

VOICING EXPERIENCE



CO-PRODUCED RESOURCES FOR OPEN CONVERSATIONS
ABOUT HEALTHY BEHAVIOURS AND RELATIONSHIPS

VOICING EXPERIENCE

These cards were co-created through a collaboration between an artist and a group of young women and non-binary people from East Sussex Coast College, Hastings, in a project led by Women's Voice.

The cards show images and texts created by the young people in response to discussions about violence against women and girls and reflect their own life experiences.

They are designed to be used to provoke open conversations with young people about a range of issues that are connected to violence against women and girls.

Women's Voice is a charity run by women for all women in Hastings and St Leonards that works to improve women's wellbeing and quality of life. We organise events, festivals and workshops. We host peer support groups, a directory of local support services and campaign on important issues affecting women.

With thanks to Freya, Zofia, Simona, Veronika, Margherita, Chiara, Sophie, Faye, East Sussex College and Beyond Harm



I AM TERRIFIED OF
FEAR



I WANT TO BE FREE

'I am terrified of fear. I am terrified that it will stop me from being who I am, stop me from smiling, that it will cut my wings. I am terrified of the isolation it has caused, the anxiety and the powerlessness it makes me feel. I want to dance, I want to run, I want to scream my lungs out in an infinite ode to freedom.'

How is it that fear can limit my adventures, when all I want is to take a walk on the streets of the world? I want to admire the sky, smile at kids running after each other, without being scared of who might be following, or which street is haunted by dangerous people. I am terrified of fear and I want to be free to live.'

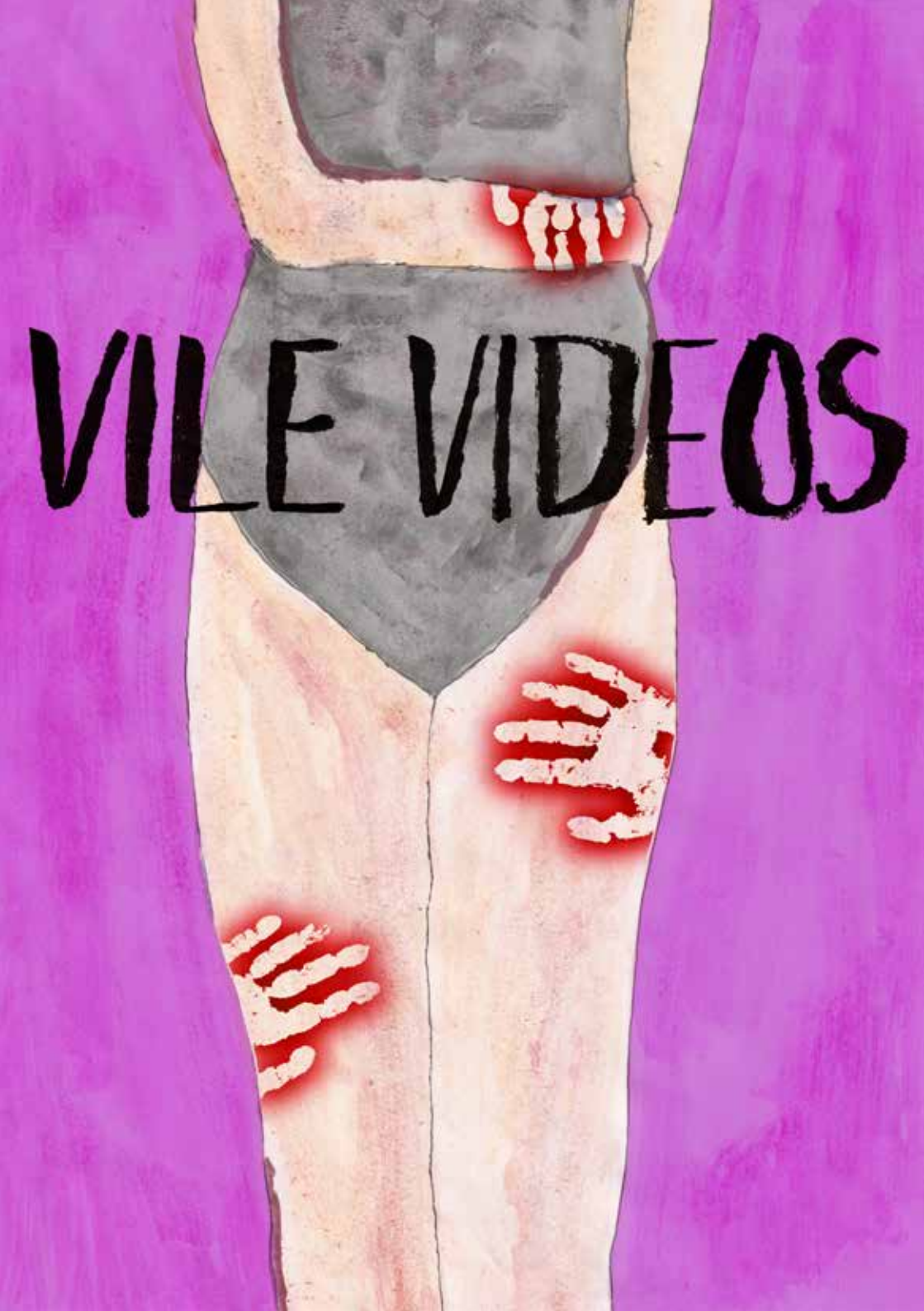
According to research by Plan International carried out in 2024, only one in 20 girls in the UK feel completely safe in public space.

Plan International, 2024

How can we make sure everyone feels safe when out in public?

Why might women and girls be more likely to feel afraid when walking in the street?

How might feeling unsafe on the streets affect someone's life in the long term?



VILE VIDEOS

‘Porn is not a form of art or of pleasure. It is a sexualisation of women. Women can’t be in power without being sexualised - why else are women in porn videos doctors or policewomen? Women in porn are represented as easy to pleasure and vulnerable. It does not promote safe sex or show the real act, it is unrealistic and often romanticises rape.

Sometimes the women don’t consent to these videos, or even know these videos of them exist. What we can do is make people realise that it is wrong and should not just be for the pleasure of men?’

A report by the Children’s Commissioner in 2023 found that the average age at which children first see pornography is 13. By age nine, 10% had seen pornography, rising to 27% by age 11. 79% of children they spoke to had seen violent pornography by the age of 18.

Children’s Commissioner, 2023

What impact does seeing pornography at a young age have on children and teenagers?

How might the violence depicted in porn affect our attitudes towards sex?

SETTING BOUNDARIES.



'Why are you allowed to set boundaries but I'm not? I shouldn't have to justify myself or my wants to you. I am just as human as you are, so I am entitled to take all the same decisions as you. I am allowed to set the same boundaries as you are. Maybe I don't want to be touched. Maybe I don't want you to get to know me. I don't want to talk to you or give you my number. I am my own person, and you don't get to decide what to do with me just because you feel like it. It always was and always has been my choice where, when, and how to set my boundaries. If you can't accept that, grow up.'

Boundaries are the personal limits we set for ourselves in relationships. They define what we are comfortable with and what we are not. Consent and boundaries build trust and create a safe environment where both partners feel respected and valued.

Can you give examples of personal boundaries you might set in a friendship or romantic relationship?

What are some signs of a healthy relationship where boundaries and consent are respected?

Can you think of situations where asking for consent is important?

How would you support a friend who was in a friendship or relationship where their boundaries were often being crossed?

UNCOMFORTABLE GAMES



When I was very young in primary school, a boy told me we were playing a game and tickled me but kept tickling me in places that made me uncomfortable. I didn't know how to react because although I was uncomfortable because it was a game I thought it must be okay so I just giggled awkwardly rather than stopping them or telling someone. I wish someone had told me that I could say no.

Research commissioned by the Children's Commissioner in 2013 found that there are gender differences in understanding and practicing consent. Young women are often more aware of the importance of consent but may still face challenges in asserting it. Young men, on the other hand, may have less understanding of consent and may be influenced by harmful stereotypes about masculinity.

Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2013

Can you think of reasons why young women and young men have different understandings of consent?

What strategies can we use to empower ourselves and others to speak up in uncomfortable situations?

Why might someone feel conflicted about saying no, even when they are uncomfortable?

A watercolor illustration of a nude female figure with multiple arms, set against a yellow background and a pink border. The figure is depicted with a pale, yellowish-tan skin tone. She has several arms: one at the top left, one at the top right, one on the right side, one on the left side, and one at the bottom. Each arm is drawn with simple black outlines and some shading. The figure's torso is visible, with small red dots representing nipples. The background is a solid yellow color. The entire illustration is framed by a thick pink border. The text "INTIMATE IMAGES" is written in large, bold, black, hand-drawn capital letters across the center of the image, partially overlapping the figure's torso and arms.

INTIMATE
IMAGES

‘Millions of people have access to my body. They touch me with their brain and taste me with their eyes. I can feel so many of them on my skin. Is it still my skin? Is it still my body? It was supposed to be mine, but it’s been given to everyone else and they all want it. It’s been taken away from me - I only have my skeleton now, and no doubt that will soon be taken from me too. Then I will become nothing but a piece of flesh for the amusement of others’

Sharing explicit images of anyone under 18, even if it’s a self-taken image, is illegal. This can lead to serious legal repercussions, including being placed on the sex offenders register. Research suggests that some young people feel pressured by peers or partners to send explicit images. A significant number of young people express regret after sending explicit images, especially if the images are then shared without their consent.

SWGf/UK Safer Internet Centre, 2017

Why do you think many young people regret sending explicit images?

What effects could the sharing of explicit images without consent have on someone’s life?

How might peers or partners pressure someone into sending explicit images?

THEY SAID



I AM CUTE

'I am a woman not a cat so stop catcalling me. If someone wants to talk to you they should talk respectfully. Instead of that they shout. Shout because you would never have given them attention if they didn't. It is always their fault and has nothing to do with the girl. The blame and shame is always on the guy shouting. It is embarrassing and hopeless, so please stop embarrassing yourself. We have no care in the world for you so please continue walking with your mouth shut.'

According to a survey conducted for UN Women in 2021, 71% of women of all ages in the UK have experienced some form of sexual harassment in a public space. This number rises to 86% among 18-24-year-olds.

UN Women UK, 2021

What can we do when we witness catcalling happening in the street?

How do you think the fear of sexual harassment like catcalling affects the daily lives and behaviours of women and girls?

OUR GENDER
IS ~~NOT~~ NOT



HOW WE
LOOK

Women and men are just people, we are all individuals, not just different bodies. Gender stereotypes can be harmful because we end up feeling wrong if we don't fit the stereotype of women/men. We are not being able to be ourselves. Sometimes because men are seen as stronger there is the assumption that they should have the power in the relationship. There are so many ways misogyny is embedded in everyday life, from comments like 'be a man' or 'girls are emotional', to blaming all bad moods on periods.

In a 2019 survey by the Fawcett Society, 45% of people said they experienced gender stereotyping in childhood by being expected to behave in a certain way. Stereotyping in childhood has wide-ranging and significant negative consequences for both women and men, with more than half (51%) of people affected saying it constrained their career choices and 44% saying it harmed their personal relationships.

The Fawcett Society, 2019

Can you think of any careers that are often stereotyped as being 'for men' or 'for women'? How do these stereotypes affect people's decisions?

How might gender stereotyping in childhood impact someone's mental health and self-esteem in the long term?

Why do you think gender stereotypes persist in society despite efforts to challenge them?

WORDS HURT



People often make assumptions about your sex life based on the way you look. If you sleep with more than one man you're a slut, if you don't sleep with anyone you're a prude. There are so many words used to shame a woman for having or liking sex. Women are labelled sluts or slags if they discuss their sex life.

Slut-shaming is a term used to describe stigmatising an individual based on their appearance, their actual or perceived sexual availability, and can happen in both virtual and physical spaces. This kind of gender stereotyping is known to have a significant and negative effect on physical and emotional wellbeing of young people.

Goblet & Glowacz, 2021

Can you think of any examples of slut-shaming that you have seen or heard about, either online or in person?

Why do you think gender stereotyping, like slut-shaming, can be particularly harmful?

How does slut-shaming differ in virtual spaces (like social media) compared to physical spaces (like schools or social gatherings)?

What might we do to challenge and dismantle the stereotypes that lead to slut-shaming?



EQUALITY?

'Is it really too hard to live life with no rules, ideology, or behaviour based on the concept of gender? The answer is it is not that hard at all, people, men and women, are just too scared of change. Cowards are scared of equality because of the radical effect it would have on society.'

'I feel that women will always be seen as inferior to men in one way or another. While we have definitely made progress over the years, a lot of the world is still dominated by men and it's gone on for so long I'm losing hope that men and women will ever be equal.'

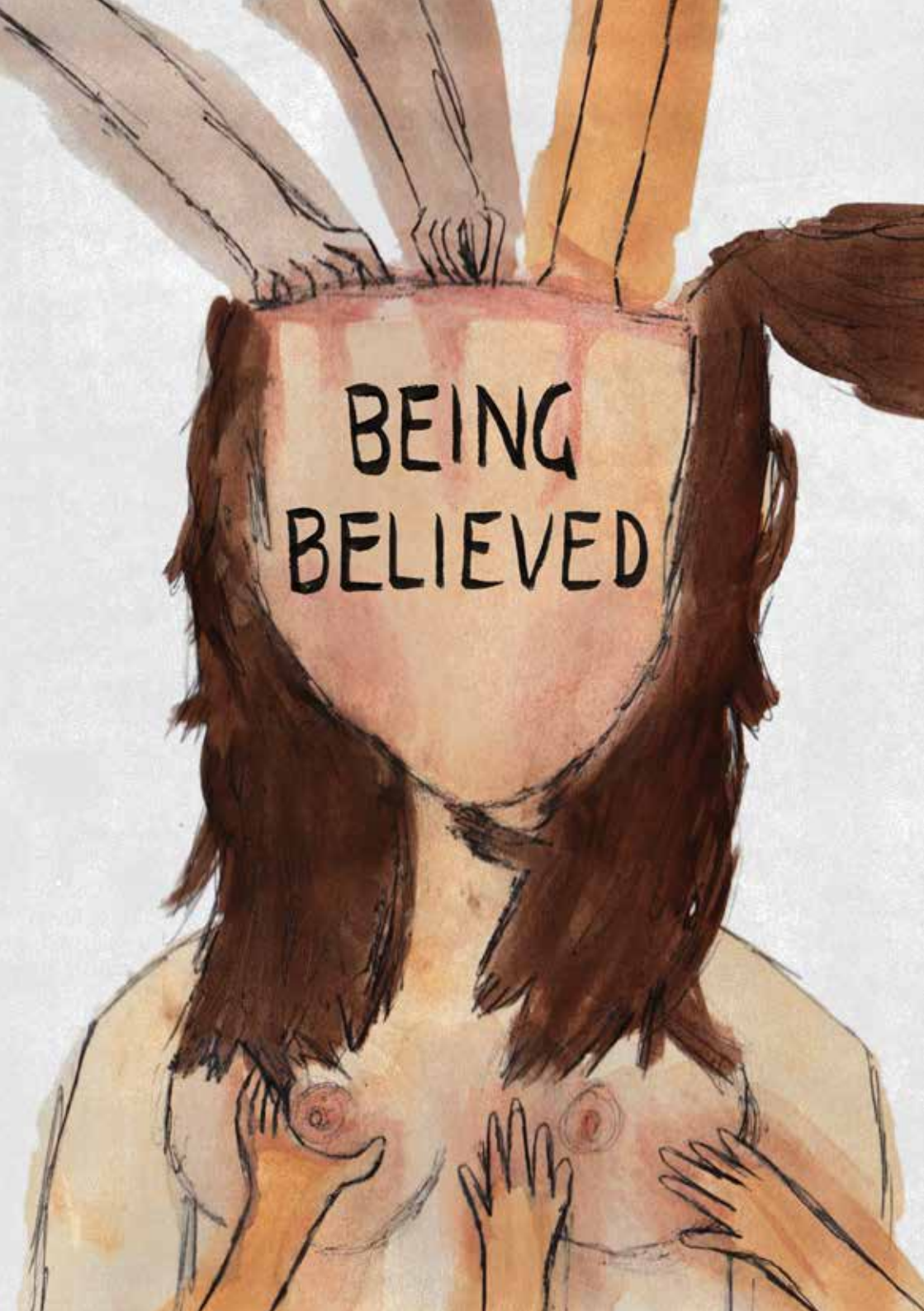
Research conducted with the Global Institute for Women's Leadership found that the opinion of the British public is highly split on the issue of gender equality. 47% of people surveyed agreed that when it comes to giving women equal rights to men, things have gone far enough, and that we now risk discriminating against men. 43% disagree, and feel that much more work is needed to promote gender equality between men and women.

Ipsos, 2024

Do you think there is a risk of discriminating against men when promoting gender equality? Why or why not?

Can you share any examples of where you think gender equality still needs improvement?

How might these differing opinions impact the progress of gender equality in the UK?



BEING
BELIEVED

'What does it feel like not to be believed? To have your whole experience rejected as if it never happened? To have a serious, suffocating, painful thing happen and to have people say you probably wanted it anyway, you were asking for it. Maybe for a moment you did want to feel grown up, feel like you'd done this thing that everyone is talking about. But then you know you said no, but it was too little and too late when they were bigger and stronger, and no one would believe you.'

According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), an estimated 2.3% of adults (3.3% women and 1.2% men) were victims of sexual assault in the year ending March 2022. Despite this high prevalence, many incidents go unreported. The charity Rape Crisis estimate that around 5 in 6 women and 4 in 5 men who are raped do not report the assault to the police.

How do you think it feels for someone to not be believed after experiencing a traumatic event like sexual assault?

Why do you think some people might blame the victim of a sexual assault for what happened or suggest they were 'asking for it'?

Why might survivors of sexual assault choose not to report what has happened to them?