BE PROUD! SPEAK OUT!

The 2017 Italy National School Climate Survey Report

2016/2017

CENTRO
RISORSE
LGBTI

Associazione
Il Progetto Alice

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Project by Centro Risorse LGBTI;
in collaboration with Associazione Il Progetto Alice;
supported by GLSEN, Teachers College, Columbia University (NY), and ILGA-Europe.

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INTRODUCTION

The national research entitled Be Proud! Speak Out! has been a strong opportunity for the LGBTI Resource Centre in Italy. In particular, ILGA-Europe facilitated the relation between national realities of European countries, GLSEN, and Teachers College of Columbia University, on the occasion of the Annual Conference in Cyprus in 2016. The Centre immediately thought to the association Progetto Alice as partner, and no choice was more successful!

As activists and researchers, we wanted to provide answers regarding homophobia and school environment. Italian schools are not particularly inclusive for LGBT people, and this is not the first research that aims to investigate on more characteristics of the phenomenon. Be Proud! Speak Out! allowed us to study on deep different aspects, such as: a national overview of the sample; the direct response of young LGBTQI people, thanks to the online questionnaire; the breadth of research themes, which shows tangible, real, and useful data for LGBTI associations, educational institutions, and schools in general.

How do LGBTQI people feel in their classes? In the corridors? With teachers and school staff? How much their wellbeing is at the center of attention? How much hostility of the environment that surrounds them affects academic results and affirmation of oneself as a person? These are just some questions of this research.
The final result is, and must be, a starting point for new researches, new educational models, and further attention to the most widespread, and commonly accepted language, and behavior at school.

When writing this report in Italian, we tried to use an inclusive language eliminating or minimizing gender declinations, where possible. Thus, we choosed a feminine declination as inclusive, given that the highest majority of respondents defined themselves as belonging to the female gender.

The survey wanted to give attention to all LGBTQI terms, including multiple self-definitions which bring us to new terminologies, that youngest generations use with great simplicity. Even if we have commonly used the LGBT acronym, we want to invite anyone who has an interest in further investigating other definitions that emerged from the research. We are sure that this work will not give all answers needed. This is why we are always ready to ask new questions.

METHODS AND SAMPLE

Participants completed an online survey about their experiences in school during the 2016-2017 school year, including hearing biased remarks, feeling safe, being harassed, and feeling comfortable at school. They were also asked about their academic experiences, attitudes about school, involvement in school, and availability of supportive school resources. Youth were eligible to participate in the survey if they were between the ages of 13 and 20, attended a primary or secondary school in Italy during the 2016-2017 school year, and identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or a sexual orientation other than heterosexual (e.g., pansexual, questioning) or described themselves as transgender or as having another gender identity that is not cisgender ("cisgender" describes a person whose gender identity is aligned with the sex/gender they were assigned at birth). Data collection occurred between June-August 2017 and ended before the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year.

The school climate survey was conducted online. The survey instrument was modeled after GLSEN's 2015 National School Climate Survey, and was appropriated and translated by Teacher's College, GLSEN, Centro Risorse LGBTI, and The Alice Project into the Italian context. In order to obtain a large and diverse sample of LGBT youth in Italy, we used advertising and promotion on social networking sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The final sample consisted of a total of 1,097 students between the ages of 13 and 20. Three out of four students (75.5%) lived in a city or urban area, and nearly all (96.4%) attended a public school. Table 1.1 presents participants' demographic characteristics and Table 1.2 shows the characteristics of the schools attended by participants. Participants had an average age of 16.8 years old and two thirds of our sample (64.7%) is female. Around one third of our sample identified as bisexual or lesbian (39.7% and 33.5% respectively) and one fifth identified as pansexual or gay (21.3% and 20.8% respectively). Nearly all (94.7%) LGBT youth in survey are Italian.

Table 1.1: Characteristics of Survey Participants

Age (n=1,097)		
13	1.6%	n=17
14	6.0%	n=66
15	13.3%	n=146
16	19.7%	n=216
17	27.9%	n=306
18	18.6%	n=204
19	10.0%	n=110
20	2.9%	n=32
Average Age = 16.8 years (SD 1.52)		
Sexual Orientation (n=1,097)		
Gay	20.8%	n=228
Lesbian	33.5%	n=368
Straight/Heterosexual	1.8%	n=20
Bisexual	39.7%	n=436
Pansexual	21.3%	n=234
Questioning	14.1%	n=155
Other Sexual Orientation	8.2%	n=90

Sex/Gender (n=1,097)		
Female	64.7%	n=710
Male	22.2%	n=244
Transgender	1.5%	n=16
Transgender Male-to-Female	0.1%	n=1
Transgender Female-to-Male	4.1%	n=45
Other	12.1%	n=133
Ethnicity (n=1,097)		
Italy	94.7%	n=1,039
Eastern Europe	3.0%	n=33
South America	0.9%	n=10
North Africa	0.7%	n=8
Eastern Asia	0.4%	n=4
Middle Asia	0.4%	n=4
Other	2.7%	n=30
Grade Level (n=856)		
1	12.6%	n=108
2	18.9%	n=162
3	28.4%	n=243
4	23.4%	n=200
5	16.7%	n=143

Table 1.2: Characteristics of Participants' Schools		
Community Type (n=1,074)		
Urban	75.5%	n=811
Suburban	11.4%	n=122
Rural or Small Town	13.1%	n=141
School Level (n=1,079)		
Middle School	4.7%	n=51
High School	94.1%	n=1,015
Other	1.2%	n=13
School Type (n=1,082)		
Public	96.4%	n=1,043
Religious-Affiliated School	1.6%	n=18
Other	1.9%	n=21
School Size (n=1,075)		
Less Than 500 Students	16.4%	n=176
501 to 1000 Students	41.2%	n=443
1001 to 1500 Students	27.2%	n=292
Over 1500 Students	15.3%	n=164

**Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding*

PART ONE:
EXPERIENCES OF HOSTILE SCHOOL CLIMATE FOR LGBT STUDENTS

School Safety

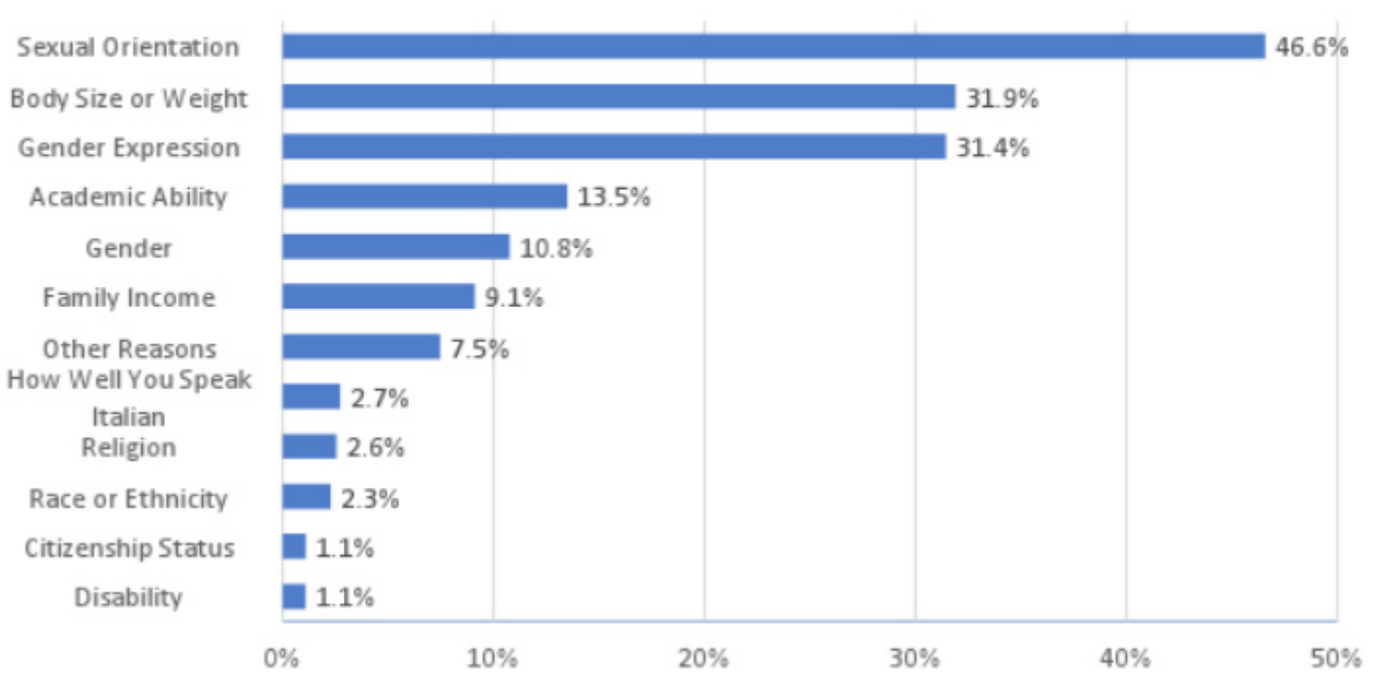
Overall Safety at School

For LGBT youth, school can be an unsafe place for a variety of reasons. Students in our survey were asked whether they ever felt unsafe at school during the past year because of a personal characteristic, including: body size or weight, sexual orientation, gender, and gender expression (i.e., how traditionally "masculine" or "feminine" they were in appearance or behavior). As shown in Figure 1.1, LGBT students most commonly felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, body size or weight, and gender expression:

- Nearly half (46.6%) reported feeling unsafe at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation.
- Almost one in three (31.4%) LGBT students felt unsafe because of how they expressed their gender.

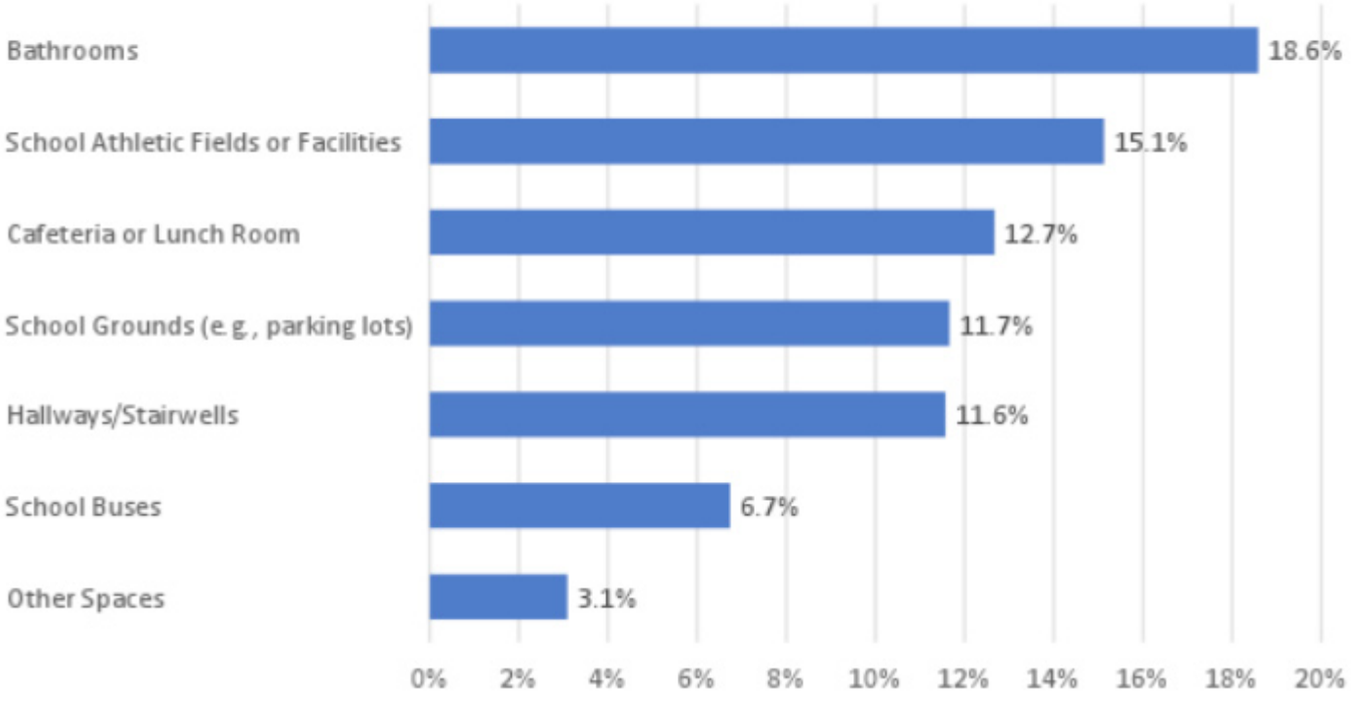
LGBT students also commonly reported feeling unsafe in the past year because of their body size or weight (31.9%).

Figure 1.1. LGBT Students Who Felt Unsafe at School Because of Actual or Perceived Personal Characteristics



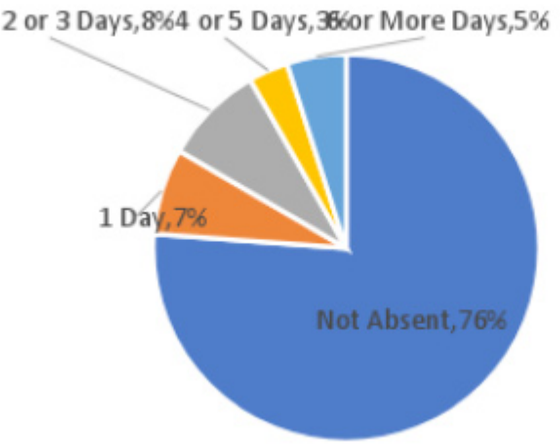
When students feel unsafe or uncomfortable in school they may choose to avoid the particular areas or activities where they feel most unwelcome or may feel that they need to avoid attending school altogether. Thus, a hostile school climate can impact an LGBT student's ability to fully engage and participate with the school community. We asked LGBT students if there were particular spaces at school that they avoided specifically because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable. As shown in Figure 1.2, LGBT students most commonly avoided bathrooms and school athletics fields or facilities, with nearly one in six students avoiding each of these spaces because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (18.6% and 15.1%, respectively). Over one in ten (12.7%) LGBT students said that they avoided the cafeteria or lunch room, school grounds (e.g., parking lots) (11.7%), and hallways/stairwells (11.6%) because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.

Figure 1.2. Percentage of LGBT Students Who Avoid Spaces at School Because They Feel Unsafe or Uncomfortable



Feeling unsafe uncomfortable at school can negatively affect the ability of students to succeed academically, particularly if it results in avoiding school or classes. When asked about absenteeism, nearly one in four LGBT students reported not attending school at least one day in the last month (23.8%) because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (see Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3. Frequency of Missing Days of School in the Past Month Because of Feeling Unsafe or Uncomfortable



Exposure to Biased Language

Homophobic, sexist, racist, and other types of biased language can create a hostile school environment for all students. We asked LGBT students about their experiences with hearing anti-LGBT and other types of biased remarks while at school. Because homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression are specifically relevant to LGBT students, we asked students in our survey additional questions about school staff's use of and responses to hearing these types of anti-LGBT language.

Homophobic Remarks. We asked students about the frequency of hearing homophobic remarks (such as "frocio", "lesbica", or "ricchione"). As shown in Figure 1.4, over half (56.8%) of LGBT students reported hearing other students make derogatory remarks, such as "frocio", "lesbica", or "ricchione" often or frequently in school. Further, we asked students who heard homophobic remarks in school how pervasive this behavior was among the student population. As shown in Figure 1.5, half (51.5%) of these types of remarks were made by "some" or "most" students. In addition, a fifth (21.0%) of LGBT students report they "sometimes," "often," or "frequently" heard homophobic remarks from teachers or staff (see Figure 1.6). We also asked students about the frequency of hearing expressions like "gay" or "frocio" in a negative manner. Use of these expressions was very common — 59.2% of students heard them often or frequently at school (see also Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4. Frequency that LGBT Students Hear Anti-LGBT Remarks at School

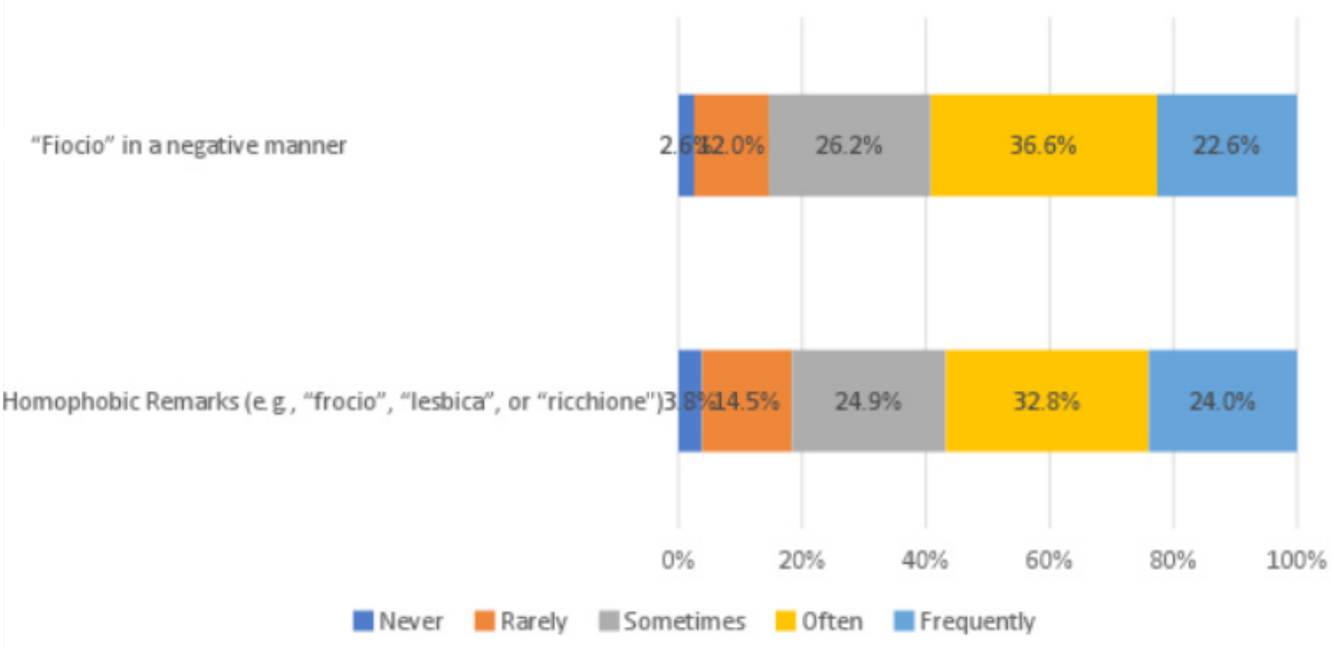


Figure 1.5. LGBT Students' Reports of How Many Students Make Homophobic Remarks

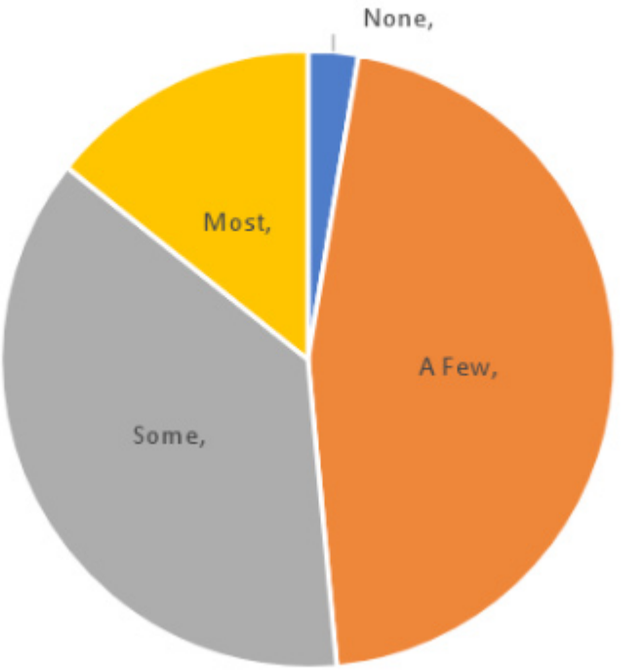
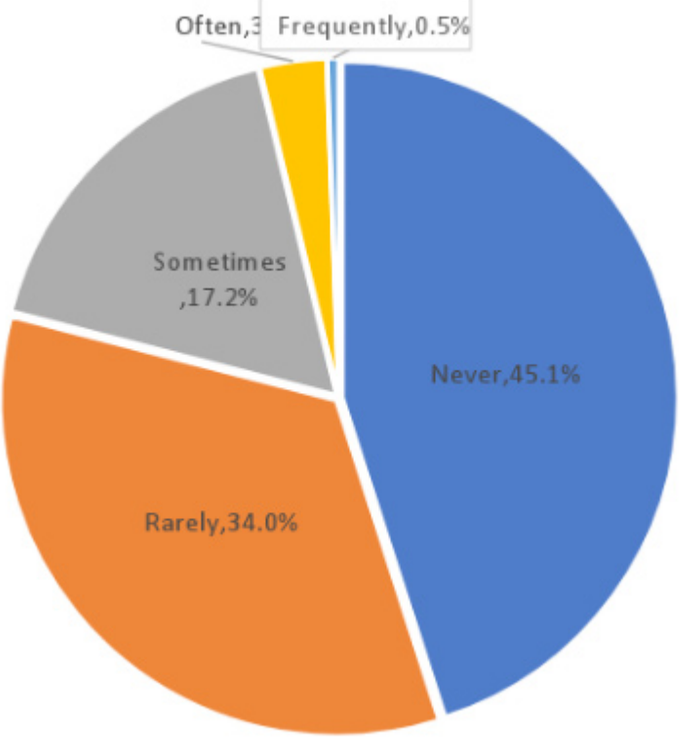


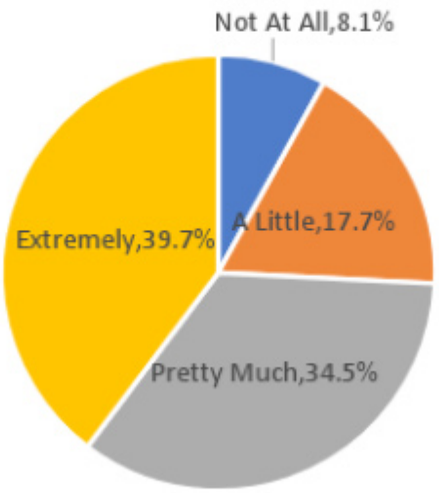
Figure 1.6. LGBT Students Hearing Homophobic Remarks from Teachers or Other School Staff



We asked students about frequency of hearing homophobic remarks from school staff. Fortunately, the majority of LGBT students reported that they heard homophobic remarks from teachers and school staff "Never" or "Rarely" (79.1%). However, one in five students (20.9%) said they heard these types of remarks from school staff "Sometimes," "Often," or "Frequently."

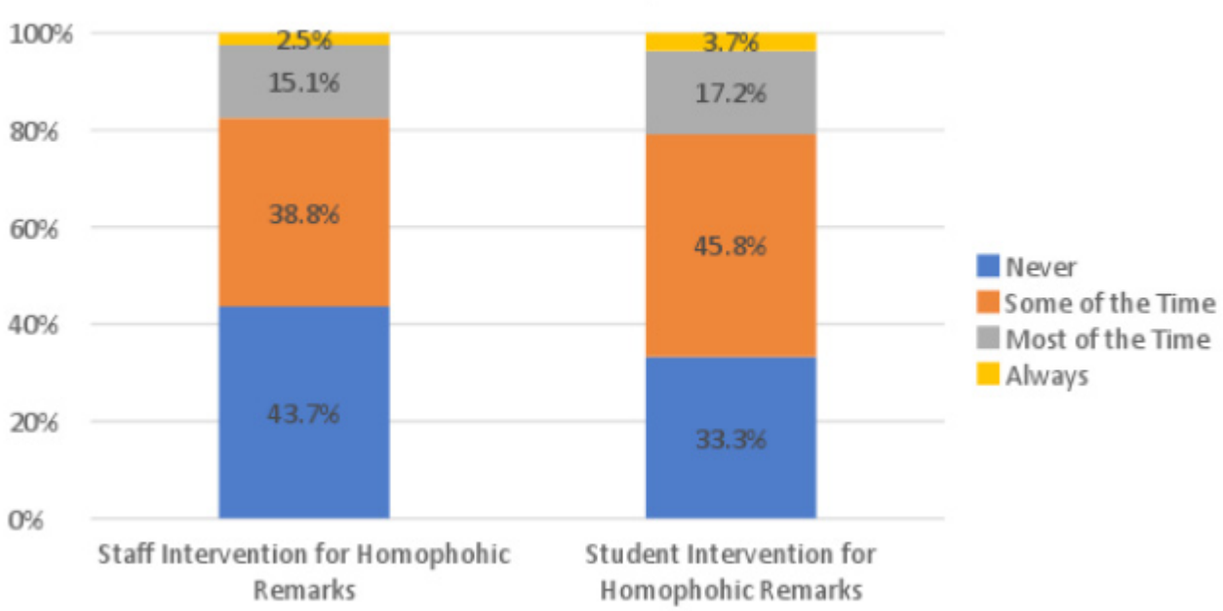
Hearing pejorative remarks in school can have negative effects on students. We asked the LGBT students in our survey how bothered or distressed they were by these remarks - and three fourths reported that they were bothered "pretty much" or "extremely" (see Figure 1.7).

Figure 1.7. Degree that LGBT Students Were Bothered or Distressed as a Result of Hearing "Gay" Used in a Derogatory Way



Students who reported hearing homophobic remarks at school were asked how often teachers or other school staff intervened if they were present. Less than one sixth (17.6%) reported that these school personnel intervened "most of the time" or "always" when homophobic remarks were made in their presence, and 43.7% reported that staff never intervened when present (see Figure 1.8).

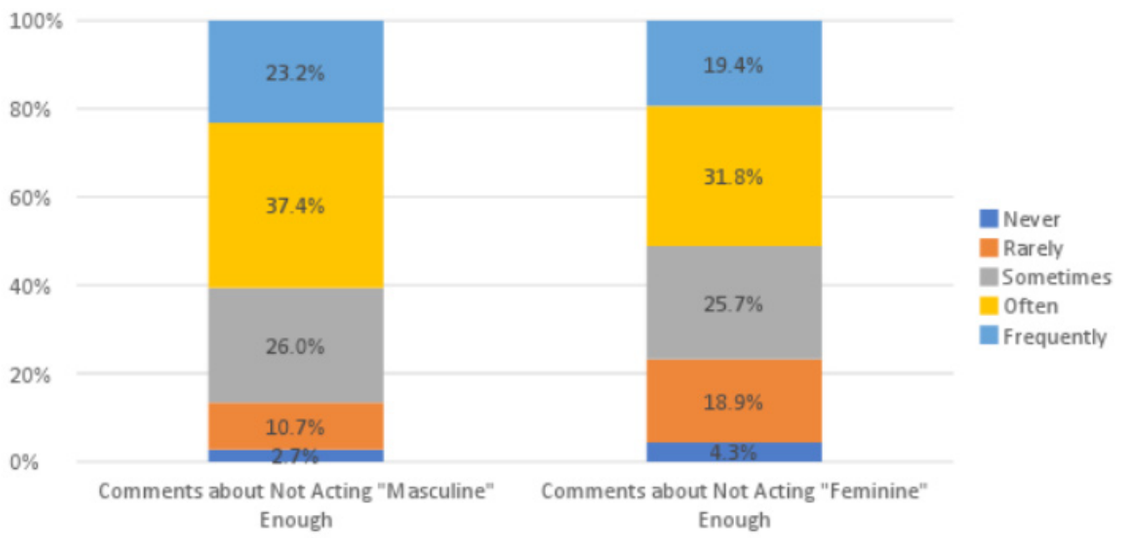
Figure 1.8. LGBT Students Reports on School Staff and Student Intevention in Homophobic Remarks



One would expect teachers and school staff to bear the responsibility for addressing problems of biased language in school. However, students may also intervene when hearing biased language, especially given that school personnel are often not present during such times. Thus, other students' willingness to intervene when hearing this language may be another important indicator of school climate. However, few students reported that their peers intervened "always" or "most of the time" when hearing homophobic remarks (20.9%), and a third (33.3%) said that their peers never intervened (see Figure 1.8).

The majority of LGBT students report rampant use of homophobic remarks in their schools, and this behavior contributes to a hostile learning environment for this population. Infrequent intervention by school authorities when hearing biased language in school may send a message to students that homophobic language is tolerated. Furthermore, school staff may themselves be modeling poor behavior and legitimizing the use of homophobic language in that most students heard school staff make homophobic remarks at some time.

Figure 1.9. Frequency of LGBT Students Hearing Different Types of Remarks about Students' Gender Expression



Negative Remarks about Gender Expression. Society often imposes norms for what is considered appropriate expression of one's gender. Those who express themselves in a manner considered to be atypical may experience criticism, harassment, and sometimes violence. Thus, we asked students two separate questions about hearing comments related to a student's gender expression — one question asked how often they heard remarks about someone not acting "masculine" enough, and another question asked how often they heard comments about someone not acting "feminine" enough.

Findings from this survey demonstrate that negative remarks about someone's gender expression were pervasive in schools. As shown in Figure 1.9, LGBT students reported hearing either type of remark about someone's gender expression often or frequently at school (60.6% and 51.2%, respectively). Remarks about students not acting "masculine" enough were more common than remarks about students not acting "feminine" enough.[1] When asked how much of the student population made these types of remarks, nearly two thirds (64.9%) of students reported that most or some of their peers made negative remarks about someone's gender expression (see Figure 1.10). In addition, 61.1% of LGBT students reported that they heard these types of remarks from teachers and other school staff (see Figure 1.11).

1 Mean differences in the frequencies between types of biased remarks based on gender expression were examined using a repeated measures t-test and percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. The effect was significant, $t(777) = 2.33$, $p<.05$.

Figure 1.10. LGBT Students' Reports on How Many Students Make Negative Remarks about Gender Expression

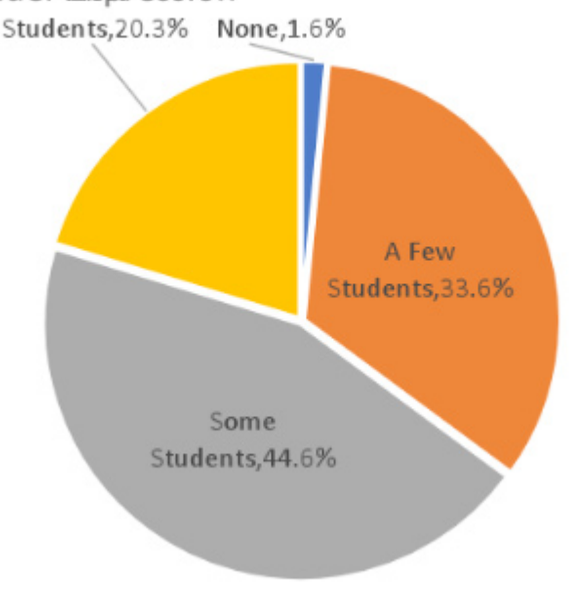
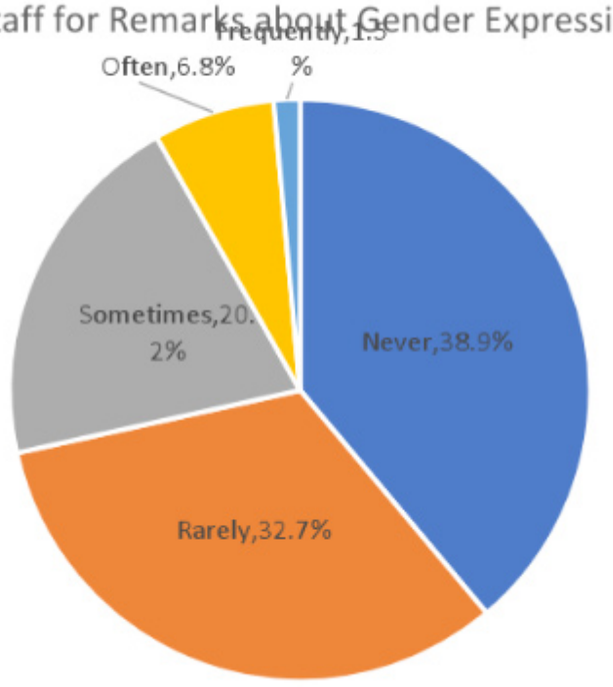


Figure 1.11. LGBT Students' Reports of School Staff for Remarks about Gender Expression

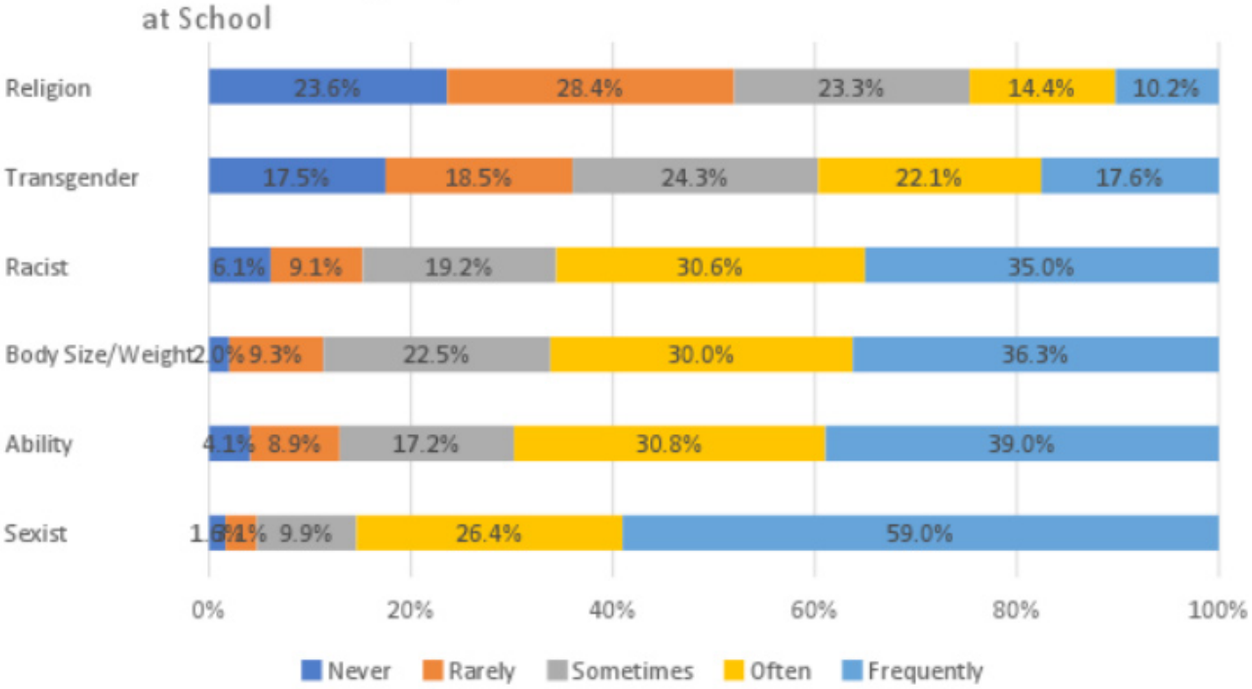


Negative Remarks about Transgender People. Similar to negative comments about gender expression, people may make negative comments about transgender people because they can pose a challenge to "traditional" ideas about gender. Therefore, we asked students about how often they heard negative remarks specifically about transgender people, like "travestito" or "travone." Over a third (39.7%) of LGBT students in our survey reported hearing these comments frequently or often (see Figure 1.12). The pervasiveness of anti-LGBT remarks is a concerning contribution to hostile school climates for all LGBT students. Any negative remark about sexual orientation, gender, or gender expression may signal to LGBT students that they are unwelcome in their school communities, even if a specific negative comment is not directly aligned to the individual sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression of the LGBT student who hears it. For example, negative comments about gender expression may disparage transgender or LGB people, even if transgender-specific or homophobic slurs are not used.

Other Types of Biased Remarks at School. In addition to hearing anti-LGBT remarks at school, hearing other types of biased language is an important indicator of school climate for LGBT students. We asked students about their experiences hearing racist or xenophobic remarks (like "negro" or "zingaro" used in a pejorative manner), and sexist remarks (such as someone being called "puttana" or "troia"), As shown in Figure 1.12, the LGBT students in the survey reported that these types of comments were very common in their schools, although some were more prevalent than others. Two thirds of LGBT students heard racist remarks (65.6%) while over four fifths heard sexist remarks (85.4%) in their school "often" or "frequently". Pejorative remarks about ability were heard from two thirds (69.8%) of LGBT students "often" or "frequently".

Considering all of the types of pejorative remarks that students hear at school, racist or xenophobic, sexist remarks, body size/weight, ability, and homophobic are remarks were the most commonly heard by LGBT students in our survey.

Figure 1.12. Frequency that LGBT Students Hear Other Biased Remarks at School



Experiences of Harassment and Assault at School

Hearing anti-LGBT remarks in school can contribute to feeling unsafe at school and create a negative learning environment. However, direct experiences with harassment and assault may have even more serious consequences on the lives of these students. We asked survey participants how often ("never," "rarely," "sometimes," "often," or "frequently") they had been verbally harassed, physically harassed, or physically assaulted at school during the past year specifically because of a personal characteristic, including sexual orientation, gender, gender expression (e.g., not acting "masculine" or "feminine" enough), race or ethnicity, and disability.

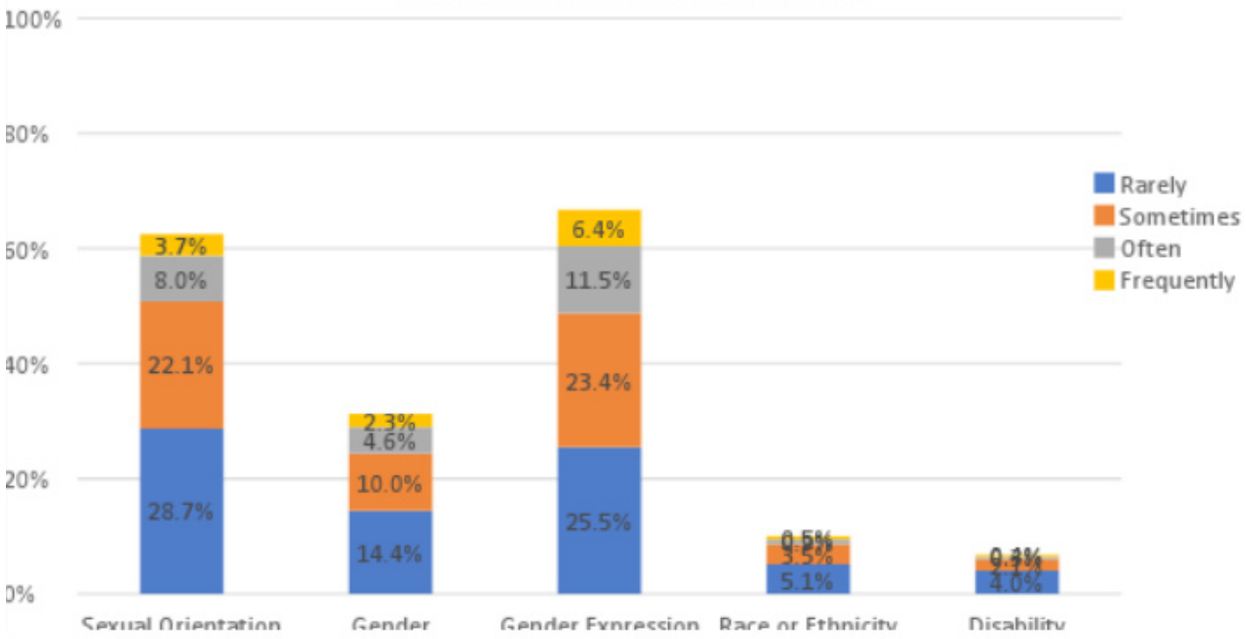
Verbal Harassment

Students in our survey were asked how often in the past year they had been verbally harassed (e.g., being called names or threatened) at school specifically because of personal characteristics. Two thirds (66.7%) reported being verbally harassed at some point in the past year based on any of these personal characteristics. LGBT students most commonly reported experiencing verbal harassment at school because of their sexual orientation or how they expressed their gender (see Figure 1.13):[2]

- Almost two thirds of LGBT students (62.5%) had been verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation.
- Two thirds of LGBT students (66.7%) were verbally harassed at school because of their gender expression.

Many LGBT students were harassed in school because of their gender — about one third (31.3%) had been verbally harassed in the past year for this reason.

Figure 1.13. Frequency of Verbal Harassment Experienced by LGBT Students in the Past School Year



2 Mean differences in the frequencies of verbal harassment across types were examined using repeated measures multiple analysis of variance: Pillai's Trace = .41, F(3, 743) = 175.21, p<.001. Univariate effects were considered at p<.05.

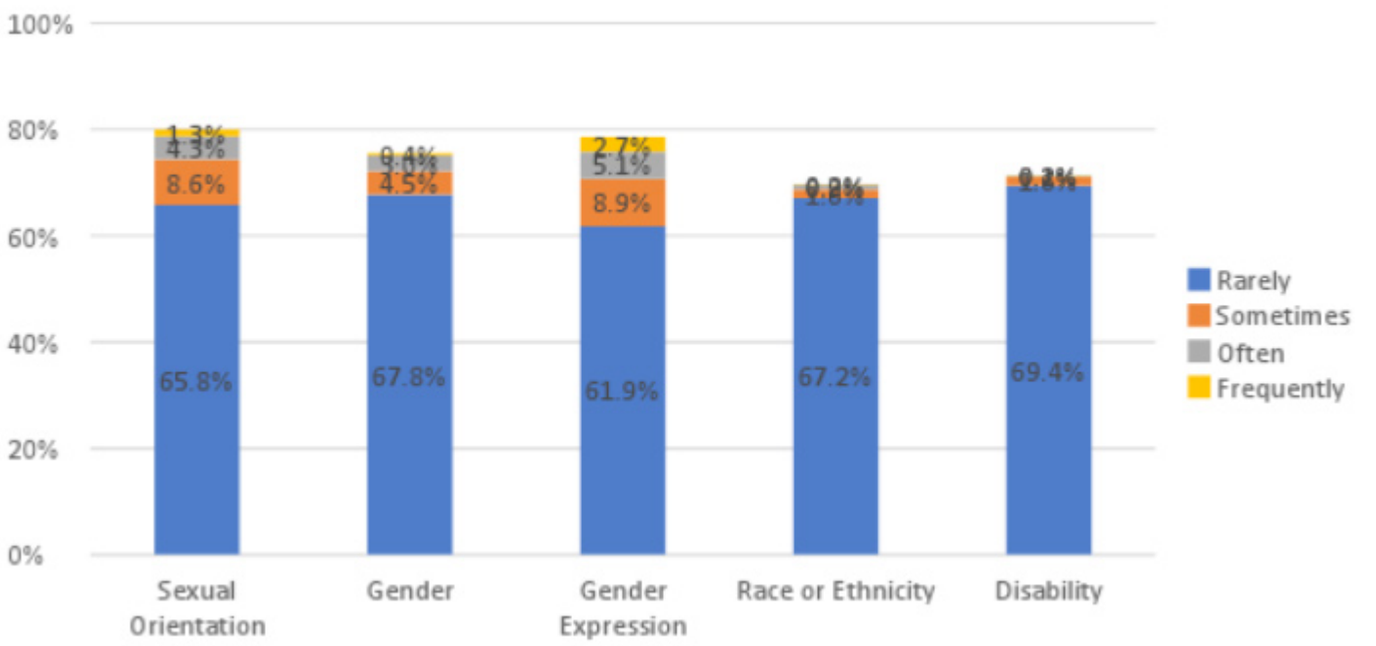
Physical Harassment

With regard to physical harassment, four fifths (80.0%) of LGBT students had been physically harassed (e.g., shoved or pushed) at some point at school during the past year based on any personal characteristic. Their experiences of physical harassment followed a pattern similar to verbal harassment — students most commonly reported being physically harassed at school because of their sexual orientation, gender, or gender expression (see Figure 1.14)::[3]

- 80.0% of LGBT students had been physically harassed at school because of their sexual orientation
- 75.6% had been physically harassed at school because of their gender, and 78.6% because of their gender expression.

Although reported as rarely, many LGBT students were physically harassed in school in the past year because of their race or ethnicity (69.8%) or a disability (71.4%).

Figure 1.14. Frequency of Physical Harrassment Experienced by LGBT Students in the Past School Year



3 Mean differences in the frequencies of physical harassment across types were examined using repeated measures multiple analysis of variance: Pillai's Trace = .18, F(3, 728) = 53.97, p<.001. Univariate effects were considered at p<.05. Levels of physical harassment based on sexual orientation and gender expression were not significantly different; percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

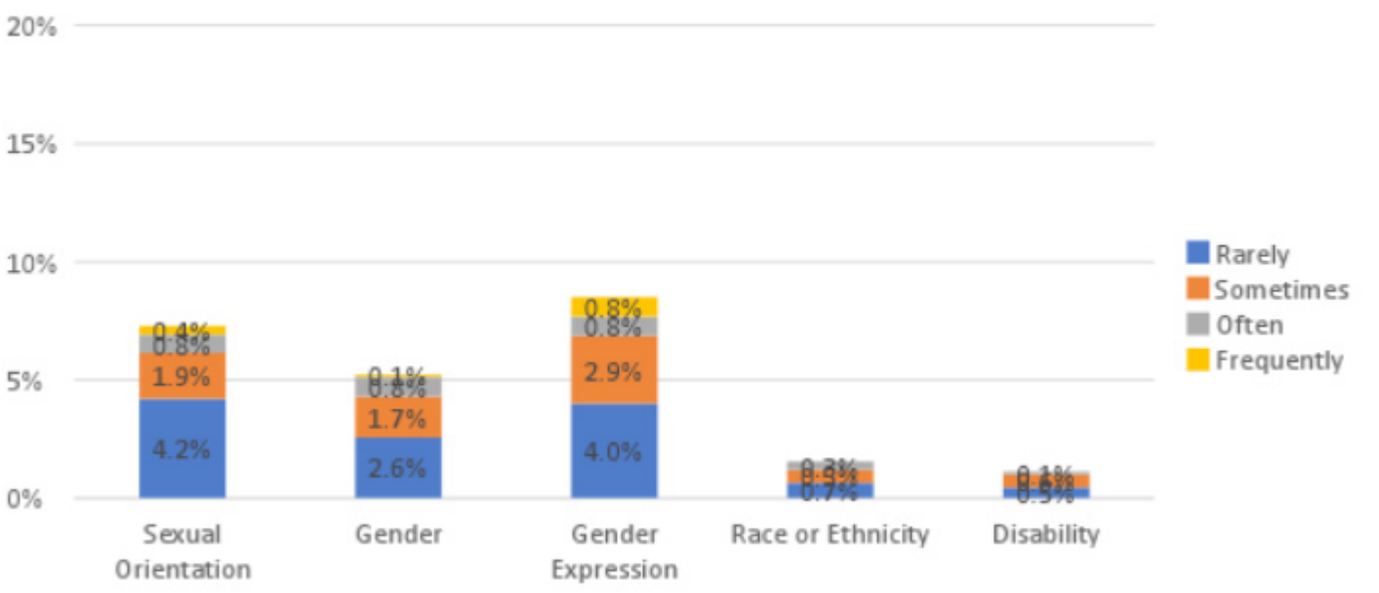
Physical Assault

LGBT students were less likely to report experiencing physical assault (e.g., punched, kicked, or injured with a weapon) at school than verbal or physical harassment, which is not surprising given the more severe nature of assault. Nonetheless, nearly one in ten (8.5%) LGBT students in our survey were assaulted at school during the past year for any personal characteristic (see Figure 1.15):

- 7.3% of LGBT students were assaulted at school because of their sexual orientation;
- 5.2% were assaulted at school because of how they expressed their gender; and
- 8.5% of LGBT students were assaulted at school because of their gender expression.

Physical assault based on sexual orientation and gender expression more common than physical assault based on other personal characteristics. 1.1% of LGBT students were assaulted at school because of a disability, and 1.5% report being assaulted because of their race or ethnicity (see also Figure 1.15).[4]

Figure 1.15. Frequency of Physical Assault Experienced by LGBT Students in the Past School Year



4 Mean differences in the frequencies of physical assault across types were examined using repeated measures multiple analysis of variance: Pillai's Trace = .06, F(3, 719) = 14.70, p<.001. Univariate effects were considered at p<.01. Levels of physical assault based on race and based on disability were not significantly different; percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

Experiences of Other Types of Harassment and Negative Events

LGBT students may be harassed or experience other negative events at school for reasons that are not clearly related to sexual orientation, gender expression, or another personal characteristic. In our survey, we also asked students how often they experienced these other types of events in the past year, such as being sexually harassed or deliberately excluded by their peers.

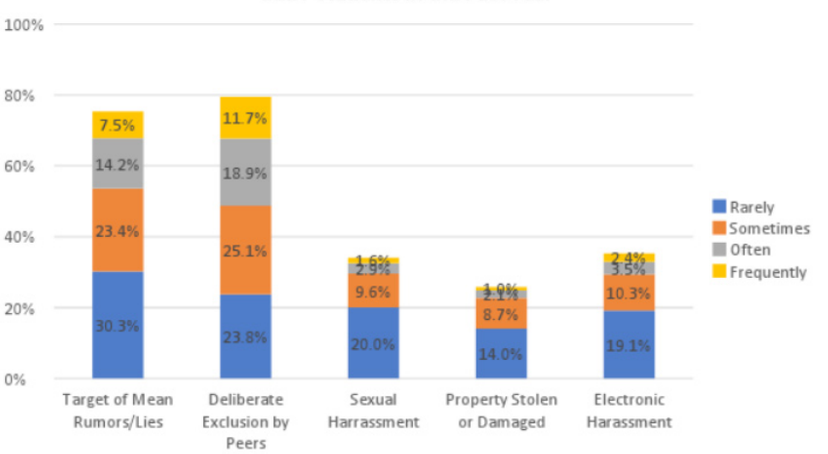
Relational Aggression. Research on school-based bullying and harassment often focuses on physical or overt acts of aggressive behavior; however, it is also important to examine relational forms of aggression that can damage peer relationships, such as spreading rumors or excluding students from peer activities. We asked participants how often they experience two common forms of relational aggression: being purposefully excluded by peers and being the target of mean rumors or lies. As illustrated in Figure 1.16, the vast majority of LGBT students (79.4%) in our survey reported that they had felt deliberately excluded or "left out" by other students, and nearly one third (30.6%) experienced this often or frequently. Three quarters of students (75.4%) had mean rumors or lies told about them at school, and about one in five (21.7%) experienced this often or frequently.

Sexual Harassment. Harassment experienced by LGBT students in school can often be sexual in nature. Survey participants were asked how often they had experienced sexual harassment at school, such as unwanted touching or sexual remarks directed at them. As shown in Figure 1.16, over one third (34.1%) of LGBT students had been sexually harassed at school, and about one in twenty students (4.6%) report that such events occurred often or frequently.

Electronic Harassment or "Cyberbullying". Electronic harassment (often called "cyberbullying") is using an electronic medium, such as a mobile phone or Internet communications, to threaten or harm others. In recent years there has been much attention given to this type of harassment, as access to the Internet, mobile phones, and other electronic forms of communication has increased for many youth. We asked students in our survey how often they were harassed or threatened by students at their school via electronic mediums (sms, emails, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr or Facebook), more than one third (35.3%) of LGBT students reported experiencing this type of harassment in the past year. 5.9% had experienced it often or frequently (see also Figure 1.16).

Property Theft or Damage at School. Having one's personal property damaged or stolen is yet another dimension of a hostile school climate for students. One in four (25.9%) LGBT students reported that their property had been stolen or purposefully damaged by other students at school in the past year (see Figure 1.16).

Figure 1.16. Frequency of Other Types of Harrassment Experienced by LGBT Students in the Past Year



Reporting of School-Based Harassment and Assault

When harassment and assault occurs in school, we expect the teachers and school personnel to address the problems effectively. However, students may not always feel comfortable reporting these events to staff. In our survey, we asked those students who had experienced harassment or assault in the past school year how often they had reported the incidents to school staff. As shown in Figure 1.17, only one third of these students ever reported incidents to staff (38.5%), and only one in eight indicated that they regularly reported incidents of harassment or assault (15.5% reporting "most of the time" or "always" to staff). Students in our survey who said that they had reported incidents of victimization to school staff were also asked how effective staff members were in addressing the problem. As shown in Figure 1.18, only a fourth (27.2%) of students believed that staff responded effectively ("Somewhat Effective" or "Very Effective") to their reports of victimization.

Given that family members may be able to advocate on behalf of the student with school personnel, we also asked students if they reported harassment or assault to a family member (i.e., to their parent or guardian or to another family member), and only one third of the students (35.4%) said that they had ever told a family member (see also Figure 1.17). Students who had reported incidents to a family member were asked how often a family member had talked to school staff about the incident, and more than half of LGBT students (53.5%) said that the family member never addressed the issue with school staff (see Figure 1.19).

Figure 1.17. Frequency of LGBT Students Reporting Incidents of Harassment and Assault

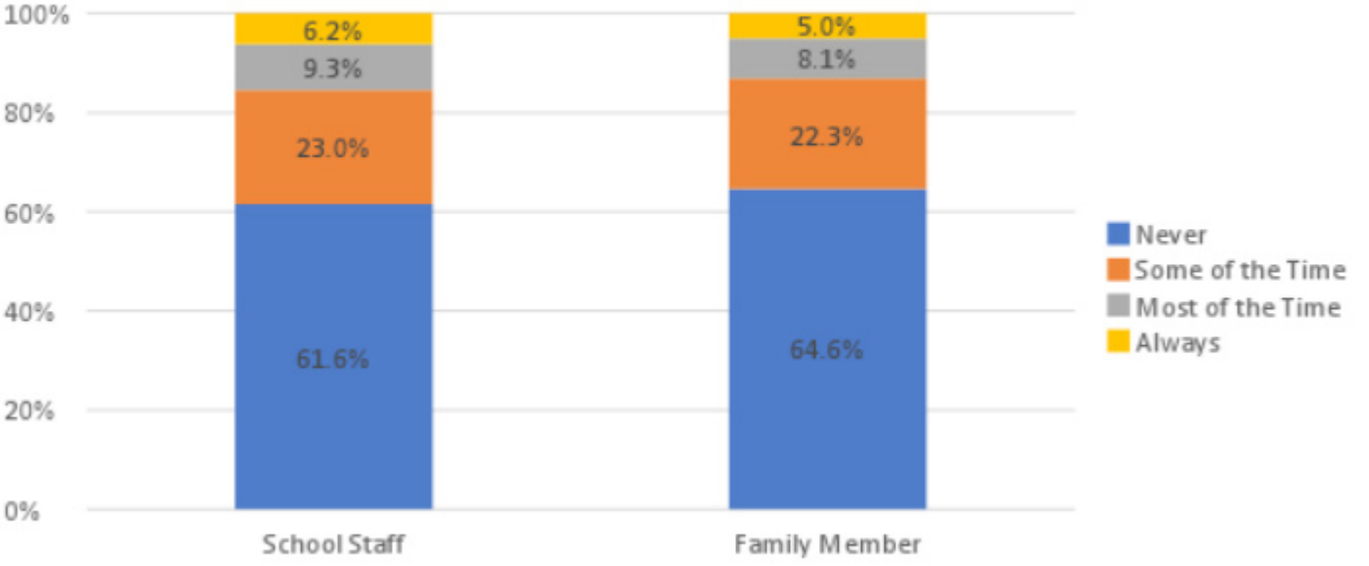


Figure 1.18. LGBT Students' Perceptions of Effectiveness of Reporting Incidences of Harassment and Assault to Shool Staff

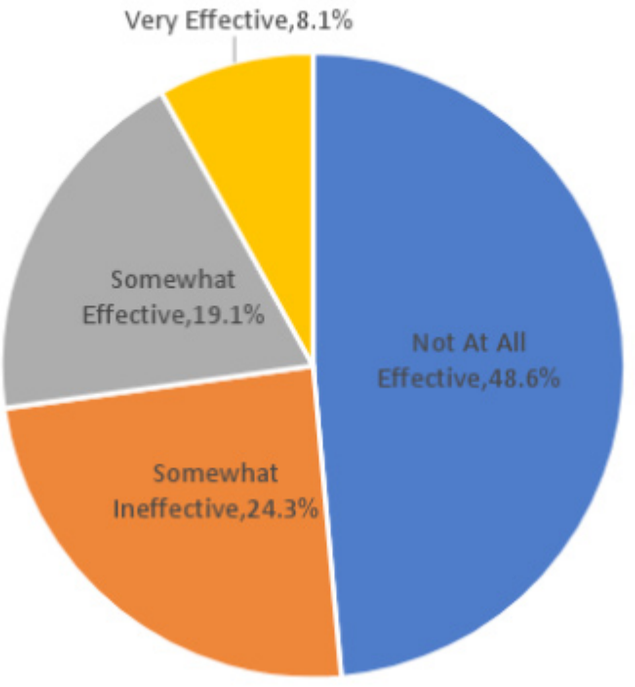
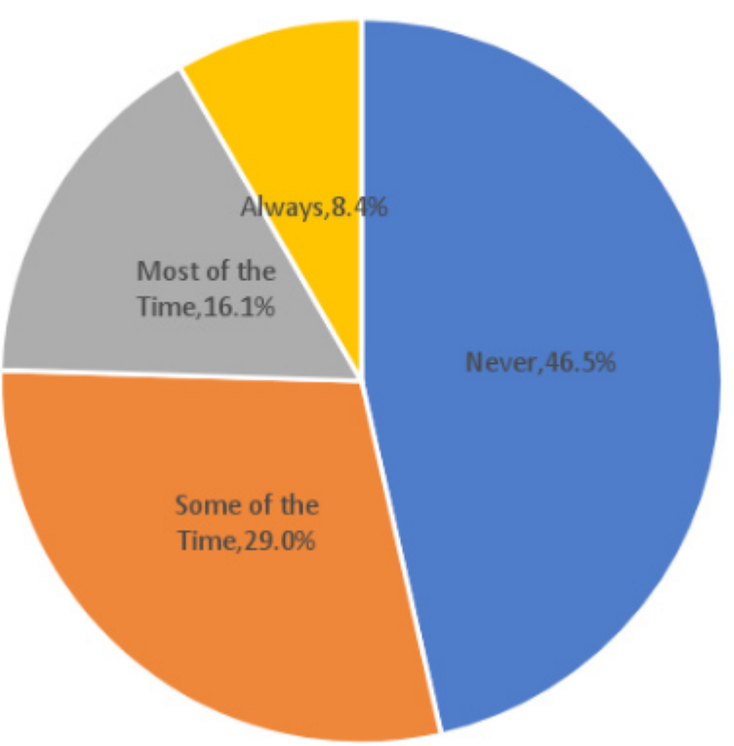


Figure 1.19. Frequency of Intervention by LGBT Students' Family Members



Hostile School Climate and Educational Outcomes

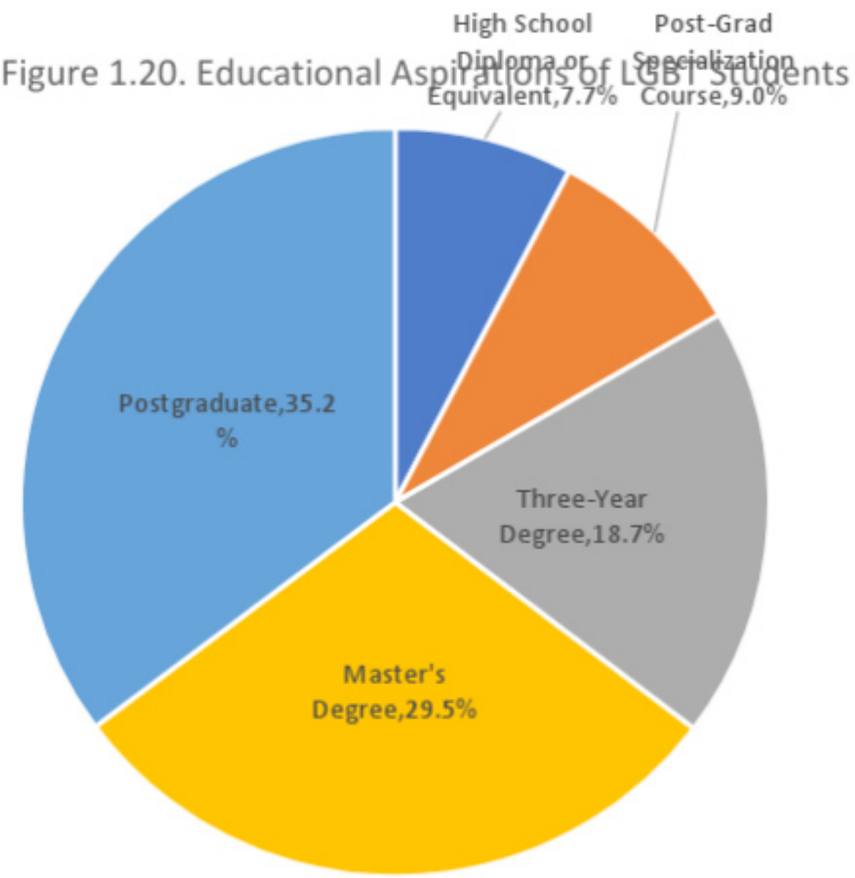
Although all students deserve equal access to education, LGBT students can face a variety of obstacles to academic success and opportunity. Given the hostile climates encountered by LGBT students, it is understandable that some students could have poorer outcomes in school. In this section, we examine in closer detail the educational experiences of LGBT students, particularly how they might be affected by hostile school climate.

Educational Aspirations and Future Plans

In order to examine the relationship between school climate and educational outcomes, we asked students about their aspirations with regard to post-secondary education, including plans to graduate versus dropping out of school, as well as their highest level of expected educational attainment and intended field of study beyond high school.

Educational Aspirations. When asked about their aspirations with regard to post-secondary education, only a small percentage of LGBT students (7.7%) indicated that they did not plan to pursue any type of post-secondary education (i.e, that they only planned to obtain a high school diploma, did not plan to finish high school, or were unsure of their plans). About four fifths of students (83.4%) reported that they planned to finish university, and one third (35.2%) said that they planned to obtain a post-graduate (see Figure 1.20). It is important to note that the survey only included students who were in school during the 2016-2017 school year. Thus, the percentage of LGBT students not pursuing post-secondary education would be higher with the inclusion of students who had already left high school without finishing.

Figure 1.20. Educational Aspirations of LGBT Students



Although most students planned on finishing secondary school, students who said they did not plan on finishing or were not sure were more likely to have experienced higher levels of victimization. As shown in Figure 1.21, five in six (86.4%) of these students reported being verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation compared to those finishing tertiary education (81.2%). Figure 1.21 also shows the same relationship between verbal harassment based on gender expression and academic aspirations.

Academic Achievement. More severe victimization was also related to lower academic achievement among LGBT students. As shown in Figure 1.22, LGBT students who had higher levels of victimization because of their sexual orientation or gender expression reported significantly lower grades than for students who experienced less harassment and assault (5.3 vs. 4.9 for both sexual orientation and gender expression).[6]

Absenteeism. Students who are regularly harassed or assaulted in school may attempt to avoid these hurtful experiences by not attending school and, accordingly, may be more likely to miss school than students who do not experience such victimization. We found that experiences of harassment and assault were, in fact, related to missing days of school. [7] As shown in Figure 1.23 students were nearly twice as likely to have missed school in the past month if they had experienced higher levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation (30.2% versus 14.4%) or gender expression (28.1% vs. 17.0%).

Sense of School Belonging. The degree to which students feel accepted by and a part of their school community is another important indicator of school climate and is related to a number of educational outcomes. Students who experience victimization or discrimination at school may feel excluded and disconnected from their school community. In order to assess LGBT students' sense of belonging to their school community, survey participants were given a series of statements about feeling like a part of their school and were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statements.[8]
As illustrated in Figure 1.24, students who experienced a higher severity of victimization based on sexual orientation or gender expression had lower levels of school belonging than students who experienced less severe victimization in school. [9] For example, 58.5% of students who experienced no reported victimization based on their sexual orientation reported a positive sense of connection to their school, compared to 45.1% of students who experienced victimization based on sexual orientation.

Overall, these findings illustrate that direct victimization may lead to less welcoming schools and more negative educational outcomes for LGBT students. In order to ensure that LGBT students are afforded a supportive learning environment and educational opportunities, community and school advocates should work to prevent and respond to in-school victimization. In Part 2 of this report, we will examine the availability of supports in school that may benefit the educational experience for LGBT students.

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5 Differences by the three groups was tested through Chi-square analyses: verbal harassment based on sexual orientation: $\chi 2 = 7.64$, df = 2, $p<.05$, Cramer's V = .10; verbal harassment based on gender expression: $\chi 2 = 14.15$, df = 2, $p<.001$, Cramer's V = .14.

6 The relationship between GPA and severity of victimization was examined through Pearson correlations. Victimization based on sexual orientation: r = -.13, $p<.001$; victimization based on gender expression: r = --.10, $p<.01$.

7 The relationship between missing school and severity of victimization was examined through Pearson correlations. Victimization based on sexual orientation: r = .36, $p<.001$; victimization based on gender expression: r = .31, $p<.001$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

8 Items assessing school belonging were taken from the 2012 survey of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment.

9 The relationship between school belonging and severity of victimization was examined through Pearson correlations. Victimization based on sexual orientation: r = -.39, $p<.001$; victimization based on gender expression: r = -.29, $p<.001$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

Figure 1.21. Educational Aspirations by Experiences of Victimization and Discrimination

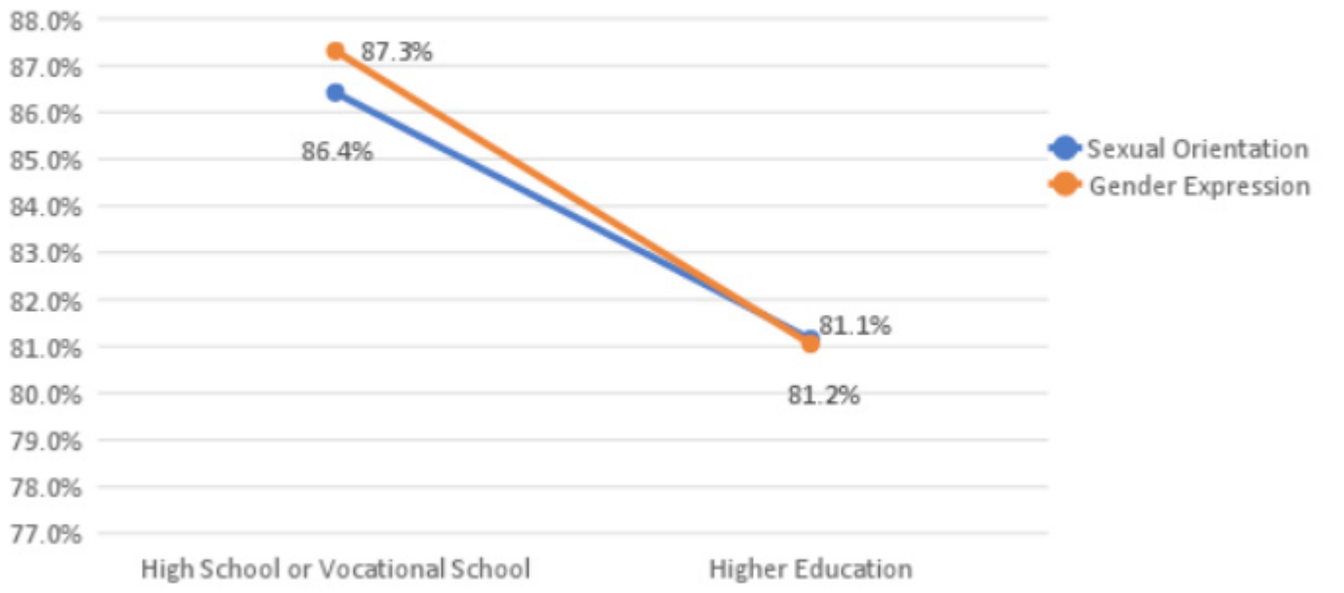


Figure 1.22. Academic Achievement by Experiences of Victimization and Discrimination

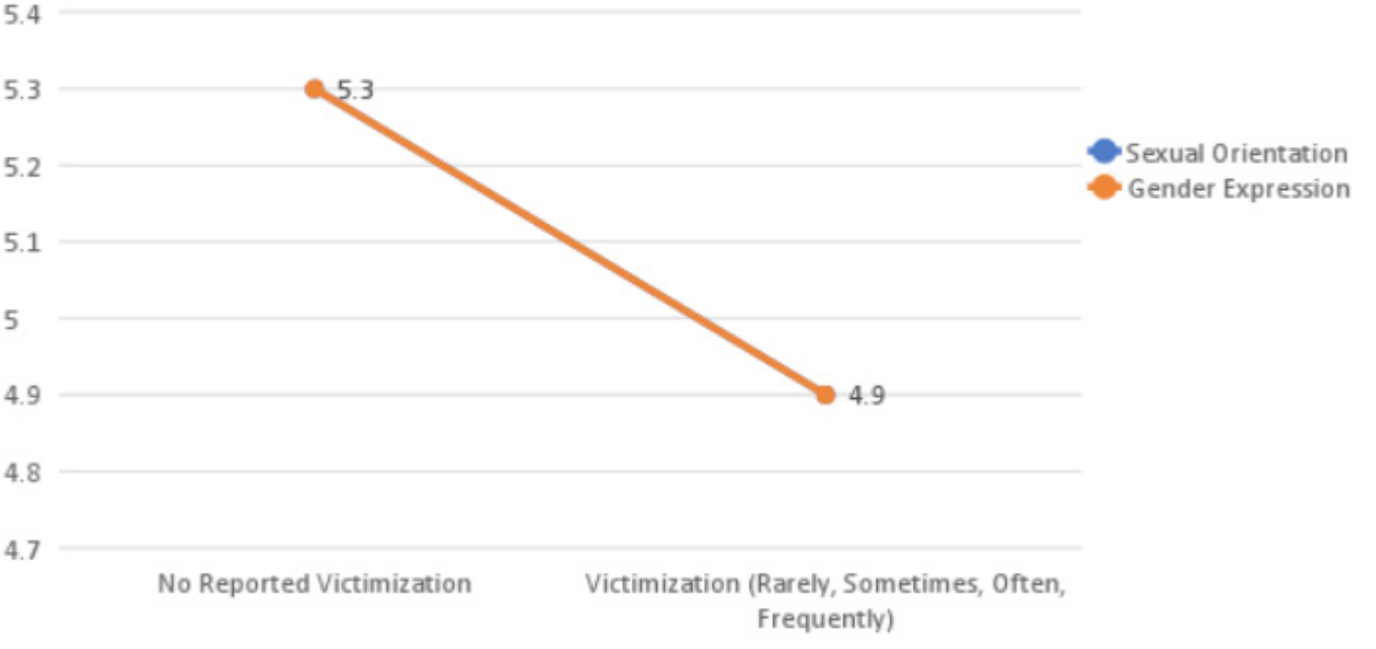
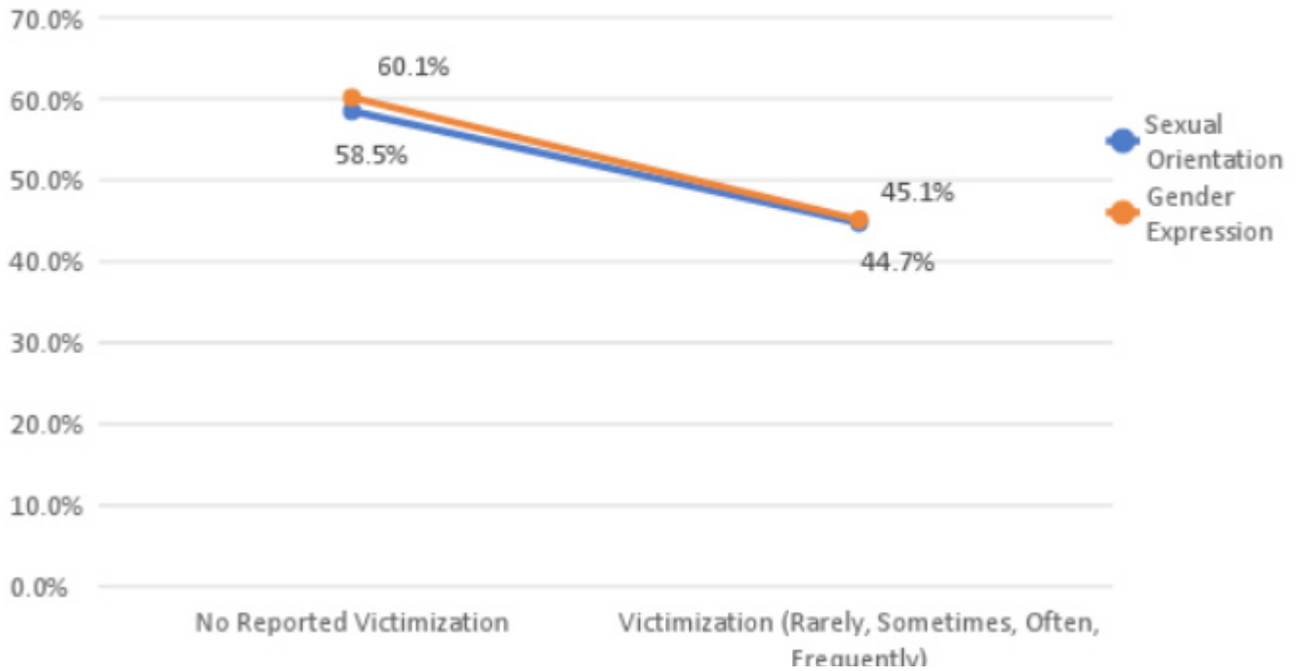


Figure 1.23. Absenteeism by Experiences of Victimization and Discrimination

Figure 1.24. School Belonging by Experiences of Victimization and Discrimination



PART 2:
SCHOOL-BASED RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

Availability of School-Based Resources and Supports

LGBT students may not have the same types of support from peers at their schools and in their communities. As shown in Figure 2.1, a third (30.7%) of LGBT students in Italy reported that other students at school were accepting of LGBT people ("very accepting" or "somewhat accepting") with nearly one third of students (31.8%) reporting that other students at school were not very accepting or not at all accepting of LGBT people. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 2.3, half of LGBT students report having never or rarely attended programs or groups for LGBT youth outside of school. Yet over 62.5% of students reported that there are numerous LGBT students in their school (see Figure 2.2.) Thus, the availability of resources and supports in school for LGBT students can be extremely important for this population of youth. There are several key resources that may help to promote a safer climate and more positive school experiences for students: school personnel who are supportive of LGBT students, LGBT-inclusive curricular materials, and school policies for addressing incidents of harassment and assault. Thus, we examined the availability of these resources and supports among LGBT students.

Figure 2.1. LGBT Students' Reports on How Accepting Their School's Students are of LGBT People

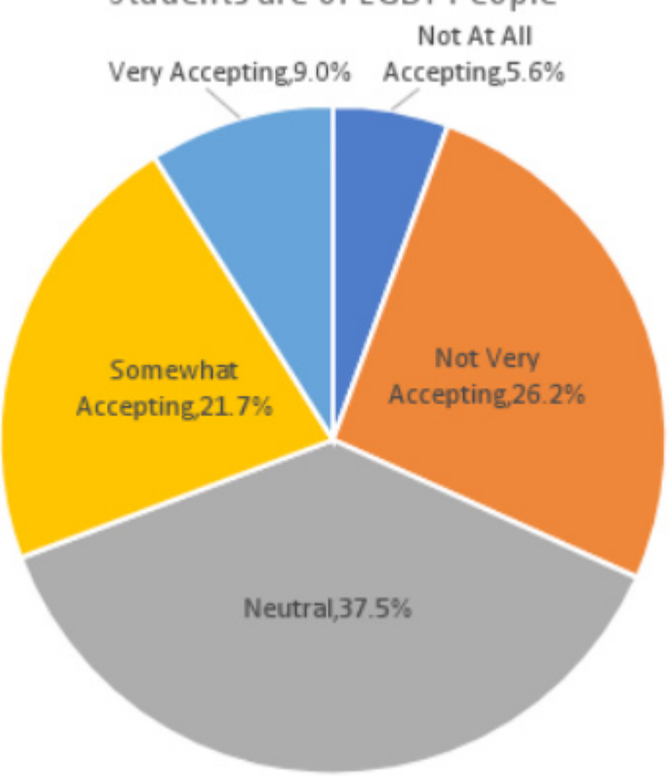


Figure 2.2. LGBT Students' Reports on the Number of LGBT Students at their School

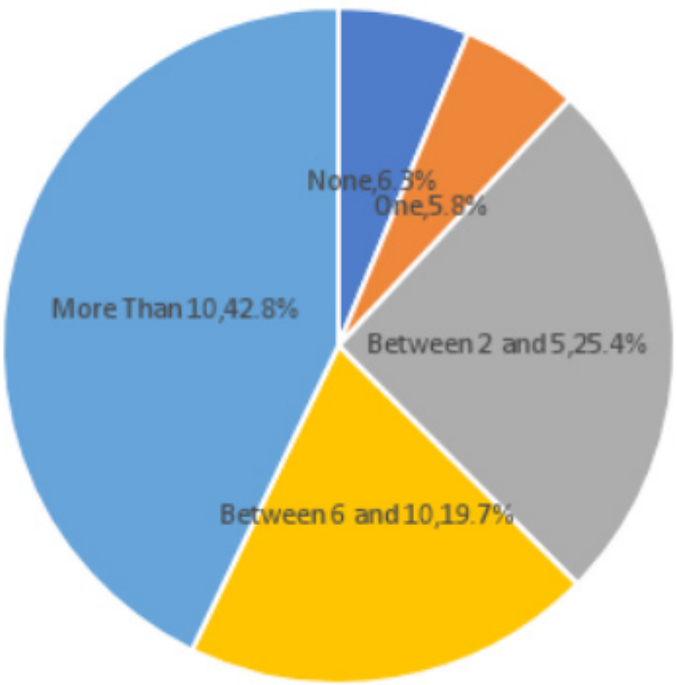
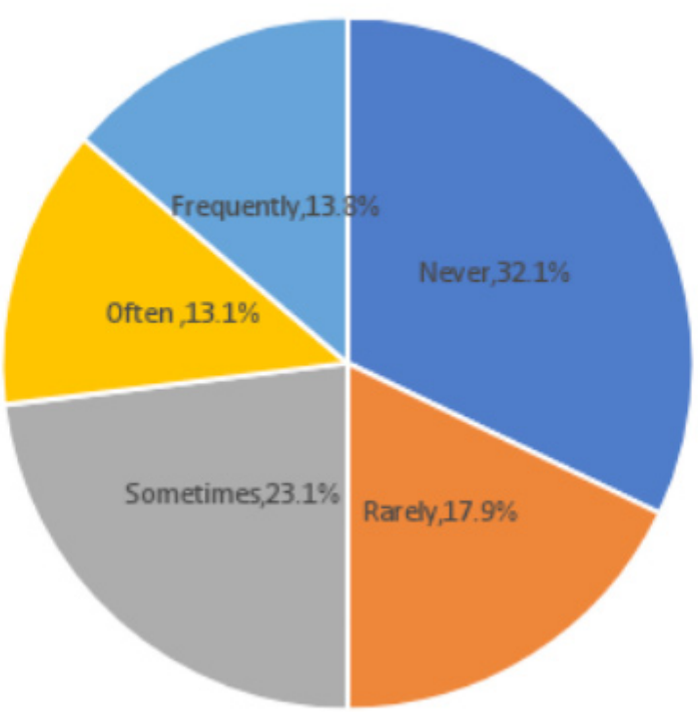


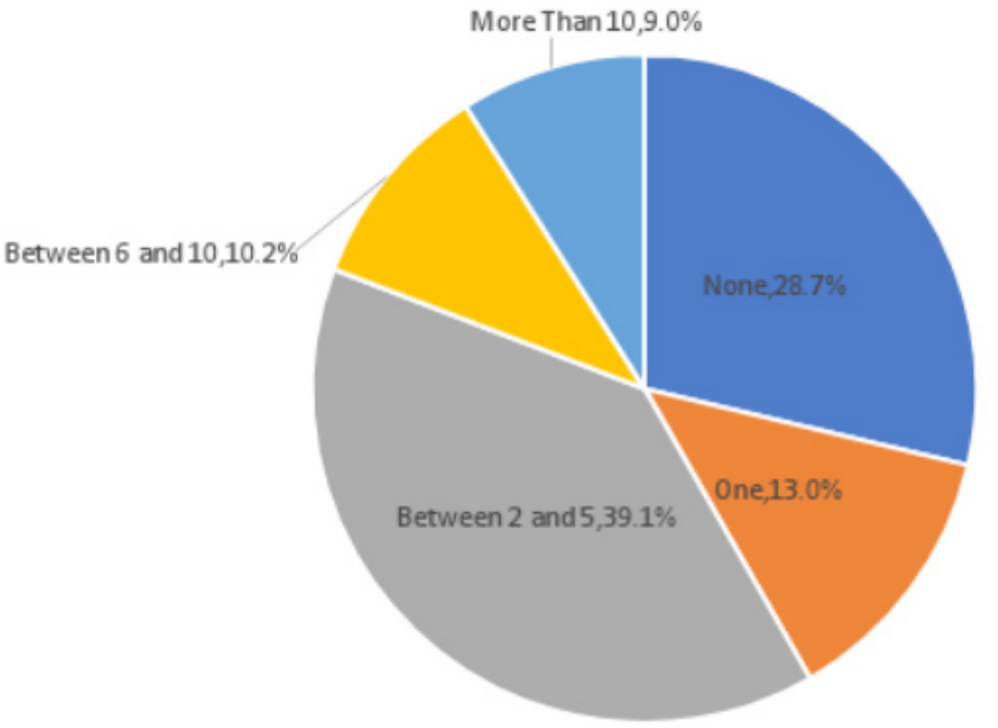
Figure 2.3. Frequency of Attending a Program or Group for LGBT Youth Outside Their School



Supportive School Personnel

Supportive teachers, principals, and other school staff serve as another important resource for LGBT students. Being able to speak with a caring adult in school may have a significant positive impact on the school experiences for students, particularly those who feel marginalized or experience harassment. In our survey, the overwhelming majority of students (71.3%) could identify at least one school staff member whom they believed was supportive of LGBT students at their school, and one fifth (19.2%) could identify six or more supportive school staff (see Figure 2.4).

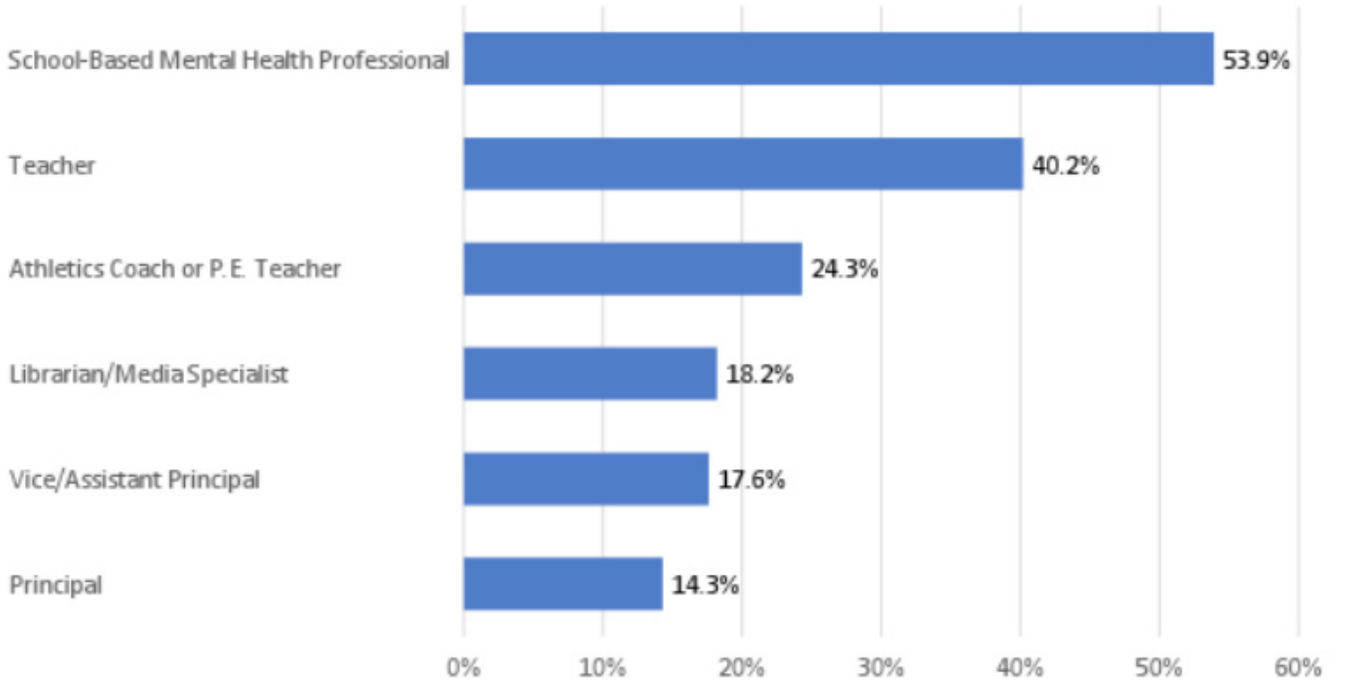
Figure 2.4 LGBT Students' Reports on Number of Teachers and Other School Staff Who are Supportive of LGBT Students



To understand whether certain types of school personnel were more likely to be seen as supportive, we asked LGBT students how comfortable they would feel talking one-on-one with various school personnel about LGBT-related issues. As shown in Figure 2.5, students reported that they would feel most comfortable talking school-based mental health professionals (Psicologo scolastico): 40.2% said they would be somewhat or very comfortable talking with a teacher and 24.3% would be somewhat or very comfortable talking about LGBT issues to an athletics coach or P.E. teacher (see Figure 2.5). Fewer students in our survey said they would feel comfortable talking one-one-one with a librarian/media specialist or school administration.[10]

10 Mean differences in comfort level talking to school staff across type of school staff member were examined using repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance and percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's Trace = .48, $F(7, 717) = 92.78$, $p<.001$. Univariate analyses were considered significant at $p<.01$.

Figure 2.5. Comfort Talking with School Personnel about LGBT Issues



Inclusive Curricular Resources

LGBT student experiences may also be shaped by inclusion of LGBT-related information in the curriculum. Learning about LGBT historical events and positive role models may enhance their engagement with the school community and provide valuable information about the LGBT community. Students in our survey were asked whether they had been exposed to positive representations of LGBT people, history, or events in lessons at school, and half (51.0%) of respondents said that their classes did not include these topics (see Figure 2.6). Of the students who said they had been taught about LGBT topics. Among the students who had been taught positive things about LGBT-related topics in class, “Italiano”, “Storia/Studi sociali”, and “Lingua straniera“ were the classes most often mentioned as being inclusive of these topics (see Table 2.1).

Figure 2.6. Percentage of LGBT Students Taught Postive Things about LGBT Topics in the Classroom Curriculum

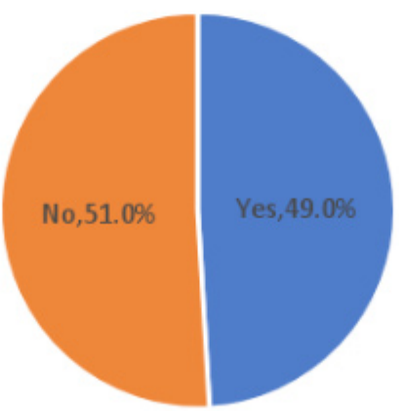


Table 2.1. Positive Representations of LGBT-Related Topics Taught in Class*		
	% among Students Taught Positive Rep of LGBT-Related Topics	% of all Students in Survey
Italian	45.6%	22.3%
History/Social Studies	38.4%	18.8%
Other	30.5%	14.9%
Foreign Language	27.6%	13.5%
Art	15.6%	7.7%
Psychology	11.2%	5.5%
Science	10.4%	5.1%
Sociology	7.6%	3.7%
Mathematics	6.1%	3.0%
Gym	5.8%	2.8%
Music	2.4%	1.2%
Health	0.6%	0.3%

*Because respondents could select multiple responses, the categories are not mutually exclusive. The percentages do not add up to 100%.

Schools often have programs specifically about bullying, harassment and violence. But these programs may not specifically include information about victimization directed toward students who are often commonly targeted, such as LGBT students. We asked students if they had ever been taught about harassment and violence and whether it included information about LGBT-related victimization.

As shown in Figure 2.7, most LGBT students reported being taught about violence, but only 43.4% said that it included information about sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

We also asked students about their ability to access information about LGBT issues that teachers may not be covering in class, such as additional reading materials featuring information about LGBT issues. These types of LGBT-related curricular resources were available for only half of the LGBT students in our survey, as shown in Figure 2.8.

Figure 2.7. Percentage of LGBT Students Taught Bullying in School

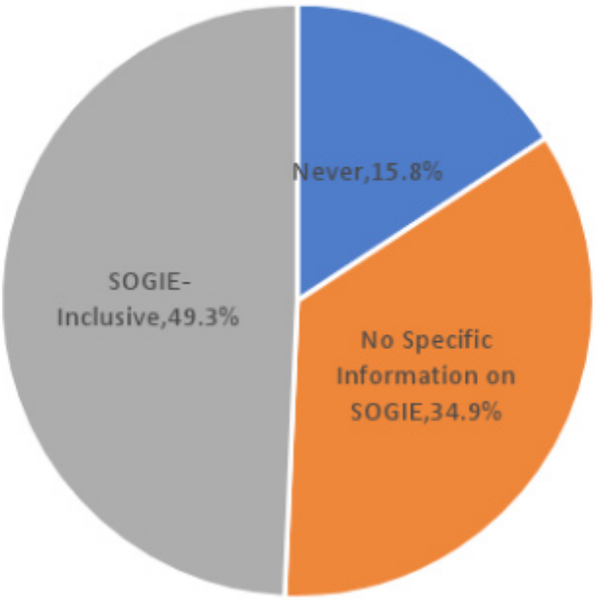
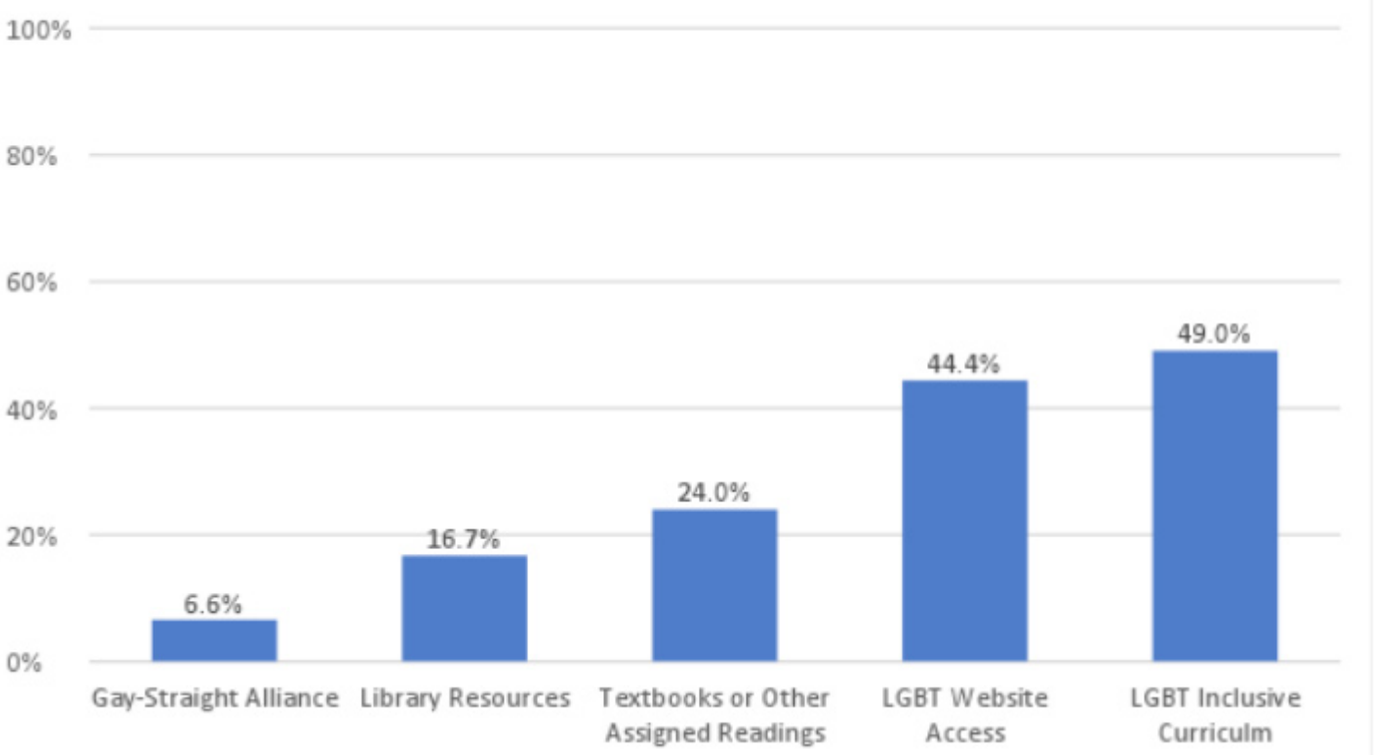


Figure 2.8. Availability of LGBT-Related Curricular Resources



School Policies for Addressing Bullying, Harassment, and Assault

School policies that address in-school bullying, harassment, and assault are powerful tools for creating school environments where students feel safe. These types of policies can explicitly state protections based on personal characteristics, such as sexual orientation and gender identity/ expression, among others. In this report, we refer to a "comprehensive" policy as one that explicitly enumerates protections based on personal characteristics, including both sexual orientation and gender identity/ expression. When a school has and enforces a comprehensive policy, especially one which also includes procedures for reporting incidents to school authorities, it can send a message that bullying, harassment, and assault are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Comprehensive school policies may also provide students with greater protection against victimization because they make clear the various forms of bullying, harassment, and assault that will not be tolerated. It may also demonstrate that student safety, including the safety of LGBT students, is taken seriously by school administrators.

Table 2.3 LGBT Students' Reports of Bullying, Harassment, and Assault Policies	
No Policy or Don't Know	74.2%
Any Policy	25.8%
Generic Policy	23.3%
Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity/Expression mentioned	2.5%

Students were asked whether their school had a policy about in-school bullying, harassment, or assault, and if that policy explicitly included sexual orientation and gender expression. As shown in Table 2.3, the vast majority of students (74.2%) did not have any policy in their school or did not know about one. And of the students who did report that their school had a policy, very few students said that it mentioned sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

Utility of School-Based Resources and Supports

School-based resources, such as supportive school personnel, LGBT-inclusive curricula, and enumerated policies for reporting bullying, harassment and assault, may help create a more positive school environment for LGBT students. In this section, we examine the relationship between school-based institutional supports and school climate, as well as educational indicators such as absenteeism, academic achievement, and educational aspirations.

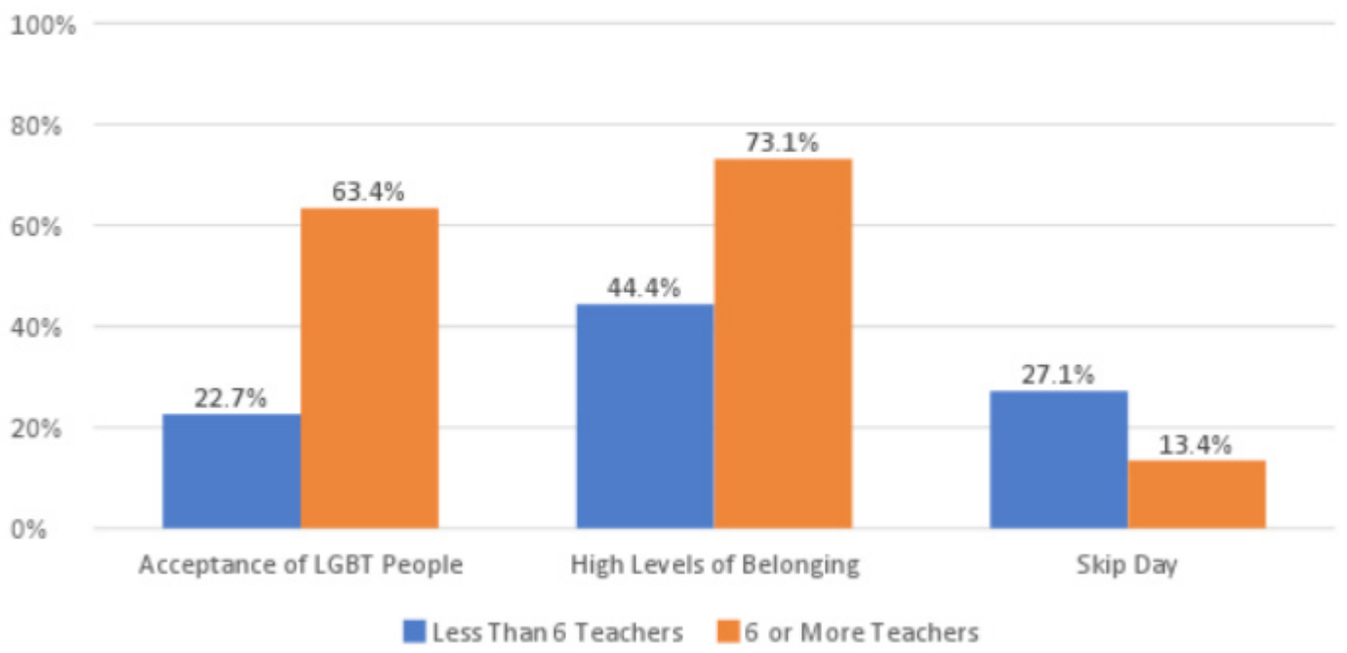
Supportive School Personnel

Having supportive teachers and school staff can have a positive effect on the educational experiences of any student, increasing student motivation to learn and positive engagement in school. Given that LGBT students often feel unsafe and unwelcome in school, having access to school personnel who provide support may be critical for creating better learning environments for LGBT students. Therefore, we examined the relationships between the presence of supportive staff and several indicators of school climate, finding that the presence of school staff supportive of LGBT students is one critical piece in improving the school climate.

School Safety and Absenteeism. Having staff supportive of LGBT students was directly related to LGBT students reporting more positive feelings about their school and their education. As shown in Figure 2.9, students who reported having a higher number of teachers and school staff who support LGBT students were:

- More likely to report that the general student body is more accepting of LGBT people (63.4% vs. 22.7%)
- More likely to feel like they belong in their school (73.1% vs. 44.4%); and
- Less likely to miss days of school because of feeling unsafe (13.4% vs. 27.1%).[11]

Figure 2.9. The Number of Teacher and School Personnel Who Support LGBT Students and the LGBT Student Experience



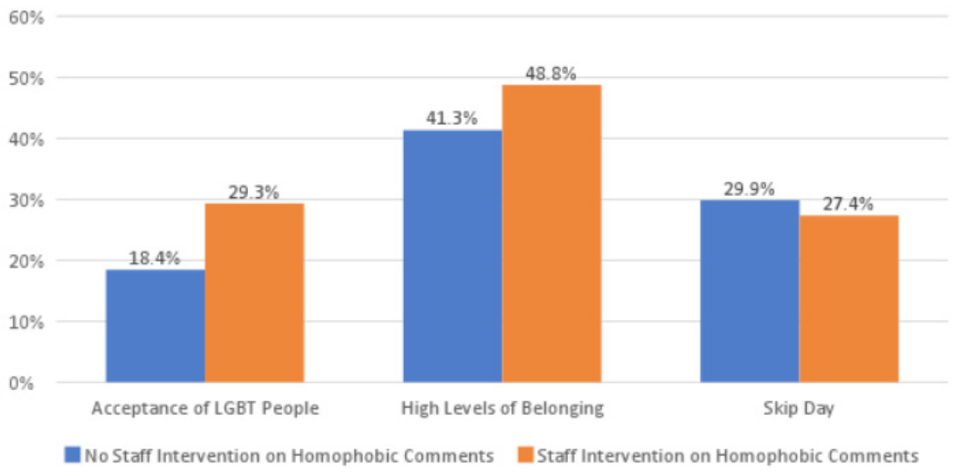
School staff members serve a vital role in ensuring a safe learning environment for all students, and as such, should respond to biased language and bias-based victimization. When staff members intervened in homophobic remarks, LGBT students reported more positive feelings about their school and education. As shown in Figure 2.10, when students said that teachers and school staff intervened more often, they also were:

- More likely to report that the general student body is more accepting of LGBT people (29.3% vs. 18.4%);
- More likely to feel like they belong in their school (48.8% vs. 41.3%); and
- Less likely to miss days of school because of feeling unsafe (27.4% vs. 29.9%).[12]

11 The relationships between number of supportive staff and the school-related outcomes were tested through Peason correlations. Student acceptance of LGBT people: r = .36, p<.001; School belonging: r = .35, p<.001; Missing school: r = -.11, p<.01. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

12 The relationships between staff intervention and the school-related outcomes were tested with Peason correlations. Student acceptance of LGBT people: r =.20, p<.001; School belonging: r = .27, p<.001; Missing school: r = -.15, p<.01. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

Figure 2.10. Staff Intervention on Homophobic Comments and The Experience of LGBT Students

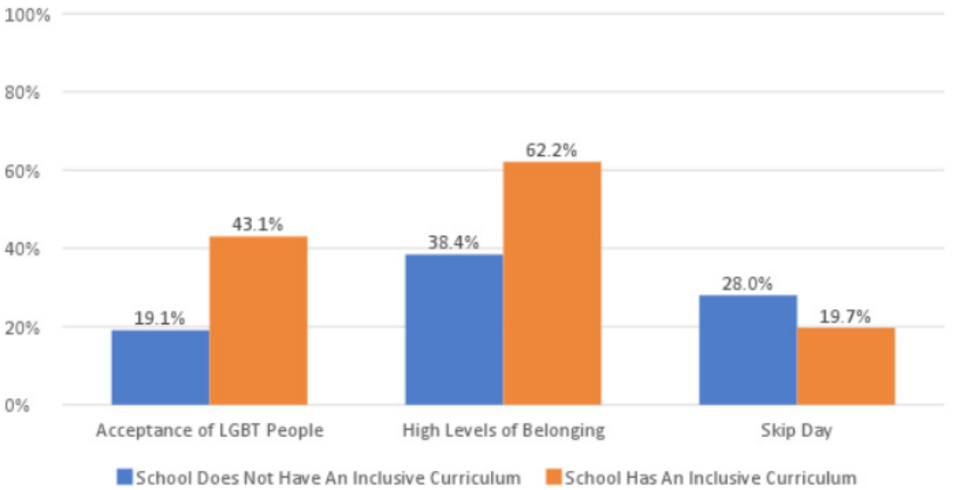


Inclusive Curriculum

Including LGBT-related issues in the curriculum in a positive manner may make LGBT students feel like more valued members of the school community, and it may also promote more positive feelings about LGBT issues and persons among their peers, thereby resulting in a more positive school climate. In fact, as shown in Figure 2.11, LGBT students who were taught positive information about LGBT people, history and events were:

- More likely to report that the general student body is more accepting of LGBT people (43.1% vs. 19.1%);
- More likely to feel like they belong in their school (62.2% vs. 38.4%); and
- Less likely to miss days of school because of feeling unsafe (19.7% vs. 28.0%).[13]

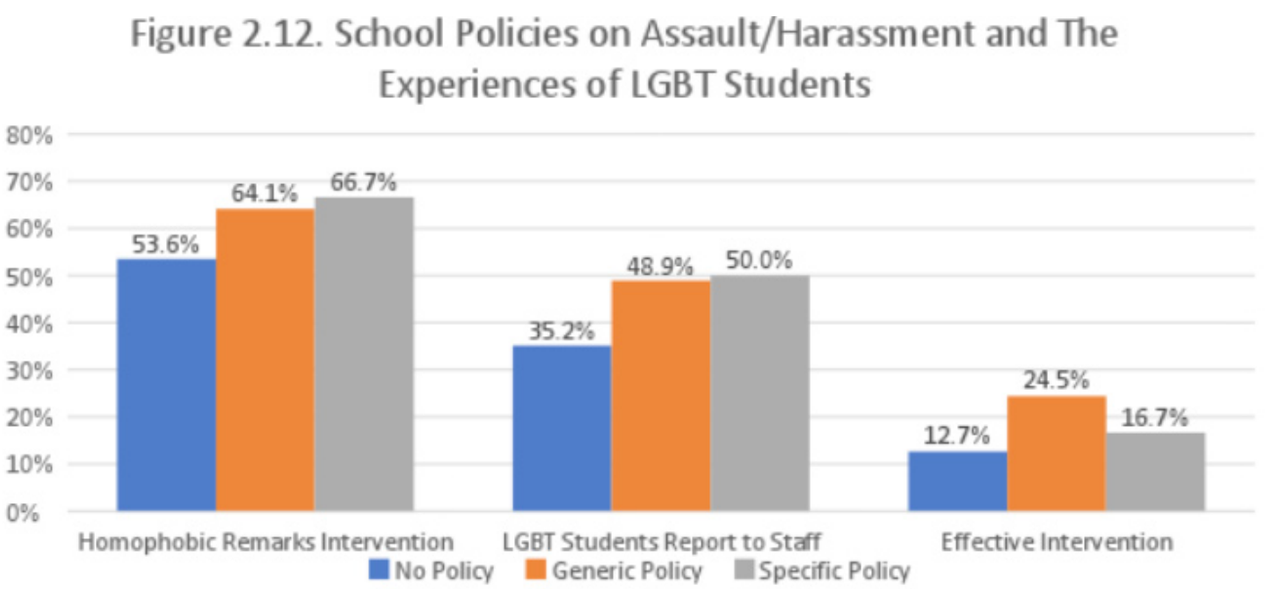
Figure 2.11. Inclusive Curriculum and The Experience of LGBT Students



13 The relationships between inclusive curriculum and the school-related outcomes were tested with Peason correlations. Student acceptance of LGBT people: r =.26, p<.001; School belonging: r = .25, p<.001; Missing school: r = -.13, p<.001. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

School Policies for Addressing Bullying, Harassment, and Assault

School policies against bullying, harassment and assault can contribute to a safer school environment. These policies can provide guidance to teachers and school personnel about how to address violence in school. These policies can also instruct students regarding their rights to a safe education and provide instruction on how to report incidents of violence. However, for LGBT students, these school policies may be less effective if they do not specifically address violence related to sexual orientation or gender expression. As shown in Figure 2.12, LGBT students who said they did not have any policy regarding victimization were less likely to say that school staff intervened regarding homophobic remarks. LGBT students were also more likely to report harassment or assault when there was a school policy, and they were also more likely to report that school personnel were more effective in responding to their complaints regarding victimization.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The data show us a hostile environment for LGBTQI people: between derogatory terms, offenses, verbal, and physical harassment, it does not seem to be a priority of Italian schools to welcome and to respect diversity. Although, there are useful tools and good practices which promote inclusion, but these are not a priority. Some examples might be: a regulation against bullying which describes, and explains discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation, including guidelines for countering the phenomenon; thematic insights, activities, and involvement of external realities, showing stories, films, and positive examples of what it means to be LGBT today; training and involvement of school staff for being a positive reference for LGBT young people, especially where LGBT students cannot find a safe space in schools.

If motivation to make the school an inclusive and attentive environment is not a priority of the Italian institutions, we can finally add that school performance is better in inclusive environments: among participants, who is able to express their identity freely, can feel a welcoming class and school; they know how to deal with issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity, having a higher participation within school, a higher sense of belonging, and reaching better results.

It should be one of the main objectives of every institution and teacher to allow the entire school population to give their best, and to express themselves in total freedom and serenity. It is time to also do it with young LGBTQI.

BE PROUD! SPEAK OUT!

CENTRO
RISORSE
LGBTI

Associazione
Il Progetto Alice