

FACT SHEET ON BULLYING OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, TRANSSEXUAL, QUEER AND QUESTIONING, AND TWO-SPIRIT YOUTH (LGBTQ2+)

Definitions

It is important to be familiar with and understand the definitions of terms commonly used in the LGBTQ2+ community (e.g., sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc.). Here are some important terms and definitions.

SEX

A person's perceived biological status typically categorized as male, female or intersex. The sex assigned at birth, based on external genitalia, may or may not correspond to their internal sexual characteristics or to their sense of self. It is important to refrain from making assumptions about someone's gender or sexual orientation based on their biological sex.

GENDER IDENTITY

A person's internal sense or feeling of being male, female, intersex or neither. Some popular identifying terms are gender (male or female) or gender-fluid (varying on a continuum of masculinity / femininity). A person's gender identity may or may not align with their biological sex. Gender and gender expression should be described in social terms such as *man*, *woman*, *transgender*, *masculine* and *feminine*.

GENDER EXPRESSION

The way that a person shows their gender identity through clothing, speech, body language, use of makeup, accessories, and so forth to display masculinity or femininity.

GENDER ROLES

Societal and cultural expectations of what it means to act appropriately for one's assigned sex (e.g., behaviours that are considered to be feminine or masculine). Gender roles are often associated with gender expression and the display of gendered behaviour. These roles are driven by stereotypical ideas rather than any connection between assigned sex and gender roles.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

A person's emotional and sexual attraction to another person. This attraction may be toward people of the same sex (lesbian or gay), the opposite sex (heterosexual or straight) or either sex (bisexual). Other sexual orientations include asexual (not experiencing sexual attraction) or pansexual (sexual attraction not restricted by assigned sex, gender or gender identity).

SEXUAL IDENTITY

A person's identification as lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual or another sexual orientation category. Some people who are sexually attracted to the same sex may still identify as heterosexual. Some people identify as *queer* because they reject socially-imposed sexual orientation and gender categories altogether.

TRANSGENDER

A person whose gender identity or gender expression does not correspond with their assigned sex.

CISGENDER

A term used to refer to someone whose gender identity matches their assigned sex (e.g., a masculine male who identifies as a man).

TRANSSEXUAL

A person who experiences intense personal and emotional discomfort with their assigned sex. Transsexual individuals often report feeling that they were born in the wrong sex or body. Some transsexual individuals undergo various treatments to physically alter their body so that their sexual anatomy, hormones and gender align.

TWO SPIRIT

Some Indigenous people identify as Two Spirit rather than as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. The term draws from the historical status of sexual and gender minority people in First Nations prior to European contact. These individuals were called on to live outside the stereotypical characteristics of dominant gender roles. They were often respected as leaders and healers with spiritual strength.

HOMOPHOBIA/BIPHOBIA/TRANSPHOBIA

Any type of bullying, intolerance or harm directed toward people because they are or are thought to be LGBTQ2+.

Key Facts About the EXPERIENCES OF LGBTQ2+ Youth

The following facts are taken from *Every Class in Every School*¹, a national Canadian survey of high school youth published in 2011.

1. Every day, youth hear language that insults LGBTQ2+ people:

- **70%** of all youth (including non-LGBTQ2+) say they hear expressions like “that’s so gay” every day in school; **48%** of all youth report hearing words like “faggot,” “lesbo,” and “dyke” used as insults every day in school.
- **86%** of LGBTQ2+ youth and **58%** of non-LGBTQ2+ youth say they are upset by such language. Youth report that teachers often look the other way when they hear homophobic and transphobic comments and some teachers even make these kinds of comments themselves.

2. Bullying, discrimination, harassment and other abuse are experienced at high rates for LGBTQ2+ youth :

- **21%** of LGBTQ2+ youth and **8%** of non-LGBTQ2+ youth are physically harassed or assaulted because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender expression.
- **55%** of LGBTQ2+ youth and **26%** of non-LGBTQ2+ youth are verbally harassed about their gender expression.
- **49%** of male and **36%** of female LGBTQ2+ youth report being sexually harassed compared to **23%** of male and **17%** of female non-LGBTQ2+ youth.

3. Most LGBTQ2+ youth do not feel safe at school:

- **53%** of LGBTQ2+ youth say they feel unsafe at school because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation compared to **3%** of non-LGBTQ2+ youth.

4. Youth with LGBTQ2+ parents suffer high rates of bullying and harassment:

- **27%** of youth with LGBTQ2+ parents report being physically harassed about their parents’ sexual orientation.
- They are more than **twice as likely** as non-LGBTQ2+ youth to be physically harassed or assaulted because of their own gender expression, perceived sexual orientation or gender identity and gender.
- They are **three times more likely** than their peers to skip school because they feel unsafe.

5. LGBTQ2+ youth are especially vulnerable if they belong to another group that suffers from systemic discrimination:

- **59%** of female LGBTQ2+ youth report feeling unsafe in their school change rooms.
- LGBTQ2+ youth of colour are more likely to say that they do not have **even one** person they can talk to about LGBTQ2+ matters.

6. Transgender and transsexual (trans) youth are particularly vulnerable to bullying and in need of support at school:

- Trans youth are frequent targets of harassment and discrimination, even from other LGBTQ2+ youth.
- Transphobia is not commonly discussed and is frequently overlooked even within the LGBTQ2+ community.
- **90%** of trans youth hear other youth use transphobic language daily or weekly.
- **78%** of trans youth feel unsafe in some way at school.
- **74%** of trans youth are verbally harassed about their gender expression.
- **64%** of trans youth have been taunted or ridiculed in the past year.
- **44%** of trans youth report skipping school because they feel unsafe.
- **36%** of trans youth have been physically threatened or injured in the past year.
- **33%** of trans youth have been bullied or picked on through the internet in the past year.
- **23%** of trans youth hear teachers use transphobic language daily or weekly.
- **15%** of trans youth have skipped more than 10 school days because they feel unsafe.
- **9%** of trans youth have been threatened or injured with a weapon in the past year.

How Can Teachers Reduce Victimization of LGBTQ2+ Youth?

1. MAKE YOUR CLASSROOM A SAFE AND RESPECTFUL SPACE.

- Make it clear that you're an ally to LGBTQ2+ youth by using inclusive language (e.g., "parents", rather than "mother and father" and "partner" instead of "boyfriend or girlfriend"). Provide a mix of both LGBTQ2+ and non-LGBTQ2+ examples in classroom discussions (e.g., transgender figures in history and popular culture).
- Remind all youth that everyone is entitled to full respect, safety and acceptance in the classroom. Emphasize that "everyone" includes LGBTQ2+ youth. Youth may agree to this commitment as part of a Classroom Code of Conduct.
- Avoid unintentionally divisive procedures like composing teams on the basis of assigned sex. One alternative is to separate youth using birth month.
- Explain to all youth that it is very important not to make assumptions about individuals' sexual orientation, gender or gender expression based on stereotypes about their assigned sex. Emphasize that heterosexual cisgender identities are not suitable for everyone. Sexual orientation and gender are fluid and fall on a continuum rather than being fixed.
- Discuss various forms of gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation whenever relevant. For example, in:
 - English Language Arts: Discuss writers and characters who challenge gender restrictions.
 - History: Discuss the positive recognition of LGBTQ2+ identities in pre-contact North America and the oppression of LGBTQ2+ individuals in Nazi Germany.
 - Social Studies: Discuss the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and same-sex marriage.
 - Health: Ensure sexual health discussions are inclusive and comprehensive of LGBTQ2+ identities.
 - Guidance: Discuss healthy same-sex relationships.
- Challenge normative ideas of gender and gender roles. Deconstruct gender categories and ask youth to question gender stereotypes. Promote a respectful, inclusive and open discussion.

2. ADDRESS HOMOPHOBIC, BIPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC LANGUAGE IMMEDIATELY.

- Be respectful, consistent and patient in reminding youth that this type of language is disrespectful and hurtful. Be careful not to single out any particular youth as victims.
- If disrespectful language is used in the classroom, refer back to the Classroom Code of Conduct.
- Turn current events and classroom incidents into learning opportunities. Deconstruct comments such as “that’s so gay”. Generate a discussion about what these comments mean, what they imply and how this language impacts people. For example, see NoHomophobes.com. Caution: This site streams re-tweets with homophobic and offensive language.

3. SUPPORT YOUTH’ EFFORTS TO BUILD AN LGBTQ2+ INCLUSIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT.

- LGBTQ2+ youth may feel isolated from the rest of the school community.
- The majority of youth find bullying of LGBTQ2+ youth unacceptable. However, they may not stand up for LGBTQ2+ youth because they don’t know what to do or fear becoming targets of bullying themselves. Youth may need help from adults to support both LGBTQ2+ and non-LGBTQ2+ peers.
 - Teachers can directly support the development of friendships and important connections that help LGBTQ2+ youth find social support and inclusion among their peers.
 - Examples of LGBTQ2+ groups include Gay-Straight Alliances, Queer-Straight Alliances, Gender and Sexuality Alliances.

4. ENCOURAGE YOUR SCHOOL TO IMPLEMENT INCLUSIVE AND COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY POLICIES AND INITIATIVES.

- When inclusive policies and initiatives are in place, LGBTQ2+ youth:
 - Feel safer at school and are less likely to be bullied.
 - Are exposed to fewer anti-LGBTQ2+ comments.
 - Are more likely to receive support from teachers when such comments are made.
 - Are more likely to report harassment or assault.
 - Are more likely to talk to teachers, principals, counselors, coaches and classmates.
- **80%** of LGBTQ2+ youth from schools with inclusive policies report never having been physically harassed.

5. BECOME AWARE OF LGBTQ2+-INCLUSIVE LEGISLATION AND SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES.

- Public funded school systems across Canada strongly support LGBTQ2+-inclusive education. Many teacher organizations can provide relevant information and resources for teachers.