



SCHOOL CLIMATE IN MASSACHUSETTS



Findings from the GLSEN 2015 National School Climate Survey demonstrate that Massachusetts schools were not safe for most lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) secondary school students. In addition, many LGBTQ students in Massachusetts did not have access to important school resources, such as having an inclusive curriculum, and were not protected by comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment school policies.

FACT: The majority of LGBTQ students in Massachusetts regularly heard anti-LGBT remarks (Fig. 1). Many also regularly heard school staff make homophobic remarks (10%) and negative remarks about someone's gender expression (29%).

FACT: Most LGBTQ students in Massachusetts had been victimized at school (Fig. 2). Of those, most never reported the incident to school staff (61%). Only 39% of those students who reported incidents said it resulted in effective staff intervention.

Figure 1. Hearing Anti-LGBT Remarks from Students in Massachusetts Schools
(percentage of LGBTQ students hearing remarks sometimes, often, or frequently)

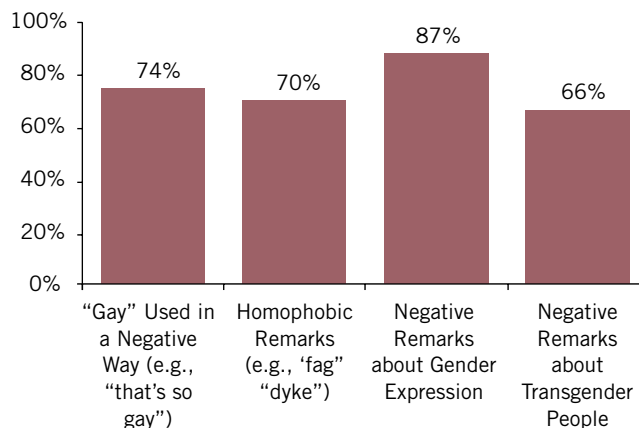
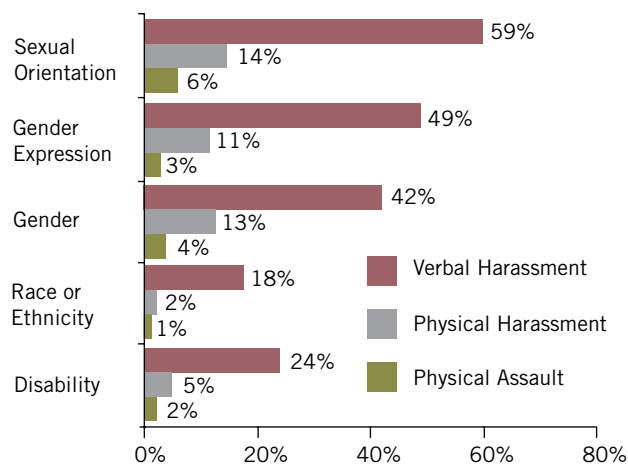


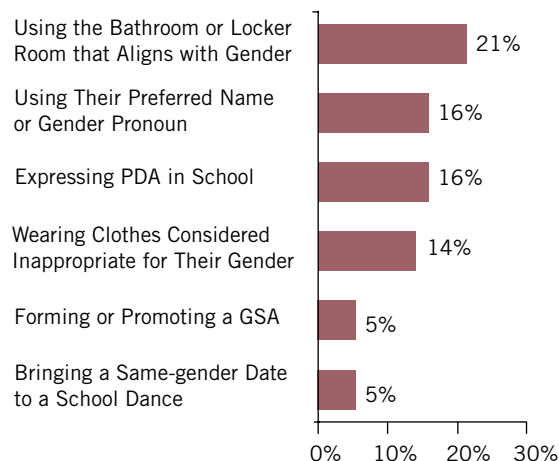
Figure 2. Identity-based Harassment & Assault in Massachusetts Schools
(percentage of LGBTQ students harassed or assaulted)



FACT: Many LGBTQ students in Massachusetts reported discriminatory policies or practices at their school (Fig. 3). Nearly half (42%) experienced at least one form of discrimination at school during the past year.

- Nearly 1 in 5 LGBTQ students in Massachusetts were disciplined for public affection that does not result in similar action when it occurs between non-LGBTQ students (16%).
- In Massachusetts, over 1 in 5 LGBTQ students (21%), and about 3 in 5 transgender students (61%), were unable to use the school restroom that aligned with their gender. Additionally, nearly 1 in 5 LGBTQ students (16%), and over 2 in 5 transgender students (43%), were prevented from using their preferred name and gender pronouns in school.
- LGBTQ students experienced other forms of school discrimination (not in Fig. 3): being unable to wear LGBT-supportive apparel (6%), being unable to discuss LGBT issues in assignments (8%), being unable to include LGBT themes in extracurricular activities (e.g. school yearbook, Day of Silence) (5%), and being prevented or discouraged from playing school sports due to an LGBT identity (7%).

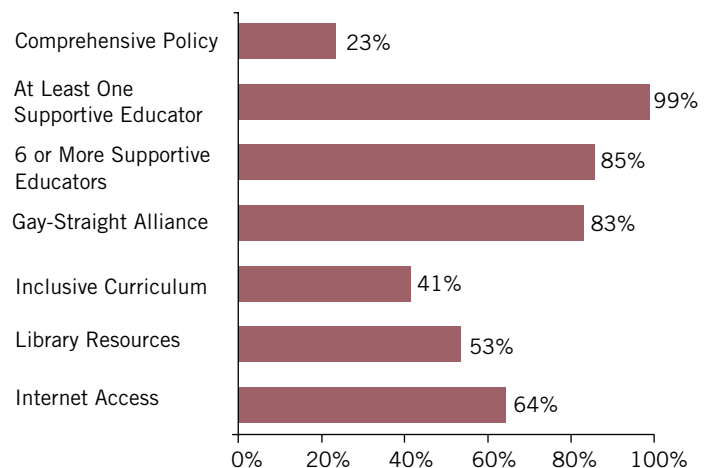
Figure 3. Discrimination Against LGBTQ Students in Massachusetts Schools
(percentage that were prevented from...)



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

- Only 1 in 4 (23%) attended a school with a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy that included specific protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.
- Nearly all (99%) could identify at least one school staff member supportive of LGBTQ students, and 85% could identify 6 or more supportive school staff.
- Only 2 in 5 (41%) were taught positive things about LGBT people in class.
- About 2 in 3 could access information about LGBT communities on school Internet.

Figure 4. Availability of LGBT-Related Resources & Supports in Massachusetts Schools



RECOMMENDATIONS

School-based supports such as comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies, school personnel who are supportive of LGBTQ students, Gay-Straight Alliances, and LGBT-inclusive curricular resources can positively affect school climate for LGBTQ students. Findings from the 2015 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 Massachusetts 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 Massachusetts 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 LGBTQ student issues; and
- Increase student access to LGBT-inclusive curricular resources.

These actions can move us toward a future in which all students in Massachusetts 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 Massachusetts chapter, visit glsen.org/chapters/massachusetts or visit massachusetts@chapters.glsen.org.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH In 2015, GLSEN conducted the ninth National School Climate Survey (NSCS), a biennial survey of the experiences of LGBT youth in U.S. secondary schools. The national sample consisted of 10,528 LGBTQ students from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. A total of 315 respondents were attending schools in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts sample was majority White/European American (79%), 8% Hispanic/Latino, 5% Asian/South Asian/Pacific islander, 5% Multiracial, 2% Arab/Middle Eastern, and 1% Black/African American. The gender composition was 21% cisgender male, 37% cisgender female, 16% transgender, 15% genderqueer, and 11% another gender (e.g., gender-fluid). Most (82%) attended public schools. The school community makeup was 19% rural/small town, 60% suburban, and 21% urban. The results reported for Massachusetts have a margin of error of +/-5%.

For the full 2015 National School Climate Survey report or for any other GLSEN research, go to glsen.org/research.

Follow @GLSENResearch on Twitter.

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