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LGBTQ SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS IN THE U.S.

An Analysis of Demographics & Experiences

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LGBTQ Victory Institute works to achieve and sustain global equality through leadership development, training, and convening to increase the number, expand the diversity, and ensure the success of openly LGBTQ elected and appointed officials at all levels of government.

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Introduction

Public schools in the US have been under increasingly fervent attack in the past few years. LGBTQ students, teachers and administrators have faced the brunt of this vitriol, making LGBTQ representation on school boards more important than ever. This analysis uncovers the state of LGBTQ representation on school boards across the country and the attacks LGBTQ school board members face while running for and serving in office. The demographic data was gathered by LGBTQ Victory Institute through its Out for America map database.¹ The data on the experiences of elected LGBTQ school board members was found through a survey of the known LGBTQ school board members.

¹ This data is based on the Out for America Report, which is the most comprehensive resource for identifying currently serving out LGBTQ elected officials in the United States at every level of government.

Key Findings

- LGBTQ people are severely underrepresented on school boards in the U.S. Out of approximately 90,000 school board members², only 90 are known to be members of the LGBTQ community³ -- **just 0.1% of all school board members**. Yet LGBTQ people make up at least 7.1% of U.S. adults.
- Known LGBTQ school board members serve in just **28 states**, with the majority only having one LGBTQ school board member in the entire state.
- The South⁴ makes up 38% of the U.S. population but has **only 13% of the known LGBTQ school board members**.
- There are low numbers of cisgender and trans women, as well as non-binary people, serving on school boards. Out of the **90 known LGBTQ school board members**, there are **29 cis women, four trans women, two trans men and two non-binary people**.
- Of LGBTQ school board member survey respondents, 47% had been the target of anti-LGBTQ verbal attacks as a school board candidate, **51% had been the target of anti-LGBTQ verbal attacks as a school board member**, and 17% had been the target of anti-LGBTQ verbal attacks from a fellow member of the school board.
- **One-third of respondents** stated there are candidates running for their school board who are championing an anti-LGBTQ platform.
- More than **one-third of respondents faced threats to their safety and 6.4% received death threats** as a school board candidate or member.
- 62% of survey respondents stated that supporting LGBTQ students was a primary motivation for running for a school board position and **87% have put forward pro-LGBTQ policies or legislation during their time as a school board member**.

2 https://cdn-files.nsba.org/s3fs-public/reports/K12_National_Survey.pdf

3 LGBTQ school board members are identified through extensive media monitoring, an annual census project, proactive research, and Victory Institute's national network of LGBTQ elected officials and supporters. With 90,000 school board members in the U.S., undoubtedly an unknown number of out LGBTQ school board members are missing from this database. Yet the Out for America database remains the largest and most comprehensive in the United States. For the most up-to-date data, visit outforamerica.org.

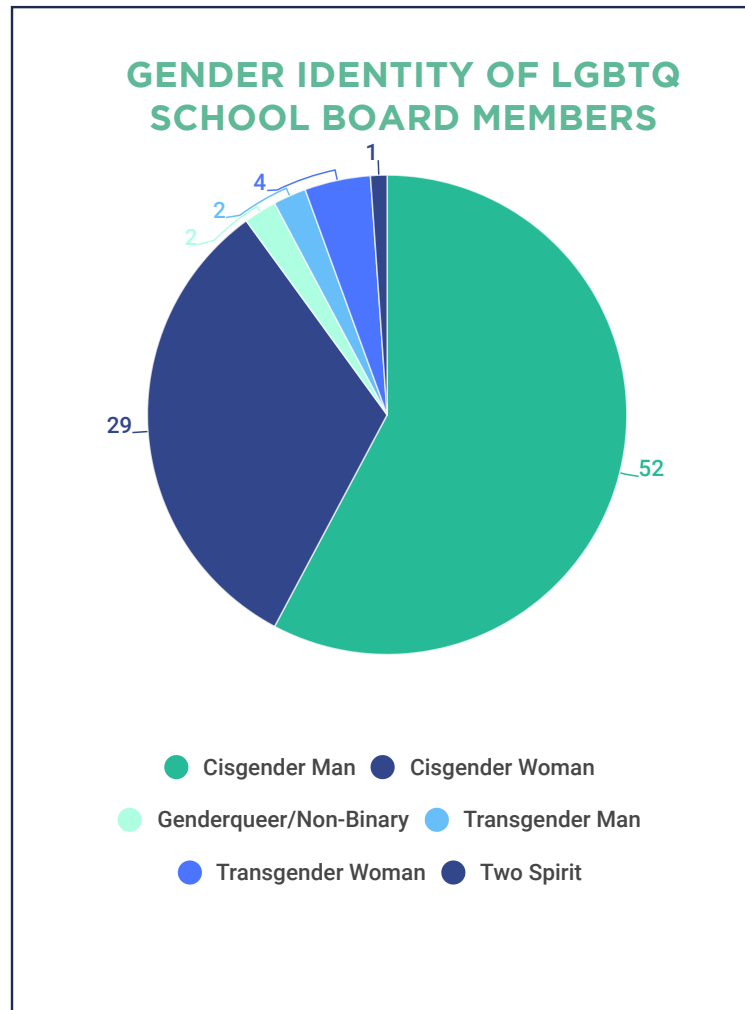
4 Based on the United States Census Bureau designation. States include: Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington, D.C., West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Demographic Findings

In the US, there are approximately 90,000 school board members and of those, 90 are known members of the LGBTQ community. That's just 0.1% of school board members, far below the 7.1% of U.S. adults who identify as part of the LGBTQ community.⁵ To achieve equitable representation among school board members, U.S. voters would need to elect 6,300 more LGBTQ school board members.

The region where LGBTQ school board members are most significantly underrepresented is in the South. Just 13% of known LGBTQ school board members are from the South, despite the South making up 38% of the US population.⁶ The state with the most LGBTQ school board members is California, with 22 members. Michigan has the second highest with nine and Ohio and Pennsylvania are tied for third with seven. Overall, there is at least one LGBTQ school board member in 28 states.

Demographically, the majority of LGBTQ school board members are gay cisgender men, with women and non-binary individuals severely underrepresented. Cis women make up only one-third of LGBTQ school board members, trans women 4% and there are only two trans men and two non-binary individuals. Less than one in five LGBTQ school board members are lesbian.



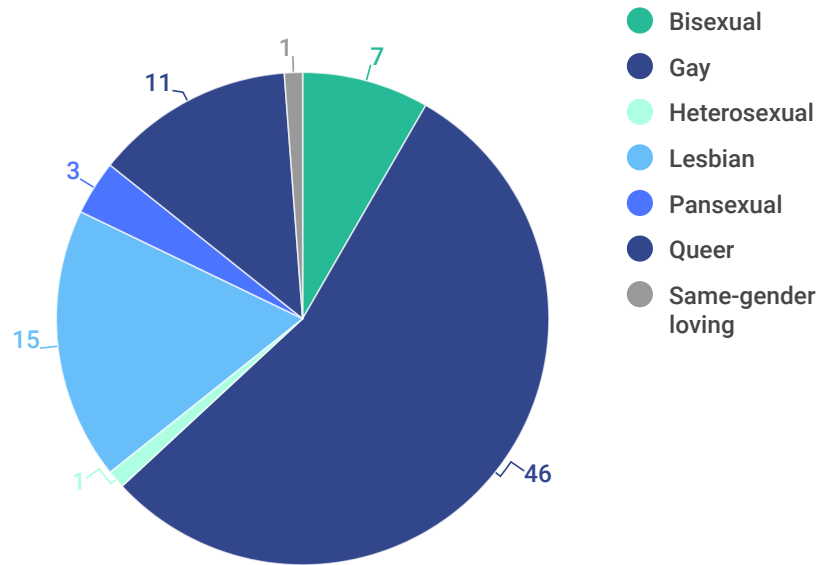
LGBTQ school board members are significantly more racially and ethnically diverse than overall LGBTQ elected officials and the overall US elected official population. Half of LGBTQ school board members are people of color, compared to 28% of LGBTQ elected officials and just 12% of US elected officials.⁷

⁵ LGBT Identification in U.S. Ticks Up to 7.1% (<https://news.gallup.com/poll/389792/lgbt-identification-ticks-up.aspx>)

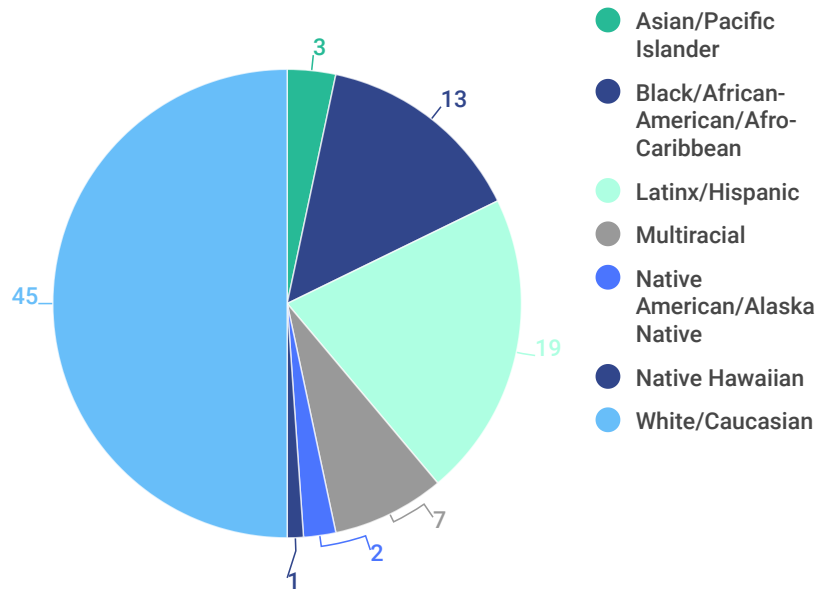
⁶ United States Population Growth by Region (<https://www.census.gov/popclock/data.tables.php?component=growth>)

⁷ Out for America 2021 - Race/Ethnicity of LGBTQ Elected Officials (<https://victoryinstitute.org/out-for-america-2021/#race>)

SEXUAL ORIENTATION OF LGBTQ SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS



RACE AND ETHNICITY OF LGBTQ SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS



Survey Findings

LGBTQ Victory Institute disseminated a survey to the 90 known LGBTQ school board members asking about their experiences running for and serving in office. More than half - 47 LGBTQ school board members - responded. The survey was conducted from April 19 through April 28, 2022.

Many of the known LGBTQ school boards members reported being subject to verbal attacks during their campaigns and time in office. Almost half were the target of an anti-LGBTQ verbal attack as a school board candidate (46%), half had been the target of an anti-LGBTQ verbal attack as a school board member, and almost one-fifth had been the target of an anti-LGBTQ verbal attack from a fellow member of the school board (17%). Physical danger was also a concern to many members, as a third faced threats to their safety (35%) and 6.5% received death threats as a school board candidate or member.

Almost two-thirds (61%) cited supporting LGBTQ students as a primary motivation in their decision to run for a school board position and 92% stated that they were involved in LGBTQ activism prior to running for a school board position. This activism was reflected in their work, with 87% putting forward pro-LGBTQ policies or legislation during their time in office.

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