

# MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY – GENDER STEREOTYPES

Gender stereotypes and rigid gender roles are harmful to everyone - both women and men.

Within the media and popular discourse the term “**toxic masculinity**” is sometimes used to describe certain norms of masculine behaviour in North American and European culture, which can be harmful to both men and wider society. Toxic masculinity might be used to describe traits such as men being strong and silent and not expressing emotions (which can have harmful impacts on men’s mental health), misogyny, homophobia, violence, binge drinking etc.

Stereotypical views of femininity are equally as harmful. The stereotype of women as passive, weak and domestic can restrict their employment options and autonomy, and they are fetishized and targeted for sexual assault and exploitation.

## **Attitudes to gender roles and to violence against women**

### **Adults’ views**

Scottish Social Attitudes Surveys show that stereotypical attitudes towards gender continue to exist in Scotland, and that holding these views can be associated with holding views that are more permissive towards certain forms of violence against women. Those with stereotypical gender attitudes are less likely to class a range of violence against women behaviours as “very seriously wrong”, or likely to cause a “great deal of harm”.

The Scottish Social Attitudes Survey<sup>1</sup> measures stereotypical attitudes to gender roles, by people’s response to 2 questions about buying toys for small children. One question asked what they would do if they took a 3 year old boy to a shop to buy a toy and he picked up a princess doll. The second posed the same question if a 3 year old girl chose a toy truck. In both cases, the answer options were:

- Buy it for him/her without saying anything
- Buy it, but first try to get him/her to pick a toy that’s more common for boys/girls
- Make him/her put the doll/truck back and pick a toy more common for boys/girls

Results show that just over half (52%) said that they would buy the girl a toy truck without saying anything. Fewer people, only two in five (40%), said the same about buying the doll for the boy. More people would make the boy put the princess doll back (24%) than would make the girl put the toy truck back (14%).

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2014: Attitudes to violence against women in Scotland  
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00489760.pdf>

Table 1.2 Attitudes to gender roles

	Boy wanting a princess doll	Girl wanting a toy truck
Buy it for him/her without saying anything	40%	52%
Buy it, but first try to get him/her to pick a toy that's more common for boys/girls	35%	33%
Make him/her put it back and pick a toy more common for boys/girls	24%	14%
Don't know/ refused	1%	1%
Weighted bases	1433	1433
Unweighted bases	1428	1428

Base: All who completed the self-completion

Source: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2014: Attitudes to violence against women in Scotland, p15

The question about buying the boy a princess doll is used to assess if someone holds gender stereotypical views. Respondents who said they would make the boy put back the doll and pick a toy more common for boys are classed as holding stereotypical gender views. Those who would buy the boy the doll without saying anything are classed as not holding stereotypical views.

Adults in Scotland who hold stereotypical gender views<sup>2</sup> are significantly less likely than those who don't hold stereotypical gender views to class the following forms of violence against women as very seriously wrong:

- Rape within marriage (64% vs. 79%)
- Physical violence - a husband slapping his wife after he finds out she has had an affair (43% vs. 59%).
- Controlling behaviour – a husband telling his wife to change her clothes before going out (30% vs. 47%)
- Controlling behaviour – husband not wanting wife to go out without him (39% vs 53%)
- Sexual harassment/stalking – ex-boyfriend sending unwanted gifts (16% vs 21%)

And are less likely to say that these behaviours are likely to cause a great deal of harm:

- Controlling behaviour – a husband telling his wife to change her clothes before going out (21% vs. 34%)
- Controlling behaviour – financial control – husband insisting on seeing wife's bank statements (29% vs. 38%)
- Putting naked photos of an ex-girlfriend online (83% vs. 87%)

They are also less likely to agree that a woman is not at all to blame if she is wearing very revealing clothing on a night out and is then raped (47% of those who hold stereotypical gender views compared to 67% of those who don't).

They are also more likely to agree that women lie about being raped, 29% of those who held stereotypical views about gender roles agreed that 'women often lie about being raped', compared with 17% of those who did not hold such views

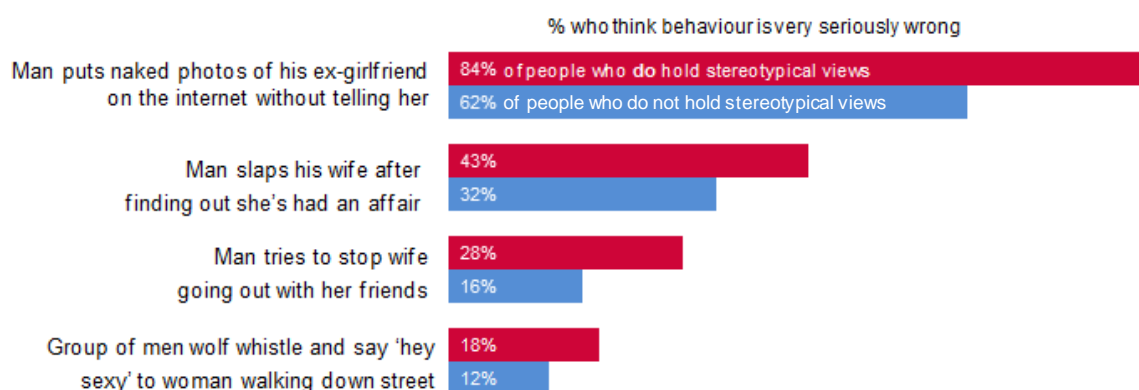
<sup>2</sup> Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2014: Attitudes to violence against women in Scotland <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00489760.pdf>

## Young people's views

Young people were asked about their attitudes to Violence Against Women in the “Young People in Scotland Survey 2014”<sup>3</sup>. Secondary school pupils aged 11-18 were asked a sub set of questions about violence against women that were asked of adults in the 2014 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey. These included the questions on willingness buying a princess doll for a young boy and a truck for a young girl, as a way of assessing who holds stereotypical gender views.

Young people and adults were equally likely to buy a small child a toy that is not traditionally associated with the child's gender, without trying to persuade them to choose another toy (40% of young people would buy the boy a doll, and 53% the girl a truck).

Young people who hold stereotypical attitudes towards gender were less likely than those who don't to think that the following behaviours were very seriously wrong: putting naked photos of an ex-girlfriend online without permission, sometimes called “revenge porn”; physical abuse; controlling behaviour; and being wolf-whistled at in the street by strangers.



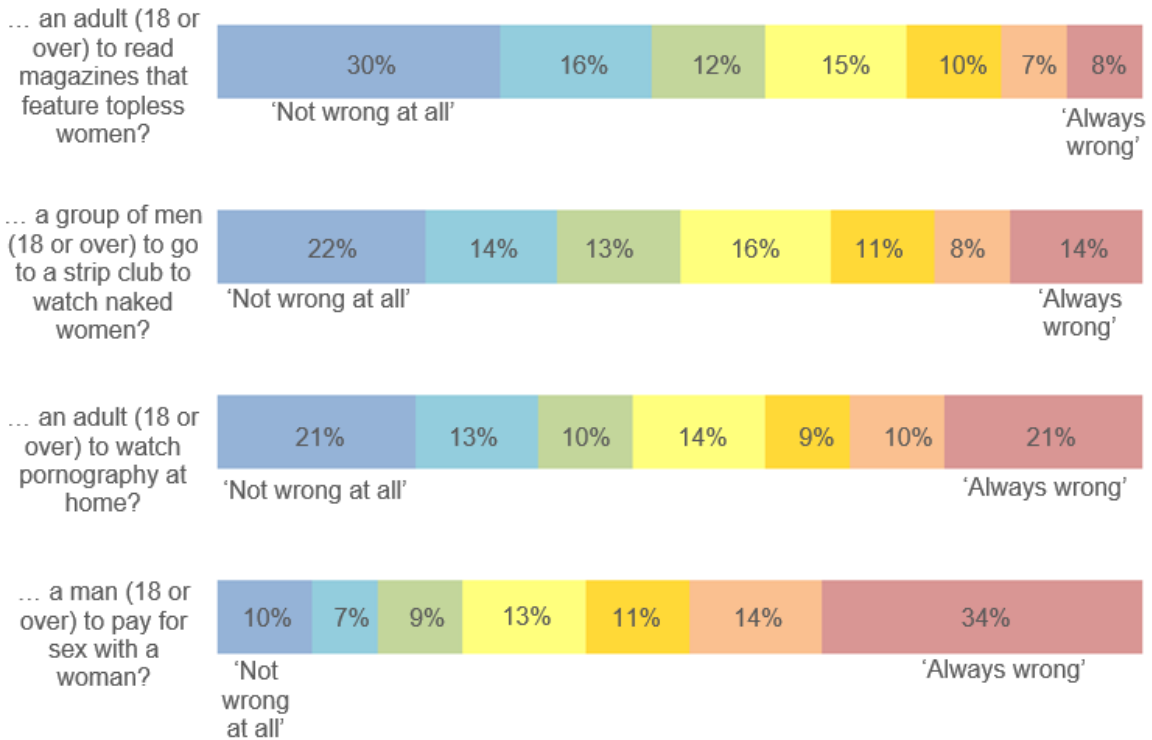
## Views on the acceptability of pornography, strip clubs and prostitution

The views of adults in Scotland on pornography were generally less negative than those on prostitution<sup>4</sup>. In relation to reading magazines featuring topless women and a group of men going to a strip club, a higher proportion thought that these were ‘not wrong at all’ (30% and 22% respectively) than thought they were ‘always wrong’ (8% and 14% respectively). People viewed men paying for sex with a woman more negatively, with around a third saying it was ‘always wrong’.

<sup>3</sup> Young People's Attitudes To Violence Against Women Report On Findings From The Young People In Scotland Survey 2014 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/10/3285/downloads>

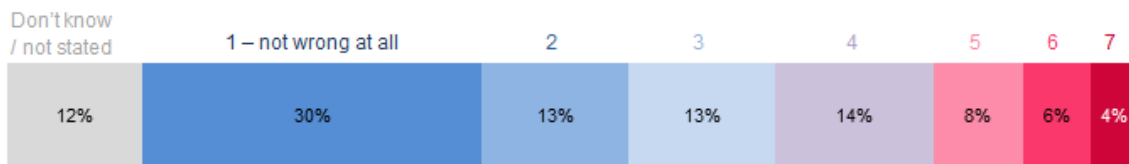
<sup>4</sup> Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2014: Attitudes to violence against women in Scotland <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00489760.pdf>

... how wrong do you personally think it is for ...



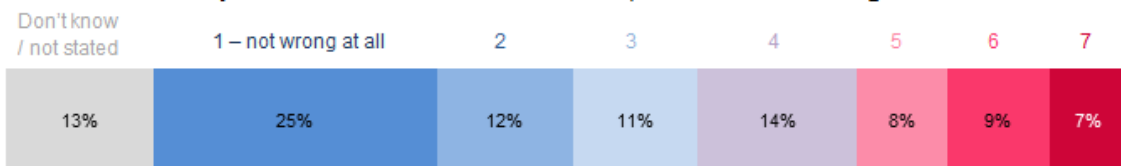
Young people were asked how wrong they thought it was for adults to read magazines that featured topless women, and go to strip clubs. Young people were significantly less likely than adults to class these behaviours as “very seriously wrong”/“always wrong” (point 7 on the 7 point scale).

**How wrong do you personally think it is for an adult (18 or over) to read magazines that feature topless women, or is it not wrong at all?**



Source: Young People in Scotland Survey 2014

**How wrong do you personally think it is for a group of men (18 or over) to go to a strip club to watch naked women, or is it not wrong at all?**



Source: Young People in Scotland Survey 2014

## **Interventions with young people to tackle unhelpful gender stereotypes and reduce violence against women**

There are a number of interventions used in Scotland, targeted at young men and young women, aimed at tackling gender stereotypes and preventing violence against women. Most of the interventions discussed below are mentioned in: "Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls."<sup>5</sup>

The interventions focus on awareness raising and education, openly discussing issues, and challenging social norms. Some interventions, such as the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme and White Ribbon Scotland use a "bystander approach", which encourages everyone to speak up and challenge negative behaviours, in a safe way.

Where programmes have been evaluated they have generally been positive in changing attitudes.

### **Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme**

The Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme<sup>6</sup> was developed in America in the 1990s and uses a "bystander approach" to help prevent all forms of bullying and gender based violence. It can be used as a tool to help tackle rape, dating violence, sexual harassment, bullying and other forms of violent and abusive behaviour.

Young men and women are not viewed as potential victims or perpetrators but as empowered and active bystanders with the ability to support and challenge peers. Issues and scenarios are discussed, along with how and when a bystander could intervene to stop behaviours escalating.

The Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme is a peer mentoring project, currently delivered across 6 local authorities in Scotland, in more than 50 schools, reaching around 50,000 pupils<sup>7</sup>. Schools recruit and train mentors from the upper part of the school to mentor younger pupils. It features debates centred around social norms of masculinity and femininity, sex and gender, and the role of peer pressure. "A powerful social norm prevents individuals from being themselves. The MVP programme seeks to confirm to young people their healthy attitudes are the norm."<sup>8</sup>

#### What evidence is there to show if it works?

Research Scotland and the USA indicates that those who participate in Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme demonstrate an increase in awareness of gender based violence, a decrease in sexist attitudes and an increased willingness to intervene and challenge negative behaviour.

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<sup>5</sup> Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls <https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/04/5766>

<sup>6</sup> <http://mvpscotland.org.uk/MVPabout.html>

<sup>7</sup> <http://actiononviolence.org/projects/mentors-in-violence-prevention>

<sup>8</sup> <http://mvpscotland.org.uk/MVPabout.html>

Researchers from St Andrew's University<sup>9</sup> carried out a qualitative evaluation of The Mentors in Violence Prevention Pilot in three Scottish High Schools in 2012-13.<sup>10</sup> The research found that staff, pupil mentors and pupil mentees generally had a positive experience of Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme. The peer learning element was liked, and was felt to add credibility to the message.

Mentors felt that the programme had raised their awareness of gender based violence, and some said that it had changed their attitudes towards gender based violence, and they would be more likely to intervene in a safe and non-violent way to challenge negative behaviours. For some, this increased willingness to intervene was seen as a consequence of a shift in attitudes and behaviours in their peer group more widely, there was a feeling that they wouldn't be the only one to intervene as they had all done the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme.

Mentees felt that people were more likely to intervene, in a calm and non-violent way after the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme. Although it should be noted that whilst some male mentees said that their attitudes and behaviours had changed, this was contradicted by some female mentees who felt that the boys' attitudes and behaviours towards them hadn't changed.

A number of evaluations in of Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme in America have been conducted, and have found positive results in pupils' attitudes and behaviours.<sup>11</sup> It was also found that young women reported less sexist attitudes or were less accepting of sexist and violent behaviours, whilst information from focus groups indicated that the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme played a role in increasing young women's feelings of safety and empowerment.

### **Rape Crisis Scotland National Sexual Violence Prevention Programme**

The National Sexual Violence Prevention Programme<sup>12</sup> is funded by the Scottish Government and works with young people in schools or youth groups to create a safe space to talk about sex and relationships. It was set up in April 2013.

The sessions cover seven topics and are adapted to be age appropriate for the young people they are working with. The 7 topics are:

- Gender
- Consent

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<sup>9</sup> Qualitative Evaluation of the Mentors In Violence Prevention Pilot in Scottish High Schools by St Andrews University in 2017 full text [https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10023/8092/MVP\\_anonymised\\_final.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10023/8092/MVP_anonymised_final.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>10</sup> Interviews and focus groups were conducted with staff and pupils who were mentors (older pupils in 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> year) and mentees (younger pupils who were in 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> year) to find out about their experience of participating in Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme.

<sup>11</sup> American evaluations are discussed in the St Andrews Evaluation Paper above. Further American evaluations can be found on the MVP site <https://www.mvpstrat.com/training-materials/evaluations/> and here "Evaluating the Mentors in Violence Prevention Program: Preventing Gender Violence on a College Campus research by Amanda B. Cissner Submitted to the U.S. Department of Education January 2009 <http://www.mvpngo.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/DOE-MVP-Eval-Report-2008.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/prevention-work/>

- What is sexual violence?
- Sexualisation and pornography
- Impacts and support
- Social media
- How can we help prevent sexual violence?

Prevention workers also support young people to take a lead in shaping their own actions to help prevent sexual violence, for example through co-facilitating workshops, joining campaigns and engaging with other young people through social media about gender stereotypes in the media.

### What evidence is there to show if it works?

And independent evaluation of the National Sexual Violence Prevention Programme was published in 2015, <sup>13</sup> and showed positive results.

The evaluation found that young people engaged with the sessions, and particularly valued the fact that the workshop leaders were not teachers.

The evaluation found that the programme had a significant impact on young people's knowledge and attitudes. As a result of attending three workshops, the vast majority of young people increased their knowledge of how sexual violence and abuse can affect people, what the law says sexual violence is and where people who have been raped or sexually assaulted can go for support.

Attitudes also changed significantly, with the data suggesting that the workshop sessions were successful in raising young people's awareness of sexual violence, the importance of equality and consent in healthy relationships, and that the responsibility for sexual violence lies with perpetrators rather than victims.

The evaluation found that in most cases boys were more likely to change their opinions than girls. In most instances, this was partly because boys had more distance to travel from their pre-workshop views to those consistent with the messages of the workshops.

### **Equally Safe in higher education**

Equally Safe in Higher Education<sup>14</sup> aims to eradicate gender-based violence in Higher Education. The project, is funded by the Scottish Government, and has developed a toolkit using Strathclyde as a pilot site, to challenge gender-based violence across Scotland's university campuses.<sup>15</sup>

The Equally Safe in Higher Education toolkit has been developed as a free resource for Higher Education Institutions to: develop a whole campus response to gender-

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<sup>13</sup>An Independent Evaluation of Rape Crisis Scotland's Sexual Violence Prevention Project, Final Report April 2015, <https://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/resources/final-evaluation-report-26-04.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.strath.ac.uk/humanities/schoolofsocialworksocialpolicy/equallysafeinhighereducation/>

<sup>15</sup> The Equally Safe in Higher Education Toolkit is available here: <https://www.strath.ac.uk/humanities/schoolofsocialworksocialpolicy/equallysafeinhighereducation/eshetoolkit/>

based violence, with an emphasis on prevention, intervention; and curriculum and knowledge exchange.

### What evidence is there to show if it works?

Equally Safe in Higher Education is still in its early stages. The toolkit was published in 2018, and research and evaluation is built into the Equally Safe in Higher Education process. The evidence base will grow over time as the project is implemented and data is gathered and analysed.

### **The White Ribbon Campaign Scotland**

White Ribbon Scotland<sup>16</sup> is a campaign to involve men in tackling violence against women. It was formed in 2006 and is part of an international White Ribbon Campaign, which operates in 55 countries.

White Ribbon Scotland contributes to ending violence against women by engaging men and boys in taking action on the issue. It does this by raising awareness, promoting discussion and providing information and resources to support personal and collective action among men. It is a grass roots organisation, spreading the message at a local level. A range of resources are available on their website.<sup>17</sup>

It doesn't view violence against women as a women's issue, and acknowledges that most men in Scotland are not violent towards women, and encourages men to see themselves as having a role to play in standing up to violence and not remaining silent about it. It encourages men to sign a pledge as a first step. On 1 August 2018, The White Ribbon Scotland showed that 14,816 pledges had been made.

"Most men in Scotland are not violent towards women, but many of us ignore the problem, or see it as something that has nothing to do with us. A simple first step you can take is to sign our personal pledge. *"I pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about men's violence against women."*<sup>18</sup>

### What evidence is there to show if it works?

There appears to be a lack of evaluation of White Ribbon activities in Scotland and elsewhere. White Ribbon Canada have produced an evaluation framework<sup>19</sup> and note the need for meaningful long term evaluation of violence prevention activities with men, and the challenges in doing so<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.whiteribbonScotland.org.uk/>

<sup>17</sup> White Ribbon Scotland Workshops, toolkits and activities  
<http://www.whiteribbonScotland.org.uk/Workshops>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.whiteribbonScotland.org.uk/>

<sup>19</sup> Preventing violence against women and girls through male engagement [http://www.rcrc-resilience-southeastasia.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/NEF\\_CoP.pdf](http://www.rcrc-resilience-southeastasia.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/NEF_CoP.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Preventing violence against women and girls through male engagement [http://www.rcrc-resilience-southeastasia.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/NEF\\_CoP.pdf](http://www.rcrc-resilience-southeastasia.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/NEF_CoP.pdf)



White Ribbon Australia<sup>21</sup> carried out research and evaluation activities around their work, which indicated positive shifts in the interpretation of what constitutes ‘violence’ and the ‘line of acceptability’ in 2016 compared to 2012. For most, violence is understood to include threat and intimidation as well as physical violence. Evaluations of White Ribbon Australia’s Breaking the Silence in Schools programme found positive results in increasing knowledge and awareness around violence against women, and giving young people the tools to influence and change culture in schools.

## **Zero Tolerance’s work in the early years and with young people**

Zero Tolerance<sup>22</sup> is a Scottish charity working to end men’s violence against women by promoting gender equality and challenging attitudes which normalise violence and abuse. It provides resources for early years practitioners and training for youth workers.

### Early years

Zero Tolerance has produced resources such as “Just like a Child”<sup>23</sup> aimed at Early Years practitioners to help challenge gender stereotypes from a young age. From an early age, the clothes a child wears and the toys they are given to play with are often influenced by gender norms. Zero Tolerance believe that it is never too early to question what is seen as ‘normal’ or what is traditionally expected of boys and girls in our society, and that doing so from a very young age, helps to protect children from the negative consequences of inequality and discrimination as they grow into adults.

### Youth Work – ‘Under pressure’ training for workers

In 2011 Zero Tolerance started delivering “Under Pressure” training to workers to youth workers to raise awareness of the issue of abuse and sexual exploitation in young people’s relationships, as well as equipping workers with skills and knowledge to prevent and address this problem in their practice.

The initial pilot for “Under Pressure” was split into 4 sections:

1. ‘Under pressure to be sexy’ - which examined the pressures of growing up in a ‘pornified’ culture;
2. ‘Under pressure in love’ – which looked at the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships and how abuse manifests in young relationships;
3. ‘Under pressure to cross the line’ - which examined the risks to young people of becoming involved in sexual exploitation;
4. ‘Under pressure to make change’ - which identified ways of preventing abuse and using the learning from the day in practice.

### What evidence is there to show if it works?

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<sup>21</sup> White Ribbon Australia Annual Report 2015-16 [https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/WhiteRibbonAnnualReport2015-16\\_HR-V2-PROOF-V2.pdf](https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/WhiteRibbonAnnualReport2015-16_HR-V2-PROOF-V2.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/resources/Just-Like-a-Child.pdf>

The initial pilot of under pressure training was evaluated<sup>24</sup>. Participants were overwhelmingly positive about the course in meeting expectations, increasing skills and knowledge and providing useful resources for practice.

Participants were asked to rate their knowledge, understanding, confidence and skills on seven key questions/areas before the course; immediately after the course; and 8-12 weeks later. Across all seven, the ratings increased indicating that the course had a significant and lasting impact on participants even for those aspects where knowledge, understanding, confidence or skills were reasonably high to start with.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/resources/Under-Pressure---Preventing-Teen-Abuse-and-Exploitation.pdf>