

Sexual harassment of girls is widespread in schools, researchers find

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A new study carried out by University of Warwick's Institute for

Employment Research for the NEU teaching union and campaign group UK Feminista has found that over a third of girls at mixed-sex schools in England and Wales have been sexually harassed while at school.

The report, "['It's just everywhere': Sexism in schools and how we tackle it](#)," is being launched today in the Houses of Parliament.

The study was led by Dr Clare Lyonette, Gaby Atfield and Dr Erika Kispeter from the University's Institute for Employment Research. Between January and June 2017, more than 1,500 secondary school students in England and Wales completed an anonymous online or paper-based survey about [sexism](#) in schools. Three discussion groups on this topic were also conducted with secondary school students. Between January and May 2017, over 1,600 teachers at secondary and primary schools in England and Wales also participated in an anonymous online survey about sexism in schools.

The research found that sexist language and gender stereotypes are a typical feature of school culture, contributing to a climate in which sexual harassment is commonplace.

In the light of the study's findings, the NEU and UK Feminista are calling on the Government to take urgent steps to tackle sexism and sexual harassment in schools, including issuing national guidance to schools on how to prevent and respond effectively to sexual harassment and sexual violence, and ensuring teachers receive the necessary training, resources and support to develop a whole school strategy for tackling sexism.

Commenting on the report, Kevin Courtney, Joint General Secretary at the National Education Union, said: "As we come to the end of 2017, we've lived through a year in which sexual harassment of women and girls has been at the forefront of the public eye. This study shows us how

normalised and pervasive it is for young people also.

"Schools and colleges have an important role to play in breaking down stereotypes but education policy is making it harder and not easier. Teachers tell us that barriers to tackling sexism include an overly heavy focus on academic subjects and teacher workload being too high."

Sophie Bennett, spokesperson for UK Feminista, said: "The results of our study are clear: schools, Ofsted and the Government must act urgently to tackle sexism in schools. Sexual [harassment](#), sexist language and gender stereotyping are rife in school settings, yet all too often it goes unreported and unaddressed.

"We need to stop schools being places where girls and boys learn that [sexual harassment](#) and sexism are routine, normal, accepted. It would transform [school](#) life – and society as a whole."

More information: "It's just everywhere": Sexism in schools and how we tackle it. [ukfeminista.org.uk/wp-content/... -just-everywhere.pdf](https://ukfeminista.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Its-just-everywhere.pdf)

Provided by University of Warwick

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