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# How Can Improving Data Collection and Reporting Advance the Civil Rights of LGBT Students?

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## SUMMARY

Previous research has shown that LGBT youth are disproportionately likely to experience harassment, bullying, and exclusionary discipline at school. However, there is insufficient data collection of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) on the state and national level to allow systematic documentation of these disparities.

Inspired by the success over nearly the last fifty years of The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights Civil Rights Data Collection at documenting disparities, this paper argues that expanding data collection on SOGI will document disparities, provide the basis for intervention, and improve the civil rights of LGBT youth.

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## KEY FINDINGS

- > The absence of comprehensive national SOGI information makes it difficult to identify the problem and protect LGBT students from exclusionary discipline or discriminatory harassment.
  - > The lack of SOGI questions in national and state assessments of school safety, climate, violence, and discipline slows our ability to fully understand how these factors may contribute to negative outcomes for LGBT students.
  - > Data on discipline and harassment needs to consider SOGI status in order to monitor the effects of interventions to reduce harm and improve outcomes.
  - > Special consideration must be given to disclosing SOGI status in schools because of the fundamental rights of youth to participation in research, as well as to privacy and protection from the potential harms associated with disclosure.
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## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

For public policy, the authors recommend that the U.S. extend federal non-discrimination civil rights protections to SOGI, such as through the proposed Student Non-Discrimination Act. They also advise the development and implementation of state, school, and district policies and practices that support the establishment of safe and supportive environments for LGBT students. With regards to improving data collection, the authors recommend that crime & safety and school discipline surveys include standard measures of SOGI appropriate for youth and that existing health surveys that currently include measures of SOGI add discipline and harassment items as well.

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## HARASSMENT & LGBT STUDENTS

Previous research has found clear evidence that LGBT students are more likely to experience bullying, verbal or physical harassment than their peers. BUT very little concrete data is collected: there are no local, state or federal reporting requirements that would shine a light on the severity of the problem. It's past time to fix this.

### LACK OF DATA



**FACT:** LGBT students are **1.4 X's** more likely to be expelled from school than heterosexual peers.



But what's driving those expulsions? There is no data.



### FEDERAL ACTION

#### STEP 1

**Federal Agencies:**  
Add LGBT questions to youth surveys on discipline and health.



#### STEP 2



**Congress:** Enact the Student Non-Discrimination Act.

This would provide protections for LGBT students similar to those recognized for race, color, gender, etc.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Call and write Congress, urging passage of critical legislation.

Contact U.S. Departments of Education, Justice and Health and Human Services to add school survey questions.



Work within your community and schools for equality.



For more information, visit [www.indiana.edu/~equity](http://www.indiana.edu/~equity)

The Equity Project  
at Indiana University

### REFERENCE

Arredondo, M., Grey, C., Russell, S., Skiba, R. & Snapp, S. (2016). Documenting disparities for LGBT students: Expanding the collection and reporting of data on sexual orientation and gender identity. *Discipline Disparities: A Research-to-Practice Collaborative*. Available at [www.indiana.edu/~atlantic/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/SOGI-Brief-Final.pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~atlantic/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/SOGI-Brief-Final.pdf).

### SUGGESTED CITATION

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