

Ozzy Ness

31 October 2023

Is It Safe to Not Be Straight?

Today, there are millions of people around the world that would identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. Thanks to several laws passed within the last few recent years and a change of peoples' beliefs, there has been a significant rise in the number of LGBTQ+ citizens not just in this country, but in the world. However, homophobia is still a massive issue amongst our community, and it seems like homophobia is spreading once again, as certain states consider passing laws to once again target the LGBTQ+ community and make their lives even more difficult than they already may be. With more states passing anti-LGBTQ+ laws and homophobia on the rise, are the rights of those part of the LGBTQ+ community truly protected?

While researching this topic, a new problem was discovered: How severe is homophobia within our own youth? Adding onto that, how much of our younger LGBTQ+ members are suffering mentally due to being discriminated against because of their sexuality? Thankfully, a study by Holt, Parodi, and Elgar shows us this exact information in 2015 by anonymously asking students in Wisconsin's Dane County. This survey determined that "...transgender youth reported significantly higher prevalence of depression (54%) and suicidal ideation (60.2%) relative to cisgender youth across all gender expression groups (Holt, Parodi, Elgar). We also can determine that most transgender/gender nonconforming youth experience more harassment than the cisgender youth, as the research study claims that "For bias-based harassment, all groups reported significantly higher percentages of bias-based harassment than cisgender youth with gender conforming expression. In particular, nearly half of transgender youth and over one-third of cisgender youth with moderately gender nonconforming expression reported bias-based

harassment...” (Holt, Parodi, Elgar). Based on the study, it can be assumed that this school district is like many other school districts across the country, which means that most students who are not cisgender with conforming gender expressions are targeted for harassment due to their gender and/or sexual identity. This study also shows that our LGBTQ+ youth are suffering much more mentally than the ordinary cisgender gender conforming student. Based on transgender students alone, more than half of them show depression, and even more reported having suicidal thoughts, with almost a quarter of them being driven to attempt to end their own lives, likely due to harassment they received for not identifying as straight.

Along with a massive anti-LGBTQ+ problem in our youth, our own government is attempting to enact laws that would actively restrict learning about LGBTQ+, while other laws are being passed to penalize those who provide gender-affirming care to the transgender youth. With the LGBTQ+ population growing to an all-time high in the U.S., being recorded at 7.1% of Americans identifying as LGBTQ+ in 2021, “Americans appear to be divided in their acceptance of transgender people. In a survey done in July 2021, 38 percent said greater acceptance of transgender people is generally good for society, while 32 percent said it is bad, and 29 percent said it is neither” (Roepe 9). Unfortunately, it’s hard to predict whether America’s acceptance of transgender people will continue or not, due to several states, especially Florida, allowing parents to sue a school district for teaching/discussing things they don’t agree with, like any LGBTQ discussion, allowing parents to effectively spread hate and misinformation to their children and make them believe that anyone that isn’t heterosexual is evil.

Although there are many laws attempting to restrict the LGBTQ+ citizens, as we grow as a society, more and more people will learn to accept people regardless of their sexual preferences, allowing the society we live in to grow and prosper in the future.

