

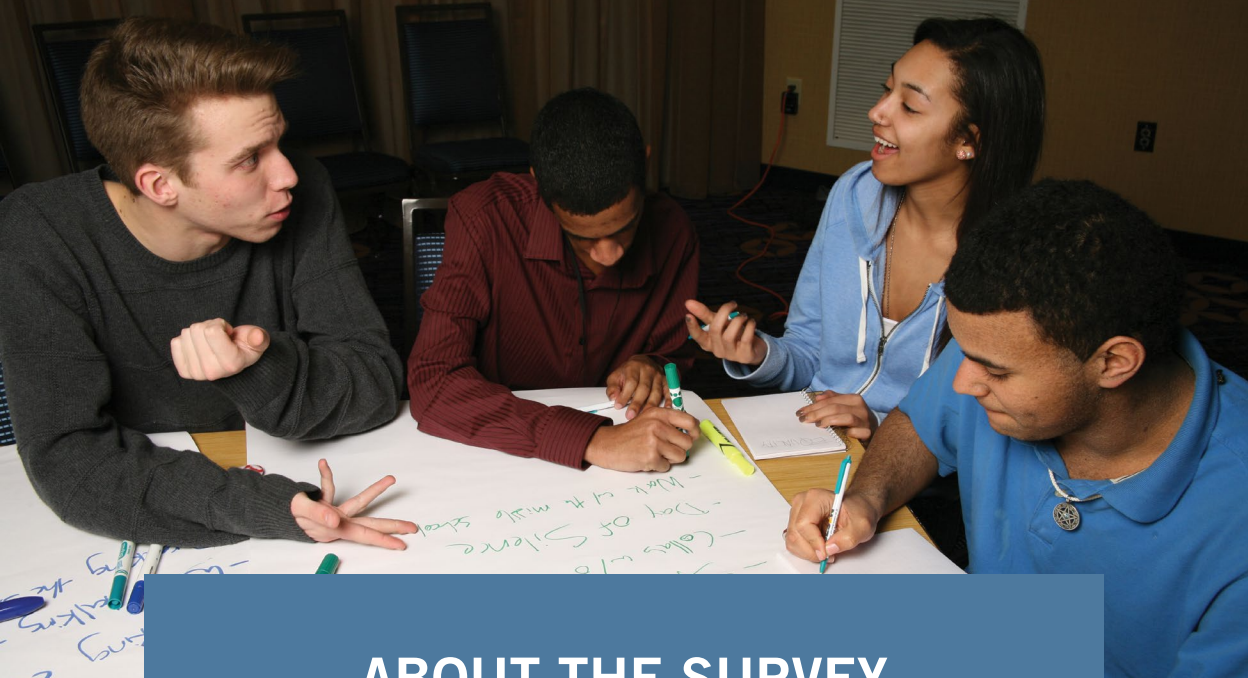


The 2019 National School Climate Survey

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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



ABOUT THE SURVEY

In 1999, GLSEN identified that little was known about the school experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth and that LGBTQ youth were nearly absent from national studies of adolescents. We responded to this national need for data by launching the first National School Climate Survey, and we continue to meet this need for current data by conducting the study every two years. Since then, the biennial National School Climate Survey has documented the unique challenges LGBTQ students face and identified interventions that can improve school climate. The study documents the prevalence of indicators of a hostile school climate for LGBTQ students, and explores the effects that a hostile school climate may have on LGBTQ students' educational outcomes and well-being. The study also examines the availability and the utility of LGBTQ-related school resources and supports that may offset the negative effects of a hostile school climate and promote a positive learning experience. In addition to collecting this critical data every two years, we also add and adapt survey questions to respond to the changing world for LGBTQ youth. For example, in the 2019 survey we included questions about the activities of LGBTQ-supportive student clubs. The National School Climate Survey remains one of the few studies to examine the school experiences of LGBTQ students nationally, and its results have been vital to GLSEN's understanding of the issues that LGBTQ students face, thereby informing our ongoing work to ensure safe and affirming schools for all.

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

Visit [glsen.org/nscc](https://www.glsen.org/nscc) for the full 2019 National School Climate Survey.

In our 2019 report, 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.

In addition we examine whether students report these experiences to school officials or their families, and how these adults addressed the problem. Further, we examine the impact of a hostile school climate on LGBTQ students' academic achievement, educational aspirations, and psychological well-being. We also examine how the school experiences of LGBTQ students vary by personal and community characteristics.

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

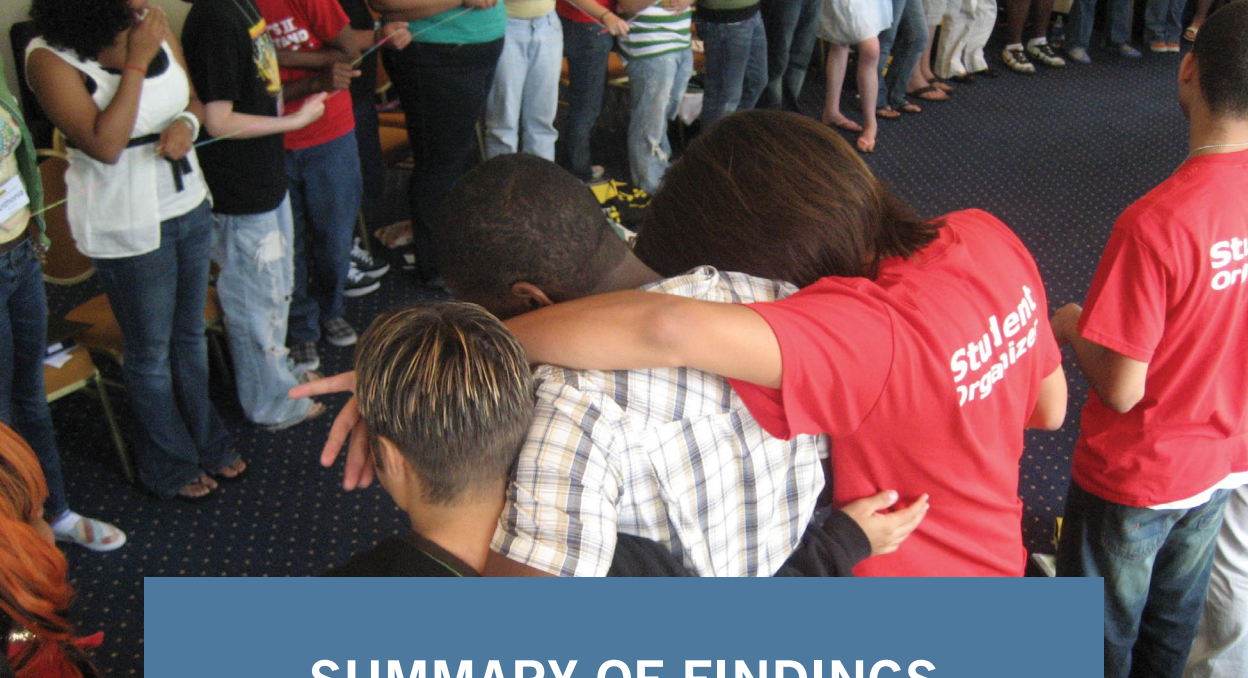
- GSAs (Gay-Straight Alliances or Gender and Sexuality Alliances) or similar clubs;
- Supportive and inclusive school policies, such as anti-bullying/harassment policies and transgender and nonbinary student policies;
- Supportive school staff; and
- Curricular resources that are inclusive of LGBTQ-related topics.

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

METHODS

The 2019 National School Climate Survey was conducted online from April through August 2019. 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 media sites, such as Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat. 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 16,713 students between the ages of 13 and 21. Students were from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and Guam. Just over two-thirds of the sample (69.2%) was White, two-fifths (41.6%) was cisgender female, and 40.4% identified as gay or lesbian. The average age of students in the sample was 15.5 years and they were in grades 6 to 12, with the largest numbers in grades 9, 10 and 11.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

HOSTILE SCHOOL CLIMATE

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

SCHOOL SAFETY

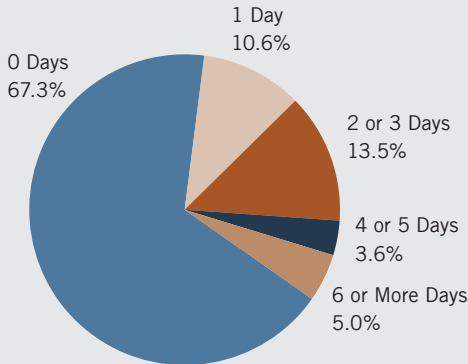
- 59.1% of LGBTQ students felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, 42.5% because of their gender expression, and 37.4% because of their gender.
- 32.7% of LGBTQ students missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable, 8.6% missed four or more days in the past month.
- Many avoided gender-segregated spaces in school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable: 45.2% avoided bathrooms and 43.7% avoided locker rooms.
- Most reported avoiding school functions (77.6%) and extracurricular activities (71.8%) because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Nearly a fifth of LGBTQ students (17.1%) reported having ever changed schools due to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable at school.

ANTI-LGBTQ REMARKS AT SCHOOL

- Almost all LGBTQ students (98.8%) heard “gay” used in a negative way (e.g., “that’s so gay”) at school; 75.6% heard these remarks frequently or often, and 91.8% reported that they felt distressed because of this language.

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



ANTI-LGBTQ REMARKS AT SCHOOL *(cont.)*

- 96.9% of LGBTQ students heard the phrase “no homo” at school, and 60.9% heard this phrase frequently or often.
- 95.2% of LGBTQ students heard other types of homophobic remarks (e.g., “dyke” or “faggot”); 54.4% heard this type of language frequently or often.
- 91.8% of LGBTQ students heard negative remarks about gender expression (not acting “masculine enough” or “feminine enough”); 53.2% heard these remarks frequently or often.
- 87.4% of LGBTQ students heard negative remarks specifically about transgender people, like “tranny” or “he/she;” 43.7% heard them frequently or often.
- 52.4% of students reported hearing homophobic remarks from their teachers or other school staff, and 66.7% of students reported hearing negative remarks about gender expression from teachers or other school staff.
- Less than one-fifth of LGBTQ students (13.7%) 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 (9.0%) reported that school staff intervened most of the time or always when overhearing negative remarks about gender expression.

HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT AT SCHOOL

The vast majority of LGBTQ students (86.3%) experienced harassment or assault based on personal characteristics, including sexual orientation, gender expression, gender, actual or perceived religion, actual or perceived race and ethnicity, and actual or perceived disability.

- 68.7% of LGBTQ students experienced verbal harassment (e.g., called names or threatened) at school based on sexual orientation, 56.9% based on gender expression, and 53.7% based on gender.
- 25.7% of LGBTQ students were physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved) in the past year based on sexual orientation, 21.8% based on gender expression, and 22.2% based on gender.
- 11.0% of LGBTQ students were physically assaulted (e.g., punched, kicked, injured with a weapon) in the past year based on sexual orientation, 9.5% based on gender expression, and 9.3% based on gender.
- A sizable number of LGBTQ students were also bullied or harassed at school based on other characteristics – 36.5% based on actual or perceived disability, 23.1% based on actual or perceived religion, and 21.4% based on actual or perceived race or ethnicity.
- 44.9% of LGBTQ students experienced electronic harassment in the past year (via text messages or postings on social media), often known as cyberbullying.
- 58.3% of LGBTQ students were sexually harassed (e.g., unwanted touching or sexual remarks) in the past year at school.

STUDENT REPORTING OF HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT INCIDENTS

- 56.6% 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.
- 60.5% of the students who did report an incident said that school staff did nothing in response or told the student to ignore it.

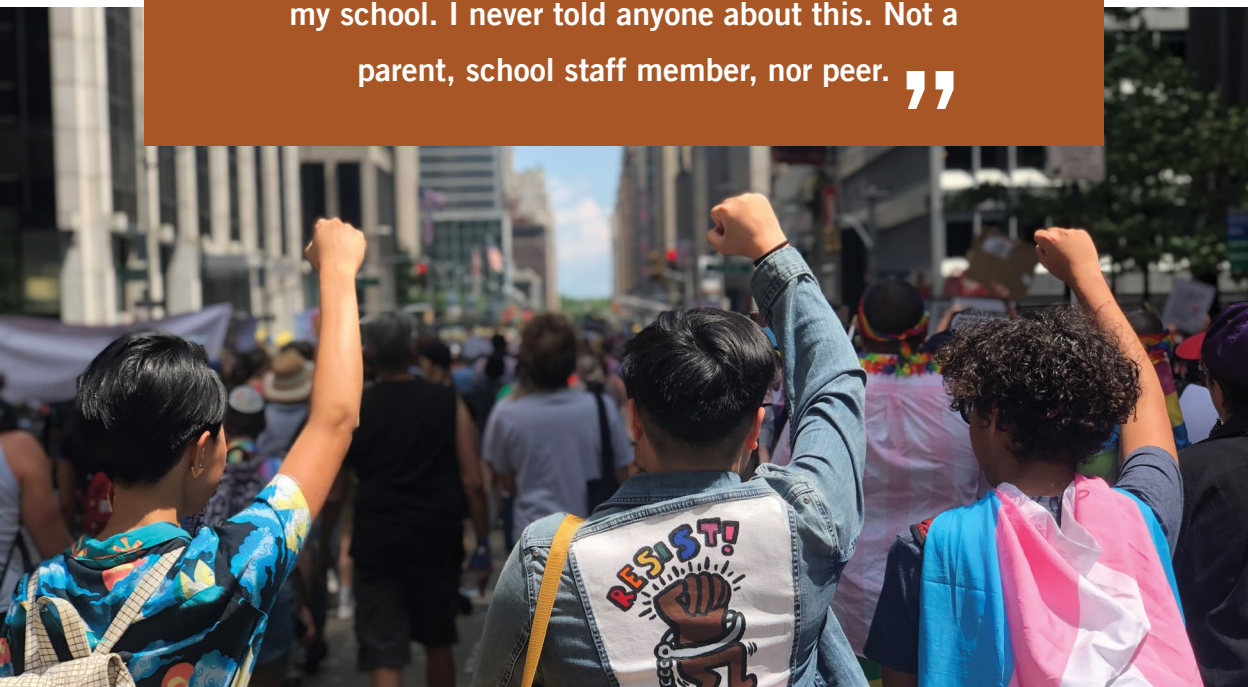
DISCRIMINATORY SCHOOL POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Most LGBTQ students (59.1%) reported personally experiencing any LGBTQ-related discriminatory policies or practices at school. Specifically, LGBTQ students reported being:

- Prevented from using bathrooms aligned with their gender identity: 28.4%.
- Disciplined for public displays of affection that were not similarly disciplined among non-LGBTQ students: 28.0%.

- Prevented from using locker rooms aligned with their gender identity: 27.2%.
- Prevented from using chosen names/pronouns: 22.8%.
- Prevented from wearing clothes considered “inappropriate” based on gender: 18.3%.
- Prohibited from discussing or writing about LGBTQ topics in school assignments: 16.6%.
- Prohibited from including LGBTQ topics in school extracurricular activities: 16.3%.
- Restricted from forming or promoting a GSA: 14.7%.
- Prevented from wearing clothing or items supporting LGBTQ issues: 10.7%.
- Prevented or discouraged from participating in school sports because they were LGBTQ: 10.2%.
- Prevented from attending a dance or function with someone of the same gender: 7.6%.
- Disciplined for simply identifying as LGBTQ: 3.0%.

“ I got rocks thrown at me and was beaten by kids at my school. I never told anyone about this. Not a parent, school staff member, nor peer. ”



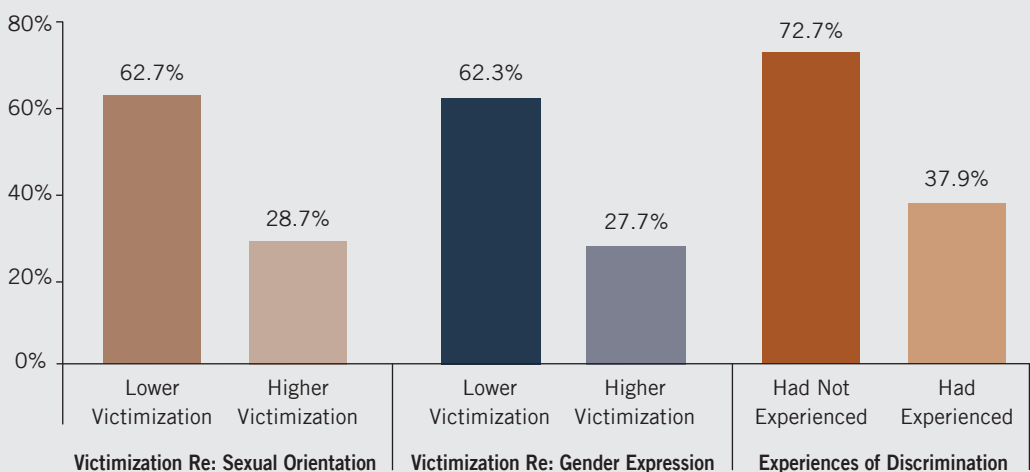
EFFECTS OF A HOSTILE SCHOOL CLIMATE

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 based on their sexual orientation:
 - Were nearly three times as likely to have missed school in the past month than those who experienced lower levels (57.2% vs. 21.7%);
 - Had lower grade point averages (GPAs) than students who were less often harassed (3.03 vs. 3.34);
 - Were nearly 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 (9.9% vs. 5.8%);
 - Were nearly twice as likely to have been disciplined at school (47.0% vs. 26.7%); and
 - Had lower self-esteem and school belonging and higher levels of depression.
- LGBTQ students who experienced higher levels of victimization based on their gender expression:
 - Were almost three times as likely to have missed school in the past month than those who experienced lower levels (59.0% vs. 21.8%);
 - Had lower GPAs than students who were less often harassed (2.98 vs. 3.36);
 - Were twice as likely to report that they did not plan to pursue any post-secondary education (e.g., college or trade school; 11.1% vs. 5.4%);
 - Were more likely to have been disciplined at school (46.8% vs. 27.2%); and
 - Had lower self-esteem and school belonging and higher levels of depression.
- Of the LGBTQ students who indicated that they were considering dropping out of school, a sizable percentage (42.2%) indicated that it was related to the harassment they faced at school.

School Belonging by Experiences of Victimization and Discrimination (Percentage of LGBTQ Students Demonstrating Positive School Belonging)





“ I sincerely hope that queer kids in future generations do not have to go through what I have been through and will most likely continue to suffer through. ”

EFFECTS OF DISCRIMINATION

- Compared to LGBTQ students who did not experience LGBTQ-related discrimination at school, those who experienced discrimination:
 - Were nearly three times as likely to have missed school in the past month (44.1% vs. 16.4%);
 - Had lower GPAs (3.14 vs. 3.39);
 - Were more likely to have been disciplined at school (40.2% vs. 22.6%); and
 - Had lower self-esteem and school belonging and higher levels of depression.
- Of the LGBTQ students who indicated that they were considering dropping out of school, a sizable percentage (30.1%) indicated that it was related to the hostile climate created by gendered school policies and practices.

LGBTQ-RELATED SCHOOL RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

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

GSA's (GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES/GENDER AND SEXUALITY ALLIANCES)

Availability and Participation

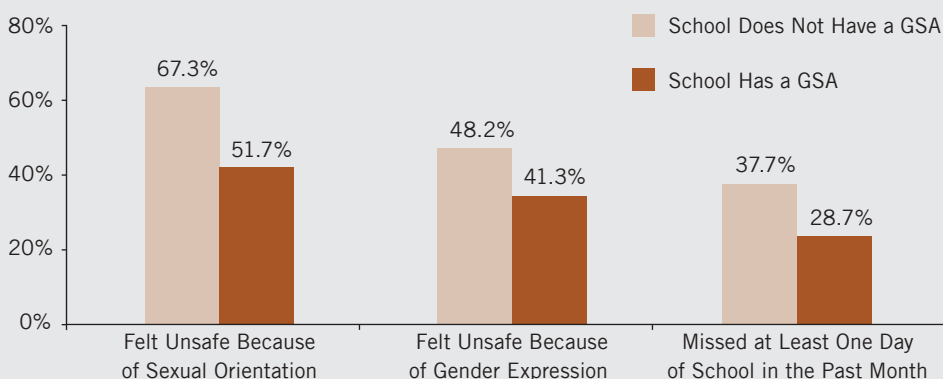
- Most LGBTQ students (61.6%) said that their school had a GSA or similar student club.
- Most LGBTQ students with a GSA at school reported participating in the club at some level, but more than a third (38.2%) had not.

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 (70.5% to 83.5%);
 - Were less likely to hear the phrase “no homo” often or frequently (57.4% vs. 66.4%);
 - Were less likely to hear homophobic remarks such as “fag” or “dyke” often or frequently (49.4% vs. 62.5%);

- Were less likely to hear negative remarks about gender expression often or frequently (49.3% vs. 59.5%);
- Were less likely to hear negative remarks about transgender people often or frequently (39.9% vs. 50.0%);
- Were more likely to report that school personnel intervened when hearing homophobic remarks — 16.4% vs. 9.4% reporting that staff intervened most of the time or always;
- Were less likely to feel unsafe regarding their sexual orientation (53.6% vs. 67.4%) and gender expression (40.2% vs. 46.0%);
- Were less likely to miss school because of safety concerns (28.4% vs. 39.6%);
- Experienced lower levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation and gender expression;
- Reported a greater number of supportive school staff and more accepting peers; and
- Felt greater belonging to their school community.

Presence of GSAs and LGBTQ Students' Feelings of Safety and Missing School



INCLUSIVE CURRICULAR RESOURCES

Availability

- Only 19.4% of LGBTQ students were taught positive representations of LGBTQ people, history, or events in their schools; 17.0% had been taught negative content about LGBTQ topics.
- Only 8.2% of students reported receiving LGBTQ-inclusive sex education.
- Just under half of students (48.9%) reported that they could find information about LGBTQ-related issues in their school library.
- Just over half of students with internet access at school (55.9%) reported being able to access LGBTQ-related information online via school computers.

Utility

- Compared to students in school without an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, LGBTQ students in schools with an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum:
 - Were less likely to hear “gay” used in a negative way often or frequently (59.2% vs. 79.8%);
 - Were less likely to hear homophobic remarks such as “fag” or “dyke” often or frequently (38.6% vs. 58.3%);
 - Were less likely to hear negative remarks about gender expression often or frequently (30.1% vs. 47.2%);
 - Were less likely to hear negative remarks about transgender people often or frequently (41.8% vs. 56.0%);
 - Were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation (44.4% vs. 62.7%) and gender expression (33.5% vs. 44.7%);
 - Experienced lower levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation and gender expression;

- Were less likely to miss school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (23.2% vs. 35.0%);
- Performed better academically in school (3.32 vs. 3.23 average GPA) and were more likely to plan on pursuing post-secondary education;
- Were more likely to report that their classmates were somewhat or very accepting of LGBTQ people (66.9% vs. 37.9%); and
- Felt greater belonging to their school community.

SUPPORTIVE EDUCATORS

Availability

- Almost all LGBTQ students (97.7%) could identify at least one staff member supportive of LGBTQ students at their school.
- Approximately two-thirds of students (66.3%) could identify at least six supportive school staff.
- Only 42.3% of students could identify 11 or more supportive staff.
- Just over two-fifths of students (42.4%) reported that their school administration was somewhat or very supportive of LGBTQ students.
- Over half of students (62.8%) had seen at least one Safe Space sticker or poster at their school (these stickers or posters often serve to identify supportive educators).

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“ My teachers are usually very kind, and four have openly defended me/LGBT rights. Two have given me serious emotional help and have made my life feel less terrible. ”

SUPPORTIVE EDUCATORS (cont.)

Utility

- Compared to LGBTQ students with no or few supportive school staff (0 to 5), students with many (11 or more) supportive staff at their school:
 - Were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation (44.8% vs. 74.2%) and less likely to feel unsafe because of their gender expression (33.6% vs. 51.3%);
 - Were less likely to miss school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (21.3% vs. 45.9%);
 - Had higher GPAs (3.34 vs. 3.14);
 - Were less likely to say they might not graduate high school and more likely to plan on pursuing post-secondary education; and
 - Felt greater belonging 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.

INCLUSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL POLICIES

Availability

- Although a majority of students (79.1%) had an anti-bullying policy at their school, only 13.5% of students reported that their school had a comprehensive policy (i.e., one that specifically enumerates both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression).
- Only 10.9% of LGBTQ students reported that their school or district had official policies or guidelines to support transgender or nonbinary students.

Utility

- LGBTQ students in schools with a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy:
 - Were less likely to hear “gay” used in a negative way often or frequently (63.4% vs. 77.6% of students with a generic policy and 79.0% of students with no policy);
 - Were less likely to hear the phrase “no homo” often or frequently (55.3% vs. 61.8% of students with a generic policy and 62.5% of students with no policy);

- Were less likely to hear other homophobic remarks such as “fag” or “dyke” often or frequently (43.9% vs. 55.7% of students with a generic policy and 58.8% of students with no policy);
 - Were less likely to hear negative remarks about gender expression often or frequently (42.5% vs. 54.7% of students with a generic policy and 56.5% of students with no policy);
 - Were less likely to hear negative remarks about transgender people often or frequently (35.4% vs. 44.5% of students with a generic policy and 47.5% of students with no policy);
 - Were more likely to report that staff intervened when hearing anti-LGBTQ remarks than those with a generic policy or no policy;
 - Experienced less anti-LGBTQ victimization than those with a generic policy or no policy; and
 - Were more likely to report victimization incidents to school staff and were more likely to rate school staff’s responses to such incidents as effective than those with a generic policy or no policy.
- Among transgender and nonbinary students, those in schools with transgender/nonbinary student policies or guidelines:
 - Were less likely to experience anti-LGBTQ discrimination in their school than transgender and nonbinary students in schools without such policies and guidelines. Specifically, they were:
 - Less likely to be prevented from using their name or pronoun of choice in school (18.8% vs. 44.9%);
 - Less likely to be prevented from using bathrooms aligned with their gender (26.7% vs. 53.6%);
 - Less likely to be prevented from using locker rooms aligned with their gender (25.6% vs. 50.7%); and
 - Less likely to be prevented from wearing clothes thought to be “inappropriate” based on gender (6.9% vs. 23.9%);
 - Were less likely to miss school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (36.5% vs. 42.4%) than transgender and nonbinary students in schools without such policies and guidelines; and
 - Felt greater belonging to their school community than transgender and nonbinary students in schools without such policies and guidelines.

CHANGES IN SCHOOL CLIMATE FOR LGBTQ STUDENTS OVER TIME

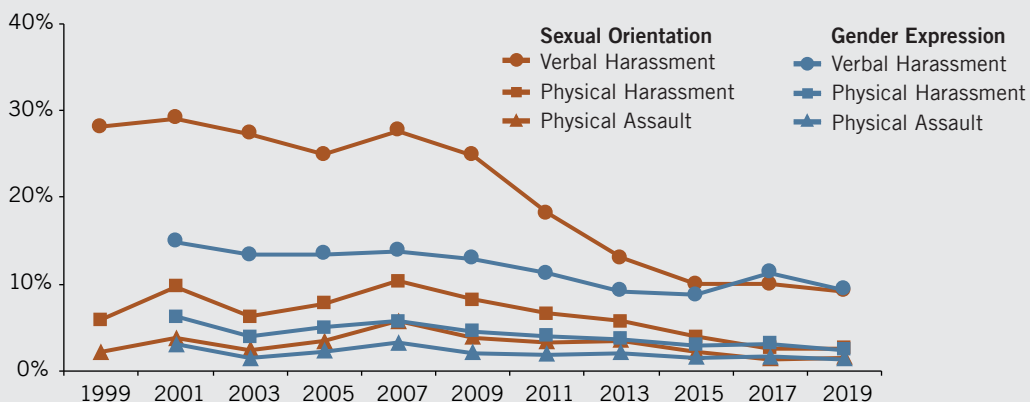
Although school climate for LGBTQ students has improved overall since our first installment of this survey in 1999, school remains quite hostile for many LGBTQ students. In 2019, we saw more positive changes than we had in the 2017 installment of this survey, but not as much positive change as in prior years.

CHANGES IN INDICATORS OF HOSTILE SCHOOL CLIMATE

Anti-LGBTQ Remarks

- The frequency with which LGBTQ students heard homophobic remarks like “fag” or “dyke” was lower in 2019 than in all prior years, and there was a general downward trend in hearing homophobic remarks from 2001 to 2015, but these remarks remained consistent between 2015 and 2017.
- The expression “that’s so gay” remains the most common form of anti-LGBTQ language heard by LGBTQ students, and its prevalence has been increasing from 2015 to 2019, after years of consistent decline.
- There was a sizable increase in the frequency of LGBTQ students hearing “no homo” at school in 2019, after a consistent pattern of decline between 2011 and 2017.
- Negative remarks about gender expression have decreased from 2017 to 2019.
- The frequency of hearing negative remarks about transgender people decreased between 2017 and 2019, after a steady increase between 2013 and 2017.
- After a steady decline in homophobic remarks from school staff between 2007 and 2013, there was no change from 2013 to 2017. In 2019, however, homophobic remarks from staff decreased once again.
- There had been an upward trend from 2013 to 2017 in the frequency of staff making negative remarks about gender expression, however these remarks decreased in 2019 to levels that are similar to our findings from 2015.

Frequency of Victimization Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression Over Time
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Event Frequently, Based on Estimated Marginal Means)





“ This was the most inclusive year at my school so far, but there is a tremendous amount of work to be done. ”

Harassment and Assault

- With regard to victimization based on sexual orientation:
 - After years of decline, the frequency of verbal harassment has not changed from 2015 to 2019; and
 - Frequencies of physical harassment resumed a pattern of decline in 2019 after no change occurred in 2017, and frequencies of physical assault resumed a pattern of decline in 2019 after no change occurred in 2015 and 2017.
- With regard to victimization based on gender expression:
 - Frequencies of verbal harassment resumed a pattern of decline in 2019, following an increase between 2015 and 2017; and
 - Physical harassment and assault continued a pattern of modest decline, and were lower in 2019 than all previous years.
- The frequency of LGBTQ students reporting victimization to school staff in 2019 was similar to 2017 and greater than nearly all other years; however, the frequency of students rating staff intervention as effective in 2019 has remained similar from 2013 to 2017, and is somewhat lower than prior years.

CHANGES IN EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION

- For all time points since we began asking about LGBTQ-related discrimination in 2013, over half of LGBTQ students experienced this type of discrimination at school. In 2019, students were less likely to experience any type of discrimination than in 2013 and 2017.
- For most specific types of LGBTQ-related discrimination, incidence was greatest in 2013, and for certain gender-specific forms of discrimination – including being prevented from using facilities aligned with one’s gender, and being prevented from using chosen name/pronouns – incidence was greatest in 2017. However, incidence for most types of discrimination was lower in 2019 than in previous years.

CHANGES IN AVAILABILITY OF LGBTQ-RELATED SCHOOL RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

Supportive Student Clubs (GSAs)

- The percentage of LGBTQ students reporting that they have a GSA has continued to increase since 2007, and was greater in 2019 than in all prior survey years.

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CHANGES IN AVAILABILITY OF LGBTQ-RELATED SCHOOL RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS *(cont.)*

Curricular Resources

- Overall, there has been little change in LGBTQ-related curricular resources over time.
 - Access to LGBTQ-related internet resources through school computers increased in 2019 and has steadily increased since 2007;
 - Access to LGBTQ-related books and library resources increased in 2019 and was higher than all previous years; and
 - The percentage of LGBTQ students who were taught positive LGBTQ-related content in class, as well as those with LGBTQ inclusion in textbooks and class resources, did not change in 2019 from 2017.
- The percentage being taught negative LGBTQ-related content in class increased between 2013 and 2015, and has not changed since 2015.

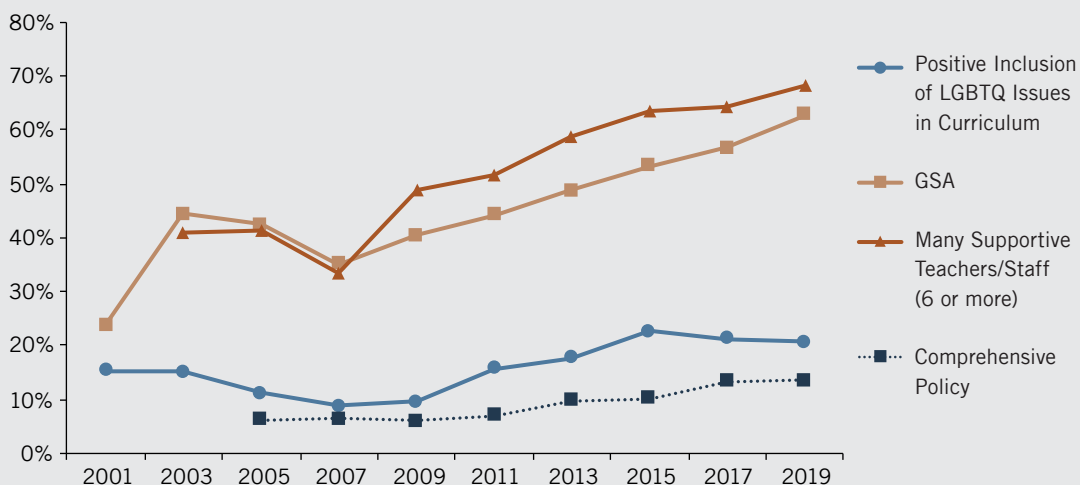
Supportive Educators

- The percentage of students who had at least one supportive educator was higher in 2019 than all previous years.
- The percentage of students who had a high number of supportive educators (6 or more) was also higher in 2019 than all previous years.

Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policies

- Overall, there was a sharp increase in the number of students reporting any type of policy after 2009, and the rate has remained more or less consistent since 2011. After small increases from 2011 to 2015, and a small decline in 2017, the number of students with any type of policy did not change in 2019.
- With regard to enumerated policies, there was a small but significant increase in the percentage of students reporting comprehensive school policies (i.e., policies that enumerate protections for both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) from 2015 to 2017 and this percentage did not change in 2019. Further, there has been a steady, modest decline in the percentage reporting partially enumerated policies from 2015 to 2019, and the rate was lower in 2019 than all prior years.

Availability of LGBTQ-Related School Resources Over Time
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Resource in School, Based on Estimated Marginal Means)



DIFFERENCES IN LGBTQ STUDENTS' SCHOOL EXPERIENCES BY PERSONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

LGBTQ students are a diverse population, and although they share many similar experiences, their experiences in school often vary based on their personal demographics. We examined differences in LGBTQ student experiences, based on:

- 1) Sexual orientation, including differences between gay and lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, and questioning students;
- 2) Gender identity, including differences between and among transgender, nonbinary, cisgender, and questioning students; and
- 3) Racial/Ethnic identity, including differences between Arab American/Middle Eastern/North African (MENA), Asian American/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian (AAPI), Black, Latinx, Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native (referred to as “Native and Indigenous”), multiracial, and White LGBTQ students.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

- Overall, pansexual students experienced more hostile climates than gay and lesbian, bisexual, queer, and questioning students, including facing the highest rates of victimization, school discipline, and missing school because of safety reasons.
- Compared to students of other sexual orientations, gay and lesbian students were more likely to be “out” about their sexual orientation at school – both to other students and to school staff.

GENDER

- Transgender students reported more hostile school experiences than LGBQ cisgender students and nonbinary students.
- Nonbinary students reported more hostile school experiences than cisgender LGBQ students.
- Among cisgender LGBQ students, male students experienced a more hostile school climate based on their gender expression and on sexual orientation than cisgender female students, whereas cisgender female students experienced a more hostile school climate based on their gender than cisgender male students.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

- All students of color experienced similar levels of victimization based on race/ethnicity, although Black students were more likely to feel unsafe about their race/ethnicity than AAPI, Latinx, Native and Indigenous, multiracial, and White students.
- Native and Indigenous LGBTQ students were generally more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to experience anti-LGBTQ victimization and discrimination.
- Many LGBTQ students of color experienced victimization based on both their race/ethnicity and their LGBTQ identities. The percentages of students of color experiencing these multiple forms of victimization were similar across racial/ethnic groups.
- White students were less likely than all other racial/ethnic groups to feel unsafe or experience victimization because of their racial/ethnic identity.

DIFFERENCES IN LGBTQ STUDENTS' SCHOOL EXPERIENCES BY SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

LGBTQ students' experiences in school may often vary based on the kind of school they attend and where they live.

SCHOOL LEVEL

- LGBTQ students in middle school had more hostile school experiences than LGBTQ students in high school, including experiencing higher rates of biased language, victimization, and anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices.
- LGBTQ middle school students were less likely than high school students to have access to LGBTQ-related school resources, including GSAs, supportive school personnel, LGBTQ-inclusive curricular resources, and inclusive policies.

SCHOOL TYPE

- Overall, LGBTQ students in private non-religious schools had fewer hostile school experiences than those in public schools and those in religious schools.
- LGBTQ public school students were most likely to hear homophobic remarks at school and experienced the greatest levels of gender-based victimization, whereas those in religious schools were most likely to hear negative remarks about gender expression.
- Students in religious schools were the most likely to report experiencing anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices.

- Students in private non-religious schools had greater access to most LGBTQ-related school resources and supports than all others, however public school students were most likely to report having a GSA and most likely to report having LGBTQ-inclusive school library resources. Students in religious schools were least likely to have access to LGBTQ-related school resources and supports.
- Among students in public schools, those in charter schools were similar to those in regular public schools regarding anti-LGBTQ experiences and many resources and supports, although charter school students were more likely to have access to: inclusive curricular resources, supportive policies for transgender and nonbinary students, and a supportive administration. Students in regular public schools were more likely to have LGBTQ-inclusive school library resources.



“ My school has both middle and high school students in the same building. The middle schoolers are much more intolerant of LGBTQ people. The high schoolers are much more supportive. ”

SCHOOL LOCALE

- LGBTQ students in rural schools faced more hostile school climates than students in urban and suburban schools including experiencing higher rates of biased language, victimization, and anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices.
- LGBTQ students in suburban schools experienced lower levels of anti-LGBTQ victimization than all others.
- LGBTQ students in rural schools were least likely to have LGBTQ-related school resources or supports, as compared to students in urban and suburban schools.

REGION

- LGBTQ students in the South had more negative school experiences overall than students in all other regions, including higher rates of biased language, victimization, and anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices; those in the Midwest had more negative experiences overall than those in the Northeast and West.
- Overall, LGBTQ students in the South were least likely to have access to LGBTQ-related resources at school, whereas students in the Northeast were most likely to have LGBTQ-related school resources.



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 2019 National School Climate Survey demonstrate the ways in which school-based supports – such as supportive staff, inclusive and supportive school policies, curricular resources inclusive of LGBTQ people, and GSAs – can positively affect LGBTQ students’ school experiences. Yet findings on school climate over time suggest that more efforts are needed to reduce harassment and discrimination and increase affirmative supports. Based on these findings, we recommend:

- Increasing student access to appropriate and accurate information regarding LGBTQ 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 LGBTQ 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;
- Enacting school policies that provide transgender and nonbinary students equal access to school facilities and activities and specify appropriate educational practices to support these 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.

Instituting these 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.

LEARN MORE

The full 2019 National School Climate Survey report goes into greater depth on the issues highlighted in this Executive Summary and explores a number of other topics, including:

- Experiences of bias and school safety based on race/ethnicity, religion, body type, citizenship, and disability;
- Frequency of relational aggression and property damage;
- A deeper examination into GSAs – the types of activities that they engage in, and the reasons why some LGBTQ students do not attend their GSAs;
- How identities regarding sexual orientation and gender identity have emerged and changed over time;
- Experiences of LGBTQ students of color regarding racist remarks and victimization based on race/ethnicity over time;
- Transgender students' experiences with gender-based discrimination at school over time; and
- Foreign-born LGBTQ students' safety concerns regarding citizenship status over time.

VISIT [GLSEN.ORG/NSCCS](https://www.glsen.org/nsccs)
FOR THE FULL 2019 NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY.



GLSEN is the leading 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.

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