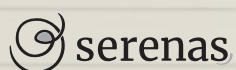




FREE TO DREAM?

School Community Perceptions
of Violence against Girls.

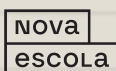
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WHO IS BEHIND THIS **RESEARCH**

SERENAS

Serenas is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization founded and led by women that works to prevent Gender-Based Violence in Brazil. The organization supports governments in developing anti-sexist education policies and training public officials to provide survivor-centered care for people affected by sexual and domestic violence.

Learn more at: www.serenasbr.org

PLANO CDE

Plano CDE is a research and consulting firm focused exclusively on understanding the needs of vulnerable populations to support third-sector organizations and governments in improving the services they provide. Its team is composed of economists, social scientists, public policy specialists, and anthropologists with extensive experience conducting research on social issues, particularly in public education.

Learn more at: www.planocde.com.br

NOVA ESCOLA

Nova Escola is a nonprofit social impact organization that has worked for nearly 40 years to strengthen teaching practices in Basic Education across Brazil, contributing to improved student learning and development. Today, it provides free digital tools and content covering all stages of the teaching profession.

Learn more at: www.novaescola.org.br

BEJA INSTITUTE

Beja Institute fosters innovation, collaboration, and systemic change by connecting initiatives across civil society, the private sector, and government. Its core purpose is to contribute to a more just and equitable society through the strategic and effective use of philanthropic resources.

Learn more at: www.institutobeja.org



MACHADO MEYER INSTITUTE

The Institute was born from almost 20 years of experience of the Machado Meyer office in the area of corporate social responsibility. The organization supports initiatives aimed at improving education in Brazil and maintains a network that promotes the exchange of experiences among organizations, the development and consolidation of good management and governance practices, and the strengthening of financial sustainability in the third sector.

Learn more at:

www.institutomachadomeyer.com.br

Special thanks to the organizations and individuals who supported the dissemination and coordination of the research during the data collection phase: Ensina Brasil, Lemann Foundation, the Center for References in Integral Education, Luciana Temer, Lúcia França, and Carolina Delboni.



WHAT KEEPS GIRLS FROM DREAMING

At Serenas, we believe that girls and women will only be truly free to dream when they are free from the violence that takes place in the very spaces where they should feel protected. We also believe that schools play a central role in preventing this violence. It is often in schools that many forms of violence first emerge — but it is also where care, support, and healthier relationships can take root.

This possibility of dreaming is also denied to students who do not fit prevailing norms, to educators who feel unsupported, and to school administrators who do not know how to respond to cases of violence. For this reason, listening to these individuals is the first step toward understanding the problem and envisioning pathways for transformation.

Since its founding, Serenas has relied on evidence and knowledge generation as guiding principles for shaping more just and effective public policies. This research marks an important step in that journey: revealing how gender-based violence permeates everyday school life — and how everyday school life, in turn, reinforces and normalizes such violence — through the perspectives of those who experience school life every day.

In Brazil, the relationship between gender-based violence and the school context is still not widely recognized by most governments and organizations. Many governments and organizations still view these issue as secondary, as educational indicators often show that girls outperform boys in school. What these data fail to reveal is the emotional, social, and subjective cost many girls bear in order to stay in school — and the extent to which violence affects the well-being of the entire school community. **Our goal is to help make this connection impossible to ignore.**

This journey involves extensive research, and we felt that something essential was missing: a perspective on the issue within the Brazilian context. While there is a substantial body of research on the role of education in addressing violence and inequality, the discussion specifically around gender-based violence is still emerging. To advance this work, Serenas needed more information. What do people involved in education understand about this issue? How do they experience and address these forms of violence in everyday school life? What are the challenges associated with this agenda? Where can we contribute?



Together with Plano CDE, our research partner, with institutional support from Nova Escola and financial support from Beja Institute and Machado Meyer Institute, we produced and launched this study not only to inform Serenas' work and advocacy within the Brazilian ecosystem, but also to amplify voices and create space for listening to those on the front lines of education who face the challenges of GBV every day.

Recognizing and naming gender-based violence is the first step toward identifying possible solutions. We invite you to immerse yourself in this reading and help us amplify this important conversation.

Enjoy your read! With care,
Serenas Team



WARNING TRIGGER



In this report, we have chosen to reproduce participants' statements as they were originally expressed, preserving their language and ways of describing their experiences. This decision aims to respect the authenticity of their accounts and ensure that the voices of those who participated in the research are represented faithfully.

For this reason, it is important to note that some sections may contain descriptions of violence and other sensitive content that could cause discomfort or trigger emotional distress — particularly for those who have experienced difficult or traumatic situations.

Take care of yourself while reading. If at any point you notice feelings of distress, anxiety, or discomfort, take a break. Resume reading only when you feel comfortable and, if needed, seek support from people you trust.

And remember: you are not alone. If you are experiencing violence or know someone who needs help, seek support. Call 180 for reporting or receiving guidance on violence against women, and call 100 for cases involving human rights violations, including those affecting children and adolescents.



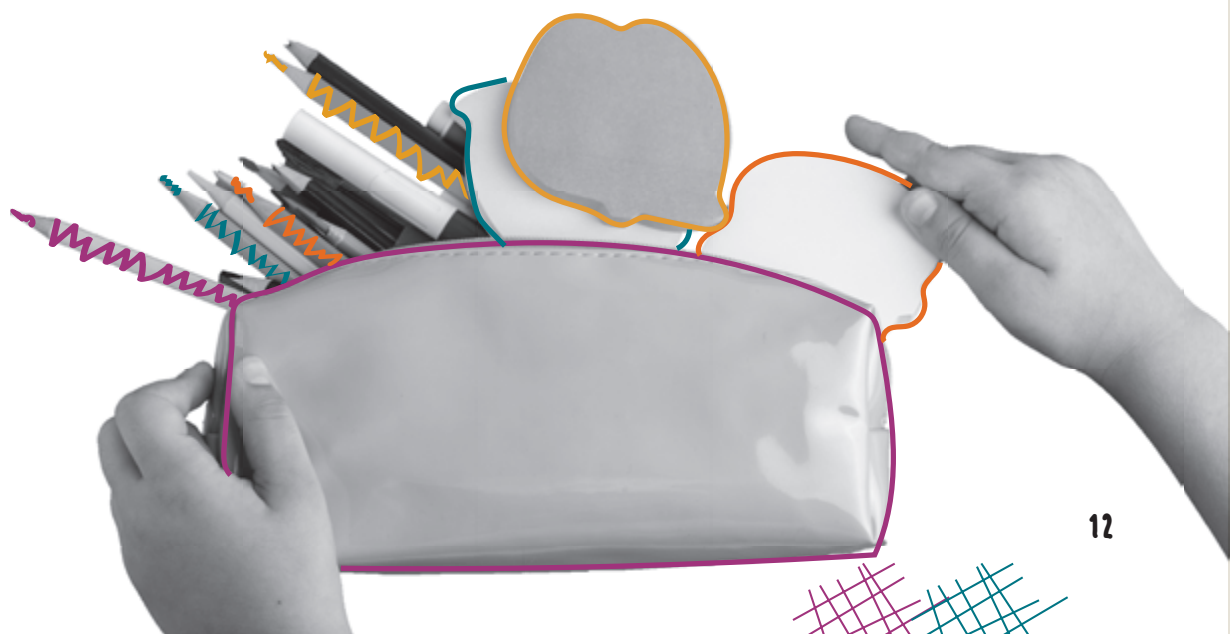
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GLOSSARY



The terms defined in this Glossary are not presented in alphabetical order. Instead, they have been organized thematically and pedagogically to facilitate a progressive understanding of the concepts addressed in this study. The terms have been grouped into five broad categories: gender; sexual orientation; gender identity; other terms related to sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions; and phenomena related to discrimination and violence.

✱ Gender

A concept that gained prominence in the 1970s, strongly influenced by the feminist movement. It was developed to discuss and distinguish the biological dimension from the social dimension, based on the understanding that some people are assigned male at birth and others female at birth, while recognizing that ways of being a man or a woman are culturally constructed. In this sense, the concept of gender asserts that people are shaped by social realities and not solely by the anatomy of their bodies (Gender, 2009, cited in Reis & Cazal, 2023).

Scholars in this field also challenge the binary notion of gender: beyond female and male, there are other gender identities and expressions, including cisgender, transgender, travesti, and non-binary identities (Glasser & Smith, 2008).

✱ School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV)

The term encompasses all forms of violence and threats of violence that affect students because of their gender identity and that are related to the school context. In other words, it may occur at school, on the way to or from school, in the surrounding area, during extracurricular activities, or through information technologies and social media (such as cyberbullying and sexual harassment via mobile phones). Such violence may be perpetrated by students themselves, teachers, or other members of the school community (Parkes et al., 2016).

✱ Gender identity

Gender identity refers to a person's perception of themselves and how they recognize and choose to express themselves in the world. It may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth. People whose gender identity aligns with the gender assigned at birth, based on their biological sex, are cisgender; people whose gender identity differs from the gender assigned at birth are transgender.

As noted above, gender identity may be binary — aligned with socially recognized notions of male and female — or non-binary, encompassing people who identify with a combination of elements associated with these two genders, with neither of them, or with another possibility outside this framework (ABGLT, 2010, cited in Reis & Cazal, 2023).



It also encompasses a personal sense of one's own body,

- which may include, by individual choice, modifications to appearance or bodily functions through medical, surgical, or other means.

- It also includes forms of gender expression, such as clothing, manner of speaking, and gestures (Yogyakarta Principles, 2006, cited in Reis & Cazal, 2023). This identity allows individuals to recognize themselves as part of a group that shares similar experiences.

✱ Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation refers to each person's capacity to experience emotional, affective, or sexual attraction to individuals of a different gender, the same gender, more than one gender, or no gender, as well as to establish intimate and sexual relationships with such individuals (Yogyakarta Principles, 2006, cited in Reis and Cazal, 2023). In general, four of the most common sexual orientations are attraction to people of the same gender (homosexuality), to people of a different gender (heterosexuality), to people of two or more genders (bisexuality/pansexuality), or little or no sexual attraction to people of any gender (asexuality) (Reis & Cazal,

✱ LGBTI+

Acronym for: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transvesti, Transgender, Intersex, and other sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.

✱ LGBTIphobia

LGBTIphobia refers to irrational fear, aversion, or hatred directed toward people whose sexual orientation or gender identity/expression differs from cisheteronormative norms — including those who do not identify as LGBTI+ but are perceived as such. This phenomenon goes beyond direct violence, being rooted in hierarchical and sexist social structures. It is a serious social and political issue that manifests through different forms of prejudice, stigmatization, discrimination, and violence, including homophobia (against gay men), lesbophobia (against lesbian women), biphobia (against bisexual people), and transphobia (against transgender people) (Reis and Cazal, 2023).

Unlike other phobias, LGBTIphobia should not be treated through therapy but rather addressed through legal accountability and educational measures (ABGLT, 2010, cited in Reis and Cazal, 2023). Its consequences are far-reaching, negatively affecting environments such as workplaces, schools, and healthcare services, particularly in the absence of inclusive public policies (Gender, 2009 cited in Reis & Cazal, 2023). LGBTIphobia is also linked to misogyny — that is, discrimination and violence against women (both cisgender and transgender) (Monsanto, 2019, cited in Reis & Cazal, 2023).

✱ Bullying

Bullying is defined as:

"(...) any act of physical or psychological violence that is intentional and repetitive, occurs without evident motivation, and is perpetrated by an individual or group against one or more persons with the objective of intimidating or harming them, causing pain and distress to the victim, within a relationship characterized by an imbalance of power between the parties involved." (BRAZIL, 2015)

✱ Racism

Racism is a system of oppression that distributes privileges and disadvantages based on race, sustained by historical, cultural, economic, and institutional practices. It goes beyond individual attitudes or isolated acts of discrimination, operating in a structural and persistent manner to maintain racial hierarchies within society. It may manifest directly or indirectly, with or without explicit intent, and affects access to rights, opportunities, and social recognition. It differs from prejudice (judgments based

on stereotypes) and discrimination (unequal treatment), although it may intersect with both. (Almeida, 2019)

In Brazil, a country shaped by its colonial and slaveholding past, racism primarily affects people perceived as non-white, especially Black and Indigenous people. It is present across all sectors of society, including schools, and is a crime under the Federal Constitution.

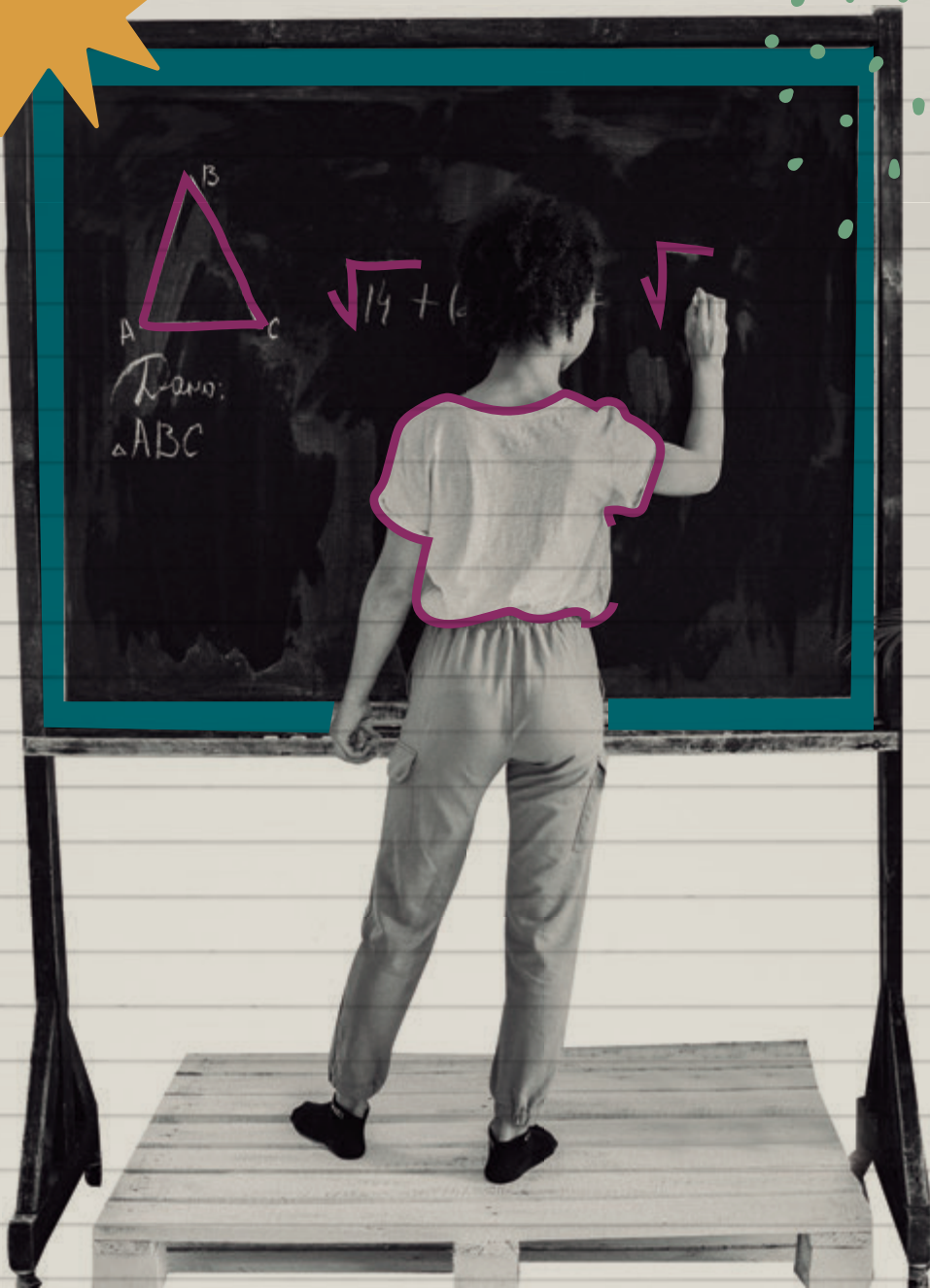
✱ Ableism

Considered one of the most common expressions of prejudice against persons with disabilities, ableism refers to discrimination manifested through certain forms of treatment, modes of communication, practices, and physical or architectural barriers that prevent these individuals from fully exercising their citizenship rights. It is primarily characterized by the assumption that someone is incapable simply because they have a disability.





INTRODUCTION



The period between 1976 and 1985 became known as “the Decade for Women” due to a series of United Nations conferences that brought gender issues onto the global agenda, fostering discussions and international agreements aimed at combating the various forms of discrimination and violence faced by girls and women around the world. However, in 2025 — nearly 50 years later — we are still far from achieving a society free from gender-based violence (GBV).

Despite advances in policies aimed at protecting and promoting women’s rights over recent decades, girls and adolescent girls are still affected by different forms of violence. Recent data highlight the severity of the situation: six out of every ten rape victims in Brazil are girls under the age of 13 (Brazilian Public Security Forum, 2023). In addition, every day, 26 girls under the age of 14 become mothers in Brazil — most of them Black and living in the country’s North and Northeast regions (UFMG, 2024). Far from representing isolated cases, these figures reveal a persistent pattern of inequality and vulnerability that begins in childhood and affects these girls’ life trajectories well into adulthood.

Schools, which should be spaces of care, safety, and holistic development, often reproduce the same forms of violence and inequality found outside their walls.

Stories of girls experiencing control over their bodies, harassment by classmates and even teachers, and barriers to participating in certain school activities, such as sports, are all too common. At the same time, there is growing recognition that rigid

norms of masculinity generate violence among boys, particularly against those who do not conform to cisheteronormative expectations. These experiences can undermine the learning process, negatively affecting students’ cognitive and emotional development while contributing to the reproduction of social inequalities.

Addressing violence in school settings — including gender-based violence (GBV) — is therefore central to ensuring the right to education. Brazil’s National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (LDB), Law No. 9,394/1996, establishes that education must ensure the full development of learners, prepare them for the exercise of citizenship, and promote respect for human, cultural, and identity diversity. The law also mandates that topics related to human rights and the prevention of violence against children, adolescents, and women be addressed as cross-cutting themes within school curricula. In addition, it assigns schools responsibility for adopting awareness-raising and prevention measures against all forms of violence, particularly bullying.



The National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC) further reinforces this commitment by establishing competencies related to respect for human rights, appreciation of diversity, and the promotion of a culture of peace. These competencies include self-awareness and self-care, empathy and cooperation, and responsibility and citizenship.

Educational processes are essential for promoting changes in perceptions and behaviors across society, both at the individual and structural levels. The transformative potential of education is immense: Brazil's education system serves more than 47 million students between the ages of 4 and 17 and includes more than 2 million teachers¹, whose influence extends to the families and communities in which they live and work.

Despite the central role schools play in the lives of children and adolescents, there remains a significant gap in systematic research on the presence and impact of GBV in educational settings. This lack of knowledge limits the development of public policies and educational strategies capable of effectively preventing and addressing the problem.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to expand knowledge about the dynamics of GBV in school settings and to contribute to

the development of more effective violence prevention and response strategies, supporting public policies and educational initiatives aimed at gender equity and the promotion of healthy relationships in schools.

The study aims to identify, based on the perceptions and experiences of students, teachers, school administrators, and representatives of Education Departments, the understandings, beliefs, and attitudes surrounding GBV. It also examines how this violence manifests both inside and outside school settings, the role of schools in preventing it, and the challenges involved in addressing the issue.

The report is structured as follows: the next chapter presents the methodology adopted, detailing the research procedures. The findings are then analyzed through five main dimensions:

1) Perceptions of Gender-Based Violence; 2) How GBV Manifests in Schools and Affects Students' Lives; 3) The Role of Schools: Visibility, Prevention, and Response to GBV; 4) Challenges of GBV Prevention in Education; and 5) Opportunities to Advance GBV Prevention in Education.

Finally, the report concludes with final considerations that synthesize the study's main findings and provide recommendations for strengthening strategies aimed at preventing and addressing GBV.

¹ Source: School Census, 2023





METHODOLOGY



This study sought to analyze how different members of the school community and leaders within education systems understand and respond to gender-based violence (GBV). To this end, a mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining qualitative and quantitative research techniques. This methodological choice enhances the study's analytical potential, making it possible not only to understand the complexity of perceptions surrounding GBV and the practices adopted by schools, but also to identify patterns and trends in a systematic manner. Throughout this report, the findings are presented in an integrated way, highlighting the interplay between the qualitative and quantitative results.

The **qualitative approach** was adopted to understand school stakeholders' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions regarding GBV, as well as to analyze how violence manifests both inside and outside school settings and what prevention and response measures are adopted by the participating Education Departments. The main strength of this method lies in its flexibility to capture nuances and subjective dimensions of the issue, allowing the research to adapt to participants' contexts and realities rather than relying on rigid hypotheses. In addition, establishing an environment of trust and empathy between interviewers and participants was essential for accessing sensitive accounts and understanding the challenges experienced in everyday school life.

Given the sensitive nature of the topic, some of the statements presented throughout this report may contain descriptions of violence and distressing situations. We chose to reproduce participants' statements as they were originally expressed, preserving their language and ways of narrating their experiences. This decision seeks to respect the authenticity of their accounts and ensure that participants' voices are represented faithfully. Nevertheless, we encourage readers to approach the material with care.

The **quantitative approach**, in turn, sought to map the prevalence of teachers' perceptions and experiences related to GBV. Teachers were selected because they maintain direct and ongoing contact with students, allowing them to closely observe situations involving violence, discrimination, and gender inequality in school settings. The quantitative survey made it possible not only to quantify perceptions and challenges identified through the qualitative research, but also to identify broader trends and patterns.

It is important to note that in both phases of the study – qualitative and quantitative – we deliberately chose not

Metodology

to introduce the topic of gender-based violence directly during the initial interactions with participants. This approach had two main objectives: first, to understand spontaneously which



conflicts shape everyday school life and whether they were perceived as related to gender issues; and second, to avoid potential resistance to the topic, given its widely recognized sensitivity.

The following sections detail the data collection process and the characteristics of the sample in each stage of the study.

QUALITATIVE PHASE

The qualitative phase of the study involved in-depth interviews (IDIs) and mini focus groups conducted by a team of specialized researchers. The interviews were conducted both in person and remotely (online), using semi-structured discussion guides and engaging different members of the school community, with representation from all five regions of Brazil.

Details on participant profiles and the distribution of interviews are presented below.

A total of 15 in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted:

- * 5 online interviews with administrators from state or municipal Education Departments.
- * 10 interviews with administrators from state and municipal public schools, including:

- * 6 online interviews with participants from the Northeast, North, and South regions.

- * 4 in-person interviews conducted in the Southeast and Midwest regions.

In addition, 25 mini focus groups were conducted, all separated by gender:

- * 14 mini focus groups with teachers from state and municipal public schools (consisting of 3 to 6 teachers each), including:

- * 6 online groups with participants from the Northeast, North, and South regions.

- * 8 in-person groups conducted in the Southeast and Midwest regions.

- * 13 mini focus groups with students from state and municipal public schools (consisting of 4 to 7 students each), all conducted in person in the Southeast and Midwest regions.

A total of 98 individuals participated in the study, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: *Distribution of the Qualitative Sample*

	In-person (Southeast)	In-person (Midwest)	Online (distributed nationally)	Total (IDIs and Mini Focus Groups)	Total (no. of participants)
Administrators (IDIs)	-	-	5 (1 per region)	5	5
School Administrators (IDIs)	2	2	6 (2 per region)	10	10
Teachers (Mini Focus Groups)	4	4	6 (2 per region)	14	31
Students (Mini Focus Groups)	9	4	-	13	52
Total	15	10	17	42	98

QUANTITATIVE PHASE

The quantitative component of the study was conducted through a structured, self-administered online questionnaire directed at teachers working with Lower Secondary Education and/or Upper Secondary Education students.

To reach the target population, the questionnaire was widely disseminated by Serenas and partner organizations through

multiple communication channels, including social media, email, and other platforms commonly accessed by teachers.

In total, **1,383 teachers** who met the target profile completed the questionnaire in full. Participants were predominantly women (70%), residents of the Southeast region (47%), and employed in the public education system (81%) (see Table 2).



Table 2: Teacher Survey – Respondent Profile

Region		Age		Color/Race	
Southeast	47%	18-34 years	16%	White	55%
Northeast	22%	36-50 years	44%	Brown	33%
South	17%	50 years or older	39%	Black	11%
North	8%			Indigenous	1%
Midweste	6%			Yellow	1%

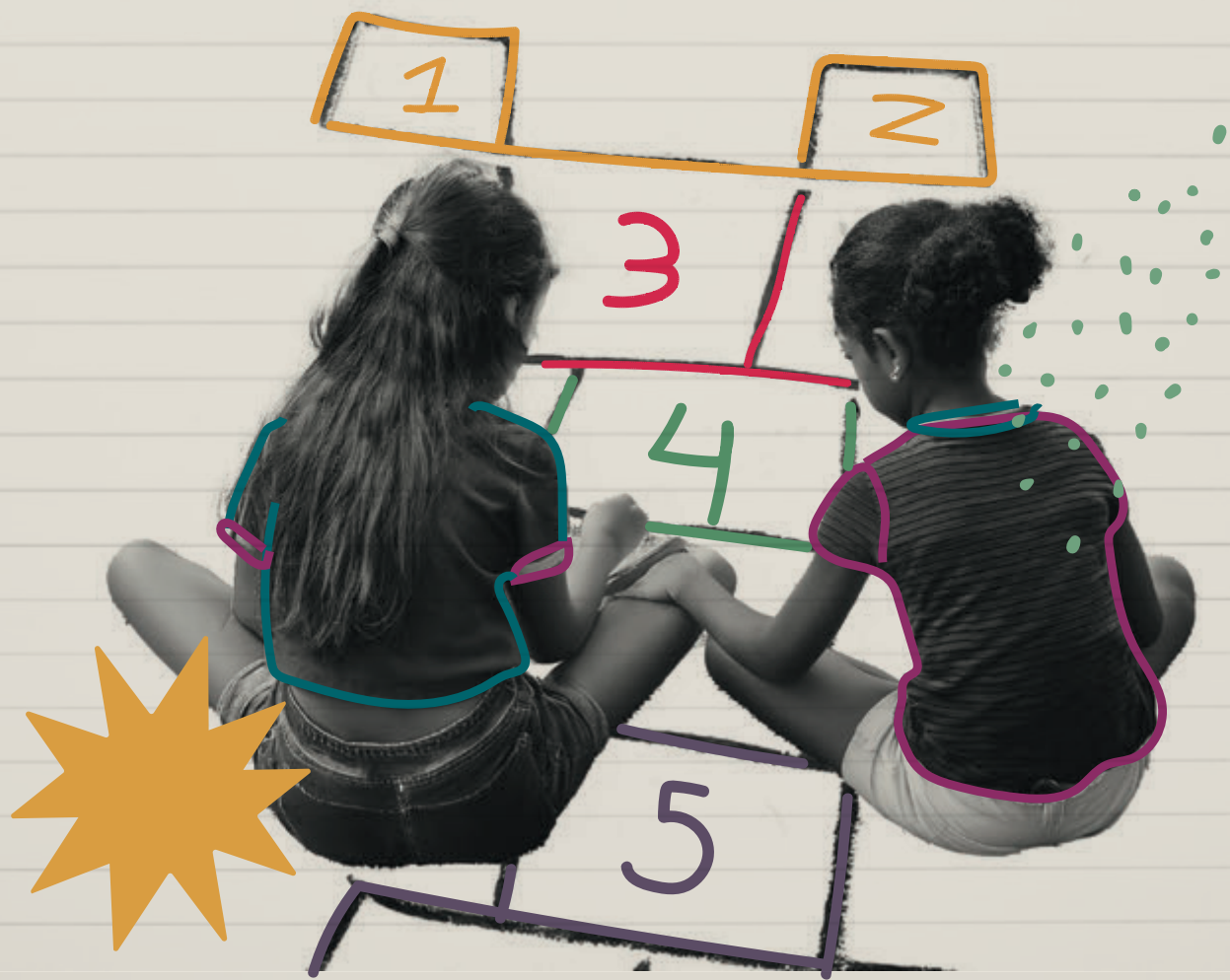
Type of School		Public Education		Education Level(s)	
Public	81%	State	58%	Early Childhood Education	6%
Private	19%	Municipal	38%	Primary Education	20%
		Federal	10%	Lower Secondary Education	74%
				Upper Secondary Education	55%
				Youth and Adult Education	16%
				Others	4%

Gender Identity		Subject Area(s) Taught	
Woman	70%	Portuguese Language	30%
Man	25%	Other	22%
Other	3%	Mathematics	17%
Prefer not to answer	3%	Biology / Physics / Chemistry	12%
Travesti	0%	Art	10%
		Foreign Language (English, Spanish, etc.)	10%
		Philosophy / Sociology	7%
		Physical Education	7%
		Technical Education Subjects	4%

		TOTAL		1.383
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The **quantitative study has a margin of error of 3 percentage points**, when analyzing the sample as a whole. In analyses comparing gender groups,

the margin of error is 5 percentage points. For analyses by age group, the margin of error is 7 percentage points.



* PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

This first chapter presents school stakeholders' perceptions of GBV. Before analyzing how violence manifests itself and which practices are adopted (or not) to prevent or address it, **it is essential to understand how administrators, teachers, and students perceive this form of violence**

in their daily lives. To this end, we first explored which conflicts permeate school life, whether participants spontaneously associated them with gender-related issues, and, finally, how they understood the concept of "Gender-Based Violence."

7.1. CONFLICTS IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

GBV is not mentioned spontaneously when participants are asked about the main challenges affecting school life. Instead, participants broadly report incidents of indiscipline and conflicts among students, including fights, name-

calling, verbal abuse, and physical violence. In addition, discrimination and bullying are mentioned, but they are predominantly associated with racism and ableism, as illustrated in some of the statements below:

"It's just gratuitous insult, there's no reason for it."

(Teacher, man, Midwest region)

"Any difference becomes a nickname. No one is spared."

(Teacher, woman, North region)

"Racism is by far the most common issue. Someone says something extremely racist, and sometimes even the Black student anticipates the bullying by making a racist joke about themselves."

(Teacher, man, Northeast region)

"There are a lot of autistic students, and most of them get made fun of a lot. It's really hard to watch."

(Student, girl, 1st year of Upper Secondary Education, Southeast region)

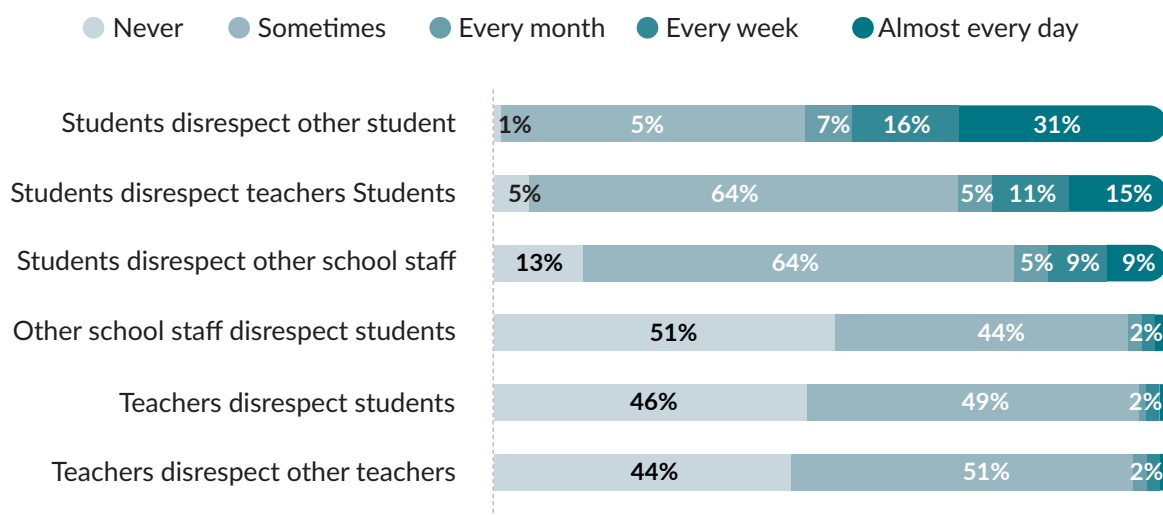
"At the school where I work, we see that many Black students experience a great deal of bullying related to their hair, skin color, and unnecessary comments..."

(Teacher, woman, North region)

Teachers report that **situations of disrespect in school settings are recurrent, with students and teachers themselves being**, the primary targets. In the quantitative phase, a large proportion of teachers reported that students frequently disrespect their peers:

31% stated that this occurs almost every day, while 16% indicated that it occurs every week. In addition, disrespect also extends to school staff, although to a lesser extent.

Chart 1: Teachers' Perceptions of How Frequently Disrespectful Situations Occur in Schools.



P5: Would you say that, at your school: | Base (total):1383

When asked about the most frequent forms of disrespect, we found that students insulting one another without any apparent reason, using terms such as “idiot” or “loser,” is common: **26% of teachers report that this occurs almost every day**, while another **14% say it happens weekly**. **Physical violence among students** is also a frequent occurrence: **8% witnessed physical aggression almost every day**, while **9% indicate that it occurs weekly**.

When we examine conflicts involving discrimination, teachers' perceptions reveal concerning findings. **Racist comments, offensive remarks, or jokes motivated by skin color, ethnic background, or cultural origin are reported as frequent occurrences: 10% of teachers state that such situations happen almost every day, while another 9% report that they occur weekly**. Similarly, students in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability are frequent targets of mockery and humiliation. According to teachers, 9% observe

these situations on a daily basis, while 7% identify them as occurring weekly.

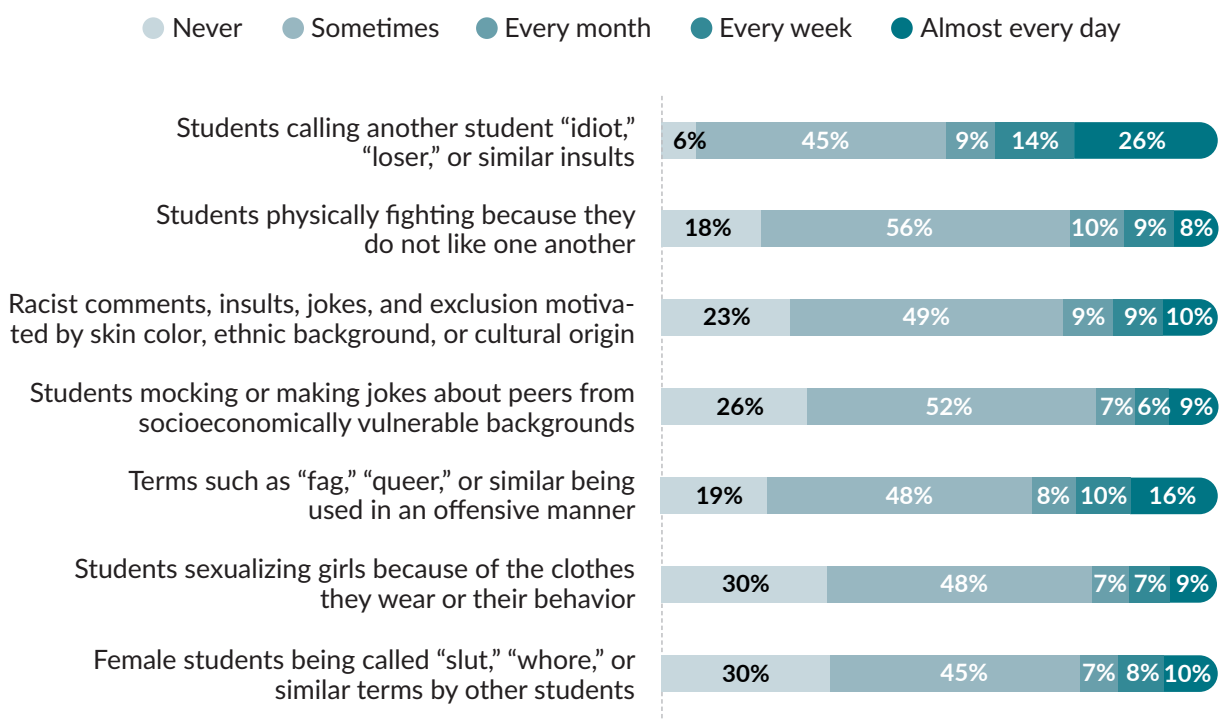
Gender-Based Violence is most commonly identified in three situations:

- the use of homophobic slurs,
- the sexualization of girls,
- verbal abuse directed at girls.

The use of derogatory terms such as “fag” and “queer” is frequently reported as a way of attacking peers, with 16% of teachers

stating that this behavior occurs almost every day and another 10% stating that it occurs weekly. The sexualization of girls based on their clothing or behavior, is equally alarming: 9% of teachers witnessed these situations daily, while 7% indicate that they occur weekly. In addition, girls are often targeted with insults such as “slut” or “whore,” with 10% of teachers reporting that these insults are used almost every day.

Chart 2: Teachers’ Perceptions of How Frequently Conflicts Occur Among Students in Schools – Breakdown of the Main Situations Reported.



P9. During the last school semester, how often did you observe the situations below occurring at school: | Base (total): 1383

7.2. WHAT DO PEOPLE UNDERSTAND BY GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?

Overall, discussions about gender are perceived as sensitive and approached with caution.

During the interviews, **when asked what they understood by Gender-Based Violence (GBV), participants' reactions and responses varied and generally suggested limited familiarity with the term, as well as some hesitation in discussing the topic.**

Some remained silent, possibly because they were unfamiliar with the expression or felt uncomfortable with the question. Others demonstrated a narrow understanding of the concept of "gender," associating it exclusively with sexual orientation and gender identity. Finally, some participants directly associated the term with "violence against women."

"Gender is a sensitive topic. You have to talk about it carefully."

(Teacher, man, Northeast region)

"I think of homophobia and sexism."

(Student, boy, 9th grade, Southeast region)

"Is it like a man hitting a woman? A man who feels superior to a woman?"

(Student, boy, 9th grade, Southeast region)

"Students who haven't defined their sexuality are not accepted; they are looked down upon."

(Teacher, man, Southeast region)

"The kind of violence women experience"

(Teacher, woman, Southeast region)

"I think of sexism and transphobia."

(Student, girl, 1st year of Upper Secondary Education, Southeast region)

When teachers, school administrators, and Education Department administrators were asked more directly about situations involving harassment and violence against girls in schools, they generally stated that such cases were infrequent. This appears to occur because, when the issue is framed in these terms, it is automatically associated with extreme situations such

as sexual abuse and physical violence. As a result, school stakeholders tend to recall isolated and particularly striking cases—often occurring outside the school setting — rather than recognizing situations that are part of everyday school life and that also constitute GBV .

“[...] We have mothers who end up prostituting their daughters.”

(Education Department Leader, man, South Region)

“[na escola] There’s nothing particularly alarming [related to this issue].”

(Teacher, man, Midwest region)

“Here at school, honestly, I can’t recall witnessing anything that could be attributed to that cause. My experiences come from outside the school setting.”

(Teacher, man, Southeast region)

“Underage girls abused by family members – an uncle, a stepfather.”

(School administrator, woman, Midwest region)

“I don’t see much harassment. I see more disrespect.”

(Teacher, woman, Southeast region)

The quantitative findings reinforce this perception. When teachers were presented with concrete examples of situations and asked whether they considered them to be cases of discrimination and/or violence

based on gender, the situations most frequently associated with the concept were those involving explicit gender stereotypes, as well as sexual and physical forms of violence, which were perceived as more severe.

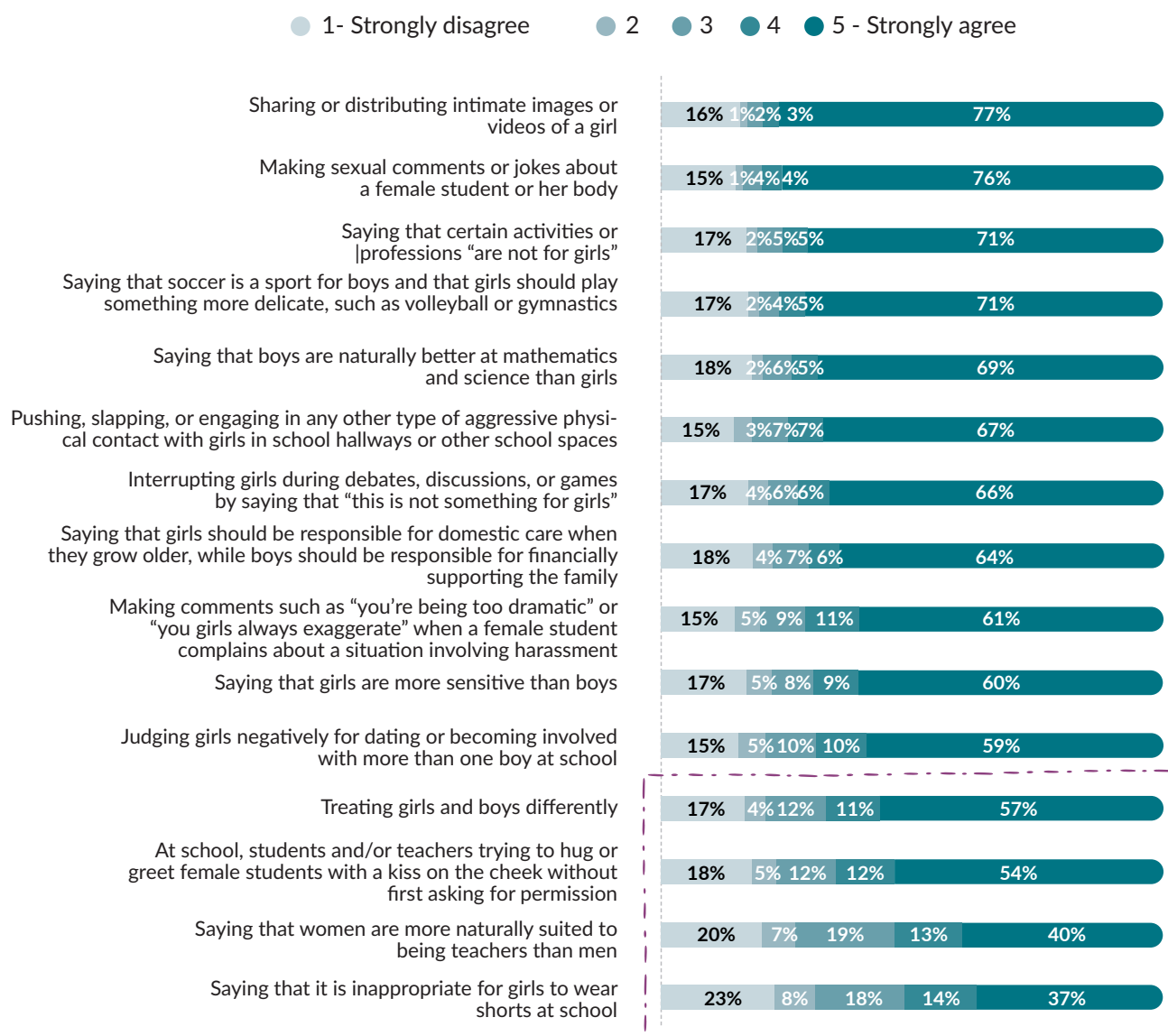
- 77% of teachers strongly agree that sharing or disseminating intimate images of girls constitutes a case of GBV.
- 76% associate sexual comments about female students' bodies with gender-based violence.
- 71% recognize that saying certain professions "are not for girls" reflects gender discrimination, as does the belief that soccer is a sport exclusively for boys.

However, even when presented with clear examples of recognized seriousness, a portion of teachers do not identify them as forms of gender-based discrimination and/or violence. For example, 15% of teachers completely disagreed that "making sexual comments or jokes about a female student or her body" constitutes a situation of GBV. Similarly, 16% completely disagreed that "sharing or disseminating intimate images or videos of a girl" constitutes a situation of gender-based discrimination and/or violence.

The situations least associated with GBV are those involving microaggressions, in which gender inequality and violence are expressed in more subtle ways. For example: only 40% of teachers strongly agree that saying women are more naturally suited to being teachers than men constitute a situation of gender-based discrimination and/or violence, while 37% agree that prohibiting girls from wearing shorts at school is linked to gender discrimination. Likewise, behaviors such as complimenting female students for being pretty or well dressed (22%) or addressing them with terms such as "beautiful" or "dear" (22%) are perceived by relatively few teachers as situations of gender-based discrimination and/or violence.



Chart 3: Teachers' Perceptions of Situations Involving Discrimination and/or gender-based violence

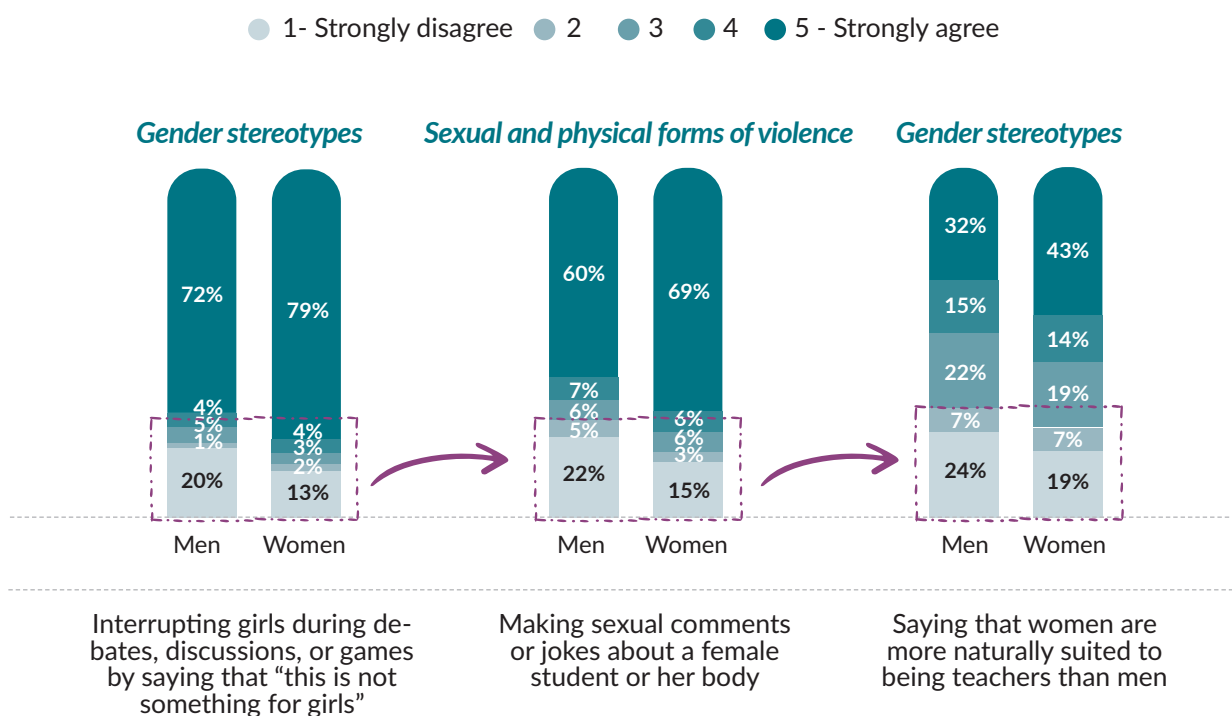


P9. For each of the situations below, please indicate on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree) the extent to which you agree or disagree that it constitutes a case of gender-based discrimination and/or violence: | Base (total): 1383

Overall, we observed, that female teachers tend to identify more situations

as GBV than male teachers.

Chart 4: Teachers' Perceptions of Situations Involving Discrimination and/or Gender-Based Violence – Breakdown by Category and Teachers' Gender Identity



P6. For each of the situations below, please indicate on a scale from 1 to 5 the extent to which you agree or disagree that it constitutes a case of gender-based discrimination and/or violence:

| Base (male teachers): 339; female teachers): 962

When we asked students about situations of violence at school that directly affect girls, the picture differed from that described by teachers and administrators. **Young people experience a range of situations in everyday school life that they identify as forms of violence.** However, perceptions differ between girls and boys.

For girls, harassment and violence are not associated only with explicit or extreme situations.

They also associate them with looks, "jokes," and comments. **Among boys, perceptions of harassment and violence vary more widely.** Some report that they have never witnessed such a case at school. At the same time, some young people identify everyday situations as harassment and violence — generally more "explicit" situations involving, for example, unwanted touching or physical aggression.



“Yes [these cases exist], for example, a hand on someone’s thigh, stealing a kiss, touching intimate parts. In seventh grade, a boy squeezed through a narrow space where a girl was standing just so he could brush against her chest.”

(Student, 3rd year of Upper Secondary Education, boy, Southeast region)

“A girl came to school wearing leggings, and the boys were trying to figure out the color of her underwear.”

(Student, 3rd year of Upper Secondary Education, girl, Southeast region)

7.3. KEY LEARNINGS

The absence of GBV from participants’ spontaneous responses suggests that it is not immediately recognized as a problem present in everyday school life. However, as the conversation deepens and the topic is explored further, it becomes clear that gender inequalities and gender-based violence are present and normalized in school settings. Throughout this report, we will see how school stakeholders experience and describe situations that, even when not explicitly identified as such, reflect dynamics of gender-based violence.

It is also possible to observe that understanding and identifying GBV differs across the groups examined in this study. Education Department administrators and school administrators, who are more distant from students’ day-to-day experiences, tend to mention

more serious and explicit cases; teachers witness various forms of GBV on a regular basis but tend to recognize them as such only in extreme situations; and students, in turn, are the group that most frequently experiences, reports, and identifies different forms of violence as GBV. Even so, perceptions of the severity of these situations vary among them, with significant differences between the experiences reported by girls and boys.

The findings indicate that GBV is more widely recognized when it manifests in more explicit forms. Its subtler dimensions, such as normalized gender stereotypes and microaggressions, are less likely to be perceived and identified as forms of violence. The figure below seeks to systematize how violence is perceived by different groups within the school community.



Figure 1: Visibility and Perceptions of the Severity of GBV from the Perspective

	Do not perceive it	Perceive it, but do not consider it serious	Perceive it and consider it serious
 looks, comments, and “jokes”	Education Department Administrators	School Administrators Teachers Students (Boys)	Students (Girls)
 Physical violence Sexual abuse	—	—	Education Department Administrators School Administrators Teachers





HOW GBV MANIFESTS IN SCHOOL SETTINGS AND IMPACTS STUDENTS' LIVES



Far from being limited to isolated incidents, GBV is embedded in broader patterns of discrimination, objectification, and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes that not only reinforce inequality but also profoundly affect students' educational experience and well-being.

This chapter explores how these forms of violence are experienced, perceived, and reported by participants, presenting evidence of their impacts

8.1. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PERPETRATED BY BOYS

Gender-based violence (GBV) perpetrated by boys against girls in school settings takes many forms, including persistent comments about girls' bodies and behavior, insults, unwanted physical contact, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate content

These forms of aggression, often normalized as jokes or harmless teasing, reinforce gender inequalities and contribute to a hostile environment in which girls feel embarrassed, intimidated, and often powerless in the face of such situations.

Certain "profiles" of girls are perceived as being more vulnerable to violence, bullying, and harassment by boys. According to the young people interviewed during the qualitative phase:

GIRLS CONSIDERED "OUTSIDE THE NORM":

Episodes of bullying are almost always linked to students' physical characteristics, with Black girls and girls perceived as overweight frequently described as common targets.

GIRLS CONSIDERED "FORWARD":

Verbal and physical harassment are common among girls labeled by young people as "flirtatious" or "promiscuous," referring to girls who are perceived to be sexually active and/or to have been involved with more than one boy.





"Boys talk about your body — your breasts, your butt. They say it directly to your face. It's very embarrassing. To them, it's a joke, but it's violent."

(Student, 2nd year of Upper Secondary Education, girl, Midwest region)

"The more 'forward' a girl is, the more she gets made fun of."

(Student, 2nd year of Upper Secondary Education, girl, Midwest region)

"I really like wearing dresses, and there's always someone making jokes about it. Boys walk by, bump into you, or try to lift your dress."

(Student, 3rd year of Upper Secondary Education, girl, Southeast region)

"The issue of religion is also very significant. For example, students from Afro-Brazilian religions may wear bead necklaces or keep their hair tied up. 'Oh, are you casting spells?' 'With those things, you're a witch, you're a cultist.'"

(School administrator, woman, Southeast region)

"We have a dedicated school climate survey, and we find that girls generally report a poorer school climate than boys. This becomes even more pronounced as students' progress through school. We also find that the school climate experienced by girls—especially Black girls—is strongly shaped by racial dynamics."

(Education Department Administrator, man, South Region)

"When they start talking about sex in a disgusting way (...) the things they want to do or have already done, they act like kings whenever they say something like, 'Wow, I hooked up with her' (...)the way they talk is disgusting. Just imagining it makes you sick — it's unsettling."

(Student, final year of Lower Secondary Education, girl, Southeast region)

"Touching girls... It used to happen more often; now it happens much less."

(Teacher, man, Midwest region)

"A girl comes to school wearing a low-cut top, and they try to throw crackers at her chest, or touch her."

(Student, 3rd year of Upper Secondary Education, girl, Southeast region)

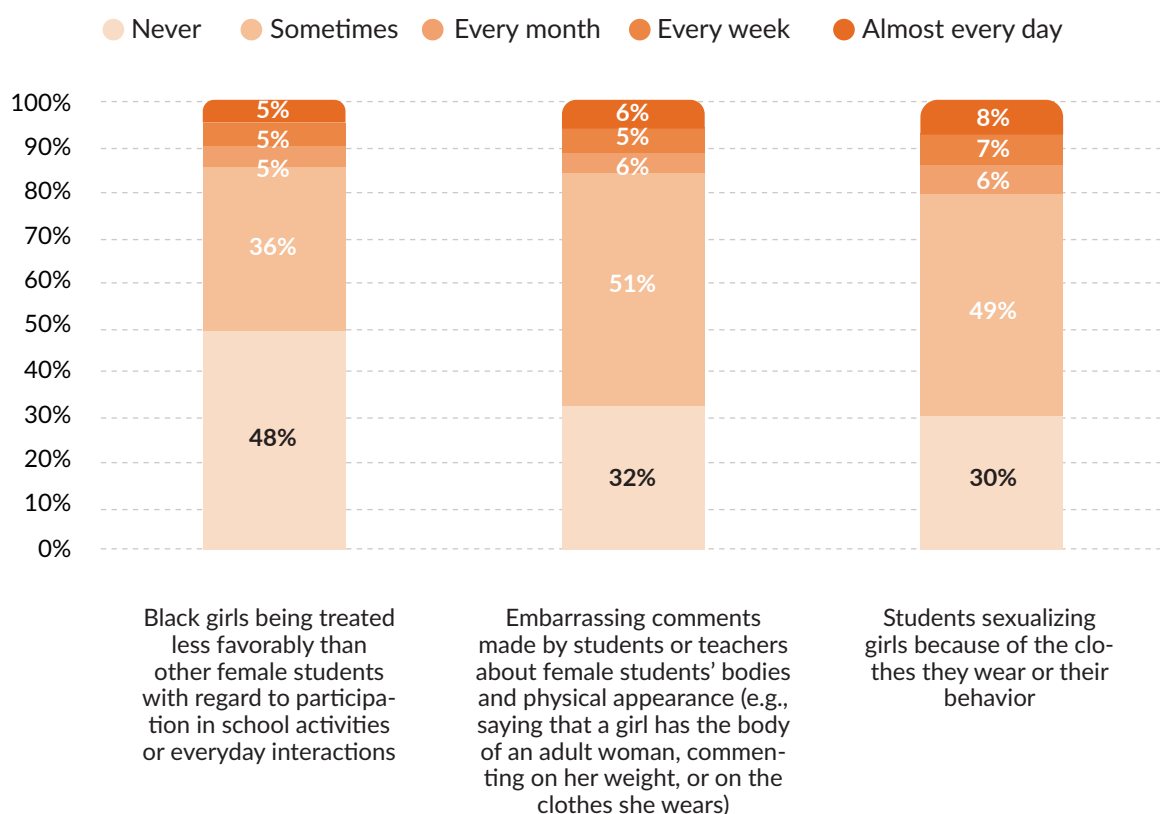
"It's Black boys and Black girls who feel the pressure."

(Teacher, woman, Midwest region)

Data collected from teachers reinforce the perceptions reported by students: half of teachers say they have witnessed Black girls experiencing racism. **Specifically, 52% report having seen these students treated less favorably than other girls with regard to participation in school activities and everyday interactions.** In addition, pressure and control over girls'

appearance is evident: **68% report having witnessed situations in which female students were subjected to embarrassing comments about their bodies or clothing,,** made by other students or even by teachers. Likewise, **70% of respondents report having witnessed students sexualizing girls because of their clothing or behavior.**

Chart 5: How Often Teachers Report Having Witnessed Specific Situations Occurring at School

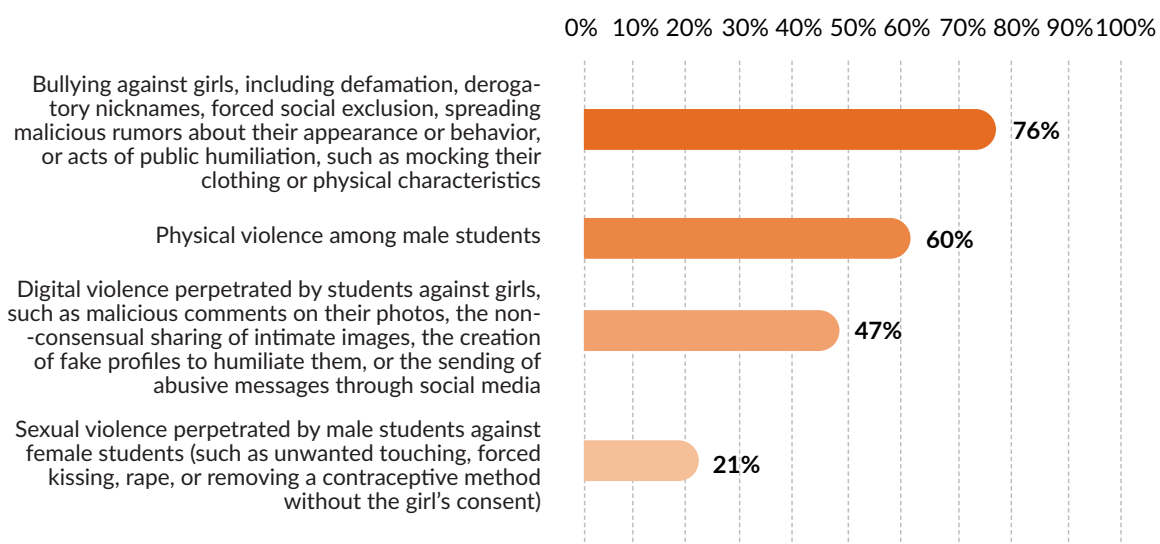


P9. During the last school semester, how often did you observe the situations below occurring at school: | **Base** (total): 1383

The data also reveal that violence against girls takes different forms, extending beyond the physical school setting and manifesting in digital settings as well. **Bullying directed at girls — including defamation, derogatory nicknames, and forced social exclusion — is widespread, with 76% of respondents reporting that they witnessed such situations during the last school semester.**

In addition, 47% report forms of digital violence targeting girls, including attacks on their reputation, such as spreading rumors about their appearance or behavior and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. **Cases of sexual violence, such as unwanted touching and forced kissing, were reported by 21% of teachers.**

Chart 6: Percentage of Teachers Who Witnessed Situations of Violence Among Students During the Last School Semester



P8. During the last school semester, what situations have you witnessed involving or between students at your school? | **Base (total):** 1383

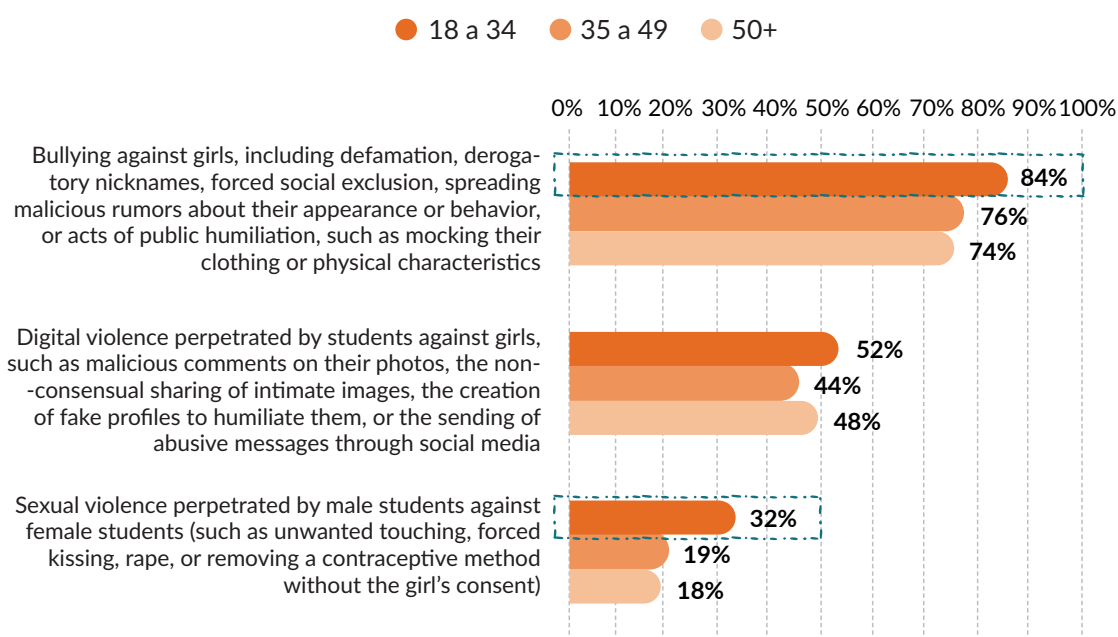
Younger teachers are the group most likely to report having witnessed gender-based violence between students during the last school semester. Bullying against girls — such as defamation, derogatory nicknames, and public humiliation — was

reported by 84% of teachers aged 18 to 34, compared to 74% among those aged 50 and older. **The same pattern appears in more severe cases: 32% of younger teachers reported having knowledge of at least one situation involving sexual**

violence perpetrated by male students against girls — such as unwanted touching, forced kissing, or the removal of a contraceptive method without consent.

Among teachers aged 35 to 49, this figure drops to 19%, and among those aged 50 and older, to 18%.

Chart 7: Percentage of Teachers Who Witnessed Situations of Violence Among Students During the Last School Semester – Breakdown of GBV Situations by Age Group.



P8. During the last school semester, what situations have you witnessed involving or between students at your school? | **Base** (18 to 34):226 | (35 to 49):613 | (50+): 544

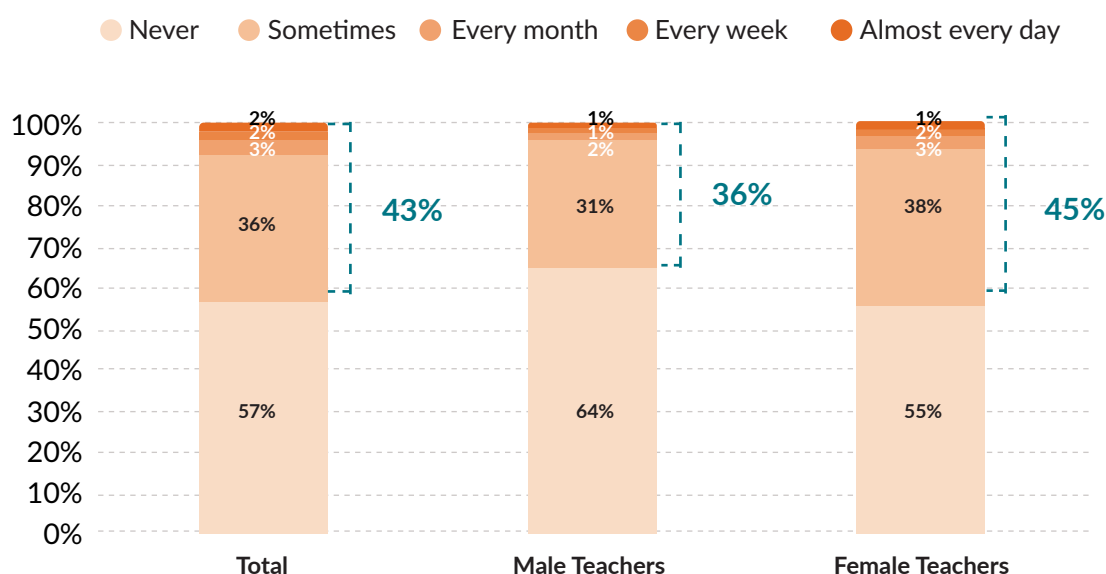
The level of objectification and exposure experienced by girls is clearly illustrated by one of the accounts shared during the qualitative phase of the study: at one of the schools visited, all of the boys interviewed reported knowing about WhatsApp groups created to compete over “who can kiss the most girls.” According to them, these groups assign points to different “types” of girls. Within this logic, girls who are “blonde,

brunette, or curly-haired” are worth more points, while girls considered “thinner, overweight, or unattractive” subtract points from a participant’s score. To prove how many points they have earned, participants are expected to send photos or videos of themselves kissing the girls. One student commented that videos of sexual activity had been shared in one of the groups he belongs to and that, in those cases, “the

score is even higher.” Situations like these – forms of technology-facilitated violence – are frequently witnessed by teachers: **43% report having encountered incidents in which students at their school shared**

or distributed intimate images or videos of a girl during the last school semester. The percentage is even higher among female teachers (45% vs. 36% in the case of male teachers).

Chart 8: How Often Teachers Report Having Witnessed Students Sharing or Distributing Intimate Images or Videos of Girls During the Last School Semester – Breakdown by Teacher Gender.



P9. During the last school semester, how often did you observe the situations below occurring at school: [Option: Students sharing or distributing intimate images or videos of a girl] | **Base (total):** 1383; **(male teachers):** 339; **(female teachers):** 962

8.2. EXPRESSIONS OF GBV IN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GIRLS

Although boys are identified as the primary perpetrators of GBV, relationships among girls themselves can also reproduce patterns of violence shaped by gender norms and stereotypes.

During the interviews, students, teachers, and school administrators reported frequent conflicts among girls, often associated with judgments about appearance, behavior, or involvement with male classmates.

These dynamics, commonly described as “female rivalry,” reflect the internalization of sexist discourses and the socialization of girls in contexts marked by competition, control, and surveillance of one another’s bodies and behavior. According to interviewees, the main reasons behind this rivalry include jealousy

related to boys and envy among girls. This behavior was also observed during the focus group discussions with female students: they frequently expressed judgment toward their peers’ behavior and reproduced sexist narratives. It is common for girls to refer to one another as rivals, a dynamic reinforced by students of all genders.



“One girl can dislike another just by looking at her.”

(Student, 1st Year of Upper Secondary Education, girl, Midwest Region)

“There are fights, hair-pulling, shouting matches.”

(Student, 2nd Year of Upper Secondary Education, girl, Midwest Region)

“It’s always because of a boy — one girl stole another girl’s boyfriend.”

(Student, 1st year of Upper Secondary Education, girl, Southeast region)

“Some girls end up being hated — the ugly ones, the ones who’ve been around, the ones who think they’re all that. Even the boys don’t want them, except to hook up and leave.”

(Student, 3rd Year of Upper Secondary Education, girl, Midwest Region)

Rather than being understood as spontaneous manifestations of conflict, these attitudes reveal how gender inequalities also shape relationships among girls and can contribute to the revictimization and isolation of students in vulnerable situations.

When addressing these situations, it is essential to understand them as part of a broader process of gender socialization — in which girls may also be led to reinforce oppressive discourses, often as a means of belonging or self-protection.

8.3 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PERPETRATED BY TEACHERS

Students' accounts also show that gender-based violence (GBV) within schools is not limited to interactions among students. **Teachers are also identified as perpetrators of these forms of violence, engaging in inappropriate and abusive behaviors,** ranging from intrusive looks, embarrassing comments, and interactions on social media to inappropriate requests that expose

and embarrass girls, including unwanted touching and physical contact. **Young people perceive these incidents as frequent and often occurring without consequences for the teachers involved.** The normalization of these practices within school settings reinforces a sense of impunity and increases girls' feelings of vulnerability.



"There are teachers who come on to female students – you can tell! They don't even try to hide it, you know? **And it's not just one of them, most of them do it. It's kind of become normal (...) one day there was a teacher who took a girl's hand and asked her to spin around."**

(Student, boy, final year of Lower Secondary Education, Southeast region)

A teacher's word will always carry more weight than a student's. **If we can't prove it, there's no point in taking it any further."**

(Student, boy, final year of Lower Secondary Education, Southeast region)

"There was something weird. A teacher asked a girl to take his wallet out of his pocket."

(Student, boy, final year of Lower Secondary Education, Southeast region)

"A girl is standing at the bus stop, and he [the teacher] drives by, offers her a ride in his car, tells her she looks pretty (...) We can even report it [to the school administration], but **they always question the student."**

(Student, final year of Lower Secondary Education, girl, Southeast region)

"He [the teacher] was unbearable. He would correct our notebooks while staring at our breasts. I wouldn't even stay in his classroom."

(Student, boy, final year of Lower Secondary Education, Southeast region)

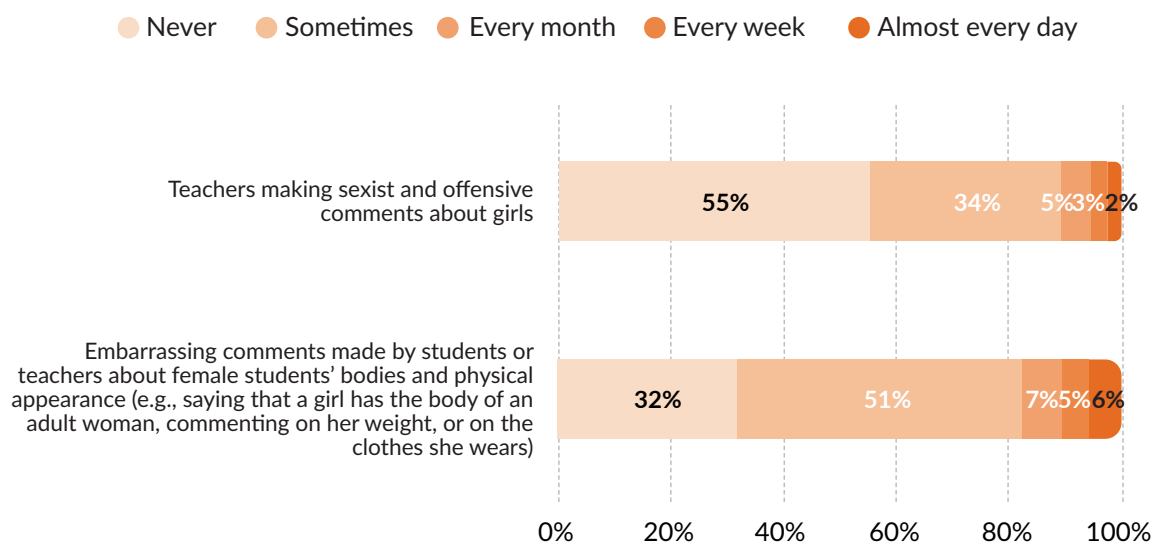
"When I said that he [the teacher] was looking at them, I was sitting in the back of the classroom and the teacher came after me. **He had been looking at my girlfriend and another girl. He said to me, 'Can you prove I was looking? Can you prove it?' (...) Man, we're scared, you know? **He's our teacher. How are we supposed to prove it?"****

(Student, boy, final year of Lower Secondary Education, Southeast region)

In the quantitative phase of the study, some teachers themselves acknowledged that teachers can be perpetrators of GBV in schools. Sexist and embarrassing comments about girls' bodies and appearance were identified as recurring

practices: 51% of respondents reported having witnessed this type of situation at least "sometimes," while 17% reported occurrences on a monthly basis or more frequently.

Chart 9: How Often Teachers Witnessed Situations in Which GBV Was Perpetrated by Other Teachers During the Last School Semester



P9. During the last school semester, how often did you observe the situations below occurring at school: : **Base** (total): 1383

Cases of sexual harassment committed by teachers against female students also occur and are recognized by other teachers: **15% report being aware of situations involving sexual harassment**

perpetrated by teachers against female students during the last school semester, including sexual advances, intrusive gazes, and inappropriate propositions.

8.4 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PERPETRATED BY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Beyond violence perpetrated by teachers, girls report receiving different treatment from school administrators, particularly regarding dress code rules and participation in physical activities, highlighting deeply rooted gender issues within school settings.

Access to sports, for example, remains restricted for girls, whether due to a lack of institutional encouragement or discouragement from peers. Soccer, in particular, is an emblematic example of this barrier. While boys often have dedicated spaces and scheduled times for practice, girls report a

lack of equivalent opportunities or the need to seek out less accessible alternatives.

In addition, girls are prevented from wearing certain types of clothing and are judged for doing so. Rigid and unequal dress code rules impose disproportionate control over female students, holding them responsible for the behavior of their male peers. There is a direct association between wearing short clothing and “provoking” boys, placing blame on girls and reinforcing sexist stereotypes.



“Boys have soccer practice three times a week, while girls have none. Would it be so hard to set aside one day for the girls? We have to go to a court far away, on the other side of town.”

(Student, final year of Lower Secondary Education, girl, Midwest Region)

“Last year, we weren’t allowed to come to school wearing crop tops. The principal would send us home to change. They would also say: ‘Don’t you think those shorts are a little too short?’ They said that by wearing short clothes we were attracting attention, distracting the boys, and that we needed to behave appropriately. They never say anything to the boys. We’re the only problem.”

(Student, 3rd year of Upper Secondary Education, girl, Southeast region)

In these situations, the relationship between students and school administrators often becomes conflictual. Girls generally do not perceive school administrators as allies

in cases of GBV. Reports of having their accounts dismissed, being blamed, and being questioned are common when female students turn to school leadership to report or disclose incidents of violence.

The lack of support and the tendency to discredit reports of GBV generate feelings of distrust and frustration among girls, who perceive school administrators as being more concerned with imposing restrictions on them than with ensuring their protection. This environment discourages reporting and reduces the likelihood that students

will seek institutional support, particularly in less explicit cases of harassment, such as intrusive gazes and inappropriate comments. **Girls have a strong perception that perpetrators of GBV go unpunished — that “nothing comes of it” and that “there’s no point in reporting it,” because those responsible will remain unaccountable.**



“School is preparing us for real life. There are no consequences here, and there won’t be any out there either.”

(Student, final year of Lower Secondary Education, girl, Southeast region)

“We can report it [to the school administration], but sometimes they’re more concerned about our uniforms than about helping us.”

(Student, final year of Lower Secondary Education, girl, Southeast region)

“She told the principal about that thing with the teacher staring at her breasts. The principal said her clothes were too tight. Come on, who’s in the wrong here? The teacher! Those guys are creeps [slang used to refer to rapists]. The school shouldn’t even be hiring people like that!”

(Student, boy, final year of Lower Secondary Education, Southeast region)

“Finding out that people are calling you a slut in your own classroom... it hurts. I didn’t tell the administration. It’s a waste of time. I’ve gone to them before, and nothing ever happened. It would just drain my time and energy and keep eating away at me. I’d rather keep it to myself.”

(Student, 1st year of Upper Secondary Education, girl, Southeast region)

“Are you sure? That’s a very serious accusation you’re making. We feel like there’s no space to talk. When we finally work up the courage to speak to the administration and they respond like that, we’re not going to speak up again.”

(Student, girl, final year of Lower Secondary Education, Southeast Region)

8.5 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

Although the focus of this study is Gender-Based Violence within school settings, participants' accounts make clear that this violence extends beyond the physical boundaries of the school. **Situations involving sexual harassment and sexual misconduct in public spaces — such as streets and public transportation, often on the way to and from school —** affect girls' well-being, generating fear and feelings of insecurity and directly impacting their school experience.

In addition, teachers and administrators reported a number of cases of sexual

violence occurring within students' families which, although not strictly classified as school-related GBV, are often **identified and, in many cases, reported within the school setting.** This is because schools frequently become spaces of listening, support, and protection for these girls, especially when other support networks are absent. Thus, although these forms of violence occur outside school, their effects manifest within school settings and require responses from the school community.



"A man harassed me on the bus. He kept staring at my legs., I told him off as I don't mince my words and he said that if I didn't want to be looked at, I should wear a tunic."

(Student, 3st year of Upper Secondary Education, girl, Southeast region)

"Harassment outside school is what happens most often (...) cars pulling up and men shouting things at us."

(Student, 3st year of Upper Secondary Education, girl, Southeast region)

"It's what we see most often, underage girls being abused by family members - an uncle, a stepfather."

(School administrator, woman, Midwest region)

8.6 VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED BY BOYS

Gender-Based Violence also affects boys, although in different ways and with different consequences from those

experienced by girls. These forms of violence are expressed primarily through the enforcement of

rigid norms of masculinity. From an early age, boys learn that they must follow certain “rules” associated with gender stereotypes, or risk having their masculinity questioned.

This pressure often results in **the internalization and reproduction of sexist and violent behaviors, which are frequently normalized as “jokes” within school settings**

Boys may also become targets of violence when they fail to conform to these norms. However, it is important to emphasize that, in most cases, boys are the primary beneficiaries of these structures and hold a privileged position within gender rela-

tions, particularly when their behaviors are validated or encouraged by peers and adults.”

Common behaviors reported by students include:

- ✱ Predominantly socializing in all-male groups;
- ✱ Participating in and accepting “jokes” that reinforce gender norms, both among themselves and toward girls;
- ✱ Normalizing violence as part of male socialization;
- ✱ Objectifying girls and treating them as possessions.



“Guys say: ‘You only hang out with girls!’ Men understand each other. If you hang out with girls, you’ll become more feminine!”

(Student, boy, final year of Lower Secondary Education, Southeast region)

“If my daughter dressed like that [showing her body], I’d definitely put a stop to it! No way! My daughter will dress however I say she should — she’s my daughter!”

(Student, 1st year of Upper Secondary Education, boy, Southeast region)

“You can’t take it personally! You can’t get emotional about it! We can’t stand people who lose control! If you lose control, you’re done — you end up alone and get pushed out of the group.”

(Estudante, 9º ano, menino, região sudeste)

“That fight was awesome! Sometimes you have to fight to keep order at school. This place is like a UFC match! For free!”

(Estudante, 1º E.M., menino, região sudeste)

It is common for different forms of violence perpetrated by boys to be framed as “jokes,” including racist behavior. For these students, almost any situation can easily be turned into a joke or prank

— whether among friends or involving other people, including girls. According to them, boys joke around more, are more

easygoing, and have a better sense of humor, whereas girls are seen as “more emotional,” less able to take a joke, and less willing to be teased. This perception, however, does not prevent them from continuing such behavior, contributing to the normalization of disrespectful dynamics in everyday school life.

“We call each other ‘faggot’, all the time, but if you say to a girl: ‘Hey, bitch!’ She takes it personally. Girls are more sensitive, more insecure, and more concerned about their appearance.”

(Student, 1st year of Upper Secondary Education, boy, Southeast region)

“Like, racism isn’t really seen as racism anymore — it’s seen as a joke. A white guy does something wrong, and someone says, ‘Come on, you Black guy!’ It’s just something people say, you know? ‘My pencil is missing — it must have been so-and-so because he’s Black.’”

(Student, boy, final year of Lower Secondary Education, Southeast region)

“This week I’ve been showing the eighth-grade classes a film with a very strong emotional impact, ‘12 Years a Slave’. There are intense, difficult scenes. The boys always make comments about the Black female character and compare her to a Black girl in the class. ‘Look, so-and-so is getting beaten up!’ ”

(Teacher, man, Southeast region)

Boys commonly blame girls for the harassment they experience. For many of them, the way girls dress, behave, or relate to others serves as an explanation for — and even a justification of — the harassment they face. The explanations offered by boys also reveal how GBV

shapes their experiences from an early age, leading them to internalize sexist attitudes and behaviors. In the accounts below, we see adolescents aged 14 to 15 normalizing predatory sexual behaviors (non-consensual and/or violent).

“Some girls wear shorts that show the bottom of their butt. They wear those clothes because they want people to look!”

(Student, 1st year of Upper Secondary Education, boy, Southeast region)

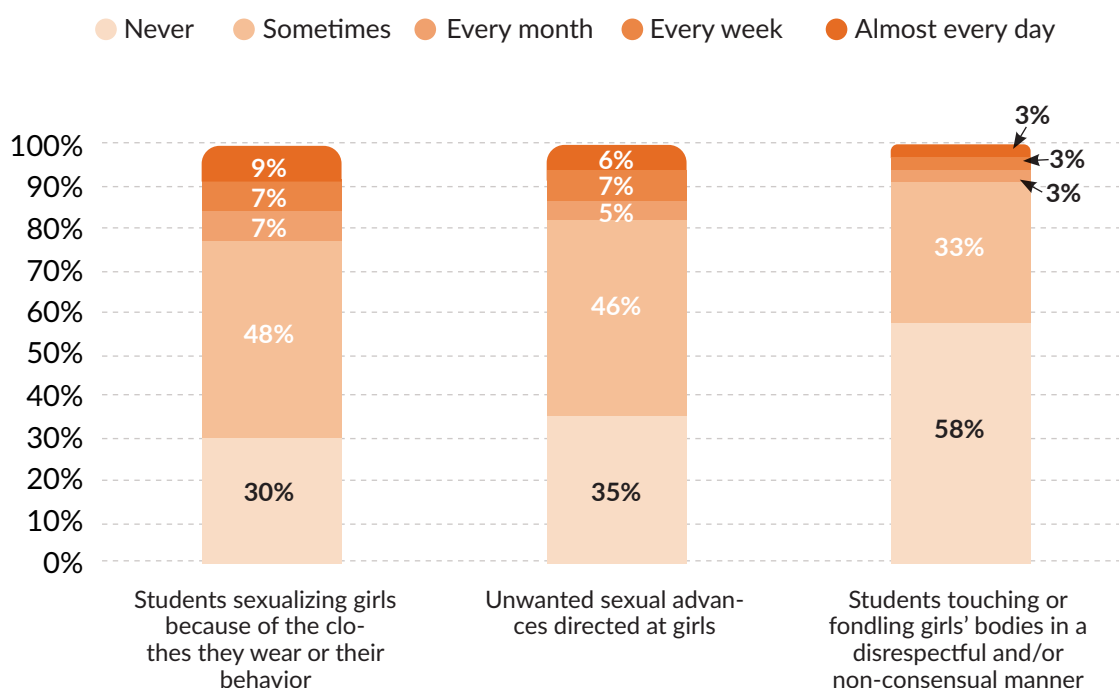
“You know there are girls who are more forward with boys, right?” The kind who are a little more promiscuous? Well, then you know the flesh is weak – nobody can resist.”

(Student, 1st year of Upper Secondary Education, boy, Southeast region)

These situations are also recognized by teachers. In the quantitative stage of the study, 7 in 10 teachers reported having witnessed, at least once during the previous school semester, incidents involving the sexualization of girls and

unwanted sexual advances by boys. In addition, 42% reported having witnessed situations in which boys touched or fondled girls' bodies in a disrespectful and/or non-consensual manner during the same period.

Chart 10: How often teachers witnessed violence against girls during the previous school semester



P9. During the last school semester, how often did you observe the situations below occurring at school:

| Base (total): 1383.

LGBTI+ boys are frequent targets of bullying and other forms of violence. Those who do not conform to behaviors traditionally associated with masculinity face exclusion, derogatory comments, and attacks related to their gender expression

and sexual orientation. In addition, among boys, statements reflecting **limited understanding of and resistance to gender diversity and sexual orientation are more common.**

"With [student's name], it was a nightmare, everyone made fun of him! He missed a week of school, and when he came back, he looked gaunt [very thin]."

(Student, 3rd year of Upper Secondary Education, boy, Southeast region)

"For example, a gay student, doesn't really fit in. He ends up finding a specific group of people who treat him better, or he joins the girls' group."

(Student, 3rd year of Upper Secondary Education, boy, Southeast region)

"What is transphobia? What does that even mean?"

(Student, 1st year of Upper Secondary Education, boy, Southeast region)

"Sometimes he deserves [to be made fun of]! Everyone can dress however they want, but he dresses like a woman. His voice is already high-pitched, and he tries to make it even higher."

(Student, 3rd year of Upper Secondary Education, boy, Southeast region)

"Honestly, I don't even know what LGBT means. It's confusing! People keep making things up! To me, there's man and woman, just like it says in the Bible, just like God created. I don't understand what being gender-fluid means either."

(Student, 3rd year of Upper Secondary Education, boy, Southeast region)

During the qualitative stage of the research, insults related to sexual orientation and gender identity or expression appeared more frequently in accounts involving boys. In contrast, among girls, offensive comments were more often associated with sexualization,

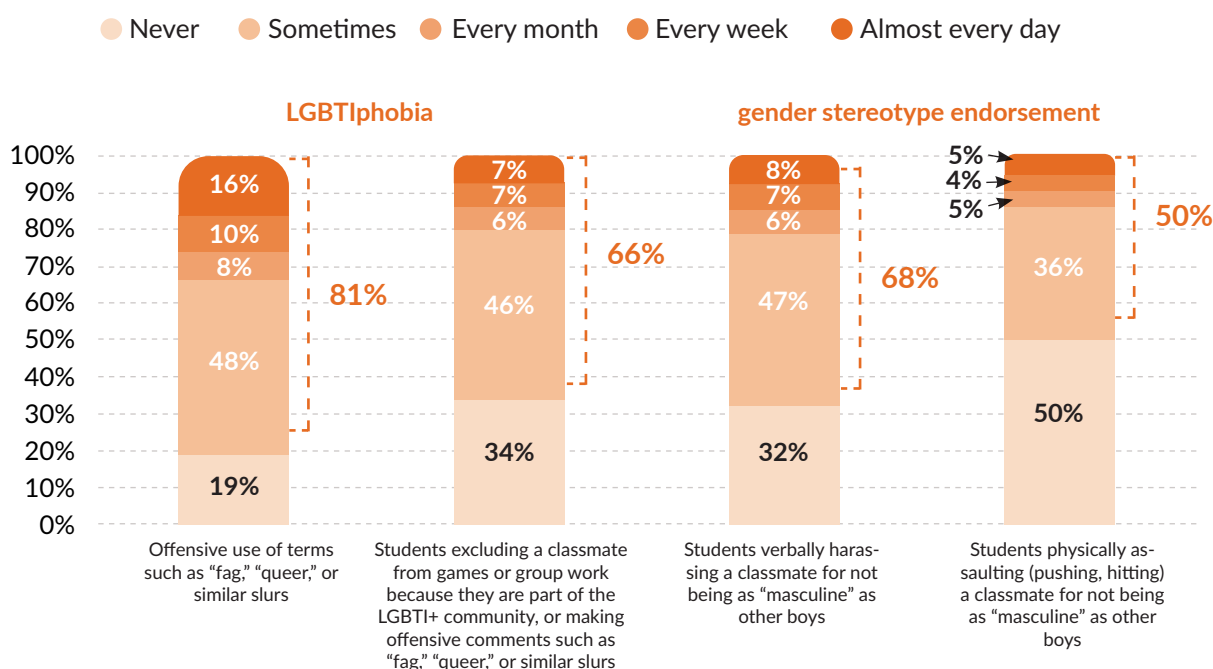
appearance, and behavior, with fewer explicit references to gender identity or sexual orientation.

More than half of the teachers participating in the quantitative survey reported having witnessed students

excluding, insulting, or attacking members of the LGBTI+ community. Offensive remarks such as “faggot” or “queer” were the most common forms of this violence, reported by 81% of teachers, with 34% observing this type of verbal aggression at least monthly. In addition, 68% of teachers

reported witnessing students verbally attacking a peer for not conforming to traditional standards of masculinity. Social exclusion and physical aggression against LGBTI+ youth were also identified as recurring issues.

Chart 11: How often teachers witnessed violence against boys during the previous school semester



P9. During the last school semester, how often did you observe the situations below occurring at school:

| Base (total): 1383.

The expression of emotions perceived as signs of sensitivity is strongly discouraged among boys. During interviews with young people, when we asked what they thought about the statement “Boys can cry and express fear and insecurity,” their

responses revealed how pressured they feel to perform a particular image of manhood, avoiding emotions that may be perceived as sensitive or “feminine.” The idea of crying or expressing vulnerability is seen as a violation of masculine norms.

However, while many boys believe they must reinforce these gender stereotypes, we also spoke with young people who

understand that not all of these behaviors need to be reproduced.



WHAT DO BOYS THINK ABOUT THE STATEMENT "BOYS CAN CRY AND EXPRESS FEAR AND INSECURITY"?

"Never! Absolutely not! If you're going to cry, it has to be in the middle of the night, in your room, at home! If a girl cries, thirty people show up to comfort her. If a boy cries, they'll take a picture, post it on Instagram, and make fun of him for the next thirty years. "

(Student, boy, final year of Lower Secondary Education, Southeast region)

"You've got to be a man. That's what I think. Men just don't cry. That's it. 'Fuck it.' "

(Student, 1st year of Upper Secondary Education, boy, Southeast region)

"We're men, man — we don't go around showing insecurity, bro!"

(Student, 1st year of Upper Secondary Education, boy, Southeast region)

"If you cry, people label you a sissy, call you gay, say you've been cheated on, or that you're a loser!"

(Student, boy, final year of Lower Secondary Education, Southeast region)

"You can cry — even Jesus cried — but my father didn't think so. He'd say, 'Stop crying,' and call me a little girl. "

(Student, 2nd year of Upper Secondary Education, boy, Midwest region)

"Men suppress their feelings because there's this idea that men aren't supposed to cry. But it's normal for men to cry."

(Student, 1st year of Upper Secondary Education, boy, Southeast region)

8.7 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED BY TEACHERS

Gender-based violence also affects teachers themselves within schools.

Teachers (both men and women), particularly younger ones, report experiencing situations of discomfort and

harassment from both male and female students, whether in the classroom or on social media, often without knowing exactly how to respond.



"I started teaching when I was very young, and I was harassed by female students. But I simply ignored it, because it happens. And if you don't have good boundaries and self-control, you can fall into those traps."

(Teacher, man, North region)

"I recently had a situation at our school where the group of male teachers actually took the lead in addressing it. It involved students engaging in this kind of behavior toward female teachers. The teachers noticed that some students behaved inappropriately whenever they were around female teachers."

(Teacher, woman, Southeast region)

"There's a case I know about firsthand. Unfortunately, the school administration followed all the proper procedures required in a situation like that. It wasn't a case involving a teacher and a student — it involved a male teacher and a female teacher. A classic case of sexual harassment. The principal took all the necessary steps, convened the school council, and so on. Today, however, she has been left on her own because the Municipal Department of Education completely abandoned her. The situation reached a point where the teacher sought legal representation, and the Department simply stopped supporting the principal. I think school administrators are extremely vulnerable in situations like this within our education system."

(Teacher, woman, Southeast region)

Another issue highlighted by female teachers is the devaluation of their authority compared with that of male teachers. Many reported situations in which they

were openly disrespected by students – a behavior that, according to them, rarely occurs with male teachers, who tend to command greater respect from students.



“Students don’t respect female teachers the same way they respect male teachers. It really comes down to gender.”

(Teacher, man, Midwest region)

“There are many things students say to female teachers that they would never say to a male teacher.”

(Teacher, woman, Southeast region)

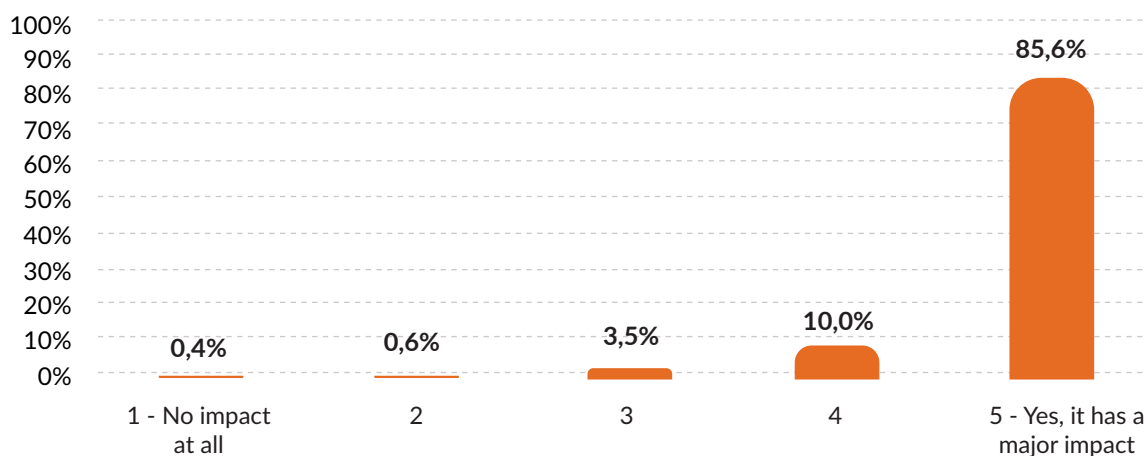
8.8 EFFECTS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The literature shows that the reproduction of gender stereotypes and gender-based violence has significant consequences for girls, affecting multiple dimensions of their lives. Some of the documented impacts include educational outcomes and school attendance (which may lead to school dropout); physical and mental health (threatening physical integrity and contributing to anxiety and depression); sexual and reproductive health (resulting in cases of sexual violence, early and

unintended pregnancies, and the spread of sexually transmitted infections); and self-esteem, confidence, and life aspirations (Parkes et al., 2016).

Most teachers recognize that violence has significant effects on girls’ educational trajectories: **86% of participants in the quantitative phase believe that GBV negatively affects girls’ educational trajectories.**

Chart 12: Teachers' Perceptions of the Impacts of GBV on Girls' Educational Trajectories



P20. Do you believe that girls who experience violence are affected in their educational trajectories?

| **Base** (total): 1383.

71% report having already observed negative impacts of Gender-Based Violence on the lives of their female students.

Among the impacts identified by teachers, are:

Figure 2: Impacts of GBV on Girls, According to Teachers



P21. Have you ever observed negative impacts of gender-based violence on the lives of your female students? If yes, what were they? (Open-ended question | Figure developed based on teachers' open-ended responses.)

8.9 KEY LEARNINGS



The findings presented in this chapter demonstrate how Gender-Based Violence is present in everyday school life and profoundly affects young people.

Girls are the primary victims, experiencing recurring situations of objectification, sexualization, and victim-blaming in cases of harassment. Boys, in turn, are affected by the imposition of masculinity norms that encourage violent behaviors. Those who do not conform to these norms, such as LGBTQIAP+ boys, are frequently subjected to verbal and physical violence, as well as social exclusion.



The school is not always the safe space that young people need. In some cases, it may even reinforce violence, whether through school administrators' failure to act on reports of harassment and bullying or through members of the teaching staff themselves acting as perpetrators, particularly in situations involving girls.



The impacts of GBV are recognized by a large proportion of teachers. These effects range from harm to students' well-being and mental health to academic underachievement and school dropout.



THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL: VISIBILITY, PREVENTION, AND RESPONSE TO GBV



The understanding and identification of GBV vary among the different groups interviewed. In general, the greater the distance from the classroom, the lower the level of knowledge and awareness regarding the frequency and severity of these situations. As discussed earlier, officials from Education Departments and school administrators tend to mention more severe and explicit cases; teachers witness various forms of GBV in their daily routines but often recognize them as such only in extreme cases; and students are the ones who most frequently experience, report, and identify different forms of violence as GBV. Even so, perceptions of the severity of these situations vary

among them, with marked differences between the experiences reported by girls and boys.

Overall, GBV tends to be more readily recognized when it takes more explicit forms. Its subtler manifestations — such as normalized gender stereotypes and microaggressions — are less likely to be perceived and identified as forms of violence. Understanding this dynamic is important because it influences how schools and Education Departments choose to respond to violence. In this chapter, we explore how institutions address GBV.

9.1. RESPONSE MEASURES

The measures adopted by schools to address GBV vary according to the type of violence and the specific circumstances of each case. In general, however, they can be grouped into two categories:



:: Internal referrals: measures taken within the school itself, which may or may not involve students' guardians. These actions range from classroom discussions and mediation to interventions by school administrators. They are most commonly used in cases of verbal harassment and other less explicit forms of violence;



:: Referrals to external bodies: measures involving entities outside the school, such as Child Protective Services, Social Assistance agencies, the Education Department, or even the police. These actions are generally adopted in more serious situations, such as physical violence, sexual abuse, or recurring cases that could not be resolved internally.

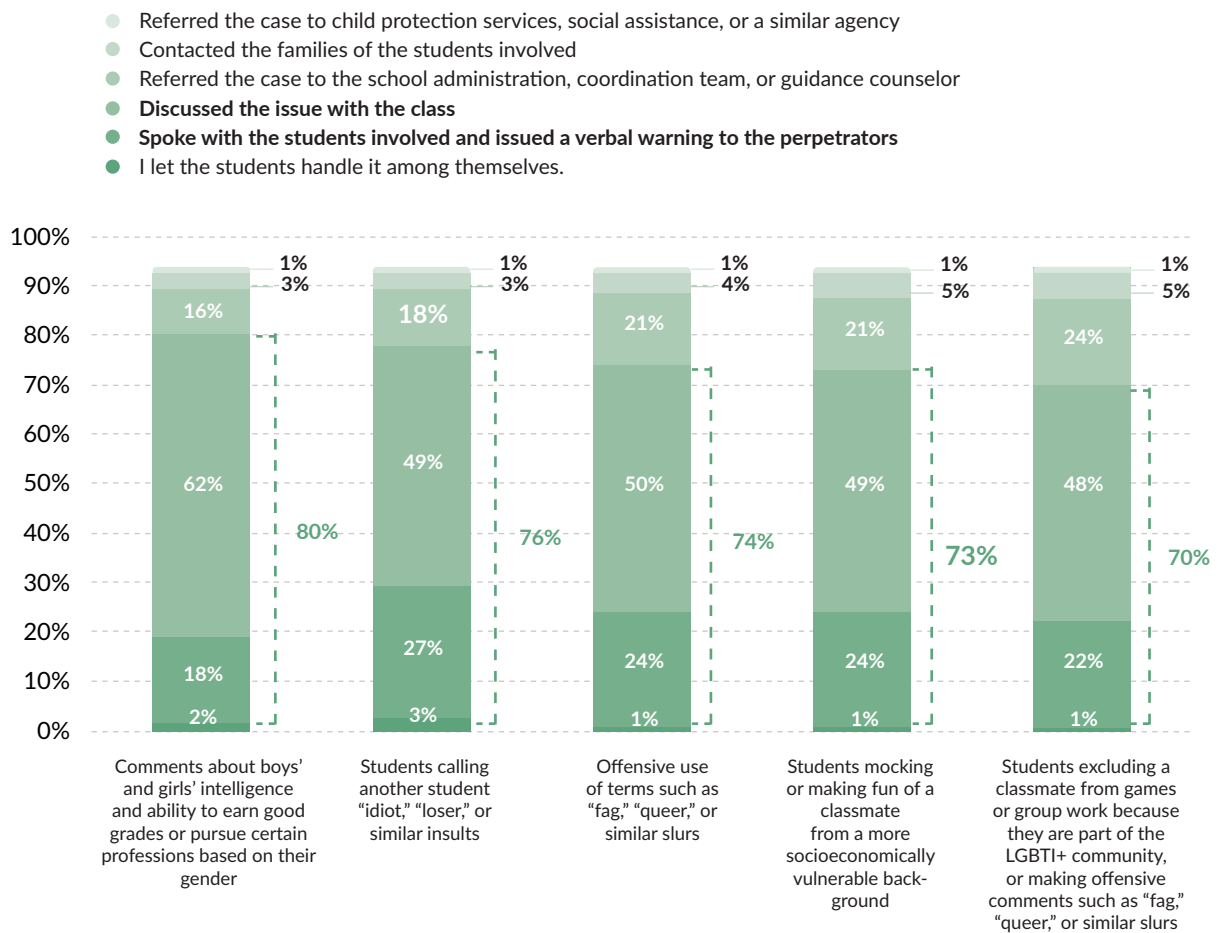
The majority of school conflicts involving insults and verbal aggression are resolved within the classroom itself, without formal referral to higher authorities. The chart below shows that teachers' primary approach to dealing with these situations

is direct conversation with the students involved, either through individual warnings or group discussions.

The most common cases handled in this way include **comments about students' intelligence and abilities based on gender (80% resolved in the classroom), name-calling between students**

(76%), and homophobic remarks (74%). Although GBV is not always explicitly recognized in these cases, situations involving homophobia and the reinforcement of gender stereotypes are among the forms of violence most often addressed within school settings itself, without necessarily involving external actors or formal referral mechanisms.

Chart 13: Conflict Resolution in the Classroom – Selected Situations Reported by Teachers



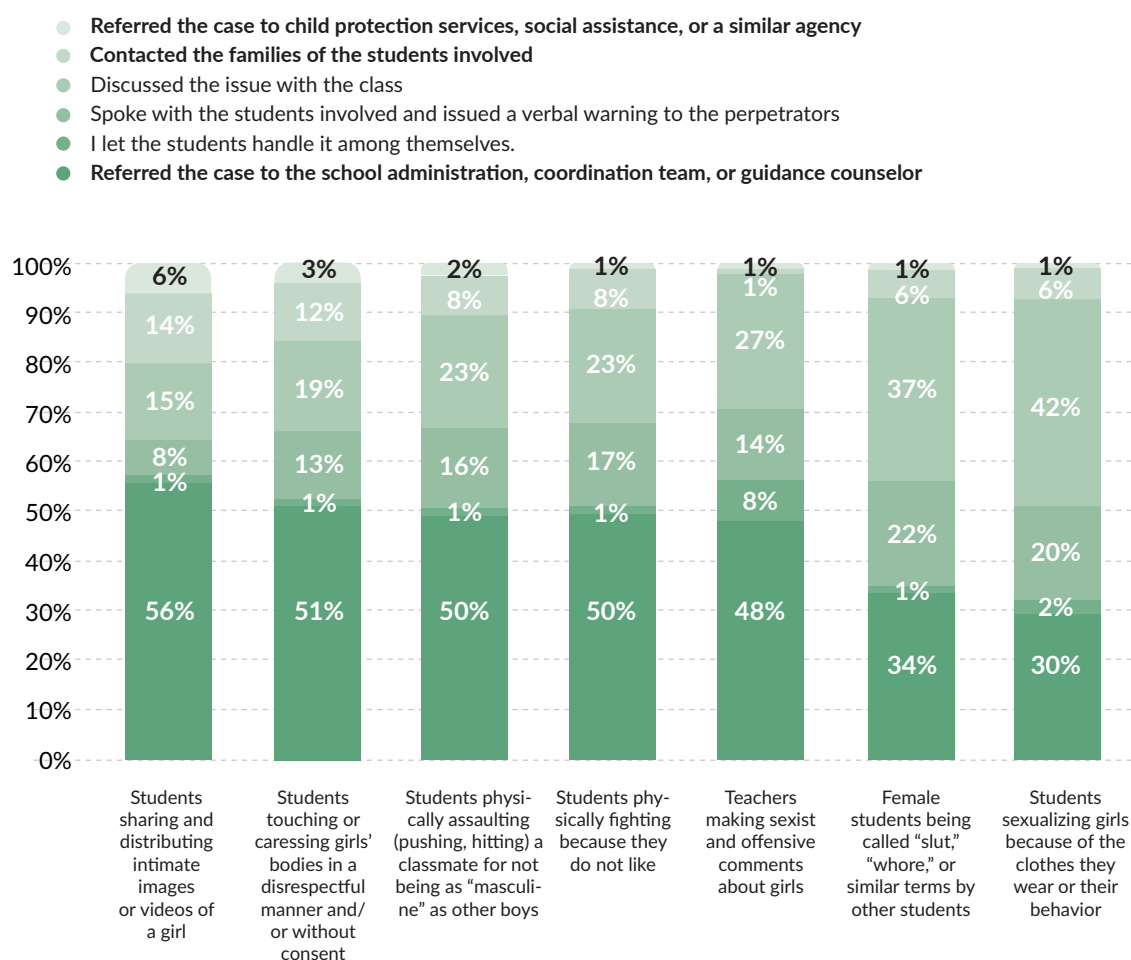
P14. How did you respond to these situations that you witnessed among students?

| **Base** (only among those who reported having witnessed at least one of these situations): 1,352

Situations involving internal referrals to school administration, coordination teams, or guidance counselors occur more frequently in cases involving physical aggression, harassment, or other explicit forms of Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

The chart below illustrates that serious incident, such as the non-consensual sharing of intimate images of girls (56%) and non-consensual touching of female students' bodies (51%), are predominantly addressed through internal referrals. In addition, physical assaults against students motivated by homophobia (50%) are also commonly handled in this way.

Chart 14: Conflict Resolution Through Internal Referrals – Breakdown of the Main Situations Reported



P14. How did you respond to these situations that you witnessed among students?

| Base (respondents who reported having witnessed at least one of these situations): 1,383

Aurthermore, these are also the cases most likely to be referred to external agencies, such as Child Protective Services, Social Assistance services, or similar bodies, although less frequently. The

decision to involve external institutions is based on the existence of protocols (when applicable), the perceived severity of the situation, and the need to provide support to victims.



“And so, if someone comes to me and reports it, I make a referral. If they report it to the coordination team, we make a referral. We don’t keep asking what happened or how it happened. I’m careful about that because I don’t think we, as a school, are the ones who can resolve it. It has to be handled by the appropriate authority, which will look into the matter and try to resolve it in the best possible way.”

(Teacher, woman, Midwest region)

“Any teacher or school staff member who becomes aware of a situation involving abuse of one of these students and fails to report it to the appropriate authorities is considered negligent toward the student and complicit in the situation.”

(Teacher, woman, North region)

9.2 GBV PREVENTION ACTIONS

Lectures at schools are among the main GBV prevention actions identified (reported by 51% of teachers). This format is frequently mentioned and is commonly implemented through intersectoral partnerships involving, for example, the Health sector, Social Assistance services, the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB), universities, among others. The topics

vary, but bullying and sexuality education are the most common. Students generally describe this format as less engaging than more participatory activities, except when it features public figures or personalities whom young people admire.

Discussion circles are also among the main prevention actions adopted by schools

(reported by 56% of teachers). Among the topics mentioned, racism, violence against women, and mental health stand out. These moments are well received by students, particularly because of their dynamic and participatory nature, which they value.

However, measures aimed at supporting and training teachers are significantly less common.

Only 33% reported that lectures or seminars on the topic had been offered to teachers during the last school year, and the distribution of educational materials, such as guidebooks or pamphlets, is even less common, having been mentioned by only 23% of participants. Continuing education initiatives are also relatively rare: optional training courses for teachers were cited by 22% of respondents, while mandatory courses were mentioned even less frequently, in only 10% of cases.



"At the beginning of every school year, we receive a handbook with all the information and guidance on how to proceed in cases of violence, how everything should be handled, all properly outlined. Then there are continuing education sessions where we talk a little about these issues. But we don't have any specific training on the topic (...) Training related to violence tends to focus much more on violence in general, on situations of violence broadly speaking."

(School administrator, woman, Midwest region)

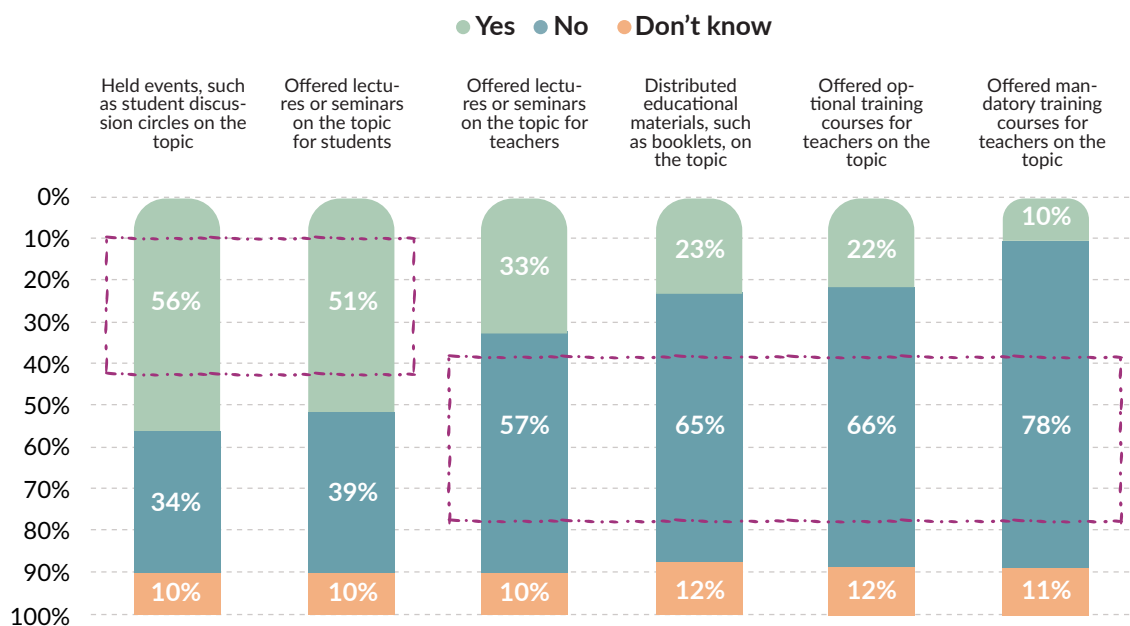
"Look, the Department of Education brings forward many important topics that should be addressed (...) I do see a genuine intention to work on these issues, but there is a lack of preparation — and of scientific grounding — to address them properly. What does the research say about this? What has the university been studying on the subject? What methodological and theoretical approaches could help us with this discussion about gender?]"

(Teacher, woman, Midwest region)

"Topics such as violence, sexual orientation, and racism need, in some way, to be incorporated into the curriculum, since they are already part of everyday life within the school, right? (...) I believe we need a better discussion today about how to address these cross-cutting issues within the school so that students can learn about them alongside mathematics and literature, and make connections between them... Otherwise, we simply won't be able to address all the necessary elements, because it is incredibly difficult..."

(Department of Education administrator, man, South region)

Chart 15: Approaches adopted by schools to address the topic during the last school year, according to teachers.

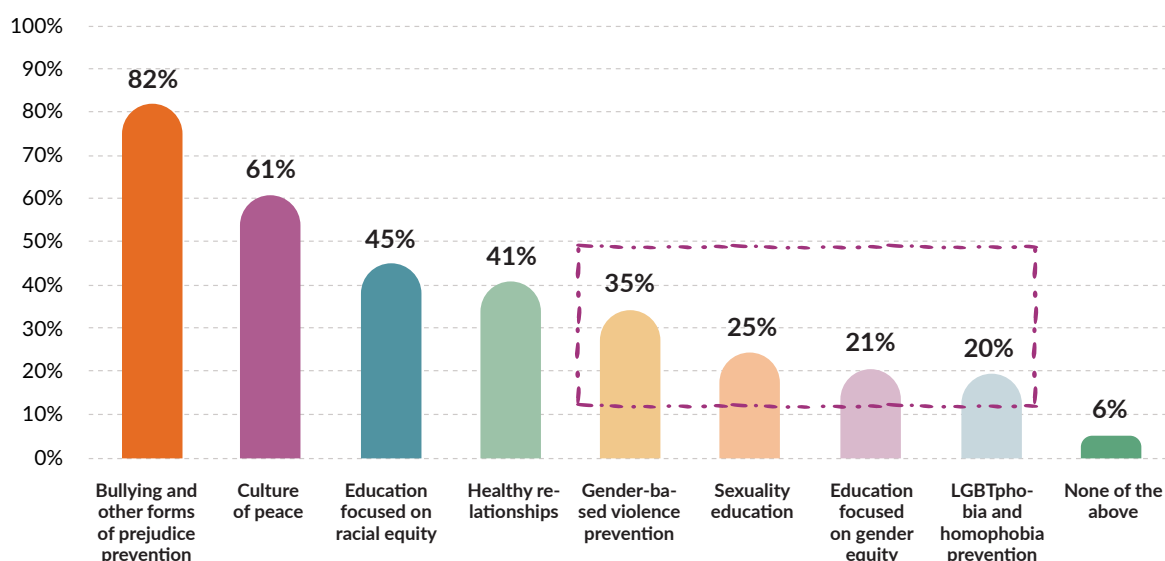


P20. During the last year, has your school adopted any of the following approaches to address violence against girls and women? | **Base** (total): 1383

The chart below shows that, among the topics addressed in schools, bullying prevention and the prevention of other forms of prejudice are the most common, mentioned by 82% of teachers. A culture of peace also stands out, having been cited by 61% of participants. These findings indicate a recognition of the importance of preventing conflicts and promoting a more harmonious school setting.

However, when it comes to more specific issues related to gender equity and diversity, the figures are considerably lower. Only 35% of teachers mentioned initiatives aimed at preventing gender-based violence, while even fewer reported actions focused on gender equity (21%) or the prevention of LGBTphobia and homophobia (20%).

Chart 16: Topics Addressed by Schools, According to Teachers



P15. For which of the topics below has your school carried out any initiatives, such as teacher/student training, lectures, or the distribution of educational materials? | Base (total): 1383

Students perceive school initiatives as isolated and largely ineffective. The topics and approaches explored are often described as repetitive and unengaging

for young people, as well as disconnected from the real-life situations and challenges they experience on a daily basis.

“Guys, today’s lesson is about cyberbullying, about bullying... What do you know about it? It feels more like just another lesson than something that could actually happen to us. You need to do something that really engages students, something dynamic, like a discussion circle where people can share their opinions and the teacher can answer our questions.”

(Student, 3rd year of Upper Secondary Education, girl, Southeast region)

“It’s always bullying, sometimes depression during Yellow September. They talk for twenty minutes and then leave. It is important to talk about other things too. We know there are people having sex outdoors, in the school bathrooms.”

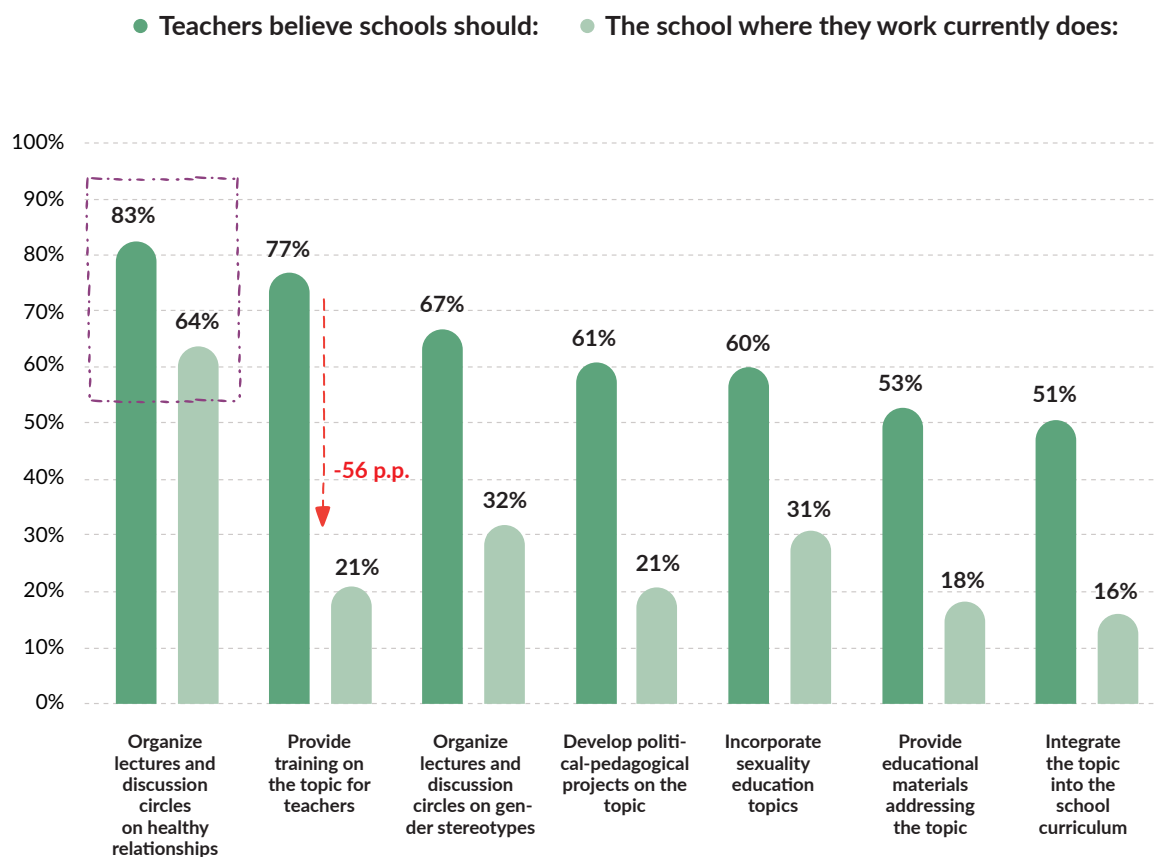
(Student, boy, final year of Lower Secondary Education, Southeast region)

99% of teachers believe that schools should take some form of action to prevent Gender-Based Violence.

However, there is a gap between recognizing the need for prevention and actually implementing preventive initiatives.

In practice, 15% of respondents stated that none of the proposed prevention measures had been adopted in the schools where they work. Teachers also say they would like to receive training (77%) and have access to teaching materials (53%) on the topic.

Chart 17: GBV prevention initiatives in schools – expectations vs. reality, according to teachers



P13. From the examples below, select the actions you believe schools could implement to prevent gender-based violence in educational settings: **Base** (total): 1383 | **P14.** Which of these actions has your school already implemented? **Base** (total): 1383

9.3 THE ROLE OF TEACHERS

Because they are in close and frequent contact with students, teachers are key figures, occupying a position that allows them to identify situations of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in everyday school life. However, many perceive their role as limited, either due to a lack of preparation or because they do not see it as part of their responsibilities.

Based on the interviews, we categorized teachers' responses to situations of Gender-Based Violence into three main approaches:



:: **Supporting:** listening and providing support when students confide in them about situations involving GBV;



:: **Taking action:** providing guidance and referring cases to school administrators or other relevant bodies, depending on the situation. In some cases, this also involves intervening and discussing incidents with the class when they occur during lessons and/or affect the wider group.



:: **Ignoring:** whether due to a lack of preparation, the belief that it is not their role, or the normalization of certain situations, some teachers report feeling “powerless” when faced with cases of GBV.

The belief that addressing these issues is not part of their role is often associated with assigning responsibility to families, based on the argument that the topic lies “beyond the educational sphere.” The prevailing discourse among teachers is one of powerlessness, particularly because they perceive the family environment as having a strong influence on students. Violent and sexist behaviors, often reproduced by students at school, are viewed as reflections of young people's social and family environments – frequently described as “dysfunctional.” As a result, families are seen not only as primarily responsible for students' “misbehavior,” but also as the only ones capable of “educating” them about issues related to sexuality and abuse.





“They bring questions about sexuality, abuse, money — topics that should be addressed by the family.”

(Teacher, woman, Midwest region)

“This is a place for studying, not for dating. Our role is not to deal with these issues — gender, sexual orientation.”

(School administrator, woman, Midwest region)

“Indiscipline comes from the family environment.”

(Teacher, man, Southeast region)

“I’m not a psychologist, nor a social worker.”

(Teacher, man, Midwest region)

“We try to set a positive example, but much of it is beyond our control.”

(Teacher, woman, Southeast region)

Many teachers also report not knowing when and how to intervene in cases of GBV, especially in situations perceived as less severe, such as comments and verbal insults. According to them, there is difficulty distinguishing verbal violence from interactions that, in everyday school life, are often normalized as “jokes” or common forms of student communication. This difficulty may be associated both with the normalization of such behaviors and

with prejudices and stigmas toward young people.

For teachers, the definition of what constitutes violence is not always clear, particularly in ambiguous or “gray area” situations. According to those interviewed, interactions among students are often based on insults and aggressive exchanges, which contributes to the trivialization and acceptance of certain forms of violence within school settings.



“It’s hard to tell when something is an insult meant to put someone down and when it’s affectionate or just a way of communicating. Students fight and then hug each other right afterward(...) Where does bullying begin? They treat each other aggressively, but that’s just how they are. They come from disadvantaged communities, with limited material and intellectual resources. When is it one thing, and when is it the other?”

(Teacher, man, Midwest region)

9.4 KEY LEARNINGS



The school plays a central role in preventing and addressing Gender-Based Violence, according to the vast majority of teachers. However, the actions taken by schools and education systems remain insufficient and limited.



The most common prevention initiatives – lectures and discussion circles – are occasional and poorly connected to students' realities.



Measures aimed at supporting and training teachers are also relatively uncommon. Only a minority of teachers have access to educational materials and continuing professional development initiatives on the topic.





CHALLENGES OF GBV PREVENTION IN EDUCATION



Efforts to address Gender-Based Violence in schools face multiple challenges, ranging from institutional resistance and opposition from students' families to a lack of adequate training and support for education professionals. With a predominant focus on responding to

extreme cases, prevention remains a lower priority, making it more difficult to create a safer school setting. Below, we detail the main barriers identified in this study and how they affect schools' ability to respond to GBV.

10.1. BEYOND RESPONSE: CHALLENGES IN STRENGTHENING PREVENTION

One of the major challenges identified is the limited focus on GBV prevention among both Education Department officials and school administrators. Discourse and actions are largely focused on responding to violence after incidents occur, while preventive strategies continue to receive little attention. This limits schools' ability to transform the school settings into a safer space and to foster healthy relationships among students.

In practice, school initiatives tend to focus on extreme cases, such as sexual abuse and physical violence — which often occur outside the school settings and are reported at school — while everyday conflicts and problems, frequently perceived as “coexistence issues,” receive less attention and fewer structured prevention and response efforts.

While schools play an essential role as reporting and support channels for children and adolescents experiencing violence, this almost exclusive focus on response makes it difficult to implement structured prevention measures. Without appropriate guidelines and resource mobilization, schools continue dealing with the consequences of violence rather than acting effectively to reduce its occurrence.





“We understand that schools are often the primary reporting channel for violations involving children and adolescents. Students often disclose experiences of intrafamily abuse and violence at school. They find a welcoming environment there and end up sharing these experiences, and the school has procedures in place to coordinate with the protection network.”

(Department official, woman, Midwest region)

“It is an extremely welcoming school, and that makes a difference.”

(School administrator, woman, Southeast region)

“When they come to school, we talk to them; we try to make them feel welcomed.” We can see that school leaders and coordinators are proactive in addressing these issues. They are constantly looking for ways to create a safer school setting for students. We know that, for many students, this is the safest environment they have.”

(Teacher, woman, Southeast region)

10.2. RESISTANCE WITHIN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The implementation of initiatives addressing topics considered sensitive, such as sexuality education and gender identity, often faces resistance within the education system itself. **Some teachers report difficulties in developing activities on these topics due to barriers imposed by school leadership, which may censor or discourage such initiatives out of concern over negative repercussions and interpretations shaped by misinformation and prejudice.**

One of the teachers interviewed shared an episode in which she was prevented from using an educational booklet on sexuality because the school administration claimed that the material, simply because it was colorful, could “encourage” undesirable behaviors. In addition, even simple educational activities, such as drawings related to these topics, can provoke strong reactions within the school community, highlighting the climate of constant scrutiny surrounding discussions of GBV-related issues.



10.3. RESISTANCE FROM FAMILIES

Families also represent a major challenge to addressing GBV in school settings. Resistance manifests itself both in the refusal to accept institutional measures aimed at addressing violence when incidents occur and in opposition to educational initiatives on topics such as sexual orientation, gender diversity, and sexuality education. These objections are often linked to:

- * Religious beliefs;
- * Moral values;
- * The reproduction of sexist norms;

* A limited understanding that certain topics should be addressed by families rather than schools. ‘

In some cases, caregivers even discredit or blame students themselves for situations of violence reported to the school. In addition, school administrators and education department officials highlight that the country’s social and political context amplifies concerns about addressing these issues, making it even more challenging to implement measures aimed at promoting gender equity.

“Parents do not realize how serious these situations are. I had a case involving a girl **who was receiving photos and propositions from a former staff member here. When I called her mother, she said, ‘Well, she must have encouraged him. I’m going to punish her.’**”

(School administrator, woman, Southeast region)

“In some way, **I understand the Department’s concerns** [about discussing gender and sexuality], **mainly because of Brazil’s broader social and political context. It is a concern about how these issues would be received by families.**”

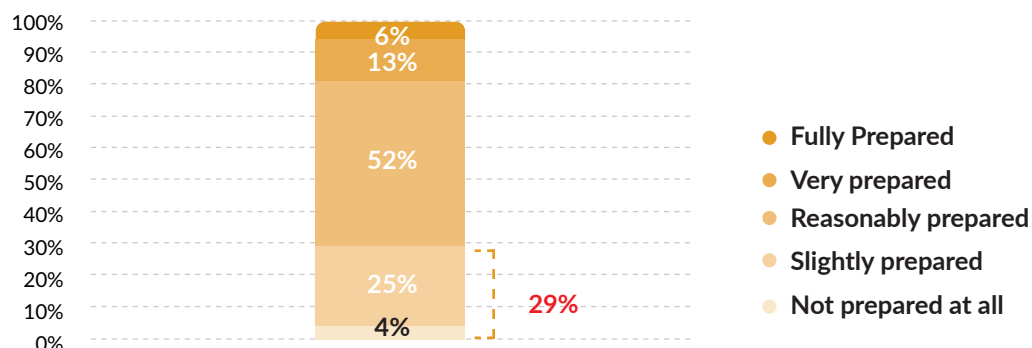
(Department official, woman, Midwest region)

10.4. LACK OF TRAINING, SUPPORT, AND INSTITUTIONAL GUIDELINES

School administrators and teachers report not feeling prepared to deal with GBV situations, particularly due to the lack of support, ongoing professional development that addresses the complexities of GBV in depth, and clear institution-

nal guidelines for action. This perception of unpreparedness is reflected in the quantitative data: **nearly one-third (29%) of teachers report feeling little prepared or not prepared at all to discuss the issue with students.**

Chart 18: How prepared do teachers feel to address violence against girls and women with their students?

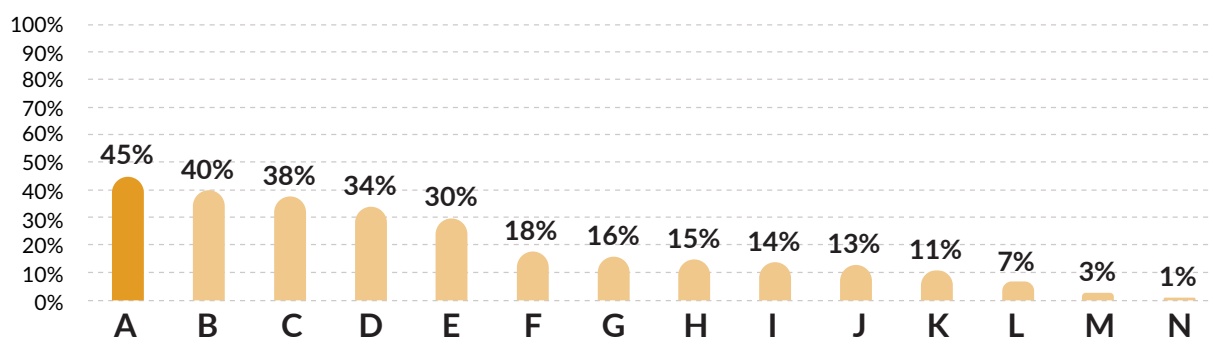


P22. Do you feel prepared to address violence against girls and women with your students? **Base (total): 1383**

When asked about the main challenges to preventing GBV, the factors most frequently cited by teachers were **the lack of preparation among school staff (45%)**, **difficulties in securing family support and engagement (40%)**, and **the absence of clear protocols (40%)**, and **the absence of clear protocols**

for addressing the issue (38%). **The lack of specialized professionals within schools or Education Departments (34%)** and **the normalization of violence in society (30%)** also emerged as significant barriers.

Chart 19: Challenges in Addressing GBV in Schools



P24. What do you see as the main challenges to preventing violence against girls in your school? Please select up to three options that you consider the most important. | **Base (total): 1383**

- A:** Teachers and school staff are not adequately prepared
- B:** Difficulty securing family support and engagement
- C:** Lack of clear protocols or procedures
- D:** Lack of specialized professionals within schools or the Education Department
- E:** Social norms reinforce and normalize violence against girls
- F:** Difficulty identifying situations of violence or discrimination
- G:** Lack of time due to competing educational demands
- H:** Lack of support from school leadership in addressing

these situations

- I:** Ineffective child and adolescent protection network j:
- Lack of supporting materials to raise awareness among students and the school community
- J:** Lack of trust in the child and adolescent protection network
- K:** Difficulty securing support and engagement from the Education Department
- L:** School culture reinforces and normalizes violence against girls
- M:** No challenges



“The second challenge is the training of these professionals themselves. A highly content-focused education does not prepare professionals to arrive at schools ready to deal with issues that go beyond textbook content, such as the relationships and dynamics that unfold in everyday school life. As a result, their initial training does not equip them with the tools needed to address these issues. The third challenge, in my view, is ongoing professional development [...] and that is also connected to a broader challenge faced by the Department as a whole: ensuring that continuing education initiatives bring these different aspects together. Or at the very least, that they are meaningful to teachers. For example, the professional development activities we offer on school climate and interpersonal relationships.”

(School administrator, woman, Midwest region)

“What I see is a profound lack of preparation among the people working in schools to deal with these situations — understanding what LGBTphobia is, knowing how to respond, understanding racism, sexism, misogyny, and being able to take appropriate action. I think the level of unpreparedness is enormous. People often treat these issues as minor, respond in ways that do not actually solve the problem, or try to smooth things over. Just to avoid creating more controversy or drawing attention to the issue.”

(Teacher, man, Northeast region)

“I think there is a gap. Institutional procedures and protocols are important, of course, but beyond that, there is a lack of preparedness among both teachers and school leadership when it comes to facilitating these discussions.”

(Teacher, man, Northeast region)

Among the Education Departments interviewed, some have dedicated teams or professionals who serve as focal points for supporting schools in cases involving GBV. The primary role of these teams is to establish guidelines and provide guidance to schools. However, these

teams are not specifically focused on GBV. Instead, they address broader school climate issues, including bullying, diversity and inclusion, mental health, and related topics. In general, responsibility for actions addressing these issues falls to individual schools.





“Sometimes schools are actually ahead of the Department. There are teachers developing initiatives in their schools, while we, as a Department, are still unable to incorporate a gender and sexuality lens into the actions we promote.”

(Department official, woman, Midwest region)

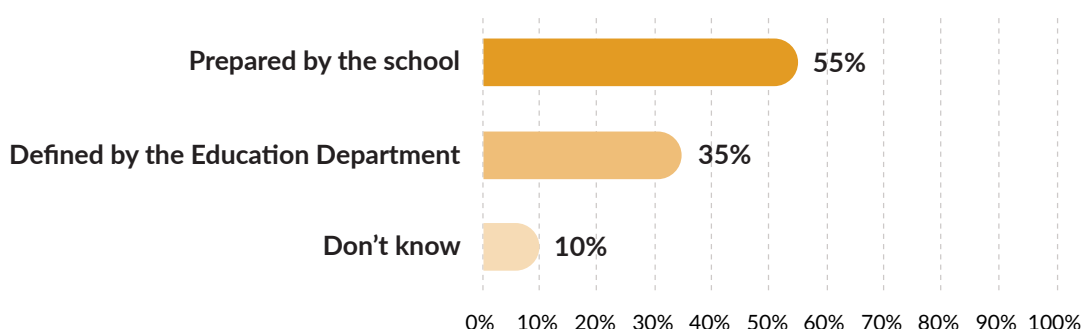
“(...) “There is a state resolution guaranteeing students the right to use their chosen name. However, issues such as bathroom access for transgender students are not clearly defined by the Department. As a result, schools are left to work these matters out with their own communities, and much depends on the school principal’s position and how they choose to handle the issue. So, when we talk about preventing gender-based violence, the actions we develop at the Department level tend to be much more general rather than specifically focused on the issue.”

(Department official, woman, Midwest region)

The lack of institutional guidelines exacerbates professionals’ sense of uncertainty, as they often do not know how to respond to specific cases. Only 40% of teachers report working in schools that have protocols in place for addressing gender-based violence or harassment against girls. In most cases, according to respondents, these protocols are developed

by the schools themselves, without external guidelines or standardization from the Education Department. Teachers express a need for clearer guidance on when and how to intervene, as well as institutional mechanisms that protect them from potential resistance and backlash.

Chart 20: Entity responsible for developing school protocols, according to teachers



P19. Who develops these protocols? | Base (among respondents who reported that their school has protocols): 557



In addition to uncertainty about how to respond, **many teachers report the emotional toll of dealing with reports of violence both inside and outside the school settings.** The lack of psychological

and institutional support intensifies feelings of helplessness when faced with the severity of the situations brought to them.



“They [the students] come to you with problems that you simply cannot solve. How am I supposed to make a decision? What am I supposed to say?”

(Teacher, woman, Southeast region)

“It’s a shock [when a student discloses sexual violence]. You’re afraid of taking a step and falling into an abyss.”

(Teacher, man, Northeast region)

“A student says he was beaten by his father. Half the class says they experienced sexual abuse at age six or seven... What am I supposed to do? A boy says he was raped by a construction worker when he was six... What do you say? What guidance can you possibly give?”

(Teacher, woman, Southeast region)

The lack of institutional support is a major barrier to addressing Gender-Based Violence in schools. **Teachers do not view school leadership as an ally in these situations, reporting that principals and coordinators often avoid taking stronger**

action because of the bureaucracy involved or concerns about potential conflicts with families. Teachers perceive a tendency toward inaction on the part of school leadership, leaving them feeling unsupported.



“When we can’t resolve something ourselves, we refer it to the school administration. But for the school to file an official report, it becomes a headache — it’s a lot of work and a lot of bureaucracy.”

(Teacher, woman, Southeast region)

“If it were up to us, we would take action [such as filing a report], but we pass it on to school leadership and nothing happens.”

(Teacher, woman, Southeast region)

In turn, school leadership also does not view the Education Department as a partner in addressing GBV. **Principals and coordinators report feeling that decisions are left entirely up to them, without adequate support or clear guidance**

from the Department. This places a heavy burden on school leaders, who not only feel unprepared to deal with these situations but also fear retaliation or even losing their positions based on how they handle them.



“Student reports must be passed on, not silenced. The Child and Adolescent Statute itself is clear about that — you cannot remain passive. But many people are afraid of losing their jobs or facing retaliation.”

(School administrator, woman, Southeast region)

10.5. KEY LEARNINGS



Preventing Gender-Based Violence in schools faces a range of challenges, including the predominance of response-oriented actions over preventive strategies. School initiatives tend to focus on extreme situations, while everyday conflicts — often treated merely as interpersonal or coexistence issues — receive less attention and fewer structured responses.



The implementation of preventive strategies still faces resistance within the education system itself, with some school leaders restricting discussions on topics such as gender identity and sexuality education. Teachers report difficulties in developing activities due to institutional concerns and reactions from the school community, including opposition from families.



The lack of training and support for education professionals is another significant obstacle. Teachers and school leaders report feeling uncertain about how to handle GBV situations and highlight the need for ongoing professional development and clearer institutional guidance.



Finally, it is important to recognize that this is still a relatively new issue for education systems. Professionals often lack **clear guidance because there is still uncertainty about the roles, responsibilities, and scope of action of different actors within the school system.** This challenge is compounded by the difficulty of understanding how to implement preventive actions that align with existing educational policies and guidelines.

* OPPORTUNITIES
TO PROMOTE GBV
PREVENTION
IN EDUCATION



Studies on how education can promote gender equity and prevent violence point to a range of promising approaches, while also highlighting important considerations. First, many of the interventions identified tend to be short-term, consisting of one-off activities (in schools or tied to specific awareness dates), which limits their potential for scale and for driving structural change. Second, the literature highlights that the most successful — or most promising — interventions operate at multiple levels (students, teachers, the school community, and families) and address the relationship between gender norms, stereotypes, and gender-based violence through an intersectional lens (Parkes et al., 2016).

Thus, gender-focused interventions in education commonly target the following areas:

✱ **Curricula:** As the educational framework that defines what students are expected to learn, curricula can indicate at which grade levels and in which subjects references to diversity and gender equity can be incorporated, helping to challenge stereotypes and foster healthy relationships.

✱ **Teaching and Learning Materials:** These are essential tools in the teaching and learning process. Through them, activities and reflections that promote equity and diversity can be integrated into both STEM and humanities subjects.

✱ **Ongoing Professional Development for Teachers:** Because teachers interact with students on a daily basis, they need literacy and training on these issues — not only to reflect on their own beliefs and teaching practices, but also to implement curricula and educational materials through a gender-equity lens, mediate conflicts, and support students experiencing violence.

✱ **Sexuality Education (or Comprehensive Sexuality Education):** Beyond preventing early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), comprehensive sexuality education can help students identify and report situations of violence and learn about consent.

✱ **Healthy Relationships:** Like comprehensive sexuality education, this type of intervention seeks to raise awareness and equip young people (especially adolescents) to build healthy relationships based on values and attitudes that promote consent, empathy, and the healthy expression of emotions, thereby helping to prevent abuse and violence while also supporting mental health.

✱ **Healthy Masculinities:** Efforts to prevent GBV increasingly recognize the importance of engaging boys and men as both allies and beneficiaries of this process. This area of work involves helping them challenge gender norms and stereotypes that reinforce male dominance (particularly through strength and violence), while also opening space for healthier forms of emotional expression and mental well-being.



Another promising approach, which cuts across multiple areas of intervention, advocates transforming the school into a safe space for students (the whole-school approach), taking gender, race, and sexuality into account (UNESCO; UN Women, 2016). Under this approach, interventions encompass all dimensions of school life — including the journey to and from school, the surrounding environment, teaching practices, learning processes, and the overall school climate and relationships — with the goal of preventing and addressing gender-based violence. This approach also emphasizes the need for collaboration among different stakeholders: school leadership, Departments of Education, other education professionals, families, and the broader school community (including local health, social assistance, and public safety services), adopting a comprehensive perspective (UNESCO; UN Women, 2016).

Finally, we highlight one more essential element for advancing knowledge about what works in violence prevention: the systematic generation of data. Despite the case studies and examples of good practice available in the literature, there is still limited evidence regarding the impacts of these interventions and what is — or is not — effective in preventing violence. In addition to indicators related to learning outcomes and school attendance, there is a need for indicators that capture aspects related to gender-based violence and school climate. These are essential both for understanding the true scale of the problem and for identifying which interventions are most likely to produce positive results (Plan International; Transform Education; UNGEI; UNICEF, 2021).





FINAL

CONSIDERATIONS

The findings presented throughout this report highlight the complexity of addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in school settings. Drawing on the perspectives of different education stakeholders, it was possible to identify how GBV permeates school relationships and profoundly affects students' experiences and well-being, particularly that of girls and LGBTQIA+ students.

At the same time, we observed that school actors do not spontaneously make a direct connection between everyday school conflicts and GBV. This appears to occur because discussions of harassment and violence against girls are often automatically associated with extreme situations, such as sexual abuse and physical violence. As a result, respondents tend to refer to isolated and highly visible incidents, while overlooking situations that are part of everyday school life and that also constitute forms of GBV. In general, there is broad recognition of violence when it manifests in explicit ways. Its subtler dimensions, such as normalized gender stereotypes and microaggressions, are less likely to be perceived and identified as forms of violence.

As a consequence, schools and Departments of Education tend to prioritize responses to severe incidents, often at the expense of strategies aimed at addressing microaggressions and preventing GBV.

In addition, the implementation of preventive initiatives faces resistance within the education system itself, whether due to reluctance among school leaders to address topics considered "sensitive" or because teachers face opposition from members of the school community, particularly families. Even the few initiatives mentioned are typically described as isolated efforts that are poorly connected to students' realities and interests.

The lack of training and support for education professionals is another significant obstacle. Teachers and school leaders report feeling insecure and insufficiently prepared to address these issues and respond to situations involving GBV. Most teachers do not have access to ongoing professional development opportunities, educational materials, or institutional guidance on the topic.

Given this context, we propose a set of practical recommendations based on the findings of this study, aimed at supporting the development of more effective responses within schools:

EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS

- ✱ Provide training for Department staff to strengthen awareness of their role in preventing and addressing GBV and to support the design and implementation of network-wide initiatives on the issue;



- ✱ Conduct diagnostic assessments to identify sources of resistance within school communities and develop strategies to engage the broader school community in these discussions;
- ✱ Develop clear protocols for identifying, reporting, and referring cases of GBV occurring both inside and outside schools;
- ✱ Establish focal points or dedicated units within Departments of Education to support schools in preventing and addressing GBV.

SCHOOL LEADERS

- ✱ Raising awareness of their role in addressing and preventing GBV;
- ✱ Provide training on relevant legislation and intersectoral collaboration with local protection networks;
- ✱ Offer ongoing professional development covering: how to recognize and support students experiencing GBV; how to avoid revictimization; how to act preventively; and how to create initiatives that engage families and caregivers in discussions about GBV;
- ✱ Promote opportunities for exchange among school leaders, teachers, and other members of the school community to discuss cases and align approaches to GBV prevention and response. These initiatives help reduce misalignment and foster a culture of collective support that is less dependent on individual efforts.

TEACHERS

- ✱ Raising awareness of their role in addressing and preventing GBV;
- ✱ Offer ongoing professional development covering: how to recognize and support students experiencing GBV; how to avoid revictimization; how to act preventively; and how to integrate these topics across the curriculum while encouraging the development of school-based projects addressing GBV;
- ✱ Provide practical resources on the topic, as well as protocols that guide teachers' responses to GBV cases

STUDENTS

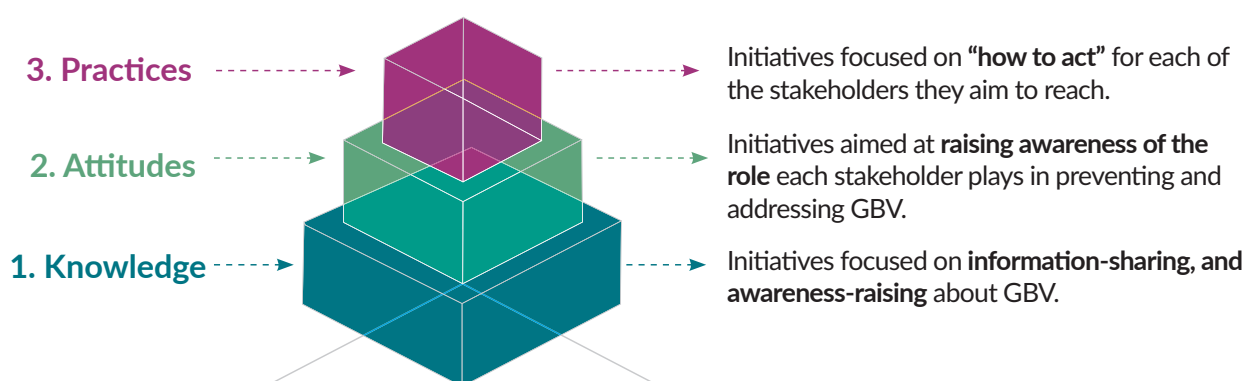
- ✱ Create safe and confidential spaces within schools for listening, support, and guidance for young people;
- ✱ Encourage active and participatory initiatives that engage students, with a focus on:
 - ✱ Approaches and themes that connect with students' lived realities;
 - ✱ Activities that take place consistently throughout the school year;

More intimate and private discussion spaces, such as smaller groups organized by gender identity.



Regardless of the target audience, it is important that initiatives address three fundamental dimensions: knowledge, attitudes, and practices, as illustrated below.

Figure 3: Examples of the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices Dimensions



To support education systems in their efforts, this report includes, as an annex, a summary table presenting different cases that illustrate interventions and good practices adopted in Brazil and other countries to promote gender-equitable education and prevent violence in schools.

Finally, we emphasize the importance of paying close attention to the language used in these approaches. The use of

terms such as “gender” and “Gender-Based Violence” may generate confusion or resistance within school communities. For this reason, it is recommended that care be taken in the choice of language and that communication strategies be developed to foster listening, dialogue, and engagement across the entire school community.





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