

EVERY CLASS IN EVERY SCHOOL:

Egale Canada Human Rights Trust



FINAL REPORT ON THE FIRST NATIONAL CLIMATE SURVEY ON HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA, AND TRANSPHOBIA IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

S	A	F	E		S	C	H	O	O	L	S
A		A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
C	C	C	C	C	C		C	C	C	C	C
D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
E	E	E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
F	F		F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
H	H	H	H	H	H		H	H	H	H	H
I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J
K	K	K	K	K	K	K	K	K	K	K	K
L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L		L	L
M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O			O	O
P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q
R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
	S	S	S	S		S	S	S	S	S	
T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T
U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U
V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z

RESEARCHERS

Catherine Taylor
 (Principal Investigator), Ph.D.,
 University of Winnipeg
 and Tracey Peter
 (Co-Investigator), Ph.D.,
 University of Manitoba

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS



USE PENCIL ONLY

- Use a 2B or HB pencil to DARKLY FILL the appropriate boxes.
- If you want to change an answer, erase the original, then mark the new box.
- Do NOT use crosses, circles or checks

MARK LIKE THIS



NOT LIKE THIS



REPORTING ORGANIZATION

Egale Canada Human Rights Trust is a national organization that conducts research and delivers educational programming on lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) human rights in Canada.



Egale Canada Human Rights Trust is a national organization that conducts research and delivers educational programming on lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) human rights in Canada.

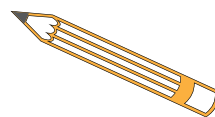
Taylor, C. & Peter, T., with McMinn, T.L., Elliott, T., Beldom, S., Ferry, A., Gross, Z., Paquin, S., & Schachter, K. (2011). *Every class in every school: The first national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools. Final report.* Toronto, ON: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.

© Copyright 2011, Egale Canada Human Rights Trust and Catherine Taylor.
All rights reserved, but permission to duplicate freely given on request.



EVERY CLASS IN EVERY SCHOOL: FINAL REPORT ON THE FIRST NATIONAL CLIMATE SURVEY ON HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA, AND TRANSPHOBIA IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



CONTENTS

Key Findings: School Climates in Canada Today

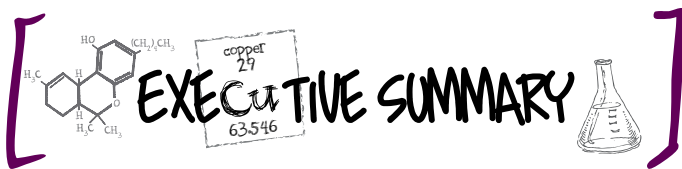
- Homophobic and Transphobic Comments
- Verbal Harassment
- Physical Harassment
- Sexual Harassment
- Unsafe Spaces
- Safer Schools Policies
- Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) and Other LGBTQ-Inclusive Student Groups

Key Findings: Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia Affect Everyone

- Intersectionality
- Youth of Colour
- Aboriginal Youth
- Youth with LGBTQ Parents
- LGBTQ Youth
- Trans Youth
- Bisexual Youth
- Heterosexual Youth

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Policy Development
- Curriculum Development
- Teacher Preparation
- Gay-Straight Alliances
- Vulnerable Groups
- Appropriate Consultation



This report discusses the results of a national survey of Canadian high school students undertaken in order to investigate what life at school is like for students with sexual or gender minority status.¹ Our study sought to identify the forms and extent of students' experiences of homophobic and transphobic incidents at school, the impact of those experiences, and the efficacy of measures being taken by schools to combat these common forms of bullying. The study involved surveying over 3700 students from across Canada between December 2007 and June 2009 through two methods. The first method was designed to reach as many sexual and gender minority youth as possible: students who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, Two Spirit, queer, or questioning (LGBTQ). To this end, we implemented an open-access online survey and advertised it widely through news releases and website and Facebook notices and by systematically contacting every organization across the country that we identified as having LGBTQ youth membership. The second method was implemented in controlled conditions using a login system through in-school sessions conducted in twenty randomly selected school districts in all regions of the country (with the exception of Québec where a parallel survey was conducted by Québec researchers). Fifteen school districts participated in sufficient numbers to permit statistically significant analysis. In-school findings were used to validate open-access findings. This report analyzes the aggregate data from both individual online participation and in-school sessions. In addition, we have submitted confidential reports to all participating boards that held in-class sessions comparing their own results to the results from all in-school sessions.

The study was commissioned by the Egale Canada Human Rights Trust (ECHRT) and funded by the ECHRT with additional support from the University of Winnipeg Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Grant Competition, and Sexual and Gender Diversity: Vulnerability and Resilience (SVR), a research team funded by Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and Fonds de Recherche sur la Société et la Culture (FRSC) du Province de Québec.

The survey itself was a fifty-four item questionnaire made available online and in print, which consisted mostly of multiple-choice questions of three kinds: demographic (e.g., age, province, gender identity, sexual orientation), experiences (e.g., hearing “gay” used as an insult, being assaulted, feeling very depressed about school), and institutional responses (e.g., staff intervention, inclusive safer schools policies). Quantitative data were tested for statistical significance through bivariate analyses that compared the responses of various groups of students, e.g., LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, sexual minority (lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning) and gender minority (transgender, transsexual, Two Spirit), and current and past. Cross-tabulations with chi-square (χ^2) estimations, independent samples t-tests, and analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted, depending on the classification or “level of measurement” of the variables/questions (i.e., whether they are dichotomous, ordered, or continuous). Effect sizes were calculated for all chi-square (used Cramer’s V), t-test (used Cohen’s d), and ANOVA (used Cohen’s d) significant tests. Future

analysis will involve qualitative analysis of responses to open-ended questions in which students responded to questions about their perceptions and experiences.

The lack of a solid Canadian evidence base has been a major impediment faced by educators and administrators who need to understand the situation of LGBTQ students in order to respond appropriately and to assure their school communities that homophobic and transphobic bullying are neither rare nor harmless, but are major problems that schools need to address. We wish to express our deepest respect for the thousands of students, LGBTQ and heterosexual, who came forward to help with this important project. We thank you and hope that you will recognize your contributions and your voices in this report. While most of the information in this report will come as no surprise to members of the LGBTQ community, the study provides a systematically produced knowledge base that will provide educators and administrators across the country with the information they need to make evidence-based policy and programming decisions.

¹ For the purposes of this report, the term “sexual minority” refers to youth who did not identify as exclusively heterosexual and the term “gender minority” refers to youth who did not identify as either “female” or “male.”

$$\frac{(x')^2}{(\sqrt{z})^2} - \frac{(y')^2}{(\sqrt{z})^2} = \frac{y'}{z}$$

$$\log_a x = \frac{\log_b x}{\log_b a}$$

KEY FINDINGS: SCHOOL CLIMATES IN CANADA TODAY



HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC COMMENTS

- ⇒ **70%** of all participating students, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, reported hearing expressions such as “that’s so gay” every day in school and almost half (**48%**) reported hearing remarks such as “faggot,” “lezbo,” and “dyke” every day in school.
- ⇒ Almost **10%** of LGBTQ students reported having heard homophobic comments from teachers daily or weekly (**17%** of trans students; **10%** of female sexual minority students; and **8%** of male sexual minority students). Even more LGBTQ students reported that they had heard teachers use negative gender-related or transphobic comments daily or weekly: **23%** of trans students; **15%** of male sexual minority students; and **12%** of female sexual minority students.
- ⇒ Hardly any LGBTQ students reported that they never heard homophobic comments from other students (**1%** of trans students; **2%** of female sexual minority students; **4%** of male sexual minority students). This suggests that if you are a sexual minority student in a Canadian school, it is highly likely that you will hear insulting things about your sexual orientation.

VERBAL HARASSMENT

- ⇒ **74%** of trans students, **55%** of sexual minority students, and **26%** of non-LGBTQ students reported having been verbally harassed about their gender expression.
- ⇒ **37%** of trans students, **32%** of female sexual minority students, and **20%** of male sexual minority students reported being verbally harassed daily or weekly about their sexual orientation.
- ⇒ **68%** of trans students, **55%** of female sexual minority students, and **42%** of male sexual minority students reported being verbally harassed about their perceived gender or sexual orientation. Trans youth may report experiencing particularly

high levels of harassment on the basis of perceived sexual orientation because often trans individuals are perceived as lesbian, gay, or bisexual when they are not.

- ⇒ More than a third (39%) of youth with LGBTQ parents reported being verbally harassed about the sexual orientation of their parents. They are also more likely to be verbally harassed about their own gender expression (58% versus 34% of other students), perceived sexual orientation or gender identity (46% versus 20%), gender (45% versus 22%), and sexual orientation (44% versus 20%).

PHYSICAL HARASSMENT

- ⇒ More than one in five (21%) LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed or assaulted due to their sexual orientation.
- ⇒ 20% of LGBTQ students and almost 10% of non-LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed or assaulted about their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.
- ⇒ 37% of trans students, 21% of sexual minority students, and 10% of non-LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender expression.
- ⇒ Over a quarter (27%) of youth with LGBTQ parents reported being physically harassed about the sexual orientation of their parents. They are also more likely than their peers to be physically harassed or assaulted in connection with their own gender expression (30% versus 13% of other students), perceived sexual orientation or gender identity (27% versus 12%), gender (25% versus 10%), and sexual orientation (25% versus 11%).

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Levels of sexual harassment are high across the board for LGBTQ students. The following groups of students reported having experienced sexual harassment in school in the last year:

- ⇒ 49% of trans students
- ⇒ 45% of students with LGBTQ parents
- ⇒ 43% of female bisexual students
- ⇒ 42% of male bisexual students
- ⇒ 40% of gay male students
- ⇒ 33% of lesbian students

The higher levels of sexual harassment for gay male than for lesbian students may be attributable to greater exposure to sexual humiliation as a distinct form of unwanted sexual attention. Also, lesbian students may be less likely than gay male or trans students to perceive their experiences of harassment as sexual. Further analysis will explore the experiences included in this finding.

UNSAFE SPACES

- ⇒ Almost two thirds (64%) of LGBTQ students and 61% of students with LGBTQ parents reported that they feel unsafe at school.
- ⇒ The two school spaces most commonly experienced as unsafe by LGBTQ youth and youth with LGBTQ parents are places that are almost invariably gender-segregated: Phys. Ed. change rooms and washrooms. Almost half (49%) of LGBTQ youth and more than two fifths (42%) of youth with LGBTQ parents identified their Phys. Ed. change rooms as being unsafe; almost a third (30%) of non-LGBTQ youth agreed. More than two-fifths (43%) of LGBTQ students and almost two-fifths (41%) of youth with LGBTQ parents identified their school washrooms as being unsafe; more than a quarter (28%) of non-LGBTQ students agreed.

- ⇒ Female sexual minority students were most likely to report feeling unsafe in their school change rooms (59%). High numbers (52%) of trans youth reported feeling unsafe in both change rooms and washrooms. It is notable that these places where female sexual minority and trans students often feel unsafe are gender-segregated areas. Not only does this contradict assumptions that most homophobic and transphobic incidents take place in males-only spaces, but it also points to a correlation between the policing of gender and youth not feeling safe.

SAFER SCHOOLS POLICIES

Generic safe school policies that do not include specific measures on homophobia are not effective in improving the school climate for LGBTQ students. LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia policies reported significantly fewer incidents of physical and verbal harassment due to their sexual orientation:

80% of LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia policies reported never having been physically harassed versus only **67%** of LGBTQ students from schools without anti-homophobia policies;

46% of LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia policies reported never having been verbally harassed due to their sexual orientation versus **40%** of LGBTQ students from schools without anti-homophobia policies.

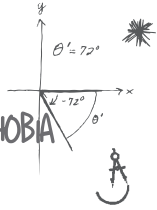
LGBTQ students in schools with anti-homophobia policies did not report significantly higher levels of feeling safe at school with regard to gender identity and gender expression: this indicates a need to explicitly address gender identity, gender expression, and anti-transphobia in school and school board safer schools and equity and inclusive education policies.

GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES (GSAs) AND OTHER LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE STUDENT GROUPS

GSAs are official student clubs with LGBTQ and heterosexual student membership and typically one or two teachers who serve as faculty advisors. Students in a school with a GSA know that they have at least one or two adults they can talk to about LGBTQ matters. The purpose of GSAs is to provide a much-needed safe space in which LGBTQ students and allies can work together on making their schools more welcoming for sexual and gender minority students. Some GSAs go by other names such as Rainbow Clubs, Human Rights Clubs, or Social Justice Clubs. This is sometimes done to signal openness to non-LGBTQ membership (though, of course, some of these are not GSAs and might not address homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia), and sometimes because “Gay-Straight Alliance” seems problematic in that “gay” does not necessarily refer to lesbians or bisexuals and trans identities are not explicitly encompassed by the expression. However, using the acronym “GSA” to represent any student group concerned with LGBTQ matters has become commonplace. Very often it is LGBTQ students themselves who initiate the GSA, although sometimes a teacher will come forward. Such groups also function as safe havens and supports for youth with LGBTQ parents. Currently, more than 100 LGBTQ-inclusive student groups across the country have registered on Egale Canada’s safer schools and inclusive education website, *MyGSA.ca*.

- ⇒ Students from schools with GSAs are much more likely to agree that their school communities are supportive of LGBTQ people, are much more likely to be open with some or all of their peers about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and are more likely to see their school climate as becoming less homophobic.
- ⇒ Students from schools with anti-homophobia policies are significantly more likely to agree that their school administration is supportive of the GSA.
- ⇒ Students in BC and Ontario reported much more frequently than students in the Prairies, the Atlantic provinces, and the North that their schools have GSAs.

$$\frac{(x')^2}{(\sqrt{x})^2} - \frac{(y')^2}{(\sqrt{y})^2} = \frac{y'}{x'}$$



KEY FINDINGS: HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA AFFECT EVERYONE

INTERSECTIONALITY

I think there's a lot of work to be done in recognizing that lgbttq people come from various cultures and communities and breaking those myths and beliefs to allow all people identifying within those communities to be free of prejudice and oppression.

Similarly to the point on a graph where lines cross being called a point of "intersection," the fact that categories of identification—such as age, class, education, ethnic background, gender expression, gender identity, geographic origin, physical and mental ability, race, religion, sexual orientation, and other factors—are experienced simultaneously and cannot genuinely be separated from one another is referred to as "intersectionality." Often, people are discriminated against with regard to multiple categories: for example, a racialized lesbian could be subjected to heterosexism, homophobia, lesbophobia, misogyny, racism, and transphobia or any other form of discrimination, such as ableism, ageism, and classism, depending on both how she identifies and how she is perceived to be. Further, each aspect of one's identity can have an impact on other aspects. For example, a racialized lesbian may be exposed to different forms of sexism and homophobia from those experienced by a non-racialized lesbian.

The survey found that there was little regional or ethnic variation in levels of physical harassment for reasons related to gender or sexual orientation, but that Caucasian youth, both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, were far less likely to report having been physically harassed or assaulted because of their ethnicity: 8% compared to **13%** of Aboriginal youth and **15%** of youth of colour. Consequently, it is important to note the aggregate effects or "double whammy" here for both Aboriginal youth and youth of colour; these youth are not only being physically harassed or assaulted because of reasons related to gender and/or sexual orientation, but they are also much more likely to be physically harassed or assaulted because of their ethnicity.

YOUTH OF COLOUR

Not only is it difficult to be LGBT in high school, but especially as a LGBT youth who is also a visible minority. The positive images and information out there for such a youth is very hard to come by.

“ ”

- ⇒ Youth of colour, both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, are far less likely to know of any out LGBTQ students (67% compared to 81% of Caucasian and 87% of Aboriginal youth, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined) or to know of any teachers or staff members who are supportive of LGBTQ students (48% knew of none, compared to 38% of Aboriginal and 31% of Caucasian youth, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined).
- ⇒ Almost one fifth (18%) of those students of colour who had experienced LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum reported that class discussions of LGBTQ people’s relationships had been negative (compared to 14% of Caucasian and 11% of Aboriginal youth). They were also less likely to see class representations of LGBTQ matters as having been very positive (17% compared to 26% of Caucasian and 31% of Aboriginal youth).
- ⇒ Youth of colour, both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, reported the lowest rates of being comfortable discussing LGBTQ matters with anyone at all, including their coaches, their teachers, their classmates, their parents, and even with a close friend.

This high degree of isolation for youth of colour with regard to LGBTQ matters suggests that serious attention needs to be paid to finding means of reaching out to youth in ways that are appropriate and informed about cultural issues and taboos surrounding LGBTQ matters.

ABORIGINAL YOUTH

Very few statistically significant findings surfaced about the experiences of LGBTQ Aboriginal youth in Canadian schools in this report. In some instances, Aboriginal youth reported experiences similar to Caucasian youth, such as comfort levels in talking to school community members about LGBTQ matters. In other instances, Aboriginal youth reported experiences similar to youth of colour—for example, in reported rates of physical harassment based on race or ethnicity. Further work needs to be done in order to better understand and account for the needs of LGBTQ Aboriginal youth in Canada.

YOUTH WITH LGBTQ PARENTS

Not only do youth not want to have to hear their loved ones spoken about in cruel ways, but youth with LGBTQ family members also avoid disclosure to protect themselves from harassment. As one student wrote, "I am not out about my family members because people are so stupid that they think that if you know someone who is LGBTQ then that means you are too."

- ⇒ Youth with LGBTQ parents are more than three times more likely than other students to have skipped school because of feeling unsafe either at school (**40%** versus **13%**) or on the way to school (**32%** versus **10%**). These results are extremely important not only because of what they reveal about the degree of fear being experienced by youth with LGBTQ parents, but also because of the potential impact of missing classes on the academic performance of these students.
- ⇒ Youth with LGBTQ parents are more likely to be aware of teachers making homophobic and transphobic comments: one-fifth of youth with LGBTQ parents said teachers sometimes or frequently make homophobic comments, compared to only **7%** of other students, and a quarter of youth with LGBTQ parents said teachers sometimes or frequently make transphobic comments, compared to one tenth of other students.
- ⇒ Students with LGBTQ parents are more likely to find homophobic comments extremely upsetting (**23%** versus **11%** of other students) or very upsetting (**29%** versus **19%**).

LGBTQ YOUTH

One in seven students who completed the survey during in-class sessions self-identified as LGBTQ (**14%**), which is consistent with the percentages of students identifying as not exclusively heterosexual in large-scale survey research of youth conducted in British Columbia (Saewyc & the McCreary Society, 2007). Further, youth who experience same-sex attraction often identify as heterosexual in research, even if they have had sexual contact with a same-sex partner, and research participants often under-report information such as being members of sexual minority groups out of concerns about confidentiality, even in anonymous surveys. This suggests that claims sometimes made

that sexual minority individuals comprise only **2-3%** of the population seriously underestimate the numbers. Our research would suggest that there are several sexual minority students in every class in every school in Canada, not to mention students with LGBTQ parents. Many of these students, of course, do not disclose their own or their family members' sexual orientation and/or gender identity until they are safely out of school.

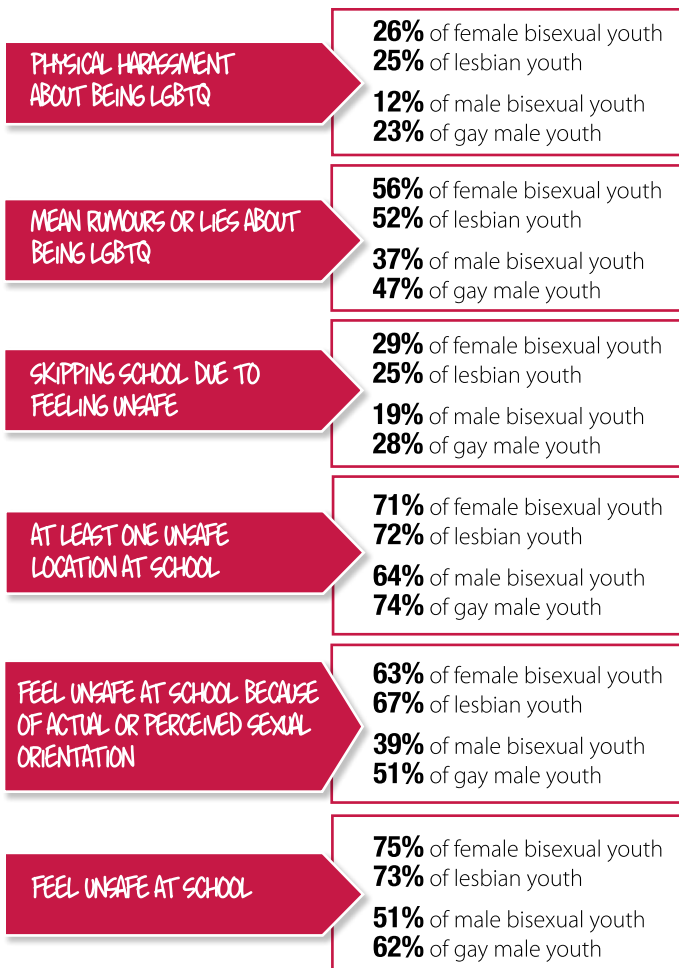
TRANS YOUTH

While youth who actually identify as trans are comparatively small in number, they are highly visible targets of harassment. Trans students may report experiencing particularly high levels of harassment on the basis of perceived sexual orientation because often trans individuals are perceived as lesbian, gay, or bisexual when they are not. The heightened sense of lack of safety at school experienced by trans youth is likely due to the rigid policing of gender conventions (male masculinity and female femininity), which can make trans youth highly visible targets for discrimination and harassment.

- ⇒ 90% of trans youth hear transphobic comments daily or weekly from other students and almost a quarter (**23%**) of trans students reported hearing teachers use transphobic language daily or weekly. Almost three quarters (**74%**) of trans students reported being verbally harassed about their gender expression.
- ⇒ One quarter of trans students reported having been physically harassed (**25%**) or having had property stolen or damaged (**24%**) because of being LGBTQ. Trans students were much more likely than sexual minority or non-LGBTQ students to have been physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender expression (**37%** compared with **21%** for sexual minority students and **10%** for non-LGBTQ students).
- ⇒ When all identity-related grounds for feeling unsafe are taken into account, including ethnicity and religion, more than three quarters (**78%**) of trans students indicated feeling unsafe in some way at school. **44%** of trans students reported being likely to miss school because of feeling unsafe and **15%** reported having skipped more than 10 days because of feeling unsafe at school.

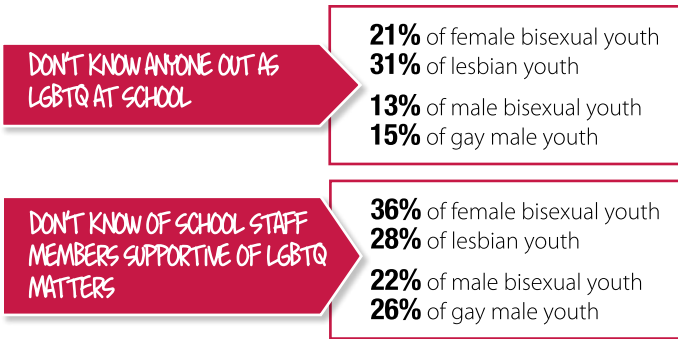
BISEXUAL YOUTH

A comparison of the responses of female and male bisexual youth with lesbian and gay male youth shows that often gender seems to be more of an influencing factor than sexual orientation in the experiences of female sexual minority youth; however, this is generally not the case for male sexual minority youth:



These findings are interesting in a few ways. First, popular understandings of bullying in school culture might lead one to expect that heterosexual males would be most likely to commit homophobic harassment and that their targets would be gay males, whom they would have the opportunity to bully in unsupervised gender-segregated spaces such as change rooms and washrooms. Second, it is sometimes said that lesbians have it easier than gay males, that society in general tolerates lesbians more than gay males, and that being a lesbian or a bisexual female is even trendy. These findings would refute both of these popular conceptions of life for sexual minority girls and women.

What male sexual minority youth, both bisexual and gay, seem to have in common, however, is a higher degree of social connectedness. Both of these groups are more likely to know of out LGBTQ youth and supportive staff members at their schools:



HETEROSEXUAL YOUTH

- ⇒ One of the most striking findings of our study is that 58% of non-LGBTQ youth find homophobic comments upsetting. This finding suggests that there is a great deal of potential solidarity for LGBTQ-inclusive education among heterosexual students.
- ⇒ One in twelve heterosexual students reported being verbally harassed about their perceived sexual orientation and one in four about their gender expression.
- ⇒ Almost 10% of non-LGBTQ youth reported being physically harassed or assaulted about their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity and more than 10% reported being physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender expression.
- ⇒ Any given school is likely to have as many heterosexual students as LGBTQ students who are harassed about their sexual orientation or gender expression.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This survey has provided statistically-tested confirmation of what LGBTQ youth, youth perceived as LGBTQ, youth with LGBTQ parents, and their allies as well as teachers and administrators working on anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia and intersectionality education have known for some time about the realities of life at school in Canada. Consider the situation in many schools:

- ⇒ LGBTQ students are exposed to language that insults their dignity as part of everyday school experience and youth with LGBTQ family members are constantly hearing their loved ones being denigrated.
- ⇒ LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents experience much higher levels of verbal, physical, sexual, and other forms of discrimination, harassment, and abuse than other students.
- ⇒ Most LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents do not feel safe at school.
- ⇒ The situation is worse on all counts for female sexual minority students and youth with LGBTQ parents and even worse for trans students.
- ⇒ Many students, especially youth of colour, do not have even one person they can talk to about LGBTQ matters.
- ⇒ Many schools have a well-developed human rights curriculum that espouses respect and dignity for every identity group protected in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* except for LGBTQ people.
- ⇒ Teachers often look the other way when they hear homophobic and transphobic comments and some of them even make these kinds of comments themselves.

Although the original title of our study named only homophobia, our findings demonstrate that school climates for bisexual and trans students are equally—and in some ways even more—hostile. The study has also demonstrated that the less directly students are affected by homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, the less aware they are of it. This finding has implications for the adult world as well: how many educators and administrators are underestimating the extent of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in their school cultures and the damage being done to the youth in their care? This study found that the more marginalized our participants were, the worse their experience of school climate was. Given the findings of this study, educators may need to work particularly hard at ensuring that lesbian youth, bisexual girls, trans students, students with sexual and/or gender minority parents, and sexual and gender minority youth of colour are included in these efforts. To this end, policy, programme, and curriculum development needs to reflect an understanding of how school climate for sexual and gender minority youth is affected by intersecting systems of social power such as racialization and poverty that are at work in all schools.

LGBTQ-inclusive safer schools policies and curriculum are not the entire solution; we did not find that 100% of students anywhere reported never hearing homophobic or transphobic comments or that they could all talk to all of their teachers, for example. However, the findings of this study indicate that while the problem of hostile school climates for sexual and gender minority students is very widespread, it is perhaps not as deep as we might think. In schools that have made efforts to introduce LGBTQ-inclusive policies, GSAs, and even some LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, the climate is significantly more positive for sexual and gender minority students.

Based on the analysis presented in this report, we strongly recommend the following:



POLICY DEVELOPMENT

1. That provincial Ministries of Education require the inclusion of anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia and intersectionality measures in safer schools policies and programmes, along with steps for the effective implementation of these policies, in order to provide support and motivation to district and school staff as well as a requirement that school divisions provide auditable evidence of meaningful implementation.
2. That school divisions develop anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia and intersectionality policies to provide institutional authority and leadership for schools.
3. That schools implement anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia and intersectionality policies and make these well known to students, parents, administration, and all school staff members as a part of their commitment to making schools safer and more respectful and welcoming for all members of their school communities.
4. That efforts begin with professional development workshops for all school division employees on intersectionality and the impact of homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic language and how to address it in classrooms, hallways, and all other parts of the school as well as at all other school-related events, such as during bus transportation.



CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

5. That Ministries of Education and school divisions require the inclusion of respectful representations of LGBTQ people in courses and provide curriculum guidelines and resources for mainstreaming LGBTQ-inclusive teaching, including intersectionality, across the curriculum and auditable evidence of meaningful implementation.
6. That school divisions provide professional development opportunities to assist schools in the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive and intersectionality curriculum.

7. That schools implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in designated courses such as Family Life and Social Studies and provide teachers with resources for mainstreaming LGBTQ and intersectionality education in their own subject areas.



TEACHER PREPARATION

8. That Faculties of Education integrate LGBTQ-inclusive teaching and intersectionality into compulsory courses in their Bachelor of Education programmes so that teachers have adequate opportunities to develop competence before entering the field.



GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES

9. That schools strongly support the efforts of students to start GSAs, or similar LGBTQ-inclusive student-led clubs, and that in schools where students have not come forward, administration should ask teachers to offer to work with students to start such clubs. It is not safe to assume that LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents would prefer to go through school isolated from their peers and teachers.



VULNERABLE GROUPS

10. That particular attention be paid to supporting the safety and well-being of lesbian and bisexual female youth and trans youth in all of the above recommendations along with the needs of youth with LGBTQ parents and sexual and gender minority youth of colour.



APPROPRIATE CONSULTATION

11. That individuals and organizations with established expertise in intersectionality and LGBTQ-inclusive education be consulted in all of the above. Such expertise exists among educators in every region of Canada.



What students have told us in the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools is that speaking up works and that they want the adults in their lives to do their parts.

It is extremely unlikely that there is any class in any high school anywhere in Canada, public or private, religious or secular, that does not have students who are LGBTQ.

Being harassed, insulted, and told that their identities belong in the guidance office, not in the classroom, will not succeed in making LGBTQ students heterosexual and gender-conforming; it will only make them unhappy. What students have told us in the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools is that speaking up works and that they want the adults in their lives to do their parts. Many participants in our survey, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, commented on their extreme disappointment with school staff who look the other way when disrespectful language is being used. The findings of our study provide ample reasons for educators and administrators across the country to take up the challenge of welcoming their LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents into inclusive twenty-first century schools that explicitly and meaningfully oppose discrimination on the basis of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation and genuinely embrace safer and more respectful school environments for all members of their school communities.

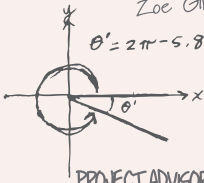
NOTES

RESEARCHERS:

Catherine Taylor (Principal Investigator), Ph.D., University of Winnipeg and Tracey Peter (Co-Investigator), Ph.D., University of Manitoba

PROJECT RESEARCH ASSISTANTS:

TL McMinn, Sarah Paquin, and Kevin Schachter (Senior RAs) Stacey Beldom, Allison Ferry, and Zoe Gross



PROJECT ADVISORY PANEL:

Joan Beecroft, Jane Bovey, James Chamberlain, Ellen Chambers-Picard, Tara Elliott, Noble Kelly, Wayne Madden, Joan Merrifield, Elizabeth J. Meyer, Susan Rose, Annemarie Shrouder, and Helen Victoros

Formula **HERON'S AREA**
 $Area = \sqrt{s(s-a)(s-b)(s-c)}$
 where $s = (a+b+c)/2$



* Thank you to The McLean Foundation for so kindly supporting the printing and distribution of this report.



$$Area = \frac{1}{2}bc \sin A = \frac{\sqrt{4b^2c^2 \sin^2 A}}{2} = \frac{\sqrt{4b^2c^2(1-\cos^2 A)}}{2} = \frac{\sqrt{4b^2c^2(1+\cos A)}\sqrt{4b^2c^2(1-\cos A)}}{2}$$



Published by Egale Canada Human Rights Trust

185 Carlton Street, Toronto, ON M5A 2K7

Ph: 1-888-204-7777 Fax: 416-963-5665

Email: egale.canada@egale.ca

www.egale.ca