



# 2018-2019 SCHOOL CLIMATE REPORT

Report Released April 2020

## SCHOOL CLIMATE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEAR

**301 Respondents**

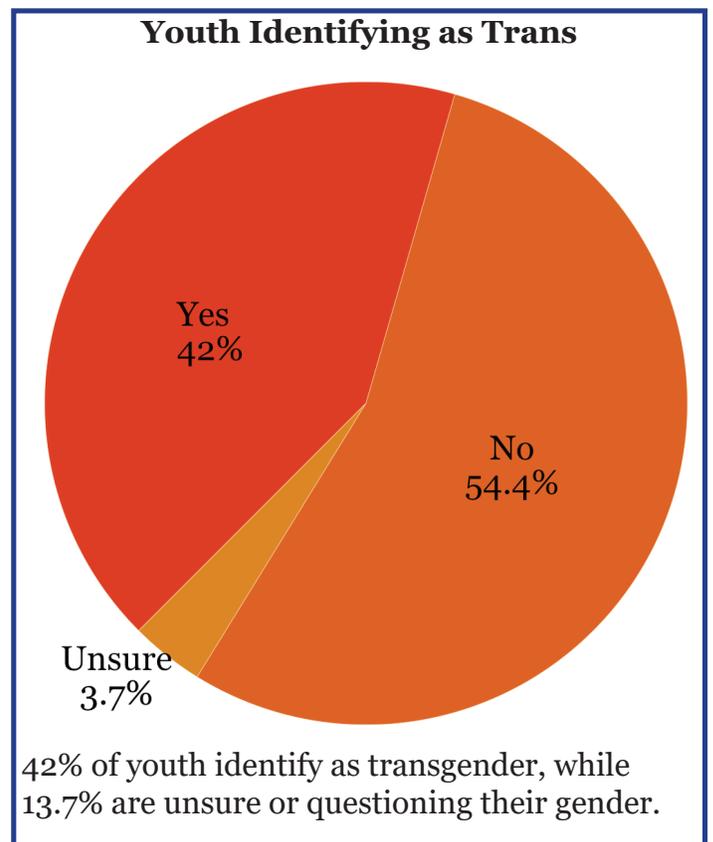
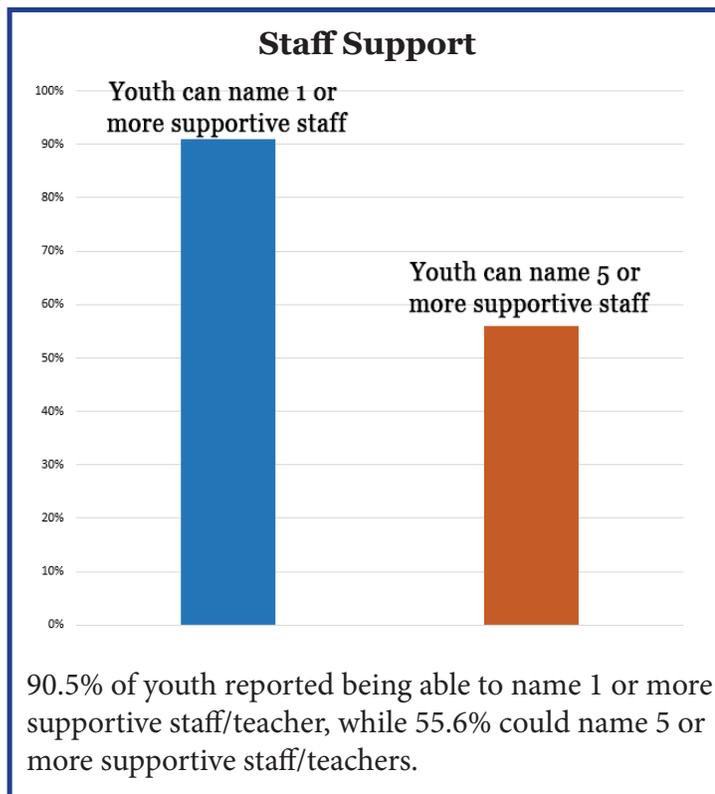
**70 Schools**

**Two hundred and seventy six** of those students live and attend school in Spokane County. **63.4%** were in high school while **30.5%** were in middle school.

Respondents identified their sexual orientation as:

- 22.2% identify as gay or lesbian
- 68.2% identify as bi/pan/polysexual
- 3.4% identify as queer
- 15.1% identify as Asexual

\*Youth were allowed to select more than one option



**60.9%** reported that their school has a GSA or similar club while **24.6%** reported their school doesn't have a GSA or similar club. **14.5%** were unsure.

## Glossary of Terms

**Asexual:** Describes an individual who does not experience sexual attraction, but may experience emotional or romantic attraction.

**Bisexual:** Continuing emotional, romantic, and affectionate attraction to persons of the same and different genders.

**Cisgender:** Describes an individual whose gender identity and gender expression matches the gender typically associated with their biological sex.

**Gay:** A man who has a continuing enduring emotional, romantic, and affectionate attraction for other men.

**Gender identity:** Describes an individual's inner sense of being a man, woman, or another gender. This may or may not correspond with an individual's biological sex assigned at birth.

**Gender expression:** Describes an individual's outward communication of gender through behavior or appearance. This may or may not correspond with their biological sex assigned at birth.

**Lesbian:** A woman who has a continuing enduring emotional, romantic, and affectionate attraction for other women.

**LGBTQ+:** A general term used to describe individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer/questioning.

**Misgender:** to identify the gender of a person, such as a transgender person incorrectly (as by using an incorrect label or pronoun)

**Non-binary/Genderqueer:** A term of self-identification for people who do not identify with the limited and binary terms that have traditionally described gender identity (for instance, male/man or female/woman)

**Pansexual:** Describes an individual who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to individuals of all gender identities and expressions including those who do not fit into the standard gender binary (man and woman).

**Queer:** An umbrella term describing individuals who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, gender neutral, questioning, and many other identities. While this term has been used in a derogatory way in the past, many individuals and groups are reclaiming it as an all-encompassing way to describe those who do not identify as heterosexual and/or cisgender.

**Questioning:** A person who is exploring their sexual and/or gender identity. A fairly common part of adolescent human development.

**Sexual Orientation:** Describes an individual's emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to the same or opposite gender. This is different from an individual's gender identity.

**Transgender:** An umbrella term used to describe anyone whose gender identity or expression situates them differently than the traditional gender role they were assigned at birth.

## **How And Where We Collected**

Odyssey Youth Movement's annual youth climate survey is conducted every Spring with the intention of gathering information about the experiences of LGBTQ+ youth from throughout the Inland Northwest.

Confidential data collection predominately occurs in person, utilizing a paper survey that is handed directly to the youth. The timeline of collection is bookended by major youth focused events where the survey was available in hard copy for all participants to engage. The survey launched the week of the Day of Silence commemoration and Odyssey's Youth Queer Prom, with the final day of data collection occurring at the Spokane Pride Festival as part of the Teen Zone facilitated by Odyssey Youth Movement.

Additional data collection occurred directly in the schools, with staff advisors of local GSA clubs being given copies of the survey and an envelope to confidentially return them to Odyssey Youth Movement. Through all of these settings, Odyssey was able to engage hundreds of LGBTQ+ youth and their peers from throughout the region.

The survey is entirely opt-in with participants given the option to leave any question blank that they choose not to answer. Odyssey recognizes the need for confidentiality when gathering this data and only allows designated staff and volunteers to handle the completed surveys. No survey participant was asked to include their name in responses and no individual data set will be shared with area schools and service providers.

### **Timeline of 2019 Data Collection**

Friday April 12th : Survey launches

Monday, Wednesday, Friday afternoons: Surveys are collected at Odyssey's drop-in center

April 12th through May 31st: Surveys distributed to area schools and collected back

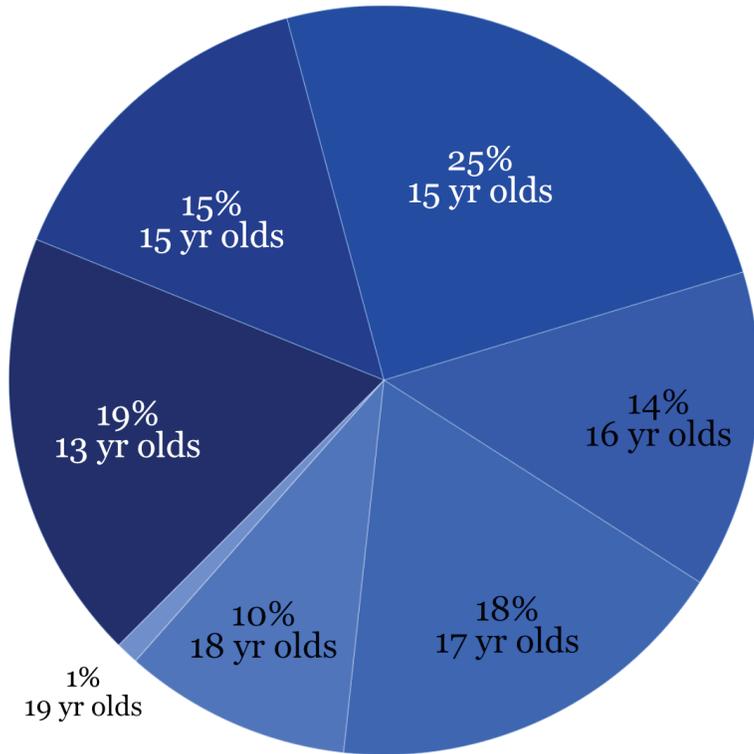
Saturday June 8th: Final surveys are collected

April 2020: Report released

# Demographics of Respondents

The 301 respondents represent many identities. The survey asked youth their age, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, school and zip code.

## By Age

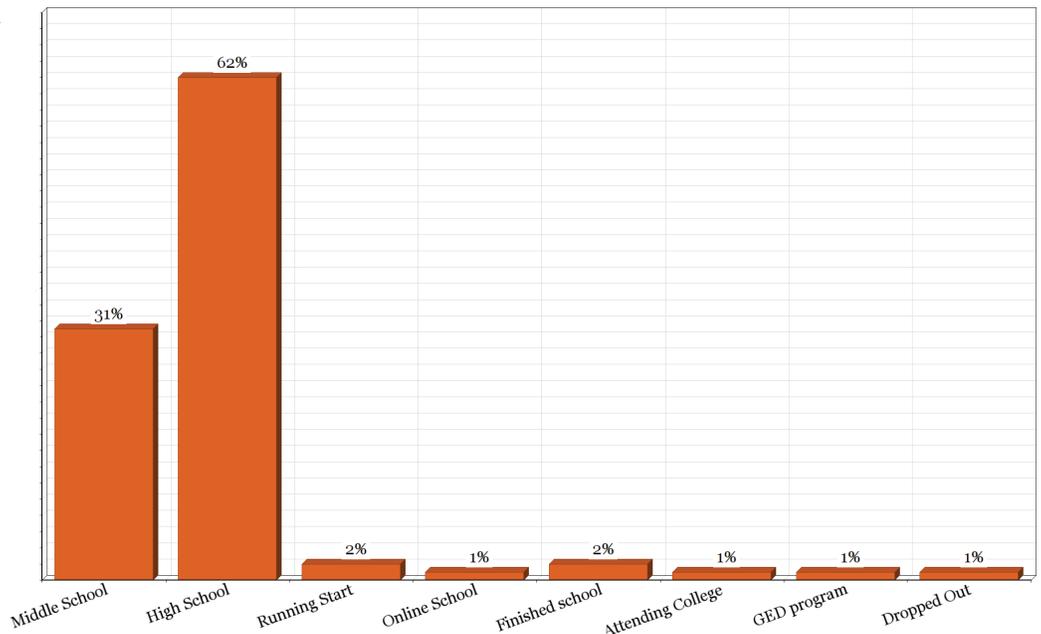


It was noted how evenly each age was represented. The nineteen year olds that completed the survey were still in the school system within the 18-19 school year.

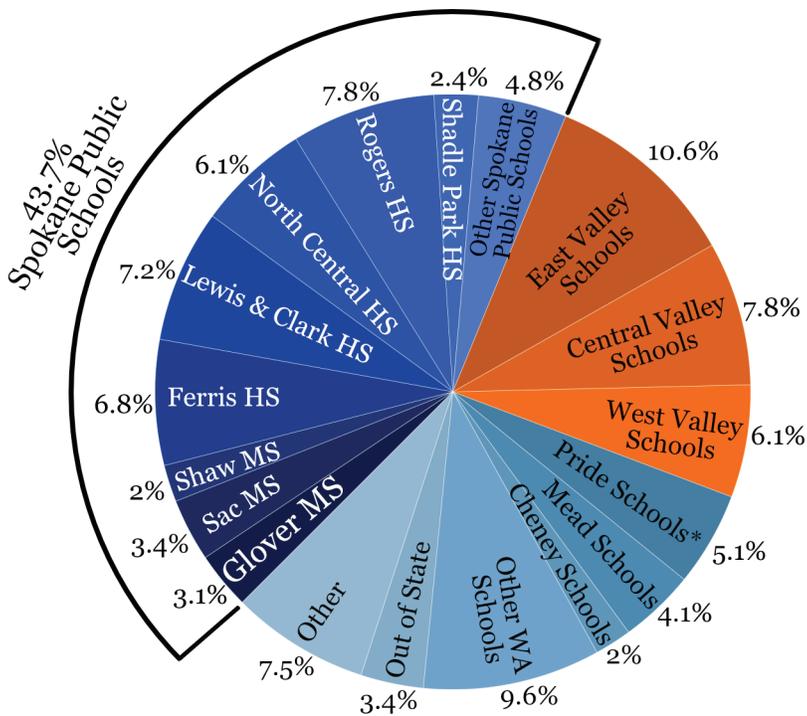
## By Level in School

93% of respondents were in middle and high school while 6% of respondents were attending other schooling options.

Some respondents reported being in multiple settings, for example; having dropped out but working on a GED. Or being in Running Start as well as high school and college. As a result this comes to over 100%.



## By School



Respondents came from all over the country, though the vast majority live in and attend school in Spokane County.

“Other WA schools” includes Seattle, Riverside, Nine Mile Falls, Medical Lake, Rearden, Yakima, Colville, Deer Park, Eastmont, and Lakeland schools.

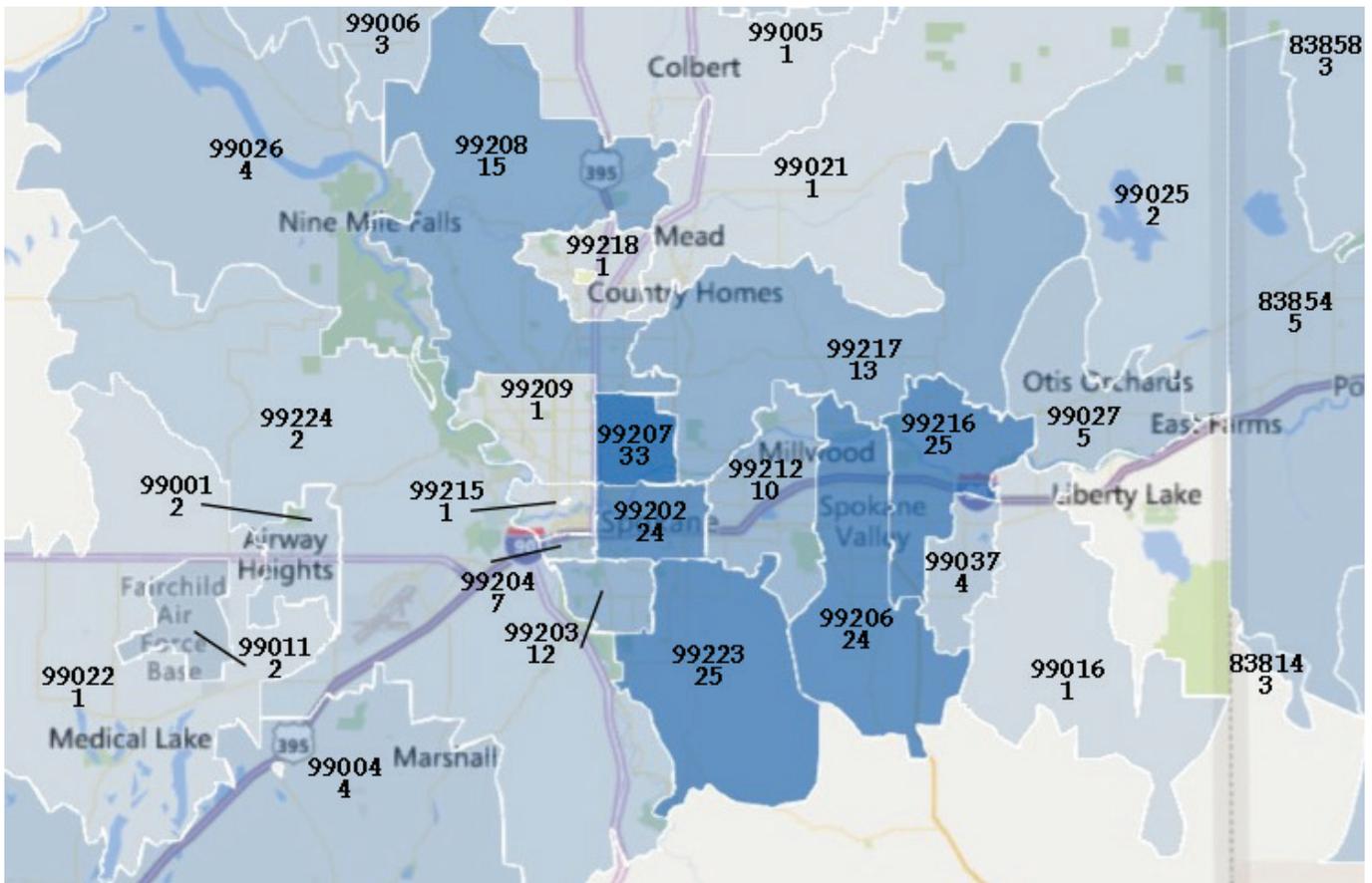
“Out of State” includes Coeur d’Alene, Post Falls, Missoula, and Rount Mt.

“Other” includes colleges, Crosswalk GED program homeschool and on-line schooling.

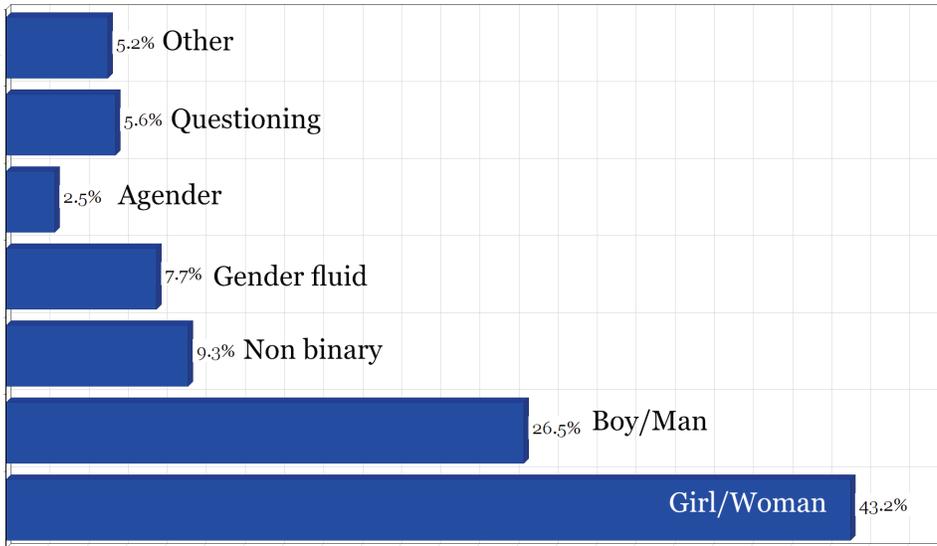
\*Pride Schools includes Pride Prep and Innovation High School.

## By Zip code

Respondents came from 48 different zip codes across the region. To represent the bulk of where these respondents came from; we mapped out 29 zip codes from Spokane and neighboring areas.



## By Gender



The survey didn't differentiate between transgender boys/men or cisgender boys/men.

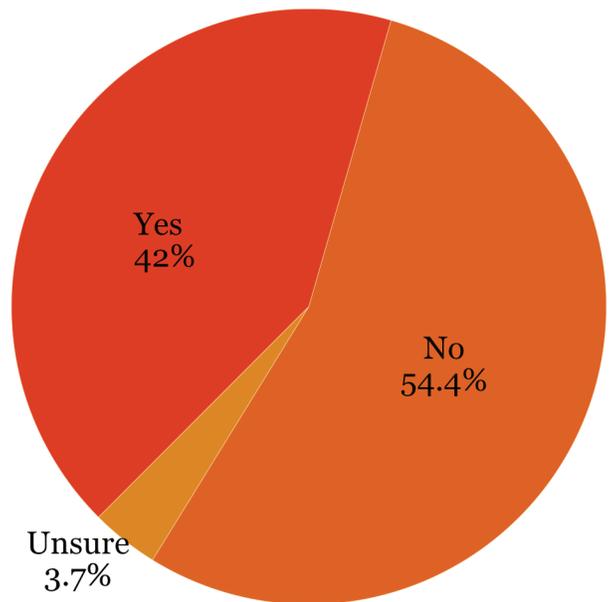
The survey didn't differentiate between transgender girls/women or cisgender girls/women.

The "other" category contains identities that 1.5% or less of the respondents used to identify themselves.

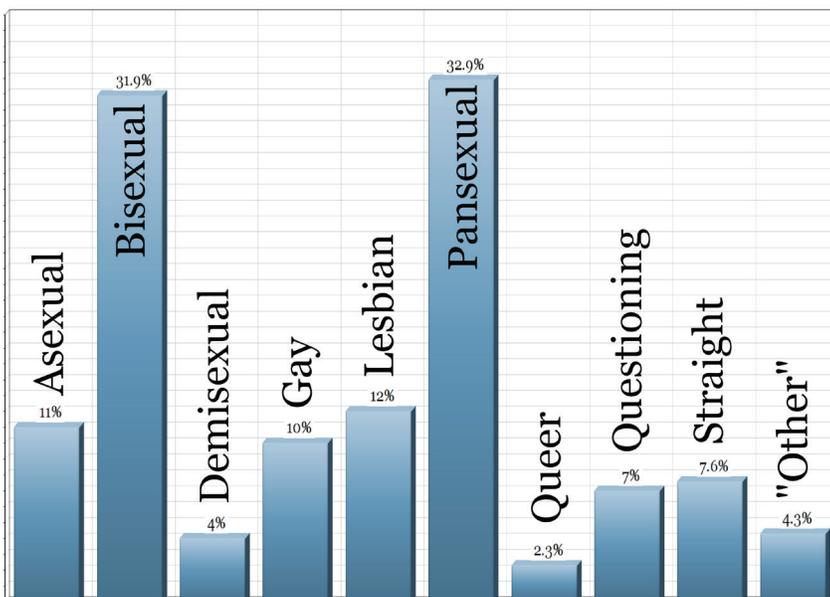
Examples include: Demi-Boy/Girl, Grey gender, Genderqueer.

## Response to the question "Are you trans?"

Youth respondents used many identifiers to label and express their gender. For the purposes of the survey, any youth who didn't identify with the sex they were assigned at birth falls within the transgender umbrella. Given that definition, 42% of youth identified themselves as trans, and 3.7% were questioning or unsure. 54.4% of youth said they aren't trans.



## By Sexuality

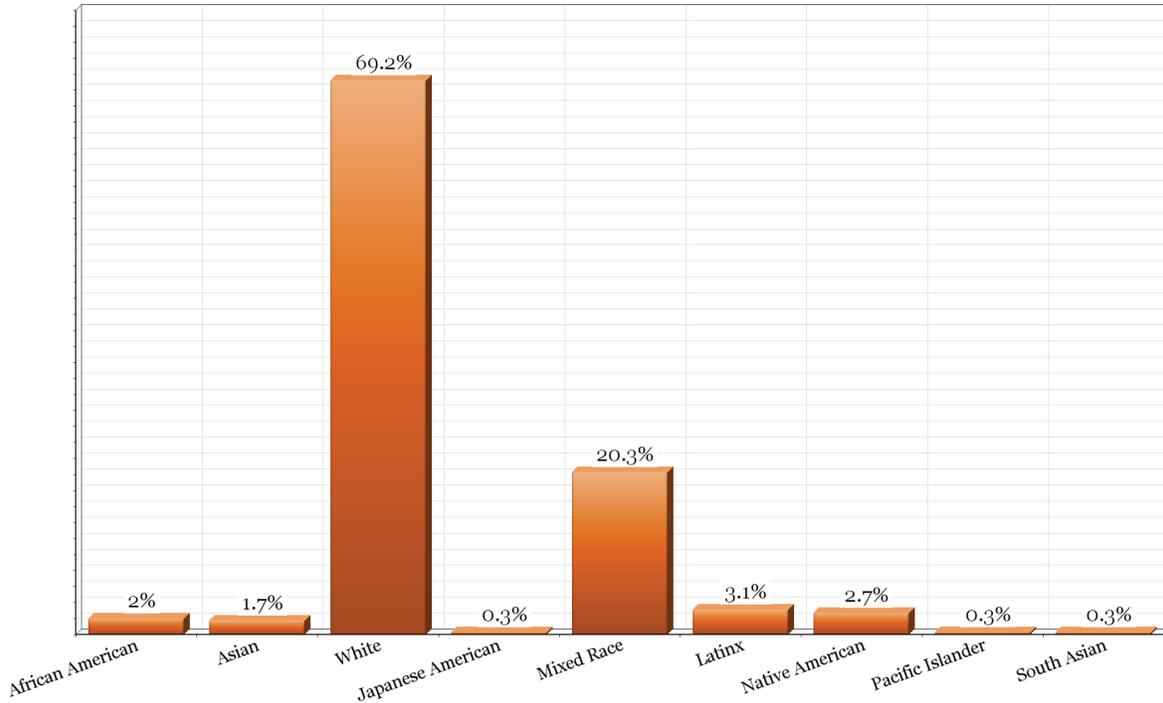


Youth participants were able to select as many identities as they needed to describe themselves. As such this graph comes to over 100%.

The "Other" column contains identities that had 2% or less.

See our Glossary on pg. 3 for terms found on this page.

## By Race

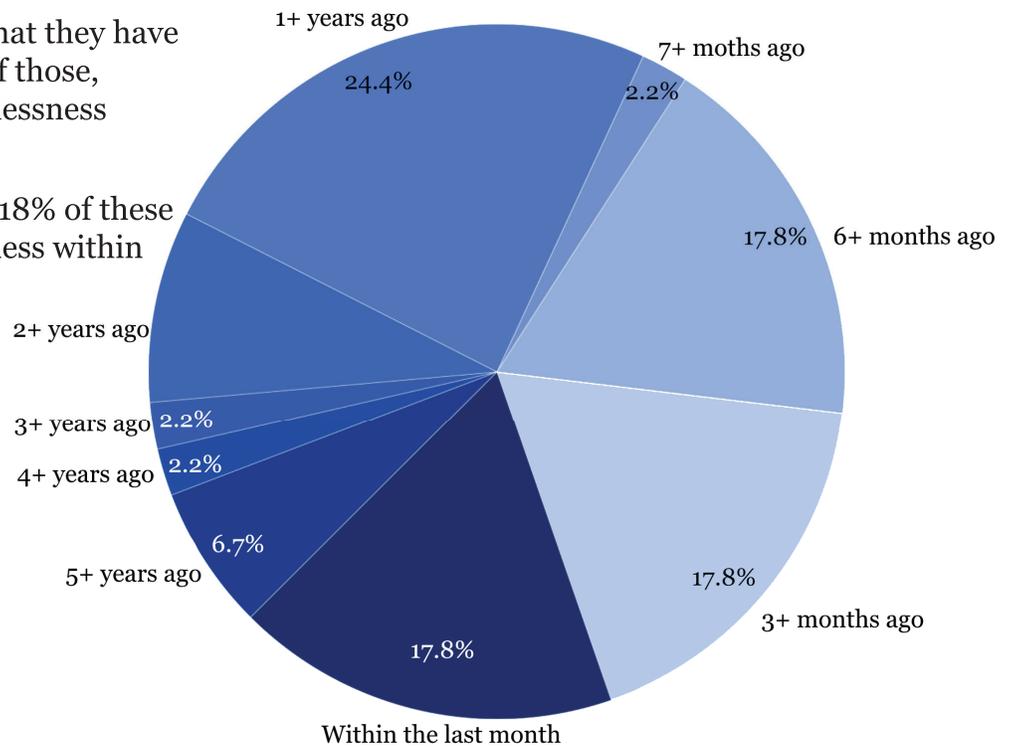


According to the 2018 census report, 85% of Spokane identifies as White and 5.89% identify with two or more races. With 69.2% of respondents identifying as White and 20.3% identifying with 2 or more races (Mixed Race) the survey represents a more diverse population than the census.

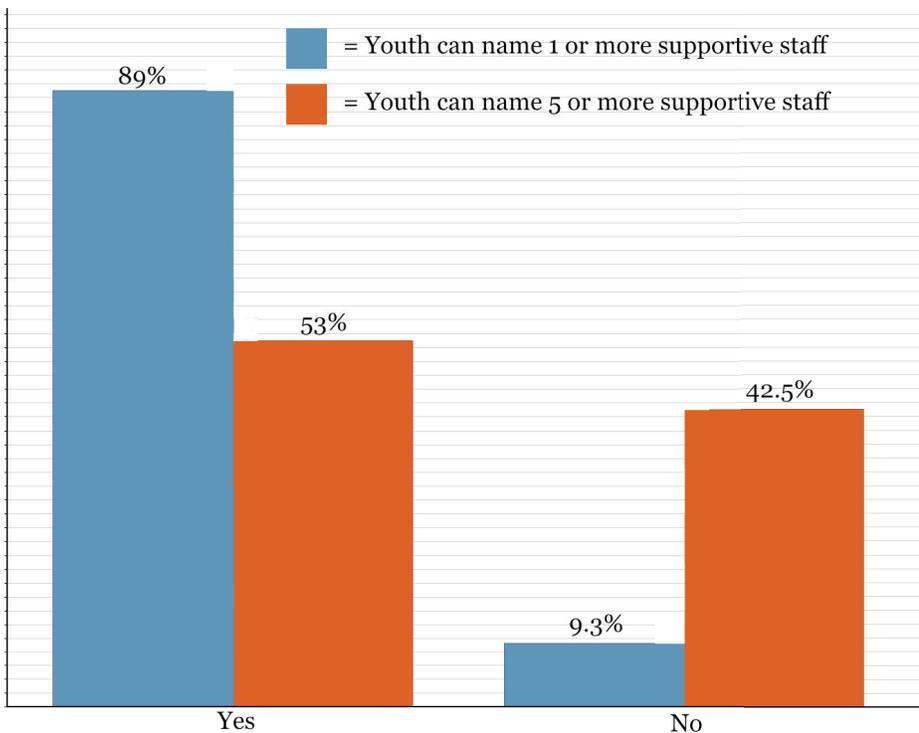
## Experiences of homelessness

15.5% of respondents wrote that they have experienced homelessness. Of those, nearly 1/4 experienced homelessness within 1-2 years ago.

It is also worth noting nearly 18% of these youth experienced homelessness within the last month.



## Experiences of Youth in School



When respondents were asked if they could name one or more school faculty they would consider supportive of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity; 89% said they could.

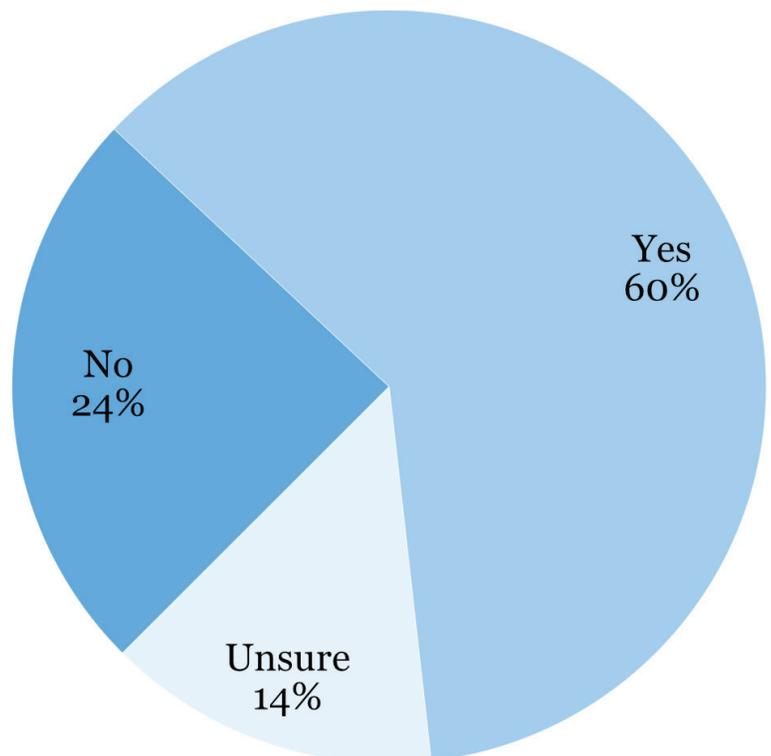
However only 53% of respondents could think of five or more school faculty.

## Experiences with GSA and Similar Clubs

Respondents were asked if they were aware of GSA or similar clubs in their school. 60% said that they were aware of a club.

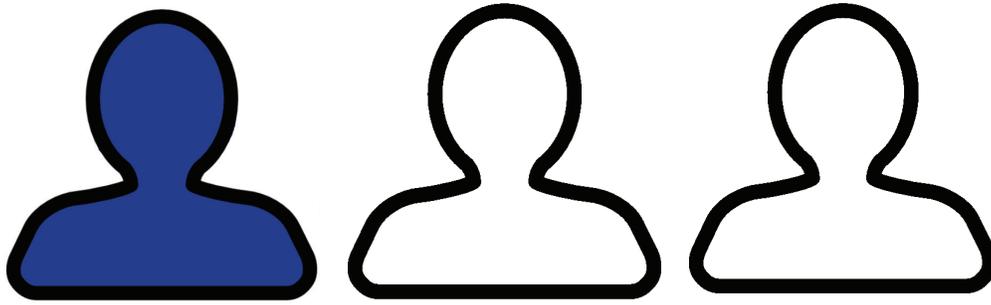
14% were unaware if their school had a club.

24% said they didn't believe their school had a club.



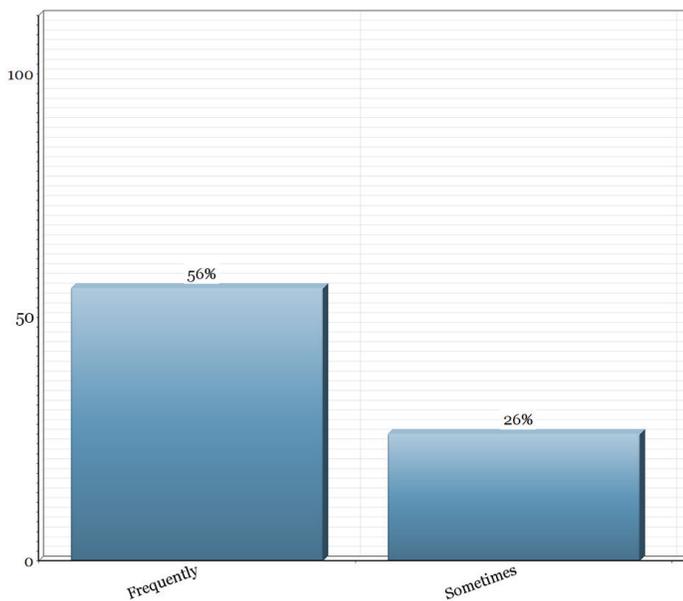
Youth are not always aware of GSA clubs in their schools. They may assume that there isn't a club without looking into it further, or they may not have seen an existing club advertised.

## School Rules

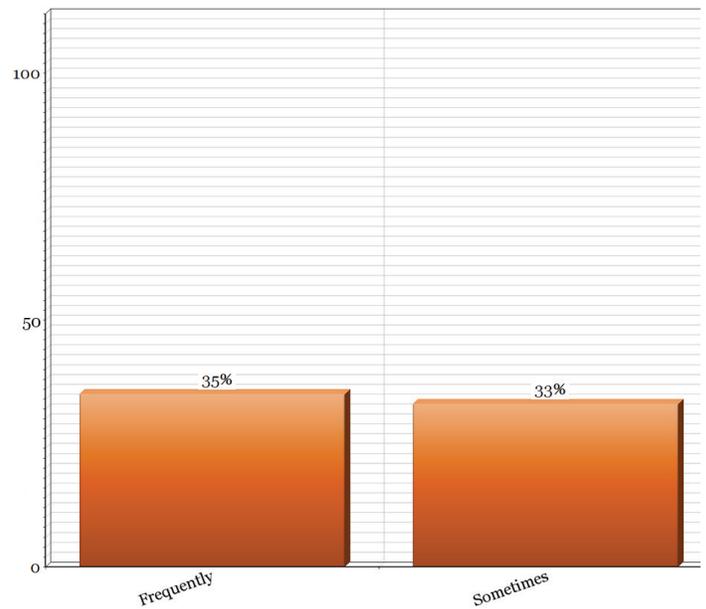


1/3 (32%) of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Queer respondents said they felt they were treated differently by school staff because of their sexual orientation. In this question, youth were given the example of how PDA rules and guidelines were applied.

## Homophobic and Transphobic Comments



### Heard Homophobic Comments at School



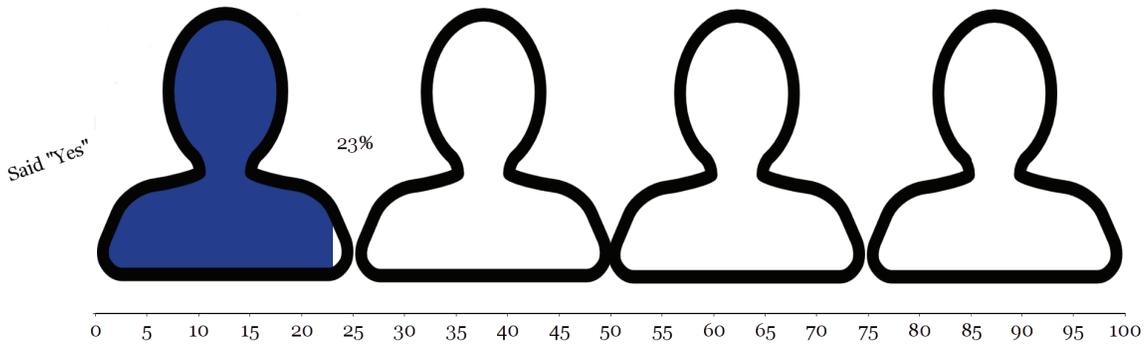
### Heard Transphobic Comments at School

Respondents were asked how often they heard homophobic comments like “That’s so gay” or slurs like “dyke or fag <sup>1</sup>”. 82% of youth said they frequently or sometimes heard these comments.

Respondents were asked how often they heard transphobic comments such as “tranny <sup>2</sup>”, “he-she”, “it”, or someone being misgendered. 68% of youth said they frequently or sometimes hear these comments.

A common coping mechanism for dealing with harassment or negative experiences is to forget that it ever happened. Which means that the real number of encounters are likely much higher. Youth are also more skilled at recognizing homophobia than transphobia due to awareness campaigns.

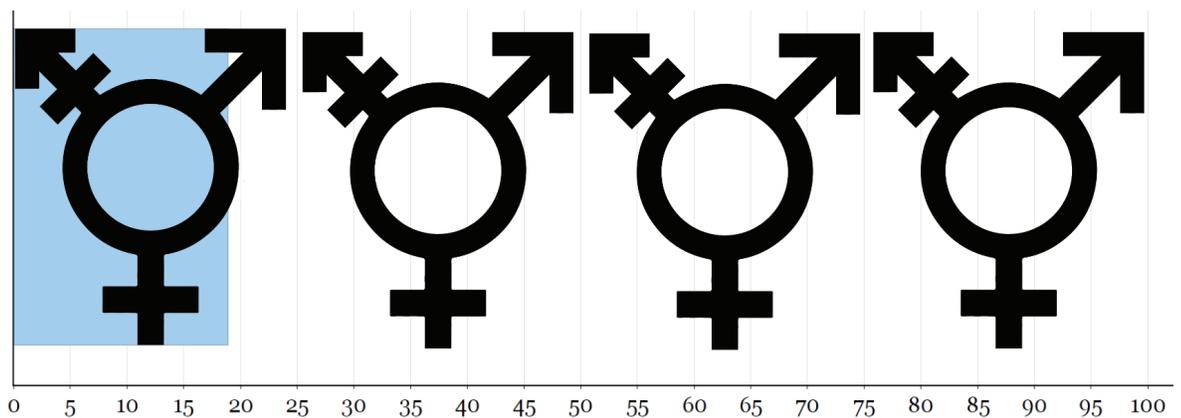
## Skipping School Over Safety Concerns



Youth respondents were asked how many times over the last month they had skipped class due to feeling uncomfortable or unsafe related to their sexual orientation. 23% responded that they had skipped class at least once in the last month.

Of those that said yes, 28% had skipped class 4 or more times in the last month.

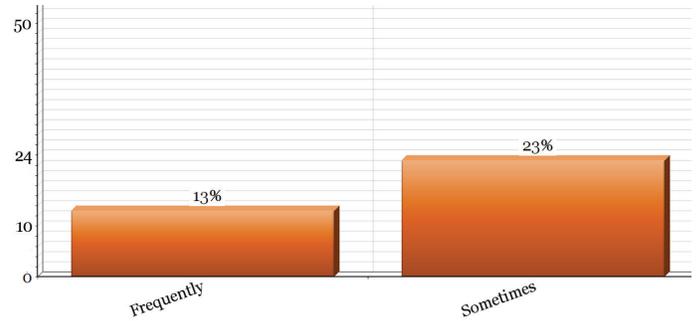
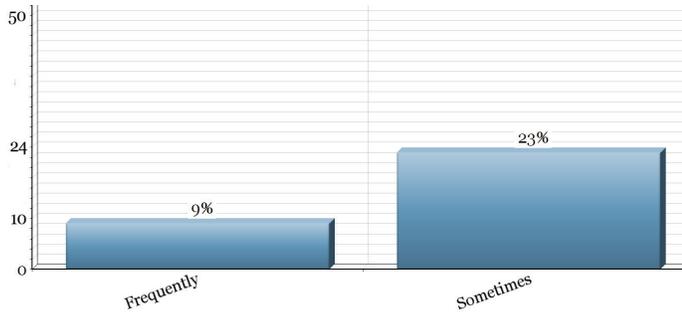
I skipped a whole week of school due to these kids bullying me and my friend. My friend is trans and they were calling her “it” and “he/she” and the principle and teachers did nothing about it.  
-Anon 15 Spokane Public Schools



Of respondents that identify as transgender, 19% said they had skipped class at least once in the last month due to feeling uncomfortable or unsafe related to their gender identity.

Of those that said yes, 27% had skipped class 4 or more times in the last month.

## Feeling Safe at School



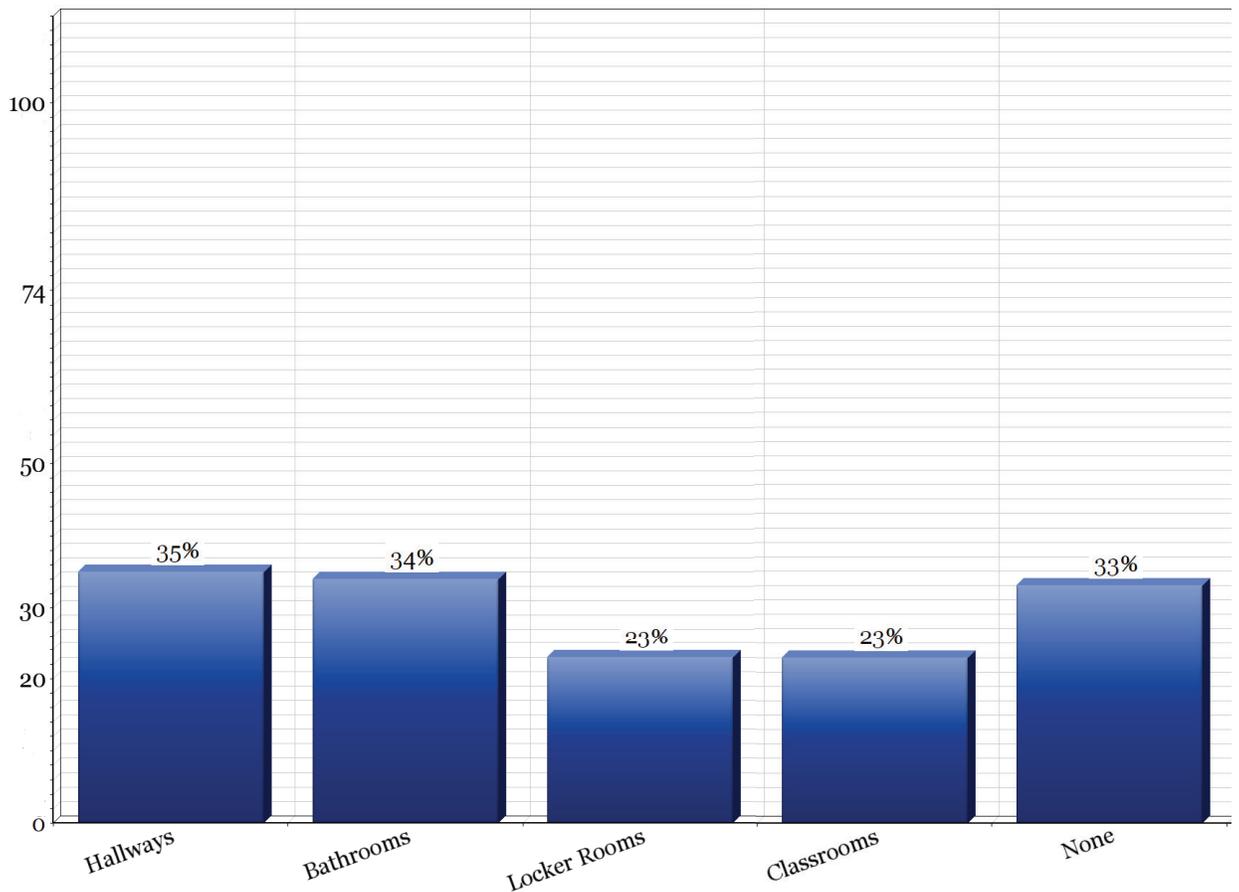
### Felt Unsafe Due to Sexual Orientation

When respondents were asked if they felt unsafe at school “Frequently, Sometimes, Rarely or Never” in relation to their sexual orientation; 2/3 of them responded that they felt unsafe.

When transgender respondents were asked if they felt unsafe at school “Frequently, Sometimes, Rarely or Never” in relation to their gender identity; over half of them responded that they felt unsafe.

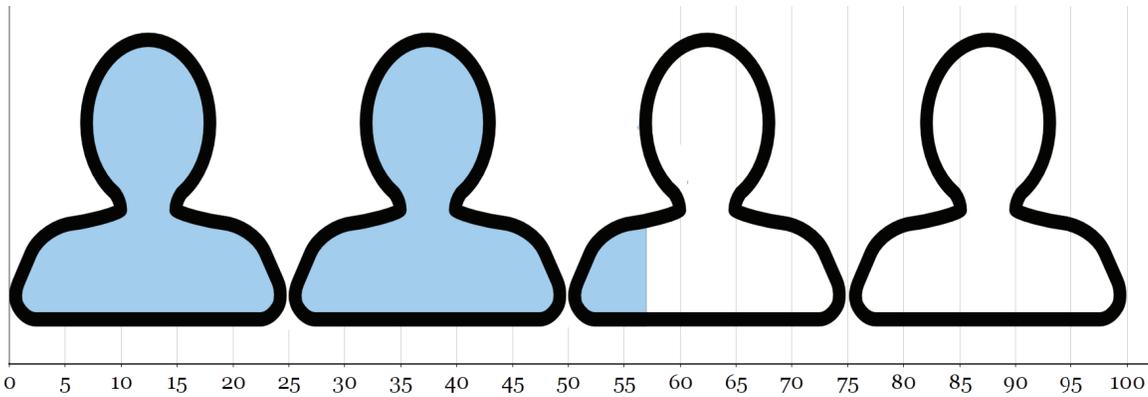
### Felt Unsafe Due to Gender Identity

## Where youth Feel Unsafe



When asked what areas of the school students felt unsafe, the top four spots (out of nine options given) were Hallways, Bathrooms, Locker Rooms and Classrooms. Youth were able to select as many locations as they needed. **68% of respondents** said they felt unsafe in at least one location in school.

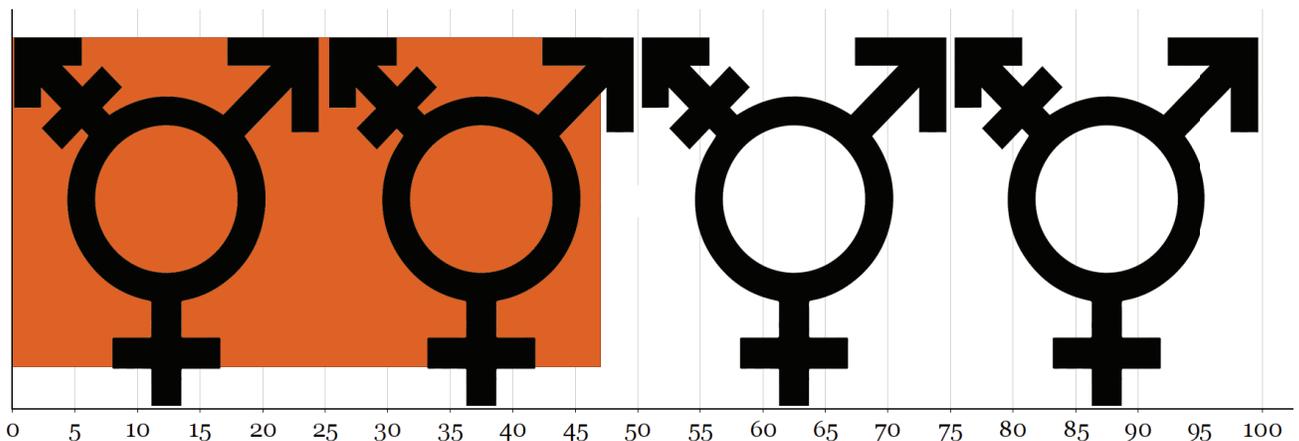
## Verbal Harassment at School



57% of respondents said that they experienced verbal harassment at school based on their sexual orientation in the past school year. This included name calling and verbal threats.

**1 in 10** of those who said they had experienced verbal harassment marked that it was happening frequently.

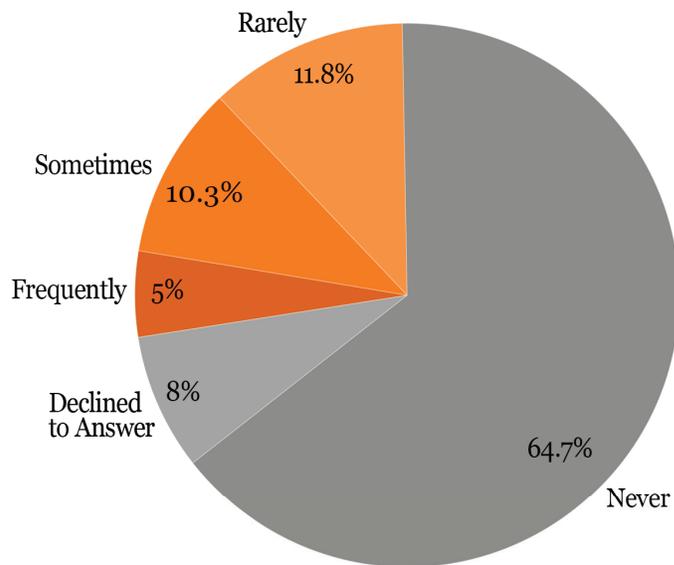
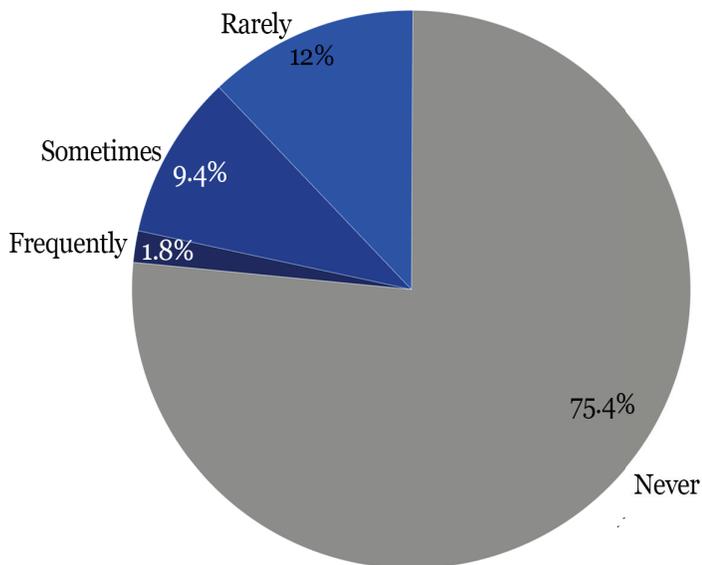
I was with a friend in the parking lot and these guys in a truck started yelling “fag” at us and telling us to “fuck off” and that we’re going to hell. When I told the vice principle, he didn’t do anything but lecture me about their freedom of speech.  
-Anon age 16, Valley Schools



47% of respondents said that they experienced verbal harassment at school based on their gender identity in the past school year. This included name calling and verbal threats.

**1 in 10** of those who said they had experienced verbal harassment marked that it was happening frequently.

## Physical Harassment or Assault at School

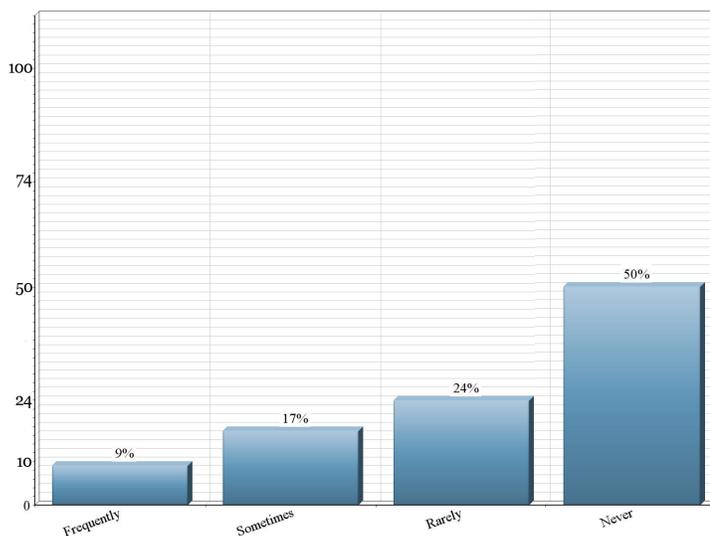


### Felt Unsafe Due to Sexual Orientation

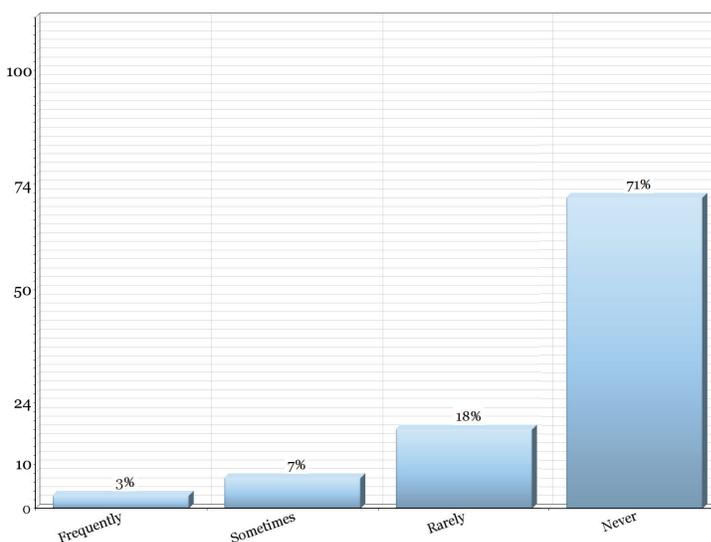
When respondents were asked how often they had experienced physical harassment or assault at school “Frequently, Sometimes, Rarely or Never” in relation to their sexual orientation; **1/4 (24.3%) of youth** had experienced physical harassment or assault like being shoved, pushed, punched, kicked, etc.

### Felt Unsafe Due to Gender Identity

When transgender respondents were asked how often they had experienced physical harassment or assault at school “Frequently, Sometimes, Rarely or Never” in relation to their gender identity; **over 1/4 (27.2%)** of them responded that they had experienced physical harassment or assault.



### Verbal Sexual Harassment



### Physical Sexual Harassment

When respondents were asked how often they had experienced verbal sexual harassment (regardless of sexual orientation or gender) at school “Frequently, Sometimes, Rarely or Never” **1/2 of youth** had experienced verbal sexual harassment like sexual remarks made toward them.

When respondents were asked how often they had experienced physical sexual harassment or assault at school “Frequently, Sometimes, Rarely or Never” **over 1/4 of them** responded that they had experienced things like being touched inappropriately.

## **Recommendations**

Below are a list of recommendations for area schools, youth service providers, and supportive adults who interact with LGBTQ+ youth in our community. These recommendations were compiled by Odyssey staff and supporters.

### **Support Youth of All Ages**

This survey targeted youth in middle and high school settings, but the stories shared with Odyssey by youth and their families show a need throughout ages and grade levels. LGBTQ+ youth are coming out and expressing themselves at younger ages and need support such as affirming classroom spaces and prepared teachers. Youth who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community do not exist just in high school, but in every community middle and elementary school. It is never too early to create age appropriate LGBTQ+ inclusive spaces.

Interested in bringing Odyssey into your building to train you and your colleagues about best practices when working with LGBTQ+ youth? Contact us at [OdysseyYouth.org](http://OdysseyYouth.org) today!

### **Always Believe LGBTQ+ Youth**

A primary coping mechanism for many young folks is to forget or block out negative experiences. This can be especially true of phobic language and behaviors being used towards them. This means that the teachers, staff, or supportive adults in the room need to be acutely aware of youth interactions and not just rely on student reports before taking any action. Also, be prepared with how you will react to these negative behaviors whether they come from a young person or an adult. Ignoring offensive and hurtful language targeted towards LGBTQ+ youth WILL be noticed.

Take a moment to reflect on your own interactions with young people, do you start by believing them? What's your reaction if an LGBTQ+ young person comes to you with a concern? Do you know someone with whom you could practice intervening?

### **Create Affirming Spaces as Prevention**

Institutions, such as schools, need to change their approach to focus on prevention and not a reactionary system that tries to sweep things under the rug. What can your school do to the physical spaces young people inhabit to be sure that ALL students feel included and affirmed? This includes not just with high school clubs, but the middle school gym, the 4th grade math class, and the library time with the 1st graders. Affirming spaces are not just about rainbows, though everyone loves those, it's about sharing the full story of the lesbian poet you are studying in English or using a variety of relationship pairings when learning Spanish.

Looking to brainstorm ways to make your school or youth focused spaces more inclusive? Start by checking out some of the resources on Odyssey Youth Movement's website at [OdysseyYouth.org](http://OdysseyYouth.org) then give us a call. We're always happy to troubleshoot and brainstorm with motivated and supportive community members.

## **Supporting Youth GSA and Similar Clubs and Activities**

Access to youth-led adult-supported GSA clubs are vital to youth in schools. According to national research young people with GSA clubs in their school express feeling safer even if they don't attend the club. 30% of respondents, from this regional survey, said they didn't know if their schools had a GSA or they believed their school didn't have one. Many youth may want to start a GSA but are unaware of how to go about it, what school policies are for starting a club, and who would be a safe and willing advisor. Utilize existing tools like the on-line GSA Network advisor guidebook. ([gsanetwork.org/resources/advisor-handbook/](http://gsanetwork.org/resources/advisor-handbook/))

Active promotion and participation in days of action and awareness celebrations are important to students feeling seen and heard. There are national and local events throughout the year that schools can participate in and GSAs can lead. This includes Odyssey's Youth Queer Prom, Teen Zone at Spokane Pride, and national events such as those found on-line. ([glsen.org/sites/default/files/school\\_year\\_calendar\\_2019.pdf](http://glsen.org/sites/default/files/school_year_calendar_2019.pdf))

## **Educate Yourself**

A primary example of this involves the words we use to describe people. Language is ever evolving, and the changes are often led by youth and younger generations. Keep yourself and your coworkers apprised of how language is being used by the young people you interact with so that you can properly intervene or offer support. For example, the questions on page 10 of this report use examples of language that is often seen as derogatory based off sexual orientation and gender identity.

When it all comes down to it, you have Google. While this may sound flippant, it's important for allies to do the work of educating ourselves the best we can so that the youth don't have to shoulder that burden for us.

## **Take Step 1 in being an Ally, and Identify a Step 2**

Think of the term Ally as a verb, not a noun. It's not a title you are striving for, it is the actions you take to make all spaces safe and affirming for youth, in this case LGBTQ+ students. There is no step-by-step guide to becoming a "perfect ally" that has to be tailored by you to best fit your community and your role in your school, office, organization. Work to identify what you can do, how you can help your peers, and be sure you're always setting that bar higher. We have high expectations for the young people we work with, and they have the same of us.

## **Share Stories and Lift Up Voices**

The report you just read is just one example of LGBTQ+ young folks sharing their stories and experiences. LGBTQ+ youth are consistently silenced or ignored in our systems when their stories are some of the ones we need to hear most.

What are ways you can showcase young LGBTQ+ voices in your work? In what ways are you already successful at sharing these stories? We'd love to hear from you. Share with us at Odyssey and we may have some additional ideas for you.

**Thank you so much for the work you do to support LGBTQ+ youth.**

To learn more about Odyssey Youth Movement's programs, training workshops and/or Drop-In Center; contact one of our staff.

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While the state of WA is under "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order we are offering digital Drop-In for youth and young adults. Please contact us for hours.



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