

#MeToo one year on – what's changed?

Fawcett Society

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Executive Summary

On the 15th October 2017, Alyssa Milano tweeted encouraging women everywhere to tweet using the words “me too” to “give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem” of sexual harassment. It soon went viral. What followed was a worldwide social media explosion of women sharing their stories and experiences of sexual harassment.

But we wanted to find out what difference that disruption has made. This research quantifies the powerful, disruptive impact that the ensuing #MeToo movement has had in the UK- the conversations it has sparked, the will to change society that it has created, and the norms it has challenged. But this report also suggests where there is still work to do.

Our data finds that awareness is high - a year on from #MeToo, 36% of women, and the same proportion of men, had both heard of the campaign and could correctly identify its aims.

#MeToo and the events of the last year have challenged people to change their thinking about sexual harassment. 38% of people in the UK agree that they had thought differently about what behaviour is and isn't acceptable over the last year – and 31% of people have had a conversation with someone of the opposite sex about sexual harassment.

Those conversations have led to more people being willing to take action in their own lives to tackle sexual harassment. Our research found that over half of women aged 18-34 and 58% of young men say they have been more willing challenge behaviour or comments they think are unacceptable. Women across social divides have been calling out unacceptable behaviour – this change has not been restricted to “elites”.

But those conversations are not happening equally when it comes to gender. 34% of women agreed that they had had a conversation about sexual harassment with other women, slightly fewer than the 41% who disagreed. However, only 28% of men said they have had those conversations with other men, compared with 50% who disagreed.

For the majority of people, #MeToo has shifted social norms – the acceptable limits of behaviour in the environments in which we live. 53% of women and men agree that “in the

last 12 months there has been a change in what behaviour other people think is and isn't acceptable”, against only 11% who disagree. This is particularly true of women (69%) and men (60%) aged 65 or over. Importantly, people who are aware of the #MeToo movement are one and a half times more likely to agree that there has been a change.

Perhaps significant is the fact that older men are as likely as younger men to report that they can see a change in social norms around sexual harassment, but less likely to say they have changed their own behaviour as a result. They still hold disproportionate power in our society and so they need to be part of the change brought about by the #MeToo movement. Across the different questions we asked, we found less of a change in attitudes and behaviour amongst them. It is amongst older men that the greatest resistance lies.

Over the last year the women who spoke up as part of the #MeToo movement have disrupted the status quo and changed society: now the law and organisational culture need to catch up. Strengthening the law on sexual harassment must be part of the legacy of #MeToo, from reintroducing a law on third party harassment, to taking gender into account in relationships and sex education, and making employers accountable for their own organisational culture, requiring them to proactively take steps to prevent harassment in their workplace.

Context

In 2006, the American civil rights activist Tarana Burke began using the phrase “me too” in her work with girls and young women who had survived sexual assault “to let folks know that they were not alone and that a movement for radical healing was happening and possible.”¹

On the 15th October 2017, shortly after the allegations against Harvey Weinstein became public knowledge, the actor Alyssa Milano tweeted asking women everywhere to post on social media using the words “me too” to “give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem” of sexual harassment.²

This rapidly went viral, with 12 million shares on Facebook in 24 hours, and 1.7 million tweets across 85 countries over the first week using the hashtag.³ Facebook reported that 45% of Americans had a friend who had posted with their stories. Millions of women sought and found the “empowerment through empathy” that Tarana Burke promoted over a decade ago.

One year on from that groundswell, the movement has spread from Hollywood to the grassroots. Women have been inspired to break the silence about the harassment they have experienced, and continue to experience - from the halls of Westminster to the Presidents’ Club and in industries across the UK.

The last year has felt like a momentous opportunity to change the way that our society views sexual harassment, treats its survivors, and holds its perpetrators to account. This research seeks to quantify the impact that the #MeToo movement has had; to suggest where there is work to do and conversations still to be had; and to propose changes to the law that can support that cultural change.

¹ <https://www.ebony.com/news-views/black-woman-me-too-movement-tarana-burke-alyssa-milano>

² https://twitter.com/Alyssa_Milano/status/919659438700670976

³ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/metoo-reaches-85-countries-with-1-7-million-tweets/>

Methodology

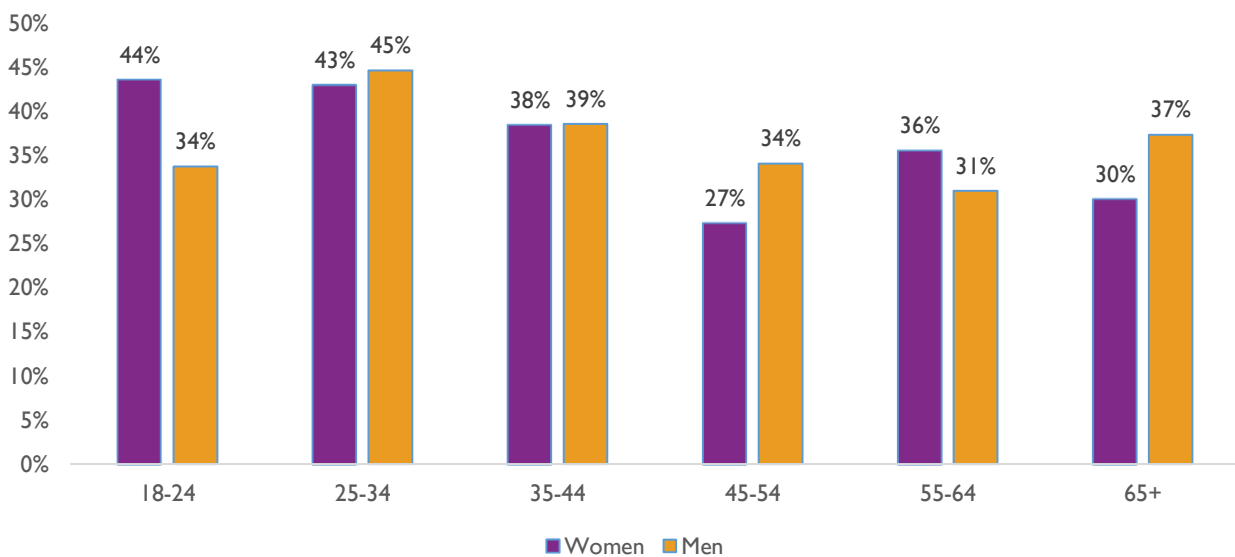
Data in this report draws on a nationally representative online panel survey of 2,056 individuals conducted by the polling company Survation between 13th-14th August 2018, and 31st August-2nd September 2018. Differential response rates from different groups were taken into account. Data were weighted to the profile of all adults aged 18+ in the United Kingdom. Data were weighted by age, sex, region, household income, education, 2017 general election vote and EU referendum vote. Targets for the weighted data were derived from Office for National Statistics 2011 Census data and the results of the 2017 general election and 2016 EU referendum.

Because only a sample of the full population were interviewed, all results are subject to a margin of error, meaning that not all differences are statistically significant. For the whole sample (2,056 respondents) it is 95% certain that the 'true' value will fall within the range of 2.2% from the sample result. Subsamples will be subject to higher margins of error. Figures throughout are rounded to the nearest % point, and may not sum due to rounding.

Awareness of #MeToo

Our data finds that a year on from #MeToo, awareness of the campaign to end sexual harassment is high. 43% of women and men said that they had heard of the movement, of which 85% could correctly identify its aims.⁴ That means that 36% of women, and the same proportion of men, had both heard of the campaign and could correctly identify its aims. As Figure 1 below shows, this varies with age.

Figure 1: Awareness of the #MeToo Movement by Age



Awareness is highest among younger women and men, with 43% of women aged 25-34 and 45% of men in that age bracket informed about the movement. But older men still have high levels of awareness, with 37% of men aged 65+ able to identify the campaign's aims.

Knowledge of the campaign is highest among women and men with degree level-education, amongst whom 54% and 53% could identify the campaign's aims correctly, compared with 30% of women and men who don't have degree-level qualifications. We found a similar trend in terms of both income and social class, although even so a quarter of working class women and a third of women on the lowest income were aware of the #MeToo campaign.

⁴ From a list of the following options: #metoo was the hashtag used to raise awareness about the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault in society; #metoo was the hashtag used to raise awareness of the gender pay gap; #metoo was the hashtag used to raise awareness of women who work in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Thinking Differently

#MeToo and the events of the last year have challenged people to change their thinking about sexual harassment. We found that 38% of people in the UK agree that they had thought differently about what behaviour is and isn't acceptable - this was particularly true of young people, with 54% of 18-24 year old women and 56% of 18-24 year old men agreeing.

Over a third of women in each region across the UK (Figure 2) say that they have thought differently, with 60% of women in London agreeing with the statement. There is also a significant difference between London (48%) and the rest of the UK (33%) in the extent to which men agree that they have thought differently.

Figure 2: % Agreeing that "In the last 12 months I have thought differently about what behaviour is and isn't acceptable" by Region

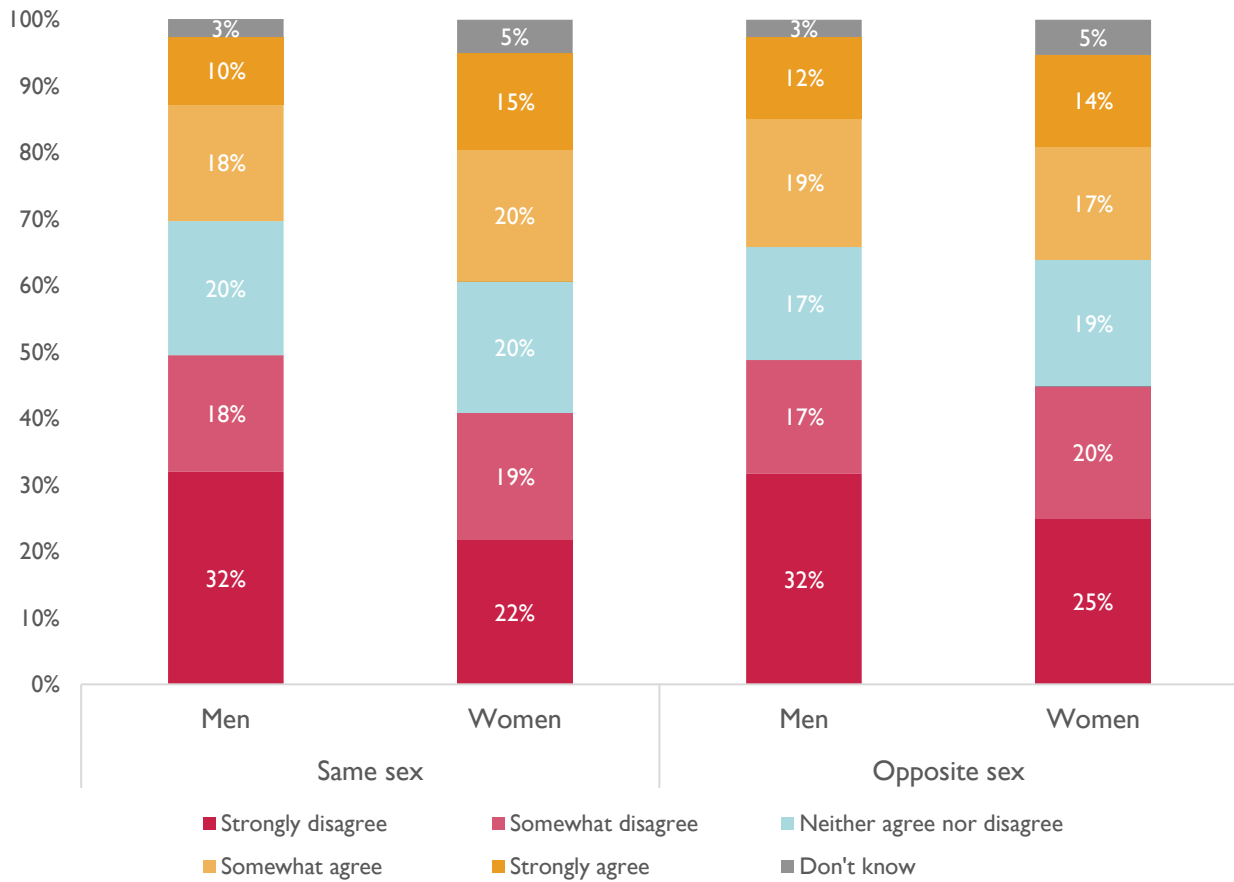


Figures for Wales (n=113) and Northern Ireland (n=59) have a small sample size; differences are unlikely to be statistically significant.

The #MeToo movement has sparked conversations about sexual harassment, with 31% of people saying they had discussed it with someone of the same sex, and the same proportion saying they had discussed it with someone of the opposite sex.

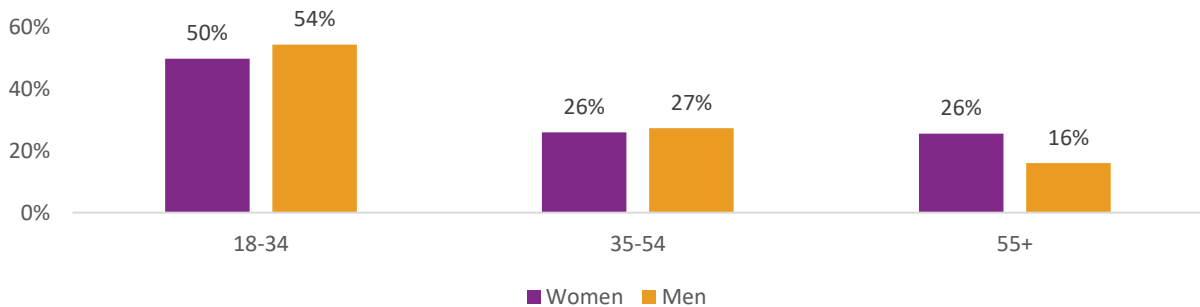
But as Figure 3 shows, conversations are not happening equally. 34% of women agreed that they had had a conversation about sexual harassment with other women, slightly fewer than the 41% who disagreed. Only 28% of men said they had those conversations with other men, compared with 50% who disagreed.

Figure 3: "In the last 12 months I've had a conversation about sexual harassment with someone of the..."



As Figure 4 shows, the situation is different among under 34s, with men and women equally likely to have conversations with their peers – 54% of young men agreed or strongly agreed that they have had conversations with other men about sexual harassment, compared with 48% of women, while just 20% of men and 26% of women disagreed or strongly disagreed. Although we don't know the tone of those discussions, it seems likely that a more active conversation about sexual behaviour is happening among younger men, as well as younger women.

Figure 4: "In the last 12 months I've had a conversation with someone of the same sex about sexual harassment" by Age

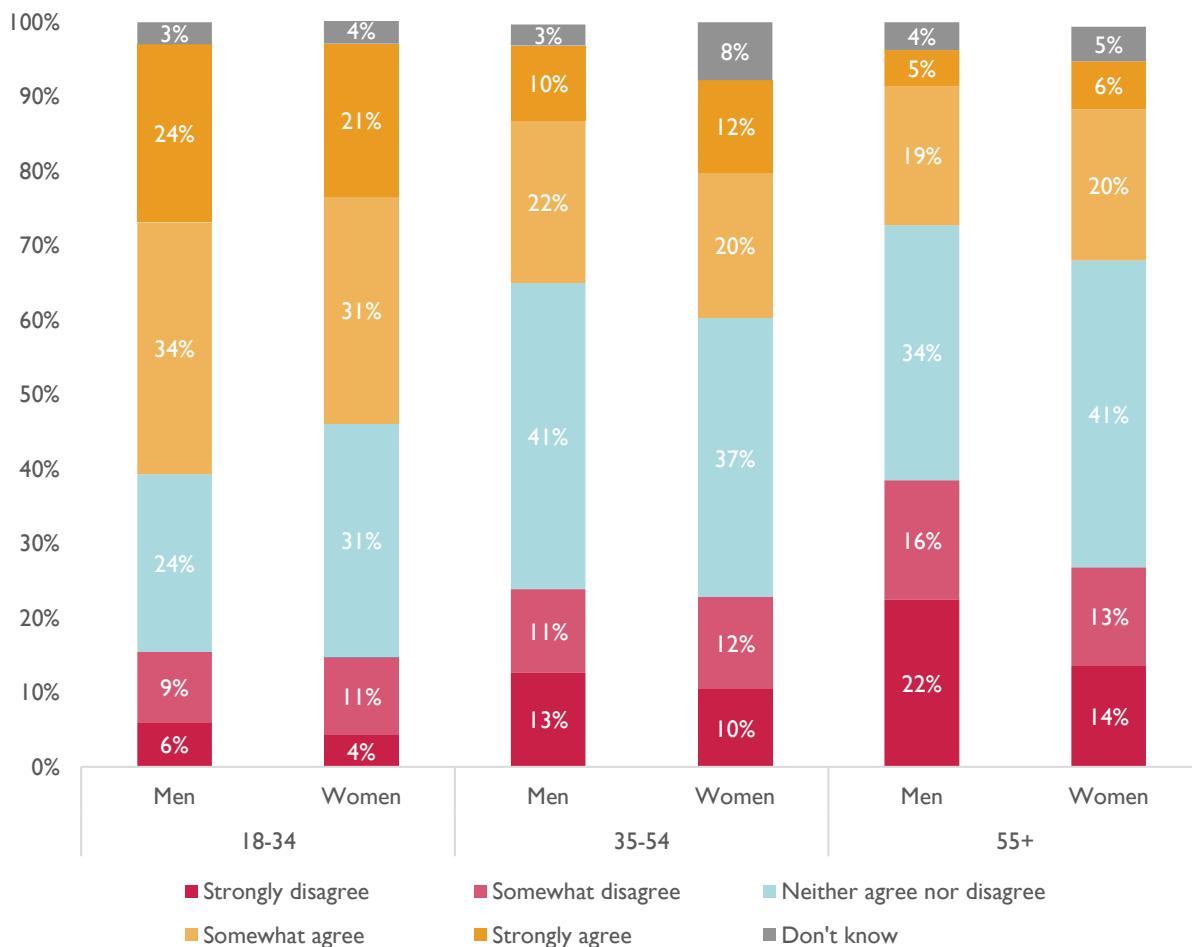


Speaking Up

Those conversations created by the #MeToo movement have led to more people being willing to take action in their own lives to tackle sexual harassment. We asked the public whether they agree or disagree that “In the last 12 months I have been more likely to challenge behaviour or comments I think are inappropriate”. Both women and men overall were more likely to agree with this statement than disagree. We found that 35% of people agreed that they were more likely to ‘call out’ inappropriate behaviour.

That willingness differed with age. As Figure 5 shows, our polling found that over half of young women (51% of those aged 18-35) and 58% of young men say they have been more willing to speak up. Men over the age of 55 were far more likely to disagree with the statement, with 38% disagreeing compared with 24% who agreed that they have been more likely to challenge behaviour over the last year. Men up to the age of 44 and women up to the age of 55 were overall more likely to agree than disagree.

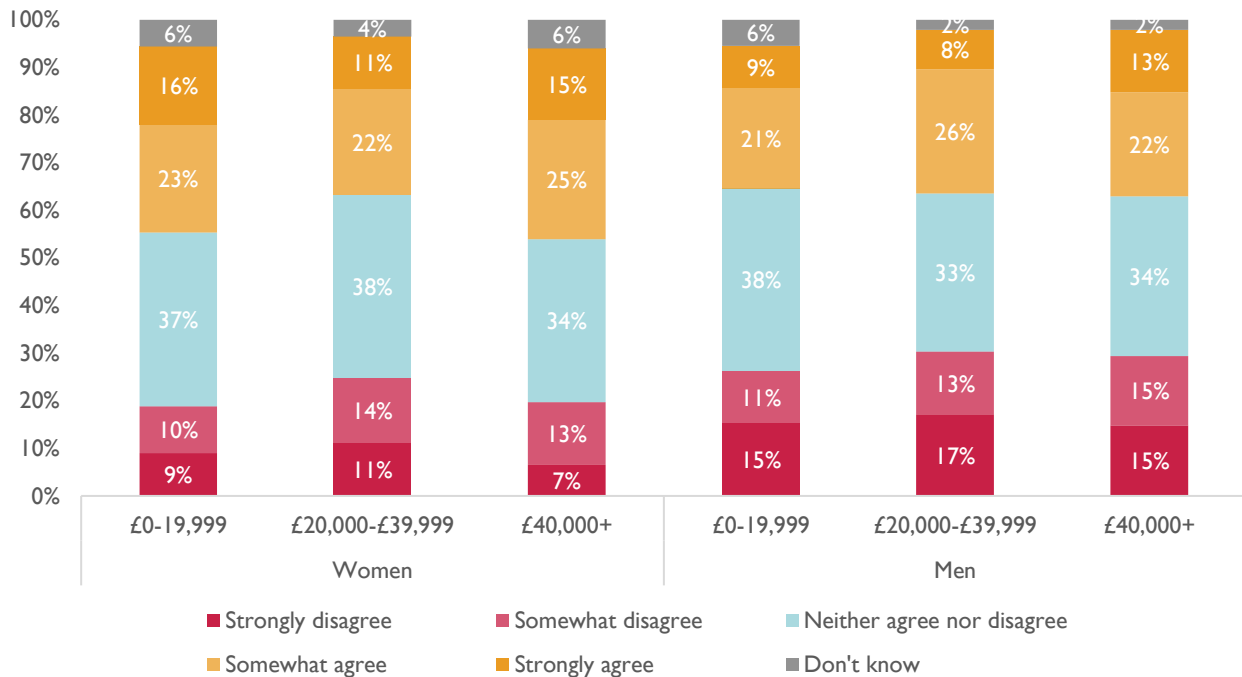
Figure 5: "In the last 12 months I have been more likely to challenge behaviour or comments I think are inappropriate" by Age



Our polling finds that women across social divides have been calling out unacceptable behaviour, with women earning £0-£20,000 saying they are more likely to do so at the same rate as women earning over £40k, as Figure 6 shows.

37% of women from working class backgrounds⁵ also said they had become more likely to speak up over the last 12 months, which was the second most likely social class after middle class and upper middle class women at 49%.⁶

Figure 6: "In the last 12 months I have been more likely to challenge behaviour or comments I think are inappropriate" by Income



This research finds that, according to individuals own estimation of their behaviour, people in the UK have been increasingly motivated over the past year to act as allies to combat sexual harassment. More needs to be done though to understand how and if that is happening in practice; and also whether people at all levels of the workplace and society have the tools to understand how they can best intervene.

⁵ DE social classes

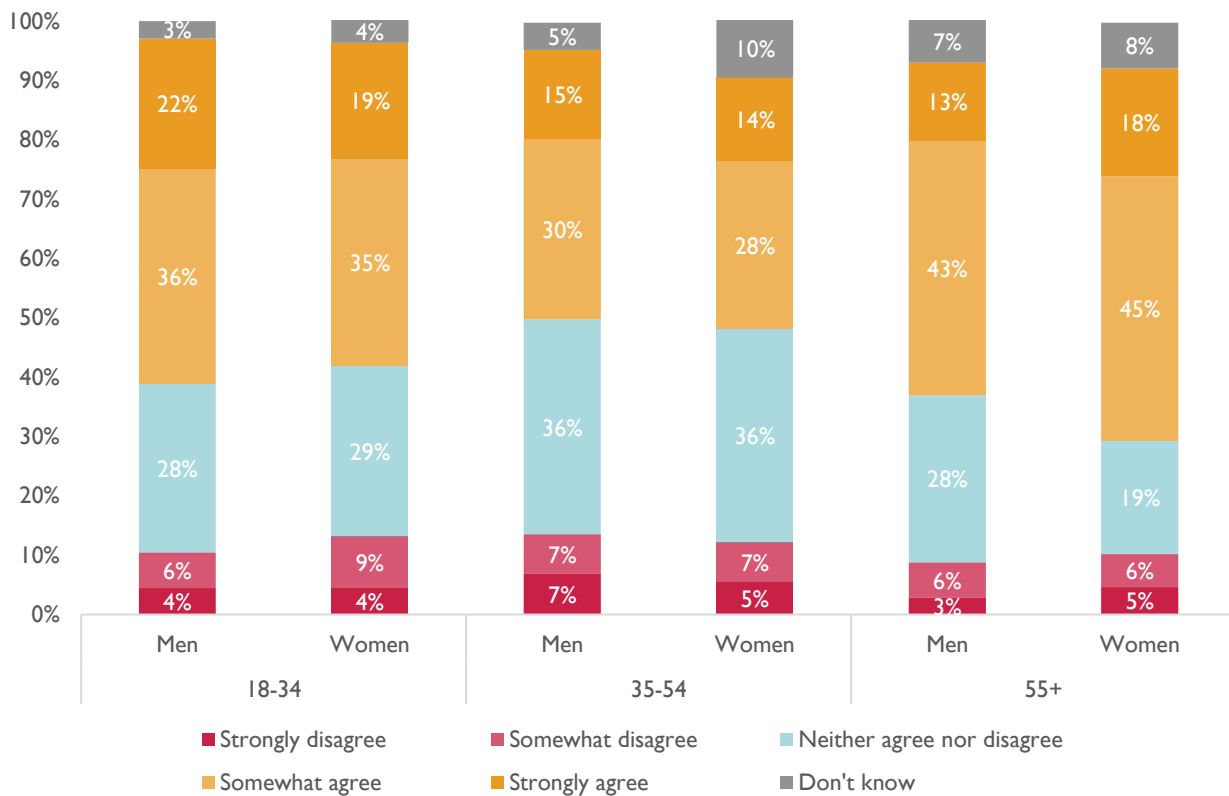
⁶ AB social classes. 30% of C1 and 33% of C2 people said they were more likely to challenge behaviour.

Changing Attitudes

For some, #MeToo has spurred them to speak up, but for others the impact has been to shift social norms – the acceptable limits of behaviour in the environments they operate in.

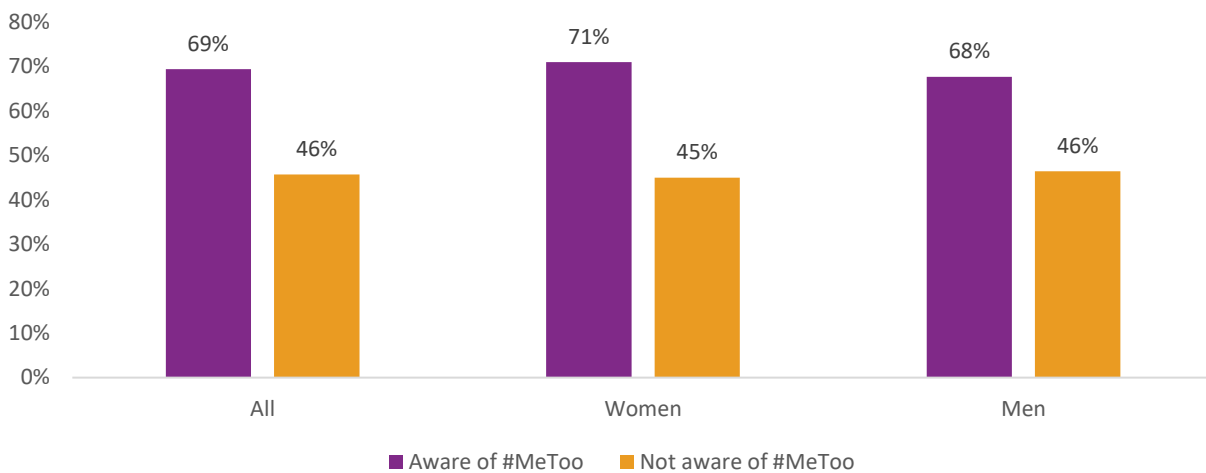
We asked respondents whether they agree or disagree that “In the last 12 months there has been a change in what behaviour other people think is and isn't acceptable”. 53% of women and men agree that this has changed in the last year, against only 11% who disagree. This is particularly true of women (69%) and men (60%) aged 65 or over, and of younger people. As Figure 7 shows, disagreement is low across age ranges, with middle-aged people more likely to neither disagree nor agree that norms had shifted.

Figure 7: "In the last 12 months there has been a change in what behaviour other people think is and isn't acceptable" by Age



Significantly, people who are aware of the #MeToo movement were one and a half times more likely to say that this environment had changed, with 69% of people who were aware of the movement agreeing compared with 46% of those who were not. This finding was similar amongst women and men, as Figure 8 shows.

Figure 8: % Agreeing that "In the last 12 months there has been a change in what behaviour other people think is and isn't acceptable"



Continuing the Conversation

This data suggests that awareness of the #MeToo movement is linked to people's perception that standards of acceptable behaviour have changed over the last year. Yet despite a significant 36% of people demonstrating that awareness of the campaign, there is still some way to go, particularly among women and men in lower-income work.

Older men need to be part of this change. Across the different questions we asked, we found less of a change in attitudes amongst them. Compared with younger men, older men are as likely to say that what other people think is and isn't acceptable has changed. But they are 27% points less likely than men aged 18-24 to say that *they* have thought differently about what behaviour is and isn't acceptable; 39% points less likely to say they have had a conversation with someone of the opposite sex about sexual harassment; and 40% points less likely to have spoken up to challenge behaviour or comments they think are inappropriate.

Older men make up a significant proportion of those in powerful positions across our society, from senior managers and directors of companies to the seats of political power. Allies and women, where they feel safe to do so, have a role to play in taking discussions to them but more importantly, they need to be open to listening to the #MeToo stories.

Recommendations

This research quantifies the conversations and rising willingness to challenge sexual harassment and assault that has happened across the country. But to date the law has failed to keep pace with these changes and culture change is similarly slow.

The Fawcett Society's *Sex Discrimination Law Review*, published earlier this year,⁷ considered whether legislation on sexual harassment was fit for purpose, and made recommendations to improve it, which we believe must be part of the legacy of #MeToo.

Third Party Harassment: Perpetrators of sexual harassment in the workplace are often third parties, i.e. not an employer, or colleague. Women working in retail, hospitality, healthcare, care, transport and many other sectors deal with clients, patients, and customers on a daily basis and currently have little protection from their employer when facing harassment.

Section 40 of the Equality Act 2010 provided for protection against this kind of harassment. However, following the Coalition Government's "Red Tape Challenge" Section 40 was repealed in 2013. The women who were harassed at the Presidents' Club are an example of women who could have little legal recourse as a result. The CBI has recently followed Fawcett's lead and called for Section 40 to be reintroduced⁸.

We recommend that section 40 is reintroduced, and amended to require only one previous incident of third party harassment for an employer to take action.

A Duty to Prevent Discrimination and Harassment: While it is vital that women have access to justice, we also need to place greater responsibility onto employers to prevent it from happening in their organisation and tackle the culture that tolerates sexual harassment as an acceptable part of the workplace. Large companies should be required to proactively set out their actions to prevent discrimination and harassment as an action plan and publish this alongside their gender pay gap reporting. This recommendation has been taken up by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and also the Women and Equalities Select Committee, which have recommended a duty to prevent harassment including a new statutory code of practice.

A new duty to prevent discrimination and harassment, and report on their action plan, should apply to organisations with 250 or more staff.

Relationships and Sex Education: Our polling demonstrates that young people, including young men, are increasingly having conversations about sexual harassment and increasingly willing to speak out against it. This needs to be reflected in the forthcoming Relationships and Sex Education guidelines.⁹ But in its current form the draft guidance is too often gender-blind. If we as a society are to capitalise on the #MeToo movement's momentum and challenge gendered violence from an early age, this needs to change.

⁷ Fawcett Society (2018) *Sex Discrimination Law Review*

<https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=e473a103-28c1-4a6c-aa43-5099d34c0116>

⁸ <http://www.cbi.org.uk/news/government-must-reinstate-section-40-to-protect-employees-against-harassment/>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/schools-to-teach-21st-century-relationships-and-sex-education>

The forthcoming statutory guidance for relationships and sex education (RSE) must cover gendered violence, address consent from an early age and limit opt-outs

Misogyny as a hate crime: Hate crime against women and girls is a cause and consequence of gender inequality and should be treated as unlawful. The recording of hate crime incidents against women and girls, which has the lowest level of hate crime recognition, has already begun in some police forces such as Nottingham and North Yorkshire. This needs to be extended, and the law around sentencing needs to be reviewed. The forthcoming review of Hate Crime is an opportunity to do so.

Police forces should be required to recognise misogyny as a hate crime for recording purposes alongside the existing five grounds, and the law should recognise it in sentencing.