

AEI STUDIES IN PUBLIC OPINION

ATTITUDES ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY (updated January 6, 2003)

ACCEPTANCE: *In 1973, when the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago first asked people about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex, 73 percent described them as "always wrong" and another 7 percent as "almost always wrong." When the organization last asked the question in 2000, 59 percent called them always wrong and 5 percent almost always wrong. NORC interviewers have asked the same question about extramarital sexual relations over the period, and they find no liberalization in attitudes (see page 20 of this report). In 1972, 37 percent said that premarital sexual relations were always wrong. In the latest poll, 28 percent gave that response, while 42 percent said they were not wrong at all. A majority now says that homosexual relations between consenting adults should be legal. Still, a substantial proportion does not believe homosexuality should be legal or considered an acceptable lifestyle.*

Acceptance can be measured in ways other than legality as other findings in this document show.

- What about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex--do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?

		Always Wrong	Almost Always	Only Sometimes	Not Wrong
1973	NORC/GSS	73	7	8	11
1974	NORC/GSS	71	5	8	13
1976	NORC/GSS	70	6	8	16
1977	NORC/GSS	72	6	8	15
1980	NORC/GSS	73	6	6	15
1982	NORC/GSS	75	5	7	13
1984	NORC/GSS	73	5	7	14
1985	NORC/GSS	75	4	7	14
1987	NORC/GSS	78	4	6	12
1988	NORC/GSS	77	5	6	13
1989	NORC/GSS	74	4	6	16
1990	NORC/GSS	76	5	6	13
1991	NORC/GSS	76	4	4	16
1993	NORC/GSS	66	4	7	22
1994	NORC/GSS	67	4	6	23
1996	NORC/GSS	60	5	6	28
1998	NORC/GSS	58	6	7	29
2000	NORC/GSS	59	5	8	29

Cohort Analysis of NORC Data

Homosexual sexual relations always wrong

	1973	1974	1998	2000	Change (1973-2000)
Total	73	71	58	59	-14
Sex					
Male	72	72	60	60	-12
Female	74	69	57	58	-16
Race					
White	71	70	56	57	-14
Black	83*	75*	69	73	-10
Age					
18-29	56	52	42	47	-9
30-44	74	70	57	56	-18
45-59	75	78	55	55	-20
60 and over	89	84	77	77	-12
Education					
Less than High School	90	83	75	74	-16
High School	75	71	66	65	-10
Some College	55	63	53	56	1
College	42*	47*	44	47	5
Postgrad	41*	48*	40*	39*	-2
Church Attendance					
One to two times/year	62	63	45	43	-19
Once a month	72	70	47	55	-17
Nearly weekly	81	73	65	71	-10
Weekly or more	84	80	82	78	-6
Region					
Northeast	64	60	48	46	-18
Midwest	74	73	61	60	-14
South	84	79	68	69	-15
West	61	64	46	50	-11
Party					
Democrat	77	75	56	56	-21
Republican	77	73	61	60	-17
Independent	64	63	52	56	-8
Ideology					
Liberal	NA	54	36	37	-17t
Moderate	NA	76	61	59	-17t
Conservative	NA	78	72	72	-6t
Family Income					
Less than \$15,000	NA	NA	62	68	NA
\$15,000-34,999	NA	NA	61	58	NA
\$35,000-49,999	NA	NA	55	61	NA
\$50,000-74,999	NA	NA	55	58	NA
\$75,000 and over	NA	NA	46	44	NA

Note: The subgroup analysis here was prepared by the Roper Center at the University of Connecticut.

*= Sample size less than 200

t = Change from 1974 to 2000

- What do you think about sexual relations between two adults of the same gender? Do you think it is always wrong, or almost always wrong, or only wrong sometimes, or not wrong at all?

		Always wrong	Almost Always	Only Sometimes	Not Wrong
Dec. 5-12, 1985	LAT	67	5	7	15
July 23-26, 1994	LAT	61	7	6	18
Oct. 27-30, 1995	LAT	61	6	7	19
Jun. 8-13, 2000	LAT	51	4	9	27

- Please tell me whether you personally believe that in general it is morally acceptable or morally wrong...homosexual behavior?

		Morally Acceptable	Morally Wrong
May 10-14, 2001	Gallup	40	53
May 6-9, 2002	Gallup	38	55

- Do think homosexual relations between consenting adults should or should not be legal?

		Should be legal	Should not be legal
Jun. 17-20, 1977	Gallup	43	43
May 18-20, 1981	ABC/Wash Post	39	50
Jun. 25-28, 1982	Gallup	45	39
Nov. 11-18, 1985	Gallup	44	47
July 11-14, 1986	Gallup	32	57
Sept. 12-17, 1986	Gallup	33	54
Mar. 14-18, 1987	Gallup	33	55
July 1-7, 1988	Gallup	35	57
Oct. 12-15, 1989	Gallup	47	36
Aug. 29-Sept. 3, 1991	Gallup	36	54
Jun. 4-8, 1992	Gallup	48	44
Aug. 20, 1992	CBS/NYT	41	44
Feb. 9-11, 1993	CBS /NYT	46	43
Jun. 23-26, 1994	ABC/Wash Post	51	45
July 14-17, 1994	CBS/NYT	45	46
Nov. 21-24, 1996	Gallup	44	47
Aug. 10-27, 1998	Wash Post/Kaiser/Harvard	55	34
Feb. 8-9, 1999	Gallup	50	43
May 10-14, 2001	Gallup	54	42
May 6-9, 2002	Gallup	52	43

- Now I'd like to ask you some questions about homosexuals – or gays and lesbians as they are sometimes called. Today there are many different kinds of lifestyles which people find acceptable, such as homosexual relationships. How do you feel about this? Do you find it acceptable for other people but not for yourself, acceptable for other people and for yourself, or not acceptable at all?

		Acceptable For Both	Acceptable For Others	Not Acceptable
Mar. 14-18, 1978	Yankelovich	6	35	59
Jun. 15-16, 1994	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	6	52	39

- Do you think that homosexual relations between consenting adults should be illegal or illegal?

		Should be legal	Should not be legal
June 15-16, 1994	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	58	32
Oct. 14-15, 1998	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	55	33

- It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships.

UCLA-CIRP*
College Freshmen

	Strongly agree or Agree somewhat		Strongly agree or Agree somewhat
1976	47	1989	45
1977	49	1990	44
1978	46	1991	42
1979	47	1992	38
1980	49	1993	36
1981	49	1994	34
1982	47	1995	31
1983	49	1996	34
1984	48	1997	34
1985	48	1998	33
1986	52	1999	30
1987	53	2000	30
1988	49	2001	26

*Cooperative Institutional Research Program, American Freshman Study, University of California at Los Angeles.

- Do you feel that homosexuality should be considered an acceptable alternative lifestyle or not?

		Acceptable	Not acceptable
Jun. 25-28, 1982	Gallup	34	51
Jun. 4-8, 1992	Gallup	38	57
Aug. 20, 1992	CBS/NYT	38	50
Mar. 15-17, 1996	Gallup	44	50
April 18-20, 1997	Gallup	42	52
Feb. 8-9, 1999	Gallup	50	46
May 10-14, 2001	Gallup	52	43
May 6-9, 2002	Gallup	51	44

- I would like to read you several statements about some social issues facing America. For each issue, please tell me whether you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with that statement...Homosexuality should be considered a socially permissible lifestyle?

		Agree	Disagree
Jun. 4-8, 1993	NBC/WSJ	43	53
Jun. 10-14, 1994	NBC/WSJ	39	56

- Please tell me whether you would or would not do each of the following:

		Yes	No
Buy something from a salesperson who is homosexual			
Jun. 15-16, 1994	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	75	21
Oct. 14-15, 1998	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	84	12
Vote for a political candidate who is homosexual			
Jun. 15-16, 1994	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	48	45
Oct. 14-15, 1998	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	58	36
See a doctor who is homosexual			

Jun. 15-16, 1994	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	39	56
Oct. 14-15, 1998	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	53	41

Allow a child of yours to play in the home of a friend who has a homosexual parent

Jun. 15-16, 1994	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	43	50
Oct. 14-15, 1998	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	54	38

Allow a child of yours to attend a preschool which had homosexual staff members

Jun. 15-16, 1994	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	42	52
Oct. 14-15, 1998	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	51	42

Allow a child of yours to watch a TV program which as a homosexual character on it

Jun. 15-16, 1994	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	46	47
Oct. 14-15, 1998	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	49	43

- Overall, do you sometimes feel uncomfortable when you are around gay men or does that not happen to you? How about being around lesbian women? Does that make you feel uncomfortable sometimes, or does that not happen to you

		-----Uncomfortable-----			Not uncomfortable
		w/both	w/men	w/women	
Sept. 18-23, 1983	LAT	20	8	10	40
Dec. 5-12, 1985	LAT	18	6	11	50
Jun. 8-13, 2000	LAT	13	6	10	60

- Now I'd like to ask you some questions about homosexuals – or gays or lesbians as they are sometimes called. In general, do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable when you are around someone you know is gay or lesbian?

Jun. 15-16, 1994	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	Comfortable 58	Uncomfortable 32
------------------	----------------------	-------------------	---------------------

- In general, how comfortable are you personally being around homosexuals – very comfortable, somewhat comfortable, somewhat uncomfortable, or very uncomfortable?

		Very Comfortable	Somewhat Comfortable	Somewhat Uncomfortable	Very Uncomfortable
Nov. 27-Dec. 17, 1995	PSRA/Kaiser/ Harvard	32	29	15	17
Sept. 17-Oct. 19, 1997	PSRA/Kaiser/ Harvard	31	30	15	20

- Does it bother you to be around people who are gay or lesbian? If yes, is that a lot or a little?

Aug. 10-27, 1998	Wash Post/Kaiser/Harvard	-----Bother----- A Lot A Little		Not Bothered
		10	12	74

- What is your attitude toward homosexuality? Do you personally approve of homosexual relations between consenting adults, or do you think it's alright for other people but not for yourself, or do you oppose it for everyone?

		Approve	Alright For Others	Oppose
Sep. 18-22, 1983	LAT	5	39	52

- Here is a list of things some people today find acceptable behavior if people choose to do them, and others find unacceptable. For each one would you tell me whether you find it acceptable for anyone, or acceptable for others but not yourself, or not acceptable for anyone?...People living in a homosexual relationship.

		Acceptable	Acceptable For Others	Not Acceptable
Nov. 1986	RoperASW	4	22	71
Nov. 1991	RoperASW	9	27	60
Jul. 1998	RoperASW	12	33	53

- Would you like to see homosexuality be more widely accepted in this nation, less widely accepted, or is the acceptance of homosexuality in this nation about right?

		More widely	Less widely	About right
Jan. 10-14, 2001	Gallup	29	34	33
Jan. 7-9, 2002	Gallup	29	33	32

- What is your impression of how most Americans feel about homosexual behavior—do most Americans think it is acceptable or not acceptable?

		Acceptable	Not acceptable
May 10-14, 2001	Gallup	21	74

- We frequently hear of the influence special interest groups have in this country. Please look at this list and tell me for each group whether you think it has too much influence in our society today, or too little influence, or about the right amount: Gay rights organizations.

		Too Much	About Right	Too Little
Jan. 1987	RoperASW	48	26	11
Jan. 1990	RoperASW	47	25	12
Jan. 1995	RoperASW	54	NA	12
Feb. 2000	RoperASW	42	30	15

Note: Prior to 1995, the choice offered was “gay rights groups”...The percentage of respondents who said gay rights organizations had too much influence (42 percent) is lower than those who thought lawyers’ organizations (56) and medical and health insurance industries (49) had too much influence. The bottom-ranked groups were organizations for the disabled (4), veterans groups (5), and senior citizens groups (6).

EMPLOYMENT: Large majorities say that homosexuals should have equal right in terms of job opportunities. And Americans tell the pollsters that homosexuals should be hired for a wide variety of occupations. Majorities now support hiring homosexuals as members of the clergy and as elementary school teachers, two occupations about which there has been resistance in the past. The Gallup poll shows that a majority would vote for a well-qualified person who happened to be homosexual (37 percent say they would not.) In the Gallup survey, far more would not vote for a well-qualified person who was atheist (48 percent).

- In general, do you think homosexuals should or should not have equal rights in terms of job opportunities?

		Should	Should Not
Jun. 17-20, 1977	Gallup	56	33
Jun. 25-28, 1982	Gallup	59	28
Oct. 12-15, 1989	Gallup	71	18
Jun. 4-8, 1992	Gallup	74	18
Aug. 20, 1992	CBS/NYT	79	13
Aug. 27, 1992	PSRA/Newsweek	78	17
Jan. 12-14, 1993	CBS/NYT	79	16
Feb. 9-11, 1993	CBS/NYT	78	15
Apr. 22-24, 1993	Gallup	80	14
Feb. 3-4, 1994	PSRA/Newsweek	74	19
Feb. 22-24, 1996	CBS/NYT	83	12
May 22-23, 1996	PSRA/Newsweek	84	12
Jun. 14-16, 1996	AP	86	10
Nov. 21-24, 1996	Gallup	84	12
Jun. 19-20, 1997	PSRA/Newsweek	84	13
July 28-30, 1998*	PSRA/Newsweek	83	14
Aug. 10-27, 1998	Wash Post/Kaiser/Harvard	87	9
Feb. 8-9, 1999	Gallup	83	13
Mar. 9-10, 2000*	PSRA/Newsweek	83	12
May 10-14, 2001	Gallup	85	11
Apr. 25-26, 2002*	PSRA/Newsweek	85	10
May 6-9, 2002	Gallup	86	11

Note: *Question wording was “Thinking about what might be done to protect the rights of gays and lesbians, do you think there should or should not be equal rights for gays and lesbians in terms of job opportunities?”

- We can choose our friends, but we can’t always choose the people we work closely with. Here is a list of some different types of people. For each one, would you tell me whether you strongly object to working around them, or prefer not to work around them, or wouldn’t mind working around them?...People who are homosexual.

		Strongly Object	Prefer Not To	Wouldn’t Mind
Jan. 1982	RoperASW	25	NA	NA
Apr. 1987	RoperASW	25	27	45
Jan. 1992	RoperASW	16	33	46

- Do you think homosexuals should or should not be hired for each of the following occupations? (SALESPERSON)

		Should	Should not
Jun. 17-20, 1977	Gallup	68	22
Oct. 12-15, 1989	Gallup	79	13
Jun. 4-8, 1992	Gallup	82	13

Aug. 27, 1992	PSRA/Newsweek	83	12
Feb 3-4, 1994	PSRA/Newsweek	84	11
Nov. 21-24, 1996	Gallup	90	7
July 28-30, 1998	PSRA/Newsweek	88	8
Feb. 8-9, 1999	Gallup	90	8
Mar. 9-10, 2000	PSRA/Newsweek	88	8
May 10-14, 2001	Gallup	91	6

- Do you think homosexuals should or should not be hired for each of the following occupations? (ARMED FORCES)

Jun. 17-20, 1977	Gallup	51	38
Oct. 12-15, 1989	Gallup	60	29
Jun. 4-8, 1992	Gallup	57	37
Aug. 27, 1992	PSRA/Newsweek	59	36
Nov. 19-20, 1992	Gallup	48	44
Jun. 4-8, 1993	NBC/WSJ	47	43
Feb 3-4, 1994	PSRA/Newsweek	58	35
Nov. 21-24, 1996	Gallup	65	29
July 28-30, 1998	PSRA/Newsweek	66	30
Feb. 8-9, 1999	Gallup	70	26
Mar. 9-10, 2000	PSRA/Newsweek	69	25
May 10-14, 2001	Gallup	72	23

- Do you think homosexuals should or should not be hired for each of the following occupations? (DOCTORS)

Jun. 17-20, 1977	Gallup	44	44
Jun. 4-8, 1992	Gallup	53	42
Nov. 21-24, 1996	Gallup	69	25
July 28-30, 1998	PSRA/Newsweek	70	25
Feb. 8-9, 1999	Gallup	75	21
Mar. 9-10, 2000	PSRA/Newsweek	75	20
May 10-14, 2001	Gallup	78	18

- Do you think homosexuals should or should not be hired for each of the following occupations? (CLERGY)

Jun. 17-20, 1977	Gallup	36	54
Oct. 12-15, 1989	Gallup	44	43
Jun. 4-8, 1992	Gallup	43	50
Nov. 21-24, 1996	Gallup	53	40
July 28-30, 1998	PSRA/Newsweek	51	44
Feb. 8-9, 1999	Gallup	54	40
Mar. 9-10, 2000	PSRA/Newsweek	52	40
May 10-14, 2001	Gallup	54	39
Apr. 25-26, 2002	PSRA/Newsweek	40	46

- Do you think homosexuals should or should not be hired for each of the following occupations? (ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS)

		Should	Should Not
Jun. 17-20, 1977	Gallup	27	65
Oct. 12-15, 1989	Gallup	42	48
Jun. 4-8, 1992	Gallup	41	54
Aug. 27, 1992	PSRA/Newsweek	51	45
Feb 3-4, 1994	PSRA/Newsweek	47	46
Nov. 21-24, 1996	Gallup	55	40
July 28-30, 1998	PSRA/Newsweek	55	40
Feb. 8-9, 1999	Gallup	54	42

Mar. 9-10, 2000	PSRA/Newsweek	60	36
May 10-14, 2001	Gallup	56	40

- Do you think homosexuals should or should not be hired for each of the following occupations? (HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS)

Oct. 12-15, 1989	Gallup	47	43
Jun. 4-8, 1992	Gallup	47	49
Aug. 27, 1992	PSRA/Newsweek	54	42
Feb 3-4, 1994	PSRA/Newsweek	53	40
Nov. 21-24, 1996	Gallup	60	34
July 28-30, 1998	PSRA/Newsweek	60	34
Feb. 8-9, 1999	Gallup	61	36
Mar. 9-10, 2000	PSRA/Newsweek	63	32
May 10-14, 2001	Gallup	63	33

- Do you think homosexuals should or should not be hired for each of the following occupations? (PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES)

Jul. 30-31, 1998	PSRA/Newsweek	85	11
Mar. 9-10, 2000	PSRA/Newsweek	86	8

- Do you think homosexuals should or should not be hired for each of the following occupations? (MEMBER OF THE PRESIDENT'S CABINET)

Jun. 4-8, 1992	Gallup	54	39
Nov. 19-20, 1992	Gallup	56	34
Nov. 21-24, 1996	Gallup	71	24
Feb. 8-9, 1999	Gallup	74	23
May 10-14, 2001	Gallup	75	21

- Do you think homosexuals should be allowed to serve in a position of high governmental office, for instance as a member of the President's Cabinet, or don't you think so?

May 27-30, 1992	CBS News	47	43
-----------------	----------	----	----

- I'm going to read you a few attributes that might be found in a candidate for president. Tell me if each would make you more likely to vote for that candidate for president, or less likely to vote for that candidate, or if it wouldn't matter...A homosexual.

Apr. 29-May 8, 1988	AP/Media General	More Likely 1	Not Matter 23	Less Likely 74
---------------------	------------------	------------------	------------------	-------------------

- If your party nominated a generally well-qualified person for president who happened to be a homosexual, would you vote for that person?

Jul. 21-24, 1978	Gallup	Yes 26	No 66
Apr. 29-May 2, 1983	Gallup	29	64
Feb. 19-21, 1999	Gallup	59	37

- If you were considering voting for a presidential candidate and then learned that candidate was a homosexual, would that cause you to vote for someone else, or would that be one factor among many, or would it not affect your vote?

		Vote For Someone Else	One Factor Among Many	Would Not Affect Vote
Oct. 15-18, 1991	CBS/NYT	44	24	29

- Let me mention several things you might learn about a candidate running for president. For each one, please tell me whether this should or should not disqualify them from becoming president of the United States. If someone is gay or lesbian, do you think this should or should not disqualify this person from becoming president of the United States?

		Should Disqualify	Should Not Disqualify
Oct. 25-29, 1991	NBC/WSJ	47	47
Feb. 28-Mar. 2, 1992	NBC/WSJ	42	53

- I'd like to ask whether certain information about a candidate for political office would cause you to vote against him, regardless of other factors. What if you found out that the candidate was a homosexual...would that alone cause you to vote against him?

		Yes	No
Sept. 19-20, 1996	PSRA/Newsweek	37	58

- Do you think homosexuals should or should not be hired for each of the following occupations? (MAJOR POLITICAL OFFICEHOLDERS)

		Should	Should Not
Jul. 30-31, 1998	PSRA/Newsweek	68	27
Mar. 9-10, 2000	PSRA/Newsweek	71	24

- Let's go through this list again, this time please tell me if you were considering a candidate whom you would otherwise support, and you discovered that they had had a homosexual relationship, would you still vote for them, probably vote against them, or definitely vote against them?

		Still Vote For	Probably Vote Against	Definitely Vote Against
May 10-11, 2000	Fox/Opinion Dynamics	53	14	26

NOTE: The percentage of respondents who said they definitely would vote against a candidate who had a homosexual relationship (26 percent) is higher than the percentage of those who would vote against a candidate who abused alcohol (11), had an extramarital affair (13), used marijuana (17), or been treated for a mental illness (25). It is lower than the percentage of those who definitely would vote against a candidate who lied on his resume (34), used cocaine (37), or cheated on his taxes (38).

KNOW SOMEONE: Awareness of homosexuality has grown, or perhaps people are more willing to acknowledge it to pollsters. Twenty-two percent in 1985 told PSRA/Newsweek interviewers that they had a gay friend or close acquaintance; in 2000, 56 percent gave that response.

- Do you know any friends or co-workers who are openly homosexual? (If not) Do you know any friends or co-workers whom you suspect are homosexuals?

		Openly Homosexual	Suspect are homosexual	No, don't know or suspect as homosexual
Sept. 18-22, 1983	LAT	30	14	53

- Do you have a friend or someone you associate with on a regular basis who is a male homosexual?

		Yes	No
Jun. 15-19, 1990	ABC	13	87

- Please tell me if any of the following apply to you...?

Work with someone you know is gay or lesbian

Aug. 27, 1992	PSRA/Newsweek	20	78
Feb. 3-4, 1994	PSRA/Newsweek	19	79
May 22-23, 1996	PSRA/Newsweek	31	66
Jun. 19-20, 1997	PSRA/Newsweek	25	72
July 28-30, 1998	PSRA/Newsweek	31	67
Mar. 9-10, 2000	PSRA/Newsweek	32	66

Have someone in your family who is gay or lesbian

Aug. 27, 1992	PSRA/Newsweek	9	90
Feb. 3-4, 1994	PSRA/Newsweek	12	88
May 22-23, 1996	PSRA/Newsweek	18	80
Jun. 19-20, 1997	PSRA/Newsweek	18	80
July 28-30, 1998	PSRA/Newsweek	21	76
Mar. 9-10, 2000	PSRA/Newsweek	23	75

Have a friend or close acquaintance who is gay or lesbian

Aug. 1-2, 1985	PSRA/Newsweek	22	77
Feb. 3-4, 1994	PSRA/Newsweek	43	56
May 22-23, 1996	PSRA/Newsweek	56	42
Jun. 19-20, 1997	PSRA/Newsweek	50	47
July 28-30, 1998	PSRA/Newsweek	55	44
Mar. 9-10, 2000	PSRA/Newsweek	56	42

- Thinking of all the people you know, either well or even casually—do you know anyone who is openly gay? (If no, ask—Do you know anyone who you think is gay?)

		Yes, openly	Yes, think is gay	No
Jun. 8-13, 2000	LAT	73	7	19

- Do you happen to personally know someone who is gay or lesbian?

		Yes	No
Aug. 20, 1992	CBS/NYT	47	51

- Do you have any close friends or family members who are gay or lesbian?

		Yes	No
Jan. 12-14, 1993	CBS/NYT	19	79
Feb. 9-11, 1993	CBS/NYT	22	77

- Do you personally know anyone who is gay or lesbian?

		Yes	No
Jun. 4-8, 1993	NBC/WSJ	61	37

- Do you have a co-worker, friend or relative who is openly homosexual?

Jul. 19-21, 1993	Gallup	23	76
------------------	--------	----	----
- Do you happen to have a family member or close friend who is gay or lesbian?

Jun. 15-16, 1994	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	32	66
Oct. 14-15, 1998	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	41	57
- Do you happen to know any males who are gay or women who are lesbian?

Jun. 14-18, 1996	AP	54	44
------------------	----	----	----
- Do you yourself have a friend, family member, or acquaintance who is gay or lesbian, or not?

Aug. 10-27, 1998	Wash Post/Kaiser/Harvard	59	40
------------------	--------------------------	----	----
- For each description I read, please tell me if it applies to you or not...Do you have a friend, colleague, or family member who is gay?

Jul. 14-Sept. 9, 1999	PSRA/Pew Research Center	39	60
-----------------------	--------------------------	----	----
- Do you have any close personal friends who are gay or lesbian or not?

Jan. 6-10, 2000	Harris Interactive	41	58
-----------------	--------------------	----	----

NATURE/NURTURE: *One of the most dramatic changes in attitudes about homosexuality appears to be about its cause. More people than in the past say that people are born homosexual or that it is an orientation that they cannot change. In a Gallup question from 1977, 12 percent said homosexuality was something a person was born with; in 2002, 40 percent gave that response.*

- In your view, is homosexuality something a person is born with or is homosexuality due to other factors such as upbringing and environment?

		Born With	Upbringing/ Environment	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)
Jun. 17-20, 1977	Gallup	12%	56%	14%	3%
Jun. 25-28, 1982	Gallup	17	52	13	2
Oct. 12-15, 1989	Gallup	19	48	12	2
Mar. 21-24, 1991	PSRA/Newsweek	24	51	9	16
Nov. 21-24, 1996	Gallup	31	40	13	3
July 28-30, 1998	PSRA/Newsweek	33	44	13	10
Feb. 8-9, 1999	Gallup	34	44	13	1
Mar. 9-10, 2000	PSRA/Newsweek	28	40	17	15
May 10-14, 2001	Gallup	40	39	9	3
May 6-9, 2002	Gallup	40	36	12	4

- In your opinion, what causes someone to be gay? Is it something that people are born with, or is it something that develops because of the way people are brought up, or is it just the way that people choose to live?

		Born	Brought up	Choice
Sept. 18-23, 1983	LAT	16	25	37
Dec. 5-12, 1985	LAT	20	23	42
Apr. 22-24, 1993	Gallup	31	14	35
Jul. 19-21, 1993	Gallup	29	15	32
June 8-10, 2000	LAT	33	11	37

- Do you think being homosexual is something people choose to be, or do you think it is something they cannot change?

		Choose to be	Cannot Change
Feb. 9-11, 1993	CBS/NYT	44	43
Jan. 27-May 31, 1994	NORC/GSS	42	45

- Do you think being homosexual is something that people choose to be, or do you think it's just the way they are?

		Choose to be	The Way They Are
Jun. 23-26, 1994	ABC/Wash Post	40	49

- Do you think that being homosexual is something people choose to be, or do you think that people are born homosexual and it is something they cannot change?

		Choose to be	Cannot Change
July 25-27, 1998	NBC/WSJ	38	41

- In your opinion, what is the main cause of homosexuality? Are people born homosexual, do people become homosexual because of their experiences while growing up, or do people choose to be homosexual on their own?

		Born	Experience	Choice
Aug. 10-27, 1998	Wash Post/Kaiser/Harvard	32	20	33

- Do you think that homosexuality is something a person is born with, or is it due to factors such as how they were raised or to their environment?

		Born With	Raised/Environment
Oct. 14-15, 1998	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	33	40

- Do you think that someone who is homosexual can change their sexual orientation if they choose to do so, or don't you think so?

		Change Orientation	Don't Think So
Oct. 14-15, 1998	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	51	36
Jan. 10-11, 2001	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	42	45

- A scientific magazine recently repudiated its own study showing that homosexuality may be genetic. Meanwhile, a new ad campaign features men and women who have left homosexuality. On the issue, do you personally believe that homosexuals are born that way or believe that homosexuals are not born that way and can change?

		Born That Way	Not Born That Way/ Can Change
Jul. 23-26, 1999	Wirthlin Worldwide	41	45

- From what you know about gay and lesbian people, do you think that gay and lesbian people choose to be homosexual or are born homosexual?

		Are born Homosexual	Choose to be Homosexual
May 17-21, 2000	AP	30	46

MARRIAGE/CIVIL UNIONS: *The first poll question we have been able to locate about gay marriage was asked in the late 1980s, and responses do not seem to have changed substantially since that time. Solid majorities (usually around 60 percent) do not endorse legally sanctioned gay marriage. A significant chunk of this group objects strongly to it. People are more comfortable with the idea of providing health- and job-related benefits to homosexual couples.*

- Do you think marriages between homosexual men or homosexual women should be recognized as legal by the law?

		Yes	No
Oct. 23-25, 1989	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	23	69
Aug. 19-20, 1992	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	27	67
Jan. 22-25, 1993	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	27	65
Jun. 15-16, 1994	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	31	64
Sept. 1996	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	26	65
Oct. 14-15, 1998	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	29	64

- Thinking about what might be done to protect the rights of gays and lesbians, do you think that there should or should not be legally sanctioned gay marriages?

		Should	Should not
Feb. 21-24, 1991*	PSRA	30	62
Aug. 27, 1992	PSRA/Newsweek	35	58
Feb. 3-4, 1994	PSRA/Newsweek	29	62
May 22-23, 1996	PSRA/Newsweek	33	58
Jun. 19-20, 1997	PSRA/Newsweek	35	56
July 28-30, 1998	PSRA/Newsweek	33	61
Mar. 9-10, 2000	PSRA/Newsweek	34	57
Apr. 25-26, 2002	PSRA/Newsweek	35	57

Note: *In 1991, question wording was, "Do you think that homosexual couples should be allowed to get legally married or not?"

- Do you agree or disagree: Homosexual couples should have the right to marry one another.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1988	NORC/GSS	3	9	15	26	47

- Should homosexual couples have the same legal rights as married couples?

		Should	Should Not
Oct. 1-4, 1989	Gallup	23	69

- Do you think marriages between homosexuals should or should not be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages?

		Should Be Valid	Should Not Be Recognized
Mar. 15-17, 1996	Gallup	27	68
Feb. 8-9, 1999	Gallup	35	62
Jan 13-16, 2000	Gallup	34	62

- Would you favor or oppose a law that would allow homosexual couples to legally form civil unions, giving them some of the legal rights of married couples?

		Favor	Oppose
Oct. 25-28, 2000	Gallup	42	54
May 10-14, 2001	Gallup	44	52
Feb. 8-10, 2002	Gallup	41	53
May 6-9, 2002	Gallup	46	51

- Now I would like to read you several more statements about some of the social issues facing America. For each issue, please tell me whether you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with this statement...Homosexual couples should be able to enjoy the full rights granted to married heterosexual couples.

		Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
Jun. 4-8, 1993	NBC/WSJ	15	23	14	43

- I'm going to mention several issues, and I'd like to get your reaction. For each item I read, please tell me whether this is something you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose...Allowing homosexual couples to be legally married?

		Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
June 16-19, 1999	NBC/WSJ	13	15	14	50

- Do you think homosexuals should or should not have equal rights to marry one another?

		Should	Should Not
Jun. 23-26, 1994	ABC/Wash Post	39	56

- Would you, personally, support or oppose giving homosexuals a legal right to marry a partner of the same sex?

		Support	Oppose
Jun. 14-16, 1996	AP	31	59

- In general, do you think gays and lesbians should or should not be allowed to be legally married?

		Should	Should Not
May 17-21, 2000	AP	34	51

- In general, do you think that gays and lesbians should or should not be allowed to form a domestic partnership that would give the same-sex couple the same rights and benefits as opposite-sex marriages?

May 17-21, 2000	AP	42	47

- I am going to read you a list of some programs and proposals that are being discussed in this country today. For each one, please tell me whether you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose it...Allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally

		Strongly Favor	Favor	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
May 31-					
Jun. 9, 1996	PSRA/Pew Research Center	6	21	24	41
Mar. 5-18, 2001	PSRA/Pew Research Center	8	27	23	34

- Do you feel same-sex couples should have the right to be legally married?

		Yes	No
Dec. 6-8, 1996	Wirthlin Worldwide	29	67

- There has been a lot of discussion recently about whether gay couples should be granted either marriage or its equivalent in terms of legal rights. Do you believe gays and lesbians should be allowed to get legally married, allowed a legal partnership similar to but not called marriage, or should there be no legal recognition to gay and lesbian relationships?

		Allowed to get legally married	Allowed domestic partnership	No legal recognition
Jan. 12-13, 2000	Fox/Opinion Dynamics	19	24	47

- Thinking now about gay marriage, that is, allowing a couple who are gay or lesbian to marry one another legally, do you support or oppose gay marriage?

		Support	Oppose
Jun. 8-13, 2000	LAT	34	58

- Now I am going to read you a list of things that some people do. For each, thinking your own values and morals, I'd like you to tell me whether you think it is generally acceptable or generally unacceptable: Marriages between people of the same sex.

		Generally Acceptable	Generally Not Acceptable
Mar. 8-Apr. 22, 2001	Wash Post/Kaiser/Harvard	34	64

- Same sex couples should have the right to legal marital status.

UCLA-CIRP*
College Freshmen

	Strongly Agree or Agree Somewhat
1997	50
1998	49
1999	52
2000	55
2001	57

*Cooperative Institutional Research Program, American Freshman Study, University of California at Los Angeles.

BENEFITS

- What about a homosexual couple? Do you think a homosexual couple who live together in a long-term relationship should be able to get the same job benefits as a married couple, or not?

		Yes	No
Feb. 21-24, 1991	PSRA	39	56

- Thinking again about what might be done to protect gay rights, do you think there should or should not be...?

Inheritance rights for gay spouses

		Should	Should Not
Aug. 27, 1992	PSRA/Newsweek	70	25
Feb. 3-4, 1994	PSRA/Newsweek	61	30
May 22-23, 1996	PSRA/Newsweek	61	29
Jun. 19-20, 1997	PSRA/Newsweek	62	30
Jul. 30-31, 1998	PSRA/Newsweek	59	33
Mar. 9-10, 2000	PSRA/Newsweek	62	28

Social Security benefits for gay spouses

Aug. 27, 1992	PSRA/Newsweek	58	35
Feb. 3-4, 1994	PSRA/Newsweek	55	39
May 22-23, 1996	PSRA/Newsweek	48	43
Jun. 19-20, 1997	PSRA/Newsweek	57	37
Jul. 30-31, 1998	PSRA/Newsweek	52	41
Mar. 9-10, 2000	PSRA/Newsweek	54	38

Health insurance and other employee benefits for gay spouses

Jun. 19-20, 1997	PSRA/Newsweek	59	36
Jul. 30-31, 1998	PSRA/Newsweek	58	37
Mar. 9-10, 2000	PSRA/Newsweek	58	34

- Do you support or oppose allowing homosexual couples to have the same benefits as married heterosexual couples, such as health benefits, inheritance rights and Social Security survivor benefits?

		Support	Oppose
Aug. 1-5, 1996	ABC/Wash Post	37	59

- Do you think gay partners who make a legal commitment to each other should or should not be entitled to the same rights and benefits as couples in traditional marriages?

		Should be entitled to same rights	Should not be entitled to same rights
Jan 13-16, 2000	Gallup	40	53

- I would like to read you a proposal in the area of legal recognition of gay and lesbian relationships. For each one, tell me whether you would favor or oppose this proposal...?

	Favor	Oppose
Providing health insurance coverage to gay partners		
May 17-21, 2000	AP	53
		37

Providing Social Security benefits to gay partners

May 17-21, 2000	AP	50	41
-----------------	----	----	----

Providing inheritance rights to gay partners

May 17-21, 2000	AP	56	32
-----------------	----	----	----

- What about allowing gay and lesbian couples the same type of rights and benefits that married couples currently enjoy, such as inheritance rights, health care benefits, or a tax break. Do you support or oppose rights and benefits for gay and lesbian couples?

Jun. 8-13, 2000	LAT	50	40
-----------------	-----	----	----

FAMILIES

About two in ten say that committed homosexual couples constitute a family. Most polls show that slightly more than a third support adoption by homosexuals. A March 2002 poll by ABC News, however, finds a plurality (47 percent) agreeing that homosexual couples should be legally permitted to adopt (42 percent disagree).

- You hear a lot today about the changing American family. I'd like to know your opinion on what a 'family' is. For each of the following types of living arrangements, please tell me whether you would definitely call it a family, you definitely would not call it a family, or if you aren't sure.

A married couple living with their children:

		Family	Not family	Aren't sure
Feb 1992	RoperASW	98	1	1
Feb. 1996	RoperASW	99	1	1
Mar. 1999	RoperASW	98	1	1

A married couple living with their children from a previous marriage:

Feb 1992	RoperASW	93	5	2
Feb. 1996	RoperASW	96	3	1
Mar. 1999	RoperASW	95	3	2

A man and a woman who are married, but don't have any children:

Feb 1992	RoperASW	87	10	3
Feb. 1996	RoperASW	88	11	2
Mar. 1999	RoperASW	86	11	3

A divorced mother living with her children:

Feb 1992	RoperASW	84	13	2
Feb. 1996	RoperASW	85	14	1
Mar. 1999	RoperASW	86	12	2

A divorced father living with his children:

Feb 1992	RoperASW	80	17	3
Feb. 1996	RoperASW	79	19	2
Mar. 1999	RoperASW	83	13	4

An unwed (never married) mother living with her children:

		Family	Not Family	Aren't Sure
Feb 1992	RoperASW	81	14	5
Feb. 1996	RoperASW	83	15	2
Mar. 1999	RoperASW	82	14	4

An unwed (never married) father living with his children:

Feb 1992	RoperASW	73	19	7
Feb. 1996	RoperASW	74	22	4
Mar. 1999	RoperASW	78	16	6

A man and a woman committed (but not married) to each other and living together, who are raising children:
(question wording differed slightly in 1992)

Feb 1992	RoperASW	77	17	6
Feb. 1996	RoperASW	72	24	3
Mar. 1999	RoperASW	75	18	6

A man and woman committed to each other and living together (but not married):
(question wording differed slightly in 1992)

Feb 1992	RoperASW	53	37	11
Feb. 1996	RoperASW	57	39	4
Mar. 1999	RoperASW	50	40	9

A group of unrelated adults who live together and consider themselves a "family":

Feb 1992	RoperASW	28	60	12
Feb. 1996	RoperASW	33	63	4
Mar. 1999	RoperASW	29	59	12

Two lesbian women living with children they are raising together:

Feb 1992	RoperASW	27	62	11
Feb. 1996	RoperASW	27	68	5
Mar. 1999	RoperASW	29	59	12

Two gay men living with children they are raising:

Feb 1992	RoperASW	26	65	9
Feb. 1996	RoperASW	29	66	5
Mar. 1999	RoperASW	26	61	13

Two gay men committed to each other and living together:

Feb 1992	RoperASW	20	71	9
Feb. 1996	RoperASW	21	75	4
Mar. 1999	RoperASW	21	69	10

Two lesbian women committed to each other and living together:

Feb 1992	Roper ASW	21	69	10
Feb. 1996	Roper ASW	22	72	6
Mar. 1999	Roper ASW	20	66	13

ADOPTION

- Do you think homosexuals should or should not be allowed to adopt children?

		Should	Should Not
Jun. 17-20, 1977	Gallup	14	77

- Do you think there should or should not be...adoption rights for gay spouses?

		Should	Should Not
Feb. 3-4, 1994	PSRA/Newsweek	29	65
May 22-23, 1996	PRSA/Newsweek	36	52
Oct. 17-18, 1996	PRSA/Newsweek	36	47
Jun. 19-20, 1997	PRSA/Newsweek	40	49
Jul. 30-31, 1998	PRSA/Newsweek	36	56
Mar. 9-10, 2000	PRSA/Newsweek	39	50
Feb. 7-Sep. 4, 2000	PSRA/Kaiser	46	47
Apr. 25-26, 2002	PSRA/Newsweek	46	44

- Do you think that homosexual couples should be legally permitted to adopt children, or don't you think so?

		Yes	No
Aug. 19-20, 1992	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	29	63
Jun. 15-16, 1994	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	28	65
Oct. 14-15, 1998	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	35	57
Mar. 27-31, 2002	ABC	47	42

- If gay couples are allowed to marry, should it be easy for them to adopt children as it is for heterosexual married couples, should it be more difficult, or should they not be allowed to adopt at all?

		As Easy	More Difficult	Not Allowed at All
May 22-23, 1996	PRSA/Newsweek	30	20	44
Jul. 7-Aug 8, 1997	PRSA	30	20	44

- Would you favor or oppose this proposal...allowing gay couples to adopt a child?

		Favor	Oppose
May 25-26, 1993	USNews	24	70
Sep. 1-12, 1999	PRSA/Pew	38	57

- Do you approve or disapprove or don't feel strongly about a female couple adopting a child?

		Approve	Disapprove
Jan. 6-10, 2000	Harris Interactive	22	55

- Do you approve or disapprove or don't feel strongly about a male couple adopting a child?

		Approve	Disapprove
Jan. 6-10, 2000	Harris Interactive	21	57

NOTE: A September 2002 poll in Great Britain found that 44 percent agreed with the statement “Gay couples should be allowed to adopt children” and 36 percent disagreed. In a 2000 poll the results were 33 percent agreed and 55 percent disagreed. For more information go to <http://www.mori.com/digest/2002/pd021101.shtml>

FOR COMPARISON PURPOSES: PREMARITAL SEX

- There's been a lot of discussion about the way morals and attitudes about sex are changing in this country. If a man and woman have sex relations before marriage, do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?

		Always wrong	Almost always	Only sometimes	Not wrong
1972	NORC/GSS	37	12	24	27
1974	NORC/GSS	33	13	24	31
1975	NORC/GSS	31	12	24	33
1977	NORC/GSS	31	10	23	37
1978	NORC/GSS	29	12	20	39
1982	NORC/GSS	29	9	20	42
1983	NORC/GSS	27	10	24	39
1985	NORC/GSS	29	8	20	43
1986	NORC/GSS	28	9	23	40
1988	NORC/GSS	26	11	22	41
1989	NORC/GSS	28	9	23	41
1990	NORC/GSS	26	12	23	40
1991	NORC/GSS	28	10	19	44
1993	NORC/GSS	27	10	21	42
1994	NORC/GSS	26	10	20	44
1996	NORC/GSS	24	10	23	44
1998	NORC/GSS	26	9	21	44
2000	NORC/GSS	28	9	21	42

Cohort Analysis of NORC Data:

Premarital sex not wrong at all
Generation Gap 1973-1997

		-----AGE-----					
		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
1973	NORC/GSS	50	41	26	20	16	15
1985	NORC/GSS	50	54	49	41	26	19
1997	NORC/GSS	48	53	47	49	33	18

SOURCE: “Changes in the Generation Gap, 1972-1998” by Tom W. Smith, National Opinion Research Center, October 2000

EXTRAMARITAL SEX

- What about a married person having sexual relations with someone other than his wife or her husband, it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?

		Always wrong	Almost always	Only sometimes	Not wrong
1973	NORC/GSS	70	15	12	4
1974	NORC/GSS	74	12	12	3
1976	NORC/GSS	69	16	12	4
1977	NORC/GSS	73	14	10	3
1980	NORC/GSS	71	16	10	4
1982	NORC/GSS	73	13	11	3
1984	NORC/GSS	71	18	9	2
1985	NORC/GSS	75	14	9	3
1987	NORC/GSS	73	15	9	3
1988	NORC/GSS	79	13	6	2
1989	NORC/GSS	78	13	7	2
1990	NORC/GSS	79	13	7	1
1991	NORC/GSS	77	14	7	3
1993	NORC/GSS	77	14	6	3
1994	NORC/GSS	79	13	7	2
1996	NORC/GSS	78	15	5	2
1998	NORC/GSS	79	13	6	2
2000	NORC/GSS	79	11	7	3

Cohort Analysis of NORC Data:

Extramarital sex always wrong
Generation Gap 1973-1997

		AGE-----					
		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
1973	NORC/GSS	57	63	71	75	81	87
1985	NORC/GSS	66	70	68	73	83	86
1997	NORC/GSS	81	78	79	77	83	82

SOURCE: "Changes in the Generation Gap, 1972-1998" by Tom W. Smith, National Opinion Research Center, October 2000

Key:

NORC/GSS = National Opinion Research Center, General Social Survey

Wash Post/Kaiser/Harvard = Washington Post, Kaiser Family Foundation, Harvard University

Suggested Readings:

A January 2000 survey by MORI (Market & Opinion Research International) provides data on British attitudes toward homosexuality. It can be found at <http://www.mori.com/polls/2000/m000127.shtml>

A number of survey organizations poll gays and lesbians about their attitudes. Some of the newest ones are listed here.

- The Kaiser Family Foundation's poll of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals and their attitudes regarding sexual orientation and public issues, conducted from February to September 2000, can be found at <http://www.kff.org/content/2001/3193/LGB%20Revised%20Release.pdf>
- Zogby International, GLCensus Partners, The S.I. Newhouse School at Syracuse, OpusComm Group and GSociety are polling gays, lesbians, and bisexuals regularly about their attitudes (see www.zogby.com).
- PSRA/Newsweek has conducted four surveys on the attitudes of gays and lesbians, most recently in March 2000. The other surveys were conducted in July 1998, June 1994, and April 1993.

- Harris Interactive, in conjunction with Witeck-Combs Communications, conducted in July 2002 a poll on gays and lesbians' attitudes toward financial services. It can be found at <http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/allnewsbydate.asp?NewsID=493>
- Harris Interactive, in conjunction with Witeck-Combs Communications, conducted in September 2002 a poll on gays and lesbians' attitudes toward the workplace. It can be found at <http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/allnewsbydate.asp?NewsID=503>

Other Recent AEI Studies in Public Opinion:

“Attitudes about Work and Leisure in America,” can be viewed at

<http://www.aei.org/ps/psbowman12.pdf>

“Attitudes Toward Business,” can be viewed at

<http://www.aei.org/ps/psbowman13.pdf>

“America At War,” updated every Friday, can be viewed at

<http://www.aei.org/ps/psbowman5.pdf>

“Attitudes Toward Welfare Reform,” can be viewed at

<http://www.aei.org/ps/psbowman11.pdf>

“Polls On Patriotism,” can be viewed at

<http://www.aei.org/psbowman10.pdf>

“Attitudes Toward National Service,” can be viewed at

<http://www.aei.org/psbowman9.pdf>

“Attitudes Toward Social Security Privatization,” can be viewed at

<http://www.aei.org/psbowman8.pdf>

“The 2000 Election: What the Polls Said,” can be viewed at

<http://www.aei.org/ps/psbowman6.pdf>

“Public Opinion and the Clinton Legacy,” can be viewed at

<http://www.aei.org/ps/psbowman3.pdf>

Forthcoming:

“Attitudes Toward Divided Government”

“The Nostalgia Impulse”

For comments or questions
contact Karlyn H. Bowman at kbowman@aei.org

Compiled by Karlyn H. Bowman, Resident Fellow (kbowman@aei.org)
and Todd J. Weiner, Research Assistant (tweiner@aei.org)

