



LIFE

in SCOTLAND

for LGBT

YOUNG PEOPLE

LGBT
YOUTH
SCOTLAND

CONTENTS

FOREWORD 3

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT FOR THE RESEARCH 4

KEY FINDINGS 6

DEMOGRAPHICS 8

COMMUNITY 13

COMING OUT 26

HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA 32

KEEPING SAFE 38

KEEPING HEALTHY 46

GENDER IDENTITY CLINICS 54

EDUCATION 58

WORK LIFE 67

LIVING SITUATION 71

MEDIA AND REPRESENTATION 74

COVID-19 84

IN THE PARTICIPANTS' OWN WORDS 90

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 95

APPENDIX 96

FOREWORD

For many reasons the world is a very different place in 2022 than it was when we last published *Life in Scotland* in 2018. We've had a pandemic, recorded hate crime is on the rise and issues surrounding the lives of trans people are often overanalysed, sensationalised by the media and misrepresented. These are the big picture issues that we knew about. What we didn't know was how these issues were impacting on the lives of individual lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) young people in Scotland.

This research is more important than ever, and we have now reached a stage where we can compare responses to questions that we have asked in 2017, 2012 and 2007 – which means that we can really begin to track trends on how Scotland is doing across a huge range of issues such as mental health, education, work, bullying, and much more.

As thrilled as we are about presenting this research to the world, we should also take a moment to reflect on the findings that most areas we asked about have not improved, and therefore in many ways life for LGBTI young people is worse now than it has been for a long time. While we must acknowledge that this is the current situation, we shouldn't allow ourselves to accept that it is how things will always be. It's our role to take these young people's voices that we've gathered to decision makers right across Scotland and make the strong case for ensuring LGBTI young people and their needs are at the centre of decision-making. Only by doing this will we make Scotland the best place to grow up LGBTI.



Dr Mhairi Crawford
Chief Executive
LGBT Youth Scotland

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT FOR THE RESEARCH

This report details the findings of LGBT Youth Scotland's longitudinal research into what life is like for LGBT Young People in Scotland. First developed in 2007, LGBT Youth Scotland has since undertaken a nationwide survey every five years, in order to capture an overview of how young Scottish people are experiencing life as an LGBTI person. As this report shows, life has changed for LGBTI young people over the last fifteen years, with progress being made in some areas and challenges remaining in others.

In 2021–22, the *Life in Scotland* research took place during a challenging time for young people, following almost two years of disruption due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. This was also a time period in which LGBTI rights, particularly those of trans people, were the subject of much political and media discussion and attack. The discussions surrounding the reform of the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) and restructuring of Gender Identity Clinics (GICs), the advancement of LGBT Inclusive Education in Scottish schools, and the discussions surrounding the proposed banning of conversion practices have all sparked debate over LGBTI issues. This is why it has been particularly important to reach as many LGBTI young people as possible in this research, to find out how life in Scotland for this group is changing alongside these discussions. An increase in participant numbers has been reached each time the *Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People* survey has been run, and this year a total of **1279** participants took part in the research, almost doubling our previous participant numbers and making this the largest piece of research to date focusing on Scottish LGBTI young people.

This survey followed a similar pattern to previous iterations of the research, asking young people about their experiences of: community; keeping safe; keeping healthy; education; coming out; and their working/living situation. After consulting with young people, youth workers and third sector organisations across Scotland, however, our 2022 survey was expanded to include new questions. In particular we considered that it was important to ask young people how they felt about the media and LGBTI representation. The findings in this section shed light on an area of young people's experiences which have not been explored in this research before, and highlight the importance of media, social media and visible role models in young people's lives.

Although this research was not intended to focus directly on the impact of COVID-19, we felt it was important to acknowledge the effects brought about by the pandemic and the resulting lockdowns and changes to daily life which impacted on everyone in Scotland. We therefore also added questions about the effects of COVID-19 on life as an LGBTI young person to the survey.

The findings highlighted in this report show that, over the last fifteen years, the way in which LGBTI young people are experiencing life in Scotland has changed. Progress has been made in many areas – the percentage of participants receiving a supportive reaction to coming out has increased, and the percentage of participants leaving home in negative circumstances has halved since 2017. However, we also found that, over the last five years in particular, there has been a reversal in the progress that was being made in many areas: lower levels of participants are now reporting feeling happy with their life as an LGBTI person in Scotland than before, and the percentage of participants feeling confident to report a hate crime or bullying to authority figures has dropped. These findings show that progress is not assured, and our work with LGBTI young people continues to be vital to ensure that the progress being made is safeguarded for the future.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

When undertaking the survey, participants were offered a glossary (see below) of terminology to help them complete the survey. In this glossary, **Transgender** was defined as 'when how you feel about your gender identity (like a woman, man, neither or both) is different from what people expected from you when you were born'. This definition is inclusive of non-binary identities and our use of the terms trans and transgender is inclusive of non-binary people.

Throughout this report we use **LGBTI** to refer to participants in the research. This term has been chosen to be consistent with other publications produced by LGBT Youth Scotland, as part of our stated goal of making Scotland the best place to grow up for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex young people. The title of this research however is Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People 2022 in order to achieve consistency with previous iterations of the research which used 'LGBT'. We acknowledge however that other identities exist within the queer community. These are acknowledged individually where they appear within the results presented below and we intend LGBTI to be considered a broadly inclusive term of the queer identities represented within this research.

GLOSSARY

Participants were offered the following glossary of LGBTI-related terms to help them in answering the survey:

Sexual orientation: how you see yourself and who you're attracted to/love.

Bisexual: a person who is attracted to/loves people of more than one gender.

Gay: a man who is attracted to/loves other men. It can be used to describe a woman who is attracted to/loves other women.

Heterosexual/straight: a man who is attracted to/loves women or a woman who is attracted to/loves men.

Lesbian: a woman who is attracted to/loves other women.

Gender identity: how we relate to and feel about ourselves: like a woman, man, neither, both.

Gender expression: how we express ourselves to others, through gender-related clothing, actions and behaviours.

Transgender: when how you feel about your gender identity (like a woman, man, neither or both) is different from what people expected from you when you were born.

KEY FINDINGS

COMMUNITY

- There has been a reduction overall in the percentage of participants rating Scotland a good place to be LGBTI over the last five years. This was 81% in 2017 and has fallen to **65%** in 2022
- Just **28%** of rural-based participants rated their local area as a good place to be LGBTI as compared to **62%** of urban-based participants

COMING OUT

- **82%** of participants received a supportive or very supportive reaction from the first person they had come out to about their sexual orientation, an increase from **75%** in 2017

HOMOPHOBIA/BIPHOBIA/TRANSPHOBIA

- The vast majority of participants believe that homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia are a problem, both across Scotland as a whole, and in their local area
- **69%** of participants believe that transphobia is a big problem in Scotland

KEEPING SAFE

- Just **17%** of young people surveyed reported that they would feel confident reporting a hate crime to the police if they experienced one

KEEPING HEALTHY

- Just **56%** of participants think that they have enough information about mental health
- Only **25%** of the people who have received formal sex education classes have seen LGBTI topics discussed within them

GENDER IDENTITY CLINICS

- **63%** of trans participants who have accessed a GIC report that they feel supported and respected by this service in terms of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity

EDUCATION

- Only **10%** of participants rated the experience of school for LGBT people as 'good'.
- **70%** of gay/lesbian participants report experiencing bullying due to their sexual orientation at school

WORK LIFE

- Just over half (**54%**) of participants felt safe to be their authentic self as an LGBTI person at work/in training

LIVING SITUATION

- Participants are more likely to report leaving home in positive circumstances than they were in 2017, with 79% of participants who have left home reporting that 'It was my decision and I left under positive circumstances'

MEDIA REPRESENTATION

- **81%** of participants felt that the way LGBTI people are portrayed in the media is not accurate
- **94%** of participants who are eligible do vote in parliamentary elections

COVID-19

- **82%** of participants felt that their education had been affected by COVID-19, and 69% of participants felt that their connection with their community had been affected

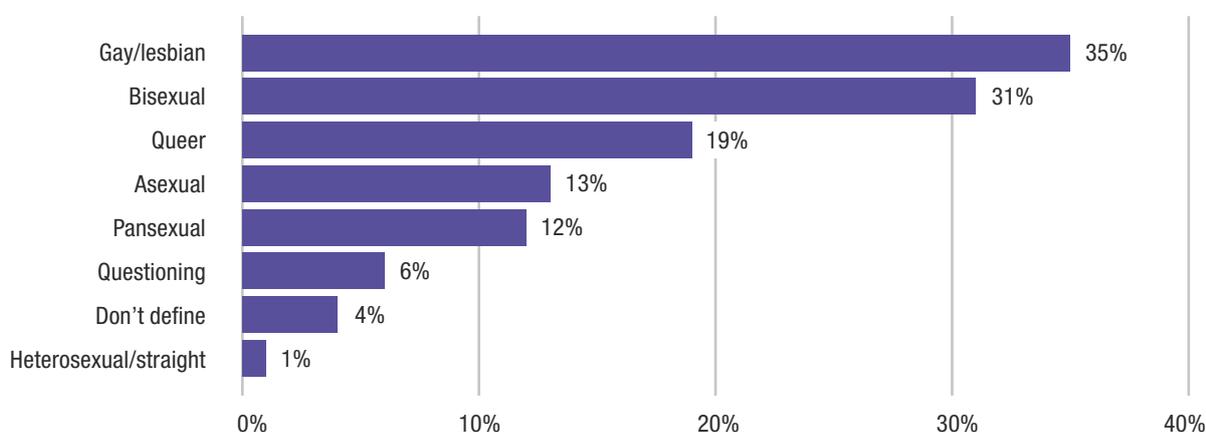
DEMOGRAPHICS

A set of demographic questions appeared at the beginning of the survey. A response was required for each question in order to progress to subsequent pages, however each question included a 'Prefer not to say' option to allow participants to decline to give information if desired. Therefore, unless otherwise stated the statistics in this section are based on a response from all **1279** participants.

Sexual orientation

Participants identified their sexual orientation in the following ways (see Fig. 1 below):

Figure 1: Sexual orientation



12 participants selected 'Prefer not to say'. Those identifying as an orientation that was not listed were invited to tell us how they identified. Responses included: Demisexual; Omnisexual; Aromantic; Uranic¹; Abrosexual²; and Polyamorous/polysexual.

Participants were able to select multiple answers to this question. The majority of participants selected only one orientation, and the percentage of participants selecting more than one choice were as follows:

Figure 2: Sexual orientation, number of selected responses

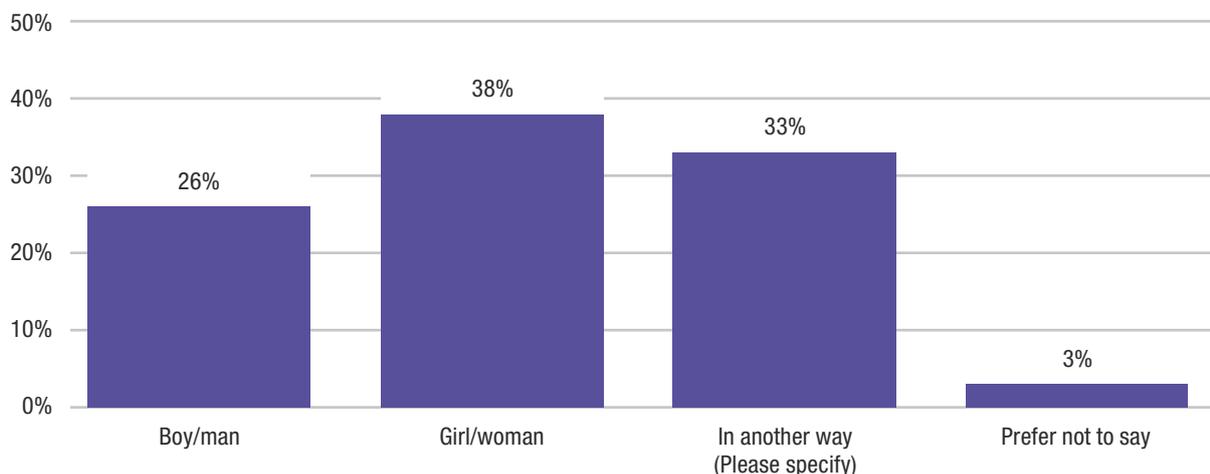
Number of selections	Percentage
"Prefer not to say"	1%
1	79%
2	15%
3	4%
4	1%

1. Someone who is attracted to men, masculine non-binary people, and androgenous people
 2. Someone whose sexual orientation fluctuates over time

Gender

Participants identified their gender as:

Figure 3: Gender



Participants identifying in another way were asked to tell us how they identified. Responses included: non-binary; transmasculine; transfeminine; agender; demi boy/girl; genderfae; pangender; and questioning.

380 participants identified as non-binary, representing **30%** of the sample. In this research, we have used non-binary as an umbrella term to encompass many of the diverse participant responses within the 'in another way' category, such as: "non-binary"; "genderfluid"; "transmasculine"; "agender" and others.

49% of participants were transgender; this is inclusive of girls/women and boys/men who responded 'Yes' to the question 'Do you identify or have you ever identified as transgender?' and of non-binary participants.

Not all non-binary participants responded "Yes" to the question "Do you identify or have you ever identified as transgender?" however in accordance with advice from Scottish Trans, non-binary participants have been included in this figure. This allows us to highlight differences between cisgender respondents, and all respondents who are not cisgender (e.g. who are transgender and/or non-binary). It is of course impossible to do justice to the diverse way that young people express and describe their gender identities and sexual orientations within the narrative analysis of the report, but this was felt the most appropriate way to present the findings most clearly.

References to transgender participants throughout this report are therefore inclusive of non-binary participants. Separate figures for non-binary participants are presented where appropriate however, i.e. when comparisons between girls/women, boys/men, and non-binary participants are made. For further explanation see the information in the glossary provided to participants in the survey (see p.5), and the definition given in "A note on terminology" on p.5.

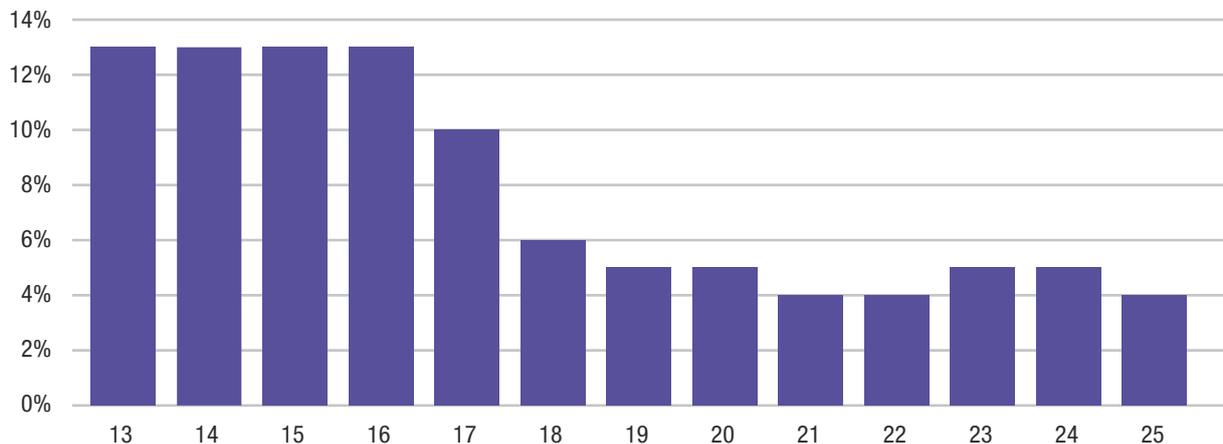
Variation in sex characteristics/intersex status

4% of participants considered themselves to have a variation in sex characteristics/to be intersex.

Age

The average age of participants was **17**, and the median was **16**. The distribution of ages across the sample is shown below in Fig.4, with a higher proportion of younger than older participants:

Figure 4: Age range of participants



When the sample was split into over- and under-18-year-olds, **63%** of the group were under 18, and the remaining **37%** were 18 years old or over.

Ethnicity

78% of participants described themselves as White Scottish, **9%** described themselves as Other White British and **5%** as Other White. **2%** described themselves as from Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups. **1%** of the sample described themselves as: White Polish; White Irish; Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British; and Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British.

Religion/faith

76% of participants stated that they do not have a religion or faith. **9%** were Christian, **1%** were Muslim, and **7%** had another religion or faith not listed in the question. Participants selecting this option were asked to tell us about their religion/faith. Responses included: Pagan; Quaker; Wiccan, and Agnostic.

Faith school

6% of school pupils attended a faith school.

Disability

17% of participants considered themselves to be disabled. This number is comparable with findings nationally, with the UK Government's 2018 National LGBT Survey also finding that 17% of LGBT participants said that they had a disability.³

A further **6%** told us that they define differently in relation to disability. Written comments specifying how participants identified in relation to disability included living with: chronic illness; a hearing impairment; mental health issues; tics; autism; and ADHD. Some participants also commented that they live with health conditions which affect their everyday life but they do not wish to define themselves as disabled.

Neurodivergence

38% of participants identified as neurodivergent, however there was variation found in this area between transgender and cisgender participants. **25%** of the cisgender participants identified as neurodivergent as compared to **52%** of transgender participants.

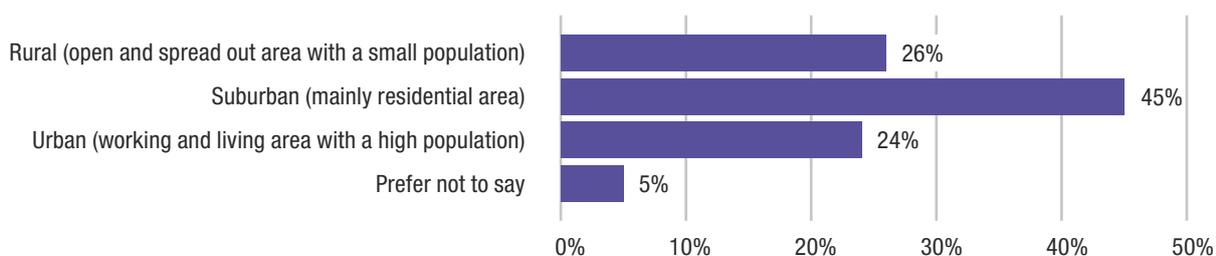
Care-experienced

8% of the participants are care-experienced.

Location

Participants described the area they live in as:

Figure 5: Percentage of participants living in rural/suburban/urban areas



Participants represented a fairly even spread across Scottish council areas, with the exception of the major cities Glasgow and Edinburgh, where slightly higher percentages of participants live.

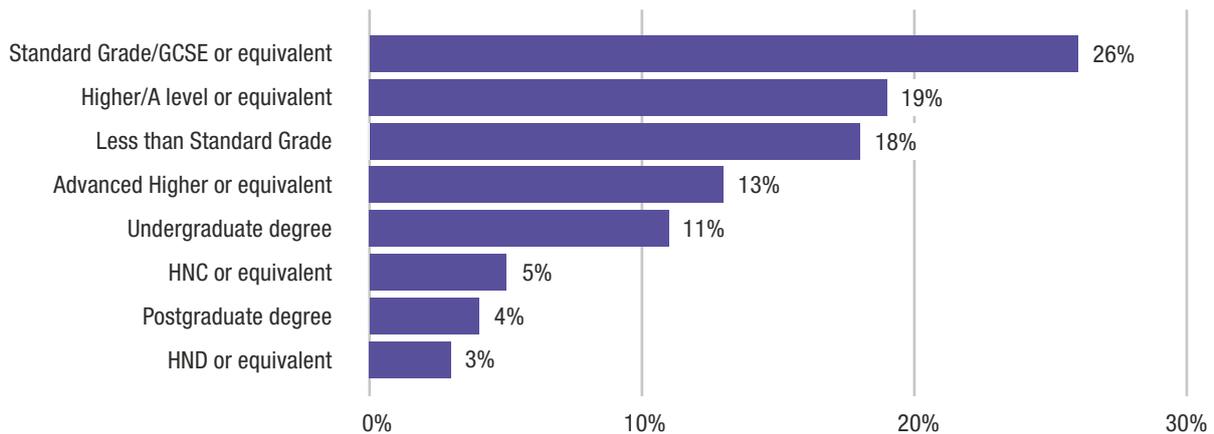
3. *National LGBTI Survey: Research Report*. (2018). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721704/LGBT-survey-research-report.pdf [Date accessed: 11/3/22]

Education and attainment

56% of participants were currently enrolled in school, **7%** were enrolled in college, **18%** were enrolled in university and **18%** were not enrolled in any of these.⁴

There was a variety of educational levels of achievement represented within the sample, with most participants (**82%**) having achieved at least standard grade/GCSE level or equivalent⁵ and **15%** having attained an undergraduate or postgraduate degree.⁶

Figure 6: Levels of educational attainment



4. n = 1056. The questions relating to education appeared later in the survey (sitting within the Education section) and a response was therefore not forced, allowing participants to skip this question resulting in a slightly reduced number of responses.

5. Including Nat 5 level qualifications

6. n=1005

COMMUNITY

'Scotland is pretty welcoming for queer people, it just depends on where in the country you are and who is around you'



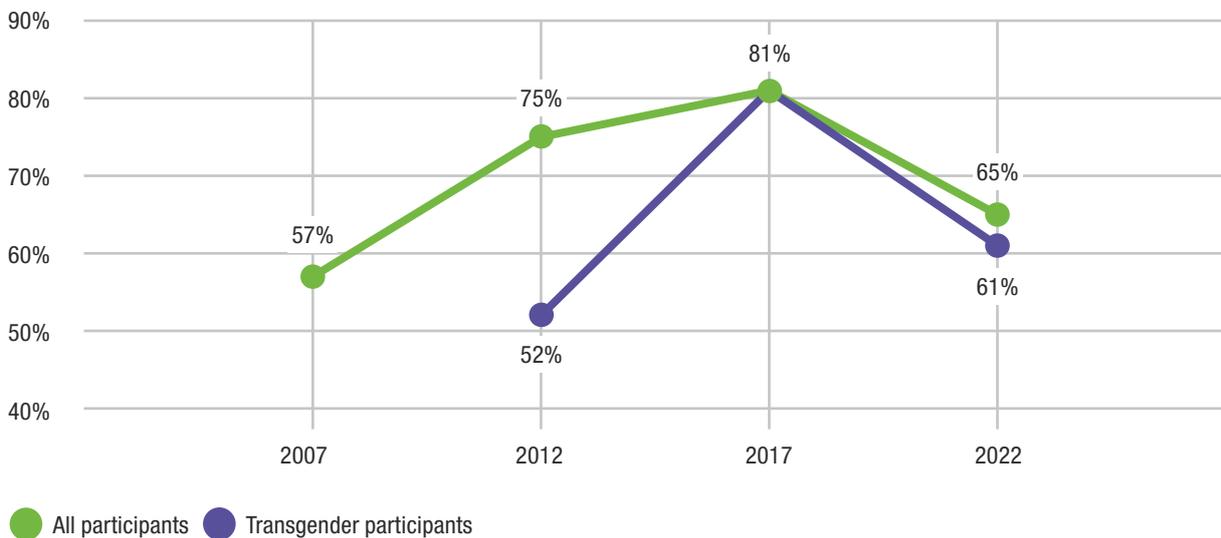
We wanted to find out how young people feel about their experience of being an LGBTI young person in Scotland, about their perceptions of their local area, and about their experiences engaging with their community – and how this has changed over time.

SCOTLAND AND YOUR LOCAL AREA

Participants were asked: *In general, would you say Scotland is a good place for LGBTI young people to live?*

- **65%** of participants answered 'Yes', Scotland is a good place for LGBTI young people to live.⁷ This figure was slightly lower for trans participants, **61%** of whom responded 'Yes' to this question.⁸
- There has been a notable decrease in these figures over the last five years. In 2017 **81%** of LGBTI participants and **81%** of trans participants believed Scotland was a good place to live for LGBTI young people.
- Prior to 2022, there had been a steady increase in people responding 'Yes' to this question across both groups (see Fig. 7). For the first time in 15 years, this figure has begun to drop. Whilst it could be argued that this finding might reflect the effects of the pandemic on young people's lives, the sharp level of decrease, along with the question's focus on LGBTI people in particular suggests a specific change in experience for LGBTI young people in Scotland, as opposed to solely the effects of the pandemic which was a broader global event.

Figure 7: Percentage of participants who believe Scotland is a good place for LGBTI people to live



7. n = 1264

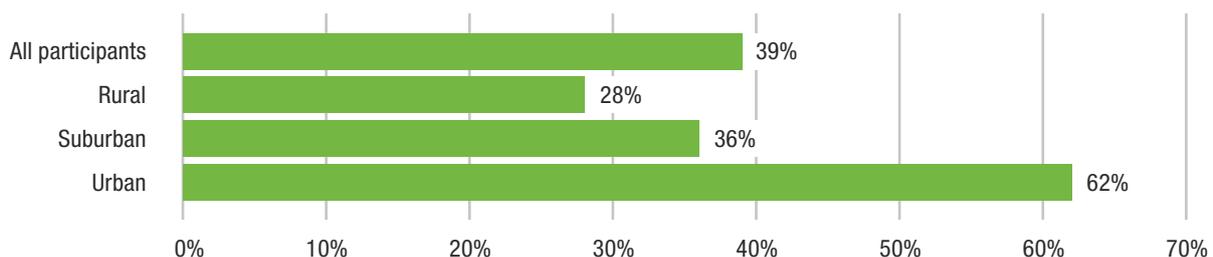
8. n = 623

'The younger generation in Scotland are very accepting of LGBTI+ people and there are a number of spaces where I feel safe to express myself, there is inclusive education and I think LGBTI+ people have a good level of medical rights, however, in some spaces it doesn't feel safe to hold my partner's hand in public and I have experienced homophobia.'

More specifically, participants were asked: *Would you say that **your local area** is a good place for LGBTI young people to live?*

- Just **39%** of all participants responded 'Yes' to this question.⁹
- There was, however, a clear difference in responses between participants living in rural, suburban and urban areas. **62%** of participants living in urban areas said that they believe their area is a good place for LGBTI young people, whereas this figure fell to **36%** for suburban participants and just **28%** for participants living in rural areas.¹⁰

Figure 8: Percentage of participants who think their local area is a good place for LGBTI young people to live



'On the whole, I would say Scotland is pretty welcoming for queer people, it just depends on where in the country you are and who is around you.'

These findings were echoed in the results of qualitative analysis. A common pattern within responses was a **perception of cities as queer-friendly**. Participant responses on this topic focused on a comparison of urban areas with rural/suburban areas. Participants told us that:

'Scotland is a lot more progressive than many other countries. However, this doesn't stop individuals being homophobic/transphobic. Living in a small town I see this a lot more than I did when I lived in a city.'

'It's hard to explain, but I feel as though I can be myself in the city centre, whereas in quieter areas of the city I'm not gonna flaunt about talking about my allyship or sexual orientation.'

9. n = 1264

10. Rural n = 324, suburban n = 572, urban n = 303

'I live in a fairly rural area and whilst there are now groups for younger people, when you hit my age group, your only real option becomes travelling to Edinburgh for bars/clubs as there aren't many sober options for young adult LGBT+ people. And even then, it's still in Edinburgh.'

'The first time I moved here I saw for the first time a poster at a bus station about going against homophobia. I came from a small island where LGBT people are rarely talked about, so it was amazing to see something like that in public.'

'I feel very isolated in my rural area – I feel that coming out as bi or trans would alienate me, and also that nobody would respect my identity at best if I came out as trans, and that I would become a pariah and bring gossip about my family and fall out with them at worst, so I remain permanently in the closet for now, which is agonising and not sustainable. I am not planning to come out until I move to a city sometime soon.'

FEELING INCLUDED IN PUBLIC SPACES

72% of participants feel that visible displays of allyship (flags/certificates of training/inclusivity statements) in public spaces make them feel safe and/or included.¹¹ Despite this, participants also reported mixed feelings about these visible signs of allyship, focusing on the context and the values or actions taken by people working in spaces displaying these. Participants' opinions on this subject were categorised into groups which included:

1. Visible signs of a safe space

Some participants felt strongly that seeing a flag or sign of allyship was a sign that the space they were entering was safe for them and this would encourage them to visit these spaces.

'I know I can be open there without fear.'

'These flags make you aware that the company cares about how they are perceived and how it makes the people they interact with feel. Certifications and documents can be hard to come by, it proves these organisations care about the rights and wellbeing of LGBTI people.'

'It reminds me that there are people who do care about us. I actually went for a drive a few weeks ago with my mum and I saw pride flags on a factory and it made me smile a lot! I love seeing them in public and it just makes me feel very safe, included and valued!'

'Although I usually still feel on edge, signs of safety and being welcomed help me relax slightly.'

'Visible inclusion, even when performative, still shows that appealing to queer people in public is better than appealing to bigots, or neither, which shows that society in general is becoming more accepting.'

'It makes me feel safe going into these places because they go out of their way to do that to make sure people know they are welcome there.'

2. Performative and tokenistic actions or 'Rainbow Capitalism'

Some participants, however, felt that a flag or sign alone was not enough to represent a safe space, and that sometimes these signs were tokenistic or purely performative, and used as a way of boosting a company's sales or reputation. Many felt that, unless these symbols were backed up with concrete action, they were worthless. Others felt that many of these displays were generic, and didn't display a true understanding or representation of the community they claimed to offer allyship to.

'It is meaningless when all corporate entities use pride flags or badges of inclusion solely to drive up profit with a fashionable cause. Many multinational corporations will fly a pride flag in the UK while trading abroad with anti-LGBT governments who commit human rights abuses.'

'Anyone can put flags up or attend training courses, this doesn't mean they are nice, educated, inclusive people who are allies.'

'If it's just a rainbow I'm not entirely convinced completely unless it's the Progress Pride flag, otherwise it seems a lot like Rainbow Capitalism/Pinkwashing to me.'

'The more specific the flag the better.'

3. Negative consequences of public displays

Another category of responses related to possible unintended negative consequences of displaying flags and signs of allyship. Some participants felt that some of these might attract unwanted attention or antagonism towards the LGBTI community. Others felt that these might not be clear enough to be sure that they represented an LGBTI-inclusive space, and that this might lead to uncertainty.

'It gives me the heads-up that I am safe to be my authentic self without judgement. However, this has been affected recently by the pandemic, and the NHS using our flag. I no longer see a rainbow as a symbol of a safe haven, but it has become a question. I have seen bigots flying our flag, and often it is used by companies who simply would like to profit off of us by using our flag when they still donate to homophobic organisations and do not truly support us.'

'I feel like that may draw unwanted attention... which might add to my discomfort.'

'People usually make fun of it.'

'Even just posting a message in support for the LGBTQ community is usually enough for an organisation to receive a tide of hatred, so I prefer to take it at face value that they mean their support if they're willing to put up with that.'

HAPPINESS

37% of the participants indicated that they were happy or very happy with their life as an LGBTI young person in Scotland.¹² This has fallen from **57%** in 2017 and **66%** in 2012.

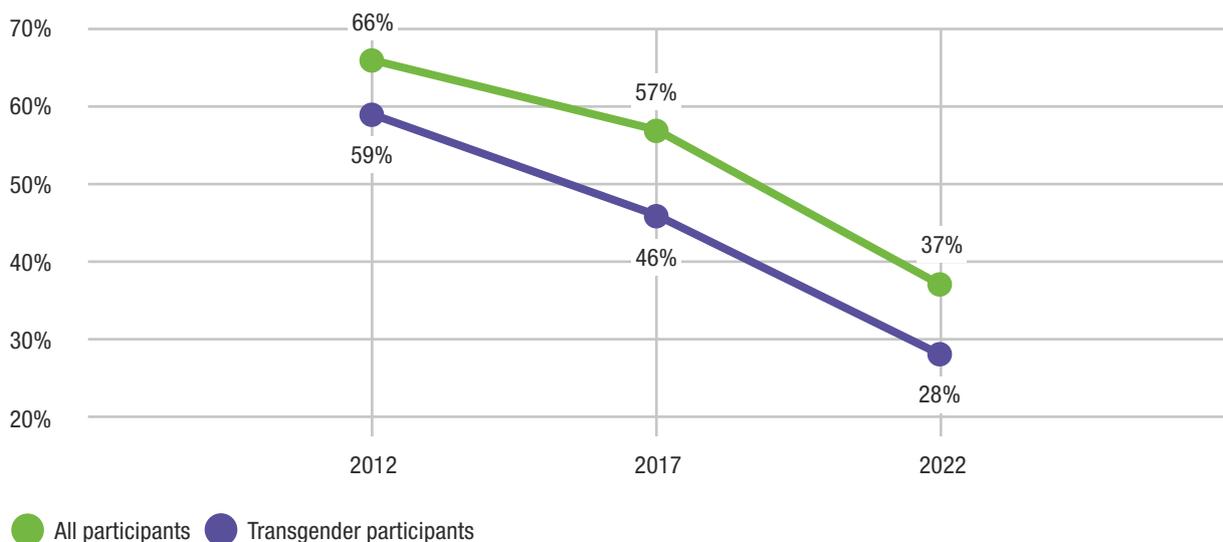
There was a slight variation found between participants identifying as gay/lesbian, bisexual and asexual:¹³

- **41%** of gay and lesbian participants felt happy or very happy with their life as an LGBTI person in Scotland
- **40%** of bisexual participants felt happy or very happy
- This figure was slightly lower for asexual participants, at **37%**

Trans participants felt less happy, with just **28%** of trans people indicating they were happy or very happy.¹⁴ Again, this has fallen from **46%** in 2017 and **59%** in 2012.

This shows a steady decline in happiness over the last decade (see Fig. 9).

Figure 9: Percentage of participants who are happy/very happy with their life as an LGBTI person in Scotland, 2012 – 2022



12. n = 1244

13. Gay/lesbian participants n = 425, bisexual participants n = 388, asexual participants n = 162

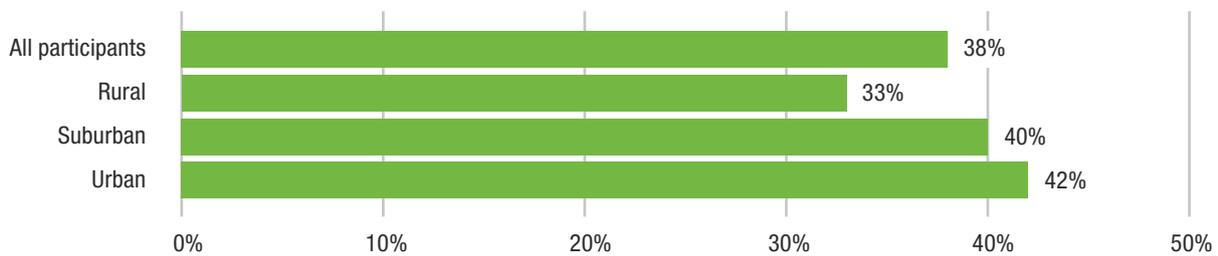
14. n = 613

SOCIALISING/LONELINESS

Just **38%** of the participants felt that there are enough places where they can safely socialise and be open about their sexual orientation or gender identity,¹⁵ a figure which is slightly lower than that found in 2017 when 43% of the participants felt there were enough places to safely socialise for them. This figure was lower again for disabled participants at **32%**, and neurodivergent participants at **33%**.¹⁶

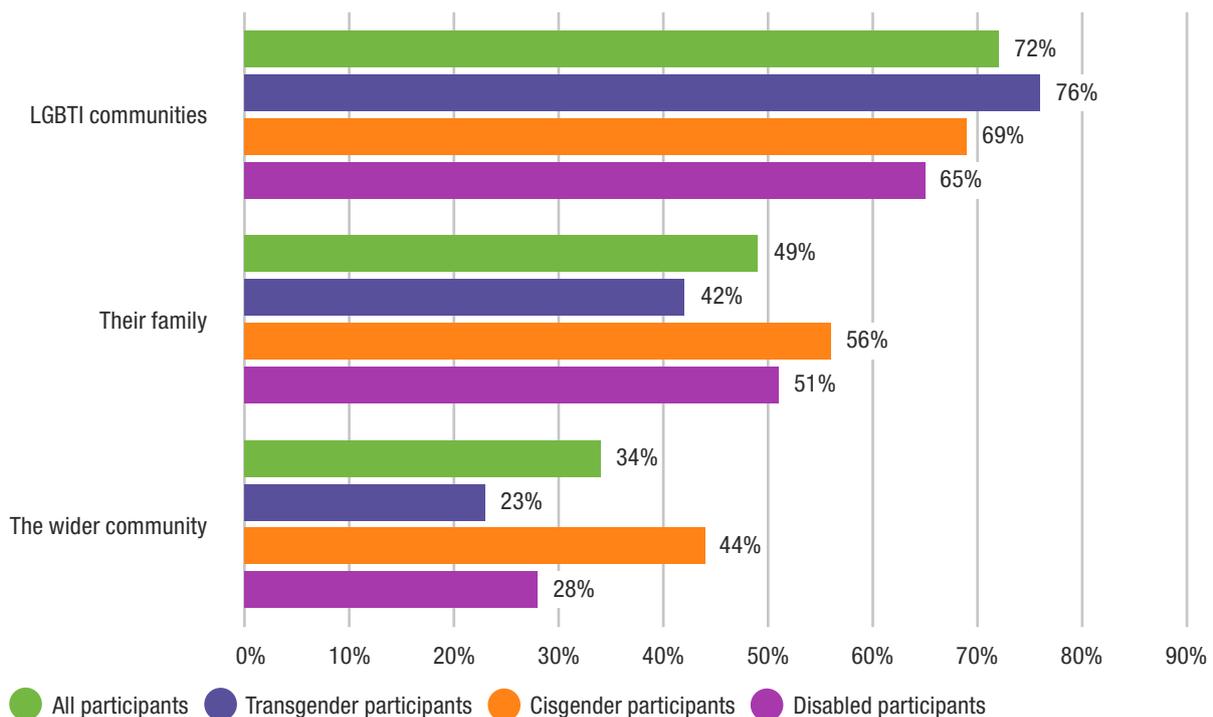
There was also variation found across rural/suburban and urban areas. A lower percentage of rural-based participants indicated that they believe there are sufficient spaces to socialise in safety than those living in suburban or urban areas (see Fig. 10):¹⁷

Figure 10: Percentage of participants who feel there are enough places to safely socialise and be open about their sexual orientation/gender identity



We also asked participants whether or not they felt included and accepted within LGBTI communities, their families and the wider community. The responses (shown below in Fig. 11)¹⁸ show that experiences vary between demographic groups:

Figure 11: Percentage of participants who feel included/accepted within...



15. n = 1256

16. Disabled participants n = 208, neurodivergent participants n = 481

17. Rural n = 323, suburban n = 569, urban n = 301

18. All participants n = 1263, transgender participants n = 623, cisgender participants n = 617, disabled participants n = 208

In particular, it is worth noting that:

- Fewer disabled participants feel included/accepted within LGBTI communities than LGBTI participants overall, with just **65%** of disabled participants feeling included as opposed to **72%** of participants overall
- Fewer transgender participants feel accepted within their families than cisgender participants (**42%** of transgender participants feel accepted vs **56%** of cisgender participants)
- Only half (**49%**) of participants overall say that they feel accepted by their families
- Only **23%** of transgender participants feel accepted within the wider community, as compared to **44%** of cisgender participants
- Overall, participants are more likely to feel accepted within LGBTI communities than the wider community or within their family

'I face the least discrimination within the rest of the LGBTQ community, which is why I tend to seek out community spaces in the city.'

'I'm not largely out in the wider community, out of fear of it getting back to my family. It's kind of stifling.'

Participants were also asked how much of the time during the past week they had felt lonely. 44% of participants indicated that they had felt lonely most of the time or all/almost all of the time.¹⁹ This figure varied by sexual orientation, with a lower percentage of gay and lesbian participants feeling lonely than bisexual or asexual (LGBA) participants (see Fig. 12 below).²⁰

Figure 12: LGBA participants – levels of loneliness

Participant group	Percentage
All participants	44%
Gay/lesbian participants	39%
Bisexual participants	47%
Asexual participants	46%

There was also a difference found in levels of loneliness according to living area, with a lower percentage of urban-based participants feeling lonely than suburban or rural-based participants (see Fig. 13 below):²¹

Figure 13: Participants feeling lonely all/most of the time in the last week

Area	Percentage of participants
Rural	46%
Suburban	43%
Urban	37%

19. n = 1253

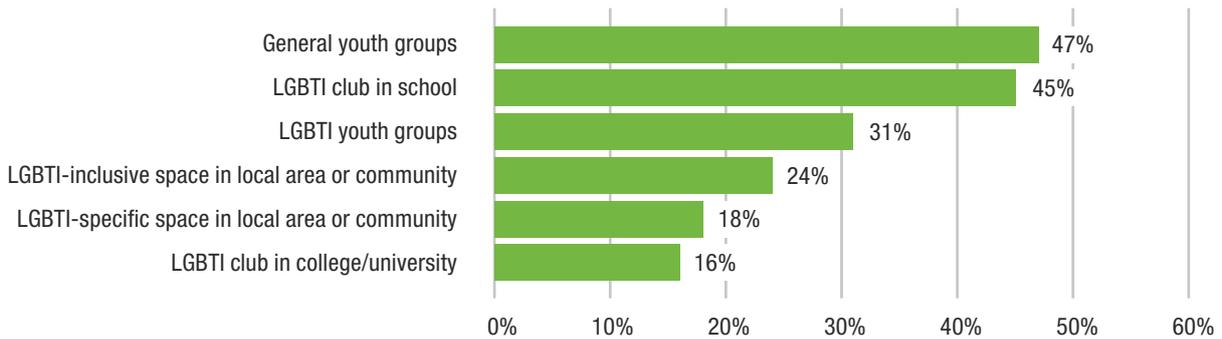
20. All participants n = 1253, gay/lesbian participants n = 429, bisexual participants n = 388, asexual participants n = 166

21. Rural n = 322, suburban n = 568, urban n = 299

LGBTI GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES

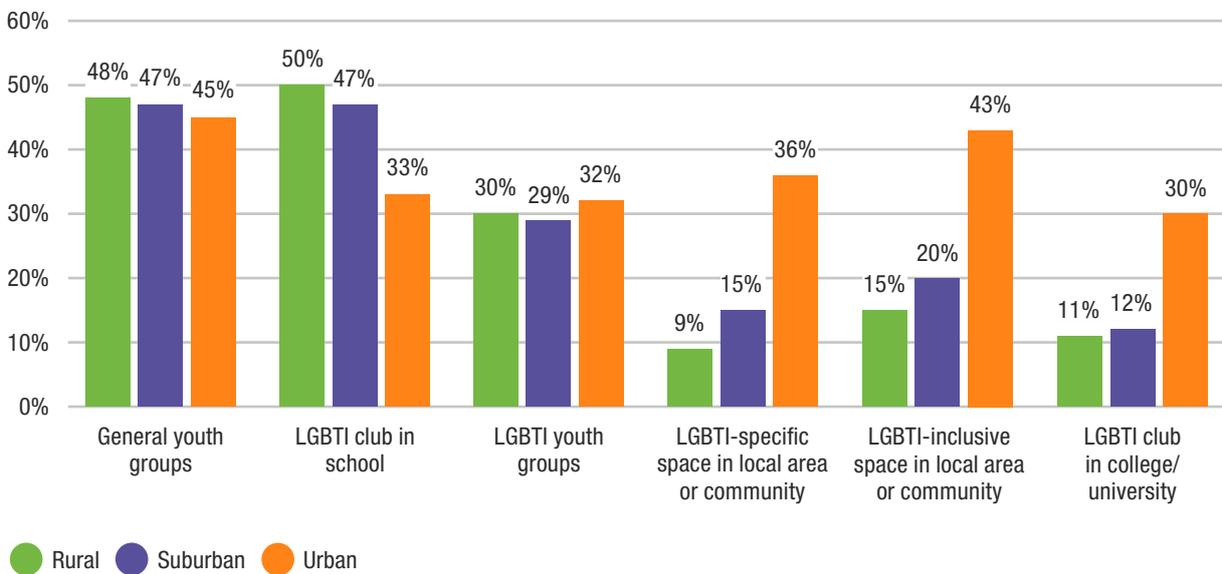
We wanted to find out more specifically about participants' experiences of socialising with other young LGBTI people. We asked which groups and LGBTI spaces participants currently attend or have attended in the past. The percentage of all participants that access these is shown in Fig. 14 below:²²

Figure 14: Percentage of all participants who attend or have attended LGBTI groups



Almost half of the participants (**45%**) attend or have attended an LGBTI club in school, and a third attend or have attended an LGBTI youth group. There was some variation between the type of groups participants choose to attend between rural, suburban and urban areas (see Fig. 15 below²³).

Figure 15: Percentage of participants attending or having attended clubs/groups split by location



Urban-based participants are more likely to attend an LGBTI-specific or inclusive space in their local area or community than rural or suburban-based young people. Further research would be required to find out why this might be, however it is possible that there are more LGBTI-specific/inclusive spaces available to young people in urban areas, which they are taking advantage of.

22. n=1263

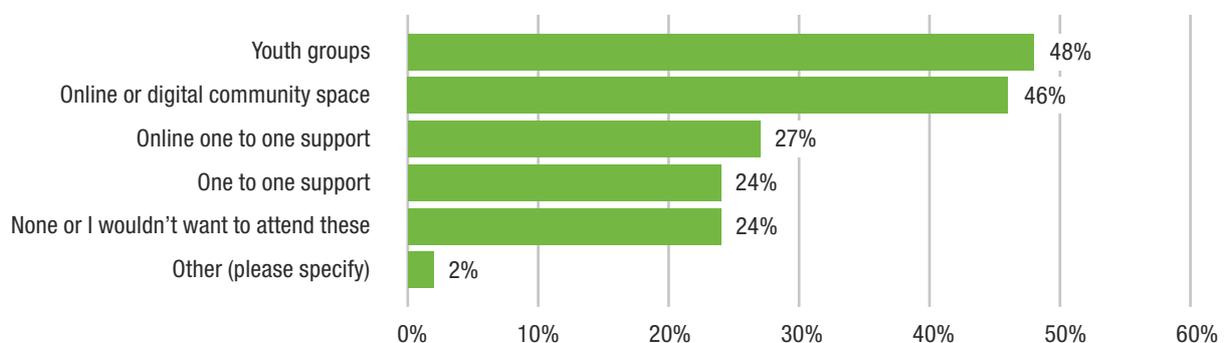
23. Rural n = 329, suburban n = 577, urban n = 306

Rural and suburban-based participants are more likely to attend an LGBTI club in school than those living in urban areas, however it is likely that these figures reflect the fact that a higher percentage of participants in urban areas currently attend university, whereas a higher percentage of participants in rural and suburban areas currently attend school.

LGBT YOUTH SCOTLAND'S SERVICES

We wanted to find out what services young people would be likely to use, if they were available in their area. Participants' responses are shown below in Fig. 16.²⁴

Figure 16: Participants' choice of groups they would be likely to attend, if available in their area



As shown in Fig. 16, participants are, on the whole, more likely to attend group activities, both in-person and digitally, than they are to access one-to-one support. Further research would be necessary to find out whether this is due to a general preference for group activities, or a lack of confidence in requesting individual support.

Participants were also asked whether or not the services shown in Fig. 16 are already available in their area. Just **38%** of participants could identify these services as being available to them,²⁵ suggesting that there is still some way to go in making sure LGBTI-specific groups and support are available to all young LGBTI people. Again, however, a variation was found between rural, suburban and urban-based participants, with just **29%** of rural-based participants telling us that these services are available in their area, as compared to **36%** of suburban and **52%** of urban-based participants.²⁶

These figures, along with those presented above showing higher levels of participants in rural areas reporting feeling lonely, and those showing participants' preferences for group activities, suggest that there might be merit in improving the accessibility of these services across a broader range of geographical areas than is currently available to young people.

24. n = 1227

25. n = 1228

26. Rural n = 319, suburban n = 554, urban n = 290

EXPERIENCES OF LGBTI GROUPS AND SPACES

Participants were invited to tell us more about their experiences of LGBTI-specific groups and spaces. Responses showed that opinions on these varied. Some young people feel that these places are a vital source of connection to their community, a safe space, or a place where they are free to express their authentic self. Some participants, however, feel that there are barriers to their participation in these groups. Themes generated from these responses included:

1. A sense of connection

Many participants appreciated the sense of community and connection with other LGBTI people that attending these spaces and groups offers them.

'LGBT Youth Scotland groups have consistently made me feel welcome and provided me with opportunities to meet people, make connections and otherwise build confidence.'

'Before COVID fully hit, I had been active in one of the local LGBT+ Scot groups but it was more just a nice place to try to socialise and have somewhere decent to chill out for a few hours and maybe get free food. I wasn't entirely honest about my living situations with them all the time, they knew it was rough but I rarely mentioned where I would actually be spending the night after. Having those spaces made me feel "normal" for at least a couple hours a week.'

'I loved that they felt so normal. Looking around and seeing so many happy queer folk just enjoying their day-to-day life, their relationships and with their own identities. It makes me look forward to a future where I can live safely and normally as an LGBT person or LGBT parent.'

'I attend a weekly LGBTQ+ badminton group – it's great to have community and sport together (but in an accessible way, i.e. you don't need to be good to join). It's had a twofold impact on my mental health – doing regular exercise and having a community space.'

2. Authenticity and freedom of expression

Other responses celebrated the freedom these spaces allowed participants to be their authentic selves without fear of negative consequences.

'The groups I attend allow me to be really open without fear of judgement, we can discuss issues we face, positive experiences we've had and get support. They're very welcoming spaces.'

'LGBT Youth Group was for a very long time my only queer space and the only place I could be myself uncritically. This may have, unexaggeratedly, saved my life and I am eternally grateful.'

'I go to a youth group for trans people, it's the one place I feel like I won't be judged for how I look/sound, and I can actually talk to people who get what being trans is like.'

'It's somewhere to go and just be me.'

3. Inaccessibility and barriers to full participation

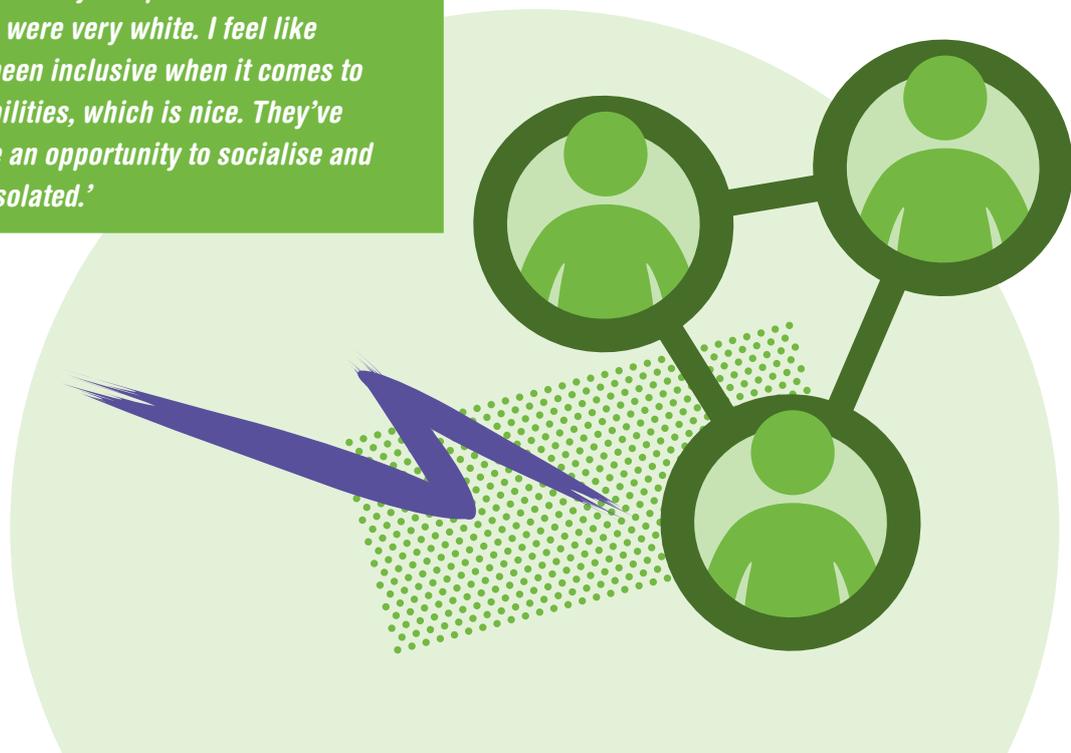
Some participants, however, felt that there were obstacles in the way of their participation in these spaces and some suggested ways in which the groups could be made more accessible.

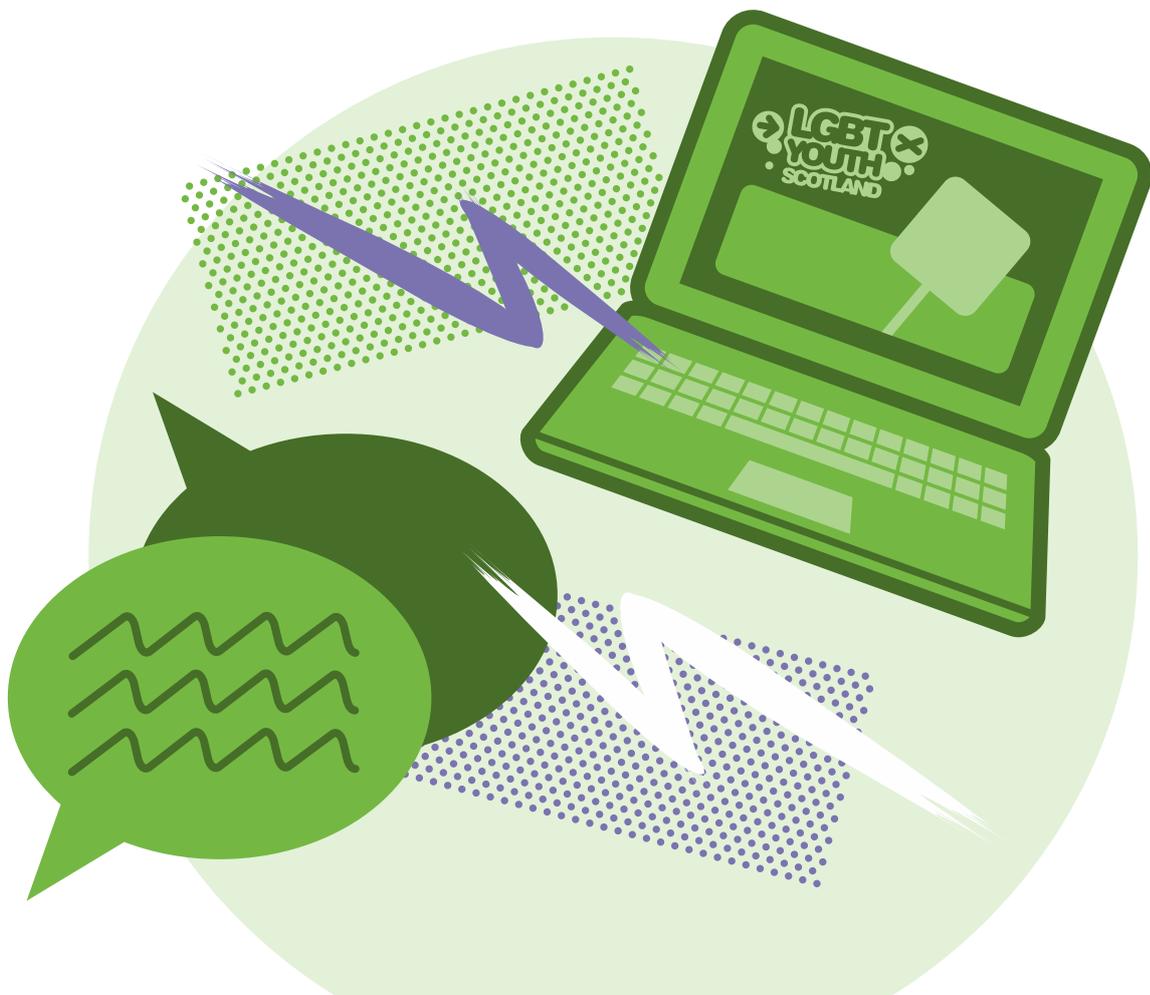
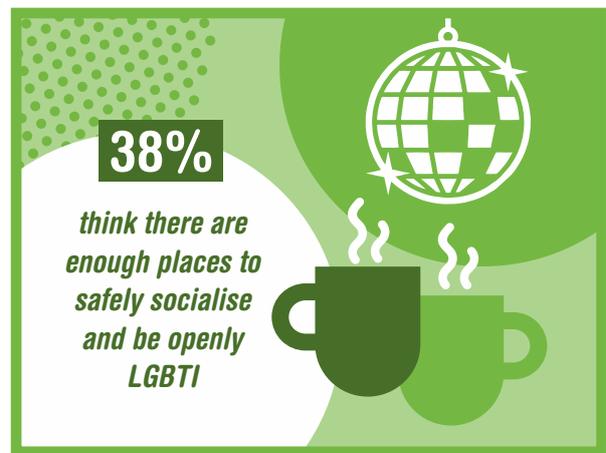
'A queer space without the pressure to drink alcohol would be very valuable for me and my other queer friends because as much as queer club nights can be a great experience, a sober space would be better to reduce loneliness I think. This is because it would remove the expectation to be hyper-social or intoxicated with alcohol or drugs. I have some transgender and queer friends who don't feel comfortable going to club nights sober and who are underage. There are very few accessible spaces for them to meet and make other friends, or even just to have supportive space and community away from the pressures of home or school.'

'I used to live in an extremely rural area where there was nothing locally accessible to me as the nearest in-person group was 50 miles away in the city closest to me. Online groups wouldn't feel like there was a strong enough sense of community to me if I hadn't been to the group in person before.'

'My issue personally is that I am a teacher, by attending these meetings I could potentially infringe on the safe space it creates for my pupils. I'd find myself in meetings with children I teach who might not feel comfortable being totally honest if I'm there, and likewise I feel like I can't talk about my own struggles in front of them.'

'I don't have any complaints other than that they were very white. I feel like they've been inclusive when it comes to my disabilities, which is nice. They've given me an opportunity to socialise and be less isolated.'





COMING OUT

'The people I came out to first had already expressed views in favour of trans rights and queer identities themselves'



Coming out is the process of telling others about your sexual orientation and/or gender identity. LGBTI people may choose to come out at various life stages and may choose to come out publicly, to come out to only a few selected people in their lives, or only to come out to themselves.²⁷

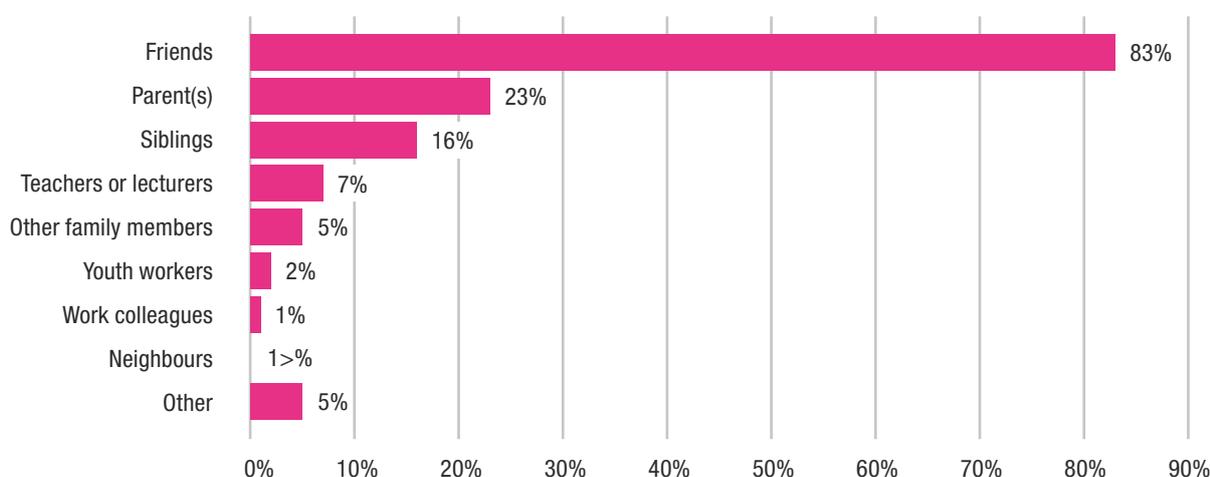
97% of the participants have come out to at least one person.²⁸ This is unsurprisingly high as participants taking part in a survey on LGBTI issues are more likely to already have come out to one or more people previously.

Young people are generally choosing to come out earlier than they were ten years ago. The average age of participants coming out as lesbian, gay, bisexual or another sexual orientation other than straight is **14**,²⁹ which has fallen from 15 in 2017 and 16 in 2012.

A similar pattern was found in the age of transgender people choosing to come out which was found this year to be **15**,³⁰ as compared to 16 in 2017.

We asked participants to tell us who the first person/group of people they came out to was. Participants were able to select more than one answer to this question in recognition of the fact that people may choose to come out to a group of people as opposed to just one person at a time. The percentage of young people choosing each response is shown below in Fig. 17.³¹

Figure 17: First person/people that young people came out to



The percentage of participants receiving a 'supportive' or 'very supportive' reaction from the person they first came out to has increased since 2017 from 75% to **82%** in 2022.³² Just over a third of the participants (**35%**) were surprised by the reaction they received.³³

77% of transgender participants reported a supportive/very supportive reaction to their coming out,³⁴ as compared to 70% in 2017.

27. *Coming Out* (n.d.). (<https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/groups-and-support/lgbt-advice-centre/coming-out/>) [Date Accessed: 11/3/22]

28. n = 1034

29. n = 936

30. n = 426

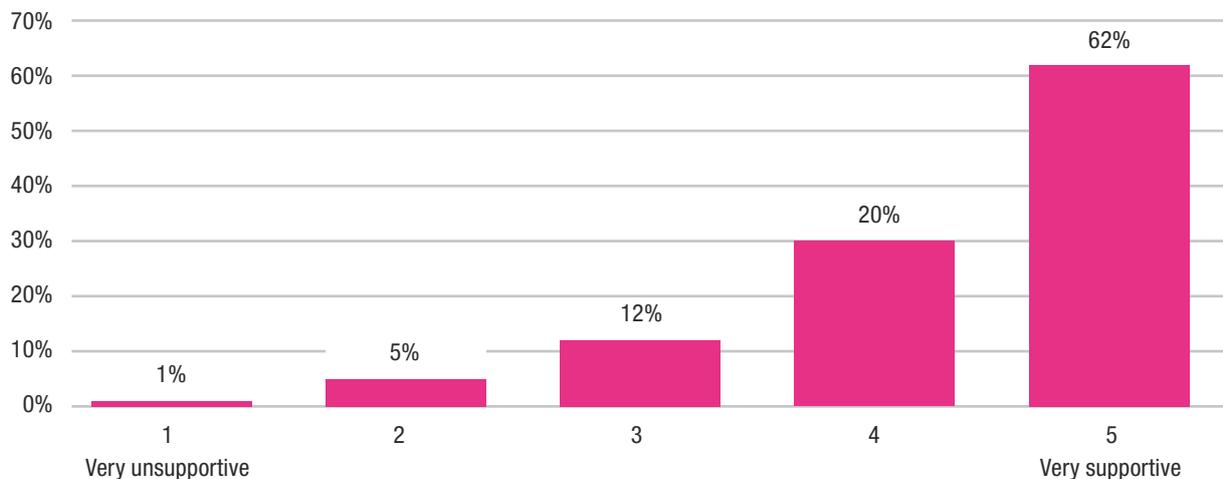
31. n = 1014

32. The survey question relating to this did not distinguish between coming out about sexual orientation and coming out about gender identity. A choice was made to reuse the wording of the 2017 question which was formatted in this way in order to achieve consistency between the two data sets. n = 1002

33. n = 1016

34. n = 514

Figure 18: How supportive was the first person you came out to? (1 = Very unsupportive – 5 = Very supportive)



'I know my friends are accepting and kind. There is almost nothing I wouldn't feel comfortable saying, and the people I came out to first had already expressed views in favour of trans rights and queer identities themselves.'

EXPERIENCES OF AND OPINIONS ON COMING OUT

Within the participants' descriptions of their experience of and perspective on coming out, the role of supportive allies in their lives was a prominent theme. Participants also debated the importance of coming out and the role that education on LGBTI issues could play in the chances of receiving a supportive reaction to coming out.

1. Surrounding yourself with support

Many participants related their positive experience of coming out to a supportive atmosphere and the visibility of other LGBTI people and LGBTI allies in their lives.

'I am very lucky that I have very supportive friends and family even though it was still scary to come out even though I knew they would be fine with it.'

'I always knew my friends would be my biggest support.'

'It would be nice to see more physical displays of allyship rather than only seeing other LGBTQ+ folks wearing pride merch! An ally flag would be great, actually. Even having one person who is clearly supportive could make a huge difference to some young people.'

'I still don't come out unless I know someone well, or I'm in an explicitly LGBTQ+ safe space. I feel that it's safest to assume that someone is homophobic until proven otherwise rather than the opposite.'

(In relation to what would help someone coming out) 'Being accepted and believed. Knowing your home will still feel safe afterwards.'

2. The consequences of a lack of support

Some participants felt that a lack of support was a barrier to their coming out and saw coming out or being outed as a risk in these circumstances.

'My family have always been very critical of any person who isn't straight or cis. They either see them as undesirables or as people who are sinners trying to ruin the world.'

'Casual trans/homophobia. People think that they have a right to be bigoted when you come out to them.'

'Being cut off financially, life being made difficult, fear about arguments.'

'Fear of being told it's a phase or not being believed.'

'My sister is gay too so I would worry that my parents would be disappointed to have both of their kids be gay and possibly not have biological grandkids (my mum has told me many times that she's relying on me for that which makes me feel like I'd let her down if I told her).'

'I am a Christian and also LGBTI, understanding how those two things fit together was difficult for me. I truly believe in my faith but I also needed to understand what being LGBTI meant with this. I have chosen to remain celibate in my life due to my faith, but do not feel some older members of my congregation would understand. I feel completely supported being LGBTI and Christian from my church leadership but I would not with some people of older generations or from fellow LGBTI people who do not understand my decision to live the way I do. I believe everyone should have the right to live as they choose but I do not think my decision would be in any way supported by fellow members of the LGBTI community.'

'Worried that I'll be mocked or harassed. I know family members won't understand gender issues.'

3. The role of LGBTI education/representation

Some participants suggested that increasing LGBTI education and representation, both within schools and more widely across society, would ease the process of coming out for LGBTI people.

'More awareness that it is okay to be LGBT+. Many grow up thinking they are freaks or abnormal, this ingrains those internalised fears. It just needs to be represented more in day-to-day life.'

'A list of references to give to people who are confused or need to learn more.'

'More education, not just in schools, but for parents and older people too. I think more education about different identities will lead to less tolerance of casual homophobia and transphobia, which will in turn make coming out seem less scary.'

'I think many workplaces need to make their policies on identity-based harassment more clear and upfront from the beginning; my own workplace has long been LGBTQ+ friendly, but only recently introduced anti-harassment training, and they did so in a way that's easy to skip over/not take in/ignore, which is something that's made me wary of coming out to even really nice co-workers.'

4. It's not a big deal, why should I come out?

A number of participants believe that coming out is an unnecessary process and that removing this expectation of LGBTI people would be a positive step.

'People shouldn't have to come out. It's an incredibly stupid and heteronormative tradition which isolates gay people and implies that if they don't directly tell people about their sexual preferences, that they aren't being true to themselves. In my opinion, it contributed to the fetishisation of gay people as well as making them feel more lonely.'

'Lifting the pressure to come out, that stems from the need to be validated by others. Coming out is not a necessary thing to do.'

'Start to get rid of heteronormativity, please, we shouldn't have to come out.'



**Average age to
COME OUT**

14
sexual orientation

15
gender identity



**Increase in percentage
receiving a supportive
response to coming out**

2017: 75%

2022: 82%



HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA

'I see it everywhere, whether it be passing comments, social media, newspapers, it's out there'



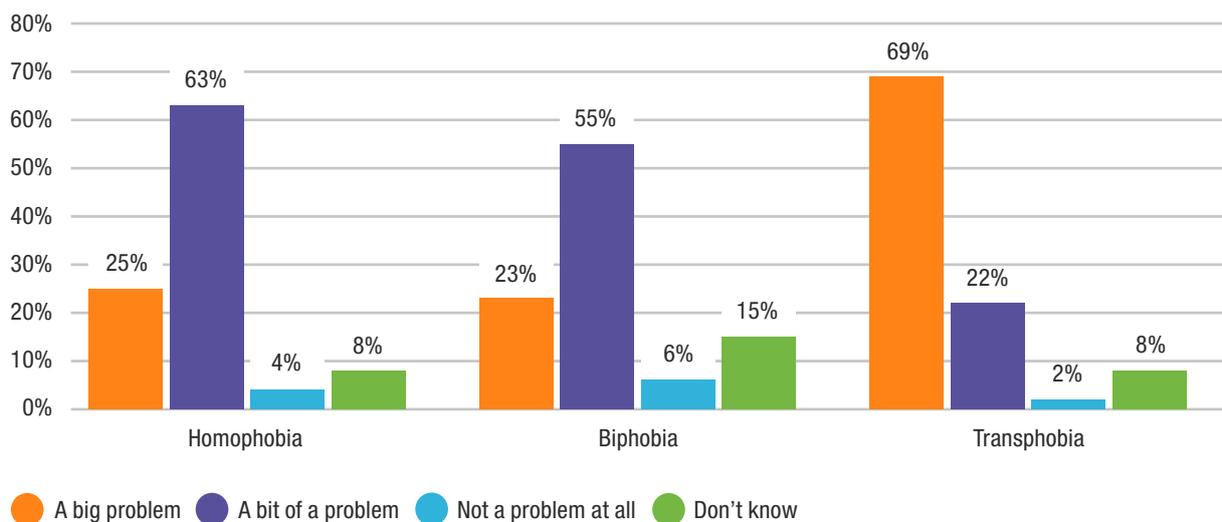
Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are an irrational fear, dislike or hatred of those who are, or who people think are, gay or lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

The vast majority of participants believe that homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are a problem,³⁵ both across Scotland as a whole, and in their local area.

IN SCOTLAND

Participants were first asked whether they perceived homophobia, biphobia or transphobia to be a problem in Scotland.

Figure 19: Percentage of participants that believe that homophobia/biphobia and transphobia are a problem in Scotland



The majority of participants indicated that they believe that homophobia and biphobia are a bit of a problem in Scotland. Transphobia, however, was believed to be a big problem by the majority of participants (69%).³⁶

'I see it everywhere, whether it be passing comments, social media, newspapers, it's out there. It crushes your confidence and self-esteem, it manipulates you into hating your very essence and existence as you feel lesser and feel like you're a detriment to society.'

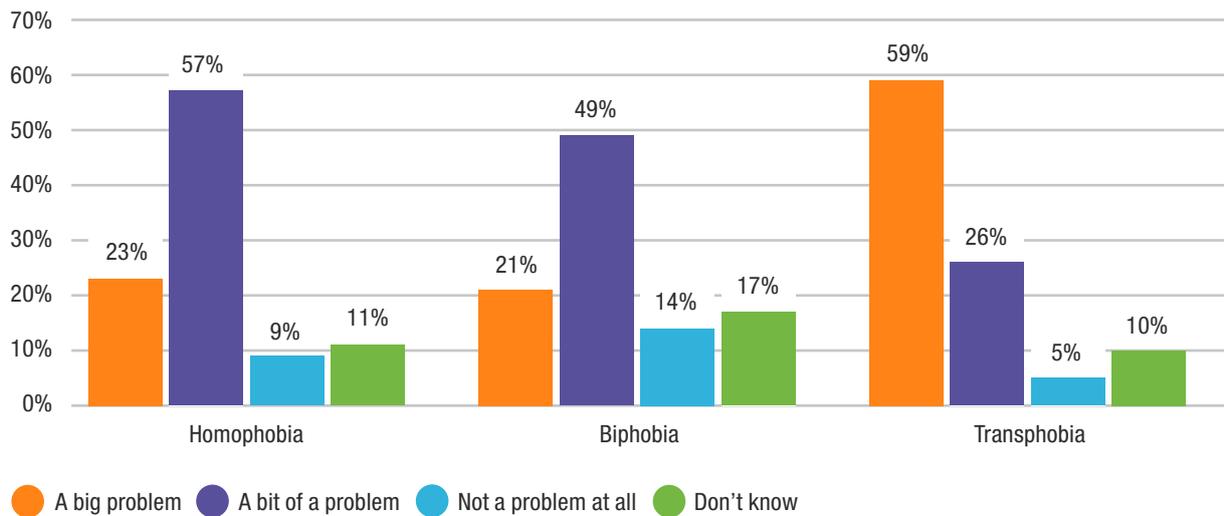
35. Responses including 'a big problem' and 'a bit of a problem' to questions in this section of the survey

36. Homophobia n = 1242, biphobia n = 1243, transphobia n = 1245

IN YOUR LOCAL AREA

Participants were also asked to reflect on homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in their local area and to indicate the extent to which they believe it is a problem.³⁷

Figure 20: Percentage of participants that believe that homophobia/biphobia and transphobia are a problem in their local area



The majority of participants believe that homophobia and biphobia are a bit of a problem in their local area. Again, the majority of participants (**59%**) indicated that they believe that transphobia is a big problem. It is however interesting to note that a higher percentage of participants believe that transphobia is a big problem in Scotland than it is in their local area, suggesting that some participants believe that Scotland has a general problem with transphobia that they do not perceive locally.

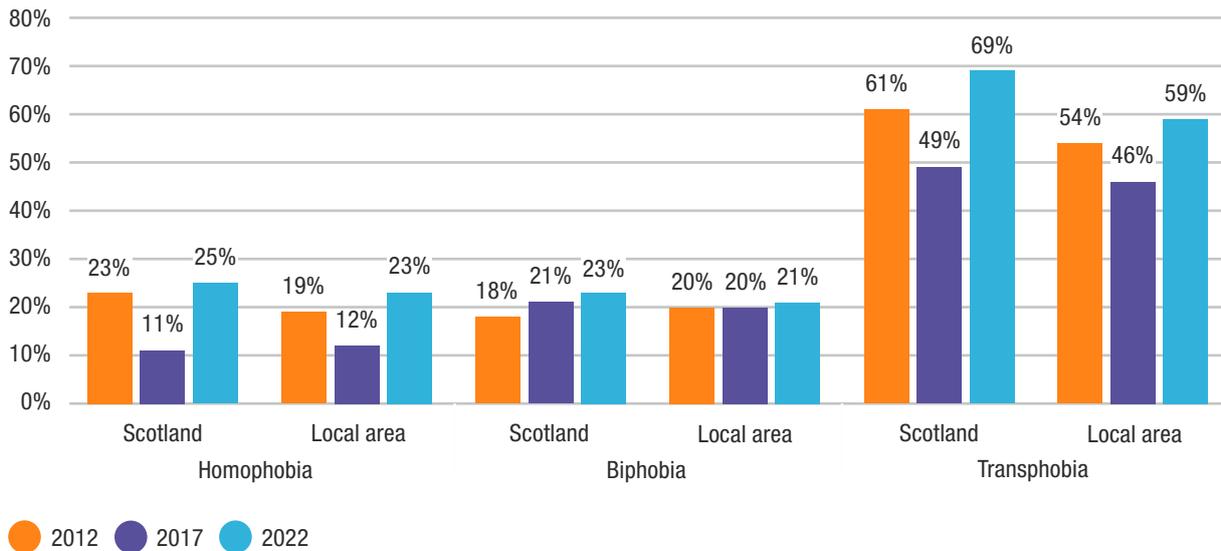


37. Homophobia n = 1260, biphobia n = 1258, transphobia n = 1258

CHANGES OVER TIME

Fig. 21 (below) shows the changing levels of participants believing that prejudicial attitudes are a big problem in Scotland and in their local area between 2012 and 2022.

Figure 21: Percentage of participants who think that homophobia/biphobia/transphobia is a big problem



As shown above in Fig. 21:

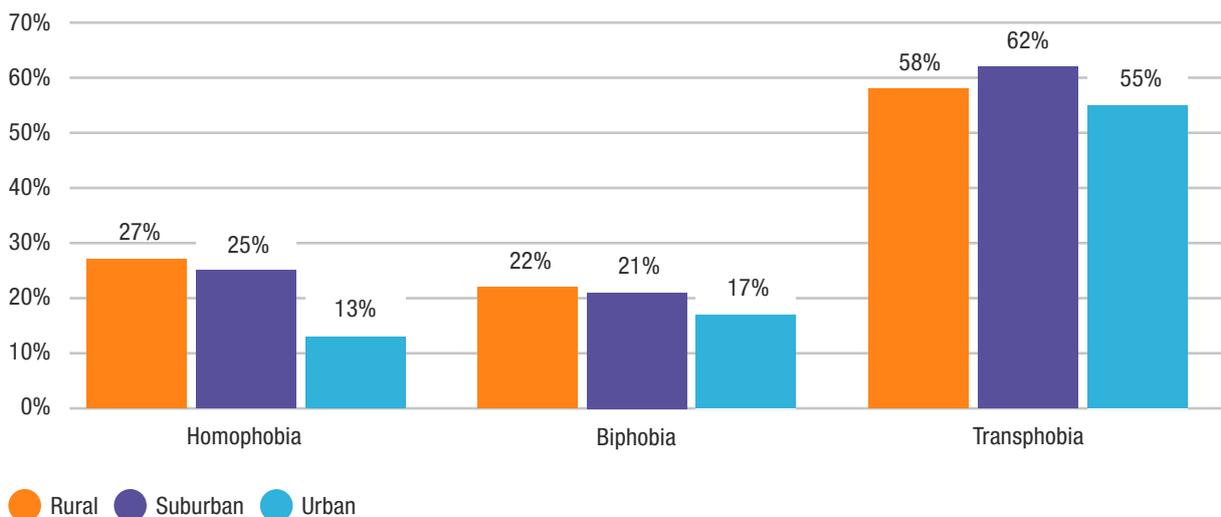
- The perception that homophobia is a big problem fell in 2017, but has now risen back to levels last seen in 2012, both in Scotland and in participants' local areas
- The percentage of participants who believe biphobia is a big problem in Scotland has risen slightly, and the percentage that believe it is a big problem in their local area has remained relatively consistent over the last ten years
- The percentage of participants perceiving transphobia to be a big problem fell between 2012 and 2017, but has now risen to higher levels than before, both in Scotland and in participants' local areas

The reasons for the rising levels of participants perceiving homophobia/biphobia/transphobia shown above are unclear. On the one hand, it is possible that the rise is linked to an increased awareness of this behaviour following media campaigns over recent years. On the other hand, it is also possible that participants are seeing a rise in this behaviour following increased anti-LGBTI content seen online and in the media during the discussions surrounding issues such as GRA reform and the banning of conversion practices. Additional research would be necessary to shed further light in this area.

LOCALITY

As this question relates to participants reflecting on prejudice in their local area, it is interesting to compare participant responses across rural, suburban and urban areas, see Fig. 22 below:³⁸

Figure 22: Percentage of rural/suburban/urban participants who think homophobia/biphobia/transphobia is a big problem in their local area



- Urban-based participants were half as likely as those based in rural or suburban areas to identify homophobia as a big problem where they live.
- Participants identified biphobia as a big problem in their area at a similar rate across all areas.
- Across all areas, the majority of participants (over 55%) identified transphobia as a big problem in their local area, with little difference found in the level of participants identifying this across rural, suburban and urban areas.

EXPERIENCES OF HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA

Many participants shared their experiences of discrimination and LGBTI-related abuse, and described a range of far-reaching impacts these experiences had had on them. The experiences described ranged from individual incidents, often taking place in educational settings, to systemic issues being faced within healthcare or legal settings.

'For me, it's more general society on the streets. For example, walking hand in hand with my partner can attract stares.'

'I harm myself because of the abuse I receive on a daily basis.'

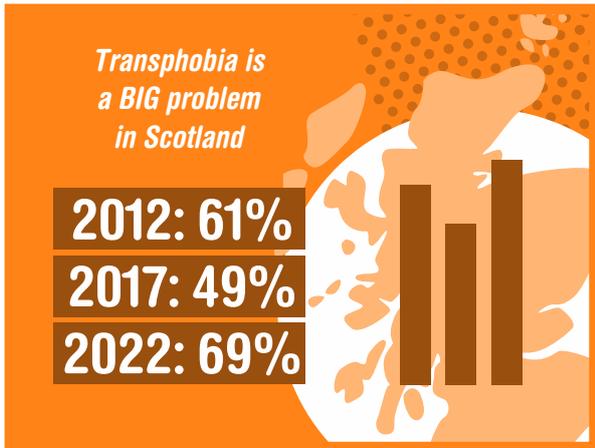
38. Homophobia : rural n = 323, suburban n = 570, urban n = 302
 Biphobia: rural n = 321, suburban n = 570, urban n = 302
 Transphobia: rural n = 320, suburban n = 570, urban n = 303

'I do not face much discrimination in my personal life or day-to-day business, it is the structural discrimination that affects me. Healthcare providers such as GPs are usually not inclusive to trans people, they ask offensive questions, make you fill out outdated forms, and just have a general lack of understanding, which has made me feel uncomfortable and not wanting to access healthcare services that I need.'

'In railway stations, public toilets and in the street I'm often called names or threatened... it's typically in public spaces that I feel the most unsafe.'

'I've experienced discrimination in hospitals before in regards to my sexuality and being treated as if I was gross or weird. It made me feel really small and crappy. I felt like my health didn't matter in comparison to other people who were there.'

'I have been bullied and called slurs for being LGBTQIA+ and I find it hard to focus in school because of the harassment I face.'



KEEPING SAFE

'I don't feel I would be believed, and even if I was it's really hard to actually get any action taken against someone'

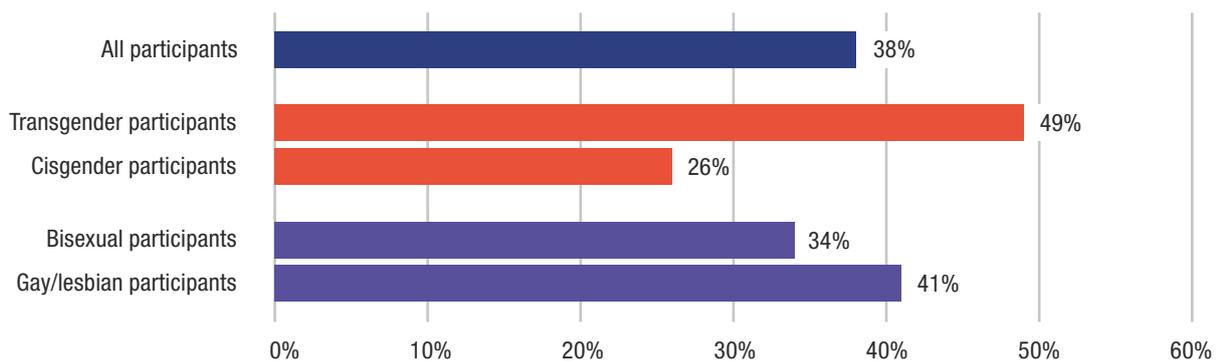


LGBTI people in Scotland are entitled to protection under hate crime law, which relates to crimes motivated by prejudice. We wanted to find out about LGBTI young people's awareness of their legal rights, their experiences reporting hate crime, and also their views on feeling safe when travelling in public as an LGBTI young person. Overall, the percentage of young people feeling confident in reporting hate crime to the police and feeling safe on public transport is lower than in previous years.

HATE CRIME

38% of the participants reported having experienced a hate crime or hate incident in the past year.³⁹ This remains similar to 2017, when 35% of the participants had experienced a hate crime/incident in the past year.

Figure 23: Percentage of participants who have experienced a hate crime in the last year



There was, however, a stark difference between the experiences of transgender and cisgender participants, with **49%** of transgender participants experiencing a hate crime/incident, as compared to just **26%** of the cisgender participants.⁴⁰

Bisexual participants were less likely to report having experienced a hate crime than the LGBTI group overall, with **34%** of these participants responding 'Yes' to this question. Gay/lesbian participants, however, were more likely to have been a victim of a hate crime in the past year, with **41%** of these participants indicating that they had experienced this.⁴¹

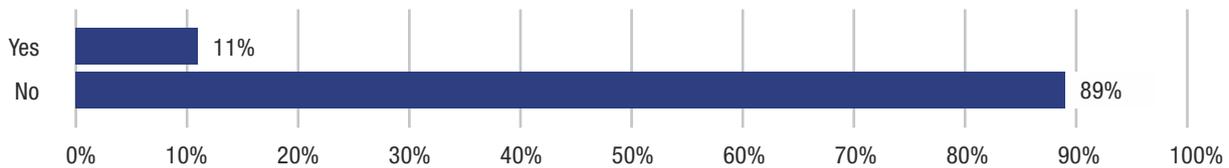
39. n = 1183

40. Transgender participants n = 593, cisgender participants n = 570

41. Bisexual participants n = 369, gay/lesbian participants n = 406

Of those participants who had been the victim of a hate crime within the last twelve months,⁴² just **11%** had reported this to police.

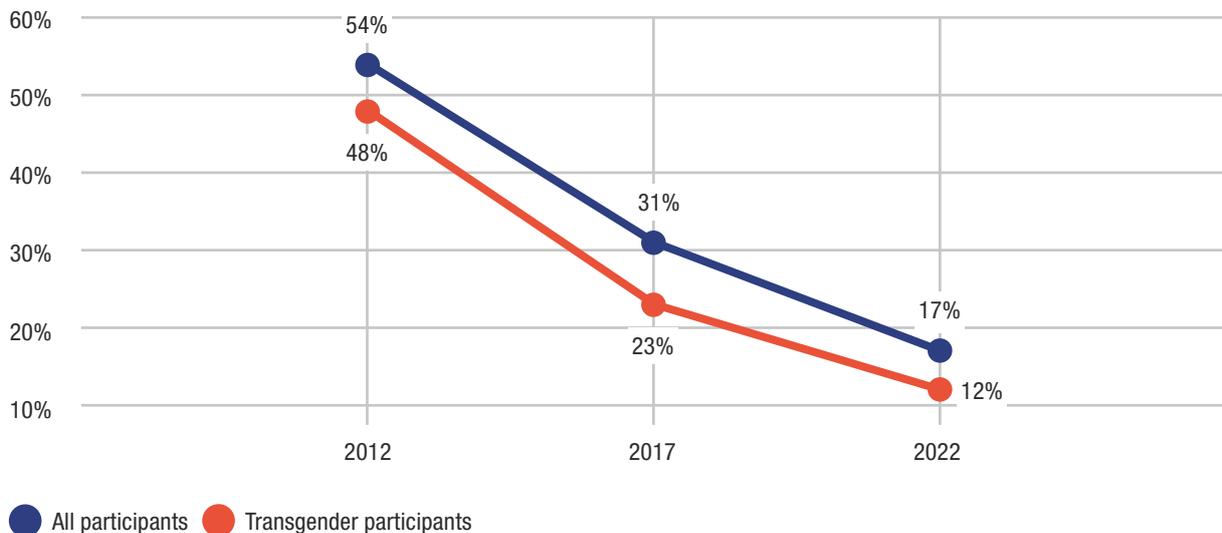
Figure 24: Percentage of participants who reported the hate crime they experienced to the police



Feeling confident reporting a hate crime to the police

We also asked participants to imagine if they experienced a hate crime, would they feel confident in reporting this to the police? Just **17%** of participants overall, and **12%** of transgender participants reported that they would feel confident in doing so.⁴³ These percentages have declined sharply over the last ten years, as shown below in Fig. 25:

Figure 25: Percentage of participants who would feel confident in reporting a hate crime to the police, 2012 – 2022



Responses to this question varied according to gender, with **18%** of girls/women feeling confident reporting a hate crime to the police, **23%** of boys/men feeling confident, but just **9%** of non-binary participants feeling confident doing so.⁴⁴

42. n = 447

43. All participants n = 1168, transgender participants n = 590

44. Girls/women n = 429, boys/men n = 308, non-binary participants n = 348

Awareness of rights

In order to feel confident reporting a hate crime, young people would need to be aware of their rights and protections under hate crime law. When we asked participants about their awareness of these rights, less than half reported that they are aware of their rights relating to sexual orientation (49%) and gender identity (44%).⁴⁵ These figures are consistent with those found in 2017 with almost no increase or decrease in awareness found.

There was, however, some variation between older and younger participants. Older participants were more likely to be aware of their rights, with 57% of 18+-year-olds being aware of their rights relating to sexual orientation, as opposed to just 45% of under-18s. Relating to gender identity, 49% of 18+-year-olds were aware of their rights, as opposed to 41% of under-18s.⁴⁶

Reporting hate crime

Participants reported many concerns relating to reporting hate crime. Some participants told us that they would report a hate crime to the police if they experienced one, as this could help protect other LGBTI people in the future from experiencing similar treatment. Many others, however, believed that their report would not be taken seriously, or that any incident they reported would not be worth wasting police time for unless it was 'severe enough' to be worth the effort. Others described the emotional cost to them as victims of reporting hate crime, with fears centring around being brushed off, having to out themselves to police and/or parents in reporting a crime, or the potential for police staff not understanding their experience as an LGBTI person.

'I feel like even if it went unhandled I would still do my best to report. It feels something that can help others who are more afraid.'

'I feel confident enough in my rights to feel justified in coming forward. I also know I have a network of friends who would support me through it.'

'I don't feel I would be believed, and even if I was it's really hard to actually get any action taken against someone, especially when you have no proof. The process can be horrific for victims, and I cannot handle that.'

'At times, friends who have experienced hate crimes have been told there's nothing the police can do about it. Even if this is the case, I think they should offer better support.'

'It would really depend on the severity of it. They probably wouldn't be able to do much about it unless it was really bad.'

'Unless it was physical assault, I wouldn't bother, but even then I might not. I do not trust the police to handle such a matter due to the history of the LGBTQ+ community and the police. But in the case I or someone else [was] severely harmed, I would.'

45. Sexual orientation n = 1183, gender identity n = 1172

46. Sexual orientation: 18+-year-olds n = 442, under-18s = 741. Gender identity: 18+-year-olds n = 439, under-18s = 733

What makes you, or would make you, feel safe and supported by the police and/or the legal system?

Responses to this question varied. Some participants stated categorically that nothing could make them feel supported within the current legal system, but instead they would appreciate alternative processes for reporting hate crime, with community support and alternatives to prosecution being offered. Others suggested that support in reporting these incidents to the police, anonymity when doing so, and more information about what is involved in the process would make them feel more confident in engaging with the police. Finally, others stated that they feared discrimination relating to their LGBTI status from the police themselves, and further training for police staff on LGBTI inclusion and visible allyship or openly LGBTI police staff would make them feel more confident of a positive experience in reporting hate crime.

'I feel I would be ridiculed by the police for being non-binary, as not many have the education or experience of having a gender identity like mine. I just don't think they'd take me seriously at all and would accuse me of being too sensitive about it, especially because it was another group of young folk who harassed me... If the police actually had proper training on trans experiences and the range of gender identities, and how that can affect our safety in public, that would make all the difference. If they actually made connections with trans groups to speak to the community and learn why we won't approach them, I think that would help – that also goes for the other identities under LGBTQ+.'

'Because the police aren't exactly a beacon of queer allyship.'

'I don't feel like they care enough, we don't seem important or of priority.'

'Overhaul the entire system and put more funding into mental health, de-escalation services and community support.'

'Designated inclusion officers. Police making an obvious and clear effort to listen to the community and take on board concerns/criticisms. The legal system making decisions in the interests of queer people.'

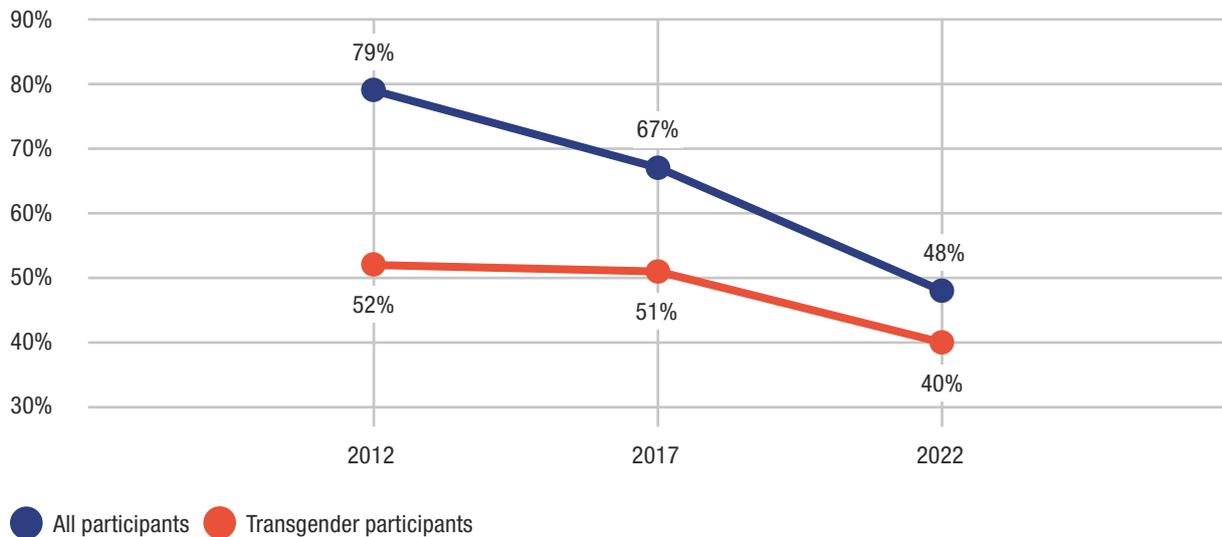
'If they would publicly stand with the community and make it more obvious. Their support seems very hidden at the moment.'

'Diverting... funds to community mutual aid and supporting mental health first-responders as an alternative to calling the police on people going through crises.'

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

We asked participants whether or not they feel safe travelling on public transport. Just 48% of participants told us they feel safe using these services.⁴⁷ This percentage has reduced steadily since 2012. See Fig. 26 below:

Figure 26: Percentage of participants that feel safe on public transport, 2012 – 2022



Additionally:

- A lower percentage of non-binary people report feeling safe on public transport (**38%**) than girls/women and boys/men (both at **53%**)⁴⁸
- Neurodivergent and disabled participants are also less likely to report feeling safe on public transport as compared to all LGBTI participants (**38%** and **39%**, respectively)⁴⁹

'I was told by a man in public to kiss a close female friend for some "hot public lesbo action".'

'I've always been very androgynous, very gender non-conforming in my gender expression and I can't hide it in any way. I worry that I can and will be a target for ridicule while I'm just trying to travel between university and home. Also when I got hate-crimes before, no one else around me helped me out or offered me support. I always feel like I'm on my own, when I need to travel myself, if someone were to approach me.'

47. All participants n = 1211, trans participants n = 602

48. Non-binary participants n = 357, girls/women n = 450, boys/men n = 319

49. Neurodivergent participants n = 471, disabled participants n = 204

'I kissed my partner goodbye as she got off a bus and a drunk man in the next seat asked if he could join in. After my partner left and I was sitting by myself he kept talking to me about how he would "show me a better time", and when I asked him to leave me alone he called me a slur and spat at me. In the moment this made me feel unsafe.'

We asked participants to tell us more about why they felt safe or unsafe using public transport. Responses varied, with some feeling safe and never having experienced discrimination on these services, and others telling us that their feelings of **safety** depended on a number of things such as: how **visible** they felt as an LGBTI person; **choices** they make about where they travel, what time of day they travel at and who they travel with; and **intersectional** aspects of their identity which impact on their feelings of safety.

Feeling safe/no one cares

'I feel safer on public transport as there are more likely to be more eyes on the bus, and there is the driver and it stops so I can get off and get the next bus if I am really uncomfortable.'

'People on public transport like to keep to themselves, including myself, so nobody has ever bothered me.'

Visibility

'I really hate being stared at.'

'I feel pretty safe as a trans masc person who mainly passes as a cis man but there is still the fear I will be clocked and someone will start something, and when you are on public transport you can't really get away.'

'At the moment I am not visibly transgender/queer. I am only safe because I am in a position of privilege where I have been on testosterone for two years and look like a white cis man to the average eye. When I was younger this was different. I am very lucky to feel safe.'

HATE!

Choices

'I feel safer when I mind my own business and I do consciously act in a non-controversial, mild, retreated and polite way on public transport, partly to avoid any unwanted attention or possible harassment.'

'Never had anything bad happen to me there because I've always been with at least one other person, but if I was on my own I would feel unsafe.'

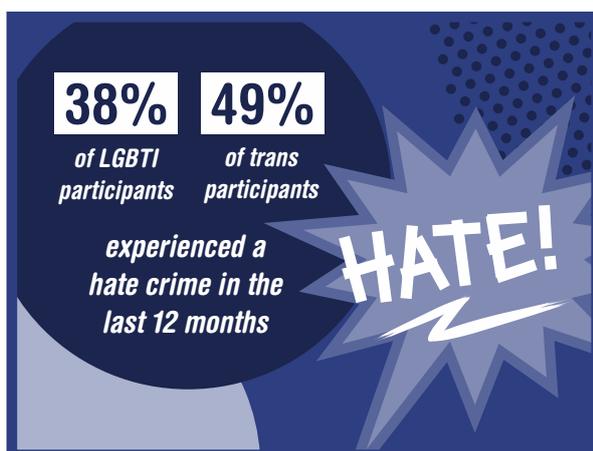
'It depends a lot on the time of day and even the day of the week. At night I generally feel uneasy when taking the bus or train. It gets easier if there's a lot of people because I know that I'm less likely to be assaulted or even worse when I'm surrounded by a large group.'

Intersectional issues

'I worry that I stick out because of my appearance and that would make me an easy target. This is also because I'm a woman and the culture in Scotland is often unkind to anyone who does not "fit in".'

'Creepy men, constant misgendering, having a disability makes me feel incredibly vulnerable, coupled with bad experiences in the past make it a highly unpleasant experience.'

'Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't [feel safe]. Ultimately, I'm visibly queer, most of the time. Although I often appear straight-passing, I'm also visibly neurodivergent, which doesn't help and people judge me for these things.'



KEEPING HEALTHY

'GPs often have a habit of assuming you're heterosexual when talking about sexual health. It would be nice if they asked beforehand'

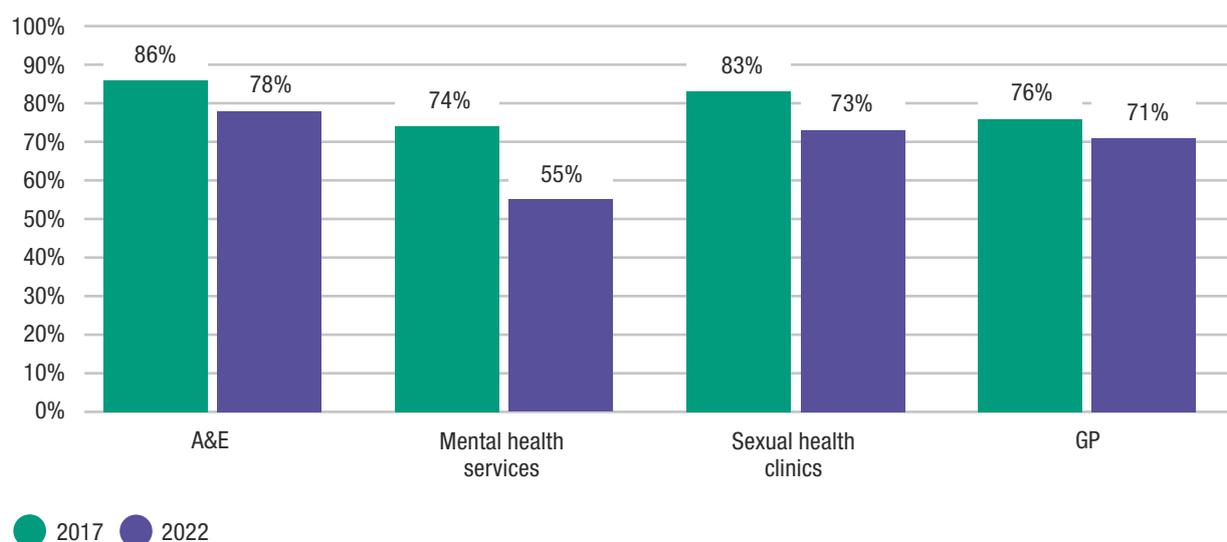


We wanted to find out more about participants' experiences accessing information about physical, mental and sexual health, and their experiences interacting with healthcare services as an LGBTI person.

FEELING SUPPORTED WITHIN THE HEALTH SERVICE

Participants were first asked whether or not they felt supported by each of the following health services:⁵⁰

Figure 27: Percentage of all participants who feel supported/respected by each health service they have used



- Across all health services listed above (Fig. 27), a lower percentage of participants say that they feel supported by each service than was found in 2017
- In particular there has been a fall in the percentage of participants that feel supported by mental health services and sexual health clinics.

50. A&E n = 482, mental health services n = 571, sexual health clinics n = 286, GP n = 791

When telling us about their opinions and experiences of accessing health services, participants identified particular barriers that they experience due to their LGBTI status. Some participants did, however, note that individual staff members that they had interacted with were supportive and inclusive in their practice. Some also identified particular concerns relating to mental healthcare:

Cis/heteronormativity

'I would appreciate it if healthcare professionals used non-gendered pronouns when referring to me and my sexual/romantic partners (not making assumptions). I would also appreciate mental health practitioners to be trained in LGBTQ issues and maybe be assigned an LGBTQ practitioner to discuss these experiences.'

'GPs often have a habit of assuming you're heterosexual when talking about sexual health. It would be nice if they asked beforehand!'

Judgement/non-judgemental staff and individuals within the system

'I think the health service is very hit or miss for LGBT people, especially trans people. Some staff are fantastic, and others are incredibly misinformed or just vastly underestimate how great an impact gender dysphoria can have. I feel like some staff see gender identity as a preference and do not take it seriously.'

'I like it when they follow queries up and pay close attention to you. Behave like they really care about you and your health. That's all you can really ask for.'

'When accessing mental health support I have found, depending on the person, the understanding of how sexuality and mental health interact can vary wildly. I have had one great therapist, but the others have assumed I am straight and asked about boyfriends/men, have not known how to talk about it when I have mentioned it or have not understood how homophobia and being closeted has impacted on my mental health.'

'It is usually a judgement-free zone, which makes it easier to discuss your problems.'

Names/pronouns

'As I'm disabled I've had to go to hospital multiple times and have doctors' appointments almost once every week. I never get called my preferred name or pronouns, making it distressing, and making it a struggle to feel comfortable getting the help I need.'

'My CAMHS worker refused to use they/them pronouns when referring to me, which led to me stopping attending those appointments.'

Mental health concerns

'For all people, the waiting times for mental health services are very long, and it is a struggle to access mental health services. I also feel that there is no acknowledgement from mainstream services that an LGBT person may have gone through trauma and/or need extra support due to being in the closet, homophobia, family acceptance and other issues like this. There are no general support services for these things, even though they can be quite stressful. I am worried about when I turn 26 and am no longer eligible for support from LGBT Youth Scotland, and about where I would go if I needed support with these things.'

'Many mental health services... have in the past implied that all of my issues link back to my trans identity and that if I fully transition they will no longer be an issue for me. This is a misunderstanding and has caused me many frustrations when trying to access services.'

Coming out to your doctor

Just **55%** of LGBTI participants and **56%** of trans participants told us they would feel comfortable coming out to their doctor.⁵¹ These figures are lower than those found in 2017, when **69%** of LGBTI participants and **75%** of trans participants reported feeling comfortable to come out to their doctor.

Although a similar level of transgender and cisgender participants would feel comfortable coming out to their doctor (**56%** and **54%** respectively), transgender participants were more likely to have already done so with **29%** of transgender participants having come out to their doctor and just **11%** of cisgender participants having done so.⁵²

51. Combining responses 'Yes, I already have' and 'Yes, but I haven't yet'. All participants n = 1165, trans participants n = 588

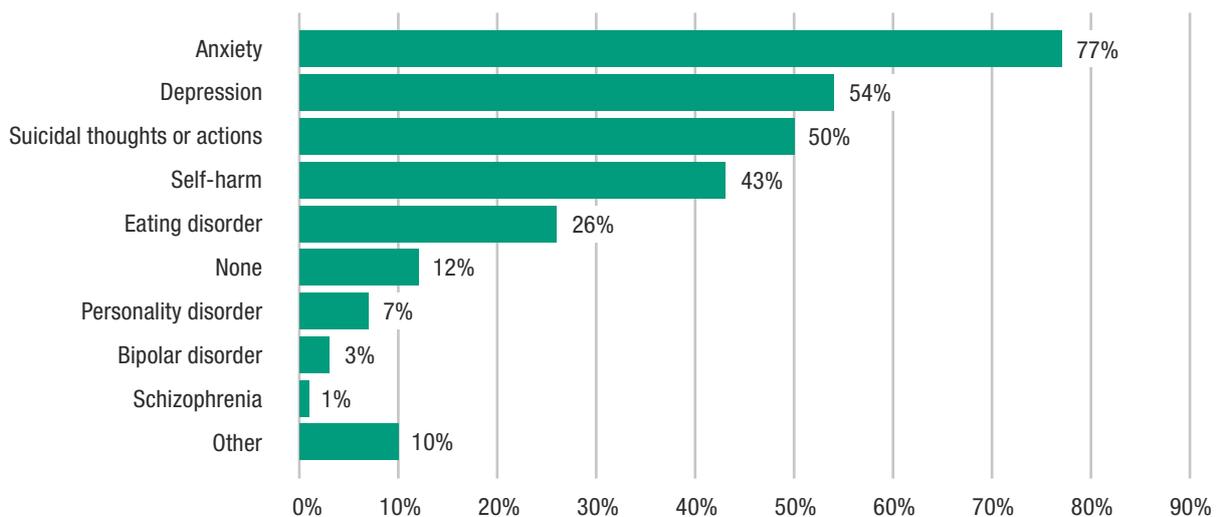
52. Transgender participants n = 588, cisgender participants n = 558

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health conditions and related behaviours

Participants were asked to indicate whether or not they considered themselves to experience any of the following mental health conditions or related behaviours (Fig. 28).⁵³

Figure 28: Percentage of participants experiencing mental health conditions or related behaviour



The figures shown above (Fig.28) show little change from those found in 2017, aside from the percentage of participants indicating that they experience depression, which has fallen from 63% to 54% of participants overall.

'As an LGBT+ young person, I feel unsupported by the mental health system, who ignored my anxiety concerns and my GP refused real help.'

'I endured misgendering, verbal abuse and physical assaults from classmates. I felt incredibly alone, to the point where I began to self-harm for being this way.'

53. n = 1147

Information and help with mental health

75% of participants indicated that they know where to go to get information and help with mental health,⁵⁴ however just **56%** think that they have enough information about this topic. There was a difference found between older and younger participants, with **64%** of 18+-year-olds believing they have enough information about mental health, whereas only **51%** of under-18s believe they have enough information.⁵⁵

'In high school I faced all sorts of different forms of bullying, from verbal abuse to what I now consider to be a sexual assault incident. I experienced many mental health issues due to this, and was not armed with the correct terminology to describe/deal with what was happening. I felt talked down to and disrespected.'

'There's no dedicated services for trans folks to get help with their mental health, really, beyond support groups, and that's not always ideal.'

57% of participants told us that they have received formal classes on mental health, however within these classes just **19%** of participants saw LGBTI topics discussed.⁵⁶

SEXUAL HEALTH

35% of LGBTI participants indicated that they are comfortable talking about sexual health issues with their doctor. This has fallen from 45% in 2017. Older participants are more comfortable than younger people in discussing these issues with their doctor, with **47%** of 18+-year-olds indicating that they were comfortable with this as opposed to just **28%** of under-18-year-olds.⁵⁷

'There is a lack of knowledge on trans sexual health issues especially in certain places in the health service. That being said, I have a great GP who has been nothing but supportive of my transition, and although I have had to educate him on the gender identity services, he has been great with pronouns/being open to education on trans healthcare. I am pretty sure he has also either done a great job of educating himself or received a lot more good training on transgender issues over the years.'

54. n = 1160

55. All participants n = 1159, 18+-year-olds n = 442, under-18s n = 717

56. Have you received any formal classes on mental health? n = 1036, Were LGBTI topics discussed? n = 590

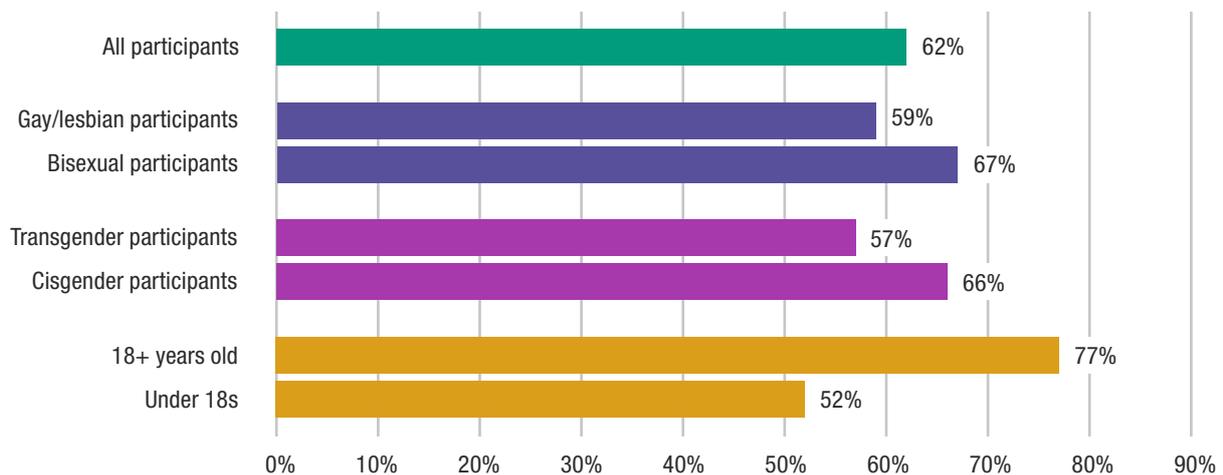
57. All participants n = 1162, 18+-year-olds n = 443, under-18s n = 719

'Some doctors/nurses know what they're talking about, others don't. It's so stressful going into a doctor's appointment not knowing if being trans is even on my file, whether they'll ask me uncomfortable questions, whether I'll leave feeling okay or completely invalidated.'

Information and help with sexual health

62% of participants overall indicated that they know where to go to get information and help with sexual health. This figure varied, however, across demographics, as shown below (Fig.29).

Figure 29: Percentage of participants who know where to go for information and help with sexual health



As shown above:

- A slightly higher percentage (**67%**) of bisexual participants know where to go for information and help with sexual health than gay/lesbian participants (**59%**).
- **66%** of cisgender participants indicated that they know where to get this information, however this figure was lower for transgender participants at **57%**.
- There was also a difference found between older and younger participants, with **77%** of 18+-year-olds knowing where to go for information and help on this issue but just **52%** of under-18s knowing where to obtain this.⁵⁸

Just **46%** of participants believe that they have enough information about sexual health, and this figure again varied between older and younger participants with **59%** of 18+-year-olds believing they have enough information but this figure was only **38%** for under-18s.⁵⁹

68% of participants have received formal classes in sex education,⁶⁰ however only **25%** of the people who received these classes saw LGBTI topics discussed within them.⁶¹

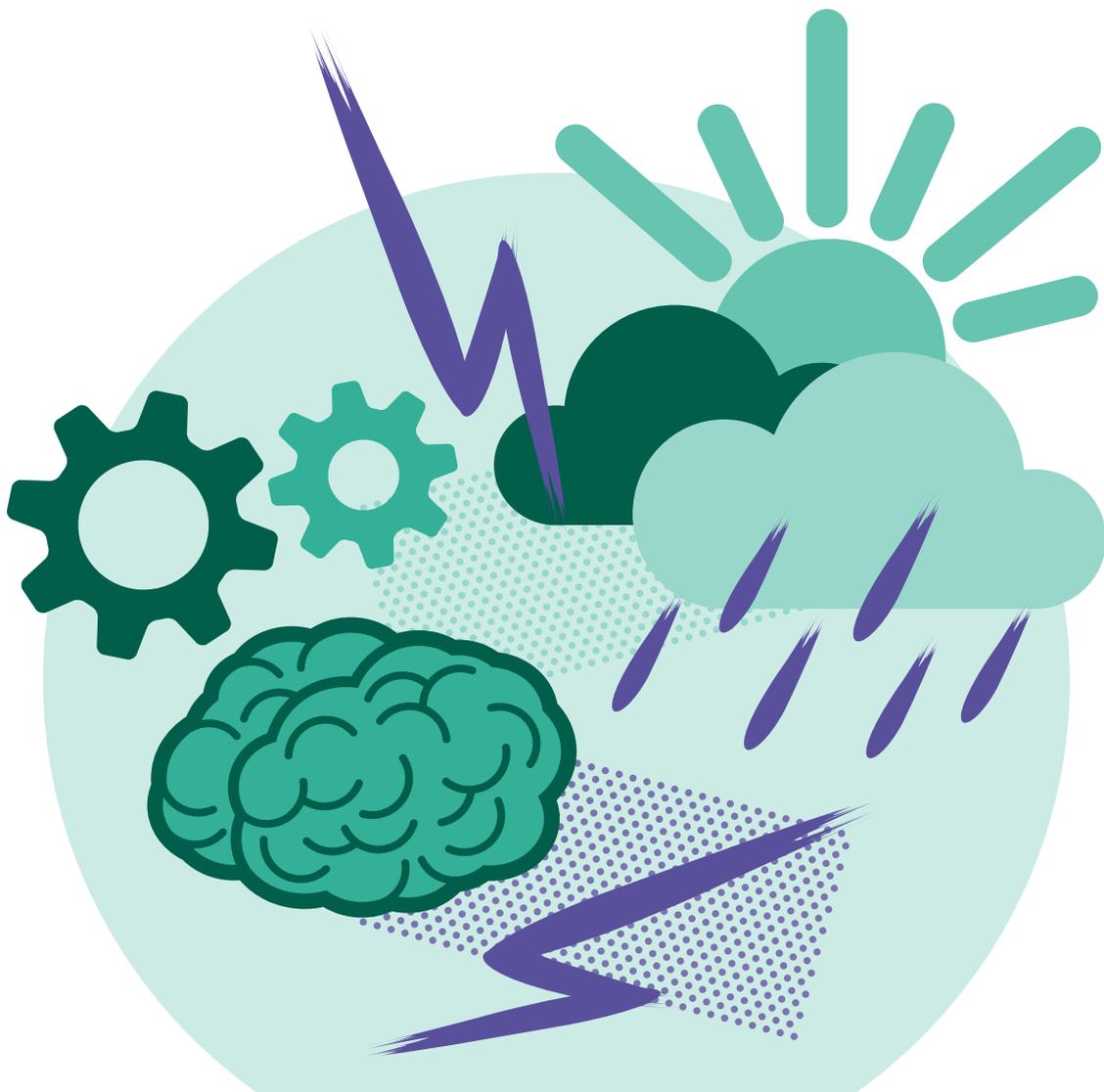
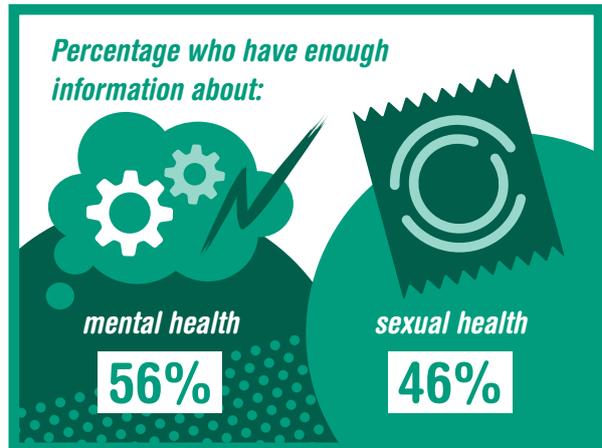
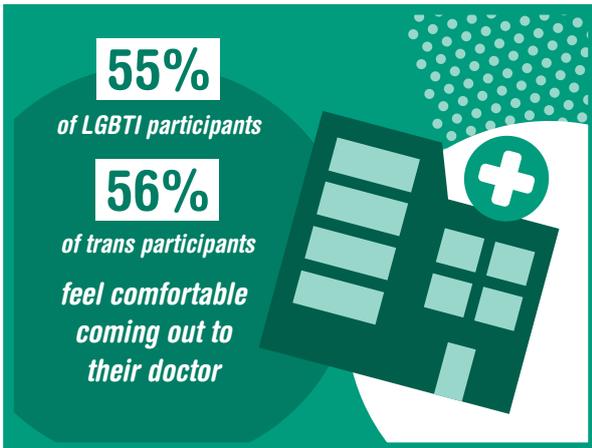
58. All participants n = 1160, bisexual n = 360, gay/lesbian n = 402, cisgender n = 557, transgender n = 585, 18+-year-olds n = 443, under-18s n = 717

59. All participants n = 1158, 18+-year-olds n = 445, under-18s n = 713

60. n = 1033

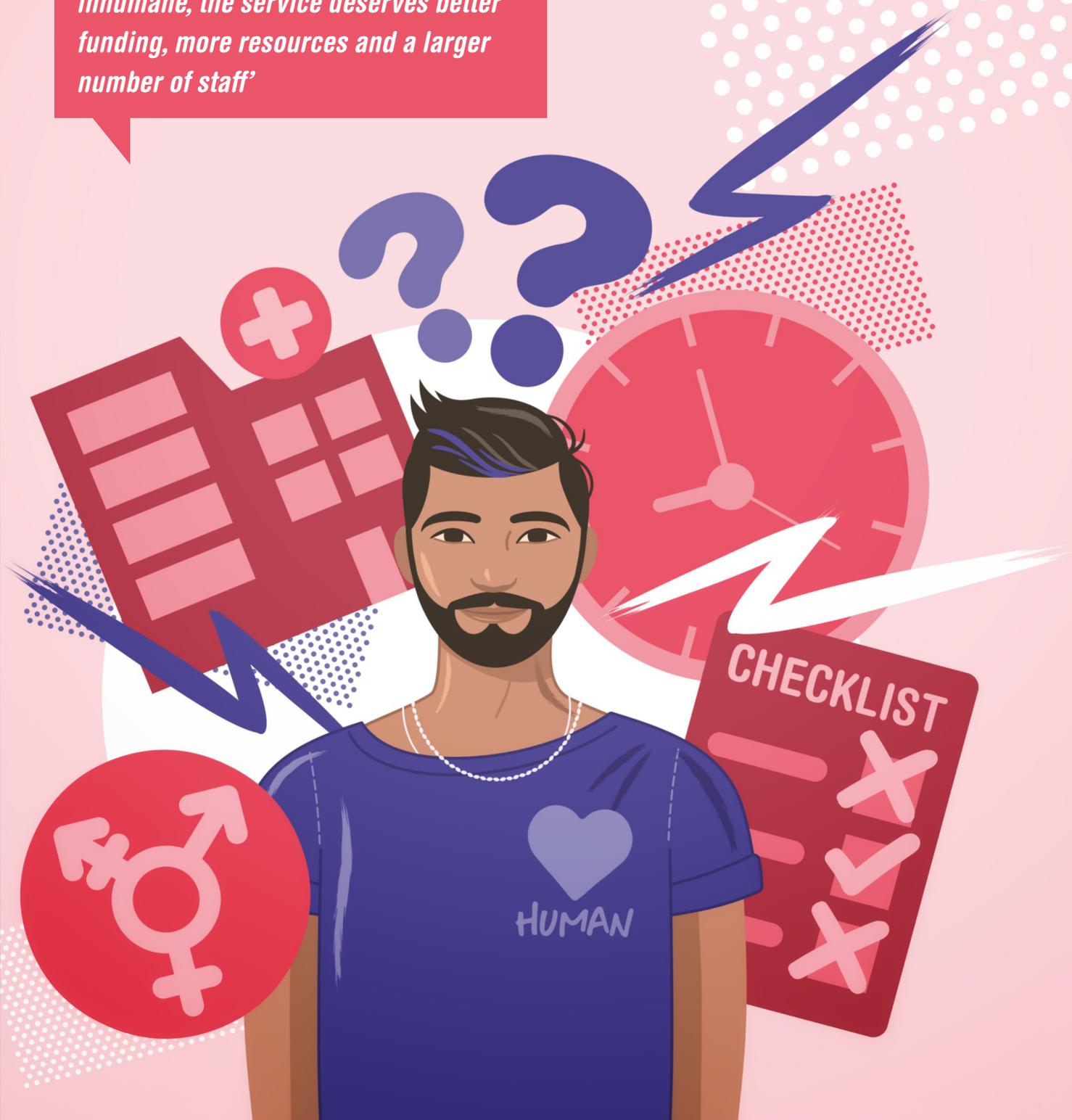
61. n = 695

'In school, we were only taught about how to prevent pregnancy and literally nothing else. All the types of contraception were talked about in terms of straight people, and it felt like a complete waste of time for me to sit through the lessons as it's completely irrelevant to me. This was really isolating and made me miserable.'



GENDER IDENTITY CLINICS

'The years-long waiting lists are utterly inhumane, the service deserves better funding, more resources and a larger number of staff'



Over the course of recent years, Gender Identity Clinics (GICs) in Scotland have seen unprecedented demand for their services and have also faced disruption due to the restrictions in place during the pandemic.⁶² We wanted to find out more about what the experience of being referred to and attending a GIC was like for young people.

16% of non-binary participants and **48%** of participating trans girls/women and boys/men have been referred to a GIC. The findings presented in this chapter are based on responses only from those participants within these groups.⁶³

EXPERIENCES OF GICs

63% of trans participants who have accessed a GIC report that they feel supported and respected by this service in terms of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.⁶⁴

We invited those participants who had been referred to a GIC to tell us more about their experiences with this service. Themes within participants' responses included:

1. *Waiting lists and feeling forgotten about*

Many participants are currently on a waiting list for a GIC appointment and stated that they were unsure when they would be seen for an initial assessment. It was therefore not possible to estimate an average waiting time for a GIC appointment, however estimates varied considerably, ranging between six months and four years.

Participants felt strongly that long waiting lists for this service cause considerable distress. Some participants described the experience of being on a waiting list for treatment. Many comments about waiting lists referred to unacceptably long waiting times and the pain this can cause. Some participants also experienced a lack of communication from their GIC which added to their frustration.

'It's just really unfortunate that all the clinics are understaffed. Waiting times aren't too bad up here in the Highlands, but hearing from people waiting for upwards of three years to get an appointment with Chalmers or Sandyford, it's just disheartening... it really seems to be more an understaffing issue than unwillingness to help trans patients.'

'I understand that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to delays and that the individual workers at gender identity clinics are not to blame. However, the years-long waiting lists are utterly inhumane, the service deserves better funding, more resources and a larger number of staff.'

62. Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport. (2021). *NHS gender identity services: strategic action framework 2022-2024* <https://www.gov.scot/publications/nhs-gender-identity-services-strategic-action-framework-2022-2024/pages/1/> [Date Accessed: 11/3/22]

63. Non-binary participants n = 348, trans girls/women and boys/men n = 220

64. n = 171

'You wouldn't have to wait this long just to see someone about your well-being – why is it so long to see a gender specialist?'

'The long waiting times are potentially life-threatening to people with unrelated mental health issues. If I hadn't been with CAMHS at the same time, I'm not sure I would be here still.'

'No one's called me since before COVID started. I'm terrified I've been forgotten.'

'I'm very impressed at the quality of service and expedience following the waiting period.'

'The massive waiting time often just makes me feel completely hopeless. I highly considered going private until I realised the time it would take me to save up would be longer than the actual waiting list.'

'I've been waiting to hear back so I can start any sort of process towards getting HRT. Absolutely nothing has come back. As a trans person, every day I just feel further and further away from who I want to be.'

'It was great when I got access to the services, but having no news left me in a state of nervousness for the two years waiting with no updates.'

41% of participants who had been placed on a GIC waiting list described accessing help elsewhere in the meantime.⁶⁵ A range of support services were mentioned here, including: CAMHS; LGBT Youth Scotland; private gender clinics; private counsellors; school/university counselling services; GPs; and other third sector support lines/groups.

2. Positive experiences

Some participants described having an overall positive experience at their GIC. While many comments in this section of the survey criticised systemic issues with GICs, these positive descriptions mainly focused on individual staff members being supportive and pleasant.

'The people that I saw were lovely and supportive.'

'The trans support and youth group were really great and welcoming I felt very safe and supported there. I have now realised I am not trans, but the support I received was very helpful and validated a lot of my other experiences.'

'On the positive side, the doc I saw initially and even still was always delightful to see. He was honest about how things were but still took what I said into account. I felt like I was truly taken seriously for a change.'

'Other than the waiting times, I felt very supported and listened to.'

'On a personal level, the practitioners I have interacted with have been kind and respectful, and aware of the inadequacies of the system they work in.'

'...the staff at the GIC are very friendly and respectful. I can only say good things about them so far.'

3. An impersonal experience/jumping through hoops

Some participants described the GIC process almost as a gatekeeping exercise, and some felt that expressing themselves authentically could result in being denied access to this service.

'They denied me chest reduction surgery, and I'm pretty sure it is because I am non-binary and present feminine sometimes, so I have had to go private.'

'You cannot tell them about mental health struggles, trauma or any neurodiversities or they will immediately assume you're incapable of understanding your gender. If you are not binary trans they will assume you aren't trans enough for anything they could do. This is a problem with the system, staff I have encountered are frustrated too.'

'Never got there, removed self from the list and gave up due to embarrassment at their lack of respect for non-binary trans people.'

'It's the worst healthcare I've ever been subjected to. I'm not convinced they see me as a full human being with the capacity to feel pain.'

'The doctors have all been very respectful but the entire process feels pretty humiliating. I feel as though I'm being forced to jump through hoops to prove that I'm not secretly lying or confused about who I am. I also don't appreciate that we're required to be out in our day-to-day lives in order to be referred. I nearly didn't get approved for surgery because I offhandedly mentioned that I wasn't out as trans to some people from a weekly college class, even though I had no reason to come out to them since I barely knew them and some of them had made transphobic comments in the past.'

'The process is demeaning and humiliating. One has to jump through so many hoops and pass so many meaningless tests, for years, before one can even begin to feel comfortable in one's own body.'



EDUCATION

'People would ask me invasive personal questions in the middle of lessons and the teacher would do nothing'



Education is a large part of many LGBTI young people's lives, and working with educational providers is part of LGBT Youth Scotland's ongoing work to make a difference in the way that LGBTI young people experience their time in education. We therefore wanted to find out about how young people are currently experiencing school, college and university, how these experiences are impacting them, and how they see LGBTI people represented within their educational context.

EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATION

We asked participants to rate the experience of school, college and university for LGBTI young people as 'good', 'OK', or 'bad' (with the option to respond 'haven't attended' where appropriate). The results for those who had attended each institution are shown below in Fig. 30 alongside results from the same question asked in 2017:

Figure 30: Would you say that the experience of LGBTI young people in schools, college and university is:

	School		College		University	
	2017	2022 ⁶⁶	2017	2022 ⁶⁷	2017	2022 ⁶⁸
Good	11%	10%	44%	32%	70%	56%
OK	43%	44%	51%	59%	27%	42%
Bad	46%	46%	5%	9%	3%	3%

- Ratings of school experiences have remained fairly consistent since 2017 with not much change in the percentage of participants feeling that their experiences were good/OK/bad
- Since 2017, the percentage of participants who believe their university experience is 'good' has decreased, with more participants now describing this as just 'OK'

We also asked participants whether or not they felt supported as an LGBTI person in their school, college, or university. Just under half (**48%**) of the participants feel supported, with around a quarter (**26%**) not feeling supported and another quarter (**26%**) stating that they didn't know.⁶⁹ We asked participants to suggest ways in which they are being helped, or could be helped, to feel supported within education. Suggestions included curricula including lessons on specific LGBTI issues, LGBTI-inclusive facilities being made available, and staff being proactive in acting inclusively and tackling discriminatory behaviour and abuse when they see it.

66. n = 1025

67. n = 318

68. n = 336

69. n = 1046

Curricula including lessons on specific LGBTI issues

'More identities being involved in PSE and science. Science is very binary. Never once touches on intersex people existing, and I imagine it would confuse and make intersex people feel out of place.'

'More education about queer people! SO many of our problems would be solved if our peers were less ignorant.'

LGBTI-inclusive facilities being made available

'We have a student support centre which have been really accommodating to me. When I emailed about changing my name on the system, they did it very quickly with no problems and asked me for my pronouns, etc. A huge difference to school.'

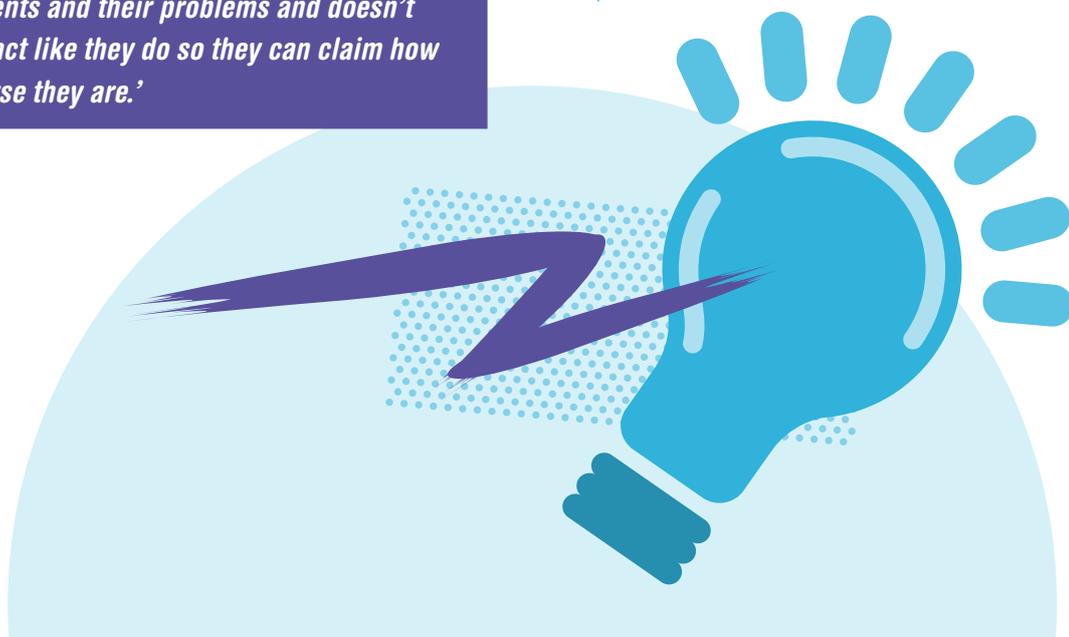
'I think that we have a pride room helps because it welcomes any student that's a part [of] or is an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community.'

Staff being proactive in acting inclusively and tackling discriminatory behaviour and abuse when they see it.

'If they asked preferred name and pronouns instead of just your name, I get that it could be problematic and there will be different issues that arise, but it will help LGBTQIA+ youth feel more seen and accepted.'

'Tutors are aware of LGBTIQ+ issues and speak positively about the community – they are someone you feel you can talk to if anything happens that is not appropriate. They also monitor the forums to ensure students are respectful of each other and their opinions.'

'A school that actually cares for its LGBT students and their problems and doesn't just act like they do so they can claim how diverse they are.'

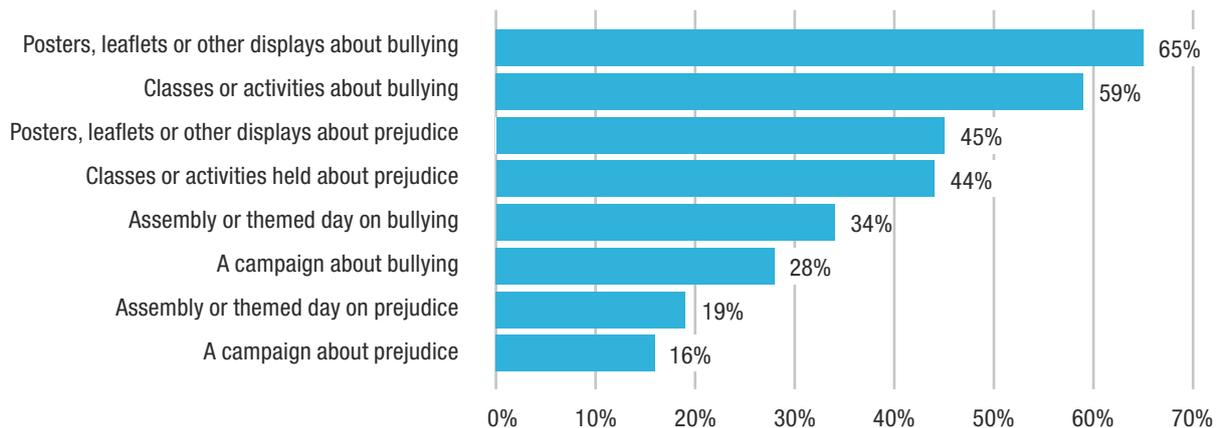


LGBTI VISIBILITY IN EDUCATION

Just **21%** of participants report seeing LGBTI people represented in their classes outside of formal LGBTI-focused sexual health or mental health lessons.⁷⁰

Participants reported a variety of ways in which they had received information on LGBTI issues in their school:⁷¹

Figure 31: Sources of information on LGBTI issues available in schools



Under half of participants (**45%**) reported that their school/college/university participates in LGBTI events such as Pride/IDAHOBIT/LGBT History Month.⁷² Of those who do see their educational centre participating in these events, **59%** report that this participation does make them feel more safe/supported, with **16%** saying they 'don't know' and **26%** saying 'no'.⁷³

DISCRIMINATION/BULLYING

58% of bisexual and **70%** of gay/lesbian participants report experiencing homophobic/biphobic bullying at school. The percentage of participants experiencing this bullying at college or university, however, is markedly lower, as shown below in Fig. 32:⁷⁴

Figure 32: Percentage of participants experiencing homophobic/biphobic bullying

Participant group	School	College	University
Bisexual	58%	10%	10%
Gay/Lesbian	70%	13%	11%

70. n = 1031

71. n = 789

72. n = 1035

73. n = 466

74. Bisexual: school n = 326, college n = 100, university n = 108. Gay/lesbian: school n = 356, college n = 121, university n = 132.

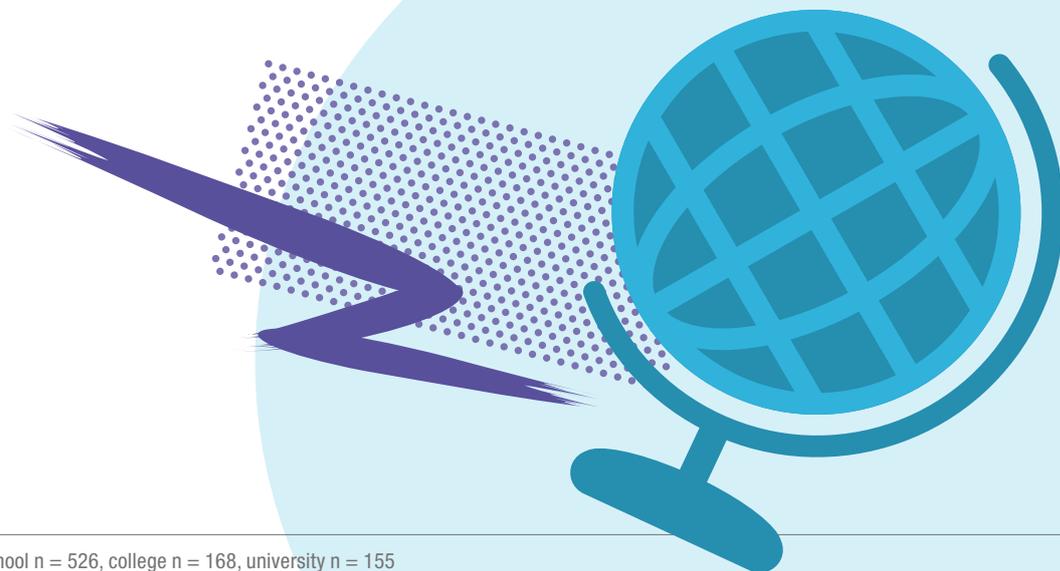
57% of transgender students report experiencing transphobic bullying at school. At college and university, however, the percentage of transgender participants experiencing this type of bullying falls to 14% for college students and 16% of university students.⁷⁵

'People would whisper about me right in front of my face. People would ask me invasive personal questions in the middle of lessons and the teacher would do nothing. People would make sexual comments to try and make me uncomfortable on purpose. I would get harassed and questioned about my identity in front of crowds of people.'

'I came out to close friends that I trusted who then spread it around the school. It was horrible, I had people older than me that I didn't even know shouting slurs at me in the hallway.'

'In high school other girls called me things like lesbo and dyke when rumours went around that I was bi (I didn't know I was gay at the time). During this time I changed in the shower cubicles because I was worried what the girls would say about having to change in the same room as me.'

'I was forced to drop out of high school following an event where another student threatened my life. I had to start over again at a new school and by that point was so traumatised that I couldn't attend mainstream school and thereby completed my exams in a secure SEN department.'



75. School n = 526, college n = 168, university n = 155

AWARENESS OF LGBT-RELATED BULLYING IN EDUCATION

In addition to asking about bullying experienced personally by participants, we asked whether or not they were aware of any other students in their school, college or university experiencing LGBT-related bullying.

Figure 33: Awareness of LGBT-related bullying in educational settings

	Homophobic/biphobic			Transphobic		
	2012	2017	2022 ⁷⁶	2012	2017	2022 ⁷⁷
School	81%	74%	83%	26%	43%	69%
College	41%	22%	26%	19%	18%	22%
University	30%	21%	31%	23%	20%	30%

As shown in Fig. 33 above:

- The percentage of participants who are aware of homophobic/biphobic bullying in colleges fell by 19% between 2012 and 2017, and has remained at a similar level this year at **26%**
- The percentage of participants who are aware of homophobic/biphobic bullying in universities fell in 2017 but has since risen to levels seen in 2012, currently at **31%**
- The percentage of participants who are aware of transphobic bullying in universities has risen by 10% since 2017; in 2022, **30%** of participants who had attended university were aware of transphobic bullying at their institution

In particular, however, the percentage of participants who are aware of LGB-related bullying in their school has remained high at **83%**, and the percentage who are aware of transphobic bullying has steadily increased over the last decade, going from just **26%** in 2012 to **69%** this year.

CONFIDENCE REPORTING HOMOPHOBIA/BIPHOBIA/TRANSPHOBIA

In addition to being aware of bullying, we asked whether or not participants would feel confident to report this to authority figures. Confidence levels in reporting homophobia/biphobia/transphobia have stayed fairly consistent with 2017 figures, however overall participants have grown less confident in reporting this discrimination to staff across all educational settings since 2012.

76. School n = 1032, college n = 296, university n = 317

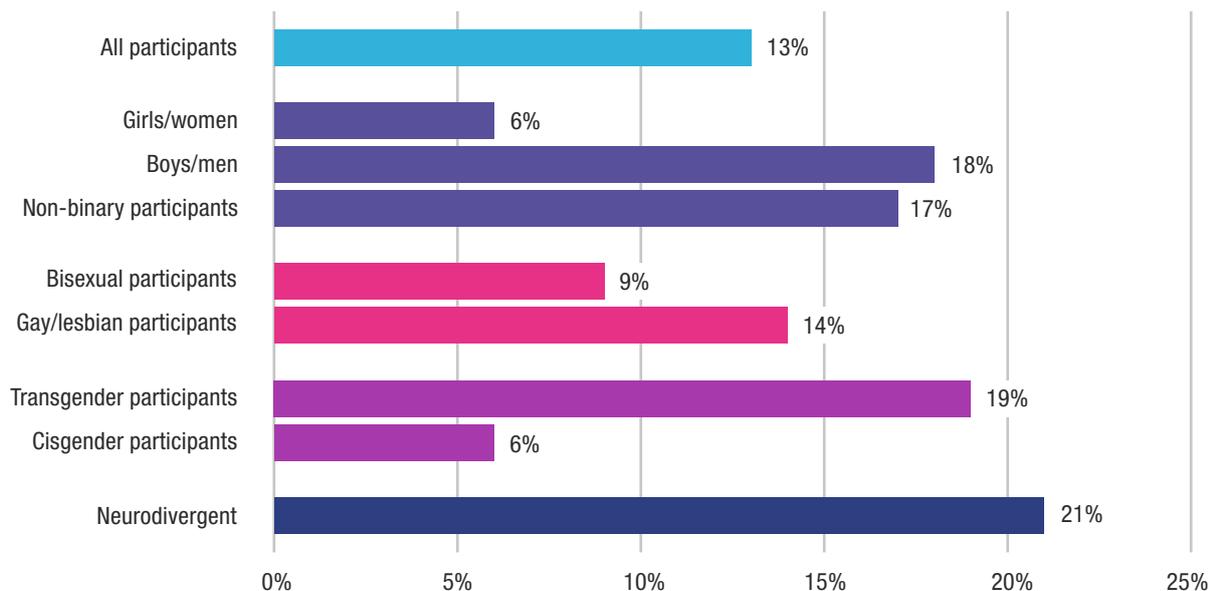
77. School n = 1029, college n = 304, university n = 320

Figure 34: Percentage of participants who felt confident reporting homophobia/biphobia or transphobia to staff or authority figures in education

	Homo/biphobia			Transphobia		
	2012	2017	2022 ⁷⁸	2012	2017 ⁷⁹	2022
School	44%	25%	25%	43%	24%	26%
College	69%	50%	43%	60%	42%	38%
University	73%	47%	49%	67%	40%	44%

The percentage of participants who report having left education as a result of homophobia/biphobia or transphobia has increased from **9%** in 2017 to **13%**.⁸⁰ There were however wide variations found in the percentage of participants across demographic groupings (see Fig. 35).⁸¹ In particular, **21%** of neurodivergent participants⁸² reported leaving education as a result of this discrimination.

Figure 35: Percentage of participants who have left education as a result of homophobia/biphobia/transphobia



'I left school way too early because I was so afraid that I'd be outed and ridiculed for my identity. Now I'm playing catch-up with my qualifications and am about two years behind where I'd like to be. I could already be in university instead of having to take extra classes.'

78. School n = 1024, college n = 288, university n = 309

79. School n = 1017, college n = 291, university n = 317

80. n = 1033

81. All participants n = 1033, girls/women n = 375, boys/men n = 269, non-binary participants n = 317, bisexual n = 327, gay/lesbian n = 349, transgender n = 529, cisgender n = 489, neurodivergent n = 405

82. n = 405

EFFECTS OF DISCRIMINATION ON WORK, TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Participants felt that homophobia/biphobia/transphobia had a negative effect on them in various areas of education, training and work. These are shown in Fig. 36 below.⁸³

Figure 36: Percentage of participants who feel that homophobia/biphobia/transphobia had a negative impact

Negative impact	Percentage
Educational experience	70%
Educational attainment	36%
Training opportunities	30%
Employment opportunities	33%
Financial situation	23%

These figures are similar to those found in the 2017 *Life in Scotland* research, aside from the finding that fewer participants believe this type of discrimination has affected their educational attainment, this has reduced from 44% to just **36%** of participants.

Participants described a range of ways that they perceived homophobia, biphobia and/or transphobia had impacted them and their experience in education, training and on their employment opportunities and financial situation, with responses including:

'[It's] Dangerous to put they/them pronouns on a job application.'

'Many employment opportunities have been closed off to me due to the environment of casual homophobia... I felt alienated from the experience as a student teacher and was unable to pursue that career due to the casually homophobic environment in my placement school, and I find it tricky to navigate finding other kinds of employment outside of hospitality where I know the right places to look to ensure I have an inclusive working environment.'

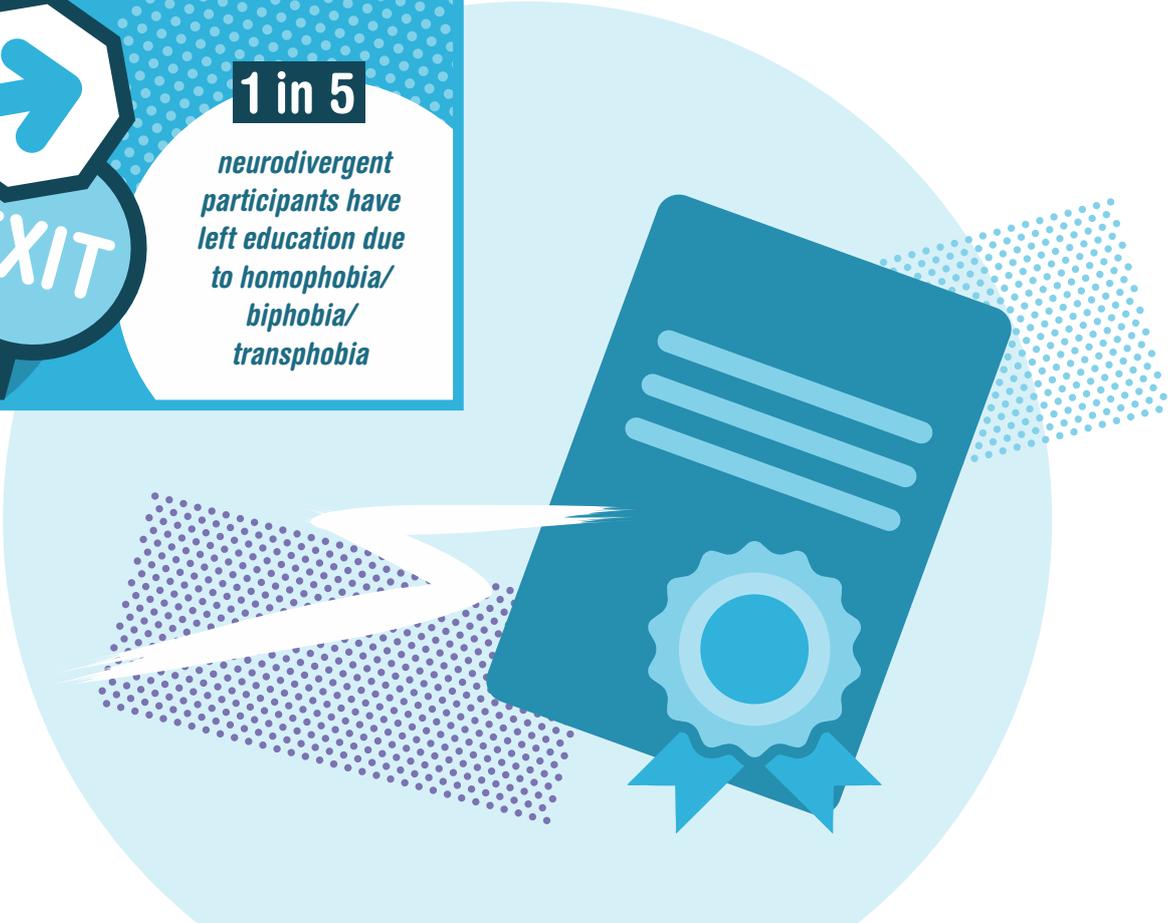
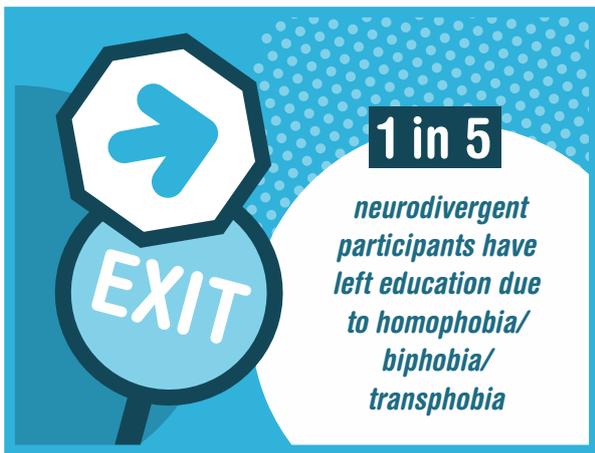
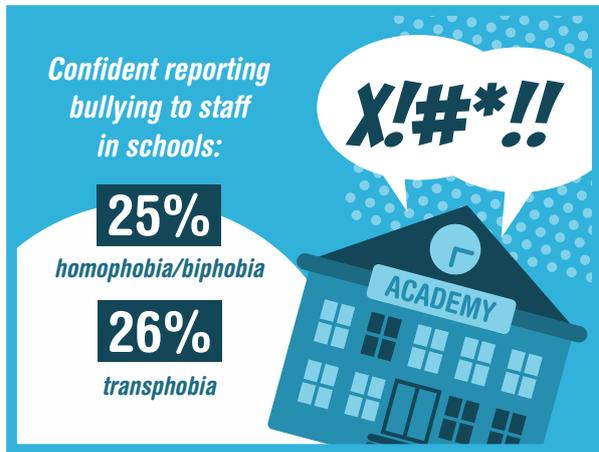
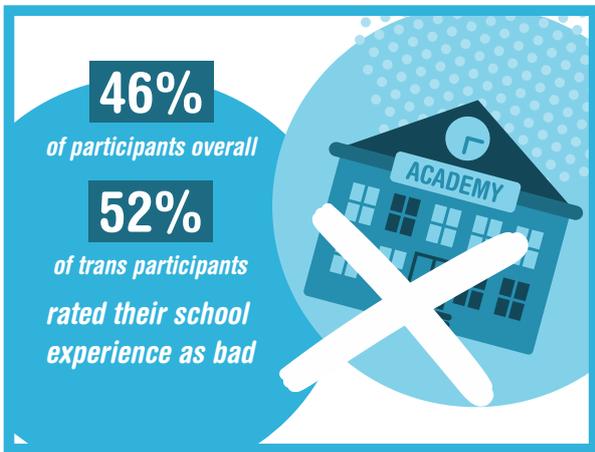
'My employment opportunities have been thwarted somewhat because when employers/work places are not clear about their LGBTI inclusion policies or don't have them, I don't feel safe to work there and my options are smaller. Or I don't feel confident my interview will go well when they see a visibly queer person who uses "weird pronouns" (they/them) in my email signature. That puts me off applying to things that are not LGBTI-specific, and then that pool of work is very small.'

83. n = 1035

'I'm too afraid to get a job because I keep finding bigoted employers, and that has had a direct impact on my financial situation because I can't find a job I'll be safe at.'

'I think if I hadn't experienced bullying when I was younger I wouldn't have been so distracted and paranoid and I would have been able to focus on the classes instead.'

'You don't feel as confident walking into any situation, and worry about it in relation to your sexuality and whether you'll feel accepted or not.'



WORK LIFE

'They came to me and asked very inappropriate questions e.g. "Are you going to get a sex change?", in front of customers'

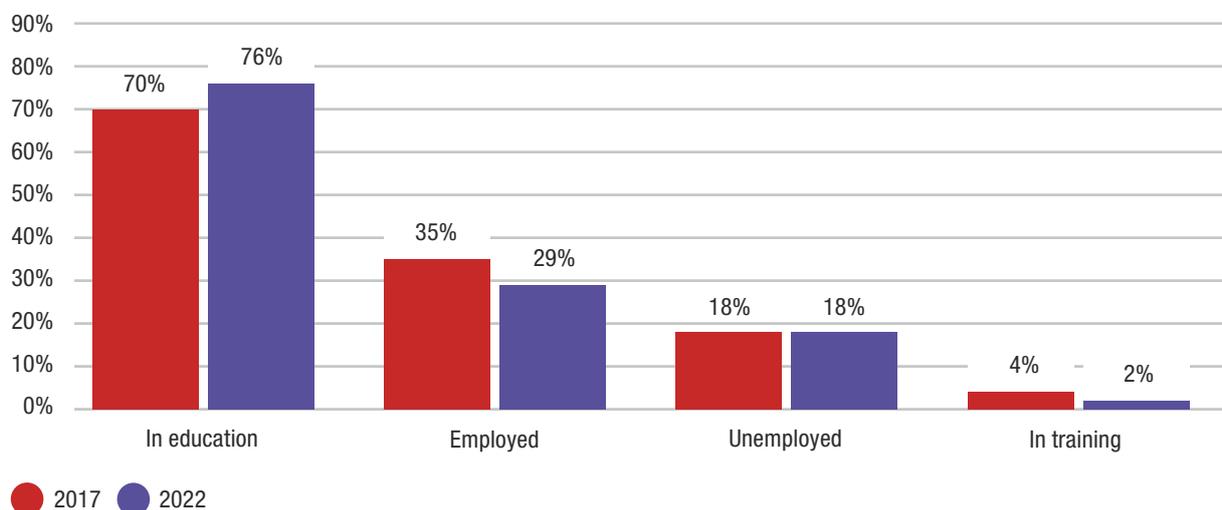


Around a third of young people surveyed told us they are currently in work or training. We asked participants to tell us more about their experience of the workplace as an LGBTI young person.

WORK LIFE

We asked participants whether they are in work, training and/or education. A higher percentage of participants in 2022 are in education than in 2017, and a smaller percentage are in employment (see Fig. 37 below).⁸⁴

Figure 37: Percentage of participants who are in work, training and employment



43% of the participants are on a permanent contract, while around a fifth of the participants are on a short-term or zero-hours contract (**21%** and **20%** respectively). Around 1 in 10 participants (**11%**) in work have no contract at all.⁸⁵

BEING YOUR AUTHENTIC SELF IN WORK/TRAINING

Just **54%** of LGBTI participants feel safe to be their authentic selves at work/in training. The percentage, however, of disabled participants feeling safe to do this was lower at just **44%**. There was also a difference in the percentage of participants feeling safe to be their authentic selves found between genders, with **64%** of boys/men feeling safe to do so, but just **56%** of girls/women and **42%** of non-binary people feeling safe to be their authentic selves.⁸⁶

84. n = 997

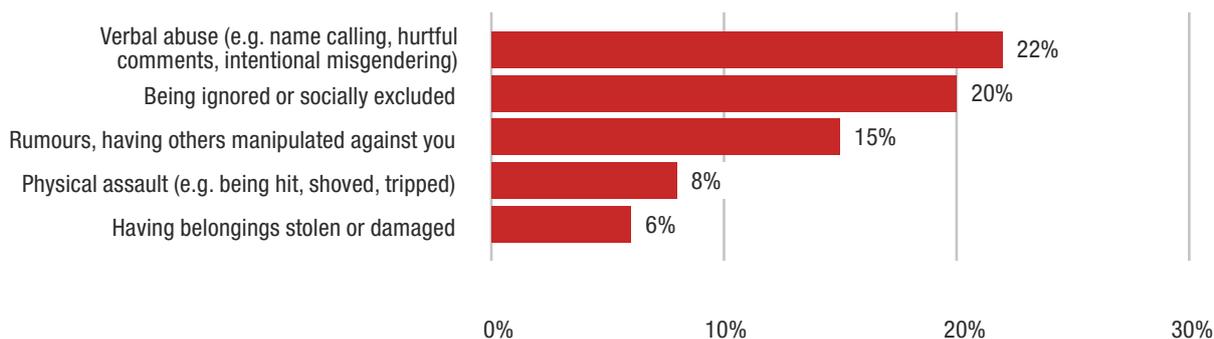
85. n = 284

86. All participants n = 580, boys/men n = 165, girls/women n = 219, non-binary participants n = 162, disabled participants n = 97

BULLYING AT WORK

We asked participants whether or not they had ever experienced homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying or discrimination at work. Around 1 in 5 participants had experienced verbal abuse at work or in training and a similar proportion had been ignored or socially excluded (see Fig. 38 below).⁸⁷

Figure 38: Experiencing bullying at work or in training



REACHING YOUR GOALS

We also asked participants what barriers they saw (if any) to reaching their goals. The most frequently selected response was 'My confidence/self-belief', which was selected by **72%** of participants. Participants also selected 'Availability of jobs' (**39%**) and 'Lack of experience' (**37%**) as barriers to success. These were also the most popular selections in 2017, though the percentage of participants selecting each option has changed, with more participants now seeing their own confidence/self-belief as a barrier and fewer participants citing the availability of jobs/a lack of experience as a factor (see Fig. 39 below).⁸⁸

Figure 39: Perceived barriers to success 2017 – 2022

Barrier	2017	2022
My confidence/self belief	66%	72%
Availability of jobs	52%	39%
Lack of experience	47%	37%

We asked participants to tell us about times that they had felt respected and/or disrespected in their workplace. Some participants told us about times when they had experienced bullying or deliberate disrespect, sometimes in the form of malicious jokes about their LGBTI status and sometimes in the use of a deadname or repeated use of the wrong pronouns. Others however shared examples of ways in which colleagues had spoken up for them, changes management had made to the way they were addressed, or the uniform/name badge they had been given in order to make them feel comfortable being their authentic self at work.

87. n = 839

88. n = 898

'When one of the supervisors learned that I'd requested to be called a different name (went from a male name to a similar-sounding but gender-neutral name), they came to me and asked very inappropriate questions (e.g. "Are you going to get a sex change?"), in front of customers.'

'Most do not care, but some people will be bothered by it. But they're also the people that won't shut up about it! I don't have time for it so I'm mostly excluded from most of the other staff. It's not serious but it adds this unnecessary, uncomfortable energy to the workplace that nobody needs – straight or otherwise.'

'Mostly people have just respected me at work and treated me as just another colleague. On one occasion, a co-worker argued with a customer on my behalf to respect my gender, which was greatly appreciated.'

'I go by my deadname and not my correct pronouns out of fear.'

'I have the option of putting pronouns on my nametag; the company loudly supports charities that help LGBTQ+ people and organisations, management regularly runs surveys to see if they can improve their resources for LGBTQ+ employees.'

'First job gave my pay cheque to me privately so others wouldn't see my birth name, generally had other workplaces respect my name and pronouns and just generally not make a big deal out of things.'

'When I worked as a football coach, one of the other coaches outed me in front of the young people and made homophobic remarks under the guise of banter. I was embarrassed and humiliated but felt I couldn't say anything. Fortunately another member of staff reported it and there were repercussions. At my last job I was told to be aware of the way I dress because it made me look gay. Also was told that I should be aware of what I teach as I didn't want to be known as "that lesbian teacher". I never spoke out and I regret not saying something at the time.'

54%

of LGBTI participants

44%

of disabled participants
feel able to be their
authentic self at work
or in training



LIVING SITUATION

'It still felt better to be living with someone I was fully out to rather than having to hide parts of myself'



We asked participants about their living situation, their experience of leaving home and the circumstances surrounding their leaving home. With an estimated 24% of homeless young people identifying as LGBT and 77% of these young people identifying coming out to their parents as the main factor in becoming homeless,⁸⁹ we wanted to find out more about young people's experience of leaving home and their experiences following this.

73% of the participants currently live with a parent/parents and **19%** live with other family members. Just **14%** live with friend(s) or flatmate(s) and **7%** live with a partner/partners. **5%** live alone.⁹⁰

Of those who have left home, the majority of participants left under positive circumstances (**79%**), having decided themselves to leave. **7%** however felt forced out and left under negative circumstances with a further **1%** being taken into care, as shown below in Fig. 40:⁹¹

Figure 40: Circumstances surrounding participants leaving home

	All LGBTI participants		Transgender participants	
	2017	2022	2017	2022
It was my decision and I left under positive circumstances	73%	79%	63%	72%
I felt forced out and left under negative circumstances	15%	7%	22%	10%
I was taken in to care	3%	1%	2%	2%
Other	9%	12%	13%	16%

As shown above in Fig. 40, although transgender participants are still more likely to report leaving home under negative circumstances than LGBTI participants overall, figures for both groups have improved since 2017 with higher levels of participants reporting leaving home in positive circumstances. Additionally, lesbian/gay and bisexual participants are, as a group, more likely to report leaving under positive circumstances, with **85%** of participants in this group selecting this option.

98% of the participants currently have a permanent address,⁹² although **6%** report having experienced homelessness.⁹³

89. The Albert Kennedy Trust Ltd. (2020). <https://www.akt.org.uk/> [Date Accessed: 11/3/22]

90. n = 986

91. All participants n = 256, trans participants n = 120

92. n = 984

93. n = 968



We asked participants to tell us in their own words about their experience of leaving home and, if they had experienced homelessness, to tell us about this. Participants described a range of experiences, including:

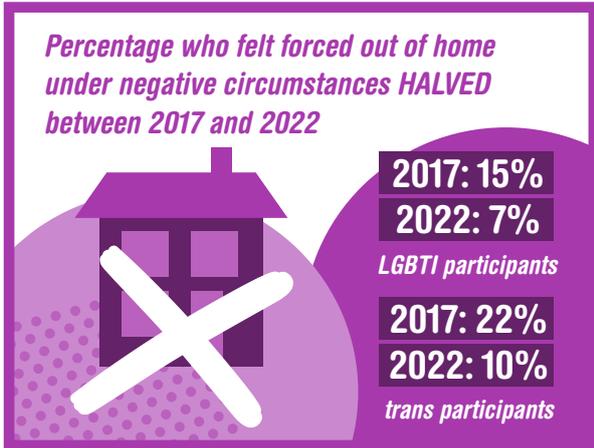
'As a trans queer person I still face a lot of discrimination in daily life out in public, and growing up in the child health team I faced so much medical discrimination due to their bigotry (I honestly believe it's too easy for bigots to get into these roles of power over us in the system). I have been homeless for the majority of the past seven years due to my parents and surrounding community's homophobia/transphobia, and the local social work and police never intervened because they told me my mother's actions were understandable for the situation; the situation being, I am a trans person and not straight. These systemic failures aren't unique to me, I know they aren't and it makes living as who I am sometimes a very lonely and painful place.'

'My family have been wonderful, supporting me with unconditional love and accepting me exactly as I am. This is very rare in my social circle, I only know one other person around my age who this is the situation for. Most people I know have been homeless at one stage or another due to poor home life. I count myself lucky that I've never not had a roof over my head and a safe bed for the night.'

'I moved to Scotland because I knew I couldn't be my authentic self around my family, especially my parents. I always felt very anxious and uneasy around them. They frequently showed abusive behaviour towards me and I felt like (still feel like) my life as I knew it was going to be over if they (especially my father) ever found out about my sexuality.'

'I left the house to go to college, and although I left under positive circumstances, it still felt better to be living with someone I was fully out to rather than having to hide parts of myself from my mum.'

'My dad kicks me out whenever we get into arguments if my mum isn't there because he hates me for being trans, he thinks I robbed him of a daughter.'



MEDIA AND REPRESENTATION

'I avoid print media because it's really anti-trans biased right now'



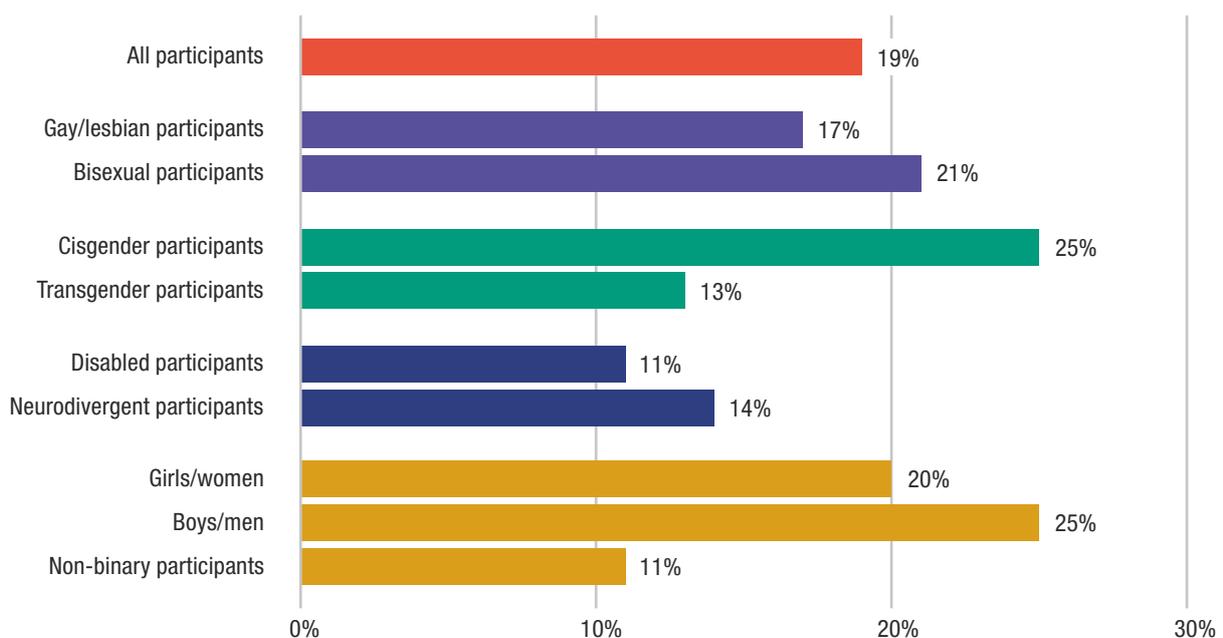
We felt that it was important to add a new section to our *Life in Scotland* research covering media and representation. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people were forced to spend long periods of time online for work, education and socialising, and we were keen to find out about young LGBTI people's experience of interacting online. In addition to this, the increasing coverage of LGBTI issues, particularly the over-representation of anti-trans views in the media, and antagonistic responses to the discussion of trans issues in the political sphere, left us keen to find out what LGBTI young people think about the way that they are portrayed in the media and in Parliament.

REPRESENTATION

Young LGBTI people perceive different levels of LGBTI representation across the media, in sport and in politics. **56%** of participants believe that LGBTI people are represented in the media, whereas just **22%** believe there is LGBTI representation in sport, and only **13%** believe there is LGBTI representation in politics.⁹⁴

When asked 'Do you feel that the way LGBTI people are portrayed in the media (newspapers, TV, etc.) is accurate/ reflects your experience?', only **19%** responded 'Yes', meaning that **81%** of LGBTI participants do not feel their community is accurately represented in the media.⁹⁵

Figure 41: Percentage of participants who feel the way LGBTI people are portrayed in the media is accurate



94. Media n = 947, sport n = 938, politics n = 943

95. All participants n = 938, gay/lesbian n = 319, bisexual n = 297, cisgender n = 439, transgender n = 486, disabled n = 158, neurodivergent n = 374, girls/women n = 337, boys/men n = 244, non-binary participants n = 290

As shown in Fig. 41, there was some variation found in which groups felt accurately represented in the media.

- **25%** of cisgender participants felt they are represented accurately, whereas just **13%** of transgender participants felt this is the case for them
- There was also a variation found according to gender, with **20%** of girls/women and **25%** of boys/men responding 'Yes', they feel accurately represented, whereas just **11%** of non-binary participants felt this.
- The percentages of disabled and neurodivergent participants who feel accurately represented in the media as an LGBTI person were also low at just **11%** and **14%** respectively

'LGBTQ+ people are usually always portrayed...in the media like the news as people who disrupt everyone else's lives, which isn't what we do.'

'A lot of the time the LGBTI+ experience isn't explored as much in the media, and being able to find people who can relate to your experience makes you feel normal.'

'I see myself (white cis gay man) represented, but pretty much every other queer demographic does not see themselves in the media.'

ENGAGING IN POLITICS

94% of 16+-year-old participants who are eligible to vote in parliamentary elections told us they do vote, and this figure rises to **97%** for 18+-year-old participants. This high level of participant engagement in elections was consistent across all demographics.⁹⁷ In the 2019 General Election, Ipsos report just 47% of people aged 18-24 voted across the UK.⁹⁷

Participants offered a range of opinions on why they do/do not vote. Some felt that voting was a responsibility or a duty, or that if they do not vote then they do not earn a right to complain about issues that affect them. Others felt that voting could make a difference to their lives or that this was a way of being heard by people with the power to affect their lives. Some spoke specifically about the power of elected officials to affect LGBTI issues. Others told us that they believe that voting does not make a difference, that all parties available to vote for are bad options, or that they do not understand enough to be involved in voting and therefore they would choose not to vote.

'I want to try and get better people into the government. I'm tired of having to see my rights constantly be fought over, I just want to live. So maybe a vote can help that.'

'Put your money where your mouth is – you can't want change and not do anything about it.'

96. 16+: n = 548, 18+: n = 372

97. How Britain voted in the 2019 election. (2019). <https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/how-britain-voted-2019-election> [Date Accessed: 11/3/22]

'I may not like politicians or their parties, but I believe that everyone should use their right to say this rather than opt out of voting when you cannot opt out of living under the elected government.'

'Every time an LGBT person doesn't vote, they're pushing democracy in favour of people who're more likely to be homophobic/transphobic. It's fundamentally important to get one's views heard, so I always vote.'

'It feels like a lot of effort, and every party seems against me.'

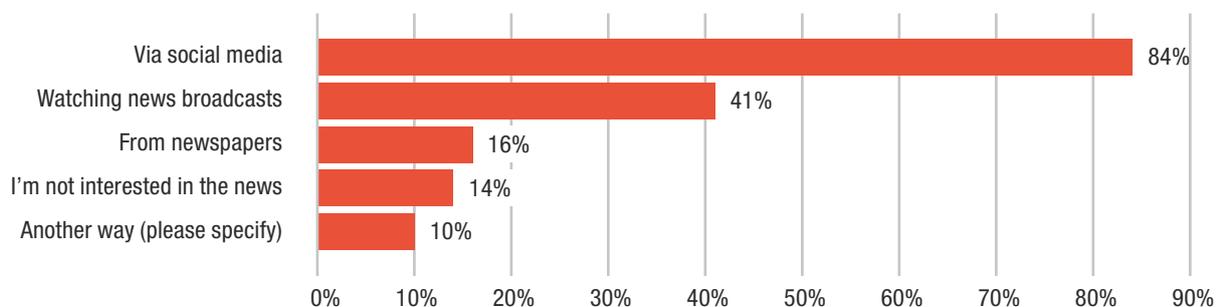
'I care deeply about using my democratic right to try and elect more LGBTQ-affirming political representatives. A party's stance on LGBT+ issues, particularly trans issues, is a primary determiner of whether I'm likely to vote for them or not.'

'A refusal to vote is a vote for the party that will go out of its way to hurt you.'

ACCESSING THE NEWS

Participants report finding out about the latest news in a variety of ways, however the majority (**83%**) use social media to find out about the latest news stories⁹⁸ (see Fig. 42 below).

Figure 42: Ways in which participants find out about the latest news



We asked participants who choose not to access the news in the ways shown above if there was any reason that they avoided these. Responses indicated that some participants perceive barriers to engaging with the news in these ways, such as the cost of a TV licence or the impact of the news on their emotional well-being. Some also mentioned consciously avoiding these due to the abundance of anti-trans rhetoric that they see or to avoid misinformation. Others told us that they choose to access multiple sources of news or to hear news from other people that they know as opposed to relying on a media source.

'I avoid print media because it's really anti-trans biased right now. I don't watch news broadcasts as my current flat doesn't pay a TV licence so we don't watch live TV. I do listen to the radio though.'

'I try to stay away from social media-based news as the way the headlines are written is designed to be eye-catching and doesn't put across all the necessary details.'

'Many newspapers and media outlets frequently fail to represent diversity in ways that is accurate to the life of queer people. There is also a lot of unnecessary and harmful misinformation and hate being spread especially concerning transgender identities. This is really hurtful to me, and is why me and the queer people I am friends with sadly have developed a strong dislike and mistrust against common media outlets.'

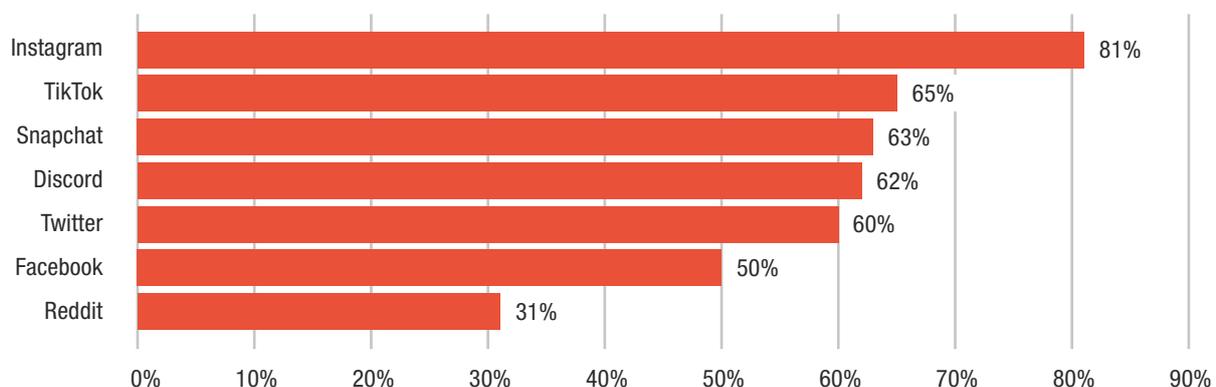
'Social media is a terrible way to access news, e.g. fake news spreads like wildfire, and clickbait headlines are misleading.'

'The news on the television is filled with death and disease, and the happy stories of the day are these strange nightmare stories with good luck at the end. I don't see myself represented in these stories, and the world is always presented from and for the perspective of the majority.'

ONLINE/DIGITAL EXPERIENCES

98% of participants told us that they use social media.⁹⁹ This figure was similar across all demographics. Participants reported using many platforms, with Instagram being the most popular, followed by TikTok and Snapchat (see Fig. 43 below).¹⁰⁰

Figure 43: Social media platforms used by participants



77% of participants rated their experience on social media as mainly 'good', with just **7%** rating the experience as 'bad' and **15%** choosing 'other'. These ratings were fairly consistent across all demographics.¹⁰¹

99. n = 944

100. n = 931

101. n = 934

INTERACTING ONLINE

73% of participants told us that they feel safe to be out/to interact as their authentic selves online.¹⁰² Responses to this question varied across the following demographics (Fig. 44):¹⁰³

Figure 44: Percentage of participants feeling safe to be out online

Participants	Percentage
Girls/women	69%
Boys/men	70%
Non-binary participants	80%
Bisexual participants	76%
Gay/lesbian participants	73%
Transgender participants	79%
Cisgender participants	67%

- A higher percentage of non-binary people than binary gendered participants feel safe to interact as their authentic selves online
- A higher percentage of transgender participants than cisgender participants feel safe to interact as their authentic selves online

67% of participants, however, reported that they have taken steps to anonymise themselves when interacting online (e.g. using anonymous accounts/a pseudonym).¹⁰⁴ Again, responses varied across demographics (Fig. 45):¹⁰⁵

Figure 45: Percentage of participants that take steps to anonymise themselves when interacting online

Participants	Percentage
Girls/women	64%
Boys/men	63%
Non-binary participants	73%
Bisexual participants	68%
Gay/lesbian participants	65%
Transgender participants	72%
Cisgender participants	62%

102. n = 939

103. Girls/women n = 339, Boys/men n = 243, Non-binary participants n = 288, Bisexual n = 298, Gay/lesbian n = 320, Transgender n = 485, Cisgender n = 440

104. n = 941

105. Girls/women n = 338, Boys/men n = 244, Non-binary participants n = 290, Bisexual n = 298, Gay/lesbian n = 320, Transgender n = 488, Cisgender n = 439

As shown in Fig. 45, **72%** of trans participants say that they take steps to anonymise themselves online. However, as shown in Fig. 44, **79%** of trans participants told us that they feel safe to be out/to interact as their authentic selves online. Interestingly, this may suggest that many trans participants interact anonymously online, however many also feel safer to interact as their authentic selves online, indicating that the space to interact anonymously may allow these participants space to express themselves as they would like, as opposed to hiding parts of themselves from others.

ONLINE BULLYING

We asked participants specifically about any experiences of bullying they had encountered online.¹⁰⁶ This question was divided into two parts, asking separately whether or not participants had experienced online bullying due to:

- their sexual orientation/perceived sexual orientation
- their gender identity/perceived gender identity

Figure 46a: Percentage of participants who have experienced online bullying due to their sexual orientation/perceived sexual orientation

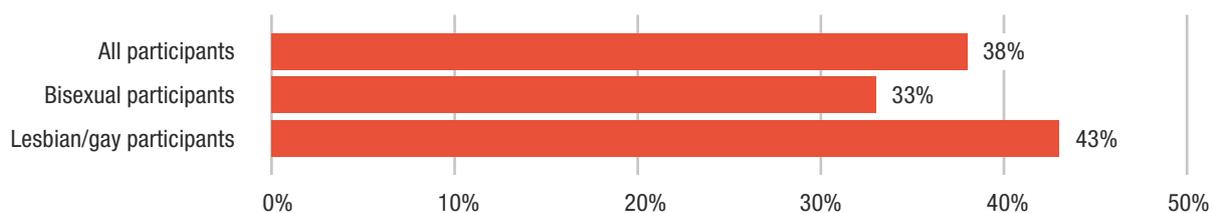
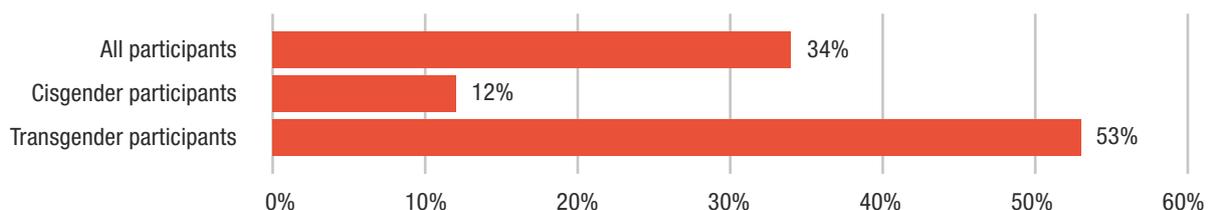


Figure 46b: Percentage of participants who have experienced online bullying due to their gender identity/perceived gender identity



As shown above in Fig. 46:

- **43%** of lesbian/gay participants and **33%** of bisexual participants have experienced online bullying due to their sexual orientation/perceived sexual orientation¹⁰⁷
- Additionally, just over half (**53%**) of trans participants have experienced online bullying due to their gender identity or perceived gender identity¹⁰⁸

106. Sexual orientation n = 936, gender identity n = 934

107. Lesbian/gay n = 318, bisexual n = 298

108. Trans participants n = 485, cisgender participants n = 435

What participants say about their experiences online

Participants described their experiences online and the way in which they choose to engage with the online world. Some described receiving abuse online, others described taking clear steps to curate their experience to avoid this, using blocking and muting tools. There were many descriptions of community – both accessing a new online community to join and also using online areas to contact well-known friends and family members. Some people felt that the anonymity afforded online has allowed them space to find their current identity, whereas others told us that they didn't enjoy the fakeness and falseness that this anonymity allows. Finally, some participants told us that they have found educational resources online useful, particularly those that broaden their world view and let them see other queer lives.

'It has been the safest place for me to figure out my identity and I will always be so grateful for that, as it would have been much harder to do in person where I live.'

'I tend to seek out inclusive spaces where I won't have to defend my identity, but when I step outside those spaces, the vitriol can be difficult to take.'

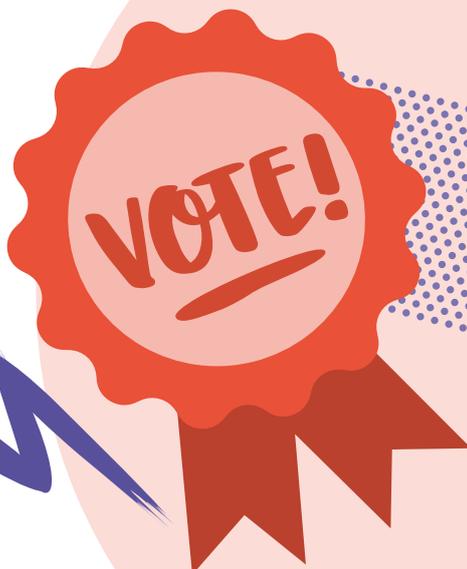
'I've curated it so that I only see things that make me happy.'

'The internet is where I've found most of my information on queer culture, identities and history so it's very important in that respect. It can have a lot of misinformation and extremely toxic/hurtful places and people, but finding the welcoming ones has made a massive amount of difference in my mental health.'

'Most of what I see on social media is very inclusive and welcoming, but if you look a bit further, like the comments, then you will see a lot of discrimination and hurtful things, so I just don't look there.'

'There are spaces where you will be welcomed and there are spaces where you won't be. You need to learn how to navigate these spaces so you can end up where you feel safe/cared for.'

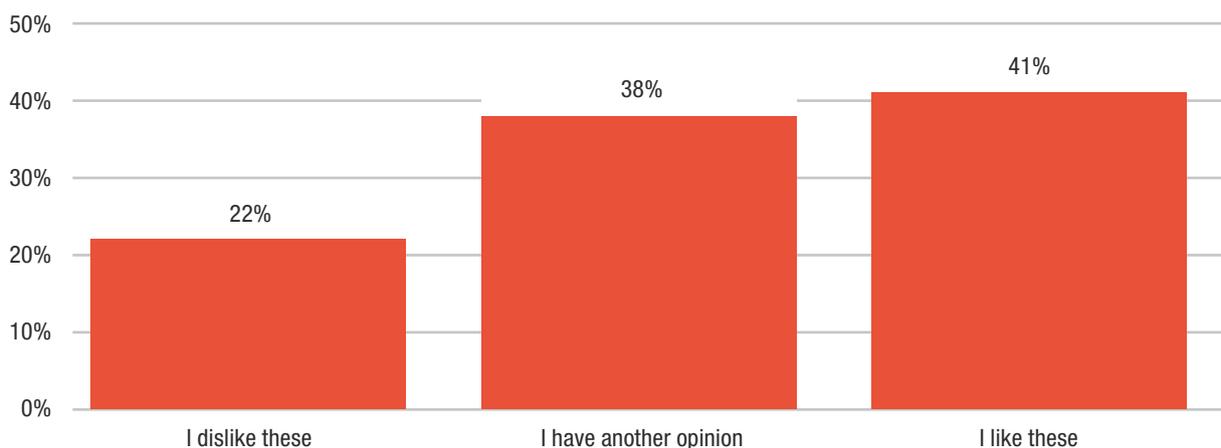
'I live in a rural area so social media is required for me to interact with my friends. I find news not reported on as much in mainstream media, job opportunities and fun things.'



SOCIAL MEDIA – ORGANISATIONS/ COMPANIES

Participants overall had mixed opinions on companies/organisations posting LGBTI-related content on social media, with just **41%** indicating that they like to see this content (see Fig. 47 below).¹⁰⁹

Figure 47: Participants' opinions on companies'/organisations' use of social media



There was however a difference in the level of participants liking/disliking this content between older and younger participants:¹¹⁰

Figure 48: Under/over-18s, opinions on organisations posting LGBTI-related content on social media

Participant group	'I like these'	'I dislike these'	'I have another opinion'
18+ year-olds	32%	24%	43%
Under 18-year-olds	46%	20%	34%

46% of under-18-year-old participants like to see companies/organisations posting LGBTI-related content, whereas only **32%** of the over-18s group indicated that they like this content.

Across all demographic groupings, at least a third of participants indicated that they didn't like or dislike this content, but had another opinion. Comments specifying what these opinions were suggested that many participants are cynical of social media posting which is not supported by concrete action within a company.

'I don't really know. On the one hand it's probably just for profit, but on the other it helps spread awareness.'

'I believe that if they are going to post about LGBTI issues they should take action to fix those same issues within their company.'

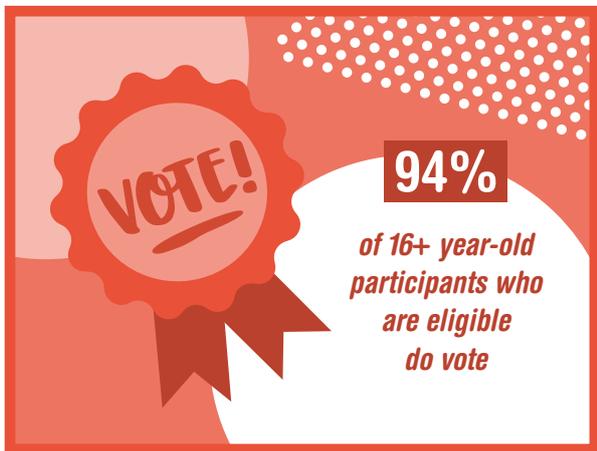
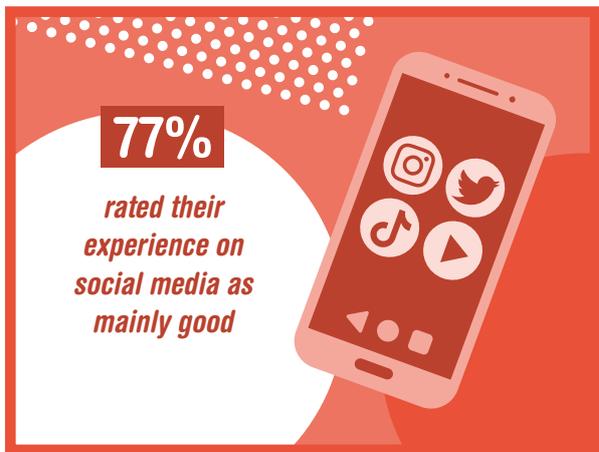
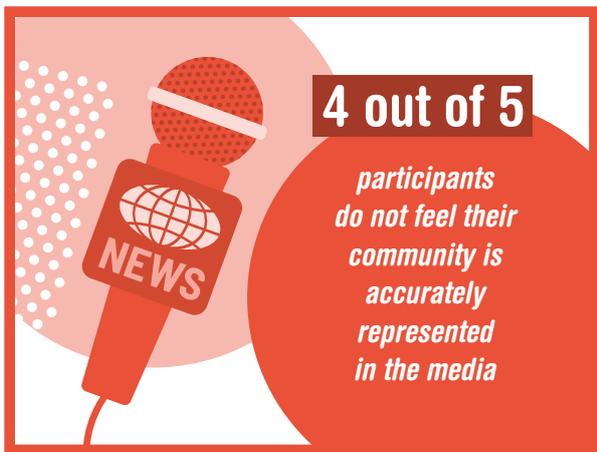
109. n = 939

110. 18+-year-olds n = 382, under-18s n = 557

'I think they are good, but actions speak louder than words. I can't stand companies who turn their logos rainbow then revert back on July 1st and ignore inclusion until June comes around next year...'

'It depends on whether they are using it as a marketing tool to sell products.'

'The action itself is good but damn I wish it was motivated by more than just profit – or involved some actual support to LGBT charities, etc.'



COVID-19

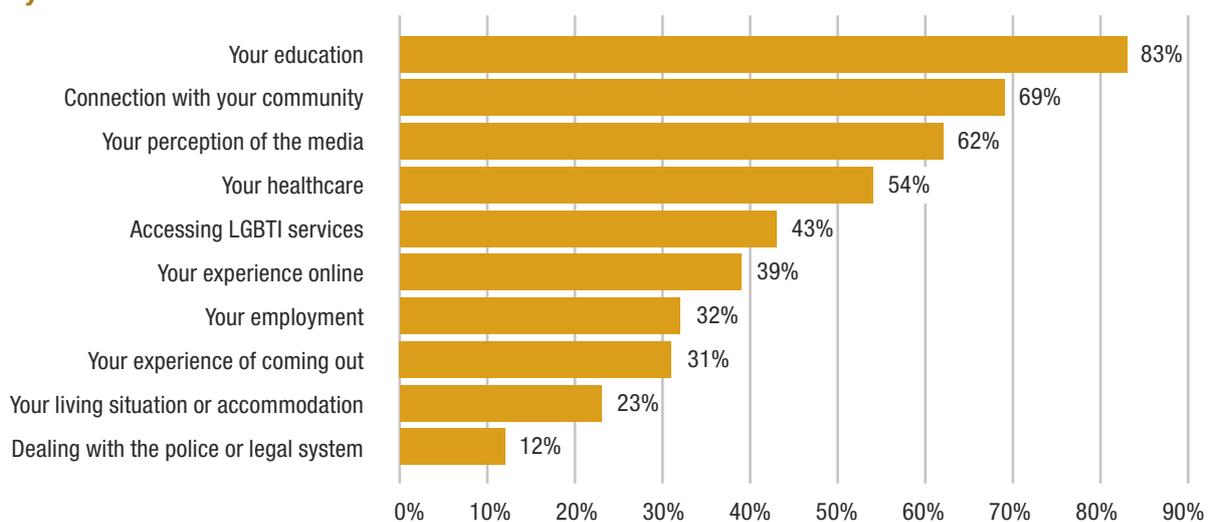
'My mental health has declined a lot as I've been unable to work and see my friends'



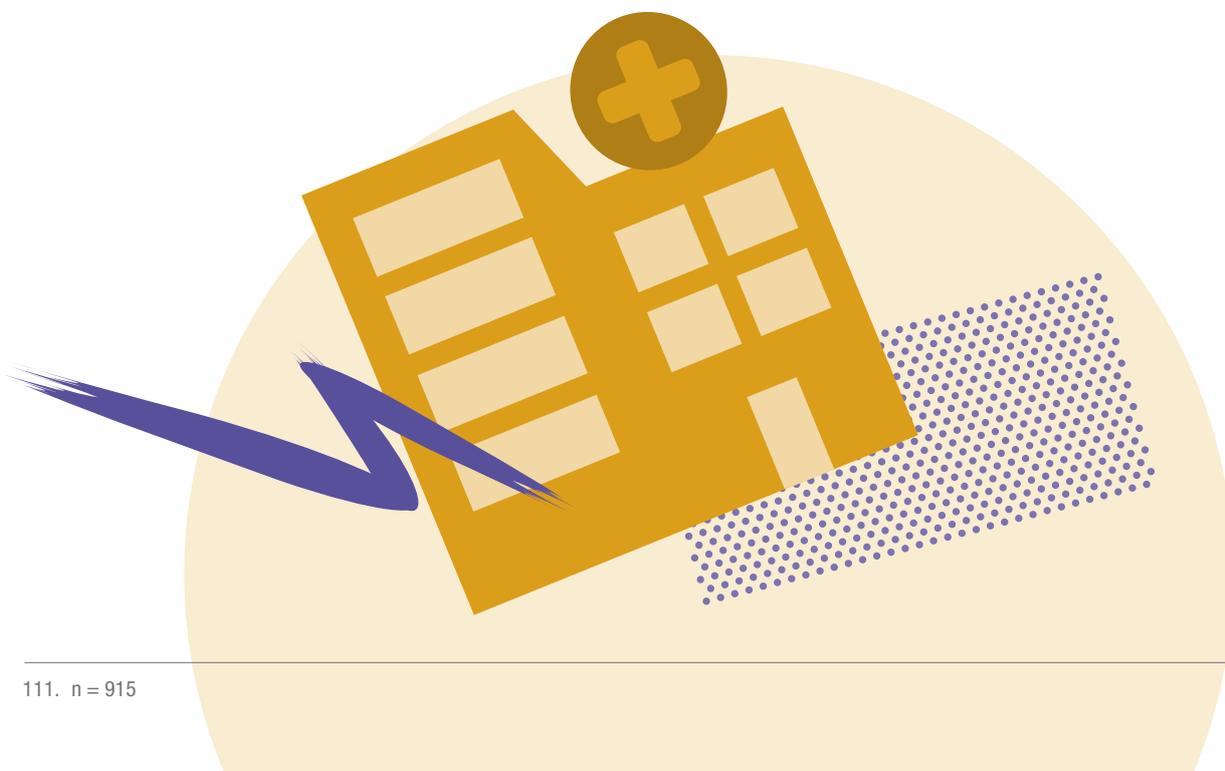
Although the *Life in Scotland* research this year was not designed to be a COVID-19-specific research project, it would be short-sighted not to acknowledge that young people's lives may have been significantly affected during the course of the pandemic which was ongoing at the time of the survey.

We asked participants to indicate whether or not their lives had been affected by the COVID-19 restrictions across each theme covered in this year's *Life in Scotland* survey – see Fig. 49 below.¹¹¹

Figure 49: Percentage of participants who believe their lives have been affected by COVID-19 restrictions across the Life in Scotland themes



Participants reported that, in particular, their education had been affected by these restrictions, with **83%** of the participants selecting education as an area impacted. **Over half** the participants also felt that their connection with their community, their perception of the media and their access to healthcare had been affected during the COVID-19 restrictions.



111. n = 915

EXPERIENCES DURING THE COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

The pandemic has had a range of effects on young people; some have found the disruption to their lives and the isolation as a result hugely difficult. On the other hand, many young people have benefited from the time to reflect on their identity, to access a queer community online and to come out at their own pace. Themes relating to the COVID-19 time period included:

1. Time out to reflect and come to terms with my identity

A recurring theme within this section was the appreciation some participants had for the time out that being in lockdown had offered them to step back and reflect, particularly in relation to their identity and LGBTI status.

'COVID gave me the perfect break to discover myself and my sexuality, if it wasn't for the pandemic, I probably wouldn't be aware of my sexuality yet.'

'It's given me time to discover my identity and not feel as pressured to be someone I'm not.'

'It was quite good for me as it was during the lockdowns that I realised I was queer, and it was good for me to learn that during a time when things were quiet. It was a lot easier coming out as well because I wouldn't have to see the person the next day and feel awkward.'

'My experience has been overall a very positive time for me in terms of my identity as an LGBTQ person. It has given me the time and space to realise what is important to me and that being out and proud of who I am is vital in that. The reduced social interaction allowed me to become much more confident in being out as I could do it in my own time, so by the time we were back to bigger groups I was comfortable in being myself in most situations.'

'Through spending more time at home and becoming more accepting of LGBTQ+, I finally accepted my own sexuality, after years of trying to suppress it. I managed to tackle my internalised homophobia.'

'Having a lot of time by myself gave me a chance to reflect, and I feel that's what caused my gender crisis.'



2. Missing out

Unsurprisingly, many participants felt that the restrictions had led to them missing out on life experiences that they would otherwise have had as an LGBTI young person.

'I felt disconnected from people at a time I wanted to come out and live my life as me. I lost a lot of confidence in myself.'

'I think it also made me feel isolated obviously but I was 17–19 so I missed the big milestones that would be going out and being in gay clubs and stuff for a while.'

'Pride events were all cancelled, so it feels like we lost a time that was important to our community.'

3. The impact of your living situation

A few participants felt that where they lived and who they lived with during lockdown had majorly impacted their life experience over the last few years.

'Trapped in a house with my homophobic and transphobic parents. Gotta love it.'

'I moved across the country during the pandemic and have yet to fully explore my new area and find my "space" within it as a queer woman.'

'Being stuck in a house full of people I haven't come out to (several of whom are transphobic) has been driving me nuts.'

4. Connection to community vs feelings of isolation

There was a sense within some of the responses that participants felt a need for connection with their community and that this had been impacted by the lockdown restrictions.

'Being able to meet fellow LGBT+ young people in person was a huge source of support and community. The pandemic really decimated face-to-face interactions between LGBT+ young people as well as a lot of LGBT-specific venues, which I think has had a hugely detrimental impact on the lives of LGBT+ youth. Certainly in my own experience my mental health has plummeted over the pandemic and caused me to feel a lot more lonely and isolated.'

'I found myself really seeking connection with other queer people during the pandemic, more than ever before.'

5. Relying on/relationship with the internet

Some participants reflected on their relationship with the internet over the course of the pandemic and how this had affected their experiences and connections with others.

'I felt like the online world was my only escape from reality, and the community especially on TikTok was amazing and I felt so comfortable when I was lonely at home.'

'I was unable to interact with my school LGBT+ club, I felt incredibly isolated, and I turned to online spaces. These spaces I found full of judgement and division even from my own community though, and often inappropriate for minors, so I feel more regulated online spaces are needed.'

'It has been good as a disabled person having a lot of things being online, doctors' appointments have been easier to attend and I'm able to work a little more without a commute. I'm hopeful that even when we are able to have services in person fully again there will still be options for people to access them remotely.'

6. Health concerns

The effect of the disruptions to participants' healthcare and concerns about participants' physical and mental health during the last two years were mentioned by some as being a problem during the lockdown period.

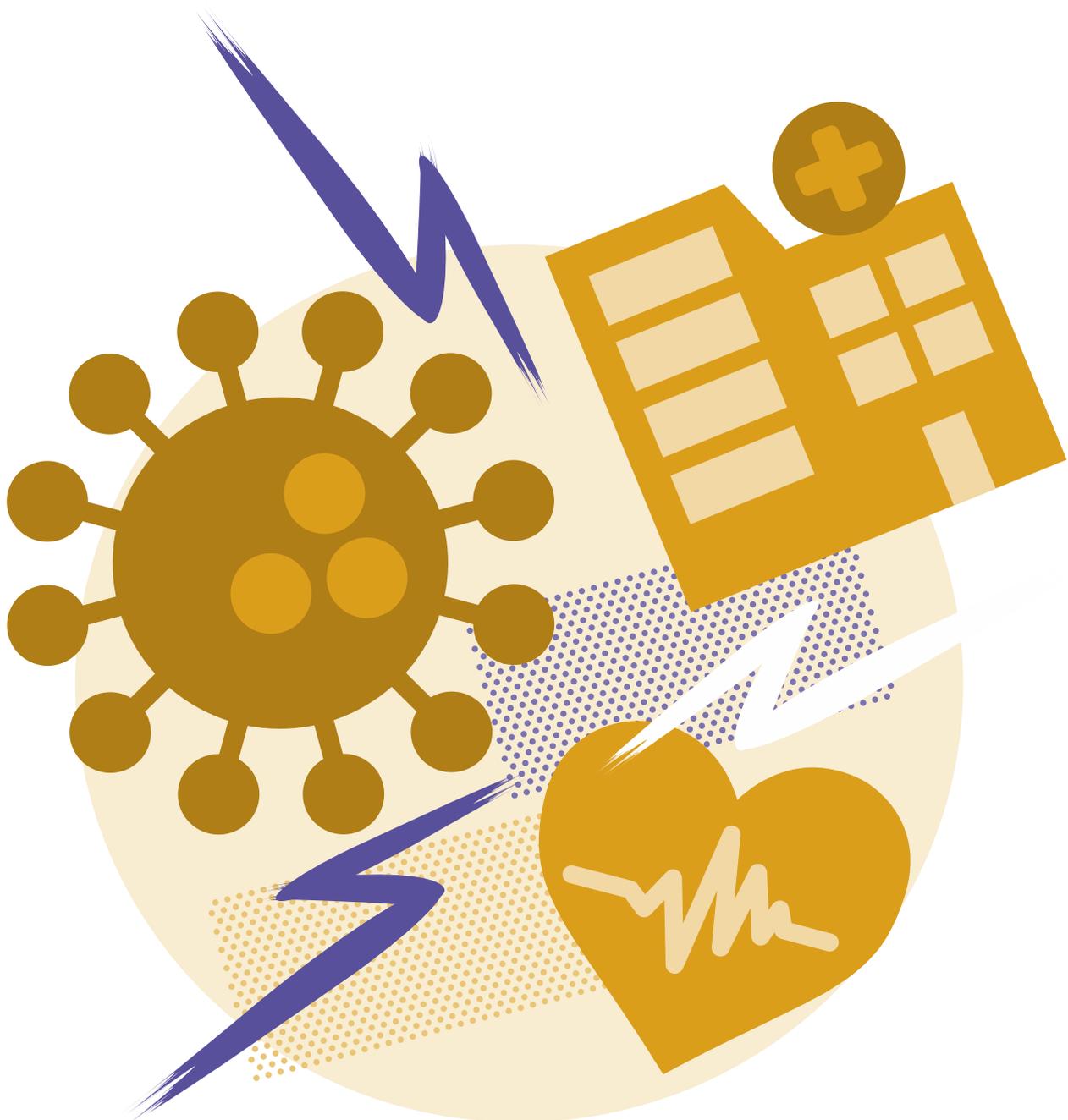
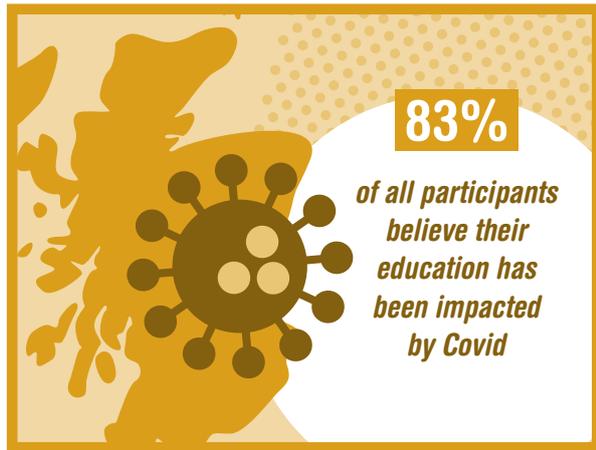
'As a queer homeless person, the COVID pandemic just makes accessing most of my support a bit harder, and most healthcare providers in my area are often staffed by older people who don't want to, or underfunded that they can't, use the online aids like near me.'

'This has been the worst year and a half of my life due to COVID. My mental health deteriorated and I lost what should have been my final teenage years to crippling mental illness.'

'The waiting lists for healthcare have increased exponentially.'

'Transgender healthcare was already punishingly slow, but the pandemic has been used as an excuse to stretch out waiting lists even further.'

'My mental health has declined a lot as I've been unable to work and see my friends.'



IN THE PARTICIPANTS' OWN WORDS...

Throughout the survey, participants were invited to tell us in their own words how they felt about each of the subjects addressed in the previous chapters. Quotes from these responses have appeared throughout this report to support the statistics presented, however recurring topics appeared throughout the participants' responses, indicating that there are common experiences that we didn't ask about that are important to LGBTI young people. In this chapter, ideas which were common across many chapters are presented, describing opinions and experiences common to many LGBTI young people across a range of life areas.¹¹²

ERASURE OF ASEXUALITY/AROMANTICISM

Some participants felt that asexuality/aromanticism are an unseen colour in the LGBTI rainbow. Some young asexual/aromantic people feel left out in queer spaces and also in the wider non-LGBTI community. This sometimes extends to healthcare and educational settings.

'Not once did I know that asexuality was a thing, and even when I did learn the word in my late teenage years I was only told about the sex-repulsed side of sexuality so I never thought it applied to me – how wrong could I be! Then I discovered the huge vastness of the asexuality spectrum and now for the first time I feel like I'm not the only one, I'm not a freak, I'm ok and don't need fixed.'

'I've had people make fun of or tell me I need medical/mental help after coming out as asexual.'

'It's incredibly difficult to be what you can't see. And often the small bits of representation of asexuality are portrayed incorrectly or only focus on one very small area of the asexuality spectrum.'

112. This chapter represents initial categories generated during qualitative analysis which is ongoing. For further information, see 'Analysis', p98.

VISIBILITY/VULNERABILITY

At times LGBTI young people feel intensely visible, or on display. Some participants told us that this has led to feelings of extreme vulnerability. As an example, public transport is a service that many LGBTI young people will avoid at certain times of the day, or will modify their behaviour to become more invisible in order to feel safer.

'I make sure to put my rainbow work lanyard in my bag before taking the Subway, especially when there is a football match on. I would not feel comfortable holding hands or being romantic in any way towards another girl on public transport in Glasgow (and feel like an incident similar to the one in London where two girls were attacked kissing on a bus is quite likely).'

'People any age will look and stare in an unwanted, diminishing way. Sometimes they make comments on the way we dress or look.'

INVISIBILITY/VULNERABILITY

At other times some young people feel unseen, either as an LGBTI person in a non-LGBTI world, or as an individual within the LGBTI bracket. This leaves them unsure of where to obtain necessary information or get adequate support. There is also a small sense for some participants of fearing they'll be brushed off as 'just a young person'.

'When trying to access help at a sexual health clinic (as my GP couldn't provide help, and referred me there), they couldn't help with what I needed as I didn't "fit" their criteria because of my gender identity and sexual orientation. They basically needed me to say what "they needed to hear" so they could provide care for my specific need as under their criteria – I wasn't "at risk".'

'My parents rejected my identity for so long because "they didn't see it".'

SYSTEMS VS INDIVIDUAL PROFESSIONALS

Many young people can identify exceptional individuals who have supported them or are trying their best, but can also identify systematic issues that exclude them as LGBTI people. There is a tension between engaging with excellent individual professionals and being rejected/marginalised/excluded by a system that is not set up to take account of their experience as an LGBTI person.

'GPs can be scummy about lesbian relationships – however, I've experienced different reactions from different practices, some better than others.'

'There is still homophobia in school but teachers/staff make the place feel so much safer because I know there is someone there to support us.'

'Don't feel supported by uni as an institution but find lots of peer support through societies and peer mentoring.'

'I am currently studying my Master's through Open University, looking at Equality and Social Justice. I felt it important to share my views from a queer woman's perspective and my tutor made really moving comments about LGBTIQ+ community and movement, and just made me feel very accepted and welcomed – that she understood and accepted my point of view.'

POLICIES VS ACTION

Many young people can identify failings of individuals to follow policies put in place to protect them as LGBTI people, leaving them just as unprotected as they would be without the policy. This was particularly highlighted in educational settings.

'For teachers and staff to put a stop to active homophobic comments and actions when they see it instead of just relying on a hurt, often self-conscious student to get the courage to speak out when they fear they could be bullied from just speaking out.'

'Teacher stopping people when they make jokes.'

'I feel safe and supported when I don't just feel listened to, but am also offered advice or solutions. This is very much a personal preference, but I've found in the past when talking to people about a problem that just feeling heard but taking no action makes me feel worse afterwards.'

NON-BINARY ERASURE

There was an apparent feeling in many responses that non-binary people are being left behind in the progress being made on LGBTI issues, with policies and legislation failing these people. This has ramifications across many areas, but is particularly highlighted in discussions around healthcare and intake forms for services.

'As a bisexual person, I feel very welcome in Scotland, but there is more hostility towards being trans/non-binary, which means I'm not out as trans, just bi. This means that while I feel generally safe and happy, there is part of my identity that's missing here.'

'Some school-related things aren't inclusive of non-binary people: things are for boys or girls including working groups and bathrooms, questions include "he or she" and not just "they".'

LGBTI ROLE MODELS

Young people told us that they like to see themselves represented in the role models they have in their lives. LGBTI teachers, family members living openly are often seen as a positive influence and source of reassurance.

'Having people like them visibly existing and living their lives just like everyone else in society. The less we feel "other", the easier it is to know who you are and to communicate that safely with the rest of the world.'

'Gay Twitter and Instagram, while filtered, allowed me to see other queer people living their lives in a way traditional media never showed.'

'There's so many people just like me, but older! They survived. They're proof I can live past 20.'

'I knew she was gay and had been discussing her upcoming wedding with the equal marriage law, and I was questioning my own sexuality for a long time before I spoke to her. She then recommended I speak with a fellow youth worker who I knew and who did LGBTIQ+ youth work. I was really lucky to have these youth workers to support me, give me guidance, and it made my first coming out a positive experience.'

PARENTS/FAMILY/BEING OUTED

Some young people are concerned that they will be outed before they are ready to people they wouldn't choose to be out to. In educational settings young people state that they worry that teachers will out them to their family at home; among their peers they fear bullying and being outed to hostile peers; and in the wider community they show concern over being outed and experiencing discrimination.

'Members of the church have told me that God would leave our church if we had any gay people at a service. Sitting there knowing I'm a Christian and gay, which I never chose to be or wanted to be, feels the worst. Being gay in church is like being an ice cube frozen in a warm room unable to thaw.'

'School does not recognise they/them pronouns that I use, also will not use any name other than birth name unless requested by parents, which puts some kids at risk of being outed at home.'

'As I am in a professional career, I would be concerned about going to a group and meeting a client there, outing myself to clients and people at work.'

'I have never been to the doctor's without my parents, and I'm quite scared to, so I would like something to support teenagers and young people with attending appointments on their own.'

MISSING OUT/OPTING OUT

Some young people feel a strong sense of 'missing out'. Experiences during the pandemic or in being left on waiting lists for support mean that many now have a sense of 'stolen experiences', such as living authentically as themselves, living with partners, going out into the world as a young adult, and time at school. There is also a sense of an awareness of a ticking clock – that at this stage of their lives the time that is put on hold is irrecoverable.

'I never expected or wanted to be the most successful person, but I think my dreams have been put on hold or totally destroyed by the pandemic.'

'Finally got a letter through to say I was on the dreaded years-long waiting list, great. I've had my valuable time wasted, months of puberty added in which my body further masculinises.'

'As a lesbian who came out in my late teens into a small community with a limited queer scene, I didn't experience many of the social and relationship milestones that my peers did. Spending my early twenties in lockdown so far has reduced those opportunities again and has once again delayed my ability to have those experiences, and I feel somewhat stilted compared to my peers.'

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LGBT Youth Scotland would like to thank all the young people for completing the survey, and we also extend our thanks to Scottish Trans, SAMH, Inclusion Scotland, and the University of Strathclyde for their support in carrying out this research.

To reference this research: Cronie, K., (2022) *Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People*. LGBT Youth Scotland

The research officer leading this project was Dr Kathleen Cronie.

Design: www.createpod.com

ABOUT LGBT YOUTH SCOTLAND

LGBT Youth Scotland is the largest youth and community-based organisation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Scotland. Our goal is to make Scotland the best place to grow up for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex young people. We play a leading role in the provision of quality youth work to LGBTI young people that promotes their health and well-being, and are a valued and influential partner in LGBTI equality and human rights. For further information, help or support, please visit our website at www.lgbtyouth.org.uk

LGBT Youth Scotland is a company limited by guarantee (No. 244805) and a registered charity (SC024047)

APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY

Type of survey/survey construction

An anonymous, mixed-methods survey was developed and hosted on the survey platform Qualtrics,¹¹³ which was opened in October 2021 and closed in January 2022. Most longitudinal questions from previous iterations of the research in 2012 and 2017 were asked again in this survey, with minor alterations made to the wording of a small number of questions to reflect current terminology. After consultation with young people, youth workers and third sector organisations across Scotland, a new section on Media/Representation, and another on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, were added to the survey. The final question list was taken to external organisations (Scottish Trans, SAMH, Inclusion Scotland, Scottish Government LGBTI Equality Team) for review and minor alterations were made to reflect their advice.

Prior to the launch of the survey, a pilot study was conducted with ten participants from LGBT Youth Scotland youth groups to test the survey's functionality and to gather feedback from young people on the question list. Feedback from these participants suggested that the survey was appropriately worded and functioned well.

Ethical considerations

A number of ethical considerations were undertaken during the research process for this project. In particular attention was paid to informing participants of: the research aim; what was involved in participating; that their participation was voluntary; that they could participate anonymously unless they chose to share their contact details as part of a prize draw which was optional, and that their identifying details would not be included in the data set to be analysed; and how their data would be stored and used. This information was set out on the participation information sheet on the opening page of the survey which participants had to confirm that they had read and understood, and that they consented to participate, before accessing the questionnaire. Additionally, as some questions within the survey related to bullying and mental health issues, the contact details for a range of support organisations were signposted both on the opening page of the survey and again on the relevant pages of the survey. Information was also given to participants about who they should contact if they had any queries or concerns relating to the research. No concerns or queries relating to the survey were received by the Research Officer.

Survey distribution/advertising

The survey was advertised via social media and information packs were sent to schools, colleges and universities. The information packs contained a letter explaining the purpose of the survey and PDF posters to be displayed in each institution with a QR code linking to the survey. LGBT Youth Scotland youth groups also ran dedicated sessions to allow members to participate in the survey in group time if they wished.

113. Qualtrics software, Version 10/21-03/22 of Qualtrics. Copyright © 2020 Qualtrics. Qualtrics and all other Qualtrics product or service names are registered trademarks or trademarks of Qualtrics, Provo, UT, USA. <https://www.qualtrics.com>

Number of participants/data cleansing

A total of **2163** participants consented via the participant information sheet and accessed the survey. Of this number, **1410** progressed further than the initial demographic questions and supplied usable data by answering questions in the main body of the survey. Though only **1014** of these completed the survey in full, the participant information sheet preceding the survey informed participants that incomplete responses may be included in the sample for analysis and participants consented to this before moving on to begin the survey.

During data cleansing, **131** participants' submissions were removed. The reasons for removing submissions fell into the following categories:

- Participants did not fit the demographic criteria for the research
 - falling outside the age range of the target sample
 - indicating they were not LGBTI
- Participants supplied unusable or deliberately nonsensical answers to open text box questions
 - stating their gender identity as 'baked beans', 'potato', or similar
 - filling text boxes with gibberish, non-alphabetical characters, or spamming the survey by repeatedly copying and pasting long sections of irrelevant text
 - responding to qualitative questions with racist, homophobic, biphobic or transphobic hate speech

The final number of usable responses was **1279**.

When completing the survey, participants were required to select a response to all demographic questions in order to progress to the main body of the survey, though they could choose to select 'Prefer not to say' in response to any or all of these questions. Following this, all questions were optional and did not require a response to progress through the survey. Due to the fact that not all participants responded to every question in the survey, each question received a different number of responses. To ensure that it is clear throughout this report how many participants are represented in statistics generated by each question, the number of participants responding to each question is clearly indicated in each section (n = ***).

As the responses to this survey constitute a convenience sample, it is not possible to generalise from these results, however a very large number of responses were received from participants spread across Scotland geographically and across a wide range of demographic groupings. In addition to this, just **33%** of the participants indicated that they had used one or more of LGBT Youth Scotland's services in the past,¹¹⁴ demonstrating that the participants were recruited more widely than LGBT Youth Scotland's regular participant groups. We are therefore confident that this sample represents a broad range of LGBTI experiences and opinions in Scotland today.

114. n = 1261

Analysis

Quantitative analysis was carried out using R & RStudio. Statistics were generated using the 2022 data and the results were then compared to the 2017 and 2012 figures.

Initially, analysis of the qualitative data was planned to be undertaken using a codebook approach to Thematic Analysis.¹¹⁵ This process would involve:

- Initially grouping the sets of qualitative questions by theme for pragmatic reasons
- An initial read-through of the complete data set
- A thematic analysis of each set of questions:
 1. Reading and rereading the data
 2. Developing initial codes/constructing a codebook for analysis
 3. Coding the data set and refining the codebook
 4. Generating themes from the code list/coded data set
- After each set of questions had been analysed, a comparison of themes and codes was to be undertaken across the full data set to identify overarching themes and codes appearing throughout the data set.

During data collection, it became apparent that a much higher number of responses was being collected than predicted (almost doubling the previous study's sample size), and in addition to this the quality and length of the qualitative responses being written by participants was resulting in more qualitative data being collected than predicted. The qualitative information presented in this report is therefore presented in two ways. Where themes are referred to, stages 1–4 of the process outlined above have been completed and selected themes are presented with accompanying quotes in the text. Where participant responses are referred to without reference to themes, qualitative coding has only reached an early stage and therefore quotes are presented in an uncategorised fashion in order to represent participant voice in illustrating the quantitative findings in the report. Work is ongoing on a full thematic analysis of the data.

Quotes appearing in this report appear in the participants' own words, the only amendments made have been to correct spelling errors to increase legibility, adding missing words for clarity (clearly marked in square brackets), or to remove additional punctuation which appeared in some quotes when downloading the data file from the survey software.

115. Influenced by Braun & Clarke: Braun, V. and Clarke, V., 2020. Can I use TA? Should I use TA? Should I not use TA? Comparing reflexive thematic analysis and other pattern-based qualitative analytic approaches. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 21(1), pp.37-47. and Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). *Applied thematic analysis*. SAGE Publications, Inc.

lgbtyouth.org.uk

   @lgbtys





LIFE

in SCOTLAND

for LGBT

YOUNG PEOPLE

LGBT YOUTH SCOTLAND