



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# **ACCELERATING ACCEPTANCE**

**2023**

A Survey of American  
Acceptance and Attitudes  
Toward LGBTQ Americans



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We've seen a steady upward climb in American's comfortability with and acceptance of LGBTQ Americans since 2015, the year GLAAD launched its inaugural Accelerating Acceptance study which examines the progress the LGBTQ movement has made and helps define the challenges we have yet to overcome. Each year, the study results are a clear demonstration that responsible representation in media and fair and accurate reporting has a powerful and measurable effect on the lives of LGBTQ people.

The most important finding of our 2023 study is that support for LGBTQ equal rights is at an all-time high: 84% of survey respondents support equal rights for the LGBTQ community.

But there's also a disturbing downward trend in critical areas representing some Americans' beliefs in false claims about LGBTQ people. Of non-LGBTQ Americans, 66% believe the false claim that the LGBTQ community is one group who all share similar needs and issues, and 54% believe the false claim that people who use they/them pronouns are "in the process of figuring out who they are." In truth, individuals use pronouns to express themselves as who they are in their fullness. And the LGBTQ community is everywhere, is multifaceted, and exists in all parts of society; the community's needs and truths are as varied as the people who comprise it.

These figures correlate with a rise in anti-LGBTQ rhetoric from fringe politicians and extremist groups, irresponsible representations in news media, a record-high number of anti-LGBTQ bills in state legislatures, and a sharp uptick in discrimination and violence targeting members of marginalized and minority communities.

From having LGBTQ people at places of worship, to learning a family member or your doctor is LGBTQ, a clear majority of non-LGBTQ people are comfortable interacting with LGBTQ people. An unprecedented 91% believe that LGBTQ people should have the freedom to live their lives without discrimination.

Yet LGBTQ people in America do face high levels of discrimination. The number of anti-LGBTQ bills this year is unmatched in our nation's history at more than 500 proposed bills. The shocking rise in discriminatory actions from our elected representatives is taking a toll. The Trevor Project's 2023 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People found that "nearly 2 in 3 LGBTQ young people said that hearing about potential state or local laws banning people from discussing LGBTQ people at school made their mental health a lot worse."

Laws targeting health care for transgender youth, access to restrooms, being able to participate in school sports, and bans on books about LGBTQ people in school libraries convey the damaging notion that LGBTQ people are to be marginalized, shunned, or feared. The effect is not limited to young people, but can infect their families and communities as well. The month after the Florida Senate passed the "Don't Say LGBTQ" bill last year, tweets mentioning the LGBTQ community alongside slurs such as "groomer,"

“pedophile,” and “predator” increased 406%, according to a report by the Human Rights Campaign and the nonprofit Center for Countering Digital Hate. All five major social platforms—Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok—are failing LGBTQ people in hate speech, harassment, and cyberbullying, and other cybersafety metrics, as documented in GLAAD’s upcoming 2023 Social Media Safety Index.

Online hate is leading to real world violence. The ADL, in the Online Hate and Harassment: The American Experience 2022 report found LGBTQ respondents were more likely to report hate-based harassment than any other group.

GLAAD’s study found that Americans see the connection: 86% believe that exposure to hate content online is leading to violence in the real world, and 66% of Americans believe that anti-LGBTQ bills and legislation at the state level will lead to increased discrimination and violence against the LGBTQ community. GLAAD has tracked more than 160 anti-LGBTQ threats and attacks—including firebombings—on drag events since 2022, with a sharp uptick beginning in the Pride season through the midterm election when false rhetoric by elected officials was deployed against drag performers.

The hopeful news is that we have decades of work to show that fair and accurate journalism, visibility in media, and corporate responsibility all have an enormous role to play. When people are exposed to responsible representations of LGBTQ people, hearts and minds can change. 60% agree that seeing LGBTQ people in advertising makes them more comfortable with people who are different than themselves. Clear majorities are comfortable seeing an LGBTQ character in a movie or TV show (73%) or in an ad (75%), and seeing an LGBTQ family with children in an ad (68%).

The 2023 Accelerating Acceptance study clearly shows the destructive repercussions of inaccurate rhetoric and baseless legislation, and showcases GLAAD’s crucial role in the ongoing fight for full LGBTQ equality and acceptance. The study demonstrates an urgent need for education and representation, factors we know can move attitudes toward full acceptance.

GLAAD is committed to amplifying stories that present audiences everywhere with the richness and humanity of our communities, that confront and correct false and dangerous narratives, and inform audiences, voters, journalists, and politicians about our everyday lives. The Accelerating Acceptance report is more information regarding what’s at stake for LGBTQ people and what we all need to know.



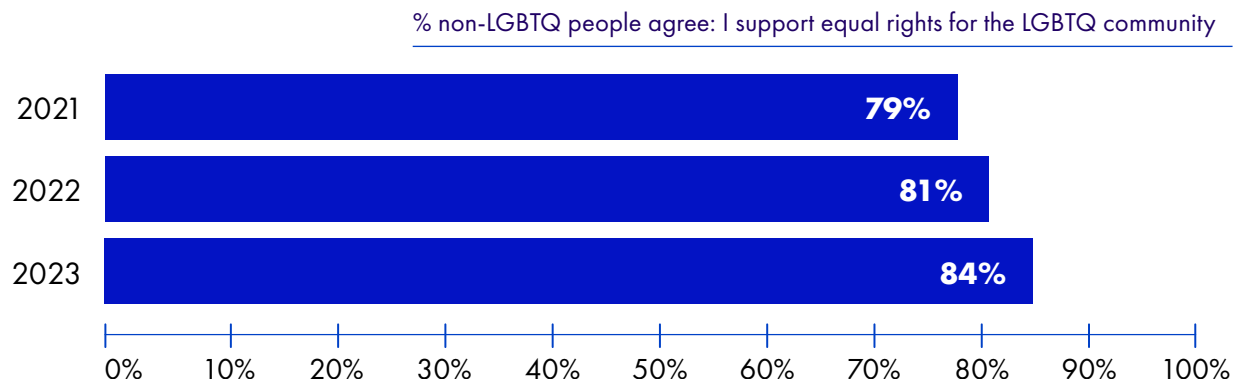
A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sarah Kate Ellis".

**SARAH KATE ELLIS**

President & CEO, GLAAD

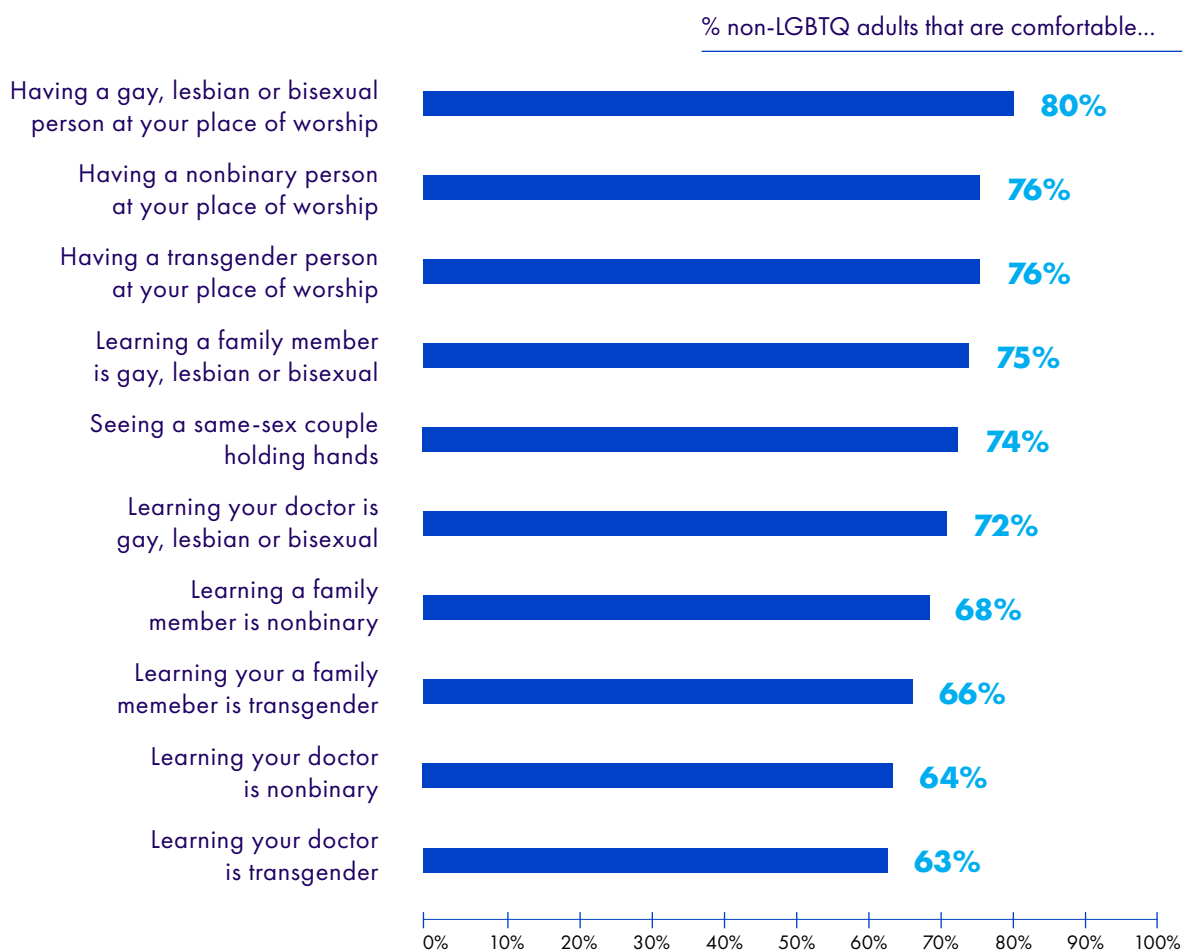
## Support for LGBTQ equal rights is at an all-time high

Equal rights for the LGBTQ community is at an all time high, with 84% of non-LGBTQ people agreeing.



## Comfort interacting with the LGBTQ community in various scenarios is stable.

From having us at places of worship, to learning a family member is LGBTQ, to learning your doctor is LGBTQ, a majority of non-LGBTQ people are comfortable interacting with us.



## Our community continues to face high levels of discrimination

Despite over 90% of non-LGBTQ people agreeing that LGBTQ people should have the freedom to live their life and not be discriminated against, we continue to face high levels of discrimination.

**91%**

of non-LGBTQ people agree that LGBTQ people should have the freedom to live their life and not be discriminated against

**66%**

of non-LGBTQ people agree that anti-LGBTQ bills and legislation at the state level will lead to increased discrimination and violence against the LGBTQ community

## Anti-LGBTQ legislation at an all-time high

**500 +**  
**ANTI-LGBTQ BILLS PROPOSED IN 2023**

Data from Equality Federation show over 500 anti-LGBTQ bills this year. Each of the previous two years – 2022 and 2021 – were record-setting years for anti-LGBTQ legislation.

Source: Equality Federation

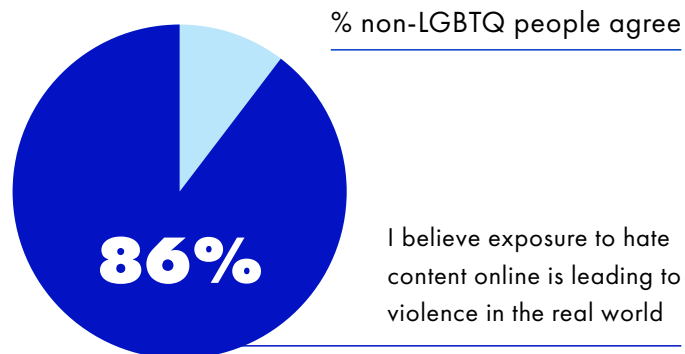
## The impact of online hate

Most Americans agree that online hate is leading to real world violence. The ADL, in their *Online Hate and Harassment: The American Experience 2022* report found that LGBTQ respondents were more likely than any other group surveyed to experience harassment.

## A wave of anti-LGBTQ protests and threats that GLAAD is tracking



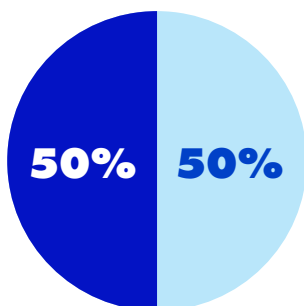
Since 2022, GLAAD has tracked over 160 incidents of anti-LGBTQ protests and threats targeting drag events, with a sharp uptick beginning in Pride season 2022 and continuing through the midterm election cycle. False rhetoric was deployed against performers in campaign ads for the 2022 midterm elections, and rhetoric escalated to violence including the firebombing of a Tulsa donut shop that had hosted a drag event in October 2022.



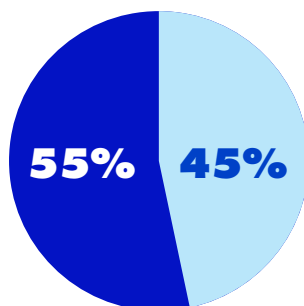
## Continued confusion around our community

There are feelings of confusion and that some members of our community are new and unfamiliar, pointing to the need for media exposure and fair and accurate representation of our community.

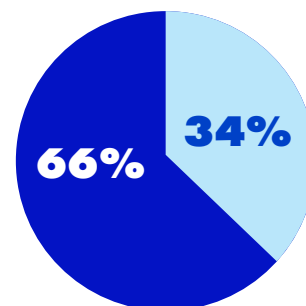
Nonbinary and transgender people are new and unfamiliar to me



I am confused by all the different letters and terms to describe individuals who comprise the LGBTQ community



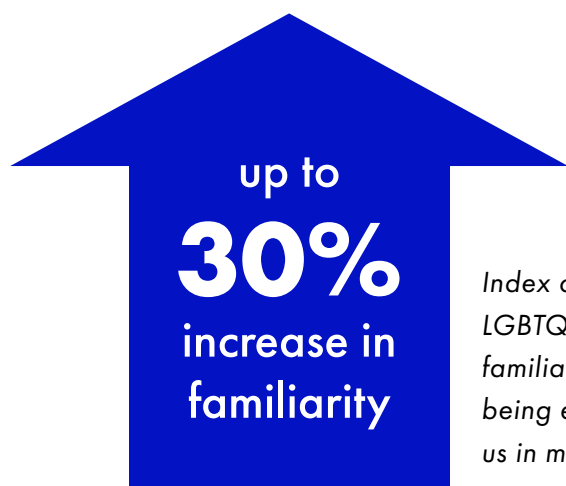
I view the LGBTQ community as one group with similar needs and issues



■ Agree ■ Disagree

## When people are exposed to us in media, it changes their hearts and minds.

Media exposure is critical to increasing familiarity and accelerating acceptance.



*Index of non-LGBTQ people familiar based on being exposed to us in media*

% non-LGBTQ people agree

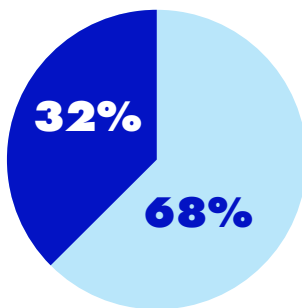
**60%**

Seeing LGBTQ people in ads makes me more comfortable with people who are different than me

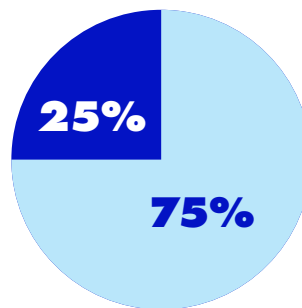
## High levels of comfortability seeing us represented in media

A majority of non-LGBTQ adults are comfortable seeing us in media, from a movie or TV show, to an advertisement.

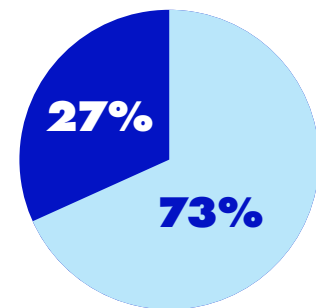
Seeing a LGBTQ family with children included in an advertisement



Seeing a LGBTQ person included in an advertisement



Seeing a LGBTQ character included in a movie or a tv show



Uncomfortable Comfortable

## Corporate responsibility

Non-LGBTQ people believe companies should publicly support our community through hiring practices and advertising. Again this year, business is the most trusted institution according to Edelman's 2023 Trust Barometer, more trusted than government.

% of non-LGBTQ people agree

**70%**

Companies should **publicly support and include the LGBTQ community** through practices like hiring, advertising and sponsorships



**TO LEARN MORE  
ABOUT HOW YOU  
CAN TAKE ACTION  
FOR THE LGBTQ  
COMMUNITY  
GO TO**

[GLAAD.org/ActNow](https://GLAAD.org/ActNow)



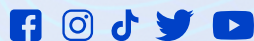
# METHODOLOGY

The Accelerating Acceptance Study was conducted online in February 2023, among a national sample of 2,533 U.S. adults, age 18 or over, using sample sourced by Cint (who has the world's largest consumer network for digital survey-based research). Data were weighted to ensure results represent the adult 18+ U.S. population.



GLAAD rewrites the script for LGBTQ acceptance. As a dynamic media force, GLAAD tackles tough issues to shape the narrative and provoke dialogue that leads to cultural change. GLAAD protects all that has been accomplished and creates a world where everyone can live the life they love.

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