

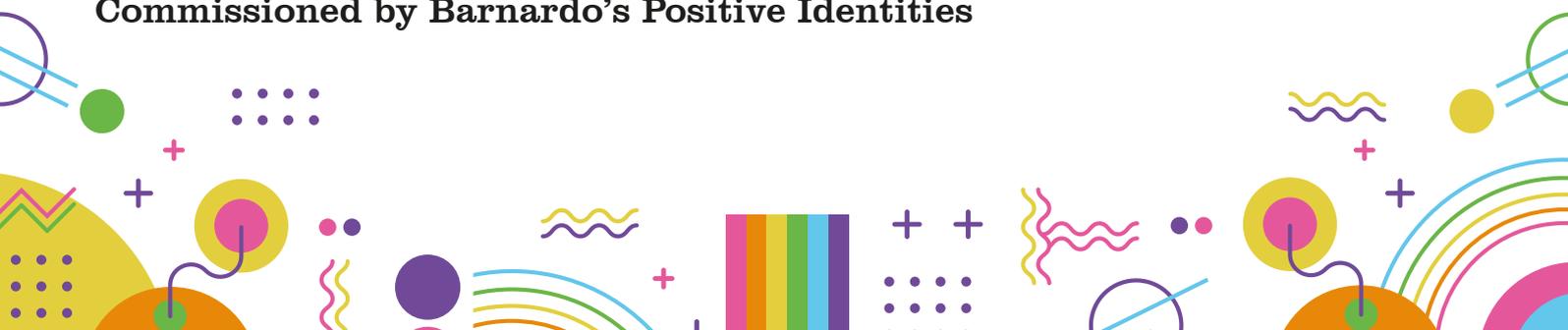


# Life as a Young LGBT+ Person Living in England 2021-2022:

## Final Report

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Commissioned by Barnardo's Positive Identities



## Preface

Barnardo's Positive Identities (PI), including Prouder Communities, has been providing services to LGBT+ children, young people and their families for 12 years. Services have included anti-homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying training for schools, direct 1-1 support for children and young people, direct support to parents/carers, community-based support, LGBT+ youth groups, and training for professionals who support children and young people.

During the pandemic, PI quickly altered our working practices to ensure LGBT+ children and young people continued to receive a service. At this same time across the media, there was much discussion about trans rights and what support was appropriate for young people; many different people held very strong views. Throughout these public conversations, the voices of children and young people were absent. Paramount to our values, Barnardo's PI decided to put the voices of children and young people front and centre and ask them about their experiences and to capture some of the impact of the pandemic on their lives.

Our aim was to ensure that we spoke to children and young people from different communities and to include those young people not engaged with LGBT+ youth provision. Highlighting the nuances in each experience helped to create a bigger picture. Societal norms can lead us to believe that experiences for LGBT+ children and young people are inherently negative. Whilst this is largely true, highlighting positive experiences plays a key role in ensuring we raise awareness about the impact an effective support system can have.

Our purpose is to ensure young people have a voice and can access the support they need, when they need it; whether this is community based or within their school/college. This survey really highlights how different children and young people's lives are – there is no one size fits all, but children and young people know where they feel safe, know when someone is supportive, and want to be seen and heard.

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## Introduction

This report presents findings from a research project conducted collaboratively between Barnardo's Positive Identities service and Sheffield Hallam University (led by Eleanor Formby). This involved an online self-completion survey and small number of follow-up discussion groups. Both of these elements set out to explore what it was like being a young LGBT+ person aged 13-19 living in England in 2021-2022. The questions were co-designed between the report's authors and Barnardo's staff, and in consultation with young LGBT+ people. They were structured around five areas: home life as a young LGBT+ person; education as a young LGBT+ person; accessing health services as a young LGBT+ person; work life as a young LGBT+ person; and life in the local community as a young LGBT+ person. In total, 1400 responses were collected over a 6-week period. Of these, 469 responses were removed from the data set because the respondents did not progress beyond the initial demographic questions. This left a total of 931 responses for the final analysis; 666 respondents progressed through the whole survey whilst the remaining 265 respondents' progress ranged between 20% and 99% completion. A detailed breakdown of the demographic variables is presented in an appendix. More detail on the research process is available from Barnardo's.

The report continues thematically, bringing together the five question areas (home life, education, health services, work life, local community) by looking at:

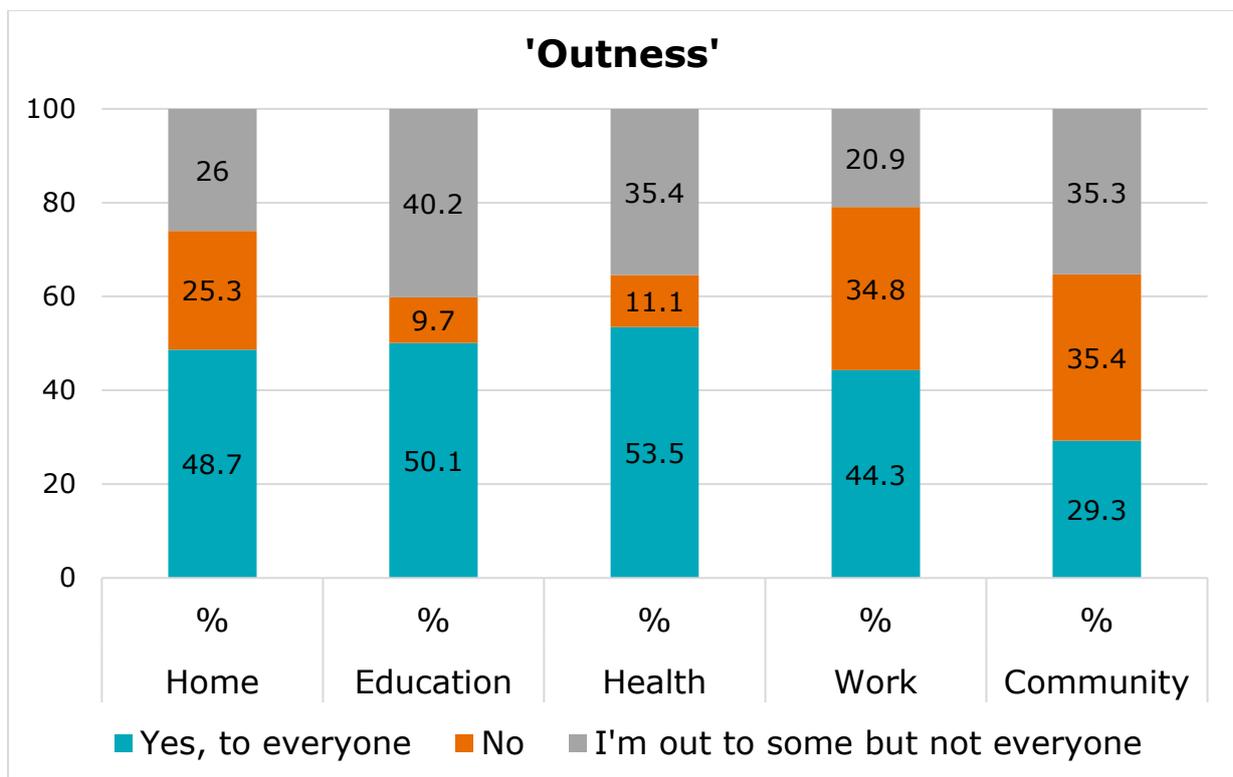
- Coming/being 'out'
- 'Acceptance'
- Safety, and feeling 'welcome'
- Reporting and help-seeking
- School-based LGBT+ groups
- Attending groups and clubs
- 1-2-1 support
- Life improvements as LGBT+ young people.

These sections include both survey results (numerical and some open text responses) and data drawn from three discussion groups held with LGBT+ young people. The purpose of these was to be able to add more in-depth data alongside the survey results.

## Coming/being 'out'

This section explores whether respondents were 'out' with the following people and in these settings:

- the people you live with
- at school or college
- in the health settings you access
- the people you work with
- in your local community (i.e. the area you live).



As this chart shows, approximately half of survey respondents said they were out to the people they live with (49%), at their school or college (50%), in health settings they access (54%), and to the people they work with (44%). Fewer respondents said they were out to everyone in their local community (30%).

Education (10%) and health settings (11%) had the fewest respondents who said they were not out to anyone. These figures are considerably lower than the percentage of respondents who said they were not out to the people they work with (35%) and/or in their local community (35%).

Survey respondents who said they were part of local religious or faith communities were additionally asked if they were out in these

communities. Just under half (49%) said yes, whilst 36% said they were not out to anyone. In addition, 15% said they were out to some, but not everyone.

Within discussion groups, participants shared concerns about how difficult some found it to be 'out' within school, and generally they described negative experiences of schooling as LGBT+ young people. Such contexts impact on young people's ability to be out:

*'I was out for, like, three weeks, and then I backtracked'* (Member of discussion group 1).

However, there were more positive discussions about college experiences as LGBT+ young people, with this contrast between negative experiences at school, and more positive experiences at college, echoing findings from other, similar research recently (Formby and Woodiwiss 2022):

*'[The] great thing about college [is] you get to be more yourself in every way'* (Member of discussion group 1).

Group participants were also concerned about school staff members 'outing' young people to their parents, which again has been identified in previous research (Woodiwiss and Formby 2023):

*'An awful lot of people I know have been outed by teachers to their parents'* (Member of discussion group 3)

*'I was out with a few teachers as well, and they called my parents before they told me anything... a lot of the teachers don't mean to be that cruel about it, they just, like, do it accidentally'* (Member of discussion group 1).

As the above comment shows, some staff may not intend to cause harm, though that could be the result, and instead believe it is required, or 'the right thing to do', to inform parents (or others) about their child's identity (Woodiwiss and Formby 2023).

Young people also talked at some length about feeling 'pushed' or 'rushed' into coming out, which was not what they had intended or desired:

*'[I] came out originally to my English teacher who I trusted, I just wanted them to call me by my name in that lesson, but they... like, outed me before I was ready... They made me come out when I wasn't ready and it ruined everything'* (Member of discussion group 2)

*'On the first day of year 7, within my first week actually, they had a tutor session on LGBTQ, and my teacher used me as an example, they were talking about trans people and they were like 'we have trans people in the school such as [me]' and I was kind of like 'oh OK, you're not gonna use, like, some famous person, maybe on the board in front of everyone, you're gonna out me, this terrified little year 7 to my entire class when you could have just left it', and I had very severe anxiety in year 7 and still do. My mum had emailed the school specifically asking them not to, like to try make me feel comfortable and not make a big deal about it, and they immediately outed me in the first week of school. Ever since then, it's been like a big thing, like I get people coming up to me on a daily basis... I just get hate thrown at me, and it does stem from that I think' (Member of discussion group 2).*

## 'Acceptance'

Survey respondents were asked if their sexuality and/or gender identity was 'accepted' by the following people or in the below settings:

- the people you live with
- at school or college
- the people you work with
- in your local community.

Response	Home		Education		Work		Community	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes, I am out and accepted by everyone	323	37.6	217	28.6	90	<b>39.1</b>	141	20
I am out and some people accept me, but not everyone	211	24.5	317	<b>41.8</b>	43	18.7	212	30.1
I am out and am not accepted by anyone	29	3.4	14	1.8	8	<b>3.5</b>	18	2.6
I am not out, but I think I would be accepted by everyone	88	<b>10.2</b>	51	6.7	23	10	50	7.1
I am not out, and I think some people would accept me, but not everyone	156	18.1	148	19.5	52	22.6	240	<b>34.1</b>
I am not out, and don't think I would be accepted by anyone	53	<b>6.2</b>	12	1.6	14	6.1	43	6.1
Total	860	100	759	100	230	100	704	100

Looking at the home, a little under 40% of respondents said their sexuality and/or gender identity was accepted by the people they live with, whilst 25% said their sexuality and/or gender identity was accepted by some people they live with but not everyone. Just 3% said that their sexuality and/or gender identity was not accepted by anyone they live with. Of those that were not out with who they live with, 10% felt their sexuality and/or gender identity would be accepted by everyone they live with, 18% felt their sexuality and/or gender identity would be accepted by some people they live with but not everyone, and 6% felt that their sexuality and/or gender identity would not be accepted by anyone they live with. This means that over a third were either not out or not accepted by anyone in the home.

Within group discussions, young people discussed their experiences of home, with varied experiences of levels of parental acceptance of their child's gender identity:

*'We came up with a compromise to use a nickname instead of my actual name... but they [my parents] don't do it very often... [I] had to come here [to an LGBT+ youth group] and have a meeting with [staff member], with my parents there as well'* (Member of discussion group 1)

*'My parents got really upset that I came out to my youngest brother because they said that I'm going to corrupt him and kind of lead him down a dark path, because 'oh no he now knows that trans people and non-binary people [exist]''* (Member of discussion group 2)

*'I came out to my Mum late summer, and she just said she wouldn't use any correct pronouns... she's, like, refusing to do anything, and my dad is just really transphobic... he doesn't think trans people should be allowed to transition, he's not a nice person... they just refuse to use any sort of correct pronouns... I think it's just how they are'* (Member of discussion group 2)

*'My parents only started to use my preferred name and stuff until something really bad happened, and so they felt bad... they watched loads of, like, weird YouTube videos of, like, really sad stuff to do with trans issues, and that's what clicked and they were like 'oh that's what my child's going through', and to help this they started using my name and stuff'* (Member of discussion group 3)

*'Sometimes I'll just go on walks outside by myself because being by yourself and not having anyone to speak to you, sometimes is better than being misgendered [at home]'* (Member of discussion group 2)

*'I have grown up in a Mormon family, so I was very sheltered as a kid... I never thought I would come out to my parents before I left the house, but it kinda ended up happening, it was kinda forced on me through someone else, which I wasn't happy about, but I ended up coming out to my mother first because she was more comfortable, she usually is the one that I'm more comfortable with as she's not as strict, but she ended up telling my father, it was kinda a big thing. My mother makes an effort when talking to external parties, so if she's talking to her friends or school, anyone, she will use my correct pronouns and my preferred name, that's all fine, but as soon as it comes to homelife, it's 'oh no, I can't use this name, I picked out this name for you', and she had a lot of trouble kind of letting go of it. Meanwhile with my father, I tried to have the conversation with him multiple times, he isn't happy about it at all, especially within the Mormon church, gender is a massive thing... so me coming out as non-binary, it was, 'hi, I am a whole other thing, I don't fit into your category''* (Member of discussion group 2).

As the above comment demonstrates, young LGBT+ people's identities intersect with other aspects of their lives, with faith in this example influencing parental responses to their child's gender.

At school or college, 29% of respondents said that their sexuality and/or gender identity was accepted by everyone, 42% said that their sexuality and/or gender identity was accepted by some but not everyone, and 3% said their sexuality and/or gender identity was not accepted by anyone. Of those that were not out in their school or college, 7% felt their sexuality and/or gender identity would be accepted by everyone, 20% felt their sexuality and/or gender identity would be accepted by some people but not everyone, and 2% felt their sexuality and/or gender identity would not be accepted by anyone. Just less than a third were therefore not out or not accepted by anyone within education.

Perceptions of 'acceptance' levels within schools were a common topic of conversation within our discussion groups, based on both personal experience and knowledge of friends' experiences:

*'One of my friends, they go to [a] single gender school, so it's an all-girls school, and they have friends who are trans males, but obviously when they joined the school, you know, they were thought of as female, and they were told by the people higher up in the school that they're not allowed to come out at all, and they could potentially be excluded if they came out as male... so they said they're not allowed to come out until they get to 6<sup>th</sup> form, because it's a mixed 6<sup>th</sup> form... It's because they don't want males in the school, so excluding them is in a way getting them to go to a different school, even if it's not in a nice way... It's not even like it's just against people that are trans, because they have trans females there and they are perfectly fine with that, but if you are there and you come out as trans [male], you know, you can get in a lot of trouble effectively' (Member of discussion group 2).*

In contrast to the above, some people had more positive experiences:

*'There are teachers who make an effort... we've got Miss [names teacher]... she's absolutely lovely and tries their best and will correct other students if they offended you. Just this week my geography teacher... we have a field trip coming up so we are working out dorms and rooming and he kept me after class to kinda discuss how my gender will fit in with that, because I'm not a binary gender... so he was really nice and, like, I was quite happy that he actually made the effort to ask me about it instead of kind of assuming' (Member of discussion group 2).*

Within the survey, 39% of respondents stating their sexuality and/or gender identity was accepted by everyone they work with; 19% said their sexuality and/or gender identity was accepted by some but not everyone, and 4% said their sexuality and/or gender identity was not accepted by anyone. Of those that were not out to the people they work with, 10% felt their sexuality and/or gender identity would be accepted by everyone, 23% felt their sexuality and/or gender identity would be accepted by some people but not everyone, and around 6% felt their sexuality and/or gender identity would not be accepted by anyone. Over 40% were therefore not out or not accepted by anyone at work.

In terms of their local community, 20% of respondents said their sexuality and/or gender identity was accepted by everyone; 30% said their sexuality and/or gender identity was accepted by some people in their community but not everyone, and 3% said their sexuality and/or gender identity was not accepted by anyone in their community. Of those

that were not out to people in their community, 7% felt their sexuality and/or gender identity would be accepted by everyone, 34% felt their sexuality and/or gender identity would be accepted by some people but not everyone, and around 6% felt their sexuality and/or gender identity would not be accepted by anyone. In total, 50% were not out or not accepted by anyone in their community.

Intersectional experiences were again apparent in discussions about the areas in which young people live. These conversations illustrated how LGBT+ young people have to manage their public safety in relation to both their identity and wider issues in the local area:

*'There's quite a few issues with like drugs as well, like there's certain places where you don't go because there's needles on the floor and stuff... even places that are meant for children, like parks and stuff... nobody goes in there because the likelihood of getting stabbed raises by about 70%, and then there's another little park but it's, like, covered in glass and beer bottles and stuff so you can't go there either'* (Member of discussion group 1)

*'I went to a college for a bit... and it was honestly awful... there were kids constantly doing drugs, like, on the grounds, and there were people waiting, like people would wait... where the college was to jump people'* (Member of discussion group 1)

*'Even if people don't know I'm gay, I don't, like, dress the way the rest of the people in general do, so, like, I'm at risk'* (Member of discussion group 1).

Such experiences impact on young people's ability to meet up with friends, and put them in a vulnerable position in terms of personal safety and legality, as this exchange shows:

*'I don't feel as comfortable actually going to meet up with friends, [be]cause, like, hate crime...'*

*'and violence. One of my friends' brother is gay and he got beat up last weekend...'*

*'When I got regularly misgendered, I got violent threats and stuff, and I know technically it's illegal but for a while I felt the need to carry around a knife with me, [be]cause I was very scared for my safety'* (Members of discussion group 3).

Another issue this group raised related to LGBT+ young people being potentially vulnerable to exploitation by far-right groups, which may warrant further research. This led to them wishing that there was more provision:

*'...protecting young people online that are LGBT+, and not even necessarily in the way of like getting homophobic comments and stuff. I know a lot of young bisexual men who have been indoctrinated into a lot of neo-nazi and racist spaces, because they're using LGBT+ experiences and stuff to be like, 'Oh you've been hated against, well we can redirect that hate to other marginalised [people]' and it's actually a weirdly common problem, especially with young, white bisexual and gay men'* (Member of discussion group 3).

Looking across the survey areas, it seems that the largest number of respondents who were out and accepted by everyone was in the workplace (39%), though work also had the largest number saying 'I am out and am not accepted by anyone' (though only 3.5%). The largest group who were out and accepted by some but not everyone was in education (42%). Of those not out, the largest groups who thought they would be accepted by everyone (10%), and conversely no-one (6%), was in the home. The largest group who thought some people would accepted them but not everyone was in their local community (34%). This indicates that whilst settings vary, young LGBT+ people clearly do not feel, or anticipate, universal acceptance.

Those that said they were part of a local religious or faith community were asked if their sexuality and/or gender identity was accepted in that religious or faith community.

<b>Response</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes, I am out and accepted by everyone	137	<b>45.7</b>
I am out and some people accept me, but not everyone	39	13
I am out and am not accepted by anyone	10	3.3
I am not out, but I think I would be accepted by everyone	28	9.3
I am not out, and I think some people would accept me, but not everyone	44	14.7

<b>Response</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
I am not out, and don't think I would be accepted by anyone	42	14
Total	300	100

As the above shows, 46% of respondents said they were out and accepted by everyone in their local religious or faith community; 13% were accepted by some but not everyone, and 3% were not accepted by anyone. In addition, a total of 38% were not out.

Discussion group data illustrate that young LGBT+ people's experiences of faith-based settings vary. This means that those working with, or advocating for, LGBT+ young people should not assume that experiences are always negative (Formby 2015, Formby forthcoming), but also recognise that balancing an LGBT+ identity and personal faith may sometimes be challenging:

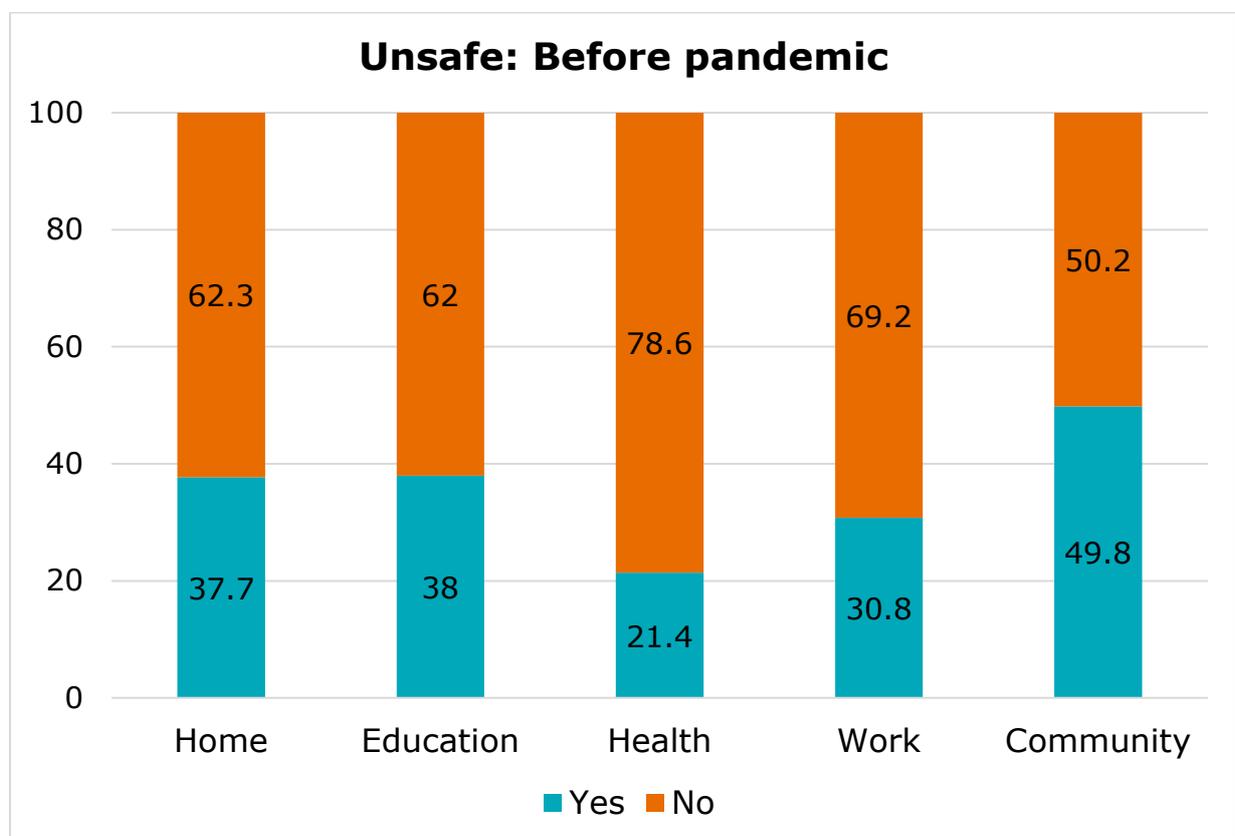
*'[My church (Church of England)] is good... I don't think I even officially came out, but I'm out to my granny who goes to the church, and I'm out to the youth leader, so some people know and some people don't... Generally, it's been really supportive... [but] it's definitely something I'm more aware of when I'm talking to my online friends, because a lot of them have issues with religion, because of them being gay and the problems they've had with that, so I just tend not to mention it most of the time... because I know that bringing it up will hurt my friends... They know that I'm Christian for the most part, I just don't talk about it because they have their own issues with that, and I don't want them to get stressed'* (Member of discussion group 1)

*'So I go to a Roman Catholic church and everyone there is super nice... until you bring any controversial opinion into anything... The priest is OK but it's the people there, they would, like, nudge me as they walk past me... One of them [the congregation] gave me a flyer for conversion therapy, so I haven't been to church in a little while'* (Member of discussion group 1).

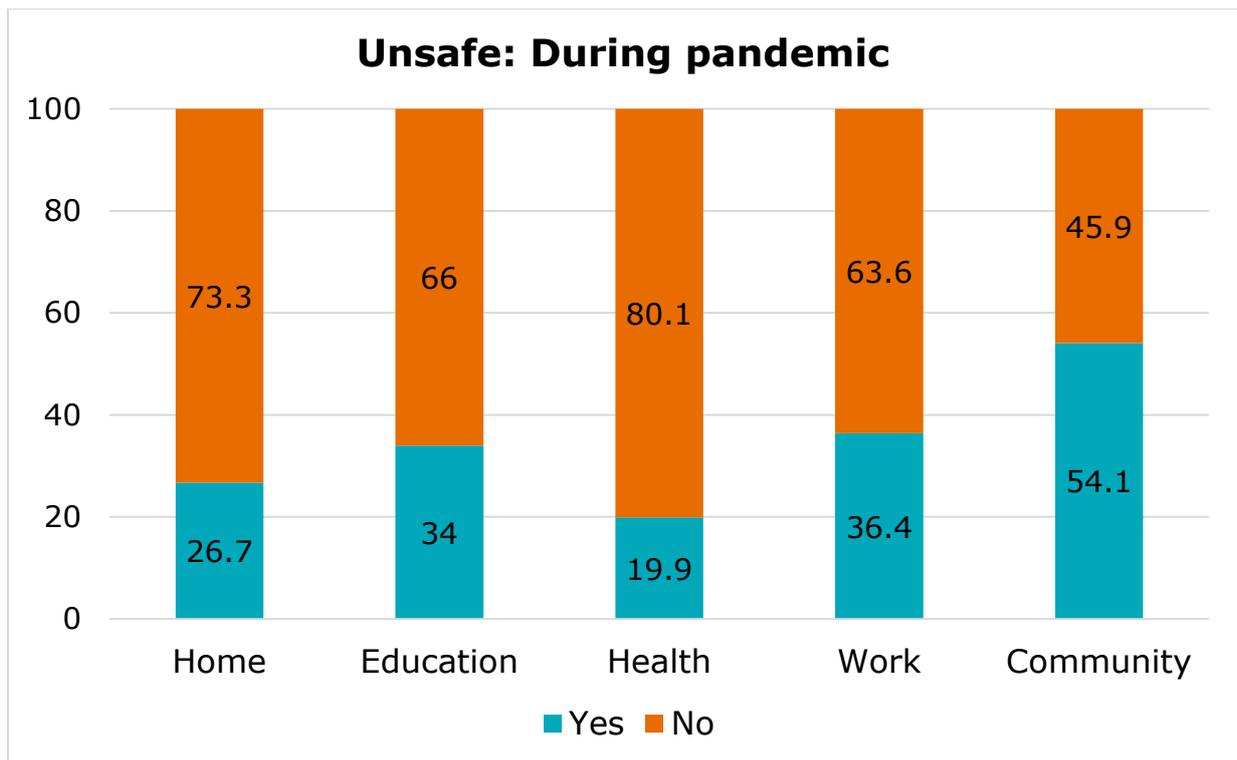
## Safety, and feeling 'welcome'

Respondents were invited to complete this survey during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, the survey was designed to explore perceived safety before and during the pandemic. Respondents were specifically asked if they had ever felt unsafe or unwelcome in the following places:

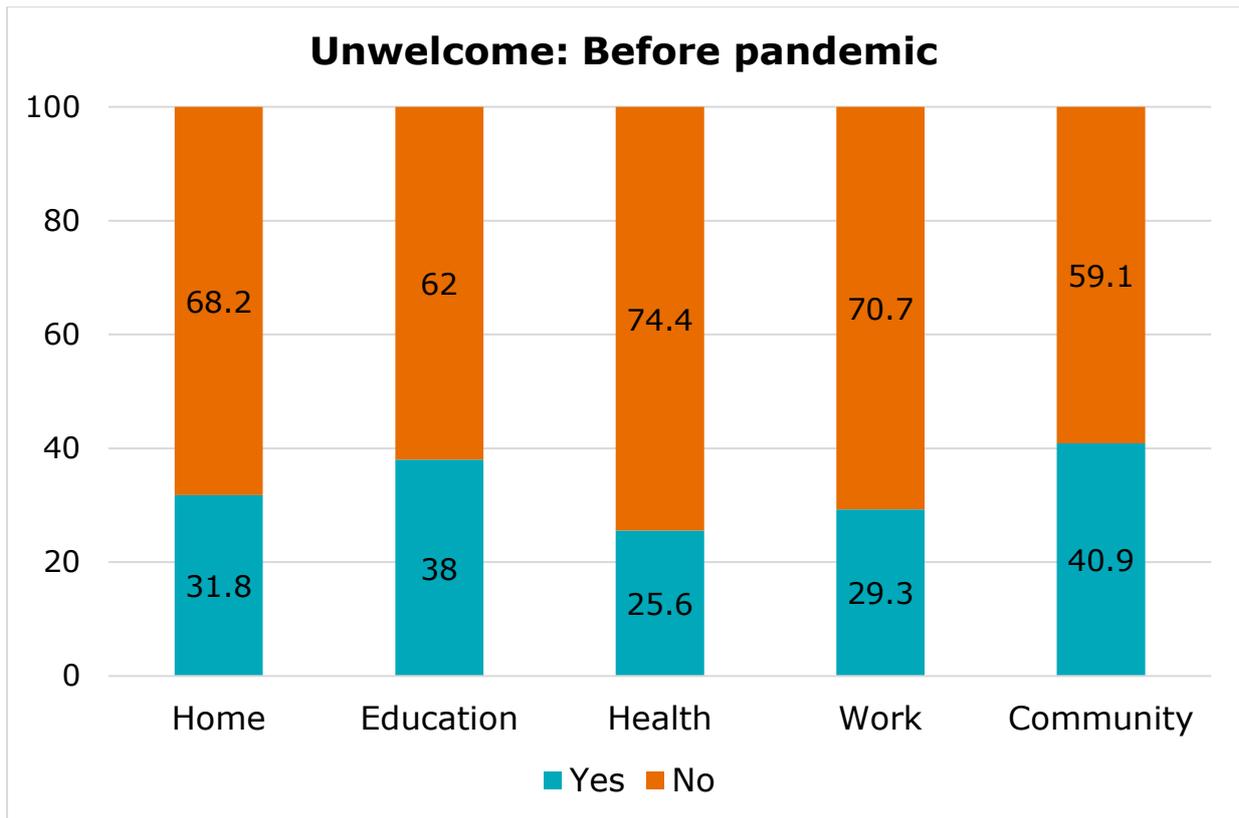
- where you live
- at school
- in health settings you access
- at work
- in your local community.



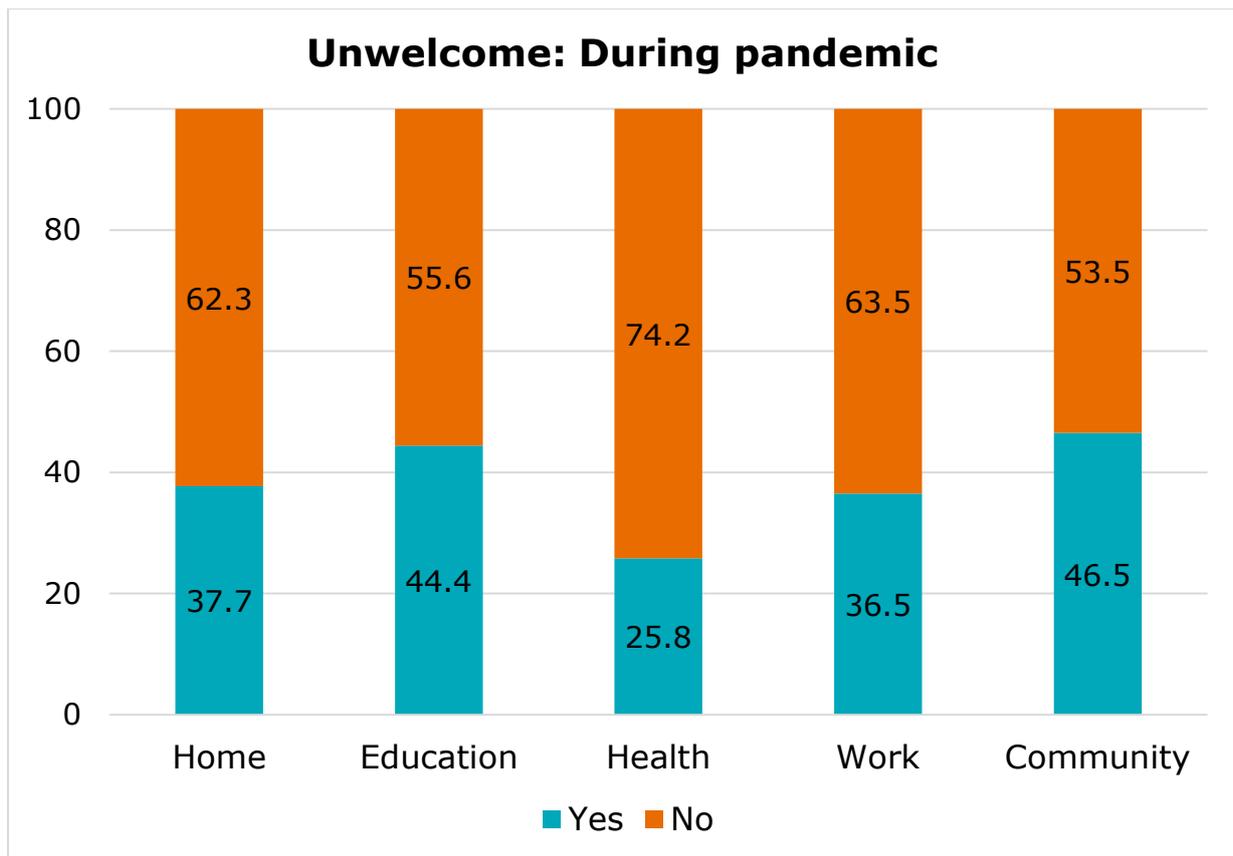
Before the pandemic, 50% of respondents said they had at some point felt unsafe in their community. Somewhat more positively, 62% said they had not felt unsafe where they live, or at school or college. 69% had also not felt unsafe in the workplace, and 79% had not felt unsafe in health settings they had accessed.



The percentage of respondents who said they had at some point felt unsafe in their community increased from 50% before the pandemic to 54% during the pandemic, though this is not a large increase. The percentage of respondents who said they had at some point felt unsafe in the workplace also increased from 31% before the pandemic to 36% during the pandemic. However, the percentage of respondents who said they had at some point felt unsafe in health settings they had accessed remained around 20% both before and during the pandemic. More positively, the percentage of respondents who said they had at some point felt unsafe at school or college decreased from 38% before the pandemic to 34% during the pandemic. Lastly, the percentage of respondents who said they had at some point felt unsafe where they lived decreased from 38% before the pandemic to 27% during the pandemic. This latter finding is particularly interesting as it contrasts with evidence elsewhere highlighting the impact of being confined to homes with 'bigoted' relatives on young LGBTQ people's mental health (Batty 2020). This is not to suggest that either research is 'untrue', but to note that experiences obviously vary. This may in part be due to how feeling 'unsafe' was interpreted by survey respondents, for example whether it was understood as being linked to the pandemic or being LGBT+. Feeling 'unwelcome' is perhaps more easily related to sexuality or gender identity.



Before the pandemic, approximately 41% of respondents said they had at some point felt unwelcome in their local community; 38% said they had at some point felt unwelcome in school or college; 32% said they had at some point felt unwelcome where they live; 29% said they felt unwelcome at their workplace, and 26% said they had at some point felt unwelcome in health settings they had accessed.



The percentage of respondents who said they had at some point felt unwelcome in their community increased from 41% (before the pandemic) to 47% (during the pandemic). The percentage of respondents who said they had at some point felt unwelcome in their workplace increased from 29% (before the pandemic) to 37% (during the pandemic). The percentage of respondents who said they had at some point felt unwelcome in health settings they had accessed remained at 26% both before and during the pandemic. The percentage of respondents who said they had at some point felt unwelcome at school or college increased from 38% (before the pandemic) to 44% (during the pandemic). Lastly, the percentage of respondents who said they had at some point felt unwelcome where they lived increased from 32% (before the pandemic) to 38% (during the pandemic). This latter finding is more in line with other research on the homelife experiences of LGBTQ young people during the pandemic (e.g. see Batty 2020).

Respondents who felt unsafe and/or unwelcome were asked if they thought this was to do with their sexuality and/or gender identity:

- 67% of respondents who felt unsafe or unwelcome where they live said this was either part of or the main reason

- 76% of respondents who felt unsafe or unwelcome at school or college said this was either part of or the main reason
- 71% of respondents who felt unsafe or unwelcome at work said this was either part of or the main reason
- 57% of respondents who felt unsafe or unwelcome in a health setting said this was either part of or the main reason.
- 76% of respondents who felt unsafe or unwelcome in their local community said this was either part of or the main reason.

As the above shows, although figures varied by category, the majority of respondents (over half, and in some cases over three quarters) felt that feeling unsafe and/or unwelcome was to do with their sexuality and/or gender identity.

Within discussion groups, school practices in relation to gender identity were a common topic of conversation, with evident links to how schools were perceived to be less safe and/or welcoming for some LGBT+ young people, particularly those that were trans and/or non-binary. As described below, these experiences have implications for educational retention, and for relationships with staff members:

*'My school's stupid with names, like I have to change my name legally before I'm allowed to change it on the register' (Member of discussion group 1)*

*'I went to a college for a bit and they have the same kinda thing... they were a real arse about, like, giving a legal name on anything... not even like official paperwork. Registers, tests, like student ID card, but [the] thing is, I went by that name everywhere else... [they were] shit like that... I left the college' (Member of discussion group 1)*

*'It's made ridiculously difficult for you to change your first name, but not your last name. I asked the pastoral leader about getting [it] changed because she's gay, so she was like 'yeah you can change it, it would be a good idea, but you have to get it changed legally and I can't help you with that'... so I was like 'well why can't I change my first name?', and she said 'well last names are people's own personal comfort', and I was like 'well my first name is for comfort as well'... If my parents got divorced and my mum married a new guy and he had a surname... they would change it to that on registers, but if I go in and say I wanna be called [a different first name] they can't do that... If I bring it up they try to,*

*like, drop the subject as fast as possible... When I said I was considering changing my name... they were like 'is that short for [something]... or just because you like the name?', and I said 'no it's because I'm trans' and the subject was just dropped completely' (Member of discussion group 1)*

*'They're pretty OK with binary trans students... but non-, with non-binary students, because that isn't a setting on the software they use, it just isn't recognised, so you don't have any pronouns [and] preferred names are often just completely ignored' (Member of discussion group 2)*

*'In my school there's a very big problem with misgendering of transgender and non-binary students, so I have been out since I was in year 6, and I'm currently in year 8, and it's been on the system since I came out that I use he/him pronouns, and I've only ever had one teacher in my 2 years of being in secondary school who's actually respected that. Even though my name had already been changed on the system, when I came to this school it took about half a year for the teachers to get used to that, because they knew my dead name, so I think there's a staff issue there... In equalities group we're trying to put together something which could help educate members of staff, because it is a problem, because obviously if the teachers are referring to me using she/her pronouns and using my dead name then that's how everyone else will refer to me, so that's a big problem... Also I'm not allowed to go in my PE group because there's risk of harassment apparently, which is a problem in itself if there's a risk of a transgender student getting harassed in a PE group because that's the PE group they should be in, then that's a massive problem on its own I think' (Member of discussion group 2)*

*'When my maths teacher decided to call me by my dead name, I decided to start calling her by her first name, and I got sent to the isolation room' (Member of discussion group 2)*

*'I haven't been allowed in the girls' toilet... I've been kicked out a lot, and been threatened with suspensions' (Member of discussion group 3)*

*'When I was in high school... I brought up having a girlfriend once, and my teacher told me that was an inappropriate subject, because I was around younger people, so I wasn't allowed to talk*

*about it, and I said 'oh but they're allowed to talk about their boyfriends?', and she was like 'well that's different', and I'm like 'hmm, is it? Or are you just homophobic?'" (Member of discussion group 3).*

Another school-related topic that was often discussed within discussion groups was LGBT+ invisibility in the formal curriculum, and other issues about tokenistic and/or inappropriate representations of LGBT+ people:

*'We had, like, one assembly on it, and one tutorial lesson, but barely anything, and I think in the tutorial lesson I kinda read most of it because I was the only gay person in my class' (Member of discussion group 1)*

*'I go to a very heavily catholic school... It's not like that they will tell you 'you can't be gay', but it's subtly put into things, like there's no representation' (Member of discussion group 1)*

*'There was like one lesson about being LGBTQ and, like, cybersex and stuff, and the teacher said that 'somebody in here will be gay, hopefully not many of you'... she hoped that not many of us would end up being LGBTQ' (Member of discussion group 1)*

*'In terms of content, in science, I was told non-binary people can't exist... and I was like 'ah OK, I guess I don't exist'" (Member of discussion group 3)*

*'Whenever, especially in English, they always make like gay issues, like LGBT+ stuff, look like a controversial topic, when it's just a normal topic, like people try to argue with it, I'm like 'why are you arguing against human rights?'" (Member of discussion group 3)*

*'It's normally just cis[gender] gay men that we talk about, and they never talk about underprivileged LGBT+ people, like black LGBT+ or trans [people]' (Member of discussion group 3).*

In a minority of cases, however, school was praised for its (albeit limited) content, and identified as a safer space than home:

*'I remember in my sixth form, it was like trans awareness, they actually did like a good short session on it... it wasn't misinformation, it was actual definitions... like one half hour out of, like, my entire experience [at school]' (Member of discussion group 3)*

*'School... especially extra-curricular stuff, because... the teachers who are accepting will run it and that's where I feel most comfortable, and I keep myself very busy because I want to avoid all of that [at home]'*.

Aside from educational environments, health settings were also the subject of discussion, with a particular focus on child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). Comments often focussed on problems with access delays, and/or LGBT+ young people being referred out of CAMHS provision based on an assumption that they need (and can get) specialist support elsewhere (see also Formby and Woodiwiss 2022):

*'The waiting list was 10 months long... I was meant to be high risk... and I was still put on a 10 month waiting list... [and it was] not very helpful once I saw them... The counsellor kinda tried to manipulate and force me into coming out as trans, which I really wasn't comfortable with and made me way worse with the other issue I had... For the past 6 years I have been bouncing around different counselling services... CAMHS kinda have the mind set of 'we will help you for 6-8 weeks then suddenly you're fixed, you're all better and you never need to come back here'... and it doesn't work like that'* (Member of discussion group 2)

*'I applied to CAMHS not even for LGBTQ issues, it was just mentioned for mental health, depression and anxiety and stuff, and the minute anyone mentioned like LGBT they dropped me to the bottom of the waiting list... It's like a 3-year waiting list to get any actual mental health assessment... CAMHS is horrible... [This group] has been helpful with, like, being LGBT but... at the same time I didn't get the mental health help that I needed, and that I'm still needing'* (Member of discussion group 1).

Young people we spoke to also suggested that some CAMHS staff have a lack of understanding about the specific issues young LGBT+ people might face:

*'CAMHS are shit... They basically said that I should go outside instead of sitting inside and feeling depressed even after I just had a big rant to them about how going outside makes me want to kill myself a lot more, and they told me just to man up and go outside... I basically said to them, you know... I tried going outside today, I self-harmed afterwards, and they were just like 'well that's an improvement, I think you should go outside a bit more, it*

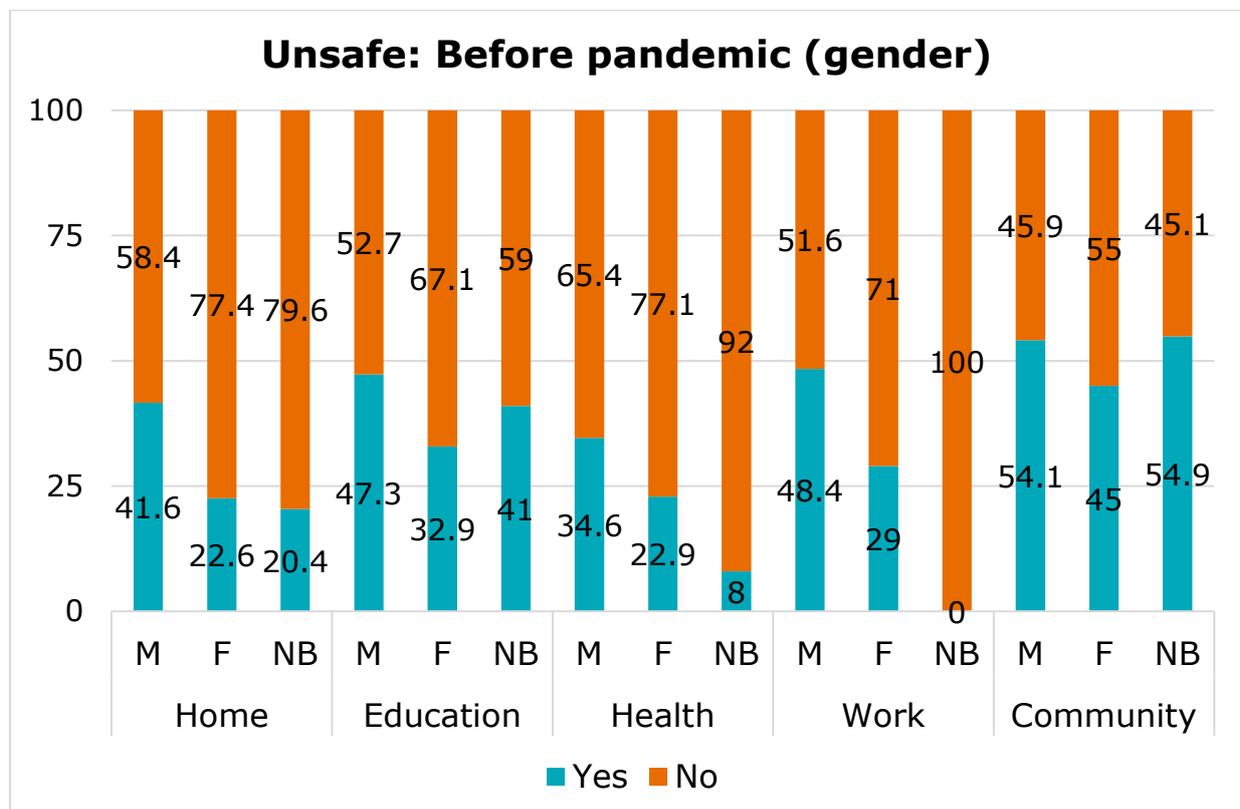
*will help you get better'... [but] I get called a faggot a lot [when I'm outside]' (Member of discussion group 3).*

There were also specific points raised for trans young people about a lack of gender-affirming and/or appropriate health care:

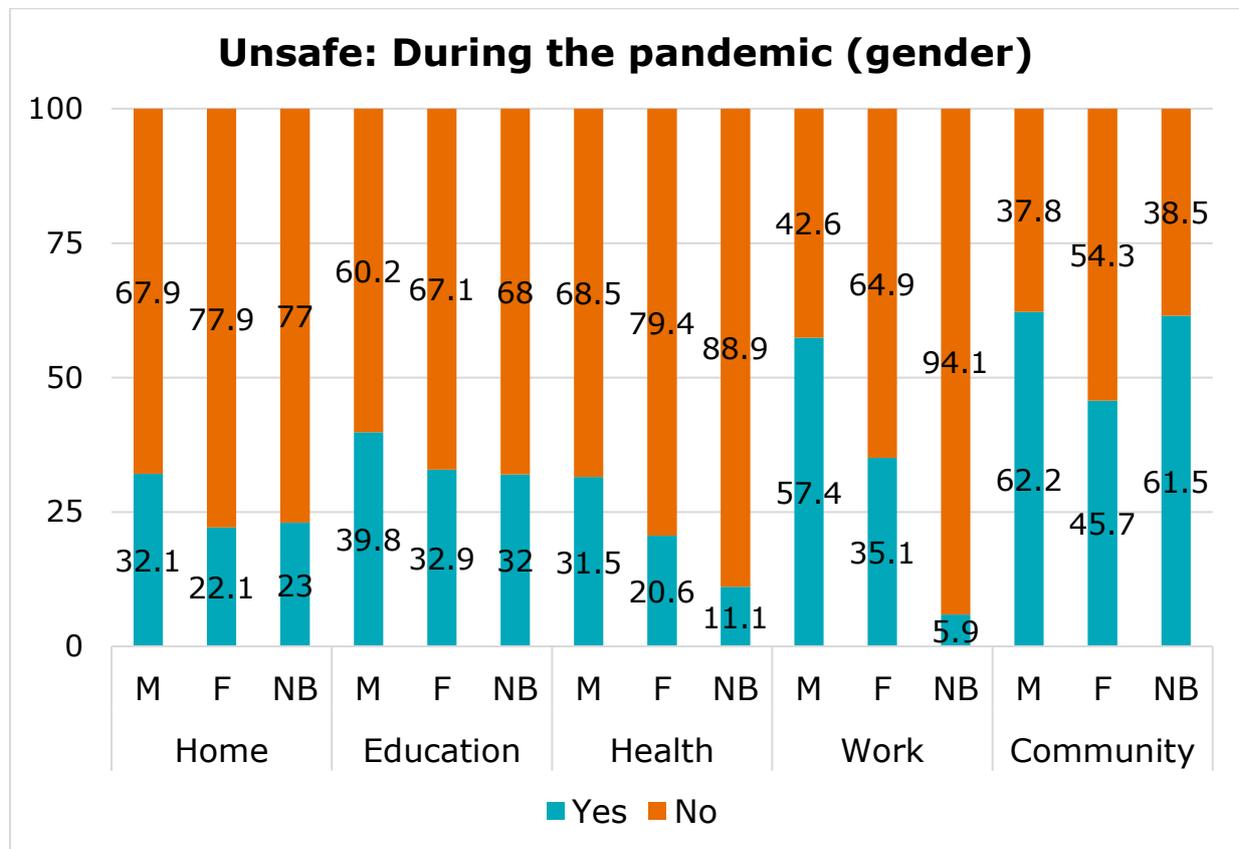
*'It's really annoying, right, because to start hormones you have to prove that you are trans, but for like years, and I'm like, 'you don't have to prove that you're straight, or prove that you're gay, but you have to prove that you're trans, and why don't you believe me?'; 'oh it's because people de-transition'; 'no, 1% of people de-transition in their lifetime, listen to everybody else, they don't speak for me'. Why do we have to be proving ourselves, that's my issue' (Member of discussion group 3)*

*'When I changed gender with the NHS they took us off the list [for smear tests] and stuff, not aware that I still need that' (Member of discussion group 3).*

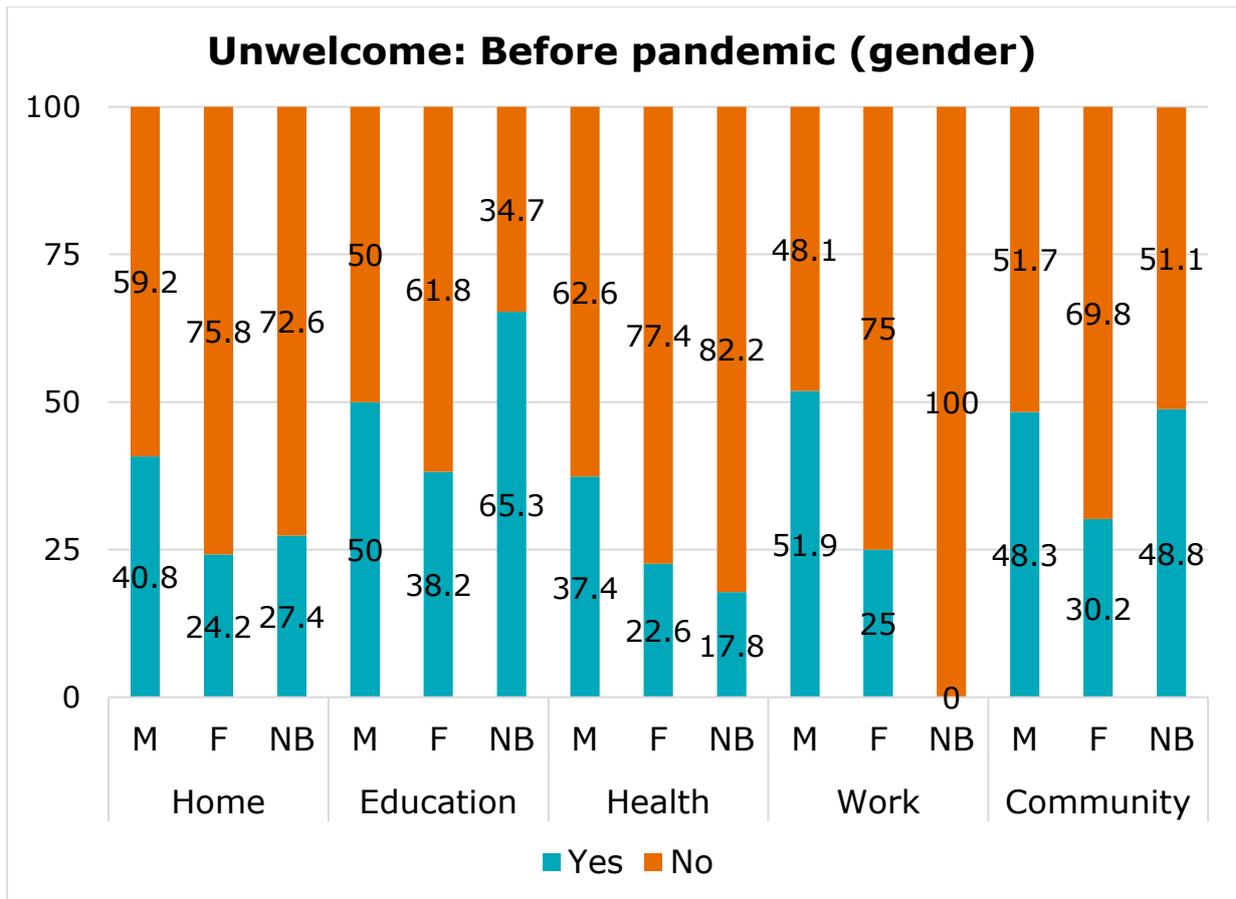
Survey data in this topic area was also analysed by gender, with three categories used: female (F), male (M), and non-binary (NB). These three were used as the majority of respondents identified as one of these; the small number of respondents that did not identify as any of these were removed from this sub-analysis due to low numbers.



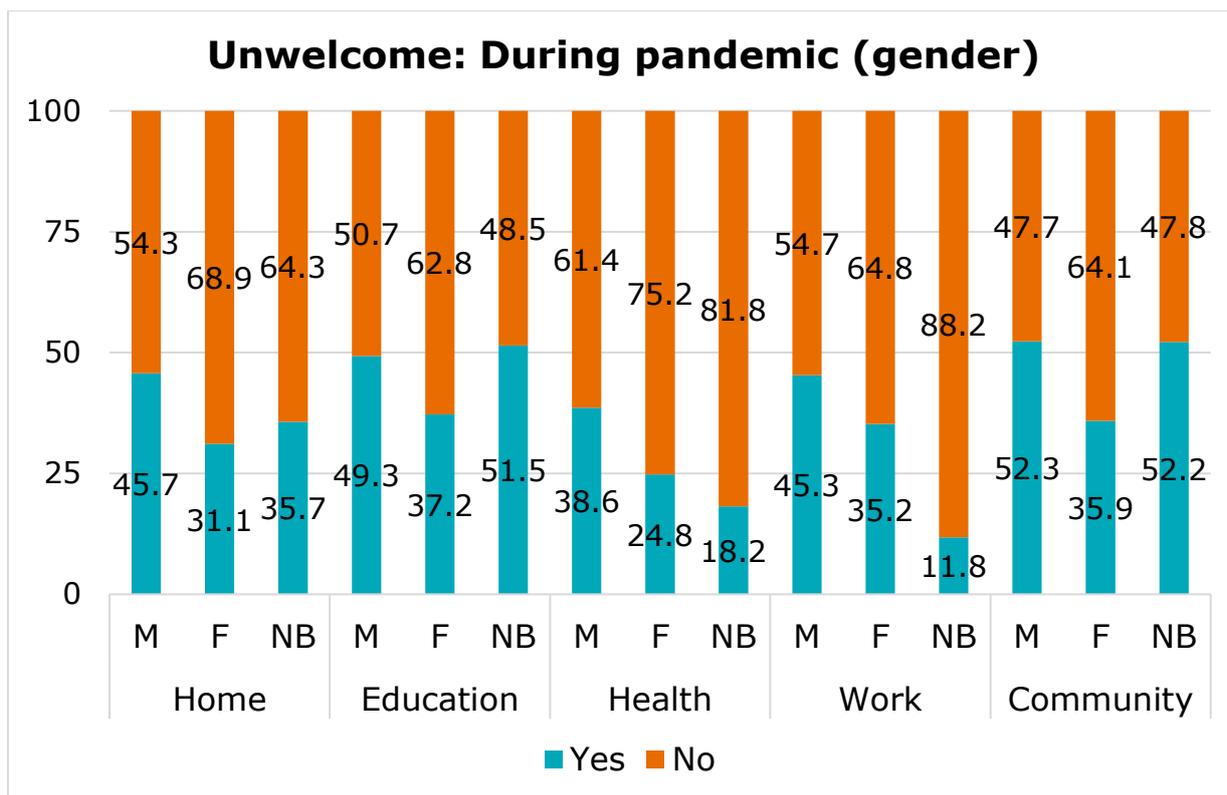
Before the pandemic, more male respondents said they felt unsafe at home (42%), in school or college (47%), in health services (35%), and at work (48%), compared to female and non-binary respondents.



During the pandemic, there was an increase in the percentage of respondents who felt unsafe in their local community; the percentage of male respondents who felt unsafe at work also increased from 48% (before the pandemic) to 57% (during the pandemic).



Before the pandemic, 50% or more of male respondents said they felt unwelcome in their school or college and at their workplace, but 65% of non-binary respondents said they felt unwelcome in their school or college, and 49% felt unwelcome in their community.



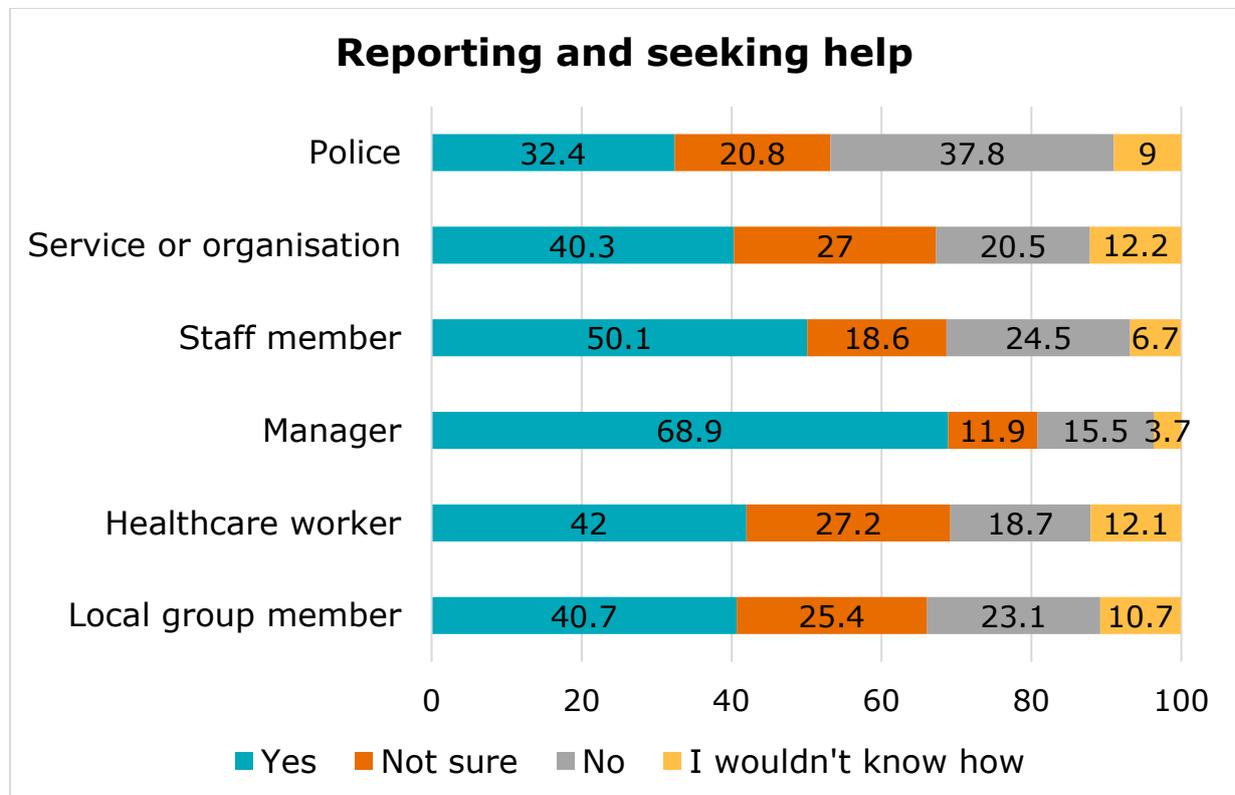
During the pandemic, 52% of male and non-binary respondents said they felt unwelcome in their community, which was a slight increase from before the pandemic. The number of non-binary respondents who said they felt unwelcome in their school or college decreased from 65% (before the pandemic) to 52% (during the pandemic). The number of male respondents who felt unwelcome at their school or college during the pandemic remained close to 50%, though the number of male respondents who felt unwelcome at work decreased from 52% (before the pandemic) to 45% (during the pandemic).

It is not possible to know from the survey whether increasing feelings of being unsafe and/or unwelcome are linked to the pandemic itself, or unrelated increasing prejudice that (may have) happened to occur during the pandemic.

## Reporting and help-seeking

Survey respondents were asked if they would feel confident to tell the police, a school staff member, their manager, a healthcare worker, or a local group member if they were being bullied or treated badly because of their sexuality and/or gender identity. Respondents were asked to tick one of the following options:

- Yes, I would feel comfortable telling them
- I am not sure
- No, I would not feel comfortable telling them
- No, I wouldn't know how.



As the above shows, respondents said they would feel most confident telling their manager (69%) if they were being bullied or treated badly because of their sexuality and/or gender identity; 50% said they would feel confident in telling a staff member at their school or college; 42% said they would feel confident telling a healthcare worker; 41% said they would feel confident telling a local group member, and 40% said they would feel confident telling a service or organisation for young people. Telling the police had the lowest percentage of respondents who said they would feel confident in doing so (32%).

Group discussions suggested reluctance to report negative experiences both within school and to the police. This was related to a lack of faith that anything would happen as a result, as this exchange indicates:

*'They [teachers] don't actually do anything...'*

*'Everything schools do is to make schools look good...'*

*'They do a lot of misinformation in terms of assemblies and stuff, in terms of like homophobic and transphobic comments... they [teachers] kind of let it happen'* (Members of discussion group 3).

This group also had a very low opinion of the police:

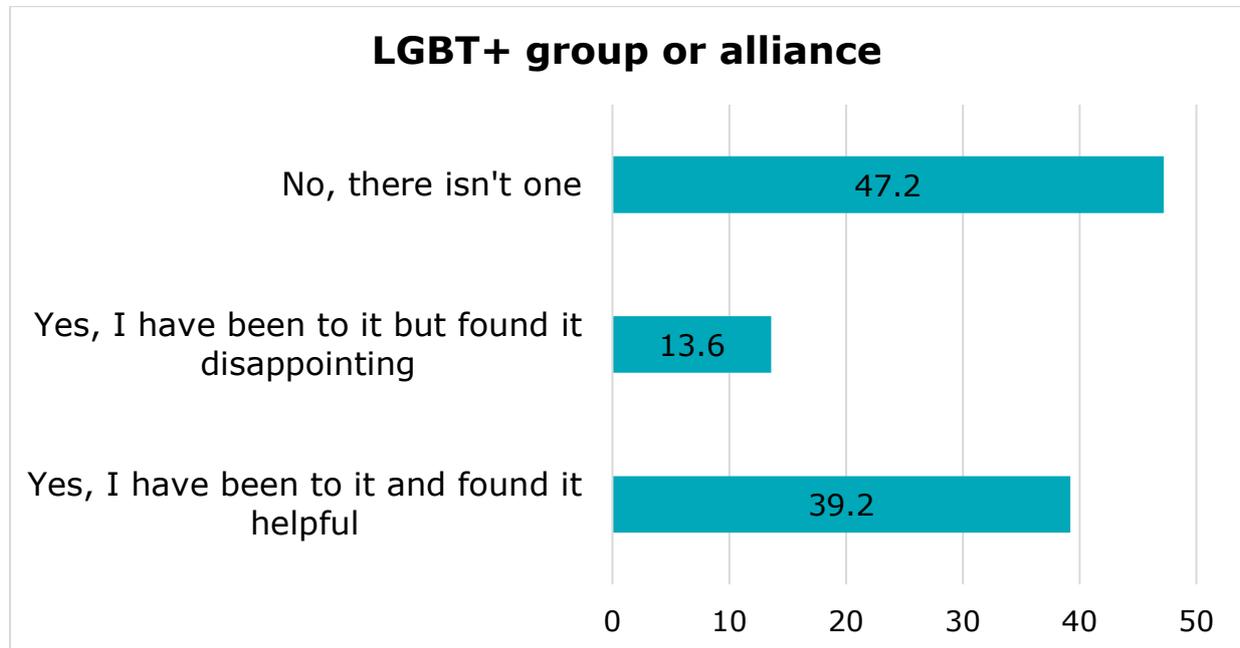
*'Even for stuff like sexual assault, they [the police] are gonna be like, if you're like a young woman, they're just gonna be like 'well what were you wearing like?''* (Member of discussion group 3)

*'The way I express myself, if I was to go to a police officer and I'd been assaulted, they'd be like 'well take a look at yourself', they'd never ever take me seriously, ever'* (Member of discussion group 3)

*'Especially because of how they respond to women, black people, like LGBTQ+... of course they wouldn't [do anything]'* (Member of discussion group 3).

## School-based LGBT+ groups or alliances

Survey respondents were asked if they were aware of an LGBT+ group or alliance for students at their school or college.



As this chart demonstrates, 39% said yes, they had been and found it helpful; 14% said yes, they had been but found it disappointing, and 47% said there wasn't one. In addition, 50% of respondents who said that there was not an LGBT+ group or alliance at their school said that they would try it if there was one; 33% were not sure, and 17% said they would not try it if there was one.

Just one group discussion touched on school-based LGBT+ groups, with some evident reticence to engage due to concerns about anonymity and safety:

*'The thing is, I feel like if my school did have an LGBT group, nobody would go to it, because if you go to it everyone would laugh. I wouldn't go to it if there was one just in case someone found out'* (Member of discussion group 1).

## Attending external groups and clubs

Survey respondents were also asked about the groups and clubs they go to and whether any of them are LGBT+ specific: 40% said yes, most of the clubs they attend are LGBT+ specific; 33% said none of the clubs they attended are LGBT+ specific, and 28% said that some are LGBT+ specific but not all. Two thirds of respondents therefore benefited from some form of LGBT+ specific provision.

Those that do not go to any groups or clubs were asked why (and respondents could provide more than one reason). Lack of interest was the most common reason provided (by 114 respondents), closely followed by a lack of available groups or clubs where they live (72 respondents) and/or a lack of confidence because of reasons that are not to do with their sexuality and/or gender identity (75). The least common reason was feeling unwelcome related to their sexuality and/or gender identity (14). There was also an open text response option for this question, which identified a range of additional reasons. These are summarised below, with some illustrative quotes included:

- restrictions related to the pandemic;
- social anxiety (e.g. 'I have anxiety and can't have the courage to go, if I get driven to a group I start to not breath and go purple');
- not interested ('not my thing')
- lack of opportunity ('haven't found anything'; 'I don't know how to join any')
- lack of time
- unnecessary ('I don't feel as though it's necessary and, despite being a lesbian... it doesn't really define me as a person').

Within the group discussions, young people were unanimously complimentary about the LGBT+ youth groups they were involved with, sometimes in explicit contrast to their home lives:

*'I come here every week unless I have something else on, it's a good place to meet new people who have similar issues and who are trans' (Member of discussion group 2)*

*'I feel like at home, you are constantly having to, like, argue for your identity, like you can't just exist whereas... here, and been surrounded by other gay people... you don't have to explain yourself, this is where I feel comfortable' (Member of discussion group 2)*

*'I went to my GP with various mental health [issues]... and she asked if I was gay and I said yeah, so she recommended me to [this group]... It felt more helpful than anything else she had to offer because everything else was like... that calm app, where it was just like meditate and that's it, and also she put me on the CAMHS waiting list but at the time it was still like a year or so until I was likely to get anything, but then with this group, it was like I could talk to someone within a month. This seemed a lot more accessible'* (Member of discussion group 1).

As this extract demonstrates, geographic accessibility can be an issue, and this young person was fortunate to have the support of their parents to enable them to attend:

*'I wish we had one of these groups close to my house, because this is like a half hour drive and my Dad's just sitting outside in a sleeping bag for two hours because it's cold... My mum does it in the Summer, but she doesn't drive in the dark so my Dad does it in the winter'* (Member of discussion group 1).

## **1-2-1 support**

Survey respondents were asked if they knew of any 1-2-1 support they could access specifically related to their sexuality and or/gender identity: 30% said yes, they have used something like this at least once; 35% said yes, but they had never used this support, and 35% said no, they don't have access to this support near them. Of those that had accessed 1-2-1 support, 81% agreed the support met their needs.

## Life improvements as LGBT+ young people

Survey respondents were asked about what could make their home life better as LGBT+ young people. Each statement was rated on a scale from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important).

Home	Mean
Recognition of my sexuality and/or gender identity by people I live with (e.g., using the correct names or pronouns)	3.9
Support, information, or advice available to people I live with	3.5
Support, information, or advice available to me to help with my home life	3.4

Recognition of their sexuality and/or gender identity by the people they live with had the highest mean of 3.9. Having support, information, and advice available for themselves, and to the people they live with, had slightly lower means of 3.4 and 3.5 respectively. Respondents were also able to provide open text responses, and their answers have been categorised and illustrated in the table below.

Q: As an LGBT+ young person, what could make your home life better?	
Response category	Example respondent quotes
Knowledge of LGBT+ identities for others/to increase understanding and acceptance <b>(x13)</b>	<p><i>'Information readily available in mainstream media for people about gender identity and the importance of respecting pronouns'</i></p> <p><i>'Less LGBTQ+ attacking from mainstream media (when people see stuff on the TV or newspaper, they repeat it back to me)'</i></p> <p><i>'A genuine understanding of the difficulties it entails to be a young LGBT person in a small town'</i></p> <p><i>'General acceptance of asexuals'</i></p>

<b>Q: As an LGBT+ young person, what could make your home life better?</b>	
Response category	Example respondent quotes
Knowledge of LGBT+ identities for parents and other family members/to help communication with family members <b>(x8)</b>	<p><i>'For family members to be more educated on and accepting of all sexualities and gender identities and to not be judgemental'</i></p> <p><i>'It would be great to have a way of explaining myself to an older person, like my grandmother, whom I also live with, but I don't think I can get through to her'</i></p> <p><i>'I would like resources for my parents'</i></p> <p><i>'Acceptance of my sexuality with family members, especially the older members'</i></p> <p><i>'Easily accessible parental services'</i></p>
Support from outside the home (e.g. community-based or from the NHS) <b>(x8)</b>	<p><i>'Support with dealing with lesbian bullying, assault, and sexual assault'</i></p> <p><i>'Better support for trans young people and their family'</i></p> <p><i>'A safe place outside home to go to'</i></p> <p><i>'Easily accessible youth services'</i></p> <p><i>'Mental health support from the NHS'</i></p>
School-based support and/or education <b>(x7)</b>	<p><i>'Support from schools without getting parents involved so you can come out to them in a safe environment'</i></p> <p><i>'Just general education and not defaulting to heterosexual... as the norm. More awareness and conversation of different identities is needed'</i></p> <p><i>'Proper responses to homophobia in academic environments'</i></p>

<b>Q: As an LGBT+ young person, what could make your home life better?</b>	
Response category	Example respondent quotes
Being respected <b>(x4)</b>	<p><i>'Not using homophobic language and slurs in my presence'</i></p> <p><i>'Being treated the same as other people'</i></p> <p><i>'Respect and common decency, to be treated like a human being'</i></p>
Other comments <b>(x1)</b>	<i>'Getting rid of gender norms'</i>

Whilst many comments above can broadly be described as a desire for increased knowledge, understanding and acceptance, it is worth noting that some individuals had more positive experiences in the home:

*'I am fortunate enough to live in a home where my single parent is also LGBTQ, and they talk to me and my sibling about our sexuality and identity, and allow us to express ourselves and feel safe'.*

Respondents were asked about what could make their school or college life better as LGBT+ young people.

<b>School or college</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Recognition of my sexuality and/or gender identity by school staff	3.9
Recognition of my sexuality and/or gender identity by other students	3.9
Support, information, or advice available to school staff	3.8
Support, information, or advice available to help me with my school/college life	3.5
For my school to promote local LGBT+ events (e.g., Pride or LGBT history month)	3.8

School or college	Mean
For my school to promote local LGBT+ youth groups and organisations	3.7
For my school to have lessons on LGBT+ people and history	4
For my school to have more inclusive sex and relationships education	4.1
For my school to show people that are similar to me	3.5
For my school to have facilities that include everyone (e.g., gender-neutral toilets)	4

The most important factor respondents said could improve their school or college experience was for their school or college to have more inclusive sex and relationships education (M = 4.1), which accords with much previous research on the importance of inclusive sex and relationships education (e.g. see Formby and Donovan 2020). This was closely followed by having facilities in school that include everyone (M = 4), and having lessons in school or college on LGBT+ people and history (M = 4). Example additional open text responses have been presented thematically below:

Q: As an LGBT+ young person, what could make your school or college life better?	
Response category	Example respondent quotes
Gender-affirming policies and practices (x19)	<p><i>'A clear way to come out and easily change stuff on the register without parents finding out'</i></p> <p><i>'Small changes like pronoun pins can make a difference and projects to raise money for gender-affirming products for trans students could be life saving'</i></p> <p><i>'Gender-neutral changing rooms/allowing transgender people to use their correct changing rooms'</i></p> <p><i>'Gender-neutral school uniform'</i></p>

**Q: As an LGBT+ young person, what could make your school or college life better?**

Response category	Example respondent quotes
	<p><i>'Gender-neutral toilets as well as gendered ones because some people might feel more comfortable in single gender toilets. Also sanitary bins in boys toilets because some boys have periods'</i></p> <p><i>'Not having to get parental permission for a name change'</i></p> <p><i>'School classes and years should begin with students introducing their names and pronouns'</i></p> <p><i>'Teachers to use gender-inclusive language, e.g. students and everyone instead of young ladies'</i></p> <p><i>'Unisex uniforms and PE [physical education] groups'</i></p> <p><i>'For the school to not discriminate against me on the basis of my gender assigned at birth. I had a detention when I was 13 for being in the 'wrong' lavatory and when I was 14 I was threatened with suspension for wearing earrings which was against the uniform code for the gender I was assigned at birth'</i></p>
<p>Responses to homophobia, biphobia and transphobia <b>(x9)</b></p>	<p><i>'Actually act on homophobia instead of being performative'</i></p> <p><i>'Clear policies and actions against homophobia and transphobia'</i></p> <p><i>'Education on how certain jokes, i.e. ones about gender/sexuality, can be harmful'</i></p> <p><i>'For abusive bullies to be dealt with'</i></p> <p><i>'For my teachers to step-in when homophobia/transphobia occurs'</i></p>

<b>Q: As an LGBT+ young person, what could make your school or college life better?</b>	
Response category	Example respondent quotes
	<p><i>'For the school to be more strict about homophobia/having some kind of system where we can report it, and taking it more seriously'</i></p> <p><i>'Not taking homophobic opinions as 'debates''</i></p> <p><i>'Teach the history and meaning behind slurs and why they are so harmful'</i></p>
Awareness-raising, education and/or other activities for staff and/or pupils <b>(x5)</b>	<p><i>'Fundraisers for charities like Stonewall and education all year round that's accepting and inclusive, not just in Pride month'</i></p> <p><i>'More education for staff members to help them recognise and prevent homophobic and transphobic remarks from other students'</i></p> <p><i>'Emphasis on broad and inclusive sex education! Received nothing of the sort'</i></p> <p><i>'School should put more effort into educating non-LGBT+ students about LGBT+ issues and struggles in an attempt to remove stigma around LGBT+ individuals'</i></p> <p><i>'To ensure students that do not accept those that are 'different' to them get the support they need to learn to accept others'</i></p>
Support for LGBT+ young people <b>(x2)</b>	<p><i>'Support for dealing with bullying, assault, and sexual assault within the lesbian community'</i></p> <p><i>'To have an event once every week for LGBT+ people to attend to talk about their life and their struggles'</i></p>
Less normativities <b>(x1)</b>	<p><i>'[I] just need people to not assume straight and cis[gender] is the default (I'm out but it doesn't</i></p>

**Q: As an LGBT+ young person, what could make your school or college life better?**

Response category	Example respondent quotes
	<i>even cross their minds to ask so I have to tell them over and over again)</i>

The largest group of comments above clearly relate to gender-affirming policies and practices in school and college, followed by responses to homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, and awareness-raising, education and other activities for (non-LGBT+) staff and pupils. These suggestions all point to ways that young people believe schools and colleges could/should become more LGBT-inclusive environments.

Within group discussions about what could make life better for LGBT+ young people in the future, more education (and earlier) was one suggestion to improve attitudes and awareness:

*'Education at a younger age, like primary school kind of age' (Member of discussion group 2).*

Other suggestions included responding to prejudice more within schools, and practices to support young people's gender identity:

*'Challenge more, like homophobia and stuff like that' (Member of discussion group 2)*

*'There's one school at the start of the year where they'd give you like a card with preferred name and pronouns, and [ask] like can we talk to your parents about this or not, and it helped some people for obvious reasons... [be]cause people stop misgendering you a lot more when I managed to get my name changed on the register and stuff, because hearing people saying it so constantly kind of normalised it a lot more' (Member of discussion group 2).*

Survey respondents were also asked about what could make the health services they access better as LGBT+ young people.

<b>Health services</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Recognition of my sexuality and/or gender identity by health workers and services	3.9
Support, information, or advice available to health workers and services	3.9
Support, information, or advice available to me to help with my health	3.7
For health settings to show people that are similar to me	3.4
For health settings to have facilities that include everyone	3.9
Better access to specialist services	4
Having services closes to where I live	3.5

The most important factor respondents said could improve their experiences of health services as LGBT+ young people was to have better access to specialist services (M = 4), for health settings to have facilities that include everyone (M = 3.9), for health workers and services to better recognise their sexuality and/or gender identity (M = 3.9), and for more support, information, and advice available to health workers and services (M = 3.9). Again, respondents were able to provide open text responses here, and answers have been categorised and illustrated below.

<b>Q: As an LGBT+ young person, what could make health services better?</b>	
<b>Response category</b>	<b>Example respondent quotes</b>
Fair treatment/better understanding/LGBT+ 'friendly' services <b>(x4)</b>	<p><i>'Having less biased professionals working there so I worry less about homophobia which is common in my area due to a strong sense of religion and tradition'</i></p> <p><i>'Don't hire bigots'</i></p> <p><i>'For GPs to understand basic trans terminology and to be trained in referrals to gender clinics for trans people'</i></p>

<b>Q: As an LGBT+ young person, what could make health services better?</b>	
Response category	Example respondent quotes
	<i>'Wider promotion of LGBT services/LGBT friendly services'</i>
<b>Policy/legal change (x4)</b>	<i>'For the laws on LGBT+ people to be changed (having to wait until 16 for hormones, etc)'</i> <i>'Ban conversion therapy'</i> <i>'Ditch the GIC [gender identity clinic] concept and let trans people get hormones prescribed by going to their GP, just like cis[gender] people on hormones'</i> <i>'More funding for gender clinics and other LGBTQ+ healthcare facilities'</i>
<b>Pronoun use (x3)</b>	<i>'To be offered pronouns upon meeting somebody'</i> <i>'Asking for pronouns and name'</i>

Whilst comments again often related to knowledge and understanding, there was also feedback clearly linked to current policy 'debate' and advocacy concern, for instance about conversion therapy.

Respondents were asked about what could make their work life better as LGBT+ young people.

<b>Work life</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Recognition of my sexuality and/or gender identity from people I work with	3.2
Recognition of my sexuality and/or gender identity from my manager(s)	3.3
Support, information or advice available to people I work with	3.1
Support, information or advice available to my managers(s)	3.1

<b>Work life</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Support, information or advice available to me to help with my work life	2.9
For my workplace to show people that are similar to me	2.9
For my workplace to have facilities that include everyone	3.3

There was little variation between the means when asked what factors could improve their working life as young LGBT+ people. Recognition of their sexuality and/or gender identity from their manager (s) (M = 3.3), along with having facilities in their workplace that include everyone (M = 3.3) were narrowly the most important factors. The small number of additional open text responses on this topic indicate a variety of opinions, from those wishing for more diversity, to those wishing diversity was less acknowledged:

*'For the workplace and teams to be more diverse with a mix of all people and people similar to me'*

*'I don't think someone's sexuality is relevant at work. All that matters is whether you are good at your job'.*

Finally, respondents were asked about what could make life in their local community better as young LGBT+ people.

<b>Community</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Recognition of my sexuality and/or gender identity by people within my local community	3.8
Recognition of my sexuality and/or gender identity by people who I socialise with	4
Support, information or advice available to people within my local community	3.8
Support, information or advice available to people I socialise with	3.7
Support, information or advice available to me to help my social life and/or life in my community	3.5
For my community to have more LGBT+ groups and activities	3.7

<b>Community</b>	<b>Mean</b>
For my community to show people that are similar to me	3.4
For my community to make sure there are facilities in spaces where I spend my time	3.9

The most important factor respondents said that could improve their life in the community was to have recognition of their sexuality and/or gender identity by people who they socialise with (M = 4). This was closely followed by having inclusive facilities in the community (M = 3.9). All other factors had a mean score of between 3.4 and 3.8. Respondents were once again able to provide open text responses here; their answers have been categorised and illustrated below.

<b>Q: As an LGBT+ young person, what could make your social life or life in your local community better?</b>	
<b>Response category</b>	<b>Example respondent quotes</b>
Mutual respecting and acceptance (sometimes, though not always, explicitly linked to faith) <b>(x4)</b>	<p><i>'The people who hate me the most ARE THE LGBT community. I believe. Let me believe in peace'</i></p> <p><i>'Women and girls are simply not safe anywhere near Muslim communities. The intimidation and harassment I face every day is from Muslim men in my area. This is because I'm a woman, it would be even worse if they knew I was a lesbian'</i></p> <p><i>'Less religiously-inspired homophobia'</i></p>
LGBT+ education/service provision for young people <b>(x3)</b>	<p><i>'Teaching kids that it isn't okay to call names or assume (I have been called a lesbo before)'</i></p> <p><i>'To have a counselling lesson group for LGBT+ kids'</i></p> <p><i>'Discreet LGBTQ+ clubs, such as being marketed as a drama group for example'</i></p>
Gender-neutral visibility <b>(x1)</b>	<i>'Gender-neutral promotions/advertisements'</i>

<b>Q: As an LGBT+ young person, what could make your social life or life in your local community better?</b>	
Response category	Example respondent quotes
Peer support <b>(x1)</b>	<i>'Being able to talk with other LGBTQ+ PoC [people of colour] in real life as it'll make me comfortable knowing I'm not truly on my own here'</i>
Other comments <b>(x1)</b>	<i>'Stop the LGB and especially trans attention-seeking and virtue-signalling. I'm a woman who prefers the sexual company of other women. In every other respect, I'm just another person trying to get on with life. For the most part LGB and trans activists make this harder not easier'</i>

Although not large in volume, some of the above comments suggest that faith can sometimes lead to tension and unwelcome experiences for LGBT+ people, also evidenced in other LGBT+ research (Formby 2017). Comments here indicate that some LGBT+ people who believe feel that they receive prejudice from other (non-believing) LGBT+ people. Some respondents also demonstrated some problematic beliefs in describing Muslim people as if they are all the same, although noting this is not to dismiss how they felt. Similarly, one of the perceptions above links to the current social context where public discourse has seemingly resulted in trans people being somehow viewed as a 'threat' to (cisgender) women (Pearce et al 2020), perhaps resulting in this individual's view of LGBT+ activism.

The penultimate question of the survey gave respondents the opportunity to reflect on what they thought was the best thing about being LGBT+. Answers have been grouped and illustrated in the table below (though it is worth noting that some of these groupings are closely linked and potentially overlapping). A large number of examples have deliberately been provided to prioritise young people's voices.

**Q: Finally, what do you think the best thing is about being LGBT+?**

Response category	Example respondent quotes
<p>Sense of community/belonging/network in common, feeling part of a 'big family' <b>(x113)</b></p>	<p><i>'Being able to have shared experiences with a whole community of people and always knowing that someone else is going through the same thing as you'</i></p> <p><i>'I have gotten to know so many amazing people because of my sexuality, and the LGBTQ+ community is very accepting and I feel safe with LGBTQ people'</i></p> <p><i>'Being myself and accepted in a community where there are people who are like me and don't make fun of me'</i></p> <p><i>'Having something to identify with and an instant support network'</i></p> <p><i>'The LGBT+ community can be such a loving and accepting group to be a part of, particularly online. I just love the inclusively and acceptance we all show to each other'</i></p> <p><i>'The community (especially online) who can support each other'</i></p> <p><i>'I think the best thing is that we are a big community and we help and support each other'</i></p> <p><i>'I think the best thing is there's so many amazing and supportive people in the community... My personal experience is that almost every LGBTQIA+ person I've met has been so kind and amazing!'</i></p> <p><i>'The fact that it is easy to bond with other people in the community'</i></p>

**Q: Finally, what do you think the best thing is about being LGBT+?**

Response category	Example respondent quotes
	<p><i>'Being able to meet others who have similar experiences, it makes me feel less alone in what I'm going through, and builds a safe community'</i></p> <p><i>'I love engaging with the community on social media. It's a group of open minded and accepting people and I love it'</i></p> <p><i>'The sense of belonging and community I have found through making friends with other people who identify as LGBT+'</i></p> <p><i>'I feel like I am part of a group, and everyone is loving and accepting so I feel like I belong in something'</i></p> <p><i>'The community is very welcoming and supportive, nobody will judge you and you won't feel lonely because you're a part of something that makes you comfortable'</i></p> <p><i>'How the internet can bring me together with people like me'</i></p> <p><i>'Feeling like a belong somewhere, as if I have a family of people who are all similar to me'</i></p> <p><i>'When the LGBTQ+ community get together there's a sense of belonging and it's amazing'</i></p> <p><i>'The sense of group identity and ability to connect with people who I never would've been able to meet if not for our overlap in identity and goals'</i></p>

**Q: Finally, what do you think the best thing is about being LGBT+?**

Response category	Example respondent quotes
	<p><i>'I'm part of a big, mostly loving family who I feel I can turn to in times of need'</i></p> <p><i>'The best thing about being LGBTQ+ is finding a community and a family, a chosen family who loves unconditionally for who you are'</i></p> <p><i>'It's nice to be able to relate to people knowing that you have something so special in common, we're like a big strong family'</i></p> <p><i>'The community... I feel like there are so many nice and inclusive people, and also how there are so many people out there just wanting to help others, especially young people, figuring out who they are, on social media but also other places'</i></p> <p><i>'Having a family of people that aren't related to you but understand the struggles you go through'</i></p> <p><i>'Most people in the community are very open to everyone and will often go out of their way to help you feel welcome and proud of who you are'</i></p> <p><i>'I like the LGBT+ community and acceptance in it. Forming closer friendships with other LGBT+ people we are able to find people we feel safe and accepted with, and find people who can empathise with the struggles we face'</i></p>

<b>Q: Finally, what do you think the best thing is about being LGBT+?</b>	
Response category	Example respondent quotes
	<i>'The diverse community and the wider levels of activism that I feel it's opened me up to. I've met really valuable people because of it, and they've been really important to me'</i>
Being/feeling able to express myself <b>(x64)</b>	<p><i>'To be free to express myself... I'm pretty fantastic!'</i></p> <p><i>'Just being myself and not having to pretend to be someone I'm not anymore'</i></p> <p><i>'Being able to express myself however I choose'</i></p> <p><i>'Being who I am and able to educate other people on who I am without hiding'</i></p> <p><i>'The best thing about being LGBT+ is that you get to be yourself and love who you want'</i></p> <p><i>'To be able to be who you really want to be, to not feel trapped or uncomfortable in the body you're stuck with for life'</i></p> <p><i>'Having a clear understanding of who I am, by being allowed to express myself and explore through gender expression'</i></p> <p><i>'I'm comfortable with who I am and I accept who I am and that is a great feeling to have'</i></p> <p><i>'I've finally been able to express and accept myself without denial'</i></p>
Developing friendships/relationships with people 'like me' <b>(x55)</b>	<i>'Having an LGBT group of friends who support you and relate to you'</i>

**Q: Finally, what do you think the best thing is about being LGBT+?**

Response category	Example respondent quotes
	<p><i>'Being able to finally find people to relate to'</i></p> <p><i>'It's a similarity with people so it's probably easier to make friends with other people in the community'</i></p> <p><i>'You can build a group of life-long friends within the community'</i></p> <p><i>'Being able to meet other LGBT+ people in online spaces and being able to feel understood and make friends with people who are like me and accepting of me'</i></p> <p><i>'Being able to socialise and make friends with people you wouldn't necessarily otherwise – it's really fun to meet new people with similar interests'</i></p> <p><i>'Meeting other queer people and being able to relate to them and enjoy their company because we are all alike in a way'</i></p> <p><i>'My amazing girlfriend; she's worth all of the internalised homophobia and even if I lose my family, I know I'll find my family in her'</i></p>
<p>Feeling accepted and/or understood <b>(x51)</b></p>	<p><i>'I like being accepted by my friends, and feeling happy when people use my correct name and pronouns!'</i></p> <p><i>'My family and friends accept me, and the world is more accepting than it used to be'</i></p>

<b>Q: Finally, what do you think the best thing is about being LGBT+?</b>	
Response category	Example respondent quotes
	<i>'That most LGBT+ people are all accepting and we can listen to each other without judgement'</i>
<b>Sense of freedom (x43)</b>	<p><i>'Having the freedom to be who I want to be without the boundaries a lot of cis het people put up for themselves'</i></p> <p><i>'I have the chance of being who I want to be with no restrictions'</i></p> <p><i>'I get to feel free and be myself'</i></p> <p><i>'You can be free and follow your own heart no matter what anyone says'</i></p> <p><i>'Being free from societal pressures now that I'm free'</i></p> <p><i>'Freedom to love anyone'</i></p> <p><i>'It's cool that I'm not held back by the restraints of gender in who I like, and even my own gender'</i></p> <p><i>'Not having a box and not having any expectations or surprises'</i></p> <p><i>'Being able to love who you love without having to obey traditional social norms'</i></p> <p><i>'Being able to experience love with people I fully trust'</i></p> <p><i>'You can be who you want to be and love who you want to love'</i></p>
<b>Feeling loved/supported (x39)</b>	<p><i>'Knowing my friends and family support me'</i></p> <p><i>'All the support from my friends'</i></p>

<b>Q: Finally, what do you think the best thing is about being LGBT+?</b>	
Response category	Example respondent quotes
	<p><i>'Struggling as we do with recognition and acceptance brings us together. We're incredibly kind and empathetic individuals who are able to relate to each other and support each other through our difficulties'</i></p> <p><i>'Being accepted by other members who understand and support me'</i></p> <p><i>'Having an LGBT group of friends who support you and relate to you'</i></p> <p><i>'Having a support group of friends that are all welcoming and knowing you can trust them when it comes to specific issues regarding my sexuality'</i></p> <p><i>'I love the closeness of everyone in the community and how everyone supports each other really well'</i></p>
Learning about/developing myself <b>(x17)</b>	<p><i>'It's such a freeing diverse group, I haven't been out long but I feel much more grounded and I think I'm learning more about myself and others'</i></p> <p><i>'The community... I think it has made me more self-reflective and compassionate'</i></p> <p><i>'I can understand myself more'</i></p> <p><i>'Truly knowing who I am, and that no one can take away from me the beauty of my existence'</i></p> <p><i>'I feel it has taught me to be less judgemental of others'</i></p>

<b>Q: Finally, what do you think the best thing is about being LGBT+?</b>	
Response category	Example respondent quotes
	<p><i>'Being able to educate myself and others about sexualities and genders that do or don't apply to me personally'</i></p> <p><i>'It has made me open-minded and willing to accept others more so than a non-LGBT+ person I believe'</i></p>
<b>Being/feeling unique (x16)</b>	<p><i>'Being unique and able to be myself'</i></p> <p><i>'It makes you feel unique, and part of something that lets you celebrate diversity and who you are'</i></p> <p><i>'I can be myself and be unique!'</i></p> <p><i>'Makes me different which I value greatly'</i></p> <p><i>'I have a unique life experience that I can use to help others. I've come a long way since coming out as trans and I struggled a lot but I have a unique perspective on the world that cis people will never understand and I think that's pretty cool'</i></p>
<b>Pride-related (x12)</b>	<p><i>'Being proud of how far we've come'</i></p> <p><i>'How people come together to celebrate their differences with pride'</i></p> <p><i>'Being proud in myself and not letting others get in the way of that'</i></p> <p><i>'Being able to be proud and express yourself'</i></p> <p><i>'The people you meet that are like you and have had similar experiences that make you feel more comfortable and proud'</i></p>

<b>Q: Finally, what do you think the best thing is about being LGBT+?</b>	
Response category	Example respondent quotes
A sense of inclusion <b>(x8)</b>	<i>'The whole community is very inclusive, and everyone looks out for each other'</i>  <i>'The inclusiveness of LGBT people, I've never met more understanding people'</i>
Flag-related <b>(x2)</b>	<i>'The colourful flags'</i>  <i>'The flag is very nice!'</i>

Whilst the above table demonstrates clear overlap between categories, and therefore the category quantities should be treated with some caution, it is evident that many respondents felt a sense of community and/or belonging with other LGBT+ people (see Formby 2019 for further discussion). This also featured in one of our group discussions, with a young person commenting:

*'I think the reason why I get on with LGBT people myself, rather than cisgender heterosexual people, it's because they have similar experiences and they kind of understand, and a lot of them are more accepting than [heterosexual] cisgender people because they educated themselves and had the same kind of identity crisis... it's nice to kind of have those people around you, that have the same experiences and to share your morals and stuff'* (Member of discussion group 2).

It is noticeable that some of the sense of community identified above was specifically related to online spaces, which points to the potentially positive side of social media and other 'virtual' interactions, which are not always understood or acknowledged in discussions about young people (Formby 2019, Formby and Donovan 2020, Hiebert and Kortés-Miller 2021). Similar themes also emerged in our group discussions, which included young people talking about the advantages of online spaces for finding and maintaining LGBT+ friendships. As they explained, these were often found through particular fan pages or Twitter hashtags:

*'A lot of my, like, online friends are LGBT+'* (Member of discussion group 3)

*'When I was younger, I didn't have any friends, and now I've made so many online, like when I was like 15 etc, I had no friends in school, and I just made a ton online, and there are so many people that are out online, but can't be in real life, so it's easier to connect online'* (Member of discussion group 3)

*'My social life very much consists of one very large [social media group]who are all pretty nice... it's like almost 2000 [people] but it's run by this one person that my friend knows, so I find it much easier than just in a group of random [people]... My friend knows the person who owns it and he was very worried about me at one point, so he put me in this [group] so I had people to talk to... it's quite helpful because they're like, there's like no-one older than 20 in it, so it's not like people miles older than me, and a lot of them are studying psychology and stuff so its quite fun'* (Member of discussion group 1)

*'All of my online friends, we're all friends because we listen to the same podcast... and I have not met a single cis het person who has listened to this podcast'* (Member of discussion group 1).

In short, whilst being young and LGBT+ can be a lonely and isolating/isolated experience for some young people, finding other (young) LGBT+ people can also be a source of support, friendship, and affirmation, as the comments above vividly demonstrate. Although some respondents had only positive things to say about the LGBT+ community that they felt or experienced – which is important in a context of often negative or gloomy portrayals of LGBT+ youth (Airtton 2013, Formby 2015, Monk 2011) – it is important to remember that this is not universal (Formby 2017), and indeed some young people could not identify a 'best thing' about being LGBT+:

*'Not many positives. We have our own communities, but it can be toxic for some genders or sexualities, e.g. not accepting bisexuality... I've not been welcomed or really included in the community... I hate being afraid my family will hurt me or won't get it. I'm so scared if disappointing everyone and not being the golden child I was meant to be. I don't want to ruin my relationship with my Mum anymore and I'm so scared'.*

The final question of the survey asked respondents if there was anything else they felt was important or that we have missed, or if they wanted to tell us about anything else, before the pandemic or currently. Responses

were very varied, and have been illustrated in the table below. Again, a relatively large number of examples have been included to showcase young people’s voices.

<b>Q: If there is anything else you feel is important that we have missed, or if you want to tell us about anything else, before the pandemic or currently, please use this space.</b>	
Response category	Example respondent quotes
Access to health and care services	<p><i>'For most LGBTQ+ teens, access to counselling and gender identity clinics and mental health stuff is really limited and difficult to get... The waiting lists are endless and it means that for teens with unsupportive parents, that stuff is even more difficult to get... trans and LGBT teens are dying because of it... Having to wait two years for an assessment doesn't work'</i></p> <p><i>'Gender identity clinic waiting list/times - 3 years. Unbearable and makes life really hard'</i></p> <p><i>'NHS health services use a lot of gendered language in letters, paperwork, conversations. In most appointments where I've mentioned LGBTQ+ I've had to educate them'</i></p> <p><i>'NHS trans services are absolutely appalling. Life-saving care has extreme wait times and at every corner trans people are forced to jump hurdles to 'prove' their transness. There is no longer a single surgeon in the UK that offers FTM bottom procedures and there are few top surgeons on the NHS. It shouldn't have to take me upwards of 5 years to get to be myself... The government can preach about LGBT suicide figures but if they don't make changes, they're a big part of the problem'</i></p>

	<p><i>'As a disabled person, I am completely reliant on a carer to access the outside world and any potential service. It would be great to know a list of carers in my local area with an understanding and willingness to work with LGBT+ disabled people'</i></p>
<p>Access to community/LGBT+ spaces</p>	<p><i>'I have only recently come out, I have a small group of LGTBQ+ friends at school and a very supportive family, but as I get older it might be nice to learn more about the community and that is very limited where I live'</i></p> <p><i>'More monitoring/construction of online spaces run by established organisations and promotion of these spaces in non LGBTQ-exclusive spaces e.g. school. Make them available and encouraged for those who are questioning/those who want to learn more'</i></p> <p><i>'I'd love to see like an LGBT cafe in communities since we only have nightclubs which are highly sexualized'</i></p>
<p>Education/school-based support</p>	<p><i>'During secondary school I received no sex education regarding LGBTQ... I feel this is a big issue with LGBTQ youths as many are unaware how to keep themselves safe and healthy since we are never taught'</i></p> <p><i>'During the pandemic, I moved 45 minutes away to a new town and a new school. I almost immediately spotted the differences in the way people acted or thought about LGBT+ people. In my current school, everyone is welcoming and accepting and lots is done by staff to help LGBT+ students and educate others on their history and struggles. However, my old school was terrible for me, because everyone had certain stereotypes stuck in their head about what people should look like or should be, it was a very toxic environment for me to be 'out' in when even my own friends yelled slurs at me just because I had a pixie cut at one point. I think that education on LGBT+ stereotypes and how they are dreadfully</i></p>

	<p><i>wrong is very important to cover too as I wouldn't want someone else to feel the way I used to do about myself in my old school just for looking or being a little different'</i></p> <p><i>'I think it's very important to have lots more education on LGBTQ+ identities, I feel as if there is none of this done in schools. If any, it's the bare minimum of posters or one lesson'</i></p> <p><i>'Support at school - they say they will help young LGBTQ+ students but then proceed to tell them they are too young to make these decisions'</i></p>
Gender-neutral facilities	<i>'The main thing I would love to have anywhere is gender-neutral toilets as I feel that could massively impact trans people or anybody under the non-binary umbrella'</i>
Not 'out'/not feeling able to be 'open'	<p><i>'I'm not out and it's scary. Two of my best friends are LGBTQ+ but I think that they might think I'm just being attention-seeking'</i></p> <p><i>'Personally, I feel uncomfortable holding hands with a significant other... as a risk would be us getting shouted at or getting told we were going to hell which has happened before'</i></p>
Mental ill-health	<p><i>'Many of us who aren't accepted by relatives or other people in general have formed a mental health problem such as anxiety or depression'</i></p> <p><i>'I have experienced a lot of homophobia and hatred directed at me through both primary school and high school. It has made it extremely difficult for me to accept myself and has caused severe mental health issues which I have had to work very hard to overcome'</i></p>

<p>Prejudice and inequalities among LGBT+ people</p>	<p><i>'A major problem that doesn't get addressed within the LGBTQ+ community is the hatred towards certain sexualities, such as bi erasure and gay stereotypes... people should be able to live, love and be addressed as they please. This has been going on before the pandemic and is still going on currently'</i></p> <p><i>'LGBT individuals with disabilities - we encounter more significant difficulties due to ableism. Our disabilities mean that people do not take our identities seriously, or believe that we have a lack of understanding of ourselves. It is infuriating, particularly when there are higher concentrations of LGBT youth who are also disabled and/or neurodivergent... We deserve to be taken just as seriously as abled people... Why on earth does being disabled somehow mean that society looks down upon us, holding prejudices that we are less intelligent or mature? ...If our divergence does affect our identities, then STUDY it, dedicate RESOURCES [to it]... Most importantly, when you are exploring these potential links, gain input from those with disabilities themselves'</i></p> <p><i>'LGBT individuals of colour - we deserve support, since our communities tend to have less access to resources which could promote education... It's absolutely abhorrent: people take our hardships and use them as an excuse to be racist... and use racist ideas such as claiming that our cultures are inherently less accepting, when in fact, it's simply that our parents, grandparents, great grandparents, never had access to the type of education surrounding these topics... LGBT youth from minority groups and their communities should be able to access well-informed support without their racist peers deeming them less accepting than themselves'</i></p>
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Perhaps not surprisingly, the above comments suggest a shared concern among young people about access to appropriate services, spaces, and school-based support. This was supported by group discussion participants who identified frustrations with mechanisms to support legal

name changes in the UK, which could be problematic for those living on a low income:

*'That's another stupid thing, like why do you need to pay to get your name changed?' (Member of discussion group 2)*

Comments in the table above also highlight the importance of taking an intersectional lens when thinking about LGBT+ young people, so as not to assume all experiences are alike. This is also true of wider research with LGBT+ people, which has evidenced experiences of prejudice and inequality from and among LGBT+ people (Formby 2020).

## Additional analyses

In part with the above in mind, the survey data was further explored using ethnicity and those eligible for free school meals (FSM) as stratification variables.

### Ethnicity

Due to low subsample sizes amongst respondents who identified with an ethnicity other than white, an analysis of individual ethnic differences was not possible. However, we have undertaken a comparison of survey responses for white and 'non-white' respondents. Please note this grouping is not used to suggest that all non-white ethnicities have the same experiences; as such, the findings from this analysis should be interpreted with caution. A more comprehensive examination of ethnic differences would require further exploration with a larger and representative sample.

There were no large differences between white and non-white participants in relation to whether they are 'out' in various different settings. The only difference to note is that there was a higher proportion of non-white respondents who said they were 'out' to everyone in their local community (52.8%) when compared to white respondents (22.4%).

There were no noticeable differences between white and non-white respondents in relation to perceived 'acceptance' of their gender and/or sexuality in various different settings.

There were some differences between participants' perceived levels of safety and 'welcomeness' both before and after the pandemic, with non-white respondents being more likely to report feeling unsafe or unwelcome where they live, compared with white respondents. Before the pandemic, 51.6% of non-white respondents said they felt unsafe where they live compared to 22.4% of white respondents. Similarly, 46.9% of non-white respondents said they felt unwelcome where they live compared to 28.5% of white respondents. Non-white respondents were also more likely to report feeling unsafe or unwelcome where they worked, compared with white respondents. Before the pandemic, 61.3% of non-white respondents said they felt unsafe at work compared to just 14.1% of white respondents. After the pandemic, these observed differences remain almost the same. However, when participants were asked if they thought their sexuality and/or gender identity was the main

reason for their lack of safety and 'welcomeness', there were no large differences between white and non-white respondents. One might tentatively infer that racism is therefore more key than homophobia, biphobia or transphobia here.

Lastly, participants were asked if they were being treated badly because of their sexuality and/or gender identity, would they tell a range of different people. Perhaps surprisingly, non-white respondents had a consistently higher percentage of respondents (when compared to white respondents) who felt comfortable telling a police officer (43.3% compared to 15.9%), a member of staff at school or college (64.7% compared to 46.5%), a manager at work (81% compared to 61.8%), and a healthcare worker in a healthcare setting (64% compared to 35.7%).

There were no other large differences observed across the remaining questions asked in the survey.

## FSM

Participants who reported receiving free school meals (FSM) were consistently more likely to be 'out' compared with non-FSM respondents. A majority of FSM respondents reported that they were 'out' in all settings, whilst for non-FSM respondents, a majority reported to be 'out' just with the people they lived with. The difference between FSM and non-FSM responses was largest when referring to being 'out' to everyone in the local community (59% compared to 14.4%), then at work (73.4% compared to 29.2%), at school or college (66.4% compared to 42.5%), in health settings (67.8% compared to 47.7%), and with people they lived with (62.9% compared to 52.1%).

A similar picture emerges for perceived 'acceptance' of respondents' sexuality and/or gender identity with people they live with (45.7% compared to 33.3%), at school or college (40% compared to 21.4%), at work (44.3% compared to 30.8%), and in the local community (33.6% compared to 11.9%).

There were no large observable differences regarding perceived levels of safety and 'welcomeness' between those that receive FSM and those that do not.

Participants were asked if they were being treated badly because of their sexuality and/or gender identity, would they tell a range of different people. Respondents receiving FSM again had a consistently higher

percentage of respondents who felt comfortable telling a police officer (39% compared to 13.9%), a member of staff at school or college (65.7% compared to 44.6%), a manager at work (85.7% compared to 57.9%), and a healthcare worker in a healthcare setting (59.2% compared to 34.9%).

## Concluding summary

This research explored what it was like being a young LGBT+ person (aged 13-19) living in England in 2021-2022, including in relation to home life, education, accessing health services, work life, and life in the community. Over 900 young LGBT+ people responded to our survey, and three discussion groups took place with LGBT+ young people to examine these issues in more detail. In summary, the report has identified the following key points:

- There are ongoing issues about whether young people feel able to be 'out' about their identities within school, with common negative experiences of school life as an LGBT+ young person reported to us – including school staff members unnecessarily, and inappropriately, 'outing' young people to their parents (see also Formby and Woodiwiss 2023);
- Young people also expressed concern about LGBT+ invisibility in the formal curriculum, and issues about tokenistic and/or inappropriate representations of LGBT+ people within school spaces;
- In just a minority of cases, school was praised, and identified as a safer space than home;
- Echoing other research (Formby and Woodiwiss 2022), college experiences were often said to be more positive than those at school;
- Less than half of the young people who responded to our survey who were out felt 'accepted' by everyone, whether at home, in education, at work, or in their local community. Whilst settings vary, young LGBT+ people clearly do not feel, or anticipate, universal acceptance;
- Young LGBT+ people's identities clearly intersect with other aspects of their lives, with faith – as an example – often influencing parental responses to their child's gender identity. However, those working with, or advocating for, LGBT+ young people should not assume that those from faith backgrounds always have poor experiences, though our data suggested that balancing an LGBT+ identity and personal faith can sometimes be challenging (see also Formby 2019);
- Feeling unsafe and/or unwelcome in various settings was often linked to sexuality and/or gender identity (by over two-thirds of young LGBT+ people in their homes, and by over three-quarters of young people at school or college, and in their local community);
- Young LGBT+ people were critical of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), with comments identifying problems with access delays, CAMHS staff lacking understanding about specific issues

young LGBT+ people might face, and LGBT+ young people being referred out of CAMHS provision based on an assumption that they need (and can get) specialist support elsewhere (see also Formby and Woodiwiss 2022);

- Supporting previous research (Formby 2015, Formby and Donovan 2020, Formby and Woodiwiss 2022), young people involved in the research were overwhelmingly positive about LGBT+ youth groups they were involved with, sometimes in explicit contrast to their home lives;
- Outside these contexts, young people frequently called for improved knowledge, understanding and acceptance, including within their home environments, and within schools/colleges;
- More specifically, the most important factor survey respondents said that could improve their school or college experiences was to have more inclusive sex and relationships education (see also Formby and Donovan 2020), which has particular policy relevance given the recent announcement on the review of the (new) relationships and sex education curriculum;
- When given the opportunity to reflect on what they thought was the best thing about being LGBT+, many young people talked about experiencing a sense of community and/or belonging with other (LGBT+) people 'like them' (see also Formby 2019), particularly in online spaces.

Whilst some of the findings of this research may not be surprising, this report nevertheless highlights the importance of listening to young people, and of acknowledging the nuances and complexities of their lives. Although being young and LGBT+ can be lonely and isolating for some, other young LGBT+ people can also be a source of support, friendship, and affirmation, emphasising that to be young and LGBT+ is not only, or always, a negative experience. This also demonstrates how valuable the provision of LGBT-specific youth services are, as they often facilitate the friendships and peer support that strengthens LGBT+ wellbeing.

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## Appendix: Survey respondent demographic information

<b>How would you describe your sexuality?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Lesbian	185	20.2
Gay	102	11.1
Bisexual or Pansexual	317	34.6
Queer	57	6.2
Asexual	34	3.7
Questioning	45	4.9
Heterosexual	46	5
Prefer not to say	48	5.2
None of the above (I identify as...)	83	9.1
Total	917	100

<b>How would you describe your gender?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	199	22.9
Female	377	43.4
Genderfluid	47	5.4
Non-binary	116	13.4
Trans	54	6.2
Intersex	2	0.2
Questioning	62	7.1
Prefer not to say	11	1.3
None of the above (I identify as...)	45	4.9
Total	868	100

<b>Is your gender identity now the same as the gender you were given when you were born?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	518	56.6
No	303	33.1
I'm not sure	79	8.6
Prefer not to say	15	1.6
Total	915	100

<b>Were you brought up in a particular religion?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Christian	317	34.6
Muslim	53	5.8
Hindu	11	1.2
Buddhist	4	0.4
Jewish	13	1.4
Sikh	14	1.5
No religion	420	45.9
None of the above	83	9.1
Total	915	100

<b>What is your religion now?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Christian	170	18.6
Muslim	42	4.6
Hindu	10	1.1
Buddhist	6	0.7
Jewish	9	1
Sikh	10	1.1
No religion	560	61.3
None of the above	106	11.6
Total	913	100

<b>At school do you receive free school meals?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	250	27.3
No	603	65.9
Not sure	49	5.4
Prefer not to say	13	1.4
Total	915	100

<b>At home, do you have any caring responsibilities?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	270	29.5
No	543	59.4
Not sure	72	7.9
Prefer not to say	29	3.2
Total	914	100

<b>Do you have a disability?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	293	32
No	423	46.2
Not sure	164	17.9
Prefer not to say	36	3.9
Total	916	100

<b>How would you describe your ethnicity?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Arab	34	3.7
Asian	43	4.7
Black	22	2.4
Chinese	13	1.4
Gypsy/Romany	8	0.9
Mixed heritage	39	4.3
Traveller of Irish heritage	19	2.1
White	692	75.8
Any other ethnicity	16	1.8
Not sure	14	1.5
Prefer not to say	13	1.4
Total	913	100