



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# OUT IN THE OPEN

Education sector  
responses to violence  
based on sexual  
orientation and gender  
identity/expression

**SUMMARY REPORT**



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Published in 2016 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,  
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

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The cover image is derived from a series of postage stamps released by United Nations Postal Administration (UNPA) as part of the UN Free & Equal campaign led by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The stamps by UNPA art director Sergio Baradat, celebrate the diversity of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

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The photos of young people included in the report are part of an interview-series conducted by IGLYO (The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer & Intersex Youth & Student Organisation), which maintains an official partnership with UNESCO in consultative status. IGLYO is a European youth development organization building the confidence, skills and experiences of young people to become leaders within the LGBTIQI movement locally, nationally and internationally.

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Designed by Aurélia Mazoyer

Printed by UNESCO

*Printed in France*

ED-2006/WS/12

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# FOREWORD

All forms of discrimination and violence in schools are an obstacle to the fundamental right to quality education of children and young people and no country can achieve inclusive and equitable quality education if students are discriminated against or experience violence because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity

In 2011, UNESCO convened the first-ever UN international consultation on homophobic bullying in educational institutions, recognizing that this complex and sensitive issue needs to be addressed as part of wider efforts to prevent school-related violence and gender-based violence, in order to achieve quality education for all.

Since then UNESCO has expanded its work on school-related gender-based violence, including preventing and addressing homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings, as part of its mandate to ensure that learning environments are safe, inclusive and supportive for all and its contribution to the achievement of the new global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As part of this work, and within the framework of a three-year programme supported by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, *Education and Respect for All: Preventing and Addressing Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying in Educational Institutions*, UNESCO has provided support for efforts to improve the evidence base, including the global review of homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings and of education sector responses that provided the basis for this report. These efforts have contributed to a better understanding of the nature, scale and effects of violence in schools, including the links between school-related gender-based violence and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, and of the elements of a comprehensive education sector response.

This report summarizes the main findings of the global review. It aims to give an overview of the most up-to-date data on the nature, scope and impact of violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression and of current action. It also intends to provide education sector stakeholders with a framework for planning and implementing effective responses to violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression as part of wider efforts to prevent and address violence in schools.



Qian Tang (Ph.D.)  
Assistant Director-General for Education

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

UNESCO would like to thank the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation for their generous financial support for its work on preventing and addressing homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings, including the global review and report on the extent of the problem and education sector responses that provide the basis for this summary.

Particular thanks are due to those who contributed to the main global review report, including Piotr Pawlak Maciej and Claudia Moreno Uriza who conducted a desk review of indicators for measuring violence in schools, and Hivos and Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA) who worked in partnership with UNESCO on a multi-country study of gender, diversity and violence in schools in Southern Africa. UNESCO would also like to thank all those who reviewed drafts of the main report, including Sophie Aujean (ILGA Europe), Suki Beavers (UNDP), Eliza Byard (GLSEN, USA), Esther Corona (Mexican Association for Sex Education and World Association for Sexual Health), Júlio Cezar Dantas (Todo Mejora, Chile), Peter Dankmeijer (GALE, The Netherlands), Daouda Diouf (ENDA, Senegal), Peter Gross (UNICEF), Tiffany Jones (University of New England, Australia), Changu Mannathoko (UNICEF), Remmy Shawa (Sonke Gender Justice Network, South Africa) and colleagues from Education International.

The development of the main report and of this summary was coordinated by a team led by Christophe Cornu, Senior Programme Specialist, under the supervision of Christopher Castle, Chief of the Section of Health and Education, and with the overall guidance of Soo Hyang Choi, Director of the Division for Inclusion, Peace and Sustainable Development at UNESCO. UNESCO staff who provided inputs included Mary Guinn Delaney, Cara Delmas, Joanna Herat, Yongfeng Liu, Justine Sass and Tigran Yepoyan. UNESCO would also like to thank Bruno Selun and Jasna Magić (Kumquat Consult), who drafted the original text of the reports.

# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ENDA</b>	Environment and Development Action in the Third World
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GALA</b>	Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action
<b>GLSEN</b>	Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (USA)
<b>IGLYO</b>	International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Youth and Student Organisation
<b>ILGA</b>	International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association
<b>LGB</b>	Lesbian, gay and bisexual
<b>LGBT</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
<b>LGBTI</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
<b>MSM</b>	Men who have sex with men
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# GLOSSARY

The terms and concepts used in this report reflect widely accepted definitions as well as work conducted by UNESCO and partners on school-related gender-based violence<sup>1</sup> and, where possible, are consistent with United Nations definitions.

Definitions for common terms and concepts used in this report include:

<b>Adolescent:</b>	A person aged 10–19 years, as defined by the United Nations.
<b>Bisexual:</b>	A person who is attracted to both men and women. Some men and women have adopted the term to describe their identity.
<b>Child:</b>	A person under 18 years, as defined by the United Nations.
<b>Gay:</b>	Same-sex sexual attraction, same-sex sexual behaviour and same-sex cultural identity in general. It often specifically refers to men who experience sexual attraction to, and the capacity for an intimate relationship primarily with, other men.
<b>Gender:</b>	The social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships: between women and men and girls and boys; and between women and between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes.
<b>Gender expression:</b>	How a person expresses their own gender to the world, such as through names, clothes, how they walk, speak, communicate, societal roles and their general behaviour.
<b>Gender identity:</b>	A person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned to them at birth. This includes the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.
<b>Gender non-conformity/ non-conforming:</b>	People who do not conform to either of the binary gender definitions of male or female, as well as those whose gender expression may differ from standard gender norms. In some instances, individuals are perceived as gender non-conforming by other people because of their gender expression. However, these individuals may not perceive themselves as gender non-conforming. Gender expression and gender non-conformity are clearly related to individual and social perceptions of masculinity and femininity.

<sup>1</sup> Key UNESCO reference materials include: Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying [1], Teaching Respect for All: Implementation Guide [2] and Global Guidance on Addressing School-Related Gender-Based Violence [3].



<b>Gender variance:</b>	Expressions of gender that do not match those predicted by one's assigned sex at birth, including people who identify as transgender, transsexual, queer or intersex.
<b>Heteronormativity:</b>	The belief that heterosexuality is the normal or default sexual orientation.
<b>Homophobia:</b>	The fear, discomfort, intolerance or hatred of homosexuality and sexually diverse people.
<b>Homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings:</b>	<p>A form of school-related gender-based violence that is grounded in the fear, discomfort, intolerance or hatred of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● homosexuality and sexually diverse people (<b>homophobia</b>), and</li> <li>● transgender and other people perceived to transgress gender norms (<b>transphobia</b>).</li> </ul> <p>This violence targets students based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. The targets are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and others whose gender identity/expression does not fit into binary gender norms. Intersex students may also be the subjects of this violence, but there is currently not enough available scientific data on this. Homophobic and transphobic violence can involve: physical violence; psychological violence, including verbal and emotional abuse; sexual violence, including rape, coercion and harassment, and bullying, including cyber bullying.</p> <p><i>This report uses 'homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings' to refer to all types of school-related gender-based violence that are based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, including bullying. However, where research addressed specific types of violence – such as bullying – this is stated.</i></p>
<b>Homosexual/homosexuality:</b>	A person who is sexually attracted to people of the same sex.
<b>Intersex:</b>	People who are born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads and chromosome patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies. Intersex is an umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations. In some cases, intersex traits are visible at birth, while in others they are not apparent until puberty. Some chromosomal intersex variations may not be physically apparent at all. Being intersex relates to biological sex characteristics and is distinct from a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. An intersex person may be straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual, and may identify as female, male, both or neither. <sup>2</sup>
<b>Lesbian:</b>	A woman who experiences sexual attraction to, and the capacity for an intimate relationship primarily with, other women.
<b>LGBTI:</b>	<p>It stands for Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex.</p> <p><i>This report uses 'LGBTI' students to refer to all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex students who may be affected by homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings. Where intersex (I) or transgender (T) students are not included in the data presented in the report, the acronyms have been amended to LGBT, or LGB, depending on the groups for whom data are available.</i></p>

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from: *Fact Sheet: Intersex, Free and Equal*, United Nations for LGBT Equality [4]

<b>Men who have sex with men (MSM):</b>	Men who have sex with men – regardless of whether or not they also have sex with women or have a personal or social gay or bisexual identity. This concept also includes men who self-identify as heterosexual, but who have sex with other men.
<b>Questioning:</b>	A person who is interrogating their sexual orientation or gender identity.
<b>Sex:</b>	Classification of people as male, female or intersex, assigned at birth, based on anatomy and biology.
<b>Sexual orientation:</b>	A person's capacity for profound emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender, the same gender or more than one gender. For example, gay men experience sexual attraction to, and the capacity for an intimate relationship primarily with, other men. Lesbian women experience sexual attraction to, and the capacity for an intimate relationship primarily with, other women. Bisexual individuals are attracted to both men and women.
<b>Transgender:</b>	A person whose gender identity differs from their sex at birth. Transgender people may be male-to-female (female identity and appearance) or female-to-male (male identity and appearance). Transgender people may be heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual.
<b>Transphobia:</b>	Transphobia is the fear, rejection or aversion – often in the form of stigmatizing attitudes or discriminatory behaviour – towards transgender people, including transsexuals and transvestites.
<b>Transsexual:</b>	A transgender person who is in the process of, or has undertaken, treatment (which may include surgery and hormonal treatment) to make their body congruent with their preferred gender.
<b>Transvestite:</b>	A person who regularly, although not all the time, wears clothes that are mostly associated with another gender than their birth gender.
<b>Young person:</b>	A person between 10 and 24 years old, as defined by the United Nations.
<b>Youth:</b>	A person between 15 and 24 years old, as defined by the United Nations.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Violence in schools and other educational settings is a worldwide problem. Students who are perceived not to conform to prevailing sexual and gender norms, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), are more vulnerable. Violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, also referred to as homophobic and transphobic violence, is a form of school-related gender-based violence. It includes physical, sexual and psychological violence and bullying and, like other forms of school-related violence, can occur in classes, playgrounds, toilets and changing rooms, on the way to and from school and online. This report summarises the findings of a global review, commissioned by UNESCO, of homophobic and transphobic violence in schools and education sector responses.

## THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

**A significant proportion of LGBT students experience homophobic and transphobic violence in school.** This is shown consistently by data from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and the Pacific, with the proportion affected ranging from 16 per cent in Nepal to 85 per cent in the United States. LGBT students are also more likely to experience such violence at school than at home or in the community.

**LGBT students report a higher prevalence of violence at school than their non-LGBT peers.** In New Zealand, for example, lesbian, gay and bisexual students were three times more likely to be bullied than their heterosexual peers and in Norway 15-48 per cent of lesbian, gay and bisexual students reported being bullied compared with 7 per cent of heterosexual students.

**Students who are not LGBT but are perceived not to conform to gender norms are also targets.** In Thailand, for example, 24 per cent of heterosexual students experienced violence because their gender expression was perceived as non-conforming and, in Canada, 33 per cent of male students experienced verbal violence related to their actual or perceived sexual orientation including those who did not identify as gay or bisexual.

**School-related homophobic and transphobic violence affects students' education, employment prospects and well-being.** Students targeted are more likely to feel unsafe in school, miss classes or drop out. For example, in the United States, 70 per cent of LGBT students felt unsafe at school, in Thailand, 31 per cent of students teased or bullied for being or being perceived to be LGBT reported absence from school in the past month and, in Argentina, 45 per cent of transgender students dropped out of school. As a result, students who experience homophobic and transphobic violence may achieve poorer academic results than their peers. LGBT students reported lower academic attainment in Australia, China, Denmark, El Salvador, Italy and Poland. Homophobic and transphobic violence also has adverse effects on mental health including increased risk of anxiety, fear, stress, loneliness, loss of confidence, low self-esteem, self-harm, depression and suicide, which also adversely affect learning.

## THE EDUCATION SECTOR RESPONSE

**The education sector has a responsibility to provide safe and inclusive learning environments for all students.** Addressing homophobic and transphobic violence in schools is critical to effective learning, to meet human rights commitments, including the right to education and the rights of the child, and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG4 – ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

**Effective education sector responses to homophobic and transphobic violence require a comprehensive approach.** Such an approach includes all of the following elements: effective policies, relevant curricula and training materials, training and support for staff, support for students and families, information and strategic partnerships and monitoring and evaluation. It also includes both preventing and responding to violence, involves all relevant stakeholders and is implemented at national and sub-national levels.

**Few countries have all of the elements of a comprehensive education sector response in place.** Very few countries have education sector policies that address homophobic and transphobic violence or include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in curricula or learning materials. In most countries, staff lack training and support to address sexual orientation and gender identity/expression and to prevent and respond to homophobic and transphobic violence. Although many countries provide support for students who experience violence, services are often ill-equipped to deal with homophobic and transphobic violence. Partnerships with civil society organizations with expertise in preventing and responding to homophobic and transphobic violence can contribute to effective responses. Few countries collect data on the nature, prevalence or impact of homophobic and transphobic violence, which contributes to low awareness of the problem and lack of evidence for planning effective responses. Only three countries have conducted large-scale evaluations of programmes to prevent and address homophobic and transphobic violence in schools.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The global review recommends that the education sector takes the following actions to support effective responses to school-related homophobic and transphobic violence:

1. Monitor systematically the prevalence of violence in educational settings, including violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.
2. Establish comprehensive national and school policies to prevent and address violence in educational settings, including violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.
3. Ensure that curricula and learning materials are inclusive.
4. Provide training and support to teachers and other education and school staff to prevent and address violence in educational settings, including violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.
5. Ensure safe school environments are inclusive and provide support for students affected by violence, including violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, and their families.
6. Provide access to non-judgmental and accurate information on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression through information campaigns and partnerships with civil society and the wider school community.
7. Evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of education sector responses to violence, including violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Schools and other educational settings<sup>3</sup> should be safe places where children and young people can learn and develop free from threats or violence. However, available data indicate that violence in such settings is a worldwide problem. For example, data from 106 countries collected through the Global School-based Student Health Survey and the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children cross-national survey show that between 7 per cent and 74 per cent of students aged 13 to 15 have recently experienced bullying in and around school [5, pp. 120–121]. Some children and young people are more vulnerable to violence at school than others. The United Nations World Report on Violence against Children in 2006 found that violence particularly affects students who are perceived not to conform to prevailing sexual and gender norms [6].

As part of its work on preventing and addressing violence in schools, UNESCO commissioned a comprehensive global review of violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in schools and other educational settings and of education sector responses.

This report aims to provide the first ever global synthesis of data on violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in educational settings, and existing responses by the education sector in all regions of the world, including gaps in those responses. It aims to be a tool for evidence-based advocacy and programming by education policy-makers, including ministries of education and other educational authorities; general education stakeholders; and all those concerned with the well-being and protection of children and young people.

## **How was this report developed?**

This report was informed by: an extensive literature review, focused on the available scientific data; interviews with 53 key informants; a data collection instrument designed for this review and filled in by key informants from 12 countries; two regional consultations in Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, and a five-country study in Southern Africa. Data on school-related violence including gender-based violence, and homophobic and transphobic violence in particular, were collected from 94 countries and territories and analysed for the purpose of this report.

The research for this report had some limitations. It focused on resources available in English, French and Spanish and did not directly access those in other languages (for which it relied on key informants' voluntary assistance). This proved particularly problematic when trying to access data on important developments in Nordic countries. The review also only included studies that were publicly available online or provided by key informants. Those available solely in print or through paid access were not considered. Finally, the research reviewed studies with greatly varying designs, sample sizes and data collection methods. As such, the pieces of data presented in the text are often not directly comparable to each other.

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<sup>3</sup> In this report schools is often used to refer to all educational settings.



Regularly people tell me I do not have the right to live.

Nikita, age 18, trans man, Russia

## How is this report structured?

This report summarises the key findings of the global review and is organized as follows:

- Section 1 provides the definition of homophobic and transphobic violence, and describes its impact.
- Section 2 provides an overview of the prevalence of homophobic and transphobic violence worldwide.
- Section 3 discusses the response to homophobic and transphobic violence, describing the principles and elements of a comprehensive education sector response and the extent to which countries are implementing these elements.
- Section 4 includes recommendations and related actions to strengthen the response to homophobic and transphobic violence in schools and other educational settings.

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## 1.1. What is violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in educational settings?

Violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in educational settings targets students<sup>4</sup> who are, or who are perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT); and others whose gender expression does not fit into binary gender norms (masculine and feminine) such as boys perceived as 'effeminate' and girls perceived as 'masculine'.

Students who are intersex (I) may also be the subject of violence, although there is currently not enough available scientific data on this.

- A 2008 study in **Canada** of students in Grades 9-11 found that 33 per cent of male students had experienced verbal harassment related to their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity, **including those who did not identify as gay or bisexual** [7].
- A 2014 study in **Thailand** found that 24 per cent of **heterosexual students** suffered violence because their gender expression was perceived as non-conforming to gender norms [8].

<sup>4</sup> The report uses students to refer to all learners in educational settings. However, where research addressed only selected members of this group – such as 'children' or 'young people' – this is stated.

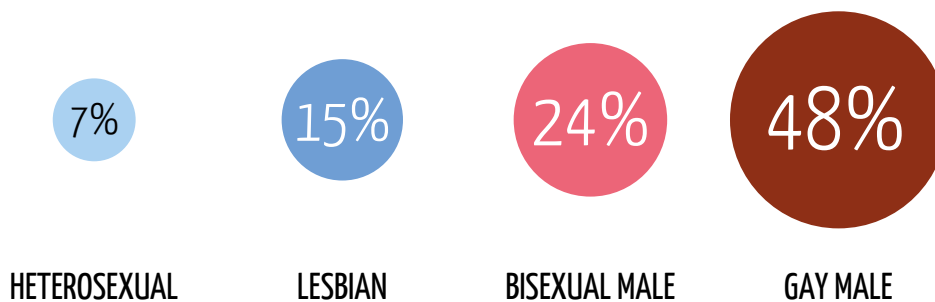
**LGBT students consistently report a higher prevalence of violence compared to their non-LGBT peers.** Those **who fail to conform to ‘masculine’ norms** – i.e. male students who are gay or bisexual, and male-to-female transgender students – **seem more likely to be the targets of violence** (See Figure 1).

- A study from **New Zealand** in 2014 shows lesbian, gay and bisexual students are three times more likely to be bullied than their heterosexual peers, and transgender students are five times more likely to be bullied than non-transgender students [9].
- Data collected in **Norway** in 2015 found that between 15 per cent and 48 per cent of lesbian, gay and bisexual students reported being bullied, compared to 7 per cent of heterosexual students. The extent to which students experienced bullying depended on their sexual orientation, with 15 per cent of lesbian students, 24 per cent of bisexual male students and 48 per cent of gay male students respectively reporting being bullied [10].
- In a survey in **Belgium** in 2013, 56 per cent of young LGBT respondents reported at least one experience of homophobic or transphobic violence or discrimination at school, with male-to-female and gay male students experiencing the highest levels of violence [11].

In this report, violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression is often referred to as homophobic and transphobic violence as it is grounded in: the fear, discomfort, intolerance or hatred of homosexuality and sexually diverse people – lesbian, gay, and bisexual – (homophobia); and transgender people (transphobia).

Homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings is a form of school-related gender-based violence, since it is clearly perpetrated as a result of existing gender norms and stereotypes (see Figure 2).

**FIGURE 1** PREVALENCE OF BULLYING REPORTED BY STUDENTS OF DIFFERENT SEXUAL ORIENTATION



Source: E. Roland & G. Auestad, 2009[10]

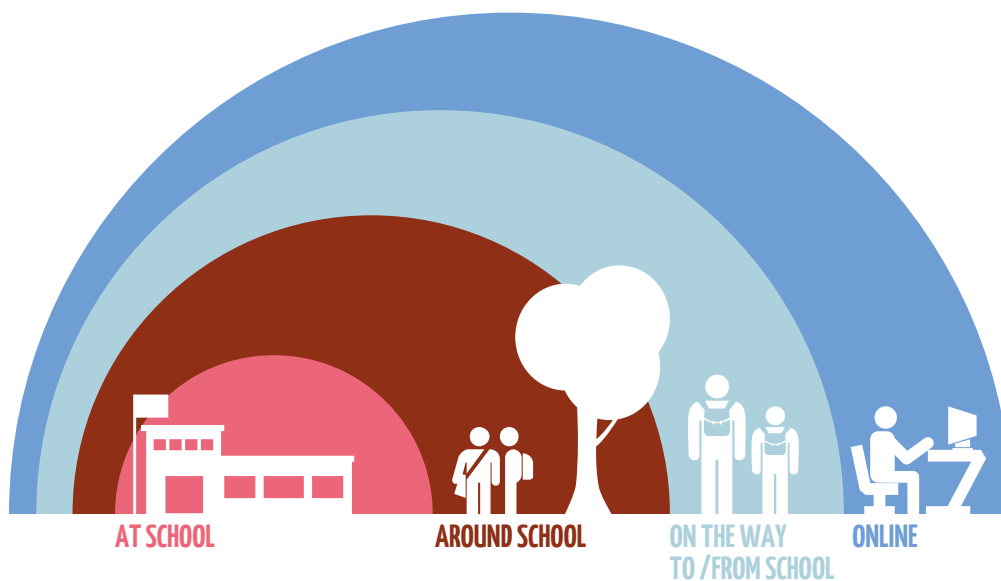


**FIGURE 2** VIOLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS:  
HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE IS A FORM OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



Like other forms of school-related violence, school-related homophobic and transphobic violence can occur in classrooms, playgrounds, toilets and changing rooms, around schools, on the way to and from school, and online (see Figure 3).

**FIGURE 3** NOT JUST INSIDE SCHOOLS: HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS  
HAPPENS IN MORE THAN ONE PLACE

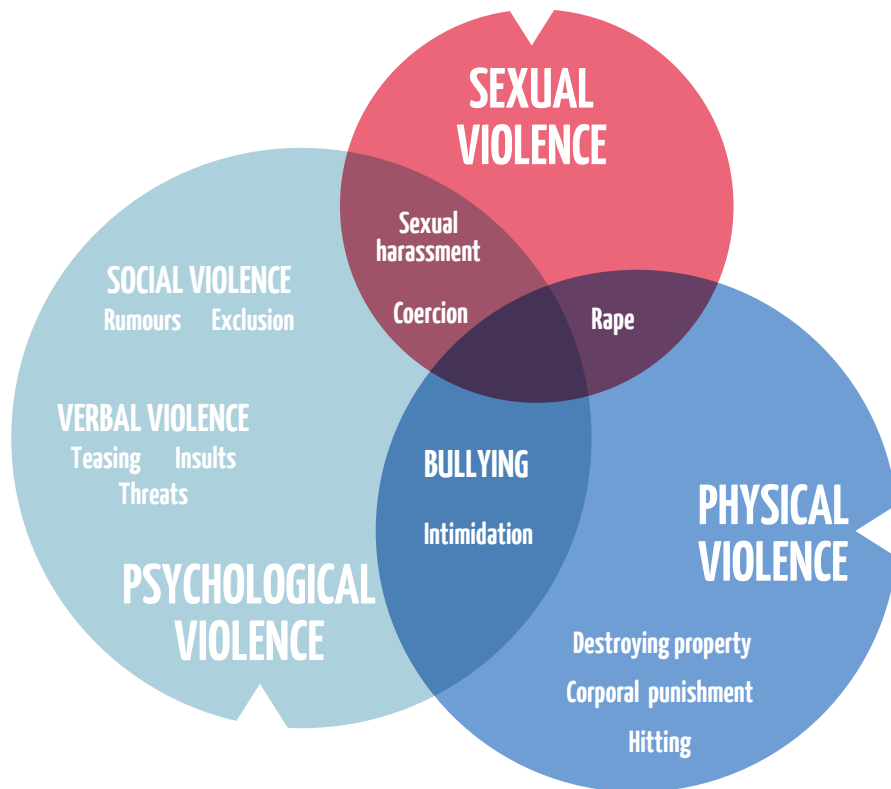


School-related homophobic and transphobic violence encompasses (see Figure 4) :

- Physical violence
- Psychological violence, including verbal and emotional abuse
- Sexual violence, including rape, coercion and harassment
- Bullying, including cyber bullying.

**FIGURE 4**

**MORE THAN BULLYING:  
HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE MANIFESTS IN A NUMBER OF WAYS**



Most data available on homophobic and transphobic violence focus on bullying. Homophobic and transphobic bullying involves physical bullying (including repeated hitting, kicking and taking, or threatening to take, possessions); and psychological bullying including verbal bullying (repeated mocking, name calling and unwanted teasing) and social or relational bullying (repeated exclusion, gossiping, the spreading of rumours and the withholding of friendship).

Cyber bullying is a type of psychological bullying. It includes repeated threats, criticism or unkind comments or images that are sent using information and communication technology, such as mobile phones, email and social media, including chat rooms and networking sites.

Although available data mostly focus on bullying, LGBTI students can be the targets of other forms of violence, including sexual violence.

In addition to these overt acts of violence, also categorized as explicit violence, the education sector as a whole can also produce ‘implicit’ homophobic and transphobic violence, also referred to as ‘symbolic’ or ‘institutional’ violence, which consists of education policies and guidelines that voluntarily or involuntarily reinforce or embed negative stereotypes related to sexual orientation and gender identity, including in curricula and learning materials. This can result in excluding LGBTI students, for example, through school-level policies that deny students the right to express their chosen gender identity, and through measures such as gender-specific uniforms and hair regulations.

Implicit homophobic and transphobic violence in the education sector fuels other types of violence perpetrated against LGBTI students by their peers or by educational and non-educational staff, including bullying, since homophobia and transphobia are perceived to be institutionally ‘normal’ and are legitimized by the education system.

Homophobic and transphobic violence can also target lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) educational and non-educational staff. However, this report focuses only on violence affecting students.

## 1.2. What is the impact of school-related homophobic and transphobic violence?

Homophobic and transphobic violence has a significant impact on students' education and employment prospects and on their health and well-being. It affects students who are targeted by violence and students who are perpetrators and bystanders.

### 1.2.1. Impact on education and employment

Homophobic and transphobic violence in and around school adversely affects access to education and academic achievement.

#### **LGBT STUDENTS WHO STUDY IN UNSAFE ENVIRONMENTS AND ARE TARGETED BY VIOLENCE**

**are more likely to:**

- **FEEL UNSAFE AT SCHOOL.** A 2015 study in the **United States** found that 70 per cent of LGBT students felt unsafe at school [12].
- **AVOID SCHOOL ACTIVITIES.** In a 2013 survey from **Europe**, which included Ireland, Italy, Denmark, Croatia and Poland, 49 per cent of young LGBT respondents said they sometimes chose not to participate in class questions or discussions [13].
- **MISS CLASSES OR SKIP SCHOOL ENTIRELY.** Another study conducted in 2013 in the **United States** revealed that 30 per cent of LGBT students had missed at least one day of school in the previous month because of feeling unsafe [14]. A 2014 study by Mahidol University in **Thailand** found that 31.2 per cent of students who were teased or bullied for being or being perceived to be LGBT, reported an unauthorised absence from school in the past month; compared with 15.2 per cent of students who were not teased or bullied [15].
- **DROP OUT OF SCHOOL.** In **Argentina**, a 2007 study showed that 45 per cent of transgender students dropped out of school, either due to transphobic bullying by their peers or being excluded by school authorities [1].
- **ACHIEVE LOWER ACADEMIC RESULTS THAN THEIR PEERS.** In an online survey in **China** in 2012, 59 per cent of LGBT respondents reported that bullying had negatively affected their academic performance [8]. In a large 2009 - 2014 survey in **England**, 37 per cent of LGBT young people aged from 16 to 25 said their time at school had been affected by discrimination or fear of discrimination; leading to lower grades [16]. In **El Salvador**, only 36 per cent of 100 transgender women interviewed for a 2012/2013 study obtained their secondary school certificate, as a result of violence and exclusion [17]. Data collected from **Australia** in 2013 demonstrated a high correlation between victimisation and lack of concentration in class, lower marks, and attendance for transgender youth [18], [19]. According to the 2013 survey in **Europe** [13], 50 per cent of respondents reported having difficulties concentrating, 37 per cent reported getting lower marks, and 40 per cent felt they did not acquire skills at school as well as they should have.



I was not accepted and I was discriminated against because of my orientation ... and I was bullied. I left school this year. I was in Grade 8. I told my mother I just want to leave school.

Student, Namibia [20]

**Students who do less well academically or leave school early have fewer qualifications and this affects their employment prospects.** An analysis of the experience of homophobia and transphobia conducted in 2014 in emerging economies found that there can be a correlation between this experience and lower or limited employment opportunities [21].

Homophobic and transphobic violence in school also creates a climate of fear, anxiety and insecurity. This has a negative impact on learning for all students, undermines students' trust in the staff and the institution, and can result in students disliking or feeling disconnected from school [14], [22], [23]. In a survey in **Canada** in 2009 [24], 58 per cent of heterosexual students expressed emotional distress over homophobic comments overheard in school.



We know that exclusion, bullying and violence have immediate, long-term and intergenerational effects. This includes school attendance, performance, and completion [...] And for those who think that bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity only affects LGBTI youth. This is wrong. It affects the whole climate of the school and community.

Gwang-Jo Kim, Director of UNESCO Asia Pacific Bureau for Education  
Asia-Pacific Consultation, 15 June 2015, Bangkok

### 1.2.2. Impact on health and well-being

Homophobic and transphobic violence is also associated with poorer than average physical and mental health. The adverse effects on young people's mental and psychological health include: **increased risk of anxiety, fear, stress, loss of confidence, low self-esteem, loneliness, self-harm, depression and suicide.**

- The 2013 study from **Thailand** [15] found that 22.6 per cent of LGBT students who were teased or bullied for being or being perceived to be LGBT, reported feeling depressed; compared with 6 per cent of students who were not teased or bullied.
- Studies from **Belgium** [25], the **Netherlands** [26], **Poland** [27] and the **United States** [28] [29], suggest that LGBT students and young people are between two and more than five times more likely to think about or attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers. The 2013 study from **Thailand** showed that 6.7 per cent of LGBT students who were teased or bullied for being or being perceived to be LGBT, reported attempting suicide in the past year; compared with 1.2 per cent of students who were not teased or bullied [11]. In **Mexico**, the first National Survey on Homophobic Bullying conducted in 2012 revealed that one in four LGBT people had thought about suicide as a result of the bullying they suffered at school [30].



One of my former classmates fabricated a lot of rumours... .. everyday my thoughts were only on how to kill myself. Once I attempted to jump off a building to commit suicide but was stopped by others. I was greatly depressed and began cutting my fingers with a knife. I felt that the whole world has turned against me and nobody was willing to help.

Young lesbian woman, China [4, p. 39]

Studies from the **United States** found that homophobic and transphobic violence contributes to LGBT young people being **more likely to be homeless or in foster care**, compared to their non-LGBT peers [12], [31].

There is also some evidence that young people who experience homophobic and transphobic violence at school may be **more likely to adopt risky health behaviours** [26], [32]. Sexual violence can result in unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV [29], [33]–[35]. In addition, homophobic and transphobic violence can have wider social impacts for those who are targeted [12], [31].



My teacher told my parents that I was troubled because he suspected I was gay.

Antonio, age 19, gay, Mexico

# 2.

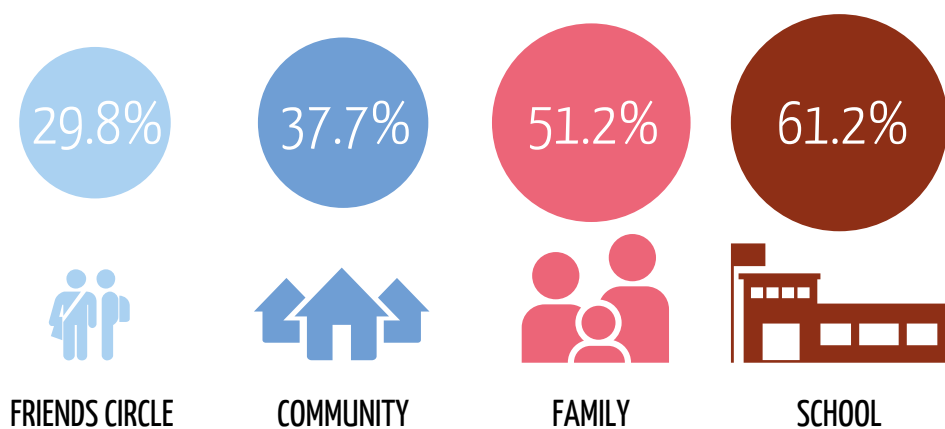
## THE SITUATION OF HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

## 2. THE SITUATION OF HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

There is a lack of comprehensive and comparable data on the prevalence of homophobic and transphobic violence in schools. The extent to which country data are available varies between regions, but few governments routinely collect data on the nature and prevalence of violence including bullying in educational settings. Only a handful of countries gather specific data on homophobic and transphobic violence. There are no international surveys that collect data across countries. Europe is the only region to have conducted a regional survey. Most of the available data were collected by research institutes and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

However, all data reviewed for this report consistently show that a high proportion of students are affected by homophobic and transphobic violence in school, and that LGBT students are more likely to experience such violence at school than at home or in the community [36]–[39] (See Figure 5). In general it is psychological violence, including social exclusion and verbal bullying, that is most reported by LGBT students, ranging from 16 per cent in Nepal to 85 per cent in the USA [14], [40].

**FIGURE 5** PERCENTAGE OF LGBT STUDENTS REPORTING EVER EXPERIENCED PREJUDICE/DISCRIMINATION IN DIFFERENT SETTINGS



Source: J. Takács, 2006 [37]

The absence of data for a country does not indicate that such violence does not occur. On the contrary, it may suggest that policy efforts have not taken place in this area and data have not been collected.

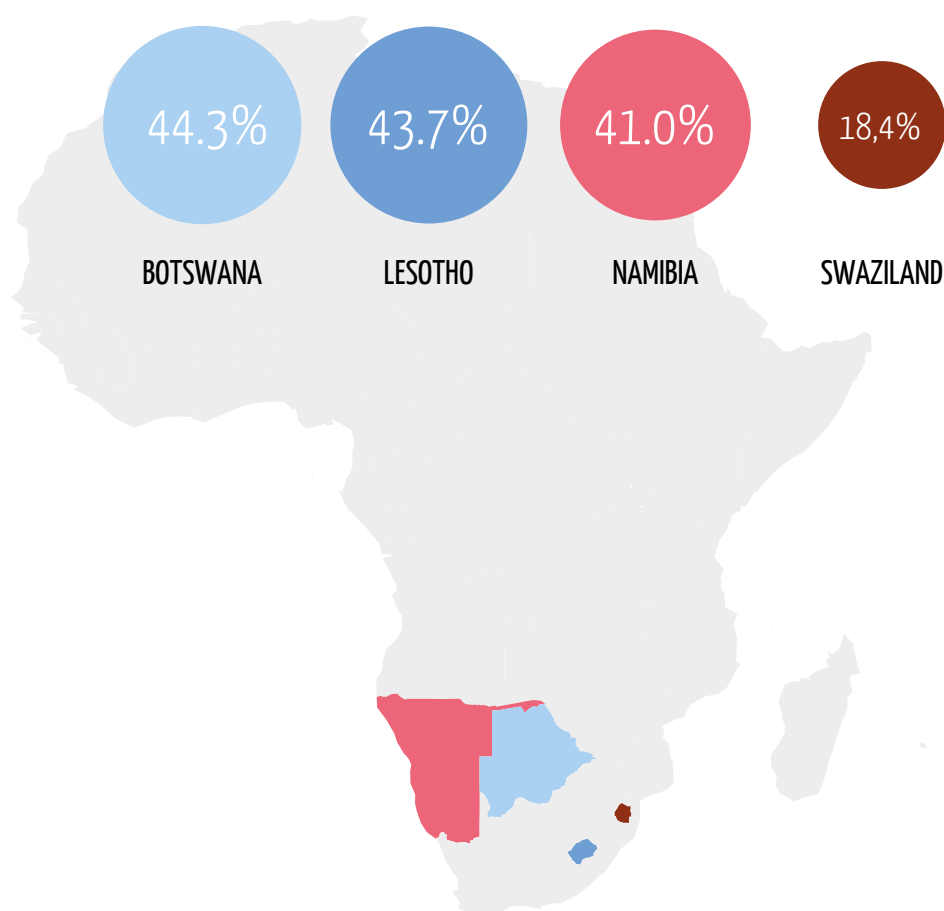
The following provides some examples of data by region.

## 2.1. Africa

A multi-country study of violence in schools, including gender-based violence and bullying, was conducted in 2014–2015 in Southern Africa [41]. It was the first large study in the region ever to explore aspects of gender-based violence targeting students who do not conform to existing gender norms. All stakeholders involved in the study agreed to use culturally-sensitive terms such as ‘diversity-related violence’ (instead of homophobic and transphobic violence), and students who are ‘perceived as different in terms of their gender, such as boys who look or act like girls and girls who look or act like boys’. Based on primary data collected from teachers and Grade 11 students in **Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia** and **Swaziland**:

- Diversity-related violence was reported by respondents in all four countries: 18.4 per cent in Swaziland; 41.0 per cent in Namibia; 43.7 per cent in Lesotho; and 44.3 per cent in Botswana (see Figure 6).

**FIGURE 6** PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS AWARE OF THE EXISTENCE OF DIVERSITY-RELATED VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS



Source: UNESCO, 2015 [20]



- In response to the question 'Why does the violence occur?', 'Because some people are perceived as different in terms of their gender' was the first reason given by respondents in Lesotho and Swaziland, and the second one in Namibia.
- Only one third of respondents reported that their school was a safe place for students who are perceived as different in terms of their gender.

In **South Africa**, a study conducted in KwaZulu Natal in 2011 revealed that gay and lesbian students experience high levels of verbal, physical and sexual violence in schools. Jokes were the most common manifestation of verbal violence reported by both lesbian/bisexual females (63 per cent) and gay/bisexual males (76 per cent). [42].

## 2.2. Asia

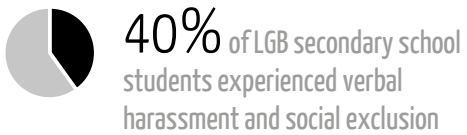
Data on homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings have been collected by NGOs and academic institutions, largely through community-based studies, sometimes in partnership with multilateral organizations (including UNESCO).

Data from **Japan** (2014) [43] and **Thailand** (2013) [15] indicate that there are high levels of homophobic and transphobic violence in schools: 68 per cent and 55 per cent respectively.

Across the Asia region, the most common form of homophobic and transphobic violence reported is psychological violence, including psychological bullying, often manifested through cyber bullying [8]. Physical and sexual violence are also reported. For example, 10 per cent of lesbian, gay and bisexual students responding to a survey in Hong Kong SAR (2009) had experienced these forms of violence [44].

**FIGURE 7** PREVALENCE OF HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE IN ASIA

**HONG KONG SAR** [44]



**JAPAN** [43]



**MONGOLIA** [45]



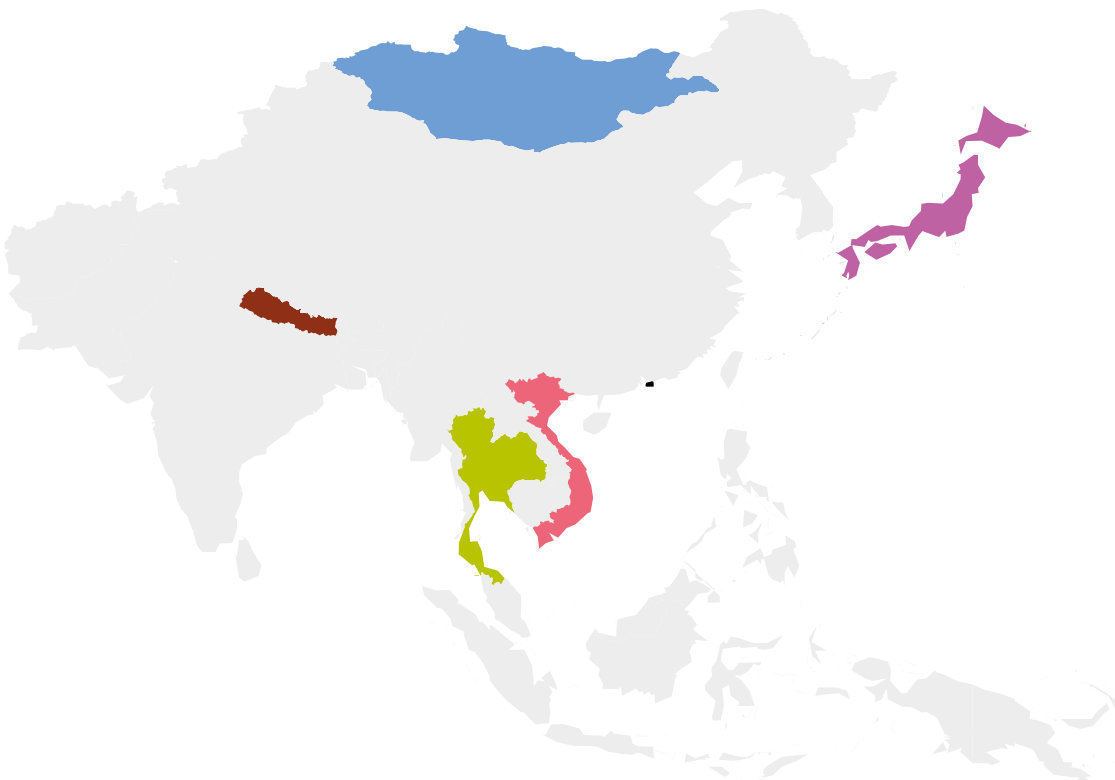
**NEPAL** [40]



**THAILAND** [15]



**VIET NAM** [8]



## 2.3. Europe

In many countries in the European region, NGOs – alongside academia and research institutes – have collected data on homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings for several years. Research in Central and Eastern Europe is often anecdotal and tends to remain unacknowledged by the education sector.

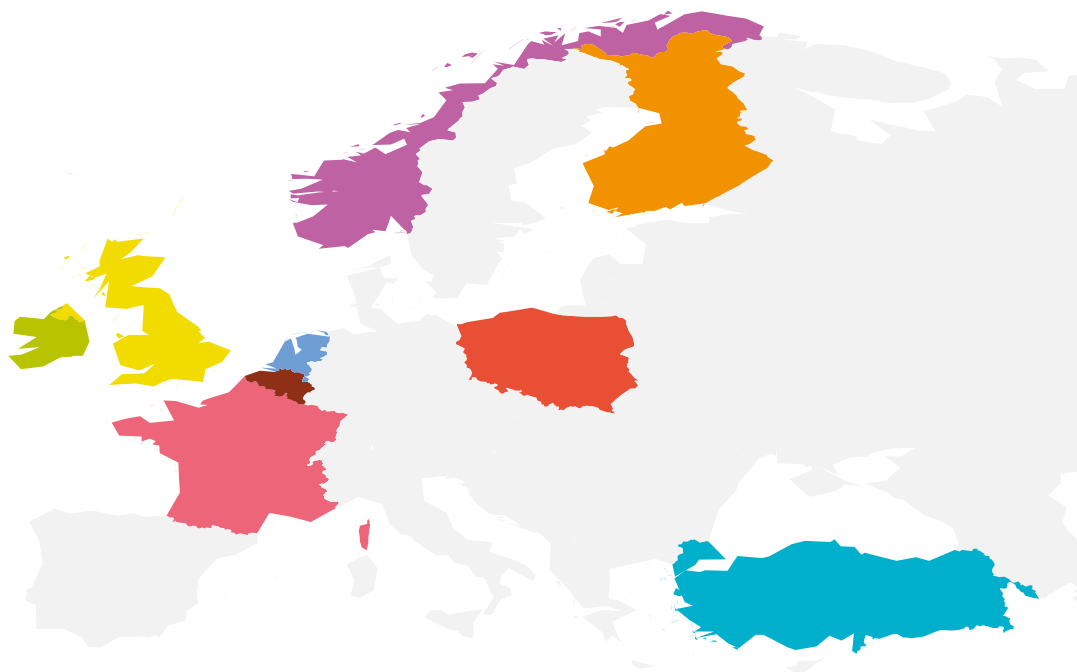
According to the largest survey in the region, conducted in 2013 among 93,000 LGBT people across 28 European countries, 68 per cent of respondents experienced homophobic and transphobic comments or conduct while in school [39].

Studies from individual countries all report that LGBT students are targets of some form of homophobic and transphobic violence, ranging from between 23 per cent in the **Netherlands** to 67 per cent in **Turkey**. In the European region the most common form of homophobic and transphobic violence reported is psychological violence (see Figure 8).



I'm constantly being attacked, I'm afraid of walking around the school, I don't even go to the school shop alone because I'm afraid to meet those who bully me. In school a few students from another class constantly accost me with some remarks, they even made a rhyme about me.

Male student, 15 years, Poland [27, p. 42]

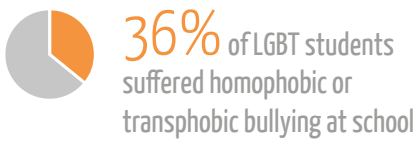


**FIGURE 8** PREVALENCE OF HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE IN EUROPE

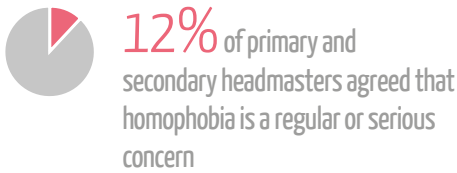
**BELGIUM** [11]



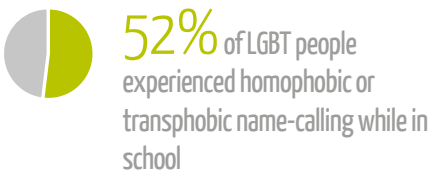
**FINLAND** [52]



**FRANCE** [46]



**IRELAND** [47]



**THE NETHERLANDS** [48]



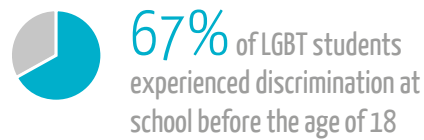
**NORWAY** [10]

- 15% of lesbian students,
- 24% of bisexual male students and
- 48% of gay students are bullied,
- compared to 7% of heterosexual students

**POLAND** [27]

- 52% of LGBT students felt lonely, and
- 63% of LGBT students thought about suicide, compared to
- 12% of the general population of the same age

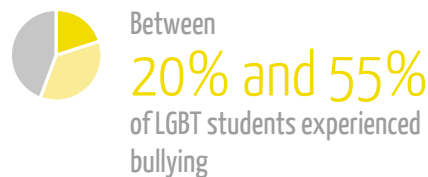
**TURKEY** [53]



As a result of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity,

- 8% of LGBT students dropped out of school before the age of 18,
- and 5% of LGBT students dropped out of university

**UNITED KINGDOM** [49-51]



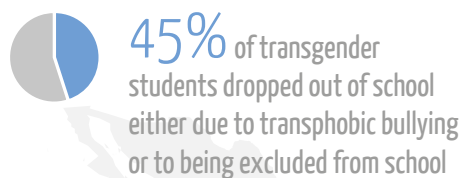
## 2.4. Latin America and the Caribbean

In Latin America existing data on homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings consist mostly of small-scale community-based studies that do not draw reliable conclusions about the levels of such violence. In the Caribbean, only one UNICEF study in Jamaica offers limited data on homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings [54]. One of the more reliable studies from the region was conducted in 2014, at secondary schools in Bogotá, **Colombia**. It revealed that 34 per cent of students are aware of LGBT peers being excluded from school activities [55].

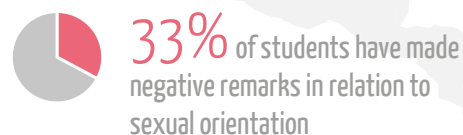
The most prevalent form of violence reported in the region is verbal violence, followed by physical violence, perpetrated by peers and educational staff in both public and private schools [17], [30], [56].

**FIGURE 9** PREVALENCE OF HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE IN LATIN AMERICA

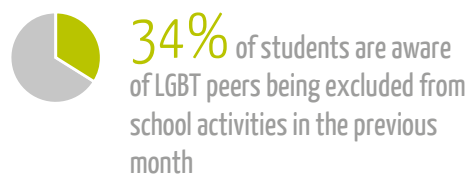
### ARGENTINA [57]



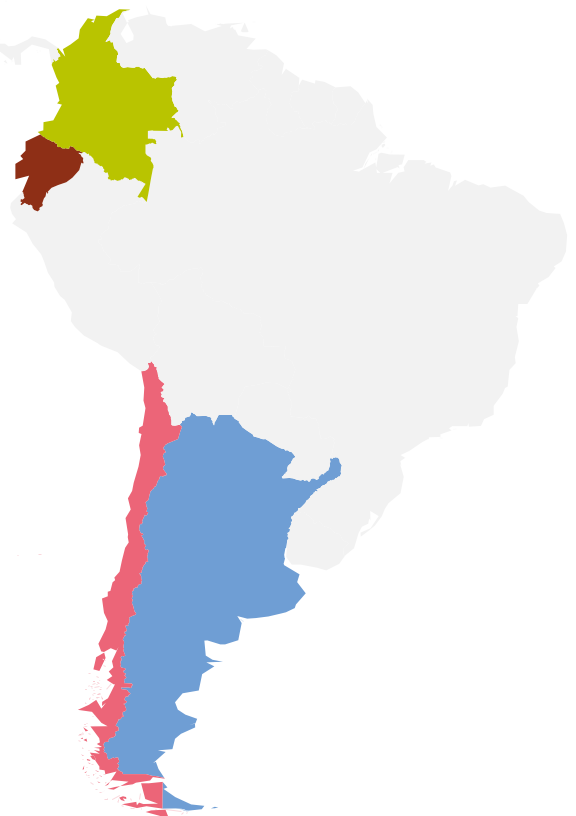
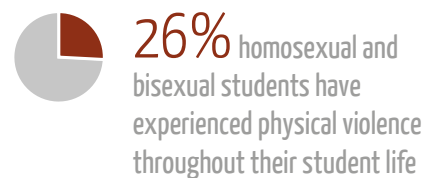
### CHILE [58]



### COLOMBIA [55]



### ECUADOR [59]



## 2.5. North America

Extensive research exists on homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings in North America, with all data showing that a considerable number of LGBT students feel unsafe at schools [60]–[62]. For example, in a 2013 survey in the **United States**, 85 per cent of LGBT students reported verbal harassment [14]. In **Canada**, 55 per cent of transgender students responding to a survey said that they had been bullied once or more during their schooling [63].

Verbal violence is the most frequent manifestation of homophobic and transphobic violence in the region, followed by physical harassment and bullying.



I have to take gym,  
and I don't feel safe in the locker rooms.

Student who identified as genderqueer , Grade 10, USA [14, p. 43]

**FIGURE 10** PREVALENCE OF HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE IN NORTH AMERICA

### CANADA [32], [64], [65]



70% of students heard homophobic comments daily



55% of transgender students were bullied at least once during their schooling



33% of all male students in grades 9–11 experienced homophobic verbal harassment

### UNITED STATES [14]



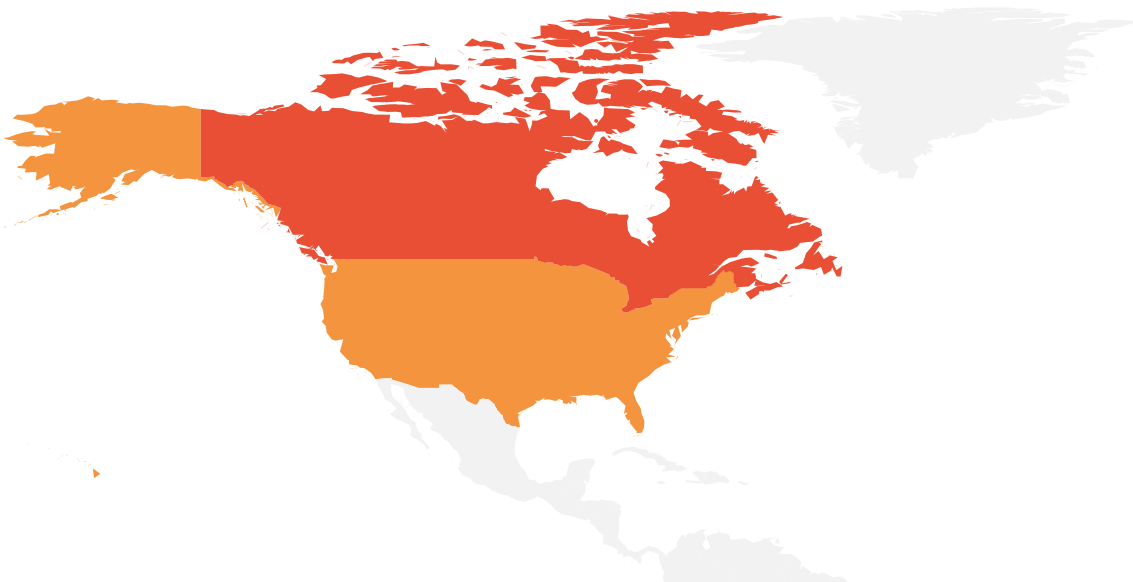
65% of LGBT students heard homophobic remarks frequently or often



85% of LGBT students were verbally harassed in the year prior to the study



30% of LGBT students missed school due to lack of safety

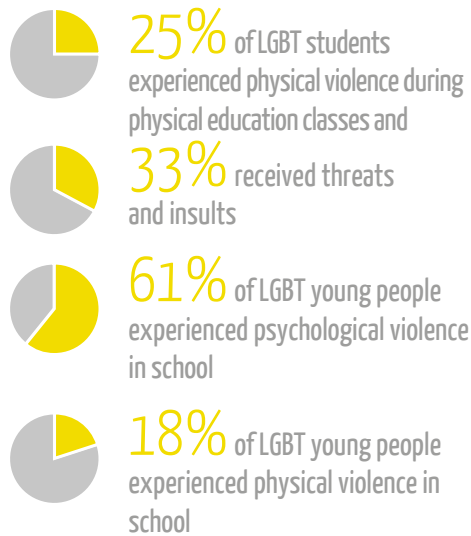


## 2.6. The Pacific

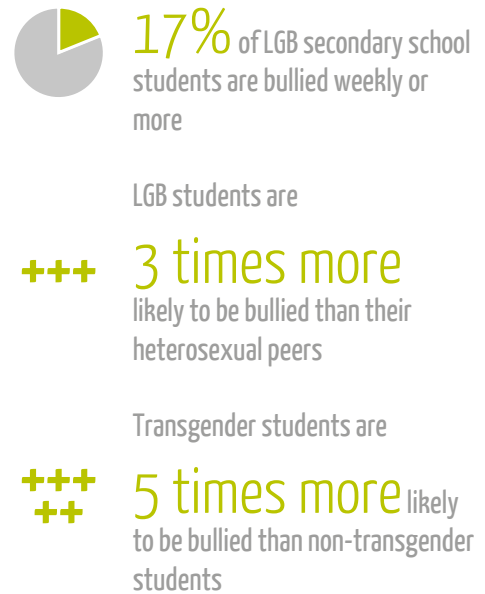
Data from **Australia** (2010) reveal that a high percentage of LGBT young people – 61 per cent – are targets of psychological violence in school [38]. In **New Zealand**, 17 per cent of LGBT students are bullied weekly or more frequently (2014) [9].

**FIGURE 11** PREVALENCE OF HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE IN THE PACIFIC

### AUSTRALIA [38], [66]



### NEW ZEALAND [9]



3.

THE EDUCATION SECTOR  
RESPONSE



# 3. THE EDUCATION SECTOR RESPONSE



A school that includes all children is good for all children. Intercultural, inclusive education – that is, learning that promotes respect for and understanding of other cultures and caters for all children, irrespective of their individual characteristics – is a key element in eliminating discrimination and increasing respect among children and between teaching staff and pupils. In other words, diversity can become a pedagogical resource that contributes to a better and safer educational experience for all children, and this experience has the potential to spread beyond the school into society as a whole.

Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children. 2012. *Tackling violence in schools: a global perspective – Bridging the gap between standards and practice*. New York; p.39

## 3.1. Why the education sector?

Homophobic and transphobic violence has an adverse impact on learning for all students and on the health and well-being of students who are subjected to violence. Addressing homophobic and transphobic violence in schools is critical to effective learning and inclusive and equitable education, to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to meet human rights commitments.

- The education sector has a responsibility to provide safe and inclusive learning environments that enable all children and young people to access quality education. Schools that are safe and inclusive for all children and young people are essential for effective learning.
- Effective education sector responses to violence in educational settings, including homophobic and transphobic violence, will contribute to the achievement of SDG4 – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all [67] – and specific SDG4 targets related to education for human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, and to providing safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all. By preventing and reducing the health impacts of violence, education sector responses to homophobic and transphobic violence will also contribute to the achievement of SDG3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- Homophobic and transphobic violence in schools violates the right to education and the rights of the child as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). The Convention on the Rights of the Child also recognises the rights of LGBTI children (see Box).

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## The Convention on the Rights of the Child protects LGBTI children's rights

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has specified how the Convention can be used to protect children who are perceived as not conforming to gender norms through its General Comments, which interpret the content of the human rights provisions. In 2003, the Committee clarified in General Comment (GC #4), Paragraph 6, that 'States parties have the obligation to ensure that all human beings below 18 enjoy all the rights set forth in the Convention without discrimination (art. 2) [...] These grounds also cover adolescents' sexual orientation' [68]. This, therefore, recognised that the universal rights described by the Convention apply also to children who are lesbian, gay or bisexual, or perceived as such. Subsequently, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child issued additional General Comments related to the protection of the rights of LGBT children using the following three articles of the Convention: Article 2 – The right to non-discrimination; Article 19 – The right to be protected against any form of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse; and Article 24 – The right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health.

---

## 3.2. What are the key principles for education sector responses to homophobic and transphobic violence?

Analysis of policy and practice has identified a number of key principles that provide the foundation for effective education sector responses to homophobic and transphobic violence and support safe and inclusive learning environments. Effective education sector responses are (see Figure 12):

- **Rights-based** – A rights-based response protects the human rights of all students, including the right to education, safety, dignity, health, equal opportunities and freedom from discrimination.
- **Learner-centred and inclusive** – A learner-centred and inclusive response addresses the different perspectives, needs and experiences of all students. Lesbian girls and women, gay boys and men, bisexual people, male-to-female and female-to-male transgender people and intersex people do not necessarily have the same perspectives, experiences or needs. Responses must also bear in mind the perspectives and needs of students who may not be LGBTI themselves, but who may be the target of homophobic and transphobic violence due to their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
- **Participatory** – Students or elected students' representatives should be involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education sector responses to violence. In Ireland and Malta, policies to protect transgender students from violence in schools have been developed with youth and LGBTI organizations to ensure that policies respond to their needs.
- **Gender-responsive and transformative** – A gender-responsive and transformative response takes account of all genders and gender identities as well as gender equality and challenges gender-related discrimination and harmful stereotypes. It also aims to transform existing structures, institutions and gender relations so that they are based on gender equality. In Thailand, transgender students in some secondary schools can choose their uniform, based on the principle that students' well-being is more important than norms about gender and clothing.
- **Evidence-based** – An evidence-based response draws on scientific evidence and expert opinion from disciplines including public health, psychology and social science and ensures that education stakeholders are aware of relevant evidence.
- **Age-appropriate** – Information and support should be consistent with a student's actual and developmental age. An age-appropriate response addresses issues related to sexual

orientation, gender identity and gender expression in a way that students can relate to safely. In Spain, the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equal Opportunities published a guidebook for the education sector to respond to homophobia and transphobia in educational settings including resources for students at different ages and levels of the education system.

- **Context-specific and culturally sensitive** – Responses to homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings need to be tailored to the social, cultural and legal context. Some contexts are more challenging than others, but experience shows that it is possible to address such violence even in challenging contexts, using appropriate entry points and approaches. In the United States, for example, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) has used an approach and terminology that are consistent with national values, including the right to quality education as a key civil right that guarantees equal opportunities.

**FIGURE 12** ALL STUDENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO LEARN SAFELY:  
PRINCIPLES FOR A COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION SECTOR RESPONSE TO HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE





When I finally found out what ‘faggot’ and ‘gay’ meant, I realized that these insults were for me.

Diogo, 25, Gay, Portugal

### 3.3. What is a comprehensive education sector response?

Work conducted in countering violence in schools in general has shown that ‘school and system wide interventions’, often referred to as ‘whole school’ strategies or approaches, are particularly effective [69], [70]. The same applies to education sector responses to homophobic and transphobic violence. In this report, ‘whole school’ responses to homophobic and transphobic violence are also referred to as ‘comprehensive’ education sector responses.

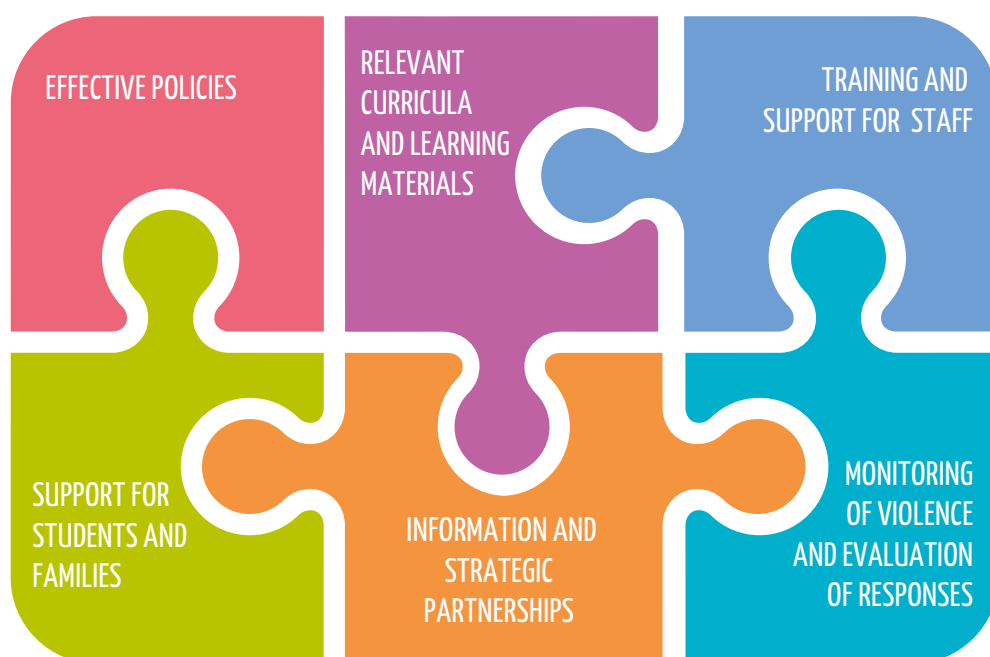
A comprehensive education sector response to homophobic and transphobic violence encompasses all of the following elements:

- **Effective policies** – National and school policies on how to prevent and address school-related violence including homophobic and transphobic violence, are the foundation for an effective response. Such policies can provide guidance on, for example, roles and responsibilities, training required by teachers and other staff, interventions to prevent violence, mechanisms for reporting incidents of violence, support for students, and monitoring and evaluation. At school level, policies are often translated into codes of conduct for staff and students.
- **Relevant curricula and learning materials** – Curricula provide teachers and other education stakeholders with clear guidelines on what students should learn at different ages, and learning materials usually reflect what is in the curriculum. The inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression in curricula and learning materials is critical to ensure that teachers address these issues in the classroom. Ensuring that curricula and learning materials convey positive rather than negative messages about these issues is equally critical.
- **Training and support for staff** – School staff, especially school principals and teachers, are central to an effective response. They play a central role in influencing the school and classroom environment and student attitudes and, more specifically, in preventing violence and responding to it if it occurs. However, teachers and other staff need appropriate training and support from school management to enable them to address the issue of homophobic and transphobic violence, and to avoid inadvertently conveying negative messages about sexual and gender diversity.
- **Support for students and families** – Schools and other educational institutions need to have measures in place to provide effective support to students who are the targets of homophobic and transphobic violence as well as to their families, the perpetrators of violence, bystanders and other students affected by violence. Policies that provide guidance on delivery of support, for example, in school or through referral to other services, play a critical role.
- **Information and strategic partnerships** – Partnerships between the education sector and other actors can enhance the quality and effectiveness of interventions to prevent and address

homophobic and transphobic violence in schools and, more specifically, the relevance and accuracy of information provided to educators and students. Partnerships with civil society, in particular with LGBTI NGOs, can contribute to successful responses.

- **Monitoring and evaluation** – Monitoring and evaluation are critical for evidence-based policy-making. Monitoring the nature, prevalence and impact of homophobic and transphobic violence is critical to the design and planning of appropriate interventions. Evaluating the effectiveness of interventions is also critical to ensure that they are having the desired impact.

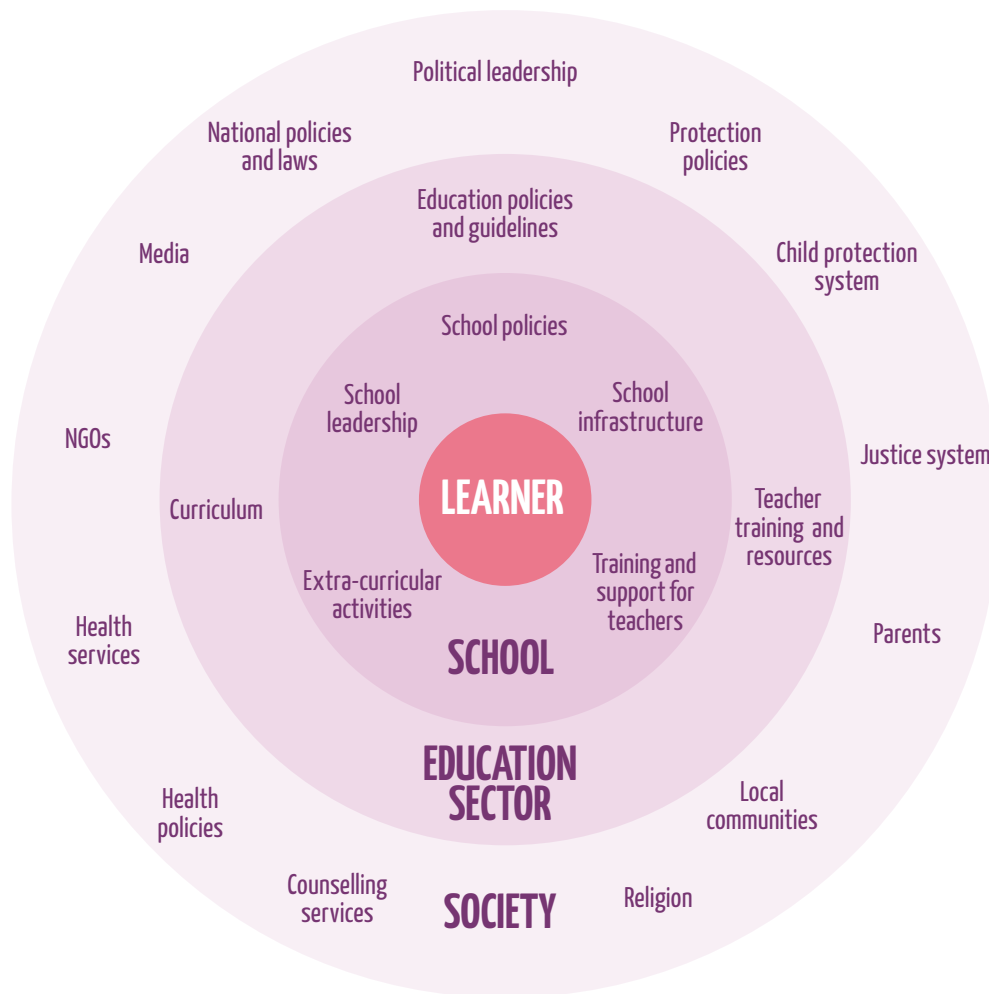
**FIGURE 13** **VIOLENCE-FREE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS:**  
**THE ELEMENTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION SECTOR RESPONSE TO HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE**



A comprehensive education sector response is also comprehensive in terms of:

- **Scope** – The response takes steps to both prevent and address homophobic and transphobic violence, i.e. it includes strategies for primary prevention of and for responding to violence.
- **Actors** – The response involves all relevant stakeholders i.e. education ministries, local education authorities, teacher training institutions, schools, universities, curriculum developers, inspectors, school principals, teachers, school nurses, students, parents, communities, and other sectors.
- **Scale** – A comprehensive response is implemented at national and sub-national levels, i.e. at provincial, state and district level depending on the country context, not just in a few schools.

**FIGURE 14** TACKLING HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE:  
A COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE INVOLVES THE WHOLE EDUCATION COMMUNITY



### 3.4. How is the education sector responding to homophobic and transphobic violence?

Progress in implementing measures to prevent and address homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings varies between regions and countries. The most comprehensive initiatives are being implemented in Australia and New Zealand, Canada and the United States, and a number of countries in Europe, Asia and Latin America. However, the education sector response has been limited in the majority of countries in the world, particularly in Africa, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Central Asia and some areas of the Pacific. In addition, it is important to note that many countries do not have comprehensive strategies to prevent and address violence in schools in general.

The following presents a summary of the extent to which the education sector is implementing the six elements of a comprehensive response to homophobic and transphobic violence, drawing on examples of promising practices from different regions identified by the global review.

### 3.4.1. Effective policies

Few countries have developed education sector policies to prevent and address homophobic and transphobic violence in schools, reflecting the fact that recognition of the prevalence and harmful impact of such violence in the sector is a relatively recent development. Most countries that have developed policies have taken one of the two following approaches:

- Integrating references to sexual orientation and gender identity or to homophobic and transphobic discrimination and violence into existing education sector policies on general violence, bullying or discrimination.
- Developing specific education sector policies that focus on violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

The first approach aims to protect and support LGBTI students by mainstreaming issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity into broader policies to prevent and address discrimination and violence. However, available data suggest that in countries where policies do not clearly refer to homophobic and transphobic violence, this form of violence may not be addressed by schools. For example, a large-scale qualitative research study conducted in 19 European countries in 2013 by the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency concluded that: 'Where anti-bullying measures are in place, these are often generic and they may be ineffective in dealing specifically with bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity' [71].

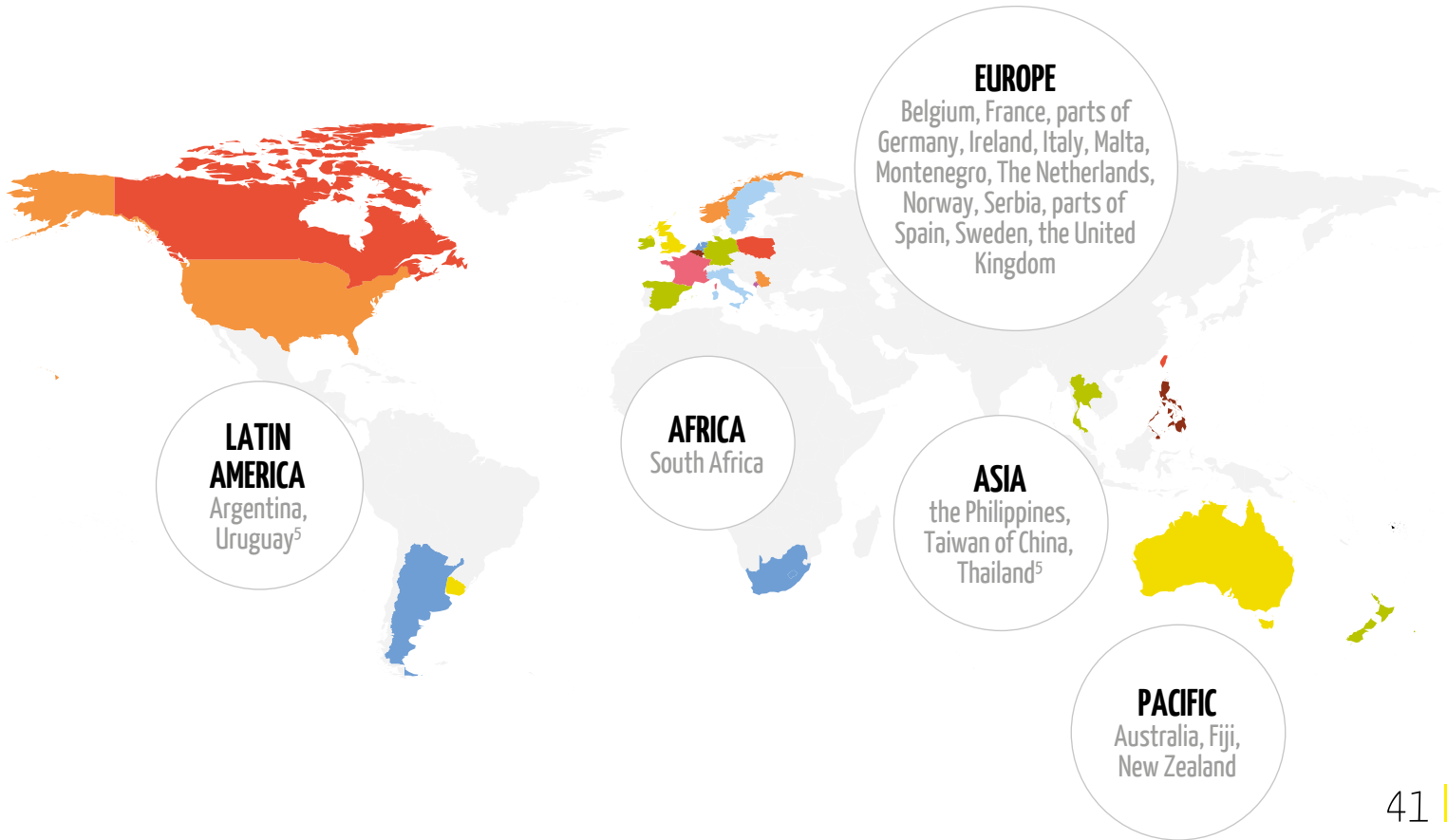
The second approach requires political leadership and a legal environment that is conducive to the protection of the rights of LGBTI people. A number of countries have developed specific education sector policies that address homophobic and transphobic violence in schools and other educational settings (see Figure 15).



My school days were basically me hiding, hating myself and never really knowing why.

Mia, age 22, trans woman, Sweden

**FIGURE 15** COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES WITH POLICIES ADDRESSING HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS



- In **Malta** the Ministry for Education and Employment published the Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy in June 2015. The policy allows students to present themselves, be addressed, choose the facilities, such as toilets, that match their gender; and wear a uniform that matches their gender. The policy also includes recommendations for implementation in schools [72].
- In **New Zealand**, the Ministry of Education published a comprehensive Guide for Sexuality Education in 2015, which states that school anti-bullying procedures should directly address bullying related to sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, and provides evidence-based guidance [73].
- In the **Philippines**, the 2013 Anti-Bullying Act includes specific references to violence on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression [8].
- In **South Africa**, the Department of Basic Education developed a 'School charter against homophobic bullying' in 2015 and expects schools to draw up their own school-specific Codes of Conduct for students that address bullying, including homophobic bullying [41].
- In **Sweden**, the 2009 Discrimination Act explicitly bans discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in education, and obliges pre-schools, schools and universities to take proactive measures against violence [74].

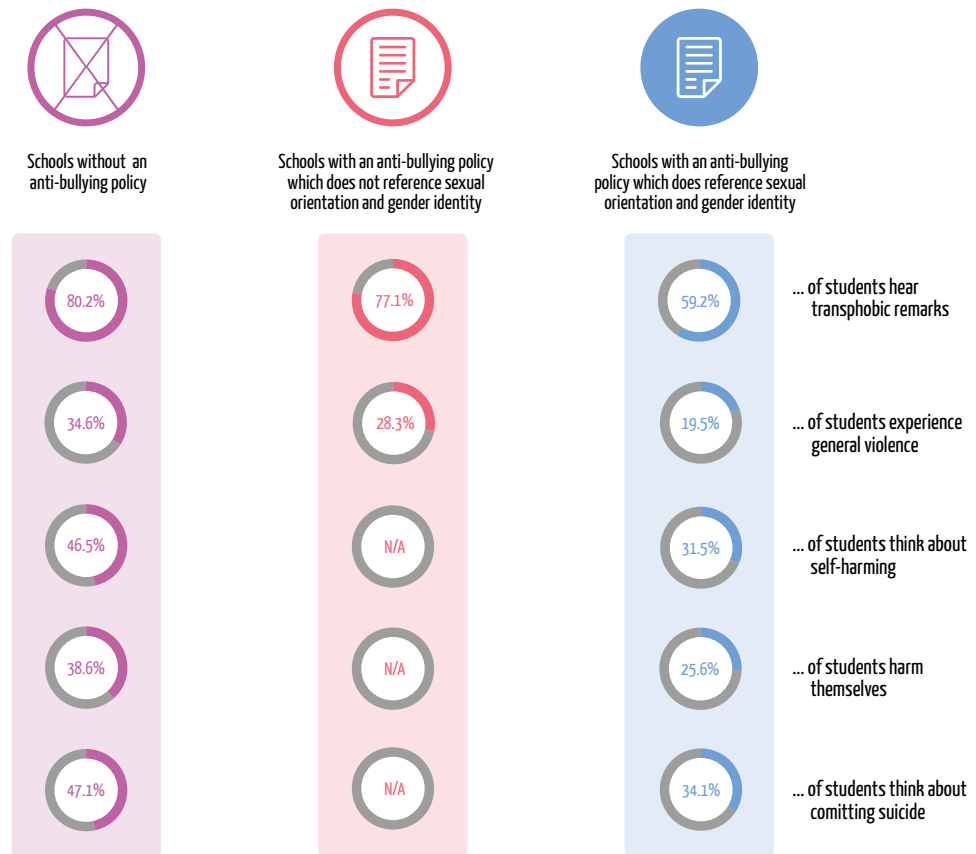
<sup>5</sup> In Thailand education policies refer to discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. They do not directly mention violence and bullying.

<sup>6</sup> Idem



Evidence from **Australia** and **the United States**, published between 2010 and 2015, shows that inclusive policies correlate with LGBTI students being less likely to hear pejorative language, suffer violence, consider or attempt harming themselves and consider or attempt suicide (see Figure 16).

**FIGURE 16** INCLUSIVE ANTI-BULLYING SCHOOL POLICIES  
HELP COUNTER INCIDENTS OF HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE



Source: J. Kosciw et al, 2013 [14] & L. Hillier et al, 2010 [38]

### 3.4.2. Relevant curricula and learning materials

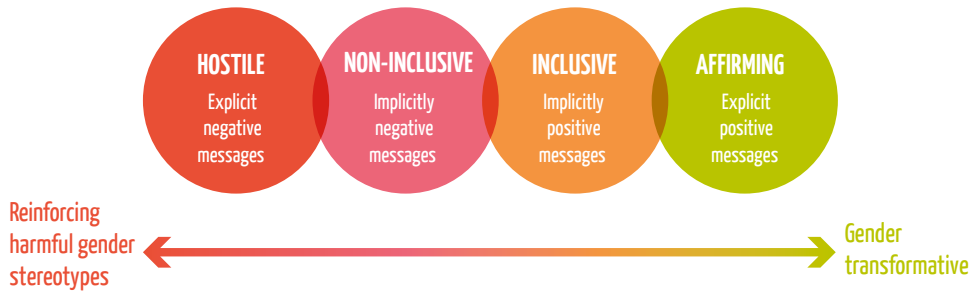
Curricula generally take one of four approaches to sexual and gender diversity (see Figure 17):

- Some are *'hostile'* i.e. they explicitly convey negative messages about LGBTI people, which reinforce negative gender stereotypes and contribute to homophobic and transphobic violence. For example textbooks were withdrawn by the government in Croatia (in 2009) and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (in 2010) because they described homosexuality as a disease.
- Some omit any representation of sexual and gender diversity, making LGBTI people *'invisible'*, which can result in schools ignoring homophobic and transphobic violence.
- Some are *'inclusive'* i.e. they convey implicit positive messages about sexual and gender diversity and promote the human rights of all, regardless of personal characteristics including sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

- Others are 'affirming' i.e. they convey explicit positive messages about sexual and gender diversity and LGBTI people. They provide educators with clear guidelines and examples on how to refer to sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in a sensitive way.

In most countries for which data are available, curricula and learning materials do not include any direct or indirect mention of sexual and gender diversity. Only a few countries have developed curricula that are 'inclusive' or 'affirming'.

**FIGURE 17** **FOUR PROFILES OF CURRICULA:**  
THE CURRICULUM CONVEYS IMPORTANT MESSAGES ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY



### International guidance on sexuality education

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommends that primary and secondary school curricula should address issues around discrimination.

The Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education has noted that in order to be comprehensive, sexual education must pay special attention to diversity, since everyone has the right to deal with his or her own sexuality.' [75] Both UNESCO and the WHO have issued detailed and evidence-based recommendations on addressing issues around sexual orientation and gender identity/expression within sexuality education [76]-[77].

The way that curricula cover sexual and gender diversity needs to reflect the social, cultural and historical context of a country. Evidence and experience suggest that it is most effective to address these issues in [77]-[81]:

- citizenship, human rights or civics classes
- history and politics classes
- language, literature and art classes
- health, personal education and sexuality education classes.



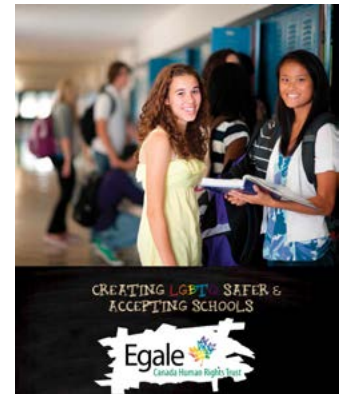
Sexuality and gender sensitivity learning materials developed by RainbowYOUTH in New Zealand

- In **Namibia**, the Life Skills curriculum for Grade 8 explicitly addresses the topic 'gender roles' in relation to different types of families. For example, students are expected to '*... in their own words define and discuss different sexual patterns, such as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual and celibacy, in their own words define sexism in writing and [lastly] appreciate [their] own sexuality*' [41]. In the Grade 12 Life Skills curriculum, the unit of self-awareness requires students to understand what homosexuality is, the impact it has on the individual and issues of conduct.
- In the **Netherlands**, primary and secondary schools must work towards core educational objectives [82]. These were updated in 2012 to encourage teachers to introduce sexual and gender diversity across all subjects, particularly sexuality education, biology, citizenship and social classes.
- In the **Philippines**, the 2013 Reproductive Health Law mandates sexuality education, and the Department of Education is working with NGOs to establish minimum standards on sexuality education that address both gender-based and homophobic and transphobic violence [8].

### 3.4.3. Training and support for staff

In most countries, educational staff lack adequate training and resources to help them understand and address sexual orientation and gender identity and expression and, more specifically, homophobic and transphobic violence. Evidence from education sector professionals and NGOs also suggests that generic training on violence in educational settings is not sufficient to address homophobic and transphobic violence adequately.

Some countries have allocated resources for training and support of staff in this area, for example, through development of guidance, professional development courses and manuals on homophobic and transphobic violence. However, this is often part of in-service training, is implemented on a small scale and is not mandatory. In order to reach as many teachers as possible, it would be more effective to include these issues in pre-service training. At present, only a few countries – Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States – include these issues in national or sub-national pre-service training.



The 'Creating LGBTQ Safer & Accepting Schools' workbook is delivered to schools by Egale Canada Human Rights Trust in support of Canada's vision to make education safe and accepting for all.



I've had literally no training at all about how to deal with it so no, I would not feel comfortable dealing with it.

Teacher in the United Kingdom  
European Union Fundamental Rights Agency. 2016. Respecting, protecting, promoting and fulfilling the fundamental rights of LGBT people in the EU: Views and experiences of public officials and professionals in 19 EU Member States

- In **Australia**, the Society and Education Unit is a requirement for some primary and secondary teaching degrees. It introduces teachers to issues linked to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression in schools through the sociology of education and encourages them to recognise their assumptions about LGBTI people and to learn about approaches to gender and sexuality in schools.
- In **Nepal**, in 2014 the NGO Blue Diamond Society developed and started to deliver a training course for teachers and school administrators to facilitate the introduction of the new curriculum on sexual and reproductive health for Grades 6, 7 and 8. The training toolkit provides basic information about gender, sexuality, sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, helps schools to identify problems that LGBT students may face, including violence, and offers possible solutions [83].
- In **Sweden**, the National Agency for Education provides educational staff with in-service training on sexuality and relationship education. It uses a 'norm critical' approach that, instead of focusing on individuals and groups that are different from a 'norm', examines how and why norms determine who is 'normal' or 'abnormal' and encourages staff to reflect on discrimination and difference [84].

### 3.4.4. Support for students and families

In many countries for which data have been analysed, support is offered to students who are the targets of general violence (including bullying), either in schools or outside of schools through referral mechanisms. However, staff in charge of providing support are often poorly prepared to deal with cases of homophobic and transphobic violence, as they are not comfortable discussing issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. They may even hold homophobic or transphobic views themselves, and therefore, cannot meet the needs of the LGBTI students who request support or are referred to them. Only in some countries does the education sector offer support that is adapted to the specific needs of students affected by homophobic and transphobic violence and, sometimes, of their families.

Support can be provided in different ways:

- Inside educational settings: through counselling services by trained staff, or peer support in school clubs.
- Outside educational settings: through access to health, child protection and training services; NGOs including LGBTI organizations and groups for parents of LGBTI students; and hotlines.
- Online: through chats or websites.

Depending on the providers, support may include psychological support, information, advice and support to report incidents, or social support including training.



- In **Argentina**, since 2013 transgender people can benefit from the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security Employment Insurance and Training scheme. Although it is open to anyone who left school early and experiences difficulties in finding qualified jobs, the scheme acknowledges the high prevalence of school drop-out amongst transgender students and the need to provide them with general skills and vocational training [85].
- In **Japan**, the Ministry of Health and Labour set up an LGBT hotline in 2012, and the services of a national suicide prevention network were also extended to LGBT young people [8].
- In the **United Kingdom**, the Government Equalities Office launched the website Stop Online Abuse to offer support to targets of cyber bullying and help them report incidents, including specific advice for LGBT individuals [86].
- Many schools and universities in **Australia, Canada, India, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States** provide space for peer-to-peer support, often known as Gay-Straight Alliances. These are student-led, school-based clubs that organize activities that are inclusive of all learners, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity/ expression, and where students can openly express their sexual orientation and gender identity [8], [87]-[89].

### 3.4.5. Information campaigns and strategic partnerships

In many countries, civil society has developed considerable expertise in preventing and reducing homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings. Policy-makers from Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America, and the Pacific consulted for this review acknowledge that partnerships with civil society, particularly LGBTI NGOs, contribute to successful responses to homophobic and transphobic violence in schools. Such partnerships have included initiatives such as: information campaigns about sexual and gender diversity, for example, through events such as the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia; establishing anti-bullying networks involving teacher and student unions; conducting long-term awareness-raising and training programmes; supporting the development of education policies; and implementing local responses at district and school level.



The #PurpleMySchool campaign in 2015, run by UNESCO, UNDP and 'Being LGBTI in Asia' seeks to raise awareness of school bullying of LGBTI people based on their sexuality or gender identity.

- In **China**, the NGO Common Language promotes inclusive university curricula by supporting teachers and student clubs to discuss sexual and gender diversity. As of 2015, the organization worked with 13 universities nationwide and supported over 30 local groups, mainly student associations, to organize LGBT-inclusive activities [8].
- In **Poland**, Campaign Against Homophobia, an LGBT NGO, works with teachers' unions, teacher training institutions and school directors to help secondary schools to plan, coordinate and monitor their programmes and activities against homophobic and transphobic discrimination and violence. Based on this work, the NGO also disseminates promising practices across schools.
- In **Uruguay**, the comprehensive education policy to combat homophobic and transphobic violence and discrimination is part of the National Programme for Sexual Education. In order to train teachers, the education sector relies on partnerships between different sectors of government and with civil society organizations. Teacher training for sexuality education is delivered in partnership with NGOs including LGBT groups, which helps to demystify topics linked to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, including homophobic and transphobic violence.

### 3.4.6. Monitoring of violence and evaluation of responses

Very few countries collect systematically comprehensive data on homophobic and transphobic violence. Governments monitor directly this form of violence in educational settings in eight countries – Belgium, Colombia (at municipality level), France, Germany (at sub-national level), Mexico, Mongolia, the Netherlands and the United States. In six other countries – Australia, Canada, Ireland, Malta, New Zealand and the United Kingdom – governments have used data collected by research institutes or NGOs.

- In **Colombia**, the Department of Education for the District of Bogotá surveyed homophobic and transphobic violence in secondary schools in 2006, 2011 and 2013. These large-scale studies collected questionnaires from 118,000 students (in its latest version) in Grades 6–11, allowing probability-based sampling and strongly reliable findings [90].
- In **Peru**, the SíseVe is a system that offers a streamlined way for the education sector to register incidents of violence; respond to those incidents; offer help to those affected; follow up on responses to violence; and close the case when there is evidence that students' well-being has improved. This system explicitly covers homophobic and transphobic violence [91].



I was told I brought shame to my society and my religion. I have endless nightmares and suffer depression

Nora, age 25, lesbian, Middle East

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## Indicators to monitor violence in schools

The global review included a review of indicators used to monitor the nature, prevalence and impact of violence in educational settings and education sector responses. The review assessed 437 indicators used by government institutions, research institutions, UN agencies, NGOs and other organizations in approximately 114 countries and territories. Most indicators monitor violence in general and most indicators used to monitor school-related gender-based violence focus only on sexual violence targeting girls.

The review identified 120 indicators that monitor violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression; almost all of these are used by research institutions and NGOs and in a limited number of countries. NGOs often collect data through surveys conducted outside of schools, for example, through online surveys. Challenges to collecting data include laws that prevent researchers from asking young people under the age of consent about their sexual orientation and gender identity, criminalisation of LGBTI people's identities or behaviours, and ensuring measures are in place to protect anonymity and confidentiality. These challenges contribute to the lack of data that, in turn, contributes to low visibility of the problem and limited responses.

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Only three countries – the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States – have conducted relatively large-scale evaluations of programmes to prevent and address homophobic and transphobic violence in the education sector to measure the effectiveness and impact of these programmes. In other countries, evaluations of small-scale interventions have been conducted by NGOs or research institutions, but these have not provided sufficient robust data to inform scale up of these interventions.

- In the **United Kingdom**, the Government Equalities Office commissioned independent research in 2014 to evaluate the most effective education sector responses to homophobic and transphobic bullying. Researchers reviewed existing legislation and policies, interviewed teachers and educational staff involved in the delivery of anti-bullying responses, and developed case studies based on four schools [92].

4.

# RECOMMENDATIONS



# 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations focus on strategic and practical actions to develop and strengthen effective and comprehensive education sector responses to homophobic and transphobic violence. They take into consideration the specificities of different legal and socio-cultural contexts in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity.

## 4.1. Systematic monitoring of violence

**Monitor systematically the prevalence of violence in educational settings, including violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.**

Specifically:

- Use existing routine data collection mechanisms that already include questions on the school environment and safety, for example, school-based surveys managed by the education sector, reporting mechanisms for incidents of violence, regional and international surveys such as the Global School-based Student Health Survey and the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children cross-national survey.
- Ensure that these mechanisms include appropriate and sensitive indicators and questions related to homophobic and transphobic violence and that data are disaggregated by age, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity/expression to identify the prevalence and nature of violence that is experienced by different groups of LGBTI students.
- Adapt terminology to the context, particularly in countries where same-sex relationships are illegal.
- Review relevant and reliable data collected through specific studies conducted by NGOs and research institutions.

## 4.2 Comprehensive national and school-level policies

**Establish comprehensive national and school policies to prevent and address violence in educational settings, including violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.**

Specifically:

- Ensure that policies are evidence-based and refer explicitly to students who are particularly at risk of violence, including students whose sexual orientation and gender identity/expression is perceived as different from the 'norm'.

- Integrate issues relating to homophobic and transphobic violence into education sector policies on violence, bullying, safe schools, inclusive education and anti-discrimination where such policies exist.
- Use culturally-appropriate terminology in policies in countries where sexual and gender diversity are sensitive issues, for example, refer to 'students whose expression does not conform to gender norms or stereotypes' rather than LGBTI students.
- Involve students, particularly those who are LGBTI, in the development of policies, including through collaboration with civil society organizations that represent LGBTI people and students or work on issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

## 4.3 Inclusive curricula and learning materials

### **Ensure that curricula and learning materials are inclusive.**

Specifically:

- Provide all students with access to non-judgmental and accurate information on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.
- Include education about discrimination and respect for all in the curriculum at all levels of the education system, starting at an early age.
- Ensure that curricula and learning materials are evidence-based and inclusive with respect to sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, including representation in content and illustrations, and remove or avoid inaccurate and stigmatising content in curricula and learning materials. In contexts where it is difficult to mention sexual and gender diversity in curricula and learning materials, it is still possible to address issues such as definitions of masculinity and femininity, gender roles and stereotypes and how these can be harmful to individuals and society.
- Identify and use appropriate entry points in curricula to help students understand issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity in a way that is age-appropriate and culturally sensitive, for example, through citizenship, human rights or civics, history and politics, language, literature and art, and health, personal and sexuality education.

## 4.4. Support for training and other school staff

### **Provide training and support to teachers and other education and school staff to prevent and address violence in educational settings, including violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.**

Specifically:

- Provide teachers with pre-service and in-service training to deliver content related to sexual orientation and gender identity in the curriculum, ideally through a participatory approach to training that enables teachers to reflect on their values, attitudes, language and behaviours. In contexts where it is difficult to mention sexual and gender diversity, teacher training may focus on issues such as definitions of masculinity and femininity, gender roles and stereotypes and how these can be harmful to individuals and society.
- Ensure that teachers, other school and educational staff receive training to enable them to respond to violence, particularly bullying, in educational settings. This involves having the

knowledge, attitudes and skills to: identify incidents of violence, including homophobic and transphobic violence, and immediately stop them; report incidents to the relevant authorities using existing mechanisms and procedures; and listen to students who are victims of homophobic and transphobic violence or witnessing it and provide them with support, either directly or by referring them to the relevant school staff or external institutions.

## 4.5. Safe, inclusive and supportive school environments

**Ensure safe school environments that are fully inclusive and provide support for those students affected by violence, including violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, as well as families.**

- Communicate school policies related to safety and inclusion to the whole school and ensure that they are monitored by school management.
- Put in place effective mechanisms and procedures to report any incident of violence; these should be available in schools and, as appropriate, outside of schools, for example, hotlines or internet-based reporting mechanisms that protect privacy and confidentiality.
- Ensure that reporting mechanisms can document incidents of violence that are based on sexual orientation and gender identity in a culturally-sensitive way, so that these are properly reported.
- Introduce or amend regulations that promote inclusiveness for transgender students, for example, respect for transgender students' preferred names, clothing and appearance choices, processes to safeguard the privacy of students who transition while in schools, and the confidentiality of students' intersex status.
- Ensure that students affected by violence can report incidents in confidence, without having to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity against their will and without feeling judged.
- Make available appropriate support or referral for support from trained staff for students affected by homophobic and transphobic violence, including those who are targets of violence, bystanders and families.
- Ensure that support is also available to the perpetrators of homophobic and transphobic violence, so that they understand the reasons for their attitudes and behaviours and can change them.
- Encourage peer support networks among students.

## 4.6. Information campaigns and partnerships with civil society

**Provide access to non-judgmental and accurate information on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in educational settings, through information campaigns and partnerships with civil society and the wider school community.**

Specifically:

- Ensure that educational settings offer accurate, age-appropriate and evidence-based information on sexual and gender diversity through, for instance, information campaigns including posters, leaflets and films. These campaigns can often complement the inclusion of relevant information in the formal curriculum.

- Encourage the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders in the design, implementation and evaluation of activities that prevent and address violence, including homophobic and transphobic violence:
  - parents and parent associations, teachers' unions, student organizations.
  - civil society organizations that offer evidence-based expertise and are ready to work with the education sector to address homophobic and transphobic violence, including NGOs that represent LGBTI people; youth NGOs; and NGOs working on human rights, sexual and reproductive health, or gender. In some countries these organizations have already gained expertise in the response to school-related violence, including homophobic and transphobic violence.
- Establish partnerships with other sectors that play a role in preventing and addressing violence in schools, for example, health and social services.

## 4.7. Evaluation of education sector responses to violence

**Evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of education sector responses to violence, including violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.**

Specifically:

- Ensure that all programmes and interventions are evaluated regularly to assess whether or not they are working.
- Evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of education sector responses to violence including the extent to which the response is comprehensive. This should include, for example, evaluating the way in which programmes are delivered, the effectiveness of training and delivery of the curriculum, the extent to which mechanisms are being used, the cost-effectiveness of interventions, and their impact on prevention of and responses to violence in schools.
- In countries where the education sector response has been limited, an initial assessment of the situation, priority needs and opportunities to implement the elements of a comprehensive response can be conducted. This also provides a baseline against which to monitor the progress and impact of the response.



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No country can achieve inclusive and equitable quality education if its own students are discriminated against or experience violence based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity - a type of violence often referred to as homophobic and transphobic violence and which is found prevalent in all educational settings in many countries.

This report summarises the main findings of a global review - providing the first ever overview of the most up-to-date data on the nature, scope and impact of, as well as current actions to address, homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings worldwide. It also provides education sector stakeholders with a framework for planning and implementing effective responses as part of wider efforts to prevent and address violence in schools.



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