

2 March 2023

Young People's RSE Poll 2022



Working together for quality relationships and sex education

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Foreword



Q and A with young people

Here at the Sex Education Forum, we believe that asking young people about their experiences of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is essential, because only young people can judge whether or not it's good enough and meeting their needs. This year the Government is reviewing its RSE guidance, so it's vital that young people's views are heard and responded to.

A poll is a useful way of collecting views from a large number of young people, and it gives us statistics from a sample living across England and attending a wide range of schools. Having data from at least 1000 young people aged 16 and 17 years old means we can look at trends and compare from one year to another. The pool of data is big enough to show up if some groups of young people are more satisfied with the quality of their RSE than others. But statistics don't tell the whole story and percentages alone run the risk of missing out the perspectives of marginalised young people.

This year, thanks to funding from the Big Lottery Community Fund, we spoke with groups of young people who are members of the LGBT Youth in Care Network and Ambitious About Autism Youth Network. We had animated conversations about the design and purpose of the poll, and then made changes to the questions and layout.

Once data from the 2022 poll was collected, we invited young people back to pre-view the findings. In January we spoke with the Youth Network at Ambitious About Autism and asked for their reactions and deeper insights. Here are some of the questions we asked, and more importantly the answers we got.

With thanks to Lotte, Louise, Dolapa, Ella, Arif, Hannah, Josephine and Kendra for the insights shared here.



Thanks also to Abigail Odell and Natasha Hawley at Ambitious About Autism

Question 1: Are you surprised about the findings from the Poll?

It's not good enough. We need to be aspirational about the percentages that say RSE is good.

At the time [I had RSE] I was satisfied and thought "that's good" and "that'll do" but now I know it was missing a lot e.g. lack of representation for disabled people and LGBTQ+ couples.

Opinions change over time. When I was 16 or 17 I would have rated RSE better than I would do now.

Surely puberty is one of the most scary things to happen to anyone and it happens to everyone. It's surprising that only 65% are happy with their education about puberty.

Should definitely improve on teaching "accessing sexual health services"- this is a very easy thing to teach and doesn't take much time'.

We are never taught about the different experiences of relationship and sex in different cultural or ethnic communities, and I think this would be helpful.

Question 2: Why are there variations in the poll data between different groups of young people?

Females may have more experience of some issues – so be more critical of what they have been taught.

Coming from an ethnic minority background, I think it's important to get data from young people from underrepresented backgrounds. This helps to minimise bias and false interpretations of beliefs.

RSE needs more representation of disability and LGBT relationships, not just a focus on getting pregnant.

People in the LGBTQ+ community will feel less satisfied with RSE because it is very heteronormative, so they won't feel represented or get the information they need. Queer sex was never discussed when I was in school.

Question 3: What formats should be used more in RSE and why? Are there any formats that you feel would be more beneficial for an autistic student?

I am surprised all the percentages are so low as these seem like the main ways of teaching. How else are people learning RSE (if at all?).

Using real-life situations is particularly helpful for Autistic students.

We watched the cup of tea video, but it is very metaphorical and confusing for Autistic young people in particular. It didn't show the seriousness of what the scenario is. It came across as humorous, it's not the right way to go about it. People just laughed, we didn't actually talk about consent.

Give time to young people to digest questions rather than answer on the spot.

'Being asked your opinion on how to improve RSE' should be something that at least 90% of young people experience.

Question 4: The findings about teachers' enjoyment and confidence were mixed. What can be done about this?

Surely there is one teacher in every school who likes teaching RSE. Let them teach it.

I personally think RSE is just as important as maths.

Teachers are more embarrassed by questions that they haven't prepared for. If they haven't had training they are afraid to use open-ended question.

Teachers are scared of what they don't understand.

Give them time to prepare. Let teachers share what has worked for them teaching RSE.

Executive Summary

Twenty-twenty three (2023) brings us to the three-year mark when the statutory Government guidance on Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) will be reviewed. The guidance came into effect in September 2020, riding on overwhelming cross-party support from Parliamentarians. Government required that the guidance be followed in full by all schools in England from September 2021.

Great optimism was felt about the dawn of statutory RSE, and the hope remains fierce that young people will experience better RSE, with an end to the lottery on quality and quantity.

Asking young people about their experiences of RSE is essential to determine the extent and effectiveness of roll out of the new legislation. The Sex Education Forum plays a leading role in monitoring RSE, having carried out substantial polls in the lead up to legislative change (in 2018 and 2019) and since mandatory provision (in 2021 and 2022).

Poll methodology

We commissioned Censuswide* to carry out a poll of 1,000 young people aged 16 and 17 years old and living in England and attend or attended school. In total, 1002 young people completed the survey. The fieldwork took place between 2 December 2022 and 13 December 2022.

Of the 1002 young people participating:

- 517 identified as female, 454 identified as male, and 23 identified as non-binary
- 590 identified as White, 182 as Asian, 98 as Black, 67 as Mixed Descent and 16 as Arab (these figures provide a summary of the more detailed ethnicity categories used)
- 780 identified as straight, 150 identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual, queer or questioning, and 20 identified as asexual or aromantic.
- 278 were eligible for free school meals.

The respondents were drawn from all nine regions of England with a mix of urban, small town and rural representation.

We consulted young people about the design of the poll and responded by introducing a new set of 'agree / disagree' style questions about the status of RSE at their school, and the level of involvement of students.

An open question was included to ask young people what one thing they would change (if anything) about their RSE at school. This generated hundreds of open text comments, a selection of which are published in this report.

A Poll of
1002
young people



Fieldwork took place between
02.12.2022
13.12.2022



Aged
16 & 17 yrs
in England

*Censuswide abide by and employ members of the Market Research Society which is based on the ESOMAR principles.

Summary of the main findings

The Relationships and Sex Education experienced by the young people sampled in December 2022 is inconsistent in quality, but shows some improvement in comparison with 2021.

Forty percent of respondents rate the quality of their school RSE as 'good' or 'very good' – up 5 percentage points on the ratings from the 2021 poll, but down 1 percentage point on the rating from the 2019 poll. Eighteen percent of respondents rate the quality of their school RSE as 'bad' or 'very bad' – down four percentage points on the ratings from the 2021 poll.

There are wide variations between the quality of RSE reported by respondents identifying as male and those identifying as female and between those identifying as LGBTQ+ and those identifying as straight. Boys are more likely to rate their RSE as 'good' or 'very good' (48%) compared to girls (34%). Forty-three percent of respondents identifying as straight rated their RSE as 'good' or 'very good', compared with 31% of those identifying as LGBTQ+.

When asked about the status and organisation of RSE at their school, young people were divided in their opinions about the time dedicated to RSE, with 37% agreeing that 'enough time was dedicated to RSE in my school' and 38% disagreeing. The inconsistency in allocation of time for RSE lessons is really brought home by the open text comments, which include examples where RSE was taught through 'two standalone lessons' or 'one day'.

In a vote of confidence for their teachers, 51% agreed that that RSE was taught by people with enough knowledge and confidence, with 21% disagreeing. Many of the suggestions for how RSE can be improved called for dedicated teachers for RSE. Put simply: 'Only make teachers who want to do it do it', and 'have a set teacher for the lesson'.

Questions about the format of RSE experienced by young people over the last year show an encouraging increase in RSE received by students in 2022 compared to 2021 as well as a greater range of formats. 'Working in pairs' and 'working in small groups' jump up by 13 percentage points between the 2022 and 2021 polls.

This year we asked young people about the ways of providing RSE that they would have liked more of. The three most requested formats are 'open discussions', 'exploring scenarios or real-life examples' and 'considering different points of view'. There is a thirst, evident in the quantitative data and open text comments, for more open classroom discussion, but crucially with teachers feeling comfortable enough to offer this style of learning, whilst keeping their own opinions separate.

When asked about which topics were covered in RSE the trends persist from previous polls, showing greatest neglect of topics such as pornography, power imbalances in relationships and sexual pleasure. Perhaps this is because these topics require most specialist skill to teach with confidence.

At the same time, it cannot be ignored that basic, mandatory aspects of RSE, that might be taught in a more fact-based style are frequently missed from the curriculum.

- **58% of respondents learnt not enough or nothing about pornography**
- **56% learnt not enough or nothing about 'how to access local sexual health services'**
- **54% learnt not enough or nothing about 'how to tell if a relationship is healthy (including online)'**
- **54% learnt not enough or nothing about 'sexual orientation including information relevant to people who are LGBTQ+'**

In this year's poll we sought to find out more about how common it is for schools to consult students about their RSE. Thirty-two percent of respondents agreed with the statement 'my school asked me for my opinions about RSE' and 42% disagreed.

Young people also observe a gap in communication between school and their parents about RSE, with 42% disagreeing that 'My school gave my parents / carers enough information about what we were learning in Relationships and Sex Education lessons'.

What is needed now?

RSE has been statutory for nearly three years, but our monitoring finds insufficient progress in implementation of the legislation and achieving good quality RSE for all. Young people point to the variability of teacher competence with RSE, and to insufficient time allocated to the subject as barriers to progress. Young people are experts in pinpointing the gaps, and they are clear about the solutions too.

The Government review of the RSHE guidance presents an opportunity to turn things around. In the next iteration of guidance, Government must provide a much stronger steer on the necessity of proper timetabling of RSE. They must dedicate ring-fenced budget to train teachers, on a par with other curriculum subjects, and provide a long-term plan to support and sustain the professionalisation of RSE teaching.

Young people have spoken powerfully about their experiences of RSE, and why it matters to get this right. We call on Government to listen, and to evaluate the successes and weaknesses of the implementation of their legislation by asking young people themselves.

Making it a requirement for schools to seek feedback from young people would help drive change. The data gathered from national and school level consultation would create the sort of open, honest discussion and the impetus for change that young people crave for their RSE.

It is high time for accountability and fulfilling the widely supported promise enshrined in legislation.

Lucy Emmerson

**Chief Executive,
Sex Education Forum**

2 March 2023



Part 1: Rate your RSE at school

Question 1: How would you rate the quality of the relationships and sex education you received at school as a whole?

Table 1: Data from Question 1 and comparative data from Sex Education Forum's 2021 and 2019 Polls.

Rating given for RSE	2022 Poll	Boys	Girls	Non-binary	Lesbian, gay or Bisexual	Straight	Asexual/ aromantic	2021 Poll	2019 Poll
Number of respondents	1002	454	517	23	150	780	20	1002	1000
Good or very good	40.42%	48.46%	33.85%	34.78%	30.67%	42.95%	45.00%	35.33%	41.10%
Very good	11.18%	15.64%	7.16%	13.04%	12.00%	10.77%	15.00%	10.48%	11.30%
Good	29.24%	32.82%	26.69%	21.74%	18.67%	32.18%	30.00%	24.85%	29.80%
OK	41.82%	37.89%	45.45%	39.13%	40.67%	41.28%	35.00%	42.11%	41.80%
Bad	12.38%	9.03%	14.70%	26.09%	20.00%	11.03%	15.00%	16.47%	13.20%
Very bad	5.39%	4.63%	6.00%	0.00%	8.67%	4.74%	5.00%	5.09%	3.90%
Very bad or bad	17.76%	13.66%	20.70%	26.09%	28.67%	15.77%	20.00%	21.56%	17.10%

Summary

- 40% of respondents rate the quality of their school RSE as 'good' or 'very good' – up 5 percentage points on the ratings from the 2021 Poll, but **down 1 percentage point on the rating from the 2019 Poll.**
- 18% of respondents rate the quality of their school RSE as 'bad' or 'very bad' – **down four percentage points** on the ratings from the 2021 Poll.
- 48% of boys rated their RSE as 'good' or 'very good' compared with 34% of girls, which shows a similar divide to that found in 2021.
- 43% of respondents identifying as straight rated their RSE as 'good' or 'very good', compared with 31% of those identifying as LGBTQ+
- 29% of respondents identifying as LGBTQ+ rated their RSE as 'bad' or 'very bad'

The number of respondents identifying as non-binary (23) and aromantic/asexual (20) provide too small a sample size to give robust comment on this data. Those young people eligible for free school meals were a little more likely to be satisfied with their RSE, with 43% rating RSE at school overall as good or very good. (This data is not shown in the table.)

The numbers of respondents identifying in the ethnicity categories were small which means that sample sizes were not robust. The ethnicity groups that had more than 50 people and can therefore be commented on were White British (38%), White any other background (37%), Asian Pakistani (47%) and Black African (35%). The overall rating for RSE as 'good' or 'very good' in these groups is shown in the brackets. (This data is not shown in the table.)

40%
of respondents
rate the quality
of their school
RSE as 'good'
or 'very good'

18%
of respondents
rate the quality
of their school
RSE as 'bad'
or 'very bad'

Part 2: Young people’s opinions about the status and organisation of RSE

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

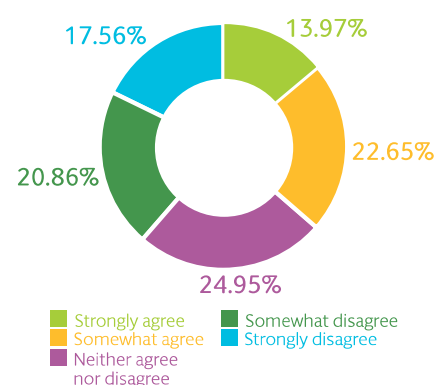
Table 2. Data from question 2

	Enough time was dedicated to RSE in my school	Relationships and Sex Education was taught by people with enough knowledge and confidence	Relationships and Sex Education lessons were taken seriously by the school	Relationships and Sex Education was taught by people who enjoyed teaching it	My school gave my parents / carers enough information about what we were learning in Relationships and Sex Education lessons
Agree (net)	36.63%	51.20%	50.80%	31.54%	32.53%
Strongly agree)	13.97%	19.66%	20.66%	12.28%	12.38%
Somewhat agree	22.65%	31.54%	30.14%	19.26%	20.16%
Neither agree nor disagree	24.95%	28.24%	24.75%	37.52%	25.15%
Somewhat disagree	20.86%	13.47%	14.87%	16.97%	18.46%
Strongly disagree	17.56%	7.09%	9.58%	13.97%	23.85%
Disagree (net)	38.42%	20.56%	24.45%	30.94%	42.32%

Summary

- Respondents were split in their opinions about time dedicated to RSE, with **37%** agreeing that ‘enough time was dedicated to RSE in my school’ and **38%** disagreeing.
- Just over half (**51%**) of respondents agreed that ‘RSE lessons were taken seriously by the school’ and **24%** disagreeing.
- Just over half (**51%**) of respondents agreed that RSE was taught by people with enough knowledge and confidence, with **21%** disagreeing.
- Around **3 in 10 (32%)** of respondents agreed that RSE was taught by people who enjoyed teaching it, and a similar proportion (**31%**) disagreed.
- Respondents were more likely to disagree (**42%**) than to agree (**33%**) with the statement ‘My school gave my parents / carers enough information about what we were learning in Relationships and Sex Education lessons’.

Enough time was dedicated to RSE in my school



“ Spend more time on it, as I believe it’s very important and needs to be taught in more detail.”

Give RSE enough time

The quotes displayed are answers to the question:

“If you could change one thing about Relationships and Sex Education at your school, what would you change, if anything?”

“Do more in year 11 (16) as that is the time they are most likely to have sex.”

“Having more time on the topic and cover more topics within the subject.”

“Have it be taught over a length of time rather than two standalone lessons.”

“Make it an actual lesson not just pick one day out of the whole year to teach it.”

“Discussions should be frequent, not just something we speak about once and then push to the side.”

“Make it, its own lesson.”

“Spend more time on it, as I believe it’s very important and needs to be taught in more detail.”

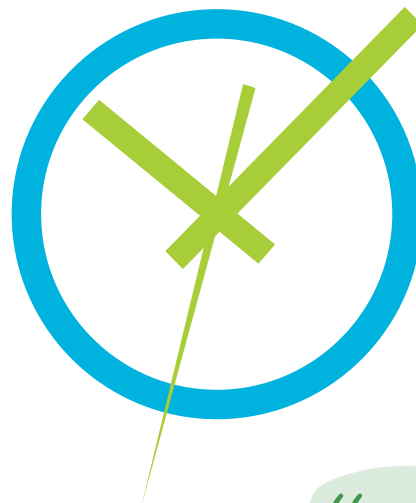
“Actually taking time out to teach all of the norms and not normal things to feel and do.”

“Learning about it over a longer period of time, with information becoming more relevant the older you get, as you progress through school years.”

“Have more in-depth discussions and more time allocated to sex education to help me and my peers better understand sexual health.”

“I think by the time my school did anything, for some people it was already too late.”

“Spend more time discussing as a class.”



Improve knowledge and skill to teach RSE

The quotes displayed are answers to the question:

“If you could change one thing about Relationships and Sex Education at your school, what would you change, if anything?”

“To be more specific and truthful. I feel like in my experience most teachers weren’t specific enough and felt uncomfortable. Which I understand but if you are doing the job do it correctly.”

“Take it more seriously and have a set teacher for the lesson.”

“Having teachers who care and have the knowledge to do so, teach it.”

“I would change the attitudes of the teachers while teaching it. As expected, many students found the topic funny and awkward, however I feel teachers have a duty not to feed into this and present the topic in a mature manner, and encourage students to view it seriously and with open minds.”

“To have had a more open and inclusive perspective that wasn’t influenced by the teachers opinions.”

“Only make teachers who want to do it do it.”

“Having teachers that are specialised on the topic and the biology behind it.”

“Comfortable teachers teaching this topic.”



Part 3: Young people's opinions about their involvement in RSE

Table 3: Data from Question 2 continued

	Relationships and Sex Education lessons felt relevant to me	Things I learned in my Relationships and Sex Education lessons have helped me	My school asked me for my opinions about Relationships and Sex Education	My school asked students for their opinions about Relationships and Sex Education and acted on them
Agree (net)	41.52%	44.21%	31.64%	30.94%
Strongly agree)	14.37%	14.37%	9.28%	10.38%
Somewhat agree	27.15%	29.84%	22.36%	20.56%
Neither agree nor disagree	32.93%	28.34%	26.15%	29.54%
Somewhat disagree	14.77%	15.37%	19.26%	19.96%
Strongly disagree	10.78%	12.08%	22.95%	19.56%
Disagree (net)	25.55%	27.45%	42.22%	39.52%

Summary

- Respondents were more likely to agree (**42%**) than to disagree (**26%**) with the statement 'RSE lessons felt relevant to me'.
- Respondents were more likely to agree (**44%**) than to disagree (**27%**) with the statement 'Things I learned in my RSE lessons have helped me'.
- **32%** of young people agreed with the statement 'my school asked me for my opinions about RSE' and are higher percentage (**42%**) disagreed with the statement.
- **31%** of respondents agreed that 'my school asked students for their opinions about RSE and acted on them' and a higher percentage (**40%**) disagreed with the statement.

Further analysis of the data in question 2 by gender, shows that there is a gap between male and female respondents in 'satisfaction' levels with RSE. Across all the data in question 2, females are more likely than males to disagree with the nine statements presented. For example, 51% of respondents identifying as female disagreed with the statement 'My school asked me for my opinions about Relationships and Sex Education' compared with 31% of respondents identifying as male.

Data from question 1 showed that respondents identifying as LGBTQ+ rated their RSE less favourably than respondents identifying as straight. This pattern is repeated in question 2, with 67% of LGBTQ+ respondents disagreeing that 'My school asked me for my opinions about Relationships and Sex Education' compared with 38% of respondents identifying as straight.

42%
of respondents
felt 'lessons were
relevant to me'

32%
of respondents
felt 'My school
asked me
for my opinions
about RSE'

Trust us

The quotes displayed are answers to the question:

“If you could change one thing about Relationships and Sex Education at your school, what would you change, if anything?”

“Being more open about the conversations and trusting the students to stay sensible to talk about things that need to be talked about.”

“There should be more opportunity for feedback and then (the hard part) actually respond accordingly the consensus.”

“Make it less condescending. I believe that my classmates and I were being told the information as if we were ignorant to the world.”

“More learning on current events with things to do with the extended LGBTQ community as well as info on trans people and or gender identity.”

“Letting students ask and answer questions and give their input, not about stuff they’ve learnt but things they want to know and being corrected or having open discussions.”

“Teachers need to be more respectful to students and see them as mature young people.”

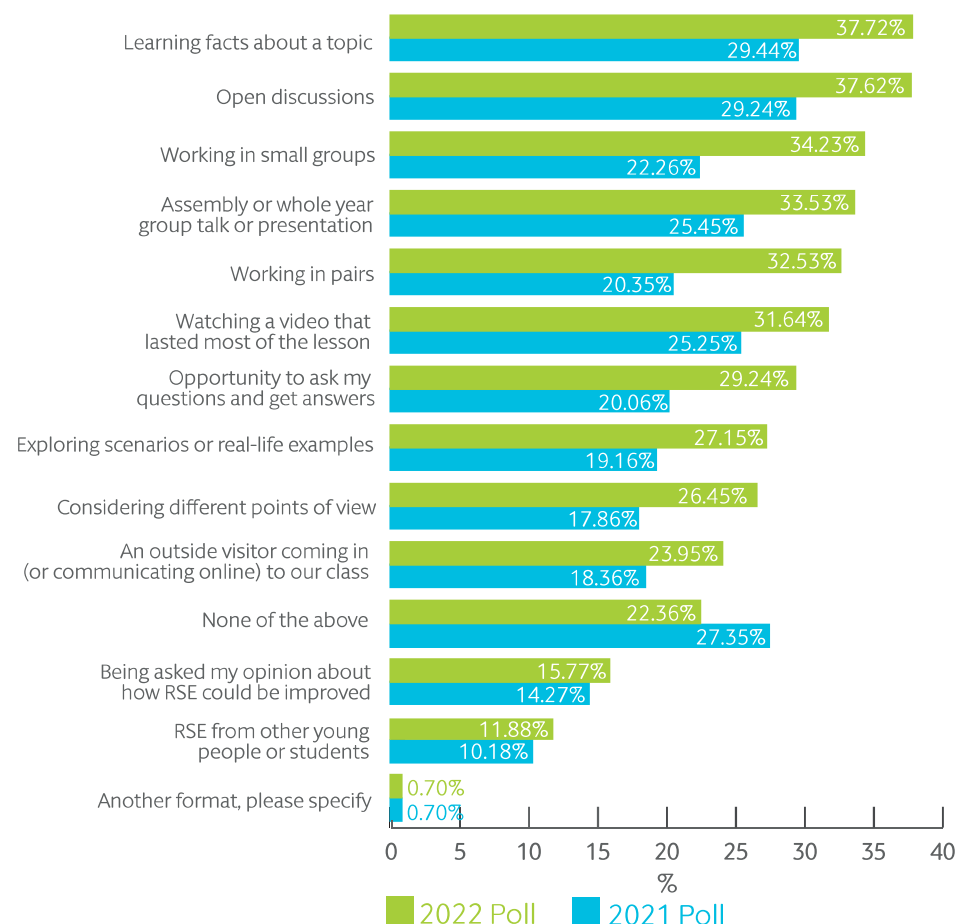
“Allow lessons where questions are asked and answered and to gather student perspectives.”



Part 4: The format of RSE at school

Question 3: At school, over the last school year, have you received RSE in any of the following formats? (Tick all that apply)

Table 4: Data from Question 3, with comparative data from 2021



‘Learning facts about a topic’ is the most usual format for RSE over the last school year, closely followed by



“ I would make it more interactive and modern instead of watching animated videos.”

Summary

- Respondents give **higher percentages** for all formats in the 2022 Poll compared to the 2021 Poll, potentially indicating an increase in RSE received by students in 2022 compared to 2021 as well as greater range of formats experienced.
- ‘Working in pairs’ and ‘working in small groups’ jump up by **13 percentage** points and **12 percentage** points respectively, from the 2021 data to the 2022 Poll.
- Just below three in ten (**29%**) respondents have experienced ‘opportunity to ask my questions and get answers’ in RSE in the past year compared to one in five (**20%**) in 2021.
- The most common formats for RSE received in the past year are **‘learning facts about a topic’** and **‘open discussions’**. These two formats were also the most common in the 2021 Poll.
- The least common formats are ‘RSE from other young people or students’ (**12%** of respondents had experienced this in the past year) and ‘being asked my opinion about how RSE could be improved’ (**16%**) of respondents had experienced this in the past year.

The findings suggest that more RSE was provided in total in the last 12 months than in the year before that, possibly due to Covid-19 disruption.

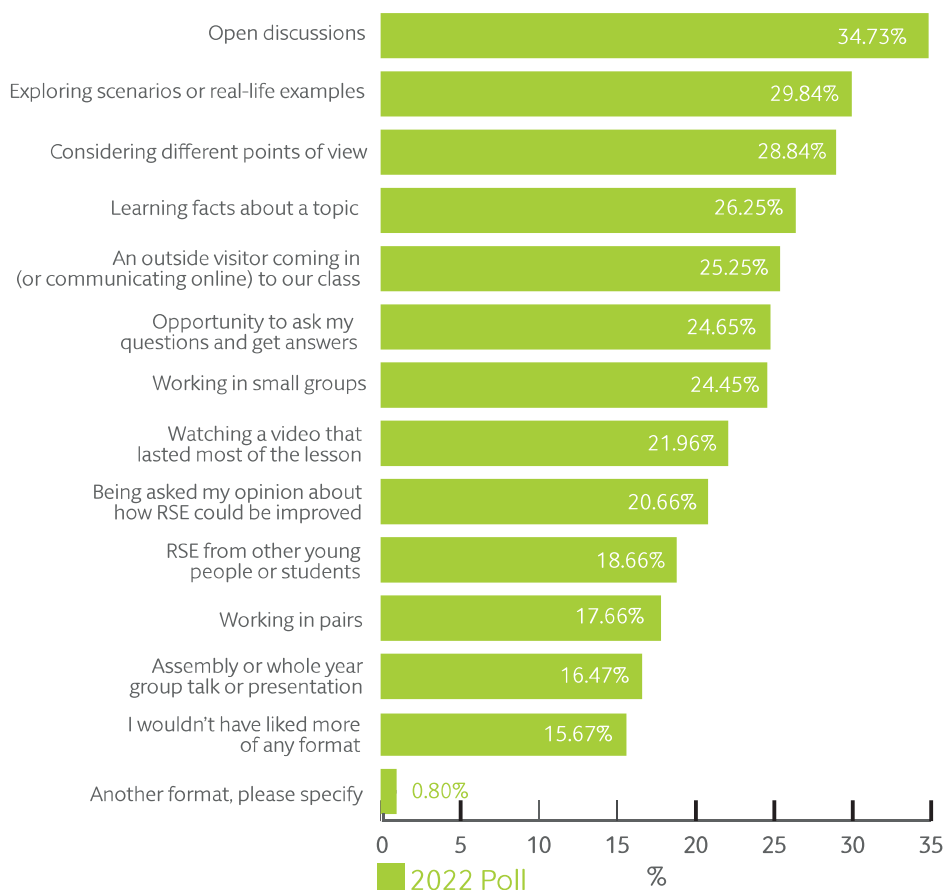
29% of respondents have had **‘opportunity to ask my questions and get answers’**

in RSE in the past year, compared to one in five (**20%**) in 2021.

Formats that young people would have liked more of

Question 4: Which of those ways of providing Relationships and Sex Education would you have liked more of? (Tick all that apply)

Table 5: Data from Question 4



35% of young people would have liked more open discussions.



“ I would change it so it was discussion based with the opportunity to ask anonymous questions. ”

Summary

The 2022 poll asked for the first time which of the ways of providing RSE young people would have liked more of.

- The **three most requested formats** are ‘open discussions’, ‘exploring scenarios or real-life examples’ and ‘considering different points of view’.
- Over a third of young people (**35%**) would have liked more open discussion.
- One in four (**25%**) of respondents would have liked more ‘opportunity to ask my questions and get answers’.
- One in four (**25%**) would have liked more ‘outside visitors’ contributing to RSE
- At least one in five (**21%**) respondents would have liked to see more of ‘Being asked my opinion about how RSE could be improved’.
- ‘Assembly or whole year group talk or presentation’ was the format **least selected** to want more of.

Other formats suggested by respondents were ‘Anonymous question-asking to reduce embarrassment’ and ‘Getting to know the people more so i can connect with them making a change in the way they understand the subject’.

‘Assembly or whole year group talk or presentation’ was the format **least selected** to want more of.

Part 5: What topics were covered at school? What was missed?

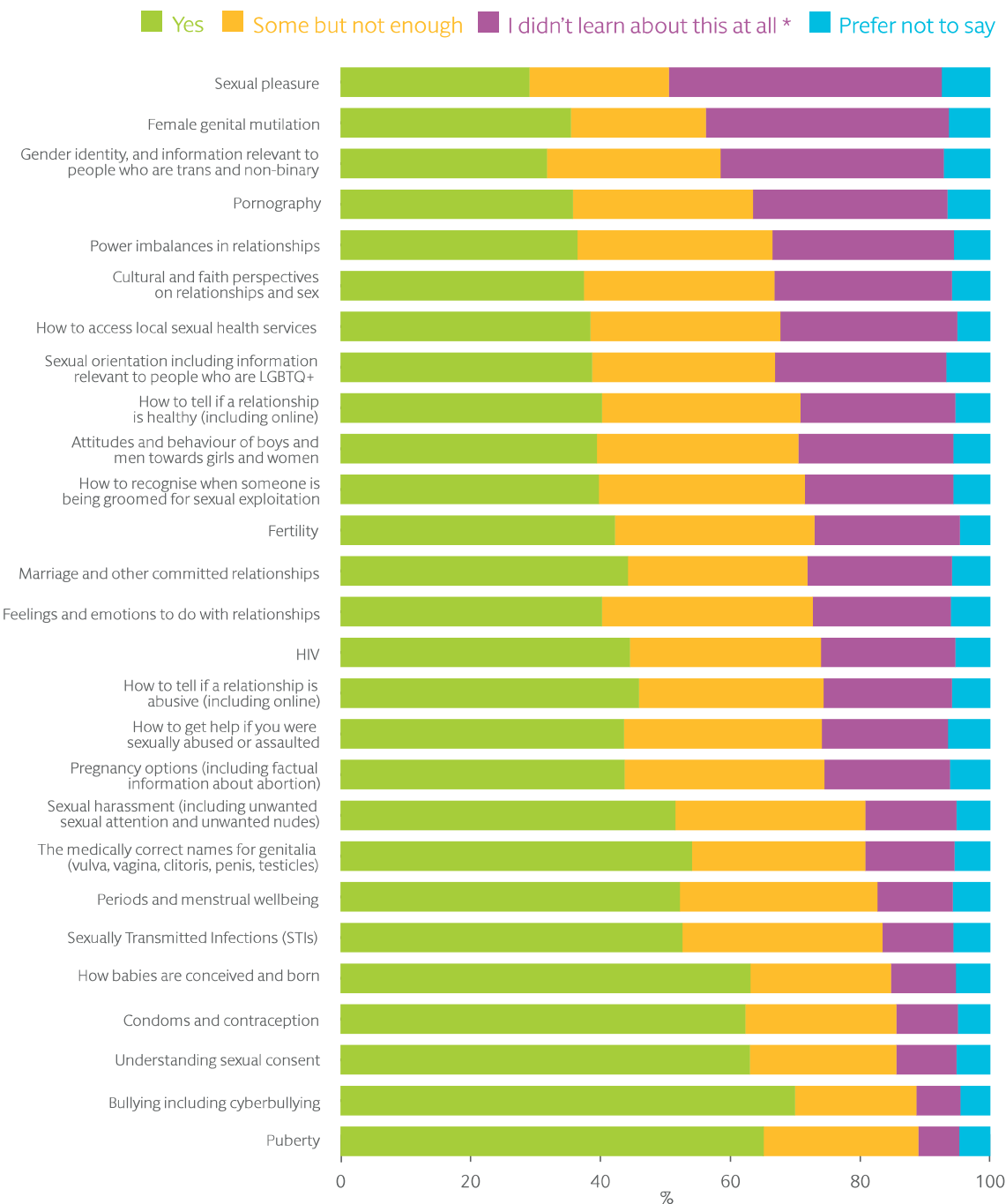
For question 5, respondents were asked about 27 different topic areas.

Question 5: At school, did you learn everything you feel you needed to about the following:

The response choices were 'yes', 'some but not enough', and 'I didn't learn about this at all'.
The option to tick 'prefer not to say' was also available.

Chart 1: Data from question 5*

*The topics are listed in rank order, with the topic that respondents identified as having learnt least about at the top of the list.



Summary

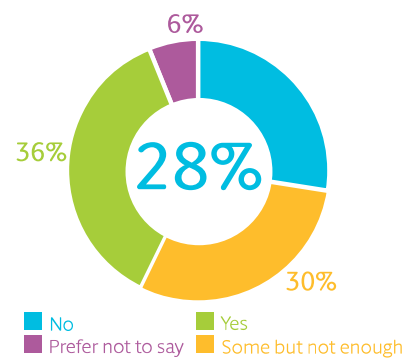
The gaps in RSE topic coverage

- 42% of respondents learnt nothing at all about **sexual pleasure** at school
- 30% of respondents learnt nothing at all about **pornography**, and a further 28% learnt 'some, but not enough' about the topic
- 28% of respondents learnt nothing at all about **power imbalances in relationships**, and a further 30% learnt 'some, but not enough' about the topic
- 26% learnt nothing at all about **sexual orientation**, and 34% learnt nothing at all about gender identity
- 24% learnt nothing at all about **'how to tell if a relationship is healthy'** (including online) and a further 31% learnt 'some, but not enough'
- 27% learnt nothing at all about **'how to access local sexual health services'** and just over one in five (21%) learnt nothing about HIV
- 27% learnt nothing about **cultural and faith perspectives** on relationships and sex, and a further 29% learnt 'some, but not enough' on the topic.
- 14% learnt nothing at all about the **medically correct names for genitalia** (vulva, vagina, clitoris, penis, testicles)

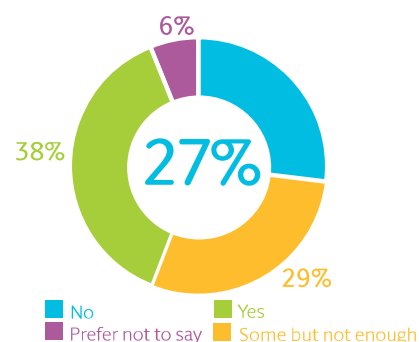
The topics most fully covered

- 52% learnt all they needed to about **sexual harassment**
- 63% learnt all they needed to about **'understanding sexual consent'**
- 63% learnt all they needed to about **'how babies are conceived and born'**
- 65% learnt all they needed to about **puberty**
- 70% learnt all they needed to about **bullying** including **cyberbullying**

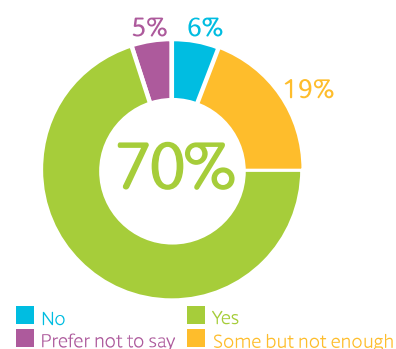
There has been increased coverage reported in 2022 compared to 2021 of some of the most neglected topics, for example 37% of respondents learnt nothing at all about 'power imbalances in relationships' in 2021 reducing to 28% in 2022. Conversely, some of the more established topics are reported to be more neglected in 2022, for example 21% of respondents learnt nothing at all about HIV in 2022 compared with 18% in 2021.



respondents learnt *nothing at all* about **power imbalances in relationships**



learnt *nothing* about **cultural and faith perspectives on relationships and sex**



learnt *all* they needed to about **bullying including cyberbullying**

What needs to be covered

The quotes displayed are answers to the question:

“If you could change one thing about Relationships and Sex Education at your school, what would you change, if anything?”

“The dominant perspective which is taught is that **sex and relationships** are a bad thing, when they can be beautiful if done right.”

“A wider range of what we learn, especially since the world is changing and there is more to know. e.g. **LGBTQIA+**, new contraceptions, being safe at night, clubbing etc.”

“That **boys and girls are equal.**”

“Most children are left to fill in the gaps which is why there is the huge **pornography** problem in young adults which will never teach young men or women how to view their partner in a respectful way.”

“Please ‘omg’ teach us about something other than cis straight sex for only creating a baby and acting like the gay people in front of you don’t exist.”

“I would want to learn more about sex and **how it should feel**, how it would be the first time, and how to properly do it.”

“More updated so talk about **online relationships** and sexting rather than old fashioned ways.”

“Teachers need to be more **respectful** to students and see them as mature young people.”

“Better understanding of our bodies and what makes **healthy relationships**, romantic and platonic. As well as an inclusion of different body types and religion factors.”

“There’s a lot of repetition in lessons so a broader range of subjects would be better like different cultural perspectives on marriage and sex and the **laws** surrounding marriage and that concerning the **LGBTQ+ community** and even the legality of some of these genders in different countries e.g. Russia banning homosexuality etc.”

“Cover misogyny, and subtle **power differences** that men take advantage of.”

“Be more **open to explaining sexual relationships** and the feelings that are allowed like **confusion** if people aren’t ready for sex.”

Appendix 1

Table 6 below shows percentages for each of the 27 topics referenced on page 15.

Question 5: At school, did you learn everything you feel you needed to about the following?

Table 6: Data from question 5.

Topic	Yes (I learnt all I needed to about this)	Some but not enough	I didn't learn about this at all	Prefer not to say	I didn't learn about this at all - 2021 Poll
Sexual pleasure	29.04%	21.46%	42.02%	7.49%	46.21%
FGM	35.43%	20.76%	37.43%	6.39%	40.42%
Gender identity, and information relevant to people who are trans and non-binary	31.74%	26.75%	34.33%	7.19%	38.62%
Pornography	35.73%	27.74%	29.94%	6.59%	36.23%
Power imbalances in relationships	36.43%	30.04%	27.94%	5.59%	37.23%
Cultural and faith perspectives on relationships and sex	37.43%	29.34%	27.35%	5.89%	31.14%
How to access local sexual health services	38.42%	29.24%	27.25%	5.09%	33.33%
Sexual orientation including information relevant to people who are LGBTQ+	38.72%	28.14%	26.35%	6.79%	28.04%
How to tell if a relationship is healthy (including online)	40.22%	30.54%	23.85%	5.39%	27.64%
Attitudes and behaviour of boys and men towards girls and women	39.42%	31.04%	23.85%	5.69%	26.45%
How to recognise when someone is being groomed for sexual exploitation	39.72%	31.74%	22.85%	5.69%	28.94%
Fertility	42.22%	30.74%	22.36%	4.69%	22.36%
Marriage and other committed relationships	44.21%	27.64%	22.26%	5.89%	22.46%
Feelings and emotions to do with relationships	40.22%	32.44%	21.26%	6.09%	24.55%
HIV	44.51%	29.44%	20.66%	5.39%	18.66%
How to tell if a relationship is abusive (including online)	45.91%	28.44%	19.76%	5.89%	26.45%
How to get help if you were sexually abused or assaulted	43.61%	30.44%	19.46%	6.49%	26.85%
Pregnancy options (including factual information about abortion)	43.71%	30.74%	19.36%	6.19%	24.25%
Sexual harassment (including unwanted sexual attention and unwanted nudes)	51.50%	29.24%	14.07%	5.19%	16.27%
The medically correct names for genitalia (vulva, vagina, clitoris, penis, testicles)	54.09%	26.65%	13.77%	5.49%	11.18%
Periods and menstrual wellbeing	52.20%	30.44%	11.58%	5.79%	23.55%
Sexually transmitted infections	52.59%	30.84%	10.88%	5.69%	12.77%
How babies are conceived and born	63.07%	21.66%	9.98%	5.29%	6.78%
Condoms and contraception	62.28%	23.25%	9.48%	4.99%	8.78%
Understanding sexual consent	62.97%	22.55%	9.28%	5.19%	9.48%
Bullying including cyberbullying	69.96%	18.66%	6.79%	4.59%	5.79%
Puberty	64.97%	23.95%	6.29%	4.79%	6.19%

About Us

The Sex Education Forum is the voice of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in England. As a national charity, we promote and protect the physical and mental health of children and young people by improving their access to RSE. We do this by:

- Bringing together our 80+ partners and wider stakeholders to share best practice and research and monitor the provision of RSE in England.
- Working alongside policy makers and engaging with Parliamentarians to raise the profile of RSE and ensure effective delivery.
- Supporting educators with high quality training, resources and a membership scheme, so they can be competent and confident providers of RSE, in partnership with parents, carers, children and young people.
- Gathering and utilising the international evidence for effective RSE to inform policy and practice and advance understanding of the benefits of RSE.

Working together is central to everything we do. Partners of the Sex Education are organisations or individuals with a strategic interest or specialist expertise in RSE and are in agreement with our shared values and principles for evidence-based RSE.

We believe that RSE should be relevant and meet the needs of children and young people, and actively involve them as participants, advocates and evaluators in developing good quality provision. We are particularly concerned to address the needs of children and young people most at risk of missing out on RSE and of poor sexual health and relationships outcomes. Comprehensive and inclusive RSE provides scope to explore and address numerous equity and diversity issues. Sex Education Forum has consulted with young people frequently throughout our 36-year history.

To find out more and join our RSE community visit:
www.sexeducationforum.org.uk

