



SCHOOL CLIMATE IN ARKANSAS

Findings from the GLSEN 2017 National School Climate Survey demonstrate that Arkansas schools were not safe for most lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) secondary school students. In addition, many LGBTQ students in Arkansas did not have access to important school resources, such as Gay-Straight Alliances/Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) or similar student clubs, and were not protected by supportive and inclusive school policies.

FACT: The vast majority of LGBTQ students in Arkansas regularly (sometimes, often, or frequently) heard anti-LGBTQ remarks (Fig. 1). Many also regularly heard school staff make homophobic remarks (36%) and negative remarks about someone's gender expression (46%).

FACT: Most LGBTQ students in Arkansas experienced anti-LGBTQ victimization at school (Fig. 2). They also experienced victimization at school based on disability (28%), race/ethnicity (24%), and religion (44%). Most never reported the incident to school staff (61%). Only 25% of students who reported incidents said it resulted in effective staff intervention.

Figure 1. Hearing Anti-LGBTQ Remarks from Students in Arkansas Schools
(percentage of LGBTQ students hearing remarks regularly)

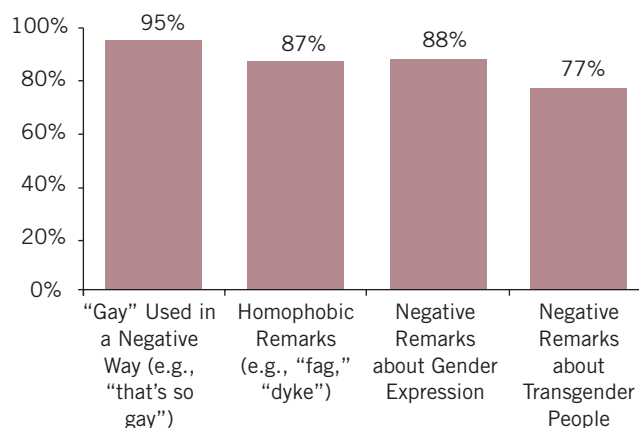
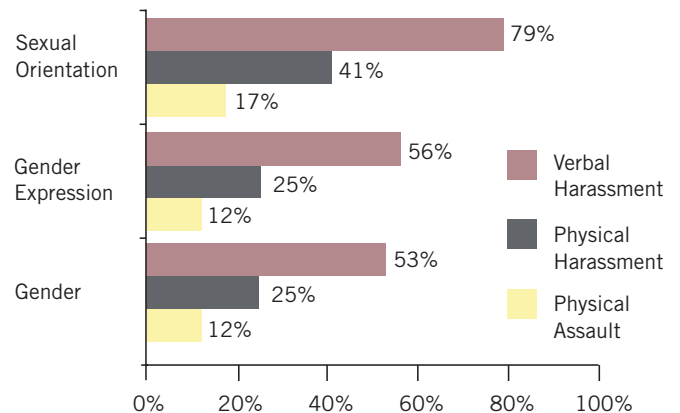


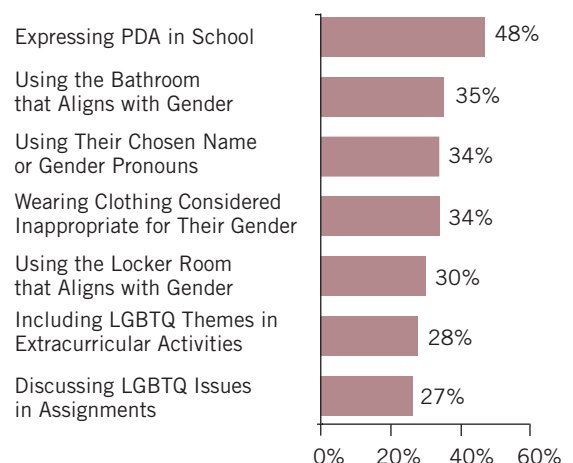
Figure 2. Anti-LGBTQ Harassment & Assault in Arkansas Schools
(percentage of LGBTQ students harassed or assaulted in the past year based on...)



FACT: Many LGBTQ students in Arkansas reported discriminatory policies or practices at their school (Fig. 3). Nearly three-fourths (73%) experienced at least one form of anti-LGBTQ discrimination at school during the past year.

- Nearly half of LGBTQ students (48%) in Arkansas were disciplined for public displays of affection (PDA) that did not result in similar action for non-LGBTQ students.
- In Arkansas, more than 1 in 3 LGBTQ students (35%), and 2 in 3 transgender students (67%) were unable to use the school restroom aligned with their gender. Additionally, 1 in 3 LGBTQ students (34%), and 2 in 3 transgender students (65%) were prevented from using their chosen name or pronouns in school.
- LGBTQ students in Arkansas experienced other forms of school discrimination (not in Fig. 3): being unable to wear LGBTQ-supportive apparel (22%), being unable to bring a same-gender date to a school dance (21%), being unable to form a GSA (20%), being prevented or discouraged from playing school sports due to an LGBTQ identity (14%), and being disciplined at school for identifying as LGBTQ (5%).

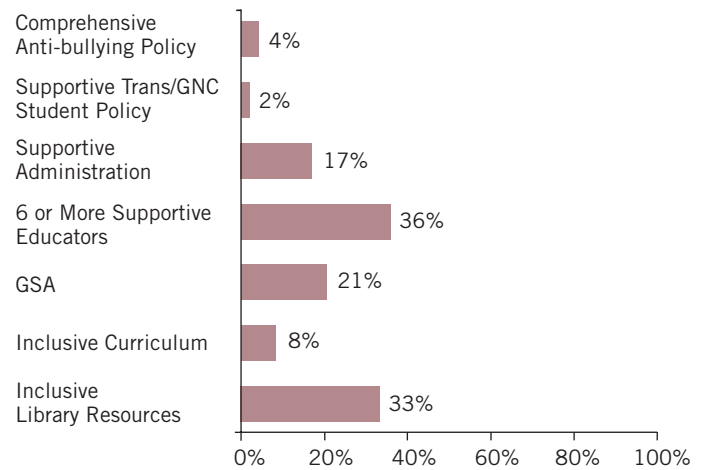
Figure 3. Anti-LGBTQ Discrimination in Arkansas Schools
(percentage of LGBTQ students that were prevented from...)



FACT: Many LGBTQ students in Arkansas did not have access to in-school resources and supports (Fig. 4).

- Only 4% attended a school with a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy that included specific protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Only 2% had a policy or official guidelines to support transgender or gender nonconforming (trans/GNC) students.
- Fewer than 1 in 5 (17%) reported that their school administration was somewhat or very supportive of LGBTQ students.
- The vast majority (90%) could identify at least one school staff member supportive of LGBTQ students (not in Fig. 4), but only 36% could identify 6 or more supportive school staff.
- Only 1 in 5 (21%) had access to a GSA or similar student club which provides a safe and affirming space and promotes a more welcoming school climate for LGBTQ students.
- Fewer than 1 in 10 (8%) were taught positive representations of LGBTQ people, history, or events (“inclusive curriculum”). Only 2% reported receiving LGBTQ-inclusive sex education at school (not in Fig. 4).

Figure 4. Availability of LGBTQ-Related Resources & Supports in Arkansas Schools



RECOMMENDATIONS

School-based supports such as supportive and inclusive school policies, school personnel who are supportive of LGBTQ students, GSAs, and LGBTQ-inclusive curricular resources can positively affect school climate for LGBTQ students. Findings from the 2017 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 LGBTQ students in Arkansas 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 Arkansas school leaders, education policymakers, and other individuals who are obligated to provide safe learning environments for all students take the following steps:

- Implement supportive and inclusive school policies, such as comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment and supportive transgender and gender nonconforming student policies;
- Support GSAs;
- Provide professional development for school staff on LGBTQ student issues; and
- Increase student access to LGBTQ-inclusive curricular resources.

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

To learn more about GLSEN and to get involved, visit glsen.org or contact glsen@glsen.org.

To get involved in the GLSEN Arkansas chapter, visit glsen.org/chapters/arkansas or contact arkansas@chapters.glsen.org.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH In 2017, GLSEN conducted the tenth National School Climate Survey, a biennial survey of the experiences of LGBTQ youth in U.S. secondary schools. The national sample consisted of 23,001 LGBTQ students from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and all 5 major U.S. territories. A total of 359 respondents were attending schools in Arkansas. The Arkansas sample was majority White (78%), 9% Hispanic/Latinx, 7% Multiracial, 4% Black/African American, 2% Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% Arabic/Middle Eastern, and < 1% Native American. The gender composition was 60% cisgender, 21% transgender, 8% genderqueer, and 12% another gender (e.g. questioning, genderfluid). Most (91%) attended public schools. The school community makeup was 54% rural/small town, 21% suburban, and 25% urban. The results reported for Arkansas had a margin of error of +/- 5%.

For the full 2017 National School Climate Survey report or for any other GLSEN research, go to glsen.org/research.

Follow @GLSENResearch on Twitter.

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