EVERY CLASS IN EVERY SCHOOL:

FINAL REPORT ON THE FIRST NATIONAL CLIMATE SURVEY ON HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA, AND TRANSPHOBIA IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS

RESEARCHERS: CATHERINE TAYLOR (PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR), PH.D., UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG AND TRACEY PETER (CO-INVESTIGATOR), PH.D., UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

Egale
CANADA
Human Rights Trust

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Egale Canada Human Rights Trust is a national organization that conducts research and delivers educational programming on lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) human rights in Canada.

For more information on Egale, visit www.egale.ca.

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[FORE WORD]

The terms "homophobia" and "transphobia" signify a great deal of unnecessary misery in the lives of Canadian students. Knowledge of their distress and a determination to bring it to the consciousness of educators and parents motivated the members of the Education Committee of Egale Canada to conduct a climate survey of Canadian schools. I joined them in the spring of 2007. Since we launched the survey in December 2007, and started collecting information from students from all over Canada, at times I have felt that my life is nothing but lists.

There's the list of varieties of homophobic attacks: verbal harassment, physical harassment, physical assault, sexual assault, property stolen and vandalized, mean rumours and lies spread through graffiti, texting, Facebook…on and on it goes, the same miserable litany of ways to torment each other, updated with electronic innovations of the day…

There's the list of places where harassment and assault occur. We asked students, Are there any places in your school that are unsafe for LGBTQ students?, and then gave them a check-box list: hallways, classrooms, washrooms, change rooms, gymnasiums, the cafeteria, stairwells, school grounds, buses, on the way to school, on the way home from school…all the everyday scenes of life at school. Heterosexual and LGBTQ students across the country were consistent in their replies—hallways, washrooms, and change rooms, in particular, are battle zones for LGBTQ students, places where bullies indulge in the perverse pleasure system of homophobia and transphobia by tormenting them. This hostile geography forces students into survival navigation mode: *"How can I get from Math to Chemistry without getting shoved into a locker? Can I hold it till lunch and then run home to use the washroom? Which exit door will my tormentors be expecting me to use?"* And prompts these kinds of questions: *"Is there anyone I can confide in about this harassment? Not my parents—they'd freak out if they knew I was gay. The Arts teacher maybe? She seems cool, but she's never said anything about gay people one way or the other—better not."* Most students, thankfully, have a friend they can talk to, but not all: one in four said they could not talk to one person in their lives about LGBTQ issues, period, let alone confide that they are LGBTQ themselves. In the words of a fifteen year-old lesbian participant, *"School is not a safe place for anyone like me."*

Apart from the personal attack targeting particular LGBTQ students or students perceived to be LGBTQ, there's the generalized kind. We found what you might expect—students hear "that's gay" and "faggot" and "lezbo" every day at school, mostly from other students. It's the air they breathe, the sea of language they swim in. Most students go along with it—some of the LGBTQ students even use this language sometimes, and not in a fun way. The vast majority of LGBTQ students find it upsetting, as you might expect. It's not just the one-shot, off-hand "that sweater's gay!" that produces this level of distress. It's the day-in, day-out saturation of school culture with such language that undermines the spirits of LGBTQ kids. It's hearing a word that applies to a core aspect of your identity used as a synonym for "stupid" 50 times a day. As educators, sometimes we tell ourselves, "It's not serious. Kids don't even mean homosexual. They just mean stupid." "Just" stupid? How would we like hearing "teacher" or "parent" used as a synonym for "stupid" 50 times a day?

But 58% of straight students in our survey—roughly 1400 of the 2400 heterosexual students who filled out the survey—said that they too found it upsetting to hear homophobic comments. Why? Why are all those heterosexual students upset by homophobic comments?

- Some because they're the targets. There are approximately seven times as many heterosexual students as LGBTQ students, and some of them are homophobically harassed because they are seen as gay. Statistically, about the same number of heterosexual students as LGBTQ students are homophobically harassed.

- Some because they have an LGBTQ family member or friend.

- Some because they are kind. They feel empathy for the victims.

- Some because they're ashamed of themselves for participating in it, or for remaining silent when it was going on.

- Some because it is depressing to the spirit to be involved in a community that continually abuses people who have done nothing to deserve it—what the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge called "the sheer malice of motiveless malignancy."

That 58% suggests to me that there is a great deal of untapped solidarity out there, an unawakened passion for social justice. One of our participants noted the presence of little ripples of resistance to homophobia *"around the school, where i hear people say 'oh that's so gay' and then they'd say 'oh no...wait, i shouldn't use that word' or a friend of theirs might say 'hey, don't use that word.'"*

Still, the vast majority of students will not intervene when homophobic language is being used. Many of them have performed a quick calculation of their own: *"What will happen to me if I speak up? Will they think I'm gay? Will I find 'Lezbo' scrawled on my locker? Will rumours start? Will no one hang out with me?"* And they have decided that the costs of speaking up outweigh the benefits.

Many adults in young people's lives, both parents and educators, are aware that fear often makes young people go against their own sense of right and wrong to follow the crowd. The silence of teachers not only helps to validate homophobia, it helps to ensure the recirculation of fear by teaching students that they're on their own on this issue and that adults won't help them. Some school authorities and some parents tacitly approve of homophobia as an efficient technology for making children turn out heterosexual. Sadly, some parents are so terrified of their kids turning out gay that they would rather see them unhappy than see them unheterosexual.

Every class in every school has LGBTQ students, and the majority of heterosexual students are silently upset by homophobic comments. If teachers were to lead the way by speaking respectfully of LGBTQ people, the silent majority of students—the 58% of heterosexual students and the approximately 14% of students who are LGBTQ— would have more reason for courage. They might figure out that most of their peers aren't homophobic either. They might stop using homophobic language to fit in, and they might start intervening when LGBTQ students are being harassed. LGBTQ students might start to think, gay life isn't just possible on TV; it's possible in my world as well, with my teachers and my friends, and my employers, and maybe with my family.

I saw a wonderful Inuit painting years ago, called "Making more room in the snow house." It showed an igloo built for 5 that had to accommodate 10, which is about where we are in Canada now. We know we can't do it just by letting everyone in and trying to make them comfortable in the cracks of an untransformed society, doing consolation pedagogy, which is what "resilience" projects for at-risk youth sometimes seem to be about. What I loved about the painting was that "making room in the snow house" was clearly about "making the snow house bigger." It can't be done from the outside—there's nothing to grab onto. It has to be done by pushing out from the inside, and it helps if everyone's pushing at the same time. It will take little acts of courage from a lot of educators to activate that 58% who would push back against homophobia and transphobia in their schools if they knew how many allies they'd have.

On behalf of the research team and the Education Committee of Egale Canada, let me express our gratitude to the many teachers, parents, principals, division staff and superintendents, community organizations, teachers' federation members, and ministry officials who worked with us to ensure that students would have the opportunity to cast some light on conditions in the snow house. We are grateful to the thousands of students who agreed to contribute their voices so that we could learn what life is like for them in school, and we are mindful of our own responsibility to ensure that knowledge is shared with stakeholders throughout the school system.

With best wishes for safe schools for all students,

CATHERINE TAYLOR

May 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report discusses the results of a national survey of Canadian high school students undertaken in order to investigate what life at school is like for students with sexual or gender minority status.[1] Our study sought to identify the forms and extent of students' experiences of homophobic and transphobic incidents at school, the impact of those experiences, and the efficacy of measures being taken by schools to combat these common forms of bullying. The study involved surveying over 3700 students from across Canada between December 2007 and June 2009 through two methods. The first method was designed to reach as many sexual and gender minority youth as possible: students who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, Two Spirit, queer, or questioning (LGBTQ). To this end, we implemented an open-access online survey and advertised it widely through news releases and website and Facebook notices and by systematically contacting every organization across the country that we identified as having LGBTQ youth membership. The second method was implemented in controlled conditions using a login system through in-school sessions conducted in twenty randomly selected school districts in all regions of the country (with the exception of Québec where a parallel survey was conducted by Québec researchers). Fifteen school districts participated in sufficient numbers to permit statistically significant analysis. In-school findings were used to validate open-access findings. This report analyzes the aggregate data from both individual online participation and in-school sessions. In addition, we have submitted confidential reports to all participating boards that held in-class sessions comparing their own results to the results from all in-school sessions.

The study was commissioned by the Egale Canada Human Rights Trust (ECHRT) and funded by the ECHRT with additional support from the University of Winnipeg Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Grant Competition, and Sexual and Gender Diversity: Vulnerability and Resilience (SVR), a research team funded by Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and Fonds de Recherche sur la Société et la Culture (FRSC) du Province de Québec.

The survey itself was a fifty-four item questionnaire made available online and in print, which consisted mostly of multiple-choice questions of three kinds: demographic (e.g., age, province, gender identity, sexual orientation), experiences (e.g., hearing "gay" used as an insult, being assaulted, feeling very depressed about school), and institutional responses (e.g., staff intervention, inclusive safer schools policies). Quantitative data were tested for statistical significance through bivariate analyses that compared the responses of various groups of students, e.g., LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, sexual minority (lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning) and gender minority (transgender, transsexual, Two Spirit), and current and past. Cross-tabulations with chi-square (X^2) estimations, independent samples t-tests, and analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted, depending on the classification or "level of measurement" of the variables/questions (i.e., whether they are dichotomous, ordered, or continuous). Effect sizes were calculated for all chi-square (used Cramer's *V*), t-test (used Cohen's *d*), and ANOVA (used Cohen's *d*) significant tests. Future analysis will involve qualitative analysis of responses to open-ended questions in which students responded to questions about their perceptions and experiences.

The lack of a solid Canadian evidence base has been a major impediment faced by educators and administrators who need to understand the situation of LGBTQ students in order to respond appropriately and to assure their school communities that homophobic and transphobic bullying are neither rare nor harmless, but are major problems that schools need to address. We wish to express our deepest respect for the thousands of students, LGBTQ and heterosexual, who came forward to help with this important project. We thank you and hope that you will recognize your contributions and your voices in this report. While most of the information in this report will come as no surprise to members of the LGBTQ community, the study provides a systematically produced knowledge base that will provide educators and administrators across the country with the information they need to make evidence-based policy and programming decisions.

[1]   For the purposes of this report, the term "sexual minority" refers to youth who did not identify as exclusively heterosexual and the term "gender minority" refers to youth who did not identify as either "female" or "male."

KEY FINDINGS: SCHOOL CLIMATES IN CANADA TODAY

HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC COMMENTS

⇨ **70%** of all participating students, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, reported hearing expressions such as "that's so gay" every day in school and almost half (**48%**) reported hearing remarks such as "faggot," "lezbo," and "dyke" every day in school.

⇨ Almost **10%** of LGBTQ students reported having heard homophobic comments from teachers daily or weekly (**17%** of trans students; **10%** of female sexual minority students; and **8%** of male sexual minority students). Even more LGBTQ students reported that they had heard teachers use negative gender-related or transphobic comments daily or weekly: **23%** of trans students; **15%** of male sexual minority students; and **12%** of female sexual minority students.

⇨ Hardly any LGBTQ students reported that they never heard homophobic comments from other students (**1%** of trans students; **2%** of female sexual minority students; **4%** of male sexual minority students). This suggests that if you are a sexual minority student in a Canadian school, it is highly likely that you will hear insulting things about your sexual orientation.

VERBAL HARASSMENT

⇨ **74%** of trans students, **55%** of sexual minority students, and **26%** of non-LGBTQ students reported having been verbally harassed about their gender expression.

⇨ **37%** of trans students, **32%** of female sexual minority students, and **20%** of male sexual minority students reported being verbally harassed daily or weekly about their sexual orientation.

⇨ **68%** of trans students, **55%** of female sexual minority students, and **42%** of male sexual minority students reported being verbally harassed about their perceived gender or sexual orientation. Trans youth may report experiencing

particularly high levels of harassment on the basis of perceived sexual orientation because often trans individuals are perceived as lesbian, gay, or bisexual when they are not.

▷ More than a third (**37%**) of youth with LGBTQ parents reported being verbally harassed about the sexual orientation of their parents. They are also more likely to be verbally harassed about their own gender expression (**58%** versus **34%** of other students), perceived sexual orientation or gender identity (**46%** versus **20%**), gender (**45%** versus **22%**), and sexual orientation (**44%** versus **20%**).

PHYSICAL HARASSMENT

▷ More than one in five (**21%**) LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed or assaulted due to their sexual orientation.

▷ **20%** of LGBTQ students and almost **10%** of non-LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed or assaulted about their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

▷ **37%** of trans students, **21%** of sexual minority students, and **10%** of non-LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender expression.

▷ Over a quarter (**27%**) of youth with LGBTQ parents reported being physically harassed about the sexual orientation of their parents. They are also more likely than their peers to be physically harassed or assaulted in connection with their own gender expression (**30%** versus **13%** of other students), perceived sexual orientation or gender identity (**27%** versus **12%**), gender (**25%** versus **10%**), and sexual orientation (**25%** versus **11%**).

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Levels of sexual harassment are high across the board for LGBTQ students. The following groups of students reported having experienced sexual harassment in school in the last year:

- **49%** of trans students
- **45%** of students with LGBTQ parents
- **43%** of female bisexual students
- **42%** of male bisexual students
- **40%** of gay male students
- **33%** of lesbian students

The higher levels of sexual harassment for gay male than for lesbian students may be attributable to greater exposure to sexual humiliation as a distinct form of unwanted sexual attention. Also, lesbian students may be less likely than gay male or trans students to perceive their experiences of harassment as sexual. Further analysis will explore the experiences included in this finding.

UNSAFE SPACES

- Almost two-thirds (**64%**) of LGBTQ students and **61%** of students with LGBTQ parents reported that they feel unsafe at school.

- The two school spaces most commonly experienced as unsafe by LGBTQ youth and youth with LGBTQ parents are places that are almost invariably gender-segregated: Phys. Ed. change rooms and washrooms. Almost half (**49%**) of LGBTQ youth and more than two-fifths (**42%**) of youth with LGBTQ parents identified their Phys. Ed. change rooms as being unsafe; almost a third (**30%**) of non-LGBTQ youth agreed. More than two-fifths (**43%**) of LGBTQ students and almost two-fifths (**41%**) of youth with LGBTQ parents identified their school washrooms as being unsafe; more than a quarter (**28%**) of non-LGBTQ students agreed.

▷ Female sexual minority students were most likely to report feeling unsafe in their school change rooms (**59%**). High numbers (**52%**) of trans youth reported feeling unsafe in both change rooms and washrooms. It is notable that these places where female sexual minority and trans students often feel unsafe are gender-segregated areas. Not only does this contradict assumptions that most homophobic and transphobic incidents take place in males-only spaces, but it also points to a correlation between the policing of gender and youth not feeling safe.

SAFER SCHOOLS POLICIES

Generic safe school policies that do not include specific measures on homophobia are not effective in improving the school climate for LGBTQ students. LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia policies reported significantly fewer incidents of physical and verbal harassment due to their sexual orientation:

> **80%** of LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia policies reported never having been physically harassed versus only **67%** of LGBTQ students from schools without anti-homophobia policies;

> **46%** of LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia policies reported never having been verbally harassed due to their sexual orientation versus **40%** of LGBTQ students from schools without anti-homophobia policies.

LGBTQ students in schools with anti-homophobia policies did not report significantly higher levels of feeling safe at school with regard to gender identity and gender expression: this indicates a need to explicitly address gender identity, gender expression, and anti-transphobia in school and school board safer schools and equity and inclusive education policies.

GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES (GSAS) AND OTHER LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE STUDENT GROUPS

GSAs are official student clubs with LGBTQ and heterosexual student membership and typically one or two teachers who serve as faculty advisors. Students in a school with a GSA know that they have at least one or two adults they can talk to about LGBTQ matters. The purpose of GSAs is to provide a much-needed safe space in which LGBTQ students and allies can work together on making their schools more welcoming for sexual and gender minority students. Some GSAs go by other names such as Rainbow Clubs, Human Rights Clubs, or Social Justice Clubs. This is sometimes done to signal openness to non-LGBTQ membership (though, of course, some of these are not GSAs and might not address homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia), and sometimes because "Gay-Straight Alliance" seems problematic in that "gay" does not necessarily refer to lesbians or bisexuals and trans identities are not explicitly encompassed by the expression. However, using the acronym "GSA" to represent any student group concerned with LGBTQ matters has become commonplace. Very often it is LGBTQ students themselves who initiate the GSA, although sometimes a teacher will come forward. Such groups also function as safe havens and supports for youth with LGBTQ parents. Currently, 150 LGBTQ-inclusive student groups across the country are registered on Egale Canada's safer schools and inclusive education website, *MyGSA.ca*.

⇨ Students from schools with GSAs are much more likely to agree that their school communities are supportive of LGBTQ people, are much more likely to be open with some or all of their peers about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and are more likely to see their school climate as becoming less homophobic.

⇨ Students from schools with anti-homophobia policies are significantly more likely to agree that their school administration is supportive of the GSA.

⇨ Students in BC and Ontario reported much more frequently than students in the Prairies, the Atlantic provinces, and the North that their schools have GSAs.

KEY FINDINGS: HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA, AND TRANSPHOBIA AFFECT EVERYONE

INTERSECTIONALITY

I think there's a lot of work to be done in recognizing that lgbttq people come from various cultures and communities and breaking those myths and beliefs to allow all people identifying within those communities to be free of prejudice and oppression.

"   "

Similarly to the point on a graph where lines cross being called a point of "intersection," the fact that categories of identification—such as age, class, education, ethnic background, gender expression, gender identity, geographic origin, physical and mental ability, race, religion, sexual orientation, and other factors— are experienced simultaneously and cannot genuinely be separated from one another is referred to as "intersectionality." Often, people are discriminated against with regard to multiple categories: for example, a racialized lesbian could be subjected to heterosexism, homophobia, lesbophobia, misogyny, racism, and transphobia or any other form of discrimination, such as ableism, ageism, and classism, depending on both how she identifies and how she is perceived to be. Further, each aspect of one's identity can have an impact on other aspects. For example, a racialized lesbian may be exposed to different forms of sexism and homophobia from those experienced by a non-racialized lesbian.

The survey found that there was little regional or ethnic variation in levels of physical harassment for reasons related to gender or sexual orientation, but that Caucasian youth, both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, were far less likely to report having been physically harassed or assaulted because of their ethnicity: **8%** compared to **13%** of Aboriginal youth and **15%** of youth of colour. Consequently, it is important to note the aggregate effects or "double whammy" here for both Aboriginal youth and youth of colour; these youth are not only being physically harassed or assaulted because of reasons related to gender and/or sexual orientation, but they are also much more likely to be physically harassed or assaulted because of their ethnicity.

YOUTH OF COLOUR

Not only is it difficult to be LGBT in high school, but especially as a LGBT youth who is also a visible minority. The positive images and information out there for such a youth is very hard to come by.

"

⇨ Youth of colour, both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, are far less likely to know of any out LGBTQ students (**67%** compared to **81%** of Caucasian and **87%** of Aboriginal youth, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined) or to know of any teachers or staff members who are supportive of LGBTQ students (**48%** knew of none, compared to **38%** of Aboriginal and **31%** of Caucasian youth, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined).

⇨ Almost one-fifth (**18%**) of those students of colour who had experienced LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum reported that class discussions of LGBTQ people's relationships had been negative (compared to **14%** of Caucasian and **11%** of Aboriginal youth). They were also less likely to see class representations of LGBTQ matters as having been very positive (**17%** compared to **26%** of Caucasian and **31%** of Aboriginal youth).

⇨ Youth of colour, both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, reported the lowest rates of being comfortable discussing LGBTQ matters with anyone at all, including their coaches, their teachers, their classmates, their parents, and even with a close friend.

This high degree of isolation for youth of colour with regard to LGBTQ matters suggests that serious attention needs to be paid to finding means of reaching out to youth in ways that are appropriate and informed about cultural issues and taboos surrounding LGBTQ matters.

ABORIGINAL YOUTH

Very few statistically significant findings surfaced about the experiences of LGBTQ Aboriginal youth in Canadian schools in this report. In some instances, Aboriginal youth reported experiences similar to Caucasian youth, such as comfort levels in talking to school community members about LGBTQ matters. In other instances, Aboriginal youth reported experiences similar to youth of colour—for example, in reported rates of physical harassment based on race or ethnicity. Further work needs to be done in order to better understand and account for the needs of LGBTQ Aboriginal youth in Canada.

YOUTH WITH LGBTQ PARENTS

Not only do youth not want to have to hear their loved ones spoken about in cruel ways, but youth with LGBTQ family members also avoid disclosure to protect themselves from harassment. As one student wrote, "I am not out about my family members because people are so stupid that they think that if you know someone who is LGBTQ then that means you are too."

⇨ Youth with LGBTQ parents are more than three times more likely than other students to have skipped school because of feeling unsafe either at school (**40%** versus **13%**) or on the way to school (**32%** versus **10%**). These results are extremely important not only because of what they reveal about the degree of fear being experienced by youth with LGBTQ parents, but also because of the potential impact of missing classes on the academic performance of these students.

⇨ Youth with LGBTQ parents are more likely to be aware of teachers making homophobic and transphobic comments: one-fifth of youth with LGBTQ parents said teachers sometimes or frequently make homophobic comments, compared to only **7%** of other students, and a quarter of youth with LGBTQ parents said teachers sometimes or frequently make transphobic comments, compared to a tenth of other students.

⇨ Students with LGBTQ parents are more likely to find homophobic comments extremely upsetting (**23%** versus **11%** of other students) or very upsetting (**29%** versus **19%**).

LGBTQ YOUTH

One in seven students who completed the survey during in-class sessions self-identified as LGBTQ (**14%**), which is consistent with the percentages of students identifying as not exclusively heterosexual in large-scale survey research of youth conducted in British Columbia (Saewyc & the McCreary Society, 2007). Further, youth who experience same-sex attraction often identify as heterosexual in research, even if they have had sexual contact with a same-sex partner, and research participants often under-report information such as being members of sexual minority groups out of concerns about confidentiality, even in anonymous surveys. This suggests that claims sometimes made

that sexual minority individuals comprise only **2–3%** of the population seriously underestimate the numbers. Our research would suggest that there are several sexual minority students in every class in every school in Canada, not to mention students with LGBTQ parents. Many of these students, of course, do not disclose their own or their family members' sexual orientation and/or gender identity until they are safely out of school.

TRANS YOUTH

While youth who actually identify as trans are comparatively small in number, they are highly visible targets of harassment. Trans students may report experiencing particularly high levels of harassment on the basis of perceived sexual orientation because often trans individuals are perceived as lesbian, gay, or bisexual when they are not. The heightened sense of lack of safety at school experienced by trans youth is likely due to the rigid policing of gender conventions (male masculinity and female femininity), which can make trans youth highly visible targets for discrimination and harassment.

➪ **90%** of trans youth hear transphobic comments daily or weekly from other students and almost a quarter (**23%**) of trans students reported hearing teachers use transphobic language daily or weekly. Almost three-quarters (**74%**) of trans students reported being verbally harassed about their gender expression.

➪ A quarter of trans students reported having been physically harassed (**25%**) or having had property stolen or damaged (**24%**) because of being LGBTQ. Trans students were much more likely than sexual minority or non-LGBTQ students to have been physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender expression (**37%** compared with **21%** for sexual minority students and **10%** for non-LGBTQ students).

➪ When all identity-related grounds for feeling unsafe are taken into account, including ethnicity and religion, more than three-quarters (**78%**) of trans students indicated feeling unsafe in some way at school. **44%** of trans students reported being likely to miss school because of feeling unsafe and **15%** reported having skipped more than 10 days because of feeling unsafe at school.

BISEXUAL YOUTH

A comparison of the responses of female and male bisexual youth with lesbian and gay male youth shows that often gender seems to be more of an influencing factor than sexual orientation in the experiences of female sexual minority youth; however, this is generally not the case for male sexual minority youth:

PHYSICAL HARASSMENT ABOUT BEING LGBTQ	**26%** of female bisexual youth **25%** of lesbian youth **12%** of male bisexual youth **23%** of gay male youth
MEAN RUMOURS OR LIES ABOUT BEING LGBTQ	**56%** of female bisexual youth **52%** of lesbian youth **37%** of male bisexual youth **47%** of gay male youth
SKIPPING SCHOOL DUE TO FEELING UNSAFE	**29%** of female bisexual youth **25%** of lesbian youth **19%** of male bisexual youth **28%** of gay male youth
AT LEAST ONE UNSAFE LOCATION AT SCHOOL	**71%** of female bisexual youth **72%** of lesbian youth **64%** of male bisexual youth **74%** of gay male youth
FEEL UNSAFE AT SCHOOL BECAUSE OF ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED SEXUAL ORIENTATION	**63%** of female bisexual youth **67%** of lesbian youth **39%** of male bisexual youth **51%** of gay male youth
FEEL UNSAFE AT SCHOOL	**75%** of female bisexual youth **73%** of lesbian youth **51%** of male bisexual youth **62%** of gay male youth

These findings are interesting in a few ways. First, popular understandings of bullying in school culture might lead one to expect that heterosexual males would be most likely to commit homophobic harassment and that their targets would be gay males, whom they would have the opportunity to bully in unsupervised gender-segregated spaces such as change rooms and washrooms. Second, it is sometimes said that lesbians have it easier than gay males, that society in general tolerates lesbians more than gay males, and that being a lesbian or a bisexual female is even trendy. These findings would refute both of these popular conceptions of life for sexual minority girls and women.

What male sexual minority youth, both bisexual and gay, seem to have in common, however, is a higher degree of social connectedness. Both of these groups are more likely to know of out LGBTQ youth and supportive staff members at their schools:

DON'T KNOW ANYONE OUT AS LGBTQ AT SCHOOL

21% of female bisexual youth
31% of lesbian youth

13% of male bisexual youth
15% of gay male youth

DON'T KNOW OF SCHOOL STAFF MEMBERS SUPPORTIVE OF LGBTQ MATTERS

36% of female bisexual youth
28% of lesbian youth

22% of male bisexual youth
26% of gay male youth
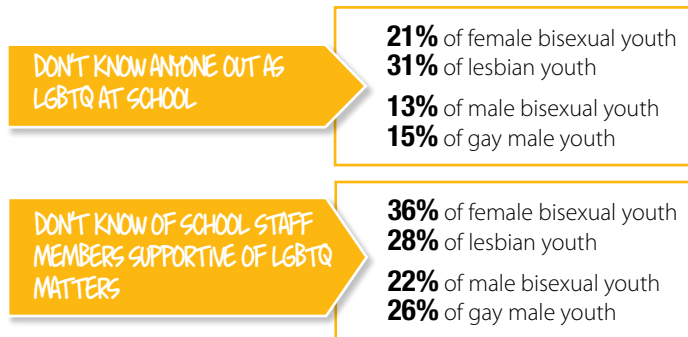
HETEROSEXUAL YOUTH

▷ One of the most striking findings of our study is that **58%** of non-LGBTQ youth find homophobic comments upsetting. This finding suggests that there is a great deal of potential solidarity for LGBTQ-inclusive education among heterosexual students.

▷ One in twelve heterosexual students reported being verbally harassed about their perceived sexual orientation and one in four about their gender expression.

▷ Almost **10%** of non-LGBTQ youth reported being physically harassed or assaulted about their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity and more than **10%** reported being physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender expression.

▷ Any given school is likely to have as many heterosexual students as LGBTQ students who are harassed about their sexual orientation or gender expression.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This survey has provided statistically-tested confirmation of what LGBTQ youth, youth perceived as LGBTQ, youth with LGBTQ parents, and their allies as well as teachers and administrators working on anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia and intersectionality education have known for some time about the realities of life at school in Canada. Consider the situation in many schools:

- ⇨ LGBTQ students are exposed to language that insults their dignity as part of everyday school experience and youth with LGBTQ family members are constantly hearing their loved ones being denigrated.

- ⇨ LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents experience much higher levels of verbal, physical, sexual, and other forms of discrimination, harassment, and abuse than other students.

- ⇨ Most LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents do not feel safe at school.

- ⇨ The situation is worse on all counts for female sexual minority students and youth with LGBTQ parents and even worse for trans students.

- ⇨ Many students, especially youth of colour, do not have even one person they can talk to about LGBTQ matters.

- ⇨ Many schools have a well-developed human rights curriculum that espouses respect and dignity for every identity group protected in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* except for LGBTQ people.

- ⇨ Teachers often look the other way when they hear homophobic and transphobic comments and some of them even make these kinds of comments themselves.

Although the original title of our study named only homophobia, our findings demonstrate that school climates for bisexual and trans students are equally—and in some ways even more—hostile. The study has also demonstrated that the less directly students are affected by homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, the less aware they are of it. This finding has implications for the adult world as well: how many educators and administrators are underestimating the extent of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in their school cultures and the damage being done to the youth in their care? This study found that the more marginalized our participants were, the worse their experience of school climate was. Given the findings of this study, educators may need to work particularly hard at ensuring that lesbian youth, bisexual girls, trans students, students with sexual and/ or gender minority parents, and sexual and gender minority youth of colour are included in these efforts. To this end, policy, programme, and curriculum development needs to reflect an understanding of how school climate for sexual and gender minority youth is affected by intersecting systems of social power such as racialization and poverty that are at work in all schools.

LGBTQ-inclusive safer schools policies and curriculum are not the entire solution; we did not find that 100% of students anywhere reported never hearing homophobic or transphobic comments or that they could all talk to all of their teachers, for example. However, the findings of this study indicate that while the problem of hostile school climates for sexual and gender minority students is very widespread, it is perhaps not as deep as we might think. In schools that have made efforts to introduce LGBTQ-inclusive policies, GSAs, and even some LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, the climate is significantly more positive for sexual and gender minority students.

Based on the analysis presented in this report, we strongly recommend the following:

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

1. That provincial Ministries of Education require the inclusion of anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia and intersectionality measures in safer schools policies and programmes, along with steps for the effective implementation of these policies, in order to provide support and motivation to district and school staff as well as a requirement that school divisions provide auditable evidence of meaningful implementation.

2. That school divisions develop anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia and intersectionality policies to provide institutional authority and leadership for schools.

3. That schools implement anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia and intersectionality policies and make these well known to students, parents, administration, and all school staff members as a part of their commitment to making schools safer and more respectful and welcoming for all members of their school communities.

4. That efforts begin with professional development workshops for all school division employees on intersectionality and the impact of homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic language and how to address it in classrooms, hallways, and all other parts of the school as well as at all other school-related events, such as during bus transportation.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

5. That Ministries of Education and school divisions require the inclusion of respectful representations of LGBTQ people in courses and provide curriculum guidelines and resources for mainstreaming LGBTQ-inclusive teaching, including intersectionality, across the curriculum and auditable evidence of meaningful implementation.

6. That school divisions provide professional development opportunities to assist schools in the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive and intersectionality curriculum.

7. That schools implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in designated courses such as Family Life and Social Studies and provide teachers with resources for mainstreaming LGBTQ and intersectionality education in their own subject areas.

TEACHER PREPARATION

8. That Faculties of Education integrate LGBTQ-inclusive teaching and intersectionality into compulsory courses in their Bachelor of Education programmes so that teachers have adequate opportunities to develop competence before entering the field.

GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES

9. That schools strongly support the efforts of students to start GSAs, or similar LGBTQ-inclusive student-led clubs, and that in schools where students have not come forward, administration should ask teachers to offer to work with students to start such clubs. It is not safe to assume that LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents would prefer to go through school isolated from their peers and teachers.

VULNERABLE GROUPS

10. That particular attention be paid to supporting the safety and well-being of lesbian and bisexual female youth and trans youth in all of the above recommendations along with the needs of youth with LGBTQ parents and sexual and gender minority youth of colour.

APPROPRIATE CONSULTATION

11. That individuals and organizations with established expertise in intersectionality and LGBTQ-inclusive education be consulted in all of the above. Such expertise exists among educators in every region of Canada.

What students have told us in the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools is that speaking up works and that they want the adults in their lives to do their parts.

It is extremely unlikely that there is any class in any high school anywhere in Canada, public or private, religious or secular, that does not have students who are LGBTQ.

Being harassed, insulted, and told that their identities belong in the guidance office, not in the classroom, will not succeed in making LGBTQ students heterosexual and gender-conforming; it will only make them unhappy. What students have told us in the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools is that speaking up works and that they want the adults in their lives to do their parts. Many participants in our survey, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, commented on their extreme disappointment with school staff who look the other way when disrespectful language is being used. The findings of our study provide ample reasons for educators and administrators across the country to take up the challenge of welcoming their LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents into inclusive twenty-first century schools that explicitly and meaningfully oppose discrimination on the basis of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation and genuinely embrace safer and more respectful school environments for all members of their school communities.

GENDER IDENTITY

GENDER EXPRESSION

LESBIAN

TRANS

QUEER

QUESTIONING

BISEXUAL

GAY

HOMOPHOBIA

PERCEIVED SEXUAL ORIENTATION

LGBTQ

INTRODUCTION

The homophobic and transphobic incidents experienced by students in Canadian schools range from hearing "gay" used as a synonym for "stupid" or "worthless" to being insulted and assaulted because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

This report discusses the results of a national survey of Canadian high school students undertaken in order to identify the forms and extent of their experiences of homophobic and transphobic incidents at school as well as measures being taken by schools to combat these common forms of bullying. The study involved surveying over 3700 students from across Canada through two methods between December 2007 and June 2009: individual online participation and in-school sessions conducted in twenty school boards in all regions of the country (with the exception of Québec where a parallel survey was conducted by Québec researchers). This report analyzes the data from both individual online participation and in-school sessions. In addition, participating boards will be provided with private reports comparing their own results to the results from all in-school sessions.

The study was funded by the Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, the University of Winnipeg Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Grant Competition, and Sexual and Gender Diversity: Vulnerability and Resilience (SVR), a research team funded by Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and Fonds de Recherche sur la Société et la Culture (FRSC) du Province de Québec.

STUDY BACKGROUND

Human Rights Commissions across the country (a few in well publicized cases such as the Jubran decision in which the North Vancouver School Board was held responsible for failing to have taken proactive measures to combat homophobia,[2] and many others in private mediation) have found school boards remiss in failing to address homophobia as a major contributor to the misery of a great many children and youth, and directed them to take proactive measures. However, there has been a lack of Canadian-based evidence to demonstrate that LGBTQ students and the children of LGBTQ parents face a hostile climate in Canadian schools. This knowledge gap has been a major impediment for educators who need to understand what the problem is in order to respond appropriately and to assure the school community that homophobic and transphobic bullying are neither rare nor harmless, but major problems that need to be addressed.

It is not an exaggeration to say that people working as either researchers or activists or both in the areas of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools believe that the experiences suffered by lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirited, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) students, along with students perceived to be LGBTQ, are leading to underperformance, unhappiness, assault, and even death, and that research such

as this, which is designed to identify problems and work towards solutions, is desperately needed. The associated issues of school climate for children with LGBTQ parents and for heterosexual or "straight" students who find themselves targeted by homophobia and transphobia also need to be researched and better understood.

Although we could assume that the experiences of Canadian students would be similar to those in the United States and the United Kingdom, we recognize that there are differences among the countries and that it is reasonable for Canadian educators to want to see Canadian results to ground their responses. While most of the information in this report will come as no surprise to members of the LGBTQ community, the study provides a systematically produced knowledge base that draws on the experiences of as many youth as possible in the interests of providing educators and administrators across the country with the information they need to make evidence-based policy and programming decisions.

The information here comes from the young people themselves through the many hundreds of students, LGBTQ and heterosexual, who took the time to make their voices heard by completing the survey. LGBTQ youth have demonstrated remarkable resilience in extremely difficult circumstances. In the absence of social acceptance and systemic integration into the life of their schools, many LGBTQ youth have developed their own support groups

and lobbied their teachers and principals for official status as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs). Other youths, however, live very isolated lives in schools across the country and participation in this study was in some cases their first experience of communicating with the adult world about what they have experienced. Their participation enabled us to develop a report that takes into account the needs of people who are not able to confide in teachers, complain to principals, or ask their parents to intervene on their behalf. We wish to express our deepest respect for all who came forward to help with this important project. We thank you and hope that you will recognize your contributions and your voices in this report.

PROJECT TEAM

The impetus for this study was the commitment to safe schools by James Chamberlain, Joan Merrifield, and other members of Egale Canada's Education Committee, a group of educators from across Canada who drafted the questionnaire that was later revised for use in this study, and who continued to serve as the Project Advisory Committee. Members include Joan Beecroft, Jane Bouey, Ellen Chambers-Picard, Tara Elliott, Noble Kelly, Wayne Madden, Elizabeth J. Meyer, Susan Rose, and Helen Victoros. Former members James Chamberlain and Joan Merrifield were instrumental in developing the project. Catherine Taylor, Ph.D., University of Winnipeg (Associate Professor of Education) is the Principal Investigator for the study. Tracey Peter, Ph. D., University of Manitoba (Assistant Professor of Sociology) joined the project team as Co-Investigator with responsibility for the statistical analysis. A number of dedicated Research Assistants worked on the project over its two year span, including Kevin Schachter, who developed and maintained the survey's website and has provided invaluable insights on the implementation of the project; Sarah Paquin, who served as the Senior Research Assistant for the in-school implementation of the project; TL McMinn, who replaced Sarah as Senior RA in September 2009; Stacey Beldom, who assisted with the process of contacting school boards and developing applications to their research committees; and Zoë Gross, who contacted youth organizations throughout the country and assisted with data coding. Tessa Blaikie and Allison Ferry provided key research assistance in the final reporting stage.

WORKING DEFINITIONS

The survey used the language of "homophobic" "bullying" because both terms are familiar to educators. In so doing, however, we were well aware that the forms of homophobic bullying reported by students in previous studies include not only direct physical or verbal harassment that targets students because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, but a whole range of experiences that also include social and cultural exclusion, lack of support from adults, and daily exposure to hearing words that describe one's identity, such as "gay," used as synonyms for "stupid" or "useless."

As adolescents go through the process of sexual awakening, terms like "gay" and "lesbian"—some of the key terms in our questionnaire—are often found in their daily vocabulary. However, the terms are not necessarily clearly understood even by students who are themselves questioning their sexual or gender identity. We provided the following definitions in the questionnaire itself to help students provide accurate responses:[3]

LGBTQ: an acronym for "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Two-Spirit, Queer and Questioning" people

BISEXUAL: a person who is attracted physically and emotionally to both males and females

GAY: a person who is physically and emotionally attracted to someone of the same sex—gay can include both males and females, or refer to males only

LESBIAN: female who is attracted physically and emotionally to other females

QUEER: historically, a negative term for homosexuality, but more recently reclaimed by the LGBT movement to refer to itself—increasingly, the word "queer" is popularly used by LGBT youth as a positive way to refer to themselves

QUESTIONING: a person who is unsure of their sexual orientation or gender identity

STRAIGHT/HETEROSEXUAL: a person who is sexually and emotionally attracted to someone of the "opposite" sex

TRANSGENDER: a person whose gender identity, outward appearance, expression and/or anatomy does not fit into conventional expectations of male or female—often used as an umbrella term to represent a wide range of non-conforming gender identities and behaviours

TRANSSEXUAL: a person who experiences intense personal and emotional discomfort with their assigned birth gender—some transsexuals may undergo treatments (i.e., sex reassignment surgery and/or hormone therapy) to physically alter their body and

gender expression to correspond with what they feel their true gender is

Note: We use the term "trans" in this report for both transgender and transsexual in order to reflect the generally preferred term in the trans community.

TWO SPIRIT: some Aboriginal people identify themselves as Two Spirit rather than as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender—historically, in many Aboriginal cultures two-spirited persons were respected leaders and medicine people. Two-spirited persons were often accorded special status based upon their unique abilities to understand both male and female perspectives.

GENDER EXPRESSION: the way a person publicly shows one's gender identity through clothing, speech, body language, wearing of make-up and/or accessories and other forms of displaying masculinity or femininity

GENDER IDENTITY: a person's internal sense or feeling of being male or female—gender expression relates to how a person presents their sense of gender to the larger society. Gender identity and gender expression are often closely linked with the term transgender.

PERCEIVED SEXUAL ORIENTATION: when someone wrongly assumes that you are lesbian, gay, or bisexual without knowing what your true sexual orientation really is (heterosexual)

SEXUAL IDENTITY/ORIENTATION: a person's deep-seated feelings of emotional and sexual attraction to another person—

this may be with people of the same gender (lesbian or gay), the other gender (heterosexual/straight) or either gender (bisexual)

HOMOPHOBIA: fear and/or hatred of homo-sexuality in others, often exhibited by name-calling, bullying, exclusion, prejudice, discrimination, or acts of violence—anyone who is LGBTQ or assumed to be LGBTQ can be the target of homophobia

While our study includes many questions that allow us to identify trans-specific experiences of bullying, we did not use the term "transphobia" in the questionnaire because it is not yet in common usage in educational circles; we anticipate, however, that one of the outcomes of the present study will be that transphobia does become more widely recognized and understood as a major problem Canadian schools.

We did not use the term "homosexual" or "homosexuality" in the survey because of their historical usage in law and medicine as extremely pejorative terms denoting immorality and mental illness. Most LGBTQ people do not identify with those terms and have deliberately stopped using them (similarly as, for example, Black people generally avoid the word "Negro").

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[3] Although we provided these definitions for the purposes of completing the survey, it is important to recognize that language is not static. For a continuously updated glossary, see the Terms & Concepts section of MyGSA.ca: http://MyGSA.ca/SiteGlossary.

[METHODOLOGY]

Data were collected through two methods: individual participation in an open-access online survey and in-class participation in a controlled-access online survey implemented in schools. This report discusses the results of our analysis of the combined (aggregate) data collected through both methods.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The survey questionnaire, which was hosted on its own website, asked participants to self-report on their school climate through a series of questions with a particular focus on experiences of hostility, indifference, acceptance, and support. It was a relatively long questionnaire that took respondents an estimated 20-30 minutes to complete. Seven of the 54 questions were open-ended. Some of these invited students to explain their experiences and perspectives while others asked students to supply basic information such as the names of their school boards. The rest were closed-ended responses in "check all that apply" and "check the best match" formats. We also asked students to identify their ethnicity, gender (female/male/trans), religion, and sexual orientation so that we could analyze their perceptions of life at school in light of various aspects of their social identities.

Members of the Education Committee of Egale Canada drafted the first version of the survey questionnaire and worked closely with the research team as we refined it. The refining process was done in consultation with researchers and research organizations that had conducted similar surveys in the United States and the United Kingdom, including GLSEN (The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) based in New York City,

whose pioneering work in the field of LGBTQ-inclusive education has laid the groundwork for studies such as the one reported here.

A review of questionnaires developed for other studies was conducted, notably GLSEN's Climate Surveys of homophobia in U.S. schools (Kosciw & Diaz, 2006; Kosciw, 2004). The draft questionnaire was then reviewed by several sociologists with expertise in survey research and statistical analysis. The questionnaire was finalized after being pre-tested for age-appropriate vocabulary, clarity/unambiguousness, neutrality, relevance, and completeness by administering it to LGBTQ youth involved in a community centre support group.

SAMPLING

The survey was conducted by two methods: individual participation via a publicly accessible website, and in-class participation via a controlled-access website. Individual participation enabled us to reach students across the country, the majority of them LGBTQ. In-class participation, which enabled us to canvas the general population of students, occurred in school divisions in every region of the country except Québec, where a parallel survey was conducted by a research team led by Dr. Line Chamberland of Université du Québec à Montréal. (Joint presentations and publications are forthcoming.)

We do not know how many students are LGBTQ, though studies over the last twenty years consistently estimate the number at between **2.5** and **11** per cent of students.[4] Our numbers were somewhat higher, with **14.1%** of the students from our in-class sessions identifying as LGBTQ. This is consistent with the findings of the 2007 McCreary Centre report *Not Yet Equal*, which is based on responses from 30,000 students in grades 7 to 12 from randomly selected schools in BC, and which reported that **89%** of male participants and only **82%** of female participants identified as "completely heterosexual."[5] Additionally, youth who are same-sex attracted often identify as heterosexual in research, even if they have had sexual contact with a same-sex partner (**55%** of the latter in

one U.S. study[6]), and research participants often under-report information such as being members of sexual minority groups out of concerns about confidentiality, even in anonymous surveys.[7] Findings such as these suggest that the percentages of LGBTQ individuals in any given population up to this point have generally been underestimated.

Because most LGBTQ youth are forced by social prejudice to conceal their identities, it was not feasible to design a true random-sampling selection process that would capture the experience of all LGBTQ students.[8] Instead of looking to generate results that would be generalizable to the whole population of LGBTQ students in Canada, we undertook to reach as many LGBTQ students as possible. As is common with surveys on LGBTQ and other marginalized and "hard to reach" populations, non-probability sampling was employed for the individual participation component. To this end, our principle manner of reaching respondents for the open-access part of the survey was through social networks. We compiled a list of every organization in the country known to have LGBTQ youth group memberships or clients and provided them with information about the survey through email and phone correspondence. In addition, a link to the survey was posted on both the Egale Canada website and Facebook group in order to encourage participation from individuals who may not be associated with any LGBTQ youth associations. Some participants learned of the survey through media coverage in major venues such as CBC Radio, the Toronto Star, and the Winnipeg Free Press. Others were informed of the survey by educators whose boards had approved the survey, but had not implemented it in their schools. Finally, although not specifically asked of respondents, it is expected that a number of participants heard about the survey through snowball sampling (i.e., told by a friend or acquaintance about the questionnaire).

For the closed-access method of data collection, we invited all school divisions in Canada to participate and we made formal research applications to conduct the survey during class time in a random sample of approximately forty school divisions distributed across Canada. In the end, the study was approved by twenty school divisions representing all regions of Canada except Québec, where the study led by Line Chamberland (UQAM) was being conducted at the same time. The survey was implemented in high school classes with regular classroom teachers supervising the survey sessions. Most sessions were conducted online in a computer lab, but in some remote communities without internet access, questionnaires were filled out on paper and mailed in. Data collection occurred between December 2007 and June 2009.

[4] Hillier, Warr, & Haste, 1996; Lindsay & Rosental, 1997; Remafedi, Resnick, Blum & Harris, 1992; Russell, Seif, & Truong, 2001; Saewyc et al., 2007.

[5] Saewyc et al., 2007.

[6] Massachusetts Department of Education, 2002.

[7] Black, Gates, Sanders, & Taylor, 2000.

[8] Elze, 2003.

ETHICS PROTOCOL

Ethical conduct that respects the rights of research participants is an ongoing and vital dimension of any research process. We prepared an Ethics Protocol package which was subsequently approved by the Senate Committee on Ethics in Human Research and Scholarship (SCEHRS) at the University of Winnipeg. We fully support the principle that parents have a right to know what outside researchers are asking their adolescent children to do, and the survey instructions therefore asked students under 18 years of age to get permission from their parents before beginning. However, the Ethics Committee agreed that it would violate core principles of scholarly research to ask youth to put themselves in harm's way in order to participate, or else deny them the benefits of participating in the research. The protocol therefore allowed LGBTQ adolescents who lack a supportive parent or guardian to act as mature minors able to provide their own consent for purposes of the study so as not to put them at the emotional, physical, and familial risks documented in scholarly studies of the reaction of parents to disclosure of LGBTQ identity (Grossman, D'Augelli, Howell, & Hubbard, 2005; Harrison, 2003; Morrison & L'Heareux, 2001; Morrow, 2004; Rivers & D'Augelli, 2001; Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2008).[9] Given the known high frequency of hostile reactions by family and acquaintances to disclosures of LGBTQ identity, we have been acutely aware of the importance of fulfilling research ethics principles of rigorously maintaining confidentiality and never reporting information that could identify individuals. Additionally, because LGBTQ youth generally need to be extremely careful about revealing their LGBTQ identities in order to avoid discrimination, harassment, and violence, the survey was completely anonymous, as is common practice in survey research addressing LGBTQ matters (Martin & Meezan, 2003). The ethics protocol also specified that we would meet the consent requirements of participating school divisions, which varied from self-consent for all students in a few divisions to full signed parental consent for all students in others.

[9] The argument for mature minor status is discussed in Taylor 2008a and 2008b.

PARTICIPANTS

In total, over 3700 individuals participated in the survey. Once data were cleaned, a total useable sample of 3607 participants was retained.[10] A brief description of the final sample follows:

▷ Nearly three-quarters (**71%**) of participants identified as straight/heterosexual. A quarter (**26%**) identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or questioning and **3%** identified as trans or Two Spirit. (In the individual open-access component, **73%** of participants identified as LGBTQ; in the in-school controlled-conditions component, **14%** identified as LGBTQ.)

▷ Participants were distributed among the regions of Canada (except Québec): **25%** were from British Columbia, **24%** from the Prairie provinces, **30%** from Ontario, **15%** from the Atlantic provinces (excluding Labrador), and **6%** from the North (Labrador, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and the Yukon).

▷ Participants approximately represented the ethnic diversity of Canada, with **66%** identifying as White/Caucasian, **19%** as Asian, **6%** as Aboriginal, **6%** as mixed ethnicity, and **3%** as "other."

▷ Almost half (**46%**) indicated living in a small city or suburban setting, followed by **43%** from urban areas, and **11%** from rural environments, First Nation Reserves, or Armed Forces Bases.

▷ The average age of respondents was 17.4 years (standard deviation of 4.23 years) with a median age of 17 years.

▷ The vast majority (**91.9%**) reported being currently in high school, while **8.1%** indicated being out of school or attending a post-secondary institution. (Participants no longer attending high school were instructed to interpret questions by referring to their last year of school.)

▷ Current and past students from a total of 149 school districts participated in the survey.

[10] A total of 126 participants' records were removed from the overall sample for a variety of reasons. Some individuals did not complete the bulk of the questionnaire and their records, therefore, were excluded. The vast majority of those removed, however, were taken out because of randomly selected responses, which were determined through a variety of data or "validity" checks through which illogical responses can be identified (for example, through the dichotomous variables of ethnic identity where respondents selected all seven categories). It is important to point out that there were a number of homophobic remarks made by some participants. These comments were identified for subsequent analysis, but respondents were not excluded from the survey solely based on derogatory remarks. Nevertheless, there was a positive correlation between homophobic comments and random, illogical, and inconsistent responses. Once these individuals were removed from the survey, the percentage of hateful comments reduced considerably.

ANALYSIS

After the data collection process was complete, bivariate analyses were prepared. Specifically, cross-tabulations with chi-square (χ^2) estimations were programmed using a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Where appropriate, difference of means (t-test) and ANOVA tests of significance were calculated, depending on the classification or "level of measurement" of the variables/questions (i.e., whether they are dichotomous, ordered, or continuous). Finally, effect sizes were calculated for all chi-square (used Cramer's V), t-test (used Cohen's d), and ANOVA (used Cohen's d) significant tests.

Chi-square, p-values, and effect sizes are provided as footnotes in the following section. We also make frequent comparisons to the results of the BC study *Not Yet Equal* (Saewyc et al., 2007) and the most recent U.S. School Climate Survey (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008).

FINDINGS

Results are reported first for student experiences and then for institutional responses. In analyzing the individual-participation data, we were particularly interested in comparing the responses of the following groupings of students:

⇨ LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ. This comparison shows differences in how students perceive the school climate depending on their sexual orientations and gender identities, with LGBTQ people generally experiencing the climate as more homophobic and transphobic than their non-LGBTQ peers.

⇨ Trans and sexual minority. Separating out trans and sexual minority students helps to identify aspects of trans experience that have received relatively little attention in anti-homophobia research. Trans individuals' confrontations with social prejudice are only now being recognized as distinct in some ways from those of other LGBTQ people.

⇨ Female and male bisexual, lesbian, and gay male. Separating out bisexual students from gay or lesbian participants will help to identify specific experiences of bisexual youth.

⇨ Sexual minority female and sexual minority male. Other studies (including, notably, Saewyc et al., 2007) have identified significant differences between lesbian/bisexual female youth and gay/bisexual male youth in relevant areas such as suicidality and exposure to harassment.

⇨ With one or more LGBTQ parents and with no LGBTQ parents.

- ⇨ Aboriginal, Caucasian, and youth of colour. Although there is a great deal of cultural variation within the "youth of colour" or "Visible Minorities" category, in this report we focused on broad categories that reflect the federal designation of Aboriginal and "Visible Minority" people as groups that face systemic discrimination in Canadian society (Public Service Canada, 2007) in order to explore the experiences of doubly marginalized LGBTQ students.

- ⇨ Regions: the Atlantic provinces, British Columbia, the North, Ontario, and the Prairies. We will be collaborating in future reports with researchers who have surveyed students in Québec.

We have also performed analyses and prepared private reports for participating school divisions for their internal use in policy and programme development. This report does not contain any board-specific data.

In the following section, we present our findings in the following sequence: school climate (including exposure to homophobic and transphobic language and direct victimization by verbal, physical, and other forms of harassment), impacts (including school attachment and perceptions of school safety), and institutional responses (including staff interventions in homophobic incidents, anti-homophobia policies, and Gay-Straight Alliance clubs or GSAs).

SCHOOL CLIMATE
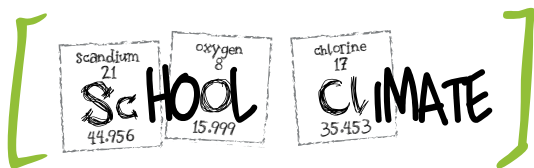
HOMOPHOBIC, TRANSPHOBIC, AND SEXIST COMMENTS

HOMOPHOBIC COMMENTS

LGBTQ students do not need to be directly targeted by homophobic or transphobic language to be exposed to it; they hear it in their everyday experience of adolescent discourse. School Climate Surveys on homophobia conducted in the U.S. and the U.K. have found that the vast majority of LGBTQ youth report hearing homophobic comments such as "fag," "dyke," and "that's so gay" in their school not just "sometimes," but "frequently" or "often"; this was reported by **73.6%** of LGBTQ students in GLSEN's 2007 sample of 6209 students (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008) and **72%** in Stonewall U.K.'s in-school sample of 1145 British students (Hunt & Jensen, 2007). In some of these usages, such as "fag" and "dyke," the intended meaning is clearly an accusation, in jest or in earnest, that the targeted person is LGBTQ; in others, such as "that's so gay" ("t'es gai" in French), the meaning is closer to "that's stupid" or "that's worthless." Whatever the intention, however, the result is that LGBTQ students are hearing terms that signify a core aspect of their identities used as insults. Ultimately, they get the message that "gay" is the last thing one wants to be in school culture.

> " **YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON EVERYDAY LANGUAGE** "

Well, since our group got shut down the homophobic remarks and other insults have become used more every single day and it's hard not to go even one class where I don't hear "that's so gay" or "Faggot."

Fun Fact: I've counted myself hearing "That's So Gay" and other homophobic terms up to around 15 times per class. That's up to 60 times a day and usually (depending on the teacher and other students around of course) the language never gets dealt with unless I say something to try and stop it.

I have never been a victim of homophobia, but I hear comments like "That's so gay" every single day at my school. Who wants to come out to that negativity?

The Climate Survey included a series of questions on homo-phobic name-calling. Respondents were asked how often they heard expressions such as "that's so gay" or remarks like "faggot," "queer," "lezbo," or "dyke," etc. used in a negative manner at school. Results show that homophobic comments are extremely prevalent in school environments. For instance, over two-thirds (**70.4%**) of all participating students reported hearing expressions such as "that's so gay" frequently (i.e., daily) in school. In addition, almost half (**47.5%**) reported hearing remarks such as "faggot," "lezbo," and "dyke" every day in school. See Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: FREQUENCY OF HOMOPHOBIC COMMENTS (ALL STUDENTS)

Legend: NEVER | RARELY (MONTHLY) | SOMETIMES (WEEKLY) | FREQUENTLY (DAILY)

EXPRESSIONS: "THAT'S SO GAY"
- 70.4%
- 21.5%
- 6.2%
- 1.9%

REMARKS: "FAGGOT", "QUEER", "LEZBO", "DYKE"
- 47.5%
- 31.9%
- 15.3%
- 5.3%
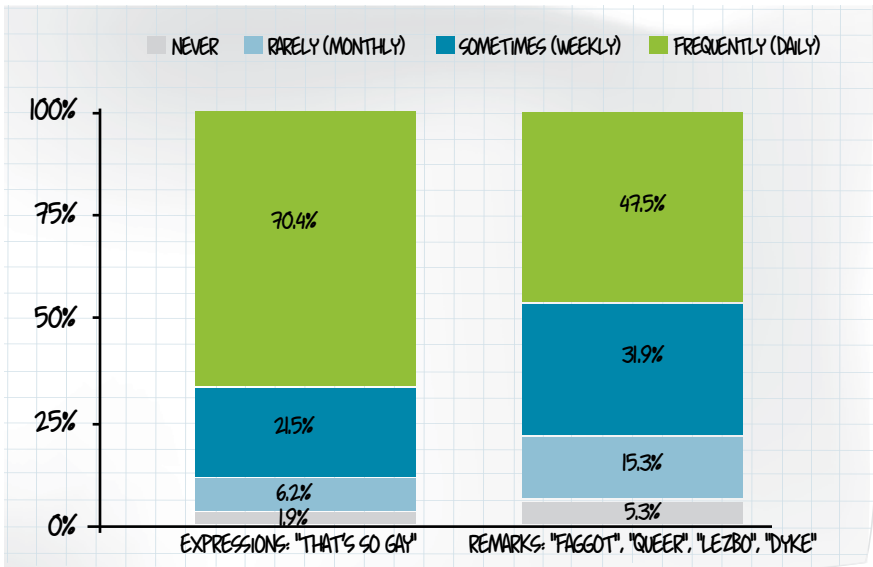
LGBTQ students were somewhat more likely to notice homophobic comments than non-LGBTQ students were, but the numbers were consistently high for both groups. For example, **98.0%** of heterosexual students and **98.3%** of LGBTQ students had heard "that's so gay" used at school, and **94.5%** of heterosexual students and **95.3%** of LGBTQ students heard "faggot," "queer," "lezbo," etc. used as insults.[11]   LGBTQ students reported using such language far less frequently than non-LGBTQ students (**18.4%** daily or weekly compared to **45.2%** for non-LGBTQ students).[12]

Within the subset of LGBTQ students, female, male, and trans students reported hearing similar levels of homophobic language. For example,

⇨ **76.9%** of female sexual minority students heard "that's so gay" every day at school, compared to **75.7%** of sexual minority males and **81.3%** of trans youth. Only **0.7%** of male sexual minority students said they never heard this comment at school (**3.2%** sexual minority female, **2.2%** trans).[13]

⇨ **82.6%** of sexual minority females heard remarks like "lezbo," "dyke," and "faggot" used as insults every day or every week at school, compared to **80.9%** of sexual minority males and **86.5%** of trans students.[14]

Only a tiny minority of LGBTQ students reported that they never heard homophobic comments from other students (**1.9%** of sexual minority females, **4.1%** of sexual minority males, and **1.1%** of trans youth[15]), which suggests that if you are a sexual minority student in a Canadian high school, it is highly likely that you will hear insulting things about your sexual orientation. Again, sexual minority female and male and trans students were similar in a number of related items:

⇨ **79.6%** of female sexual minority students reported that they find homophobic comments upsetting, which is somewhat lower than for sexual minority males (**90.1%**) and about the same as trans students (**80.5%**).

▷ Only a quarter of LGBTQ students said staff intervened "most of the time" or "always" (**25.2%** of sexual minority females, **27.3%** of sexual minority males, and **24.4%** of trans youth).

▷ A third of sexual minority female students (**34.6%**) said that staff never intervened when such comments were made (**29.5%** for sexual minority males and **43.0%** for trans youth[16]).

▷ More than half of sexual minority female students (**55.4%**) said that another student never intervened when homophobic comments were made (compared to **49.2%** for sexual minority males and **53.9%** for trans youth[17]).

▷ Almost **10%** of LGBTQ students reported having heard homophobic comments from teachers daily or weekly (**9.5%** for female sexual minority youth, **8.2%** for male sexual minority youth, and **16.9%** trans youth.)[18]

TRANSPHOBIC AND SEXIST COMMENTS

I know I type a lot, sorry. I just have never had anyone ask me before. There is the really obvious stuff and then there is less obvious stuff that hurts just as much. Like when teachers walk in and say 'I need 3 strong boys to help me move some tables.' One time I put up my hand because I am perfectly able to move tables, probably even better than the boys. Ppl in my class started laughing, and the teacher took 4 boys anyways.

" YOUTH RESPONDENT "

Negative gender-related or transphobic comments are as common in school culture as homophobic comments. For example, "don't be a girl" is used to accuse boys of displaying feminine qualities, such as being emotional. LGBTQ students were somewhat more likely to report that teachers used negative gender-related or transphobic comments than to report that teachers used homophobic comments: **12.1%** of female sexual minority students, **15.1%** of male sexual minority students, and **22.5%** of trans students reported that they heard teachers using such language daily or weekly.[19]

There were some gender differences among LGBTQ participants' reports on this subject. For example, almost half of the female sexual minority participants and more than half of the trans participants reported hearing transphobic comments about girls "not acting feminine enough" every day or every week at school (**47.0%** of female sexual minority students and **62.2%** of trans students). Male sexual minority participants were somewhat more likely than female to hear such comments (**55.8%**), perhaps because they were made in gender-segregated areas, such as washrooms or change rooms, by other male students out of hearing range of female students. There were even more comments reported about boys "not acting masculine enough": **73.2%** of female sexual minority students heard such comments daily or weekly, as did **66.7%** of male sexual minority students and **79.1%** of trans students.[20] See Figure 2.

FIGURE 2: INAPPROPRIATE GENDERED REMARKS (MALE SEXUAL MINORITY/FEMALE SEXUAL MINORITY/TRANS STUDENTS)
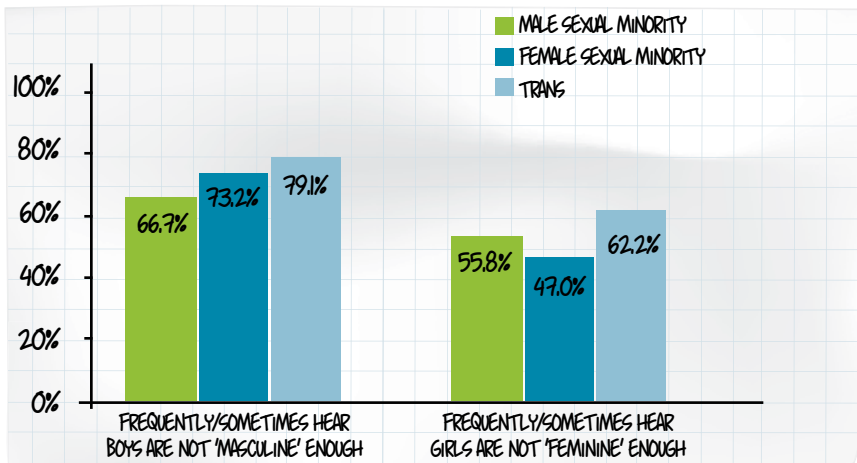
While our participants' responses suggest that boys were subjected to more comments than girls about how they measure up to gender conventions, the reverse was true for negative comments about boys or girls in general, with the latter being much more common. Almost two-thirds (**62.9%**) of female sexual minority students reported hearing negative remarks about girls in general daily or weekly (as did **72.1%** of male sexual minority and **72.7%** of trans students).[21] These figures suggest that, as aware as girls are of sexist comments about their gender, there is even more sexist language than they are privy to. There was also a great deal of negative language about boys in general, but much less than was reported about girls, and with less of a difference between female students' and male students' exposure to it in school culture. Just over half of both sexual minority females (**55.1%**) and males (**52.3%**) reported hearing negative comments about boys in general daily or weekly. Trans students reported hearing anti-male language more often (**65.5%**).[22] Similar results were found in the report *Harsh Realities: The Experiences of Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools* released by GLSEN, where it was found that **82%** of trans students heard remarks about not acting "masculine" enough sometimes, often, or frequently versus **77%** of students who heard remarks about not acting "feminine" enough (Greytak, Kosciw, and Diaz, 2009). This may be because they are more acutely aware of gender or because more remarks about gender are deliberately made in their presence.

Similarly, trans students were more likely to report hearing negative gender-related or transphobic comments daily or weekly from other students (**89.8%** of trans youth compared to **79.3%** of female sexual minority and **81.1%** of male sexual minority youth).[23] Students also reported hearing negative gender-related or transphobic comments from teachers or other school staff members, with trans students more likely to report hearing such comments from staff sometimes or frequently (**22.5%**, compared to **12.2%** of female sexual minority students and **15.1%** of male sexual minority students).[24]

OTHER BETWEEN-GROUP DIFFERENCES

Students with one or more LGBTQ parents were somewhat more likely than other students to say that they rarely or never hear "that's so gay" at school (13.7% versus 7.9%).[25] They were also less likely to use homophobic language themselves, though many reported that they did use it (45.3% never use it, versus 36.2% of students with no LGBTQ parents).[26] Further, youth with one or more LGBTQ parents were more likely than students without any LGBTQ parents to notice homophobic and derogatory gender-related or transphobic comments made by teachers: one-fifth (21.4%) of youth with one or more LGBTQ parents said teachers sometimes or frequently made homophobic comments, compared to only 6.9% of students without any LGBTQ parents,[27] and a quarter (25.9%) of youth with one or more LGBTQ parents said teachers sometimes or frequently made transphobic comments, compared to a tenth (9.6%) of students without any LGBTQ parents.[28]

These findings are consistent with the GLSEN study *Involved, Invisible, Ignored: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Parents and Their Children in Our Nation's K-12 Schools*, which reported that students with LGBT parents were significantly more likely to hear homophobic remarks and sexist remarks frequently (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). That study reported that 32% of students had heard negative remarks about having an LGBT

family member at least sometimes. In this same study it was also found that students with LGBT parents were more likely to frequently hear homophobic remarks (64% versus 52% of students without LGBT parents) and sexist remarks (72% versus 51% of students without LGBT parents) (Kosciw & Diaz 2008).

Regionally, there was considerable variation across the country in the frequency of hearing the expression "that's so gay" at school. Among Ontario participants, 80.9% reported hearing it daily, as did 74.9% of Northern participants, 71.1% of Prairie participants, and 69.1% of Atlantic participants. BC had the lowest reported rate at 53.7% (which may be attributable to the high proportion of BC students who were from the Vancouver School Board, which has an extensive anti-homophobia programme). There was less variation at the bottom end of the scale, where between 1.3% (Prairies) and 4.4% (BC) of youth reported never hearing the expression.[29] Between 67.0% (North) and 39.1% (Prairies) of students reported hearing other homophobic language such as "faggot" and "lezbo" every day, with a high of 10.7% (BC) and a low of 2.9% (Ontario) of students reporting that they never heard such language.[30] Students from the North were most likely to report saying these remarks themselves every day (30.0%), with students from the other regions ranging from 13.5% to 16.7%. Students from the North were least likely to report rarely or never saying such remarks

(**45.5%**), with the other regions ranging from **54.4%** (Atlantic) to **66.9%** (Ontario).[31] Even in the region where students were least likely to report being upset by such language, half the participants reported being upset by it (North, **50.2%**), ranging up to **75.4%** of participating students in Ontario.[32]

There was also some ethnic variation, with Caucasian students being significantly more likely to hear "that's so gay" every day at school: **75%** of Caucasian students reported hearing this daily, compared to **65.7%** of Aboriginal students and **57.5%** of students of colour. However, each of these three ethnic groupings reported similarly high rates of hearing the comment at least weekly: **94.0%**, **87.1%**, and **86.3%**, respectively.[33] Half of Caucasian (**50.0%**) and Aboriginal students (**49.0%**) heard comments such as "faggot" and "lezbo" daily, compared to **39.2%** of students of colour, with similar numbers hearing the comments at least weekly (Caucasian **82.0%**, Aboriginal **76.5%**, youth of colour **72.1%**).[34] Students from these three groups were similarly likely to report hearing such remarks from teachers "rarely" or "never" (Caucasian **93.5%**, Aboriginal **93.5%**, youth of colour **90.3%**) and to say that they "rarely" or "never" said such remarks themselves (Caucasian **63.2%**, Aboriginal **60.7%**, youth of colour **61.2%**).[35] What is being used as homophobic language varies depending on cultural context, however. A possible reason for youth of colour reporting the lowest rates of

hearing homophobic expressions such as "that's so gay," "faggot," and "lezbo" daily or weekly is that the survey questions did not explicitly account for equivalent culturally-specific abusive terms such as "batty man" or "chi chi gal." This is an especially important consideration in school environments both because of what the environment might really be like for youth from various cultural groups who are being exposed to different malicious words and for the sake of intervention: if students, educators, education support workers, and administrators are not familiar with discriminatory language, it becomes impossible for them to intervene effectively when homophobic incidents are occurring.[36]

Caucasian students were most likely to hear transphobic comments about "boys not acting masculine enough" every day or at least every week (**64.3%** compared to **59.0%** of Aboriginal youth and **57.0%** of youth of colour). There was less variation in the frequency of hearing comments about "girls not acting feminine enough" (**46.5%** of Caucasian youth compared to **39.2%** of Aboriginal youth and **43.6%** of youth of colour).[37] Caucasian students were also most likely to hear remarks that are negative to girls in general every day or at least weekly (**68.3%** of Caucasian youth compared to **59.5%** of Aboriginal youth and **53.2%** of youth of colour), and to hear comments that are negative to boys in general (**54.2%** of Caucasian youth compared to **46.7%** of Aboriginal youth and **47.2%** of youth of colour).[38]

11 "That's so gay" χ^2 (3, N=3340) = 26.6, p<.001, Cramer's V=.09; "faggot" etc.
χ^2 (3, N=3338) = 17.5, p<.001 Cramer's V=.07.

12 χ^2 (1, N=3329) = 2.09, p<.001, Cramer's V=.25.

13 χ^2 (6, N=941) = 12.9, p=.045, Cramer's V=.08.

14 χ^2 (6, N=940) = 6.3, p=.40, Cramer's V=.06.

15 χ^2 (6, N=936) = 10.8, p=.09, Cramer's V=.08.

16 χ^2 (6, N=912) = 10.1, p=.12, Cramer's V=.08.

17 χ^2 (6, N=934) = 11.2, p=.08, Cramer's V=.08.

18 χ^2 (2, N=940) = 6.6, p=.036, Cramer's V=.08.

19 χ^2 (6, N=937) = 36.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.14.

20 Girls not feminine enough χ^2 (2, N=939) = 9.25, p=.010, Cramer's V=.10; boys not masculine enough χ^2 (2, N=943) = 7.93, p=.019, Cramer's V=.09.

21 Negative comments to girls in general χ2 (2, N=935) = 8.35, p=.015, Cramer's V=.10.

22 χ^2 (6, N=934) = 5.32, p=.07, Cramer's V=.08.

23 χ^2 (6, N=930) = 5.0, p=.08, Cramer's V=.07.

24 χ^2 (6, N=937) = 5.9, p=.053, Cramer's V=.08.

25 χ^2 (1, N=3210) = 5.00, p=.03, Cramer's V=.04.

26 χ^2 (3, N=3196) = 7.35, p=.06, Cramer's V=.05.

27 χ^2 (1, N=3193) = 45.9, p<.001, Cramer's V=.12.

28 χ^2 (1, N=3190) = 32.3, p<.001, Cramer's V=.10.

29 Daily, χ^2 (12, N=3546) = 216, p<.001, Cramer's V=.14.

30 Daily, χ^2 (12, N=3545) = 166, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13.

31 Daily, χ^2 (12, N=3536) = 54.7, p<.001, Cramer's V=.12.

32 χ^2 (4, N=3524) = 89.9, p<.001, Cramer's V=.16.

33 Daily, χ^2 (6, N=3508) = 119, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13; daily or weekly, χ^2 (2, N=3508) = 58.1, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13.

34 Daily, χ^2 (6, N=3508) = 95.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.12; daily or weekly, χ^2 (2, N=3508) = 40.8, p<.001, Cramer's V=.11.

35 Teachers, χ^2 (2, N=3491) = 10.5, p=.005, Cramer's V=.06; themselves, χ^2 (2, N=3498) = 1.5, p=.479, Cramer's V=.02.

36 For a more detailed glossary of terms, see http://MyGSA.ca/SiteGlossary.

37 Boys not masculine, χ^2 (2, N=3503) = 16.1, p<.001, Cramer's V=.07; girls not feminine, χ^2 (2, N=3489) = 5.48, p=.065, Cramer's V=.04.

38 Negative to girls, χ^2 (2, N=3473) = 68.5, p<.001, Cramer's V=.14; negative to boys, χ^2 (2, N=3475) = 15.6, p<.001, Cramer's V=.07.

DIRECT VICTIMIZATION

Kam got a binder kicked down the hall into her back by a guy shouting, "Fucking dykes!" as the two of us passed. I have heard remarks from girls saying "If I were a lesbian, I'd kill myself." When watching a video on the holocaust where they mentioned the killings of LGBT people, boys cheered at the idea. I have been forced into my own section of our gymnasium locker rooms by my classmates because I like girls. I was sexually harassed (verbally and physically) by a male classmate who said that he'd make me like boys again. Kam and I both have been told "Go die, dyke!" Myself and almost all of my GLBT friends have received emails, facebook and/or nexopia messages from other students with homophobic remarks.

most of the gay community in my school are bullied, we all stick together, but that doesn't always help. Many gays are depressed because of this, and teachers and adults need to help and stand up for our community. We are not aliens, we're people, and we have rights.

I have a friend who is gay and she's ridiculed at her school about it. The girls in her class give her dirty looks and avoid her and when I hang out with her those girls ask me if i'm gay. It's really ridiculous and it disappoints me how stupid some kids can be.

This year there was a particularly bad crop of grade 9's. It seems like they can't go two minutes without calling someone a fag.

Other large scale studies have found that LGBTQ youth are directly victimized much more often than heterosexual youth. For example, the recent "Growing Up Today" study of more than 7500 U.S. adolescents reports that sexual minority youth were much more likely to be bullied than heterosexual adolescents (Berlan, Corliss, Field, Goodman, & Austin, 2010). Many studies have found that LGBTQ students have higher rates of suicidal ideation than heterosexual students (e.g., Zhao, Montoro, Igartua, & Thombs, 2009) and that LGBTQ students who are targeted by homophobic harassment tend to have lower grades, lower progress to post-secondary education, higher rates of skipping school because of safety concerns, higher rates of risky behaviour, and higher rates of

depression and suicidal ideation than non-LGBTQ students (Garcia, Adams, Friedman, & East, 2002; GLSEN, 2003; Illingworth & Murphy, 2004; Lugg, 2003; Massachusetts Department of Education, 2002). The 2007 McCreary Study found that **61%** of gay students and **66%** of lesbian students between grades 7 and 12 reported having been verbally harassed, compared to **29%** and **37%** of heterosexual boys and girls, respectively (Saewyc et al., 2007), and **86.2%** of LGBTQ students in the 2007 U.S. Climate Survey reported being homophobically harassed and **66.5%** harassed because of their gender expression (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008).

We asked students a series of questions on their experiences of direct verbal and physical harassment and harassment by graffiti, rumour, and cyber-bullying.

VERBAL HARASSMENT

i have been called a dyke, a lesbo, a woman who doesn't know what a woman is. i have been told that all i need is "a strong man who will show me what it is to be a woman" and i have had a teacher say "I'm not doing that, it's so gay" in class. also, i get threatened by people who say they will gay bash me, people who push me into lockers, people who whisper about me knowing i can hear them. overall, it's like hell everyday i go through those doors.

All of my posters were torn down the second they were put up. When I made daily announcements during Pride week discussing famous people who came out, I was verbally harassed IN EVERY CLASS the whole class by the whole class for several days. I had Christian fundamentalist students saying gay marriage was taking away their rights. I was presumed to be a lesbian, name-called, etc. etc.

LGBTQ participants in our survey reported similar levels of direct harassment, much higher on all counts than was reported by non-LGBTQ students, with trans students reporting the highest levels on most indicators. For example, LGBTQ students report

⮕ six times as much verbal harassment about their sexual orientation (**50.8%** of LGBTQ compared to **8.0%** of non-LGBTQ students);

⮕ five times as much verbal harassment about their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity (**48.6%** of LGBTQ versus **8.5%** of non-LGBTQ students);

⮕ twice as much verbal harassment about their gender (**36.2%** of LGBTQ versus **17.3%** of non-LGBTQ students);

⮕ twice as much verbal harassment about their gender expressions of masculinity or femininity (**57.0%** of LGBTQ versus **25.5%** of non-LGBTQ students).[39]

These figures also show that large numbers of non-LGBTQ students experience verbal harassment about their gender and gender expression. See Figure 3. This suggests that the message needs to get out that it is hurtful to harass anyone about their gender, whether LGBTQ or not.

FIGURE 3: VERBAL HARASSMENT (LGBTQ/NON-LGBTQ STUDENTS)
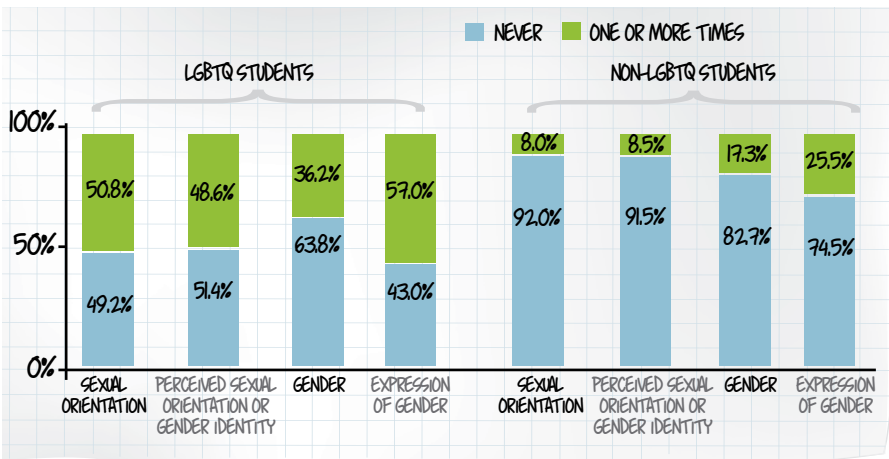
The level of harassment experienced by trans students was particularly high: **64.8%** of trans participants reported being verbally harassed about their gender, compared to **33.3%** of sexual minority respondents and **17.3%** of non-LGBTQ students; **74.2%** of trans students were verbally harassed because of their expression of gender, compared to **55.2%** of sexual minority students and **25.5%** of non-LGBTQ students.[40] Societal gender norms of masculine boys and feminine girls are rigidly enforced in adolescent culture. As Bochenek and Brown (2001) explained in one of the first in-depth examinations of school-based homophobia that reported on interviews with 140 youth and 130 adults:

> It quickly became obvious from our research that the abuse of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth is predicated on the belief that girls and boys must strictly adhere to rigid rules of conduct, dress, and appearances based on their sex. For boys, that means they must be athletic, strong, sexist, and hide their emotions. For girls, that means they must be attentive to and flirtatious with boys and must accept a subordinate status to boys. Regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, youth who violate these rules are punished by their peers and too often by adults.

> Boys who reported the most harassment were those who were least stereotypically masculine. Trans youth are the most vulnerable to both violence by peers and harassment from adults. (p. 49)

Further, trans students are roughly twice as likely as other LGBTQ students and their non-LGBTQ peers to be verbally harassed about their ethnicity or race (**31.0%**, compared to **17.4%** of sexual minority and **16.5%** of non-LGBTQ students) and religion (**32.9%**, compared to **17.7%** of sexual minority and **10.6%** of non-LGBTQ students).[41] Findings such as these suggest that the less one fits into the norms of heterosexual culture, the more one is likely to

be harassed for a variety of reasons, some of them unrelated to sexuality or gender. While youth who actually identify as trans are comparatively small in number, they are highly visible targets of harassment.

However, female sexual minority students were also more likely than male sexual minority students to have been direct targets of verbal harassment because of their sexual orientation, and almost as likely as trans students (**40.9%** of sexual minority females said they had never been harassed, compared to **56.6%** of sexual minority males and **35.6%** of trans youth[42]). A third (**32.3%**) of female sexual minority students said they were verbally harassed daily or weekly because of their sexual orientation (compared to **20.4%** of sexual minority male students and **36.7%** of trans students[43]). It is striking in these results that female sexual minority students were less likely to see the harassment as gender-based (**24.8%**, compared to **37.3%** of male sexual minority students and **64.8%** of trans students[44]), but more likely than sexual minority males to see the harassment they suffer as related to their expression of gender: **60.4%** of sexual minority females, **51.3%** of sexual minority males, and **74.2%** of trans students reported being verbally harassed at school on these grounds.[45] Female sexual minority students were also more likely than male sexual minority students to report being verbally harassed because of their perceived gender or sexual orientation (sexual minority females **54.8%**, sexual minority males **41.6%**, and trans youth **68.2%**).[46] Trans students may report experiencing particularly high levels of harassment on the basis of perceived sexual orientation because often trans individuals are perceived as lesbian, gay, or bisexual when they are not. See Figure 4.

FIGURE 4: VERBAL HARASSMENT (TRANS/FEMALE SEXUAL MINORITY/MALE SEXUAL MINORITY STUDENTS)

NEVER ■ **ONE OR MORE TIMES** ■

TRANS
	NEVER	ONE OR MORE TIMES
EXPRESSION OF GENDER	25.8%	74.2%
GENDER	35.2%	64.8%
PERCEIVED SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY	31.8%	68.2%
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	35.6%	64.4%

FEMALE SEXUAL MINORITY
	NEVER	ONE OR MORE TIMES
EXPRESSION OF GENDER	39.6%	60.4%
GENDER	75.2%	24.8%
PERCEIVED SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY	45.2%	54.8%
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	40.9%	59.1%

MALE SEXUAL MINORITY
	NEVER	ONE OR MORE TIMES
EXPRESSION OF GENDER	48.7%	51.3%
GENDER	62.7%	37.3%
PERCEIVED SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY	58.5%	41.6%
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	56.6%	43.4%

0%   50%   100%

Students with one or more LGBTQ parents also reported higher rates of verbal harassment than students without any LGBTQ parents. In addition to a third (**36.5%**) of youth with one or more LGBTQ parents being harassed about the sexual orientation of their parent(s), these youth are more likely than their peers to be verbally harassed about their own sexual orientation (**44.0%** versus **20.1%**) and perceived sexual orientation or gender (**45.6%** versus **19.7%**) as well as about their gender (**45.2%** versus **22.3%**) and gender expression (**58.3%** versus **34.3%**). They are also more likely to be harassed about their race or ethnicity (**28.9%** versus **17.1%**) and their religion (**34.2%** versus **12.6%**).[47] U.S. findings follow a similar trend, with **42%** of students with LGBT parents experiencing harassment on the basis of their parents' sexual orientation. They also reported high levels of verbal harassment because of their sexual orientation (**37%**), gender (**30%**), gender expression (**33%**), and race (**26%**) (Kosciw & Diaz 2008).

Not only do youth not want to have to hear their loved ones spoken about in cruel ways, but youth with LGBTQ family members also avoid disclosure to protect themselves from harassment. As one participant wrote, *"I am not out about my family members because people are so stupid that they think that if you know someone who is LGBTQ then that means you are too."* Coming to terms with one's sexual development and establishing oneself as a sexual being in the high school community is difficult enough without having peers insist on misreading one's orientation.

There was some ethnic variation, with Aboriginal students (LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined) being more likely to report having been verbally harassed because of their expression of gender (**39.1%** versus **35.0%** Caucasian youth and **31.0%** youth of colour[48]). It is notable that these rates are higher than rates of verbal harassment because of ethnic identity for Aboriginal students (**28.4%**) and much higher than rates for Caucasian students (**9.0%**) and approximately the same for students of colour (**34.1%**).[49] However, caution should be exercised in making this comparison because it can be difficult to judge if a slur is solely about gender or ethnicity (e.g., "squaw"). Many derogatory terms make reference to more than one facet of identity (e.g., age, class, education, geographic origin, physical and mental ability, race, religion, sexual orientation) and insults are often strung together, attacking someone's identity in multiple ways all at once.[50]

PHYSICAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT

> *I got beat up in grade 10 for dating a girl. The people who jumped us got suspended, but we did also. It wasn't fair—I never asked to get beat up and I surely didn't deserve getting suspended because I got beat up.*

> *My friend and I both got sent to the hospital—and he's straight but was just trying to help me. I feel bad that he got hurt, and we don't talk anymore cuz afterwards he had to leave the school as well for being labelled a fag for being known as my friend.*

The 2007 U.S. Climate Survey reports that **44.1%** of LGBTQ students had been physically harassed (pushed or shoved) because of being LGBTQ, and **30.4%** because of their gender expression; **22.1%** had been more severely assaulted (punched, kicked, injured with a weapon) because of being LGBTQ, and **14.2%** because of their gender expression (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008). The McCreary study found similarly elevated rates of physical assault against non-heterosexual students (Saewyc et al., 2007).

LGBTQ students in our study were also more likely to report being physically harassed at school due to their sexual orientation, perceived sexual orientation, gender, and expression of gender. For example, as illustrated in Figure 5, **20.8%** of LGBTQ students indicated being physically harassed due to their sexual orientation, compared to **7.9%** of non-LGBTQ participants.

Among LGBTQ participants, female sexual minority students were more likely to have been physically harassed or assaulted because of their sexual orientation than male sexual minority students, and reported levels similar to those of trans students: a quarter of female sexual minority students (**25.4%**; **26%** female bisexual and **25.2%** lesbian) and trans students (**25.0%**) had been physically harassed because of being LGBTQ, compared to **17%** of male sexual minority youth (**23.2%** gay male and **11.7%** bisexual male). Female sexual minority students were also more likely than male sexual minority students to have had property

FIGURE 5: PHYSICAL HARASSMENT (LGBTQ/NON-LGBTQ STUDENTS)
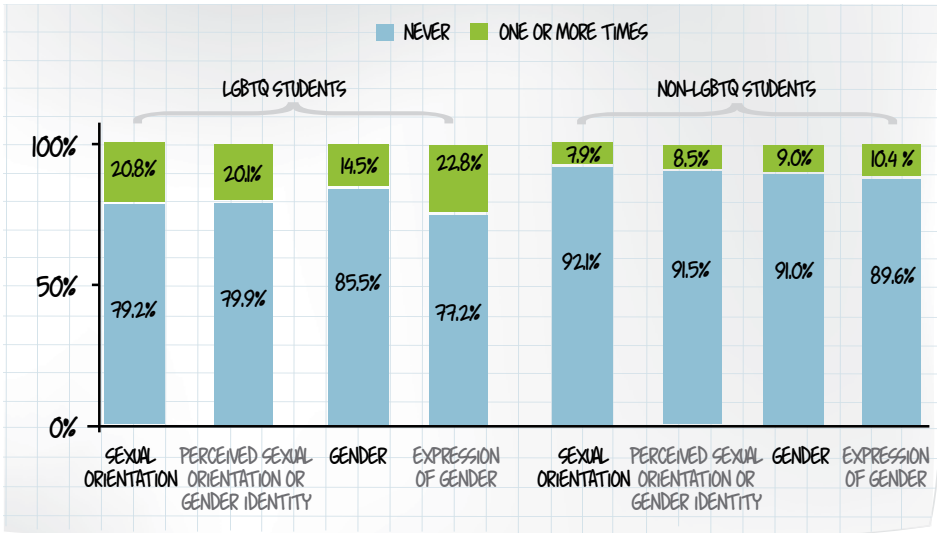
stolen or damaged because of being LGBTQ (**18.3%** versus **11.7%**), but less likely than trans youth (**24.4%**).[52] Trans students were much more likely than sexual minority or non-LGBTQ students to have been physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender expression (**37.1%**, compared with **21.3%** of sexual minority students and **10.4%** of non-LGBTQ students).[53]

As with verbal harassment, female sexual minority students tended not to see incidents of physical harassment as attributable to their gender (female sexual minority youth **13.3%**, male sexual minority youth **12.7%**, trans youth **27.9%**). They reported higher levels of physical assault related to their expression of gender (**24.2%** compared to **19.0%** of sexual minority males), however, and to their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity (**22.7%** compared to **16%** of sexual minority males).[54]

Students with one or more LGBTQ parents also reported higher rates of physical harassment and assault than students without any LGBTQ parents. Over a quarter (**27.2%**) of students with one or more LGBTQ parents had been physically harassed about the sexual orientation of their parent(s) and they were more likely than their peers to be physically harassed or assaulted in connection with their own sexual orientation (**25.4%** versus **11.1%**), their gender (**24.6%** versus **10.2%**), gender expression (**30.4%** versus **13.3%**), and their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity (**26.5%** versus **11.5%**). Like trans students, they were more likely to be physically harassed or assaulted due to their race or ethnicity (**27.2%** versus **9.4%** students without any LGBTQ parents) and their religion (**27.0%** versus **8.5%**).[55] Almost a quarter (**23.7%**) of students with one or more LGBTQ parents had had property stolen or damaged because they or their parents are LGBTQ.[56] See Figure 6.

There was little regional or ethnic variation in levels of physical harassment for reasons related to gender or sexual orientation, but Caucasians were far less likely to report having been physically harassed or assaulted because of their ethnicity (**8.4%** of Caucasian youth, compared to **13.3%** of Aboriginal youth and **14.8%** of youth of colour[57]). Consequently, it is important to note the aggregate effects or "double whammy" here for both Aboriginal youth and youth of colour: these youth are not only being physically harassed or assaulted because of reasons related to gender or sexual orientation, or both, but they are also much more likely to be physically harassed or assaulted because of their ethnicity.
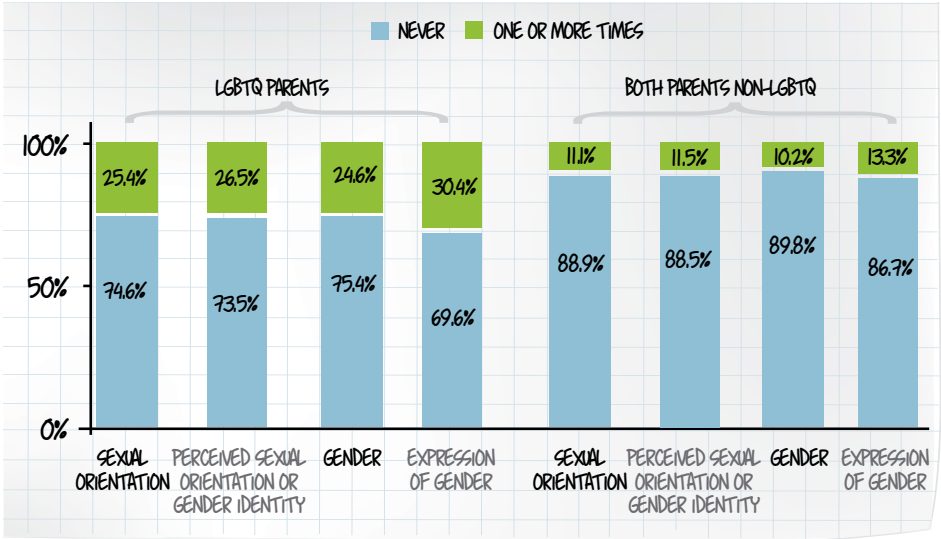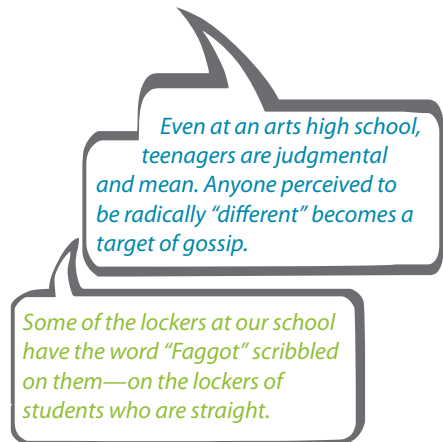
SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Recent studies have shown that sexual minority youth experience much more sexual harassment at school than do sexual majority students and that sexual harassment is a particularly damaging form of bullying that is strongly associated with depression and other dangerous health outcomes (e.g., Gruber & Fineran, 2008).

In the Canadian survey, levels of sexual harassment were high across the board for LGBTQ students: **35.7%** of female sexual minority youth, **41.4%** of male sexual minority youth, and **49.4%** of trans participants reported having been sexually harassed in the past year (compared to **16.6%** of female non-LGBTQ and **23%** of male non-LGBTQ youth).[58] Female sexual minority students were less likely than male sexual minority students or trans students to perceive their experiences of harassment as sexual. Slightly more bisexual male than gay male participants identified experiencing sexual harassment in school (**42.2%** versus **40.4%**); however, **43%** of bisexual female students (compared to **33.2%** of lesbian students) reported being harassed sexually at school.[59] Students with one or more LGBTQ parents were also much more likely to have been sexually harassed at school (**44.7%** versus **25.7%** of students without any LGBTQ parents).[60]

OTHER FORMS OF VICTIMIZATION

Even at an arts high school, teenagers are judgmental and mean. Anyone perceived to be radically "different" becomes a target of gossip.

Some of the lockers at our school have the word "Faggot" scribbled on them—on the lockers of students who are straight.

Other forms of harassment experienced by LGBTQ students, students who have one or more LGBTQ parents, and heterosexual students who are perceived to be LGBTQ involve graffiti, rumour, networking websites (such as Facebook), and text messaging. Stonewall U.K.'s 2006 Climate Survey found that **65%** of the gay and lesbian youth in their U.K. study experience homophobic bullying of some kind and, of these, **76%** experience malicious gossip and **41%** experience cyberbullying (Hunt & Jensen, 2007). Our questions explored a number of these kinds of incidents.

> *I got "(my name) is a dyke" written on a street post after i got my hair cut short.*

> *I just remember one time there were rumours going around that I made out with some dude, and yeah those rumours were false. Still, I felt very outcast/shunned.*

> *Some ignorant bigots drew swastikas on the signs that were posted by the GSA.*

> *I've had rumours started about myself as being a lesbian just because I had a friend who was bisexual and not afraid to admit it. I'm straight.*

A large number of LGBTQ participants (**55.8%**) and non-LGBTQ participants (**28.2%**) had seen or experienced the effects of homophobic graffiti at school. Although smaller numbers reported being directly named in the graffiti, **15.1%** of LGBTQ students and **4.7%** of non-LGBTQ participants stated "yes" to being targeted in this way at least once. Students were also asked if, in the past year, they have had mean rumours or lies spread about them at school either because of their sexual orientation/perceived sexual orientation or because of having an LGBTQ family member/friend. Almost half (**47.3%**) of LGBTQ students responded "yes" to experiencing at least one incident of hearing homophobic rumours or lies about themselves. Additionally, nearly one in ten (**8.0%**) non-LGBTQ youth had been targeted by this malicious form of homophobic harassment. Students were asked a similar question about personal harassment on the internet or via text messaging. Again, both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ youth reported experiencing these types of homophobic harassment (**27.7%** and **5.7%**, respectively).[61] See Figure 7.

FIGURE 7: OTHER FORMS OF HARASSMENT (LGBTQ/NON-LGBTQ STUDENTS)
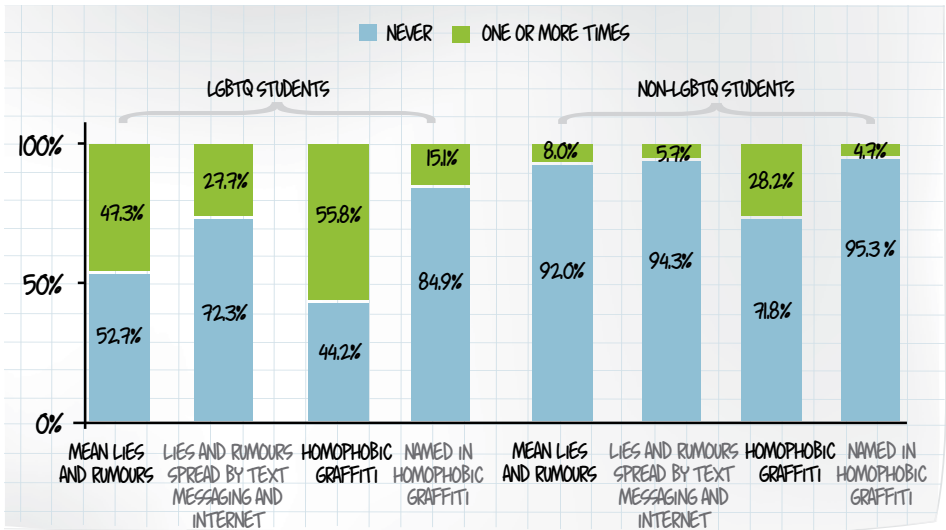
Legend: NEVER (blue), ONE OR MORE TIMES (green)

LGBTQ STUDENTS

- Mean lies and rumours: 52.7% / 47.3%
- Lies and rumours spread by text messaging and internet: 72.3% / 27.7%
- Homophobic graffiti: 44.2% / 55.8%
- Named in homophobic graffiti: 84.9% / 15.1%

NON-LGBTQ STUDENTS

- Mean lies and rumours: 92.0% / 8.0%
- Lies and rumours spread by text messaging and internet: 94.3% / 5.7%
- Homophobic graffiti: 71.8% / 28.2%
- Named in homophobic graffiti: 95.3% / 4.7%

Female sexual minority students were more likely than male sexual minority students to have had mean rumours or lies spread about them because of being LGBTQ (**53.2%** compared to **41.5%**), and trans students were even more likely to be targeted in this way (**60.2%**).[62] Compared to lesbian participants, slightly more bisexual female students reported having had mean rumours or lies spread about them because of being LGBTQ (**52.3%** of lesbian students compared to **55.7%** bisexual female students); however, compared to bisexual male participants, gay male students were more likely to be targeted in this way (**46.9%** compared to **36.9%**).[63] Female sexual minority students were also more likely than male sexual minority students to have had rumours or lies spread about them through texting or on the internet (**30.7%** compared to **23.2%**), and again trans students were even more likely to experience this type of harassment (**40.7%**).[64] Trans students reported even higher rates of mean rumours (**89%**) and cyberbullying (**62%**) in GLSEN's study (Greytak, Kosciw, & Diaz, 2009). In our study, bisexual female students were also more likely to experience cyberbullying, compared to lesbian participants (**38.5%** compared to **28.1%**), while gay males were more likely to be bullied in this way, compared to bisexual male students (**28.2%** compared to **18.9%**).[65]

Among students with one or more LGBTQ parents, almost half (**48.2%**) had been the subject of rumours or lies because they are or someone in their lives is LGBTQ, or perceived to be LGBTQ, compared to one-fifth (**18.5%**) of students without any LGBTQ parents. Many students (**18.4%**) with one or more LGBTQ parents reported having rumours or lies spread about them every day at school.[66] The U.S. report also accounted high levels of this type of harassment: **35%** of students with LGBT parents related that they hear mean rumours or lies about themselves at least sometimes and, of these students, **8%** hear them frequently (Kosciw & Diaz 2008). In Canada, the situation is similar for mean rumours and lies spread on the internet or through texting: **36.8%** of students with one or more LGBTQ parents had had this experience, compared to **11.3%** of students without any LGBTQ parents.[67] Youth with one or more LGBTQ parents were much more likely to have noticed homophobic graffiti at school (**54.9%** versus **36.1%** of students without any LGBTQ parents) and to have been named in the graffiti (**25.4%** versus **6.9%** of students without any LGBTQ parents).[68]

ETHNIC AND REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

In some ways, the experiences of direct victimization among LGBTQ students of different ethnicities spread out in big cities, small towns, reserves, and rural communities across the country are remarkably similar. There were some noteworthy differences, however.

There was little regional or ethnic variation in levels of physical harassment for reasons related to gender or sexuality, but Caucasians were far less likely to report having been physically harassed or assaulted because of their ethnicity (**8.4%** of Caucasian youth, compared to **13.3%** of Aboriginal youth and **14.8%** youth of colour). Caucasian (**20.0%**) and Aboriginal students (**18.8%**) were more likely than students of colour (**15.0%**) to report having been the subject of mean rumours and lies because they or a family member or friend was, or was perceived to be, LGBTQ. They were also more likely to have been exposed to homophobic graffiti (**38.7%** of Caucasian and **36.1%** of Aboriginal youth, compared to **27.3%** of youth of colour). The fact that youth of colour repeatedly indicated lower levels of perceiving homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia—especially in combination with reporting higher levels of isolation with regard to LGBTQ matters and not being comfortable discussing them—suggests that more attention needs to be paid to how educational programming is approaching LGBTQ youth of colour.

39 Sexual orientation, χ^2 (3, N=3267) = 758, p<.001, Cramer's V=.48; perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, χ^2 (1, N=3254) = 672; p<.001, Cramer's V=.45; gender, χ^2 (1, N=3258) = 136, p<.001, Cramer's V=.20; gender expression/masculinity or femininity, χ^2 (1, N=3273) = 295, p<.001, Cramer's V=.30.

40 Harassed because of gender, $\chi2$ (2, N=3258) = 181, p<.001, Cramer's V=.24; because of gender expression, χ^2 (2, N=3273) = 308, p<.001, Cramer's V=.31).

41 Harassed because of race or ethnicity, χ^2 (2, N=3266) = 12.6, p=.002, Cramer's V=.06; because of religion, χ^2 (2, N=3128) = 56.2, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13).

42 χ^2 (6, N=928) = 43.5, p<.001, Cramer's V=.15.

43 χ^2 (2, N=928) = 43.5, p<.001, Cramer's V=.15.

44 χ^2 (2, N=920) = 49.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.23.

45 χ^2 (2, N=930) = 19.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.14.

46 χ^2 (2, N=924) = 28.6, p<.001, Cramer's V=.18.

47 Having LGBTQ parent(s), χ^2 (3, N=3092) = 441.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.38; Sexual orientation, χ^2 (3, N=3137) = 80.4, p<.001, Cramer's V=.16; perceived sexual orientation, χ^2 (3, N=3129) = 88.4, Cramer's V=.17; gender, $\chi2$ (3, N=3125) = 97.8, p<.001, Cramer's V=.18; gender expression, χ^2 (1, N=3144) = 27.9, p<.001, Cramer's V=.09; race or ethnicity, χ^2 (1, N=3137) = 10.7, p<.001 Cramer's V=.06; religion, χ^2 (1, N=3009) = 44.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.12.

48 χ^2 (2, N=3426) = 7.11, p=.029, Cramer's V=.05.

49 χ^2 (2, N=3419) = 317, p<.001, Cramer's V=.31.

50 For more on this, see the discussion on intersectionality in the Executive Summary of this report.

51 χ^2 (1, N=3262) = 108, p<.001, Cramer's V=.18.

52 Physically harassed, χ^2 (2, N=928) = 9.59, p=.008, Cramer's V=.10; property stolen or damaged, χ^2 (2, N=928) = 13.1, p=.001, Cramer's V=.12.

53 χ^2 (2, N=3257) = 102, p<.001, Cramer's V=.18.

54 Gender, χ^2 (2, N=921) = 14.28, p=.001, Cramer's V=.13; expression of gender, χ^2 (2, N=924) = 14.94, p=.001, Cramer's V=.13; perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, χ^2 (2, N=921) = 14.78, p=.001, Cramer's V=.13.

55 Having LGBT parent(s), χ^2 (1, N=2854) = 753, p<.001, Cramer's V=.51; sexual orientation, χ^2 (1, N=3135) = 21.9, p<.001, Cramer's V=.08; gender, χ^2 (1, N=3129) = 23.6, p<.001, Cramer's V=.09; gender expression, χ^2 (1, N=3127) = 27.1, p<.001, Cramer's V=.09; perceived sexual orientation/gender identity, χ^2 (1, N=3122) = 23.4, p<.001, Cramer's V=.09; race or ethnicity, χ^2 (1, N=3117) = 38.3, p<.001, Cramer's V=.11; religion, χ^2 (1, N=3007) = 44.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.12.

56 Property stolen or damaged, χ^2 (1, N=3131) = 52.8, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13.

57 χ^2 (2, N=3399) = 31.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.10.

58 χ^2 (2, N=933) = 6.06, p=.048, Cramer's V=.08.

59 χ^2 (5, N=3268) = 14.6, p<.001, Cramer's V=.21.

60 Sexual harassment, χ^2 (1, N=3155) = 20.5, p<.001, Cramer's V=.08.

61 Homophobic graffiti at school, χ^2 (1, N=3267) = 221, p<.001, Cramer's V=.26; directly named in graffiti, χ^2 (1, N=3266) = 104, p<.001, Cramer's V=.18; rumours or lies at school, χ^2 (1, N=3275) = 669, p<.001, Cramer's V=.45; internet, χ^2 (1, N=3259) =307, p<.001, Cramer's V=.31.

62 χ^2 (2, N=932) = 17.4, p<.001, Cramer's V=.14.

63 χ^2 (5, N=3258) = 698, p<.001, Cramer's V=.46.

64 χ^2 (2, N=929) = 14.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.12.

65 χ^2 (5, N=3242) = 341, p<.001, Cramer's V=.32.

66 χ^2 (1, N=3143) = 62.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.14.

67 χ^2 (1, N=3128) = 67.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.15.

68 Seen graffiti, χ^2 (1, N=3138) = 16.6, p<.001, Cramer's V=.07; named in graffiti, χ^2 (1, N=3137) = 53.4, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13.

69 χ^2 (2, N=3399) = 31.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.10.

70 χ^2 (2, N=3431) = 10.7, p=.005, Cramer's V=.06.

71 χ^2 (2, N=3423) = 37.8, p<.001, Cramer's V=.11.

IMPACTS

It's a day-to-day issue that no one seems to care about, except for maybe a handful of people. Being an LGBTQ student is a hard thing with all of the discrimination that goes around. This makes it increasingly difficult to speak about your beliefs or feelings. More support from the staff and maybe the inclusion of some sort of GSA group could lighten the stress of being an LGBTQ student in this increasingly discriminatory setting.

homophobia affects all aspects of my school life. no one understands me. if i tell them about my family, they pity me, start rumours, or make fun of me.

I went to a Catholic high school a few years ago and homosexuality was rarely discussed. It came up once in a health class more or less accompanied by the message that God wouldn't approve, but that we have to love all sinners regardless. I was whacked in the head with textbooks a few times, and I've had objects such as eggs and water bottles thrown out of car windows at me. I've also had all kinds of slurs shouted at me and rumours spread about me. Since starting college, I haven't experienced any violence. No one has been rude to me here either. It's a real breath of fresh air and I'm finally starting to enjoy school. Now that I enjoy being here, my grades have gone up overall.

Our findings about homophobic and transphobic comments and direct victimization both verbally and physically, as well as other forms of harassment, establish that LGBTQ students, youth with one or more LGBTQ parents, and youth perceived as LGBTQ are exposed to hostile school climates on a regular basis throughout Canada. In the next section, we discuss participants' responses to questions about the impacts of such experiences: their emotional reaction to homophobic language, their perception of places in school as unsafe, and their school attachment.

EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

I was in drama class last year and people kept on making fun of gay men when they went up to perform for the class. It started to hurt me because at that time I wasn't out. When I asked them to stop they would laugh or stop for a few days and then start again. I told the teacher and they jokily asked the kids to stop. It got so bad for me that I was sick before going into class, puked before or after class, the kids in the class would bring me to tears, or I got so mad I started to punch the walls to keep from hitting someone. Once the class started to make fun of lesbians, I had to quit the class. My VP didn't want me to leave, so I had to tell him how bad the class made me feel before he let me. I really didn't want to quit drama because I love it so much, but I couldn't take the homophobic jokes they told.

Unsurprisingly, LGBTQ students were more likely than non-LGBTQ students to find homophobic comments upsetting (**85.8%** versus **58.3%**).[72] However, the fact that the majority of heterosexual students reported finding homophobic comments to be upsetting on some level deserves attention. Some heterosexual youth may be distressed at homophobic comments because they themselves are perceived to be LGBTQ, and many have LGBTQ friends or family members. However, research into the psychological impact of repetitive exposure to bullying suggests that bystanders are damaged in ways similar to the direct victims of bullying. For example, bystanders may suffer long-term depression, anxiety, feelings of helplessness, somatic complaints, and skipping school (Janson, Carney, Hazler, & Oh, 2009). Further, some research suggests that the experience of cognitive dissonance that arises from failing to intervene when abusive behavior is occurring puts bystanders at risk of some forms of psychological harm that actually exceeds the levels found in direct victims

(Rivers, Poteat, Noret, & Ashurt, 2009). The distress experienced by heterosexual students supports the position held by many educators that homophobic comments poison the school climate for everyone because they are an assault on human dignity. Although some bystanders react to abuse by rationalizing that the victim somehow deserved it, the finding that **58%** of heterosexual students are distressed by homophobic comments suggests that there may be a great deal of untapped solidarity for LGBTQ students among their non-LGBTQ peers.

Although only **5.6%** of non-LGBTQ students reported finding homophobic comments "extremely upsetting" (in comparison to **23.1%** of LGBTQ students), it is important to note that the numbers of LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ students who find homophobic comments to be either "very" or "somewhat" upsetting are both high: **62.6%** of LGBTQ students and **52.7%** of non-LGBTQ students.[73] See Figure 8.
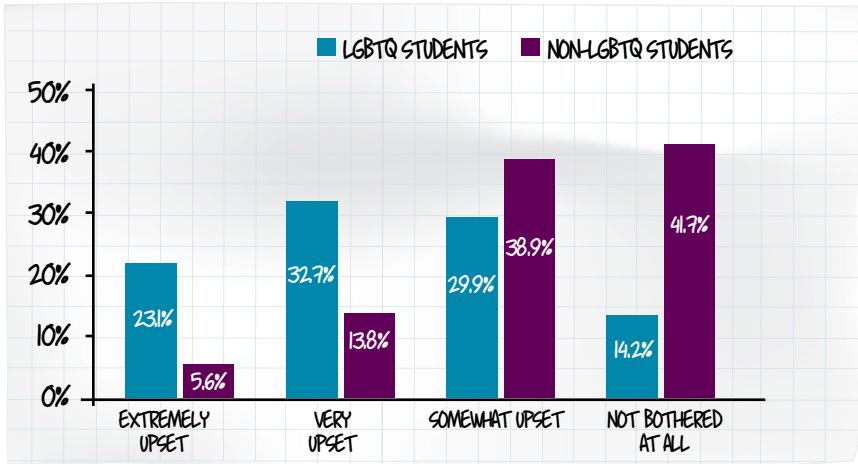
Interestingly, **79.6%** of female sexual minority students reported that they find homophobic comments upsetting, which is lower than for sexual minority males (**90.1%**) and about the same as for trans youth (**80.5%**).[74] Caucasian students were more likely than students of other ethnicities to find homophobic comments upsetting: **68.4%** found such comments upsetting, compared to **60.9%** of Aboriginal students and **60.1%** of students of colour.[75] It is also noteworthy that more trans students (**26.4%**) than sexual minority participants (**22.8%**) found such comments to be "extremely" upsetting.[76] This finding could be attributable to trans students' relative visibility as LGBTQ and, unfortunately, a correspondingly greater likelihood of derogatory comments being made purposefully in their presence combined with a heightened attention to comments relevant to their safety. Students with one or more LGBTQ parents were also more likely to find homophobic comments extremely upsetting (**22.9%** versus **10.5%** of students without any LGBTQ parents) or very upsetting (**28.8%** versus **19.2%**).[77]

WHY DON'T CANADIAN YOUTH COME OUT AS LGBTQ AT SCHOOL?

bullies. i already get bullied enough and i self harm and always think about suicide. i don't need any more things to deal with at school. if i came out about being bisexual, the bullying will increase!

I feel it would be very dangerous for me. I would be threatened and harassed, more than I already am for other (religion, poverty) reasons. I think I would be beat up. Also, people might tell my dad and he would hurt me.

Even writing this or my ISU on Homosexuality, I have to hide it because i will be made fun of and called names! :(

A lot of slurs and demeaning things are said regularly in class/halls between students—it was not a very safe or secure environment to be OUT!

Everyone bullies the gay kid. You don't have to know him/her personally to know who s/he is. I don't get to know the good side of the gays because they are rarely around—they're off hiding so they don't have to hear about being gay.

When I walk into school, I feel like I'm stepping into landmines not knowing what will happen. "Will I be bullied today, or won't I? Will I have to lay low and be careful of what I say, walking on eggshells, or can I say something?" People think I'm so happy, but I'm putting on a show and a mask for my own protection. Going to school is like a big act for me and I've gotten really good.

I'm just afraid because people might judge me based on my sexuality.
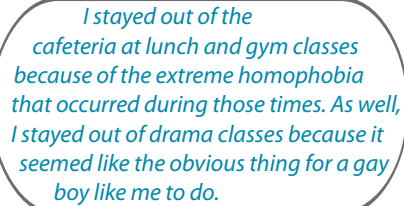
Because I am worried what most people will think or say to me. I already get teased enough and I don't want to lose friends for being trans. I am afraid to admit it.

It isn't safe. I learned that the hard way at other schools. I had to transfer out of the public school system and my parents now pay tonnes of cash per year to keep me in a secluded school—and at this new place I don't risk my parents' investment by outing myself.

I can see why other people wouldn't want to come out here. It's because, quite simply, it's not a safe move. People here are VERY homophobic, to the point of violence/hate mail.

Prejudice is more keenly felt in some places than others, depending on such factors as opportunity, exposure, the presence of potential witnesses, and the type of activity associated with the place, such as showering and contact sports. However, places that are seemingly innocuous, such as school corridors, are in fact so dangerous for LGBTQ students that hallways appear in the titles of both the Human Rights Watch's *Hatred in the Hallways: Violence and Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students in U.S. Schools* (Bochenek & Brown, 2001) and the American Association of University Women's *Hostile Hallways: Bullying, Teasing, and Sexual Harassment in School* (Lipson, 2001). We asked students whether there were any spaces in their schools that are unsafe for LGBTQ students. Our findings are consistent with the findings of the GLSEN study, which found that hallways (**64%**), classrooms (**56%**), and physical education areas (**43%**) are particularly common sites of homophobic harassment.

People directly affected by an issue are, of course, more likely to be aware of safety concerns arising from that issue than people who are not, and this greater awareness was reflected in the survey responses: LGBTQ participants consistently identified more spaces as unsafe for LGBTQ students than did non-LGBTQ participants. LGBTQ youth were significantly more likely to see hallways, the cafeteria, classrooms, the library, stairwells/

> *I stayed out of the cafeteria at lunch and gym classes because of the extreme homophobia that occurred during those times. As well, I stayed out of drama classes because it seemed like the obvious thing for a gay boy like me to do.*

under stairs, the gymnasium, Phys. Ed. change rooms, the school grounds, washrooms, school buses, and travelling to and from school as unsafe. Additionally, many non-LGBTQ participants also recognized these places as being unsafe for LGBTQ students. As illustrated in Figure 9, LGBTQ participants were most likely to identify their Phys. Ed. change rooms as being unsafe (**48.8%**), followed by washrooms (**43.1%**), and hallways (**42.5%**). Slightly over half as many non-LGBTQ participants identified these spaces as unsafe for LGBTQ students (**30.1%**, **27.8%**, and **25.1%**, respectively).[78]

FIGURE 9: UNSAFE AREAS FOR LGBTQ STUDENTS (LGBTQ/NON-LGBTQ STUDENTS)

Bar chart legend: ■ LGBTQ STUDENTS ■ NON-LGBTQ STUDENTS

Area	LGBTQ Students	Non-LGBTQ Students
PE CHANGE ROOMS	48.8%	30.1%
WASHROOMS	43.1%	27.8%
HALLWAYS	42.5%	25.1%
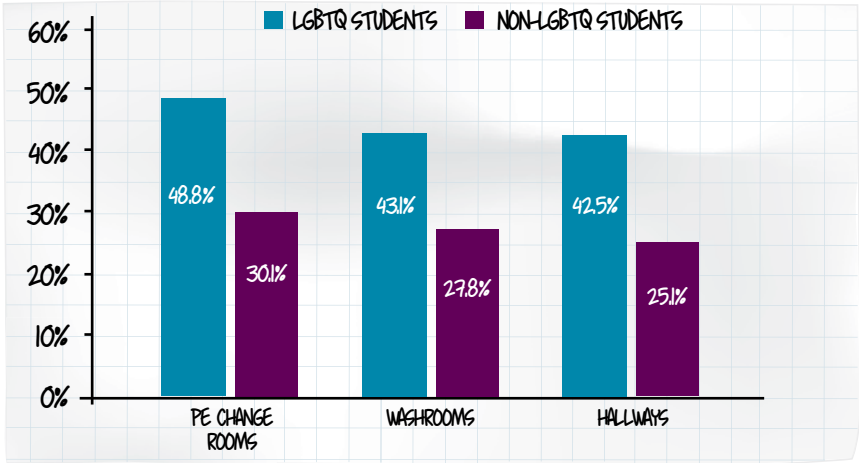
The change rooms are the scariest place. That girl, I'll call her V, was in my gym class last semester and after she came out she had to change in the gym teacher's office. She wasn't allowed to change with us because supposedly (Obviously not!!!) she would want to stare at us and molest us and shit. She never could shower after gym class, so people said she was smelly and stuff. I usually didn't shower after gym class because I was too scared of accidentally looking at someone by mistake. But no one noticed that I didn't shower. And about staring at ppl—I am a lesbian, and believe me I never ever even glanced at ANYONE. I went in a corner and stared at the floor because I was afraid of someone accusing me of being a "dyke" and then my life would be over like V's.

During Phys. Ed. in Grade 9, we could hear the guys in the boys' change rooms making fun of the other boys who weren't as "manly," as they would say, or as muscular as they were. They would call them pansies, fags, butt pirates, queers, anything homophobic. You name it, they most likely called them it.

Smaller numbers of students identified other places as unsafe for LGBTQ students: going to and from school (**31.4%** LGBTQ versus **16.7%** non-LGBTQ), the school grounds (**31.1%** LGBTQ versus **17.6%** non-LGBTQ), the cafeteria (**30.0%** LGBTQ versus **17.4%** non-LGBTQ), and school buses (**29.0%** LGBTQ versus **18.5%** non-LGBTQ).[79] Data were also analyzed so that overall numbers of places seen as unsafe could be established. Again, sexual orientation and gender identity make a difference in how students perceive the environment for LGBTQ students:

- Half (**53.4%**) of all participants reported that at least one place at their school was unsafe for LGBTQ students. Although this number was higher for LGBTQ participants (**70.6%**) than for non-LGBTQ students, almost half (**46.5%**) of non-LGBTQ youth view at least one place in their school as unsafe for LGBTQ youth.[80]

- **79.1%** of trans participants reported at least one unsafe location, compared to **69.7%** of sexual minority respondents.[81]

- **74%** of gay males reported at least one unsafe location, compared to **63.5%** of bisexual male participants, **70.9%** of bisexual female students, and **72.3%** of lesbian respondents.[82]

- Non-LGBTQ, sexual minority, and trans participants identified 2.20, 4.59, and 3.58 unsafe spaces for LGBTQ students, respectively.[83]

Female sexual minority and male sexual minority students were roughly equal in their reports, and trans students even more likely to report, that some parts of their schools are unsafe for LGBTQ students: hallways (**41.3%** female sexual minority, **41.1%** male sexual minority, **54.9%** trans[84]), the school grounds (**31.5%** female sexual minority, **29.1%** male sexual minority, **40.7%** trans[85]), and under stairwells (**29.3%** female sexual minority, **27.6%** male sexual minority, **42.9%** trans[86]). However, female sexual minority and trans students reported some places as unsafe on similar levels that are much higher than male sexual minority students' reports. These places include washrooms (**47.9%** female sexual minority, **38.5%** male sexual minority, **51.6%** trans[87]) and
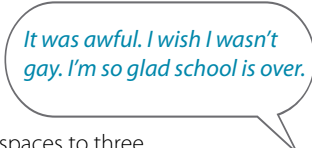
gymnasiums (**32.5%** female sexual minority, **21.4%** male sexual minority, **36.3%** trans[88]). Female sexual minority students were even more likely than either male sexual minority or trans students to see change rooms as unsafe (**58.7%** female sexual minority, **42.5%** male sexual minority, **51.6%** trans[89]). It is notable that the places that female sexual minority and trans students are most likely to experience as unsafe are gender-segregated areas such as washrooms, change rooms, and gymnasiums. Not only does this contradict assumptions that most homophobic and transphobic incidents take place in males-only spaces, but it also points to a correlation between the policing of gender and youth not feeling safe. See Figure 10.

FIGURE 10: UNSAFE AREAS FOR LGBTQ STUDENTS (TRANS/FEMALE SEXUAL MINORITY/MALE SEXUAL MINORITY STUDENTS)
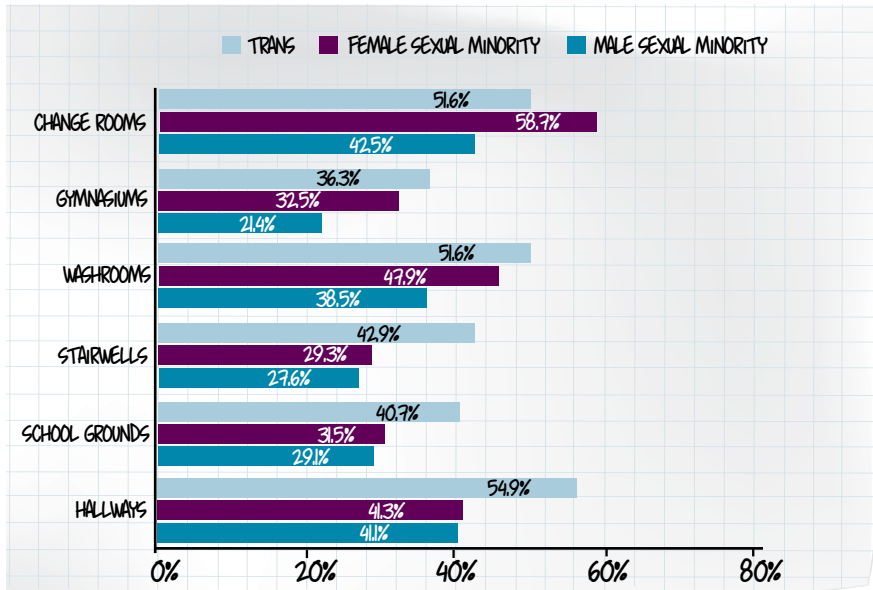
Students with one or more LGBTQ parents were also much more likely than students without any LGBTQ parents to see areas of their school as unsafe for themselves or for LGBTQ students: for example, school grounds, **34.5%** versus **21.3%**, respectively; classrooms, **30.3%** versus **15.9%**; the cafeteria, **32.8%** versus **20.7%**, stairwells, **34.5%** versus **20.2%**; the gymnasium, **27.7%** versus **17.8%**; and washrooms, **41.2%** versus **32.3%**.[90] Similar numbers of students with one or more LGBTQ parents and without any LGBTQ parents agreed that change rooms were not safe for LGBTQ students or students with an LGBTQ parent (**42.0%** versus **35.9%**). Overall, **74.8%** of students with one or more LGBTQ parents felt that there was at least one area at school that is unsafe for LGBTQ students or students with LGBTQ parents, compared to **53.2%** of students without any LGBTQ parents.[91]

LGBTQ students no longer in school were more likely to report a higher average of unsafe areas than current LGBTQ students (4.75 versus 3.37).[92] While moving from four unsafe spaces to three does not mean that schools are now safe for LGBTQ students, it may indicate that they are somewhat safer than they used to be.

It was awful. I wish I wasn't gay. I'm so glad school is over.

Finally, there was considerable regional variation in students' likelihood of reporting at least one part of their school as unsafe for LGBTQ students, ranging from **42.1%** of students in the Atlantic provinces to **62.4%** in the North.[93]

[72] χ^2 (1, N=3322) = 230, p<.001, Cramer's V=.26.

[73] χ^2 (3, N=3322) = 490, p<.001, Cramer's V=.38.

[74] χ^2 (2, N=938) = 20.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.15.

[75] χ^2 (2, N=3488) = 23.1, p<.001, Cramer's V=.08.

[76] χ^2 (6, N=3322) = 494, p<.001, Cramer's V=.27.

[77] χ^2 (3, N=3194) = 29.2, p<.001, Cramer's V=.10.

[78] Change rooms, χ^2 (1, N=3369) = 106, p<.001, Cramer's V=.18; washrooms, χ^2 (1, N=3369) = 74.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.15; hallways, χ^2 (1, N=3369) = 99.2, p<.001, Cramer's V=.17.

[79] To and from school, χ^2 (1, N=3369) = 89.7, p<.001, Cramer's V=.16; schoolyard, χ^2 (1, N=3369) = 73.9, p<.001, Cramer's V=.15; cafeteria, χ^2 (1, N=3369) = 66.6, p<.001, Cramer's V=.14; school buses, χ^2 (1, N=3369) = 44.7, p<.001, Cramer's V=.12.

[80] χ^2 (1, N=3369) = 161, p<.001, Cramer's V=.22.

[81] χ^2 (2, N=3369) = 164, p<.001, Cramer's V=.22.

[82] χ^2 (5, N=3351) = 169, p<.001, Cramer's V=.23.

[83] f (2, 3368) = 60.5, p<.001, Cohen's d=.38.

[84] χ^2 (2, N=951) = 6.4, p=.041, Cramer's V=.08.

[85] χ^2 (2, N=951) = 4.9, p=.085, Cramer's V=.07.

[86] χ^2 (2, N=951) = 8.7, p=.013, Cramer's V=.10.

[87] χ^2 (2, N=951) = 10.5, p=.005, Cramer's V=.11.

[88] χ^2 (2, N=951) = 17.7, p<.001, Cramer's V=.14.

[89] χ^2 (2, N=951) = 21.9, p<.001, Cramer's V=.15.

[90] School grounds, χ^2 (1, N=3233) = 11.7, p=.001, Cramer's V=.06; classrooms, χ^2 (1, N=3233) = 17.2, p<.001, Cramer's V=.07; cafeteria, χ^2 (1, N=3233) = 9.9, p=.002, Cramer's V=.06; stairwells, χ^2 (1, N=3233) = 14.3, p<.001, Cramer's V=.07; gymnasium, χ^2 (1, N=3233) = 7.68, p=.006, Cramer's V=.05; and washrooms, χ^2 (1, N=3233) = 4.13, p=.042, Cramer's V=.04.

[91] Change rooms χ^2 (1, N=3233) = 1.877, p<.171, Cramer's V=.02; general χ^2 (1, N=3233) = 21.4, p<.001, Cramer's V=.08.

[92] t (948, n=950) = -4.8, p<.001, Cohen's d=-.36.

[93] χ^2 (4, N=3569) = 61.4, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13.

SENSE OF PERSONAL SAFETY AT SCHOOL

A great many students feel unsafe at school for a variety of reasons, not just LGBTQ students (Harris Interactive & GLSEN, 2005). Educators know that they are responsible for protecting the students entrusted to their care, and their concern is evident in the many anti-bullying programmes, crisis-response protocols, and human rights curricula that have been developed in recent years. Yet we know that it is often difficult for teachers and other school staff to know who is experiencing school as an unsafe place and why. Studies that compare LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ feelings of safety at school consistently find that the former are more likely to experience fear at school. The McCreary Centre study, for example, found that **82%** of lesbian youth versus **60%** of heterosexual girls sometimes feel unsafe and that **70%** of gay boys sometimes feel unsafe versus **58%** of heterosexual boys (Saewyc et al., 2007).

> *It isn't safe. I've been bashed four times all told outside of school in the last few years. Why bring it on and complicate classes? It makes no sense. Pick your battles, ya know?*

A main objective of our study was to gauge students' feelings of safety at school specifically with reference to their sexual orientation and gender identity as well as other aspects of their identity. Participants were asked if they ever felt unsafe at school due to sexual orientation; perceived sexual orientation; gender identity; expression of gender identity; racial or ethnic identity; religious or perceived religious identity; or their family status (i.e., having one or more LGBTQ parents). As illustrated in Figure 11, there were significant differences between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ students.
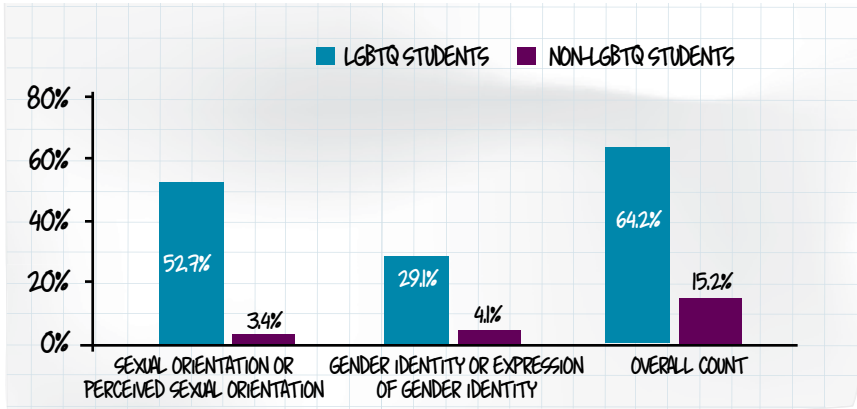
The largest gap was with reference to sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation where **52.7%** of LGBTQ participants reported feeling unsafe at school, compared to only **3.4%** of non-LGBTQ respondents.[94]
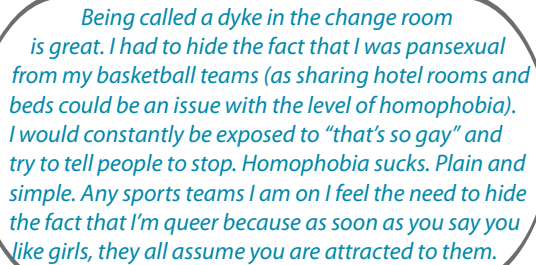
When all identity-related grounds for feeling unsafe are taken into account, including ethnicity and religion, almost two-thirds (**64.2%**) of LGBTQ participants feel unsafe at school, compared to fewer than one-sixth (**15.2%**) of non-LGBTQ respondents.[95] When we compared data between sexual minority and trans youth, results revealed even higher percentages of feeling unsafe in school for trans students than for sexual minority students: more than three-quarters (**78.0%**) of trans students indicated feeling unsafe in some way at school, compared to just over three-fifths (**62.8%**) of sexual minority students.[96] In the GLSEN report on trans youth, similar results were found, with **82%** of trans students feeling unsafe compared with **67%** of female LGB students (Greytak, Kosciw, and Diaz, 2009). The heightened sense of lack of safety at school experienced by trans youth is likely due to the rigid policing of gender conventions (male masculinity and female femininity), which can make trans youth highly visible targets for discrimination and harassment.

Further, female sexual minority students were much more likely than male sexual minority students (**73.2%** versus **56.4%**) to feel unsafe at school, and in numbers approaching the level of trans students (**78.0%**):[97] as one lesbian participant put it, *"School is not a safe place for anyone like me."* Gay male students were more likely to report feeling unsafe than bisexual males (**62.4%** compared to **51.2%**), while similar numbers of bisexual female and lesbian participants felt unsafe at school (**74.7%** compared to **72.7%**).[98] Two-thirds of female sexual minority students (**65.9%**) reported feeling unsafe because of their sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation, compared to **44.4%** of male sexual minority students and **54.9%** of trans youth.[99] Compared to bisexual males, gay males were more likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation (**51.2%** compared to **38.6%**). Slightly more lesbian participants, compared to female bisexual respondents, reported feeling unsafe in this way (**66.8%** compared to **63.3%**).[100]

These findings are interesting in a few ways. First, popular understandings of bullying in school culture might lead one to expect that heterosexual males would be most likely to commit homophobic harassment and that their targets would be gay males, whom they would have opportunity to bully in unsupervised gender-segregated spaces such as change rooms and washrooms. Second, it is sometimes said that lesbians have it easier than gay males,

that society in general tolerates lesbians more than gay males, and that being a lesbian or a bisexual female is even trendy. These findings would refute both of these popular conceptions of life for sexual minority girls and women.

Being called a dyke in the change room is great. I had to hide the fact that I was pansexual from my basketball teams (as sharing hotel rooms and beds could be an issue with the level of homophobia). I would constantly be exposed to "that's so gay" and try to tell people to stop. Homophobia sucks. Plain and simple. Any sports teams I am on I feel the need to hide the fact that I'm queer because as soon as you say you like girls, they all assume you are attracted to them.

Overall, our findings suggest that whether one is female, male, or trans makes a big difference with respect to how safe one feels. Female sexual minority students in our study were not attributing their feelings of being unsafe to their gender, however, even though they reported high levels of verbal and physical harassment. Only a quarter (**27.4%**) said they felt unsafe because of their gender or gender expression, which is about the same as males at **23.6%**, and much lower than trans youth at **61.5%**.[101] Even though most female students did not report feeling unsafe because of their gender, the high levels of female sexual minority students feeling unsafe could be attributable to their exposure to the enormous amounts of negative language about girls that circulates in school culture as well as to the high levels of verbal and physical harassment that they experience. See Figure 12.

FIGURE 12: FEELINGS OF NOT BEING SAFE (MALE SEXUAL MINORITY/FEMALE SEXUAL MINORITY/TRANS STUDENTS)
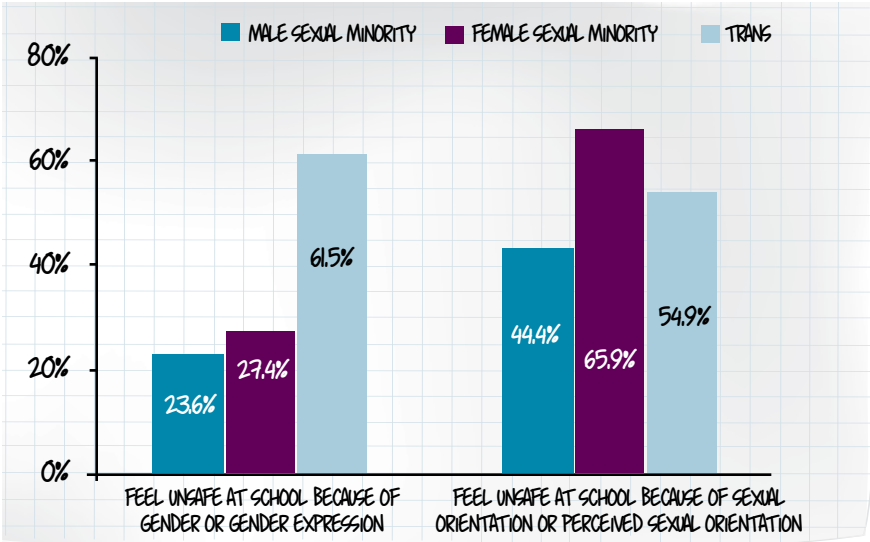
A comparison of students with one or more LGBTQ parents to students without any LGBTQ parents shows significant differences in sense of personal safety. When gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and religion are all taken into account, **61.3%** of students with one or more LGBTQ parents reported feeling unsafe at school, compared to **28.4%** of students without any LGBTQ parents.[102] Students with one or more LGBTQ parents were much more likely to feel unsafe because of their own sexual orientation/perceived sexual orientation (**36.1%** versus **17.4%**).[103] GLSEN found that **51%** of students with an LGBT parent feel unsafe at school. Of the reasons for feeling unsafe reported by participants in their study, **23%** identified the fact that they have an LGBT parent, while **21%** connected feelings of not being safe to the students' own sexual orientation (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). Both sets of results seem to indicate that youth are being harassed at school because other students might assume that anyone with an LGBTQ parent is LGBTQ themselves. See Figure 13.

FIGURE 13: FEELINGS OF NOT BEING SAFE (STUDENTS WITH/WITHOUT LGBTQ PARENTS)

Legend: AT LEAST ONE LGBTQ PARENT, BOTH PARENTS NON-LGBTQ

FEEL UNSAFE AT SCHOOL BECAUSE OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR PERCEIVED SEXUAL ORIENTATION: 36.1%, 17.4%

FEEL UNSAFE OVERALL: 61.3%, 28.4%
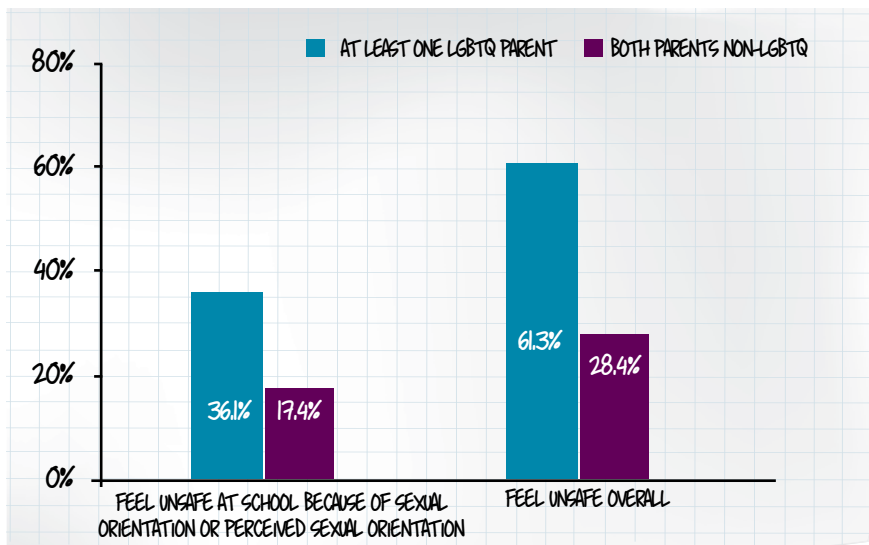
[94] χ^2 (1, N=3369) = 1161, p<.001, Cramer's V=.59.

[95] χ^2 (1, N=3369) = 800, p<.001, Cramer's V=.49.

[96] χ^2 (3, N=3369) = 809, p<.001, Cramer's C=.49.

[97] χ^2 (2, N=951) = 33.2, p<.001, Cramer's V=.19.

[98] χ^2 (5, N=3351) = 833, p<.001, Cramer's V=.50.

[99] χ^2 (2, N=951) = 37.5, p<.001, Cramer's V=.20.

[100] χ^2 (5, N=3351) = 1231, p<.001, Cramer's V=.61.

[101] χ^2 (2, N=951) = 55.4, p<.001, Cramer's V=.24.

[102] χ^2 (1, N=3233) = 59.9, p<.001, Cramer's V=.14.

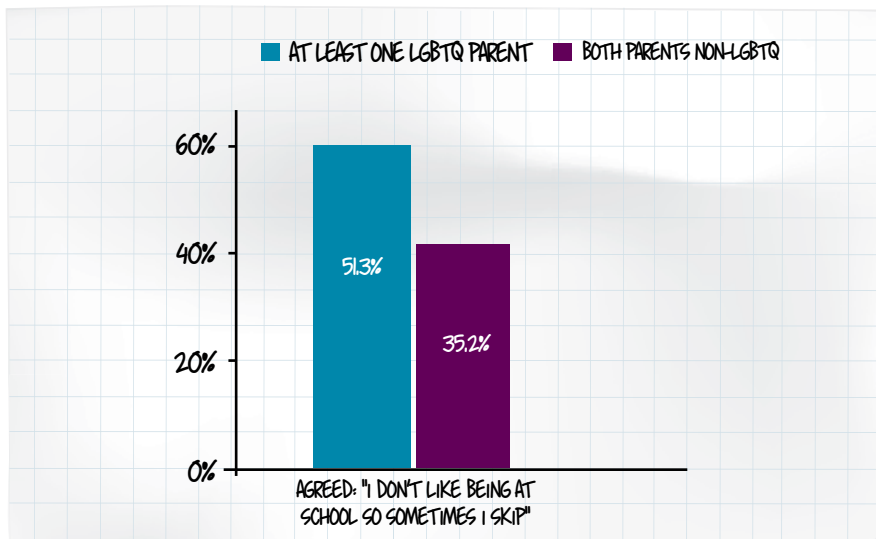[103] χ^2 (1, N=3233) = 27.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.09.

SKIPPING SCHOOL

Two questions asked participants whether or not they ever skipped school because they felt unsafe either at school or on their way to school. Results show that **30.2%** of LGBTQ students, compared to **11.0%** of non-LGBTQ students, reported skipping because they felt unsafe at school or on the way to school.[104] Trans students were even more likely to miss school because they felt unsafe (**43.5%**, compared to **28.9%** for sexual minority participants),[105] and they were more likely to have skipped more than 10 days because they felt unsafe at school (**14.6%** of trans students compared to **4.8%** of sexual minority and **1.2%** of non-LGBTQ students). GLSEN reports that **46%** of trans students skipped at least one day of school due to feeling unsafe and **13%** reported skipping more than five days (Greytak, Kosciw, & Diaz, 2009). Next to trans students, bisexual female students were the most likely to miss school because they felt unsafe (**29.1%**), followed by gay male youth (**27.9%**), lesbian participants (**24.7%**), and bisexual male students (**18.7%**).[106] Students with one or more LGBTQ parents were also more likely than students without any LGBTQ parents to have skipped because they felt unsafe at school (**40.2%** versus **12.5%**) or on the way to school (**32.2%** versus **9.8%**; see Figure 14).[107] These results are, of course, important not only because of what they reveal about the degree of fear being experienced by LGBTQ youth, but also because of the potential impact of missing classes on the academic performance of these students. Similarly elevated levels of skipping were reported in the McCreary Centre study (Saewyc et al., 2007). The latest U.S. Climate Survey found that **31.7%** of LGBT students had skipped a class because they felt unsafe, compared to **5.5%** of all students, and **32.7%** had missed at least a day, compared to **4.5%** of all students (both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ; Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008).

FIGURE 14: SKIPPING SCHOOL DUE TO FEELING UNSAFE (MALE SEXUAL MINORITY/FEMALE SEXUAL MINORITY/ TRANS STUDENTS)
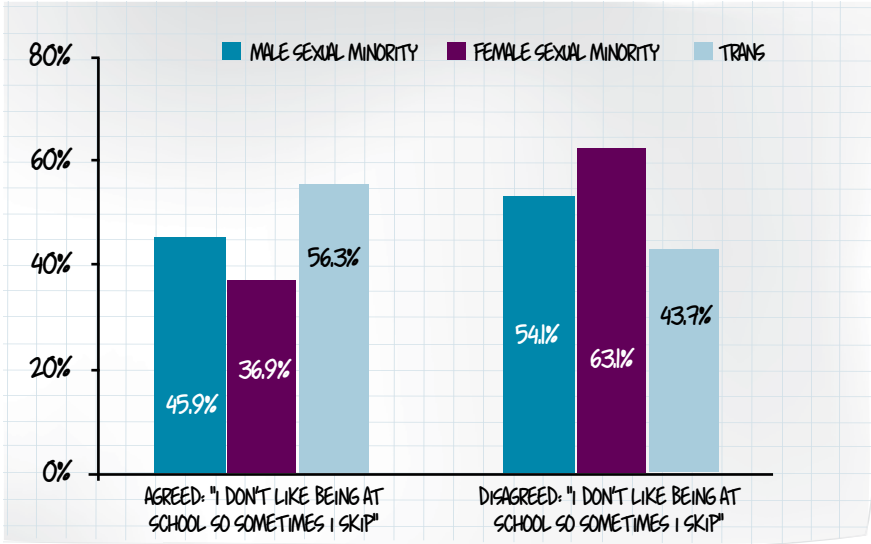
We also wanted to learn whether students who are LGBTQ or have LGBTQ parents are skipping school for reasons other than safety, and asked whether they agreed with the statement, "I don't like being at school and sometimes I skip." LGBTQ students were more likely to agree with the statement than non-LGBTQ students (**44.0%** versus **33.0%**); students with one or more LGBTQ parents were more likely than students without any LGBTQ parents (**51.3%** versus **35.2%**); and trans students were most likely to agree with the statement (**56.3%** of trans students versus **36.9%** of female sexual minority and **45.9%** of male sexual minority students).[108] In short, it seems that being on the outside in the heteronormative mainstream where gender norms are strictly regulated makes it harder to like being at school and this holds true both for LGBTQ students and for students with LGBTQ parents. See Figure 15.

FIGURE 15: SKIPPING SCHOOL DUE TO FEELING UNSAFE (STUDENTS WITH/WITHOUT LGBTQ PARENTS)

Legend: ■ AT LEAST ONE LGBTQ PARENT ■ BOTH PARENTS NON-LGBTQ

- 60%
- 40%
- 20%
- 0%

51.3%

35.2%

AGREED: "I DON'T LIKE BEING AT SCHOOL SO SOMETIMES I SKIP"

[104] χ^2 (1, N=3254) = 179, p<.001, Cramer's V=.24.

[105] Skipped because felt unsafe, χ^2 (2, N=3254) = 191, p<.001, Cramer's V=.24; more than ten days, χ^2 (8, N=3283) = 241, p<.001, Cramer's V=.19.

[106] χ^2 (5, N=3267) = 212, p<.001, Cramer's V=.26.

[107] At school, χ^2 (1, N=3153) = 74.2, p<.001, Cramer's V=.15; on the way χ^2 (1, N=3130) = 58.6, p<.001, Cramer's V=.14.

[108] LGBTQ, χ^2 (1, N=3151) = 34.3, p<.001, Cramer's V=.10; LGBTQ parent, χ^2 (1, N=3037) = 12.4, p<.001, Cramer's V=.06; trans, χ^2 (2, N=918) = 12.3, p=.002, Cramer's V=.12.

PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL AS BECOMING MORE HOMOPHOBIC OR LESS HOMOPHOBIC

I don't know if it is actually "more or less." Grade nines tend to be more ignorant/careless and use terms like homo, fag, etc. Some people (myself included) tell them off. I don't think most people are exactly homophobic— they are just accustomed/used to it.

My community's environment and school have become much more mean-spirited and conservative since 2005. People seem much less caring and unwilling to be thoughtful about community social issues across the board.

Very slow change in social climate. Students are generally more accepting; however, there are many who are still extraordinarily homophobic.

People are becoming more educated about homosexuality, etc., and the prejudice is slowly getting "bred" out of us, essentially. Generation by generation, it's becoming more and more acceptable and much less of a "big deal."

It's actually about the same, except this year we have an out kid. (Me—yes, just me. One out kid, in all of the school.) So now people KNOW they can bully me for being queer because it's been proven.

People generally find distressful situations more tolerable if they feel hopeful that things are improving. We asked students if they believed their school was less homophobic or more homophobic than in past years. LGBTQ students responded "less" in about the same proportions as non-LGBTQ students (**67.2%** of LGBTQ and **70.0%** of non-LGBTQ[109]). However, trans students and students with one or more LGBTQ parents were less optimistic, which suggests that schools need to pay specific attention to their situations. Trans students were evenly divided between "less" (**50.6%**) and "more" (**49.4%**) responses,[110] and only **59.3%** of students with one or more LGBTQ parents responded "less" (compared to **69.5%** of students with only non-LGBTQ parents).[111]
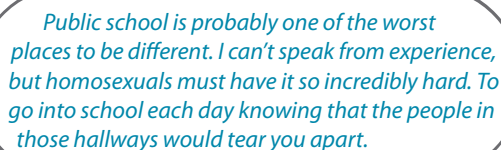
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[109] χ^2 (1, N=3043) = 2.3, p=.128, Cramer's V=.03.

[110] χ^2 (2, N=3043) = 13.8, p=.001, Cramer's V=.07.

[111] χ^2 (1, N=2937) = 5.3, p=.022, Cramer's V=.04.

SCHOOL ATTACHMENT

We asked students a range of questions related to school attachment, including whether they felt comfortable talking to school staff or other students about LGBTQ matters, and whether or not they felt accepted, respected, and able to be themselves at school.

> *Public school is probably one of the worst places to be different. I can't speak from experience, but homosexuals must have it so incredibly hard. To go into school each day knowing that the people in those hallways would tear you apart.*

INDICATORS OF SCHOOL ATTACHMENT

Studies have suggested that there is a link between bullying and suicide, and that there is a disproportionately high rate of suicide attempts and suicidal thinking among LGBTQ students (O'Donnell, O'Donnell, Wardlaw, & Stueve, 2004; Remafedi, French, Story, Resnick, & Blum, 1998; Robin et al., 2002; Russell, 2003; Russell & Joyner, 2001; Udry & Chantala, 2002; Wichstrom & Hegna, 2003). This might be expected, given the amount of bullying and other homophobic and transphobic experiences they typically have. However, there is some suggestion that school attachment—the feeling that one belongs in the school community—is a crucial issue in this regard because of its connection to lower suicidality rates in the general school population and among LGBTQ students (O'Donnell et al., 2004).

School attachment has also been linked to academic performance for LGBTQ students, especially for boys (Pearson, Muller, & Wilkinson, 2007).

We did not ask directly about suicidal thinking because we could not be sure that our participants, whether completing the survey on their own or in class, would in every case have adequate support available to help them cope with any emotional distress that might arise from being confronted with such a question. Instead, participants were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with a list of statements related to school attachment, some of them positive, such as "I feel like a real part of my school," and some of them negative, such as "It is hard for me to feel accepted at my school." LGBTQ students were far more likely than

non-LGBTQ students to either strongly or somewhat agree with the negative statements. For instance, almost half of the LGBTQ participants (**44.3%**) strongly agreed (**15.8%**) or somewhat agreed (another **28.5%**) that "It is hard for me to feel accepted at my school," compared to fewer than one in six non-LGBTQ students (**3.5%** strongly and **11.9%** somewhat).[112] Trans students reported even lower levels of school attachment. Of particular concern is that **29.9%** strongly agreed that they sometimes felt "very depressed" about their school, compared to **19.9%** of sexual minority participants and **6.1%** of non-LGBTQ students. Similarly, **29.7%** of trans respondents strongly agreed with the statement "Sometimes I don't feel like I belong in my school," compared to **18.1%** of sexual minority students and **6.3%** of non-LGBTQ individuals.[113] See Figure 16.

FIGURE 16: SCHOOL ATTACHMENT (NON-LGBTQ/SEXUAL MINORITY/TRANS STUDENTS)
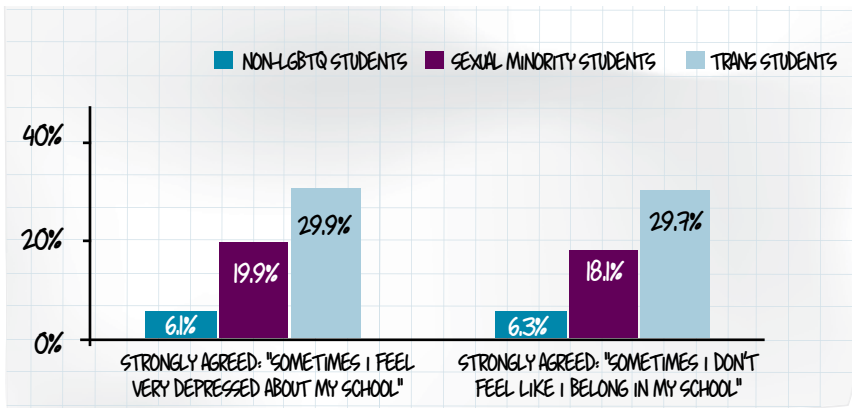
Trans students were also more likely to disagree with positive comments assessing school attachment. For example, over half (**55.5%**) of trans participants disagreed with the statement, "I feel like a real part of my school," compared to **41.4%** of sexual minority and only a quarter (**24.5%**) of non-LGBTQ students.

Even though many students with one or more LGBTQ parents are not LGBTQ themselves, their responses followed a similar pattern of school attachment to the responses by LGBTQ youth, in some cases indicating even weaker school attachment. These

findings suggest that students may find it even more socially alienating to have to hide their parents' LGBTQ identities than to hide their own. Students with LGBTQ parents were less likely to "feel like a real part of my school" (**55.7%** agree versus **70.9%** of students without any LGBTQ parents) and to feel that "I am treated with as much respect as other students" (**60.9%** agree versus **78.2%**).[115] They were much less likely to agree that "There is at least one adult I can talk to in my school" (**58.1%** versus **76.1%**).[116] They were much more likely to agree that "Sometimes I don't feel like I belong in my school" (**57.9%** versus **38.1%**) and that "Sometimes I feel very depressed about my school" (**63.8%** versus **35.5%**).[117] See Figure 17.

FIGURE 17: SCHOOL ATTACHMENT (STUDENTS WITH/WITHOUT LGBTQ PARENTS)

Legend: BOTH PARENTS NON-LGBTQ | AT LEAST ONE LGBTQ PARENT

AGREED: "SOMETIMES I FEEL VERY DEPRESSED ABOUT MY SCHOOL"
- Both parents non-LGBTQ: 35.5%
- At least one LGBTQ parent: 63.8%

AGREED: "THERE IS AT LEAST ONE ADULT I CAN TALK TO IN MY SCHOOL"
- Both parents non-LGBTQ: 76.1%
- At least one LGBTQ parent: 58.1%

AGREED: "I AM TREATED WITH AS MUCH RESPECT AS OTHER STUDENTS"
- Both parents non-LGBTQ: 78.2%
- At least one LGBTQ parent: 60.9%

AGREED: "SOMETIMES I DON'T FEEL LIKE I BELONG IN MY SCHOOL"
- Both parents non-LGBTQ: 38.1%
- At least one LGBTQ parent: 57.9%

AGREED: "I FEEL LIKE A REAL PART OF MY SCHOOL"
- Both parents non-LGBTQ: 70.9%
- At least one LGBTQ parent: 55.7%

X-axis: 0%, 20%, 40%, 60%, 80%

[112] χ^2 (3, N=3271) = 381, p<.001, Cramer's V=.34.

[113] Very depressed, χ^2 (6, N=3262) = 295, p<.001, Cramer's V=21; belong, χ^2 (6, N=3286) = 273, p<.001, Cramer's V=.20.

[114] χ^2 (6, N=3288) = 130, p<.001, Cramer's V=.14.

[115] Real part, χ^2 (1, N=3157) = 12.3, p<.001, Cramer's V=.06; respect, χ^2 (1, N=3144) = 19.1, p<.001, Cramer's V=08.

[116] χ^2 (1, N=3157) = 19.5, p<.001, Cramer's V=.08.

[117] Don't belong, χ^2 (1, N=3156) = 18.2, p<.001, Cramer's V=.08; depressed, χ^2 (1, N=3139) = 38.5, p<.000., Cramer's V=.11.

ISOLATION

I guess you could say that this town is very conservative in some aspects. We seem a little behind the times as far as LGBTQ openness goes. Our high school has about 400 students, and I only know one person who is open, although I think the rest of the school doesn't really know. Many people don't realize that the things that they say have such a powerful impact on people. One of my friends doesn't really fit into society's standards of what a teenage boy should be. He often gets picked on for this. Most of the comments are never said to his face, but with such a small school word gets around. People joke around, calling him a "fag", not realizing how much they're really hurting him. I guess the main point of this is that most people wouldn't feel safe to come out at our school. Even at home, I don't really know how my parents would react to that. I just wish that people could just accept the fact that the whole world isn't straight.

People used to make fun of everyone (joking) about being gay, lesbian, etc., until 2 people in our school actually came out.

Female sexual minority and trans participants were more likely than male sexual minority participants to feel isolated at school. For example, **28.5%** of sexual minority females did not know anyone who was open about being LGBTQ at school, compared to **13.8%** of male sexual minority students and **20.0%** of trans students.[118] Compared to bisexual female students, lesbian participants were more likely to report not knowing anyone who was open about being LGBTQ at school (**30.8%** compared to **21.1%**). A similar number of bisexual male participants and gay male respondents reported knowing LGBTQ students at school (**12.8%** and **15%**).[119] More sexual minority females than sexual minority males were unaware of a single member of the school staff who was supportive of LGBTQ students (**30.1%**

of sexual minority females versus **23.7%** of sexual minority males and **40.0%** of trans students[120]). More bisexual female students (**35.5%**) were unaware of a single member of the school staff who was supportive of LGBTQ students, compared to lesbian participants (**28.3%**), gay male respondents (**25.6%**), and male bisexual students (**22.1%**).[121] Most LGBTQ students did not know of any openly LGBTQ staff members (**72.9%** of sexual minority females versus **68.9%** of sexual minority males and **68.2%** of trans youth[122]). Sexual minority females were less likely to feel that the school community was supportive of LGBTQ people: **47%** compared to **39.4%** of male sexual minority youth.[123] See Figure 18.

FIGURE 18: KNOWLEDGE OF OPENLY LGBTQ STUDENTS AND TEACHERS (MALE SEXUAL MINORITY/FEMALE SEXUAL MINORITY/TRANS STUDENTS)
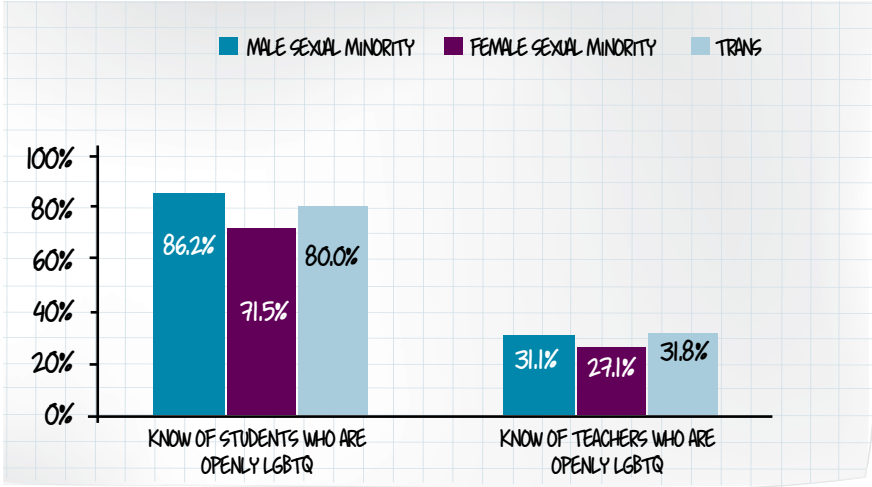
In grade 6, there was a very open gay teacher who spoke to everyone, including parents, about his sexuality and his openness in discussing homosexuality. I never talked to him or ever had a class with him. Without him and at the time, I didn't have any other gay role models or ideas of what an adult gay male could be.

Our school has gone from having a toxic to tolerating environment in the past few years. I think the reason our school had such a toxic environment was that NO ONE had ever come out here before. Ever.

In grade 10, one day my geography teacher gave a 40 min. lecture on homosexuality and gay youth in high school. He was not gay himself, but he talked about homophobia and the potentiality of gay students and the actual number of gay students within a given high school. This was sort of an unexpected talk, but it helped me more than anything to continue through school.

These findings are particularly alarming in the context of the McCreary Centre longitudinal analysis of data from their large-scale surveys of high school students in British Columbia (Saewyc et al., 2007). Their analysis found exceptionally high rates of both suicidal thinking and suicide attempts among bisexual female and lesbian students and, even more alarming, found that the incidence of both was increasing:
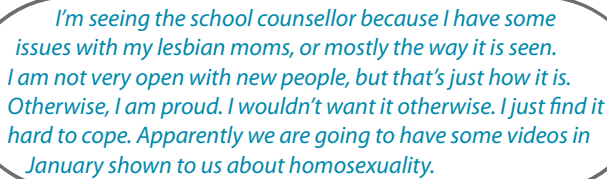
Although the rates of heterosexual teens who reported suicidal thoughts remained similar for males over all three surveys (9–11%) and declined slightly for females (22% down to 19%), rates of suicidal thinking significantly increased for bisexual males, bisexual females, and lesbians over the same three years. For example, in 1992, 21% of bisexual males reported thinking about suicide in the past year, while in 2003 this had increased to 38%. Similarly, 20% of bisexual females reported suicidal thoughts in 1992, while in 2003, more than half (52%) reported suicidal thoughts. Lesbians reported even greater increases, from 33% in 1992 to 63% in 2003. Unlike rates for other sexual minority youth, the rates of gay males with suicidal thoughts declined sharply from 1992 (50%) to 2003 (26%).

Trends in suicide attempts showed similar patterns of unchanged rates (males) or declining rates (females) for heterosexual youth, but increasing rates for lesbian and bisexual females, increasing and then declining rates for bisexual males, and sharply declining rates for gay males. Among lesbian and bisexual females, rates in 1992 were 13% and 19%, and by 2003, had increased to 38% (lesbian) and 30% (bisexual). For bisexual males, 12% reported a recent suicide attempt in 1992, while 18% reported suicide attempts in 1998, and 13% in 2003. Again, unlike the other sexual minority groups, the rates of suicide attempts among gay males decreased from 44% in 1992 to 22% in 1998, to only 9% in 2003. Even so, this was still 3 times as high as the proportion who had attempted suicide among heterosexual youth. (Saewyc et al., 2007, p. 32)

Saewyc et al. (2007) also found that boys of all sexual orientations were more likely to self-report good or excellent health than girls of all sexual orientations, that lesbians and bisexual girls have greater HIV risk than gay and bisexual boys, and that lesbian students were almost three times as likely to have experienced physical assault in the past year.

Even though they would be more prone to be on the lookout for signs of LGBTQ-inclusiveness at school, students with one or more LGBTQ parents were actually slightly more likely than students without any LGBTQ parents not to know of any student at school who was open about being LGBTQ (**23.9%** with and **21.7%** without knew of nobody).[124] They were also slightly more likely not to be open about their sexual orientation or gender identity if they were LGBTQ themselves: **26.6%** of LGBTQ students with one or more LGBTQ parents were not out to anyone at school, compared to **24.2%** of LGBTQ students without any LGBTQ parents.[125] Although students with LGBTQ parents were less likely to say they did not know of an out LGBTQ staff member (**66.1%** knew of none, compared to **72.3%** of students without any LGBTQ parents)[126] and more likely to report not knowing of any staff members who are supportive of LGBTQ students (**40.0%** knew of no one, compared to **34.5%** of students without any LGBTQ parents),[127] these differences are not statistically significant.

> *I'm seeing the school counsellor because I have some issues with my lesbian moms, or mostly the way it is seen. I am not very open with new people, but that's just how it is. Otherwise, I am proud. I wouldn't want it otherwise. I just find it hard to cope. Apparently we are going to have some videos in January shown to us about homosexuality.*

As with so many other indicators, the experiences of female sexual minority, male sexual minority, and trans students differed significantly when we asked whether they found their school community supportive of LGBTQ people and whether they knew of at least one supportive teacher.

There were some ethnic variations in likelihood of isolation for LGBTQ students. Youth of colour (LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined) were far more likely to report that they knew of no teachers or staff members who were supportive of LGBTQ students (**48.2%** compared to **37.6%** of Aboriginal and **30.8%** Caucasian youth, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined). Youth of colour (LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined) were also far less likely to know of any students who were open about being LGBTQ (**67.0%** compared to **80.5%** of Caucasian and **86.5%** of Aboriginal youth, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined).[128] If heterosexual themselves, students of colour were far less likely to have friends who were publicly LGBTQ (**34.9%** compared to **47.6%** of heterosexual Caucasian and **53.8%** of heterosexual Aboriginal youth).[129] This high degree of isolation for youth of colour with regard to LGBTQ matters suggests that serious attention needs to be paid to finding means of reaching out to youth in ways that are appropriate and informed about cultural issues and taboos surrounding LGBTQ matters. See Figure 19.

FIGURE 19: INDICATORS OF ISOLATION (STUDENTS OF COLOUR/ABORIGINAL STUDENTS/CAUCASIAN STUDENTS)
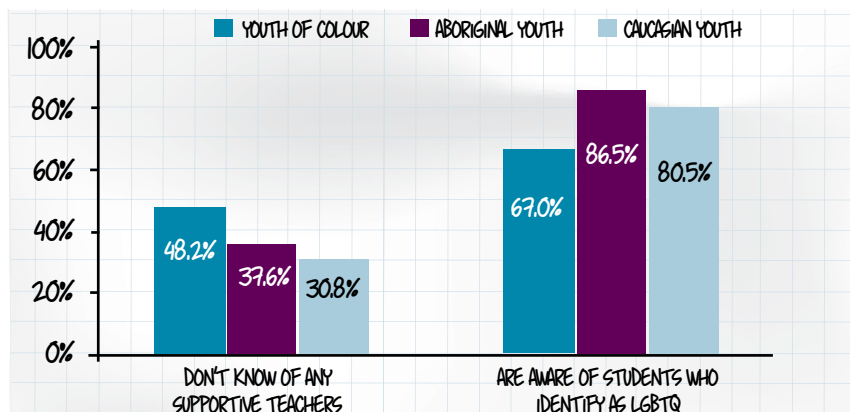
[118] χ^2 (2, N=899) = 26.5, p<.001, Cramer's V=.17.

[119] χ^2 (5, N=2993) = 33.6, p<.001, Cramer's V=.11.

[120] χ^2 (2, N=919) = 11.9, p=.003, Cramer's V=.11.

[121] $\chi2$ (5, N=3159) = 48.4, p<.001, Cramer's V=.12.

[122] χ^2 (2, N=909) = 1.7, p=.436, Cramer's V=.04.

[123] χ^2 (2, N=941) = 10.9, p=.028, Cramer's V=.08.

[124] χ^2 (4, N=2888) = 51.1, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13.

[125] χ^2 (4, N=813) = 3.34, p=.503, Cramer's V=.06.

[126] χ^2 (4, N=3033) = 7.8, p=.101, Cramer's V=.05.

[127] χ^2 (4, N=3055) = 5.7, p=.223, Cramer's V=.04.

[128] χ^2 (8, N=3329) = 109, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13.

[129] Know of LGBTQ students, χ^2 (2, N=3140) = 70.8, p<.001, Cramer's V=.15; have LGBTQ friend, χ^2 (2, N=2317) = 34.8, p<.001, Cramer's V=.12.

SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

I know that many of my friends that are LGTB or Q are extremely afraid of telling their parents. Although in our community many people pretend to be rather liberal in their ideals, they think in the "as long as it's not my kid" type of way, which is hurtful and intimidating to their children.

Being openly LGBTQ at my school makes getting in the "in crowd" VERY difficult if not impossible.

A girl in my careers class moved tables because she had found out that my friends and I were bisexual.

The Vice-Principal of my school used to be my Guidance Counsellor. I went to her because I was extremely depressed and wanted to commit suicide. She then found it necessary to point out that she goes to church every Sunday.

My best friend is gay. And he's afraid to come out to MANY people—including his family—because he hears "that's so gay" and "this is gay" and "that is gay" all the time. He's afraid of what will happen.

Growing up can be a challenging and anxiety-ridden process, even when youth can turn to various people in their lives for support, guidance, and understanding, and even when their core sense of self is not the subject of widespread social prejudice. Youth who might be experiencing harassment at school based on their ethnic or religious minority status can normally turn to their parents for support; LGBTQ youth generally cannot (Harrison, 2003). Participants were asked a series of questions about how comfortable they would be talking about LGBTQ matters with various people in their lives: teachers, the principal, counsellors, school coaches, classmates, parent(s)/guardian(s), other relatives, and close friends. In every case, trans students were less comfortable than sexual minority students. See Figure 20.[130]

FIGURE 20: COMFORT LEVEL TALKING TO SCHOOL COACHES, TEACHERS, AND CLASSMATES ABOUT LGBTQ MATTERS (SEXUAL MINORITY/TRANS STUDENTS)

Bar chart legend: ■ SEXUAL MINORITY STUDENTS ■ TRANS STUDENTS

VERY UNCOMFORTABLE TALKING TO SCHOOL COACHES: 43.6% / 58.6%
VERY UNCOMFORTABLE TALKING TO TEACHERS: 18.9% / 28.1%
VERY UNCOMFORTABLE TALKING TO CLASSMATES: 18.2% / 25.8%
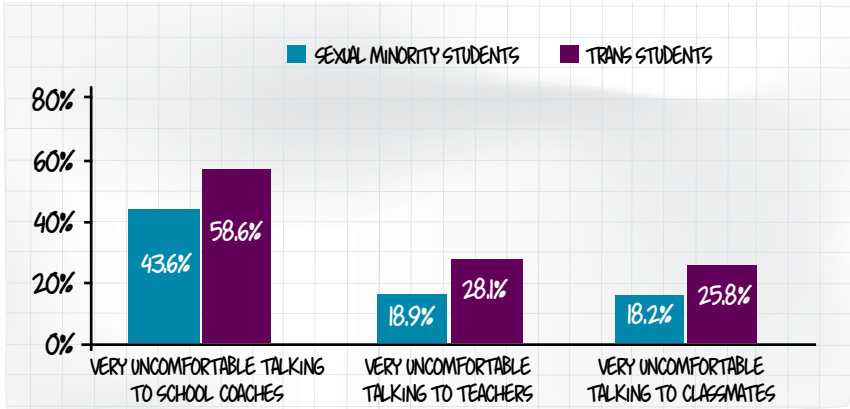
My two roommates "came out," and I think that this has raised issues for staff and teachers that they are uncomfortable addressing. One of our classmates committed suicide—a gay male who "came out" in a suicide note left for students. These events were not processed appropriately by school officials.

My most significant encounters with homophobia were in the early years of middle school and high school (grades 7-10). I believe that more direct and accessible support (such as by counsellors, GSAs, etc.) in high school contributes to a safer environment for older students, but there is definitely a need for constructive intervention into violence and homophobic harassment amongst younger students. Recognizing that students' understanding of queer issues is less sophisticated at younger ages, more work needs to be done in developing tools to make a difference in the lives of youth as early as possible and, in doing so, preventing homophobic attitudes from becoming a routine school experience.

Further, only one in four (**24.7%**) LGBTQ respondents reported feeling very comfortable speaking about LGBTQ matters with their parents, compared to more than a third (**38.7%**) of non-LGBTQ participants.[131] One encouraging finding is that almost three-quarters of LGBTQ individuals (**72.5%**) stated feeling very comfortable speaking with a close friend about LGBTQ matters. Only **59.1%** of non-LGBTQ youth responded in this way.[132] Many students in our study, however, described themselves as being unable to talk to anyone about being LGBTQ.

Roughly two-fifths of LGBTQ youth reported being uncomfortable talking to school counsellors about LGBTQ matters (**40.9%** trans youth, **39.3%** sexual minority females, and **36.7%** sexual minority males).[133] Female sexual minority students were most likely to feel uncomfortable talking about LGBTQ matters with their parents (**61.5%** versus **52.2%** sexual minority males and **51.1%** trans youth) or another relative (**67.2%** versus **55.2%** trans youth and **55.1%** sexual minority males),[134] whereas both female sexual minority students and trans students were likely to feel uncomfortable talking about LGBTQ matters with school coaches (**77.0%** trans youth and **74.8%** sexual minority females versus **62.8%** sexual minority males) or even to a close friend (**14.8%** trans youth and **14.3%** sexual minority females versus **7.5%** sexual minority males),[135] and trans students were most likely to feel uncomfortable talking about LGBTQ matters with their classmates (**55.1%** versus **45.1%** sexual minority females and **34.4%**

sexual minority males) and their teachers (**51.7%** versus **43.5%** sexual minority females and **41.2%** sexual minority males).[136]

Although students with one or more LGBTQ parents have the advantage of having an adult in their lives who might be open to discussing LGBTQ matters, they are also more personally implicated in and affected by such discussions when talking with other people, and they reported high levels of discomfort talking with other adults and their own peers. For example, **53.9%** of youth with LGBTQ parents were uncomfortable talking about LGBTQ matters with their teachers (compared to **39.7%** of students without any LGBTQ parents); **50.9%** of youth with LGBTQ parents were uncomfortable talking about LGBTQ matters with their school counsellors (compared to **36.4%** of students without any LGBTQ parents); and **49.6%** of youth with LGBTQ parents were uncomfortable talking about LGBTQ matters with their classmates (compared to **37.1%** of students without any LGBTQ parents).[137] Almost a third (**29.5%**) of youth with LGBTQ parents described themselves as uncomfortable talking to their parents about LGBTQ matters, a number which is understandably lower than for students who do not have any LGBTQ parents (**42.4%**).[138] Most youth with LGBTQ parents are comfortable talking with a close friend about LGBTQ matters, although more youth without any LGBTQ parents reported feeling this way (**78.8%** compared to **84.0%**).[139] See Figure 21.

FIGURE 21: COMFORT LEVEL TALKING TO TEACHERS, COUNSELLORS, CLASSMATES, PARENTS, AND CLOSE FRIENDS ABOUT LGBTQ MATTERS (STUDENTS WITH/WITHOUT LGBTQ PARENTS)

Legend:
- BOTH PARENTS NON-LGBTQ
- AT LEAST ONE LGBTQ PARENT

UNCOMFORTABLE TALKING TO CLOSE FRIENDS
- 16.0%
- 21.2%

UNCOMFORTABLE TALKING TO PARENTS
- 42.4%
- 29.5%

UNCOMFORTABLE TALKING TO CLASSMATES
- 37.1%
- 49.6%

UNCOMFORTABLE TALKING TO COUNSELLORS
- 36.4%
- 50.9%

UNCOMFORTABLE TALKING TO TEACHERS
- 39.7%
- 53.9%
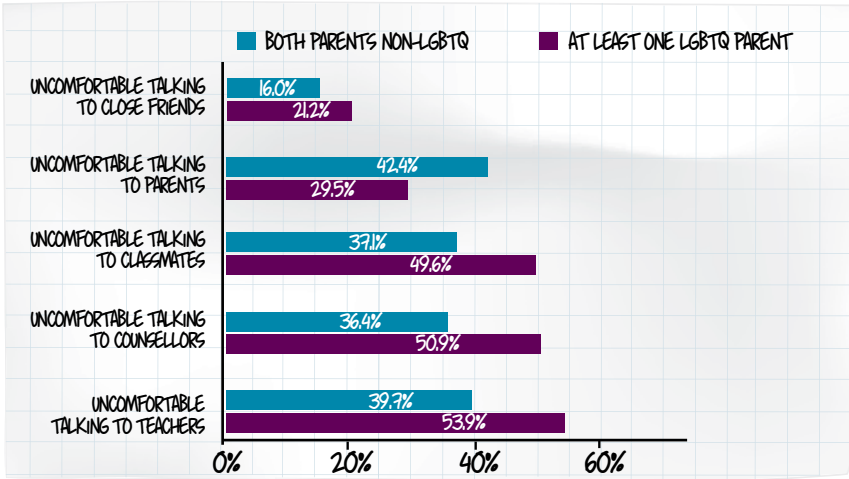
Regionally, there was significant variation in students' reported rates of being comfortable talking about LGBTQ matters with their teachers (only **54.1%** in BC to **63.7%** in the Atlantic provinces), their coaches (only **34.2%** in BC to **47.4%** in the Atlantic provinces), their classmates (only **53.0%** in the North to **66.9%** in the Atlantic provinces), and their parents (only **51.0%** in the North to **68.0%** in the Atlantic provinces).[140]

There was also ethnic variation in reported rates of being comfortable discussing LGBTQ matters with various influential people in youth's lives. For example, only **20.5%** of students of colour (LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined) reported being "very comfortable" talking to their teachers (compared to **28.4%** of Caucasian and **33.7%** of Aboriginal youth, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined), **15.2%** to their coaches (compared to **20.5%** of Caucasian and **22.1%** of Aboriginal youth, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined), **26.5%** to their classmates (compared to **32.8%** of

Aboriginal and **35.1%** of Caucasian youth, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined), and **27.3%** to their parents (compared to **36.9%** of Caucasian and **37.6%** of Aboriginal youth, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined).[141] Students of colour (LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined) were also significantly less likely to be very comfortable talking about LGBTQ matters even with a close friend (**52.6%**, compared to **65.5%** of Aboriginal and **65.9%** of Caucasian youth, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined).[142] They were also more likely to disagree that there was "at least one adult I can talk to in my school" (**29%**, compared to **25.9%** of Aboriginal and **23.3%** of Caucasian youth, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined).[143] Given such low rates of comfort levels in talking to anyone at all about LGBTQ matters, it is unsurprising that youth of colour also reported such high rates of isolation. These findings suggest a heightened need for targeted approaches in engaging LGBTQ youth of colour.

[130] Coaches, χ^2 (6, N=3170) = 80.4, p<.001, Cramer's V=.11; teachers, χ^2 (6, N=3209) = 9.54, p=.145, Cramer's V=.04; classmates, χ^2 (6, N=3179) = 29.3, p<.001, Cramer's V=.07.

[131] χ^2 (3, N=3195) = 108, p<.001, Cramer's V=.18.

[132] χ^2 (3, N=3201) = 57.7, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13.

[133] χ^2 (2, N=924) = 0.9, p=.642, Cramer's V=.03.

[134] Parent(s)/guardian(s), χ^2 (2, N=926) = 7.5, p=.024, Cramer's V=.09; another relative, χ^2 (2, N=923) = 12.4, p=.002, Cramer's V=.12.

[135] Coaches, χ^2 (2, N=911) = 16.2, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13; a close friend, χ^2 (2, N=927) = 11.6, p=.003, Cramer's V=.11.

[136] Classmates, χ^2 (2, N=921) = 18.8, p<.001, Cramer's V=.14; teachers, χ^2 (2, N=934) = 3.5, p=.174, Cramer's V=.06.

[137] Uncomfortable with teachers, χ^2 (1, N=3089) = 9.24, p=.002, Cramer's V=.06; with counsellors, χ^2 (1, N=3068) = 9.89, p=.002, Cramer's V=.06; with classmates, χ^2 (1, N=3063) = 7.32, p=.007, Cramer's V=.05.

[138] χ^2 (1, N=3077) = 7.37, p=.007, Cramer's V=.05.

[139] χ^2 (1, N=3082) = 2.2, p=.135, Cramer's V=.03.

[140] Teachers, χ^2 (4, N=3375) = 17.7, p=.001, Cramer's V=.07; coaches, χ^2 (4, N=3333) = 28.3, p<.001, Cramer's V=.09; classmates, χ^2 (4, N=3340) = 21.5, p<.001, Cramer's V=.08; parents, χ^2 (4, N=3358) = 31.1, p<.001, Cramer's V=.10.

[141] Uncomfortable with teachers, χ^2 (6, N=3360) = 45.7, p<.001, Cramer's V=.08; with coaches, χ^2 (6, N=3319) = 21.5, p=.002, Cramer's V=.06; with classmates, χ^2 (6, N=3326) = 29.6, p<.001, Cramer's V=.07; with parents χ^2 (6, N=3345) = 43.9, p<.001, Cramer's V=.08.

[142] χ^2 (6, N=3352) = 58.2, p<.001, Cramer's V=.09.

[143] χ^2 (6, N=3435) = 32.6, p<.001, Cramer's V=.10.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES

My school has absolutely no support (no awareness) of the LGBTQ community within and around it. The biggest fear for me is the unknown, not knowing how people will accept someone who is LGBTQ.

If school officials are to effectively address problems in school climate, they need to know what sorts of institutional responses are associated with improvements in climate and increases in school attachment among socially marginalized students. We asked a set of questions about staff interventions, Gay-Straight Alliance Clubs (GSAs), and school- and division-level anti-homophobia policies, and we correlated students' responses with indicators of school climate and school attachment.

I was lucky enough to get through with just mild taunting in all guys PE or whispers in the halls, but sometimes what hurt the most was simply the apathy and the lack of role models. If only I had queer educators around me earlier on to show that success and queerness could be compatible, that at some point it was a possibility to be honest with oneself. Better sexual health ed. involving queer material would have worked wonders and prevented so much grief in my life.

SUPPORTIVE TEACHERS AND TEACHER INTERVENTION IN HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC INCIDENTS

I have not once seen a teacher or principal do anything to discipline someone for a homophobic remark—never a suspension, which is what it is supposed to be according to the harassment and safety policy.

People can be cruel. I remember my first day at the new school in grade 11 these guys decided it would be fun to taunt me because someone from a previous school had also transferred and let them in on the fact that I was gay. The class was hell, and really very little was done about it.

Nobody is stepping up to the plate (especially adults/teachers) to stop it. It's really pretty depressing that this piece of society is not being respected.

I find that none of the teachers support what I am doing and I'm all alone. I was called a Dyke in front of the class by another kid and the teacher heard it but did nothing so I called the teacher on it and they just changed the subject.

For the most part I think it would really help if teachers stood up a bit more when slurs were being said. Of course we understand that they might want to stay neutral, or don't know what to say, but then learn what to say!

I am very discouraged when everyday I sit in class and hear mean homophobic remarks, and the teachers just ignore it or perhaps even have a laugh along with the students who said it!! I have lost faith in the supposed 'teacher role model' crap. Yeah right. These people only conform to their own beliefs of religion and such, and rarely do I see a teacher stick up against homophobic remarks.

Most educators believe it is their obligation to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for LGBTQ students (Harris Interactive and GLSEN, 2005). Even those teachers who see LGBTQ lives as immoral or sinful would agree that they do not want any child to be insulted and made to feel afraid to go to school. However, studies have found that a great many teachers are disinclined to intervene when they hear homophobic comments (Fraynd & Capper, 2003), even though they agree that such language should not be tolerated (Sykes, 2004). In GLSEN's 2007 U.S. Climate Survey, fewer than a fifth (17.6%) of students said that teachers and other staff intervened always or most of the time when they heard homophobic comments and only 16.6% said staff intervened when they heard negative comments about gender expression. In contrast, 57.6% of students from the same survey said staff intervened always or most of the time when they heard racist comments and 42.3% when they heard sexist comments. Similarly, over a third (38.6%) said that staff never intervened when they heard homophobic comments and 42.6% when they heard comments about gender expression (in comparison to 10.2% for racist comments and 14.8% for sexist comments) (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008).

This year, one of the teachers decided that the amount of homophobic slurs that she was hearing around the halls and in the classrooms was just too much. She's since put up posters that say "that's so gay is not okay," and she has been working to discourage the use of homophobic slurs. Other teachers have also joined in working to stop the homophobia at our school.

For me, there have been more presentations and more outspoken teachers who have taken initiative in making sure all students feel safe and equally treated.

We asked a series of questions to gauge the frequency of intervention by school staff and students when homophobic and transphobic comments were being made. LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ responses were similar to those in the U.S. study regarding whether or not a teacher or staff member was present when homophobic and transphobic comments were being made. However, the "it doesn't affect me" factor comes into play in participants' views of whether or not staff members intervene: LGBTQ students were more likely than non-LGBTQ students to report that school staff members never intervene when homophobic comments are being made (**33.2%** versus **19.0%**).[144]

Nearly half (**43.0%**) of trans students reported that school staff members never intervened when homophobic comments were being made, compared to just under a third (**32.2%**) of sexual minority respondents.[145] Students with one or more LGBTQ parents were more likely to report that teachers always intervene when homophobic language is used in their presence (**17.7%** versus **10.9%** of students without any LGBTQ parents), but they were also more likely to report that teachers never intervene when such remarks were made (**30.1%** versus **22.8%**).[146] Results were similar in the U.S. report with fewer than one in five students with LGBT parents reporting that staff intervened regularly when they heard homophobic (**12%**), sexist (**18%**), or gender-biased (**7%**) language (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008).

Most LGBTQ students see teachers as ineffective in addressing homophobic harassment (**67.2%** of trans youth, **67.0%** of sexual minority females, and **64.6%** of sexual minority males),[147] and fewer than half of LGBTQ students reported incidents of harassment to school staff (**38.2%** of sexual minority males, **40.8%** of sexual minority females, and **46.9%** of trans youth).[148] Even fewer reported to their parents, and female sexual minority students were less likely to confide in their parents about harassment they had experienced than either trans students or sexual minority males (**34.4%** versus **40.3%** of trans youth and **42.8%** of sexual minority males).[149] See Figure 22.
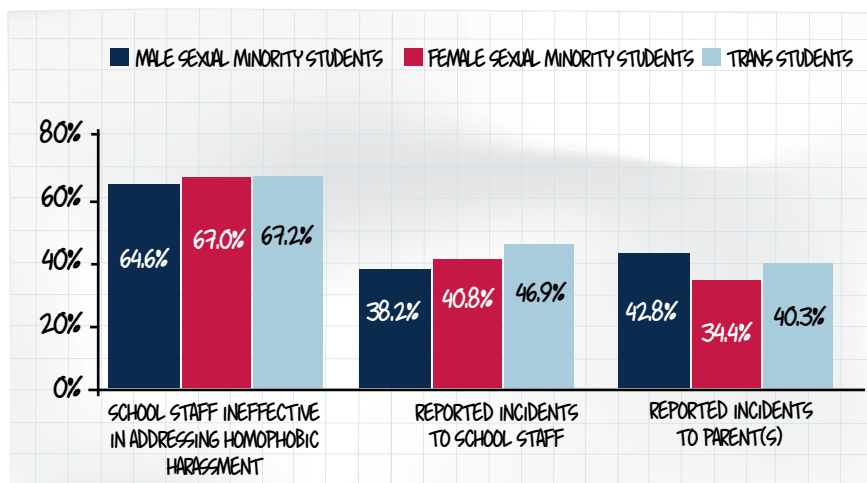
Students with one or more LGBTQ parents are an exception to this pattern, perhaps because they have a parent who has talked to them about what to do if they are homophobically harassed; **55.4%** told someone with authority at school, compared to **32.3%** of students without any LGBTQ parents. They were also more likely to tell their parents (**55.4%** versus **35.9%**).[150] These findings are roughly comparable to the U.S. figures: GLSEN reported that **48%** of students with LGBT parents had told an authority figure when they were harassed and **66%** had told their parents (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008).

Although there was little regional variation regarding school staff intervention in homophobic language, students in BC were most likely to see staff members as effective in addressing homophobic harassment (**60.0%**), and students in Ontario were least likely to report this (**43.8%**).[151] Students in BC were also most likely to see their school communities as supportive of LGBTQ people (**51.6%**), and students in the North were least likely to report this (**25.4%**).[152] Students in Ontario (**74.2%**) were most likely to know of at least one teacher who was supportive of LGBTQ students and students in the North and the Prairies were the least likely to report this (**54.9%** and **53.7%**, respectively).[153] Overall, students were unlikely to know of an openly LGBTQ teacher or other staff member, although there was considerable variation regionally, with students from Ontario (**34.8%**) and the North (**34.6%**)

being the most likely and students from the Prairies (**17.0%**) being the least likely to report this.[154] Students from the North (**57.2%**) were least likely to see their school climate as becoming less homophobic, compared with students from BC (**73.4%**), the Prairies and Atlantic Provinces (both **70.1%**), and Ontario (**66.9%**).[155] See Figure 23.

Students of different ethnic groups were similarly likely to report that staff members never intervene when homophobic comments are made (**22.7%** of all students reported this), and that

they always intervene (**11.3%**). There was significant variation among these groupings on the question of other students never intervening: **49.8%** of youth of colour, **54.6%** of Caucasian youth, and **60.9%** of Aboriginal youth, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined, said other students never intervene.[156] Youth of colour, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined, were much more likely to respond that their school community was supportive of LGBTQ people (**45.6%** versus **34.3%** of Aboriginal youth and **33.8%** of Caucasian youth),

FIGURE 23: SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS AND TEACHER INTERVENTION BY REGION

Legend: ■ NORTH ■ ATLANTIC ■ PRAIRIES ■ ONTARIO ■ BC

SCHOOL CLIMATE LESS HOMOPHOBIC
- North: 57.2%
- Atlantic: 70.1%
- Prairies: 70.1%
- Ontario: 66.9%
- BC: 73.4%

TEACHER OR STAFF MEMBER WHO IS OPENLY LGBTQ
- North: 34.6%
- Atlantic: 21.8%
- Prairies: 17.0%
- Ontario: 34.8%
- BC: 30.1%

TEACHERS THAT ARE SUPPORTIVE OF LGBTQ STUDENTS
- North: 54.9%
- Atlantic: 65.7%
- Prairies: 53.7%
- Ontario: 74.2%
- BC: 62.4%

SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL COMMUNITY
- North: 25.4%
- Atlantic: 33.7%
- Prairies: 28.5%
- Ontario: 36.7%
- BC: 51.6%

SCHOOL STAFF EFFECTIVE IN ADDRESSING HOMOPHOBIA
- North: 53.0%
- Atlantic: 57.4%
- Prairies: 48.8%
- Ontario: 43.8%
- BC: 60.0%

even though youth of colour were much less likely to be comfortable talking about LGBTQ matters with anybody at school or at home, to know of either any out LGBTQ students or any teachers or other staff members who are supportive of LGBTQ students, or to see class representations of LGBTQ matters as having been very positive (and much more likely to see class discussions of LGBTQ people's relationships as having been negative). However, youth of colour also reported lower levels of hearing homophobic and transphobic comments, of having been exposed to homophobic graffiti, and of having been the subject of mean rumours and lies because they or a family member or friend was, or was perceived to be, LGBTQ. These seemingly contradictory results could perhaps best be explained by differing understandings of what counts as an LGBTQ-inclusive environment and these findings again point to the fact that more work needs to be done on the impact of the intersections of race/culture/ethnicity and sexual orientation and gender identity in Canadian schools.

One hopeful finding is that LGBTQ students who are no longer in high school were significantly more likely than current LGBTQ students to report non-intervention by staff members during their high school years (**42.1%** of former LGBTQ students versus **30.6%** of current LGBTQ students), which suggests that teachers are becoming more likely to act when they witness homophobic harassment.[157]

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[144] χ^2 (3, N=3251) = 108, p<.001, Cramer's V=.18.

[145] χ^2 (6, N=3251) = 114, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13.

[146] χ^2 (3, N=3127) = 11.4, p=.010, Cramer's V=.06.

[147] χ^2 (2, N=612) = .40, p=.817, Cramer's V=.03.

[148] χ^2 (2, N=535) = 1.68, p=.432, Cramer's V=.06.

[149] χ^2 (2, N=524) = 3.26, p=.196, Cramer's V=.08.

[150] Tell school staff, χ^2 (1, N=1232) = 14.7, p<.001, Cramer's V=.11; tell parent, χ^2 (1, N=1228) = 10.1, p=.001, Cramer's V=.09.

[151] χ^2 (4, N=1895) = 32.6, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13.

[152] χ^2 (8=3480) = 195, p<.001, Cramer's V=.17.

[153] χ^2 (4, N=3342) = 91.4, p<.001, Cramer's V=.17.

[154] χ^2 (4, N=3315) = 86.6, p<.001, Cramer's V=.16.

[155] χ^2 (4, N=3186) = 22.8, p<.001, Cramer's V=.09.

[156] Staff, χ^2 (6, N=3408) = 7.01, p=.320, Cramer's V=.03; students, χ^2 (6, N=3445) = 26.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.06.

[157] χ^2 (3, n=912) = 21.4, p<.001, Cramer's V=.15.

ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA POLICIES

One of the main findings of the 2007 U.S. Climate Survey (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008) was that LGBTQ students in schools with comprehensive safe school policies that explicitly address homophobia report lower levels of harassment, fewer homophobic comments, more staff intervention when such comments are made, and more willingness to report harassment and assault to school staff members. They also found that generic safe school policies that do not include specific measures on homophobia are ineffective in improving the school climate for LGBTQ students. Students from schools with generic policies reported experiencing levels of homophobic harassment similar to those reported by students from schools with no policies at all. We therefore asked students in the Canadian Climate Survey whether their schools had anti-homophobia policies or procedures and analyzed their responses in the context of what those students were reporting about their lives at school.

Asking students about policy, of course, does not tell us whether schools actually have policies, only whether students think they do. It is likely that some students were wrong about their schools or school divisions not having policies. However, when students are reporting either that anti-homophobia policies do not exist when in fact they do or that they

> *I've never seen the issue discussed in any class or assembly (despite our school having at least two anti-racism assemblies a year) and the school apparently doesn't have any policies on queer issues. If it does have policies, it obviously doesn't enforce them as students make anti-queer slurs all the time in front of teachers and nothing is said to the students.*

do not even know whether their schools or school boards have such policies, this suggests that schools need to make further efforts to publicize their policies among their student bodies: a procedure for reporting homophobic incidents that LGBTQ students, students perceived as LGBTQ, and students with LGBTQ parents who are suffering from harassment do not know about is not effective. (Participating boards will be able to use the private reports on their results to see whether their own anti-homophobia policies and procedures are well-known to their students.)
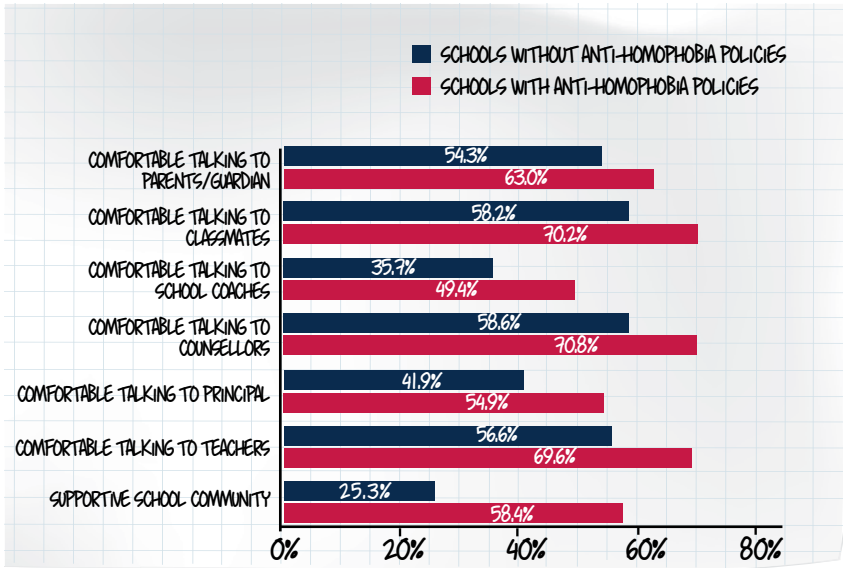
Overall, only a third (**33.8%**) of all respondents reported that they knew whether or not their schools had policies about or procedures for reporting incidents of homophobia. Unsurprisingly, more LGBTQ respondents knew whether or not their schools had policies about or procedures for reporting incidents of homophobia (**43.9%**, compared to **29.7%**

for non-LGBTQ individuals). Students with one or more LGBTQ parents were also more likely to know whether or not their schools had policies about or procedures for reporting incidents of homophobia than students without any LGBTQ parents (**50.8%** versus **33.4%**). We found that in schools where LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents reported that they know they are included in safe school policies, they are much more likely to feel as though they are respected as part of the school community and to feel they can talk to teachers, principals, counsellors, coaches, and classmates about LGBTQ matters. They are exposed to fewer homophobic and transphobic comments and their teachers are more likely to intervene when these occur. They are targeted less often by verbal and physical attacks, are more likely to report incidents when they are targeted, and find their teachers more effective in addressing incidents. They find fewer parts of their school unsafe. Results were similar for division-level policies.

Participants were asked how supportive of LGBTQ people they thought their school communities were. More than half (**58.4%**) of students who come from schools with anti-homophobia policies believe that their school communities are supportive of LGBTQ people, compared to only a quarter (**25.3%**) of students whose schools do not have such policies. Findings also suggest that knowing there is a supportive policy in place for LGBTQ students increases students' general comfort level in discussing LGBTQ topics. For example, more students from schools with anti-homophobia policies than those from schools without such policies reported feeling comfortable talking about LGBTQ matters to teachers (**69.6%** versus **56.6%**), the principal (**54.9%** versus **41.9%**), counsellors (**70.8%** versus **58.6%**), school coaches (**49.4%** versus **35.7%**), classmates (**70.2%** versus **58.2%**), and their parents (**63.0%** versus **54.3%**). See Figure 24.

Participants were also asked if school climate was less or more homophobic this year than in previous years. Students in schools with policies to deal with incidents of homophobia were significantly more likely to feel that their school was becoming less homophobic (**76.3%** versus **59.0%**[162]).

FIGURE 24: SCHOOL SUPPORT AND COMFORT LEVEL TALKING ABOUT LGBTQ MATTERS (SCHOOLS WITH/WITHOUT ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA POLICIES)

Legend:
- SCHOOLS WITHOUT ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA POLICIES
- SCHOOLS WITH ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA POLICIES

Category	Schools without	Schools with
COMFORTABLE TALKING TO PARENTS/GUARDIAN	54.3%	63.0%
COMFORTABLE TALKING TO CLASSMATES	58.2%	70.2%
COMFORTABLE TALKING TO SCHOOL COACHES	35.7%	49.4%
COMFORTABLE TALKING TO COUNSELLORS	58.6%	70.8%
COMFORTABLE TALKING TO PRINCIPAL	41.9%	54.9%
COMFORTABLE TALKING TO TEACHERS	56.6%	69.6%
SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL COMMUNITY	25.3%	58.4%

Students from schools with anti-homophobia policies or procedures reported hearing expressions like "that's so gay" less often than participants from schools without such policies (**65.4%** versus **80.6%** reported hearing such comments every day[163]). As shown in Figure 25, the same relationship holds for homophobic comments such as "faggot," "queer," "lezbo," or "dyke" (**47.9%** compared to **62.6%** reported hearing such comments every day[164]). Students from schools with anti-homophobia policies or procedures also report that when homophobic comments are made, school staff members are more likely to intervene at least some of the time (**86.0%** versus **66.8%**) and less likely to never intervene (**14.0%** versus **33.2%**).[165]

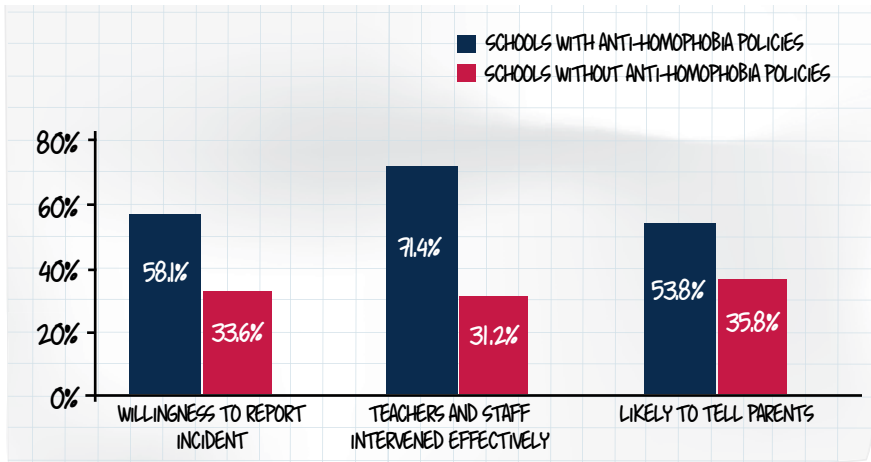FIGURE 25: SCHOOL ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA POLICIES AND CLIMATE INDICATORS
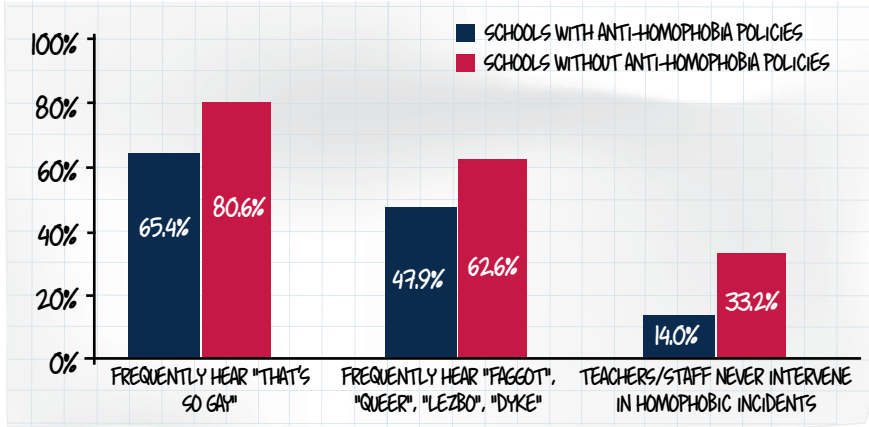
Interestingly, there is also some difference between schools with or without anti-homophobia policies with regard to transphobic comments or gender-related comments that are derogatory in nature. For example, under two-thirds of students (**63.7%**) from schools with anti-homophobia policies reported sometimes or frequently hearing comments about boys not acting "masculine" enough, compared to almost three-quarters (**72.0%**) of respondents from schools without these policies.[166] This suggests that anti-homophobia policies help somewhat in deterring transphobia, but also that in such policies insufficient attention is being paid to the damaging effects of negative gender-related comments on students, especially trans youth, who are most often the target of these remarks.

Participants from schools with anti-homophobia policies reported that they were less likely to be targets of homophobic bullying. For instance, **45.3%** of LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia policies reported having mean rumours or lies spread about them at school because they are, or have been perceived as, LGBTQ, compared to **61.0%** of LGBTQ respondents from schools without anti-homophobia policies.[167] LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia policies were also less likely to have "had mean rumours or lies spread about you on the Internet or text-messaging because you are or are perceived to be LGBTQ" (**30.4%** versus **37.3%** of LGBTQ students from schools without anti-homophobia policies) or to have "had property stolen or

deliberately damaged at school because you are or are perceived to be LGBTQ" (**17.4%** versus **23.0%** of LGBTQ students from schools without anti-homophobia policies).[168] LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia policies reported significantly fewer incidents of verbal harassment due to their sexual orientation (**46.4%** never verbally harassed versus **39.6%** of LGBTQ students from schools without anti-homophobia policies) and of physical harassment (**80.0%** never physically harassed versus **67.1%** of LGBTQ students from schools without anti-homophobia policies).[169] When they are harassed about being LGBTQ, students fro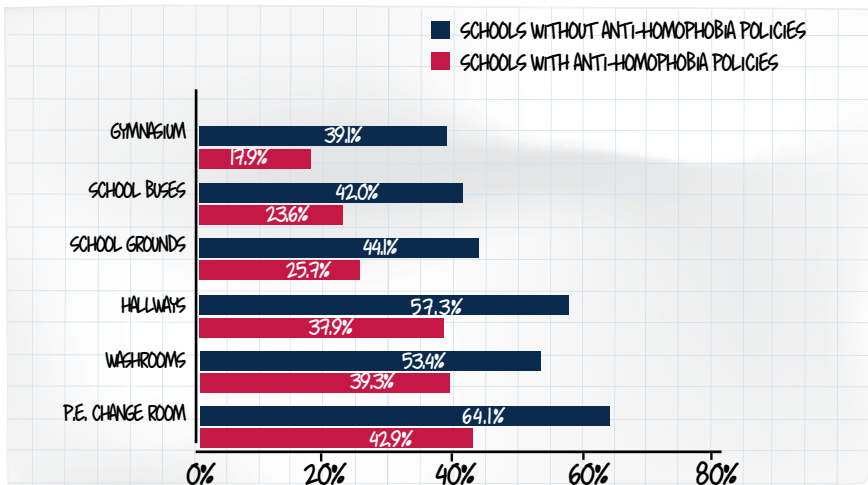m schools with anti-homophobia policies are much more likely to indicate a willingness to report the incident to teachers, principals, or other school staff members (**58.1%**, compared to **33.6%** reported incidents at least some of the time).[170] Students from schools with relevant policies were much more likely to see teachers or school staff members as effective in addressing homophobic harassment (**71.4%**, compared to only **31.2%** of students from schools without procedures for reporting homophobic behaviour).[171] Finally, students from schools with policies for reporting incidents of homophobia were significantly more likely to have told their parents (**53.8%** versus **35.8%**) if they had been bullied about being LGBTQ.[172] See Figure 26.

FIGURE 26: LGBTQ STUDENTS' WILLINGNESS TO REPORT AND EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION IN HOMOPHOBIC INCIDENTS (SCHOOLS WITH/WITHOUT ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA POLICIES)

Legend:
- ■ SCHOOLS WITH ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA POLICIES
- ■ SCHOOLS WITHOUT ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA POLICIES

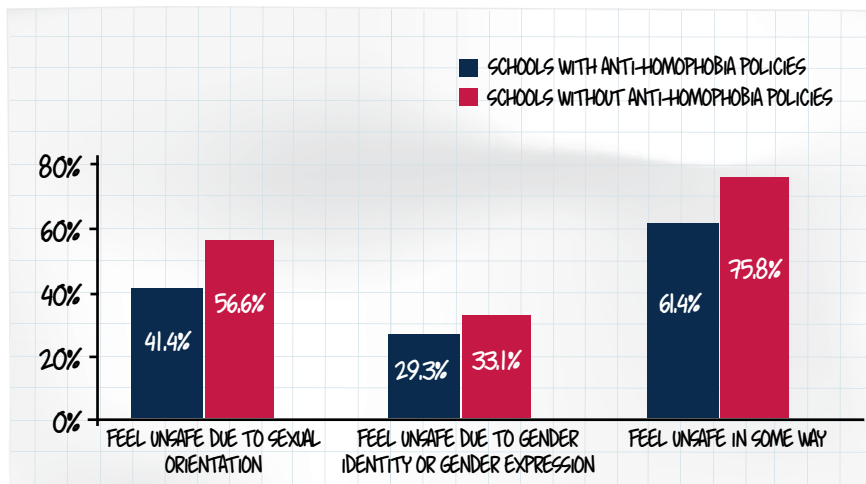| Category	Schools with	Schools without
WILLINGNESS TO REPORT INCIDENT	58.1%	33.6%
TEACHERS AND STAFF INTERVENED EFFECTIVELY	71.4%	31.2%
LIKELY TO TELL PARENTS	53.8%	35.8%

Another significant finding is that LGBTQ participants from schools without anti-homophobia procedures reported more areas in and around their schools as unsafe for LGBTQ students. As illustrated in Figure 27, notably higher percentages of LGBTQ students from schools without procedures for reporting homophobic incidents identified the following spaces or areas as unsafe: the Phys. Ed. change room (**64.1%** versus **42.9%**); hallways (**57.3%** versus **37.9%**); washrooms (**53.4%** versus **39.3%**); the school grounds (**44.1%** versus **25.7%**); school buses (**42.0%** versus **23.6%**); and the gymnasium (**39.1%** versus **17.9%**).[173]

FIGURE 27: UNSAFE AREAS FOR LGBTQ STUDENTS (SCHOOLS WITH/WITHOUT ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA POLICIES)

LGBTQ students who come from schools with anti-homophobia policies were significantly less likely to report feeling unsafe in general at school (**61.4%** compared to **75.8%** of LGBTQ students at schools without anti-homophobia policies) or feeling unsafe due to their sexual orientation (**41.4%** compared to **56.6%**).[174] There is, however, less difference on the matter of gender identity: **29.3%**

of LGBTQ students in schools with anti-homophobia policies reported feeling unsafe due to their gender identity or expression of gender, compared to **33.1%** of LGBTQ students at schools without anti-homophobia policies.[175] See Figure 28. This may, perhaps, be owing to the lack of attention to gender identity and gender expression in anti-homophobia policies and the lack of explicit language around transphobia in school board policies.

Importantly, given the correlation between school attachment and suicidality, LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia policies are more likely to report feeling attached to their schools. For example, **81.9%** of LGBTQ students from schools with policies or procedures for reporting incidents of homophobia agreed with the statement, "there is at least one adult I can talk to in my school," compared to **60.4%** of participants from schools without such policies. Similarly, two-thirds (**67.6%**) of LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia policies agreed that they felt like a real part of their school communities, compared

FIGURE 29: LGBTQ STUDENTS AND SCHOOL ATTACHMENT (A)
(SCHOOLS WITH/WITHOUT ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA POLICIES)

SCHOOLS WITH ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA POLICIES
SCHOOLS WITHOUT ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA POLICIES

- AGREED: "I FEEL LIKE A REAL PART OF MY SCHOOL." — 67.6% / 49.1%
- AGREED: "I AM TREATED WITH AS MUCH RESPECT AS OTHER STUDENTS" — 69.4% / 55.2%
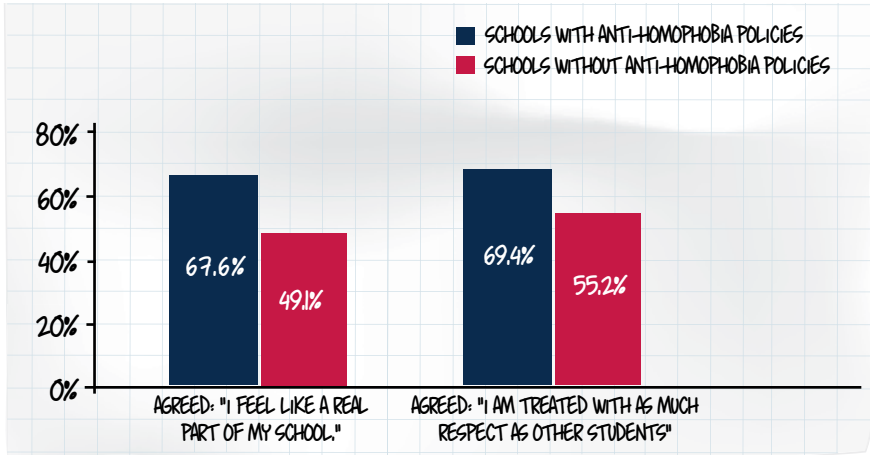
FIGURE 30: LGBTQ STUDENTS AND SCHOOL ATTACHMENT (B)
(SCHOOLS WITH/WITHOUT ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA POLICIES)

SCHOOLS WITH ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA POLICIES
SCHOOLS WITHOUT ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA POLICIES

- AGREED: "SOMETIMES I FEEL VERY DEPRESSED ABOUT MY SCHOOL." — 50.7% / 68.7%
- AGREED: "THERE IS AT LEAST ONE ADULT I CAN TALK TO IN MY SCHOOL" — 81.9% / 60.4%
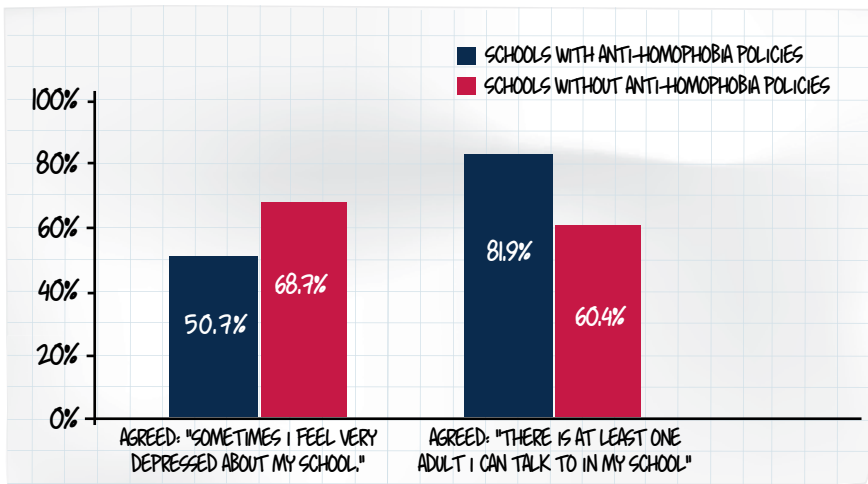
to one half (**49.1%**) of LGBTQ students from schools without such policies. LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia policies were also more likely to agree that they are treated with as much respect as other students (**69.4%**), compared to respondents attending schools without such policies (**55.2%**). Finally, LGBTQ students who attend schools with anti-homophobia policies reported a lower incidence of depressive feelings about their school (**50.7%**) than those who attended schools without these policies (**68.7%**).[176] See Figures 29 and 30.

[158] χ^2 (2, N=3339) = 62.3, p<.001, Cramer's V=.14.

[159] χ^2 (2, N=3209) = 16.5, p<.001, Cramer's V=.07.

[160] χ^2(4, N=3488) = 192, p<.001, Cramer's V=.17.

[161] Teachers, χ^2 (2, N=3397) = 21.2, p<.001, Cramer's V=.08; principal, χ^2 (2, N=3373) = 23.2, p<.001, Cramer's V=.08; counsellors, χ^2 (2, N=3372) = 16.4, p<.001, Cramer's V=.07; school coaches, χ^2 (2, N=3356) = 20.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.08; classmates, χ^2 (2, N=3363) = 15.9, p<.001, Cramer's V=.07; and their parents, χ^2 (2, N=3381) = 8.51, p=.014, Cramer's V=.05.

[162] χ^2 (2, N=3203) = 47.9, p<.001, Cramer's V=.12.

[163] χ^2 (6, N=3544) = 64.6, p<.001, Cramer's V=.10.

[164] χ^2 (6, N=3541) = 120, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13.

[165] χ^2 (6, N=3450) = 139, p<.001, Cramer's V=.14.

[166] χ^2 (2, N=3543) = 45.2, p<.001, Cramer's V=.11.

[167] χ^2 (2, n=945) = 30.5, p<.001, Cramer's V=.18.

[168] Internet, χ^2 (2, n=942) = 22.1, p<.001, Cramer's V=.15; property stolen, χ^2 (2, n=941) = 22.8, p<.001, Cramer's V=.16.

[169] Verbal, χ^2 (6, n=941) = 45.9, p<.001, Cramer's V=.16; physical, χ^2 (8, n=940) = 40.6, p<.001, Cramer's V=.15.

[170] χ^2= (2, n=1352) =54.3; p<.001, Cramer's V=.20.

[171] 28.2% "very effective" in schools with policies, 5.9% in schools without; χ^2= (2, n=1907) =125; p<.001, Cramer's V==.26.

[172] χ^2= (2, n=1351) =23.4; p<.001, Cramer's V=.13.

[173] Physical Education change room χ^2= (2, n=958) =35.8, p<.001, Cramer's V=.19; hallways χ^2= (2, n=958) =34.8; p<.001, Cramer's V=.19, washrooms χ^2= (2, n=958) =16.4, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13; schoolyard χ^2= (2, n=958) =29.8, p<.001, Cramer's V=.18; school buses χ^2= (2, n=958) =31.3, p<.001, Cramer's V=.18; gymnasium χ^2= (2, n=958) =32.1, p<.001, Cramer's V=.18.

[174] In general χ^2= (2, n=958) = 22.3; p<.001, Cramer's V=.15; due to sexual orientation χ^2= (2, n=958) =39.8, p<.001, Cramer's V=.20.

[175] χ^2= (2, n=958) =2.9, p=.233, Cramer's V=.06.

[176] At least one adult, χ^2= (2, n=945) =24.4; p<.001, Cramer's V=.16; real part of school, χ^2= (2, n=947) =14.3; p<.001, Cramer's V=.12; treated with respect, χ^2= (2, n=940) =18.4; p<.001, Cramer's V=.14; less depressed, χ^2= (2, n=939) =26.2; p<.001, Cramer's V=.17.

LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

In my family studies class, we were talking about different kinds of families. When a gay family was mentioned, our teacher said that this was not an appropriate conversation to have since there might have been gay people in the school.

i wrote a paper on heterosexism in schools and it wasn't something that my teachers ever took on. the paper did look at ways in which they could incorporate it, but when i looked at the curriculum i found that everything was optional and to know that people who are straight are taught in the school system, but people who are gay are forgotten or optional really hurts.

I think there needs to be more queer representation in readings and textbooks in high school.

the lack of education on lgbtq issues creates a type of fear of it, which in itself is a type of homophobia in my mind. people are too scared to stand up for people because they don't know enough about it or they do not want to be pinpointed themselves. i have found that students don't know what it means to be homophobic. they think it means you actually have to be "afraid," which is untrue. they may consider themselves "anti-homophobic" when really they are far from it. i think maybe if they knew they were considered homophobic, they would look at their current beliefs, actions, use of language, etc., and change them to be less homophobic. basically, most of the homophobia in our school is due to a lack of education and a lack of effort taken by the administration to fight homophobia.

If my school had broached the topic of homosexuality in the classroom and had teachers who were not afraid to discuss it, my school would have been a much better place. I feel that the students in my school had the ability to accept gay people, but were never given a reason to question their stance that gay people were bad and immoral.

The importance for students of seeing their identity groups included in the curriculum is generally accepted among educators as one of the basic principles of progressive education. We asked students a series of questions about the frequency with which LGBTQ people, relationships, and other related topics were addressed in their courses and in what forms.

LGBTQ students who reported that LGBTQ matters were addressed in one or more of their courses are significantly more likely to feel "like a real part of my school" (**60.9%** versus **53%** for other LGBTQ students), to feel "I can be myself at school" (**60.9%** versus **51.3%**), to feel "proud of belonging to my school" (**61.9%** versus **50.5%**), to feel "I am treated with as much respect as other students" (**69.0%** versus **61.7%**), and to have "at least one adult I can talk to in my school" (**75.6%** versus **64.9%**).[177] They are much more likely to feel their school communities are supportive of LGBTQ people (**41.0%** versus **28.7%**) and to feel that their school climates are less homophobic than in past years (**71.8%** to **61.5%**).[178]

However, nearly a quarter (**24.9%**) of LGBTQ students who had had at least one class that included LGBTQ matters reported that the representations of LGBTQ people were actually negative, and **23.0%** found that LGBTQ people's relationships were portrayed negatively in their classes. When we look only at the LGBTQ students who reported positive representations, there is a somewhat stronger association between curriculum and attachment. As Figure 31 shows, **65.4%** of LGBTQ students who had experienced LGBTQ-positive representations in their classes reported that they "feel like a real part of my school"[179]; **64.6%** agreed that "I can be myself at school"[180]; and **65.7%** reported feeling "proud of belonging to my school."[181] The number of LGBTQ youth who reported having "at least one adult I can talk to in my school" rises to **80.7%**.[182] The number of LGBTQ youth who reported "I am treated with as much respect as other students" rises to **72.6%**.[183] These LGBTQ youth are also somewhat more likely to feel that their school communities are supportive of LGBTQ people (**43.1%**[184]) and to feel that their school climates are less homophobic than in past years (**75.5%**[185]).

> *People are becoming more educated and welcoming of the subject of LGBTQ students. We've had presentations on the subject of welcoming more curriculum on LGBTQ students. Most of us believe that if there is literature and learning about straight students, then we can learn about LGBTQ students as well.*

FIGURE 31: POSITIVE LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM (LGBTQ STUDENTS)
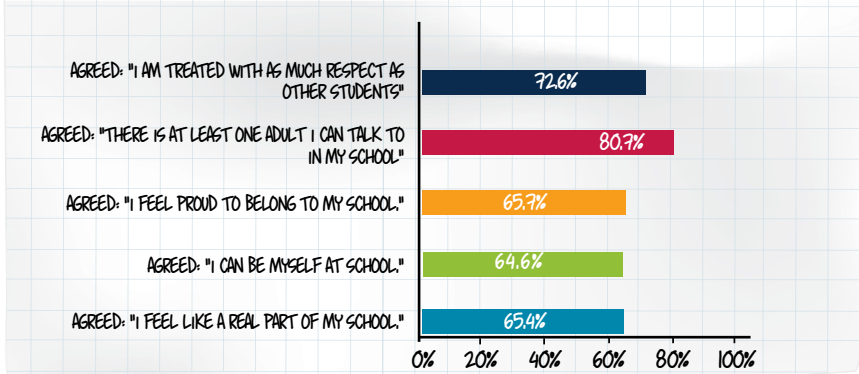
LGBTQ students' exposure to LGBTQ-positive curriculum provides us with an indication of their school cohorts' exposure as well. LGBTQ students who experienced LGBTQ-positive curriculum were somewhat less likely to hear remarks like "faggot" at school (**21.6%** rarely or never heard such comments versus **16.0%** of LGBTQ students who had not been exposed to LGBTQ-positive curriculum).[186] Unfortunately, there was no significant difference associated with LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in levels of direct verbal or physical harassment or assault experienced by LGBTQ students. In light of the improved levels of school attachment enumerated above that are associated with such curriculum, this may suggest that while an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum might bolster the resilience of LGBTQ students, and perhaps fosters greater inclusion in the non-homophobic "**58%**" of the heterosexual student body, LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum as experienced by our participants was not in itself effective in changing the behaviour of harassers.

That being said, most students reported that LGBTQ matters were covered in only one course, which would minimize any impact one way or another. Our findings of significant, but not dramatic, differences between the experiences of students who have and who have not experienced LGBTQ-inclusive and positively portrayed curriculum suggest that LGBTQ matters need to be implemented more widely across subject areas. Our findings that harassment levels were not affected

further suggest that more attention needs to be paid to finding effective pedagogical strategies for preventing homophobia and transphobia in school settings.

While very few jurisdictions have provided teachers with LGBTQ-inclusive educational resources, or encouraged them to address homophobia or transphobia in the curriculum, teachers across the country do attempt to integrate some LGBTQ matters. There is considerable variation regionally in students' reported experiences of LGBTQ topics being addressed in class, from **43.7%** in the Prairies to **67.0%** in BC.[187] Most students (**79.9%**) who reported having classes addressing LGBTQ matters also reported that LGBTQ people and topics were represented positively. Far fewer students reported that LGBTQ people's relationships were included in class discussions about dating or sexuality (ranging from **24.7%** in the Prairies to

35.4% in BC),[188] but those who reported such discussions saw them as representing LGBTQ relationships positively (**85.3%**, no statistically significant regional variation).

There was some ethnic variation. Youth of colour were more likely to see class discussions of LGBTQ people's relationships as having been negative (**18.3%** compared to **13.6%** of Caucasian and **11.1%** of Aboriginal youth).[189] They were also less likely to see class representations of LGBTQ matters as having been very positive (**16.6%** compared to **25.8%** of Caucasian and **30.8%** of Aboriginal youth).[190] Given these perceptions, it is not surprising that youth of colour would not feel comfortable talking to their teachers, coaches, classmates, or parents, or even to a close friend, about LGBTQ matters, and that they were far more likely to report that they know of no teachers or staff members who are supportive of LGBTQ students.

[177] "Real part of my school," χ2= (1, n=952) =5.93, p=.015, Cramer's V=.08; "be myself," χ^2= (1, n=948) =8.93, p=.003, Cramer's V=.10; to feel "proud of belonging to my school," χ^2= (1, n=944) =12.4, p<.001, Cramer's V=.12; to feel "treated with as much respect," χ^2= (1, n=945) =5.66, p=.017, Cramer's V=.08; "at least one adult," χ^2= (1, n=950) =12.9, p<.001, Cramer's V=.12.

[178] School community supportive, χ^2= (2, n=959) =16.8, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13; school climate less homophobic, χ^2= (1, n=905) =10.8, p<.001, Cramer's V=.11.

[179] χ^2 (1, N=807) = 12.5, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13.

[180] χ^2 (1, N=803) = 14.4, p<.001, Cramer's V=.13.

[181] χ^2 (1, N=800) = 18.9, p<.001, Cramer's V=.15.

[182] χ^2 (1, N=805) = 24.7, p<.001, Cramer's V=.18.

[183] χ^2 (1, N=802) = 10.6, p<.001, Cramer's V=.12.

[184] χ^2 (2, N=813) = 24.1, p<.001, Cramer's V=.17.

[185] χ^2 (1, N=763) = 17.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.15.

[186] χ2 (1, N=810) = 4.12, p=.042, Cramer's V=.07.

[187] χ2 (4, N=3569) = 105, p<.001, Cramer's V=.17.

[188] χ2 (8, N=3291) = 74.8, p<.001, Cramer's V=.11.

[189] χ2 (6, N=960) = 17.7, p=.007, Cramer's V=.10.

[190] χ2 (6, N=1919) = 42.0, p<.001, Cramer's V=.11.

GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES

I don't actually know how homophobic our school is, but I know individuals who have gone from being very homophobic to very accepting in the past years. I think our school has been making progress, as our GSA has been increasing awareness and has become more active.

People who are homophobic are starting to realize that what they are doing is wrong. I see this with the people I know. When they found out I was in GSA, they were much more supportive than they had been before. When more and more of my friends started joining GSA, my homophobic friends actually strived to work through their problems with the LGBTQ community, and came to be accepting of it.

The GSA has done workshops with all the younger students for the past few years, so they are being raised on trans/queer anti-oppression. So i think hopefully that helps.

Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) are official student clubs with LGBTQ and heterosexual student membership and typically one or two teachers who serve as faculty advisors. Students in a school with a GSA know that they have at least one or two adults they can talk to about LGBTQ matters. The purpose of GSAs is to provide a much-needed safe space in which LGBTQ students and allies can work together on making their schools more welcoming for sexual and gender minority students. Some GSAs go by other names such as Rainbow Clubs, Human Rights Clubs, or Social Justice Clubs. This is sometimes done to signal openness to non-LGBTQ membership (though, of course, some of these are not GSAs and might not address homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia), and sometimes because "Gay Straight Alliance" seems problematic in that "gay" does not necessarily refer to lesbians or bisexuals and trans identities are not explicitly encompassed by the expression. However, using the acronym "GSA" to represent any student group concerned with LGBTQ matters has become commonplace. Very often it is LGBTQ students themselves who initiate the GSA, although sometimes a teacher will come forward. Such groups also function as safe havens and supports for youth with LGBTQ parents. Currently, over 4000 U.S. schools have GSAs, and there are many in Canada as well. 150 LGBTQ-inclusive student groups across the country have registered on Egale Canada's safer schools and inclusive education website, MyGSA.ca. There was significant regional variation in students reporting that their schools have GSAs, from **4.4%** of students in the North, **4.6%** in the Atlantic provinces, and **13.8%** in the Prairies to **37.1%** in Ontario and **40.1%** in BC.[191] See Figure 32.
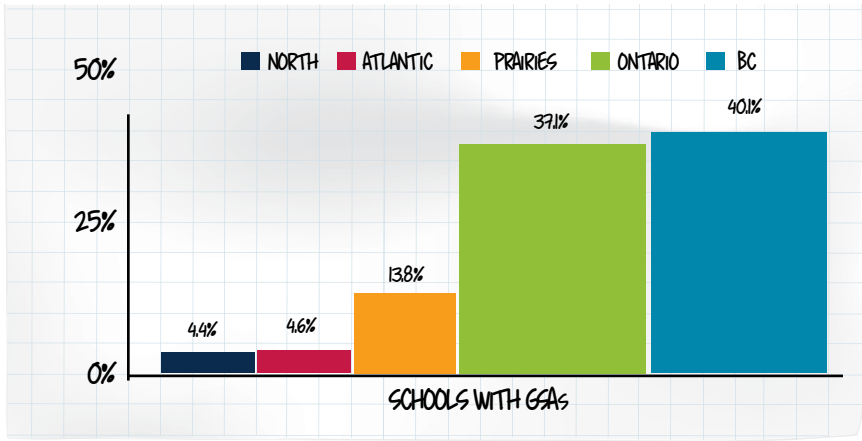
Unsurprisingly, participants from schools with anti-homophobia policies are significantly more likely to agree that their school administration is supportive of the GSA club (**69.4%** versus **37%**).[192] Moreover, students from schools with GSAs are much more likely to agree that their school communities are supportive of LGBTQ people compared to participants from schools without GSAs (**53.1%** versus **26.4%**). LGBTQ students in schools with GSAs are much more likely to be open with some or all of their peers about their sexual orientation or gender identity (**81.5%** versus **67.5%**)[193] and are somewhat more likely to see their school climate as becoming less homophobic (**75.0%** versus **65.2%**).[194]

OBSTACLES

I tried to start one, and approached staff to ask for assistance and help. I was told that in theory, although it was a nice idea, they believed that a) our school probably didn't have enough interest "in that topic"; and b) there wasn't a budget for it.

I attempted to start a GSA in my school, but the principal simply replied, "I do not think that many students would be interested. Also, most people may find it offensive."

The only openly gay student in my school of 1000 tried to form a GSA. He went to the vice-principal for permission to create the club. He was denied, and told he would have to organize that off of school time.

There were obstacles from the administration for fear of backlash from parents or "creating a problem where there wasn't one." Though generally supportive, they were afraid of explicitly queer events for fear of "giving bullies ideas."

CHALLENGES

Our GSA started while we were in grade 9. The principal at that time wouldn't let them advertise, worried that parents and community members and students would revolt. So they had to go to the school board who overruled that principal.

The administration agreed to validate the GSA with some hesitation, but otherwise starting the club was not difficult, as discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation is technically not allowed in our Code of Conduct.

Obstacles were mainly from the student side—many students were very unfamiliar and thus uncomfortable with the idea of a GSA. The very few other LGBT students were very disengaged in general from school (academically and in extracurriculars), which offered very little support. The administration and staff, though approving, provided little actual support for the GSA. All funding, planning, organisation, and publicity depended on me and the help of close friends. The administration was generally apologetically wary of any major events such as a "Day of Silence," fearing that such a noticeable event would provoke the ire of parents (particularly since we have students from many different backgrounds, some of which rather oppose LGBT rights).

PROGRESS

A GSA is being started in the upcoming year and there is a substantial population interested. More and more students are becoming more open with their sexuality/gender identity and I am optimistic about this school in the future. I think that in 5-10 years, this school may be a celebrating one.

There are two members of staff that support the GSA, who supported after students, including myself, fought to get the club sanctioned by the administration.

Our school was particularly supportive of our social justice committee (who made a documentary on homophobia in high schools) and our "respected" group, which is developing a presentation on homophobia.

Teachers are very supportive about gay straight alliance—some teachers have bought sweaters and shirts to show their support and they do the day of silence.

[191] χ^2 (8, N=3382) = 510, p<.001, Cramer's V=.28.

[192] χ^2= (4, n=1510) =113; p<.001, Cramer's V=.19.

[193] χ^2= (2, N=857) =18.6; p<.001, Cramer's V=.15.

[194] School community supportive, χ^2= (4, N=3358) =219, p<.001, Cramer's V=.18; less homophobic, χ^2= (2, N=3142) =24.6; p<.001, Cramer's V=.09.

[LIMITATIONS]

TYPES OF SCHOOLS

Students from several Catholic school boards participated in the survey on an individual basis, enabling us to report on some statistically significant findings in the Phase One Report. However, whereas the proportion of LGBTQ to non-LGBTQ students was comparable in the Catholic board and non-Catholic board sub-samples at the time of the Phase One Report, the number of LGBTQ students participating overall is much higher proportionately in the Catholic group than in the non-Catholic because we were not given permission to implement the survey in any Catholic school divisions. Although we discussed implementation with officials from several Catholic divisions who were clearly interested in participating, they were instructed not to participate by their governing Bishops' councils, apparently on the grounds that generic safe schools policies protect all students equally, and that Catholic schools should not be involved in activities that affirm the viability of a "homosexual lifestyle," such as filling out a homophobia survey. As a result, we do not have enough participants from Catholic school boards to be able to report on the situation there with the same high level of confidence that we have in the findings of the rest of this report. There is nothing in the data that we do have to suggest that the situation facing LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents in Catholic schools is better than in non-Catholic schools, and much to suggest that it is even worse. We deeply regret our inability to report further on the situation in Catholic school boards, and we hope that future research will fill this gap.

VARIETIES OF RELIGIOSITY

Further, we did not distinguish in our demographic questions among Christian denominations or between denominational and non-denominational Christianity, and are therefore also unable to report on differences in experiences of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia associated with involvement in socially conservative faith communities versus more liberal forms of Christianity. We will incorporate such distinctions into the demographic information collected in future studies.

RELIGION & LGBTQ MATTERS

I actually had a lot more experiences with homophobia at my old school, which was a Catholic school. The kids there were extremely intolerant and they still are. The teachers weren't very supportive either.

I do not support homosexuality. However, "homophobia" and the acts of violence, mistreatment, and prejudice that comprise the term are also wrong. Homosexuals are still people who deserve to be treated with respect by others.

I had a lot of problems dealing with students that didn't think queer people should be in a Catholic school. I was raised Anglican, and people used some aspects of my own religion to show how I didn't belong. I know that most branches of Christian religion are accepting of queer people (who are not sexually active) but it seems that many people ignore that.

I have never really seen hate crimes at my school—however, I have heard of them from other schools in town, such as the Catholic one. I am not a Christian anymore, but I was raised as one and had to go to a Catholic school and there was definitely a homophobic attitude there.

Amazingly enough, though my school was a Catholic school, homophobia was never encouraged as part of the religious doctrine—in fact, it was discouraged because hatred is un-Christlike.

I've heard negative comments from everybody, but because I attend a Catholic school, teachers aren't allowed to talk about homosexuality. They aren't supposed to, although, if students bring it up, they never dismiss it. I do find that our school is somewhat heterosexist, and that really bothers me.

*Homophobia doesn't make sense to me, ESPECIALLY as a Christian. Christ teaches us to love and accept people, not lynch them. *sighs* I hope someday sexuality is not such a touchy subject. I hope life gets better for people being picked on.*

When I went to high school it was as if GLBT people never existed. GLBT issues never came up in any class. Sex. Ed. was strictly heterosexual and we were separated for that: boys in one class, girls in the other. It was a predominantly Christian community where the only place homosexuality was discussed was in the Catholic church I was raised in where I was told that I was eternally damned.

[CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS]

This survey has provided statistically-tested confirmation of what LGBTQ youth, youth perceived as LGBTQ, youth with LGBTQ parents, and their allies as well as teachers and administrators working on anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia and intersectionality education have known for some time about the realities of life at school in Canada. Consider the situation in many schools:

- ⇨ LGBTQ students are exposed to language that insults their dignity as part of everyday school experience and youth with LGBTQ family members are constantly hearing their loved ones being denigrated.

- ⇨ LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents experience much higher levels of verbal, physical, sexual, and other forms of discrimination, harassment, and abuse than other students.

- ⇨ Most LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents do not feel safe at school.

- ⇨ The situation is worse on all counts for female sexual minority students and youth with LGBTQ parents and even worse for trans students.

- ⇨ Many students, especially youth of colour, do not have even one person they can talk to about LGBTQ matters.

- ⇨ Many schools have a well-developed human rights curriculum that espouses respect and dignity for every identity group protected in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* except for LGBTQ people.

- ⇨ Teachers often look the other way when they hear homophobic and transphobic comments and some of them even make these kinds of comments themselves.
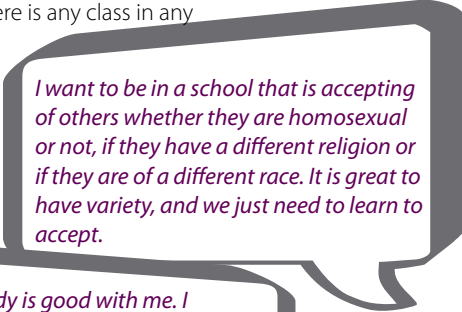
Although the original title of our study named only homophobia, our findings demonstrate that school climates for bisexual and trans students are equally—and in some ways even more—hostile. The study has also demonstrated that the less directly students are affected by homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, the less aware they are of it. This finding has implications for the adult world as well: how many educators and administrators are underestimating the extent of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in their school cultures and the damage being done to the youth in their care? This study found that the more marginalized our participants were, the worse their experience of school climate was. Given the findings of this study, educators may need to work particularly hard at ensuring that lesbian youth, bisexual girls, trans students, students with sexual and/or gender minority parents, and sexual and gender minority youth of colour are included in these efforts. To this end, policy, programme, and curriculum development needs to reflect an understanding of how school climate for sexual and gender minority youth is affected by intersecting systems of social power such as racialization and poverty that are at work in all schools.

Our analysis has found both that large numbers of LGBTQ students often feel unsafe at school and that large numbers of heterosexual students also see many places at school as unsafe for their LGBTQ peers. The questionnaire asked students about safety, not fear, but the latter is a continuous theme throughout the comments that students made in response to open-ended questions. LGBTQ students wrote about fearing for their personal safety; heterosexual students wrote about fearing they too will be targeted by homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia if they are known to have LGBTQ friends or family; both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ students wrote about teachers appearing to be afraid of backlash for supporting LGBTQ people and administrators appearing to be fearful of parental complaints. (The qualitative data will be discussed in future reports.) In some schools, there are obvious reasons for students' fears. For example, in some state-funded public schools in Canada—a country that claims full legal protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and sex/gender—there is an explicit ban on discussing LGBTQ matters, with teachers having to sign a contract pledging to shut down any questions on the subject and to refer the student for guidance counselling. But in a great many others, there is no such explicit prohibition to account
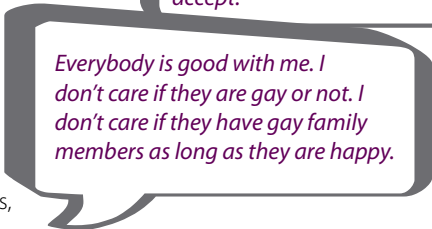
for systemic failures to address homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. It is extremely unlikely that there is any class in any high school anywhere in Canada, public or private, religious or secular, that does not have students who are LGBTQ. Being harassed, insulted, and told that their identities belong in the guidance office, not in the classroom, will not succeed in making LGBTQ students heterosexual and gender-conforming; it will only make them unhappy.

I want to be in a school that is accepting of others whether they are homosexual or not, if they have a different religion or if they are of a different race. It is great to have variety, and we just need to learn to accept.

Courageous LGBTQ students across the country have decided not to let their fear or anyone else's stop them. They have started GSAs, organized consciousness-

Everybody is good with me. I don't care if they are gay or not. I don't care if they have gay family members as long as they are happy.

raising events, and asked their teachers to get on board. They find schools that have well-known school- or division-level anti-homophobia policies much safer than ones that do not. They have told us that in schools with such policies,

⇨ they are much more likely to feel safe at school and that they are a respected part of the school community.

⇨ they are more likely to feel they can talk to teachers, principals, counsellors, coaches, and classmates.

⇨ they are more likely to feel like a real part of their school and less likely to feel depressed about school.

⇨ they are exposed to fewer homophobic and transphobic comments and their teachers are more likely to intervene.

⇨ they are less likely to be bullied and more likely to report harassment or assault.

⇨ they are less likely to feel unsafe at school, and they see fewer places at school as unsafe.

One of the most striking and encouraging findings of this national study has been that most non-LGBTQ students—**58%** in our study—find homophobic comments upsetting. Some might be distressed because they are among the many heterosexual youth who are themselves victims of homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic harassment. In our study, approximately one in twelve heterosexual students reported being verbally harassed about their perceived sexual orientation and one in four about their gender expression. Since heterosexual students outnumber LGBTQ students by approximately seven to one (given that **14.1%** of participants in the in-school sessions self-identified as LGBTQ), any given school is likely to have as many heterosexual students as LGBTQ students who are harassed about their sexual orientation or gender expression. Some heterosexual students wrote about being distressed by homophobic comments because they have an LGBTQ parent or other family member or friend. Some are distressed because they are kind, and they feel empathy for the victims. Other non-LGBTQ students are ashamed of themselves for participating in the abuse or for remaining silent when it is going on. And some, we must imagine, are distressed because it is depressing to be involved in a community that continually abuses people who have done nothing to deserve it—what the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge called "the sheer malice of motiveless malignancy." Their solidarity may be passive, and they may be prepared to tolerate the abusive atmosphere created by homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic comments, but they too have told us that they are distressed by the situation. One of the challenges facing the adult world, parents, educators, and administrators alike, is discovering how to support young people in finding the courage to move from being distressed and ashamed bystanders to becoming allies who intervene in abusive situations.

A lot of people in my school make fun of homosexuals ALL THE TIME, constantly! And it's seriously annoying.

I feel that students have always been afraid to stand up for one another in these odd times in fear that they themselves will be labelled as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and/or questioning.

The one out student that I remember, he had some bad experiences with his family when he came out and got kicked out of his house. When grad rolled around, the entire graduating class stood up and cheered for him when he was handed his diploma.

From what I have heard from other schools, I believe my school is quite advanced in the area of creating a safe environment for those that need it. I know that homophobia exists but I like to believe that we are slowly overcoming it. It saddens me to hear of other schools that are not allowed to have GSA clubs or experience horrible forms of bullying. I have never witnessed any sort of direct discrimination at my school towards any individuals who have come out or have family members that have and it bothers me to know that it is still occurring.

Personally, I feel we should have open discussions about gay relations at our school to help the students who are questioning themselves to open up and not be afraid— there is no reason to be judged.

LGBTQ-inclusive safer schools policies and curriculum are not the entire solution; we did not find that **100%** of students anywhere reported never hearing homophobic or transphobic comments or that they could all talk to all of their teachers, for example. However, the findings of this study indicate that while the problem of hostile school climates for sexual and gender minority students is very widespread, it is perhaps not as deep as we might think. In schools that have made efforts to introduce LGBTQ-inclusive policies, GSAs, and even some LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, the climate is significantly more positive for sexual and gender minority students.

Based on the analysis presented in this report, we strongly recommend the following:

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

1. That provincial Ministries of Education require the inclusion of anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia and intersectionality measures in safer schools policies and programmes, along with steps for the effective implementation of these policies, in order to provide support and motivation to district and school staff as well as a requirement that school divisions provide auditable evidence of meaningful implementation.

2. That school divisions develop anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia and intersectionality policies to provide institutional authority and leadership for schools.

3. That schools implement anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia and intersectionality policies and make these well known to students, parents, administration, and all school staff members as a part of their commitment to making schools safer and more respectful and welcoming for all members of their school communities.

4. That efforts begin with professional development workshops for all school division employees on intersectionality and the impact of homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic language

and how to address it in classrooms, hallways, and all other parts of the school as well as at all other school-related events, such as during bus transportation.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

5. That Ministries of Education and school divisions require the inclusion of respectful representations of LGBTQ people in courses and provide curriculum guidelines and resources for mainstreaming LGBTQ-inclusive teaching, including intersectionality, across the curriculum and auditable evidence of meaningful implementation.

6. That school divisions provide professional development opportunities to assist schools in the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive and intersectionality curriculum.

7. That schools implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in designated courses such as Family Life and Social Studies and provide teachers with resources for mainstreaming LGBTQ and intersectionality education in their own subject areas.

TEACHER PREPARATION

8. That Faculties of Education integrate LGBTQ-inclusive teaching and intersectionality into compulsory courses in their Bachelor of Education programmes so that teachers have adequate opportunities to develop competence before entering the field.

GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES

9. That schools strongly support the efforts of students to start GSAs, or similar LGBTQ-inclusive student-led clubs, and that in schools where students have not come forward, administration should ask teachers to offer to work with students to start such clubs. It is not safe to assume that LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents would prefer to go through school isolated from their peers and teachers.

VULNERABLE GROUPS

10. That particular attention be paid to supporting the safety and well-being of lesbian and bisexual female youth and trans youth in all of the above recommendations along with the needs of youth with LGBTQ parents and sexual and gender minority youth of colour.
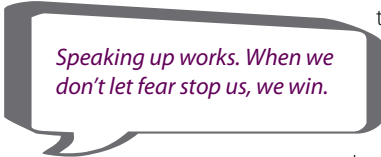
APPROPRIATE CONSULTATION

11. That individuals and organizations with established expertise in intersectionality and LGBTQ-inclusive education be consulted in all of the above. Such expertise exists among educators in every region of Canada.

What students have told us in the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools is that speaking up works and that they want the adults in their lives to do their parts. Many participants in our survey, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, commented on their extreme disappointment with school staff who look the other way when disrespectful language is being used. The findings of our study provide ample reasons for educators and administrators across the country to take up the challenge of welcoming their LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents into inclusive twenty-first century schools that explicitly and meaningfully oppose discrimination on the basis of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation and genuinely embrace safer and more respectful school environments for all members of their school communities.

Speaking up works. When we don't let fear stop us, we win.

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[RESOURCES]

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Many thanks to Elizabeth Meyer for permission to adapt the following resource list from her excellent book: Meyer, E. (2009). *Gender, bullying, and harassment: Strategies to end sexism and homophobia in schools.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

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GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE CLUBS (GSAS)

⇨ MyGSA.ca (**FREE**) **www.mygsa.ca** Egale's national LGBTQ safer schools and inclusive education website. MyGSA.ca was created in response to the Phase One findings of the School Climate Survey and it is the hub of Egale's Safe Schools Campaign. There you will find a GSA directory, a GSA guide, discussion forums, events, campaigns, maps, statistics, school board policies, classroom materials, books, news items, videos, terms and concepts, role models, and other resources pertaining to safer schools and inclusive education.

SCHOOL-WIDE INTERVENTIONS

⇨ Ally Week (**FREE**) **www.glsen.org/allyweek** An event held every October to end anti-LGBTQ bullying and harassment in K-12 schools by building ties with allies.

⇨ Challenge Day (**$$$$**) **www.challengeday.org** A community-building initiative to jumpstart anti-bullying and harassment work in a school.

⇨ Day of Silence (**FREE**) **www.dayofsilence.org** A non-confrontational, yet empowering way to highlight issues of LGBTQ name-calling. Free resources to help student groups organize this event in their school communities.

⇨ International Day against Homophobia (IDAHO) (**FREE**) **www.homophobiaday.org** Provides informational posters and publications for schools and other organizations to participate in the activities on May 17 and year round.

⇨ Mix It Up at Lunch Day (**FREE**) **www.tolerance.org/teens/lunch.jsp** Annual event encourages students to break out of their cliques and cross divisions in their school's social culture at lunchtime.

⇨ No Name-Calling Week (**FREE/$$**) **www.nonamecallingweek.org** Free downloadable resources, as well as a kit that can be purchased online. Many school-wide organizing ideas as well as classroom activities are available. Grades 5-8.

⇨ Pink T-Shirt Day (**FREE**) **www.pinkshirtday.ca** International day against bullying, discrimination, and homophobia in schools and communities that invites everyone to celebrate diversity by wearing a pink shirt and organizing activities in their schools and communities.

For more, see the Events & Campaigns section of MyGSA.ca.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

⇨ Challenging Silence, Challenging Censorship (**$**) **www.ctf-fce.ca/e/ publications/ctf_publications.asp** Valuable guide for librarians and other educators interested in resources and supports for LGBTQ youth, families, and their allies. Provides an annotated bibliography of materials for students of all ages.

⇨ Egale Canada's Workshops (**FREE/$**) **www.MyGSA.ca** English and French regionally-specific anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, anti-transphobia, and intersectionality workshop series. Order online at MyGSA.ca or contact Egale at mygsa@egale.ca or 1.888.204.7777 (toll-free).

⇨ GLSEN Lunchbox (**$$**) **www.glsenstore.org** Training toolkit that provides many interactive activities, videos, and fact sheets on LGBTQ issues in schools. Valuable for consultants, resource centers, and organizations that provide in-service training and support.

⇨ It Takes a Team (**FREE/$**) **www.ittakesateam.org** Video & resource kit addresses how gender and sexual orientation stereotypes can harm athletes, coaches, and the team environment. Includes video, action guides, posters, stickers, and additional resources.

⇨ It's Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in Schools (**$$**) **www. groundspark.org/films/elementary** Video & discussion guide are excellent teaching resources that model age-appropriate ways to talk about gay and lesbian matters with elementary age students. Includes actual classroom footage.

⇨ Just Call Me Kade (💲💲) cart.frameline.org/ProductDetails. asp?ProductCode=T526 Award-winning documentary traces the transition of an adolescent FTM (female-to-male) transperson. Provides a valuable first-person narrative for those who are new to learning about trans matters.

⇨ Lessons Learned (💲) www.ctf-fce.ca/e/publications/ctf_publications. asp Canadian Teachers' Federation publication provides brief introduction to terminology and studies as well as stories from educators to better understand the cultural and political contexts for addressing LGBTQ issues in Canadian schools.

⇨ Teaching Respect for All (💲) www.glsenstore.org Training video captures compelling talk by author and former GLSEN Executive Director and high school teacher, Kevin Jennings. Covers key points for educators to understand when addressing homophobia and LGBTQ matters in schools.

K-12 CLASSROOMS

⇨ Dealing With Differences (💲) www.glsenstore.org This lesson kit is available to order and includes a 20-minute video as well as discussion guides for teachers to introduce conversations about respect and anti-LGBTQ harassment in the secondary classroom (grades 7-12).

⇨ GLSEN (FREE/💲) www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/curriculum. html Free downloadable lesson plans (K-12) and reading lists (sorted by age) to assist teachers interested in integrating information about sex, gender, sexual orientation, and related forms of diversity education into their classes.

⇨ Let's Get Real! (💲💲) www.groundspark.org/films/letsgetreal/index. html This film addresses multiple forms of bias and harassment that happen in schools and provides first-hand narratives from students who have been targeted and students who have taken a stand on behalf of others. Grades 6-12.

⇨ Media Awareness Network (FREE) www.media-awareness.ca This French/English site provides a rich variety of lessons on gender and stereotypes using media texts. Teachers can search by grade-level (K-12) or topic for classroom activities and resources.

For more Classroom Resources, see the Educators' Section of MyGSA.ca: www.MyGSA.ca/Educators

Egale Canada Human Rights Trust is a national organization that conducts research and delivers educational programming on lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) human rights in Canada.