



Pulse of Equality  
*A Snapshot of U.S. Perspectives on Gay and Transgender People  
and Policies*

Prepared for:

Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)

*Presented by*

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# *Background, Objectives, Sample, Methodology & Report Structure*

- GLAAD commissioned Harris Interactive to conduct a nationally representative survey among U.S. adults 18+.
- The objective of this study was to understand public opinion on LGBT people and LGBT-Related policy issues.
- Total sample includes 2,008 U.S. adults ages 18+.
- Interviewing was conducted by telephone using random digit dialing (RDD) Nov 13-17, 2008.
- Results were weighted as needed using age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region, number in household, and household income to be representative of the U.S. population of adults 18+.
- The questionnaire was approximately 15 minutes in length.
- Results from this study are intended for public release.
- In reviewing this report, please note that percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding, the acceptance of multiple responses or the exclusion of any “not sure” or “decline to answer” responses.

## Terms and Definitions

- The following are subgroups or segments analyzed throughout this report:
  - Gender, Age and Gender-Age Combinations (e.g., women age 18-34)
  - Race/Ethnicity
    - Whites = Non-Hispanic Whites only
    - African Americans = Non-Hispanic African Americans only
    - Hispanics = Hispanics of any race
  - Religion
    - Mainline Christians = those who identified as Protestant, Mormon or Other Christian but do not consider themselves born-again Christians
    - Catholics
    - Evangelical Christians = those who identified as Protestant, Mormon or Other Christian and consider themselves born-again Christians
    - Other religions (e.g., Jewish, Muslim) had sample sizes too small to report on separately.
- Other terms used in this report
  - LGBT = lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender
  - Don't Ask, Don't Tell = policy that bans gay military personnel from serving in the armed forces

# Executive Summary

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## Executive Summary:

# Strong Support for Gay and Transgender-Related Policy Issues

- **Sizeable majorities of U.S. adults support key policy proposals that affect gay and transgender people.**
  - **Marriage and Relationship Recognition**
    - Three out of four (75%) U.S. adults believe there should be either marriage or domestic partnerships/civil unions for gay and lesbian couples. Only 22% say there should be no legal recognition.
      - U.S. adults are evenly divided on allowing gay and lesbian couples to legally marry (47% favor, 49% oppose).
  - **Don't Ask, Don't Tell**
    - Almost two-thirds (64%) of U.S. adults favor allowing openly gay military personnel to serve in the armed forces.
  - **Hate Crimes Laws**
    - More than six in 10 (63%) U.S. adults favor expanding hate crime laws to cover gay and transgender people.
  - **Non-Discrimination Laws**
    - A slight majority of U.S. adults (51%) favor employment, housing, and public accommodations non-discrimination laws for gay and transgender people.
  - **Adoption**
    - Nearly seven out of 10 U.S. adults (69%) oppose laws that would ban qualified gay and lesbian couples from adopting children.

## Executive Summary:

# Support Varies by Demographics and Religion

- **Significant differences in support were evident across the LGBT-Related policy issues with respect to demographics and religion.**
  - Age and Gender
    - People under 65, and especially those under 35, were more supportive than people age 65 or older.
    - Women were generally more supportive than men, with those women age 18-34 often being the most supportive among all of the segments.
  - Race/Ethnicity
    - Hispanics were often more supportive than Whites and African Americans, even showing the most support among all segments on allowing openly gay military personnel to serve in the armed forces (76% Hispanic, 63% White, 61% African American). African Americans were among the most supportive segments for expanding hate crimes laws to cover gay and transgender people (71% African Americans, 62% White, 61% Hispanics).
  - Religion
    - Mainline Christians and Catholics expressed more support than Evangelical Christians with Mainline Christians often being among the most supportive segments.

## Executive Summary:

# Growing Acceptance of Gays and Lesbians

- **Greater acceptance of gays and lesbians over the past five years.**
  - Approximately two in 10 U.S. adults (19%) report their feelings towards gays and lesbians have become more favorable over the past five years. Among those who say they have become more favorable toward gays and lesbians in the past five years, contributing factors include:
    - Knowing someone who is gay or lesbian (79%)
    - The fact that laws have been passed that protect gays and lesbians (50%)
    - Opinions of family or friends (45%), and religious leaders (21%)
    - News coverage of gay and lesbian issues (41%)
    - Seeing gay or lesbian characters on television (34%) and in movies (29%)
  - Nearly three out of four U.S. adults (73%) personally know or work with a gay or transgender person.
    - Half of those who know or work with a gay or transgender person know five or more gay or transgender people.



# Detailed Findings

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- ▶ Attitudes Toward LGBT-Related Policy Issues
  - ▶ Marriage and Relationship Recognition for Gay and Lesbian Couples
  - ▶ Adoption by Qualified Gay and Lesbian Couples
  - ▶ Don't Ask, Don't Tell
  - ▶ Gay- and Transgender-Inclusive Hate Crimes Laws
  - ▶ Non-Discrimination Laws
  - ▶ Bi-National Gay Couples
- ▶ Feelings Towards, Personal Relationships with, and Beliefs about Gay and Transgender People

# Attitudes Toward LGBT-Related Policy Issues

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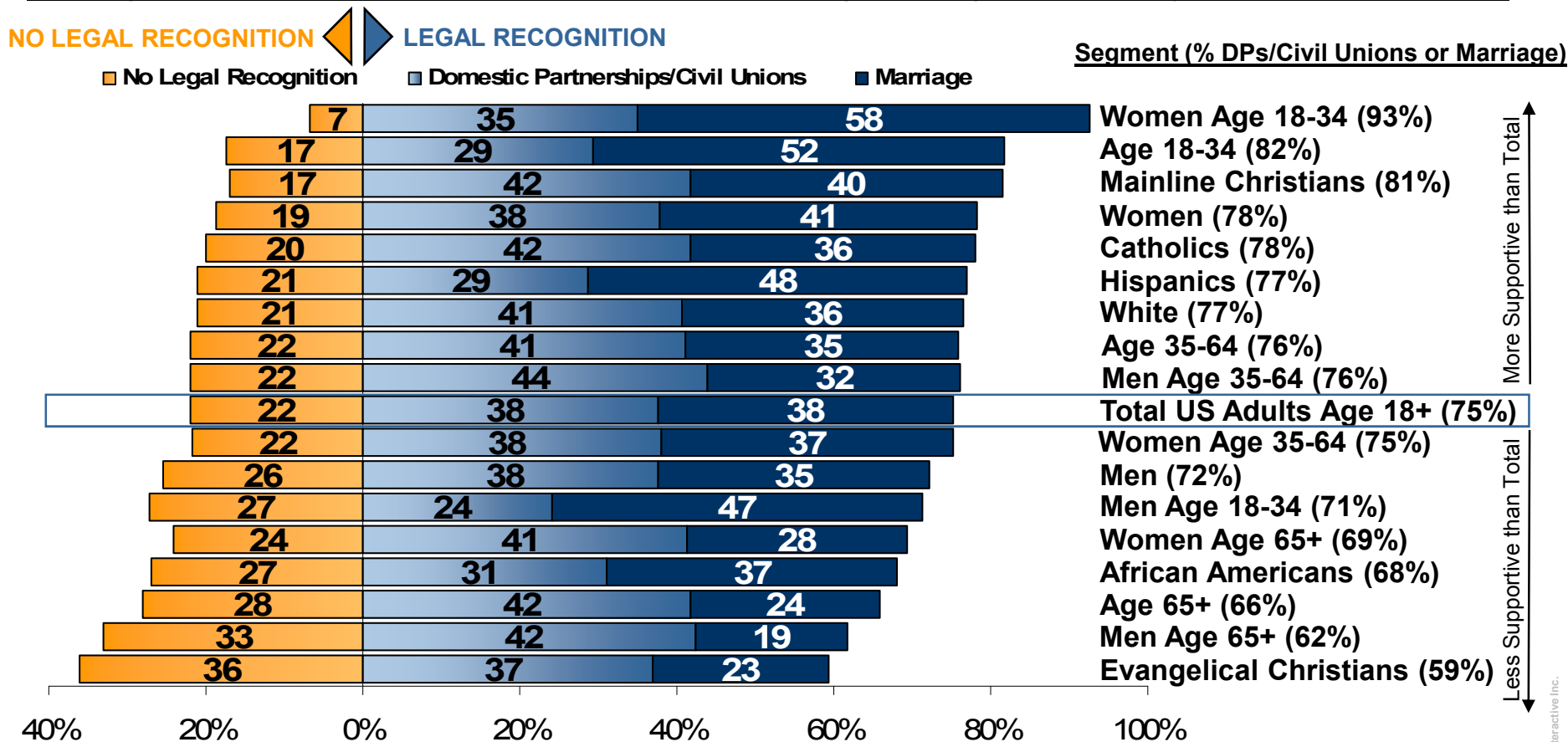


# Marriage and Relationship Recognition

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Three out of four U.S. adults believe there should be either marriage or domestic partnerships/civil unions for gay and lesbian couples. Those under 35, women, Mainline Christians, Catholics and Hispanics are the segments most likely to favor legal recognition of gay and lesbian couples' relationships while Evangelical Christians are the most likely among the groups analyzed to think there should be no legal recognition (though a majority of Evangelical Christians support domestic partnerships/civil unions or marriage).

### Marriage, Domestic Partnerships/Civil Unions or No Legal Recognition for Gay and Lesbian Couples



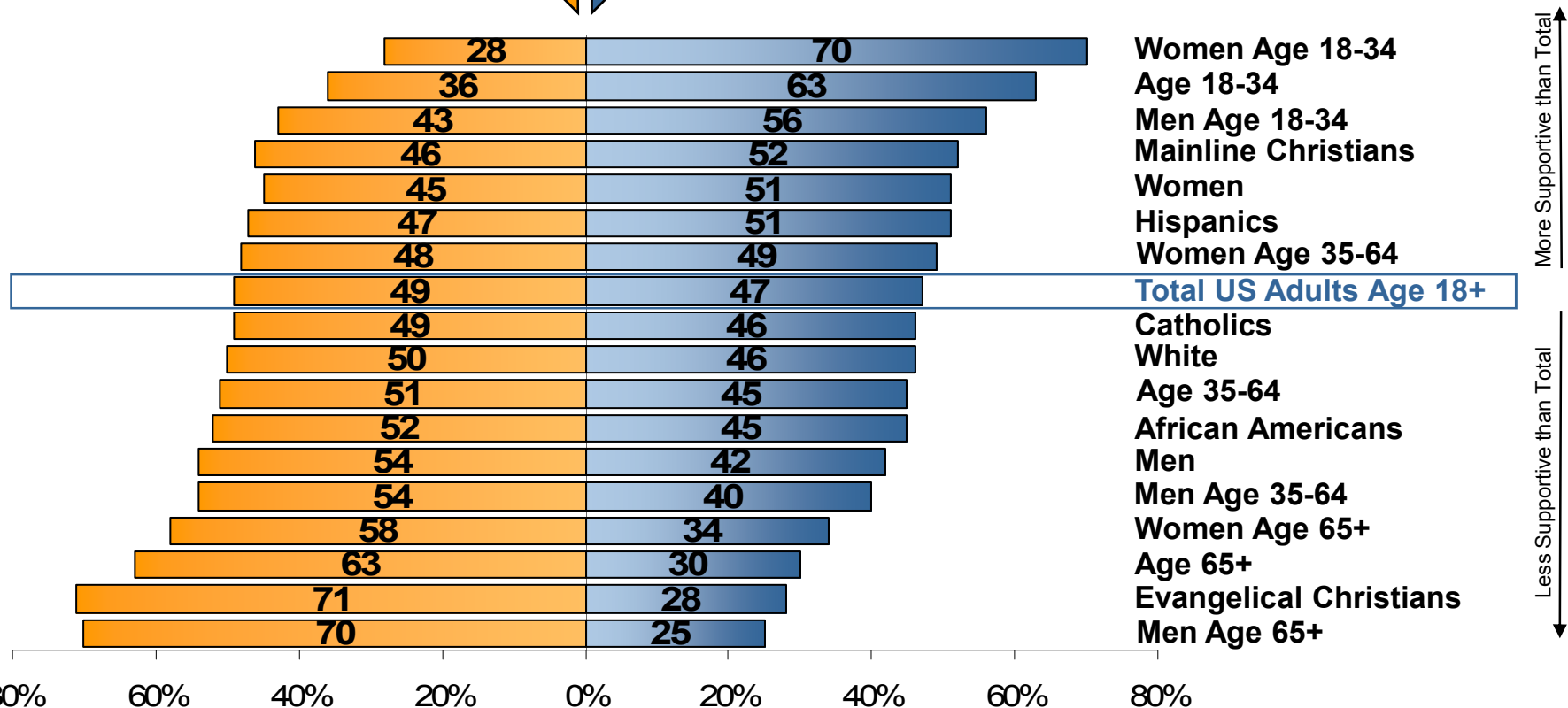
Q630: Which of the following three statements comes closest to your view? Gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to legally marry. Gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to form domestic partnerships or civil unions, but not legally marry. There should be no legal recognition of gay and lesbian couples' relationships. Base: U.S. adults 18+ (n=2,008)

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# U.S. adults are evenly split on marriage for gay and lesbian couples. A majority of those under age 35, Mainline Christians, women and Hispanics favor marriage.

## Marriage for Gay and Lesbian Couples

OPPOSE ◀▶ FAVOR



Q625: Do you favor or oppose the following proposals? Allowing gay and lesbian couples to legally marry.

Base: U.S. adults 18+ (n=2,008)

**Significant differences in attitudes towards marriage by gender and age. Mainline Christians and Catholics are significantly more likely to favor marriage than Evangelical Christians. No statistically significant differences by race/ethnicity.**

**% Who Favor/Oppose Marriage of Gay and Lesbian Couples by Demographics**

	% Favor	% Oppose
U.S. Adults Age 18+	47	49
Gender		
Women	51	45
Men	42	54
Age		
18-34	63	36
35-64	45	51
65 or older	30	63
Gender by Age		
Women 18-34	70	28
Men 18-34	56	43
Women 35-64	49	48
Men 35-64	40	54
Women 65+	34	58
Men 65+	25	70

	% Favor	% Oppose
U.S. Adults Age 18+	47	49
Race/Ethnicity		
White (Non-Hispanic)	46	50
African American (Non-Hispanic)	45	52
Hispanics (Any Race)	51	47
Religion		
Mainline Christians	52	46
Catholics	46	49
Evangelical Christians	28	71

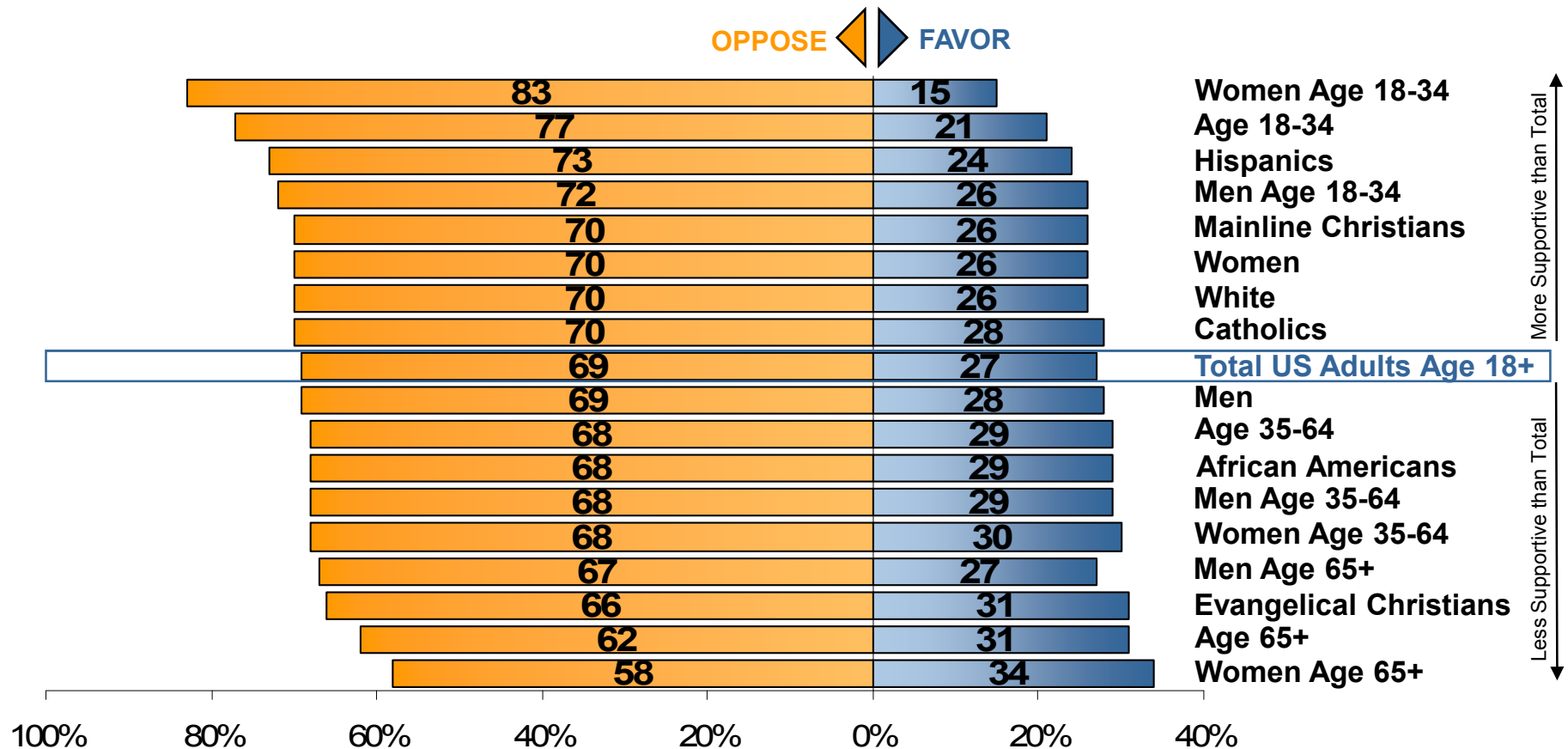
Q625: Do you favor or oppose the following proposals? Allowing gay and lesbian couples to legally marry.  
 Base: U.S. adults 18+ (n=2,008)

## **Adoption by Qualified Gay and Lesbian Couples**

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**Strong support for adoption. Nearly seven out of 10 U.S. adults (69%) oppose laws that would ban qualified gay and lesbian couples from adopting children. More than three in four (77%) under age 35 and even two out of three Evangelical Christians oppose banning adoption for qualified gay and lesbian couples.**

**Laws that Would Ban Qualified Gay and Lesbian Couples from Adopting Children**



Q645: Do you favor or oppose the following proposals? Laws that would ban qualified gay and lesbian couples from adopting children.  
 Base: U.S. adults 18+ (n=2,008)



Opposition to banning adoption for qualified gay and lesbian couples is negatively correlated with age. No statistically significant differences by gender, race/ethnicity, or religion.

**% Who Favor/Oppose Laws that Would Ban Qualified Gay and Lesbian Couples from Adopting Children by Demographics**

	% Favor	% Oppose
U.S. Adults Age 18+	27	69
Gender		
Women	26	70
Men	28	69
Age		
18-34	21	77
35-64	29	68
65 or older	31	62
Gender by Age		
Women 18-34	15	83
Men 18-34	26	72
Women 35-64	30	68
Men 35-64	29	68
Women 65+	34	58
Men 65+	27	67

	% Favor	% Oppose
U.S. Adults Age 18+	27	69
Race/Ethnicity		
White (Non-Hispanic)	26	70
African American (Non-Hispanic)	29	68
Hispanics (Any Race)	24	73
Religion		
Mainline Christians	26	70
Catholics	28	70
Evangelical Christians	31	66

Q645: Do you favor or oppose the following proposals? Laws that would ban qualified gay and lesbian couples from adopting children.  
 Base: U.S. adults 18+ (n=2,008)

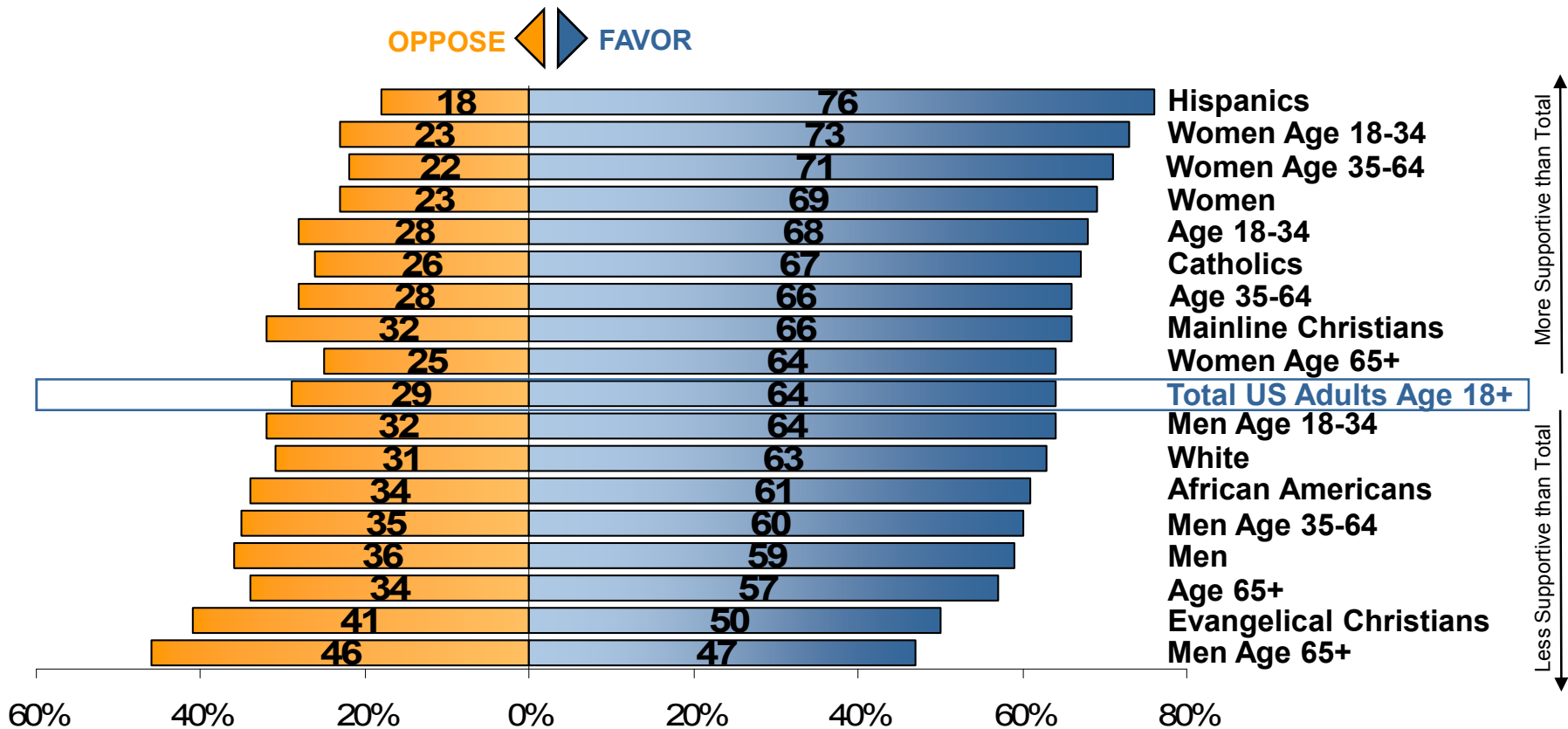


## **Don't Ask, Don't Tell**

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Almost two-thirds (64%) of U.S. adults believe openly gay military personnel should be allowed to serve in the armed forces. Hispanics and women are more supportive while older men and Evangelical Christians are more likely to oppose.

**Allowing Openly Gay Military Personnel to Serve in the Armed Forces**



Q625: Do you favor or oppose the following proposals? Allowing openly gay military personnel to serve in the armed forces.  
 Base: U.S. adults 18+ (n=2,008)

**Women are more likely than men, those under 65 are more likely than those 65+, Hispanics are more likely than Whites and African Americans, and Mainline Christians and Catholics are more likely than Evangelical Christians to favor gay people serving openly in the military.**

**% Who Favor/Oppose Allowing Openly Gay Military Personnel to Serve in the Armed Forces**

	% Favor	% Oppose
U.S. Adults Age 18+	64	29
Gender		
Women	69	23
Men	59	36
Age		
18-34	68	28
35-64	66	28
65 or older	57	34
Gender by Age		
Women 18-34	73	23
Men 18-34	64	32
Women 35-64	71	22
Men 35-64	60	35
Women 65+	64	25
Men 65+	47	46

	% Favor	% Oppose
U.S. Adults Age 18+	64	29
Race/Ethnicity		
White (Non-Hispanic)	63	31
African American (Non-Hispanic)	61	34
Hispanics (Any Race)	76	18
Religion		
Mainline Christians	66	32
Catholics	67	26
Evangelical Christians	50	41

Q625: Do you favor or oppose the following proposals? Allowing openly gay military personnel to serve in the armed forces. Base: U.S. adults 18+ (n=2,008)

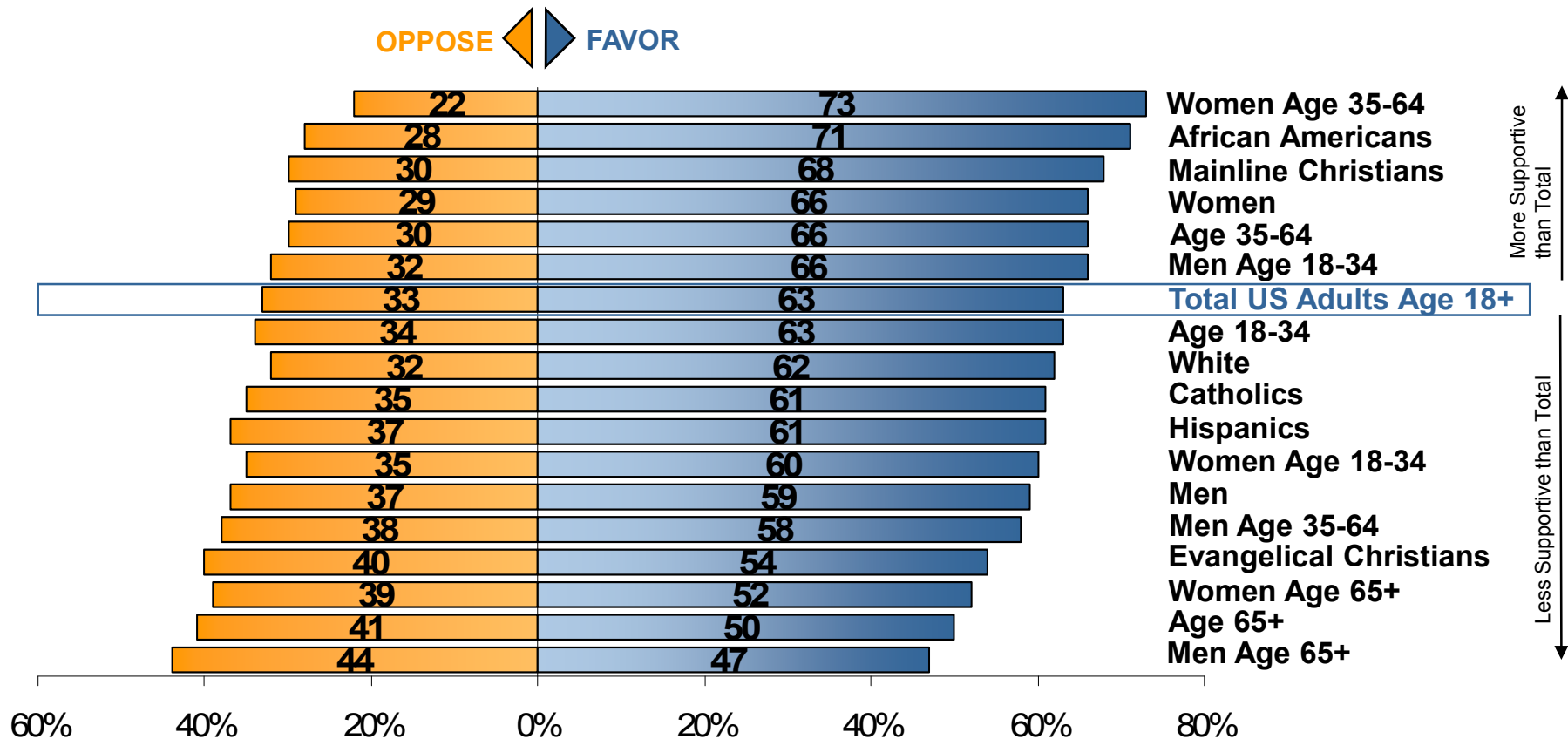


## **Gay- and Transgender-Inclusive Hate Crimes Laws**

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More than six in 10 (63%) U.S. adults favor expanding hate crime laws to cover gay and transgender people. More than seven in 10 women age 35-64 (73%) and African Americans (71%) favor this proposal while only half of those age 65+ do.

**Expanding Hate Crimes Laws to Cover Gay and Transgender People**



Q625: Do you favor or oppose the following proposals? Expanding existing hate crimes laws -- which currently cover violent crimes committed against someone because of their race, religion, color, or national origin -- to include violent crimes against someone because they are gay or transgender. Base: U.S. adults 18+ (n=2,008)

**Women are more likely than men, those under 65 are more likely than those 65+, African Americans are more likely than Whites and Hispanics, and Mainline Christians are more likely than Catholics and Evangelical Christians to favor expanding hate crimes laws to cover gay and transgender people.**

**% Who Favor/Oppose Expanding Hate Crimes Laws to Cover Gay and Transgender People**

	% Favor	% Oppose
U.S. Adults Age 18+	63	33
Gender		
Women	66	29
Men	59	37
Age		
18-34	63	34
35-64	66	30
65 or older	50	41
Gender by Age		
Women 18-34	60	35
Men 18-34	66	32
Women 35-64	73	22
Men 35-64	58	38
Women 65+	52	39
Men 65+	47	44

	% Favor	% Oppose
U.S. Adults Age 18+	63	33
Race/Ethnicity		
White (Non-Hispanic)	62	32
African American (Non-Hispanic)	71	28
Hispanics (Any Race)	61	37
Religion		
Mainline Christians	68	30
Catholics	61	35
Evangelical Christians	54	40

Q625: Do you favor or oppose the following proposals? Expanding existing hate crimes laws -- which currently cover violent crimes committed against someone because of their race, religion, color, or national origin -- to include violent crimes against someone because they are gay or transgender. *Base: U.S. adults 18+ (n=2,008)*



## **Non-Discrimination Laws**

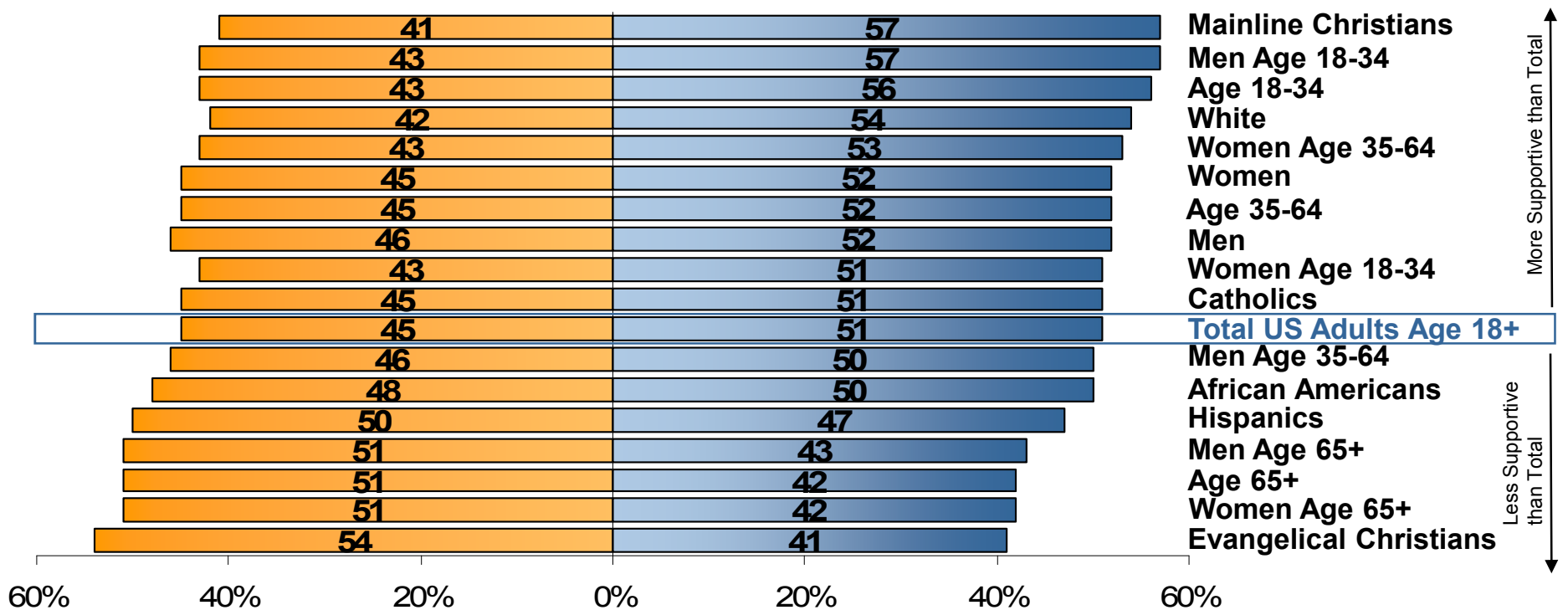
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A slight majority of U.S. adults favor employment, housing, and public accommodations non-discrimination laws for gay and transgender people. Mainline Christians and those under age 35 are the most likely out of the groups analyzed and Evangelical Christians and those 65+ are the least likely of the groups analyzed to favor these laws.

**Employment, Housing and Public Accommodations  
Non-Discrimination Laws for Gay and Transgender People**

OPPOSE ◀▶ FAVOR



Q625: Do you favor or oppose the following proposals? Modifying current employment law to make it illegal to fire someone from their job or deny someone housing or public accommodations solely because they are gay or transgender. Base: U.S. adults 18+ (n=2,008)

**Mainline Christians and Catholics are more likely than Evangelical Christians, and those under 65 are more likely than those 65+ to favor non-discrimination laws covering gay and transgender people. No statistically significant differences by gender or race/ethnicity.**

**% Who Favor/Oppose Employment, Housing and Public Accommodations  
Non-Discrimination Laws for Gay and Transgender People**

	% Favor	% Oppose
U.S. Adults Age 18+	51	45
Gender		
Women	51	45
Men	52	46
Age		
18-34	56	43
35-64	52	45
65 or older	42	51
Gender by Age		
Women 18-34	54	43
Men 18-34	57	43
Women 35-64	53	43
Men 35-64	50	46
Women 65+	42	51
Men 65+	43	51

	% Favor	% Oppose
U.S. Adults Age 18+	51	45
Race/Ethnicity		
White (Non-Hispanic)	54	42
African American (Non-Hispanic)	50	48
Hispanics (Any Race)	47	50
Religion		
Mainline Christians	57	41
Catholics	51	45
Evangelical Christians	41	54

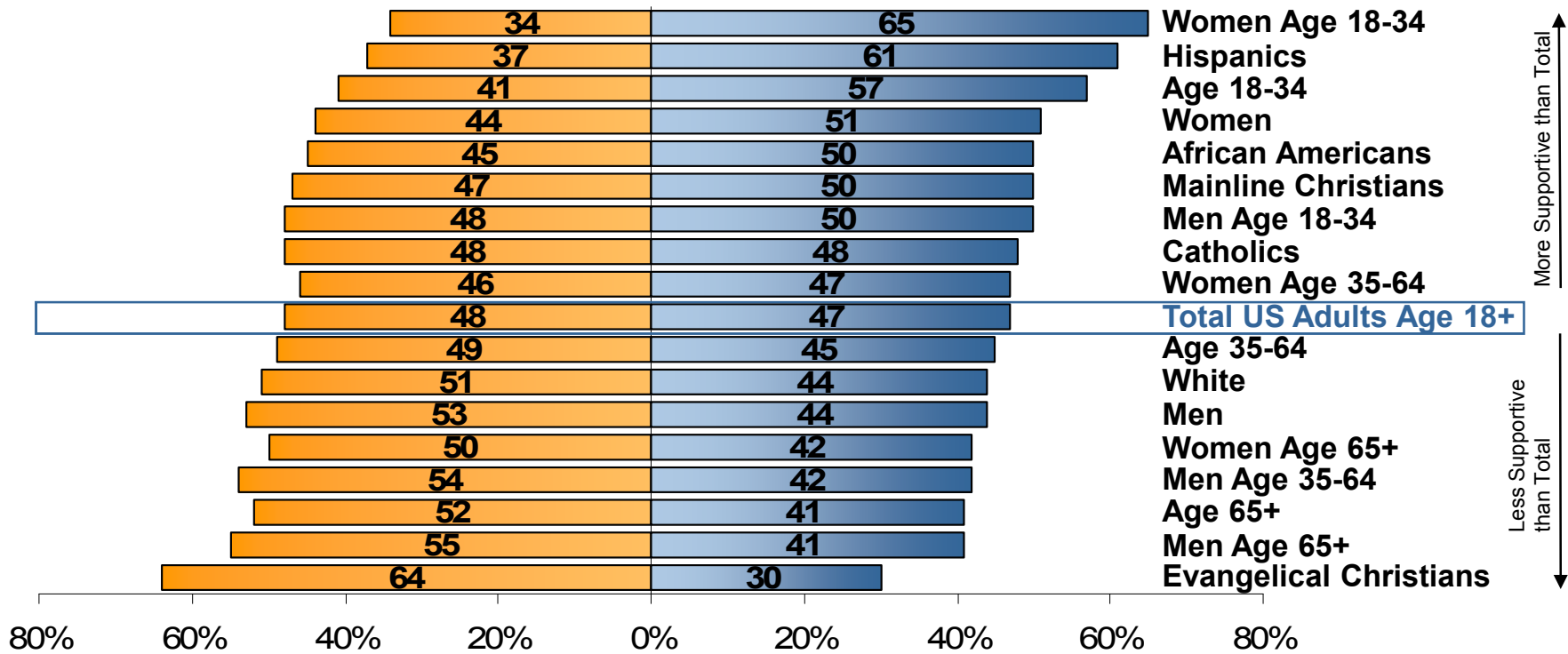
Q625: Do you favor or oppose the following proposals? Modifying current employment law to make it illegal to fire someone from their job or deny someone housing or public accommodations solely because they are gay or transgender. Base: U.S. adults 18+ (n=2,008)

## **Bi-National Gay Couples**

**U.S. adults are evenly split on immigration equality for bi-national gay couples. More than half of women (51%), Mainline Christians (52%), those under age 35 (57%), and Hispanics (61%) favor this while fewer than three in 10 (28%) Evangelical Christians do.**

**Allowing Gay Americans to Sponsor Their Non-American Life Partners to Become Residents of the U.S.**

OPPOSE ◀ ▶ FAVOR



Q645: Do you favor or oppose the following proposals? Allowing gay Americans to sponsor their non-American life partners to become residents of the United States.  
 Base: U.S. adults 18+ (n=2,008)

**Women are more likely than men, those younger than 35 are more likely than those 35+, Hispanics are more likely than Whites, and Mainline Christians and Catholics are more likely than Evangelical Christians to favor immigration equality for bi-national gay couples.**

**% Who Favor/Oppose Immigration Equality for Gay Americans**

	% Favor	% Oppose
U.S. Adults Age 18+	47	48
Gender		
Women	51	44
Men	44	53
Age		
18-34	57	41
35-64	45	49
65 or older	41	52
Gender by Age		
Women 18-34	65	34
Men 18-34	50	48
Women 35-64	47	46
Men 35-64	42	54
Women 65+	42	50
Men 65+	41	55

	% Favor	% Oppose
U.S. Adults Age 18+	47	48
Race/Ethnicity		
White (Non-Hispanic)	44	51
African American (Non-Hispanic)	50	45
Hispanics (Any Race)	61	37
Religion		
Mainline Christians	50	47
Catholics	48	48
Evangelical Christians	30	64

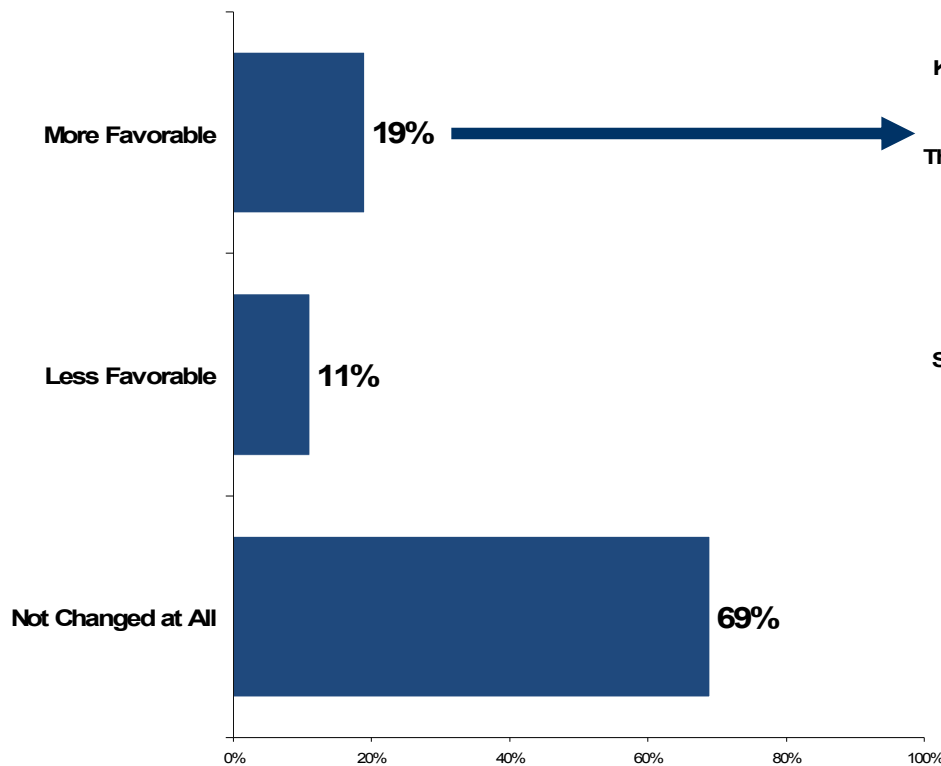
Q645: Do you favor or oppose the following proposals? Allowing gay Americans to sponsor their non-American life partners to become residents of the United States.  
 Base: U.S. adults 18+ (n=2,008)

# **Feelings Towards, Personal Relationships with, and Beliefs About Gay and Transgender People**

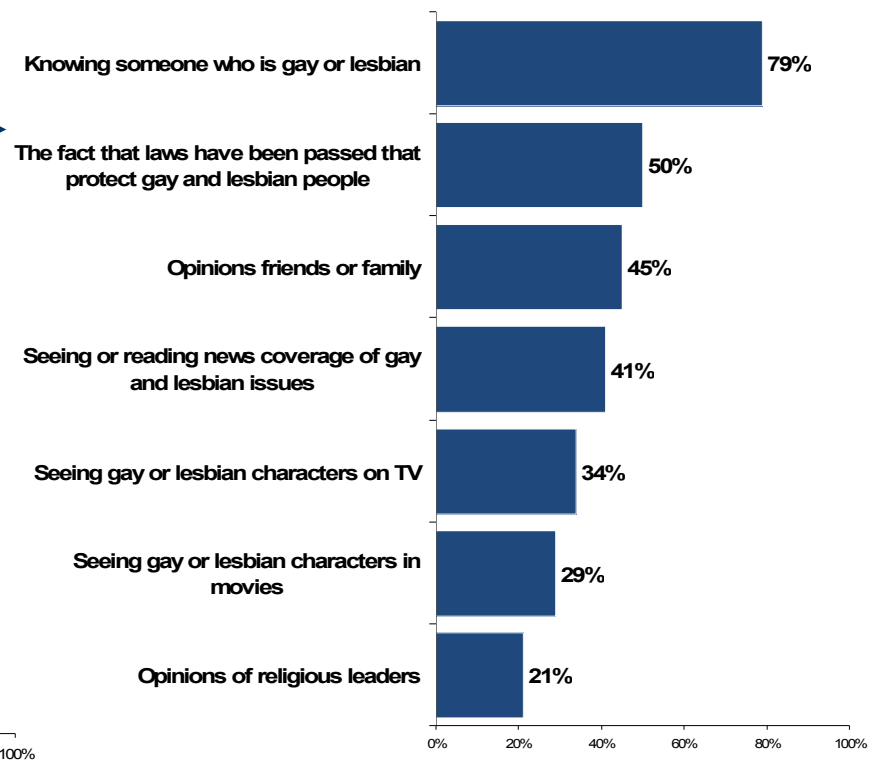
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Since 2003, almost two in 10 (19%) say their feelings towards gays and lesbians have become more favorable while about 1 in 10 (11%) have become less favorable. Knowing someone who is gay or lesbian was a contributing factor for nearly eight in 10 (79%) whose feelings became more favorable.

### Change in Feelings Towards Gays and Lesbians Over Past 5 Years



### Contributing Factors to Feelings Towards Gays and Lesbians Becoming More Favorable

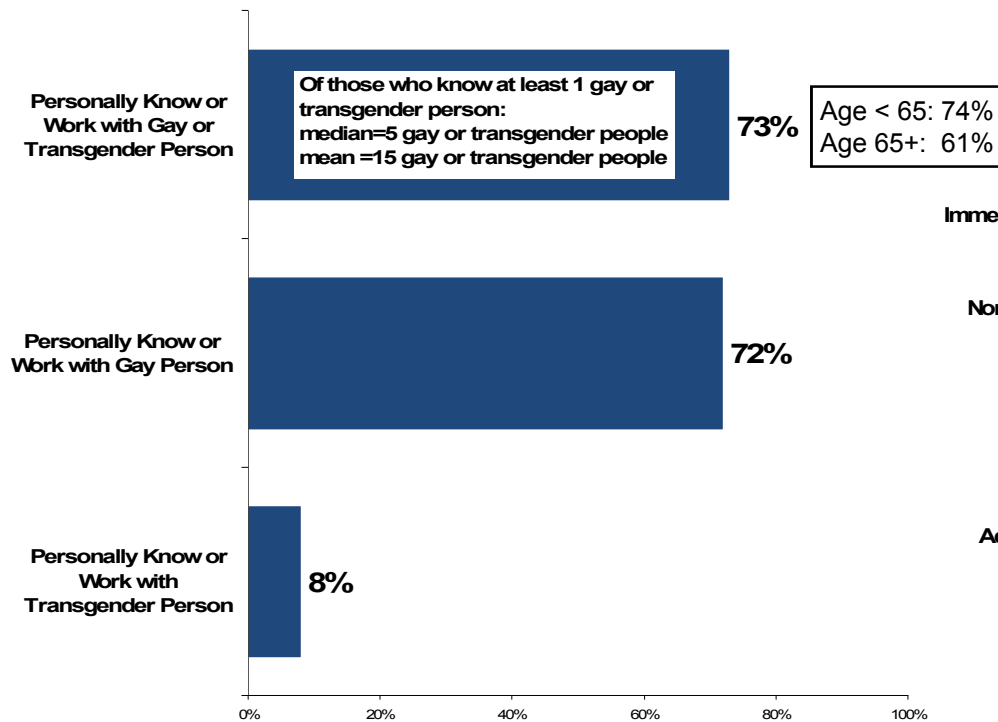


**Q610:** Over the past five years, would you say your feelings towards gays and lesbians have become much more favorable, somewhat more favorable, somewhat less favorable, much less favorable or not changed at all? *Base: U.S. adults 18+ (n=2,008)*

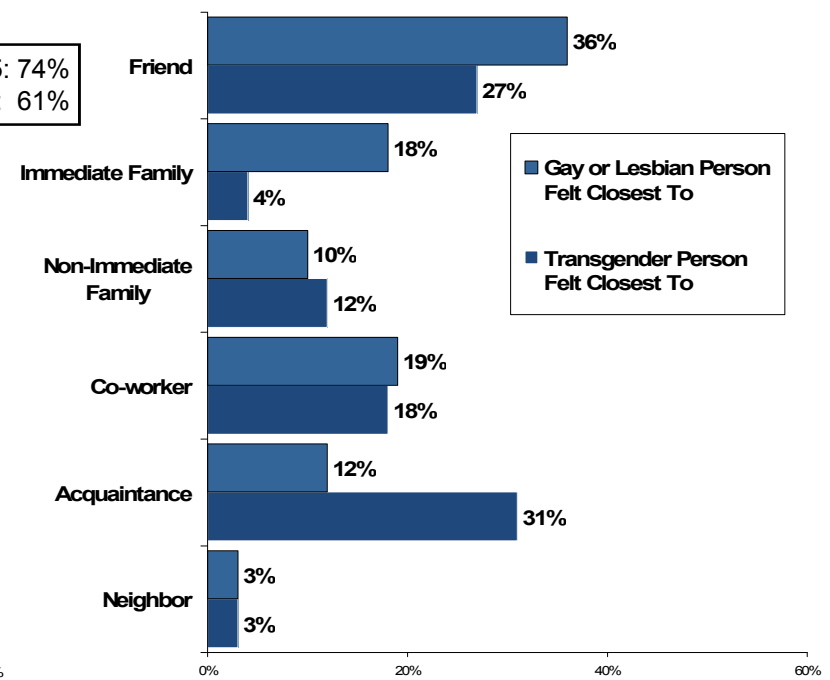
**Q615:** Which of the following do you believe contributed to your feelings becoming more favorable? Please tell me all that contributed. *Multiple responses accepted. Base: Respondents whose feelings have become more favorable (n=362)*

Nearly three out of four (73%) U.S. adults personally know or work with a gay or transgender person. Of those who know/work with at least one, half know/work with five or more gay or transgender people, and almost two-thirds (64%) say the gay or lesbian person they've felt closest to is a family member or friend.

### Do you Personally Know or Work with a Gay or Transgender Person?



### Relationship of Gay or Transgender Person Felt Closest To



Q655: Do you personally know or work with someone who is gay or lesbian? Q670: Do you personally know or work with a transgender person? Base: U.S. adults 18+ (n=2,008)

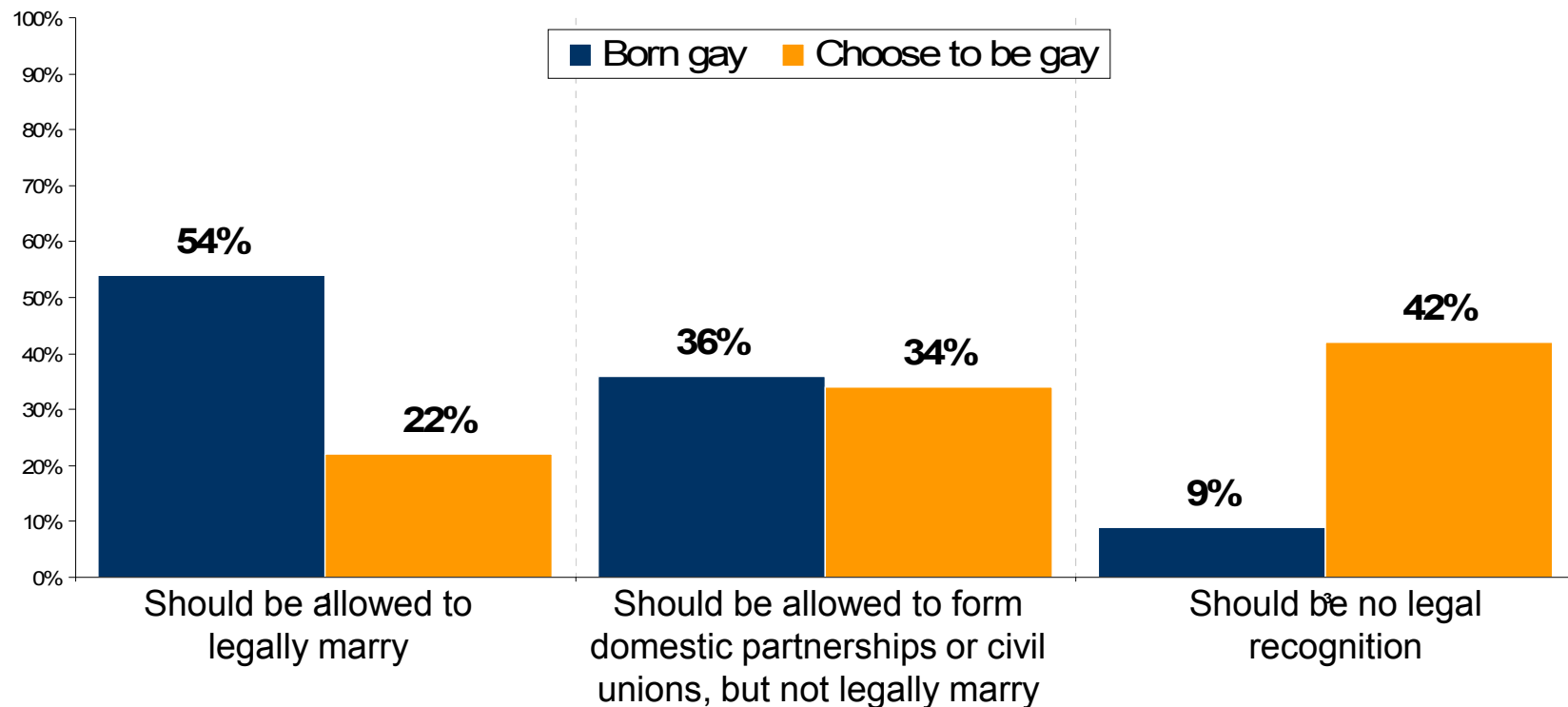
Q660: Thinking of the gay or lesbian person you've felt closest to, what is your relationship to him or her? Is that person yourself or is he or she a member of your family, your non-immediate family, a friend, a coworker, a neighbor, or an acquaintance? Base: Respondents who know someone who is gay or lesbian (n=1,421)

Q675: Thinking of the transgender person you've felt closest to, what is your relationship to him or her? Is that person yourself or is he or she a member of your family, your non-immediate family, a friend, a coworker, a neighbor, or an acquaintance? Base: Respondents who know someone who is a transgender person (n=168)



Those who believe people are born gay are significantly more likely to believe gay and lesbian couples should be able to legally marry. Those who believe people choose to be gay are significantly more likely to think there should be no legal recognition of gay and lesbian couples' relationships.

**Attitudes Towards Marriage, Domestic Partnerships/Civil Unions, and No Legal Recognition for Gay and Lesbian Couples by Beliefs about Born vs. Choose to be Gay**



**Q630:** Which of the following three statements comes closest to your view? Gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to legally marry. Gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to form domestic partnerships or civil unions, but not legally marry. There should be no legal recognition of gay and lesbian couples' relationships. *Base: U.S. adults 18+ (n=2,008)*

**Q650:** Do you think gay people are born gay or choose to be gay? Note: Half of sample heard "choose to be gay" first and half the sample heard "born gay" first. *Base: U.S. adults 18+ (n=2,008)*

# Demographic Profile of Respondents

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# Gender, Age, Urbanicity, Region, Employment Status, Political Party Affiliation

	Total
<b>Gender</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	49
Female	51
<b>Age</b>	<b>%</b>
18-34 (net)	28
18-24	13
25-34	15
35-64 (net)	54
35-44	19
45-54	20
55-64	15
65+	16
<i>MEAN</i>	45.6
<b>Urbanicity</b>	<b>%</b>
Metro (net)	80
In Center City of Metropolitan Area	31
Outside Center City, Inside Center City County	22
Inside Suburban County of Metropolitan Area	23
In Metropolitan Area with No Center City	5
In Non-Metropolitan Area	20

	Total
<b>Region</b>	<b>%</b>
East	22
Midwest	22
South	34
West	23
<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>%</b>
Employed (net)	60
Employed full time	46
Employed part time	14
Retired	21
Not employed	18
<b>Political Party Affiliation</b>	<b>%</b>
Democrat	39
Independent	30
Republican	25

# Education, Income

<b>Education</b>	<b>Total %</b>
High school or less (net)	44
Less than high school	1
Completed some high school	9
High school graduate or equivalent	35
Attended college or college degree (net)	45
Completed some college, but no degree	19
Associate's degree	8
College (e.g., B.A., B.S.)	18
Postgraduate degree	9
Refused/No response	2

<b>Income</b>	<b>Total %</b>
Less than \$40,000 (net)	31
Less than \$15,000	8
\$15,000 to \$24,999	8
\$25,000 to \$29,999	5
\$30,000 to \$34,999	4
\$35,000 to \$39,999	6
Less than \$40,000 (unspecified)	1
\$40,000 or More (net)	61
\$40,000 to \$49,999	7
\$50,000 to \$59,999	9
\$60,000 to \$74,999	9
\$75,000 to \$99,999	13
\$100,000 or more	23
\$40,000 or more (unspecified)	1
Refused/No response	8

# Race/Ethnicity, Marital Status, Adults in Household, Children in Household

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Total %</b>
White Non-Hispanic	67
Hispanic	13
Black/African American Non-Hispanic	11
Asian or Pacific Islander	2
Other race	4
Decline to answer	3

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>%</b>
Married/Living with partner (net)	58
Married	54
Living with partner	4
Single, never married	24
Divorced/Widowed/Separated (net)	17
Divorced	8
Widowed	7
Separated	2
Refused/No response	1

<b>Adults in Household</b>	<b>Total %</b>
1	14
2	33
3+	52
<i>MEAN</i>	2.9
<i>MEDIAN</i>	3

<b>Have Children Under 18 in Household</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	41
No	57