

# ROUTT COUNTY LGBTQIA2S+ COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE 2022 REPORT



ADVOCATES  
OF ROUTT COUNTY



grand futures  
prevention coalition



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## Introduction

**LGBTQIA2S+**: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, 2-Spirit, +more (See Appendix 1. Glossary for definitions)

The **Community RoundTable** project is a collaborative initiative to gather insight, narratives, and data from traditionally marginalized populations to be shared with local institutions and utilized for improving awareness, policies, and practices. The goal of soliciting and sharing vital information across social divides is ultimately to improve quality of life and a sense of belonging for all residents of Routt County, regardless of identity.

This pilot project centered on capturing the experience of the LGBTQIA2S+ community in the County. The Community RoundTable event and the aligned Community Survey were both developed through the close collaboration between two lead groups:

**The Social Justice Coalition (SJC)** is a diverse collective of Routt County community members proactively collaborating on projects to engage with all communities and improve quality of life for all residents.

**Yampa Valley Pride (YVP)** is an organization entirely made up of members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community that plans an annual Pride event and social events throughout the year with the intention of building visibility, connection, community of LGBTQIA2S+ people in Yampa Valley.

With funding support from Advocates of Routt County, Rocky Mountain Youth Corp, the Health Partnership, and the City of Steamboat Springs these groups were guided through the process of developing the RoundTable initiative by **ESD Consulting** who provided key insights and ensured the entire effort was culturally responsive.

## Project Description

Through a guided process with ESD Consulting, it was determined there would be two primary strategies for gathering information and stories from the LGBTQIA2S+ Community of Routt County: *The Community Survey* and the *Community RoundTable* event centered around conducting focus groups: Adults, Under 18, and Parents of LGBTQIA2S+ Youth.

The survey was distributed throughout Pride Month (June) and on June 29th, 2022 the RoundTable event was held at Colorado Mountain College. Through a facilitated process, participants responded to an array of curated questions about their lived experience as a member of the LGBTQIA2S+ community in Routt County, specifically addressing issues related to safety, inclusion, and access.

## Summary

The experience of LGBTQIA2S+ residents of Routt County is widely variant, but the project revealed several prominent themes throughout the information gathered. Historically and still today, this systematically marginalized community is compelled to take extraordinary measures to ensure their own safety, health, and access to opportunities. Until very recently, with the emergence of public queer-friendly events, many people chose not to reveal their true identities to avoid conflict, confrontation, or potential violence. This unjust social burden - for simply existing outside of common cis-het (cisgender / heterosexual) norms - results in a wide range of ongoing harms, which will remain unchecked without broad community participation in efforts to eliminate toxic attitudes and behaviors targeting LGBTQIA2S+ citizens.

This report also explores some of the conditions necessary for the LGBTQIA2S+ community to thrive. By analyzing what conditions ensure safety, allow authenticity, and provide opportunities to build a healthy and vibrant community, institutions across Routt County will have the opportunity to become better informed about local conditions and make improvements where needed. At the bare minimum, it is vital to ensure a baseline of adequate resources are available to support the unique needs of marginalized populations across Routt County. Everyone deserves to feel safe, be respected, and given equitable opportunities to thrive. Ideally, all stakeholders will create meaningful and sustainable improvements to current social conditions with a robust effort. Empowering all County residents with expanded awareness and actionable information has the potential to improve the quality of life for all LGBTQIA2S+ people in the area and eliminate harmful divisions fracturing our communities.

As this report will lay out, many potential actions may be taken to solve individual problems, but the only serious solutions for improving safety require an aspirational effort among many institutions to both guarantee equitable treatment and establish a true sense of *belonging* among all members of our community, regardless of their identity.

## Methodology

Since identifying the Community RoundTable and survey formats for gathering insights and data from the LGBTQIA2S+ community, the SJC and YVP groups conducted independent research, engaged with a consultant, and developed tools for collecting intel.

ESD Consulting provides facilitation and consultation services to help organizations create equity based, values-driven change through transformational leadership practices.

*Emily Shamsid-Deen, MNM, Principal & Owner, ESD Consulting:*

Emily has worked in the nonprofit sector for over 17 years primarily with marginalized communities in the areas of disease prevention, domestic violence, social justice leadership development, equity-based capacity building, and advocacy.

Leveraging the insight and recommendations provided by ESD consulting, the SJC and Yampa Valley Pride collaborated on careful development of the RoundTable event and Community Survey. The survey would provide feedback from anonymous participants who may be uncomfortable in a group setting, while the RoundTable focus groups would cater to participants who prefer discussion and sharing stories. To avoid potential harm that could be caused by soliciting information that could “out” a member of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, special consideration was given to ensure strict confidentiality.

Development of the project unfolded in several stages:

## The Community Survey

1. Members of the SJC & YVP determined the primary topics we wanted to address by gathering information through the survey and RoundTable focus groups: Safety, Inclusion, and Access. There was also discussion about potential target audiences for receiving the final report which included local municipalities, school districts, medical and mental health providers, service organizations, law enforcement, and potential funders with the capacity to support solutions.
2. This combined group then brainstormed potential questions for use in both the Survey and the RoundTable discussions centered on the primary topics above.
3. The full membership of Yampa Valley Pride then reviewed the questions and made recommendations
4. Chelsie Holmes, who serves both as Chair of Yampa Valley Pride and Secretary of the Social Justice Coalition finalized the questions and built an [online survey form](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/18iHxFJyyzGR3ezrBk_4q2jJb34pQ_wF4uNKmZqiktMU/edit) ( [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/18iHxFJyyzGR3ezrBk\\_4q2jJb34pQ\\_wF4uNKmZqiktMU/edit](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/18iHxFJyyzGR3ezrBk_4q2jJb34pQ_wF4uNKmZqiktMU/edit) )
5. The Survey was then distributed to members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community through several portals:
  - a. Yampa Valley Pride's listserve
  - b. Targeted sharing across social media platforms by YVP and members of the SJC
  - c. Surveys were filled out in real time by participants in the 2nd Annual Pride Celebration on June 25th, 2022

## The Community RoundTable Event (Focus Groups)

1. The SJC with ESD Consulting determined focus groups would be another in-depth and personal opportunity for members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community to provide information and their personal narratives.
2. Members of the SJC & YVP set a date, secured a location, and managed logistics for the Community RoundTable event on June 29th, 2022
3. Targeted online promotions (using the project's [Interest Form](#)) and a substantial amount of "word-of-mouth" communications were used to raise awareness of the opportunity and secure participation

4. The RoundTable event was held at Colorado Mountain College which provided capacity for gathering all participants at once in a large space and parsing them into focus groups using additional smaller spaces and classrooms
5. The introduction of the event featured tone-setting narratives from members of YVP and the SJC, while strongly encouraging participants to adhere to strict confidentiality and mutual respect throughout the process.
6. Participants were then separated into 3 distinct focus group populations: Parents, Youth (under 18 years old), and Adults (over 18 years old)
7. Each focus group was led by 2 facilitators representing both YVP and the SJC to ensure the conversations were fluid and the resulting information and stories could be captured by one of the facilitators.
8. The full group of participants were then assembled for closing remarks and strongly encouraged to continue participating in improving the visibility and quality of life for all members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community.

## Data Review

1. After soliciting input from ESD Consulting, the core group responsible for this project identified and recruited a data analyst to lead a subcommittee to review all data gathered from both the Survey and the RoundTable focus groups
2. The subcommittee's review process centered on extracting recurring themes throughout the data on each primary topic addressed. Within this review the subcommittee also determined which inputs were identifying problems versus which were supplying potential solutions. Furthermore, consideration was given to ensure no identifying information would be included in the final presentation of results.
3. The data analyst used both raw data and the results of the subcommittee's work to create resource documents laying out the findings in a useful, searchable format, revealing common themes among responses.



4. It was determined that the final report would provide major findings supplemented by indexed sections for target audiences (schools, healthcare providers, law enforcement, etc)
5. Members of the subcommittee then drafted this report for review by ESD Consulting, the SJC, YVP, and participants in the project before sharing with the community at-large.

## Responses & Findings

### Overview

The following section provides the collected results from Community Survey responses solicited throughout the month of June 2022 and the responses captured from the focus groups at the Community RoundTable event.

#### *Disclaimer 1 - Representative Cohort?*

By having vetted questions aligned between both the Community Survey and Community RoundTable focus groups, a single set of data was gathered from both sources, resulting in **96 total anonymous responses**. We believe this is a substantial cohort accurately representing the LGBTQIA2S+ community. However, we also acknowledge that due to potential social consequences, it is near impossible to know the accurate number of County residents who identify themselves as members of this population, since “coming out” is a serious matter of life and death proportions. As such, it is not possible to accurately determine whether the number of respondents is statistically robust enough to represent the entire LGBTQIA2S+ community.

#### *Disclaimer 2 - Primarily Qualitative Data*

In order to provide the most impactful results, relevant information gathered in this report focuses primarily on the qualitative experience of the LGBTQIA2S+ community in Routt County, rather than attempting to make the case exclusively with quantitative data. The focus, of course, being to assess the quality of life among members of the queer community, qualitative inputs were necessary to achieve our goals.

#### *Disclaimer 3 - Cannot Entirely Avoid Politics*

This project was not conceived of, developed, or produced with any political agenda whatsoever. Both the SJC and YVP are nonpartisan organizations and this report is not intended to support or oppose political parties. Rather, we seek to provide information of individual experiences. However, despite this deliberate effort to avoid politics, there were so many political references among the responses it would be negligent to exclude them from this report. Many participants who provided responses found politics to be a significant factor influencing their experience of living here in Routt County as a member of the LGBTQIA2S+ community.

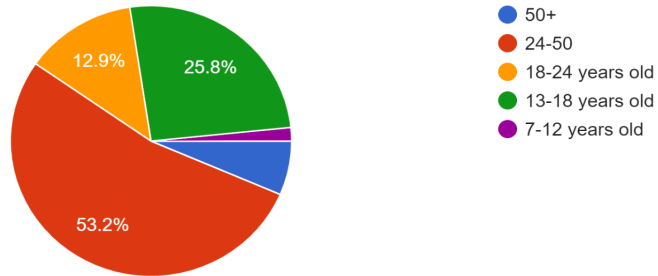
#### *Disclaimer 4 - Use of the Term "Queer"*

There are varying outlooks on whether the use of the term "queer" may innately be derogatory in nature. Certainly, the term has been used as a slur by bigots for decades. However, in alignment with many members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, this report will simply be using "queer" as an umbrella term encapsulating all identities represented within the community. The concept here is that by deliberately and casually using this term with no hurtful intent we may contribute to efforts seeking to reclaim it for common use within the community and among allies.

## Demographics of respondents (Survey Only)

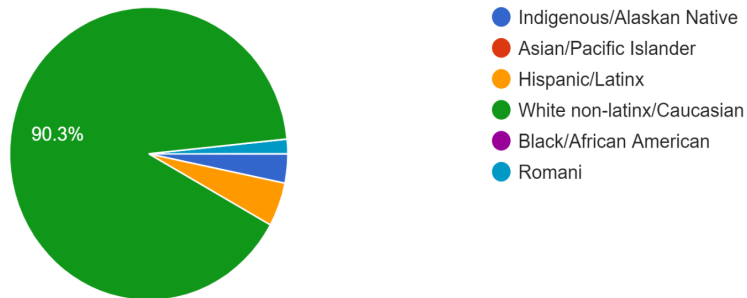
### Age

62 responses



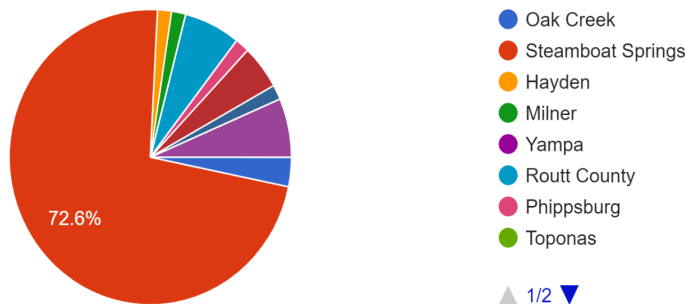
### Racial identity

62 responses



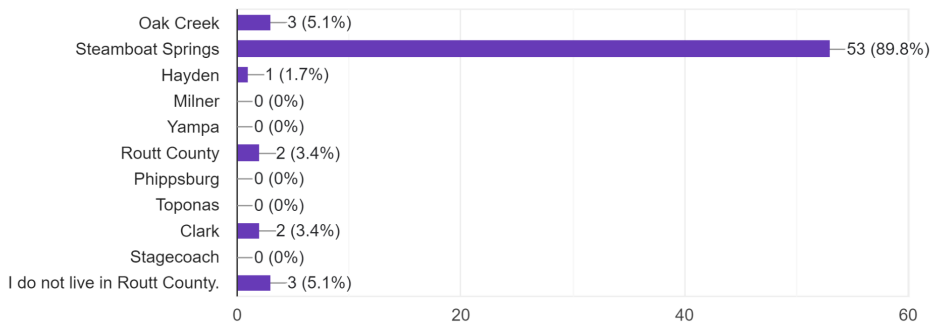
### Where in Routt County do you live?

62 responses



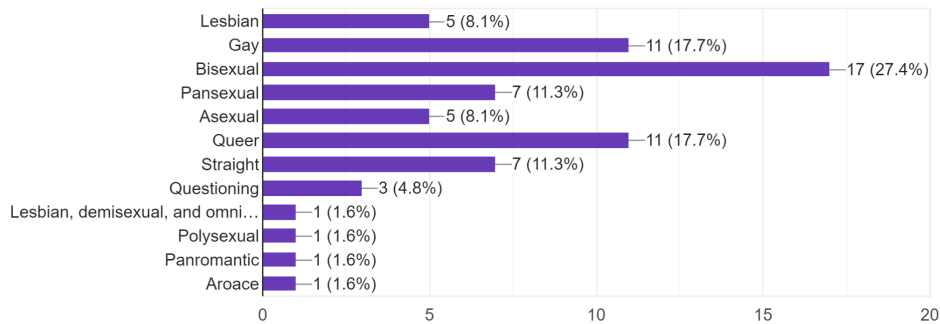
### Where in Routt County do you work and/or attend school? (check all that apply)

59 responses



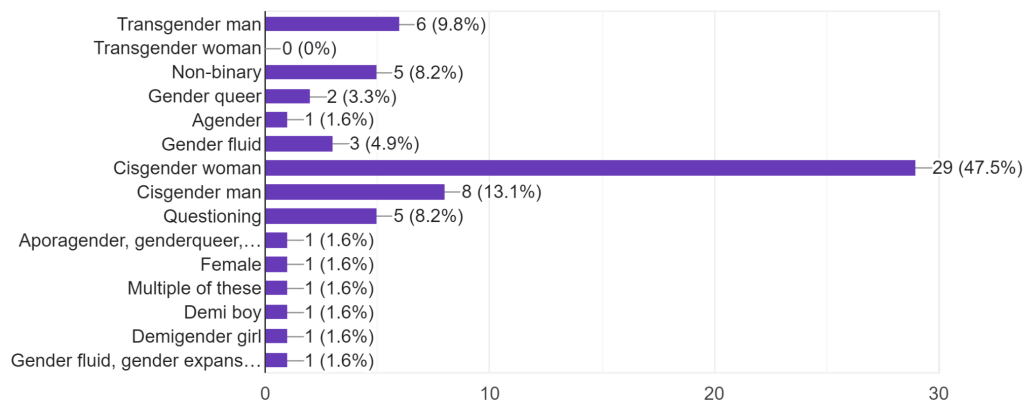
### Sexual orientation

62 responses



### Gender identity

61 responses

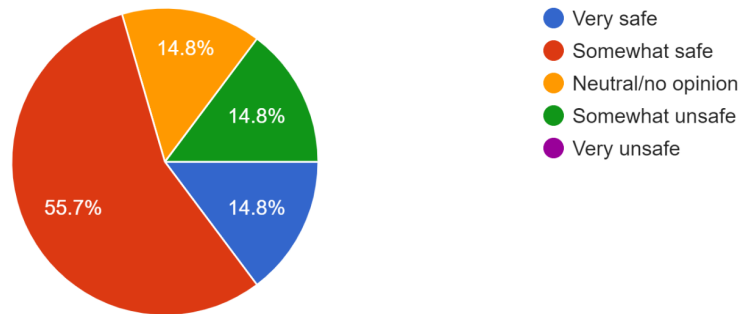


# Major Findings

## 1. Substantial Safety Concerns

How safe do you feel as an LGBTQIA+ person in Routt County?

61 responses



Reflecting national trends, one of the primary concerns among the LGBTQIA2S+ community in Routt County is personal safety. Long-standing animosity, intolerance, misinformation, and outright cruelty have impacted queer communities across our country, often more intensely in rural areas. The severe social burden of facing these ongoing threats to physical safety also deeply impacts the mental wellbeing of queer-identifying people. Youth in particular are subjected to extraordinary distress.

The Trevor Project's 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health found that 45% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, including more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth.

Within our findings, multiple respondents referred to recent episodes of ideated and attempted suicide. **It is not an overstatement to say that inaction on these matters has deeply harmful and potentially lethal consequences.**

Support services have been inconsistent. LGBTQIA2S+ advocacy groups in Routt County have been established and dissolved over several generations. Unfortunately, experiencing prejudice, discrimination, and violence are ongoing occurrences for County residents who openly live outside of common heterosexual and cisgender "norms."

The scope and nature of harmful and traumatizing experiences faced by the queer community in Routt County includes (but is not limited to):

- Violent Hate Crimes
- Verbal assault and harassment using homophobic and transphobic slurs
- Derogatory jokes and humiliation publicly targeting queer people
- Deliberate “Deadnaming” (misidentifying) trans people to cause harm
- Discrimination in the workplace and among service providers
- Lack of representation in educational or professional settings

Coping and Safety Strategies are crucial. In order to maintain a degree of safety, many respondents have developed an array of personal safety protocols and skills to accurately identify safe and unsafe places, people, and institutions.

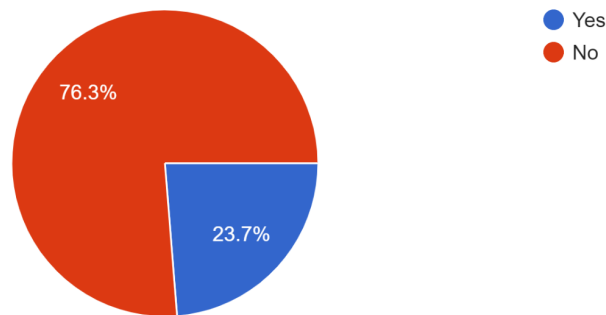
Findings include:

- Hiding one’s identity and/ or limiting affectionate behavior in public are common practices among members of the queer community. Those unwilling or unable to “pass” as cisgender or heterosexual suffer higher rates of harm
- Over 30% of respondents replied that they used some combination of intuition, observation, reputation, word of mouth, and gut instinct to assess safe people and environments
- Many participants identified sources of intolerance by observing a wide range of political markers including: extreme right-wing political messages, confederate flags, pro-gun messages or images, fundamentalist religious messaging, etc.
- Several identified local school culture as being unsafe due to overt discrimination among peers, bullying, and toxic attitudes - yet when reporting issues they were met with an unresponsive administration
- Under 10%, but still a significant number, also identified feeling or being unsafe among law enforcement and aggressively religious people.

- With a few notable exceptions, a majority of bathroom facilities in public buildings do not provide a gender-neutral option. Considering privacy concerns of all people, regardless of gender, this lack of access to private bathroom facilities for LGBTQIA2S+ people not only puts additional burden exclusively on these citizens - a form of discrimination - it presents *perceived* safety concerns among many cis-het citizens and *actual* safety concerns for queer people forced to use a gendered bathroom.

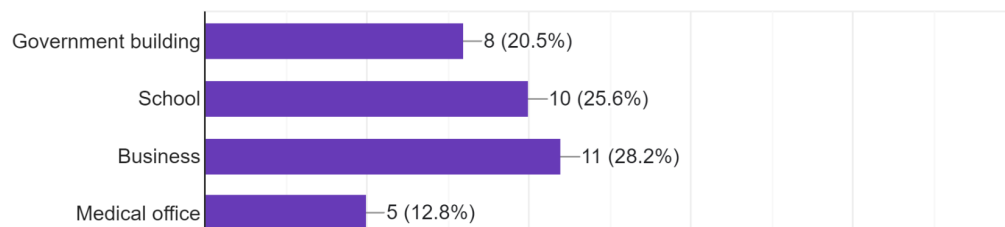
Have you ever felt unsafe or uncomfortable using the restroom somewhere in Routt County due to your LGBTQIA+ identity?

59 responses



If you answered yes to the previous question, at what kind of establishment did you feel uncomfortable or unsafe using the restroom? (check all that apply)

39 responses





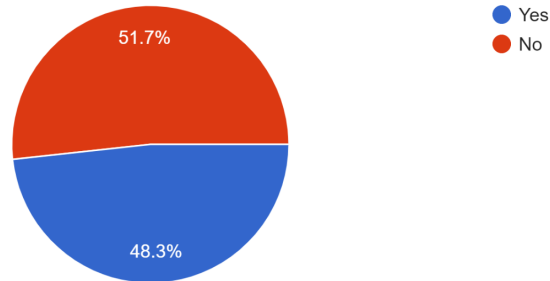
Queer-friendly spaces are vital for personal wellbeing. Using similar assessment strategies, respondents were also able to easily identify safe places and people through various identifying markers such as Pride flags, stickers, or event promotions with deliberately inclusive images related to the LGBTQIA2S+ community, among others. Many also perceived safety was exclusively available from overtly queer-friendly groups and events, such as:

- Clubs and GSA's (Gender & Sexuality Alliance) or QSA's (Queer/ Straight Alliance) in schools provide a haven for members who are forced to endure cis-het (cisgender/ heterosexual) culture dominance throughout the school day.
- The Pride Celebration hosted by Yampa Valley Pride is widely acknowledged as a centerpiece of Routt County queer culture and a primary community-building opportunity for people who identify as LGBTQIA2S+.
- Often members of the queer community will exclusively attend personal gatherings instead of public events.

## 2. Lack of Access to Informed Service Providers

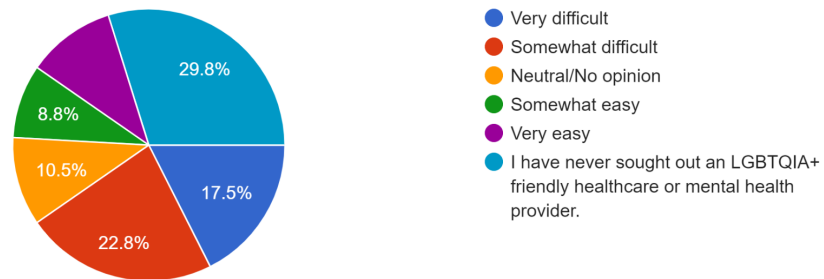
Have you ever needed help with a problem related to your LGBTQIA+ identity and were unable to find the support you needed?

58 responses



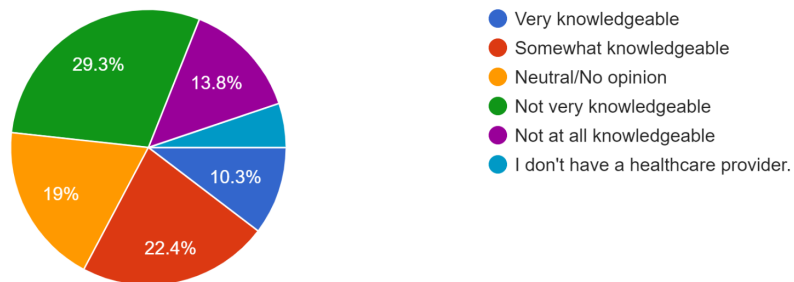
How difficult has it been for you to find a healthcare and/or mental health provider who is knowledgeable and supportive of your identity?

57 responses



How knowledgeable do you feel your healthcare provider is about your LGBTQIA+ identity?

58 responses



A major concern among participants in this project is the glaring lack of local service providers who are adequately trained or educated about LGBTQIA2S+ identity, health, or social issues. This proved true community-wide, but especially referring to vital medical and mental health services. Nearly every respondent relayed an attempt to find mental health care and either found none or their providers displayed a problematic lack of knowledge. Several also described overt harms being caused by a therapist's uninformed approach:

- *“A licensed mental health professional in Routt County asked me about my pornography preferences and then told me I probably wasn't bisexual”*
- *“I'm seeking therapy that isn't focused on my trans identity. For me being trans has nothing to do with my trauma, yet every therapist I have gone to has focused purely on me being trans.”*

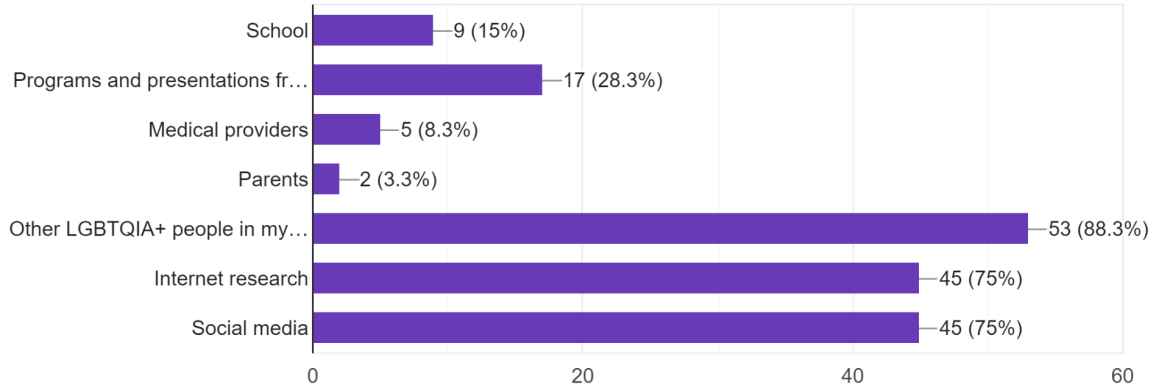
And in the medical arena, despite strides being taken to ensure more inclusivity reflected in policies and paperwork, there is still a great deal to be done to ensure LGBTQIA2S+ patients have a safe and validating experience.

- *“In medical settings, the surveys before the an appointment have asked questions I want to be asked about my gender and sexual identity, but my responses are never acknowledged in conversations with the health care provider.”*
- *“I've had a healthcare provider praise me for not having penetrative sex and encourage me to continue avoiding it”*

### 3. An Undereducated Community

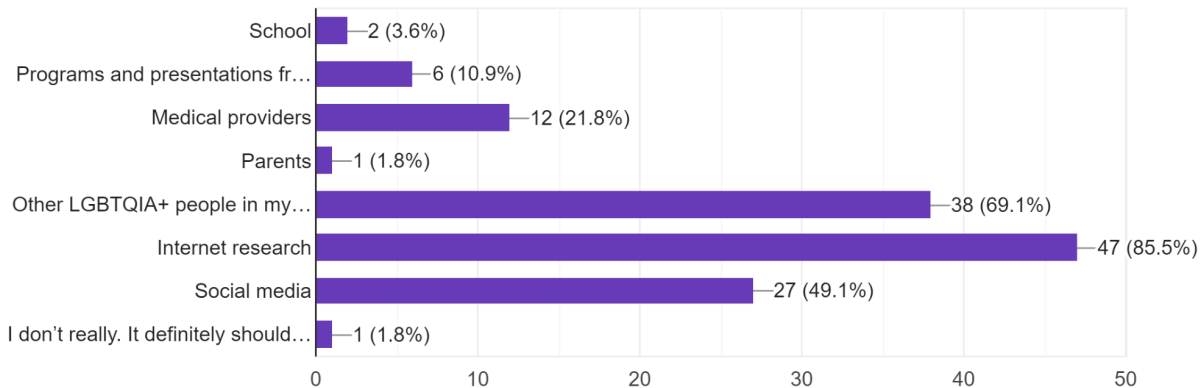
How do you learn about your own and other LGBTQIA+ identities? (check all that apply)

60 responses



How do you learn about sexual and relationship health and safety in LGBTQIA+ relationships? (check all that apply)

55 responses



Though a substantial portion of this report includes findings about school culture, this section also refers to education much more broadly. Beyond the school community, respondents identified a significant lack of education being evident among several institutions and the community in general, demonstrating common gaps in basic knowledge of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, the issues they face, or how to safely and effectively provide services.

Moreover, lacking a baseline of knowledge provided through formal education, it appears few adults are motivated to further educate themselves unless compelled to do

so, leaving professionals unprepared and the queer community underserved. The more serious concern of course is that, not only will undereducated professionals lack the skills to effectively serve the queer community, they could easily cause real and lasting harm unintentionally.

In the absence of formal education, learners of all ages are forced to turn to other sources, which may or may not be accurate. For example, several respondents claimed they relied on social media to learn fundamentals, but could not explain why they trusted their sources. Few were aware of long-standing, credible resources such as The Trevor Project or ONE Colorado who provide up-to-date, medically accurate, and culturally-responsive information.

- Many respondents found that it was difficult or impossible to find support services with adequately educated practitioners. In addition, several said they couldn't find any form of support group either.
- Respondents found that it was difficult or impossible to find medical/ mental health services with adequately educated practitioners.
- Parents and Students pointed to Health class curriculum in middle and high schools being designed exclusively for heterosexual and cis-gendered students, with rare, if any, mentions of LGBTQIA2S+ identities or issues.

### 3. Youth Bear the Brunt of Ignorance and Hostility

*“I realized (my child’s sexuality) by little pieces... through observation, tears, a suicide attempt and trip to the ER as a result.”*

- Anonymous Parent

Several adult members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community in Routt County acknowledged that they deliberately avoided public acknowledgement of their true identities because they found it easier to avoid confrontation and assimilate with the community more easily. Unfortunately, this leaves behind queer youth who face extreme challenges, yet do not have the knowledge-base, experience, or agency to effectively advocate for themselves or create queer-centered opportunities.

Reflecting national trends, youth locally who do not identify as cisgender or heterosexual face extraordinary social hardship and a near constant threat of violence. **Multiple parents involved in the Community RoundTable revealed that their queer-identified youth considered or attempted suicide.** Also, since the first Pride event in Routt County that took place in 2021, the Founder of YVP has been bombarded with requests from youth for all manner of services that remain unavailable in our community. Accompanying many of these requests were stories of alienation, discrimination, public humiliation, hate speech and multiple incidents of violence.

With the rise of the internet, LGBTQIA2S+ youth have been able to find one another more easily and safely, share information (and misinformation), and cultivate a sense of community across our society. However, unless more is done to improve awareness and understanding among parents, caregivers, educators, and others who directly impact the lives of queer youth, there will continue to be legitimate safety concerns and serious impacts on mental health among these children in our community.

Multiple parents expressed urgency and concern about the lack of resources available to help them support their own children.

*“There aren’t many resources. We were referred to (a center in) Denver and the waiting list was 6 months... a year to talk to a psychologist or a specialist doctor. Just to get a call back takes a month. It’s frustrating for parents who want to help their kids.”*

- Anonymous Parent

Queer youth who lack a supportive caregiver often face extraordinary challenges compared to their cis-het peers, including negligence, mental or physical abuse, and homelessness.

Our information-gathering did not focus on learning about harms respondents had experienced, but concerns among local queer youth also included:

- Lack of access to privacy, especially when seeking support
- Few, if any, adequate support services available
- Financial barriers, especially for healthcare needs

## 4. Significant Benefits of Cultivating Queer Community

When you think of the culture and identity of Routt County, do you feel that LGBTQIA+ people are represented and considered a part of that culture?

62 responses



Due to the constraints imposed by fearing for one's safety, many participants in the RoundTable project explained the difficulty of finding safe places to gather, finding others in the community (because so many are compelled to hide their identities), and finding support. However, there were several recurring themes that emerged regarding the immense value of *queer-inclusive* (informed, responsive, equitable - but not exclusively queer people) or *queer-dedicated* (by and for LGBTQIA2S+ people) spaces.

Overwhelmingly, respondents indicated that there was an innate sense of acceptance and support in intentionally queer-friendly spaces that was impossible to find in any other context. The apparent freedom from being scrutinized, judged, criticized, bullied, and harmed in predominantly cis-gender, heteronormative spaces (i.e. most places in society) allows members of the community to both relax and express their most authentic selves without shame or fear. Moreover, these spaces present the only opportunity to find others who can relate to the experience of being a local member of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, who are fully-educated about queer issues, are adept at avoiding unnecessary harm, and who share a common vocabulary.

- *"The queer community was instantly accepting of me, unlike other groups and supported me when even my parents didn't... I will do almost anything for the LGBTQ+ community because it taught me just how powerful love can be."*
- *"It's important to be able to raise awareness as a community"*



- *“The queer community is where I can feel heard and supported. Feeling alone is one of the most disheartening feelings, so knowing there is a community of people supporting you is empowering.”*
- *“The queer community is a safe place for me to openly be who I am”*
- *“...we celebrate our pride, our diversity, our similarities, and our individuality without judgment.”*

It is worth noting that each of these celebrations of queer-inclusive and queer-dedicated communities reflects that a majority of other community spaces across our society present obvious and tangible dangers for members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. If the rare opportunities to gather in queer-friendly spaces are the only time these members of our community can express their authentic identities safely, then it's the rest of the community who must step up to the challenge of creating safety and ensuring inclusivity.

Marginalized populations may have outspoken (and very effective) activism, but often lack the social position and resources to enact meaningful, sustainable social change on their own. If all citizens of Routt County deserve to feel safe in public spaces, proactive effort must be applied by the entire community to achieve this for the LGBTQIA2S+ population. Every member of the community has a responsibility to contribute to the mutual respect and safety of our entire population. It is especially relevant for people who consider themselves “neutral” on issues of equity and safety to recognize how their inaction plays into allowing dangerous conditions to continue causing harm in our communities.

However, when a broad cross-section of a community collaborates to improve awareness, attitudes, and behaviors as a collective, research proves problem behaviors within that population decline. Encouraging broad participation in such an effort has the potential to have substantial positive impacts on the LGBTQIA2S+ community of Routt County

# Responses and Recommendations

## **General Feedback**

Below is an assortment of insights and suggestions supplied by participants in both the Community RoundTable focus groups and responses to the Community Survey. Although a majority of responses have been applied to targeted recommendations below, these general responses may be valuable to each of those audiences and anyone reading this report.

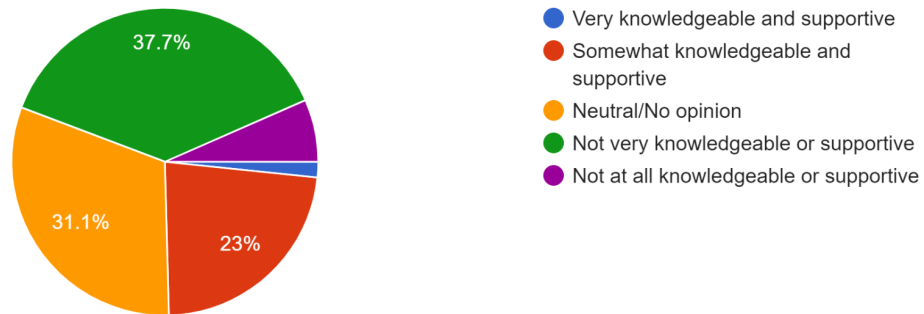
- Establishment of an LGBTQIA2S+ Family Resource and Advocacy Center
  - Note: The need for a formal institution to address the needs of the queer community was brought up repeatedly by numerous respondents and many of the recommendations below would be addressed by establishing such an institution locally
  
- List of Doctors informed/ educated about health for LGBTQIA2S+ people
  
- List of trustworthy resources and credible educational media outlets
  
- A comprehensive document about rights, laws, and rules in Colorado
  
- Establishing a dedicated fund for emergencies (victimization, sudden homelessness, urgent medical needs, etc)
  
- Educational opportunities and workshops available for all community members
  
- Addressing the dire need for adequate trans health services
  
- Widespread workplace trainings
  
- Establish more spaces dedicated to queer people (and their safety)
  - Family events (picnics, hikes, potlucks, etc.)
  - Sports events
    - Queer ski day/weekend
    - Queer yoga
    - Bike rides
  - Social events (private or open)

- More queer-centered public events
  - “Pride all year!”
  - Drag shows
  - Advertising publicly to “normalize” queer events in the community
- Development of a more robust social media presence to connect locals
- Queer-inclusive elements added to major local events
- Creation of a listserv dedicated to queer opportunities and events
- Recurring events and meetings
- Creation of an Advisory Board
- Gender-Neutral Bathrooms *everywhere*
- Creation of queer-friendly social groups and sports clubs
- Parents of LGBTQIA2S+ youth collective/ listserv
- Encouraging cis-het community to avoid “performative allyship” where some claim they’re informed and queer-friendly without applying adequate effort to actually improving their knowledge or practices
- A widespread campaign encouraging locals to use pronouns correctly
- Establishing an exclusively queer shelter, considering disproportionate rates of homelessness
- More opportunities explicitly designed to eliminate social barriers between queer and straight communities
- Queer-friendly business guide (similar to the “Green Book”)
  - Multiple positive experiences about Planned Parenthood referenced

## Local Government

How knowledgeable and supportive do you feel local government is of the LGBTQIA+ community?

61 responses



Local government has a role in LGBTQIA2S+ citizens lives that should not be defined by merely avoiding discrimination on the basis of gender or orientation. There are several opportunities exclusively available to the government that can drastically improve the visibility of - and engagement with - marginalized populations.

Recommendations include:

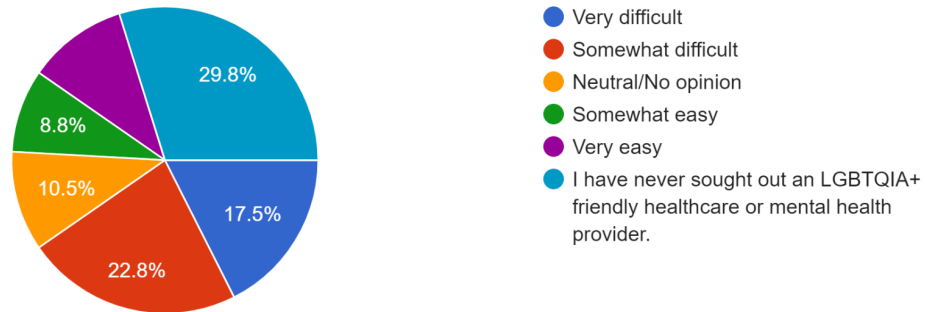
- Training on workplace culture for all government employees
- Training for government workers who interact with citizens on how to ensure safe and healthy interactions with members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community
- Aside from educating the government workforce, leaders may also take proactive measures to be publicly inclusive of queer-identified citizens. For example:
  - Pride flags could be displayed in any downtown area across the County during Pride month (June) or on government buildings (anytime)
  - Hire artists to paint crosswalks as rainbows
  - Public display or event acknowledging the history of local LGBTQIA2S+ leaders
  - Annual proclamations (and advertising of the proclamation) declaring June Pride Month

- Improving internal policies and practices to advance equity and reduce harm
  - Earmark funding for emergency services required for responding to sexual and gender-based violence
  - Guarantee gender-neutral bathrooms in all government buildings/ schools
- Visible leadership: Few opportunities could be more potent than outspoken leadership from political and government leaders, advocating for equity and justice for the most marginalized and underserved citizens they represent.
- Proactively moving to address the urgent gaps in services
  - Adding inclusive language in public statements
  - Introducing oneself using identifying pronouns
  - Leveraging political visibility to host events dedicated to celebrating and empowering the local LGBTQIA2S+ community
  - Forcefully speaking out against the attempts to align queer identity with “groomers” and pedophilia

## Medical/ Mental Health Providers

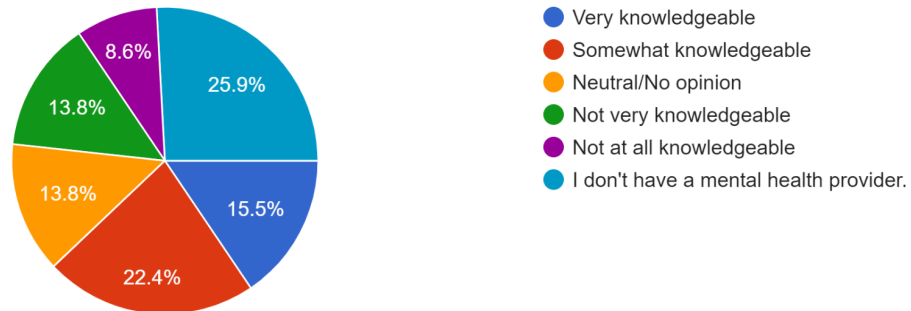
How difficult has it been for you to find a healthcare and/or mental health provider who is knowledgeable and supportive of your identity?

57 responses



How knowledgeable do you feel your mental health provider is about your LGBTQIA+ identity?

58 responses



Note: Please refer also to the Major Findings, Section 2 of this report

Many local medical and mental health care providers have taken great strides to improve policies and practices to make them more responsive to the needs of the queer community, which must certainly be applauded. However, when these practices are applied without understanding the full context or meaning behind them, makes the effort more performative than substantial. Of course this only applies to providers who make the effort to try in the first place, which is apparently fairly uncommon in Routt County.

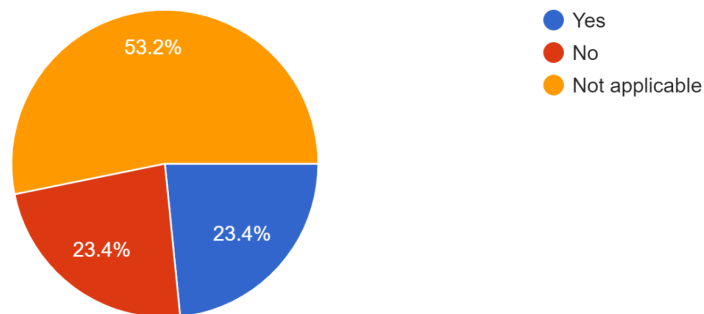
Recommendations include:

- Training for all care providers on LGBTQIA2S+ identities and issues
- Training for all on safe workplace culture
- Audit intake forms to ensure accurate and inclusive language
- The LGBTQIA2S+ community seeks a list of culturally-competent healthcare providers versed in the unique medical and mental health needs of queer-identifying people
- There is **urgent need for trans healthcare** and education on trans care among local providers. Trans members of Routt County's population are forced to travel to Denver to meet their basic healthcare needs, nevermind specialists
- Multiple respondents expressed alarm at the apparent lack of preparation among mental health providers
- Providers should hire more openly queer healthcare workers

## School Districts and Educators

If you are a student, have you ever been bullied at school due to your LGBTQIA+ identity?

47 responses



As youth culture remains on the cutting edge of the LGBTQIA2S+ social movement, school communities are uniquely positioned to affect the experience of youth who identify and operate outside of cis-het (cis-gender / heterosexual) “norms”. With the rise of social media, keeping up with the pace of new norms, ever-changing trends and vocabulary presents a significant challenge among adults. However, it is vital that the adults who steward young people’s school experience stay up-to-date as much as possible so they can be trusted by vulnerable queer students.

*“Acceptance is key to our children’s mental health and wellbeing. Also access to information and support for both parent and child is very important.”*

*- Anonymous Parent*

Adults who reject or humiliate queer-identified youth compound the harm caused by their undereducated peers. Based on insight from both students and parents’ responses, LGBTQIA2S+ students face ongoing scrutiny, judgment, unwanted attention, unwanted touch, bullying, and violence from their predominantly cis-het peer community. Aside from Colorado Mountain College and Yampa Valley High School (with a high percentage of attendees identifying as LGBTQIA2S+ and a knowledgeable counselor), schools are often perceived as unsafe places by queer youth.



*“I wanted support for bullying because I am transgender. They made me talk to the person who harassed me for years and APOLOGIZE to HIM. No actual action was taken.”*

- Anonymous Student

Findings include: **Concerns**

- Under-informed peers exhibit homophobic and discriminatory behaviors towards LGBTQIA2S+ students
- Ongoing harm from some teachers and adult staff who deliberately misgender and deadname queer youth
- Under-informed teachers and staff commit similar harms accidentally
- Disciplinary measures have been taken by school staff when youth display Pride stickers or wear rainbow colored clothing
- There is a common mistrust and belief among LGBTQIA2S+ students that their school administration will not adequately address reported problems

*“Hate crimes and anti-LGBT propaganda are NOT taken seriously... sexual harassment and assault based on gender identity is not looked into either. Even our school officer is not a safe person to talk to.”*

- Anonymous Student

- LGBTQIA2S+ identities and issues are not represented in school curricula or programming
  - Unique needs and concerns of queer health are not addressed in Health curriculum
- Youth identified pornography as their primary source of sex education

*“There is an issue when porn is more accessible than education.”*

- Anonymous Student

Aside from school-based curriculum, multiple respondents referenced exposure to religious teachings by guest educators in local schools. Considering the widespread, open hostility expressed by many religious institutions towards every aspect of LGBTQIA2S+ identity and lifestyle, queer students are justifiably alarmed at finding teachers of religion in their school, some presenting information openly hostile to queer identity.

*“I have a real concern about the lack of separation of Church and State in the schools here, as I have witnessed and heard many instances in Routt County of churches using their presence in the school to spread homophobic rhetoric and make the learning environment less inclusive.”*

- Anonymous Respondent

Fortunately, findings also include many suggestions for proactively creating solutions as well. Just as undereducated, or willfully disrespectful adults can create a hostile environment for youth, the opposite is also true. When met with compassion, understanding and informed communication, queer youth are able to live less burdened by social intolerance.

Findings include: **Solutions**

- Teacher and Staff training on LGBTQIA2S+ issues and pronoun use
- Adding queer-inclusive content to curricula, especially Health
- Add a full class on Gender and Sexuality
- Provide gender-neutral bathrooms in all schools
- Establishment of GSA/ QSA clubs in all schools
- Peer support between High School and Middle School GSA/ QSA members
  - Peers who aren't Mandated Reporters feel safer for many
  - Acknowledging that some issues are too big for mere peer support
- Creating a dedicated hotline for queer-related issues, not just suicide prevention
- Bring in expert guest educators, not religious leaders

- Ensure mental health support is informed on LGBTQIA2S+ identity and issues
- A dedicated DEI (diversity, equity, & inclusion) position on the Board, or any level
- Add inclusive elements to “Infinite Campus” system

*“My school’s openness and proactive conversations  
created more comfort.”*

- Anonymous Student

Our local Colorado Mountain College recently made a concentrated push to become a more inclusive institution and may be considered a model for how to take initial steps as an educational body:

- Establishing LGBTQIA2S+ club to ensure there’s a committed, safe group
- Collaboration with local experts from Yampa Valley Pride
- Hosting panel discussions with queer, trans and non-binary speakers
- Hosting awareness events, such as *Take Back the Night*

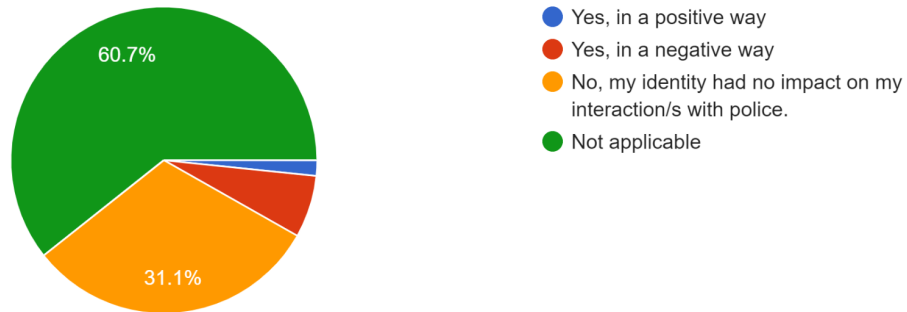
*“It is unfair for the kids to educate the adults and their teachers. The pressure on my child to explain these things is high... but they’re hard to talk about on a regular basis.”*

- Anonymous Parent

## Law Enforcement

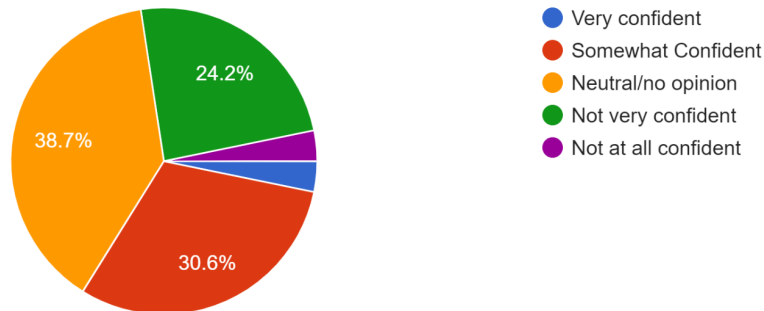
If you have ever had interactions with local police, did your identity impact your interaction with them?

61 responses



How much confidence do you have that it is safe for LGBTQIA+ people to seek help from police in Routt County?

62 responses



Respondents had a wide range of experiences and outlooks on the readiness of local officers to avoid harm when engaging with members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. Some perspectives were based on a historically strained relationship between law enforcement and the queer community in general, where some feedback was based on direct experience interacting with law enforcement locally. The primary finding is that police are in a unique position of influence to either assert universal acceptance of all citizens as the norm or - intentionally or unintentionally - police may reinforce harms caused by abusive aggressors, in turn compounding the trauma of the people they intend to serve. This makes for a complex relationship between police and the queer community.

Findings include: **Concerns**

- Undereducated officers accidentally causing harm
- SRO's deadnaming and misgendering queer youth
- *Safe2Tell* TipLine
  - Used for "swatting" - a bullying tactic where police are unnecessarily sent to address a fake problem with the bully's target
  - Youth know the service is not actually anonymous since PD has access to IP address of users
- *"Take hate crimes seriously and stop misgendering the victims"*

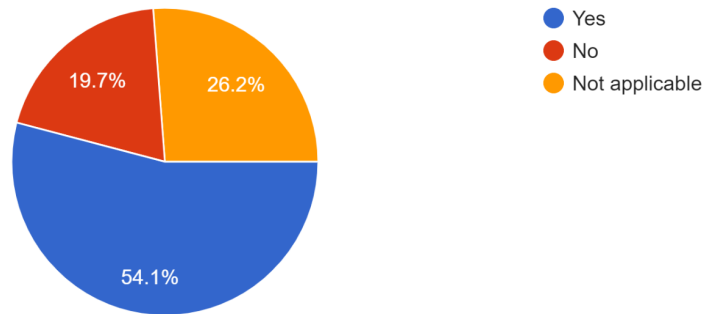
Findings include: **Solutions**

- Training for all levels of law enforcement on LGBTQIA2S+ identity and issues
- Training for non-police responders and establishment of a co-responder program to ensure access to an unarmed, queer-friendly response
- Competent and consistent use of accurate pronouns, avoid deadnaming

## Businesses and Service Providers

If you are employed, do you feel safe and comfortable being out in your workplace?

61 responses



The private sector and nonprofit organizations play a pivotal role in advancing equity throughout our community. Between ensuring a safe work environment for any workforce and engaging with LGBTQIA2S+ customers or clients, leadership among businesses and agencies of all sorts contribute to the overall conditions members of the queer community face.

Recommendations include:

- Avoid performative allyship in favor of committing substantial effort towards improving awareness, attitudes, and behaviors
- Update policies and practices to be more equitable and inclusive
- Audit and update forms and key documents to be inclusive
- Consider representation and hiring practices related to LGBTQIA2S+ identities among staff and support services
- Ensure visual markers alert queer communities they're safe among your team
- Build an agency-wide practice of sharing your pronouns to alert queer communities you and your organization are an aspiring allies

## Conclusion

Confronting social issues related to homo/trans-phobia, sexism and bigotry is challenging. Raising awareness about the scope and nature of these concerns can be a starting point, seeking to bring all stakeholders to a common understanding of conditions. From this foundation of mutual understanding, a sweeping collaborative effort must be undertaken by a majority of public and private institutions to embrace the LGBTQIA2S+ community and counter hostile attitudes and behaviors towards queer citizens of Routt County.

Collaborating with the LGBTQIA2S+ leaders throughout a process for safely and anonymously collecting data and narratives, the information enclosed in this report encapsulates a broad range of relevant issues, concerns, and potential solutions offered directly from the queer community reached by the Community Survey and Community RoundTable event.

It is the expressed hope among members of both the Social Justice Coalition and Yampa Valley Pride who led the project that this information will be used in good faith for the purpose of improving conditions and quality of life for the LGBTQIA2S+ community - and ultimately all citizens - in Routt County.

*Special thanks to all partners, funders, and participants in the development and execution of this project... and, of course, for all members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community who courageously participated and shared their insights.*

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Glossary

#### Agender

*A gender identity referring to people who not experience gender or identify with any gender.*

#### Aroace

*A sexual orientation referring to people who identify as both aromantic and asexual, meaning they do not experience sexual or romantic attraction.*

#### Asexual

*A sexual orientation referring to people who not experience, or do not often experience, sexual attraction.*

#### Bisexual

*A sexual orientation referring to people who experience attraction to their own as well as other genders.*

#### Cis/het

*Refers to people who are not a part of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. A shortening of the terms cisgender and heterosexual, which are defined below.*

#### Cisgender

*A gender identity referring to people who identify with the gender were assigned at birth; someone who is not transgender.*

#### Demigender

*An umbrella term referring to people who partially identify with a particular gender identity, but not completely.*

#### Gay

*A sexual orientation that typically refers to men who are exclusively romantically and/or sexually attracted to other men. This word can also be used to describe a person of any gender who experiences attraction to people of their own gender.*

#### Gender

*Gender is a combination of an individual's identity and the expression of their identity. Gender identity is one's internal understanding of their gender and how*



*they label themselves based on how much they align or don't align with the gender they were assigned at birth. Gender expression refers to how one expresses their identity to others. Gender can be, but does not have to be, expressed through a combination of things such as clothing, hairstyle, the sound of their voice, how their body looks, the pronouns they use, etc.*

#### Gender Binary

*The defining of gender as being either masculine or feminine.*

#### Gender Fluid

*A gender identity referring to people whose gender identity and/or expression changes over time.*

#### Genderqueer

*A flexible term referring to a person or people who do not identify with the gender binary and/or the gender they were assigned at birth. Some use this term instead of 'transgender,' because transition is not a part of their experience.*

#### Heterosexual

*A sexual orientation referring to people who are exclusively attracted to people of a different gender than their own.*

#### Lesbian

*A sexual orientation referring to women who exclusively experience romantic and/or sexual attraction to other women.*

#### LGBTQIA2S+ community

*An abbreviation of the terms lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, two-spirit, and more. This umbrella term is meant to encompass all people of minority sexualities, genders, and sexes.*

#### LGBTQIA2S+/Queer identity

*LGBTQIA2S+ or queer identity refers to a specific person's identification with one or more terms related to their minority sexuality, gender, and/or sex.*

#### Nonbinary

*A gender identity that is outside the binary of masculine and feminine.*

#### Pansexual

*A sexual orientation referring to people who experience attraction regardless of gender.*

#### Queer

*A flexible term that can refer to anyone within the LGBTQIA2S+ community, the LGBTQIA2S+ community as a whole, and can also be the term one uses to define their own sexuality or gender identity. To put it simply, queer means not cisgendered and/or not straight. The term “queer” was used as a harmful slur in the past, but has been reclaimed by the community, and is now widely used and accepted.*

#### Queer Community

*An alternative to the abbreviated LGBTQIA2S+ community, this is an umbrella term meant to encompass people of all minority sexualities, genders, and sexes. The term “queer” was used as a harmful slur in the past, but has been reclaimed by the community, and is now widely used and accepted.*

#### Sexuality

*A person’s identity as it relates to the way they experience romantic and/or sexual attraction.*

#### Transgender

*The term transgender refers to people who do not identify with the gender identity they were assigned at birth. It can be used both to define an individual person’s experience with gender and as an umbrella term referring to a community of people with a variety of gender non-conforming identities.*

NOTE: Terms and definitions change frequently within the LGBTQIA2S+ community. See [PFLAG’s Glossary of Terms](#) for a constantly updated and more comprehensive list.

## Appendix 2: Key Sections of “Healthy Kids Colorado” Survey Results

### Routt County 2021 Healthy Kids Colorado Summary

Updated 5.26.22

Understanding the reliability and validity of this data:

- All data listed below is considered a secondary source, calculated based on primary sources.
- No data below can imply causation between data points.
- If a data set did not have adequate data to report, it was left out of the calculation below. Data below does not note if a school was omitted.
- All data points include information from at least two schools.
- Questions are added, edited, or removed year over year. If a question has been edited, this is noted in the results.
- “x” implies that there is either inadequate data or the question did not appear on that year’s survey.
- Blank sections imply that data may exist, but was not available for this report.
- Hayden School District has not yet received results from 2021; they are not included in the numbers below.
- South Routt School District changed to an “opt in” sampling system between 2019 and 2021- response rates went down significantly.
- Percentages below are rounded to the nearest whole number. School-level frequency reports are more detailed.
- Not all students answer all questions- some 2021 response numbers are as few as 200 students, and some are as high as 500+.
- State and HSR Reports are still in progress- these may not be ready for a few months.

Questions? Please reach out to Sarah Valentino [routtcounty@grandfutures.org](mailto:routtcounty@grandfutures.org) to learn more about methods or specific data points.

BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS	2021 (Steamb oat Springs MS + South Routt MS)	2021 (Steamb oat Springs HS, YVHS, Soroco HS)	2019 (Routt County High Schools)	2017 (HSR 11 High Schools= Routt, Moffat, Rio Blanco, Jackson Counties)
White	72%	79%	78%	73%
Heterosexual	74%	76%	89%	
Cisgender	92%	94%	x	

<u>MENTAL HEALTH</u>	2021 (Steamb oat Springs MS + South Routt MS)	2021 (Steam boat Springs HS, YVHS, Soroco HS)	2019 (Routt County High Schools)	2017 (HSR 11 High Schools= Routt, Moffat, Rio Blanco, Jackson Counties)
Percentage of students who purposefully hurt themselves without wanting to die in the past 12 months	x	29%	24%	17%
Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree their stress level is manageable most days	64%	56%	x	x
Percentage of students who take two or fewer days to feel fully recovered after a stressful situation	85%	75%	x	x
Percentage of students who felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row during the past 12 months that they stopped doing some usual activities	25%	35%	32%	29%
Percentage of students who seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months	23%	20%	19%	16%
Percentage of students who made a plan about how they would attempt suicide during the past 12 months	18%	17%	15%	11%
Percentage of students who attempted suicide one or more times during the past 12 months	8%	8%	8%	7%
Percentage of students who have an adult to go to for help with a serious problem	76%	75%	76%	71%
Percentage of students who most of the time or always could talk to a friend about feelings during their life	57%	60%	x	x

SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS	2021 (Steamboat Springs MS + South Routt MS)	2021 (Steamboat Springs HS, YVHS, Soroco HS)	2019 (Routt County High Schools)	2017 (HSR 11 High Schools= Routt, Moffat, Rio Blanco, Jackson Counties)
Among students who dated or went out with someone during the past 12 months, the percentage who had been physically hurt on purpose by someone they were dating or going out with one or more times	15%	10%	5%	
Among students who dated or went out with someone during the past 12 months, the percentage who had been controlled or emotionally hurt by someone they were dating or going out with	14%	24%	x	
Percentage of students who had a sexual experience where they were unsure if they gave their fully-granted consent to the other person	3%	15%	x	
Percentage of students who had a sexual experience where they were unsure if they received fully-granted consent from the other person	x	4%	x	
Percentage of students who had ever been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to	x	8%	6%	
Percentage of students who have forced someone to have sex when it was unwanted (i.e., rape)	x	<1%	x	
Percentage of students who have ever had sexual intercourse	x	31%	38%	
Percentage of students who have had sexual intercourse with one or more people during the past three months	x	23%	25%	
Among students who had sexual intercourse during the past three months, the percentage who drank alcohol or used drugs before sexual intercourse the last time	x	24%	21%	
Among students who had sexual intercourse during the past three months, the percentage who used a condom or their partner used a condom during sexual intercourse the last time	x	65%	x	

**Appendix 3:**



**COLORADO LGBTQ+**  
**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**  
STATE OF THE STATE SURVEY REPORT

[www.envision-you.org/state-of-the-state](http://www.envision-you.org/state-of-the-state)

**Appendix 4:**

The Health Partnership, Memorial Regional Health, Northwest Colorado Health, Routt County Public Health, UCHealth Yampa Valley Medical Center, and United Way

**Yampa Valley  
Community Health  
Needs Assessment**

**2022**



<https://link.edgepilot.com/s/b6ae2af6/SoDR9IXG0E2uG3NpCdds3g?u=https://thehealthpartnership.org/>

## Appendix 5: (American Association of Pediatrics “Pediatrics” journal article debunks trans identity as a “Social Contagion”)

# Sex Assigned at Birth Ratio Among Transgender and Gender Diverse Adolescents in the United States

Jack L. Turban, MD, MHS,<sup>a</sup> Brett Dolotina, BS,<sup>b</sup> Dana King, ALM,<sup>c</sup> Alex S. Keuroghlian, MD, MPH<sup>b,c,d</sup>

**OBJECTIVE:** Representatives of some pediatric gender clinics have reported an increase in transgender and gender diverse (TGD) adolescents presenting for care who were assigned female sex at birth (AFAB) relative to those assigned male sex at birth (AMAB). These data have been used to suggest that youth come to identify as TGD because of “social contagion,” with the underlying assumption that AFAB youth are uniquely vulnerable to this hypothesized phenomenon. Reported changes in the AMAB:AFAB ratio have been cited in recent legislative debates regarding the criminalization of gender-affirming medical care. Our objective was to examine the AMAB:AFAB ratio among United States TGD adolescents in a larger and more representative sample than past clinic-recruited samples.

**METHODS:** Using the 2017 and 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey across 16 states that collected gender identity data, we calculated the AMAB:AFAB ratio for each year. We also examined the rates of bullying victimization and suicidality among TGD youth compared with their cisgender peers.

**RESULTS:** The analysis included 91 937 adolescents in 2017 and 105 437 adolescents in 2019. In 2017, 2161 (2.4%) participants identified as TGD, with an AMAB:AFAB ratio of 1.5:1. In 2019, 1640 (1.6%) participants identified as TGD, with an AMAB:AFAB ratio of 1.2:1. Rates of

bullying victimization and suicidality were higher among TGD youth when compared with their cisgender peers.

**CONCLUSION:** The sex assigned at birth ratio of TGD adolescents in the United States does not appear to favor AFAB adolescents and should not be used to argue against the provision of gender-affirming medical care for TGD adolescents.

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<https://publications.aap.org/pages/licensing-permissions>