TRANS REPORT 2024

LIFE in SCOTLAND for LGBT YOUNG PEOPLE

LGBT YOUTH SCOTLAND

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FOREWORD

This final report in LGBT Youth Scotland's research project *Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People* seeks to specifically explore issues being faced by trans young people in Scotland. For the full project we undertook a nationwide survey of LGBTQ+ young people between aged of 13 to 25. A total of 1,279 young people participated, making this the largest piece of research of LGBTQ+ young people in Scotland to date. Of the participants 49% identified as trans.

This report is the last of several thematic reports that focus on topics that are of significant importance to LGBTQ+ young people. Previous reports on education, health and rurality along with the full Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People report are published on our website.

Across the three sections of this report – Accessing Public Spaces, Accessing Services, and Transphobia – clear narratives emerge, revealing the different realities and challenges encountered by trans young people in Scotland; from navigating community spaces which do not always feel safe or inclusive to grappling with systemic barriers in accessing essential services.

One of the core themes that emerges is the presence of transphobia, which impacts on the quality of life that trans young people experience. Nearly three quarters of respondents identified transphobia as a significant problem in Scotland, highlighting the need for coordinated efforts to combat prejudice and discrimination.

Amidst these challenges, however, there are also positive messages. Participants voiced the presence and importance of allies, LGBTQ+ networks, and supportive environments in mitigating the adverse effects of transphobia. Their lived experience serves as a reminder of the importance of community and inclusion.

This report makes a clear case for policymakers, public institutions, and civil society to adopt the recommendations and take decisive action to safeguard the rights and well-being of trans young people in Scotland.

As part of wider mainstreaming equalities work, we recommend that this report forms part of any trans inclusion work undertaken by organisations working in all communities across Scotland. We propose that inclusion programmes such as the LGBT Charter are used to make real changes and create truly inclusive spaces, and that funding be set aside for safe spaces for trans young people to accessing every community.

We urge the Scottish Government and other public bodies mentioned in this report to take action urgently to protect trans young people and learn from the lived experience shared within this report.

We extend our thanks to all those who contributed to this research project, particularly the individuals who shared their lived experience. Your voices and experiences are what enable us to work towards building a Scotland in which LGBTQ+ young people are able to flourish and thrive.

Dr Mhairi Crawford
Chief Executive
LGBT Youth Scotland

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research forms part of the LGBT Youth Scotland *Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People* project, which has been running for fifteen years, with surveys being undertaken to find out what life is like in Scotland for LGBTQ+ young people every five years. A full report was published in April 2022 following analysis of 1,279 responses to our most recent survey, making this the biggest piece of research on this demographic to date. Following this, we have produced supplementary reports on specific topics. The first three of these, our ***Education Report***, ***Health Report***, and our ***Rural Report*** were published in 2023. This final 'deep dive' report completes the set, focusing on the experiences of trans young people. The topics raised in this report fall into three sections: **Accessing Public Spaces**; **Accessing Services**; and **Transphobia**.

ACCESSING PUBLIC SPACES

Within this topic, community spaces, public transport, and online spaces were described as presenting specific challenges for trans people.

Within community spaces, participants told us that they often feel more isolated, with just 1 in 3 feeling that there are enough places for them to safely socialise and be open about their identity. Many told us they feel public attitudes towards trans people are hostile, and that they struggle to find supportive figures in their lives. Some mentioned allies, LGBTQ+ role models and LGBTQ+ networks as being important sources of support. The perception that the general public lacks knowledge of and, in some cases, interest in learning more about trans experiences, was described as a challenge for some participants. The extent to which progress is or isn't being made on trans rights in Scotland was a concern for many and the negative influence of the media and some politicians on these attitudes was described as distressing.

We therefore recommend that awareness of trans issues should be prioritised by organisations that work with and support the public. We propose that tools such as the ***LGBT Charter*** should be used in carrying out this work. We also advocate for funding to be set aside for safe spaces such as LGBTQ+ clubs/ societies within education and LGBTQ+ LGBTQ+ work should be provided, with equality of access across the country ensured.

Many of our participants told us that using public transport often made them feel vulnerable. This was felt acutely by trans participants, with just **40%** telling us they feel safe on public transport. Trans participants described feeling highly visible as a queer person and mentioned 'passing' or not as being key to feeling safe on public transport. Many alter their appearance before taking public transport in order to feel safer. Variables cited as affecting how safe participants feel in these spaces included: the time of day/night; whether or not they are travelling alone; and issues such as disability or expressions of masculinity or femininity.

We therefore recommend that public transport providers display visible signs of allyship such as staff badges, posters and online statements of support. Providers' policies should take a zero-tolerance approach to transphobia and should clearly set out how instances of discrimination will be dealt with. We also support the further use of marketing campaigns such as the previous 'Dear transphobes…' media campaign and recommend that the Scottish Government revisit this strategy.

The final space discussed in this report is the online world. Almost all participants use social media however only **73%** of trans participants say their experience is mainly good as compared to **81%** of cisgender participants. Participants described curating their online experience in order to keep themselves safe and block out transphobic content. This negative content however was described as almost impossible to avoid. Many did however tell us that they find online spaces useful in forming connections with other people, particularly other LGBTQ+ young people. Some also find that online spaces can be educational. A few participants told us that while online they can explore their identity in safety and find positive representations of queer lives, which they cannot do locally.

We therefore recommend that politicians take responsibility for their role in the ongoing 'culture wars' which harm the safety of trans young people and have opened the online world up to increasing levels of transphobia. We suggest that the Scottish Government should develop an action plan for addressing increased online transphobia, racism, misogyny, disablism and other forms of discrimination. We also recommend that organisations creating content to be shared online should actively work in consultation with trans young people to ensure that their online spaces are safe and welcoming.

ACCESSING SERVICES

The second area of concern highlighted in this report is access to public services for trans young people. Participants highlighted issues in engaging with health services and the police.

Our findings show that trans participants do not feel as supported and respected within the health service as cisgender participants. Trans young people told us that standard procedures are not always trans-inclusive, with intake forms missing non-binary gender options being cited as a particular example. Waiting lists for care were described as being inaccessibly long. Others told us that when they are seen by healthcare staff, they often lack an understanding of trans identities and they struggle to be taken seriously. Some participants did say however that the staff they meet do try their best to be supportive with the knowledge they have.

We therefore recommend that NHS and Scottish Government representatives revisit the recommendations made in our ***Health Report 2023*** report in full. In particular we recommend that NHS procedures and guidance documents are reviewed to ensure they are trans-inclusive, including provision for non-binary people. We recommend that all patients on waiting lists that do not adhere to national Referral to Treatment targets receive a clear timeline for treatment and regular updates. We also recommend further training for NHS staff on trans identities and issues, to be designed in consultation with trans young people. We welcome the action being taken to improve Gender Identity Services and anticipate that this continues until the current challenges are fully addressed. We also welcome the establishment of a Mental Health Youth Commission and expect further action from the Scottish Government following consultation with this group. Finally, we recommend that sexual health services review the procedures they follow and the resources they make available to ensure trans identities are acknowledged and supported.

Police services were also described as lacking in trans-inclusive practices. Just 1 in 10 trans participants told us they would feel safe reporting a hate crime to the police. Some felt that it would not be worth reporting this as they didn't believe anything would be done about it and that the experience would be emotionally difficult. Others described difficulties in collecting evidence or apprehension about potentially transphobic police staff. Some did acknowledge benefits to reporting hate crime in that they might receive justice or prevent a future crime if they reported their own experience. Many however told us they need an alternative to approaching the police. We acknowledge that there are different ways to contact the police, however not many participants seemed aware of these.

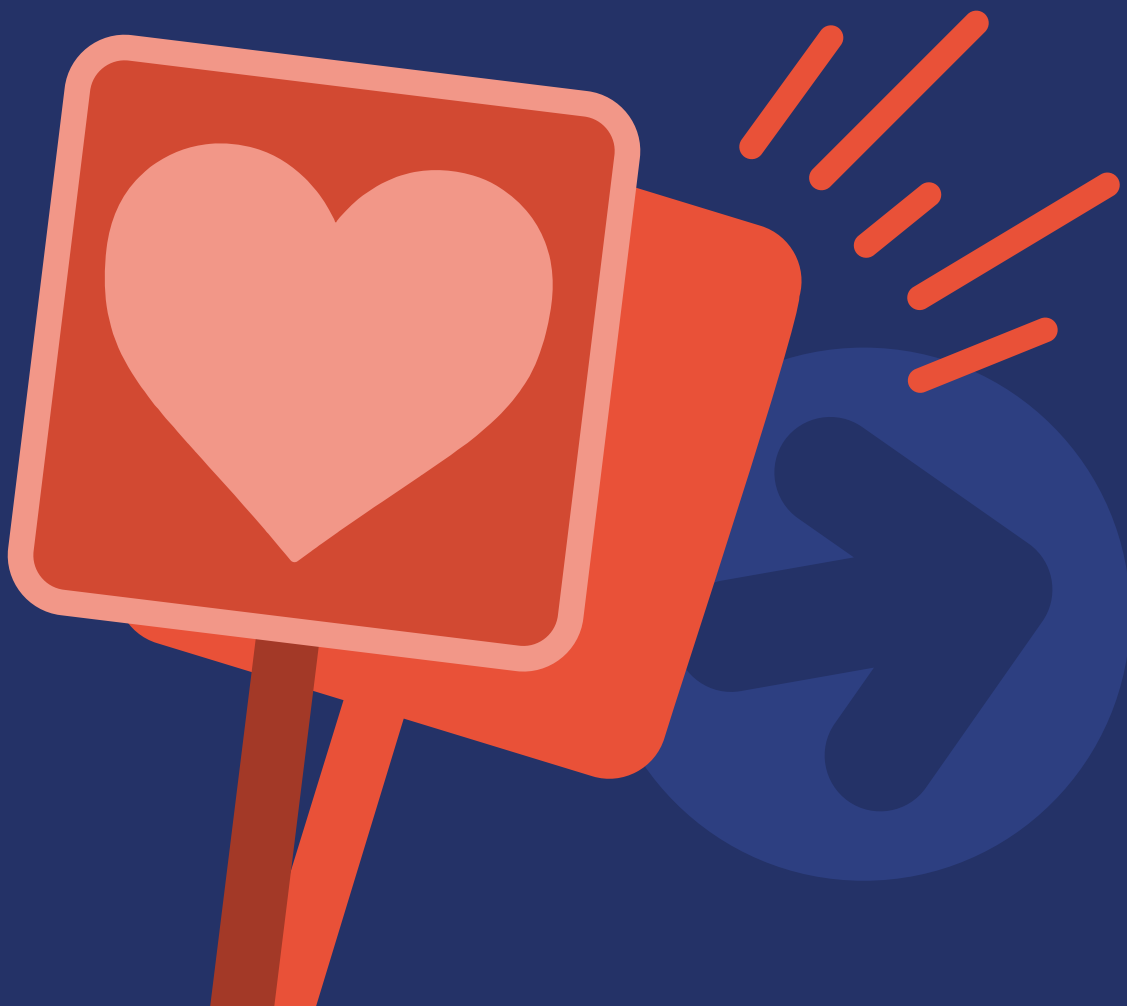
We therefore recommend that impact reviews of new legislation are undertaken to ensure that trans young people are being protected in this process. We also believe that Police Scotland should issue an apology for historic homophobia, biphobia and transphobia and present an action plan for addressing this. Going forward, anti-transphobia training for all public-facing staff should be undertaken. We also recommend more widespread advertising of other approaches to reporting hate crime directly to the police such as third-party reporting.

TRANSPHOBIA

Our final set of findings relate to experiences of transphobia. This was a concern for the majority of our participants with **72%** believing that transphobia is 'a big problem' in Scotland. We also found that 1 in 5 trans participants have left education as a result of transphobia and less than half (**44%**) feel safe to be their authentic self at work or in training. Many told us that they had 'missed out' on experiences such as gaining qualifications or job opportunities due to transphobia. Many are now cautious in their day-to-day lives as a result of this, fearing for their safety or choosing carefully who they do/don't come out to. Many had experienced rejection, alienation, or being excluded from activities. The emotional effects of this included anxiety and stress, and others described a lack of self-confidence due to their experiences.

We therefore recommend that our Education Report 2023 should be revisited by education providers and the Scottish Government. We also recommend that employers engage with inclusion programmes developed in partnership with the LGBTQ+ community such as the ***LGBT Charter for Workplaces*** in order to ensure safe working conditions for trans young people. Our final recommendation is that a public-facing campaign is developed to address the lack of knowledge and understanding from the public of the extent of the impact 'culture wars' are having on young people.

This report highlights specific challenges faced by trans young people in Scotland. Many of these reflect diminishing levels of public support for trans people, a situation being worsened by the rhetoric of many high-profile political and media figures. We urge the Scottish Government and other public bodies mentioned in this report to take action urgently to protect trans young people from the harmful effects of these 'culture wars' and support them to flourish and thrive alongside their peers.



INTRODUCTION

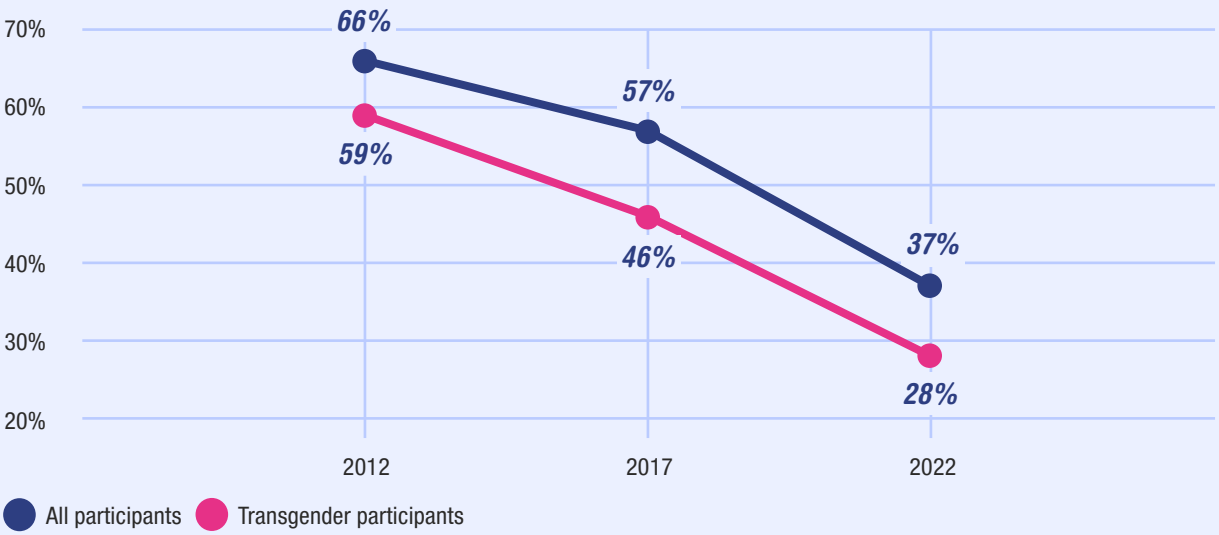
This report has been developed as part of the LGBT Youth Scotland *Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People* research project (Cronie, 2022), a nationwide survey of LGBT young people between the ages of 13 and 25. This research has been running for over fifteen years, with surveys carried out every five years, with the number of young people participating almost doubling each time surveys have been conducted.

This time, 1,279 young people participated, making this the largest piece of research involving LGBTQ+ young people in Scotland to date. The Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People research has had a huge impact already, being quoted in the Scottish Parliament and referenced in academic papers, and the findings are being used to influence policy and decisions which improve the experience of accessing public services and education for young people.

Following its launch, we are developing a set of reports which explore key topics from the Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People research in more depth. This is the fourth and final report in a set of 'deep dives' into topics that were of significant importance to young people. The first of these focused on LGBTQ+ young people's experiences of ***education*** and was launched in February 2023. Following this, our ***Health Report*** focused on participants' experiences of accessing healthcare, exploring good practice, barriers to inclusion, and ways in which young people believe the experience could be improved to make them feel safer and more supported. Our third deep dive report published in November 2023 explored ***experiences of rurality*** in Scotland as an LGBTQ+ young person.

This report was then commissioned to explore issues being faced by trans young people in Scotland. In our main *Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People* report, we covered a wide range of topics including health, education, community, work life, hate crime, the experience of coming out and the media. In the report, we noted that many trans participants' experiences in these areas were poorer than those of cisgender participants. In particular, we asked participants "How happy do you feel with your life as an LGBTQ+ young person in Scotland?" As shown in Fig. 1 below, trans participants reported lower levels of happiness with their lives than participants overall, and the percentage of respondents feeling "Happy" or "Very happy" has fallen steadily each time we have surveyed LGBTQ+ young people since 2012.

Figure 1: Participants who feel happy with their life as an LGBTQ+ person in Scotland



We therefore decided to explore trans young people's experiences further by responding to three research questions:

1. ***Are there particular aspects of life in Scotland explored in our full research report that trans people find more challenging than their cisgender peers?***
2. ***If so, what are these areas and what differences in experience do trans people report?***
3. ***What action can be taken to improve experiences for this group of people?***

The resulting report has been divided into two sections. Section one will respond to our first two research questions by presenting quantitative and qualitative findings in areas where we noted a difference in experience for trans and cisgender participants. The following section will then respond to the third research question by proposing a number of recommendations based on these findings aimed at the Scottish Government, NHS Scotland, Police Scotland, and educational institutions in Scotland.

TERMINOLOGY

LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and questioning, and the positive '+' aims to represent and respect everyone within the LGBTQ+ community. We have previously described our community as 'LGBT' and 'LGBTI', and both are still valued acronyms.

We want the term 'LGBTQ+' to be interpreted in the inclusive way it is meant. At LGBT Youth Scotland, we welcome the full diversity of the LGBTQ+ community and include intersex, asexual and non-binary people within this umbrella, whilst also being mindful that people can have multiple identities that intersect.

LGBT Youth Scotland is informed by the views of young people in consultation with young people. As part of a consultation to inform our 2023–2028 Strategy, young people revealed that they feel LGBTQ+ is the best way to describe their community. In accordance with this, although the Life in Scotland survey used the acronym 'LGBTI', in this report we have replaced this with 'LGBTQ+'. More information on the terminology and the language used in the original survey can be found in the full report *Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People* (2022).

Throughout this report you will often find the term 'trans' and 'cisgender' used as opposed to transgender or cis. These are the versions used most frequently by the community at time of publication and this has been reflected where appropriate within this report.

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

SECTION 1 – FINDINGS

It is clear from our findings that trans young people are having a poorer experience in many areas of life in Scotland than their cisgender peers. We first asked participants *'In general, would you say Scotland is a good place for LGBTI young people to live?'* In response, **61%** of trans participants answered yes as compared to **69%** of cisgender participants.[1] We notice that there has been a decline in the number of trans participants who agree that Scotland is a good place to live, as this figure has dropped by 20% since 2017 when **81%** of trans participants answered 'Yes'.[2]

We also asked participants whether or not they thought their local area is a good place for LGBTQ+ people to live. **45%** of cisgender participants responded "Yes", as compared to **34%** of trans participants.[3] This indicates that trans participants not only perceive Scotland as a whole to be less inclusive of them as trans young people, they are also having a poorer experience at a local level on a day-to-day basis. This finding was also supported by responses to us asking how happy participants felt with their life as an LGBTQ+ person in Scotland. **46%** of cisgender participants were happy or very happy, whereas just **28%** of trans participants responded in this way.[4]

We therefore wanted to find out more about which aspects of Life in Scotland trans young people were finding challenging. Analysis of the qualitative data generated three areas of interest/concern for the trans young people taking part in this research. Our main findings will therefore be presented in the following three sections:

ACCESSING PUBLIC SPACES

ACCESSING SERVICES

TRANSPHOBIA

1. Trans n = 623, cisgender n = 618
2. Lough Dennell, B.L., Anderson, G. and McDonnell, D. (2018) *Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People*. LGBT Youth Scotland. Available online: *www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/media/1354/life-in-scotland-for-lgbt-young-people.pdf*
3. Cisgender n = 618 , trans n = 623
4. Cisgender n= 609, trans n = 613

ACCESSING PUBLIC SPACES

Our participants told us that, as trans young people, they experience barriers in accessing a range of public spaces. Some of these are physical spaces such as places to socialise and spaces on public transport. Others described their sense of place within a local community or the networks and spaces they access online. Within these descriptions, many participants told us that they did not feel included in these spaces or that they felt uneasy accessing them. Others however described places where they have found an accepting community and where they can feel at ease with themselves and those around them.

What do we already know?

- **Two thirds British people say they pay little (42%) or no attention (24%) to the debate about trans rights.[5]**
- **Almost 4 out of 5 non-binary people (78%) participating in Scottish Trans' research into non-binary experiences in the UK in 2016 said that they avoid public spaces and opportunities such as education, retail spaces or social clubs due to a fear of discrimination.[6]**

According to the 2021 Trans Lives Survey,[7]

- **40% of participating trans people reported having experienced transphobia when seeking housing.**
- **On public transport, 67% of trans women, 63% of non-binary people, and 60% of trans men have experienced transphobia.**
- **99% of trans people participating had experienced transphobia when using social media, and 97% had seen transphobic content in digital and/or print media.**
- **93% reported that their experiences of transphobia from strangers on the street had been affected by transphobia in the media.**
- **85% reported being treated differently by their family due to transphobic content in the media, 81% said this was true of their colleagues, and 70% for friends.**

5. YouGov (n.d.)
6. Valentine, 2016
7. TransActual, 2021

COMMUNITY SPACES

Our findings indicate that trans participants feel less included in their community than their cisgender peers. In particular:

- Just 1 in 3 trans participants (**31%**) feel there are enough places for them to safely socialise and be open about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, whilst **44%** of cisgender participants feel enough of these spaces exist for them.[8]
- At the time of the survey, **55%** of trans participants had felt lonely "All or almost all of the time" or "Most of the time" over the past week, as compared to **33%** of cisgender participants.[9]
- **45%** of trans participants told us they feel supported as an LGBTQ+ person in their school/college/university as compared to **52%** of cisgender participants.[10]

Analysis of the qualitative responses participants gave relating to community spaces generated 3 themes:

SUPPORT WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Trans participants described the level of support, respect, and acceptance of their LGBTQ+ identity that they feel or do not feel around them, both in their friend and family circles, and more widely within their community. Some felt that they have managed to find supportive friends or that their family, teachers or other familiar figures in their life are fully accepting of them as a trans person. It was also important to participants to feel accepted as a trans person sociatally, and some participants told us that they believe this to be true.

> ***"I feel lucky as I do feel surprisingly accepted in my area, which I was worried about when moving here. It's quite rare for me to receive negative comments or homophobic/transphobic remarks."***

A larger proportion of participants however told us that they feel that attitudes towards trans identities are hostile, and that they do not feel accepted societally, or that they struggle to find friends and supportive figures in their lives. Many told us that they feel unsafe in public, or that they feel that there is a stigma surrounding their trans identity, leaving them feeling uncomfortable expressing their identity in their community.

> ***"The lack of full societal acceptance certainly affects my sense of safety in public. I'm very proud of who I am and to be part of the LGBTQ community but it does come at the cost of feeling safe in public, I for one have notified the difference from before i came out to now."***

8. Trans n = 620, cisgender n = 615
9. Trans n = 621, cisgender n = 611
10. Trans n = 530, cisgender n = 500

When looking for sources of support within their community, trans participants pointed to allies, LGBTQ+ role models, and LGBTQ+ networks or community events as being important in creating safe spaces for them to inhabit. Allies might support others by consistently using correct pronouns, speaking out when they see discrimination or hate, or being vocal in their support of trans rights. Safe spaces to meet other trans people such as youth groups or LGBTQ+ events, Pride, and other queer events were all seen as positives within the community for trans people. Some participants already see these appearing in their local area, however others, particularly those in rural areas, told us that they would like to be able to access these more often. The need for role models and seeing other openly trans people was mentioned by participants however, this was mainly discussed as something that would be helpful but is currently lacking. Increased representation of LGBTQ+ people was mentioned as something that would improve experiences for trans participants.

> ***"The first time I moved here I saw for the first time a poster at a bus station about going against homophobia. I came from a small island where LGBT people are rarely talked about, so it was amazing to see something like that in public. I have been harrassed by other teenagers before in a mall, but I see so many queer people on the buses and streets that I can't help but feel welcomed."***

Participants also reflected on the extent to which they can/cannot be themselves with the people around them. Many described balancing feeling able to be themselves authentically around a selected group of supportive family members, friends, or trusted people, but also feeling that it would be too dangerous to be their authentic self more publically for fear of abuse or being ostricised.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF TRANS IDENTITIES

Participants told us that many people around them lacked understanding of their trans identity. Some commented that not only was there a lack of understanding, they believe that people around them are unwilling to learn more about LGBTQ+ issues.

> ***"It's not a lack of education as LGBT education is good here, it's more of a lack of caring amongst cis/het young people. They aren't interested in learning or expanding their opinions, particularly about pronouns and other-than-cis identities."***

LGBT-inclusive education was pointed to as a step forward for Scotland however many participants still found that the effects of this had not made a difference to their day-to-day experience. There was a sense for many participants that although LGBT-inclusive education had been incorporated into the curriculum at their school, other pupils continued to engage in homophobic, biphobic and transphobic behaviours. As we found in our ***Education Report 2023***, many of our participants reported that staff at their school, college or university are not always proactive in taking action when they witness these behaviours. Participants in the research felt that tackling this type of discrimination would be a supportive action that those around them could take to make the space safer for them.

> *"Some teachers are not educated enough about queer issues, especially transgender issues, and say things that contribute to transphobia. I am sometimes scared of other students. I hear students say homophobic and transphobic things in classes and some teachers say nothing."*

Many also felt that a lack of understanding of trans and non-binary identities in the community more widely leads to increased transphobia and a heightened stigma around being trans. This leaves them feeling more anxious and uncomfortable within their community.

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS LGBTQ+ IDENTITIES AND RIGHTS

Many participant responses reflected on the progress that has been made in terms of trans rights, and on LGBTQ+-related issues more broadly. Both the media and politicians were pointed to as being influential on public attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community. In particular, transphobic reporting in the media and the spread of misinformation around trans issues which was a source of concern. Some participants attributed the hostile attitudes towards trans and non-binary people that they see around them to this. Just **13%** of trans participants feel that the way LGBTQ+ people are portrayed in the media (newspapers/TV etc) is accurate and reflects their experience.[11]

> *"The government and media's constant transphobic rhetoric has made the UK an increasingly dangerous and discriminatory place to live, especially for young people."*

Many responses compared the experience for trans and non-binary people in Scotland to what they might experience in other countries. There was a lot of variety in opinion around this, with some believing that Scotland is a progressive country when compared to others, but many others feeling that Scotland has not yet progressed far enough in supporting LGBTQ+ rights.

> *"I want to appreciate the safety I get in Scotland, because it could be so much worse – I think there are few countries that would make me feel better than this, even if it's not perfect here."*

> *"I think law/government wise Scotland is progressive in terms of sexuality and that is great but a lot of the general public have bigoted beliefs that they hide behind the guise of being 'traditionally Scottish'."*

11. n = 486

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Many of our participants told us that using public transport was an experience that often made them feel vulnerable. This was felt more acutely by trans participants, with just **40%** telling us they feel safe on public transport as compared to **56%** of cisgender participants.[12]

VISIBILITY

Many trans respondents described feeling a keen sense of being visible as an LGBTQ+ person, which leaves them vulnerable to harassment or discrimination on public transport. Some mentioned that others often pay unwanted attention to them, staring or making comments about their appearance. This leads some to alter their appearance to appear 'less queer' when getting on public transport, attempting to blend in by removing rainbow badges or other accessories. As one participant puts it,

> ***"As long as I don't "show that I'm gay" then I'm safe."***

In addition to this, for many trans participants, 'passing' or otherwise hiding their queer identity was key in feeling safe in these spaces. Some participants who feel they do not "pass" commented that this left them feeling vulnerable to abuse or discrimination. Comments were also made about groups of men who seem intimidating and some examples were given of harassment being received from groups of men.

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

In addition to altering their physical appearance to blend in, others attempt to keep to themselves as much as possible and behave in a way which doesn't draw attention. For many this means keeping quiet, moving out of the way to avoid others, and being carefully aware of the way they move through the space in order not to disturb or provoke anyone.

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

Being visible however was not always described negatively. Some participants told us that they feel safer when they know someone has observed them. For these participants, being noticed in a space offers a form of protection, making them feel less alone and vulnerable. These participants welcome CCTV and other ways of being observed, particularly when they are monitored by staff, making them feel safer.

> ***"All the buses are always bright, clean, and have CCTV recording, so should anything happen I feel safe that it would have been recorded."***

12. Trans n = 602, cisgender n = 589

Being observed and recorded by official staff members was seen as comforting, however some participants also told us that "I've had pictures taken of me by a stranger on the subway." This sort of behaviour was seen as threatening by the victims who described it as an aggressive act. Participants who had experienced this told us that it made them less likely to take public transport in the future.

> ***"I have had people record me to make fun of me. People talk about me and "what I could be", discussing my sex and gender in front of me and I just feel like I need to keep my guard up."***

FEAR/FEELING SAFE

Many participants talked about experiencing fear when travelling. Prior experiences of abuse and violence, or hearing of attacks on other LGBTQ+ people caused many of our trans participants to feel anxious when taking public transport.

> ***"I've been harassed and witnessed harassment more on public transport than anywhere else."***

Some participants had not experienced any harassment directly, however they felt that taking public transport placed them in an enclosed space where they are trapped with strangers. Many felt that not knowing who is there or what might happen was off putting and makes them unhappy taking public transport. For these participants, fear stemmed from the fact that *"when you are on public transport you can't really get away."*

Not everyone however told us that they experienced fear. Some participants did feel safe on public transport, saying that no one really takes notice of them, that people keep to themselves, that no one bothers them and, if they did, it would be possible to get off the transport at the next stop.

> ***"People seem to mind their own business. I might get some weird looks every now and then, but I don't mind that. Not once been threatened, spat on made to feel unsafe due to being LGBTQ+."***

VARIABLES

A key theme discussed by participants was the extent to which their experience on public transport can vary from trip to trip. For many, their experience depends heavily on the area they are travelling in, the time of day, and who they see around them. Participants felt that busier services, and those available at night are more intimidating, whereas daytime services and those with fewer people are preferable. Noticing other travellers under the influence of drugs or alcohol also worried participants.

> ***"During the day is fine but at night I feel vulnerable especially if there are drunk rowdy men around."***

Travelling with other people was preferable for many participants who told us that they feel there is safety in numbers and that having others around them made them feel more confident in taking public transport than they'd feel if they were travelling alone. For some, even if they were travelling alone, having other travellers on the train/bus is useful as they feel that this means there would be someone to step in if they encountered harassment.

> ***"It gets easier if there's a lot of people because I know that I'm less likely to be assaulted or even worse when I'm surrounded by a large group."***

On the other hand, some participants told us that in their experience no one had actually stepped in to help when they had encountered a difficult situation in the past. The presence of a driver or other transport staff made some participants feel safer however others told us that the presence of other passengers, particularly those described as "creeps" made them feel uncomfortable.

> ***"Buses have usually always had more issues on them due to crowds of often teenage boys or old creepy men making comments or trying to touch me for a "joke" or as a "compliment"."***

INTERSECTIONAL ISSUES

For some participants, their trans status is just one of many aspects of their identity which affects their confidence and experience using public transport. Some participants told us that having a disability made them feel more vulnerable to harassment. Others mentioned their physical size as a factor, feeling that they were either small which left them vulnerable or conversely saying that they are physically large and this made them feel safer in this situation.

> ***"I'm small, I look young, I probably look queer to some people."***

Masculinity and femininity were also commented on frequently by participants. Those presenting in a feminine way tended to mention feeling less confident taking public transport than those presenting in a masculine way.

> ***"Most of the time, I am fine, but on occasion I have felt vulnerable as a feminine person who doesn't dress or act femininely surrounded by football lads or any large group of men. I am scared of being assaulted and no one doing anything."***

ONLINE SPACES

Online spaces have become important places for young people to communicate and form communities. For our trans participants social media platforms, online forums and other websites are places to meet and hang out with friends, to learn, to find entertainment, and to express themselves.

- Almost all trans and cisgender participants told us that they use social media (**97%** and **99%** of participants respectively)[13] however **73%** of trans participants say their experience is mainly good as compared to **81%** of cisgender participants.[14]
- **67%** of cisgender participants feel safe to interact as their authentic self online, whereas **79%** of trans participants feel safe to do so.[15] **72%** of trans participants, however, still take steps to anonymise themselves online.[16]
- **53%** of trans participants have experienced bullying related to their gender identity/perceived gender identity.[17]
- **48%** of trans participants have experienced bullying related to their sexual orientation/perceived sexual orientation as compared to **28%** of cisgender participants.[18]

Analysis of the qualitative data relating to online experiences generated 6 themes:

CURATION

Many trans participants seemed to have a strong sense that their online experience is affected by the extent to which they curate it. Choosing who to follow and who to block on social media, and being aware of sites which have moderators or consequences for anti-social behaviours were cited as methods of curating the content they engage with online.

> ***"It is modular, I can interact with who I want to interact with, I can block who I don't want to interact with, it is an experience that for the most part I am in control of."***

Careful control over who they reveal their identity to online was also important to lots of participants. Whilst a few participants had experienced being outed without their consent online, being able to maintain anonymity if they choose to, was seen as an important factor for these young people in feeling safe in online spaces. Some felt that this allowed them to express themselves more freely without fear of judgment, whereas others felt that anonymity offered them a level of protection from transphobia.

> ***"I can be myself and mostly anonymous. I can control who sees what I post and I don't feel as vulnerable. There's more of a buffer."***

Some participants described the internet almost as a physical location, and learning where to go and which areas to avoid was a recurring idea within this theme. Many agreed with the sentiment expressed by the participant that told us *"I know where best to stay and where to avoid."*

13. Trans n = 487, cisgender n = 443
14. Trans n = 483, cisgender n = 437
15. Cisgender n = 440, trans n= 485
16. n = 489
17. n = 485
18. Trans n = 484, cisgender n = 438

POSITIVITY

For many, online spaces and websites are a source of support from others, where they find friendly people and surround themselves with positivity. Seeking out forums and communities where people are upbeat, kind and will lift each other up, was an important online source of positivity for our trans participants.

> ***"I surround myself with positivity and block negativity."***

Others use the internet to find fun and interesting content, or for entertainment. Keeping up to date with what's going on in the world, finding funny videos or cute pictures, learning more about their hobbies, seeing what friends are up to, and reading about likes and interests were all mentioned as entertaining ways to spend time online.

> ***"I follow a lot of artists, including queer and trans artists which makes me inspired, feel represented, and feel seen. I also follow trans and queer influencers or activists, which makes me more hopeful, inspired, and safe on the platforms."***

CONNECTION

Finding connection to others and forming communities is an important way in which our trans participants use the internet. Many told us that they use the internet to interact with friends and combat feelings of isolation. Not only do they interact with their existing friendship group, many trans young people told us that they met new friends online, and that finding supportive people and feeling included was something they found in online spaces. In particular, finding and forming LGBTQ+ communities was mentioned by many participants who commented that this was much easier and, in some cases, only possible online.

> ***"There's variety of communities that work together and will help you through whatever you're struggling with. There's like-minded people like you out there who understand you."***

Rurality was a factor in turning to the internet to find community. For some participants, living in a rural location meant that they struggled to see any representation or find other LGBTQ+ people in their local area. For these people, online spaces were critical in finding community.

> ***"I live in the middle of nowhere so it's good to make other queer friends online."***

Others remarked that meeting new people online had made them aware of other perspectives and helped them form new opinions through talking to other people, and had allowed them to share content and information about their experiences and lives with people they would be unlikely to meet in person.

> ***"I really enjoy seeing other people views on things. I like finding people that share the same interests as me."***

A SPACE FOR IDENTITY

Interestingly our findings show that, for trans people, online spaces can provide an opportunity to express or explore their identity and, for many of our participants, this was the only space they had to do this safely. Several participants told us that they felt they could be themselves and express their identity authentically online, and a few described trying out a name or pronouns in an online space.

> ***"It gives me access to other LGBTI people and educators that I wouldn't be able to talk to otherwise and I could be myself online anonymously before I was out to friends and family."***

Finding positive representation of their identity was also something that participants sought out online. The lack of visible queer role models around many of our respondents in their day-to-day lives meant that finding others like them online who are having positive life experiences was meaningful. This representation was described by some as a source of reassurance and inspiration.

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

LEARNING

Some participants reflected that they'd found their time online to be educational, finding content to engage with that added to their understanding of subjects they are interested in outside of formal education settings. Being able to choose what topic to focus on learning and being educationally independent were aspects of the online experience that appealed to some participants.

> ***"I can really focus on what I want to learn depending on the accounts I follow."***

Others told us that they'd been able to learn about LGBTQ+ identities online, and for some this was helpful in coming to understand their own LGBTQ+ identity more fully. Many commented that the LGBTQ+ education they received elsewhere was not as comprehensive or specific as the information they could access online.

> ***"You can get a lot of advice especially for transgender people about how to pass and how to come out."***

NEGATIVE ASPECTS

Whilst many of the aspects of the internet described by participants were beneficial, there was also an appreciation of the potential negative consequences of using the internet. Many participants had encountered transphobia or anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination online, and some had experienced bullying or harassment on account of their identity. Many descriptions of this abuse emphasised how strong the anti-trans sentiments they'd seen expressed were and that, however hard they tried, it was almost impossible to escape this material online.

> ***"There are so many bigots who just love to go and attack people. I do not care for their opinions but it does hurt to be reminded how many people hate me for simply who I am."***

In addition to stumbling across anti-trans material online, some participants had directly received unwanted attention and "creepy" or sexual messages. This unsolicited attention was upsetting to those who received it. Others had seen shocking or unpleasant content without expecting to come across it as they navigated online spaces.

> ***"I have been exposed to a lot of things that I shouldn't have at a young age."***

Other negative effects mentioned included the potential for arguments and anger to escalate in an echo chamber or misinformation to spread. On the other hand, some acknowledged that they had created their own echo chamber in curating their feeds to increase the positivity they see online and maintain a safe space. In addition to this, some mentioned losing time to "doomscrolling" and engaging with negative or "toxic" content.

> ***"I mostly have a positive experience but constant exposure to stressful/negative news and political views is a downside."***

ACCESSING SERVICES

Trans young people responding to our survey highlighted barriers that they faced in accessing public services. In particular health services were pointed to as being hit-and-miss and, for some, inaccessible. Participants also told us about the difficulties they face in engaging with police services, particularly when deciding whether or not to report hate crime.

What do we already know?

- 14% of participants in the Trans Lives Survey 2021 had been refused care by their GP on at least 1 occasion due to being trans and 70% of participants had encountered transphobia when accessing healthcare services.[19]
- 1 in 10 LGBTQ+ people in Scotland (13%) have experienced unequal treatment from healthcare staff due to their LGBTQ+ identity. This rises to 1 in 4 for trans people (26%).[20]
- The current average waiting time for a first appointment with a GIC in Scotland varies by location from around two to almost five years.[21]
- Scottish Trans's 2016 research into non-binary people's experiences of gender identity services[22] found that only 25% of participants had 'always' felt comfortable sharing their non-binary identity when using gender identity services, and around 1 in 3 (29%) had 'never' felt comfortable doing so. In addition to this, 42% of non-binary participants had felt pressured by gender identity services to do things they did not want to do, such as change their name or undergo a particular treatment.
- 88% of trans people do not report the hate crimes they experience.[23]
- Around half (48%) of trans people reporting hate crimes are not satisfied with the response they receive from police.[24]

19. TransActual, 2021
20. Bridger et al., 2018
21. Scottish Trans, n.d.
22. Valentine, 2016
23. Stop Hate UK, n.d.
24. Stop Hate UK, n.d.

HEALTH SERVICES

As outlined in detail in our ***Health Report 2023***, young people report experiencing barriers to accessing healthcare due to being LGBTQ+. Trans participants however experience additional difficulties in accessing health services. Only half of our trans participants (**56%**) feel comfortable coming out to their doctor.[25]

We asked participants whether or not they feel supported and respected by the following health services in terms of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. There was a clear difference in the proportion of those answering yes to this question between cisgender and trans participants across all services.[26]

Figure 2: Percentage of participants who feel supported and respected in terms of their sexual orientation/gender identity within healthcare services

	A&E	Mental health services	Sexual health services	GP	Gender Identity Clinic
Cisgender	90%	69%	84%	83%	–
Trans	62%	45%	57%	58%	63%

We asked participants specifically about mental health. Almost all trans participants (**94%**) told us that they experience one or more of the mental health conditions or related behaviours below, as compared to **82%** of cisgender participants. In particular we noticed a large difference in the percentages of participants experiencing suicidal thoughts/actions and self-harm, with double the percentage of trans participants experiencing these as compared to cisgender participants.[27]

Figure 3: Percentage of participants who experienced mental health conditions/related behaviours

Mental health condition/related behaviour	Trans participants (%)	Cisgender participants (%)
Anxiety	81%	73%
Suicidal thoughts and/or actions	66%	34%
Depression	62%	45%
Self-harm	58%	28%
Eating disorder	31%	20%
Other (Please specify)	12%	7%
Personality disorder	9%	5%
No	6%	18%
Bipolar disorder	4%	2%
Schizophrenia	2%	1%

25. n = 588
26. A&E n = 482, Mental health n= 233, Sexual health n = 286, GP n = 791, Gender Identity Clinic n = 171
27. n = 1147

As discussed in our ***Health Report***, analysis of qualitative responses relating to healthcare generated four themes: **Systems, procedures and waiting lists; Understanding and care; Respect and agency; and Disclosure, risk and uncertainty.** Trans participants described particular experiences within these themes, detailing the specific ways in which they experience barriers to accessing healthcare services.

SYSTEMS, PROCEDURES AND WAITING LISTS

This theme describes ways in which NHS standard procedures include/exclude LGBTQ+ young people in their service. In particular, trans participants told us that intake forms are often not inclusive of non-binary identities, and that the way consultations are framed, or questions asked by healthcare staff are not sensitive to the needs of trans people. They also told us that waiting lists for trans healthcare were not only long, but also leave patients in limbo without updates or communication during the waiting period which can be over 5+ years for an initial appointment in some areas.[28]

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

UNDERSTANDING AND CARE

This theme describes the extent to which LGBTQ+ identities are understood and LGBTQ+ patients are cared for by healthcare professionals. Trans participants' responses relating to this theme centred around healthcare professionals' understanding of trans and non-binary identities, and whether or not they felt individual service providers seemed truly interested in their care and wellbeing. Many felt that there was a lack of understanding of trans identities and issues among healthcare staff, and that this means they receive poorer standards of care than their cisgender peers.

> ***"Total lack of education surrounding trans issues, this means that the language used was usually outdated or inappropriate and I didn't feel able to speak openly about my gender and the impact that it was having on me as I spent most of the time educating the team that worked with me. It felt that in order to access support, I had to support them first to understand me."***

There were many descriptions however of individual staff who are caring and do their best to support and understand trans patients, but this experience was described as being very much dependent on the luck of the draw and finding a member of staff who demonstrated this care.

> ***"I've found myself rather lucky insofar as all of the doctors/nurses that I have spoken to about my gender have been very accepting. I feel as though they perhaps are unsure of how to handle it sometimes, though they do their best from what they know."***

28. Scottish Trans, 2024

RESPECT AND AGENCY

Responses within this theme describe the extent to which LGBTQ+ young people feel able to advocate for themselves and feel truly listened to when using health services. Trans participants' responses relating to this theme focused on whether or not they felt they are taken seriously by healthcare staff and the frequency of encountering misgendering. Some also described service providers implying that they are not 'trans enough' to qualify for certain gender related services, and should express their gender differently in order to secure service provision.

> ***"I've never been correctly gendered when accessing emergency services. Gender identity clinics have given me a difficult time in the past as I'm gender nonconforming – and the pervasive idea that being trans is somehow more real if you're straight has led to some situations with gender services that made me uncomfortable."***

DISCLOSURE, RISK AND UNCERTAINTY

This theme describes the extent to which LGBTQ+ young people feel safe to disclose information relating to their identity to healthcare professionals. Trans participants told us that choosing whether or not to come out to healthcare staff was a decision that involved weighing up risks and benefits to them. For some trans participants there is no choice:

> ***"At my point in my transition, I am required to come out to healthcare services and have little choice, as refraining could negatively impact my healthcare."***

For others, this choice is stressful and becomes an additional barrier to accessing healthcare. Some trans participants felt that there is always a risk in coming out and others felt that without clear indications that service providers are LGBTQ+-friendly, they would not necessarily feel comfortable doing so.

> ***"The conversation about gender identity has to be initiated by us – this can make it difficult for anxious/less confident people to come out to their healthcare provider."***

GENDER IDENTITY CLINICS

Trans people seeking NHS support as part of their transition may be referred to a gender identity clinic (GIC). Whilst some participants described positive experiences with their GIC, for many participants these services are not adequate.

Many participants described difficulties in simply accessing a GIC in the first instance. Long waiting lists was the primary concern reported. The current average waiting time for a first appointment with a GIC in Scotland varies by location from around two to almost five years.[29] In addition to the delay to accessing care created by these lists, participants also told us that their experience during this waiting period was distressing. Not knowing when they might receive notification of an appointment, or if in fact they remained on the list left many fearing their information had been lost in the system and that they may not hear anything further from the GIC, leaving them without care.

29. https://www.scottishtrans.org/healthcare/scottish-gender-identity-services/

Others found that even when they are able to access trans healthcare, the service provided was inadequate or inaccessible. Some non-binary participants told us that they felt they had to jump through hoops and prove that they are 'trans enough' to receive the care they need. Some had experienced pauses in their care after disclosing mental health concerns to healthcare staff, leaving them worried that it is too risky to tell staff about mental health issues in the future, in case this leads to them being denied further care.

For some, the options available to them via NHS GICs are not adequate and they have chosen to pursue private healthcare to avoid long waiting times for appointments. This however can be a costly process and is not an option open to all trans young people. Some participants described having overspent or taken out loans in order to pay for healthcare.

> ***"Access to trans health care is severely limited. I had to spend around £2000 on travel to Manchester for top surgery. I struggle to get work to pay the debts."***

POLICE SERVICES

We asked participants about their experiences with the police service. Responses centred around hate crime, and the experience of reporting this or choosing not to report. 1 in 5 cisgender participants (**21%**) would feel safe reporting a hate crime to the police if they experienced this, whereas just 1 in 10 trans participants (**12%**) would feel safe in reporting to the police.[30]

Analysis of qualitative responses relating to police services generated 5 themes:

NOT WORTH IT

Many participants said they would be put off from reporting hate crimes as they don't think they would be believed or that they wouldn't be taken seriously during the process. Many felt that as a young person, and/or as an LGBTQ+ person, their case would be deemed unimportant, and that nothing would be done about it.

> ***"I just don't think they'd take me seriously at all and would accuse me of being too sensitive about it especially because it was another group of young folk who harassed me."***

Others mentioned that the severity of the crime would affect their decision over whether or not to report it, with physical crimes being seen as more likely to merit reporting whereas verbal harassment was seen as not worth the effort for the victim or for the police. For some, there was uncertainty over whether or not what they had experienced would actually count as a crime, or whether the police would not consider it worth their time.

> ***"What if it doesn't count?"***

DIFFICULTY

Reporting hate crime was seen by a large number of participants as a difficult thing to do. Some felt that collecting any evidence of the crime was difficult, whereas others viewed the police as untrustworthy and believed that the legal system was unsupportive of LGBTQ+ people. This left them feeling scared of reporting a crime, or demoralised, with many telling us that the process would be scary, or that past experience has taught them that it would be difficult.

> ***"I don't think anyone would believe me. Because of my disability I have bad memory issues and I can't remember people's faces well, so I couldn't describe the people to the police even if I went. I'd be subjecting myself to a lot of scrutiny and judgement for no reason."***

Many also felt that queerphobia and a lack of interest in helping LGBTQ+ people on the part of the police would mean that their experience would be uncomfortable and not worth pursuing.

> ***"The police have a nasty track record and I don't trust them to keep me or other LGBT people safe. I fear for my safety more as a queer person when I am around police officers as I know many more people who have been harassed by police for being queer than have been treated well by police."***

30. Cisgender n = 558, trans n = 590

BENEFITS

Other participants believe that reporting hate crime is a worthwhile and important thing to do. Some felt a responsibility to report, even if no justice was served, in an effort to help others by recording the levels of crime being perpetrated.

> ***"I would report it in the hope it would help inform statistics that would call for change, but I wouldn't report it in the hope that I would be supported as an individual."***

Others trust the system and that they would benefit from reporting a crime. Some would feel safer after reporting their experience and hoped that the perpetrator would be prevented from harming others in the future. Some believed that they could obtain justice by reporting a crime and seeing a prosecution through, and that this would feel fair to them.

> ***"It's a crime!! People need punishment for their negative actions towards minority groups."***

REFORM AND ALTERNATIVES

Some participants expressed a dislike for the current legal system, and a belief that this should be reformed to provide an alternative. These participants believe that systems such as education programmes or mediation would be more beneficial than the current system.

> ***"I don't believe in solving problems with violence, that is all the police can do. I do not report anything to the police unless I am legally required to."***

Others expressed a wish for an alternative to the police as a point of contact for reporting hate crime. Whilst alternative ways of reporting hate crime do exist such as reporting via third parties, it is still noted that these participants were not aware of this and would benefit from knowing more about the options open to them.

> ***"Depends how easy it is to report; if online then I'd report, if I had to phone or attend somewhere in person then I probably wouldn't bother."***

AFTER EFFECTS

The emotional impact of the process was a factor that participants were highly conscious of when deciding whether or not to report a hate crime. Some feared repercussions from their aggressor after reporting, whilst others feared that the incident would be seen as their own fault or that police would take the perpetrator's side.

> ***"I wouldn't report it personally because I feel like the people who committed the hate crime would become angry about it and maybe try to attack one of us later as a way of revenge."***

Participants also told us that the act of reporting a crime would cause them anxiety, that they found it intimidating, and that the emotional cost of reliving the incident would be too high for them to want to engage in the process. Many also worried that reporting a hate crime would result in them being outed, with many being particularly worried about being outed to their parents.

> ***"Saying you have been a victim of hate crime is outing yourself to people with a lot of power over you."***

Many of our participants worried that, given the high emotional cost of reporting a crime and their lack of optimism, that this would result in action being taken against the perpetrator, this would ultimately be a waste of their time and effort.

> ***"It's really hard to actually get any action taken against someone, especially when you have no proof. The process can be horrific for victims and I cannot handle that."***

TRANSPHOBIA

What do we already know?

- The 2021 Trans Lives Survey found that 85% of trans women had experienced transphobic harassment in the street from strangers.[31]
- TransActual's survey also found that 71% of trans men and 73% of non-binary people had experienced transphobic harassment in the street from strangers.[32]
- Trans people are more likely than LGBTQ+ people overall to experience harassment, violence or physical/sexual threats.[33]

Transphobia was a concern for the majority of our participants. We asked whether or not respondents considered transphobia to be: a big problem; a bit of a problem; or not a problem at all, both in their local area and across Scotland as a whole. We compared this to perceptions of homophobia and biphobia in these areas. The table below (Fig. 4) shows that transphobia was considered by the vast majority to be a big problem. Figures for homophobia and biphobia, whilst still considered by some to be a big problem, were much lower.

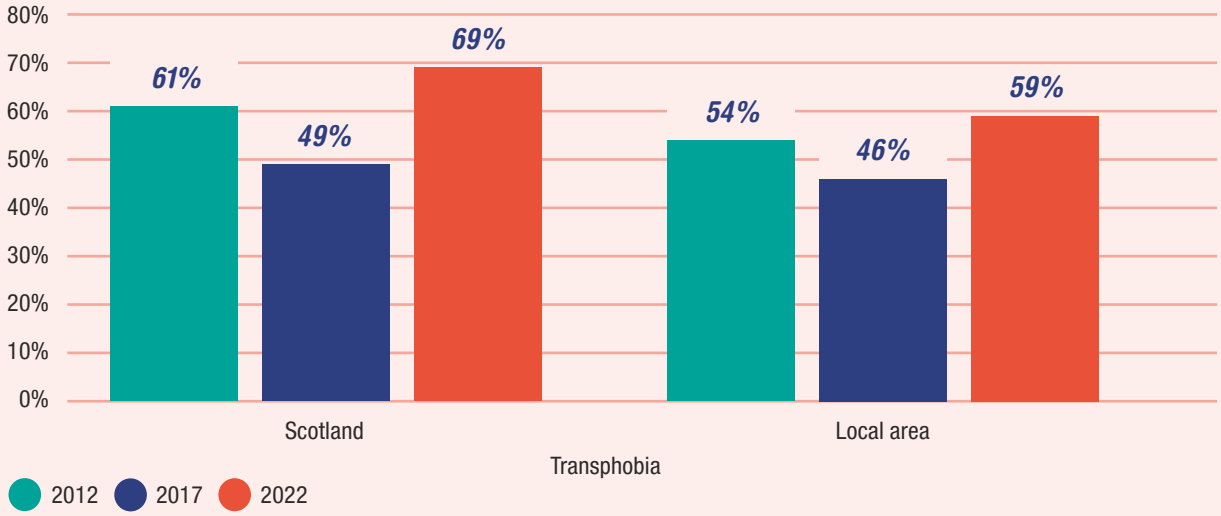
Figure 4: Percentage of trans participants that consider homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia to be a big problem

	Homophobia	Biphobia	Transphobia
A big problem in Scotland[34]	26%	26%	72%
A big problem in local area[35]	28%	23%	64%

31. TransActual, 2021
32. Ibid.
33. Government Equalities Office, 2018
34. Homophobia n = 1242, biphobia n = 1243, transphobia n = 1245
35. Homophobia n = 1260, biphobia n = 1258, transphobia n = 1258

We have asked these questions in surveys to all participants, both trans and cisgender, periodically over the last decade. As shown below in Fig. 5, between 2012 and 2017 the percentage of respondents believing transphobia to be a big problem dropped, however in our most recent survey these figures have climbed higher than ever before.

Figure 5: Percentage of participants that consider transphobia to be a big problem



Transphobia has real world consequences. Participants in our research told us of the effects this discrimination has had on them.

- Almost 1 in 5 trans participants (**19%**) have left education as a result of homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia. This compares to just **6%** of cisgender participants.[36]
- **80%** of trans participants feel that homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia has had a negative impact on their educational experience, as compared to **58%** of cisgender participants.[37]
- **64%** of cisgender participants feel safe to be their authentic self at work/in training however just **44%** of trans participants responded in this way.[38]

We asked specifically whether or not participants felt that homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia had affected them in the following areas (Fig. 6):

Figure 6: Effects of homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia

"Yes", homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia had an effect on my:	Educational experience[39]	Educational attainment[40]	Training opportunities[41]	Employment opportunities[42]
Cisgender	80%	47%	40%	44%
Trans	58%	23%	19%	21%

36. Trans n = 529, cisgender n = 489
37. Trans n = 513, cisgender n = 439
38. Cisgender n = 302, trans n = 271
39. Trans n = 513, cisgender n = 409
40. Trans n = 476, cisgender n = 416
41. Trans n = 381, cisgender n = 347
42. Trans n = 345, cisgender n = 335

It is clear that trans participants are being more severely affected by homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia than their cisgender peers.

Whilst our trans participants may experience homophobia or biphobia, qualitative responses in this area tended to focus on transphobia. A few participants told us they had not experienced transphobia, though this number was not high, and a large proportion of participants spoke of experiencing transphobic discrimination. Some referred to hate crime, violence and harassment, others described being verbally abused. Many spoke of feeling afraid or unsafe as an LGBTQ+ person.

> ***"I can hear the transphobic chants they say at parliament from my flat. I see their stickers on every corner. I've been harassed by bouncers in both men and women's toilets. It is clear they are trying to run a campaign of intimidation against us, and I feel like I am standing strong knowing that but it is difficult."***

EFFECTS OF TRANSPHOBIA

Analysis of qualitative responses relating to the negative effects of transphobia generated four themes:

MISSING OUT

Many participants felt that transphobic discrimination had led to them missing out on opportunities, either by being excluded, or by leading them to opt out of activities and services due to the effects or fear of transphobia. This led to many participants experiencing a change in attitude towards participating in education and training in particular, and feeling that their level of attainment was unfairly limited. Many felt that the threat of transphobic bullying from classmates had left them unable to concentrate, leading to poor performance in school.

> ***"In primary school my attendance started getting really bad towards the end because of [transphobia]. In secondary I dropped out completely and developed agoraphobia, when I was offered training opportunities, I already was incredibly wary of the education system as a result. I'm too afraid to get a job because I keep finding bigoted employers, and that has had a direct impact on my financial situation because I can't find a job, I'll be safe at."***

Some participants believe that missing out on opportunities and experiences has had long-term consequences. We received many reports of missing qualifications or training opportunities that participants believe they would otherwise have gained. Others told us that they are experiencing debt and financial difficulties due to missing out on education or work opportunities.

CAUTION

Some participants found that, due to past experiences of transphobia, they now behave more cautiously. Some described being wary or mistrustful of revealing their LGBTQ+ identity, whilst others actively ensure that they don't present as openly LGBTQ+ to avoid discrimination as they go about their day-to-day lives.

> ***"I felt afraid, particularly in school. I was a constant struggle to not be myself for fear of others' judgement. It's an exhausting battle."***

This related strongly to some participants feeling afraid or fearing for their safety as an LGBTQ+ person, and trying to conceal their LGBTQ+ identity from others around them. Whilst choosing not to come out offers these people an amount of protection from discrimination, for some this causes stress and upset as they try to hide aspects of their identity from others.

> ***"[Transphobia] did and does place a lot of stress on me which makes it hard to focus at times in school and at home trying to do homework or revision and gives me increased anxiety about the thought of being openly trans at school, something I know I should want to be but I don't feel as if I would be safe."***

One participant however points out that they are careful to make sure they do come out when meeting people, in order to make sure that they do not have to keep their guard up in the future. This places a lot of pressure on them to face potential transphobia each time they meet new people.

> ***"I feel I have to be outwardly trans at every job interview as I do not want to work stealth, I feel this has lost me positions where there has been another strong candidate who is not transgender."***

REJECTION/ALIENATION FROM OTHERS

Many participants reported being alienated from those around them. Some told us that the fear or experience of transphobia had made them feel shy or nervous interacting with other people. Others said that due to the gendered nature of certain activities, they feel that they do not fit in. A non-binary participant told us that:

> ***"I hate coming to school because of my gender. I hate using the bathrooms, I hate being sorted in certain classes into boys and girls. I'm not a girl, and I'm not quite a boy."***

Some participants told us that they did not feel supported by those around them. This was mentioned most frequently in relation to a lack of support from school staff after experiencing bullying. Others have been excluded from activities or passed over for opportunities given to their non-LGBTQ+ peers.

> ***"I have been aware of people being really keen to employ me over phone interviews or saying my CV is fantastic and it all goes well until in person interviews where there are a number of jobs, I have suddenly not been suitable for despite having all the experience plus voluntary work and a good phone interview but once I mention I'm trans they start acting weird."***

EMOTIONAL EFFECTS

Some participants shared the emotional effect of experiencing transphobia with us. They described this experience as taking a toll on their mental health, in particular increasing feelings of anxiety and stress.

> ***"I felt I was robbed of my teenage years honestly and was in constant survival mode which made my mental health worsen until I came to university. It left me super vulnerable though in my first year of university."***

Others told us that they engage in unhealthy coping strategies as a result of experiencing transphobia. Some of the coping mechanisms mentioned included smoking, drinking alcohol, and reckless spending. Some also commented that their self-confidence had been affected, as they experienced self-doubt and a reduction in their sense of self-worth. For many of these participants this has impacted their motivation, and they feel it is more difficult to succeed in life following this experience.

> ***"It just makes you feel worthless and like you don't deserve to do well."***

SECTION 2 – RECOMMENDATIONS

ACCESSING PUBLIC SPACES

Our participants told us that, as trans young people, they experience barriers in accessing a range of public spaces. In particular, three areas of public space presented barriers; **Community Spaces**; **Public Transport**; and **Online Spaces**. We therefore make the following recommendations relating to these areas:

COMMUNITY SPACES

- All organisations that work with and support the public should undertake to ensure they systemically understand LGBTQ+ identities, needs and vulnerabilities. In particular, a focus on understanding trans identities should be prioritised.
- Wider knowledge and understanding of trans identities should be increased through public awareness-raising initiatives such as the ***LGBT Charter***. Any initiative pursued should improve policies and practices which affect trans young people, and increase representation of trans identities. These should include how to be a good ally with information on how to de-escalate situations where trans people are being abused.
- Funding for safe spaces such as LGBTQ+ clubs/societies within education and LGBTQ+ youth work should be provided, with equality of access across the country ensured.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- Public transport providers should display visible signs of allyship. Examples of these include staff wearing badges / lanyards indicating their support, posters with statements of support, and transport companies' social media posts being clear that trans people are welcomed and celebrated.
- Public transport providers policies should take a zero-tolerance to transphobia and should be clear on how to address anti-trans discrimination.
- We recognise the impact and success of marketing campaigns such as the previous 'Dear transphobes…' media campaign. The Scottish Government should revisit this strategy to ensure the public can identify what transphobia is and what the impacts can be, particularly on young trans people who may be in vulnerable situations just by being in public spaces.

ONLINE SPACES

- The 'culture wars' have harmed the lives and well-being of trans people instead of focusing on matters of national significance. Politicians need to take ownership of this and commit to acting to protect the rights of the most vulnerable.
- Increased funding for LGBTQ+ safe spaces online should be provided by Scottish Government.
- LGBT Youth Scotland commits to providing high-quality online youth work and sharing our learning and expertise to ensure young people can choose to learn about gender identity and trans issues outside of education, with a trusted provider.
- The Scottish Government should address increased online transphobia, racism, misogyny, disablism and other forms of discrimination. They should take evidence from the communities affected and help raise awareness of the impacts of trolling, doxing, outing, and other forms of abuse online. An action plan should be developed and filtered down through all areas of devolved capacity to help make essential services, which are basic human rights, accessible and safe for trans young people, as well as those with intersecting and other protected characteristics.
- Trans young people are actively curating their online experience in order to keep themselves safe online. Providers of online content, particularly those creating content for public service providers should actively work in consultation with trans young people to review their provision in order to ensure that their online spaces are safe and welcoming.

ACCESSING SERVICES

Trans young people told us that they faced barriers in accessing public services. In particular, we highlighted issues with access to Health and Police services. We therefore make the following recommendations:

HEALTH SERVICES

In our ***Health Report 2023*** we made a large number of recommendations that still stand and we advise in the first instance that NHS and Scottish Government representatives revisit those recommendations.

In this report, we further investigated the experience of accessing health services for trans young people. We therefore reiterate the following recommendations in particular which relate to this group:

- NHS Boards must review paperwork and procedures for initial appointments to ensure they are trans-inclusive, ensuring there are non-binary gender identity options on intake forms. Questions in initial consultations should not assume sexual orientation or gender identity.
- National guidance must be updated to ensure that all patients who are on waiting lists that do not adhere to national Referral to Treatment targets receive a clear timeline for treatment, regular updates and, where possible, suitable alternatives for support.
- Mandatory LGBTQ+ awareness training should be in place for healthcare professionals, including primary care and frontline non-medical staff, and adequate funding must be provided for this work. When developing this training, transgender identities and needs should be a particular point of focus.
- NHS Boards must consult with trans young people to improve patient experience and invest in methods for meaningful engagement. Future research and engagement with young people should follow a co-production model, including but not limited to using youth commissions.
- Guidance must be issued to practitioners on supporting and including trans young people through the use of inclusive language and a person-centred approach.

GENDER IDENTITY SERVICES

- We welcome the action being taken by the Scottish Government and NHS Boards to reduce lengthy waiting times for first appointments at NHS gender identity services. However, we recognise this work is slow and needs to continue to ensure that waiting lists become equivocal to referral to treatment standards elsewhere in the NHS.
- We recognise also the steps that have been taken over the last year to address inequalities that trans people have when accessing gender identity services and recommend that this work continues apace.
- Non-binary service users should be consulted to understand how the service can best support their needs and improve their confidence in accessing services, and treatment pathways should clearly include non-binary people.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- We recognise the progress made in establishing a Mental Health Youth Commission since our Health Report 2023 was published. We now recommend that the Scottish Government's priority in this area should be to communicate with and act on the recommendations made by the Youth Commission in due course.

SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES

- As recommended in our Health Report 2023, sexual health resources must be reviewed to ensure they are relevant and accessible to LGBTQ+ young people. LGBT Youth Scotland has developed a set of Good Sex Guides relating to individual LGBTQ+ identities which could be used as a basis for future resources or promoted more widely within sexual health services.
- Following this, LGBT Youth Scotland commits to updating our ***Good Sex Is…for Trans People*** guide, which should be used and shared by sexual health services
- Policies, training materials, and standard procedures must also be reviewed to ensure they are inclusive of trans identities. Lived experience should be centred during this review, to ensure that any new guidance, policy and/or public-facing materials are appropriate and inclusive.

POLICE SERVICES

In this report, we found that trans participants lack trust in the police service, face challenges in engaging with police officers, and lack knowledge of alternatives to contacting the police directly to report hate crime. Hate crime is a persistent factor that needs to be meaningfully addressed. We therefore recommend that:

- Impact reviews of new legislation should be undertaken to ensure that these meaningfully protect trans young people and that barriers to addressing hate crime are being removed.
- Police Scotland should apologise for historic homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. They need to accept the organisation is institutionally transphobic and present an action plan for addressing this.
- Police Scotland must undertake training of all public-facing staff to support them to engage in anti-transphobic practices.
- Wider advertising of third-party reporting processes should be undertaken to ensure that young people are fully advised of their options when experiencing hate crime.

TRANSPHOBIA

Trans young people told us that experiencing transphobia has long-lasting effects on their lives. The impact of this for participants was particularly focused on their experiences within employment, training, and education. Therefore:

- We strongly advise that the recommendations made in our ***Education Report 2023*** should be revisited by education providers and the Scottish Government in full.
- We also recommend that employers across Scotland actively engage with the ***LGBT Charter for Workplaces*** or equivalent in order to ensure safe working conditions for trans young people.
- We also endorse a Scottish Government funded public-facing campaign to address the lack of knowledge and understanding of the extent of the impact 'culture wars' are having on trans young people, and which seek to unfairly demonise the trans community.

Outwith the three focus areas from the findings, we ask that the Scottish Government continue work to deliver on the Non-Binary Action Plan at pace. In addition, we call on the Scottish Government to exert influence on the UK Government on issues out-with its capacity which impact trans people living in Scotland. These include:

- Non gendered sex markers on driving licences and passports
- Maintaining the commitment to discussions negating the Section 35 Order placed following the passing of the Gender Recognition Reform Bill at a point where it is appropriate to do so.

METHODOLOGY

A full outline of the methodology and ethical considerations for the Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People 2022 research can be found in the ***Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People*** report. The methods used in preparing this supplementary report are broadly similar to those used in the main report, however some additional analysis was carried out to explore trans and non-binary participants' experiences in more depth. We will therefore set out the analytical procedure used in preparing this report below.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Quantitative analysis was carried out initially using R & RStudio, and a dashboard was then created using Power BI for use in further analysis.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The qualitative data was analysed using an Applied Thematic Analysis (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). This process involved:

- Isolating responses given by trans participants.
- Selecting questions to be analysed based on topics of relevance to the research question.
- An initial read-through of the data set.
- A thematic analysis of the data set:
    1. Reading and rereading the data.
    2. Developing initial codes from shared patterns of meaning across data units.
    3. Coding the data set fully.
    4. Generating themes from the code list/coded data set.

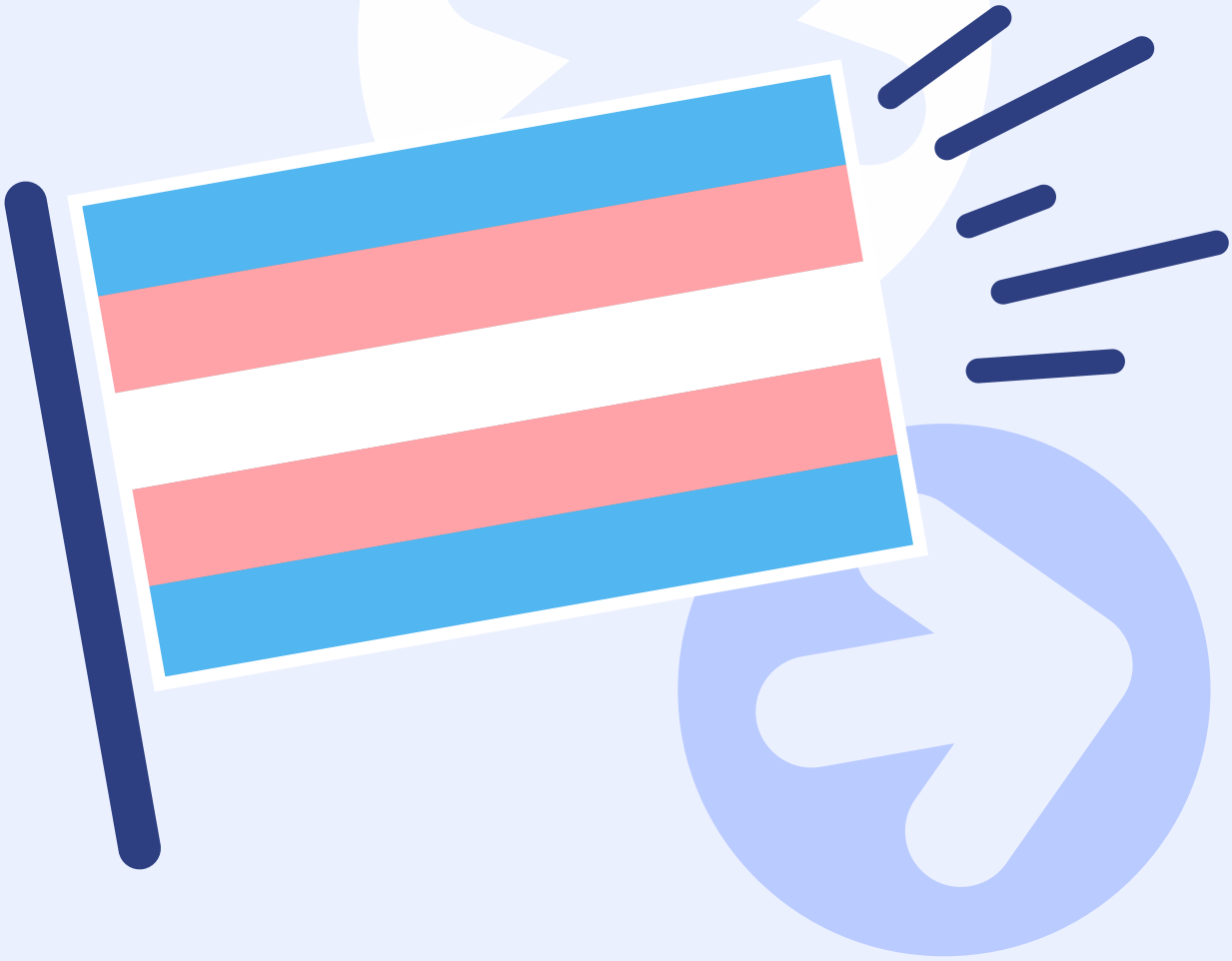
The resulting themes are presented in the section headings within this report, supported by sets of representative quotes to illustrate the data contained within each. Quotes within in this report appear in the participants' own words; the only amendments made have been to correct spelling or punctuation errors to increase legibility or to remove additional punctuation which appeared in some quotes when downloading the data file from the survey software.

DEFINITION OF TRANSGENDER IN THIS RESEARCH

Participants were asked to tell us how they would describe their gender identity, using the response options: Girl/woman; Boy/man; In another way; and Prefer not to say. Participants identifying in another way were asked to tell us how they identified. Responses included: nonbinary; transmasculine; transfeminine; agender; demi boy/girl; genderfae; pangender; and questioning. 380 participants identified as non-binary, representing 30% of the sample. In this research, we have used non-binary as an umbrella term to encompass many of the diverse participant responses within the 'in another way' category, such as: “non-binary”; “genderfluid”; “transmasculine”; “agender” and others.

49% of participants were transgender; this is inclusive of girls/women and boys/men who responded 'Yes' to the question 'Do you identify or have you ever identified as transgender?' and of non-binary participants. Not all non-binary participants responded “Yes” to the question “Do you identify or have you ever identified as transgender?” however in accordance with advice from Scottish Trans, non-binary participants have been included in this figure. This allows us to highlight differences between cisgender respondents, and all respondents who are not cisgender (e.g. who are transgender and/or non-binary). It is of course impossible to do justice to the diverse way that young people express and describe their gender identities and sexual orientations within the narrative analysis of the report, but this was felt the most appropriate way to present the findings most clearly.

References to transgender participants throughout this report are therefore inclusive of non-binary participants.



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ABOUT LGBT YOUTH SCOTLAND

LGBT Youth Scotland is the national charity for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ+) young people. LGBTQ+ young people face unique and additional barriers to realising their potential and that is why LGBT Youth Scotland exists. We believe Scotland can be a place where all young people can thrive and flourish, and we work alongside young people to remove those barriers, supporting young people individually and amplifying their collective voices to influence change. For further information, help or support, please visit our website at www.lgbtyouth.org.uk

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or scan the code to download our brochure.

LGBT YOUTH SCOTLAND

LGBT CHARTER

"It's not a lack of education as LGBT education is good here, it's more of a lack of caring amongst cis/het young people. They aren't interested in learning or expanding their opinions, particularly about pronouns and other-than-cis identities."

"I follow a lot of artists, including queer and trans artists which makes me inspired, feel represented, and feel seen. I also follow trans and queer influencers or activists, which makes me more hopeful, inspired, and safe on the platforms."

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LIFE in SCOTLAND for LGBT YOUNG PEOPLE

LGBT YOUTH SCOTLAND