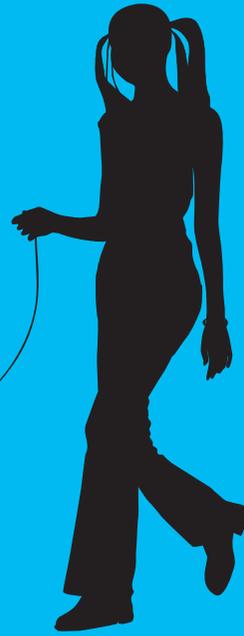




The overall aim of this project is to affect change. A clearer understanding of young women's lives, experiences and aspirations can inform youth work practice in terms of its ethos and focus. The findings will be used to inform the set up, delivery and evaluation of a number of programmes to meet the needs of young women as they themselves have defined them.

This research will also provide recommendations for youth work policy regarding increasing the participation of young women and establishing a framework of effective practice.



For more information:

Research Team
Gender Equality Unit
YouthAction NI
Hampton
Glenmachan Park
Belfast
BT4 2PJ

Tel: 028 9076 0067

Email: geu@youthaction.org

Supported by



In partnership with:



Where
have all the
**young
women
gone?**



Designed by: Kathleen Dixon, Jemy Jamison, Danielle Maguire,
Sarah McLaughlin (Young Women's Working Group)

The Position of Women in NI: Key Statistics

Work, Employment and Education

- Girls continue to outperform boys at both GCSE and A-Level, 59% of those entering NI universities are women. This success in education is not translated into women's position in the labour market¹
- In 2000, the average weekly income for women was £301 compared to £361.50 for men¹
- 84% of all part-time employees are women²
- Women continue to undertake more unpaid work than men – on average men spend 5.92 hours a week doing housework compared to an average of 17.15 hours spent by women²

Representation

- There are no female High Court judges¹
- There are three elected women MPs from Northern Ireland and 1 MEP²
- Despite the current suspension of the NI Assembly, in the 2003 elections only 18 of the 108 elected members were women²

Health and Well-Being

- In a recent survey, 30% of young women aged 16 years compared to 16% of young men the same age reported suffering from psychological distress³
- Recent research suggests that the numbers of teenage girls involved in binge drinking in Ireland are the highest in Europe⁴
- There were 14,520 recorded incidents of domestic violence in 2000, almost 90% of victims were female¹

Little is known about the everyday lives of young women living and growing up in Northern Ireland, yet there is an increasing focus on the negative aspects of young women's lifestyles e.g. binge drinking, sexual promiscuity and risk-taking behaviours.

In order to gain a more grounded understanding of young women's lives, we recognise that it is necessary to reveal their "lived realities".

This research project aims to find out, in the words of the young women themselves, what it is like living and growing up in Northern Ireland today.

A range of issues are being explored, including:

- Education
- Politics
- Employment
- Access to services
- Community Participation
- Gender roles & expectations
- Leisure Provision

The research findings will act as a catalyst to affect change and generate debate concerning various aspects of the lives of young women.

WHAT YOUNG WOMEN SAY

We have already spoken to over 50 young women from different backgrounds across Northern Ireland. This is a snapshot of some of the things they told us:

Young Women on Sports and Leisure

"Especially fellas like, they all think girls can't do sport, girls have to do all the womany things"
(YW living in a rural community)

"If you ask about me it's a boring life, I just stay at home all the time ... I'm not allowed to go out, I'm not allowed to do anything!"
(YW minority ethnic background)

Young Women on Careers Advice & Employment Expectations

"Hopefully in September I'm going on to work with car body repairs ... One of the teachers laughed at me, and said 'don't be so stupid'"
(YW living in an interface area)

Young Women on Body Image

"I sat and cried a couple a weeks ago when I was watching the girls on TV, I just cried for ages ... Because they're all nice"
(YW living in an interface area)

"It's weird, you wanna be feminine and you wanna be attractive but you don't want that to be seen as be your only quality"
(YW attending a Grammar School)

Young Women on Gender Expectations

"... it's a double set of standards, if you see a condom in a fella's wallet, that's alright, that's normal. If you see a condom in a girl's purse, you're like 'who!'"
(YW attending a Grammar School)

Young Women on Equality

"... I hate cooking and embroidery and things, I find them really boring, my mum's always on my back to do them, cos she says 'you're a girl, whenever you grow up and get married what are you gonna do when you dunno how to cook?'"
(YW minority ethnic background)

"... it's quite confusing when you're led to believe that you can do anything, but then when you try, you get knocked down ..."
(YW L/Derry community)

1 Cited in Breitenbach, E. & Galligan, Y. (2004) **Gender Equality Indicators for Northern Ireland: A Discussion Document**. Belfast: OFMDFM

2 Department of Enterprise, Trade & Investment (2005) Women in Northern Ireland. Department of Enterprise, Trade & Investment. National Statistics. www.statistics.gov.uk

3 Cairns, E. & Lloyd, K. (2005) **Stress at 16**. Research Update (33). ARK Northern Ireland, Social & Political Archive. www.ark.ac.uk

4 O'Doherty, G. (2004) Drunken schoolgirls staggering along the streets in the afternoon ... is this normal behaviour in Ireland. **Irish Independent**, 18/12/04.