



Online misogyny is normalising abuse for children as young as 13

Description

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A girl looks at a mobile phone Online misogyny [Barnardo's](#) commissioned poll of 4,000 young people in the UK about their experiences of online [misogyny](#) are "constant, corrosive and deeply embedded" for young people across the country. That's according to a [Barnardo's](#) commissioned poll of 4,000 young people in the UK about their experiences of online [misogyny](#).

The results from thousands of 13 to 20-year-olds show how they experience misogyny online. Over a quarter (28%) of girls in Scotland said they'd been called degrading names online. And five in seven (72%) boys said they believed they are expected to "act tough and not show emotion".

Online misogyny is having real world effects

The findings also highlight how online misogyny is having an impact on the offline lives of young people. More than a quarter (27%) of all young people in Scotland had seen a nude photo that had originally been sent privately and had been shared.

Just over one in seven (15%) 13 to 15-year-olds across the UK as a whole had been asked to share a nude photo of themselves. Meanwhile, 17% of respondents in Scotland reported having received repeated messages after asking the sender to stop or ignoring them.

At the same time, boys in the Scotland felt unable to challenge their peers. 18% said that their friends wouldn't back them if they called out sexist comments. And about five in eight (62%) boys in Scotland said that people would think they are "boring" if they don't join in with group "banter".

18-year-old Olly (not his real name) said:

As a young man, I see online misogyny every day. It sets the tone for how boys treat girls and how boys treat each other. There is pressure to laugh it off or stay silent, even when it crosses a line.

Young men set the standard. Challenge it, shut it down, and back those who speak up. That is how we change what is accepted.

Sarah, a children's services manager for a Barnardo's Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence service, says:

A girl we supported was referred to the service after digitally manipulated 'deepfake' images of her were created and circulated online.

The images were shared through social media platforms, sometimes via fake accounts created to spread the abuse further. Incidents like this cause significant emotional impact including fear and

A culture of victim blaming can also leave girls being concerned about how others perceive them, rather than seeing themselves as a victim of sexual abuse.

This can sometimes leave them vulnerable to further abuse and exploitation but with the right support, we do see girls begin to rebuild trust, confidence and find their voice.

Barnardo's says the children and young people they support are increasingly feeling the impact of online misogyny. 29% of Barnardo's frontline practitioners said they were seeing more children affected by misogynistic content online, compared to the year before. 29% also said they were seeing an increase in child-on-child sexual abuse and / or children displaying problematic or harmful sexual behaviour, compared to the year before.

Michele Janes, director of Barnardo's Scotland, said:

Misogyny isn't always loud or visible to many of us, but these findings show how constant, corrosive and deeply embedded it is in the lives of young people today both online and off. It shapes how boys and girls think about themselves, their worth and their relationships with others.

Young people are telling us that the result can be harmful on all sides, from humiliation and sexualised abuse to feelings of shame and isolation. This is not inevitable it is learned, and it can be challenged.

That's why we're raising the alarm and we want young people's experiences to be at the heart of conversations about how to tackle misogynistic content online.

As a step in the right direction, we are calling on the government to turn Ofcom's guidance for online services to improve the safety of women and girls online into a

mandatory code of practice for tech companies to create safer digital platforms for all children and young people.

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By [The Canary](#)

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