

GENDER AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN (SEC)



1 in 5
girls

have been **sexually exploited or abused**
before reaching the age of 18



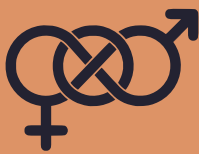
2 in 13
boys

Offenders are overwhelmingly male



1 in 20
men

reported having had **sexualised behaviour**
involving children under 12 years old



LGBTQIA+
children

are on average **4 times more likely** to be
sexually abused than heterosexual ones



Gender inequality fuels
Sexual Exploitation of
Children (SEC) which in
turn reinforces gender
inequality

SEC & Power

A child is a victim of sexual exploitation when they take part in a **sexual activity in exchange for something** (e.g. gain or benefit, or even the promise of such) from a third party, the perpetrator, or by the child themselves.

A child might be coerced through the use of physical force or threats. They may also be persuaded to engage in sexual activity as a **result of more complex and nuanced factors**, either human or situational.

SEC is a form of **gender-based violence (GBV)**, therefore it always involves **power imbalances**.



SEC is GBV

because **gender affects the risk factors** to become a **victim**, it shapes the **manifestation** of SEC and **needs change** depending on the gender.

Gender & Coping Mechanisms

Experience, coping mechanism and consequently, type of support needed differs depending on the gender:



Girls tend to exhibit
symptoms of depression
and suicidal ideation



Boys turn to substance
abuse to cope with the
victimisation

These differences can partly be explained by the way support is provided to girls and boys, whereas girls are seen as victims and boys as expressing harmful behaviours.



Shame and normalisation of violence discourage children from reporting

BOYS	GIRLS	LGBTQIA+
More likely to be victims of sexual abuse by someone outside the family	Victim-blaming , considered as slut for having engage with boys/ men, internalised self-shaming	Shaming, using homophobia with both gay boys to prevent reporting
Reporting at a later stage compared to girls, less likely to be identified by law enforcement and service providers	Internalised submissive behaviour , normalisation of male violence against girls	Internalised negative feelings about their sexual orientation (e.g. thinking it might have caused the abuse)
More likely to be a child offender (92-97% of children showing harmful sexual behaviour are boys)	Stigma around SEC and its interference with marriageability and virginity requirement: attempt to control over their sexuality	Myths concerning LGBTQIA+ kids and abuse, e.g.: sexual abuse turned the person LGBTQIA+, LGBTQIA+ adolescents are promiscuous, LGBTQIA+ are more likely to abuse
When victims of female offenders, they may not be perceived as victims but rather as lucky to receive sexual attention even if unwanted	Face unwanted early pregnancies and forced marriage as a result of SEC, leading to adverse health risks & education/ economic outcomes	LGBTQIA+ boys more at risk of SEC
Shaming, using homophobia with straight boys to prevent reporting (fear of being emasculated)	Significant higher vulnerability to all forms of SEC	Fear that talking about sexual abuse, in particular same-sex abuse, will be like outing their sexual orientation

Gender Norms at Play



Patriarchal societies encourage men's **power, dominance and control** over women and children, including their bodily integrity.



Victim-blaming attitude and prioritisation of the **offender's reputation** validate violence as a legitimate form of social control.



Norms related to **girls 'virginity'**: Gender norms such as sex should only take place within heterosexual marriage/ relationships and girls should be virgins before marriage.



Attitudes around masculinity based on heterosexual prowess and femininity predicated on control; male peer pressure to demonstrate their manhood by having sexual **conquest and unsafe** sexual practices.



Masculine Gender Role Stress: the strain boys and men experience for violating or not adhering to masculine gender norms (e.g. pressure on men to be seen as strong/ dominant).



Marriagability: Girls experience the pressure to conform to heterosexual norms through norms on beauty, appearance, their bodies, romance and social expectation to ultimately marry.