



Life for LGBT young people in Dumfries & Galloway

Schools Survey 2020





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Introduction

Since 2015, LGBT Youth Scotland in Dumfries and Galloway have carried out an annual survey in order to understand more about young peoples' views on the experiences of LGBT young people living within the region.

The survey development, circulation, analysis and report are carried out by a student during a 3rd year social work degree placement. A questionnaire is circulated to schools who agree to participate, asking young people about their own experience in secondary schools and requesting recommendations of how to best improve the experience of LGBT young people in Dumfries and Galloway.

This year, the report is based on the results of fourteen schools with 371 young people completing the questionnaire. Two other schools had intended to take part, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic we were unable to gather their findings. This would have brought the total of schools participating to 16, the largest number of schools participating and responses we have gathered since the survey began.

Schools were contacted through a nominated teacher who was responsible for distributing 30 surveys within their school. The pupils did not need to be known to be LGBT to participate in this survey as the aim is to gain a realistic picture using a random sample of young people. The survey asked the participants their age, sexual orientation and gender identity and was followed with several questions to explore their experience in school, the community and in youth groups. The survey questions are not significantly altered from year to year in order to facilitate comparison between the annual data gathered, though we review the questions each year in the light of responses from the previous year. For the 2020 survey, following discussion with representatives from partner organisations in the D&G LGBT Youth Development Group and recommendations from last year's student, we made several changes. We added in some further options to some questions to reduce the number of responses left unanswered by participants. We also changed the wording and order of 2 questions, to help elicit fuller responses.

Once the analysis and full report is complete, each school is provided with an individual report on the findings within that particular school to inform their strategy and practice. This includes a comparative graph and data to indicate how their responses compared to the average in schools across the region. When the schools do return, we hope to gather the information from the 2 schools that wished to take part and send them their individual report to inform their strategy and practice.



Key Findings

Who participated:

- 371 young people from 14 schools participated. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, we were unable to collect information from a further 2 schools that wished to participate, which would have taken the number of schools to 16.
- 12.1 % of the participants identified as LGBT+, a 3.2% decrease from last year's survey.
- 4.3% of the participants identified as pansexual, a 1.7 % increase.
- 2.2 % of the participants identified as asexual, this option was not provided in previous years.
- 3.8 % of the participants identified as Transgender, a 1.7% increase from last year's survey.
- 2.7% of the participants identified as other.

Being 'out' as LGBT:

- 64.5% of LGBT pupils reported to be 'out' at school, an increase of 10.5% from last year.
- 51.7% reported to be 'out' at home, last year only 47.5% were 'out'.
- 43% reported to be 'out' in the community, last year only 39.9% were out in the community.
- 10.6% of LGBT respondents were not 'out' to anyone, a 5.8 % decrease from last year's survey.
- 17.3% of respondents felt they had to keep their gender identity or sexual orientation a secret to avoid negative consequences, an increase of 8.5% from last year.

LGBT Inclusion in schools:

- 55.5 % of the participants stated that LGBT themes were included in the curriculum.
- 67.3% of the participants reported that they were comfortable raising LGBT issues in class, lower than 2019, 2018 and 2017 responses (71.2%, 74% and 68%).
- 66.7% of the participants believed that their school had an LGBT group.
- 51.2 % reported that their school celebrate LGBT events.



Experience of discrimination in schools

- 21.4% of all the participants reported that they experienced bullying or discrimination in school, an increase of 5.6% increase from last year's survey.
- 61.5% of the participants experiencing bullying said this was due to their perceived or actual LGBT identity. A 34.5 % increase from last year.
- 79.5% of the participants who had witnessed bullying or discrimination said this was due to the persons perceived or actual LGBT identity or orientation. A 26.5 % increase from last year's survey.
- 71.4% of the participants have heard other pupils in their school use negative language towards the LGBT community, a 9.6% decrease from last year.
- 58.6% of the participants said this language was not challenged by teachers, other staff, friends, or other pupils, a 2.4 % decrease from last year's survey.
- 7 % said they heard teachers use negative language towards the LGBT community within their school, a 1.7% increase from last year.
- 3.2 % said they heard other staff members use negative language towards the LGBT community, a 0.6% increase from last year.

Impact of discrimination in schools

- 7% of the participants said that they had at some point feared for their safety due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- 10% of the participants said they have experience bullying due to their sexual orientation and or gender identity.
- Of that 10%, 50% said that this affected their education and 60% said this affected their ability to form friendships.

LGBT Inclusion in Youth Groups

- 22.6% of young people stated that they received LGBT information in their youth groups.
- 53.5% of those attending youth groups said that they felt comfortable raising LGBT issues within their groups, a 3.8% increase from last year.

Impact of discrimination in Youth Groups

- 7.1 % of those attending youth groups said they had felt uncomfortable in groups due to their LGBT identity.

Impact of those participating in this year's survey

- 29.8% of the participants said that they felt the questionnaire had helped them reflect on their experience, the same as in 2019

Profile of survey respondents

Age

The participants were made up of secondary school pupils, with their ages ranging from 12 to 18+. The ages were broken up into four categories of 12-13, 14-15, 16-17 and 18+. The largest group of this age range were 14-15-year olds with 47.4%, followed closely by the 16-17-year olds with 46.6%, 12-13 year olds with 6.2% and 18+ with 3.7%. When compared to last year, there was a 2.2% increase of participants who were aged 12-13, a 10.8% decrease of those who were 14-15, a 11.2% increase of those who were 16-17 and a 1.3% increase of this who were over the age of 18.

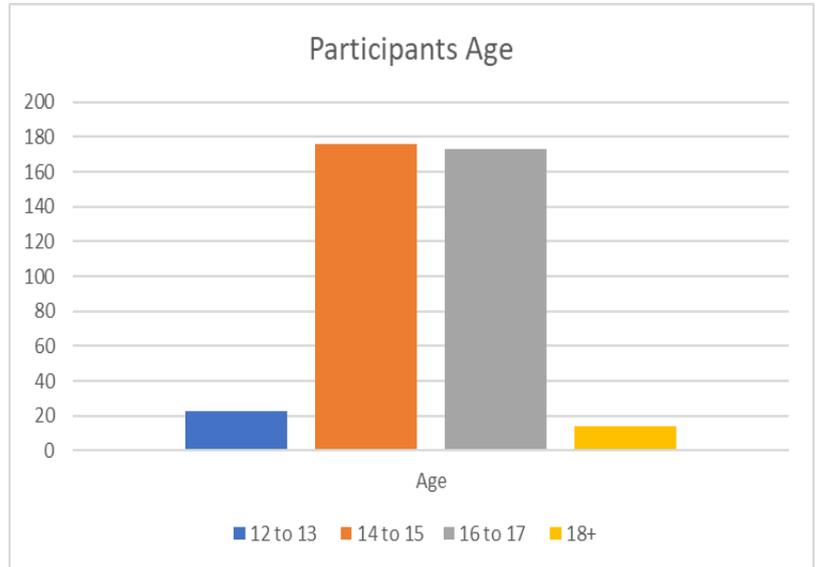


Figure 1: age ranges of participants

Gender Identity

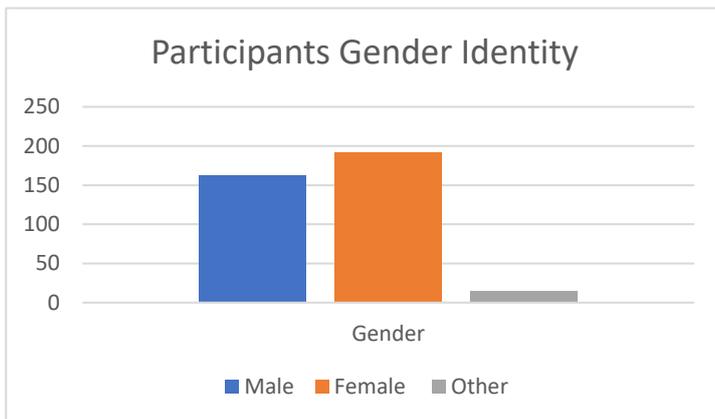


Figure 2: Participants' gender identity

The survey's participants were asked whether they identified as male, female, or other. 43.9% of the respondents identified as male, 52% identified as female and 4.1% identified as other.



Sexual Orientation

Participants were asked about their sexual orientation. The results indicated that 78.1% of participants identified as straight, meaning that 21.9% of participants identified as LGB+, respectively: 8.6% bisexual, 4.4% pansexual, 2.8% other, 2.5% gay, 2.2% asexual and 1.4% lesbian. This is a 6.6% increase in responses for LGB+ identity from last year's responses.

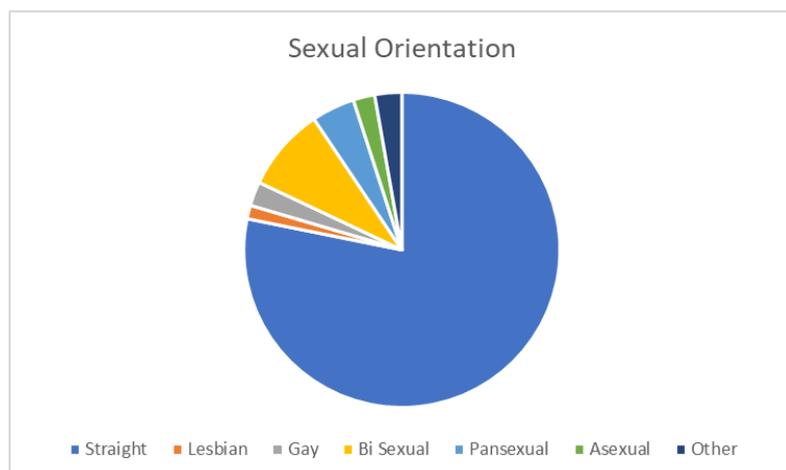
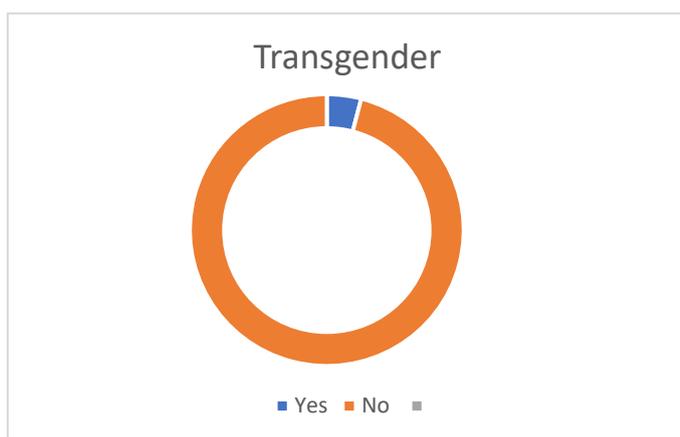


Figure 3: Participants' sexual orientation

Transgender identity



3.8% of the participants identified as transgender.

Figure 4: Participants identifying as transgender

LGBT+ young people in Dumfries and Galloway

According to Scottish Government (2019), there are around 22632 10 to 25 year olds living in Dumfries and Galloway. From the information from this survey and the current population of Dumfries and Galloway, we estimate that around 2700 13 to 25-year olds in Dumfries & Galloway are LGB+ and around 800 are transgender.

Comparison across previous surveys

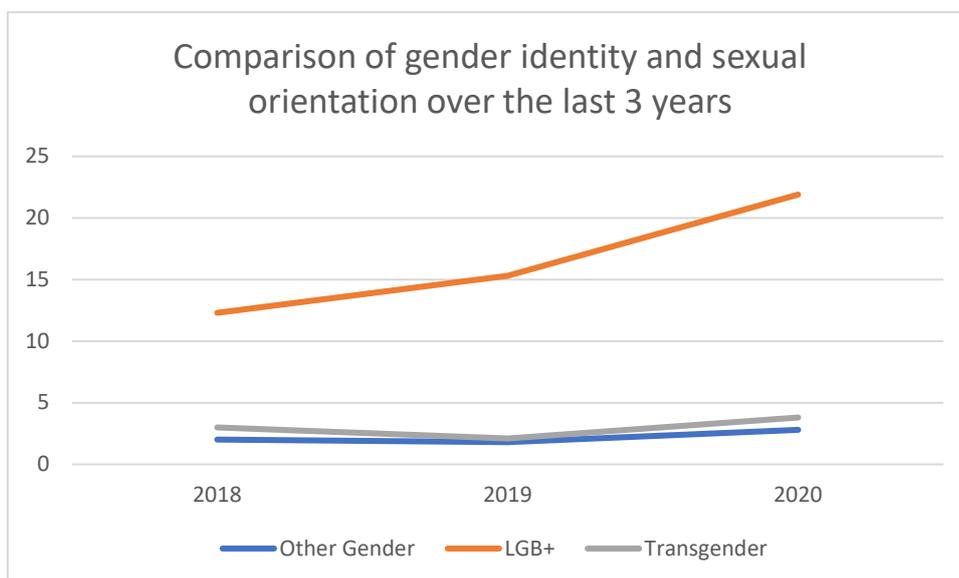


Figure 5: Comparison of identity across survey years

The graph indicates a slight increase from both 2019 and 2018 in respondents who identify as transgender and who stated that their gender was ‘other’ than male or female. There was a significant increase of respondents who identify as LGB+. In 2018 there was not the option for the respondents to select ‘pansexual’, ‘asexual’ and ‘other’ when asking about the participants sexual orientation, however the structure of this question remained the same as last year as 2019 and there still is that significant increase.

The Office for National Statistics (2017) show that 2% of the UK population identified themselves as LGB and that 4.2% of 16-24 years old were estimated to identify as LGB. This would indicate that the findings in this report show a significantly higher rate of people identifying as LGB+ than the national average. However, the participants in the national report were all over the age of 16 and we have the options of ‘pansexual’, ‘asexual’ and ‘other’, therefore we cannot directly compare to this research.

There is currently no significant research in the UK which indicates a clear percentage of the population who identify as transgender. The current estimate according to Stonewall (2017), is that 1% of the UK population might identify as trans. The findings in this survey are slightly higher than the estimated national average with 3.8% identifying as transgender. In 2021, the office for nation statistic in Scotland have said that they will allow people to select the gender they were assigned at birth, so we will be able to gauge a truer reflection and compare the data in our future surveys.



Feeling pressured to keep gender identity or sexual orientation a secret

17.4% of the respondents felt at some point they had to keep their gender identity or sexual orientation a secret in school to avoid negative consequences.

Being 'out' in different locations

After identifying their gender identity and sexual orientation, the participants were asked whether if they were 'out', and if so, in what locations. The respondents could choose from 3 locations: home, school, and in the community. The respondents also had an option to select if they were not 'out' to anyone.

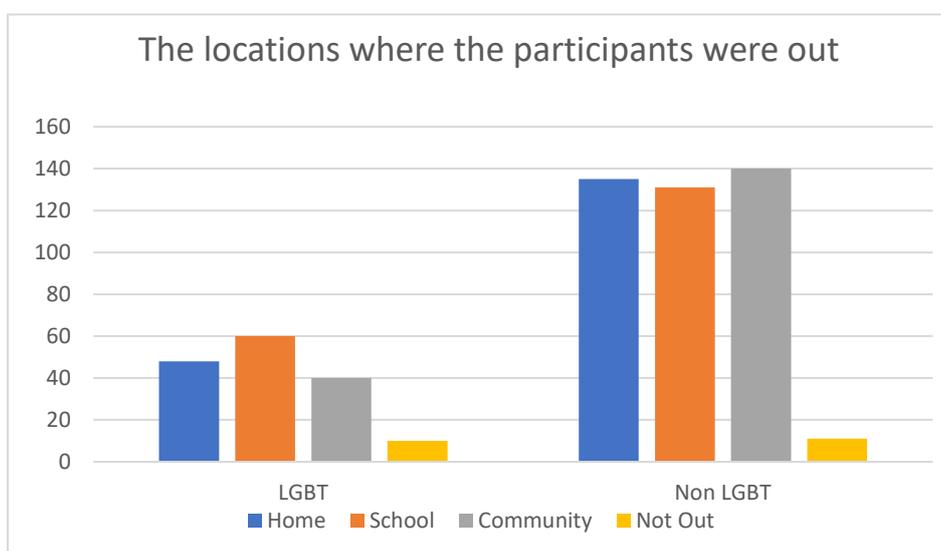


Figure 6: locations where young people are out

49.5% of non- LGBT participants opted out of answering this question. Many participants responded with the phrase 'not applicable' or left the answer blank, however over half of non-LGBT participants still responded.

Of the participants who identified as LGB or T, 85.7% stated they were 'out' in school, 68.6% said they were 'out' at home and 57.1% of respondents stated they were 'out' in the community. 14.3% of the LGBT participants reported that they were not 'out' to anyone.

This shows that LGBT young people tend to feel most comfortable 'coming out' within a school setting, despite there being an increase of participants who have experienced bullying in schools due to their gender identity or sexual orientation in schools compared to last year's survey (see next section) and the statistics from national surveys. The research from LGBT Youth Scotland Life in Scotland report, shows that 52% of the respondents felt that their school or place of education was where they experienced most of the discrimination (LGBT Youth Scotland, 2017).



Less LGBT participants were out within the community than at school and home, however, there is an increase of 17.8% compared to last year's survey. There has also been a 2.1% decrease in the number of LGBT young people who were not 'out' at all, when compared to last year's results.

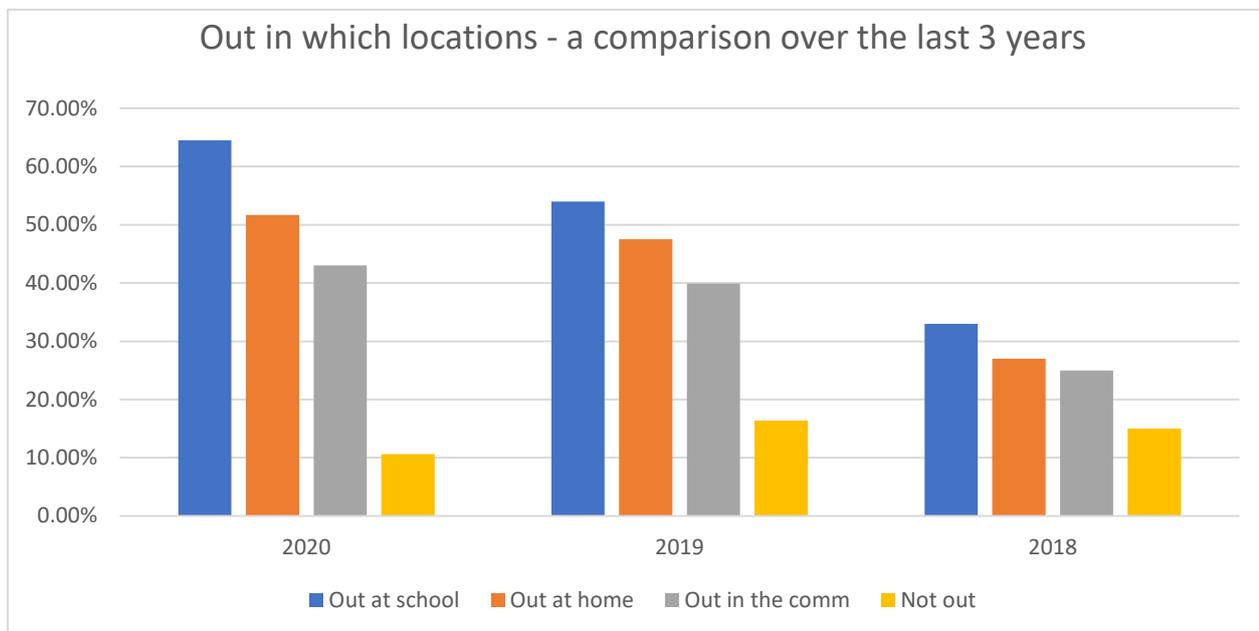


Figure 7: Comparison of locations where young people are out over the last 3 years

In **Figure 7**, we have compared the locations in which LGBT participants were 'out' over the last 3 years, and those who were not out. In 2020, there continues to be an increase of LGBT participants who were out in schools, home and in the community than ever before and a decrease in young people who are not out.

For the participants who did not identify as LGB or T, 'in the community' had the highest response rates, however all 3 options were high. 7.3 % of the participants who did not identify as LGB or T, were not out to anyone.

Discrimination

Personal Experience

The next part of the survey focused on discrimination, bullying and stereotyping. The first question asked the participants if they had ever experienced discrimination or stereotyping for any reason. Participants were then asked if they believed the discrimination or bullying they had experienced, was due to them being known to be LGBT, someone thinking they were LGBT or for other reasons.

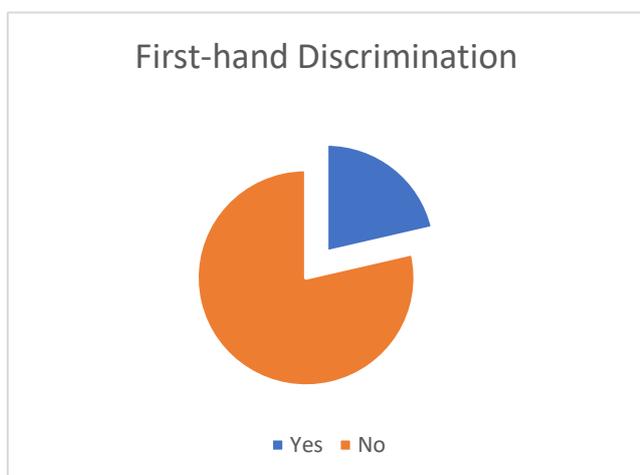


Figure 8: Percentage of respondents experiencing discrimination

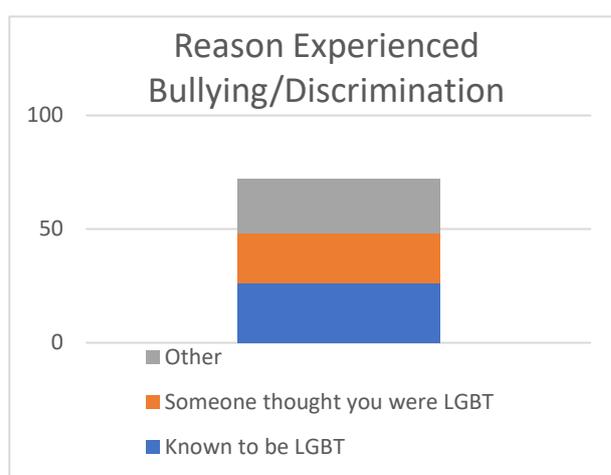


Figure 9: Reasons for experiencing bullying/discrimination

21.4% of the participants felt they had experienced being bullied or faced discrimination at some point in their school life, an increase of 5.6% from last year's survey.

36.1 % of the respondents, felt as if they had experienced this due to being known to belong to the LGBT community and 30.6% due to being associated or someone perceiving them as LGBT. Both responses are up from last year, with an increase of 8.8% for those known to be LGBT and 20% for those who were associated, or someone thinking they were LGBT.

33.3% of the young people said that they experienced discrimination or bullying due to 'other' reasons, common responses were: due to their race or due to having a disability, all of which are a form of hate crime. However, some of the young people had shared that they had no experiences of being bullying or discrimination.

The participants were asked if they wished to share their personal experience of experience bullying, discrimination and stereotyping. Some of the responses were as follows.



“I’ve been called slurs and have been pushed in the hallways”

“called faggot and he/she. I have also been told that my identity is not real. I have received threats of physical violence”

“Getting verbal abuse yelled at me in classrooms and corridors”

“I get called gay even though I am not out”

“I held my partners hand and got verbally abused for it”

“Experienced verbal abuse, I am constantly questioned about why I am pansexual. I was accused of being trans for having short hair and was told to grow it again”.

“People making fun off my disability, calling me names such as retard”

“because of my heritage”

“because of my weight”

“because I am dyslexic”

“I have been physically abused in corridors”

According to LGBT Youth Scotland's Life in Scotland survey, 35% of LGBT young people said they had experienced hate crime or an incident in the last year (LGBT Youth Scotland, 2017). Similar experiences are reported in both that survey and our D&G survey, such as physical violence, verbal abuse, threats and trans, bi and homophobic messages.

Witnessing Discrimination

Participants were also asked about whether they were aware or had witnessed any instances of discrimination, bullying or stereotyping of others in their school. 48.4% of respondents were aware of instances where others had been bullied, down 0.8% from last year's survey. The participants were asked if they felt these instances were due to the person's sexual orientation or gender identity, 79.5% of the respondents believed this to be the case. A 26.1% increase from last year's survey. **See figure 10 and 11**

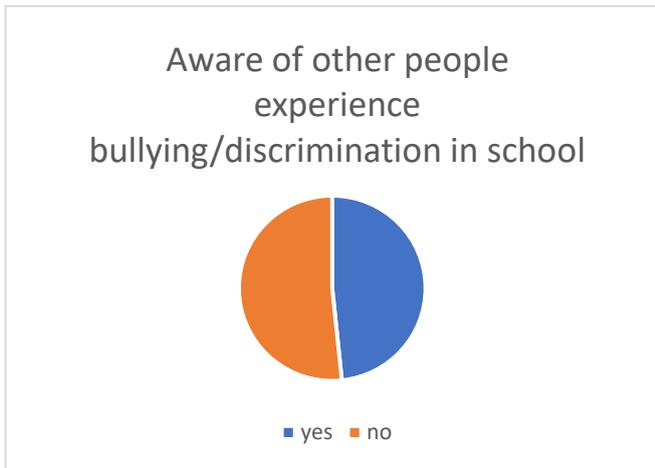


Figure 10: Percentage of respondents aware of others being bullied

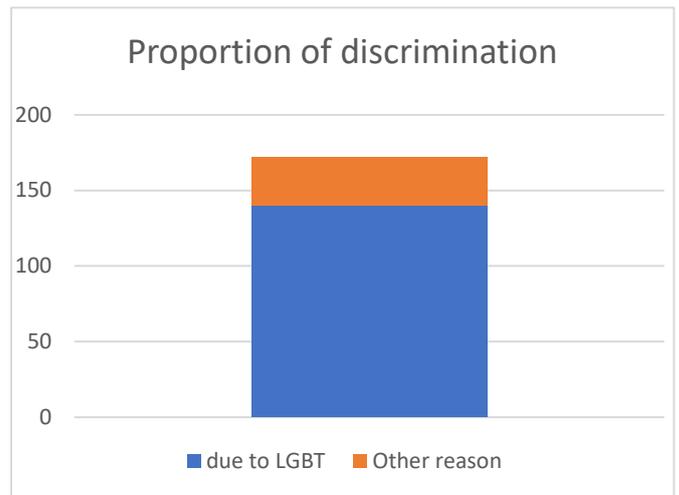


Figure 11: Percentage of discrimination related to LGBT identity

Some of the participants felt there were other reasons or characteristics outwith LGBT+ identity for the bullying or discrimination they had witnessed or were aware of. Some of the respondents also felt that there was not an issue of bullying or discrimination with their school.

Respondents were given the opportunity to elaborate on experiences that they had witnessed if they wished to do so. Some of the responses are as follows.

“People will make jokes and exclude certain people”

“I have heard people deadnaming trans people, mis gendering and physically harming LGBT people. I have heard lots of slurs”

“Gay assumptions”

“Assuming people’s sexual orientation”

“When my friend came out as trans, they had received hate when they began to show off their new gender and people would use their old name on purpose”

“Calling names”

“People being teased for being different”

“Stigma and toxic masculinity”

“There seems to be a poor stereotype for transgender people”

“Verbal abuse, threats, transphobia and homophobia”



School Experience

Participants were asked about their own school experience as well as their perception of how well their school tackles the bullying, discrimination and stereotyping of LGBT pupils.

LGBT inclusion in school

The first question focused on the representation of LGBT issues within their school. 67.3% of participants reported to feel comfortable to raise LGBT issues in class, 67.7% of participants believed that their school had an LGBT group and 52.5% reported that their school celebrates LGBT events. All of which are down from last year's survey.

55.4% of participants stated that LGBT themes or identities were included in the curriculum, an increase of 0.2% from last year.

Some of the subjects that were identified by the respondents as including LGBT themes were:

- Personal Social Education
- Religious Education
- English
- Biology
- History
- Health and Wellbeing
- Drama
- Modern Studies
- Business
- Sex Education
- Maths
- Art
- Registration

3 further subjects were identified than in last year's survey: Maths, Art and Registration. 55.5% of the participants also said that LGBT themes were covered in all subjects and were able to seek and discuss themes with their tutors. This would suggest that LGBT themes are represented in a broad range of subjects within some secondary schools in Dumfries and Galloway and that pupils are provided with spaces to discuss LGBT issues within their schools. However, 44.5% of the respondents said that LGBT themes were not taught in their schools. Research from Stonewall Scotland's school report shows that 41% of young people are not taught anything about LGBT issues in school or college (Stonewall Scotland, 2017). Furthermore, few respondents did not see the benefit of discussing LGBT issues and themes in the



curriculum indicating there may be a need to tackle prejudice and raise awareness of the value of diverse role models within the curriculum.

The next question aimed to understand the prevalence of use and challenging of negative language used about LGBT people within school. 74.1% of respondents reported 'other pupils' using negative language within school, a 6.1 % decrease from last year's survey. 26.1% had heard 'friends' use negative language a 6.5% decrease from last year. 7% reported that teachers had done so, a 1.7 increase from last year and 3.2% of other staff, a 0.6% increase.

Throughout this survey, it is clear that many respondents had experienced or witnessed negative use of language towards the LGBT community. A common response throughout, was phrases like "that's gay", "gay boy". According to Stonewall 'Tackling Homophobic Language' (2015) report, 99% of young people reported hearing casual or passing phrases, such as "that's so gay". Like this survey these comments were directed towards members of the LGBT community, however they can also be used with no link to a person's sexual orientation. It might be that the person is saying those phrases to display something as negative. As these phrases have undesirable connotations, people who are LGBT may feel their orientation is negative, which could consequently affect their experience or mental health.

Participants were asked whether they had witnessed this negative language being challenged. 58.6% said that they had not witnessed this language being challenged. Of the 41.4% who did witness the language being challenged, 'other pupils' were the category most likely to challenge this negative language, followed by 'friends'. Worryingly, 'teachers' and 'other staff' were least likely to challenge this negative language. This may be due to these groups not being present when the negative language was used, however information from a similar Scottish school report (Stonewall Scotland, 2017). suggests otherwise. 72% of the respondents within that report said, that school staff 'sometimes' or 'never challenge homo, bi and trans phobic language when they hear it. From the responses within this survey, we can conclude that in some schools across Dumfries and Galloway, teachers and other staff were more likely to use negative language towards LGBT young people, rather than challenge it.

In cases where the language was left unchallenged, participants were asked why they thought that was. Positively, many respondents said there was nothing to challenge in their schools. However, most of the respondents said that individuals feared the bullies themselves and feared that they would make people experience worse if they were to challenge it. Some of the responses follow.

“There is no need to”

“Because they don't want to be called anything for sticking up for people”



“They may get bullied or called names themselves”

“There is no behaviour to be challenged”

“People do not have enough confidence”

“Why would they, nothing gets done anyway”

Safety

The respondents were asked whether they had ever feared for their safety due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. 7.0% of the participants stated that they had at some point feared for their safety due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, a 2.3% increase from last year.

The participants were then asked, which specific locations made them particularly unsafe and which location made them feel safe. Some of the respondents said they felt unsafe in locations such as: changing rooms, halls, classrooms, outside of school grounds and toilets. Some of the respondents said they felt most safe in the library, the classroom, around teachers, at the GSA and when they were with their friends.

Unsafe

“Anywhere that is not the classroom or where a good teacher can’t stand up for us”

“Outside of class, especially outside of school grounds at lunch time”

“The hall because it is just a crowd of people and you never know what they will say or do.”

“Toilets”

Safe

“GSA”

“GSA and Libraries, I know who goes there and I feel safe with some teachers”

“In the classrooms”

“Around my teachers and tutor”

Impact on attainment and friendships

Respondents were asked whether being bullied due to their gender identity or sexual orientation had affected their educational attainment or their friendships. 50% of respondents felt that being bullied due to their sexual orientation or gender identity had affected their education. 58.3% of participants stated that it had affected their friendships. Although these stats have significantly increased compared to last year survey, we had changed the structure of the question, which



has ultimately affected the percentages, so we are unable to make a comparison against previous years. Some of the responses are as follows.

Attainment

“I have been diagnosed with anxiety, depression and have suicidal tenancies, partly because of the bullying and they have been triggered at school by the regular trans and homo phobia”

“I do not want to come to school”

“My attendance drops”

“I had to take time off school, it was affecting me mentally and affected my grades”

Friendships

“I find it extremely hard to trust people”

“I can’t talk to other guys without being the weird gay guy, so most of my friends are girls”

“I do not trust people. I have spent time alone and self-isolate. I fear for breaks and lunch and have hid in the science lab”

According to the life in Scotland for LGBT young people report, 63% of LGBT young people and 68% of trans young people said the bullying they had experienced affected their educational attainment. 20% of LGBT young people and 29% of transgender young people who had directly experienced homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia left education (LGBT Youth Scotland, 2017). Stonewall Scotland’s school report shows that more than half of LGBT young people feel this type of bullying, has affected their future educational plans.



Youth Group Experience

LGBT Inclusion

22.6% of the young people stated that their youth groups provided information about LGBT issues and identities, a 2.8 decrease from last year's survey. 55.6% of young people said that they were not sure if the information was provided, a 16.3 % increase from last year's survey. Over 1/5th of the respondents felt that they did not receive on any information on LGBT services or issues at the youth groups they attend.

Of the participants who attended the youth groups, 57.5% felt comfortable in raising LGBT issues, a 7.8 % increase from last year, while 42.5% did not. 7.1% of young people who access youth groups said that they had felt uncomfortable at some point within their youth group due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, a 1.4% increase when compared to last year.

Negative Language

38.6% of young people who attended youth groups said they had heard negative language used towards the LGBT community, a 6.9% decrease compared to last year, The other young people who attended the youth groups were the individuals most likely to use negative language, followed by friends and then the youth workers. 8.2% of the respondent said that they had heard the youth workers using negative language at these groups, a 3.2% increase when compared to last year, **see figure 12 below.** 71.8% of the young people had not observed this negative language being challenged. Compared to last year, this is a 9.4% increase to the negative language not being challenged. Young people are still more likely to use negative language towards the LGBT community, than to challenge it.

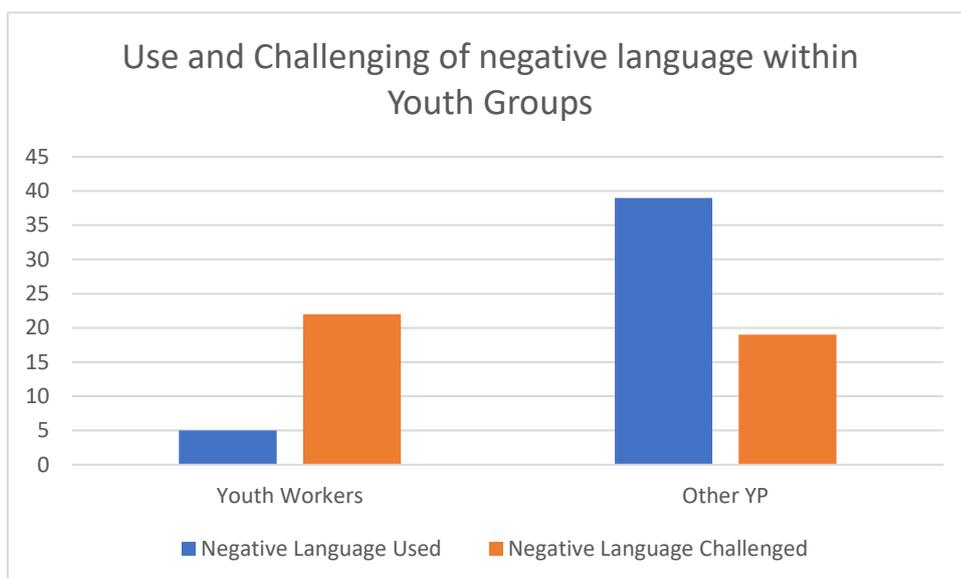


Figure 8: Use and challenge of negative language in youth groups



The participants were asked why they thought this negative language was left unchallenged in youth groups. Some of the responses are as follows.

“There is nothing to challenge”

“While other have stood up, I think that many don’t because they are worried about being bullied themselves”

“Would make them feel uncomfortable”

“They might have thought it was funny”

“Probably do not want to get involved or make things worse”



Improving LGBT young people's lives

Schools

Respondents were asked whether they had any recommendations for what could make the lives of LGBT young people in D&G better. Most of the participants suggested that there was still lots of prejudice and discrimination in the school across D & G and suggested there is a need for more education. This would help others understand the impact this discrimination can have on the LGBT community over the region and promote equality and inclusion in schools to improve lives and experience of being LGBT.

Some of the respondents said they were unsure or left the question blank or made the statement "no comment" or "I don't know". Some of the participants believed that there was enough being done within their schools, and no further action was needed. Representative responses are provided below.

"Raise awareness"

"More education on LGBT in classes"

"More support"

"Help people understand how they affect other people's lives"

"In my school, I think it is good for LGBT young people"

"Equality"

"Harsher punishments for the bullies"

"Teachers receiving more education"

"GSA being more prominent in schools"

Wider region

According to The Scottish LGBT Equality Report, almost a quarter of the respondents felt that living in a rural setting was 'bad' or 'very bad'. The participants felt this was due to a high prevalence of prejudice and discrimination and feeling a higher level of social isolation compared to urban areas (Equality Network, 2015). As LGBT Youth Scotland continue to seek for ways to improve the lives of LGBT young people, the respondents were asked about their recommendations to make D and G more LGBT inclusive. Some of the responses are as follows.

"More and better public awareness, such as posters"

"Do not single people out, make everyone welcome"



“More support groups for LGBT people, so people can feel comfortable and safe”

“There should be more recognition throughout the region, more access to safe spaces for LGBT people”

“I believe the legal system should take LGBTQ+ issues more seriously”

“Educating the older people of the region, so that if their child was to come out to them, they wouldn’t be so old fashioned and misunderstanding”

Better access to support

In the 2015 Equality Network (Scotland wide) report, LGBT young people living in rural setting said they felt there were a lack of support services and social opportunities to help fulfil their needs. Participants in the D&G 2020 survey were asked what changes could be made to improve the access to LGBT support services in the region. Some of their responses are as follows.

“Have more groups open”

“Have more services available and have people come into schools”

“Reduce the prices of public transport”

“Make more groups or services across the region”

“Easier access to health care for trans people”

“If the LGBT came to you or the school more often”

Participants’ reflections on completing the survey

The participants were asked whether the questionnaire had helped them to reflect on their own experience, to which 29.8% of participants felt that the survey questionnaire had helped them to reflect on their own experience. This is the same percentage as last year’s survey. Some of the responses were as follows.

“It has shown me what people might be going through and that everyone should get treated the same even if they are gay or transgender, they are still the same as us”

“I can voice my ideas and complaints”

“I don’t often think about these issues, it allowed me to think about issues around the LGBT community”

“It made me think of my own sexuality and how others may be impacted and how this may be solved”



“Made me realise that some of the things I have experienced are wrong”

“I feel happier with myself”

70.2 of the participants felt that this survey did not allow them to reflect on their own experiences. Most of the responses were due to the young people not having lived LGBT experiences themselves. Some of the responses were as follows.

“No experience to reflect”

“I already know most of the stuff”

“I found it very repetitive”

“I am not a part of the LGBT community”

“Don’t really have any experience to reflect on”

Final comments

Participants were given the opportunity to share any additional comments on the survey or the issues raised within it. A lot of the participants left this question left unanswered. As with other opportunities to comment throughout the survey, responses from some young people indicated a lack of understanding of the impact of discrimination and the value of education around LGBT identities. They also provided an insight into the attitudes and language that are used amongst peers and contribute to the negative school experiences of many respondents.

“if we label people as minorities, they are going to be treated differently but if we treat them as equal there will be less discrimination”.

“I would hope for more awareness to LGBT issues”

“The teacher training did not work”

“Authority figures are trying their hardest, it is individuals and parents who are causing issues and I do not know how to change that”

“The amount of people who are so disrespectful is dreadful, no one notices how bad it really is”

“I find it hard to express my feelings”

“I do not know”



Conclusion

With an estimate of around 2700 young people across Dumfries and Galloway likely to identify as LGBT+, there is an imperative to continue to act collectively and strategically to improve the experiences of LGBT young people in our region.

This year's survey showed that many more young people were out at school, home and in the community than ever before in D&G, which is positive. However, it is of note that 10.6% of the LGBT participants reported that they were not 'out' to anyone. This is a 5% decrease from last year, but it is still an area we need to focus on. 17.3% of respondents said they had to keep their gender identity or sexual orientation a secret to avoid negative consequences, an increase of 8.5% from last year. We know that hiding one's identity can have a negative effect on mental health, so it is important that young people get both information and support about coming out. Fear of negative reactions and bullying are likely to be a common reason for young people not coming out, so it is important for schools, youth groups and the wider community to continue to improve awareness and directly tackle discrimination.

The 2020 survey showed that 2/3 of young people believe their school have a group for LGBT pupils and allies (a Gender Sexual orientation Alliance or GSA), Students who attend a GSA are more likely to report that they feel safe in school and are less likely to be absent. A GSA provides young people with opportunities to gain support from peers and to work together to make their school more inclusive. In early 2020, LGBT Youth Scotland, along with members of the D&G Council Time for Inclusive Education Steering Group brought GSAs together from across the region for a networking event. 21 young people from 7 schools attended and shared information about challenges, good practice, additional support that could be provided. Feedback from participants was excellent. Ensuring that all D&G schools have a GSA would be a useful step towards improving LGBT pupils' experience in all schools across the region.

This year's survey shows that D&G teachers are including LGBT identities and themes in more subjects than ever before, with over half of the respondents saying their school did so, However, when compared to last year, the participants felt less comfortable in raising LGBT issues in class and there was a decrease in the number of respondents who believed their school celebrated LGBT events. Marking events in the LGBT cultural calendar is a simple way to demonstrate commitment to inclusion and helps to facilitate open and positive discussion around LGBT identities in class.



Some of the young people said they felt safe around teachers, in their classrooms were able to speak to their tutors around LGBT issues. All state schools will be expected to teach LGBTI equality and inclusion by May 2021, so there is an opportunity for D&G schools that are already integrating LGBT themes to share their experience and practice with schools that have yet to do so. Seven schools in the region have been awarded the LGBT Schools Charter, and two schools are currently progressing through their Charter journey. Over the last year, teachers from 3 Charter schools have played an active role in the D&G Council Time for Inclusive Education Steering Group, sharing their experience and knowledge. There is potential for this group to share more good practice and further inspire all schools across the region to proactively integrate LGBT themes.

This year's survey showed a substantial increase from 2019 in pupils experiencing or witnessing bullying due to actual or perceived LGBT identities. We are not able to draw any conclusions around this increase, but we note that though the LGBT community are more visible in society than ever before, negative media attention continues, particularly around the trans and non-binary community. There was a decrease in the number of participants who heard other pupils and friends use negative language towards the LGBT community in school, however this was still high with 74.1% of other pupils using negative language and 26.1% of friends. There was a slight increase of 2.4% of the respondents who had heard the negative language being challenged, however less than half of the participants felt this was challenged (41.4%). Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language play a key role in normalising prejudice and has a substantial negative impact on the mental health of LGBT people. It is of concern that 26 respondents noted that they had heard teachers use negative language towards the LGBT community and we found that in some schools across the region, teachers were more likely to use the negative language rather than challenge it. There is a need for schools across the region to be much more effective in challenging discrimination, in order to ensure that all children are safe, respected and included within the school environment.

Responses showed that negative language is witnessed significantly less in youth groups than in schools and less was noted in 2020 than in last year's survey. Dumfries & Galloway Council continue to provide strategic support to LGBT young people through a Commission to deliver LGBT Youth Groups to actively engage young people and this has had a positive impact on LGBT young peoples' experience of youth work in the region. The decrease in negative language heard is encouraging; however only 28.2% of respondents who witnessed negative language said it was challenged, a decrease of 0.8% on last year's survey. There remains a need for



youth workers across Dumfries & Galloway to work more effectively to challenge discriminatory language in groups, to ensure that LGBT young people feel safe, respected and included. It was a concern that some of the respondents said they had heard youth workers use this negative language, which also needs to be addressed. There is also a need for youth groups to provide more information related to LGBT issues and identities, given that only 22.6% of young people said that LGBT information was provided in their group, a 2.8% decrease from last year. Both D&G Council Young Peoples' Services and the Oasis Youth Centre have recently begun working towards the LGBT Charter. We hope this journey will include targeted work to support youth workers in these services to provide information more effectively around LGBT identity and challenge discrimination when it occurs.

Many pupils completing the survey took the opportunity to share experiences and provide comments, which provided some rich qualitative input. Many young people shared troubling examples of bullying and negative language. These illustrate the day to day experience of many LGBT young people in our region and remind us that Dumfries and Galloway is not perceived as an inclusive and positive place to grow up for many young people. Some pupils provided comments which demonstrated a lack of understanding of the need for inclusive education and illustrated the negative language and discrimination witnessed by their peers. Many pupils took the time to provide thoughtful and insightful recommendations to improve the lives of LGBT young people in Dumfries and Galloway. These comments demonstrate that pupils in our schools welcome a better experience for LGBT young people and have a clear idea of what is needed. The recommendations below draw on the findings of the report to provide suggestions as to how key organisations in Dumfries and Galloway can use their agency and skills to achieve the kind of positive changes that young people are telling us they need.



Recommendations

For Dumfries & Galloway schools:

- Take more opportunities across the curriculum to carry out preventative work exploring prejudice-based bullying
- Develop and implement effective strategies to challenge negative language in all areas of the school community
- Provide resources and information to support pupils in coming out
- Set up or continue to actively support a school group for LGBT young people and allies
- Mark days and events in the LGBT [cultural calendar](#)
- Provide training, resources and support to develop the confidence of staff to support LGBT pupils, include LGBT identities in the curriculum and challenge discrimination
- Work towards the LGBT Charter Mark, or if the Award is already achieved, sustain and build upon the cultural change initiated through the Charter Mark journey

For Dumfries and Galloway Council:

- Act strategically, to ensure that all schools, teachers and youth workers across the region are confident to support LGBT young people and challenge homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying
- Support all secondary schools in the region to set up and continue to actively support a school group for LGBT young people and allies
- Support schools across the region to mark days and events in the LGBT [cultural calendar](#)
- Ensure that schools can confidently include LGBT identities in the curriculum
- Continue to prioritise actions to improve the lives of LGBT young people in D&G

For LGBT Youth Scotland:

- Further promote their outreach support including 1:1s and online support for young people who are unable to access the service due to travel.
- Encourage schools who have not yet signed up to the LGBT Charter Mark to do so
- Continue to provide resources and support schools to increase curriculum content around LGBT identities and mark the LGBT cultural calendar
- Support schools to set up and support groups for LGBT pupils and allies
- Support youth workers across the region to more effectively challenge discrimination and integrate LGBT themes and identities into group activities



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