly over time:

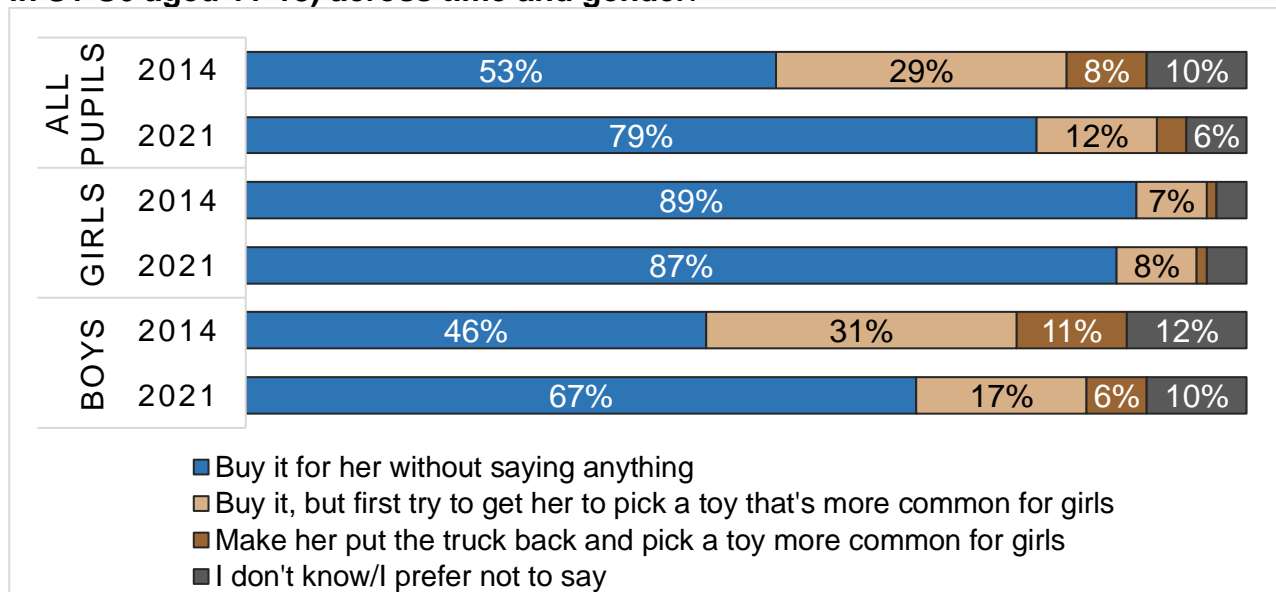
- nearly 9 in 10 selected they would buy the toy in both years (87% in 2021 and 89% in 2014)
- under 1 in 10 refused to buy the toy in both years (9% and 8%, respectively)

Looking at the gender stereotype scenarios together, boys were much more accepting of a girl picking a toy truck and less accepting of a boy picking a princess doll in both 2014 and 2021, while girls have become equally accepting of both scenarios over time.

A significant difference in attitudes was also observed in the breakdown by religion. Just over 8 in 10 (83%) non-religious pupils reported they would buy the toy without saying anything, compared to just over 7 in 10 pupils of a Christian faith (74%)

There were no significant differences by health condition, urban/rural or area deprivation. The sample size was too small to examine differences by ethnicity.

Figure 13: Attitudes to gender stereotypes in ‘girl with a toy truck’ scenario (pupils in S1-S6 aged 11-18) across time and gender.



Conclusion

This report examined Scottish state secondary school pupils’ attitudes towards a range of scenarios which described VAWG behaviours gathered in the YPIS between February and April 2021. The same questions on attitudes towards VAWG were included in the 2014 iteration of the survey, allowing for the identification of how young people’s attitudes have changed over time.

The results show that pupils’ attitudes have changed significantly over the seven years between 2014 and 2021. There has been a notable increase in the proportion of pupils viewing the described behaviours as ‘wrong’ and ‘harmful’ for most VAWG scenarios presented, except for scenarios describing commercial sexual exploitation (watching pornography and visiting a strip club). For most scenarios, the increase is driven by a greater shift in attitudes among girls rather than boys. Moreover, for all scenarios girls were much more likely to view the behaviour as ‘wrong’ compared to boys.

Scenarios relating to sexual harassment and stalking were most likely to be viewed as being ‘wrong’ and ‘harmful’ by pupils in 2021 and 2014. Specifically, the scenario on sharing naked images of an ex-partner online without her consent was most likely to be viewed as ‘wrong’ and ‘harmful’ in both years. In comparison, scenarios on commercial sexual exploitation were least likely to be viewed as ‘wrong’ in both years. In 2021, the scenario describing an adult man watching pornography at home was least likely to be viewed as ‘wrong’ by pupils, while in 2014 the scenario least likely to be viewed as ‘wrong’ described a group of men visiting a strip club.

The results also point to a significant decrease in gender stereotyping over time. Both girls and boys were more likely to say that they would buy a toy doll for a boy or a toy truck for a girl without saying anything compared to 2014. The proportion of girls and boys who said they would not buy the toy also decreased between 2014 and 2021. In both 2014 and 2021, girls were less likely to reinforce the gender stereotype and were more accepting of buying a toy doll for a young boy compared to their male peers.

Taken together, these results point to significant attitudinal changes over time. Younger people are increasingly viewing VAWG as wrong and harmful, and are increasingly less likely to reinforce gender stereotypes.

Annex A – Scottish Government policy initiatives

The Scottish Government adopts a broad definition of violence against women and girls which corresponds with the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.⁹ The definition refers to ‘a range of actions that harm, or cause suffering and indignity to, women and children’,¹⁰ including:

- physical, sexual, and psychological violence in the family, general community or institutions, including domestic abuse, rape, incest, and child sexual abuse
- sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in public
- commercial sexual exploitation including prostitution, pornography, and trafficking
- so-called 'honour based' violence, including dowry-related violence, female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages and 'honour' crimes

Each of the forms of violence incorporated within the Scottish Government definition represent ‘forms of control and abuse of power’.¹¹ They are often perpetrated by the same men, with many women experiencing more than one type of violence.¹²

Equally Safe is Scotland’s strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls in Scotland and sets out the strategic framework in which this work is taken forward. It recognises that by promoting gender equality, preventing gender based violence and responding effectively when it occurs, we can change the attitudes that permit violence and abuse to flourish. Responsibility for this strategy sits across multiple teams in the Scottish Government and with COSLA. The Strategy has four key priorities:

- Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls;
- Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and politically;
- Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people; and
- Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.

The purpose of the Strategy is to foster collaborative working with key partners across all sectors, in a way that recognises that progress requires significant and sustained long term economic, social and cultural change. The strategy is underpinned by a delivery plan which identifies actions to the range of delivery partners to achieve the aims of the strategy.

Equally Safe prioritises primary prevention and challenges the notion that violence is inevitable or acceptable. Many of the actions being delivered under priorities one and two within the delivery plan are intended to raise awareness and challenge the existing attitudes that create the societal conditions for gender based violence to flourish. An

⁹ [OCHCR \(1993\) 'Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women'](#).

¹⁰ [Scottish Government \(2020\) 'Violence against women and girls \(VAWG\)'](#).

¹¹ [COSLA \(2010\) 'What does gender have to do with violence against women?'](#).

¹² [Greenan, L. \(2004\) 'Violence against women: a literature review', Scottish Executive.](#)

example of this is the “Equally Safe at School” project¹³. It was developed with Zero Tolerance and Rape Crisis Scotland and applies a whole school approach to tackling gender inequality and gender based violence in schools supported by a range of specialists resources for schools. By promoting gender equality, preventing gender based violence and responding effectively when it occurs, this model of prevention intervention has been shown to challenge and change the attitudes that permit sexual violence - equipping and empowering young people with the knowledge they need to navigate consent and healthy relationships.

The Scottish Government has also reviewed Personal and Social Education (PSE), including how the issue of sexual consent is taught in Scottish schools, and a PSE Lead Officers Network formed by Education Scotland is supporting implementation of the review recommendations. Furthermore, the Scottish Government are funding Rape Crisis Scotland to provide a National Sexual Violence Prevention Programme to local authority secondary schools across Scotland. The programme aims to provide consistency in approaches to the prevention of sexual violence and contributes to the Scottish Government’s Equally Safe strategy. Since the programme’s start in 2016 they have reached over 48,000 pupils.

The Equally Safe at Work programme recognises that everyone has the right to work and live their life free of abuse, harassment and intimidation. The Scottish Government has funded Close the Gap to develop an employer accreditation programme, working with local authorities to incorporate gender equality into their internal policies. The Scottish Government is also supporting Scottish Women’s Aid in the development of Equally Safe in Practice, a model to increase capacity for training on gender based violence and the norms and cultures that perpetuate it for organisations across Scotland.

¹³ [Rape Crisis Scotland \(2017\) ‘Equally Safe at School’, Glasgow.](#)

Annex B - Legislative developments

Equally Safe has been credited with the ambition behind the ‘world’s gold standard’ domestic abuse offence, which was introduced through legislation in 2018. More than half of the rise in convictions for non-sexual crimes of violence in 2019-20, were accounted for by new offences under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018. The Scottish Government provided an additional £825,000 to Police Scotland so they could introduce a programme of change for their officers and they have trained some 14,000 officers and frontline staff to respond to and investigate the new domestic abuse offence. This extensive training programme sought to continually improve the response to domestic abuse; tackle the myths of coercive and controlling behaviours; and embed a workplace culture where there is no tolerance for domestic abuse. The new Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021 will build on this momentum providing police and courts with powers to further protect people at risk of domestic abuse and ensure a person’s home is a place of safety.

The Scottish Government Programme for Government includes several positive and ambitious commitments relevant to the VAWG agenda including:

- enshrining the right to lifelong anonymity for complainers of sexual crimes in Scots law
- giving serious consideration to the recommendations from Lady Dorrian’s review of the handling of sexual offences cases
- introduction of a new framework, specific to the justice system, to give staff the knowledge and skills they need to understand and adopt a trauma-informed approach
- ensuring that the Caledonian System is available nationwide
- developing a model for Scotland to tackle prostitution, and consider how aspects of international approaches to challenge men’s demand for prostitution would best be applied in Scotland
- developing a new funding regime for victim support organisations
- launching a public consultation on the three verdict system and whether the not-proven verdict should be abolished and consider reform of the corroboration rule
- and further funding to tackle gender-based violence and support services

In addition, on 21 April 2022 the Scottish Government published its response to the report of the Independent Working Group on Misogyny and Criminal Justice in Scotland, accepting the recommendations as pivotal in challenging misogyny and confirming development of draft legislative provisions for public consultation.

In March 2023, the Scottish Government published its consultation seeking views on draft legislative provisions that implement recommendations for criminal law reform contained in the report of the Working Group on Misogyny chaired by Baroness Kennedy. In addition, the Scottish Government has introduced the Victims, Witnesses, and Justice Reform Bill to the Scottish Parliament which provides for an automatic right to state-funded independent legal representation for complainers of sexual offences (in certain circumstances).

Work has moved forward on the Programme for Government Commitment to “develop a model for Scotland which effectively tackles and challenges men’s demand for prostitution.” This is now being progressed through the development of a Framework for Scotland which will also support those with experience of prostitution. Working with an expert group of stakeholders, in December 2022 the Scottish Government published the

six fundamental principles which will ensure that equality, human rights and safety are at its heart.

Annex C – Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSA)

The sample of this study consisted of 952 adults aged 18 and over. Respondents were presented with scenarios describing particular situations and were asked to rate how wrong they thought the behaviour of the perpetrator was on a 7-point scale where 1 meant “not wrong at all” and 7 was “very seriously wrong”. As follow-up to some of the scenarios, respondents rated how much harm they thought the behaviour caused the victim on a 5-point scale ranging from “a great deal” to “none at all”. The survey showed that:

- the proportion of adults who marked rape within a marriage as ‘very seriously wrong’ (84%) and has increased in 2019 from 74% in 2014, however, it was lower than the proportion of adults who thought raping a stranger was ‘very seriously wrong’ (91%)
- 72% of adults thought a man taking out his stressful day at work on his wife by putting her down/criticising her was ‘very seriously wrong’ compared to 51% who thought the same when the perpetrator was a woman. Views did not change significantly between 2014 and 2019
- physical abuse was considered as more seriously wrong than verbal abuse, with 93% adults agreeing that a man slapping his wife and 81% agreeing that a woman slapping her husband was ‘very seriously wrong’
- 68% of adults thought that a man looking at his wife’s bank statements without showing her his bank statements was ‘very seriously wrong’ and 55% considered a man controlling what his wife wears as ‘very seriously wrong’
- 20% adults thought a man texting his wife to ask where she is and when she will be home was ‘very seriously wrong’, while 42% considered it ‘very seriously wrong’ when the husband texted multiple times throughout the evening. In comparison, 14% thought it was ‘very seriously wrong’ for a woman to send a text asking her husband when he would be home, with fewer than 3 in 10 (27%) saying it was ‘very seriously wrong’ for a woman to send her husband multiple texts throughout the evening
- sexual harassment in the workplace was most likely to be considered ‘very seriously wrong’ (45%), while the equivalent figures for a group of men wolf-whistling and a man sending unwanted gifts to his ex-girlfriend were 39% and 30% respectively. The proportion of adults who rated wolf-whistling as ‘very seriously wrong’ increased from 25% in 2014 to 39% in 2019. The proportion who thought an ex-boyfriend sending unwanted gifts was ‘very seriously wrong’ increased from 19% to 30% in the same period
- an overwhelming majority (94%) of adults considered the behaviour of a man who put naked pictures of his ex-girlfriend on the internet to be ‘very seriously wrong’ in 2019. This compared to 88% in 2014
- 38% thought it was ‘very seriously wrong’ for a man to pay a woman for sex; 21% thought a group of men going to a strip club was ‘very seriously wrong’ and 20% considered an adult watching pornography to be ‘very seriously wrong’. A higher proportion of people thought the behaviour of an adult watching pornography (27%) was ‘not wrong at all’ than thought it was ‘very seriously wrong’, the only example of commercial sexual exploitation where this was the case

Annex D - Response question list and options

VAWG scenarios

Q1: “Imagine you are taking a 3 year old boy to a shop to buy a toy. When you get there he picks a princess doll. Which of the phrases below best describes what you would do?”

Response Options

- “Buy it for him without saying anything”
- “Buy it, but first try to get him to pick a toy that's more common for boys”
- “Make him put the doll back and pick a toy more common for boys”
- “I don't know”
- “Prefer not to say”

Q2: “Imagine you are taking a 3 year old girl to a shop to buy a toy. When you get there she picks a toy truck. Which of the phrases below best describes what you would do?.”

Response Options

- “Buy it for her without saying anything”
- “Buy it, but first try to get her to pick a toy that's more common for girls”
- “Make her put the truck back and pick a toy more common for girls”
- “I don't know”
- “Prefer not to say”

Q3: “Imagine a woman is walking down the street. She passes a group of men who start wolf whistling and saying things like “hey sexy” to her.”

Response Options

1 (not wrong at all), 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (very seriously wrong); “I don't know”; “Prefer not to say”

Q3B: “What harm, if any, do you think this does to her”

Response Options:

- “A great deal”
- “Quite a lot” Some
- “Not very much”
- “None at all”
- “I don't know”
- “Prefer not to say”

Q4: “Imagine a woman who broke up with her boyfriend a few months ago. He wants them to get back together, she does not. He has been sending flowers and gifts to her work and home even though she has told him she doesn't want them.”

Response Options

1 (not wrong at all), 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (very seriously wrong); "I don't know"; "Prefer not to say"

Q4B: "What harm, if any, do you think this does to her"

Response Options:

- "A great deal"
- "Quite a lot" Some
- "Not very much"
- "None at all"
- "I don't know"
- "Prefer not to say"

Q5: "Imagine a woman sent some naked photos of herself to her boyfriend. After they split up, he puts them on the internet without telling her, so that anyone could see them."

Response Options

1 (not wrong at all), 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (very seriously wrong); "I don't know"; "Prefer not to say"

Q5B: "What harm, if any, do you think this does to her"

Response Options:

- "A great deal"
- "Quite a lot" Some
- "Not very much"
- "None at all"
- "I don't know"
- "Prefer not to say"

Q6: "Imagine a married woman who wants to go out with her friends for a meal in the evening. When she tells her husband about it, he gets very annoyed. He tells her that he doesn't want her going out without him"

Response Options

1 (not wrong at all), 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (very seriously wrong); "I don't know"; "Prefer not to say"

Q6B: "What harm, if any, do you think this does to her"

Response Options:

- “A great deal”
- “Quite a lot” Some
- “Not very much”
- “None at all”
- “I don't know”
- “Prefer not to say”

Q7: “Imagine a married couple who have been together for a while. One evening the man's wife tells him she has been having an affair. He has never hit her before, but he responds to this news by slapping her in the face. Using the scale, choose one number to show what you think about the behaviour of the people in the situation described.”

Response Options

1 (not wrong at all), 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (very seriously wrong); “I don't know”; “Prefer not to say”

Q8: “How wrong do you personally think it is for an adult (18 or over) to watch pornography at home, or is it not wrong at all?”

Response Options

1 (not wrong at all), 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (very seriously wrong); “I don't know”; “Prefer not to say”

Q9: “How wrong do you personally think it is for a group of men (18 or over) to go to a strip club to watch naked women, or is it not wrong at all?”

Response Options

1 (not wrong at all), 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (very seriously wrong); “I don't know”; “Prefer not to say”

Equality demographic questions

“How would you describe your gender identity?”

Response Options

Male, Female, In another way, Prefer not to say

“What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to?”

Response Options

Church of Scotland; Roman Catholic; Other Christian; Muslim; Buddhist; Sikh; Jewish; Hindu; Pagan; Other; No religion

Do you have a physical or mental health condition, illness or disability lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?

Response Options

“Yes”, “No”

What is your ethnic group? Please select the one that best describes your ethnic group or background.

White – Scottish; White - Other British; White – Irish; White - Gypsy/Traveller/Roma; White – Polish; White– Other; Mixed or multiple ethnic groups; Pakistani; Indian; Bangladeshi; Chinese; African; Caribbean; Black; Arab; Other



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