

RESEARCH, POLLS AND SURVEYS

In the face of persistent negative societal attitudes and governmental neglect of our needs, members of the LGBT community have courageously forged ahead to form relationships and create families. This is evidenced most dramatically in the most recent federal decennial census and surveys that show significant increases in the number of same-sex households and those with children.

The U.S. Census

The United States Census Bureau did not gather any data on single lesbians and gay men or the total number of lesbians and gays living in the United States in the 1990 and 2000 Census questionnaires. However, the Bureau did begin in 1990 to count and analyze the responses when two adults of the same sex and sharing a household identified each other as their “unmarried partner.” This census represented the first time that the U.S. Census Bureau provided a means for same-sex partners to identify themselves.¹ The 2000 Census showed a 72% increase over the 1990 Census in the number of unmarried partner households.²

In January of 2002, the U.S. Census Bureau released the final state-by-state reports that showed a final tally of more than four times the number of same-sex households than those who identified themselves in the 1990 census. The largest percentages of same-sex partner households were reported in California, New York, Texas and Florida, which together accounted for more than one-third of all same-sex partner households nationwide.³ New York State alone reported 46,490 same-sex households (which is 7.73% of all same-sex households nationwide).^{*} The 2000 Census also showed that of the 10 most populous metropolitan areas in the country, the Washington-Baltimore area had the highest percentage (1.5%) of same-sex couple households compared to all households, followed closely by San Francisco (1.1%) and then New York City (0.8%).³

Public Opinion Surveys

Several recent public opinion surveys have revealed important information on the lives of LGBT people and their families as well as the public’s views on key policy issues affecting them.

A public opinion survey conducted by The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation to gather information on the experiences of self-identified lesbians, gays and bisexuals across the country found that:⁴

- More than 28% report living with a partner as if they were married, and 74% say that they would marry legally someday if they could.

- 8% are parents or legal guardians of a child under 18 who lives in their home.
- Among those who are not parents of children under 18 years of age, 49% would like to adopt children of their own someday.

In a survey published by the Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, participants in Black LGBT Pride celebrations indicated that:⁵

- Marriage and domestic partnership were two of their three most important issues. Women respondents were more likely than men and transgender people to view marriage and domestic partnership as key issues for Black LGBT people.
- There is a high prevalence of parenting in Black LGBT people’s families: 40% of women, 18% of men and 15% of transgender people.
- Nearly 40% of Black women surveyed said they had at least one child.

A poll conducted by Zogby International/GL Census Partners found that 47% of gays and lesbians in the United States selected marriage rights as their top priority. Fifty-one percent of survey participants aged 18 to 24 and 57% of lesbians were more likely to put marriage as their top priority.⁶

A number of national public opinion polls conducted in the last several years to measure the general public’s views show strong support for certain anti-discrimination measures, such as the right to hospital visitation for lesbian and gay partners, partner health insurance and Social Security benefits for partners.⁷ The percentages of people polled who were in support of these issues are shown below.

Issue	Human Rights Campaign	Kaiser Family Foundation	Victory Foundation: Black voters	Victory Foundation: Hispanic voters
Hospital visitation rights for partners	90%	no data available	no data available	no data available
Partner health insurance benefits	66%	70%	67%	78%
Social Security benefits for partners	55%	68%	no data available	no data available
Inheritance rights	58%	73%	no data available	no data available

^{*} Human Rights Campaign: Gay and Lesbian Families in the United States: Same-sex Unmarried Partner Households —A Preliminary Analysis of 2000 United States Census Data, August 2001

The public also has some encouraging but mixed viewpoints on legally sanctioned marriages for lesbians and gay men, civil unions and adoption rights for lesbian and gay couples. The percentages of people polled who were in support of these issues are indicated below.

Issue	Human Rights Campaign	Kaiser Family Foundation	Victory Foundation: Black voters	Victory Foundation: Hispanic voters	ABC News
Civil unions	28% strongly support 20% somewhat support	45% men 49% women	39%	51%	no data available
Adoption	42%	46%	no data available	no data available	47%
Same-sex marriage	35%	55% oppose	no data available	no data available	no data available

More than merely gauging support or opposition, these surveys provide an additional dimension to the questions on family and relationship:

Human Rights Campaign

- 63% agreed with the idea that civil unions are the foundation for gay and lesbian families and have support among a plurality of the public.
- 59% agreed with the idea that couples should have the right to legal recognition as partners regardless of sexual orientation.
- 55% agreed with the idea that civil unions promote stability by giving lesbian and gay couples shared legal responsibility.
- 53% agreed with the idea that civil unions promote stability for children living in lesbian and gay households.

Gay and Lesbian Victory Foundation

- 57% of African American respondents and 60% of Latino respondents agreed that lesbians and gay men can be good parents, while 31% of African Americans and 28% of Latinos disagreed.
- 57% of Latino voters in the Northeast are most likely to support civil unions while 46% of African American voters who live in the Northeast support civil unions (48% are opposed).

Kaiser Family Foundation

- 56% of the respondents believe lesbian and gay partners can be as good at parenting as heterosexual couples.
- Levels of support vary by age, gender and religious affiliation, with women and younger adults expressing generally high levels of support for most of these policy issues. The majority of 18- to 29-year-olds support civil unions, marriage and adoptions (68%, 60% and 55%, respectively).
- 54% of the respondents believe same-sex marriage would undermine the traditional American family.

Hamilton College/Zogby International

- 66% of high school seniors across the country support the legal recognition of gay marriages and 68% agree that lesbian and gay couples should be allowed to adopt children.