

Girlguiding's Girls' Attitudes Survey 2016 reveals a steep five year decline in girls' body confidence, with 61% aged 7 to 21 feeling happy with how they look today, down from 73% in 2011

The largest annual research of its kind into the views of UK girls and young women shows the damaging impact of gender inequality on girls as young as seven.

- A third (36%) of 7-10 year old girls say people make them think that the most important thing about them is how they look.
- A quarter (23%) of girls aged 7-10 feel they need to be perfect.
- Almost one in six (15%) 7-10 year old girls feels embarrassed or ashamed of how they look.
- One in three (38%) at this age feels they are not pretty enough.
- One in three (35%) 7-10 year old girls agree women are judged more on their appearance than their ability.
- 7-10 year old girls say the most important thing to improve their lives now would be to stop judging girls and women on the way they look.

Every year the **Girls' Attitudes Survey** has highlighted multiple, compound pressures faced by girls and young women, from relentless exposure to media and digital images that objectify women, to street harassment and sexist online abuse.

Today's findings expose the clear and worrying impact this is having on girls still at primary school. With 29% aged 7-8 and 41% aged 9-10 agreeing that women are judged more on their appearance than on their ability, it's unsurprising almost a quarter across the 7-10 age group (23%) feel they need to be perfect and over half (52%) feel they are not good enough.

Now 7 to 10 year olds from across the UK have told Girlguiding that the single most important thing that needs to change to improve their lives, is to stop judging women on how they look.

Lyra, 10, a South London Brownie, said:

I think more girls are judged on their appearance than boys. I don't think it's fair that men get treated differently to women. You have to treat everyone the same.

Liddy Buswell, 18, Girlguiding Advocate and Brownie leader, said:

I'm shocked but not surprised by the Girls' Attitudes Survey findings. As a Brownie Leader, I've experienced these issues first-hand. I've witnessed girls unwilling to speak to groups because of how they look, I've heard girls saying they've been called names at school and aren't confident trying new activities as a result.

No girl should have to worry about the way she looks – she should be having fun and enjoying herself. This year's survey is a damning indication that something needs to be done to tackle this growing issue.

Becky Hewitt, Girlguiding Director, said:

This year's Girls' Attitudes Survey demonstrates the shocking impact that focusing on girls' appearance is having on the youngest girls in society.

Girls have told us to stop judging them on how they look. Every day in guiding, girls inspire us with their bravery, sense of adventure and their kindness. We are calling on everyone to show girls that they are valued for who they are - not what they look like.

Girlguiding has consistently taken action to respond to the annual decline in girls' body confidence, including the launch of the 2014 Peer Education badge *Free Being Me*, to introduce girls and young women to body confidence issues. The charity's peer education programme also covers sensitive topics such as mental resilience and healthy relationships.

Today's report shows 1 in 10 girls (10%) aged 7-10 have had people say 'mean things about their bodies' most of the time or often. It underlines the urgent need to listen as young girls call for an end to women being judged on their appearance.

Throughout October, Girlguiding will challenge the public to think twice about the way they complement or praise the girls in their lives. Tell young women they're amazing, for the amazing things they achieve or the amazing people they are, over how they look, on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram at [@Girlguiding](#), [#YouAreAmazing](#) [#GirlsAttitudes](#) .

Researching Girls' Attitudes

Girls' Attitudes 2016 is a survey of 1,627 girls and young women aged between 7 and 21 who were asked about their attitudes on a range of issues from health and wellbeing to relationships and careers.

A panel of young women from within Girlguiding works with the project team to develop the survey and to comment on its findings. Those surveyed form a representative sample across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and are not restricted to those involved in guiding.

Research was conducted by leading research specialists on children and young people Childwise and fieldwork took place during March to May 2016. The questionnaire was adapted to be suitable for different age groups (7-11, 11-16, 16-21), with some core questions asked of all groups.