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## Ruth Hunt and David Regis

# A survey of homophobic bullying in schools

**H**omophobic bullying is a common aspect of school life, and affects many pupils, regardless of their sexual orientation. Research has been conducted around the extent and effects of homophobic bullying, yet the quantitative evidence for this research has been drawn from lesbian and gay adults talking about their school days. There has been no comprehensive, national survey of lesbian and gay young people at school and their experiences.

Research has been conducted in America, by GLSEN (see below), and the findings of their survey have been used to help demonstrate a need to develop policies to tackle the problem. The survey has provided a means to better assess the needs and experiences of young lesbian and gay people.

There has been no equivalent research in Great Britain. Stonewall therefore is conducting a national survey into the incidence of homophobic bullying in schools in order to shape policy developments to tackle the issue.

### How the survey looks

The survey, which is currently in draft form, has five sections, and 50 questions.

Section 1 asks for background information, including region, gender, age,

sexual orientation, type of school, year group, and grades achieved.

Section 2 asks about information about the respondent and whether they strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree or strongly disagree with a series of statements about school climate.

Section 3 asks about the school in general. It asks whether the school has an explicit anti-homophobia bullying policy, and so on.

Section 4 asks about bullying.

Section 5 asks for equal opportunities information, including ethnicity, disability status, and religion or belief of respondents.

The survey is principally available online but there is also a paper version available. The survey can be accessed at the website [www.speakoutonline.org.uk](http://www.speakoutonline.org.uk) and the survey itself sits on one of SHEU's survey websites.

The questions have been translated into Welsh, and respondents given an option about which language they want to answer in.

### The sample

We would like young people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or not sure about their sexuality to complete this survey whether they have been bullied or not. If everyone

who has not been bullied skips the survey, then our answers will not be so representative; we do recognise that this will be a bias to this part of the research, but this is not the only research we plan to do.

### The launch

The survey was launched on Thursday 1st June through press releases, postcards, e-mails and items in magazines.

We would welcome further publicity for the survey, so that as many young people as possible know about it; this article is part of it. Please photocopy this article if you want to.

### What's next?

What's next for this study is:

~ We will write a report of what we found and its policy implications.

~ A copy of the report will be made available on the Stonewall and SHEU websites

~ We will send a summary of the research to journalists in mainstream and "pink" media.

~ We will follow up with campaigning and more research about the issue, depending on what we find

## USA National School Climate Survey Sheds New Light on Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students

In April 2006, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, or GLSEN, announced findings from the 2005 USA National School Climate Survey (NSCS), the only national survey to document the experiences of students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) in America's schools.

"The 2005 National School Climate Survey reveals that anti-LGBT bullying and harassment remain commonplace in America's schools," said GLSEN Founder and Executive Director Kevin Jennings. "On the positive side, it also makes clear that inclusive policies, supportive school staff and student clubs, like Gay-Straight

Alliances, all relate to reduced harassment and higher achieving students."

Some of the findings of the 2005 survey include:

- 75.4% of students heard derogatory remarks such as "faggot" or "dyke" frequently or often at school, and nearly nine out of ten (89.2%) reported hearing "that's so gay" or "you're so gay" - meaning stupid or worthless- frequently or often.
- Over a third (37.8%) of students experienced physical harassment at school on the basis of sexual orientation and more than a quarter (26.1%) on the basis of their gender expression. Nearly one-fifth (17.6%) of students had been physically assaulted

because of their sexual orientation and over a tenth (11.8%) because of their gender expression.

- ♦ LGBT students were five times more likely to report having skipped school in the last month because of safety concerns than the general population of students.
- ♦ LGBT students who experience more frequent physical harassment were more likely to report they did not plan to go to college. Overall, LGBT students were twice as likely as the general population of students to report they were not planning to pursue any post-secondary education.

For more details visit:  
[www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/news/record/1927.html](http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/news/record/1927.html)