



Experiences of students who identify as **LGBTQ+**

**Pupil
Wellbeing
Survey
2026**

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Introduction

We want to make sure every student feels happy, confident and able to engage in education and learning towards a bright future. In recent years students have felt more confident about identifying openly with different sexualities and genders. We are also aware not every student has the same experiences growing up in Gloucestershire.

Students who identify as LGBTQ+ experience many of the same challenges as their peers, while some may also face additional pressures linked to stigma, discrimination, or a lack of acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

In this report we will investigate how students who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer or alternative sexual orientation/gender (LGBTQ+ community) experience living and going to school or college in Gloucestershire. LGBTQ+ covers a broad range of people who have different lived experiences and may be at different stages in exploring their identity.

National evidence¹ suggest students in the LGBTQ+ community are more likely to experience bullying, suffer from low mental wellbeing and face discrimination in accessing help.

Students who identify as LGBTQ+ may also be more likely to experience health disparities - preventable gaps in physical and mental health that stem from social stigma and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

A number of stressors can shape experiences of Students who identify as LGBTQ+:

- Challenges with finding or building a supportive community
- The coming out process
- Understanding identity
- Worrying about others' reactions to coming out or changes in relationship status
- Tension in family relationships
- Finding and engaging with romantic and sexual partners
- Discrimination and internalized oppression
- Loneliness or isolation

- Unhealthy coping strategies

There is an opportunity to strengthen school and wider community environments so that LGBTQ+ pupils feel safe, included and supported to achieve their potential.

Questions about sexual orientation and gender identity are only asked to secondary and post-16 students, therefore all analysis in this report relates to these students only.



The Pupil Wellbeing Survey

The Pupil Wellbeing Survey (PWS) and Online Pupil Survey™ (OPS) is a biennial survey that has been undertaken with Gloucestershire school children since 2006. Students participate in Years 4, 5 and 6 in primary schools; Years 8 and 10 in secondary schools; and Years 12 and 13 in post-16 settings such as sixth forms and colleges. A large proportion of mainstream, special and independent schools, colleges and educational establishments take part, representing approximately 70.0% of students in participating year groups in 2026. The PWS asks a wide variety of questions about student's characteristics, behaviours and lived experience that could have an impact on their overall wellbeing. The 2026 PWS was undertaken between January and April 2026.

Limitations and caveats of the survey

Not all children and young people who are resident in Gloucestershire attend educational establishments in the county and similarly not all students attending educational establishments in Gloucestershire are residents in the county. It is

¹ <https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/risks-and-protective-factors/vulnerable-children/lgbtqiplus-children-and-young-people/>

therefore important to remember this analysis is based on the student population not the resident population.

Gloucestershire is a grammar authority and has a number of notable independent schools, and several mainstream schools very close to the county's boundary; these all attract students from out of county. This results in the school/college population (particularly at secondary phase) having slightly different characteristics, especially ethnicity, to the resident young people's population. 12.3% of Gloucestershire's resident population (2021 Census) were estimated to be from diverse ethnic communities; however, 23.1% of Gloucestershire's student population were from diverse ethnic communities in January 2026 and 23.4% of the PWS cohort were students from diverse ethnic communities in the 2026 survey.

Although a large proportion of the county's educational establishments took part in the survey, some only had low numbers of students completing the survey; in contrast, others had high numbers. Although this doesn't impact the overall county analysis, as demographics are represented as expected at this geography, analysis by district and education phase might only have certain demographic groups represented due to low student take-up (for example, low numbers completing the survey in Tewkesbury at post-16 phase). Where post-16 provision is situated also impacts the survey, as older students travel further to access post-16 provision.

Analysis of deprivation

Educational settings have been categorised into statistical neighbour groups which cluster settings with students of a similar socio-economic profile within the same type of setting (a similar level of deprivation, affluence or personal/family characteristics).

We use Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) to determine the relative deprivation of students. The IMD is based on the home postcode of students (collected in the School Census). This is aggregated to give an overall IMD score for the setting, reflecting the deprivation levels experienced by students. The settings are then split into quintiles based on their

scores: quintile 1 is the most deprived and quintile 5 is the least deprived in Gloucestershire.

In addition:

- Grammar/selective schools are compared to other grammar/selective schools in their phase without reference to the IMD.
- Independent schools are compared to other independent schools in their phase without reference to the IMD.
- Post-16 only/Further Education (FE) colleges are compared to all other post-16 only colleges without reference to the IMD.
- Special schools are compared to all other schools of this type in the same phase without reference to the IMD.
- Vocational and alternative settings/schools are compared to other settings/schools in the same phase without reference to IMD.

Glossary of terms

A/HMW – Average/High Mental Wellbeing (see WEMWBS)

Asexual – A person who does not experience sexual attraction. Some asexual people experience romantic attraction, while others do not.

CAMHS – Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services

Cis – where a person's gender corresponds with sex assigned at birth

Transgender and non-binary students – a collective term for people who are non-gender conforming

LGB – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual

LGBTQ+ - collective term for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer plus community

Non-binary - An umbrella term for people whose gender identity doesn't sit comfortably with 'man' or 'woman'. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject them entirely

LMW – Low mental wellbeing (see WEMWBS)

Queer - a term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity

RSE – Relationship & Sex Education

Trans or **Transgender** - where a person's gender doesn't correspond with sex assigned at birth

WEMWBS – Warwick & Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale
– an internationally used measure of mental wellbeing



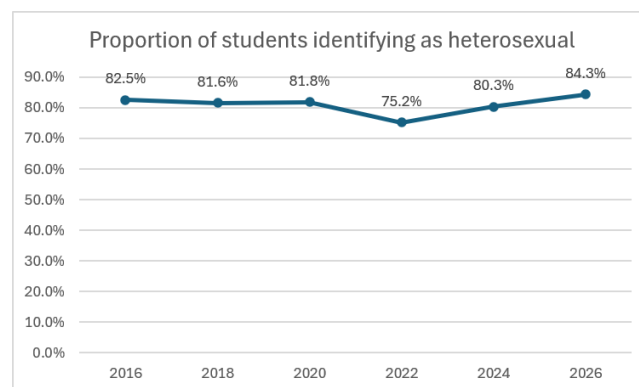
Sexual orientation

Questions about sexual orientation and gender identity are only asked to secondary and post-16 students, therefore all analysis in this report relates to these students only.

Key takeaways

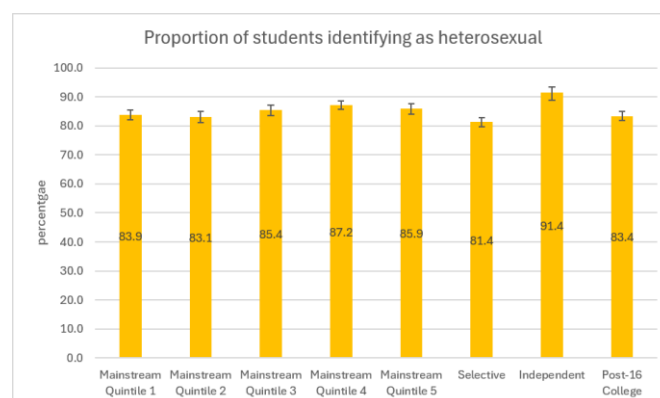
- Most students identified as heterosexual in 2026, but patterns varied by setting, ethnicity and district.
- Heterosexual identification was highest in independent schools and lowest in selective settings.
- Students in special schools were less likely than other groups to identify as heterosexual.
- Students from Asian and Black backgrounds were more likely than White British students to identify as heterosexual.
- Lesbian/gay and bisexual identification increased between 2016 and 2022, then reduced slightly.
- Female students were more likely than male students to identify as lesbian, bisexual or pansexual.
- Bisexual or pansexual identification was highest in vocational/alternative settings and in Cotswold.
- The proportion of students questioning or not knowing their sexual orientation has reduced since 2022.
- Asexual identification reduced significantly in 2026.

Sexual orientation is about a person's sexual feelings, thoughts, attractions and behaviours towards other people. The proportion of students reporting they are *heterosexual* in 2026 (84.3%).



There appears to be little correlation between identifying as heterosexual and deprivation. However, students at independent schools who are likely to have the most affluent backgrounds had the highest proportion of students identifying as heterosexual

The reasons for these differences are unclear and may reflect a range of factors, including cohort characteristics, school culture, confidence in disclosure, or wider social influences



Students at Special schools were significantly less likely to report identifying as heterosexual than any other group (67.6%). International research including a [study²](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09687599.2019.1689925) based on Australian men in 2018 suggest that a larger proportion of disabled than non-disabled people are sexual minorities.

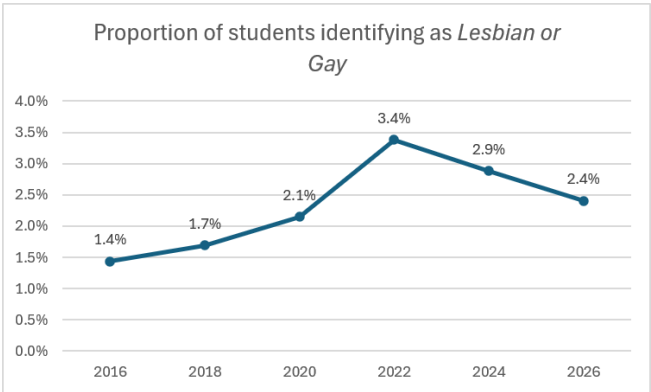
²<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09687599.2019.1689925>



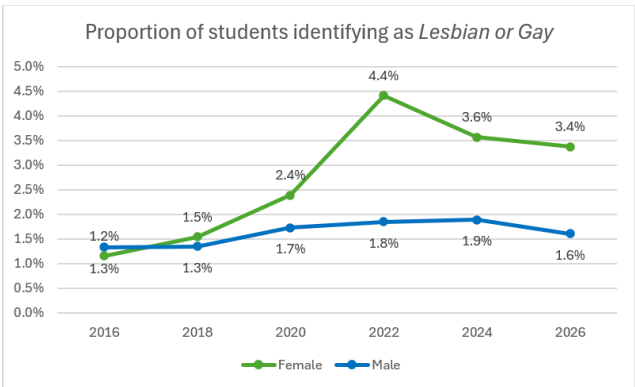
The proportion of students identifying as heterosexual was different by broad ethnic group, students from Asian and Black backgrounds were significantly more likely to identify as heterosexual than white British students. Students from *Any other mixed background* were significantly less likely to identify as heterosexual.

Students identifying as lesbian or gay

The proportion of students identifying as lesbian or gay had been increasing since a question about sexual orientation was added to the survey in 2016, and 2022. However, since 2022 it has been reducing.

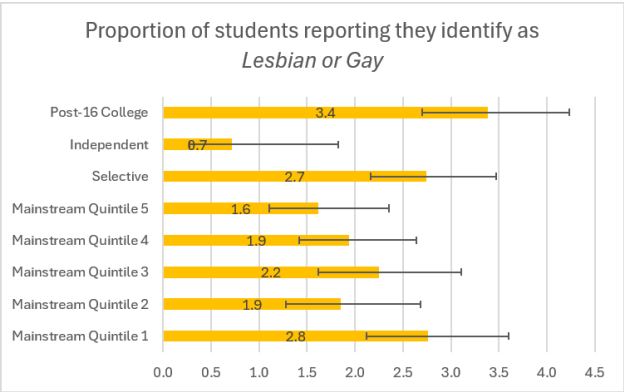


This trend is driven by an increase in females identifying as lesbian, and a subsequent reduction between 2022 and 2024; the proportion of males identifying as gay has risen much more slowly.



Only around a third of students identifying as lesbian or gay were cisgender males.

There was no significant difference in the proportion of students identifying as *lesbian or gay* by statistical neighbour group, although there appears to be a link with deprivation in mainstream settings. Students at independent schools had the lowest proportion identifying as *lesbian or gay* in 2026.



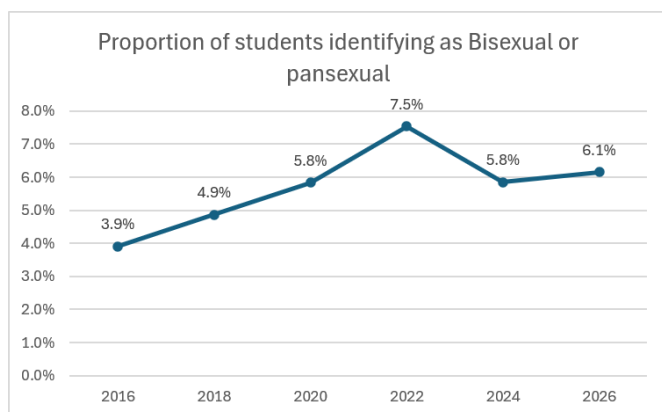
There was no significant difference in the proportion of students identifying as lesbian or gay across the districts.

The 2021 Census results suggest 1.3% of the Gloucestershire population over 16 identify as lesbian or gay, slightly lower than the national average 1.5%.

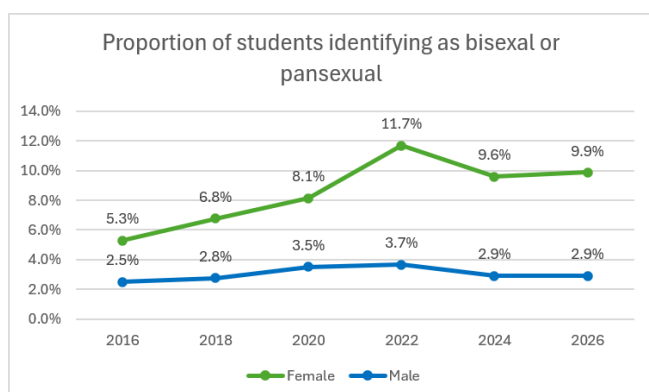


Students identifying as bisexual

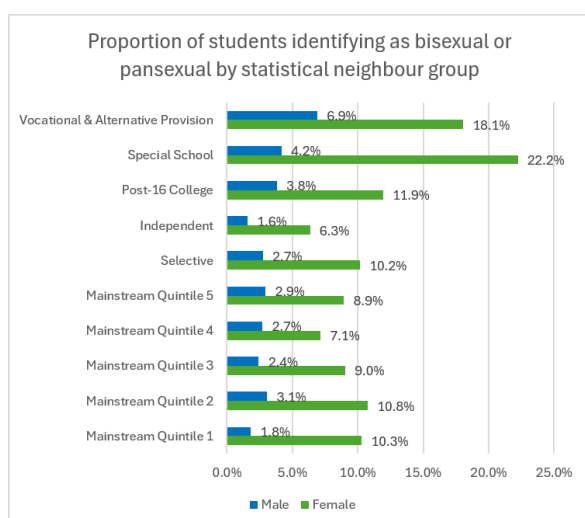
Since 2016, the proportion of students identifying as bisexual had been increasing but again reduced slightly between 2022 and 2024.



Again, this is mainly driven by the trend in cisgender females identifying as bisexual or pansexual, the male trend remains fairly stable.

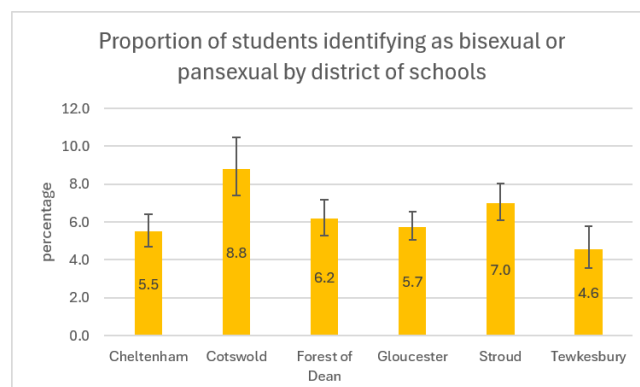


The proportion of students identifying as bisexual or pansexual was highest in vocational & alternative settings. Females were between 3 and 5 times more likely than males to identify as bisexual or pansexual across all socioeconomic groups.



The proportion of students identifying as bisexual or pansexual was highest in Cotswold district, which was significantly higher than all other

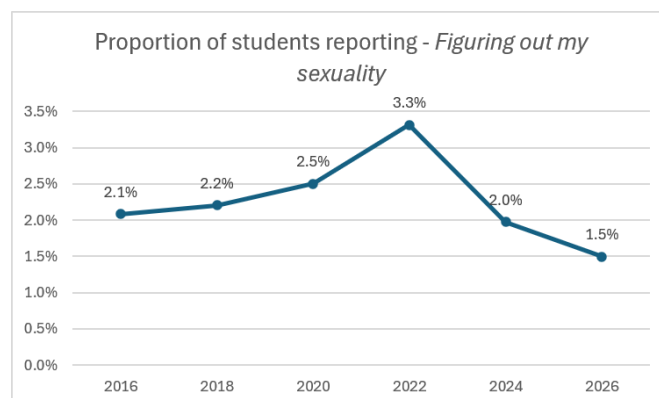
districts except Stroud. The proportion across the other districts was more similar.



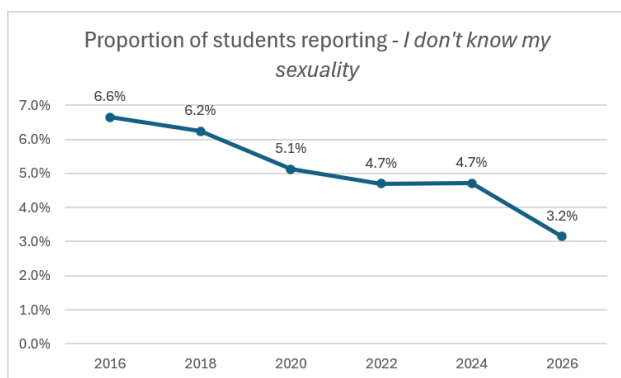
The 2021 census results suggest 1.2% of the Gloucestershire population over 16 identify as bisexual, slightly lower than the national average (1.3%). More recent national estimates³ for young people suggests of women aged 16 to 24 years, 6.7% identified as bisexual, compared with 3.5% of men in the same age group.

Questioning and changing sexual identity

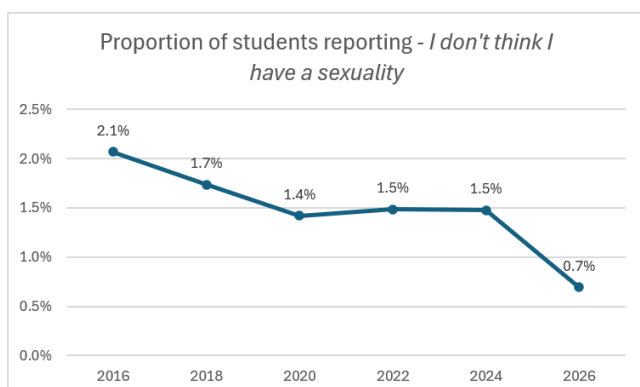
There was an increase in students who were questioning their sexual orientation and figuring out their sexual identity between 2016 and 2022. Since then, the proportion has fallen to below the 2016 level.



The proportion of students reporting they didn't know their sexual orientation has been reducing steadily since 2016.



After reducing between 2016 and 2018, the proportion of students reporting they were asexual or didn't feel they had a sexual orientation, appeared stable, but has reduced significantly in 2026.



The proportion of students who did not answer the sexual orientation question has reduced substantially since 2016, from 12.7% to 1.8% in 2026.

Gender identity

Questions about sexual orientation and gender identity are only asked to secondary and post-16 students, therefore all analysis in this report relates to these students only.

Key takeaways

- In 2026, 2.3% of secondary and post-16 students identified as trans, non-binary or gender fluid.
- LGB students were more likely than heterosexual students to also identify as transgender and non-binary students.
- Students who identify as LGBTQ+ were more likely to want information and support about sexual and gender identity.
- LGB and transgender and non-binary students reported lower levels of control, self-acceptance and feeling good about themselves than heterosexual/cis students.

Gender identity refers to a person's innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something else, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.⁴

In the Gloucestershire student cohort, students assigned female at birth were more likely than students assigned male at birth to identify as trans. The reasons for this difference are unclear and cannot be determined from the survey data.



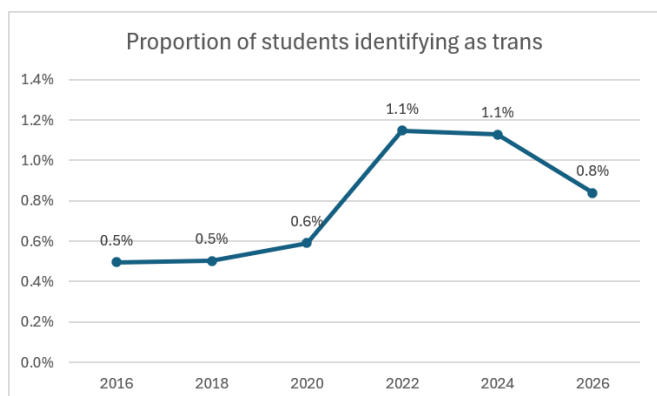
Since 2022, the survey has asked students more comprehensively about their gender identity. In 2026, 2.3% of students identified as trans, non-binary or gender fluid.

⁴ <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/list-lgbtq-terms>

Identified gender	Biological sex		Total
	Female	Male	
Cisgender	94.3%	95.9%	94.6%
Don't know	1.2%	1.7%	1.9%
Don't think of myself as having a gender	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Figuring out my gender	1.0%	0.4%	0.8%
Gender fluid	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Non-binary	1.3%	0.5%	0.9%
Transgender	1.2%	0.5%	0.8%

Students who identified as trans

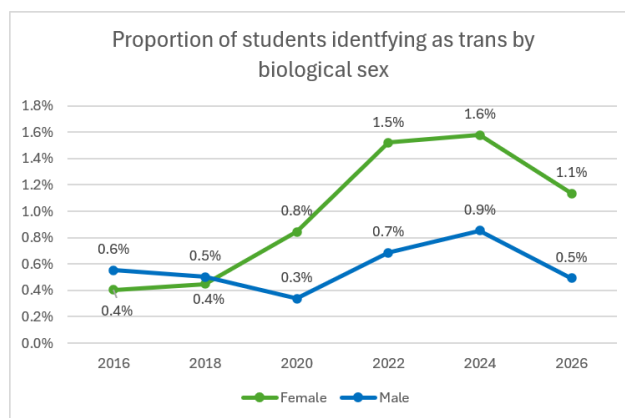
In previous surveys we included trans in a separate broader question about sexual orientation and gender, therefore it is difficult to show robustly a trend in pupils identifying as trans. In 2026, 0.8% reported they identified as trans (1.1% of students assigned female at birth and 0.5% of students assigned male at birth). This was a slight reduction on the last two surveys but not significantly.



The 2021 census results suggest 0.1% of the Gloucestershire population over 16 identify as trans, slightly lower than the national average 0.2%. It also suggests that nationally the proportion of young people aged 16-24 identifying as trans is higher at 1.0%

Research⁵ suggests among youths aged 13 to 17 in the U.S., 1.4% identify as transgender, the 2026 survey results indicate Gloucestershire is broadly in line with national and international estimates.

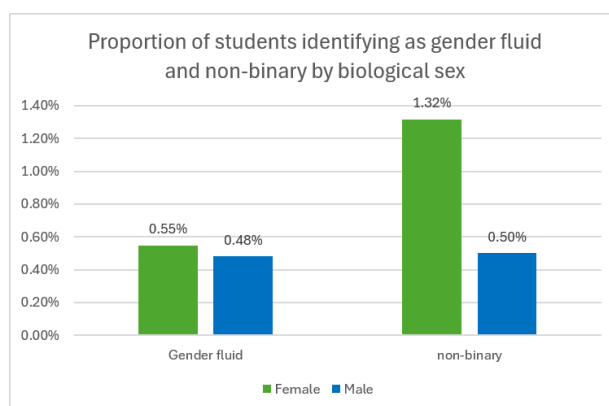
There appears to be a difference between the sexes when identifying as trans, but due to small numbers it is not significant.



There is no significant difference in students identifying as different gender identities by ethnicity.

Students who identified as gender-fluid or non-binary

In the 2026 PWS a further 0.5% of students identified as gender-fluid, and 0.9% identified as non-binary. Cisgender females were more likely to identify as non-binary than cisgender males.



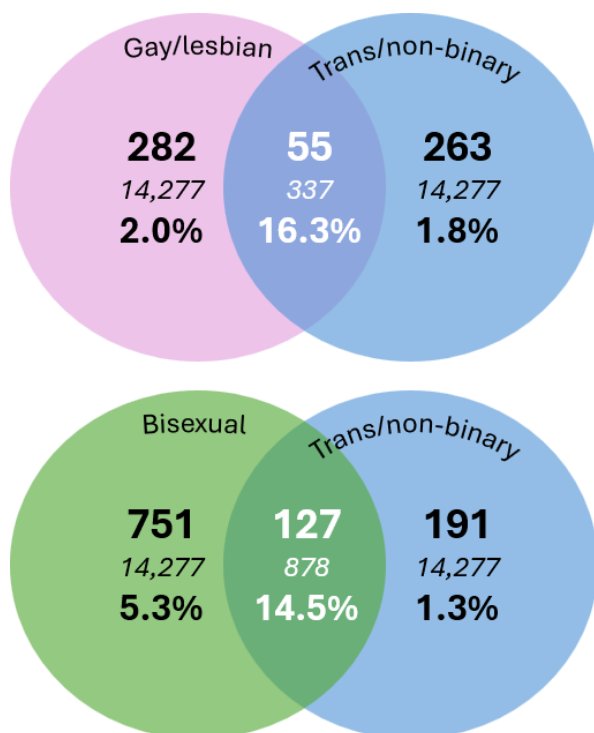
Students who identified as lesbian or gay and those identifying as bisexual were both significantly more likely to also identify as trans, gender-fluid or non-binary (subsequently referred to as transgender and non-binary students) than heterosexual students. 1 in 6 lesbian or gay pupils and 1 in 7 bisexual students identified as transgender and non-binary students compared to 1 in 138 heterosexual students.

There are many different combinations of sexual orientation and gender, students who identified as lesbian or gay and those identifying as bisexual were both significantly more likely to also identify

⁵<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/trans-adults-united-states/#:~:text=Among%20youth%20ages%2013%20to,>

reported%20they%20are%20gender%20nonconforming .

as transgender and non-binary students than heterosexual pupils.



Understanding identity

Key takeaways:

- Students who identify as LGBTQ+ were less likely than heterosexual/cis students to report finding it easy to make and keep friends.
- Transgender and non-binary students reported the lowest levels of ease in making and keeping friends.
- Asexual students were least likely to report feeling close to other people.
- Transgender and non-binary students and LGB students were significantly more likely to report serious bullying than cis and heterosexual students.
- However, reported serious bullying has reduced since 2016, particularly among transgender and non-binary students and lesbian/gay students, but inequalities remain.

Social identity can influence how people understand themselves, relate to others and experience a sense of belonging. Feeling accepted and respected within family, peer and community settings can support positive wellbeing and help young people develop confidence in who they are.

As young people grow and develop, their understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity may evolve over time. Supportive relationships and inclusive environments can help young people feel connected, valued and able to participate fully in family, school and wider community life.

Students who identify as LGBTQ+⁶ were significantly more likely to say they wanted more information and support about their sexual identity (21.8% vs. 1.9%). 1 in 3 students who said they were *figuring out their sexual orientation* said they wanted more information and support about their sexual identity.

Students who identify as LGBTQ+ were also significantly more likely to say they wanted more information and support about their gender identity (15.6% vs. 1.5%).

LGB students were significantly less likely to report they felt *they had control over their life* than heterosexual students (47.0% vs. 67.4%). Transgender and non-binary students were also less likely to say they had control over their life than cis students (39.6% vs. 68.7%).

LGB students were significantly less likely to report saying they *can like themselves even when others don't* compared to heterosexual students (47.0% vs. 70.6%), this was also the case for transgender and non-binary students when compared to cis students (39.6% vs. 68.7%).

Only 1 in 5 transgender and non-binary students reported they felt good about themselves compared to 1 in 2 cis students, and only 1 in 4 LGB students compared to 1 in 2 heterosexual students.

⁶ This includes all students identifying other than heterosexual or cisgender

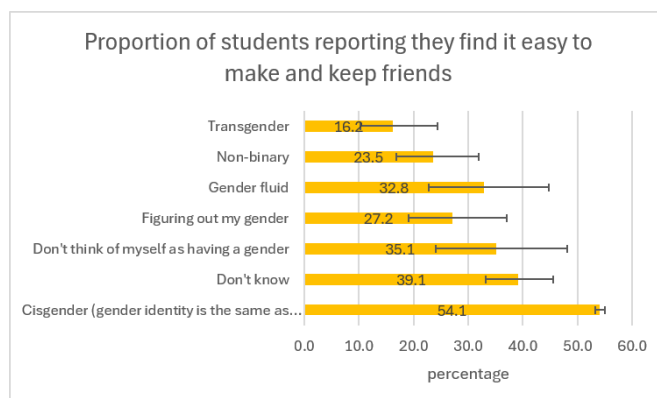
Peer acceptance and belonging

Key takeaways:

- Students who identify as LGBTQ+ were less likely than heterosexual/cis students to report finding it easy to make and keep friends.
- Transgender and non-binary students reported the lowest levels of ease in making and keeping friends.
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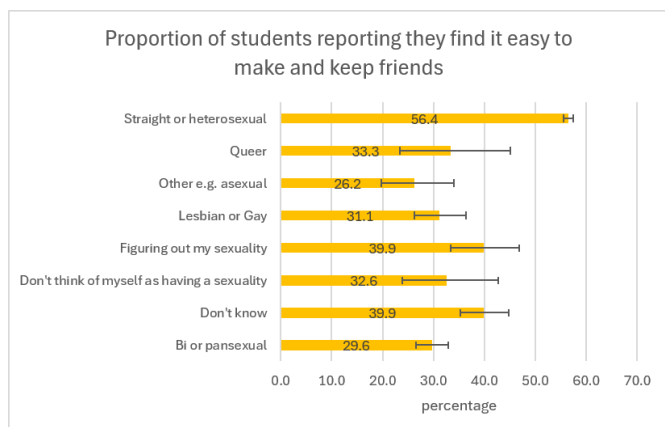
Transgender and non-binary students were also less likely to report they found it easy to make and keep friends, compared to cis students. Only 1 in 6 Trans students reported they found it easy to make and keep friends, the least likely of all gender identities.



There was a difference between the sexes. 1 in 3 transgender and non-binary students whose sex assigned at birth was male said they found it easy to make and keep friends compared to 1 in 7 of transgender and non-binary students whose sex assigned at birth was female. The reasons for this difference are not clear from the survey data and may reflect a range of individual, social or school-level factors. Given the small numbers involved, this finding should be interpreted with caution. Students with differing sexual orientation and gender combinations may experience compounding issues that affect their confidence or their ability to make and keep friends.

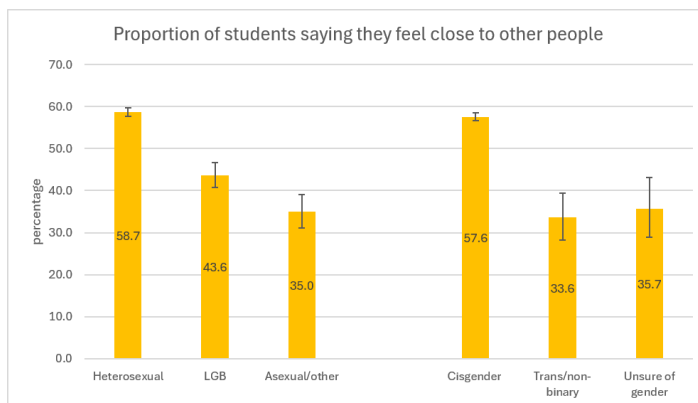
Friendships and peer acceptance

Making friends and feeling you belong to a group, or community is important for wellbeing and development. Students identifying as any other sexual orientation than heterosexual were significantly less likely to report they found it easy to make and keep friends than heterosexual pupils.



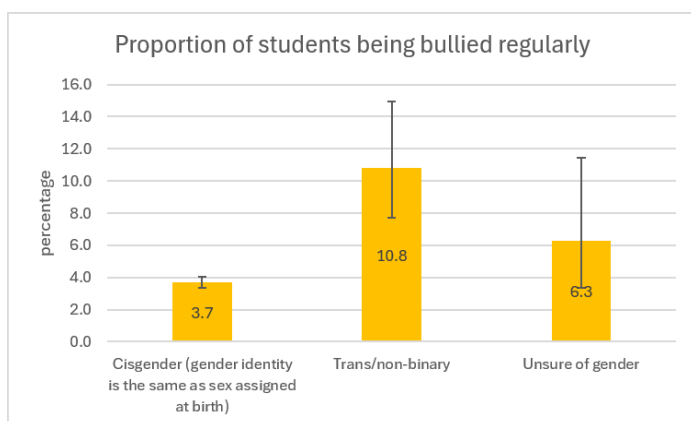
1 in 3 of LGB pupils at selective schools (35.7%) reported they found it easy to make and keep friends compared with only 1 in 4 (23.8%) LGB pupils in mainstream quintile 1 schools.

Students are also asked if they feel close to other people, asexual students were the least likely to say they'd been feeling close to other people, significantly lower than heterosexual students but also LGB students.

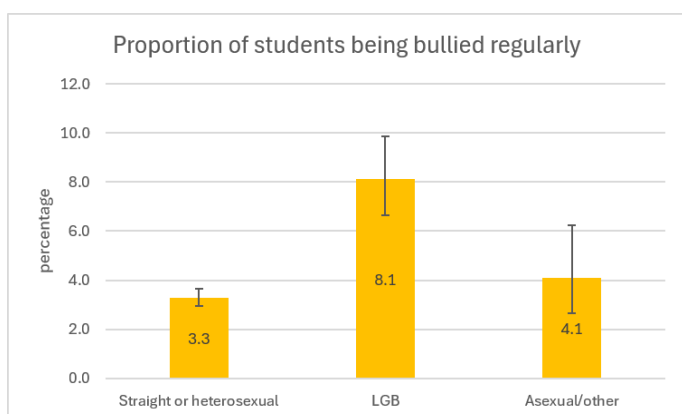


We know that bullying can lead to various problems such as anxiety, depression, stress, anger and low self-esteem. It can also have a negative effect on school performance.

In 2026, transgender and non-binary students were significantly more likely to report being seriously bullied than their cis peers.

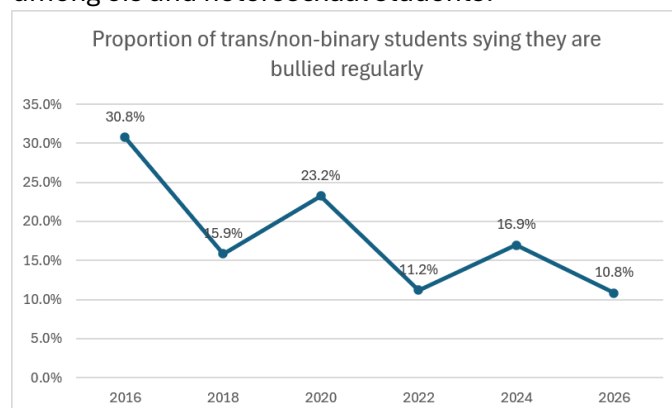


LGB students were also significantly more likely to have experienced serious bullying than their heterosexual peers.



Since 2016, there has been a general reduction in the proportion of students reporting that they have been seriously bullied. The largest percentage point reductions were reported among transgender and non-binary students (20.0 percentage points) and lesbian or gay students (6.6 percentage points).

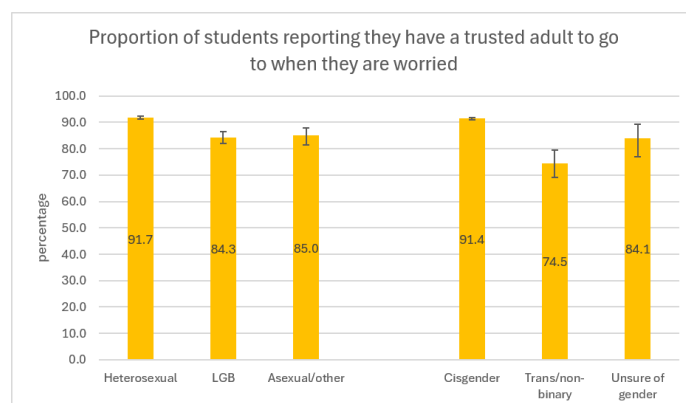
However, in 2026, reported levels of serious bullying remained higher among these groups than among cis and heterosexual students.



Family relationships

Having a loving and supportive home can give a young person confidence and resilience. Almost three quarters of heterosexual students (71.6%) and cis students (70.7%) reported feeling loved. However, around half of LGB (57.3%) and asexual/other sexual orientation (56.4%) and transgender and non-binary students (46.7%) reported feeling loved.

In 2026 most students report they have someone to turn to if they are worried. Although, heterosexual and cis students were significantly more likely to report having a trusted adult to turn to than their LGBTQ+ peers.



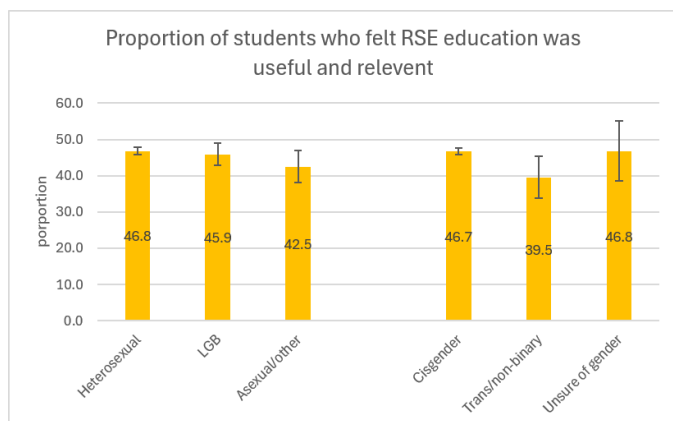
8 in 10 heterosexual (78.8%) and cis students (79.0%) said if they were worried about something and had a trusted adult, they would turn to their parent(s)/carer for support. This was significantly higher than students who identify as LGBTQ+ where; 77.2% of LGB students, 74.7% of asexual/other sexual orientation and 66.9% of transgender and non-binary students said they would go to their parent(s)/carer for help if they were worried about something.

Over three quarters of heterosexual and cis students report they have enough help and support at home with schoolwork. However, only two-thirds (68.0%) of LGB students and of transgender and non-binary students (64.1%) reported they had enough help and support at home with schoolwork.

All Students who identify as LGBTQ+ were also less likely to say they felt safe at home or the place they live than heterosexual/cis students (94.0%). Transgender and non-binary students were the least likely to say they felt safe at home (75.5%).

Personal relationships

It is important to ensure Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) is appropriate for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Students who identify as LGBTQ+ were less likely to report they found RSE helpful although only transgender and non-binary students were significantly less likely to say they found it helpful.



Part of RSE includes understanding consent. In 2026, the vast majority of students reported they understood consent. However, transgender and non-binary students (92.7%) and asexual/other sexual orientation students (91.9%) were significantly less likely to report they understood consent than heterosexual/cis students (96.3% and 96.4% respectively).

Around 1 in 10 secondary and post-16 students report they have had sex, a reduction on previous years.

In 2026 there was a significant difference between the proportion of students reporting having sex by sexual orientation and gender identity, LGB students (16.7%) were more likely to be sexually active than heterosexual students (13.1%) and transgender and non-binary students (14.9%) were

more likely to be sexually active than cis students (13.0%). Asexual students (9.4%) were less likely to report they had engaged in sexual activity but not significantly.



There was no significant difference in reported Early Sexual Debut (ESD) between heterosexual and LGB students or asexual/other sexual orientation students.

Transgender and non-binary students were less likely to report ESD than cis students although not significantly.

Overall, 16.8% of students who reported having had sex said they did not use protection. Students who identify as LGBTQ+ were significantly more likely to report not using protection during intercourse, at 26.9%. This may indicate a potential need for more inclusive sexual health education and advice that addresses contraception, protection against sexually transmitted infections, and the different experiences and needs of LGBTQ+ young people.

Heterosexual/cis students were most likely to go to their parents/carers for help and advice around sexual health and contraception. Whilst this was the same for students who identify as LGBTQ+ they were significantly more likely to go to *Friends* (35.0%), *Professionals (other than health)* (20.9%), *Chemist/Pharmacy* (13.9%), *Internet forums/websites* etc. (12.9%) *Sexual health clinic* (17.3%).

Healthy living

Healthy eating habits start in childhood and can help people live healthier as adults.

LGB (86.1%) and asexual/other sexual orientation (84.2%) students were significantly less likely to say

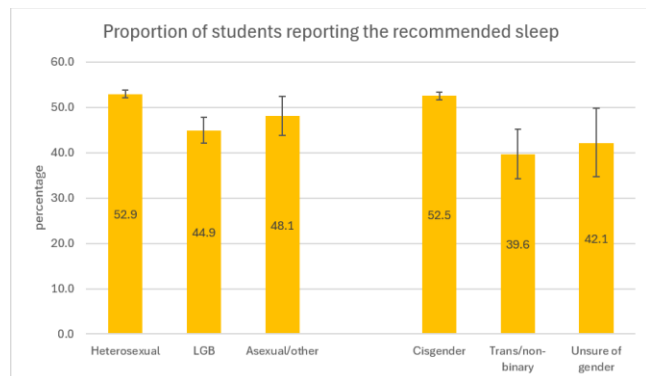
they had healthy food available at home compared to heterosexual students (92.6%), transgender and non-binary students (79.3%) were also significantly less likely to have healthy food available at home vs. cis students (92.2%).

The only cohort with a significantly lower proportion of students reporting they eat '5 a day' by sexual orientation or gender identity was transgender and non-binary students (18.4%).

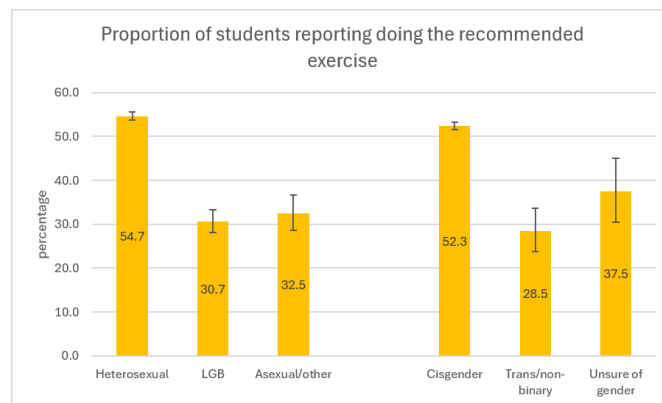
In 2026, around half of students reported eating unhealthy snacks daily, there was no difference between different sexual orientation or gender identities.

Half of students reported drinking sugary drinks daily, students unsure of their gender were more likely to report drinking sugary drinks daily (57.0%).

Getting the recommended sleep has been shown to have a significant impact on mental wellbeing. Overall students who identify as LGBTQ+ (46.0%) were significantly less likely to report getting the recommended sleep than heterosexual/cis students (53.0%), and was lowest in transgender and non-binary students, with 39.6% getting the recommended sleep.



Exercise has also been closely associated with mental as well as physical wellbeing. Students who identify as LGBTQ+ were significantly less likely to report getting the recommended exercise than heterosexual/cis students.



Health-related risk behaviours

Adolescence is a period of significant social, emotional and developmental change, during which some young people may experiment with behaviours that can affect their health and wellbeing. These behaviours may be influenced by peer norms, social context, emotional wellbeing and access to support. For some students who identify as LGBTQ+, experiences such as bullying, discrimination or feeling less accepted may contribute to poorer wellbeing, which can be associated with a higher likelihood of some health-harming behaviours. These patterns should be interpreted with caution and not assumed to apply to all students who identify as LGBTQ+.

Habits begun in adolescence can lead to lifelong behaviours and have a significant impact on health and wellbeing.

In 2026, 2.5% of students report smoking regularly, LGB students (4.5%), asexual/other sexual orientation students (5.8%) and transgender and non-binary students (6.3%) were significantly more likely to report smoking regularly.

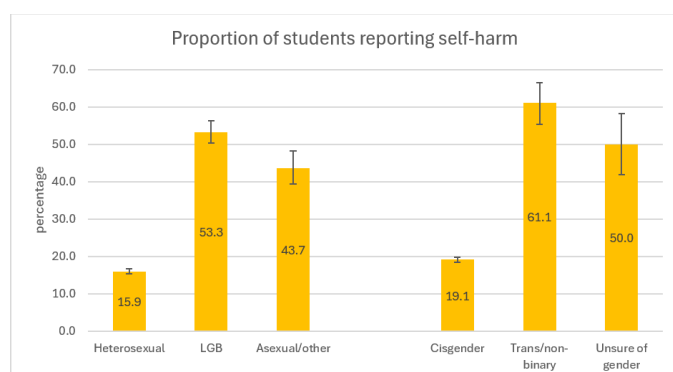
Around 1 in 12 students report vaping regularly, LGB students (10.9%) were significantly more likely to report vaping regularly than heterosexual

students (8.1%), transgender and non-binary students (10.1%) were in line with cis students (8.1%).

In the secondary and post-16 age group over half (59.2%) of students had tried alcohol, however LGB students (70.5%) were significantly more likely to have tried alcohol than heterosexual students (59.2%). LGB students were also significantly more likely to say they drank regularly than heterosexual students.

12.1% of students had tried illegal drugs, LGB students (18.5%) were significantly more likely to report trying drugs than heterosexual pupils, all other sexualities and gender identities were in line.

Overall, 1 in 5 students reported self-harm, students identifying as *asexual/other sexual orientation* (OR 4.2) or *not sure of their gender identity* (OR 4.1) were 4 times more likely to report self-harm, and students identifying as *LGB* (OR 6.0) or *Transgender and non-binary students* (OR 6.6) were 6 times more likely to report self-harm than heterosexual/cis students.



Screentime, especially social media has become a key part of socialisation for young people in recent years. However, the negative impact of excessive screentime is beginning to be investigated and better understood.

Overall, 33.2% of secondary and post-16 pupils reported excessive screen time⁷. However, LGB students (46.8%) and transgender and non-binary students (50.7%) were significantly more likely to report excessive screentime.

Students who identify as LGBTQ+ were significantly more likely to report sexting than heterosexual/cis students, 14.6% had sent sexual images, 25.0%

had received sexual images and 11.4% had sent sexual images of themselves (vs 7.3%, 15.4% and 5.7% respectively).

Mental wellbeing

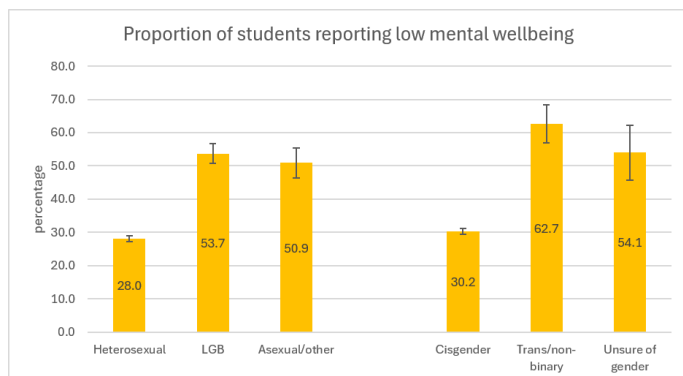
Key takeaways:

- Students who identify as LGBTQ+ reported poorer mental wellbeing, happiness and sleep than heterosexual/cis students.
- They were more likely to access, or feel they needed, mental health support.
- Key barriers to support included fear of parents, peers or school knowing, and not feeling understood.
- Students who identify as LGBTQ+ were less likely to enjoy school, feel safe, or get enough help with learning.
- LGB and transgender and non-binary students were more likely to miss substantial education sessions.
- Intersectional analysis highlights overlapping risks around LGBTQ+ identity, bullying, self-harm, disability and low wellbeing.

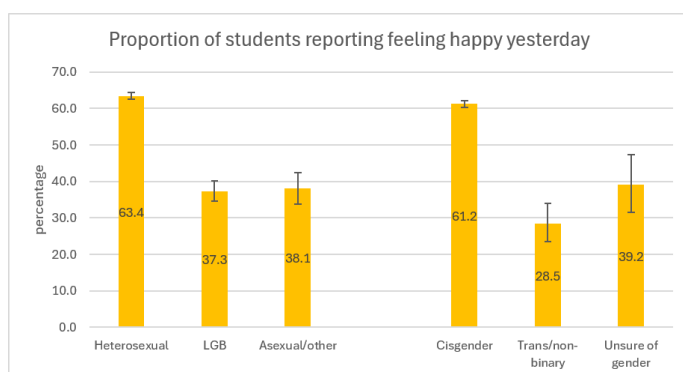
The primary measure used in the survey to capture overall wellbeing since 2016 is the Warwick & Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). This is an internationally used measure that has been benchmarked against well-validated measures of clinical mental health disorders. A score of 41 or less has been shown to be an accurate indication of probable clinical depression and or anxiety, a score between 41 and 44 is indicative of possible/mild depression and or anxiety. In the survey analysis we use categorization bounds as ratified by Warwick University, to split the cohort into those with low, average or high mental wellbeing. The bound for low mental wellbeing (LMW) is a score of 42 or below, suggesting that those categorized with low mental wellbeing are likely to be experiencing clinical anxiety or depression.

⁷ Excessive screen time in the PWS is categorised as over 6 hours per day

Overall, around a third of secondary and post-16 students reported LMW (31.5%). However, two thirds of transgender and non-binary students (62.7%) and over half of LGB (53.7%) and asexual/other sexual orientation (50.9%) students reported LMW.



Students are asked how they felt generally in the last week, just over half (59.9%) reported they were feeling *happy most of the time/quite happy*. Only 1 in 5 transgender and non-binary students reported they felt happy in the last week and 1 in 3 LGB and asexual/other sexual orientation students.

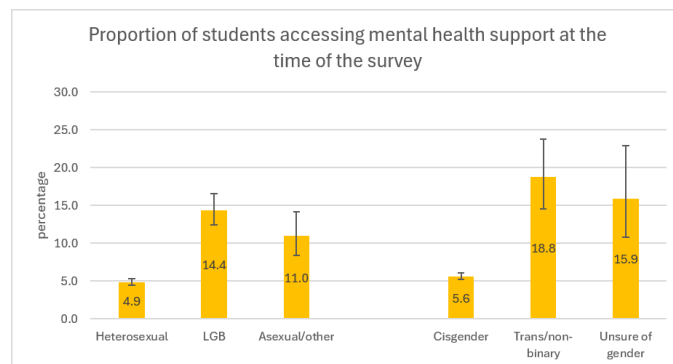


Feeling unhappy and worried can lead to sleep disruption¹ in 6 transgender and non-binary students (16.7%) reported they woke in the night due to worry (compared to 6.0% of cis students). LGB (14.0%) and asexual/other sexual orientation (11.3%) students were also significantly more likely to report waking in the night due to worry than heterosexual pupils (5.3%).

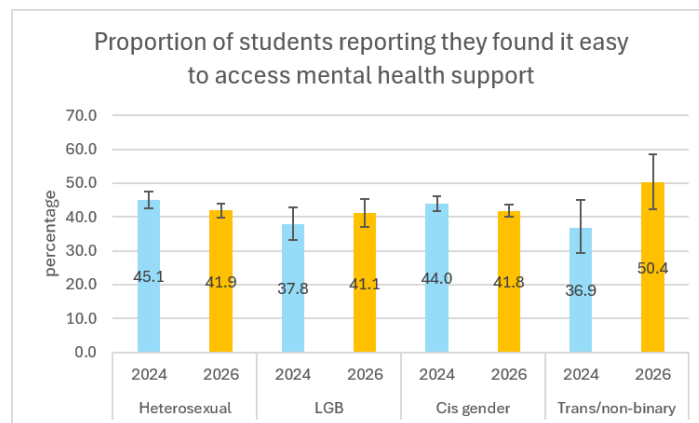
Accessing mental health support

In 2026, 1 in 4 students reported accessing professional support for their mental wellbeing. However, students who identify as LGBTQ+ were up to 3 and a half times more likely (transgender and non-binary students *OR* 3.7) to report ever accessing professional mental health support (48.7% of lesbian/gay students and 51.1% transgender and non-binary students) and

significantly more likely to report being supported at the time of the survey than heterosexual/cis students.



There has been an improvement in perception of ease of access for professional mental health support by students who identify as LGBTQ+ since 2024.



Where students had accessed mental health support, they were asked how helpful the support had been.

Although lower, there was no significant difference in the proportion of students reporting they found the mental health support they received helpful between LGBTQ+ and heterosexual/cis students.

Of those who hadn't accessed professional support for mental health, students who identify as LGBTQ+ were significantly more likely to say they felt they needed mental health support than heterosexual/cis students.

Sexuality/gender	% want MH support	Odds ratio - higher likelihood
Heterosexual	14.2%	
LGB	41.6%	4.3
Asexual/other	36.3%	3.5
Cisgender	15.8%	
Trans/non-binary	48.8%	5.1
Unsure of gender	44.9%	4.3

Students who felt they needed professional mental health support but hadn't received it were asked why they hadn't had support. For LGBTQ+ (52.1%) and heterosexual/cis students (38.4%) the most frequent reason given was *didn't want parents to know*. Students who identify as LGBTQ+ were significantly more likely to report they hadn't accessed support because:

- *Didn't want parents to know* (52.1% vs.38.4%)
- *Didn't want other young people to know* (26.2% vs.19.1%)
- *Didn't want teachers/school to know* (31.6% vs. 21.4%)
- *Didn't like to talk to strangers* (40.1% vs.26.7%)
- *I tried but adults didn't take me seriously or understand* (16.6% vs.9.4%)

Experience of education, attainment, and aspirations

LGB (48.3%) students were significantly less likely to report they enjoyed school than their heterosexual (56.8%) peers, and transgender and non-binary students (39.1%) were significantly less likely to report they enjoyed school than cisgender students (56.6%). There was a reduction in the proportion of transgender and non-binary students reporting they enjoyed school from the 2024 survey (44.7%).

Students who identify as LGBTQ+ were also significantly less likely to report *Getting enough help at school with learning*. Research⁸ suggests Students who identify as LGBTQ+ have different

academic outcomes to their heterosexual/cis peers, however the reasons for this are unclear.

LGB in post-16 settings were significantly more likely to report they planned on going to university after post-16 education than heterosexual/cis students (58.3% vs. 51.1%).

Transgender and non-binary students (9.3%) and LGB (5.8%) students were significantly more likely to say they were *Often aggressive or violent* at school than cis and heterosexual students (4.1% and 4.2% respectively).

Students who identify as LGBTQ+ were significantly less likely to report they felt safe at school, just over half (57.9%) transgender and non-binary students and two thirds of LGB students (65.6%), compared to 77.3% of cis students and 78.1% of heterosexual students.

Missing education through exclusion or absenteeism can have a negative impact on a student's later outcomes, including compounding loneliness and isolation as well as academic outcomes.

Transgender and non-binary students (31.5%) and LGB (31.5%) students were significantly more likely to report missing more than 10% of possible education sessions in the previous term (autumn 2025) than cis (22.3%) and heterosexual students (23.0%).

There was no significant difference between students who identify as LGBTQ+ reporting an isolation, suspension or exclusion, and heterosexual/cis students.



⁸[Educational outcomes of UK LGB and heterosexual adolescents: exploring gendered](#)

[differences and mechanisms | European Sociological Review | Oxford Academic](#)

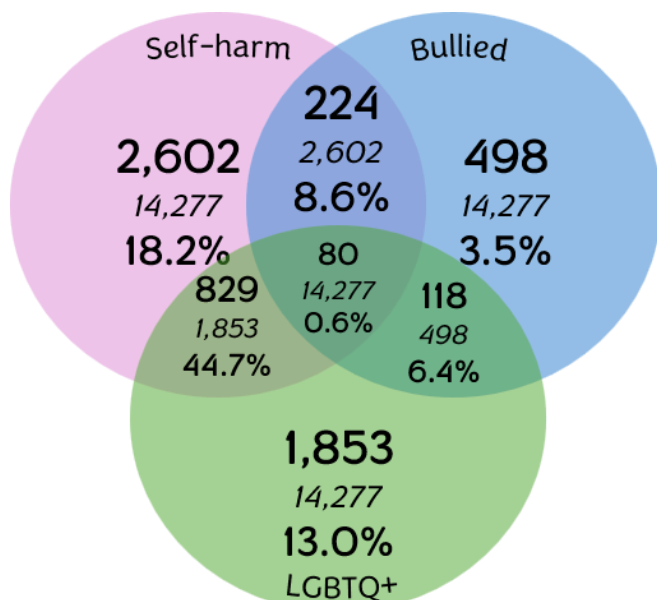
Almost half of students (48.3%) said their education setting was *inclusive/very inclusive* for students identifying as gender diverse. There was no difference between Students who identify as LGBTQ+ and heterosexual/cis students. Just over half (53.6%) of students said their education setting was *inclusive/very inclusive* for students identifying as LGB or queer, although this was significantly higher for students who identify as LGBTQ+ (61.9%) than heterosexual/cis students (52.8%). Students in selective settings were significantly more likely to report their setting was *inclusive/very inclusive* for students identifying as LGB or queer (70.4%) than any other statistical neighbour group.

Intersectionality

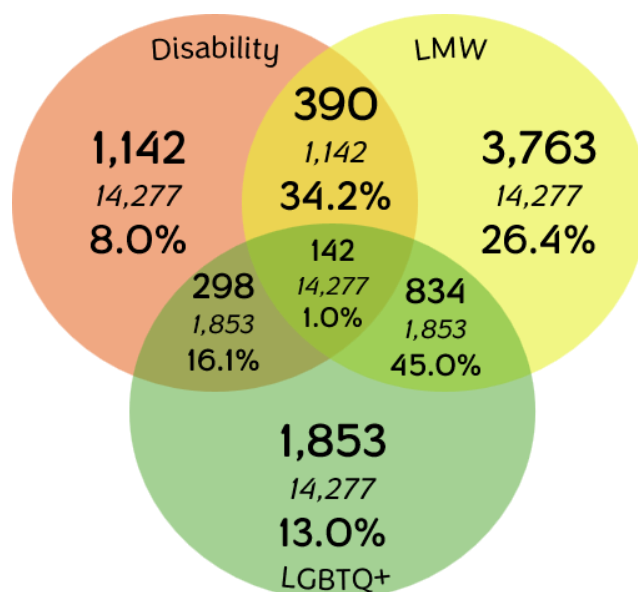
Students may experience challenges due to a number of inter-related characteristics. Where this intersectionality occurs the impact on the student is likely to be exacerbated.

Health harming behaviours such as self-harm may be initiated as a coping mechanism by students in mental distress. Students who self-harm and those who were bullied were more likely to be LGBTQ+.

The intersectionality Venn diagrams below show the relationship between characteristics, the first diagram shows **80** Students reported they were LGBTQ+, had been bullied and self-harmed.



There was also a significant correlation between students who identify as LGBTQ+, disability and low mental wellbeing, **142** students reported all three characteristics/experiences.



Helping Students who identify as LGBTQ+ thrive

Key takeaways:

- LGBTQ+ wellbeing is supported by friendship, trusted adults, exercise, sleep, learning and achievement.
- The NHS Five Ways to Wellbeing appear relevant for Students who identify as LGBTQ+.
- Volunteering may be linked to better wellbeing
- Inclusive education and accessible local/national support remain important.

It is important to help every young person to thrive. Students who identify as LGBTQ+ can face unique challenges in addition to those faced by many young people during adolescence. Students with high mental wellbeing (HMW) are much more likely to have the skills and resilience to deal with problems, worries and everyday issues.

By analysing the results of students who identify as LGBTQ+ with high mental wellbeing it is apparent the NHS Five Ways to Wellbeing are as relevant to wellbeing for students who identify as LGBTQ+ as their heterosexual/cis peers.

NHS Five Ways to Wellbeing⁹:

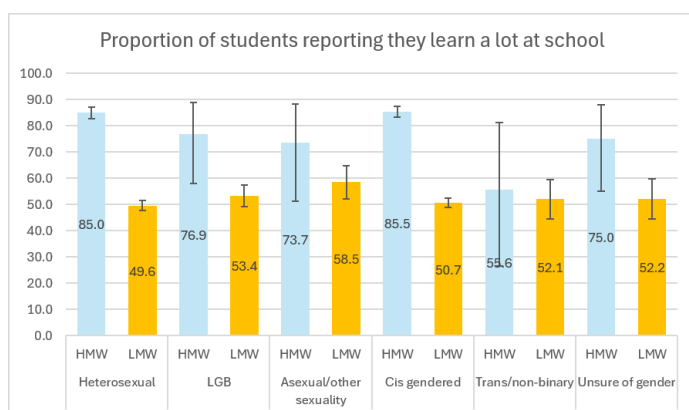
- Connect with other people
- Be physically active
- Learn new skills
- Give to others
- Pay attention to the present moment

As with heterosexual/cis students, transgender and non-binary students with HMW were significantly more likely to say they were good at making and keeping friends (62.5%) than those with low mental wellbeing (12.4%). LGB (59.3%) and asexual/other sexual orientation (84.2%) students with HMW were also more likely to report finding it easy to make and keep friends.

Students who identify as LGBTQ+ with HMW were significantly more likely to say they had a trusted adult to turn to when they were worried (94.2%) than those with LMW (74.3%).

Students who identify as LGBTQ+ with high mental wellbeing were significantly more likely to do the recommended exercise (50.9%) than those with LMW (27.4%).

More students with HMW report they learn a lot at school/college compared to those with LMW this was the same for all students.



Students with HMW were more likely to report they did voluntary work than those with LMW. Students who identify as LGBTQ+ with HMW were the most likely to volunteer (37.3%), significantly higher than heterosexual/cis students (22.8%). The impact of voluntary work on wellbeing appears to have a greater impact on students who identify as LGBTQ+. Students who identify as LGBTQ+ who volunteered were twice as likely to have HMW than

those who didn't volunteer (*OR* 2.1), however, this increased likelihood wasn't observed in heterosexual/cis students (*OR* 1.2). It is important to note impact of volunteering on wellbeing appears to also be more pronounced for cisgender females; the LGBTQ+ cohort is made up of more cisgender females so this could be a confounding factor.

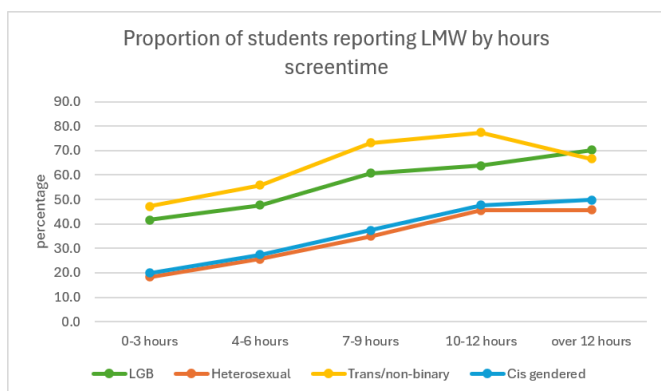
Students with HMW were significantly more likely to report they felt proud of what they had achieved than those with LMW, this was the same for students who identify as LGBTQ+ and heterosexual/cis students, however, the gap was wider for students who identify as LGBTQ+ (94.2% vs. 13.2%).



Sleep appears to be important for both LGBTQ+ and heterosexual/cis students in relation to wellbeing. All students getting the recommended sleep were twice as likely to report A/HMW (LGBTQ+ *OR* 2.3, Heterosexual/cis *OR* 2.0).

Generally, an excess of screen time appears to have a negative effect on mental wellbeing, however, it appears to be a more complex picture for some Students who identify as LGBTQ+. Transgender and non-binary students have no significant difference in levels of LMW regardless of screen time. This may be due to finding and connecting with inclusive LGBTQ+ communities online or perhaps feeling they can be their true self online more than in everyday life. It is important to note numbers in some of these cohorts are small.

⁹ <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/>



Support

A national survey¹⁰ of LGBTQ+ people in 2018 found:

“Only 3% of respondents said they had discussed sexual orientation and gender identity at school, be that during lessons, in assemblies or elsewhere. Over three quarters (77%) said that neither was discussed, though this was lower for younger respondents, e.g. 54% for 16-17 year olds. Where these topics were discussed at school, only 9% of respondents said that the discussions had prepared them well for later life as an LGBT person.”

Since this national survey the statutory Relationships and Sex Education guidance for schools has changed.

Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning (GHLL) have developed a number of resources to enable teachers, support staff and parents to support Students who identify as LGBTQ+ including:

- the **Equality and Antibullying Resource Teaching pack** for KS 1 & 2 which incorporates resources from Stonewall such as how to talk about children’s different families and discuss ‘different families, same love’ poster as well as activities for all key stages.
- Forming Positive Relationships** including power points for teachers to use.
- Equalities and Transgender training** available for teachers and lecturers both virtually and face to face are regularly run.
- Equalities Training** – train the trainer has been delivered to all the GHLL team by

Queer Futures Gloucestershire and the Hate Crime Co-ordinator to then roll out to schools.

GHLL also work closely with Victim Support, Hate Crimes and Queer Futures Gloucestershire to ensure that equalities and LGBTQ+ training is included within the PSHE curriculum. It covers respectful relationships and information on bullying, stereotypes and the importance of respect.

GHLL provide information for Parent/Carers - <https://www.ghll.org.uk/family/transgender/> on LGBTQ+ on their website.

GHLL are also a **Stonewall Education Champion**.

Support for LGBTQ+ young people and their families is available from a number of national organisations:

- Mermaids** has been supporting transgender, nonbinary and gender-diverse children, young people, and their families since 1995.
<https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/about-us/>
- Stonewall** is a national organisation advocating for LGBTQ+ people. It provides, advice, training programmes and best practice guides for workplaces, schools and colleges.
<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/schools-colleges>
- Gendered Intelligence** is a trans-led and trans-involving grassroots organisation that aims to increase understandings of gender diversity and improve trans people's quality of life.
<https://genderedintelligence.co.uk/>

There are also a number of local organisations offering support to LGBTQ+ young people and their families:

- Queer Futures Gloucestershire** – provides support for LGBTQ+ young people in Gloucestershire
<https://www.queerfuturesgloucestershire.org.uk/>

¹⁰https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/722314/GEO-LGBT-Survey-Report.pdf

Queer Futures Glos offers young people aged 14-18 with safe, welcoming spaces to meet others, explore their identity and build confidence. Our focus is on belonging, wellbeing and connection, helping young people feel supported at home, at school and in their wider communities.

- **GlosCats** - trans support group which also runs a group for parents
<https://www.gloscats.org.uk/>
- **The Arcus Project** is for parents and carers where a child within the family is transgender or exploring their gender identity. The project aims to support families by offering bespoke 1-2-1 therapeutic mentoring.
<https://www.infobuzz.co.uk/services/wellbeing/transgender-support/>
- **LGBT+ Partnership** – Support, advance and celebrate the LGBT+ community, including signposting to support groups, marking and celebrating national LGBTQ+ events and promoting inclusivity.
<https://www.lgbtchelt.co.uk/lgbtgroups>



Conclusion

The 2026 Pupil Wellbeing Survey shows that most Students who identify as LGBTQ+ in Gloucestershire report positive aspects of their lives, but they continue to experience poorer outcomes than their heterosexual and cis peers across a wide range of wellbeing, safety and belonging measures. The proportion of students openly identifying as LGBTQ+ appears to have stabilised or reduced slightly since 2022 in some groups, following earlier increases; however, the proportion not answering sexual orientation questions has fallen substantially since 2016, suggesting greater willingness to disclose identity in the survey.

The clearest finding is the consistent pattern of inequality: students who identify as LGBTQ+ were more likely to report low mental wellbeing, self-harm, bullying, poorer sleep, lower physical activity, reduced feelings of safety at school and home, and weaker access to trusted adult support. These differences were particularly marked for transgender and non-binary students, who reported the lowest levels of happiness, self-worth, school enjoyment and perceived safety, and the highest levels of low mental wellbeing.



The findings also highlight important protective factors. Students who identify as LGBTQ+ with high mental wellbeing were more likely to have strong friendships, a trusted adult to turn to, opportunities to be physically active, enough sleep, pride in their achievements and opportunities to contribute through volunteering. This suggests that inclusive school cultures, visible and trusted support, effective RSE, anti-bullying work and opportunities to build connection and belonging remain central to helping students who identify as LGBTQ+ thrive in Gloucestershire.