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TEACHERS COLLEGE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
A Graduate School of Education, Health & Psychology

The 2022 Irish School Climate Survey

Experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual,
trans, and queer young people in
Irish second-level schools.

The 2022 Irish National School Climate Survey Report

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Methods and Sample

Participants completed an online survey about their experiences in school during the 2018-2019 school year, including hearing biased remarks, feeling safe, being harassed, and feeling comfortable at school. They were also asked about their academic experiences, attitudes about school, involvement in school, and availability of supportive school resources. Youth were eligible to participate in the survey if they were between the ages of 13 and 20, attended a primary or secondary school in Ireland during the 2021-2022 school year, and identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or a sexual orientation other than heterosexual (e.g., pansexual, questioning) or described themselves as transgender or as having another gender identity that is not cisgender ("cisgender" describes a person whose gender identity is aligned with the sex/gender they were assigned at birth). Data collection occurred between June 7 and August 15 2022 and ended before the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year.

The school climate survey was conducted online. The survey instrument was modeled after GLSEN's 2021 National School Climate Survey and IGY's 2021 National School Climate Survey, and was appropriated by Teachers College, Columbia University, and BeLonG To into the Irish context. In order to obtain a large and diverse sample of LGBT youth in Ireland, we used advertising and promotion on social networking sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Large number of youth engaged with the survey (n=4,087). However, not everyone were eligible to participate in the survey or completed the survey. We removed cis-gender heterosexual respondents (most likely allies), respondents under 13 or over 21 years old, respondents who did not attend school, and respondents with very partial information (e.g., respondents who did not respond to the question about their student status during the past school year).

The final sample consisted of a total of 1,208 students between the ages of 13 and 20. Table 1.1 presents participants' demographic characteristics and Table 1.2 shows the characteristics of the schools attended by participants. Participants had an average age of 16.1 years old (SD=1.6). About two-fifths of the sample (38.6%) are female, about one-fifth is male (18.6%), transgender (18.9%), and gender non-binary (18.2%). The rest identifies as gender non-confirming (9.8%), gender queer (9.5%), and other gender identities (9.5%). One-third of the sample identifies as bisexual (35.3%); one-fifth identifies as gay and one-fifth identifies as lesbian (20.4% and 22.7% respectively). The rest identifies as queer, pansexual, or questioning (24.9%, 13.8%, and 13.5% respectively). Approximately six out of ten students (59.0%) lived in a city or city edge.

Majority of students in the sample have "came out" or shared their sexual orientation with at least one person (70.8%). More than half (56.1%) came out to at least one parent. Slightly more than two-fifths (42.4%) came out to most or all students in their school. However, less than one-fifth of students (18.3%) came out to most or all school staff. Importantly, majority of transgender students are out about being transgender (72.0%).

The survey was conducted during the second year of the global pandemic (covid-19). About eight-in-ten students (78.6%) attended school only in person. One-fifth of students (20.4%) attended school in a hybrid modality – online and in person. Less than one percent attended school only online.

PART ONE: EXPERIENCES OF HOSTILE SCHOOL CLIMATE FOR LGBT STUDENTS

School Safety

Overall Safety at School

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

- Half (50.0%) of LGBT students reported feeling unsafe at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation.
- About two-fifths (37.2%) of LGBT students felt unsafe because of how they express their gender
- About one third (30.0%) of LGBT students felt unsafe because of how their body size or weight.
- About one third (28.1%) of LGBT students felt unsafe because of how their gender identity.

Importantly, about one fourth (24.1%) of students said that they “do not feel unsafe at school”.

When students feel unsafe or uncomfortable in school they may choose to avoid the particular areas or activities where they feel most unwelcome or may feel that they need to avoid attending school altogether. Thus, a hostile school climate can impact an LGBT student’s ability to fully engage and participate with the school community. We asked LGBT students if there were particular spaces at school that they avoided specifically because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable. As shown in Figure 1.2, LGBT students most commonly avoided bathrooms (44.7%) and physical education/gym class (38.9%) because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable. About one in three (29.2%) LGBT students said that they avoided school athletic fields or facilities, and a similar number said that they avoided the locker rooms (28.1%).

Feeling unsafe uncomfortable at school can negatively affect the ability of students to succeed academically, particularly if it results in avoiding school or classes. When asked about absenteeism, three in ten LGBT students reported not attending school at least one day in the last month (32.2%) because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (see Figure 1.3).

Exposure to Biased Language

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

Homophobic Remarks. We asked students about the frequency of hearing homophobic remarks (such as [e.g., “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay”, “faggot,” “dyke,” or “queer” used in a negative manner?]). As shown in Figure 1.4, majority (68.5%) of LGBT students reported hearing other students make derogatory remarks often or frequently in school. Further, we asked students who heard homophobic remarks in school how pervasive this behavior was among the student population. As shown in Figure 1.5, two thirds (64.5%) of the respondents said that these types of remarks were made by “some” or “most” students. In addition, about six-in-ten (58.2%) of LGBT students report they heard homophobic remarks from teachers or staff (see Figure 1.6). One in five students (20.5%) reported that they heard homophobic remarks from teachers and school staff “sometimes,” “often,” or “frequently.”

Hearing pejorative remarks in school can have negative effects on students. We asked the LGBT students in our survey how bothered or distressed they were by these remarks - and about three-fifths (59.2%) reported that they were bothered “pretty much” or “extremely” (see Figure 1.7).

Students who reported hearing homophobic remarks at school were asked how often teachers or other school staff intervened if they were present. Less than one-in-six (13.7%) reported that these school personnel intervened “most of the time” or “always” when homophobic remarks were made in their presence, and nearly half (48.6%) reported that staff never intervened when present (see Figure 1.8).

One would expect teachers and school staff to bear the responsibility for addressing problems of biased language in school. However, students may also intervene when hearing biased language, especially given that school personnel are often not present during such times. Thus, other students’ willingness to intervene when hearing this language may be another important indicator of school climate. However, few students reported that their peers intervened “always” or “most of the time” when hearing homophobic remarks (7.6%), and six in ten students (58.6%) said that their peers never intervened (see Figure 1.8).

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

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

Findings from this survey demonstrate that negative remarks about someone’s gender expression were pervasive in schools. As shown in Figure 1.9, LGBT students reported hearing either type of remarks about someone’s gender expression often or frequently at school (41.4% and 33.7%, respectively). Remarks about students not acting “feminine” were as common as remarks about students not acting “masculine” enough. When asked how much of the student population made these types of remarks, over half (52.0%) of students reported that most or some of their peers made negative remarks about someone’s gender expression (see Figure 1.10). In addition, 36.0% of LGBT students reported that they heard these types of remarks from teachers and other school staff “Sometimes”, “Often”, or “Frequently” (see Figure 1.11).

Negative Remarks about Transgender People. Similar to negative comments about gender expression, people may make negative comments about transgender people because they can pose a challenge to “traditional” ideas about gender. Therefore, we asked students about how often they heard negative remarks specifically about transgender people. Half (50.0%) of LGBT students in our survey reported hearing these comments frequently or often (see Figure 1.12). The pervasiveness of anti-LGBT remarks is a concerning contribution to hostile school climates for all LGBT students. Any negative remark about sexual orientation, gender, or gender expression may signal to LGBT students that they are unwelcome in their school communities, even if a specific negative comment is not directly aligned to the individual sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression of the LGBT student who hears it. For example, negative comments about gender expression may disparage transgender or LGB people, even if transgender-specific or homophobic slurs are not used.

Other Types of Biased Remarks at School. In addition to hearing anti-LGBT remarks at school, hearing other types of biased language is an important indicator of school climate for LGBT students. We asked students about their experiences hearing racist or xenophobic remarks, and sexist remarks (such as someone being called “bitch” or “hoer”). As shown in Figure 1.12, the LGBT students in the survey reported that these types of comments were very common in their schools, although some were more prevalent than others. A large majority of LGBT students heard biased remarks on people’s physical ability (78.0%) in their school “often” or “frequently”. A majority of LGBT students heard sexist remarks in

their school, and half of LGBT students heard body size/weight remarks in their school "often" or "frequently" (59.0% and 55.0%, respectively).

Experiences of Harassment and Assault at School

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

Verbal Harassment

Students in our survey were asked how often in the past year they had been verbally harassed (e.g., being called names or threatened) at school specifically because of personal characteristics. Approximately three quarters (72.0%) reported being verbally harassed at some point in the past year based on any of these personal characteristics. LGBT students most commonly reported experiencing verbal harassment at school because of their sexual orientation or how they expressed their gender (see Figure 1.13):

- Six in ten LGBT students (63.9%) had been verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation.
- Six in ten LGBT students (61.9%) were verbally harassed at school because of their gender expression.

Physical Harassment

With regard to physical harassment, two fifths (33.0%) LGBT students had been physically harassed (e.g., shoved or pushed) at some point at school during the past year based on any personal characteristic. Their experiences of physical harassment followed a pattern similar to verbal harassment — students most commonly reported being physically harassed at school because of their sexual orientation, or gender expression (see Figure 1.14):

- One in four LGBT students (24.6%) had been physically harassed at school because of their sexual orientation.
- One in five LGBT students (20.0%) had been physically harassed at school because of their gender expression.

Physical Assault

LGBT students were less likely to report experiencing physical assault (e.g., punched, kicked, or injured with a weapon) at school than verbal or physical harassment, which is not surprising given the more severe nature of assault. Nonetheless, 12.0% of LGBT students in our survey were assaulted at school during the past year for any personal characteristic (see Figure 1.15):

- 9.0% of LGBT students were assaulted at school because of their sexual orientation;
- 7.6% were assaulted at school because of their gender expression

Experiences of Other Types of Harassment and Negative Events

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

Relational Aggression. Research on school-based bullying and harassment often focuses on physical or overt acts of aggressive behavior; however, it is also important to examine relational forms of aggression that can damage peer relationships, such as spreading rumors or excluding students from peer activities. We asked participants how often they experience two common forms of relational

aggression: being purposefully excluded by peers and being the target of mean rumors or lies. As illustrated in Figure 1.16, the vast majority of LGBT students (86.1%) in our survey reported that they had felt deliberately excluded or “left out” by other students, and nearly one-third (31.8%) experienced this often or frequently. Three quarters of students (70.5%) had mean rumors or lies told about them at school, and about one in four (24.0%) experienced this often or frequently.

Sexual Harassment. Harassment experienced by LGBT students in school can often be sexual in nature. Survey participants were asked how often they had experienced sexual harassment at school, such as unwanted touching or sexual remarks directed at them. As shown in Figure 1.16, half (46.4%) of LGBT students had been sexually harassed at school, and about 7.5% report that such events occurred often or frequently.

Electronic Harassment or “Cyberbullying.” Electronic harassment (often called “cyberbullying”) is using an electronic medium, such as a mobile phone or Internet communications, to threaten or harm others. In recent years there has been much attention given to this type of harassment, as access to the Internet, mobile phones, and other electronic forms of communication has increased for many youth. We asked students in our survey how often they were harassed or threatened by students at their school via electronic mediums (telephone, internet, sms, e-mails, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or Snapchat?), two fifths (41.3%) of LGBT students reported experiencing this type of harassment in the past year; 11.3% had experienced it often or frequently (see also Figure 1.16).

Property Theft or Damage at School. Having one’s personal property damaged or stolen is yet another dimension of a hostile school climate for students. About two fifths (37.8%) LGBT students reported that their property had been stolen or purposefully damaged by other students at school in the past year (see Figure 1.16).

Reporting of School-Based Harassment and Assault

When harassment and assault occurs in school, we expect the teachers and school personnel to address the problems effectively. However, students may not always feel comfortable reporting these events to staff. In our survey, we asked those students who had experienced harassment or assault in the past school year how often they had reported the incidents to school staff. As shown in Figure 1.17, four in ten of these students reported incidents to staff (39.5%), and 20.3% of students indicated that they regularly reported incidents of harassment or assault (7.4% reporting “most of the time” and 5.5% reporting “always” to staff). Students in our survey who said that they had reported incidents of victimization to school staff were also asked how effective staff members were in addressing the problem. As shown in Figure 1.18, about two-fifths (37.5%) of students believed that staff responded effectively (“Somewhat Effective” or “Very Effective”) to their reports of victimization.

Given that family members may be able to advocate on behalf of the student with school personnel, we also asked students if they reported harassment or assault to a family member (i.e., to their parent or guardian or to another family member), about two fifths of the students (42.5%) said that they had ever told a family member (see also Figure 1.17). Students who had reported incidents to a family member were asked how often a family member had talked to school staff about the incident, and two fifths of students (43.0%) said that the family member never addressed the issue with school staff (see Figure 1.19).

See Figures 1.17B and 1.17C for additional information.

Hostile School Climate and Educational Outcomes

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

Educational Aspirations and Future Plans

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

Educational Aspirations. When asked about their aspirations with regard to post-secondary education, about one third (31.5%) of LGBT students indicated that they did not plan to pursue any type of post-secondary education: 14.8% reported they are not sure yet, and 16.7% indicated they aspire to attain high school diploma. About two thirds of students (68.5%) reported that they planned to get at least a bachelor degree. It is important to note that the survey only included students who were in school during the 2021-2022 year. Thus, the percentage of LGBT students not pursuing post-secondary education would be higher with the inclusion of students who had already left high school without finishing.

Although most students planned on finishing secondary and go attain an academic degree, we find an association between victimization and educational aspiration. As shown in Figure 1.21, students who reported frequent verbal harassment because of their sexual orientation were less likely than other students to aspire for a post-secondary academic degree (65.1% vs. 73.5%). Figure 1.21 also shows the same relationship between verbal harassment based on gender expression and academic aspirations.

Absenteeism. Students who are regularly harassed or assaulted in school may attempt to avoid these hurtful experiences by not attending school and, accordingly, may be more likely to miss school than students who do not experience such victimization. We found that experiences of harassment and assault were, in fact, related to missing days of school. As shown in Figure 1.22 students were more likely to have missed school in the past month if they had experienced higher levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation (41.5% versus 15.7%) or gender expression (44.0% vs. 12.9%).

Sense of School Belonging. The degree to which students feel accepted by and a part of their school community is another important indicator of school climate and is related to a number of educational outcomes. Students who experience victimization or discrimination at school may feel excluded and disconnected from their school community. In order to assess LGBT students' sense of belonging to their school community, survey participants were given a series of statements about feeling like a part of their school and were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statements.¹ Figure 1.23A presents students' responses to these statements. Overall and across items, about two-fifths of the students reported on positive feelings towards school belonging.

Figure 1.23B compares LGBT students with a representative sample of 15 year-old students in Ireland. Data for the general population come from the 2015 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment. The wording of four items is identical, and the wording of two other items is slightly different. Compared to the general population of 15 year-old students, LGBT students in Ireland report on lower sense of school belonging.

As illustrated in Figure 1.23C, students who experienced victimization based on sexual orientation or gender expression had lower levels of school belonging than students who experienced did not

¹ Items assessing school belonging were taken from the 2012/2015 survey of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment.

experience victimization in school. For example, more than half (59.1%) of students who did not experience victimization based on their sexual orientation reported a positive sense of connection to their school, compared to two fifths (38.4%) of students who experienced victimization based on sexual orientation.

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

PART 2: SCHOOL-BASED RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

Availability of School-Based Resources and Supports

LGBT students may not have the same types of support from peers at their schools and in their communities. As shown in Figure 2.1, about four-in-ten (42.7%) of LGBT students reported that other students at school were accepting of LGBT people ("very accepting" or "somewhat accepting") with one-third students (32.3%) reporting that other students at school were not very accepting or not at all accepting of LGBT people. Almost all students (98.3%) reported that there are numerous LGBT students in their school (see Figure 2.2.). Still, as shown in Figure 2.3, two-thirds of LGBT students (68.0%) report having never attended programs or groups for LGBT youth outside of school. Thus, the availability of resources and supports in school for LGBT students can be extremely important for this population of youth. There are several key resources that may help to promote a safer climate and more positive school experiences for students: school personnel who are supportive of LGBT students, LGBT-inclusive curricular materials, and school policies for addressing incidents of harassment and assault. Thus, we examined the availability of these resources and supports among LGBT students.

Supportive School Personnel

Supportive teachers, principals, and other school staff serve as another important resource for LGBT students. Being able to speak with a caring adult in school may have a significant positive impact on the school experiences for students, particularly those who feel marginalized or experience harassment. In our survey, the overwhelming majority of students (99.2%) could identify at least one school staff member whom they believed was supportive of LGBT students at their school, and half (53.6%) could identify ten or more supportive school staff (see Figure 2.4).

To understand whether certain types of school personnel were more likely to be seen as supportive, we asked LGBT students how comfortable they would feel talking one-on-one with various school personnel about LGBT-related issues. As shown in Figure 2.5, students reported that they would feel most comfortable talking with other students (62.4%). About half of LGBT students said they would be somewhat or very comfortable talking with counsellor (47.8%) or a teacher (47.2%). Fewer students in our survey said they would feel comfortable talking one-on-one with librarian, Vice Principal, Principal, PE teacher, and Chaplin.

Inclusive Curricular Resources

LGBT student experiences may also be shaped by inclusion of LGBT-related information in the curriculum. Learning about LGBT historical events and positive role models may enhance their engagement with the school community and provide valuable information about the LGBT community. Students in our survey were asked whether they had been exposed to positive and negative representations of LGBT people, history, or events in lessons at school (Figure 2.6). About half (44.7%) of respondents said that their classes did include positive things about LGBT-related topics; among these students, SPHE, History, and English were the classes most often mentioned as being inclusive of these

topics (see Table 2.1). One-in-ten (12.4%) of respondents said that their classes included negative things about LGBT-related topics.

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

As shown in Figure 2.7, vast majority of LGBT students (89.1%) reported being taught about violence, but only 35.9% said that it included information about sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

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

- 82.4% reported on having access (through school computers) to websites about LGBTQ+ people, history, events, or topics;
- 56.5% reported their school participated in Stand Up Awareness Week (Belong To's Anti-LGBTQ+ Bullying campaign)
- 49.1% reported having books or other resources (at their school library) that contain information about LGBTQ+ people, history, events, or topics
- 39.3% reported on using textbooks or other assigned readings that contain information about LGBTQ+ people, history, events, or topics

See Figure 2.8B for policy about inclusive school uniform policy .

School Policies for Addressing Bullying, Harassment, and Assault

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

Students were asked whether their school had a policy about in-school bullying, harassment, or assault, and if that policy explicitly included sexual orientation and gender expression. As shown in Table 2.3, the majority of students (86.5%) have such policy in their school. And of the students who did report that their school had a policy, slightly more than one-third of students said that it mentioned sexual orientation or gender identity/expression (35.6%).

Utility of School-Based Resources and Supports

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

Supportive School Personnel

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

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

- More likely to report that the general student body is more accepting of LGBT people (53.7% vs. 19.4%).
- More likely to feel like they belong in their school (57.0% vs. 23.7%); and
- Less likely to miss days of school because of feeling unsafe (26.7% vs. 48.2%).

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

- More likely to report that the general student body is more accepting of LGBT people (42.8% vs. 30.2%);
- More likely to feel like they belong in their school (49.1% vs. 34.5%); and

Importantly, students who said that teachers and school staff intervened more often are similar to other students with regard to skipping days of school because of feeling unsafe (36.4% vs. 39.3%).

Inclusive Curriculum

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

- More likely to report that the general student body is more accepting of LGBT people (48.7% vs. 37.9%);
- More likely to feel like they belong in their school (57.5% vs. 36.1%); and
- Less likely to miss days of school because of feeling unsafe (28.2% vs. 35.5%).

PART 3: Students' Agency and Educational Change

We asked students to indicate what actions they take to improve their experience at school (Figure 3.1). Two-thirds of students (64.1%) said they are talking with friends about ways to reduce LGBTQ+ phobic comments in school. About four-in-ten students (39.6%) said they have done so three or more times in the past year. Another common action is actively infusing LGBTQ+ topics by bringing them up in class. Half of LGBTQ+ students (53.9%) said they have mentioned LGBTQ+ topics and experiences in class.

As shown in Figure 3.2 students were more likely to take action to improve their experience at school if they had experienced higher levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation (44.8% versus 32.9%) or gender expression (45.5% vs. 31.9%).

PART 4: Social Media Platforms

See Figures 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4

Tables and Figures

Table 1.1: Characteristics of Survey Participants		
Age (n=1208)		
13	5.0%	n=60
14	13.0%	n=157
15	17.0%	n=206
16	22.1%	n=267
17	22.8%	n=275
18	13.9%	n=168
19	4.4%	n=53
20	1.8%	n=22
Average Age = 16.1 years (SD 1.6)		
Sexual Orientation (n=1208)		
Gay	20.4%	n=247
Lesbian	22.7%	n=274
Bisexual	35.3%	n=426
Pansexual	13.8%	n=167
Straight/Heterosexual	1.7%	n=21
Questioning	13.5%	n=163
Queer	24.9%	n=301
Other Sexual Orientation	10.3%	n=125
Sex/Gender (n=1208)		
Male	18.6%	n=225
Female	38.6%	n=466
Transgender	18.9%	n=228
Gender Non-Binary	18.2%	n=220
Gender Non-conforming	9.8%	n=118
Gender queer	9.5%	n=115
Other gender	9.5%	n=115
Born in Ireland		
	88.4%	n=1068

Table 1.2: Characteristics of Participants' Schools		
Community Type (n=1208)		
City or City Edge	59.0%	n=713
Rural Area or Village	41.0%	n=495
School Level (n=1208)		
Dublin	27.5%	n=332
Cork	12.8%	n=154
Galway	7.1%	n=86
Wicklow	5.1%	n=61
Meath	4.6%	n=55
Kildare	3.8%	n=46
Louth	3.8%	n=46
Limerick	3.6%	n=44
Wexford	3.6%	n=44
Mayo	3.2%	n=39
Tipperary	3.1%	n=37
Donegal	2.5%	n=30
Kerry	2.3%	n=28
Waterford	2.3%	n=28
Westmeath	2.3%	n=28
Clare	2.0%	n=24
Offaly	1.9%	n=23
Laois	1.6%	n=19
Kilkenny	1.5%	n=18
Roscommon	1.1%	n=13
Sligo	1.1%	n=13
Carlow	1.0%	n=12
Cavan	0.9%	n=11
Monaghan	0.8%	n=9
Leitrim	0.4%	n=5
Longford	0.3%	n=3
School Size (n=1208)		
Less Than 500 Students	32.1%	n=388
501 to 1000 Students	49.0%	n=592
1001 to 1500 Students	15.3%	n=185
Over 1500 Students	3.6%	n=43

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

Table 2.1: Positive Representations of LGBT-Related Topics Taught in Class*

	% among Students Taught Positive Rep of LGBT-Related Topics	% of all Students in Survey
SPHE	77.3%	34.7%
History	28.2%	12.7%
English	26.9%	12.1%
Other subjects	18.8%	8.4%
Art	7.7%	3.5%
Home Economics	5.2%	2.3%
Science	5.0%	2.2%
Music	4.6%	2.1%
Irish Language	4.2%	1.9%
Foreign Language	2.6%	1.2%
Mathematics	2.0%	0.9%
Geography	1.8%	0.8%
Physical Education	1.1%	0.5%
Business	1.1%	0.5%
Accounting	0.2%	0.1%

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

Table 2.3: LGBT Students' Reports of Bullying, Harassment, and Assault Policies

No Policy/Don't Know	11.5%
Any Policy	
General Policy	52.9%
Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity/Expression or transgenders mentioned	35.6%

Table 3.1: TITLE TBA

	County: Clare (n=315, 26%)	County: Connaught (n=156, 13%)	County: Leinster (n=687; 57%)	County: Ulster (n=50; 4%)
Library resources (a few + many) *	40.7%	41.4%	55.2%	42.8%
LGBT+ websites access	83.4%	84.8%	82.2%	72.4%
Textbooks (a few + many)	39.7%	31.6%	40.5%	43.5%
LGBT+ inclusive curriculum	41.3%	37.8%	48.0%	46.0%
More than six supportive teachers at school	71.3%	67.0%	74.7%	70.3%
Frequent verbal harassment (based on sexual orientation)	65.5%	59.6%	63.6%	70.0%
Frequent physical harassment (based on sexual orientation)	25.6%	20.0%	24.8%	30%
Frequent physical assault (based on sexual orientation)	10.3%	7.7%	8.6%	10.4%
Skip at least one day of school	30.0%	32.7%	33.2%	32.0%
High sense of belonging*	43.9%	36.4%	48.3%	49.0%

* Differences between counties are statistically significant

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

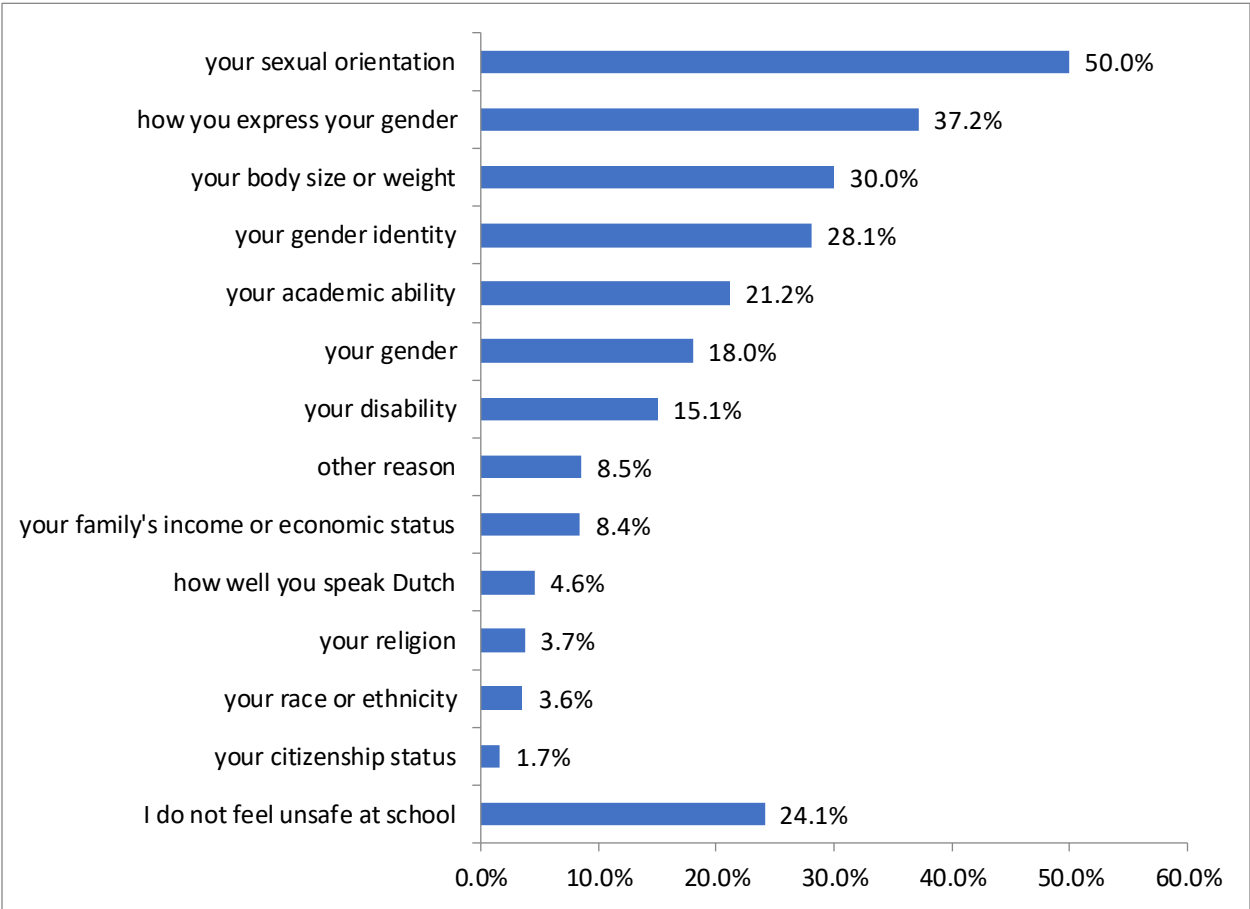


Figure 1.2: Percentage of LGBT Students Who Avoid Spaces at School Because They Feel Unsafe or Uncomfortable

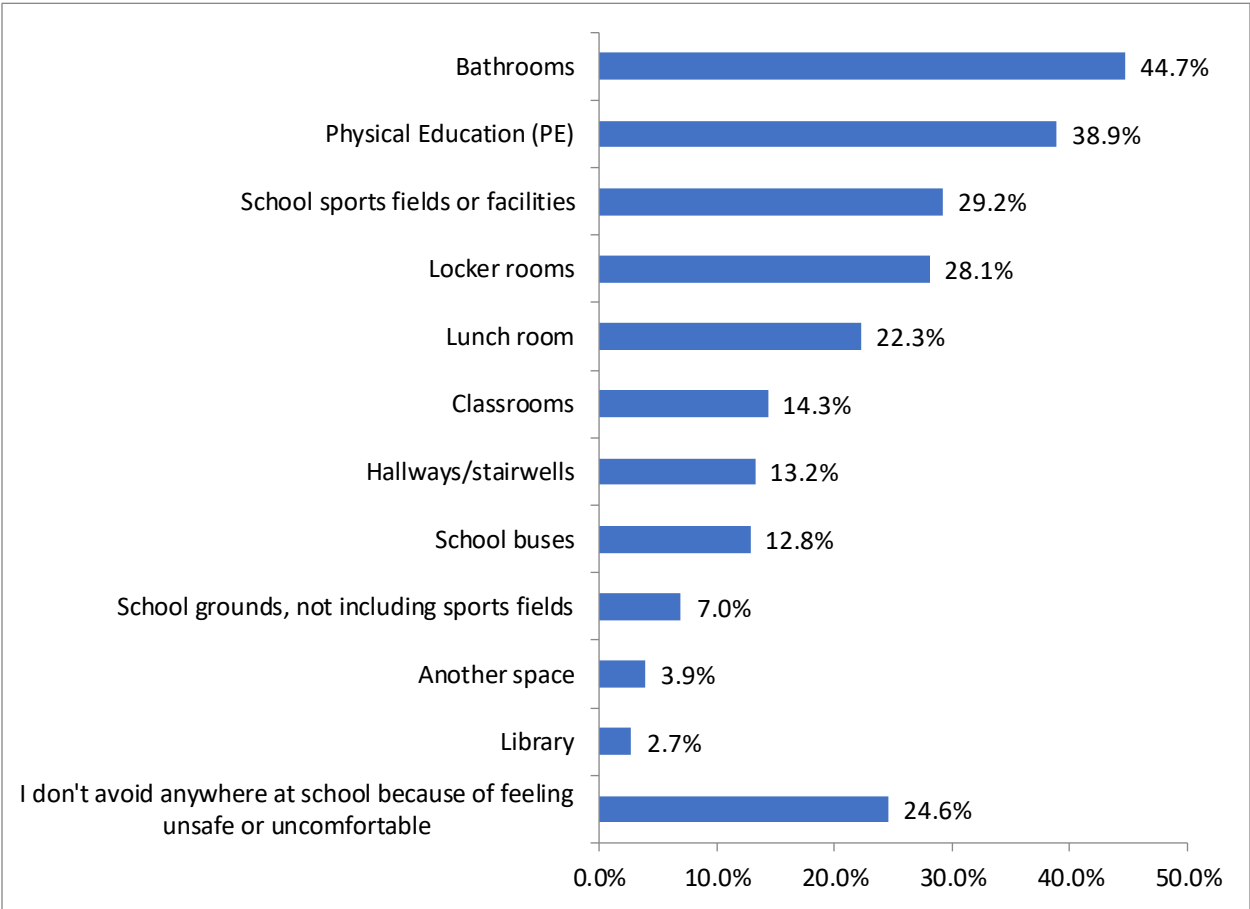


Figure 1.2B: Percentage of LGBT Students Who Avoid School Functions and Extracurricular Opportunities Because They Feel Unsafe or Uncomfortable

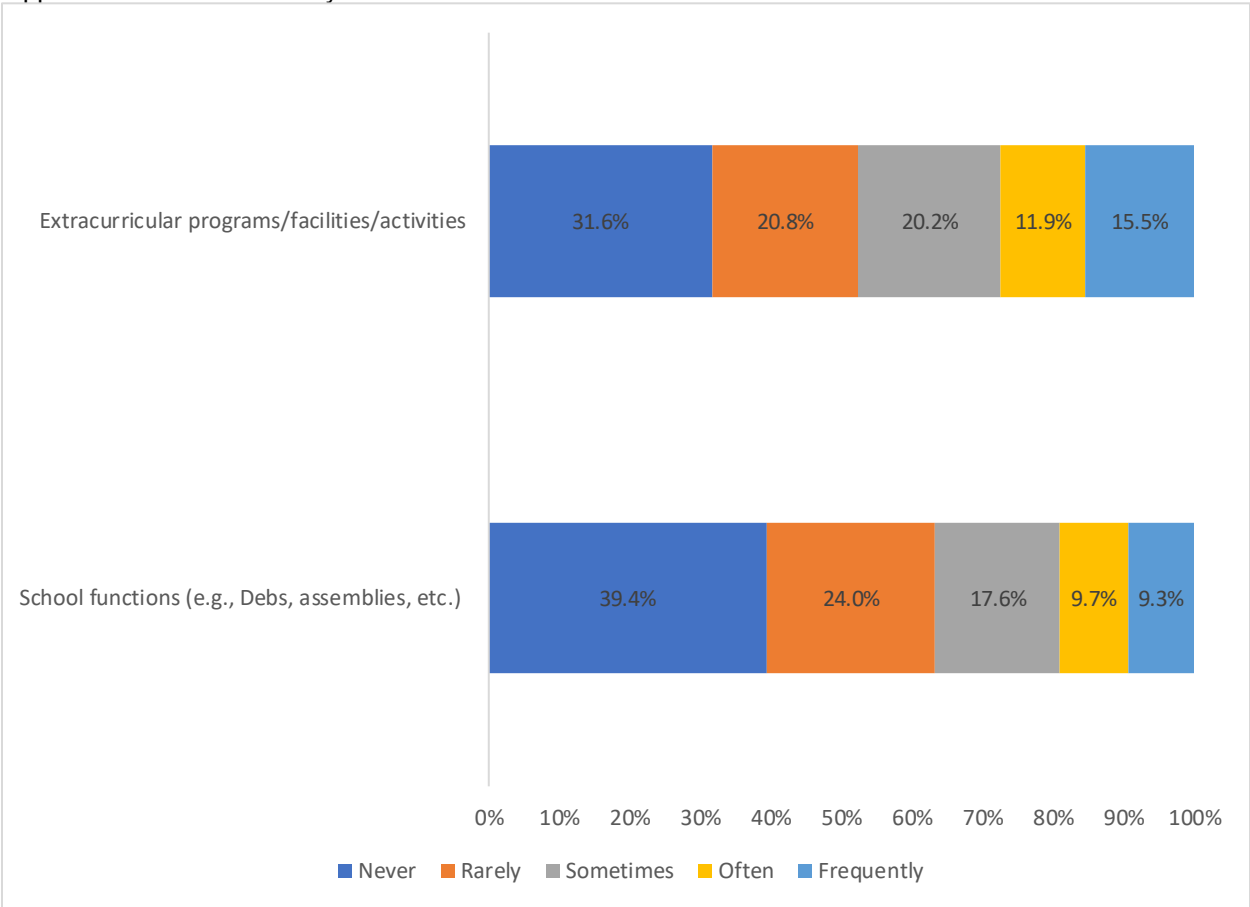


Figure 1.3: Frequency of Missing Days of School in the Past Month Because of Feeling Unsafe or Uncomfortable

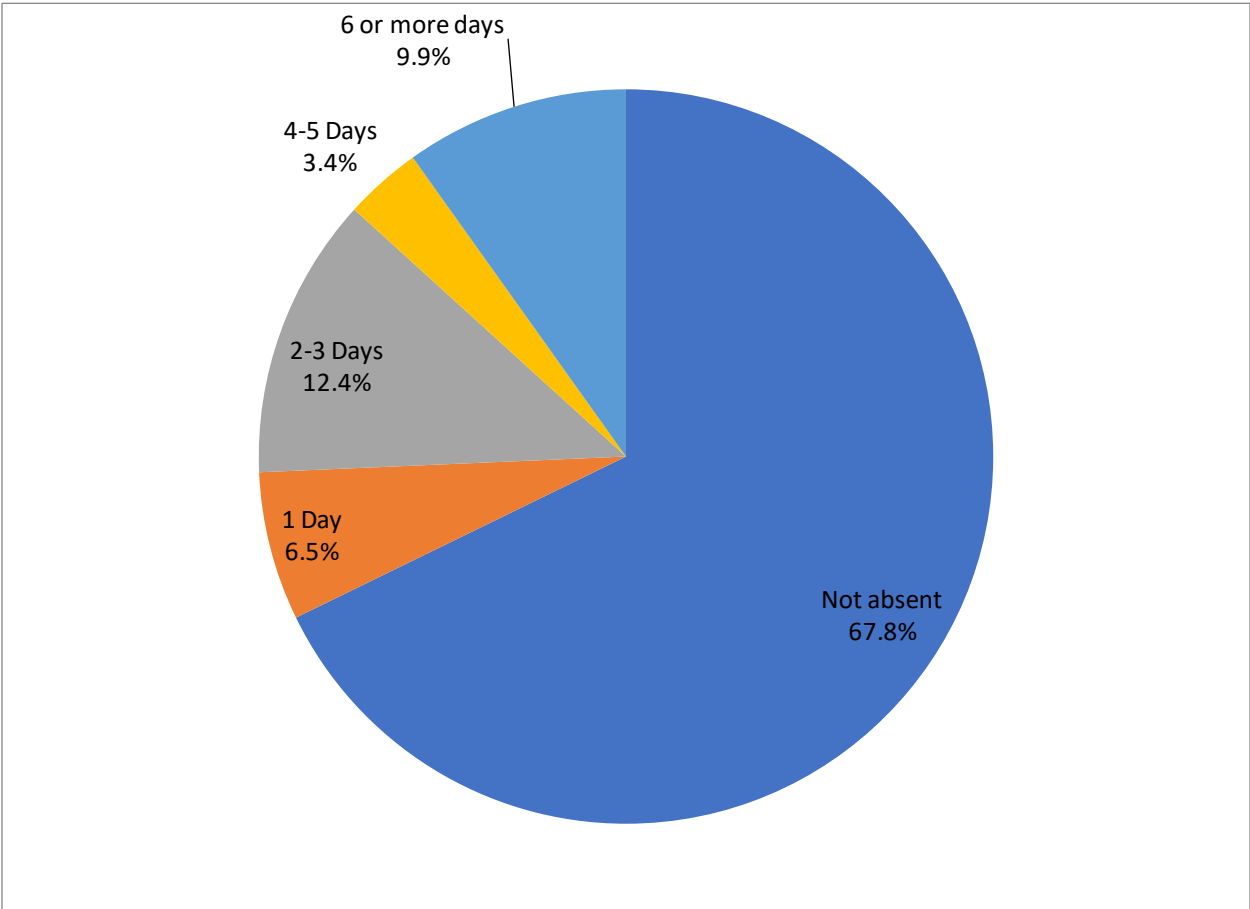


Figure 1.4: Frequency that LGBT Students Hear Anti-LGBT Remarks at School

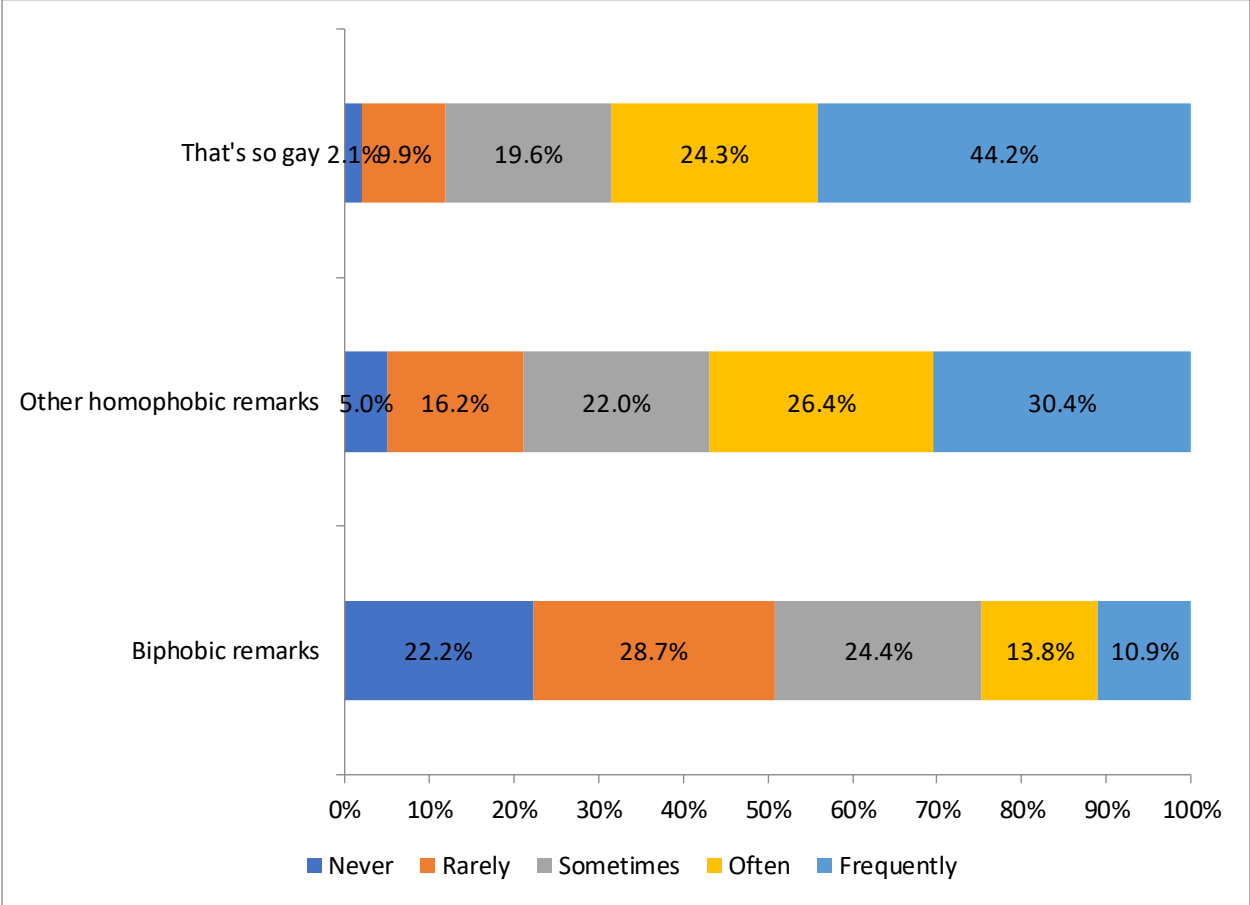


Figure 1.5: LGBT Students' Reports of How Many Students Make Homophobic Remarks

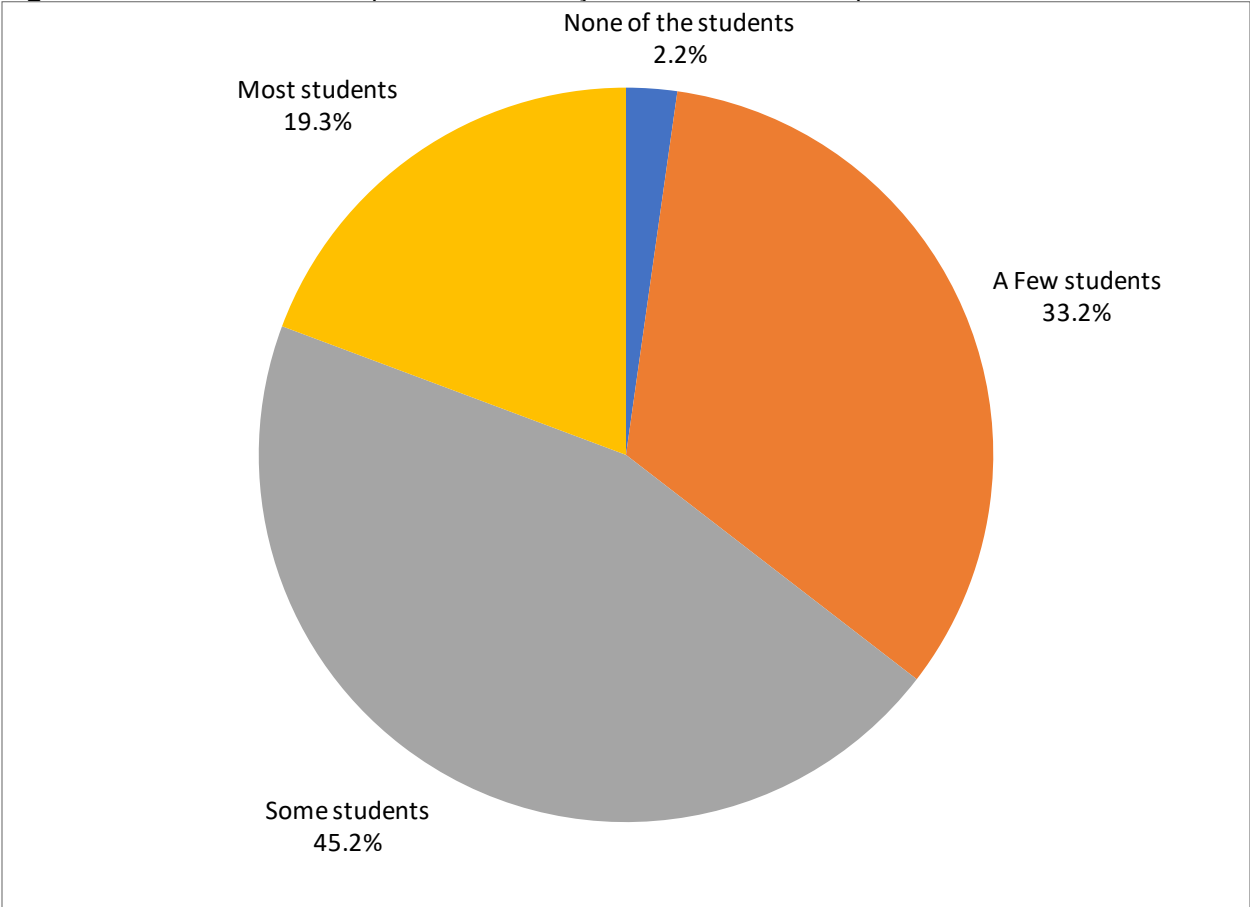


Figure 1.6: LGBT Students Hearing Homophobic Remarks from Teachers or Other School Staff

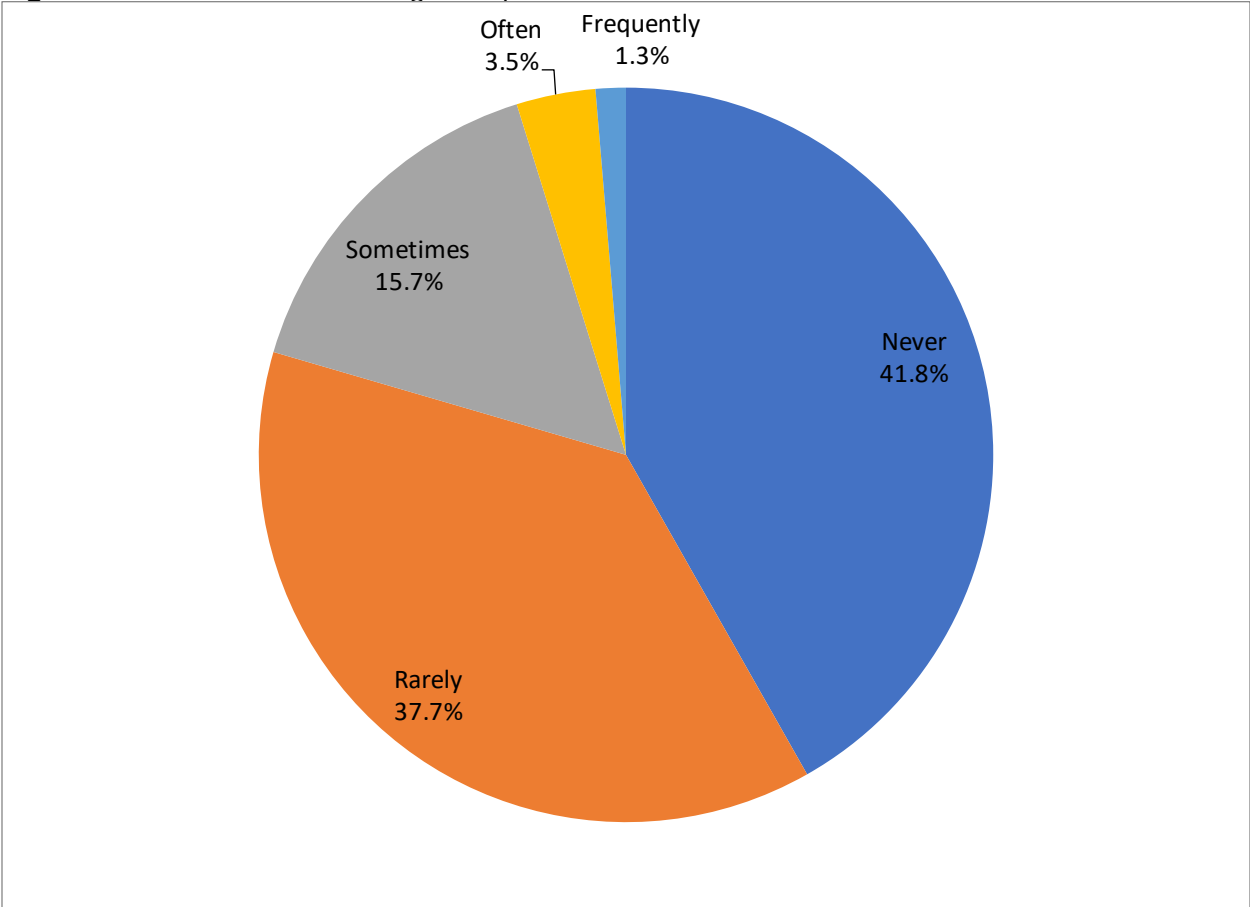


Figure 1.7: Degree that LGBT Students Were Bothered or Distressed as a Result of Hearing "Gay" Used in a Derogatory Way

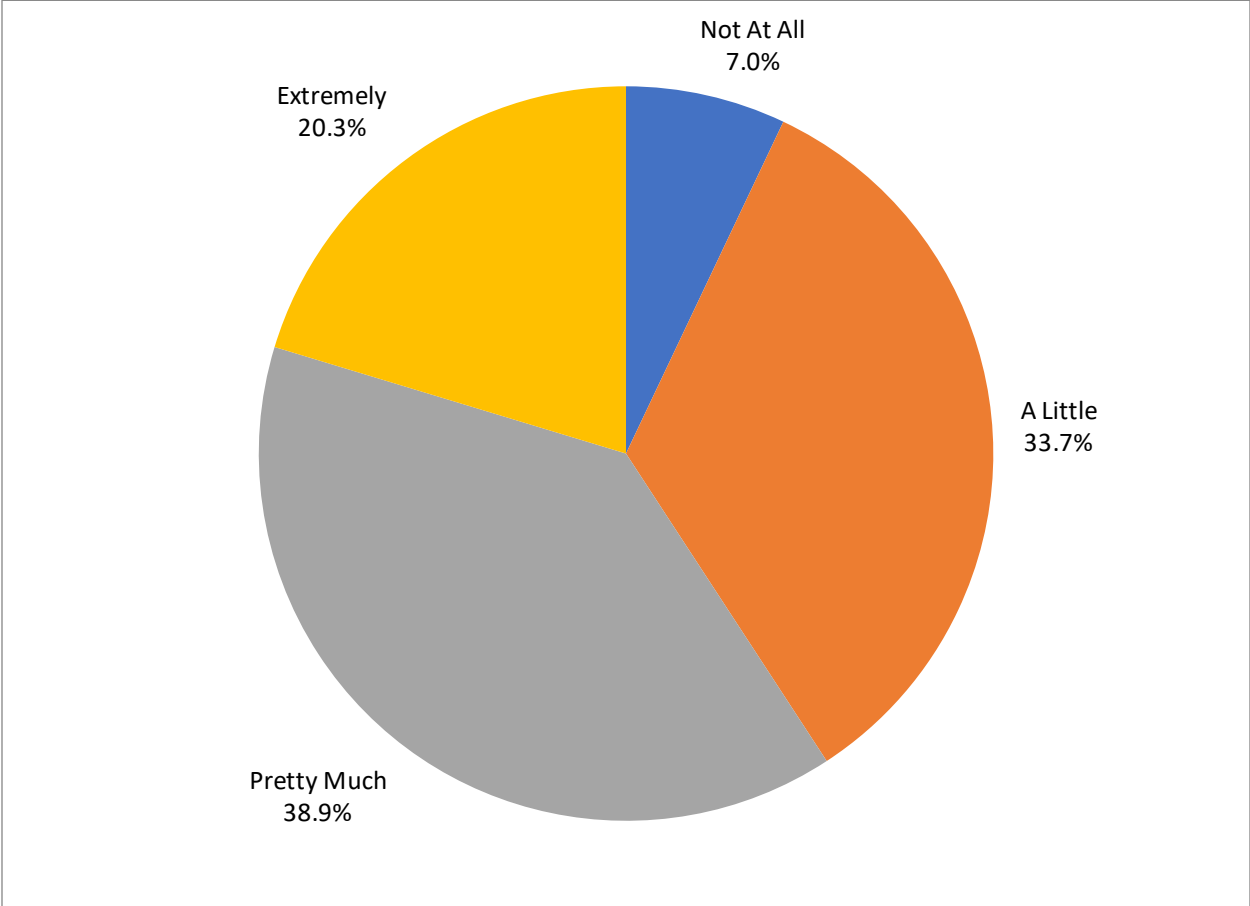


Figure 1.8: LGBT Students Reports on School Staff and Student Intervention in Homophobic Remarks

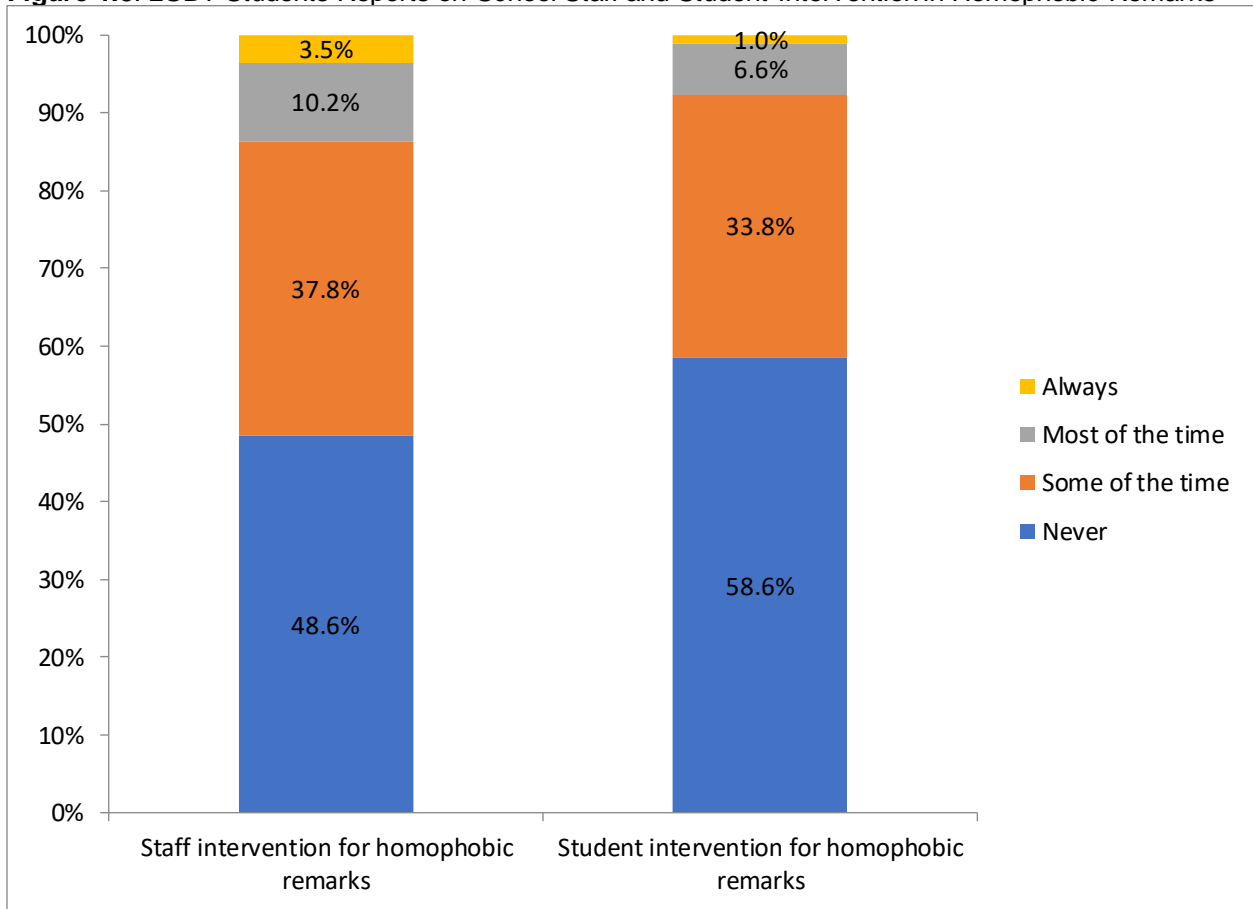


Figure 1.9: Frequency of LGBT Students Hearing Different Types of Remarks about Students' Gender Expression

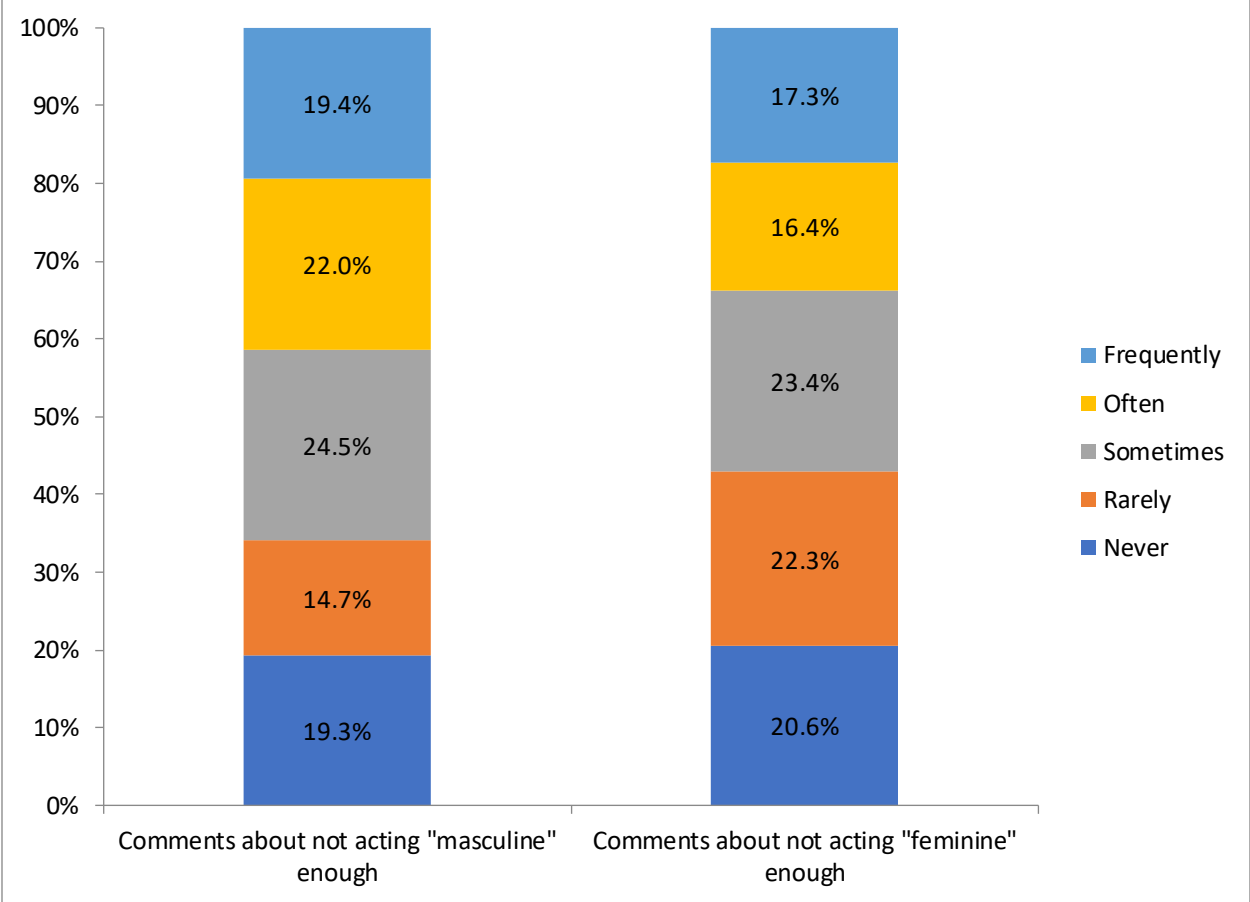


Figure 1.10: LGBT Students' Reports on How Many Students Make Negative Remarks about Gender Expression

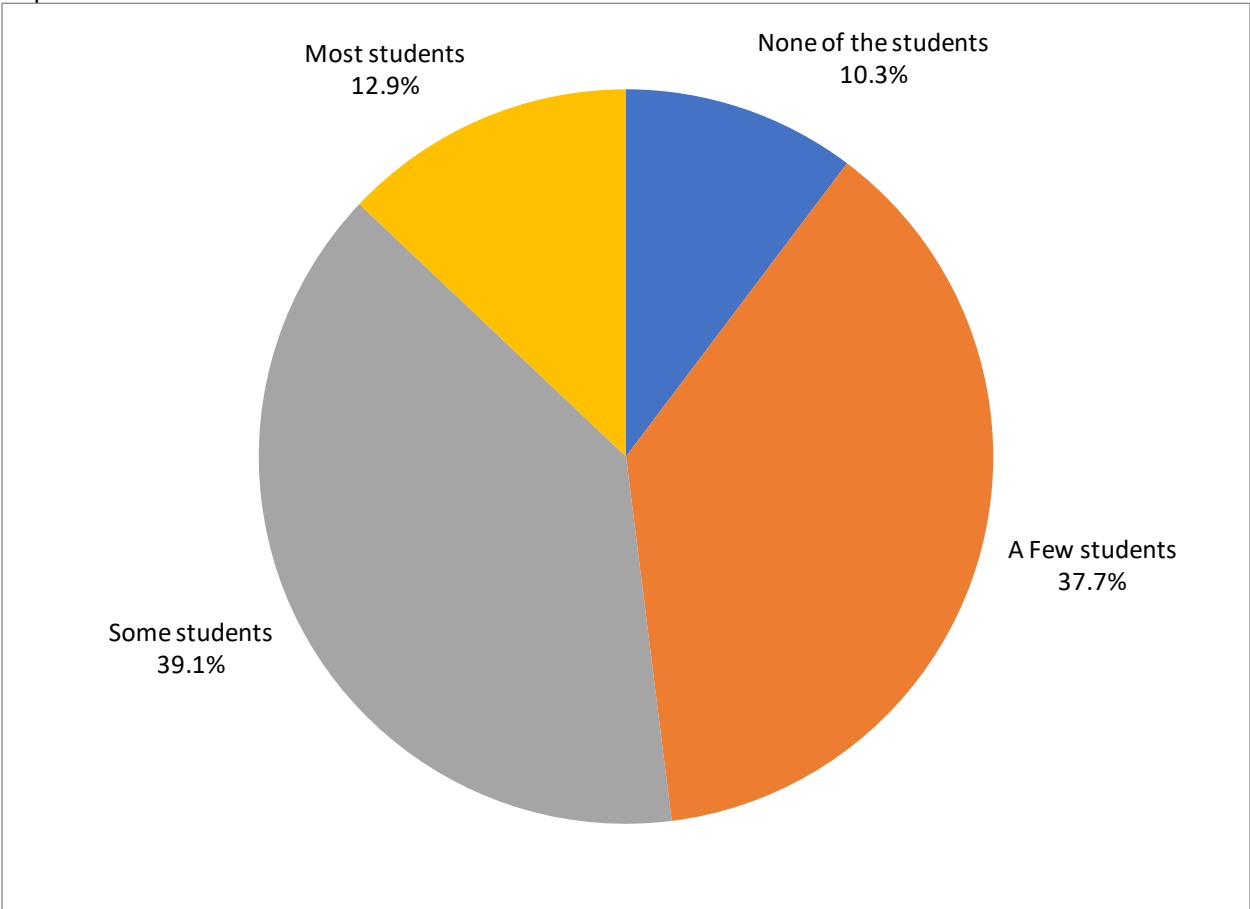


Figure 1.11: LGBT Students' Reports of School Staff for Remarks about Gender Expression

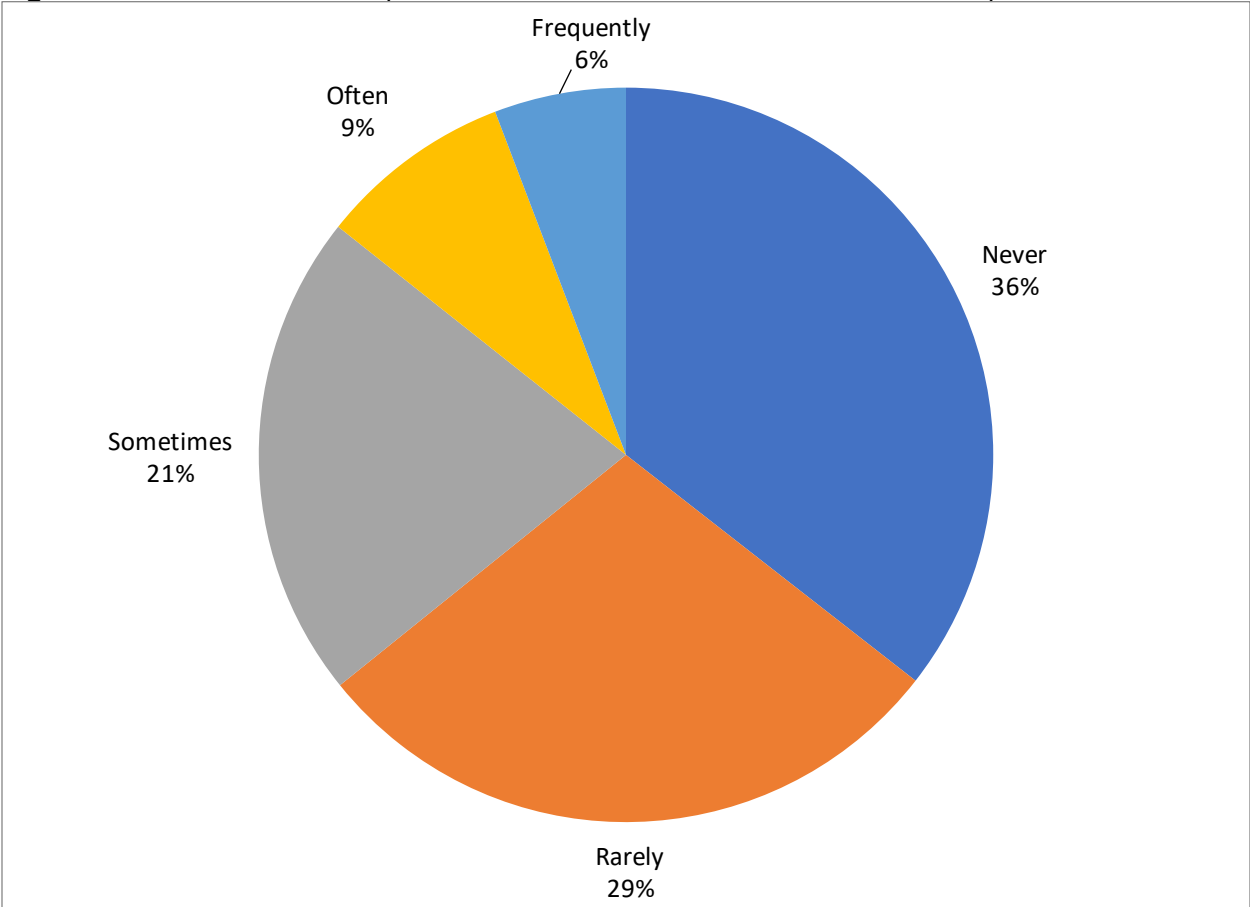


Figure 1.12: Frequency that LGBT Students Hear Other Biased Remarks at School

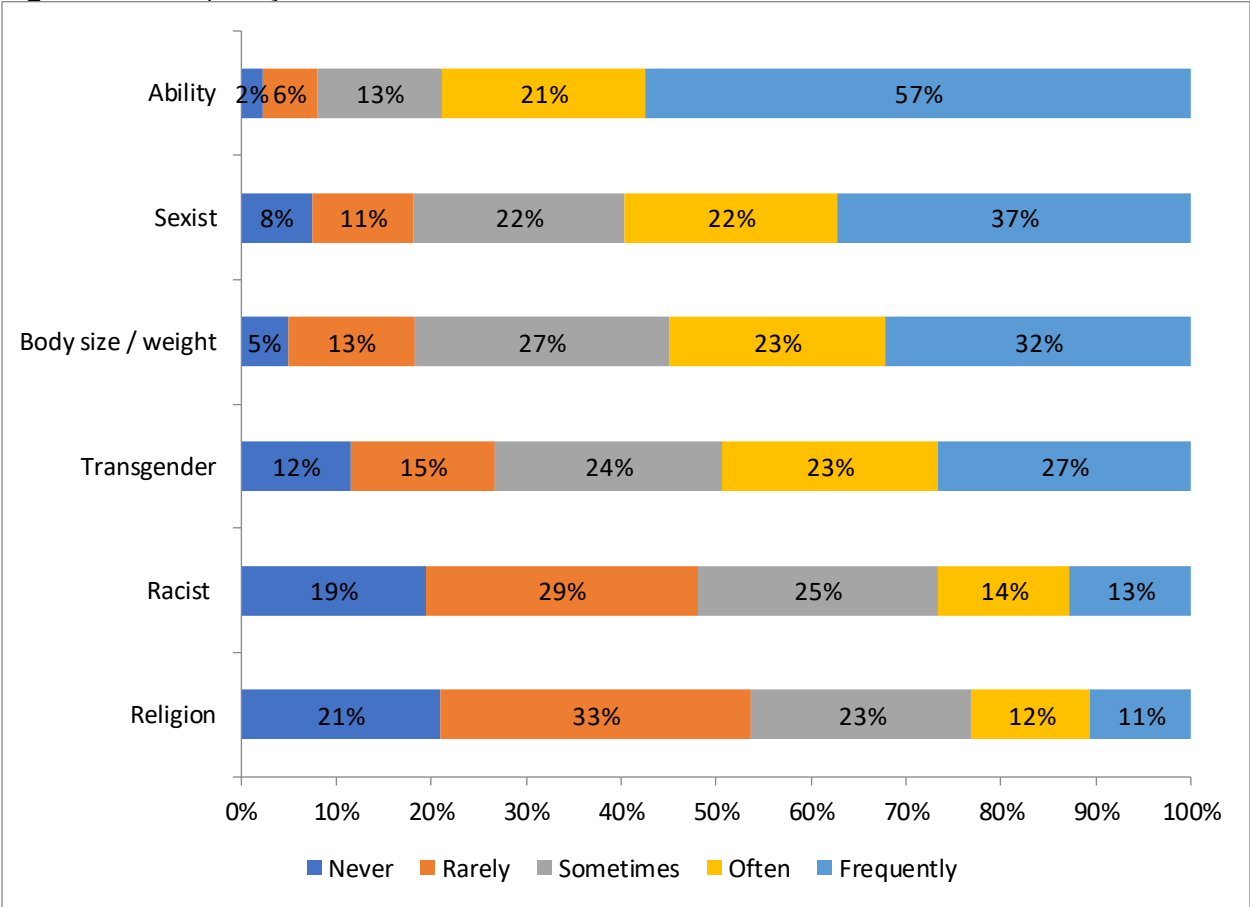


Figure 1.13: Frequency of Verbal Harassment Experienced by LGBT Students in the Past School Year

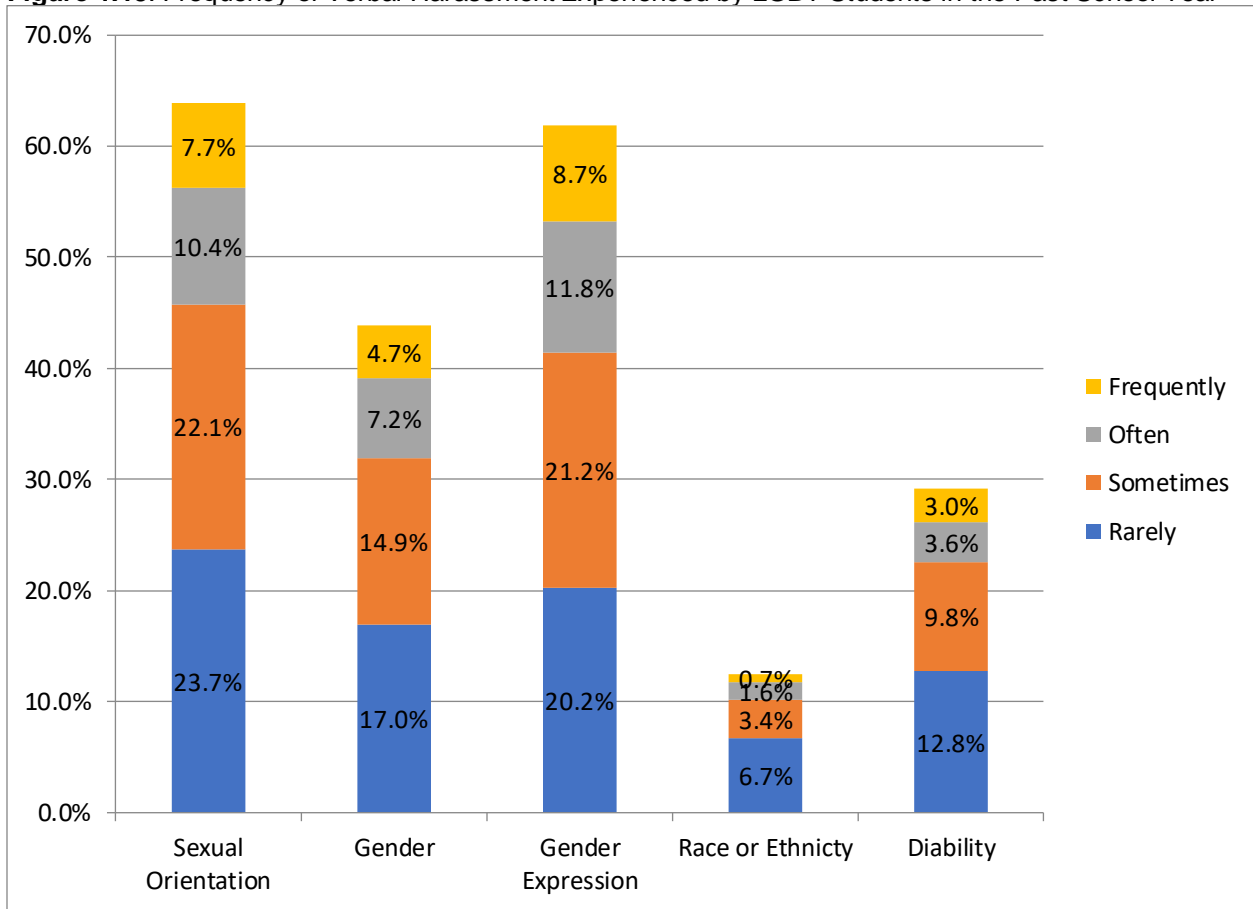


Figure 1.14: Frequency of Physical Harassment Experienced by LGBT Students in the Past School Year

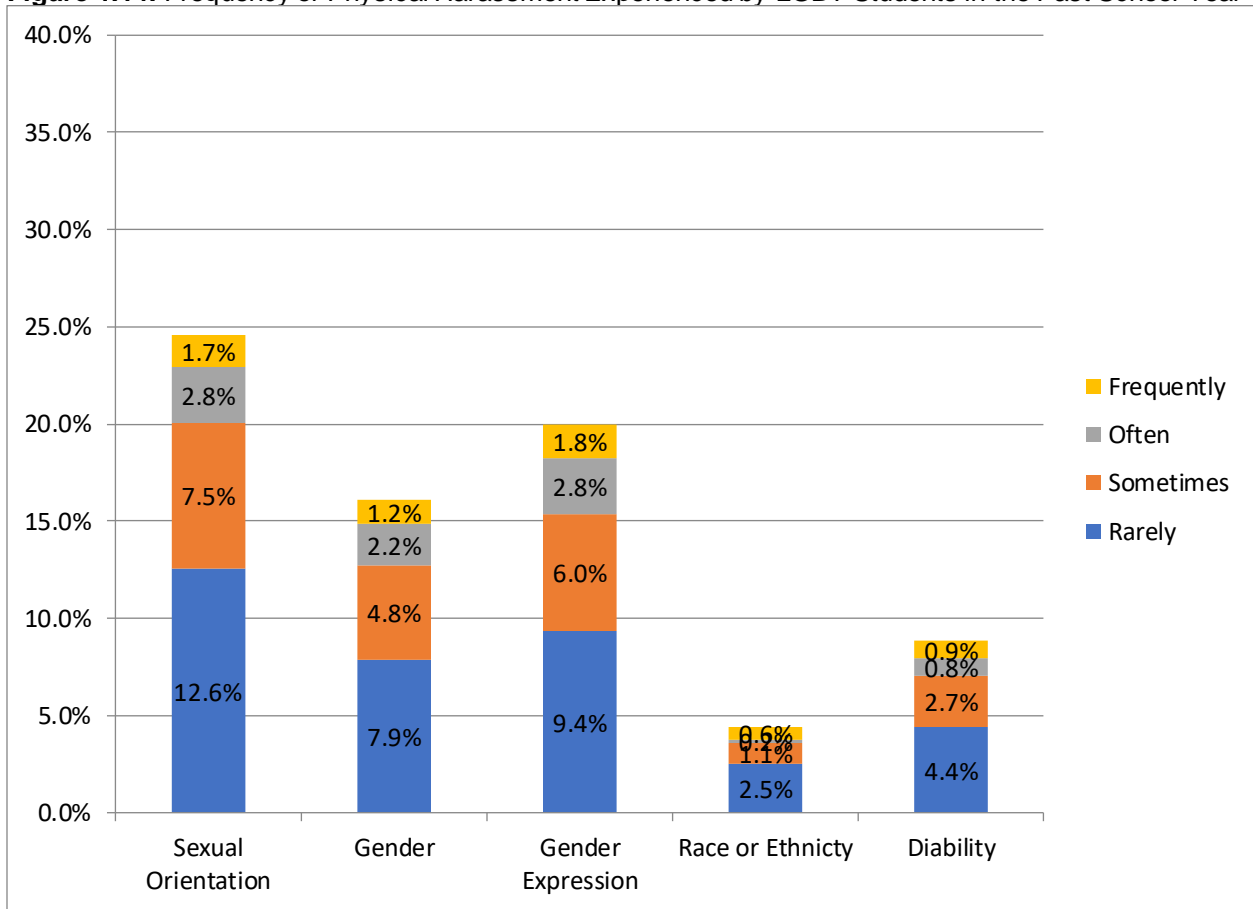


Figure 1.15: Frequency of Physical Assault Experienced by LGBT Students in the Past School Year

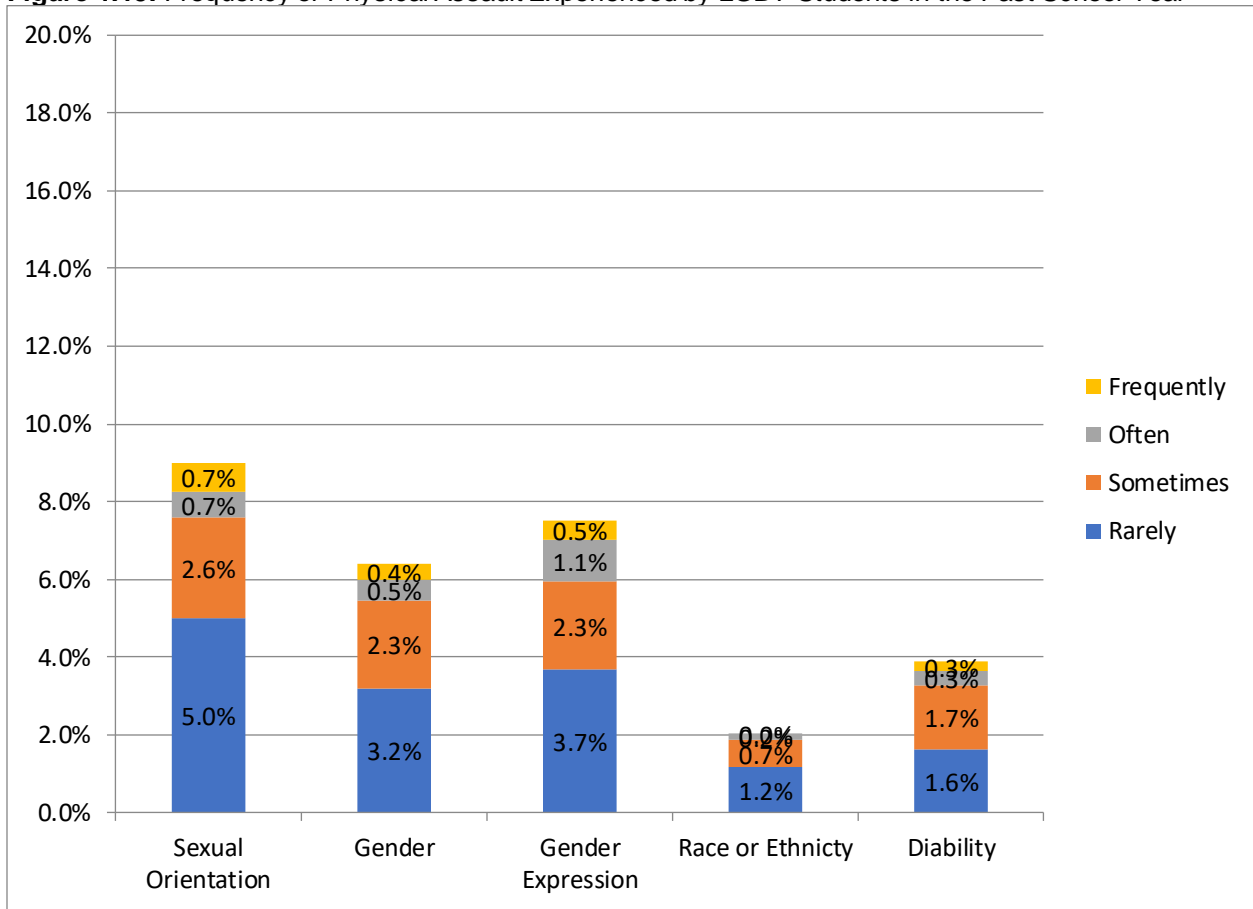


Figure 1.16: Frequency of Other Types of Harassment Experienced by LGBT Students in the Past Year

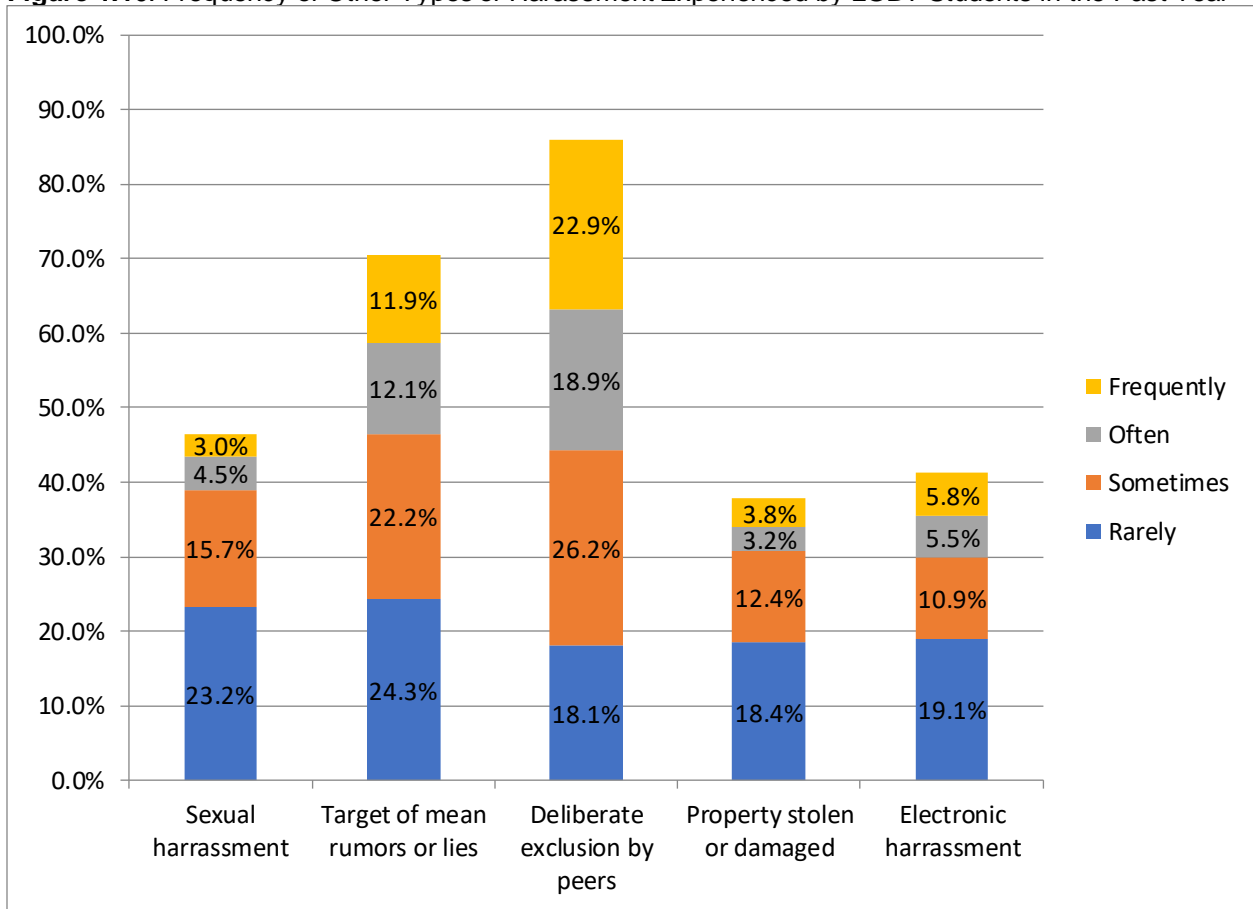


Figure 1.17: Frequency of LGBT Students Reporting Incidents of Harassment and Assault

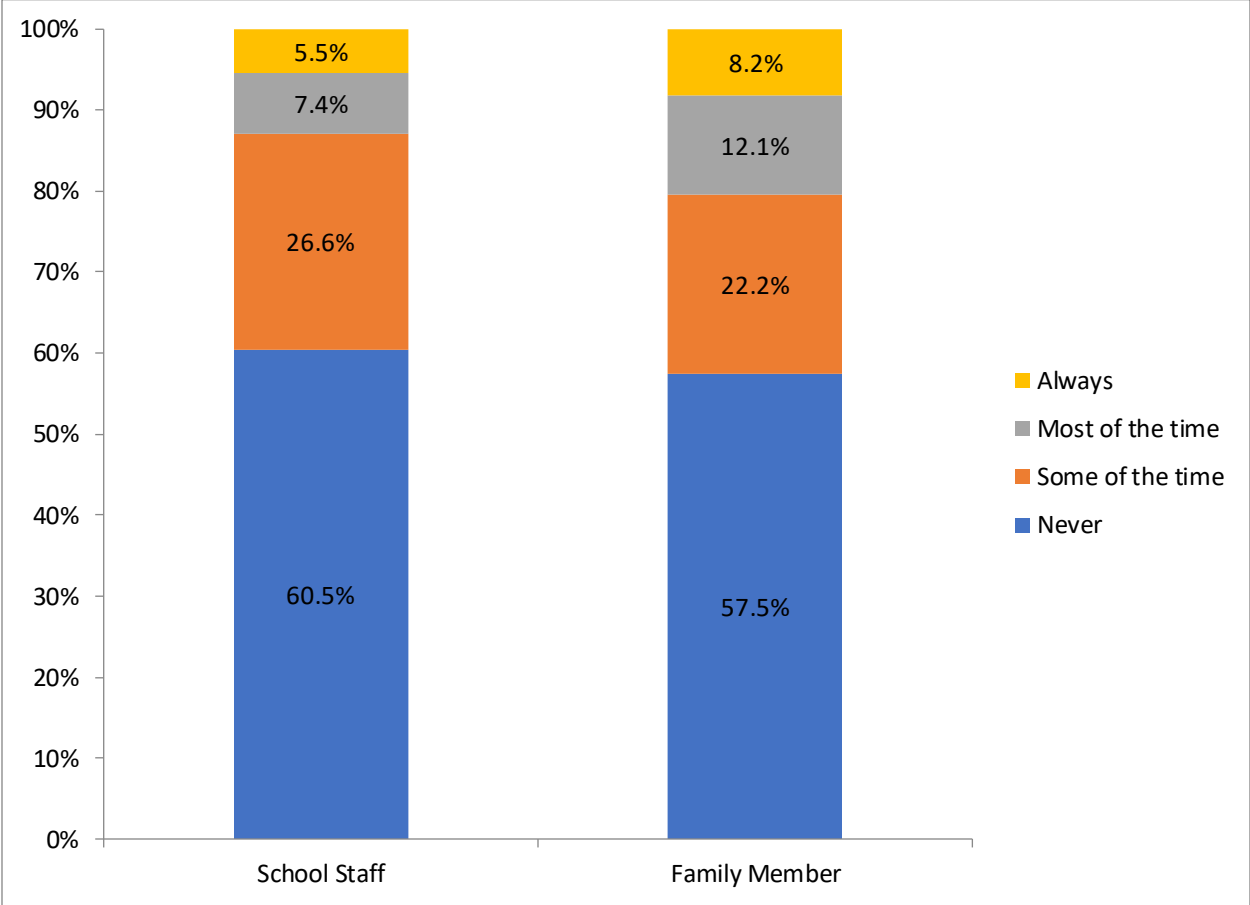


Figure 1.17B: Why did you NOT always report being harassed or assaulted to a teacher or staff person?

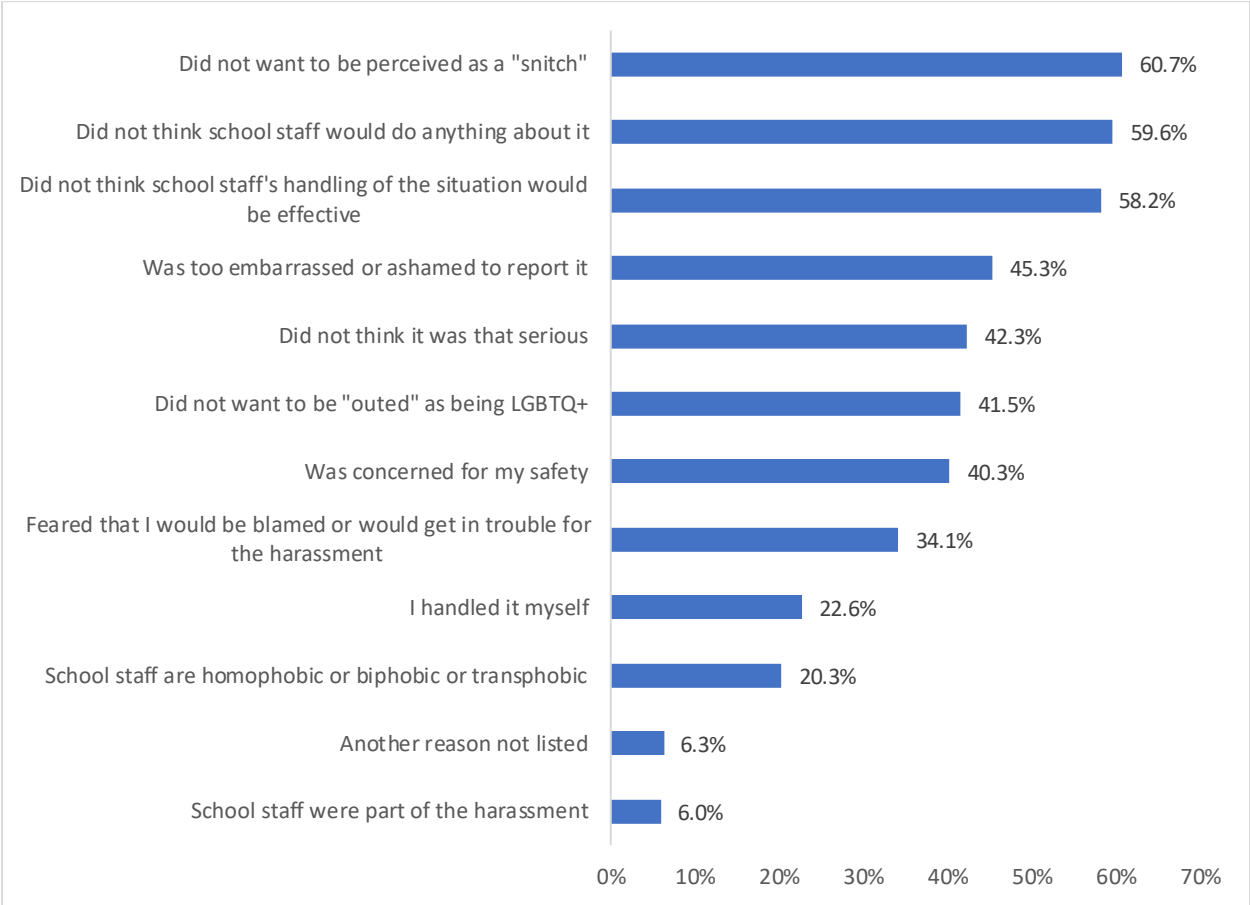


Figure 1.17C: What did school staff do the last time you reported being harassed or assaulted?

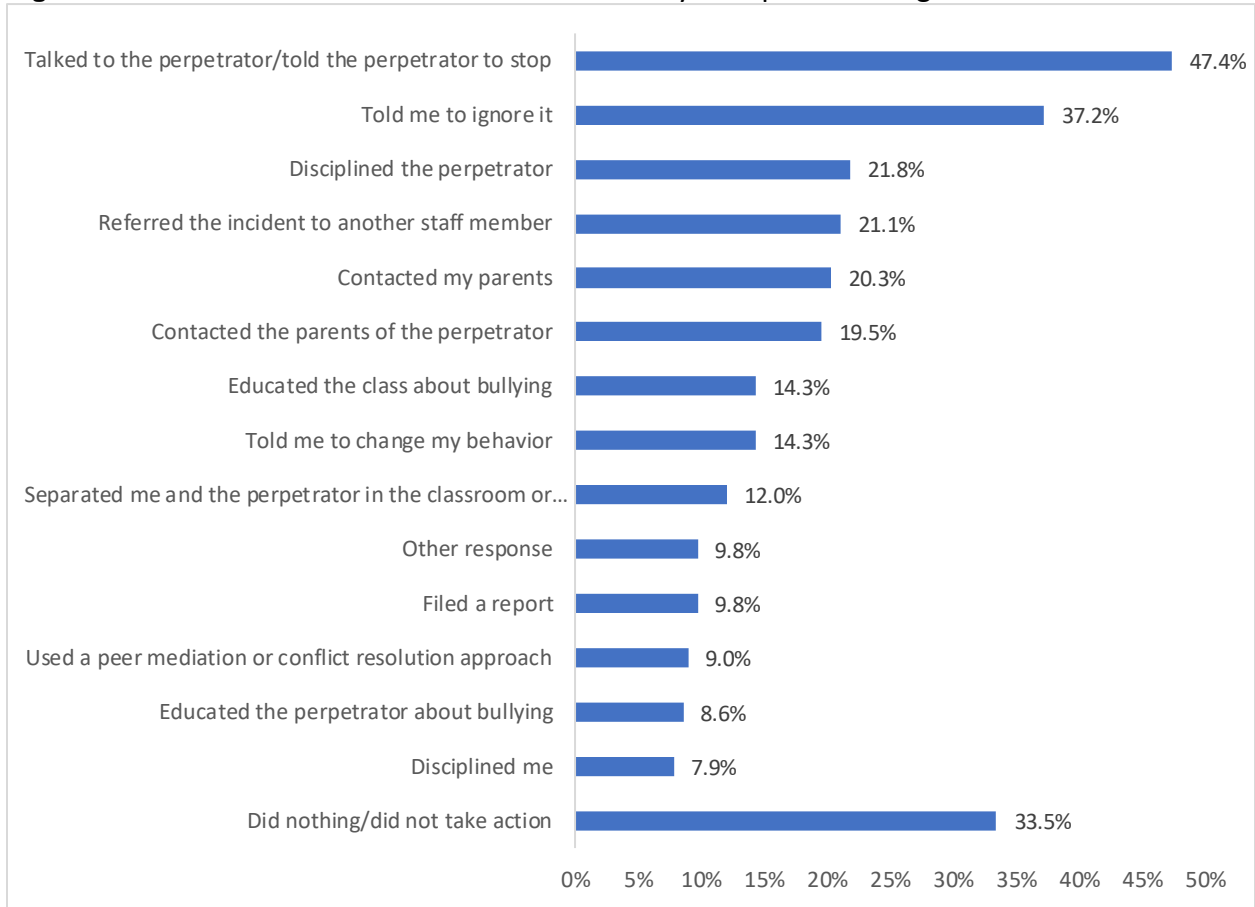


Figure 1.18: LGBT Students' Perceptions of Effectiveness of Reporting Incidences of Harassment and Assault to School Staff

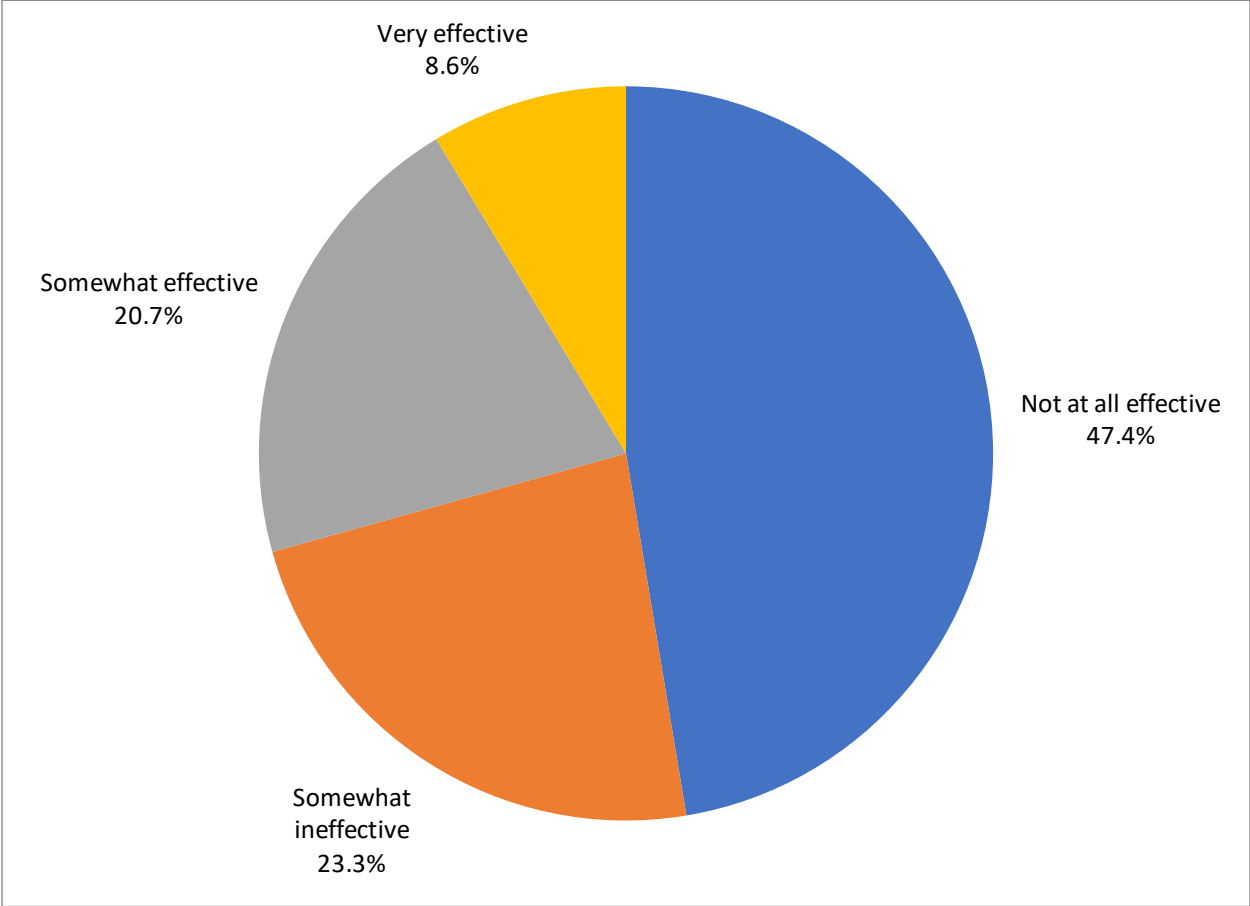


Figure 1.19: Frequency of Intervention by LGBT Students' Family Members

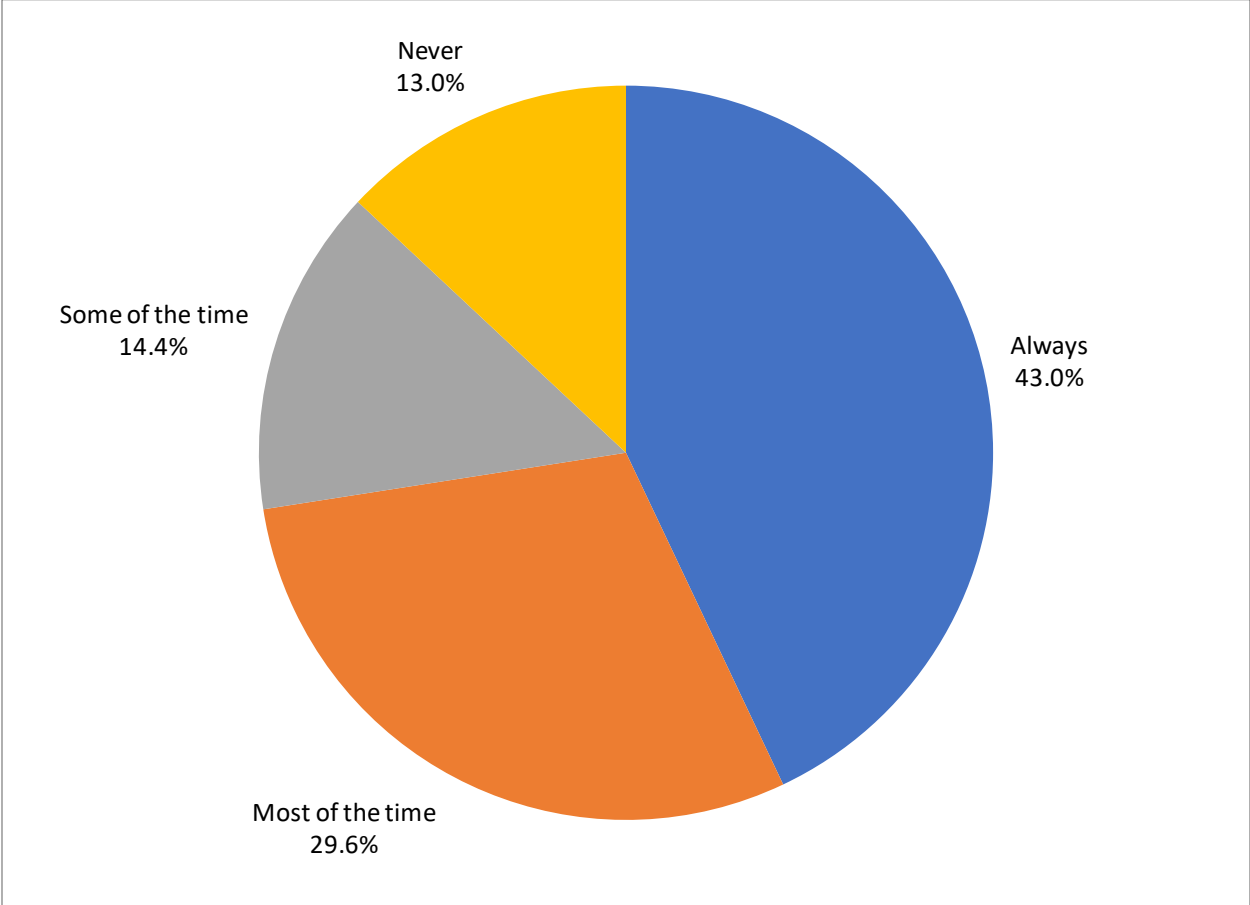


Figure 1.20: Educational Aspirations of LGBT Students

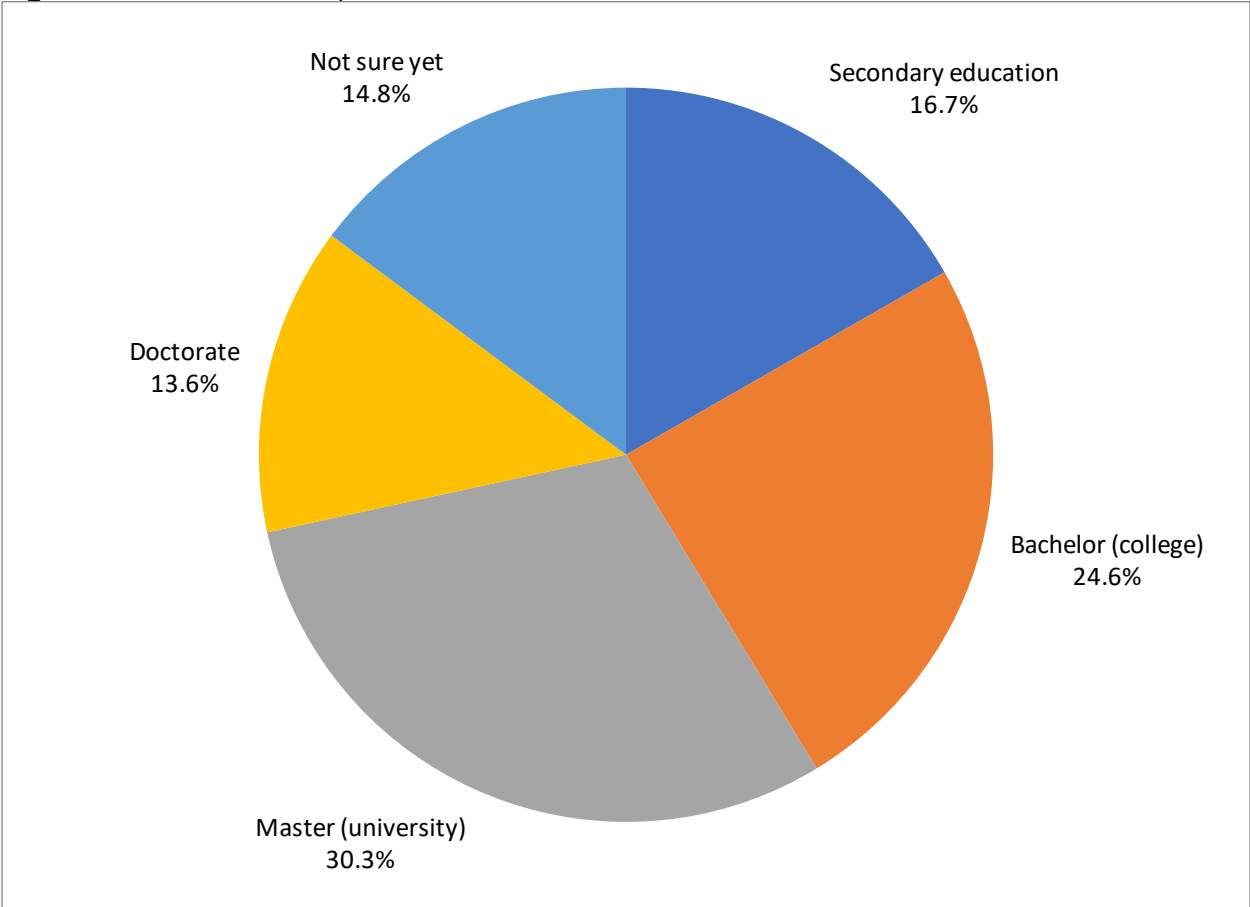


Figure 1.21: Educational Aspiration by Experiences of Victimization and Discrimination

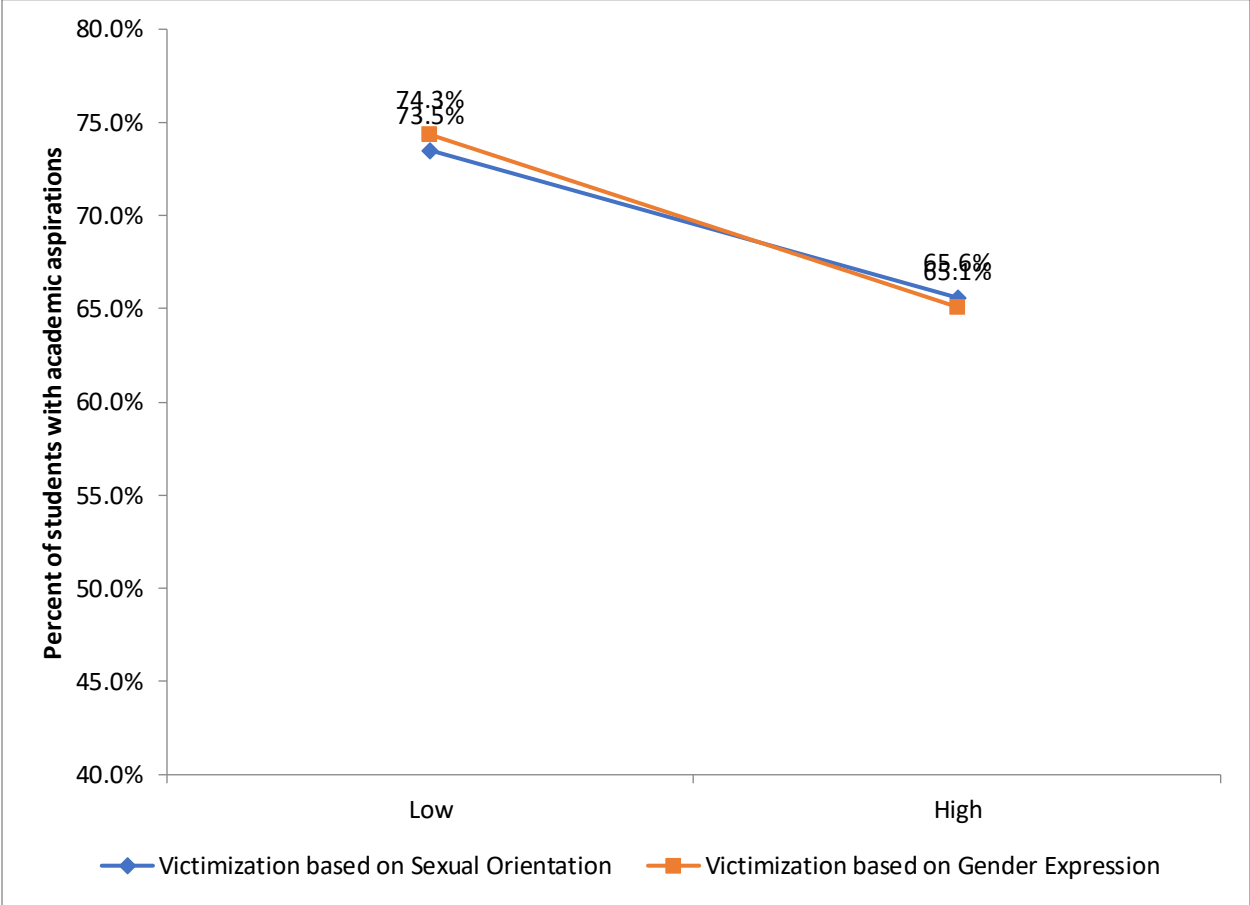


Figure 1.22: Absenteeism by Experiences of Victimization and Discrimination

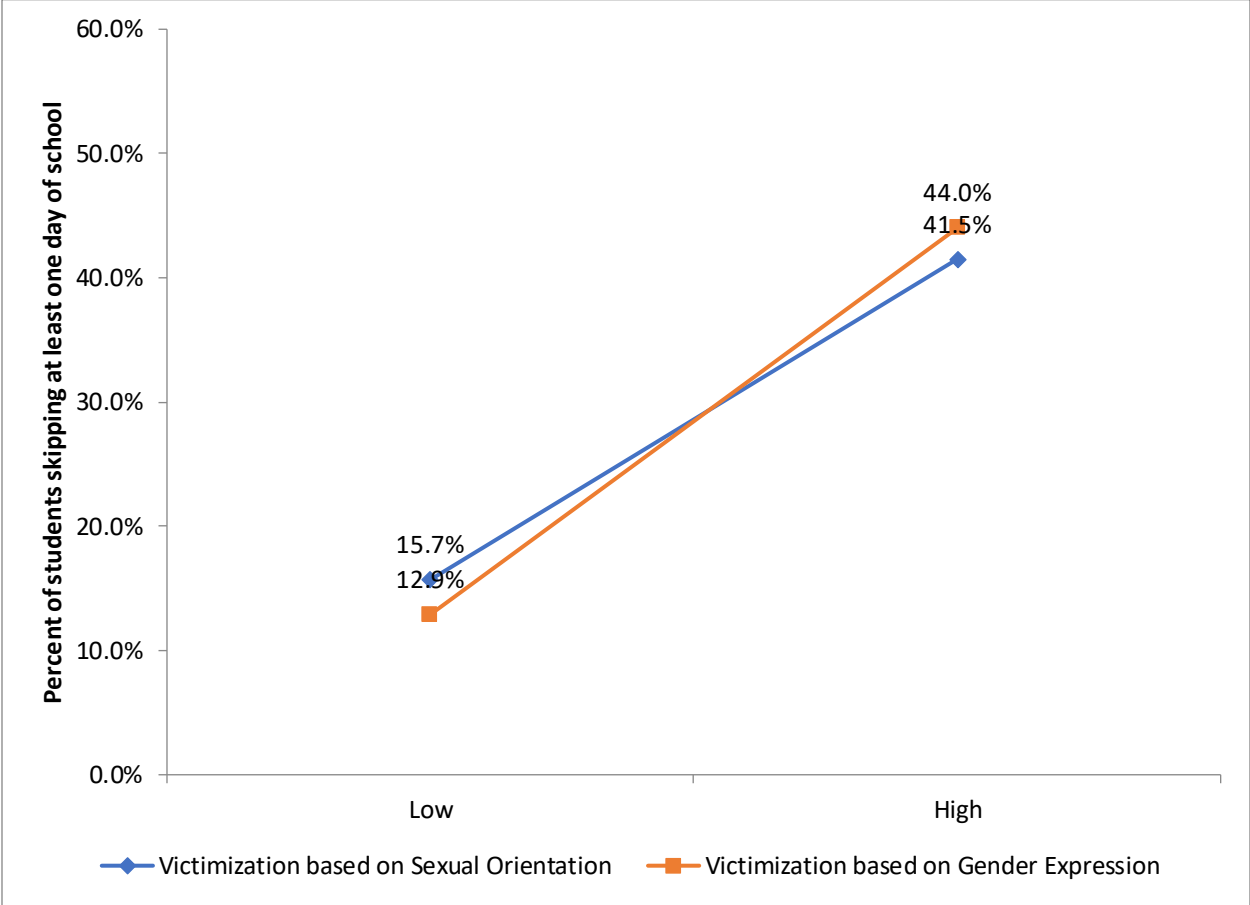
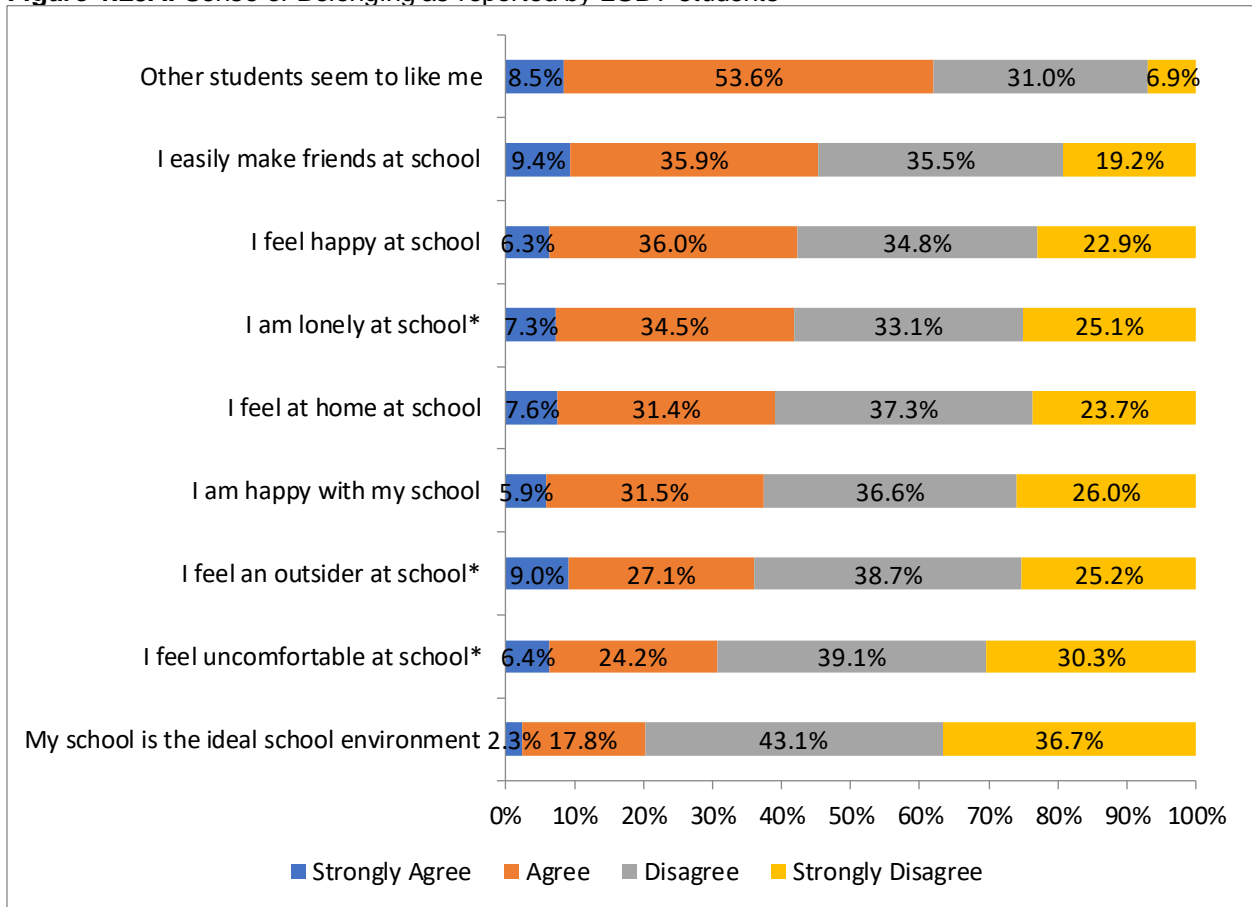


Figure 1.23A: Sense of Belonging as reported by LGBT students



Note: * item was recoded / reversed. Agreeing with a statement means higher sense of belonging.

Figure 1.23B: School Belonging, LGBT Students and the General Population of 15 Year-Old Students

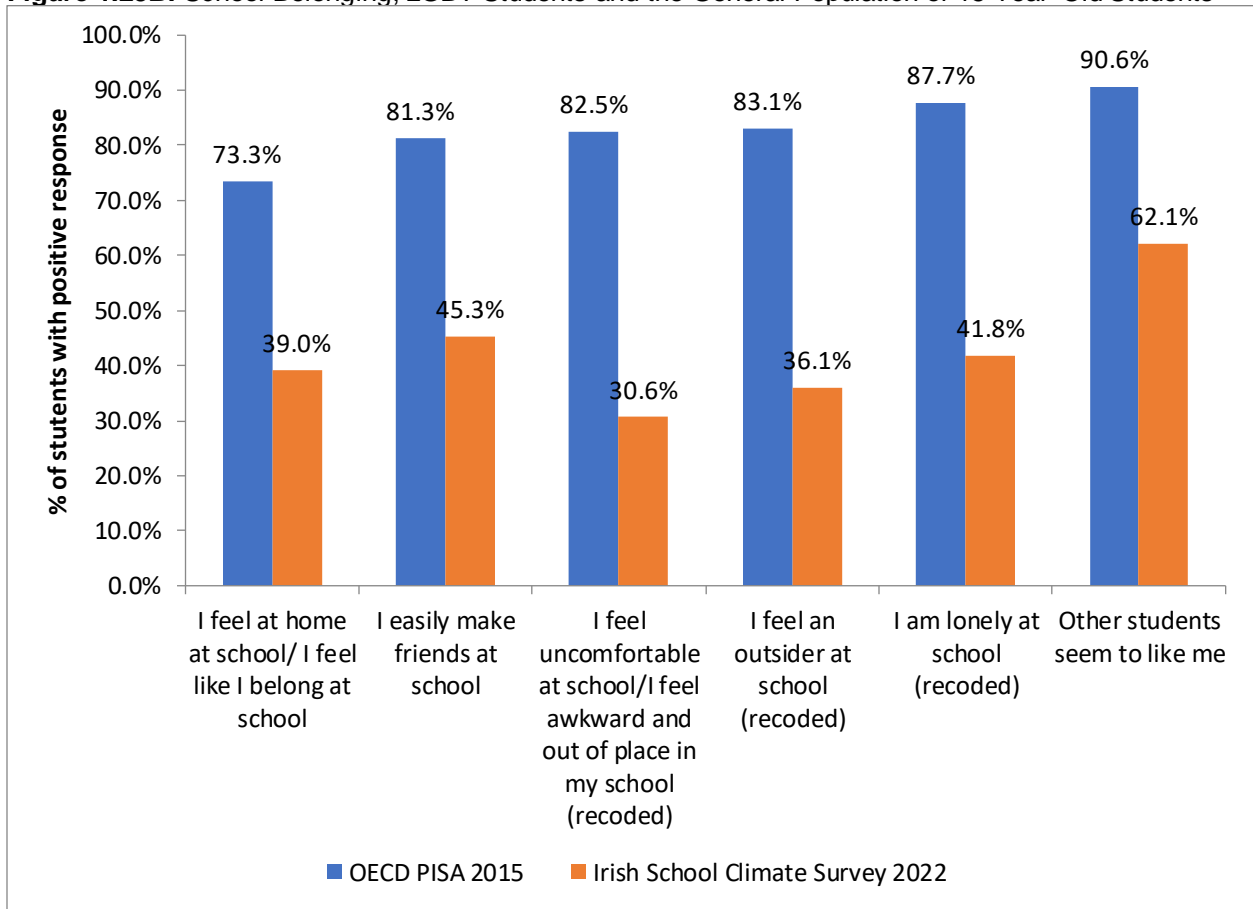


Figure 1.23C: School Belonging by Experiences of Victimization and Discrimination

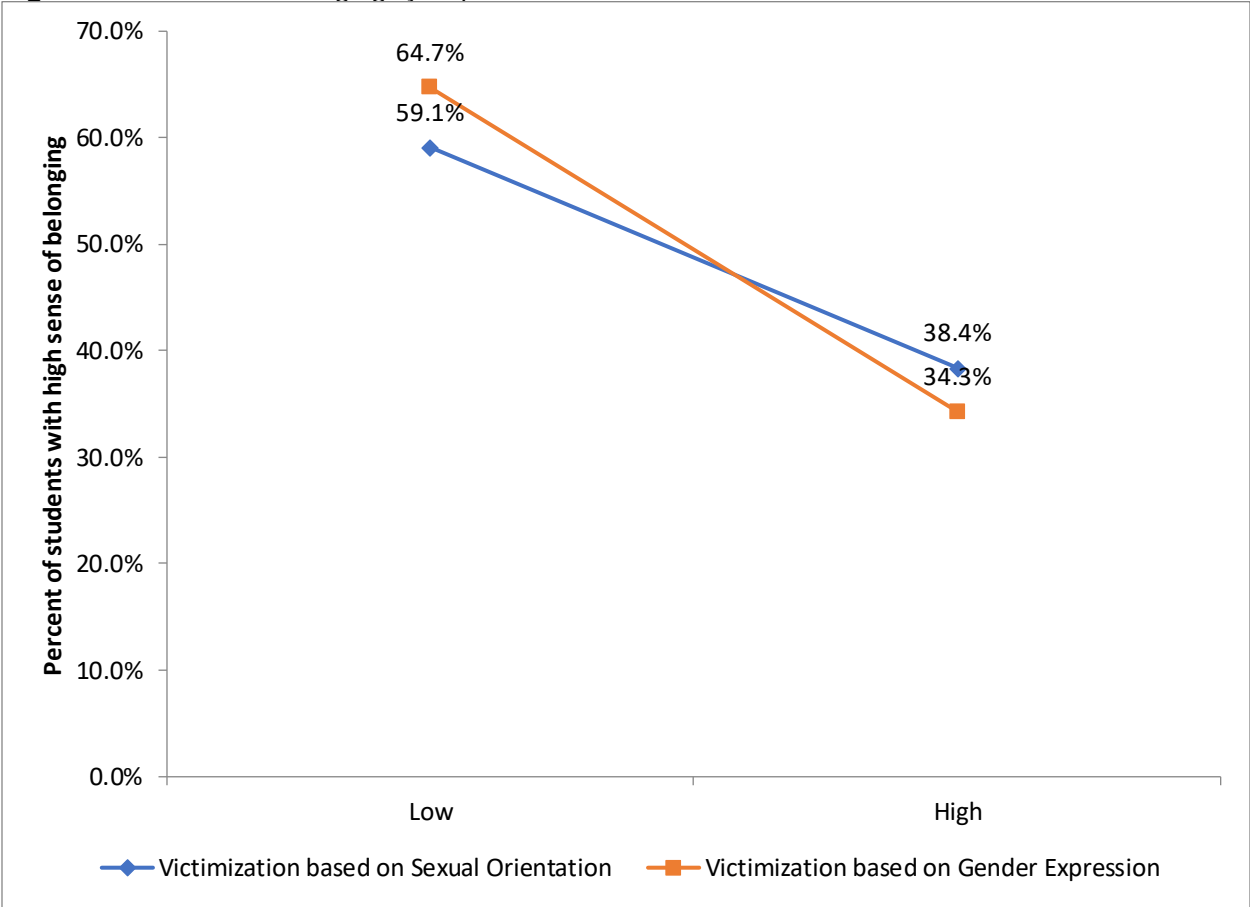


Figure 2.1: LGBT Students' Reports on How Accepting Their School's Students are of LGBT People

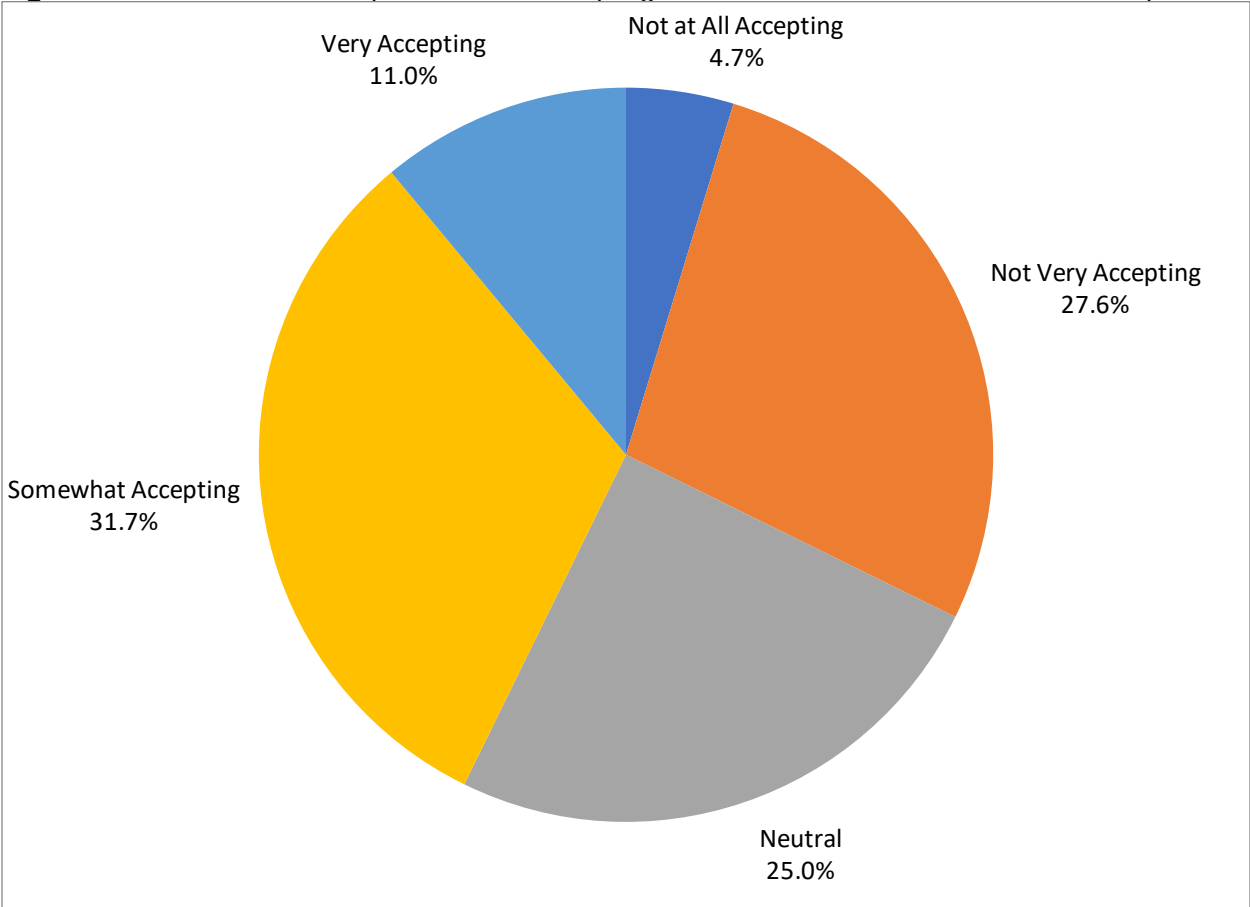


Figure 2.2: LGBT Students' Reports on the Number of LGBT Students at their School

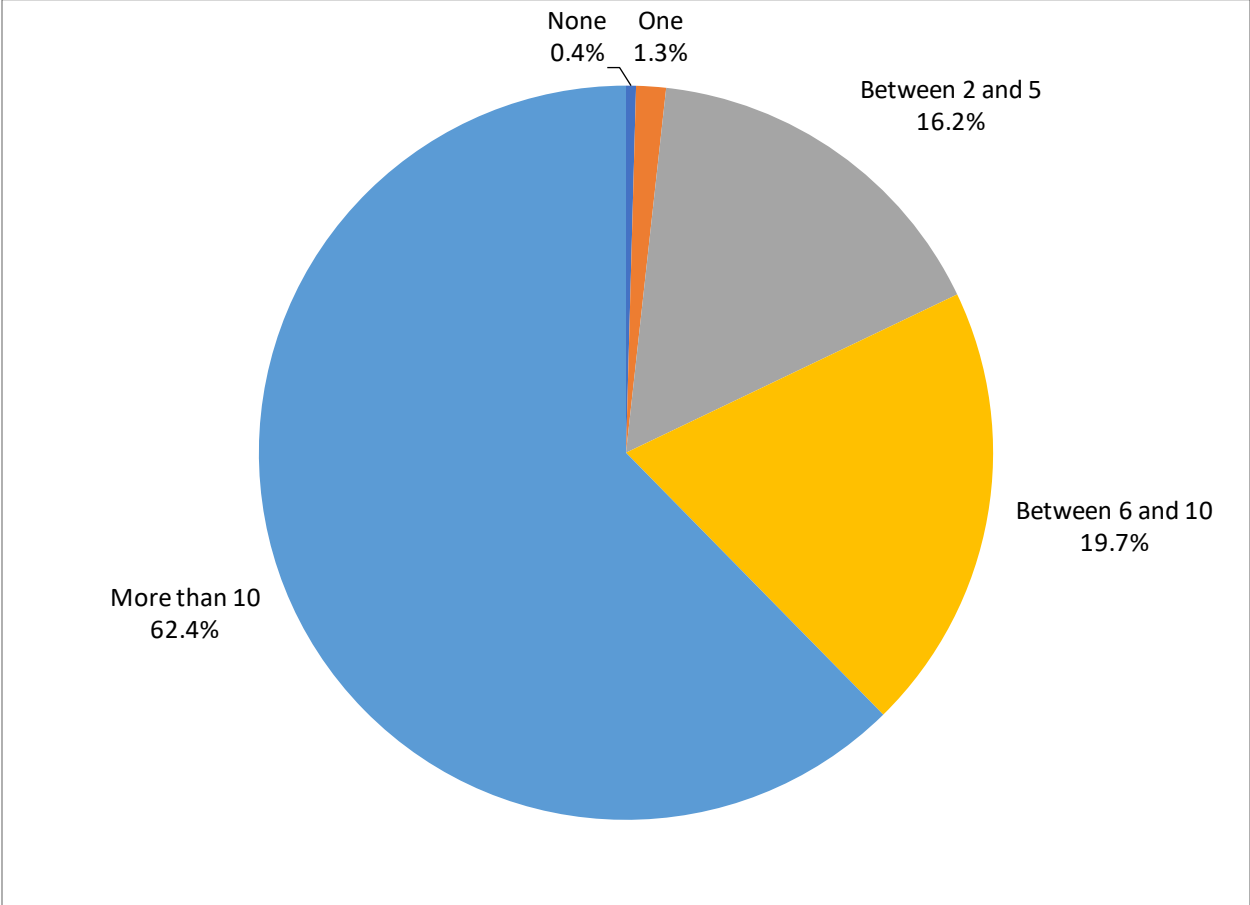


Figure 2.3: Frequency of Attending a Program or Group for LGBT Youth Outside Their School

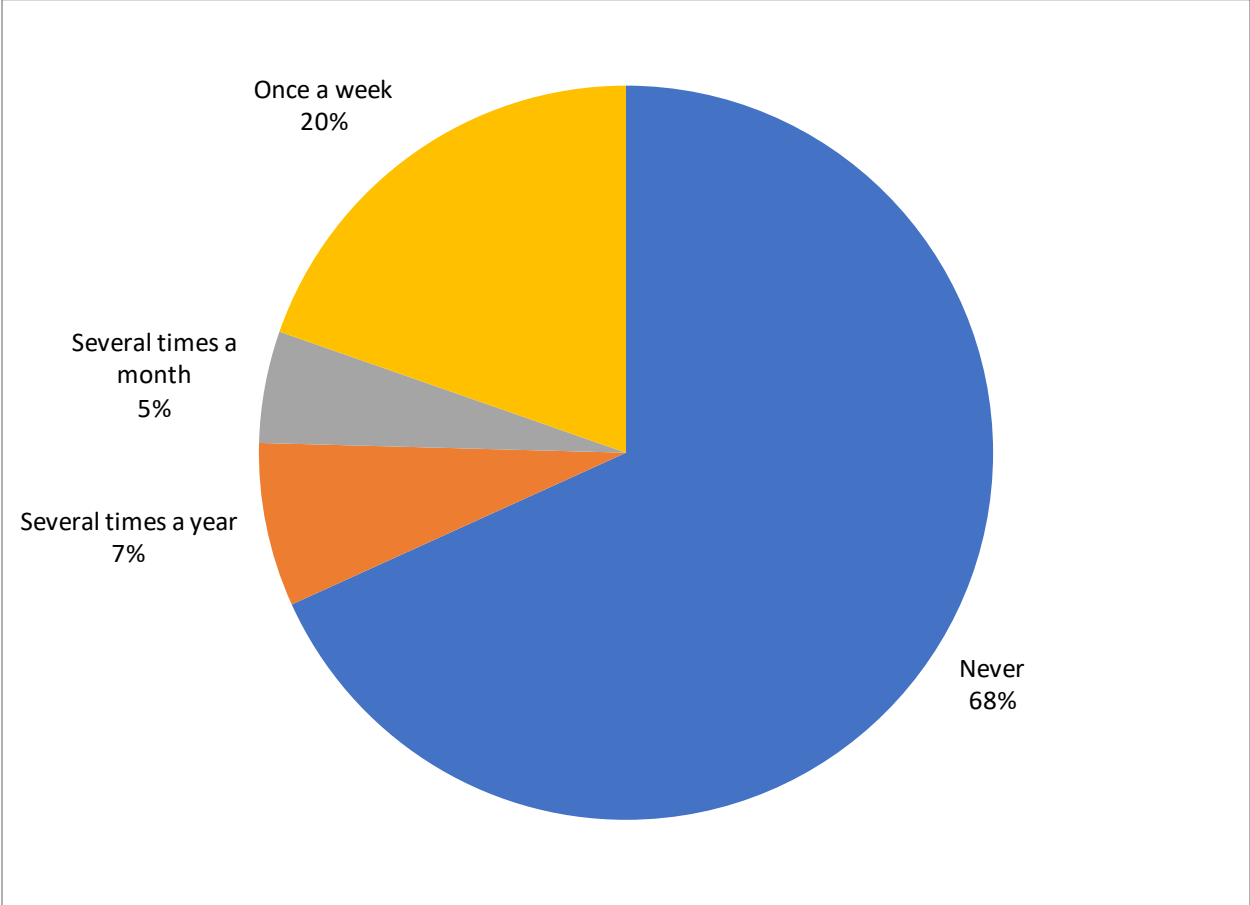


Figure 2.4: LGBT Students' Reports on Number of Teachers and Other School Staff Who are Supportive of LGBT Students

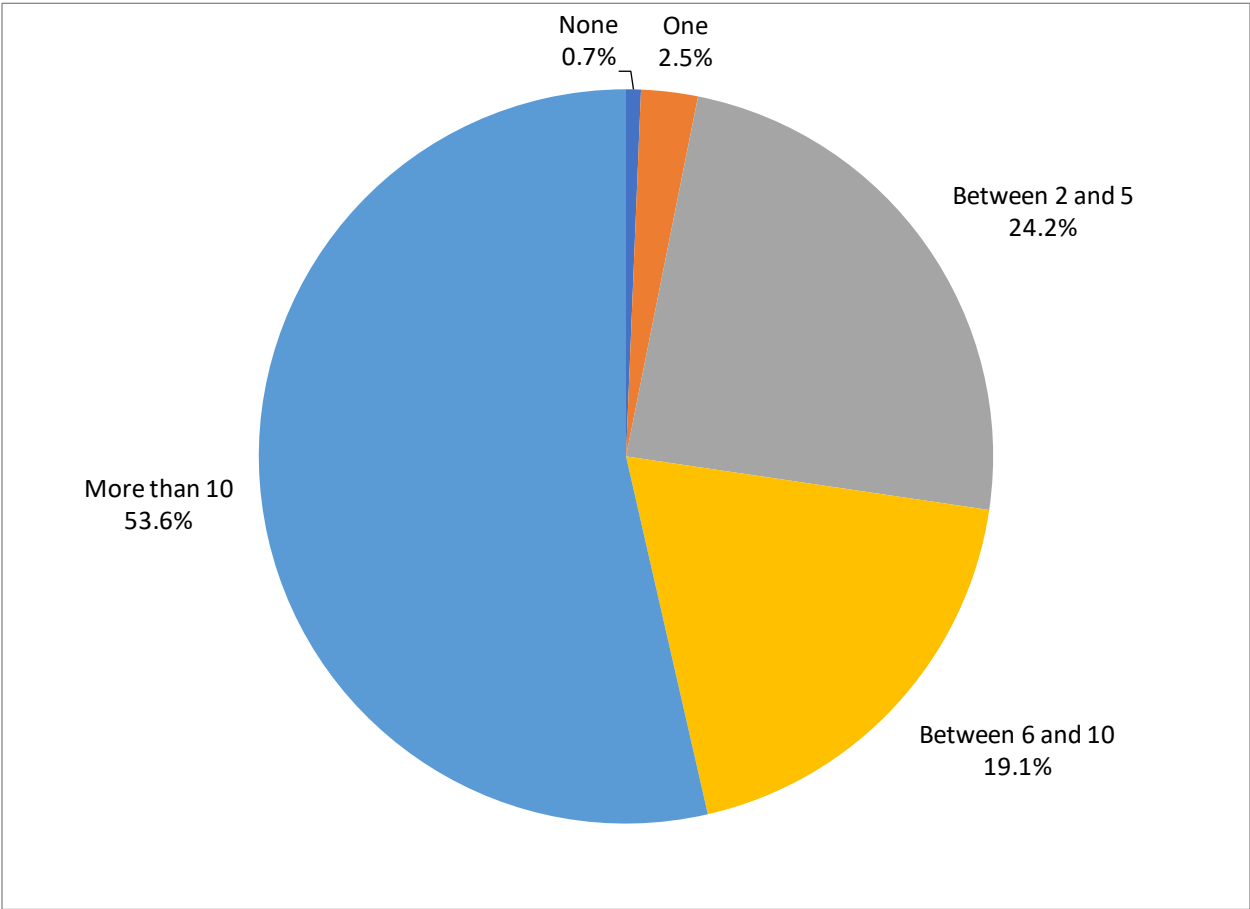


Figure 2.5: Comfort Talking with School Personnel about LGBT Issues

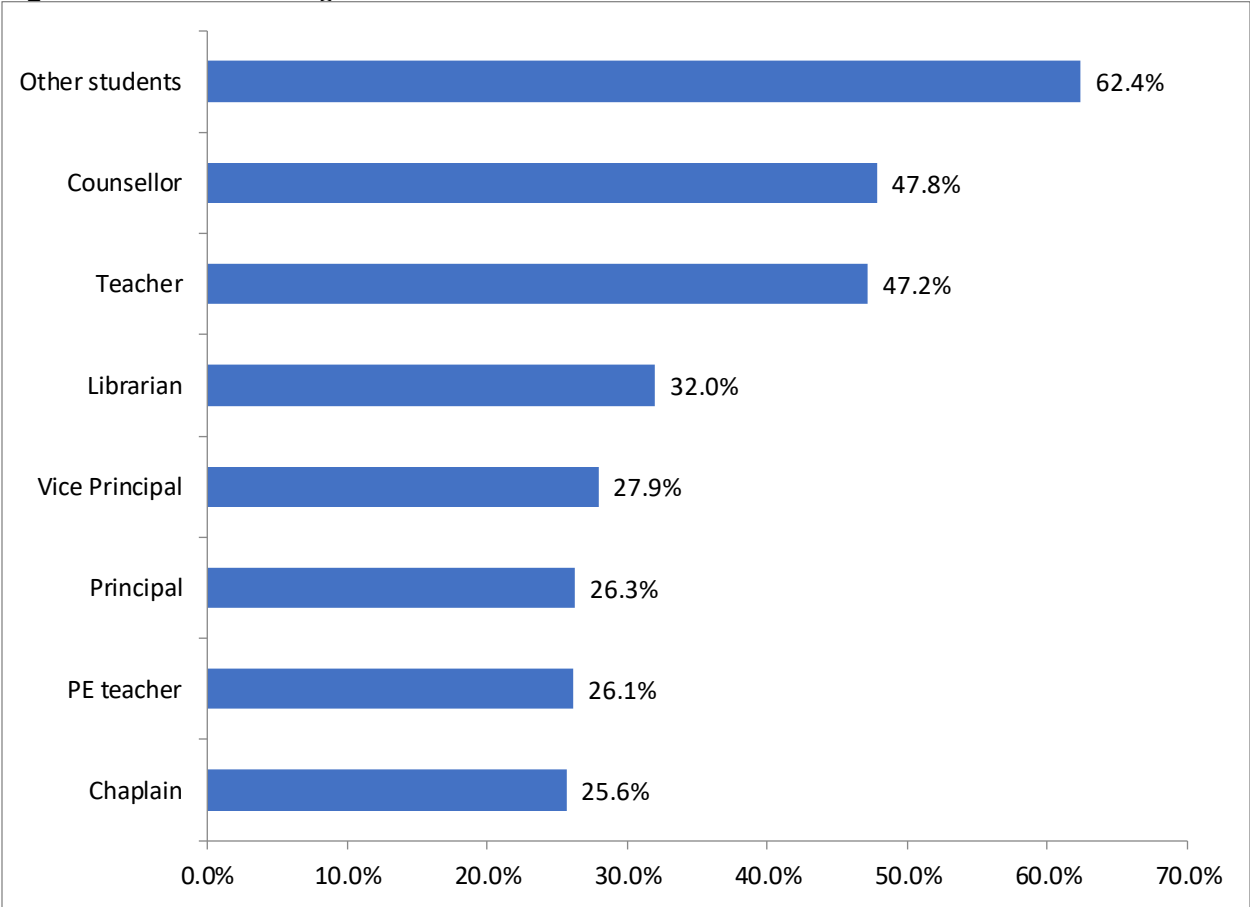
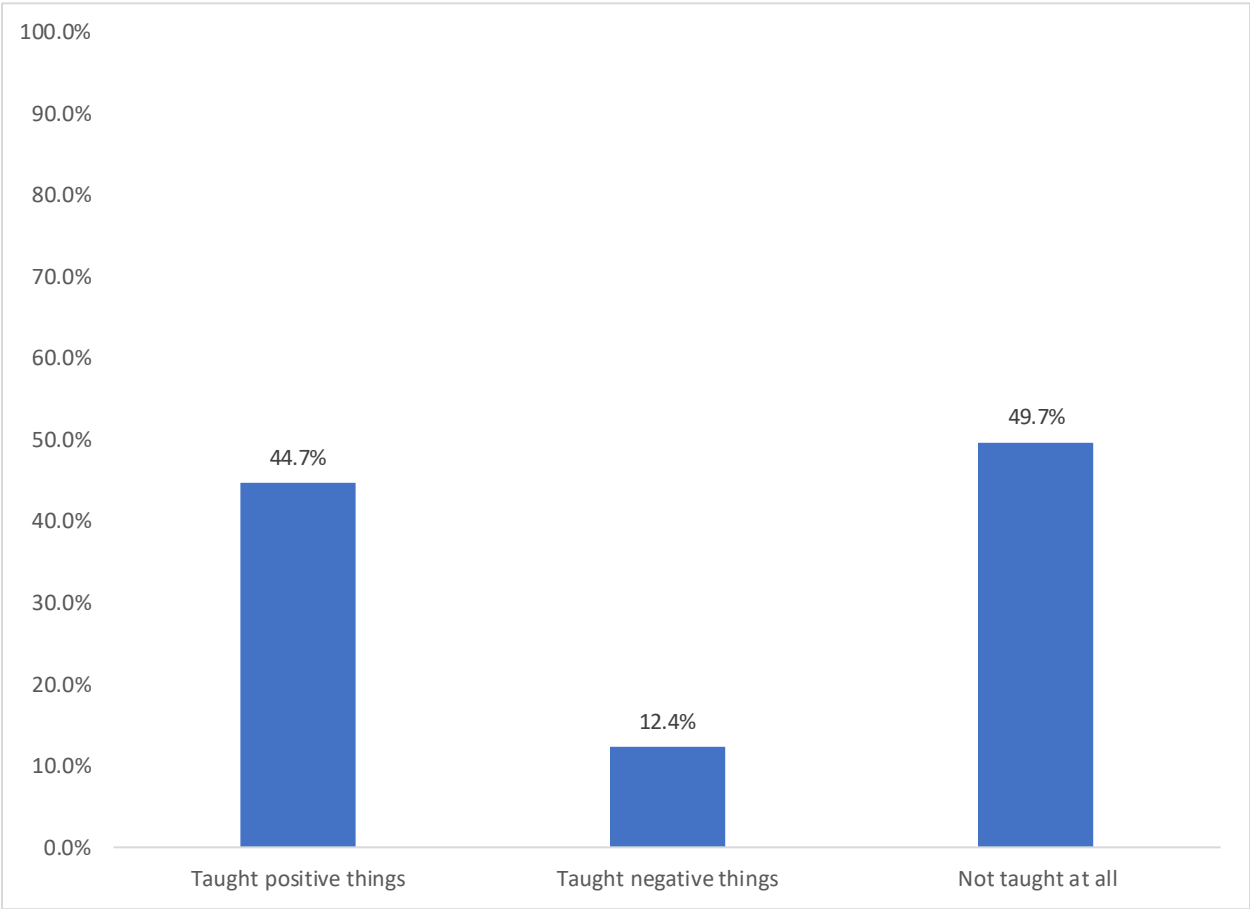


Figure 2.6: Percentage of LGBT Students Taught Positive and Negative Things about LGBT Topics in the Classroom Curriculum



Note: The total exceeds 100.0% because 6.9% of students reported on being taught both positive and negative things.

Figure 2.7: Percentage of LGBT Students Taught Bullying in School

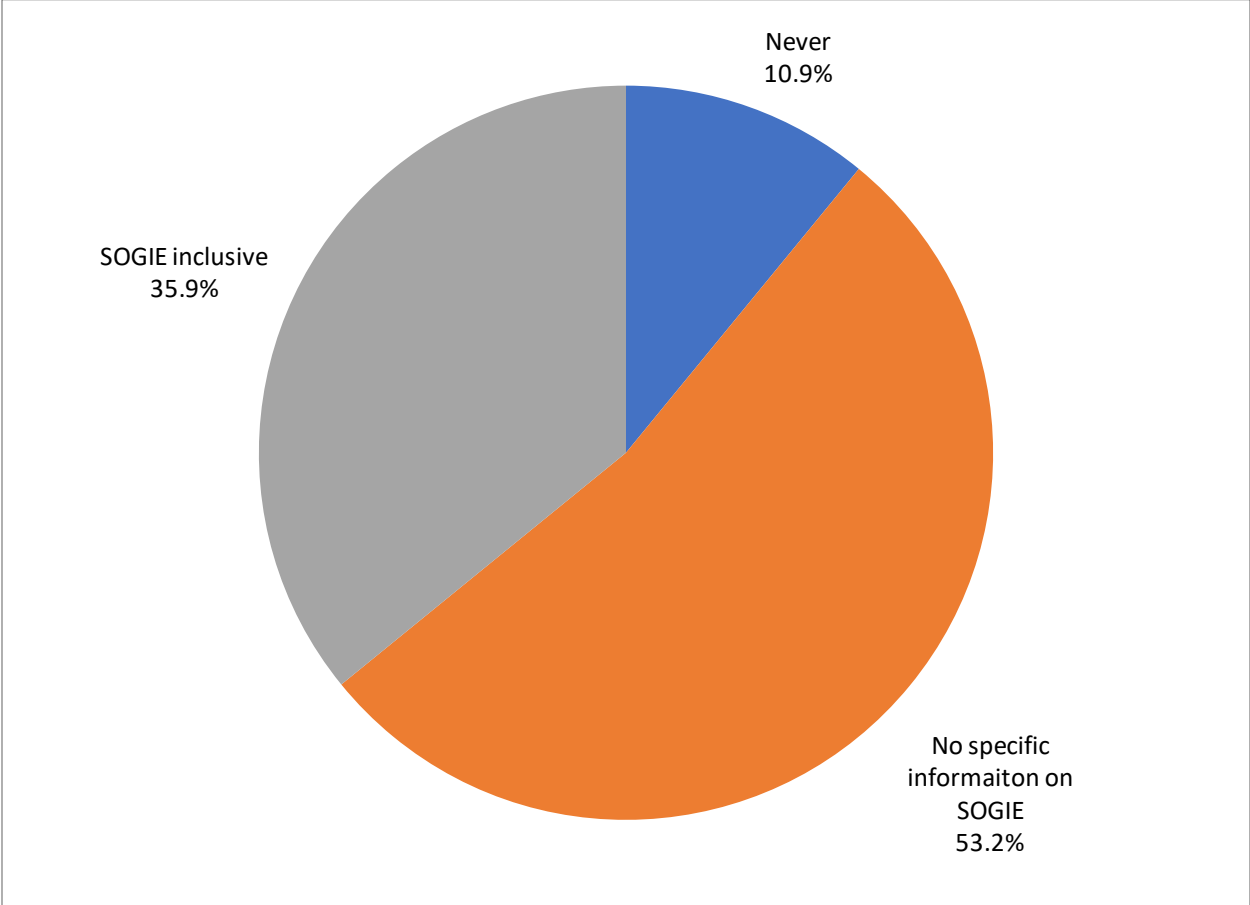


Figure 2.8: Availability of LGBT-Related Curricular Resources

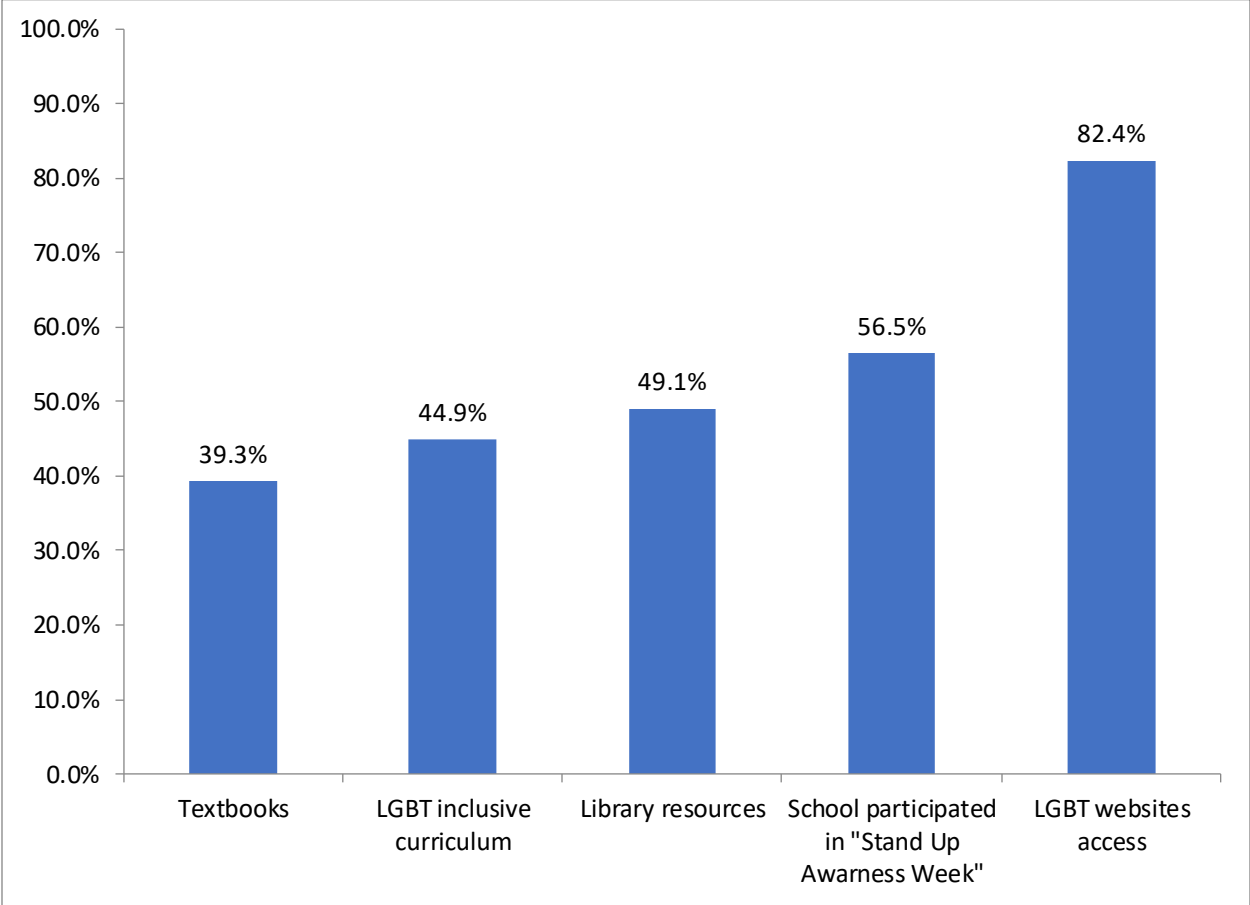


Figure 2.8B: Can students choose to wear the uniform that best fits their gender identity/gender expression?

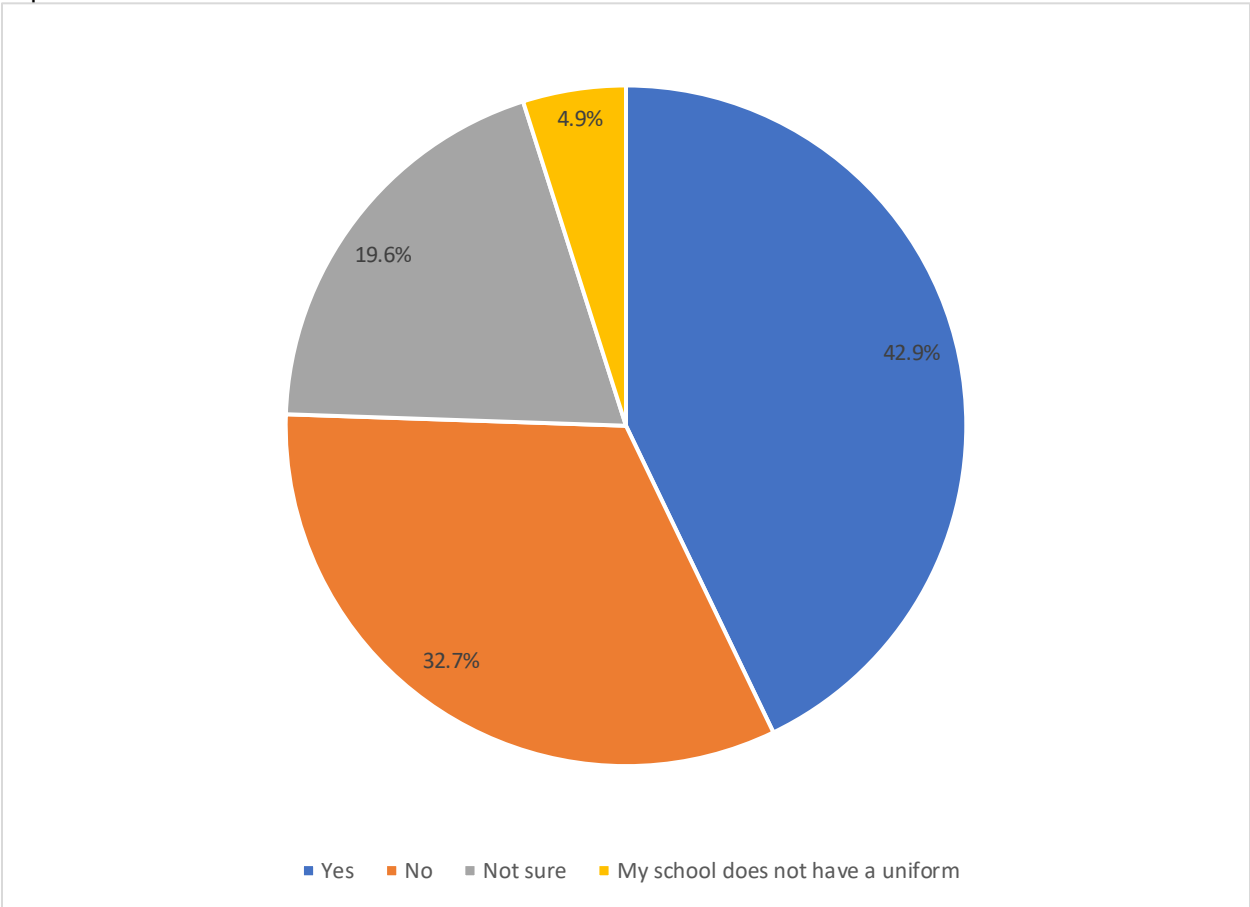


Figure 2.8C Does your school have a gender-neutral bathroom or changing room?

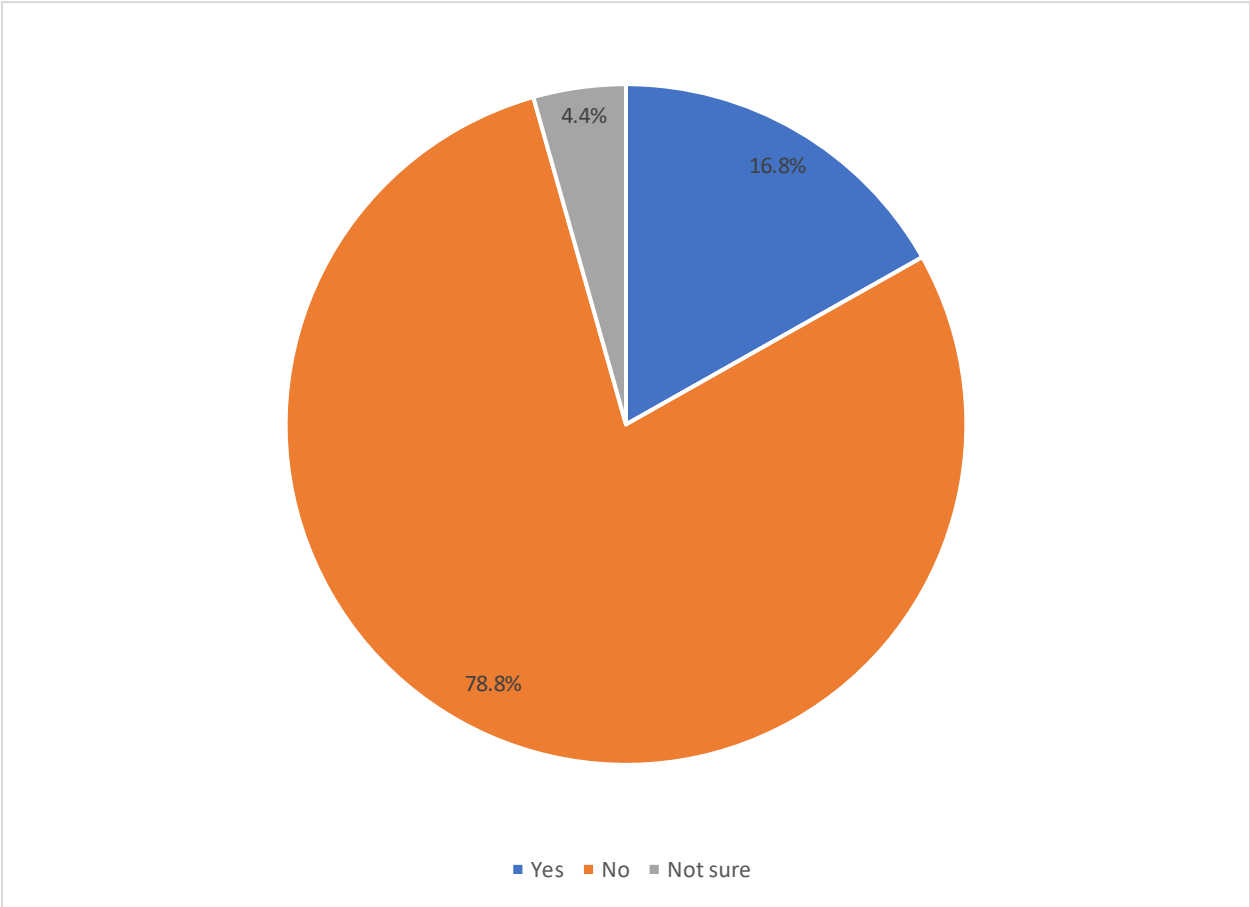


Figure 2.9: The Number of Teacher and School Personnel Who Support LGBT Students and the LGBT Student Experience

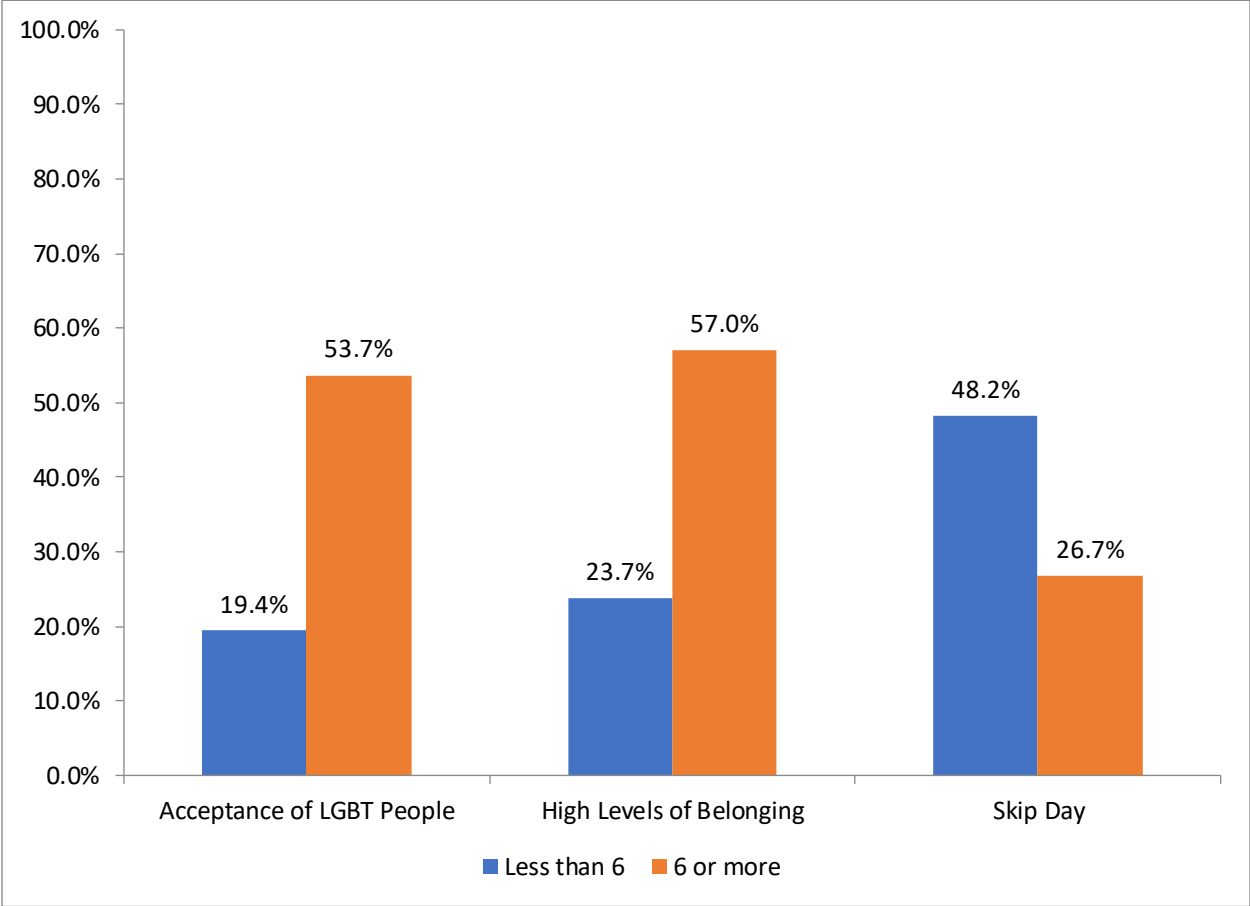


Figure 2.10: Staff Intervention on Homophobic Comments and the Experience of LGBT Students

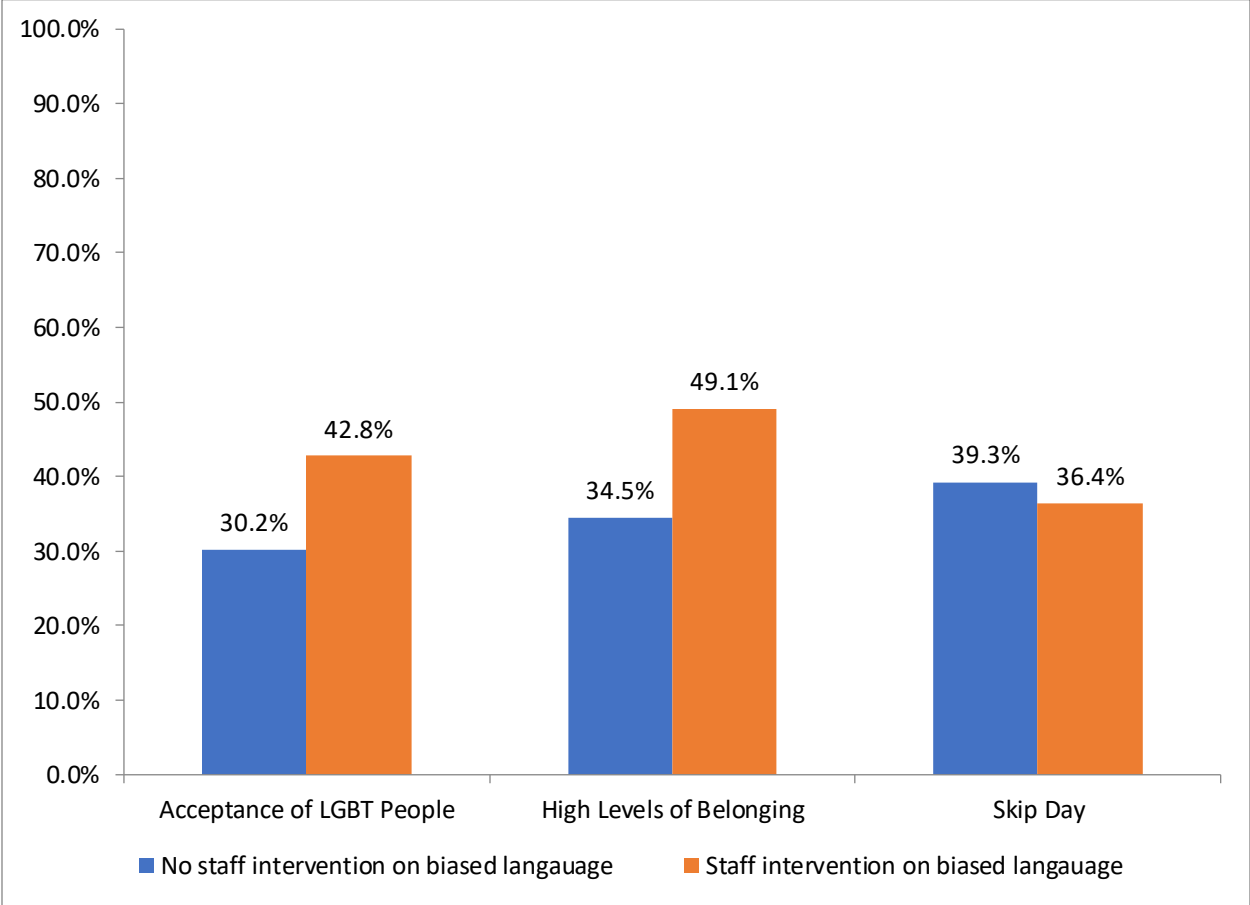


Figure 2.11: Inclusive Curriculum and the Experience of LGBT Students

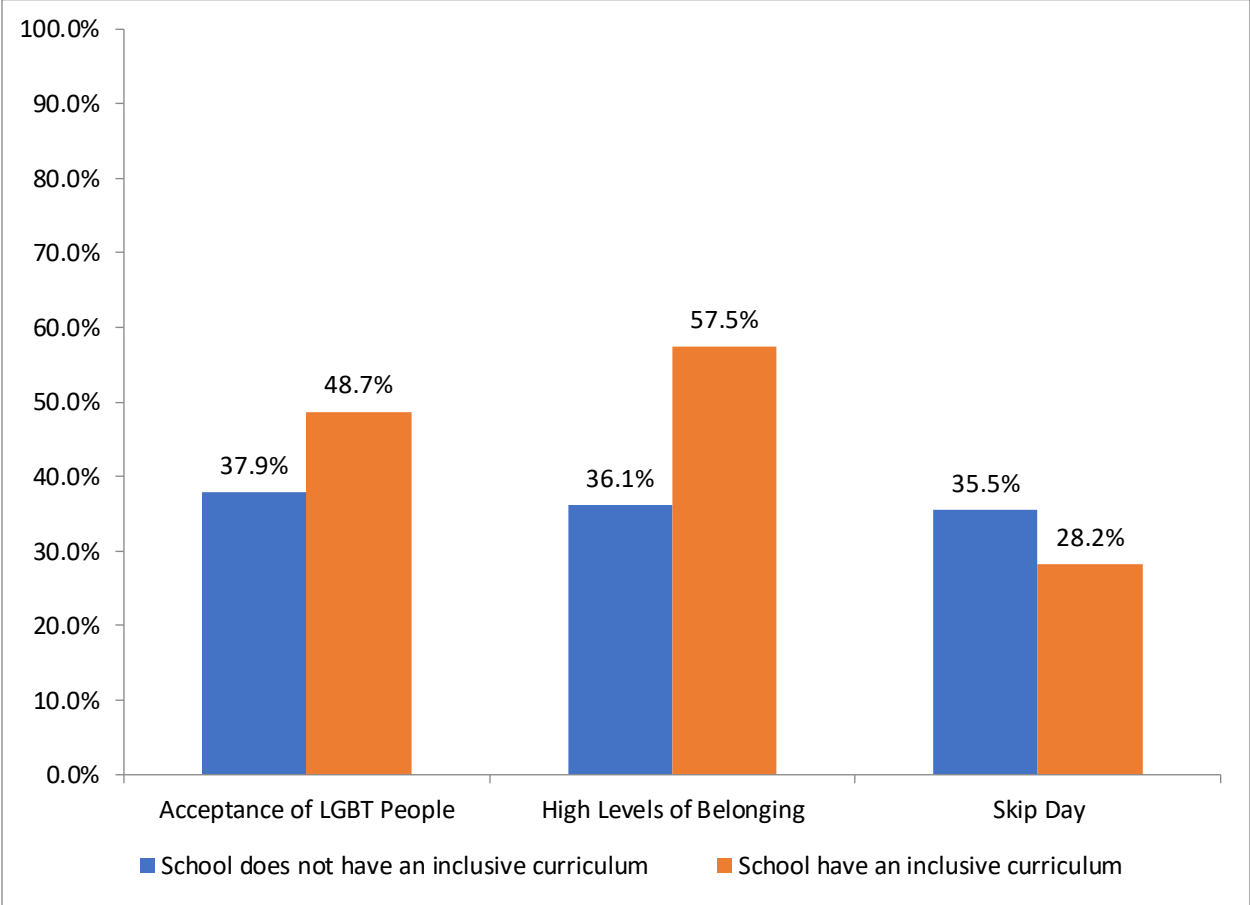
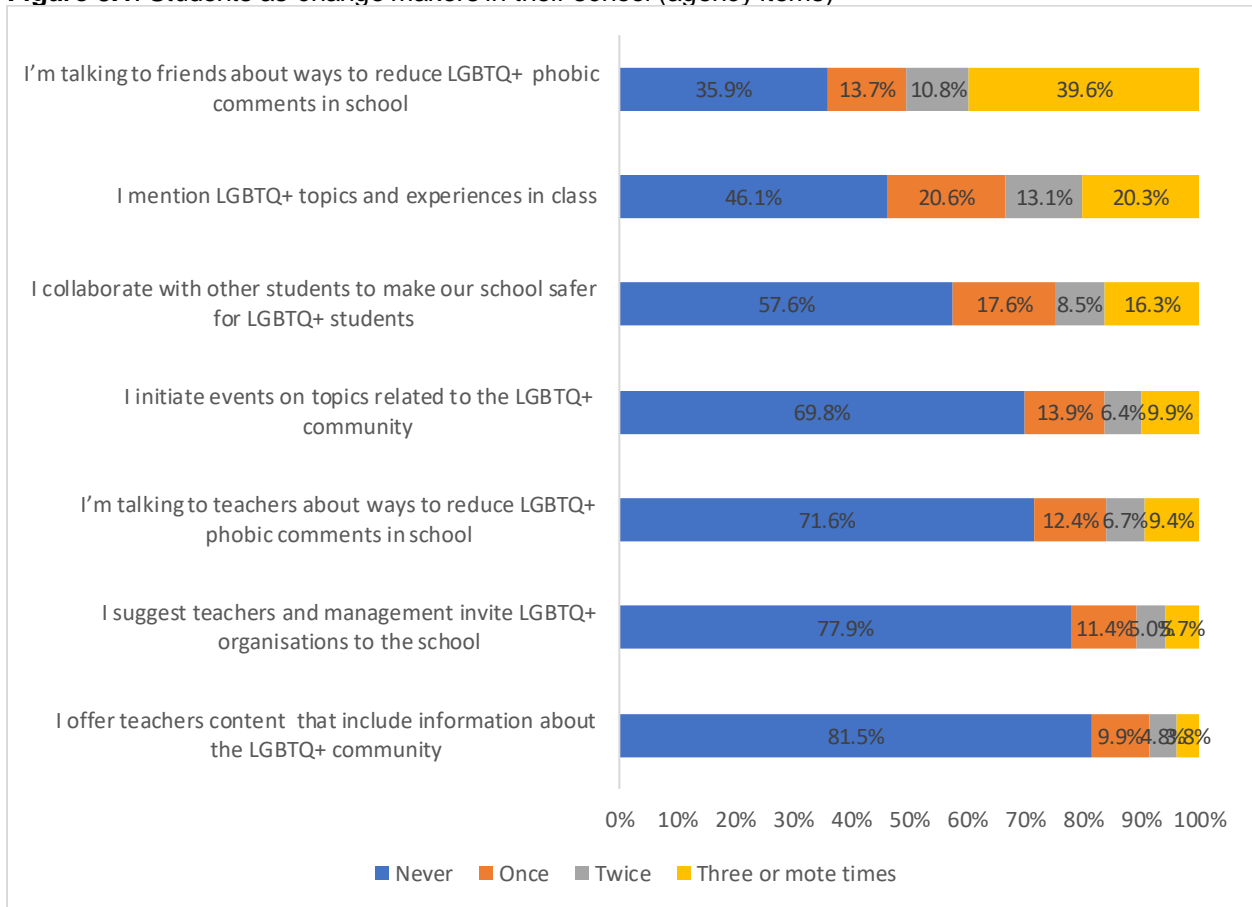


Figure 3.1: Students as change makers in their school (agency items)



The following questions relate to different activities that students can do to improve the educational climate and experience of students from the LGBTQ+ community in the school. In the past year how many times have you done these activities?

Figure 3.1: Students as change makers (agency) by Experiences of Victimization

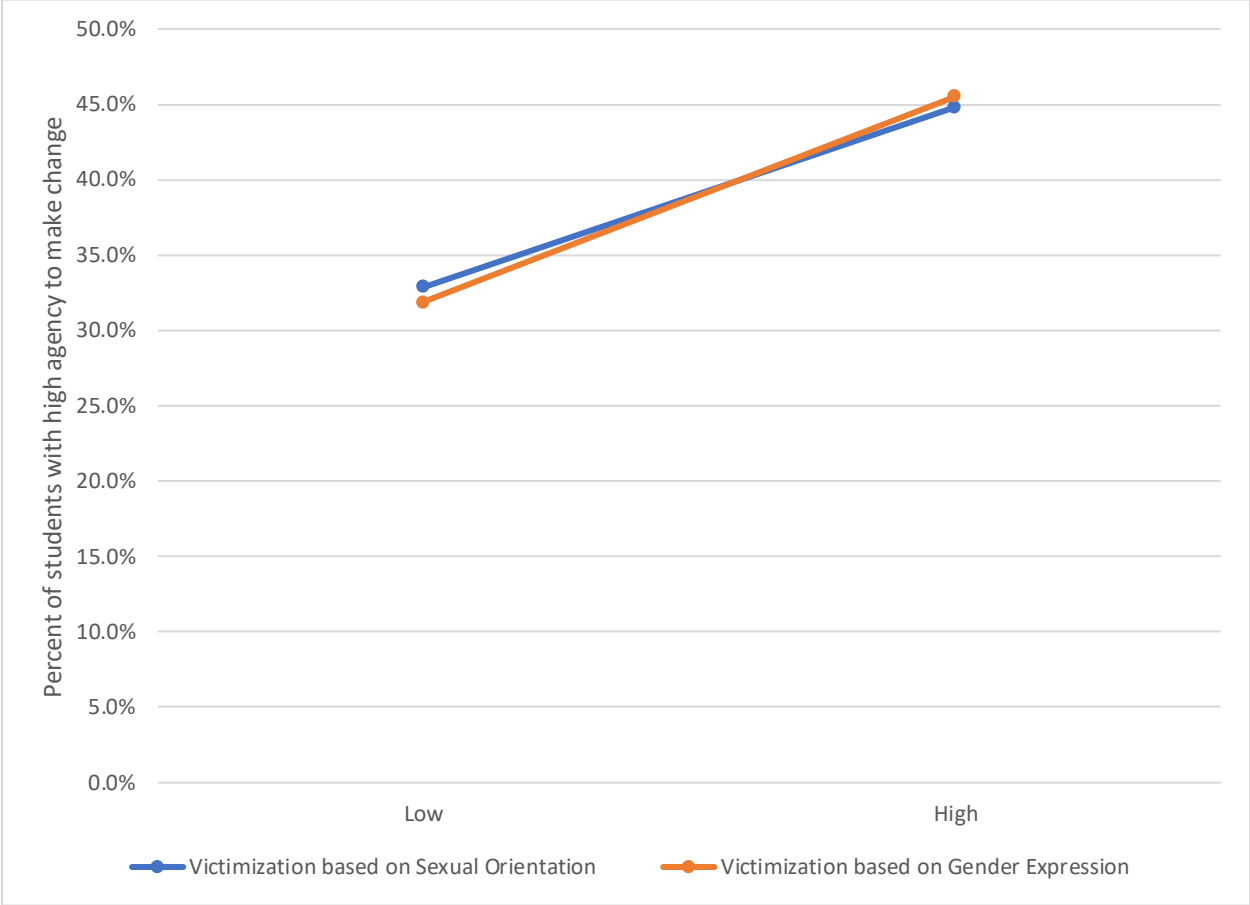


Figure 4.1: Which social media platforms do you use?

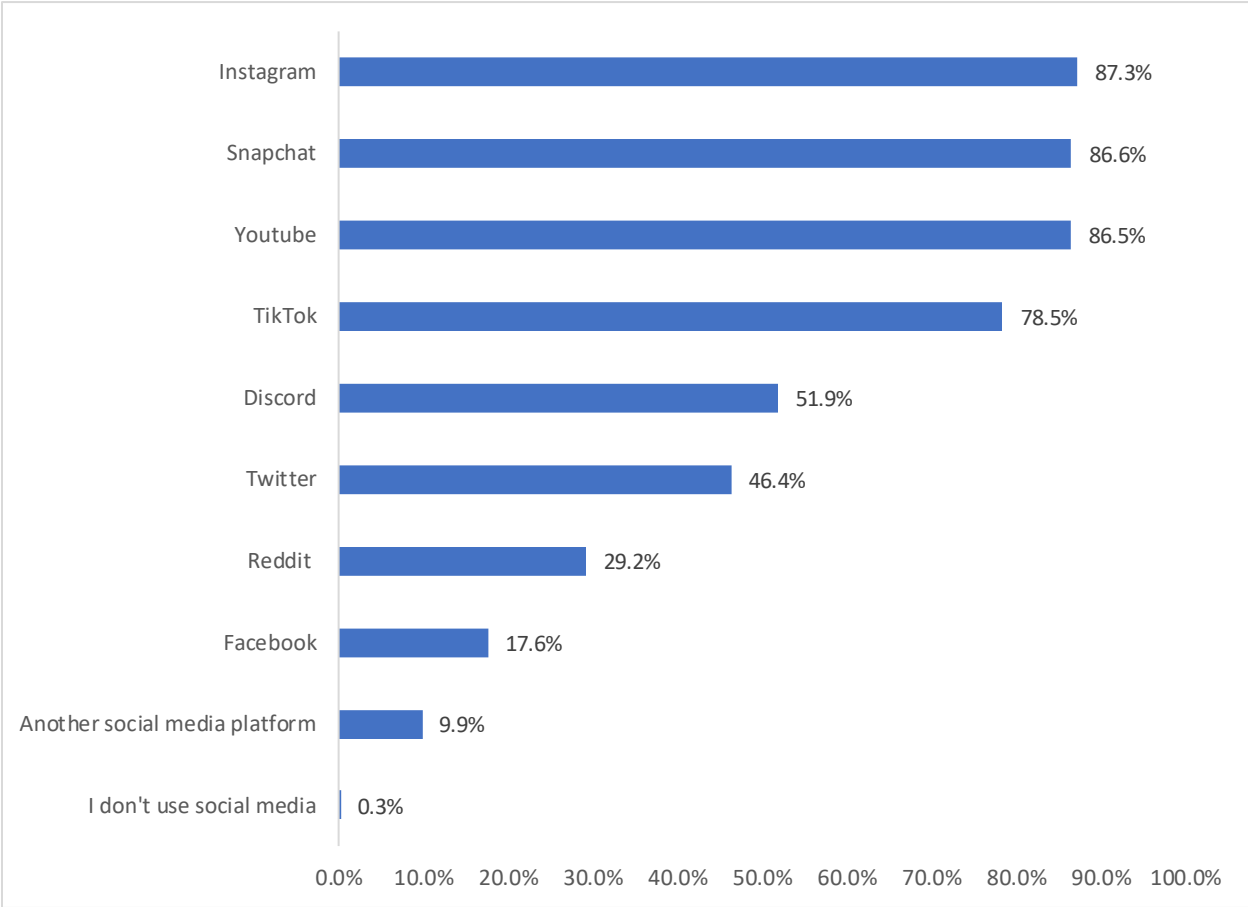


Figure 4.2: Distribution of the total number of accounts on social media platforms

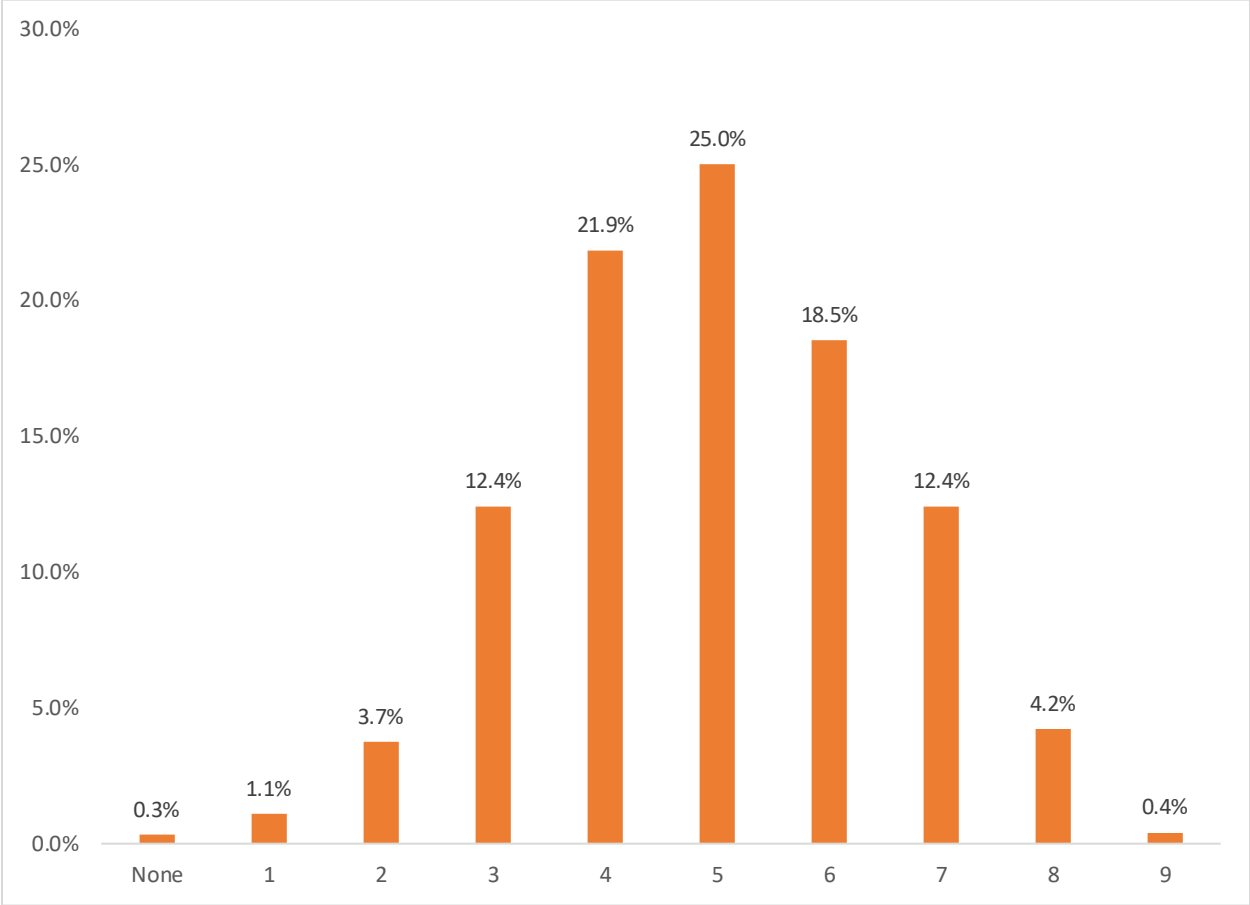


Figure 4.3: Anti-LGBTQ+ Harassment, Hate Speech or Discrimination on Social Media Platforms, Experienced or Seen by LGBT Students in the Past School Year

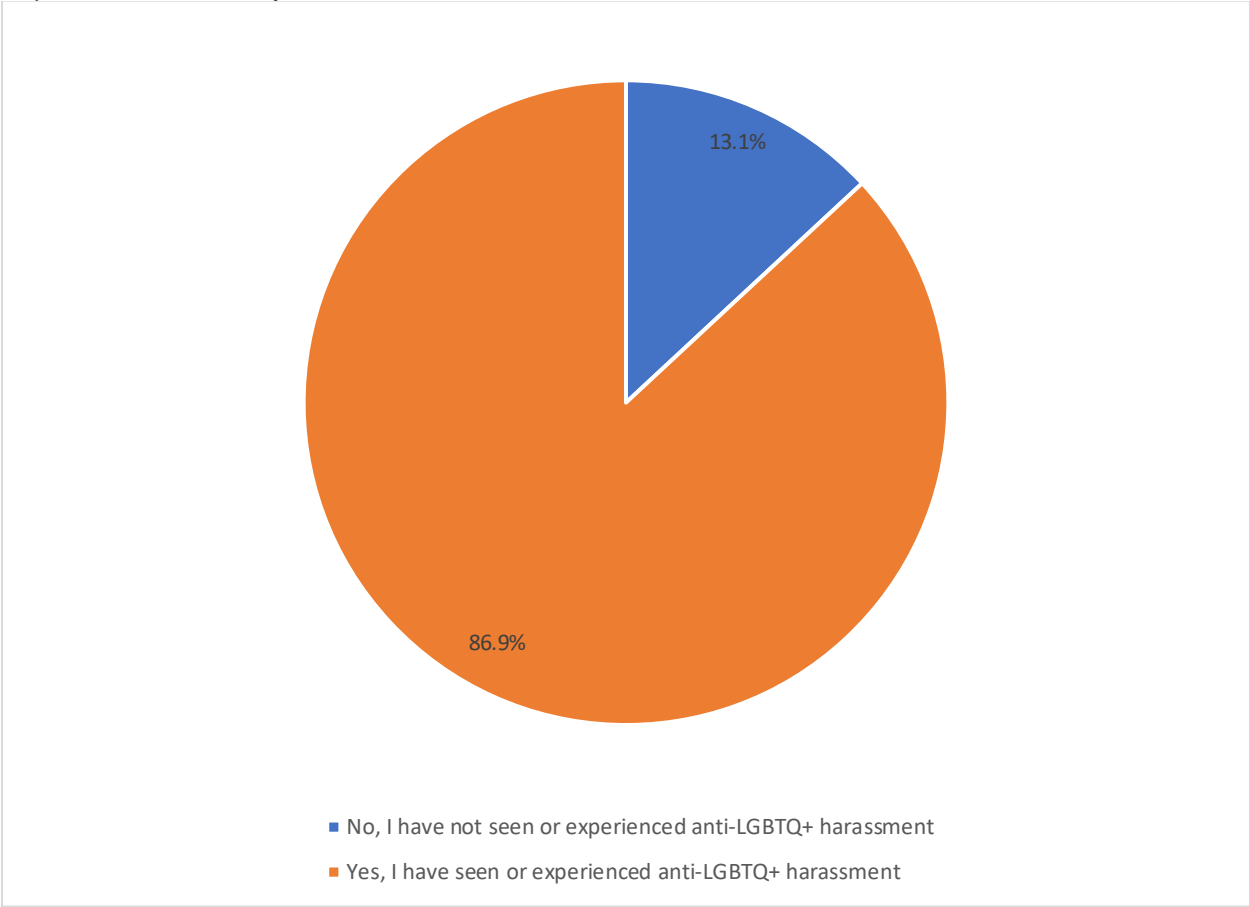
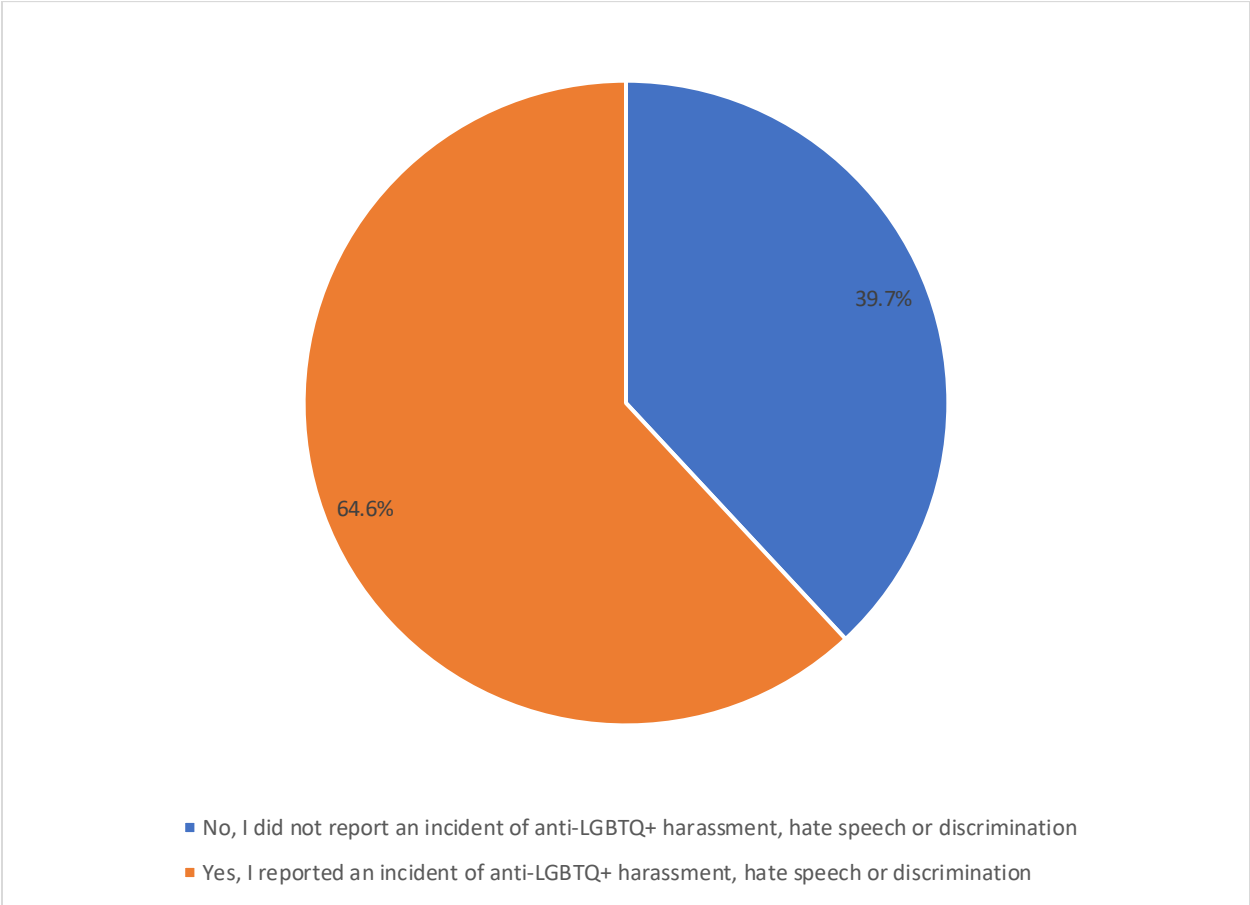


Figure 4.4: Have you ever reported an incident of anti-LGBTQ+ harassment, hate speech or discrimination to a social media platform?



Additional Figures

Figure X.1: Do you plan to complete the Leaving Certificate or Leaving Certificate Applied?

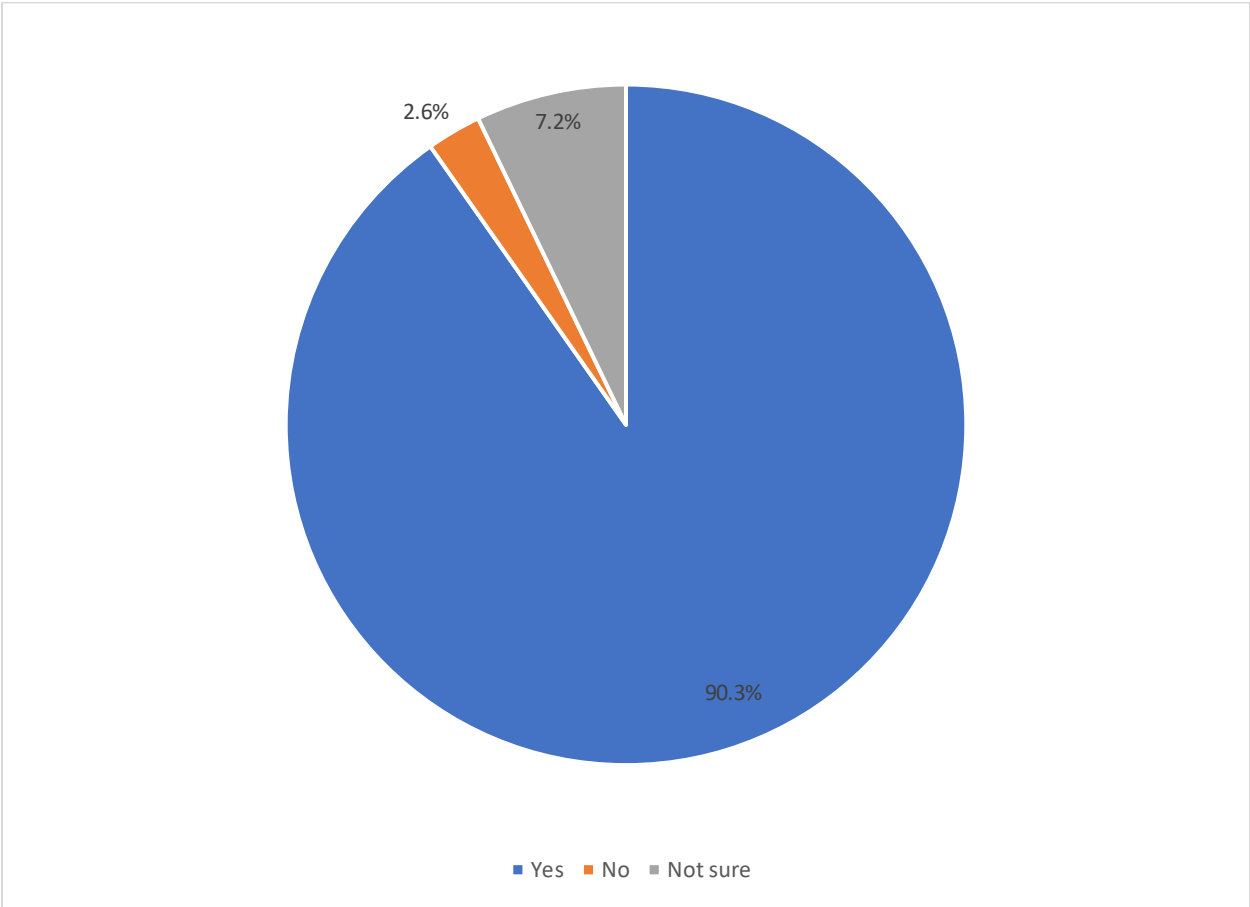
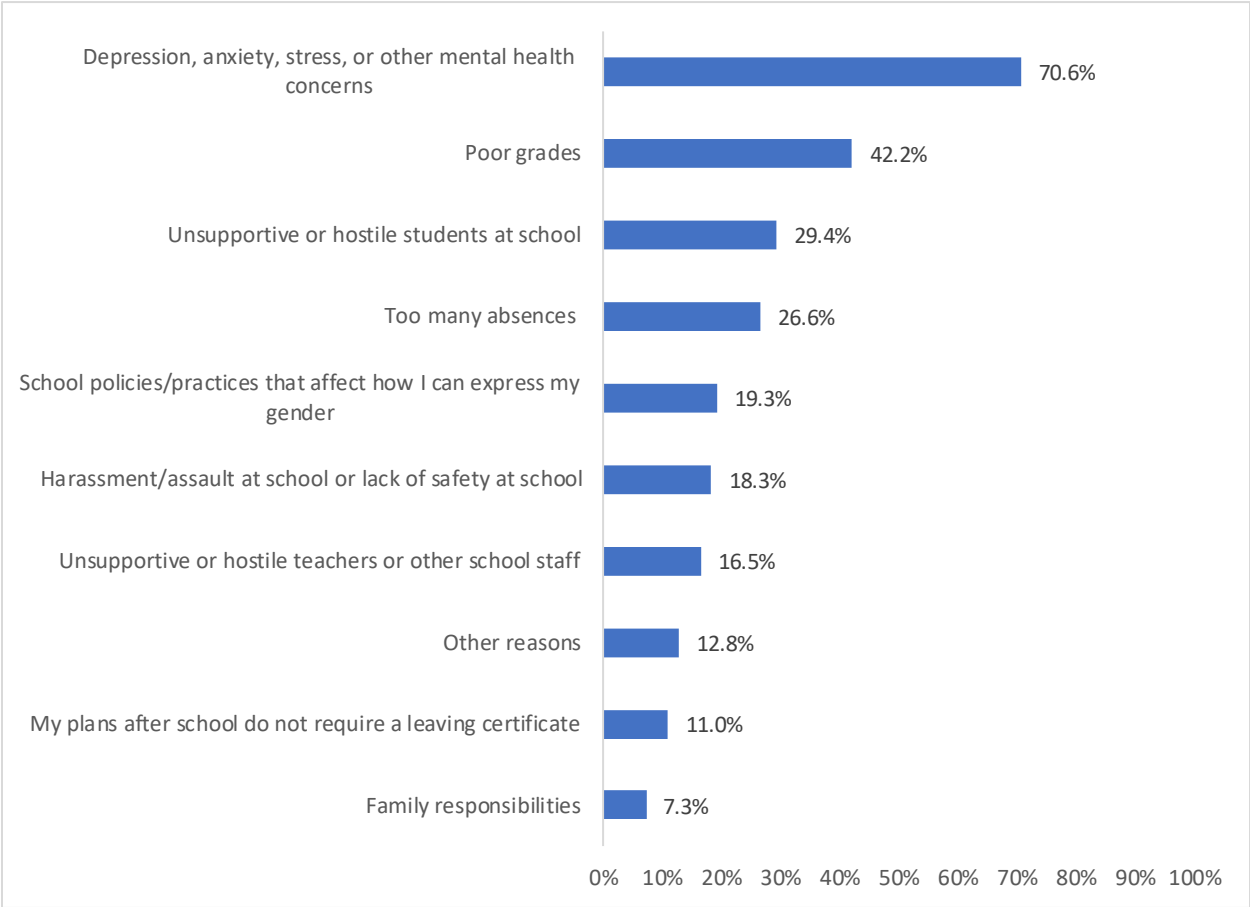


Figure X.2: What are the reasons you do not plan to or are not sure that you will graduate?





It's lonely. So very lonely. I never had anything in common with anyone and felt alienated. School just made me realise how lonely being queer truly is."

Belong To is a national organisation supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ+) youth. Since 2003, Belong To has worked with LGBTQ+ young people to create a world where they are equal, safe, and thriving. The organisation advocates and campaigns on behalf of young LGBTQ+ people and offers a specialised LGBTQ+ youth service including crisis counselling with Pieta, information, and the provision of LGBTQ+ youth groups.

Belong To supports educators and schools across Ireland. Stand Up Awareness Week, now in its 13th year, is an opportunity for educators and schools across Ireland to avail of teacher training and second-level school resources. Belong To's LGBTQ+ Quality Mark initiative supports second-level schools by helping them to create environments that are fully inclusive of LGBTQ+ youth. To find out more, visit

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