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Strengths and Silences

The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students in Rural and Small Town Schools

A Report from the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network
www.glsen.org

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A Report from the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network
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The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students. Established nationally in 1995, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

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Table of Contents

Tables & Figures

Preface

This past spring, Lenoir City High School, a school in rural Tennessee, featured a section of short articles on student life in its yearbook. One article, entitled "It's OK to be Gay," profiled openly gay student Zac Mitchell. Apparently, as far as Lenoir City School Board is concerned, it is not OK to be gay — or at least not OK to talk about it. Although the yearbook's student staff and faculty advisors felt the article was a perfectly legitimate and inclusive depiction of life at the school, members of the school board were vocal in their opposition. "I don't think that that type of material has any place in a yearbook," said Board member Glenn McNish. Board Vice Chairman Rick Chadwick added, "It should not have been put in the yearbook, and it split our community, and we are going to straighten it out."

The story highlights the challenges facing many LGBT students who attend schools in rural and small town areas, but also points to a resiliency and determination to use the resources available to them to make their schools safer for everyone. It is this complex reality that we see reflected in GLSEN's new report on rural and small town LGBT students.

This new report from GLSEN, *Strengths and Silences: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students in Rural and Small Town Schools*, is the most recent release from our twelve years of research into the LGBT student experience nationwide, updated every two years via GLSEN's National School Climate Survey. Our reports consistently illustrate the difficult learning environments encountered by LGBT students, and the discrimination, bullying and violence they experience in K-12 schools. The wealth of data we have collected also allows us to examine the experiences of specific segments of this student population, including transgender students (*Harsh Realities*) and LGBT students of color (*Shared Differences*). Whereas this report reveals numerous commonalities in experience among LGBT students across geographies, it also highlights the heightened victimization and lower access to resources experienced by rural and small town LGBT students as a result of physical and demographic isolation.

At every turn, research on the LGBT student experience represents both an urgent call to action and a roadmap for targeted advocacy, program development and service delivery. *Strengths and Silences* underscores the need for educators and policymakers to do more to address the safety risks for LGBT students in rural and small town schools. Rural LGBT students are far less likely to have access to LGBT-related resources at school. Nonetheless, they benefit substantially when such resources are present. We must continue to do all we can to bring those critical in-school supports to every community in the country. As familiar as this call may now be, it will continue until all students, in every type of school and of every demographic, have access to the school-based supports that can transform the LGBT student experience and enable every student to thrive.

Eliza Byard, Ph.D.
Executive Director
GLSEN

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank the youth who participated in the survey and the LGBT youth services and programs that permitted their constituents to participate in the survey, as well as the organizations that assisted with disseminating information about the survey. The authors would also like to thank Alex Kowal for his work in the design of this report, and Ryan M. Kull, GLSEN Research Consultant, for his assistance with editing and proofing this report.

Executive Summary

For more than 20 years, GLSEN has worked to make schools safer for all students; it has sought specifically to reduce the bullying and harassment targeted at students' sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. For lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students across the country, violence and harassment experienced in school affect their ability to learn. Although schools in urban areas are typically regarded as more violent or dangerous than schools in other areas, findings from our National School Climate Surveys consistently show that it is most often rural schools that may pose the greatest threats for LGBT students. It may be that community characteristics, such as religious and cultural traditions, income, and educational levels, influence individual beliefs and attitudes toward LGBT people in these areas. It may also be that a lack of positive LGBT-related school resources negatively affects LGBT students' school engagement and academic performance, particularly if they also experience bullying and harassment.

Although research on the educational experiences of LGBT youth has grown considerably over the past 25 years, less is known about rural students specifically. This research report examines the experiences of LGBT students in small town and rural areas on matters related to biased language in schools, school safety, harassment and victimization, educational outcomes, school engagement, and LGBT-related resources and support. It also examines the prevalence and utility of LGBT-related resources in rural schools. Finally, this report concludes by advocating for more intentional policies, measures, and programs that protect LGBT students.

Methods

Data used in this report come from the sixth installment of GLSEN's National School Climate Survey, which was conducted during the 2010–2011 school year. GLSEN used two methods to obtain a representative national sample of LGBT youth to participate in the survey: 1) outreach through national, regional, and local organizations that provide services to or advocate on behalf of LGBT youth, and 2) targeted advertising on the social networking site Facebook. For the first method, we asked organizations to direct youth to the National School Climate Survey, which was available on GLSEN's website, through their organizations' emails, listservs, websites, and social networking sites. Additionally, a paper version of the survey was made available to local community groups/organizations with limited capacity to access the Internet. To ensure representation of transgender youth, youth of color, and youth in rural communities, we made special efforts to notify groups and organizations that work predominantly with these populations. For the second method, we posted advertisements for the survey on Facebook, targeting all users between 13 and 18 years of age who gave some indication on their profile that they were lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

When examining differences between rural students and suburban and urban students, we draw from the full sample of 8,584 LGBT secondary school students, specifically the 8,158 students for whom we collected reliable locale information. This report also examines in greater detail the experiences of the 2,387 students in the survey who attended schools in rural areas. These rural LGBT students were between 13 and 20 years of age, and most were White (78%) and identified as gay or lesbian (64%).

Key Findings

Biased Language in School

Nearly all LGBT students in rural areas have heard homophobic, racist, sexist, and negative gender expression-based remarks. Furthermore, students in rural areas more frequently experienced derogatory comments than students in suburban and urban schools. For example:

- 97% of rural LGBT students heard "gay" used in a negative way (e.g., "that's so gay") sometimes, often, or frequently in school. 94% heard other homophobic language ("dyke" or "faggot") sometimes, often, or frequently.
- 86% heard comments from students about someone not acting "masculine" enough sometimes, often, or frequently, and 69% heard such comments about students not acting "feminine" enough sometimes, often, or frequently.
- A quarter or more of students also had heard school staff make homophobic remarks (25%), sexist remarks (30%), or negative remarks about someone's gender expression (35%) sometimes, often, or frequently.
- Rural students were more likely than suburban or urban students to hear most types of biased language, including homophobic remarks and negative comments about gender expression.

Rural LGBT students reported that school staff members and students rarely intervened when biased comments were heard.

- Only 13% of rural LGBT students said staff members intervened most or all of the time when homophobic comments were made, and only 11% said that staff members intervened most or all of the time when negative comments were made about gender expression.
- Only 6% of students said that other students intervened most of the time or always when they heard homophobic remarks, and 5% said that about comments regarding gender expression.
- Students in rural schools reported lower student and school staff intervention in homophobic remarks than suburban students.

Overall Safety in School

Most rural LGBT students in this survey felt unsafe in the past year due to personal characteristics like sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, race, disability, or religion.

- 81% of rural LGBT students had felt unsafe at school during the past year because of a personal characteristic. Sexual orientation and gender expression were the most common reasons rural students said they felt unsafe.
- Rural students were more likely than suburban and urban students to feel unsafe in school, and rural students in the South and Midwest were more likely to feel unsafe than rural students in the West and Northeast.

Harassment and Assault

A majority of rural LGBT students had been verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression, and substantial numbers had experienced more severe physical harassment and physical assault because of these characteristics. Furthermore, although LGBT students across the country experienced harassment and abuse, students in rural areas were more frequently victimized than students in suburban and urban areas.

- Nearly nine in ten (87%) rural LGBT students had been verbally harassed (e.g., called names or threatened) at school at least once in the past year on the basis of their sexual orientation, and 68% had been verbally harassed due to their gender expression.
- Nearly half (45%) of students had been physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved) at school at least once in the past year due to their sexual orientation. In addition, one-third (31%) had been physically harassed because of their gender expression.
- One in five (22%) rural students said they had been physically assaulted at school because of their sexual orientation in the past year, and 16% said that they had been physically assaulted because of their gender expression.

- Rural students experienced higher levels of victimization due to their sexual orientation and gender expression than suburban and urban students.
- 70% of rural LGBT students had regularly had rumors or lies spread about them, significantly more than suburban or urban students (61% and 58%, respectively).
- Two in five (40%) had regularly experienced cyberbullying in the past year. Rural students were more likely to have experienced cyberbullying than suburban and urban students.

Intervention by teachers and other school staff regarding incidents of harassment and assault can improve the school climate for LGBT students. Unfortunately, most rural LGBT students reported that such incidents were not effectively addressed by the staff in their schools.

- Six in ten (60%) rural LGBT students said they never reported incidents of harassment and assault to school staff or family members. Rural students, however, did not differ from urban or suburban students in the frequency of reporting harassment and assault.
- When rural students did report incidents to school staff, two-thirds (68%) labeled the responses as ineffective. Rural students rated staff responses to reporting as less effective than urban and suburban students.

Educational Outcomes

In general, LGBT students, regardless of locale, often seek to avoid a hostile learning environment by skipping classes or missing days of school. LGBT students in rural areas, however, were slightly more likely to miss classes or school for safety reasons than urban and suburban rural students. Also as we have found with LGBT students in general, rural LGBT students who were more severely victimized missed even more classes or days of school.

- One-third (36%) of rural LGBT students had missed days of school because they felt unsafe, greater than the 38% of suburban students and 40% of urban students.
- Rural LGBT students who experienced a high severity of verbal harassment (occurring frequently or often) based on their sexual orientation were significantly more likely to have missed school in the past month because of feeling unsafe than students who were less severely verbally victimized (occurring never, rarely, or sometimes): 53% of highly victimized students had missed school, compared to 29% of less severely victimized students.
- Rural LGBT students who had experienced a high severity of verbal harassment based on their gender expression were significantly more likely to miss school than students who had experienced a lower severity of verbal harassment (54% compared to 23%).
- Rural LGBT students who had experienced high levels of harassment and assault reported significantly lower grade point averages (GPAs) and college aspirations compared to students who had experienced lower levels of victimization (3.2 versus 2.9, for sexual orientation as well as for gender expression).

School Engagement

For any LGBT student, experiences of harassment and assault can negatively affect participation in school activities and connectedness to school. LGBT students who are more out to peers and staff may be more engaged in school but also experience more frequent victimization.

- Rural LGBT students felt less connected to their schools than suburban and urban students.
- Nearly half (45%) of rural students were uncomfortable raising LGBT issues in class, similar to urban and suburban students.
- Rural students also felt uncomfortable talking with school staff about LGBT issues. Of all school personnel, rural students were most comfortable talking with teachers and counselors about LGBT issues. However, only about half said they were comfortable doing so. Rural students were least comfortable talking with athletic personnel, principals and vice principals, and security personnel: three-quarters or more of rural students said they were uncomfortable talking with these school personnel about LGBT issues.

- Rural students were less comfortable talking to teachers, counselors, principals, and most other school staff members about LGBT issues than suburban or urban students.
- However, rural youth did not differ from suburban and urban students in their likelihood of talking with school staff about LGBT issues.

Being out in school can make LGBT youth more engaged in the school setting. Therefore, outness is a key indicator of school climate for LGBT students.

- Rural students were out to peers, staff members, and parents at rates that were not different from suburban and urban students.
- For all students, being out in school was related to higher rates of victimization. However, for rural students, being out was associated with even higher levels of victimization compared to urban and suburban students.

Resources and Supports

LGBT-related resources can help counter the negative effects of hostile school climates and serve as important tools in changing attitudes about LGBT people. Given that students in rural schools had the highest incidence of victimization, they might be in greatest need of these supports. However, rural LGBT students consistently reported less access to LGBT-related support.

- Only 11% of rural LGBT students reported that their curricula included information on LGBT people, history, or events (compared to 18% of suburban and 20% of urban students), and only 13% said their textbooks included such information (compared to 20% of suburban and urban students).
- Over a third (39%) of rural LGBT students reported that they could access LGBT-related information through school computers, which was lower than that for suburban and urban students (44% for both).
- Rural students were half as likely to have a GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance) or other student club that addresses LGBT issues as suburban and urban students (27% of rural students vs. 55% of suburban and 53% of urban students).
- For those students who had a GSA at school, rural students more frequently attended GSA meetings than urban and suburban students.
- Most rural students (94%) knew of at least one teacher or staff person supportive of LGBT students. However, fewer than half (42%) reported knowing 6 or more supportive staff members, which was lower than the 60% reported for suburban and 61% reported for urban areas.
- Only 5% of rural students attended schools with comprehensive harassment and assault policies (i.e., which enumerate protection on the basis of both sexual orientation and gender expression); one in five (19%) attended schools with no bullying policies of any kind. Rural students were least likely to attend schools with a comprehensive or a partly enumerated policy.

Although they are less prevalent in rural areas, LGBT-related resources can make a significant difference in the school environment for rural LGBT students.

- Rural students whose schools had LGBT-related supports such as GSAs, many supportive school personnel, inclusive curricula, and comprehensive anti-bullying policies, reported significantly lower levels of victimization due to their sexual orientation and gender expression.
- Rural students whose schools had LGBT-related resources also reported higher levels of school belonging, higher self-esteem, and lower levels of depression.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings from this report demonstrate that LGBT students across the country — particularly those in rural and small town areas — encounter hostile school environments. Compared to students in urban and suburban areas, LGBT students in rural schools are more likely to hear negative comments about gender expression and sexual orientation; feel unsafe at their schools due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression; and experience verbal and physical harassment and assault due to these characteristics. In addition, the more hostile climates experienced by students in rural and small town schools may be further exacerbated by the lack LGBT-related resources relative to their suburban and urban counterparts, including a lower prevalence of GSAs, supportive staff, inclusive curricula, and comprehensive anti-bullying policies.

These findings demonstrate a clear need for safer and more inclusive learning environments for LGBT students in rural and small town areas. Educators, policymakers, and supporters of safe school initiatives can use the information from this report to better understand the specific experiences of rural LGBT students and take appropriate steps to make rural schools safer and more inclusive for LGBT students. Developing LGBT-related resources and supports may require additional support or alternative strategies in rural areas. Advocates should strive to expand use of the resources that already exist. For instance, for rural students who may be living in vast geographic areas, online resources may be useful to supplement or make up for a lack of resources. Community members may find it valuable to establish community groups and programming for LGBT youth, as they seem to be particularly absent from rural areas. Cultivating more intentional involvement from educators may also be helpful, given that supportive educators are associated with academic and psychological benefits regardless of locale. We recommend that educators, policymakers, and supportive community members begin by organizing community-based coalitions of individuals and organizations that concern themselves with school safety in order to build broader community support for LGBT-specific policies and practices. Together, these recommendations will help make schools safer for all students in school, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or locale.

Introduction

For more than 20 years, GLSEN has worked to make schools safer for all students; it has sought specifically to reduce the bullying and harassment targeted at students' sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. For lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students across the country, violence and harassment experienced in school affect their ability to learn. Although urban schools are typically regarded as more dangerous or violent than rural or suburban schools[1], it may be rural school settings that pose the greatest danger for LGBT students.[2]

LGBT people in rural areas, regardless of age, may have more negative experiences related to their LGBT identity than those in other areas. The stigmatization of the larger LGBT population in rural areas is reflected in informal beliefs about LGBT people as well as in the absence of more formal protections and resources for LGBT people. Adults in rural areas are more likely to have unfavorable opinions of gay men and lesbians and be more uncomfortable around them, and also more likely to oppose same-sex marriage, compared to residents of other parts of the US.[3] In addition, evangelical Christianity, lower income, and lower adult education levels, all of which are more prevalent in rural areas[4], tend to be associated with more conservative social beliefs, including opposition to same-sex marriage.[5] Unsurprisingly, and perhaps as a result, rural areas are less likely to have LGBT institutional protections, as seen in the lower prevalence of inclusive sexual orientation and gender expression non-discrimination ordinances in rural areas than in suburban or urban areas.[6]

Negative attitudes and a lack of protections in the larger community might be expected to be reflected in the school community as well. For LGBT youth specifically, this general negative climate in rural areas may contribute to a lower prevalence of resources that could be useful to LGBT youth, and thus result in more hostile school climates for LGBT students in these areas.[7] Although research on the educational experiences of LGBT youth has grown considerably over the past 25 years, less is known about rural students specifically. Previous GLSEN research has shown that even in elementary school, teachers in rural areas are less likely to address remarks by students that use "gay" in a negative way as compared to teachers in suburban and urban areas, and are also less likely to believe that students who may grow up to be LGBT would feel comfortable at their schools.[8] Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) have been shown to develop more slowly in rural areas than in urban areas.[9] In addition, school personnel may be ill-equipped to respond to LGBT-related harassment in schools, whether this inaction is intentional or not.[10] Furthermore, there is some evidence from prior research that rural LGBT youth also typically lack the support of more formal institutions that help buffer against experiences of victimization in urban areas, such as bookstores, coffee shops, community organizations, and LGBT-focused school or workplace social groups or organizations.[11] However, research also suggests that LGBT youth in rural areas adapt and make use of the resources that are available in their communities. For example, rural youth may meet and gather in local parks or shopping center parking lots in the absence of LGBT community centers.[12]

This research report takes an in-depth look at the experiences of LGBT students in rural and small town areas on issues such as biased language in schools, school safety, harassment and victimization, educational outcomes, school engagement, and LGBT-related resources and support. Given that previous research has found that there are regional differences in attitudes toward LGBT people — specifically, that places in the South and Midwest may be more hostile than areas of the West and Northeast — we also examine the influence of geographic region in the experiences of rural LGBT students.[13] Finally, this report concludes by advocating for more intentional policies, measures, and programs that protect LGBT students, specifically those in rural areas.

Methods

Data used in this report come from the 2011 installment of GLSEN's *National School Climate Survey*, which is a biennial survey of U.S. secondary school students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender. Youth were eligible to participate in the survey if they were at least 13 years of age, attended a K–12 school in the United States during the 2010–11 school year, and identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or a sexual orientation other than heterosexual (e.g., queer, questioning) or identified as transgender or as having a gender identity other than male, female, or transgender (e.g., genderqueer). In order to obtain a more representative sample of LGBT youth, two methods were used to locate possible participants.

First, the *National School Climate Survey* was made available online through GLSEN's website. Notices about the survey were sent through GLSEN's email and chapter networks, as well as through national, regional, and local organizations that provide services to or advocate on behalf of LGBT youth. National and regional organizations posted notices about the survey on listservs, websites, and social networking websites (e.g., TrevorSpace). Local community groups serving LGBT youth notified their participants about the online survey via email, social networking, and flyers. In addition, a paper version of the survey was made available to local community groups with limited capacity to access the Internet (resulting in 139 completed paper surveys). To ensure representation of transgender youth, youth of color, and youth in rural communities, special outreach efforts were made to notify groups and organizations that work predominantly with these populations about the survey.

Contacting participants only through LGBT youth-serving groups and organizations would have limited our ability to reach LGBT students who were not connected to LGBT communities in some way. Thus, in order to broaden our reach to LGBT students who may not have had such connections, we conducted targeted advertising on Facebook. Notices about the survey were shown to users between 13 and 18 years of age who gave some indication on their profile that they were lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

The survey collected information from 8,584 LGBT students, though only the 8,158 students for whom we collected reliable locale information are used for analysis in this report.[14] Students were from all 50 states and the District of Columbia and from 3,224 unique school districts. Rural students comprise 29.4% (n=2,387) of the full sample of the 2011 survey.[15] Table 1 presents the rural subsample's demographic characteristics and Table 2 shows the characteristics of the schools they attended. About four-fifths of the rural subsample (78%) were White, half (48%) were female, and two-thirds identified as gay or lesbian (64%). Students were in the 6th to 12th grades, with the largest numbers in 10th and 11th grades. Compared to the suburban and urban respondents, rural LGBT students were more likely to be White, attend a public school, live in the South and Midwest, and attend smaller schools.[16]

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Rural Survey Respondents (N=2387)

Gender Identity[†]		
Female	48.0%	n=1145
Male	37.6%	n=895
Transgender	7.8%	n=185
Other	6.6%	n=158
Sexual Orientation		
Gay/Lesbian	63.8%	n=1522
Bisexual	26.7%	n=637
Other Sexual Orientation (e.g., Queer, Questioning)	9.6%	n=228
Race[‡]		
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.7%	n=16
Native American, American Indian, or Alaska Native	0.8%	n=19
White or European American	78.3%	n=1860
African American or Black	1.9%	n=44
Middle Eastern or Arab American, any race	0.9%	n=21
Hispanic or Latino/a, any race	8.6%	n=204
Multiracial	8.8%	n=210
Grade		
6th	0.2%	n=5
7th	2.5%	n=59
8th	9.0%	n=214
9th	18.0%	n=429
10th	24.9%	n=592
11th	24.0%	n=571
12th	21.4%	n=508
Age (mean)	16.10 years	

† "Female" includes participants who selected only female as their gender, and "male" includes participants who selected only male. The category "transgender" includes participants who selected transgender, male-to-female, or female-to-male as their gender, including those who selected more than one of these categories. Participants who selected both male and female were categorized as "other" (e.g., genderqueer, androgynous).

‡ Participants who selected more than one category were coded as "multiracial", with the exception of participants who selected "Hispanic or Latino" or "Middle Eastern or Arab American".

Table 2. School Characteristics of Rural Survey Respondents (N=2387)

Region		
Northeast	19.6%	n=465
South	36.5%	n=865
Midwest	31.0%	n=735
West	12.9%	n=307
School Type		
Public	95.6%	n=2214
Magnet	2.0%	n=44
Charter	3.1%	n=68
Religious-Affiliated School	1.3%	n=31
Other Independent or Private School	3.1%	n=71
School Size		
Small (<500 students)	27.6%	n=654
Medium (501-1000)	34.7%	n=823
Large (1001-1500)	23.0%	n=544
Very Large (>1500)	14.7%	n=348

Results

Biased Language in School

One of the more pervasive negative elements of the school climate is biased language. Students frequently hear negative comments on the basis of personal attributes — including race, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and religion — whether they are directed at individual students or expressed more generally.

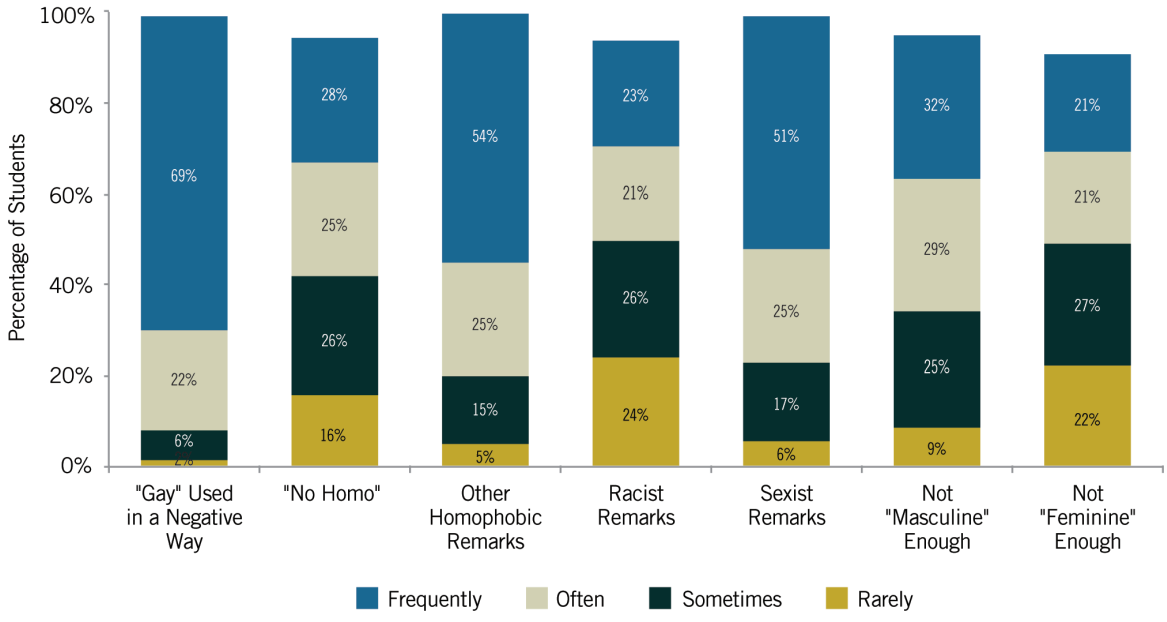
The *2011 National School Climate Survey* asked students about the frequency at which they hear biased remarks, such as those that are homophobic, racist, or sexist in nature. Students were asked about hearing these remarks from other students as well as from school staff, and were also asked how students and staff intervened when these remarks were made. Although hearing homophobic, racist, sexist, and gender expression-based remarks were prevalent across locales, LGBT students in rural areas more frequently heard derogatory comments than students in suburban and urban schools.

Students' Reports of Hearing Biased Remarks in School

Biased remarks were commonly heard by LGBT students in rural schools. As shown in Figure 1, nearly all students had heard biased remarks in school based on gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, and other personal characteristics. More than 98% had heard sexist remarks, "gay" used in a negative way, or other homophobic remarks at school, and more than 90% had heard racist remarks or negative remarks related to gender expression.

The most prominent derogatory remark was "gay" used in a negative way, such as "that's so gay" to refer to something inferior, undesirable, or less valuable. In fact, 69% of rural LGBT youth reported that they frequently heard "gay" used in this way; only 9% reported that they heard such comments only sometimes, rarely, or never. Other homophobic comments were also commonly overheard in school.

Figure 1. Rural Students' Frequency of Hearing Biased Remarks from Students



"No homo" is a more recent phrase used to rid a statement of a homosexual connotation. For instance, someone might utter the phrase after a compliment to someone of the same gender, as in, "I like your jeans — no homo." Although it was not heard as commonly as "gay" in a negative manner, half (52 %) of rural LGBT students reported hearing the phrase frequently or often. Other homophobic remarks, such as use of the word "faggot" or "dyke," were heard regularly as well, with 79% of respondents reporting hearing such comments frequently or often.

Rural LGBT students were also exposed to derogatory comments regarding sex and gender expression. More than half reported frequently overhearing sexist comments, such as use of "bitch." Three in five (61%) students reported frequently or often hearing remarks about students not acting "masculine" enough; 42% had heard similar comments about students not acting "feminine" enough.

Frequencies of racist language were generally lower than homophobic and sexist remarks. Nevertheless, nearly half (44%) of respondents reported hearing racist remarks frequently or often.

Students were also exposed to biased language from their teachers and other school staff, as shown in Figure 2. Although school staff made biased remarks less regularly than students[17], a quarter or more of students reported hearing a school staff member make homophobic remarks (25%), sexist remarks (30%), or negative comments in regard to gender expression (35%) at least sometimes. Given that school personnel have a direct responsibility in promoting a safe learning space for students, any use of such language is unacceptable and perhaps reinforces a negative climate for students.

Commonly hearing biased remarks in school was not unique to students in rural areas. However, as shown in Figure 3, rural students reported hearing

Figure 2. Rural Students' Frequency of Hearing Biased Remarks from Staff

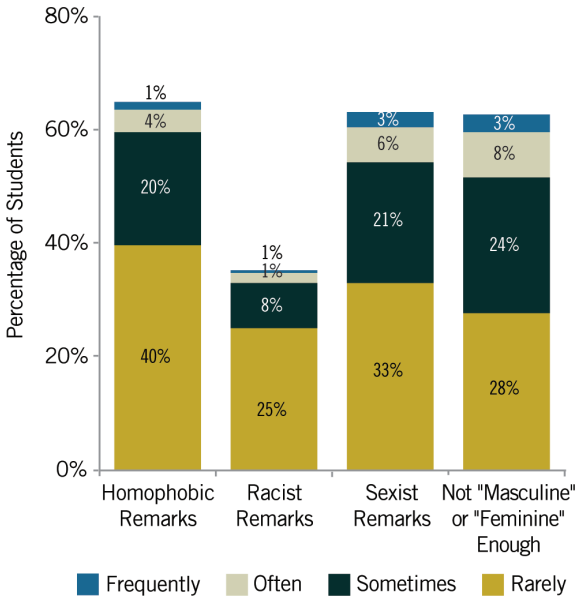
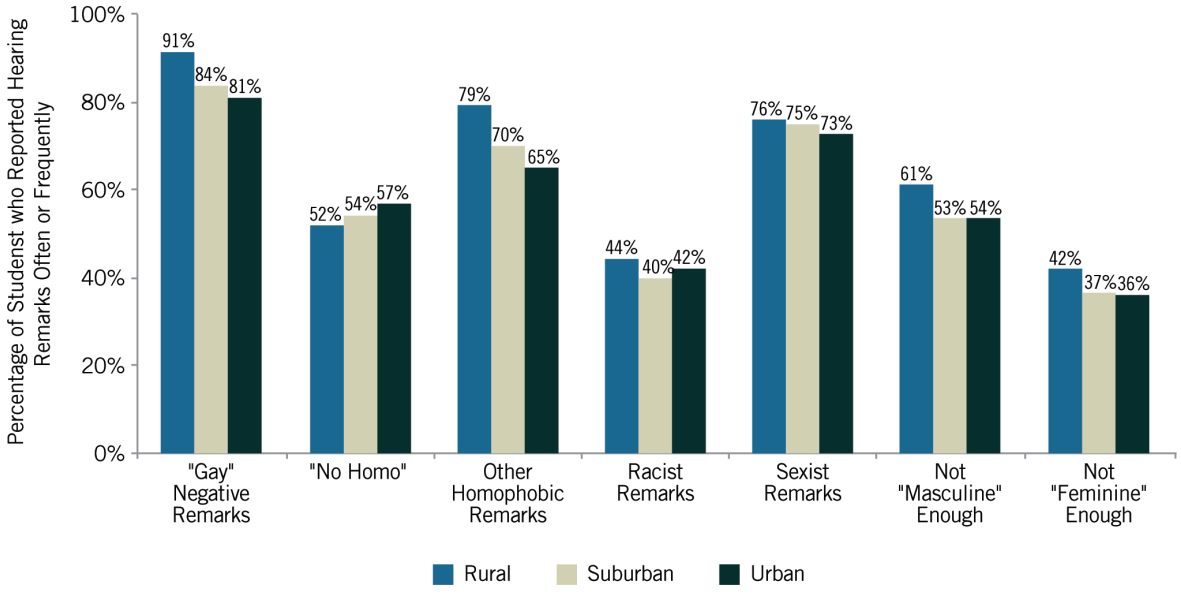


Figure 3. Frequency of Hearing Biased Remarks from Students by Locale

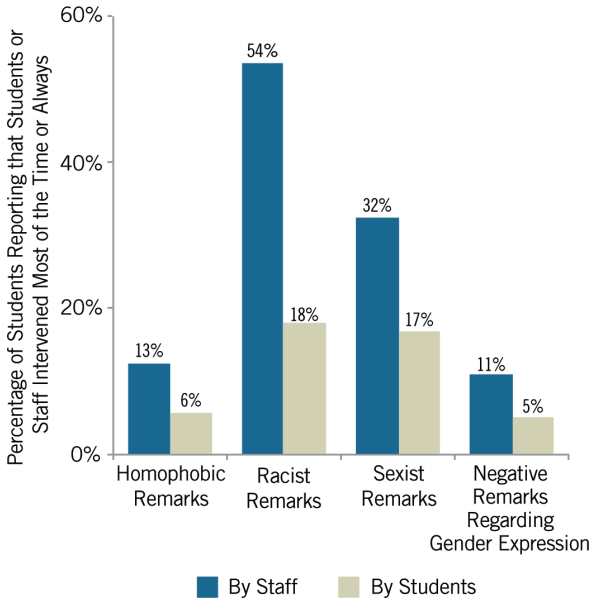


most types of biased language more than urban and suburban students.[18] The differences across locale were particularly strong for homophobic remarks, such as "fag" and "dyke." The one exception is with the phrase "no homo" — rural students heard this expression slightly less often than suburban or urban students.[19] This difference may reflect the origins of the phrase in hip-hop culture[20], which tends to be associated more with urban (and perhaps suburban) places than rural ones.

Intervention with Biased Language by School Staff and Students

The manner in which school staff respond to biased language can also influence the overall school climate. If the use of biased language goes unchallenged in the school setting, then it can signal that such language is acceptable for use in the school and perhaps in other public spaces. On the other hand, if staff members intervene when they hear such language, then they may be sending a message that such language is unacceptable. As shown in Figure 4, biased language was largely unchecked in rural schools. Rural LGBT students reported that teachers and other staff members more frequently intervene when they hear racist remarks; nevertheless, only a little more than half (54%) reported that educators intervene always or most of the time with this type of remark. Rural students were much less likely to report that teachers and school staff intervene frequently when hearing other types of biased language.[21] For instance, only 13% of students said staff members intervene always or most of the time when they hear homophobic remarks, and only 11% said staff members intervene always or most of the time when they hear negative remarks related to gender expression. Only a third of students (32%) said staff members respond always or most of the time when they overhear sexist remarks in school. Differences by locale for staff member response to biased remarks were minimal, with the exception of homophobic remarks: staff members in suburban areas were more likely to intervene when homophobic remarks were made than staff members in rural areas.[22]

Figure 4. Intervention When Biased Remarks Were Made in Rural Schools



Although it is primarily teachers' and other staff members' responsibility to intervene in instances of biased language, students may, at times, intervene as well. It is possible that intervention by students may have a greater impact, as it may model appropriate behavior for other students. Unfortunately, students were even less likely to intervene than staff members.[23] For instance, only 18% of the rural LGBT students said other students intervene most of the time or always when they overhear racist language in school. Fewer than one in five (17%) said students intervene most of the time or always when they overhear sexist remarks. Intervention by students was even lower for comments related to sexual orientation and gender expression.[24] Only 6% and 5% of rural LGBT students indicated that other students in their school respond most of the time or always to homophobic remarks or negative remarks about gender expression. Differences by locale for student response to biased remarks were minimal, although students in rural and suburban areas were slightly less likely to intervene when homophobic remarks were made than students in urban areas.[25] The failure of school staff and students to intervene, particularly when derogatory remarks about sexual orientation and gender expression are made, may contribute further to a hostile environment for LGBT students.

Overall Safety in School

Students who perceive themselves to be different from their classmates may feel less safe in school. Students in the survey were asked whether they had felt unsafe in the past year due to personal characteristics, such as sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, race, disability, or religion. Furthermore, students were asked if there were spaces they avoided in school for safety reasons. As with biased language, rural students were more likely to feel unsafe at school due to sexual orientation or gender expression than suburban and urban students.

Feeling Unsafe at School

An overwhelming majority (81%) of rural LGBT students reported that they had felt unsafe at school during the past year due to their gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, or other personal characteristic, and this number was substantially more than the 73% of suburban students and 71% of urban students who reported feeling unsafe for any of these reasons.[26] Rural LGBT students most commonly felt unsafe due to their gender expression and sexual orientation, as shown in Figure 5. Although this was also true for suburban and urban students, rural LGBT students were even more likely to feel unsafe on the basis of their sexual orientation (71% vs. 62% of suburban and 58% of urban school students)[27] and gender expression (49% of rural students vs. 42% of suburban and 42% of urban students).[28] The differences by locale were largest for feeling unsafe because of sexual orientation.[29] In addition, rural students were more likely to feel unsafe due to their religion than suburban or urban students.[30] Feeling unsafe due to gender, race, or disability was less common for all students, regardless of locale. There were no significant differences by locale for feeling unsafe due to gender or disability, though students in rural areas were less likely to say they felt unsafe due to their race.[31]

When asked about specific places in school they avoided because they felt unsafe, rural students were more likely to report having avoided bathrooms and locker rooms because of feeling unsafe or uncomfortable than other spaces, such as the cafeteria, school buses, and hallways (see Figure 6).[32] Although the same pattern applied to suburban and urban students as well[33], rural students were more likely to feel unsafe than suburban and urban students in all of these spaces except for the cafeteria and other, non-specified school grounds and places.[34] In particular, the largest differences across locale were observed for bathrooms and locker rooms.[35]

Figure 5. Feeling Unsafe at School by Locale

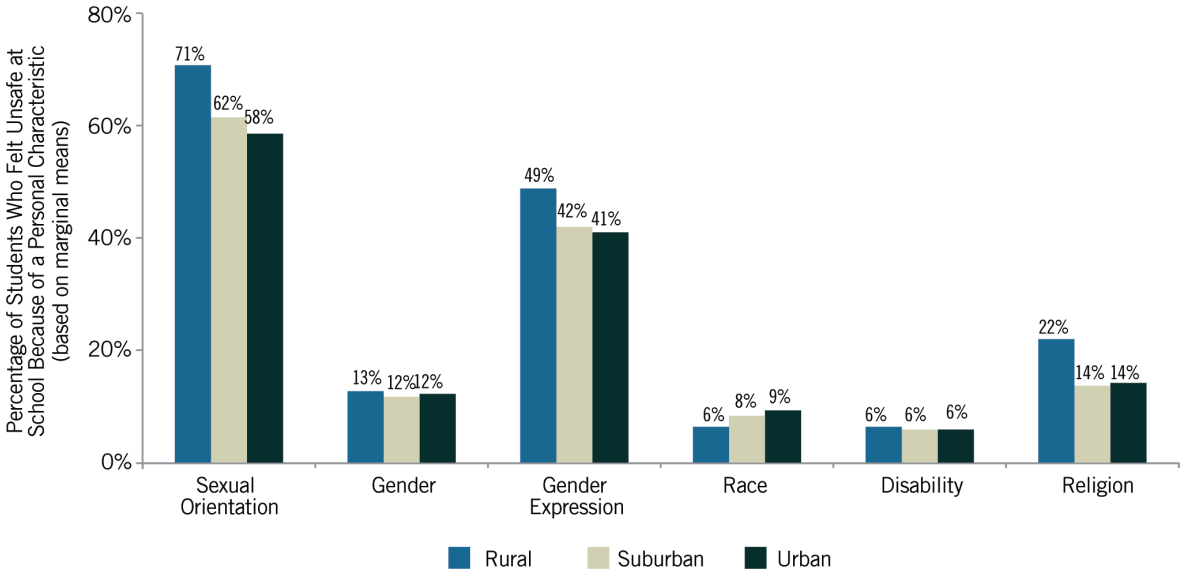
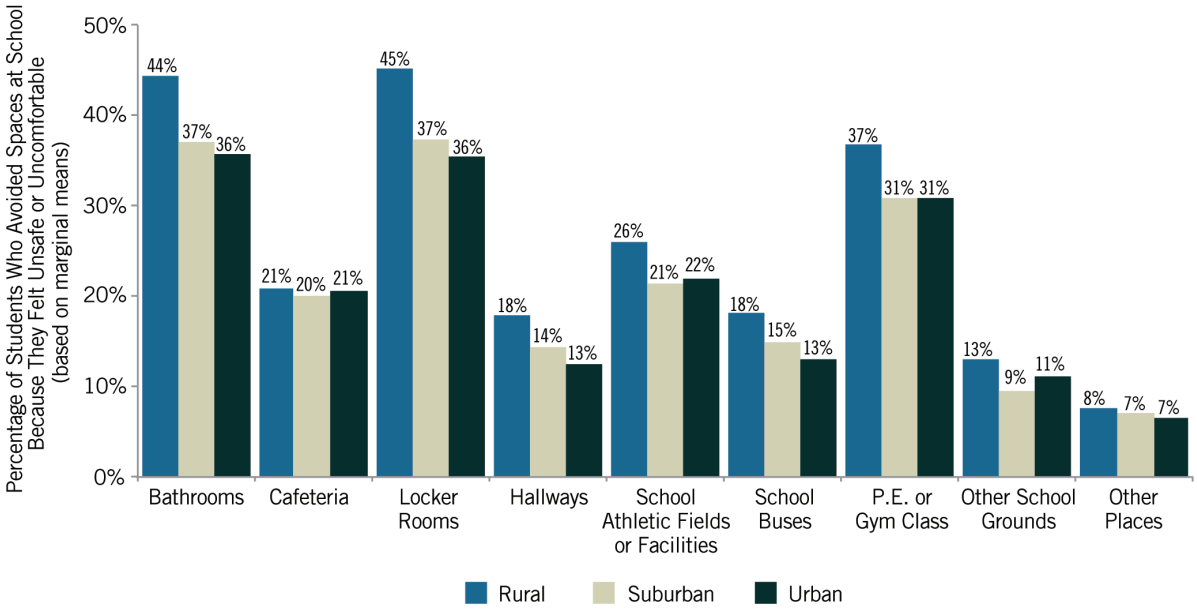
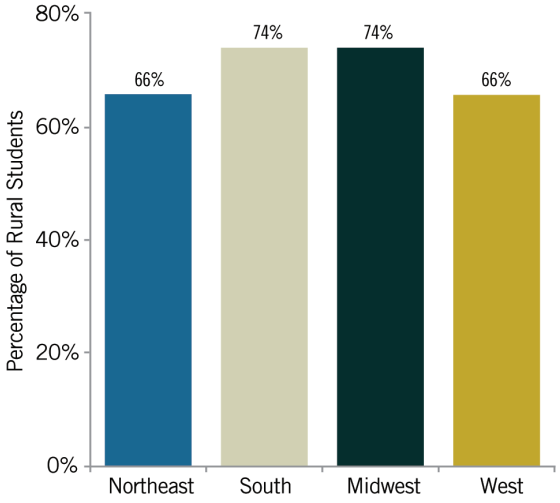


Figure 6. Avoiding Spaces at School by Locale



Prior research about geographic differences across the U.S. indicates that rural areas of the South and Midwest may be more socially conservative than other areas of the country.[36] For example, a recent study of social and religious values found that 52% of Southerners and 45% of Midwesterners disapproved of same-sex marriage, compared to 39% of Westerners and 35% of Northeasterners.[37] In addition, in our *2011 National School Climate Survey*, we found that LGBT students experienced more hostile climates in these regions. Thus, we wanted to examine how region might be related to rural students' feelings of safety. As shown in Figure 7, across all regions of the country, students in rural areas felt less safe than students in suburban and urban areas.[38] In addition, rural students in the South and Midwest were more likely to report feeling unsafe based on sexual orientation than were students in rural areas of the Northeast or West.[39]

Figure 7. Feeling Unsafe at School Based on Sexual Orientation in Rural Locales by Region



Harassment and Assault

Other experiences in the school environment can also contribute to a hostile school climate for LGBT students. In addition to overhearing biased language in school, LGBT students can be the direct targets of verbal harassment and physical harassment and assault. Students in this survey were asked about experiences of verbal and physical harassment and physical assault related to such characteristics as sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, race, disability, and religion. It is the responsibility of school staff to address these instances of bullying and harassment in school. For this reason, we asked students about school staff responses to incidents of harassment.

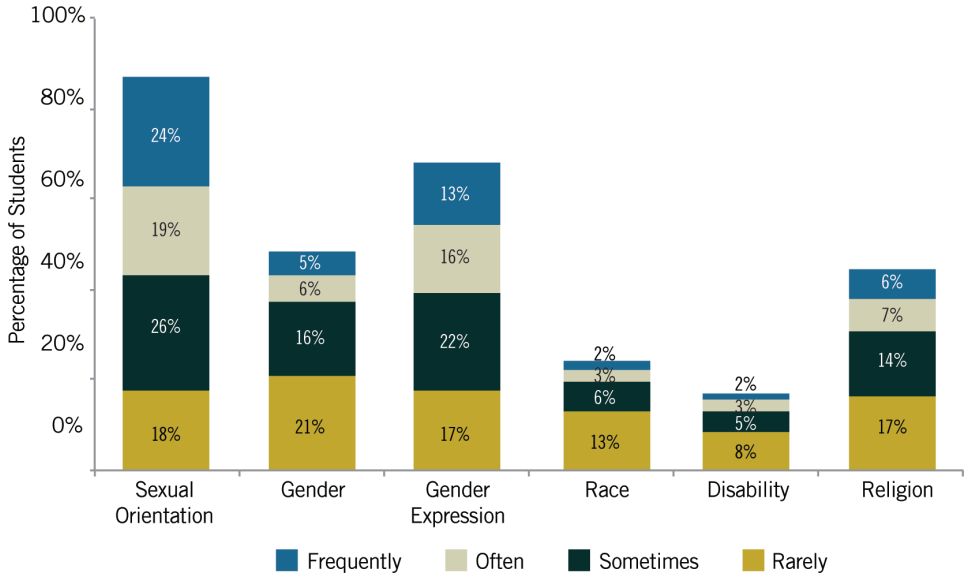
Verbal Harassment

Rural LGBT students reported high rates of verbal harassment, or being the target of name-calling or threats due to characteristics such as their sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, race, disability, or religion. As with hearing biased remarks, LGBT students in rural areas most frequently experienced harassment based on their sexual orientation[40] and gender expression.[41] As seen in Figure 8, nearly nine in ten (87%) rural students had been verbally harassed at least once in the past year at school on the basis of their sexual orientation, with 43% reporting that the harassment occurred frequently or often. In addition, 68% had been verbally harassed at least once in the past year due to their gender expression, with 29% reporting that it occurred frequently or often.

Physical Harassment

Students also reported being physically harassed in the past school year because of personal characteristics, which includes being the victim of pushing, shoving, or similar physical aggression. Although rates of physical harassment were lower than for verbal harassment, a substantial number of students had been physically harassed at some point in the preceding year at school. As shown in Figure 9, rural LGBT students were most commonly physically harassed due to their sexual orientation[42] and gender expression.[43] Nearly half (45%) of students had been physically harassed at least once in the past year due to their sexual orientation, with 16% saying that it occurred frequently or often. In addition, one third (31%) had been physically harassed because of their gender expression, with 10% saying that it occurred frequently or often.

Figure 8. Rural Students' Frequency of Verbal Harassment in the Past School Year



Physical Assault

Rural LGBT students also experienced direct physical assault because of their personal characteristics, which includes violent actions such as being kicked, punched, or injured with a weapon. As depicted in Figure 10, rural LGBT students most commonly experienced this form of victimization on the basis of their sexual orientation[44] and gender expression.[45] One-fifth (22%) said they had been physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation in the past year at school, with 6% saying that it occurred frequently or often. In addition, 16% said that they had been physically assaulted because of their gender expression, with 5% saying that it occurred frequently or often.

Figure 9. Rural Students' Frequency of Physical Harassment in the Past School Year

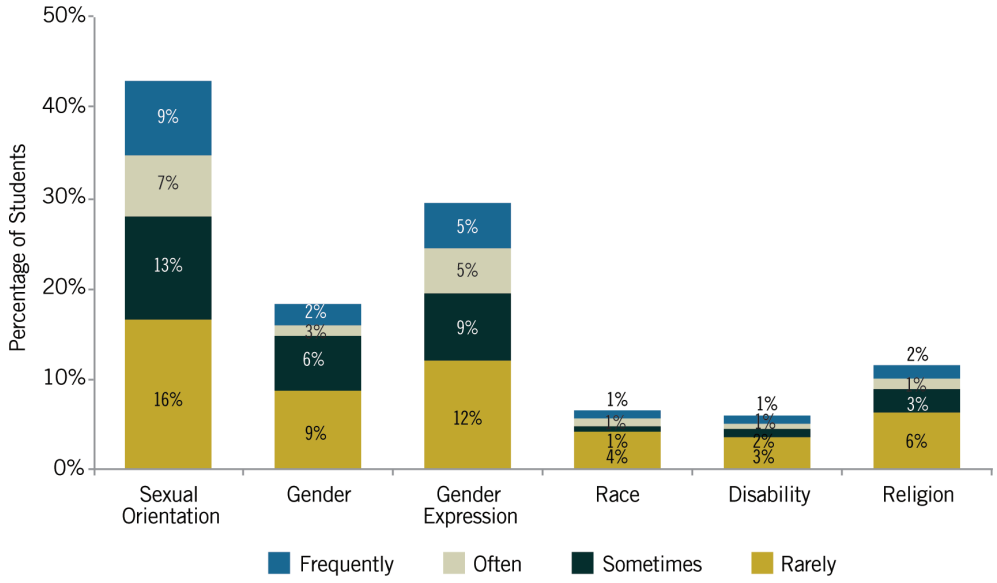
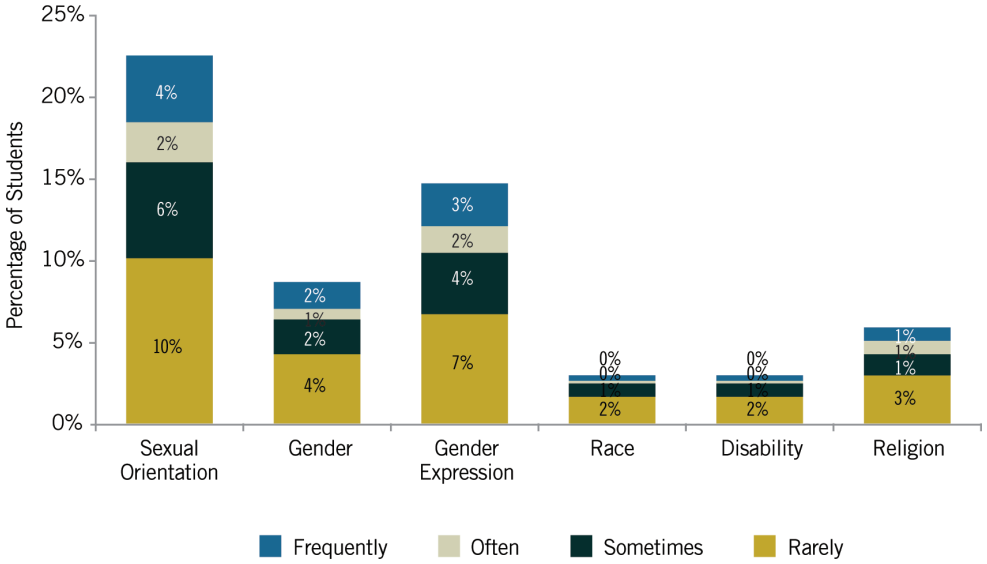


Figure 10. Rural Students' Frequency of Physical Assault in the Past School Year



Differences in Victimization by Locale

In addition to understanding the different types of victimization experienced by LGBT students in rural schools, we also wanted to examine whether these rural students experienced higher levels of victimization than their peers in other locales. The results suggest that although LGBT students across locales commonly experienced harassment and assault, the problem was more severe for LGBT students in rural areas. As shown in Figure 11, rural students were found to experience greater levels of victimization[46] than both suburban and urban LGBT students on the basis of their sexual orientation[47], gender[48], gender expression[49], and religion.[50] As with feeling unsafe at school, rural students reported the largest differences between urban and suburban students for victimization based on sexual orientation.[51] Levels of victimization based on disability were not different by locale[52], and rural and suburban students experienced slightly less victimization based on race compared to urban students.[53]

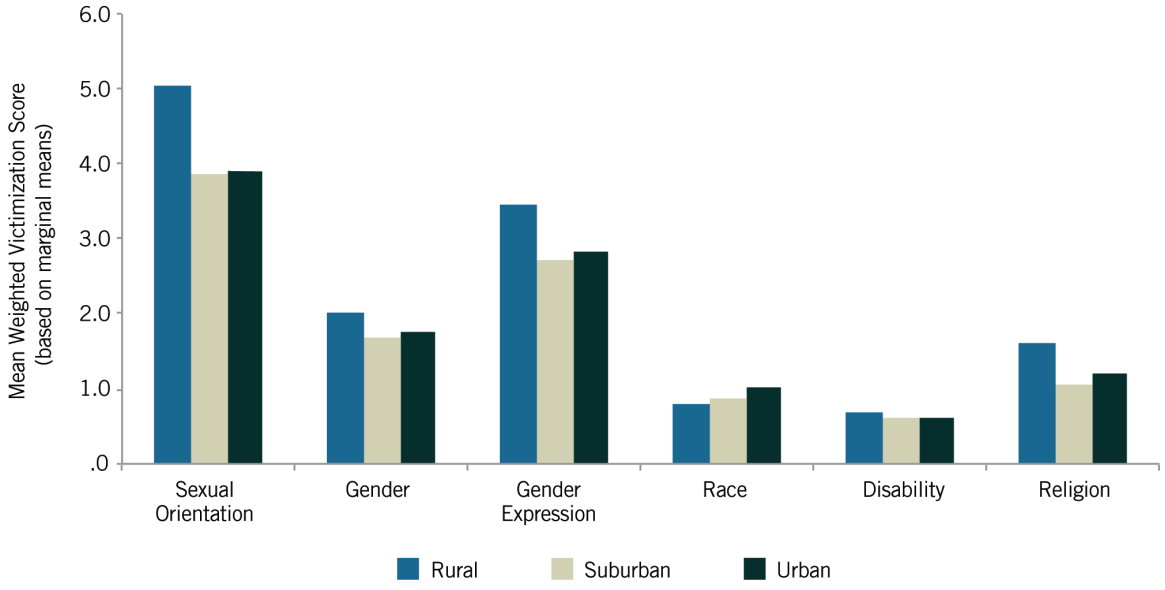
The survey also asked students about other negative events they may have experienced in school, such as being sexually harassed; having property damaged or stolen; being the target of cyberbullying; or being the target of relational bullying (having rumors or lies spread about them or feeling intentionally "left out" of some event, gathering, or other social activity). Most rural LGBT students had experienced each of these other types of harassment at least once in the past year, and as Figure 12 shows, large numbers had experienced them regularly (sometimes, often, or frequently). Three in four (78%) had regularly felt excluded or left out or had experienced rumors or lies being spread about them (70%). In addition, almost half (44%) had regularly (sometimes, frequently, or often) experienced sexual harassment, which includes having sexual remarks made toward them or having someone touch their body inappropriately. Finally, more than a third (40%) had regularly experienced some form of electronic harassment, or "cyberbullying" (e.g., being the target of negative comments or attacks on MySpace or Facebook; or receiving targeted, negative emails or text messages).

For each locale, having rumors or lies spread, feeling excluded or left out, and sexual harassment were the most common other forms of harassment. Nonetheless, LGBT students in rural areas experienced each of these types of harassment more frequently than students in suburban or urban areas.[54] Again, these findings suggest that although experiences of harassment are common across locales, rural students often experience these problems to a higher degree.

Reporting of Harassment and Assault

Students were also asked about how often they reported incidents of harassment and assault to school staff and whether the school staff member's response was effective. When students fail to report such incidents, their experiences of victimization are likely to go unaddressed, and few efforts may

Figure 11. Experiences of Victimization by Locale



be directed to improving their school experience. If students feel like staff members respond effectively to incidents of harassment, they may feel better supported in school and have better overall school experiences.

Unfortunately, many students do not feel comfortable reporting experiences of harassment and assault. As shown in Figure 13, more than half of students said they never reported these incidents to school staff (60%). Furthermore, only 14% of rural students said they reported incidents of harassment and assault to school staff always or most of the time. Rates of reporting did not differ by locale.[55]

We also asked about the effectiveness of school staff responses when students did report instances of victimization. Among the rural LGBT students who reported incidents to school staff, only a third (32%) of students said that the response to their reports was somewhat or very effective, yet half (49%) said that the responses by school staff were completely ineffective (see Figure 14). Given the low numbers of students who found staff intervention to be at all effective, it is perhaps not surprising that students so infrequently reported their experiences of harassment and assault. Although rural students did not differ from urban and suburban students, they were significantly more likely to rate the staff members' responses ineffective.[56]

Figure 12. Other Types of Harassment by Locale

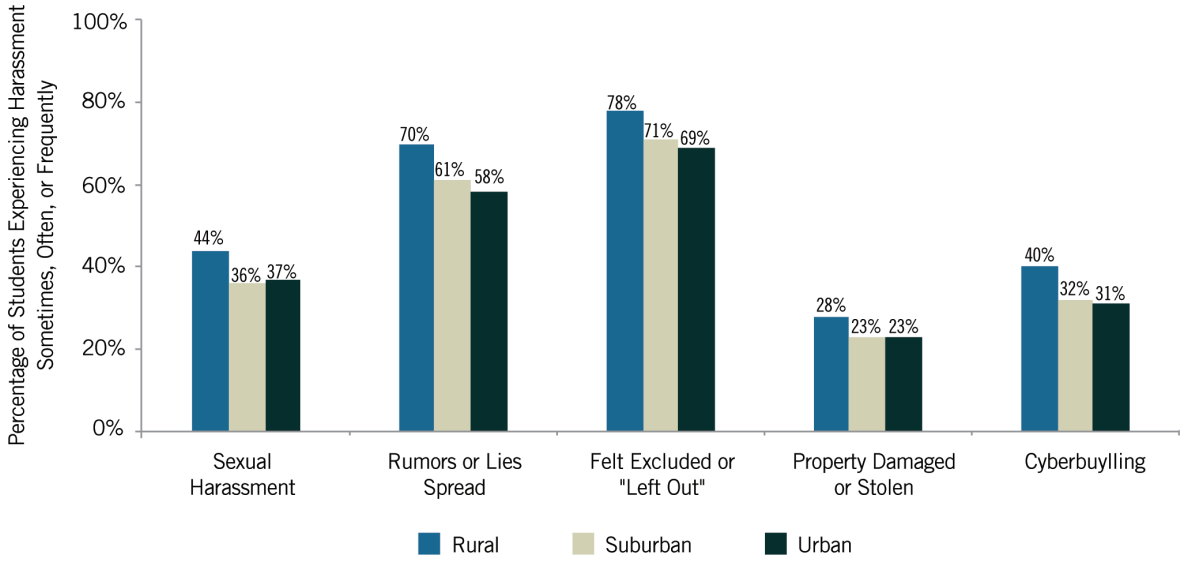


Figure 13. Rural Students' Frequency of Reporting Incidents of Harassment and Assault to School Staff (n=2376)

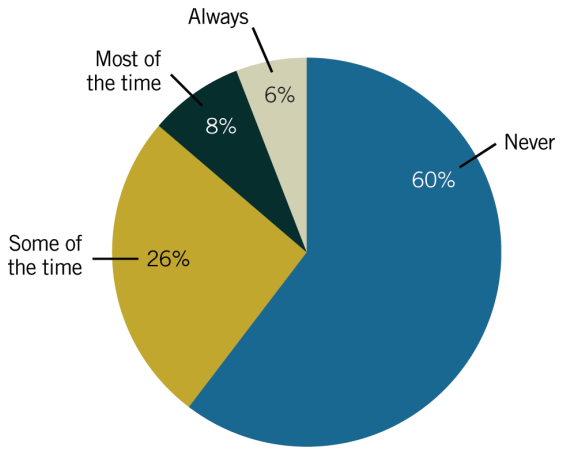
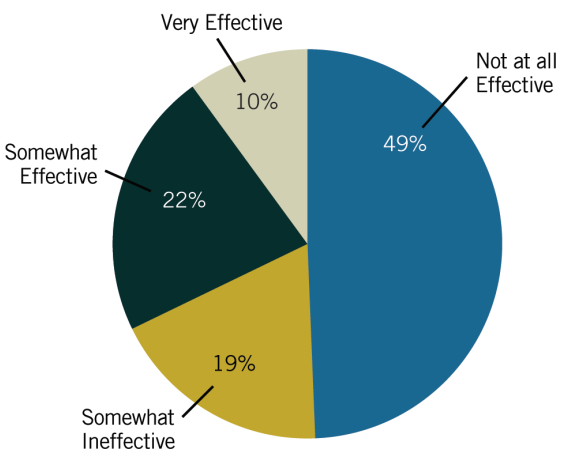


Figure 14. Effectiveness of Rural Students' Reporting Incidents of Harassment and Assault to School Staff (n=867)



The Impact of Victimization on Educational Outcomes

Biased language, harassment, and assault may negatively affect LGBT students' ability to receive an education. Being harassed may interfere with a student's ability to concentrate during class or even at home. In addition, students may attempt to avoid the spaces where experiences of victimization occur, such as the classroom or bathroom. Higher rates of absenteeism may, in turn, lead to poorer academic performance. In the *2011 National School Climate Survey*, we found that higher rates of victimization were associated with lower grades, lower educational aspirations, and greater absenteeism due to safety concerns for LGBT students across locales.[57] In this report, we examine the relationships between victimization and educational outcomes for rural LGBT students specifically.

Absenteeism

Nearly half (46%) of rural LGBT students had missed class, a day of school, or both in the past month, and one in ten (12%) rural students said they had missed school four or more times during the past month. Rural LGBT students exhibited moderately higher rates of absenteeism than urban or suburban students.[58] Compared to the 36% rural students who had missed class and/or a day of school in the past month, only 30% of suburban LGBT students and 30% of urban LGBT students had done so.

The effect of harassment on educational outcomes appeared to be directly related to the severity of that harassment. Students who experienced high levels of victimization due to their sexual orientation or gender expression were more likely to miss class or school than students who experienced lower levels of victimization. For instance, as shown in Figure 15, rural LGBT students who experienced a high severity of verbal harassment (occurring frequently or often) based on their sexual orientation were significantly more likely to miss some school in the past month (53%) than students who experienced less victimization (29%, occurring never, rarely, or sometimes).[59]

Rural students who had experienced high levels of victimization had significantly lower grade point averages (GPAs) than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization, even after accounting for school absences.[60] For instance, as depicted in Figure 16, students who had experienced high levels of verbal harassment due to their gender expression

Figure 15. Rural Students' Absenteeism Due to Safety Concerns by Severity of Verbal Harassment

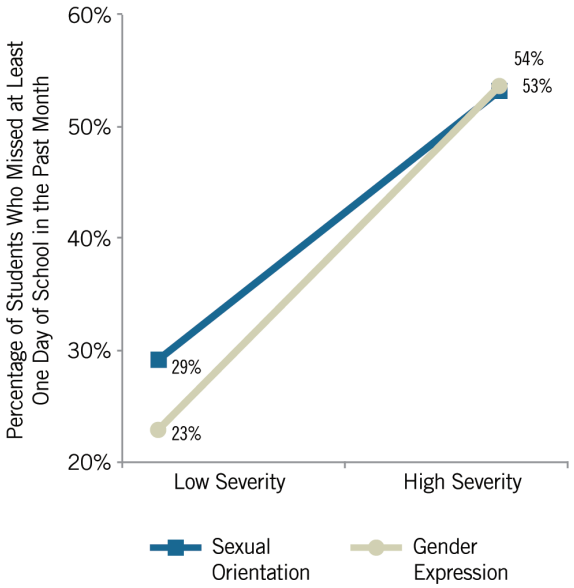


Figure 16. Rural Students' Academic Achievement by Severity of Verbal Harassment

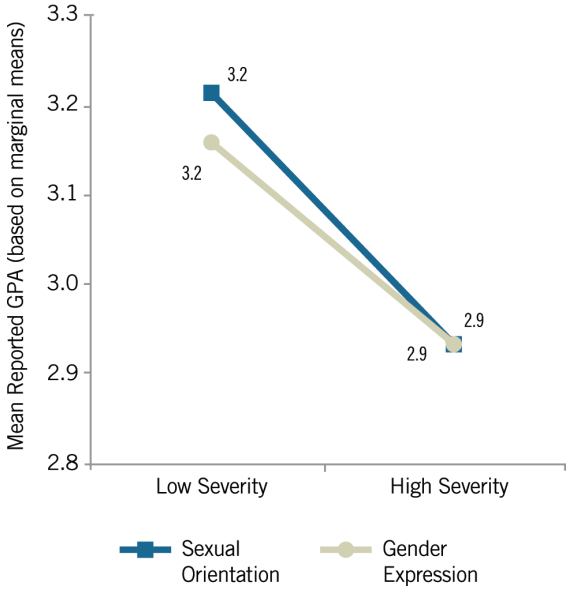
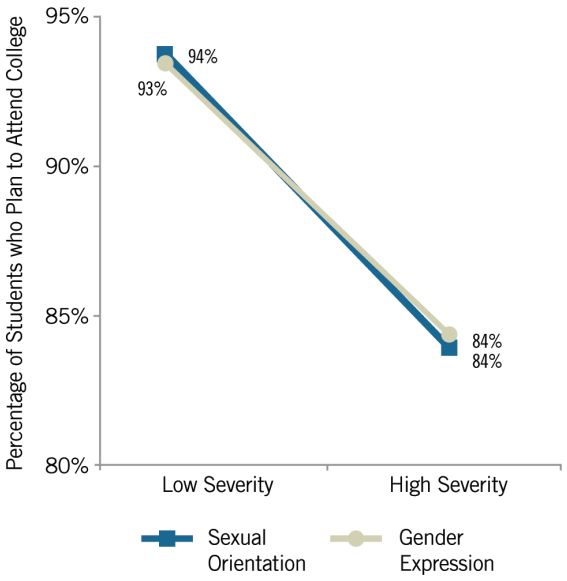


Figure 17. Rural Students' Educational Aspirations by Severity of Physical Assault



had lower GPAs than students who had experienced less severe levels of verbal harassment due to their sexual orientation, corresponding to the difference between a C and a B (2.9 vs. 3.2) in most schools.

Higher severities of physical harassment and assault were also associated with negative academic outcomes. As indicated in Figure 17, rural LGBT students who experienced a high severity of physical assault (occurring frequently or often) based on gender expression[61] or sexual orientation[62] were significantly less likely to plan to attend college than students who experienced less severe victimization (occurring never, rarely, or sometimes). For instance, only 84% of rural LGBT students who experienced a high severity of physical assault based on gender expression planned to attend college, compared to 93% of students who experienced a low severity of physical assault. Similar patterns were found for physical harassment based on gender expression or sexual orientation.

Discriminatory Policies and Practices

Hearing homophobic and negative remarks about gender expression in the hallways and directly experiencing victimization from other students are overt contributions to a hostile climate for LGBT students. In addition, LGBT students may be negatively affected by less overt experiences of discrimination in the school environment, whether resulting from formal school or district policies, or from informal practices by school personnel. In the *2011 National School Climate Survey*, we asked students to describe ways they felt their schools discriminate against LGBT people. Rural students were more likely to report that their schools had discriminatory policies and practices than suburban and urban students (25% of rural students, compared to 20% of suburban and 20% of urban students).[63]

Although rural students were more likely to report that their schools had discriminatory policies and practices, the types of discrimination they experienced were similar across locales. Rural LGBT students most commonly reported that their schools discriminated against LGBT relationships (31.8% of students who reported discriminatory policies and practices). For instance, they said they were more severely punished for public displays of affection than non-LGBT students, and a couple of students said that their privacy had been violated when their school disclosed their sexual orientation or transgender identity to their parents. Many students mentioned that school functions discriminated against LGBT couples:

> *My school does not allow same-sex couples to attend prom. They have to be checked in as individuals while straight couples can be checked in as couples. (Female student, 11th grade, IL)*

Rural LGBT students also commonly reported staff practices that promoted negative attitudes toward LGBT people (22.5% of those who responded to the question), including the presence of anti-LGBT content in class, non-intervention in biased language and harassment, and differential enforcement of disciplinary policies toward LGBT students. Several students commented that staff members themselves used biased language:

> *Many teachers reinforce the bullying by always suggesting that male students should act a certain way; otherwise that student is gay. (Male student, 11th grade, MN)*

> *Counselors often tell us that we bring harassment upon ourselves, and the term 'gay' in a demeaning manner is tossed around by faculty. (Transgender student, 12th grade, UT)*

One in five (21.5%) rural LGBT students who responded to the question reported that their school limited their ability to discuss LGBT issues in the school setting, including in the suppression of GSAs and similar clubs, limits on LGBT-related discussions in the classroom, and discouragement of staff support of LGBT issues. Many students said that they were prevented from expressing themselves fully as LGBT individuals:

> *We're not allowed to post any information on our GSA around the school or publicly announce anything GSA related. Everything has to be done in private; Facebook, talking to people privately. (Female student, 9th grade, MI)*

In addition, 14.5% of rural LGBT students who said that their schools had discriminatory policies or practices reported that their schools reinforced gender boundaries around dress:

> *Graduation: Girls wear a certain color and MUST be in a dress. Boys wear another color and must be in pants with a tie. For band concerts, boys and only boys get to wear bowties. Girls must be in feminine clothing. (Other gender student, 12th grade, PA)*

Table 3. Discriminatory Policies and Practices Reported by Rural Students (N=600)

	% of students	(number reporting response)
Policies and Practices that Discriminate Against LGBT Relationships	**31.8%**	**(191)**
Rules Regarding Dances and School Functions	19.5%	(117)
Enforcement of Public Displays of Affection	14.7%	(88)
Violations of Student Privacy	0.3%	(2)
Policies and Practices that Reinforce Gender Boundaries around Dress	**14.5%**	**(87)**
Policies and Practices that Segregate School Activities Based on Gender	**5.5%**	**(33)**
Policies and Practices that Particularly Affect Transgender Students	**4.7%**	**(28)**
Gender-Segregated Locker Rooms and Gyms	4.3%	(26)
Use of Gendered Pronouns and Legal Sex	0.7%	(4)
Policies and Practices that Limit Discussion of LGBT Issues	**21.5%**	**(129)**
Suppression of GSA Efforts	7.3%	(44)
Restrictions on LGBT-Related Self Expression	13.2%	(79)
Limits on Discussion of LGBT Issues in the Class and School Activities	2.3%	(14)
Suppression of Staff Support for LGBT Students/Issues	0.8%	(5)
Staff Practices that Promote Negative Attitudes toward LGBT People	**22.5%**	**(135)**
Use of Biased Language	13.7%	(82)
Anti-LGBT Content in Classes	2.2%	(13)
Non-Intervention in Biased Language and Victimization	13.3%	(80)
Differential Enforcement toward LGBT Students	1.3%	(8)
Absence of Supportive Policies and Practices	**12.8%**	**(77)**
Lack of LGBT Curricular Content	5.5%	(33)
Lack of LGBT-Related School Resources	1.5%	(9)
Non-Inclusion in Bullying and Harassment Policies	6.0%	(36)
Other Discriminatory Experiences in Schools	**4.2%**	**(25)**

Rural LGBT students also reported policies and practices that specifically affected transgender students (4.7% of those who responded to the question), including in the refusal of school staff to use preferred gender pronouns. Others said that students at their school were only permitted to use the bathrooms or locker rooms of their legal sex, which sometimes exposed transgender students in particular to danger from other students or personal discomfort:

Male/female locker rooms made for a difficult time. A trans friend of mine (female to male) was not allowed to use the male locker rooms. Before this incident, no one knew he was biologically female. He got made fun of mercilessly. (Female student, 12th grade, NH)

Finally, some students (12.8% of those who responded) commented that the absence of inclusive and supportive policies and resources felt discriminatory, such as the lack of LGBT content in the curriculum and a lack of relevant resources in the school, including access to LGBT-related information through school computers. Several students commented on the lack of inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in their school's anti-bullying and harassment policy:

> *There's really no specific policy that discriminates, but they don't have anything to protect us, like an anti-discrimination policy or anything. I was afraid to be an out lesbian here, but I am and I am getting hate for it. (Female, 11th grade, AR)*

Together, these responses indicate that rural LGBT students are exposed to policies and practices that negatively affect their educational experiences in schools, as was found for students across the country. As with the more overt biased language and victimization, such discriminatory policies and practices may contribute negatively to the school climate.

School Engagement

In addition to reducing academic achievement and educational aspirations, harassment can also negatively affect how engaged students are in school and with their peers at school. Given that LGBT students are frequently targeted because of personal characteristics, they might feel less connected to their peers. For example, students may psychologically withdraw or feel emotionally detached from their schools when they are targets of harassment and they may be less engaged in class and in school activities. Considering that the school climate may be especially hostile in rural areas, some students may not feel comfortable being out to their peers, school staff, or members of their family. LGBT students may also feel obliged to keep silent about LGBT issues if they feel their opinions are not valued in the school setting. In order to examine possible effects of a negative school climate on student engagement in school, students in this survey were asked about their feelings of belonging at school; how out they were to peers and school personnel; and how frequently they raised LGBT issues in class and spoke with school staff about LGBT issues.

School Belonging

School belonging is an important indicator of the quality of LGBT students' school experience because it is related to educational outcomes: in general, students who feel more connected to their school perform better academically.[64] Unfortunately, LGBT students who are more victimized in school report lower school belonging.[65] In order to assess school belonging, students were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about their relationship to and connection with their schools.[66] Rural LGBT students reported significantly lower levels of school belonging than either suburban or urban students (2.40 compared to 2.56 and 2.59).[67] In that rural LGBT students experienced higher levels of victimization and were exposed to higher levels of biased remarks, it may have been the case that their decreased feelings of belonging were a result of higher victimization. However, even among LGBT students who reported fewer incidents of biased remarks and victimization, rural students reported feeling less connected to their schools than suburban or urban students.[68] This finding suggests that additional factors — such as lower community support and fewer resources

in school may contribute to rural LGBT students feeling less connected to their schools, a possibility that researchers and community advocates should examine further.

Outness

Another indicator of how much an LGBT student feels like a part of their school community can be how open they are to their peers and school staff about their sexual orientation or gender identity. Despite the risks involved in coming out, including greater victimization and lower educational outcomes, coming out is also traditionally associated with some positive outcomes, such as improved psychological well-being.[69]

As shown in Figure 18, LGBT students were much more likely to be out at school to peers than to a staff person.[70] Only 7% of rural LGBT students were not out to at least one other student, compared to one-third (34%) of students who were not out to a single school staff person.

Given the elevated levels of victimization observed in rural areas, it is perhaps surprising that rural students were no less out to peers and school staff than students in suburban or urban areas, as indicated in Figure 19.[71] More than nine in ten students across locales were out to at least one peer, and two-thirds were out to at least one staff member.

Being out may identify a student as a potential target for harassment based on sexual orientation, gender expression, and other characteristics. In our *2011 National School Climate Survey*, we found that for all LGBT students, being more out in schools was related to increased victimization.[72] Although rural students were not more or less likely to be out compared to their suburban and urban peers, they were more likely to experience victimization. Thus, it is possible that they might face more severe consequences for being out. As shown in Figure 20, across all locales, students' levels of victimization increased as their outness in school increased.[73] However, the negative effect for being out was much stronger in rural areas; students who were out to all or most of their peers were much more severely victimized in rural schools than students in suburban or urban schools.[74]

As mentioned, LGBT students who are more open about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity at school may have more positive feelings about themselves and may feel a greater part of their school. As shown in Figure 21, rural LGBT students in this survey who were out to more peers in school reported significantly higher levels of self-esteem[75] than students who were out to fewer peers[76], and this pattern was true for suburban and urban students as well.[77] Similarly, as shown in Figure 22, rural LGBT students who were more out in school also reported significantly lower levels of

Figure 18. Rural Students' Outness to Peers and School Staff

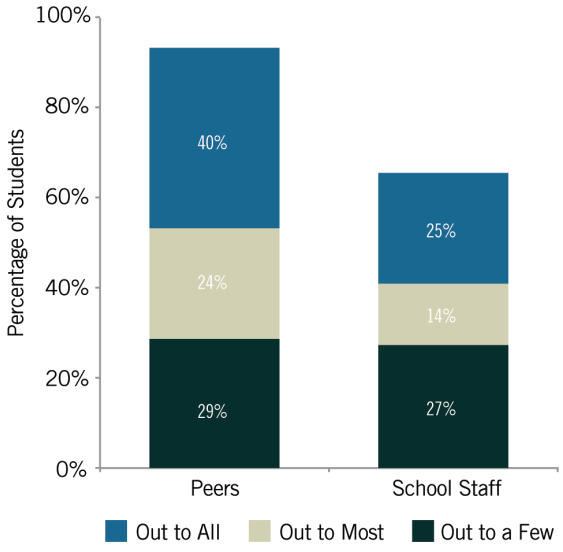


Figure 19. Outness to at Least One Person by Locale

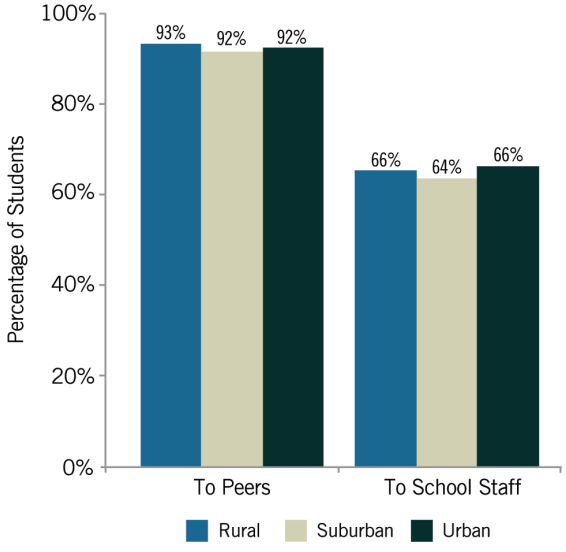


Figure 20. Outness to Students at School and Experiences of Victimization Based on Sexual Orientation, by Locale

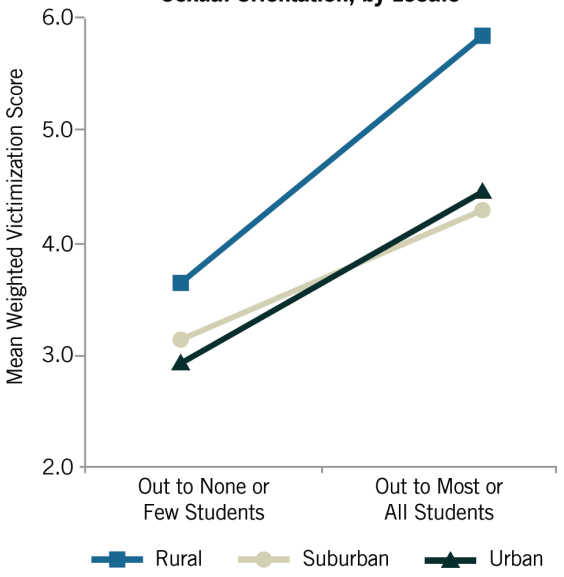


Figure 21. Outness to Students at School and Self-Esteem, by Locale

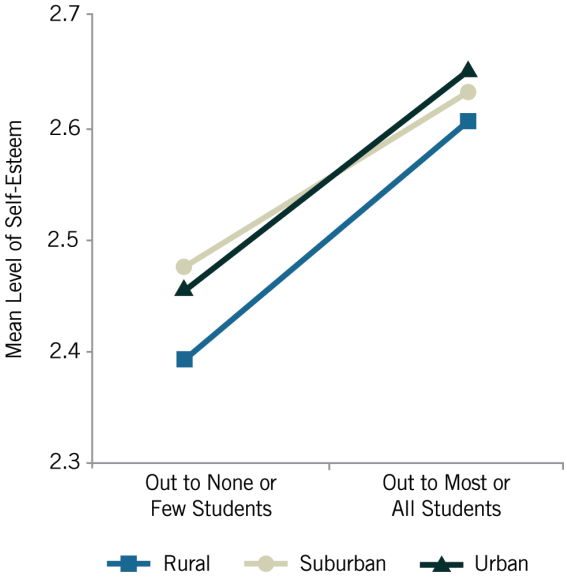


Figure 22. Outness to Students at School and Depression, by Locale

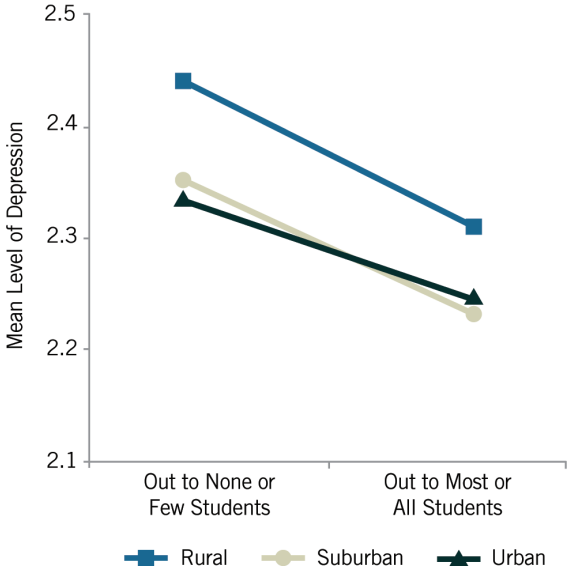
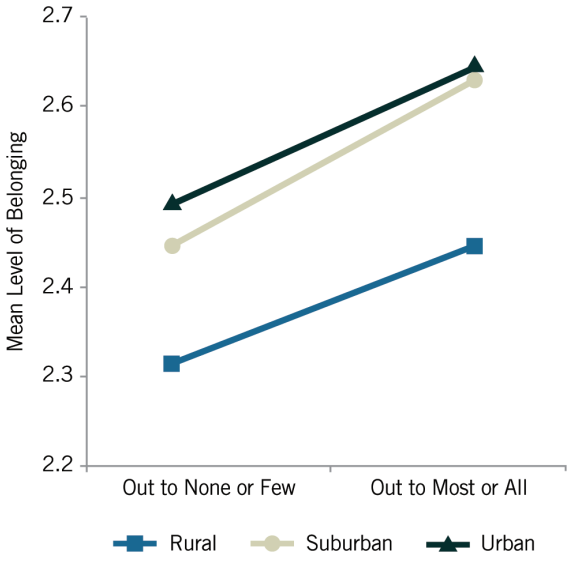


Figure 23. Outness to Students at School and Sense of School Belonging, by Locale



depression[78] than other students.[79] Nevertheless, it is important to note that rural students reported poorer well-being than students from other locales — specifically, rural students had lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depression than did suburban and urban students, regardless of how out they were.[80]

For LGBT students in general, being out at school was also associated with feeling more connected to school, and this pattern was also observed for rural students. As illustrated in Figure 23, rural LGBT students who were out to more peers at school about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity reported significantly higher levels of school belonging than students who were out to fewer peers.[81] The association between outness and belonging was similar across locales, although rural youth continued to report the lowest levels of school belonging regardless of how out they were to peers.[82] Together, these findings show that rural students were out to peers, school staff, and parents at levels similar to suburban and urban students. Being out was associated with increased victimization for all locales, though even more strongly so for rural students. Although rural students appeared to experience a similar increase in well-being and school belonging when they were out as compared to suburban and urban students, they still reported lower well-being and school belonging overall than their peers in other locales.

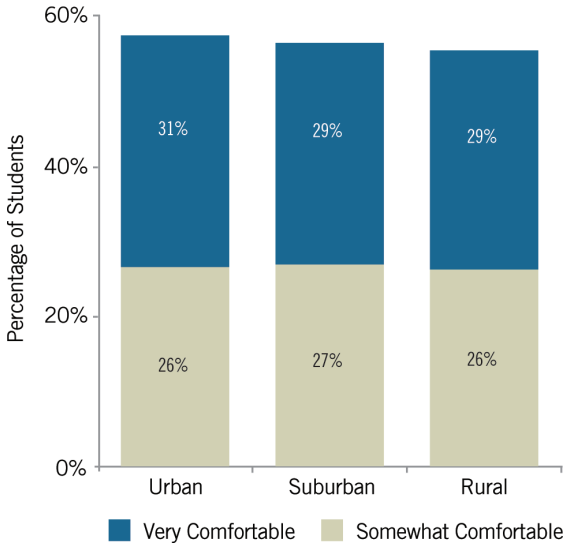
Talking about LGBT Issues in School

Another indicator of school engagement is the degree to which students feel comfortable discussing LGBT issues with school staff and raising LGBT issues in class. When students feel safer in the school environment and feel like a respected part of their school community, they may feel more comfortable raising LGBT issues in class and other school environments. As depicted in Figure 24, about half (55%) of rural LGBT students said they were comfortable raising LGBT issues in class, which is comparable to the 56% of suburban and 57% of urban students who said they were comfortable raising these issues in class.[83]

Students were also asked how comfortable they were speaking with school staff about LGBT issues. Rural LGBT students were significantly less comfortable talking to every type of school personnel than either urban or suburban students.[84] As shown in Figure 25, rural LGBT students were most comfortable talking with school counselors or teachers, yet even for these two types of staff, only half of respondents reported feeling comfortable (52% and 48%, respectively). Rural LGBT students were least comfortable talking about these issues with a school safety or resource officer (22%) or a gym teacher or athletic coach (19%).[85]

As shown in Figure 26, students were also asked how frequently they had raised LGBT issues with school staff. Whereas a little less than half (48%) of rural students said they were comfortable discussing LGBT issues with teachers, a slightly higher percentage (57%) said they had actually discussed LGBT issues with a teacher. In addition, nearly a third (31%) had talked with counselors about LGBT issues in the past year. It is interesting to note that, with the exception of teachers, students were more likely to say they would be comfortable talking with the different types of staff than actually had talked with them.

Figure 24. Comfort Level Raising LGBT Issues in Class by Locale



In comparing the frequency of discussing LGBT issues across locales, rural students were largely similar to urban and suburban students. The only significant differences were that rural students reported slightly lower rates of discussing LGBT issues with teachers[86], counselors[87], and school resource/safety officers[88] than suburban and urban students. This pattern is surprising, considering that rural students were consistently less comfortable talking with each type of school staff than urban and suburban students. As we found with being out in school, these findings suggest that rural LGBT students were relatively open about LGBT issues in the school environment in spite of decreased personal comfort or increased risk for harm.

Being able to speak with school personnel about LGBT issues may help LGBT students feel more connected to their school community. Thus, we might expect students who talk to staff about LGBT issues to feel greater belonging to their school community. As shown in Figure 27, students who talked with teachers, principals, vice principals, counselors, nurses, librarians, and gym teachers at least once in the past year reported a much greater sense of school belonging than students who did not talk with these staff members about LGBT issues.[89] Only for safety/resource officers was discussing LGBT issues not associated with greater school belonging.[90] In that these personnel are often used to maintain school safety, this observation might be an indicator of LGBT youth being treated as perpetrators, or perhaps simply that they speak with these people only when they have been in trouble; such instances would understandably not be associated with the increases in school belonging observed for talking with other types of school personnel.

Together, these findings indicate interesting patterns of school engagement for rural LGBT students. Although rural LGBT students reported high levels of victimization, half were comfortable raising LGBT issues in class, and more than half had discussed LGBT issues with a teacher at least once during the past year. In addition, rural LGBT youth were just as out in school as suburban and urban students. Thus, despite considerable risk involved in being LGBT in rural schools, rural LGBT students reported behaviors that in many ways were similar to their suburban and urban counterparts.

Figure 25. Comfort Talking with School Staff about LGBT Issues by Locale

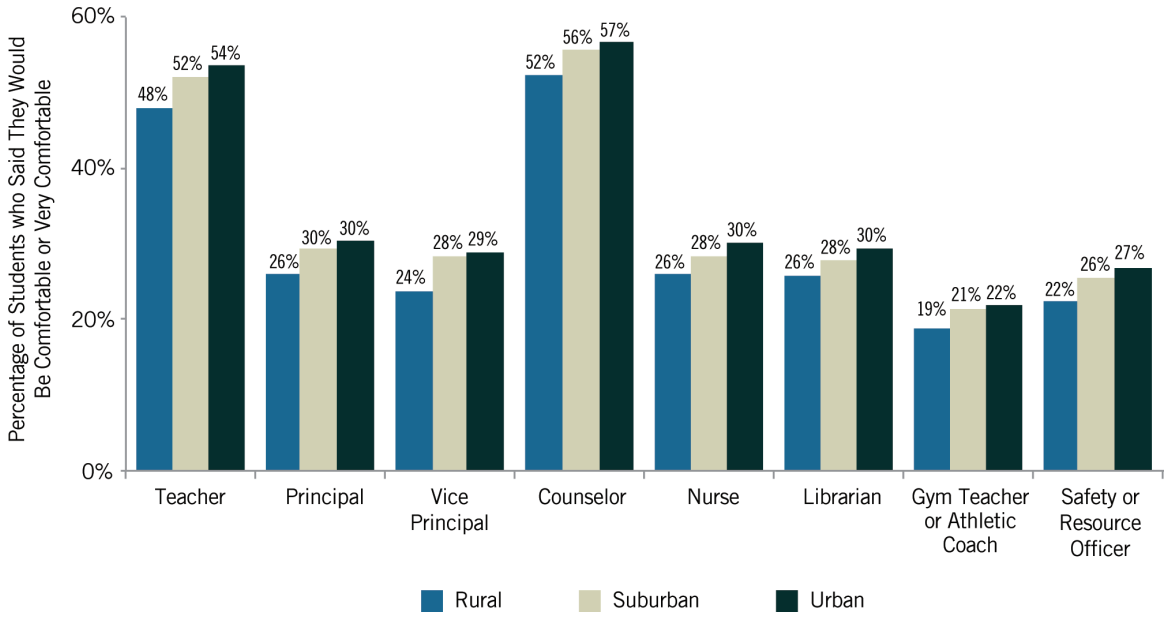


Figure 26. Talking to School Staff about LGBT Issues by Locale

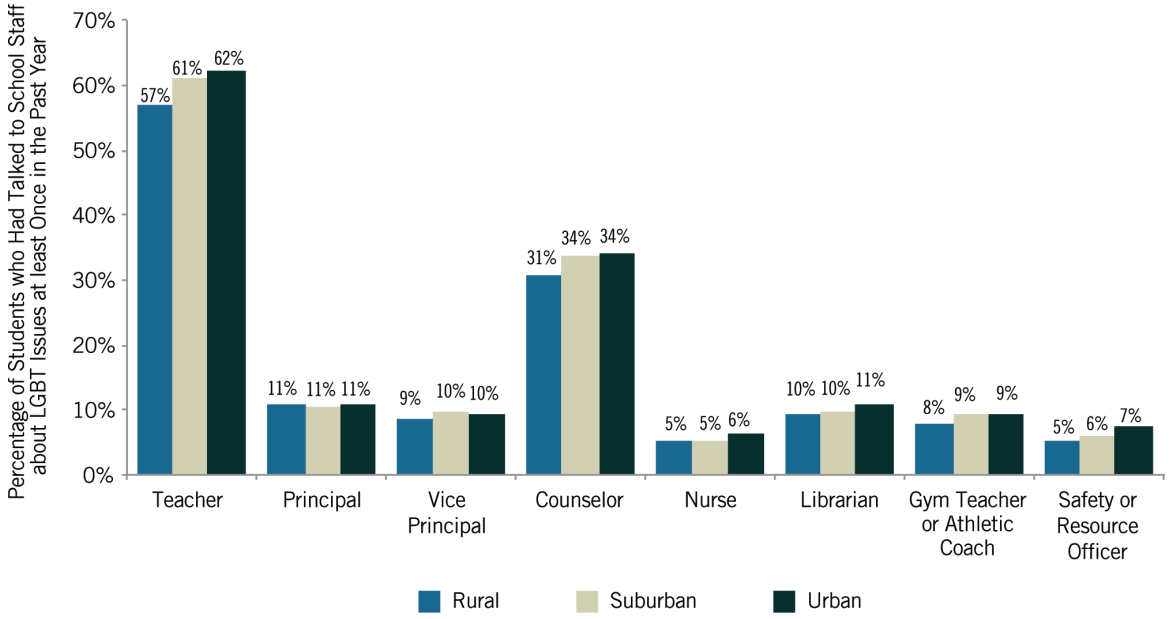
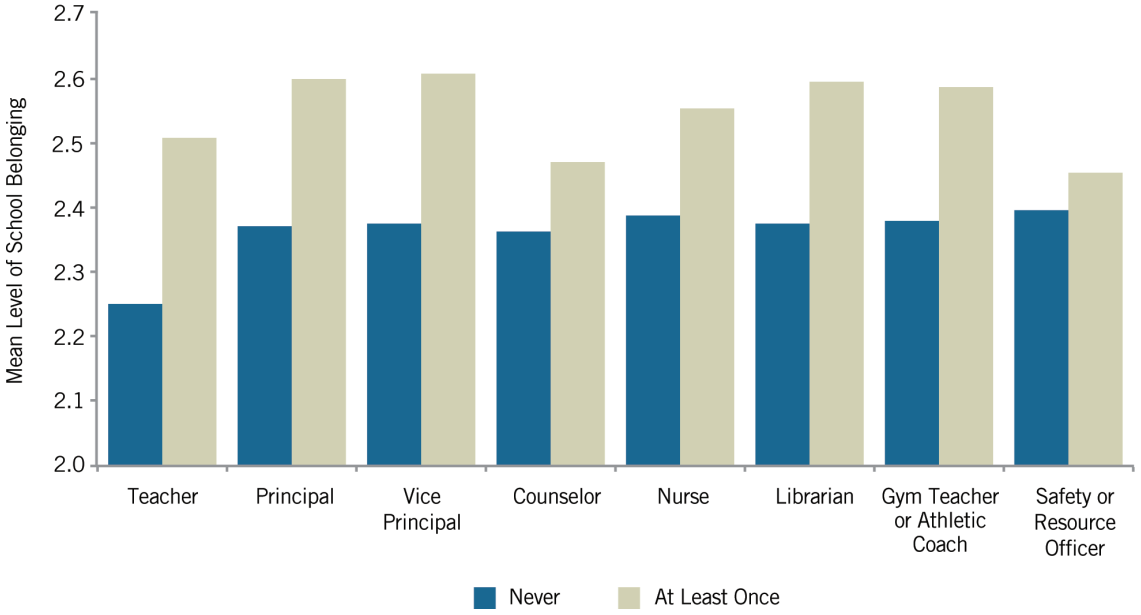


Figure 27. Rural Students' Sense of School Belonging and Talking about LGBT Issues to School Staff in the Past Year



Resources & Supports

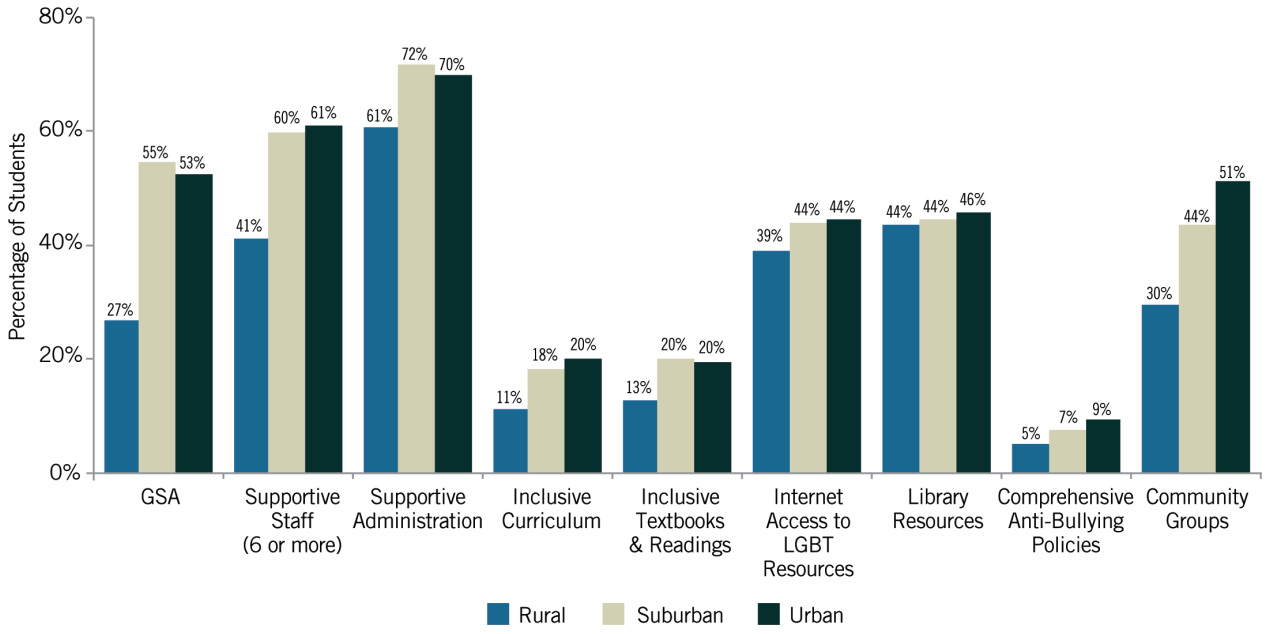
Across locales, LGBT students often encounter hostile school settings, and such environments can have negative consequences for psychological well-being and educational success. LGBT-related resources can help counter these negative influences, as well as positively affect the school climate and enhance the learning environment for LGBT students. Especially given that students in rural areas report more negative school experiences than those in other locales, it is important to understand the availability of LGBT-related resources in rural areas of the country. Students in the *2011 National School Climate Survey* were asked about the prevalence of LGBT-related resources, such as supportive student clubs, curricular resources, and school policies for addressing harassment and assault.[91] They were also asked about support from peers and school personnel. In this section, we discuss the availability of resources for rural LGBT students and any differences between rural students and their urban and suburban peers.

Curricular Resources

Rural LGBT students have limited access to LGBT-related curricular resources, and their access is consistently lower than students in suburban and urban areas. As shown in Figure 28, only 11% of rural LGBT students reported having an LGBT-inclusive curriculum (i.e., having been taught positive things about LGBT people, history, or events in their classes), significantly less than the 18% of suburban and 20% of urban students.[92] Their textbooks and assigned readings were also less likely to include information about LGBT persons, history, or events (13%, compared to 20% of suburban and 20% of urban students).[93] Rural students also reported less access to LGBT-related content on the Internet using school computers: 39% of rural LGBT students whose school computers had Internet access said that they could access LGBT-related websites, compared to 44% of suburban students and 44% of urban students.[94] In addition, only 44% of rural students said they had access to LGBT-related resources in the school library, though their availability was not different from suburban and urban students.[95]

Participants in this survey were also asked about the sex education provided at their school and whether it used an abstinence-only approach — that is, that students should not have sex until marriage, which is a current impossibility for most LGBT adults in the U.S. Existing research demonstrates that many abstinence-only curricula provide misleading and medically inaccurate information about sexuality and sexual health, and also that they commonly ignore the needs of LGBT youth, who may not receive accurate information about HIV prevention

Figure 28. Prevalence of LGBT-Related Resources in Schools by Locale



and relevant information on sexual health matters.[96] Overall, rural (and urban) students were only slightly less likely than suburban students to have been taught any curriculum about sexual health (84% of rural students, vs. 87% of suburban students and 83% of urban students).[97] However, rural LGBT students were more likely to have been taught to practice abstinence-only in sex education (see Figure 29). One-third (32%) of rural LGBT students said they were taught an abstinence-only sexual health curriculum, which was greater than the 28% of suburban students and 25% of urban students who were taught abstinence-only.[98]

Supportive Student Clubs

School clubs supportive of LGBT students and topics, such as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), serve as another critical resource in creating safe spaces for LGBT students. The *2011 National School Climate Survey*, for instance, reported that students in schools with a GSA heard fewer homophobic remarks and were less likely to report feeling unsafe or having been victimized because of their sexual orientation or gender expression than students who attended schools without GSAs. Furthermore, they were more likely to report that teachers and other staff members intervened when they heard homophobic remarks.[99]

As with curricular resources, GSAs were much less prevalent in rural areas than in suburban or urban areas: 27% of rural students reported having a GSA at school, compared to 55% of suburban students and 53% of urban students.[100] However, when there was a GSA at school, rural students were more likely to attend than urban and suburban students. As shown in Figure 30, 58% of rural LGBT students who attended school with a GSA reported that they attended frequently or often, compared to 49% of urban and 53% of suburban school students.[101] This difference suggests that GSAs may serve as a particularly important resource for rural LGBT students, especially when compared to urban LGBT students. Given that rural students also experienced higher levels of victimization than their peers in other locales, it may be that students in rural areas were likelier to seek out their GSA as a safe space — one where they could receive support as well as resources to cope with or address victimization.[102]

Community programs or groups for LGBT youth that take place outside of the school environment may serve a similar purpose as school-based GSAs. Unfortunately, rural LGBT students were also much less likely than suburban or urban students to live in communities with a program or group for LGBT youth (30% vs. 44% and 51%, respectively).[103] In

Figure 29. Sexual Health Curricula in Rural Schools

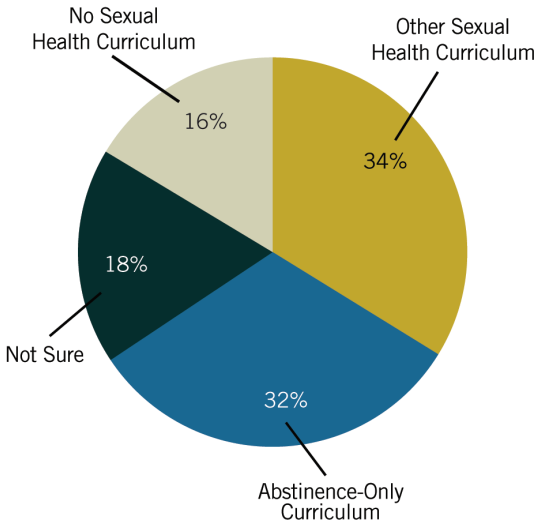
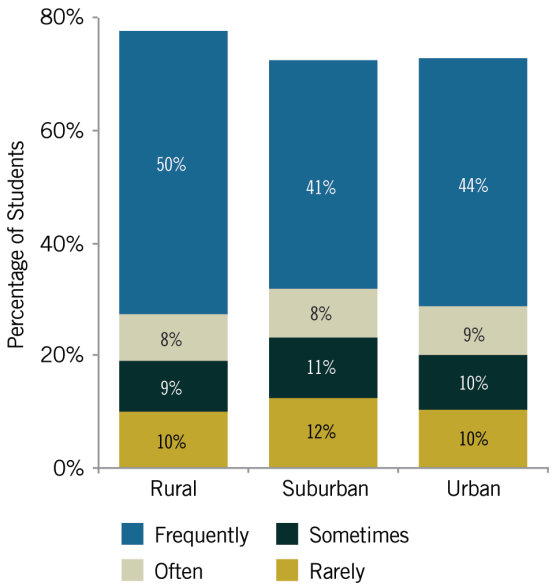


Figure 30. Frequency of GSA Attendance by Locale



fact, students who attended schools without a GSA were also much less likely to live in a community with a community group or program for LGBT youth (see Figure 31).[104] For instance, among rural students, only 21% of students who attended schools without a GSA had a community group or program available as an alternative resource. These findings suggest a shortage of school- and community-based clubs for LGBT students in rural areas. It also suggests, perhaps, that some rural areas may be in even greater need of resources for LGBT youth than others.

Supportive School Personnel

School personnel serve as another important resource for LGBT youth. Having supportive teachers and other school staff has been shown to be positively related to the academic experiences of students in general.[105] Because LGBT students, particularly in rural areas, may feel unsafe and experience victimization at school, being able to solicit help from a supportive adult at school may be crucial to creating safer leaning environments. Fortunately, as shown in Figure 32, the vast majority of rural LGBT students (94%) in this survey reported knowing at least one school staff person supportive of LGBT students. However, on average, rural students knew fewer supportive staff members than students in other areas of the country. For instance, only 41% of rural students knew many (6 or more) teachers or staff members supportive of LGBT students, compared to 60% of suburban and 61% of urban students) (see Figure 32).[106]

School administrators also play an important role in creating a safe school environment because they help establish school policies on harassment and bullying, are in a position to provide training and support to teachers and other staff members regarding LGBT issues, and also help set the tone of the overall school environment. As shown in Figure 33, 25% of rural LGBT students reported having an administration supportive of LGBT students, lower than the 35% of students in suburban schools and 36% in urban schools who said that their administration was supportive of LGBT students.[107]

Figure 31. Prevalence of LGBT Community Groups by Locale and Presence of a GSA

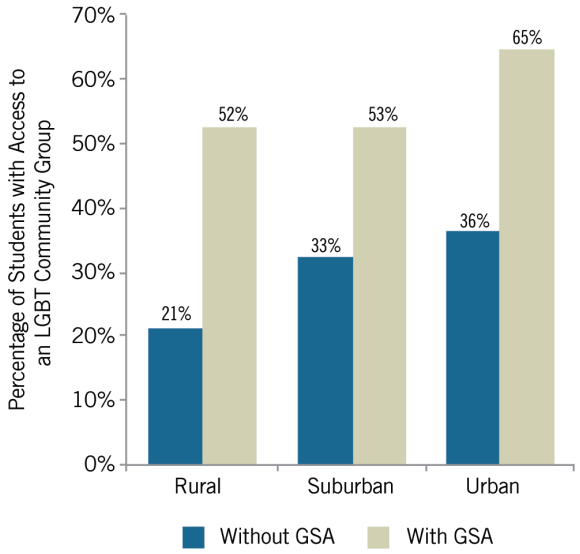
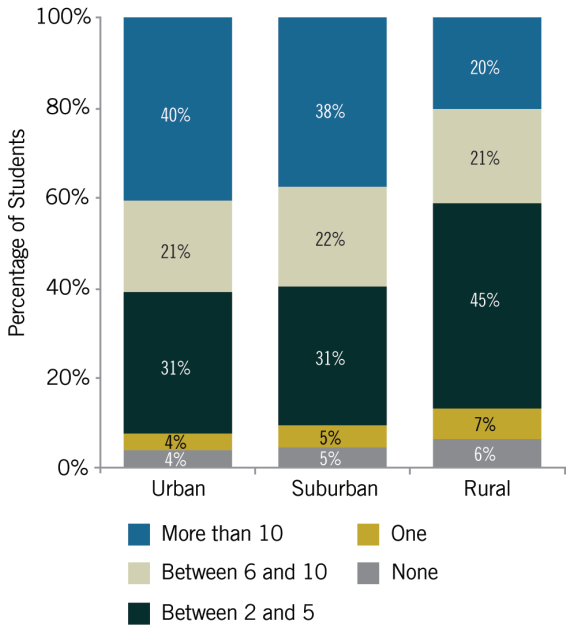


Figure 32. Number of Teachers and School Staff Supportive of LGBT Students by Locale



Supportive Peers

Supportive peers also have the ability to make the learning environment more positive for LGBT students.[108] Rural LGBT students, however, may face significant resistance from peers. As depicted in Figure 33, only 28% of rural students reported that other students in their schools were accepting of LGBT students, indicating that peers in rural areas were significantly less accepting than in suburban (33% accepting) or urban (46% accepting) areas. [109]

Students in rural areas may also face difficulty in finding peers who share similar experiences.[110] Rural students were significantly less likely to have access to a GSA or LGBT community group, for instance (see Figure 28). Although most students regardless of locale knew at least one other LGBT peer, rural (and suburban) LGBT students knew substantially fewer LGBT peers than LGBT students in other areas of the country, even after accounting for the smaller sizes of many rural schools. For instance, as shown in Figure 34, only 52% of students in rural areas knew many (six or more) other LGBT students, compared to 63% of suburban students and 66% of urban students.[111]

School Harassment & Assault Policies

An additional resource that can substantially contribute to safer schools for LGBT students is the implementation of school anti-bullying policies that specifically enumerate protection based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. As shown in the *2011 National School Climate Survey*, policies that include these protections were found to be associated with a lower frequency of hearing homophobic remarks in school and negative remarks about gender expression. They were also associated with lower rates of victimization and more effective intervention when negative remarks are made.[112]

Unfortunately, few LGBT students in rural areas reported that their schools had comprehensive harassment and bullying policies that specifically enumerated sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. As shown in Figure 35, only 18% of rural students attended schools with policies that enumerated sexual orientation or gender expression, including only 5% who said that their schools enumerated both (i.e., had comprehensive policies). Although comprehensive policies were uncommon regardless of locale, rural students were less likely

Figure 33. Acceptance/Support from Students and School Administration in Rural Schools

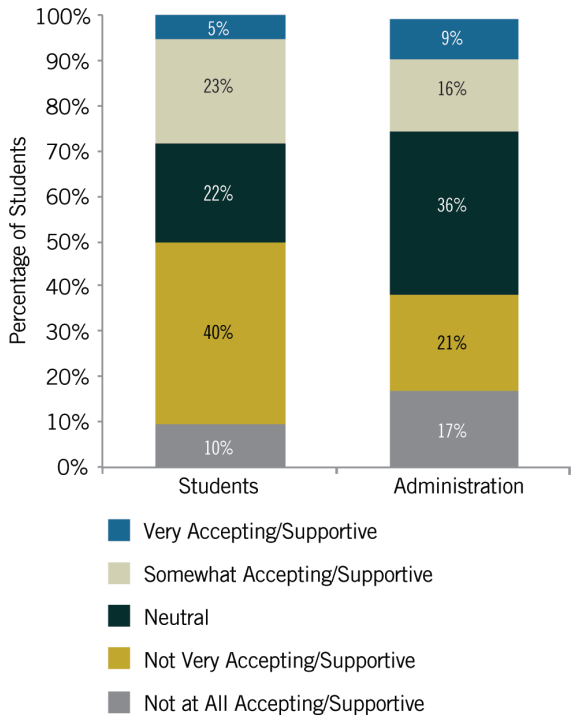


Figure 34. Number of Other LGBT Students at School by Locale

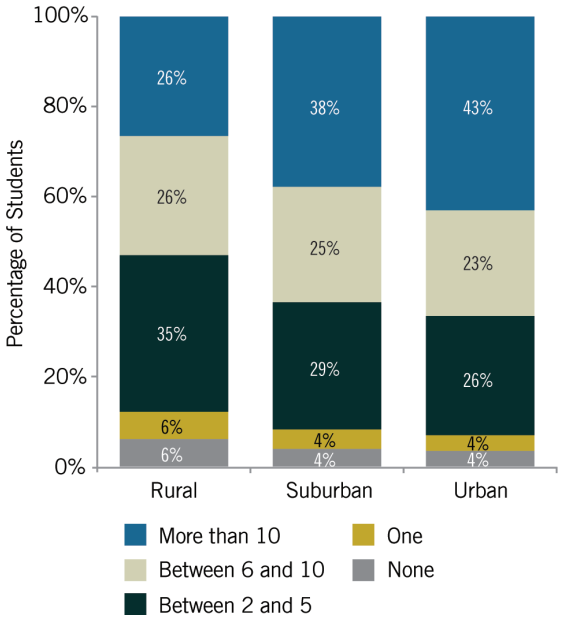
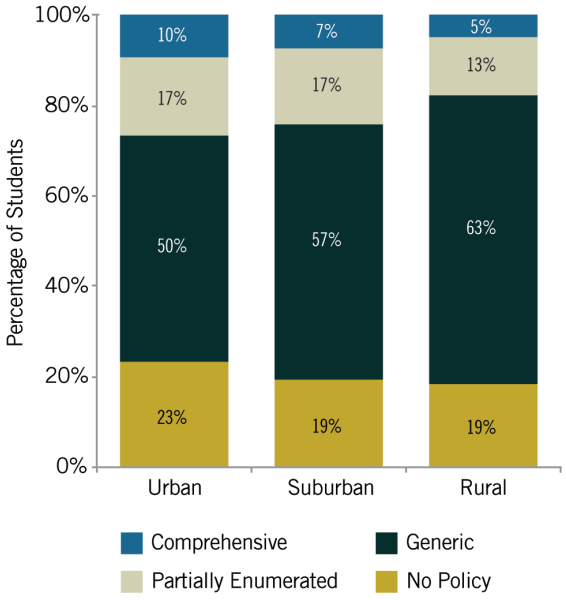


Figure 35. Type of Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy by Locale



than urban or suburban students to attend schools with comprehensive policies (5% of rural vs. 8% of suburban and 10% of urban students).[113] They were also more likely than urban students to have no policy at all.[114]

Given that comprehensive policies have been associated with better school environments, it is alarming that so few schools — whether rural, suburban, or urban — specifically protect students on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Thus, strategies to improve the school experience for LGBT students must include efforts to provide them with greater institutional protections.

The Benefits of LGBT-Related Resources and Supports

LGBT-related resources — student clubs, supportive teachers and staff members, inclusive curricular resources, and comprehensive anti-bullying and harassment policies — serve as important resources because they have the power to change school cultures and practices. In this section, we discuss the utility of LGBT-related resources for rural LGBT students. Although these resources have been found to be associated with greater access to education, educational achievement, educational aspirations, and overall school climate for the national LGBT youth population[115], it is important to examine their impact in rural environments specifically in order to ensure that safe school efforts are as effective as possible. Accordingly, we examine the relationship between school supports and overall school climate, as well as the relationship between supports and well-being and school belonging for rural LGBT students.

School Climate

Each of the four LGBT-related school supports examined here — supportive clubs, supportive staff members, inclusive curricula, and comprehensive policies — was associated with lower levels of victimization due to sexual orientation. For instance, rural LGBT students who did not have a GSA at their school reported a weighted victimization score of 5.52, higher than the 3.85 for rural students who did have a GSA at their school (see Figure 36).[116] In addition, rural LGBT students who had many supportive educators experienced lower victimization than students with no supportive educators; rural students with an inclusive curriculum had lower victimization than students without an inclusive curriculum; and those with a comprehensive policy (i.e., which enumerated both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) experienced lower victimization than students with no anti-bullying/harassment policy.[117] In a similar fashion, LGBT-related supports were associated with lower levels of victimization based on gender expression.[118]

Psychological Well-Being and Connection to School

LGBT-related resources have also been shown to be related to better psychological well-being and attachment to school. Findings show that the four LGBT-related school supports examined here were also associated with better psychological outcomes specifically for rural LGBT students. For instance, rural LGBT students who had many supportive educators reported an average school belonging score of 2.70, higher than the 2.00 observed for students who did not have any supportive educators at their school (see Figure 37).[119] In addition, rural LGBT students who had a GSA at their school reported higher belonging than those who did not; rural students with an inclusive curriculum had lower victimization than students without an inclusive curriculum; and those with a comprehensive policy experienced less victimization than students with no anti-bullying/harassment policy.[120] These resources were also found to be associated with lower depression[121] and higher self-esteem among rural LGBT students.[122]

Figure 36. Rual Students' Experiences of Victimization Based on Sexual Orientation and Presence of LGBT-Related Resources

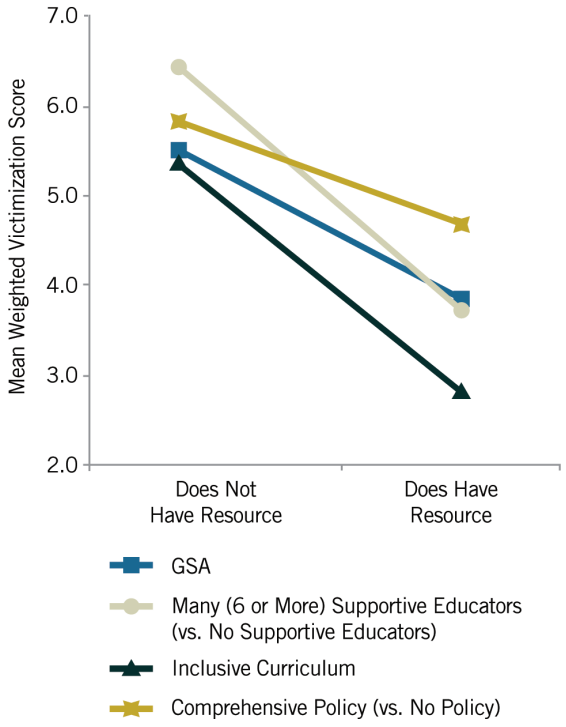
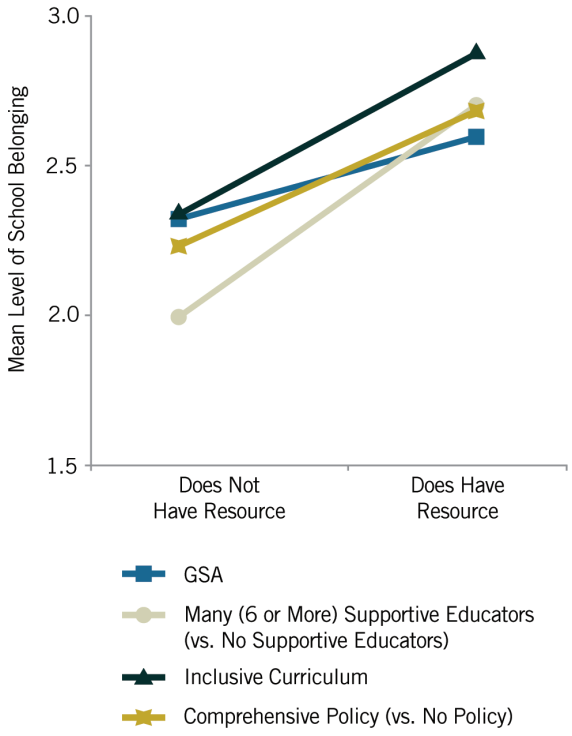


Figure 37. Rural Students' Sense of School Belonging and Presence of LGBT-Related Resources



Conclusion & Recommendations

Limitations

The methods used for this survey resulted in a nationally representative sample of LGBT youth. However, it is important to note that the sample is representative only of youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, have some connection to the LGBT community (either through their local youth organization or through the Internet), and/or have a Facebook page. Thus, we may not have reached LGBT students who were not connected to LGBT community organizations in some way or who had limited access to computers or the Internet. We also cannot make determinations from our data about the experiences of youth who might be engaging in same-sex sexual activity or experiencing same-sex attractions but who do not identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or something else other than heterosexual (e.g., queer).

Just as there are no known population parameters of LGBT youth overall, we cannot be certain as to the representativeness of our sample of rural LGBT youth relative to the larger population of rural LGBT youth. Our national sample was slightly more suburban and slightly less rural than the population of secondary school students in the United States.[123] It is possible that our methods had less reach in rural areas, and/or that they resulted in a rural LGBT youth sample that is more connected than the overall rural LGBT youth population. It is also possible that youth in rural areas who might eventually identify as LGBT as adults do not identify as such as youth.

The percentage of youth of color was lower than the general population of secondary school students, which may be another possible limitation to the survey. However, our participant outreach methods have resulted in increased representation of youth of color over the years, and the characteristics of the rural LGBT sample were similar to those found in the rural school population in general: more White than in other areas, more likely to attend public schools and smaller schools, and more likely to live in the South and Midwest.[124] Any discrepancies may also have resulted from different methods for measuring race/ethnicity, as most national youth surveys restrict students to selecting only one racial category, and do not provide a multiracial response option.[125] In contrast, we allow for students in our survey to select multiple options for their race/ethnicity, and code students who selected two or more racial categories as being multiracial.[126]

It is also important to note that our survey only reflects the experiences of LGBT students who were in school during the 2010–2011 school year. Thus, findings from this survey may not necessarily reflect the experiences of LGBT youth who have dropped out of school, whose experiences with a hostile school climate or access to supportive resources may differ from those students who remained in school.

Discussion

School settings may often pose significant dangers for LGBT students across the country. Findings in this report suggest that the experiences of victimization may be more frequent, and the number of resources fewer, in rural and small town areas than in other areas of the country. Experiences of victimization and other outcomes were commonly worse for rural students than for suburban and urban students. This stands in contrast to common depictions of urban schools as the least safe for students in general. Almost all of the rural LGBT students in this survey reported feeling unsafe at school. Compared to their suburban and urban peers, rural LGBT students experienced more derogatory comments as well as more direct harassment in school on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender expression. They were also more frequently the target of relational bullying, cyberbullying, and intentional property damage. As we find for all LGBT students, rural students also reported that school staff members most often failed to effectively address their experiences of victimization.

Given that attitudes about LGBT people in general may be less tolerant in rural and small town areas, it is perhaps surprising that rural LGBT students were

no less likely to be out to school staff and peers than suburban and urban LGBT students. However, our report reveals that the consequences they face for being open about being LGBT are more severe than those experienced by suburban and urban students, however. Although being more out at school was related to higher levels of victimization for LGBT students in general, the relationship was even stronger for rural LGBT students.

Even though this report depicts substantially more negative school experiences for rural LGBT students compared to suburban and urban students, it is not meant to suggest that rural and small town areas of the country are universally negative places for LGBT persons. Indeed, a small but enlightening body of scholarship has examined how LGBT people in rural areas of the country resist characterizations of their experiences as inferior to those in urban locales and create strong and meaningful communities.[127] Nonetheless, it does suggest that although rural LGBT youth are at times resilient, they continue to face stigma, greater victimization, and lower access to resources. Although most LGBT students overall reported a lack of positive, LGBT-related resources in their school, this problem was particularly pronounced for students in rural and small town areas. Rural LGBT students were far less likely to have a GSA in their school, to say that their school curricula were inclusive of LGBT persons and events, and to report having a comprehensive anti-bullying policy at school. Furthermore, they were less likely to report that the administration at their school was supportive of LGBT students. Even though the vast majority of rural LGBT students reported knowing at least one school staff person supportive of LGBT students, rural students still reported fewer supportive educators, on average, than students in rural and urban areas.

It is important to note that rural LGBT students benefit from LGBT-related school and community resources, particularly school personnel and GSAs. Despite feeling uncomfortable talking with school staff about LGBT issues, rural LGBT students nonetheless discussed these issues with staff as frequently or nearly as frequently as students from other areas of the country. Moreover, discussing these issues was associated with greater school belonging for nearly every type of school personnel. These findings suggest that school personnel serve as important resources in rural schools, even if students are less comfortable approaching them about LGBT issues.

In addition, GSAs may serve particular importance in rural areas. Compared to students in urban or suburban areas, students in rural areas were more likely to attend GSAs when their schools had them. When they are present, GSAs may help rural LGBT students build a support network of other LGBT students and supportive peers. Nevertheless, findings from this report highlight the heightened potential for isolation among LGBT students in rural areas. LGBT youth in rural and small town areas were less likely to have access to an LGBT community group, less likely to have a GSA in their school, and knew fewer LGBT peers at school, than LGBT students in other locales. Thus, these findings also indicate continued need for LGBT-related resources in rural and small town areas.

Future Directions for Research

This report fills an important gap in our knowledge of the experiences of rural and small town LGBT youth. Although we provide a broad perspective of the experiences of LGBT students living in rural areas, more can be learned about differences within the rural LGBT student population. Future research should examine how racial/ethnic identity intersects with locale and other characteristics in influencing the experiences of LGBT youth. Similarly, it would be important to understand the unique experience of transgender students in rural areas. Research should consider the role that additional factors play in communities and in the school experiences of LGBT students, such as religion, socioeconomic status, and local traditions and culture. National population-based surveys of youth, such as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, need to include questions about sexual orientation and gender identity to allow for more in-depth examination of the experiences of rural student experiences.

Given that rural students reported substantially higher levels of victimization than students in other areas of the country and substantially fewer LGBT-related resources than other youth, it is important for future research to examine whether different interventions are more or less effective in different types of communities, particularly across different locales. In addition, more knowledge is needed about possible differences in implementation across locales — certain types of

interventions may be less difficult or controversial to implement in rural and small town settings. Furthermore, more formative research is needed that examines new strategies for creating safer school climates for LGBT students in rural schools. Given that LGBT rural students reported having fewer LGBT-related supports, it is important for future research to examine both the resilience of students experiencing hostile school climates as well as strategies used by rural students to seek support, perhaps especially when they encounter resistance in the school and community environments.

Recommendations

These findings demonstrate a clear need for safer and more inclusive learning environments for LGBT students in rural and small town areas. Anti-LGBT bullying is a problem in many areas of the country, but this report suggests that efforts to address anti-LGBT bullying may require particular attention in rural areas. Educators, policymakers, and supporters of safe school initiatives can use the information in this report to better understand the specific experiences of rural LGBT students and take appropriate steps to make rural schools safer and more inclusive for LGBT students.

The *2011 National School Climate Survey* found that school- and community-based resources — GSAs, supportive staff, comprehensive policies, inclusive curricula, and LGBT youth groups — are associated with safer schools for LGBT students.[128] Unfortunately, rural schools are much less likely to have these kinds of resources and supports than suburban and urban areas. Given that rural and small town areas may be more politically and socially conservative, they may also be somewhat resistant to implementation of these measures in the future. Therefore, pursuing LGBT-related resources and supports may require alternative strategies in rural areas. Education leaders and safe school advocates may find it useful to partner with other organizations to create a broader movement to advocate for safe schools, which include LGBT-specific policies and practices. Members of rural and small town LGBT communities may also find it valuable to establish community groups and programming for LGBT youth, as they seem to be particularly absent from rural and small town areas.

It is important to acknowledge the challenges posed by limited resources and the low population densities of rural areas. These factors may necessitate innovative approaches to making schools safer for rural LGBT students. For instance, increasing access to LGBT-related resources through computers may help students access resources and information that might not otherwise be available or offered in the classroom. Rural educators might also advocate for new or additional technologies that would provide access to online communities and supports for more geographically (and otherwise) isolated youth.

LGBT students were most comfortable talking to counselors and teachers about LGBT issues. However, the prevalence of supportive educators was lower in rural areas; thus, there is a need for greater emphasis on professional development for school professionals in rural areas. In addition to professional development, it may be even more important for supportive educators to identify themselves more intentionally as allies, through public support for LGBT students, such as use of GLSEN's Safe Space stickers and posters, inclusion of LGBT content in class materials, and support for student events such as Ally Week or the Day of Silence. Given that rural areas appear most likely to lack GSAs and community-based LGBT youth groups, it may be even more important for supportive educators in rural schools to consider sponsoring a GSA or a similar club supportive of LGBT student issues.

Together, these recommendations will help make schools safer for all students in school, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or locale.

Notes & References

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14 Locale information was captured by asking students for their school district and/or zip code. These were then matched with NCES school district-level information.

15 In this study, "rural" refers to rural and small town students. Statistical comparison tests suggested that students from these areas could be treated similarly in statistical analysis; in addition, the aggregation into a single "rural" category generates a sample size adequate for subsample comparisons. Categories "suburban" and "urban" were aggregated in similar ways and for similar reasons.

16 To test demographic differences across locale, several analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted. To test differences in race, an analysis of variance was conducted with race as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale was significant: $F(2, 7845)=94.657$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.024. To test differences in school type, an analysis of variance was conducted with attending a public school as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale was significant: $F(2, 7845)=56.863$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.014. To test differences in region, an analysis of variance was conducted with south, midwest, west, and northeast as the dependent variables, and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale was significant at the $p<0.001$ for each region, with effect sizes ranging from .010 to .039. To test differences in school size, an analysis of variance was conducted with school size as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale was significant: $F(2, 7845)=351.009$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.082. Rural, suburban, and urban samples did not differ demographically in other respects.

17 Based on paired sample comparison tests: students were significantly more likely to hear biased language from students than from teachers for homophobic remarks ($t=81.863$, $p<0.001$), racist remarks ($t=58.032$, $p<0.001$), sexist remarks ($t=62.689$, $p<0.001$), and negative remarks regarding gender expression ($t=52.635$, $p<0.001$).

18 To test differences across locale in hearing biased languages, several analyses (ANOVAs) of variance were conducted, with frequency of heading the biased remark as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effects were significant for hearing "gay" in a negative way: $F(2, 8144)=56.32$, $p<0.001$, effect size =.014; hearing other homophobic remarks; $F(2, 8137)=85.16$, $p<0.001$, effect size =.020; hearing remarks about someone not acting masculine enough: $F(2, 8127)=22.37$, $p<0.001$, effect size =.005; hearing remarks about someone not acting feminine enough: $F(2, 8127)=16.13$, $p<0.001$, effect size =.004; hearing racist remarks: $F(2, 8135)=8.29$, $p<0.001$, effect size =.002; and hearing sexist remarks: $F(2, 8124)=4.56$, $p<0.01$, effect size =.001.

19 To test differences across locale, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with frequency of hearing the phrase "no homo" as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale was significant: $F(2, 8143)=3.52$, $p<0.05$, effect size =.001.

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21 Based on paired sample comparison tests: students said teachers were more likely to intervene when they heard racist remarks than homophobic remarks ($t=31.553$, $p<0.001$), sexist remarks ($t=15.565$, $p<0.001$), and negative remarks regarding gender expression ($t=29.024$, $p<0.001$).

22 To test differences in rates of intervention in biased remarks across locales, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with staff intervention most of the time or always as the dependent variable, and locale as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's trace=.004, $F(8, 7924)=1.945$, $p<.05$. The univariate effect of locale in intervening in homophobic remarks was significant: $F(2, 3964)=4.881$, $p<0.01$. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that suburban staff members were more likely to intervene than rural staff members. Urban staff members were not different from either group. The univariate effect of locale in intervening in racist remarks was not significant: $F(2, 3964)=.326$, $p>0.10$. The univariate effect of locale in intervening in sexist remarks was not significant: $F(2, 3964)=1.472$, $p>0.10$. The univariate effect of locale in intervening in negative remarks about gender expression was not significant: $F(2, 3964)=0.099$, $p>0.10$.

23 Based on paired sample comparison tests: students were significantly less likely to intervene than teachers in homophobic remarks ($t=20.026$, $p<0.001$), racist remarks ($t=43.345$, $p<0.001$), sexist remarks ($t=25.832$, $p<0.001$), and negative remarks regarding gender expression ($t=9.676$, $p<0.001$).

24 Based on paired sample comparison tests: students were more likely to intervene when they heard racist remarks than homophobic remarks ($t=13.637$, $p<0.001$), and negative remarks regarding gender expression ($t=14.033$, $p<0.001$). They were also more likely to intervene when they heard sexist remarks than in homophobic remarks ($t=13.219$, $p<0.001$) and negative remarks regarding gender expression ($t=14.195$, $p<0.001$).

25 To test differences in rates of intervention in biased remarks across locales, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with student intervention most of the time or always as the dependent variable, and locale as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was marginally significant: Pillai's trace=.002, F(8, 14060)=1.788, $p<.10$. The univariate effect of locale in intervening in homophobic remarks was only marginally significant: F(2, 7032)=2.328, $p<0.10$; the differences were not all that meaningful however, as only 6% of urban students were reported to intervene most or all of the time to homophobic remarks, compared to 5% of rural students and 5% of suburban students. The univariate effect of locale in intervening in racist remarks was not significant: F(2, 7032)=2.277, $p>0.10$. The univariate effect of locale in intervening in sexist remarks was not significant: F(2, 7032)=2.250, $p>0.10$. The univariate effect of locale in intervening in negative remarks about gender expression was not significant: F(2, 7032)=0.992, $p>0.10$.

26 A chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentages of students who reported feeling unsafe at all by locale: $\chi^2=77.041$, $df=2$, $p<.001$, $\Phi=.098$. Adjusted *p*-values indicated that rural students were more likely to report having feeling unsafe than urban and suburban students.

27 To test differences across locale in feeling unsafe due to sexual orientation, an analysis of covariance (ANOVA) was conducted with the proportion of students feeling unsafe due to their sexual orientation as the dependent variable, locale as the independent variable, and sexual orientation as a covariate. The main effect of locale was significant: F(2, 8013)=44.793, $p<0.001$, effect size=.011.

28 To test differences across locale in feeling unsafe due to gender expression, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with the proportion of students feeling unsafe due to their gender expression as the dependent variable, locale as the independent variable, and gender identity and sexual orientation as covariates. The main effect of locale was significant: F(2, 7993)=18.611, $p<0.001$, effect size=.005.

29 Based on effect sizes for locale in the preceding analyses.

30 To test differences across locale in feeling unsafe due to religion, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with the proportion of students feeling unsafe due to their religion as the dependent variable, locale as the independent variable, and religion as a covariate. The main effect of locale was significant: F(2, 7951)=39.160, $p<0.001$, effect size=.010.

31 To test differences in feeling unsafe due to gender across locale, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with the proportion of students feeling unsafe due to their gender as the dependent variable, locale as the independent variable, and sexual orientation and gender identity as covariates. The main effect of locale was not significant: F(2, 7993)=.199, $p>.10$. To test differences in feeling unsafe due to race across locale, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with the proportion of students feeling unsafe due to their race as the dependent variable, locale as the independent variable, and race as a covariate. The main effect of locale was significant: F(2, 7974)=7.3162, $p<.001$, effect size=.002. To test differences in feeling unsafe due to a disability across locale, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with the proportion of students feeling unsafe due to their disability as the dependent variable, and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale was not significant: F(2, 8025)=.149, $p>.10$.

32 Based on paired sample comparison tests: rural students were significantly more likely to avoid bathrooms and locker rooms than the cafeteria, school athletic fields, school buses, school grounds, and other places. For every comparison, $p<0.001$.

33 Based on paired sample comparison tests conducted separately for suburban and urban students: students were significantly more likely to avoid bathrooms and locker rooms than the cafeteria, school athletic fields, school buses, school grounds, and other places. For every comparison, $p<0.001$.

34 To test differences in avoiding spaces at school by locale, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with avoiding spaces as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's trace=.014, F(18, 15816)=6.297, $p<.001$. The univariate effect of locale was significant in avoiding bathrooms: F(2, 7915)=22.446, $p<0.001$, effect size =.006; locker rooms: F(2, 7915)=26.854, $p<0.001$, effect size =.007; hallways: F(2, 7915)=13.468, $p<0.001$, effect size =.003; school grounds: F(2, 7915)=8.470, $p<0.001$, effect size =.002; school athletic fields or facilities: F(2, 7915)=9.384, $p<0.001$, effect size=.002; and physical education or gym class: F(2, 7915)=13.588, effect size=.003. The univariate effect for locale was not significant for avoiding other places: F(2, 7915)=0.810, $p>0.10$; or for avoiding the cafeteria: F(2, 7915)=0.283, $p>0.10$.

35 Based on effect sizes reported above.

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38 To test differences in feeling unsafe based on sexual orientation across locale and region, a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with feeling unsafe as the dependent variable, and locale and region as independent variables. The main effect of locale was significant: $F(2, 7964)=38.625$, $p<0.001$, as was the main effect for region: $F(3, 7964)=19.011$, $p<0.001$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that students I nthe South and Midwest felt less safe than students in the Northeast and West, as did students in rural areas compared to students in suburban and urban areas. The overall interaction effect between region and locale was not significant, although individual interaction effects indicated that differences between rural and urban areas were larger in the Northeast ($p<.05$) and Midwest regions($p<.10$) than in the West, where the interaction effect was not different from the South.

39 To test differences in feeling unsafe based on sexual orienation across region for rural students, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with feeling unsafe as the dependent variable, and region as independent variable. The main effect for region was significant: $F(3, 2330)=5.836$, $p<0.001$. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that levels of feeling unsafe did not differ between rural students in the South and Midwest, though both of these groups reported higher levels of feeling unsafe than did rural students in the Northeast or West.

40 Based on paired sample comparison tests of the frequency of verbal harassment due to different characteristics, students were significantly more likely to be verbally harassed based on their sexual orientation than based on their gender ($t=42.966$, $p<0.001$), gender expression ($t=23.288$, $p<0.001$), race ($t=58.705$, $p<0.001$), disability ($t=62.480$, $p<0.001$), or religion ($t=39.475$, $p<0.001$).

41 Based on paired sample comparison tests of the frequency of verbal harassment due to different characteristics, students were significantly more likely to be verbally harassed based on their gender expression than based on their gender ($t=24.444$, $p<0.001$), race ($t=37.285$, $p<0.001$), disability ($t=41.092$, $p<0.001$), or religion ($t=19.872$, $p<0.001$).

42 Based on paired sample comparison tests of the frequency of physical harassment due to different characteristics, students were significantly more likely to be physically harassed based on their sexual orientation than based on their gender ($t=25.264$, $p<0.001$), gender expression ($t=16.321$, $p<0.001$), race ($t=32.255$, $p<0.001$), disability ($t=31.984$, $p<0.001$), or religion ($t=29.153$, $p<0.001$).

43 Based on paired sample comparison tests of the frequency of physical harassment due to different characteristics, students were significantly more likely to be physically harassed based on their gender expression than based on their gender ($t=14.237$, $p<0.001$), race ($t=23.058$, $p<0.001$), disability ($t=23.116$, $p<0.001$), or religion ($t=18.455$, $p<0.001$).

44 Based on paired sample comparison tests of the frequency of physical assault due to different characteristics, students were significantly more likely to be physically assaulted based on their sexual orientation than based on their gender ($t=16.897$, $p<0.001$), gender expression ($t=11.326$, $p<0.001$), race ($t=20.491$, $p<0.001$), disability ($t=20.197$, $p<0.001$), or religion ($t=18.425$, $p<0.001$).

45 Based on paired sample comparison tests of the frequency of physical assault due to different characteristics, students were significantly more likely to be physically assaulted based on their gender expression than based on their gender ($t=9.872$, $p<0.001$), race ($t=15.266$, $p<0.001$), disability ($t=14.847$, $p<0.001$), or religion ($t=11.679$, $p<0.001$).

46 Using a weighted victimization score based on experiences of verbal harassment, physical harassment, and physical assault.

47 To test differences in victimization based on sexual orientation across locale, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with the mean weighted victimization score as the dependent variable, locale as the independent variable, and sexual orientation as a covariate. The main effect of locale was significant: $F(2, 8060)=44.959$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.011. In addition, post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that levels of victimization based on sexual orientation did not differ between urban and suburban students.

48 To test differences in victimization based on gender across locale, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with the mean weighted victimization score as the dependent variable, locale as the independent variable, and gender and sexual orienation as covariates. The main effect of locale was significant: $F(2, 7961)=6.722$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.002. In addition, post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that levels of victimization based on gender did not differ between urban and suburban students.

49 To test differences in victimization based on gender expression across locale, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with the mean weighted victimization score as the dependent variable, locale as the independent variable, and gender and sexual orienation as covariates. The main effect of locale was significant: $F(2, 7841)=21.251$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.005. In addition, post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that levels of victimization based on gender expression did not differ between urban and suburban students.

50 To test differences in victimization based on religion across locale, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with the mean weighted victimization score as the dependent variable, locale as the independent variable, and religion as a covariate. The main effect of locale was significant: $F(2, 7828)=26.660$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.007. In addition, post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that levels of victimization based on religion did not differ between urban and suburban students.

51 Based on the effect sizes reported in the notes in the first part of this section.

52 To test differences in victimization based on disability across locale, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with the mean weighted victimization score as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale was not significant: $F(2, 7949)=.832$, $p>0.10$.

53 To test differences in victimization based on race across locale, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with the mean weighted victimization score as the dependent variable, locale as the independent variable, and race and sexual orientation as covariates. The main effect of locale was significant: $F(2, 7882)=5.197$, $p<0.01$, effect size=.006. In addition, post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that levels of victimization based on race were higher for urban than for suburban and rural students, who did not differ from one another.

54 To test differences in frequncies of other types of harassment across locales, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with frequency of the different types of harassment as the dependent variables and locale as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's trace=.019, $F(10, 15964)=15.246$, $p<.001$. The univariate effect of locale in sexual harassment was significant: $F(2, 7985)=23.992$, $p<0.001$, effect size =.006. The univariate effect of locale in rumors or lies spread was significant: $F(2, 7985)=62.687$, $p<0.001$, effect size =.015. The univariate effect of locale in feeling excluded or left out was significant: $F(2, 7985)=42.459$, $p<0.001$, effect size =.011. The univariate effect of locale in stolen or damaged property was significant: $F(2, 7985)=16.699$, $p<0.001$, effect size =.004. The univariate effect of locale in cyberbullying was significant: $F(2, 7985)=38.050$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.009.

55 To test differences in reporting incidents of harassment and assault across locales, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with rate of reporting as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale in reporting to school staff was not significant: $F(2, 6191)=1.837$, $p>0.10$.

56 To test differences in reporting incidents of harassment and assault across locales, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with effectiveness of staff response as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale in effectiveness of response was significant: $F(2, 2459)=8.827$, $p<0.001$. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests suggested that rural students rated staff response as less effective than suburban students. Suburban and urban students did not differ from one another in their ratings of effectiveness.

57 Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, Madelyn J., & Palmer, N. A. (2012). *The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's schools.* New York: Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network.

58 A chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentages of students who had missed a day of school due to feeling unsafe by locale: $\chi^2=31.134$, $df=2$, $p<.001$, $\Phi=.062$. Adjusted p-values indicated that rural students were more likely to report having missed school than urban and suburban students.

59 To test differences in missing school by severity of verbal harassment, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with missing school at least once in the past month as the dependent variable, and severity of verbal harassment as the independent variable. The main effect for severity of verbal harssment based on sexual orientation was significant: $F(1, 2365)=264.696$, $p<.001$. The main effect for severity of verbal harssment based on gender expression was significant: $F(1, 2329)=127.314$, $p<.001$.

60 To test differences in GPA for rural LGBT students by severity of verbal harassment, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with the GPA as the dependent variable, severity of verbal harassment as the independent variable, and frequency of school absences as a covariate. The main effect for severity of verbal harassment based on sexual orientation was significant at the $p<0.01$ level for harassment based on sexual orientation, and significant at the $p<0.001$ level for harassment based on gender expression.

61 To test differences in educational aspirations by severity of victimization based on gender expression, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with plans to attend college as the dependent variable and severity of victimization based on gender expression as the independent variable. The effect for severity of verbal harassment was significant: $F(1, 2320)=4.922$, $p<0.05$. The effect for severity of physical harassment was significant: $F(1, 2330)=22.039$, $p<0.001$. The effect for severity of physical assault was significant: $F(1, 2337)=11.987$, $p<0.001$.

62 To test differences in educational aspirations by severity of victimization based on sexual orientation, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with plans to attend college as the dependent variable and severity of victimization based on sexual orientation as the independent variable. The effect for severity of verbal harassment was significant: $F(1, 2356)=17.627$, $p<0.001$. The effect for severity of physical harassment was significant: $F(1, 2350)=16.043$, $p<0.001$. The effect for severity of physical assault was significant: $F(1, 2342)=17.348$, $p<0.001$.

63 A chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentages of students who reported discriminatory policies and practices by locale: $\chi^2=23.587$, $df=2$, $p<.001$, $\Phi=.054$. Adjusted p-values indicated that rural students were more likely to report having discriminatory policies and practices than urban and suburban students.

64 Goodenow, C., & Grady, K. E. &1993). The relationship of school belonging and friends' values to academic motivation among urban adolescent students. *Journal of Experimental Education, 62*(1), 60-71.

Murdock, T. B., & Bolch, M. B. (2005). Risk and protective factors for poor school adjustment in lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) high school youth: Variable and person-centered analyses. *Psychology in the Schools, 42*(2), 159-172.

Roeser, R. W., Midgley, C., & Urdan, T. C. (1996). Perceptions of the school psychological environment and early adolescents' psychological and behavioral functioning in school: The mediating role of goals and belonging. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 88*, 408-422.

65 Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, Madelyn J., & Palmer, N. A. (2012). *The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's schools.* New York: Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network.

66 A measure for the psychological sense of school membership was developed for use with aadolescents by Carol Goodenow: Goodenow, C. (1993). The psychological sense of school membership among adolescents: Scale development and educational correlates. *Psychology in the Schools, 30*(1), 79-90. The measure used here is based on the 4-point composite scale constructed from these measures of school belongingnes.

67 To test differences across locale, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with sense of of school belonging as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect for locale was significant: $F(2, 8114)=69.364$, $p<0.001$. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that rural students had lower levels of school belonging than either suburban or urban students. There were no differences between suburban and urban students on their levels of school belonging.

68 To test differences across locale, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with sense of school belonging as the dependent variable; locale as the independent variable; and weighted victimization scores based on sexual orientation and gender expression, as well as frequency of homophobic and gender-expression-related biased remarks as covariates. The main effect for locale remained significant: $F(2, 7721)=15.620$, $p<0.001$. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that after accounting for locale differences in victimization and biased remarks, rural students still had lower levels of school belonging than either suburban or urban students. There were no differences between suburban and urban students on levels of school belonging.

69 Hershberger, S. L., & D'Augelli, A. R. (1995). The impact of victimization on the mental health and suicidality of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths. *Developmental Psychology, 31*(1), 65-74.

Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, Madelyn J., & Palmer, N. A. (2012). *The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's schools.* New York: Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network.

Rosario, M., Hunter, J., Maguen, S., Gwadz, M., & Smith, R. (2001). The coming-out process and its adaptational and health-related associations among gay, lesbian, and bisexual youths: Stipulation and exploration of a model. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 29*(1), 133-160.

70 Based on paired sample comparison tests: using a 4-point outness Likert-type scale, students were significantly more likely to be out to peers than to school staff ($t=-43.688$, $p<0.001$). Using a binary measure of being out to at least one person, students were siginificantly more likely to be out to students than staff ($t=29.752$, $p<0.001$).

71 To test differences in outness across locale, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with being out to at least one peer and one staff personas the dependent variables and locale as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was marginally significant and small: Pillai's trace=.001, $F(4, 16142)=2.071$, $p<.10$. The univariate effect for locale in outness to peers was marginally significant: $F(2, 8071)=2.614$, $p<0.10$. The univariate effect for locale in outness to school staff was not significant: $F(2, 8071)=2.247$, $p>0.10$.

72 Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, Madelyn J., & Palmer, N. A. (2012). *The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's schools.* New York: Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network.

73 To test differences in victimization for rural students by level of outness to peers, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with victimization based on sexual orientation and victimization based on gender expression as the dependent variables, and outness to peers as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's trace=.044, F(2, 2272)=52.654, $p<.001$. The univariate effect for outness in sexual orientation victimization was significant: F(1, 2273)=87.842, $p<0.001$. The univariate effect for outness in gender expression victimization was significant: F(1, 2273)=17.356, $p<0.001$.

74 To test differences in victimization by locale and outness to peers, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with victimization based on sexual orientation as the dependent variable, locale as the independent variable, and interactions between locale and outness. The main effect for outness in sexual orientation victimization was significant: F(1, 8011)=191.172, $p<0.001$. The interaction effect for outness was significant overall at the $p<.001$ level, and was also significant in individual comparisons between rural and suburban and urban students.

75 Self-esteem was assessed with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Rosenberg, M. (1989). *Society and the adolescent self-image* (Revised edition). Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

76 To test differences in self-esteem by level of outness for rural students, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with self-esteem as the dependent variable and outness to peers as the independent variable. The main effect for outness to peers was significant: F(1, 2335)=51.648, $p<0.001$.

77 To test differences in self-esteem across locale and outness to peers, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with self-esteem as the dependent variable, locale as the independent variable, outness to peers as a covariate, and interactions between locale and outness. The main effect for locale was significant: F(2, 7953)=3.938, $p<0.05$. The interaction effect was not significant. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that rural students reported lower levels of self-esteem than suburban students. Suburban students were not statistically different from urban students.

78 Depression was measured using the 20-item Likert-type CES-D depression scale (Eaton et al., 2004), which includes such items as "During the past week, I felt hopeful about the future."

Eaton, W. W., Muntaner, C., Smith, C., Tien, A., & Ybarra, M. (2004). Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale: Review and revision (CESD and CESD-R) (pp. 363-377). In M. E. Maruish (Ed.), T*he use of psychological testing for treatment planning and outcomes assessment*. 3rd Ed. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

79 To test differences in depression by level of outness for rural students, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with depression as the dependent variable and outness to peers as the independent variable. The main effect for outness to peers was significant: F(1, 2324)=18.133, $p<0.001$. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that rural students reported higher levels of depression than suburban and urban students, who were not different from one another.

80 To test differences in self-esteem across locale and outness to peers, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with self-esteem as the dependent variable, locale and outness to peers as independent variables, and interactions between locale and outness. The main effect for locale was significant: F(2, 7953)=3.938, $p<0.05$. The interaction effect was not significant. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that rural students reported lower levels of self-esteem than suburban students, and lower levels than urban students with marginal statistical significance. Suburban students were not statistically different from urban students.

81 To test differences in school belonging by level of outness for rural students, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with sense of school belonging as the dependent variable and outness to peers as the independent variable. The main effect for outness to peers was significant: F(1, 2363)=26.981, $p<0.001$.

82 To test differences in school belonging across locale and outness to peers, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with sense of belonging as the dependent variable, locale as the independent variable and outness to peers as a covariate. The main effect for locale and was significant: F(2, 8065=71,232, $p<0.001$.

83 To test differences in comfort in raising LGBT issues in class by locale, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with comfort in raising LGBT issues as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect for locale was not significant: F(2, 8113)=1.002, $p>0.10$.

84 To test differences across locale in comfort talking to school staff about LGBT issues, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with comfort talking with school staff about LGBT issues as the dependent variables and locale as the independent variable. Multivariate results were significant: Pilai's trace=.007, F(3, 7648)=3.138, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were significant at $p<.01$, except for nurses, who were significant at the $p<.05$ level.

85 Based on a repeated-measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA): students were significantly more comfortable talking with teachers and counselors than with other types of staff members. Pilai's trace=.509, F(21, 53536)=1131.359, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were significant at the $p<.001$ level.

86 To test differences in discussing LGBT issues with teachers by locale, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with frequency of discussing LGBT issues as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect for locale was significant: F(2, 7775)=7.995, $p<0.01$.

87 To test differences in discussing LGBT issues with counselors by locale, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with frequency of discussing LGBT issues as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect for locale was significant: $F(2, 7775)=3.736$, $p<0.05$.

88 To test differences in discussing LGBT issues with safety/resource officers by locale, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with frequency of discussing LGBT issues as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect for locale was significant: $F(2, 7775)=4.697$, $p<0.01$.

89 To test differences in school belonging by locale and frequency of talking to teachers, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with school belonging as the dependent variable, locale and frequency of talking to teachers as the independent variables, and interaction effects between locale and frequency of talking to a teacher. The effect of locale was significant: $F(2, 8079)=57.583$, $p<0.001$. The main effect of talking to a teacher about LGBT issues was significant: $F(1, 8079)=424.003$, $p<0.001$. The interaction effectsbetween locale and talking to a teacher was not significant.

90 To test differences in school belonging across frequency of talking to school personnel, several analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted with the mean score on the school belonging scale as the dependent variable, and frequency of talking to a school staff person about LGBT issues as the independent variable. The main effect of frequency of talking to a teacher was significant: $F(1, 2369)=109.159$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.044. The main effect of frequency of talking to a principal was significant: $F(1, 2361)=33.655$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.014. The main effect of frequency of talking to a vice principal was significant: $F(1, 2344)=27.324$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.012. The main effect of frequency of talking to a counselor was significant: $F(1, 2355)=15.489$, $p<0.001$, effect size= .007. The main effect of talking to a nurse was significant: $F(1, 2354)=8.880$, $p<0.01$, effect size=.004. The main effect of frequency of talking to a librarian was significant: $F(1, 2355)=27.581$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.012. The main effect of frequency of talking to a gym teacher was significant: $F(1, 2352)=20.011$, $p<.001$, effect size=.008. The main effect of frequency of talking to a safety/ resource officer was not significant: $F(1, 2352)=1.091$, $p>.10$.

91 Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, Madelyn J., & Palmer, N. A. (2012). *The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's schools.* New York: Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network.

92 To test differences in access to LGBT-related resources and supports across locales, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with resources as the dependent variables and locale as the independent variable. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's trace=.92, $F(18, 15816)=42.150$, $p<.001$. The univariate effect of locale in having an inclusive curriculum was significant: $F(2, 7905)=37.033$, $p<0.01$, effect size=.009. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests showed that rural students were significantly less likely to attend schools with inclusive curricula than were suburban or urban students.

93 Having an inclusive curriculum was included in the multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) conducted above, with presence of an inclusive curriculum as a dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale was significant: $F(2, 7905)=27.374$, $p<0.001$, effect size =.007. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests showed that rural students were significantly less likely to attend schools with inclusive textbooks than were suburban or urban students.

94 Having Internet access to LGBT resources was included in the multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) conducted above, with Internet access to LGBT resources as a dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale was significant: $F(2, 7905)=8.944$, $p<0.001$, effect size =.002. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests showed that rural students were significantly less likely to attend schools with internet access to LGBT resources than were suburban or urban students.

95 Having access to LGBT library resources was included in the multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) conducted above, with access to LGBT library resources as a dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale was not significant: $F(2, 7905)=.916$, $p>0.10$.

96 Heitel Yakush, J. (2007) *Legalized discrimination: The rise of the marriage-promotion industry and how federally funded programs discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth and families*. Washington, D.C., Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). Available at: http://www.siecus.org/_data/global/images/Legalized-Discrimination.pdf.

Ott, M. & Santelli, J. (2007). Abstinence and abstinence-only education. *Current Opinion in Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 19(5), 446–452.

Santelli J., Ott, M., Lyon, M., Roger, J., Summer, D., & Schleifer, R. (2006) Abstinence and abstinence-only education: A review of US policies and programs. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 38(1), 72–81.

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) (2004). *A portrait of sexuality education and abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in the states*. Available at: http://www.siecus.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=487&parentID=478.

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform – Minority Staff Special Investigations Division. (December 2004). *The content of federally funded abstinence-only education programs*, prepared for Rep. Henry A. Waxman.

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) (2004). *A portrait of sexuality education and abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in the states*. Available at: http://www.siecus.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=487&parentID=478.

97 A chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentages of students who reported being taught about sexual health by locale: χ^2=18.716, *df*=2, *p*<.001, Φ=.048. Adjusted *p*-values indicated that rural and urban students were less likely to have been taught about sexual health than suburban students.

98 A chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentages of students who reported being taught an abstinence-only curriculum by locale: χ^2=29.277, *df*=2, *p*<.001, Φ=.060. Adjusted *p*-values indicated that rural students were more likely to have been taught an abstinence-only curriculum than suburban and urban students.

99 Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, Madelyn J., & Palmer, N. A. (2012). *The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's schools.* New York: Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network.

100 Having a GSA was included in the multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) conducted above, with havign a GSA at school as a dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale was significant: F(2, 7905)=259.247, *p*<0.001, effect size =.062. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests showed that rural students were significantly less likely to attend schools with GSAs than were suburban or urban students.

101 To test differences in GSA attendance across locale, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with the "frequency of GSA attendance as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale was significant: F(2, 3709)=7.242, *p*<0.01, effect size=.004.

102 To test this possibility, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with the frequency of attending a GSA as the dependent variable, locale as the independent variable, frequency of hearing homophobic remarks as a covariate, and interaction terms between locale and frequency of hearing homophobic remarks. The overall interaction effect just missed marginal significance, at *p*<.11. The interaction effects between locale and homophobic remarks were significant for rural compared to suburban (t=2.082, *p*<.05) and marginally significant for rural compared to urban students (t=1.764, *p*<0.10).

103 Having a community group or program for LGBT youth was included in the multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) conducted above, with presence of a group or program as a dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale was significant: F(2, 7905)=119.482, *p*<0.001, effect size =.029. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests showed that rural students were significantly less likely to live in communities with a group or program for LGBT youth than were suburban or urban students.

104 To test differences in access to a community group or program by locale and school size, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with access to a community group/program as the dependent variable, locale and the presence of a GSA as independent variables, and interaction terms between locale and GSA presence. The main effect for locale was significant: F(2, 8111)=43.663, *p*<0.001. The main effect for GSA presence was significant: F(1, 8111)=568.899, *p*<0.001. The interaction term was also significant: F(2, 8111)=9.870, *p*<0.001, with suburban students more likely than rural students to have a community group even when they lacked access to a GSA (with significance at the *p*<.001 level).

105 Klem, A. M., & Connell, J. P. (2004). Relationships matter: Linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement. *Journal of School Health, 74*(7), 262-273.

106 Number of school staff supportive of LGBT students was included in the multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) conducted above, with number of supportive staff as a dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale was significant: F(2, 7905)=134.737, *p*<0.001, effect size=.033. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests showed that rural students had significantly fewer supportive staff than suburban or urban students.

107 To test differences across locale in having a school administration supportive of LGBT students, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with supportiveness of administration as the dependent variable, and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale was significant: F(2, 8044)=64.865, *p*<0.001. The effect size was .016. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests showed that rural students rated their administration as significantly less supportive than suburban and urban students.

108 Anhalt, K., & Morris, T. L. (1998). Developmental and adjustment issues of gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents: A review of the empirical literature. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review, 1*(4), 215-230.

D'Augelli, A. R., & Hershberger, S. L. (1993). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth in community settings: Personal challenges and mental health problems. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 21*(4), 421-448.

Diamond, L. M., & Lucas, S. (2004). Sexual-minority and heterosexual youths' peer relationships: Experiences, expectations, and implications for well-being. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 14*(3), 313-340.

109 To test differences across locale in peer acceptance of LGBT students, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with acceptance of peers as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect of locale was significant: F(2, 8130)=146.004, *p*<0.001, effect size=.035. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests showed that rural students rated their peers as less accepting than suburban andurban students.

110 Smith, J. D. (1997). Working with larger systems: Rural lesbians and gays. In J. D. Smith & R. J. Mancoske (Eds.), *Rural gays and lesbians: Building on the strength of communities* (pp. 13-22). New York, NY: The Harrington Park Press.

Swank, E. D., Frost, D. M., & Fahs, B. (2012). Rural location and exposure to minority stress among sexual minorities in the United States. *Psychology & Sexuality, 3*(3), 226-243.

111 To test differences in number of LGBT peers across locale, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with number LGBT peers as the dependent variable (weighted to the approximate value of the response option in the ordinal response set), locale as the independent variable, and school size as a covariate. The main effect of locale was significant: F(2, 8074)=19.303, $p<0.001$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that urban students knew a greater number of LGBT peers than rural and suburban students. Rural students knew fewer LGBT peers than suburban students at marginal significance: $p<0.10$.

112 Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, Madelyn J., & Palmer, N. A. (2012). *The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's schools.* New York: Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network.

113 A chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentages of students who reported having a comprehensive policy in their school by locale: $\chi^2=34.492$, $df=2$, $p<.001$, $\Phi=.065$. Adjusted *p*-values indicated that rural students were less likely to have comprehensive policies than suburban students, who were less likely to have them than urban students.

114 A chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentages of students who reported having any policy in their school by locale: $\chi^2=18.104$, $df=2$, $p<.001$, $\Phi=.047$. Adjusted *p*-values indicated that rural and suburban students were less likely to have an anti-bullying and harassment policy than urban students.

115 Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, Madelyn J., & Palmer, N. A. (2012). *The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's schools.* New York: Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network.

116 To test differences in victimization based on sexual orientation for rural LGBT students by presence of a GSA, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with the weighted victimization score as the dependent variable, and presence of a GSA as the independent variable. The main effect for the presence of a GSA was significant: F(1, 2349)=43.044, $p<0.001$, effect size=.018.

117 To test differences in victimization based on sexual orientation for rural LGBT students by presence of supportive resources, several analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted, with weighted victimization score as the dependent variable and supportive resource as the independent variable. The main effect for having many supportive educators was significant: F(1, 1110)=43.311, $p<0.001$, effect size=.036. The main effect for an inclusive curriculum was significant: F(1, 2349)=52.129, $p<0.001$, effect size=.022. The main effect for having a comprehensive policy relative to no policy was significant: F(1, 553)=3.626, $p<0.06$, effect size=.007.

118 To test differences in victimization based on gender expression for rural LGBT students by presence of supportive resources, several analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted, with weighted victimization score as the dependent variable and supportive resource as the independent variable. The main effect for the presence of a GSA was significant: F(1, 2296)=20.274, $p<0.001$, effect size=.009. The main effect for having many supportive educators was significant: F(1, 1083)=23.158, $p<0.001$, effect size=.021. The main effect for an inclusive curriculum was significant: F(1, 2295)=30.080, $p<0.001$, effect size=.013. The main effect for having a comprehensive policy relative to no policy was not significant: F(1, 546)=3.342, $p>.10$, effect size=.004.

119 To test differences in school belonging for rural LGBT students by presence of many supportive teachers versus none, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with the school belonging score as the dependent variable, and presence of many supportive educators as the independent variable. The main effect for supportive educators was significant: F(1, 1119)=206.339, $p<0.001$, effect size=.156.

120 To test differences in school belonging for rural LGBT students by presence of a GSA, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with the school belonging score as the dependent variable, and presence of a GSA as the independent variable. The main effect for the presence of a GSA was significant: F(1, 2371)=102.607, $p<0.001$, effect size=.041. To test differences in school belonging for rural LGBT students by presence of an inclusive curriculum, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with the school belonging score as the dependent variable, and presence of an inclusive curriculum as the independent variable. The main effect for inclusive curriculum was significant: F(1, 2371)=205.402, $p<0.001$, effect size=.080. To test differences in school belonging for rural LGBT students by presence of a comprehensive policy versus no policy, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with the school belonging score as the dependent variable, and presence of a comprehensive policy as the independent variable. The main effect for comprehensive was significant: F(1, 558)=58.460, $p<.001$, effect size=.095.

121 To test differences in depression for rural LGBT students by presence of supportive resources, several analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted, with the depression score as the dependent variable and supportive resource as the independent variable. The main effect for the presence of a GSA was significant: $F(1, 2329)=33.135$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.014. The main effect for having many supportive educators was significant: $F(1, 1100)=87.326$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.074. The main effect for an inclusive curriculum was significant: $F(1, 2329)=88.371$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.037. The main effect for having a comprehensive policy relative to no policy was significant: $F(1, 550)=9.183$, $p<.01$, effect size=.016.

122 To test differences in self-esteem for rural LGBT students by presence of supportive resources, several analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted, with the self-esteem score as the dependent variable and supportive resource as the independent variable. The main effect for the presence of a GSA was significant: $F(1, 2341)=5.420$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.005. The main effect for having many supportive educators was significant: $F(1, 1104)=71.380$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.0616. The main effect for an inclusive cur-riculum was significant: $F(1, 2341)=58.253$, $p<0.001$, effect size=.024. The main effect for having a comprehensive policy relative to no policy was significant: $F(1, 549)=14.166$, $p<.001$, effect size=.025.

123 A one-sample chi-square test was conducted to compare the locale distribution of students in the 2011 NSCS to the locale distribution of primary and secondary school students reported for 2010-2011 by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES): $\chi^2=262.063$, $df=2$, $p<.001$, $\Phi=.175$.

National Center for Education Statistics (2011). *NCES Common Core of Data (CCD). Public elementary/ secondary school universe survey: School year 2010-2011, Final Version 1a.* Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/ pubs2012/pesschools10/tables/table_06.asp.

124 National Center for Education Statistics (2010). *NCES Common Core of Data (CCD). Public elementary/ secondary school universe survey: School year 2007–08.* Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010015/tables/table_7_2.asp.

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126 Hispanic/Latino and Middle Eastern/Arab American categories were considered ethnicities as opposed to races, and thus students selecting either of those categories were coded as such, regardless of race (e.g., student selecting "African-American" and "Latino/a" were coded as "Latino/a").

When forced to select one response, students with both White and another racial background may be more likely to select a non-White identity, particularly when "multiracial" is not an option:

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This method may result in a higher percentage of students of color from specific racial groups being identified in other surveys and a higher percentage of students being identified as multiracial in our survey. This difference in method may account for some of the discrepancy regarding percentages of specific racial groups (e.g., African American/Black, Asian/ Pacific Islander) between our sample and the general population of secondary school students.

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