

# Young people's RSE poll 2019

## Introduction

Legislation making Relationships and Sex Education statutory in all schools in England was passed in 2017 and schools must follow the new requirements set out in updated Government guidance from September 2020.

In the lead up to RSE becoming compulsory we are monitoring young people's experience of RSE so that we have a benchmark and an understanding of where there are gaps.

For the second year in a row, the Sex Education Forum commissioned Censuswide to carry out a poll of 1000 young people aged 16 and 17 years old.

In total 1000 young people participated in the survey, including 371 males, 671 females, 6 preferred not to say and 6 other. Participants were either 16 years old (453 individuals) or 17 years old (547 individuals).

Just over a fifth (21%) indicated that they are eligible for free school meals. 8% of respondents stated that they have a disability and 10% that they have a special educational need.

The survey ran between 28 October 2019 and 6 November 2019 and covered all 9 geographical regions in England.

Some of the poll questions were identical to the questions asked in the 2018 survey.

New questions were introduced this year focusing on parents as providers of RSE.

## Part 1: Rate your RSE

**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 Q1

		Male	Female	16 years old	17 years old
	1000	371	617	453	547
Very good	113	47	65	53	60
	11.30%	12.67%	10.53%	11.70%	10.97%
Good	298	116	177	135	163
	29.80%	31.27%	28.69%	29.80%	29.80%
OK	418	159	257	192	226
	41.80%	42.86%	41.65%	42.38%	41.32%
Bad	132	36	93	55	77
	13.20%	9.70%	15.07%	12.14%	14.08%
Very bad	39	13	25	18	21
	3.90%	3.50%	4.05%	3.97%	3.84%

- **41% of respondents rate the quality of their school RSE as 'good' or 'very good'**
- **17% of all respondents rate the quality of their school RSE as 'bad' or 'very bad'**

**Male respondents more likely to rate their RSE from school as 'good' or 'very good' than females:** 44% 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 39% of female respondents.

There is very little difference between 16 and 17 year olds in how they rate their RSE.

There are regional variations, for example only 1% of respondents rate their RSE as 'very bad' in Yorkshire and Humber, and 15% from this region selected 'very good', placing Yorkshire and Humber ahead of other areas.

Compared to a similar poll carried out in 2018 there is no change in the percentage of young people rating their RSE as 'bad' or 'very bad'. Fewer respondents rated their RSE as 'good' or 'very good' in the 2019 poll (41% compared to 45% in 2018).

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

For question two, respondents were asked about 22 different topic areas. For each topic the question was:

**'At school, did you learn everything you needed to about the following':**

The response choices were 'yes', 'no' or 'I didn't learn about this at all'.

Sexual pleasure and FGM were the two topics young people were least likely to have learnt anything about. Cyberbullying and bullying are the two topics that were most likely to have been covered

Table 2: Data from question 2

Topic	Answered 'I didn't learn about this at all'	Answered 'no' to question 'did you learn all you needed to about...'	Answered 'yes' to question 'did you learn all you needed to about...'
Sexual pleasure	31%	38%	31%
FGM	29%	35%	36%
Pornography	24%	33%	43%
How to recognise when someone is being groomed for sexual exploitation	19%	27%	54%
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans gender (LGBT+) issues	18%	28%	54%
How to tell if a relationship is abusive	18%	27%	56%
How to tell is a relationship is healthy	17%	30%	53%
How to get help if you were sexually abused or assaulted	16%	26%	57%
Marriage and other committed relationships	15%	26%	59%
How to access local sexual health services	14%	27%	58%
Fertility	13%	29%	58%
Pregnancy options (including abortion)	11%	22%	70%
HIV	11%	23%	66%
Gender equality	10%	23%	67%
Giving and getting sexual consent	8%	12%	80%

STIs	6%	16%	78%
The medically correct names for genitalia (vulva, vagina, penis, testicles)	5%	11%	85%
Condoms and contraception	4%	10%	86%
How babies are conceived and born	3%	6%	90%
Puberty	3%	10%	87%
Bullying	3%	10%	87%
Cyberbullying	3%	9%	88%

- The topics that had been covered **most adequately** were **how babies are conceived and born**, cyberbullying, bullying, puberty, condoms and contraception, STIs, the medically correct terms for genitalia and STIs.
- The topics where respondents were **least likely to say they had learnt all they needed** to at school were **sexual pleasure, pornography and FGM**.
- **Less than 6 in 10 young people learnt all they needed** to at school about **healthy relationships, abusive relationships**, grooming and how to get help if you were sexually abused or assaulted.
- **18% of young people learnt nothing about LGBT+ issues at school**, and a further 28% said they had not learnt all that they needed to about LGBT+ issues.

## Part 3: Parents and RSE

**Question 3: 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 Q3

		Male	Female	16 years old	17 years old
	1000	371	617	453	547
Very good	171	57	111	71	100
	17.10%	15.36%	17.99%	15.67%	18.28%
Good	304	125	177	143	161
	30.40%	33.69%	28.69%	31.57%	29.43%
OK	340	137	199	158	182
	34.00%	36.93%	32.25%	34.88%	33.27%
Bad	113	28	83	45	68
	11.30%	7.55%	13.45%	9.93%	12.43%
Very bad	72	24	47	36	36
	7.20%	6.47%	7.62%	7.95%	6.58%

- **48% of respondents rate the quality of their RSE from parents/carers as 'good' or 'very good'**
- **19% of respondents rate the quality of their RSE from parent/carers as 'bad' or 'very bad'**

**47% female respondents rate their RSE from parents/carers as 'good' or 'very good' compared with 49% of males.** There are regional variations, for example with North East, North West and Yorks and Humber having over 50% of respondents rating their parental RSE as 'good' or 'very good'. only 1% of respondents rate their RSE as 'very bad' in Yorkshire and Humber, and 15% from this region selected 'very good', placing Yorkshire and Humber ahead of other areas.

## Part 4: What topics were covered at home? What was missed?

For question four, respondents were asked about 22 different topic areas. For each topic the question was:

**'From your parents/carers, did you learn everything you needed to about the following':**

The response choices were 'yes', 'no' or 'I didn't learn about this at all'.

Table 4: Data from question 4

Topic	Answered 'I didn't learn about this at all'		Answered 'no' to question 'did you learn all you needed to about...'		Answered 'yes' to question 'did you learn all you needed to about...'	
	School	Parents	School	Parents	School	Parents
Sexual pleasure	31%	30%	38%	40%	31%	30%
FGM	29%	31%	35%	38%	36%	31%
Pornography	24%	26%	33%	36%	43%	38%
How to recognise when someone is being groomed for sexual exploitation	19%	22%	27%	27%	54%	51%
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans gender (LGBT+) issues	18%	21%	28%	31%	54%	49%
How to tell if a relationship is abusive	18%	18%	27%	25%	56%	57%
How to tell is a relationship is healthy	17%	16%	30%	22%	53%	62%
How to get help if you were sexually abused or assaulted	16%	20%	26%	25%	57%	55%
Marriage and other committed relationships	15%	10%	26%	15%	59%	74%
How to access local sexual health services	14%	24%	27%	33%	58%	43%

Fertility	13%	20%	29%	29%	58%	51%
Pregnancy options (inc. abortion)	11%	18%	22%	24%	70%	58%
HIV	11%	21%	23%	32%	66%	47%
Gender equality	10%	15%	23%	20%	67%	66%
Giving and getting sexual consent	8%	17%	12%	20%	80%	63%
STIs	6%	20%	16%	27%	78%	53%
The medically correct names for genitalia (vulva, vagina, penis, testicles)	5%	19%	11%	29%	85%	52%
Condoms and contraception	4%	18%	10%	19%	86%	64%
How babies are conceived and born	3%	14%	6%	17%	90%	69%
Puberty	3%	9%	10%	13%	87%	78%
Bullying	3%	8%	10%	13%	87%	79%
Cyberbullying	3%	12%	9%	20%	88%	68%

- **Parents are more likely than school to have covered 'marriage and other committed relationships' and how to tell if a relationship is healthy or abusive.**  
Nearly three quarters (74%) of young people said they had learnt all they needed to from their parents about 'marriage and other committed relationships',
- **Young people are more likely to have learnt about 'how babies are conceived and born' from school than home,** with 14% of young people not having learnt about this from parents/carers at all (compared with 3% who didn't learn this at school).
- **Nearly 1 in 5 (19%) young people had not learnt the medically correct names for genitalia from parents/carers, compared to just 1 in 20 (5%) who had not learnt this at school**
- **Condoms, contraception and STIs are topics missed out by around a fifth of parents/carers compared with 1 in 20 respondents not learning about these topics at school.**
- **9% of young people had not learnt anything about puberty from their parents/carers.**

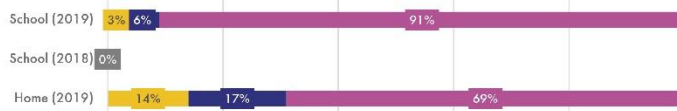
# Appendix 1: Poll data at a glance

"I didn't learn about this at all"

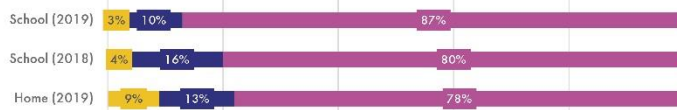
"No, I didn't learn everything I needed"

"Yes, I learned everything I needed"

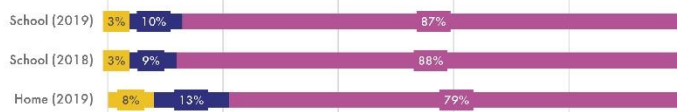
## How babies are born and conceived



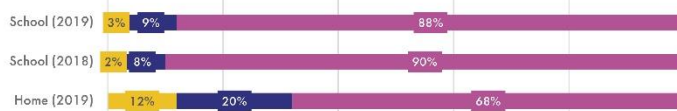
## Puberty



## Bullying



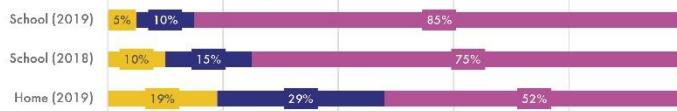
## Cyberbullying



## Condoms & contraception



## The medically correct name for genitalia



## STIs



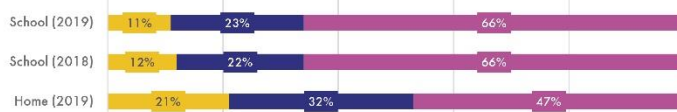
## Giving and getting sexual consent



## Gender equality



## HIV



## Pregnancy options (including abortion)



## Fertility



## How to access local sexual health services



## Marriage and other committed relationships



## How to get help if sexually abused or assaulted



## How to tell if a relationship is healthy



## Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Trans (LGBT+) issues



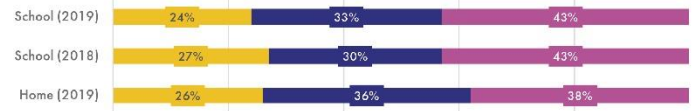
## How to tell if a relationship is abusive



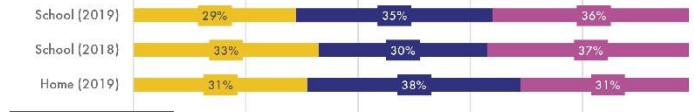
## How to recognise when someone is being groomed for sexual exploitation



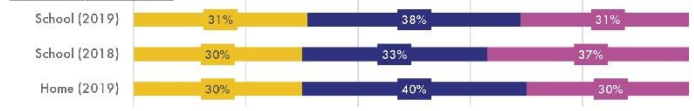
## Pornography



## FGM



## Sexual pleasure





## Acknowledgments

With thanks to the young people completing the survey, and their families for supporting them to do so.

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The Sex Education Forum is the leading voice on RSE in England and is a national collaboration of organisations and individuals committed to improving sex and relationships education for children and young people. The Sex Education Forum is part of the National Children's Bureau.

Email: [sexedforum@ncb.org.uk](mailto:sexedforum@ncb.org.uk) Website: [www.sexeducationforum.org.uk](http://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk)



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