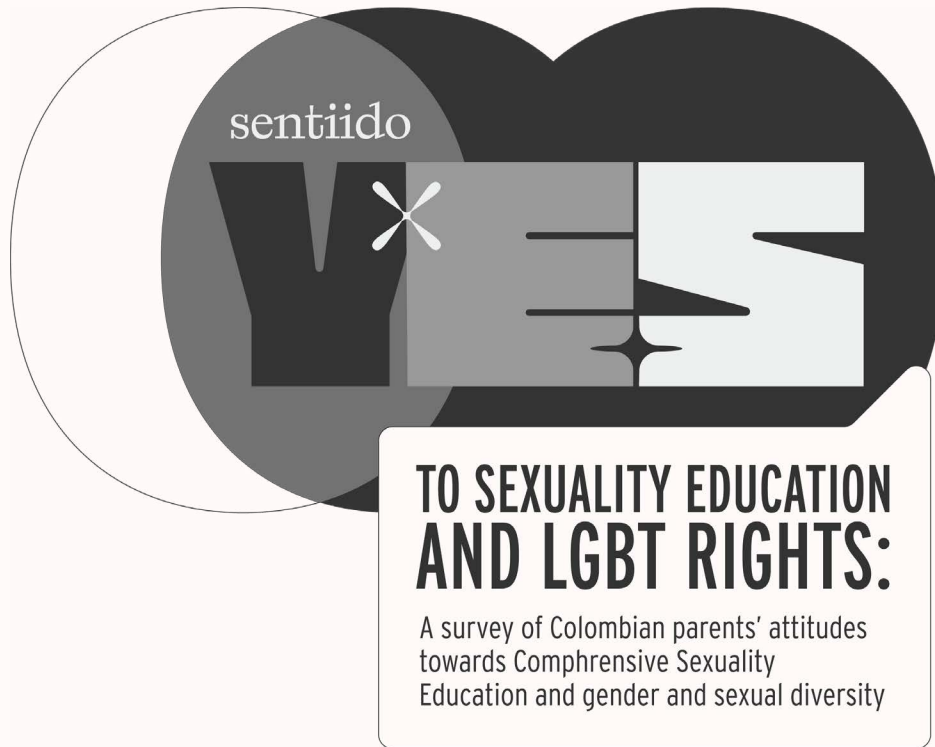


A stylized heart shape composed of overlapping circles in shades of orange, blue, teal, and pink. Inside the heart, the letters 'WES' are written in a bold, sans-serif font. The 'W' is orange, the 'E' is teal, and the 'S' is pink. A small white asterisk-like symbol is positioned between the 'W' and 'E'.

sentiido

TO SEXUALITY EDUCATION AND LGBT RIGHTS:

A survey of Colombian parents' attitudes
towards Comprehensive Sexuality
Education and gender and sexual diversity



**'YES' TO SEXUALITY
EDUCATION AND LGBT**

RIGHTS: A survey of Colombian
parents' attitudes towards
Comprehensive Sexuality
Education and gender
and sexual diversity

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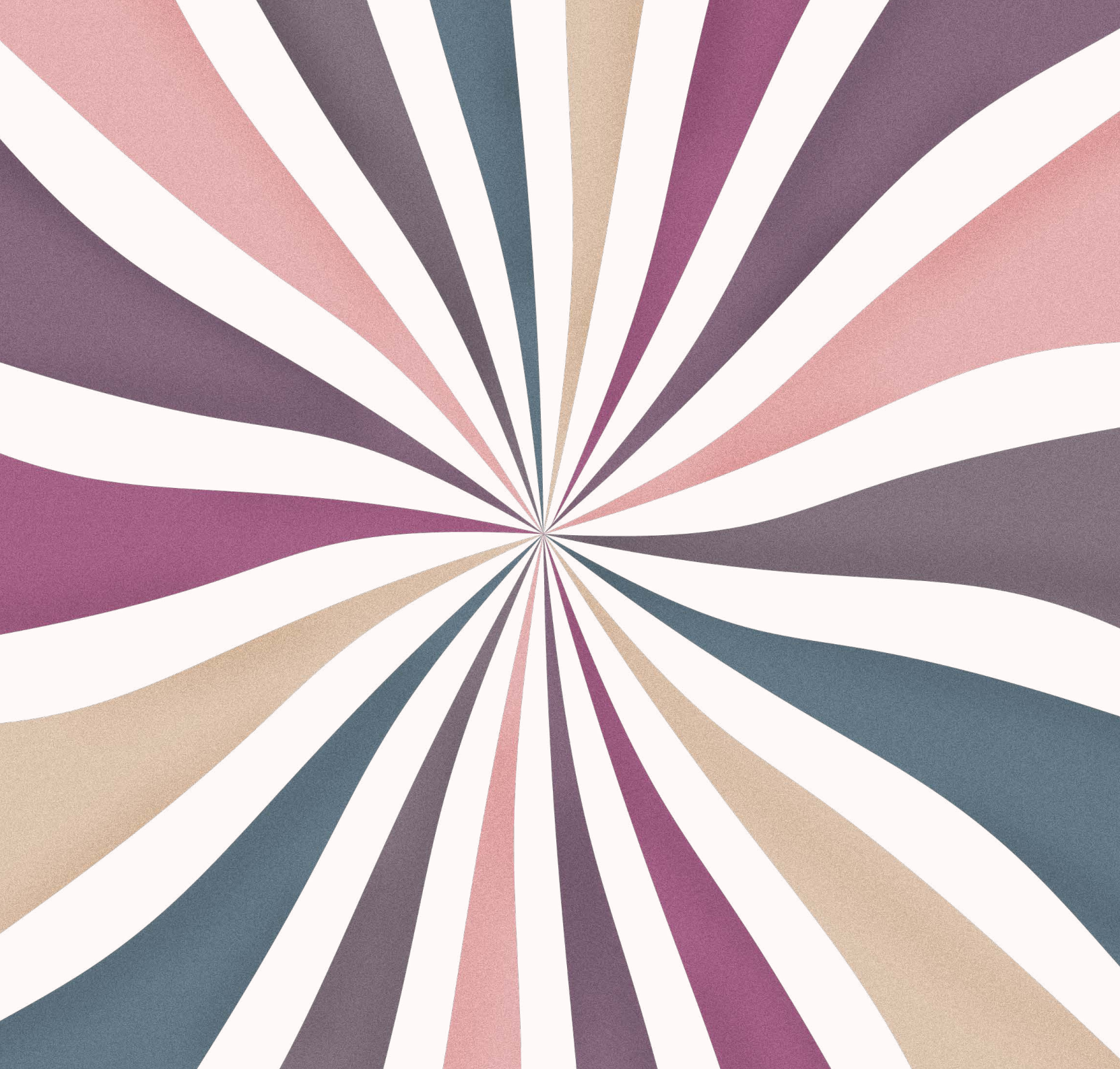
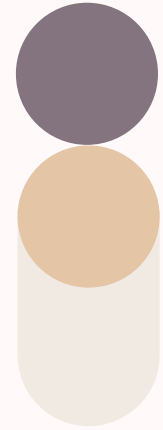
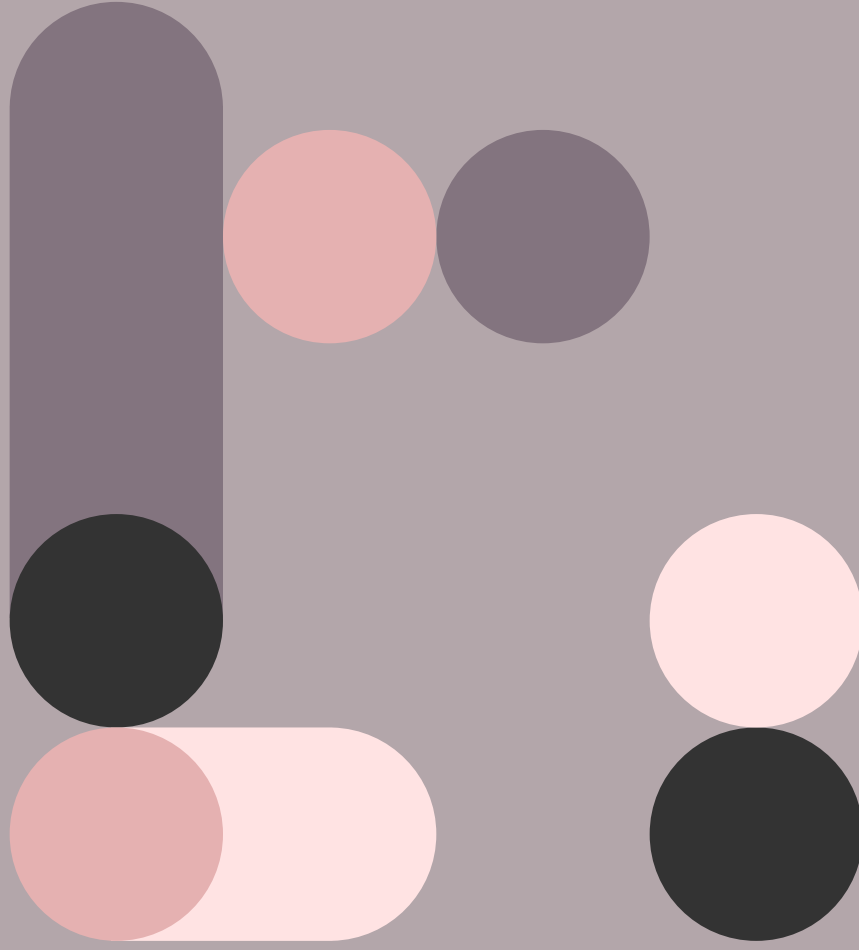


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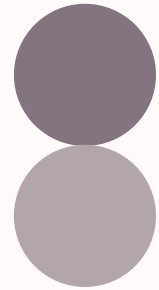


This report would not be possible without the dedication of the Sentiido team. To all our members and researchers, thank you for contributing your knowledge, ideas, and time to make this project possible.

We also want to express our gratitude to the Williams Institute Research Center, especially to Ari Shaw, Ph.D., Senior Fellow and Director of International Programs. His two decades of experience in research on sexual orientation and gender identity was fundamental to shaping this report.

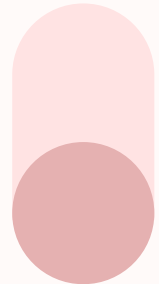
The survey—the first of its kind in Colombia—is the product of the Data Conceptos S.A.S team. The participa-

tion and dedication of Laura Ivonne Barrera Pérez and the team of surveyors in this project allowed us to conduct a rigorous and expansive survey. Finally, we want to thank the Latin America Program of the Open Society Foundations, especially Nina Madsen, Aram Barra, and Alejandra Zamora, for continuing to believe in Sentiido’s work and supporting the development of strategic research on sexual education, sexual diversity, and gender in Colombia. We believe that this study is of great relevance to our country and serves as a reference for further work and discussion in Latin America.

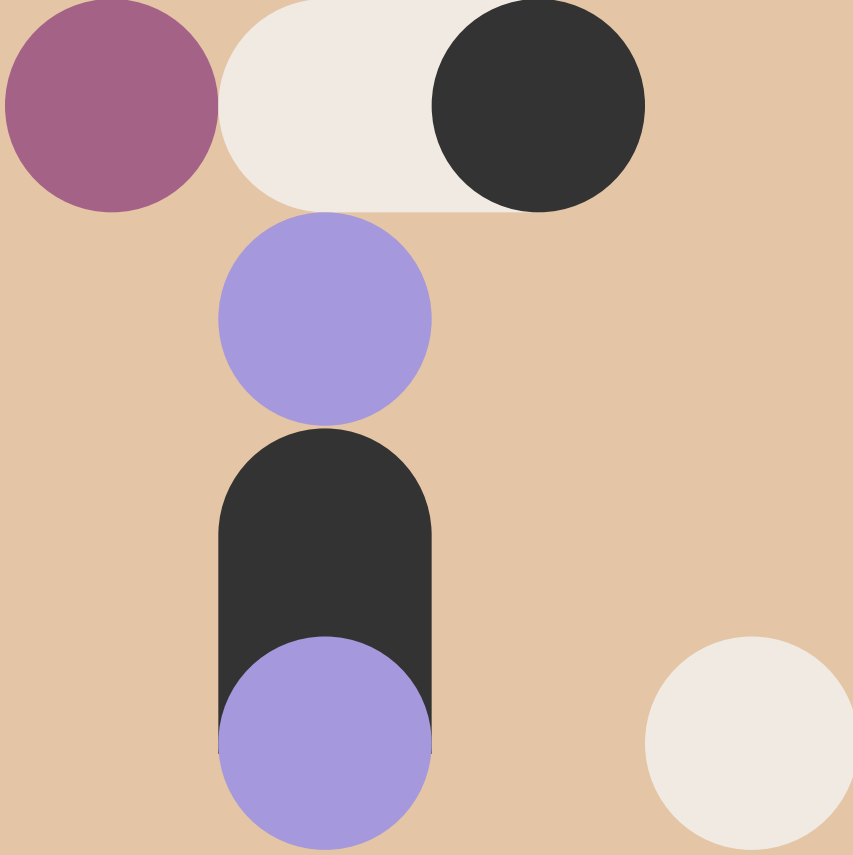


LI CUELLAR W.

Executive Director, Sentiido



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION



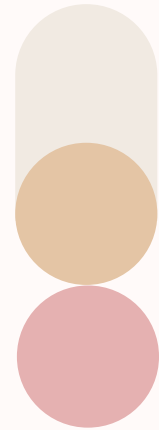


For the first time in Colombia, this groundbreaking report offers data on Colombian parents' attitudes towards sexual education (CSE) and gender and sexual diversity (LGBT related issues). Our findings show that **Colombian parents overwhelmingly support Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), which is defined as curriculum-based processes that educate children and adolescents on sexuality** (UNESCO 2019, 1). Additionally, even though some misconceptions about gender and sexual diversity remain, majority of Colombian parents support key LGBT rights, including marriage equality. Most also stated that they would be accepting of an LGBT child.

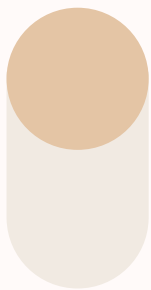
These findings are particularly relevant considering the growing visibility and influence of vocal anti-rights actors. These actors claim to speak for all parents when seeking to restrict or ban Comprehensive Sexuality Education efforts and curtail LGBT rights. Although anti-rights actors purport to speak on behalf of all parents, **lit-**

tle attention has been dedicated to gauging Colombian parents' actual opinions about Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and LGBT issues.

Anti-rights actors who proclaim to speak for all parents and “concerned citizens” commonly leverage the rhetoric of parents’ rights, religious freedom, and child protection. Their **stance against human rights—particularly those of LGBT people, cis-gender women and girls, and all children—is disguised as an effort to protect children and affirm the rights of parents and religious groups.**¹ However, as an extensive corpus of research conclusively demonstrates, lack of access to accurate, age-appropriate sexual education negatively impacts children’s health and wellbeing, regardless of whether they are LGBT. CSE is associated with sexual risk reduction and increased awareness of HIV and other STIs among other benefits (Visser and van Bilsen, 1994; Gómez-Lugo et. Al, 2022).



1. For more on the topic, see *“Manufacturing Moral Panic”* (Martínez, Duarte, and Rojas, 2021).



Also, LGBT youth report lower rates of suicide attempt when they feel supported by their families, schools, and communities (Price-Feeney, Green, and Dorison, 2022). Although there is no Colombia-based data, the Trevor Project's most recent survey (2023) of U.S. LGBT youth highlights the negative impact that gender-restrictive political campaigns have on LGBT youth, with **two-thirds of survey respondents reporting that anti-LGBTQ+ legislation had a negative impact on their mental health.**

As the **first survey of Colombian parents' attitudes towards Comprehensive Sexuality Educa-**

tion (CSE) and gender and sexual diversity, our findings constitute a data-driven rebuttal to the rhetoric of anti-rights actors who claim to speak for all parents when seeking to ban CSE and oppose LGBT rights. **Colombian parents strongly support CSE (95%) in schools and equal rights for LGBT people (90%).** They are also aware that CSE and gender and sexual diversity do not threaten their children. For example, 60% percent of parents surveyed recognized that gay people are not more likely to sexually abuse children and 61% agreed that a gay teacher does not pose a danger to their kids.



The report, as well as the survey, is structured in two parts.

Part I focuses on Comprehensive Sexuality Education, including topics that parents think should be addressed in CSE and who they think should be responsible for educating children and teens on sexual health. **Part II** centers on parental attitudes and beliefs about **gender and sexual diversity.** It covers their knowledge of LGBT identities, attitudes toward LGBT rights, and behavior in hypothetical situations.

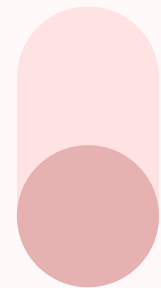
Calm political periods are also an opportunity for stakeholders to engage the “movable middle”—parents whose opinion on key issues, including marriage equality and gender identity-affirming legislation—remains unclear. On the topic of gender and sexual diversity, we identified three key misconceptions and issues where a sizeable percentage of respondents’ opinions is malleable:

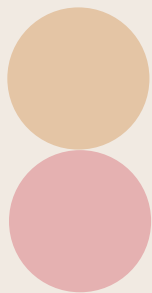
- The false notion that gay people pose a threat to children.
- The idea that people “become” LGBT due to outside pressures like social media or traumatic events.
- The misconception that LGBT people are less capable parents and therefore undeserving of having a family life.

In the last section, “Moving Forward,” we highlight how those advocating for LGBT people and CSE—including lawmakers, teachers, and parent-teacher associations, among others—can leverage this report to make data-informed decisions. Ultimately, Colombian parents’ attitudes towards CSE and gender and sexual diversity are more positive than what vocal anti-rights actors would have us believe, especially during key political moments like elections, referenda, proposed legislation, and court rulings. This report indicates that an accurate appraisal of a population’s attitudes must be undertaken when social issues are not being instrumentalized to instigate moral panic for political gain.

By steadily working with parents on the issues where many of them have an undecided stance, advocates and educators can solidify parents’ support in favor of LGBT rights and CSE. This would make them become less ‘movable’ when these issues become politically salient and contentious through misinformation and moral panic campaigns.

Part of this work involves bridging the gap between support for abstract rights and tangible ones. For example, **although 90% of parents agreed that LGBT people deserve the same rights as everyone else, only 58% supported marriage equality.** Such a divide points to the gap between many parents’ values, such as





non-discrimination, and their lack of support for fundamental, concrete rights, such as marriage. Advocacy should highlight this gap and **tap into parents' belief in equality as a catalyst for endorsement of more specific rights, like same-sex marriage and recognition of trans and non-binary identities.**

Our data and the resulting recommendations also demonstrate **the importance of long-term, flexible funding.** Instead of primarily reacting when these issues become politically charged, stakeholders need the resources to steadily involve parents. **We need to be proactive and reinforce a pro-human rights narrative in the quiet moments when people are more open to change.**

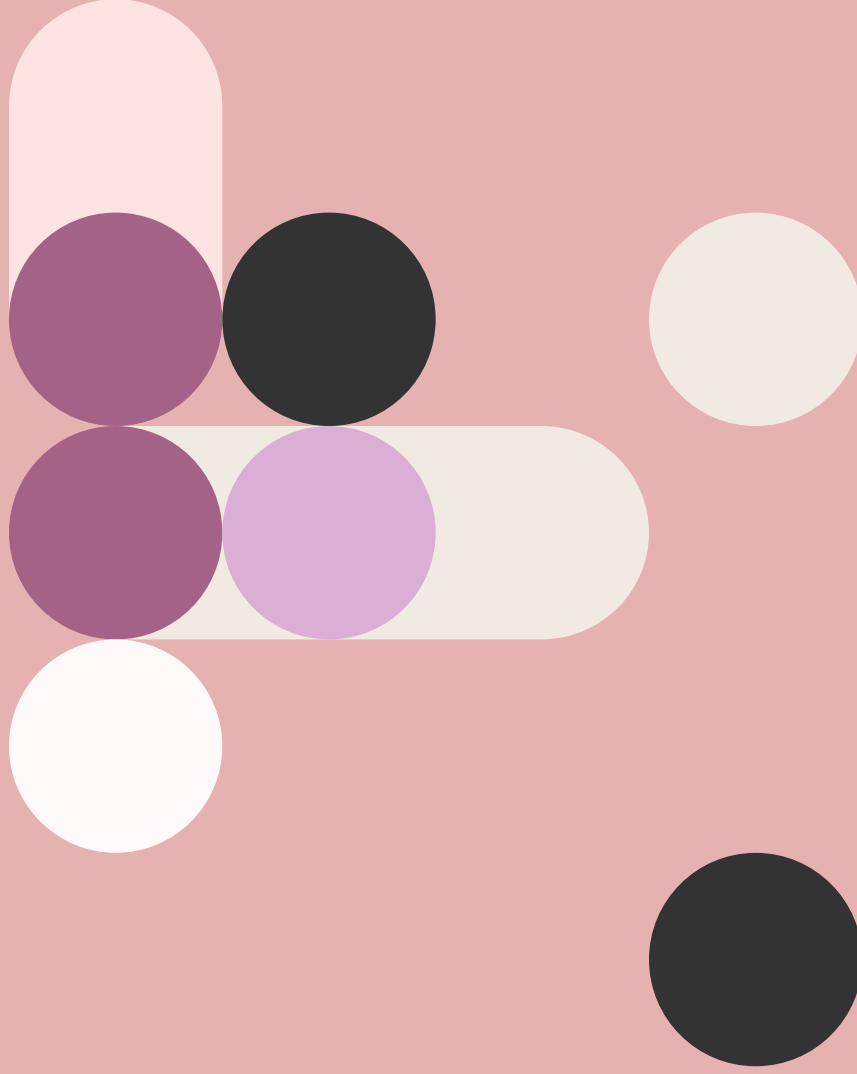
Ultimately, this report is a timely and urgent tool on how to engage Colombian parents to strengthen their support for Comprehensive Sexuality Education and LGBT rights. Alongside parents, we will continue to forge an inclusive present and an equitable future for all Colombian children and youth.



...Although 90% of parents agreed that LGBT people deserve the same rights as everyone else, only 58% supported marriage equality.



KEY FINDINGS





COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION (CSE)

1

COLOMBIAN PARENTS OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORT COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION.

Almost all parents (95%) think schools should teach Comprehensive Sexuality Education. Similarly, 94% of parents believe that their children have a “right” to receive quality information about sexual health and wellbeing.

2

PARENTS THINK SEXUAL EDUCATION SHOULD BE A JOINT EFFORT BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES.

Colombian parents were equally split between mothers (32%), fathers (31%), and schools (25%) on who should be primarily responsible for educating children and teens about their sexuality.

3

PARENTS SUPPORT THE INCLUSION OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS (INCLUDING ABORTION) AND LGBT ISSUES IN SEXUAL EDUCATION CURRICULMS.

86% of parents agree that **gender and sexual diversity** could be part of CSE, and **78%** say that the curriculum could include **sexual and reproductive rights, including voluntary termination of pregnancy (VTP) in cases permitted by law.**



GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY

1

ALMOST ALL PARENTS SUPPORT EQUAL RIGHTS FOR LGBT PEOPLE.

90% of surveyed parents agree that **LGBT people should have the same rights** as everyone else. For example, 9 out of 10 parents surveyed believe that LGBT individuals should not be discriminated against in the workplace.

2

THE MAJORITY OF COLOMBIAN PARENTS WOULD ACCEPT THEIR CHILD IF THEY WERE GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL OR TRANS.

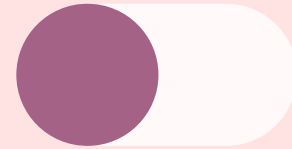
69% of parents said they would have **no problem accepting an LGB child**, and **67%** said the same about having a trans child.

Nearly 7 out of 10 parents think that being gay or trans is a normal part of human diversity. Furthermore, accepting parents would fear for their potential LGBT child. Of the parents who would support a lesbian, gay, or bisexual child, 71% claim they would fear something would happen to their child; the number goes up slightly to 72% when asked about their attitudes towards a trans child.

3

THE MAJORITY OF PARENTS IN COLOMBIA SUPPORT GAY MARRIAGE.

Almost **58%** of **parents support gay marriage**, 30% disapprove, and 12% were unsure. However, less than fifty percent say that LGBT people should be able to adopt children (46%), and only 45% say they should show affection in public (45%). Christian (denomination unspecified) parents surveyed demonstrated lower levels of support for marriage equality than the rest of the sample population. Catholic respondents are slightly more (61%) supportive of LGBT people's right to marry than the sample population overall. Furthermore, the percentage of Christian parents who "completely disagree" with gay marriage is almost double (34.84%) compared to the percentage of Catholic parents surveyed who express the same view (18.8%).



4

COLOMBIAN PARENTS SAY “NO” TO CONVERSION THERAPIES, BUT...²

84% of parents acknowledge that **being gay, bisexual, or trans is not a mental illness**. However, **21%** of respondents still said they would engage in efforts to “cure” their gay, lesbian, bisexual, or trans child.

5

GENDER, AGE AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION ARE STRONGLY CORRELATED WITH MORE FAVORABLE ATTITUDES.

Amongst the sample population, being a woman, being younger, and being less religious is associated with more positive attitudes towards LGBT people and rights.

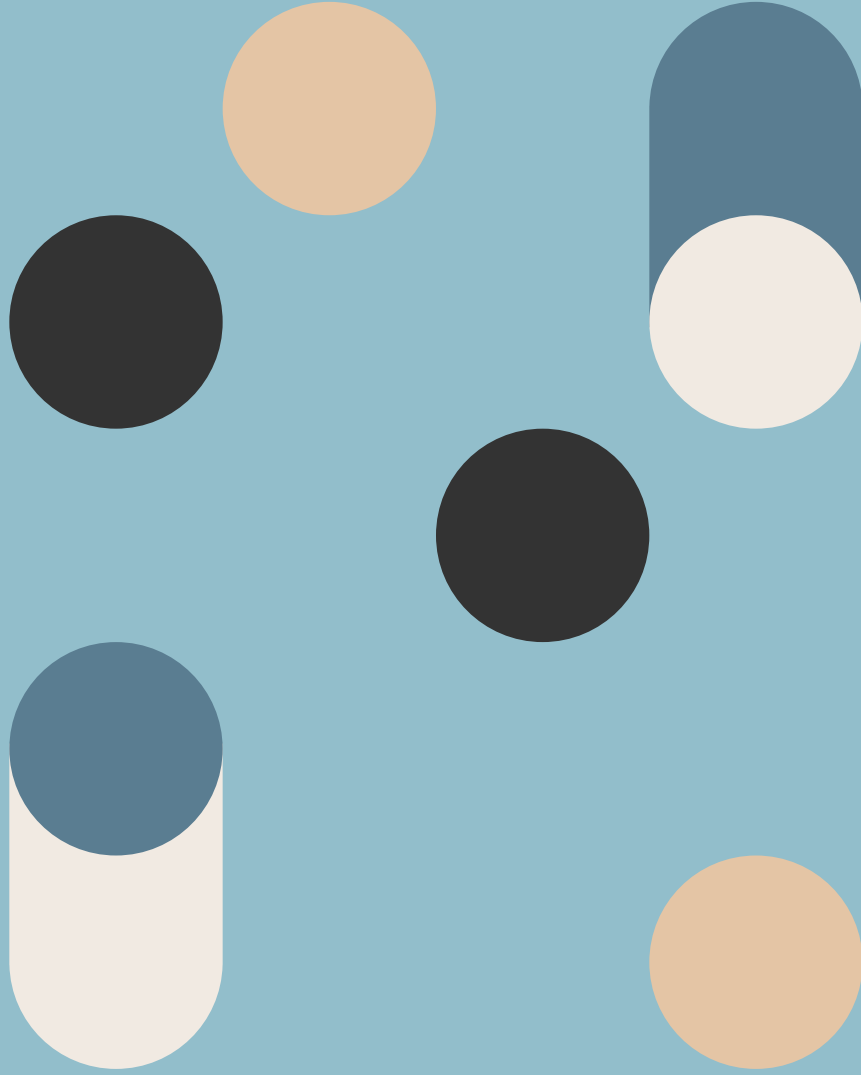
6

SUPPORT FOR EQUAL RIGHTS IS HIGH ACROSS ALL MAJOR ETHNO-RACIAL GROUPS SURVEYED.

For Afro-Colombian, *Mestizo*, and white respondents, support for equal rights for LGBT people was above 80%. Though Indigenous people surveyed show slightly lower levels of support (75%), disapproval of equal rights was also low (7%), with a sizeable population of Indigenous parents surveyed indicating their stance was unclear (18%).

2. Conversion ‘therapy’ or, more accurately, sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts (SOGICE), refers to a widely discredited approach aimed at altering the sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression of LGBT individuals. The coercion or persuasion of LGBT youth to alter their sexual orientation or gender identity can inflict severe harm on their mental health and overall well-being (see Sentido’s 2022 Report “*LGBTQ+ Youth Experiences and Well-being During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Colombia*”).

METHOD



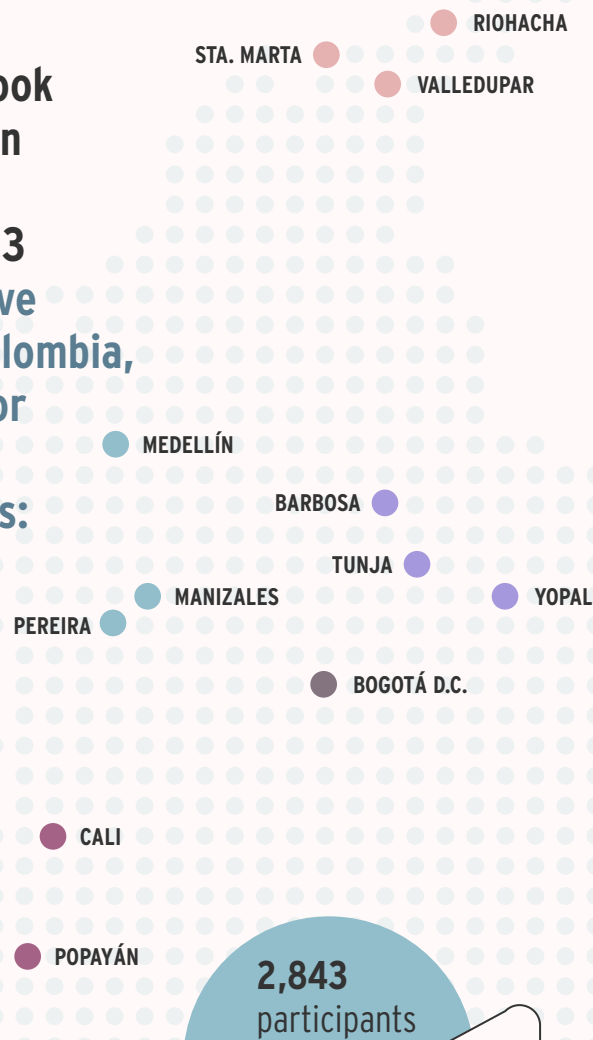


We conducted an extensive, in-person survey of Colombian parents' attitudes towards Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and sexual and gender diversity. Eligibility was limited to those living in Colombia with children currently enrolled in primary and/or secondary education. Participants were selected using a stratified random sampling method. The survey questions covered participants' understanding of key concepts related to sexual orientation, gender-identity and expression (SOGIE); attitudes towards LGBT rights; and behavior in hypothetical situations. The survey contained a total of 111 questions, administered by DataConceptos, a Colombian polling firm.

2,843 participants were surveyed with a margin of error of 4.3% and a confidence level of 95%. The survey is nationally representative of the sample population. To account for the fact that the survey primarily focuses on Colombian parents, not sub-populations (e.g. parents over 50), we note that those results can only speak to the opinions of "respondents surveyed." For complete data on the demographic makeup of the sample, see Appendix A.

The survey took place between February and March of 2023 and covers five regions of Colombia, accounting for a total of 12 municipalities:

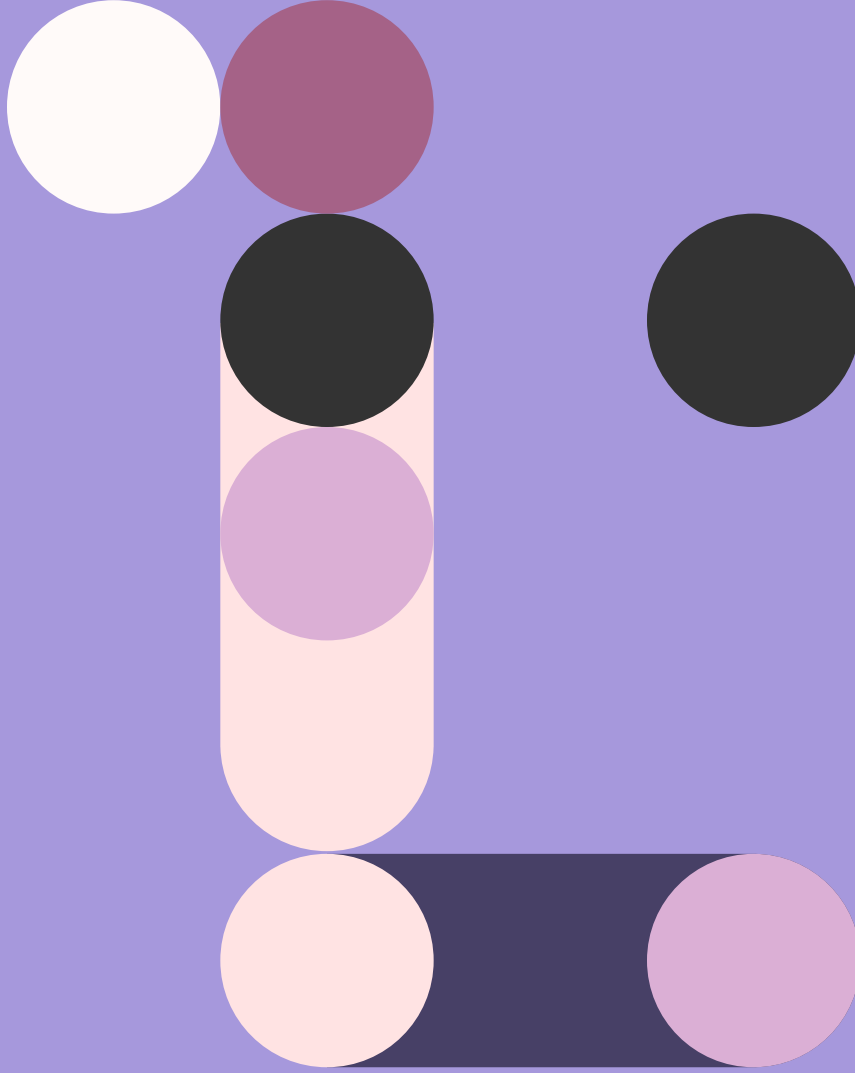
- BOGOTÁ D.C.
- NORTH (CARIBBEAN)
- CENTRAL
- ANTIOQUIA
- SOUTHWEST



In-person survey of Colombian parents' attitudes

with children currently enrolled in primary and/or secondary education

RESULTS



Our findings highlight Colombian parents' perspectives on two areas: **Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)** and **gender and sexual diversity**. Our data illuminates both cause for hope and a need for sustained advocacy.



COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION (CSE)

We asked Colombian parents about their thoughts and personal experiences with Comprehensive Sexuality Education, including who they believe should be primarily responsible for educating children and teens about sexual health and rights, and to what extent they support the integration of CSE into school curriculums. Our survey also included questions designed to gauge parents' own experiences with CSE.





95%

94%

Strong support for Comprehensive Sexuality Education

The overwhelming majority of Colombian parents agree that age-appropriate Comprehensive Sexuality Education should be taught in schools. The data indicates broad consensus about the importance of sexual education, with **95% saying that schools should teach age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education; and 94% 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing' that having quality sexual education is their**

child's 'right'. Support for providing CSE in schools is above 90% for all major racial and ethnic groups surveyed (Afro-Colombian, Mestizo, Indigenous and White). Parents also broadly agree (92%) that CSE is important to help children identify forms of abuse, including sexual and gender-based violence. Additionally, **most parents (56%) support age appropriate CSE starting during childhood** (Figure 1).

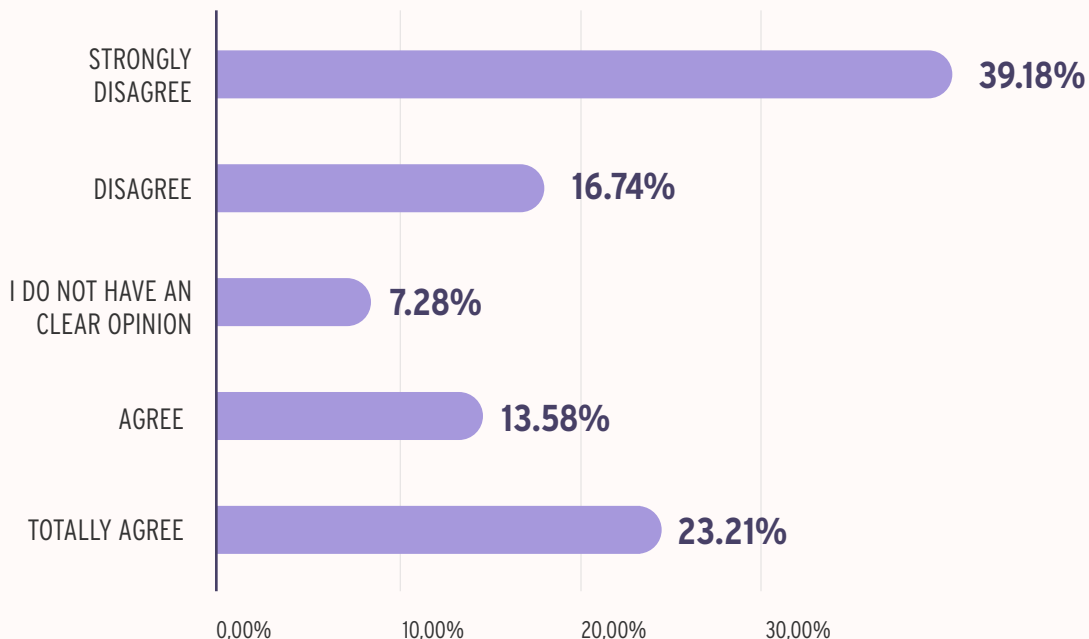


Figure 1: Attitudes towards the question, "You should not talk about sexual education during childhood, only in adolescence."

With regards to who should be primarily responsible for educating children and teens about sexual health, responses were almost equally divided between mothers, fathers, and schools (Figure 2).

Our data also demonstrates that Colombian parents are willing to include a broad spectrum of important topics in Comprehensive Sexuality Education. In contrast to narratives designed to induce moral panic, **the vast majority would allow their children to learn about gender identity and**

sexual orientation (86%) as well as reproductive rights, including the **voluntary termination of pregnancy when permitted by law (78%)**. For most CSE topics surveyed, consensus was high. For 10 out of 13 questions, over 90% of parents agree the topic in question should be included in CSE. Over 50% of parents agreed that all of the suggested topics should be included in sexual health education. However, almost a third of Colombian parents (27%) believe that sexual education should promote abstinence.

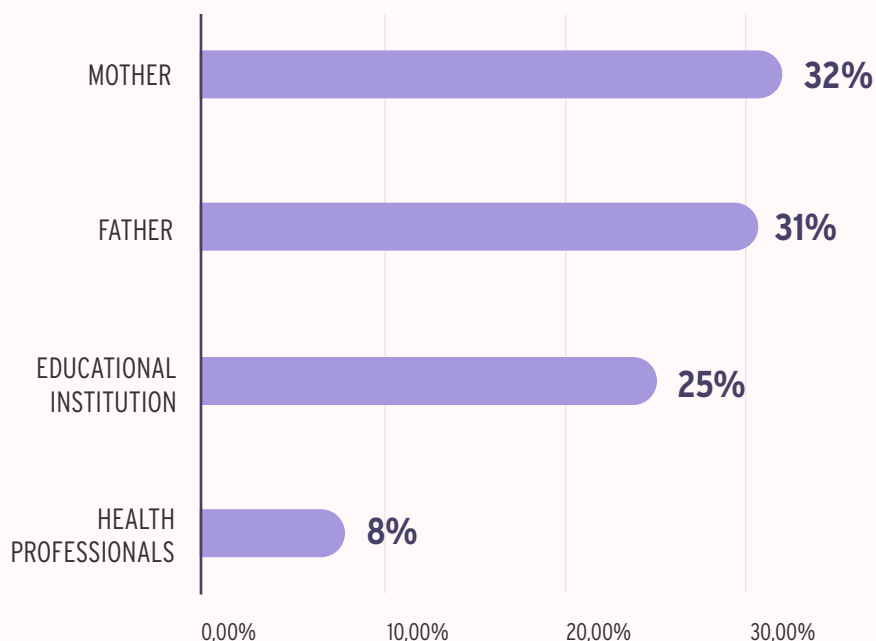


Figure 2: Colombian parents' opinions on who should be primarily responsible for educating children about sexual health and wellbeing.

Parental Agreement Percentage for Inclusion in CSE Curricula by Topic (rounded):



When crossed with demographic data, **our research highlights a need to further educate older parents—particularly older men— on the topic of sexual and reproductive health**, as younger age groups surveyed were more likely to accept the inclusion of topics like sexual and reproductive health, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), contraceptive methods, and sexual consent into CSE curriculum.

Surveyed men over the age of 55 are less willing to include information about gender-based violence in CSE, with 75% expressing support for including the topic as part of CSE compared to 94% of the overall sample. Given that it is critical children are well-informed about resources that combat and respond to gender-based violence, continued campaigns to increase support for CSE amongst older men is essential.

Surveyed men over the age of 55 are less willing to include information about gender-based violence in CSE, with 75% expressing support for including the topic as part of CSE compared to 94% of the overall sample.



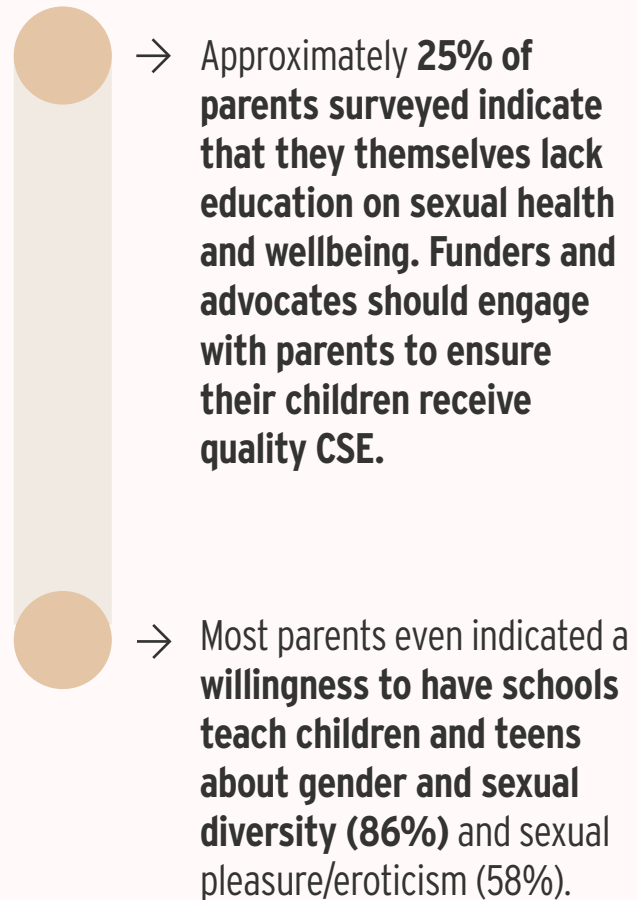
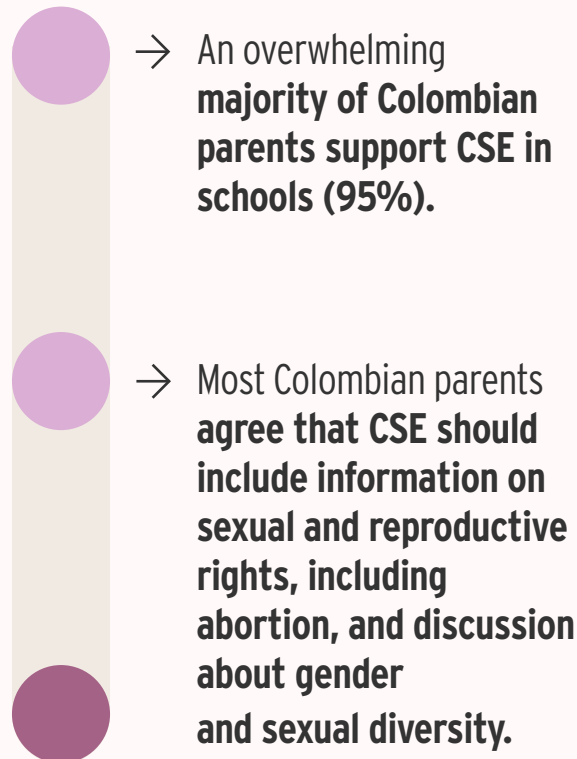
Engaging and supporting parents

Most Colombian parents (75%) have received sexual education at some point in their lives.

While this number is high, it leaves almost a quarter of parents behind. Among parents informed about sexual health and wellbeing, the main sources of education were schools (40%), their own parents (18%), health services (9%), and the Internet (7%). As nearly two-thirds of Colombian parents stated that they believe that mothers or fathers should serve as the primary source of Comprehensive Sexuality Education, **it is important that they have accurate information they can pass to their children.** Therefore, sustained resourcing of organizations and initiatives that give parents accurate information about sexual and reproductive health, rights and wellbeing is needed.

Takeaways

Our research shows that, **far from being reluctant to have their children learn about sexual health and wellbeing, Colombian parents strongly support the provision of CSE in schools.**





GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY (LGBT ISSUES)

Our data shows that majority of Colombian parents support equal rights for LGBT people and have favorable attitudes towards gender and sexual diversity. For example, **9 out of 10 parents oppose discrimination against LGBT people.** Furthermore, most **Colombian parents do not see LGBT rights and their children's safety as contradictory. While this is cause for celebration, our data also illustrates the importance of sustained advocacy:**

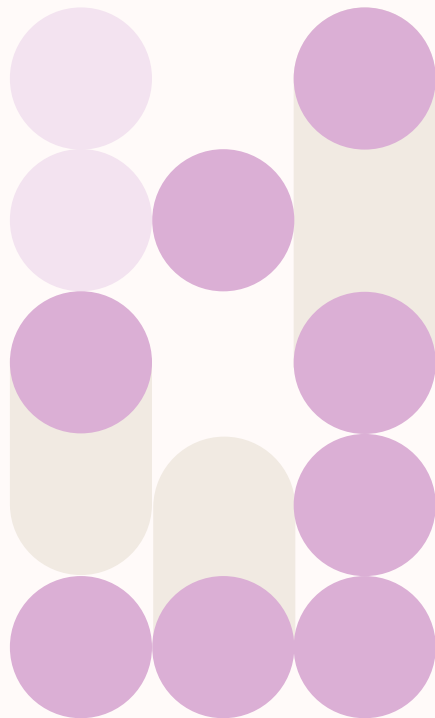
The majority (**61%**) recognizes that a gay teacher does not pose a threat to children and acknowledge (**60%**) that gay people are not more likely to sexually abuse minors.

- Although most parents would accept a gay, lesbian, bisexual (69%), or trans (67%) child, the inverse of this statistic highlights that approximately 30% of parents would not accept an LGBT child.
- The majority of parents surveyed (57%) stated they would not try to find a “cure” if their child revealed they are trans. However, a little over one-fifth (21%) stated that they would engage in efforts to try to change their child's gender identity. “Conversion therapies,” or, more accurately, sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts (SOGICE), are a form of discredited and misleading psychiatric or spiritual practices that falsely claim to be able to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. These efforts are deeply harmful and are widely discredited by all recognized international psychiatric and medical associations.

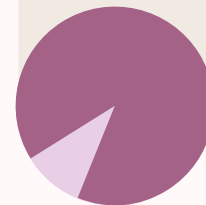
Additionally, while Colombian parents increasingly reject homophobic and transphobic stereotypes, some **dangerous misconceptions about LGBT people remain**. Many parents uphold harmful myths: for example, **30% of participants believe that women become lesbians because they have had poor**

relationships with men; similarly, **26% of respondents support the notion that a lack of a father figure may cause a person to 'become' gay**. Our research underscores where misinformation has been adopted as fact, thus highlighting where further engagement is needed.

Strong support for equality



Among Colombian parents, **there is strong consensus (90%) that LGBT people should have the same rights as everyone else**. Acknowledgment of the challenges LGBT people face is also high: **8 out of 10 respondents recognize that LGBT people experience discrimination**. However, when presented with tangible situations designed to probe the extent of their convictions, support falters.



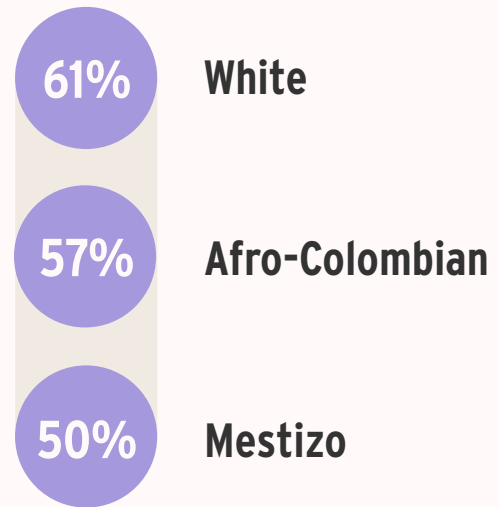
While 90% of participants agreed that LGBT people deserve the same rights as everyone else, **less than fifty percent say that LGBT people should be able to adopt children (46%) or show affection in public (45%). Only 46% of respondents agreed that same sex couples are as good at parenting as heterosexual couples.**

The majority of parents in Colombia support marriage equality: 58% of respondents stated that they agree or 'strongly agree' that LGBT people should have the right to marry, while 30% disapproved, and 12% indicated they were unsure. Christian (denomination unspecified) parents surveyed demonstrated lower levels of support for marriage equality than the rest of the sample population. Catholic respondents are slightly more (61%) supportive of LGBT people's right to marry than the sample population overall.



Furthermore, the percentage of Christian parents who "completely disagree" with gay marriage is almost double (34.84%) compared to the percentage of Catholic parents surveyed who express the same view (18.8%).

Support for equal marriage is above 50% for those surveyed who self-identified as



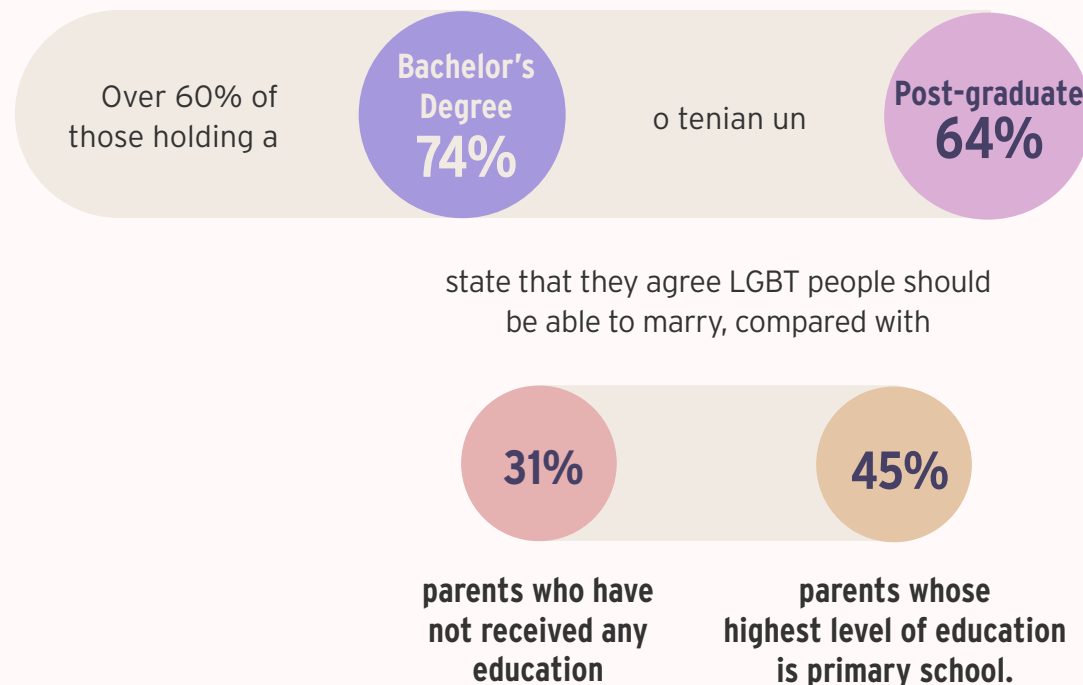
Support for marriage equality is lower for Indigenous respondents (37%). However, amongst Indigenous respondents, support for gay marriage remains higher than opposition (32%).

A relatively high percentage of Indigenous respondents were undecided on the matter (17%). This pattern repeats across other major survey questions concerning gender and sexual diversity, with the Indigenous parents surveyed more undecided than respon-

dents from other major ethnic and racial groups.

Notably, **support for gay marriage is high across all social classes surveyed.** The majority of both low- and high-income respondents (measured by Colombia's 'estrato' index³) state that they support marriage equality.

Support does, however, vary based on the respondent's education level:



3. In Colombia, the term "estrato" refers to a socioeconomic classification system used for residential areas. The system categorizes neighborhoods and households into different strata based on their socioeconomic conditions. The purpose of the "estrato" system is to help determine the pricing of public services, such as water and electricity, as well as to guide social and economic policies. The "estrato" levels range from 1 to 6, with 1 being the lowest and 6 the highest. The classification considers various factors such as housing conditions, infrastructure, and the overall economic well-being of the residents in a particular area. The "estrato" system is a tool used by the government to address social inequality and allocate resources more equitably.

“LGBT people should have the right to marry”

	Total Sample n=2843	Christian (denomination unspecified) n=577	Catholic n= 1,622
STRONGLY AGREE	33.63%	24.78%	34.96%
AGREE	24.16%	16.46%	25.96%
I DO NOT HAVE AN CLEAR OPINION	12.14%	10.75%	13.81%
DISAGREE	8.20%	13.17%	6.47%
TOTALLY DISAGREE	21.88%	34.84%	18.80%

To **close the gap** between support of abstract rights and concrete ones, funders and advocates should leverage Colombian parents' support of the principles of non-discrimination. For example, LGBT people's right to marry and adopt children could be framed using terms such as "equality" or "equal protection." The idea

would be to emphasize that **Colombian parents' stated values (equal rights and a strong anti-discrimination stance) should translate into support for tangible LGBT rights (e.g., marriage and adoption).** Ultimately, the goal is to create a positive and relatable vision of what a society that values "equality" would look like.

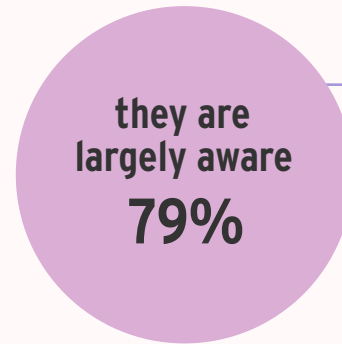


Colombian parents reject moral panic narratives about LGBT people but misconceptions remain

Most Colombian parents recognize that people could identify their sexual orientation before adulthood (63%), showing a level of awareness regarding the fact that LGBT issues are not only “adult” issues, and therefore should be recognized in youth spaces like schools, and within families.

Additionally, they **reject the narrative that LGBT people pose a danger to children**: 61% do not see a gay teacher as a threat, and 60% acknowledge that gay people are not more likely to sexually abuse children. However, this also means that 39% of parents do see a gay teacher as a threat, and 40% consider LGBT people as more prone to commit sexual crimes with children. It is urgent to continue and intensify sustained narrative change efforts so that parents—and the population more broadly—can reject this harmful and false stereotype.

Colombian parents recognize that some stereotypes are incomplete or untrue: for example,



that a man who presents traditionally “feminine” characteristics is not necessarily gay.

However, some misconceptions and stereotypes about gender sexual diversity remain.

Drug usage is one such areas: many respondents were



unsure

agreed

that LGBT people consume more drugs than cis, heterosexual people.

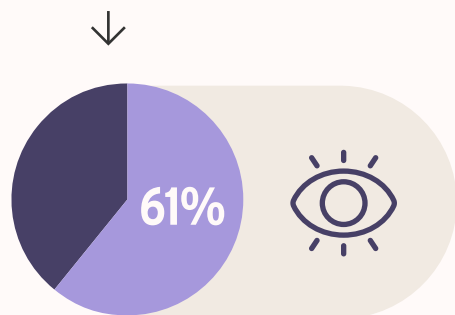
Another **point of confusion among Colombian parents is the notion that people 'become' LGBT due to outside influences.** Although respondents largely disagreed (65%) that homosexuality and bisexuality are a “phase,” **43% agreed with the statement, “homosexuality and/or bisexuality are only trends.”** Almost a **third of respondents (30%) indicated that they believe women are lesbians because they have had bad experiences with men; and 20% did not have a clear opinion on the matter.**

Similarly, while half of respondents (50%) disagree that people are gay or lesbian because they were sexually abused during childhood, a sizable number of them still think this is the case (34%), while 16% does not have a clear opinion.

43% agreed with the statement, “homosexuality and/or bisexuality are only trends.” Almost a third of respondents (30%) indicated that they believe women are lesbians because they have had bad experiences with men; and 20% did not have a clear opinion on the matter.

The significant percentage of respondents without a clear opinion on these topics represents an important opportunity for LGBT and child rights advocates to continue to work with parents and the population at large to unlearn these harmful misconceptions. Therefore, commitment to and investment in long-term cultural shifts and narrative change is critical.

Lastly, **61%** of participants believe that the rise in visibility of gay and trans identifying youth is due the influence of media and television.



While increased media representation of LGBT people can make today's teens feel safer sharing their identity ('coming out'), **it does not 'make' them gay and/or trans.**

In other words, as society becomes more welcoming, with better laws and legal protections in place, as well as more stereotype-free information available about gender and sexual diversity, more people (especially young people) will feel more comfortable communicating that they are LGBT (Martínez and Crehan 2023). **The steady statistical and societal rise in LGBT self-identification does not mean that there are now more LGBT people in Colombia and the rest of the world. Rather it suggests that, given the changing environment, there are more LGBT people, particularly young people, who are comfortable coming out of the closet.**



The majority of Colombian parents would accept their child if they were gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans.

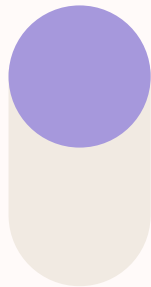
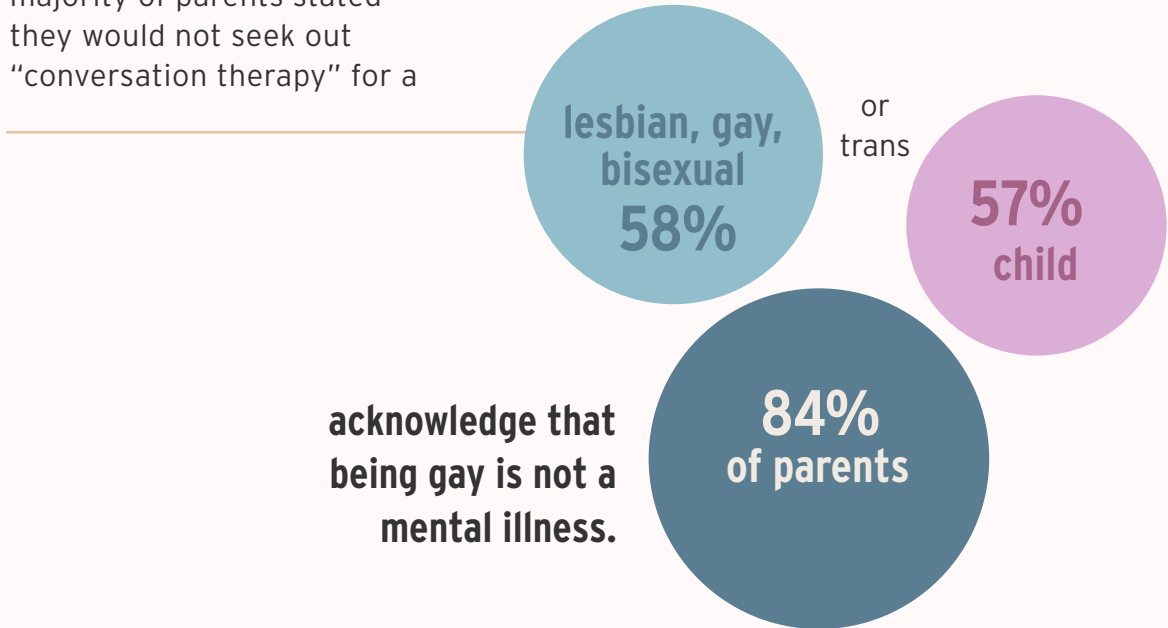
69% of Colombian parents state that they would accept their child if they identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual (LGB). Colombian parents' acceptance for a trans child drops slightly (**67%**).

69%

67%

Colombian parents are also increasingly saying no to efforts to change their child's sexual orientation or gender identity:

majority of parents stated they would not seek out "conversation therapy" for a



Many Colombian parents would also defend their LGBT child against family remembers and friends who are not accepting: **44% of parents reported they would be willing to cut ties with people and communities that would not embrace their LGB child, including religious communities; the number rises to 47% when the same question was asked about a potential trans**

child. Additionally, **75%** of Colombian parents stated that if **their child were lesbian, gay, or bisexual, they would educate their family and friends** so that they would also be supportive of the child's identity.

While these numbers highlight an environment of acceptance for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans youth, they still leave room for growth. Of the parents who said

that they would accept an LGB child, **64%** said that although they would support their child, they would not consider it to be “ideal”, and **20%** said that they would ask their child to keep their sexuality ‘private’ (**20%** did not have a clear

opinion). If their child identified as trans, **64%** of parents said they would accept their child, but they would consider it less than optimal, while **25%** of parents would ask them to keep their gender identity private.

Additionally, **approximately one-fifth of respondents**



said they would seek therapy to “cure” their gay, bisexual, or trans child,

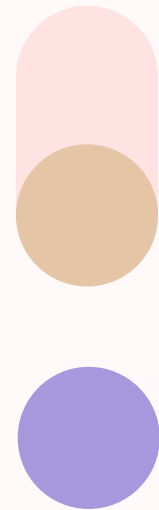


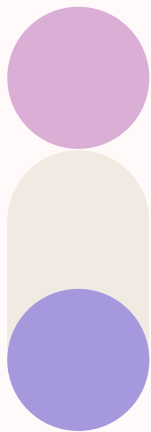
said they were unsure of their opinion on the matter.

Such practices, commonly termed “conversion therapies”, are interventions of a wide-ranging nature aimed at changing a person’s sexual orientation from non-heterosexual to heterosexual, or gender identity from trans or non-binary to cisgender. Practices of this kind have been

proven to be extremely harmful to an individual’s mental health and wellbeing and are therefore considered a form of torture by the U.N.’s Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.

Also, a troubling 25% of parents said they would refuse to





call their child by a name other than the one they were assigned at birth (dead-naming), whilst 24% were unsure of their opinion on the matter. Dead-naming and misgendering⁴ a trans person has significant and concerning consequences. In contrast, using a trans person's chosen name and pronouns is linked to reduced depressive symptoms and decreased suicidal ideation and behavior among trans youth. Russell et. al. (2018) found that when trans youth's gender identity was recognized, there was a 29% reduction of suicidal ideation, and a 56% drop in suicidal behavior.

This underscores an urgent need to create narratives and resources that highlight the importance of identity recognition for trans and non-binary people, especially teens, including using their chosen name and pronouns.

The previous data points raise questions about how Colombian parents interpret the meaning of acceptance: **a trans child whose parents do not support the public expression of their gender**

identity and deadname them is unlikely to feel truly accepted.

A misguided sense of protection and concern for their child's wellbeing may explain these attitudes. Of the parents who would support a lesbian, gay, or bisexual child, 71% claim they would fear something would happen to their child; the number goes up slightly to 72% when asked about their attitudes towards a trans child.

As opposed to encouraging secrecy and conformity to normativity, advocates and educators should encourage parents to redirect this fear towards support for 1) narrative change initiatives that promote accurate, bias-free information about gender and sexual diversity; 2) public policy efforts that seek to mainstream and operationalize existing anti-discrimination protections for LGBT people—particularly youth; and 3) legislative efforts that seek to secure equal rights for all people, including LGBT youth.

4. Using the gender and pronouns of a person's sex assigned at birth, instead of those that align with their gender identity.

Demographic factors and acceptance of LGBT youth

When crossed with demographic data, our findings align with the extensive corpus of academic literature (Chaux et al. 2021) that has **consistently identified gender, age, and religion as individual-level factors associated with attitudes toward gender and sexual diversity**. Being a woman and being younger were associated with more positive attitudes, while Christianity (non-denominational) was associated with more negative attitudes towards LGBT issues. - in our survey, we found that these groups were more likely to accept an LGBT child. On the other hand, being a man, being older, and being more religious were associated with more negative attitudes towards LGBT people, issues, and rights (Ibid., p. 8). Support did not vary considerably based on ethno-racial self-identification, apart from Indigenous respondents showing higher levels of undecided stances.

Snapshot demographic findings



Christian
(denomination unspecified)
parents surveyed **show lower rates of acceptance for LGBT and trans children:**

● **57% of them compared to 69%** of the sample overall, would support an LGBT child.

● **54% of them, compared to 67%** of the sample overall, would support a trans child.



Women surveyed show higher rates of acceptance than men surveyed:

● If their child were **gay/bisexual, 73% of women** would accept them, compared to **62% of men.**

● If their child were **trans, 71% of women** would accept them, compared to **60% of men.**



Age (<25) is strongly correlated with a higher proclivity to accept an LGBT child amongst the surveyed population:


● **83% of parents under 25 years old stated that they would accept an LGBT child,** while 60% of parents over 55 would accept an LGBT child.

● Similarly, **78% of those under 25 would accept a trans child; support lowers to 59% for parents over 55.**

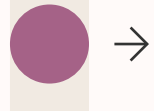
Takeaways

Our research shows that Colombian parents have positive attitudes and hypothetical behaviors towards LGBT people, including, potentially, their own children. Furthermore, our findings demonstrate that despite widespread misinformation campaigns, Colombian parents are

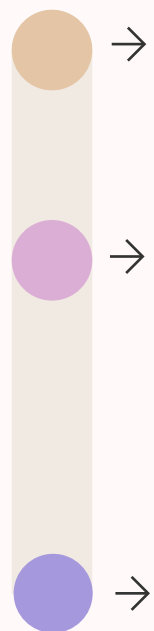
debunking some of the most harmful preconceptions about LGBT people, like the wrongful belief that they pose a danger to children and society more broadly. That said, continued advocacy and engagement with parents to address misconceptions and stereotypes is necessary.



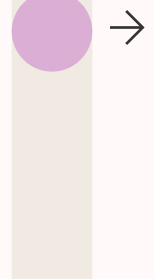
→ The overwhelming majority of Colombian parents **(90%) are in favor of LGBT people having the same rights as everyone else.** However, when asked about their opinions on tangible rights, like marriage, support falters—58% percent support marriage equality, a drop of 32 points. Also, only **46% said LGBT people should be able to adopt children,** and an even smaller number (45%) agreed that they should be able to show affection in public.




→ Nearly **7 out of 10 parents think that being gay or trans is a normal** part of human diversity.



→ **8 out of 10 respondents recognize that LGBT people experience discrimination,** and more than **9 out of 10 believe that LGBT individuals should not be discriminated** at the workplace.

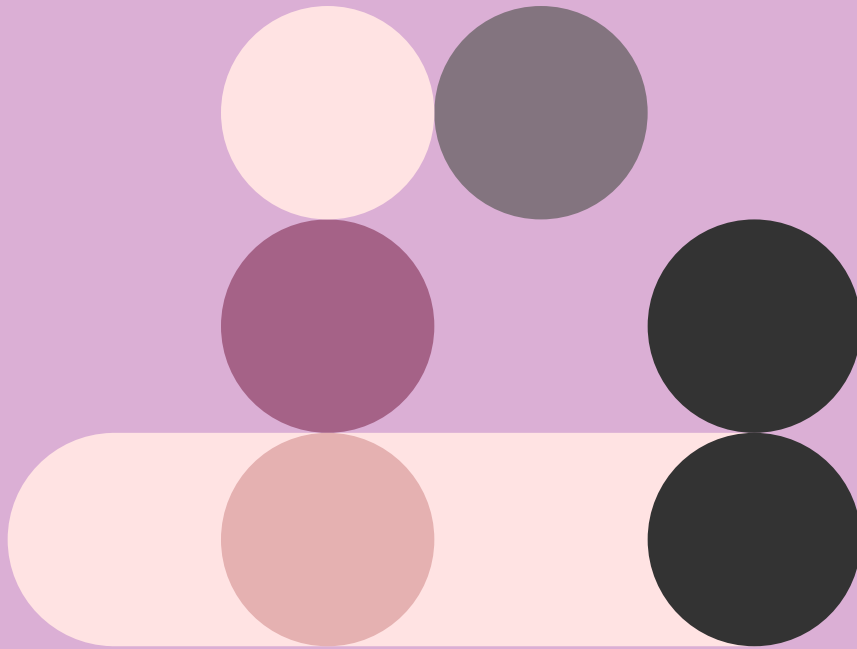


→ **Most Colombian parents state that they would support an LGB (69%) or trans (67%) child.** However, some parents have a narrow perspective on what 'acceptance' looks like: for example, of the parents who state they would support a trans child "without issue," **25% would ask them to keep their gender identity private.**



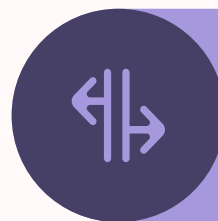
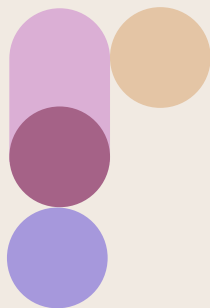
→ Amongst the sample population, being a woman, being younger, and being less religious is associated with more positive attitudes towards LGBT people and rights.

THE MOVABLE MIDDLE: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ENGAGEMENT AND ADVOCACY





Among the attitudes on gender and sexuality diversity surveyed, we identified several statements where a sizeable percentage of respondents indicated that their opinion on the matter is “unclear.” Given the high percentage of uncertainty, we have an opportunity to grow our base of support through sustained and targeted work on specific topics and audiences. Thematically, these issues can be subsumed within three categories:



The notion that outside factors lead people to ‘become’ LGBT (e.g., women become lesbians because they have had poor relationships with men).



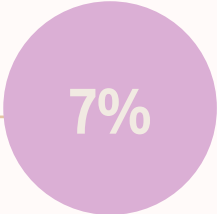
The idea that LGBT people pose a danger to children—for example, that they are more likely to sexually abuse children.



That LGBT people are less apt parents who do not deserve a family life, which includes beliefs that they should not be allowed to marry, and, specially, adopt children.

Notably, when crossed with demographics information, many of those surveyed who are a part of this 'movable middle' lack formal education.

For example, with the statement, "LGBT people deserve the same rights as everyone else,"



of those surveyed had an unclear opinion.

Meanwhile,



of those surveyed whose highest level of education is a bachelor's degree had an unclear opinion,

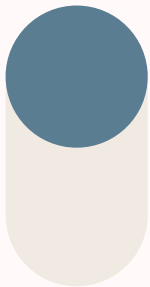
compared to 12% of those surveyed without formal education.⁵

In the chart below we have summarized the issues with the highest percentages of undecided parents. We believe this information is useful for different stakeholders looking to fund or work on different yet complementary efforts to engage this important demographic.

It is key that these efforts are sustained and not only reactive to anti-rights disinformation campaigns.

They should also be based on narratives that resonate with people, and that are hope-based and worldmaking. In other words, **stakeholders should not limit themselves to debunking misconceptions but should present a hopeful and achievable vision of a democratic society that actively recognizes and protects the human rights of all people, including cisgender women and girls, LGBT people, and all children.**

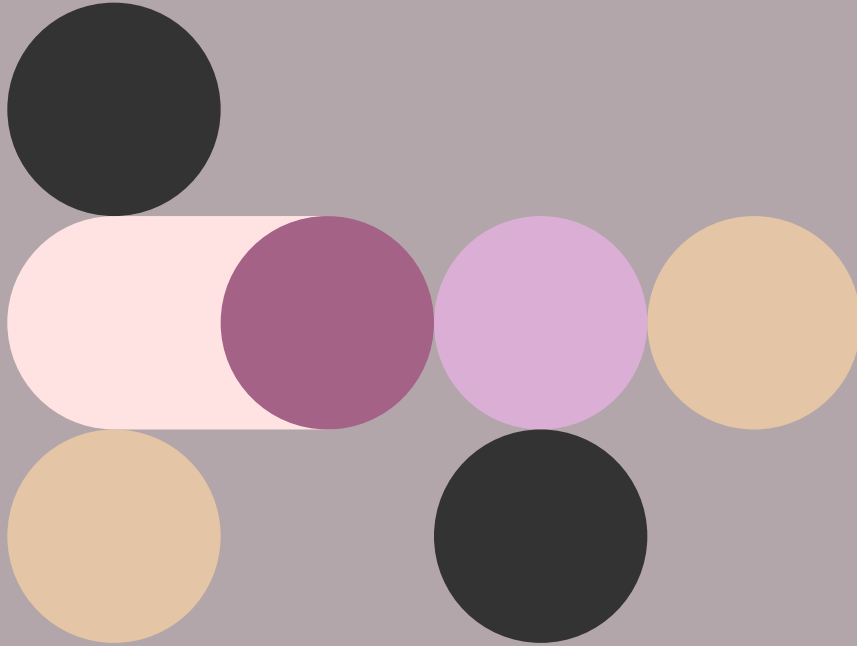
5. As only 0.88% of the sample, or 25 people, has a post-graduate degree, for the sake of comparison, we used those with a bachelor's degree (15% of the sample) as our primary 'highly-educated' group.



QUESTION OR STATEMENT**% that do not have
a clear opinion**

LGBT people consume more drugs	34%
Homosexual couples equally good parents as other couples	25%
Homosexual people are more likely to sexually abuse children	21%
Women are lesbians because they have not had a good relationship with men	20%
If my child were gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans, I would accept them, but ask them to keep their preferences private (not tell anyone else)	20% (LGB) 25% (Trans)
If my child were gay, lesbian, bisexual, or trans, I would find a therapy to cure them.	21% (LGB) 22% (Trans)
If my child were gay, lesbian, bisexual, or trans I would accept and support them, and would cut ties with communities (including church) and people who do not accept them	18% (LGB) 21% (Trans)
Homosexuality or bisexuality are just a phase	20%
If my child were lesbian, gay, bisexual, or trans, I would kick them out of the house	9% (LGB) 20% (trans)
People are gay or lesbian because they were sexually abused in their childhood	16%
Having a gay teacher can be dangerous for my child	15%
LGBT people should have the right to marry	12%

MOVING FORWARD ADVOCATING FOR COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION AND LGBT RIGHTS





Our findings show that **most Colombian parents favor Comprehensive Sexuality Education and equal rights for the LGBT population and would accept and LGBT child.**

Our findings also reveal opportunities for stakeholders to continue to fight for Comprehensive Sexuality Education programs and inclusion of the LGBT people. The **three most salient recommendations** from this study are:

1

To truly gauge parental attitudes toward Comprehensive Sexual Education and LGBT people and issues, it is key to survey people **when these issues are not being instrumentalized through moral panic campaigns that seek specific political outcomes—for example, by avoiding major elections.**

2

It is crucial to **identify the issues that cause more confusion among parents**, as well as those on which they are undecided or have no clear opinion. This information constitutes a helpful roadmap to guide narrative power efforts and other strategies for sustained change.

3

It is necessary to steadily and proactively **engage those with an undecided stance on key issues (“the moveable middle”)** during politically calm moments, building a base of support for when these issues become politicized.

Other key recommendations for stakeholders:

1

Engage and support parents. *Treat parents as educational partners. Most parents see themselves as having a role in educating their children about sexual health and wellbeing. Yet, nearly a quarter of them indicated that they themselves lack comprehensive education on the subject. Thus, to ensure that children receive factual, bias-free information, parents must also have access to reliable and accurate resources.*

2

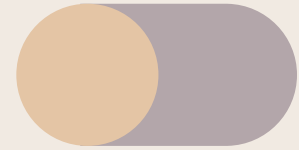
Highlight the benefits of Comprehensive Sexuality Education for all children and youth. *CSE, particularly LGBT inclusive sexual education, has been shown to decrease risk taking in sexual behavior and increase knowledge of HIV protection (Ramírez-Villalobos et. al 2022; Goldfard and Liebereman, 2020). It is also protective against intimate partner violence and child abuse, as well as teen pregnancy (Council of Europe 2020; Foshee et. al 2004).*

3

Leverage people's stated values (support for non-discrimination and equal rights) into support for tangible rights, like marriage and adoption equality, and gender identity recognition laws and policies. *To bridge the gap between parents' support of abstract promises of "equal rights" and concrete support, advocates can create affirming, hope-base narratives about what a world with true support for equality looks like in day-to-day life.*

4

Engage men, religious groups, older people, and parents with no or low levels of formal education. *Respondents from these groups showed lower levels of support for CSE and key LGBT issues.*



5

Show Colombian parents affirming ways to cope with the fear that their LGBT child might be exposed to harm. *Many Colombian parents indicated that they would accept an LGBT child but would fear for them because of their gender identity and/or sexual orientation. Ironically, this fear can manifest in ways that cause harm to the child, for example, by asking them to keep their gender identity and/or sexuality private or submitting them to efforts to change their gender identity or sexual orientation. It is important to show parents supportive and affirming ways to keep their LGBT children safe. For example, parents can advocate for inclusivity in their local communities and parent-teacher associations, or campaign for protective legislation.*

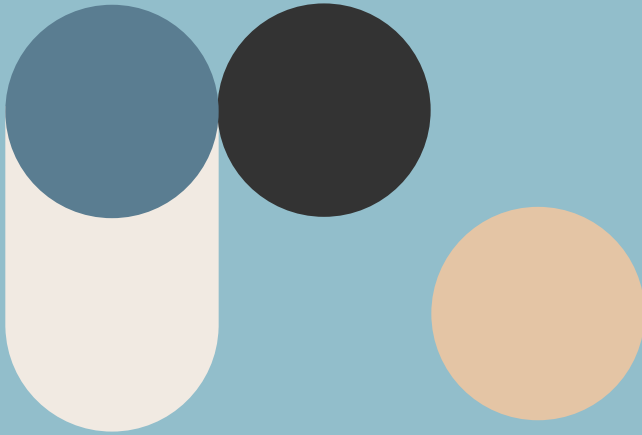
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Finally, we want to emphasize that implementing these recommendations requires that advocates have access to long-term, flexible funding. *Short-term, reactive programming ultimately limits advocacy work to crisis response and curtails their ability to enact steady, incremental change.*

As the first of its kind in Colombia, this study paves the way for future research in Latin America and the world. While it is encouraging that Colombian parents show more positive attitudes than expected, worrying misconceptions remain strong.

Also, the large number of undecided respondents points to the possibility of being manipulated by misinformation and anti-rights campaigns. Therefore, our findings are an invitation to continue fighting for a better tomorrow, and to renew our commitment to create a society where the rights of all children and youth are recognized and affirmed.

APPENDIX A DEMOGRAPHIC DATA



Age (n= 2843)	Percent surveyed
Under 25	12.35%
25-35	37.39%
36-45	27.40%
46-55	18.78%
Older than 55	4.08%

Table 1: Age of Surveyed Parents

Social Class/ Estrato (1=lowest; 6=highest)	Percent Surveyed
1-2	54.84%
3-4	38.37%
5-6	6.79%

Table 3: Social Class of Surveyed Respondent

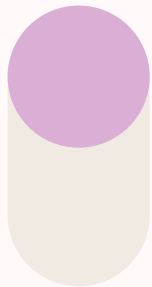
Gender (n= 2843)	Percent surveyed
Female	66.37%
Male	33.63%

Table 2: Gender of Surveyed Parents

Education level (n= 2843)	Percent surveyed
No education	0.91%
Elementary school	10.41%
High school	52.41%
Vocational or associate degree	20.30%
Bachelor's degree	15.09%
Postgraduate	0.88%

Table 4: Education Level of Surveyed Respondent





6. Mestizo is a common racial category in Colombia and Latin America. It is often translated as “mixed race,” referring to people who are of both Indigenous and Spanish ancestry. The category is part of the region’s racist history and ongoing legacy. The term has contributed to the erasure of Indigenous and Black communities, reinforcing the idea that they belonged to an idealized past but were not part of the nation’s present or future.

Ethnicity	Percent Surveyed
White	55.84%
Mestizo ⁶	18.07%
Afro-Colombian, Black	10.12%
I do not know	12.47%
Indigenous	2.28%
Roma	0.54%



Table 5: Ethnicity of Survey Respondents

School Type (n= 2843)	Percent surveyed
Unaffiliated	12.35%
Religious affiliation	37.39%
School directly managed by a religious congregation	27.40%
Unknown	18.78%



Table 6: School Type (Religion) of Survey Respondent’s Children

Religious Belief (n= 2843)	Percent Surveyed
Catholic	57.05%
Christian (denomination unspecified)	20.30%
No Religion	11.71%
Other Religion	7.14%
Atheist/Agnostic	2.71%
Jehovah's Witness	1.09%

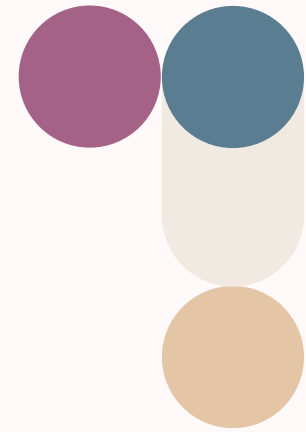


Table 7: Religious Beliefs of Survey Respondents

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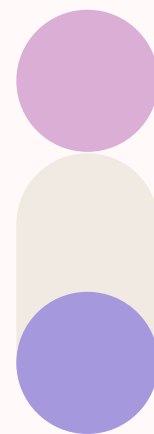
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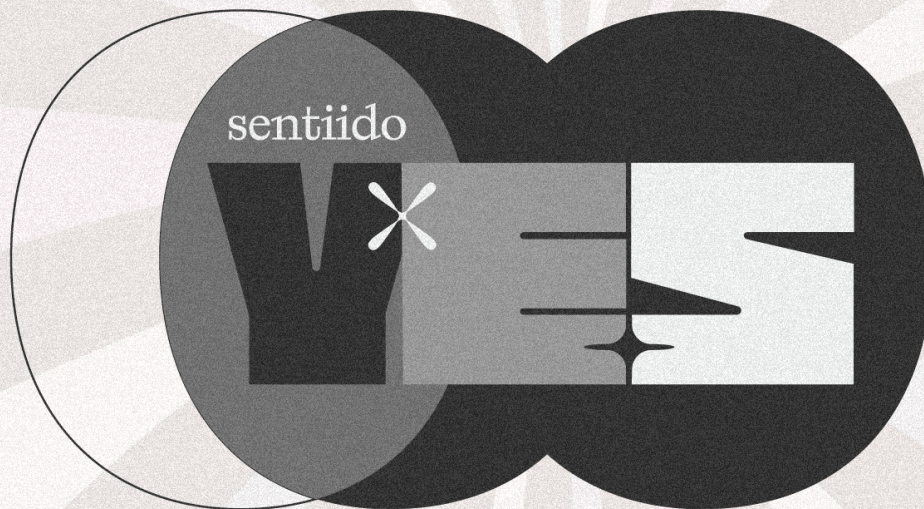
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'YES' TO SEXUALITY EDUCATION AND LGBT RIGHTS:
A SURVEY OF COLOMBIAN PARENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS COMPHRENSIVE
SEXUALITY EDUCATION AND GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY

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