



CBS NEWS POLL
For release: June 9, 2010
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VIEWS OF GAYS AND LESBIANS
May 20-24, 2010

The percentage of Americans that know someone who is gay or lesbian has nearly doubled over the past 18 years. And as more Americans have direct contact with gays and lesbians, fewer see it as morally wrong or as a choice.

- Nearly eight in 10 Americans know someone who is gay or lesbian, a percentage that has increased by 35 percentage points since 1992.
- 43% of Americans think homosexual relations between consenting adults are wrong, while slightly more - 48% - do not. That has changed since 1978, when a majority felt it was wrong.
- Just 36% think homosexuality is something people choose to be, most (51%) think it is how one is born. That, too, has changed over the years.
- 53% of Americans think it is necessary to have laws that protect gays and lesbians from discrimination in hiring and promotion, 43% do not.

DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS GAY OR LESBIAN?

More than three quarters of Americans today say they know someone who is gay or lesbian, a figure that has grown dramatically over the past two decades. When this question was asked in 1992, 56% of Americans said they did not know anyone who was gay or lesbian. More than six in 10 have a close friend, work colleague, or relative who is gay or lesbian.

Do You Know Someone Who is Gay or Lesbian?

	Now	8/1992
Yes	77%	42%
No	22	56

A majority of Americans of all ages, incomes, and regions of the country know someone who is gay or lesbian, though there are differences. Americans with higher education and income levels are more likely to know someone who is gay or lesbian.

Americans under thirty are particularly likely to know someone who is gay or lesbian, and although older Americans are less likely to, even a majority of those over 65 know someone.

Do You Know Someone Who is Gay or Lesbian?

	Total	Under 30	30-65	Over 65
Yes	77%	84%	77%	66%
No	22	16	22	31

HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONS: RIGHT OR WRONG?

Americans are divided as to whether homosexual relations between consenting adults is wrong – 43% say it is, while slightly more (48%) say it is not. But those views have changed over time. When Gallup asked this question in 1978, six in 10 Americans said homosexual relations between consenting adults was wrong.

	Are Homosexual Relations Wrong?		
	Now	1/2009	1/1978*
Yes	43%	41%	62%
No	48	54	25

*Gallup

There are differences by age: Americans over 65 tend to think homosexual relations are wrong, while people under 30 do not, with those in between more divided. Republicans and conservatives tend to think homosexual relations are wrong, while Democrats and liberals – and to a lesser extent independents and moderates – do not.

Knowing someone who is gay or lesbian affects how Americans feel about the morality of homosexual relations. 53% of those who know someone who is gay or lesbian do not believe homosexual relations between consenting adults is wrong, while 54% of those who do not know anyone who is gay or lesbian think such relations are wrong.

	Are Homosexual Relations Wrong?		
	All Americans	Know gay or lesbian	Don't know gay or lesbian
Yes	43%	39%	54%
No	48	53	32

IS HOMOSEXUALITY A CHOICE?

About half of Americans think people are born homosexual, while about a third thinks that is something one chooses to be. These results haven't changed much since September 2008, but when the question was asked back in 1993, Americans were divided.

	Is Being Homosexual Something You...?		
	Now	9/2008	2/1993
Choose	36%	37%	44%
Are born as	51	51	43

Knowing someone who is gay or lesbian impacts views on this issue as well. Those who know a gay or lesbian person are more apt to think homosexuals are born that way.

	Is Being Homosexual Something You...?		
	All Americans	Know gay or lesbian	Don't know gay or lesbian
Choose	36%	34%	45%
Are born as	51	56	37

JOB DISCRIMINATION AGAINST GAYS AND LESBIANS

53% think it is necessary to have laws that protect gays and lesbians from discrimination in hiring and promotion. Americans under 65, Democrats, independents, liberals, and moderates all tend to think such laws are necessary, while Republicans, conservatives, and Americans over 65 do not. There are some gender differences on this issue too: nearly six in 10 women think these laws are necessary, while men are divided.

Is It Necessary to Protect Gays and Lesbians from Discrimination in Hiring and Promotion?			
	Total	Men	Women
Yes	53%	47%	58%
No	43	50	35

DIFFERENT TERMS = SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT RESULTS

Americans respond differently when different terminology is used. When asked whether it is wrong, opinion is more closely divided when the term "homosexual relations" is used than when the phrase "same sex relations" is used.

Are Homosexual/Same-Sex Relations Wrong?		
	"Homosexual"	"Same-Sex"
Yes	43%	39%
No	48	53

And when the term "being gay or lesbian" is substituted for "being homosexual", Americans are slightly more likely to view being gay or lesbian as a choice rather than something one is born as.

Is Being Homosexual/Gay or Lesbian Something You...?		
	"Homosexual"	"Gay or Lesbian"
Choose	36%	39%
Are born as	51	47

This poll was conducted among a random sample of 1054 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone May 20-24, 2010. Phone numbers were dialed from random digit dial samples of both standard land-line and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher.

This poll release conforms to the Standards of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

CBS NEWS POLL
How Americans View Gays and Lesbians
May 20-24, 2010

q77 Do you think being gay or lesbian is something people choose to be, or do you think it is something they cannot change?

	***** HALF SAMPLE A *****				
	***** Age *****				
	Total	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
	%	%	%	%	%
Choose to be	39	45	46	32	33
Cannot change	47	47	39	51	54
DK/NA	14	8	14	17	13

q78 Do you think being homosexual is something people choose to be, or do you think it is something they cannot change?

	***** HALF SAMPLE B *****					Sep08b
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Choose to be	36	50	39	31	25	37
Cannot change	51	47	47	54	55	51
DK/NA	13	3	14	15	20	12

q79 Do you think same-sex relations between consenting adults is wrong, or not?

	***** HALF SAMPLE C *****				
Yes	39	22	46	45	45
No	53	72	50	48	34
DK/NA	8	6	4	7	20

*Not released

q80 Do you think homosexual relations between consenting adults is wrong, or not?

	***** HALF SAMPLE D *****					Jan09a
Yes	43	37	43	39	53	41
No	48	60	44	51	35	54
DK/NA	9	3	13	10	12	5

*Not released

q81 These days, do you think it is necessary to have laws to protect gays and lesbians from discrimination in hiring and promotion, or don't you think it's necessary?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
Necessary	53	58	56	50	44
Not necessary	43	39	39	46	49
DK/NA	4	3	5	4	10

q82-q85 HELD FOR RELEASE

q86 Do you happen to personally know someone who is gay or lesbian?

						Aug92c
Yes	77	84	77	77	66	42
No	22	16	22	22	31	56
DK/NA	1	0	1	1	3	2

*not released

q87 Do you have a work colleague, close friend, or relative who is gay or lesbian?

***** HALF SAMPLE A *****

***** Age *****

	Total	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+	Mar04a
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	63	80	62	63	44	55
No	35	20	37	36	53	44
DK/NA	2	0	1	1	3	1

	<u>Unweighted</u>	<u>Weighted</u>
Total Respondents	1054	
Half Sample A	549	571
Half Sample B	505	483
Half Sample C	528	533
Half Sample D	526	521