

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER  
IDENTITY BASED BULLYING  
IN LITHUANIAN SCHOOLS  
SURVEY DATA ANALYSIS**







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# SUMMARY

An online survey with a core objective to identify and analyze bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity, and its prevalence in Lithuanian secondary schools was conducted in April–May 2015. An anonymous questionnaire was distributed via Internet to interview 12 to 19 year-olds enrolled in Lithuanian secondary schools. The total of 296 responses are analyzed in this study.

## Demographical Data

- 51 % of respondents indicated larger cities as their place of residence, 41 % said they were living in smaller towns, and 8 % stated they lived in rural Lithuanian villages.
- The respondents' age ranged from 12 to 19 years. Most of the respondents were 16 and 17 years old (25 % and 21 %).
- 73 % of the respondents described themselves as heterosexual, 17 % answered – "I do not know." 5 % reported to be bisexual and 5 % – homosexual.
- 83 % indicated themselves as "female", 16 % described themselves as "male" and 1 % chose "other".

## THE PREVALENCE AND NATURE OF HOMOPHOBIC AND GENDER IDENTITY BASED BULLYING

As many as 85 % of all the respondents said they had seen or had become

aware of bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity in their classroom / school.

There were not a single homosexual respondent, who claimed to never had heard or seen bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity in her / his classroom or school.

More than a third of all (37 %) the respondents said that they had a history of being bullied and insulted with words directly indicating their actual or alleged sexual orientation and / or gender identity.

30 % of the heterosexual respondents indicated that they had experienced verbal homophobic bullying. Among homosexual and bisexual respondents the figure reached 71 % (for each of a group).

The data demonstrates that the male respondents are twice more likely to be abused by name-calling than their female counterparts (72 % of boys and 30 % of girls). Also, 35 % of the male respondents acknowledged that they had experienced verbal homophobic and / or gender identity based bullying, compared to 20 % of the female respondents.

22 % of the respondents admitted being a bully. It was found that the most common forms of homophobic bullying were gossip, name-calling, as well as ignoring and social exclusion.

Among the words used in homophobic bullying, the masculine ones (we do have masculine and feminine nouns and adjectives in Lithuanian language) were mentioned by almost five times more than the feminine ones.

## THE TEACHERS' ROLE AND THE OFFICIAL POSITION OF SCHOOLS

35 % of the respondents claimed that

there was no bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity in their classroom or school. Although 68 % of them had earlier in the questionnaire indicated that they had seen or were aware of homophobic and / or gender identity based bullying in their classroom or school.

Almost a third (32 %) of the respondents, who had experienced verbal homophobic bullying, pointed that teachers while seeing such a bullying usually ignored it. The same was acknowledged by 50 % of the homosexual respondents and almost half (43 %) of the bisexual respondents.

A striking number – 40 % of the respondents – indicated that the teachers themselves often became bullies on the grounds of sexual orientation and / or gender identity.

32 % of the respondents said that no ones intervened with bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity in their classroom / school when it was encountered.

The 2/3 of all the respondents (62 %) said that the teachers or other school staff never spoke about bullying based on sexual orientation or gender identity, or at least they were not aware about it. In comparison, 28 % of the respondents said they knew nothing about the school approach to bullying because of a disability; and 33 % said they knew nothing about the school approach to bullying based on nationality / ethnicity / racial identity aspects.

The respondents who were studying at schools where homophobic and gender identity based bullying was never acknowledged, have also indicated that at school they:

1. more often saw or became aware

about bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation and / or gender identity,

2. more often experienced verbal homophobic bullying,

3. more often noticed that teachers initiated bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation and / or gender identity.

## CAUSES OF BULLYING AND WAYS TO DEAL WITH IT

26 % of the respondents indicated that bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity could be decreased by introducing sex education classes, during which the topic of sexual orientation and gender identity would be discussed. 23 % said that the role of parents is highly influential and conversation with children regarding bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity would be very useful and helpful; and 18 % said that if the teachers would speak more openly about issues, such as sex and sexuality, it also could reduce the frequency of homophobic and gender identity based bullying.

The main reasons for and causes of bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity indicated by respondents are:

- the fear of non-normativity – the cause of bullying is identified as otherness, the discrepancy in expectations of social norms and standards in general (25 %),
- a common culture of bullying – a bully seeks to consolidate position in classroom, aims to be recognized; also often respondents would become bullies in order not be bullied themselves,
- the entrenchment of heteronormativity – the orientation other than heterosexual is not understandable, acceptable or “normal”.

# GLOSSARY<sup>\*8</sup>

**Bisexual** – when a person is emotionally and / or sexually attracted to persons of more than one sex.

**Bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation and / or gender identity (Homophobic Bullying)** – it is a bullying, which is based on one's actual or perceived sexual orientation and / or gender identity. Bullying can occur in verbal form (including cyberbullying) as well as in physical.

**Gender Identity** – refers to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modifications of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerism (Yogyakarta Principles).

**Heteronormativity** – Reference to cultural and social practices where men and women are being led into believing and behaving as if heterosexuality were the only conceivable sexuality. It also implies the positioning of heterosexuality as the only way of being "normal" and as the key source of social reward.

**Heterosexual** – People are classified as heterosexual on the basis of their gender and the gender of their sexual partner(s). When the partner's gender is other than the individual's, then the person is categorised as heterosexual.

**Homosexual** – People are classified as homosexual on the basis of their gender and the gender of their sexual partner(s). When the partner's gender is the same as the individual's, then the person is categorised as homosexual. It is recommended to use the terms lesbian and gay men.

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8 Glossary is based on:  
LGBT\* asmenų nediskriminavimo skatinimo tarpinstitucinis veiklos planas. Išsamus leidinys. 2015-2020  
See <http://www.lgl.lt/assets/Nediskriminavimo-planas.pdf>  
Translyčių asmenų žmogaus teisių apsaugos standartai: lyties pakeitimas ir teisinis pripažinimas.  
See <http://www.lgl.lt/assets/Antrasis-TRANS-leidinys-internetui.pdf>; and ILGA-Europe Glossary, <http://old.ilga-europe.org/home/publications/glossary>.



LGBTI – acronym used for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex people.

Trans Person / People / Man / Woman – is an inclusive umbrella term referring to those people whose gender identity and/or a gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. It includes, but is not limited to: men and women with transsexual pasts, and people who identify as transsexual, transgender, transvestite / cross-dressing, androgyne, polygender, genderqueer, agender, gender variant or with any other gender identity and / or expression which is not standard male or female and express their gender through their choice of clothes, presentation or body modifications, including undergoing multiple surgical procedures.

Transvestite / Cross-dresser – refers to people who enjoy wearing the clothing of another gender for certain periods of time. Their sense of identification with another gender can range from being very strong and indeed their primary gender, to being a less critical part of their identity. Some transvestite or cross-dressing people may seek medical assistance to transition and live permanently in their preferred gender at some point in their life. Others are happy to continue cross dressing part-time for the rest of their lives.

# INTRODUCTION

Internationally governments have a duty to protect LGBTI children by respecting their views and securing their best interests, as laid out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>1</sup>. Human rights apply equally to LGBTI children without discrimination, thus LGBTI children must be protected from bullying at schools and be able to fully exercise their rights to education, right to private life and self-determination, freedom of expression and right to health, which are secured via many international (legally binding) treaties. These rights are naturally enjoyed by LGBTI individuals by the fundamental human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination, as very clearly articulated by the UN Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>2</sup>. Right to Education, including the education about sexual and gender identity diversity and support for the development of LGBTI students (bullying prevention) is explicitly articulated in the famous Yogyakarta Principles and many international bodies, such as UNESCO and IGLYO have invested enormous efforts provide detailed guidance on effective responses to LGBTI bullying to schools and educa-

tional authorities<sup>3</sup>. On 26th September 2014 the United Nations Human Rights Council passed a second LGBT rights resolution, condemning violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity across the globe.

Meanwhile Lithuania had adopted a “Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information”<sup>4</sup>, which might be applied to the awareness raising of homophobic bullying in schools by the national authorities, which in essence constitutes an anti-LGBT censorship. This national legislation arguably contributes to the prevalence of homophobic bullying by blocking access to knowledge and information about diverse sexualities and gender identities to young children, and in turn, contributes to stigmatization and exclusion of the LGBTI children and youth at schools.

Homophobic bullying in Lithuanian schools is currently an invisible and ignored basis for bullying, not least because of a the Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information. For example, in Ireland all schools are legally required to have an anti-bullying policy within the framework of their overall code of behaviour, and all schools’ personnel

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1 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

2 Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, A/HRC/19/41, 17 November, 2011.

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3 See UNESCO, Good Policy and Practice in HIV and Health Education – Booklet 8: Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying, 2011.

4 Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information, 10 September 2002 – No IX-1067 (As last amended on 22 December 2009 – No XI-594). Section 4 of Article 2, paragraph 16 states that: “a negative effect on minors is contained is such information, which scorns family values, and promotes marriage and family development concepts that those contained in the Constitution and the Civil Code” (namely, marriage and family between a man and a woman (only)).

to adhere to the specific AntiBullying Procedures (2013) in dealing with incidents of bullying<sup>5</sup>; Currently, bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity is not identified as a potential ground for bullying in Lithuania, nor it is included or even mentioned in Lithuanian school bullying policy or national website devoted to bullying in schools<sup>6</sup>. This prevents children from enjoying their fundamental rights and to growing up in safe environment. It is unacceptable and has to change in order to secure equality and non-discrimination, as well as access to education, health and right to self-determination by every child, including LGBTI, in Lithuania.

The frequency and severity of negative behaviour directed at LGBTI students in Europe generally is very high (according to the FRA survey, at least 60 % of LGBT respondents were bullied/harassed at school because of their sexual orientation or gender identity; and 80 % had witnessed such conduct as a result of a schoolmate being perceived as LGBT); and Lithuania has the highest rates of students hiding their LGBT identity at schools in Europe (81 %)<sup>7</sup>. This has a serious effect on LGBTI students' both physical, mental and social well-being, prevents openness about their

personal identity, lead to an increased risk of suicidal behaviour, impede their educational achievement, violates their right to education without discrimination and right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health. These negative effects call for effective policy interventions and inclusion of LGBTI bullying in the national action plan.

By perceiving such a problematic situation, this study aims at filling an information gap by collecting data on homophobic bullying in Lithuanian schools in order to provide robust empirical evidence on the existence and severity of bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity in Lithuanian schools and raise awareness of the policy-makers, teachers and society more generally.

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5 See the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 and the Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools issued by the National Educational Welfare Board in 2008, and Irish Department of Education and Skills, ANTI-BULLYING PROCEDURES FOR PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS, September 2013.

6 See [www.bepatyciu.lt/](http://www.bepatyciu.lt/)

7 See European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, "Homophobia and Discrimination on the grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the European Union Member States" Parts I & II, 2008, 2009.

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPANTS

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A specific questionnaire for an anonymous survey was formulated and distributed online. This was chosen due to several reasons: financial limits, which did not let to perform a physical examination interviewing respondents across the territory of Lithuania and because of the currently effective Lithuanian legislation titled "Protection of Minors Against the Detrimental of Public Information". The advantage of using an online medium for survey distribution gave a possibility to reach out geographically remote areas and to cover most of the territory of Lithuania, including the peripheries. Nevertheless, this method has its drawbacks – it was not possible to reach the potential respondents who do not participate in certain social networks on the Internet and those who do not have access to the Internet.

The following research objectives were formulated:

1. to collect initial data related to bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity Lithuanian schools;
2. to analyze and evaluate bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity prevalence in Lithuanian schools;
3. to use the collected data to increase the visibility of the problem in the public domain and between the school staff and to formulate recommendations for systemic social change.

The data was collected during the period of April-May of 2015. The target audience – Lithuanian high school students from 12 to 19 years old and attending any secondary school in Lithuania during the period of data collection. The purpose was to collect the data from the general population of students, regardless of the their sexual orientation and / or gender identity. This strategy was chosen for several reasons:

1. One of the objectives of this study was to find out the extent and prevalence of bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity in Lithuanian schools. This objective could be achieved only if the research audience consisted of unlimited variety of sexual orientations and / or gender identities of the respondents. Researching and analysing only the experiences of LGBTI students would arguably lead to larger scale of the homophobic bullying emphasizing the qualitative nature of the research. The study aimed to understand how bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity is understood and how it is divided among the students who do not identify themselves as LGBTI, and how these experiences are distributed among LGBTI students and non-LGBTI students. It would be impossible to reach this aim

if only LGBTI students would be targeted for research;

2. Other objectives of the study included primary data collection and raising visibility of the problem. The abundance of research, analysing the situation from different angles, develops and strengthens the knowledge base, which can in turn be used for strategic policy interventions. In 2015, association LGL (Lithuanian Gay League) has published a study – “Invisible bullying: Lithuanian schools study findings and recommendations”<sup>9</sup>, which were representing analysis specifically of homosexual and bisexual students. In order to fill the knowledge gap it was decided to choose a much more diverse target audience, so the broader understanding of bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity extent could be revealed.

An anonymous questionnaire was distributed through Lithuanian survey platform Apklausa.lt. The questionnaire consisted of 17 questions, of which 6 were aiming to collect the respondents’ demographic data. Of the existing 11 questions, two were open ones, the remaining 9 – had a multiple choice of answers with a possibility to record a comment. Due to the sensitivity of the subject and the potential accessibility problems by the target group, the respondents were not required to answer every single question.

The answers were received from 299 respondents, 3 of which indicated that they had already graduated from high school. Since the study narrowed the

target audience to the ones who were attending any high school in Lithuania during data collection period, the mentioned 3 respondents were excluded from the further data analysis and total 296 responses were analysed in this study. The number of the respondents could not be considered as representative (although this is a relatively high number for such a sensitive topic for Lithuanian schools), so the results can not be generalized to and valued as a catch-all. However, the results may indicate trends and problematic situations and can be used as a starting point for future research applications and strategic policy interventions.

The questionnaire was distributed in cooperation with non-governmental organization “Lithuanian School Students Union” (LMS)<sup>10</sup>. The organisation seeks to unite and represent all Lithuanian pupils, and therefore, its communication channels for survey distribution guaranteed that distant geographical areas and other than the main cities of Lithuania would be reached for potential respondents. Lithuanian Students’ Union has distributed the survey through their Facebook profile page, via internal e-mailing groups and newsletters. Additionally, e-mails were sent to various Lithuanian students and youth organizations and associations (e.g. “Lithuanian Parliament of Students”, Youth Organizations “Round Table”, “Lithuanian Scouts” and so on). The organisations dedicated to LGBTI issues were deliberately excluded from this list in order to keep the diversity of targeted audience in terms of their sexual orientation and / or gender identity, and not to distort the data.

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9 “Invisible bullying: Lithuanian schools study findings and recommendations” <http://www.lgl.lt/assets/Patyciu-leidinys-internet.pdf>

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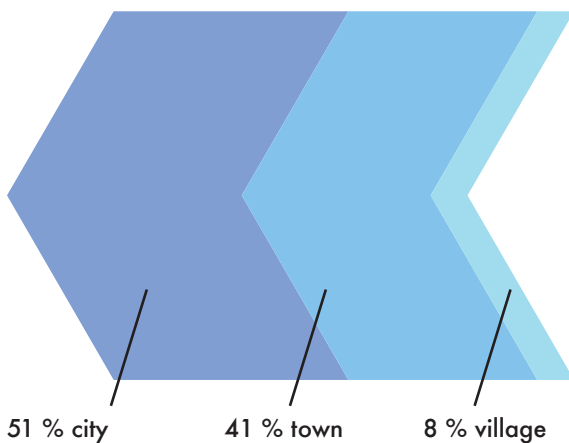
10 [www.moksleiviai.lt](http://www.moksleiviai.lt)

## SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

A relevant demographic data about the respondents was collected in the survey and is presented below.

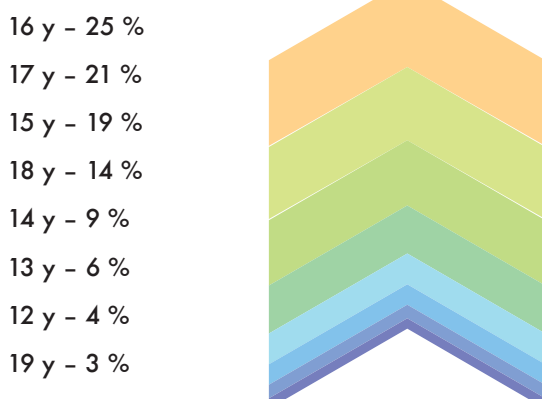
The majority of the respondents (51 %) identified a larger city as their place of residence, 41 % – a smaller town, and 8 % claimed to live in a rural Lithuanian village. (9 respondents did not answer this question).

Respondents' place of residence (Chart 1.1)



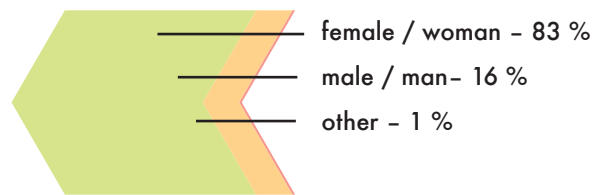
The respondents' age ranged from 12 to 19 years. The vast majority were 16 and 17 years old (25 % and 21 % of respondents respively). The remaining respondents' age was divided as follows: 12 y – 4 %, 13 y – 6 %, 14 y – 9 %, 15 y – 19 %, 18 y – 14 %, 19 y – 3 %. (15 respondents did not indicate their age).

Respondents' age . (Chart 1.2)



When queried about their sex / gender<sup>11</sup> of the respondents – 1 % reported "other", 16 % chose "male / man" and the vast majority – 83 % indicated "female / woman". Answer "other" (1 %) – has proved to be an insignificant minority, and data according by this aspect therefore will not be analyzed in the study. (9 respondents did not answer the question).

Respondents' sex / gender. (Chart 1.3)



Students also indicated their sexual orientation. As expected – the vast majority of respondents – 73 % reported to be heterosexual. 17 % of respondents doubted for one particular choice and opted for the answer "I do not know." 10 % reported to be bisexual, 5 % – homosexual. (17 respondents chose not to answer this question).

The aspect of sexual orientation perception by the respondents is particularly important for the whole follow-up survey analysis, as it will allow to compare the different understandings of bullying situations, different perceptions of school staffs' actions towards bullying and other relevant aspects.

Respondents' sexual orientation. (Chart 1.4)



<sup>11</sup> Lithuanian language has one word which describes sex and gender at the same time. In this particular survey respondents have not been asked to distinguish one or another due to the complexity and potetial confusion of the subject for the survey participants.



# SURVEY RESULTS

The research results of the analysis are divided into three main blocks. The first block analyzed the prevalence and nature of bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity; the second one studied the reaction of teachers and official positions of schools regarding the homophobic bullying; and the third part presents students' perceptions about the causes of bullying and possible prevention strategies to the problem and analysis of this data.

Data are presented as a percentage. In some instances, the exact amount may exceed 100 % due to rounding.

## NATURE AND PREVALENCE OF BULLYING BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND / OR GENDER IDENTITY

### PREVALENCE OF HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING

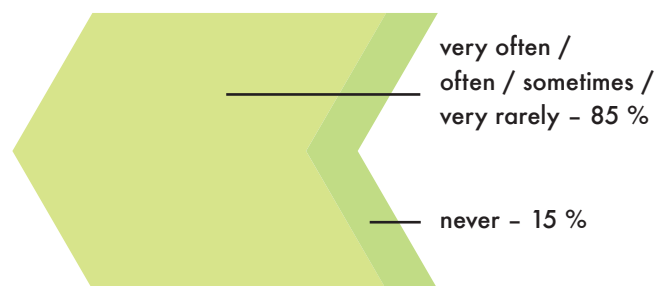
One of the main objectives of this study - to analyze the prevalence of bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity in Lithuanian schools. Respondents were asked how often they see or become aware about bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity in their classrooms or schools. Data demonstrates that 85 % of the respondents more or

less often sees or become aware about homophobic bullying in their classrooms or schools.

The answers spread as follow: 13 % of the respondents indicated that they see such bullying very often, 16 % - often, 34 % - sometimes, 23 % - very rarely and 15 % - never.

How often do you see or become aware about bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity in your classroom / school. All respondents.

(Chart 2.1.1)



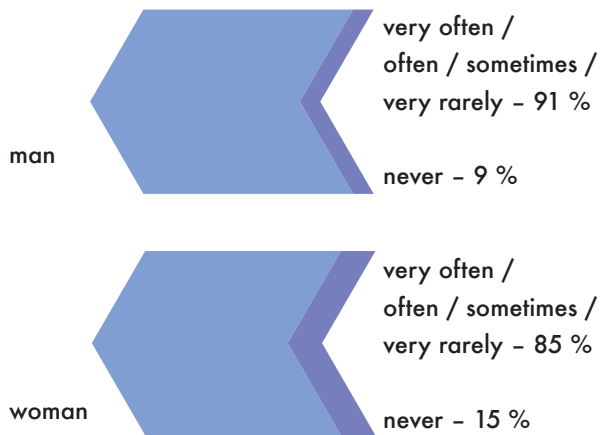
There were not a single homosexual respondent, who had never seen or become aware of homophobic bullying in their classroom or school. That means that all 100 % of the homosexual respondents one way or another became aware of homophobic bullying. This could be compared with only 15 % of their heterosexual counterparts.

How often do you see or become aware about bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity in your classroom / school. By respondents' sexual orientation. (Chart 2.1.2)



Male respondents reported that they more frequently observe the homophobic or gender identity based bullying compared with female representatives (91 % vs. 85 %).

How often do you see or become aware about bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity in your classroom / school.  
According to sex / gender. (Chart 2.1.3)

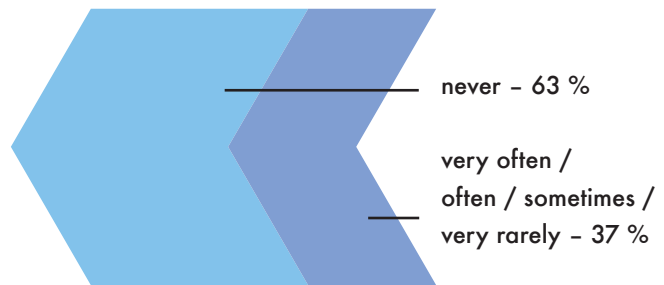


### HOW OFTEN STUDENTS BECOME VICTIMS OF HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING

This part of the study analyzes how often the students themselves become victims of homophobic bullying, and particularly verbal bullying. It is generally assumed that verbal abuse is the most common form of bullying. In the questionnaire therefore, the respondents were asked how often they were verbally bullied on the grounds of sexual orientation and / or gender identity verbally.

The data revealed that more than a third (37 %) of all the respondents have experienced the verbal homophobic bullying. 21 % said this happened rarely, 11 % claimed that it occurs sometimes, 3 % - often, 3 % - very often; 63 % said that they have never experienced verbal homophobic bullying.

How often do you experienced verbal homophobic and / or gender identity based bullying.  
All respondents. (Chart 2.2.1)



The deeper analysis revealed that among mostly verbally bullied were homosexual and bisexual students - 71 % (in each of mentioned groups). Next came the respondents who said they are uncertain about their sexual orientation - 40 %. And the smallest, but nevertheless a significant proportion of heterosexual students - 30 %.

How often do you experienced verbal homophobic or gender identity based bullying.  
By respondents' sexual orientation. (Chart 2.2.2.)



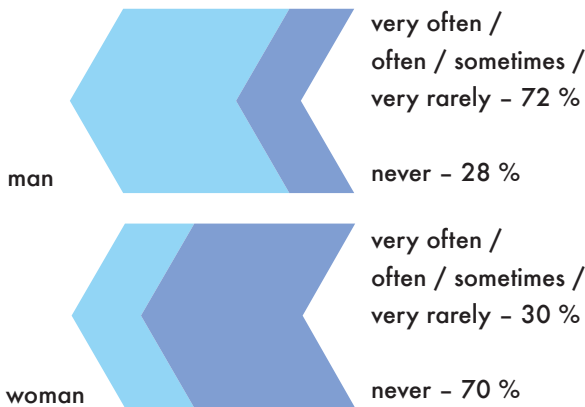
It is clear that the prevalence of bullying is directly related to ones sexual identification. However, this is not the only factor, because almost one-third (30 %) of heterosexual students claimed they have had experienced a verbal homo-



phobic bullying. Thus, it is rather a perception of individual as non-heterosexual that seems to be a crucial factor. To be identified as LGBT, whether you actually are one or not, already means a humiliation.

Analysing the data by sex / gender revealed that male respondents were twice more likely to be verbally bullied than the female respondents (72 % vs. 30 % ). This is a significant difference, which is worth paying attention in the rest of the analysis.

How often do you experienced verbal homophobic and / or gender identity based bullying.  
By respondents' sex / gender. (Chart 2.2.3)



### HOW OFTEN STUDENTS INITIATE HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING

78 % of the students indicated that they had never bullied others because of ones sexual orientation and / or gender identity. The remaining 22 % said they have initiated or participated in homophobic bullying in their class or school. Splitting results according to the respondent's sexual orientation the answers were located as follows: homophobic bullying is mostly initiated by heterosexual students – 26 %, further – 16 % of those who could not identify their sexual orientation, 14 % of homosexual students and 7 % – bisexual. It can be as-

sumed that homosexual, bisexual and, in some cases, respondents who could not indicate their sexual orientation, being more conscious about their sexual orientation and / or gender identity and questioning, might be more sensitive to this particular issue and therefore rarely initiate this kind of bullying.

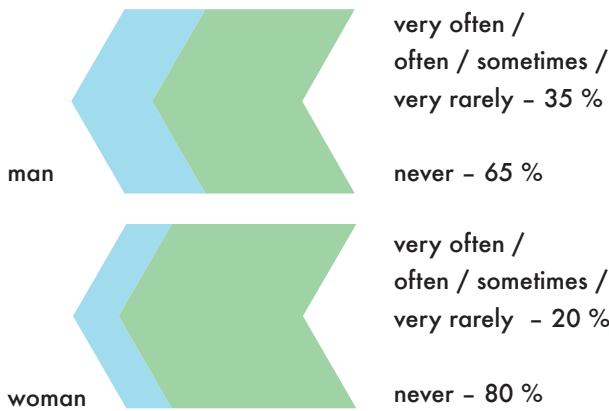
How often students initiate bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation and / or gender identity.  
By respondents' sexual orientation. (Chart 2.3.1)



A study revealed a significant difference in the distribution of answers according respondents' sex / gender: 35 % of the male respondents said they have been a verbal homophobic bullying initiators, compared with 20 % of female representatives. It is a clearly visible tendency: a theme of sexual orientation and gender identity is more often escalated among the male respondents<sup>12</sup> which indicates an entrenchment of "male heterosexuality" as the only "normal" standard of sexuality.

<sup>12</sup> See also a chart 2.2.3 where it is shown that male respondents are verbally bullied 2 times more likely than female respondents.

How often students initiate bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation and / or gender identity. By respondents' sex / gender. (Chart 2.3.2)



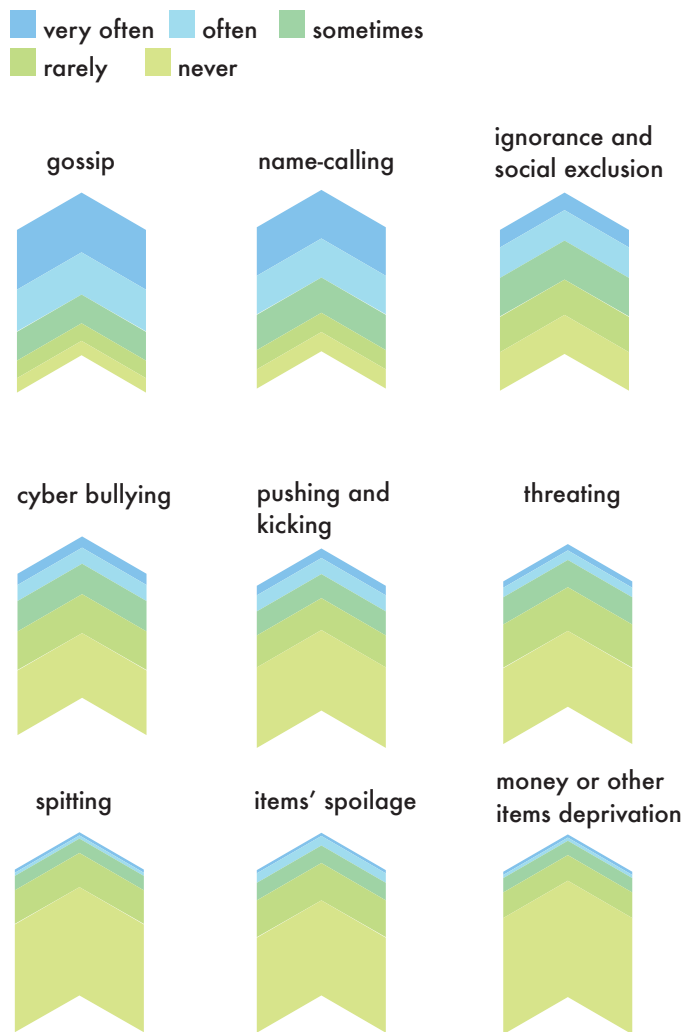
### THE FORMS OF HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING

In the survey students were also asked to indicate the forms of homophobic bullying. As expected – the most common form of bullying occurs through gossip, followed by name-calling, as well as ignoring and social exclusion; and cyber bullying (social networks and / or text messaging) as the fourth most frequently used bullying form. The rest are pushing and kicking, threatening, spitting, spoiling the items and deprivation of money or other items.

It would be particularly useful for future research to explore each of these separate realms – verbal, physical, and particularly the digital one, which cannot be observed and / or controlled by the school staff. It is generally thought that physical bullying is likely to take place where it is not accessible or visible for teachers, other school staff – on the way to / from school, school toilets, cloakrooms. Meanwhile, verbal bullying is often thought to take place in the classroom, where it is observed by other students and school staff. The deeper

analysis of each of different group of bullying would allow to confirm or deny these general assumption by bringing the knowledge and understanding how bullying works, what enables it, how to react and combat and what could be the strategies to prevent it.

Forms of homophobic bullying. (Chart 2.3.2)



### VERBAL HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING

In this study, greater attention has been paid to verbal bullying, because it was assumed that this is one of the most common forms of bullying, specially popular in school settings. Respondents were asked to indicate the specific words that

are commonly used during homophobic bullying. The answers are shown in the picture below<sup>13</sup>.

The most commonly used words in homophobic bullying<sup>14</sup>. (Words Cloud No 1)



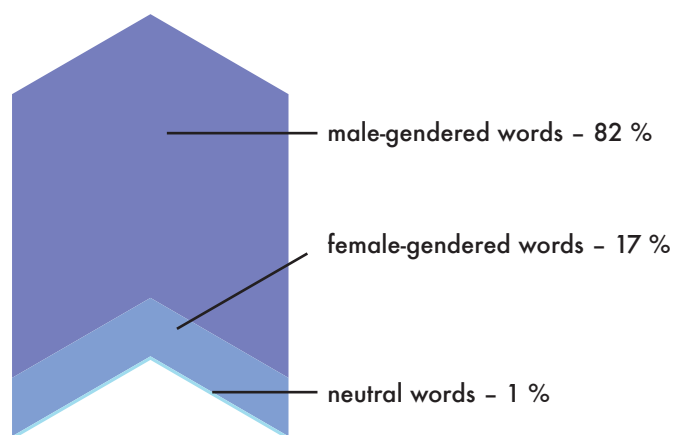
Data revealed that standard normative words, such as gay or lesbian are among the most commonly used. However, they are used to offend, so they have acquired a negative connotation in school settings among students. Therefore, someone can be called by a normative word revealing / alleging ones non-traditional sexual orientation, and that is assumed to be insulting and humiliating in itself.

Respondents' replies imply the importance of gender identity question. Participants were using the words which are

questioning the gender identity – a girl (for a boy), a boy (for a girl), a transvestite, and even "Raulis"<sup>15</sup>. A mismatch of gender identity as well as non-heterosexual orientation is not socially acceptable. It would be difficult to determine how much these areas are mixed or used interchangeably, but nevertheless it is obvious that the questions of sexual orientation and gender identity are interlinked as they both transgress the traditional gender roles in society.

The following analysis of the collected data through the prism of gender roles showed that the 'masculine' words were mentioned by almost five times more than the "feminine" or neutral descriptions (as mentioned earlier, Lithuanian language has masculine and feminine forms). In this context, the earlier mentioned tendency repeats here again – the questions of sexual orientation and / gender identity is escalated more frequently between male participants than among their female counterparts.

Distribution of the words by their gender. (Chart 2.3.3)



<sup>13</sup> The word cloud was not translated in English language and is presented in Lithuanian, because there are many slang and jargon words, that have no direct translation, but to name few – faggot, lesbo, transvestite, sucker, cock, degenerate, whore and so on.

<sup>14</sup> The size of the word indicates how often it was mentioned in survey by participant.

<sup>15</sup> Raulis – Raulis Mammadli / Agness Landau – a transsexual celebrity of Lithuanian's show scene.

## THE ROLE OF THE TEACHERS AND SCHOOL'S POSSITION

### THE REACTION OF TEACHERS TO THE HOMOPHOBIC AND / OR GENDER IDENTITY BASED BULLYING

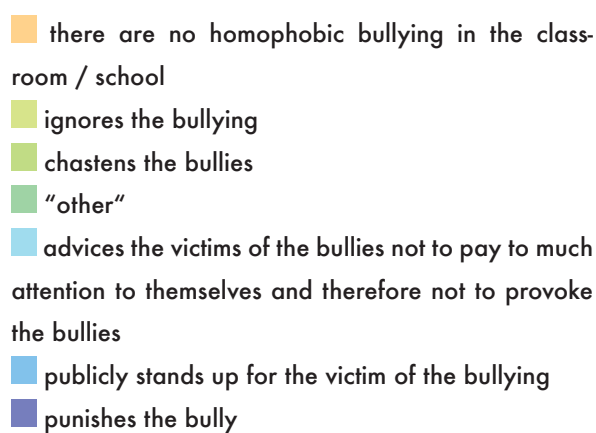
In order to investigate and assess the position of school staff and management regarding bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity, students were asked what are the reactions of teachers to such a bullying they observe.

35 % of the respondents in the survey replied that there are no such bullying in their class / school. Although 68 % of them have indicated earlier in the questionnaire that they had seen or had become aware about homophobic and / or gender identity based bullying in their classroom / school. There are several assumptions for explaining the situation, which in principle could be revealed if deeper investigation of this issue would be conducted, which, however was not possible in the current survey due to limitations in scope. Nevertheless, the one of the implicit assumptions would be the absence of clear school policy on homophobic bullying – it could be difficult for a student to trace teachers' reactions, since those actions are probably not consistent, fragmented, imprecise and therefore not always understood by students.

Almost a quarter of all the respondents (22 %) stated that the teachers, when observing bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity, simply ignore it. 16 % said that the teachers chasten the bullies, and 7 % claimed that the teachers were advis-

ing the victims of bullying not to attract too much attention to themselves and therefore not to provoke the bullying. 6 % claimed that the teachers publicly stood up for the victims of homophobic or gender identity based bullying, and 5 % indicated that the teachers had punished the bullies. 10 % of students did not choose any of these options – they pointed out on the "other".

How the teachers respond to the homophobic and or gender identity based bullying (Chart 3.1.1)



The survey revealed that a half (50 %) of the homosexual and almost a half (43 %) of the bisexual respondents claimed that the teachers were usually ignoring the homophobic and / or gender identity based bullying in their classroom / school. The same was said by the 32 % of students, who had experienced a verbal homophobic bullying in their classrooms / schools. The teachers' strategy to ignore the homophobic and / or gender identity based bullying was least indicated by heterosexual students.

Teachers ignore the homophobic bullying. (Chart 3.1.3)

- homosexual
- bisexual
- respondents who have experienced a homophobic bullying
- all respondents
- those respondents who can not define their sexual orientation
- heterosexual

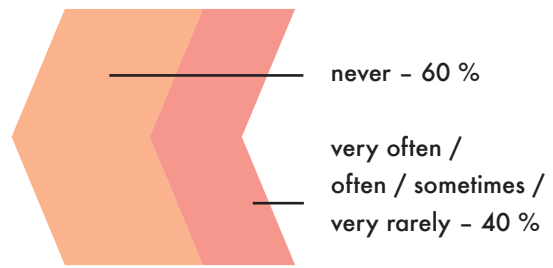


When overviewing the teachers' reaction to bullying based on one's sexual orientation and / or identity, it becomes obvious that these reactions are not systematic or unified, and that there is no single visible or clear direction, but rather that these are individual reactions that do not reflect any officially formulated school's policy on homophobic or gender identity based bullying (as there is no such policy in place).

### TEACHERS AS BULLIES

Respondents were asked how often they observe their teachers acting as bullies (on the grounds of sexual orientation and / or gender identity), and 40 % of the respondents said that they had seen or had become aware of their teachers in the bullies role.

How often teachers are observed as bullies (on the grounds of sexual orientation and / or gender identity). (Chart 3.2.1)



The answers in detail splits into the following groups: 60 % - said that teachers had never initiated a homophobic bullying, 24 % said they had observed it very rarely, 12 % - sometimes, 1 % - often 2 % - very often.

The survey revealed that the homosexual and bisexual students much more often claim that the teachers become bullies because of one's actual or perceived sexual orientation and / or gender identity. Although a little more than a one third of heterosexual respondents also have observed this trend.

How often teachers are observed as bullies (on the grounds of sexual orientation and / or gender identity). By respondents' sexual orientation. (Chart 3.2.2)

- very often / often / sometimes / very rarely
- never

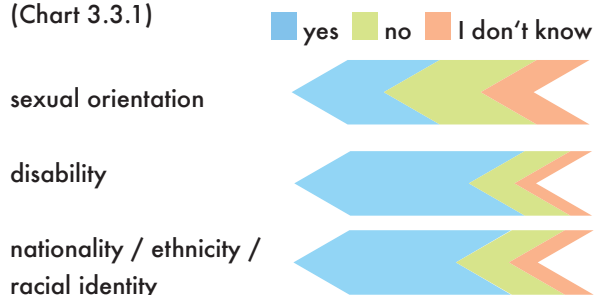


## SCHOOL POSITION ON HOMOPHOBIC AND / OR GENDER IDENTITY BASED BULLYING

The study aimed to find out whether the schools have a clearly formulated and clearly communicated position in relation to sexual orientation and / or gender identity bullying. Students were asked if the teachers and other school staff talk about bullying based on nationality / ethnicity / racial identity, disability and sexual orientation, and that it should be unacceptable. The first two from the list (nationality and ethnicity) are included in the list of choices as examples which are likely to be formally established and well-articulated in schools. Sexual orientation option was presented as equivalent to those first two and were supposed to lead to a perception that this could be the school's official position too, rather than teachers' individual initiatives.

62 % of the respondents indicated that the teachers and other school staff never speak about homophobic bullying or they are not aware if this kind of communication ever taking place. In comparison, 28 % of the respondents said that they knew nothing about the school position on bullying on the basis of disability and 34 % about position on bullying based on nationality / ethnicity / racial identity.

If the teachers and other staff of school ever talk about bullying based on sexual orientation, disability, nationality / ethnicity / racial identity. (Chart 3.3.1)

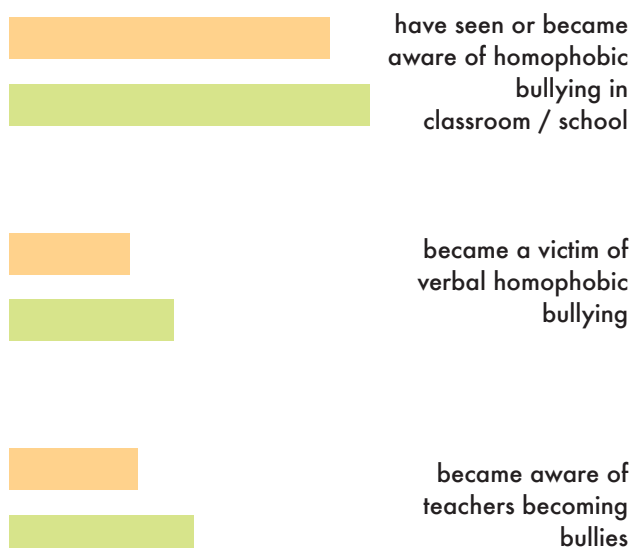


It is clear that the official strategies applied in schools have enormous influence for internal processes and often leads to desired results of decreased prevalence of bullying. While analyzing the data, a correlation between the school's internal anti-bullying strategy and the prevalence of the same bullying in the same school has been identified. Respondents claiming that their school does not have a clear policy against homophobic and / or gender identity based bullying also reported that in their classroom / school:

1. they more often see or become aware about bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation and / or gender identity,
2. they more often become a victims of verbal homophobic bullying,
3. they more often observe their teachers as bullies (on the grounds of sexual orientation and / or gender identity).

If the teachers and other staff of school ever talk about bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity. (Chart 3.3.2)

- teachers and other school staff communicate that homophobic bullying is not acceptable
- teachers and other school staff do not communicate that homophobic bullying is not acceptable



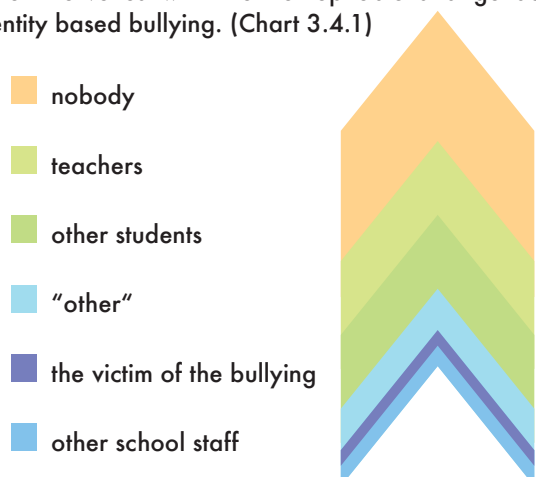


The tendency here become obvious – the schools having communicated about homophobic and / or gender identity based bullying are likely to report less (from 10 % to 13 % less) on homophobic behaviour in their classrooms. And these are very logical consequences – if the problem is not understood, acknowledged and articulated, it is free to grow and take root in the minds of the teachers and the students. The data strongly suggests that a clear policy against homophobic and / or gender identity based bullying reduces its prevalence.

### WHO INTERVENE WITH THE HOMOPHOBIC AND / OR GENDER IDENTITY BASED BULLYING

The respondents were asked who usually cease the homophobic and / or gender identity based bullying in classroom settings. Most of the respondents – 32 % indicated that no one intervene with this kind of bullying. 21 % reported that it is the other students, and the same amount also indicated that it is the teachers. 7 % reported that the victims of bullying themselves break out the act of bullying. And 3 % claimed that it is ceased by other school staff, such as management (not teachers).

Who intervenes with the homophobic and gender identity based bullying. (Chart 3.4.1)



15 % of respondents chose an option "other" and had the opportunity to record a comment. After analyzing the comments, it appeared that 39 % of them said that there are no homophobic bullying in their class / school and that is why it is impossible to answer the question.

It is clear that a significant part of the problem of homophobic and gender identity-based bullying consists of ignoring the problem itself. It can be argued that it is determined by the absence of official homophobic bullying prevention programs and policies. The intervention with the homophobic bullying is sporadic, encouraged by individual initiative and therefore minimal or non-existent.

### THE CAUSES OF HOMOPHOBIC AND GENDER IDENTITY BASED BULLYING AND THE WAYS TO PREVENT IT

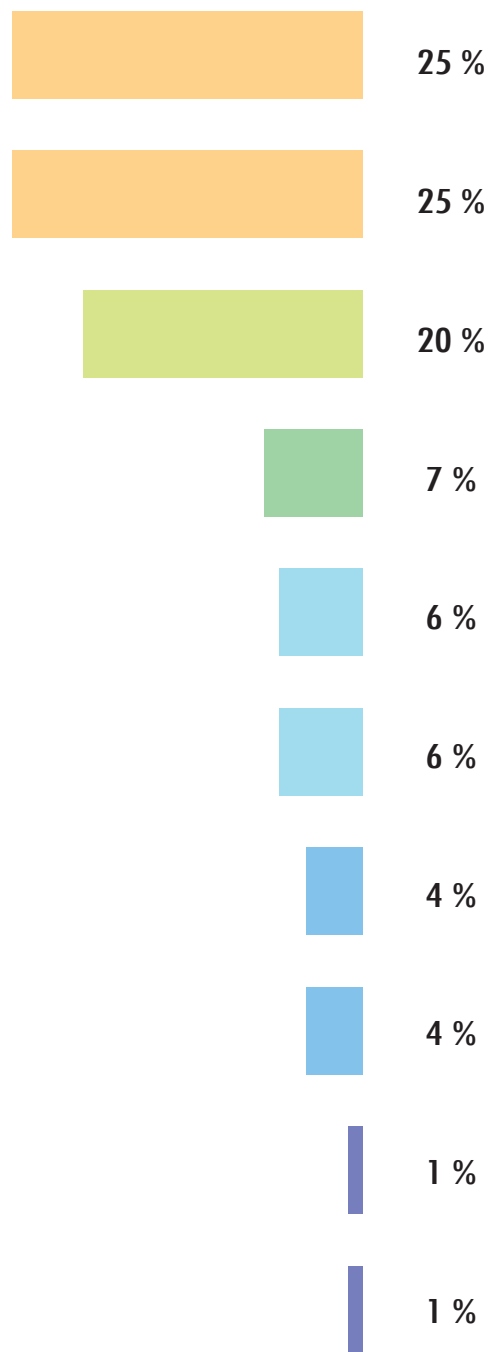
#### THE CAUSES OF HOMOPHOBIC AND GENDER IDENTITY BASED BULLYING

The respondents were asked to answer an open-end question "Why do you think the students bully each on the grounds of the sexual orientation and / or gender identity?" All 169 responses were divided into 10 categories with distinct causes and reasons. For example: "Because they want to be cool" or "Because they feel invisible and want to show off ..." – drops into the category "a common culture of bullying".

All results are categorised as follows: 25 % of all responses fall into a "fear of non-conformity" category, when the cause of bullying becomes a non-compliance with the norms of society in gen-

eral. The other 25 % of the responses were classified as – “a common culture of bullying” – respondents said that bullying often arises from the fact that bullies seek to consolidate the position in classroom / school, aim to be recognized and fear that if they themselves will not bully, they will be bullied at. The bullying in this way thus becomes a strong way to communicate with the public and the community. 20 % of the responds were classified as “entrenchment of heteronormativity” – these students claimed that other than heterosexual orientation is not acceptable and understandable either by themselves or by general society. These are the three most common causes of bullying indicated by the respondents that could be summed up as follows: the homogeneity of society, the normalized self-actualization in the community (school / classroom) through bullying and unquestionable heteronormativity entrenchment.

7 % of the responses were classified as a lack of sex education and education in general. Answers indicating that such behaviour comes from negative public opinion, family, teachers and religious beliefs gathered accordingly 7 %, 6 %, 1 % and 1 % of all the respondents’ answers. 4 % of the replies could be categorised as “a fear of being identified as non-heterosexual” and “non-compliant sex behaviour and / or appearance”.



- fear of non-conformity
- common culture of bullying
- entrenchment of heteronormativity
- lack of sex education and education in general
- negative public opinion
- homophobic values in family
- fear to be identified as non-heterosexual
- non-compliant sex behaviour and / or appearance
- religious beliefs
- negative teachers' influence

The causes of homophobic and / or gender identity based bullying. (Chart 4.2.1)



The table of categories and corresponding examples\*. (Table No 1)

fear of non-conformity	<i>They think to be different is wrong. If you look and behave like others you feel more safe and trust your self more. And then it becomes easier to bully others &lt;...&gt;</i>
common culture of bullying	<i>The influence of the friends encourage bullying. You want to adapt and that is way you need to show off.</i>
entrenchment of heteronormativity	<i>I think that students bully the homosexual guys, because they think it is not normal and they find it disgusting. The lesbians are bullied more rarely.</i>
lack of sex education and education in general	<i>Lack of education. No one teaches them how to behave.</i>
negative public opinion	<i>Because there is so much bullying within society and online that students takes it as an example and thinks it is fine.</i>
homophobic values in family	<i>Parents are also bullies, that encourages their children to bully too, as it is understood as sickness.</i>
fear to be identified as non-heterosexual	<i>Afraid to be identified as homosexuals, therefore start a homophobic bullying by themselves.</i>
non-compliant sex behaviour and / or appearance	<i>Because of the different appearance, way of talking. If socialise more with opposite gender students.</i>
religious believes	<i>&lt;...&gt; because of the religious believes, different understanding of the aspect of humanity existence...</i>
teachers' influence	<i>Negative teacher's approach to non-traditional sexual orientations</i>

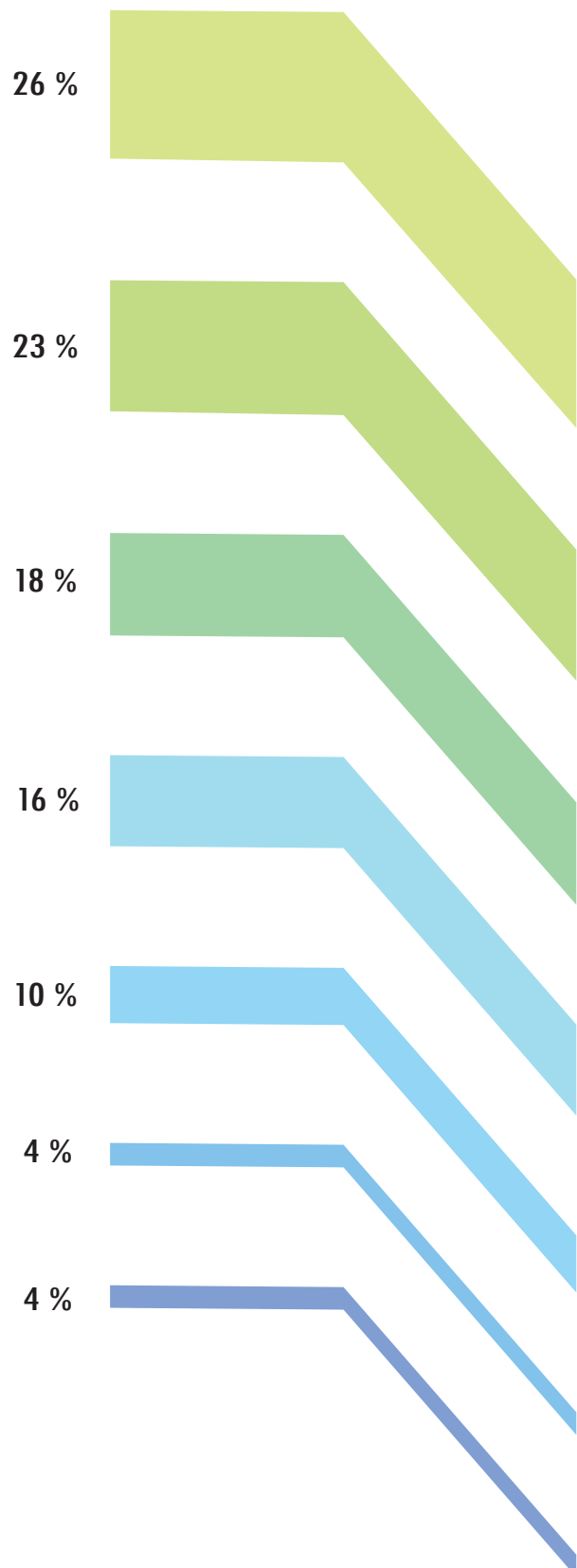
## WAYS TO PREVENT HOMOPHOBIC AND GENDER IDENTITY BASED BULLYING

The respondents were asked what should be done to reduce or prevent the homophobic bullying, and it was possible to select more than one answer. 26 % of the participating students chose an option, which proposed the introduction of sex education with discussions on sexual orientation and sexuality topics at school. 23 % said that parents should talk with their children about the various forms of bullying, including homophobic one, 18 % claimed that the teachers should speak more openly about sex, sexuality and similar topics, 16 % said that there should be clear rules introduced at schools regarding the homophobic bullying, 10 % indicated that there are no homophobic and / or gender identity based bullying in their classroom / school; and 4 % said that students are too young to discuss sex and sexuality topics at school.

Ways to prevent homophobic and / or gender identity based bullying. (Chart 4.1.1)

- sex education should be introduced in curricula
- parents should talk with their children about the various forms of bullying, including homophobic one
- teachers should speak more openly about sex, sexuality and similar topics
- clear rules should be established at schools regarding the homophobic / gender identity based bullying
- there are no homophobic / gender identity based bullying in their classroom / school
- other
- students are too young to discuss sex and sexuality topics at school

The study reveals three major anti-bullying strategy components: it is a formal learning program involving sex education, teachers' competence to be able to talk and discuss issues of sexuality and the role of parents, as these were indicated by the respondents themselves.



# CONCLUSIONS

In the long fight against bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity, a detailed understanding of the very essence of the problem is required. This is one of the objectives of the research – to gather and analyze the data in order to enable an evidence-based decision-making and formulate strategic action plans. This study is one of the very few of its kind conducted in Lithuania, which sets out the trends and creates a platform for a public discussion.

This particular study included only one aspect of bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity - peer bullying at school, but it should not be forgotten that it is only a tip of the iceberg. Other social circles as teachers (whose role as the bully were discussed in the study at a minimum), the family and relatives, neighbours and so on are equivalent everyday actors in the lives of school students. This study concentrated on the school communities, as it is likely that its members are mostly affected by such external factors as clearly formulated and implemented policy of education, mass media translated messages, a close family circles cherished values, among others.

The investigation revealed certain trends related to the LGBTI sphere, which would otherwise remain hidden, because even in a national website

dedicated to prevention of bullying in schools, there is not a single hint about bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity. Meanwhile, the survey demonstrated that 85 % of the respondents in their classroom / school is aware of homophobic or gender identity based bullying. It is an incredibly high figure, which reveals the prevalence of homophobic bullying in Lithuanian schools. The words “gay” or “lesbian” have acquired a negative connotation – it means a humiliation to be identified as one. It is not only the LGBTI students who are bullied – this issue is common among all school communities and society in general.

It was revealed that the teachers and other school staff in the context of homophobic bullying currently have a minimal and sporadic role. The teachers choose not to intervene with homophobic or gender identity based bullying or become bullies themselves. This is a worrying tendency, which emerges most likely, because the problem of homophobic or gender identity based bullying is not articulated on policy-making level, there are no clear guidelines or anti-bullying practices that could be applied in schools. Even more – the “Law on Protection of Minors Against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information” introduces confusion, because it becomes unclear whether the teachers do have a right

to respond to homophobic and gender identity based bullying in the first place.

The study also revealed a number of strong correlations, one of them – bullying based on sexual orientation and / or gender identity was significantly more common among male than female respondents – they were more often nicknamed, and more often became bullies themselves. The vast majority of the words used in homophobic / gender identity based bullying were masculine. This is a clear reference to prevailing masculinity hetero-norms.

Another significant correlation was found between whether or not students were aware about school position regarding homophobic and gender identity based bullying and the frequency of such bullying. Students from schools, where there was communication regarding the bullying also more rarely reported to have seen or have become aware of such kind of bullying. They also more rarely saw or became aware of teachers as bullies and more rarely become bullies themselves. It is obvious and indisputable influence of sex education, which unfortunately does not yet exist in Lithuanian schools.

Lithuania has been implementing Olweus "Bullying and Violence Prevention Program" since 2008, which is supervised by the "Centre of Special Education and Psychology"<sup>16</sup>. The Centre's own conducted comparative analysis reveals that the scale of bullying in schools that participated in the pro-

gram for five years is constantly evolving: the number of bullied students have decreased by 32 %, and the number of bullies have decreased by 43 %<sup>17</sup>. These significant figures only prove that a consistent, long-term strategy is the key in changing rooted norms and in bringing a positive change.

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16 See "Olweus programa. Specialiosios pedagogikos ir psichologijos centras." < [www.sppc.lt/index.php?-1194004933](http://www.sppc.lt/index.php?-1194004933) >

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17 See "Patyčių masto kitimas: Olweus patyčių prevencijos programos vykdymo Lietuvoje patirtis." Ieva Dulinskaitė. < [http://www.vaikuliniija.lt/media/filer\\_public/47/d7/47d7028b-0841-44ce-800f-47c279ef9aaf/ieva\\_dulinskaite.pdf](http://www.vaikuliniija.lt/media/filer_public/47/d7/47d7028b-0841-44ce-800f-47c279ef9aaf/ieva_dulinskaite.pdf) >

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