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ABSTRACT

This report presents findings from the 2001 National School Climate Survey related to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students' experiences and feelings of safety in school. A total of 904 LGBT students from 48 states and the District of Columbia participated. Results indicated that the overwhelming majority of students heard homophobic remarks, and faculty and staff contributed to the problem by making comments or failing to intervene when necessary. A large percentage of LGBT students (83.2) reported name calling, threats, and other forms of verbal abuse. Verbal, sexual, and physical harassment were common experiences for LGBT students of color and for female students, and the abuse was often compounded by racism and sexism. The majority of LGBT students reported feeling unsafe at school, and they were likely to skip classes or even days of school out of fear for personal safety. Transgender students were the least likely to feel their school communities were places of safety. Many schools failed to recognize the abuse faced by LGBT students, and as a result, resources and supportive personnel were rare. However, where resources and support were available (e.g., gay-straight alliances), a statistically significant number of LGBT students felt a greater sense of belonging at school. A copy of the survey is attached. (SM)

THE RESULTS FROM THIS 2001 National School Climate Survey echo the findings from our 1999 survey: for many of our nation's LGBT youth, school can be an unsafe and even dangerous place. School is where homophobic remarks can be frequently heard, often by faculty and staff. The majority of the youth in our survey reported being verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation or their gender expression and a large number of youth reported experiencing incidents of physical harassment, physical assault and sexual harassment. The findings from this survey also demonstrate that transgender students feel particularly vulnerable at school.

GLSEN's 2001 National School Climate Survey has also documented that certain schools are providing resources that can improve the quality of life for LGBT students. Some of the youth reported that their schools have gay-straight alliances and that LGBT people, history and events are being mentioned in classroom curricula. Nevertheless, the number of youth reporting such resources is far outweighed by the number of youth reporting acts of harassment or victimization. Perhaps most importantly, our results document that more work needs to be done to make all of our nation's schools safe for all students.

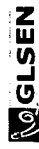
The complete survey may be obtained either by calling GLSEN's Research Dept. at (212) 727-0135 or by visiting the News section of www.glsen.org.

ABOUT GLSEN

GLSEN is the largest national network of parents, students, educators and others working to end anti-LGBT bias in K-12 schools. Established nationally in 1995, the chapter-based organization has emerged as a leading voice for safety and equality in America's systems of education.

GLSEN'S VISION

GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.



GLSEN National Headquarters 121 West 27th Street, Suite 804 New York, NY 10001
P: (212) 727-0135 F: (212) 727-0254 E: glsen@glsen.org Web: www.glsen.org

The National School Climate Survey

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students and their Experiences in Schools

FIRST CONDUCTED IN 1999, the National School Climate Survey is the only national survey to document the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students in America's high schools. It examines the prevalence of school-based harassment and victimization, the frequency with which LGBT students hear homophobic language, and the factors that contribute to or detract from an overall feeling of comfort and safety.

In 2001, GLSEN nearly doubled the sample of the original study. This year, a total of 904 LGBT youth from 48 states and the District of Columbia completed the survey. In order to create a more representative sample of all LGBT youth in schools, GLSEN employed two methods of obtaining participants. In the first, youth were accessed through community based groups

or service organizations serving LGBT youth, which were randomly selected from a list of over 200 such groups nationwide. Each group was then invited to participate and surveys were subsequently sent for youth to complete. The National School Climate Survey was also made available on the internet via GLSEN's website. Notices about the online survey were posted on LGBT youth-oriented listservs and electronic bulletin boards, and were emailed to GLSEN chapters and youth advocacy organizations. Data collection through community-based groups occurred from the end of May to the middle of August 2001. Data collection through the online version occurred from June to the middle of August 2001.

Additional information about methodology and demographics, as well as full results, are available online at www.glsen.org.

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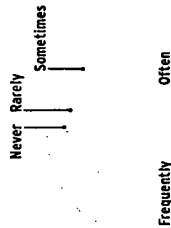
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KEY FINDINGS

How often have you heard homophobic remarks (such as "faggot," "dyke" or "queer")?



HOMOPHOBIC REMARKS

As in 1999, the overwhelming majority of LGBT students reported hearing homophobic remarks: faculty and staff contributed to the problem either by making homophobic comments themselves or failing to intervene when they heard students making them.

- 84.3% of LGBT students reported hearing homophobic remarks, such as "faggot" or "dyke," frequently or often
- 90.8% reported hearing the expression "that's so gay," or "you're so gay," frequently or often
- 23.6% reported hearing homophobic remarks from faculty or school staff at least some of the time
- 81.8% reported that faculty or staff never intervened or intervened only some of the time when present when homophobic remarks were made

HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT

The study showed that verbal, sexual and physical harassment are common experiences for LGBT students. For LGBT youth of color, and for female students, this abuse is often compounded by racism and sexism.

- In the past year:
 - 83.2% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed (name calling, threats, etc.) because of their sexual orientation
 - 48.3% of LGBT students of color reported being verbally harassed because of both their sexual orientation and their race/ethnicity
 - 65.4% of LGBT students reported being sexually harassed (sexual comments, inappropriately touched, etc.)
 - 74.2% of lesbian and bisexual young women reported being sexually harassed
 - 73.7% of transgender students reported being sexually harassed
 - 41.9% of LGBT students reported being physically harassed (being shoved, pushed, etc.) because of their sexual orientation
 - 21.1% of LGBT students reported being physically assaulted (being punched, kicked, injured with a weapon) because of their sexual orientation
 - 31.3% of LGBT students reported experiencing physical harassment based on their gender expression
 - 13.7% of LGBT students reported experiencing physical assault based on their gender expression

FEELING SAFE IN SCHOOL

The majority of LGBT students reported feeling unsafe at school, and they were likely to skip class or even days of school out of fear for personal safety. Transgender students were the least likely to feel their school communities were places of safety.

- 68.6% of LGBT students reported feeling unsafe in their school because of their sexual orientation
- 89.5% of transgender students reported feeling unsafe based on their gender expression
- 31.6% of LGBT students had skipped a class at least once in the past month because they felt unsafe based on sexual orientation
- 30.9% had missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe based on sexual orientation

LGBT students attending public, private and parochial schools felt varying degrees of safety based on sexual orientation:

- 70.4% of public school students reported feeling unsafe
 - 65% of private religious school students reported feeling unsafe
 - 51.2% of private secular school students reported feeling unsafe
- Similarly, LGBT students from urban, suburban and rural schools felt varying degrees of safety based on sexual orientation:
- 62.2% of students from urban schools reported feeling unsafe
 - 70.7% of students from suburban schools reported feeling unsafe
 - 75.9% of students from rural schools reported feeling unsafe

LGBT RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS IN SCHOOL

Many schools fail to recognize the abuse faced by LGBT students. As a result, resources and supportive personnel are rare. Yet, where available, a statistically significant number of LGBT students felt a greater sense of belonging at school.

- 80.6% of students reported that there were no positive portrayals of LGBT people, history or events in any of their classes
- 38.1% of students who said they had positive portrayals of LGBT people, history or events in their classes were more likely to feel they belonged in the school than those who did not (38.1% versus 29.0%)
- 39.7% of students reported that there were no teachers or school personnel who were supportive of LGBT students at their school
- Students who said that they had a supportive faculty or staff were more likely to feel they belonged in their school than those who did not (35.1% versus 25.6%)
- 31.1% of students reported that their schools had a gay-straight alliance (GSA) or another type of club that addresses LGBT student issues
- Students who said their schools had GSAs were less likely to feel unsafe in their schools than those who did not (62.9% versus 72%)

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Local School Climate Survey

School-Based Version



121 West 27th Street, Suite 804
New York, NY 10001
212-727-0135 / 212-727-0254 (fax)
glsen@glsen.org / www.glsen.org

Local School Climate Survey (School-Based Version)

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Two versions of the Local School Climate Survey were developed from GLSEN's National School Climate Survey to be used by local communities. This, the "School-based Version" was developed as a tool to be used to assess a particular school from within. Survey questions and answers reflect this.

Those wishing to use the Local School Climate Survey in a non-school-based capacity should view the "Community-based Version" available, along with the 1999 and 2000 National School Climate Surveys, online at www.glsen.org.

To send copies of results or get more information, please contact:

Joe Kosciw, Research Program Manager
GLSEN
121 West 27th Street, Suite 804
New York, NY 10001
212-727-0135 x100
212-727-0254 (fax)
jkosciw@glSEN.org
www.glsen.org

1. Survey Usage Guidelines

The Local School Climate Survey provides users with a printer-ready:

- Participant letter
- Survey Form

These may be used, according to the guidelines below, to assess your school's climate towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Additionally, this survey asks students questions about their experiences with racist and sexist discrimination and harassment.

1. In exchange for using the Local School Climate Survey (School and Community-based Versions) it is requested that coordinators send GLSEN a copy of the survey results.
2. Due to the number of local surveys potentially being conducted, GLSEN cannot tabulate Local School Climate Survey results for you. However, we're happy to provide you with the method we use. Please e-mail Joe Kosciw (jkosciw@glsen.org) to request more information.
3. GLSEN cannot pay to produce copies of the survey for local use. However, the attached PDF will provide you with a "printer-ready" version of the survey that you may reproduce on your own, provided that it remains intact.
4. The provided GLSEN Local School Climate Survey may be used free of charge, if used in its entirety. The survey may not be amended without expressed permission from GLSEN.
5. Any use of the Local School Climate Survey implies that you have read and agreed to these guidelines.

2. Tips and Considerations

Please see www.glsen.org for the original document, *Assessing Your School Climate (Section 4a)* in *The GLSEN Jump-Start*.

- o Depending on your school and school district, you may need additional permission to do a school-wide survey, if that's the route you've chosen. Your administrator will be able to tell you if you need permission from a district representative or your school's parent organization.
- o Your school administration may decide that you need parental permission from all participants. There are two types of parental permission that may be required: "active consent" and "passive consent." "Active consent" is when the parent must submit signed permission before their child can participate in the activity (an example of this is a field trip permission slip). "Passive consent" is when the parent is notified that the activity is going to happen, and it is up to the parent to notify the school if they don't want their child to participate. Make sure that you tell the administrator, parents and participants that the survey will be completely anonymous.
- o The survey begins with a sample letter that thanks participants for their responses, briefly explains the survey, and directs participants who have questions, want to learn more, or want to talk about their own experiences to the proper resources. It is up to your group to insert the names of the appropriate adult allies in your school. You also should provide the contact information of a community resource for LGBT youth, if one exists in your area, for students who may not feel comfortable talking to someone at school.

Sample Letter for the Local School Climate Survey

Dear Fellow Student,

Thank you for taking the time to respond to our School Climate Survey. We appreciate your participation.

The survey contains questions about our school, your background, and your experiences as a victim or observer of bias against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students, students of color and female students.

We are doing the survey so that we can determine our school's "climate": how comfortable students of different backgrounds feel in our school, how frequently offensive and hateful language is heard in our hallways, and how common it is for students to experience other forms of harassment. We want to work so that our school is a safe place for everyone. The information from the survey will tell us where our school may need improvement.

This survey is completely anonymous. Please *do not* write your name anywhere on the survey. Because it is anonymous, we hope that you will feel free to be completely honest when answering our questions.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact:

GSA Representative

GSA Advisor

If you want to talk with someone about your experiences in school, particularly if you feel unsafe or have been harassed or assaulted, please contact:

GSA Advisor

School Counselor

If you want to talk with someone about being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning, please contact:

School's GSA

School Counselor

Local LGBT Youth Support Group

National LGBT Youth Resource

Local School Climate Survey

Section A

This first set of questions is about homophobic remarks you may have heard at our school. Please circle the answer that best describes your experience at our school.

1.	How often do you hear the expression "That's so gay," or "You're so gay" in school?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
2.	How often have you heard other homophobic remarks used in school (such as "faggot," "dyke," "queer," etc.)?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
3.	How often do you hear these homophobic remarks from other students?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4.	Would you say that homophobic remarks are made by:	Most of the students		Some of the students	A few of the students	
5.	How often do you hear these homophobic remarks from teachers or school staff?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
6.	How often do you hear homophobic remarks in:					
	a) Classes	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	b) Hallways	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	c) Bathrooms	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	d) Locker Rooms	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	e) Buses	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	f) Athletic Field/Gym	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	g) Schoolyard or School Grounds	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	h) Cafeteria	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
7.	When you hear homophobic remarks, how often has a teacher or other school staff person been present?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	
8.	When homophobic remarks are made and a teacher or other school staff person is present, how often does the teacher or staff person intervene?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	
9.	When you hear homophobic remarks, how often does another student intervene?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	

Local School Climate Survey

Section B

This next set of questions is about racist remarks you may have heard at our school. Please circle the answer that best describes your experience at our school.

1.	How often have you heard racist remarks used in school (such as "nigger," "kike," "spic," "gook," etc.)?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
2.	How often do you hear racist remarks from other students?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
3.	Would you say that racist remarks are made by:	Most of the students		Some of the students	A few of the students	
4.	How often do you hear racist remarks from teachers or school staff?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
5.	How often do you hear racist remarks in:					
	a) Classes	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	b) Hallways	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	c) Bathrooms	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	d) Locker Rooms	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	e) Buses	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	f) Athletic Field/Gym	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	g) Schoolyard or School Grounds	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	h) Cafeteria	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
6.	When you hear racist remarks, how often has a teacher or other school staff person been present?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	
7.	When racist remarks are made and a teacher or other school staff person is present, how often does the teacher or staff person intervene?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	
8.	When you hear racist remarks, how often does another student intervene?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	

Local School Climate Survey

Section C

This set of questions is about sexist remarks you may have heard at our school. Please circle the answer that best describes your experience at our school.

1.	How often have you heard sexist remarks used in school (such as someone being called a "bitch" or comments about girls' bodies or talk of girls being inferior to boys)?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
2.	How often do you hear sexist remarks from other students?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
3.	Would you say that sexist remarks are made by:	Most of the students		Some of the students	A few of the students	
4.	How often do you hear sexist remarks from teachers or school staff?	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
5.	How often do you hear sexist remarks in:					
	a) Classes	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	b) Hallways	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	c) Bathrooms	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	d) Locker Rooms	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	e) Buses	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	f) Athletic Field/Gym	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	g) Schoolyard or School Grounds	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	h) Cafeteria	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
6.	When you hear sexist remarks, how often has a teacher or other school staff person been present?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	
7.	When sexist remarks are made and a teacher or other school staff person is present, how often does the teacher or staff person intervene?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	
8.	When you hear sexist remarks, how often does another student intervene?	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never	

Local School Climate Survey

Section D

This set of questions is about harassment or fights that you may have encountered at our school. For each question, please circle or check the answer that best describes your experience at our school.

1. In the past month, how many times have you skipped a class because you felt uncomfortable or unsafe in that class?

	0 times	1 time	2 or 3 times	4 or 5 times	6 or more times
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2. In the past month, how many days did you not go to school because you felt unsafe at school or on your way to school?

	0 times	1 day	2 or 3 days	4 or 5 days	6 or more days
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3. Do you feel unsafe at our school because of... (check all that apply)

- your sexual orientation
- your race or ethnicity
- your gender
- how you express your gender (how traditionally "masculine" or "feminine" you are in your appearance or in how you act)
- your religion
- because of a disability or because people think you have a disability

4. In the past year, how often have you been verbally harassed (name calling, threats, etc.) at our school because of...

	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
a) your sexual orientation?					
b) your gender?					
c) how you express your gender?					
d) your race or ethnicity?					
e) because of a disability or because people think you have a disability?					



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