



# Accelerating Acceptance **2016**

harris poll

A Harris Poll survey of Americans'  
acceptance of LGBT people

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# Accelerating Acceptance 2016

## Introduction

2015 represented an especially historic year in the movement for LGBT equality, with the Supreme Court’s landmark ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which guaranteed same-sex couples the right to marry nationwide. Notwithstanding the American public has grown well beyond majority status in support for marriage equality and we have reached what *TIME Magazine* called the “transgender tipping point,” GLAAD’s recent survey results, conducted by Harris Poll, reveal that other key, yet perhaps more nuanced attitudes about LGBT people are lagging and the cause of Accelerating Acceptance in 2016 and beyond must continue.

With the monumental progress achieved for marriage equality also comes a misperception that LGBT people are now fully equal in the eyes of the law. For example, half of non-LGBT Americans (50%) currently believe that “gay people have the same rights as everybody else,” GLAAD’s survey reveals. GLAAD’s findings point to a culture of complacency, wherein the non-LGBT public is under the false and potentially dangerous impression that the work for LGBT equality is done.

Yet, GLAAD’s survey also reveals that slow but steady progress is being made for acceptance of LGBT people. In many of the ‘comfortability’ questions central to GLAAD’s *Accelerating Acceptance* survey, non-LGBT Americans report significantly less discomfort than was reported in 2014. Whereas in 2014 over 36% of non-LGBT Americans said they were “very uncomfortable” or “somewhat uncomfortable” seeing a same-sex couple holding hands, this year’s survey finds 29% of non-LGBT Americans are uncomfortable in the same scenario, a notable decline of seven percentage points. Still, these Americans’ level of discomfort remains about the same year over year when asked about their children, once again indicating there is still much work to be done.

In *Accelerating Acceptance*, GLAAD celebrates the progress that has been achieved in recent years and signals concern with the emerging complacency and ambivalence. Most importantly, GLAAD remains committed to its leadership role identifying, amplifying, and ultimately breaking down barriers to full LGBT acceptance.

## Methodology

The 2015 and 2014 surveys were conducted online within the United States by Harris Poll on behalf of GLAAD.

- The 2015 survey was fielded from October 5-7, 2015 among 2,032 adults ages 18 and older. The non-LGBT sub-sample was 1,781.
- The 2014 survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Poll on behalf of GLAAD from November 10-12, 2014 among 2,010 adults ages 18 and older. The non-LGBT sub-sample was 1,821.

This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables, please contact Seth Adam, GLAAD’s Director of Communications, at [seth@glaad.org](mailto:seth@glaad.org).

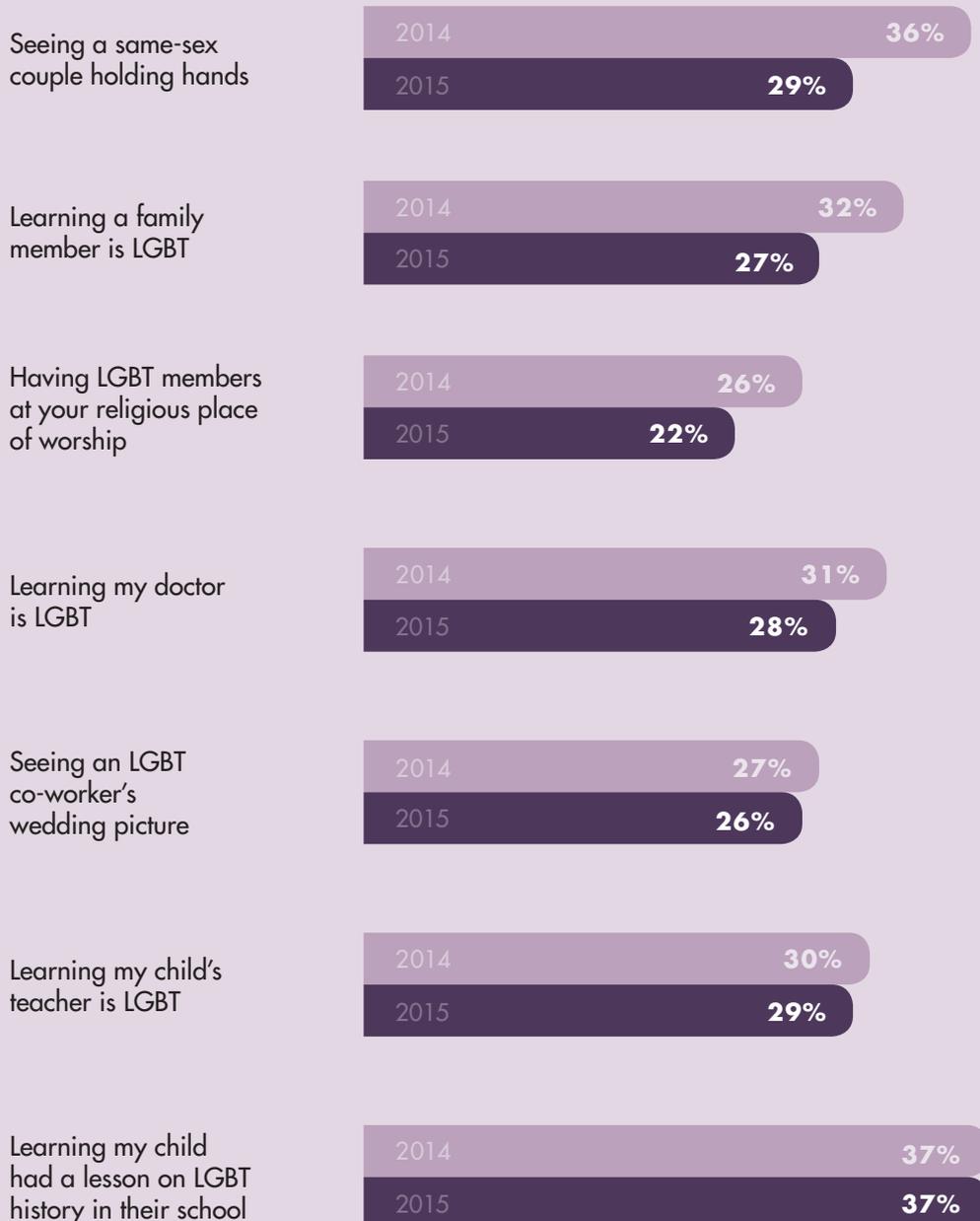
**Contributing author:** Daniel Berrier, Northstar Research Partners

# 1

## Progress over the last year in acceptance of the LGBT community

There is no mistaking that the LGBT community and its allies have made immense strides, with significant gains for legal equality achieved in 2015. GLAAD’s Accelerating Acceptance survey shows non-LGBT Americans are also growing more comfortable with LGBT people, indicating increased levels of acceptance. In fact, in most situations surveyed, these Americans report less discomfort with LGBT people than was reported the previous year. Notably, the scenarios that saw the most change were also those that were the most personal, for example seeing a couple hold hands and learning a family member is LGBT. Perhaps not surprisingly, the exception to this progress was on issues involving children, such as “learning that my child had a lesson on LGBT history in their school,” where more than a third of non-LGBT Americans are still uncomfortable.

### % of non-LGBT Americans “very uncomfortable” or “somewhat uncomfortable” in given situations



Building on GLAAD's first *Accelerating Acceptance* survey, this year's study built an acceptance scale based on responses of non-LGBT people to the LGBT community. To better understand how support differs across society, this year's study split non-LGBT Americans into three segments based on professed comfort across seven surveyed LGBT-themed situations:

- 1. Allies:** Non-LGBT Americans who were either very or somewhat comfortable with all situations (51% of the sample)
- 2. Detached Supporters:** Non-LGBT Americans whose comfort level varied across situations (35% of the sample)
- 3. Resisters:** Non-LGBT Americans who were either very or somewhat uncomfortable with all situations (14% of the sample)

# 2

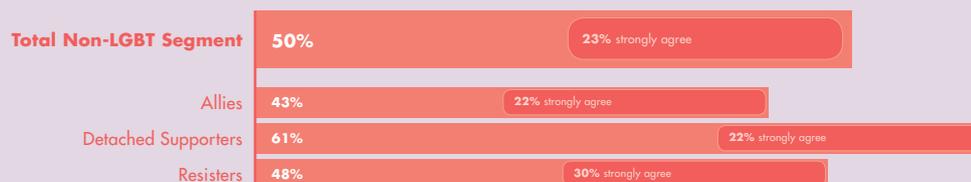
## Complacency setting in among a large number of non- LGBT Americans

Despite measurable progress, the data also suggests a growing complacency appears to be developing about the state of the LGBT community in America. Perhaps because marriage equality was so widely covered by the media in 2015, half of all non-LGBT Americans now report that 'gay people have the same rights as everybody else.' This is where Detached Supporters tend to look more like Resisters than Allies.

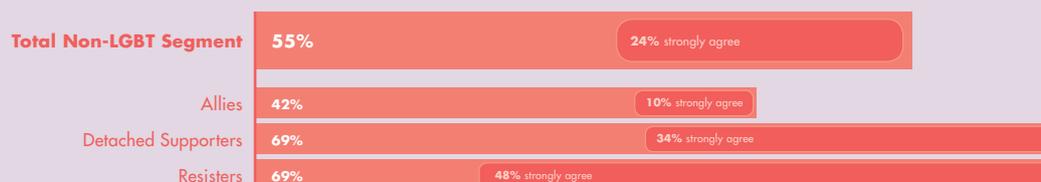
### Perception of LGBT rights and influence by non-LGBT Americans

(% of non-LGBT respondents who agreed with the following statements)

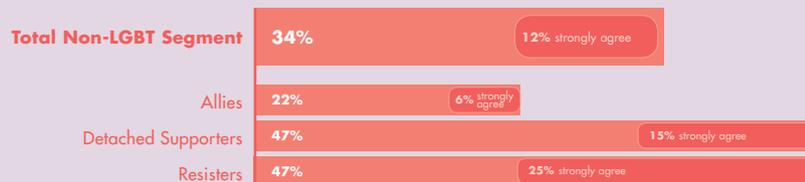
**In the United States today, gay people have the same rights as everybody else.**



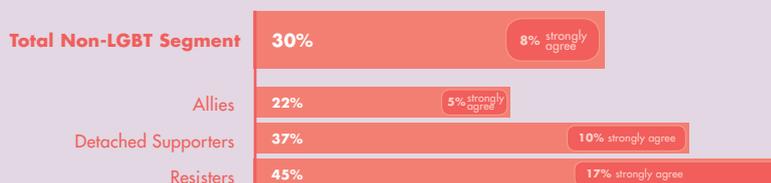
**Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people receive more media attention today than other minority communities.**



**The gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community has more influence than other minority communities.**



**Most politicians support policies favorable to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people.**



# 3

## Many non-LGBT Americans are unconcerned by or unaware of LGBT issues

Beyond being denied basic legal rights at both the state and federal level – such as protection from discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations – LGBT citizens also face many serious negative social consequences, including disproportionate rates of homelessness, mental illness, and violence. Yet, a significant number of non-LGBT Americans report that many of the issues still facing the LGBT community are not serious, indicating a lack of knowledge or lack of interest in the harsh realities LGBT people face.

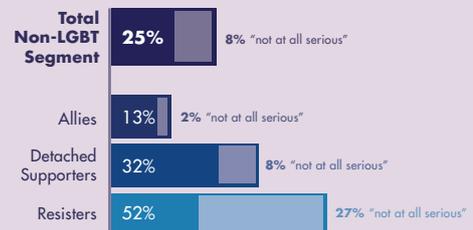
### Perception of LGBT problems by non-LGBT Americans

(total % of non-LGBT respondents who stated that the following problems were not serious; strongest responses of disbelief highlighted)

#### HIV and AIDS in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community



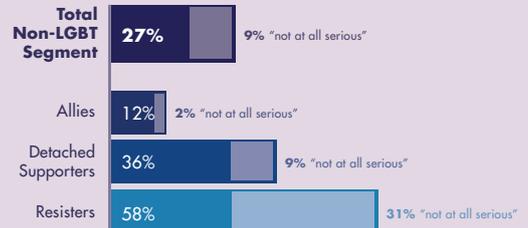
#### Depression & suicide among gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people



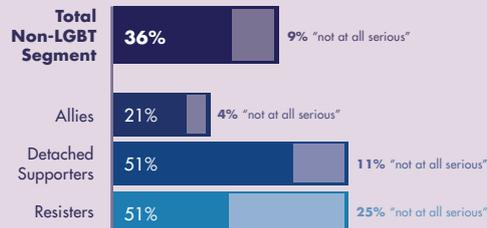
#### Acts of violence against gay and lesbian people



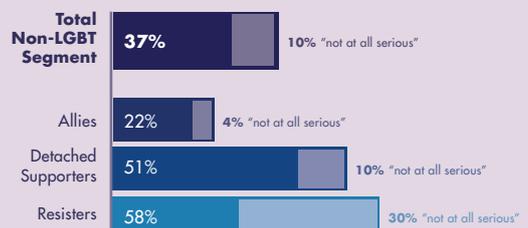
#### Acts of violence against transgender people



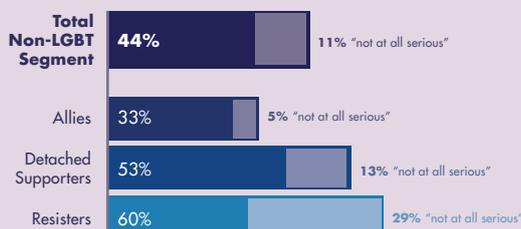
#### Social acceptance of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people



#### Homeless gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender teens



#### Racism within the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community



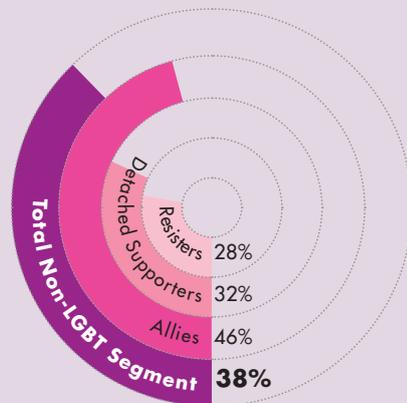
# 4

## Ambivalence toward other important LGBT issues

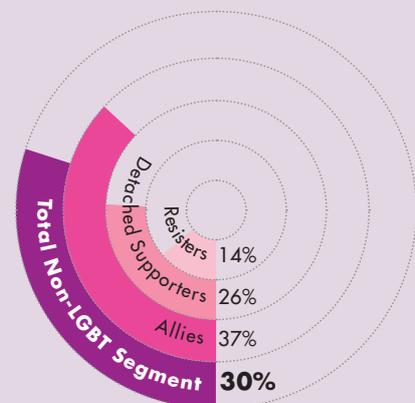
In addition to the aforementioned undercurrent of complacency regarding the state of LGBT issues, the survey data also suggests an unusually high level of ambivalence, or people who report they neither disagree nor agree with statements about the LGBT community. Roughly a third of non-LGBT Americans profess no strong opinion about important LGBT issues. Interestingly, this ambivalence appears across segments, including Allies.

### % of non-LGBT Americans who neither agreed nor disagreed with the following statements

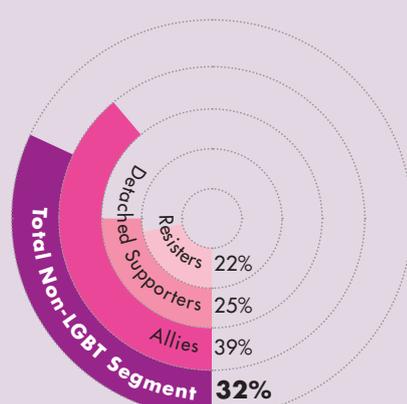
The gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community has more influence than other minority communities.



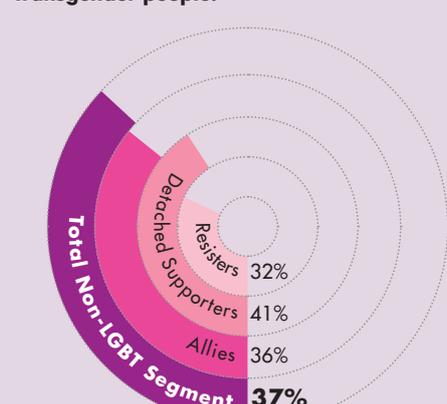
It is best for a child to be raised by a mother and a father as opposed to two fathers or two mothers.



Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people receive more media attention today than other minority communities.



Most politicians support policies favorable to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people.



## Summary

2015 was a monumental year for the LGBT community. The Supreme Court ruling that marriage equality is a matter of equal dignity under the law afforded by the United States Constitution represents the culmination of decades of hard work and advocacy. However, even as we celebrate important advances, we must be mindful of momentum slowing, of becoming prematurely complacent or ambivalent. We must continue to raise awareness of and advocate for a broader spectrum of LGBT equality and acceptance — *beyond* the single issue of marriage equality. The hard work of legislative change must go hand in hand with that which cannot be conducted in a courtroom: changing the hearts and minds of society.

# Demographic make-up of three segments of Americans on LGBT issues



## Gender

Allies are more likely to be female, whereas Resisters are more likely to be male.



## Education

Resisters are more likely to be less educated, while Allies are more likely to have gone to college or graduate school. Detached Supporters tend to either be well-educated or poorly educated.



## Region

Allies are concentrated in the Northeast and West, while Resisters live in the South and Midwest. Detached Supporters are most likely to live in the Midwest.



## Income

Allies are more likely to either be middle income and/or especially very high income. Resisters are lower income. Detached Supporters are more likely to be upper middle income.



## Age

Allies are more likely to be young, whereas Resisters tend to be between the ages of 45 - 64. Detached Supporters are relatively evenly distributed, though slightly more likely to be over 65.

	ALL AMERICANS % (INDEX)*	ALLIES % (INDEX)*	DETACHED SUPPORTERS % (INDEX)*	RESISTERS % (INDEX)*
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	48.1% (100)	44.4% (92)	49.5% (103)	53.2% (111)
Female	51.9% (100)	55.6% (107)	50.5% (97)	46.8% (90)
<b>Income</b>				
Under \$35k	27.5% (100)	24.2% (88)	27.3% (99)	29.5% (107)
\$35K to \$75k	31.9% (100)	34.2% (107)	32.0% (100)	30.1% (94)
\$75k - \$125k	24.6% (100)	24.1% (98)	27.4% (111)	25.0% (101)
\$125k+	16.0% (100)	17.4% (109)	13.3% (83)	15.4% (97)
<b>Education</b>				
High school or less (no college)	32.1% (100)	28.5% (89)	34.3% (107)	40.5% (126)
Some college	19.3% (100)	19.6% (101)	18.9% (98)	16.5% (87)
Associate's degree	9.5% (100)	9.0% (95)	9.7% (102)	7.4% (78)
College graduate	21.5% (100)	26.1% (121)	18.2% (85)	16.7% (78)
Graduate school	8.3% (100)	8.8% (106)	8.9% (107)	3.0% (36)
Job training	9.4% (100)	8.1% (86)	10.0% (107)	15.8% (169)
<b>Age</b>				
18 to 24	10.6% (100)	11.1% (105)	7.8% (74)	5.0% (48)
25 to 34	19.4% (100)	18.9% (97)	17.4% (90)	13.6% (70)
35 to 44	15.3% (100)	16.3% (106)	15.3% (100)	14.9% (97)
45 to 54	16.4% (100)	15.0% (91)	16.3% (99)	25.0% (152)
55 to 64	19.3% (100)	19.4% (101)	20.1% (104)	23.8% (123)
65+	19.0% (100)	19.4% (103)	23.1% (122)	17.7% (93)
<b>Region</b>				
Northeast	21.5% (100)	23.0% (107)	21.4% (100)	18.4% (86)
Midwest	21.7% (100)	20.9% (96)	24.1% (111)	22.9% (105)
South	33.6% (100)	30.8% (91)	33.9% (101)	35.5% (106)
West	23.2% (100)	25.4% (110)	20.6% (89)	23.2% (100)

\* e.g., 21.5% of the general population are college graduates. 26.1% of allies are college graduates. Therefore, an ally is 1.21x more likely than the general population to be a college graduate.



GLAAD rewrites the script for LGBT 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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