



STATUS OF  
YOUNG  
WOMEN IN  
SCOTLAND 2016





### Status of Young Women in Scotland 2016

Young women's voices on gender equality in Scotland.

Produced by YWCA Scotland – The Young Women's Movement.

If you would like a copy of this report in a different format, please contact us at [hello@ywcascotland.org](mailto:hello@ywcascotland.org)



### About Us

YWCA Scotland is a feminist organisation and part of a worldwide movement of women leading change.

Our vision is a world where every woman can shape her own life journey and fulfil her potential, where the voices of women are heard, respected and celebrated.

[www.ywcascotland.org](http://www.ywcascotland.org)



@youngwomenscot

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## YOUNG WOMEN ACROSS SCOTLAND HAVE A VOICE THAT NEEDS TO BE HEARD.

They have views about their education and careers, about sex and relationships, politics, Brexit, and the expectations they feel are put on them because they are a woman in society - expectations about the way that they look, how they should behave in relationships, and what the future looks like for them.

As a woman who is in the public eye, I have felt the weight of some of these expectations too.

I believe that young women in Scotland can and should choose their own futures and pursue their own dreams.

They shouldn't be held back by outdated ideas about what women should or shouldn't do. Gender equality isn't just good for women, its good for all of us.



Our country will only be the best that it can be when women are empowered to participate fully in all aspects of work, political and public life.

The views expressed by young women in the report are diverse because young women in Scotland are diverse too. I believe that we have to find more and better ways to allow everyone in our society to feel that their voice has been heard.

There are also some hard things to read, from young women in Scotland who have experienced gender based violence, sexual harassment and racism. They show that we still have a lot of work ahead of us to tackle these issues.

I believe in a Scotland where young women can live without fear and prejudice. And for as long as I am First Minister of Scotland this is the country that I will put my passion and energy into realising.

To all young women in Scotland I would like to say, don't let anyone tell you that you can't do, say or be because you are a woman. Young women in Scotland can and are writing their own history.

**Nicola Sturgeon**

*First Minister of Scotland*

# INTRO

In 2015 we launched the very first Status of Young Women in Scotland report (SYWS). Based on interviews with 60 young women aged 16 to 30, SYWS 2015 explored what life is like for young women in Scotland and examined the challenges they face, particularly in relation to gender equality.

This year we wanted to go further and increase the reach and depth of our interviews with young women across Scotland. We decided to explore the theme of 'hidden conversations'. As a young woman leader in the Scottish third sector and international development community I've noticed a trend. Young women in all our diversity are talked at and talked about more often than we are listened to and valued. It happens at home and in public, in the media, in work and education, in Parliament and on the world stage. We at The Young Women's Movement and across the World YWCA want to change that. Young women have so many interesting and intelligent things to say. Together with people of all ages and walks of life, young women in Scotland inspire and lead change.

In 2015 we spoke to young women who were confident about discussing gender and equality with someone they hadn't met before. This year, we engaged with young women who have limited opportunities to chat about these issues. SYWS 2015 uncovered significant variation in young women's experiences depending on factors such as age, level of education, socio-economic status, health and family circumstances. In 2016 we looked at differences in more detail and encouraged participation by young women from a diverse range of backgrounds. The first SYWS report covered broad themes such as education, employment, family and politics. SYWS 2016 examines more personal and intimate experiences.

This report was written, produced and designed by women aged 35 and under. Edinburgh-based social researchers The Lines Between carried out face-to-face and telephone interviews with 115 young women aged 16-30 years old. We recognise that gender is a spectrum, and this report does not attempt to be representative of every young woman in Scotland but to act as a talking point for wider discussion on the way that gender affects each of our lives.



Some of the words in this report may be upsetting for readers who have experienced domestic violence, sexual assault, mental illness, racism or homophobia. Please take care in reading SYWS 2016. If you have experienced any of the issues raised here, visit our website [www.ywcascotland.org](http://www.ywcascotland.org) for partner organisations who offer a range of support. We invite you to read, draw comparisons and raise questions about the experiences shared here. We hope you find it as powerful and inspiring as we do.



**Kara Brown,**  
**Director**  
YWCA Scotland -  
The Young Women's  
Movement





# HIDDEN VOICES

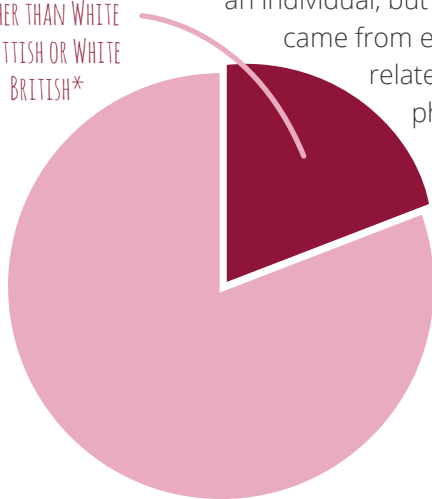
In 2016 we set out to explore the theme of hidden conversations with young women aged 16 to 30 living in Scotland. Young women are often referred to in research and the media as alike and as one group, yet the challenges that young women face are determined and linked to the specific circumstances of their lives. In this report we shine a light on issues experienced by groups of young women in Scotland whose voices are so often unheard.

20% OF YOUNG WOMEN (16-29) IN SCOTLAND IDENTIFY AS AN ETHNICITY OTHER THAN WHITE SCOTTISH OR WHITE BRITISH\*

## MARGINALISATION

Some young women described a sense that others see them not as an individual, but as a label; part of a marginalised group. Examples came from experiencing intersecting forms of discrimination related to sexual orientation, ethnicity, and learning and physical disabilities. This reinforced a sense of social isolation and exclusion for these young women.

Bias and hostility continues to be experienced by ethnically and culturally diverse young women, illustrated by participants dealing with racism online and in public spaces in Scotland.





*"I was on Tinder, maybe like a year ago, as a woman of colour the first topic is always my race or my hair. Once I got this guy who looked like a total dick head [who] asked 'what jungle are you from?'"*

*"The other day we get on the bus and the guys are sitting in back and they said why our government allow these Asian people, why they are not sending back their countries?"*

*"I've been treated very badly like in the bus or on Princes Street. We were in the bus stop, we got off and crossed over at the light, and the bus is going on, and up from the bus the young guys open the window and throw the bottle on my head. It's happened three times on separate days."*

**"EVEN THOUGH OUR GENERATION WERE BORN HERE WE STILL FEEL LIKE FOREIGNERS BECAUSE SOMETIMES I SPEAK TO MY FRIENDS AND SAY I FEEL AS IF I DON'T FIT IN HERE SOMETIMES IN TERMS OF SCOTLAND, I LOVE SCOTLAND BUT I FEEL AS IF CULTURALLY SOMETIMES I DON'T FIT IN BECAUSE I'M BROWN. AND THEN WHEN I GO BACK HOME, THEY TREAT YOU DIFFERENT THERE, AS IF YOU'RE AN OUTSIDER AS WELL."**

4,134

WOMEN (AGED 18-34) WITH  
LEARNING DISABILITIES ARE  
KNOWN TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN  
SCOTLAND (2015)\*

(7,378 FOR MEN OF SAME AGE).

Young women with learning and physical disabilities not only experience gender based discrimination but also marginalisation and invisibility “...we all get treated the same because we are just seen with our disabilities.”

Young women talked about what it's like to identify as LGBT+ and to navigate those identities in Scotland. Some discussed exploring their sexuality and coming out, while others talked about school being an unsafe space. Young women recalled experiencing verbal discrimination in educational settings.

*“I think we're getting better, there are a lot of people in my year who are bi or lesbian or gay and it's becoming a lot more accepted, but when you're in first, second or third year it must be so hard, they use 'gay' as a derogatory term.”*

*“She came out ... girls were quite afraid of her as if she'd come on to them, like when they were changing in the bathroom they would hide, go into the shower bit, usually everybody just gets dressed and goes out but people would be like 'I don't want to do it, make her get dressed first and then leave and then we will get ready', I think it was obviously hard for her and it was also hard for other people to [come out] because look how they treated her.”*

*“I'm bisexual so I got out of a relationship with a guy in January/ February so that was four years in a heterosexual relationship so I felt like I had to come out again. I felt like people had just decided that I had gone back to being straight and I had to re-come out to people again. People were like 'oh you're doing that again.”*

## YOUNG WOMEN LIVING IN RURAL AREAS

Young women we spoke to in rural areas expressed mixed views and experiences. Some noted that harsh living conditions and small communities require everyone to pull their weight, breaking down gender bias. A few conveyed a greater sense of safety in relation to random acts of violence and sexual harassment in public than experienced by young women living in urban areas. Others identified specific issues that affect young rural women relating to gender equality, including difficulties in accessing emergency contraception and encountering entrenched views about gender roles.



15.3%

OF YOUNG WOMEN (16-30) LIVING  
IN SCOTLAND LIVE IN  
REMOTE RURAL SETTINGS.  
(JUNE 2015)\*

*"I remember when the first woman started working on the ferry and people would say the ferry woman – man."*

*"When I'm talking to people about crushes [a handling system for cows] and things like that, they'll look at my dad and talk directly to my dad and I'm asking the questions but he's answering them to my dad, and it's just like 'hello? I'm here...' some are just so used to talking to men they will talk straight over you."*

Our discussions with women farmers were largely positive, with young women highlighting their capabilities and how much they enjoy working in a unique context. Nevertheless they described regular encounters with gender bias, including lack of recognition of their contribution, expectations of multiple responsibilities, physical challenges and the impact of traditional gender stereotypes in relation to farming roles and land ownership.

*"You have to work twice as hard as all the men to get half as much recognition, and then if you do slip up then it's because you're a girl."*

*"It's the older generations that think the women should be inside, making sure there is food ready for the men coming in from the fields or off the hill, but if you're outside on the hill you're still expected to go half an hour ahead to go and make the tea for them coming in so you're actually doing double the work but not being recognised for any of it. That's what I find anyway."*

**"MY GRANNY WAS DOING THE SAME, SHE WAS DOING DOUBLE WHAT MY GRANDPA WAS DOING, PREPARING EVERYTHING, DOING ALL THE HOUSEWORK, RAISING THE KIDS, AS WELL AS FARMING. IT JUST SEEMS TO HAVE GONE DOWN THE GENERATIONS."**

*"I went and got my waterproofs on and he was like 'you shouldn't be doing that', he was really looking down his nose at me, and I thought 'why, why can I not do that?' It's kind of the same if I go and offer if they're short on people to take the tattie trailer and they've got a spare one with no driver, and I'm like 'I'll do it' and they're like 'you can't do that' but I can."*

*"There are certain jobs where people think they are girls' jobs, it may be out on the farm but it's still given to a girl, like lambing on our farm, the girls do the lambing, the men do the machinery and they will only help if we need them to."*

Participants spoke of the limitations of land being typically passed between men within their families in rural Scotland:

*"I've got a brother who is a year and a half younger than me and there is no question of me taking over the family farm, it will definitely be his even though I'm older than him and it's just because that's how it is, it will go to the boy and I've just got to accept that."*

*"On the days I'm not at college I have to pretty much run the family farm with my uncle. My cousin couldn't care less but he is the only boy and I will be underneath him [in the will] because I'm a girl. That's just how it is."*

*"I'm really lucky, my dad is a really good guy, he's very forward thinking and they've literally just given me the opportunity to inherit the farm, but only because there's nobody else."*

## YOUNG MOTHERS

For many young mothers SYWS 2016 was their first encounter with conversations about their experiences of gender and equality. Almost all shared examples of ways in which inequality affects their life circumstances and day-to-day experiences, in some cases to a significant extent. Young women described a lack of shared childcare and domestic duties, affecting their mental health, energy levels and potential. While some of these stories are small insights into day-to-day struggles, the cumulative effect is detrimental and affects opportunities for these young women and their families in the longer term; for example keeping them in poverty, holding them back in education and employment, raising stress levels and leaving little or no time to rest and relax or for personal development.

*"He [father] was there for my pregnancy. For half of it he was excited and then he changed his mind saying 'it's not mine'."*

*"His dad has never seen him. As soon I was pregnant, he wasn't bothered. He left."*

*"I lived with my ex for a year and he thought women had to do literally everything in the house: cooking, cleaning everything. It shouldn't be like that."*

**"I HATE THAT, WHEN PEOPLE ARE LIKE 'AW HIS DAD'S BABYSITTING', HE'S NOT BABYSITTING, HE'S PARENTING HIS CHILD!"**

*"I'm going to bring him up to be [respectful of women]... 'cause I've been through that. I've been disrespected. I've been through stuff like that and it's horrible. I'd never wish that for anyone."*

Across the discussions it became apparent that many of the young mothers lacked knowledge and awareness about recent changes to statutory parenting leave and pay entitlements. Many said they had never had a conversation with their partner about childcare; it was just assumed that the father would go to work. Some of the single mothers described financial and emotional struggles in raising a family alone.

*"It usually is always the mum that stays home and the dad goes out to work."*

“HE SAID ‘KEN WHAT, I’LL BE A STAY AT HOME DAD AND YOU GO OUT AND WORK.’ I WAS LIKE ‘YEAH NO BOTHER.’ I THINK HE WAS JOKING BECAUSE HE DEFINITELY COULDN’T HANDLE IT, HE HAD THEM FOR THREE HOURS AND HE WAS LIKE ‘THAT WAS SO HARD, WHY DID YOU NOT CALL OR ANYTHING?’ I’M LIKE ‘THAT’S HOW I FEEL!’”

*“He was in [nursery] two days a week – Thursday and Friday – and it cost me £500 a month... there’s hardly any point finding a job.”*

*“X is always like “my job’s hard” and I’m like fair enough but I also think yeah physically your job’s hard but mine’s mentally torturing.”*

A common theme in the discussions with young mothers was experiences of social stigma, with several examples of stressful encounters on public buses.

“I HATE WHEN YOU’RE ON THE BUS AND PEOPLE SAY ‘YOU’RE TOO YOUNG TO HAVE A KID’.”

*“I think women are expected to look and behave mature. When you’re a mum, you’re expected to be mature and be a role model... I feel like that I have to stay in and tidy my house or whatever. I went to London for two days last week and I came back and someone actually said to me ‘where’s [the baby?].’ I was like ‘It’s nothing to do*

*with you. I need a break! I'm a full time mum with him on my own – I deserve a break!"*

Young mothers also shared encounters with staff in health care services:

*"They think you're not going to say anything [complain] cause you're young."*

*"I felt ashamed. The midwife looked over at me and said [to another mother on the ward] 'bairn's having a bairn' but I didn't say anything cause I didn't want to make a scene."*

During the discussions several of the young mothers observed a gender bias in terms of limited support for young fathers, noting that this reinforces gender inequality for all.

*"I've heard of this place called Fixers that have made a video about what it's like to be a young mum and there's this lassie who's there with her bairn, and she talks about how there's bad days and good days, and you do feel there's more bad days than good days... I think that it should be aimed at young dads as well, because you never see anything for young dads, you never hear anything for young dads."*







# HIDDEN CONVERSATIONS “THE HEAVY STUFF”

This section addresses the issues that arose across all interviews with young women regardless of their specific circumstances. Common themes included experiences and fears of violence and sexual harassment, social pressures and continuing inequality within institutions such as schools and the media.

## GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Across the interviews, participants described experiences of gender-based violence and controlling behavior:

*“My big brother used to be violent to his girlfriend and I said to him time and time again ‘that’s not the way to treat someone’... he pulled her hair and hit her head off the sofa, and I was in the room trying to stop him and he pushed me towards a radiator.”*

*"[A friend] ended up taking tablets to try and kill herself. The problem was that her dad was told he'd pass away in a few years. He got emotional and said I'm going to die pretty soon, I want to see some grandchildren. He chose the youngest daughter first and said 'you're sixteen, you can get married first. Let's go to Pakistan and get you married'. She said, 'I don't want to do this'. He wouldn't listen to her and one day she went downstairs and took any tablets she could find."*

*"I remember I once went out with somebody... I remember constantly being told 'you can't do that', I'd do it and he'd go in a huff and a day later he'd come back and say 'I can't believe you did X, Y and Z' and I was like 'I can't believe you think you can tell me that I can't do these things'. We were really young at the time and I could not understand. I have actually heard that in a lot of relationships, when we were in high school I would hear a lot of guys telling their girlfriends that they couldn't do things, like 'you can't go out with your friends, you can't wear this, you're not going to...' I think it's also 'cause we went to an all-girls school [...] and the girls maybe didn't know how to stand up for themselves, they couldn't exactly tell their mum and dad that these things were happening."*

**"[ON HER EXPERIENCE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE] I THINK SOMETIMES, AS WELL, IF YOU'VE BEEN USED TO LIVING IN A CYCLE OF THINGS, YOU GET USED TO IT: IT BECOMES A WAY OF LIFE. SOME PEOPLE CAN WORK IT OUT. SOME PEOPLE CAN GET THROUGH IT. BUT SOME PEOPLE, THEY CAN'T. AND I KNEW THERE**



WAS NO CHANGING HIM. WHEN I FELL PREGNANT... I FEEL THAT HE WAS... THE CATALYST TO MAKE A CHANGE. I ALWAYS SAY IF IT WASN'AE FOR [MY BABY], MAYBE I WOULDN'T BE HERE TODAY."

*"...that's scary that you could stay with someone that makes you feel that low."*

Many young women described experiencing unchallenged sexual harassment and abuse in a variety of settings:

*"When I go to gigs this year I'm going in the pits. You get really warm, and one time I was wearing fishnet tights and some shorts and a spiky bra and a guy just thought he had the right to feel me up and he actually put his hand in my bra and I thought that was really disgusting 'cause I was like I'm not dressed like this to give you a free pass. I hadn't bought it in an underwear section I was wearing stuff that was meant for outside so... people say to me well you're obviously trying to be provocative but I'm not dressing like this for them I'm dressing like this for myself. It's unfair. It shouldn't just be free touching because you are wearing something shorter!"*

*"I think the worst thing that's happened to me is that I was at work and this big group of guys came in and they were actually shop lifting and I was walking through the store and I had had on my uniform, which is just like a skirt and a jumper, and they all started clicking their fingers at me and wolf whistling at me, it was horrible, there was so many of them, it was awful."*

*[About cat-calling] "First I'll be scared, then insecure, thinking do I look bad or what are they trying to say and then I'll get angry, why should they be able to make me feel like this when all I'm trying to do is walk from A to B."*

**[ON BEING GROPED AT SCHOOL] "YOU THOUGHT, WELL YOU DIDN'T WANT IT TO HAPPEN BUT IF IT DIDN'T HAPPEN AND IT WAS HAPPENING TO OTHER PEOPLE IT MADE YOU THINK, OR IT SAID SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR ATTRACTIVENESS OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. I DO REMEMBER FEELING IT WASN'T A NICE THING TO BE PART OF, IT'S QUITE SORT OF VIOLATING."**

*"There was this boy that I liked he never said I had a nice face or nice hair it would always be like about asses and stuff like that and it was just a wee bit annoying... It feels like you don't matter or that the rest of you doesn't matter."*

*"I would say we are more isolated, here you wouldn't get cat-called because you would know everyone and if you did you would go up to them and be like 'why would you do that?' I think because it is so small and you know everyone that if someone treated you wrong then you would tell someone and then they would actually help you."*

Above and beyond direct experiences of assault and harassment, a common theme across interviews was a sense of fear and of being at risk.

“WE HAD THAT DISCUSSION ABOUT THE CATCALLING AND STUFF AND I SAID TO MY PARTNER I STILL DON’T KNOW HOW TO REACT BECAUSE I’VE GOT PRETTY BAD ANXIETY SO IF A GUY CATCALLS AT ME MY REACTION IS A MASSIVE FRIGHT AND I FEEL NOTHING AND I GET FLAPPED FOR THE MOMENT, FOR A FEW HOURS. I DON’T FEEL DEGRADED I JUST FEEL GUILT AND FRIGHTENED.”

*“I always still walk home alone like I’m kind of independent in that sense but I’m also holding my keys in my back pocket also I’ve got my partner on call stuff like that I’m very aware of it, I used to work a night time job and I’ve been followed home a few times.”*

## GENDER BIAS IN EDUCATION

There were mixed responses in our discussions about gender equality in Scottish nurseries, schools, colleges and universities. Some young women praised forward-looking approaches adopted by their schools; others gave examples of gender bias they had observed or experienced.

“I NOW KNOW THAT WHEN I’M IN NURSERIES WHEN I’M TEACHING, THAT WE JUST RESTRICT FEMALE MOVEMENT OR CURIOSITY OR ADVENTURE OR SENSE OF RISK THAT WE REALLY ENCOURAGE IN BOYS, AND I KNOW THAT MY DAD, HE MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN THE SAME WITH BROTHERS, BUT I KNEW MY LIMITATIONS BEFORE I KNEW MY STRENGTH OR WHAT I WAS ACTUALLY CAPABLE OF.”

*"I think farm colleges are realising how much potential girls have and are totally recognising that and are trying to push them forward. All of my lecturers were excellent; they were excited about girls coming into agriculture. Girls are different and that's okay, it can be celebrated... mine were certainly great at listening to you and pushing your views and pushing you forward."*

*"When I first told the careers officer here that I would like to study film and be a screenwriter and she said 'you're thinking a bit high have you thought about nursing or teaching?' and I told my mum and she said that's exactly what they told her."*

*"He [he was like this substitute RME teacher] made jokes about how women can't change a light bulb, they should be in the kitchen, and I was like who is this guy??"*

*"A thing that was quite surprising to me was that we had a female science teacher and she was quite sexist towards women... she was of the view that boys and girls should be taught in different classrooms and in different ways so that the girls didn't distract the boys! And because girls' brains were not as good as boys' apparently, and couldn't learn as well."*

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

In discussions about mental health young women talked about their efforts to protect and strengthen wellbeing; some said their experiences had improved as they aged and learned more about themselves. They mentioned the anxiety and stress in relation to meeting social expectations, describing pressures around careers, income, weight, image, lifestyle, family, and relationship status.

Within these conversations we identified numerous examples of self-imposed and social judgments that women encounter on a daily basis. A few shared experiences of social isolation as a result of depression and anxiety and some described a lack of access to support:

*"The women that I know are so self-critical, and I don't know if we are of that generation where we want to have it all, but all of my friends seem to want to have it all simultaneously."*

*"There's this big thing now, a total battle with social media presence where everything's got to be rosy. You're seeing people doing all these things and thinking she's really successful but maybe she's not and even I feel there's a filter in terms of what I put online, there's lots of different reasons for that. People might look at me and think, 'well you just put the highlights up don't you, at the end of the year you did this and that and you look so happy and have so much going on'. It's like, well, just 'cause I'm not posting anything bad it doesn't mean it's not going on."*

*"I saw someone I hadn't seen in ages and said 'how's it going? I see you've been doing all this successful stuff... and she just turned around and was like 'pfff to be honest this has happened and I've had a really shit time and I'm dealing with a lot of mental issues and I had to go away for a bit'. I was really stunned at how honest she was being and that's something I've noticed with mental illness, people are more comfortable to talk about it. Your perception of how someone is is completely different if you take the time to speak to them."*

*"I have dealt with anxiety and depression since my teenage years and I used to live in London for a couple of years and during that time it*



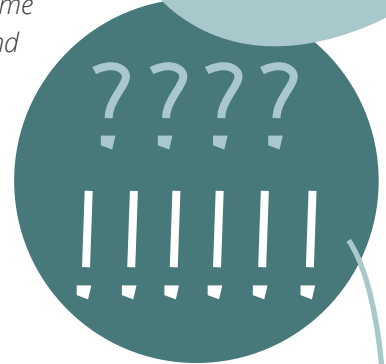
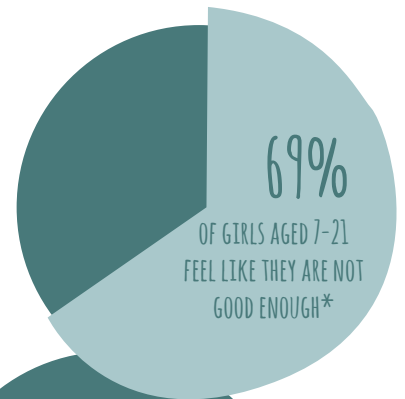
got a lot worse. I think part of it was to do with being in London, that really fast-paced, pressured environment. I was just having really shitty relationships and drinking too much and I just felt like I shouldn't be living like this anymore. I had a really good doctor and she put me on antidepressants and sent me to a therapist, and I found them really, really helpful."

## "I TRIED TO GO TO A COUNSELLOR... THERE WAS NO COUNSELLOR FOR DISABLED PEOPLE."

"For me I found the self-love thing is getting [away] from social media- switching phones off and spending time with myself, if we're having a meal, no phones. For me that helps me. It's just finding when you're near your thirties you are finding a more comfortable place within yourself."

"It's not been 'till the past two or three years where I've thought, what makes me happy? Whether that's nutrition or exercise, the kind of people I associate with, my routine, what I do. It's only recently I've discovered and known what makes me happy. I think it is really good that we are all happy to talk about these issues and stuff."

"But there's so much more you have to do now. It's not just about looking nice. It's about your weight, contouring your face and having a tan and getting your nails done. The stuff you have to do before a night out, whereas a guy just jumps in the shower and gets dressed! Us girls have to do so much."





*"Sometimes I feel that sometimes girls are 'girly girls' and I wouldn't describe myself that way. So even my immediate friend group, I feel like I have to sort of dress up a bit more when I go out with them if I want to keep in line with them, you know because I'm sort of like messy hair, jeans and a fleece and they're all kind of high fashion."*

*"A lot of the stuff you see written about women... seems to be focused around their looks in a way that men don't get. I can't remember what paper it was but it was on the first page it was like 'why are so many leading female politicians childless?' and it had an empty cot and just stuff that's really bad taste..."*

**"I'M REALLY HARD ON MYSELF AS WELL. IF A GUY MAKES A MISTAKE, I'M LIKE 'HE'S JUST MADE A MISTAKE' BUT IF I MAKE A MISTAKE I'M LIKE 'YOU SHOULD BE BETTER THAN THIS'. I MEAN I PUT A LOT ON MYSELF IN TERMS OF I'LL THINK PEOPLE THINK 'OH IT'S BECAUSE SHE'S A GIRL' AND IT'S IN MY HEAD. YOU SHOULD JUST BE ABLE TO DO WHAT YOU NEED TO DO AND FORGET WHAT PEOPLE THINK BUT IT'S ALMOST INGRAINED IN YOU."**

During conversations about equality many made reference to a recent news story about the end of a trial of a contraceptive pill for men, with several comments similar to this one:

*"The way [the male pill] is pitched it looks as though there is a small list of side effects that could come with it and that's sort of a reason for it to be rejected but then when you get the pill and you're a woman the list is about twice the length... I do know people that have had really awful things from birth control so it's kind of like 'why do we get the full burden?'"*

## ROLE MODELS

We asked about role models and sources of guidance and support. On a personal level, many described the positive influence of women family members. However, we also identified examples of older generations perpetuating gender inequality or adding to the pressures experienced by young women today.

*"My granny will always be my role model. People say 'who is your idol?' and you start to think about celebrities, and then you're like 'no actually, they've not got much substance to them'. Yeah I would definitely say she is the best of who I am... I was her shadow from a young age. I learned everything from her, all the interest in farming and baking. I've taken on from her."*

**"MY MUM WAS KIND OF AN ACCIDENTAL FEMINIST, SHE WOULDN'T IDENTIFY AS THAT, BUT HER CHOICES REPRESENTED THAT. IT MADE AN IMPACT ON MY EVENTUAL CAREER WHICH I'M PROBABLY GOING TO STICK AT."**

*"It [low expectations about relationships] came from my mum, I've never known her to be in a relationship and my Nan had a horrible experience but my mum still said you should find a nice rich man and settle down. I wish I had Cher's response 'I am a rich man.' I wish I had thought of that. Mum, I am a rich man!"*

*"A lot of my cousins have faced emotional blackmail from the rest of the family. I think something to do with gender equality is that girls now in Pakistan are really encouraged to get an education, they're like yep, and we want you to be educated so you can get married off*

*as a better pedigree. Girls should have an education, whether they get a job or not depends what happens. That's literally it. 'Depends what happens' they're not saying you should get a job but wait and see."*

## POLITICS

In discussions about public figures, numerous young women referenced First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon and the UK's youngest politician Mhairi Black MP as inspirational figures in Scotland. Some described their dismay at the representation of women politicians; others talked about gender inequality in an international context, particularly in relation to the 2016 US presidential election.

*"Across all the parties in Scotland there is strong female leadership, not just Nicola Sturgeon but like Kezia Dugdale and Ruth Davidson, and like I'm not Scottish, I only moved here a year ago, but it feels so much more progressive than it does down South just in terms of putting women at the forefront of leadership and the sensible ideas that they all come out with are so encouraging compared to Donald Trump and the Brexit brigade [which] all seems so backward."*

*"The way the media speak about Nicola Sturgeon... it's frustrating because you look up to these people and you want everyone to have the same respect as you do for them and then you feel like that isn't applied because they are a woman."*

*"A news story will always... focus on what she is wearing, like that article about the conversation between Theresa May and Nicola Sturgeon about Brexit. The headline was about their shoes instead*

*of what they are actually doing and it makes you aware how behind a lot of society are because you wouldn't have that kind of stuff about a man."*

*"How horrible [Donald Trump] is to women, all the stuff he's said in the past, just has kind of been glossed over and now he's President! People are going to start listening to him."*

*"It's an over-simplification to say people didn't vote Hilary because she's a woman, I mean I think that probably had a lot to do with it, and people say 'yeah but you shouldn't like her', and I'm like 'yeah but why do you need to be likeable, it's not the sort of job to be likeable', like a woman should have to be likeable as well as getting the job done but he's not likeable, he's an asshole. People don't like him, people respect him but people say she's not likeable or because she stayed with her husband but how is that... These are things people are talking about. [Imagine] if you went for any other job and you were the most qualified candidate and had the most term in office, and all this. She's over-qualified and he's the least qualified. [Imagine] if you went for a job interview and you have no experience and have shown no interest in that field until there was a big prize at the end."*

*"I think it was Iceland? Women just stopped and walked out and went on strike to emphasise how important they are in the workplace."*

Some SYWS 2016 participants talked about Brexit – the decision of the UK electorate to leave the European Union following a referendum on 23 June 2016. Linked to this, some migrant young women described feelings of anxiety, social isolation and

uncertainty. A few identified particularly damaging impacts of Brexit for women:

“I OVERHEARD SOME COLLEAGUES SPEAKING IN FAVOUR OF BREXIT, TALKING ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF MIGRANTS. ONE OF THEM LOOKED UP AND SAW ME AND LOOKED REALLY GUILTY – SHE SAID ‘OF COURSE, WE DON’T MEAN YOU’. BUT THAT’S HOW I FEEL WHEN I WALK DOWN THE STREET NOW – NOT WANTED.”

*“It wasn’t the result I had voted for, it was quite a shock for me. I felt really upset at first, you know, I felt really sick just catastrophising everything that had been said, but I’m really not sure what’s going to happen, there’s so much uncertainty around it and what’s going on.”*

*“It is hard to make peace with it especially since we don’t know much about what is going to happen.”*

“I ALSO STARTED THINKING THAT I HAVE TO MEET THE CURRENT VISA REQUIREMENTS OF EARNING £35K A YEAR. I REALLY DON’T SEE THAT IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE FOR MYSELF, BEING A JOURNALIST. SO AGAIN IT’S GOING TO BECOME IMPORTANT HOW MUCH MY HUSBAND IS MAKING AND THAT MEANS THAT WE’RE MEETING ALL THE REQUIREMENTS LIKE I FELT MUCH MORE VULNERABLE AS ALL OF A SUDDEN MY VERY EXISTENCE HERE IN THIS COUNTRY BECAME DEPENDENT ON A MAN. THAT’S ONE OF THE REASONS I WANTED TO EMIGRATE FROM POLAND WAS THIS

## LACK OF UNDERSTANDING FOR FEMINIST ISSUES, SO QUITE IRONIC THERE.”

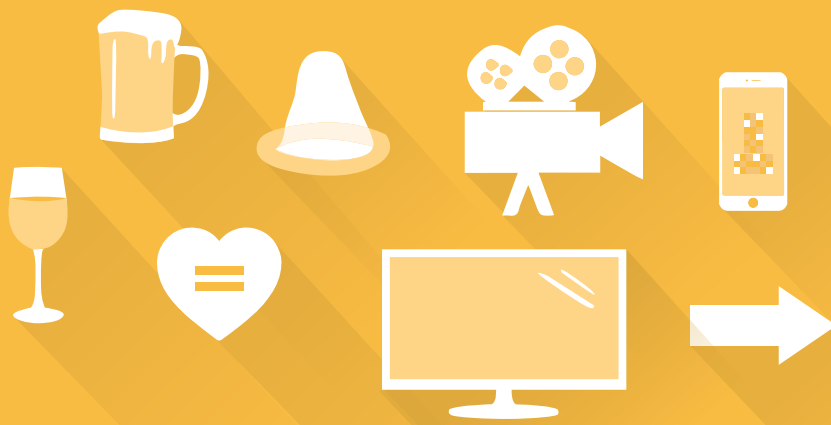
*“The thing I find most annoying is that... it didn't matter what people voted in Scotland or Northern Ireland, what England said went. That was horrible to see. I didn't agree with Scotland wanting to leave the first time the Independence referendum came round and now I'm like yep leave, that's fine... I hope it means Scotland can go independent.”*

*“I guess with the rise of the whole far right doctrine, it's a pretty sexist doctrine as well so I guess it's not going to be beneficial but I can't think of any specific effects Brexit would have on women.”*

A few young women revealed their concerns around current conflict, ISIS and migration. These issues were raised during the lead up to Brexit. While we have decided not to include quotes representing racism in this report, we do wish to acknowledge that some young women in Scotland have antagonistic views about refugee and asylum-seeking communities.







# HIDDEN CONVERSATIONS “THE SECRET STUFF”

This section describes the themes that emerged in our discussions about relationships, equality and sex. In these interviews many said they felt entitled to enjoy and experience sex on their own terms, nevertheless we encountered extensive examples of young women being shamed, lacking knowledge, feeling disempowered, experiencing abuse, confusion and coercion. Many described inequality in relation to sexual pleasure, expectation, expression and choice. The influence of social media was also a strong theme, for example in increasing access to sexual encounters and opening up new platforms for exploitation, such as online shaming.

## ASSERTIVENESS IN RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX

Many of the young women who took part in our interviews described passivity in their relationships and sexual encounters

for example in setting expectations about what they wanted to experience and/or their choice of partner.

*"One of my female friends said 'what do you want from a relationship?' and I would think 'I have no idea! I have never thought of that before'."*

**"A LOT OF MY FRIENDS TALK ABOUT HOW THEY'VE BEEN ON TINDER DATES AND GUYS HAVE FLAT OUT REFUSED TO USE CONDOMS. I'VE NEVER HAD THAT EXPERIENCE BUT I HAVE HAD FRIENDS TELL ME STORIES LIKE THAT AND IT HAS ALARMED ME... AND THEY HAVE FOLLOWED THROUGH ANYWAY, EITHER BECAUSE THEY'VE HAD ALCOHOL OR BECAUSE THERE HAS BEEN THIS SENSE OF EMBARRASSMENT."**

*"I have a friend and her boyfriend, they'd been together for a while, she forgot to take her pill a lot... [he chastised her] he got graphs up on his computer of how likely it was she would get pregnant [yet] he wouldn't wear a condom. That's really frustrating."*

*"I think when I was younger, at uni and I was out drinking I always felt like I had to go home with someone and it was absolutely not about me getting anything out of it other than feeling like I had made myself look good enough and whatever to be able to take someone home. It wasn't anything to do with me getting any enjoyment out of sex. I think when I look back on it I see that now but I didn't really think that at the time."*

*"I didn't have a very good relationship with boys for my whole life up until this partner. So anything I consider now as abuse or assault I probably passed off as a joke quite a lot when I was a teenager and it's probably a contributing factor to my mental health now... in that how I've let boys treat me... going from boyfriend to boyfriend, when one asked me out, thinking 'oh my god I've been asked out' and then dedicating myself to that person just because I thought I was so lucky to have been asked out and I spent all my time getting to know someone else when I should have been getting to know myself."*

*"When you are a girl, especially boys are not nice, they just always expect you to always be happy and meet their needs, sort of being yourself, meeting the boys needs, you have to always agree with them you can't voice your opinion as much."*

*"I used to only be able to have sex when I was drunk or had had a few drinks. I wasn't doing it for my own pleasure, for knowing what I liked."*

**"IF YOU GET PRESSURED [TO HAVE SEX] YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY NOT GOING TO ENJOY IT 'CAUSE YOU'RE JUST DOING IT BECAUSE YOU'RE SCARED. SOMETIMES YOU DO IT BECAUSE YOU'RE SCARED TO LOSE SOMEONE AS WELL. AND YOU DO IT NOT BECAUSE YOU WANT TO BUT BECAUSE YOU'RE SCARED, OR SHOW THEM LIKE THAT YOU LOVE THEM SO YOU DO IT TOO FAST. I THINK IT'S A PROBLEM WITH A LOT OF GIRLS."**

*"Speaking to my friends and stuff, girls always feel it's about the guy, especially in sexual experiences when you're younger, it's what you can do for them not the other way round. If you speak to any girl they'll almost definitely say the same."*

*"Over the years I've predominantly slept with men who I don't even know if they knew your pleasure was even factored in, and that's probably bad choices on my part.... It's funny, with [ex boyfriend's] group of friends, some of them were married or in a long-term relationship and they'd be like 'oh no I don't do that', and I was like 'how funny is that? Your friends are ok to brag about being terrible in bed, I'm not satisfying my wife!'"*

The age range of our participant group (16-30) was broad; some of the young women in their mid to late twenties reflected on improvements in their sexual experiences, attributing poor experiences to a lack of assertiveness, self knowledge and confidence:

**"WE'VE ALL GONE THROUGH AN EARLY PART OF OUR TWENTIES NOT [BEING ASSERTIVE] GROWING UP AND [NOT] ACCEPTING YOURSELF IN SO MANY WAYS, MAYBE THE SEXUAL THING COMES INTO PLAY AND [NOW BEING OLDER] YOU'RE LIKE NOW I'M ACTUALLY ABLE TO SAY EXACTLY WHAT I NEED. YOU NEED TO BE HAPPY IN ALL THE WAYS INCLUDING SEXUAL THINGS."**

*"A conversation I've had with a lot of friends recently is that once you get to that point in your later twenties you know your body a bit better. It's that thing with sex isn't it, if you can't tell the person what makes you feel good then you're not going to. Its not just like there's a switch that can be flicked. You need to know yourself."*

## LEARNING AND TALKING ABOUT SEX

Some young women described a lack of knowledge about sex. Many recounted unhelpful experiences of sex education and suggested that it should be more direct, relevant and comprehensive.

*"I think my friends and in the media in general don't talk about [female] masturbation. That just wasn't something I knew was possible at all until I was twenty because it had never been discussed. It's such a shame."*

**"I THINK WOMEN JUST TALKING ABOUT SEX IS A BIG STEP, IN SCHOOLS YOU ARE NEVER TOLD YOU ARE ALLOWED TO ENJOY IT OR LIKE IT OR WANT TO HAVE IT - IT TAKES A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF TIME [TO DISCOVER THAT], FOR GUYS IT'S JUST ACCEPTED THAT THEY WILL HAVE SEX AND THEY WILL ENJOY IT WHEREAS FOR WOMEN IT TAKES A LONG TIME TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THAT."**

*"[Sex education at school] makes me think of that quote from Mean Girls 'don't have sex 'cause you'll get pregnant and die'. That's what mine was like."*

*"[Sex education at school] I can remember just putting a condom on a banana and told not to get STIs."*

*"In uni or the last years of high school, consent workshops would have been quite useful... I have a couple of friends, one in particular who may or may not have been pressured into having a couple of abortions that she probably wouldn't have had otherwise. Workshops on indicators of what's an abusive relationship, would be helpful for some. Or what you can or can't expect, what your rights are as a woman, all that kind of thing, because it's really quite sad the stories about what's happened to my friends."*

*"We have such an issue at the moment with schools freaking out about young people sexting. I'm like you have young people talking about sex... that's amazing."*

**"I'M FROM A SMALL TOWN IN AN AREA, LOTS OF POCKETS OF WEE VILLAGES WITH SMALL TOWN MENTALITIES, THE WAY PEOPLE THINK ABOUT THINGS ARE NOT VERY OPEN. AT SCHOOL WE DIDN'T LEARN ABOUT SEXUAL IDENTITIES OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT. FOR ME I MUST HAVE BEEN THIRTEEN OR SOMETHING, CHATTING TO A FRIEND ABOUT A GIRL I REALLY LIKED, AND SHE WAS LIKE, 'MAYBE YOU'RE BI?' AND I WAS LIKE 'WHAT'S THAT?' I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS."**

Young women with physical and learning disabilities described a lack of sex education and specific barriers to sexual experiences.

*"For me that is a really sore point. Well not a sore point but a really negative point because the opportunities for people with disabilities*

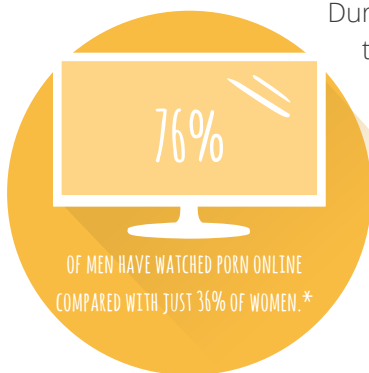
*aren't quite always there because they have to rely on hoists and you have to have trust in that person to be able to do that, I cant do it myself."*

*"People are too scared to bring it up [conversations about sex and sex education] because they don't think we're human [people with learning disabilities], and we are."*

One young woman talked about racial prejudice around the way sex is perceived:

*"There was one time I got this comment and it was basically ended him saying 'black girls are always up for it though aren't they?' and that was enough for me! I think that's a hard thing to learn. That men have this perception of you based on the colour of your skin, and that was really difficult to get my head around, especially that sexual perception and that you might be kind of filling a fantasy or they are expecting something from you that they wouldn't expect from other women because of what they perceive your body to be like because you are a black woman. I think that was difficult."*

## PORN



During conversations about pornography a common thread was the taboo of acknowledging that young women watch, enjoy or learn from porn. Some suggested that young men's exposure to porn at earlier ages than young women lay at the root of unrealistic expectations about sexual norms and behaviours.



*"There's a definite lack of conversations about women watching porn. I think that's something that in a friend group other friends won't admit to it, they feel embarrassed. Whereas I think it's healthy as long as it's safe and the content you're watching is healthy then there is nothing to be embarrassed about. Whereas boys start watching it really young."*

*"Guys are exposed a lot earlier through porn and things like that. 'Cause its not a thing where women watch porn where they're younger anyway. That's still a guy's thing. When you get a bit older, you start watching it and discovering stuff but that's still, I feel that if you watch porn you are [considered] kinky. In my experience... I've maybe suggested something [I want to try] and it's been like [disapproving] 'oh you're a bit kinky, you're a bit dirty' its like 'nah I'm not, why am I dirty and you're not?'"*

*"I mean I'm pretty scared for my 13 and 16 year-old sisters in terms of what stuff people are seeing and that, not that they are normal, like go and explore those things if you want to if you like those things and are genuinely interested, but don't think that's what sex is. That's terrifying and... it's skipping all the good bits."*

*"Porn is just total objectification, you don't even get to see people's heads sometimes, you don't see what bits are connected to other bits. It's all done for camera angles, it's not even the angles that feel good, it's the angles that look good to an outside person. That's how people are learning about sex and I don't think that sex ed in school has caught up as quick to this as the kids have, they've not changed the discussion around it. Kids are getting bombarded with way too much wrong information and no responsible adults are ready to, they just say 'don't watch it' rather than actually talk about anal sex."*

*I've heard people go 'oh but that [anal sex] doesn't count as real sex, you've not lost your virginity'."*

## PUBLIC SHAMING AND ABUSE

In the context of discussing sexual relationships many young women shared examples and knowledge of online and social shaming, for example pictures of themselves or their peers being shared without their consent. They described being exposed to unwanted images, the pressure to reciprocate and the shame and trauma of picture sharing.

Participant A: *"Some people add me on Facebook and just send me a message with a dick pic and says 'I love you'."*

Researcher: *"Strangers sending you dick pics?"*

All participants: *"Yeah."*

*"You'd have your webcam and there would be boys at my school who'd be like, 'go and flash us'. We'd be like 'no!' You'd be being all cutesy on the webcam and they'd be like, 'show us your tits' and you'd be like 'NO, go away'. There is a lot of pressure on girls to do that kind of stuff when they don't really want to."*

*"Definitely in third and fourth year I used to get shown these group chats for all the guys where they would just send round all the girls dirties that they had, naked photos and stuff... They would share all the gossip round as well, as soon as they'd kissed a girl they would put it straight in the group chat, it's like if someone sleeps with someone the whole year will know about it, they will tell everyone."*

Many referenced the social shaming of women having casual sex, expressing several variations of the comment below:

*"If a boy sleeps with someone it's like yeah they've pulled, but if a girl sleeps with someone she's a slut."*

## ONLINE RESOURCES

A few young women identified advantages of the increasing use of dating and hook up apps; some talked about the value of social media in learning about sexual identity:

*"[Tinder] is good in some ways, in that it's made casual sex much more socially acceptable, not as much as it should... it's made this idea of women... actually might just want to go and have sex and never see the person again – it's made it more accepted."*

*"Social media is good now, there's a lot of YouTubers, people writing about being gay, being bi or trans or whatever. If there are teenagers now feeling that way, they can't rely on that one lesbian in the town and be like oh god do I have to be like that? There's a broad range of people you can look at or idolise and take a bit from that person or that person. Also there's the videos that a lot of people are making so your parents can watch it instead of asking you 'ten questions I always get asked as a trans woman'."*



# A TOOL FOR CHANGE

Across the interviews our 115 participants spoke positively about the opportunity to take part in SYWS 2016, often saying that hearing what other young women felt, thought and had experienced motivated them to participate. We would like to see the **Status of Young Women in Scotland** report and young women's voices used as a tool for change.

During the discussions we asked young women for their thoughts about the concept of 'safe spaces'; opportunities for young women to come together to share experiences, learn from one another and discuss issues of inequality or anything else of concern to them. Almost every participant said they would find the opportunity valuable, often referencing the lack of opportunities to access support for particular issues including complex and profound questions of family, religious and cultural loyalty, contemporary identity, social exclusion and related gender bias.

*"I think that's sometimes all we need: someone to talk to. We might not realise just how much of a difference it can make, just to get something off your chest. You know, all too often in this life I think we're very guarded. I don't know, maybe as a nation. We aren't expected to open up or say this and you carry it with you. And it can be dangerous for that person and it can impact upon loads of different areas of your life as well so if you had a safe space and somebody you knew you could trust, you could go and speak to them. The whole Standing Safe campaign [to prevent sexual violence on university campuses] it gets people thinking... I think as part of a group, it can offer you a voice – especially for people who are naturally more introverted so are lacking in confidence. They see someone else doing it so they see that it is all right and they're more encouraged to speak out themselves."*

*"You come into this room and feel comfortable to express your ideas and stuff like that. You know that what you're saying is in confidence and that you're not going to be judged. I think that you do need to... create that space. You can't just expect it to happen when you're having a chat with your friend."*

*"We've got to make time for ourselves, 'cause if you don't, you will mentally get ill because you start speaking to your bairns like their adults! That's why it's good that we have this young mums group 'cause we can talk about stuff that we don't speak about to anyone else."*

*"Teachers stop you opening up because of the authority they have."*

A dominant theme in these discussions was the need of forums for young men. It was suggested that this might be one of the most effective ways to achieve change and improve gender equality in Scotland.

*“Those who it hasn't happened to [sexual harassment] don't have the experience until someone has a daughter or a sister or a girlfriend that they see it happen to. Again it's about opening these kinds of conversations about gender with more men. That's what's really important and they know that women genuinely don't feel safe at night and they should cross the street. They don't realise the effects this has on a young woman. These conversations need to be had in school.”*

*“Recently a team called RASASH came to our school and they were talking to us about rape in Scotland and I think it was really effective because it was an outside group talking to us about it, it wasn't our teachers who we see every day so they were taken more seriously, it was like a lecture, they were getting people involved and we were talking about sexual violence and stuff. I think it would be really effective to have groups come in and talk to us about what feminism actually is, so that the boys are forced to listen to it, because it's in school, and then everyone can learn about it. I feel like one of the main issues is that people don't actually know what feminism is.”*

Two sides of the coin:

*“Spaces away from judgment or fear. I don't think safe spaces always need to exclude men because I don't think that's going to be helpful either. I think if it's a gender-focused space, I feel if it's a feminist space, the men are hopefully going to be... So if it's not necessarily a women's only space, but a feminist space.”*

*"I have lots of male friends that are lovely, but I just don't feel comfortable talking about these things with them but I'm conscious they wouldn't see these things as an issue. When you've never had these worries or think about how people will react to the way you're dressed then I think there's just the thought that it doesn't happen."*

*"I just feel like I would need people who would listen. I don't know if they would listen. And like people that would be more interested, you have to have people that are interested in what you're talking about."*

Another aspect of safe spaces is that they offer opportunities for young women to meet, reflect and discuss outside their existing social and family networks. Many young women described friends and women family members as key people they turn to for information, advice and guidance. While we recognise these networks as valuable sources of support for young women, some of the examples presented in this report show that the balance between traditional and family norms can be in conflict with helping young women to exist in the dynamic social reality they face. In particular, familial role models can often reinforce gender expectations.

*"I think you sometimes need someone who doesn't know you to talk to about it- you don't need that extra judgement...sometimes if you have something personal and you're upset about something, you don't want the person to know you that talks to you."*

*"Anonymous is important, people think their parents are going to get in trouble or people will start judging them and the anonymous thing is really good 'cause you don't feel like someone's going to get in trouble if they say how they feel or what's happened in their life."*

Several young women described the SYWS interview process as thought-provoking, enjoyable and stimulating. **The Young Women's Movement is working to create more safe spaces for young women in Scotland, now and into the future.** This research highlights the appetite for, and value of, accessible, respectful and supportive spaces for women and girls to explore the ways in which their gender and identity affects their lives.

We invite you to read, draw comparisons, and raise questions about the opinions and experiences shared in this report. We would like you, as a reader, a leader and decision-maker, to use this report to listen to young women and be inspired and/or challenged by their words to bring about change in whatever small or big way you can.

We look forward to continuing our work with young women to ensure even more of our voices are being heard. **We'd love to hear what you think of SYWS 2016** and for you to get involved in The Young Women's Movement. Chat to us on social media using the hashtag #SYWS16 and email us [hello@ywcascotland.org](mailto:hello@ywcascotland.org).

*The Status of Young Women in Scotland Team*

[www.ywcascotland.org](http://www.ywcascotland.org)



@youngwomenscot



# METHODOLOGY

**Researchers** - Elspeth Parsons, Research Officer and Lorraine Simpson, Research Director from The Lines Between were commissioned to undertake the research, analysis and reporting for SYWS 2016 on behalf of The Young Women's Movement. They also undertook the SYWS 2015 study.

**Number of young women involved** – 115 young women in Scotland between the ages of 16 and 30 took part in a series in-depth interviews and focus groups in Autumn 2016.

**Participant characteristics** - a key focus for the research was to reach young women who have limited opportunities to talk about their experiences and gender equality within the context of their unique life circumstances. From the outset The Lines Between looked for diverse perspectives and voices, meeting individuals and groups whose voices and experiences had not previously been heard.

<b>Participant Group/Characteristics</b>	<b>Number</b>
Remote rural areas	40
Young mothers	17
Young women with physical and/or learning disabilities	9
Young women with experience of the care system	10
Young women with experience of the justice system	4
Young women from minority ethnic communities	15

**Accessible interviews** -while some of the participants expressed interest in and familiarity with feminism and gender equality issues, many had not discussed these matters before or had opportunities to reflect on gender barriers in relation to their own life. We were sensitive to this and took steps to facilitate participation, for

example sharing anonymised themes and discussion points across interviews to stimulate discussion. A large degree of flexibility was needed when using our discussion guide, to make sure it was accessible. Interviews and focus groups typically lasted an hour, with all dialogue recorded and transcribed for analysis.

**Encouraging participation** - potential participants were reached through a social media campaign, using the twitter handle **#SYWS16**, a series of leaflets and a short video to introduce the research and the researchers. This was effective in reaching individuals with an interest in gender equality and also staff from organisations that work with the particular vulnerable and marginalised groups we were keen to hear from. For the intimate conversations about sex and relationships, we made a specific call to invite interview participants who were happy talk about these aspects of their lives.

**Working with gatekeepers** - we contacted relevant organisations and agencies working with marginalised groups of young women to gain their buy-in to the research, which helped to facilitate introductions to willing participants. Once the interviews were complete we followed up with the 'gatekeepers' or group organisers who were able to share their thoughts about the role of creating spaces for discussion.

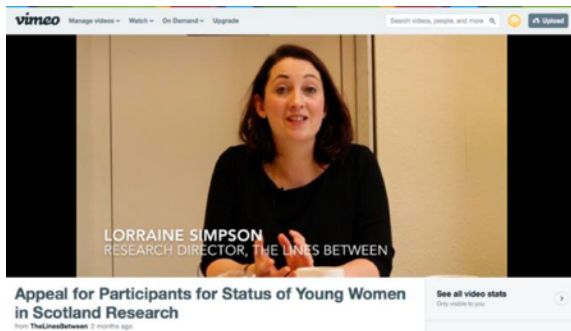
**Travel** - our efforts to reach rural communities involved travelling around Scotland using various combinations of train and bicycle, car and ferry around the peripheries of the central belt and across the Highlands.

**Photography** - we took photographs of the participants if they were willing however, some preferred a more anonymous style of portrait. Our photographs illustrate the variety of community settings that young women live in.

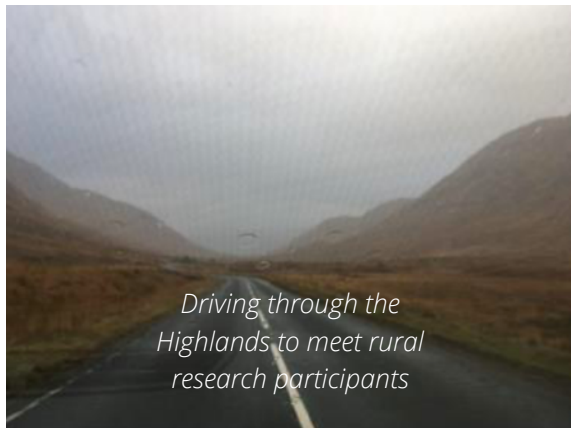
**Literature review** - we conducted a light-touch review of existing research into young women in Scotland published in the past three years. This search focused on quantitative findings, which allowed us to situate our findings within the wider research context. Some of this data appears in infographics throughout SYWS 2016.

**Limitations** - although the qualitative nature of the methodology described above has key strengths we acknowledge the limitations of the methodologies employed and highlight that the findings should not be considered representative of the experiences of all young women in Scotland; they shine a light on the lives and views of those who participated in this study.

*Screen shot from video appealing for participants*



*The view from the ferry while travelling to meet participants across the Scottish Highlands.*



*Driving through the Highlands to meet rural research participants*



*Active research- cycling between interviews in East Dunbartonshire*



*A typical focus group set-up for this study*

# GLOSSARY

<b>Bairn</b>	a child
<b>Bi</b>	short for 'bisexual', meaning sexually attracted to the same gender or another gender
<b>Ken</b>	know, e.g. "I ken." Can be translated as "I know."
<b>Lassie</b>	a girl or young woman
<b>Tattie</b>	a potato
<b>Tinder</b>	a mobile dating app where users choose whether to connect with each other based on photos and a short bio
<b>Trans</b>	prefix for 'trans', 'transsexual', 'transgender', 'transvestite', 'trans-anything' referring to identities that cross from one gender or sex to another in body behavior and/or life
<b>Princes Street</b>	the main shopping street in the centre of Scotland's capital city, Edinburgh
<b>Wasnae</b>	was not
<b>Wee</b>	small

# CREDITS

This report would not have been possible without the 115 young women who shared their stories, opinions and ideas with us. Thank you.

## **SYWS 2016 Donors**

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Upward Mobility Project  
Who Cares? Scotland  
Women's Fund for Scotland  
Youth Highland



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Movement