

1 February 2022

Young People's RSE Poll 2021



Working together for quality
relationships and sex education

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Foreword

In March 2017, Parliament made it law for all secondary schools in England to teach Relationship and Sex Education, and Relationship Education in Primary Schools.

Schools rightly asked for time to properly implement this important new area of teaching, and the pressures of Coronavirus have understandably delayed full implementation by a further year. The pandemic has significantly disrupted all facets of school life and education, creating extraordinary challenges for young people, teachers, and parents alike. All have worked in impossible circumstances throughout, but that has had a considerable impact on the delivery of Relationship and Sex Education to a whole generation of school-aged children.

The campaign 'Everyone's Invited' revealed not only the nature and prevalence of sexual harassment and abuse experienced and perpetrated by young people, it also indicated the inadequacy of Relationship and Sex Education in the vast majority of school curriculums up and down the country. This was a problem identified by Ofsted's resulting 2021 report which identified the importance of well-sequenced, mandatory Relationship and Sex Education as a solution to mitigate the risks of toxic cultures of sexual abuse and harassment in schools.

Yet sadly, this important new report from the Sex Education Forum reveals that, far from seeing Relationship and Sex Education strengthened in schools, the teaching of this subject has deteriorated since the new law was put on the statute books. Even more concerning is that specific recommendations made in June 2021 by Ofsted, following the campaign by Everyone's Invited, have gone largely ignored.

This report shows that far too many young people are still missing out on learning the basics around what a healthy relationship looks like,

despite this being a mandatory part of the curriculum for primary and secondary schools across the country and a specific recommendation from Ofsted. It also identifies some worrying omissions: despite clear evidence that pornography plays a destructive role in young people's understanding of healthy relationships, more than 1 in 3 young people report they still learn nothing about this topic in school, despite being a specific recommendation by Ofsted's 2021 report.

Accessing high-quality RSE provision has been a longstanding difficulty for more than two decades, with insufficient investment in training and too few expert resources in schools. Drawing on the direct experiences and insights of young people, this report lays bare the true extent of the problem, and emphasises the urgency with which schools and Government must act in order to mitigate the risks and harms posed by a lack of quality Relationship and sex education.

This report also acknowledges the difficulty parents have experienced tackling the issues of Relationship and Sex Education at home, in the absence of face-to-face teaching in school during the pandemic, with around half of young people reporting no input from their parents or carers during lockdown. We know getting RSE right isn't easy, yet children are clear that they want their parents and carers to have more, open discussions with them. These conversations should go hand in hand with learning the basic building blocks of healthy relationships and respect for others at primary school, with seamless progression to secondary school.

It was the voices of young people in 2017 that highlighted the failure of RSE in our schools and it was cross-party support that led to a change in the law.

We worked together in Parliament to get this change in the law and we must work together again to ensure it is implemented as intended, particularly in light of the Ofsted findings following revelations by 'Everyone's Invited'.

The past two years have presented extraordinary challenges for children, and negotiating the online world, bullying, sexual harassment, and abusive relationships have only become more acute, not less. More than ever, children need schools to play their part in delivering high-quality Relationships and Sex Education, with the funding and resources to deliver an inclusive and comprehensive curriculum that Parliament has already put into law.

This report shows what is being delivered now is not good enough and we know our children need the best, more than ever before.



Rt Hon Maria Miller MP



Sarah Champion MP

Executive Summary

The dawn of statutory RSE

Legislation making Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) statutory in all schools in secondary schools in England and Relationships Education statutory in all primary schools came into effect in September 2020 and was expected to be followed in full since September 2021. Current Government guidance on Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) (2019) provides statutory guidance on what lessons should cover.

The Sex Education Forum monitored young people's experiences of RSE in the lead up to RSE becoming statutory, with extensive polls in **2018** and **2019**. This helped create a benchmark and an understanding of where the gaps were. With the legislation now expected to be followed in full we are once again getting a snapshot of young people's experiences in this new era – an era in which a comprehensive, developmental programme of RSE and Health Education is no longer optional, but a mandatory requirement – essentially an entitlement for all young people attending school in England.

Poll methodology

We commissioned Censuswide* to carry out a poll of 1,000 young people aged 16 and 17 years old and living in England. In total, 1002 young people completed the survey. The fieldwork took place between 29 October 2021 to 12 November 2021.

Of the young people participating, 346 identified as male, 626 identified as female and 30 identified as neither male or female. 551 of the respondents were 16 years old at the time of answering the survey questions and 451 were 17 years old.

The respondents were drawn from all nine regions of England with a mix of urban, small town and rural representation. 276 participants indicated that they are eligible for free school meals.

The poll questions were developed together with a group of Sex Education Forum partners. The questions are an evolution from the polls of 2018 and 2019, with some, such as question one, repeated verbatim to enable comparison. The range of topic questions has been extended for the 2021 poll and new questions added about the form that RSE takes at school and at home.

This report presents the data from the 2021 poll. Quotations from young people are displayed alongside the statistics, giving a flavour of the views of young people in response to two optional open questions included in the poll, which asked respondents what they feel would have improved their RSE from school and separately, from parents and carers.

A Poll of
1002
young people

Fieldwork took place between
29.10.2021
12.11.2021

Aged
16 & 17 yrs
in England

*Censuswide abide by and employ members of the Market Research Society which is based on the ESOMAR principles.

Summary of the main findings

The Relationships and Sex Education experienced by the young people sampled in 2021 is inconsistent in quality, with no overall improvement compared to the 2019 poll. Thirty-five percent of respondents rate the quality of their school RSE as 'good' or 'very good'. This is down 6 percentage points on the ratings from the 2019 Poll. While, 22% of respondents rate the quality of their school RSE as 'bad or 'very bad', an increase of 4 percentage points from 2019.

Young people's experiences of RSE from parents and carers is also highly variable. One in three (33%) say that RSE at home is 'good' or 'very good', but almost a quarter (23%) of young people report receiving no RSE from their parents and carers.

The poll asked young people to comment on the quantity of RSE they received during the Covid lockdowns during 2020. Almost half (49%) of young people said they had received no RSE from school across the Covid lockdowns. And a similar figure (48%) had received no RSE from parents or carers during this period.

When asked about which topics were covered in RSE a worrying picture is revealed showing that basic, mandatory aspects of the curriculum, such as healthy relationships, and how to access sexual health services are frequently missed.

- Close to 3 in 10 (28%) of young people had not learnt about 'how to tell if a relationship is healthy, including online', with a further 31% feeling they had not learnt enough about this topic.
- Almost 3 in 10 (29%) had learnt nothing about 'How to recognise when someone is being groomed for sexual exploitation'.
- More than a quarter (26%) had learnt nothing about the 'attitudes and behaviour of men and boys towards women and girls'

- Thirty-seven percent reported learning nothing about 'Power imbalances in relationships.'
- One in three (33%) didn't learn 'how to access local sexual health services', yet this is a basic, mandatory part of statutory RSE.

The topics which were the most neglected are areas that teachers frequently find challenging and seek support with.

- Forty-six percent of young people had learnt nothing about sexual pleasure
- Forty percent had learnt nothing about Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), a further 25% felt they had not learnt enough
- Thirty-nine percent had learnt nothing about 'gender identity and information relevant to people who are trans and non-binary'
- Thirty-seven percent had learnt nothing about 'Power imbalances in relationships'
- Thirty-six percent had learnt nothing about pornography

This year's poll asked young people to tell us more about the format of their RSE, for example did their RSE at school include opportunity for discussion and small group work? Did their parents give one 'big talk' or several smaller conversations?

We found that 'learning facts about a topic' is the most usual format for RSE over the last school year, closely followed by 'open discussions'. However, just one in five young people reported having had an 'opportunity to ask my questions and get answers' as part of their RSE at school over the last year. And only 14% of young people recalled 'being asked my opinion about how RSE could be improved'. Our poll asked young people to tell us what could have improved their RSE at school, and

their quotes throughout this report give a crystal clear message that young people want more RSE, with more depth, discussion and diversity.

For many young people (23%), there has been no RSE from parents and carers, but for those that did receive some it was more often one big talk or a few separate talks. Only 1 in 6 (17%) of young people have had RSE at home in the form of regular talks or conversations. Young people's message for parents is to start earlier, with more frequent, open and honest conversations.

The findings from this poll cannot be ignored. Some young people are receiving inadequate RSE at school and no RSE at all at home. One in five (20%) of the young people surveyed were clear that they do not have a trusted adult with whom they feel comfortable to discuss matters to do with relationships and sex. For those young people that do, the trusted adult is female in 3 out of 4 cases.



What is needed now?

RSE became statutory because it was the right thing to do. The legislation was a response to the overwhelming support for providing high quality RSE and the compelling international research evidence that comprehensive RSE would make a difference to the physical and mental health of children and young people, now and in the future. However, the reality is that high quality RSE depends on confident, competent educators. There is willingness from teachers and parents alike, but training and support is vital. Imaginative approaches are needed to help dads and male carers to get more involved in RSE. It is simply not possible to become skilled at RSE overnight. This is where bold and urgent action by Government is needed.

Our poll shows that many of the topics that form the new statutory curriculum are not being covered yet. This is hardly surprising given how little investment has been made in training teachers in RSE, with Ministers giving figures of around 1 in 5 schools having received Government funded training, with just £250,000

being spent on training in 2012-21 ([Response to Parliamentary Question](#) 21 September 2021). It is vital that the Government monitors the effectiveness of its own legislation, and where there are gaps that they listen to schools to understand them, and then address the barriers.

RSE is most effective when parents and teachers both play a role. Sadly, this report shows that some young people cannot rely on any adult to talk to them about relationships and sex, and they are asking the trusted adults in their lives – and their Government – to step up.

The Sex Education Forum will continue to champion the voices of children and young people and continue demanding that the necessary action is taken to make the promise of compulsory, quality, and comprehensive RSE a reality.

Lucy Emmerson

**Chief Executive,
Sex Education Forum**

1 February 2022

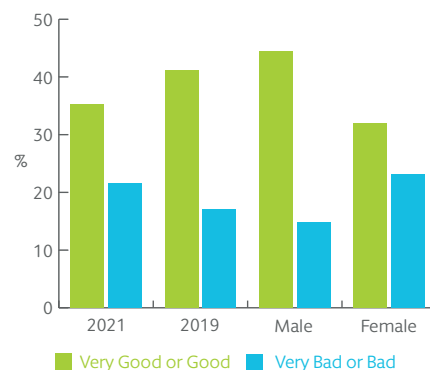


Part 1: Rate your RSE at school

Question 1: How would you rate the quality of the relationships and sex education you received at school as a whole?

Table 1: Data from Question 1

	All (2021)	2019 comparison	Male	Female	Identify as neither male or female
Number	1002	1000	346	626	30
Very good	10.48%	11.30%	14.74%	8.63%	0%
Good	24.85%	29.80%	29.77%	23.32%	0%
OK	42.11%	41.80%	40.75%	44.89%	33.33%
Bad	16.47%	13.20%	10.69%	18.53%	40.00%
Very bad	5.09%	3.90%	4.05%	4.63%	26.67%
Very good or good	35.33%	41.10%	44.51%	31.95%	0%
Very bad or bad	21.56%	17.10%	14.74%	23.16%	66.67%



Summary

- **35%** of respondents rate the quality of their school RSE as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ - down **6 percentage points** on the ratings from the 2019 Poll
- **22%** of all respondents rate the quality of their school RSE as ‘bad’ or ‘very bad’ - up **4 percentage points** on the ratings from the 2019 Poll
- **45%** of boys rated their RSE as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ compared with **32%** of girls
- **41%** of young people living in large, metropolitan urban areas rate their school RSE as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ compared with **30%** of young people living in small towns

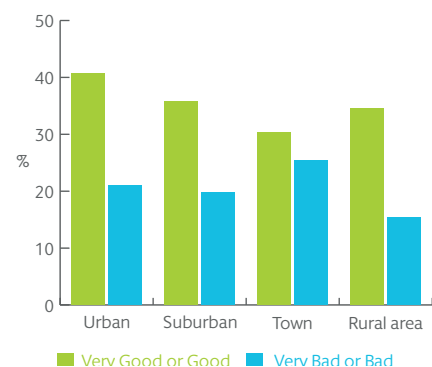
Male respondents are more likely to rate their RSE from school as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ than females: 45% of male respondents would rate the quality of the relationships and sex education they received at school as ‘very good’ or ‘good’. This is compared to 32% of female respondents. The sample size of young people identifying as neither male or female means we cannot provide robust comment on this data.

35%
of respondents rate the quality of their school RSE as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ - down 6 percentage points on the ratings from the 2019 Poll

22%
of respondents rate the quality of their school RSE as ‘bad’ or ‘very bad’ - up 4 percentage points on the ratings from the 2019 Poll

Table 2: Data from Question 1

	Urban (large metropolitan area)	Suburban (residential community outside a large metropolitan area)	Small town	Rural area
Number	280	324	320	678
Very good	15.36%	7.72%	9.38%	8.97%
Good	25.36%	28.09%	20.94%	25.64%
OK	38.21%	44.44%	44.38%	50.00%
Bad	17.86%	15.12%	18.13%	10.26%
Very bad	3.21%	4.63%	7.19%	5.13%
Very good or good	40.71%	35.80%	30.31%	34.62%
Very bad or bad	21.07%	19.75%	25.31%	15.38%



Summary

There are also some geographic and demographic variations. 41% of young people living in large metropolitan urban areas rate their school RSE as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ compared with 30% of young people living in small towns. North West (22%), South West (27%) and West Midlands (28%) were the three regions with the lowest % of young people rating their RSE as ‘good’ or ‘very good’, with South East (43%), Greater London (41%) and East of England (41%) getting the highest scores for this combined measure. Young people eligible for free school meals (42%) were more likely to rate their RSE as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ than their peers (32%).

Compared to a similar poll carried out in 2019, young people are more likely to rate their RSE as ‘bad’ or ‘very bad’ in 2021. Between the 2019 and 2021 data there is a drop in the percentage of young people describing their RSE as ‘good’ or ‘very good’.

“
I would be very uneducated if I didn’t research a lot myself.
”

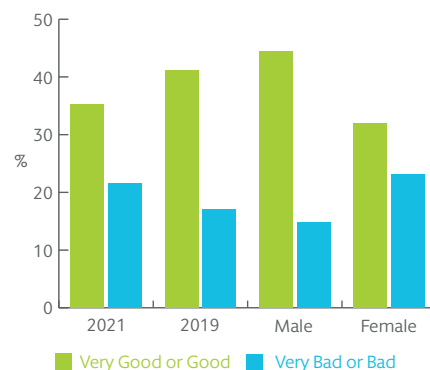
“
RSE would have been improved if there was an actual teacher who was a specialist instead of any random teacher just reading off a powerpoint.
”

Rate your RSE from parents and carers

Question 2: How would you rate the quality of the relationships and sex education you received from your parents / carers as a whole?

Table 3: Data from Question 2

	All (2021)	2019 comparison	Male	Female	Identify as neither male or female
Number	1002	1000	346	626	30
Very good	8.98%	17.10%	9.54%	8.95%	33.33%
Good	23.65%	30.40%	26.30%	23.00%	6.67%
OK	31.74%	34.00%	31.21%	31.95%	33.33%
Bad	8.28%	11.30%	6.65%	9.11%	10.00%
Very bad	3.89%	7.20%	2.89%	3.99%	13.33%
N/A I do not receive any relationships and sex education from parents / carers	23.45%	N/A	23.41%	23.00%	33.33%
Very good or good	32.63%	37.5%	35.84%	31.95%	10.00%
Very bad or bad	12.18%	18.5%	9.54%	13.10%	23.33%



Summary

- Almost **1 in 4 (23%)** young people stated that they receive no relationships and sex education from their parents or carers
- **1 in 3** young people rate their parent or carers contribution to their relationships and sex education as 'very good' or 'good'.

There is little difference between how girls and boys rate their parent or carers contribution to their RSE. The sample size for young people who identify as neither male or female is too small to enable robust comment on the data.

The quality of parent and carer RSE varies only very slightly between geographical regions. There is no marked difference between large, urban metropolitan areas and small towns, as there is for school RSE provision.



1 in 4
young people
receive no
relationships
& sex education
from their parents
or carers'

It would have been better...

“

...if [RSE] had been normalised from a younger age rather than the typical sitting down and having ‘the talk’ and then never discussing again.

”

“

...if my mum had discussed relationships with me more and my dad had been more open to the idea of me having a boyfriend.

”

“

...if my parents had explained abusive relationships and rights and wrongs.

”

“

...if they didn't just assume the school would cover every topic so never spoke about that kind of stuff.

”

“

...if they spoke to us about sex.

”

Part 2: What topics were covered at school? What was missed?

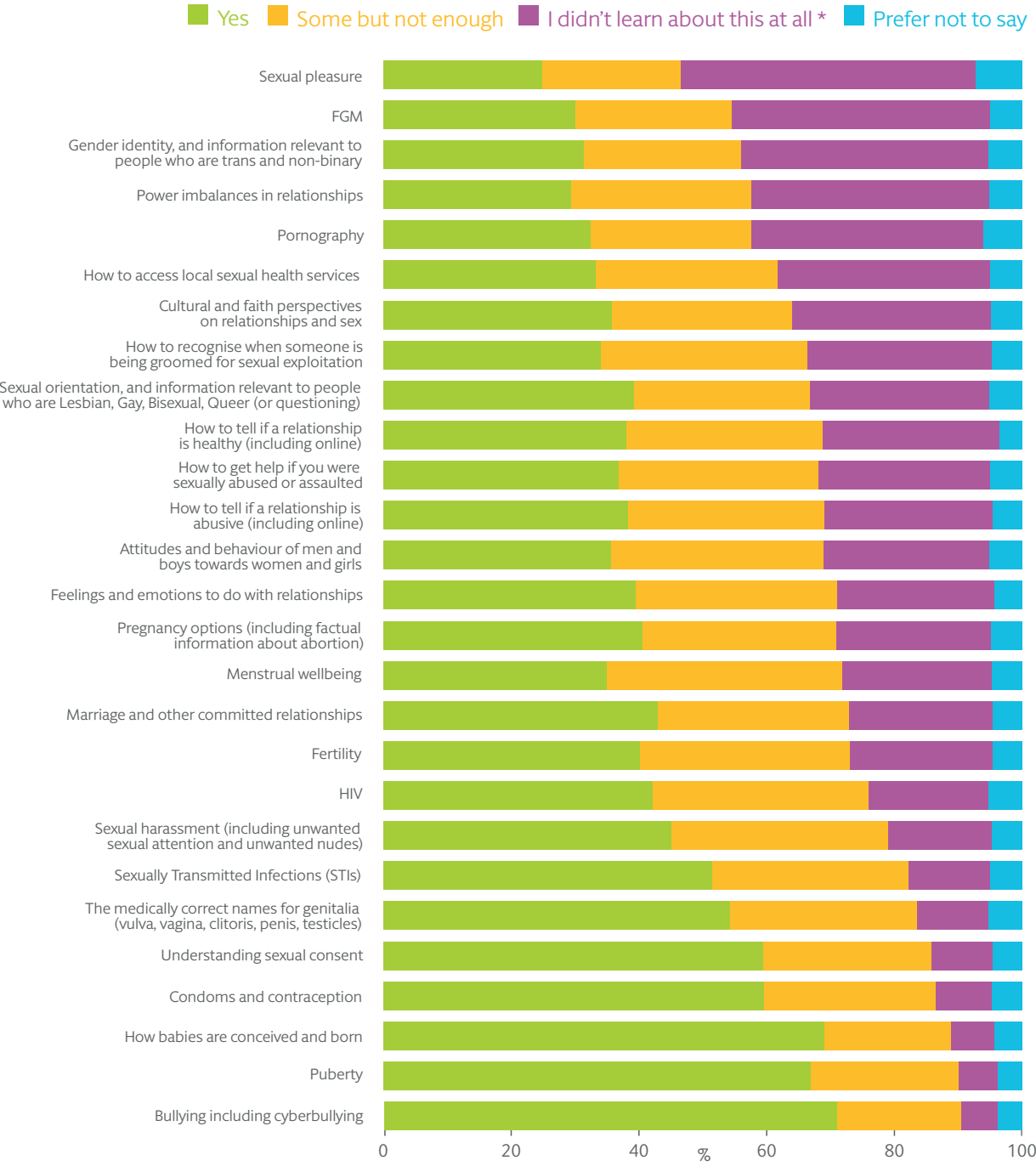
For question 3, respondents were asked about 27 different topic areas.

Question 3: At school, did you learn everything you feel you needed to about the following:

The response choices were 'yes', 'some but not enough', and 'I didn't learn about this at all'. The option to tick 'prefer not to say' was also available. See Appendix 1 for full percentages.

Chart 1: Data from Question 3

*The topics are listed in rank order, with the topic that respondents identified as having learnt least about at the top of the list.

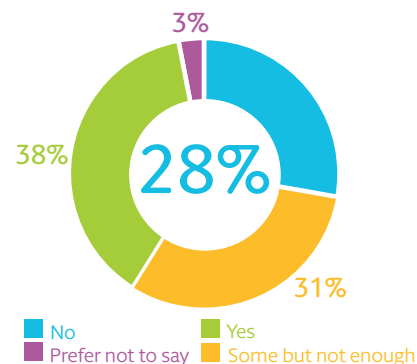


Summary

- **Close to 3 in 10 (28%)** of young people had not learnt about 'how to tell if a relationship is healthy, including online', with a further **31%** feeling they had not learnt enough about this topic. Almost **1 in 3 (29%)** had learnt nothing about 'How to recognise when someone is being groomed for sexual exploitation'.
- **More than a quarter (26%)** had learnt nothing about the 'attitudes and behaviour of men and boys towards women and girls' and **37%** of young people reported learning nothing about 'Power imbalances in relationships'.
- **A quarter** of young people had learnt nothing at school about feelings and emotions to do with relationships.
- **Over a third** of young people (**36%**) had not learnt about 'pornography' as part of their school RSE.
- 'Understanding sexual consent' appears to have become a more established curriculum topic, with only **9%** of young people saying they had learnt nothing at school about this.
- Sexual pleasure and FGM stand out as the topics most likely to be missed out of school RSE with close to half (**46%**) of respondents having learnt nothing about sexual pleasure and **40%** having learnt nothing about FGM.
- **1 in 3** young people (**33%**) had learnt nothing about 'how to access local sexual health services'.
- **40%** of respondents had learnt nothing about FGM, and a further **25%** felt they had not learnt enough.
- **1 in 4** young people responded that they had learnt all they felt they needed to about 'sexual pleasure', with a further **22%** stating that they had learnt 'some but not enough'. **46%** had not learnt anything about 'sexual pleasure'.
- **39%** of young people learnt nothing at school about gender identity, and information relevant to people who are trans and non-binary. Sexual orientation is more likely to be covered than gender identity, but **28%** of respondents said they had learnt nothing about this.
- Over **two-thirds** of young people are satisfied that they learnt enough about puberty, how babies are conceived and born and about bullying including cyberbullying.
- More than half (**54%**) of young people report that they had adequate education about the medically correct names for genitalia. **1 in 9** young people (**11%**) had not learnt about these terms (such as vulva, vagina, clitoris, penis, testicles) in their school RSE.

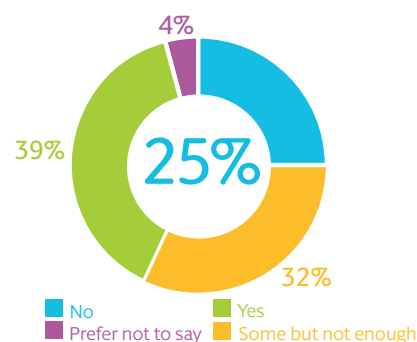
The data also shows considerable differences in how the male and female respondents answered the questions. Boys were more likely than girls to report that topics had been covered and adequately so. For example, 46% of boys compared to 31% of girls said that cultural and faith perspectives had been covered. 49% of boys compared to 33% of girls said they had learnt what they needed to about 'How to tell if a relationship is healthy (including online)'. There was little difference between boys and girls for some topics, including 'how a baby is conceived and born' (69% vs. 69%), and 'condoms and contraception' (61% vs. 59%).

Between 4% and 7% of respondents selected 'prefer not to say' for the topic-based questions. The 'prefer not to say' option was more likely to be chosen for the topics such as sexual pleasure and pornography, that ranked as least likely to be covered in school.



of young people had not learnt about 'how to tell if a relationship is healthy, including online'

“ They try too much to not talk about 'taboo' topics but that's exactly the issue, the less we speak on issues then the less educated everyone is on these topics. ”



of young people had learnt nothing at school about 'feelings and emotions to do with relationships'

What young people said would help...

“ More learning needed about when a relationship is becoming toxic, the warning signs as this would really help the younger generation. ”

“ RSE would be better if schools did more about things related to abuse instead of just teaching the biological facts about the body. ”

“ More education on casual sexual harassment, to stop the normalisation of it. ”

“ They avoided the conversation of LGBT and so when I figured out I was attracted to women I thought I was wrong for that. ”

“ Teach boys about girls rather than just girls about boys. ”

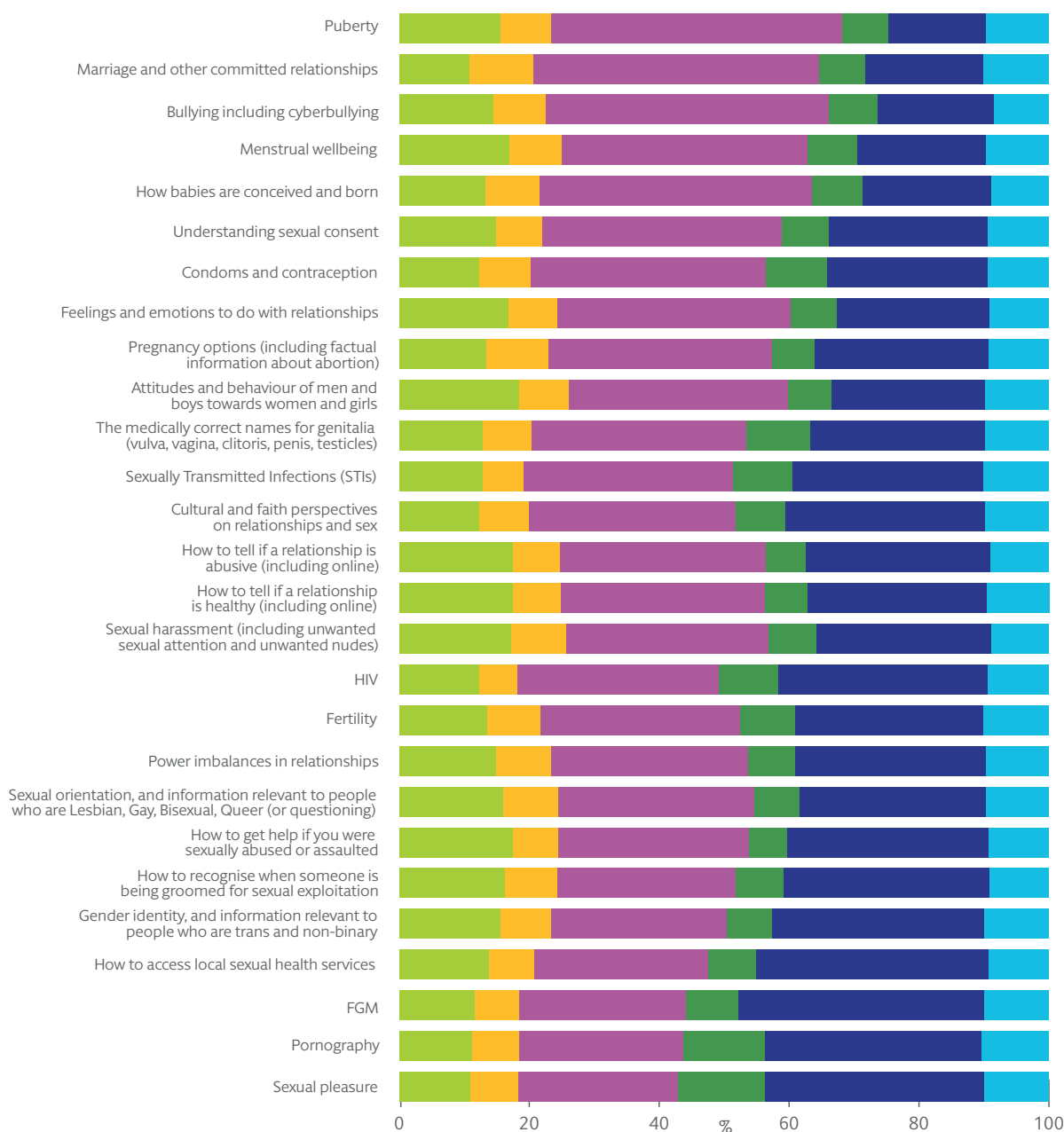
The timing of parent / carer RSE topics

Question 4 asked respondents to comment on the same 27 topic areas covered by question 3, but in relation to the usefulness of timing of any learning that took place with parents or carers. For each topic the question was:

Question 4: Did you learn about the following topics from your parents / carers at the most useful time for you?:

The response choices are displayed in the key within Chart 2 below. See Appendix 2 for full percentages.

Chart 2: Data from Question 4



Summary

- Across all topics, young people were more likely to want to have learnt about it from their parent or carer **earlier** rather than later than they did.
- The highest demand for earlier coverage centred on a cluster of relationship topics, with **17%** of respondents wanting to have learnt earlier about 'How to get help if you were sexually abused or assaulted'; 'How to tell if a relationship is abusive (including online)'; 'How to tell if a relationship is healthy (including online)'; and 'Sexual harassment'. This was topped by **18%** wanting to have learnt from their parents or carers earlier about 'Attitudes and behaviour of men and boys towards women and girls'.
- At least **1 in 3** young people felt that their parents and carers were providing RSE at 'the right time' on several core topics ranging from 'feelings and emotions to do with relationships' (**36%**) to 'understanding sexual consent' (**37%**).
- Puberty was the topic which ranked highest for being covered 'at the right time', with **45%** of young people reflecting on their parental RSE in this way.
- Pornography, FGM, sexual pleasure and 'how to access local sexual health services' are the topics that were least often covered 'at the right time' by parents and carers.
- Across the majority of topics, girls were more likely than boys to rate their parental RSE input as having been 'at the right time'. For example, **49%** of girls responded that puberty had been covered 'at the right time', compared with **38%** of boys. Boys were more likely than girls to say that they wouldn't have wanted to ever learn about a particular topic at home.

Across
all topics



young people
were more likely to want
to have learnt about it
from their parent or carer
earlier
rather than later

1 in 3

young people
felt that their parents
and carers were
providing RSE at
'the right time'



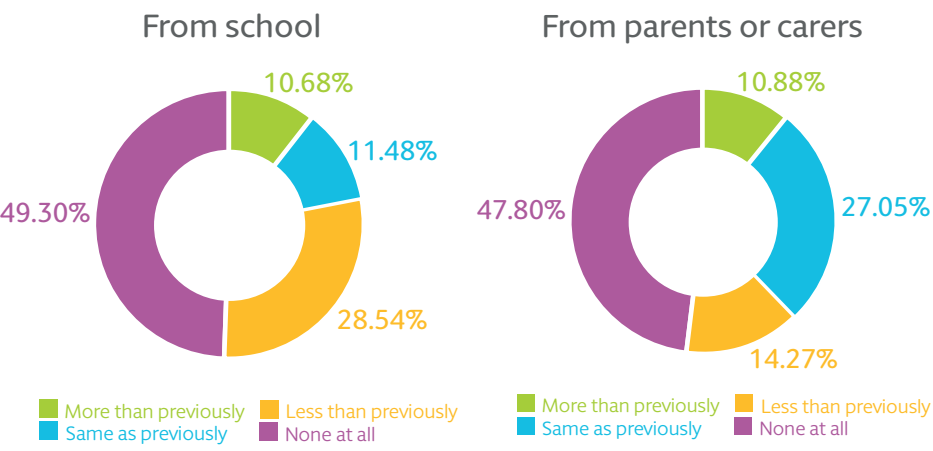
Part 3: Covid and RSE

Poll questions 5 and 6 probed the impact of the Covid-19 lockdowns on the quantity of RSE received. A separate question was posed about RSE at school and from parents or carers. The questions were as follows:

Question 5: How much RSE (Relationships and Sex Education) did you receive from school across the Covid lockdowns?

Question 6: How much RSE did you receive from parents or carers across the Covid lockdowns?

Pie chart 1: Data from questions 5 and 6



Summary

- Nearly **half (49%)** of young people received no Relationships and Sex Education from school across the Covid lockdowns, with many more (a further **29%**) receiving less than they had previously
- Nearly **half (48%)** of young people receive no Relationships and Sex Education from parents or carers across the Covid lockdowns
- 1 in 9 (11%)** young people experienced an increase in RSE from school, and the same proportion experienced an increase in RSE from home

Half of young people received no Relationships and Sex Education from school across the Covid Lockdowns

1 in 9 young people experienced an increase in RSE from school

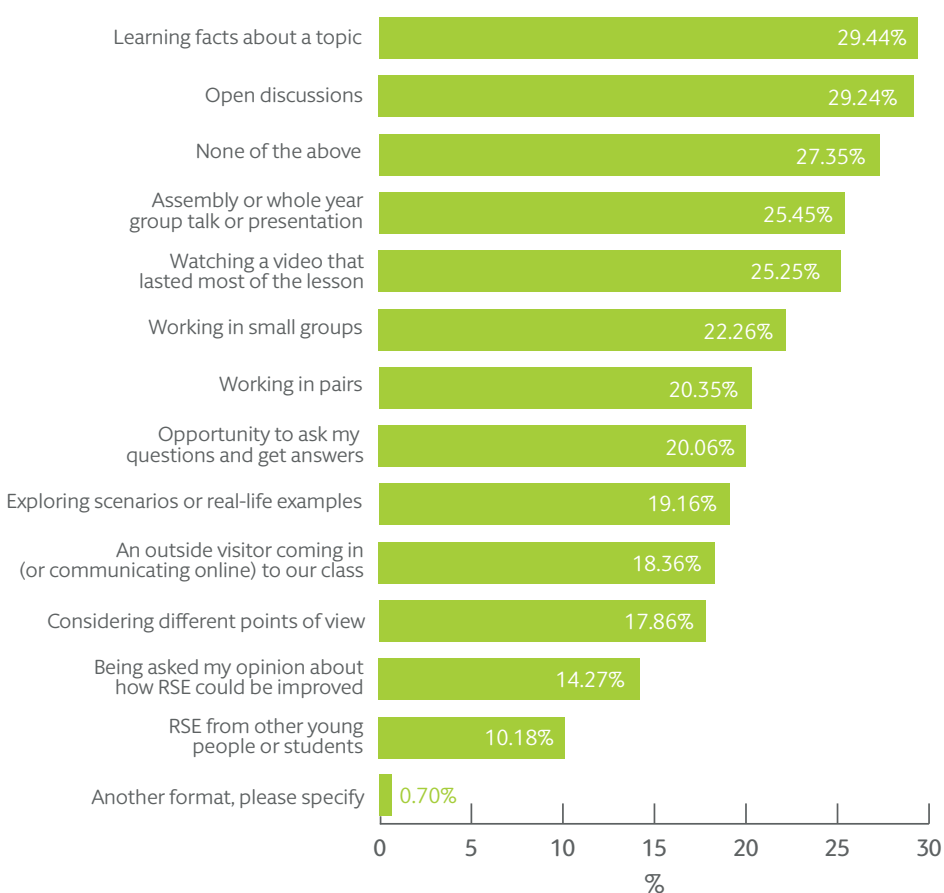
“Representation of the LGBTQ community, sexual assault and power in relationships are all vital things that need to be taught before leaving secondary school, because even before leaving I had experienced everything I didn’t know anything about yet.”

Part 4: The format of RSE at school

Poll question 7 was designed to explore the range and frequency of formats of RSE received at school. The time frame was limited to ‘over the last school year’. The question wording was:

Question 7: At school, over the last school year, have you received RSE in any of the following formats? Tick all that apply

Chart 3: Data from questions 7



Summary

- Just **1 in 5 (20%)** young people reported having had an ‘opportunity to ask my questions and get answers’ as part of their RSE over the last year
- Only **1 in 7 (14%)** young people recalled ‘being asked my opinion about how RSE could be improved’ over the last year
- ‘Learning facts about a topic’ (**29%**) is the most usual format for RSE over the last school year, closely followed by ‘open discussions’ (**29%**)
- **27%** of respondents had not experienced any of the RSE formats listed over the last school year
- A quarter of young people have experienced watching a video that lasted most of the lesson as part of their RSE received over the past year



‘Learning facts about a topic’ is the most usual format for RSE over the last school year, closely followed by



“ at my school certain questions aren’t allowed. ”

“ I think talking in smaller groups or individually would be better as people would open up instead of feeling embarrassed. ”

We want more RSE at school

“
More time to develop an understanding of it all, instead of rushing the whole subject to get it over and done with.
”

More time

More talking

More honesty

More normal

More diverse

More in-depth

More open

More non-judgemental

More about relationships

...We want more RSE!



Part 5: Trusted adults for discussions

Question 8 was designed to ascertain the extent to which young people have a trusted adult with whom they can discuss matters to do with relationships and sex. This was not limited to parents or carers – it could include someone else close to them.

Question 8: Do you have a trusted adult: a parent/carer or someone else close to you whom you feel comfortable to discuss matters to do with relationships and sex?

Table 4: Data from questions 8

	All (2021)	Male	Female	Identify as neither male or female
<i>Number</i>	1002	346	626	30
Yes (a female adult)	44.51%	24.86%	56.23%	26.67%
Yes (a male adult)	9.48%	22.83%	2.56%	0.00%
Yes (an adult who does not identify as male or female)	4.19%	6.65%	2.88%	3.33%
No	19.86%	18.79%	19.33%	43.33%
Not sure	12.48%	13.87%	11.34%	20.00%
Prefer not to say	9.48%	13.01%	7.67%	6.67%
Yes combined	58.18%	54.34%	61.66%	30.00%

Summary

- 1 in 5 (20%) young people were clear that they do not have a trusted adult with whom they feel comfortable to discuss matters to do with relationships and sex. A further 12% were not sure
- 58% of young people have a trusted adult with whom they feel comfortable to discuss matters to do with relationships and sex. This was lower for boys (54%) than girls (62%)
- The trusted adult referred to was female in over three-quarters (77%) of the cases
- Female respondents who have a trusted adult were far more likely to have a female trusted adult than a male trusted adult (56% vs. 3%)
- Male respondents with a trusted adult were more evenly split between female and male adults (25% vs. 23%)

1 in 5
young people
were clear that they do not have a trusted adult with whom they feel comfortable to discuss matters to do with relationships and sex



58%
of young people
have a trusted adult with whom they feel comfortable to discuss matters to do with relationships and sex

The trusted adult
referred to was female in **3/4** of the cases

Part 6: Who provides RSE at home

RSE at home might be provided by one parent or carer or more than one parent or carer. It might also be provided from someone else in the home environment. Question 9a aimed to understand the variety of inputs that might be involved in RSE at home.

Question 9a: Who was the RSE you received with?

Table 5: Data from Question 9a

	All (2021)	Male	Female	Identify as neither male or female
<i>Number</i>	742	243	483	16
With one parent or carer	48.79%	40.74%	53.21%	37.50%
With two or more parents or carers	19.81%	22.22%	18.22%	31.25%
From someone else not a parent or carer	14.96%	16.46%	14.29%	12.50%
From parents and someone else	16.44%	20.58%	14.29%	18.75%

Summary

- For almost half (49%) of young people receiving RSE at home it is provided by one parent or carer
- Two or more parents or other people at home provide RSE for 36% of those young people receiving RSE at home

“

If they talked about it more often and more casually instead of making a big deal out of just having a conversation.

”

36%
of young people receive RSE at home by two+ parents or other people



The frequency of RSE at home

To deepen our understanding around the qualities of RSE received at home, question 9b gave a list of options for frequency of RSE related talks and conversations experienced at home. The question wording was as follows:

Question 9b: Overall, while growing up, what sort of RSE have you received at home, if any?

Table 6: Data from Question 9b

	All (2021)	Male	Female	Identify as neither male or female
Number	742	243	483	16
No talks or conversations	25.95%	29.77%	22.84%	46.67%
One or two 'big talks' or conversations	22.75%	26.59%	20.93%	16.67%
A few separate talks or conversations	34.33%	30.35%	36.74%	30.00%
Regular talks or conversations	16.97%	13.29%	19.49%	6.67%

Summary

- Over 1 in 4 (**26%**) young people report having had no talks or conversations at home about RSE while growing up
- Just over a third (**34%**) of young people have experienced RSE at home as a few separate talks or conversations
- Around **1 in 6 (17%)** young people have had RSE at home in the form of regular talks or conversations
- Boys are less likely than girls to have had regular talks (**13% vs. 19%**) and were more likely to have had either no talks (**30% vs. 23%**) or one or two 'big talks' (**27% vs. 21%**).

1 in 4



young people report having had no talks or conversations at home about RSE while growing up



of young people have experienced RSE at home as a few separate talks or conversations

17%

of young people have had RSE at home in the form of regular talks or conversations

“
If they tried to teach
me instead of just
waiting for me to find
out at school
”

“
Just small pieces of
advice to guide me
along the right path
”

“
[Parents] actually
knowing that they
need to talk about
this stuff
”

We asked
“What do you feel would
have improved your RSE from
parents or carers”
Young people said...

“
I hate how everything
is seen as forbidden to
talk about, I would have
liked to have a lot more
conversations
”

“
More open
conversations about
sex without getting
told off
”

We want more RSE at home

We asked

“What do you feel would have improved your RSE from parents or carers”

Young people said...

- More of anything
- More comfortable
- More trusted
- More conversation
- More inclusive
- More frequent
- More talking
- More personal
- More when I was younger
- More honest
- More aware of men's behaviour towards women
- ...Just more!



Appendix 1

Table below shows full percentages for each of the 27 topics referenced on page 11.

Question 3: At school, did you learn everything you feel you needed to about the following?

Topic	Yes	Some but not enough	I didn't learn about this at all *	Prefer not to say
Sexual pleasure	24.75%	21.76%	46.21%	7.29%
FGM	29.94%	24.55%	40.42%	5.09%
Gender identity, and information relevant to people who are trans and non-binary	31.34%	24.65%	38.62%	5.39%
Power imbalances in relationships	29.34%	28.24%	37.23%	5.19%
Pornography	32.34%	25.25%	36.23%	6.19%
How to access local sexual health services	33.23%	28.44%	33.33%	4.99%
Cultural and faith perspectives on relationships and sex	35.73%	28.24%	31.14%	4.89%
How to recognise when someone is being groomed for sexual exploitation	33.93%	32.34%	28.94%	4.79%
Sexual orientation, and information relevant to people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer (or questioning)	39.12%	27.64%	28.04%	5.19%
How to tell if a relationship is healthy (including online)	38.02%	30.74%	27.64%	3.59%
How to get help if you were sexually abused or assaulted	36.83%	31.24%	26.85%	5.09%
How to tell if a relationship is abusive (including online)	38.32%	30.64%	26.45%	4.59%
Attitudes and behaviour of men and boys towards women and girls	35.63%	33.23%	26.45%	5.19%
Feelings and emotions to do with relationships	39.42%	31.64%	24.55%	4.39%
Pregnancy options (including factual information about abortion)	40.52%	30.34%	24.25%	4.89%
Menstrual wellbeing	34.93%	36.83%	23.55%	4.69%
Marriage and other committed relationships	42.91%	29.94%	22.46%	4.69%
Fertility	40.12%	32.83%	22.36%	4.69%
HIV	42.12%	33.83%	18.66%	5.39%
Sexual harassment (including unwanted sexual attention and unwanted nudes)	45.01%	33.93%	16.27%	4.79%
Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)	51.40%	30.84%	12.77%	4.99%
The medically correct names for genitalia (vulva, vagina, clitoris, penis, testicles)	54.19%	29.34%	11.18%	5.29%
Understanding sexual consent	59.38%	26.45%	9.48%	4.69%
Condoms and contraception	59.48%	26.95%	8.78%	4.79%
How babies are conceived and born	68.96%	19.86%	6.79%	4.39%
Puberty	66.87%	23.15%	6.19%	3.79%
Bullying including cyberbullying	70.86%	19.56%	5.79%	3.79%

Appendix 2

Table below shows full percentages for each of the 27 topics referenced on page 14.

Question 4: Did you learn about the following topics from your parents / carers at the most useful time for you?:

Topic	I would have liked to have learnt about this earlier	I would have liked to have learnt about this later	I learnt about this at the right time	I wouldn't have wanted to ever learn about this at home	N/A I've not learned about this at home	Prefer not to say
Puberty	15.57%	7.68%	44.81%	7.19%	15.07%	9.68%
Marriage and other committed relationships	10.78%	9.78%	44.01%	7.09%	18.16%	10.18%
Bullying, including cyberbullying	14.47%	7.98%	43.71%	7.49%	17.86%	8.48%
Menstrual wellbeing	16.87%	8.18%	37.82%	7.58%	19.86%	9.68%
How babies are conceived and born	13.17%	8.38%	41.92%	7.88%	19.76%	8.88%
Understanding sexual consent	14.87%	7.09%	36.83%	7.29%	24.45%	9.48%
Condoms and contraception	12.28%	7.88%	36.23%	9.38%	24.85%	9.38%
Feelings and emotions to do with relationships	16.67%	7.58%	36.03%	6.99%	23.55%	9.18%
Pregnancy options (including factual information about abortion)	13.37%	9.58%	34.33%	6.69%	26.65%	9.38%
Attitudes and behaviour of men and boys towards women and girls	18.36%	7.68%	33.83%	6.59%	23.75%	9.78%
The medically correct names for genitalia (vulva, vagina, clitoris, penis, testicles)	12.77%	7.58%	33.03%	9.88%	26.85%	9.88%
Sexually Transmitted Infections	12.77%	6.29%	32.24%	9.28%	29.24%	10.18%
Cultural and faith perspectives on relationships and sex	12.18%	7.68%	31.84%	7.78%	30.64%	9.88%
How to tell if a relationship is abusive (including online)	17.47%	7.19%	31.74%	6.09%	28.44%	9.08%
How to tell is a relationship is healthy (including online)	17.37%	7.39%	31.44%	6.59%	27.64%	9.58%
Sexual harassment (including unwanted sexual attention and unwanted nudes)	17.17%	8.48%	31.14%	7.39%	26.85%	8.98%
HIV	12.28%	5.89%	30.94%	9.28%	32.14%	9.48%
Fertility	13.47%	8.18%	30.84%	8.38%	29.04%	10.08%
Power imbalances in relationships	14.87%	8.48%	30.24%	7.29%	29.44%	9.68%
Sexual orientation, and information relevant to people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer (or questioning)	15.97%	8.48%	30.14%	6.99%	28.64%	9.78%
How to get help if you were sexually abused or assaulted	17.47%	6.99%	29.24%	5.99%	30.94%	9.38%
How to recognise when someone is being groomed for sexual exploitation.	16.17%	8.18%	27.45%	7.29%	31.74%	9.18%
Gender identity, and information relevant to people who are trans and non-binary	15.57%	7.68%	27.15%	6.89%	32.73%	9.98%
How to access local sexual health services	13.67%	7.09%	26.65%	7.39%	35.83%	9.38%
Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)	11.58%	6.89%	25.55%	8.08%	37.92%	9.98%
Pornography	11.18%	7.19%	25.35%	12.48%	33.43%	10.38%
Sexual pleasure	10.88%	7.39%	25.35%	13.47%	33.73%	9.98%

About Us

The Sex Education Forum is the voice of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in England. As a national charity, we promote and protect the physical and mental health of children and young people by improving their access to RSE. We do this by:

- Bringing together our 70+ partners and wider stakeholders to share best practice and research and monitor the provision of RSE in England.
- Working alongside policy makers and engaging with Parliamentarians to raise the profile of RSE and ensure effective delivery.
- Supporting educators with high quality training, resources and a membership scheme, so they can be competent and confident providers of RSE, in partnership with parents, carers, children and young people.
- Gathering and utilising the international evidence for effective RSE to inform policy and practice and advance understanding of the benefits of RSE.

Working together is central to everything we do. Partners of the Sex Education are organisations or individuals with a strategic interest or specialist expertise in RSE and are in agreement with our shared values and principles for evidence-based RSE.

We believe that RSE should be relevant and meet the needs of children and young people, and actively involve them as participants, advocates and evaluators in developing good quality provision.

We are particularly concerned to address the needs of children and young people most at risk of missing out on RSE and of poor sexual health and relationships outcomes. Comprehensive and inclusive RSE provides scope to explore and address numerous equity and diversity issues.

Sex Education Forum has consulted with young people frequently throughout our 35-year history. Having established ourselves as an independent charity in April 2021 we now seek to further develop the inclusion of children and young people in the next chapter of our governance and activities.

To find out more and join our RSE community visit:
www.sexeducationforum.org.uk

