

Experiences of LGBTQ+ pupils

Pupil
Wellbeing
Survey
2024

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Introduction

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

LGBTQ+ pupils encounter the same struggles as other pupils but also manage the stress of navigating in a world that can feel like it isn't fully accepting of people who are not heterosexual and cisgendered.

In this report we will investigate how pupils who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer or alternative sexuality/gender (LGBTQ+ community) experience living and going to school 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 pupils in the LGBTQ+ community are more likely to experience bullying, suffer from low mental wellbeing and face discrimination in accessing help.

LGBTQ+ pupils 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 LGBTQ+ pupils:

- 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

We would like to do more to ensure all LGBTQ+ pupils are taught in and can live in an environment that allows them to fulfil their potential.

Questions about sexuality and gender identity are only asked to secondary and Post 16 pupils, therefore all analysis in this report relates to these pupils 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. Children and young people participate in years 4, 5 and 6 in Primary schools; years 8 and 10 in Secondary schools; and year 12 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 57% of pupils in participating year groups in 2024. The PWS asks a wide variety of questions about children's characteristics, behaviours and lived experience that could have an impact on their overall wellbeing. The 2024 PWS was undertaken between January and April 2024.

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 children and young people attending educational establishments in Gloucestershire are residents in the county. It is therefore important to remember

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

this analysis is based on the pupil population not the resident population.

Gloucestershire is a grammar authority, has a number of notable independent schools and several mainstream schools very close to the county's boundary these all attract young people from out of county. This results in the school 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 minority ethnic groups however 21.0% of Gloucestershire's school population were pupils from minority ethnic groups in January 2024 and 21.7% of the PWS cohort were pupils from minority ethnic groups in the 2024 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 numbers of pupil take up (for example low numbers completing the survey in Tewkesbury at FE level), where FE provision is situated also impacts the survey as older students travel further to access FE provision.

Analysis of deprivation

Schools can be categorised into statistical neighbour groups which cluster schools with pupils of a similar social profile within the same type of school (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 pupils. The IMD is based on the home postcode of pupils (collected in the school census). This is aggregated to give an overall IMD score for the school, reflecting the deprivation levels experienced by pupils. The schools 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 and alternative schools are compared to all other schools of this type in the same phase without reference to the 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

Trans/non-binary – 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



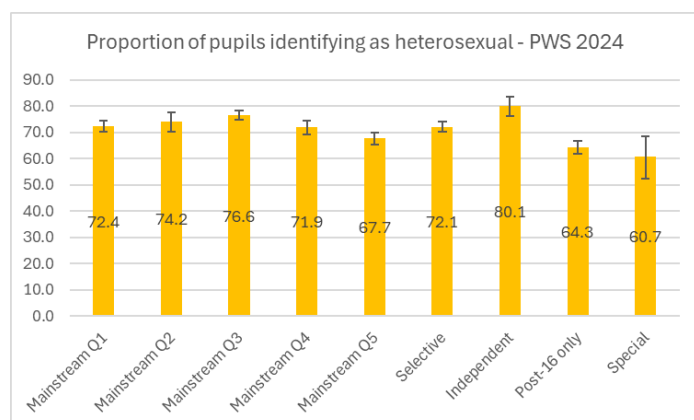
Sexuality

Questions about sexuality and gender identity are only asked to secondary and Post 16 pupils, therefore all analysis in this report relates to these pupils only.

Sexuality is about a person's sexual feelings, thoughts, attractions and behaviours towards other people. The proportion of pupils reporting they are *heterosexual* in 2024 (71.5%) has remained stable since 2022 (70.1%).

There appears to be some correlation between identifying as heterosexual and deprivation. Pupils in schools where the majority of pupils lived in deprived neighbourhoods were significantly more likely to report identifying as heterosexual as those in schools where the majority of pupils lived in the least deprived areas. However, pupils at independent schools who are likely to have the most affluent backgrounds have a similar proportion of pupils reporting they are heterosexual as those living in the most deprived areas. This trend may be more about increased prejudice and discomfort in 'coming out' in these environments.

There is some [international evidence](#) suggesting LGBTQ+ people can have differing economic circumstances due in part to their sexual and gender identity. However, in young people this might be more linked to bullying being more prevalent in more deprived areas which may indicate a perceived or real stigma or prejudice of non-heterosexual sexuality in these settings.



Pupils at Special schools were less likely to report identifying as heterosexual than any other group. International research including a [study²](#) based on

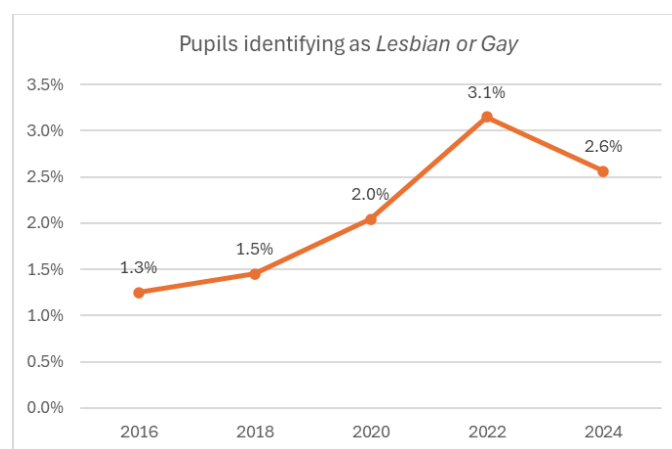
Australian men in 2018 suggest that a larger proportion of disabled than non-disabled people are sexual minorities.



There is no significant difference in pupils identifying as different sexualities by broad ethnic group, however, Gypsy/Roan and Traveller pupils were significantly less likely to identify as heterosexual.

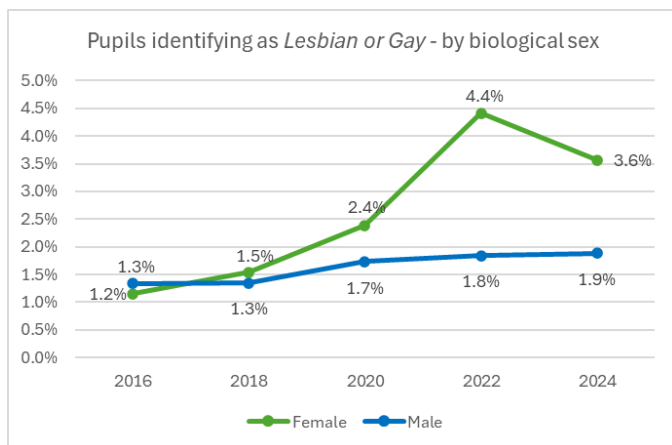
Pupils identifying as lesbian or gay

Since a question about sexuality was added to the survey in 2016, the proportion of pupils identifying as lesbian or gay had been increasing, but has fallen slightly in 2024.



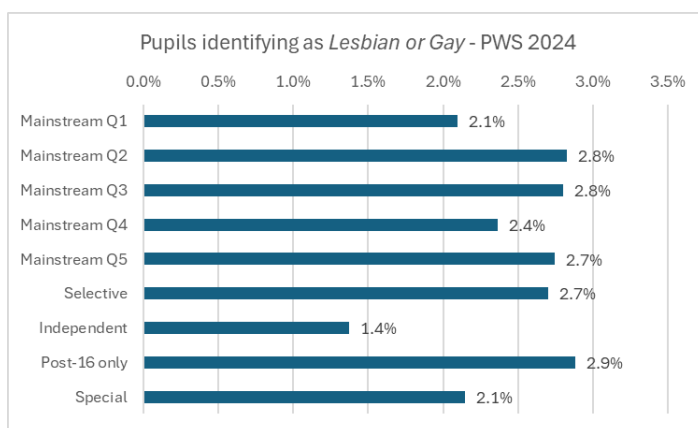
This trend is driven by an increase in females identifying as lesbian since 2018, and a subsequent slight reduction between 2022 and 2024; the proportion of males identifying as gay has risen much more slowly.

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



Only around a third of pupils identifying as lesbian or gay were biological males, this may be due to higher stigma around sexuality in males.

There was no significant difference in the proportion of pupils identifying as *lesbian or gay* by statistical neighbour group, although a lower proportion of pupils at independent schools identified as *lesbian or gay* in 2024.



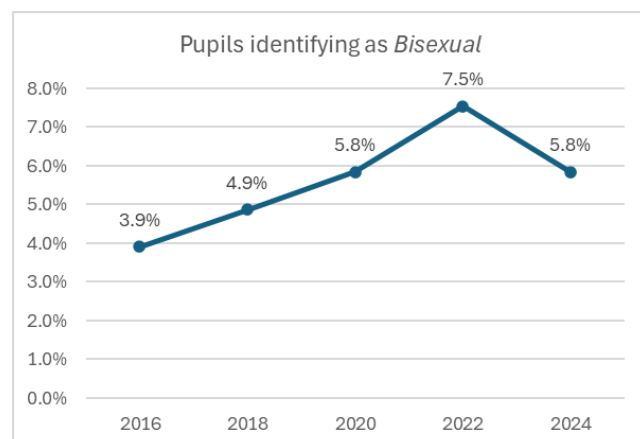
There was no significant difference in the proportion of pupils identifying as lesbian or gay across the districts.

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%.

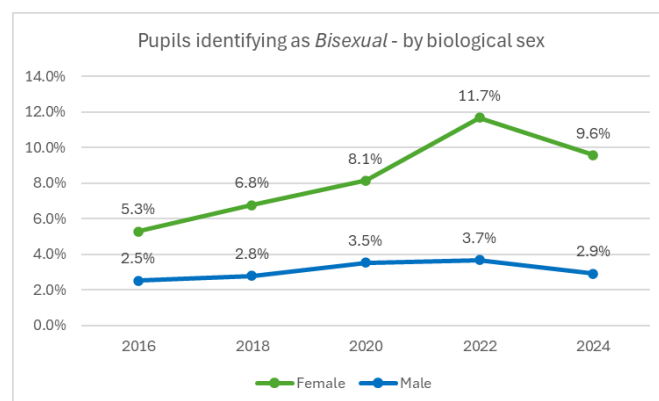


Pupils identifying as bisexual

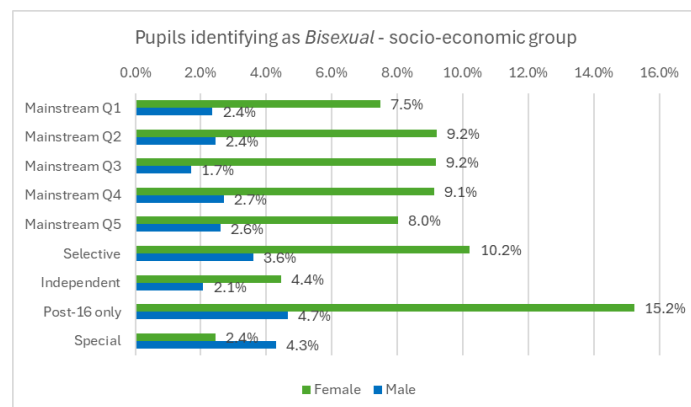
Since 2016, the proportion of pupils identifying as bisexual had been increasing, but again has reduced slightly between 2022 and 2024.



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



The proportion of pupils identifying as bisexual was highest in selective schools and Post-16 colleges. Females were between 2 and 4 times more likely than males to identify as bisexual across all socioeconomic groups, except in special schools where males were more likely to identify as bisexual.

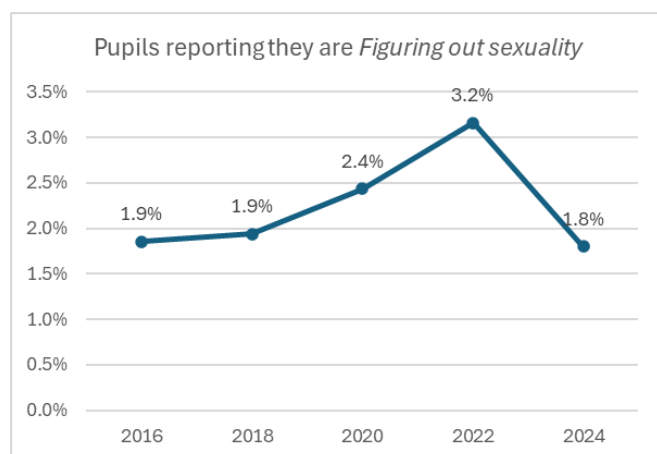


There is little difference in the proportion of pupils identifying as bisexual across the districts although the proportion was highest in Cotswold and Forest of Dean districts.

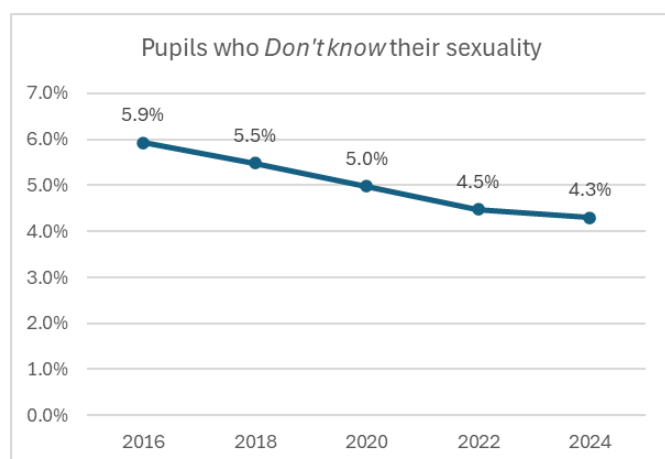
The 2021 census results suggest 1.2% of the Gloucestershire population over 16 identify as bisexual, slightly lower than the national average (1.3%).

Fluid/dynamic sexuality

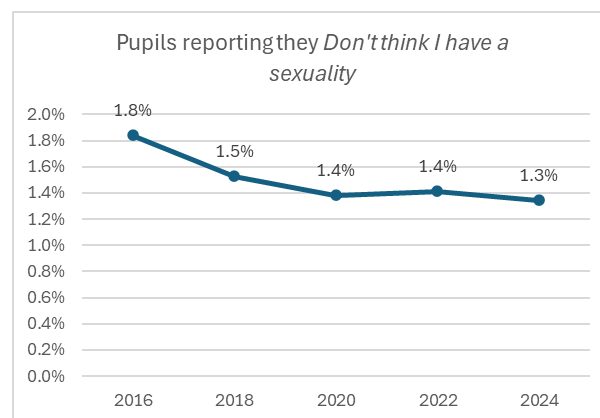
There was an increase in pupils who were questioning their sexuality and figuring out their sexual identity between 2016 and 2022. In 2024 the proportion has fallen to the 2016 level.



The proportion of pupils reporting they didn't know their sexuality has been reducing steadily since 2016.



After reducing between 2016 and 2018, the proportion of pupils reporting they were asexual or didn't feel they had a sexuality, has been stable.



It is encouraging that young people feel able to acknowledge their sexuality in the survey, the percentage who did not answer the question has remained in line since 2016 at around 2.0%.

Gender identity

Questions about sexuality and gender identity are only asked to secondary and Post 16 pupils, therefore all analysis in this report relates to these pupils only.

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.³

Since 2020, the survey asked pupils if they identified as the same gender as the biological sex they were assigned at birth (cis gendered). In 2020, 1.6% of pupils said they did not identify as the same gender as the biological sex they were assigned at birth (trans and non-binary). In 2022, this had risen significantly to 3.1% but in 2024 it reduced again to 2.0%.

Pupils who gave their biological sex as female were significantly more likely to say their gender was not the same as the biological sex they were assigned at birth.

³ <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/list-lgbtq-terms>



An American study⁴ found “Of the 1.3 million adults who identify as transgender, 38.5% (515,200) are transgender women, 35.9% (480,000) are transgender men, and 25.6% (341,800) reported they are gender nonconforming”, suggesting in our pupil cohort there may be barriers such as more stigma associated with biological males identifying as transgender.

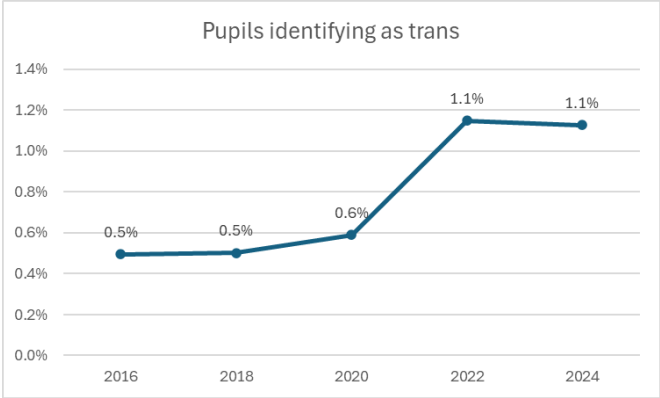
Since 2022, we have asked pupils more comprehensively about their gender identity. In 2024, 2.6% of pupils identified as trans/non-binary.

| Identified gender | Biological sex | | Total |
|-------------------|----------------|-------|-------|
| | Female | Male | |
| (not answered) | 3.0% | 3.8% | 10.5% |
| Cis gender | 85.3% | 86.0% | 79.3% |
| Don't know | 5.9% | 5.9% | 5.5% |
| Gender fluid | 0.9% | 0.4% | 0.6% |
| Non-binary | 1.4% | 0.4% | 0.9% |
| Transgender | 1.6% | 0.9% | 1.1% |
| Rather not say | 1.8% | 2.6% | 2.1% |

Pupils who identified as trans

In previous surveys we included trans in a separate broader question about sexuality and gender, therefore it is difficult to show robustly a trend in pupils identifying as trans. In 2024, 1.1% reported they identified as trans (1.6% of biological females and 0.9% of biological males).

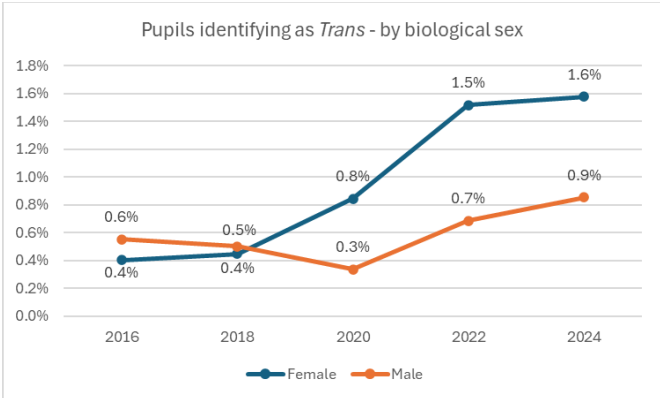
⁴<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/trans-adults-united-states/>
⁵<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/trans-adults-united-states/#:~:text=Among%20youth%20ages%2013%20to,reported%20they%20are%20gender%20nonconforming>



The 2021 census results suggest 0.1% of the Gloucestershire population over 16 identify as trans, slightly lower than the national average 0.2%.

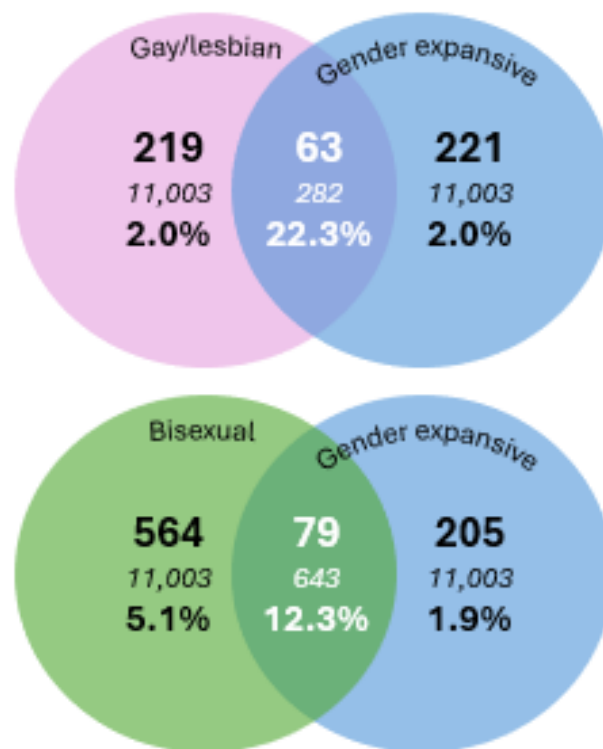
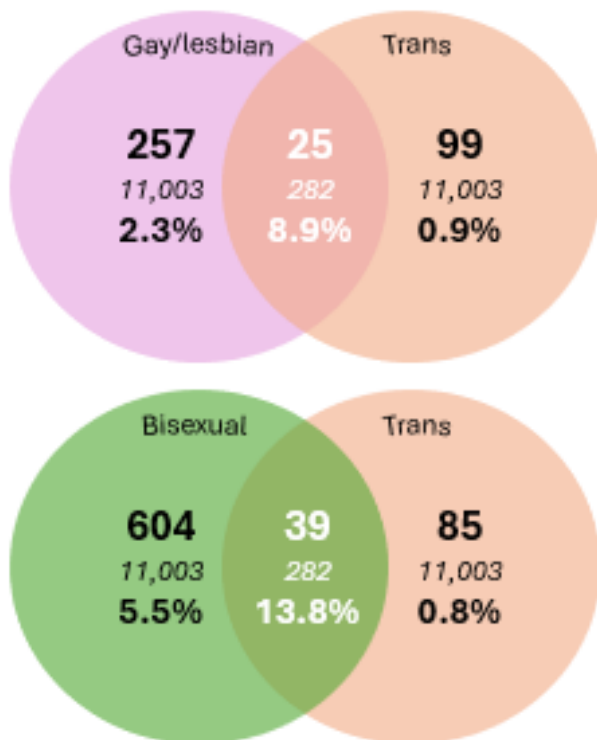
Research⁵ suggests among youths aged 13 to 17 in the U.S., 1.4% identify as transgender, the 2024 survey results indicate Gloucestershire is in line with this.

Whilst there appears to be a difference between the sexes when identifying as trans, it is not significant.



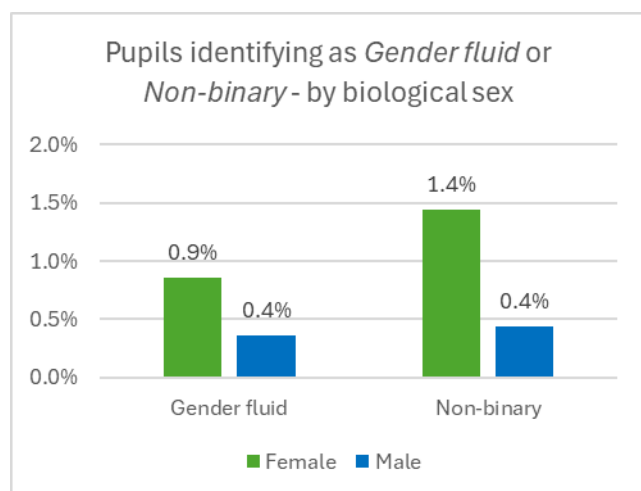
There is no significant difference in pupils identifying as different gender identities by ethnicity.

There are many different combinations of sexuality and gender, pupils who identified as lesbian or gay and those identifying as bisexual were both significantly more likely to also identify as trans than heterosexual pupils.



Pupils who identified as gender-fluid or non-binary

In the 2024 PWS a further 0.6% of pupils identified as gender-fluid, and 0.9% identified as non-binary. Biological females were more likely to identify as gender-fluid or non-binary than biological males.



Pupils who identified as lesbian or gay and those identifying as bisexual were both significantly more likely to also identify as gender-fluid or non-binary than heterosexual pupils. 1 in 5 lesbian or gay pupils and 1 in 8 bisexual pupils identified as trans/non-binary.

Overall, 1 in 2 LGB pupils reported they were trans/non-binary.

Understanding identity

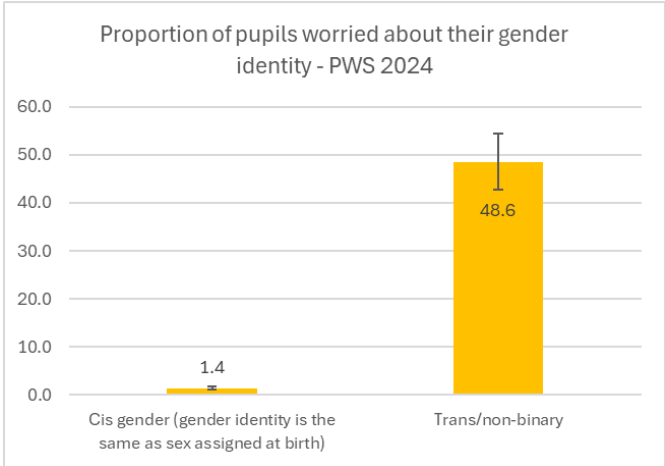
Social identification is important because it influences how people see themselves and how they interact with others. If people have a positive view of their identity within a group, they are more likely to relate well to others in that group and feel positive emotions about themselves.

Feeling confused or unhappy with your identity or having an identity crisis, can often occur due to big changes or stressors in life, or due to factors such as age or advancement from a certain stage.

As young people develop and become aware of their sexuality and gender identity it may take some time to understand their developing identity and feel connected within their family, peer group and wider community.

LGBTQ+ pupils were significantly more likely to say they were worried (*Worried/Quite worried/Extremely worried*) about their sexual orientation. 1 in 4 lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) pupils and 1 in 3 trans/non-binary pupils compared to 3.3% of heterosexual and 4.5% of cis gendered pupils reported they were worried about their sexual orientation.

LGBTQ+ pupils were also significantly more likely to say they were worried about their gender identity. 1 in 6 LGB pupils (vs. 1.3% heterosexual pupils) and almost 1 in 2 trans/non-binary pupils (vs. 1.4% of cis pupils)



LGB pupils were significantly less likely to report they felt *they had control over their life* than heterosexual pupils (38.6% vs. 64.6%). trans/non-binary pupils were also less likely to say they had control over their life than cis pupils (30.3% vs. 62.7%).

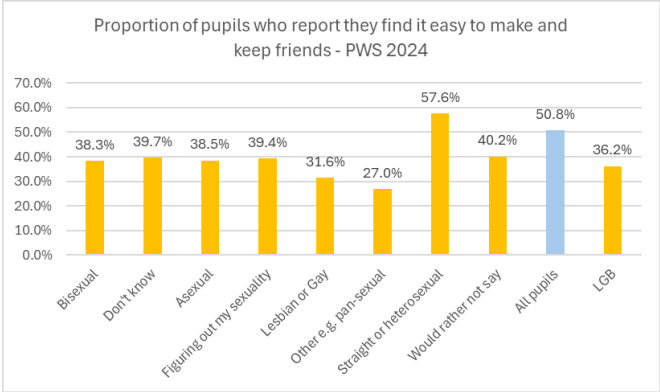
LGB pupils were significantly less likely to report saying they *can like themselves even when others don't* compared to heterosexual pupils (28.0% vs. 44.6%), this was also the case for trans/non-binary pupils when compared to cis pupils (22.9% vs. 43.2%).

Only 1 in 6 trans/non-binary pupils reported they felt good about themselves compared to almost 1 in 2 cis pupils, and only 1 in 5 LGB pupils compared to 1 in 2 heterosexual pupils.

Peer acceptance and belonging

Friendships and peer acceptance

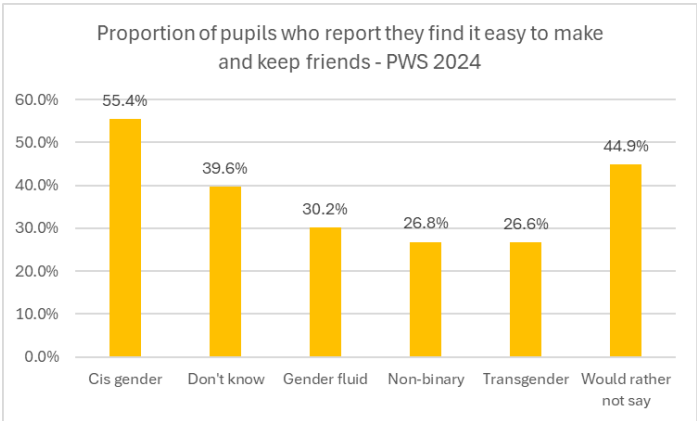
Making friends and feeling you belong to a group or community is important for wellbeing and development. LGB pupils and those who were asexual/other sexuality were significantly less likely to report they found it easy to make and keep friends than heterosexual pupils.



LGB pupils in more affluent socioeconomic groups were more likely they found it easy to make and keep friends than those from more deprived groups. 4 in 10 of LGB pupils at mainstream quintile 5 (41.8%), selective (46.5%) and independent schools (40.0%) reported they found it easy to make and keep friends compared with only 1 in 4 (28.7%) LGB pupils in mainstream quintile 1 schools.



Trans/non-binary pupils were also less likely to report they found it easy to make and keep friends, compared to Cis pupils. Only 1 in 4 Trans pupils reported they found it easy to make and keep friends, the least likely of all gender identities.

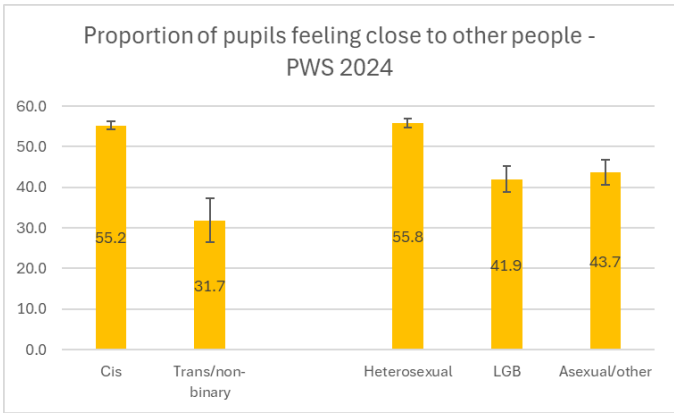


There was a difference between the biological sexes. More than 1 in 3 trans/non-binary pupils who

were biologically male said they found it easy to make and keep friends compared to 1 in 5 of trans/non-binary pupils who were biologically female. This suggests cis females may be more accepting of trans females than cis males of trans males.

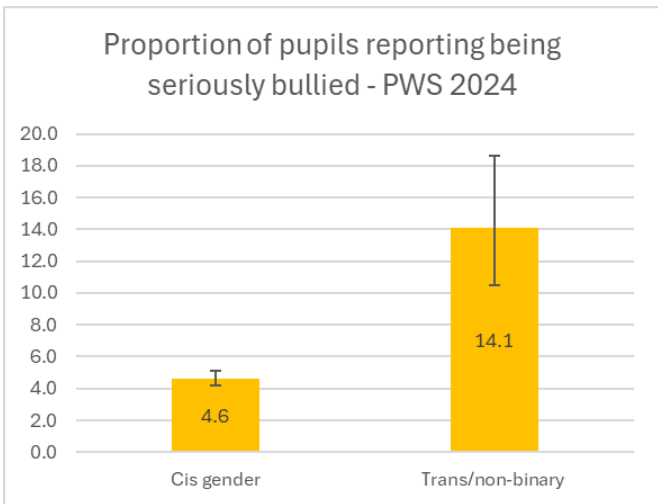
Pupils with differing sexuality and gender combinations may experience compounding issues that affect their confidence or their ability to make and keep friends.

Pupils are also asked if they feel close to other people, trans/non-binary pupils were the least likely to say they'd been feeling close to other people, significantly lower than cis pupils but also LGB and asexual/other sexuality pupils.

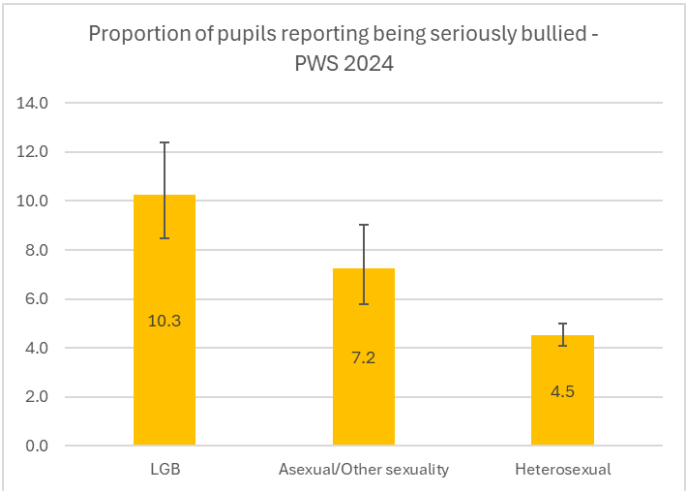


We know that bullying can lead to various problems such as: anxiety, depression, stress, anger and low self-esteem. It can also have a negative effect on school performance.

In 2024, trans/non-binary pupils were significantly more likely to report being seriously bullied than their cis peers.



LGB and asexual/other sexuality pupils were also significantly more likely to have experienced serious bullying than their heterosexual peers.

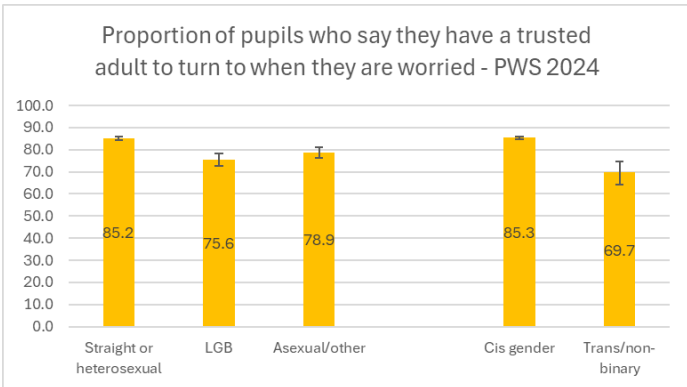


Since 2016, there has been a general reduction in the proportion of pupils reporting they have been seriously bullied. The biggest reduction in bullying is reported by trans pupils (13.8 percentage points) and lesbian or gay pupils (5.1 percentage points). Whilst in 2024 levels of bullying in these groups is still higher than heterosexual and cis pupils this is an encouraging trend.

Family relationships

Having a loving and supportive home can give a young person confidence and resilience. Around two thirds of heterosexual pupils (68.4%) and cis pupils (68.2%) reported feeling loved. However, only half of LGB (51.6%) and asexual/other sexuality (59.0%) and trans/non-binary pupils (46.8%) reported feeling loved.

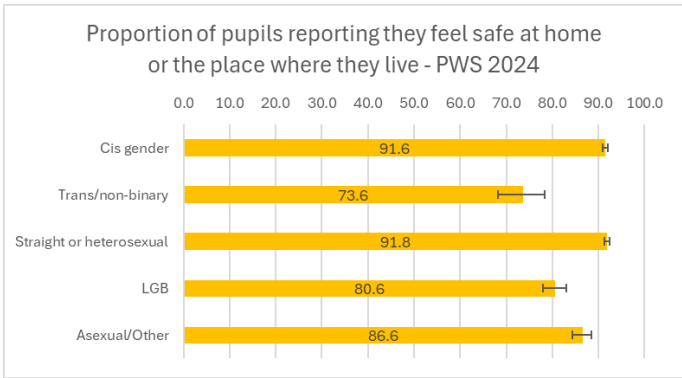
In 2024 most pupils report they have someone to turn to if they are worried. Although, heterosexual and cis pupils were significantly more likely to report having a trusted adult to turn to than their LGBTQ+ peers.



More than 8 in 10 heterosexual (87.6%) and cis pupils (87.0%) 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 LGBTQ+ pupils where; 75.3% of LGB pupils, 81.0% of asexual/other sexuality and 65.2% of trans/non-binary pupils said they would go to their parent(s)/carer for help if they were worried about something.

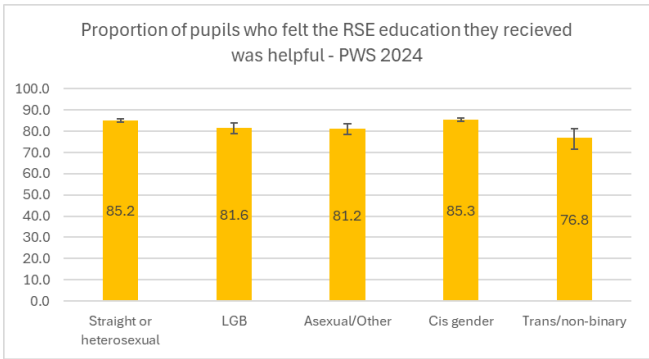
Three quarters of heterosexual and cis pupils report they have enough help and support at home with schoolwork. However, only two-thirds (68.1%) of LGB pupils and just over half (59.5%) of trans/non-binary pupils reported they had enough help and support at home with schoolwork.

LGBTQ+ pupils were also less likely to say they felt safe at home or the place they live than heterosexual/cis pupils, only three-quarters of Trans/non-binary pupils reported they felt safe at home.



Personal relationships

It is important to ensure Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) is appropriate for all pupils, regardless of their sexuality or gender identity. LGBTQ+ pupils were significantly less likely to report they found RSE helpful.



Part of RSE includes understanding consent. In 2024, the vast majority of pupils reported they

understood consent. However, trans/non-binary pupils (88.4%) and asexual/other sexuality pupils (85.6%) were significantly less likely to report they understood consent than other LGBTQ+ and heterosexual/cis pupils.

Around 1 in 10 secondary and post-16 pupils report they are sexually active, a reduction on previous years.

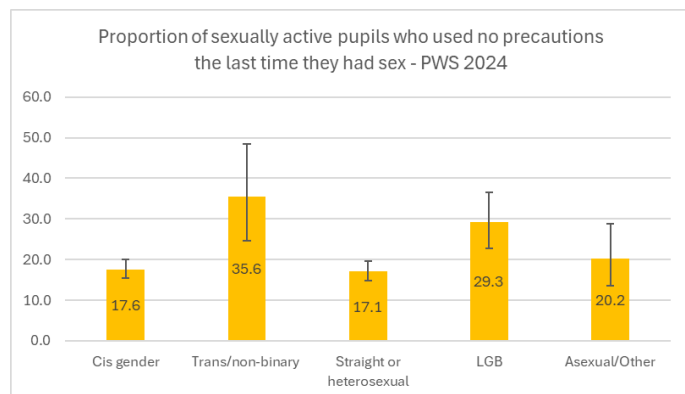
In 2024 there was a significant difference between the proportion of pupils reporting engaging in sexual activity by sexuality and gender identity, LGB pupils (16.2%) were more likely to be sexually active than heterosexual pupils (11.3%) and trans/non-binary pupils (18.3%) were more likely to be sexually active than cis pupils (11.4%). Asexual pupils (9.8%) were less likely to report they had engaged in sexual activity but not significantly. This is a change to previous years where there was no difference between different sexualities and gender identities and suggests the overall reduction in pupils reporting they are sexually active is likely to be driven by a reduction in heterosexual pupils.



There was no significant difference in reported Early Sexual Debut (ESD) between heterosexual and LGB pupils, but asexual/other sexuality pupils were less likely to report ESD than heterosexual pupils. Trans/non-binary pupils were less likely to report ESD than cis pupils.

Around 1 in 8 pupils reported having sex, LGBTQ+ pupils were significantly more likely to report having sex than their heterosexual/cis peers.

19.2% of those who had had sex reported they didn't use protection⁶, trans/non-binary pupils (35.6%) and LGB pupils (29.3%) were significantly more likely to report they didn't use protection during intercourse. Whilst same sex intercourse has no risk of pregnancy, this suggests LGBTQ+ pupils are likely to be at higher risk of sexually transmitted diseases.



Around half of pupils reported they would be happy to go to their GP for sexual health and contraception services, this was the same for both LGBTQ+ pupils (48.9%) and heterosexual/cis pupils (49.3%). LGBTQ+ pupils were significantly more likely to say they were comfortable going to any other specified service for sexual health and contraception advice than heterosexual/cis pupils.

Healthy living

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

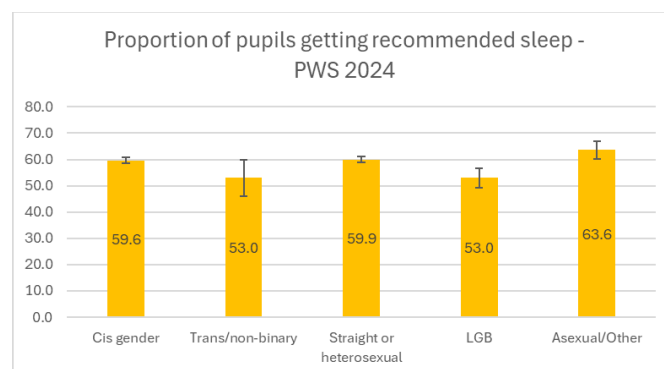
LGB (80.0%) and asexual/other sexuality (84.2%) pupils were significantly less likely to say they had healthy food available at home compared to heterosexual pupils (89.3%), trans/non-binary pupils (74.3%) were also significantly less likely to have healthy food available at home vs. cis pupils (89.0%).

Despite this there was no significant difference in the proportion of pupils reporting they eat '5 a day' by sexuality or gender identity, although it was lowest in trans pupils (13.7%).

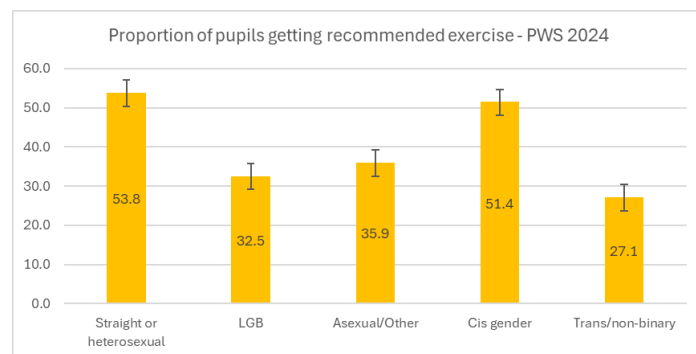
In 2024, around 2 in 3 pupils reported eating unhealthy snacks daily, there was no difference between different sexuality or gender identities.

1 in 5 pupils reported drinking sugary drinks daily, however trans/non-binary pupils were significantly more likely to report drinking sugary drinks daily (31.0%).

Getting the recommended sleep has been shown to have a significant impact on mental wellbeing. Overall LGBTQ+ pupils (55.3%) were significantly less likely to report getting the recommended sleep than heterosexual/cis pupils (60.6%), and was lowest in lesbian and gay pupils, with 49.0% getting the recommended sleep.



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



⁶ I didn't use protection, don't know about partner/No precautions used by either of us/Natural family planning' or withdrawal



Health harming behaviours

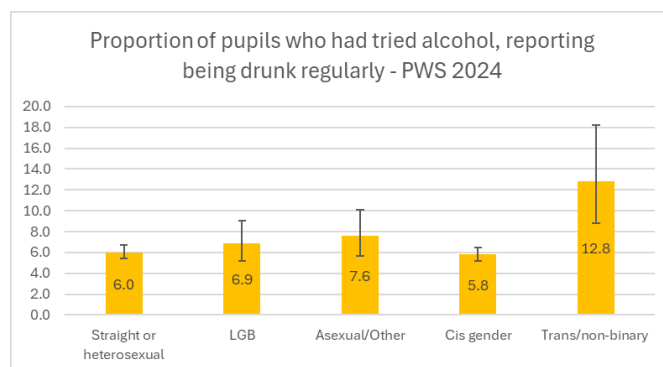
Adolescence is often a period of exploration, many teenagers become less risk averse and more impulsive. This leads to an increase in teenagers trying health harming behaviours such as drinking alcohol. Trying these behaviours may also help teenagers feel they 'fit in' with peers. Sometimes though young people turn to health harming behaviours as a way of coping with trauma, distress or low mental wellbeing.

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

In 2024, 3.0% of pupils report smoking regularly, LGB pupils (5.9%) and trans/non-binary pupils (6.7%) were significantly more likely to report smoking regularly.

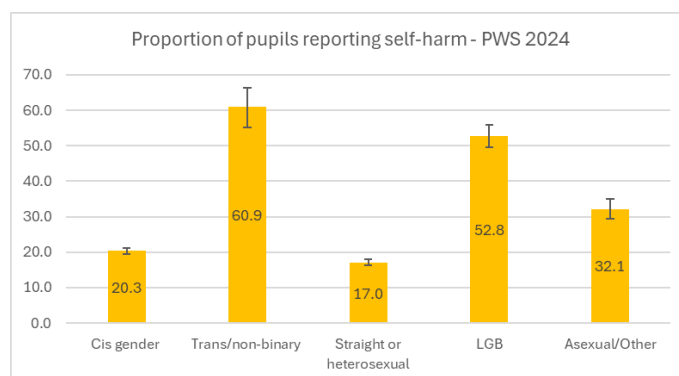
Around 1 in 5 pupils report vaping regularly, LGB pupils (29.6%) were significantly more likely to report vaping regularly than heterosexual pupils (20.2%), trans/non-binary pupils (20.6%) were in line with cis pupils (25.0%).

In the secondary and post-16 age group almost two thirds (60.8%) of pupils had tried alcohol, however LGB pupils (70.9%) were significantly more likely to have tried alcohol than heterosexual pupils (61.4%). There was no significant difference observed in the proportion of pupils who had tried alcohol that were regularly drunk between LGB and heterosexual pupils, however, Trans/non-binary pupils were significantly more likely to report being drunk regularly than cis pupils.



12.0% of pupils had tried illegal drugs, LGB pupils (16.9%) were significantly more likely to report trying drugs than heterosexual pupils, all other sexualities and gender identities were in line.

Overall, 1 in 5 pupils reported self-harm, asexual/other sexuality pupils were two and a half times more likely to report self-harm, and LGB pupils were 3 times more likely to report self-harm than heterosexual pupils. Trans/non-binary pupils were 3 times more likely to report self-harm than cis pupils.



Screentime, especially social media has become a key part of socialisation for young people in recent years. Particularly during the pandemic period, online socialising was a lifeline for many pupils. 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 time. However, LGB pupils (44.3%) and trans/non-binary pupils (50.4%) were significantly more likely to report excessive screentime.

LGB pupils (66.4%) were significantly more likely to report one of their top 3 online activities was *keeping in touch with friends (messaging on any media)* than heterosexual pupils (60.6%). This may

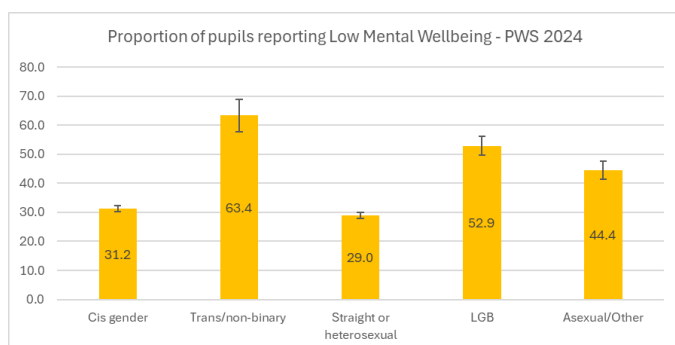
be due to finding supportive LGBTQ+ communities online.

LGB pupils (51.4%) were significantly more likely to report sexting than heterosexual pupils (44.4%), trans/non-binary pupils (50.4%) were also significantly more likely to report sexting than cis pupils (44.5%).

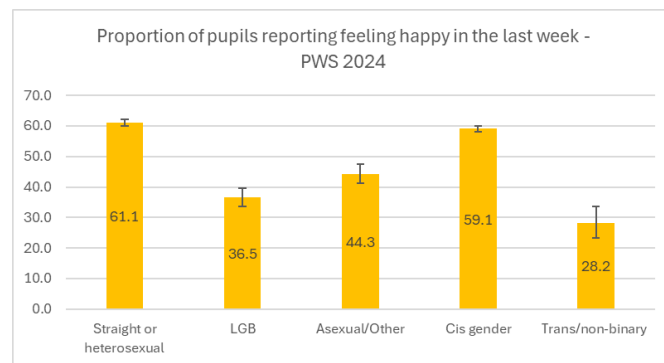
Mental wellbeing

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.

Overall, around a third of secondary and post-16 pupils reported LMW (30.7%). However, two thirds of trans/non-binary pupils (63.4%) and over half of LGB (52.9%) and asexual/other sexuality (44.4%) pupils reported LMW.



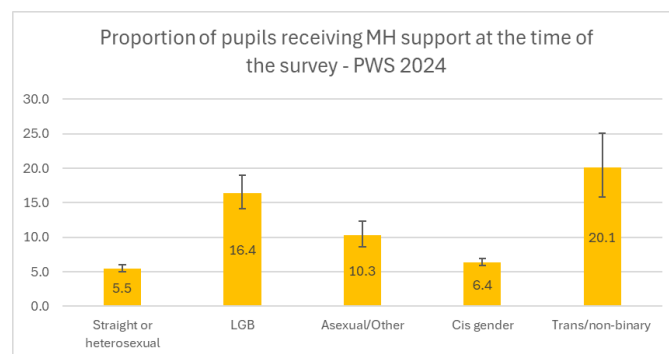
Pupils are asked how they felt generally in the last week, just over half (52.6%) reported they were feeling *happy most of the time/quite happy*. Only 1 in 5 trans/non-binary pupils reported they felt happy in the last week and 1 in 3 LGB and asexual/other sexuality pupils.



Feeling unhappy and worried can lead to sleep disruption. A quarter of trans/non-binary pupils (23.5%) reported they woke in the night due to worry (compared to 4.9% of cis pupils). LGB (13.2%) and asexual/other sexuality (8.3%) pupils were also significantly more likely to report waking in the night due to worry than heterosexual pupils (4.1%).

Accessing mental health support

In 2024, 1 in 5 pupils reported accessing professional support for their mental wellbeing. However, LGBTQ+ pupils were twice as likely to report ever accessing professional mental health support (42.6% of lesbian/gay pupils and 49.6% trans/non-binary pupils) and three times as likely to report being supported at the time of the survey than heterosexual/cis pupils.



LGBTQ+ pupils were significantly less likely to report they found it easy to access professional mental health support than heterosexual/cis pupils.

| Pupils reporting they found it easy to access professional mental health support | |
|--|----------|
| Sexuality/gender | % pupils |
| Heterosexual | 45.1 |
| LGB | 37.8 |
| Asexual/Other sex | 40.6 |
| | |
| Cis gender | 44.0 |
| Trans/non-binary | 36.9 |

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

There was no significant difference in the proportion of pupils reporting they found the mental health support they received helpful between LGBTQ+ and heterosexual/cis pupils for any service.

Of those who hadn't accessed professional support for mental health, more than twice as many trans/non-binary pupils (38.7%) felt they needed mental health support as cis pupils (18.7%). LGB (41.3%) and asexual/other sexuality pupils (33.6%) were more than also twice as likely to report they felt they needed mental health support than heterosexual pupils (16.7%).

Pupils who felt they needed professional mental health support but hadn't received it were asked why they hadn't had support. For LGBTQ+ pupils the most frequent reason given was *didn't want parents to know* (55.7%), but for heterosexual/cis pupils the most frequent reason given was *didn't know who to ask* (34.0%). LGBTQ+ pupils were significantly more likely to report they hadn't accessed support because:

- *Didn't want parents to know* (55.7% vs.31.7%)
- *Didn't want other young people to know* (24.9% vs.15.0%)
- *Didn't want teachers/school to know* (26.7% vs.15.5%)
- *Didn't like to talk to strangers* (36.2% vs.19.5%)

Experience of education, attainment, and aspirations

LGB (44.5%) pupils were significantly less likely to report they enjoyed school than their heterosexual (54.3%) peers. There was no significant difference between cis gendered (50.1%) and trans/non-binary pupils (44.7%).

LGBTQ+ pupils were also significantly less likely to report *Getting enough help at school with learning*, and GE pupils were more likely to say they were *Often in trouble*. Trans/non-binary and LGB pupils were significantly more likely to report they didn't feel they often achieved top grades (35.9% and 29.3% respectively), compared to cis gender (24.7%) and heterosexual pupils (24.3%). Research by Edinburgh University⁷ suggested LGBTQ+ pupils put themselves under increased academic pressure as attending university or college was perceived as gaining freedom to be themselves and a safe space to connect with other LGBTQ+ young people.

Trans/non-binary (11.6%) pupils were significantly more likely to say they were *Often aggressive or violent* at school than cis pupils (5.3%).

LGBTQ+ pupils were significantly less likely to report they felt safe at school, less than half trans/non-binary pupils and just over half LGB pupils, compared to 69.0% of cis pupils and 69.0% of heterosexual pupils.

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

Trans/non-binary (46.1%) and LGB (41.2%) pupils were significantly more likely to report missing more than 10% of possible school sessions in the previous term (autumn 2023) than cis (34.2%) and heterosexual pupils (34.3%).

Whilst there was no significant difference between the pupils of different sexualities reporting an isolation, suspension or exclusion, trans/non-binary pupils were significantly more likely to report

⁷<https://hazelmarzetti.files.wordpress.com/2021/12/understanding-lgbt-youth-suicide-in-scotland-summary-report-1.pdf>

they had experienced an isolation, suspension or exclusion (20.1%), than cis pupils (14.8%).

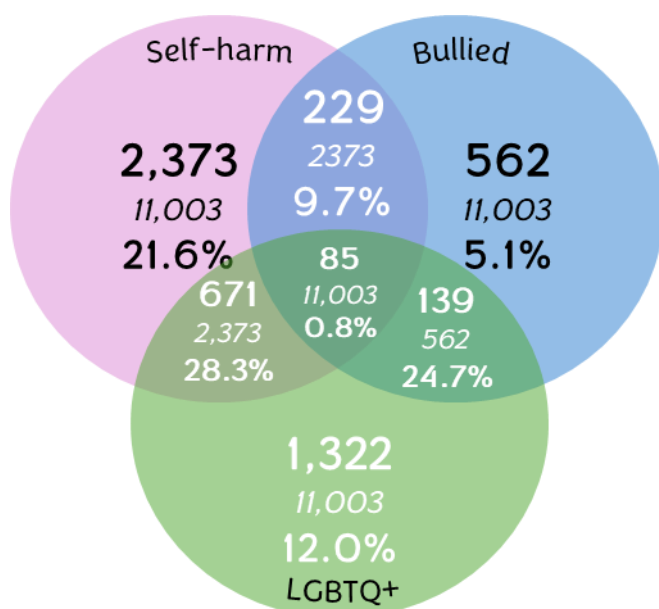


Intersectionality

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

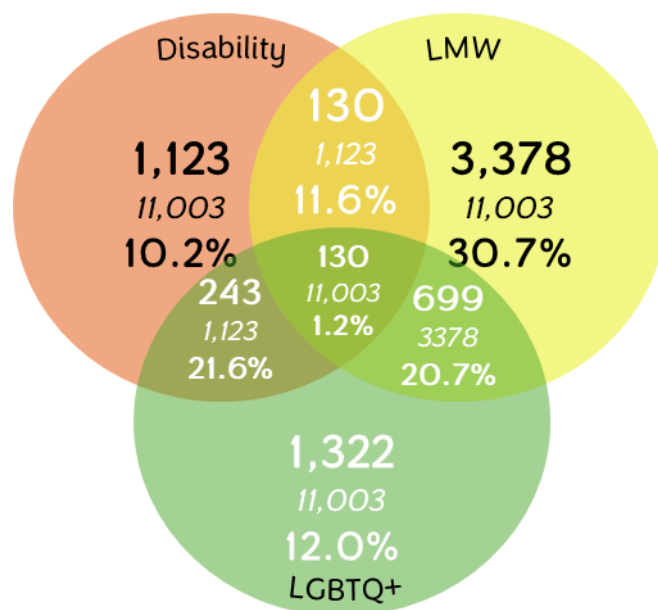
Health harming behaviours such as self-harm may be initiated as a coping mechanism by pupils in mental distress. Pupils who self-harm and those who were bullied were more likely to be LGBTQ+.

The intersectionality Venn diagrams below show the relationship between characteristics, the first diagram shows **85** pupils reported they were LGBTQ+, had been bullied and self-harmed.



There was also a significant correlation between LGBTQ+ pupils, disability and low mental

wellbeing, **130** pupils reported all three characteristics/experiences.



Helping LGBTQ+ pupils thrive

It is important to help every young person to thrive. LGBTQ+ pupils can face unique challenges in addition to those faced by many young people during adolescence. Pupils 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 LGBTQ+ pupils with high mental wellbeing it is apparent the NHS Five Ways to Wellbeing are as relevant to wellbeing for LGBTQ+ pupils as their heterosexual/cis peers.

NHS Five Ways to Wellbeing⁸:

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

Trans/non-binary pupils with HMW were twice as likely to say they were good at making and keeping friends than those with average or low mental wellbeing A/LMW. LGB and asexual/other sexuality pupils with HMW were also more likely to report finding it easy to make and keep friends.

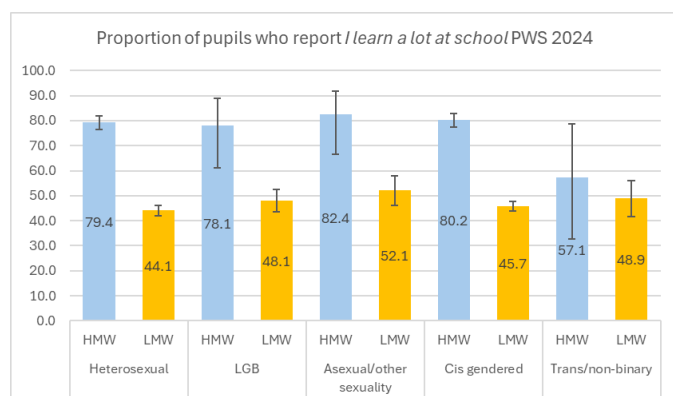
LGBTQ+ pupils with HMW were significantly more likely to say they had a trusted adult to turn to when

⁸ <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/>

they were worried (88.9%) than those with LMW (48.3%).

LGBTQ+ pupils with high mental wellbeing were significantly more likely to do the recommended exercise (41.3%) than those with LMW (26.5%), this was still significantly below their heterosexual/cis peers.

Almost twice as many pupils with HMW report they learn a lot at school compared to those with LMW this was the same for all pupils.



Pupils with HMW were more likely to report they did voluntary work than those with LMW. Similarly, LGBTQ+ pupils with HMW were more likely to volunteer than heterosexual/cis pupils (LGB 31.3% vs. heterosexual 21.5%).

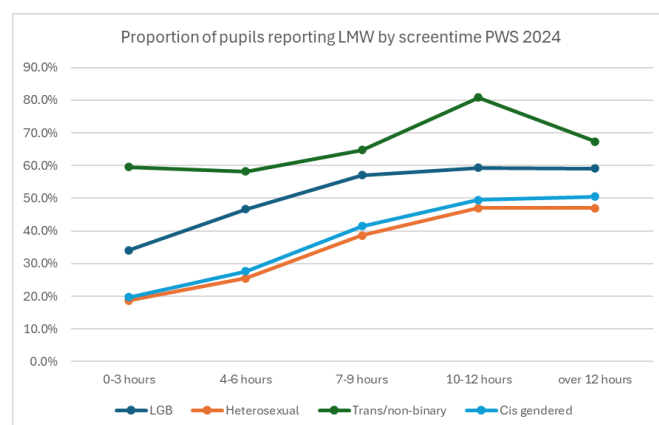
Pupils with HMW were more likely to report they felt proud of what they had achieved than those with LMW, this was the same for LGBTQ+ pupils and heterosexual/cis pupils, however, the gap was wider for LGBTQ+ pupils (82.5% vs. 19.5%).



Sleep appears to be as important for LGBTQ+ pupils in relation to wellbeing as for cis and

heterosexual pupils. LGBTQ+ pupils with high mental wellbeing were twice as likely to report getting the recommended sleep.

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 LGBTQ+ pupils. trans/non-binary pupils have very similar levels of LMW regardless of screentime. 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.



Support

A national survey⁹ 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.”

Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning (GHLL) have developed a number of resources to enable teachers, support staff and parents to support LGBTQ+ pupils 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

⁹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/722314/GEO-LGBT-Survey-Report.pdf

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 Gay Glos and the Hate Crime Co-ordinator to then roll out to schools.

GHLL also work closely with Victim Support, Hate Crimes and Gay Glos 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:

- **GayGlos** – provides support for LGBTQ+ young people in Gloucestershire
www.gay-glos.org

GayGlos Youth started in July 2012, rapidly growing to a membership which has run at between 30-40 young people at any one time. It provides young LGBTQ+ people aged 14-18 with a sense of identity and belonging, helping them to grow in confidence, self-esteem and happiness, both within the group and in the other communities within which they function, i.e. home, school, locality.

- **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>

