



Listening to LGBTQIA+ Young People...

and their experiences of school, work, sport and leisure activities

Since being appointed in 2017, I have undertaken more than 40 surveys and polls of South Australian children and young people on issues and topics relating to their lives. Young people have participated in their tens of thousands, revealing insights across a broad range of issues that enable me to advocate for change at the systemic level to improve the lives of all South Australian children and young people.

This snapshot summary takes a close look at the large surveys I've conducted on relationships and sexual health education, periods, sport, work and public transport in relation to responses from lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and/or asexual (LGBTQIA+) young people. Nearly 1,500 LGBTQIA+ young people responded to these surveys, representing just under 20% of all respondents.

The surveys asked young people to select if they were LGBTQIA+ in slightly different ways – sometimes as part of the broader LGBTQIA+ grouping, and at other times by answering separate questions about sexuality and gender which have been grouped as LGBTQ+. These groupings are used in this snapshot summary in the same way they were used in the original surveys. LGBTQIA+ young people's views and experiences are reflected in an analysis of the responses they gave providing a snapshot view of their lives.

While some issues raised by SA young people are similar, LGBTQIA+ young people more often raised that they are excluded and are missing out. They were also more likely to report that they receive education that is less relevant to them, and that they feel unsafe in many situations and places.

In addition to their survey responses, many South Australian LGBTQIA+ young people have spoken to me directly about being systematically excluded and overlooked across many aspects of their lives. These negative experiences occur while they're at school, at work and in the community, as well as when they're undertaking sport and leisure activities.

The high levels of exclusion and discrimination LGBTQIA+ young people continue to experience has prompted me to take a closer look at the survey responses they have provided to examine how they are faring when compared to non-LGBTQIA+ young people.

This snapshot summary is an extension of projects and engagement I have previously undertaken with LGBTQIA+ young people in South Australia as part of my advocacy around their rights. These include creating safer schools for LGBTQIA+ students ([No Exceptions](#)) and supporting SA's healthcare system to better meet the needs of trans and gender diverse children and young people ([First Port of Call](#)). The SA SRC [Seeing Ourselves](#) Campaign position brief also highlights the need for more action to increase inclusion in schools for LGBTQIA+ young people.

LGBTQIA+ young people come from diverse circumstances and have had different experiences. These differences relate not only to their sexuality and gender but also to culture and language, disability, geographical locations

and socio-economic backgrounds. While this snapshot summary provides a brief overview of this group it also recognises that the lives and identities of young people are diverse and multi-faceted.

All young people have the right to live their lives free of discrimination and to participate fully in society. For many LGBTQIA+ young people these rights are not always being upheld in the settings and spaces they frequent, and this must change.

I am deeply concerned by the continuing exclusion and discrimination being faced by LGBTQIA+ young people in South Australia. While acknowledging that some progress has been made, we all need to continue to advocate for these children and young people who are so often being ignored and marginalised. By embracing the key messages this snapshot summary contains we will be demonstrating our commitment to providing the support South Australia's LGBTQIA+ young people have told us they need.

Experiences of relationships and sexual health education

All young people should have access to inclusive relationships and sexual health education. However, survey feedback provided by young people shows this is often not the case.

Overall LGBTQ+ young people were less likely to report learning about a broad range of topics relating to relationships and sexual health at school compared to non-LGBTQ+ young people. Fewer reported learning about healthy relationships, consent, sexual violence and sexual assault. They also reported learning less about sexuality and sexual diversity, gender identity and gender diversity, homophobia and transphobia and intersex variations.

Young people reported learning most about sex from their friends. However, alongside this, LGBTQ+ young people were more likely than non-LGBTQ+ young people to learn

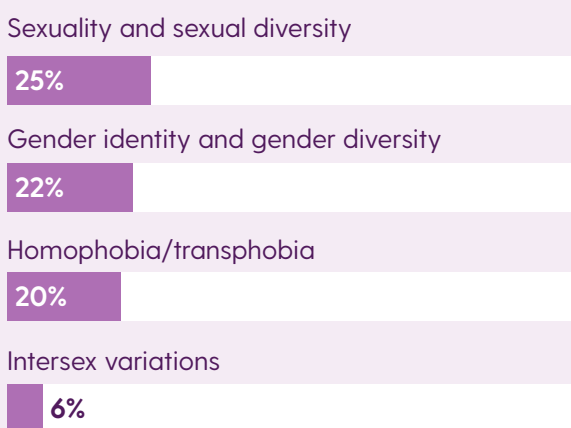
from the Internet, including social media, websites (eg SA Health and SHINE SA) and porn. Nearly three quarters (73%) of LGBTQ+ young people reported learning about sex from social media, which was higher than non-LGBTQ+ young people who reported this at less than two thirds (60%).

The levels of trust young people place in these sources of information varies. While friends were an important source they were only trusted 'a lot' by one third of young people. Family and lessons at school were trusted less by LGBTQ+ young people than non-LGBTQ+ young people. Informative websites (such as SA Health and SHINE SA) were trusted 'a lot' by two thirds of LGBTQ+ young people, compared to just under 60% of non-LGBTQ+ young people. Even though social media and porn sites were places where many LGBTQ+ young people learnt about sex, very few viewed these sources as being trustworthy.

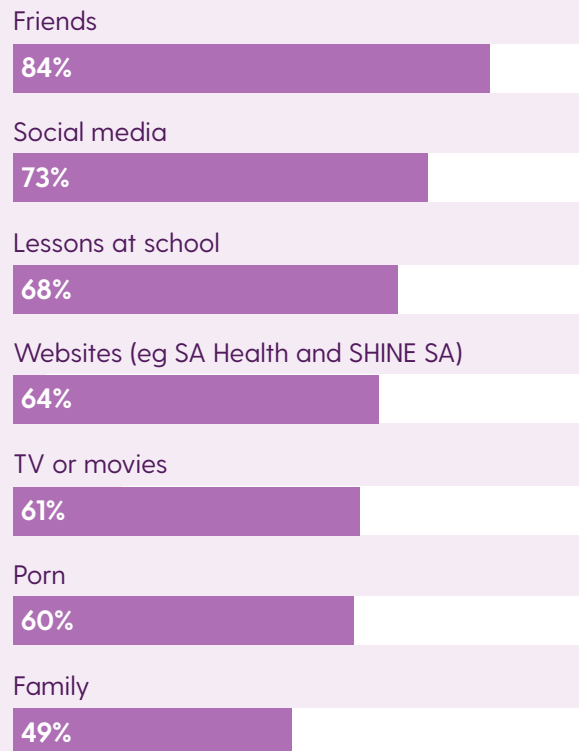
LGBTQ+ young people reported much poorer experiences of relationships and sexual health education at school. They were more likely to report lessons taught about relationships and sexual health that were awkward, brief, infrequent and embarrassing. They were also less likely to view the relationships and sexual health education they received at school as being relevant to them.

- “ i feel like there should be less awkwardness around lgbt and show more than just straight, lesbian and gay, since there’s so much more like ace/aro, bi/pan, genderfluid, non binary, trans etc. (15, female)
- “ [I] did not know much about the LGBT community until I had social media. There’s various other things I believe I should have learned and my school let me down. (16, female)
- “ Education from a young age so they don’t have to learn what sex (all forms of it) is from porn. (17, female)
- “ In high school, I specifically remember my teacher saying, “No one in here is gay so we can just skip all that stuff.” (18, male)
- “ I know how to date and have great and safe sex with women... [but] I’m gay. (17, male)
- “ Separating genders not only makes young, closeted trans people uncomfortable. (17, non-binary)

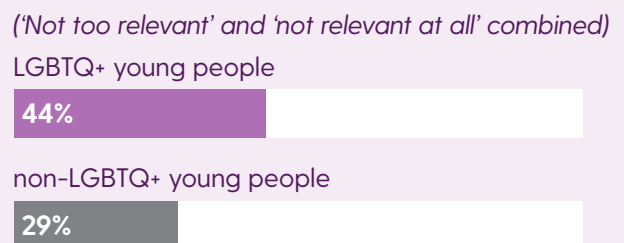
Topics LGBTQ+ young people learnt about at school:



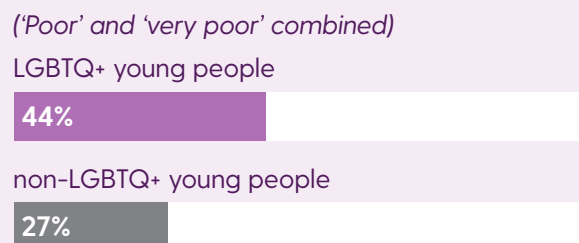
Most common places LGBTQ+ young people learn about sex:



Relevance of relationships and sexual health education at school:



Experience of relationships and sexual health education at school:



Experiences of periods

All children and young people should have access to informative, relevant and inclusive period education and period products whenever they're needed.

Young people say they often obtain knowledge about periods from their parents or carers. While many young people mentioned school as a source of information about periods, this was less often the case for LGBTQIA+ young people. LGBTQIA+ young people were more likely to rely on social media and other online sources of information about periods when compared to non-LGBTQIA+ young people.

When it came to gaining knowledge about periods and to accessing period products LGBTQIA+ young people reported some of the worst experiences. Transgender and non-binary young people reported not only having issues with accessing period products, but also a lack of knowledge and understanding from cisgender people.

LGBTQIA+ young people were more likely to report that they had missed school due to having their period. They were also twice as likely to report problems getting period products than non-LGBTQIA+ young people, with a third of LGBTQIA+ young people reporting that they 'frequently' or 'sometimes' had no access to period products.

When they did not have a period product LGBTQIA+ young people were much more likely than non-LGBTQIA+ young people to use something else as a period product. They were also less likely to ask someone for a period product and more likely to use a less suitable period product. Of the LGBTQIA+ young people who had problems getting period products, a much higher proportion (85%) had used something else (such as toilet paper or socks) instead of a period product.

LGBTQIA+ young people more often reported having negative feelings because of not having a period product compared to non-LGBTQIA+ young people. Two thirds of LGBTQIA+ young people felt anxious and/or self-conscious, with nearly 60% reporting they felt embarrassed about not having a period product.

Ever missing school due to having their period:

LGBTQIA+ young people



non-LGBTQIA+ young people



Ever having problems getting period products:

LGBTQIA+ young people



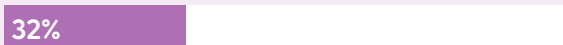
non-LGBTQIA+ young people



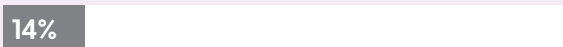
Not having access to period products:

('Frequently' and 'sometimes' combined)

LGBTQIA+ young people



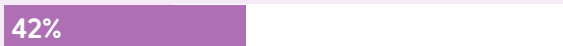
non-LGBTQIA+ young people



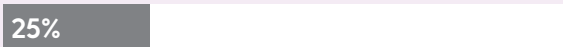
Not having a period product has ever led to missing out on:

Participating in activities you enjoy

LGBTQIA+ young people

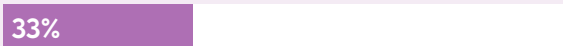


non-LGBTQIA+ young people



Playing sports

LGBTQIA+ young people

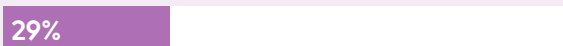


non-LGBTQIA+ young people

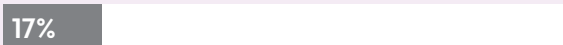


Going to social events

LGBTQIA+ young people



non-LGBTQIA+ young people



LGBTQIA+ young people were much more likely to report missing out on activities due to not having access to a period product. These missed activities were most likely to be activities they enjoyed, sport and social events, as well as school.

- “ I don’t remember exactly what we learnt but I’m pretty sure it was mostly just the biological reasons “girls” get periods without anything about blood colours, clots, discharge etc. and of course there was absolutely no mention of trans or intersex people. (17, non-binary)
- “ It’s really difficult to access certain things and I miss out on my classes a lot. (12-14, female)
- “ I’m transgender and unable to talk about my period with a lot of people because it would out me as trans to those who think i’m cis. (15-17, transgender)

- “ As a trans male, it’s difficult to speak up about needing them. (12-14, transgender)
- “ Pain has caused me to miss school as I got to the levels that I was unable to move about or concentrate on my work. I know other people who also have that level of pain and have also had to miss school. (18-21, female)
- “ As a transgender male I was too embarrassed to go and get something that many consider a ‘female hygiene’ product. I also feel as if people will see me as ‘dirty’ for buying them and needing them, presumably because I’m currently on my period. (18-21, male)
- “ By understanding that I am still a male even though I get them. (13, transgender)

Experiences of sport

All children and young people should have access to inclusive sport and physical activities that suit their interests and abilities.

Young people say that sport can be fun and can have many benefits across their physical, mental and social health and wellbeing. However, often young people highlight challenges and barriers to participation in sport, with these often being more pronounced amongst LGBTQ+ young people. In addition, LGBTQ+ young people were much less likely to describe themselves as ‘sporty’ compared to non-LGBTQ+ young people.

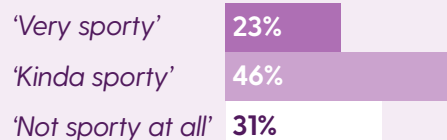
LGBTQ+ young people were less likely to participate in school or club sport during primary school, and even less likely to participate while in secondary school.

In primary school, two thirds of LGBTQ+ young people participated in school sport (other than PE) compared to three quarters of non-LGBTQ+ young people.

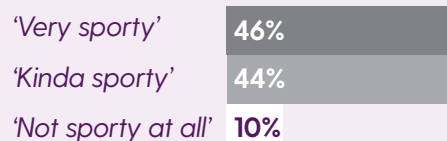
In secondary school, this dropped to under half of LGBTQ+ young people participating in school sport, compared to nearly 60% of non-LGBTQ+ young people.

How young people describe themselves:

LGBTQ+ young people

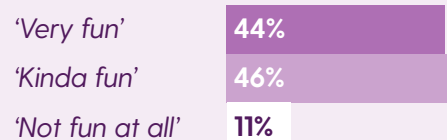


non-LGBTQ+ young people

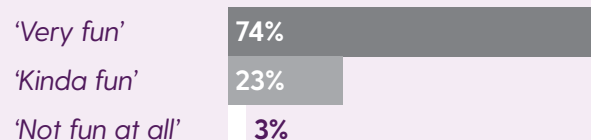


Enjoyment of sport:

LGBTQ+ young people



non-LGBTQ+ young people



Over half of LGBTQ+ young people played club sport during primary school which dropped to less than half during secondary school. In comparison, two thirds (67%) of non-LGBTQ+ young people played club sport in primary school compared to 60% in secondary school.

The reasons most young people decide to play sport relate to how fun it is, whether there is a positive culture amongst players and teams, and how inclusive it feels. These factors were more important to LGBTQ+ young people. However, when asked how fun sport is, less than half of the LGBTQ+ young people who responded felt sport was 'very fun' compared to nearly three quarters of non-LGBTQ+ young people who felt it was.

LGBTQ+ young people had many suggestions for how more LGBTQ+ children and young people could be supported to get involved and stay involved in sport. Their ideas included suggestions based on which sports can be played, who they can be played with, and what uniforms different sports require.

- “ Quite a toxic environment both for women, trans people and +size people. Personally quite anxious about playing against other people. (17, female)
- “ I only play the sport that has the mixed team even though it's not my preferred one. (16, male)
- “ Transgender boys have to use binders and you can't exercise while wearing. Sport makes it harder to be your preferred gender. (16, transgender boy)
- “ Making more effort to create inclusive spaces where anyone can feel safe joining in, not just white, straight, able bodied 'sporty' people. (16, female)
- “ Let people have a choice, make sure forms have gender diverse options on them. (12, non-binary)
- “ Possibly include more diversity in gender divisions, uniform, and having options for non-competitive playing. (17, female)
- “ Provide access to different kinds of sport for all genders. (16, non-binary)

Experiences of work

All young people have the right to experience inclusive workplaces and have positive working experiences in their teenage years.

Overall LGBTQ+ young people reported having less positive experiences of work than non-LGBTQ+ young people. They were more likely to view their experiences of work as being negatively impacted by how they were treated by managers, how work clashed with school and study as well as with other aspects of their lives, and how co-workers treated them.

LGBTQ+ young people were more likely to feel pressure to work while sick and/or after they had already told their employer they were unavailable. They were also more likely to share that a customer had shouted or sworn at them and/or told jokes that made them feel uncomfortable.

Other people impacting on experience of work:

(A lot of impact')

How managers treat you:

LGBTQ+ young people

48%

non-LGBTQ+ young people

30%

How other workers treat you:

LGBTQ+ young people

43%

non-LGBTQ+ young people

30%

Young people named many things that make a good workplace for teenagers, including being welcomed and encouraged, feeling physically and emotionally safe, being given learning opportunities, having supportive and professional management, and working in a friendly team environment. LGBTQ+ young people emphasised that a good workplace is one in which you feel included, safe and accepted. They also highlighted several things employers can do to make workplaces more inclusive for LGBTQ+ young people.

LGBTQ+ young people were less likely to feel comfortable talking to their supervisor, manager, or boss if they were worried about something at work.

“ A good workplace is one where young people can quickly, safely and anonymously report incidents without fear of the aggressor finding out and potentially acting on them - as well as one that is queer, neurodivergent and POC friendly; an inclusive space. Its employees must be willing to be attentive and listen and help young people and be able to be confided in. (16, non-binary)

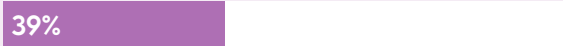
“ It's hard to tell as it really depends on the person. There are some bosses that I would feel comfortable to speak with, and some who I don't. (16, non-binary)

“ Safe, welcoming, accepting a.k.a. not homophobic, racist, transphobic, etc. and open to new ideas. (14, female)

LGBTQ+ young people's experiences at work:

(‘A lot of the time’ and ‘sometimes’ combined)

Felt pressure to work while sick

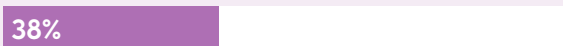


Felt pressure to work after they said they were unavailable

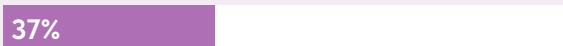


LGBTQ+ young people's experiences with customers at work:

Told jokes by a customer that made them feel uncomfortable



Shouted at or sworn at by a customer



“ There also needs to be more options for us young people, especially us with sensory issues and who are LGBTQIA+. (16, trans masculine)

“ Enfor[c]e the environment to be more supportive about mental health and the LGBTQIA+ community. (14, genderfluid)

“ Employers can do to make workplaces better for young people is to make it more inclusive, more supportive and a little less stressful. (16, male)



Experiences of public transport

All young people should have access to safe, reliable, clean public transport. However, many young people across SA often express concerns about experiencing this.

Overall LGBTQIA+ young people were more likely to report feeling unsafe and uncomfortable while using public transport. This appeared to be even more of a concern for some young people who may appear visibly LGBTQIA+ to others.

LGBTQIA+ young people reported greater safety concerns in relation to public transport. They were less likely to feel 'very safe' while on public transport, waiting for public transport, or getting to the station or bus/train/tram stop.

LGBTQIA+ young people were also much more likely to feel judged by adults and by other young people while using public transport. Over a third of LGBTQIA+ young people 'almost always' felt judged by adults and other young people, compared to just under a quarter of non-LGBTQIA+ young people. LGBTQIA+ young people were also slightly more likely to feel threatened by adults or other young people while using public transport.

Like other young people, LGBTQIA+ young people ask for their safety concerns to be met with more frequent and better-connected bus, tram, and train services, better lighting at places where they wait for public transport, supportive drivers and security guards who are willing to help LGBTQIA+ young people, and security cameras on all public transport vehicles and at all stations and stops.

- “ At night I feel safer on public transport because there are not many people, but walking home after getting off is terrifying. During the day on public transport there are too many people, including threatening people. I am worried I will get hatecrimed. (17, non-binary)
- “ I hate taking the bus every day. I am so scared on there. (17, non-binary)
- “ At night I am definitely more cautious since I appear female. (14, prefer not to say)
- “ Although I identify as a male and present masculine, occasionally I do still get seen as a Female, meaning that I still have to be careful. (16, male)

LGBTQIA+ young people's feeling of safety in relation to use of public transport:

(‘Very safe’)

While on public transport

19%

Waiting for public transport

21%

Getting to the station or stop

37%

LGBTQIA+ young people's experiences while using public transport:

(‘Almost always a problem’ and ‘sometimes a problem’ combined)

Feeling creeped out by adults

92%

Feeling creeped out by other young people

72%

Feeling threatened by adults

66%

Feeling threatened by other young people

52%

- “ There are more cameras on the busses so you know that you are protected (15, female)
- “ I could rely on buses throughout the day and not only during peak hours to increase safety while walking alone, if the interchanges had better lighting during early morning and evening hours (19, female)
- “ I am often scared one of the threatening adults will follow me and hurt me because I am a POC and/or visibly queer. (17, non-binary)
- “ stops and stations had better lighting. I've also found that trains with security guards or personnel in the carriages feel a lots safer. (17, female)
- “ the bus driver checked if the younger passengers had a good trip and if there was anyone harassing them (13, non-binary)

Practical ways adults can support LGBTQIA+ young people

Creating a society where all LGBTQIA+ young people experience inclusion and a sense of belonging in all situations and at all times not only benefits other young people, it benefits everyone. To achieve this, adults need to embrace and embed the following principles and practices into schools, workplaces, sports clubs, on public transport, in public spaces, and beyond.

Avoid assumptions

Avoid making assumptions about young people's sexuality and gender and be aware that LGBTQIA+ young people exist in all spaces and places.

Make education inclusive and relevant

Provide all young people with inclusive and relevant education that teaches about diversity in relation to sexuality and gender, including but not limited to relationships and sexual health education and period education.

Create safe and inclusive spaces

Create safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTQIA+ young people, making sure these welcoming spaces are clearly visible and displaying posters and signage that reflect this.

Drive active participation

Actively drive and implement principles of participation and non-discrimination in relation to the participation of LGBTQIA+ young people in all community, social and recreational activities and events.

Commit to adult allyship

Educate and equip the adults in LGBTQIA+ young people's lives to actively support them to feel welcomed and that they belong in all situations and at all times.



The Commissioner's Role

The South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People is an independent statutory position, established under the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016* ('the Act'). The Commissioner's role includes advocating for systemic change to policies, programs and practices that impact the rights, development and wellbeing of South Australia's children and young people.

This work is informed by the experiences and issues of children and young people themselves, with a specific focus on those who struggle to have their voices heard.

The Commissioner's strategic agenda was formulated with direct input from children and young people. In particular, children and young people asked the Commissioner to facilitate their involvement in decision making, and to create opportunities for them to experience authentic participation.

The Commissioner is working with a number of partners on this agenda, including ways in which children and young people can have greater input into the design and delivery of policies, programs and practices that affect their lives.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the South Australian LGBTQIA+ young people who have contributed their insights by participating in CCYP surveys and consultations on the various topics covered in this snapshot summary.

Please note: All quotes in this snapshot summary are reproduced verbatim.

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