

# The 2015 National School Climate Survey

The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay,  
Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer  
Youth in Our Nation's Schools







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Youth in Our Nation's Schools**

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**GLSEN** is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. Established in 1990, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. GLSEN seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes to creating a more vibrant and diverse community. For more information on our educator resources, research, public policy agenda, student leadership programs, or development initiatives, visit [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org).

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Quotes throughout are from students' responses to open-ended questions in the survey.

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# PREFACE







This edition of GLSEN's National School Climate Survey is released at a time of tremendous uncertainty. The report you now hold documents continued progress in improving the lives of LGBTQ students across the United States, continued increases in the availability of LGBTQ-affirming supports, and further reductions in rates of harassment and assault faced by LGBTQ youth.

In short: It works. Sustained investment in increasing the presence of school-based interventions that promote inclusive and affirming learning environments, backed by official commitment to root out the institutional discrimination that compounds the challenges faced by at-risk youth, can shift the tide. All of us at GLSEN are proud of the decades of focused hard work — in good times and bad — that have made this possible. We are also grateful for the partnership of individual and institutional allies that are similarly committed to the well-being of all students, and to the bedrock principle of respect for all in our K–12 schools.

That being said, not all of the news is good. Overall rates of homophobic and transphobic harassment are still higher than anyone should be willing to accept. Institutional discrimination against LGBTQ people is widespread, with the majority of the students surveyed having faced such discrimination personally. Perhaps most troubling are the findings regarding adult behaviors in school. Reports of homophobic and transphobic remarks made by teachers increased in 2015, and reports of teacher intervention in response to anti-LGBTQ remarks were down. Furthermore, there has been a consistent decrease since 2011 in students' assessments of teacher effectiveness in dealing with reports of anti-LGBTQ incidents. Our work is far from done.

Moreover, at this time of transition in our nation's leadership, our challenge may well be greater than simply continuing to press to bring life-changing benefits to more schools across the United States. Today, we face the prospect of hostile official action at the federal level to abolish the governmental functions dedicated to advancing justice in K–12 education and to promote harmful and discredited practices, such as attempts to “cure” students of being LGBTQ. We are experiencing a deeply troubling wave of bias violence in schools nationwide in the wake of a divisive election, with no indication that the incoming administration is concerned about the trend.

At this unsettling moment, this report reminds us exactly what is possible, and what is at stake. As a network of educators, students, parents, and community leaders united on common ground, GLSEN has always managed to identify and seize opportunities for progress, even when confronting enormous opposition. We will mobilize around these findings to motivate all people of goodwill to act to defend LGBTQ youth from new attacks, to promote safe and healthy learning environments for all students, and advance the cause of equity and respect for all in our schools.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eliza Byard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Eliza" and last name "Byard" clearly distinguishable.

Eliza Byard, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
GLSEN

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## ***Acknowledgements***

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The authors first wish to thank the students who participated in our survey for continuing to enlighten us about their experiences in school.

We also wish to acknowledge the organizations that helped disseminate information about the survey, including LGBTQ youth services and programs that invited their constituents to participate in the survey as well as GLSEN's Chapter network. We are also extremely indebted to our Summer Research Fellow, Adrian Zongrone, for his invaluable support with data coding and analysis, formatting, editing, and proofreading. We are grateful to former GLSEN Research staff members Maddy Boesen and Neal Palmer for their work on the development of the survey, and to former Summer Research Fellow Juan Del Toro for his assistance in survey outreach. Finally, much gratitude goes to Eliza Byard, GLSEN's Executive Director, for her insights and her deep commitment to GLSEN Research.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





## ABOUT THE SURVEY

In our 2015 survey, we examine the experiences of LGBTQ students with regard to indicators of negative school climate:

- Hearing biased remarks, including homophobic remarks, in school;
- Feeling unsafe in school because of personal characteristics, such as sexual orientation, gender expression, or race/ethnicity;
- Missing classes or days of school because of safety reasons;
- Experiencing harassment and assault in school; and
- Experiencing discriminatory policies and practices at school.

We also examine:

- The possible negative effects of a hostile school climate on LGBTQ students' academic achievement, educational aspirations, and psychological well-being;
- Whether or not students report experiences of victimization to school officials or to family members and how these adults address the problem; and
- How the school experiences of LGBTQ students differ by personal and community characteristics.

In addition, we demonstrate the degree to which LGBTQ students have access to supportive resources in school, and we explore the possible benefits of these resources:

- Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) or similar clubs;
- School anti-bullying/harassment policies;
- Supportive school staff; and
- Curricular resources that are inclusive of LGBT-related topics.

Given that GLSEN has been conducting the survey for over a decade, we also examine changes over time on indicators of negative school climate and levels of access to LGBT-related resources in schools.

## METHODS

The 2015 National School Climate Survey was conducted online. To obtain a representative national sample of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth, we conducted outreach through national, regional, and local organizations that provide services to or advocate on behalf of LGBTQ youth, and advertised and promoted on social networking sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Tumblr. To ensure representation of transgender youth, youth of color, and youth in rural communities, we made special efforts to notify groups and organizations that work predominantly with these populations.

The final sample consisted of a total of 10,528 students between the ages of 13 and 21. Students were from all 50 states and the District of Columbia and from 3,095 unique school districts. About two-thirds of the sample (68.6%) was White, a third (34.9%) was cisgender female, and about half identified as gay or lesbian (49.2%). Students were in grades 6 to 12, with the largest numbers in grades 10 and 11.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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### ***Hostile School Climate***

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Schools nationwide are hostile environments for a distressing number of LGBTQ students, the overwhelming majority of whom routinely hear anti-LGBT language and experience victimization and discrimination at school. As a result, many LGBTQ students avoid school activities or miss school entirely.

#### **School Safety**

- 57.6% of LGBTQ students felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, and 43.3% because of their gender expression.
- 31.8% of LGBTQ students missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable, and a tenth (10.0%) missed four or more days in the past month.
- Over a third avoided gender-segregated spaces in school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (bathrooms: 39.4%; locker rooms: 37.9%).
- Most reported avoiding school functions and extracurricular activities (71.5% and 65.7%, respectively) because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.

#### **Harassment and Assault at School**

The vast majority of LGBTQ students (85.2%) experienced verbal harassment (e.g., called names or threatened) at school based on a personal characteristic, most commonly sexual orientation (70.8% of LGBTQ students) and gender expression (54.5%).

- 27.0% of LGBTQ students were physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved) in the past year because of their sexual orientation and 20.3% because of their gender expression.
- 13.0% of LGBTQ students were physically assaulted (e.g., punched, kicked, injured with a weapon) in the past year because of their sexual orientation and 9.4% because of their gender expression.
- 48.6% of LGBTQ students experienced electronic harassment in the past year (via text messages or postings on Facebook), often known as cyberbullying.
- 59.6% of LGBTQ students were sexually harassed (e.g., unwanted touching or sexual remarks) in the past year at school.
- 57.6% of LGBTQ students who were harassed or assaulted in school did not report the incident to school staff, most commonly because they doubted that effective intervention would occur or the situation could become worse if reported.
- 63.5% of the students who did report an incident said that school staff did nothing in response or told the student to ignore it.

#### **Anti-LGBT Remarks at School**

- Almost all of LGBTQ students (98.1%) students heard “gay” used in a negative way (e.g., “that’s so gay”) at school; 67.4% heard these remarks frequently or often, and 93.4% reported that they felt distressed because of this language.
- 95.8% of LGBTQ students heard other types of homophobic remarks (e.g., “dyke” or “faggot”); 58.8% heard this type of language frequently or often.



- 95.7% of LGBTQ students heard negative remarks about gender expression (not acting “masculine enough” or “feminine enough”); 62.9% heard these remarks frequently or often.
- 85.7% of LGBTQ students heard negative remarks specifically about transgender people, like “tranny” or “he/she;” 40.5% heard them frequently or often.
- 56.2% of students reported hearing homophobic remarks from their teachers or other school staff, and 63.5% of students reported hearing negative remarks about gender expression from teachers or other school staff.

### **Discriminatory School Policies and Practices**

- 8 in 10 LGBTQ students (81.6%) reported that their school engaged in LGBT-related discriminatory policies or practices, with two-thirds (66.2%) saying that they personally experienced this anti-LGBT discrimination. Almost three-fourths (74.0%) said other students had experienced these policies and practices at school.
- 29.8% of students reported being disciplined for public displays of affection that were not disciplined among non-LGBTQ students.
- 22.2% of students had been prevented from wearing clothes considered inappropriate based on their legal sex.
- 16.7% of students were prohibited from discussing or writing about LGBT topics in school assignments, and 16.3% were prohibited from doing so in school extracurricular activities.
- 15.6% of students were prevented from attending a dance or function with someone of the same gender.
- 14.1% of students were restricted from forming or promoting a GSA.
- 13.2% of students were prevented from wearing clothing or items supporting LGBT issues.
- 10.8% were prevented or discouraged from participating in school sports because they were LGBT.
- 3.5% of students reported being disciplined for simply identifying as LGBT.
- Some policies particularly targeted transgender students:
  - 50.9% of transgender students had been prevented from using their preferred name or pronoun (19.9% of LGBTQ students overall);
  - 60.0% of transgender students had been required to use a bathroom or locker room of their legal sex (22.6% of students overall); and
  - 71.2% of LGBTQ students reported that their schools engaged in some form of gendered practice in school activities.
    - 53.8% reported that their school had gender-specified honors at school activities, such as homecoming courts.
    - 36.3% reported that their school required gendered attire at school graduation, and 31.8% for school photographs.

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## ***Effects of a Hostile School Climate***

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A hostile school climate affects students' academic success and mental health. LGBTQ students who experience victimization and discrimination at school have worse educational outcomes and poorer psychological well-being.

### **Effects of Victimization**

- LGBTQ students who experienced higher levels of victimization because of their sexual orientation:
  - Were more than three times as likely to have missed school in the past month than those who experienced lower levels (62.2% vs. 20.1%);
  - Had lower grade point averages (GPAs) than students who were less often harassed (2.9 vs. 3.3);
  - Were twice as likely to report that they did not plan to pursue any post-secondary education (e.g., college or trade school) than those who experienced lower levels (10.0% vs. 5.2%);
  - Were more likely to have been disciplined at school (54.9% vs. 32.1%), and
  - Had lower self-esteem and school belonging and higher levels of depression.
- LGBTQ students who experienced higher levels of victimization because of their gender expression:
  - Were almost three times as likely to have missed school in the past month than those who experienced lower levels (59.6% vs. 20.8%);
  - Had lower GPAs than students who were less often harassed (2.9 vs. 3.3);
  - Were twice as likely to report that they did not plan to pursue any post-secondary education (e.g., college or trade school; 9.5% vs. 5.4%);
  - Were more likely to have been disciplined at school (52.1% vs. 32.7%), and
  - Had lower self-esteem and school belonging and higher levels of depression.
- 42.5% of LGBTQ students who reported that they did not plan to finish high school, or were not sure if they would finish, indicated that they were considering dropping out because of the harassment they faced at school.

### **Effects of Discrimination**

- LGBTQ students who experienced LGBT-related discrimination at school were:
  - More than three times as likely to have missed school in the past month as those who had not (44.3% vs. 12.3%);
  - Had lower GPAs than their peers (3.1 vs. 3.4);
  - Were more likely to have been disciplined at school (46.0% vs. 27.9%), and
  - Had lower self-esteem and school belonging and higher levels of depression.

- 32.0% of LGBTQ students who reported that they did not plan to finish high school, or were not sure if they would finish, indicated that they were considering dropping out because of the hostile climate created by gendered school policies and practices.

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## ***LGBT-Related School Resources and Supports***

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Students who feel safe and affirmed have better educational outcomes. LGBTQ students who have LGBT-related school resources report better school experiences and academic success. Unfortunately, all too many schools fail to provide these critical resources.

### **Gay-Straight Alliances**

#### ***Availability and Participation***

- A little over half (54.0%) of students said that their school had a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or similar student club.
- Although most LGBTQ students reported participating in their GSA at some level, a little more than a third (34.0%) had not.

#### ***Utility***

- Compared to LGBTQ students who did not have a GSA in their school, students who had a GSA in their school:
  - Were less likely to hear “gay” used in a negative way often or frequently (59.3% compared to 77.1% of other students);
  - Were less likely to hear homophobic remarks such as “fag” or “dyke” often or frequently (51.0% vs. 68.0%);
  - Were less likely to hear negative remarks about gender expression and transgender people often or frequently (gender expression: 59.6% vs. 66.8%; transgender people: 35.9% vs. 46.0%);
  - Were more likely to report that school personnel intervened when hearing homophobic remarks compared to students without a GSA — 20.6% vs. 12.0% said that staff intervene most of the time or always;
  - Were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation than those without a GSA (50.2% vs. 66.3%, and less likely to miss school (26.1% vs. 38.5% missed one day of school in past month because of safety concerns).
  - Experienced lower levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation and gender expression. For example, 21.5% of students with a GSA experienced higher levels of victimization based on their gender expression, compared to 34.0% of those without a GSA;
  - Reported a greater number of supportive school staff and more accepting peers, and
  - Felt more connected to their school community than students without a GSA.

## **Inclusive Curricular Resources**

### ***Availability***

- Only 22.4% of LGBTQ students were taught positive representations about LGBT people, history, or events in their schools; 17.9% had been taught negative content about LGBT topics.
- Less than half (42.4%) of students reported that they could find information about LGBT-related issues in their school library.
- About half of students (49.1%) with Internet access at school reported being able to access LGBT-related information online via school computers.

### ***Utility***

- LGBTQ students in schools with an LGBT- inclusive curriculum:
  - Were less likely to hear “gay” used in a negative way often or frequently (49.7% compared to 72.6% of other students);
  - Were less likely to hear homophobic remarks such as “fag” or “dyke” often or frequently (40.6% vs. 64.1%);
  - Were less likely to hear negative remarks about gender expression and transgender people often or frequently (gender expression: 50.7% vs. 66.6%; transgender people: 26.8% vs. 44.5%);
  - Were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation (40.4% vs. 62.6%);
  - Were less likely to miss school in the past month compared to a third of other students (18.6% of students with an inclusive curriculum missed school in past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable compared to 35.6% of other students);
  - Were less likely to say they might not graduate high school (1.4% vs. 4.1%) and less likely to not plan on pursuing post-secondary education (5.1% vs. 7.0%). Students in schools with an inclusive curriculum were more likely to report that their classmates were somewhat or very accepting of LGBTQ people than other students (75.8% vs. 41.6%); and
  - Felt more connected to their school community than other students.

## **Supportive Educators**

### ***Availability***

- Almost all LGBTQ students (97.0%) could identify at least one staff member supportive of LGBTQ students at their school.
- Less than two thirds of students (63.7%) could identify at least six supportive school staff.
- Only 41.2% of students could identify 11 or more supportive staff.
- 36.8% of students reported that their school administration was supportive of LGBTQ students.
- Over a quarter (29.1%) of students had seen at least one Safe Space sticker or poster at their school (these stickers or posters often serve to identify supportive educators).

## ***Utility***

- Compared to LGBTQ students with no supportive school staff, students with many (11 or more) supportive staff at their school:
  - Were less likely to feel unsafe (40.6% vs. 78.7%);
  - Were less likely to miss school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (16.9% vs. 47.2%);
  - Had higher GPAs than other students (3.3 vs. 2.8); and
  - Were less likely to say they might not graduate high school (1.7% vs. 9.5%) and were less likely to not plan on pursuing post-secondary education (4.5% vs. 14.7%); and
  - Felt more connected to their school community;
- Students who had seen a Safe Space sticker or poster in their school were more likely to identify school staff who were supportive of LGBTQ students and more likely to feel comfortable talking with school staff about LGBTQ issues.

## **Comprehensive Bullying/Harassment Policies**

### ***Availability***

- Although a majority (83.6%) of students had an anti-bullying policy at their school, only 10.2% of students reported that their school had a comprehensive policy (i.e., that specifically enumerate both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression).

### ***Utility***

- Students in schools with a comprehensive policy:
  - Were less likely to hear “gay” used in a negative way often or frequently (51.7% compared to 73.6% of students with a generic policy and 80.2% of students with no policy);
  - Were less likely to hear other homophobic remarks such as “fag” or “dyke” often or frequently (44.4% compared to 60.5% of students with a generic policy and 67.9% of students with no policy);
  - Were less likely to hear negative remarks about gender expression often or frequently (52.9% compared to 63.5% of students with a generic policy and 69.1% of students with no policy);
  - Were more likely to report that staff intervene when hearing anti-LGBT remarks;
  - Experienced less anti-LGBT victimization; and
  - Were more likely to report victimization incidents to school staff and were more likely to rate school staff’s response to such incidents as effective.

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## ***Changes in School Climate for LGBTQ Youth Over Time***

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School climate for LGBTQ students has improved somewhat over the years, yet remains quite hostile for many. Increases in the availability of many LGBT-related school resources may be having a positive effect on the school environment.

### **Changes in Indicators of Hostile School Climate**

#### ***Anti-LGBT Remarks***

- LGBTQ students in 2015 reported a decrease in homophobic remarks made by other students compared to all prior years. The percentage of students hearing homophobic remarks like “fag” or “dyke” frequently or often has dropped from over 80% in 2001 to less than 60% in 2015.
- Although the expression “that’s so gay” remains the most common form of anti-LGBT language heard by LGBTQ students, its prevalence has declined consistently since 2001.
- In 2015, LGBTQ students reported a higher incidence of negative remarks about gender expression than in 2013.
- There was a decrease in school staff’s frequency of intervention in both homophobic remarks and negative remarks about expression from 2013 to 2015.

#### ***Harassment and Assault***

- In 2015, the incidence of verbal and physical harassment and physical assault regarding sexual orientation was lower than all prior years.
- Changes in harassment and assault based on gender expression were similar to those for sexual orientation – verbal and physical harassment were lower in 2015 than all prior years and physical assault was also its lowest since 2007.

### **Changes in Availability of LGBT-Related School Resources and Supports**

#### ***Gay-Straight Alliances***

- The percentage of LGBTQ students reporting that they have a GSA in their school was higher in 2015 than in all prior survey years.

#### ***Curricular Resources***

- The percentage of LGBTQ students reporting positive representations of LGBT people, history, or events in their curriculum was significantly higher in 2015 than in all prior survey years.
- The percentage of students with access to LGBT-related Internet resources was higher in 2015 than in all prior survey years.
- Students’ access to LGBT-related content in their textbooks and LGBT-related resources in their school library were not different in 2015 from 2013.

#### ***Supportive Educators***

- A higher percentage of LGBTQ students reported having supportive school staff in 2015 than in all prior survey years.

### ***Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policies***

- More LGBTQ students reported having an anti-bullying/harassment policy at their school in 2015 than in all prior survey years, but there was no increase in comprehensive policies, i.e., one that included protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, from 2013 to 2015.

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### ***Demographic and School Characteristic Differences in LGBTQ Students' School Experiences***

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LGBTQ students are a diverse population, and although they share many similar experiences, their experiences in school vary based on their personal demographics, the kind of school they attend, and where they live.

#### **Differences in LGBTQ Students' School Experiences by Personal Demographics**

##### ***Race or Ethnicity***

- Overall, Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander students experienced the lowest frequencies of victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression.
- White/European American LGBTQ students experienced lower frequencies of victimization based on race/ethnicity than all LGBTQ youth of color groups.
- Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander students were less likely to experience anti-LGBT discrimination at school resulting from school policies and practices, than Multiracial students, White students, and Hispanic/Latino students.

##### ***Gender Identity***

- Compared to LGBQ cisgender students, transgender, genderqueer, and other non-cisgender students faced more hostile school climates.
- Cisgender female students were less likely to be victimized or feel unsafe based on their sexual orientation or their gender expression compared to other LGBTQ students.
- Compared to cisgender male students, cisgender female students experienced a more hostile school climate regarding their gender and were more likely to have experienced anti-LGBT discrimination at school.

##### ***Gender Nonconformity***

- Gender nonconforming cisgender students (students whose gender expression did not align to traditional gender norms) experienced worse school climates compared to gender conforming cisgender students.

#### **Differences in LGBTQ Students' School Experiences by School Characteristics**

##### ***School Level***

- LGBTQ students in middle school were more likely than students in high school to hear homophobic language and negative remarks about gender expression in school.
- Students in middle school reported slightly higher frequencies of victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression than students in high school.



- Students in middle school were less likely to have access to each LGBT-related school resource: GSAs, supportive educators, inclusive curriculum, and comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies; the disparity between middle and high school students was greatest for GSAs (14.5% for middle school students vs. 61.2% for high school students).

### ***School Type***

- LGBTQ public school students heard all types of homophobic language most often, as compared to both students in religious schools and private non-religious schools.
- Overall, students in public schools experienced higher frequencies of anti-LGBT victimization compared to other students.
- Students in religious schools reported more anti-LGBT related discrimination compared to students in public schools and private non-religious schools.
- Overall, students in private non-religious schools had greater access to LGBT-related resources and supports in school than students in other schools, whereas students in religious schools had less access to most LGBT-related resources.

### ***Region***

- LGBTQ students attending schools in the Northeast and the West reported lower frequencies of hearing anti-LGBT remarks than students attending schools in the South and Midwest.
- Students from schools in the Northeast and the West reported somewhat lower levels of victimization both based on sexual orientation and based on gender expression than students in schools in the South and the Midwest.
- Students in the South were most likely to experience anti-LGBT discrimination at school.
- Students in the Northeast were most likely to report having LGBT-related resources at school.

### ***School Locale***

- LGBTQ students in rural/small town schools reported hearing anti-LGBT remarks most often.
- Students in schools in rural/small town areas experienced the highest levels of victimization based on sexual orientation and based on gender expression.
- Students in schools in rural/small town areas were more likely to experience anti-LGBT discrimination at school than students in suburban and urban schools.
- Students in rural/small town schools were least likely to have LGBT-related school resources or supports, particularly GSAs and supportive school personnel.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

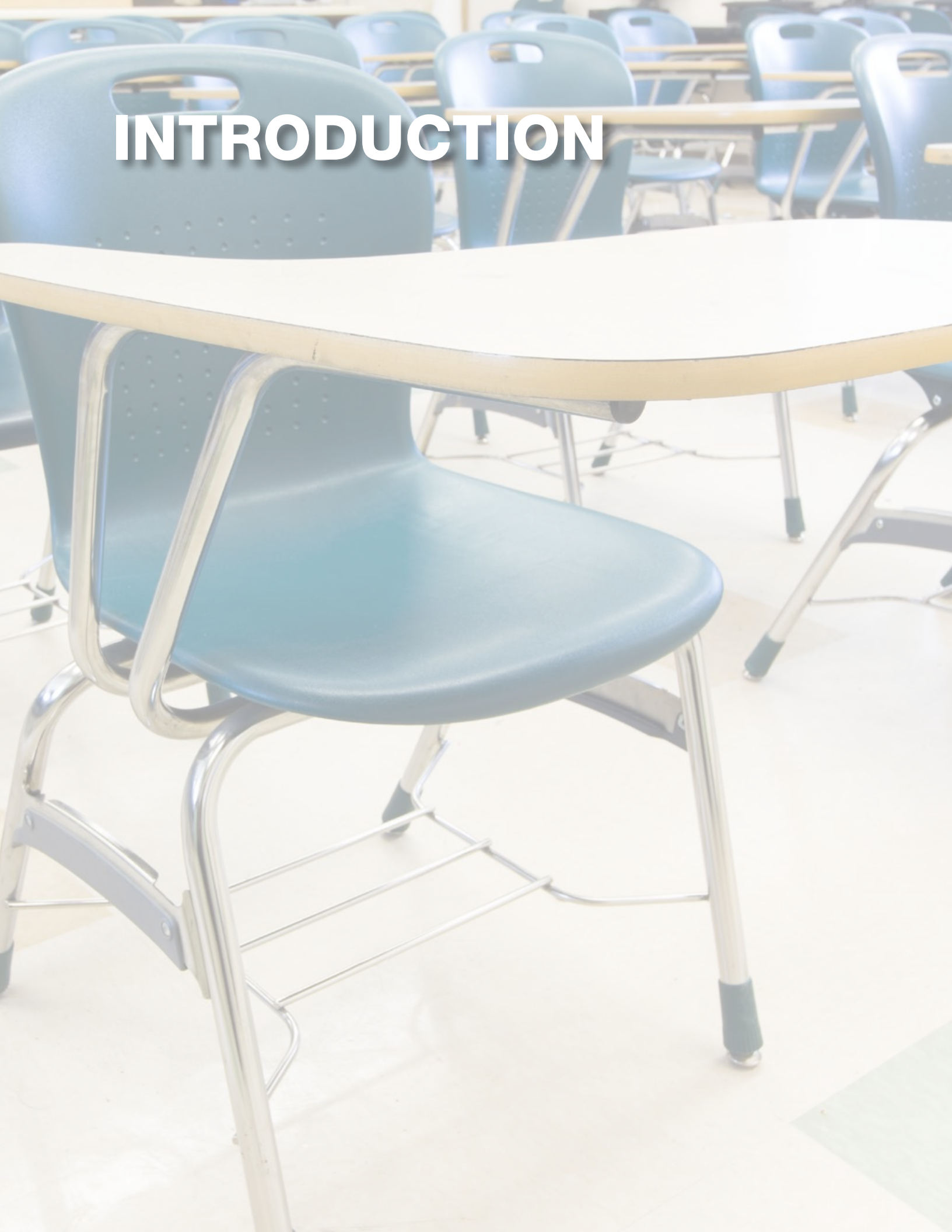
It is clear that there is an urgent need for action to create safe and affirming learning environments for LGBTQ students. Results from the 2015 National School Climate Survey demonstrate the ways in which school-based supports — such as supportive staff, anti-bullying/harassment policies, curricular resources inclusive of LGBT people, and GSAs — can positively affect LGBTQ students’ school experiences. Based on these findings, we recommend:

- Increasing student access to appropriate and accurate information regarding LGBT people, history, and events through inclusive curricula and library and Internet resources;
- Supporting student clubs, such as GSAs, that provide support for LGBTQ students and address LGBT issues in education;
- Providing professional development for school staff to improve rates of intervention and increase the number of supportive teachers and other staff available to students;
- Ensuring that school policies and practices, such as those related to dress codes and school dances, do not discriminate against LGBTQ students; and
- Adopting and implementing comprehensive bullying/harassment policies that specifically enumerate sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in individual schools and districts, with clear and effective systems for reporting and addressing incidents that students experience.

Taken together, such measures can move us toward a future in which all students have the opportunity to learn and succeed in school, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.



# INTRODUCTION





For over 25 years, GLSEN has worked to ensure that schools are safe and affirming spaces for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. As part of its mission, GLSEN has documented the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ)\* students in schools to raise awareness of these experiences among policymakers, educators, advocates, and the general public. Now in its ninth edition, the GLSEN National School Climate Survey (NSCS), a national biennial survey of LGBTQ middle and high school students, reports on the prevalence of anti-LGBT language, discrimination, and victimization, and the impact that these experiences have on LGBTQ students' educational outcomes and well-being. The NSCS also examines the factors that can result in safer and more affirming learning environments for LGBTQ students. Thus, the NSCS also includes questions on the availability of resources and supports for students in their schools, such as supportive student clubs (e.g., GSAs), LGBT-inclusive curricular resources, supportive educators, and anti-bullying/harassment policies that explicitly protect LGBTQ students.

Since the release of our 2013 NSCS report, we have seen some progress in federal government's response to the continuing hostile environments many students face in school every day. In 2015, the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act was reauthorized; this version of the Act, entitled the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), increases accountability for the educational experiences of certain marginalized student groups, requires states to report school-level data on bullying and harassment, compels states to outline plans to improve learning conditions to obtain federal funds, and allows schools to use federal dollars for bullying prevention programs.<sup>1</sup> However, the two proposed bills that would ensure safe and accessible schools for LGBTQ students specifically, the Safe Schools Improvement Act and the Student Non-Discrimination Act, were not included in the final legislation. Therefore, this new federal education law failed to explicitly include protections for LGBTQ students. Nevertheless, we have seen headway on LGBTQ youth issues by the federal government since 2013. President Obama called for an end to "conversion therapy" for

LGBTQ youth,<sup>2</sup> and some states, such as Oregon, have since enacted bans on such practices.<sup>3</sup> We have also seen great strides in terms of federal data collection efforts. In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education began collecting data on incidents of sexual orientation-based bullying from public schools as part of its civil rights data collection efforts.<sup>4</sup> In 2015, an interagency workgroup was established to improve measurement of sexual orientation and gender identity in federal surveys, including education and youth-related surveys.<sup>5</sup> In 2016, the National Center for Education Statistics included LGBT-identity measures in a student survey for the first time. These items were asked as part of a wave of the High School Longitudinal Survey, and as the participants are now beyond high school age, the resulting data will provide valuable information on LGBTQ young adults and retrospective assessments of their school experiences. However, this survey will not produce any information on school climate for current LGBTQ secondary students. In 2015, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention included new sexual orientation items on the national and standard state/local versions of their Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The addition of these items will allow for population-based national and state data for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning youth. Although including these items holds promise for advancing our understanding of issues affecting LGBTQ youth, the federal YRBS does not include a way to identify transgender or other non-cisgender youth. Furthermore, as the YRBS is focused on health behaviors in many aspects of students' lives, there are limited items specifically related to the school environment. Considering all of these important additions to federal data collection efforts, GLSEN's National School Climate Survey continues to be vitally important to the understanding of the school experiences of LGBTQ students nationally.

Earlier this year, GLSEN released *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited, A Survey of U.S. Secondary School Students and Teachers*,<sup>6</sup> a report that examined the current landscape of bias and peer victimization as reported by students and teachers from across the nation. We found that LGBTQ students remain at significant risk for bullying and harassment, compared to

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\* Throughout this report we use LGBTQ when referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students and the LGBTQ population in general. Although prior installments of the National School Climate Survey have used LGBT, we have explicitly added queer in this installment as a result of the increase in an observed self-identification of students as queer over time. However, there are instances when referring to particular survey items that we will use LGBT to reflect how the question was asked in the survey.

their non-LGBTQ peers, and that these elevated rates of victimization contributed to disparities between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ students on educational indicators, such as educational attainment and school discipline. Findings from this survey illustrate that we have extensive work left to do in order to minimize these gaps in educational experiences. While *From Teasing to Torment* provides us with a frame of reference to understand the severity of anti-LGBT bullying and harassment, the NSCS, as it has always done, provides a focused and in-depth look at the diverse experiences of LGBTQ youth at school — and the ways in which they impact their education and well-being.

GLSEN's NSCS continues to expand and adapt to better reflect the schooling experiences of LGBTQ students today. For example, given the growing attention being paid to the experiences of LGBTQ students in gendered school activities,<sup>7</sup> we asked students whether their schools segregated certain activities by gender, including yearbook photos, school dances, and graduation. Additionally, we have increased our focus on students' experiences in school athletics and other extracurricular activities in more recent years by including questions about safety and participation in these activities, and we added questions to our 2015 survey about anti-LGBT discrimination in school

sports and other extracurricular activities as well. Over the past two decades, there has been an increased interest in school-based efforts to address bullying,<sup>8</sup> but little is known about how these efforts address anti-LGBT bullying and harassment. Thus, we asked students in this survey whether they received anti-bullying education in schools, and whether this education included LGBT-specific content. In this installment of the NSCS, we also expanded our examination of school policies by asking students if their schools or districts have specific policies or guidelines that supported transgender or gender nonconforming students.

This report offers a broad understanding of the policies, practices, and circumstances that make LGBTQ students more vulnerable to discrimination and victimization at school and how these experiences impact their educational success and trajectories. Given that we have been conducting the NSCS for nearly two decades, we continue to examine changes over time on measures of school climate and levels of access to LGBT-related resources in schools. As with previous editions, we trust that the 2015 NSCS will offer advocates, educators, and policymakers up-to-date and valuable information that will strengthen their work in creating safe and affirming schools for all students.



# METHODS AND SAMPLE



How are you  
I'm fine, I'm fi



Participants completed an online survey about their experiences in school during the 2014–2015 school year, including hearing biased remarks, feeling safe, being harassed, feeling comfortable at school, and experiencing discriminatory actions; they were also asked about their academic experiences, attitudes about school, and availability of supportive school resources. Youth were eligible to participate in the survey if they were at least 13 years of age, attended a K–12 school in the United States during the 2014–2015 school year, and identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or a sexual orientation other than heterosexual (e.g., pansexual, questioning) or described themselves as transgender or as having another gender identity that is not cisgender (“cisgender” describes a person whose gender identity is aligned with the sex they were assigned at birth). Data collection occurred between April and August, 2015.

The survey was available online through GLSEN’s website. Notices and announcements were sent through GLSEN’s email and chapter networks as well as through national, regional, and local organizations that provide services to or advocate on behalf of LGBTQ youth. The national and regional organizations posted notices about the survey on listservs, websites, and social media (e.g., twitter, Instagram, tumblr). Local organizations serving LGBTQ youth notified their participants about the online survey via email, social media, and by distributing paper flyers and promotional stickers. To ensure representation of transgender youth, youth of color, and youth in rural communities, additional outreach efforts were made to notify groups and organizations that work predominantly with these populations about the survey.

Contacting participants only through LGBTQ youth-serving groups and organizations would have limited our ability to reach LGBTQ students who were not connected to or engaged in LGBTQ communities in some way. Thus, in order to broaden our reach to LGBTQ students who may not have had such connections, we conducted targeted outreach and advertising through social media sites. Specifically, we advertised the survey on Facebook to U.S. users between 13 and 18 years of age who indicated on their profile that they were: male and interested in men, male and interested in men and women, female and interested in women, and female and interested in women and men. We also advertised to those 13–18 year old Facebook users who listed relevant interests or “likes” such as “LGBT,” “queer,” “transgender,” or other LGBTQ-related terms or interests. We also promoted the survey to youth who were connected to Facebook pages relevant to LGBTQ students (e.g., Day of Silence page), or friends of other youth connected to relevant Facebook pages. Information about the survey was also posted on subgroups or pages with significant LGBTQ youth content or followers of additional social media sites (e.g., Tumblr, Instagram, Twitter).

The final sample consisted of a total of 10,528 students between the ages of 13 and 21. Students came from all 50 states and the District of Columbia and from 3,095 unique school districts. Table 1.1 presents participants’ demographic characteristics and Table 1.2 shows the characteristics of the schools attended by participants. About two-thirds of the sample (68.6%) was White/European American, a little more than a third (34.9%) was cisgender female, and about half identified as gay or lesbian (49.2%). Students were in grades 6 to 12, with the largest numbers in grades 10 and 11.

**Table 1.1 Characteristics of Survey Participants**

<b>Race and Ethnicity</b> <sup>9</sup> (n = 8971)		<b>Gender</b> <sup>10</sup> (n = 9108)	
White or European American	68.6%	Cisgender	61.7%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	14.7%	<i>Female</i>	34.9%
African American or Black	3.2%	<i>Male</i>	26.8%
Asian, South Asian, or Pacific Islander	3.3%	Transgender	15.2%
Middle Eastern or Arab American, any race	1.2%	<i>Female</i>	1.7%
Native American, American Indian, or Alaska Native	0.6%	<i>Male</i>	9.9%
Multiracial	8.4%	<i>Non-binary (i.e., identifies as something other than male or female)</i>	3.6%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b> <sup>11</sup> (n = 9158)		Genderqueer	11.4%
Gay or Lesbian	49.2%	Another Gender (e.g., agender, genderfluid)	11.7%
Bisexual <sup>12</sup>	22.9%	<b>Grade in School</b> (n = 8967)	
Pansexual <sup>13</sup>	16.1%	6 <sup>th</sup>	0.3%
Queer	5.5%	7 <sup>th</sup>	3.1%
Another Sexual Orientation (e.g., omnisexual)	3.1%	8 <sup>th</sup>	8.4%
Questioning or Unsure	2.4%	9 <sup>th</sup>	18.4%
<b>Average Age</b> (n = 10528) = 16.1 years		10 <sup>th</sup>	23.0%
		11 <sup>th</sup>	26.1%
		12 <sup>th</sup>	20.6%

**Table 1.2 Characteristics of Survey Participants' Schools**

<b>Grade Levels</b> (n = 10413)		<b>School Type</b> (n = 10443)	
K through 12 School	7.4%	Public School	89.6%
Lower School (elementary and middle grades)	0.6%	<i>Charter</i>	4.0%
Middle School	7.6%	<i>Magnet</i>	8.2%
Upper School (middle and high grades)	8.0%	Religious-Affiliated School	3.9%
High School	76.3%	Other Independent or Private School	6.4%
<b>School Locale</b> <sup>15</sup> (n = 10445)		<b>Region</b> <sup>14</sup> (n = 10519)	
Urban	28.1%	Northeast	22.7%
Suburban	44.5%	South	30.8%
Rural or Small Town	27.4%	Midwest	24.0%
		West	22.4%



# **PART ONE: EXTENT AND EFFECTS OF HOSTILE SCHOOL CLIMATE**





# School Safety

## Key Findings

- Nearly 6 in 10 LGBTQ students reported feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation; 4 in 10 reported feeling unsafe at school because of how they expressed their gender.
- Almost one third of students missed at least one day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.
- LGBTQ students reported most commonly avoiding school bathrooms and locker rooms because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable in those spaces.
- Most LGBTQ students reported avoiding school functions and extracurricular activities to some extent, and about a quarter avoided them often or frequently.

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## Overall Safety at School

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For LGBTQ youth, school can be an unsafe place for a variety of reasons. Students in our survey were asked whether they ever felt unsafe at school because of a personal characteristic, including: sexual orientation, gender, gender expression (i.e., how traditionally “masculine” or “feminine” they were in appearance or behavior), body size or weight, family’s income or economic status, academic ability, citizenship status, and actual or perceived race or ethnicity, disability, or religion. About three-quarters of LGBTQ students (74.4%) reported feeling unsafe at school because of at least one of these personal characteristics. As shown in Figure 1.1, LGBTQ students most commonly felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation and gender expression:

- More than half of LGBTQ students (57.6%) reported feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation.
- 4 in 10 students (43.3%) felt unsafe because of how they expressed their gender.
- Sizable percentages of LGBTQ students also reported feeling unsafe because of their body size or weight (37.7%) and because of their academic ability or how well they do in school (22.3%).

We also asked students if they felt unsafe at school for another reason not included in the

listed characteristics, and if so, why. Of the 7.0% who provided another reason, the most commonly reported were mental health issues such as anxiety or depression, other types of self-expression (e.g., how students dress or talk), and personal interests or beliefs (i.e., political and social views and values). Although slightly less common, students also reported feeling unsafe due to gender-based incidents such as sexual harassment, sexual violence, or hearing sexist language in school. Whether or not these incidents were related to students’ LGBTQ status is unknown, but it is evident that issues of gender-based violence are a concern for at least some LGBTQ students.

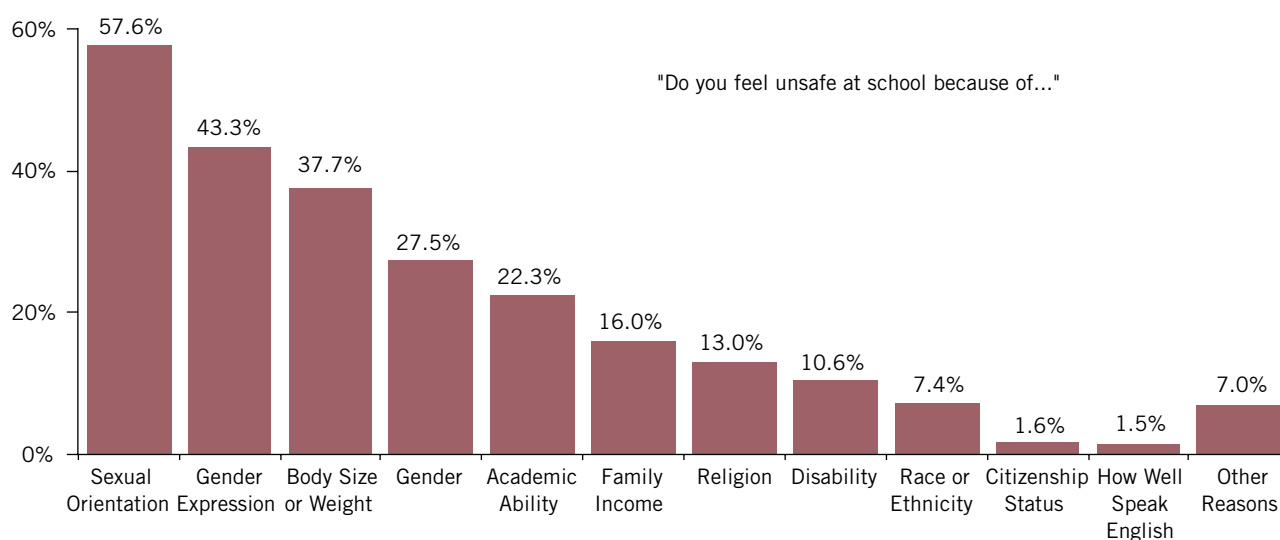
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## School Engagement and Safety Concerns

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When students feel unsafe or uncomfortable in school they may choose to avoid the particular areas or activities where they feel most unwelcome or may feel that they need to avoid attending school altogether. Thus, a hostile school climate can impact an LGBTQ student’s ability to fully engage and participate with the school community. To examine this possible restriction on LGBTQ students’ school engagement, we asked about specific spaces and school activities they might avoid because of safety concerns. As shown in Figure 1.2, school bathrooms, locker rooms, and Physical Education (P.E.)/Gym classes were the most common spaces avoided, with a little more than one-third of LGBTQ students avoiding each of these spaces because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (39.4%, 37.9%, and 35.0%,

**Figure 1.1 LGBTQ Students Who Felt Unsafe at School Because of Actual or Perceived Personal Characteristics**





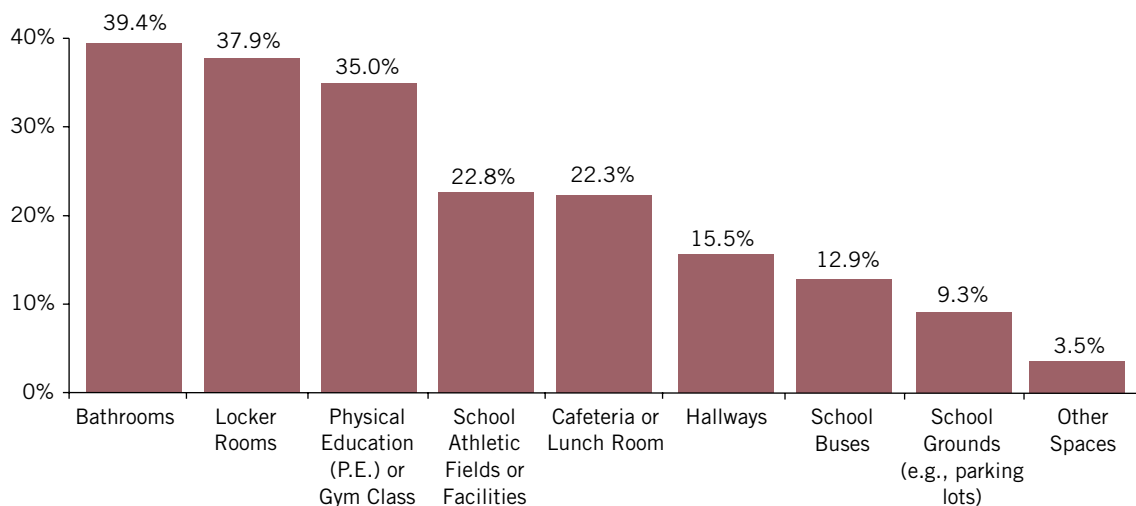
respectively). In addition, more than one-fifth avoided school athletic fields or facilities (22.8%) or the school cafeteria or lunchroom (22.3%) because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.

In addition to avoiding certain spaces in school because of safety reasons, LGBTQ students may also avoid other more social aspects of student life for similar concerns for personal safety. Thus, we asked students if they avoid attending school functions, such as school dances or assemblies, or participating in extracurricular clubs or programs because they feel unsafe or uncomfortable. Most LGBTQ students reported avoiding school functions and extracurricular activities to some extent (71.5% and 65.7%, respectively), and about a quarter avoided them often or frequently (29.3% and 23.0%, respectively; see Figure 1.3).

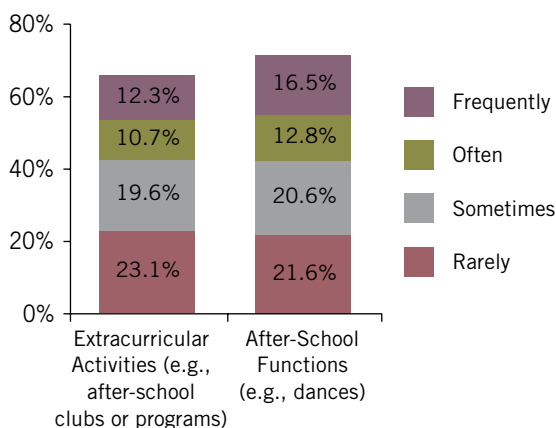
Involvement in school community activities like clubs or special events can have a positive impact on students' sense of belonging at school, self-esteem, and academic achievement.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, it is concerning that such a high rate of LGBTQ students may not have full access to the benefits of engaging in these school activities.

Feeling unsafe or uncomfortable at school can negatively affect the ability of students to thrive and succeed academically, particularly if it results in avoiding school. When asked about absenteeism, nearly one-third of LGBTQ students (31.8%) reported missing at least one entire day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable, and a tenth (10.0%) missed four or more days in the past month (see Figure 1.4).

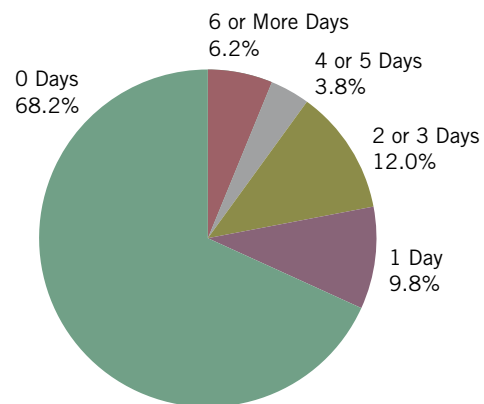
**Figure 1.2 Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Avoid Spaces at School Because They Feel Unsafe or Uncomfortable**



**Figure 1.3 LGBTQ Students Who Avoided School Activities Because They Felt Unsafe or Uncomfortable**



**Figure 1.4 Frequency of Missing Days of School in the Past Month Because of Feeling Unsafe or Uncomfortable**





# Exposure to Biased Language

## Key Findings

- Just over two-thirds of LGBTQ students heard the word “gay” used in a negative way often or frequently at school.
- More than half of LGBTQ students heard homophobic remarks such as “fag” or “dyke” often or frequently at school.
- Just under two-thirds of LGBTQ students heard negative remarks about gender expression often or frequently at school. Remarks about students not acting “masculine enough” were more common than remarks about students not acting “feminine enough.”
- Two-fifths of LGBTQ students heard negative remarks specifically about transgender people, like “tranny” or “he/she,” often or frequently.
- More than half of LGBTQ students heard homophobic remarks from school staff, and nearly two-thirds heard remarks from staff about students’ gender expression.
- Less than one-fifth of LGBTQ students reported that school staff intervened most of the time or always when overhearing homophobic remarks at school, and less than one-tenth of LGBTQ students reported that school staff intervened most of the time or always when overhearing remarks about gender expression.
- More than 4 in 5 LGBTQ students heard sexist remarks often or frequently at school, and just over two-thirds of students heard negative remarks about ability (e.g., “retard” or “spaz”) often or frequently.
- Just over half of LGBTQ students heard their peers make racist remarks often or frequently at school.

GLSEN strives to make schools safe and affirming for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other characteristic that may be the basis for harassment. Keeping classrooms and hallways free of homophobic, sexist, racist, and other types of biased language is one aspect of creating a more positive school climate for all students. In order to assess this feature of school climate, we asked LGBTQ students about their experiences with hearing anti-LGBT and other types of biased remarks while at school. Because homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression are specifically relevant to LGBTQ students, we asked students in our survey additional questions about school staff's usage of and responses to hearing these types of anti-LGBT language.

### ***Hearing Anti-LGBT Remarks at School***

We asked students in our survey about the frequency with which they heard homophobic remarks (such as “faggot” and “dyke,” the word “gay” being used in a negative way, or the phrase “no homo”). We also asked about the frequency of hearing negative remarks about the way students expressed their gender at school (such as comments related to a female student not acting “feminine enough”) and negative remarks about transgender people (such as “tranny” or “he/she”). Further, we also asked students about the frequency of hearing these types of remarks from school staff, as well as whether anyone intervened when hearing this type of language at school.

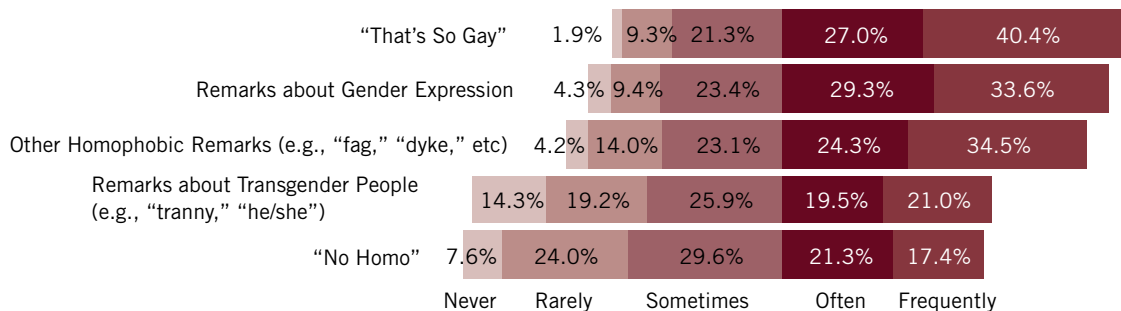
**Homophobic Remarks.** The most common form of homophobic language that was heard by LGBTQ students in our survey was “gay” being used in a negative way at school, such as comments like “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay.”<sup>17</sup> As shown

in Figure 1.5, more than two-thirds of LGBTQ students (67.4%) reported hearing these types of comments often or frequently in their schools. These expressions are often used to mean that something or someone is stupid or worthless and, thus, may be dismissed as innocuous by school authorities and students in comparison to overtly derogatory remarks such as “faggot” or “dyke.” However, many LGBTQ students did not view these expressions as innocuous. In fact, 93.7% of LGBTQ students reported that hearing “gay” used in a negative manner caused them to feel bothered or distressed to some degree (see Figure 1.6).

Other types of homophobic remarks (such as “fag” or “dyke”) were also heard regularly by students in our 2015 survey. More than half of LGBTQ students (58.8%) reported hearing these remarks often or frequently in their schools (see Figure 1.5). By comparison, the phrase “no homo” was the least-commonly reported homophobic remark heard by LGBTQ students at school; however, this expression was still heard often or frequently by more than a third of students (38.7%) in our survey (see also Figure 1.5). “No homo” is a phrase employed at the end of a statement in order to rid it of a potential homosexual connotation. For instance, some might use the phrase after giving a compliment to someone of the same gender, as in, “I like your jeans—no homo.” This phrase is homophobic in that it promotes the notion that it is unacceptable to have a same-gender attraction.

We also asked LGBTQ students that heard homophobic remarks in school how pervasive this behavior was among the student population. As shown in Figure 1.7, nearly a quarter of students (22.4%) reported that these types of remarks were made by most of their peers. Additionally, and disturbingly, more than half of students (56.2%) reported ever hearing homophobic remarks from

**Figure 1.5 Frequency that LGBTQ Students Hear Anti-LGBT Remarks at School**



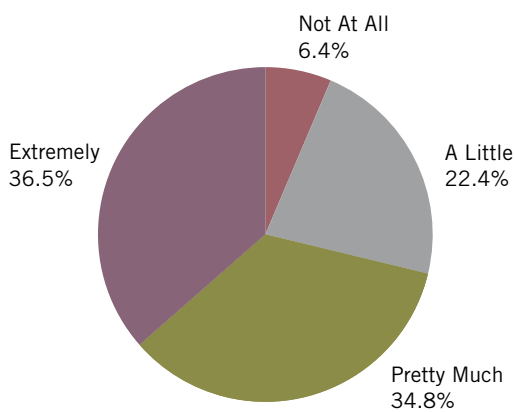
their teachers or other school staff (see Figure 1.8).

Students who reported hearing homophobic remarks at school were asked how often homophobic remarks were made in the presence of teachers or other school staff, and whether staff intervened if present. Almost a third of students (30.5%) in our survey reported that school staff members were present all or most of the time when homophobic remarks were made.<sup>18</sup> When school staff were present, the use of biased and derogatory language by students remained largely unchallenged. For example, less than a fifth of students (16.5%) reported that school personnel

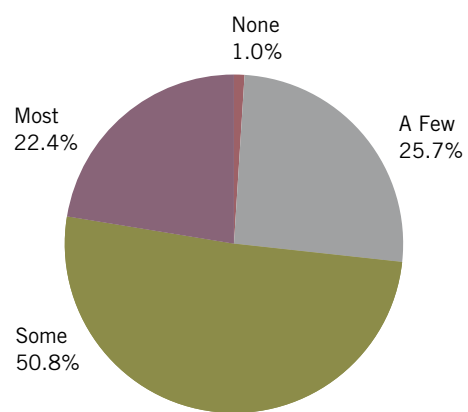
intervened most of the time or always when homophobic remarks were made in their presence, and 46.9% reported that staff never intervened when hearing homophobic remarks (see Figure 1.9).

One would expect teachers and school staff to bear the responsibility for addressing problems of biased language in school. Though, students may also intervene when hearing biased language, especially given that school personnel are often not present during these incidents. Thus, other students' willingness to intervene when hearing this kind of language may be another important indicator of school climate. However, only one-tenth of students (9.9%) reported that their peers

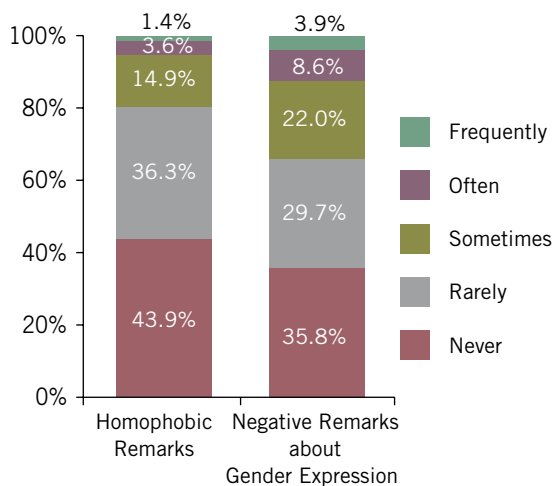
**Figure 1.6 Degree that LGBTQ Students Were Bothered or Distressed as a Result of Hearing "Gay" Used in a Derogatory Way**



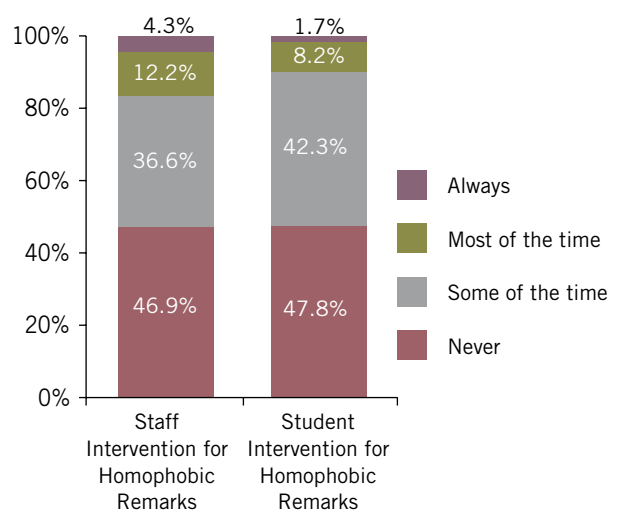
**Figure 1.7 LGBTQ Students' Reports of How Many Students Make Homophobic Remarks**



**Figure 1.8 LGBTQ Students Hearing Negative Remarks from Teachers or Other School Staff**



**Figure 1.9 LGBTQ Students Reports of School Staff and Student Intervention in Homophobic Remarks**



intervened always or most of the time when hearing homophobic remarks, and a little less than half (47.8%) said their peers never intervened (see also Figure 1.9).

These findings indicate that the majority of LGBTQ students report rampant usage of homophobic remarks in their schools, which contributes to a hostile learning environment for this population. Infrequent intervention by school authorities when hearing such language in school may send a message to students that homophobic language is tolerated. Furthermore, school staff may be modeling poor behavior and legitimizing the use of homophobic language, in that most students in our 2015 survey heard school staff make homophobic remarks themselves.

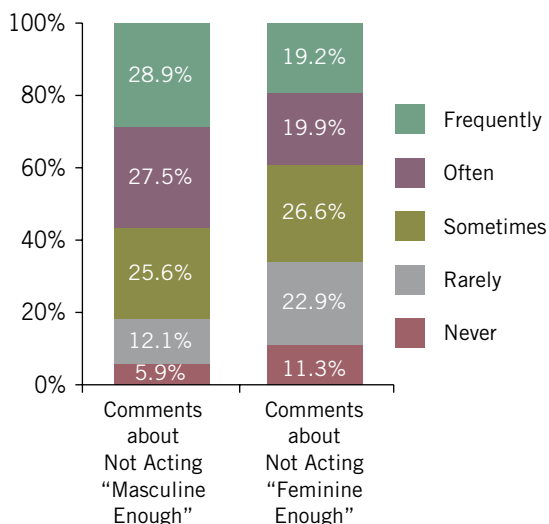
### Negative Remarks about Gender Expression.

Society often imposes norms for what is considered appropriate expression of one’s gender. Those who express themselves in a manner considered to be atypical may experience criticism, harassment, and sometimes violence. Thus, we asked students in our survey two separate questions about hearing comments related to a student’s gender expression; one question asked how often they heard remarks about someone not acting “masculine enough,” and another question asked how often they heard comments about someone not acting “feminine enough.”

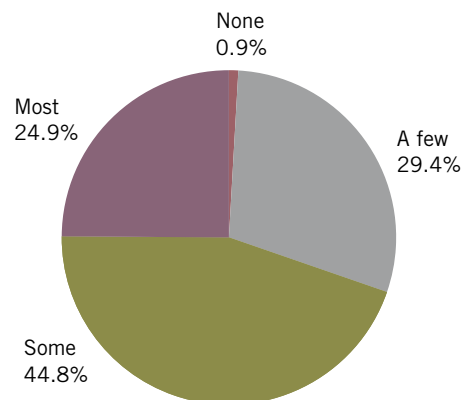
Findings from this survey demonstrate that negative remarks about someone’s gender expression were pervasive in schools. Overall, as shown previously in Figure 1.5, 62.9% of students reported hearing either type of remark about someone’s gender expression often or frequently at school. In addition, Figure 1.10 shows the frequency of hearing remarks about other students not acting “masculine enough” and not acting “feminine enough” separately — remarks related to students not acting “masculine enough” were found to be more common than remarks related to students not acting “feminine enough.”<sup>19</sup> More than half of students (56.4%) heard negative comments related to students’ masculinity regularly (i.e., often or frequently), compared to about two-fifths of students (39.1%) that regularly heard comments related to students’ femininity.

When asked how much of the student population made these types of remarks, about a quarter of students (24.9%) reported that most of their peers made negative remarks about someone’s gender expression (see Figure 1.11). Further, nearly two-thirds of students (64.2%) had heard teachers or other school staff make negative comments about a student’s gender expression (see Figure 1.8). Unlike biased remarks heard from other students, LGBTQ students heard school staff make negative remarks about gender expression more frequently than homophobic remarks.<sup>20</sup>

**Figure 1.10 Frequency of LGBTQ Students Hearing Different Types of Remarks about Students’ Gender Expression**



**Figure 1.11 LGBTQ Students' Reports of How Many Students Make Negative Remarks about Gender Expression**

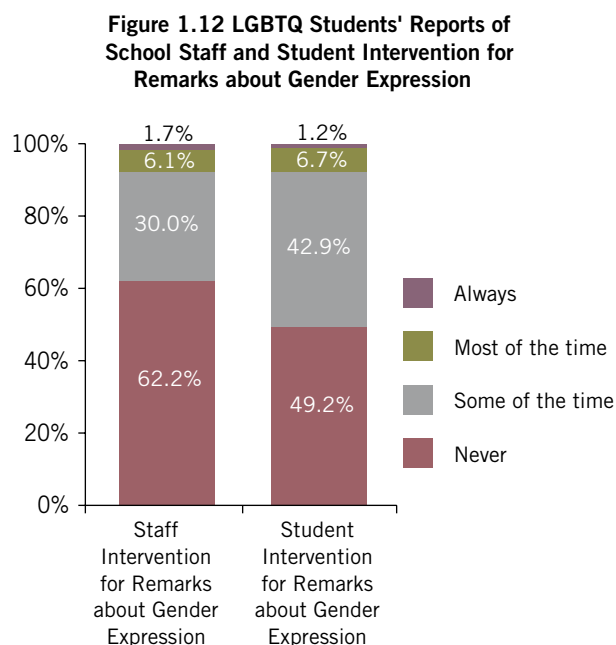


## “There are a lot of terms like gay or fag or racial slurs that people say a lot in the halls. It bothers me a lot. I want that to change.”

More than a quarter of students (29.9%) in our survey that heard negative remarks about gender expression reported that school staff members were present all or most of the time when these remarks were made.<sup>21</sup> In addition, intervention by educators and peers for gender expression remarks was even less common than intervention for homophobic remarks.<sup>22</sup> For example, approximately 8.0% of LGBTQ students reported that school staff (7.8%) or that their peers (7.9%) intervened most of the time or always when remarks about gender expression were made in their presence (see Figure 1.12), compared to 16.5% of school staff and 9.9% of students intervening for homophobic remarks, respectively (see Figure 1.9). The high frequency of hearing these remarks, coupled with the fact that these comments are so rarely challenged, suggests that acceptance of a range of gender expressions may be relatively uncommon in schools.

### Negative Remarks about Transgender People.

Similar to negative comments about gender expression, people may make negative comments about transgender people because they can pose a challenge to “traditional” ideas about gender.



Therefore, we asked students about how often they heard negative remarks specifically about transgender people, like “tranny” or “he/she.” About two-fifths of LGBTQ students (40.5%) in our survey reported hearing these comments often or frequently (see Figure 1.5).

The pervasiveness of anti-LGBT remarks is a concerning contribution to hostile school climates for all LGBTQ students. Any negative remark about sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression may signal to LGBTQ students that they are unwelcome in their school communities, even if a specific negative comment is not directly applicable to the individual student who hears it. For example, negative comments about gender expression may disparage transgender or LGB people, even if transgender-specific or homophobic slurs are not used.

### Hearing Other Types of Biased Remarks at School

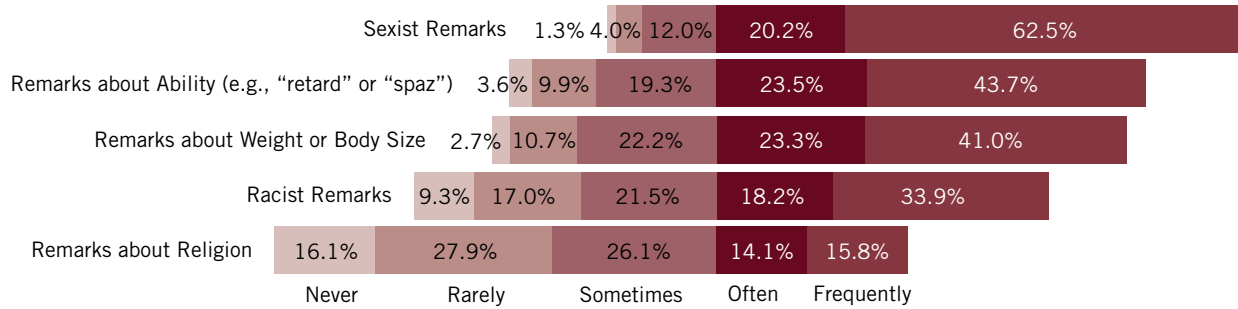
In addition to hearing anti-LGBT remarks at school, hearing other types of biased language is also an important indicator of school climate for LGBTQ students. We asked students about their experiences hearing racist remarks (such as “nigger” or “spic”), sexist remarks (such as someone being called “bitch” in a negative way, or girls being talked about as inferior to boys), negative remarks about other students’ ability (such as “retard” or “spaz”), negative remarks about other students’ religion, and negative remarks about other students’ body size or weight at school.

For most of these types of remarks, LGBTQ students in our survey reported that they were commonplace at their schools, although some comments were more prevalent than others (see Figure 1.13).<sup>23</sup> Sexist remarks were the most commonly heard remark – even more so than homophobic remarks. More than three-quarters of LGBTQ students (82.7%) heard sexist remarks regularly (i.e., frequently or often) at their school. Negative remarks about students’ ability/disability and remarks about their weight or body size, were

also very commonly heard types of biased remarks; approximately two-thirds heard these types of remarks regularly from other students (67.2% and 64.3%, respectively). Comments about race/ethnicity were somewhat less common, with about

half of students (52.1%) reporting hearing racist remarks from other students regularly. Least commonly heard were negative remarks about other students' religion, with just over a quarter (29.9%) reporting that they heard them regularly at school.

**Figure 1.13 Frequency that LGBTQ Students Hear Other Biased Remarks at School**





# Experiences of Harassment and Assault at School

## Key Findings

- Close to 9 in 10 LGBTQ students were harassed at school.
- Sexual orientation and gender expression were the most common reasons LGBTQ students were harassed or assaulted at school.
- Nearly three quarters of students reported being verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation; more than half were verbally harassed because of their gender expression.
- Over a quarter of students reported being physically harassed at school because of their sexual orientation; 1 in 5 were physically harassed because of their gender expression.
- About 1 in 6 students reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year, primarily because of their sexual orientation, gender expression, or gender.
- Relational aggression, i.e. spreading rumors or deliberate exclusion, was reported by the vast majority of students.
- About half of students reported experiencing some form of electronic harassment (“cyberbullying”) in the past year.
- Over half of students were sexually harassed at school in past year.

**“Because I am lesbian, many boys at my school continue to sexualize my body. They ask for pictures of my breasts and when I say no, they say something along the lines of, ‘well you shouldn’t care if I see your boobs if you’re really lesbian.’”**

Hearing anti-LGBT remarks in school can contribute to feeling unsafe at school and create a negative learning environment. However, direct experiences with harassment and assault may have even more serious consequences on the lives of students. We asked survey participants how often (“never,” “rarely,” “sometimes,” “often,” or “frequently”) they had been verbally harassed, physically harassed, or physically assaulted at school during the past year specifically based on a personal characteristic, including sexual orientation, gender, gender expression (e.g., not acting “masculine” or “feminine” enough), actual or perceived race or ethnicity, and actual or perceived disability.

### Verbal Harassment

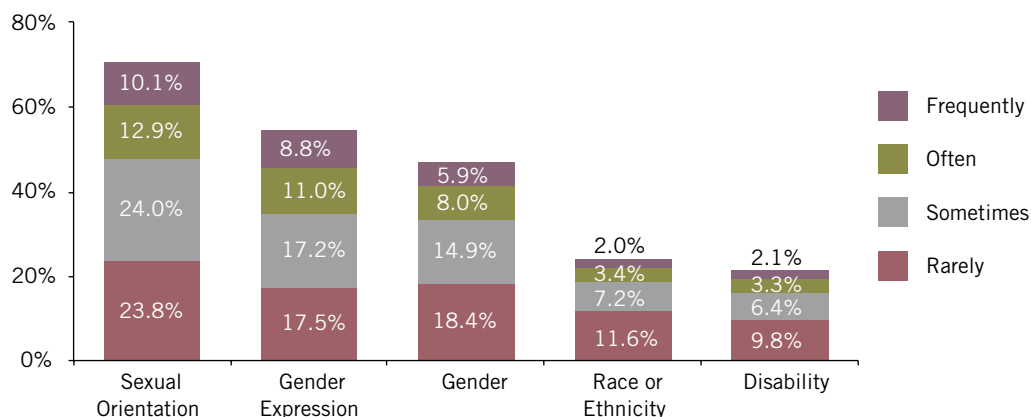
An overwhelming majority of LGBTQ students (85.2%) reported being verbally harassed (e.g., called names, threatened) at some point in the past year based on any of these characteristics, and 37.9% experienced high frequencies (often or frequently) of verbal harassment. LGBTQ students most commonly reported experiencing verbal harassment at school based on their sexual

orientation, followed by how they expressed their gender (see Figure 1.14):<sup>24</sup>

- Almost three-quarters of LGBTQ students (70.8%) had been verbally harassed based on their sexual orientation; almost a quarter (23.0%) experienced this harassment often or frequently; and
- A majority of LGBTQ students (54.5%) were verbally harassed at school based on their gender expression; about a fifth (19.8%) reported being harassed for this reason often or frequently.

Although not as commonly reported, many LGBTQ students were harassed in school based on their gender — almost half (47.2%) had been verbally harassed in the past year for this reason; over a tenth (13.9%) were verbally harassed often or frequently. In addition, as shown in Figure 1.14, sizable percentages of LGBTQ students reported being verbally harassed at school based on their actual or perceived race or ethnicity (24.2%) and disability (21.6%).

**Figure 1.14 Frequency of Verbal Harassment Experienced by LGBTQ Students in the Past School Year**



## Physical Harassment

With regard to physical harassment, over a third of LGBTQ students (34.7%) had been physically harassed (e.g., shoved or pushed) at some point at school during the past year based on any personal characteristic. Their experiences of physical harassment followed a pattern similar to verbal harassment — students most commonly reported being physically harassed at school based on their sexual orientation or gender expression (see Figure 1.15):<sup>25</sup>

- Over a quarter of LGBTQ students (27.0%) had been physically harassed at school based on their sexual orientation, and 7.5% reported that this harassment occurred often or frequently; and
- A fifth (20.3%) had been physically harassed

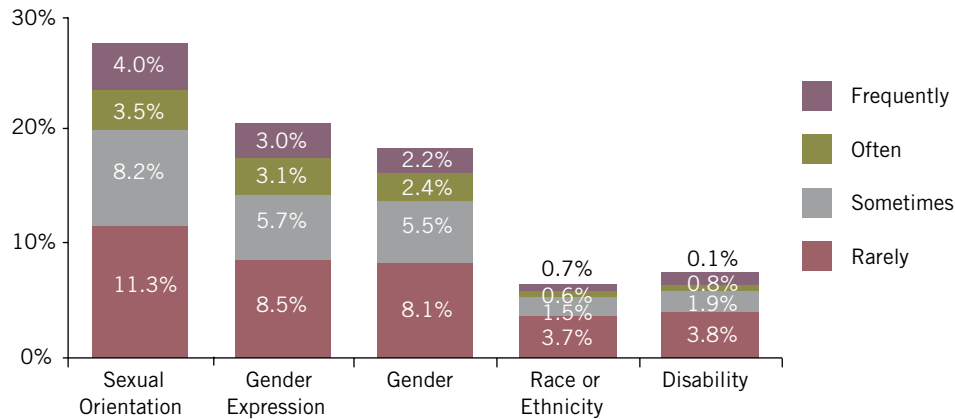
at school based on their gender expression, with 6.1% experiencing this often or frequently.

With regard to other personal characteristics, about a fifth of respondents (18.2%) had been physically harassed based on their gender, 6.5% based on their race/ethnicity, and 7.5% based on an actual or perceived disability (see also Figure 1.15).

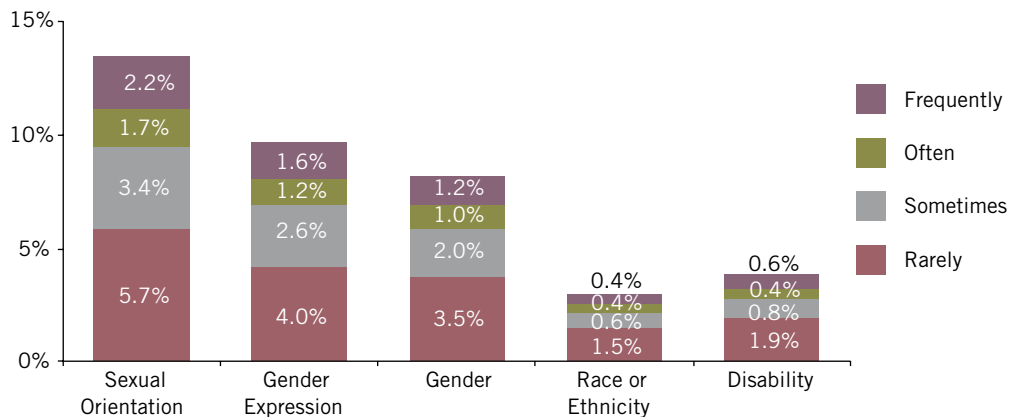
## Physical Assault

LGBTQ students were less likely to report experiencing physical assault (e.g., punched, kicked, or injured with a weapon) at school than verbal or physical harassment, which is not surprising given the more severe nature of assault.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, 15.5% of students in our survey were assaulted at school during the past year for any personal characteristic, again most

**Figure 1.15 Frequency of Physical Harassment Experienced by LGBTQ Students in the Past School Year**



**Figure 1.16 Frequency of Physical Assault Experienced by LGBTQ Students in the Past School Year**



commonly based on their sexual orientation or gender expression (see Figure 1.16):<sup>27</sup>

- 13.0% of LGBTQ students were assaulted at school based on their sexual orientation; and
- 9.4% were assaulted at school based on how they expressed their gender.

Physical assault based on gender, actual or perceived race/ethnicity or disability was less commonly reported: 7.7%, 2.9%, and 3.7% of LGBTQ students reported any occurrence in the past year, respectively (see also Figure 1.16).

### **Experiences of Other Types of Harassment and Negative Events**

LGBTQ students may be harassed or experience other negative events at school for reasons that are not clearly related to sexual orientation, gender expression, or another personal characteristic. In our survey, we also asked students how often they experienced these other types of events in the past year, such as being sexually harassed or deliberately excluded by their peers.

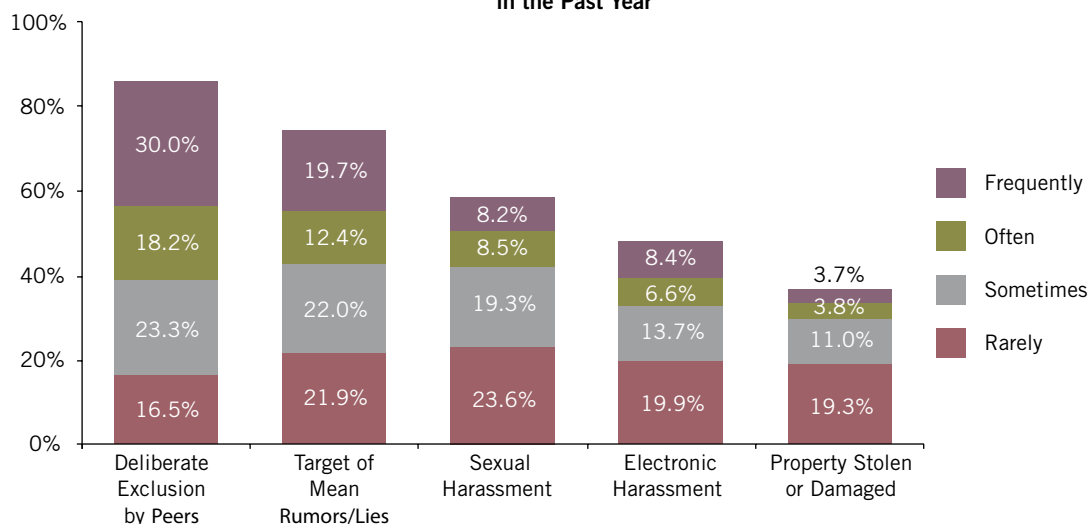
**Relational Aggression.** Research on school-based bullying and harassment often focuses on physical or overt acts of aggressive behavior; however, it is also important to examine relational forms of aggression that can damage peer relationships, such as spreading rumors or excluding students from peer activities. We asked participants how

often they experienced these two common forms of relational aggression. As illustrated in Figure 1.17, the vast majority of LGBTQ students (88.0%) reported that they had felt deliberately excluded or “left out” by other students, and nearly half (48.2%) experienced this often or frequently. Over three-fourths of students (76.0%) had mean rumors or lies told about them at school, and about a third (32.1%) experienced this often or frequently.

**Sexual Harassment.** Harassment experienced by LGBTQ students in school can often be sexual in nature, particularly for lesbian and bisexual young women and transgender youth. Survey participants were asked how often they had experienced sexual harassment at school, such as unwanted touching or sexual remarks directed at them. As shown in Figure 1.17, about three in five LGBTQ students (59.6%) had been sexually harassed at school, and nearly a fifth (16.7%) reported that such events occurred often or frequently.

**Electronic Harassment or “Cyberbullying.”** Electronic harassment (often called “cyberbullying”) is using an electronic medium, such as a mobile phone or Internet communications, to threaten or harm others. In the past decade there has been growing attention given to this type of harassment, as access to the Internet, smart phones, and other electronic forms of communication has increased for many youth. We asked students in our survey how often they were harassed or threatened by students at their school via electronic mediums (e.g., text

**Figure 1.17 Frequency of Other Types of Harassment Experienced by LGBTQ Students in the Past Year**



messages, emails, instant messages, or postings on Internet sites such as Facebook). About half of LGBTQ students (48.6%) reported experiencing this type of harassment in the past year. 15.0% had experienced it often or frequently (see also Figure 1.17).

**Property Theft or Damage at School.** Having one's personal property damaged or stolen is yet another dimension of a hostile school climate for students. Over a third of LGBTQ students (37.8%) reported that their property had been stolen or purposefully damaged by other students at school in the past year, and 7.5% said that such events had occurred often or frequently (see Figure 1.17).



# Reporting of School-Based Harassment and Assault

## Key Findings

- The majority of LGBTQ students who were harassed or assaulted at school did not report these incidents to school staff.
- The most common reasons that LGBTQ students did not report incidents of victimization to school staff were doubts that effective intervention would occur, and fears that reporting would make the situation worse.
- Less than a third of LGBTQ who had reported incidents of victimization to school staff said that staff had effectively addressed the problem.
- When asked to describe how staff responded to reports of victimization, LGBTQ students most commonly said that staff did nothing or told the student to ignore it; 1 in 4 students were told to change their behavior (e.g., to not act “so gay” or dress in a certain way).

GLSEN advocates that anti-bullying/harassment measures in school must include clear processes for reporting by both students and staff, and that staff are adequately trained to effectively address instances of bullying and harassment when informed about them. In our survey, we asked those students who had experienced harassment or assault in the past school year how often they had reported the incidents to school staff. As shown in Figure 1.18, over half of these students (57.6%) never reported incidents of victimization to school staff, and less than a fifth of students (16.8%) indicated that they reported these incidents to staff regularly (i.e., reporting “most of the time” or “always”).

Given that family members may be able to advocate on behalf of the student with school personnel, we also asked students in our survey if they reported harassment or assault to a family member (i.e., to their parent or guardian, or to another family member). About two-fifths of students (43.4%) said that they had ever told a family member about the victimization they faced at school, while 56.6% indicated that they never reported harassment to their families (see also Figure 1.18). Furthermore, students who had reported incidents to a family member were also asked how often their family member had talked to school staff about the incident, and a little more than half of students (53.0%) in our survey said that a family member had ever addressed the issue with school staff (see Figure 1.19). Not surprisingly, students that were out as LGBTQ to at least one family member were more likely to tell

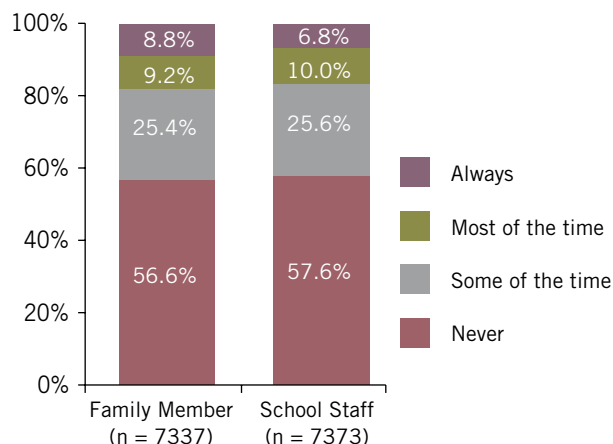
**“For three years I was teased about anything and everything and it just got worse when I came out. Every single day I reported it, and at the end of the year the guidance counselor just told me that I needed to ‘grow thicker skin.’”**

their families about the victimization they were experiencing in school.<sup>28</sup>

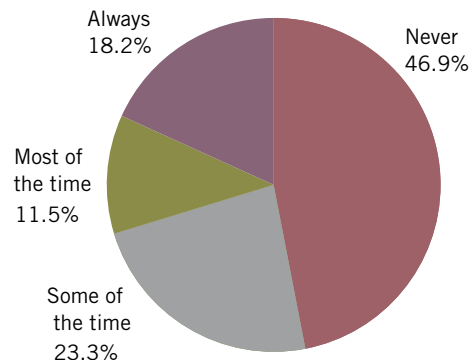
### ***Reasons for Not Reporting Harassment or Assault***

Reporting incidents of harassment and assault to school staff may be an intimidating task for students, especially when there is no guarantee that reporting these incidents will result in effective intervention. Students who reported that they had not told school personnel about their experiences with harassment or assault were asked why they did not do so (see Table 1.3).

**Figure 1.18 Frequency of LGBTQ Students Reporting Incidents of Harassment and Assault**



**Figure 1.19 Frequency of Intervention by LGBTQ Students' Family Members (n = 3937)**





**Doubted that Effective Intervention Would Occur.**

As shown in Table 1.3, the most common reasons that LGBTQ students cited for not always reporting incidents of victimization to school staff were doubts about the effectiveness of doing so. About two-thirds of victimized students (67.2%) in our survey expressed the belief that school staff would not do anything about the harassment even if they reported it, and to a slightly lesser extent, just under two-thirds of students (64.3%) said they didn't believe the actions of staff would effectively address the victimization that they were experiencing.

**Feared Making the Situation Worse.** Many students indicated that they didn't report instances of victimization because they were afraid of exacerbating an already hostile situation. For

example, more than half of students (55.8%) in our survey indicated they wanted to avoid being labeled a "snitch" or "tattle-tale." Further, many students did not report their harassment or assault to school staff due to concerns about their confidentiality. Specifically, about two-fifths of LGBTQ students (41.3%) in our survey were worried about being "outed" to school staff or to their family members simply by reporting the bias-based bullying that they were experiencing. These fears are somewhat warranted, given that 8.4% of students in our survey reported that they had been outed to their families by school staff without their permission.<sup>29</sup> Lastly, over a third of students (35.9%) expressed explicit safety concerns, such as fear of retaliation from the perpetrator if they reported the harassment to school staff.

**Table 1.3 Reasons LGBTQ Students Did Not Always Report Incidents of Harassment or Assault to School Staff (n = 6821)**

	Students Reporting Specific Response*	
	%	number
<b>Doubted that Effective Intervention Would Occur</b>	<b>75.9%</b>	<b>5177</b>
Did not think school staff would do anything about it	67.2%	4582
Did not think school staff's handling of the situation would be effective	64.3%	4385
<b>Feared Making the Situation Worse</b>	<b>74.2%</b>	<b>5063</b>
Did not want to be perceived as a "snitch" or a "tattle tale"	55.8%	3806
Did not want to be "outed" as being LGBTQ to staff or family members	41.3%	2820
Was concerned for their safety (e.g., retaliation, violence from perpetrator)	35.9%	2449
<b>Concerns about Staff Members' Reactions</b>	<b>65.3%</b>	<b>4456</b>
Was too embarrassed or ashamed to report it	42.4%	2895
Fear of being blamed or getting in trouble for the harassment	40.7%	2778
Because school staff are homophobic/transphobic	29.3%	1998
Because school staff were part of the harassment	10.3%	702
<b>Did Not Think the Harassment was Serious Enough</b>	<b>44.1%</b>	<b>3007</b>
<b>Student Handled it Themselves</b>	<b>32.1%</b>	<b>2190</b>
<b>Other Reason</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>249</b>

\*Because respondents could select multiple responses, categories are not mutually exclusive.

## “It was a teacher, so they sat down and talked with her. She harassed me on Day of Silence when I took the vow.”

### **Concerns about Staff Members' Reactions.**

Nearly two-thirds of students (65.3%) expressed concerns about how staff might react if they had reported their bullying and harassment to them. More than two-fifths of students (42.4%) said they felt too embarrassed or ashamed about the incident to report it to school staff members. To a slightly lesser, but much more troubling, extent, 40.7% of students expressed concerns about staff specifically blaming them for the incident and/or disciplining them simply for reporting incidents of harassment. Further, more than a quarter of students (29.3%) were deterred from reporting harassment or assault because they felt that staff members at their school were homophobic or transphobic themselves, and thus would not help them properly address the victimization they were experiencing. Perhaps the most troubling, however, is that one-tenth of victimized students (10.3%) in our survey said that school staff members were actually part of the harassment or assault they were experiencing, thus leaving students to feel that there is no recourse for addressing incidents of victimization at their school.

The idea of staff acting as the perpetrators of victimization is particularly disturbing and underscores the negative school climate that many LGBTQ students often experience. Harassment by educators, while troubling enough on its own, can cause additional harm when witnessed by other students by sending a message that harassment is acceptable in the classroom or within the school community. Harassment of students by school personnel also serves as a reminder that safer school efforts must address all members of the school community, and not just the student body.

**Did Not Think it was that Serious.** More than two-fifths of students (44.1%) expressed that they did not report incidents of victimization to school personnel because they did not consider the harassment to be serious enough to report. Because we lack specific details about these particular

incidents of victimization, we cannot examine whether only those events that were truly minor were perceived as “not serious enough” to report. We did, however, find that students who said they didn’t report victimization because it was “not that serious” had lower levels of victimization compared to those that did not cite this reason for not reporting harassment or assault.<sup>30</sup> It is also possible that some students may convince themselves that their harassment is insignificant, and therefore not worth reporting, due to the many other inhibiting factors discussed throughout this section.

**Students Addressing Matters on their Own.** Nearly a third of students (32.1%) in our survey said they did not report harassment or assault to school staff because they handled the situation themselves. Without further information we cannot know what specific actions these students took to address these incidents. It may be that they confronted the perpetrator directly, either instructing them to stop, or by retaliating in some way. It is possible that retaliation against those responsible for the harassment may result in disciplinary consequences for the student originally victimized. As indicated in the next section on how staff respond to incidents, we found that some LGBTQ students reported that they themselves were disciplined when they reported being harassed. Handling the situation on their own could also mean that they ignored the situation. Although it is possible that ignoring or acting undisturbed by the harassment could be an effective strategy in some situations, it is also possible that appearing unaffected may prevent some students from accessing important resources and supports in cases of harassment. Further research is needed to explore the nature and possible consequences of the various ways students handle incidents of harassment “on their own.”

Taken together, these responses demonstrate a pervasive problem that seems to be plaguing our nation’s schools. Whether due to doubts about school staff taking effective action, fear of retaliation from perpetrators, concerns about being “outed” as LGBTQ, or by simply being too embarrassed to come forward and report the victimization they are experiencing, it is clear that LGBTQ youth are struggling to find their voice when it comes to reporting harassment and/or assault in their schools.

In order to create a safe learning environment for all students, schools should work toward appropriately and effectively responding to incidents of victimization. Many of the reasons students gave for not reporting victimization could be addressed through more intentional policies and practices. School staff should respond to each incident brought to their attention, as well as inform victims of the action that was taken. Training all members of the school community to be sensitive to LGBTQ student issues and effectively respond to bullying and harassment, in addition to doing away with zero-tolerance policies that lead to automatic discipline of

targets of harassment and assault, could increase the likelihood of reporting by students who are victimized at school. Such efforts could, in turn, improve school climate for all students.

### ***Students' Reports on the Nature of School Staff's Responses to Harassment and Assault***

We asked LGBTQ students in our survey who had reported incidents to school staff about the actions taken by staff in response to the most recent incident of harassment or assault that these students had reported (see Table 1.4). The most common responses were that the staff member:

**Table 1.4 LGBTQ Students' Reports of School Staff's Responses to Reports of Harassment and Assault (n = 3130)**

	<b>Students Reporting Specific Response*</b>	
	<b>%</b>	<b>number</b>
<b>Staff Did Nothing/Took No Action and/or Told the Student to Ignore It</b>	<b>63.5%</b>	<b>1987</b>
Staff told the student to ignore it	51.4%	1609
Staff did nothing/Took no action	44.7%	1399
<b>Staff Talked to Perpetrator/Told Perpetrator to Stop</b>	<b>42.7%</b>	<b>1335</b>
<b>Told Reporting Student to Change Their Behavior</b> (e.g., to not act "so gay" or dress in a certain way)	<b>26.9%</b>	<b>842</b>
<b>Parents were Contacted</b>	<b>20.6%</b>	<b>644</b>
Staff contacted the reporting student's parents	15.3%	479
Staff contacted the perpetrator's parents	11.2%	350
<b>Perpetrator was Disciplined (e.g., with detention, suspension)</b>	<b>18.2%</b>	<b>570</b>
<b>Reporting Student and Perpetrator were Separated from Each Other</b>	<b>17.8%</b>	<b>558</b>
<b>Incident was Referred to Another Staff Person</b>	<b>15.8%</b>	<b>496</b>
<b>Staff Attempted to Educate Students about Bullying</b>	<b>14.0%</b>	<b>437</b>
Staff educated the perpetrator about bullying	9.1%	284
Staff educated the whole class or school about bullying	8.5%	265
<b>Filed a Report of the Incident</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>415</b>
<b>Reporting Student was Disciplined (e.g., with detention, suspension)</b>	<b>9.5%</b>	<b>297</b>
<b>Used Peer Mediation or Conflict Resolution Approach</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>263</b>
<b>Other Responses (e.g., student was discouraged from reporting, threats of discipline)</b>	<b>8.1%</b>	<b>252</b>

\*Because respondents could select multiple responses, categories are not mutually exclusive.

- Did nothing and/or told the reporting student to ignore the victimization (63.5%);
- Talked to the perpetrator/told them to stop the harassment (42.7%); and
- Told the reporting student to change their behavior (e.g., not to act “so gay” or not to dress a certain way – 26.9%).

Formal disciplinary action to address reported incidents of victimization occurred less frequently, and was sometimes directed at the target of the harassment themselves. Approximately one-fifth of students (18.2%) reporting harassment indicated that the perpetrator was disciplined by school staff, and unfortunately, about one in ten students (9.5%) reported that they themselves were disciplined when they reported being victimized (see also Table 1.4).

Failing to intervene when harassment is reported, punishing students for their own victimization, and other inappropriate responses to reports of harassment and assault are unacceptable, and potentially harmful to students who experience them. Staff members that do not address reports of student victimization may not only fail to help the victimized student, but may also discourage other students from reporting when they are harassed or assaulted at school.

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### ***Effectiveness of Staff Responses to Harassment and Assault***

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In our survey, students who said that they reported incidents of harassment and assault to school staff were also asked how effective staff members were in addressing the problem. As shown in Figure 1.20, not quite a third of students (30.9%) believed that staff responded effectively to their reports of victimization. Students reported that staff members’ responses were more likely to be ineffective when:<sup>31</sup>

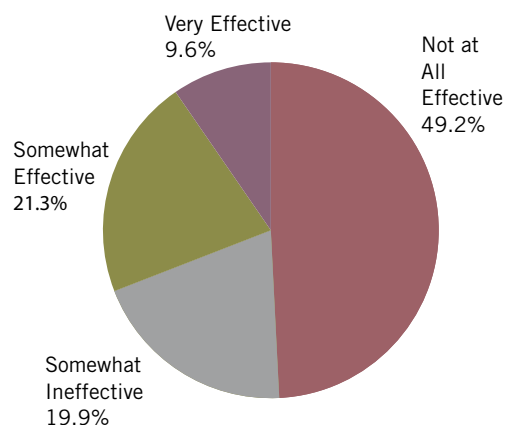
- Staff educated the perpetrator about bullying (71.6% effective vs. 28.4% ineffective);
- Staff took disciplinary action against the perpetrator (68.7% effective vs. 31.3% ineffective);
- Staff contacted the perpetrator’s parents (61.2% effective vs. 38.8% ineffective);

- Staff educated the class or school about bullying (57.9% effective vs. 42.1% ineffective); and
- Staff filed a report (54.3% effective vs. 45.7% ineffective).

Students reported that staff members’ responses were more likely to be ineffective when:<sup>32</sup>

- Staff disciplined the student who reported the incident (93.5% ineffective vs. 6.5% effective);
- Staff told the reporting student to change their behavior (91.4% ineffective vs. 8.6% effective);
- Staff did nothing to address the incident and/or told the reporting student to ignore the harassment (87.7% ineffective vs. 12.3% effective);
- Staff used a peer mediation/conflict resolution approach (58.5% ineffective vs. 41.5% effective);
- Staff referred the incident to another staff member (57.9% ineffective vs. 42.1% effective); and
- Staff separated the perpetrator and reporting student (51.5% ineffective vs. 48.5% effective).

**Figure 1.20 LGBTQ Students' Perceptions of Effectiveness of Reporting Incidences of Harassment and Assault to School Staff (n = 3089)**



Although these findings about ineffective responses may suggest a lack of care on the part of staff, they may also be indicative of school staff who are well-meaning but are also misinformed about effective intervention strategies for cases of bullying and harassment. For example, peer mediation and conflict resolution strategies, in which students speak to each other about an incident, are only effective in situations where conflict is among students with equal social power. Peer mediation that emphasizes that all involved parties contribute to conflict can be ineffective, and, at worst, may re-victimize the targeted student when there is an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. When harassment is bias-based, as is the case with anti-LGBT harassment, there is almost always, by definition, an imbalance of power.<sup>33</sup>

School personnel are charged with providing a safe learning environment for all students. In this survey, the most common reason students gave for not reporting harassment or assault was the belief that nothing would be done by school staff. And as discussed above, even when students did report incidents of victimization, the most common staff responses were to do nothing or merely to tell the student to ignore it. By not effectively addressing harassment and assault, students who are victimized are denied an adequate opportunity to learn. It is particularly troubling that more than a quarter of victimized students (26.9%) were told by school staff to change their behavior for reasons such as their sexual orientation or gender

expression (see Table 1.4), which implies that they somehow brought the problem upon themselves for simply being who they are. This type of response may exacerbate an already hostile school climate for LGBTQ students, and may deter them from reporting other incidents of harassment or assault in the future.

When students reported incidents of harassment or assault to staff members, the interventions had varying degrees of effectiveness. Given that we do not know the circumstances for each instance of harassment or assault, or the reasons why students would characterize a response as effective or not, we are not able to know details about what made certain staff responses (e.g., talking to the perpetrator) more effective than others (i.e., whether it resulted in an end to the harassment and/or made the student feel more supported in school). Our prior research has indicated that general training about bullying and harassment may not be enough to equip educators with the ability to effectively address anti-LGBT victimization.<sup>34</sup> School or district-wide educator professional development trainings on issues specifically related to LGBTQ students and bias-based bullying and harassment may better equip educators with tools for effectively intervening in cases of bullying of LGBTQ students. In addition, such trainings may help educators become more aware of the experiences of LGBTQ students, including incidents of harassment and bullying, which could play a vital role in improving LGBTQ students' school experiences overall.



# Experiences of Discrimination at School

## Key Findings

- 8 in 10 LGBTQ students indicated that their school had LGBT-related discriminatory policies and practices. Two-thirds of students said that they had experienced discriminatory policies and practices personally.
- Students were commonly restricted from expressing themselves as LGBT at school, including being: disciplined for public displays of affection (PDA) that are not disciplined among non-LGBT students, prohibited from bringing a date of the same gender to a school dance, restricted from wearing clothing or items supporting LGBT issues, prevented from discussing or writing about LGBT topics in assignments, or being disciplined unfairly simply because they were LGBT.
- Schools often limited the inclusion of LGBT topics or ideas in extracurricular activities, including inhibiting GSAs' activities, preventing students from discussing or writing about LGBT issues in extracurricular activities, and preventing or discouraging students from participating in school sports because they're LGBT.
- Transgender students were often particularly affected by these discriminatory policies. Most were prevented from using their preferred name or pronoun and were required to use a bathroom or locker room of their legal sex. Many transgender students were also prevented from wearing clothes because they were considered inappropriate based on their legal sex.
- Over two thirds of students reported that their schools had policies or practices that segregated by gender by separating certain activities by gender or imposing different requirements for male and female students. Over half indicated that their school dance honors, such as prom royalty, were required to be male and female. About a third indicated that attire for graduation and for yearbook photos were different for male and female students.

## **“No PDA, even though straight people get to hold hands. No talking about LGBT. No identifying as LGBT.”**

Hearing homophobic and negative remarks about gender expression in the hallways and directly experiencing victimization from other students clearly contribute to a hostile climate for LGBTQ students. Certain school policies and practices may also contribute to negative experiences for LGBTQ students and make them feel as if they are not valued by their school communities. In our 2015 survey, we asked students about a number of specific LGBT-related discriminatory policies and practices at their school – both about their own direct experiences and about the experiences of their peers. Over 8 in 10 students (81.6%) indicated that students at their school had experienced LGBT-related discrimination, with more than two-thirds of students (66.2%) saying that they had personally experienced these types of discriminatory policies and practices, and 74.0% reporting that they were experienced by other students (see Figure 1.21).

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### ***Restricting LGBT Expression in School***

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Several of the questions about policies and practices were related to efforts to restrict students from being identified as LGBT, from being themselves in the school environment, and from expressing support for or interest in LGBT issues (see Figure 1.21). Not only do these policies stifle students' expression, but they also serve to maintain a silence around LGBT issues that could have the effect of further stigmatizing LGBT people.

Over four in ten students (42.0%) said that their schools had disciplined LGBT students for public affection that is not similarly disciplined among non-LGBT students, including 29.8% who had experienced it personally. Over a quarter of LGBTQ students (26.5%) also indicated that their schools prevented students from attending a school dance with someone of the same gender; 15.6% had personally been prevented from attending dances with their chosen date. A quarter (25.2%) said that students in their school had been prevented from discussing or writing about LGBT topics in class assignments and projects, including 15.6% who had experienced this personally. In

addition, just over a fifth of students (23.7%) indicated that their schools had prevented students from wearing clothing or items supporting LGBT issues (e.g., a t-shirt with a rainbow flag), with 13.2% of students reporting that they personally had been prevented from wearing such clothing. Furthermore, almost a tenth of students (9.1%) reported that LGBT students had been disciplined, or disciplined more harshly than their peers, simply because they were LGBT; 3.5% of students have had this happen to them personally.

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### ***Limiting LGBT Inclusion in Extracurricular Activities***

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Students in our survey indicated that some schools also maintained policies and practices that limited LGBT content in extracurricular activities and/or restricted LGBTQ students' participation in these activities. Over a fifth of LGBTQ students (21.2%) reported that students had been hindered in forming or promoting a GSA or official school club supportive of LGBT issues, such as requiring parental permission to participate or refusing to publicize the GSA's events as they do other clubs; 14.1% reported experiencing this personally. And a quarter of students (24.9%) said that their school prevented discussing or writing about LGBT issues in other extracurricular activities, such as the yearbook or school newspaper (see Figure 1.21), with 16.3% of students indicating that they experienced this personally.

## **“Our GSA isn't funded at all, unlike every other after-school club we have. They're all funded.”**

We also asked LGBTQ students in the 2015 survey about their experiences with school sports, specifically whether school staff or coaches had prevented or discouraged students from playing sports because they were LGBT. Over a fifth (22.0%) of students indicated that this had

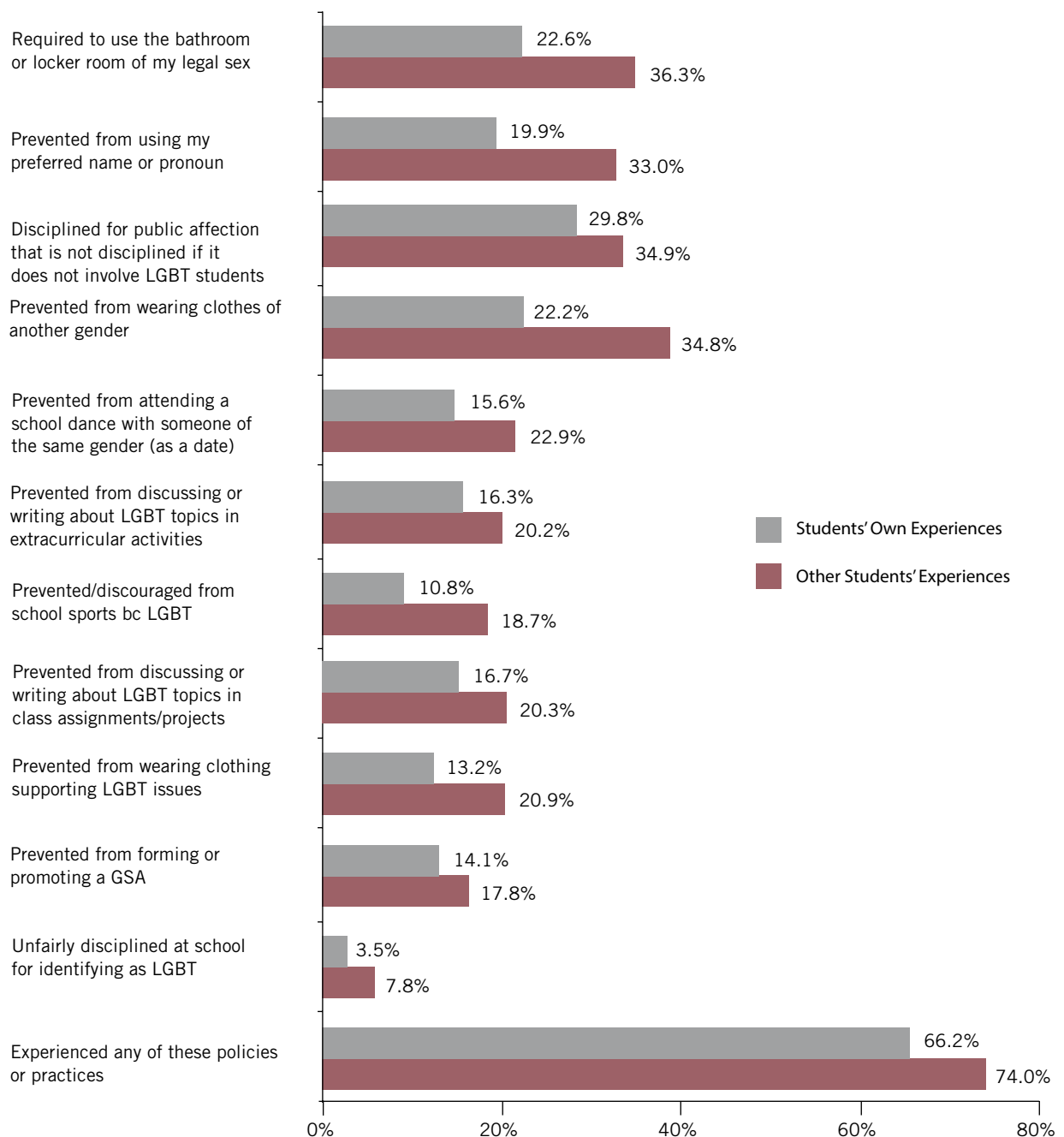


occurred at their school, with one-tenth (10.8%) saying it happened to them personally. This finding corroborates research from the *School Safety* section of this report citing that the school spaces associated with sports, such as locker rooms, PE/Gym class, and athletic fields/facilities, were some of the spaces most commonly avoided by LGBTQ students. This survey's findings on the barriers LGBTQ students face participating in

school athletics also corroborates our previous research on the general secondary student population in which we found that LGBTQ students were half as likely as their peers to participate in interscholastic or intramural sports.

Clearly, some schools are sending the message that LGBT topics, and in some cases, even LGBTQ people, are not appropriate for extracurricular

**Figure 1.21 Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Have Experienced Discriminatory Policies and Practices at School**



activities. By marking official school activities distinctly as non-LGBT, these types of discrimination prevent LGBTQ students from participating in the school community as fully and completely as other students.

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### ***Enforcing Adherence to Traditional Gender Norms***

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Other policies appeared to target students' gender in ways that prescribed certain rules or practices based on students' sex assigned at birth, regardless of their gender identity or preferred gender expression (see Figure 1.21). Less than half of students (40.3%) reported that their school prevented students from wearing clothing deemed "inappropriate" based on their gender (e.g., a boy wearing a dress), with over one-fifth (22.2%) saying it happened to them personally. Over a third of students (38.6%) said that students at their school had been prevented from using their preferred name or pronoun (19.9% personally), and 42.6% said that students at their school had been required to use the bathroom of their legal sex (22.6% personally). These policies were disproportionately reported by transgender students:

- 60.0% of transgender students had been required to use the bathroom or locker room of their legal sex;
- 50.9% of transgender students had been prevented from using their preferred name or pronoun; and
- 28.0% of transgender students had been prevented from wearing clothes because they were considered inappropriate based on their legal sex.

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### ***Gender Segregation in School Activities***

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School policies that segregate the student body by gender by imposing different standards and expectations for boys and girls may negatively impact the LGBTQ student school experience, especially for transgender and other non-cisgender students (i.e., genderqueer). These types of policies can restrict students' own individual expression and invalidate their identities. By reinforcing the gender binary system (the notion that there are only two distinct and opposite genders), these gendered practices may force

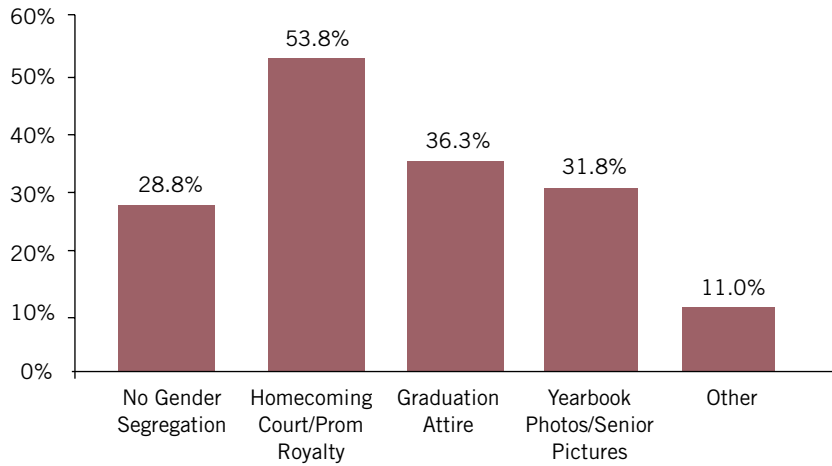
transgender students to identify with a gender that is not consistent with their gender identity, or may put undue pressure on them to come out as transgender when they are not yet ready. Furthermore, gendered spaces, activities, and rules provide no options for students who do not conform to a binary gender (those who do not identify as either male or female), and these students may then feel as if they have no place in school at all.

We asked LGBTQ students about certain school activities that may separate by gender or require different standards for students based on gender. Specifically, we asked about these practices in: student photos, such as yearbook pictures or senior portraits; honors at school dances, such as homecoming or prom king/queen; and graduation attire. We also provided an opportunity for students to indicate additional ways their school segregated student activities by gender. Most students (71.2%) reported that their schools engaged in some form of gendered practice. As shown in Figure 1.22, over half (53.8%) of LGBTQ students reported that their school had gender-specified homecoming courts, prom kings/queens, or other types of honors at dances. In addition to reinforcing the gender binary, selecting a "king" and a "queen" also enforces the idea that heterosexuality is the norm and the only acceptable way of being.

About a third of students in our survey experienced gendered attire at their school for graduation (36.3%), such as different colored-ropes for boys and girls, and for school photos (31.8%), such as having boys wear tuxedos and girls wear dresses for senior portraits (see Figure 1.22). Just over one in ten students (11.0%) reported other types of gender segregation in school activities, the most common being school athletics (e.g., different uniforms, different sports for boys and

**“We had a boys vs. girls rally in the beginning of the year. It reinforced gender stereotypes and was extraordinarily sexist as well.”**

**Figure 1.22 LGBTQ Students' Reports of Ways Schools Separate Activities by Gender or Have Different Requirements Based on Gender**



girls) and music activities, such as chorus, band, or orchestra (e.g., different dress requirements for performances, separation of boys and girls in these activities). In addition, many of the students reporting “other” types of gendered standards discussed school dress codes and uniforms. Some specifically mentioned different standards for dress code, most notably additional specific requirements only applying to girls’ attire, such as skirt/shorts length and sleeve coverage. In addition to reinforcing the gender binary, this type of regulation of female students’ bodies sends a message to students and the school community at large that parts of girls’ bodies are inappropriate and can be regulated or punished. A number of students also discussed activities during special events such as spirit week or pep rallies that pitted boys and girls against each other, such as a “battle of the sexes.”

In order to ensure that schools are welcoming and affirming of all its students, schools should eliminate policies and practices that discriminate against LGBTQ students, including those that treat LGBTQ couples differently, censor expressions of LGBTQ identities, enforce traditional gender norms, needlessly separate students by gender, or maintain different rules or standards for male and female students. Ending these practices can help to provide LGBTQ youth with a more inclusive school experience. In addition, by not engaging in gendered practices, schools will no longer reinforce gender stereotypes that, according to these findings here, are all too pervasive in our nation’s schools.



# Hostile School Climate, Educational Outcomes, and Psychological Well-Being

## Key Findings

- LGBTQ students who did not plan to graduate high school (e.g., who planned to drop out or were not sure if they would finish high school) most commonly reported mental health concerns and hostile school climate as reasons for leaving school.
- LGBTQ students who experienced high levels of in-school victimization:
  - Had lower GPAs than other students;
  - Were less likely to plan to pursue any post-secondary education;
  - Were three times as likely to have missed school in the past month because of safety concerns;
  - Were less likely to feel a sense of belonging to their school community; and
  - Had lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depression.
- LGBTQ students who experienced discrimination at school:
  - Had lower GPAs than other students;
  - Were more than three times as likely to have missed school in the past month because of safety concerns;
  - Were less likely to feel a sense of belonging to their school community; and
  - Had lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depression.

All students deserve equal access to education, yet LGBTQ students can face a variety of obstacles to academic success and opportunity. Given the hostile climates encountered by LGBTQ students documented in previous sections, it is understandable that some students could have poorer outcomes in school. For instance, prior research has found lower educational aspirations among LGBTQ students than their peers, and that unsafe or unwelcoming school environments may contribute to such outcomes.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, school victimization and experiences of discrimination at school can hinder a students' academic success as well as undermine their sense of belonging to their school community. They can also impact their mental health and put them at higher-risk for school discipline. Thus, in this section, we examine in closer detail LGBTQ students' educational experiences and psychological well-being, particularly how they might be affected by hostile school climate.

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### ***Educational Aspirations***

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In order to examine the relationship between school climate and educational outcomes, we asked students about their aspirations with regard to further education, including their plans to complete high school and their highest level of expected educational attainment.

**High School Completion.** As shown in Table 1.5, almost all LGBTQ students (96.6%) in our survey planned to graduate high school. However, 3.4% of LGBTQ students did not plan to complete high school or were not sure if they would. We then asked these specific students whether they planned to obtain a General Education Development (GED)

or similar equivalent. As shown in Table 1.5, most of these students did plan to obtain some type of GED or equivalent (2.4% vs. 1.0% who did not). Some research on high school equivalency certification in the general student population suggests that GED equivalencies are not associated with the same educational attainment and earning potential as high school diplomas.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, some students who planned to get a GED did indicate that they intended to continue on to some type of post-secondary education. Clearly, more research is needed to better understand how LGBTQ students' educational and career plans may be impeded if they are unable to earn high school diplomas.

**Reasons LGBTQ Students May Drop Out of High School.** To better understand why LGBTQ students might not finish high school, we asked those students who indicated they were not planning on completing high school or were not sure if they would graduate about their reasons for leaving school (see Table 1.6). The most common reason LGBTQ students cited for not planning to graduate or being unsure if they would graduate was mental health concerns, such as depression, anxiety, or stress, as given by 86.3% of those who provided reasons for leaving high school.<sup>37</sup> The next most common reason for potentially not graduating was academic concerns (67.5%), including poor grades, high number of absences, or not having enough credits to graduate. In addition, over half of LGBTQ students (60.5%) explicitly reported a hostile school climate as being factor in their decision or doubts about finishing high school. In particular, students noted issues with harassment, unsupportive peers or educators, and gendered school policies/practices. Less common reasons

**Table 1.5 LGBTQ Students' High School Completion Plans**

<b>High School (HS) Graduation Plans</b>	<b>% LGBTQ students</b>
<b>Plan to Graduate HS</b>	<b>96.6%</b>
<b>Do not Plan to Graduate HS or not sure if Will Graduate HS</b>	<b>3.4%</b>
Do not plan to graduate	0.7%
Unsure if will graduate	2.7%
<b>Plans to Receive GED or Equivalent</b>	
Do not plan to obtain a GED or equivalent	1.0%
Plan to obtain a GED or equivalent	2.4%

reported were that students' future occupational plans did not require a high school diploma (23.3%) and family responsibilities, such as having to earn money to help support their family, which imposed barriers to high school completion (13.0%). A few students (6.8%) noted other reasons they might not graduate high school including a lack of motivation and an unsupportive family.

Of course, LGBTQ students may consider dropping out of school for many reasons, some of which may have little to do with their sexual orientation, gender identity, or peer victimization. However, it is possible that some of the mental health and academic concerns cited stem from experiences of a hostile school environment.<sup>38</sup> For example,

school-based victimization may impact students' mental health. This lower mental well-being can also place students at-risk for lower academic achievement.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, a lack of safety may lead to missing school, which can result in a student being pushed out of school by school disciplinary or criminal sanctions for truancy<sup>40</sup> or dropping out of school as a result of poor academic achievement or disengaging with school due to the days missed. In fact, we found that students in our survey who reported missing more days of school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable at school were more likely to report not planning to complete high school.<sup>41</sup> More research to better understand the potentially interconnected mechanisms that lead LGBTQ students to drop out of high school is warranted.

**Table 1.6 Reasons LGBTQ Students Do Not Plan to Graduate High School or Are Unsure If They Will Graduate (n = 400)**

	<b>Students Reporting*</b> (% of students who indicated that they did not plan to graduate or were unsure)	<b>Specific Response Number</b>
<b>Mental Health Concerns</b> (i.e., depression, anxiety, or stress)	<b>86.3%</b>	<b>345</b>
<b>Academic Concerns</b>	<b>67.5%</b>	<b>270</b>
Poor grades	56.5%	226
Absences	38.0%	152
Not enough credits	36.0%	144
<b>Hostile School Climate</b>	<b>60.5%</b>	<b>242</b>
Unsupportive peers	47.3%	189
Harassment	42.5%	170
Unsupportive teachers/staff	34.8%	139
Gendered school policies/practices	32.0%	128
<b>Future Plans Do Not Require High School Diploma</b>	<b>23.3%</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Family Responsibilities</b> (e.g., child care, wage earner)	<b>13.0%</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Other</b> (e.g., unsupportive family, lack of resources, etc.)	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>27</b>

\*Because respondents could select multiple responses, categories are not mutually exclusive. Percentages may not add up to 100%.

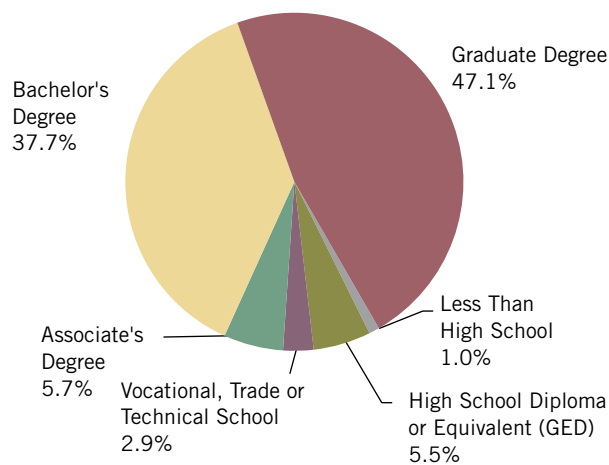
**Postsecondary Aspirations.** When asked about their aspirations with regard to post-secondary education, only 6.5% of LGBTQ students indicated that they did not plan to pursue any type of postsecondary education (i.e., that they only planned to obtain a high school diploma, did not plan to finish high school, or were unsure of their plans). Approximately, over a third (37.7%) said that they planned to complete their education with a college degree (e.g., Bachelor’s degree; see Figure 1.23) and almost half of students (47.1%) reported that they planned to continue on to obtain a graduate degree (e.g., Master’s degree, PhD, or

MD). It is important to note that the 2015 NSCS only included students who were in school during the 2014–2015 school year. Thus, the percentage of LGBTQ students not pursuing post-secondary education would be higher with the inclusion of students who had already dropped out of high school.

### **School Climate and Educational Aspirations**

Students who experience victimization in school may respond by avoiding the harassment, perhaps by dropping out of school or avoiding any further type of formal educational environments, such as college. We assessed the relationship between school safety and educational aspirations for students in our survey and found that LGBTQ students who reported higher levels of victimization based on their sexual orientation or gender expression were more likely than other students to report lower educational aspirations.<sup>42,43</sup> For example, as shown in Figure 1.24, students who experienced a higher severity of victimization based on gender expression were less likely to plan to go on to college or to vocational or trade school, compared those who had experienced less severe victimization (10.0% vs. 5.2%). Discriminatory practices were also related to lower educational aspirations, though the differences were relatively small and were negligible once when we accounted for students’ level of victimization, suggesting that discrimination may not have a direct effect

**Figure 1.23 Educational Aspirations of LGBTQ Students**



**Table 1.7 Academic Achievement of LGBTQ Students by Experiences of Victimization and Discrimination**

	Mean Reported Grade Point Average (GPA)
<b>Peer Victimization</b>	
Sexual Orientation	
Lower victimization	3.3
Higher victimization	2.9
Gender Expression	
Lower victimization	3.3
Higher victimization	2.9
<b>Experiences of Discrimination</b>	
Had Not Experienced Discriminatory Policies or Practices at School	3.4
Had Experienced Discriminatory Policies or Practices at School	3.1



on LGBTQ students' educational aspirations above and beyond the effect of victimization they may be experiencing.<sup>44</sup>

### **School Climate and Academic Achievement**

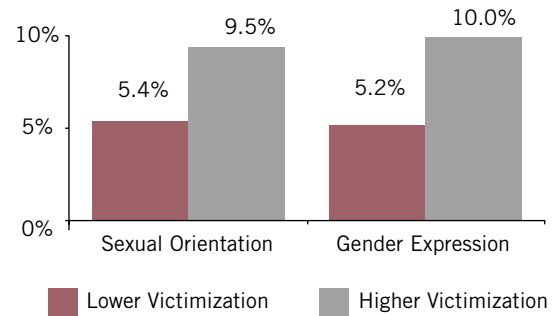
As detailed in the previous section, a hostile school climate can lead LGBTQ students to not want to continue on with their education. However, it can also result in these students struggling academically. We found that more severe victimization was also related to lower academic achievement among LGBTQ students. As shown in Table 1.7, the reported grade point average (GPA) for students who had higher levels of victimization based on their sexual orientation or gender expression was significantly lower than for students who experienced less harassment and assault (2.9 vs. 3.3).<sup>45</sup> As also illustrated in Table 1.7, experiences of institutional discrimination were also related to lower educational achievement and this relationship persisted even after accounting for students' direct experiences of victimization.<sup>46</sup>

### **School Climate and Absenteeism**

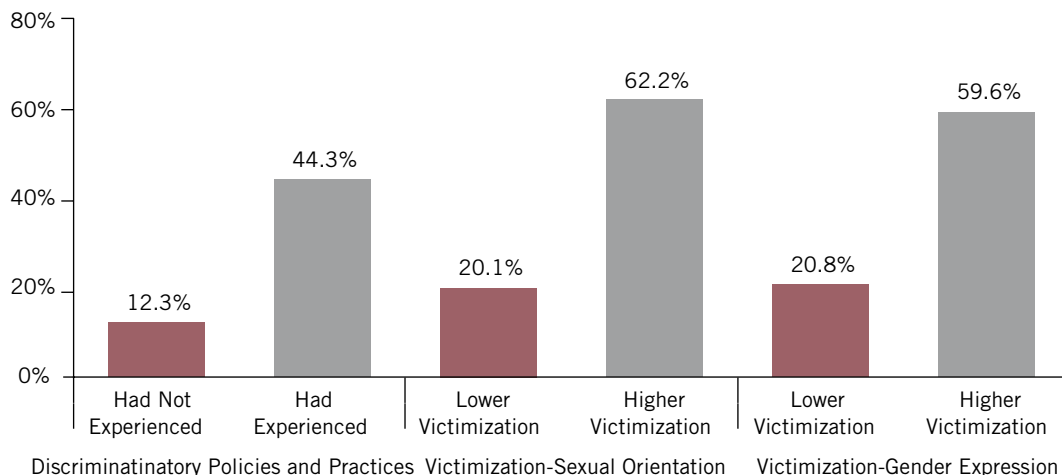
School-based victimization may impinge on a student's right to an education. Students who are regularly harassed or assaulted in school may attempt to avoid these hurtful experiences by not attending school and, accordingly, may be more likely to miss school than students who do not experience such victimization. We found

that experiences of harassment and assault were, in fact, related to missing days of school.<sup>47</sup> As shown in Figure 1.25, students were at least three times as likely to have missed school in the past month if they had experienced higher levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation (62.2% vs. 20.1%) or gender expression (59.6% vs. 20.8%). In addition to victimization, we found that experiences of discrimination were related to missing days of school.<sup>48</sup> As shown in Figure 1.25, LGBTQ students were more than three times as likely to have missed school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable if they had experienced LGBT-related discrimination in their school (44.3% vs. 12.3%). Thus, discriminatory policies and

**Figure 1.24 Educational Aspirations and Severity of Victimization**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Not Planning to Pursue Post-Secondary Education)



**Figure 1.25 Absenteeism by Experiences of Victimization and Discrimination**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Missed At Least a Day of School in Past Month)



**“I have been physically pushed into my locker and had faggot and queer and dyke shouted at me. I was also called a homo and shouted at by a group of other boys. I then got in trouble because they were shouting at me.”**

practices may contribute to a school setting that feels unwelcoming for many LGBTQ students.

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### ***School Climate and School Discipline***

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The use of harsh and exclusionary discipline, such as zero-tolerance policies, has proliferated over the previous several decades for both serious infractions as well as minor violations of school policies.<sup>49</sup> Initially framed as vital to protecting teachers and students,<sup>50</sup> these disciplinary policies are regarded by many as being over-employed in removing students from the traditional school environment.<sup>51</sup> The use of harsh discipline has contributed to higher dropout rates as well as reliance on alternative educational settings, including alternative schools or juvenile justice facilities, where educational supports and opportunities may be less available.<sup>52</sup> Growing awareness of the soaring use of exclusionary school discipline approaches in the U.S. has included some attention to their effect on LGBTQ youth,<sup>53</sup> and school discipline may be an important aspect of school climate for this population. Specifically, it is possible that both the high rates of peer victimization and the school policies that, intentionally or unintentionally, target LGBTQ students may put these students at risk of greater contact with school authorities and increase their likelihood of facing disciplinary sanctions.

**Rates of School Discipline.** We asked LGBTQ students if they had experienced certain types of disciplinary actions. Over a third of respondents (38.3%) in this survey reported having been disciplined at school, including about a quarter who were sent to the principal’s office (23.9%) or who had received detention (26.8%). Over one in ten students (13.2%) reported that they received either in-school or out-of-school suspension, and few students in our survey indicated that they had been expelled (1.3%) (see Figure 1.26).

**Discipline Due to Punitive Responses to Harassment and Assault.** We examined whether students who experienced higher rates of victimization also experienced higher rates of school discipline, perhaps because they were perceived to be the perpetrator in these incidents (see *Reporting of School-Based Harassment and Assault*). LGBTQ youth who reported higher than average levels of victimization based on their sexual orientation or gender expression did experience substantially greater rates of discipline examined in this survey.<sup>54</sup> For example, according to Figure 1.27, 54.9% of students with higher levels of victimization based on sexual orientation experienced school discipline compared to 32.1% of students with lower levels of victimization.

**Discipline Due to Absenteeism.** LGBTQ students who are victimized at school may also miss school because they feel unsafe and thus face potential disciplinary consequences for truancy. We found that students who experienced school discipline were much more likely to have missed school due to safety concerns.<sup>55</sup> 42.6% of students who had been disciplined at school missed at least a day of school, compared to 24.8% of students who had not been disciplined.

**Discipline Due to Discriminatory Policies and Practices.** As discussed in the *Experiences of Discrimination* section, schools may have official policies or unofficial practices that unfairly target LGBTQ youth, which may result in a system in which LGBTQ youth are at greater risk for school discipline if students violate these policies (e.g., violating gendered dress codes). Furthermore, a number of students in our survey noted that LGBTQ youth may be subject to disproportionate punishment for violations, as compared to non-LGBTQ youth (e.g., same-sex couples experiencing harsher discipline for public displays of affection in schools than heterosexual couples). LGBTQ students in our survey who had personally experienced discriminatory policies and

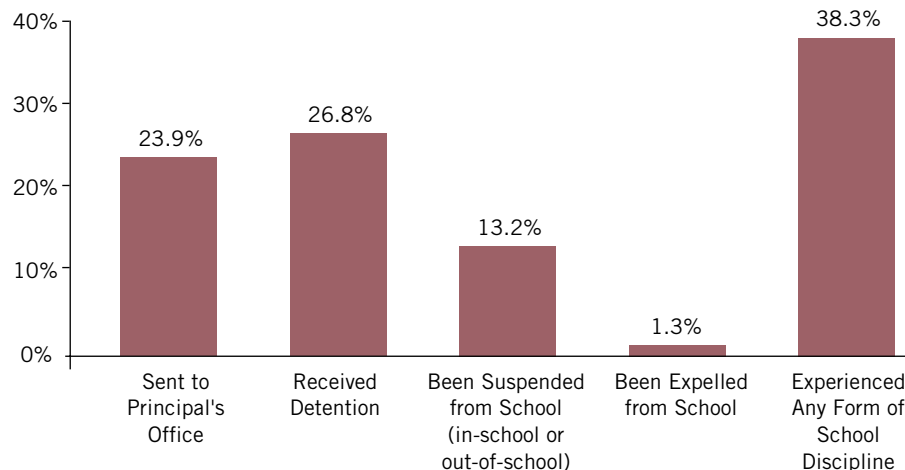
practices at school reported higher rates of school discipline.<sup>56</sup> For example, according to Figure 1.27, 46.0% of students who experienced discrimination at school were disciplined at school compared to 27.9% of students who had not experienced discrimination.

### **School Climate and School Belonging**

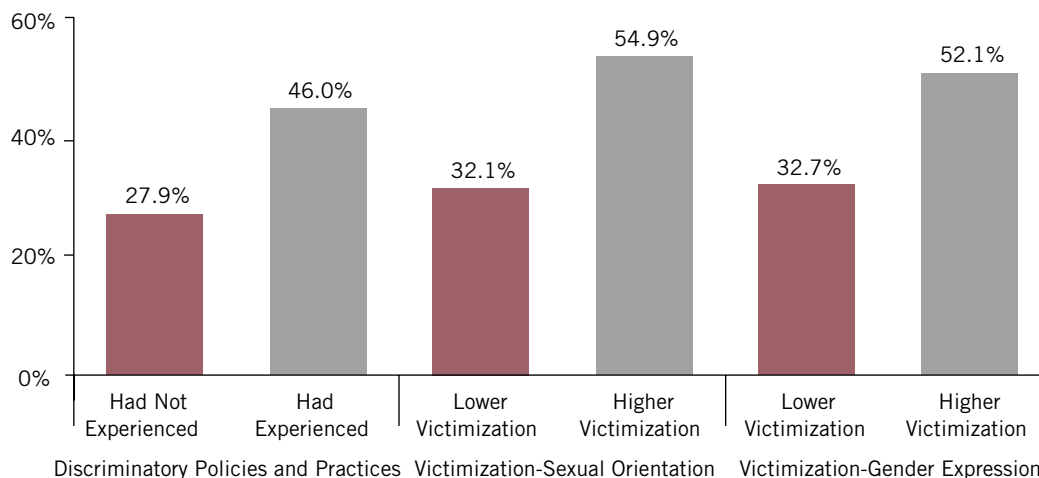
The degree to which students feel accepted by and a part of their school community is another important indicator of school climate, and is related to a number of educational outcomes. For example, having a greater sense of belonging to one's school is related to greater academic

motivation and effort as well as higher academic achievement.<sup>57</sup> Students who experience victimization or discrimination at school may feel excluded and disconnected from their school community. In order to assess LGBTQ students' sense of belonging to their school community, survey participants were given a series of statements about feeling like a part of their school and were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statements.<sup>58</sup> As illustrated in Figure 1.28, students who experienced a higher severity of victimization based on sexual orientation or gender expression had lower levels of school belonging than students who experienced less severe victimization in school.<sup>59</sup> For example,

**Figure 1.26 Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Have Experienced School Discipline**



**Figure 1.27 School Discipline by Experiences of Victimization and Discrimination**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Experienced School Discipline)



nearly two thirds (62.9%) of students who experienced lower levels of victimization based on their sexual orientation reported a greater sense of connection to their school, compared to less than one quarter (24.6%) of students who experienced more severe victimization based on sexual orientation. Experiencing discriminatory policies and practices at school was also related to decreased feelings of connectedness to the school community. As also illustrated in Figure 1.28, students who experienced school-based discrimination were twice as likely to report lower levels of belonging compared to students who had not experienced school-based discrimination (78.8% vs. 36.6%).<sup>60</sup>

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### ***School Climate and Psychological Well-Being***

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Previous research has shown that being harassed or assaulted at school may have a negative impact on students' mental health and self-esteem.<sup>61</sup> Given that LGBTQ students face an increased likelihood for experiencing harassment and assault in school,<sup>62</sup> it is especially important to examine how these experiences relate to their well-being. As illustrated in Figure 1.29, LGBTQ students who reported more severe victimization regarding their sexual orientation or gender expression had lower levels of self-esteem<sup>63,64</sup> and higher levels of depression than those who reported less severe victimization.<sup>65,66</sup> For example, 67.1% of students who experienced higher levels of victimization based on sexual orientation demonstrated higher levels of depression compared to 35.7% of students who experienced lower levels of victimization (see Figure 1.30).

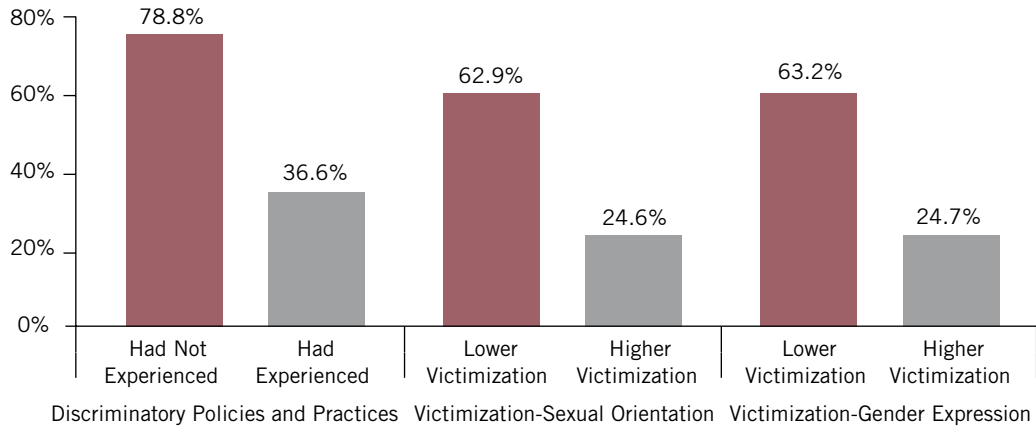
Discrimination and stigma have been found to adversely affect the well-being of LGBTQ people.<sup>67</sup> We found that LGBTQ students in our

survey who reported experiencing discriminatory policies or practices in school had lower levels of self-esteem<sup>68</sup> and higher levels of depression<sup>69</sup> than students who did not report experiencing this discrimination (see also Figure 1.30). For example, only 31.8% of students who experienced discrimination demonstrated higher levels of self-esteem compared to 56.7% of students who did not experience anti-LGBT discrimination at school.

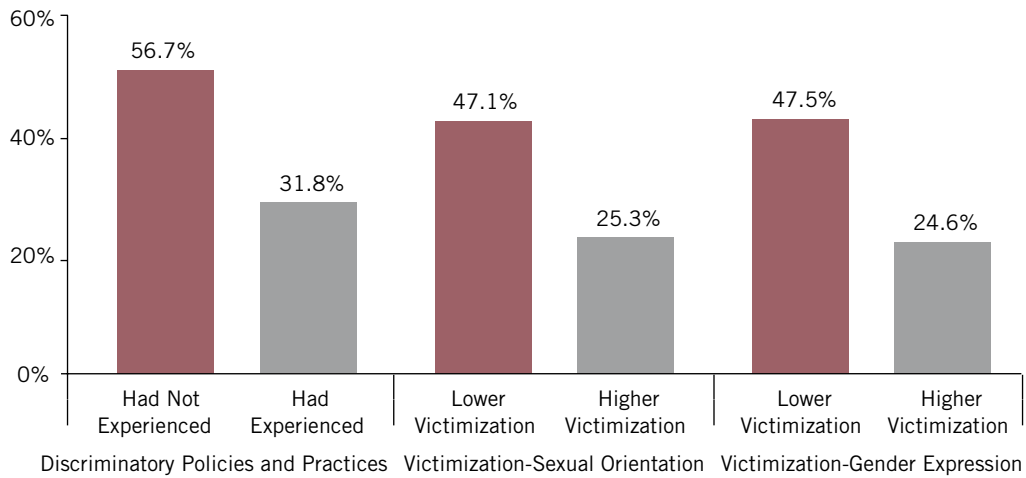
Of note, even though discrimination and victimization often co-occur, we found discrimination to be related to these psychological outcomes even when accounting for students' level of victimization, indicating that discrimination may have a negative effect on students' well-being independent of victimization.

The findings in this section provide insight into how peer victimization and institutional discrimination may lead to less welcoming schools and more negative educational outcomes for LGBTQ students. LGBTQ students who experience victimization and discrimination are more likely to have lower educational aspirations, lower grades, and higher absenteeism. They are also more likely to experience school discipline, which can result in pushing students out of school, and at times, into the criminal justice system.<sup>70</sup> These findings also demonstrate that hostile school climates can negatively impact LGBTQ students' sense of school belonging and psychological well-being. In order to ensure that LGBTQ students are afforded supportive learning environments and equal educational opportunities, community and school advocates should work to prevent and respond to in-school victimization and to eliminate school policies and practices that discriminate against LGBTQ youth.

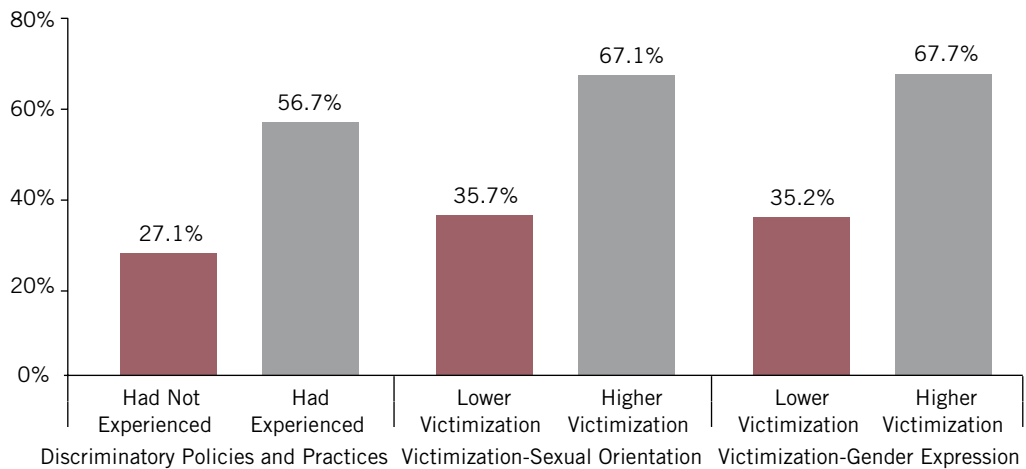
**Figure 1.28 School Belonging by Experiences of Victimization and Discrimination**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students with Higher School Belonging)



**Figure 1.29 Self-Esteem by Experiences of Victimization and Discrimination**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students with Higher Levels of Self-Esteem)



**Figure 1.30 Depression by Discrimination and Severity of Victimization**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Demonstrating Higher Levels of Depression)





# **PART TWO: SCHOOL- BASED RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS**







# Availability of School-Based Resources and Supports

## Key Findings

- Just over half of LGBTQ students attended a school that had a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or similar student club that addressed LGBT issues in education.
- Most students did not have access to information about LGBT-related topics in their school library, through the Internet on school computers, or in their textbooks or other assigned readings.
- About 1 in 5 students were taught positive representations of LGBT people, history, or events in their classes. Nearly the same amount had been taught negative content about LGBT topics.
- Almost all students could identify at least one school staff member whom they believed was supportive of LGBT students.
- A little over a third of students reported that their school administration was supportive of LGBT students.
- Few students reported that their school had a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy that specifically included protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

The availability of resources and supports in school for LGBTQ students is another important dimension of school climate. There are several key resources that may help to promote a safer climate and more positive school experiences for students: student clubs that address issues for LGBTQ students, school personnel who are supportive of LGBTQ students, LGBT-inclusive curricular materials, and school policies for addressing incidents of harassment and assault. Thus, we examined the availability of these resources and supports among LGBTQ students.

### **Supportive Student Clubs**

For all students, including LGBTQ students, participation in extracurricular activities is related to a number of positive outcomes, such as academic achievement and greater school engagement.<sup>71</sup> Supportive student clubs for LGBTQ students, often known as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) or sometimes as Queer Student Alliances or Gender and Sexuality Alliances, can provide LGBTQ students in particular with a safe and affirming space within a school environment that they may otherwise experience as hostile.<sup>72</sup> GSAs may also provide leadership opportunities for students and potential avenues for creating positive school change. In our survey, more than half of LGBTQ students (54.0%) said that their school had a GSA or similar student club. Among students with a GSA in their school, over half (54.1%) said that they attended club meetings at least sometimes, and about a quarter (26.4%) had participated as a leader or an officer in their club (see Table 2.1). Although most LGBTQ students reported participating in their GSA at some level, a little more than a third (34.0%) had not.

There is a small body of research examining why LGBTQ students may or may not participate in their school's GSA. Some research suggests that experiences of harassment and discrimination may motivate students to attend,<sup>73</sup> and other literature suggests that some groups of students may be discouraged from attending because they do not perceive their schools' GSAs to be inclusive,<sup>74</sup> or they are concerned about a potential lack of confidentiality,<sup>75</sup> but more research is needed in this area. Nevertheless, GSA leaders and advisors should assess potential barriers to GSA attendance at their school and take steps to ensure that GSA meetings are accessible to a diverse range of LGBTQ students.

### **Inclusive Curricular Resources**

LGBTQ student experiences may also be shaped by inclusion of LGBT-related information in the curriculum. Learning about LGBT historical events and positive role models may enhance LGBTQ students' engagement with the school community and provide valuable information about the LGBTQ community. Students in our survey were asked whether they had been exposed to representations of LGBT people, history, or events in lessons at school, and the majority of respondents (63.0%) said that their classes did not include these topics (see Figure 2.1). Of the remaining students who indicated that LGBT topics had been discussed in one or more of their classes, the majority said that they were covered in a positive way (22.4% of the full sample), and slightly fewer said that they were covered in a negative manner (17.9% of the full sample). Among the students who had been taught positive things about LGBT-related topics in class, History/Social Studies and English were the classes most often mentioned as being inclusive of these topics (see Table 2.2).

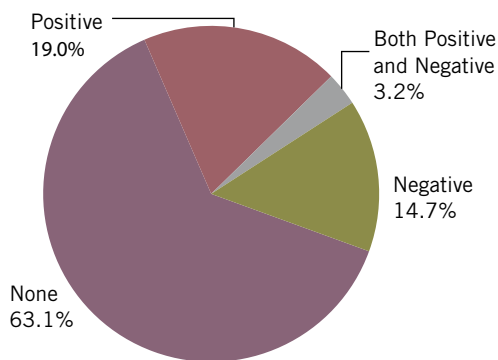
We also asked students about their ability to access information about LGBT issues that teachers may not be covering in class, such as additional reading materials featuring information about LGBT issues. These types of LGBT-related curricular resources were not available for most LGBTQ students in our survey. As Figure 2.2 illustrates, less than

**Table 2.1 Availability of and Participation in Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs)**

<b>Have a GSA at School</b>	
No	46.0%
Yes	54.0%
<b>Frequency of GSA Meeting Attendance (n = 5669)</b>	
Never	34.0%
Rarely	11.9%
Sometimes	11.0%
Often	7.8%
Frequently	35.3%
<b>Acted as a Leader or Officer (n = 5649)</b>	
No	73.6%
Yes	26.4%

**“The high school I go to needs to give more information to all students about LGBTQ+ people because the lack of gender and sexuality (and also sex education) information is hurting us LGBTQ+ kids because we thought that who we are is wrong. We are taught that everyone is straight, that there’s only two genders, and that anyone that is out of the norm is wrong and is condemned. I do not want to be condemned anymore.”**

**Figure 2.1 Representations of LGBT-Related Topics Taught in Any Classroom Curriculum**

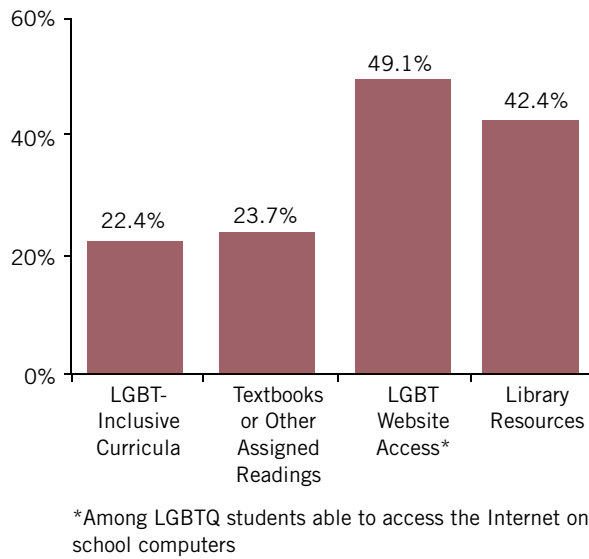


half (42.4%) reported that they could find books or information on LGBT-related topics, such as LGBT history, in their school library. In addition, just about half of students (49.1%) with Internet access at school reported being able to access LGBT-related information via school computers. Furthermore, less than a quarter (23.7%) reported that LGBT-related topics were included in textbooks or other assigned class readings.

**Table 2.2 Positive Representations of LGBT-Related Topics Taught in Class**

<b>Classes</b>	<b>% among Students Taught Positive Rep of LGBT-Related Topics (n = 2319)</b>	<b>% of all Students in Survey (n = 10445)</b>
History or Social Studies	58.0%	12.8%
English	43.7%	9.7%
Health	25.8%	5.7%
Science	14.5%	3.2%
Psychology	14.2%	3.1%
Art	13.0%	2.9%
Foreign Language	12.7%	2.8%
Music	11.5%	2.5%
Gym or Physical Education	5.6%	1.2%
Sociology	7.8%	1.7%
Math	4.6%	1.0%
Other Class (e.g., Drama, Philosophy)	11.4%	2.5%

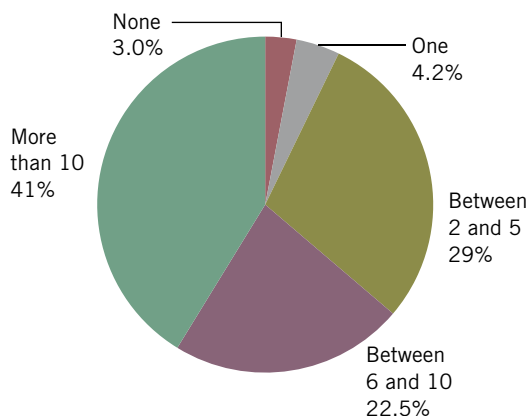
**Figure 2.2 Availability of LGBT-Related Curricular Resources**



### Supportive School Personnel

Supportive teachers, principals, and other school staff serve as another important resource for LGBTQ students. Being able to speak with a caring adult in school may have a significant positive impact on the school experiences for students, particularly those who feel marginalized or experience harassment. In our survey, almost all students (97.0%) could identify at least one school staff member whom they believed was supportive of LGBTQ students at their school, and 63.7% could identify six or more supportive school staff (see Figure 2.3).

**Figure 2.3 LGBTQ Students' Reports on the Number of Teachers and Other School Staff Who are Supportive of LGBT Students**

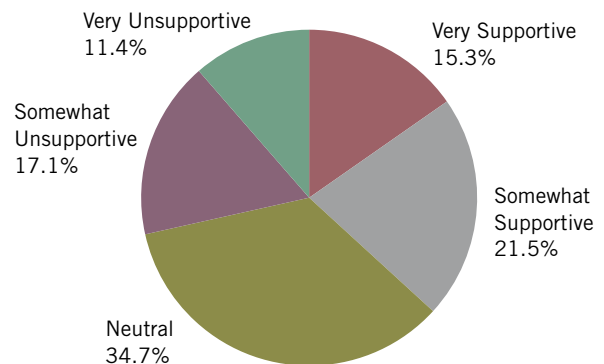


As the leaders of the school, school administrators may play a particularly important role in the school experiences of LGBTQ youth. They may serve not only as caring adults to whom the youth can turn, but they also set the tone of the school and determine specific policies and programs that may affect the school's climate. As shown in Figure 2.4, over one-third of LGBTQ students (36.8%) reported that their school administration (e.g. principal, vice principal) was very or somewhat supportive of LGBTQ students, yet more than a quarter of students (28.5%) said their administration was very or somewhat unsupportive.

To understand whether certain types of educators were more likely to be seen as supportive, we asked LGBTQ students how comfortable they would feel talking one-on-one with various school personnel about LGBT-related issues. As shown in Figure 2.5, students reported that they would feel most comfortable talking with teachers and school-based mental health professionals (e.g., school counselors, social workers, or psychologists): 58.0% said they would be somewhat or very comfortable talking with a teacher and 51.7% would be somewhat or very comfortable talking about LGBT issues with a mental health staff member. Fewer students in our survey said they would feel comfortable talking one-on-one with a school nurse, school librarian, principal or vice principal, athletic coach/Physical Education (P.E.) teacher, or school safety officer about these issues (see also Figure 2.5).<sup>76</sup>

In addition to comfort level, students were asked how frequently in the past school year they had

**Figure 2.4 LGBTQ Students' Reports on How Supportive Their School Administration is of LGBT Students**



**“Only one teacher I knew last year spoke highly and nicely of transgender people. Many others either ignore that we exist, or they put us down. No more of that. Please, help schools to give accurate, helpful, and kind information about gender identity and sexuality.”**

engaged in positive or helpful conversations with school personnel about LGBT-related issues. Nearly two-thirds of LGBTQ students (63.7%) spoke with a teacher about LGBT issues at least once in the past year (see Figure 2.6), yet only a minority of students reported ever having had conversations about LGBT-related issues with other types of school staff. Given that students reported higher levels of comfort talking to teachers about LGBT issues compared to other school staff, it is not surprising that they were more likely to speak with teachers about these issues.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, because students spend more time with teachers than other types of school staff, they may have more opportunity for discussion on any topic. It may be that students have less daily interaction with school staff other than teachers, and thus fewer opportunities for positive conversations about LGBT issues than they have with their teachers. However, it may also be that LGBTQ students perceive that these other staff members are less willing to support LGBTQ students, especially given that they report low levels of comfort with these staff members, with the exception of school mental health professionals.

Supportive teachers and other school staff members serve an important function in the lives of LGBTQ youth, helping them feel safer in

school as well as promoting their sense of school belonging and psychological well-being. One way educators can demonstrate their support for LGBTQ youth is through visible displays of such support, such as Safe Space stickers and posters. (These stickers and posters are part of GLSEN's Safe Space Kit,<sup>78</sup> an educator resource aimed at making learning environments more positive for LGBTQ students.) These materials are intended to provide visible evidence of staff members who are allies to LGBTQ students and who can be turned to for support or needed intervention.

In order to assess the visibility of Safe Space stickers and posters at school, we asked students if they had seen them displayed in their school. Over one quarter of LGBTQ students (29.1%) in this survey had spotted at least one Safe Space sticker or poster at their school, whereas nearly two-thirds of students (66.4%) had not seen either a sticker or poster, and a small minority (4.5%) was not sure whether they had (see Figure 2.7).

The presence of LGBT school personnel who are out or open at school about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity may provide another source of support for LGBTQ students. In addition, the number of out LGBT personnel may provide a sign of a more supportive and accepting school climate. Over a third of students (44.3%) in our survey said they could identify an out LGBT staff person at their school (see Figure 2.8).

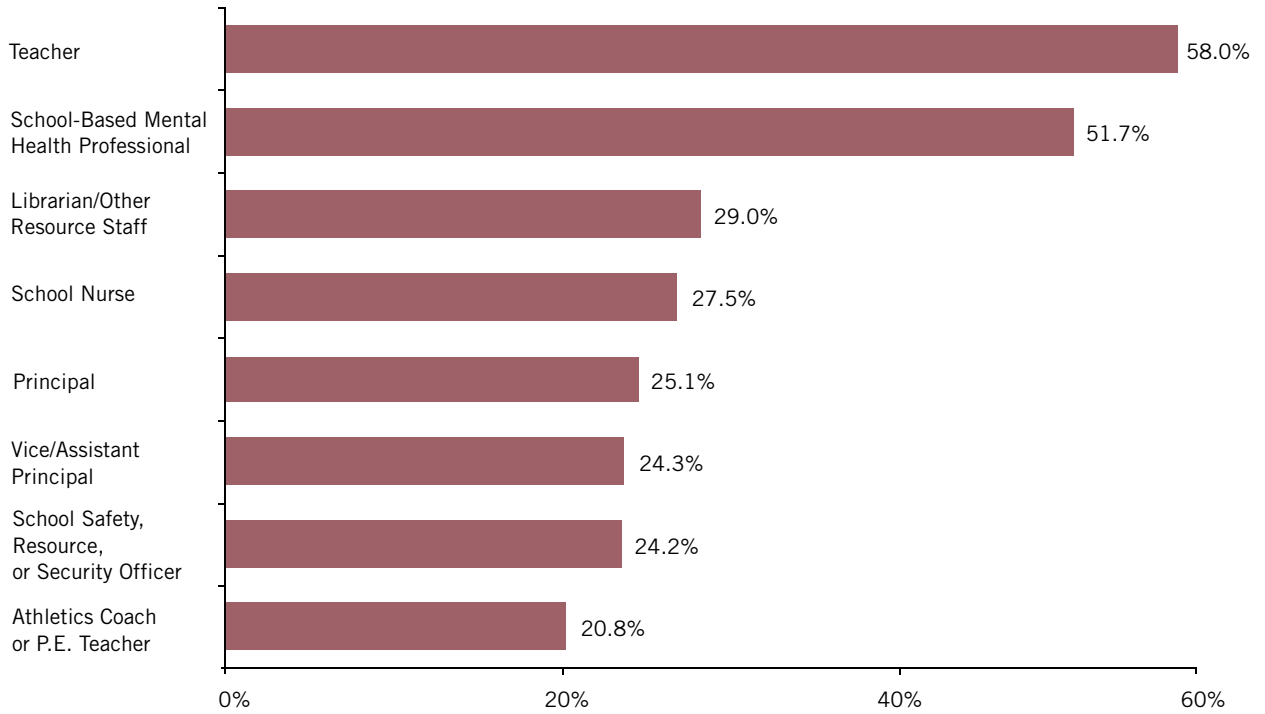
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### ***School Policies for Addressing Bullying, Harassment, and Assault***

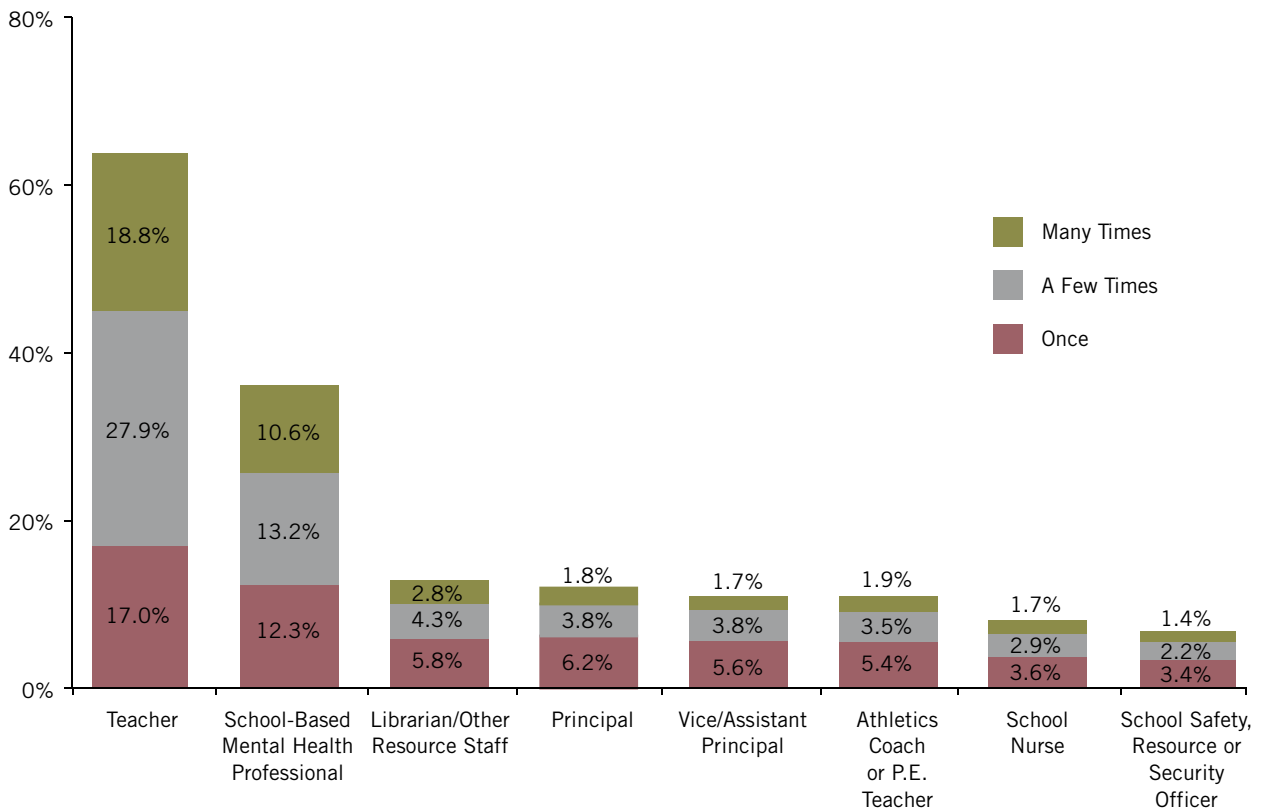
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School policies that address in-school bullying, harassment, and assault can be powerful tools for creating school environments where students feel safe. These types of policies can explicitly state protections based on personal characteristics, such as sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, among others. In this report, we refer to a “comprehensive” policy as one that explicitly enumerates protections based on personal characteristics, including both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. When a school has and enforces a comprehensive policy, especially one which also includes procedures for reporting incidents to school authorities, it can send a message that bullying, harassment, and assault are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Comprehensive school policies may also provide students with greater protection

**Figure 2.5 Comfort Talking with School Personnel about LGBT Issues**  
 (Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting That They Would Be Somewhat or Very Comfortable)



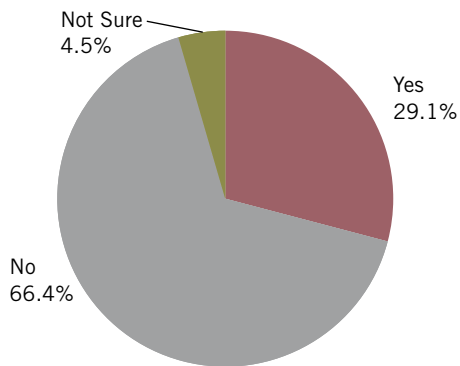
**Figure 2.6 Frequency that LGBTQ Students Talked to School Staff about LGBT Issues in the Past School Year**



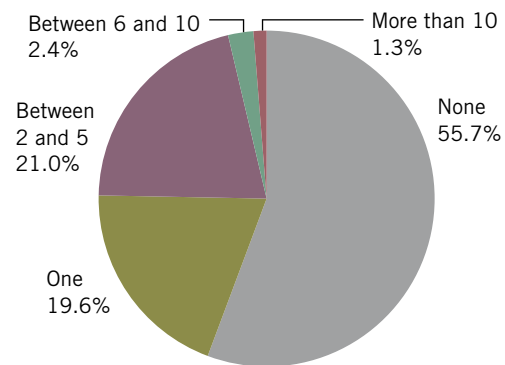
because they make clear the various forms of victimization that will not be tolerated. They may also demonstrate that student safety, including the safety of LGBTQ students, is taken seriously by school administrators. “Partially enumerated” policies explicitly mention sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, but not both, and may not provide the same level of protection for LGBTQ students. “Generic” anti-bullying or anti-harassment school policies do not enumerate sexual orientation or gender identity/expression as protected categories.

LGBTQ students in our survey were asked whether their school had a policy about in-school bullying, harassment, or assault, and if that policy explicitly included sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. Although a majority of students (83.6%) reported that their school had some type of policy (see Table 2.3), only 10.2% of students in our survey reported that their school had a comprehensive policy that specifically mentioned both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression (see also Table 2.3).

**Figure 2.7 Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Had Seen Safe Space Sticker or Poster in School**



**Figure 2.8 LGBTQ Students' Reports on the Number of Openly LGBT Teachers or Other School Staff**



**Table 2.3 LGBTQ Students' Reports of School Bullying, Harassment, and Assault Policies**

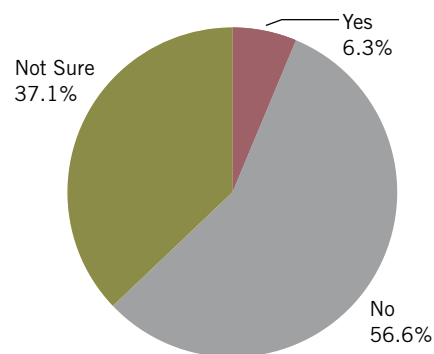
<b>No Policy/Don't Know</b>	16.4%
<b>Any Policy</b>	83.6%
Generic (enumerates neither sexual orientation nor gender expression/ unsure if policy includes enumeration)	59.2%
Partially Enumerated	14.1%
<i>Sexual orientation only</i>	13.2%
<i>Gender identity/expression only</i>	0.9%
Comprehensive (enumerates both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression)	10.2%

# Insight on Policies and Guidelines on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education informed all schools and districts that Title IX, the component of the federal civil rights law that outlaws sex discrimination in education, applies to discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression.<sup>79</sup> Despite this federal requirement, many transgender and gender nonconforming students are still facing discrimination at school, such as being prevented from using bathrooms or locker rooms consistent with their gender identity (see the *Experiences of Discriminatory Policies and Practices* section). Some state and local education agencies have developed explicit policies and implemented practices designed to ensure transgender and gender nonconforming students are provided with equal access to education;<sup>80</sup> however, little is known about the prevalence or the content of these types of policies. In our 2015 survey, we asked LGBTQ students whether their school or district had official policies or guidelines to support transgender or gender nonconforming students. A small portion of LGBTQ students (6.3%) indicated that their school or district had such a policy, whereas a majority reported that they did not, and a substantive amount noted that they were not sure (see figure below).<sup>81</sup>

We examined whether the presence of a policy supporting transgender and gender nonconforming students was related to non-cisgender students' and gender nonconforming cisgender students' experiences of gender-related discrimination at school. We found that, for transgender students, having a supportive policy was related to a lower likelihood of gender-related discrimination — specifically, being prevented from using bathrooms/locker rooms of their gender identity, wearing clothes not deemed appropriate for their legal sex, and using their preferred name and pronoun.<sup>82</sup> However, there were no differences in experiences of discrimination for genderqueer students, students of another gender identity (e.g., bigender, agender), or gender nonconforming cisgender students. It may be that these policies are less likely to address the concerns of non-binary students and/or that the areas that are most often addressed in the policies — sex-segregated spaces and names/pronouns — are not as relevant to these other students as they are to transgender students.

Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Their School Has Policy/Guidelines Regarding Transgender and/or Gender Nonconforming Students



Districts and schools should proactively implement both specific, comprehensive policies and relevant professional development to ensure that schools are safe and accessible places for transgender and gender nonconforming youth. District and school administrators can consult model policies, such as the one created by GLSEN and the National Center for Transgender Equality,<sup>83</sup> for sample language and best practices. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Education issued further guidance to all districts providing specific information on how schools should accommodate transgender and gender nonconforming students.<sup>84</sup> This guidance may result in an increase in district response to ensuring the rights of their transgender and gender nonconforming students in coming years. However, in that it is administrative guidance and not a law passed through congressional legislation, the government could choose to rescind it at any point. In fact, as of the publication date of this report, this guidance is being challenged in federal court.<sup>85</sup>

**“Teachers and other staff will respect an individual’s pronouns and name. People can request that an e-mail go out to all staff about preferred name/pronouns. Although, a student has to choose between she or he.”**



# Utility of School-Based Resources and Supports

## Key Findings

- LGBTQ students experienced a safer, more positive school environment when:
  - Their school had a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or similar student club;
  - They were taught positive representations of LGBT people, history, and events through their school curriculum;
  - They had supportive school staff who frequently intervened in biased remarks and effectively responded to reports of harassment and assault; and
  - Their school had an anti-bullying/harassment policy that specifically included protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

**“GSAs are so so so so so important. Queer youth NEED to meet other queer youth and it is difficult to do that without a school-established GSA. I wish there was more protection in creating and allowing a GSA to survive and not having to worry that it will be abolished.”**

School-based resources, such as supportive student clubs (e.g., Gay-Straight Alliances, or GSAs), LGBT-inclusive curricula, supportive school personnel, and comprehensive, enumerated policies for addressing bullying, harassment, and assault, may help create a more positive school environment for LGBTQ students. These institutional supports may provide formal processes and structures for addressing LGBT-related issues in schools, which then may foster better school outcomes and well-being for students. In this section, we examine the relationship between school-based institutional supports and school climate, as well as educational indicators, such as absenteeism, academic achievement, educational aspirations, and school belonging, and indicators of student well-being such as self-esteem and depression.

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### ***Supportive Student Clubs***

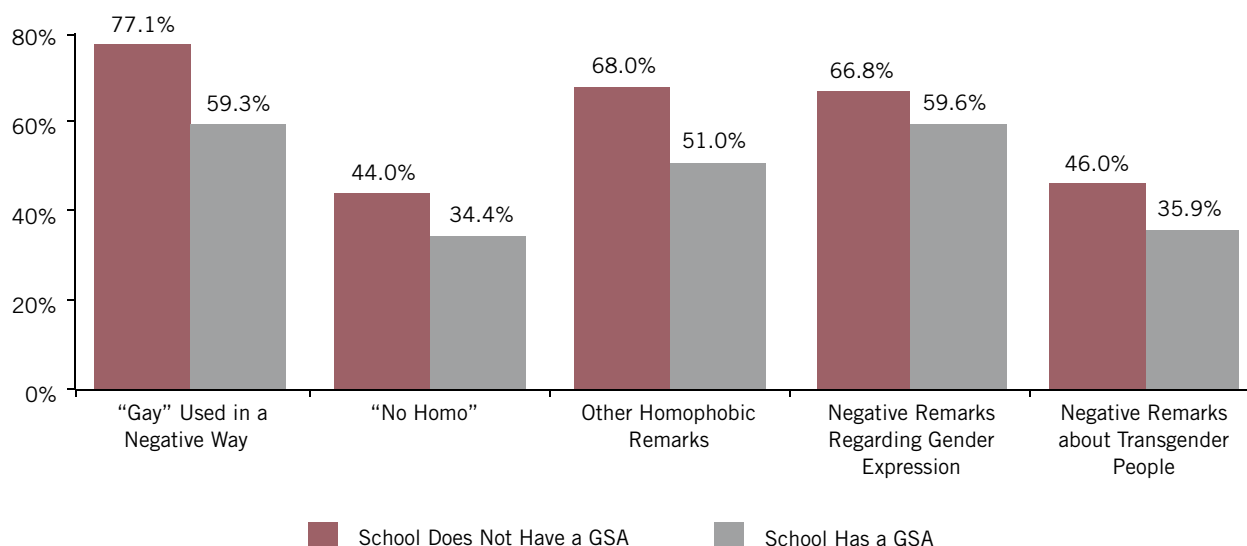
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Student clubs that address issues of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression (such as Gay-Straight Alliances, or GSAs) can provide a safe space for LGBTQ students and their allies to meet, socialize, and advocate for changes in their schools and communities. The presence of a GSA may also contribute to a more respectful student body by raising awareness of LGBTQ issues, as well as demonstrate to LGBTQ students that they have allies in their schools. As such, GSAs can contribute to safer and more inclusive schools for LGBTQ students.

**Biased Language, School Safety, and Absenteeism.** We found that LGBTQ students in our survey who attended schools with a GSA:

- Heard anti-LGBT remarks less frequently than LGBTQ students in schools without a GSA. For

**Figure 2.9 Presence of Gay-Straight Alliances and Frequency of Hearing Biased Remarks**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Hearing Remarks Often or Frequently)



instance, 51.0% of students in schools with a GSA reported hearing homophobic remarks such as “fag” or “dyke” often or frequently, compared to 68.0% of students in schools without a GSA (see Figure 2.9);<sup>86</sup>

- Were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation (50.2% vs. 66.3% of students without a GSA) or gender expression (39.1% vs. 48.2%; Figure 2.10);<sup>87</sup> and
- Experienced less severe victimization related to their sexual orientation or gender expression. For example, two in ten students (20.1%) in schools with a GSA experienced higher levels of victimization based on their sexual orientation, compared to more than one-third of students (36.1%) in schools without GSAs (see Figure 2.11).<sup>88</sup>

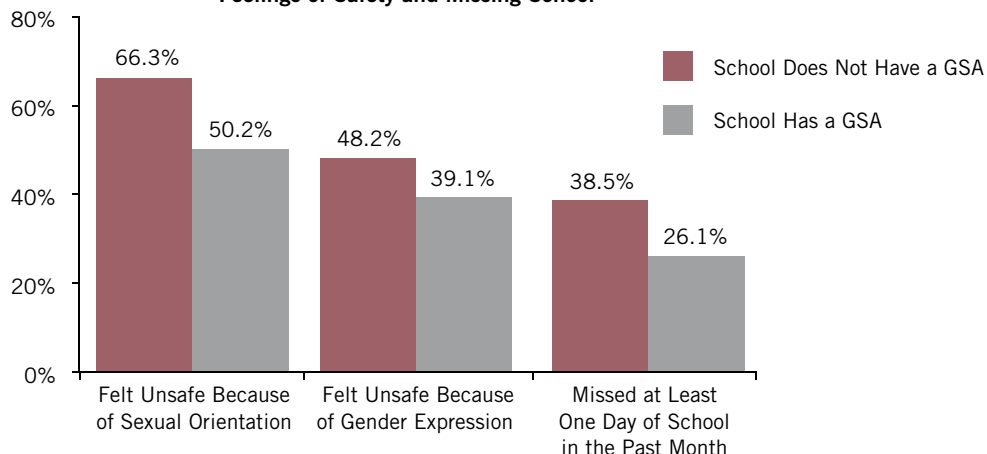
Perhaps in part because of the positive effect of GSAs on school climate, LGBTQ students in schools with a GSA were less likely to have missed school in the past month because of feeling unsafe or uncomfortable (26.1% compared to 38.5% without a GSA; see Figure 2.10).<sup>89</sup>

**Students' Connections to School Staff.** Given that GSAs typically include at least one faculty advisor, the presence of a GSA may make it easier for LGBTQ students to identify a supportive school staff person. Indeed, students in schools with a GSA were slightly more likely to say their schools had supportive staff members than students in schools without a GSA (99.3% vs. 94.1%), as shown in Figure 2.12.<sup>90</sup>

By increasing awareness of anti-LGBT bias in the school environment or promoting training for educators on LGBT issues, GSAs may help increase rates of staff intervention in anti-LGBT biased remarks: staff in schools with GSAs intervened in homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression more frequently than educators in schools without a GSA.<sup>91</sup> For example, 20.6% of staff in schools with GSAs intervened in homophobic remarks most of the time or always, compared to 12.0% of staff in schools without GSAs (see Figure 2.13).

**Peer Acceptance and Intervention.** GSAs provide an opportunity for LGBTQ students and their allies to meet together in the school environment, and they may also provide an opportunity for LGBTQ students and issues to be visible to other students in school. In addition, GSAs may engage in activities designed to combat anti-LGBT prejudice and raise awareness about LGBTQ issues, such as the Day of Silence.<sup>92</sup> As such, they may foster greater acceptance of LGBTQ people among the student body, which then may result in a more positive school climate for LGBTQ students. Students who attended schools with a GSA were much more likely to report that their classmates were accepting of LGBTQ people. Overall, 49.3% of students said their peers were somewhat or very accepting of LGBT people.<sup>93</sup> However, as shown in Figure 2.14, students in schools with GSAs were almost twice as likely to describe their peers as accepting compared to students in schools without a GSA (61.0% vs. 35.4%).<sup>94</sup> GSAs were also related to increased student intervention in biased remarks. Students in schools with GSAs reported

**Figure 2.10 Presence of Gay-Straight Alliances and LGBTQ Students' Feelings of Safety and Missing School**

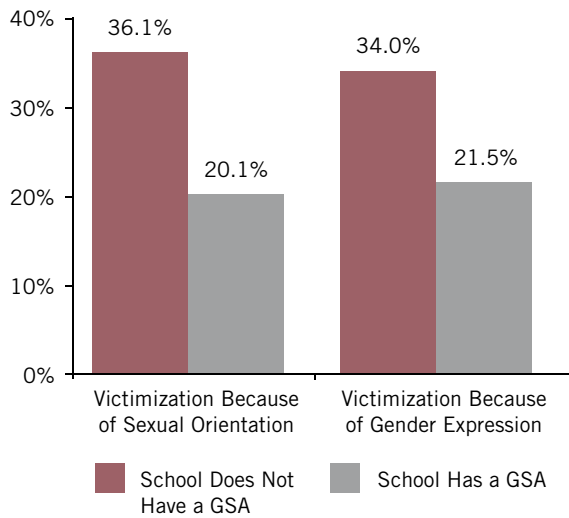


that other students intervened more often when hearing homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression than those in schools without GSAs (see Figure 2.13).<sup>95</sup>

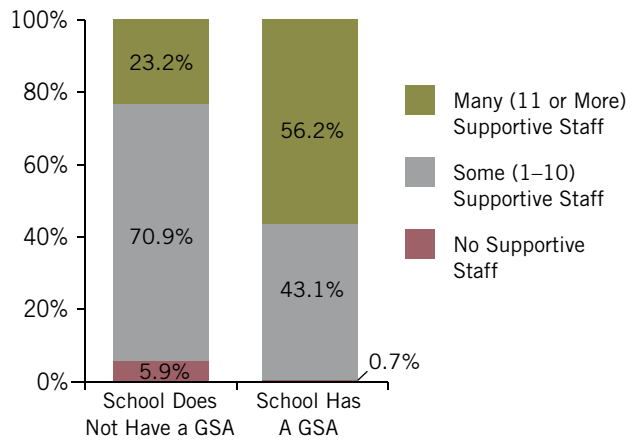
**School Belonging and Student Well-Being.** Given that GSAs are related to more supportive educators and more accepting peers, it is not surprising that LGBTQ students with a GSA also reported higher levels of school belonging.<sup>96</sup> Increased feelings of belonging and greater sense of safety may have a positive effect on LGBTQ student well-being. In

**Figure 2.11 Presence of Gay-Straight Alliances and Victimization**

(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Experiencing Higher Levels of Victimization)

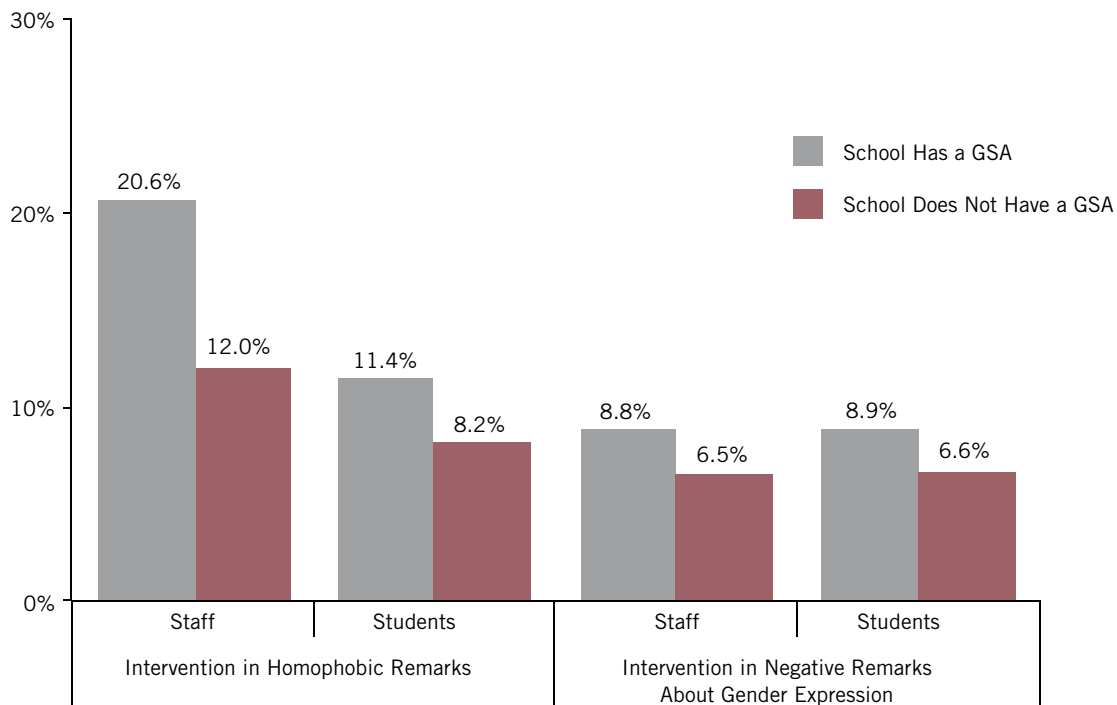


**Figure 2.12 Presence of Gay-Straight Alliances and Number of School Staff Supportive of LGBT Students**



**Figure 2.13 Presence of Gay-Straight Alliances and Intervention in Anti-LGBT Remarks**

(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting that Staff and Students Intervene Most of the Time or Always)



fact, we found that LGBTQ students in schools with GSAs reported lower levels of depression than students in schools without GSAs.<sup>97</sup>

### Inclusive Curriculum

Many experts in multicultural education believe that a curriculum that is inclusive of diverse groups — including culture, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation — instills a belief in the intrinsic worth of all individuals and in the value of a diverse society.<sup>98</sup> Including LGBT-related issues in the curriculum in a positive manner may make

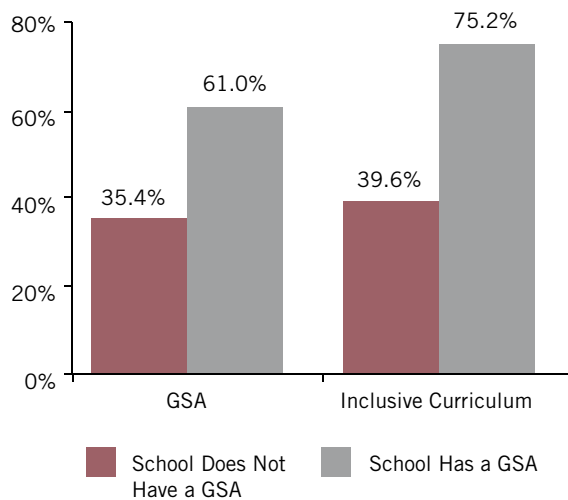
LGBTQ students feel like more valued members of the school community, and it may also promote more positive feelings about LGBTQ issues and persons among their peers, thereby resulting in a more positive school climate.<sup>99</sup>

### Biased Language, School Safety, and Absenteeism.

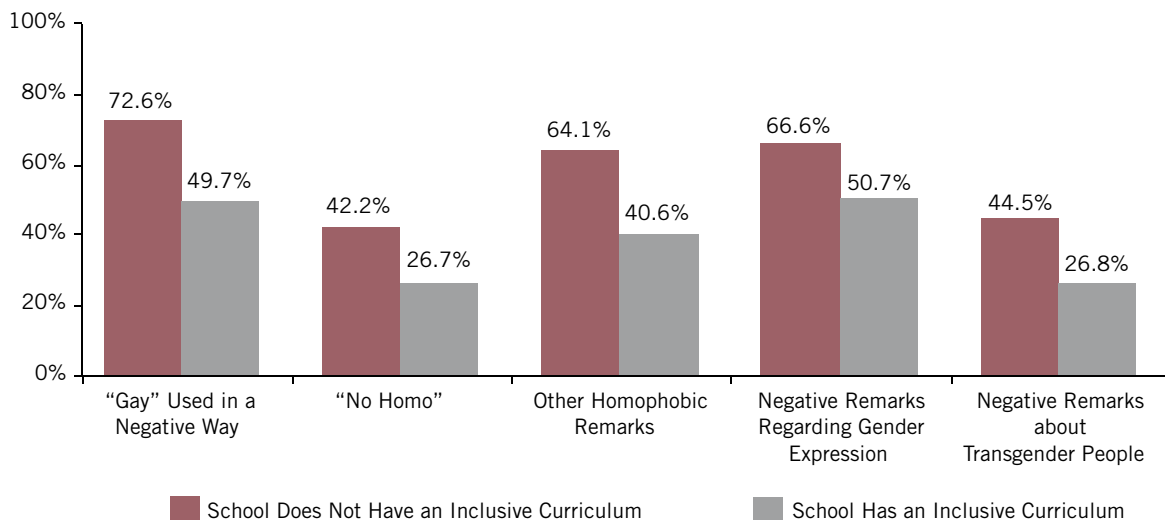
Among the LGBTQ students in our survey, attending a school that included positive representations of LGBT topics in the curriculum was related to a less hostile school climate. LGBTQ students in schools with an inclusive curriculum:

- Heard homophobic remarks less frequently. For instance, 49.7% of students in schools with an inclusive curriculum reported hearing “gay” used in a negative way often or frequently, compared to 72.6% of students in schools without an inclusive curriculum (see Figure 2.15);<sup>100</sup>
- Heard negative remarks about gender expression and transgender people less frequently. For example, five in ten students (50.7%) in schools with an inclusive curriculum heard negative remarks about gender expression often or frequently, compared to almost seven in ten (66.6%) of those in schools without an inclusive curriculum (see also Figure 2.15);<sup>101</sup>
- Felt safer. Four in ten students (40.4%) in schools with an inclusive curriculum felt unsafe in the past month due to their

**Figure 2.14 School Supports and Peer Acceptance of LGBT People**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting That Their Peers Were Somewhat or Very Accepting)



**Figure 2.15 Inclusive Curriculum and Frequency of Hearing Anti-LGBT Remarks**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Hearing Remarks Often or Frequently)



# Insight on Anti-Bullying Education

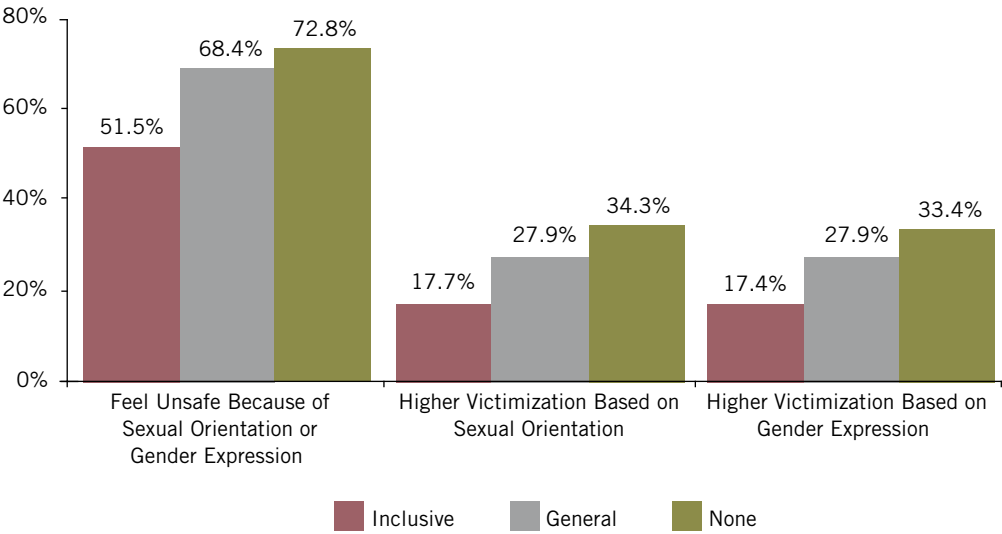
There has been increasing attention paid to bullying in schools over the past two decades, including the growth of anti-bullying prevention programs.<sup>102</sup> However, little is known about how these efforts address anti-LGBT bullying and harassment. A few studies have suggested that school bullying prevention efforts generally fail to include LGBT content.<sup>103</sup> Given that LGBTQ students experience high levels of harassment and assault, it is important to examine the prevalence of anti-bullying education in schools and whether any such education includes LGBT-specific content. Furthermore, it is important to examine the extent to which these efforts may improve school climate. Although the majority of LGBTQ students in our survey (81.0%) reported having been taught about bullying at their school (for example, in an assembly, lesson, or bullying prevention program), only one out of six students (16.5%) reported that this type of education included content about bullying of LGBT students.

**Biased Language and School Safety.** Students in schools with LGBT-inclusive anti-bullying education reported hearing anti-LGBT remarks less frequently than students in schools with general anti-bullying education and students in schools without any anti-bullying education.<sup>104</sup> Overall, with respect to hearing anti-LGBT remarks, students with a general anti-bullying education were not different from those with no anti-bullying education at all. Regarding experiences of victimization and feelings of safety based on sexual orientation and gender expression, LGBTQ students in schools with inclusive anti-bullying education reported the lowest levels of anti-LGBT victimization and were least likely to feel unsafe, whereas students in schools with no anti-bullying education reported the highest levels of victimization and were most likely to feel unsafe (see figure).<sup>105,106</sup>

**Response to Biased Incidents.** Educational efforts that explicitly address LGBT-related bullying may send a message to the student body that this type of behavior is not acceptable and should not be tolerated. We found that LGBTQ students with inclusive anti-bullying education were more likely to report that their peers intervened when hearing anti-LGBT remarks, compared to students with general anti-bullying education and to students with no anti-bullying education (see figure). Students in schools with general anti-bullying education were also more likely than those with no anti-bullying education to report student intervention in these remarks.<sup>107</sup>

When students believe their school will take anti-LGBT bullying and harassment seriously, they might be more likely to report them to school authorities. Although LGBTQ students rarely do report these incidents (see the *Reporting of School-Based Harassment and Assault* section), those who had inclusive anti-bullying education were, in fact, more likely to do so (see figure).<sup>108</sup> There were no differences in reporting incidents to school staff between students with a general anti-bullying education and students with no anti-bullying education.

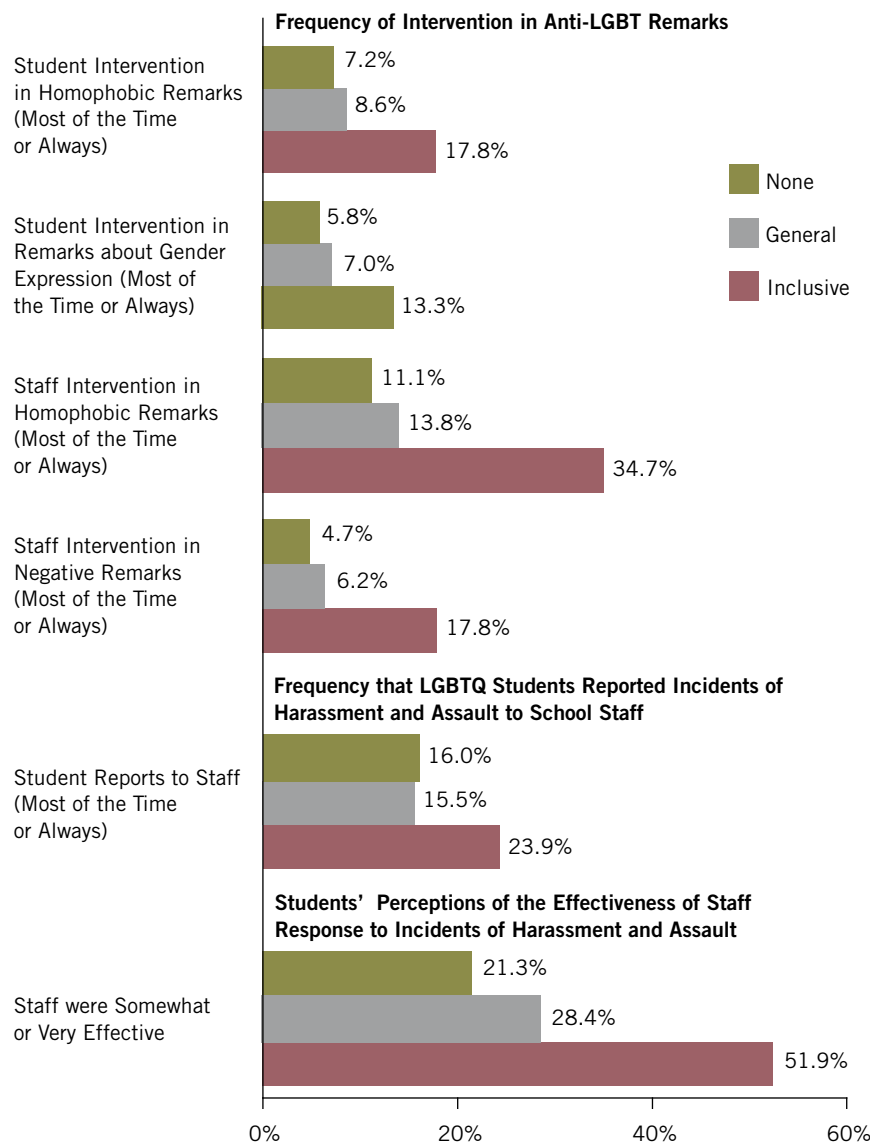
Feelings of Safety and Experiences of Victimization in School by Type of Anti-Bullying Education



Anti-bullying education efforts may include not only student-directed components, but also training for educators on how to respond to incidents of bullying and harassment. Therefore, professional development efforts at schools with LGBT-inclusive anti-bullying student education may be more likely to address LGBT-related bullying, resulting in educators who are more motivated and better prepared to effectively respond to anti-LGBT bias and bullying. Compared to all other students, students who received inclusive anti-bullying education reported more frequent staff intervention in anti-LGBT remarks and more effective staff responses to students' reports of bullying and harassment (see also figure).<sup>109,110</sup> Students with general anti-bullying education also reported more staff intervention and more effective staff responses than those with no anti-bullying education.

**Conclusions.** Our findings indicate that having inclusive anti-bullying education may have a positive impact on school climate — not only regarding student behavior, but also regarding educators' response to anti-LGBT bias. LGBT-inclusive bullying education appeared to be the most effective; however, for some outcomes, having some type of bullying education was better than no anti-bullying education. In regard to hearing anti-LGBT remarks and the likelihood of reporting victimization incidents to school staff, general anti-bullying education appeared to make no difference at all.

**Responses to Anti-LGBT Bias and Bullying by Type of Anti-Bullying Education**



Given the high frequency of bias-based bullying and remarks in schools today,<sup>111</sup> it is important to assess the content of anti-bullying education in schools, and the extent to which these efforts discuss bias-based behaviors, including anti-LGBT behavior. Educators and administrators should consider these factors when implementing school or district-wide programs and initiatives to address bullying. In our survey, we were only able to examine the availability of such education programs, and not the depth or content of the education provided. In order to assess whether these anti-bullying efforts truly improve school climate for all students, further research is warranted, especially with regard to how effectively these efforts address bias-based bullying in general, and anti-LGBT bullying in particular.

sexual orientation, compared to more than half (62.6%) of those in schools without an inclusive curriculum (see Figure 2.16);<sup>112</sup> and

- Reported less severe victimization. As shown in Figure 2.17, students in schools with an inclusive curriculum were half as likely to have experienced higher levels of victimization, compared to students in schools without an inclusive curriculum (14.8% vs. 31.1% for victimization based on sexual orientation; 15.7% vs. 30.6% for victimization based on gender expression).<sup>113</sup>

As an inclusive curriculum may result in a safer and more supportive school environment, it may also be related to less absenteeism. Students in schools with an inclusive curriculum were half as likely to report having missed school due to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable (18.6% vs. 35.6%), perhaps because they felt more supported and included in their schools (see Figure 2.16).<sup>114</sup>

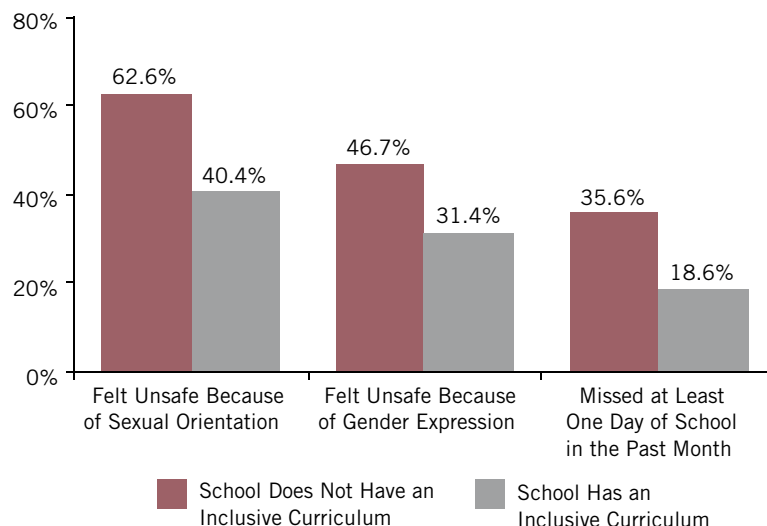
**Students' Connections to School Staff.** When educators include LGBT-related content in their curriculum, they may also be sending a message that they are open to discussing LGBT-related issues with their students. As depicted in Figure 2.18, students in schools with an inclusive curriculum were more likely to have had a positive or helpful conversation with a teacher about LGBT issues at least once (83.2% vs. 58.1%).<sup>115</sup> They were also much more likely to say they felt comfortable discussing these issues with their

teachers than students in schools without an inclusive curriculum (78.0% vs. 52.2%; see also Figure 2.18).<sup>116</sup>

**Achievement and Aspirations.** Inclusive curricula can serve a vital role in creating an affirming learning environment where LGBTQ students see themselves reflected in their classroom. This may result in increased student engagement and may encourage students to strive academically which, in turn, may yield better educational outcomes. In fact, we found that LGBTQ students who received an LGBT-inclusive education performed better in school and exhibited higher academic aspirations.<sup>117</sup> Students in schools with an inclusive curriculum were less likely to say they did not plan to pursue some type of post-secondary education and less likely to say they did not plan to or were unsure if they would graduate high school compared to LGBTQ students in schools without an inclusive curriculum (5.1% vs. 7.0% and 1.4% vs. 4.1%, see Figure 2.19). LGBTQ students in schools with an inclusive curriculum also reported higher grade point averages (GPAs) (3.3 vs. 3.1; see Table 2.4).

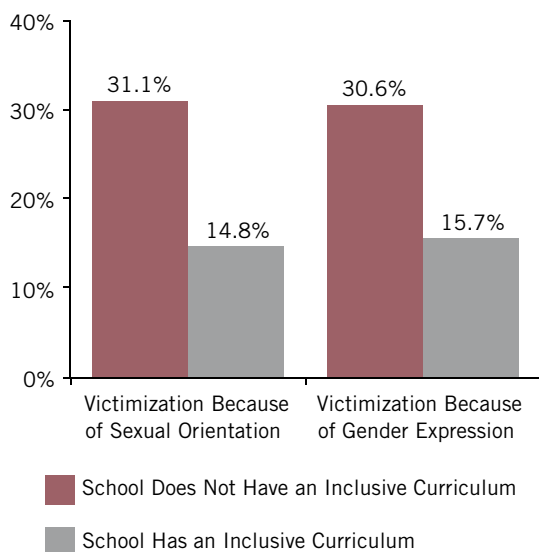
**Peer Acceptance and Peer Intervention.** The inclusion of positive portrayals of LGBT topics in the classroom may not only have a direct effect on LGBTQ students' experiences, but may also help educate the general student body about LGBT issues and promote respect and understanding of LGBTQ people in general. Students who attended schools with an LGBT-inclusive curriculum were

**Figure 2.16 Inclusive Curriculum and LGBTQ Students' Feelings of Safety and Missing School**

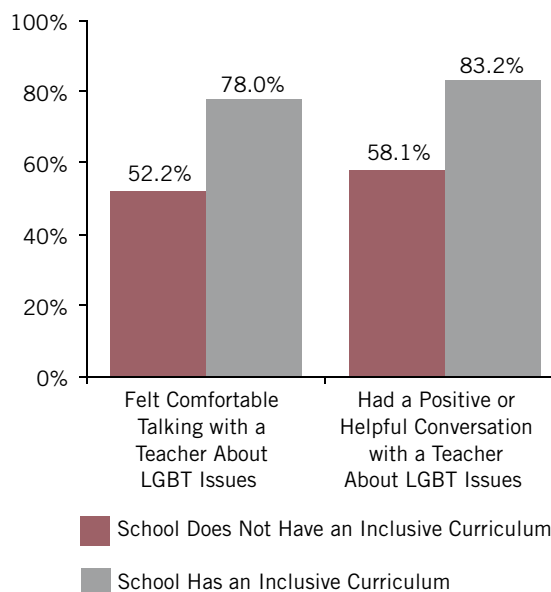




**Figure 2.17 Inclusive Curriculum and Victimization**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Experiencing Higher Severities of Victimization)



**Figure 2.18 Inclusive Curriculum and LGBTQ Students' Conversations with Teachers About LGBT Issues**



**Table 2.4 Inclusive Curriculum and LGBTQ Students' Academic Achievement**

	Mean Reported Grade Point Average (GPA)
School Does Not Have an LGBT-Inclusive Curriculum	3.1
School Has an LGBT-Inclusive Curriculum	3.3

much more likely to report that their classmates were somewhat or very accepting of LGBT people (75.2% vs. 39.5%; see Figure 2.14).<sup>118</sup> An LGBT-inclusive curriculum may raise awareness of LGBT issues and the negative effects of anti-LGBT bias, which could encourage students to speak up when they encounter anti-LGBT behaviors. Although overall rates of students' intervention in these types of remarks were low, students in schools with an inclusive curriculum reported that other students were more than twice as likely to intervene most or all of the time when hearing homophobic remarks as students in schools without an inclusive curriculum (19.3% vs. 7.2%; see Figure 2.20).<sup>119</sup>

**School Belonging and Well-Being.** Given that an inclusive curriculum is related to more supportive educators and more accepting peers, it is not surprising that LGBTQ students in schools where an inclusive curriculum is taught reported higher levels of school belonging.<sup>120</sup> LGBTQ students in schools with an inclusive curriculum also reported lower levels of depression than students in schools

without an inclusive curriculum.<sup>121</sup>

### **Supportive School Personnel**

Having supportive teachers and school staff can have a positive effect on the educational experiences of any student, increasing student motivation to learn and positive engagement in school.<sup>122</sup> Given that LGBTQ students often feel unsafe and unwelcome in school, having access to school personnel who provide support may be critical for creating better learning environments for LGBTQ students.<sup>123</sup> Therefore, we examined the relationships between the presence of supportive staff and several indicators of school climate.

**School Safety and Absenteeism.** Having staff supportive of LGBTQ students was related to feeling safer in school and missing fewer days of school. As shown in Figure 2.21, students with more supportive staff at their schools were less likely to feel unsafe due to their sexual orientation or gender expression, as well as much less

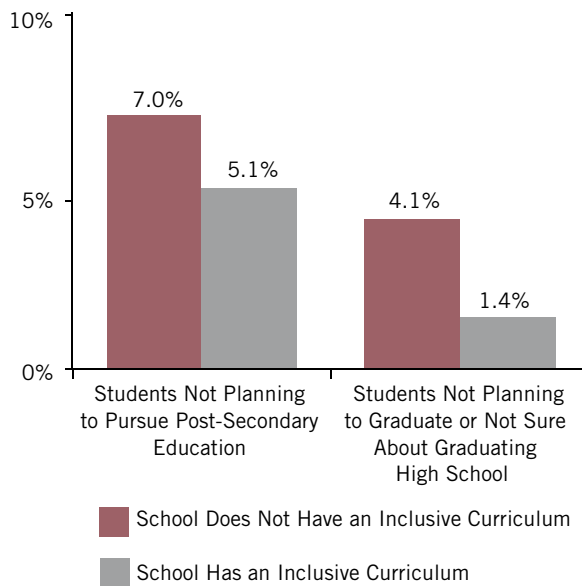
likely to miss school because of feeling unsafe or uncomfortable.<sup>124</sup> For example, 40.6% of students with 11 or more supportive staff reported feeling unsafe because of their sexual orientation, compared to 78.7% of students with no supportive staff.

**Achievement and Aspirations.** Supportive staff members serve a vital role in creating an affirming learning environment that engages students and

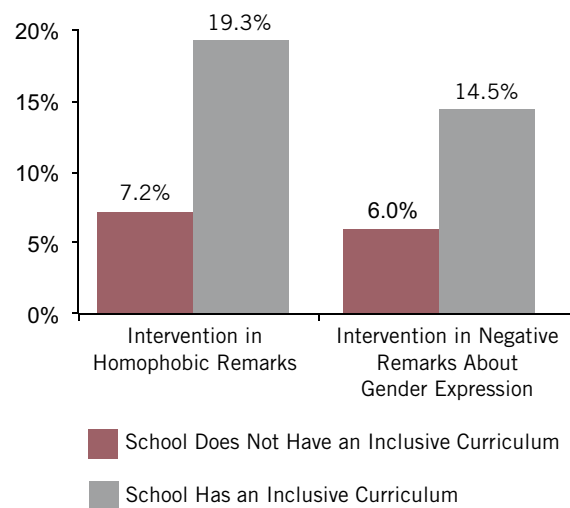
encourages them to strive academically. Therefore, it stands to reason that supportive staff would be related to LGBTQ students' educational outcomes. We found that students with more supportive staff:

- Were more likely to say they planned to attend college or pursue other post-secondary education after graduation: 14.7% of students with no supportive staff said they did not plan to pursue post-secondary education, compared

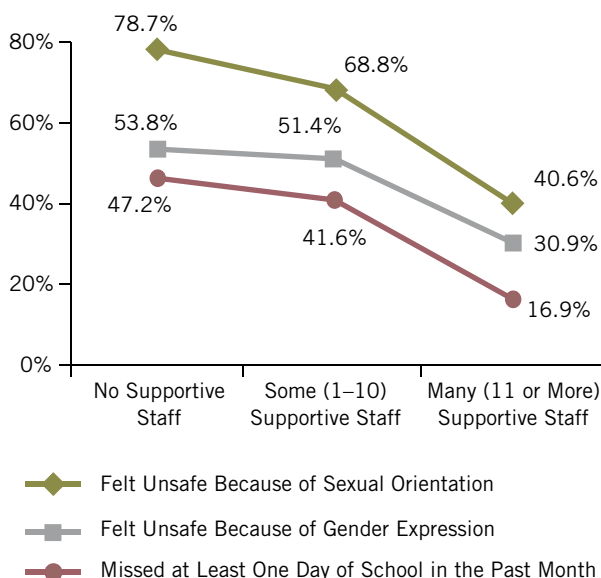
**Figure 2.19 Inclusive Curriculum and LGBTQ Students' Educational Aspirations**



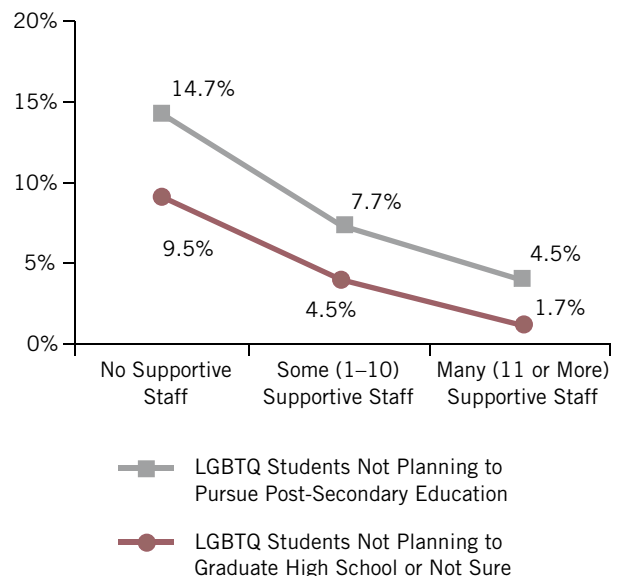
**Figure 2.20 Inclusive Curriculum and Student Intervention in Anti-LGBT Remarks**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Report that Students Intervened Most or All of the Time)



**Figure 2.21 Supportive School Staff and Feelings of Safety and Missing School**



**Figure 2.22 Supportive School Staff and Educational Aspirations**



to only 4.5% of students with 11 or more supportive educators (see Figure 2.22);<sup>125</sup>

- Were more likely to say they planned to graduate from high school: 9.5% of students with no supportive educators said they did not plan to graduate, or were not sure if they would graduate high school, compared to only 1.7% of students with 11 or more supportive educators (see Figure 2.22);<sup>126</sup> and
- Reported higher GPAs than other students: students with no supportive staff reported an average GPA of 2.8, compared to a 3.3 GPA for students with 11 or more supportive staff (see Table 2.5).<sup>127</sup>

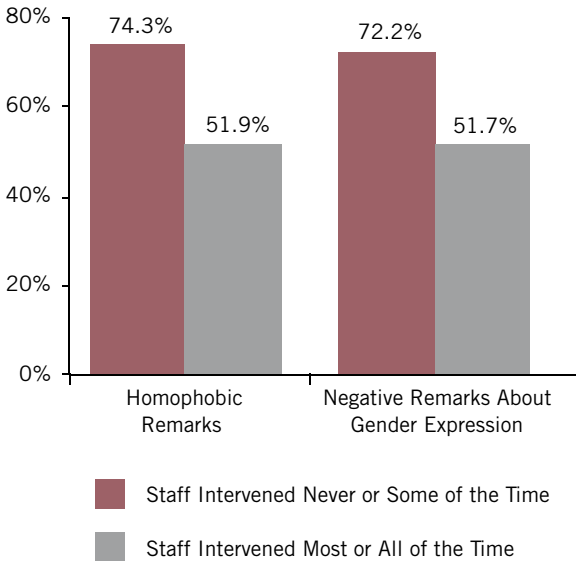
As we saw with having a GSA and an inclusive curriculum, having supportive school personnel

may also enhance a student's relationship with school. Students with more supportive staff members expressed higher levels of school belonging.<sup>128</sup> Increased feelings of belonging may also have a positive effect on student well-being. We found that LGBTQ students in schools with more supportive staff reported higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of depression.<sup>129</sup>

**Responses to Anti-LGBT Remarks and Victimization.** School staff members serve a vital role in ensuring a safe learning environment for all students, and as such, should respond to biased language and all types of victimization. We found that students with educators who intervened more often in anti-LGBT remarks felt safer in their schools (see Figure 2.23).<sup>130</sup> For example, as shown in Figure 2.23, 74.3% of students in schools where staff never intervened or

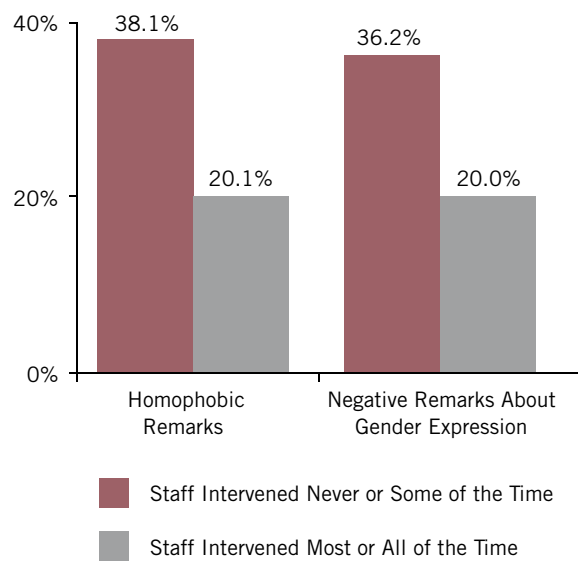
**Figure 2.23 Staff Intervention in Biased Remarks and Feelings of Safety in School**

(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Felt Unsafe Because of Sexual Orientation or Gender Expression)



**Figure 2.24 Staff Intervention in Biased Remarks and Missing School Due to Feeling Unsafe**

(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Had Missed at Least One Day of School in the Past Month)



**Table 2.5 Supportive Staff and LGBTQ Students' Academic Achievement**

	Mean Reported Grade Point Average (GPA)
No Supportive Staff	2.8
Some (1–10) Supportive Staff	3.1
Many (11 or More) Supportive Staff	3.3

only intervened some of the time in homophobic remarks said they had felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation or gender expression, compared to 51.9% of students in schools where staff intervened most or all of the time. Staff intervention was also related to fewer days of missing school (see Figure 2.24).<sup>131</sup> For example, more than one-third of students (36.2%) in schools where school staff only sometimes or never intervened in negative remarks about gender expression had missed school due to feeling unsafe, compared to only 20.0% of students in schools where staff members intervened most or all of the time.

The overarching goals of staff intervention are to protect students, prevent future victimization, and demonstrate to the student body that such actions will not be tolerated. Clear and appropriate actions on the part of school staff regarding harassment and assault can improve the school environment for LGBTQ youth and may also serve to deter future acts of victimization. In fact, as shown in Figure 2.25, when students believed that staff effectively addressed their reports of harassment and assault, they were less likely to feel unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation or gender expression (64.8% vs. 86.1%)<sup>132</sup> and less likely to miss school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (27.5% vs. 56.0%).<sup>133</sup> In addition, as shown in Figure 2.26, students in schools where staff responded effectively experienced lower levels of victimization based on their sexual orientation or gender expression. For example, less than one-third of students (27.0%) who reported that staff intervened effectively experienced higher levels of victimization based on gender expression compared to about half of students (49.7%) who reported that staff responded ineffectively.<sup>134</sup>

**Visible Displays of Support.** One of the many ways that educators can demonstrate to LGBTQ students that they are supportive allies are through visible displays of support, such as GLSEN's Safe Space stickers and posters. Safe Space stickers and posters were strongly associated with LGBTQ students being able to identify supportive teachers and other staff at their schools.<sup>135</sup> For instance, as shown in Figure 2.27, just under two-thirds of students (62.6%) who had seen a Safe Space sticker or poster were able to identify 11 or more supportive staff in their schools, compared to less than a third of students (32.3%) who had not seen a Safe Space sticker or poster at school. Moreover,

**“We have one openly gay teacher, he put equality stickers up in his room and everything, and people seem to like him. Our newest guidance counselor has a safe space sign, she has yet to hang it up, but it exists. My English teacher called out another teacher for making homophobic comments.”**

almost all students (>99.0%) who said they had seen a Safe Space sticker or poster were able to identify at least one supportive staff member.

By signaling their support for LGBTQ students through these visible displays, students may feel more at ease talking with these educators about LGBT issues, including any potential challenges they might be facing as an LGBTQ student. We did find that Safe Space stickers and posters were associated with more positive attitudes towards school staff. As shown in Figure 2.28, LGBTQ students who had seen a Safe Space sticker or poster in their school were more likely to feel comfortable talking about LGBT issues with teachers and school-based mental health professionals (e.g., school counselors).<sup>136</sup> In addition, LGBTQ students who saw a Safe Space sticker/poster were more likely to have had a positive or helpful conversation with staff about LGBT issues in the past year.

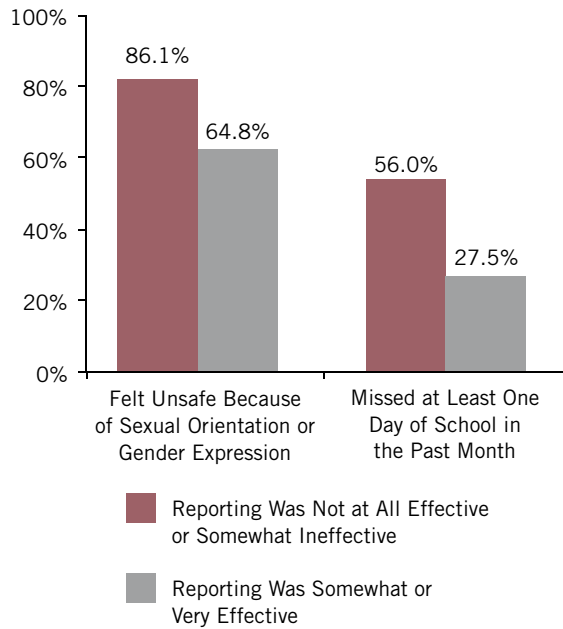
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### ***School Policies for Addressing Bullying, Harassment, and Assault***

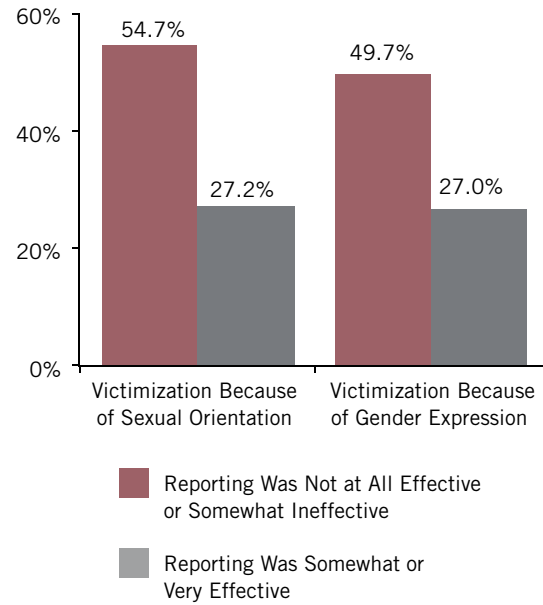
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GLSEN believes that all students should have access to a safe learning environment, regardless

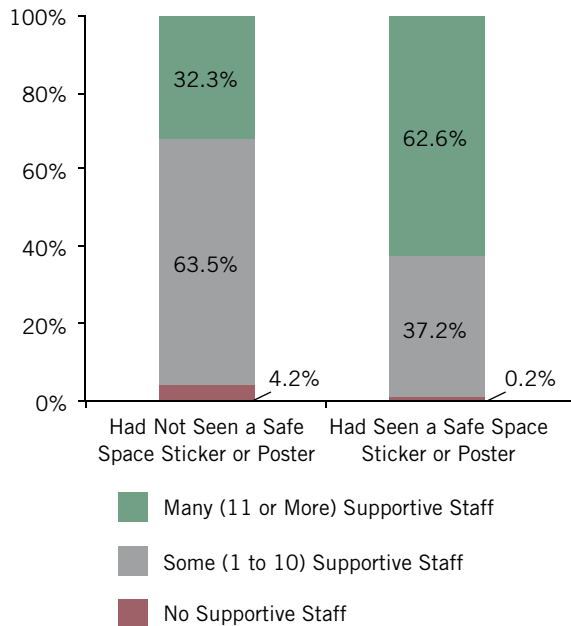
**Figure 2.25 Effectiveness of Staff Response to Harassment/Assault and LGBTQ Students' Feelings of Safety and Missing School**



**Figure 2.26 Effectiveness of Staff Response to Harassment/Assault and Experiences of Victimization**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Experiencing Higher Severities of Victimization)



**Figure 2.27 Safe Space Stickers/Posters and Number of Supportive School Staff**



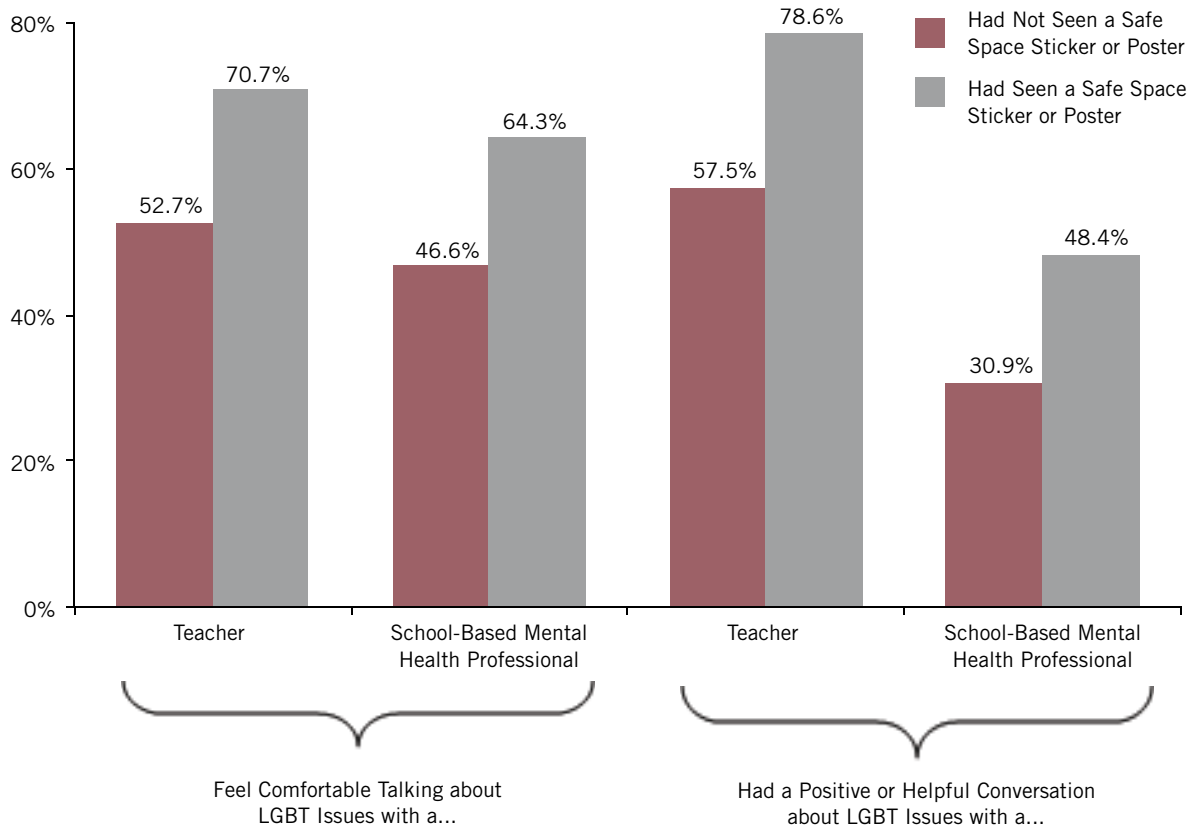
of a student's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies can contribute toward this goal in that they explicitly state protections from victimization based on sexual orientation

and gender identity/expression. Furthermore, comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies may also provide school staff with the guidance needed to appropriately intervene when students use anti-LGBT language and when LGBTQ students report incidents of harassment and assault.

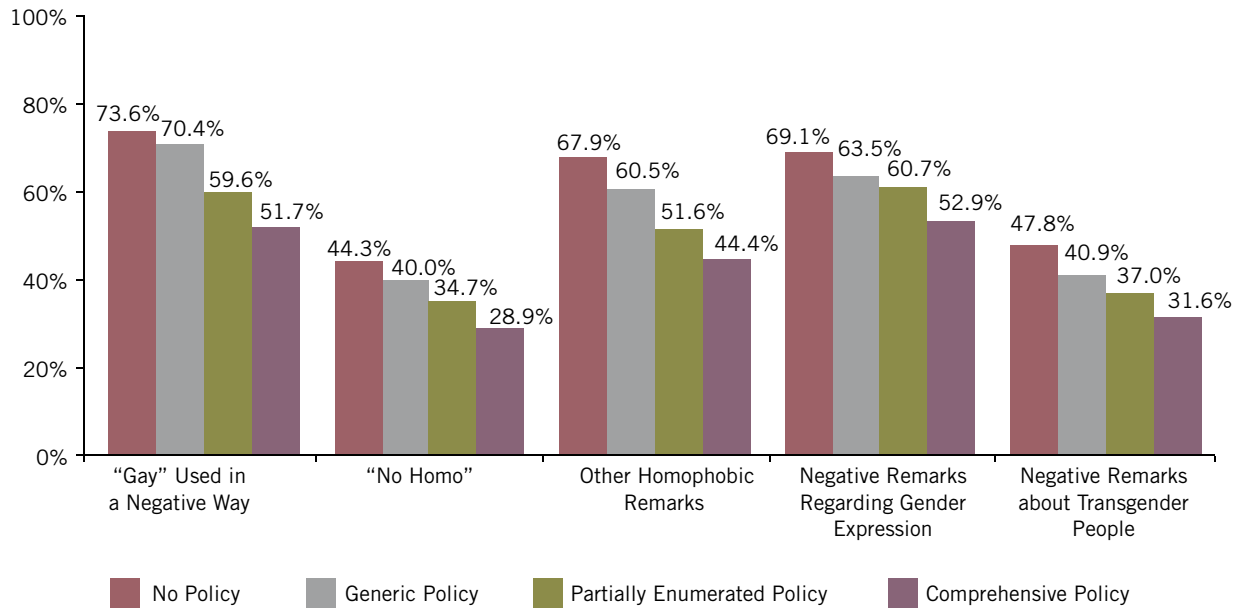
**Anti-LGBT Language and School Safety.** Although LGBTQ students who attended schools with any type of anti-bullying policy did report less anti-LGBT language than those without a policy, students in schools with comprehensive policies were the least likely to hear such language, followed by schools with partially enumerated policies, generic policies, and schools with no policies (see Figure 2.29).<sup>137</sup> For example, 51.7% of students in schools with a comprehensive policy heard phrases like "that's so gay" often or frequently, compared to 59.6% of students in schools with partially enumerated policies, 70.4% in schools with generic policies, and 73.6% in schools with no policy.

Overall, LGBTQ students in schools with any type of anti-bullying policy reported lower levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation and gender expression compared to those in schools without a policy.<sup>138</sup> However, students in schools with policies that enumerated sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression experienced the

**Figure 2.28 Seeing a Safe Space Sticker or Poster and LGBTQ Student Conversations with School Staff About LGBT Issues**



**Figure 2.29 School Harassment/Assault Policies and Frequency of Hearing Anti-LGBT Remarks**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Hearing Remarks Often or Frequently)



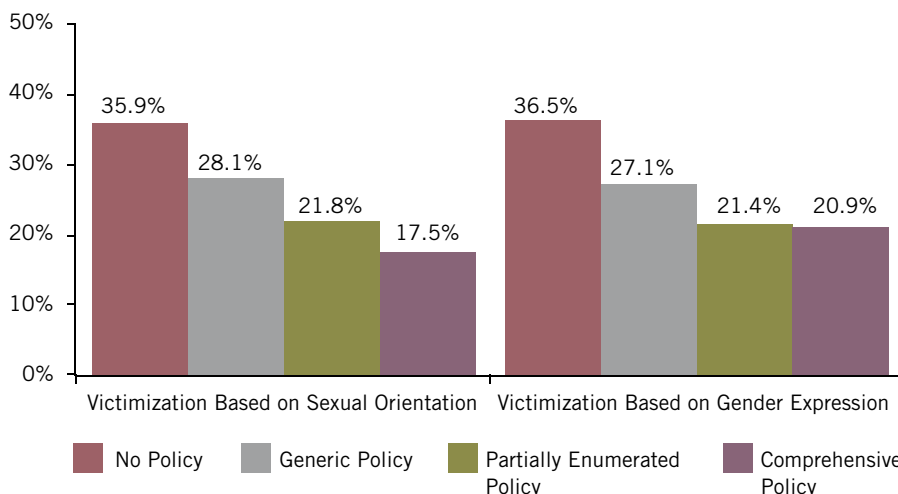
lowest levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation and gender expression, compared to students in schools with no policy and students in schools with a generic policy. For example, as shown in Figure 2.30, 20.9% of students in schools with a comprehensive policy reported experiencing higher levels of victimization based on their gender expression, compared to 27.1% of students in schools with a generic policy and 36.5% of students in schools with no policy. There were no differences in levels of victimization between students in schools with comprehensive policies and those in schools with partially enumerated policies. Given that the majority of partially enumerated policies include sexual orientation (13.2%) and very few include gender identity/expression (0.9%), it is not surprising that there were no differences in victimization based on sexual orientation between partially and fully enumerated policies. It is somewhat unexpected that the inclusion of gender identity/expression in these policies may not have affected the incidence of victimization based on gender expression. However, given that harassment based on gender expression is often directed at students who are perceived to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual, this form of harassment may be interpreted as being about sexual orientation, which is typically addressed in partially enumerated policies.

**Responses to Anti-LGBT Remarks.** School anti-bullying/harassment policies often provide guidance to educators in addressing incidents of harassment and biased remarks. Even though students reported, in general, that staff

intervention is a rare occurrence, it was more common in schools with anti-bullying policies, with students in schools with comprehensive policies reporting the highest frequencies of staff intervention of anti-LGBT remarks, followed by partially enumerated policies, and generic policies.<sup>139</sup> For example, as shown in Figure 2.31, almost a third of LGBTQ students (32.0%) in schools with comprehensive policies said school staff intervened most of the time when homophobic remarks were made, compared to just over a fifth of those (22.2%) in schools with partially enumerated policies, 15.3% in schools with a generic policy, and 7.8% of schools with no policy (Figure 2.31).

**Students' Reporting of Victimization to School Staff and Effectiveness of Staff Response.** Policies may provide guidance to students on reporting bullying and harassment, but perhaps more importantly, policies may also signal that students' experiences of victimization will be addressed. Overall, we found that the stronger the policy in terms of enumeration, the more likely that LGBTQ students were to report incidents of victimization to school staff. LGBTQ students in schools with a comprehensive policy were more likely to report incidents of victimization to school staff compared to all other students in the survey, while students in schools with partially enumerated policies were more likely to report incidents of victimization than students in schools with generic policies or those with no policy (see Figure 2.32).<sup>140</sup> The mere presence of any anti-bullying policy was related to reporting of victimization as students in schools with no policy were less likely to report

**Figure 2.30 School Harassment/Assault Policies and Experiences of Victimization**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Experiencing Higher Levels of Victimization)



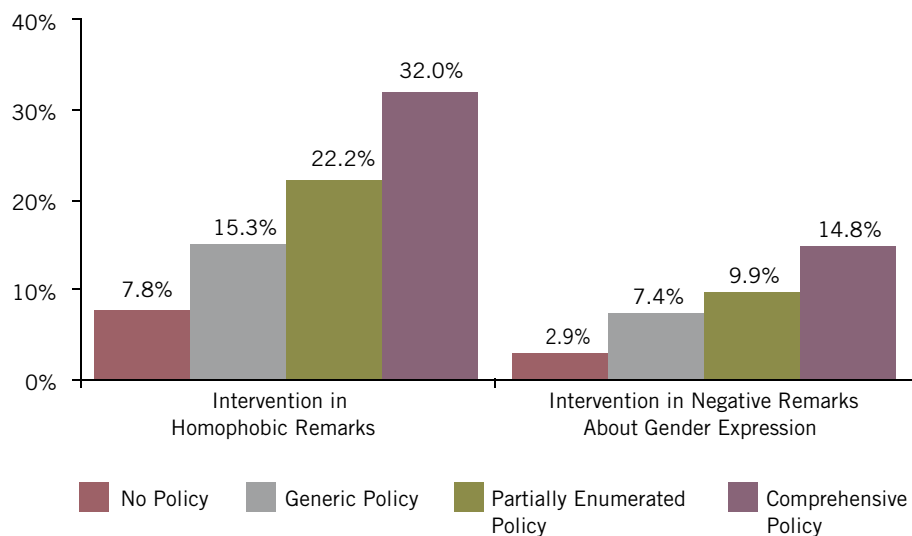
victimization to staff compared to students in schools with any policy, whether comprehensive, partially enumerated, or generic.

LGBTQ students in schools with enumerated policies were also more likely to say staff responses to students' reports of victimization were effective.<sup>141</sup> LGBTQ students in schools with a comprehensive policy were most likely to report staff response as effective, followed by those in schools with partially enumerated policies.

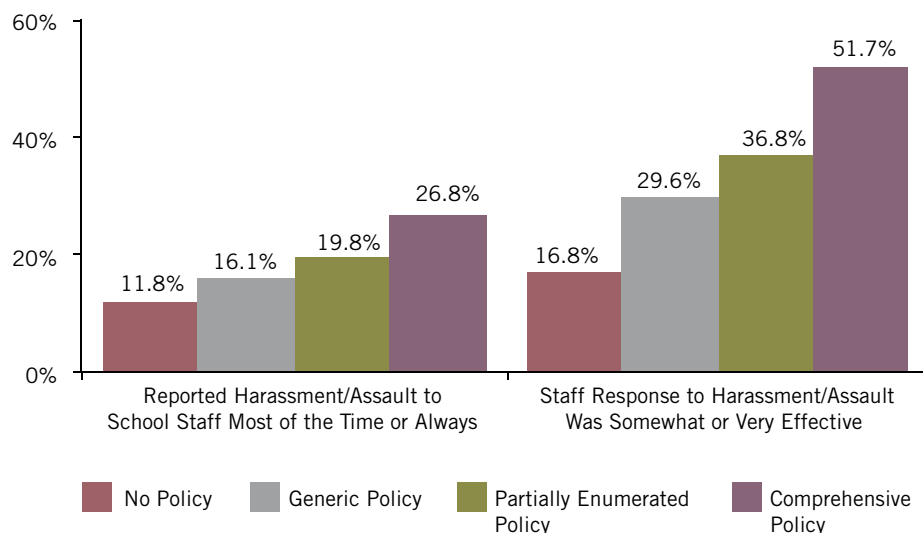
Furthermore, students in schools with generic policies were more likely to report staff response as effective than students in schools without a policy (see Figure 2.32).

Collectively, these findings suggest that comprehensive policies are more effective than other types of policies in promoting a safe school environment for LGBTQ students. For example, they may send the message to teachers and other school staff that responding to LGBT-based

**Figure 2.31 School Harassment/Assault Policies and Staff Intervention in Anti-LGBT Remarks**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting That Staff Intervened Most of the Time or Always)



**Figure 2.32 School Harassment/Assault Policies, Reporting Harassment/Assault, and Effectiveness of Staff Response**





harassment is expected and critical. According to the students in our survey, school personnel intervened more often and more effectively when the school had a comprehensive policy. When school staff members respond effectively, it may also encourage students to report incidents of harassment: students who said that staff intervention was effective were, in fact, more likely to regularly report incidents of harassment to school staff.<sup>142</sup> In addition, comprehensive policies

may be effective in curtailing anti-LGBT language and behaviors among students — students in schools with comprehensive policies reported the lowest incidence of homophobic remarks, negative remarks about gender expression, negative remarks about transgender people, and reported the lowest levels of anti-LGBT victimization. Thus, comprehensive policies may signal to all members of the school community that anti-LGBT victimization and biased remarks are not tolerated.



A classroom scene with a teacher at the front writing on a whiteboard. Several students are seated in the foreground, viewed from behind. The text is overlaid in large, bold, white letters with a slight shadow effect.

# **PART THREE: DIFFERENCES IN SCHOOL CLIMATE BY DEMOGRAPHIC AND SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS**



# Demographic Comparisons in Safety, Victimization, and Discrimination

## Key Findings

- Black/African American students were less likely to feel unsafe due to sexual orientation than White, Hispanic/Latino, and Multiracial students.
- Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander students reported the lowest rates of anti-LGBT victimization.
- White/European American students were least likely to feel unsafe because of their race/ethnicity.
- Transgender students experienced a more hostile school climate than all other students. Genderqueer students experienced a more hostile school climate than cisgender LGBQ students.
- Gender nonconforming LGBQ cisgender students were more victimized and felt less safe at school than LGBQ cisgender students whose gender expression conformed to traditional norms.

## Comparisons by Race or Ethnicity

We examined potential differences in LGBTQ students' experiences of safety and victimization at school based on sexual orientation, gender expression, and race/ethnicity by racial/ethnic group (White or European American, Hispanic or Latino/a, Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander, Black or African American, and Multiracial).<sup>143</sup>

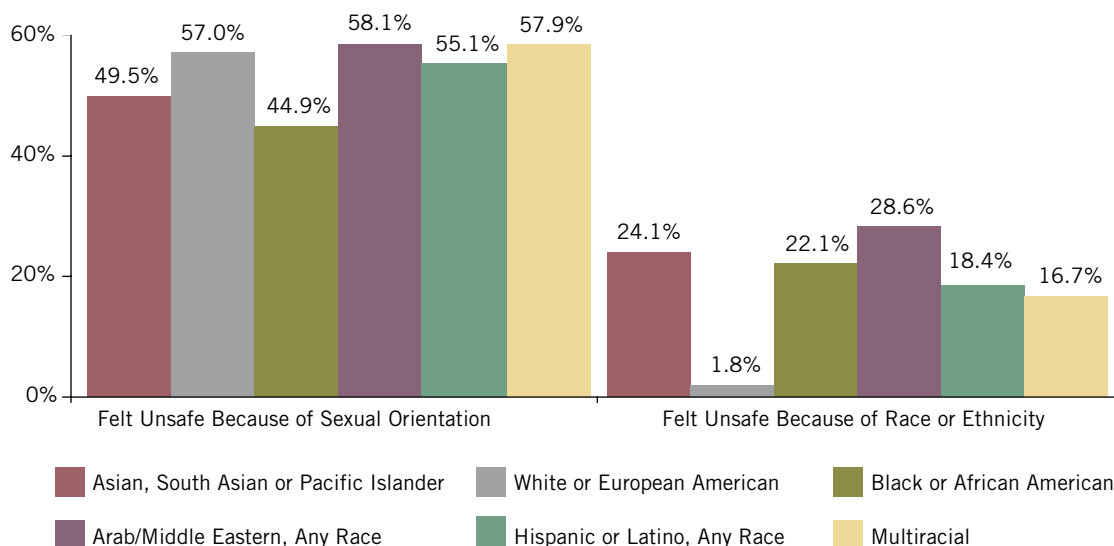
**Feeling Unsafe in School.** Across all racial/ethnic groups, sizable percentages of students reported feeling unsafe and being harassed at school because of their sexual orientation or race/ethnicity. Nevertheless, there were a few significant differences across groups with regard to feeling unsafe in school.<sup>144</sup> As shown in Figure 3.1, Black/African American students (44.9%) were less likely to feel unsafe due to sexual orientation than White (57.0%), Hispanic/Latino (49.5%), and Multiracial students (57.9%). Furthermore, White students (1.8%) were least likely to feel unsafe because of their race/ethnicity. There were no racial/ethnic differences in feeling unsafe based on gender expression.

**Harassment and Assault.** There were a few differences by race/ethnicity in students' experiences of harassment and assault based on sexual orientation, gender expression, and race/ethnicity (see Figures 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4):<sup>145</sup>

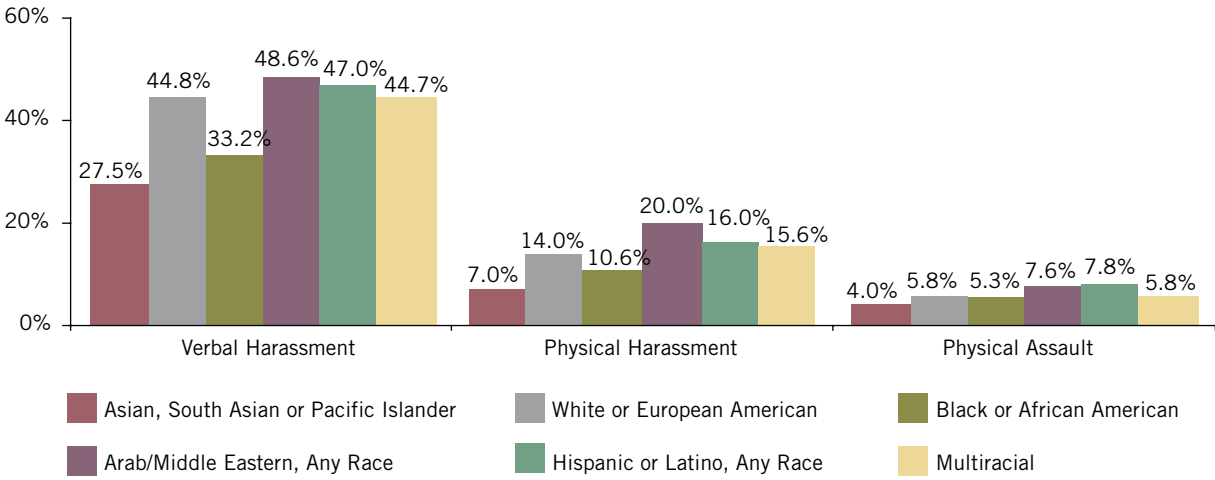
- Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander students reported lower rates of all forms of victimization based on sexual orientation than all other racial and ethnic groups except for Black/African American;
- Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander students reported lower rates of all forms of victimization based on gender expression than all other students except African American/Black students, White students, and Arab/Middle Eastern students; and
- White students reported lower rates of all forms of victimization based on race or ethnicity than all other students. There were no significant differences among the students of color groups on experiences of harassment and assault related to race/ethnicity.

**Experiences of Discrimination.** As noted previously (see *Experiences of Discrimination* section), nearly two-thirds of students overall reported having personally experienced discriminatory policies and practices. Experiences of personal discrimination at schools also differed based on students' race or ethnicity. Asian American/Pacific Islander students (49.6%) were less likely to experience anti-LGBT discrimination at school resulting from school policies and practices (see Figure 3.5) than Multiracial students (64.1%), White students (61.5%), and Hispanic/Latino students (60.1%).<sup>146</sup>

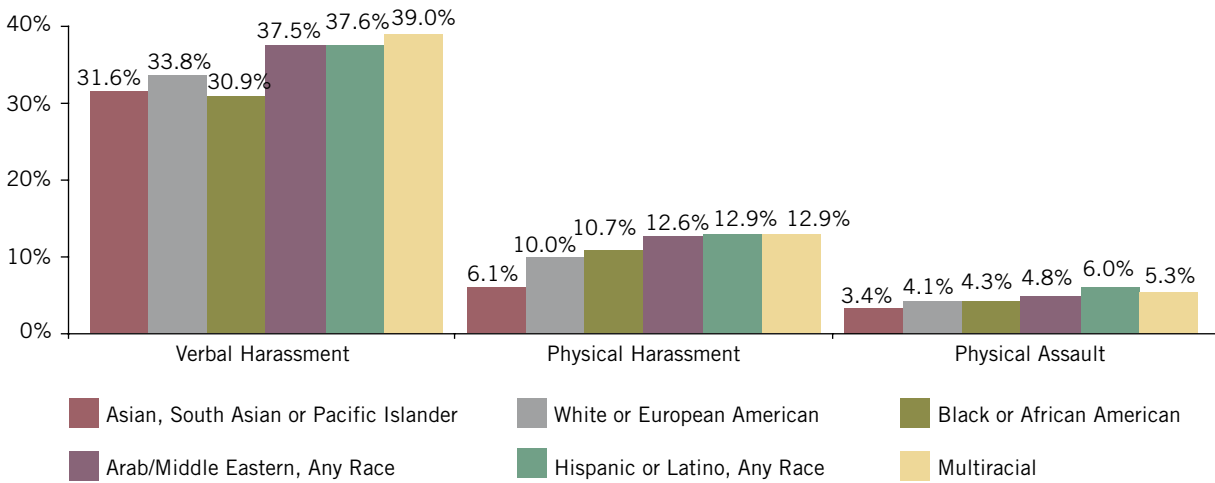
**Figure 3.1 Sense of Safety by Race/Ethnicity**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Felt Unsafe)



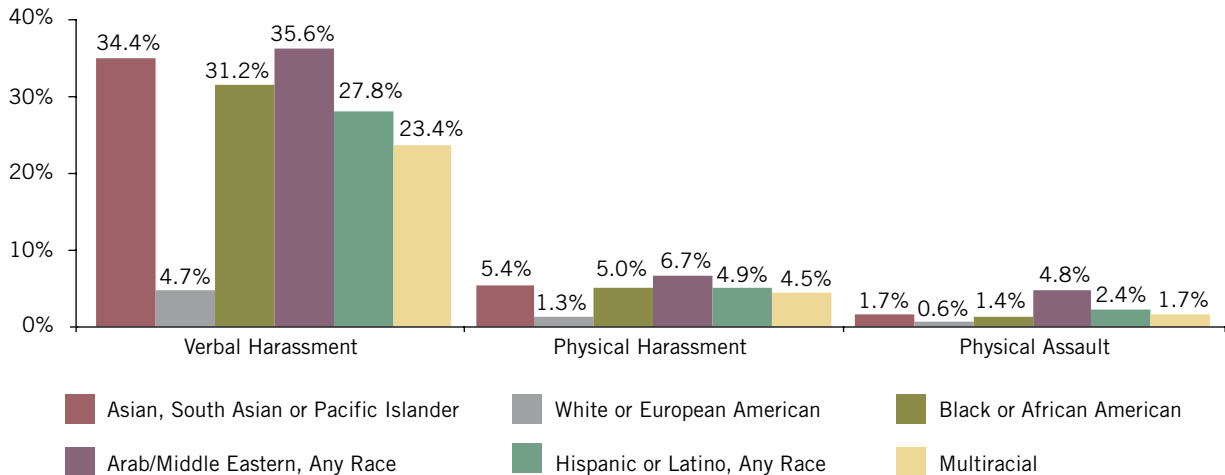
**Figure 3.2 Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Sexual Orientation by Race/Ethnicity**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Experienced Event Sometimes, Often, or Frequently)



**Figure 3.3 Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Gender Expression by Race/Ethnicity**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Experienced Event Sometimes, Often, or Frequently)



**Figure 3.4 Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Race/Ethnicity by Race/Ethnicity**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Experienced Event Sometimes, Often, or Frequently)



Clearly, more information is needed to better understand the experiences of LGBTQ Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander students.

It is important to note that despite these differences by racial/ethnic identity, significant numbers of LGBTQ students of all races or ethnicities reported hostile school experiences related to their sexual orientation and gender expression. These findings are consistent with results from prior installments of the GLSEN National School Climate Survey, where we have also found that Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander LGBTQ students experienced lower levels of anti-LGBT victimization in school. These findings may be due to the fact that racial/ethnic differences are partly a function of the varying characteristics of schools that students attend or the types of resources and supports available in those schools. These differences may also be related to how race/ethnicity manifests itself within the school's social network or to other issues with peers, such as how "out" students are about their LGBTQ identity. Further research is needed that examines the factors related to racial/ethnic differences in LGBTQ student experiences.

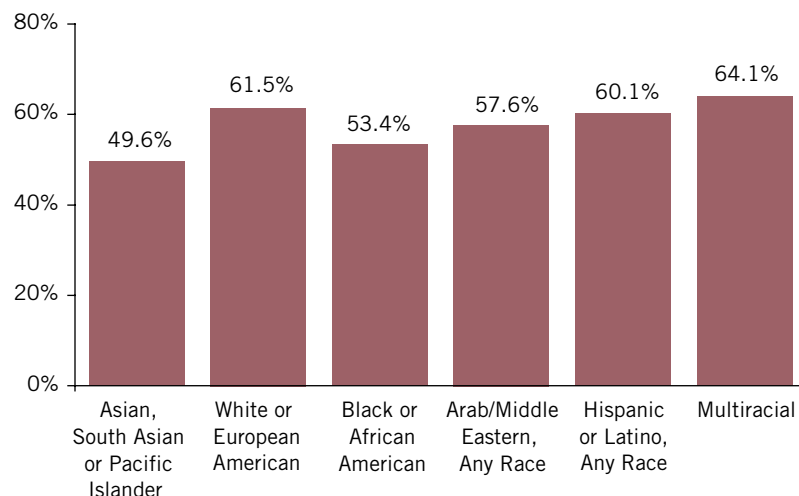
### Comparisons by Gender Identity

We also examined potential differences in LGBTQ students' experiences of safety, victimization, and discrimination by gender identity. Across all gender groups (cisgender female, cisgender male, transgender, genderqueer, and students who indicated they were another gender

identity),<sup>147</sup> many students reported feeling unsafe, experiencing high frequencies of harassment or assault, and facing discrimination at school related to their gender, gender expression, and sexual orientation. However, there were some significant differences among gender groups.

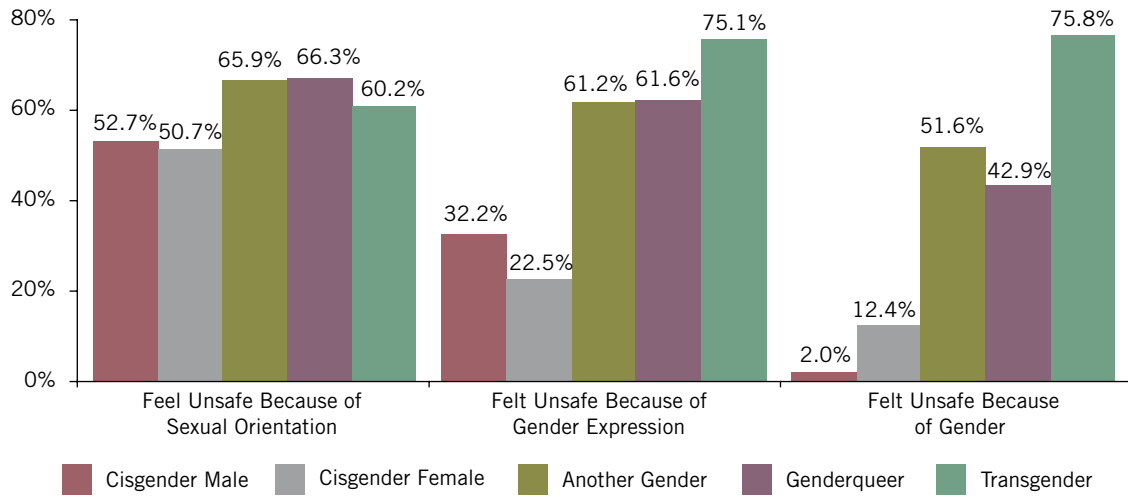
**Experiences of Transgender Students.** Overall, transgender students were more likely than all other students to have negative experiences at school. As shown in Figures 3.6, 3.8, and 3.9, transgender students were more likely to have felt unsafe<sup>148</sup> and to experience victimization at school based on their gender expression or gender.<sup>149</sup> For example, three quarters of transgender students (75.1%) felt unsafe at school because of their gender expression, compared to slightly under a third of genderqueer students and students with other gender identities (61.6%, 61.2%, respectively), almost a third of cisgender males (32.2%), and just over a fifth of cisgender females (22.5%) (see Figure 3.6). Across all gender groups, students experienced hostile school climate related to their sexual orientation. It is important to note that, in contrast to cisgender LGBTQ students in our sample, transgender youth (and other non-cisgender youth) can identify as any sexual orientation, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, or heterosexual. In fact, transgender students still faced higher rates of sexual orientation-based victimization<sup>150</sup> and were more likely than cisgender students to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation (see also Figures 3.6 and 3.7).<sup>151</sup>

**Figure 3.5 Experiences of Anti-LGBT Discrimination by Race/Ethnicity**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Anti-LGBT Discrimination at School)

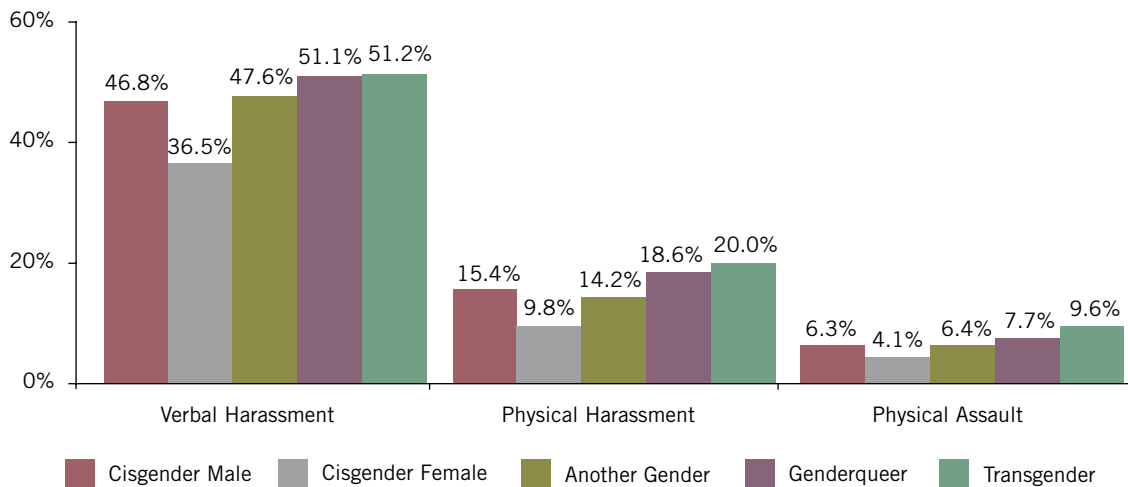




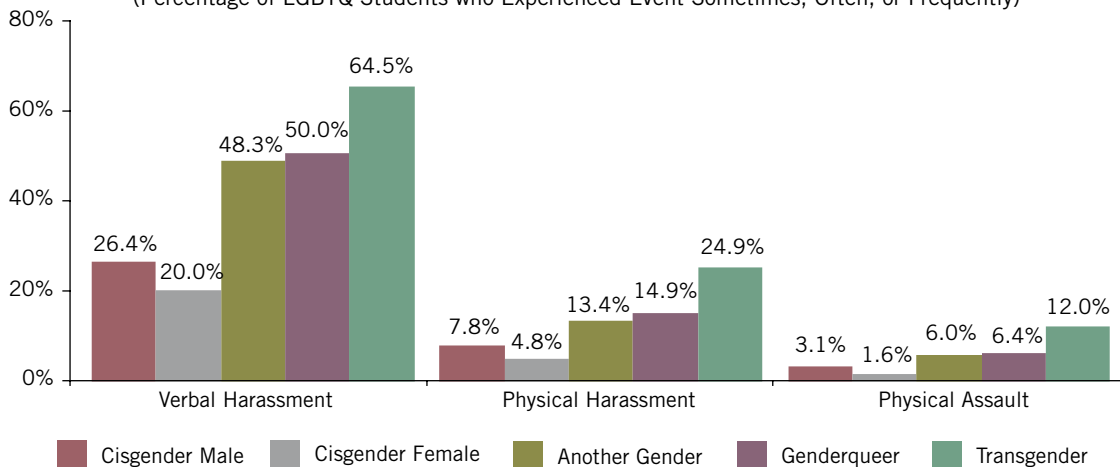
**Figure 3.6 Feelings of Safety at School by Gender Identity**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Felt Unsafe)



**Figure 3.7 Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Sexual Orientation by Gender Identity**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ students who Experienced Event Sometimes, Often, or Frequently)



**Figure 3.8 Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Gender Expression by Gender Identity**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Experienced Event Sometimes, Often, or Frequently)

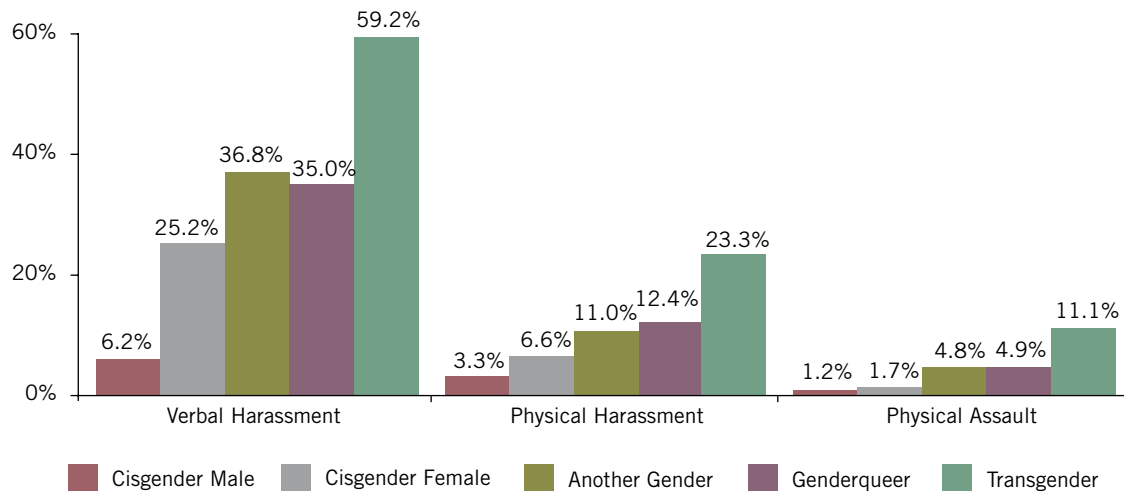


As shown in the *School Safety* section, sizable percentages of LGBTQ students avoided spaces at school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable, most notably spaces that are traditionally segregated by sex in schools, such as bathrooms and locker rooms. For transgender and other non-cisgender students (e.g., genderqueer youth), sex-segregated spaces at school may be particularly challenging.<sup>152</sup> We therefore also examined whether there were gender differences in the percentages of students who reported avoiding school bathrooms, locker rooms, and given that these are often sex segregated, Gym/Physical Education (PE) classes. Transgender students were more likely than all other students to avoid these spaces because of

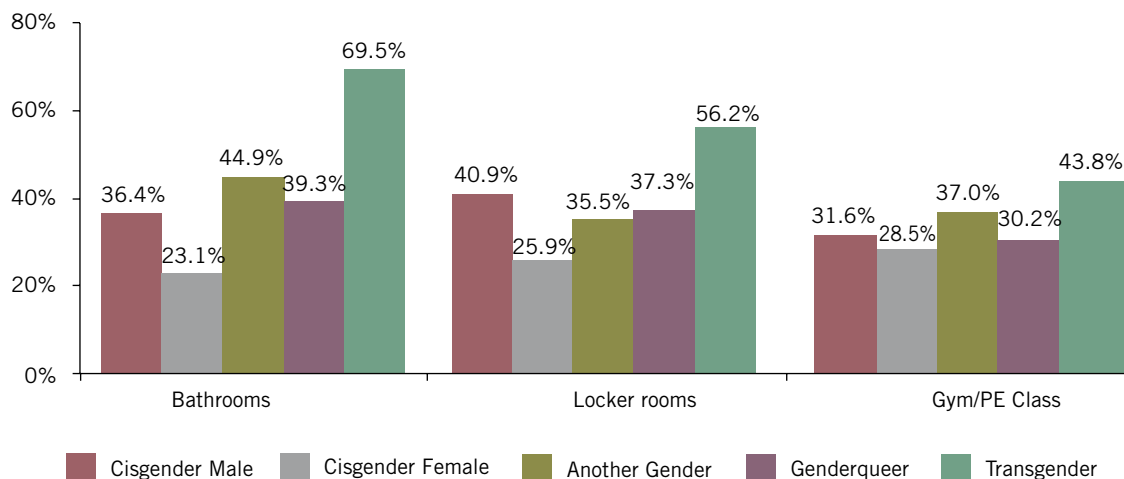
feeling unsafe or uncomfortable.<sup>153</sup> For example, over two-thirds of transgender students (69.5%) reported avoiding bathrooms, compared to less than half of all other groups of students (see Figure 3.10).

With regard to discriminatory policies and practices, several of the specific types of discrimination asked about in the survey addressed the types of discrimination that transgender students may be most likely to face (e.g., prevented from using bathroom consistent with gender identity, prevented from using preferred name/pronoun). Therefore, it is not surprising that transgender students were more likely to report instances of

**Figure 3.9 Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Gender by Gender Identity**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ students who Experienced Event Sometimes, Often, or Frequently)



**Figure 3.10 Comparison by Gender Identity: Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Avoided Spaces at School Because They Felt Unsafe or Uncomfortable**  
(Accounting for Severity of Victimization)



anti-LGBT discrimination at school, with 85.3% of transgender students having personally been discriminated against, compared to about three-quarters of genderqueer students and students of other gender identities, and over half of cisgender students (see Figure 3.11).<sup>154</sup> However, transgender students were not only more likely to experience the types of discrimination explicitly relevant to non-cisgender students, but were also more likely to experience most other types of anti-LGBT discrimination as well, for example, being prevented from addressing LGBT topics in class.<sup>155</sup> Perhaps transgender students are more likely to be censored, either because they are more visible or more stigmatized than other LGBQ students. It is also possible that transgender students in our survey are more outspoken or active in their LGBT-related advocacy than cisgender LGBQ students and thus engage in more of the activities that are subject to anti-LGBT policies.<sup>156</sup> Further research is needed to explore these disparities and the factors that determine which students are most targeted by discriminatory policies and practices.

Although transgender students experienced the most hostile school climates overall, there were also a few differences within the group of transgender students. In regards to feeling unsafe based on gender and gender expression, transgender male students were more likely than transgender females or transgender non-binary students to feel unsafe for these reasons.<sup>157</sup> Furthermore, transgender male students were more likely to feel unsafe based on gender than transgender female students. In terms of victimization, transgender male students were more

likely to experience harassment and assault based on gender and based on gender expression than non-binary transgender students, i.e., transgender students who do not identify as male or female.<sup>158</sup> There were no differences among transgender youth regarding safety or victimization based on sexual orientation.

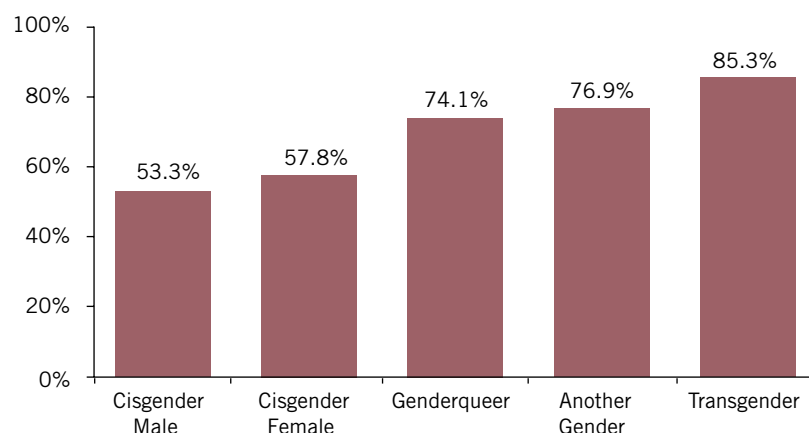
With regard to avoiding spaces because of feeling unsafe or uncomfortable, transgender non-binary students were less likely than male or female transgender students to avoid bathrooms or locker rooms due to feeling uncomfortable or unsafe.<sup>159</sup> There were no differences among transgender students in avoiding Gym/Physical Education class.

We also examined differences among transgender students in regards to discriminatory policies and practices. Transgender male students reported higher rates of anti-LGBT discrimination at school than transgender females or transgender non-binary students (who were not different from each other).<sup>160</sup>

Overall, these findings suggest that transgender male students may face somewhat more hostile school climates than other transgender students. However, further research is needed to explore differences among transgender students and potential factors accounting for those differences.

**Experiences of Genderqueer Students.** In the 2015 NSCS, slightly over one in ten students (11.4%) identified their gender as genderqueer, which generally refers to someone whose gender is outside the gender binary system of male

**Figure 3.11 Comparison by Gender Identity: Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Experienced Anti-LGBT Discrimination at School**



or female. These genderqueer students also experienced a more hostile school climate than their cisgender peers. They were more likely to feel unsafe at school<sup>161</sup> and to experience victimization at school based on gender expression or gender compared to both cisgender males and

## “Transgender students at my school are routinely outed, disrespected, and treated as lesser.”

females (see Figures 3.6, 3.8, and 3.9).<sup>162</sup> For example, half of genderqueer students (50.0%) were verbally harassed at school based on their gender expression sometimes, often, or frequently, compared to less than a third of cisgender males and females (26.4% and 20.0%, respectively). Although genderqueer students can be of any sexual orientation (including heterosexual), they were still more likely than cisgender LGBQ students to feel unsafe<sup>163</sup> and more likely to experience victimization based on their sexual orientation as compared to female cisgender students (see also Figures 3.6 and 3.7).<sup>164</sup> Genderqueer students were also more likely than cisgender females to avoid bathrooms, locker rooms, and Gym/Physical Education class because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (see Figure 3.10), but were not different from cisgender males in this regard.<sup>165</sup> Lastly, genderqueer students were more likely to experience anti-LGBT discrimination at school than were their cisgender LGBQ peers.<sup>166</sup>

**Experiences of Students with Other Non-Cisgender Identities.** Over a tenth of students (11.7%) identified their gender as something other than cisgender, transgender, or genderqueer. For example, some students wrote in that they were “bigender” or “pangender.” In that they identify outside of the traditional gender binary, these students are similar to their genderqueer peers, and in fact, there were virtually no significant differences between these students and genderqueer students regarding safety and victimization (the one exception being that students with other gender identities were more likely to feel unsafe based on sexual orientation than genderqueer students). As reported above, these students with other gender identities had

slightly better school experiences than transgender-identified students. Similar to transgender and genderqueer students, they were more likely to feel unsafe at school<sup>167</sup> and to experience victimization at school based on gender expression or gender compared to both cisgender males and females (see Figures 3.6, 3.8, and 3.9).<sup>168</sup> They were also more likely than cisgender male and female students to feel unsafe based on their sexual orientation<sup>169</sup> and more likely to experience victimization based on their sexual orientation compared to cisgender females (see also Figures 3.6 and 3.7).<sup>170</sup> Students with other non-cisgender identities were also more likely than cisgender students to avoid bathrooms, locker rooms, and Gym/Physical Education class because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (see Figure 3.10).<sup>171</sup> These students were also more likely than genderqueer students to avoid bathrooms, but were not different on the other typically gender-segregated spaces. These students were also not different from genderqueer students regarding anti-LGBT discriminatory policies and practices, but were more likely to experience this discrimination than were cisgender students.<sup>172</sup>

**Experiences of Cisgender LGBQ Students.** Overall, cisgender LGBQ students experienced less hostile school climate than transgender students, genderqueer students, and students with other gender identities (see Figures 3.6–3.11). However, most LGBQ students still faced hostile school climates. In addition, there were a number of differences between cisgender male and female students. Overall, cisgender female students experienced somewhat safer school environments regarding their sexual orientation and their gender expression in comparison to their cisgender male peers (see Figures 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8).<sup>173,174</sup> For example, less than a quarter of cisgender female students (22.5%) felt unsafe in school because of their gender expression, compared to almost a third of cisgender males (32.2%) (see also Figure 3.6). However, cisgender females were more likely to face a hostile school climate regarding their gender, in that they were more likely to feel unsafe because of their gender and be victimized based on gender (see Figures 3.6 and 3.9).<sup>175,176</sup> Cisgender females were less likely than cisgender males to avoid gender segregated spaces of locker rooms and bathrooms (but not Gym class), even after accounting for levels of victimization (see Figure 3.10).<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, cisgender females were somewhat more likely to experience anti-

LGBT discrimination at school compared to cisgender males.<sup>178</sup> Therefore, it appears that LGBTQ cisgender male and female students, while both often facing hostile climates, may have some differing challenges at school that should be explored in further research.

Overall, we found that among the LGBTQ students in our sample, transgender students appear to face the most hostile school climate, generally followed by genderqueer students, students with other gender identities, and LGBTQ cisgender students. Our findings also highlight that even in the absence of overt victimization, students may experience other discriminatory or hostile behaviors from classmates or school staff that restrict their access to education. School staff need to be aware of the various ways that gender-segregated spaces may be particularly difficult for transgender and other non-cisgender youth to navigate, and should work to ensure that all students have equal access to school facilities. It is also important to acknowledge that most cisgender LGBTQ students still experienced hostile school climates, and cisgender males experienced lower feelings of safety regarding sexual orientation and gender expression than cisgender females. It is possible that our society allows for more fluidity of sexual orientation and gender expression for females, particularly compared to males: for example, it is often considered more acceptable for a girl to dress or behave in ways deemed “masculine” than for a boy to dress or behave in a “feminine” manner.<sup>179</sup> Conversely, cisgender female students experienced greater victimization than cisgender males with regard to their gender, illustrating the additional ways that female students may experience sexism at school.

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### ***Comparisons by Gender Nonconformity***

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As reported in the previous section, *Comparisons by Gender Identity*, we examined differences in LGBTQ students’ school experiences by gender identity and found that students whose identities do not align with their sex assigned at birth (e.g., transgender and genderqueer students) faced more hostile school climates than their cisgender peers. A growing body of research indicates that LGBTQ youth whose gender expression does not conform to traditional expectations for their gender may also be at an elevated risk for victimization.<sup>180</sup> Indeed, LGBTQ students in our survey commonly reported hearing negative remarks about students’

gender expression (how “masculine” or “feminine” someone appears to be) as well as having been personally victimized based on their gender expression. Therefore, we examined differences in students’ experiences of safety, harassment, and assault based on their conformity or nonconformity to traditional gender expression norms.

**Gender Expression of LGBTQ Students.** In order to assess gender nonconformity among students in our survey, we asked participants about how other people at school would describe their gender expression: very masculine, mostly masculine, somewhat masculine, equally masculine and feminine, somewhat feminine, mostly feminine, very feminine, or none of these. There was a great deal of variance among the responses, in general, and more so by gender identity. As

**“I feel like my gender expression would not be welcome at school. For example, I would like to wear makeup and dresses, but I feel that doing so would jeopardize my safety.”**

shown in Figure 3.12, of the LGBTQ students who selected a gender expression, just over two-thirds of cisgender female students (67.3%) reported that their gender expression was “somewhat feminine,” “mostly feminine,” or “very feminine.” In contrast, just over a third of cisgender male students (35.0%) reported their gender expression as “somewhat masculine,” “mostly masculine,” or “very masculine.” Transgender male students, however were much more likely than cisgender males to report their gender expression as masculine (69.2% vs. 35.0%)<sup>181</sup> Although a similar portion of transgender female and cisgender female students reported their gender expression as somewhere on the feminine spectrum (67.3% and 68.1%), transgender females were more likely than cisgender females to report their expression specifically as “very feminine.” Students whose

# Insight on Bisexual Students

Bisexual youth make up a sizeable portion of the LGBTQ youth community,<sup>182</sup> yet there is little data on their specific school experiences. Nearly a quarter of LGBTQ students (22.9%) in the 2015 NSCS identified as bisexual. In this insight, we examine their specific school experiences and explore how they might differ from other students in our survey. Although bisexual and pansexual identities are often considered under the same umbrella of those who have sexual/romantic attraction to more than one gender, preliminary analyses indicated that bisexual and pansexual students in our survey were significantly different from one another in the areas of interest, and thus we did not aggregate them into one category, instead examining their experiences separately.

In comparison to students of other sexual orientations, bisexual students in our survey were somewhat different in regard to gender and age. Compared to gay/lesbian students, bisexual students were more likely to be cisgender female and less likely to be cisgender male; they were also less likely to be non-cisgender (e.g., transgender, genderqueer) compared to pansexual and queer students.<sup>183</sup> Bisexual students were not different from other students in regard to race/ethnicity,<sup>184</sup> but were somewhat younger than gay/lesbian students.<sup>185</sup>

**School Safety and Victimization.** Bisexual students reported feeling safer at school due to their sexual orientation than gay/lesbian and pansexual students and less safe than questioning students in our survey.<sup>186</sup> Bisexual students also felt safer at school regarding their gender expression than gay/lesbian, pansexual, and queer students, and students of another sexual orientation (e.g., asexual, homoromantic).<sup>187</sup> We also found that bisexual students experienced less peer victimization based on their sexual orientation and gender expression than gay/lesbian and pansexual students, and less victimization based on gender expression than students with another sexual orientation.<sup>188</sup> However, bisexual students in our survey experienced higher levels of sexual harassment compared to gay/lesbian, questioning, and students with another sexual orientation — we found this to be true even when accounting for the higher percentage of cisgender females with bisexual identities in our survey. They were less likely than gay/lesbian students to report incidents of victimization to school staff.<sup>189</sup> Over a third of bisexual students (38.0%) who had been victimized in the past year said they ever reported these incidents to school staff compared to 43.7% of gay/lesbian students.

**Psychological Well-Being.** Compared to gay/lesbian students in our survey, we found that bisexual students had lower self-esteem, higher rates of depression, and lower sense of belonging to their school community.<sup>190</sup> However, compared to pansexual students and students with another sexual orientation, bisexual students reported higher levels of self-esteem, lower levels of depression, and a greater sense of school belonging. Bisexual students did not differ from queer or questioning students with regard to psychological well-being.

**Bisexual Students and Outness.** Prior research has demonstrated that being out about one's LGBTQ identity at school can lead to more frequent peer victimization;<sup>191</sup> thus, it is possible that bisexual students felt safer and experienced less LGBT-related victimization at school because they were not as out as other students. We found that bisexual students were less likely to be out to school staff, other students in school, and to their parents compared to gay/lesbian and pansexual students.<sup>192,193</sup>

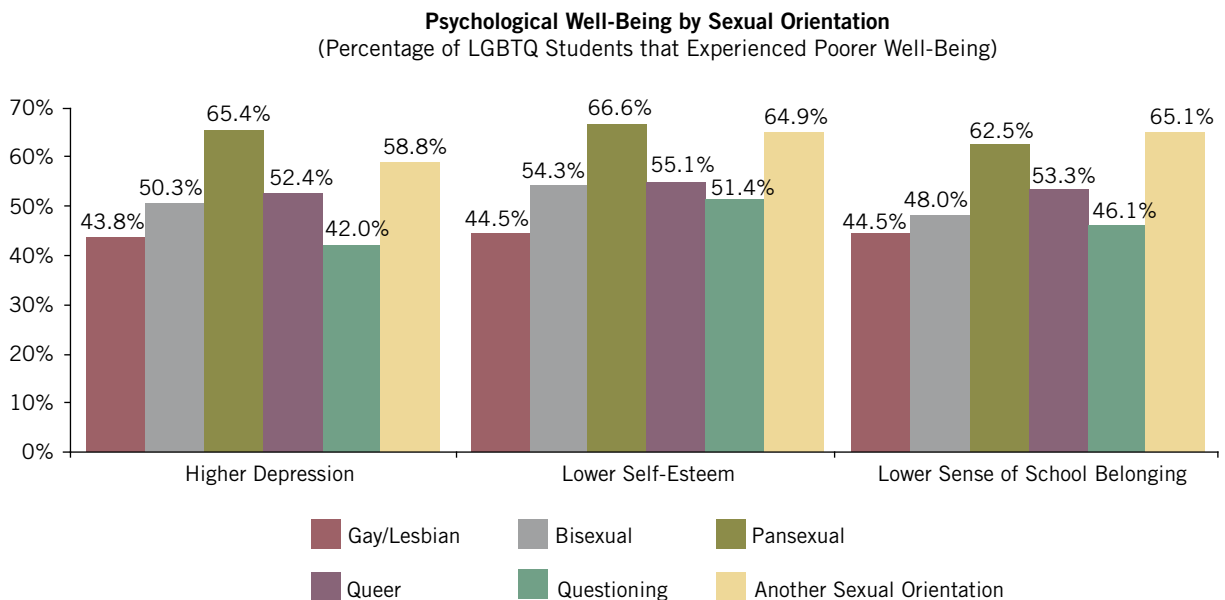
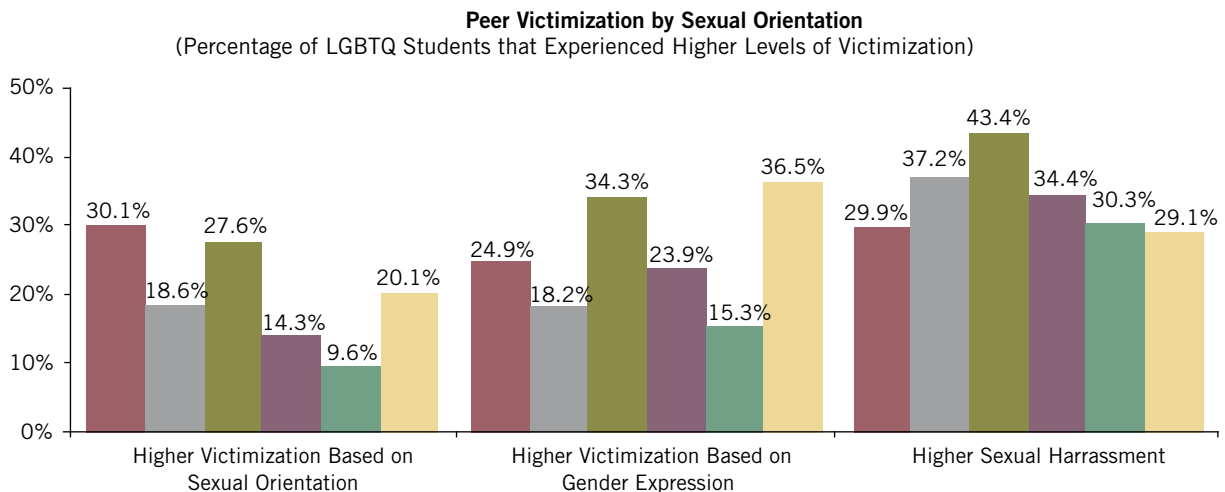
Among bisexual students, those who were less out to peers experienced less victimization,<sup>194</sup> although overall, outness was not related to feeling unsafe at school. Outness was related to reporting victimization to school staff, in that bisexual students who were less out to peers were less likely to report incidents when they occurred.<sup>195</sup> Previous research has indicated that youth who are open about their LGBTQ identity may have better mental health.<sup>196</sup> Among bisexual students in our survey, outness to school staff was somewhat related to greater self-esteem and higher school belonging.<sup>197</sup> However, neither outness to peers nor outness to parents were related to any of the well-being indicators.

Given that bisexual students were less out than gay/lesbian and pansexual students, and that outness was related to victimization and well-being, we examined whether these differences in outness accounted for the differences in victimization and well-being. We found that when accounting for differences in outness, bisexual students were no longer different from gay/lesbian students in reporting incidents to school staff or school belonging.<sup>198</sup> However, with respect to victimization,<sup>199</sup> self-esteem, and depression, outness appeared to narrow these differences somewhat, but not eliminate them completely.<sup>200</sup> It may be that even

when some bisexual students are out, they are nevertheless seen as heterosexual, particularly if they are in what might appear to be a heterosexual relationship.<sup>201</sup> This manifestation of bisexual invisibility<sup>202</sup> might partially account for bisexual students' lower rates of victimization (as compared to gay/lesbian students). Furthermore, when students' identities are not validated or acknowledged, their psychological well-being may be negatively affected.

**Conclusions.** These findings demonstrate that the comparative experiences of bisexual students to their peers is complex. Bisexual students experienced less anti-LGBT victimization than gay/lesbian students, but more sexual harassment, and were less likely to report victimization incidents to school staff. They also had poorer well-being than their gay/lesbian peers. Yet, overall, bisexual students appear to be faring better than pansexual students and students of other sexual orientations in both safety/victimization and indicators of well-being. In general, bisexual students were relatively similar to both queer and questioning students in relation to the items assessed.

Our findings highlight the significant role that outness plays in bisexual students' experiences. Bisexual students were less out about their sexual orientation than their gay/lesbian and pansexual peers. Although these differences in outness appear to somewhat explain differences in school experiences, they do not appear to completely account for the disparities. Future research should examine the experiences of bisexual students in more depth in order to understand what underlying factors may contribute to these disparities. Our findings highlight the need to further explore the particular experiences of other sexual minority students, such as pansexual students.





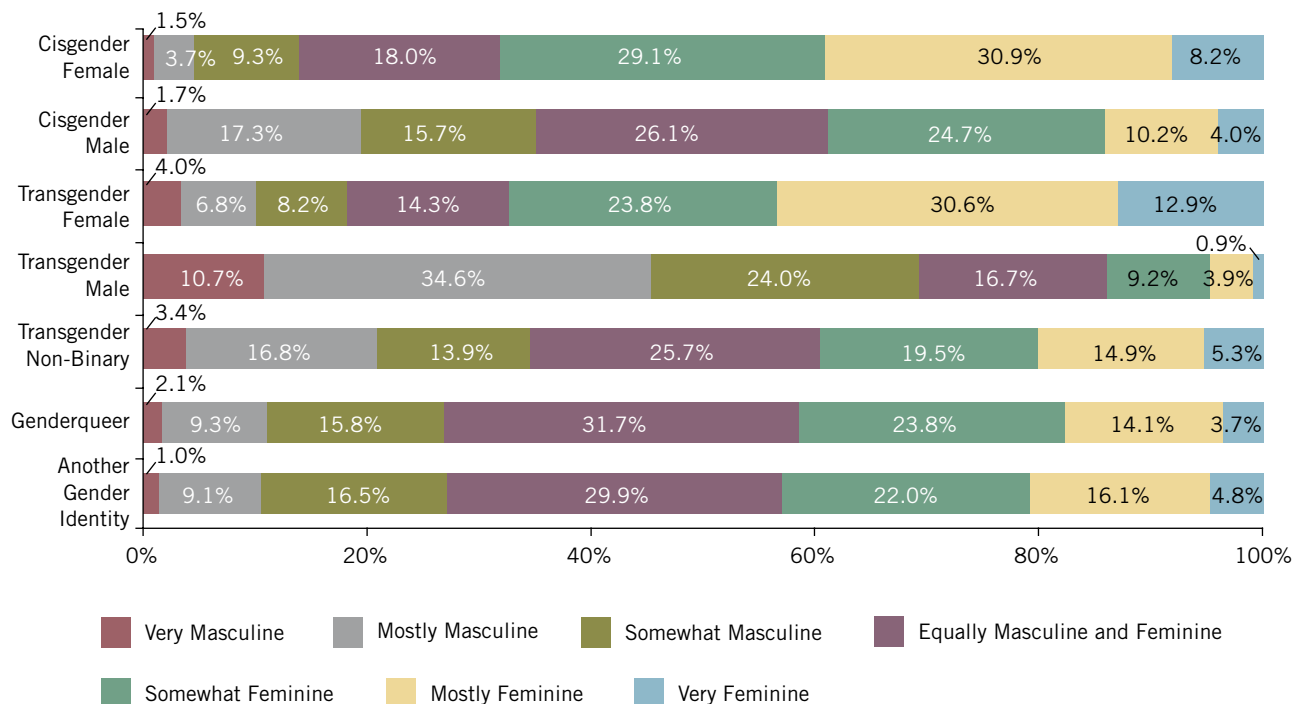
identity fell outside the male or female gender binary (i.e., genderqueer students, students with other gender identities, and transgender students who did not identify as solely male or female) were more likely than other students to describe their gender expression as “equally masculine and feminine.” A small portion of students (1.1%) selected the option “none of these” and were given the opportunity to describe how they expressed their gender, and many of them indicated that it varied depending on context or their mood (e.g., “depends on the day”) or varied on a spectrum (e.g., fluid).

**Gender Nonconformity and School Experiences.** As reported in the previous section, *Comparisons by Gender Identity*, youth whose gender identity was not the same as their assigned sex at birth (i.e., transgender, genderqueer, and other youth who are not cisgender) faced higher levels of victimization and lower levels of safety at school. However, even for cisgender students, traditional expectations regarding gender expression may negatively affect their school experiences. Therefore, within the sample of cisgender LGBQ students, we examined whether those students who were gender nonconforming reported higher levels of

victimization and lower feelings of safety compared to those who were more gender conforming (students were considered gender nonconforming if they reported a gender expression that did not align with traditional gender norms: i.e., a male student who reported a gender expression on the feminine scale or as equally masculine and feminine).<sup>203</sup> Although gender expression and sexual orientation are distinct concepts, they may be linked by perpetrators of harassment who may, often falsely, believe that nontraditional gender expression indicates a non-heterosexual sexual orientation. Thus, we examined differences in both gender expression-based and sexual orientation-based victimization and safety.

We found that students who were gender nonconforming were more likely to feel unsafe in school and to report a more hostile school climate than their peers, specifically higher rates of victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression (see Figures 3.13 and 3.14).<sup>204,205</sup> For example, among LGBQ cisgender students, gender nonconforming students were almost three times as likely to report feeling unsafe at school because of their gender expression than their gender conforming peers (41.6% vs.

**Figure 3.12 Gender Expression by Gender Identity**  
(LGBTQ Students who Selected an Option on the Masculine-Feminine Continuum; n = 8881)



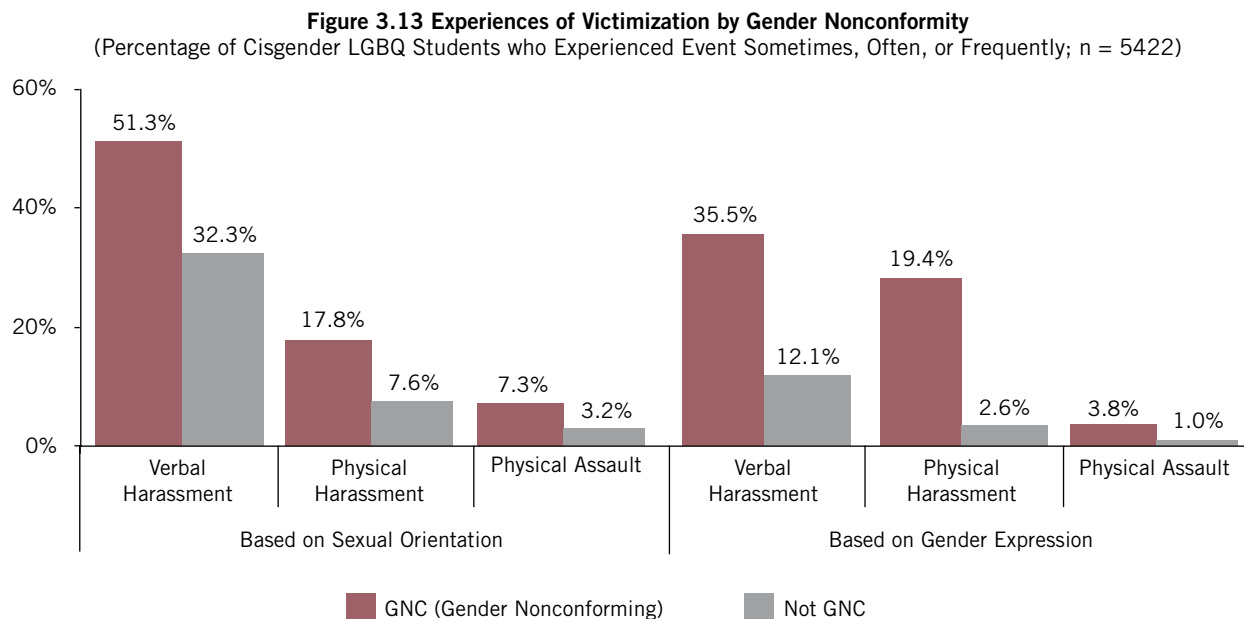


14.2%, see Figure 3.14). Furthermore, as shown in Figure 3.13, over a third of LGBTQ cisgender gender nonconforming students had been verbally harassed based on their gender expression at least sometimes in school, compared to just over a tenth of their gender conforming peers (35.3% vs. 12.1%). It is important to note that gender nonconformity was not only related to higher rates of victimization based on gender expression, but also higher rates of victimization based on sexual orientation. Also, many LGBTQ students whose gender expression conformed to traditional norms commonly experienced victimization based on gender expression. These findings indicate that nontraditional (i.e., nonconforming) gender expression may make one a more visible target for various types of anti-LGBT harassment. It may also be that perpetrators of anti-LGBT behaviors in school may direct harassment related to gender expression toward any student they believe to be LGBTQ, regardless of their actual gender expression.

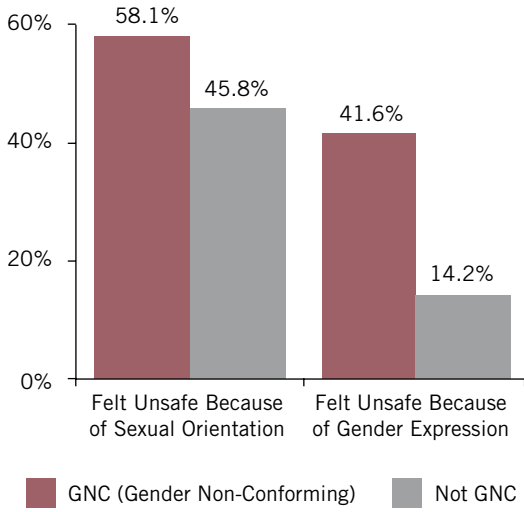
Schools may often reinforce adherence to traditional gender norms through formal policies or everyday practices of school staff, such as through dress codes which may be stigmatizing for some

students (see the *Experiences of Discrimination at School* section of this report). Therefore, it is not surprising that we found that gender nonconforming cisgender LGBTQ students reported experiencing discrimination at a higher rate than gender conforming youth (61.1% vs. 51.1%). Given the heightened level of victimization and discrimination faced by gender nonconforming LGBTQ cisgender students, it is critical that schools and safe schools advocates ensure that their efforts to improve school climate for LGBTQ students explicitly address issues of gender expression and gender nonconformity, in addition to those of sexual orientation.

Taken together, the findings in this section regarding demographic differences in LGBTQ students' school experiences by race/ethnicity, gender identity, and gender expression highlight the importance of examining the experiences of various subpopulations within the larger population of LGBTQ students. Clearly, in order to ensure that all LGBTQ youth feel safe and welcome in schools, schools need to address not only homophobia, but also transphobia, racism, sexism, and other forms of bias that affect all youth.



**Figure 3.14 Feelings of School Safety  
by Gender Nonconformity**  
(Percentage of Cisgender LGBTQ Students  
who Feel Unsafe at School; n = 5422)



# Comparisons of Biased Language, Victimization, Discrimination, and Resources by School Characteristics

## Key Findings

- Compared to high school students, LGBTQ students in middle school were more likely to experience harassment, assault, and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender expression, and less likely to have access to LGBT-related resources and supports.
- Students in non-religious private schools were less likely to hear homophobic remarks than students in public or religious schools and more likely to have access to LGBT-related resources and supports.
- Students from schools in the South and Midwest and from schools in small towns or rural areas were most likely to hear anti-LGBT remarks. They were also more likely to be harassed or assaulted based on sexual orientation or gender expression and more likely to experience anti-LGBT discrimination at school and report discrimination occurring to other students in their school.
- Students from schools in the South, the Midwest, and small towns or rural areas were least likely to have access to LGBT-related resources and supports.

Just as LGBTQ students' school experiences may vary by certain personal demographic characteristics, their experiences may also vary based on the characteristics of their schools. For instance, certain types of schools might be more or less accepting of LGBTQ students or may be more or less likely to have important LGBT-related resources and supports. Therefore, we examined students' reports of hearing biased language, experiences of victimization and discrimination, and the availability of LGBT-related resources and supports by school level, school type, geographic region, and locale.

### Comparisons by School Level

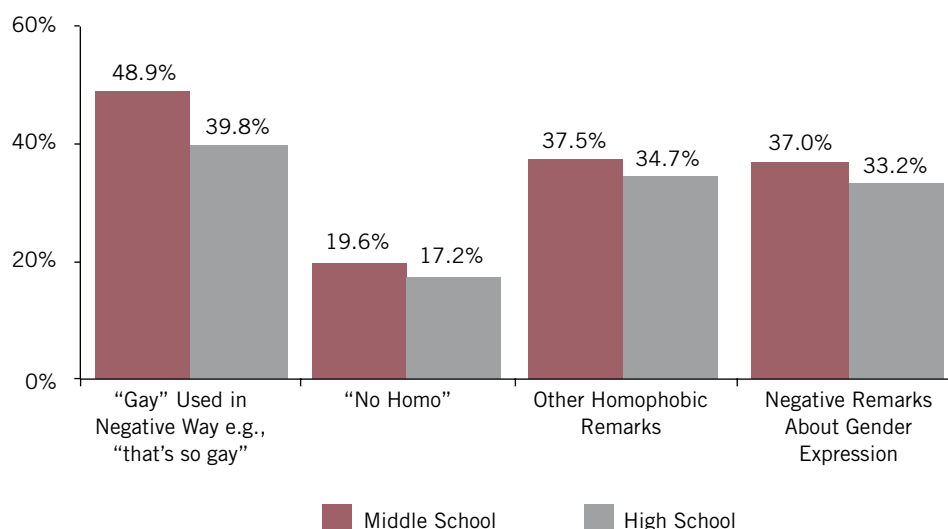
LGBTQ students in middle school may face more bullying and harassment than their high school peers, as research has shown that to be the case among the general student population.<sup>206</sup> It is also possible that LGBT-specific resources and supports may be more or less available in middle schools. Thus, we examined differences in anti-LGBT language, experiences of victimization, experiences of discrimination, and availability of resources and supports based on school level.<sup>207</sup> On almost all of the indicators of school climate, middle school students fared worse than high school students — middle schools students experienced more biased language and direct victimization, reported more experiences of discrimination, and had fewer LGBT-related resources and supports.

**Anti-LGBT Language in School.** Most anti-LGBT remarks — homophobic remarks (“gay” in a negative way, “no homo,” and other homophobic remarks) and negative remarks about gender expression — were heard more frequently by students in middle school than students in high school (see Figure 3.15).<sup>208</sup> For example, nearly half of LGBTQ middle school students (48.9%) reported hearing “gay” used in a negative way frequently at school, compared to 39.8% of LGBTQ high school students.

**Experiences of Victimization.** Compared to high school students, middle school students experienced slightly higher levels of victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression (see Figure 3.16).<sup>209</sup> For example, over half of LGBTQ middle school students (57.9%) experienced verbal harassment based on their sexual orientation sometimes, often, or frequently, compared to 46.2% of LGBTQ high school students.

**Discriminatory Policies and Practices.** Further exploration of the particular types of discrimination we assessed in this survey (see the *Discriminatory Policies and Practices* section) revealed that compared to high school students, middle school students were more likely to have experienced anti-LGBT discrimination in school (72.6% vs. 58.0%).<sup>210</sup> However, with respect to reporting discrimination occurring to other students in their school, there were no differences between middle and high school students.

**Figure 3.15 Anti-LGBT Remarks by School Level**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Heard Remarks Frequently)



**School Resources and Supports.** Students in middle schools were less likely than students in high schools to have access to each of the LGBT-related resources and supports at school (see Figure 3.17).<sup>211</sup> One particularly large disparity between middle and high school students was in the presence of GSAs (14.5% for middle school students vs. 61.2% for high school students). One possible explanation for this disparity is that GSAs, like other non-curricular clubs, are student-initiated, whereas the other LGBT-related resources and supports assessed in this section are typically dependent on educators to implement. It may be that middle school students have fewer opportunities to start clubs. It may also be that developmentally, high school students are more prepared to initiate and sustain a school club and to effectively respond to opposition from the school or community than middle school students. Given the benefits GSAs may provide to LGBTQ students, it may be particularly important for safe school advocates to devote resources to helping middle school students start and sustain GSAs.

Overall, our findings are consistent with research on the general population of students in that LGBTQ students in middle schools face more hostile school climates than LGBTQ students in high schools. In addition to general developmental trends about school violence, it may also be that adolescents become more accepting of LGBT people and less tolerant of anti-LGBT harassment as they grow older.<sup>212</sup> Further, not only did middle

school students experience more victimization and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender expression than those in high school, they were much less likely to report that their schools had resources and supports that can help to create a safer and more affirming environment. Given the higher incidence of victimization of LGBTQ students in middle schools, school districts should devote greater attention to implementing these supportive resources in middle schools and to addressing anti-LGBT bias in the younger grades before it becomes engrained in middle school students' behaviors and attitudes.

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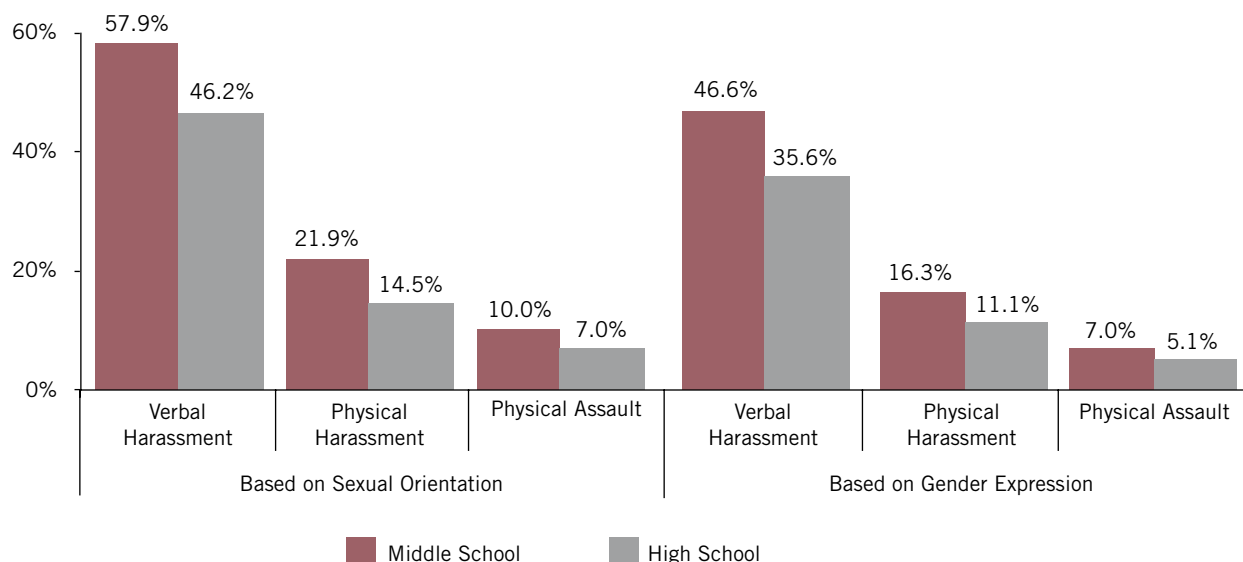
### Comparisons by School Type

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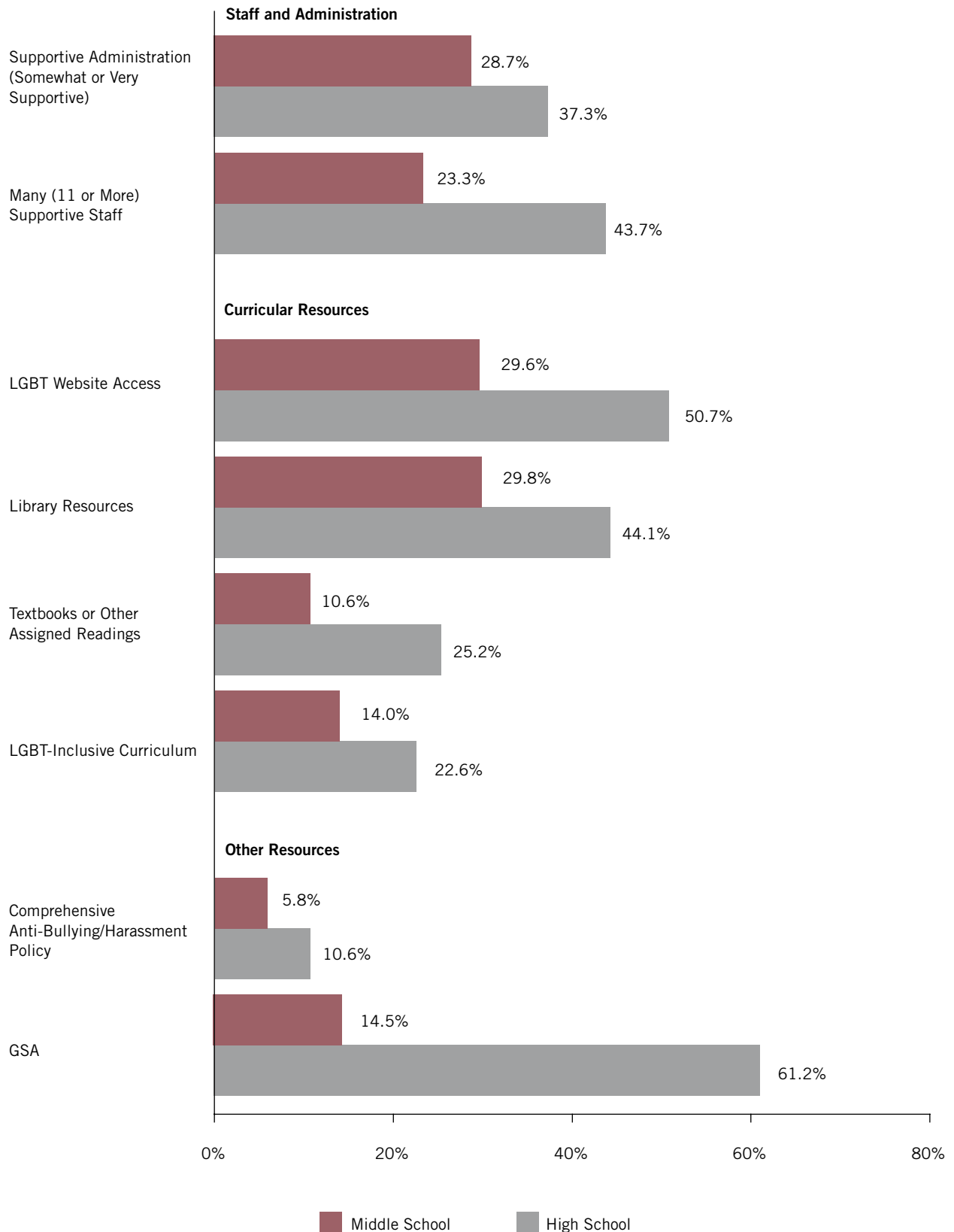
As with the general population of students in the United States, most of the LGBTQ students in our sample (89.6%) attended public schools. Nevertheless, we wanted to examine whether students' experiences with biased language, victimization, discrimination, and the availability of LGBT-related resources and supports varied based on the type of school they attended — public, religious, or private non-religious schools.

**Anti-LGBT Language in School.** Overall, LGBTQ students in public schools were most likely to hear anti-LGBT language at school, whereas LGBTQ students in private non-religious schools were least likely to hear this type of language (see Figure 3.18).<sup>213</sup>

**Figure 3.16 Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression by School Level**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Experienced Event Sometimes, Often, or Frequently)



**Figure 3.17 Availability of LGBT-Related Resources and Supports by School Level**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students with Resource in their School)



- Public school students heard all types of homophobic language most often, as compared to both students in religious schools and private non-religious schools. Students in non-religious private schools were least likely to report hearing “gay” in a negative way and other types of homophobic remarks, but were not different from religious schools regarding the phrase “no homo.”
- Public school students were more likely than private non-religious school students to hear negative remarks about gender expression. There were no differences between religious school students and public school students
- Public school and religious school students heard negative remarks about transgender people more often than private non-religious school students. There were no differences between public school students and religious school students.

**Experiences of Victimization.** Similar to findings related to biased language, LGBTQ students in public schools reported the highest levels of victimization (see Figures 3.19 and 3.20).<sup>214</sup> Specifically:

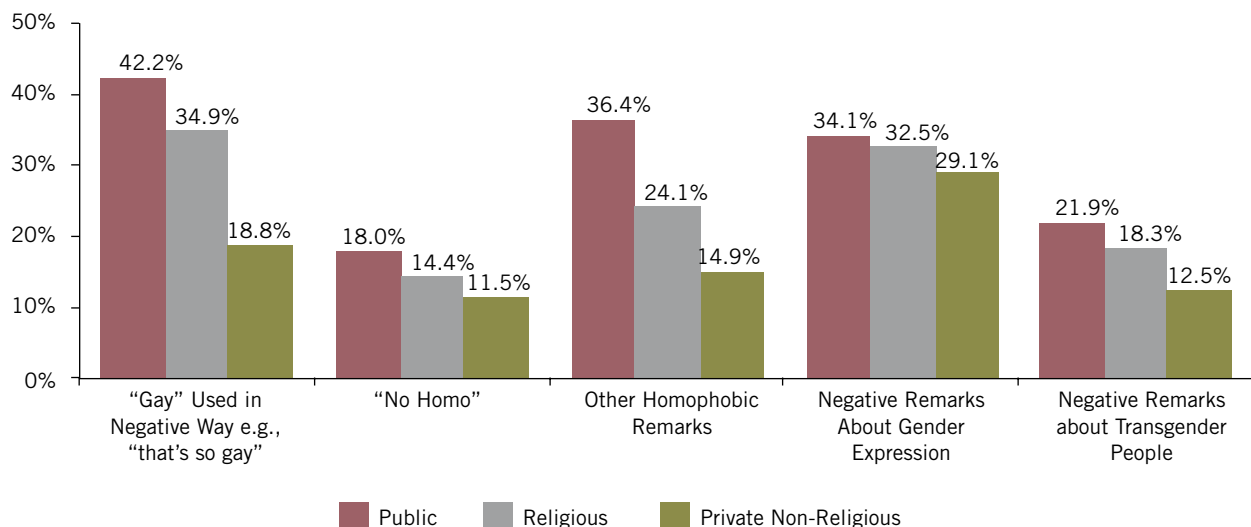
- Public school students experienced more victimization based on sexual orientation than both private and religious school students;

- Public school students experienced more victimization based on gender expression than private non-religious school students (Public school and religious school students were not significantly different on victimization based on gender expression); and
- There were no differences in victimization based on sexual orientation or gender expression between students in private non-religious and religious schools.

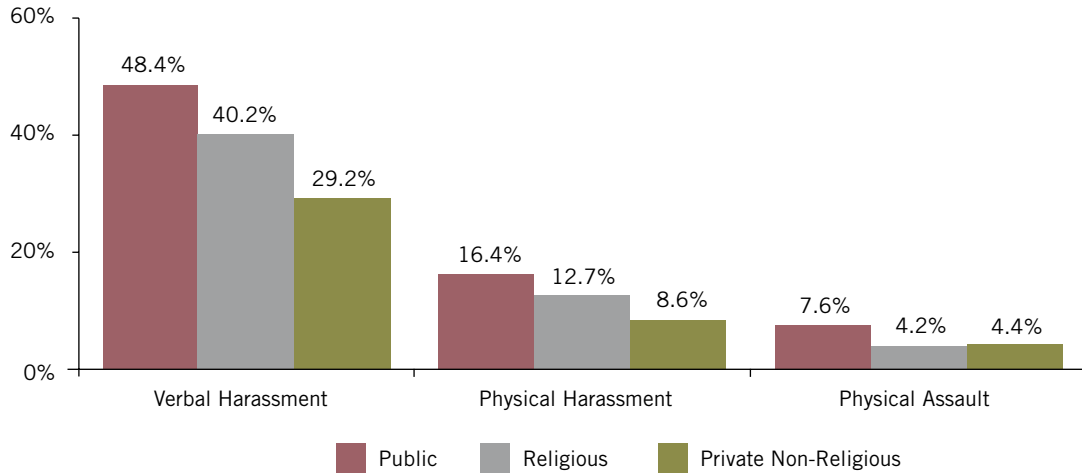
**Experiences of Discrimination.** Students in private non-religious schools were less likely to report anti-LGBT discriminatory policies and practices in their schools, as compared to students in public and religious schools. Religious school students were more likely to report anti-LGBT discrimination in their schools compared to students in other schools.<sup>215</sup> As shown in Figure 3.21, these patterns remained true for both students’ reports of their own experiences as a target of anti-LGBT discrimination and their reports of other students’ experiences at their school.

**School Resources and Supports.** There were significant differences in the availability of LGBT-related resources and supports by school type. Overall, students in private non-religious schools were more likely to have access to LGBT-related resources and supports than students in public or religious schools. However, there were some exceptions. Students in private non-religious

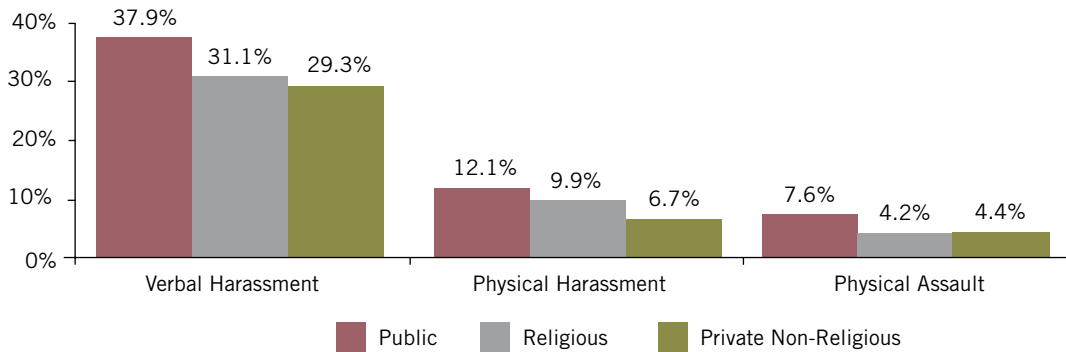
**Figure 3.18 Anti-LGBT Remarks by School Type**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Hear Remarks Frequently)



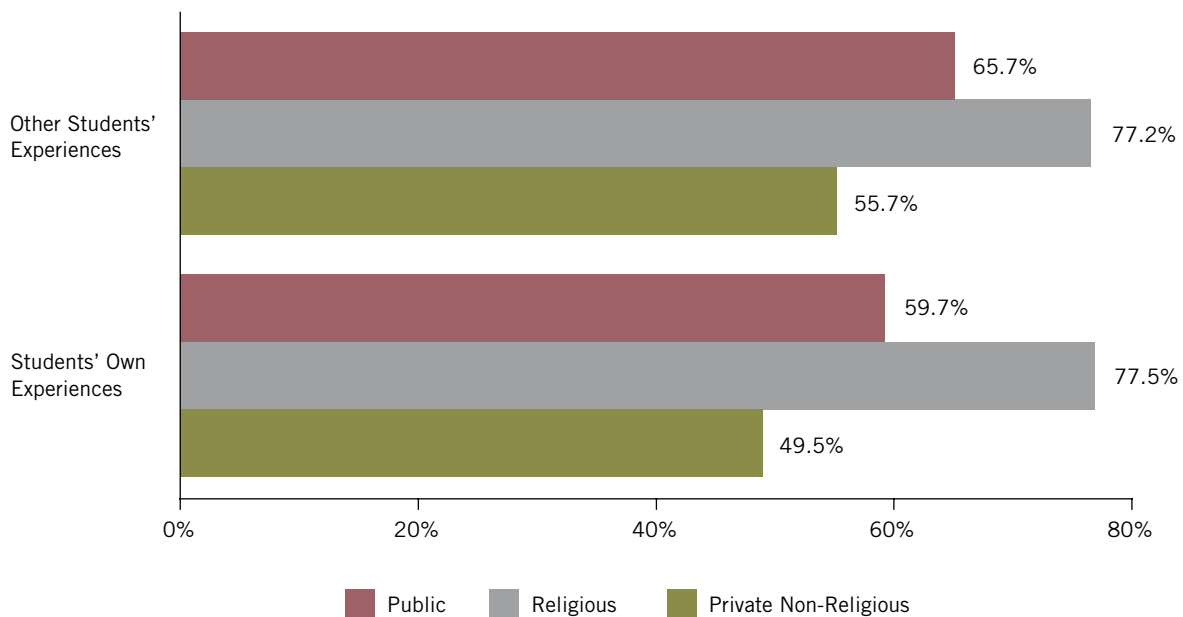
**Figure 3.19 Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Sexual Orientation by School Type**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Experienced Event Sometimes, Often, or Frequently)



**Figure 3.20 Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Gender Expression by School Type**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Experienced Event Sometimes, Often, or Frequently)



**Figure 3.21 Experiences of Discrimination by School Type**





**“I really wish my Catholic school was less oppressive to the LGBT community. We exist and have a good presence at the school, let us have a GSA and give us bullying protections. I am often discouraged from starting a GSA as our school will claim ‘religious liberty.’”**

schools did not differ from students in public schools with respect to inclusive library resources. Also, students in private non-religious schools did not differ from students in religious schools with respect to LGBT-inclusive content in textbooks or assigned readings (see Figure 3.22).<sup>216</sup>

**Charter Schools.** The number of charter schools in the U.S. has increased over the last several years – there are now more than 6,800 charter public schools enrolling an estimated 2.9 million students throughout the country.<sup>217</sup> Funded by public money, but run independently, charter schools are exempt from many state laws and district policies that regulate how and what they teach, how they can use their resources, and decisions related to staffing and personnel. In exchange, charter schools must meet certain academic and financial performance criteria. Recently, federal education policy, as well as many state policies, have pushed charter schools as a means of increasing educational quality, equality, and access. We found that 3.9% of LGBTQ students in public schools in our survey attended charter schools (compared to the 6.0% of the nation’s public school students overall).<sup>218</sup> Given that charter schools are increasingly becoming such a significant sector of public education and given the lack of educational equity experienced by LGBTQ students in general,<sup>219</sup> it is important to examine LGBTQ students’ experiences in charter schools, and we compared differences between students attending charter schools and non-charter public schools on a variety of school climate measures.

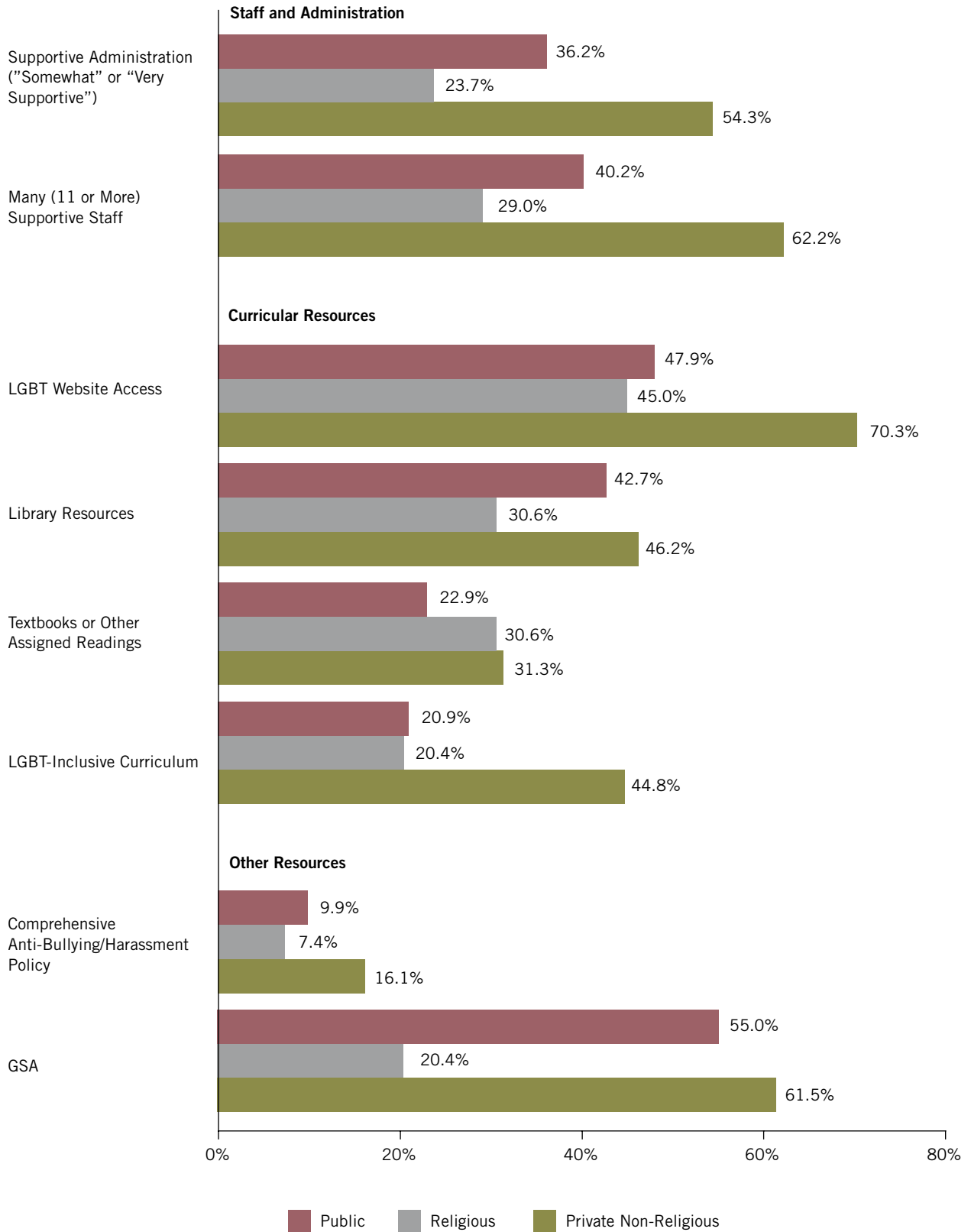
**School Safety.** LGBTQ students in charter schools did not differ from other public school LGBTQ students in terms of frequency of hearing biased remarks<sup>220</sup> or experiences of harassment and assault based on sexual orientation or gender expression.<sup>221</sup> However, LGBTQ students in charter schools were less

likely to report feeling unsafe at school due to their sexual orientation (51.5% vs. 58.8%).<sup>222</sup> There were no differences in feelings of safety based on gender expression.

**Discriminatory Policies and Practices.** Students in charter schools were less likely to report anti-LGBT discrimination as occurring at their school compared to students at other public schools — specifically, charter school students were less likely to report discriminatory policies and practices occurring to their peers (67.0% vs. 74.7%).<sup>223</sup> We found no differences between charter and non-charter public school students in terms of students’ own personal experiences as the target of this type of discrimination.

**School Resources.** There were no differences between charter schools and other public schools in the availability of the majority of LGBT-related school resources, including comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies, Gay-Straight Alliances (or similar student clubs), inclusion of LGBT content in textbooks/assigned readings, school Internet access to LGBT material, staff supportive of LGBTQ students, and supportive administration.<sup>224</sup> However, we did find that students in charter schools were more likely to report that teachers incorporated more positive representations of LGBT people, issues, and events into the curriculum than students in other public schools (28.1% vs. 20.7%).<sup>225</sup> It may be that teachers in charter schools have more latitude over or flexibility with curricular content and can more easily incorporate LGBT issues into classroom instruction. In contrast, charter school students reported less access to school library resources with LGBT information than other public schools students (50.6% vs. 66.8%). It may be that charter schools have or

**Figure 3.22 Availability of LGBT-Related Resources and Supports by School Type**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students with Resource in their School)



spend fewer resources for library materials than other public schools.

Overall, our findings indicate that charter schools may offer slightly less hostile school environments for LGBTQ students than other public schools. LGBTQ charter school students felt less unsafe due to their sexual orientation than students in other public schools. Given that, unlike traditional public schools, many charter schools are able to select who attends and who gets expelled from their school, it may be easier for charter schools to limit disruptive behaviors. Furthermore, students in charter schools were more likely to have positive representations of LGBT topics in their curriculum. Perhaps the autonomy afforded to charter schools with respect to instructional content allows for increased curricular inclusion. Nonetheless, more research is needed to fully understand the relationship between charter schools and LGBT-inclusive curricular materials. In addition, with increased attention being paid to charter schools, it is important that future research further examine the experiences of LGBTQ students in these schools. As charter schools may vary widely in their missions, ideals, and practices, further exploration into how the various types of charter schools address LGBTQ student issues would be particularly valuable.

In general, we found that private non-religious schools were more positive environments for LGBTQ youth than public schools or religious schools. Not only were private non-religious school students less likely to hear anti-LGBT language, less likely to be victimized, and less likely to report LGBT-related discrimination at school, but they also had greater access to LGBT-related resources and supports. Whereas LGBTQ students in religious schools were least likely to have these supports and were more likely to report LGBT-related discrimination at school, they did not face the most unsafe school climates; students in public schools reported greater frequencies of hearing biased remarks and experiencing harassment and assault. Perhaps students in religious schools face stricter codes of conduct and/or harsher discipline for violating school rules, resulting in decreased rates of all types of prohibited behaviors. In addition, unlike most public schools, both religious schools and private non-religious schools can select who attends their school and can more easily expel disruptive students compared to public schools. In contrast, LGBTQ students

attending religious schools did experience or witness more discriminatory behaviors than students from other schools. It is possible that these stricter codes of conduct also lead to a greater prohibition of expressing an LGBTQ identity in school. Additionally, private schools (both religious and non-religious) that do not receive federal funding are not necessarily subject to federal anti-discrimination laws, such as Title IX which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Stricter codes of conduct in religious schools, coupled with the potential lack of enumerated protections for LGBTQ students, could contribute to higher rates of discrimination reported by students. It is perhaps surprising that LGBTQ students in our sample from religious schools reported more LGBT inclusion in their textbooks and assigned readings than public school students, given that most of these students attended Catholic schools.<sup>226</sup> However, students in the survey were asked about any LGBT inclusion in textbooks and readings (regardless of its nature). Therefore, it is possible that these higher rates of LGBT inclusion among religious school students' textbook/readings are due to LGBT topics being presented in a neutral or negative manner.

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### ***Comparisons by Region***

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The United States is a vast country, rich with geographic diversity. To best target education and advocacy efforts, it is helpful to understand the specific array of experiences of LGBTQ students in schools in these various areas of the country. Therefore, we also examined whether there were differences in students' experiences with biased language, discrimination, victimization, and access to LGBT-related school resources and supports based on region of the country — Northeast,

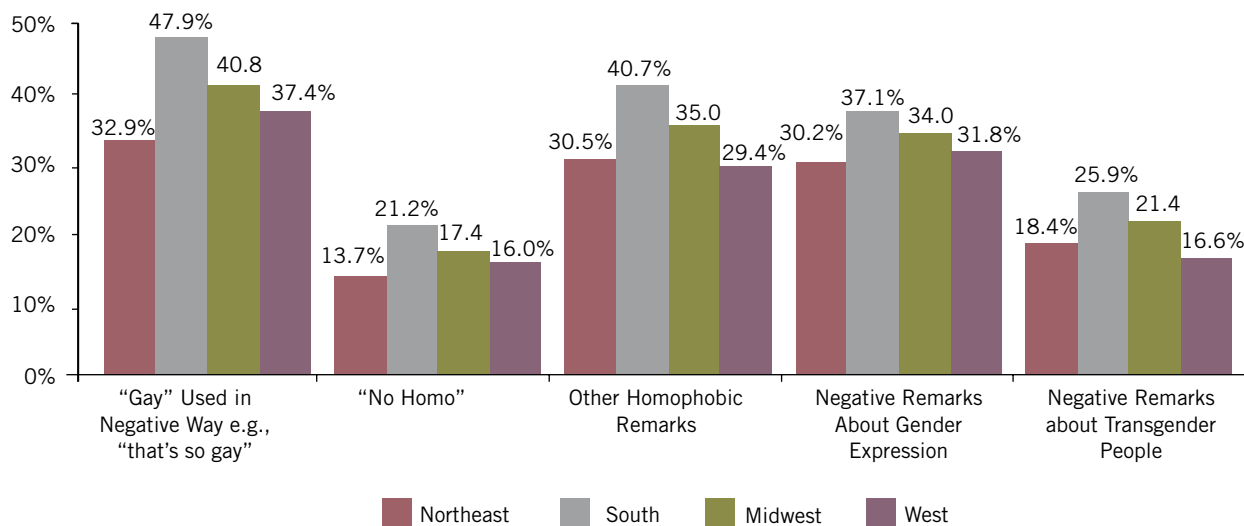
**“My school is worse than most. Everyone in my area is homophobic or unsupportive. I have searched and there are no programs or anything here in the south.”**

South, Midwest, or West.<sup>227</sup>

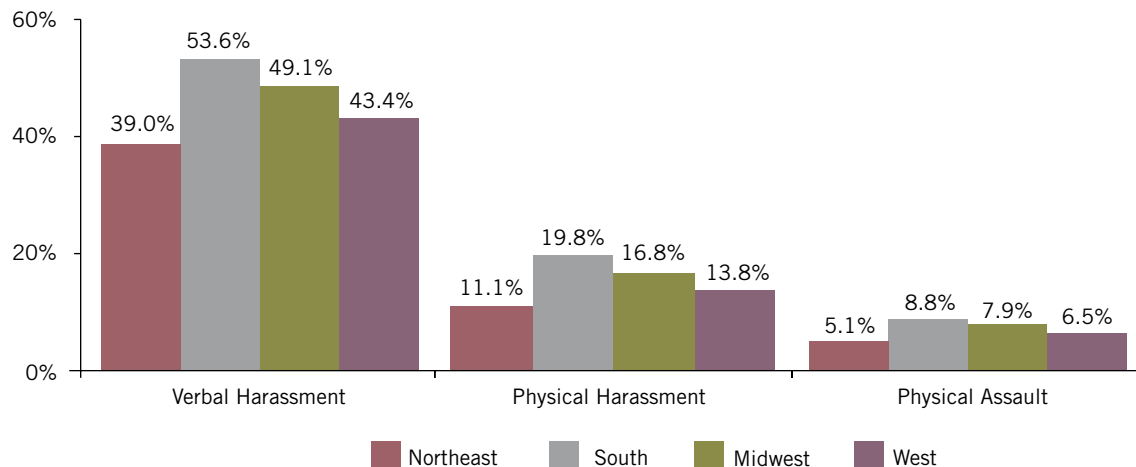
**Anti-LGBT Language in School.** In general, LGBTQ students attending schools in the Northeast and the West reported lower frequencies of hearing anti-LGBT remarks than students attending schools in the South and Midwest; differences were most stark for homophobic expressions such as “that’s so gay” and “no homo” (see Figure 3.23).<sup>228</sup> For example, as shown in Figure 3.23, a third of students (32.9%) in the Northeast reported hearing “gay” used in a negative way frequently, compared to nearly half of students in the South (47.9%).

**Experiences of Victimization.** Overall, LGBTQ students from schools in the Northeast and the West reported somewhat lower levels of victimization both based on sexual orientation and based on gender expression than students in schools in the South and the Midwest, with the largest differences between the Northeast and the South (see Figures 3.24 and 3.25).<sup>229</sup> For example, as shown in Figure 3.24, over a third of LGBTQ students (39.0%) attending schools in the Northeast reported experiencing verbal harassment based on their sexual orientation sometimes, often, or frequently, compared to more than half of students (53.6%) in Southern schools.

**Figure 3.23 Anti-LGBT Remarks by School Type**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Hearing Remarks Frequently)



**Figure 3.24 Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Sexual Orientation By Region**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Experienced Event Sometimes, Often, or Frequently)



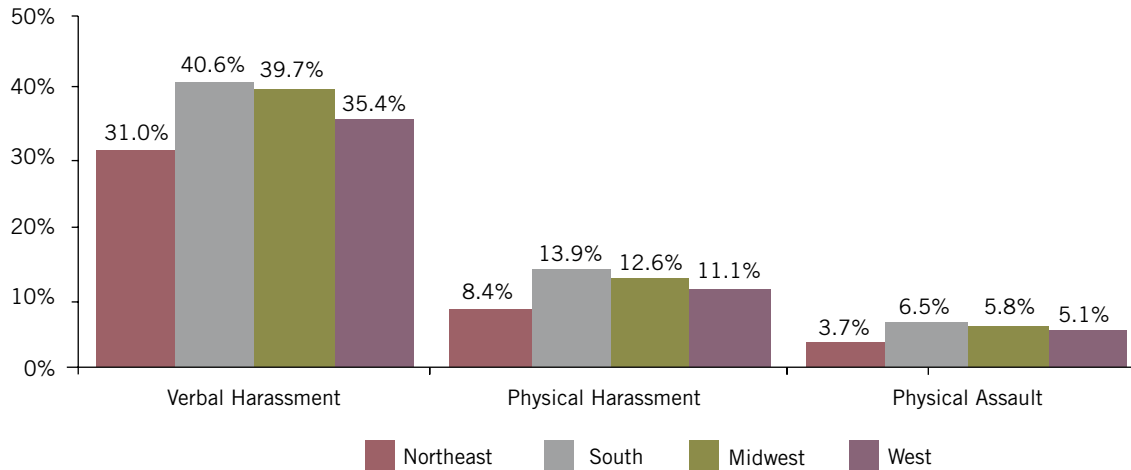
**Experiences of Discrimination.** LGBTQ students in the South (75.9%) were most likely to experience anti-LGBT discrimination at school resulting from school policies and practices (see Figure 3.26), followed by students in the Midwest (69.2%).<sup>230</sup> Similarly, LGBTQ students in both the South (82.3%) and the Midwest (77.2%) reported the highest incidence of anti-LGBT discrimination occurring to other students in their school.<sup>231</sup>

**School Resources and Supports.** Students in the Northeast were most likely to report having LGBT-related resources at school, followed by students in the West.<sup>232</sup> As shown in Figure 3.27, students

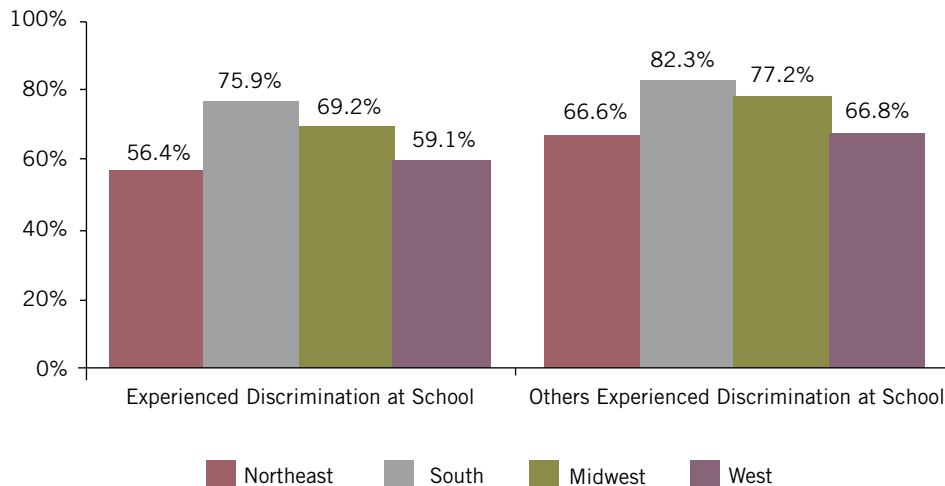
attending schools in the South were least likely than all others to have access to each of the following LGBT-related resources and supports: GSAs, LGBT-inclusive curriculum, Internet access to LGBT-related information, supportive school staff, supportive administration, and a comprehensive bullying/harassment policy.

Students in the Midwest were also less likely to have certain LGBT-related supports in their schools compared to students in the Northeast and West, specifically: GSAs, comprehensive policy, supportive school staff, supportive administration, and inclusive curriculum. Although students in

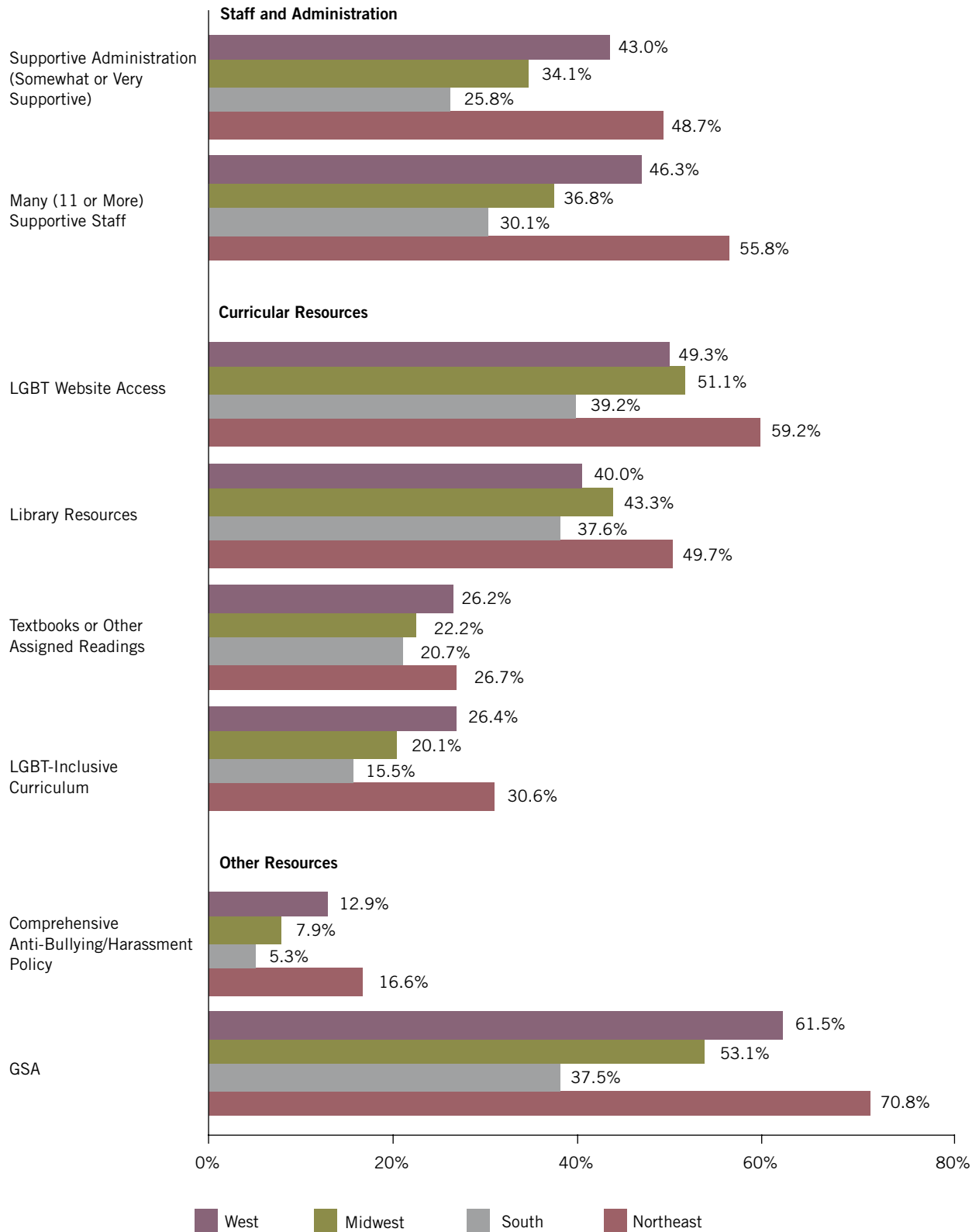
**Figure 3.25 Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Gender Expression by Region**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Experienced Event Sometimes, Often, or Frequently)



**Figure 3.26 Experiences of Discrimination by Region**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Discrimination at School)



**Figure 3.27 Availability of LGBT-Related Resources and Supports by Region**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students with Resource in their School)



the Midwest were also less likely to have access to LGBT-related information through the Internet using school computers compared to students in the Northeast, they were not different from students in the West in this regard.

Students in the Northeast were also more likely than students in the West to have Internet access to LGBT information as well as LGBT-related library resources. However, students in these two regions did not differ in the likelihood of having LGBT resources in the form of textbooks/assigned reading or inclusive curriculum. These findings are somewhat surprising given the 2011 passage of the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful Education Act in California.<sup>233</sup> This law mandates the inclusion of the political, economic, and social contributions of LGBT and other marginalized people into educational textbooks and the social studies curricula in California public schools. Given the vast population in California (and thus, the large number of LGBTQ students from California in our survey), we might expect students in the Western region to reflect a greater access to inclusive textbooks and curriculum. However, it's possible that implementation of this law is particularly slow given the need for widespread awareness of the law itself, development of new resources, and time for effective educator adoption of these new resources.<sup>234</sup>

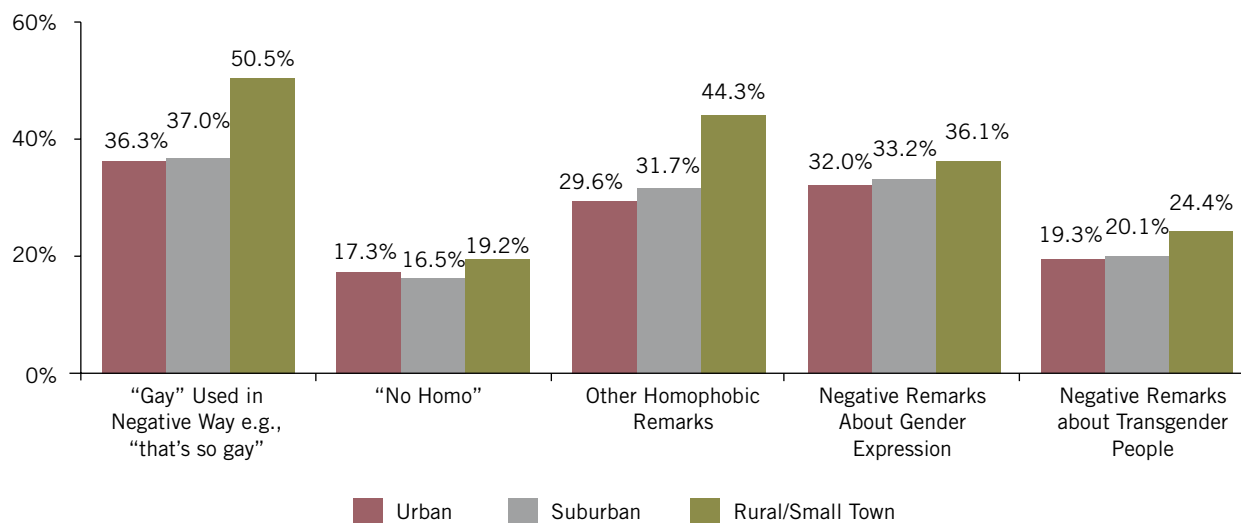
Overall, LGBTQ students' school experiences

differed substantially with respect to geographic region. Compared to students in the Northeast and the West, students in the South and Midwest had more negative school climates, including more frequent anti-LGBT language and higher levels of victimization. Southern and Midwestern students also had less access to LGBT-related resources and supports, particularly GSAs and supportive school staff and administration. These regional findings highlight that much more needs to be done to ensure that LGBTQ students are safe no matter where they attend school, and education leaders and safe school advocates must focus efforts on schools in regions where climate is most hostile. Further research should examine the type and effectiveness of strategies used to implement LGBT-supportive school resources in the South and the Midwest. Advocates should strive to identify the most effective means for ensuring that LGBTQ students in all areas of the country have access to these and other potentially beneficial resources and supports.

### Comparisons by Locale

Previous research has shown that attitudes about LGBTQ people can vary greatly by locale — urban, rural, and suburban, with more negative attitudes being in rural areas.<sup>235</sup> Conversely, research on school violence among the general population of students suggests that students in schools in urban areas face higher levels of violence.<sup>236</sup> Yet there is

**Figure 3.28 Anti-LGBT Remarks by School Locale**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Hearing Remarks Frequently)



some evidence that LGBTQ students specifically in urban schools feel safer and more accepted.<sup>237</sup> Given these seemingly contradictory findings, it was important for us to examine whether there were differences among LGBTQ students in our survey based on the type of community in which their schools were located — urban, suburban, or rural/small town areas. Specifically, we examine prevalence of anti-LGBTQ language, victimization, and discrimination, as well as availability of LGBTQ-related school resources and supports.

**Anti-LGBT Language in School.** There were significant differences across locales in students' reports of hearing anti-LGBT remarks.<sup>238</sup> Overall, students in rural/small town schools reported hearing these types of remarks most often. For example, as shown in Figure 3.28, 50.5% of students in rural/small town schools reported hearing “gay” used in a negative way frequently compared to only 36.3% of students in urban schools.

**Experiences of Victimization.** As shown in Figures 3.29 and 3.30, LGBTQ students in schools in rural/small town areas experienced higher levels of victimization based on sexual orientation and based on gender expression than students in schools in other types of communities.<sup>239</sup> For example, 56.1% of students in rural/small town areas experienced verbal harassment compared to 43.2% of students in urban schools and 43.7% of students in suburban schools. Students in urban schools and suburban schools did not differ in their

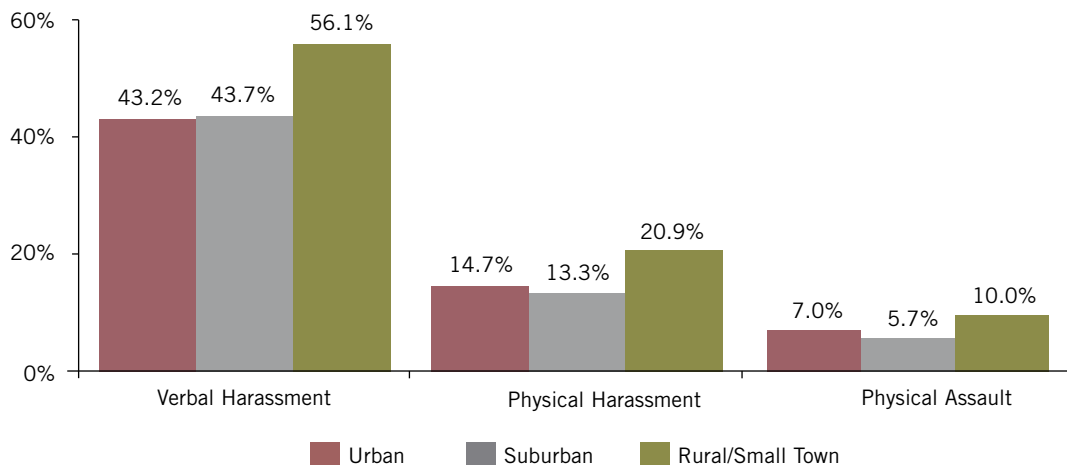
levels of reported victimization.

**Experiences of Discrimination.** LGBTQ students in schools in rural/small town areas were more likely to experience anti-LGBTQ discrimination due to school policies and practices than students in suburban and urban schools.<sup>240</sup> They were also most likely to witness discrimination against their peers.<sup>241</sup> For example, as shown in Figure 3.31, 81.2% of students in rural/small town areas witnessed discrimination against their peers compared to 67.9% of students in urban schools and 73.7% of students in suburban schools.

**School Resources and Supports.** Overall, as shown in Figure 3.32, LGBTQ students in rural/small town schools were least likely to have LGBT-related resources or supports, with the greatest disparities being in availability of GSAs, supportive staff, and supportive administration.<sup>242</sup> For example, 31.4% of students in rural/small town schools reported having a GSA compared to 63.0% of students in suburban schools and 62.6% of students in urban schools. There were also differences in the presence of comprehensive policies and curricular resources, although only a minority of students reported having these resources regardless of locale.

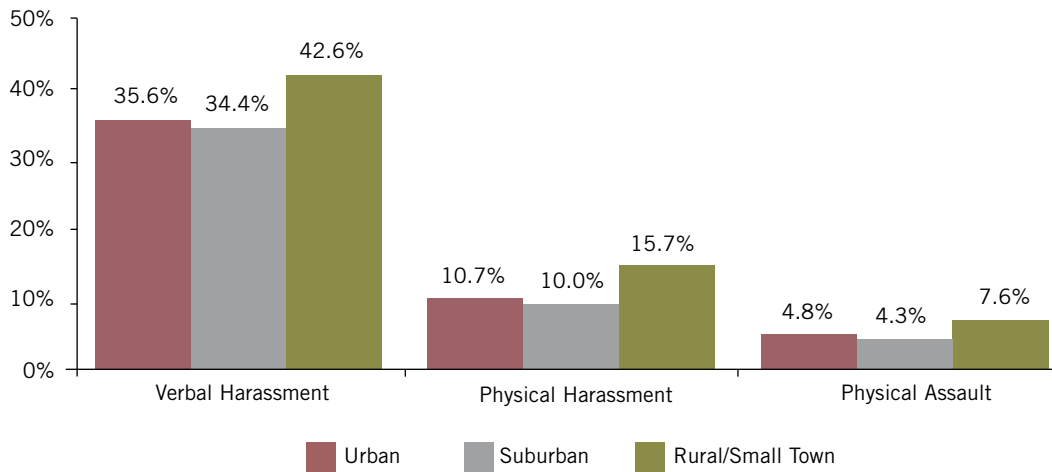
Our findings show that for LGBTQ students, schools in rural areas and small towns were the most unsafe. LGBTQ students in rural/small town schools experienced the highest levels of anti-LGBTQ language and victimization based

**Figure 3.29 Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Sexual Orientation By School Locale**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Experienced Event Sometimes, Often, or Frequently)

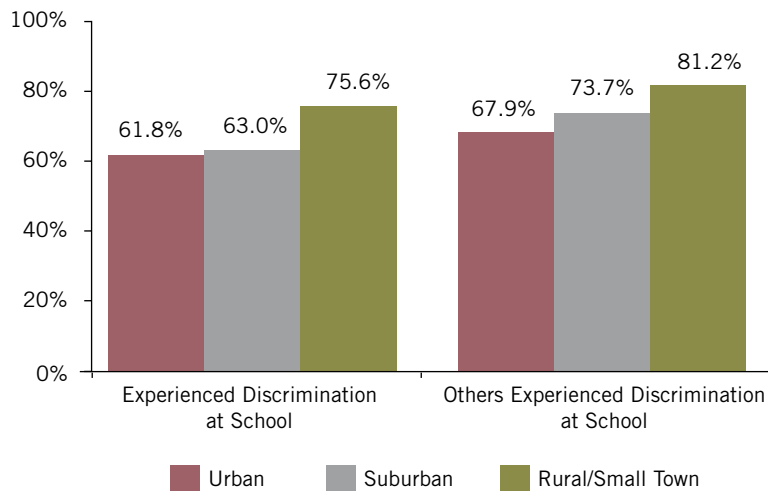




**Figure 3.30 Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Gender Expression by School Locale**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students who Experienced Event Sometimes, Often, or Frequently)



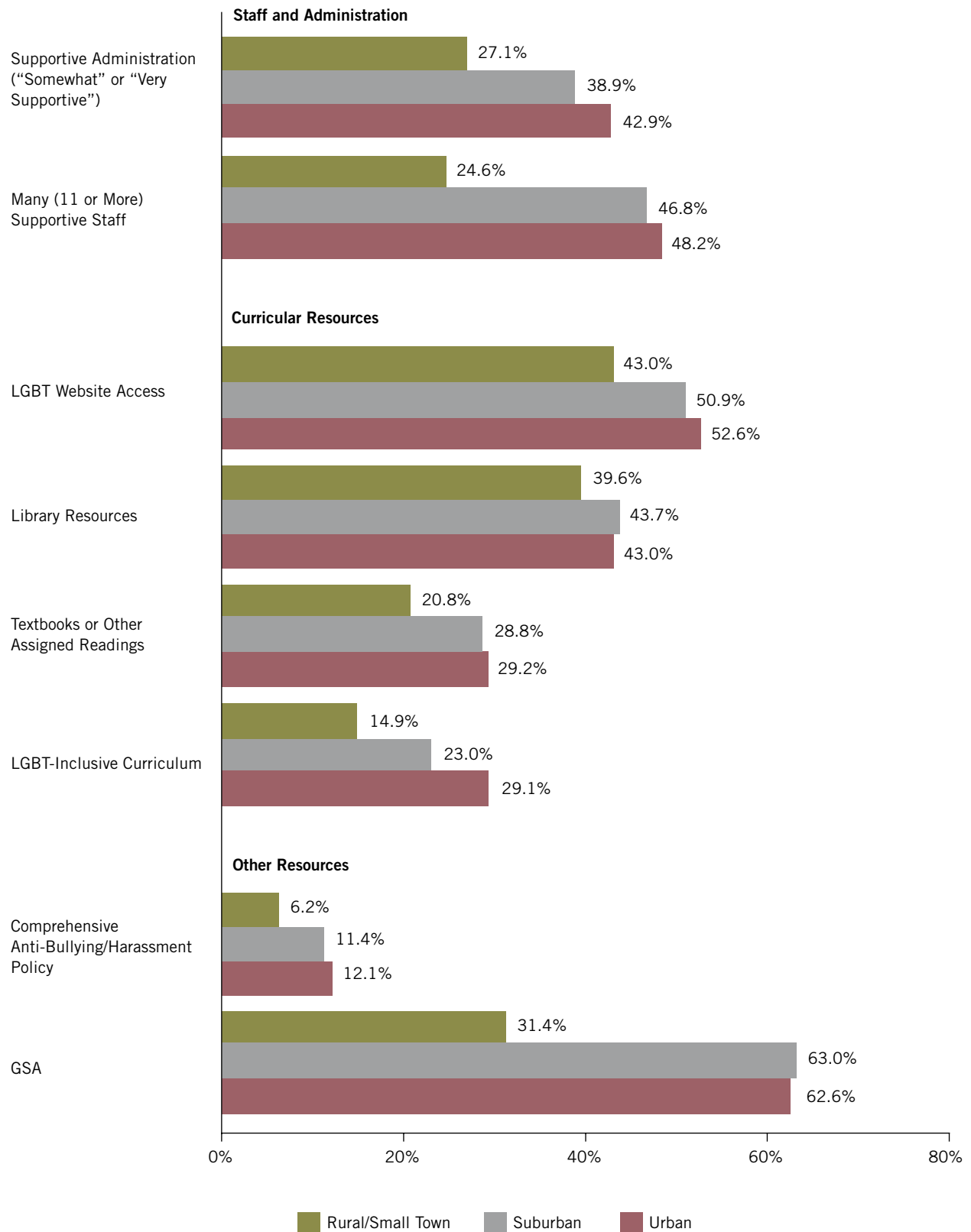
**Figure 3.31 Experiences of Discrimination by School Locale**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Discrimination at School)



on sexual orientation and gender expression and were least likely to have LGBTQ-related resources and supports in school. Given the positive impact of these resources and supports, specific efforts should be made to increase these resources in rural/small town schools. Safe school advocates and education leaders should also develop different strategies and programmatic interventions for LGBTQ students in rural areas, and further

research is needed to better understand the obstacles to implementing resources for LGBTQ students in rural areas. Furthermore, national efforts regarding bullying prevention must not only take into account the overall experiences of LGBTQ students but must also be aware of how the incidence of victimization and of available student supports differs geographically among LGBTQ students.

**Figure 3.32 Availability of LGBT-Related Resources and Supports by School Locale**  
 (Percentage of LGBTQ Students with Resource in their School)



# **PART FOUR: INDICATORS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE OVER TIME**





# Indicators of School Climate Over Time

## Key Findings

- Since 2001, there has been a steady decrease in students' frequency of hearing homophobic remarks at school.
- Although there had been a decrease in hearing negative remarks about someone's gender expression from 2011 to 2013, there was an increase in the frequency of these remarks between 2013 and 2015.
- In 2015, there was a decrease in school staff's frequency of intervention in both homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression.
- With regard to remarks from school staff, after seeing a steady decline in students' frequency of hearing homophobic remarks from school staff from 2007 to 2013, we saw no change between 2013 and 2015. Furthermore, we saw an increase in frequency from 2013 to 2015 in hearing school staff making negative remarks about gender expression.
- Students' frequency of experiencing harassment and assault based on sexual orientation and gender expression was significantly lower in 2015 than in previous years. However, students in 2015 were not more likely to report incidents of harassment to school staff than in 2013 and there was also no change from 2013 in students' reports on the effectiveness of staff's responses to these incidents.
- There has been an increase over time in the presence of several LGBT-related resources and supports in school, specifically:
  - Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) or other student clubs that address LGBT issues in education;
  - School staff who are supportive of LGBT students;
  - Access to LGBT-related Internet resources through school computers;
  - Positive representations of LGBT people, history, and events in the curriculum; and
- There has been little change in the availability of comprehensive school anti-bullying/harassment policies that include specific protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/ expression over time and no difference between 2013 and 2015.
- Students in 2015 reported that their peers were more accepting of LGBT people than in previous years

GLSEN strives to make schools safe for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, race or ethnicity, or any other characteristic that may be the basis for harassment. Given that the National School Climate Survey (NSCS) is the only study that has continually assessed the school experiences of LGBTQ students, it is vital that we use our data to examine changes over time in the education landscape for this population. In this section, we examine whether there have been changes from 2001 to the present 2015 survey<sup>243</sup> with regard to indicators of a hostile school climate, such as hearing homophobic remarks, experiences of harassment and assault, as well as the availability of positive resources for LGBTQ students in their schools such as supportive educators, student-led clubs such as Gay-Straight Alliances, comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies and inclusive curricular resources. In addition, we examine whether there have been changes over time in students' acceptance of LGBT people.

### Anti-LGBT Remarks Over Time

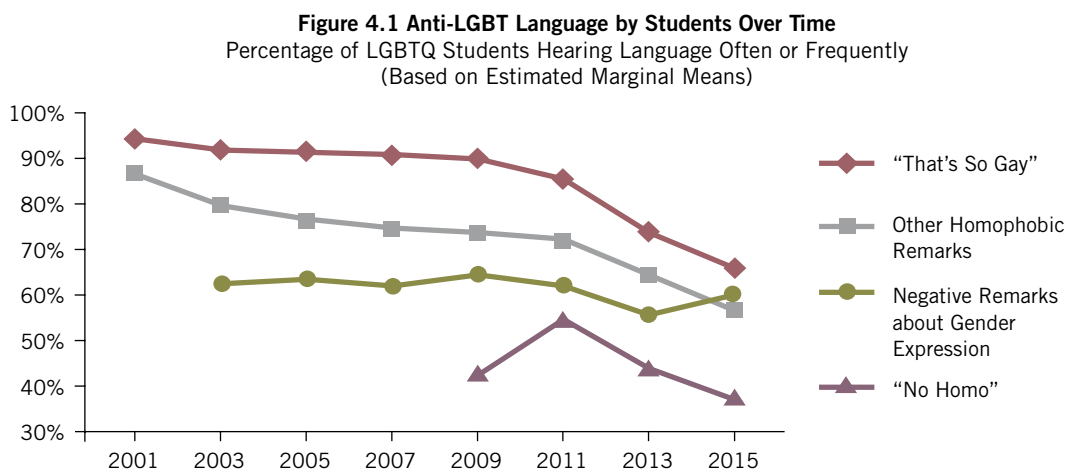
Language perpetually evolves, and so is the case with anti-LGBT remarks since we began conducting the NSCS. To keep current with changes in usage, we have modified how we ask LGBTQ students about anti-LGBT remarks. In 2001, we assessed only the frequency of hearing homophobic remarks, either remarks like “fag” or “dyke,” but also expressions using “gay” to mean something bad or valueless. In 2003, we began asking questions about hearing negative remarks about gender expression, such as someone not acting “feminine enough” or “masculine enough.” In 2009, we began assessing the expression “no homo” and in

2013 we asked about negative expressions about transgender people, such as “tranny” or “he/she.”<sup>244</sup>

Our results indicate a general trend that homophobic remarks are on the decline.<sup>245</sup> Students in 2015 reported a decrease of these remarks than all prior years, continuing the trend we saw in 2011 and 2013 (see Figure 4.1).<sup>246</sup> For example, the percentage of students hearing remarks like “fag” or “dyke” often or frequently has dropped from over 80% in 2001 to less than 60% in 2015. Use of expressions such as “that’s so gay” has remained the most common form of biased language heard by LGBTQ students in school. However, as also shown in Figure 4.1, there has been a significant, consistent decline in frequency of this language since 2001.<sup>247</sup> Hearing the expression “no homo” has consistently been less common than all other types of LGBT-related biased remarks, and we have also seen a decrease in this expression since 2011.<sup>248</sup>

With regard to hearing negative remarks about gender expression, we had historically seen few changes across years until our 2013 survey, when students reported a significantly lower frequency than all prior years. In 2015, however, students reported a higher incidence of these remarks than in 2013 (see Figure 4.1).<sup>249</sup>

Figure 4.2 illustrates the preponderance of students who reportedly use anti-LGBT language in school. The number of students who reported that homophobic remarks were used pervasively by the student body had been on a small decline since the 2001 survey, but declined sharply since the 2013 survey and has continued in the 2015 survey.<sup>250</sup> For example, less than 30% of



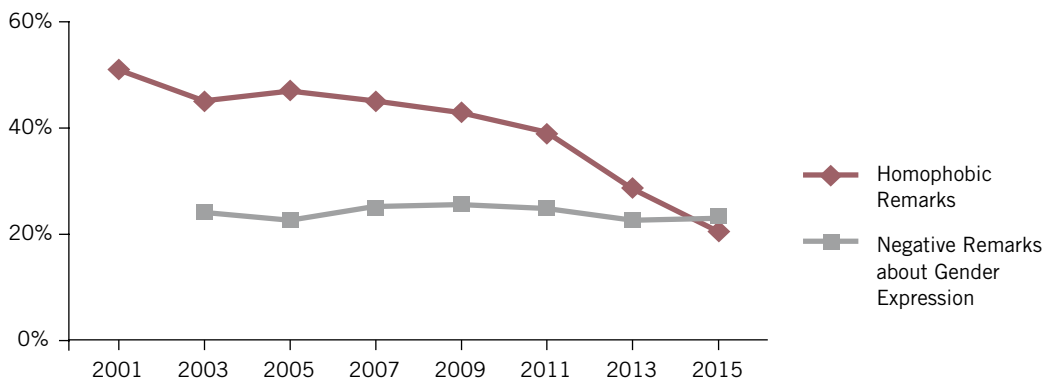
students said that most or all of the students in their school made homophobic remarks in 2013 and 2015, compared to about 40% in 2011 and nearly 50% in 2001. As also shown in Figure 4.2, the preponderance of students reportedly making negative remarks about gender expression at school has remained low, relative to homophobic remarks. However, the preponderance of students has not changed from 2013 to 2015, and was higher than other years prior.<sup>251</sup>

As shown in Figure 4.3, since we began conducting the NSCS, the majority of students have reported that they have heard anti-LGBT remarks from teachers or other staff in their school. We have seen a steady decline in the frequency of staff making homophobic remarks from 2007 to 2013, but no change between 2013 and 2015.<sup>252</sup> With regard to hearing negative remarks about gender expression from school staff, although there had been a small, downward trend in frequency

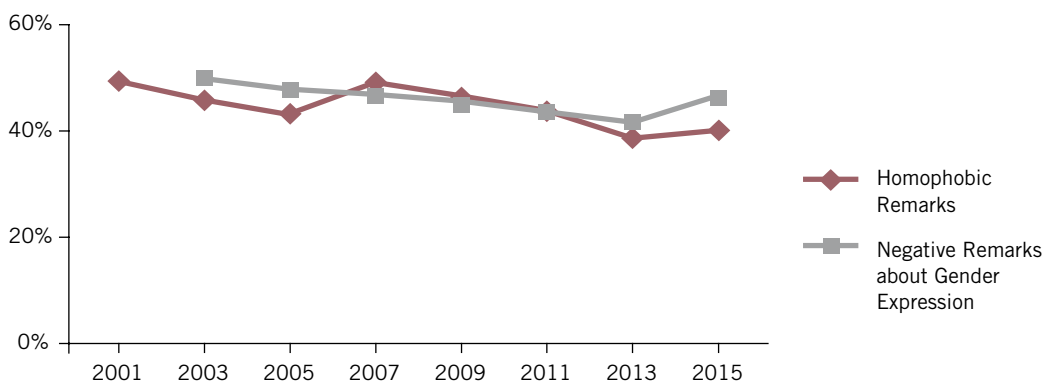
between 2003 and 2013, the frequency was higher in 2015 than all previous years except for 2003 and 2005 (see also Figure 4.3).

In our 2001 survey, we began asking students how frequently people in their school intervened when hearing homophobic remarks. As shown in Figure 4.4, the levels of intervention by staff and by students were relatively stable across years. However, in 2015, students reported a somewhat lower frequency of staff intervention but a somewhat higher frequency of student intervention.<sup>253</sup> Regarding negative remarks about gender expression, we have seen a continued downward trend in levels of intervention by staff and a more recent, though relatively consistent, upward trend in intervention by students (see Figure 4.5).<sup>254</sup> It would appear that school staff are not improving in their intervention regarding anti-LGBT remarks, but that students may be evidencing better bystander and ally behavior.

**Figure 4.2 Portion of Students Using Anti-LGBT Language Over Time**  
Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting that Most of Students Make Remarks  
(Based on Estimated Marginal Means)



**Figure 4.3 Anti-LGBT Language by School Staff Over Time**  
Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Ever Hearing Remarks  
(Based on Estimated Marginal Means)



It is important to note that the incidence of homophobic remarks has decreased, yet the incidence of negative remarks about gender expression has increased. Also, the preponderance of students making homophobic remarks has also declined, yet there was no change in the preponderance of students making biased remarks about gender. This pattern may indicate that school climate may not be changing with regard to gender bias or gender expression to the same degree that they are with regard to sexual orientation-related bias. It will be important to assess whether this is a continued trend in future surveys.

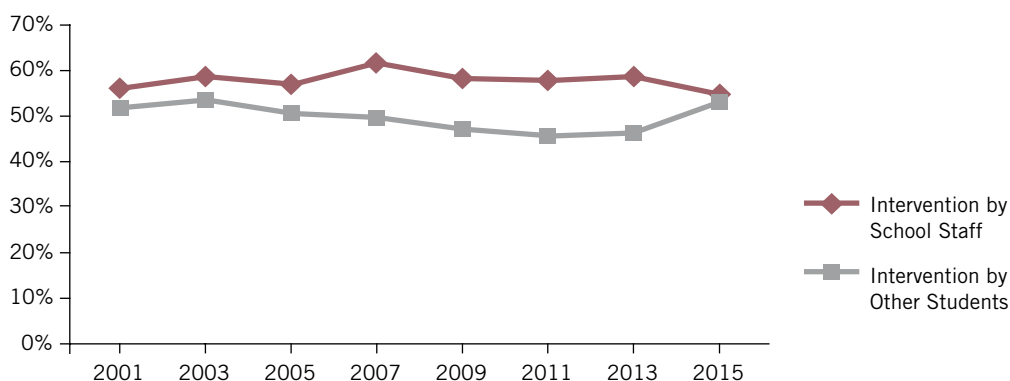
### Experiences of Harassment and Assault Over Time

To gain further understanding of changes in school climate for LGBTQ students in secondary schools, we examined the incidence of reported harassment and assault since 2001. As shown in Figure 4.6,

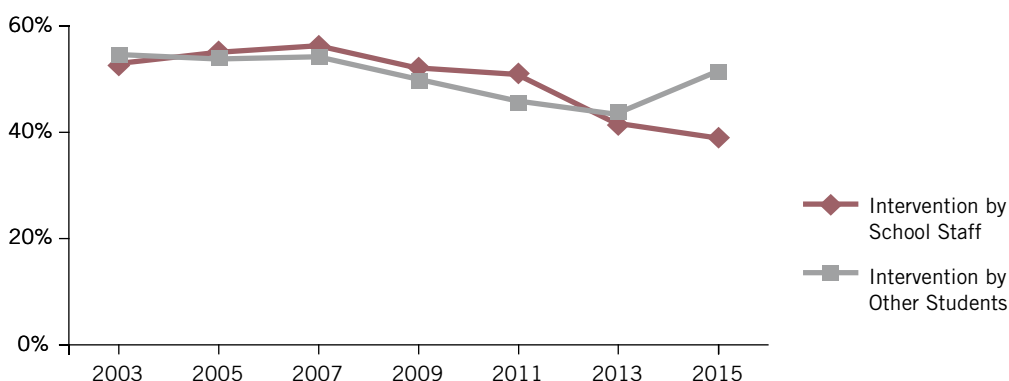
we had seen few changes between 2001 and 2007 and a significant decline in victimization based on sexual orientation from 2007 onward. In 2015, we saw this trend continue—the incidence of verbal and physical harassment and physical assault regarding sexual orientation was lower than all prior years.<sup>255</sup> The strongest change over time was regarding verbal harassment—only about 20% of students reported high incidence (often or frequently) in 2015 compared to nearly 50% in 2007. Although the degree of change was not as pronounced for physical harassment and assault, they both were significantly lower in 2015 than all prior years. As shown in Figure 4.7, there was the same pattern of differences regarding harassment and assault based on gender expression—verbal and physical harassment were lower in 2015 than all prior years and physical assault was also its lowest since 2007.<sup>256</sup>

We also examined whether there were differences

**Figure 4.4 Intervention Regarding Homophobic Remarks Over Time**  
Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Any Intervention  
(Based on Estimated Marginal Means)



**Figure 4.5 Intervention Regarding Negative Remarks about Gender Expression Over Time**  
Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Any Intervention  
(Based on Estimated Marginal Means)





across years with regard to the frequency of students reporting experiences of victimization to school staff and the perceived effectiveness of reporting to staff. As shown in Figure 4.8, across all years, the percentage of students who reported incidents to school staff was quite low and varied very little—only a fifth or fewer reported victimization most of the time or always. There was no statistical difference in reporting between 2013 and 2015, and both years were somewhat statistically higher than all prior years except for 2003.<sup>257</sup> In 2005, we began asking students how effective their teachers or other school staff were in addressing the problem. Across all years, the minority of students reported that any intervention on the part of school staff was effective (see Figure 4.8). In 2015, the rating of effectiveness was not different from 2013, and both years were lower than 2011.<sup>258</sup> Taken together, these findings on victimization indicate that the incidence of anti-LGBT behaviors may have decreased over time, but

students are not much more likely to report these events to staff, and staff are not improving with regard to how they handle such incidents when told about them.

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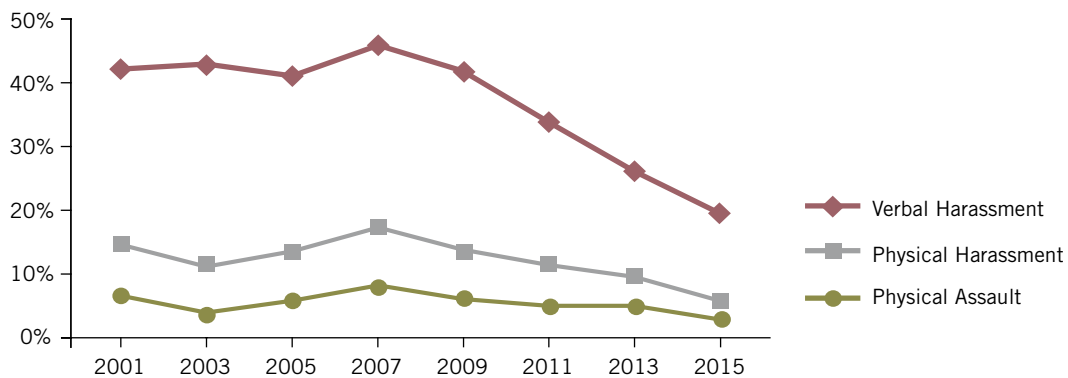
### ***LGBT-Related Resources Over Time***

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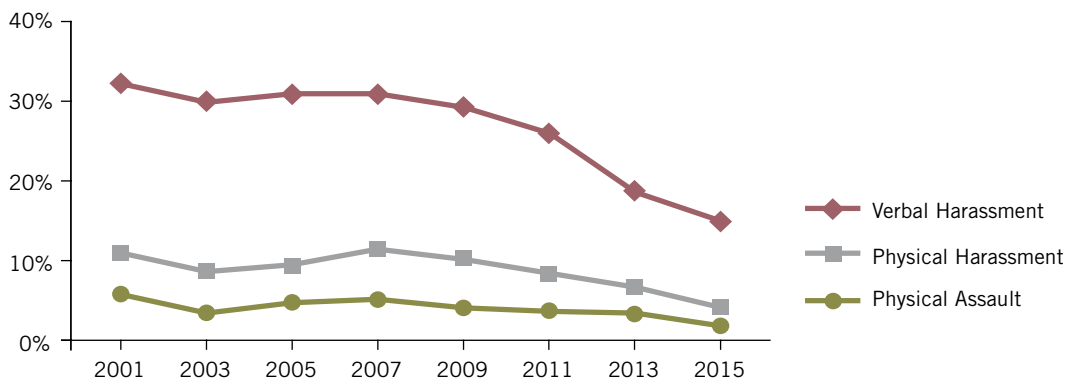
In 2001, we began asking LGBTQ students in the NSCS about the availability of LGBT-related resources in school, such as Gay-Straight Alliances and curricular resources. Since 2001, there have continued to be significant increases in many LGBT-related resources.

**Supportive Student Clubs.** As shown in Figure 4.9, we continue to see a steady, significant increase from previous years in the percentage of LGBTQ students having a GSA at school.<sup>259</sup> The percentage of students reporting that they had a GSA at school has increased from about 40% in 2007 to nearly 60% in 2015.

**Figure 4.6 Frequency of Victimization Based on Sexual Orientation Over Time**  
Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Event Often or Frequently  
(Based on Estimated Marginal Means)



**Figure 4.7 Frequency of Victimization Based on Gender Expression Over Time**  
Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Event Often or Frequently  
(Based on Estimated Marginal Means)

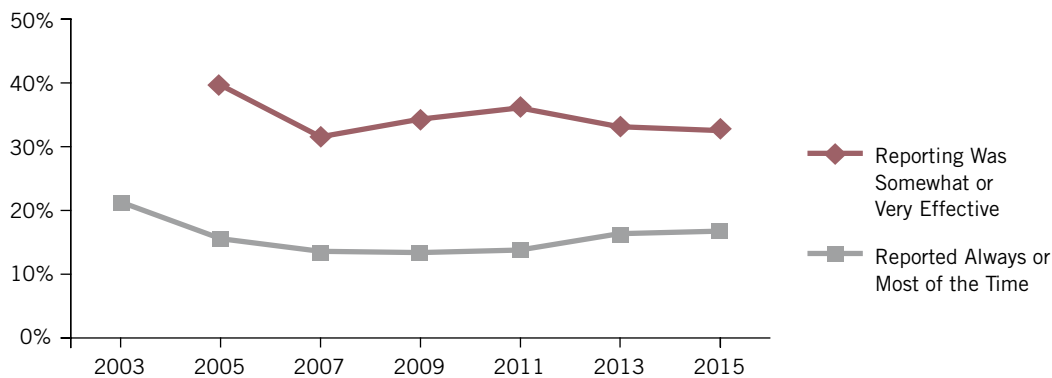


**“My school has really come a long way in the past 3.5 years I’ve been here. Student-led initiatives have been the most effective in changing the school culture and education others and promoting diversity.”**

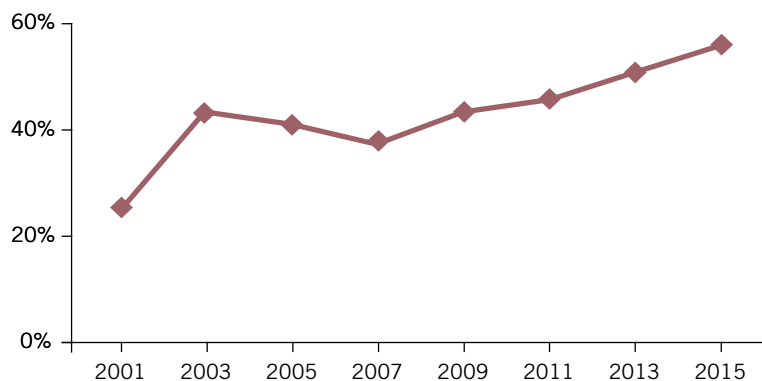
**Supportive School Personnel.** We also found an increase from prior years in the number of teachers or other school staff who were supportive of LGBTQ students. Figure 4.10 shows the percentages of students reporting any supportive educators (from 2001 to 2015) and the percentage of students reporting a high number of supportive educators (from 2003 to 2015).<sup>260</sup> In 2015, we found that both indicators were significantly higher than all prior years.

**Inclusive Curricular Resources.** Overall, there has been little change in LGBT-related curricular resources over time (see Figure 4.11). Nevertheless, there were some small but significant increases in 2015 regarding being taught positive LGBT-related content in class and having access to LGBT-related Internet resources through their school computers. Both resources were higher in 2015 than all prior years. Although the availability of LGBT-related content in textbooks was not significantly different between 2013 and 2015, it

**Figure 4.8 Frequency of Reporting Victimization to School Staff and Effectiveness of Reporting Over Time**  
Percentage of LGBTQ Students  
(Based on Estimated Marginal Means)



**Figure 4.9 Availability of Gay-Straight Alliance (GSAs) Over Time**  
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Having a GSA at School, Accounting for Covariates)



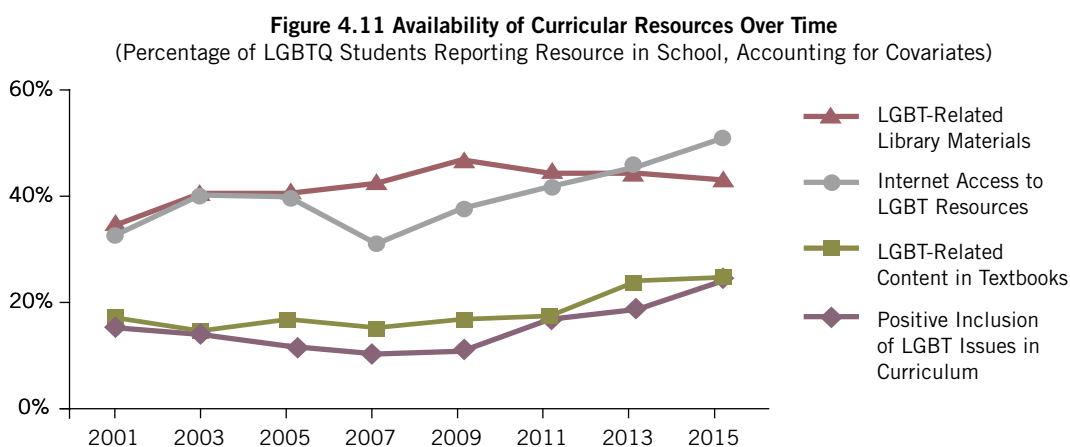
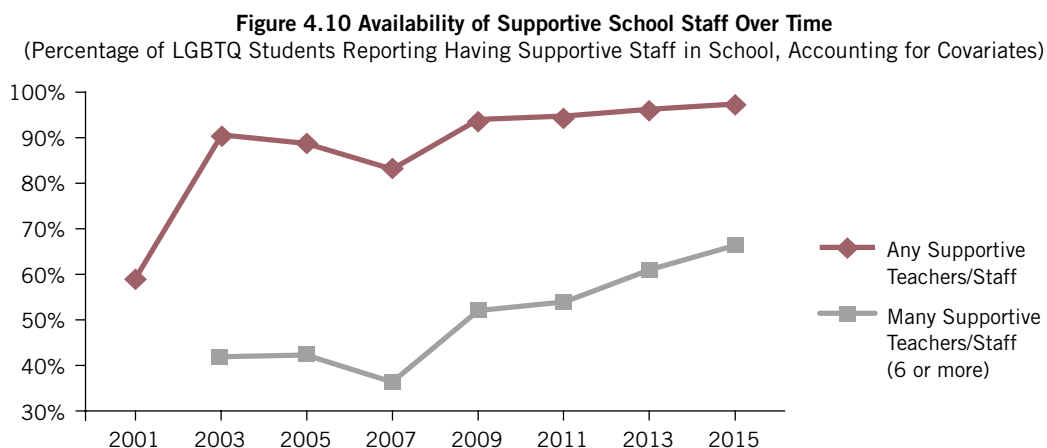
was somewhat higher in 2015 than all other years. The percentage of students who reported LGBT-related materials in their school libraries, however, has not changed since 2011.<sup>261</sup>

**Bullying, Harassment, and Assault Policies.** In all years, as shown in Figure 4.12 the majority of LGBTQ students reported that their schools had some type of anti-bullying/harassment policy; however, the minority of students reported that the policy enumerated sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression. Since 2011, there have been consistent yet small increases with regard to any type of anti-bullying/harassment policy. There have been few changes in the percentage of students reporting either partially enumerated or comprehensive policies since we began asking about these types of policies in 2005.<sup>262</sup>

Regarding changes in school resources overall, in 2015, we continued to see increases in the availability of most of LGBT-related resources—even

in some of the supports that were already more common, e.g., supportive school staff and GSAs. With regard to anti-bullying/harassment policies, although there continued to be a small but steady increase over the years in the reports of any type of policy, the reports of comprehensive policies have remained low and there have been few changes overall. Thus, it would appear that, whereas the prevalence of policies in general has increased, these policies are rarely including specific protections for sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

After seeing increases in library resources from 2001 to 2009, we have seen little change since that time. It is possible that these changes are related to school expenditures for library materials—schools that did not previously have LGBT-related materials in their libraries may not have had resources to include them. It is also possible that for some libraries, inclusion of LGBT materials was not a priority relative to other informational needs.



In the past, the American Library Association (ALA) has been an advocate against censorship and has partnered with GLSEN in providing resources educating school librarians on LGBT student issues. These findings suggest that more attention should be paid to library materials in the future.

Although there had been an increase in the inclusion of LGBT-related content in textbooks in 2013, there was no change from 2013 to 2015. In our 2013 National School Climate Survey, we posited that the implementation of California's Fair, Inclusive, and Respectful (FAIR) Education Act might have a positive effect on the textbook industry, in that the FAIR Education Act stipulates that LGBT contributions are included in California social science education, and California is a large market for the textbook industry. But, it appears that the gains in 2013 in textbook inclusion have not continued in 2015.

Our findings also suggest that more institutional supports, such as implementing a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy or including LGBT content in the curriculum, may be slower to change—although we saw increases in some of the curricular resources in our 2015 survey, the change has been slower across the years. And, the growth on policies in general is greater than the growth in comprehensive or even partially enumerated policies.

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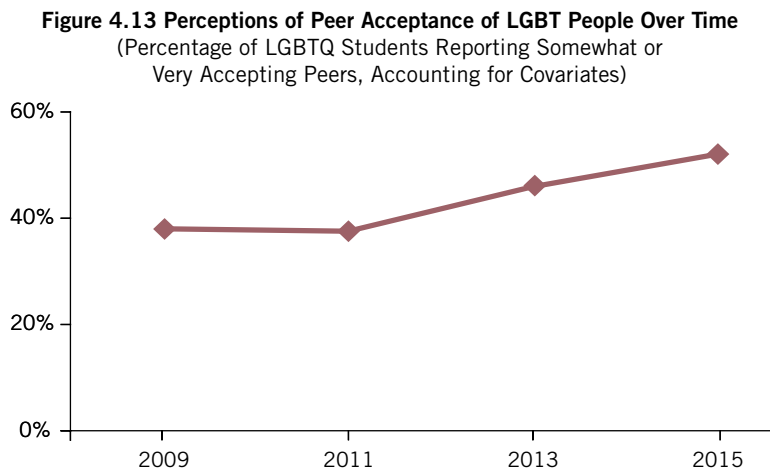
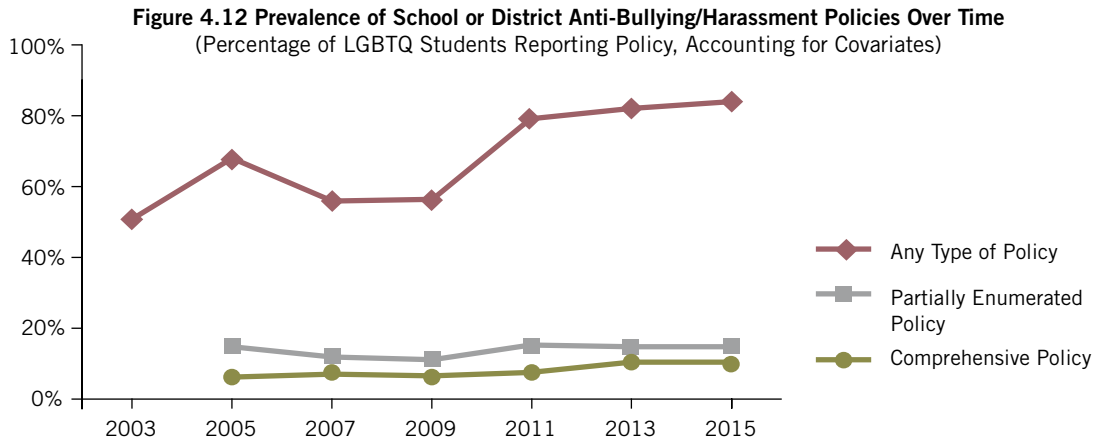
### ***Student Acceptance of LGBT People Over Time***

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In 2009, we began asking students how accepting of LGBT people other students are at school. In the *Utility of Resources and Supports* section, we have seen that LGBT-related supports in school, such

as GSAs and curricular inclusion, are related to a more accepting student body, and in this current section, we have seen many of these supports continue to increase. Thus, increases in supports may be related to changes in student acceptance. In our analysis over time, we have also seen that student intervention regarding anti-LGBT remarks has increased, whereas intervention by school staff has not. It may be that increased student intervention is also, in part, related to increased positive attitudes toward LGBT people among the student population. We did find, in fact, that there has been a significant increase in positive attitudes since 2011 (see Figure 4.13).<sup>263</sup> In 2009 and 2011, less than 40% of students in our surveys had reported that their peers were somewhat or very accepting of LGBT people compared to over half of students in our 2015 survey.

Considering all of the differences across time—remarks, victimization, LGBT-related supports, and peer acceptance—we see a more recent trend in the data of some significant decreases in negative indicators of school climate, e.g., hearing anti-LGBT remarks and experiences of victimization, as well as a steady, longer trend of increases in many of the LGBT-related resources and supports in school. Nevertheless, these data indicate that more work is needed to make schools safer and more affirming for LGBTQ students—although less prevalent now, negative indicators such as anti-LGBT remarks are still prominent in our schools and many of the LGBT-related supports are still low in incidence, particularly curricular resources.







# DISCUSSION







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## Limitations

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The methods used for our survey resulted in a nationally representative sample of LGBTQ students. However, it is important to note that our sample is representative only of youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (or another non-heterosexual sexual orientation and/or non-cisgender gender identity) and who were able to find out about the survey in some way, either through a connection to LGBTQ or youth-serving organizations that publicized the survey, or through social media. As discussed in the Methods and Sample section, we conducted targeted advertising on the social networking site Facebook in order to broaden our reach and obtain a more representative sample. Advertising on Facebook allowed LGBTQ students who did not necessarily have any formal connection to the LGBTQ community to participate in the survey. However, the social networking advertisements for the survey were sent only to youth who gave some indication that they were LGBTQ on their Facebook profile.<sup>264</sup> LGBTQ youth who were not comfortable identifying as LGBTQ in this manner would not have received the advertisement about the survey. Thus, LGBTQ youth who are perhaps the most isolated — those without a formal connection to the LGBTQ community or without access to online resources and supports, and those who are not comfortable indicating that they are LGBTQ in their Facebook profile — may be underrepresented in the survey sample.

We also cannot make determinations from our data about the experiences of youth who might be engaging in same-sex sexual activity or experiencing same-sex attractions, but who do not identify themselves as LGBTQ.<sup>265</sup> These youth may be more isolated, unaware of supports available to them, or, even if aware, uncomfortable using such supports. Similarly, youth whose gender identity is not the same as their sex assigned at birth, but who do not identify as transgender, may also be more isolated and without the same access to resources as the youth in our survey. The survey was primarily advertised as being for LGBTQ students, so non-heterosexual students and non-cisgender students who did not identify as LGBTQ may be less likely to participate in the survey.

Another possible limitation to the survey is related to the sample's racial/ethnic composition — the percentages of African American/Black and

Hispanic/Latino/a students were somewhat lower than the general population of secondary school students.<sup>266</sup> This discrepancy may be related to different methods for measuring race/ethnicity. In our survey, students may select multiple options for their race/ethnicity, and students who selected two or more racial categories are coded as being multiracial.<sup>267</sup> In contrast, most national youth surveys restrict students to selecting only one racial category and do not provide a multiracial response option.<sup>268</sup> When forced to select one response, students with both White and another racial background may be more likely to select a non-White identity, particularly when “multiracial” is not an option.<sup>269</sup> This may result in a higher percentage of students of color from specific racial groups being identified in other surveys and a higher percentage of students being identified as multiracial in our survey (e.g., a student who is African American/Black and White might select African American/Black in a survey where they only can select one option, whereas in our survey that student might select both racial identities and then be coded as multiracial). This difference in method may account for some of the discrepancy regarding percentages of specific racial groups (e.g., African American/Black, Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander) between our sample and the general population of secondary school students. Nevertheless, it is possible that LGBTQ African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino/a students were somewhat underrepresented in our sample. However, because there are no national statistics on the demographic breakdown of LGBTQ-identified youth, we cannot know how our sample compares to other population-based studies.

Given that our survey is available only in English and Spanish, LGBTQ students who are not proficient in either of those languages might be limited in their ability to participate. Thus, these students might be underrepresented in our survey sample.

It is also important to note that our survey only reflects the experiences of LGBTQ students who were in school during the 2014–2015 school year. Although our sample does allow for students who had left school at some point during the 2014–2015 school year to participate, it still does not reflect the experiences of LGBTQ youth who may have already dropped out in prior school years. The experiences of these youth may likely differ from those students who remained in school, particularly

with regard to hostile school climate, access to supportive resources, severity of school discipline, and educational aspirations.

Lastly, the data from our survey are cross-sectional (i.e., the data were collected at one point in time), which means that we cannot determine causality. For example, although we can say that there was a relationship between the number of supportive staff and students' academic achievement, we cannot say that one predicts the other.

While considering these limitations, our attempts at diverse recruitment of a hard-to-reach population have yielded a sample of LGBTQ students that we believe most likely closely reflects the population of LGBTQ middle and high school students in the U.S.

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### ***Conclusions and Recommendations***

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The 2015 National School Climate Survey, as in our previous surveys, shows that schools are often unsafe learning environments for LGBTQ students. Hearing biased or derogatory language at school, especially sexist remarks, homophobic remarks, and negative remarks about gender expression, was a common occurrence. However, teachers and other school authorities did not often intervene when anti-LGBT remarks were made in their presence, and students' use of such language remained largely unchallenged. Approximately three-quarters of the students in our survey reported feeling unsafe at school because of at least one personal characteristic, with sexual orientation and gender expression being the most commonly reported characteristics. Students also frequently reported avoiding spaces in their schools that they perceived as being unsafe, especially bathrooms, locker rooms, and P.E. classes. Nearly three quarters of LGBTQ students reported that they had been verbally harassed at school based on their sexual orientation, and more than half had been harassed based on their gender expression. In addition, many students reported experiencing incidents of physical harassment and assault related to their sexual orientation or gender expression, as well as incidents of sexual harassment, deliberate property damage, cyberbullying, and relational aggression at school. Transgender, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming cisgender students were particularly likely to have felt unsafe at school and to have been harassed due to their sexual orientation and gender expression.

In addition to anti-LGBT behavior by peers, be it biased language in the hallways or direct personal victimization, the majority of LGBTQ students also faced discriminatory school practices and policies. Schools prohibited LGBTQ students from expressing themselves through their clothing or their relationships, limited LGBT inclusion in curricular and extracurricular activities, required different standards based on students' gender, and promoted other policies that negatively affected transgender students in particular, such as preventing use of a preferred name or pronoun.

Results from our survey also demonstrate the serious consequences that anti-LGBT victimization and discrimination can have on LGBTQ students' academic success and their general well-being. LGBTQ students who experienced frequent harassment and assault based on their sexual orientation or gender expression reported missing more days of school and having lower GPAs and lower educational aspirations than students who were harassed less often. In addition, students who experienced higher levels of harassment and assault had lower levels of school belonging and poorer psychological well-being. LGBTQ students who reported experiencing anti-LGBT discrimination at school, such as differential treatment for same-sex couples versus heterosexual couples, had worse educational outcomes and poorer well-being than other students.

Although our results suggest that school climate remains dire for many LGBTQ students, they also highlight the important role that institutional supports can play in making schools safer for these students. Steps that schools take to improve school climate are also an investment in better educational outcomes and healthy youth development. For instance, supportive educators positively influenced students' academic performance, educational aspirations, and feelings of safety. Students attending schools that had a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or a similar student club reported hearing fewer homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression, were less likely to feel unsafe and miss school for safety reasons, and reported a greater sense of belonging to their school community. Students who reported that their classroom curriculum included positive representations of LGBT issues had higher GPAs, higher educational aspirations, and were more likely to have classmates who were accepting of LGBT people. Unfortunately, these

resources and supports were often not available to LGBTQ students. Although a majority of students did report having at least one supportive teacher or other staff person in school, only slightly more than half had a GSA in their school, and less than half had LGBT-related materials in the school library or could access LGBT-related resources via school computers. Other resources, such as inclusive curricula and LGBT-inclusive textbooks and readings, were even less common. Furthermore, students from certain types of schools, such as middle schools or religious-affiliated private schools; from certain locales, such as small towns or rural areas; and from certain regions, such as the South and the Midwest, were less likely than other students to report having supportive resources in their schools. These findings clearly indicate the importance of advocating for the inclusion of these resources in schools to ensure positive learning environments for LGBTQ students in all schools—environments in which students can receive a high quality education, graduate, and continue on to further education.

Findings from the 2015 survey indicate that comprehensive school harassment/assault policies can result in concrete improvements in school climate for LGBTQ students. Students in schools with comprehensive harassment/assault policies that included protections for sexual orientation and gender identity/expression reported a lower incidence of both homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression, as well as a greater frequency of school staff intervention when these remarks were made. Furthermore, students with a comprehensive policy were more likely to report incidents of harassment and assault to school personnel. Unfortunately, students attending schools with comprehensive policies remained in the minority. Although a majority of students said that their school had some type of harassment/assault policy, few said that it was a comprehensive policy that explicitly stated protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

We have seen small, but steady increases in the availability of certain LGBT-related resources since our last report—specifically, GSAs, school staff supportive of LGBTQ students, and LGBT-inclusive curriculum. Rates of students hearing homophobic epithets have declined steadily as has the pervasiveness of these remarks in the school environment. Reports of other students

intervening when hearing these remarks has also increased. Furthermore, we have seen a continual growth in students' acceptance of LGBT people, with over half of LGBTQ students now reporting that they have accepting classmates. In 2015, the downward trend in experiences of harassment due to sexual orientation and gender expression also continued. These positive changes may result, in part, from the continued growth of resources over time. Nevertheless, it is still the minority of students who have these resources available to them, with the exception of having a GSA and having any supportive school staff. With regard to anti-bullying/harassment policies, more and more students report that their schools have some type of policy, yet a consistent minority have a policy that include protections based sexual orientation and gender identity/expression specifically.

Despite these improvements in school climate, there remain some specific areas of concern. With regard to negative remarks about gender expression, we have seen a slight uptick in the frequency of these remarks made by both students and school staff. Furthermore, in contrast to the usage of homophobic remarks, there was no change in the pervasiveness of gender expression-related remarks in 2015. Perhaps a growing attention to issues of gender fluidity and transgender populations, particularly transgender and gender nonconforming youth, have resulted in increased conversation about these issues in general. We also saw fewer positive findings in 2015 regarding teachers and other school staff: reports of anti-LGBT remarks by school staff have increased, and reports of educator intervention regarding these kinds of remarks have decreased. These findings about educators' behaviors are quite troubling and further research should explore potential explanations—be it changes in the teacher workforce, potential backlash to the recent gains of LGBTQ rights from resistant educators, or other various other factors.

The results of the 2015 National School Climate show that great strides have been made in providing LGBTQ students with school supports, yet also show that more work is needed to create safer and more affirming learning environments for LGBTQ students.

It is clear that there is an urgent need for action to create safer and more inclusive schools for LGBTQ students. There are steps that concerned

stakeholders can take to remedy the situation. Results from the 2015 National School Climate Survey demonstrate the ways in which the presence of supportive educators, comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies, and other school-based resources and supports can positively affect LGBTQ students' school experiences. Therefore, we recommend the following measures:

- Support student clubs, such as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), that provide support for LGBTQ students and address LGBTQ issues in education;
- Provide training for school staff to improve rates of intervention and increase the number of supportive teachers and other staff available to students;
- Increase student access to appropriate and accurate information regarding LGBTQ people, history, and events through inclusive curricula and library and Internet resources;

- Ensure that school policies and practices, such as those related to dress codes and school dances, do not discriminate against LGBTQ students; and
- Adopt and implement comprehensive school and district anti-bullying/harassment policies that specifically enumerate sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as protected categories alongside others such as race, religion, and disability, with clear and effective systems for reporting and addressing incidents that students experience.

Taken together, such measures can move us towards a future in which all students have the opportunity to learn and succeed in school, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

## Endnotes

- 1 P.L. 114–95, The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015.
- 2 Shear, M. D. (2015 April 8) Obama calls for end to ‘conversion’ therapies for gay and transgender youth. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/09/us/politics/obama-to-call-for-end-to-conversion-therapies-for-gay-and-transgender-youth.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/09/us/politics/obama-to-call-for-end-to-conversion-therapies-for-gay-and-transgender-youth.html?_r=0)
- 3 See <http://www.glsen.org/article/glsen-applauds-oregon-conversion-therapy-ban>
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- 9 Race/ethnicity was assessed with a multi-check question item (i.e., African American or Black; Asian; South Asian; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; Native American, American Indian, or Alaska Native; White or Caucasian; Hispanic or Latino/a; and Middle Eastern or Arab American) with an optional write-in item for races/ethnicities not listed. Participants who selected more than one category were coded as “Multiracial,” with the exception of participants who selected “Hispanic or Latino” or “Middle Eastern or Arab American.”
- 10 Gender was assessed with a multi-check question item (i.e., male, female, transgender, transgender male-to-female, transgender female-to-male, and genderqueer) with an optional write-in item for genders not listed in combination with an item that asked respondents their sex assigned at birth. Participants in the Transgender Female category selected “male-to-female” and/or selected “female,” “transgender,” and indicated that they were assigned male at birth; the category Transgender Male was calculated similarly. Participants were categorized as having Another Transgender Identity if they selected only “transgender” and provided no other information about their gender identities, if they selected both “male-to-female” and “female-to-male” transgender options, or if they selected both “male” and “female” and also indicated “transgender,” regardless of birth sex.
- 11 Sexual orientation was assessed with a multi-check question item (i.e., gay, lesbian, straight/heterosexual, bisexual, questioning, and queer) with an optional write-in item for sexual orientations not listed. Students in the categories Queer, Another Sexual Orientation, and Questioning or Unsure did not also indicate that they were gay/lesbian or bisexual.
- 12 Bisexual identity is commonly described as either experiencing attraction to some male-identified people and some female-identified people or as experiencing attraction to some people of the same gender and some people of different genders.
- 13 Pansexual identity is commonly defined as experiencing attraction to some people, regardless of their gender identities.
- 14 Students were placed into region based on the state they were from — Northeast: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, DC; South: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia; Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin; West: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.
- 15 School locale (urban, suburban, rural) was created by matching school district locale information from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) with the school district name and/or zip code provided by participants attending public schools.
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- 17 Because of the large sample size and the multiple analyses conducted for this report, we use the more restrictive  $p < .01$  in determinations of statistical significance for our analyses, unless otherwise indicated. Mean differences in the frequencies across types of biased remarks were examined using a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), and percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant. Pillai’s Trace = .68,  $F(9, 10363) = 2483.06$ ,  $p < .001$ . Resulting univariate effects were considered at  $p < .01$ , and differences were significant with the exceptions of: remarks about students’ ability and hearing “gay” used in a negative way; and hearing the phrase “no homo” and negative remarks about transgender people.
- 18 When students heard homophobic remarks being made, school staff were present: Always = 5.3%; Most of the time = 25.2%; Some of the time = 48.1%; Never = 21.5%.
- 19 Mean differences in the frequencies between types of biased remarks based on gender expression were examined using a paired samples t-test. The difference was significant,  $t(10493) = 42.64$ ,  $p < .001$ .
- 20 Mean differences in the frequency of homophobic remarks and gender expression remarks made by staff were examined using a paired samples t-test. The difference was significant,  $t(10488) = -33.50$ ,  $p < .001$ .
- 21 When students heard negative remarks about gender expression being made, school staff were present: Always = 5.5%; Most of the time = 24.4%; Some of the time = 49.1%; Never = 20.9%.
- 22 Mean differences in the frequencies between staff and peer intervention of homophobic remarks and gender expression remarks, were examined using two paired samples t-tests. Frequencies were significantly different for both staff and peer intervention: School staff:  $t(6849) = 29.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Peers:  $t(10020) = 6.16$ ,  $p < .001$ .
- 23 See endnote 2.
- 24 Mean differences in the frequencies of verbal harassment across types were examined using repeated measures multiple analysis of variance: Pillai’s Trace = .43,  $F(4, 10,090) = 1864.54$ ,  $p < .001$ . Univariate effects were considered at  $p < .01$ .
- 25 Mean differences in the frequencies of physical harassment across types were examined using repeated measures multiple analysis of variance: Pillai’s Trace = .17,  $F(4, 10,195) = 518.51$ ,  $p < .001$ . Univariate effects were considered at  $p < .01$ .
- 26 Mean differences in the frequencies of any type of verbal harassment, physical harassment, and physical assault were examined using repeated measures multiple analysis of variance: Pillai’s Trace = .70,  $F(2, 10223) = 11650.87$ ,  $p < .001$ .
- 27 Mean differences of physical assault across types were examined

- using repeated measures multiple analysis of variance: Pillai's Trace = .08,  $F(4, 10329) = 219.63$ ,  $p < .001$ . Univariate effects were considered at  $p < .01$ .
- 28 To test differences in frequency of reporting victimization to family members by outness to family members, we conducted an independent samples t-test, where reporting to family was the dependent variable and outness was the independent variable. Results were significant,  $t(8367) = -15.37$ ,  $p < .001$ .
- 29 An additional 19.1% indicated that this question was "not applicable," perhaps because they had been out to their parents prior to staff knowledge of their LGBTQ identity.
- 30 To test differences across groups, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with five weighted victimization variables (based on sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, race/ethnicity, and disability) as dependent variables. The independent variable was dichotomous, where 1 = "not that serious" and "0" indicated that students had not cited this reason for not reporting victimization to school staff. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .90,  $F(5, 6300) = 11484.68$ ,  $p < .001$ .
- 31 Chi-square tests were performed looking at type of school staff response by whether it was perceived to be effective or ineffective (dichotomous variable was created for effectiveness: effective = "very effective" or "somewhat effective"; ineffective = "not at all effective" or "somewhat ineffective"). Responses that were more likely to be effective: Educated perpetrator about bullying:  $\chi^2 = 246.16$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = .28$ ; Disciplined perpetrator:  $\chi^2 = 475.09$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = .39$ ; Contacted perpetrator's parents:  $\chi^2 = 173.12$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = .24$ ; Filed a report:  $\chi^2 = 127.07$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = .20$ ; Educated all students about bullying:  $\chi^2 = 99.76$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = .18$ .
- 32 Chi-square tests were performed looking at type of school staff response by whether it was perceived to be effective or ineffective (dichotomous variable was created for effectiveness: effective = "very effective" or "somewhat effective;" ineffective = "not at all effective" or "somewhat ineffective"). Responses that were more likely to be ineffective: Disciplined the reporting student:  $\chi^2 = 88.24$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = -.17$ ; Told reporting student to change their behavior:  $\chi^2 = 262.44$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = -.29$ ; Did nothing/ Told student to ignore:  $\chi^2 = 879.59$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = -.53$ ; Referred the incident to another staff member:  $\chi^2 = 36.68$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = -.11$ ; Separated perpetrator and reporting student:  $\chi^2 = 102.36$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = -.18$ ; Used peer mediation/conflict resolution approach:  $\chi^2 = 16.00$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = .07$ .
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- 37 Mean differences in the frequencies of reasons for having no plans or being unsure about finishing high school across reasons were examined using repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA): Pillai's Trace = .79,  $F(10, 390) = 149.42$ ,  $p < .001$ . Univariate effects were considered at  $p < .01$ .
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- 41 To assess differences in high school graduation plans by absenteeism, a chi-square test was performed:  $\chi^2 = 79.29$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .09. Students with higher absenteeism due to feeling unsafe/uncomfortable were more likely to have no plans or not be sure of their plans to finish high school.
- 42 For purposes of analysis, we measured victimization by creating composite weighted variables for each type of victimization (e.g., those based on sexual orientation, gender expression, etc.) based on the severity of harassment with more weight given to more severe forms of harassment. Physical assault received the most weight, followed by physical harassment, and verbal harassment.
- 43 The relationship between educational aspirations and severity of victimization was examined through Pearson correlations. Victimization based on sexual orientation:  $r(9887) = -.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ; victimization based on gender expression:  $r(9661) = -.13$ ,  $p < .001$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 44 To test differences in educational aspirations by experiencing discriminatory policies and practices at school, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, with educational aspirations as the dependent variable, and experiencing discrimination as the independent variable. The main effect for experiencing discrimination was significant:  $F(1, 7367) = 63.52$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ; however, this difference was no longer significant when we performed a similar analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), controlling for victimization due to sexual orientation and gender expression.
- 45 The relationship between GPA and severity of victimization was examined through Pearson correlations. Victimization based on sexual orientation:  $r(9829) = -.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ; victimization based on gender expression:  $r(9604) = -.19$ ,  $p < .001$ .
- 46 To test differences in educational achievement by experiencing discriminatory policies and practices at school, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, with GPA as the dependent variable, and experiencing discrimination as the independent variable. The main effect for experiencing discrimination was significant:  $F(1, 7323) = 120.65$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . To account for direct experiences of victimization, we performed a similar, corresponding analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), controlling for victimization due to sexual orientation and gender expression. The ANCOVA revealed differences between students who had experienced discriminatory policies and practices and those who had not; thus, results of the ANOVA are reported for the sake of simplicity.
- 47 The relationship between missing school and severity of victimization was examined through Pearson correlations. Victimization based on sexual orientation:  $r(9477) = .46$ ,  $p < .001$ ; victimization based on gender expression:  $r(9564) = .44$ ,  $p < .001$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 48 To test differences in missing school by experiencing discriminatory policies and practices at school, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, with missing school as the dependent variable, and experiencing discrimination as the independent variable. The main effect for experiencing discrimination was significant:  $F(1, 7809) = 805.86$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .06$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. To account for direct experiences of victimization, we performed a similar, corresponding analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), controlling for victimization due to sexual orientation and gender expression. The ANCOVA revealed differences between students who had experienced discriminatory policies and practices and those who had not; thus, results of the ANOVA are reported for the sake of simplicity.
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- 54 To compare disciplinary experiences by severity of victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression, two chi-square tests were conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students had experienced higher than average victimization and dichotomized variable regarding having experienced any type of school discipline. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization were more likely to have experienced school discipline than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization: sexual orientation:  $\chi^2 = 415.88$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .21$ . gender expression:  $\chi^2 = 295.69$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .18$ .
- 55 To compare disciplinary experiences by missing school due to safety reasons, a chi-square test was conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students had missed school at least once due to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable:  $\chi^2 = 334.16$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .19$ . Students who had experienced any school discipline were more likely to miss school than students who had not experienced discipline.
- 56 To compare disciplinary experiences by experiences of discrimination at school, a chi-square test was conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students had experienced discriminatory policies or procedures:  $\chi^2 = 334.16$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .19$ . Students who had experienced discriminatory policies or practices at school reported higher rates of school disciplinary action than students who had not experienced these policies or practices. Note that further analyses demonstrated that these relationships between discriminatory practices and school discipline held even after controlling for peer victimization.
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- 59 The relationship between school belonging and severity of victimization was examined through Pearson correlations. Victimization based on sexual orientation:  $r(9414) = -.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ; victimization based on gender expression:  $r(9205) = -.41$ ,  $p < .001$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 60 To test differences in school belonging by experiencing discriminatory policies and practices at school, as analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, with school belonging as the dependent variable, and experiencing discrimination as the independent variable. The main effect for experiencing discrimination was significant:  $F(1, 6915) = 1451.32$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .17$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. To account for direct experiences of victimization, we performed a similar, corresponding analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), controlling for victimization due to sexual orientation and gender expression. The ANCOVA revealed differences between students who had experienced discriminatory policies and practices and those who had not; thus, results of the ANOVA are reported for the sake of simplicity.
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- 63 Self-esteem was measured using the 10-item Likert-type Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1989), which includes such items as “I am able to do things as well as most people.” Higher and lower levels of self-esteem are indicated by a cutoff at the mean score: students above this cutoff were characterized as “Demonstrating Higher Levels of Self-Esteem.”
- Rosenberg, M. (1989). *Society and the adolescent self-image* (Revised ed.) Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- 64 The relationship between self-esteem and severity of victimization was examined through Pearson correlations. Victimization based on sexual orientation:  $r(8758) = -.26, p < .001$ ; victimization based on gender expression:  $r(8566) = -.26, p < .001$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 65 Depression was measured using the 20-item Likert-type CES-D depression scale (Eaton et al., 2004), which includes such items as “During the past week, I felt hopeful about the future.” Higher levels of depression are indicated by a cutoff at the mean score of depression: students above the mean were characterized as “Demonstrating Higher Levels of Depression.”
- 66 The relationship between depression and severity of victimization was examined through Pearson correlations. Victimization based on sexual orientation:  $r(8709) = .36, p < .001$ ; victimization based on gender expression:  $r(8516) = .36, p < .001$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
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- 69 To test differences in depression by experiencing discriminatory policies and practices at school, as analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, with depression as the dependent variable, and experiencing discrimination as the independent variable. The main effect for experiencing discrimination was significant:  $F(1, 6320) = 679.18, p < .001, \eta^2 = .10$ . Even when accounting for direct experiences of victimization, the ANCOVAs revealed differences between students who had experienced discriminatory policies and practices and those who had not; thus, results of the ANOVAs are reported for the sake of simplicity.
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- 74 McCreedy, L. (2004). Some challenges facing queer youth programs in urban high schools: Racial segregation and denormalizing whiteness. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, 1(3), 37–51.
- 75 Griffin, P., Lee, C., Waugh, J., & Beyer, C. (2004). Describing roles that gay-straight alliances play in schools: From individual support to school change. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, 1(3), 7–22.
- 76 Mean differences in comfort level talking to school staff across type of school staff member were examined using repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's Trace = .52,  $F(7, 9311) = 421.30, p < .001$ . Univariate analyses were considered significant at  $p < .01$ . All mean differences in comfort level talking to school staff members were significant except between Vice/Assistant Principal and School Safety/Resource/Security Officer.
- 77 Mean differences in talking with school staff across type of school staff member were examined using repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's Trace = .55,  $F(7, 9624) = 1686.82, p < .001$ . Univariate analyses were considered significant at  $p < .01$ . All mean differences in talking to school staff members were significant except between: Principal and Vice/Assistant Principal, Principal and Athletics Coach, and Vice Principal and Athletics Coach.
- 78 Visit [glsen.org/safespace](http://glsen.org/safespace) for more information or to obtain a Safe Space Kit for an educator or school.
- 79 <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/qa-201404-title-ix.pdf>
- 80 [http://mediamatters.org/research/2016/05/05/comprehensive-guide-debunked-bathroom-predator-myth/210200#\\_Research\\_From\\_23](http://mediamatters.org/research/2016/05/05/comprehensive-guide-debunked-bathroom-predator-myth/210200#_Research_From_23)
- Such states and districts include: Los Angeles Unified School District: [http://notebook.lausd.net/pls/ptl/docs/PAGE/CA\\_LAUSD/FLDR\\_ORGANIZATIONS/STUDENT\\_HEALTH\\_HUMAN\\_SERVICES/SHHS/HUMAN\\_RELATIONS\\_HOME\\_PAGE/HUMAN\\_RELATIONS\\_BULLETINS\\_MEMOS/BUL-6224.0%20-%20TRANSGENER%20POLICY%20BULLETIN%2002-03-14\\_0.PDF](http://notebook.lausd.net/pls/ptl/docs/PAGE/CA_LAUSD/FLDR_ORGANIZATIONS/STUDENT_HEALTH_HUMAN_SERVICES/SHHS/HUMAN_RELATIONS_HOME_PAGE/HUMAN_RELATIONS_BULLETINS_MEMOS/BUL-6224.0%20-%20TRANSGENER%20POLICY%20BULLETIN%2002-03-14_0.PDF)
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/lgbtq/GenderIdentity.pdf>
- New York City Department of Education: <http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/TransgenderStudentGuidelines/default.htm>
- St. Paul Public Schools: <http://www.spps.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=1254&ModuleInstanceID=3522&ViewID=047E>



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Washoe County School District, NV

[http://washoecountyschools.net/csi/pdf\\_files/5161%20Reg%20-%20Gender%20Identity%20v1.pdf](http://washoecountyschools.net/csi/pdf_files/5161%20Reg%20-%20Gender%20Identity%20v1.pdf)

Washington, DC Public Schools: <http://dcps.dc.gov/publication/dcps-transgender-and-gender-non-conforming-policy-guidance>

- 81 Non-cisgender students and gender nonconforming students in our survey were somewhat less likely to report they were not sure if there was a policy. To compare reports of having policies/guidelines for transgender/gender nonconforming students by gender, a chi-square test was conducted  $\chi^2 = 156.76$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = .13$ . Post hoc comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ . Transgender students were the least likely to respond "not sure," followed by genderqueer and students of another gender identity (with no difference between these two groups), then cisgender gender nonconforming students, and with the most likely being cisgender gender conforming students. Given that these policies are specific to non-cisgender and gender nonconforming cisgender students, it is not surprising that they might be more informed about the existence of these types of policies
- 82 To test difference between transgender students in schools with a transgender/gender nonconforming student policy/guideline and without, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with the three variables related to personally experiencing gender-related discrimination as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .05,  $F(3, 1353) = 21.32$ ,  $p < .001$ . Univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$  – required to use bathrooms/locker rooms of legal sex:  $F(1, 1355) = 51.48$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ ; prevented from using preferred name/pronoun:  $F(1, 1355) = 43.24$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ ; prevented from wearing clothes thought inappropriate for legal sex:  $F(1, 1355) = 16.45$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . Similar analysis were done with genderqueer students, students of another gender identity, and gender nonconforming cisgender students and these analyses were not significant.
- 83 GLSEN and NCTE. (2016). Model District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students, Revised: Model language, commentary, and resources. New York: GLSEN. <http://www.glsen.org/article/model-laws-policies>
- 84 <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201605-title-ix-transgender.pdf> and see <https://www.justice.gov/opa/file/850991/download> for examples of promising policies and practices from districts across the country.
- 85 Balingit, M. (2016, July 8). Another 10 states sue Obama administration over bathroom guidance for transgender students. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/another-10-states-sue-obama-administration-over-bathroom-guidance-for-transgender-students/2016/07/08/a930238e-4533-11e6-88d0-6adee48be8bc\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.4ae265828f58](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/another-10-states-sue-obama-administration-over-bathroom-guidance-for-transgender-students/2016/07/08/a930238e-4533-11e6-88d0-6adee48be8bc_story.html?utm_term=.4ae265828f58).
- 86 To test differences in hearing biased remarks by presence of a GSA, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with GSA presence as the independent variable, and frequency of hearing anti-LGBT remarks as the dependent variables. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .05,  $F(5, 10449) = 111.94$ ,  $p < .001$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. The univariate effects for GSA presence in anti-LGBT remarks were all significant: "gay" used in a negative way,  $F(1, 10453) = 496.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ ; "no homo" used in a negative way,  $F(1, 10453) = 168.76$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ; other homophobic remarks,  $F(1, 10453) = 360.03$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ ; negative remarks regarding gender expression,  $F(1, 10453) = 72.415$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ; negative remarks about transgender people,  $F(1, 10453) = 100.32$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ .
- 87 To test differences in feeling unsafe by presence of a GSA, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with GSA presence as the independent variable, and feeling unsafe, missing school due to feeling unsafe, and victimization as the dependent variables. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .05,  $F(5, 9928) = 97.67$ ,  $p < .001$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. The univariate effect for GSA presence and feeling unsafe due to sexual orientation was significant:  $F(1, 9932) = 266.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ . The univariate effect for GSA presence and feeling unsafe due to gender expression was significant:  $F(1, 9932) = 81.03$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ .
- 88 To test differences in victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression by presence of a GSA, these variables were included in the MANOVA described above. The univariate effect for GSA presence in victimization due to sexual orientation was significant:  $F(1, 9932) = 351.67$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ . The univariate effect for GSA presence in victimization due to gender expression was significant:  $F(1, 9932) = 196.01$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . For illustrative purposes figures depicting differences in victimization based on sexual orientation or gender expression rely on a cutoff at the mean score of victimization: students above the mean score were characterized as "Experiencing Higher Levels of Victimization." Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 89 To test differences in missing school by presence of a GSA, this variable was included in the MANOVA described above. The univariate effect for GSA presence in missing school in the past month was significant:  $F(1, 9932) = 209.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 90 To test differences in number of supportive school staff by presence of a GSA, a t-test was conducted, with GSA presence as the independent variable, and number of supportive staff as the dependent variable. The effect for GSA presence in number of supportive staff was significant:  $t(8688.300) = -41.44$ ,  $p < .001$ . In addition, a chi-square test was conducted to compare the likelihood of having any supportive staff by presence of a GSA:  $\chi^2 = 230.92$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .15. Students who had a GSA were more likely to have at least 1 supportive educator compared to students who did not have a GSA. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 91 To test differences in staff intervention in anti-LGBT remarks by presence of a GSA, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with GSA presence as the independent variable, and frequency of staff intervention as the dependent variables. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's trace = .02,  $F(2, 6847) = 60.78$ ,  $p < .001$ . The univariate effects for GSA presence and staff intervention were both significant: homophobic remarks,  $F(1, 6848) = 118.29$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ; negative remarks about gender expression,  $F(1, 6848) = 19.29$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 92 The Day of Silence is a national student-led annual student day of action coordinated by GLSEN. The event is designed to draw attention to anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment in schools. Visit [www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org) for more information.
- 93 The full breakdown of student responses to the question, "In general, how accepting do you think students at your school are of LGBT people?" was as follows: not at all accepting, 4.4%; not very accepting, 22.6%; neutral, 23.7%; somewhat accepting, 32.9%; very accepting, 16.4%.
- 94 To test differences in peer acceptance and peer intervention by presence of a GSA, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with GSA presence as the independent variable, and peer acceptance, peer intervention in homophobic remarks, and peer intervention in negative remarks about gender expression as the dependent variables. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's trace = .09,  $F(3, 9694) = 319.93$ ,  $p < .001$ . The univariate effect for peer acceptance was significant:  $F(1, 9696) = 957.30$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .09$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 95 To test differences peer intervention by presence of a GSA, we conducted the MANOVA described in the previous endnote. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's trace = .09,  $F(3, 9694) = 319.93$ ,  $p < .001$ . Univariate effects for student intervention were significant: homophobic remarks,  $F(1, 9696) = 79.50$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ; negative remarks about gender expression,  $F(1, 9696) = 43.71$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 96 To test differences in school belonging and presence of a GSA an ANOVA was conducted with presence of a GSA as the independent variable and school belonging as the dependent variable. The main effect was significant:  $F(1, 8600) = 268.04$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 97 To test differences in well-being and presence of a GSA two one-way ANOVAs were conducted with the presence of a GSA as the independent variable and depression and self-esteem as the dependent variables. The main effect for depression was significant:  $F(1, 8600) = 102.77$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . The effect for self-esteem was not significant,  $p > .001$ .

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- 99 Style, E. (1996). Curriculum as window and mirror. *Social Science Record*, 33(2), 21–28.
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- 100 To test differences in hearing homophobic remarks by presence of an inclusive curriculum, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with inclusive curriculum presence as the independent variable, and frequency of hearing anti-LGBT remarks as the dependent variables. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's trace = .08,  $F(5, 10398) = 174.39$ ,  $p < .001$ . The univariate effects for inclusive curriculum presence was significant for all anti-LGBT remarks: hearing "gay" used in a negative way:  $F(1, 10402) = 583.59$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ ; "no homo" used in a negative way:  $F(1, 10402) = 283.16$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ ; other homophobic remarks was significant:  $F(1, 10402) = 631.18$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .06$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 101 To test differences in hearing biased remarks about gender identity or gender expression by presence of an inclusive curriculum, these variables were included in the MANOVA described above. The univariate effect for inclusive curriculum presence in hearing negative remarks re: gender expression was significant:  $F(1, 10402) = 251.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . The univariate effect for inclusive curriculum presence in hearing negative remarks about transgender people was significant:  $F(1, 10402) = 335.51$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
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- GLSEN and Harris Interactive (2008). *The Principal's Perspective: School Safety, Bullying and Harassment, A Survey of Public School Principals*. New York: GLSEN.
- 104 To test differences in anti-LGBT language by type of anti-bullying education, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with frequency of hearing anti-LGBT remarks as the dependent variables and bullying education type (no education, general education, LGBT inclusive education) as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .03,  $F(10, 20768) = 32.37$ ,  $p < .001$ . All univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$ . Gay used in a negative way:  $F(2, 10387) = 100.00$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . No homo:  $F(2, 10387) = 56.94$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . Other homophobic remarks:  $F(2, 10387) = 80.13$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Negative remarks about gender expression:  $F(2, 10387) = 80.70$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Negative remarks about transgender people:  $F(2, 10387) = 69.84$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered significant at  $p < .01$ . LGBTQ students in schools with inclusive anti-bullying education heard all anti-LGBT remarks less frequently compared to students in schools with general anti-bullying education or no anti-bullying education. There were no differences in frequency of hearing these remarks between students in schools with a general anti-bullying education or no anti-bullying education
- with the exception of hearing negative remarks about transgender people. Students in schools with general anti-bullying education heard remarks less frequently than students in schools with no anti-bullying education.
- 105 To test differences in feeling unsafe by type of anti-bullying education, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with feeling unsafe based on sexual orientation and gender expression as the dependent variables and bullying education type as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .02,  $F(4, 20524) = 32.37$ ,  $p < .001$ . All univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$ . Unsafe based on sexual orientation:  $F(2, 10262) = 106.82$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Unsafe based on gender expression:  $F(2, 10262) = 59.46$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Students in schools with an inclusive anti-bullying education reported feeling least unsafe based on their sexual orientation or gender expression, followed by students in schools with a general anti-bullying education. Students in schools with no anti-bullying education felt least safe based on their sexual orientation or gender expression. Percentages of combined variable for feeling unsafe for either sexual orientation or gender expression are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 106 To test differences in victimization by type of anti-bullying education, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with frequency of victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression as the dependent variables and bullying education type as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .02,  $F(4, 20212) = 44.01$ ,  $p < .001$ . Both univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$ . Victimization based on sexual orientation:  $F(2, 10106) = 83.63$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Victimization based on gender expression:  $F(2, 10106) = 68.04$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . Post hoc comparisons were considered significant at  $p < .01$ . Students in schools with an inclusive anti-bullying education reported experiencing the lowest levels of victimization based on their sexual orientation or gender expression, followed by students in schools with a general anti-bullying education. Students in schools with no anti-bullying education reported the highest levels of victimization based on sexual orientation or gender expression. Percentages of students experiencing higher levels of victimization (i.e., have score above the mean for the weighted victimization variables) are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 107 To test differences in student intervention in anti-LGBT remarks by anti-bullying education type, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with frequency of student intervention in homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression as the dependent variables and type of bullying prevention program as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .02,  $F(4, 19914) = 52.73$ ,  $p < .001$ . Univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$ . Student intervention in homophobic remarks:  $F(2, 9957) = 38.79$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Student intervention in negative remarks about gender expression:  $F(2, 9957) = 79.01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Pairwise comparisons were significant at  $p < .01$ . Students who received inclusive anti-bullying education said their peers intervened more frequently in homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression compared to students in schools with no anti-bullying education, followed by students in schools with general anti-bullying education. Students in schools with no anti-bullying education said their peers intervened least often in negative remarks about gender expression and homophobic remarks. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 108 To test differences in frequency of student reporting of harassment and assault to school staff by anti-bullying education type, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with frequency of student reporting as the dependent variable and type of bullying education as the independent variable. The univariate effect was significant:  $F(2, 7333) = 27.49$ ,  $p < .001$ . All pairwise comparisons were significant at  $p < .01$ , except there were no differences in frequency of reporting among students in schools with general education or no bullying education. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 109 To test differences in school staff intervention in anti-LGBT remarks by anti-bullying education type, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with frequency of school staff intervention in homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression as the dependent variables and type of anti-bullying education as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .06,  $F(4, 13602) = 111.70$ ,

- $p < .001$ . Univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$ . Staff intervention in homophobic remarks:  $F(2, 6801) = 202.77$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .06$ . Staff intervention in negative remarks about gender expression:  $F(2, 6801) = 142.74$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Students in schools with an inclusive anti-bullying education reported that teachers intervened the most in anti-LGBT remarks followed by students in schools with a general anti-bullying education, and no anti-bullying education. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 110 To test differences in effectiveness of school staff intervention by anti-bullying education type, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with staff effectiveness as the dependent variable and type of anti-bullying education as the independent variable. The univariate effect was significant:  $F(2, 3071) = 98.11$ ,  $p < .001$ . All pairwise comparisons were significant at  $p < .01$ . Students in schools with an inclusive anti-bullying education reported that school staff were most effective in handling reports of harassment and assault followed by students in schools with a general anti-bullying education, and students in schools with no anti-bullying education. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 111 Greytak, E. A., Kosciw, J. G., Villenas, C. & Giga, N. M. (2016). *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited, A Survey of U.S. Secondary School Students and Teachers*. New York: GLSEN.
- 112 To test differences in safety by presence of an inclusive curriculum, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with inclusive curriculum as the independent variable, and victimization due to sexual orientation and due to gender expression, feeling unsafe, and missing school as the dependent variables. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's trace = .05,  $F(5, 9882) = 103.91$ ,  $p < .001$ . The univariate effects were significant – feeling unsafe due to sexual orientation:  $F(1, 9886) = 350.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ ; feeling unsafe due to gender expression:  $F(1, 9886) = 165.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 113 To test differences in victimization by the presence of an inclusive curriculum, these variables were included in the MANOVA described above. The univariate effects were significant – victimization due to sexual orientation:  $F(1, 9886) = 236.77$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ; victimization due to gender expression:  $F(1, 9886) = 184.53$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 114 To test differences in missing school by the presence of an inclusive curriculum, this variable was included in the MANOVA described above. The univariate effect for inclusive curriculum in missing school was significant:  $F(1, 9886) = 251.68$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 115 To test differences in talking to school staff about LGBT issues by presence of an inclusive curriculum, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with inclusive curriculum presence as the independent variable, and talking to teachers and feeling comfortable talking to teachers about LGBT issues as the dependent variables. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's trace = .09,  $F(2, 9804) = 486.66$ ,  $p < .001$ . Both univariate effects were significant — having a positive or helpful conversation about LGBT issues:  $F(1, 9805) = 778.27$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ ; feeling comfortable talking with a teacher about LGBT issues:  $F(1, 9805) = 683.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 116 See endnote above. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 117 To test differences in achievement and aspirations, two t-tests were conducted, with inclusive curriculum presence as the independent variable, and GPA and educational aspirations as the dependent variables. The effects were significant: GPA and inclusive curriculum presence:  $t(3993.838) = -8.61$ ,  $p < .001$ . Educational aspirations and inclusive curriculum presence:  $t(9923) = -6.43$ ,  $p < .001$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- To test differences in plans to graduate high school and an inclusive curriculum, a chi-square test was conducted:  $\chi^2 = 36.63$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .06$ .
- 118 To test differences in peer acceptance and peer intervention by presence of an inclusive curriculum, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with inclusive curriculum as the independent variable, and peer acceptance, peer intervention in homophobic remarks, and peer intervention in negative remarks about gender expression as the dependent variables. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .13,  $F(3, 9658) = 457.95$ ,  $p < .001$ . All univariate effects were significant — peer acceptance:  $F(1, 9660) = 1152.16$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .11$  (other univariate effects detailed in following endnote). Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 119 To test differences in student intervention in anti-LGBT remarks by presence of an inclusive curriculum, these variables were included in the MANOVA described above. The univariate effects were significant — student intervention in homophobic remarks:  $F(1, 9660) = 415.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ ; student intervention in negative remarks about gender expression:  $F(1, 9660) = 276.52$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 120 To test differences in school belonging and presence of an inclusive curriculum an ANOVA was conducted with presence of an inclusive curriculum as the independent variable and school belonging as the dependent variable. The main effect was significant:  $F(1, 8569) = 615.42$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ .
- 121 To test differences in well-being and presence of an inclusive curriculum two one-way ANOVAs were conducted with the presence of an inclusive curriculum as the independent variable and depression and self-esteem as the dependent variables. The main effect for depression health was significant:  $F(1, 8569) = 177.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . The main effect for self-esteem was not significant,  $p > .001$ .
- 122 Konishi, C., Hymel, S., Zumbo, B. D., & Li, Z. (2010). Do school bullying and student-teacher relationships matter for academic achievement? A multilevel analysis. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 25*(1), 19-39.
- Klem, A. M., & Connell, J. P. (2004). Relationships matter: Linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement. *Journal of School Health, 74*(7), 262-273.
- 123 Kosciw, J. G., Palmer, N. A., Kull, R. M., & Greytak, E. A. (2013). The effect of negative school climate on academic outcomes for LGBT youth and the role of in-school supports. *Journal of School Violence, 12*(1), 45-63.
- 124 The relationships between number of supportive staff and feeling unsafe at school and missing school due to feeling unsafe were examined through Pearson correlations. Feeling unsafe because of sexual orientation:  $r(9905) = -.29$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Feeling unsafe because of gender expression:  $r(9905) = -.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Missing school:  $r(10042) = -.29$ ,  $p < .001$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 125 The relationship between number of supportive staff and postsecondary educational aspirations was examined through Pearson correlations:  $r(9862) = .13$ ,  $p < .001$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 126 To test differences in the number of supportive educators and planning to graduate, a t-test was conducted with planning to graduate high school as the independent variable and number of supportive staff as the dependent variable. The effect was significant:  $t(9898) = -11.09$ ,  $p < .001$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 127 The relationship between number of supportive staff and GPA was examined through Pearson correlations:  $r(9802) = .14$ ,  $p < .001$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 128 The relationship between number of supportive staff and school belonging was examined through Pearson correlations:  $r(9395) = .40$ ,  $p < .001$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 129 The relationship between number of supportive staff and student well-being was examined through Pearson correlations. Depression:  $r(8692) = -.23$ ,  $p < .001$ . Self-esteem:  $r(8742) = .06$ ,  $p < .001$ .
- 130 The relationship between feeling unsafe due to sexual orientation or gender expression and frequency of teacher intervention was examined through Pearson correlations. Intervention in homophobic language:  $r(8063) = -.18$ ,  $p < .001$ . Intervention in negative remarks about gender expression:  $r(7831) = -.12$ ,  $p < .001$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 131 The relationship between missing school due to feeling unsafe and frequency of teacher intervention was examined through Pearson correlations. Intervention in homophobic language:  $r(8147) = -.15$ ,  $p < .001$ . Intervention in negative remarks about gender expression:  $r(7908) = -.09$ ,  $p < .001$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

- 132 The relationship between feeling unsafe due to sexual orientation or gender expression and effectiveness of teacher intervention was examined through a Pearson correlation:  $r(3044) = -.26, p < .001$ .
- 133 The relationship between missing school due to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable and effectiveness of teacher intervention was examined through a Pearson correlation:  $r(3067) = -.30, p < .001$ .
- 134 To test differences in victimization by effectiveness of staff intervention, two correlations were conducted, with effectiveness of staff intervention as the independent variable, and victimization due to sexual orientation and gender expression as the dependent variables. Both relationships were significant: effectiveness of intervention on victimization due to sexual orientation:  $r(3061) = -.29, p < .001$ ; effectiveness of intervention on victimization due to gender expression:  $r(2969) = -.25, p < .001$ .
- 135 To compare students' perceptions of school staff based on the presence of Safe Space stickers/posters, a multiple analysis of covariance (MANOVA) was conducted, with Safe Space sticker/poster presence as the independent variable, and number of supportive staff, talking to teachers and counselors, and also feeling comfortable talking to teachers and counselors about LGBT issues as the dependent variables. The main effect for a Safe Space sticker/poster presence on the number of supportive staff was significant:  $F(1, 9612) = 655.39, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .10$ . With this analysis and the others described below, we performed a similar, corresponding analysis controlling for the presence of a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or other LGBT-supportive club at school. Even when accounting for the presence of a GSA, the analysis revealed differences between students who had seen a Safe Space sticker/poster at school and those who had not; thus, results of the initial MANOVA are reported for the sake of simplicity.
- 136 To test differences in talking to school staff about LGBT issues by presence of a Safe Space sticker/poster, a multiple analysis of (MANOVA) was conducted (See endnote above). The main effect for presence of a Safe Space sticker in having had a positive or helpful conversation about LGBT issues was significant with teachers:  $F(1, 9612) = 692.45, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .07$ ; and also for counselors:  $F(1, 9612) = 351.17, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$ . The main effect for comfort talking with teachers was significant:  $F(1, 9612) = 413.07, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$ ; and also for counselors:  $F(1, 9612) = 439.95, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$ . With these analyses and the one described above, we performed a similar, corresponding analysis controlling for the presence of a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or other LGBT-supportive club at school. Even when accounting for the presence of a GSA, the analyses revealed differences between students who had seen a Safe Space sticker/poster at school and those who had not; thus, results of the initial MANOVA are reported for the sake of simplicity.
- 137 To test differences in anti-LGBT language by type of school policy, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with frequency of hearing biased language as the dependent variable and policy type as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .04,  $F(15, 31242) = 25.74, p < .001$ . The univariate effect of policy type on hearing "gay" in a negative way was significant:  $F(3, 10416) = 95.19, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .03$ . Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that "gay" was heard negatively least frequently in schools with comprehensive policies, followed by schools with partially enumerated policies, followed by schools with a generic policy, and followed by schools with no policy. The univariate effect of policy type on hearing "no homo" was significant:  $F(3, 10416) = 46.932, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that "no homo" was heard least frequently in schools with comprehensive policies and schools, followed by partially enumerated policies, followed by schools with generic policies, and followed by schools with no policy. The univariate effect of policy type on hearing other homophobic remarks was significant:  $F(3, 10416) = 79.98, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that other homophobic language was heard least frequently in schools with comprehensive policies, followed by schools with partially enumerated policies, followed by schools with a generic policy, followed by schools with no policy. The univariate effect of policy type on hearing negative remarks re: gender expression was significant:  $F(3, 10416) = 29.75, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that negative remarks re: gender expression were heard least frequently in schools with comprehensive policies, followed by schools with partially enumerated policies, followed by schools with a generic policy, followed by schools with no policy. The univariate effect of policy type on hearing negative remarks about transgender people was significant:  $F(3, 10416) = 29.51, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that negative remarks about transgender people were heard negatively least frequently in schools with comprehensive and partially enumerated policies, followed by schools with a generic policy, followed by schools with no policy.
- 138 To test differences in rates of victimization by type of school policy, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with frequency of victimization as the dependent variable and policy type as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .02,  $F(6, 20272) = 29.10, p < .001$ . The univariate effect of policy type on rates of victimization due to sexual orientation was significant:  $F(3, 10140) = 54.15, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that students were least victimized because of their sexual orientation in schools with comprehensive policies and schools with partially enumerated policies, followed by schools with a generic policy, followed by schools with no policy. The univariate effect of policy type on victimization due to gender expression was significant:  $F(3, 10140) = 3806, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that students were least victimized because of their gender expression in schools with comprehensive policies and schools with partially enumerated policies, followed by schools with generic policies, followed by schools with no policy.
- 139 To test differences in rates of staff intervention in anti-LGBT language by type of school policy, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with frequency of intervention as the dependent variable and policy type as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .05,  $F(6, 13650) = 45.48, p < .001$ . The univariate effect of policy type on rates of intervention in homophobic language was significant:  $F(3, 6829) = 88.27, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$ . Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that teachers intervened most frequently in schools with comprehensive policies, followed by schools with partially enumerated policies, followed by schools with a generic policy, followed by schools with no policy. The univariate effect of policy type on staff intervention in negative remarks re: gender expression was significant:  $F(3, 6829) = 40.28, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that staff intervened most frequently in schools with comprehensive policies, followed by schools with partially enumerated policies, followed by schools with generic policies, followed by schools with no policy.
- 140 To test differences in rates of student reporting of incidents by type of school policy, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, with frequency of student reporting as the dependent variable and policy type as the independent variable. The main effect of policy type on rates of reporting was significant:  $F(3, 7355) = 25.22, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that students reported most frequently in schools with comprehensive policies, followed by schools with partly enumerated policies, followed by schools with a generic policy, and followed by schools with no policy.
- 141 To test differences in effectiveness of staff intervention by type of school policy, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, with effectiveness of staff of intervention as the dependent variable and policy type as the independent variable. The main effect of policy type on effectiveness of intervention was significant:  $F(3, 3077) = 56.69, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .05$ . Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that staff intervention was most effective in schools with comprehensive policies, followed by schools with enumerated policies, followed by schools with a generic policy, and followed by schools with no policy.
- 142 The relationship between effectiveness of staff intervention and reporting of victimization to staff was examined through Pearson correlations:  $r(3083) = -.15, p < .01$ .
- 143 Given the relatively small sample sizes of Native American/American Indian LGBTQ students, they are not included in the analysis of school experiences by race or ethnicity.
- 144 To compare feeling unsafe by race/ethnicity, three chi-square tests were conducted. Post hoc comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ . Unsafe because of sexual orientation:  $\chi^2 = 22.65, df = 5, p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .05$ . Black/African American students were less likely to feel unsafe due to sexual orientation than White, Hispanic/Latino, and Multiracial students. Unsafe because of race/ethnicity:  $\chi^2 = 898.57, df = 5, p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .32$ . Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, Arab/Middle Eastern, and Multiracial students were more likely to feel unsafe because of their race/ethnicity than White/European students.

- 145 To compare experiences of harassment and assault by race/ethnicity, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the three weighted harassment and assault variables as dependent variables. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .07,  $F(15, 25542) = 41.37$ ,  $p < .001$ . Univariate effects were significant: victimization based on sexual orientation:  $F(5, 8519) = 6.50$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ ; victimization based on gender expression:  $F(5, 8519) = 5.05$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ ; victimization based on race or ethnicity:  $F(5, 8519) = 100.90$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .06$ . Post hoc comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . victimization based on sexual orientation: Asian American/Pacific Islander students experienced less victimization based on sexual orientation compared to all other racial/ethnic groups except Black/African American students, there were no other significant differences between racial/ethnic groups; victimization based on gender expression: Asian/Pacific Islander students reported lower rates of victimization based on gender expression than all other students except African American/Black students, White students, and Arab/Middle Eastern students, there were no other significant differences between racial/ethnic groups; victimization based on race/ethnicity: White students reported lower rates of victimization based on race or ethnicity than all other students. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 146 To compare reports of experiencing discriminatory policies and practices by race or ethnicity, a chi-square test was conducted using the variable of personally experiencing any of the types of anti-LGBT discrimination asked about in the survey:  $\chi^2 = 22.41$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .05. Post hoc comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ . Asian American/Pacific Islander students were less likely to experience anti-LGBT discrimination at school resulting from school policies and practices than Multiracial students, White students, and Hispanic/Latino students. There were no other significant differences between racial/ethnic groups.
- 147 Gender was assessed with a multi-check question item (i.e., male, female, transgender, transgender male-to-female, transgender female-to-male, and genderqueer) with an optional write-in item for genders not listed in combination, along with an item that asked respondents their sex assigned at birth. Cisgender respondents are those, either male or female, whose gender identity is aligned with the sex/gender they were assigned at birth, indicating that they chose only male or female in response to the gender identity item and that this was same response given to the sex assigned at birth item. Transgender respondents included transgender females (those who selected "male-to-female" and/or selected "female," "transgender," and indicated that they were assigned male at birth), transgender males (calculated similarly as transgender females), transgender students who did not also identify as male or female (e.g., those who selected only "transgender"). Those who could not be classified as cisgender male, cisgender females, or transgender, and did not identify as genderqueer are included in the "another gender identity" category.
- 148 To compare feeling unsafe by gender identity, chi-square tests were conducted. Unsafe because of gender:  $\chi^2 = 3152.41$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .59; unsafe because of gender expression:  $\chi^2 = 1513.06$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .41. Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ .
- 149 To compare experiences of harassment and assault by gender identity, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the three weighted variables (victimization based on: sexual orientation, gender expression, gender) as dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .22,  $F(12, 26262) = 175.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ . The univariate effect for victimization due to gender expression was significant:  $F(4, 8754) = 239.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .10$ . The univariate effect for victimization due to gender was significant:  $F(4, 8754) = 289.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .12$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 150 To compare experiences of harassment and assault by gender identity, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the three weighted variables (victimization based on: sexual orientation, gender expression, gender) as dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .22,  $F(12, 26262) = 175.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ . The univariate effect for victimization due to sexual orientation was significant:  $F(4, 8754) = 37.47$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 151 To compare feeling unsafe by sexual orientation, a chi-square test was conducted. Unsafe because of gender: unsafe because of sexual orientation:  $\chi^2 = 141.57$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .13. Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ .
- 152 Foley, J. T., Pineiro, C., Miller, D., & Foley, M. L. (2016). Including transgender students in school physical education. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 87(3), 5-8.
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- 153 To compare avoiding gender-segregated spaces at school by gender identity, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the weighted variables for victimization based on sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender included as covariates. Differences were significant: Pillai's Trace = .12,  $F(8, 25587) = 85.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ . The univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$ . Avoiding bathrooms:  $F(4, 8529) = 233.60$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .10$ ; avoiding locker rooms:  $F(4, 8529) = 100.48$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ ; avoiding Gym/PE class:  $F(4, 8529) = 35.74$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 154 To compare having experienced any anti-LGBT discrimination at school by gender identity, a chi-square tests was conducted:  $\chi^2 = 486.64$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ . Cramer's V = .26. Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ .
- 155 To compare each type of anti-LGBT discrimination by gender identity, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with each type of discrimination as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .15,  $F(44, 25587) = 85.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ . All univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Transgender students were more likely than male and female cisgender students to experience each type of anti-LGBT discrimination. In addition, transgender students were also more likely to experience the following types of discrimination, as compared to genderqueer students and students of other gender identities: prevented from using bathroom/locker room, prevented from using preferred name and pronoun, prevented/discouraged from sports, prevented from discussing LGBT content in extracurriculars, and disciplined unfairly because LGBT. Transgender students were also more likely than students of another gender identity to be prevented from including LGBT content in class assignments and from bringing same gender date to school dance.
- 156 Greytak, E. A., Kosciw, J. G., & Diaz, E. M. (2009). *Harsh Realities: The Experiences of Transgender Students in Our Nation's Schools*. New York: GLSEN.
- 157 To compare feeling unsafe among transgender students (transgender males, transgender females, and transgender students who do not identify as male or female), chi-square tests were conducted. Unsafe because of gender expression:  $\chi^2 = 16.08$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .15; unsafe because of gender:  $\chi^2 = 27.20$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .001$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ . There were no significant differences in feeling unsafe because of sexual orientation.
- 158 To compare experiences of harassment and assault among transgender students, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the three weighted variables (victimization based on: sexual orientation, gender expression, gender) as dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .05,  $F(6, 2598) = 10.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . The univariate effect for victimization due to gender expression was significant:  $F(2, 1300) = 12.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . The univariate effect for victimization due to gender expression was significant:  $F(2, 1300) = 15.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . There were no significant differences in experiences of harassment and assault among transgender students based on sexual orientation.

- 159 To compare avoiding gender-segregated spaces at school among transgender students, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the weighted variables for victimization based on sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender included as covariates. Differences were significant: Pillai's Trace = .05,  $F(6, 2550) = 10.01$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Avoiding Gym/PE class was not significant, the other two univariate effects were: avoiding bathrooms:  $F(2, 1276) = 27.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ ; avoiding locker rooms:  $F(2, 1276) = 7.33$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ .
- 160 To compare having experienced any anti-LGBT discrimination at school among transgender students, a chi-square test was conducted:  $\chi^2 = 27.03$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .001$ . Cramer's V = .15. Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ .
- 161 To compare feeling unsafe by gender identity, chi-square tests were conducted. Unsafe because of gender:  $\chi^2 = 3152.41$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .59; unsafe because of gender expression:  $\chi^2 = 1513.06$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .41. Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ .
- 162 To compare experiences of harassment and assault by gender identity, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the three weighted variables (victimization based on: sexual orientation, gender expression, gender) as dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .22,  $F(12, 26262) = 175.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ . The univariate effect for victimization due to sexual orientation was significant:  $F(4, 8754) = 37.47$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 163 To compare feeling unsafe by sexual orientation, a chi-square test was conducted. Unsafe because of gender: unsafe because of sexual orientation:  $\chi^2 = 141.57$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .13. Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ .
- 164 To compare experiences of harassment and assault by gender identity, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the three weighted variables (victimization based on: sexual orientation, gender expression, gender) as dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .22,  $F(12, 26262) = 175.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ . The univariate effect for victimization due to sexual orientation was significant:  $F(4, 8754) = 37.47$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 165 To compare avoiding gender-segregated spaces at school by gender identity, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the weighted variables for victimization based on sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender included as covariates. Differences were significant: Pillai's Trace = .12,  $F(8, 25587) = 85.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ . The univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$ . Avoiding bathrooms:  $F(4, 8529) = 233.60$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .10$ ; avoiding locker rooms:  $F(4, 8529) = 100.48$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ ; avoiding Gym/PE class:  $F(4, 8529) = 35.74$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 166 To compare having experienced any anti-LGBT discrimination at school by gender identity, a chi-square test was conducted:  $\chi^2 = 486.64$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ . Cramer's V = .26. Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ .
- 167 To compare feeling unsafe by gender identity, chi-square tests were conducted. Unsafe because of gender:  $\chi^2 = 3152.41$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .59; unsafe because of gender expression:  $\chi^2 = 1513.06$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .41. Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ .
- 168 To compare experiences of harassment and assault by gender identity, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the three weighted variables (victimization based on: sexual orientation, gender expression, gender) as dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .22,  $F(12, 26262) = 175.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ . The univariate effect for victimization due to gender expression was significant:  $F(4, 8754) = 239.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .10$ . The univariate effect for victimization due to gender was significant:  $F(4, 8754) = 289.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .12$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 169 To compare feeling unsafe by gender identity, a chi-square test was conducted. Unsafe because of sexual orientation:  $\chi^2 = 141.57$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .13. Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ .
- 170 To compare feeling unsafe by sexual orientation, a chi-square test was conducted. Unsafe because of gender: unsafe because of sexual orientation:  $\chi^2 = 141.57$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .13. Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ .  
To compare experiences of harassment and assault by gender identity, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the three weighted variables (victimization based on: sexual orientation, gender expression, gender) as dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .22,  $F(12, 26262) = 175.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ . The univariate effect for victimization due to sexual orientation was significant:  $F(4, 8754) = 37.47$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 171 To compare avoiding gender-segregated spaces at school by gender identity, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the weighted variables for victimization based on sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender included as covariates. Differences were significant: Pillai's Trace = .12,  $F(8, 25587) = 85.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ . The univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$ . Avoiding bathrooms:  $F(4, 8529) = 233.60$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .10$ ; avoiding locker rooms:  $F(4, 8529) = 100.48$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ ; avoiding Gym/PE class:  $F(4, 8529) = 35.74$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 172 To compare having experienced any anti-LGBT discrimination at school by gender identity, a chi-square test was conducted:  $\chi^2 = 486.64$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ . Cramer's V = .26. Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ .
- 173 To compare feeling unsafe by gender identity, chi-square tests were conducted. Unsafe because of gender expression:  $\chi^2 = 1513.06$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .41; unsafe because of sexual orientation:  $\chi^2 = 141.57$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .13. Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ .
- 174 To compare experiences of harassment and assault by gender identity, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the three weighted variables (victimization based on: sexual orientation, gender expression, gender) as dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .22,  $F(12, 26262) = 175.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ . The univariate effect for victimization due to gender expression was significant:  $F(4, 8754) = 239.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .10$ . The univariate effect for victimization due to sexual orientation was significant:  $F(4, 8754) = 37.47$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 175 To compare feeling unsafe by gender identity, chi-square tests were conducted. Unsafe because of gender:  $\chi^2 = 3152.41$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .59. Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ .
- 176 To compare experiences of harassment and assault by gender identity, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the three weighted variables (victimization based on: sexual orientation, gender expression, gender) as dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .22,  $F(12, 26262) = 175.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ . The univariate effect for victimization due to gender was significant:  $F(4, 8754) = 289.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .12$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 177 To compare avoiding gender-segregated spaces at school by gender identity, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the weighted variables for victimization based on sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender included as covariates. Differences were significant: Pillai's Trace = .12,  $F(8, 25587) = 85.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ . The univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$ . Avoiding bathrooms:  $F(4, 8529) = 233.60$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .10$ ; avoiding locker rooms:  $F(4, 8529) = 100.48$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ ; avoiding Gym/PE class:  $F(4, 8529) = 35.74$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 178 To compare having experienced any anti-LGBT discrimination at school by gender identity, a chi-square test was conducted:  $\chi^2 = 486.64$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .001$ . Cramer's V = .26. Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ .
- 179 Kimmel, M. (2004). Masculinity as homophobia: fear, shame, and silence in the construction of gender identity. In P. F. Murphy (Ed.) *Feminism and Masculinities*, 182–199. New York: Oxford University Press.

- 180 Gordon, A. R., Conron, K. J., Calzo, J. P., Reisner, S. L., & Austin, S. B. (2016). Nonconforming gender expression is a predictor of bullying and violence victimization among high school students in four US school districts. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 58*(2), S1-S2.
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- 181 To compare gender expression by gender identity, a chi-square test was conducted:  $\chi^2 = 1321.61$ ,  $df = 36$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .17$ .
- 182 Kann, L., Olsen, E. O., McManus, T., et al. Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Related Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9-12 — United States and Selected Sites, 2015. *MMWR Surveill Summ* 2016; 65(No. SS-9):1-202. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.ss6509a1>.
- 183 Among the sample of bisexual students in this survey: 61.7% were cisgender female, 11.7% were cisgender male, and 26.6% identified as non-cisgender (e.g., transgender, genderqueer). Differences in gender between bisexual and non-bisexual students were assessed through a chi-square test:  $\chi^2 = 3047.56$ ,  $df = 15$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .36$ . Compared to all other sexual orientations except for questioning students, a greater portion of bisexual students were cisgender female and a smaller portion of bisexual students were cisgender male. A smaller portion of bisexual students identified as non-cisgender (e.g., transgender, genderqueer), as compared to all other sexual orientations, except for gay/lesbian students and questioning students.
- 184 Differences in race/ethnicity between bisexual students and other students were assessed through a chi-square test:  $\chi^2 = 11.79$ ,  $df = 7$ , not significant at  $p < .01$ .
- 185 Among the sample of bisexual students in this survey, the mean age was 15.88: Differences in age between bisexual students and non-bisexual students were assessed through a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA):  $F(5, 9157) = 30.77$ ,  $p < .001$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered significant at  $p < .01$ . Bisexual students were significantly younger than gay/lesbian students, and were not different in age from queer, pansexual, or questioning students, or from students with other sexual orientations. Therefore, when relevant, we control for gender identity and age in subsequent analyses of sexual orientation differences.
- 186 To test differences in feelings of school safety by sexual orientation, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with feeling unsafe due to one's sexual orientation and gender expression as the dependent variables, and sexual orientation (gay/lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, questioning, and other sexual orientation) as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .05,  $F(10, 17932) = 46.30$ ,  $p < .001$ . Univariate effects were significant. Felt unsafe because of sexual orientation:  $F(5, 8966) = 40.16$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Felt unsafe because of gender expression:  $F(5, 8966) = 55.73$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered significant at  $p < .01$ . Unsafe because of sexual orientation: bisexual students were less likely to feel unsafe compared to gay/lesbian and pansexual students, and more likely to feel unsafe compared to questioning students. Gender expression: bisexual students were less likely to feel unsafe because of their gender expression compared to gay/lesbian, queer, and pansexual students, and students with another sexual orientation. To account for gender identity, we performed a similar, corresponding analysis of covariance (MANCOVA), controlling for gender identity; the MANCOVA still revealed similar significant differences in feelings of safety by sexual orientation; thus, results of the MANOVA are reported for the sake of simplicity. To account for age, we performed a similar, corresponding analysis of covariance (MANCOVA), controlling for age; the MANCOVA revealed similar significant differences in feelings of safety by sexual orientation; thus, results of the MANOVA are reported for the sake of simplicity.
- 187 See endnote above.
- 188 To compare experiences of harassment and assault by sexual orientation, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with three victimization variables (victimization based on sexual orientation, victimization based on gender expression, sexual harassment) as dependent variables, and sexual orientation as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .02,  $F(15, 26508) = 40.81$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . All univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$  - victimization based on sexual orientation:  $F(5, 8836) = 33.46$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ; victimization based on gender expression:  $F(5, 8836) = 22.62$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ; sexual harassment:  $F(5, 8836) = 45.25$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered significant at  $p < .01$ . Bisexual students experienced lower levels of victimization based on sexual orientation compared to gay/lesbian and pansexual students. Bisexual students experienced lower levels of victimization based on their gender expression compared to gay/lesbian and pansexual students, and students with another sexual orientation. Bisexual students experienced more frequent sexual harassment expression compared to gay/lesbian students and students with another sexual orientation, and less frequent sexual harassment compared to pansexual students. These findings remained after controlling for gender identity and age; results of the MANOVA is reported for the sake of simplicity. Percentages of students experiencing "higher victimization" are shown for illustrative purposes only; students with a score above the mean for the specific type of victimization were characterized as experiencing higher levels of victimization for that victimization type.
- 189 To compare reporting harassment to school staff by sexual orientation, a univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with sexual orientation as the independent variable and reporting harassment to staff as the dependent variable. Results were significant:  $F(5, 6253) = 3.39$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered significant at  $p < .01$ . Post hoc tests indicate that bisexual students reported victimization to school staff less frequently than gay/lesbian students. Percentages are reported for illustrative purposes. These findings remained after controlling for gender identity and age; results of the ANOVA is reported for the sake of simplicity.
- 190 To test differences in students' levels of depression, self-esteem, and feelings of school belonging by sexual orientation, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with depression, self-esteem, and school belonging as dependent variables and sexual orientation as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .05,  $F(15, 25647) = 25.99$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$ : Depression:  $F(5, 8549) = 57.33$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ ; Self-esteem:  $F(5, 8549) = 66.16$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ ; School belonging:  $F(5, 8549) = 48.88$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Bisexual students had higher levels of depression than gay/lesbian students, but less depression than pansexual students and students with another sexual orientation. Bisexual students had lower self-esteem than gay/lesbian students, but higher self-esteem than pansexual students and students with another sexual orientation. Bisexual students had a lower sense of school belonging than gay/lesbian students, but had a greater sense of school belonging than pansexual students and students with another sexual orientation. These findings remained after controlling for gender identity and age; thus, results of the MANOVA are reported for the sake of simplicity. Percentages of students experiencing "lower depression," "higher self-esteem," and "higher school belonging" are shown for illustrative purposes only. Students with a score above the mean for the specific type of victimization were characterized as experiencing higher levels of victimization for that victimization type. Students with a score above the mean for self-esteem scale were characterized as experiencing higher levels of self-esteem. Students with a score below the mean for depression scale were characterized as experiencing lower levels of depression.
- 191 Kosciw, J. G., Palmer, N. A., & Kull, R. M. (2015). Reflecting resiliency: Openness about sexual orientation and/or gender identity and its relationship to well-being and educational outcomes for LGBT students. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 55*(1), 167-178.
- Watson, R. J., Wheldon, C. W., & Russell, S. T. (2015). How does sexual identity disclosure impact school experiences? *Journal of LGBT Youth, 12*(4), 385-386.
- 192 To compare outness to staff, peers, and parents by sexual orientation, chi-square tests were performed. Out to staff:  $\chi^2 = 745.85$ ,  $df = 15$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .17$ ; Out to peers:  $\chi^2 = 1321.95$ ,  $df = 15$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .22$ . Out to parents:  $\chi^2 =$

- 311.286,  $df = 5$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .19$ . Pairwise comparisons considered at  $p < .05$ . Bisexual students were significantly less likely to be "out" about their LGBTQ status compared to gay/lesbian and pansexual students. We then conducted a MANCOVA (for outness to peers and staff) and an ANCOVA (for outness to parents) to control for gender identity and age. The findings remained after controlling for gender identity and age; thus, results of the chi-squares are reported for the sake of simplicity. A majority of bisexual students were not out to other students or were only out to a few (59.8%), compared to less than a third of gay/lesbian students (29.7%) and just under a half of pansexual students (46.7%). In regard to teachers and other school staff, the vast majority of bisexual students were out to none or a few (82.9% vs. 57.6% of gay/lesbian, and 72.5% of pansexual students).
- 193 Given our measure of LGBTQ outness does not allow us to determine whether transgender and other non-cisgender students were considering their outness related to sexual orientation or gender identity, it is difficult to interpret gender differences in outness among all gender identities (cisgender and non-cisgender alike). Thus, we examined gender differences in outness among bisexual cisgender students and found that males were more likely to be out to teachers/school staff,  $t(1507) = -3.44$ ,  $p < .01$ . There were no differences between male and female cisgender bisexual students in outness to peers or to parents. Almost half of bisexual students (47.5%) were not out to a parent or guardian, compared to approximately one-third of gay/lesbian (30.1%) and pansexual (38.3%) students.
- 194 The relationships between outness to peers and peer victimization (weighted victimization based on sexual orientation, weighted victimization based on gender expression, sexual harassment) among bisexual students were examined through Pearson correlations. Correlations were significant at  $p < .001$  – victimization based on sexual orientation:  $r(2044) = .17$ , victimization based on gender expression:  $r(2002) = .08$ , sexual harassment:  $r(2057) = .09$ .
- 195 The relationships between outness (to staff, to peers, and to parents) and frequency of reporting incidents of victimization to school staff among bisexual students were examined through Pearson correlations. Correlations between reporting and outness to staff and outness to parents were not significant at  $p < .01$ . The correlation between reporting and outness to peers was significant:  $r(2057) = -.09$ ,  $p < .001$ .
- 196 Kosciw, J. G., Palmer, N. A., & Kull, R. M. (2015). Reflecting resiliency: Openness about sexual orientation and/or gender identity and its relationship to well-being and educational outcomes for LGBT students. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *55*(1), 167–178.
- 197 The relationships between outness (to staff, to peers, and to parents) and well-being (i.e., self-esteem, depression, and school belonging) among bisexual students were examined through Pearson correlations. Correlations between well-being and outness to peers were not significant at  $p < .01$ . Correlations between well-being and outness to parents were not significant at  $p < .01$ . Correlation between self-esteem and outness to staff was significant:  $r(1990) = .07$ ,  $p < .01$ . The correlation between school belonging and outness to staff was significant:  $r(2032) = .07$ ,  $p < .01$ .
- 198 To assess differences in reporting based on sexual orientation when accounting for outness at school, we performed a corresponding analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with reporting harassment to school staff as the dependent variable, and sexual orientation at the independent variable, controlling for outness to staff, peers, and parents. Results were significant:  $F(5, 8937) = 14.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered significant at  $p < .01$ . Bisexual students were no longer different from gay/lesbian students, however once accounting for outness, bisexual students were now more likely than pansexual to report incidents to school staff.
- 199 To assess differences in victimization based on sexual orientation when accounting for outness to peers, we performed a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) with three victimization variables (weighted victimization based on sexual orientation, weighted victimization based on gender expression, and sexual harassment) as dependent variables, and sexual orientation as the independent variable, and controlled for outness to peers. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .05,  $F(15, 26127) = 33.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$  – victimization based on sexual orientation:  $F(5, 8709) = 16.22$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ; victimization based on gender expression:  $F(5, 8709) = 21.10$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ; sexual harassment:  $F(5, 8709) = 32.19$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Given that outness was not related to feeling of school safety among bisexual students, we did not examine whether or not outness accounted for sexual orientation differences.
- 200 To account for outness at school, we performed a corresponding multiple analysis of covariance (MANCOVA), controlling for outness to staff, outness to peers, and outness to parents. The MANCOVA still revealed differences between students' levels of depression, self-esteem, and school belonging by sexual orientation. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .04,  $F(15, 25302) = 21.53$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . Univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$ : Depression:  $F(5, 8434) = 50.66$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ ; Self-esteem:  $F(5, 8434) = 50.38$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ ; School belonging:  $F(5, 8434) = 39.95$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Pairwise comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ .
- 201 Elia, J. P. (2010). Bisexuality and school culture: School as a prime site for bi intervention. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *10*(4), 452–471.
- 202 The Movement Advancement Project (MAP). 2014. *Understanding issues facing bisexual Americans*. Retrieved from [www.lgbtmap.org/policy-and-issue-analysis/bisexual-people](http://www.lgbtmap.org/policy-and-issue-analysis/bisexual-people).
- 203 A measure of gender nonconformity was constructed for cisgender males and females by comparing their gender identity (male or female) to their reported level of femininity or masculinity. Female students who reported their gender expression as anything other than "very," "mostly," or "somewhat" "feminine" were considered gender nonconforming, whereas male students who reported their gender expression as anything other than "very," "mostly," or "somewhat" "masculine" were considered gender nonconforming.
- 204 To compare feeling unsafe by gender nonconformity, chi-square tests were conducted; unsafe because of sexual orientation:  $\chi^2 = 81.37$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = .12$ ; unsafe because of gender expression:  $\chi^2 = 513.70$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = .31$ .
- 205 To compare experiences of victimization by gender nonconformity, a multivariate analysis of covariance was conducted with the two weighted variables (victimization based on: sexual orientation and gender expression) as dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .06,  $F(2, 5421) = 165.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .06$ . Both univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$ . Sexual orientation was significant:  $F(1, 5422) = 197.07$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ . The univariate effect for victimization due to gender expression was significant:  $F(1, 5422) = 321.41$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .06$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 206 Greytak, E. A., Kosciw, J. G., Villenas, C. & Giga, N. M. (2016). *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited, A Survey of U.S. Secondary School Students and Teachers*. New York: GLSEN.
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- 207 Only students who attended middle or high schools were included in this analysis. Students who attended elementary schools, K–12 schools, lower schools, upper schools, or another type of school were excluded.
- 208 To test differences between middle and high schools, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the anti-LGBT remarks variables (the three homophobic remarks variables, the negative remarks about gender expression, and negative remarks about transgender people variables) as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .00,  $F(5, 8676) = 7.07$ ,  $p < .001$ . Univariate effects were significant for the following remarks: "Gay" used in a negative way:  $F(1, 8680) = 31.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ , "No homo":  $F(1, 8680) = 9.71$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ , Other homophobic remarks:  $F(1, 8680) = 7.07$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ , Negative remarks about gender expression:  $F(1, 8680) = 10.28$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ . Negative remarks about transgender



- people was not significant at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 209 To test differences between middle and high schools, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with victimization based on sexual orientation and victimization based on gender expression as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .01,  $F(2, 8442) = 19.98, p < .001$ . Univariate effects were significant: Victimization based on sexual orientation:  $F(1, 8433) = 38.39, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . Victimization based on gender expression:  $F(1, 8443) = 29.21, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .00$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 210 To compare reports of discriminatory policies and practices by school level, 3 chi-square tests were conducted. Any discrimination, a combined variable of whether the student experienced any of the on 11 discriminatory actions assessed or reported that it happened to other students at their school, by school level was significant:  $\chi^2 = 15.41, df = 1, p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .04. Any discrimination experienced by student themselves, a combined variable of students reporting experiencing any of the discriminatory actions, by school level was significant:  $\chi^2 = 62.03, df = 1, p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .09. The chi-square for any discrimination of other students, a combined variable of whether students reported any discriminatory actions happening to other students at their school, by school level was not significant at  $p < .01$ .
- 211 To compare differences between middle and high school, a series of independent sample t-tests (equal variances not assumed) was conducted with each resource and support variable as the dependent variable. (For the purposes of this analyses and similar analyses in this section regarding school differences in availability and resources and supports, we examined only whether students reported that their school had a comprehensive, i.e., fully enumerated, anti-bullying/harassment policy or not. Therefore, students without a comprehensive policy might have had a partially enumerated policy, a generic policy, or no policy at all.) The results of the following analyses were significant — GSAs:  $t(1123.71) = -34.27, p < .001$ ; supportive staff:  $t(885.71) = -12.15, p < .001$ ; supportiveness of administration:  $t(942.99) = -3.43, p < .001$ ; inclusive curriculum:  $t(1036.85) = -6.49, p < .001$ ; textbooks/other assigned readings:  $t(1129.42) = -12.14, p < .001$ ; library resources:  $t(986.75) = -8.33, p < .001$ ; access to internet:  $t(981.82) = -12.21, p < .001$ ; comprehensive policy:  $t(1090.24) = -5.34, p < .001$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 212 Horn, S. S., & Nucci, L. (2003). The multidimensionality of adolescents' beliefs about and attitudes toward gay and lesbian peers in school. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 36*(2), 136–147.
- 213 To test difference across school type, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the anti-LGBT remarks variables (the three homophobic remarks variables, the negative remarks about gender expression, and the negative remarks about transgender people variables) as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .06,  $F(10, 20730) = 60.96, p < .001$ . All univariate effects were significant. "Gay" used in negative way:  $F(2, 10268) = 218.84, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$ . "No homo":  $F(2, 10268) = 50.31, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . Other homophobic remarks:  $F(2, 10268) = 243.31, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .05$ . Negative remarks about gender expression:  $F(2, 10268) = 6.80, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .00$ . Negative remarks about transgender people:  $F(2, 10268) = 36.97, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . Post hoc comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 214 To test difference across school type, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the two weighted victimization variables (victimization based on sexual orientation and based on gender expression) as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .01,  $F(4, 20168) = 14.24, p < .001$ . Univariate effects were significant – sexual orientation:  $F(2, 10093) = 27.36, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .01$ ; gender expression:  $F(2, 10093) = 12.94, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .00$ . Post hoc comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 215 To compare reports of discriminatory policies and practices by school type, 3 chi-square tests were conducted. All relationships were significant. Any discrimination, a combined variable of whether the student experienced the discriminatory action or witnessed it by school type:  $\chi^2 = 52.42, df = 2, p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .07. Any discrimination experienced by student, a combined variable of students reporting discrimination on 11 variables by school type:  $\chi^2 = 81.51, df = 2, p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .09. Composite of students witnessing discrimination by school type:  $\chi^2 = 48.23, df = 2, p < .001$ , Cramer's V = .07.
- 216 To compare differences across school type, a series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) was conducted with each resource and support variable as the dependent variable. The results of these analyses were significant at  $p < .001$  – GSAs:  $F(2, 10440) = 77.98, \eta_p^2 = .01$ ; supportive staff:  $F(2, 10017) = 96.58, \eta_p^2 = .02$ ; supportiveness of administration:  $F(2, 10013) = 93.56, \eta_p^2 = .02$ ; comprehensive policy:  $F(2, 10431) = 15.09, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ; inclusive curriculum:  $F(2, 10389) = 105.80, \eta_p^2 = .02$ ; textbooks/other assigned readings:  $F(2, 10405) = 17.73, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ; library resources:  $F(2, 10408) = 13.76, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ; access to Internet:  $F(2, 10353) = 64.01, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . Post hoc comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
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- 218 National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. (2016) *A Closer Look at the Charter School Movement: Charter Schools, Students, and Management Organizations, 2015–2016*. Washington, D.C.: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.
- 219 Greytak, E. A., Kosciw, J. G., Villenas, C. & Giga, N. M. (2016). *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited, A Survey of U.S. Secondary School Students and Teachers*. New York: GLSEN.
- 220 To compare differences in frequency of hearing biased remarks by charter school, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. No significant differences were found at  $p < .01$ .
- 221 To compare differences in experiences of victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression by charter school, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. No significant differences were found at  $p < .01$ .
- 222 To compare feeling unsafe based on sexual orientation and gender expression by charter school, chi-square tests were conducted. Sexual orientation:  $\chi^2 = 7.29, df = 1, p < .01$ , Cramer's V = .03. Students in charter schools were less likely to feel unsafe due to their sexual orientation than students in other public schools. The chi-square for gender expression was not significant at  $p < .01$ .
- 223 To compare reports of experiencing anti-LGBT discriminatory policies and practices by charter school, a series of chi-square tests were conducted. Any Discrimination:  $\chi^2 = 7.83, df = 1, p < .01$ , Cramer's V = .03. Discrimination Against Other Students:  $\chi^2 = 8.71, df = 1, p < .01$ , Cramer's V = .03. There were no differences between charter schools and other schools based on personal experiences of discrimination.
- 224 To compare supportive administration by charter school, a univariate analysis was conducted:  $F(1, 8947) = 6.27, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .00$ . Given the small effect size, these differences were not considered meaningful.
- 225 To compare access to LGBT-related resources by charter school, a series of chi-square tests were conducted. LGBT-inclusive curriculum:  $\chi^2 = 11.70, df = 1, p < .01$ , Cramer's V = .04. Students in charter schools were more likely to have access to LGBT-inclusive curriculum than students in other public schools. Library resources:  $\chi^2 = 28.29, df = 1, p < .01$ , Cramer's V = .07. Students in charter schools were less likely to have access library resources with LGBT information than students in other public schools. The chi-squares for the other LGBT-related resources were not significant at  $p < .01$ .
- 226 Of the 409 LGBTQ students in our survey who attended religious schools: 58.7% attended Catholic schools, 21.0% Christian non-denominational, 6.1% Episcopal, 3.9% Quaker, 3.9% Lutheran, 3.2% Jewish, and 3.2% another religion.
- 227 Students were placed into region based on the state they were from – Northeast: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, DC; South: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia; Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin; West: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.

- 228 To test difference across region, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the anti-LGBT remarks variables (the three homophobic remarks variables, the negative remarks about gender expression variable, and the negative remarks about transgender people variable) as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .03,  $F(15, 31320) = 19.21$ ,  $p < .001$ . Univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$ : "gay" used in negative way:  $F(3, 10442) = 59.19$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ; "no homo":  $F(3, 10442) = 51.33$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ; other homophobic remarks:  $F(3, 10445) = 50.36$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ; negative remarks about gender expression:  $F(3, 10442) = 14.51$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ ; negative remarks about transgender people:  $F(3, 10442) = 38.37$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . Post hoc comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. "Gay" used in a negative way: all regional differences were statistically significant; "no homo": all regional differences were statistically significant except Midwest and West; other homophobic remarks: all regional differences were statistically significant except Northeast and West; negative remarks about gender expression: all regional differences were statistically significant except Northeast and West, South and Midwest, and Midwest and West; negative remarks about transgender people: all regional differences were statistically significant except Northeast and West.
- 229 To test difference across region, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the two weighted victimization variables (victimization based on sexual orientation and based on gender expression) as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .01,  $F(6, 20322) = 18.21$ ,  $p < .001$ . Univariate effects were significant – sexual orientation:  $F(3, 10164) = 36.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ; gender expression:  $F(3, 10164) = 19.52$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . Post hoc comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. Sexual orientation: all regional differences were statistically significant except Midwest and West. Gender expression: all regional differences were statistically significant except Northeast and West, South and Midwest, and Midwest and West.
- 230 To compare reports of experiencing discriminatory policies and practices by region, a chi-square test was conducted using the variable of personally experiencing any of the types of anti-LGBT discrimination asked about in the survey:  $\chi^2 = 269.61$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .17$ . Post hoc comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ . All regional differences were statistically significant except Northeast and West.
- 231 To compare reports of discriminatory policies and practices against other students by region, a chi-square test was conducted using the variable of any other students in their school experiencing any of the types of anti-LGBT discrimination asked about in the survey:  $\chi^2 = 209.21$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .16$ . Post hoc comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ . All regional differences were statistically significant except Northeast and West.
- 232 To compare differences across regions a series of one-way analysis of variances were conducted with each resource and support variable as the dependent variable. The results of these analyses were significant at  $p < .01$  – GSAs:  $F(3, 10518) = 243.66$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ ; supportive staff:  $F(3, 10088) = 162.86$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ ; supportiveness of administration:  $F(3, 10083) = 133.44$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ ; comprehensive policy:  $F(3, 10482) = 122.71$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ ; inclusive curriculum:  $F(3, 10473) = 71.42$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ; textbooks/other assigned readings:  $F(3, 9297) = 14.17$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ; library resources:  $F(3, 6814) = 57.1$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ ; access to Internet:  $F(3, 6556) = 57.73$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ . Post hoc comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. GSA: all regional differences were statistically significant; Supportive Staff: all regional differences were statistically significant; Supportive Administration: all regional differences were statistically significant; Comprehensive policy: all regional differences were statistically significant; Inclusive Curriculum: all regional differences were statistically significant; Textbooks: all regional differences were statistically significant except Northeast and West, South and Midwest, and Midwest and West; Library Resources: all regional differences were statistically significant except Midwest and West; Access to Internet: all regional differences were statistically significant except Midwest and West.
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- 238 To test difference across school locale, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the anti-LGBT remarks variables (the three homophobic remarks variables, the negative remarks about gender expression variable, and negative remarks about transgender people variable) as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .03,  $F(10, 20736) = 35.72$ ,  $p < .001$ . Univariate effects were significant at  $p < .001$ : "gay" used in negative way:  $F(2, 10373) = 125.93$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ; "no homo":  $F(2, 10373) = 14.46$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ ; other homophobic remarks:  $F(2, 10373) = 142.98$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ ; negative remarks about gender expression:  $F(2, 10373) = 10.13$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ ; negative remarks about transgender people:  $F(2, 10373) = 15.82$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ . Post hoc comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . "Gay" used in a negative way and other homophobic remarks: all locale differences were statistically significant; "no homo": all locale differences were statistically significant except urban and rural/small town; negative remarks about gender expression: only rural/small town and urban were statistically different; negative remarks about transgender people: all locale differences were statistically significant except urban and suburban. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 239 To test difference across school locale, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the two weighted victimization variables (victimization based on sexual orientation and based on gender expression) as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .01,  $F(4, 20184) = 29.77$ ,  $p < .001$ . Univariate effects were significant – sexual orientation:  $F(2, 10094) = 52.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ; gender expression:  $F(2, 10094) = 38.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ . Post hoc comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . For both sexual orientation and gender expression victimization: all locale differences were statistically significant except urban and suburban. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 240 To compare reports of experiencing discriminatory policies and practices by locale, a chi-square test was conducted using the variable of personally experiencing any of the types of anti-LGBT discrimination asked about in the survey:  $\chi^2 = 142.43$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .12$ . Post hoc comparisons were considered at  $p < .05$ . Rural/small town was significantly different from urban and suburban. No other differences were found.
- 241 To compare reports of discriminatory policies and practices against other students by region, a chi-square test was conducted using the variable of any other students in their school experiencing any of the types of anti-LGBT discrimination asked about in the survey:  $\chi^2 = 106.63$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .11$ . All locale differences were statistically significant.

- 242 To compare differences across locale, a series of one-way analysis of variances were conducted with each resource and support variable as the dependent variable. The results of these analyses were significant at  $p < .001$  – GSAs:  $F(2, 10444) = 449.98$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .08$ ; supportive staff:  $F(2, 10020) = 247.31$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ ; supportiveness of administration:  $F(2, 10015) = 108.65$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ; comprehensive policy:  $F(2, 10413) = 31.34$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ; inclusive curriculum:  $F(2, 10402) = 86.54$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ; access to Internet:  $F(2, 10357) = 31.67$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ; textbooks/other assigned readings:  $F(2, 9237) = 7.11$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ; library resources:  $F(2, 10445) = 6.25$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ . Post hoc comparisons were considered at  $p < .01$ . For all resources, rural/small town was significantly lower than urban and than suburban. For inclusive curriculum, suburban was also lower than urban. For all other resources, there were no significant differences between urban and suburban. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 243 Although we have been collecting NSCS data since 1999, the first survey differed slightly from all subsequent surveys in the comprehensiveness of the survey questions and in the methods. Thus, we did not include it in these over-time comparisons. Even though the survey is slightly modified with each installment to reflect new or emerging concerns about school climate for LGBTQ students, it has remained largely the same and has used virtually the same data collection methods since 2001.
- 244 We did not include frequencies of hearing negative transgender remarks in these over time analyses because there were only three time points, and thus, it would be more difficult to discern any trend in the data.
- 245 To test differences across years in use of anti-LGBT language and intervention in the use of this language, a series of one-way analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) were performed. Given certain demographic differences among the samples, we controlled for participation in a community group or program for LGBT youth (“youth group”), age, racial/ethnic group, gender, sexual orientation, and method of taking the survey (paper vs. Internet version). These individual-level covariates were chosen based on preliminary analysis that examined what school characteristics and personal demographics were most predictive of survey year membership. Because there were more cases in 2015 and 2013 that were missing on demographic information, we also included a dummy variable controlling for missing demographics. Because of the large sample size for all years combined, a more restrictive  $p$ -value was used:  $p < .001$ .
- 246 To test differences across years in the use of homophobic remarks, an ANCOVA was performed, controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years. The main effect for Survey Year was significant, indicating mean differences across years:  $F(7, 43574) = 179.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ . Post-hoc group comparisons among years indicated 2015 was significantly lower than all years ( $p < .001$ ).
- 247 To test differences across years in the use of expressions like “that’s so gay,” an ANCOVA was performed, controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years. The main effect for Survey Year was significant, indicating mean differences across years:  $F(7, 43592) = 465.49$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ . Post-hoc group comparisons among years indicated 2015 was lower than all other years ( $p < .001$ ).
- 248 To test differences across years in the use of “no homo,” an ANCOVA was performed, controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years. The main effect for Survey Year was significant, indicating mean differences across years:  $F(3, 34008) = 223.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Post-hoc group comparisons among years indicated 2015 was lower than 2013 and 2011 but not 2009 ( $p < .001$ ).
- 249 To test differences across years in the use of negative remarks about gender expression, an ANCOVA was performed, controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years. The mean of the two gender expression variables (negative remarks related to being “too masculine” and “too feminine”) was computed to test across years. The main effect for Survey Year was significant, indicating mean differences across years:  $F(5, 42758) = 53.91$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . Post-hoc group comparisons among years indicated 2015 was higher than 2013, lower than 2011, 2009, 2007, and 2005 ( $p < .001$ ), and lower than 2003 at  $p = .001$ .
- 250 To test differences across years in the number of students in school who make homophobic remarks, an ANCOVA was performed, controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years. The main effect for Survey Year was significant:  $F(7, 43183) = 305.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ . Post-hoc group comparisons indicated that the mean for 2015 was lower than for all other years.
- 251 To test differences across years in the number of students in school who make negative remarks about gender expression, an ANCOVA was performed, controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years as well as the frequency of hearing these remarks. The main effect for Survey Year was significant:  $F(6, 40482) = 9.09$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ . Post-hoc group comparisons indicated that the mean in 2015 did not differ from 2013 but was significantly lower than all prior years.
- 252 To test differences across years in the frequency of hearing biased remarks from school staff, ANCOVAs were performed controlling for demographic and method differences with each of the two dependent variables: frequency of hearing homophobic remarks and frequency of hearing negative remarks about gender expression from school staff. Regarding homophobic remarks, the main effect for Survey Year was significant:  $F(7, 43573) = 42.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . Post-hoc group comparisons indicated that the mean in 2015 was significantly lower than those in all years but 2013. Regarding remarks about gender expression, the main effect for Survey Year was significant:  $F(6, 42532) = 21.97$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ . Post-hoc group comparisons indicated that the mean in 2015 was significantly higher than all prior years except for 2003 and 2005, where there were no significant differences.
- 253 Mean differences in intervention re: homophobic remarks was examined using analysis of covariance, controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years. Regarding student intervention, the main effect for Survey Year was significant:  $F(7, 43391) = 26.55$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ . The mean in 2015 was significantly higher than all prior years except 2003 and 2001, where there were no significant differences. For staff intervention, the main effect for Survey Year was also significant:  $F(7, 36509) = 7.04$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ . The mean in 2015 was significantly lower than in 2013 and 2011, but not different from other years. However, the effect size for both effects was quite small.
- 254 Mean differences in intervention re: negative remarks about gender expression were examined using a series of analyses of covariance (ANCOVA), controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years. Regarding student intervention, the main effect for Survey Year was significant:  $F(6, 40816) = 39.78$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . The mean in 2015 was higher than 2013 and 2011, lower than 2007, and not different from other years. For staff intervention, the main effect for Survey Year was also significant:  $F(6, 31960) = 59.07$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . The mean was significantly lower in 2015 than all prior years.
- 255 To test differences across years in the experiences of victimization based on sexual orientation, a multivariate analysis of covariance was conducted with the three harassment/assault based on sexual orientation variables as dependent variables, controlling for demographic and method differences across years. The multivariate results were significant: Pillai’s Trace = .06,  $F(21, 129669) = 65.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Univariate effects were considered at  $p < .001$ .
- 256 To test differences across years in the experiences of victimization based on gender expression, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted with the three harassment/assault based on gender expression variables as dependent variables, controlling for demographic and method differences. The multivariate results were significant: Pillai’s Trace = .04,  $F(21, 126870) = 74.80$ ,  $p < .001$ . Univariate effects were considered at  $p < .001$ .
- 257 Mean differences in reporting victimization to school personnel was examined using an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years. The main effect for Survey Year was significant:  $F(6, 31599) = 14.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ . The mean in 2015 was not statistically different from 2013, higher than 2011 to 2005, and not different from 2003.
- 258 Mean differences in the effectiveness of staff intervention re: victimization was examined using an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years. The main effect for Survey Year was significant:  $F(5, 12427) = 5.66$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ . The mean in 2015 was not statistically different from 2013 or 2007, but was lower than all other years.

- 259 To test differences across years, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with the GSA variable as the dependent variable, controlling for demographic and method differences across survey years. The univariate effect for Survey Year was significant:  $F(7, 43575) = 110.67, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . Post-hoc group comparisons were considered at  $p < .001$ . The percentage in 2015 was higher than all prior years.
- 260 In 2001, students were asked a question about whether there were any supportive school personnel in their school. In 2003 and beyond, we asked a Likert-type question about the number of supportive school personnel. In order to include 2001 in the analyses, we created a comparable dichotomous variable for the other survey years. To test differences across all years, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with the dichotomous variable of having any supportive educators as the dependent variable, controlling for demographic and method differences across survey years. The univariate effect for Survey Year was significant:  $F(7, 42769) = 402.83, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$ . The percentage in 2013 was greater than in all previous years. To test differences in the number of supportive school personnel (in 2003 and beyond), we tested the mean difference on the full variable. The main effect for Survey Year was significant:  $F(6, 41933) = 377.00, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .05$ . Post-hoc group comparisons were considered at  $p < .001$ . The mean number of supportive educators was higher in 2015 than in all prior years.
- 261 To test differences across years in curricular resources, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted with four dependent variables (inclusion of LGBT-related topics in textbooks, Internet access to LGBT-related information/resources through school computers, positive curricular representations of LGBT topics, LGBT-related library materials), controlling for demographic and method differences across survey years. The multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .03,  $F(28, 172836) = 31.73, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . Univariate effects indicated significant difference across years for all four resources – curricular representations:  $F(7, 43209) = 101.73, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .02$ ; textbooks:  $F(7, 43209) = 53.64, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .01$ ; library:  $F(7, 43209) = 10.32, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ; Internet access:  $F(7, 43209) = 99.02, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . Post-hoc comparisons by survey year were considered at  $p < .001$ .
- 262 To test differences across years in the percentage of students reporting a school harassment/assault policy, three ANCOVAs were performed controlling for demographic and method differences with the three dependent variables: any type of policy, partially enumerated policy and comprehensive policy. The main effect for Survey Year for any type of policy was significant, indicating mean differences across years:  $F(6, 42730) = 520.44, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .07$ . The main effect for Survey Year for having a partially enumerated policy was also statistically significant  $F(5, 41879) = 17.74, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .00$ . The main effect for Survey Year for having a comprehensive policy was also statistically significant  $F(5, 41879) = 28.26, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .00$ . For any type of policy, 2015 was significantly different from 2013 at  $p < .01$  and significantly different from all other years at  $p < .001$ . For partially enumerated policies, 2015 was significant higher than 2009 and 2007 ( $p < .001$ ) and not different from other years. For fully enumerated policies, 2015 was not different from 2013 and higher than all other years.
- 263 To test differences across years, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with the student acceptance variable as the dependent variable. In order to account for differences in sampling methods across years, controlling for demographic and method differences across years. The main effect for Survey Year was significant:  $F(6, 33654) = 245.78, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . Post-hoc group comparisons were considered at  $p < .001$ . Student acceptance was higher in 2015 and 2013 than all prior years, and was not different between 2009 and 2011.
- 264 A variety of strategies were used to target LGBTQ adolescents via Facebook ads: ads were sent to 13 to 18 year-olds who indicated on their profile that they were a female seeking other females, a male seeking other males, or a male or female who was seeking both males and females; ads were also shown to 13 to 18 year-olds who used the words lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer somewhere in their profile or who indicated that they were interested in causes, events, or organizations specifically related to LGBTQ community or topics. In order to be included in the final sample, respondents had to have identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer or as a sexual orientation or gender that would fall under the LGBTQ “umbrella” (e.g., pansexual, genderqueer).
- 265 The 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey documents ways in which high school students who identify as LGB differ from students who engage in same-sex behavior but do not identify as LGB.  
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- 267 Hispanic/Latino and Middle Eastern/Arab American categories were considered ethnicities as opposed to races, and thus students selecting either of those categories were coded as such, regardless of race (e.g., student selecting “African American” and “Latino/a” were coded as “Latino/a”).
- 268 Musu-Gillette, L., Robinson, J., McFarland, J., KewalRamani, A., Zhang, A., & Wilkinson-Flicker, S. (2016). *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2016* (NCES 2016-007). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC.
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