



# MIRROR ON

## Women's Safety

An exploration into womanhood,  
harassment and the role of the media

Content warning: this report contains themes of  
sensitive topics around violence towards women

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**4i WOMXN**

At Channel 4, we've been running our award winning '**Mirror on the Industry**' project for 4 years. This is a study that audits TV advertising annually to see how diverse and representative it really is.

We are building on the project and releasing the '**Mirror on...**' series. Individual reports that take a closer look at some of the topics we evaluate in the wider study and dig deeper into the experiences, feelings and perceptions of our audiences.

The conversation surrounding the safety of women has been continuously brought to the forefront in recent years following several tragic murders, serving as a catalyst for the resurgence of this discussion.

To contribute to the conversation, we have created our next report: **Mirror on Women's Safety**. We have used this report as a platform to provide our 4Youth and Core4 communities an opportunity to speak about **what it means to be a woman**. Exploring their **experiences as a woman** in contemporary society, we highlight where they think the problem stems from and **what they believe needs to done** to make the world a **safer place**. We explore the role **media and brands** can play to educate and raise awareness of this conversation and **how to do it authentically**.

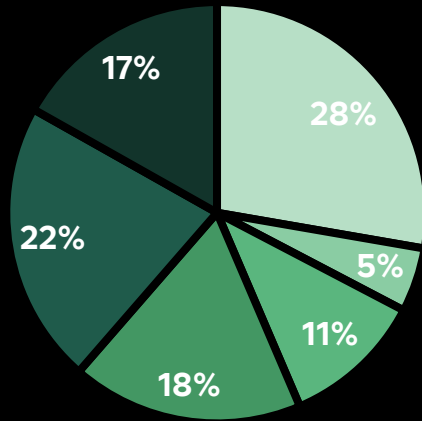
We hope you find this report thought provoking, and for those of you who are time poor, you'll also find a teaser video and one pager on the 4Sales website.



# WHO WE SPOKE TO

593 PARTICIPANTS

Age



■ 16-34 ■ 25-34 ■ 35-44 ■ 45-54 ■ 55-64 ■ 65+

**4 YOUTH**  
+  
**CORE 4**

We used our Channel 4 **4Youth** community to do a deep dive into perceptions of 16-24 year olds & **Core4** to speak to a broader audience, as well as drawing out supporting evidence from **OnePulse** surveys. This study primarily features women but also to get the male perspective we spoke to a few men on 4Youth

# Summary

- 01.** While being a woman has its challenges, women feel proud of who they are and associate womanhood with being empowered and strong. Women also recognise how intersectionality can play a role in their lived experiences.
- 02.** Women recognise the progress that has been made in women's rights, however they still feel there is a long way to go and continue to feel fear of judgement, sexualisation, sexism and their safety throughout their day-to-day lives.
- 03.** 54% of women have experienced some form of sexual harassment in public with many feeling a constant fear of attack. Women feel the need to take extra precautions to stay safe, which while necessary, puts the onus of keeping safe on women themselves rather than addressing the men who perpetrate these issues.
- 04.** To make the world a safer place for women there needs to be an emphasis on better education, better justice for victims, male allyship and accurate portrayals of women in the media.
- 05.** The key issue for women within media is how they are being portrayed. Women are often portrayed stereotypically; either being shown as overly sexualised or as a victim. Ads featuring women should show a range, including empowerment and portraying them in a way which lifts them up.
- 06.** Women expect and invite brands to use their platforms to educate people and represent women authentically. By addressing these issues in campaigns, it will not only raise awareness but also encourage viewers to reflect on their own behaviours towards women. Ideally brands should ensure they're part of the change rather than engaging at surface level.



# 01

**BEING A WOMAN IN  
SOCIETY TODAY...**

# Being a woman means being powerful, independent and strong

Overall, women feel proud of who they are

While womanhood is diverse, complex and in many ways undefinable, many see womanhood as **empowering**

They are **inspired** by other women and their successes in spite of hardship, and feel **strength** and **independence** are key parts of what it means to be a woman

Source: Core4 (base female: 488) & 4Youth (base: 110), Q: What does it mean to be a woman in today's society?





“ Being a woman means being **empowered by your definition of femininity**, whatever that may be. It is also about bringing change to women’s rights and women’s lives.

**female, 20**

“ We live in a time of a leap forward in terms of gender equality and I think it is essential that we use this moment to leave behind the constraints of expectations that have been in place since the dawn of the patriarchal society. Being a **woman now means exactly what we want it to be** - an image of empowerment and love.

**female, 22**

“ To be heard, valued, independent....to be anything you want to be.

**female, 45-54**

“ Strong independent people still fighting for equality and battling sexism and degrading behaviour towards us.

**female, 45-54**

Source: Core4 (base female: 488) & 4Youth (base: 110), Q: What does it mean to be a woman in today's society?



**16-24 year olds note that being a woman can be significantly affected by other elements of identity, and that intersectionality is important when understanding the discrimination that different women face**

16–24-year-olds understand that while all women experience discrimination based on their gender, the role that intersectionality plays (i.e., a woman’s ethnicity, sexuality, class, able-bodiedness) marginalises certain groups further, and can lead to additional prejudice.

*Source: 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Do you think that other identity factors (i.e., race, sexuality) impact women’s experiences? If so, in what way do you think they have an effect?*

## ETHNICITY

Non-White 16–24-year-olds speak of feeling incredibly **vulnerable** in society, and less protected by the police.

“As a black woman, I have the added burden of racism on top of the sexism that I already have to deal with. Because of this I’m **considered worth less than a white woman** in society, so if I were to go missing there would be less media coverage and people in general would care less.

**female, 23, straight, black**

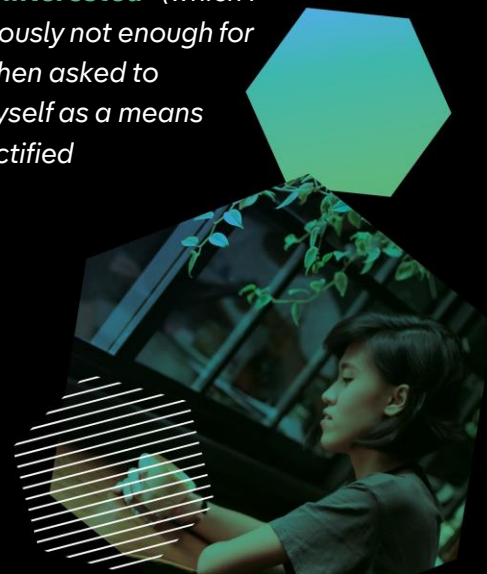
## SEXUALITY

Non-straight 16–24-year-olds speak of times where they’ve felt further **objectified** due to male fantasies driving inappropriate behaviour.

“I have resorted to saying **“I’m a lesbian, I’m not interested”** (which I shouldn’t have to say, no means no, but it’s obviously not enough for men), I have then on numerous occasions been then asked to “prove it”. Meaning not only have I had to out myself as a means to not be sexually harassed, I’m then being objectified and invalidated.

**female, 22, lesbian, white**

Source: 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Do you think that other identity factors (i.e., race, sexuality) impact women’s experiences? If so, in what way do you think they have an effect?



**Females have to break through 'the glass ceiling' but for those in more marginalised groups, the ceiling begins to feel more like cement.**

Source: 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Are there problems associated with being a woman in society? If so, what are they

“

Race and sexuality have a huge impact on women's experiences. Women of colour and gay or trans women **are more likely to experience sexual harassment and assault**, and tend to be blamed more for it, and are less likely to be believed. This intersection is extremely important to consider when thinking about this issue, and should not be overlooked.  
female, 23,

“

Race definitely compounds it as it brings in **concordant issues around institutional racism and prejudice**. So women of colour would feel even more vulnerable and less protected by the police, as well as less willing to report crime or have workplace support.  
male, 19

“

They are facing additional types of discrimination (racism, homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, aphobia, ableism, etc) and the combination of different discriminations. This can **impact the type or scale of harassment they experience, as well as the care and support they are given afterwards**.  
female, 23



**Women have fought and are fighting for their rights; they are proud to be a part of an ongoing movement.**

**But there is a feeling that despite the progress that's been made, there's a long way to go...**


Source: 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Are there problems associated with being a woman in society? If so, what are they

“ We **all need to play our parts**, but there needs to be radical change at all levels, institutionally, structurally, personally and socially. So called “harmless” jokes, flirting and touching needs to be shown as completely unacceptable, **everyone should be aware of what is abuse** and that no means no

female, 45-54

“ The pressure to be independent and successful but still relying on others to ensure your safety

female, 55-64



# Women's issues remain the forefront of conversation following multiple tragic murders and at a time where abortion rights are being reversed in the US

“ Gosh it's a scary time. Knowing you aren't safe in any environment. Your drink could get spiked in a pub. You walk home alone, you could get murdered. I don't think it's ever been as bad as it currently is. I used to go out alone all the time. Now I don't.  
female, 35-44

“ The choice for our own reproductive health being taken away from us  
female, 16-24

Source: 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Are there problems associated with being a woman in society? If so, what are they

When we spoke to our 4Youth community, their experiences of womanhood are diverse and undefinable, yet they are all united by a similar **sense of fear**

Our conversations revealed 4 key fears that women feel in their day-to-day lives. In this report we will be primarily discussing fear for their safety

*Source: 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Are there problems associated with being a woman in society? If so, what are they*



**FEAR OF JUDGEMENT**



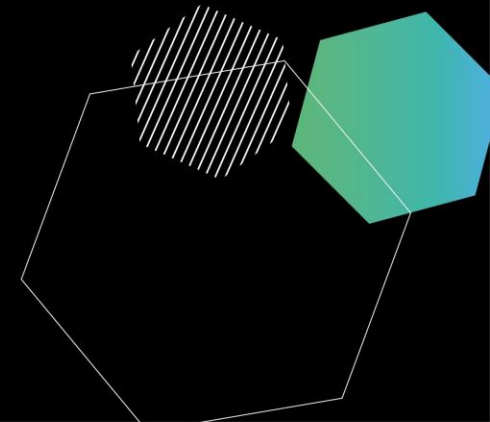
**FEAR OF SEXUALISATION**



**FEAR OF EVERYDAY SEXISM**



**FEAR FOR THEIR SAFETY**





## FEAR FOR THEIR SAFETY

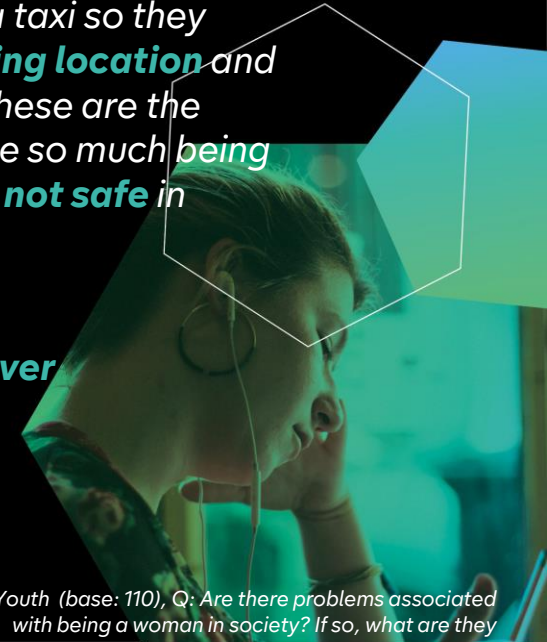
### Womanhood is often characterised by a fear for personal safety

**16-24 year olds** state how they receive constant unwanted attention, sexualisation and harassment from men regardless of where they are and who they are with – this has led to a genuine and visceral fear of attack which all women carry with them

**71% of all women** have experienced some form of sexual harassment in public<sup>1</sup>

“ A man does not have to remember to add a **rape alarm to their bag** every time they go out, tell their friends/family/partner when they are walking somewhere alone, to ring someone when walking or in a taxi so they don't feel alone, always **sharing location** and **carrying keys** in your hand. These are the issues women still face despite so much being done for women. **Women are not safe** in society and that scares me.  
– female, 17

To be a woman means you **never** feel completely safe.  
– female, 23



Source: 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Are there problems associated with being a woman in society? If so, what are they

<sup>1</sup> Advanced Pro Bono (2021) *Prevalence and reporting of sexual harassment in UK public spaces*. Available at: [https://www.unwomenuk.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/APPG-UN-Women-Sexual-Harassment-Report\\_Updated.pdf](https://www.unwomenuk.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/APPG-UN-Women-Sexual-Harassment-Report_Updated.pdf) (Accessed 23.04.2021)



## FEAR FOR THEIR SAFETY

The death of Sarah Everard felt close to home for many 16–24-year-olds, as it taps into the shared fear that they are right to be afraid

Her kidnapping and death brought memories of traumatic events to the surface that women previously brushed off as nothing, now seeing them through a more sinister lens

To add to this, the situation further ingrained in women a sense of powerlessness; no matter the precautions they take, women's lives are still at risk

“ Since Sarah Everard's murder, **I am terrified of walking around London on my own**, if someone gives me a strange look / comes near me on the tube, I feel the fear in me rise.  
– female, 17

The sad thing is, after hearing of Sarah Everard's death **I remembered the experiences I've felt because of my gender**, and because of society I've been made to skip over them, forget it and **act like it was nothing**.  
– female, 18

Since finding out it was a member of the police force who kidnapped Sarah Everard it has **really decreased people's confidence in the police force**.  
– female, 21,

Source: 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Are there problems associated with being a woman in society? If so, what are they



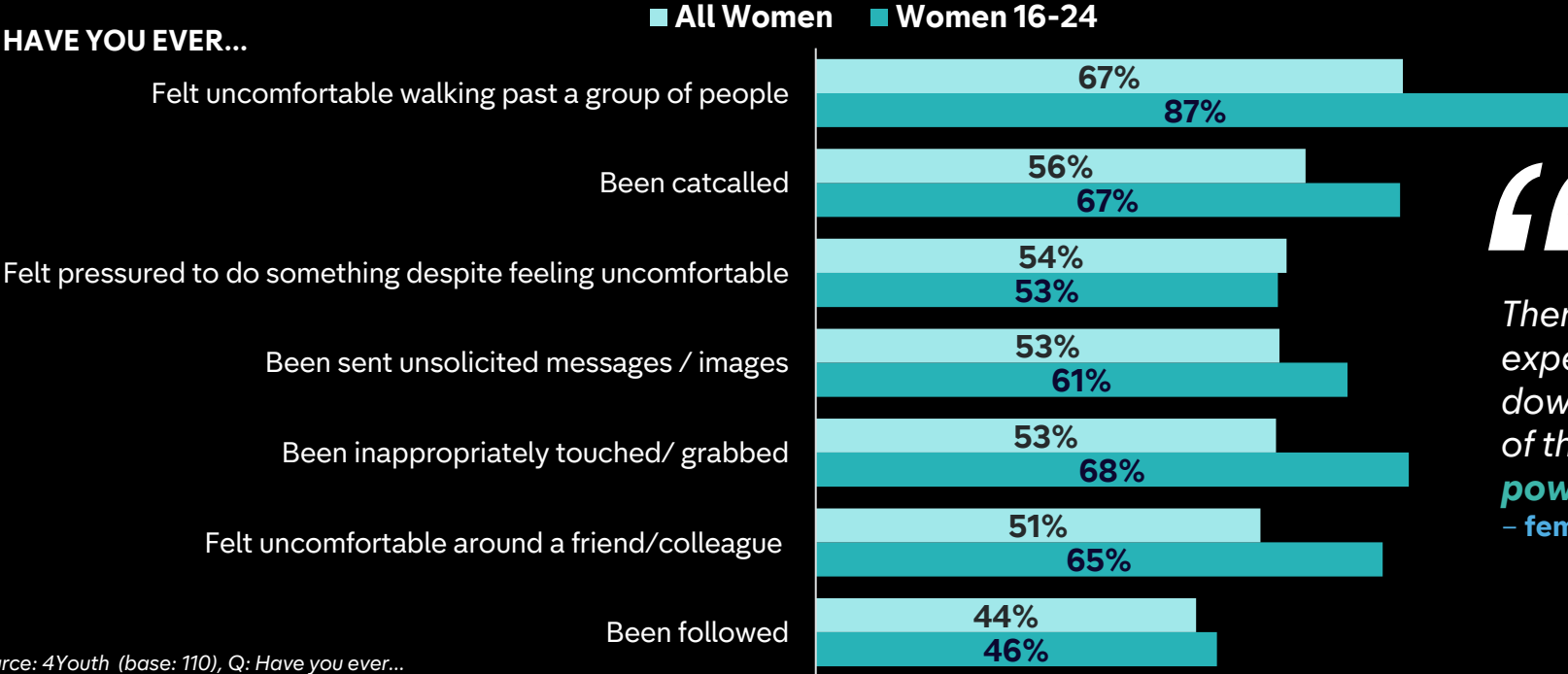


# 02

## DEEP DIVE: SEXUAL HARASSMENT

*Trigger warning: the following slides discuss sexual harassment and assault*

# Our female community members have been exposed to multiple forms of harassment, leading to discomfort, pressure & fear



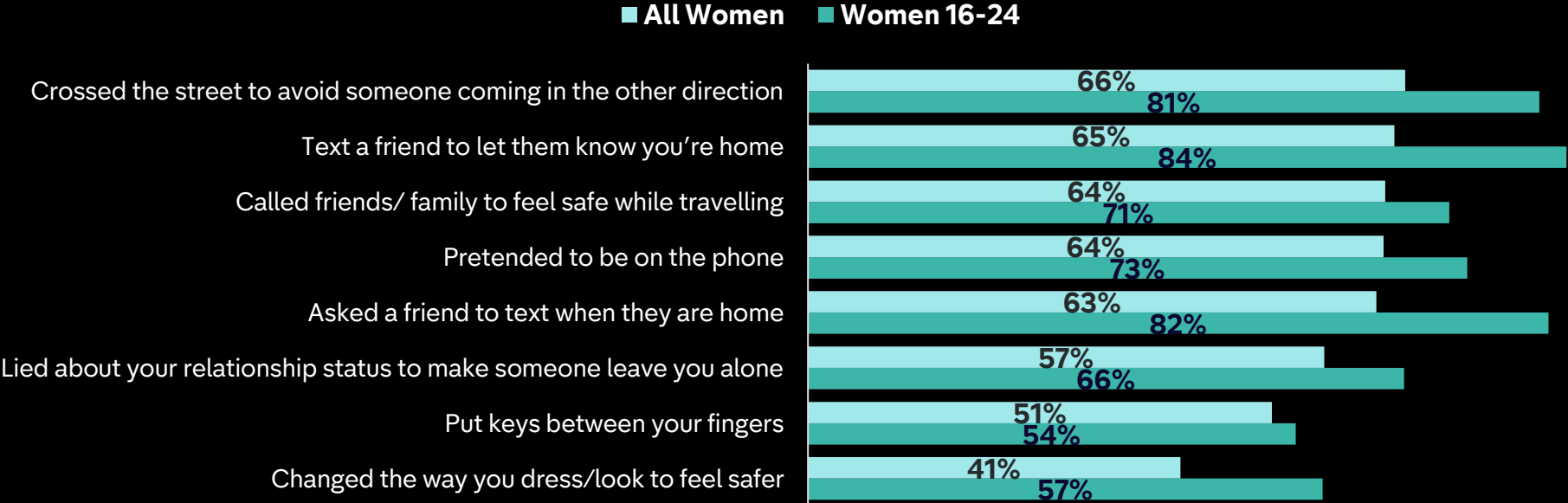
*There's honestly too many experiences to narrow down and pick one, and all of them make me feel **powerless and angry.***  
- female, 23

Source: 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Have you ever...


# In an attempt to protect themselves, women feel the need to take additional measures when in public

These measures, while necessary, can serve to place the **responsibility of women's safety upon women themselves** rather than addressing the men who perpetrate these issues

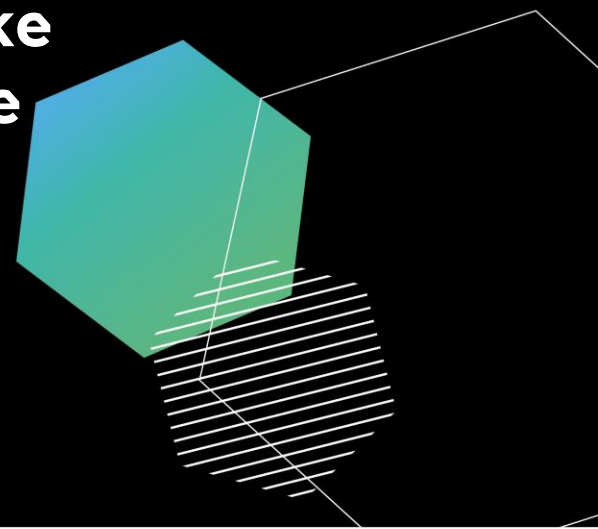
HAVE YOU EVER :



Source: 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Have you ever...



**We offered the 4Youth community the opportunity to share any times they've been **victims of sexual harassment**. These testimonies serve to show not only the range of experiences throughout women's lives which regularly make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe but also the universality of this experience – many women are bound by a shared experience of sexual harassment or assault**



# On the street: catcalling & being followed

Around 67% of women between the ages of 16 and 24 have been **catcalled** while on the street

Around 46% of women between 16 and 24 have been **physically followed** while on the street

“ There are too many examples to write down. Just today I went on a **walk that took about 40 minutes as I was shouted and beeped at 8+ times**. I also crossed the street multiple times to avoid men that were acting odd.

- female, 18

“ There was a group of people mostly older men standing outside a restaurant, they had clearly had a few drinks which made me slightly unsettled. **As I walked past they started calling me like “honey”, “babe” telling me to come over**. I was quite surprised at first and I didn't think they were talking to me but then they got louder which scared me so I quickened my step to leave the scene.

- female, 18

“ I was once followed by a man when walking to work in daylight. When I crossed the road, he'd follow to the same side. I walked as fast as I could almost running to get to my workplace on a busier road from the side street I was on. **I felt very scared, ready to run for my life, it made me feel anxious to start my shift at work in case he'd seen where I'd gone into**. I started thinking whether I could outrun him to a safe place and whether I should knock on a random door to get help.

- female, 23,

Source: 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Please tell us in which of the below situations you've been made to feel unsafe

# On the street: assault & using public transport

Over 68% of women between 16 and 24 have been touched or groped without their consent

Over half of women have experienced some form of sexual harassment on public transport<sup>1</sup>

“ I have been made to feel unsafe when I was walking back to my hotel while abroad on holiday and was not really thinking about safety issues as I was with my boyfriend. **A car full of guys drove up next to me and grabbed my bum from underneath my skirt and drove off.** I didn't know how to feel but from then on I realised that I hadn't even considered this could happen and the safety issues I faced despite being accompanied by men.

- female, 20, straight, white

“ I was on the tube home from school when a man leaned over to hand me a folded piece of paper. The note had his phone number on and said something like “call me if you want to talk more”. I was horrified because even though I was only 16 I knew it was completely inappropriate for a grown man to give his number to a teenager, plus I was wearing my school uniform and I'm baby faced. Luckily the train was really packed so there were people between us. **I kept my head down & didn't look up for about 5 stops** just in case I accidentally made eye contact with him. **When I got to my stop I threw the note in a bin & called my mum to tell her what happened because I was creeped out & didn't know what else to do.** She was worried & asking if I could still get the bus ok or wanted her to come meet me, but while talking to her I realised there was no way for the man to find me or contact me since I hadn't called him. I was just so shocked that someone would seemingly hit on a child. I'd heard that kind of person existed but never seen it first hand.

- female, 18, black

<sup>1</sup>Advanced Pro Bono (2021) *Prevalence and reporting of sexual harassment in UK public spaces*. Available at: <https://www.unwomenuk.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/APPG-UN-Women-Sexual-Harassment-Report-Updated.pdf> (Accessed 23.04.2021)

Source: 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Please tell us in which of the below situations you've been made to feel unsafe.

# On school & on work: harassment

64% of girls aged 13-21 experienced sexual violence or sexual harassment at school or college in 2017<sup>1</sup>

52% of women have experienced some form of sexual harassment in the workplace<sup>2</sup>, and this number increases in certain industries like hospitality

<sup>1</sup> Girlguiding (2017) *Girls Attitude Survey*. Available at: <https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/globalassets/docs-and-resources/research-and-campaigns/girls-attitudes-survey-2017.pdf> (Accessed 23.04.2021)

<sup>2</sup>TUC (2016) *Still just a bit of banter: Sexual harassment in the workplace in 2016*. Available at: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/SexualHarassmentreport2016.pdf> (Accessed 23.04.2021)

“

It was when I was in secondary school and one boy (in particular, there were other one-off occasions with others) would say crudely sexual things about/to me on a number of occasions. I guess I felt humiliated but I didn't have the knowledge at the time to understand what I was feeling or why - I didn't even know this was sexual harassment, **it was just considered to be how teenage boys treat girls. It was normal for them, so what right did I have to feel upset?**

- female, 24

“

When I was at school boys touched our bums without consent and guessed what your bra size was, **kind of catcalling in a school boy way** like 'I can see your bra'

- female, 24

“

One example of a time I've felt unsafe was when I used to work at a bar. I was serving a stag do in a private room and I was cornered and one of them fully grabbed my bum. I told him to fuck off and went and told the owner of the bar who went on to tell me **"you never speak to a paying customer like that"**. I felt angry and annoyed that in my own workplace I was made to feel like the one in the wrong after being sexually assaulted. Luckily the manager was much more supportive, and I told him and he kicked the whole stag group out, which made me feel safer again.

- female, 23

“

I don't know if this could be considered bad enough, but there was a time when I felt my boss had a thing for me and the **mere look in his eyes used to make me feel very uncomfortable.**

- female, 21

Source: 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Please tell us in which of the below situations you've been made to feel unsafe.

# When being intimate

While statistics show that **20% of women have been sexually assaulted<sup>1</sup>**, lack of reporting means that many more women have been made to feel unsafe in the bedroom

<sup>1</sup>ONS (2017) Sexual offences in England and Wales: year ending March 2017.

Available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/sexualoffencesinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2017> (Accessed 23.04.2021)

“ My partner at the time used to **get angry at me** if I said I didn't want to be intimate and would coerce me into those situations until I said yes  
– female, 20

“ I was in university halls and a guy came back. He was quite forceful about us sleeping together. We were both out of it, but I knew he had just broken up with his girlfriend and I really didn't want to have sex with him. He was persistent in taking my clothes off. We were in a small single bed and I felt so uncomfortable. He started touching me, forcefully and I finally turned over and tried to go to sleep. I asked him to leave and after many attempts to get him to leave he finally did. **I felt violated and shaky. It felt hard to get him off me.**  
– female, 22

“ I was being intimate with a boy and he did something without consent which I clearly did not want to happen. **At first I did not realise there was anything wrong with that, I just thought it was natural for boys to push their luck.** It was only years later that I realised it was sexual assault.  
– female, 20

Source: 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Please tell us in which of the below situations you've been made to feel unsafe.






03

**CREATING A SAFER  
WORLD FOR WOMEN**



To help women feel safer a cultural shift needs to take place involving both **personal** and **institutional** changes



**And when we spoke to women of all ages they felt there were 4 key things which need to happen in order to make women feel safe in society today**



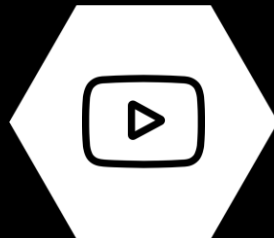
**EDUCATION**



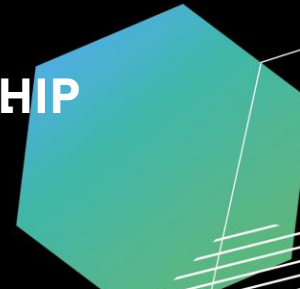
**INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES**



**MALE ALLYSHIP**



**MEDIA PORTRAYAL**



Education is the most important cultural shift; it should teach a respect for consent, boundaries and the importance of listening to and believing women when they express themselves

“

Something needs to be done about the way we all are brought up and educated, which starts with **little boys getting T-shirts saying Here comes trouble** and Monster and baby girls getting T-shirts saying "daddy's princess" and "#bekind" and **ends with male entitlement and violence**.

– female, 45-54

“

There needs to be a massive **increase in education both around sexual assault, harassment and consent, as well as major reform to many public institutions and the way they operate**. For women to feel safe, trans, lesbian and queer women, black and brown women, disabled women and sex workers must be made to feel safe, otherwise efforts made only further exacerbate pre-existing inequalities and dangers in society. For this reason, wide scale institutional reform, not just an attempt to shift the mindset of individual men, must be made.

– female, 20

“

Education from a younger age. **Letting people know when they have done something unacceptable or made a sexist comment not just 'boys will be boys'**. Teaching human beings to respect each other more on a wider scale through gender, race and everything in between. Better sex education in regards to consent also.

– female, 21

Source: Core4 (base female: 488) & 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Please tell us what needs to change for women to feel safe in today's society?

Women want to be listened to and taken seriously when reporting assaults. Stricter laws against sexual harassment should also be put into place alongside more action from general staff (in bars or other public places) to prevent sexual misconduct

Source: Core4 (base female: 488) & 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Please tell us what needs to change for women to feel safe in today's society?

“

Harsher punishments to those who harm and abuse women. Sexist attacks and incidents need harsher responses and a strategy is needed to show that these won't be tolerated and that our society should not let these go.

- female, 24

“

Laws must be enforced and aggressors must be sanctioned, whether it is mental or physical aggression, if we see aggression there must be a mechanism for denunciation and emergency sanctions

- female, 35-44

“

What needs to change is **more serious repercussions** for those committing acts of sexual harassment, but for this to happen the police need to **take sexual harassment more seriously** and dedicate more time/resources to tackling it. Women should also feel empowered to go to the police to report such acts but will only do so if they feel that they are being listened to and action is being taken. My advice to other men would be to also **report sexual harassment/violence if you are witness to it** in public.

- male, 19



“ I think in the case of sexual assault and harassment there is **terrible culture surrounding the way in which police approach accusations**. A lot of women are apprehensive to report things because they are belittled or judged for their actions, often questions like **‘What were you wearing? Had you had anything to drink?’** are degrading and make the victim seem at fault. I think the police should take all accusations more seriously, schools should have more thorough education on consent and lad culture and how disrespectful it is to degrade women like this.

- female, 19

Source: Core4 (base female: 488) & 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Please tell us what needs to change for women to feel safe in today's society?

# 16–24-year-olds feel distrust towards the Police regarding woman's safety...

Since the murder of **Sarah Everard**, and some of the Police force's antagonistic and violent actions at the vigil, distrust towards the Police has been exacerbated

- 16–24-year-olds feel that their actions show the deep-rooted misogyny embedded in the system

Our conversations revealed that a lot of younger women believe that the police do not listen to women, or take their stories seriously, often looking for reasons to disregard them. This means that they do not feel safe, and are not likely to turn to the police if they are in need



**84%** of 16–24-year-olds, believe the **Police could (and should) be doing more to help women feel safe in society**

## WHAT CAN THEY DO?

To help women feel safer, 16–24-year-olds believe that the police should be working with communities to create 'safe-spaces' where women feel like they can get help or justice, without worrying about not being believed, or even worse, being blamed

Source: 4Youth (base: 110) Q. Please tell us how much you agree with the following statements: The Police need to do more to help us move to a society where females feel safe

# Male allyship:

## Women explain that real allyship from men is the next step and that not being a perpetrator is not enough

- This allyship from men must involve **conscious action to call out inappropriate behaviour** from other men, as well as **confronting their own personal biases** and working to change them and **acting as role models** for the next generation of young men
- Of the 16–24-year-old males we spoke to, they understand the severity of the issue, and do not associate themselves with males involved in harassing behaviours
- The majority admit to having witnessed other men's harassment of women; in some cases, they spoke up, but in others, they felt like it wasn't their place to

“

Safety advice needs to be addressed towards men more than women. Because I get the logic that women are statistically more likely to be attacked so advice for how to stay safe is usually geared towards us, but **no one seems to tell men to avoid the aggressive behaviours that cause the danger.**  
– female, 18

“

**People need to recognise their responsibility to make other people safe.** Being aware of your abilities to intimidate or scare a woman doesn't mean you're a bad person automatically, it just means you need to be aware of the way you interact with others.  
– non-binary, 20

“

**Men need to take responsibility, they should be the ones that are taught not to harass/ hurt women, not women being taught to alter their behaviour to avoid men who may do this. They also need to realise that we are very aware that not ALL men do this, but it's hard to identify which ones will (instead of just saying not all men, do something about the ones that do act like that) Men should point out inappropriate behaviour from their friends/ co-workers etc instead of saying that's just how they are.**  
– female, 25-34

Source: Core4 (base female: 488) & 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Please tell us what needs to change for women to feel safe in today's society?



# Which links to the key pieces of advice women would give to men

## Being an ally

Men should not tolerate violence towards women and call out their peers if they witness any harmful behaviour.

## Behaviour towards women

Men should be conscious of how their behaviour can make a woman feel and avoid putting them in situations where they feel unsafe.

*"Educate yourself/**seek education** about this type of thing. If you know that one of your friends/someone you know is abusing women **report them to the authorities/ do something about it**. If you see a women in distress/another man is bothering them calmly get that man away from them etc."*  
- female, 24

*"If you see a women by herself do not follow her - simply cross the road and **do not make her feel targeted**. If you see a women being harassed please **check that she is okay**."*  
female, 16-24

Source: Core4 (base female: 488) Q: What advice would you give to men to help women feel safer?

Women want the media to stop portraying them in harmful ways. Better representation of women within all facets of life will enable the rigid perceptions of womanhood to be broken down and slowly curb the sexualisation of women through people seeing woman as fully formed, multifaceted people

“

People are heavily influenced by the media, and opinions are formed based on what they see. **Women in the media are largely depicted as submissive, oversexualised and less important overall than their male counterparts.** There should be a more balanced, grounded depiction of women, showing the various careers and personalities that encompass womanhood.

- female, 23

More shows/documentaries should be aired to raise awareness around issues and educate people on what they can do. **Media companies also need to stop giving misogynistic people/abusers/etc a platform.** Too many known rapists/woman haters/etc and people who share views which encourage women to feel unsafe have too much airtime when they shouldn't be allowed on there as it suggests these negative views are acceptable.

- female, 23

I think TV/media have a responsibility because if you think about all the different shows they offer, all of these shows are actively being discussed by friends/family/strangers, as ways of bonding or relatability. Imagine if there were shows about sexual assault and the importance of presenting it and the harm it can cause. **More and more people would be encouraged to speak about the topic.**

- female, 20

Source: Core4 (base female: 488) & 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Please tell us what needs to change for women to feel safe in today's society?

“

Brand advertisements should not **perpetuate unhealthy gender relationships** and could reflect this message in their branding.

- female, 21

“

Brands are only addressing the problem when they are forced to, to not make them look misogynistic. I think they need to **employ more women in higher responsibility roles** (i.e BBC Director General have all been men).

- female, 20

“

Brands have got such **broad, national platforms** which could reach vast portions of the population across varying demographics. This means they could educate the public and encourage more support and awareness.

- male, 19

Source: Core4 (base female: 488) & 4Youth (base: 110), Q: Please tell us what needs to change for women to feel safe in today's society?



04

**THE ROLE OF  
MEDIA & BRANDS**

**73%**

of TV ads feature  
**women**

WOMEN LEAD  
IN

**39%**

OF ADS OVERALL

LEADING IN

**53%**  
ADS  
THEY'RE  
IN

**In Mirror on the Industry,  
we coded up the top 1000  
TV ads and we found that  
women were quite well  
represented in the ads of  
2020**

Source: Mirror on the industry Pt 2. Tapestry/C4 Coding - Top 1000 adverts shown on TV in March & September 2020

# The majority of ads featuring women in lead roles are cosmetic brands

By contrast, women are significantly less likely to play lead roles in ads from finance brands compared to men despite it being a gender neutral territory

19%

of TV ads featuring **women** in a lead role are for **cosmetics and personal care brands**

vs.

5%

for men

10%

of TV ads featuring **women** in a lead role are for **finance brands**

vs.

15%

for men

Source: Mirror on the industry Pt 2. Tapestry/C4 Coding - Top 1000 adverts shown on TV in March & September 2020

Cosmetic brands are inclusive of women, but they don't always get it right. Many still lean into over sexualisation and objectification of women to sell products

Source: Mirror on the Industry Pt 2. (base: 149 female, 121 male), Q1. Please tell us in your own words what you specifically disliked about this ad?, Q2. What did you think about the following characters?, Q3. And how did you feel about the characters in the advert?

## CASE STUDY

As part of Mirror on the Industry we showed people various adverts, one of which was a perfume advert featuring a well known actress in a **sexualised role** and found it was **viewed more negatively by women** than men, despite being targeted at them. The character was felt to be **far fetched, objectified and too different** to the women watching

35%

of female viewers felt the character felt too different to them or people they know (vs. 24% of men)

"Objectifying towards women, not inclusive of all women - shapes, sizes, race, disability. Enforces the idea of that is what we should all aim for"

Female 25-34

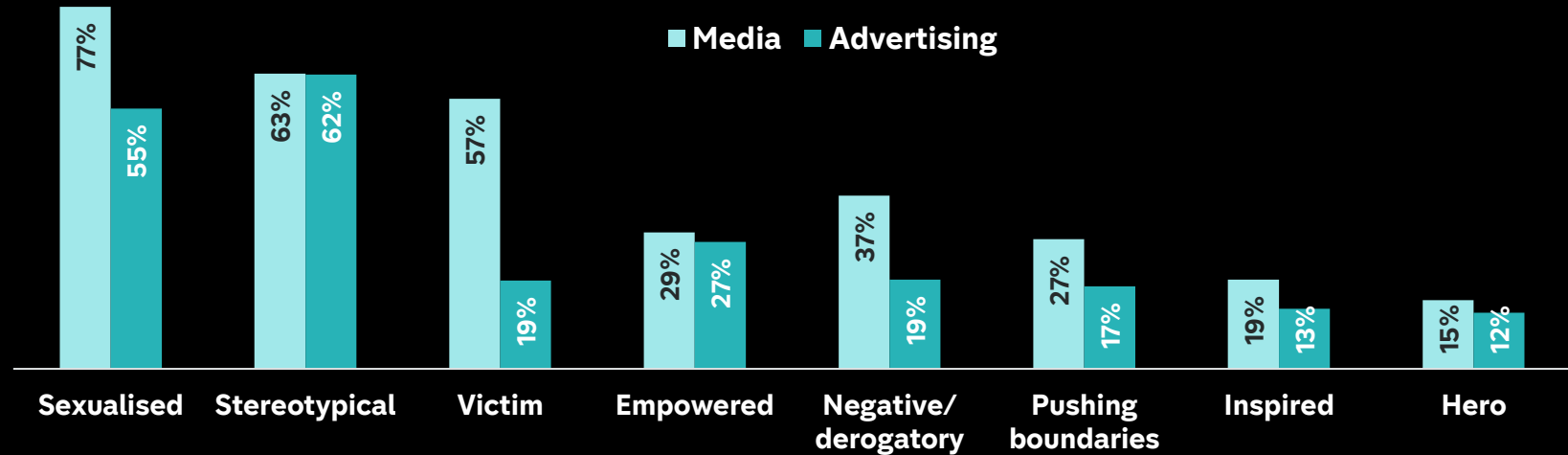
**LEARNING: Adverts with women in should focus on being empowering:** It's important that women are shown in ways that lift them up and avoid objectification or discrimination.



# Women feel they tend to be portrayed in media and TV advertising as sexualised and in stereotypical ways

Almost 8 in 10 say they tend to see women being portrayed as sexualised in media and half tend to see this type of portrayal in TV advertising too

Q: How do you tend to see women portrayed in....



Source: Core4 (base female: 488), Q: How do you tend to see women portrayed in...



# It's not enough just to be on screen...

Women in TV advertising are a perfect example of why it's important for us to make the distinction between **representation** and **portrayal**. Women appear in a relatively high proportion of ads, so can be considered well represented. However, that representation can feel inauthentic, with the over use of gender stereotypes and objectification, which weights the issue in poor portrayal of women.

## REPRESENTATION



## PORTRAYAL



# When brands combine representation and authentic and empowering portrayal they land well amongst audiences

## CASE STUDY – THIS GIRL CAN

This Girl Can includes women in all sections of their life, and evokes a much more positive response among women than men. The characters are felt to be likeable and relatable.



**+47%**  
female viewers felt NET more positive about the brand (vs. +29% non-female viewers)

"Representation of different body shapes, races and experiences of being a woman"  
Female 16-24

**LEARNING:** Adverts should aim to showcase the real experiences of women and explore intersectionality in womanhood: It's important for audiences to see real depictions of women that don't objectify or sexualise their inclusion

Source: Mirror on the Industry Pt 2. (base: 149 female, 121 male), Q1. Please tell us in your own words what you specifically disliked about this ad?, Q2. What did you think about the following characters?, Q3. And how did you feel about the characters in the advert?

# TV & Media institutions have an enormous amount of influence over how people view and act in society

**STOP** promoting romantic tropes which normalise forms of sexual harassment (*i.e. stalking someone and laughing about it with friends, controlling women's behaviour*)

**STOP** portraying women in a way that contributes towards objectification and inequality (*i.e. existing for male pleasure, being 'lesser' than their male counterparts*)

**CONTINUE** pushing out shows like *I May Destroy You* and *Sex Education*; these portray the nuances and complexities of womanhood, being both relatable and educational. Documentaries like *Dispatches* can also help uncover issues and encourage conversation.

Source: 4Youth (base: 110), Q. Please tell us how much you agree with the following statements: TV/Media need to do more to help us move to a society where females feel safe

“ Documentaries like *Dispatches* can uncover the issues that women are facing every day. They can put news up about inappropriate conduct or shows about this topic. - **female, 20, black**



**86%** of 16–24-year-olds, believe TV & Media Institutions should be doing more to help women feel safe in society

## WHAT CAN THEY DO?

Young people feel that the media should help educate people about the realities women's experiences and how damaging they can be. Showing the dangers of degrading attitudes will make men more aware and also help women to realise they're not alone and support is available

# Brands should use their voice to educate people and represent women authentically

BUT... there's a fine line between brands integrating this social awareness into their positioning, and looking like they're trying to fit in with social commentary. **Brands must ensure they are a part of the change they are promoting.** They must walk the walk **before** they talk the talk. 16-24 year olds are hypersensitive to this and are actively looking out for it.

“ It bothers me greatly when brands lobby off the back of topical issues purely to improve their image. That being said, **brands do have a responsibility to act... responsibly.**  
- female, 22, bisexual, white

**63%** of 16–24-year-olds, believe **brands could be doing more to help women feel safe in society**

Source: 4Youth (base: 110), Q. Please tell us how much you agree with the following statements:  
Brands need to do more to help us move to a society where females feel safe

# Speaking out on women's safety is expected from authorities but women are inviting brands to enter this space too

Source: Core4 (base: 488 females), Q1. We would now like you to imagine a brand were to attempt to raise awareness on the issue of women's safety. What industry would you most likely expect this brand to belong to?; Q2. Would you like to see more relevant brands speaking about women's safety?

43%

Said they would most expect Government Social Political Organisations to attempt to raise awareness

Women **most expect** campaigns addressing women's safety to come from Government, Social, Political brands.

However, that does not mean they don't want to see other sectors engaging in this issue – they would like to see **more brands speaking up**

84%

would like to see more relevant brands speaking about women's safety

"Only effective if enough brands did this otherwise it is a drop in the ocean"

This rises to **93%** Amongst 16-24s

# They believe brands creating campaigns that address issues around women's safety will not only raise awareness, but encourage behaviour reflection change

## Seeing a brand highlight issues around women's safety would...



Source: Core4 (base: 488 females), Q . Continuing to think about this, please tell us the impact you think a campaign which highlighted issue around women's safety would have. Please tick all that apply.

“ Teach men how to **call out** other men on bad behaviour

“ I'd hope (but not expect) all to **reflect** on how their words/actions/attitudes are received by others.

“ Raise the profile and **importance** of this subject



05

# CAMPAIGN CASE STUDIES

**Women want to see themselves portrayed as strong and empowered, rather than vulnerable or weak**

**There needs to be a balance struck between depicting authentic, real life experiences, whilst also showing where people can get help or support**

When brands combine representation and authentic and empowering portrayal they land well amongst audiences.

It is important to show the every day experiences of women and the reality of the different types of abuse they are subjected to, whilst also depicting them as individuals who can stick up for themselves.



# #WHYSHOULD I

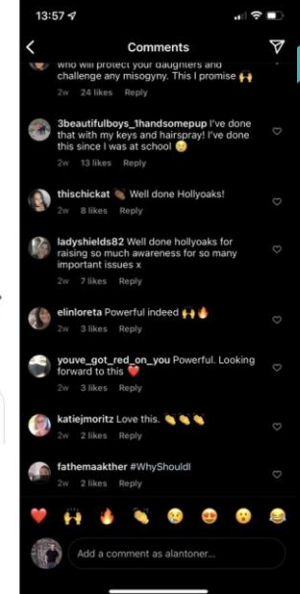
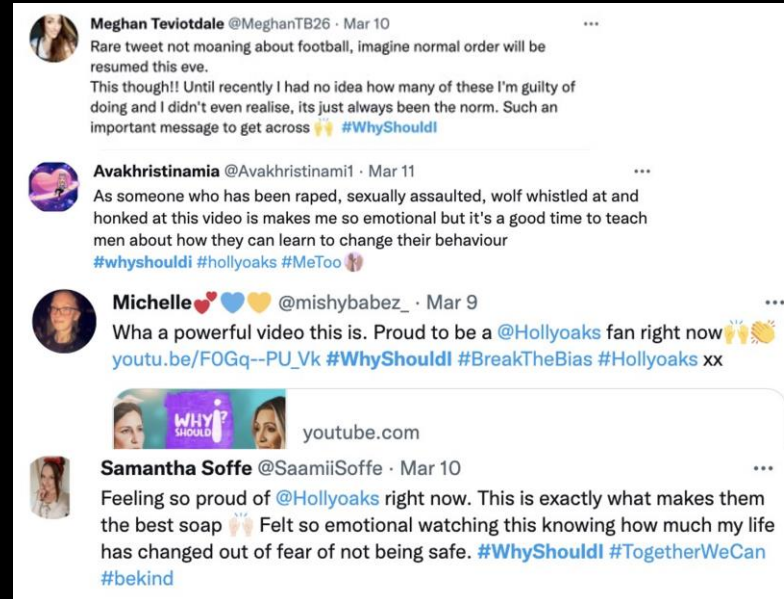
On International Women's Day 2022, Channel 4 launched the #WhyShouldI Campaign exploring the things women do 'to feel more safe' or the unwanted experiences women face every day, through first-hand accounts from female and non-binary cast members. Following on from this, the campaign then captured the male casts live reactions to seeing the harsh realities of being a woman.



# #WHYSHOULD I

The #WhyShouldI campaign activity achieved an overwhelming response. The campaign videos achieved 564K views across Facebook, YouTube and Instagram in the first two weeks of being published.

Viewers praised the campaign for its powerful and educational message which highlighted everything a woman needs to go through in order to feel safe.



# ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Enough is Enough is a TV advert depicting different scenes where women are subjected to verbal or physical abuse. It also shows how people can step in and help or actively address someone's abusive behaviour.

Audiences noted that seeing the representation of a black man stand up to his white friends was refreshing, which broke down the stereotypes and stigmas of young black men in association with this kind of behaviour.



**ENOUGH.**

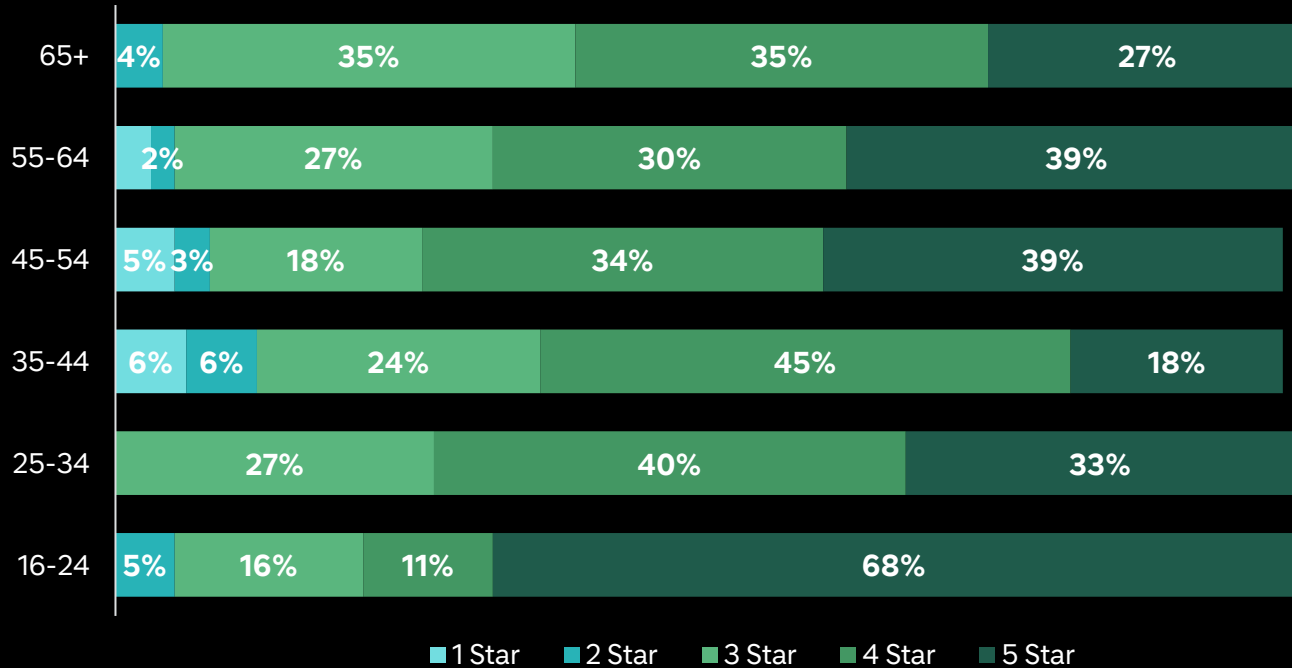
Find out how you can be part of  
the change at [gov.uk/enough](https://www.gov.uk/enough)



Source: Core4 (base female: 218) , Q: Thinking about the ad, please tell us anything you particularly liked and/or disliked about the ad.

# ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Nearly **7 in 10** rated the ad 4 or 5 stars, with **79% of 16-24s** rating the ad 4 or 5 stars.



“ **I LIKED** that it showed different groups and settings where these things can happen. **Showing a wide demographic of people who can intervene** and stop these things happening.

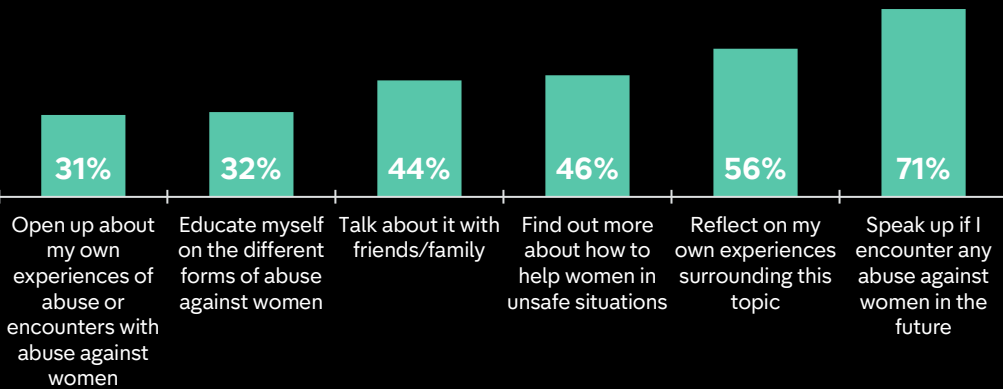
“ **I DISLIKED** that it was very short and snappy, it maybe could have **explained more on what to do if you saw violence against women** taking place in various different scenarios.

Source: Core4 (base female: 218) , Q: We'd love to get your thoughts. How much do you like or dislike this ad?

# ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

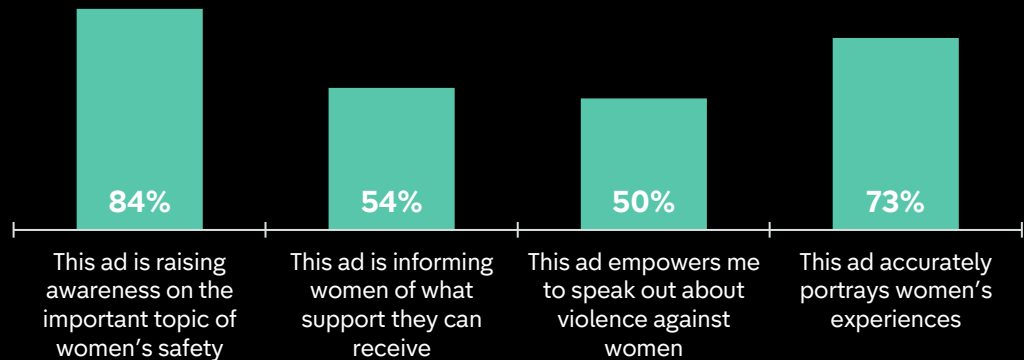
## ACTIONS

This ad is doing a powerful job of encouraging people to speak up if they encounter any abuse against women in the future, with **over 7 in 10** saying they would speak up if they encounter abuse against women after watching this ad.



## PERCEPTIONS

**Over 8 in 10** people feel this ad is raising awareness on the topic of women's safety and that this ad is a step in the right direction in depicting everyday situations.

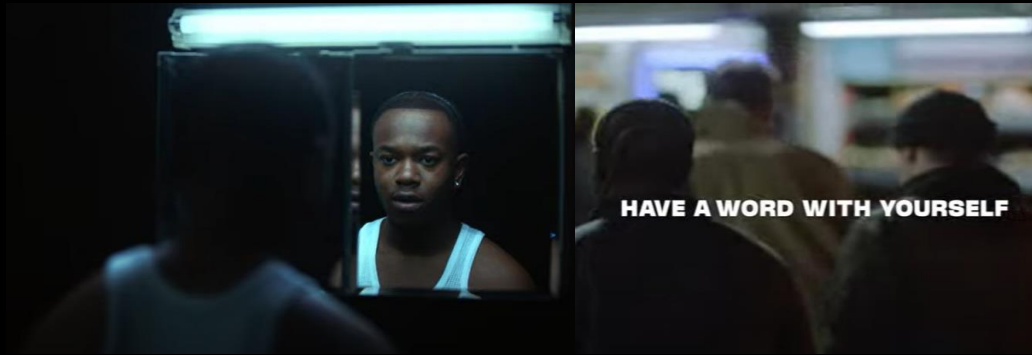


Source: Core4 (base female: 218) , Q: Please tell us how likely you are to do the following things after watching this ad. Q: Having now watched the ad, please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements...

# HAVE A WORD

Have a Word is a social media advert depicting a woman who is subjected to harassment by a group of men, and how one of them eventually calls out his friends' behaviour whilst also checking himself for being a part of the group who is intimidating the girl.

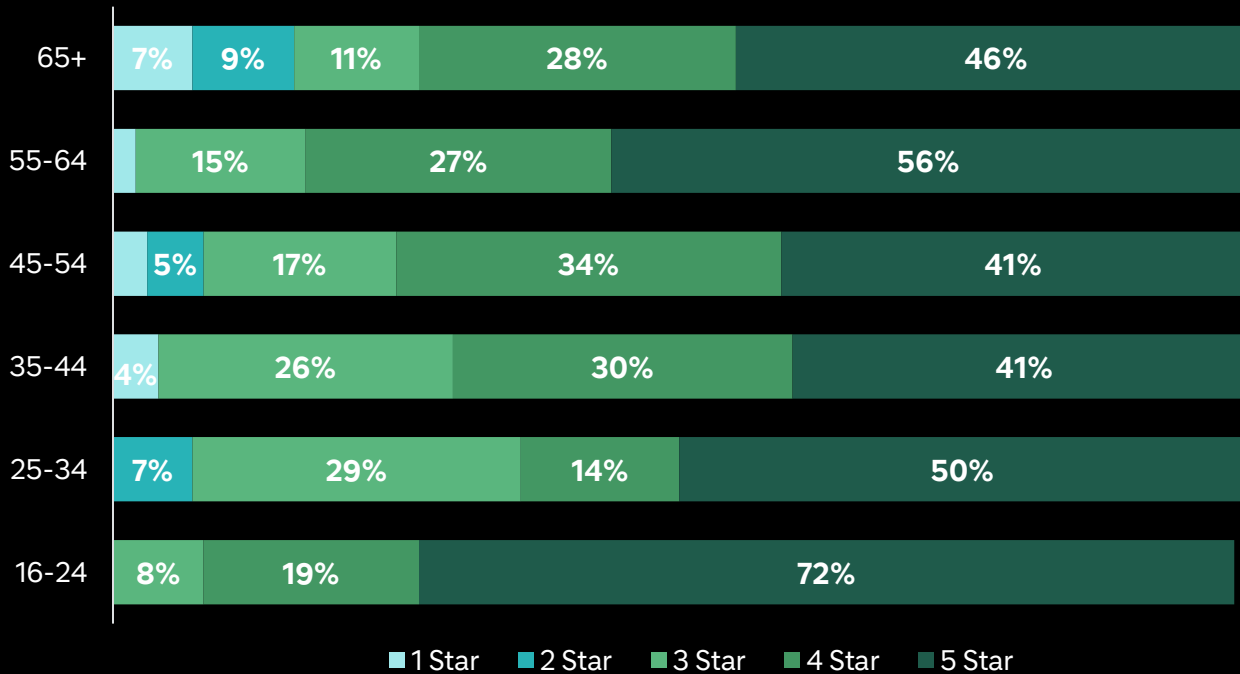
Audiences noted the importance of depicting men standing up to their friends and calling out their behaviour when it is inappropriate, and taking responsibility in situations that they can directly affect or change.



Source: Core4 (base female: 244) , Q: Thinking about the ad, please tell us anything you particularly liked and/or disliked about the ad.

# HAVE A WORD

Nearly **8 in 10** rated the ad 4 or 5 stars, with **91% of 16-24s** rating the ad 4 or 5 stars.



“

**I LIKED** how it showed how intimidating that sort of behaviour is and **how the young man did the right thing and spoke out.**

“

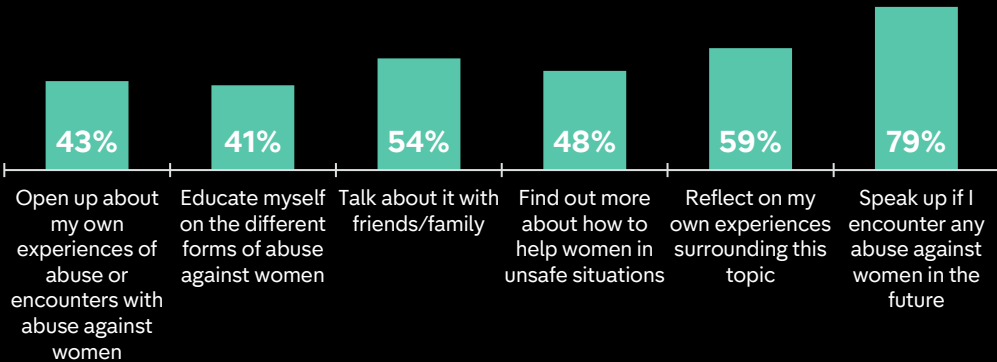
**I DISLIKED** the fact that the ad very quickly showed the woman start crying **played into stereotypes about women being emotional and weak.** The woman could easily have looked anxious, worried etc without crying.

Source: Core4 (base female: 244), Q: We'd love to get your thoughts. How much do you like or dislike this ad?

# HAVE A WORD

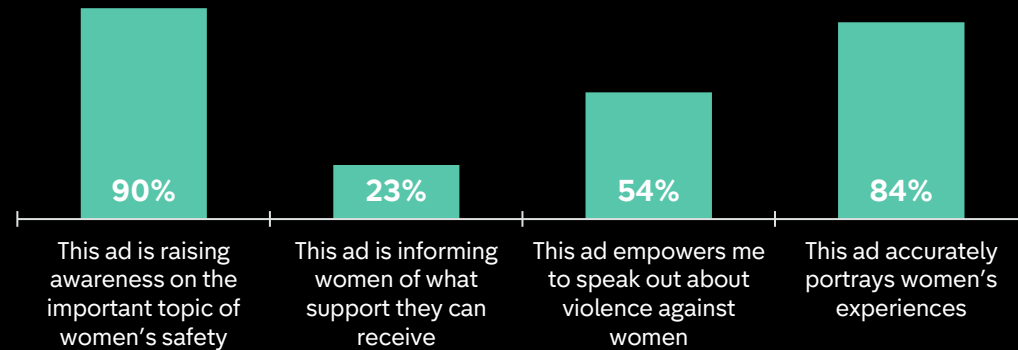
## ACTIONS

This ad is going a powerful job of encouraging people to speak up if they encounter any abuse against women in the future, with **nearly 8 in 10** saying they would do this after watching the ad.



## PERCEPTIONS

**9 in 10** people feel this ad is raising awareness on the topic of women's safety. **91% of 16-24s** liked the ad, noting that seeing a young man stand up for a women was refreshing rather than joining in with the behaviour.



Source: Core4 (base female: 244), Q: Please tell us how likely you are to do the following things after watching this ad. Q: Having now watched the ad, please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements...



It is important for brands to be conscious of how they are portraying women when stepping into the space of talking about women's safety.

When prioritising a message for people to change their behaviour and to consider how they can help others in situations of harassment or abuse, this is conveyed strongly when paired with a powerful creative that depicts authentic experiences.

93%

of 16-24s would now speak up if they encounter any abuse against women in the future after watching the ads

**Have A Word** is doing a powerful job at raising awareness and portraying real life experiences, whilst **Enough Is Enough** is doing a significant job at showing women what support they can receive if they experience this kind of abuse.

87%

of respondents agreed that the ad they watched is raising awareness on the important topics of women's safety

79%

of respondents agreed that the ad they watched accurately portrays women's experiences

Source: Core4 (base female: 488) , Q: Please tell us how likely you are to do the following things after watching this ad.

Q: Having now watched the ad, please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements...

Q: And thinking about the ad, please tell us anything you particularly liked and/or disliked about the ad.

# What does this mean for brands?

At Channel 4 we have a marketing with meaning spectrum, to help brands who are considering creating more purposeful advertising on that journey. So how does everything we've learnt about what it means to be a woman and women's safety impact brands, and where on the spectrum could brands get most involved?

**MORE BRANDS**

**LESS BRANDS**

## **SPREAD JOY**

*Okay, so the topic of harassment doesn't exactly sound joyful... but when it comes to representing women in a meaningful way, frame us as joyful, empowered.*

## **FACILITATE TOGETHERNESS**

*Focus on what unites us, not what divides us. Help society come together to understand that women's safety is everybody's problem and we need to improve it together*

## **REFLECT SOCIETY**

*Representation matters. It's time for brands to portray a diverse array of women and their stories within advertising. We shouldn't be relying on old fashioned tropes like sexualisation.*


## **EDUCATE YOURSELVES & OTHERS**

*Educate both internally (in your teams) and externally (to your consumers). Call out inappropriate behaviour in the workplace, listen to those who are struggling & provide support*

## **TAKE A STAND**

*Brands need actively distance themselves from those who have harmed women or presented misogynistic opinions. Brands can lead the way by creating positive working climates and outwardly demonstrate their support for victims*

# Summary



**01.** While being a woman has its challenges, women feel proud of who they are and associate womanhood with being empowered and strong. Women also recognise how intersectionality can play a role in their lived experiences.

**02.** Women recognise the progress that has been made in women's rights, however they still feel there is a long way to go and continue to feel fear of judgement, sexualisation, sexism and their safety throughout their day-to-day lives.

**03.** 54% of women have experienced some form of sexual harassment in public with many feeling a constant fear of attack. Women feel the need to take extra precautions to stay safe, which while necessary, puts the onus of keeping safe on women themselves rather than addressing the men who perpetrate these issues.

**04.** To make the world a safer place for women there needs to be an emphasis on better education, better justice for victims, male allyship and accurate portrayals of women in the media.

**05.** The key issue for women within media is how they are being portrayed. Women are often portrayed stereotypically; either being shown as overly sexualised or as a victim. Ads featuring women should show a range, including empowerment and portraying them in a way which lifts them up.

**06.** Women expect and invite brands to use their platforms to educate people and represent women authentically. By addressing these issues in campaigns, it will not only raise awareness but also encourage viewers to reflect on their own behaviours towards women. Ideally brands should ensure they're part of the change rather than engaging at surface level.



# Thank you

CORE 

 YOUTH

If you have been impacted by any of the issues mentioned in the report, you can find information & support at

<https://www.channel4.com/4viewers/help/abuses>

<https://origin-corporate.channel4.com/4viewers/help/crime>