

Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2019: Violence against Women

Key Findings



Introduction: The Survey

The Scottish Social Attitudes Survey has been conducted by ScotCen since 1999, to study public opinion and inform policy development.

The survey contains a range of modules on different topics. Scottish Government commissioned this module to explore attitudes to violence against women (VAW).



This module was previously included in 2014. It contained 40 questions. The majority of the questions were the same in both years, to allow us to see how attitudes changed between 2014 and 2019.



The survey was carried out from 30 August 2019 to 18 March 2020.



The survey uses a random sample of adults living anywhere in Scotland. The data is also weighted to correct for non-response bias and to ensure that it reflects the age and gender profile of the Scottish population.

This means that we can be confident that the findings presented here reflect the attitudes of the adult Scottish population.

959 people answered these questions.



Introduction: Violence against Women

Violence against women and girls directly affects around 1 in 3 women and girls globally.¹

Scottish Government defines VAW as 'actions that harm, or cause suffering and indignity to, women and children', including:

- physical, sexual and psychological violence, including domestic abuse, rape, incest and child sexual abuse
- sexual harassment at work and in public
- commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution and pornography
- 'honour based' violence, including female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages and 'honour' crimes.

We wanted to capture people's views about particular **behaviours**, rather than their response to terms used to describe VAW ('domestic abuse', 'rape', etc.)

For this reason, the survey included many scenario-based questions. After each description, respondents were asked how **wrong** they thought the behaviour was (and for some, how much **harm** they thought the behaviour did to the victim).

For example:

'A woman is getting ready for a night out. When her husband sees she is dressed up more than usual, he tells her he doesn't like her going out looking like that and tells her to change.'



1. Gender stereotypes

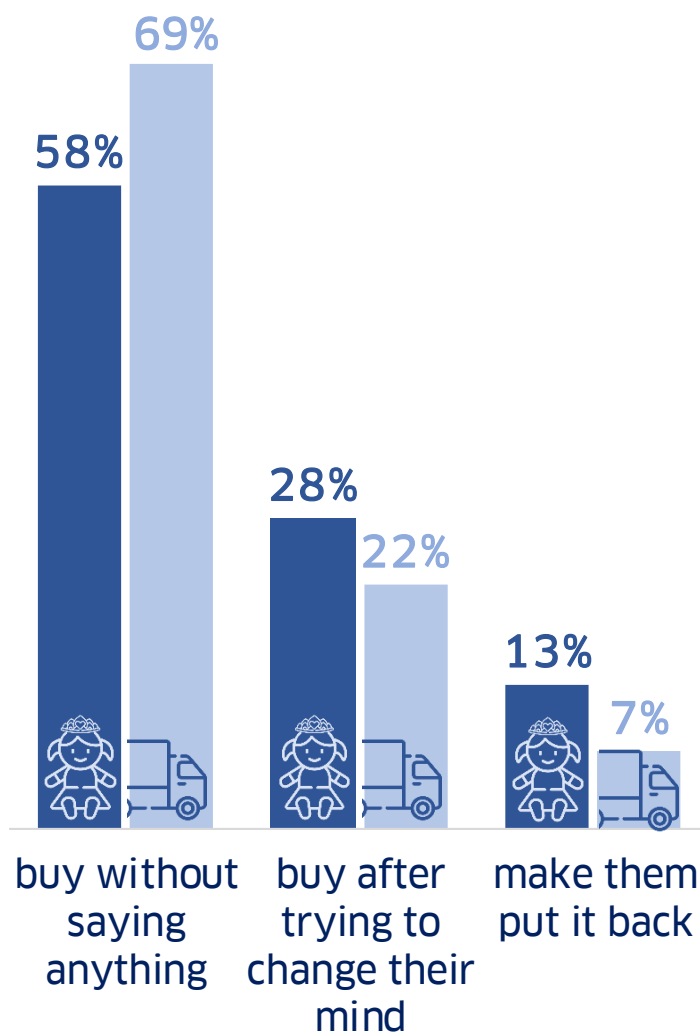
People were more likely to say that they would buy a girl a toy truck than buy a boy a princess doll.

These questions were designed to measure whether people held stereotypical views on gender roles.

People were asked about taking a 3-year-old to buy a toy and what they would do if a boy chose a princess doll, or a girl chose a toy truck.

The options were to buy it without saying anything, to buy it but first try to get them to pick a toy more common for their gender, or to make them put it back.

Attitudes towards stereotypical gender roles



Overall, people who held these stereotypical views on gender roles were less likely to see abusive behaviour as wrong and harmful, and more likely to hold conservative views on prostitution and pornography.

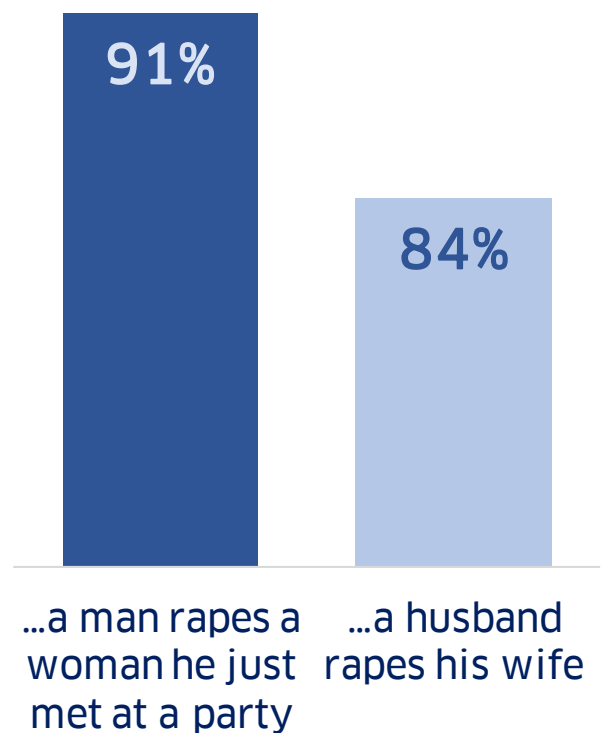


2. Sexual violence

The majority of people thought that rape is ‘very seriously wrong’, and that it causes ‘a great deal’ of harm.

However, people thought that rape is less wrong and less harmful in the context of a marriage than when it is perpetrated by a stranger.

The proportion of people who thought that it is ‘very seriously wrong’ if...



If the woman first takes the man into the bedroom and kisses him, people saw the rape as less wrong.

In this case, the proportion of people who said the rape was ‘very seriously wrong’ fell from **91%** to **67%** for a man raping a woman he just met at a party, and from **84%** to **55%** for a man raping his wife.



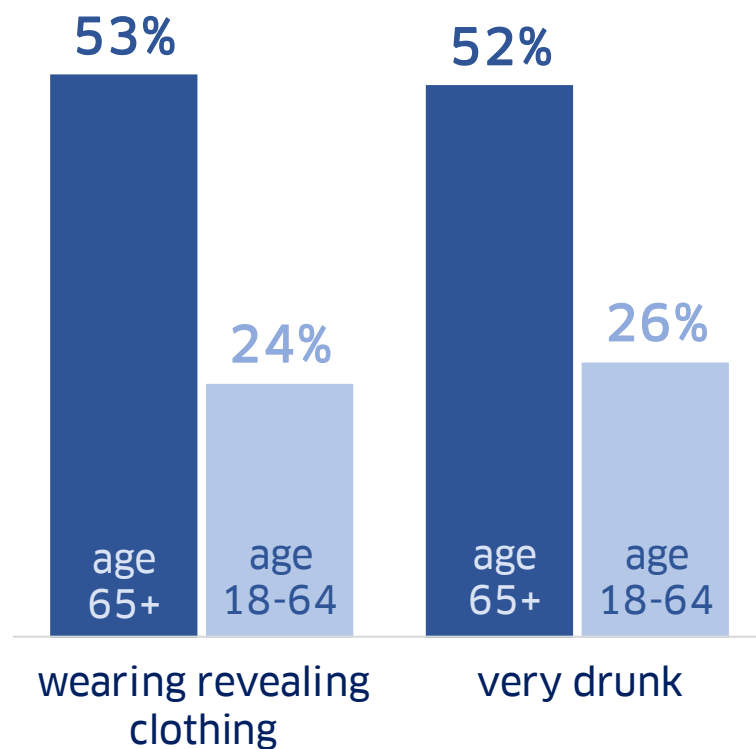
3. Myths about sexual violence

3 in 10 people thought that a woman is at least partly to blame for being raped if she is either very drunk, or wearing revealing clothing.

The other 7 in 10 said that she is 'not at all to blame'.

Older people (65+) were more likely than those aged 18-64 to think that the woman was at least partly to blame in these instances.

The proportion of people who thought that a woman is at least partly to blame for being raped if she is...



Only **8%** of people agreed that 'women often lie about being raped'.

However, **28%** of people agreed that 'rape results from men being unable to control their need for sex'.



4. Physical domestic abuse

The vast majority of people thought that physical domestic abuse is ‘very seriously wrong’ and causes ‘a great deal’ of harm.

People thought that a man slapping his wife is more wrong – and causes more harm – than if a woman slaps her husband.

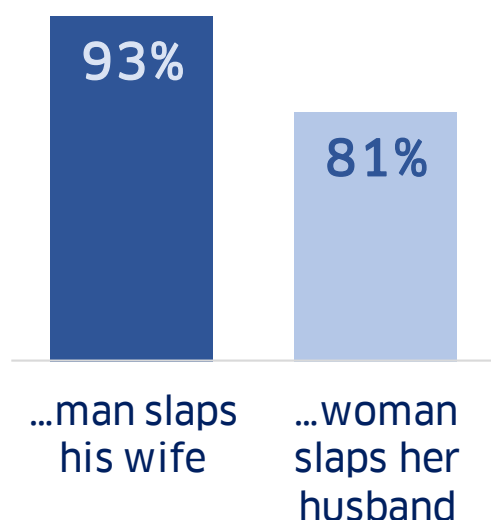
Men were less likely than women to think that a woman slapping her husband is ‘very seriously wrong’.



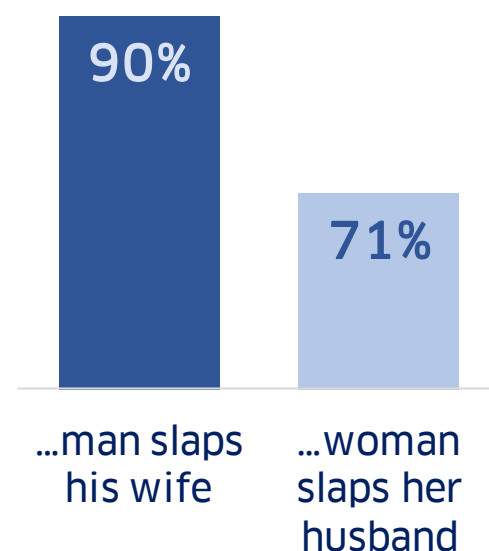
74% of men thought this, compared with 88% of women.



The proportion of people who thought that it is ‘very seriously wrong’ if a...



The proportion of people who thought that it causes the victim ‘a great deal’ of harm if a...





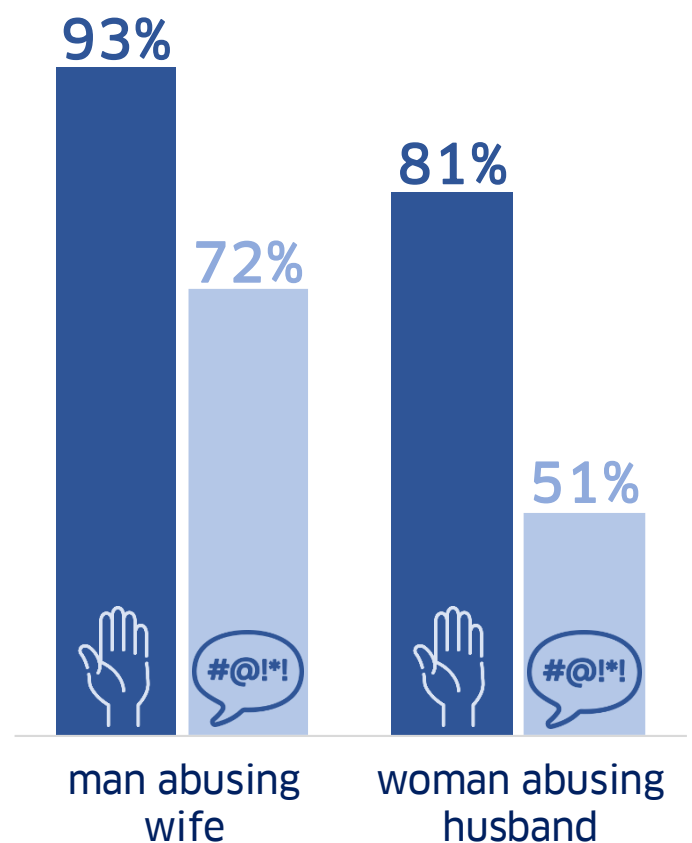
5. Verbal domestic abuse

Verbal abuse was considered less seriously wrong than physical abuse.

Most people believed that often putting down a partner and criticising them is wrong, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator or the victim.

However, only 7 in 10 people (72%) thought that a man putting down and criticising his wife was ‘very seriously wrong’, compared with over 9 in 10 people (93%) who thought that it was ‘very seriously wrong’ if he slaps her.

Proportion who thought that physical and verbal domestic abuse are ‘very seriously wrong’



66% said this verbal abuse did ‘a great deal’ of harm to a woman, compared with only **44%** who thought that it did ‘a great deal’ of harm to a man.

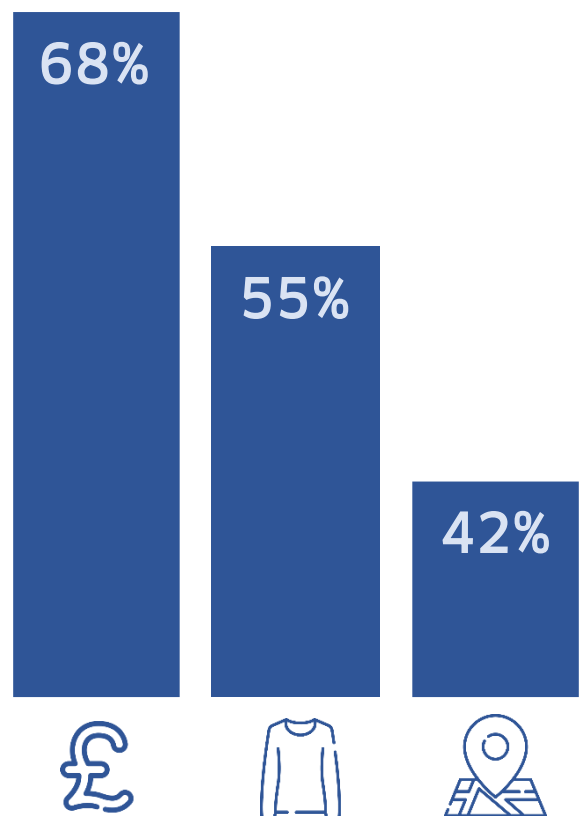


6. Controlling behaviour

Financial control was considered more serious than controlling what your partner wears, or excessively monitoring where they are.

Two-thirds of people (68%) thought that a man looking at his wife's bank statements was 'very seriously wrong'. Over half (55%) said the same of a man telling his wife to change her outfit. Two-fifths (42%) thought it was 'very seriously wrong' for a man to text his wife multiple times through an evening asking where she is and when she'll be home.

Proportion who thought controlling behaviours are 'very seriously wrong'



If told that the man had recently found out his wife was having an affair, only **30%** of people thought that him telling her to change her outfit was 'very seriously wrong'.



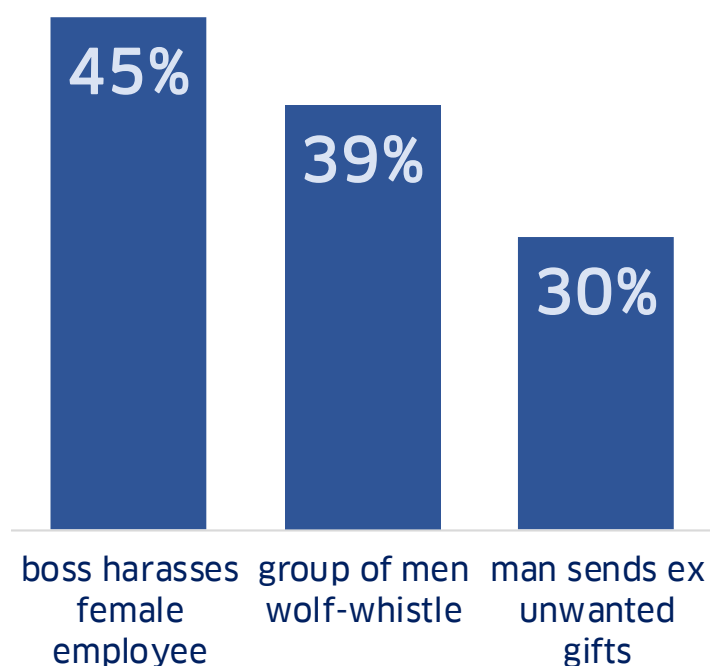
7. Sexual harassment

The majority of people thought that each of the forms of sexual harassment asked about are wrong.

80% of people said that a boss telling his employee she's pretty and touching her shoulder is wrong. 76% said a group of men wolf-whistling and catcalling at a woman is wrong, and 74% said this of a man sending unwanted gifts and flowers to an ex-girlfriend.

45%, 39% and 30% respectively thought these behaviours are 'very seriously wrong'.

The proportion of people who thought that it is 'very seriously wrong' if...



Unlike for domestic abuse, men were more likely than women to think that wolf whistling and sexual harassment at work are 'very seriously wrong'.



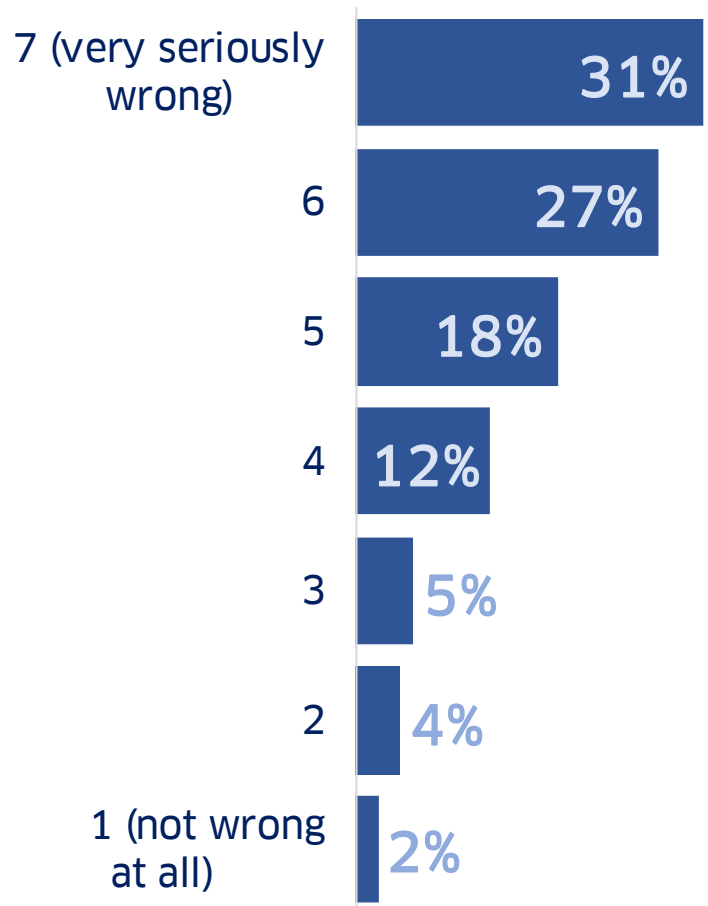


8. Online stalking & abuse

Three-quarters (75%) of people thought that social media stalking is wrong. A third (31%) said it is ‘very seriously wrong’.

People were asked what they thought of a man always commenting on a woman’s social media posts, even though she has asked him to stop.

Attitudes towards social media stalking



The overwhelming majority of people said a man putting naked pictures of his ex-girlfriend online is ‘very seriously wrong’ –

94%



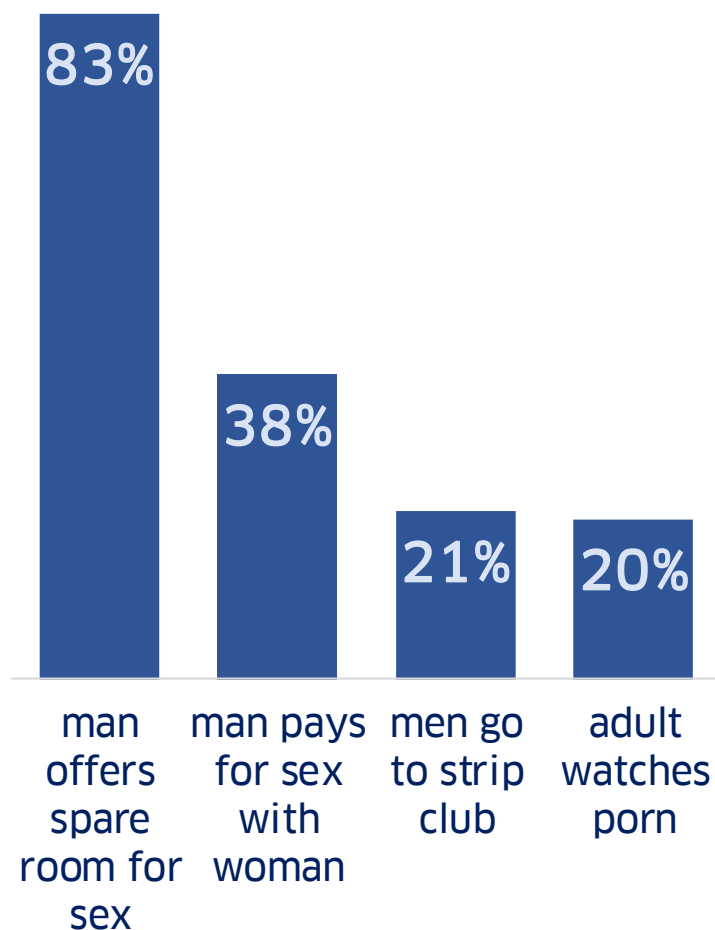
9. Commercial sexual exploitation

More than **4 in 5** people thought that a man offering a woman his spare room in return for sex is ‘very seriously wrong’.

Just under 2 in 5 people said the same of a man paying a woman for sex. Around 1 in 5 thought that it is ‘very seriously wrong’ for a group of men to go to a strip club, or for an adult to watch pornography at home.

Over half (53%) of people thought that a man paying for sex with a woman does her ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ of harm. A similar proportion (56%) thought that paying for sex should either ‘definitely’ or ‘probably’ be against the law.

The proportion who thought behaviours were ‘very seriously wrong’



1 in 4 people agreed that watching pornography is a ‘normal part of growing up’ for teenage boys, but only **1 in 7** said the same for teenage girls.





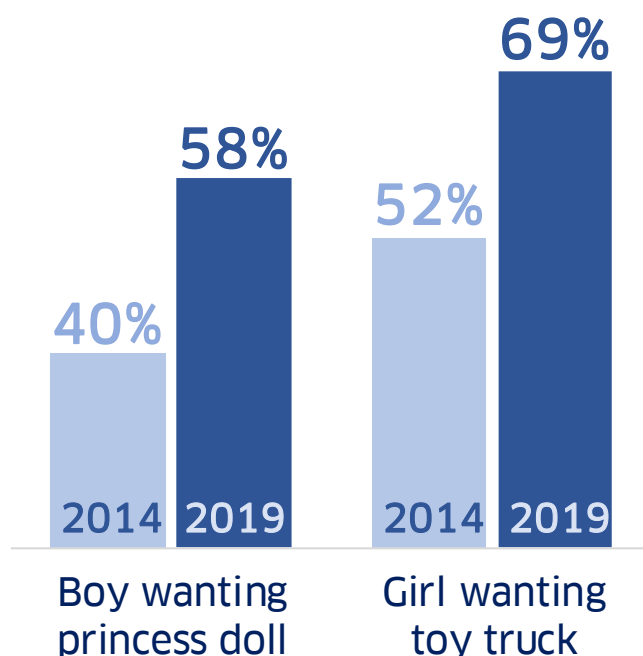
10. How have views changed?

The proportion who held stereotypical views on gender roles declined from 2014 to 2019, as did belief in rape myths.

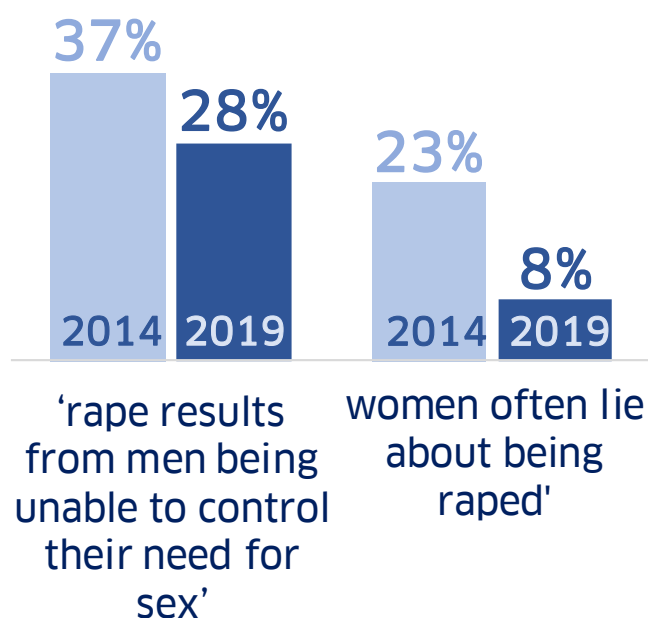
People were also much more likely in 2019 to think that wolf whistling and a man controlling what his wife wears are ‘very seriously wrong’ (up from 25% to 39% in the case of wolf whistling, and from 39% to 55% for a man controlling what his wife wears).

However, there were no substantial differences in views on the wrongness of physical or verbal abuse, or financial control. In the case of physical abuse this may be because the vast majority of people said that this was ‘very seriously wrong’ in 2014.

Proportions who would buy non-gender-stereotypical toys without saying anything



Proportions agreeing with rape myths





Further resources & contact

To read the full report on this research, go to: <https://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-80004-395-4>

To find out more about the methodology, you can read the technical report [here](#).

Equally Safe is Scotland's strategy to eradicate violence against women and girls. You can read more about it [here](#).



Findings from this survey will be included in future updates to the indicators for the [Equally Safe Delivery Plan](#), and will inform future work to tackle violence against women and girls.

You can find more evidence about equality produced by Scottish Government [here](#).



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1. ActionAid (2020), '[Violence against women and girls](#)'