



# Methodology & Approach

## Study Objectives

- Determine what changes young people aged 11-25 in the UK want to see when it comes to accessing online educational content about relationships, sex and wellbeing.
- Understand how young people are currently accessing content.
- Use this data to inform the development of a 'Youth Manifesto' addressing harmful content and contact young people don't want to be exposed to and the healthy content they want to be able to access.

## Methodology

- 44-question survey comprising both quantitative and qualitative questions. All responses were anonymous.
- Respondents were recruited by Fumble – criteria was young people aged 11-25 living in the United Kingdom.
- 201 respondents - 33 excluded due to being from outside UK or aged over 25 years.
- Fielded from 10 January 2022 to 7 February 2022.



# Executive Summary



## Happy, healthy hub

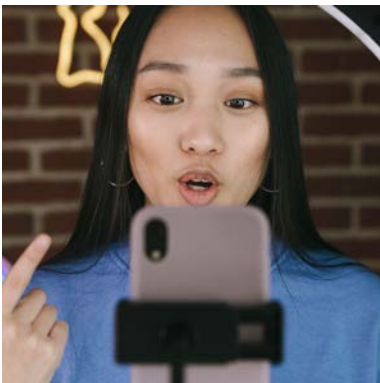
The change young people most wanted to see was the provision of a happy, healthy place online for sex education.

This would provide them with a safe place with reliable information where they could have their questions answered without fear of judgement.



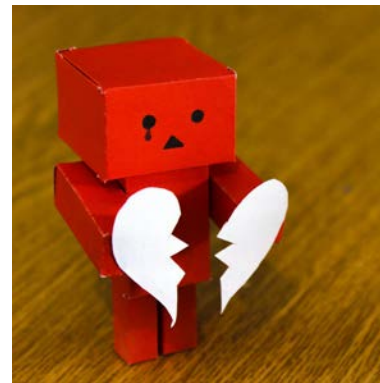
## Inclusive education

Inclusivity was a hot topic for young people. Too often, content is only written for able-bodied, cis-het individuals within monogamous relationships. This made others feel excluded and also resulted in them not being able to access information they need.



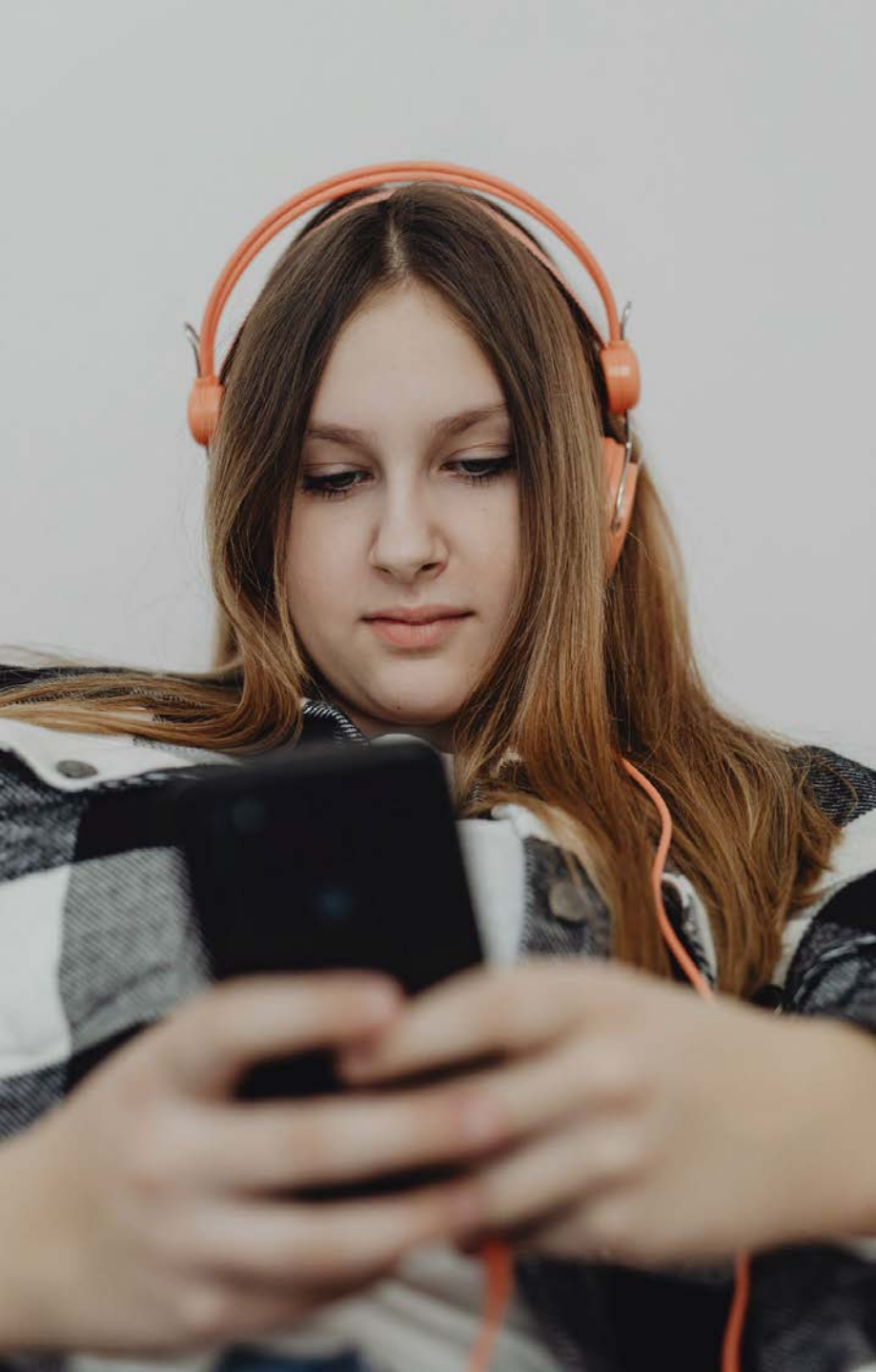
## Content creators

Young people really wanted to be involved in the creation of content around sex and relationships. They argued they understood what other young people want to see, as well as the issues affecting other young people.



## Internet downsides

While the internet can be a useful space to find information, it also has its downsides. 25% were impacted a lot by seeing sexually explicit content when looking for information. And while 51% of young people used porn to learn about sex, most found it unuseful.



## Section 1

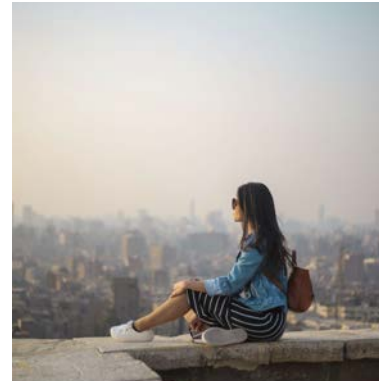
# Searching for information online

# Searching for information online



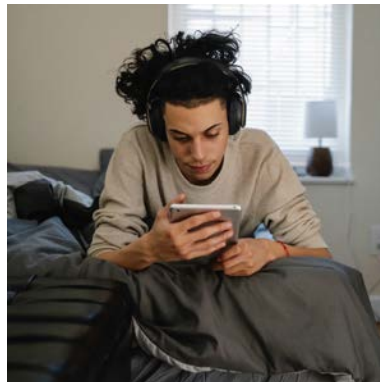
## Searching for answers

89% of respondents use Google for questions about sex or relationships. Social media and blogs are also popular as they allow people to share a wide range of experiences and develop a sense of community.



## Unique perspectives

Respondents stated that they went online because they could find more information than people they knew could offer, as well as find more inclusive content. Further, young people go online because it's quick and easy, and they can ask questions privately to avoid embarrassment.



## Hot Topics

Young people were asked what type of information or advice they wanted to see online. Topics most commonly requested included those around sexual health and healthy relationships and communication. Many asked for information to be written inclusively, from a variety of perspectives.

# Why respondents look online for information

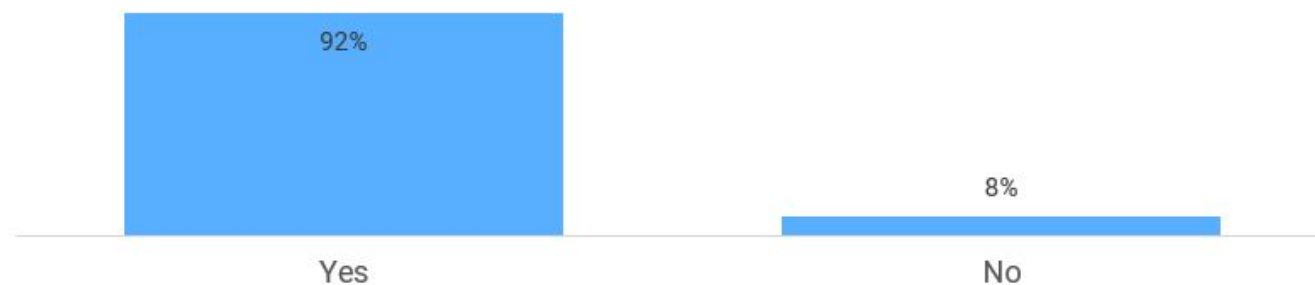
92% of respondents go online for questions about relationships, sex and wellbeing. Only 50% of respondents under 16 years did, compared to 97.5% of respondents aged 19+.

The key reasons for going online is to hear other people's points of views, a belief that online content will provide more information than people in respondents' real lives, and to search for answers in private.

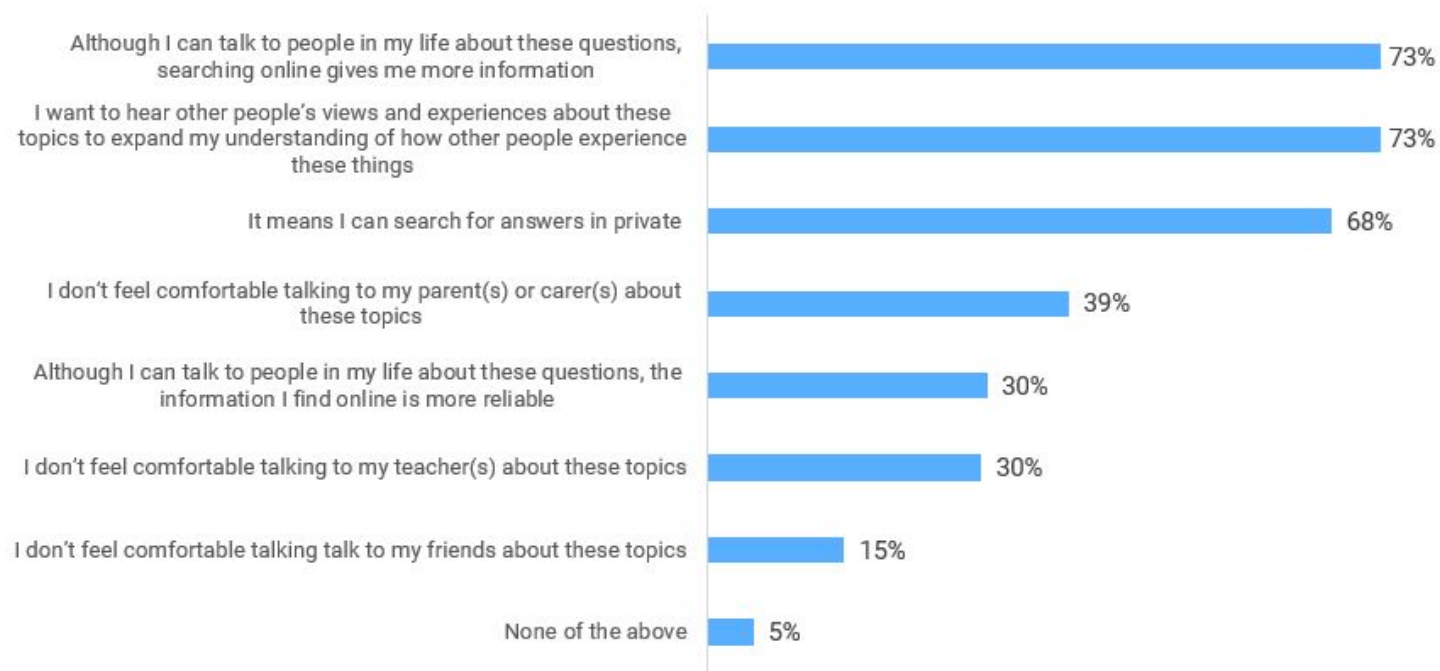
Q: Do you go online when you have questions about relationships, sex or wellbeing?

Q: If yes, why do you go online when you have questions about relationships or sex?

## Do respondents go online for questions about relationships, sex or wellbeing?



## Why do respondents go online?



# Other reasons for going online

When asked about other reasons for going online, respondents were most likely to say they looked online to **avoid judgement and embarrassment**, and to **access information quickly and easily**.

Those aged 19+ were more interested in ease, while those under 19 were more concerned about avoiding judgement/embarrassment.

Other common reasons included the ability to access a **broader range of information and opinions**, and the ability to **find information from people you can identify with**.

Q: Are there any other reasons you go online when you have questions about relationships or sex?



## Avoiding judgement/embarrassment

"I'm embarrassed to ask because I feel like I should know more than I do at my age"

"I am ashamed to reveal inexperience or confusion or abuse history"

"It's embarrassing, I fear people will judge me for asking the questions I want answers to"

## Broader range of opinions

"Broader range of opinions than my very small 20-30yo old white and straight dominant friend group"

"Experiences! People have so many different ones and there are some genuinely amazing resources out there"

"Get a bigger range of answers than just the few people I feel comfortable asking IRL [in real life]"

## Quick & easy

"It's quick and easy so when I'm alone and have a query I can get the answer immediately rather than waiting for a response from someone else"

"Most of the time it's just easier to pick up your phone and Google something"

"It's quick and generally accessible"

## Inclusive content

"It's easier to find people with experiences like mine... If you don't have queer friends or family then it's hard to get that information. It's also challenging to find overlapping identities e.g. being queer and disabled"

"More chance of finding someone who has the same or at least very similar experiences to you"

# Online resources accessed for learning

A search engine such as Google was the most popular tool for searching information about relationships and sex.

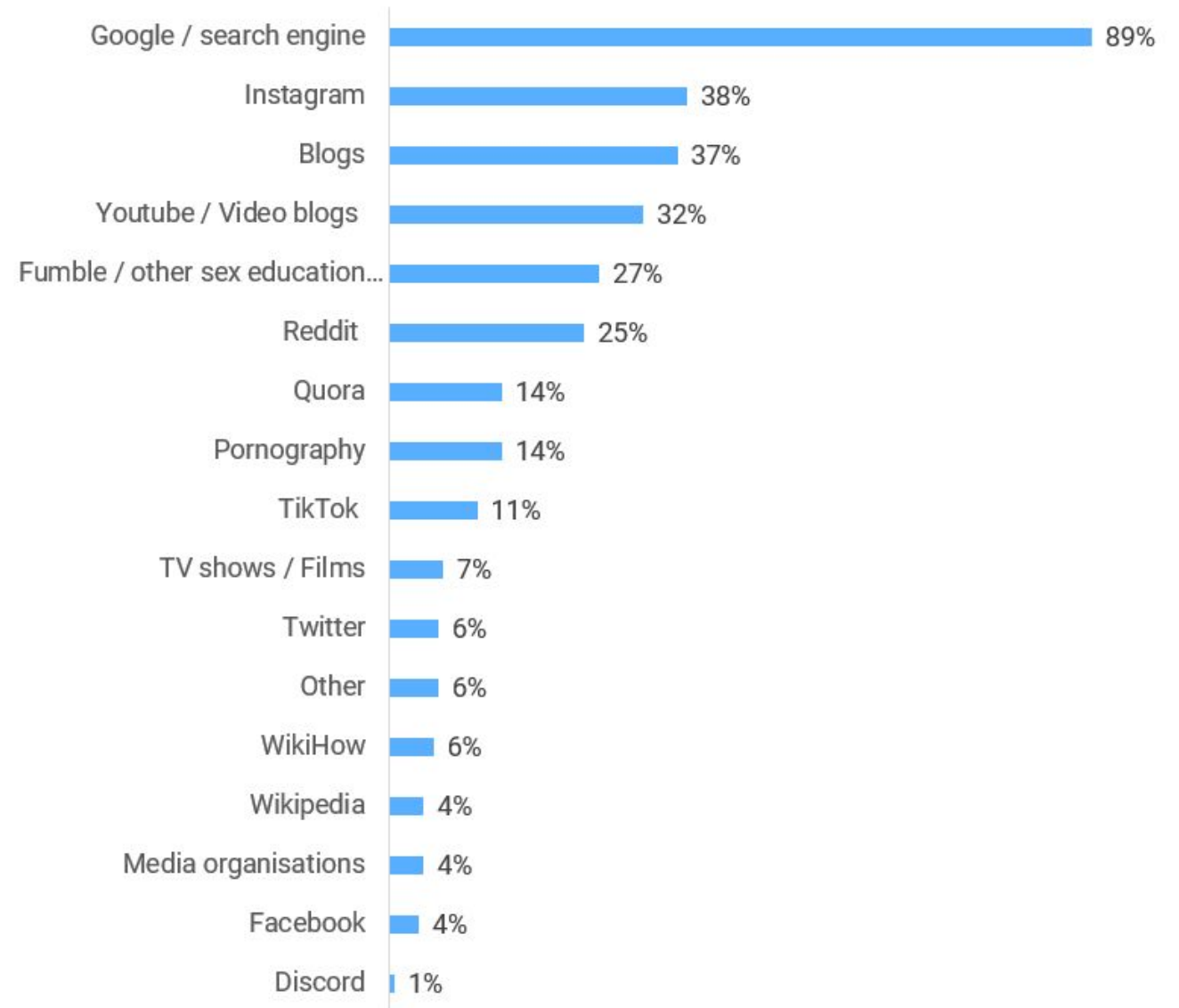
Social media sites such as Instagram and YouTube were also popular.

Because many respondents look for experiences similar to their own, this may explain why 37% read blogs to find information and 25% go on Reddit forums.

Interestingly, while around 30% of those aged under 16 or aged 19+ use sex education charities to find information, just 15.6% of those aged 16-18 do. Further, those aged 16-18 are as likely to turn to pornography for information as sex ed charities (15.6% respectively).

Q: Where do you go online when you want to find out about relationships or sex?

## Online resources used to learn about sex and relationships





# Topics of interest

The most common topics respondents wanted information and advice about were sexual health and healthy relationships.

Sex tips, articles written in an LGBTQ+ inclusive way, and information on communication and consent were also frequently mentioned.

Those who identified as LGBTQ+ were much more likely to want articles about healthy relationships, suggesting not enough content has been written with LGBTQ+ people in mind.

Q: What topics related to sex, relationships and wellbeing do you want info or advice about online?

## Sexual Health

"Advice on consent, contraception, navigating **all the things we are taught about in a "scientific" sense but never through a personal lens**"

"**STDs and things like thrush** - how to distinguish between them"

"Menstrual cycles, about discharge. It is **not talked about enough** at schools"

"Vaginismus mainly as that's what effects me most and **I'd never heard of it before I was diagnosed**"

"**Checking things are normal**, e.g. penis size, signs of STI"

## Healthy Relationships

"How to have healthy relationships"

"**Support in forming healthy relationships** after abusive/toxic relationships or experiences"

"**Different forms of relationships** like polyamory, monogamy"

"Navigating sex and relationships when trans, and also when ace. **Seeing other people's experiences of relationships similar to my own**"

"Things that healthy relationships have, **what is normal what isn't**"

## Sex Tips

"Kinks and maximising pleasure and exploring"

"**Other peoples experiences of sex and perhaps discomforts** that aren't normalised, but are a normal part of many people's experiences"

"**Sex positivity**, having sex as a disabled person"

"Sex and relationships **for all genders and sexualities**"

## LGBTQ+

"**LGBT sexual relationships**"

"Advice for queer relationships. **Safe sex with a same sex partner**"

"**Non-cis, non heteronormative information**"

"How to **talk to parents/family** about or explain LGBTQ+ topics?"

"**Birth control and STI protection for trans bodies**"

## Communication/Consent

"How to be more confident **communicating during sex** and telling your partner(s) what you like and what feels good/bad for you"

"How to talk and communicate with your partner **and set boundaries**"

"Clear consent"

"Complex consent **including feeling pressured**"



## Section 2

# Issues in the online world

# Issues in the online world



## Reliable and relevant

The two issues most likely to impact respondents a lot or some of the time were **not knowing what content is reliable and not being able to find relevant content online.**



## Unwelcome content & contact

**25% said seeing sexually explicit content when searching for information impacted them a lot.** In a similar vein, 25% of those <16 years old said the worry of strangers approaching them online to groom or use them impacted them a lot.



## Inclusion as standard

When asked about additional issues faced when looking for information, **a big concern was content often only being provided in the context of cis-het people,** resulting in feelings of exclusion and frustration. Young people wanted articles with inclusive language, from a variety of perspectives.



## Porn pitfalls

51% had used porn to learn about sex, with those who had more likely to say it was not useful than useful. **Even those who said it was useful would also often highlight it was unrealistic and could, at times, be damaging.**

# Quality of online content

Most young people found content useful and felt comfortable and safe with the content they found.

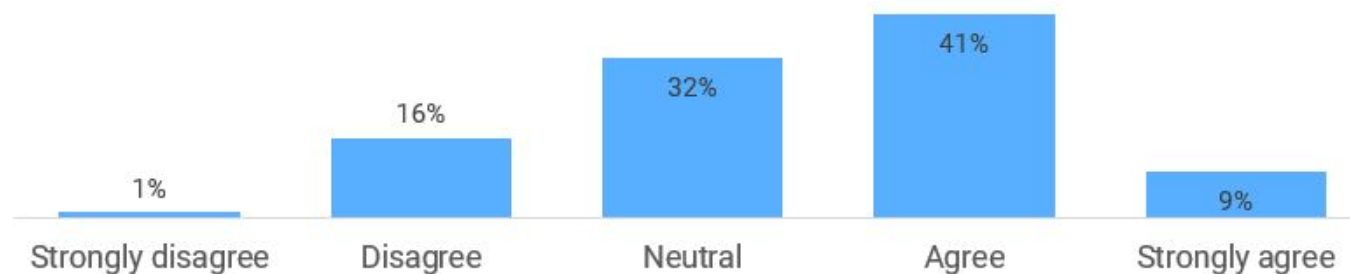
However, 17% of young people disagree or strongly disagree that they feel comfortable and safe with the content they find online about sex and relationships. Further, 44% of those under 16 disagreed that they felt comfortable and safe.

And while just 6% of young people disagree that the content is useful, this rises to 15% of young people who are not white, suggesting a need for more inclusive content.

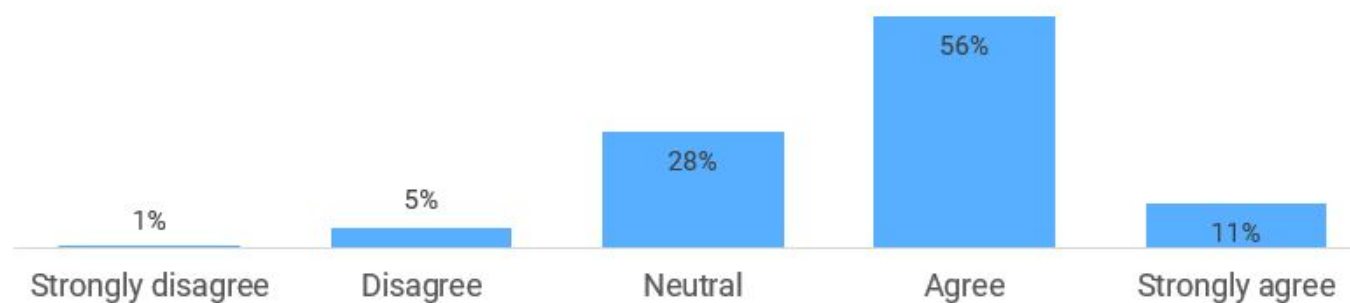
Q: How much do you agree with this sentence: 'I feel comfortable and safe with the content I find online about sex, relationships and wellbeing'?

Q: How much do you agree with this sentence: 'the content I find online about sex, relationships and wellbeing is useful'?

## 'I feel comfortable and safe with the content I find online about sex, relationships and wellbeing'



## 'The content I find online about sex, relationships and wellbeing is useful'



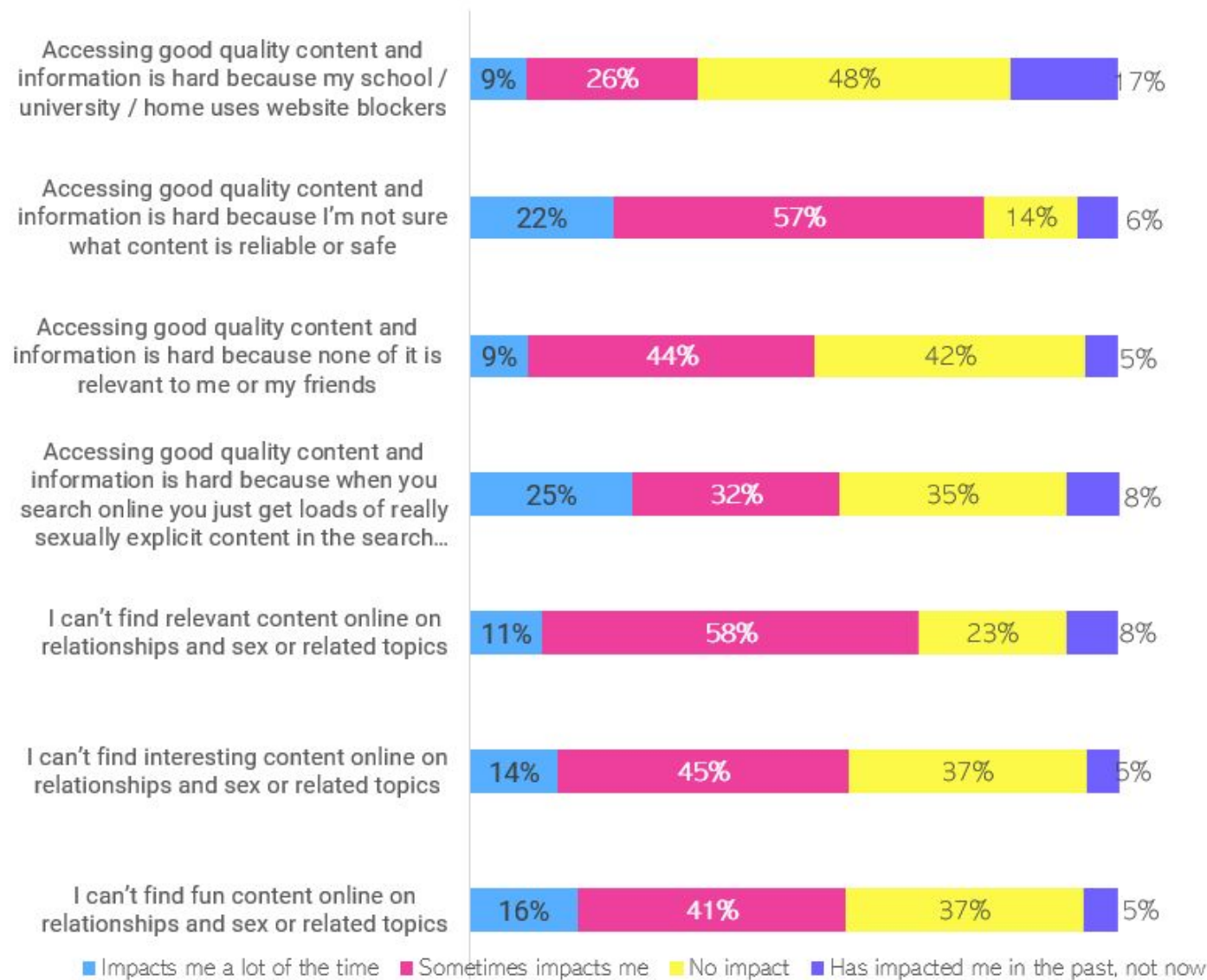
# Issues impacting access to quality content

The issues most likely to impact respondents a lot or some of the time were not knowing what content is reliable (79%) and not being able to find relevant content online (69%).

25% of respondents said the issue of seeing sexually explicit content when searching for information impacted them a lot.

Q: How often do these issues impact you when you're looking for information or content about relationships, sex or related topics online?

## Issues impacting access to quality content



# Issues impacting access to quality content

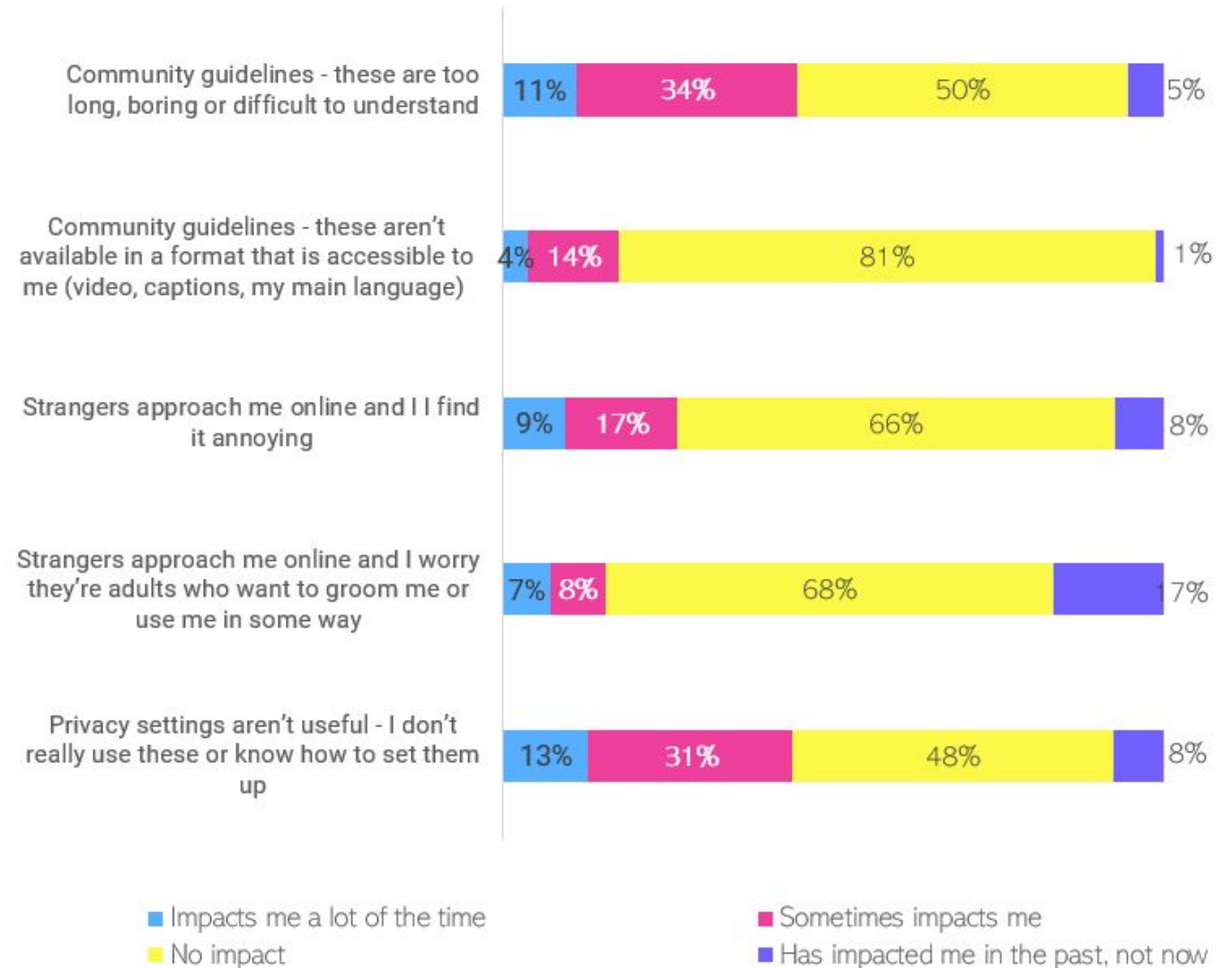
25% of young people under the age of 16 stated that worrying that strangers approaching them online were adults trying to groom or use them impacted them a lot.

While 14% of respondents said community guidelines not being accessible sometimes affected them, this rose to 38% for those who were not white.

Similarly 10% of people with disabilities were impacted a lot of the time by inaccessible guidelines - considerably higher than the 4% of the general population.

Q: How often do these issues impact you when you're looking for information or content about relationships, sex or related topics online?

## Issues impacting access to quality content



# Additional Issues

The main additional concerns that respondents discussed were a lack of inclusive content and difficulty in finding quality information.

Respondents felt **information was often written from a cis-het perspective** which made them feel excluded and overlooked.

Respondents also discussed how **information was often too general**, potentially as a way to avoid being too explicit, but **this results their questions not being answered**.

Q: Tell us about any other issues you face with the online world when it comes to accessing reliable information about relationships, sex or related topics, if any

## Not enough inclusive content

“There's not a lot of LGBTQ sex ed out there and there was none at school. I think if I were straight there'd be plenty but trying to advice personally is hard!”

“A lot of content is very heteronormative or eurocentric... Not being white British it would be good to hear from those of different cultures”

“It is very hard to find good advice for young queer women. It is always overly sexual or only applies to cis straight people”

“I just want to know accurate information to keep myself and my partner safe. Finding transphobic webpages negatively impacts my mental health”

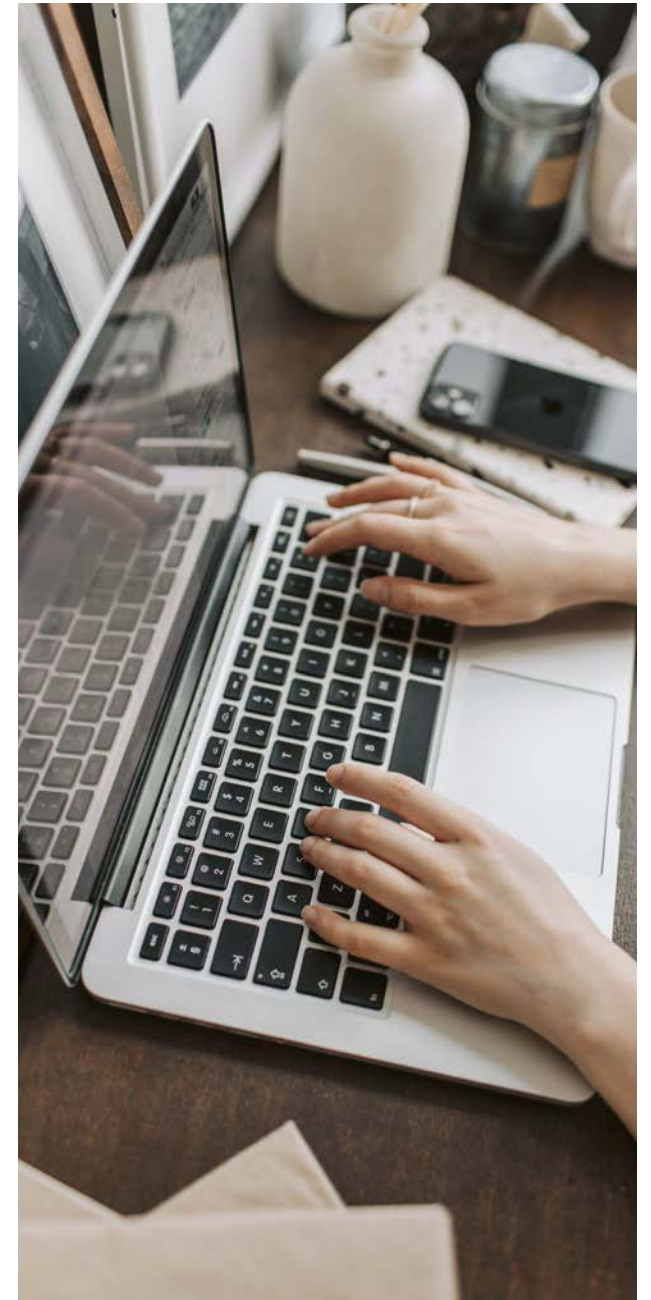
## Difficulty finding quality information

“A lot of the information coming at you is repetitive and it's hard to find info that digs a little deeper into details or is more informative”

“It's too general and quite vague because many sites don't want to be overly explicit”

“Lots of American information comes up and obviously they do things different in terms of sexual health testing etc. so not reliable”

“A lot of well-known websites don't always have what you need meaning that when you try looking somewhere else you find unreliable sources and often inappropriate content which you didn't mean to find”



# Most negative issues

The issue most likely to negatively affect young people was a lack of inclusive content. Too often, **respondents felt resources were not written with them in mind.**

Another big issue was **difficulty in finding quality information and in knowing what resources they could trust.**

Some also were concerned that overly explicit material would pop-up when they searched for information online.

Q: Which issue negatively affects you the most when you're looking for information or content about relationships, sex or wellbeing online? (tell your top issue, and why)

## Not Enough Inclusive Content

"Lack of diversity in information/articles available. **All seem to default to cis-hetero**"

"**Lack of queer and disabled relevant info**, lots of it is very heteronormative"

"Lack of awareness of the **asexual and aromantic spectrums** limits the information and support available to us"

"A lot of what's written online is heteronormative and **sometimes this makes me feel as though 'normal' sex, or sex that is most pleasurable, has to include a penis**"

"Questions/issues I have relating to my current state of health only seem to be answered on pregnancy-related pages. **I'm not pregnant nor do I plan to be, but why do sex therapists and medical professionals only cater to those that want to/are reproducing?**"

"A lot of information is targeted to straight people especially **targeted toward men's pleasure**"

## Lack of high-quality, reliable content

"Misinformation, there are so many things written about a topic online and, **if you do not know which one is the most scientifically accurate, you may end up with the wrong information**"

"It took me **a long time to find useful content on sex and relationships** that I related to and was realistic"

"The media often gives uneducated advice about wellbeing and **it can make you feel confused and hopeless** when it looks like there's no solution to your problem where you have access to"

"Conflicting information; **different sites saying different things**, dismissing something that another site said was important, etc."

## Explicit material popping up

"Most results being **pornography rather than informational**"

"I worry that **I will see sexually explicit images and videos (porn) that I am not ready to see**"

"Using certain hashtags on Instagram often brings up loads of scam accounts or bot accounts, like **anything hashtag containing the word 'sex' even if it's something non-explicit like #sexeducation, will attract inappropriate accounts/bots**"

"That searching for **almost anything about being a lesbian leads to a lot of NSFW [not safe for work] content made for men**"



# Use of porn for learning

51% of respondents had used porn to learn about sex/intimacy.

Those who had were more likely to feel their use of porn to find out about sex and intimacy was not useful (47) than useful (33).

Interestingly, some who had found it useful also highlighted it could at times, be damaging and propagate negative stereotypes.

Some who felt it was useful for learning more about what sex entailed also stated that when looking for information they were aware it was not a true representation of "real" sex.

Q: Have you ever used porn online to find out about sex and intimacy?

Q: Tell us about your experience of using porn to find out about sex and intimacy. What kind of information were you looking for? Did you find it useful?

## Have respondents used online porn to learn about sex/intimacy?



## Experiences of using porn to find out about sex and intimacy

### Useful

"Like a lot of LGBT people, I think our first introduction to LGBT sex is porn. I was just generally curious about how it all worked"

"Looking for inspiration and ideas, whilst understanding it is not realistic"

"Some porn is helpful for exploring sexuality and learning but a lot of it is very explicit and extreme and caters to the male gaze"

"On one occasion I was looking to find out more about a specific sex act and wanted to see what it would actually look like. It helped me to visualise it and decide if I would actually want to do it"

"Interesting to see how things are done - not great for self-esteem"

### Not Useful

"I find it extremely anxiety-provoking and not representative of real sex or relationships. I found it damaging. I was looking for what 'real' sex looked like. Turns out it's definitely not like porn"

"When I was a teenager, I used to watch porn so I could learn beforehand how to do a hand/blow-job... but most porn does not help because it is not real, it portrays an unrealistic way to have sex"

"It's absolutely grim and promotes abuse and a complete lack of consent. Scary stuff to see as a young woman"

"I wanted to understand more about anal sex before I tried it. It did not help. At all"

A neon sign with the text "THINK ABOUT THINGS DIFFERENTLY" is displayed against a red background. The sign is made of white neon tubing and is arranged in four lines: "THINK", "ABOUT", "THINGS", and "DIFFERENTLY". The text is written in a simple, sans-serif font. The sign is slightly tilted to the right.

THINK  
ABOUT  
THINGS  
DIFFERENTLY

### Section 3

# Changes we need

# Changes young people want to see



## Happy, healthy environment

Young people most wanted to see a happy, healthy place online for sex education. They felt this would provide them with a safe and inclusive space to learn more about sex and relationships, without them having to worry about seeing harmful content.



## Peer-led content creation

Young people also really wanted to be involved in the creation of content. They argued that they are closest to the issues affecting them, and would know how best to communicate to young people like them and help make a positive impact.



## Educating adults

75% of young people wanted parents and carers to be educated on the online world and what young people are facing. They felt it would help encourage parents to talk more openly about sex and relationships, and help parents to better support and understand young people.

# Changes are needed

The key changes respondents wanted to see were a happy, healthy place online for sex education (89%) and the involvement of young people in the creation of content (84%).

75% also wanted parents and carers to be educated on social media, the online world and what young people are facing.

Q: Which of the following changes would you like to see online when it comes to accessing reliable information about relationships, sex, wellbeing or related topics?

## Change respondents want to see

Have a happy, healthy place online providing relationships and sex education for young people.

89%

Involve young people in creating content on the topics of relationships, sex, identity, healthy bodies and mental health

84%

Educate parents and carers on social media and the online world, and what young people are facing

75%

Make guidelines for social media accessible, interesting and short

64%

Put some kind of age verification on social media channels so older people / adults can't approach young people online

60%

Give young people a say in deciding which sites get blocked / restricted in schools & universities

62%

Set up an advisory board of young people to have a say when moderating accounts aimed at them on social channels

55%

Involve young people in designing guidelines for social channels

52%

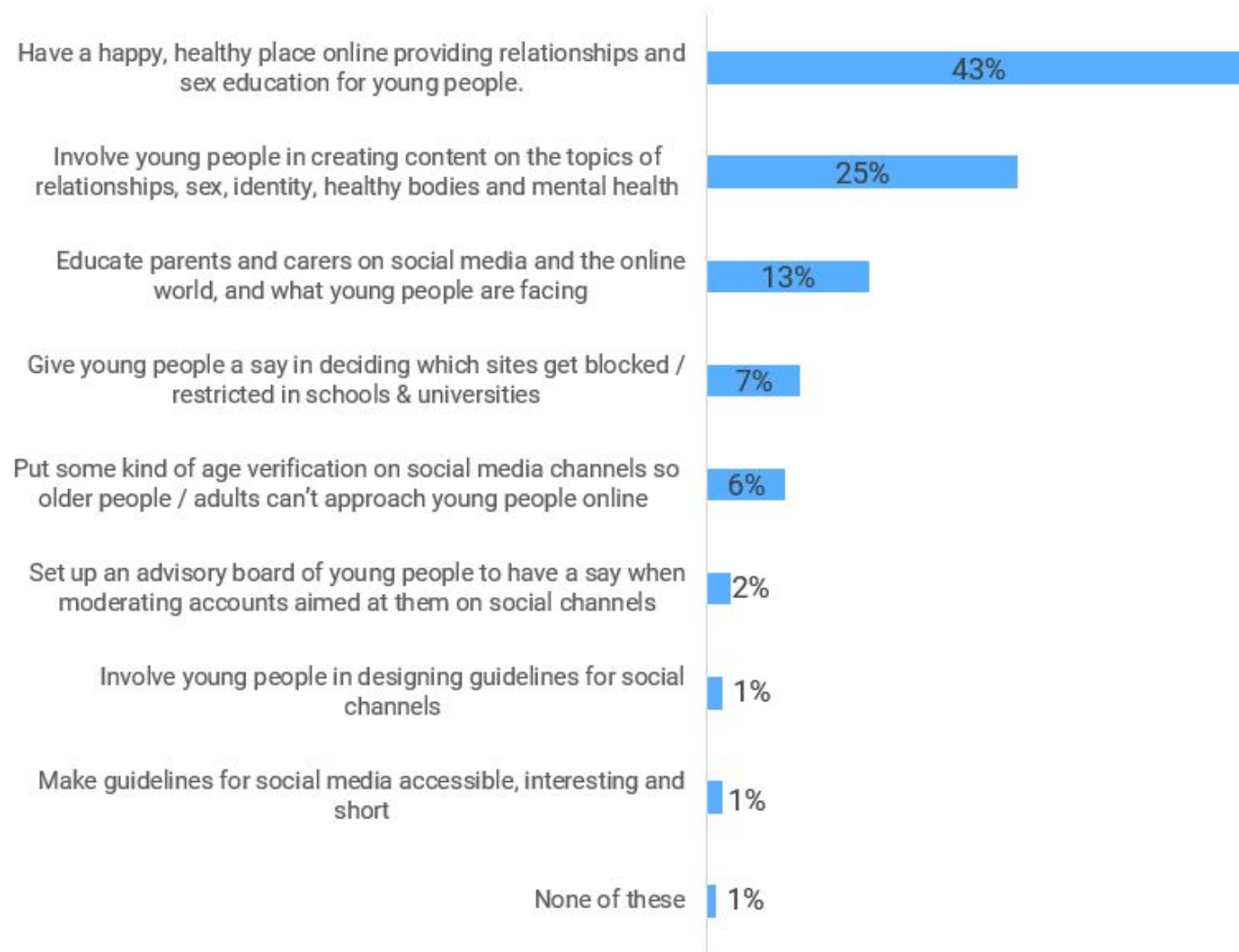
# Most important changes

Unsurprisingly, the changes respondents were most likely to have been interested in were also the changes they most wanted to see.

43% of participants said the change they would most like to see is having a happy, healthy place online, and 25% said it would be the involvement of young people in content creation.

Q: What change would you most like to see?

## Changes respondents most want to see



# Reasons for valuing these changes

Young people who most valued having a happy, healthy place online felt this would provide a safe, inclusive place for them to learn more about topics they were interested in, without the worry of exposure to harmful content.

Those who most valued involving young people in content creation felt it was young people who are closest to the issues impacting young people, and that they could make real positive impacts in the provision of educational content for others.

Q: Why is this change the most important to you?

Q: Is there anything else you want to tell us about the changes you want to see online?

## Have a happy healthy place online

“Unless young people have already viewed similar content, it is **relatively hard for them to find an inclusive space** in which they can safely explore their identity”

“It would **change how young people explore the internet for information** about sex, wellbeing and relationships. It would **hopefully reduce young people [being] exposed to harmful content**”

“So that young people - who are exploring and experimenting - are able to get **easy access to good, understandable and reliable information** about self-pleasure, sex, relationships, etc. **without feeling uncomfortable or scared**”

“Young people are going to look for the answers **regardless** so it is important that we provide a safe and healthy place for young people as **otherwise we cannot know where they will get their answers from**”



## Involve young people in content creation

“Young people know what other young people need to see. They understand the struggles that other young people go through with trying to find healthy resources around sex ed”

“I feel like all decisions about this topic are made without consulting the ones who it affects, as they may think we are not old enough to understand, but **if you help us understand we can make decisions on our own**”

“I think young people should be able to influence the resources that they are using as **they are the closest to the issues that need to be included** in this and clearly the world is ever-changing and we need to keep up with that”

“The best way to understand young people's needs is to ask them and empower them to make positive changes”

# Additional changes

Young people want somewhere safe they can go to find trustworthy, reliable information.

However, they also want the information to offer a wide range of perspectives so they can learn from a variety of different people's points of view, and read information written by someone they identify with.

Q: Tell us about any other changes online when it comes to accessing reliable information about relationships, sex or related topics (free text box)

## Inclusive content

"Include diverse examples of relationship advice e.g. dating as a trans person, queer relationships, disability and race representation and challenges advice etc."

"All videos (tiktoks, reels etc) need to be subtitled!! I'm not going to watch any length of any video if the information isn't subtitled, and there's many others with auditory processing needs that are the same"

"Make changes in how relationships are presented. Show that it can be between all kinds of people not just the heteronormative view"

"Professionally written articles about asexuality and relationships. Reported experiences of trans people with a range of experiences"

## Safe environment

"Making it a safer environment for younger teens that want to learn"

"Websites, social media accounts or charities that teach this sort of information to teens to be promoted in schools so students have some help in finding more useful content rather than having to find it all for themselves and potentially finding misinformation or worse"

"Websites with a 'hide this page' button. A mixture of text, video, visual, and audio information"

"Have some form of 'verifying' accounts that have good and reliable information to distinguish from sites that could be more harmful in the advice they give"



# Final thoughts

When asked if there was anything else they wanted to share about changes they wanted to see online, young people highlighted that they wanted an inclusive, non-judgmental space to learn about sex and relationships.

Q: Is there anything else you want to tell us about the changes you want to see online?



"I think it's essential this content aimed at young people should be blatantly non-judgemental and promote self exploration, and not focus on things like cis heterosexual sex, but includes inclusive content for all genders and sexuality"

"No shaming on self-pleasure and kinks because as a woman I was often stigmatised when I was a teenager but it was deemed normal for boys"

"I think that sex ed is moving to becoming more inclusive and openly discussed and if we can create a safe space for these discussions to also happen on the internet we can help to safeguard young people who haven't had any/have a limited education around sex"





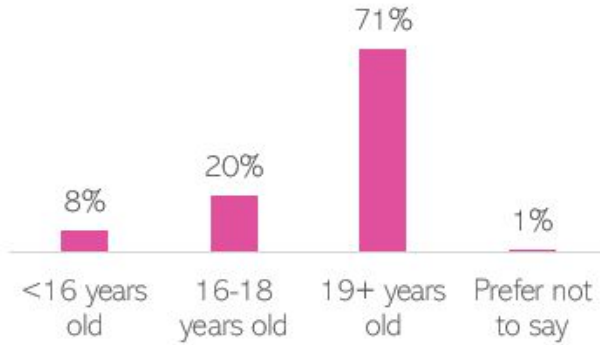


## Section 4

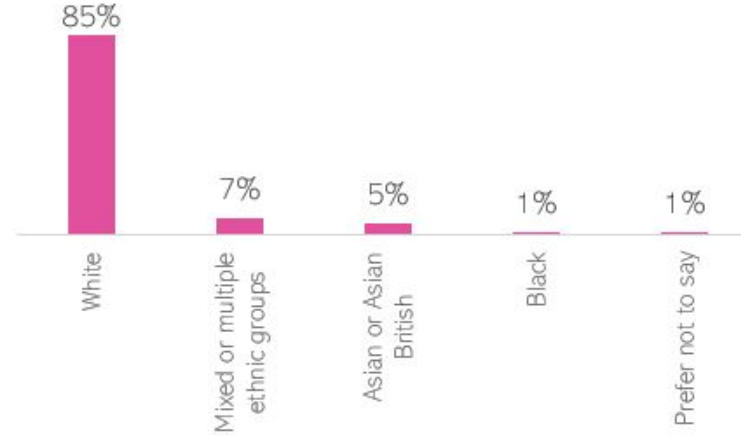
# Demographics

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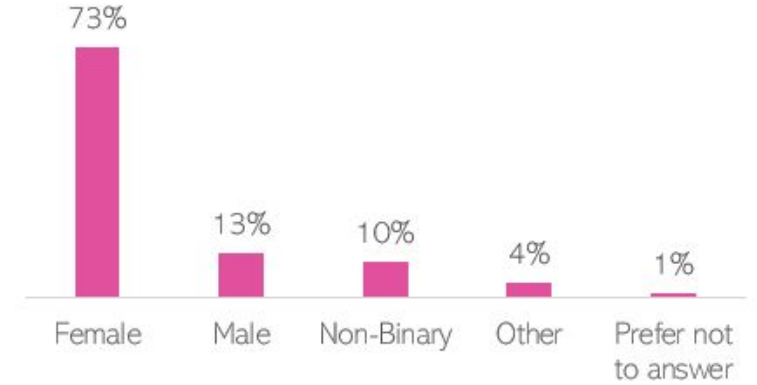
## Age



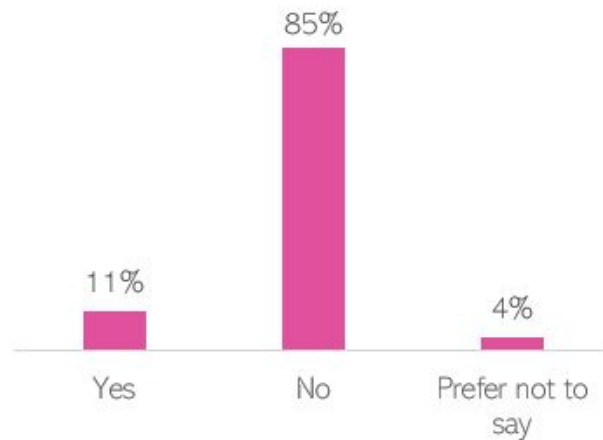
## Race/Ethnicity



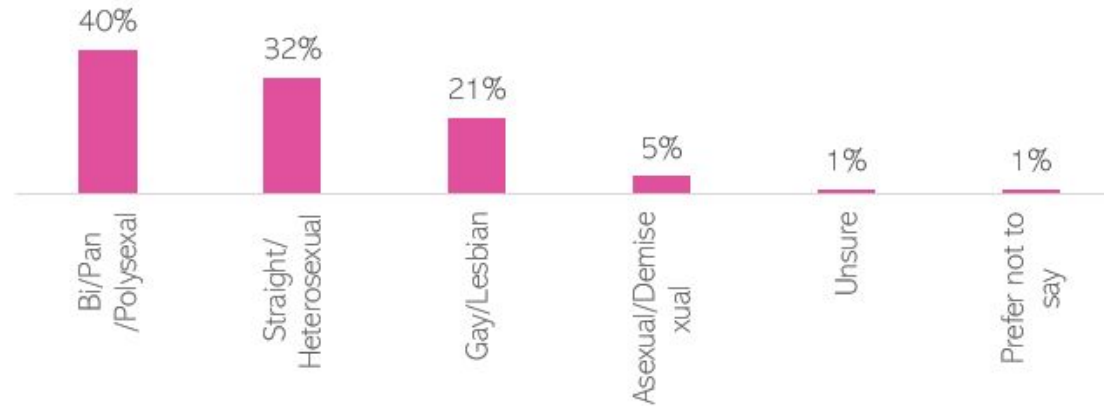
## Gender Identity



## Identifies as Trans?



## Sexual Orientation

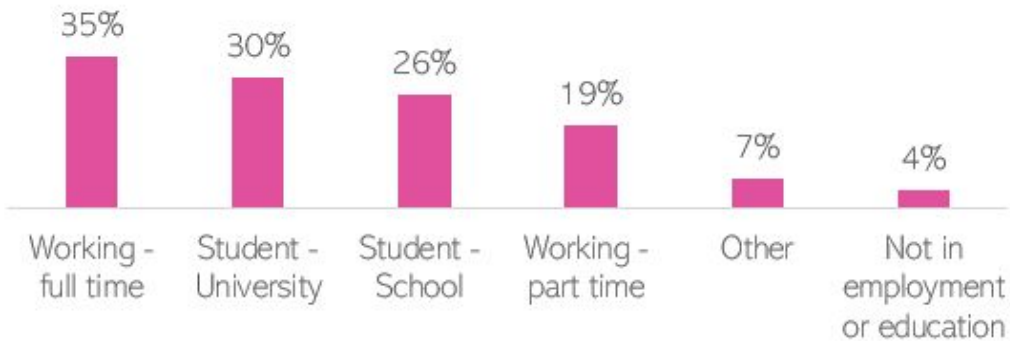


# Demographics

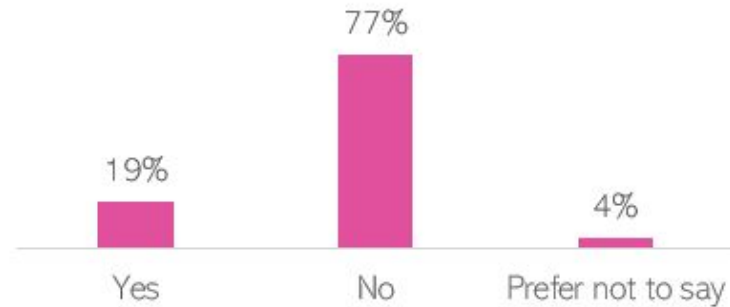
## Region in UK



## Study/Employment Status



## Has a disability?



# Location & age

71% of respondents were 19 years old and over, with just 8% being under 16.

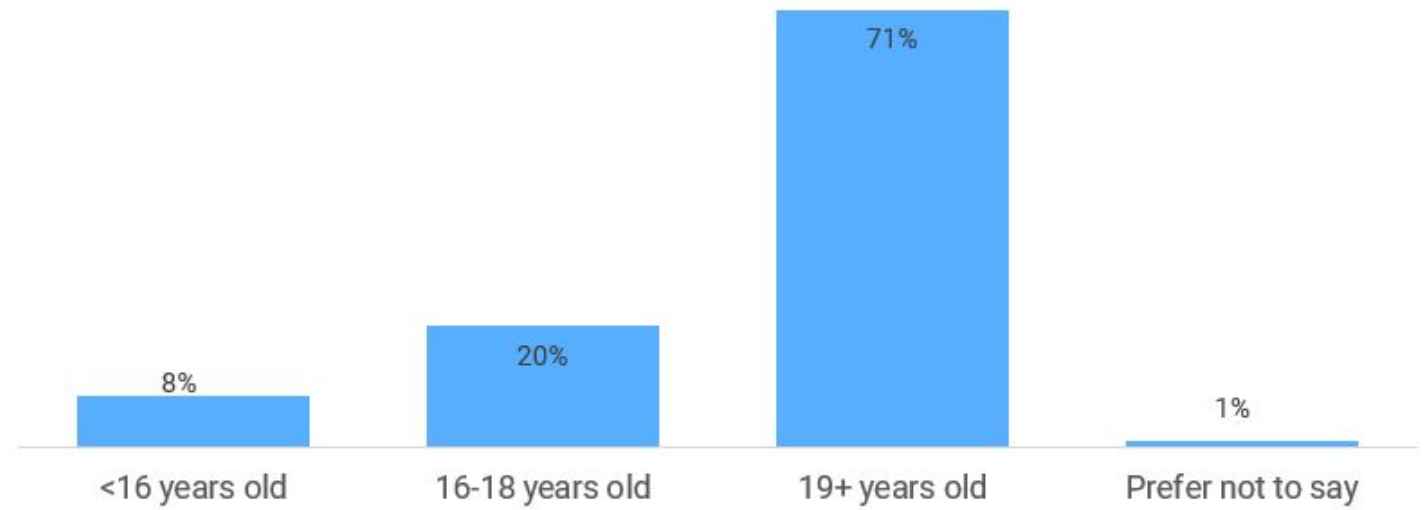
44% of respondents were from London or South East England. This is reflective of general UK demographics, with the South East of England and London being the largest regions in the UK in terms of population.

Q: Do you live in the UK?

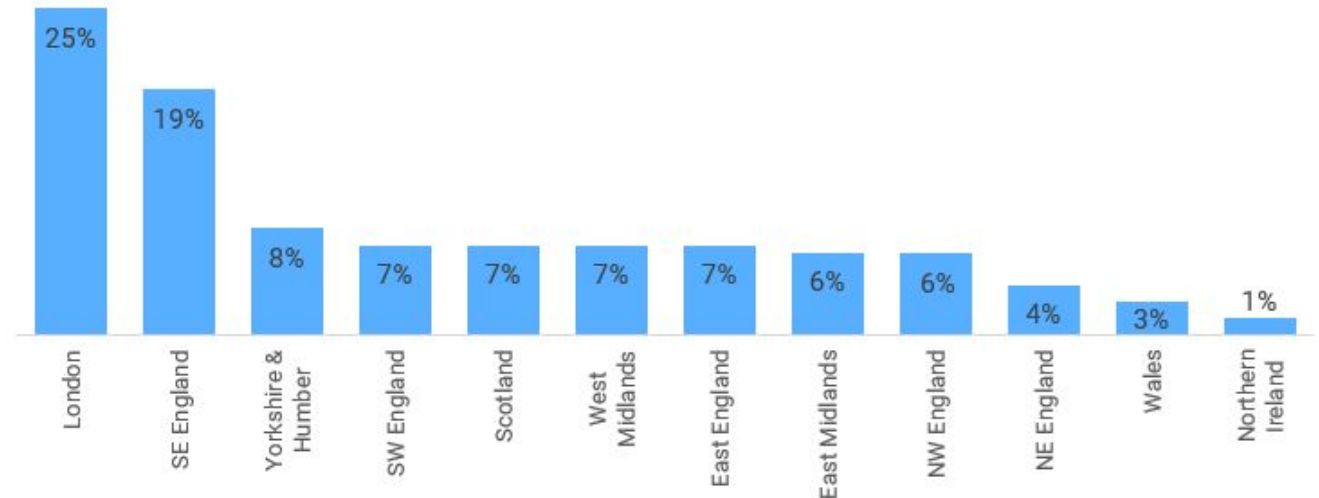
Q: How old are you?

Q: What is the nearest town or city to where you live?  
(sorted into region post-survey)

## Ages



## Region of the UK



# Gender identity & sexual orientation

73% of respondents identified as female, with just 13% of respondents identifying as male and 10% as non-binary.

32% of respondents identified as straight/heterosexual, reflecting a wide array of sexual orientations. 11% of respondents identified as trans.

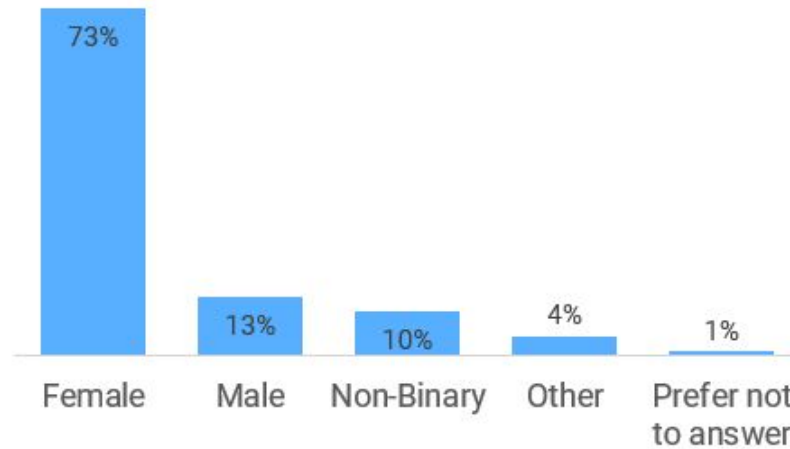
These high percentages may also reflect that young people who are LGBTQ+ are more likely to be seeking out quality sex ed and relationship resources that cater to them.

Q: Which best describes your gender?

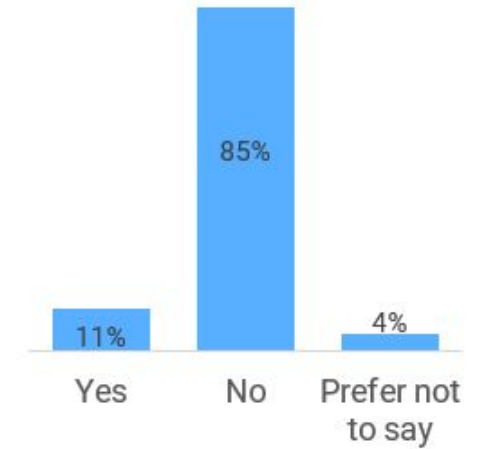
Q: Do you identify as transgender?

Q: What best describes your sexual orientation?

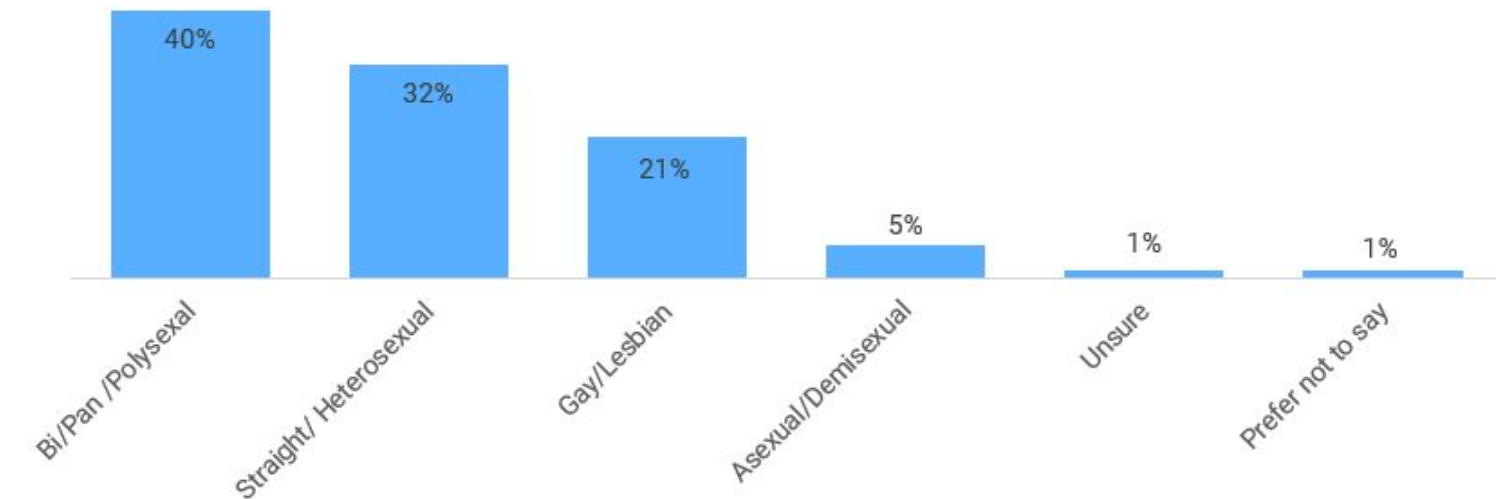
## Gender Identity



## Trans?



## Sexual Orientation



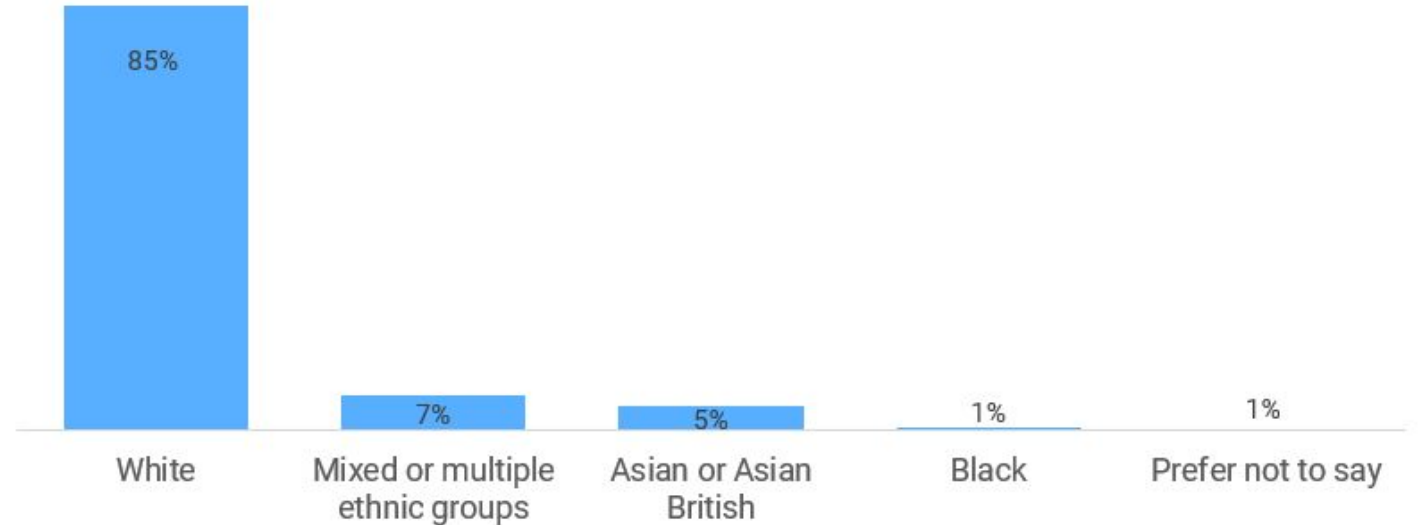
# Ethnicity & study/employment status

85% of respondents stated they were white and 13% identified as Asian, Black or Mixed or multiple ethnic groups.

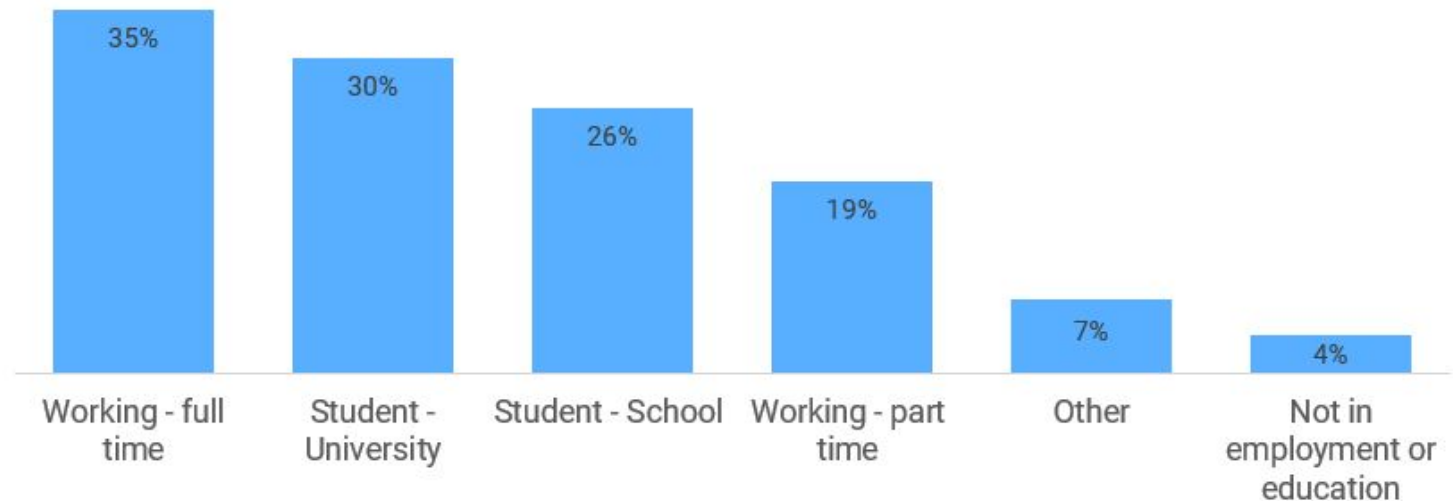
More than half of respondents (54%) were working either part or full-time. While this may seem initially surprising, more than half of respondents were 19+ years old, making it more likely that they would be working.

Q: What best describes your race/ethnicity  
Q: What is your current study or employment status?  
(Select all that apply)

## Race/Ethnicity



## Study/Employment Status



# Disabilities

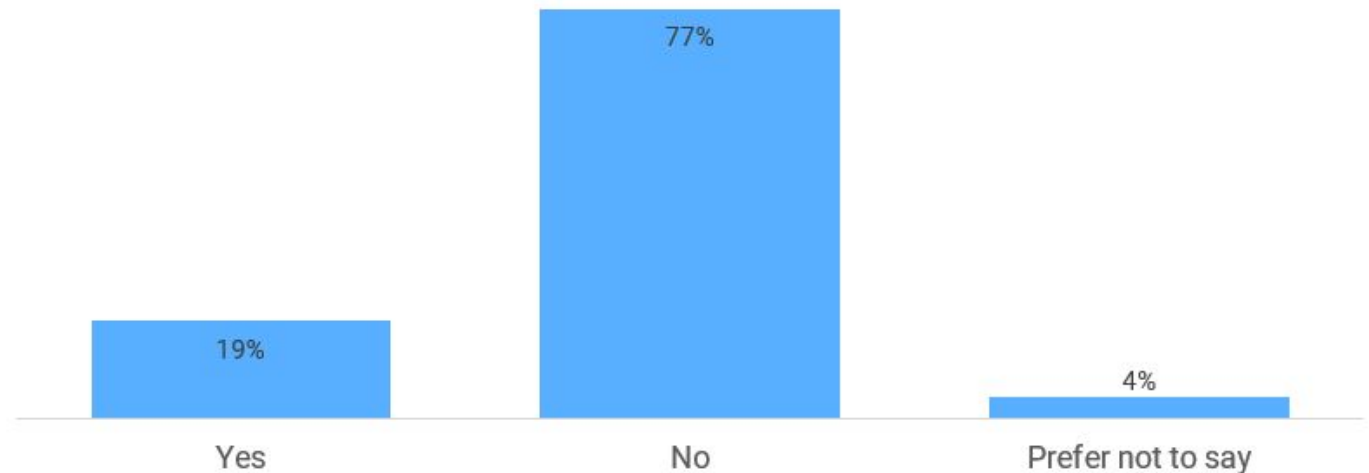
19% of respondents stated that they had a disability. These disabilities included physical disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health conditions, neurodivergence and chronic health conditions.

Mental health conditions were the most commonly cited disabilities, followed by neurodivergence (e.g., autism and ADHD) and physical disabilities.

A number of respondents also specifically discussed conditions related to sexual health such as vaginismus and endometriosis.

Q: Do you consider yourself to have a disability?  
Q: If you want to, please tell us a little about your disability here:

## Do respondents have a disability?



# Appendix







# About Fumble

**Fumble is the digital sex ed resource for the 21st century**

We create exciting, reliable, relatable digital content on intimacy, relationships, identity, health and wellbeing. A happy, healthy digital world of sex ed: by young people, for young people.

We make sure that young people have the skills and knowledge to successfully manage their sexual health, mental health and relationships today.

We do this through our trusted, quality co-created digital content and our relationships and sex education (RSE) programme in schools, universities and other youth settings.

Learn more at <https://www.fumble.org.uk>

Discover our youth manifesto that has been informed by this data at <https://www.fumble.org.uk/manifesto>

# Thank you to our funders and supporters

Fumble has been supported to analyse this data by Alder Tree Research

Alder Tree Research is a company focused on scouring data to provide clients with quality insights to help inform them on how best to prepare for the future.

Find out more about Alder Tree Research at [www.aldertreeresearch.com](http://www.aldertreeresearch.com)

Fumble has delivered this project with funding from the following organisations

- The Olwyn Foundation
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- The King's Fund and GSK Grow Programme

We are grateful for their generous support.

You can support Fumble through monthly or one-off donations here:  
[fumble.org.uk/donate/](http://fumble.org.uk/donate/)



