



# Accelerating Acceptance

## 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Survey of American  
Acceptance and Attitudes  
Toward LGBTQ Americans

Conducted by



Harris Insights & Analytics, A Stagwell LLC Company

**Five years ago, GLAAD partnered with The Harris Poll** to launch a unique index to measure Americans' attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people and issues. In the first three years of the Harris Poll study, the Accelerating Acceptance report showed positive momentum year-over-year, with Americans stating they were more comfortable with LGBTQ people and more supportive of LGBTQ issues. These results paralleled historic steps in LGBTQ visibility in our culture as well as the passage of marriage equality nationwide and other pro-LGBTQ legal wins.

Last year, however, the acceptance pendulum abruptly stopped and swung in the opposite direction. More non-LGBTQ adults responded that they were "very" or "somewhat" uncomfortable around LGBTQ people in select scenarios. The decline was paired with a significant increase in LGBTQ respondents reporting discrimination because of sexual orientation or gender identity. The decline in acceptance and rise in discrimination found in the survey corresponded to an increase in hateful rhetoric in our culture.

Headlines that stated 'LGBTQ acceptance is eroding' were a call to arms for GLAAD and so many around the country. GLAAD doubled down on our formula for making culture change and has now trained nearly 10,000 individuals through the GLAAD Media Institute. The GMI officially launched last year with the index, aimed at empowering LGBTQ people and allies to accelerate acceptance by advancing their own stories and sharing LGBTQ messages that create change.

With the knowledge that erosion in acceptance was primarily happening among younger males, GLAAD launched a program dedicated to working with the video game industry on LGBTQ inclusion, to bring LGBTQ characters and stories to a world where male audiences were consuming content.

In this year's report, we are relieved that general attitudes toward LGBTQ people are stable. Surprisingly, however, an evident downward shift in comfort levels happened within participants ages 18-34.

While young people are identifying as LGBTQ in higher rates than ever before, there has also been an uptick in non-LGBTQ young people pushing back against acceptance. The younger generation has traditionally been thought of as a beacon of progressive values. We have taken that idea for granted and this year's results show that the sharp and quick rise in divisive rhetoric in politics and culture is having a negative influence on younger Americans.

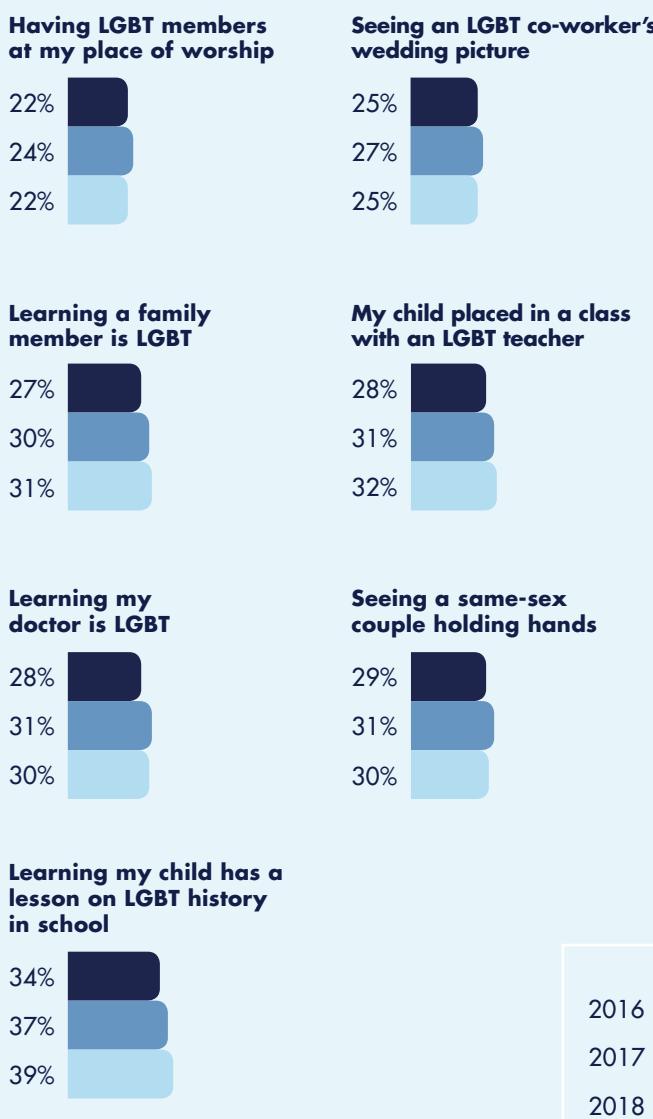
There is a deep need for the understanding of LGBTQ people, both in the United States and worldwide - and GLAAD knows the playbook. Closing the gap to full acceptance of LGBTQ people will not come from legislation or judicial decisions alone, but from creating a culture where LGBTQ people are embraced and respected. This year's results demonstrate an urgent need for GLAAD to reach younger Americans with stories and campaigns that build acceptance.

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

## 1 | The Erosion of Comfort with LGBTQ People is Stemmed

After declines in comfort across several scenarios last year, this year's survey highlights a stabilization of comfort since the previous year among non-LGBTQ U.S. adults on all 7 situations.

### Base: % of Non-LGBTQ Americans "Very" or "Somewhat" Uncomfortable in Situation



The 2018 survey was conducted online by The Harris Poll from January 8-11, 2019 among 1970 US adults ages 18 or older, including 1754 who were classified as non-LGBTQ adults. Email [press@glaad.org](mailto:press@glaad.org) for questions related to methodology and data.

## 2 | A Shift in Millennial Acceptance: From Allies to Detached Supporters

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

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

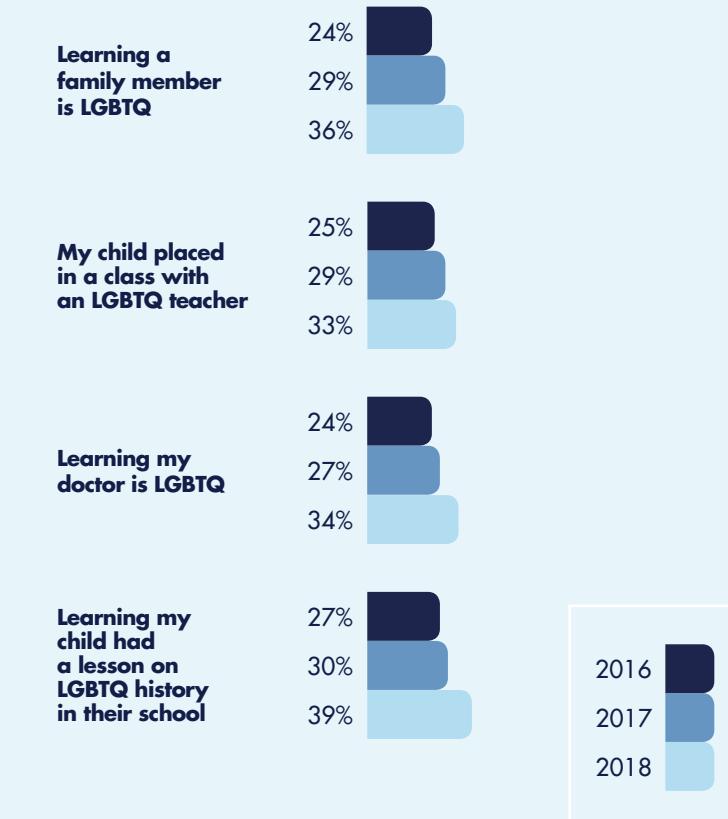
**Detached Supporters:** Non-LGBTQ respondents whose comfort level varied across situations.

**Resisters:** Non-LGBTQ respondents who were either "very" or "somewhat" uncomfortable in all situations

There has been a decline in overall comfort and acceptance of LGBTQ people from respondents ages 18-34, with allies steadily declining among this audience since 2016.

The erosion in LGBTQ acceptance among younger people is seen in both male and female respondents, particularly in personal scenarios.

### Base: % of Non-LGBTQ 18-34 uncomfortable in personal situations



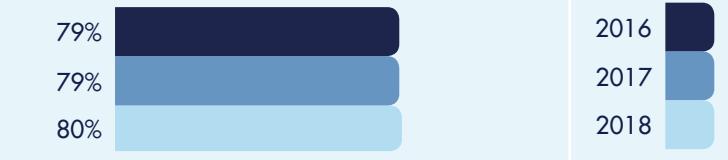
## 3 | Support For Equal Rights is Stable

Supporting equal rights for LGBTQ people remains relatively stable and strong with non-LGBTQ adults. In spite of the erosion in comfortability, the majority of non-LGBTQ Americans (80%) support equal rights for the LGBTQ community.

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

### Base: % Non-LGBTQ Americans Strongly/Somewhat Agree

#### "I support equal rights for the LGBT community"



**"Closing the gap to full acceptance of LGBTQ people will not come from legislation on judicial decisions alone, but from creating a culture where LGBTQ people are embraced and respected. This year's results demonstrate an urgent need for GLAAD to reach younger Americans with stories and campaigns that build acceptance."**

**SARAH KATE ELLIS**  
PRESIDENT & CEO, GLAAD



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

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

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