

LGBT EDUCATION

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REGIONAL NEWS: COVID-19 AND LESBIANS IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

European and Central Asian survey on the impact of Covid-19 on lesbians

9 December 2020 - Since March 2020, The European Lesbian Conference organization (EL*C) has been collecting testimonies and analyzing the impacts of Covid-19 on lesbians. They are huge and now EL*C is launching comprehensive survey. The organization hopes to gather over 4000 responses.

HOW LESBIAN GROUPS FIGHT BACK?



Trapped in dangerous situations

From the little information available so far, it was observed that lesbians have been trapped in potentially dangerous situations due to the crisis. Young lesbians were obliged to quarantine with their lesbo-phobic families. Older lesbians cannot go out, do not have family to rely on, and can only get food and medication from the local lesbian community. Lesbians are being fired because their families are not recognized as equal to heterosexual ones, or not recognized at all.

Survey in eight languages for both groups and individuals

EL*C welcomes responses by lesbians on a wide gender identity spectrum (trans, cis, non binary). The goal of the survey is develop recommendations for policy makers and donors to take into account in the current crisis management schemes.

The survey will be accessible online until March 2021 in 8 different languages: **Spanish, French, English, German, Italian, Russian, Turkish, Serbian**. (To change the language in the survey: click on the top right button and scroll down to find the language that suits. Or click on the direct link).

GALE urges it's members to help disseminate the call to fill this survey.

English: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/58RLKVN>

Русский: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/58RLKVN?lang=ru>

Français: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/58RLKVN?lang=fr>

Español: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/58RLKVN?lang=es>

Srpski: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/58RLKVN?lang=sr_Latn_RS

Deutsch: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/58RLKVN?lang=de>

Italiano: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/58RLKVN?lang=it>

Türkçe: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/58RLKVN?lang=tr>

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/58RLKVN>

Sources: [More information about the survey](#),
[more information about EL*C](#)





Convention against discrimination is 60 years old, but still undervalued

10 December 2020 - This year UNESCO celebrates 60 years since the adoption of the *Convention against Discrimination in Education*. But it is disappointing that even after 60 years only half of the UN members states have ratified the convention. For The GALE membership, it is also disappointing that the UNESCO survey to monitor the implementation of the convention does not make reference to LGBTI discrimination. Furthermore, it is disappointing that UNESCO makes it very challenging for NGOs to participate in the consultation on the convention.

Celebration 60 years

On 14 December 1960, the UN adopted the Convention against Discrimination in Education (CADE). It was first and still the only legally binding international treaty exclusively dedicated to the right to education. UNESCO celebrates this anniversary with a 4-day campaign “Say no to discrimination in education”, which starts today. The campaign is badly needed. Too little attention is given to discrimination in education. The global trend of polarizing attitudes, the rising number of states that implement totalitarian measures, ongoing war and the COVID-19 epidemic exuberate the risks of discrimination for the most vulnerable students. Increasingly, non-discrimination is seen as a “left-wing” hobby of softies and as secondary to “hard” economic needs.

Monitoring the convention

The anniversary coincides with the 10th Consultation of Member States on the implementation of the Convention. But the consultation is riddled with problems. In the first place, only 52% of the UN Member States have approved the convention. Member states are requested to submit reports of their policy measures every four years, but many don't do this.

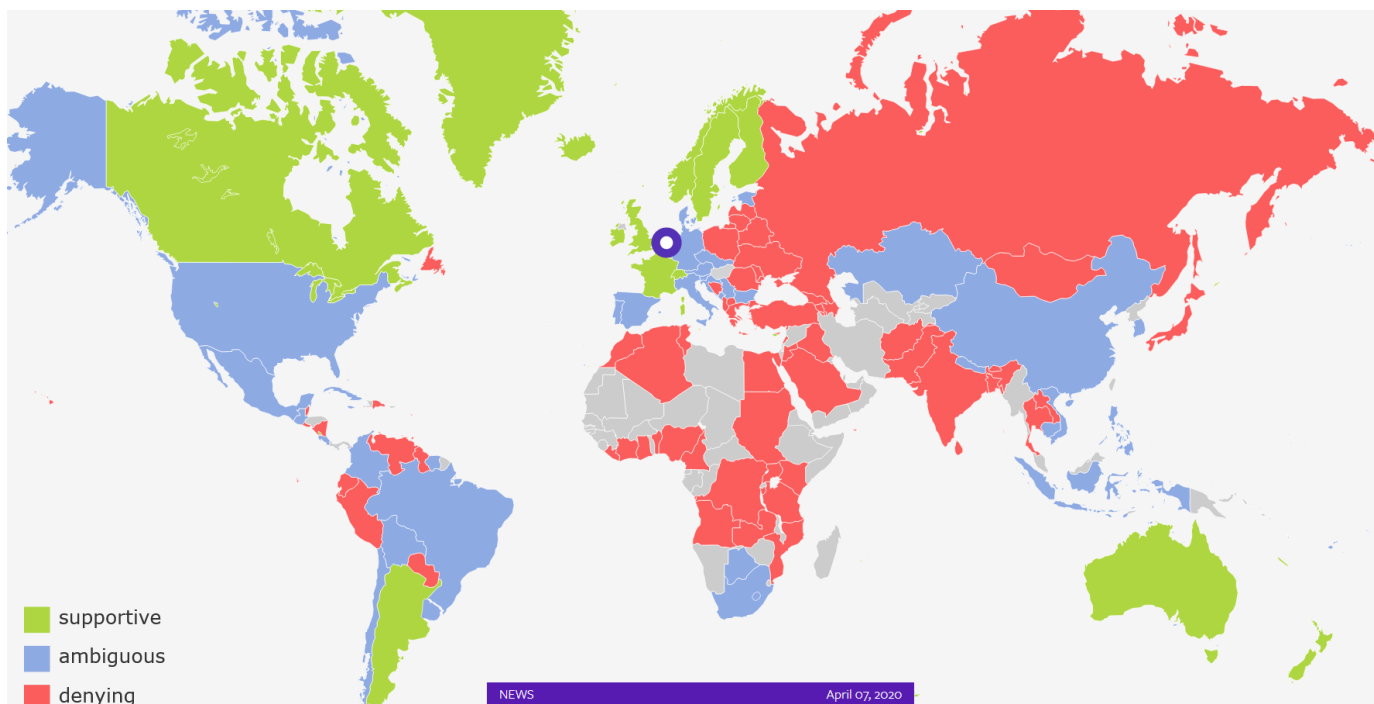
The image is a screenshot of the UNESCO website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with language options (English, Français, Español, Русский, العربية, 中文) and a search bar. Below this is the UNESCO logo and the tagline "Building peace in the minds of men and women". The main content area features a large heading "10th Consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education" and a photograph of a teacher interacting with two young girls. To the right of the photo is a "RELATED LINKS" section with four bullet points: "Ratification of the Convention", "UNESCO's Convention against discrimination in education", "Legal action", and "Global Observatory on the Right to Education". Below the photo, there is a paragraph of text explaining UNESCO's monitoring process and a call to action for Member States to submit reports.

In the questionnaire that government are requested to fill in for the consultation, the attention for discrimination is limited. Specific questions are only on gender, cultural minorities, refugees, and disabilities. Other discrimination grounds are subsumed under "children in vulnerable situations". Attention for gender is asked with a heteronormative perspective and LGBTI

students are not mentioned. Very few government report on LGBTI issues in their reports.

In many other UN conventions, NGOs are involved to some extent in the monitoring process. One would expect that UNESCO would do the same, certainly in view of the many NGOs combating discrimination and the number of states actually promotion and sustaining discrimination in education. However, NGOs hardly have a place in the consultations on CADE. If they press UNESCO, they may be informed about the dates of the procedure, but there is no possibility to submit shadow reports to UNESCO. This is worrying, also in the context of non-discrimination NGOs already finding it very difficult to use the legal system to address discrimination in schools.

Sources: [Convention Against Discrimination in Education](#) (CADE); [UNESCO Consultation on the CADE, guidelines for country reports for the 10th consultation](#), [Global Observatory on the Right to Education](#), [Racial discrimination in education and EU equality law](#)



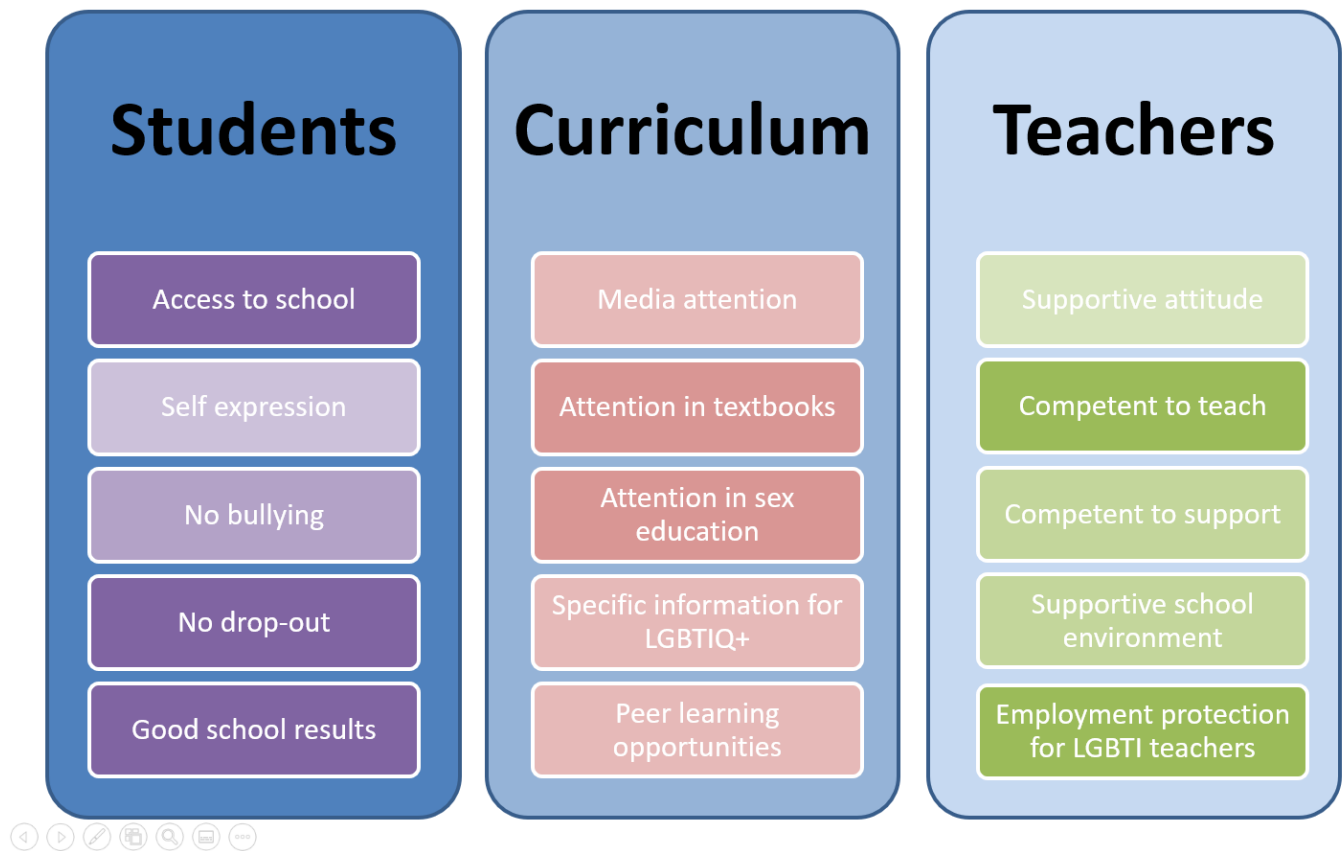
GALE develops individual right to education survey

22 December 2020 - In addition to the Right to Education Checklist, GALE is now also developing a survey that can be filled in by individuals. The Right to Education Checklist is a policy checklist with 15 checkpoints. It monitors the level of implementation of the right to education for LGBTIQ+ students. However, the Checklist requires some knowledge about your country's education policy. Many LGBTIQ+ people would like to contribute to the mapping, but don't know about policy. They asked if GALE could develop a questionnaire that links their individual experiences with school with the national policy.

The GALE Checklist

The GALE Checklist is based on human rights standards of what internationally is understood as good quality of education. The checklist consists of 15 questions which cover the 3 key areas of the right to education: the right to access school (including feeling well in school), the right to a relevant curriculum and the right to have good and supportive teachers. Each checkpoint can be rated on a five point scale ranging from completely denying policy, via ambiguous policy to supportive policy.

Mapping the LGBTIQ+ Right to Education



1The three pillars of the Right to Education in the GALE Checklist

The GALE Survey

Translating the Checklist into a survey that is based on individual experiences is complicated. In the first place, we want to use validated questions. This way we can compare the data from this survey to data from other large scale surveys that are already done among the general population.

Another challenge is to make to results of the survey comparable to the policy checklist. For example, if we ask *how often* LGBTIQ+ students were bullied, the result can not be automatically be translated to a classification in denying, ambiguous or supportive policy. Although most denying countries generally have higher rates of bullying, we cannot say that countries with a higher level then 25% bullying have a denying policy.

Testing

Some years ago GALE developed a survey which was internationally tested, but the first version could not be translated to the checklist. Now GALE is pretesting a second version to see if the questions are understandable and if the survey is not too long. The survey has 89 questions, of which 26 are mandatory because they determine the score on the checklist. The other questions are supporting the analysis and make the survey comparable to other surveys.

GALE members and others who are interested to test the survey, [can do it here](#). The test phase will end on 10 January 2021.

GALE members and other activists who would like to cooperate on translating and implementing the survey in their country, can [contact GALE to discuss the strategy](#).

GLOBAL NEWS: COVID-19



LGBTI movement asks for protection of rights during COVID-19 outbreak

5 June 2020 - Today, GALE joined a coalition of 187 organizations to draw the attention of the UN Human Rights Council to the situation of LGBTI persons and those who defend their rights in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. The coalition urged States and stakeholders to ensure that this public health emergency will neither exacerbate existing misconceptions, prejudices, inequalities or structural barriers, nor lead to increased violence and discrimination against sexually and gender diverse persons.

COVID-19 no reason to discriminate (again)

The coalition stresses two reasons to be alert. The first is that LGBTI people are more strongly hit by the negative health and economic consequences of the pandemic, due to already existing exclusion and discrimination. The second reason is that some governments use the epidemic to tune down LGBTI-protections and to increase discrimination towards LGBTI.

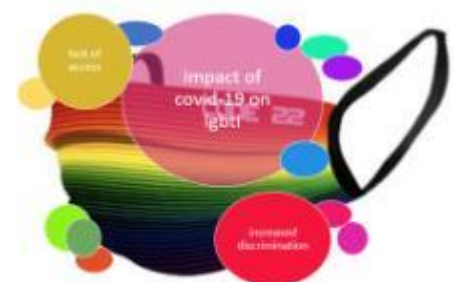
The coalition acknowledges that we need swift action now. But is also stresses that states must comply with international human rights obligations when doing this. Vulnerabilities of specific groups - including LGBTI persons - must be taken into account. This can only be done by involving LGBTI civil society in planning the response.

Risks of LGBTI in education

The coalition specifically names the general rise of stigma, less access to housing, negative consequences of social distancing, less access to work and less social and political participation as areas where LGBTI are more severely disadvantaged. GALE also wants to focus on the negative consequences for LGBTI-students and teachers.

Like victims of sexual abuse, LGBTI-youth in lockdown situations are convicted to stay home in situations that may be risky for their well-being. The social distancing is even more disastrous for young LGBTI people who cannot find social support in their community but have to go to safe places. The limitation to online socializing puts LGBTI students at risk of homophobic and transphobic abuse and possibly of getting entrapped in unsafe relational or sexual encounters. LGBTI students are already more at risk to drop out, and this may increase because of them lagging further behind. LGBTI students with medical needs may be refused services due to their identity expression.

LGBTI teachers may be more at risk to loose their job. This effect was already shown when Greece was pushed into an economic crisis by the European Union. The workforce had to be thinned and the most vulnerable teacher were fired first. This was not only an economic danger for LGBTI teachers, but it also stifled LGBTI-led initiatives to improve the sexual and gender situation in schools.



- [Read the full statement here](#)
- [The rainbow mouth mask in the illustration is available from Gays & Gadgets](#)

Madrassa for trans people opens in Dhaka

8 November 2020 - Sanjana Chowdury from the BBC reports that in Dhaka, a madrassa for third sex people has opened. It is the first religious school for transgender people to be opened in Bangladesh. Although right wing forces vehemently persecute gay and lesbian people in Bangladesh, third gender has officially been recognized.



Any age can enroll

When students already become aware they are transgender and come out, this usually leads to heavy bullying in school by both students and teachers. The drop-out is high, and the effect is that most transgender people are illiterate. A separate school for transgenders is one way of amending this challenge. Next to learning to read the Quran, the students can learn basic skills in a madrassa.



More than 150 students will study Islamic and vocational subjects at the privately-funded madrassa (religious school). Although it is a private school, the education is free of charge. The madrassa is funded from the legacy of Ahmad Ferdous Bari Chowdhury, a businessman who wanted to educate the hijra community.

People of any age in the hijra community can enrol at the school. It is hoped that after studying there, students will have a chance to enter a number of different professions. The madrassa's education secretary told BBC that many third sex people only identify as third sex at a later age. This is why the school does not set an age limit.

Third sex in Bangladesh

Transgender or third sex people are called hijras in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. Hijras transition from male to female. The government says Bangladesh has about 10,000 hijras, but some think there are five times as many.

Third gender is officially recognized as a gender since 2013. Legally, third gender people have the right to vote and to stand for election, but conservative social attitudes still make it hard for them to access jobs and education. In addition, in recent years there have been numerous attacks of Muslim conservative extremists, using machetes to hack people to death. LGBT activists were among the victims. Many third gender people are ostracized in their villages and are forced to migrate to cities. Because it is difficult for them to get a regular job, they often have to support themselves by singing and dancing at weddings and births which does not earn enough to live on. The alternative is begging or sex work.

Sources: [BBC](#), [HRW: trans men in Bangladesh](#), [Dhaka Tribune: recognition third gender](#)

LOCAL NEWS: POLAND



Polish parliament members protest president by forming a rainbow

Polish president divides country with homophobia

8 August 2020 - In the election battle, the Polish president Andrzej Duda vowed to ban all LGBT education in schools. He narrowly won the election and many fear the repressive policy of the last few years will now be implemented with more extreme measures. While parliament members protested by wearing rainbow dresses, flags and masks, some LGBT are already planning to flee the country.

Homophobic rhetoric

President Duda ramped up his homophobic rhetoric in June to jump-start his re-election campaign. In a pitch to his conservative base, he signed a 'family values' declaration that vows to "protect children from LGBT+ ideology" and prohibit the teaching of LGBT+ inclusion by public institutions. He finds a wide audience for such discriminatory claims. A large right-wing and populist newspaper has called for "LGBT-(propaganda)-free zones" and about half the Polish counties have adopted local statements to declare themselves "LGBT-free". The Polish media have adopted a rhetoric condemning "gender ideology" and believe they support the (heterosexual) family this way. In reality they are creating rift in the Polish population. In addition, they are alienating themselves from Europe. The European Community has denied further funding to 6 Polish counties towns who upkeep discriminatory statements.

Rainbow protests

But the right-wing radicals of the governing Law and Justice party only see such action to stop discrimination as a flag waved for a frantic bull. They now see the rainbow flag as a symbol of all the things that they say pose a threat to Roman Catholic



values and the nation's identity. When radicals steal rainbow flags, trample on them or burn them, the authorities remain idle. But activists hanging rainbow flags on statues are prosecuted, because they "desecrate monuments and offend religious feelings." This in turn has galvanized the opposition, who chose the flag as their emblem. For many, it represents now not just solidarity with LGBTI, but also a rejection of what they view as a government-led campaign of intolerance, hatred and xenophobia.

Sources: [Pink News 11 June 2020](#), [BBC 13 July 2020](#), [The Globe Post 6 August 2020](#), [New York Times 30 July 2020](#), [BBC 5 August 2020](#), [New York Times 6 August 2020](#).

Conservatives in New South Wales propose censorship law

9 November 2020 - The conservative Australian politician Mark Latham has proposed a law for the state of New South Wales that will forbid education about gender fluidity. The proposal harms trans and gender diverse students by denying their existence and prevents teachers and counsellors from supporting them. It allows parents to withdraw their child from a class or program which tells them LGBTIQ+ people are just like everyone else.



Proposed censorship

According to Equality Australia, the bill:

1. prohibits schools from teaching that gender fluidity (referring to trans and gender diverse people) exists and should be treated with respect;
2. prohibits school counsellors from affirming a trans or gender diverse student or providing them with any support or referrals to gender affirming support;
3. puts teachers at risk of losing their job when they support a trans or gender diverse student in affirming their identity;
4. enshrines biological fallacies, describing intersex people as disordered;
5. allows parents to deny their children access to lessons in public schools which may contradict their political, social or personal values, including their views about LGBTIQ+ people;
6. requires schools to present discredited counter narratives when teaching classes like science or history. For example, discussing creationism when teaching evolution, raising anti-vaccination theories, or raising racist ideologies to explain the over representation of First Nations people in prison.



Anti-populist shirt

Latham's notorious reputation

Mark Latham is the new leader of One Nation, a right-wing splinter party which is opposed to immigration and holds nationalist values. The party proudly present Lathan as someone who strongly opposes the impact of political correctness and identity politics on public debate. He appears to be a rough type and has been accused several times of hitting and threatening people and of destroying equipment of journalists.



He also was reported to downplay the importance of domestic abuse against women. Finally, he publicly commented that one of the boys in a high school video about International Women's Day looked gay.

Next steps

The proposal has been put forward for comments to the NSW Committee, which will collect comments through a survey in January and February. The Uniting Church LGBTIQ+ Network NSW/ACT has already submitted a critical response, especially with the view that a host of conservative churches are expected to support the proposal. The further discussion steps are not yet clear. However, this proposal is part of a larger body of legislative proposals to give precedence to religious rights over fundamental human rights for everyone.

Sources: [The proposed bill](#), [Equality Australia](#), [One Nation on Mark Latham](#), [Wikipedia on Latham](#), [Parliament of New South Wales](#), [response of ACT](#)



Human Rights Watch calls for stepping up efforts to combat bullying

5 November 2020 - Governments around the world should urgently step up efforts to ensure students' safety at school and in online spaces, Human Rights Watch said today on the first International Day against Violence and Bullying at School Including Cyberbullying. Many governments have not yet banned corporal punishment, and many lag behind on protecting students from school-related sexual violence, bullying, and online violence, including homophobic, transphobic and sexist bullying.

Half of all adolescents experience school bullying

According to United Nations agencies, more than 246 million children suffer gender-based violence in or around schools every year, and one in three students experiences bullying and physical violence. Half of the world's adolescents report violence from peers at school.

Human Rights Watch research on barriers to education in over 15 countries found that children and young people experience many forms of school-related gender-based violence. Students often report corporal punishment, sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, physical violence, and bullying. Teachers and school officials as well as other students are commonly responsible for these abuses. Corporal punishment in schools remains lawful in at least 67 countries, and many teachers still use corporal punishment to control classrooms and to exert their authority.

LGBT students and girls seriously at risk

Girls, children with disabilities, refugee children, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students frequently experience high levels of violence and bullying. Violence against these children often receives little attention because of prevailing discriminatory and harmful attitudes that perpetuate silence and impunity. Sexual violence in schools, which includes rape, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation, remains under-reported in many countries. In Senegal and Tanzania, teachers and school officials frequently sexually exploit girls in exchange for money for school fees, grades, and basic items like menstrual pads. LGBT students face bullying, discrimination, and violence in many countries, but are often excluded from antibullying policies or measures taken to curb violence in schools. In many countries a lack of teacher training and accountability means that teachers both allow and contribute to bullying of LGBT students. Cyberbullying also affects LGBT youth, with abuses moving from classrooms to online spaces. In the Philippines and the United States, LGBT students described anti-LGBT comments and slurs as well as rapidly spreading rumors facilitated by social media. This public exposure and ridicule has negative



consequences for children's mental health and academic achievement, Human Rights Watch has found.

A UK study found that teachers are responsible for 10% of LGBT bullying.

Government action needed

Governments should urgently adopt binding national policies that guarantee students protection in schools and online spaces. Those that already have policies in place should ensure that they include protections for children particularly likely to face abuse, including girls, LGBT students, and children with disabilities.

Sources: [Human Rights Watch](#), [International Day against Violence and Bullying at School Including Cyberbullying](#), [UN Women on bullying](#), [Corporal Punishment](#), [UK study teachers responsible for 10% of LGBT bullying](#).

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[Únete eje miembro GALE.](#) La membresía es gratis!

[Rejoignez axe membre de GALE.](#) L'adhésion est gratuite!

Colophon

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