



# Executive Brief: LGBTQ+ Undergraduate Students

EDUC- C 565: Intro to College & University Administration  
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## Student Population Overview

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, and Asexual + (LGBQA+) college students are minoritized by their sexual identity/attraction.
- Defined by non-heteronormative standards of attraction dominant within the U.S.
- Out of 8,000 undergraduate students, 21% identified as LGBQA+ (American College Health Association, 2020).

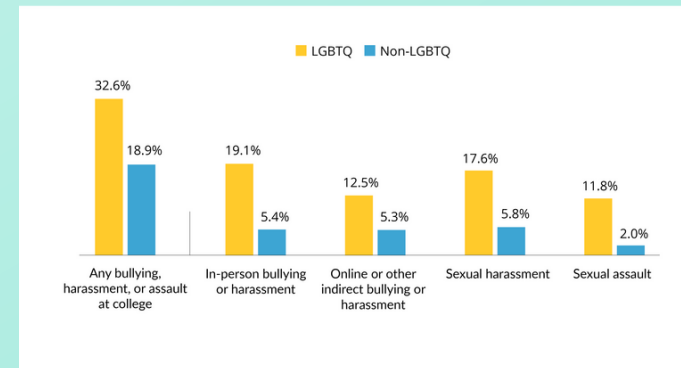
## Relevant Terms

- **Sexuality/Sexual Orientation-** "an individual's positioning on... attraction, sexual behavior, romantic orientation, and sexual orientation identity" (Mustanski et al., 2014 & Hall, 2019 as cited by Hall, 2021).
- **Gender-** defined as both "... a cultural phenomenon" (Stryker, 2008) and the way people identify, express, and embody the socially ascribed norms relating to their assigned sex at birth (Nicolazzo, 2016b, p. 166 as cited in Kilgo, 2020).
- **Heterosexism:** "The ideology that denies and rejects people who identify as other than heterosexual" (Woodford et al., 2018, as cited in Kilgo 2020 p.8).
- **Coming Out:** A personal & ongoing process where an LGBQA+ person identifies & accepts their minoritized sexual identity (Kilgo, 2020, p 4).

## Their Collegiate Experience

- **Campus Climate:** LGBTQ+ negative perceptions of campus climate persist today (Kilgo, 2019).
- **Academics:** LGBTQ+ academic-related concerns include campus safety, curricular content and structure, rapport with faculty, and writing ability (Kilgo, 2020).
- **Lack of:** support from peers and faculty, LGBTQ+ inclusive content courses or program offerings, & resources along with engagement with these campus resources significantly impact LGBTQ+ perception of the classroom (Kilgo, 2020).
- **Administrative Level:** Retention & graduation research doesn't typically cover the experiences of this population despite the risk they pose for dropping out (Mendenhall, 2021).

Bullying, harassment, or assault at four-year college among adults ages 18-40 (N=629) by LGBTQ status



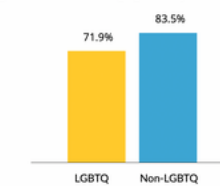
## Historical Background & Current Trends

- **Historical Foundations:** Student groups developed via secret societies due to institutional persecution (Rankin et al., 2019). First recognized LGBT+ Center emerged in the early 1970s (the University of Michigan as cited by Jourian, 2022). Today, more LGBT+ student groups than official centers at institutions (Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals, 2020).
- **Seeking Acceptance Today:** LGBTQ students are four times more likely to report picking a university in a different city or state to seek a more welcoming climate than non-LGBTQ peers (Conron et al., 2022).
- **Current Mental Health Concern:** LGBTQ students attending 4-year colleges were three times more likely to report poor mental health than non-LGBTQ peers, including being twice as likely to report a diagnosis of a mental health problem such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, eating disorders, suicidal ideation etc. (McGill, C. M., et al., 2021; Access to Higher Education Survey 2019, as cited in Conrad et al., 2022).

## Issues of Development

- **Barriers to Development:** LGBTQ students are more at risk to suffer from harassment, bullying, and poor mental health (Conron et al., 2022).
- **Development Models:** The Unifying Model of Sexual Identity Development (Dillon et al., 2011) considers social identity important to LGBTQ student development, but according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, safety needs must be met before social needs (love & belonging, esteem) can be explored (Maslow, A. H., 1943, as cited in Kurt, 2021).

Figure 14. Sense of belonging in four-year college by adults ages 18-40 (N=629) by LGBTQ status



## Diversity within the Population

- LGBQA+ spaces are predominantly white, favoring white, cisgender, able-bodied, gay men. This neglects LGBQA+ students with multiple minoritized identities based on gender, race, ethnicity, ability, and social class (Lange et al., 2019, p. 514; Graham, 2022; Jourian, 2022).
- Bi, asexual, and pan sexual students can be marginalized within LGBQA+ groups based on a lack of visibility and acceptance for their particular orientation (Meyer, 2019; Tavarez, 2022).
- LGBTQ+ students thrive in spaces that recognize & affirm multiple identities (Hill et al., 2021).

## Implications & Strategies for Higher Education

- Give space for students to safely explore minoritized sexual identities.
- Validate closeted & out students' experiences with sensitivity.
- Institutions should create/maintain comprehensive and affirming LGBQA+-oriented policies, resources, especially mental health resources, programming, & safe spaces (The Jed Foundation, 2021).
- LGBQA+ resources and programming should be informed by intersectionality ideology to ensure that the needs of minoritized individuals within an LGBQA+ student population are being met (McGill, C. M., et al., 2021).

