



Accelerating Acceptance 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Survey of American
Acceptance and Attitudes
Toward LGBTQ Americans

Conducted by



Four years ago, GLAAD commissioned

The Harris Poll to launch a first-of-its-kind index to measure American attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people and issues. Each year, the *Accelerating Acceptance* report showed positive momentum. Year over year, Americans said they were more comfortable with LGBTQ people and more supportive of LGBTQ issues. These results paralleled historic steps in LGBTQ visibility in our culture as well as the passage of marriage equality nationwide and other pro-LGBTQ legal wins.

This year, the acceptance pendulum abruptly stopped and swung in the opposite direction. More non-LGBTQ adults responded that they were “very” or “somewhat” uncomfortable around LGBTQ people in select scenarios. The decline is paired with a significant increase in LGBTQ people reporting discrimination because of sexual orientation or gender identity.

This change can be seen as a dangerous repercussion in the tenor of discourse and experience over the last year. 2017 brought heightened rhetoric toward marginalized communities to the forefront of American culture. Policies and headlines ran that were anti-LGBTQ including the President’s proposed ban on transgender people entering the U.S. military, confirmation of a Supreme Court justice opposed to marriage equality, and the passage of a state law in Mississippi which allows businesses to legally deny service to LGBTQ families. LGBTQ people fell victims to violence in Chechnya, Egypt, Indonesia, and the U.S. mourned the death of at least 26 transgender women. LGBTQ visibility slipped in news and entertainment media – Americans can no longer see LGBTQ stories that change hearts and minds with the same frequency.

For decades, as more and more LGBTQ people were out, visible, and threaded through all walks of life, non-LGBTQ people became more comfortable. This year, more non-LGBTQ U.S. adults reported being uncomfortable learning a family member, doctor, or child’s teacher is LGBTQ. However, 79% of non-LGBTQ U.S. adults still agreed with the statement ‘I support equal rights for the LGBT community.’

Forward progress ebbs and flows in every social justice movement. Progress for marginalized communities is a pendulum that swings in both directions, but ultimately lands on freedom.

Closing the gap to full acceptance of LGBTQ people will not come from legislation or judicial decisions alone, but from a deeper understanding and empathy for LGBTQ people. Acceptance is more than laws and policy; it is the freedom for LGBTQ people to live their lives free of discrimination, violence, and limitations. This is the work that GLAAD prioritizes and invests in. Our stories have always been and will continue to be the front lines to accelerate acceptance. LGBTQ people and allies being visible and vocal will not only stop the rollback, but continue the forward march towards 100 percent acceptance around the world.

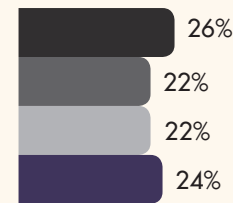
**Sarah Kate Ellis
President & CEO, GLAAD**

1 A Significant Decrease in Comfort in Personal Situations

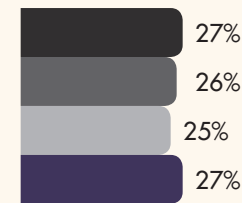
This year’s survey reflects a **decline with people’s comfort year-over-year in every LGBTQ situation**, losing ground that had been gained during the last four years. Three of the most personal interaction scenarios experienced significant declines with more people reporting discomfort with “learning a family member is LGBTQ”, “learning my child’s teacher is LGBTQ” and “learning my doctor is LGBTQ”.

Base: % of Non-LGBTQ Americans “Very” or “Somewhat” Uncomfortable in Situation

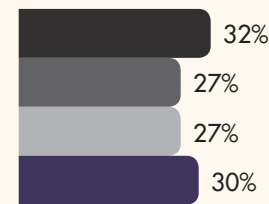
Having LGBT members at my place of worship



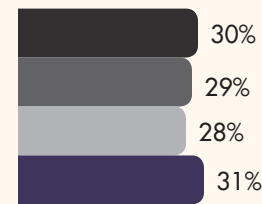
Seeing an LGBT co-worker’s wedding picture



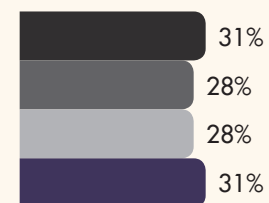
Learning a family member is LGBT



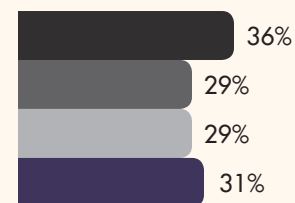
My child placed in a class with an LGBT teacher



Learning my doctor is LGBT



Seeing a same-sex couple holding hands



Learning my child has a lesson on LGBT history in school



■ 2014 ■ 2015
■ 2016 ■ 2017

2 A Shift From Allies to Detached Supporters

There has been a significant decline in overall comfort and acceptance of LGBTQ people, as reflected in **a meaningful shift from “Allies” to “Detached Supporters.”**

To better understand how support for the LGBTQ community differs across society, GLAAD has split non-LGBTQ Americans into three segments based on respondents’ comfort levels across the seven specific LGBTQ-related interaction scenarios. GLAAD’s segmentation is defined by the following categories:

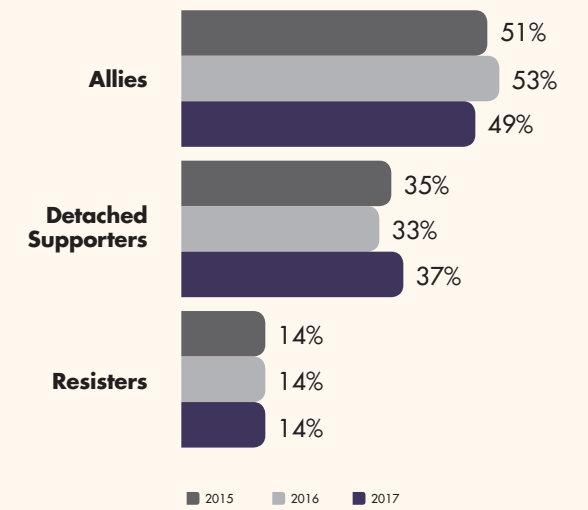
Allies: Non-LGBTQ respondents who were either “very” or “somewhat” comfortable in all situations.

Detached Supporters: Non-LGBTQ respondents whose comfort level varied across situations.

Resisters: Non-LGBTQ respondents who were either “very” or “somewhat” uncomfortable in all situations.

Segmentation definition has been consistent each year, but this year the proportion of non-LGBTQ Americans who were either “very” or “somewhat” comfortable in all situations has abruptly declined, sliding backwards four percentage points.

Base: % of Non-LGBTQ Americans In Each Segment



3 Significant Increase in LGBTQ People Reporting Discrimination

Consistent with this reported erosion in comfort and acceptance among non-LGBTQ Americans, there was a **significant increase year-over-year in the percent of LGBTQ community members who reported having experienced discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation**; it jumped to 55% reporting discrimination, which is eleven percentage points higher than last year.

Sexual orientation or gender identity



Race / ethnicity



Age



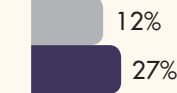
Religious beliefs



Disability



Other area



■ 2016 ■ 2017

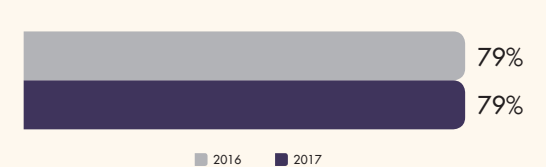
Base: % of LGBTQ Americans Reporting Discrimination

4 Support For Equal Rights is Stable

Supporting equal rights for LGBTQ people remains stable and strong with non-LGBTQ adults. In spite of the erosion in comfortability, **the majority of non-LGBTQ Americans (79%) support equal rights for the LGBTQ community.**

This far reaching commitment and stability year-over-year for supporting equality from a wide majority of non-LGBTQ Americans should be seen as validation of the desire to end discrimination against LGBTQ people and as a platform for rekindling comfortability and acceptance.

Base: % of Non-LGBTQ Americans “Strongly” or “Somewhat” Agree with Statement “I support equal rights for the LGBT community.”



METHODOLOGY: The 2017 survey, like the previous three waves, was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of GLAAD. The 2017 survey was fielded from November 16-20 among 2160 adults ages 18 and older; 1897 of these adults were non-LGBTQ. The 2016 survey was fielded from November 2-4 among 2,037 adults ages 18 and older; 1692 of these adults were non-LGBTQ. The 2015 survey was conducted October 5-7, 2015 among 2,032 18+ adults; 1781 of these adults were non-LGBTQ. The 2014 survey was conducted November 10-12, 2014 among 2,010 adults ages 18 and older; 1821 of these adults were non-LGBTQ.

The classification of LGBTQ was updated in the 2016 survey by using two new distinct questions – one about sexual orientation and the other about gender identity. This change resulted in a more nuanced understanding of the community composition. Importantly, the reported overall size of the LGBTQ community has remained steady at 12% of the American population across the survey periods.

The researchers from GLAAD were Grant Schneider, Chief Strategy Officer; Sarah Kate Ellis, President and CEO; Beth Sullivan, Consultant; and from The Harris Poll were David Krane, Research Director; John Gerzema, CEO; and Tawny Saez, Head of PR.

For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables and subgroup sample sizes, please contact Rich Ferraro, GLAAD’s Chief Communications Officer, at rferraro@glaad.org.

“Forward progress ebbs and flows in every social justice movement. Progress for marginalized communities is a pendulum that swings in both directions, and, when well-supported, ultimately lands on freedom.”

SARAH KATE ELLIS
PRESIDENT & CEO, GLAAD



The Harris Poll is one of the longest running surveys in the U.S. tracking public opinion, motivations and social sentiment since 1963 that is now part of Harris Insights & Analytics, a global consulting and market research firm that delivers social intelligence for transformational times. We work with clients in three primary areas; building twenty-first-century corporate reputation, crafting brand strategy and performance tracking, and earning organic media through public relations research. Our mission is to provide insights and advisory to help leaders make the best decisions possible.

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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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