



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Education  
Sector

# Bringing it out in the open

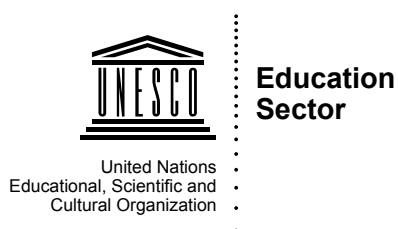
Monitoring school violence based on sexual orientation,  
gender identity or gender expression in national  
and international surveys

Technical brief  
March 2019

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## UNESCO Education Sector

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation on which to build peace and drive sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education and the Education Sector provides global and regional leadership in education, strengthens national education systems and responds to contemporary global challenges through education with a special focus on gender equality and Africa.



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# Bringing it out in the open

Monitoring school violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression in national and international surveys

## 1. What is this technical brief?

This technical brief has been developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to strengthen the routine monitoring of school violence that is based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression (SOGIE). It is informed by best practice from large institutional surveys that have been successfully conducted at the international or national level. The Brief provides recommendations on:

- Questions to capture data on the sexual orientation or gender identity of students.
- Questions to capture data on school violence that is specifically based on SOGIE.

The Brief also gives guidance on:

- The challenges in collecting data on school violence based on SOGIE
- Identifying and fulfilling indicators on school violence based on SOGIE

The audience for this technical brief is: monitoring and evaluation specialists who manage institutional surveys at the international or national level (including school-based and population-based studies); policy-makers in the education sector; and researchers who investigate school violence, including against young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people and students who are perceived as gender non-conforming.

## 2. What is school violence based on SOGIE and why does it matter?

Across the world, an estimated 246 million boys and girls experience school violence every year (UNESCO, 2017). A study of 19 low and middle-income countries found that, while 34% of students aged 11–13 had been bullied in the past twelve months, 8% had been bullied every day (Fleming & Jacobsen, 2010).

School violence, including bullying, has many negative impacts. These include on academic performance, physical and mental health, and emotional well-being – not only of the student who is targeted, but of the bystanders and the perpetrators themselves. Such violence abuses the rights of children and adolescents, including to education and health. It has long-term effects that persist into adult life, as well as wider social and economic costs. (UNESCO, 2017)

All forms of school violence are a barrier to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4's target of 'safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all'.

### What is school violence?

*School violence refers to physical, psychological and sexual violence and bullying. It takes place inside or outside of the classroom, around schools, on the way to or from school, as well as online. School violence is experienced by students. It can be perpetrated by students, teachers or other school staff.*

All students are at risk of school violence. However, some are particularly vulnerable. This is due to a range of factors, such as social status, poverty, ethnicity, linguistic or cultural differences, migration or displacement, and disability (Devries, et al., 2014). According to evidence, a further reason is gender expression – how students look and behave in terms of their gender. Those who are perceived as gender non-conforming (such as boys categorized as ‘effeminate’ or girls categorized as ‘masculine’) are often more exposed to school violence than those that fit into binary norms of male and female, and stereotypes of masculinity and femininity (UNESCO, 2015).

Students who experience particular vulnerability due to their gender expression include those who are:

- **Lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB)** - with a sexual orientation that is not heterosexual.
- **Transgender (T)** - with a gender identity that is different from the sex they were assigned at birth.

School violence that targets LGBT students and other students perceived as gender non-conforming is defined as school violence based on SOGIE. Another group of students who may also experience school violence are those who are intersex, with sex characteristics that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies.

The following box provides definitions of key terms.

## Key terms about school violence based on SOGIE

### Terms about school violence:

**Bullying:** Negative physical or verbal actions that have hostile intent, cause distress to victims, are repeated over time, and involve a power differential between bullies and their victims. It is not bullying when two people of about the same strength or power argue or fight or tease each other in a friendly way.

### Terms about sexual orientation:

**Bisexual:** A person who is sexually attracted to both men and women.

**Gay:** A person who experiences sexual attraction to, and capacity for intimate relationships primarily with, people of the same sex. Often refers to males only.

**Heterosexual:** A person who is emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex.

**Lesbian:** A female who experiences sexual attraction to, and capacity for intimate relationships primarily with, other females.

**Sexual orientation:** 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.

### Terms about gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics:

**Gender expression:** How people express their own gender to the world, such as through names, clothes, how they walk, speak, communicate, societal roles and their general behaviour.

**Gender identity:** 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.

**Intersex:** People with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads and chromosome patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies.

**Sex characteristics:** Each person's physical features relating to sex, including genitalia and other sexual and reproductive anatomy, chromosomes, hormones and secondary physical features emerging from puberty.

**Transgender:** A person whose gender identity differs from their sex at birth. Transgender people may be male-to-female (female identity and appearance); female-to-male (male identity and appearance); or genderqueer (non-binary, fluid or variable gender expression). Transgender is an umbrella term that includes transsexuals (who undergo surgery and hormonal treatment) and transvestites (who sometimes wear clothes associated with another gender).

Evidence from all regions in the world shows that a significant proportion of gender non-conforming students experience school violence based on SOGIE. Furthermore, surveys have found that LGBTI students report a *higher* level of violence than their non-LGBTI peers (UNESCO, 2016).

In practice, however, very few countries routinely collect data on school violence based on SOGIE. This means that, in many contexts, policy-makers are unaware of the existence or scale of this type of violence. Even where reporting mechanisms are available, students who experience violence based on SOGIE may under-report incidents, due to fear of being stigmatized or bullied even more. This vicious circle contributes to a lack of visibility of LGBTI students and the violence they face.

The absence of monitoring of school violence based on SOGIE is due a number of factors. These can include a lack interest in, or even denial of, the issue by a country's education sector. This may reflect the sector's fear of negative reactions from families and elements of society, especially in contexts where consensual same-sex relationships between adults are criminalized. Currently, the scarcity of data prevents an accurate picture of the prevalence, nature and impact of school violence based on SOGIE at national, regional and global levels. As a result, SOGIE issues are often ignored as drivers of violence, such as within education authorities' local and national policies on anti-school violence.

In countries where data on school violence based on SOGIE does exist, it has often been collected by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), particularly ones that support LGBTI people. While such studies provide useful additional information, in the long-term, the education sector cannot rely on them - as they can be costly and unsustainable, particularly in low and middle-income countries. As such, it is recommended that data on violence based on SOGIE should be collected within existing international and national surveys that address school violence and that are managed by governments and recognized institutions. Such an approach has the benefit of measurement that is consistent and conducted over time.

### 3. Which international surveys collect data on school violence?

Some international (multi-country) surveys already include questions that address the school environment and, more specifically, the subject of violence. Such surveys are usually developed by international institutions and conducted in collaboration with the education and/or health authorities of the countries concerned. The surveys can be divided into three groups:

- **Group A: School-based surveys assessing health-related behaviors and outcomes**
- **Group B: School-based surveys assessing learning outcomes**
- **Group C: Population-based surveys**

Examples of these groups are provided in the following chart, with a summary of each survey's management, frequency, age range and geographical coverage. It should be noted that, among the surveys, key terms (including 'violence') are defined in different ways, while similar questions are worded differently. As such, comparing data across the surveys – and, in turn, across countries - can be challenging. Also, in surveys such as the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) and Health Behavior in School-aged Children study (HBSC), countries can chose to opt out of questions that are non-mandatory.

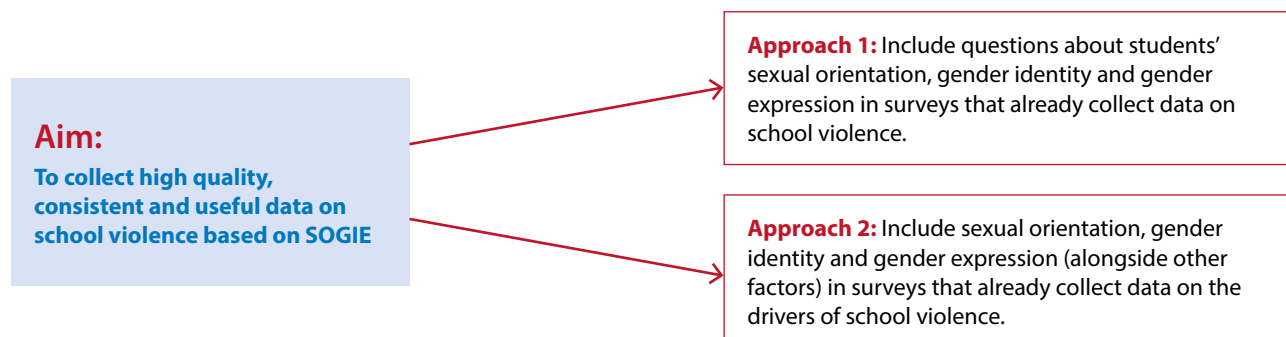
Finally, it is important to consider that, alongside international surveys, some countries collect their own data on school violence at the national and/or sub-national level. Such processes are conducted through institutional school-based surveys, such as the Annual School Censuses managed by Education Management Information Systems (EMIS).

## International surveys that collect data on school violence

Survey	Institution managing survey	Frequency of data collection on school violence	Age range of survey	Countries/regions where data collected on school violence
<b>Group A: School-based surveys assessing health-related behaviors and outcomes</b>				
<b>Global school-based student health survey (GSHS)</b>	World Health Organization (WHO)	Since 2003; survey conducted every 3-5 years (for most countries)	13-17 year olds	96 countries and territories across all regions except Europe and North America
<b>Health behavior in school-aged children study (HBSC)</b>	HBSC Consortium	Since 1983; survey conducted every 4 years; next survey in 2021-22	11, 13 and 15 year olds	48 countries and territories in Europe, plus Israel, and North America
<b>Group B: School-based surveys assessing learning outcomes</b>				
<b>Estudio regional comparativo y explicativo (ERCE) (Regional comparative and explanatory study)</b>	Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE)/UNESCO	Since 2008; survey conducted in 2008 and 2013; next survey in 2019	8-9 year olds (Grade 3) and 11-12 year olds (Grade 6)	16 countries in Latin America
<b>International civic and citizenship study (ICCS)</b>	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)	Since 2016; survey conducted in 2016; next survey in 2022	Average 13.5 year olds (Grade 8 or 9)	24 countries and territories in Asia, Europe and Latin America
<b>Progress in international reading literacy study (PIRLS)</b>	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)	Since 2001; survey conducted every 5 years; next survey in 2021	9-10 year olds (Grade 4)	65 countries across all regions
<b>Programme for international students assessment (PISA)</b>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	Since 2015; conducted every 3 years; next survey in 2021	15 year olds	72 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America
<b>Trends in mathematics and science study (TIMSS)</b>	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)	Since 1999; conducted every 4 years; next survey in 2019	9-10 year olds (Grade 4) and 13-14 year olds (Grade 8)	77 countries and territories across all regions, with the majority in Europe
<b>Group C: Population-based surveys</b>				
<b>Demographic and health survey (DHS)</b>	ICF International. Contributions from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), WHO and United Nations Programme on AIDS (UNAIDS). Funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID)	Since DHS Phase 5 (2003-2008); conducted every 4 years	15-49 year olds	Over 90 countries and territories

## 4. How can you collect data on school violence based on SOGIE in surveys?

There are two approaches to collecting data on school violence based on SOGIE in international and national surveys:



These approaches can be used separately or together. Both have already been successfully integrated into some large surveys in several countries. Approach 1 was used for the first time by the GSHS in 2018.

The following pages provide guidance on how to adapt existing surveys by using Approach 1 or 2, or both, based on the best practices developed to date.

### Approach 1: Include questions about students' sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression in surveys that already collect data on school violence

Currently, in most international surveys that address school violence, questions about the sex of the respondents are binary. Students are asked if they are 'male' or 'female', with no other options. This means that the resulting data can only be disaggregated and analyzed according to two categories: 'boys' and 'girls'. It also implies two assumptions. Firstly, that a student's sex and gender match (while, in fact, some may feel that their gender identity does not correspond with the sex that they were assigned at birth). Secondly, that all boys and girls are heterosexual (if additional questions are not asked about their sexual orientation).

Including questions about students' SOGIE status in surveys that collect data on school violence provides a fuller picture. It allows triangulation – by comparing the resulting data against the answers to questions about violence.

The following pages give information on:

- How can you ask questions about students' sexual orientation?
- How can you ask questions about students' gender identity?

### How can you ask questions about students' sexual orientation?

In best practice research involving children and adolescents under 18, sexual orientation is often captured using a multi-item measure (Patterson, Jabson, & Bowen, 2017). This involves asking questions about two or more of the following three dimensions:

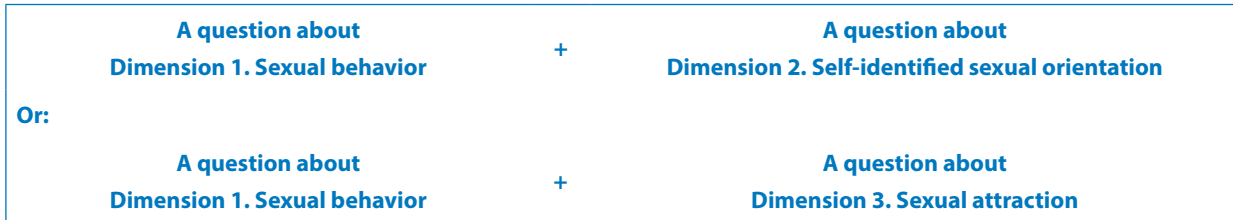
**Dimension 1. Sexual behavior:** This addresses the sex of a student's sexual partners, such as through a question about whether students have recently had sexual contact with males, females, or both males and females.

**Dimension 2. Self-identified sexual orientation:** This addresses how a student identifies their sexual orientation, such as in terms of being gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual.

**Dimension 3. Sexual attraction:** This addresses the sex of individuals that a student feels attracted to or fantasizes about.

It is well understood that people who feel same-sex attraction, particularly adolescents, may not engage in sexual activity with partners of the same sex at all or exclusively. Conversely, people who identify as heterosexual or bisexual may sometimes primarily or solely have sexual relations with people of the same sex. As such, it is necessary to ask questions about at least two of the three dimensions listed, by using the following combinations:

### Combinations of questions to address sexual orientation



The following pages give examples of best practice questions about the three dimensions, taken from a range of surveys. Those involved in the design and management of studies can use or adapt the examples that suit them best, depending on their needs and context.

It should be noted that the terminology used in these type of questions – such as gay, lesbian, bisexual and straight/heterosexual – applies to most people in Western cultural settings. However, some young people prefer other labels, such as ‘queer’ or ‘questioning’<sup>1</sup>. Also, terms can mean different things in different contexts. For example, in some countries, ‘gay’ refers only to receptive male partners involved in same-sex sexual contact. Therefore, it is important to verify that the terminology used is appropriate for both the specific target group and the specific setting.

The following are two examples of best practice questions about **Dimension 1. Sexual behavior**:

Example 1:	
<b>Question:</b>	<p><b>During your life, with whom have you had sexual contact?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I have never had sexual contact</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Females</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Males</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Females and males</p>
<b>Source:</b>	<p><b>Youth risk behavior surveillance system</b></p> <p><b>Type:</b> School-based survey. <b>Country:</b> USA. <b>Population:</b> Public and private school students. <b>Age:</b> 14-18 year olds (Grades 9-12). <b>Sample size:</b> Varies.</p> <p><b>Further information:</b> <a href="http://cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs">http://cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs</a></p> <p><b>Global school-based student health survey</b></p> <p><b>Type:</b> School-based survey. <b>Country:</b> Global. <b>Population:</b> Adolescents. <b>Age:</b> 13-17 year olds. <b>Sample size:</b> Unknown. <b>Frequency:</b> From 2018.</p> <p><b>Further information:</b> <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/GSHS/">https://www.cdc.gov/GSHS/</a></p>

<sup>1</sup> ‘Queer’ is a reclaimed word that can be used as an umbrella term for a range of sexual identities including LGBTI or gender questioning. It is also used by some people who do not want to label themselves. ‘Questioning’ is a person who is interrogating their sexual orientation or gender identity.



Example 2:	
<b>Question:</b>	<p><b>During your life, the person(s) with whom you have had sexual contact (however you define it) is (are):</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I have not had sexual contact with anyone</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Female(s)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Males(s)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Female(s) and male(s)</p>
<b>Source:</b>	<p><b>Growing up today study 2</b></p> <p><b>Type:</b> Population-based survey. <b>Country:</b> USA. <b>Population:</b> Children of Nurses' Health Study participants. <b>Age:</b> 10-17 year olds (2004). <b>Sample size:</b> 10,900. <b>Frequency:</b> Annually since 2004.</p> <p><b>Further information:</b> <a href="http://www.gutsweb.org">www.gutsweb.org</a></p>

### Issues to consider for questions about sexual behavior

- Questions should ask about sexual contact (which does not necessarily involve intercourse).
- To make it more explicit what sexual contact refers to, it can be useful to add a definition or examples, such as 'sexual kissing', 'sexual touching' or 'oral or genital sex'.
- Questions should only address sexual contact that is voluntary.
- Where possible, questions should be adapted to the specific age of respondents, such as noting that younger members of a 'children and adolescents' range may be less likely to have had sexual contact.

The following are six examples of best practice questions about **Dimension 2. Sexual orientation:**

It is important to note that it is possible to ask children to identify their sexual orientation in a survey, as evidence shows that people may be able to identify this by 10 years of age.

Example 1:	
<b>Question:</b>	<p><b>Which of the following do you consider yourself to be?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual, that is, straight</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian or gay</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual</p>
<b>Source:</b>	<p><b>National survey on drug use and health</b></p> <p><b>Type:</b> Population-based survey. <b>Country:</b> USA. <b>Population:</b> Non-institutionalized U.S. residents.<sup>2</sup> <b>Age:</b> &gt;12 year olds. <b>Sample size:</b> 70,000. <b>Frequency:</b> Since 1971.</p> <p><b>Further information:</b> <a href="https://www.samhsa.gov/data/data-we-collect/nsduh-national-survey-drug-use-and-health">https://www.samhsa.gov/data/data-we-collect/nsduh-national-survey-drug-use-and-health</a></p>

Example 2:	
<b>Question:</b>	<p><b>Which of the following best describes you?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual (straight) or [country specific term]</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Gay or lesbian or [country specific term]</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual or [country specific term]</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not sure</p>
<b>Source:</b>	<p><b>Global school-based student health survey – core expanded questions for module on sexual behaviors that contribute to HIV infection, other STI and unintended pregnancy</b></p> <p><b>Type:</b> School-based survey. <b>Country:</b> Global. <b>Population:</b> Adolescents. <b>Age:</b> 13-17 year olds. <b>Sample size:</b> Unknown. <b>Frequency:</b> From 2018.</p> <p><b>Further information:</b> <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/GSHS/">https://www.cdc.gov/GSHS/</a></p>

2 The survey does not include people who are homeless or do not use shelters, military personnel on active duty, or residents of institutional group quarters, such as jails and hospitals.

Example 3:	
<b>Question:</b>	<p><b>Do you consider yourself to be ... ?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual (sexual relations with people of the opposite sex)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Homosexual, that is, lesbian or gay (sexual relations with people of your own sex)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual (sexual relations with people of both sexes)</p>
<b>Source:</b>	<p><b>Canadian community health survey</b></p> <p><b>Type:</b> Population-based survey. <b>Country:</b> Canada. <b>Population:</b> Non-institutionalized Canadian residents.<sup>3</sup> <b>Age:</b> &gt;12 year olds. <b>Sample size:</b> 65,000. <b>Frequency:</b> Biennially 1991–2007 and annually from 2008.</p> <p><b>Further information:</b> <a href="http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&amp;SDDS=3226">http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&amp;SDDS=3226</a></p>

Example 4:	
<b>Question:</b>	<p><b>Which of the following best describes you?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual (straight)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Gay or lesbian</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not sure</p>
<b>Source:</b>	<p><b>Youth risk behavior surveillance system</b></p> <p><b>Type:</b> School-based survey. <b>Country:</b> USA. <b>Population:</b> Public and private school students. <b>Age:</b> 14–18 year olds (Grades 9–12). <b>Sample size:</b> Varies.</p> <p><b>Further information:</b> <a href="http://cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs">http://cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs</a></p>

Example 5:	
<b>Question:</b>	<p><b>Which of the following best describes your feelings?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Completely heterosexual (attracted to persons of the opposite sex)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mostly heterosexual</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual (equally attracted to men and women)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mostly homosexual</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Completely homosexual (gay/lesbian, attracted to persons of the same sex)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not sure</p>
<b>Source:</b>	<p><b>Growing up today study</b></p> <p><b>Type:</b> Population-based survey. <b>Country:</b> USA. <b>Population:</b> Children of Nurses’ Health Study participants. <b>Age:</b> 9–14 year olds (1996) and 10–17 years (2004). <b>Sample size:</b> 16,700 (Growing Up Today Study) and 10,900 (Growing Up Today Study 2). <b>Frequency:</b> Annually since 1996.</p> <p><b>Further information:</b> <a href="http://www.gutsweb.org">www.gutsweb.org</a></p>

Example 6:	
<b>Question:</b>	<p><b>Choose the description that best fits how you think about yourself:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 100% heterosexual (straight)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mostly heterosexual (straight), but somewhat attracted to people of your own sex</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual that is attracted to men and women equally</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mostly homosexual (gay), but somewhat attracted to people of the opposite sex</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 100% homosexual (gay)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not sexually attracted to males or females</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not sure</p>
<b>Source:</b>	<p><b>National longitudinal study of adolescent to adult health</b></p> <p><b>Type:</b> School-based survey. <b>Country:</b> USA.</p> <p><b>Population:</b> In-school adolescents. <b>Age:</b> 12–18 year olds (Grades 7–12). <b>Sample size:</b> 14,400. <b>Frequency:</b> 1994–2008 (longitudinal).</p> <p><b>Further information:</b> <a href="http://cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth">http://cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth</a></p>

3 The survey does not include persons living on reserves and other Aboriginal settlements; full-time members of the Canadian Forces; the institutionalized population, children aged 12–17 that are living in foster care, and persons living in two health regions of Quebec.

### Issues to consider for questions about sexual orientation

- In national surveys, it can be important to include local, culturally appropriate words for a person’s sexual orientation, alongside Western terms.
- Additional information – such as to describe the meaning of terms such as ‘bisexual’ – can help ensure that terminology about sexual orientation is understandable to respondents.
- Using two synonyms (words with the same meaning) – such as ‘homosexual’ and ‘gay’ - in the same question can help to ensure that students fully understand the question. This is particularly the case as, in many settings, ‘homosexual’ is no longer used by young people who, instead, are only familiar with the term ‘gay’.
- It can be especially important to include a ‘not sure’ option in surveys for children and young people, as they may currently be questioning their sexual orientation.
- Using qualifying terms – such as ‘completely’, ‘mostly’ or ‘100%’ – can be a useful way to provide different options to students who are unclear about their sexual orientation. However, this needs to be balanced with not overwhelming respondents with terminology, especially if they already find the language around sexual orientation complex.

The following is one example of a best practice question for **Dimension 3. Sexual attraction**:

Sexual attraction is an important subject when studying children, as they may not yet have had sexual contact and, as such, cannot respond to questions about their sexual behaviour. For example, someone can know that they are attracted to people of the same sex, even if they have not had experience of such relations.

Asking children and adolescents about their sexual attraction – rather than their sexual orientation – can be more relevant, as some may not yet be able to define their sexual orientation.

Example 1:	
<b>Question:</b>	<p><b>Who are you sexually attracted to...?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The opposite sex (e.g. I am a male attracted to females or I am a female attracted to males)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The same sex (e.g. I am a male attracted to males or I am a female attracted to females)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Both sexes (e.g. I am attracted to males and females)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I’m not sure</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Neither</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I don’t understand this question</p>
<b>Source:</b>	<p><b>Youth 2000</b></p> <p><b>Type:</b> School-based survey. <b>Country:</b> New Zealand. <b>Population:</b> Students from secondary schools randomly selected throughout the country. <b>Age:</b> 9-13 year olds. <b>Sample size:</b> 28,000. <b>Frequency:</b> Conducted 2001, 2008 and 2012.</p> <p><b>Further information:</b> <a href="http://www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/en/faculty/adolescent-health-research-group/youth2000-national-youth-health-survey-series.html">www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/en/faculty/adolescent-health-research-group/youth2000-national-youth-health-survey-series.html</a></p>

### Issues to consider for questions about sexual attraction

- Asking children or adolescents about their sexual attraction - rather than their sexual orientation - can be more relevant, as some may not yet be able to define their sexual orientation.
- Adding explanatory text - such as ‘e.g. I am a male attracted to males or I am a female attracted to females’ - can help respondents to understand exactly what is meant by sexual attraction and the different options offered.
- It is especially important to provide options such as ‘I’m not sure’ for younger respondents who may not yet be clear or confident enough to identify the type of people they are sexually attracted to.

## How can you ask questions about students' gender identity?

As yet, no large-scale surveys have managed to address the gender expression of respondents. As such, this section of the technical brief only looks at gender identity.

To date, very few large-scale surveys that address school violence have incorporated attention to the gender identity of respondents. Those that have done so have taken different approaches. For example, below, Example 1 gives respondents a range of gender identity options. Meanwhile, Example 2 specifically asks respondents whether or not they self-identify as transgender.

The following are two examples of best practice questions about **gender identity**.

Example 1:	
<b>Question:</b>	<p><b>How do you describe yourself? (Mark one answer)</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Female</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Male</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Transgender</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do not identify as female, male or transgender</p>
<b>Source:</b>	<p><b>Growing up today study</b></p> <p><b>Type:</b> Population-based survey. <b>Country:</b> USA. <b>Population:</b> Children of Nurses' Health Study participants. <b>Age:</b> 9-14 year olds in 1996 and 10-17 year olds in 2004. <b>Sample size:</b> 16,700 (Growing Up Today Study) and 10,900 (Growing Up Today Study 2). <b>Frequency:</b> Annually since 1996.</p> <p><b>Further information:</b> <a href="http://www.gutsweb.org">www.gutsweb.org</a></p>

Example 2:	
<b>Question:</b>	<p><b>Do you think you are transgender? This is a girl who feels like she should have been a boy, or a boy who feels like he should have been a girl. (e.g. Trans, Queen, Fa'faffine, Whakawahine, Tangata ira Tane, Genderqueer)</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I'm not sure</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I don't understand this question</p>
<b>Source:</b>	<p><b>Youth 2000</b></p> <p><b>Type:</b> School-based survey. <b>Country:</b> New Zealand. <b>Population:</b> Secondary school students from schools randomly selected throughout the country. <b>Age:</b> 9-13 year olds. <b>Sample size:</b> 28,000. <b>Frequency:</b> Conducted 2001, 2008 and 2012.</p> <p><b>Further information:</b> <a href="http://www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/en/faculty/adolescent-health-research-group/youth2000-national-youth-health-survey-series.html">www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/en/faculty/adolescent-health-research-group/youth2000-national-youth-health-survey-series.html</a></p>

### Issues to consider for questions about gender identity

- It is important to remember that all students have a gender identity, not just those who are transgender.
- In national surveys, it can be important to include local, culturally appropriate words for a person's gender identity, alongside Western terms.

**Approach 2: Include sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression (alongside other factors) in surveys that already collect data on the drivers of school violence**

As yet, no large-scale surveys that address school violence have included questions that list gender expression as a factor that can cause such violence. However, specific questions about gender identity and/or sexual orientation have been included in a number of studies in individual countries.

The following are two examples of best practice questions about **sexual orientation and gender identity as drivers of school violence**:

Example 1:	
<b>Question:</b>	<p><b>In the last 12 months, have you felt maltreated or discriminated because of any of the following reasons?</b></p> <p>a. For being a man or a woman <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>b. <b>Because of your gender identity or sexual orientation, like gay, lesbian or other</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>c. Because of your age, being too young <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>d. Because of your parent’s nationality <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>e. Because of the way you dress or your style <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>f. Because of your skin color or origin <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>g. Because of your body or physical appearance <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>h. Because of your socioeconomic status <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>i. Because of the place where you live <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>j. Because of your religion <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>k. Because of health issues or handicap status <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<b>Source:</b>	<p><b>First survey of human development in children, girls and teenagers</b></p> <p><b>Type:</b> School-based survey. <b>Country:</b> Chile. <b>Population:</b> Students enrolled in schools from all regions of the national territory. <b>Age:</b> Grades 3-7. <b>Sample size:</b> 3,073 children and adolescents in 272 schools. <b>Frequency:</b> 2017.</p> <p><b>Further information:</b> <a href="http://www.cl.undp.org/content/dam/chile/docs/desarrollohumano%20no/undp_cl_desarrollohumano_Encuesta%20Desarrollo%20Humano%20en%20NNA%20(v.09.03.18).pdf">http://www.cl.undp.org/content/dam/chile/docs/desarrollohumano no/undp_cl_desarrollohumano_ Encuesta Desarrollo Humano en NNA (v.09.03.18).pdf</a></p>

Example 2:	
<b>Questions:</b>	<p><b>When you were bullied in school this year, did you ever think it was related to ...</b></p> <p>a. Your race? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>b. Your religion? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>c. Your ethnic background or national origin – for example, people of Hispanic origin? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>d. Any disability you may have – such as physical, mental or developmental disabilities? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>e. Your gender? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>f. <b>Your sexual orientation – by this we mean gay, lesbian, bisexual or straight?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>g. Your physical appearance? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><b>During this school year, has anyone called you an insulting or bad name at school having to do with your race, religion, ethnic background or national origin, disability, gender, or sexual orientation? We call these hate-related words. Were any of the hate-related words related to ...</b></p> <p>a. Your race? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>b. Your religion? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>c. Your ethnic background or national origin - for example, people of Hispanic origin? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>d. Any disability you may have – such as physical, mental or developmental disabilities? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>e. Your gender? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>f. <b>Your sexual orientation - by this we mean gay, lesbian, bisexual or straight?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<b>Source:</b>	<p><b>School crime supplement to the national crime victimization survey 2015</b></p> <p><b>Type:</b> School-based survey. <b>Country:</b> USA. <b>Population:</b> National sample of students in public and private elementary, middle and high schools. <b>Age:</b> 12-18 year olds. <b>Sample size:</b> 6,500. <b>Frequency:</b> 2015.</p> <p><b>Further information:</b> <a href="https://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth">https://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth</a></p>

The following two questions are taken from two large-scale surveys (the GSHS and HBSC) and do not currently consider SOGIE. The questions are provided here as examples of ones that could be adapted to do so.

Both Example 3 and Example 4 identify ‘sexual jokes, comments or gestures’ – something that could be linked to SOGIE – as a specific form of bullying. Indeed, such practices are often related to a student’s perceived gender non-conformity, particularly boys who are seen as ‘effeminate’. However, currently the formulation is too generic to be able to identify how much of these sexual jokes, comments or gestures are specifically related to SOGIE.

Meanwhile, Example 3 also identifies ‘how my body or face looks’ (physical appearance) as a possible driver of bullying. This could be linked to the gender non-conforming physical appearance of a student that, in turn, might be associated with their perceived or actual sexual orientation or non-conforming gender identity. Again the way the item is expressed is very broad to capture how much bullying based on the physical appearance of students could be related to SOGIE.

Such questions could be strengthened to collect more explicit data.

Example 3:	
<b>Question</b>	<p><b>During the past 12 months, how were you bullied face-to-face most often?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. I was not bullied face-to-face during the past 12 months</li> <li>b. I was hit, kicked, pushed, shoved around or locked indoors</li> <li>c. I was made fun of because of my race, nationality or color</li> <li>d. I was made fun of because of my religion</li> <li><b>e. I was made fun of with sexual jokes, comments or gestures</b></li> <li>f. I was left out of activities on purpose or completely ignored</li> <li><b>g. I was made fun of because of how my body or face looks</b></li> <li>h. I was bullied face-to-face in some other way</li> </ul>
<b>Source:</b>	<p><b>Global school-based student health survey – core expanded questions for the module on sexual behaviours that contribute to hiv infection, other STIs and unintended pregnancy</b></p> <p><b>Type:</b> School-based survey. <b>Country:</b> Global. <b>Population:</b> Adolescents. <b>Age:</b> 13-17 year olds. <b>Sample size:</b> Unknown. <b>Frequency:</b> 2018.</p> <p><b>Further information:</b> <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/GSHS/">https://www.cdc.gov/GSHS/</a></p>

Example 4:	
<b>Question:</b>	<p><b>How often have you been bullied at school in the past couple of months in the ways listed below?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. I was called mean names, was made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way</li> <li>b. Other students left me out of things on purpose, excluded me from their group of friends, or completely ignored me</li> <li>c. I was hit, kicked, pushed, shoved around, or locked indoors</li> <li>d. Other students told lies or spread false rumors about me and tried to make others dislike me</li> <li>e. I was bullied with mean names or comments about my race or color</li> <li>f. I was bullied with mean names or comments about my religion</li> <li><b>g. Other students made sexual jokes or gestures to me</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Responses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have not been bullied in this way in the past couple of months</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Only once or twice</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 2 or 3 times</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> About once a week</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Several times a week</li> </ul>
<b>Source:</b>	<p><b>Health behaviour in school-aged children survey 2014 optional package – violence and injury prevention</b></p> <p><b>Type:</b> School-based survey. <b>Country:</b> International. <b>Population:</b> Students. <b>Age:</b> 11, 13 and 15 year olds. <b>Frequency:</b> 2014.</p> <p><b>Further information:</b> <a href="http://www.hbsc.org/about/">http://www.hbsc.org/about/</a></p>

## Issues to consider for questions about sexual orientation and gender identity as drivers of school violence

- It is important to list ‘sexual orientation’ and ‘gender identity’ as separate drivers of school violence, as they refer to different things. This will help to produce data that, for example, identifies whether, within a specific culture or context, violence is higher for one than the other.

### Collecting data on intersex students

Due to the very small number of students who are intersex, it is highly challenging to collect meaningful data on school violence affecting such children in large surveys. However, important qualitative studies can be conducted on this topic.

It should be noted that some countries have started to collect information about intersex people in some surveys. In Australia, for example, Intersex Human Rights Australia (IHRA) recommends using non-binary options – such as ‘X’ or ‘non-binary’ – rather than intersex in survey questions about a person’s sex or gender (Intersex Human Rights Australia, 2012). As intersex people have diverse classifications and identities, ‘X’ is used in the Australian Commonwealth Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender (Australian Government, 2013). Such an approach offers recognition to anyone with a non-binary gender identity or sex characteristics.

## 5. What are the challenges in collecting data on school violence based on SOGIE?

There are a number of methodological and ethical challenges to designing and implementing international and national surveys that collect data on school violence based on SOGIE. Three examples are:

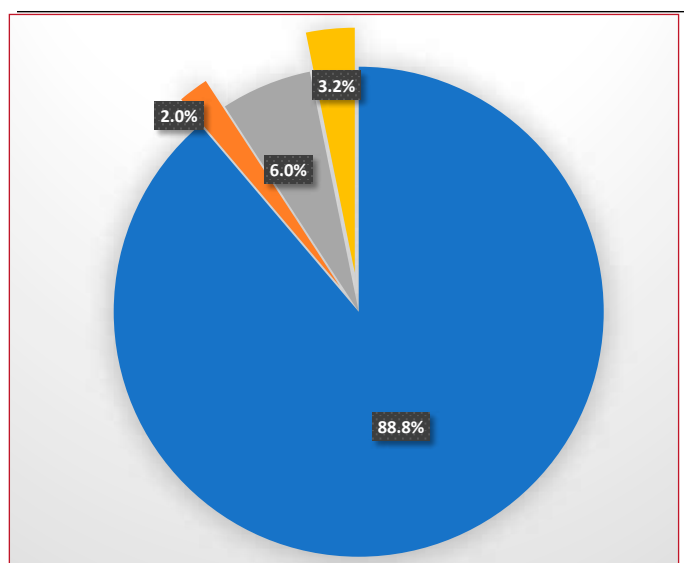
### Challenge 1: Terminology

Terms related to SOGIE and LGBTI people vary between regions and countries, and must be used appropriately depending on the context. It is also important, however, to use terminology that is accurate and in accordance with international good practice. Institutions that manage surveys at the international and national levels should choose the questions and terminology that are the most relevant for the purpose of the survey that they plan to conduct.

### Challenge 2: Sampling

Sampling is a critical issue, especially as LGBTI students risk being perceived as a ‘minority’ population that is too small to provide statistically valid data when designing nationally representative samples of students. In practice, several examples prove that large surveys can collect useful data on A first example is provided by the 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBS), conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the USA. This used a three-stage cluster sample design to identify a nationally representative sample of students in Grades 9–12 at public and private schools. This found that, by combining students that identified as gay or lesbian into one subgroup (‘gay or lesbian’), the resulting proportion of the respondents (2.0%) could be statistically analyzed, together with a subgroup of ‘bisexual’ respondents representing 6.0% of the population surveyed, both against the majority group (‘heterosexual’) and another subgroup self-identified as ‘not sure’ (3.2%) (Kann, et al., 2016).

Data on students’ self-identified sexual orientation – YRBS, USA



Source: Charts created by the authors based on data extracted from Kann, et al., 2016

The YRBS data provided the USA's first-ever national estimate of the percentage of students who identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual: 8.0%. While the proportion of self-identified LGB students may vary across countries and contexts, this figure shows that the size of this population is big enough to allow statistical analyses.

A further example is provided by the Youth2000 survey in New Zealand. This is conducted among 9-13 year olds and, since 2012, has included a question about whether students self-identify as transgender. The sample for the most recent survey (2012) involved students being randomly selected from 91 schools that, in turn, were randomly selected from all eligible schools (those with at least 50 students) from across the country. The resulting sample - of 8,500 respondents – proved large and representative enough for the implementers to find that 1.2% of students identify as transgender – a figure that is significant enough to enable statistical comparisons (Clark, et al., 2013).

### Challenge 3: Law and ethics

There are potential legal and ethical issues involved in collecting data from children and adolescents under 18 years, especially in relation to violence. For example, asking respondents about violence that they have experienced or witnessed can be traumatic.

The existing surveys that collect data on school violence, referred to in this technical brief, have already established well-designed and tested methodologies, protocols and guidelines to address these challenges. Informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality are among the key requirements that have to be guaranteed to conduct any of these surveys.

Researching issues about SOGIE in relation to children and adolescents and in the context of education, has additional challenges. In some contexts, it is illegal to discuss these issues either in or outside of schools. Where it is legal, SOGIE may still be considered a very sensitive topic for discussion with children and young people. Asking respondents about SOGIE in a school setting might embarrass them and expose them to stigma and discrimination, unless the questions are included in questionnaires that are self-administered or asked in strict confidence and by independent data collectors.

Monitoring school violence based on SOGIE must be carried out in line with applicable laws, particularly in contexts where LGBTI people are criminalized. Under no circumstances should anyone – students, teachers, educational staff, parents or researchers – be put at risk due to the research.

In contexts where SOGIE issues are taboo or governmental bodies hesitate to collect related data, it may be useful to not use terminology such as 'LGBTI'. For example, in a UNESCO-supported study in four countries in Southern Africa, questionnaires used in schools referred to gender non-conforming students as 'people who are seen as different in terms of gender (boys who look or act like girls; girls who look like or act like boys)'.

## 6. How can you report on school violence based on SOGIE?

This technical brief has focused on two approaches to strengthening the monitoring of school violence based on SOGIE: 1. Including questions about students' SOGIE in surveys that already collect data on school violence; and 2. Including SOGIE in surveys that already collect data on the drivers of school violence.

Either or both of these approaches can be used to produce more and better information about school violence based on SOGIE. In turn, the resulting data can be analysed, assessed and reported through three main types of indicators:

- **Indicator type 1:** The prevalence of school violence based on SOGIE, including the types of violence and the trends over time.
- **Indicator type 2:** The consequences of school violence based on SOGIE on the education of the students who are targeted, such as in relation to absenteeism, school dropout and learning outcomes.
- **Indicator type 3:** The consequences of school violence based on SOGIE on the physical and mental health of the students who are targeted.



To illustrate how to fulfil these types of indicators for the reporting on the prevalence and consequences of school violence-based on SOGIE, the following shares the approach used for the Youth Risk Behaviour Surveillance System (YRBS) in the USA. The YRBS provides a good example of a large-scale, national, school-based survey that started to collect data on school violence based on sexual orientation through the addition of only two questions. This provided ground-breaking evidence on the high prevalence of school violence targeting LGB students and its dramatic consequences.

**Example: Fulfilling indicators on the prevalence and consequences of school violence based on sexual orientation - the Youth Risk Behaviour Surveillance System, USA**

**The YRBS, which is conducted among 14-18 year olds, monitors six categories of health-related behaviours, including those that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence. Within the survey, students are asked if they have experienced the following:**

- Carried a weapon
- Carried a gun
- Carried a weapon on school property
- Threatened or injured with a weapon on school property
- In a physical fight
- Injured in a physical fight
- In a physical fight on school property
- Electronically bullied
- Bullied on school property
- Forced to have sexual intercourse
- Physical dating violence
- Sexual dating violence

**The YRBS also assesses the impact of such involvement, by exploring the consequences for students' education and mental health. Respondents are asked if, as a result of the behaviour that they experienced, they:**

- Did not go to school because of safety concerns
- Felt sad or hopeless
- Seriously considered attempting suicide
- Made a suicide plan
- Attempted suicide
- Suicide attempt treated by a doctor or nurse

In 2015, two questions were added to the national questionnaire for the YRBS, as well as the standard questionnaire that is used by states and large urban school districts as a starting point for their own questionnaires. One question asked the students to self-identify their sexual orientation; the other addressed the sex of the students' sexual contacts (sexual behaviour).

The addition of these questions meant that the survey's data could not only be disaggregated according to the sexual orientation and sexual behavior of the respondents, but also *triangulated* with data on their health-related behaviors and consequences of those behaviors. This enabled a robust analysis of whether lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) students are more likely to experience violence-related behaviours than heterosexual students.

Overall, higher prevalence of violence was seen for LGB students in almost all of the behaviours addressed by the YRBS, whether data were disaggregated by sexual orientation or sexual behaviour of respondents. Examples of school violence affecting LGB students included:

**Bullying on school property:**

- According to data based on self-identified sexual orientation, 34.2% of LGB students said that they had been bullied on school property. This compared to 18.8% of heterosexual students. The prevalence was also high (24.9%) for students who were 'not sure' about their sexual orientation.
- Similarly, according to data based on the sex of sexual contacts, 34.1% of students who had had sexual contact with partners of the same sex only or both sexes said that they been bullied on school property. This compared to 21.2% of students who had had sexual contact with partners of the opposite sex only.

**Electronic bullying:**

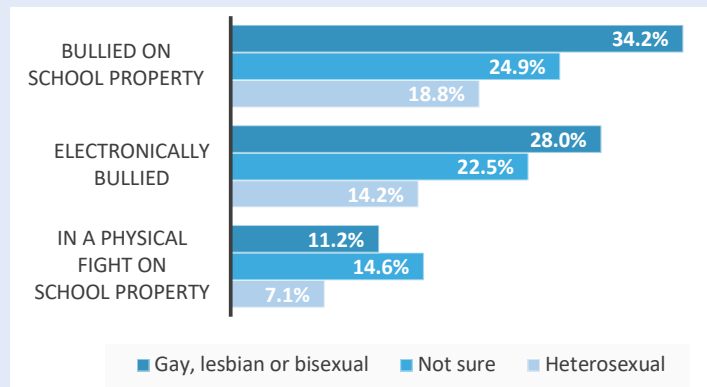
- 28.0% of LGB students had been electronically bullied, compared to 14.2% of heterosexual students. Again, the prevalence was also high (22.5%) among students who were 'not sure' about their sexual orientation.
- 31.9% of students who had had sexual contact with partners of the same sex only or both sexes had been electronically bullied, compared to 17.4% of students who had sexual contact with partners of the opposite sex only.

**Physical violence:**

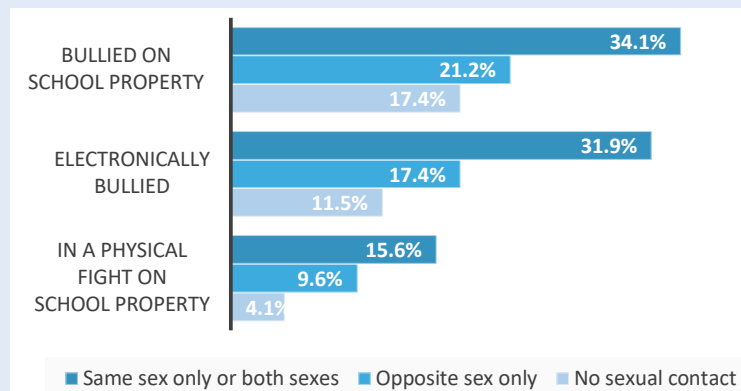
- 11.2% of LGB students had been involved in a physical fight on school property, compared to 7.1% of heterosexual students.
- 15.6% of students who had had sexual contact with partners of the same sex only or both sexes had been involved in a physical fight, compared to 9.6% of students who had sexual contact with partners of the opposite sex only.

Percentage of high school students who were bullied on school property, electronically bullied and in a physical fight on school property - United States Youth Risk Behaviour Survey, 2015

• By self-identified sexual orientation



• By sex of sexual contacts



Source: Charts created by the authors based on data extracted from Kann, et al., 2016

Disaggregation and triangulation of the YRBS data also fulfilled indicators on the *consequences* of school violence based on sexual orientation, showing that the impact of that violence on the education and mental health of LGB students was much worse than for their heterosexual peers. The findings included:

**Education:**

- 12.5% of LGB students said that they did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to/from school. This compared to 4.6% of heterosexual students. Again, the prevalence was also high (10.8%) for students who were 'not sure' about their sexual orientation.
- Similarly, according to data based on the sex of sexual contacts, 11.9% of students who had had sexual contact with partners of the same sex only or both sexes said that they did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to/from school. This compared to 5.8% of students who had had sexual contact with partners of the opposite sex only.

**Mental health:**

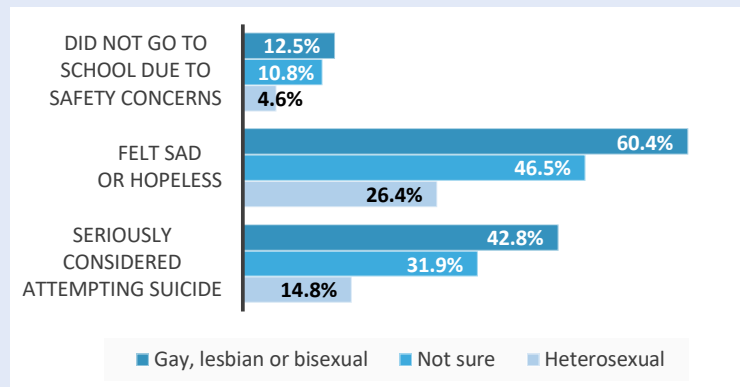
- 60.4% of LGB students said they felt sad or hopeless, compared to 26.4% of heterosexual students. Again, the prevalence was also high (46.5%) among students who were 'not sure' about their sexual orientation.
- 62.7% of students who had had sexual contact with partners of the same sex only or both sexes said they felt sad or hopeless, compared to 32.9% of students who had sexual contact with partners of the opposite sex only.

**Suicide:**

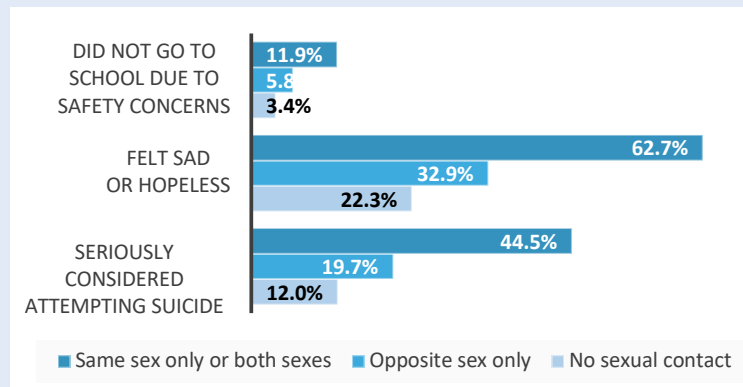
- 42.8% of LGB students said that they had seriously considered attempting suicide, compared to 14.8% of heterosexual students. Again, the prevalence was also high (31.9%) among students who were 'not sure' about their sexual orientation.
- 44.5% of students who had had sexual contact with partners of the same sex only or both sexes said they had seriously considered committing suicide, compared to 19.7% of students who had sexual contact with partners of the opposite sex only.

Percentage of high school students who did not go to school due to safety concerns, felt sad or hopeless or seriously considered attempting suicide - United States Youth Risk Behaviour Survey, 2015

• By self-identified sexual orientation



• By sex of sexual contacts



Source: Charts created by the authors based on data extracted from Kann, et al., 2016

This example demonstrates that, without the inclusion of the two additional questions on the sexual orientation of respondents, data from the YRBS would only have been analysed according to the traditional categories – explaining that students in the USA are the victims of different types of school violence depending on whether they are ‘girls’ or ‘boys’. The results of this large-scale survey prove that these two categories are no longer valid to provide evidence on the full range of drivers of school violence and on consequences for specific categories of students.

Using the example of the YRBS, the GSHS introduced the same two questions in its questionnaire in 2018. Other international surveys outlined in this technical brief - such as the ERCE, HBSC, PIRLS, PISA and TIMSS - could include similar questions to enable the countries that implement them to have better evidence on the prevalence and consequences of school violence based on sexual orientation and SOGIE in general and, in turn, to develop better policies and programmes to prevent and address school violence, including that based on SOGIE.

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