



TO: **INTERESTED PARTIES**  
FROM: **HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN**  
RE: **PUBLIC OPINION ROUNDUP: RECENT  
LGBTQ+ POLLING**  
DATE: **MAY 2023**

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**Americans Believe the Amount of Anti-LGBTQ+ Legislation Is Excessive, Agreeing It Is “Political Theater”**

Likely voters across all political parties look at GOP efforts to flood state legislatures with anti-LGBTQ+ legislation as political theater. Recent polling indicates that 64% of all likely voters, including 72% of Democrats, 65% of Independents, and 55% of Republicans think that there is “too much legislation” aimed at “limiting the rights of transgender and gay people in America” ([Data For Progress survey of 1,220 likely voters, 3/24-26, 2023](#)). This quote from Cuban American former Republican Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen sums it up:

*“Intolerance is not a good look on anyone. I remain optimistic that voters will see through this charade and will encourage their elected officials to solve the real problems of America instead of masquerading as Moral Police Officers.”*

**Two Recent National Surveys Report Opposition to Bans on Gender-Affirming Care**

Majorities of Americans oppose “criminalizing” or “banning” gender transition-related medical care for minors: 54% oppose by [NPR/Marist on 3/20-23, 2023](#); 53% oppose by [Grinnell College National Survey on 3/14-19, 2023](#). Democrats and Independents drive opposition to such legislation, suggesting that support for such bans carries risk in a general election context.

**Majorities Disapprove of Banning LGBTQ+ Content in Schools – and Seem Prepared to Punish Candidates Who Do So**

When asked if middle school libraries should include materials related to “gender identity” (57% “should”) and “sexual orientation” (56%), majorities of Americans believe this content should be available. In fact, by a margin of 32 percentage points, Americans are more worried that “materials that could be valuable to students will be removed from school libraries” (62%), than worry that “materials that could be harmful to students will remain in school libraries” (30%). Yet again, Democrats and Independents are in a different place than their GOP counterparts suggesting headaches for Republicans in the 2024 elections. ([Grinnell College National Poll, 3/14-19, 2023](#))

Indeed, it looks like this issue could be a disqualifier for elected officials who support curriculum censorship and book bans, based on recent polling ([Ipsos, 4/24-25, 2023 among 1,005 adults nationwide, the vast majority of whom are registered to vote](#)). More than six in 10 Americans say they would be less likely to back a candidate who “supports policies that ban books in schools and in school libraries on subject matter that deals with sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity” (38% more likely, 62% less likely)

It is also worth noting that the intensity is on the backlash side – 15% say they are “much more likely” to back a candidate who espouses these views, while 41% say it makes them “much less likely” to support such a person. These numbers are in line with the likelihood of backing a candidate who wants to “severely restrict abortion access” (35% more likely, 65% less likely).

### **DeSantis’ Anti-LGBTQ+ Policies Don’t Sit Well with Most Americans and They Side with Disney**

As the section above notes, significantly more Americans are repelled by than attracted to Ron DeSantis’ extreme rightwing agenda. Majorities of Americans, including 83% of Republicans, say they are more likely to choose a candidate who focuses on the economy (63%) rather than social issues (22%).

DeSantis’ strategy has the potential to lose him critical support should he run for president. By nearly a two-to-one margin, Americans say their opinion of the Florida governor is “less favorable” (42%) than more so (23% more favorable) “as a result of his fight over LGBTQ+ issues in Florida.”

While this is largely driven by Independents and Democrats, Republican voters are by no means in lockstep with DeSantis. While Republicans are more favorable (44%) than less favorable (19%) toward DeSantis based on his anti-LGBTQ+ policies, another 37% say his views have no impact on their opinion of Governor DeSantis. That a majority of GOP voters (56%) either like him less or are unwilling to give the governor props for his anti-LGBTQ+ stances suggests that he may have even committed an overreach with members of his own party.

His tussle with Disney is also not helping his national prospects – and voters are paying attention. Majorities are aware of Disney’s objections to Florida’s “Don’t say LGBTQ+,” law (54%) and roughly the same number (53%) are at least “somewhat familiar” with DeSantis’ “efforts to revoke some of Walt Disney World’s legal privileges in Florida.”

More voters of all political stripes are more inclined to agree that Disney was within its right to criticize Florida’s “Don’t Say LGBTQ+” legislation (55% yes, 23% no). Even more are inclined to agree that the Governor is “punishing Disney for exercising their right to free speech” (64%) than believe DeSantis is “rightfully rolling back special treatment for Disney” (36%).

## Bans on Drag Shows Is Another Non-Starter with the Public

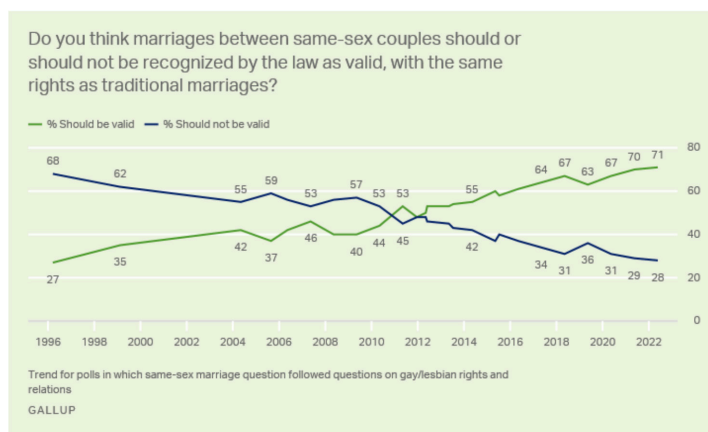
Nearly six in 10 (58%) Americans oppose laws that would restrict drag shows or performances in their state, while 39% support legislation to restrict these performances. While 61% of Republicans are in favor of these bans, 73% of Democrats and 57% of Independents oppose the proposed limitations ([NPR/Marist on 3/20-23, 2023](#)).

## Most Say Businesses Should Not Have Right to Deny Service Based on Sexual Orientation as Supreme Court Decision in 303 Creative Looms

The [March 2023 Grinnell College National Poll](#) reports that more than two-thirds of Americans (68%) oppose denial of service to LGBTQ+ individuals because of religious objections to homosexuality. Slightly more than one-quarter (27%) support religious refusal.

## Americans Continue to Be Decidedly in Favor of Same-Sex Marriage

There is consensus among opinion researchers that support for marriage equality is also high, with support hovering around 70%. According to [PRRI's 2022 American Values Atlas](#) (random sample of 22,984 adults conducted in the winter of 2022), support for same-sex marriage is at 60% or greater in 43 states. Mississippi is the only state in the country below 50% (at 49%).



## Support for Equality Act, Nondiscrimination Protections for LGBTQ+ Individuals Continues to Be Exceedingly High. It's an Issue that Transcends Partisanship, Religious Affiliation, and Geography.

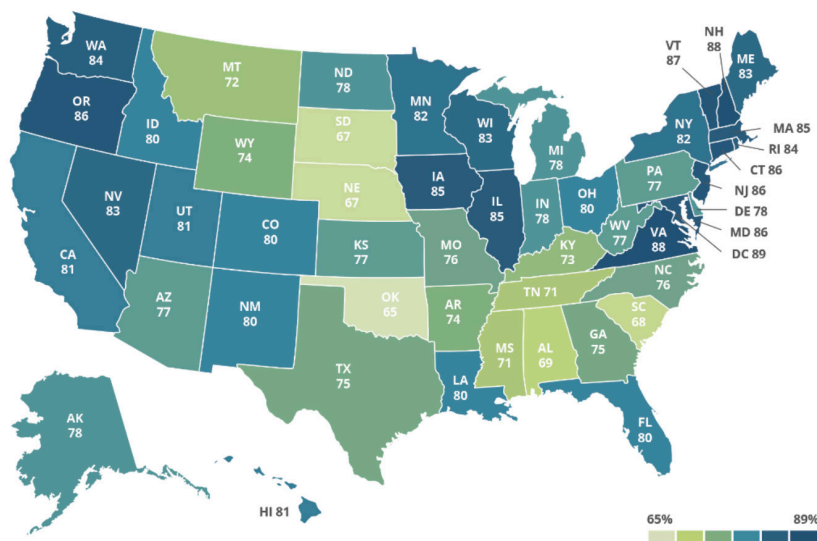
According to PRRI, eight in ten Americans (80%) favor laws that would protect gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people against discrimination in jobs, public accommodations, and housing. Nearly half (48%) support these protections "strongly." Fewer than one in five Americans (18%) oppose these laws, including 7% that "strongly" oppose them.

Overwhelming numbers of Democrats (90%), Independents (82%), and Republicans (66%), favor nondiscrimination provisions for LGBTQ+ people. Support has grown over the last five years among all three partisan groups.

Strong majorities of voters in every state support these laws. In fact, there is no state in the nation where support is below 65%. It is also worth noting that vast majorities of most major religious groups support nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ people.

**FIGURE 5. Support for LGBT Nondiscrimination Protections, by State**

Percent who favor laws that would protect gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people against discrimination in jobs, public accommodations, and housing:



Source: PRRI, American Values Atlas, 2022.

## Americans Support for the Equality Act Is Predicated on the Belief that Discrimination Is a Reality for the Trans Community.

Support is high for these protections because Americans know discrimination exists. Polling by [PRRI in September 2022](#) showed that 68% believe “there is a lot of discrimination” against transgender people.

Members of the LGBTQ+ community agree. The recently released “[2023 US National Survey on the Mental Health of Young People](#)” conducted among of 35,208 LGBTQ+ youth ages 13 to 24 in the winter of 2022 by The Trevor Project reported these findings:

- 64% of transgender and nonbinary youth reported that they have experienced discrimination in the past year because of their gender identity.
- A majority (53%) of young LGBTQ+ Americans say they were verbally harassed because people thought they were LGBTQ+.
- 24% of LGBTQ+ youth reported that they have been physically threatened or harmed due to either their sexual orientation or gender identity. The numbers are a bit higher (27%) for transgender and nonbinary young people.