



SCHOOL CLIMATE IN SOUTH CAROLINA



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

FACT: The majority of LGBTQ students in South Carolina regularly heard anti-LGBT remarks (Fig. 1). Many also regularly heard school staff make homophobic remarks (27%) and negative remarks about someone's gender expression (42%).

FACT: Most LGBTQ students in South Carolina had been victimized at school (Fig. 2). Of those, most never reported the incident to school staff (61%). Only 36% of those students who reported incidents said it resulted in effective staff intervention.

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

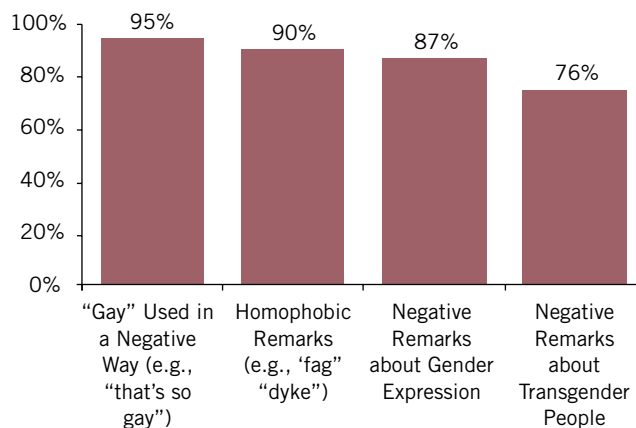
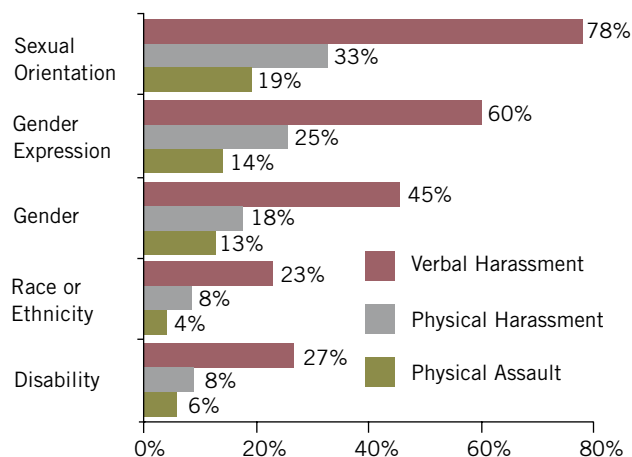


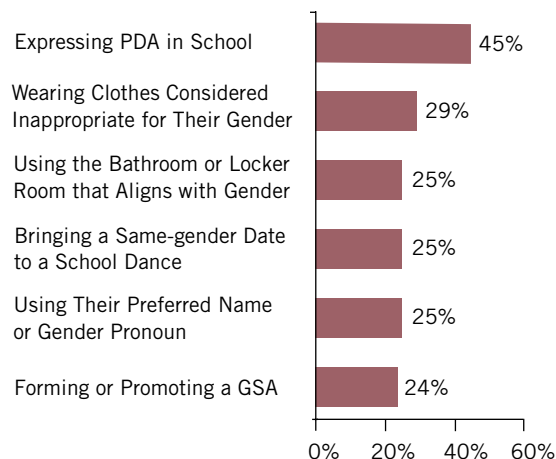
Figure 2. Identity-based Harassment & Assault in South Carolina Schools
(percentage of LGBTQ students harassed or assaulted)



FACT: Many LGBTQ students in South Carolina reported discriminatory policies or practices at their school (Fig. 3). Most (76%) experienced at least one form of discrimination at school during the past year.

- The most frequent form of discrimination experienced by South Carolina's LGBTQ students was being disciplined for public affection that does not result in similar action when it occurs between non-LGBTQ students (45%).
- In South Carolina, 1 in 4 LGBTQ students (25%), and over half of transgender students (60%), were unable to use the school restroom that aligned with their gender. Additionally, about 1 in 4 LGBTQ students (25%), and over half of transgender students (60%), 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 (23%), being unable to discuss LGBT issues in assignments (26%), being unable to include LGBT themes in extracurricular activities (e.g. school yearbook, Day of Silence) (30%), and being prevented or discouraged from playing school sports due to an LGBT identity (17%).

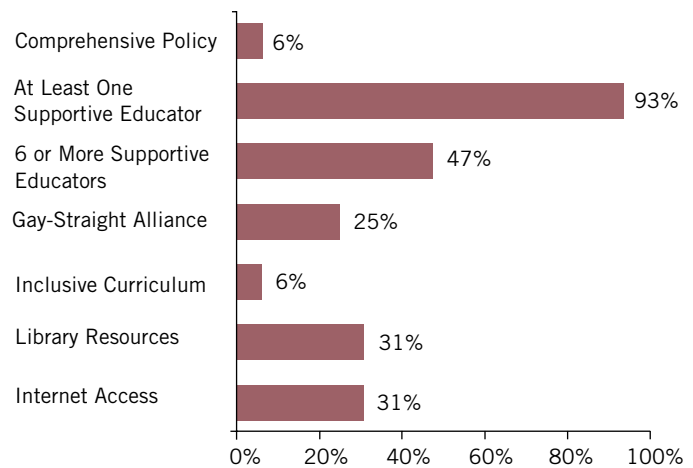
Figure 3. Discrimination Against LGBTQ Students in South Carolina Schools
(percentage that were prevented from...)



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

- Only 6% attended a school with a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy that included specific protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.
- The vast majority could identify at least one school staff member supportive of LGBT students, but less than half (47%) could identify 6 or more supportive school staff.
- Only 1 in 4 (25%) had access to a Gay-Straight Alliance or similar student club which provides a safe and affirming space and promotes a more welcoming school climate for LGBT students.
- Less than 1 in 10 were taught positive things about LGBT people in class.

Figure 4. Availability of LGBT-Related Resources & Supports in South Carolina 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 South Carolina 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 South Carolina 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 South Carolina 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.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH In 2015, GLSEN conducted the ninth National School Climate Survey (NSCS), a biennial survey of the experiences of LGBTQ 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 146 respondents were attending schools in South Carolina. The South Carolina sample was majority White/European American (76%), 9% Black/African American, 6% Multiracial, 5% Hispanic/Latino, 2% Arab/Middle Eastern, and 2% Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander. The gender composition was 26% cisgender male, 34% cisgender female, 18% transgender, 11% genderqueer, and 11% another gender (e.g., genderfluid). Most (95%) attended public schools. The school community makeup was 26% rural/small town, 55% suburban, and 19% urban. The results reported for South Carolina have a margin of error of +/-8%.

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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