

# Everyday Sexism

By Faye Williamson

**The Plan International Australia and Our Watch recently conducted a survey of 600 girls and young women aged between 15 and 19.**

This survey explored young women's experiences, perceptions and suggestions for change in three key areas:

- Everyday experiences of gender equality, inequality and sexism;
- Girls' and young women's safety – online, at home, school and work, and in relationships;
- Sexual health and reproductive rights.

The report, 'Everyday sexism: girls, and young women's views on inequality in Australia', was released in October 2016.

## Key findings & recommendations

### Modelling gender equality

More than two thirds of the girls and young women surveyed believed inequality between men and women (including boys and girls) is still a problem in Australia today.

“Close to one in four young women (24%) disagreed that their teachers would take action if sexist name calling was taking place at their school.”

Only 30% of respondents said that their brothers or boys always or often did their fair share of housework.

*Recommendation:* Support families and communities to reject sexist attitudes, challenge gender stereotypes and rigid and hierarchical gender norms, and model behaviours that promote equality.

### Freedom to move

23% agreed with the statement that “girls should not travel alone on public transport.”

A worrying, 42% of young women disagreed with the statement that “girls always feel safe on the way to school”, while only 26% agreed.

*Recommendation:* Consult with young women to address their needs in urban and transport planning.

### Online safety

Seven out of ten thought young women are often bullied online.

*Recommendation:* Support schools, young people and their parents to address online bullying and harassment and promote ethical and respectful behaviours in online and digital environments.

### Empowering young women

One third agreed with the statement “it would be easier to get their dream job if they were male”.

Close to one in four young women (24%) disagreed that their teachers would take action if sexist name calling was taking place at their school.

*Recommendation:* Promote gender equality in work, governance and politics through legislation, quotas or other initiatives to deliver equal representation of women in leadership and decision-making roles, mentoring and addressing unconscious bias.

### Starting relationships

60% agreed that girls have an equal say in their relationships.

*Recommendation:* Through initiatives like The Line, support young women and men to have equal and respectful relationships.

“More than a third want more informative practical safe-sex and healthy relationships education at school.”

### Right to the night

Close to one third agreed with the statement that “girls should not be out in public places after dark”.

*Recommendation:* Work with the media sector to ensure that reporting of violence against women – in both public and private spaces – is done in an ethical, accurate, and responsible way and challenges the culture of victim-blaming.

### Respectful relationships education

More than a third want more informative practical safe-sex and healthy relationships education at school.

*Recommendation:* Support all education settings (from early childhood to university) to deliver ‘whole school’ approaches to respectful relationships education and comprehensive age-appropriate sexuality education.

### Constrained futures

Lack of support for working parents, such as parental leave and affordable childcare, will impact their decision to have children.

*Recommendation:* Provide world-leading parental leave and accessible and affordable early childhood education and care.

### Sexual & reproductive health rights

51% agreed that girls are often pressured to take 'sexy' photos of themselves and share them and 62% agreed that "girls often feel pressure to take part in sexual activities with their boyfriend or husband".

*Recommendation:* Invest in sexual health services and education for young women and men.

The report also recommends listening to and learning from young women and girls through improved data collection on their experiences and views, including their perceptions of equality, safety, discrimination and inclusion.

### Safety at school

When asked for "suggestions of things that could protect girls from abuse or

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What schools can do:

- 69% having a clear and easy to use complaints process, so that girls can report situations of violence at school
- 57% respectful relationships and gender equality as part of their curriculum

- 69% schools enforcing clear and strong rules that harassment, violence and abuse are not acceptable at school
- 22% improvements to make the school more secure, such as protective fencing, security cameras and security gates. ■

Source: *Everyday Sexism: Girls' and young women's views on gender inequality in Australia* -<https://www.ourwatch.org.au>