



# Religious Freedom and LGBTIQ+ Students

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## Abstract

**Introduction** The United Nations called member states to better support the education rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQ+) people in recent years. However, Australian policy debates about schools' 'religious freedom' and exemptions around gender and sexuality discrimination continue.

**Methods** This article explores 1293 LGBTIQ+ students' experiences around religious freedom, gender, and sexuality by school type using data from the 2022 'Gender and Sexuality Expression in Schools' survey. To understand correlations for students' religious vs. non-religious educational institution types, basic descriptive and correlative statistical analyses were undertaken for quantitative data in SPSS and Excel including chi-square tests, alongside Leximancer-supported thematic analyses of qualitative responses.

**Results** Attending religious schools was associated with (1) increased anti-LGBTIQ+ and religious freedom-restricting policies, messages, and practices; (2) increased sexual orientation and gender identity and expression change efforts (SOGIECE) messages and practices; and (3) increased negative consequences and feelings. In religious education sites, professionals — especially teachers/educators — were more likely to spread anti-LGBTIQ+ messaging at class/group and school-wide levels especially around 'sinning'; however, professional codes appeared deterrents for school psychologists. In government schools, students more often unofficially spread anti-LGBTIQ+ messaging around 'brokenness' or 'social harmfulness', mostly one-on-one.

**Conclusions** The article shows the value of anti-discrimination laws and professional codes in reducing official problematic practices, for those contexts and professionals they applied to.

**Policy Implications** Removal of exemptions for religious education institutions in anti-discrimination laws, revisions of education policies, and clearer protections for LGBTIQ+ people in educators' professional codes are recommended.

**Keywords** School · Gender · Sexuality · Conversion · LGBT · Policy · Practice

## Introduction

Nations have been called upon by rights bodies to support the right to non-discrimination on the basis of sexuality, gender, and sex characteristic diversity in education and to ban religious Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression Change Efforts (SOGIECE) (UN, 2020). SOGIECE are a set of scientifically discredited practices that aim to deny and suppress lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQ+) identities, which people are often first exposed to in education settings

(Jones et al., 2021a, b). Policy terrain is fast evolving, with six nations adopting national-level bans, whilst three Australian, three Canadian, five Spanish, and twenty-two US states have adopted state-specific bans pertaining to minors (and sometimes adults) (ACT Government, 2020; Movement Advancement Project, 2020; QLD Government, 2020; Victorian Government, 2021). Australia has been debating exemptions in its 2013 federal anti-discrimination law allowing religious schools 'freedom' to discriminate on the basis of gender identity/expression and sexual orientation since their introduction, alongside school-based SOGIECE (Australian Government, 2019; Australian Government, 2013, 2019–2020–2021). This paper aims to explore how religious independent/private and non-religious schools compare on religious, gender, and sexuality freedom and SOGIECE, in LGBTIQ+ Australian students' experiences. It supplies an

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overview of related research, then reports on the framing and results of a study of Australian LGBTIQ+ students' experiences.

## Literature Review

SOGIECE research includes Canadian, UK, and US-based psychology studies on SOGIECE's prevalence and harm (Salway et al., 2020; UK Government Equalities Office, 2021; UN, 2020), and ineffectiveness (APA, 2009; Beckstead, 2020; Serovich et al., 2008). Between 7 and 16% of LGBTIQ+ adults are exposed, depending on country (Salway et al., 2020; UN, 2020). Australian SOGIECE research has focussed on students (Jones, 2015, 2020; Jones et al., 2021a, b). Around a third of Australian students are in religious education systems, most of which are Catholic schools (ABS, 2021a). Most of 1200 Australian telephone survey participants aged 13–18 years (93%) agreed with the statement: 'Having people of many different faiths makes Australia a better place to live,' and three quarters (74%) had a positive attitude towards minority religions (Singleton et al., 2019). Most (52%) did not identify with a religion themselves and most (50%) thought that people with very strong religious beliefs are often too intolerant. Most supported secondary schools' obligation to allow students to openly express any sexual or gender orientation (84%) (Singleton et al., 2019).

Australian LGBTIQ+ students have in particular developed changing expectations for religious acceptance over time. In the late 1990s, only two-thirds of counsellors were supportive of diverse gender and sexuality, but the remaining third sometimes encouraged change or suppression (SOGIECE) (Jones, 2015). One study explored quantitative and qualitative data on the experiences of a religious sub-group of 3134 same-sex attracted and gender questioning Australians aged 14–21 years from an anonymous online survey, against a comparable earlier sub-group from the 2004 version of the study (Gahan et al., 2014). The 2010 subgroup indicating religiosity were more likely to be socially isolated, had more negative school experiences, and were at greater risk of self-harm and suicidality; these were mostly associations seen in the 2004 data. However, the 2010 religiosity sub-group now had higher expectations of how they should be treated by the religions, saw fewer contradictions in keeping their faith and LGBTIQ+ identities, and often expected to marry and have kids (whereas the 2004 group had not yet developed an optimism for religions changing).

A study of 3134 LGBTIQ+ Australians aged 14–21 years found 7% were exposed to the conversion ideology messaging in schools (Jones, 2015) — around four times more in Christian than government schools. Anti-homophobia policies reduced exposure (3.9% vs. 14.3% without policies). Another study showed 4.9% of 2500

mostly heterosexual cisgender students aged 14+ years were exposed to conversion ideology, over a tenth in conservative schools (Jones, 2020). Affected students' concentration, grades, and attendance declined. They were more likely to consider self-harm (81.8%), enact self-harm (61.8%), consider suicide (83.6%), and attempt suicide (29.1%). A survey of 6418 LGBTIQ+ youth aged 14–21 years showed half of those exposed to conversion ideology in schools were exposed to SOGIECE practices, which had correlations with (1) demographics (being male, multi-gender-attracted, religious), (2) social experiences (increased rejection and harassment), (3) social outcomes (decreased education and housing), and (4) increased suicidality and self-harm (Jones et al., 2021b). Interviews of SOGIECE-exposed adults (Jones et al., 2021a) showed first exposure often occurred in school; however, there is no research on how school types affect the amount, emphases, and delivery mode/source of anti-LGBTIQ+ and SOGIECE messages and practice promotions. A study aiming to explore how LGBTIQ+ students' religious, gender, and sexuality freedoms differed by education institution type was therefore needed. The study asked the following:

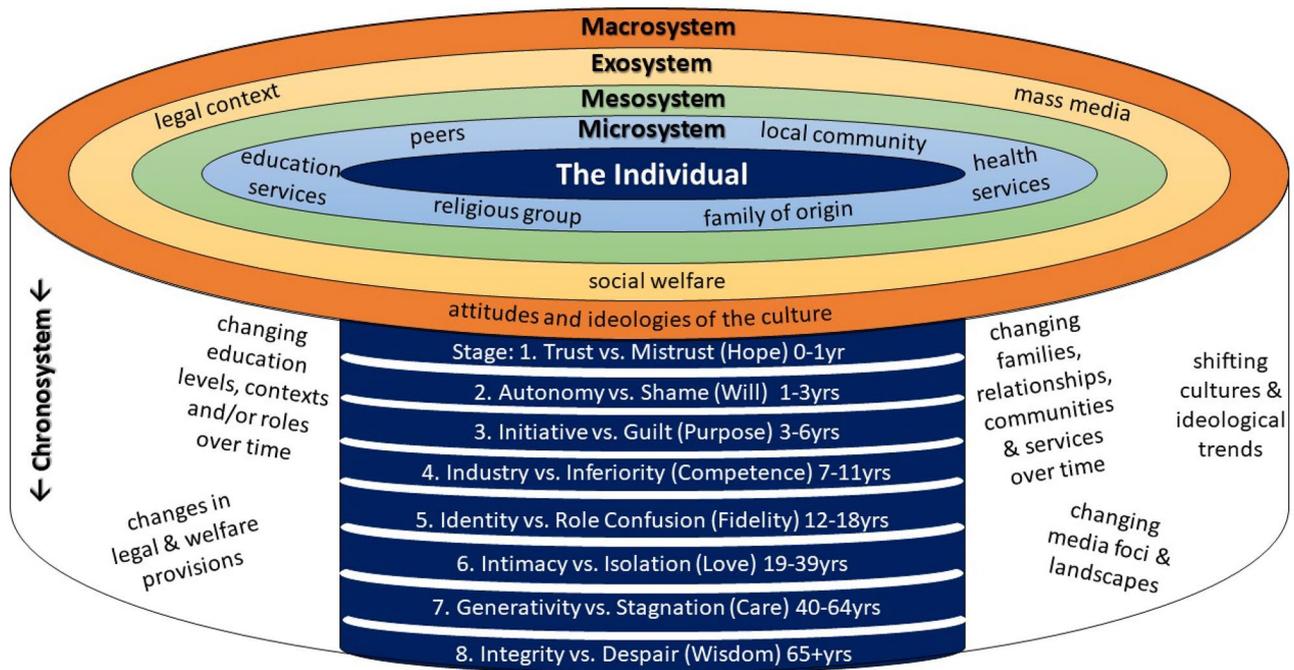
1. How do LGBTIQ+ students' exposures to general religious, gender, and sexuality policies and practices compare for religious and non-religious education institutions?
2. How do LGBTIQ+ students' exposures to anti-LGBTIQ+ and SOGIECE messages and practices compare for religious and non-religious education institutions (by amount, emphases, delivery mode/source)?

## Theory

Ecological development theory conceptualises how staged individual (LGBTIQ+ student) development can be impacted by socio-cultural and contextual influences (and schooling). In Fig. 1, my model employs Uri Bronfenbrenner's ecological development model (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). It theorises the (LGBTIQ+) 'Individual' as centred in their development as autonomous and socio-cultural beings in their relationships to their gender, sexuality, religion, and other demographics, nested within five broader systems of influence:

The 'microsystem' — including institutional and social context individuals are frequently and repetitively directly exposed to. LGBTIQ+ students are, for example, influenced by attending religious or non-religious schools, their peers, and families (Jones, 2015; Jones et al., 2021b).

The 'mesosystem' — including interactions across individuals' microsystems which they only indirectly experience. Education and health providers and parents can have interactions promoting or blocking interventions into



**Fig. 1** An ecological model of influences on LGBTIQ+ people's psycho-social development

LGBTIQ+ people's identities and intimacies (Riggs, 2018; Smith et al., 2014) that do not involve them directly initially but restrict or support them.

The 'exosystem' — including broader institutional influences on Individuals and their microsystems (including media, legal and policy contexts). For example, Australia's marriage equality plebiscite (ABS, 2017) and religious schools' 2013 exemptions to discriminate on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation (Australian Government, 2013) and push to increase these (Australian Government, 2019; Australian Government, 2019–2020–2021), and professional codes banning psychologists' promotion of SOGIECE (Australian Psychological Society, 2021).

The 'macrosystem' — including surrounding cultural attitudes and ideologies, like debates on LGBTIQ+ marriage and education rights (Copland & Rasmussen, 2017; Verrelli et al., 2019).

The 'chronosystem' — the time periods within which all systems shift and change. This influences and changes Individuals' development alongside variations in systems/contexts.

The model employs Erik Erikson's eight-stage model of psycho-social development where progress is affected by previous staged feats over the chronosystem. Like Bronfenbrenner's work, it built socio-cultural lenses into Freud's theory of youth psychosexual development, emphasising the influence of education and age/stage motivations (Erikson, 1968). Critiques grew allowance for gender and

cultural trends including prolonged educations expanding identity development into the early twenties (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Key stages for LGBTIQ+ students are as follows:

Stage 5. Identity vs. role confusion (Fidelity), 12–18 years: youth develop their gender, sexual, and socio-cultural roles. Identity 'moratoriums' (exploration towards commitment) and 'achievements' (commitment after exploration) are culturally rewarded ideals (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Identity 'diffusion' (lack of exploration or commitment) or 'foreclosure' (pre-formed/enforced commitment without exploration) are negated as inauthentic, causing weak self-hood and role confusion (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Sexuality and gender diverse identity disclosures can be affected by macrosystem or microsystem messages, or foreclosures (Jones et al., 2021b).

Stage 6. Intimacy vs. isolation (Love), 19–39 years: young adults establish romantic and platonic intimacies. In cultural ideals, individuals gain a strong sense of self-informing successful intimacies. In negated scenarios, they struggle in maintaining relationships in line with their needs or values, engendering loneliness, and isolation. Theorists relate this to earlier role confusion (Erikson, 1968; Kroger & Marcia, 2011); socio-cultural/religious rejection may also block intimacy for LGBTIQ+ students. Stage-motivations thus underscore why school policies, messages, and practices around identities and intimacies can may powerfully impact LGBTIQ+ students.

## Methods

### National Survey

A survey was developed for this study, informed by the ideals of positive social-psychology seeking affirming self-constructions by and for LGBTIQ+ youth (Bracken & Lamprecht, 2003); and critical views privileging LGBTIQ+ insider insights into service systems using larger-scale data (Davis, 2015). Survey development was led by the author in consultation with an LGBTIQ+ youth reference group on wording sensitivities. Ethics approval was gained from the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee (520,221,130,837,287) to conduct a comparative survey of LGBTIQ+ students aged 14–25 years on gender and sexuality expression by Australian schooling context. The ‘Gender and Sexuality Expression in Schools’ survey was hosted via Qualtrics. The survey asked approximately 50 forced-choice and open-ended questions (depending on selections triggering additional questions) on their demographic information, schooling policies and practices, exposure to anti-LGBTIQ+ and SOGIECE messages and practices, and outcomes.

The sex, gender, and sexuality questions applied the Australian Bureau of Statistics/ABS (2021b) and UNESCO (UNESCO, 2018) standards, wherein sex includes sex characteristics and initial sex allocation at birth. Gender includes socio-cultural roles determined by asking how participants describe their gender identity and offering common choices (ABS, 2021b; UNESCO, 2018); and write-in space for individuation (Smith et al., 2014). Ethical considerations included that the participants self-selected to join the research, could skip any question, and were supplied cohort help lines and support groups in the survey. Guardian approvals were not required, given past data on guardian abuse (Smith et al., 2014). Recruitment occurred through Meta ad packages in a 2-week period (May–June 2022). Announcements were made via university media, LGBTQ+ websites, and word-of-mouth. In total, 2276 people responded. Data were downloaded, cleansed (removing incomplete and non-target-group surveys), and analysed in SPSS v28.0.0 and Excel (quantitative data) and Leximancer Desktop v.5 (qualitative data).

### Data Analysis

After data cleansing, there were 1293 participant surveys. Basic descriptive and correlative statistical analyses were undertaken for quantitative data in SPSS and Excel including chi-square tests. Information is presented as written descriptive statistics, tables of data, and graphs as relevant in the paper. Within the qualitative analyses of survey written

responses, LGBTIQ+ youth participants’ own concepts were foregrounded as they appear within participants’ own conceptual frames and terms using initial grounded thematic analyses emphasising commonalities. Two fluid coding stages placed a focus on emergent categories/strategies (Charmaz & Bryant, 2011). The automated content analysis programme Leximancer, historically used in sociology and psychology studies (Cretchley et al., 2010), was applied to analyse participants’ comments on ‘other consequences of outness’ at their school. Answers were collated into a PDF, and uploaded to Leximancer.

Leximancer uses word occurrence and co-occurrence counts to identify dominant themes and their sub-concepts, and how they relate. It was applied to ensure dominant thematic concepts and their ‘typical’ quote samples were identified and examined systematically based on data representativeness. Equivalent concepts in different tense (accept/accepted) and quantity (student/students) were merged in Leximancer’s concept-editing stages. A reproducible concept map evidencing how participant comments’ over-arching themes and sub-concepts related was auto-generated using Leximancer, with theme titles auto-named for the dominant sub-concept per cluster. It visually shows asymmetric concept occurrence, and co-occurrence information (size, relationships and groupings of themes and sub-concepts) from software-driven content analyses of comments. Map settings were kept at ‘100% visibility’ making all sub-concepts visible, and ‘60% theme size’ showing only common themes/overlaps. Leximancer algorithms were verified for foregrounding the global significance and context of concepts and their relations, ensuring analyses focus on typicality, not atypical anecdotes (Smith & Humphreys, 2006, p. 262). All Leximancer-identified themes were secondly elevated for theoretical sampling. Open coding processes included line-by-line coding; different concepts within a single story were separated out for cross-checking of concept-level and individual-level ‘meanings’. Leximancer-selected thematic quotes are reported using gender-congruent pseudonyms. The discussion section reflects on students’ experiences through my ecological model of influences.

## Results

### Demographics by School Type

Table 1 reports the 1293 participants’ demographics by school type. This shows that the convenience sample of LGBTIQ+ students attended government schools (58.8%), religious schools (35.0%), non-religious independent schools (4.6%), and other types (1.7%) in proportions in line with the general Australian schooling population (ABS, 2021a). Similarly, state representation (NSW 33.3%, QLD 22.4%,

**Table 1** Gender and sexuality expression in school survey participant demographics by school type

<i>School type</i>	<b>Government</b>	<b>Religious independent</b>	<b>Non-religious independent</b>	<b>Another option*</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total</b>	760 (58.8%)	452 (35.0%)	59 (4.6%)	22 (1.7%)	<b>1293</b>
<b>Age</b>					
14 yrs	146 (62.9%)	68 (29.3%)	14 (6.0%)	4 (1.7%)	<b>232</b>
15 yrs	183 (54.1%)	137 (40.5%)	11 (3.3%)	7 (2.1%)	<b>338</b>
16 yrs	229 (61.6%)	128 (34.4%)	12 (3.2%)	3 (0.8%)	<b>372</b>
17 yrs	158 (58.7%)	91 (33.8%)	16 (5.9%)	4 (1.5%)	<b>269</b>
18 yrs	17 (43.6%)	18 (46.2%)	2 (5.1%)	2 (5.1%)	<b>39</b>
19 yrs	13 (72.2%)	3 (16.7%)	1 (5.6%)	1 (5.6%)	<b>18</b>
20–25 yrs	14 (56.0%)	7 (28.0%)	3 (12.0%)	1 (4.0%)	<b>25</b>
<b>State</b>					
Australian Capital Territory (ACT)	11 (35.5%)	17 (54.8%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (9.7%)	<b>31</b>
New South Wales (NSW)	259 (60.1%)	145 (33.6%)	20 (4.6%)	7 (1.6%)	<b>431</b>
Northern Territory (NT)	3 (37.5%)	2 (25.0%)	2 (25.0%)	1 (12.5%)	<b>8</b>
Queensland (QLD)	165 (57.1%)	106 (36.7%)	11 (3.8%)	7 (2.4%)	<b>289</b>
South Australia (SA)	52 (59.1%)	33 (37.5%)	3 (3.4%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>88</b>
Tasmania (TAS)	18 (51.4%)	17 (48.6%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>35</b>
Victoria (VIC)	149 (63.7%)	72 (30.8%)	10 (4.3%)	3 (1.3%)	<b>234</b>
Western Australia (WA)	102 (58.0%)	60 (34.1%)	12 (6.8%)	2 (1.1%)	<b>176</b>
<b>Rurality</b>					
Regional, remote, or rural area	287 (63.2%)	145 (31.9%)	16 (3.5%)	6 (1.3%)	<b>454</b>
Metro/urban	316 (53.1%)	233 (39.2%)	34 (5.7%)	12 (2.0%)	<b>595</b>
Unsure	156 (64.5%)	74 (30.6%)	9 (3.7%)	3 (1.2%)	<b>242</b>
<b>Ethnic identity</b>					
Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander	18 (69.2%)	6 (23.1%)	2 (7.7%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>26</b>
African	6 (50.0%)	6 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>12</b>
Anglo/Celtic	464 (60.3%)	263 (34.2%)	31 (4.0%)	11 (1.4%)	<b>769</b>
East/South East Asian	40 (64.5%)	20 (32.3%)	2 (3.2%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>62</b>
European	104 (54.7%)	75 (39.5%)	10 (5.3%)	1 (0.5%)	<b>190</b>
Middle Eastern	7 (63.6%)	3 (27.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (9.1%)	<b>11</b>
Multi-ethnic	144 (69.2%)	51 (24.5%)	7 (3.4%)	6 (2.9%)	<b>208</b>
Pacific Islander	2 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>2</b>
South Asian	17 (44.7%)	13 (34.2%)	5 (13.5%)	3 (7.9%)	<b>38</b>
Something else	23 (59.0%)	15 (38.5%)	1 (2.6%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>39</b>
<b>Intersex variation diagnoses</b>					
Yes	7 (63.6%)	3 (27.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (9.1%)	<b>11</b>
No (or don't know)	753 (58.7)	449 (35.0%)	59 (4.6%)	21 (1.6%)	<b>1,282</b>
<b>Assigned sex at birth (M, F, X)</b>					
Assigned male at birth (AMAB)	68 (55.7%)	51 (41.8%)	1 (0.8%)	3 (2.5%)	<b>122</b>
Assigned female at birth (AFAB)	671 (58.6%)	398 (34.7%)	58 (5.1%)	19 (1.7%)	<b>1146</b>
Assigned X or another option at birth (AXAB)	0 (0.0%)	1 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>1</b>
Prefer not to say	21 (91.3%)	2 (8.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>23</b>
<b>Gender</b>					
Cisgender male (CIS Male)	38 (50.0%)	37 (48.7%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.3%)	<b>76</b>
Cisgender female (CIS Female)	288 (53.7%)	214 (39.9%)	23 (4.3%)	11 (2.1%)	<b>536</b>
Transgender female-to-male (Trans Male)	95 (72.5%)	26 (19.8%)	8 (6.1%)	2 (1.5%)	<b>131</b>
Transgender male-to-female (Trans Female)	15 (68.2%)	5 (22.7%)	1 (4.5%)	1 (4.5%)	<b>22</b>
Non-binary	201 (62.4%)	97 (30.1%)	21 (6.5%)	3 (0.9%)	<b>322</b>
Different term**	102 (58.6%)	66 (37.9%)	4 (2.3%)	2 (1.1%)	<b>174</b>
Prefer not to say	22 (68.8%)	7 (21.9%)	2 (6.3%)	1 (3.1%)	<b>32</b>

**Table 1** (continued)

<i>School type</i>	<b>Government</b>	<b>Religious independent</b>	<b>Non-religious independent</b>	<b>Another option*</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Sexuality</b>					
<i>Asexual</i>	55 (58.5%)	31 (33.0%)	8 (8.5%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>94</b>
<i>Bisexual (including multi, queer, fluid)</i>	237 (53.5%)	176 (39.7%)	22 (5.0%)	8 (1.8%)	<b>443</b>
<i>Gay or lesbian</i>	173 (57.5%)	112 (37.2%)	14 (4.7%)	2 (0.7%)	<b>301</b>
<i>Straight</i>	33 (54.1%)	23 (37.7%)	2 (3.8%)	3 (4.9%)	<b>61</b>
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	6 (85.7%)	1 (14.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>7</b>
<i>Don't know</i>	45 (69.2%)	16 (24.6%)	3 (4.6%)	1 (1.5%)	<b>65</b>
<i>Different term***</i>	211 (65.5%)	93 (28.9%)	10 (3.1%)	8 (2.5%)	<b>322</b>
<b>Personal religion</b>					
<i>Christian</i>	71 (47.3%)	75 (50.0%)	2 (1.3%)	2 (1.3%)	<b>150</b>
<i>Muslim</i>	8 (61.5%)	4 (30.8%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (7.7%)	<b>13</b>
<i>Buddhist</i>	10 (71.4%)	3 (21.4%)	1 (7.1%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>14</b>
<i>Hindu</i>	6 (46.2%)	4 (30.8%)	2 (15.4%)	1 (7.7%)	<b>13</b>
<i>Jewish</i>	6 (40.0%)	8 (53.3%)	1 (6.7%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>15</b>
<i>Atheist</i>	489 (63.0%)	233 (30.0%)	44 (5.7%)	10 (1.3%)	<b>776</b>
<i>Agnostic</i>	117 (51.3%)	98 (43.0%)	6 (2.6%)	7 (3.1%)	<b>228</b>
<i>Something else</i>	53 (63.1%)	27 (32.1%)	3 (3.6%)	1 (1.2%)	<b>84</b>
<b>School religiosity</b>					
<i>All the time</i>	3 (1.2%)	246 (97.2%)	2 (0.8%)	2 (0.8%)	<b>253</b>
<i>Often</i>	13 (7.4%)	150 (85.7%)	7 (4.0%)	5 (2.9%)	<b>175</b>
<i>Sometimes</i>	105 (65.2%)	44 (27.3%)	8 (5.0%)	4 (2.5%)	<b>161</b>
<i>Rarely</i>	252 (90.3%)	5 (1.8%)	15 (5.4%)	7 (2.5%)	<b>279</b>
<i>Almost never</i>	382 (91.8%)	4 (1.0%)	27 (6.5%)	3 (0.7%)	<b>416</b>

\* Another option schools included: 10 mixed schools, 3 selective schools, and 7 unique alternative/distance schools

\*\* Different genders included genderfluid/flux (62), demigirl/girlflux (23), transmasculine/man (16), demiboy/male/guy (14), agender (12), genderqueer/queer (10), unsure/questioning (7), they/he or she pronouns (7), woman/feminine/non-binary (3), pangender (2), androgynous (2), bigender (2), cassgender (2), and unique combinations, e.g., female and male and multiple xenogenders

\*\*\* Different sexualities included pansexual (116), queer (75), omnisexual (29), asexual (32), unlabelled (18), panromantic (12), aromantic (7), biromantic (6), abrosexual (6), demisexual (5), demiromantic (3), omniromantic (2), bisexual + (2), and unique combinations, e.g., demiomni-sexual and aegosexual

VIC 18.1%, WA 13.7%, SA 6.8%, and other states >5%) and rurality (35.2%) roughly aligned with the broader population's trends — slightly higher for QLD (ABS, 2021a). The sample had high representations of younger students (93.7% were under 18yrs), atheism (60.0%), agnosticism (17.6%), and pansexual identities (around a tenth). In religious independent schools, attended by students who were atheist and agnostic as for government schools, students were more likely to be exposed to religious views with greater frequency [ $X^2(4, N = 1204) = 969.6846, p \leq 0.00001$ ] — 89% of LGBTIQ+ students at religious independent schools said their schools addressed religion all the time or often, compared to 2.1% at government schools.

### General Religious and LGBTIQ+ Policies and Practices by School Type

Most Australian LGBTIQ+ students reported that their schools had *some* protective policies and practices around sex,

gender, and sexuality. These included that their school did not exclude divorced staff (83.1%), sexually active students (77.3%), unmarried pregnant staff (76.1%), and staff wearing religious items of their choice (72.1%). Over half were in education institutions where their uniform was not restricted by their sex allocation; religious rules, beliefs and practices, and garb were not enforced; and anti-LGBTIQ+ positions and attitudes were not enforced. However, for most LGBTIQ+ students, sports were restricted by allocated sex (53.4%). Under half reported that they could have a same-sex formal partner (47.1%), were protected in policy (31.1%), that unisex bathrooms were available (26.1%), or that students could use gender-suitable bath/changing rooms (19.8%).

Table 2 shows there were highly significant differences between religious independent schools and all other school types on religious and LGBTIQ+ policies and practices however. LGBTIQ+ students reported that their religious independent schools' policies were significantly more likely than those at government schools to enforce a core religion

(for staff 43.0% vs. <1.0%, for students 33.4% vs. <1.0%, for family/guardians 13.7% vs. <1.0%), require signing of contracts to uphold a religion or its views (for staff 37.5% vs. 1.5%, for students 19.5% vs. 1.5%, for family/guardians 14.5% vs. 1.5%), or require signing of contracts that were anti-LGBTIQA + expression or support (for staff 6.4% vs. 1.5%, for students 3.2% vs. <1.0%, for family/guardians 2.7% vs. <1.0%). Their religious independent schools' discrimination/bullying policies were also around half as likely to cover discrimination against LGBTIQA + people than government schools' discrimination/bullying policies (19.8% vs. 37.6%). LGBTIQA + students at religious independent schools were significantly more likely than those at government schools to report their schools' policies included:

- Restrictions on staff or students openly identifying as LGBTIQA + (30.2% of LGBTIQA + students at religious schools vs. 6.5% of LGBTIQA + students at government schools);
- Students can only wear the uniform that aligns with their birth sex (58.9% vs. 21.4%);
- Students must wear items the school's religion requires or encourages (23.4% vs. 2.3%);
- Staff must wear items the school's religion requires or encourages (16.8% vs. 1.6%);
- Sports are strictly divided by sex assigned at birth at school (65.7% vs. 49.9%);
- Students must believe in and practice the main religion at the school (33.4% vs. <1.0%);
- Staff must believe in and practice the main religion at the school (43.0% vs. <1.0%); and
- Families/guardians must believe in and practice the main religion at the school (13.7% vs. <1.0%).

LGBTIQA + students at religious independent schools were significantly less likely than those at government schools to report their schools' practices included:

- Students can choose to wear items their religion requires or encourages them to wear, if they want to (60.0% of LGBTIQA + students at religious schools vs. 82.0% at government schools);
- Staff can choose to wear items their religion requires or encourages them to wear, if they want to (64.8% vs. 80.2%);
- Students are able to use the bathroom or changing room that suits their gender identity—including if it does not align with the sex assigned at birth (11.8% vs. 23.9%);
- There are unisex bathrooms at our school that anyone can use (23.4% vs. 28.0%);
- Students are able to bring a same-sex partner to their school formal (31.2% vs. 56.8%);

- An unmarried student who became pregnant could study at the school (24.8% vs. 58.4%);
- An unmarried staff member who became pregnant could work at the school (59.8% vs. 88.5%);
- Staff can get divorced and still keep their job (77.7% vs. 90.0%); and
- If a student was known to be sexually active, they could still attend the school (66.3% vs. 87.2%).

Around half (50.0%) of Australian LGBTIQA + students reported that their schools celebrated LGBT events, and half did not (50.0%). The most popular event was Wear it Purple Day (wearing purple to support LGBTIQA + youth, 36.7%), followed by Pride Month (July, 23.4%), International Day Against Homophobia Biphobia Intersex Bias and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT, 22.0%), and finally Mardi Gras (4.9%). Chi-square tests showed that those whose school did not celebrate LGBT events were more likely to attend religious independent schools (see Table 3), whilst over half of all students at government schools reported all days being celebrated, and this was a highly significant relationship. This difference could especially be seen in celebration of Wear it Purple Day (reported by 51.1% of government students vs. 9.7% of religious independent students), Pride Month (30.7% vs. 9.1%), and IDAHOBIT (29.7% vs. 8.6%).

### Anti-LGBTIQA + Messages by Delivery Mode, Source, and School Type

Participants were asked if they were exposed to nine anti-LGBTIQA + messages which arose in past interviews about SOGIECE (Jones et al., 2021a), via 11 delivery modes and sources. Most LGBTIQA + students were exposed to at least one message, mostly by other students and in a class/group, and least often by school psychologists or in school-wide messages (Fig. 2). Most LGBTIQA + students were exposed to the school-based message '*Being sexuality and gender diverse goes against the natural order*' (56.1%), mostly by other students or in a class/group. Other common messages for these modes included that being sexuality and gender diverse *should not be acted on* (44.9%); *can be 'fixed'* (43.2%), *means that you are broken or flawed* (42.5%), *means that you are sinning or living a sinful life* (40.8%), and *is harmful for society* (40.4%). Under a third of students were exposed to messages on how sexuality and gender diversity can be overcome if *you avoid LGBTIQA + influences* (29.5%) or *do not act on it* (27.1%), around a quarter to the message that it is *not in line with school values* (25.9%). Religious leaders and teachers more often emphasised the message sexuality and gender diversity '*means that you are sinning or living a sinful life*', whilst principals more often emphasised the SOGIECE message around *school values*. Differences by school type show there were

**Table 2** Relationship between policies and practices vs. school type

	Pearson chi-square	df	Government	Religious independent	Non-religious independent	Another option	Total
<b>Policies</b>							
<i>The rules of a core religion are enforced in the school policy</i>	787.267***	6	10 (3.1%)	304 (93.3%)	7 (2.1%)	5 (1.5%)	<b>326</b>
<i>Staff must sign a contract to uphold a religion or its views</i>	415.416***	6	11 (6.0%)	165 (89.7%)	4 (2.2%)	4 (2.2%)	<b>184</b>
<i>Students must sign a contract to uphold a religion or its views</i>	156.071***	6	11 (10.6%)	86 (82.7%)	4 (3.8%)	3 (2.9%)	<b>104</b>
<i>Families/guardians must sign a contract to uphold a religion or its views</i>	145.497***	6	11 (13.9%)	64 (81.0%)	4 (5.1%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>79</b>
<i>Staff must sign a contract that is anti-LGBTQIA + expression or support</i>	59.317***	6	11 (27.5%)	28 (70.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.5%)	<b>40</b>
<i>Students must sign a contract that is anti-LGBTQIA + expression or support</i>	26.912***	6	5 (26.3%)	14 (73.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>19</b>
<i>Families/guardians must sign a contract that is anti-LGBTQIA + expression or support</i>	35.373***	6	5 (29.4%)	12 (70.6%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>17</b>
<i>The school's discrimination/bullying policy covers discrimination against LGBTQIA + people</i>	79.98***	6	278 (69.2%)	87 (21.6%)	30 (7.5%)	7 (1.7%)	<b>402</b>
<b>Practices</b>							
<i>There are restrictions around whether staff or students can openly identify as LGBTQIA +</i>	186.163***	6	48 (25.5%)	133 (70.7%)	4 (2.1%)	3 (1.6%)	<b>188</b>
<i>Students can only wear the uniform that aligns with their birth sex</i>	186.848***	6	158 (36.4%)	259 (59.7%)	12 (2.8%)	5 (1.2%)	<b>434</b>
<i>Students can choose to wear items their religion requires or encourages them to wear, if they want to</i>	88.127***	6	607 (65.1%)	246 (26.4%)	47 (5.0%)	14 (1.5%)	<b>932</b>
<i>Students must wear items the school's religion requires or encourages</i>	156.066***	6	17 (13.6%)	103 (82.4%)	2 (1.6%)	3 (2.4%)	<b>125</b>
<i>Staff can choose to wear items their religion requires or encourages them to wear, if they want to</i>	46.396***	6	593 (63.2%)	285 (30.4%)	47 (5.0%)	14 (1.5%)	<b>939</b>
<i>Staff must wear items the school's religion requires or encourages</i>	147.444***	6	12 (13.6%)	74 (84.1%)	2 (2.3%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>88</b>
<i>Students are able to use the bathroom or changing room that suits their gender identity (including if it doesn't align with the sex assigned at birth)</i>	87.025***	6	177 (69.1%)	52 (20.3%)	23 (9.0%)	4 (1.6%)	<b>256</b>
<i>There are unisex bathrooms at our school that anyone can use</i>	20.133**	6	207 (61.4%)	103 (30.6%)	24 (7.1%)	3 (0.9%)	<b>337</b>
<i>Students are able to bring a same-sex partner to their school formal</i>	124.49***	6	420 (69.0%)	137 (22.5%)	40 (6.6%)	12 (2.0%)	<b>609</b>
<i>Sports are strictly divided by sex assigned at birth at school</i>	42.275***	6	369 (53.5%)	289 (41.9%)	25 (3.6%)	7 (1.0%)	<b>690</b>

**Table 2** (continued)

	Pearson chi-square	df	Government	Religious independent	Non-religious independent	Another option	Total
<i>Students must believe in and practice the main religion at the school</i>	315.923***	6	6 (3.8%)	147 (94.2%)	2 (1.3%)	1(0.6%)	<b>156</b>
<i>Staff must believe in and practice the main religion at the school</i>	519.106***	6	5 (2.5%)	189 (94.0%)	5 (2.5%)	2 (1.0%)	<b>201</b>
<i>Families/guardians must believe in and practice the main religion at the school</i>	180.583***	6	5 (7.6%)	60 (90.9%)	1 (1.5%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>66</b>
<i>An unmarried student who became pregnant could study at the school</i>	166.667***	6	432 (73.6%)	109 (18.6%)	37 (6.3%)	9 (1.5%)	<b>587</b>
<i>An unmarried staff member who became pregnant could work at the school</i>	146.854***	6	655 (66.6%)	262 (26.6%)	52 (5.3%)	15 (1.5%)	<b>984</b>
<i>Staff can get divorced and still keep their job</i>	47.657***	6	655 (60.9%)	342 (31.8%)	54 (5.0%)	14 (1.3%)	<b>1075</b>
<i>If a student was known to be sexually active, they could still attend the school</i>	88.549***	6	645 (64.6%)	291 (29.1%)	50 (5.0%)	13 (1.3%)	<b>999</b>

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

almost uniformly highly significant increases in formal anti-LGBTIQA + messaging reported by LGBTIQA + students from religious independent education institutions compared to government schools, especially for messages delivered by professionals in school-wide and class/group modes (Fig. 3). The manifold increase for teachers/educators from religious education institutions’ delivering the message on *sinning* was notable. Anti-LGBTIQA + messages about being sexuality and gender diverse (especially those that one is *broken or flawed*, or *harmful for society*) were comparably more often delivered informally in government schools: one-on-one and by other students.

Participants were asked about the frequency of their exposures: ‘How often did you hear these messages?’ and could respond by selecting from the forced-choice options: rarely, sometimes, often, or all the time. LGBTIQA + students

were mostly exposed to these messages ‘sometimes’ when exposed, and it was least often reported that they heard the message ‘all the time’ (Fig. 4). LGBTIQA + students at religious independent schools were more likely to report increased frequencies for the messages, particularly that being sexuality and gender diverse ‘...is not in line with school values’ and ‘means that you are sinning or living a sinful life’ for example.

**SOGIECE Messages and Practices by Delivery Mode and School Type**

Participants were asked ‘Has it been suggested to you by someone else that you should not act on your sexual orientation or gender identity?’; of 1293 participants, 49.9% said yes (30.5% for their sexuality, 19.4% for their

**Table 3** Relationship between celebrated LGBT events vs. school type

	Pearson chi-square	df	Government	Religious independent	Non-religious independent	Another option	Total
<b>Events</b>	<b>422.5447***</b>	<b>16</b>					
<i>Wear it Purple</i>			388 (81.9%)	46 (9.7%)	32 (6.8%)	8 (1.2%)	<b>474</b>
<i>Pride month (July)</i>			233 (76.9%)	41 (13.5%)	21 (6.9%)	8 (2.6%)	<b>303</b>
<i>Idahobit</i>			226 (79.3%)	39 (13.7%)	14 (4.9%)	6 (2.1%)	<b>285</b>
<i>Mardi Gras</i>			38 (60.3%)	10 (15.9%)	12 (19.0%)	3 (4.8%)	<b>63</b>
<i>None</i>			252 (39.0%)	363 (56.2%)	21 (3.3%)	10 (1.5%)	<b>646</b>

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Fig. 2** Percent of LGB-TIQA + students reporting ‘Being sexuality and gender diverse...’ message, by school-based exposure mode (N = 1293)



gender identity). Asked ‘*Has it ever been suggested to you by someone else that you might be able to change your sexual orientation or gender identity?*’ 46.2% said yes (30.2% for their sexuality, 16.0% for their gender identity). Around two thirds of LGBTIQIA + students had been told at least one of these SOGIECE messages to suppress or change their identities at school (66.4%); home (44.7%); religious sites (church/mosque/temple/synagogue/etc., 6.5%); the doctor’s (4%); work (3.1%) or another location (9%). SOGIECE messages were delivered most by classmates (33.0%); then family (31.2%); het/cis friends (29.6%); school community (21.5%); LGBTIQIA + friends (15.2%); teachers (13.9%); religious community (8.1%); service providers (5.3%); cultural community (2.7%); colleagues (1.4%) and least by bosses (0.9%). LGBTIQIA + students attending religious schools were significantly more likely to get SOGIECE messages at religious sites; and from their school community including being twice as likely to get these messages from teachers compared to those attending government schools (Fig. 5). Usually these messages came once (26.9%) or several times a year (25.1%) — less often other amounts (7.5% yearly; 12.3% monthly; 5.4% once a week; 5.0% a few times a week; 4.3% daily). The messages were delivered with higher frequency to LGBTIQIA + students attending religious schools (Fig. 6).

Participants were asked to select from a range of SOGIECE practices promoted to them if relevant, from a range of people. Around a tenth reported being told to overcome their sexuality or gender diversity by personal strategies (11.4%), attending sermon/bible study (10%), reading and researching solutions (9.4%), seeking out materials (9.3%), prayer (8.7%), aversion practices (8.5%) others’ prayers (8.4%), or therapy (8.1%). They were less often told to use attending conferences (2.2%) or deliverance/exorcisms (1.7%). Differences by school type showed LGBTIQIA + students at religious schools mostly exposed to more SOGIECE practices overall and across types and including by professionals — especially attendance at sermons/bible study (Fig. 7). Deliverance/exorcisms were rarely used, yet when promoted, promoted with higher frequency (Fig. 8).

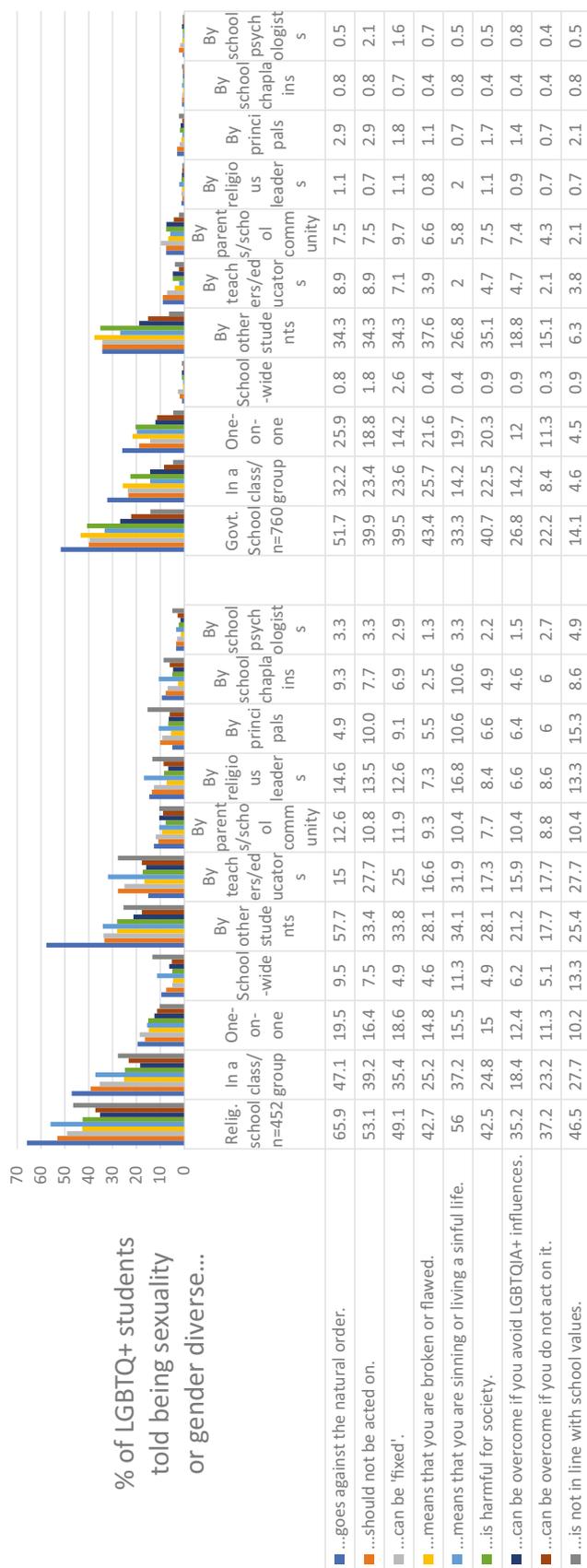
### Impacts for LGBTIQIA + Students

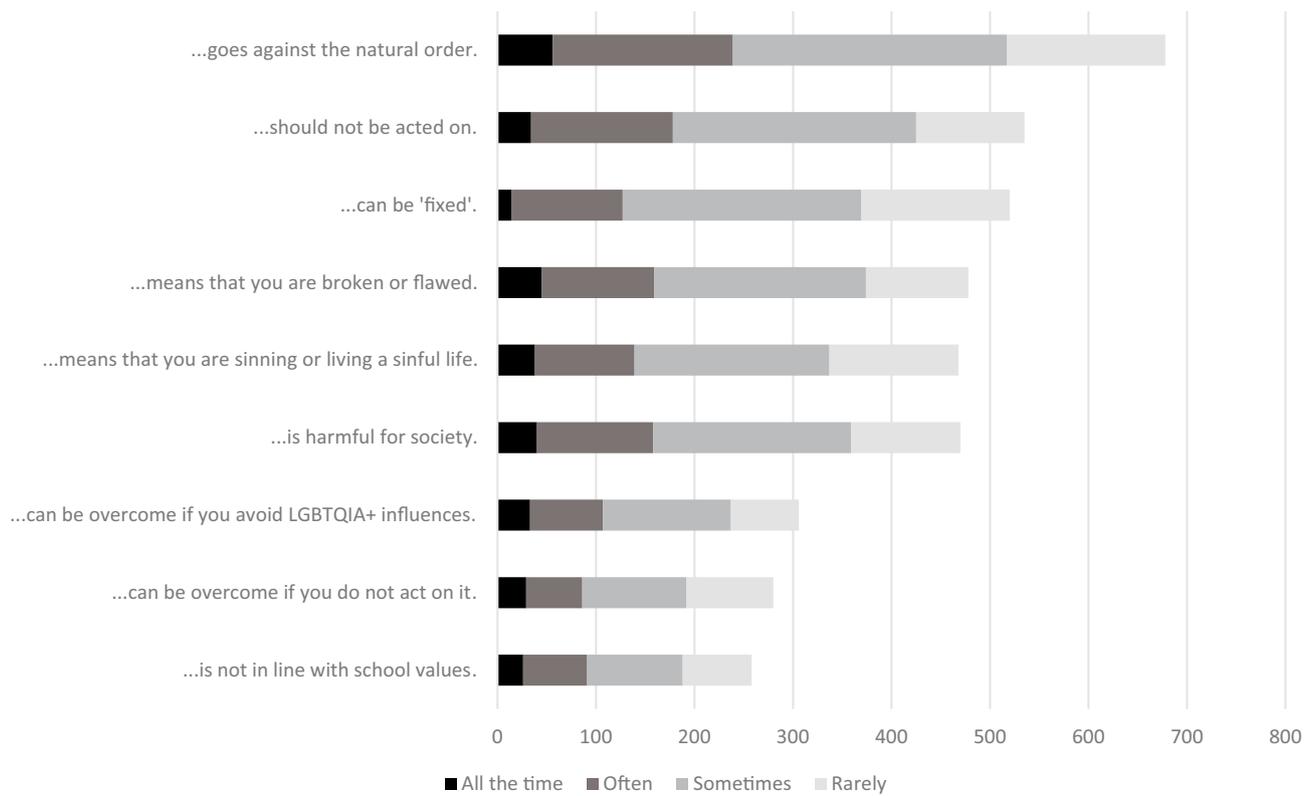
Participants were asked ‘*If someone at your school openly identified as or acts on LGBTIQIA + identity, what has or would happen to them?*’ — of the responses offered, LGBTIQIA + students from government schools were more likely to say no-one cared or they were accepted (around half compared to around a third at religious schools) and over twice as likely to say they were strongly supported by the school

**Fig. 3** Percentage of LGBTIQ+ students reporting ‘Being sexuality and gender diverse...’ message, by school-based exposure mode and school type (N=1293)

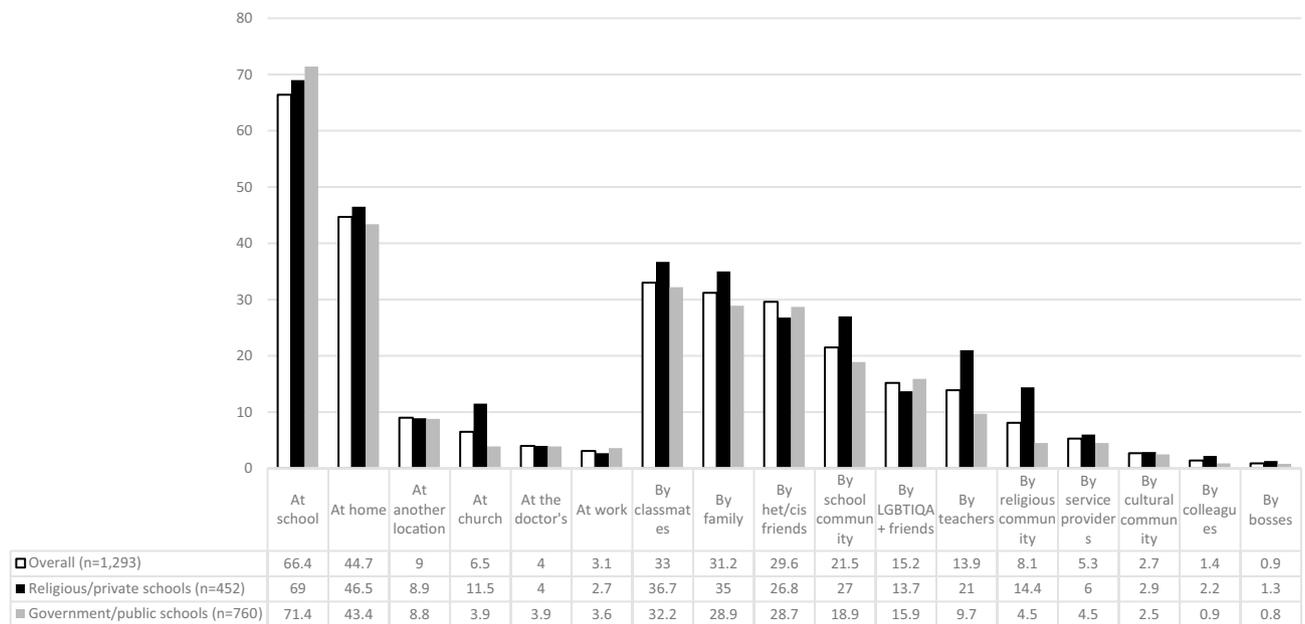
(Fig. 9). LGBTIQ+ students from religious schools were more likely to say they were shunned (23.7% at religious schools vs 15.3% at government schools); reported on to parents, community, or staff/faculty (21.2% vs 9.6%); reported on to students (10.1% vs 6.4%); given lower marks (5.5% vs 3.2%); banned from extra curricula activities/roles (4% vs. 2.6%); detained/punished (5.5% vs. 1.2%); suspended (4.4% vs. <1%); or expelled/fired 4.6% vs. <1%).

Participants were asked to expand on the 29.9% of ‘other’ responses for the question; Leximancer uncovered four themes in 909 comments offered (Fig. 10). The strongest theme ‘students’ described how students mainly from religious schools would gossip or spread rude rumours and negative messages about out LGBTIQ+ people (74 hits, sub-concepts: students, people, school, gender, gossip, rude, talked). In theme-typical Leximancer-selected comments, Vicky (14 years, cis-female, lesbian, NSW religious school) said LGBTIQ+ people who came out would ‘*be talked about, bullied, the whole grade would probably find out their sexuality/gender identity*’ and Karen (14 years, cis-female, lesbian, VIC Catholic school) said students and staff would ‘*gossip about it and joke about it. They might also spread rumours*’. The second strongest theme ‘accept’ described acceptance’s contingencies by social groupings; its dependence on school, grade, or subject-specific subcultures within schools; and how supportive and relaxed or caring about LGBTIQ+ people specific cohorts were (58 hits, sub-concepts: accept, care, others, called, supportive, depends, bathroom, common, chill, comment). In Leximancer-selected typical comments, Joanne (16 years, cis-female, queer, NSW government school) said ‘*There are some really positive teachers and students who are allies but overall, mainly the PDHPE staff and students alike would harass and bully anyone who was different*’ and Eliot (17 years, non-binary, bisexual, QLD government school) said ‘*a little bit of bullying or messing around in the lower grades but apart from that everyone’s really chill*’. The third theme ‘homophobic’ captured hidden anti-LGBTIQ+ sentiments expressed only within homophobic groups were such concepts thrived (39 hits, sub-concepts: homophobic, openly, behind, talk, gay, try, discussed, mostly, constant, socially, aren’t, minded). Typical quotes included Lou’s (17 years, non-binary/male, queer, WA government school) comment that LGBTIQ+ people were ‘*notionally accepted, ie in face to face, but socially they would be mocked behind their back*’ and Ji’s (17 years, non-binary, bisexual, NSW religious school) comment no staff or students ‘*would openly discriminate against this individual*’, but in hidden

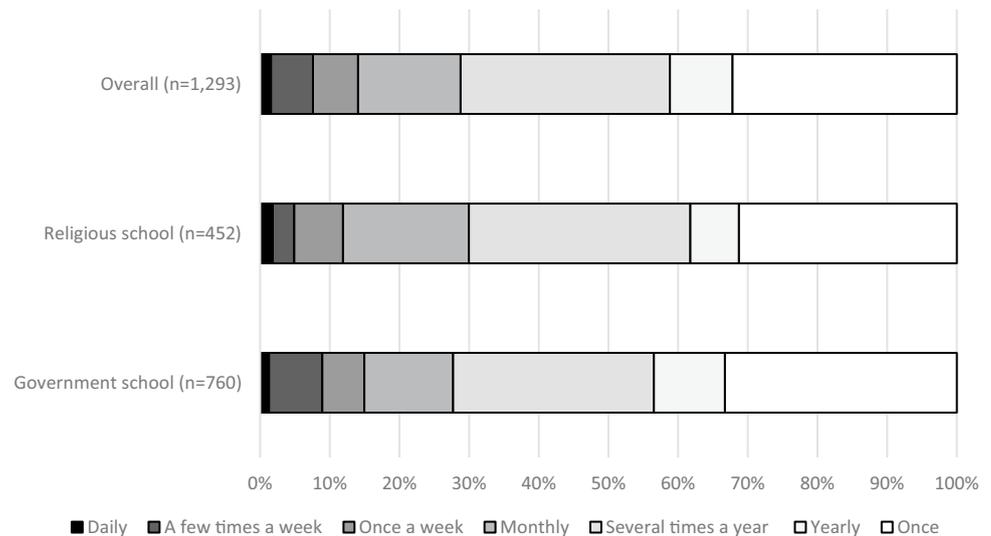




**Fig. 4** Number of LGBTIQ+ students reporting ‘Being sexuality and gender diverse...’ message by school-based exposure frequency and school type (N= 1293)



**Fig. 5** Percentage of LGBTIQ+ students exposed to SOGIECE messages by location/source

**Fig. 6** Frequency of SOGIECE messages by school type

sub-groups, they could ‘*be total dicks about it- talk about it behind their back, openly disapprove of how they identify*’. The final theme ‘pronouns’ encapsulated prohibitions or refusals of gender diverse pronoun, uniform, or name changes (12 hits, sub-concepts: pronouns, name, uniform, banned, wear). Typical quotes included Deb’s response (15 years, cis-female, lesbian, QLD government school): ‘*teachers are banned from using a student’s correct name and pronouns without parent permission, even with permission, a lot of teachers will still refuse*’; Andrea’s response (15 years, cis-female, lesbian, QLD government school): ‘*teachers are banned from using a student’s correct name and pronouns without parent consent*’; and Andi’s response (14 years, unlabelled, unlabelled, SA religious school): ‘*Nothing would be done and no effort would go into them no longer being deadnamed*’.

Participants were asked how they felt about the messages delivered about being LGBTIQ+ overall at school. Whilst most felt bad overall, they were more likely to feel ‘very bad’ at a religious school (30.1% vs 23.3% at a government school); given negative messages were more often delivered by authorities or in official scenarios at religious schools this perhaps imbued the message or experience with greater power or combined with other beliefs in more difficult ways (Fig. 11).

## Discussion

The sample reflected the increased participation from those under 18 years and assigned female at birth, in online surveys broadly (Curtin et al., 2000; Moore & Tarnai, 2002). It also reflected increased pansexual identification trends in recent Australian LGBTIQ+ studies (Jones et al., 2021b), and

Australian youth atheism trends (Singleton et al., 2019). The study showed that there is general religious freedom for cisgender heterosexuals in most Australian schools, particularly government schools’ policies and practices. However, it extended the findings of other studies showing Australian religious schools facilitate increased exposure to anti-LGBTIQ+ policies and practices (Jones, 2015); particularly religious freedom restrictions and punishments for LGBTIQ+ staff and students around their gender and sexuality. This suggests likely influence from bills enabling restrictive dominionistic concepts of ‘religious freedom’ in religious schools rather than support for religious interpretations or diversities (Australian Government, 2019; Australian Government, 2019–2020–2021), and political anti-LGBTIQ+ targeting bias in the macrosystem of media, culture and debates around them (Verrelli et al., 2019). Non-religious LGBTIQ+ students can be legally required by parents and state laws combined, to attend highly religious schools of high religious, gender and sexuality freedom restrictions.

The study expanded on the Australian SOGIECE education literature, showing over two thirds of students experienced exposure to SOGIECE messaging and over a tenth to SOGIECE practices when conceived more broadly by types and sources — considerably higher than the 7% previously for ex-gay messaging in classroom-delivered sex education (Jones, 2015), and 4% for SOGIECE practices (Jones et al., 2021b). This increase comes from this new study’s wider range of message and practice inquiries including more individually tailored, unofficial sources and settings. LGBTIQ+ students at religious education institutions more often had SOGIECE messaging and practices promoted via official school professionals and modes, than those at non-religious schools. SOGIECE messaging feeds the increased hope for LGBTIQ+ religious/school inclusion and Stage 6 intimacy seen in earlier

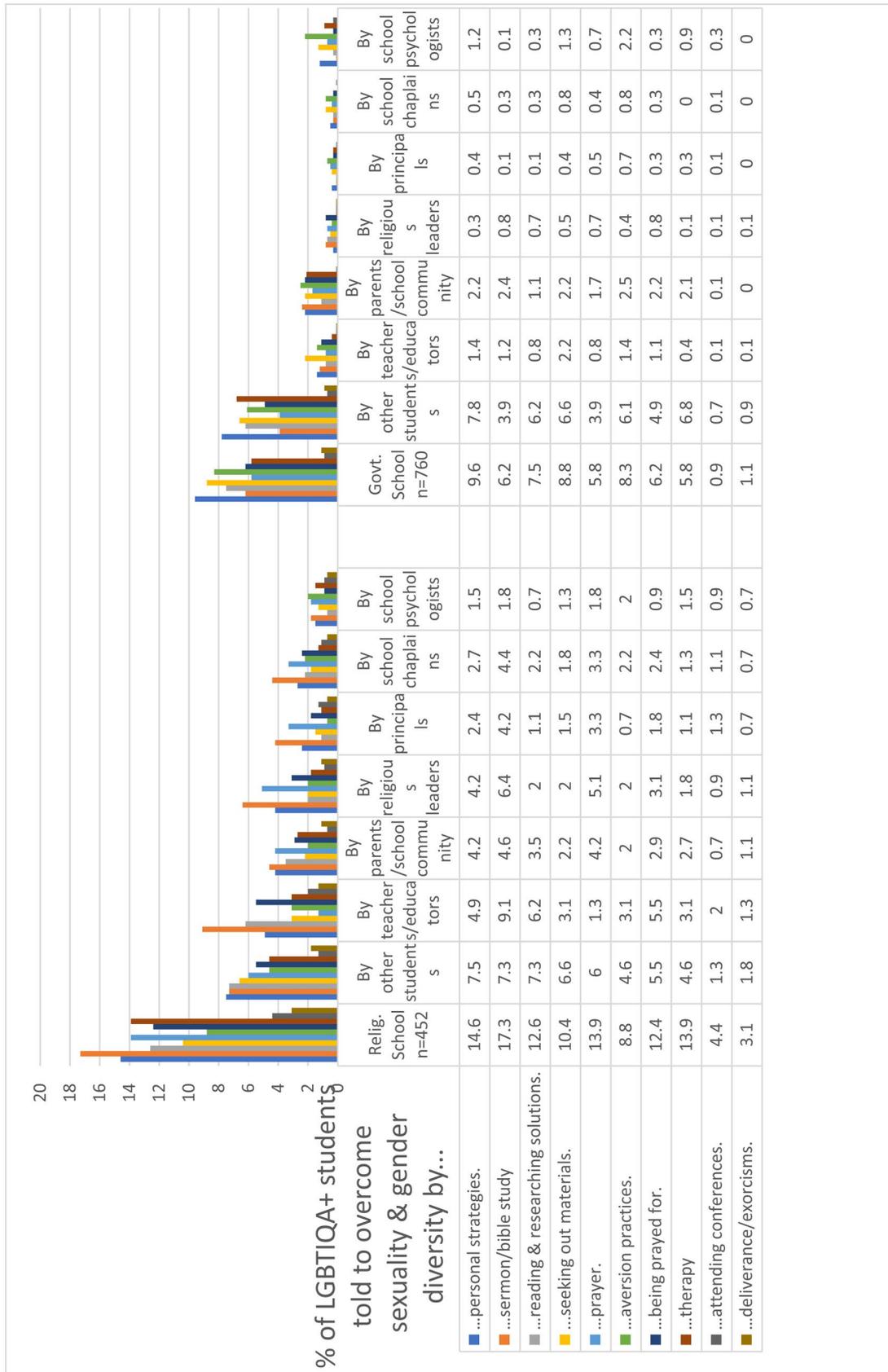
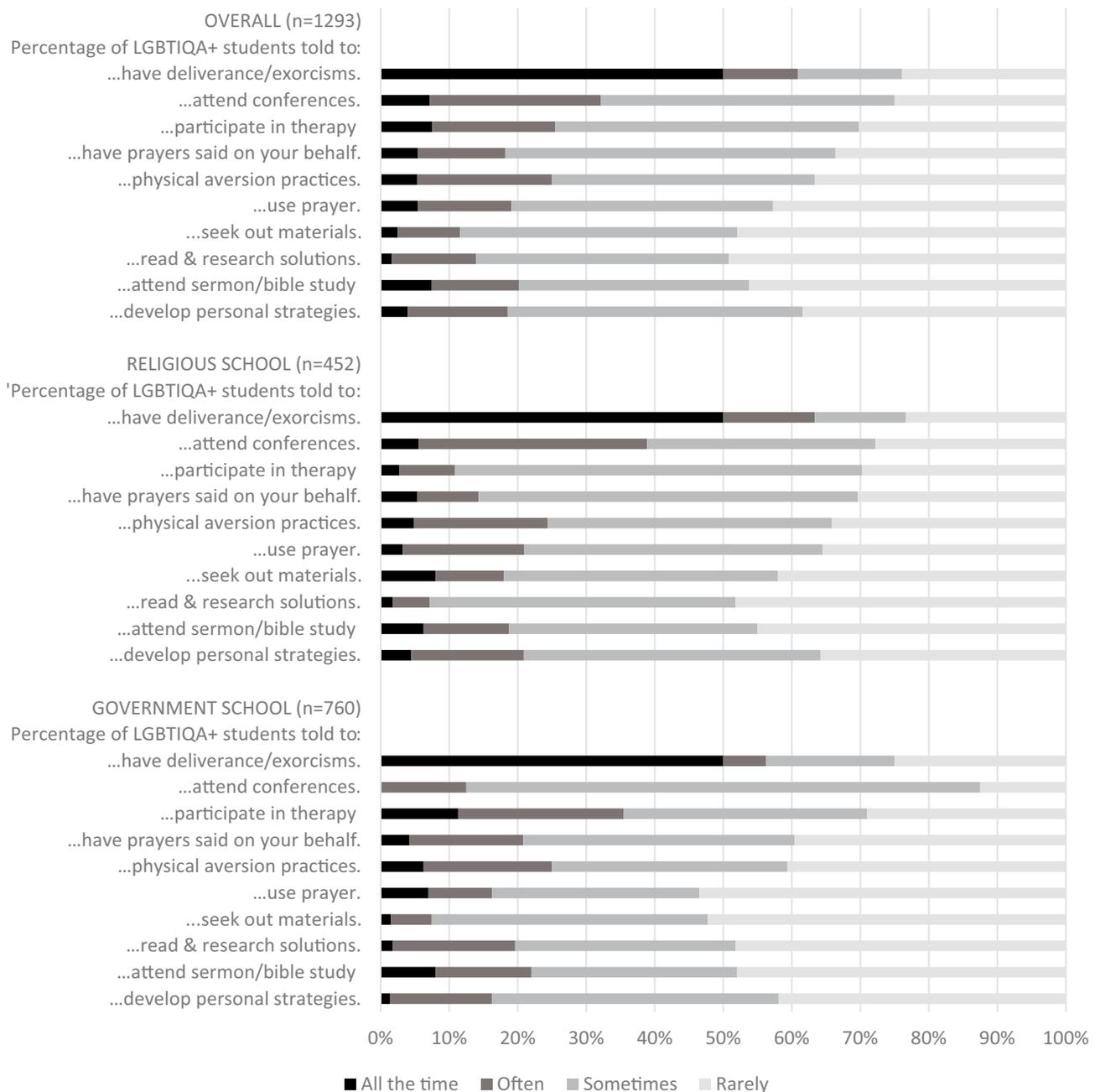


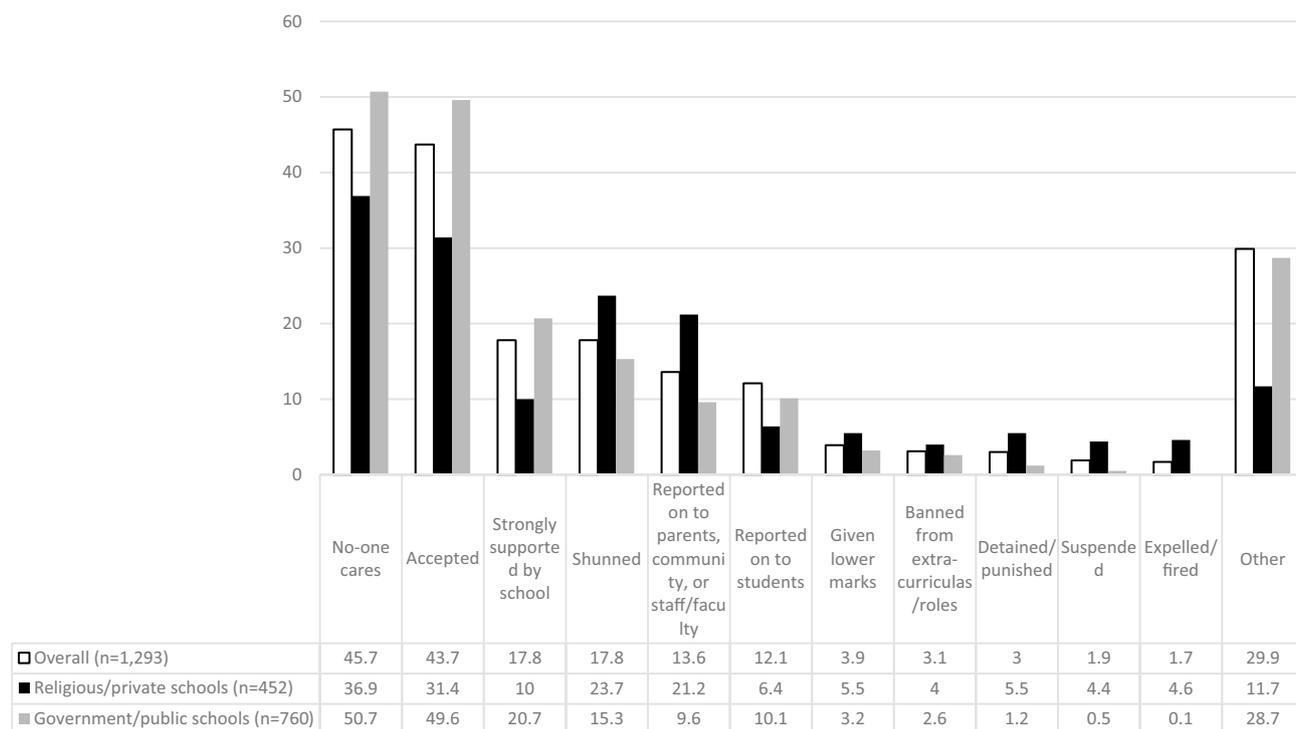
Fig. 7 Percent of LGBTIQ+ students reporting school-based SOGIECE practice by school-based exposure source and school type



**Fig. 8** Frequency of SOGIECE practices by school type

studies not through the religions/schools developing to be more accepting of LGBTIQ+ identities as has been the increasing broader expectation of LGBTIQ+ youth (Gahan et al., 2014), but instead through making the LGBTIQ+ identities/individuals the target for change hope/fervour in prolonged Stage 5 identity moratoriums or ex-LGBTIQ+ foreclosures. Multiple other social and educational consequences (from exclusions to microaggressions) add to pressure against LGBTIQ+ identity formation and intimacies.

Anti-LGBTIQ+ messages about the unnatural and sinful nature of sexual and gender diversity (for example, amongst other messages) were particularly increasingly emphasised in religious education settings; and more often delivered by adults in official education roles, in formal and group/communal settings in religious schools and with higher frequencies when tied to school values. Most anti-LGBTIQ+ and SOGIECE messages and SOGIECE practices examined were significantly less likely to be promoted in government schools, where they were by comparison



**Fig. 9** Percentage of LGBTIQ+ students reporting consequences for open LGBTIQ+ identification by school type

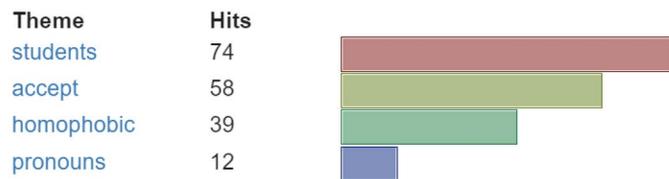
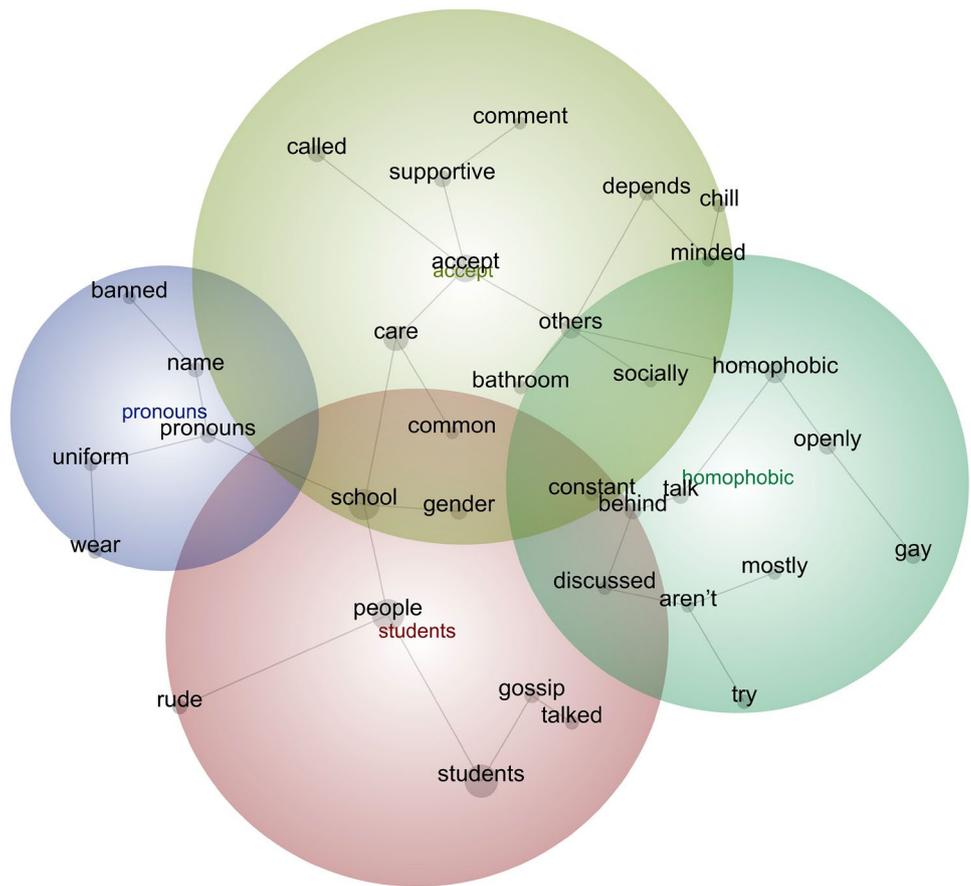
more often and mainly communicated unofficially by other students, and/or one-on-one. Especially notable was the manifold increase for religious school staff — especially educators — formally delivering in class and school-wide settings the message that being sexuality/gender diverse was sinning; far more than school chaplains or religious leaders. This indicated the likely additional influence of various exosystem religious education policy and curricula specific for religious educators; beyond the general religious ideas and texts in the macrosystem also broadly influencing religious leaders. In short, religious schools are the site where anti-LGBTIQ+ messaging, religious freedom restrictions, and SOGIECE messaging and practices are *most prevalent and problematic* for LGBTIQ+ youth *overall* (compared to home, religious settings, or work overall).

This new condition is likely also linked to the Australian (2013) exemptions for religious education institutions in anti-discrimination laws on the basis of sex, gender, sexuality, marital, and relationship status — education policies and practices of anti-LGBTIQ+ discrimination and SOGIECE have been directly planned for and enabled through legislative campaigns. These exemptions should be urgently reconsidered for removal. These exemptions legally enabled religious school exosystems and microsystems to become the sites for top-down gender and sexuality discrimination and SOGIECE harmful to LGBTIQ+ students, that many of them are today, far above government schools (which still

feature and should combat peer-to-peer discriminations). The 2013 exemptions have for the past decade limited the effectiveness of SOGIECE bans (ACT Government, 2020; QLD Government, 2020; Victorian Government, 2021), human rights legislative protections for LGBTIQ+ people (UN, 2020) and religious freedom protections (Commonwealth of Australia, 1900) in Australian religious schools. However, all school types can host hidden anti-LGBTIQ+ enclaves and passive gender diverse inclusion refusals, which training should redress.

A positive finding was that whilst psychologists/counselors were previously key purveyors of SOGIECE including up to a third interacting with Australian LGBTIQ+ youth in the late 1990s (APA, 2009); this study showed school psychologists are now least likely to promote it in Australian schools. Professional association and society code bans and degree-program SOGIECE denouncements seen in the Australian psychology exosystem (Australian Psychological Society, 2021) and broader industry-specific macrosystem (APA, 2009); likely helped to significantly mediate SOGIECE messaging from Australian school psychologists. Professional code SOGIECE denouncements are thus likely influential as they do not carry exemptions; they should be replicated for education professionals including teachers towards mediating school-wide, classroom and staff school-based anti-LGBTIQ+ and SOGIECE messaging and practice promotions (particularly in religious schools). These

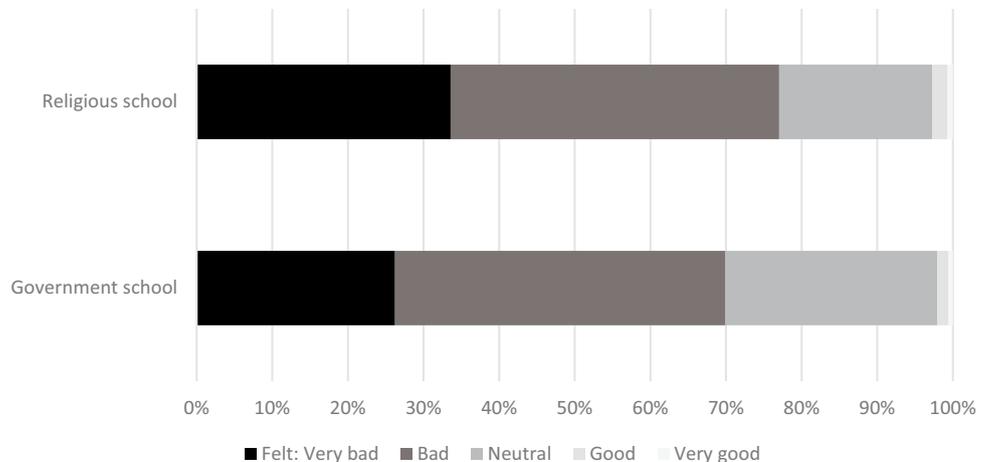
**Fig. 10** Leximancer map\* for LGBTIQ+ students’ ‘other consequences’ descriptions ( $n=909$ ). \*Dark font indicates sub-concepts; light font indicates over-arching themes (dominant sub-concept by cluster)



codes should reinforce the religious freedom of all individuals but not institutions (which have no human rights), clarifying that religious freedom does not afford religious

dominion over others (including LGBTIQ+ youth) and ends where its expression puts others’ safety at risk (including through education discrimination, psychological torture,

**Fig. 11** LGBTIQ+ students’ feelings about these messages from their schools overall by religious ( $N=452$ ) vs government ( $N=760$ ) school type



SOGIECE). Both staff and students will need training/education on the cumulative impacts of seemingly passive anti-LGBTIQA + expressions (using unwanted pronouns or names, gossip).

## Conclusions

Religious ideas in the broader macrosystem of an LGBTIQA + individual may have some impact on their lives. However, for LGBTIQA + students, the differences in policies in their exosystems (specifically religious educational institution exemptions to anti-discrimination laws and how these interact with other laws and policies) and microsystems (school policies) may become key determinants around their educational experience, and level of daily religious freedom concerning their LGBTIQA + identities. Sending LGBTIQA + students to Australian religious schools above government schools currently risks their religious freedom, education, and non-discrimination rights. Until legislation and policy and/or professional codes for educators are properly addressed, LGBTIQA + students are being put at the type of wellbeing risk they used to face from psychological professionals — now mostly mediated by professional codes.

Policies make robust contributing impacts on the systems surrounding LGBTIQA + youth, and in turn, youth themselves. Whilst we may never be able to completely rid religious schools of homophobia and transphobia, we can mediate their influence with policy protections for LGBTIQA + staff and students. These settings need not remain the crisis sites some currently constitute where an anti-LGBTIQA + ethos is promoted as a ‘school value’ by professionals in their official work. Looking to the successful leveraging of professional codes for school psychologists across contexts is informative. Both removing religious education institutions’ anti-discrimination exemptions and targeting educator professional codes may help to tackle the anti-LGBTIQA + messaging and practices from religious school professionals. Training all educators for the skills to tackle messages either trickling down to, or brought into schools by, students will be key for mediating the common informal and one-on-one SOGIECE and anti-LGBTIQA + practice promotions by students seen across all education systems. Finally, the informality of SOGIECE promotion can mean it evades detection. Researchers may anticipate higher incidence of SOGIECE messaging and practices where testing for a broader range of types, alongside informal sources, in and beyond schools.

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**Availability of Data and Material** In article, and by application (tiffany.jones@mq.edu.au).

**Code Availability** Not applicable.

## Declarations

**Informed Consent to Participate and Publish** Obtained by participants as approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee (520221130837287).

**Conflict of Interest** Not applicable.

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