

Key Findings of the 2011 National School Climate Survey

Hostile School Climate and its Effects on Educational Outcomes and Psychological Well-Being

- 81.9% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed, 38.3% reported being physically harassed and 18.3% reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation.
- 63.9% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed, 27.1% reported being physically harassed and 12.4% reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year because of their gender expression.
- 84.9% of LGBT students heard "gay" used in a negative way (e.g., "that's so gay") and 71.3% heard homophobic remarks (e.g., "dyke" or "faggot") frequently or often at school.
- 6 in 10 LGBT students (63.5%) reported feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation; and 4 in 10 (43.9%) felt unsafe because of their gender expression.
- LGBT students reported feeling unsafe in specific school spaces, most commonly locker rooms (39.0%), bathrooms (38.8%) and physical education/gym class (32.5%).
- Transgender students experienced more hostile school climates than their non-transgender peers %96 80% of transgender students reported feeling unsafe at school because of their gender expression.
- Nearly one third of LGBT students (29.8%) reported skipping a class at least once and 31.8% missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because of safety concerns.
- The reported grade point average of students who were more frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression was lower than for students who were less often harassed (2.9 vs. 3.2).
- Increased levels of victimization were related to increased levels of depression and anxiety and decreased levels of self-esteem.
- 60.4% of LGBT students never reported an incident of harassment or assault to school personnel.

- A considerable number of students reported discriminatory policies or practices against LGBT people by their school or school personnel. Students indicated the most common discriminatory policy or practice was related to treatment of LGBT relationships (e.g., related to dates for school dances and public display of affection).
- Being out in school had positive and negative repercussions for LGBT students %96 outness was related to higher levels of victimization, but also higher levels of psychological well-being.

Positive Interventions and Support

- Having a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) in school was related to more positive experiences for LGBT students, including: hearing fewer homophobic remarks, experiencing less victimization because of sexual orientation and gender expression, being less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation (54.9% of students with a GSA vs. 70.6% of other students) and having a greater sense of belonging to their school community.
- Students in schools with an LGBT-inclusive curriculum, i.e. one that included positive representations of LGBT people, history and events, heard fewer homophobic remarks, were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation (43.4% of students with an inclusive curriculum vs. 63.6% of other students), were more likely to report that their peers were accepting of LGBT people (67.0% vs. 33.0%) and felt more connected to their school.
- The presence of school personnel who are supportive of LGBT students contributed to a range of positive indicators, including higher grade point averages (3.2 vs. 2.9), greater likelihood of pursuing higher education, lower likelihood of missing school and lower likelihood of feeling unsafe in school (53.1% of students with supportive school personnel vs. 76.9% of other students).
- Compared to students at school with a generic policy that did not include protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, students attending schools with a comprehensive anti-bullying policy that included specific protections heard fewer homophobic remarks, experienced lower levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation, were more likely to report that staff intervened when hearing homophobic remarks and were more likely to report incidents of harassment and assault to school staff.
- Despite the positive benefits of these interventions, less than half of LGBT students (45.7%) reported having a Gay-Straight Alliance at school; few (16.8%) were taught positive representations about LGBT people, history or events in their school; only about half (54.6%) could identify six or more supportive educators; and less than a tenth (7.4%) attended a school that had a comprehensive anti-bullying policy.

Changes in School Climate for LGBT Youth over Time

- The percentage of students hearing homophobic remarks, such as "dyke" or "faggot" frequently or often has seen a major decline since 2001.
- In 2011, there was a significant decrease in harassment and assault based on sexual orientation compared to findings released from previous years.
- There was a small increase in portion of students who reported having a Gay-Straight Alliance at school.
- Students reported a significant increase of positive representations of LGBT-related topics in their curriculum.
- There was a small increase in portion of students who reported having access to LGBT-related Internet resources through their school computers.

GLSEN's biennial National School Climate Survey, first conducted by GLSEN in 1999, remains the only study to consistently document the school experiences of LGBT students nationwide. The 2011 survey includes responses from 8,584 students between the ages of 13 and 20. Students were from all 50 states and the District of Columbia and from 3,224 unique school districts. Data collection was conducted through national and community-based organizations and targeted online advertising on the social networking site Facebook.

ABOUT GLSEN

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, 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 information on GLSEN's research, educational resources, public policy advocacy, student organizing programs and educator training initiatives, visit www.glsen.org.