

YOUTH



TRUTH



AN INSIGHT INTO TEEN RELATIONSHIPS



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Report/Data



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Social Media



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Event/Mailout



Noor Miah
Project Manager

Mini Biography:

I am a Year 11 student who worked as lead on the report, which provided an enriching experience while working with the team

~ Amaira Katyal

In this role as the event planner, I have allocated budget, organised the setting and found interest in the mailout to practitioners.

~ Crystal Yaa Atiogbe

I am an A Level student who led the social media campaign for this project. I have future ambitions to work in parliament.

~ Teddy Arlain

I am a year 13 student who oversaw the overall project, and helped out with creating the presentation and report.

~ Noor Miah

Our Journey:

We began with VAWG training, after which youth councillors shared ideas that formed the baseline of the project. Starting with a large group, we held consultations to identify current issues and priorities, which led to the three survey sections. A smaller focus group then drafted questions that were accessible to young people and covered all project areas.

After a soft launch at the Young Mayor induction, we promoted the survey through schools and youth council, though progress was delayed due to scheduling challenges. By December, we set new deadlines, organised social media outreach, and began planning the event and report, bringing everything together for the final outcomes.



Introduction

This peer research project centres around investigating relationships among teenagers.

It aims to understand young people's experiences so they can be incorporated into new policies or support systems, ensuring that the help they receive is accessible, relatable, and as effective as possible.



In a world where social media shapes young people's identities and forms a significant part of their daily lives, it is difficult to fully understand the impact it has on their relationships and the expectations it creates.

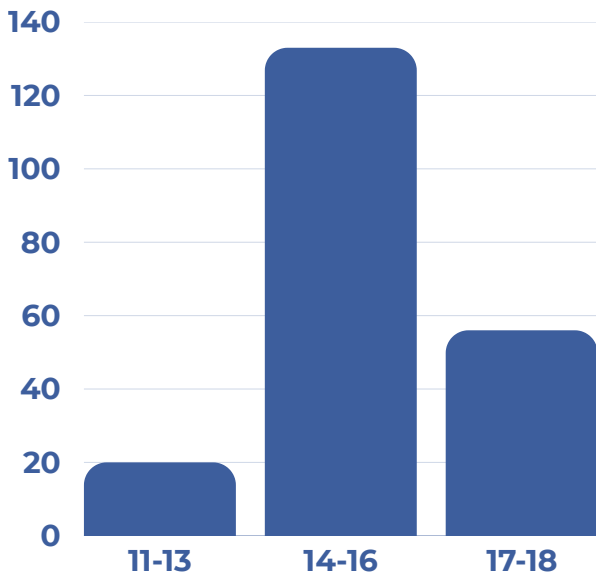
In addition, we aimed to explore how relationships impact young people and how toxic dynamics in teenage relationships reflect unhealthy patterns.

Our journey began when we attended VAWG training during Youth Council, where we were encouraged to consider the issues that can arise in teenage relationships. As young people who see the impact of these relationships every day, we decided to explore these issues further.

Aims

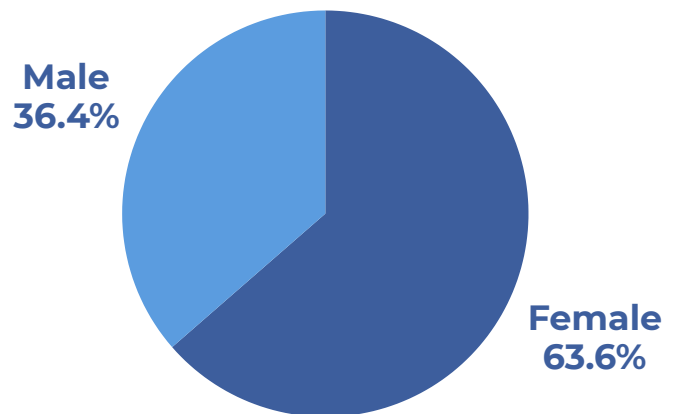
- Study influences on youth relationships
- Highlight teen awareness on VAWG issues
- Share findings with youth practitioners

Highlights



The ages of those who completed the survey were quite varied, but there was a clear majority of responses from 14-16 year olds. This reflects the age when teenagers begin to engage in relationships or are mature enough to recognise unhealthy or toxic behaviours and take part in discussions about them.

There was a noticeable gender imbalance in the responses, with significantly more female participants than male. This may be reflected in the low number of respondents who reported being in a relationship, as girls may be more likely to feel restricted from engaging in relationships due to cultural expectations, family influence, and upbringing. In East London in particular, there can be greater social and cultural pressure on girls around relationships, which is reflected in the data.



Trends:

On a scale of 1-10, around 78% of young people reported feeling pressured to be in a relationship at 5 or higher.

42% of young people said that pornography plays a role in teen relationships.

Just over half of young people (62%) indicated a moderate to high level of comfort (5+) in seeking support.

Influences

We examined the external factors shaping young people's views and expectations of relationships, aiming to identify what factors influence them to enter or leave relationships at a young age.

For use in this survey, the factors have been defined differently.

Culture refers to religion and the environment you grow up in, reflecting the diversity of families in East London. Peers are people of a similar age, while family refers to those who raise you and shape your values. These factors were chosen because of their strong influence during childhood, through both family guidance and peer pressure.

Social media includes the wider world and trends that shape views and expectations, and is arguably the most significant factor in a rapidly changing, technology-driven world, as reflected in the data collected.

The question about pornography aimed to understand young people's exposure to the topic and its potential influence on the development of toxic relationships.

Factors

Social Media

Culture

Family

Peers

Key Findings:

Social media was the top influence, with 75% rating it above 5.

Culture was a polarising factor, with 51% rating it above 5 and 49% below, most giving either a 1 or 10.

Friends and family had a moderate influence, with 65% and 62% rating them as such.

Relationships in the Real World

This section explores the toxic factors shaping young people's views and expectations of relationships, while examining the challenges teenagers face, their ability to recognise unhealthy behaviours, and how easily they can break out of toxic cycles.

The scenarios were designed with subtle red flags to assess how well young people recognise nuance rather than simply assign blame, while also evaluating their responses to different situations and their understanding of the root causes of toxic relationships.

The findings showed that young people's responses were not highly perceptive, with most only identifying obvious red flags. It also highlighted how common toxic relationships are among young people, showing the need for improved education, not only on maintaining healthy relationships, but also on recognising issues and supporting friends in similar situations.

Key Findings:

43% of young people reported that toxic relationships are “highly common” among teenagers.

Only a few young people grasped the nuance of blame in the scenarios, while most assigned it to just one party.

32% of young people think those in toxic relationships “think they are in love.”

52% reported having 1–3 friends in toxic relationships.

Support & Help

This section focuses on understanding young people's awareness of support services and how accessible these services are to them. It also looks at whether they have knowledge of these services, while ensuring council communication reaches them in the most effective ways possible.

Tower Hamlets offers a wide range of youth support services, but many young people remain isolated or unaware of them, often relying on friends instead of professional help. Services aren't well advertised or easily accessible, and many suggested schools as the best way to reach young people, highlighting the need to bridge the gap between schools and support services.

Questions asked which organisations they are aware of and their main sources of support, to understand how to improve the support they receive.

Key Findings:

16% of young people reported Childline as the only youth organisation they knew that offered support.

Most young people said less judgment, more openness, and confidentiality would improve their experience.

Most young people turn to friends for relationship support, with 68% reporting this as their main source of help.

16% of people preferred to receive communication through their school.

Call to Action

Foster an environment that supports and empowers young people to feel confident in themselves and their relationships.

Increase accessibility to support:

Provide accessible safe spaces for teens to discuss peer pressure and online influences, supported by peer mentors and trusted adults.

Enhance awareness:

Young people need greater awareness of toxic relationship factors and guidance on leaving them, supported by more discussions and funded programs.

Bridging Gaps:

Schools and support services should work together with young people to co-create a comprehensive support network.

Final Notes

Young Tower Hamlets: Aims to empower young people through safe spaces, support, activities, and opportunities to be heard.

Youth Council: a group of young people working to champion youth voices.



Acknowledgements:

Special thanks to our youth participation officer, Aksary Rahman, for supporting us through the process.

In addition, we would like to thank Youth Council, Khadra Said, Triny Diaz, and Elizabeth Adesanya for their support.

Quotes from research

“The biggest red flag is a lack of honesty and communication. Healthy relationships are built on trust, openness, and respect for each other’s feelings”

“More anonymous support systems in schools”

“I will not overlook red flags.”

“Raise more awareness on how you can get out of a toxic relationship rather asking about what they know”

“I think it’s unhealthy addiction to have and teens can get addicted too it. But regardless anyone under the age of 18 shouldn’t be looking or even thinking about it”

“it’s hard for students but we just need a supporting hand”

“Wait until marriage thats a red flag if someone wants u before then. Excuse me why does James have a girl best friend
RED FLAG, A MATCHING WHAT?! break up with him now”

“relationships are hard to get into but even harder to get out of”

Resources:

NYA Young researchers portfolio -

<https://nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Young-researchers-portfolio-024-editable-final-1.pdf>

Elevate report -

<https://www.queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/Elevate-Research-Report-2025.pdf>



For more information go to <https://www.youngtowerhamlets.org.uk/>