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Support for Same-Sex Marriage at Record High, but Key Segments Remain Opposed

*72% Say Legal Recognition is
'Inevitable'*

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
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72% Say Legal Recognition is 'Inevitable'

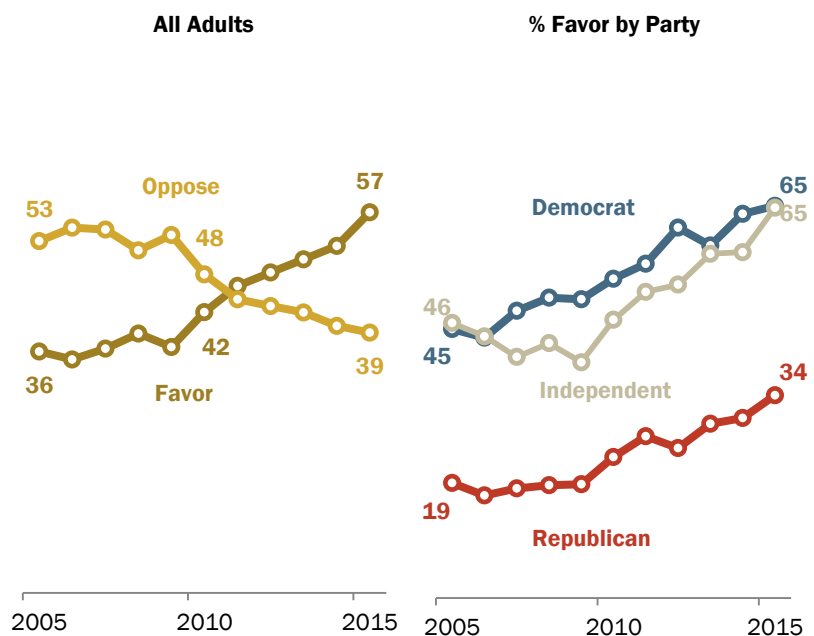
As the Supreme Court prepares to decide a key case involving states' requirements to recognize same-sex marriage, public support for allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally continues its rapid rise: A 57%-majority of Americans now favor allowing same-sex marriage and 39% oppose. As recently as five years ago, more opposed (48%) same-sex marriage than supported it (42%).

This is the highest level of support measured for same-sex marriage in nearly 20 years of Pew Research Center polling of the issue.

Yet even as support for same-sex marriage has increased among nearly all segments in the public, some groups remain broadly opposed to gay marriage. (See [detailed demographic breakdowns](#) and [long-term trends on same-sex marriage](#).)

Support for Same-Sex Marriage Rises Across-the-Board, Partisan Divide Persists

% who say they ___ allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally



Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015.

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The Pew Research Center survey, conducted May 12-18 among 2,002 adults, finds that partisans are as divided on this issue as ever: Today, 65% of Democrats and an identical percentage of independents favor gay marriage; only about one third (34%) of Republicans do so. Growing shares of all three groups support same-sex-marriage, yet the differences between Democrats and Republicans are as wide today as they were a decade ago.

However, with same-sex marriage legal in 36 states (and the District of Columbia) and the possibility of a Supreme Court decision on its nationwide status, Republicans (72%) are just as likely as Democrats (72%) and independents (74%) to say that it is “inevitable” that same-sex marriage will be legally recognized.

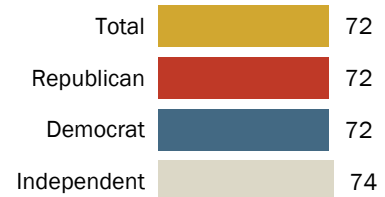
The fault lines on the issue of same-sex marriage extend beyond party. Other substantial cleavages include race, generation, religious beliefs and familiarity with people who are gay or lesbian.

As is the case with other demographic groups, African Americans have become more supportive of same-sex marriage over the last decade. However, overall views are mixed: 51% of blacks oppose gays and lesbians marrying legally, while 41% are in favor. Majorities of whites (59%) and Hispanics (56%) now favor same-sex marriage. The racial differences in these opinions largely persist even when taking into account other factors, such as age, religious affiliation and attendance at religious services.

A key component of the shifting attitudes on this issue is the strong support for gay rights among younger Americans. Younger generations have long been more accepting of homosexuality and of same-sex marriage than older generations, and as Millennials (who are currently ages 18-34) have entered adulthood, those views have influenced overall public opinion.

Partisans Agree: Legal Recognition ‘Inevitable’

% who say legal recognition of same-sex marriage is ‘inevitable’



Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015.

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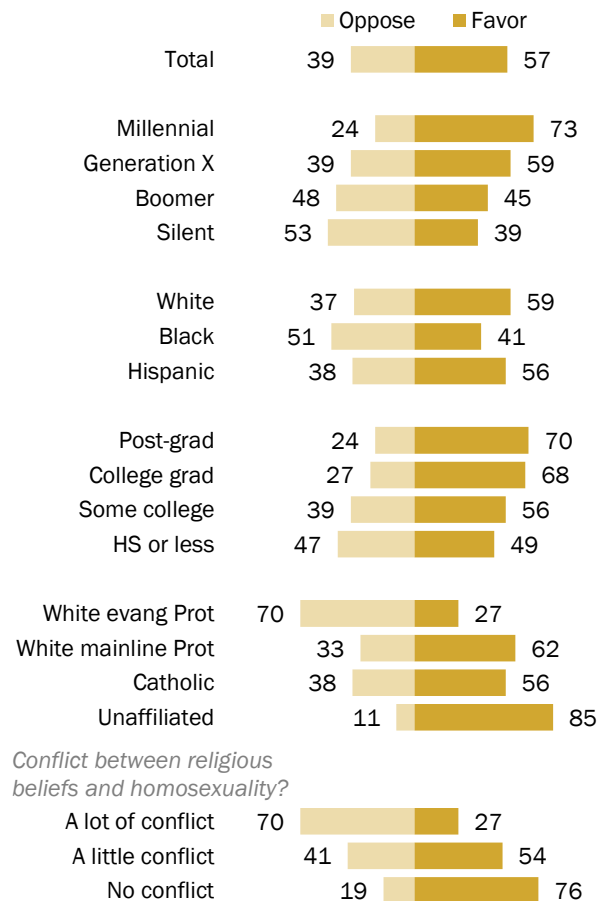
Nearly three-quarters of Millennials (73%) currently favor legal recognition, with fully 45% saying they *strongly* favor it. A more modest majority (59%) of Gen Xers (ages 35-50) also support same-sex marriage, while opinions among Baby Boomers (ages 51-69) are divided (45% favor, 48% oppose); among those in the Silent Generation (ages 70-87), just 39% favor same-sex marriage, while 53% oppose.

One of the strongest factors underlying views of same-sex marriage is religion, and the sense that homosexuality is in conflict with one's religious beliefs. White evangelical Protestants stand out for their deep opposition to same-sex marriage: Just 27% favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry, while 70% oppose it (43% *strongly* oppose); by contrast, majorities of both Catholics (56%) and white mainline Protestants (62%) support same-sex marriage, along with an overwhelming majority (85%) of the religiously unaffiliated.

And among the one-third (33%) of Americans who feel there is a lot of conflict between their religious beliefs and homosexuality, opposition to same-sex marriage outweighs support by more than two-to-one (70% oppose, 27% favor); fully 76% of those who see no such conflict favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally.

Current Views of Same-Sex Marriage

Allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally (%)



Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015. Whites and blacks do not include Hispanics; Hispanics are of any race.

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But just as religious objections undergird much of the opposition to same-sex marriage, personally knowing people who are gay or lesbian is strongly linked to support for the legal recognition of same-sex marriages, as many people who have changed their minds on this issue stated in a [2013 Pew Research Center survey](#).

The new survey finds that nearly nine-in-ten Americans (88%) know someone who is gay or lesbian, with 28% saying they know “a lot” of gays or lesbians. These percentages are little changed from two years ago, but in 1993 a smaller majority (61%) said they knew someone who is gay.

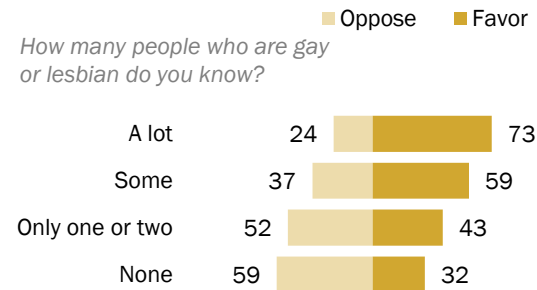
Today, about three-quarters (73%) of those who say they personally know a lot of gays and lesbians favor same-sex marriage. A majority (59%) of those who know no gays or lesbians oppose same-sex marriage.

Overall, 54% of the public views the issue of same-sex marriage as at least somewhat important, but just 30% say it is very important. Those who oppose gay marriage (38%) are more likely than supporters (27%) to view the issue as very important.

Intensity about same-sex marriage is high – and about equally so – among those on the ends of the ideological spectrum: Four-in-ten conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats say the issue is very important.

More Support for Gay Marriage Among Those with Many Gay Acquaintances

Allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally (%)

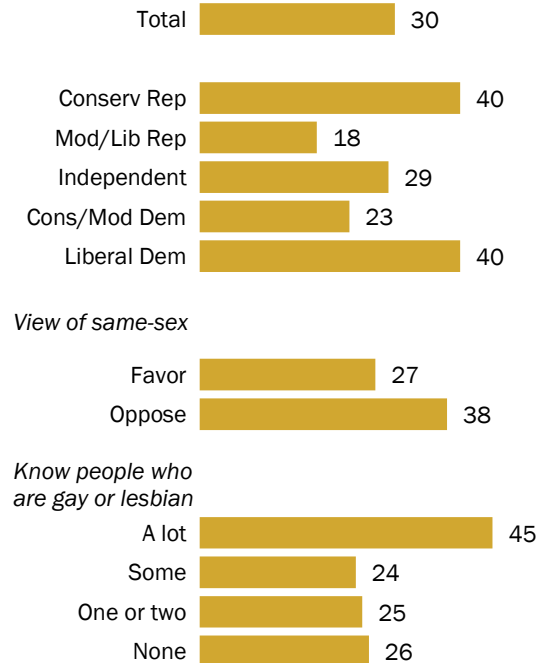


Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015.

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More Opponents than Supporters View Same-Sex Marriage as Very Important

% who say issue of same-sex marriage is “very important”



Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015.

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And while 45% of those with a lot of gay and lesbian acquaintances rate this issue as highly important, only about quarter of those with fewer gay acquaintances say the same.

Other findings

Partisans rate their parties. Most Republicans and Republican leaners (57%) say their party is not doing a good job of representing their views on same-sex marriage, and the party draws criticism from those on both sides of the issue.

By contrast, 62% of Democrats and Democratic leaners say their party is doing a good job of representing their views. Democratic supporters of same-sex marriage rate their party much more positively than do Democratic opponents.

Most say gay person's sexual orientation cannot be changed. Six-in-ten Americans (60%) say a gay or lesbian person's sexual orientation cannot be changed; just 33% say it can. In 2003, views on this measure were divided (42% can be changed, 42% cannot).

More say people are 'born gay.' Nearly half of the public (47%) says that people are born gay or lesbian, while 40% think being gay is a way people choose to live; 7% say it is a result of someone's upbringing.

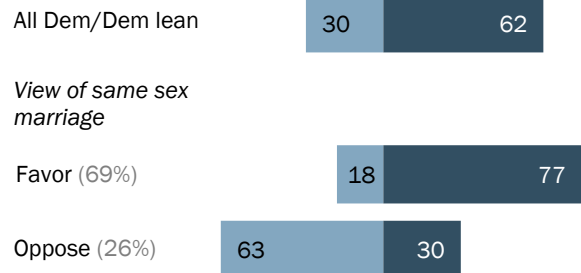
The share saying people are born gay has increased six points since 2013. There are stark differences between whites and blacks in these opinions. Whites are twice as likely as blacks to say that people are born gay (52% vs. 26%).

Republicans Dissatisfied with Party's Handling of Same-Sex Marriage

% of Dems/leaners, Reps/leaners saying their party is doing ... representing their views on same-sex marriage

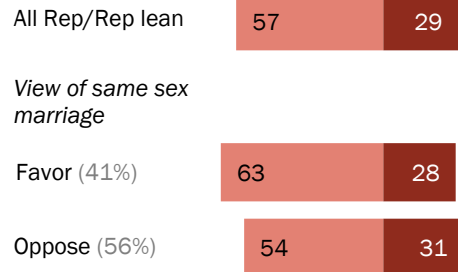
Democratic Party

Not a good job Good job



Republican Party

Not a good job Good job



Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015.
Don't know responses not shown.

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Section 1: Changing Views of Same-Sex Marriage

Support for same-sex marriage has increased substantially across virtually all demographic and partisan groups over the past decade. At the same time, there continue to be sharp differences in opinions about this issue – by generation, partisanship and ideology, race and religion.

Millennials – adults born since 1980 who are currently ages 18 to 34 – continue to be far more supportive of same-sex marriage than older age cohorts. Today, 73% of Millennials say gays and lesbians should be allowed to marry legally, while just 24% say they should not. Gen Xers, the next youngest cohort, also support gay marriage, though by a narrower margin (59% favor, 39% oppose).

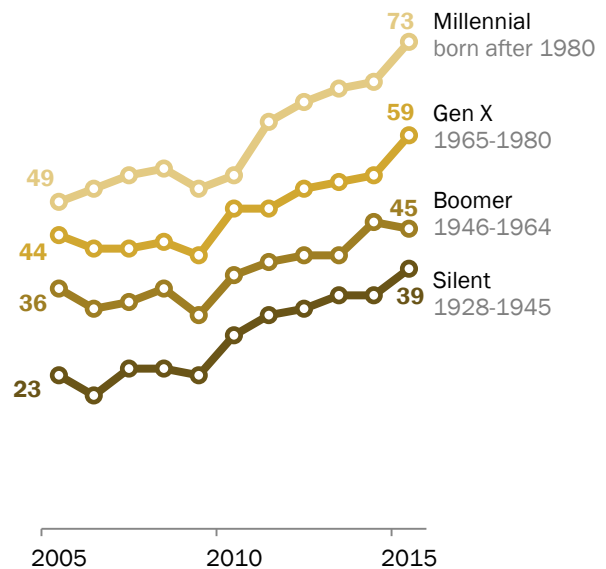
Among older cohorts, Boomers (ages 51 to 69) are currently divided (45% favor, 48% oppose), while Silents (ages 70-87) are the only generation in which significantly more oppose (53%) than favor (39%) gay marriage. But among both Boomers and Silents, support for same-sex marriage has increased over the past decade (nine percentage points among Boomers, 16 percentage points among Silents).

Within each age cohort, there are wide partisan differences in support for same-sex marriage. The gaps are particularly striking among older age cohorts, Silents and Boomers.

Among Democrats and Democratic leaners in the Silent Generation, the balance of opinion about same-sex marriage has flipped over the past decade. In 2005, 53% of Silent Democrats opposed gay marriage, while just 31% favored it. Today, 54% support gay marriage and 34% are opposed.

Growing Support Across Generations for Same-Sex Marriage

% who favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally



Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015. 2005-2014 figures based on all surveys conducted in each year.

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Support for gay marriage among Silent Republicans and Republican leaners also has increased over the past decade (by 14 points). However, Silent Republicans oppose allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally by three-to-one (72% to 24%).

The share of Boomer

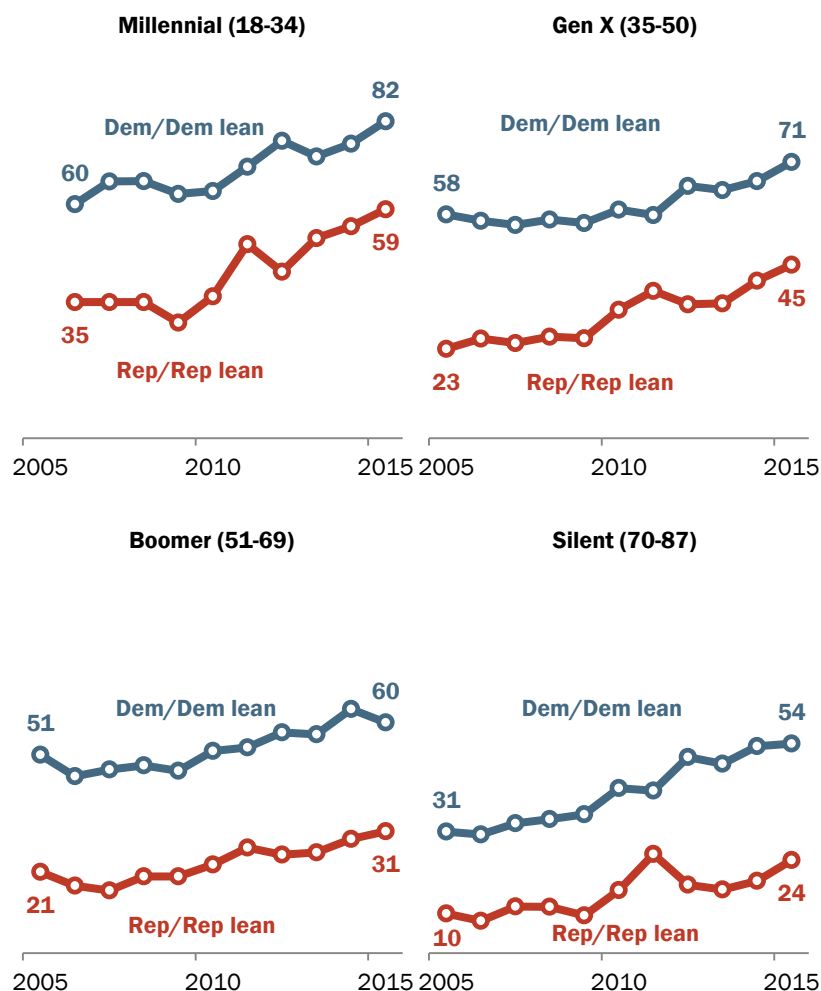
Democrats who favor same-sex marriage has increased nine percentage points since 2005. There has been a similar, 10-point rise among Boomer Republicans. However, while Boomer Democrats currently favor gay marriage by 60% to 34%, Boomer Republicans oppose it by a comparable margin (62% to 31%).

Support for same-sex marriage among Republican Gen Xers and Millennials has increased dramatically over the past decade. Currently, 45% of Gen X Republicans and Republican leaners favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally, roughly double the percentage as in 2005 (23%). Still, Gen X Democrats are 26 points more likely than Republicans of that generation to favor gay marriage (71%).

Last year, the Pew Research Center [found that a majority](#)

Partisan Gaps in Support for Same-Sex Marriage Seen Across Generations

% who favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally



Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015. Trend for Millennials begins in 2006 because of insufficient sample sizes of Millennials by party in 2005.

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of Republican Millennials supported same-sex marriage. That remains the case today: 59% support gay marriage, up from just 35% a decade ago. Among Democratic Millennials, 82% favor same-sex marriage, up from just 35% a decade ago. Among Democratic Millennials, 82% favor same-sex marriage, up 22 points over the past decade.

Both Parties Ideologically Divided

Ten years ago, liberal Democrats were the only ideological group in which a majority supported same-sex marriage. Today, majorities of every ideological group except one – conservative Republicans – favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally.

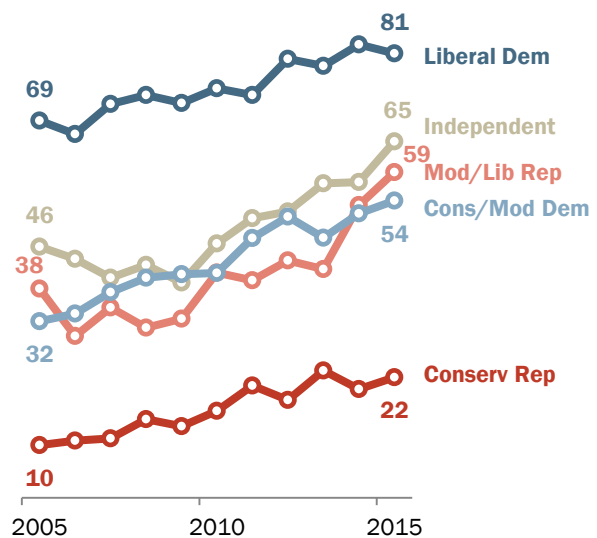
To be sure, the share of conservative Republicans supporting same-sex marriage has doubled, from 10% to 22%, since 2005. However, three-quarters of conservative Republicans (75%) continue to oppose gay marriage. About six-in-ten moderate and liberal Republicans favor same-sex marriage (59%), up from 38% a decade ago.

Like Republicans, Democrats are ideologically divided over same-sex marriage: 81% of liberal Democrats and 54% of conservative and moderate Democrats support same-sex marriage. This gap has narrowed somewhat from a decade ago, when 69% of liberal Democrats backed gay marriage, compared with only about a third (32%) of the party's conservatives and moderates.

In 2005, political independents were divided on same-sex marriage: 46% favored it, while 43% were opposed. Today, about twice as many independents support (65%) as oppose (31%) gay marriage.

Sharp Rise in Support for Gay Marriage in Middle of the Ideological Spectrum

% who favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally



Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015.

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Racial Differences Over Same-Sex Marriage

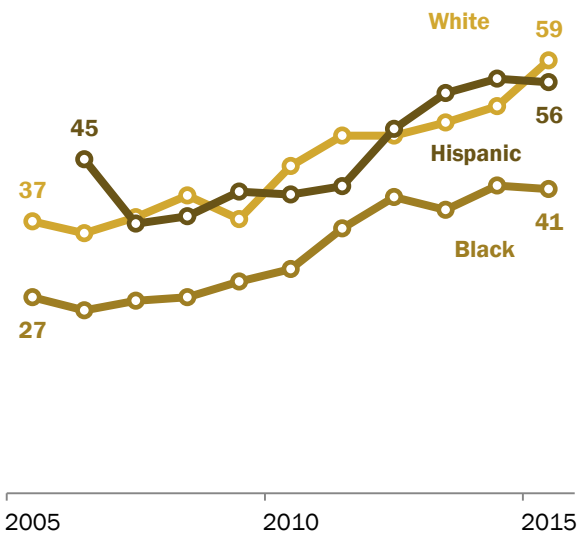
The share of blacks who support gay marriage has not changed significantly since 2012: 41% favor same-sex marriage today, while 51% oppose it; in 2012, 40% favored while 48% opposed. By contrast, over the past three years, support for gay marriage among whites has risen 10 points (from 49% to 59%).

Between 2005 and 2012, support for gay marriage rose at about the same rate among blacks and whites. Blacks' support for same-sex marriage increased 13 points, from 27% to 40%. Over the same period, there was an identical 13-point rise in support among whites (from 37% to 50%).

Currently, a majority of Hispanics (56%) support same-sex marriage, while 38% are opposed. That is little changed from recent years, but nine years ago Hispanics were divided; 45% favored gay marriage while about as many (48%) were opposed.

Blacks Far Less Likely than Whites to Support Same-Sex Marriage

% who favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally



Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Trend for Hispanics begins in 2006.

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Religion Continues to be Major Factor in Attitudes Toward Gay Marriage

As in the past, religious groups are deeply divided about same-sex marriage. And adults who do not identify with an organized religion – [whose ranks are growing](#) – are more likely than those who affiliate with a religion to support gay marriage.

Fully 85% of those who are religiously unaffiliated favor same-sex marriage, up from 60% in 2005. Majorities of white mainline Protestants (62%) and Catholics (56%) support same-sex marriage; a decade ago just 39% of both groups supported it.

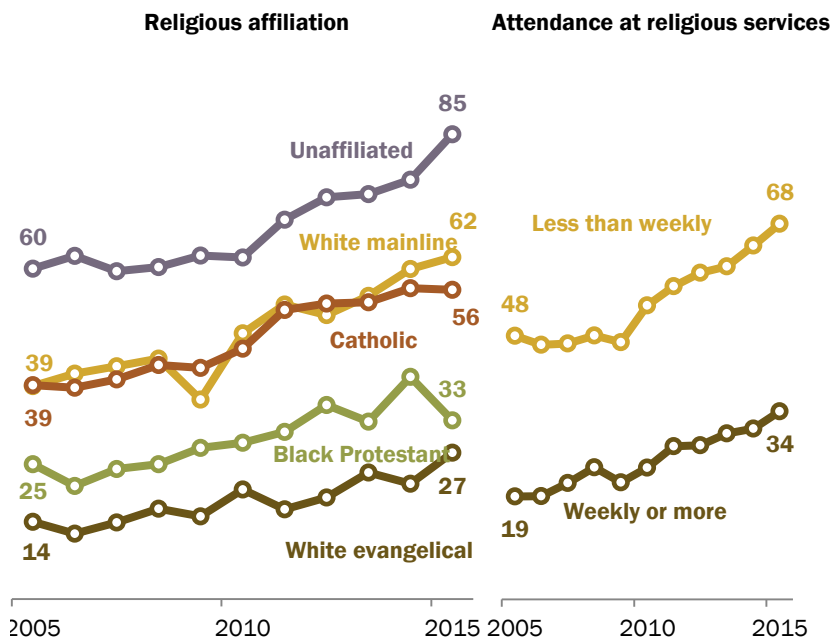
But just 33% of black Protestants and 27% of white evangelical Protestants favor same-sex marriage. Majorities of both groups (57% of black Protestants, 70% of white evangelicals) oppose gay marriage.

Opinion among black Protestants has changed relatively modestly over the past decade; in 2005, 25% favored gay marriage. And while support among white evangelical Protestants has increased 13 points (from 14% to 27%), white evangelicals oppose gay marriage by far greater than two-to-one.

Overall, 68% of adults who attend religious services less than once a week favor gay marriage, compared with 34% who attend weekly or more. In 2005, 48% of less frequent attenders of religious services backed gay marriage, as did 19% of those who attended more frequently.

Little Support for Gay Marriage Among Black Protestants, White Evangelicals

% who favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally



Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic.

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Most Americans Say Legal Same-Sex Marriage is ‘Inevitable’

By a three-to-one margin (72%-24%), most Americans think that legal recognition of same-sex marriage is inevitable. While that is little changed from 2013, a greater share of the public expects gay marriage to be legally recognized today than did so in a 2004 survey by the L.A. Times (when 59% said this).

Across generations there is a broad sense that same-sex marriage eventually will be legally recognized, though older Americans are somewhat less likely to say this. Nearly eight-in-ten Millennials (78%), along with about seven-in-ten Gen Xers (72%) and Baby Boomers (71%), and 62% of those in the Silent generation say legal recognition is inevitable.

College graduates (82%) and those with some college experience (79%) are more likely than adults with a high school education or less (59%) to say legal recognition of same-sex marriage is inevitable.

As in 2013, similar percentages of Republicans (72%), Democrats (72%) and independents (74%) believe that legal same-sex marriage is inevitable. Republican views of same-sex marriage’s inevitable legal recognition are up 25 points since 2004 (from 47%). Democrats today are about as likely to say same-sex marriage is inevitable as they were 11 years ago (72% vs. 67%).

An overwhelming majority of same-sex marriage supporters (86%) say its legal recognition is inevitable, little changed from two years ago. Among opponents, just 50% say this; in 2013, opponents were nine points more likely to say same-sex marriage would eventually be recognized.

More See Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Marriage as Inevitable

% saying legal recognition of same-sex marriage is inevitable

	March 2004	May 2013	May 2015	13-15 Change
	%	%	%	
Total	59	72	72	0
Millennial	--	70	78	+8
Generation X	67	76	72	-4
Boomer	55	75	71	-4
Silent	52	66	62	-4
College grad+	59	82	82	0
Some college	60	78	79	+1
H.S. or less	58	62	59	-3
Republican	47	73	72	-1
Democrat	67	72	72	0
Independent	61	74	74	0
<i>Same-sex marriage attitudes</i>				
Favor	--	85	86	+1
Oppose	--	59	50	-9

Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. March 2004 from The Los Angeles Times.

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Importance of the Issue of Same-Sex Marriage

Just over half of the public says the issue of same-sex marriage is very (30%) or somewhat important (24%) to them. Two-in-ten (20%) say it is not too important and 25% say it is not important to them at all.

Supporters and opponents of same-sex marriage are equally likely to see the issue as at least somewhat important (56% each), but opponents are more likely than supporters to say it is “very” important (38% vs. 27%).

However, those who feel strongly about the issue — on both sides — are particularly likely to say it is important. Among those who strongly favor gay marriage, 44% say it is a very important issue and just 11% say it is not important at all. And fully 53% of strong opponents say it is a very important issue to them.

Republicans (33%) and Democrats (31%) are about equally likely to say same-sex marriage is very important to them. And 40% of both conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats say it is a very important issue.

Religious, Ideological Divides on Importance of Same-Sex Marriage

% saying issue of same-sex marriage is ...

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not important at all	DK/Ref
	%	%	%	%	%
Total	30	24	20	25	1=100
Men	25	24	22	27	1=100
Women	35	23	18	22	1=100
White	32	26	20	21	1=100
Black	23	15	17	43	2=100
Hispanic	28	21	22	28	2=100
Millennial	34	25	21	19	*=100
Generation X	28	24	21	26	1=100
Boomer	29	23	20	27	1=100
Silent	29	20	18	28	5=100
Republican	33	19	23	23	2=100
Conserv	40	18	22	19	1=100
Mod/Lib	18	24	24	30	4=100
Independent	29	25	22	24	*=100
Democrat	31	26	17	26	1=100
Cons/Mod	23	25	21	31	1=100
Liberal	40	27	13	18	1=100
<i>Same-sex marriage attitudes</i>					
NET Favor	27	29	25	19	1=100
Strongly favor	44	32	12	11	*=100
Favor	9	25	38	27	1=100
NET Oppose	38	17	14	30	1=100
Oppose	21	20	24	34	2=100
Strongly oppose	53	15	5	26	1=100

Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

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Millennials (34%) are more likely than those in older generations (29%) to see same-sex marriage as a very important issue. In addition, women (35%) are more likely than men (25%) to say it is very important.

Section 2: Knowing Gays and Lesbians, Religious Conflicts, Beliefs about Homosexuality

As support for same-sex marriage has increased, other attitudes about homosexuality have changed as well. Majorities now say homosexuality should be accepted by society (63%) and that the sexual orientation of a gay or lesbian person cannot be changed (60%). Nearly half (47%) say that people are born gay or lesbian. These opinions represent a shift over the past decade, even if in some cases the short-term changes have been modest.

In addition, a 54% majority says there is no conflict between their own religious beliefs and homosexuality, up from 48% in 2013. However, the view that homosexuality and one's personal religious beliefs are in conflict remains a powerful factor in opposition to same-sex marriage.

An overwhelming majority of the public (88%) reports personally knowing someone who is gay or lesbian. That is little changed since 2013, but much higher than in the early 1990s.

Gay and Lesbian Acquaintances, Friends and Family Members

Though the vast majority of Americans say they know gays or lesbians, just over a quarter (28%) say they know "a lot" of people who are gay or lesbian, while 43% say they know some and 17% say they only know one or two gays or lesbians. Slightly more people now say they know a lot of gays or lesbians than did so two years ago.

And, as in 2013, about half (52%) have a close family member or one of their closest friends who is gay or lesbian.

Overwhelming Majority of Americans Know People Who are Gay or Lesbian

<i>Do you personally know anyone who is gay or lesbian?</i>	June 1993*	May 2013	May 2015	13-15 Diff
	%	%	%	
Yes	61	87	88	+1
<i>How many people who are gay or lesbian do you know?</i>				
A lot	--	23	28	+5
Some	--	44	43	-1
Only one or two	--	19	17	-2
None/Don't know	--	<u>13</u>	<u>13</u>	0
		100	100	
<i>Have close family members or friends who are gay or lesbian?</i>				
Yes	--	49	52	+3
No/Don't know	--	<u>51</u>	<u>48</u>	-3
		100	100	

Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. *June 1993 survey by NBC News/Wall Street Journal.

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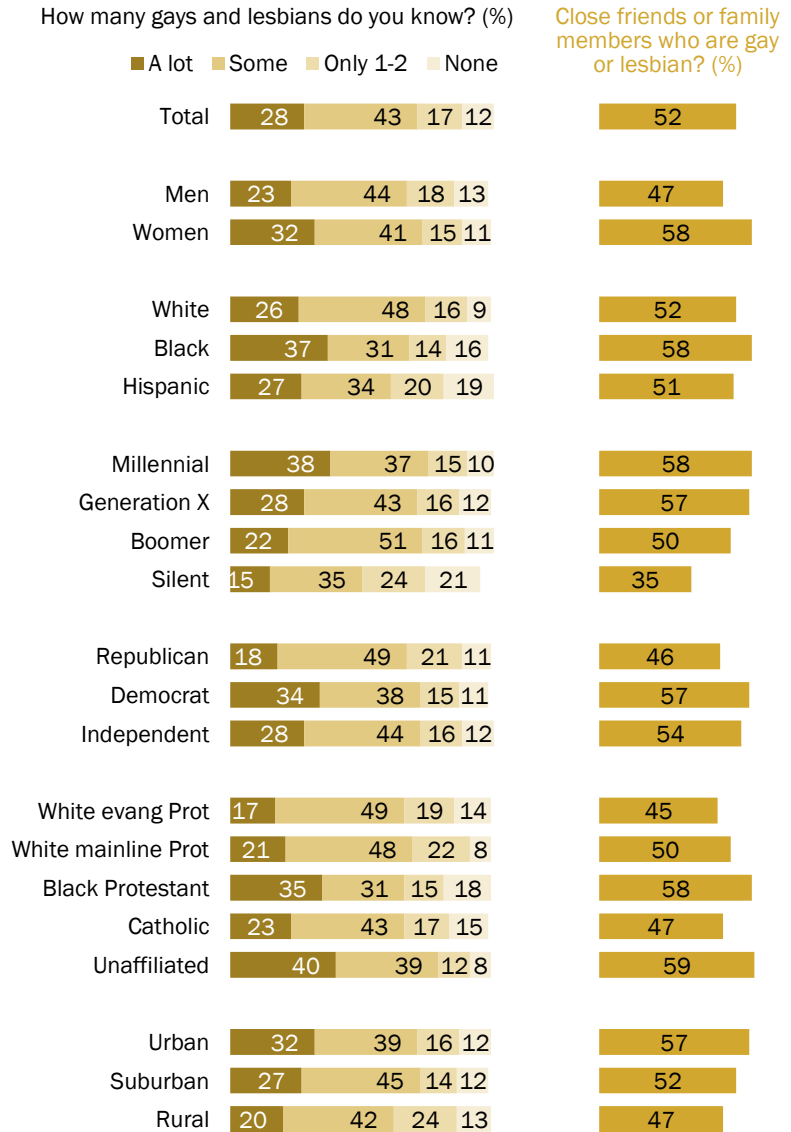
While large majorities of almost all demographic and partisan groups say they know someone who is gay or lesbian, there are differences in both the number of gay and lesbian acquaintances people have and in whether people say they have close family members or friends who are gay.

Millennials are among the most likely of any demographic or partisan group to say they know a lot of people who are gay or lesbian: Nearly four-in-ten (38%) say so, compared with fewer Gen Xers (28%), Boomers (22%) and Silents (15%). And about twice as many Silents say they do not know any gays or lesbians (21%) as members of any other generation.

Millennials and Xers are also somewhat more likely than Boomers – and particularly Silents – to say they have close family members or friends who are gay.

There are differences by religious affiliation in the number of gays and lesbians people know. Fully four-in-ten (40%) of those who are not affiliated with a religion say they personally know a lot of gays and lesbians, while 8% say they know none. By contrast, just 23% of Catholics, 21% of white mainline Protestants and 17% of white evangelical

Younger, Urban Americans More Likely to Say They Know Many Gays or Lesbians



Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015. Don't know responses not shown. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

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Protestants report having a lot of gay and lesbian acquaintances. There are also similar — if somewhat more modest — differences across religious groups in those who report having close friends and family members who are gay.

About a third of Democrats (34%) say they know a lot of gays and lesbians, compared with just 18% of Republicans. And while 57% of Democrats (and 54% of independents) have a gay or lesbian close family member or friend, 46% of Republicans say this.

There are also divides by community type: People who live in urban areas (32%) are more likely to know a lot of people who are gay and lesbian than those who live in suburban (27%) or rural (20%) communities.

Gay or Lesbian Friends and Support for Same-Sex Marriage

About three-quarters (73%) of those who know a lot of gays and lesbians — and two-thirds (66%) of those who have gay or lesbian close friends or family members — say they support same-sex marriage. And nearly half (48%) of Americans with many gay acquaintances, and 38% of those who have close friends or family who are gay, *strongly* favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally.

There is far less support for same-sex marriage among those with few or no gay or lesbian acquaintances, as well as among those who do not have close friends or family members who are gay or lesbian. Just 32% of those who do not have any gay or lesbian acquaintances favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry and 58% oppose (30% say they *strongly* oppose same-sex marriage).

Personally Knowing Gays and Lesbians Strongly Associated With Support for Same-Sex Marriage

Do you favor or oppose allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally?

	NET Favor	Strongly favor	Favor	NET Oppose	Strongly oppose	Oppose
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Total	57	28	28	39	21	18
<i>How many people who are gay or lesbian do you know?</i>						
A lot (28%)	73	48	26	24	14	10
Some (43%)	59	27	31	37	19	17
Only one or two (17%)	43	16	26	52	28	24
None/Don't know (13%)	32	6	26	58	30	29
<i>Thinking about your close family members and closest friends, are any of them gay or lesbian?</i>						
Yes (52%)	66	38	28	30	17	14
No/Don't know (48%)	46	18	28	48	25	23

Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015. Figures read across. Don't know responses not shown.

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Views of Whether Homosexuality Conflicts with Religious Beliefs

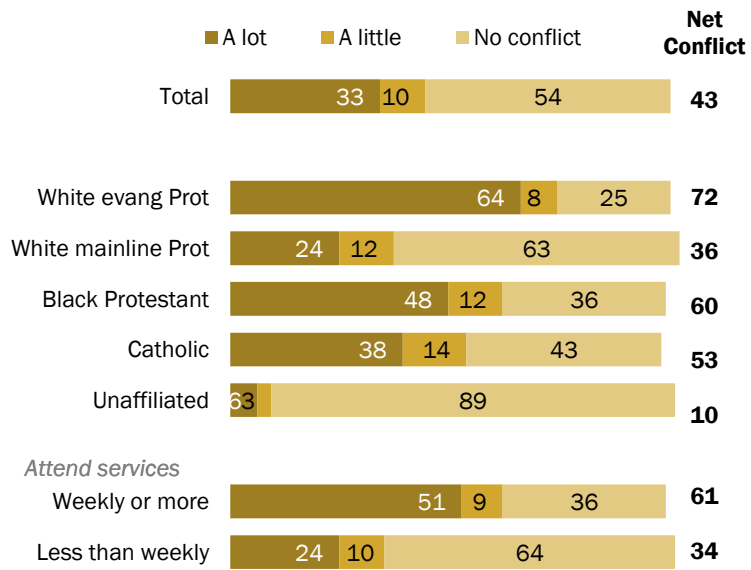
A majority of the public (54%) says there is no conflict between their religious beliefs and homosexuality. About four-in-ten (43%) say there is a lot (33%) or a little (10%) conflict.

Conflict between religious beliefs and homosexuality is felt particularly strongly by white evangelical Protestants, about seven-in-ten (72%) of whom say there is a conflict, including 64% who say there is “a lot” of conflict. Six-in-ten black Protestants say there is either a lot (48%) or a little (12%) conflict between their religious beliefs and homosexuality, while 53% of Catholics feel that their religious beliefs and homosexuality are in some conflict (38% say there is a lot of conflict). By comparison, just 36% of white mainline Protestants and 10% of those without religious affiliation (10%) feel such a conflict.

Attendance at religious services is also associated with feelings of conflict between religious beliefs and homosexuality. Among those who go to services at least weekly, 61% say there is a conflict between their beliefs and homosexuality (51% perceive “a lot” of conflict). Roughly one-third of less-frequent attenders (34%) feel there is such a conflict, 64% do not.

Nearly Two-Thirds of White Evangelicals See ‘a Lot’ of Conflict Between Homosexuality and Religious Beliefs

% saying there is a conflict between their religious beliefs and homosexuality...



Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015. Other/don't know responses not shown.

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Mixed Views on Why People Are Gay or Lesbian

When asked about possible reasons why people are gay or lesbian, 47% say people are born gay or lesbian, while slightly fewer (40%) say it's just the way some people choose to live; relatively few (7%) say being gay or lesbian is a result of a person's upbringing.

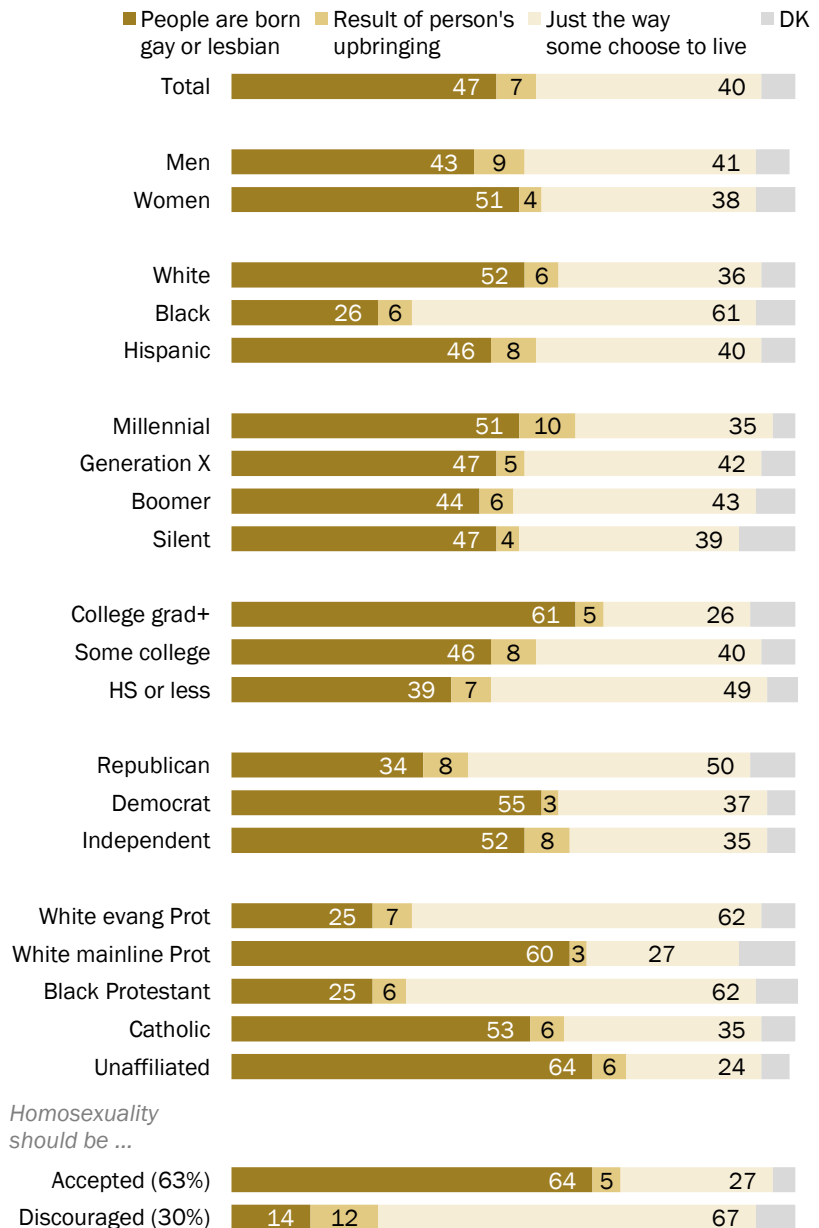
Over the past two years, the share saying people are born gay or lesbian has edged up six points. In May 2013, as many said people are born gay or lesbian (41%) as said it is just the way some people choose to live (42%).

As with other attitudes on homosexuality, there are substantial racial, partisan and religious differences on why people are gay or lesbian. But the generational differences in these opinions are relatively modest.

About half of Millennials (51%) say people are born gay or lesbian compared with 47% of those in Generation X and the Silent Generation, and 44% of Baby Boomers.

Modest Differences Across Generations About Why People Are Gay Or Lesbian

Which comes closer to your view to your view ... (%)



Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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There are striking differences between blacks and whites over why people are gay or lesbian. About six-in-ten blacks (61%) say being gay is just the way some choose to live; just 26% say people are born gay or lesbian. By contrast, more whites say people are born gay or lesbian (52%) than say it is a lifestyle choice (36%). Among Hispanics, about as many say people are born gay (46%) as say it's a choice (40%).

College graduates are far more likely than those with less education to say that people are born gay or lesbian: 61% of college graduates say this, compared with 46% of those with some college experience and 39% of those with no college experience.

Comparable percentages of Democrats (55%) and independents (53%) say people are born gay or lesbian; about four-in-ten in each group say it's just the way some people choose to live (37% of Democrats, 35% of independents). The reverse is true among Republicans: 50% say being gay or lesbian is just the way some people choose to live, compared with 34% who say people are born homosexual.

Identical majorities of white evangelical Protestants and black Protestants (62% each) say being gay or lesbian is just the way some people choose to live. By contrast, most white mainline Protestants (60%) say people are born homosexual, as do 53% of Catholics. Among the religiously unaffiliated, more see homosexuality as the way people are born than a lifestyle choice by a wide 64%-24% margin.

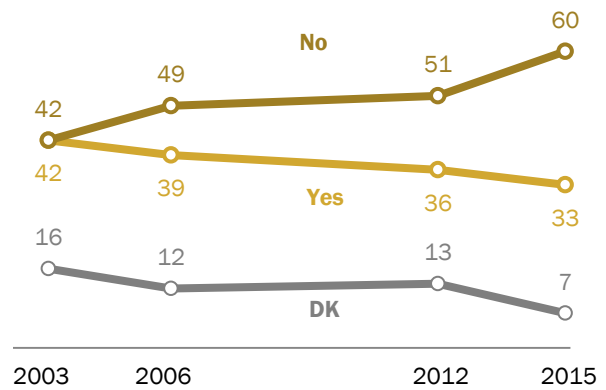
Most Say Gay or Lesbian Person's Sexual Orientation Cannot Be Changed

A majority of Americans (60%) say they do not think a gay or lesbian person's sexual orientation can be changed; about half as many (33%) say they think it can be changed.

The share saying a gay person's sexual orientation cannot be changed has increased 18 points since 2003 (from 42%), and nine points in the past three years alone (from 51%).

Growing Share Say Gay Person's Sexual Orientation Cannot Be Changed

Can a gay or lesbian person's sexual orientation be changed ... (%)



Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015.
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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Opinions about whether a gay or lesbian person's sexual orientation can be changed largely mirror views of whether or not someone is born gay.

Overall, 70% of Democrats and 62% of independents say they do not think a gay or lesbian person's sexual orientation can be changed, up nine points and 14 points, respectively, since 2012. By contrast, about as many Republicans say a gay or lesbian person's sexual orientation can be changed (45%) as say it cannot be changed (47%); views among Republicans are little changed since 2012.

Among religious groups, 71% of white mainline Protestants and 68% of Catholics say homosexuality cannot be changed. Majorities of black Protestants (56%) and white evangelical Protestants (55%) say a gay person's sexual orientation can be changed.

Adults with no religious affiliation are among the most likely to say that a gay person's sexual orientation cannot be changed: 79% express this view, while just 18% say homosexuality can be changed.

Republicans Divided Over Whether Homosexuality Can Be Changed

A gay or lesbian person's sexual orientation ...

	Can be changed %	Cannot be changed %	DK %
Total	33	60	7=100
White	28	66	6=100
Black	51	39	10=100
Hispanic	39	55	5=100
Millennial	30	66	4=100
Generation X	36	59	5=100
Boomer	35	58	8=100
Silent	27	58	15=100
College grad+	23	70	6=100
Some college	33	60	7=100
HS or less	39	54	7=100
Republican	45	47	9=100
Democrat	24	70	6=100
Independent	32	62	6=100
White evang Prot	55	37	8=100
White mainline Prot	20	71	9=100
Black Protestant	56	36	9=100
Catholic	25	68	7=100
Unaffiliated	18	79	4=100
<i>Reason people are homosexual ...</i>			
Born that way (47%)	11	86	3=100
Upbringing (7%)	49	46	5=100
Lifestyle choice (40%)	57	35	7=100

Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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Reactions to a Gay Child

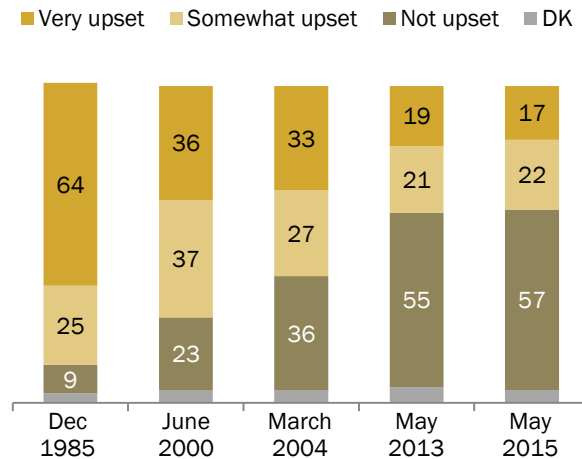
Most Americans (57%) say they would not be upset if they had a child who told them he or she was gay or lesbian; 39% say they would be upset about this, including 17% who say they would be very upset.

Views on this question are little changed over the past two years, but they have shifted dramatically since the question was first asked 30 years ago.

A 1985 Los Angeles Times poll found fully 89% said they would be either very upset (64%) or somewhat upset (25%) if their child told them he or she was gay or lesbian. By 2000, the share saying they would be upset about having a gay child had fallen to 73%, and by 2013 just 40% said they would be upset if a child of theirs said he or she was gay.

Most Say They Would Not Be Upset If They Learned Their Child Was Gay

If you had a child who told you he or she was gay or lesbian, what would your reaction be ... (%)



Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015.
1985-2004 data from L.A. Times surveys.

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Reactions to the prospect of having a gay child are linked to other attitudes about homosexuality. For instance, 77% of those who say that homosexuals are born gay or lesbian would not be upset if they learned that their child was gay or lesbian. Nearly six-in-ten (58%) of those who view homosexuality as a lifestyle choice say they would be upset if their child disclosed that he or she was gay.

Racial, partisan and religious differences on this measure are substantial, as they are with other attitudes toward homosexuality.

However, generational differences in reactions to the prospect of a gay child are much wider than in opinions about whether or not a gay person is born that way, or whether a gay person's sexual orientation can be changed. Nearly twice as many Silents (55%) as Millennials (29%) say they would be upset if they had a child tell them that he or she was gay or lesbian.

Most Silents Would Be Upset By Having Gay Child; Most Millennials Would Not

If you had a child who told you he or she was gay or lesbian, what would your reaction be ...

	Upset %	Very upset %	Not upset %	DK %
Total	39	17	57	4=100
White	39	18	59	2=100
Black	58	26	39	3=100
Hispanic	29	12	63	8=100
Millennial	29	9	69	2=100
Generation X	36	17	61	3=100
Boomer	47	23	50	4=100
Silent	55	27	38	7=100
Republican	59	30	36	4=100
Democrat	35	15	62	3=100
Independent	32	12	65	3=100
White evang Prot	65	40	32	3=100
White mainline Prot	37	9	58	5=100
Black Protestant	60	29	36	4=100
Catholic	36	14	58	6=100
Unaffiliated	16	5	83	1=100

Reason people are homosexual ...

Born that way (47%)	21	6	77	2=100
Upbringing (7%)	56	26	39	5=100
Lifestyle choice (40%)	58	30	38	4=100

Know people who are gay or lesbian ...

Have close friends/family (52%)	33	12	65	2=100
Have acquaintances but not friends/family (34%)	45	20	52	4=100
Don't know any (12%)	56	35	36	8=100

Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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Younger Generations Most Accepting of Homosexuality

More than six-in-ten Americans (63%) say homosexuality should be accepted by society, while 30% say homosexuality should be discouraged. The share saying homosexuality should be accepted has grown steadily over the last decade; in 2003, the public was split on this question (47% accepted, 45% discouraged).

Today, about three-quarters of Democrats (74%) think homosexuality should be accepted, up from 66% in 2013 and 56% in 2003. Fully 87% of liberal Democrats say society should accept homosexuality, compared with 66% of conservative and moderate Democrats.

Among Republicans, 40% think homosexuality should be accepted and 54% say it should be discouraged – relatively unchanged since 2003. While three-in-ten conservative Republicans (30%) say it should be accepted by society, about twice as many moderate and liberal Republicans (63%) say this.

Growing Percentage Says Homosexuality Should be Accepted by Society

% saying homosexuality should be accepted or discouraged by society ...

	June 2003		March 2013		May 2015		13-15 Change in 'Accepted'
	Accept- ed %	Dis- courag- ed %	Accept- ed %	Dis- courag- ed %	Accept- ed %	Dis- courag- ed %	
Total	47	45	57	36	63	30	+6
Men	42	52	53	41	58	36	+5
Women	52	39	61	31	68	25	+7
Millennial	66	30	74	22	78	19	+4
Generation X	50	44	62	28	65	30	+3
Boomer	48	45	46	47	55	38	+9
Silent	38	51	42	49	45	42	+3
Republican	37	59	38	54	40	54	+2
Conserv	27	67	32	59	30	63	-2
Mod/Lib	56	41	53	42	63	33	+10
Independent	52	39	65	31	71	23	+6
Democrat	56	35	66	28	74	21	+8
Cons/Mod	47	45	58	34	66	27	+8
Liberal	76	18	82	15	87	11	+5
White evang Prot	22	71	30	61	33	61	+3
White mainline Prot	49	43	68	28	72	22	+4
Catholic	62	32	61	32	64	28	+3
Unaffiliated	--	--	83	13	88	8	+5

Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015. Don't know responses not shown.

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Younger generations are more accepting of homosexuality in society: 78% of Millennials, 65% of Gen Xers and 55% of Boomers say homosexuality should be accepted, while Silents are split (45% accepted, 42% discouraged).

White evangelical Protestants, on balance, say homosexuality should be discouraged (61% vs. 33%). By contrast, about seven-in-ten white mainline Protestants (72%) as well as 64% of Catholics and 88% of those who are religiously unaffiliated say it should be accepted by society.

About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted May 12-18, 2015 among a national sample of 2,002 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (700 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,302 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 750 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/u-s-survey-research/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the 2013 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status (landline only, cell phone only, or both landline and cell phone), based on extrapolations from the 2014 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. The margins of error reported and statistical tests of significance are adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, a measure of how much efficiency is lost from the weighting procedures.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	2,002	2.5 percentage points
Republican	506	5.0 percentage points
Democrat	636	4.5 percentage points
Independent	758	4.1 percentage points
Millennial Generation (ages 18-34)	452	5.3 percentage points
Generation X (ages 35-50)	469	5.2 percentage points
Baby-Boom Generation (ages 51-69)	710	4.2 percentage points
Silent Generation (ages 70-87)	325	6.2 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

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