



Postsecondary National Policy Institute

LGBTQ STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

While [over 200 LGBTQ centers](#) exist on college campuses across the country, there is limited data about LGBTQ students in higher education. Existing research shows that LGBTQ students face challenges as early as high school that factor into their college enrollment and experiences. In fact, data has shown that nearly [10% of LGBTQ students](#) who experienced frequent verbal harassment didn't plan to attend college after high school.

ENROLLMENT

- In 2018, the Association of American Universities found that out of a sample of more than 180,000 undergraduate and graduate students, nearly [17% identified](#) as gay, lesbian, bisexual, , asexual, queer, or questioning.
- In the same survey, 1.7% of undergraduate and graduate students identified as trans, nonbinary, or questioning.

ATTAINMENT

- [Seventeen percent](#) of self-identified members of the LGBT community age 25 or older have earned a bachelor's degree, compared to 18% of non-LGBT members.
 - Thirteen percent of self-identified members of the LGBT community age 25 or older have earned a graduate degree, compared to 14% of non-LGBT members.
- LGBTQ men were twice as likely to [obtain](#) a bachelor's degree in comparison to LGBTQ women in 2015.
 - In contrast, in the 2014–15 academic year, women earned 57% of all bachelor's degrees in the overall student population.
- The probability of LGBTQ women [completing](#) a bachelor's degree was 25%, which is below heterosexual women's predicted probability of 34% in 2015.
- In 2015, LGBTQ women [earned less](#) than heterosexual women, reporting an average annual salary of \$45,606 versus \$51,461.
- Similarly, in 2015, LGBTQ men [reported](#) earning an average of \$56,936, compared with average earnings for heterosexual men of \$83,469.

SAFETY CONCERNS

- Two in three LGBTQ college students reported having experienced sexual harassment at least once in a 2019 campus climate survey by the Association of American Universities (AAU).
- Non-heterosexual students are more likely to experience harassing behavior, intimate partner violence, and stalking than heterosexual students, according to the 2019 AAU campus climate survey.
- Twenty percent of LGBTQ college students feared for their physical safety due to their gender identity or their perceived sexual orientation according to the 2015 AAU climate survey.
- Thirty-one percent of LGBTQ students of color reported experiencing “exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, or hostile conduct” that they attributed to their racial identity in the 2015 AAU climate survey.

SOURCES

[“AAU Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct \(2015\).”](#) *Association of American Universities*, September 2015.

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[“LGBT Inclusion: A Work in Progress.”](#) *Diverse*, June 2017.

[“The 2019 National School Climate Survey.”](#) GLSEN, 2021.

[“Gay Men are more Likely to Graduate College than Anyone Else.”](#) *Business Insider*, June 2015.

[“Find an LGBTQ Center.”](#) Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals.

[“Report on the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct.”](#) Association of American Universities, January 2020.

[“LGBT Data & Demographics.”](#) Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law.

[“Degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by level of degree and sex of student: Selected years, 1869-70 through 2026-27.”](#) U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

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