

2011 STATE SNAPSHOT

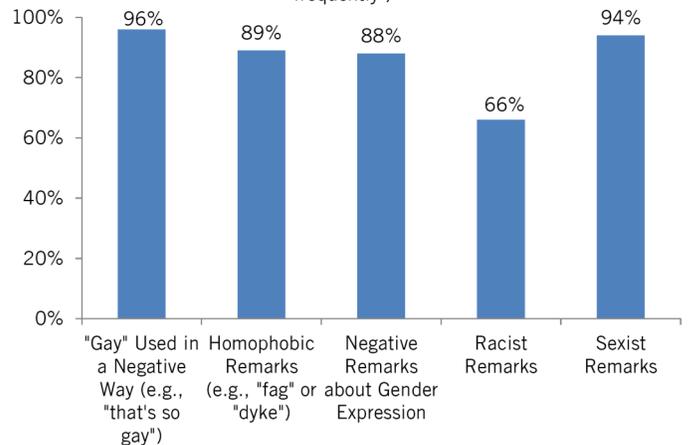
Findings from the GLSEN *2011 National School Climate Survey* demonstrate that Pennsylvania schools were not safe for many lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) secondary school students. In addition, many LGBT students in Pennsylvania did not have access to important school resources, such as Gay-Straight Alliances, and were not protected by comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment school policies.

FACT: The vast majority of LGBT students in Pennsylvania regularly heard homophobic remarks, sexist remarks, and negative remarks about gender expression.

- Nearly all heard “gay” used in a negative way (e.g., “that’s so gay”) and nearly 9 in 10 heard other homophobic remarks (e.g., “fag” or “dyke”) regularly at school (see Figure 1).
- About 9 in 10 regularly heard other students in their school make negative remarks about how someone expressed their gender, such as comments about someone not acting “feminine” or “masculine” enough (see Figure 1).
- Students also heard biased language from school staff. 27% regularly heard staff make negative remarks about someone’s gender expression, and 18% regularly heard school staff make homophobic remarks.

Figure 1. Hearing Biased Remarks from Students in Pennsylvania Schools

(percentage hearing remarks “sometimes,” “often,” or “frequently”)

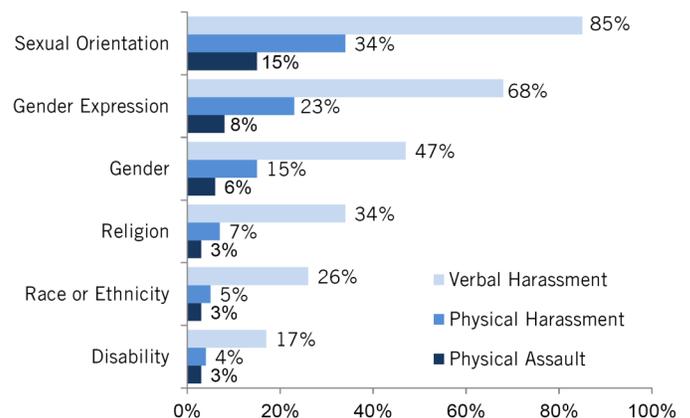


FACT: Most LGBT students in Pennsylvania had been victimized at school. The majority of these incidents were not reported to adult authorities.

- The majority experienced verbal harassment (e.g., called names or threatened): 8 in 10 based on their sexual orientation and 6 in 10 based on the way they expressed their gender (see Figure 2).
- Many also experienced physical harassment and physical assault: 2 in 10 were physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved) based on the way they expressed their gender and 1 in 10 was physically assaulted (e.g., punched, kicked or injured with a weapon) based on their sexual orientation (see Figure 2).
- Students also reported high levels of other forms of harassment at school: 91% felt deliberately excluded or “left out” by peers; 85% had mean rumors or lies told about them; 61% were sexually harassed; 53% experienced electronic harassment or “cyberbullying”; and 42% had property (e.g., car, clothing, or books) deliberately damaged and/or stolen.
- 60% of students who were harassed or assaulted in school *never* reported it to school staff, and 57% *never* told a family member about the incident. Among students who did report incidents to school authorities, only 36% said that reporting resulted in effective intervention by staff.

Figure 2. Harassment and Assault in Pennsylvania Schools

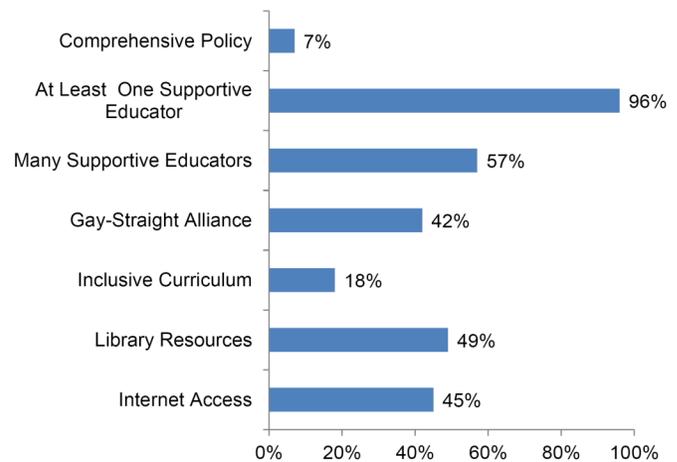
(percentage harassed or assaulted in the past year)



FACT: LGBT students in Pennsylvania most often did not have access to in-school resources and supports.

- Only 7% attended a school with a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy that included specific protections based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression (see Figure 3).
- Nearly all could identify at least one school staff member supportive of LGBT students, but only 57% could identify many (6 or more) supportive school staff.
- Many did not have LGBT-inclusive curricular resources: only 18% were taught positive representations of LGBT people, history, and events, and only 49% could access information about LGBT communities on school Internet (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Availability of LGBT-Related Resources and Supports in Pennsylvania Schools



RECOMMENDATIONS

School-based supports such as comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies, school personnel who are supportive of LGBT students, Gay-Straight Alliances and LGBT-inclusive curricular resources can positively affect school climate for LGBT students. Findings from the *2011 National School Climate Survey* demonstrate that students attending schools with these resources and supports report more positive school experiences, including lower victimization and absenteeism and higher academic achievement.

Given the high percentages of LGBT students in Pennsylvania who experience harassment at school and the limited access to key resources and supports that can have a positive effect on their school experiences, it is critical that Pennsylvania school leaders, education policymakers and other individuals who are obligated to provide safe learning environments for all students take the following steps:

- Implement comprehensive school anti-bullying/harassment policies;
- Support Gay-Straight Alliances;
- Provide professional development for school staff on LGBT student issues; and
- Increase student access to LGBT-inclusive curricular resources.

These actions can move us toward a future in which all students in Pennsylvania will have the opportunity to learn and succeed in school, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

To **learn more** about GLSEN, visit www.glsen.org or contact glsen@glsen.org.

To **get involved** in a GLSEN chapter in Pennsylvania, visit www.glsen.org/chapters or contact chapterinfo@glsen.org.

GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

In 2011, GLSEN conducted the seventh National School Climate Survey (NSCS), a biennial survey of the experiences of LGBT youth in U.S. secondary schools. The national sample consisted of 8,584 LGBT students from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. A total of 331 respondents were attending schools in Pennsylvania. The majority of this sample was White (76%), 8% multi-racial, 7% Hispanic/Latino, 4% African American/Black, and less than 5% Asian/Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern/Arab American or Native American/American Indian. The gender composition was 53% female, 32% male, 7% transgender, and 7% some other gender (e.g., genderqueer). Most (89%) attended public schools. The school community makeup was 55% suburban, 29% rural/small town, and 16% urban. The results reported for Pennsylvania have a margin of error of +/-5%.

For the national NSCS report or for any other GLSEN research, go to www.glsen.org/research. Follow @GLSENResearch on Twitter.

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