

LGBTQIA+ Life in Craven 23/24, report summary for communities

Who are Pioneer Projects?

Pioneer Projects is a community-based charity which works to help improve the health and wellbeing of people and communities across Craven, North Yorkshire, by using creative arts through using themes of positivity, inclusion, and celebration.

In September 2023 Pioneer Projects took on a part time LGBTQIA+ Mental Health Outreach worker for one year. Their job was to be a visible LGBTQIA+ point of contact in Craven for community members accessing support for their mental health at local Health and Wellbeing Hubs. This document is a summary of a bigger report describing what the Outreach Worker discovered.

The Outreach Worker spoke with people about their experiences of living in the district, looked for opportunities to get LGBTQIA+ people more involved in community life, identified sources of support, and more ways in which LGBTQIA+ people's voices could influence health and social care services in Craven.

The research included a survey to find out more about the experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals in Craven.

As far as we know there has never been any research in Craven on the experiences of LGBTQIA+ people. Although this was small project, we hope the report will be the beginning of work to make sure that the mental health of LGBTQIA+ communities in Craven is supported more effectively in the future.

What did we find out?

The survey

LGBTQIA+ people filling in the survey often said they would like a stronger sense of belonging, representation and visibility in local events, and easier access to resources such as sources of support and information. They also reported facing many challenges like social isolation and difficulty accessing mental health support.

- **Diverse Gender Identities:** Nearly 1 in 3 people said that they identified with a gender which differed from the one assigned to them at birth. This shows there is a need for spaces and services tailored for this group of people.
- **Sexual Orientation:** People identifying as gay and bisexual made up the majority of those completing the survey, and a significant number reported they were questioning or unsure. Support for people exploring their identity is needed.
- **Intersex Identities:** No one so far has identified as intersex, nevertheless, the survey findings show the importance of raising awareness and fighting the stigma faced by people with intersex identities.
- **Disabilities and Neurodiversity:** A large number of people reported having disabilities or neurodivergent conditions, reinforcing the need for inclusive and accessible LGBTQIA+ services.
- **Mental Health:** The majority of respondents reported experiencing mental health challenges, often linked to discrimination, stigma, and isolation.
- **Community and Support:** LGBTQIA+ people described a strong need for LGBTQIA+ specific social groups, wellbeing cafes, and support services.
- **Challenges in Rural Areas:** People also reported facing issues related to isolation, lack of visibility, and limited access to support services, all connected to living in a rural area.

Recommendations

Based on outreach work and the results of the community survey some recommendations have been made, mainly related to health and social care services and the teams who plan how they should work.

We hope that if these recommendations are put into practice, they will help LGBTQIA+ people living with mental health conditions to feel more included, visible and supported in Craven.

Many of the recommendations will need Pioneer Projects and its partners in the Craven Mental Health & Wellbeing Hubs Network, to drive them forward, but a lot of the work will be done by us working with our communities and local LGBTQIA+ people. Here are some of the main recommendations from the report:

1. **Inclusive Practices:** Create and deliver staff training and simple ways for communities to feedback on their experiences of services. Also better accountability to make sure people who identify as LGBTQIA+ feel more included in all types of outreach work.
2. **Mental Health Support:** Provide information, peer support, and a wider range of support options to cater for the unique mental health challenges faced by of LGBTQIA+ individuals.
3. **Community Building:** Create more LGBTQIA+ safe spaces, combat isolation, and build opportunities for people to connect.
4. **Gender Inclusivity:** Develop programs that help people with diverse gender identities to feel validated, and provide safe spaces for exploration of those identities.
5. **Representation and Role Models:** Make sure there is LGBTQIA+ representation wherever decisions are made about the services and support on offer. Also to make sure this representation exists in creative work such as in recording people's stories and experiences.
6. **Safe Spaces:** Maintain a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of harassment and unfair exclusion, make sure confidentiality can be kept, and ensure services and spaces are accessible for all.
7. **Neurodiversity Inclusion:** Provide flexible options for people identifying as LGBTQIA+ and neurodiverse to get involved in activities and groups such as providing sensory-friendly environments, and clear communication.
8. **Awareness and Collaboration:** Promote neurodiversity awareness, collaborate with neurodivergent advocacy groups, and incorporate neurodiversity into creative work and projects.

By following these recommendations, and by working closely with LGBTQIA+ individuals and communities, and other local organisations, Pioneer Projects and its partners can play a really important role in improving life for LGBTQIA+ individuals in Craven and create a more inclusive and supportive community generally.

Conclusion

This report shows that the most important things which could improve life in Craven for LGBTQIA+ people are:

- **Building stronger communities and people feeling more connected**
- **Services, charities and communities working better together**
- **Information and support to raise awareness with services of people's experiences**

We believe that these actions will help achieve a more inclusive Craven for LGBTQIA+ people experiencing mental ill-health.

This initial work is a promising start to making improvements, and some helpful evidence has been found thanks largely to LGBTQIA+ taking part in the survey, but more engagement is needed to build a richer understanding of LGBTQIA+ lives in Craven.

Other evidence should also be gathered, such as existing research into the impact on people's health of living in rural areas. This extra evidence will help to build that richer understanding. Most of all, people's stories should be gathered too. Doing this will create more ways for them to feel connected with one another and a sense of community belonging and inclusion which we have seen is needed to support healthier and happier LGBTQIA+ communities in Craven.

Survey Results at present

The survey remains open for responses. To further inform and support the development of new initiatives ensuring recognition and inclusion of LGBTQIA+ communities, Pioneer Projects will continue to seek responses to the survey and analyse what comes in. Ongoing findings will be reviewed in a year's time, with updated survey results circulated. This will be shared on Compass in Craven, factsheets:

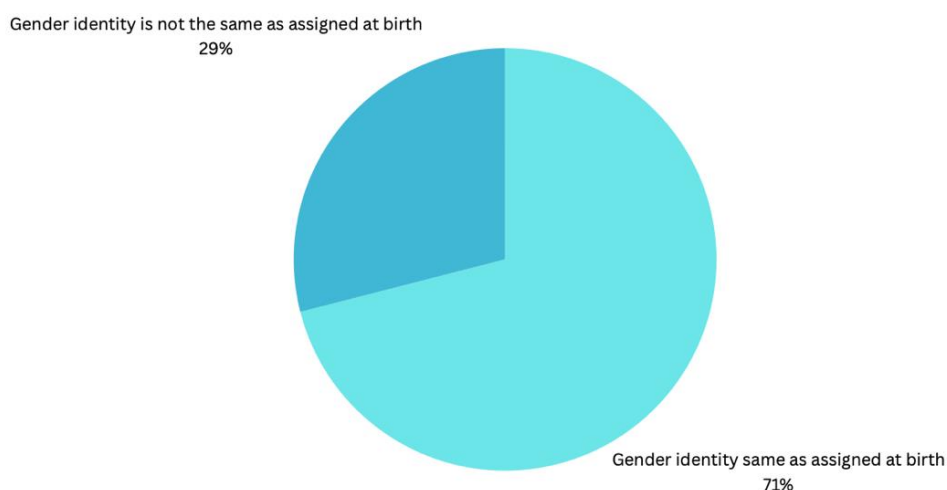
<https://www.compassehub.com/factsheets> alongside updating partners, local authorities and organisations.

The fully anonymous survey is still open and we need more people to take part. If you live in Craven and identify as LGBTQIA+ please help! Click here: <https://forms.gle/oc54VcrVwvowhJn77>

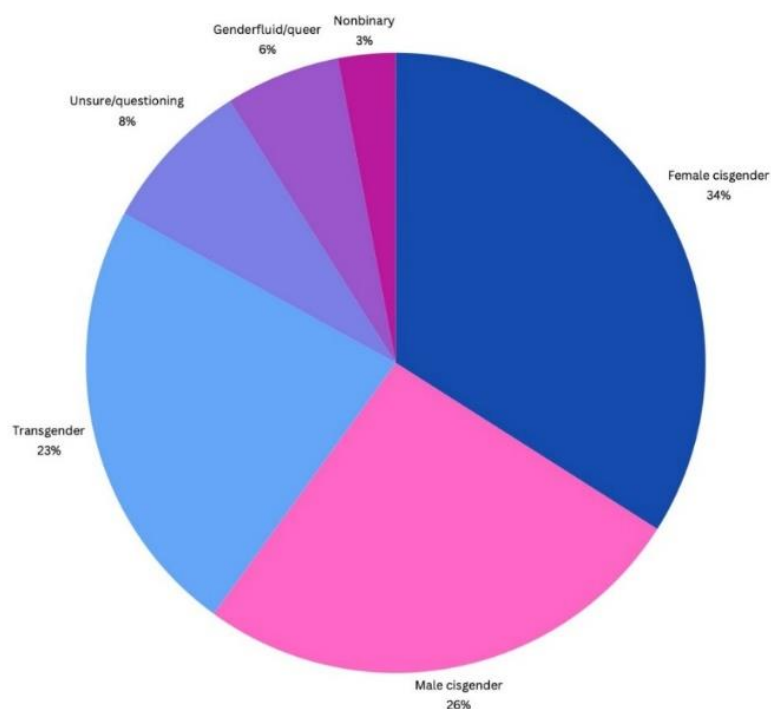
More results from the survey:

Here is some information showing how people have been responding to some of the survey questions.

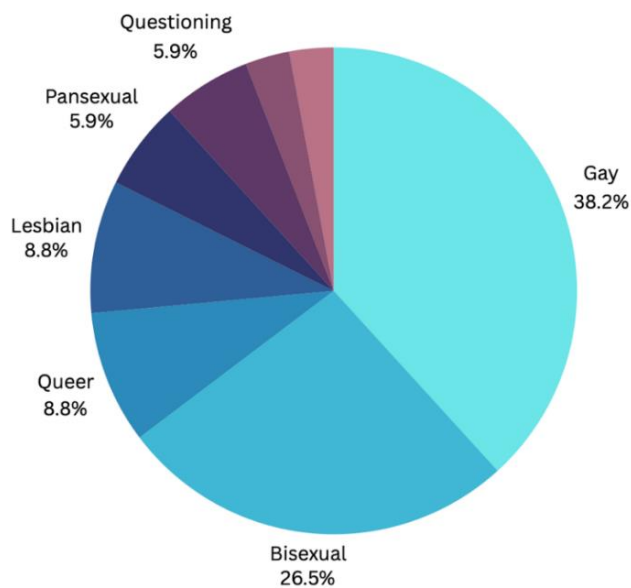
Is your gender identity the same as was assigned to you at birth?



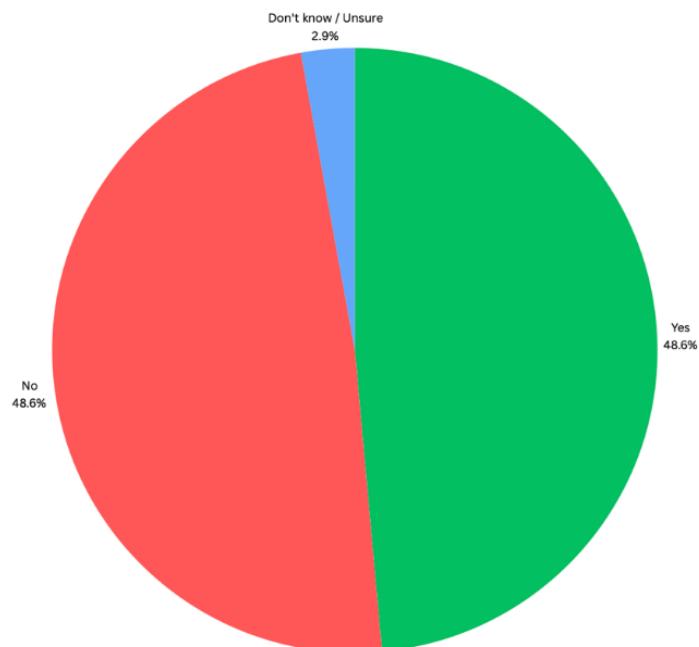
Do you consider yourself to be...?



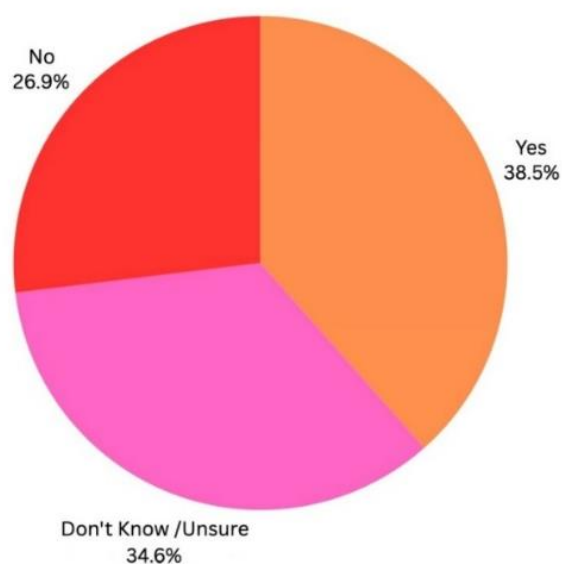
How would you define your sexual orientation?



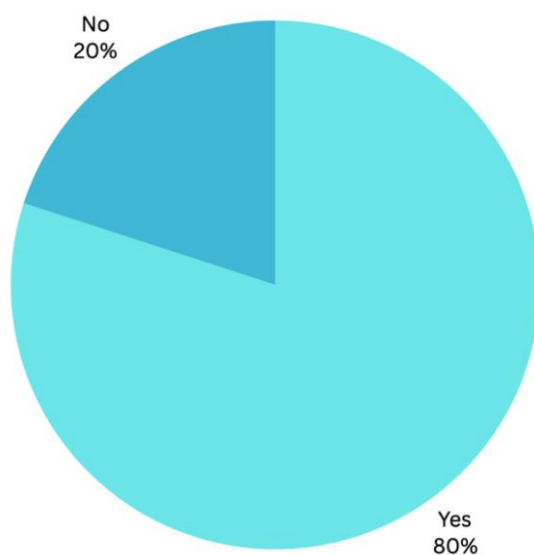
Do you consider yourself to have a disability/disabilities? These can be mental, physical, visible or invisible.



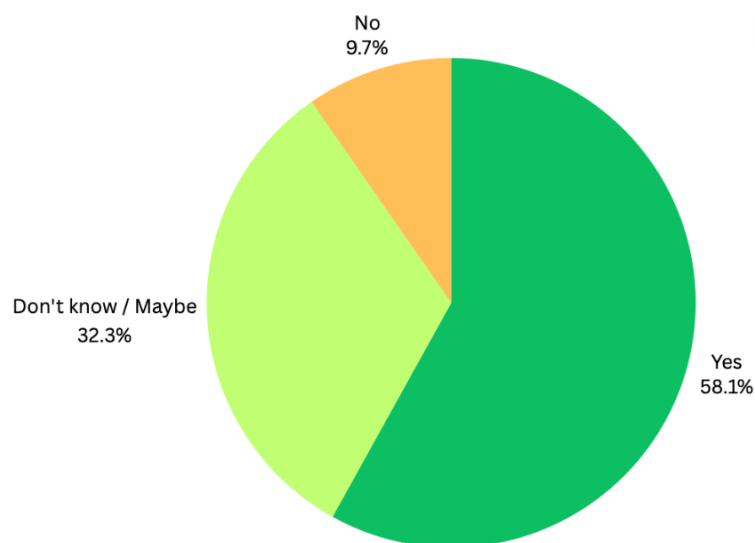
Do you consider yourself to be neurodivergent? Examples: ADHD, autism, auDHD, learning difficulties.



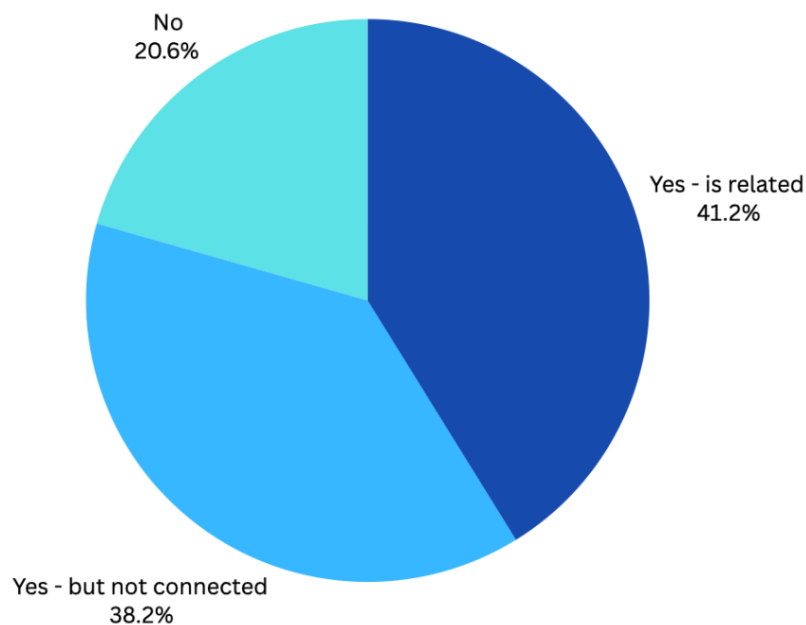
Are you experiencing or have you ever experienced mental health challenges? Examples: anxiety, depression, clinical diagnosis.



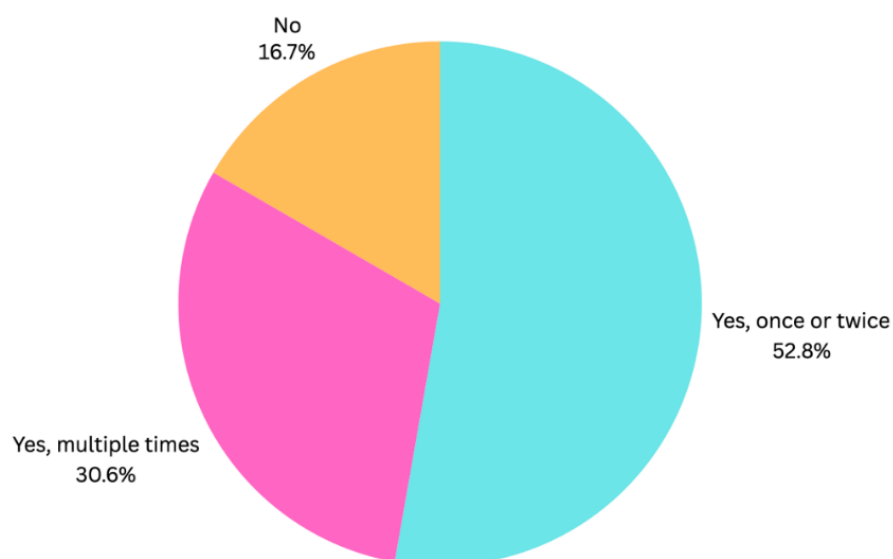
If you answered YES to [experiencing or ever experienced mental health challenges], do you think greater LGBTQIA+ visibility and support in Craven, such as LGBTQIA+ social groups or wellbeing cafes, and help accessing community resources, might have reduced those mental health challenges? This was an optional question.



Do you ever feel isolated and/or lonely living and/or working in Craven? Do you think this is connected in some way to you being LGBTQIA+?



Have you ever experienced direct or indirect prejudice, verbal or physical aggression in Craven because of your sexual and/or gender identity? This could be at home, in education, at the workplace, on the street, anywhere.



What needs to be provided/improved for people who identify as LGBTQIA+ in Craven?

