

# PLAY IT FOR CHANGE



## RAISING AWARENESS AND EMPOWERMENT OF GIRLS AND BOYS FOR THE PREVENTION OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE THROUGH AUDIO-VISUAL MEDIA AND MUSIC

Collection of evidence and needs assessment report: Cyprus

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July 2018, Nicosia



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# INTRODUCTION

## THE PROJECT


Play it for Change is a European project that aims to educate youth through audio-visual media and music by encouraging their critical thinking skills and fostering their empowerment to prevent and combat gender-based violence (GBV). In order to reach this aim, the first activity of the project has been the collection of evidence on the impact of GBV-related gender stereotypes in audio-visual media and music on youth attitudes and behaviours, and the assessment of the needs of teachers to prevent GBV. This report contains the result of this action. The project is being delivered by a partnership of six organisations across Europe: Fundació Surt (Catalonia, Spain), KMOP (Greece), The Peace Institute (Slovenia), CESI (Croatia), the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (Cyprus) and Feminoteka (Poland). The lead partner is Fundació Surt (Catalonia, Spain).

## NATIONAL CONTEXT, LEGISLATION AND POLICY

The impact of gender-based violence (GBV) on women and men's lives is illustrated by a vast number of studies. There is also an increasing body of evidence internationally that supports the idea that there are strong links between patriarchal attitudes and values and tolerance, and even acceptance, of GBV (Burton and Kitzinger, 1998; Murner et al., 2002; WHO, 2005; Santana and et al., 2006).

For the purposes of this study, GBV is understood as an umbrella term for discrimination or harmful behaviour directed against a person on the basis of their gender: the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that society considers appropriate for women and men. Its root cause lies in unequal hierarchical power structures and relationships that persist between women and men but also among men and among women. Although it affects both women and men, women and girls are disproportionately at risk of and affected by GBV, a fact that reflects their subordinate status in society. Violence against women (VAW) is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and includes all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (this definition is adapted from the UN Convention on the Eradication of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 2002 (CEDAW) and the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, 2011 (the Istanbul Convention)).

A number of studies reveal that Cypriot women as well as those of migrant background suffer a subordinate status, which reflects the highly patriarchal nature of Cypriot society. The prevalence of rigid gender roles contribute to the persistence of the conservative gender order (Kapsou and Christou, 2011; MIGS, 2010; Vassiliadou, 2004). The consequences of gender inequality are evident in all areas of life: women are under-represented in political and public life, they experience inequality in employment for example in the form of the gender pay gap, as well as GBV, in the form of, amongst others, domestic violence, rape and sexual assault.



Despite the frequent modifications to the legislative framework aimed at enhancing the protection of women against GBV in Cyprus (as well as in the European context), VAW statistics confirm a high prevalence, indicating that this phenomenon cannot be addressed exclusively through normative action. According to the EU-wide FRA survey (2014a), one in three women in the EU aged 15 and over has experienced physical and/or sexual violence. In Cyprus meanwhile, 6% of the women interviewed answered that they experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their current partner, 38% by previous partner, 23% by any partner (current and/or previous), 14% by a non-partner and 28% by any partner and/or non-partner since the age of 15 (FRA, 2014). Compared to the EU-28 average, physical and/or sexual violence by a previous partner (38%) and by a current and/or previous partner (23%) is significantly higher in Cyprus. An interesting finding of the survey was that one of the most prevailing forms of sexual harassment for women aged between 18 and 29 is cyber-harassment with an overall 20% of women reporting harassment since the age of 15 and 11% in the preceding 12 months (FRA, 2014).

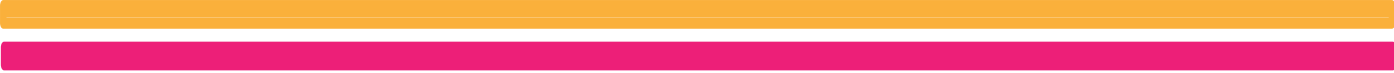
Although many obstacles remain which inhibit progress toward gender equality and ending VAW in Cyprus, there have been a number of positive developments in recent years. Such developments include the improvement of the legislative framework dealing with family violence through the adoption of the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family (2017-2019), and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in November 2017. As a result, a new bill on VAW and the protection of victims is being prepared by the Ministry of Justice to comply with the provisions of the Convention. In addition, the Legal Services have prepared a bill to criminalise harassment and stalking, in line with Article 34 of the Convention.

The establishment of actors such as the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence (1996), the Observatory on Violence in Schools (Ministry of Education and Culture) and the sustained efforts by relevant NGOs (such as the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, the Cyprus Family Planning Association and the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family) greatly contribute to positive developments.

However, significant challenges remain, including the lack of systematic collection and comprehensive analysis of VAW data. This data gap is problematic, as it impedes an in-depth understanding of the root causes but also the extent of these issues in Cyprus. Furthermore, the lack of comprehensive data and research impedes informed analysis and policy-making that would create much needed services and mechanisms to support and protect victims. It also impedes effective policing and criminal investigations, which would bring perpetrators to justice (MIGS, 2017; Kaili & Pavlou, 2015; MIGS, 2014, MIGS, 2010). Finally, research on violence against vulnerable groups, including migrant and refugee women, as well as women with disabilities are even more limited, hindering a comprehensive overview of the situation.

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AMONG ADOLESCENTS

There is limited data and research within the Cypriot context on the prevalence of GBV among adolescents. Research carried out by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (2014) on manifestations of GBV among adolescents aged 14 to 17, revealed that almost 1 in 5 (18%) had experienced some form of intimate partner violence. Furthermore, 13% of respondents had experienced domestic violence (3% physical), and 21% reported having been victims of bullying. 17% of the sample reported having been perpetrators of bullying and 40% held negative gender attitudes (gender stereotypes).



The study also revealed there is a high use of new technologies among young people, bringing a new and underexplored dynamic to GBV among adolescents. 44% of the survey respondents reported some form of online partner violence. Regarding sexual messages, 5.6% of girls and 15% of boys have sent sexual messages to their partner- during or after the relationship had ended. While, 13% of girls and 29% of boys have shared sexual messages received from partners with almost half of them (49%) claiming that they did it as a 'joke' (MIGS, 2014; MIGS, 2015).

With regards to the impact of experiences of online violence on young girls and boys, 59% of girls record an overall negative impact vs. 39% of boys, describing their feelings as – 'annoyed', 'embarrassed', 'angry' and 'upset'. 19% of girls, record an overall positive impact vs. 34% of boys, describing their feelings as – 'loved', 'wanted' and 'protected'.

The abovementioned results are further complemented by the results from the qualitative research paper titled *Connecting offline and online risks among young people* (MIGS, 2014). Young people report offline and online control as 'normal', 'acceptable', 'justifiable', 'reasonable'. Jealousy is also perceived as a sign of 'love and caring', 'a passing phase' and 'just a part of being in a relationship'. It was also considered 'justifiable' because it tends to be reciprocal, which 'evens the score'. Victim-blaming was also observed in offline and online violence: 'If you give him a reason, for example if you wear something short'. Young girls also expressed that 'it's ok to give your Facebook password or let him check your phone to show that you have nothing to hide' (MIGS, 2014; MIGS, 2015).

Not surprisingly, there has been a significant increase in incidents of cyber-harassment in recent years. Since 2009, the national Safer Internet Centre's CyberEthics helpline has responded to 3,474 calls. When the service launched in 2009, they received just one call on cyber-harassment, which increased to 6 calls in 2011, 19 in 2012, 21 in 2013 and saw a sharp increase in 2014, with 1,064 calls, followed by 1,134 in 2015 and 1,241 calls in 2016. Unfortunately, the categorisation of calls into specific groups such as sexual violence and harassment (SVH), grooming and sexting started in 2013 so the data for SVH is understandably scarce. SVH is defined by CyberEthics as, 'unwanted sexual contact/content/comments – including unsolicited contact' and has received a total of 20 calls since 2014 (16 calls in 2014 and 4 calls in 2016). This gap in reporting probably stems from a persistent reluctance to report SVH incidents due to the fear of victim-blaming and retaliation, and possibly a lack of awareness by young teens and young adults of cyber-harassment being a form of SVH.

Posting degrading photos on the internet and disseminating them via mobile phone, creating blogs or profiles on social networking websites with deliberately incorrect content, sending threats/obscene and offensive content, and the publication of photographs or videos without the consent of the individual, are just some of the more commonly reported incidents of internet bullying. This poses a new set of challenges for the stakeholders working to end GBV among teenagers.

In another study targeting young adults, specifically university students, carried out by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (2015), it was shown that, young men are more likely to engage in risky behaviour on the internet, while young women are more commonly propositioned by strangers. 27.1% of Cypriot youth have been victims of cyber violence, with women and students aged 23-25 being the most vulnerable group. The main form of harassment was 'annoying phone calls' or 'being humiliated, gossiped about or insulted via text messages, social media and chatting sites'. The impact of cyber-harassment is experienced very differently by young women and men. As concluded in the report, "[y]oung women's feelings of worry, fear, anger, and vulnerability following cyber violence, are associated with their perceived safety, integrity and dignity, whereas young men's feelings of disgust, nervousness, and shame, are associated with the impact of online activities of violence on their "social status" and reputation" (MIGS, 2015).

## VIOLENCE IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS


In a cross-national survey among 476 female university/college students (aged 18-24) in Greece, Cyprus, Malta, Lithuania and Latvia investigating date rape incidents and exploring their attitudes, dating experiences and level of awareness, 1.3% of the participants reported an attempted date rape, 1.9% reported being forced to have oral sex and 1.9% reported having been date raped (MIGS, 2008). 12.2% who answered the questionnaire reported having an “unwanted sexual experience”, often by a person that they considered to be their “boyfriend, friend or sexual partner” (54.2%) (MIGS, 2008: 23). More importantly, most who claimed to have been pressured into sexual acts by their partner feared their partners might leave them if they did not comply.

Interestingly, women were much more likely to disclose in the survey that they had “unwanted sexual experiences”, rather than having been victims of rape or attempted rape. This was also reflected the focus groups discussions where traditional beliefs about women and sexuality surfaced reinforcing patriarchal attitudes around the subject. Gender roles and stereotypes were confirmed by majority of the participants, specifically, “societal expectations with regard to women and men’s behaviour (gender roles) can contribute to an atmosphere where date rape is possible and indeed acceptable” (MIGS, 2008: 24).

Additionally, the study demonstrated that young women seem to have some understanding and recognition of other forms of GBV in intimate relationship apart from physical violence (such as coercive control). What emerges in the study specifically with regards to Cyprus, is an picture of abuse extensively affecting the lives of girls and boys, and a prevalence of a culture of victim-blaming. Even though the female students stated that women should dress any the way they feel comfortable, they also reported that sometimes women ‘confuse’ men with provocative dressing. This reinforces one of the most powerful myths associated with sexual violence that looks to justify the assault by attributing it to the victim’s behaviour or choices. This attitude reflects the traditional belief that men’s sexual desires cannot be controlled and thus women must take appropriate measures to avoid ‘provoking’ them (MIGS, 2008).

Few studies exist that examine the links between patriarchal gender attitudes and tolerance/acceptance of GBV within teenage relationships in Cyprus. Nevertheless, the data that exists confirms that persisting gender stereotypes are deeply ingrained and lead to gender-based violence. The most popular explanation for violence points to socialisation, and attributes violence to role models, especially within the family, as well as intergenerational transmission (Kapsou and Christou, 2011: 41). Other explanations for violence include the aforementioned victim-blaming, i.e. ‘provocation’ by girls and young women and the ‘necessary’ jealousy by those who exercise power and control as a way of showing love in teenage relationships (MIGS, 2017: 14; Kaili and Pavlou, 2015; Kapsou and Christou, 2011: 39-42).

The *First Pancyprrian Survey: Violent Behaviour in Interpersonal Relationships of Young Adults in Cyprus aged 18–25* (2012) also raised some interesting points. For one, it seemed that many female participants recognised violence as a pattern of behaviour, agreeing that that perpetrators who have acted violently towards one partner, are likely to exhibit patterns of such behaviour in their other relationships (Andronikou, A., Erotokritou, K., & Hadjiharalambous, D., 2012). But the survey also presented some disconcerting statistics, one of which was that 70% of the participants (667 female and 333 male in total) had opinions and attitudes that are conducive to violence, such as victim-blaming and the belief that intimate partner violence is a ‘private’ matter. More alarmingly, 50% of participants in general



agreed with statements that excuse the use of violence under certain circumstances, such as to 'correct' certain behaviour (Andronikou, A., Erotokritou, K., & Hadjiharalambous, D., 2012: 195). For instance, if the woman is dressed in a 'certain' way that can be deemed provocative by her partner or her behaviour is 'out of place'. Taken together, these findings indicate that such perceptions and attitudes enforce and perpetuate the victim blaming culture, which persists in Cypriot society, especially in terms of violence against women and girls. Women and girls bear the brunt of gender-discriminatory attitudes within their intimate relationships and violent behaviour is often considered acceptable.

Having in mind the growing use of new technologies and the constant exposure of adolescents and young people to audio-visual media and music, there is limited data and research within the Cypriot context examining the links between patriarchal gender attitudes and toleration/acceptance of GBV within teenage relationships. Research and data are even scarcer regarding the role of audio-visual media and music in this regard. Putting at the forefront the importance of studies understanding the level and forms of GBV affecting teenagers in Cyprus, this study aims to explore the impact of gender stereotypes in audio-visual media and music on the attitudes of young girls and boys. Furthermore, the study aims to expose the extent of tolerance among adolescents towards GBV and analyse such attitudes in light of their socio-cultural context. Finally, the study provides a number of critical recommendations for using music and audio-visual media to prevent GBV and to develop a coherent policy on gender equality education in Cyprus.

# METHODOLOGY

First, the objectives of the current study:

- To collect evidence on attitudes and behaviours of girls and boys aged 12 to 18 about gender equality and GBV.
- To collect evidence on the impact of gender stereotypes in audio-visual media and music on girls' and boys' attitudes and behaviours as they relate to GBV;
- To assess the needs of teachers and other education professionals to work with girls and boys on preventing GBV.
- To set priorities for future action to build the capacity of teachers and education professionals on preventing GBV among youth & fostering awareness and empowerment of boys and girls.

The research methodology was pre-set and agreed among the project partners to ensure consistency across participating countries. The methodology included both qualitative and quantitative methods. The empirical research involved: 1) A quantitative survey aimed at girls and boys, 2) focus groups with girls and boys and 3) focus groups with teachers and education professionals.

## DESK RESEARCH


Desk research of primary and secondary data was carried out before and during the qualitative and quantitative data collection, reviewing past national studies, as well as key policy and legal documents addressing GBV among adolescents.

## QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

The aim of the survey was to quantify the impact of gender stereotypes in audio-visual media and music on the attitudes and behaviours of boys and girls in secondary school in relation to GBV. The research sample on its own is not representative and therefore we cannot draw concrete conclusions from these findings. However, in combination with the qualitative data gathered through the focus groups, as well as secondary data, we have identified some general trends that can inform the project activities.

Total	Sex	Sex2	Sex3	Age	Age2
	Male	Female	Other	12~15	16~18
86	33	48	5	55	31





86 secondary school students (48 girls and 33 boys), aged 12-18 participated in the quantitative survey. Participants were students gathered from three public secondary schools in the Nicosia district. The schools can be categorised as urban and semi-urban.

Questionnaires were developed by the project consortium and modified as needed to reflect the national context. For Cyprus, the questionnaire was translated into Greek and distributed to students following approval of the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture (Directorate of Middle and High School Education) and school principals. The questionnaire was distributed in print form to students attending the three schools who had obtained parental/guardian consent. Sessions for questionnaire distribution were scheduled following coordination with teachers during class. The completion of the questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes, followed by an information session about the project and an invitation to the students to participate in the upcoming activities the following academic year.

## FOCUS GROUPS WITH ADOLESCENTS


The aim of the focus groups was to obtain qualitative information on the impact of gender stereotypes in audio-visual media and music on the attitudes and behaviours of girls and boys in secondary school in relation to GBV.

Focus groups participants included girls and boys (aged 12-13) from semi-rural public secondary schools. Participants of Focus Group 1 were six adolescent girls attending the first year of middle school. Participants of Focus Group 2 were six adolescent students (three girls, three boys), attending the second year of middle school. Participants of Focus Group 3 were eight adolescent students (four girls, four boys) attending the first year of middle school.

The focus group guide was developed and agreed among the project's consortium to ensure consistency in key discussion themes. The focus group guide was then adapted according to the national context and translated into Greek. Permission was obtained from the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture. The focus groups were organised in collaboration with teachers and school principals, after written consent was obtained from parents/guardians. The participation of adolescents in the focus group was voluntary and based on prior informed consent either by the legal guardians as well as the children/youth themselves. Before signing the letter of consent, adolescents and their guardians were informed of the project's goals and activities and the purpose of their participation. They were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw their participation at any time without consequence. Data protection regulations were also communicated to the participants and their parents/guardians. They were informed that their opinions would remain confidential and anonymity was guaranteed. Informed consent was also obtained to record the focus group discussions. The focus groups were led by two researchers, one who led the discussion and the other who was responsible for note-taking and technical support.

## FOCUS GROUPS WITH TEACHERS AND EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

The aim of the focus groups with teachers and education professionals was to assess the needs of teachers and other education professionals working with adolescents regarding the prevention of GBV.



Three focus groups were carried out with teachers and education professionals, both in rural public secondary schools in the Nicosia district (Focus Groups 1 & 2). The participants of Focus Group 1, were nine women and two men and for Focus Group 2 were six women and one man. Focus Group 3 brought together 9 female education professionals from different departments of the Ministry of Education and Culture as well as youth workers, trainers and teachers. The researchers aimed for the best possible gender balance in the focus groups participation.

The focus group guide was developed and agreed among the project's consortium to ensure consistency in the key discussion themes. The focus group guide was then adapted to the national context and translated into Greek. Permission to carry out the research was obtained from the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture and consent forms were signed by all participants. The focus groups were organised in collaboration with teachers and school principals. Before signing the consent form, the teachers were informed about the research project's goals and activities, the purpose of their participation, the possibility to withdraw from participation at any time without consequence, and the use of the data obtained. Data protection regulations were also communicated to the participants. They were informed that their opinion would remain confidential and anonymity was guaranteed. The focus groups were led by two researchers, one who led the discussion and the other who was responsible for note-taking and technical support.

## SAMPLING METHOD AND SAMPLE RECRUITMENT

For the recruitment of interested teachers and students, purposive sampling was deployed through a snowballing method, using key contacts of the research team to reach educators and schools. Teachers who had already participated in projects regarding gender equality in education, were asked to bring MIGS in touch with school principals. The school principals and teachers facilitated the recruitment of students to participate in both the questionnaire and the focus groups.

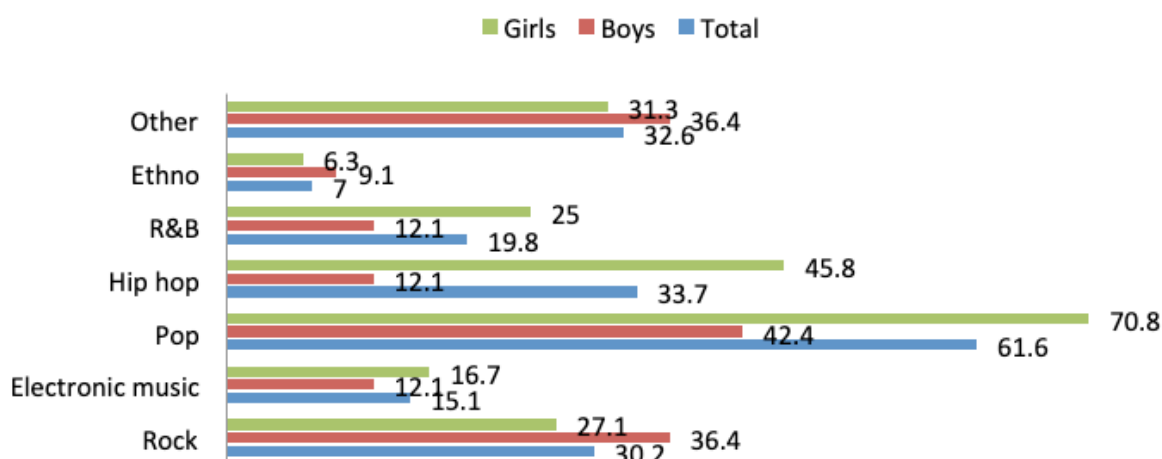
Teachers were recruited through school management with the help of the teachers who acted as contact points. School management was asked to disseminate the invitation for participation and the consent form to the teachers.

Every effort was made to ensure that the participation of teachers in the focus groups was gender balanced. The focus group discussions for both students and teachers lasted approximately 90 minutes.

# ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRES

The sample of students completing the questionnaire across gender and age (N=86) can be broken down as follows: 38.4% boys, 55.8% girls and 5.8% other. The mean age of the sample is 14.86. The percentage of 12-15 year olds is 64% and 36% for the 16-18 year olds. Two thirds of the sample came from rural areas in the Nicosia district and one third came from urban Nicosia.

## What type of music do you listen to?



Graph 1. Types of preferred music

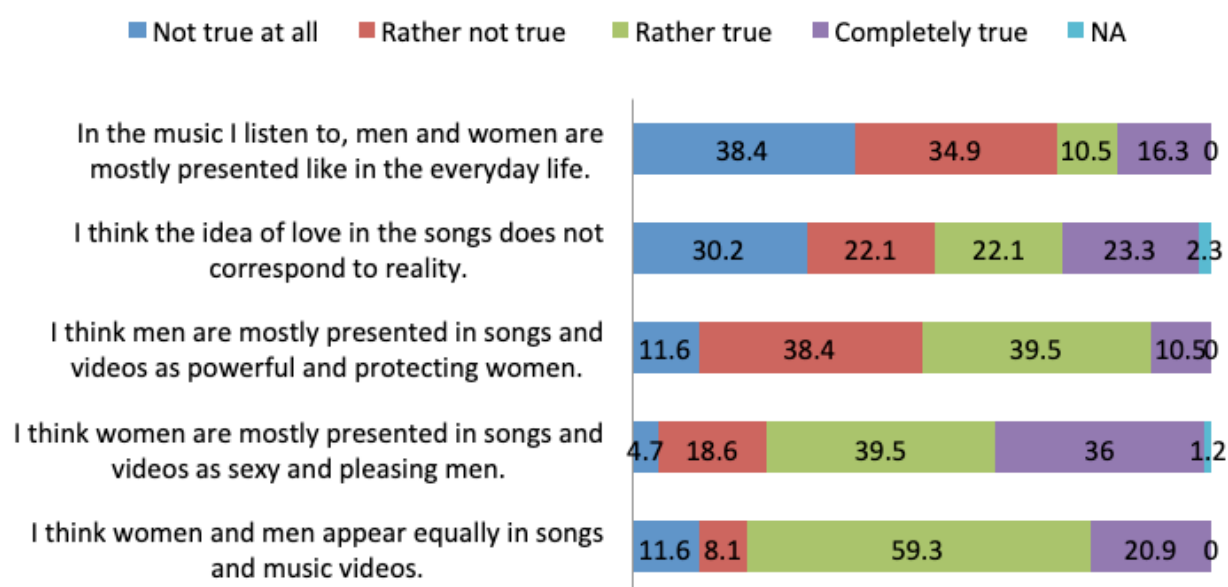
Students were asked to indicate their preferred type of music from the list including genres such as rock, electronic music, pop, hip-hop, R&B, ethno and others. The most common answer was pop (61.6%), followed by hip-hop (33.7%), other (32.6%), rock (30.2%) and R&B (12.1%). "Other" included classical, jazz, metal, rap, trap, k-pop, house, traditional Greek genres (e.g. entehno and rebetico), and byzantine music.

The most attractive aspect of music for students is rhythm (80.2%) followed by lyrics (72.1%), indicating that other aspects such as the singer, the music videos and visuals (including the appearance of the singer) do not carry the same significance. Only 26.7% of adolescents said they listened to music because they considered the singer attractive. 25.6% like the music videos of the songs and 5.8% find the appearance of the singer attractive. The results reflect that what matters is the rhythm, passion and energy of the performers, i.e. the ability to convey emotion to the audience.

## IDENTIFICATION OF GENDER STEREOTYPES IN MUSIC

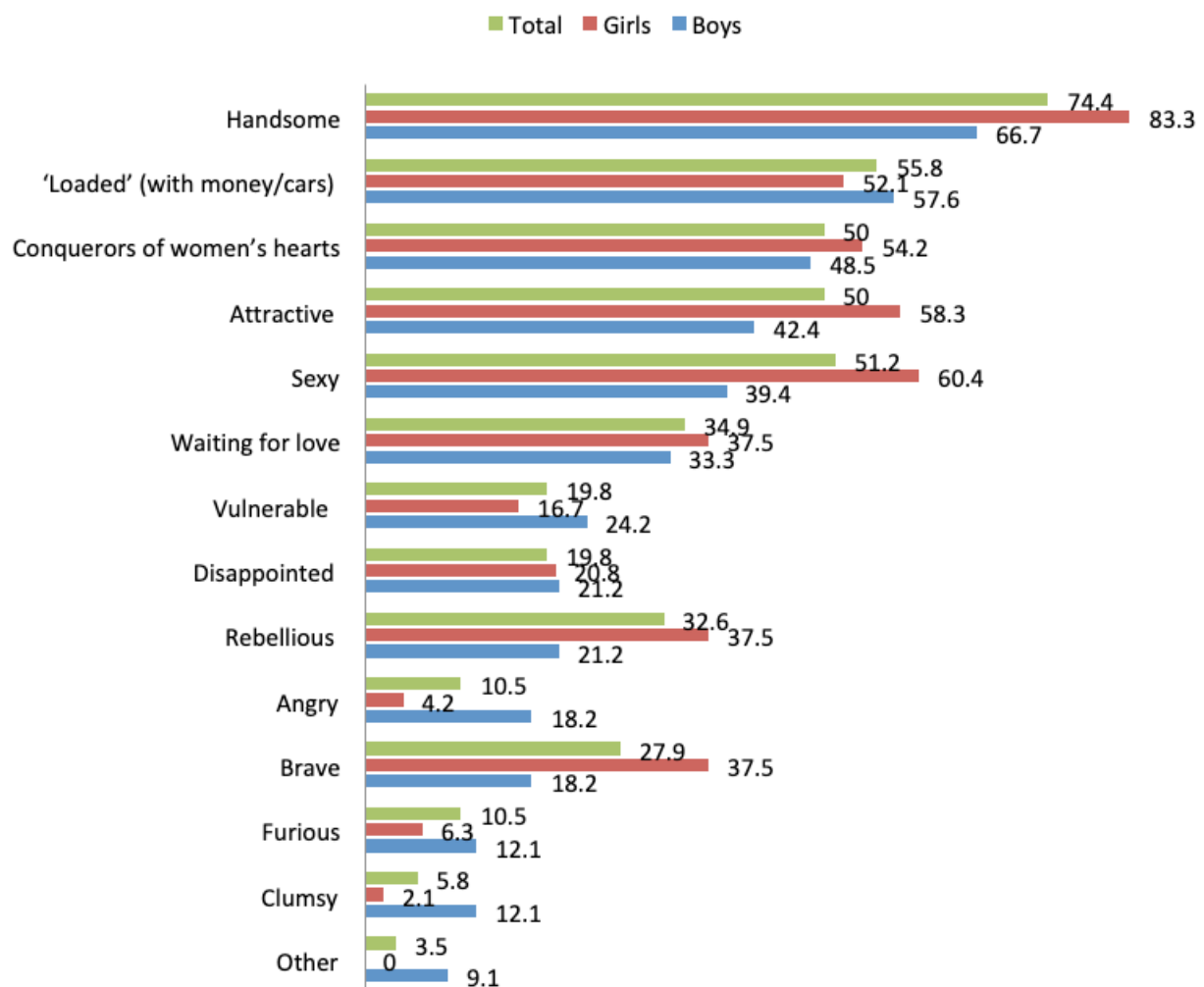
Adolescents' opinions on representations of men and women in songs are presented in Graph 2. The majority of students—with no major differences between genders—think that men and women are equally represented in songs and music videos. Regarding the presentation of women and men in songs and videos, students on the whole had noticed that women were sexy and pleasing to men, while men were powerful and protective of women. The most common opinion seems to be the idea that the way men, women and love are presented in songs and music videos do not correspond to reality and everyday life.

### What is your opinion for the following statements?



Graph 2. Adolescents' opinions on representations of gender in songs and videos

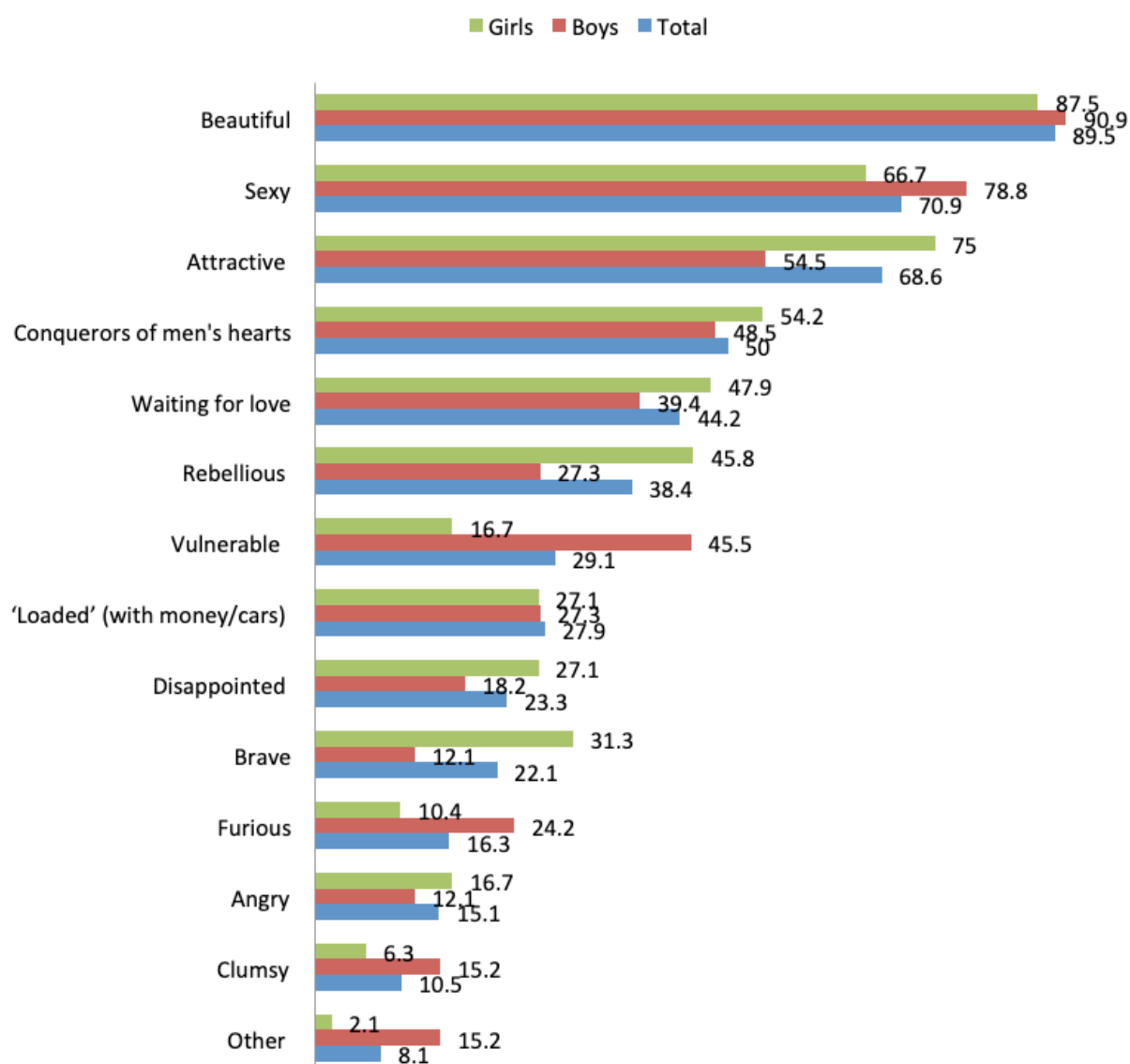
## What is your opinion on how men are presented in songs and videos?



Graph 3. Opinions on representation of men in songs and videos

According to the students, men are presented in songs and music videos as handsome (74.4%), wealthy and powerful (55.8%), conquerors of women's hearts (50%), attractive (50%), sexy (51.2%) and rebellious (32.6%). The most common answers correspond to stereotypical and socially constructed masculine characteristics.

## What is your opinion on how women are presented in songs and videos?



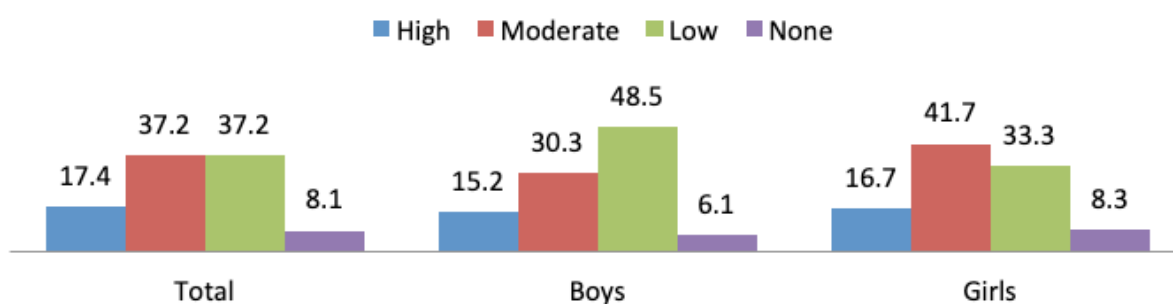
Graph 4. Opinions on representation of women in songs and videos

On the other hand, as shown in Graph 4, the most frequent response regarding women's presentation in videos and songs included, beautiful (89.5%), sexy (70.9%), attractive (68.6%), conquerors of men's hearts (50%) and waiting for love (44.2%). Interestingly, there is a significant difference in the perceptions of girls and boys regarding characteristics associated with women's gender roles and feminine features. Specifically, 45.8% of girls thought women in videos and songs were presented as rebellious, compared to 38.4% holding that opinion. Similarly 31.3% of girls thought the women in videos and songs were brave, compared to only 12.1% of boys. In contrast, 45.5%

of boys had the opinion that women are presented as vulnerable, while only 16.7% of girls held this view. This difference in perception reveals the conflicting nature of the messages and meanings perceived by boys and girls.

## PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE ABOUT GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

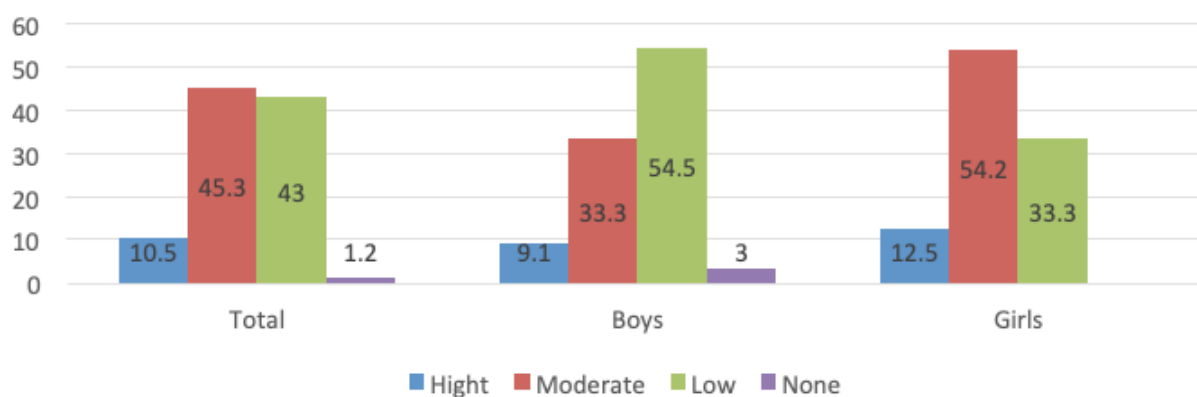
### I think that in Cyprus inequality between men and women is



Graph 5. Perceptions of gender inequality in Cyprus

When asked about gender inequality in Cyprus, 74.4% of adolescents responded that they believe gender inequality is moderate to low.

### I think the prevalence of violence against women is

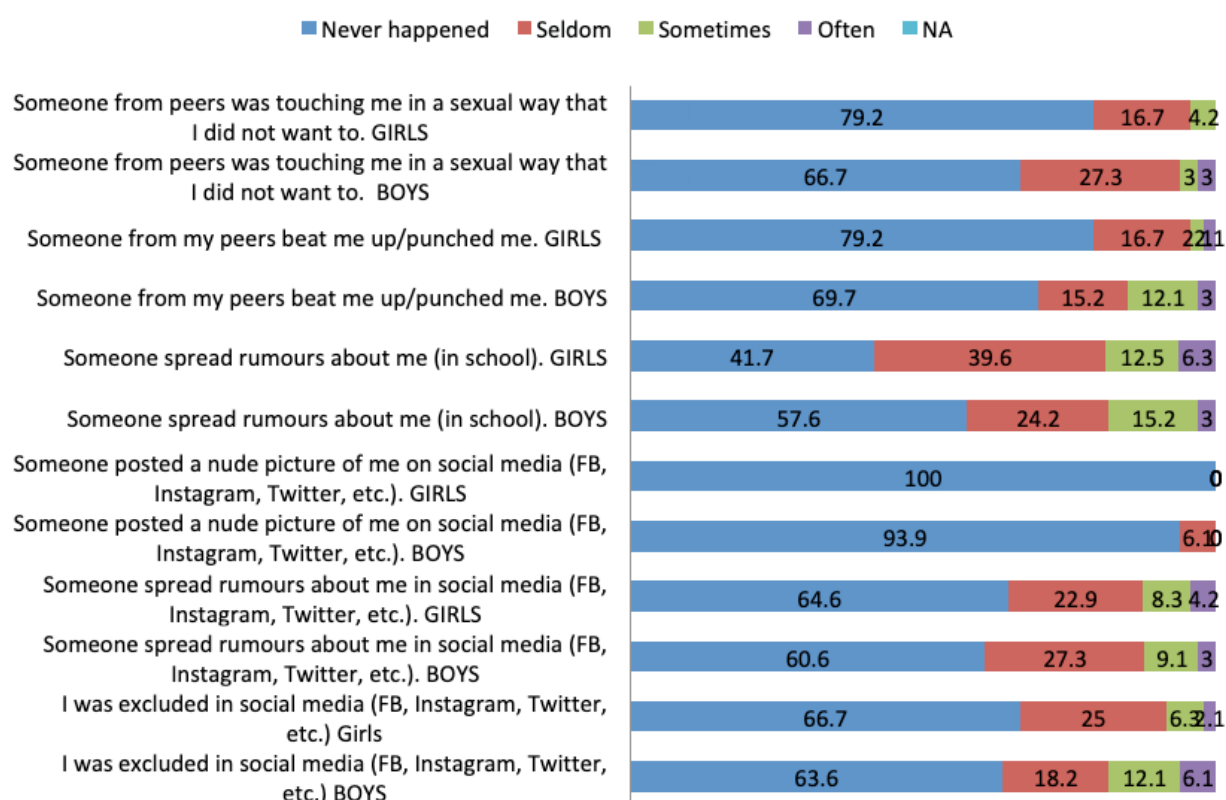


Graph 6. Perceptions on the prevalence of violence against women in Cyprus

With regards to violence against women in Cyprus, girls think that the prevalence is moderate (54.2%) to low (33.3%). Boys respectively think that the prevalence is low (54.5%) to moderate (33.3%). These statistics are perhaps due to the age range of the girls and boys, which meant that they had not yet been exposed to the social conditioning and expectations in tertiary education and employment, where both gender segregation and the gender pay gap persist.

## IDENTIFICATION OF SITUATIONS OF ABUSE AND VIOLENCE

### How often did you experience different forms of abuse or violence?



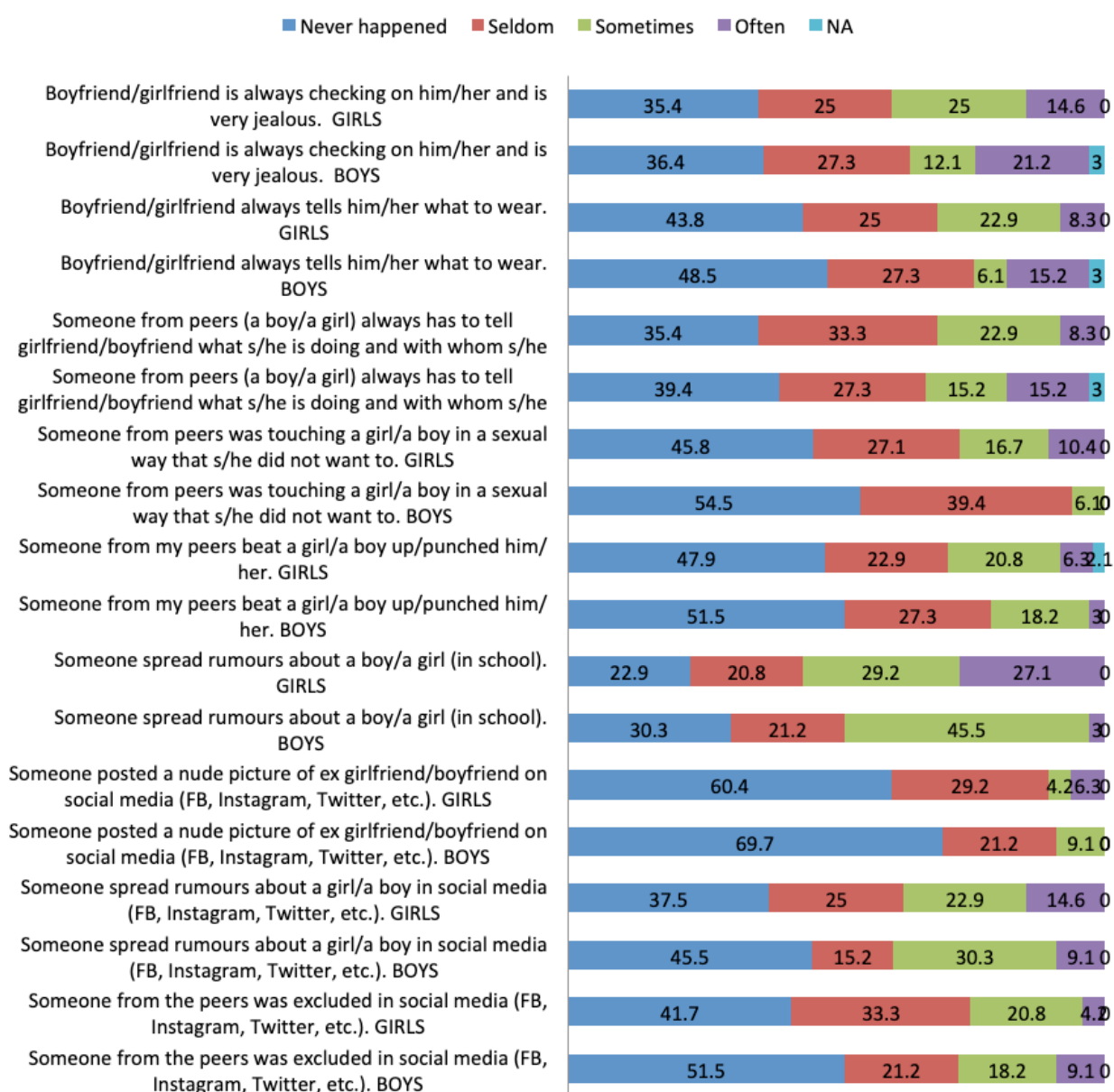
Graph 7. Adolescents' personal experience of abuse

Answers related to the personal experience of abuse are presented in Table 4. The majority of adolescents responded that they never experienced abuse. Forms of abuse described in this table as experienced seldom or sometimes included: having rumours spread about me in school (with higher incidence among girls); having rumours spread about me on social media and being excluded from social media. These situations can be grouped into online violence, peer violence in school, physical and sexual violence.

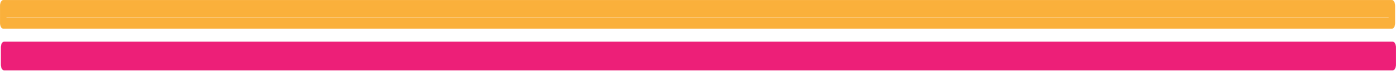


The most common situation experienced are rumours being spread about girls in school (girls 48.4%, boys 42.4%). With regards to forms of online abuse, the majority of adolescents responded with never happened. Especially with regards to nude picture posts on social media, all girls and 93.9% of boys responded that never happened to them. Experiences such as, rumours spread about me on social media (seldom 24.4% and sometimes 9.3%) and excluded in social media (seldom 23% and sometimes 8.1%) had relatively homogenous percentages of incidence in total.

### How often did you witness different forms of abuse or violence?



Graph 8. Adolescents witnessing abuse/violence



Witnessing abuse and violence seems to be a more prevalent situation according to *Table 8*. Forms of abuse witnessed *often* by adolescents include peer violence (i.e. rumours spread in school), electronic peer violence (i.e. rumours spread in social media) and controlling relationships (i.e. controlling behaviour of a partner). The types of violence that are witnessed *sometimes* include electronic peer violence (i.e. rumours spread through, and exclusion from, social media), peer violence (i.e. rumours spread in school), controlling relationships. Sexual violence (i.e. unwanted touches) was *seldom* witnessed.

# ANALYSIS OF THE FOCUS GROUPS WITH ADOLESCENTS

## MUSIC IN ADOLESCENTS' DAILY LIFE

All participants stated that music has a significant role in their life and they listen to it every day. When asked to list their top six songs (three in the national language and three in foreign languages), they mainly picked songs in Greek and English. Concerning the type of music they listen to, a plethora of songs were mentioned representing a variety of music genres. The majority explained that they like to listen to specific types of music depending on their mood at a given time.

**Female, Secondary School, Cyprus:** *I listen to different types of songs according to my emotional state. When I'm in love I listen to international pop songs that talk about love and relationships. When I'm sad, I listen to songs that have slow rhythm and sad lyrics.*

Specific reference was made to mainstream pop music as it represents a large number of genres and has a wide appeal. There were also mentions of k-pop, rock, rap, trap, heavy metal, Greek rock and popular traditional music. Only one male participant included classical music in his list.

When asked what elements of music attract them the most, the students mentioned a combination of elements. The lyrics, the meaning and the rhythm of the song as well as the performance/appearance of the artist were cited as the most important elements. Other elements included the voice of the singer and the video clip. An in-depth discussion took place around the meaning of the lyrics and the theme of the songs. The boys in Group 2 placed particular emphasis on the value and significance of lyrics. They felt that in the current music environment, songs lack meaningful lyrics.

**Male, Secondary School, Cyprus:** *Older songs have more meaning compared to today's songs. For example, 'Roza' by Mitropanos, 'It's my life' by Jon Bon Jovi...*

**Male, Secondary School, Cyprus:** *I listen to popular traditional Greek music and Greek rock that talks about the meaning of life [...] I also listen to heavy metal and rock because the lyrics promote independence and are taken from real life examples. I feel more represented.*

## PERCEPTIONS AND IDENTIFICATION OF GENDER STEREOTYPES

The researchers initially chose three videos for the students to watch and stimulate a group discussion: Video 1- [I love the way you lie](#) by Eminem and Rihanna; Video 2- [Animals](#) by Maroon 5; and Video 3, [Kariola se miso](#) («Καριόλα σε μισώ»/ "Bitch I hate you") by Greek pop singer Christos Dantis. Having in mind the age gap between researchers and students, the researchers kept a reflexive and flexible approach, encouraging students to share the thoughts they felt were relevant to the discussion.

Students across all focus groups were also encouraged to give examples of videos they watch, which enriched the discussion and made the subject more relevant to them. The discussion therefore evolved towards the songs and videos that were recommended by students rather than the ones initially chosen by the researchers. It should be also noted that the girls participating in Focus Group 1 said they did not watch music videos in general, but rather only those of songs they already liked. Interestingly, they noted that some of their favourite songs sometimes show content that is not age inappropriate and/or that is offensive to women. A particular example given by female students was the pop/ dance/ contemporary R&B song [Swalla](#) (feat. Nicki Minaj & Ty Dolla \$ign) by Jason Derulo. They explained that they like the rhythm of the song but they felt that the video was “inappropriate”, “not good” and “provocative”.

**Female, Secondary School, Cyprus:** *This music video [Swalla] gives us the message that women must look good, dress provocatively, dance, do sexual acts and movements, be naked to attract men and their attention [...] Men are not presented like this. They are presented as in a positive manner even if they are stupid.*

**Female, Secondary School, Cyprus:** *Men talk. Women only do what they are told to do. Men are confident. Women are subordinate. Women only show flesh.*

The boys in Group 3 were particularly keen on a hip hop/ rap/ trap song called [Gucci gang](#) by Li'l Pump. The lyrics of the particular song include profanity and references to buying sex and drugs. In the video clip, men are presented as rebellious, rich (e.g. driving expensive cars), powerful and women are presented as overly feminine, sexualised and passive.

**Male, Secondary School, Cyprus:** *A rich man can have many women.*

However, throughout the discussion it emerged that they were not aware that the term “trap” referred to places where drug deals take place, nevertheless, boys seemed to like this particular genre, because they thought it was radical and ‘cool’.

Another example of music videos discussed among the focus group participants was [Animals](#) by Maroon 5. The participants expressed the view that the video is ‘creepy’ as it shows meat hanging in a butcher shop and the lead singer cutting pieces of meat while he stalks the woman he likes. The woman is presented as sexy, beautiful, passive and waiting for love. The lyrics of the song include phrases such as “I’m preying on you”, “Hunt you down eat you alive”, “like animals”, “I can smell your scent for miles”, and “you can’t stay away from me”. The participants in Focus groups 2 and 3, although not aware of the full lyrics, said they observed an animalistic depiction of men’s sexual needs and power which they felt justified violence as an act of love.

To sum up, the students participating in the focus groups discussed the following characteristics of women and men as depicted in the music videos, which they recognised as gender stereotypical.

The students identified the overall subordinate status of women and dominant status of men in media depictions, but particularly in the above mentioned music videos. Specifically, men were dominant, displaying their body in ways that showed off their money and power, especially over women. In contrast, women were presented as subordinate to men, often wearing scant clothing (e.g. bikinis), infantilised (e.g. holding lollipops), with no independence and in need of protection, with a general emphasis on their bodies and looks (beauty). Overall, female students were able to identify key aspects of inequality between women and men and the stereotypical gender roles promoted in

Characteristics in music videos	
Men / boys	Women/ girls
Masculine, well-dressed, powerful, strong, sexually experienced (with many women or can buy women) rich, independent, hunter, animalistic needs.	Feminine, naked, porn star, undervalued, weak, bitch, sexy, victim/prey, beautiful, sex objects, serve men, provocative.

music videos. These results align with previous studies that found women on MTV portrayed in a submissive manner (Seidman 1992; Vincent et al. 1987). Such data reveals that despite the progress that women have made towards equality in society, the hoped-for impact on stereotypical gender representations in popular culture, and in this case, in the realm of music videos, remains disappointing. This is a reflection of the gender stereotypes as presented in the mass media, which contributes to the perpetuation of sexism, misogyny and GBV in the wider social context in Cyprus and beyond.

## 'PROVOCATIVE' CONTENT

There was also an in-depth discussion as to how the teenage girls define and understand the word 'provocative'. An overall reluctance was observed with regards to articulating what exactly makes the video of a particular song (e.g. *Swalla*) 'inappropriate' and 'provocative'. Female students in Focus Group 1 elaborated on the fact that the women were naked and their body movements, hand gestures and facial expressions were sexualised – which they considered 'inappropriate' for young audiences. Female students consistently used the words 'provocative' and 'bad' to show that the content (especially the choreography and body movements) may cause unwanted sexual behaviour.

**Female, Secondary School, Cyprus:** [...] *their choreography and movements are not right. The way they are moving... are bad examples...for example my baby brother cannot watch this because he might be prompted to do bad things... these images must not be seen by young children.*

The discussion shed more light on constructs of femininity and masculinity and the underlying differences in the depictions of the role of men and women.

**Female, Secondary School, Cyprus:** *A boy dating many girls is considered cool and handsome. Boys are not judged for that. A girl seeking attention from many boys is considered a bitch.*

It also shed light on stereotypical and "victim-blaming" attitudes of girls regarding sexual harassment; specifically, some justified sexual violence citing the way a woman dresses or behaves.

**Female, Secondary School, Cyprus:** [...] *but most of the time, it is the women who act provocatively with*

*the way they dress or their movements to attract male attention...it is like they are asking for it.*

The overall reluctance of the girls, perhaps due to embarrassment, to articulate the concepts of over-sexualisation and objectification of women and girls was particularly interesting. Feelings of shame, awkwardness and embarrassment to explain what constitutes 'provocative' behaviour and its perceived consequences, indicates that gender stereotypes, sex and sexuality are not openly discussed among girls and boys in the school context. Culturally, sexuality and gender roles are issues that are taboo and not openly discussed, reflecting the fact that Cyprus remains a highly patriarchal, conservative society. Students seemed to put a lot of effort into being politically correct and shying away from nuance, e.g. making basic distinctions (good/bad, ok/not ok), which resulted in the overall impression that they lacked awareness and critical thinking skills.

## PORTRAYALS OF LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Boys and girls participating in the focus groups also had the opportunity to discuss the ways in which love and relationships are portrayed in song lyrics and music videos. They expressed that the type of love depicted in music videos often revolves exclusively around sex, and seems superficial and materialistic. The majority of students were of the opinion that love as depicted in music videos like *Swalla* and *Animals* is 'fake', unhealthy and not 'equal'.

**Female, Secondary School, Cyprus:** *Love as shown in this video clip is not real. This is fake love.*

**Male, Secondary School, Cyprus:** *This is sick. A normal person does not show his love in this way. They are doing it for the views and likes.*

Their overall impression was that such performances are set up to attract views and likes on social media platforms like YouTube. Additionally, boys and girls expressed that love in song lyrics and videos is often shown to be "animalistic", with a focus on the sexual needs of men and the vulnerability of women. Students felt that relationships are often characterised by control, jealousy and antagonism, characteristics that are often presented as expressions of love.

Although boys agreed overall that the content was "wrong" and offensive, they felt it nevertheless reflects real-life relationships that are superficial, unequal and sex-based. They explained that women of "lower moral standards" have sex for money or get married to older men for financial security. They depicted a fragmented picture of women's roles based on ingrained stereotypes and sexism. They held contradictory views of women as both a vulnerable victims that would do anything for love but also simultaneously sexual beings with financial motives. In the case of *Swalla* and *Gucci Gang*, the majority of girls across focus groups said they disliked the videos and felt they were offensive to women.

In the case of *Animals*, where a man is depicted to be stalking a woman he desires, some female participants said that it can sometimes be romantic to be stalked by a boy. At the same time, both boys and girls acknowledged that stalking is a criminal offence in many countries and many of them thought that the images shown in the video (the man butchering meat and stalking the woman) were 'sick' and not representative of 'real' relationships. They also acknowledged that such videos contribute to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes, unhealthy relationships and gender-based violence.

## THE IMPACT

All students agreed that certain songs and videos could have a negative influence on the behaviour of adolescents. Female students in Group 1 insisted that music videos can contribute to risky and over-sexualised behaviour in young girls.

**Female, Secondary School, Cyprus:** *I believe that boys and girls imitate what they see in the media and videos.*

On another level, the students were of the opinion that gender stereotypes projected in songs and music videos reflect those that are projected more widely across the media, such as in popular TV series and advertisements. They expressed that videos with sexist and misogynistic content have many views and likes because they reflect the wider social context, i.e. what the audience want to see. On the other hand, they felt that these depictions are a negative influence on adolescents' everyday life, due to the former's extensive online reach and popularity, as evidenced by the high number of views and likes. Related to this point, women and girls may feel that they have to act in specific stereotypical ways (e.g. over-sexualised and focused on outer beauty and appearance) in order to be accepted, liked and loved.

**Female, Secondary School, Cyprus:** *In school, some girls dress and behave in a sexy way to sexually attract boys. Some send pictures and videos to boys posing like they do in music videos... thinking that they will not share it, and when the boys do spread it all over school it becomes extremely embarrassing to the girls.*

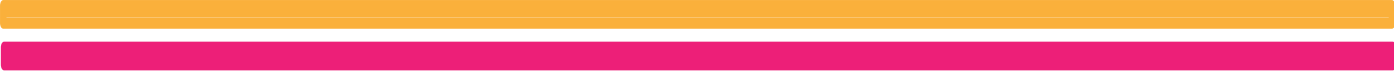
Female students expressed that young people often form relationships based on money, looks and sex, in order to be accepted and considered 'cool' by their peers. They agreed that to some extent songs and video clips may contribute to the normalisation and perpetuation of gender stereotypes, sexual objectification of women and gender-based violence. To sum up, it was evident that sexism and misogyny is becoming more embedded in adolescents' lives through the widespread accessibility of music and related audio-visual content.

## USING MUSIC AND AUDIO-VISUAL MEDIA IN A POSITIVE MANNER

The students also gave examples of singers that depict love in their music in a positive way, such as Dimitris Mitropanos, a popular traditional Greek singer. Reflecting on Mitropanos' performances and talent, the female students in Group 1 characterised him as a "levendis" ("λεβέντης"), a Greek word to describe a handsome man with positive connotations of fearlessness and gallantry. Both boys and girls expressed that Mitropanos is gallant because he uses his talent to talk about love with honesty, positivity and sensitivity ("ευαισθησία") even when referring to love that is not reciprocated. Male participants in Group 3 said Mitropanos compared positively to modern singers who talk about love in a 'superficial and insulting way'.

Another positive example given by Groups 1 and 3 of a song and video that promotes a realistic depiction of love and healthy relationships was the song [Perfect](#) by Ed Sheeran. The participants felt that this is a positive example depicting mutual love and respect, shared dreams, and shared future. Similarly, they felt that the man and woman in





the video were depicted more realistically, with 'normal' clothing and enjoying daily activities together. The students felt that the couple were portrayed as equals in the relationship even if the love was not always mutual. Female students expressed that they could relate more to such content.

The boys in Focus Group 2 expressed that heavy metal music such as that of AC/DC, Bon Jovi, Metallica, and Iron Maiden, as well as older traditional Greek songs like *Neoellinas* by Panousis and *Roza* by Mitropanos, have 'deeper meaning' and that they could relate to this music more than to popular modern genres. The reasons attributed for this distinction by boys was the fact that the themes related to daily life and experiences, and also the lyrics to such songs are more meaningful and respectful (e.g. about love, independence, empowerment, living one's life).

The issue of restricted internet access in school (particularly regarding YouTube content), sparked a revealing exchange among students regarding the importance of using music and audio-visual media as tools. To start, they felt that restricting access, as a standalone measure, did not contribute significantly to the prevention of GBV in school.

**Female, Secondary School, Cyprus:** *Protect us from what? We are exposed to stereotypes and violence every day and everywhere.*

**Male, Secondary School, Cyprus:** *Restricting access to the internet and YouTube is a result of the ongoing narrowmindedness of the Ministry of Education. They are stuck in the old ways...*

**Male, Secondary School, Cyprus:** *We have grown up with these video clips and we know they exist, so we should be able to handle stereotypes and violence. We must be exposed to this problem so that we know how to react.*

As a more constructive way forward, both female and male students in Group 3 felt that, rather than restricting access, music and audio-visual media could be used positively during class as a teaching tool, and incorporated in the educational curriculum to encourage discussion and raise awareness on gender stereotypes and GBV.

**Female, Secondary School, Cyprus:** *We need to be able to discuss our concerns with our teachers in order to learn. Talking about gender stereotypes only in theory is not enough, because as soon as we leave school we are exposed to this material- even on TV series.*

**Male, Secondary School, Cyprus:** *The school's responsibility is not to forbid access but to encourage discussion and learning.*

They felt that few teachers are willing to incorporate videos and music in their teaching methods because of the rigidity of most of the subjects on the curriculum, with the exception of music and art, where there is more flexibility.



# ANALYSIS OF THE FOCUS GROUPS WITH TEACHERS AND EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

## GENDER STEREOTYPES IN SCHOOL

27 secondary school teachers and education professionals (24 women and 3 men, including policy officers, youth workers and trainers) participated in the focus groups. The focus group teachers cover a variety of subjects: Greek literature, Home Economics, French, Design and Technology, Music, Computer Science, Biology, Science, Physics and Mathematics.

The majority of teachers acknowledged the persistence of gender stereotypes and gender inequality in the school setting as well as in Cypriot society.

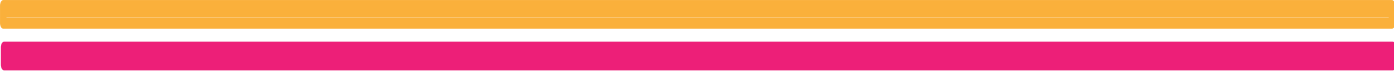
**MT:** *Complying with gender roles can be challenging for many young people, especially because in Cyprus there is a tendency for homogeneity and not pluralism [...]*

They also, on the whole, acknowledged that adolescents in Cyprus are brought up in a traditional and patriarchal way, which is then reflected in their roles, expectations and attitudes. To show the students' entrenched attitudes and beliefs, examples were given, such as the sexist and insulting language boys use towards their female peers but also the female staff (e.g. the cleaners). Other examples of rigid gender roles include, boys expecting girls to clean up after class and to decorate the venues during school events, while boys are mainly expected to help in tasks that require physical strength. With regards to classroom participation and behaviour, girls are more likely to participate in the school choir, while boys prefer to participate in the orchestra. They also observed a reluctance from boys to participate in music and art projects, reflecting the gender segregation persisting in educational choices.

They also referred to the gender segregation in extra-curricular activities such as football and other sports, where boys are over-represented and conversely, girls are discouraged from participating. The teachers acknowledged that they do not always take a proactive role in preventing gender stereotypes and encouraging a fairer and equal distribution of tasks and activities between boys and girls. A reason for this is because they often feel their role is limited, and that family and societal norms play a predominant role. They expressed that this is also a result of the teachers' own socialisation, stereotypical beliefs and attitudes, which are reflected in the wider socio-cultural context.

**MT:** *...due to the smallness of our society and also because of traditional structures, those who must take action... in reality they keep their eyes shut.*

A male music teacher emphasised that if boys were encouraged from a younger age to experiment and explore



their skills in playing musical instruments, in traditional and performing arts, they would have less reluctance and insecurities relating to their gender roles and societal expectations. Teachers shared that boys have to overcome a set of more rigid gender norms, attitudes and behaviour relating to society's expectations about masculinity. Teachers were able to associate rigid gender roles and norms with gender inequality and persistent sexist attitudes in Cypriot society (e.g. public and political life, the media, etc.). This demonstrates an elevated level of awareness among the participants in relation to how gender roles promote the unequal distribution of power among women and men.

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SCHOOL

Teachers expressed different opinions in relation to GBV among adolescents. Some teachers acknowledged that GBV is a problem among adolescents in the school context. Specifically, they described boys as being more aggressive and violent compared to girls. Girls were described as prone to using verbal violence but also capable of using physical violence if needed. However, they pointed out that most teachers are generally unaware of the existence of GBV among adolescents, and are therefore not proactive in identifying and handling such cases.

**FT:** *Violence among teenagers exists, although teachers may not be aware of it.*

Teachers in Group 1 gave examples of intimate partner violence in teenage romantic relationships, such as boys pressuring girls into sexual activity, spreading rumours, engaging in unwanted sexual touching, body shaming, and sharing of nude pictures of their female peers with other students.

Teachers in Group 2 felt that GBV is not a major problem in their school. However, during the discussion, some female teachers admitted there had been cases of girls experiencing unwanted touching from boys. Teachers either dismissed incidents of sexual harassment towards female students as isolated events or trivialised them as 'boys just trying to get attention'. The fact that teachers insisted that violence among teenagers is not a problem in their school demonstrated that not all teachers perceive incidents of sexual harassment such as unwanted touches or verbal insults as forms of GBV.

A female teacher offered one explanation for the lack of reporting on serious incidents of GBV in school: "...gender roles are very embedded and stereotypes are internalised by boys and girls. This is something I observe every day in my class." She continued, "...the reason why no one kicks up a fuss or goes to the school counsellor or the principal is because the gender roles are so entrenched and embedded", meaning that such behaviour is seen as acceptable and/or normal. There was no discussion, however, on the school's responsibility in providing students with the opportunity to report cases of GBV either through school policies or through accessible, private and confidential teacher-student interaction.

## MUSIC AND ADOLESCENCE

**FT:** *Music, theatre and audio-visual technologies are powerful tools that help us speak the same language as adolescents.*

All teachers agree that music has a significant role in adolescents' life and that they spend a lot of their free time

listening to music. They believe that boys and girls identify with music according to their personality, feelings and experiences. Regarding students' music preferences, teachers noticed that adolescents listen to all types of music and that one cannot single out a preferred music genre, except for pop music, which seems to be more mainstream. Teachers believe that adolescents do not pay particular attention to song lyrics, or think about the messages of particular songs. For example, boys who claim to listen to rap and trap are not aware of the lyrics and the context of the music (e.g. 'trap' refers to locations where drug deals take place). Language also seems to be a factor, as focus group students often reported being unaware of the meaning of their preferred English language songs.

Teachers agree that, despite the positive effects and importance that music has in adolescents' everyday life, music and audio-visual media can also reproduce and perpetuate gender stereotypes. Sexualised and stereotypical images prevail, where women are depicted as weak, submissive, and sexualised (sexual objects) and men depicted as hyper-masculine, powerful (money and prestige). Teachers perceived the unequal gender representations in songs and music videos as products of the wider context of gender inequality. They felt that audio-visual media can portray and encourage violence because it often perpetuates gender stereotypes and unhealthy and harmful behaviours (e.g. drug use, intimate partner violence, sexual harassment). Particular attention was given to offensive images and language towards women in music and music videos and their negative influence on teenage relationships.

**MT:** *The lyrics become behaviour in some cases. Young people often get the message that women must behave in a sexualised way to attract attention.*

**FT:** *Behaviours of control and jealousy featured in lyrics and videos contribute to the overall justification of violence and victim-blaming.*

Teachers also believe that songs and music videos influence adolescent behaviour and their appearance, perpetuating the gender divide. The content encourages behaviour such as girls acting sexualised in order to attract boys' attention and the boys acting 'macho' to attract girls.

**FT:** *During the school breaks a group of girls meet up and imitate music videos. The way they move is sexy and their behaviour is the same, like 'Beyoncé'... boys hang around and watch them.*

Participants pointed to the lack of critical thinking and the absence of media and music literacy in school. Given that comprehensive music and sex education are both absent from the general school curriculum, students end up lacking the capacity to analyse messages in media and music and understand the potential impact on attitudes and behaviour on gender relations and intimate relationships. The educational system seems to be performance-oriented, in that it promotes propriety, obedience and passivity rather than child-oriented, which would promote respect, creative expression, self-development and active citizenship.

While the teachers did acknowledge the entrenched gender stereotypes and sexism often reflected through songs and music but also through social structures and culture (e.g. family, church, and media), they nevertheless went on to state that music and audio-visual tools can also have a positive influence on violence prevention, which will be discussed in the next section.

**FT:** *With music, anyone can learn, create and achieve anything, as long they have access to music education/literacy. With music, less privileged students can be reached and have the opportunity to engage in creative action to prevent GBV, and to promote gender equality and social change.*

## TEACHERS' ROLE: CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

Although there was debate in relation to the extent of the role of teachers in preventing GBV and handling incidents among students, most teachers understood their role as key in advising students and referring them to the right people. Some felt confused and reluctant due to the lack of flexibility within the curriculum, and due to the lack of school policies and support system for students and teachers to tackle and handle GBV.

**MT:** *I feel I have a huge role to play as a teacher even if I only have a half hour to spend with my students. The actions I choose to take may accompany them for the rest of their life.*

Teachers agreed that students must be encouraged to discuss issues that affect them in their everyday lives and teachers must learn to listen. Unfortunately, teachers expressed that the space for professional interaction, on one hand, and teacher-student interaction on the other, is constantly shrinking, as the curriculum becomes more rigid and demanding. The subjects during which one can have opportunities for experiential learning and discussion on gender equality and gender-based violence are very limited.

Additionally, teachers in Group 1 were very critical of the fact that not all educators are aware of existing procedures and policies on handling GBV in school. They emphasised the need for awareness-raising and training, targeting teachers systematically across all levels of education on an obligatory basis. They pointed out that such training must provide practical knowledge and advice on preventing and handling incidences of GBV in schools.

The role of the school counsellor was also considered very important. However, the fact that only one school counsellor is appointed to each school was considered to be inadequate as support. Also, the fact that the counsellor's time in class has recently been reduced by the Ministry of Education and Culture, was identified as a significant obstacle for effective prevention of GBV and support for students.

Teachers also expressed the need for coordinated strategies in enhancing school policies on the prevention of GBV among adolescents. As they have not been implemented on a practical level, general action plans issued by the Ministry of Education were considered inadequate in dealing with the challenges faced by teachers and educators in preventing and handling GBV. The teachers called for integrated school policies and strategies, which would be applied with the involvement of teachers, parents and students. They expressed that individual efforts are insufficient in bringing about real change.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Within the framework of their work as teachers, participants suggested the following strategies in eradicating gender stereotypes and preventing GBV in school. The strategies also include examples of teacher efforts to challenge gender stereotypes through music and audio-visual tools.

First, applying the 'gender-lens' in class was considered a good tool for encouraging discussion on different social problems and gender inequality. Being aware of gender dynamics in the classroom and using opportunities to combat gender stereotypes, was considered an important strategy.

**FT:** *To challenge this I oblige boys and girls to participate in the choir and the orchestra in a more gender*

*balanced way. I believe that by doing this I encourage boys and girls to get out of their comfort zones and perceived gender roles and cultivate their true talents."*

**FT:** *The boys all want to be part of the drumming group. However, I give priority to girls so as to combat gender stereotypes and encourage girls to explore their talents.*

Second, teachers proposed the use of thematic "hooks" in particular subjects (e.g. Biology, Greek Literature) to encourage class discussions about stereotypes, racism, sexism and GBV when looking at literature, poems, songs and art. Participants nevertheless included a caveat, stating that not all teachers have this flexibility, as it depends on their subject and whether the curriculum allows it.

Third, the integration of non-formal education methods, such as peer education workshops, role playing, group work (and other interactive activities) on GBV, gender stereotypes and gender equality through different school subjects (e.g. Ethics, Music). There was general agreement that peer education and awareness-raising material created by adolescents for adolescents (e.g. music, songs, short films, posters, essays, presentations) has a better effect in prevention work.

**FT:** *Implementing interactive peer education programmes in my class on gender-based violence (led by NGOs) has been a very valuable way in which I feel I am contributing to prevention and student empowerment. I wish this was implemented in a more systematic and obligatory manner across the board.*

Fourth, the integration of music and audio-visual tools in teaching methods was considered an important strategy to raise awareness on gender stereotypes and prevent GBV. Songs with anti-violence lyrics, positive messages for equality, acceptance and love, could be used to initiate discussions in class. For example, encouraging a discussion about true love using *All you need is love* by The Beatles, or interpreting poems such as those of Odysseas Elytis. However, some teachers caution that selecting music for educational purposes has to be done very carefully because adolescents are not very open to being exposed to music that is not in line with their preferences. Additionally, when students are encouraged to carry out their own cultural, audio-visual and music projects, they must be supported by the relevant knowledge and training that would enable them to put their creative thoughts and ideas into effective action. Some teachers expressed that students are often asked to carry out such projects without appropriate and creative guidance, with an end result that they cannot express and adequately translate their thoughts and ideas into, for example, posters and videos.

Fifth, the teachers suggested introducing regular teacher-student meetings to build better communication. This pilot-tested strategy was found to be effective in strengthening teacher-student relations and providing support and guidance concerning personal problems encountered by students.

# MAIN RESULTS

The research results provided a great deal of insight regarding adolescents' perceptions and especially their tolerant attitudes towards GBV. The research explored the impact of gender stereotypes in audio-visual media and music on adolescents and assessed the needs of teachers in preventing GBV in school. Due to the small sample and scale of the quantitative and qualitative research carried out within the framework of the Play it for Change project, it would be challenging to draw definitive conclusions. However, key trends were identified with regard to attitudes and behaviour of adolescents on GBV, as well as the role of audio-visuals and music.


Music is considered by both students and teachers as an important aspect of adolescents' everyday lives. Adolescents' preferences included a variety of music genres, with pop music being the most popular. Adolescents identified the rhythm and lyrics of songs as the two most important aspects influencing their preference, and they reported that they do not watch music videos as often as they listen to songs. Interestingly, Maybe this latter aspect revealed a gap in perception between teachers and adolescents, regarding the latter's listening habits. Adolescents seem to pay attention to and seek out good or meaningful lyrics in songs, as well as catchy rhythms, while teachers assume adolescents listen to whatever happens to be 'cool', without particularly understanding the messaging of the songs.

In addition, adolescents were able to identify gender stereotypical depictions of women and men in songs and videos. They recognise that women are often portrayed as young, beautiful, sexy, naked and pleasing to men, while men are often portrayed as rich, powerful, superior, brave and protectors of women. The idea of love as featured in some music videos and songs was commonly characterised as 'fake' and not corresponding to 'real life' and 'real relationships'. Such data reveals that despite the progress that women have made towards equality in society, the hoped-for impact on stereotypical gender representations in popular culture, and in this case, in the realm of music videos, remains disappointing. As it stands, women are still on the whole depicted as overly feminine, submissive and fragile and thus in need of the protection of men.

Teachers agree that gender stereotypes in songs and music videos contribute to the normalisation of GBV. They perceived these as a reflection of the wider context of gender inequalities and sexism in the media, advertisements and culture.

With the growing presence of the concept of GBV in the public discourse, especially in the development of educational policy, one would expect that a large percentage of teachers would be able to identify GBV or have a more accurate perception as to the extent of its relevance and impact in the school setting. Given the results of the teacher focus groups, identification and perception of GBV remains low. Students, when asked about gender inequality in Cyprus and the prevalence of violence against female adolescents, characterised both problems as moderate to low. Both sets of responses can arguably be linked to the wider misconception within Cypriot society that improvements in the legislative framework have automatically achieved a higher level of gender equality in society and daily life. This can also be attributed to some extent to the victim-blaming attitudes surrounding GBV in Cyprus, whereby violence is 'justified' by or attributed to the victim's behaviour.

The research results on personal experience of abuse show that while the majority have never experienced abuse, the students that had experienced it, had done so with varying frequency (often, sometimes, seldom). With regard to what is meant by abuse, the following were the most commonly reported forms: having rumours spread about



them, and being controlled in relationships. Students reported that they often witness abuse and violence including peer violence (i.e. rumours spread in school), electronic peer violence (i.e. rumours spread in social media), controlling relationships (i.e. controlling behaviour of a partner) and sexual violence (i.e. unwanted touching).

Teachers find that the students' socialisation is based on patriarchal norms, which affects their perceptions and attitudes, making them conducive to GBV and gender discrimination. The teachers also made reference to girls experiencing unwanted touching experienced from boys. This was frequently minimised and not considered sexual violence but instead perceived as boys' way of seeking attention. This lack of awareness goes some way in explaining why some teachers reported that GBV isn't a problem in the school setting.

Adolescents also often fail to recognise controlling behaviours, emotional violence, jealousy, stalking, blackmailing, and sexual violence (e.g. pressure to have sex) as forms of violence. In some cases, they considered such behaviour (e.g. stalking, jealousy, control) as a way of showing love to one's partner. Furthermore, we saw that unhealthy behaviour (e.g. stalking, sexual objectification of women, sexual harassment) featured in music videos can enforce and perpetuate students' perceptions and attitudes, such as the victim blaming culture that persists in Cypriot society. Women and girls bear the brunt of gender-discriminatory attitudes within their intimate relationships and violent behaviour is often considered acceptable. Despite the acknowledgment of the gender stereotypes and sexism featured in some songs and music videos, students still gravitate towards victim-blaming attitudes when incidents of unwanted sexual harassment are being discussed.

Nevertheless, adolescents agree that music and audio-visual tools can be more actively incorporated in teaching to encourage dialogue on preventing and handling sexism and GBV in school and society. In this regard, teachers also expressed a variety of ideas on the ways in which music can be an effective tool for the prevention of GBV. Despite the lack of class time due to the heavy academic workload, strategies suggested by teachers included the implementation of awareness-raising workshops (in collaboration with local NGOs), the assignment of projects on aspects of GBV and gender equality across subjects (e.g. Greek Literature, Biology, Arts) and the use of music and audio-visual tools in student assignments (especially, in Music, Literature and Art). Teachers feel that their teaching methods and scope can thus be expanded, opening up the space for dialogue among teachers and students (and among peers) on gender stereotypes and GBV, encouraging media literacy and critical thinking among the younger generations.

To conclude, there is a need for large-scale studies on adolescent attitudes towards GBV. Additionally, the absence of research on the impact audio-visual media and music on adolescent perceptions and attitudes from a gender perspective provide a fertile environment for this kind of explorative research. Future research would benefit by further exploring representations of gender using a larger sample of songs and music videos with a larger sample of students.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are a number of recommendations for the development of a coherent policy on gender equality education in Cyprus and ways in which music and audio-visual media can be used to prevent GBV.

- **Systematic capacity-building and training for teachers** across all levels and subjects in secondary education on an obligatory basis. Such training has been identified as necessary for awareness-raising on gender equality as well as for gaining practical knowledge and advice on current school policies and handling effectively disclosures of GBV in the school context.
- **Allocation of more time within the school curriculum** in order to allow for improvement of the life-skills of adolescents, including gender equality awareness, preventing and handling GBV, comprehensive sex education, building healthy relationships and media literacy.
- **Implementation of awareness-raising workshops and peer education programmes for students** at all levels of secondary education, employing non-formal education methods and experiential learning as a means for building mutual understanding among girls and boys and for enhancing teacher-student relations and trust.
- **Provision of guidelines** to encourage the use of audio-visual materials and music in class, for instance, music videos and songs to encourage dialogue among students and teachers on gender stereotypes and violence.
- **Enhancement of the role and number of school counsellors** to effectively provide support to students and teachers on GBV incidents.
- **Better dissemination of current policies and guidelines** on handling GBV in schools and among teachers.
- **Provision of support to schools to transpose educational policies and guideless in internal school procedures** in order to effectively track, handle and prevent GBV incidences.



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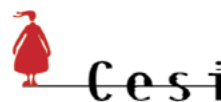
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For more information: <http://playitforchange.org/>

#### Project partnership

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PLAY IT FOR CHANGE - Raising awareness and empowerment of girls and boys for the prevention of gender based violence through audio-visual media and music. Grant Agreement no: REC-VAW-AG-2016-02-776965

Funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme(2014-2020)

