**Briefing paper: Analysis of LGBTQ+ children's responses to the *Our Europe, Our Rights, Our Future* Survey**
Prepared by: ILGA-Europe and IGLYO, November 2022

## Introduction
LGBTIQ children and youth face often outsized issues compared with their non-LGBTIQ peers, particularly at home and in school. There has, however, been limited research into the experiences of LGBTIQ children specifically covering a wide geographic scale, and it has not generally been possible to disaggregate these children within larger surveys. The *Our Europe, Our Rights, Our Future*[1], conducted by UNICEF, ChildFund Alliance, Eurochild, Save the Children, and World Vision, targeted input from children ages 11 to 17 around the world, and included demographic questions that allow for disaggregating LGBTQ+ children and children who identify outside of the gender binary. As a result, it is possible to compare these children to the general set of respondents - a unique opportunity for large-scale comparison data on LGBTQ+ children.

## Method
This briefing built on the analysis presented by UNICEF et al. in their report *Our Europe, Our Rights, Our Future*, creating sub-populations for those who self-identify as LGBTQ[2] and those whose gender identity is outside of the binary (henceforth, referred to as non-binary)[3] and comparing these with the general population of respondents. Descriptive statistics were run for these three groups, and analysis was then performed using Pearson chi-square analyses to assess differences between the sub-populations and the general population of respondents. While the survey collected responses globally, this methodology focuses only on the European Union; responses from other regions, which were much less thorough in their global coverage, given the EU focus of the survey and language limitations, were dropped from this analysis.

## Results
Statistically significant differences were found across many questions for both the LGBTQ+ and non-binary sub-populations, compared to the general respondent population. Out of the 9,309 EU respondents who answered the question about their background, 1072 self-identified as LGBTQ+ (12%) and 218 selected "neither" to the question about their gender (2%); 53% of the non-binary respondents also marked that they were LGBTQ+.

### COVID-19
LGBTQ+ children and those who identified as neither a boy or a girl experienced more issues at home during the COVID-19 pandemic than their peers (Figure 1). Both the LGBTQ+ and non-binary groups were more likely to have conflicts with their parents, caregivers, family members during the pandemic, with 41% of the LGBTQ+

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[1] UNICEF, 'Our Europe, Our Rights, Our Future: Children's and young people's contribution to the new EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the Child Guarantee', 2021. Available from: https://www.unicef.org/eu/reports/report-our-europe-our-rights-our-future

[2] We use LGBTQ+ to refer to respondents who answered "LGBTQ" to the question "Which of the following groups/communities, if any, do you feel you belong to?". We cannot use the acronym LGBTQI, because the questionnaire did not include intersex within the acronym and did not ask any other question about people's sex characteristics.

[3] We use *non-binary* as a shorthand to refer to respondents who answered "neither" to the question "Which one of the following describes you best? Boy/Girl/Neither/I don't want to say".

respondents and 34% of non-binary respondents selecting this option, compared to 19% of the general respondents. This aligns with community reports[4] of likely increased exposure for LGBTQ+ children to domestic violence during the pandemic due to lockdowns with unsupportive family members.

Furthermore, the LGBTQ+ and "neither a boy or a girl" groups also were more likely to cite having mental health problems themselves during the pandemic, with 53% of LGBTQ+ and 44% of non-binary respondents reporting this, compared to 21% of the general respondents.



Figure 1. Likelihood of conflict in the home during COVID-19, disaggregated
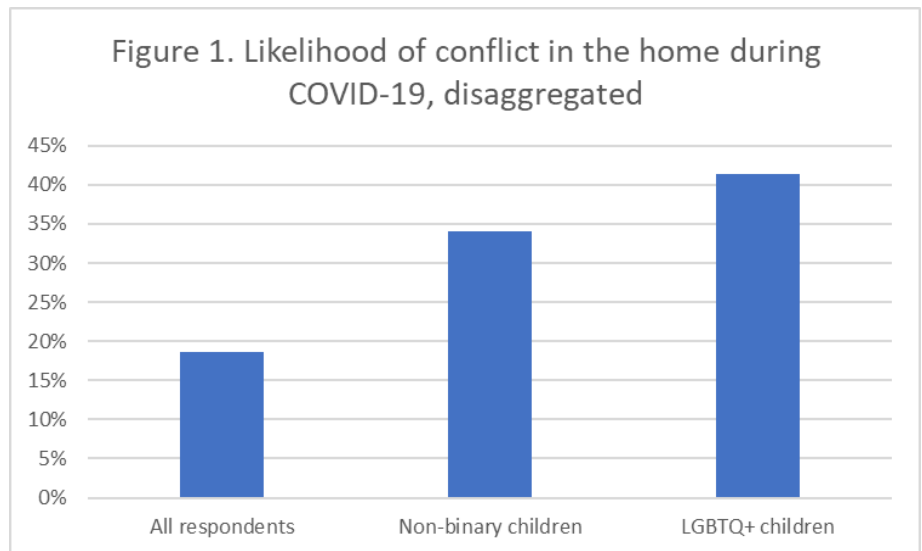
*Health*
Respondents were asked "Do you have access to the health services (including mental health services) you need?"[5] Children who did not identify as either a boy or a girl were less likely to indicate that they had access to all of the help they needed, with 42% selecting this option compared to 69% of the general respondents; for LGBTQ+ children, 44% indicated they had access to all of the help they needed. Similarly, 16% of non-binary children and 12% of LGBTQ+ children indicated they had only limited access to the help they needed, compared to 5% of the general respondent population.

Children were also asked about what was difficult for them in their lives right now (see section on Mental health for more discussion of this question). LGBTQ+ children and non-binary children were significantly more likely to indicate that they were experiencing problems with their health: while 11% of the general population selected this option, this number rose to 31% of non-binary children and 26% of LGBTQ+ children.

*Mental health*
Mental health discrepancies were particularly notable. Respondents were asked if they were ever sad or unhappy, and ranked this on a scale of never, rarely, about once a month, about once a week, or most of the time (Figure 2). While 20% of general respondents selected "most of the time", more than twice as many non-binary and LGBTQ+ children - 47% of non-binary children who identify and 48% of LGBTQ+ children - made this selection. Equally strikingly, while 37% of children overall reported



Figure 2. Frequency that respondents felt "sad or unhappy", selected responses

■ Most of the time ■ Never

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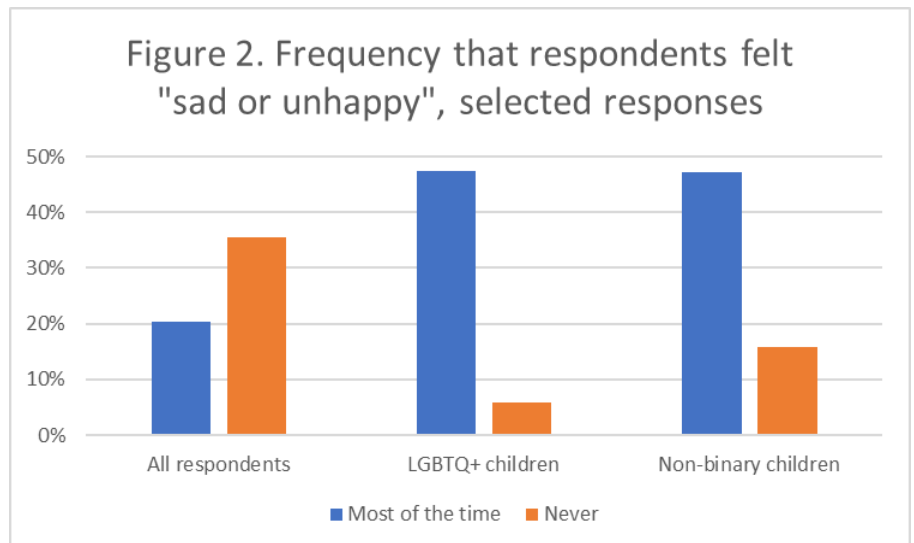
[4] The Trevor Project - Saving Young LGBTQ Lives, 'How COVID-19 is impacting LGBTQ Youth', 2020. Available from: https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Trevor-Poll_COVID19.pdf
[5] For this question, respondents could select one of "Yes I can access all the help I need", "I can access most of the help I need", "I only have limited access", "No services are available", or "Parents /caregivers cannot afford the services I need".

feeling never or rarely sad or unhappy, only 16% of non-binary children and a shocking 6% of LGBTQ+ children reported this.

Respondents were also asked about why they are unhappy and what they do when they feel that way. The differences between LGBTQ+ and non-binary children with the general population of children were stark. In terms of reasons, while 5% of children in general reported being bullied or cyberbullied as a reason,12% of LGBTQ+ children and 18% of non-binary children selected this option. Additionally, 41% of non-binary children and 41% of LGBTQ+ children reported "arguing with your parents/brothers or sisters" as a reason why they feel sad or unhappy, compared to 28% of the general respondents.

LGBTQ+ and non-binary children also dealt with their unhappiness in different ways - while 36% of the general population of children selected that they "have an adult to provide support (for example, a parent, teacher, counsellor or therapist)", only 24% of LGBTQ+ children and 21% of non-binary children have this option. Instead, LGBTQ+ children and non-binary children much more frequently seek help online, with 18% and 15% selecting this option, compared to 8% of children in general.



Figure 3. Reporting what is difficult in life right now, selected responses
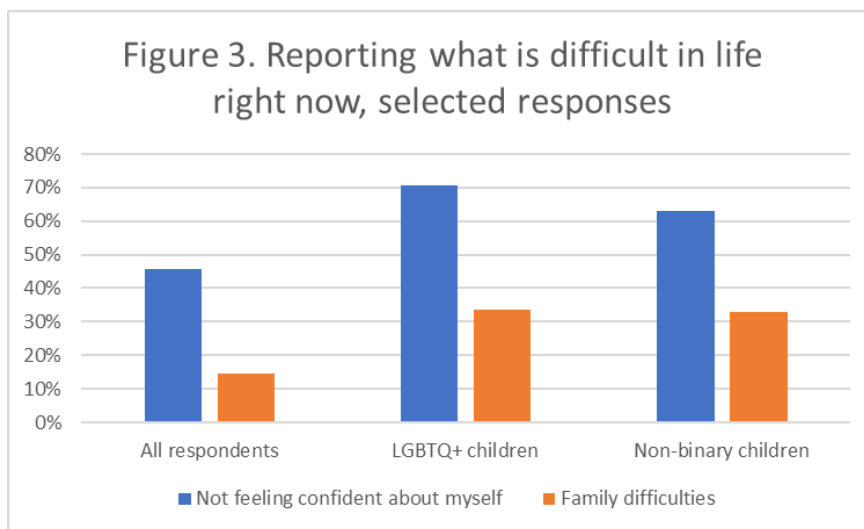
Finally, children were asked about what is difficult in their lives right now (Figure 3). 46% of children in general selected "Not feeling confident about myself" as a current difficulty; this same response came from 63% of non-binary children and 71% of LGBTQ+ children. Similarly, while 15% of the general population of children selected "Family difficulties (for example, parents arguing, anger and aggression, violence, alcohol)" as a current difficulty, 33% of non-binary children and 34% of LGBTQ+ children selected this option.

*School*
Children were asked several specific questions about school. The most notable for this analysis asked "What would you like to change about school, for example?" One of the response options was "to have a safe space"; 37% of LGBTQ+ children and 36% of non-binary childrenwhile only 17% of the general population selected this option.

*Decision-making*
The survey also focused on children's participation in decision-making that affects them. One question asked "When adults take decisions that affect you, do they ask for your opinion?" and respondents could provide input on parents, teachers, youth workers, doctors, local municipality or authority, national government, and the EU, marking each as always, sometimes, or never. LGBTQ+ children and non-binary children were significantly less likely to select "always" for their parents, with 36% of non-binary childrenand 41% of LGBTQ+ children selecting this compared to 52% of children overall.

*Online safety*
Children were asked "In the past year, how often has something happened online or on your phone that has upset or bothered you?" and given the option to answer never, just once or twice, at least every month, at least every week, or daily or almost daily. While 30.6% of the general respondents were never exposed to something

upsetting online during the previous year, this number shrunk dramatically to only 10% of LGBTQ+ children and 24% of non-binary children. Furthermore, while 13% of children overall reported something happening at least once a week or more, 28% of non-binary children and 27% of LGBTQ+ children reported this frequency.

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**The European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association (ILGA-Europe)** are an independent, international non-governmental umbrella organisation bringing together over 600 organisations from 54 countries in Europe and Central Asia. We are part of the wider international ILGA organisation, but ILGA-Europe were established as a separate region of ILGA and an independent legal entity in 1996. ILGA itself was created in 1978. www.ilga-europe.org
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**The International LGBTQI Youth & Student Organisation (IGLYO)** is a member-based youth and student network, with over 100 members in 40 Council of Europe countries. IGLYO's vision is a world where we, young people in all our diversity, are able to express and define our own sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and variations in sex characteristics, and are able to participate fully in all aspects of life, rise to our full potential, and enjoy respect and positive recognition. IGLYO strives to ensure the voices and experiences of LGBTQI young people are present and heard by decision-makers at European and international levels, by implementing and designing research and policy work in areas such as inclusive education. To create an influential collective of young activists, IGLYO also builds the confidence, skills and experience of LGBTQI youth through cross-cultural exchange and peer learning activities. https://iglyo.com
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