



GREENBERG QUINLAN ROSNER RESEARCH

TargetPoint 

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Progress in Arkansas

To: Interested Parties

The Human Rights Campaign

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On June 26, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community won two great victories at the U.S. Supreme Court. The federal government will no longer be able to discriminate against same-sex couples married legally in their respective states and marriage equality has returned to California. These judicial victories follow political wins last November, where voters in Maine, Maryland, Minnesota and Washington broke a streak of 29 straight electoral losses by supporting equality at the ballot box. Beyond marriage, patriotic gay and lesbian Americans are free to serve their country, proudly and openly in the military. Jason Collins opened up the world of professional sports to LGBT athletes, and the Boy Scouts will admit openly gay scouts. Our culture clearly is changing.

This great work remains incomplete. There are still 37 states in the country where marriage equality is not yet legal, representing 70 percent of the population. Also, in the majority of states, an LGBT person can be denied employment, housing or a hotel room based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

LGBT people live and work in all 50 states, including in Arkansas. A major study done in 2013 by the Williams Institute and Gallup organization involving over 200,000 interviews taken throughout 2012 shows that one third of LGBT people in the country live in the South and 23 percent live in the Midwest.

With this context in mind, the bi-partisan team of pollsters at Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research (Democratic) and Target Point Consulting (Republican) explored attitudes toward the LGBT community in Arkansas immediately after the Supreme Court decisions.

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The results show real opportunities in this state. An impressive majority support non-discrimination in employment under state and federal law. A majority believe discrimination against LGBT people represents a problem in this country. Fully one in three (34 percent) report they have grown more accepting of LGBT people. The results also underscore the challenges the LGBT community faces in many parts of the country. Arkansans are more unfavorably (36 percent) than favorably disposed (31 percent) toward gay and lesbian people in general. Whereas a 55 percent majority of the country supports marriage equality, this number is at 38 percent in Arkansas.¹

This memorandum summarizes the results of a survey of 600 Arkansas adults taken between June 26 and June 30, 2013. The survey was commissioned by the Human Rights Campaign and executed by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research and Target Point Consulting. It carries a margin of error of +/- 4.90 at a 95 percent confidence level.

Main Findings

The LGBT community represents a visible presence in Arkansas, with growing levels of acceptance.

- In 1992, only 42 percent of respondents in a national survey said they know someone who is gay or lesbian². That number increased to 87 percent in recent national surveys³. Currently in Arkansas, 63 percent know a gay person. This jumps to 72 percent among people under age 50.
- Of the Arkansans who know a gay person, fully half (54 percent) describe the relationship as “close.”
- More than one in three (34 percent) describe their views toward LGBT people as growing more accepting. Just 8 percent describe themselves growing less accepting and 57 percent report no change. Even among subgroups that typically are not thought of as LGBT allies, we see progress on this measure: 30 percent more accepting among white seniors; 31 percent among observant Christians, 32 percent among self-described born-again Christians.

Arkansas strongly supports state and federal level non-discrimination employment protections.

- As is the case throughout the country, most people in Arkansas do not understand that it is perfectly legal under federal and state law to fire someone for being gay. An 82 percent majority mistakenly believe it is illegal under federal law to fire someone for being gay; 75 percent believe it is illegal under state law.
- Arkansas residents acknowledge the problem. A 57 percent majority believes discrimination against LGBT people is a problem in this country, 62 percent among women, 59 percent among African Americans.

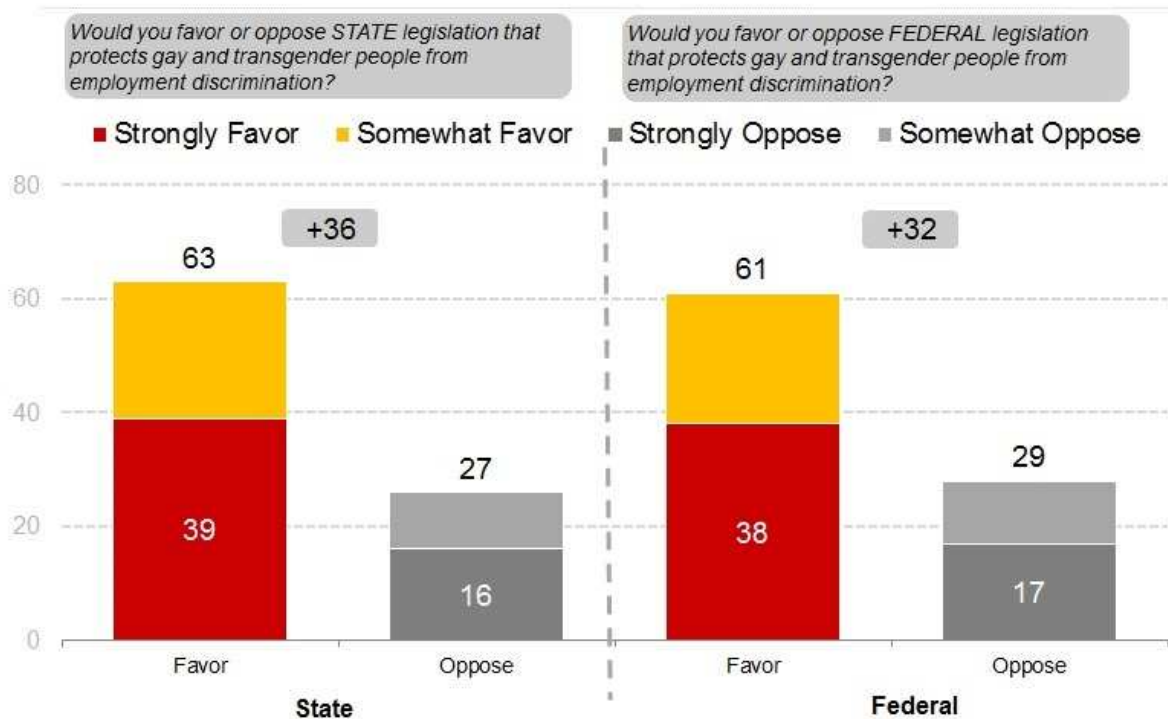
¹ National figure reflects a May, 2013 survey of adults conducted by Washington Post/ABC news.

² The 1992 citation reflects a survey conducted by CBS News.

³ A national survey of 1,504 adults, 18 years or older, conducted by the Pew Research Center May 1 – 5, 2013 found that 87% of respondents knew someone who identified as gay or lesbian. Question text: *Do you personally know anyone who is gay or lesbian, or not?*

- A convincing majority support federal and state legislation that protects gay and transgender people from employment discrimination: 63 percent support a state law, 61 percent support a federal law.

■ **Figure 1: Employment Discrimination**



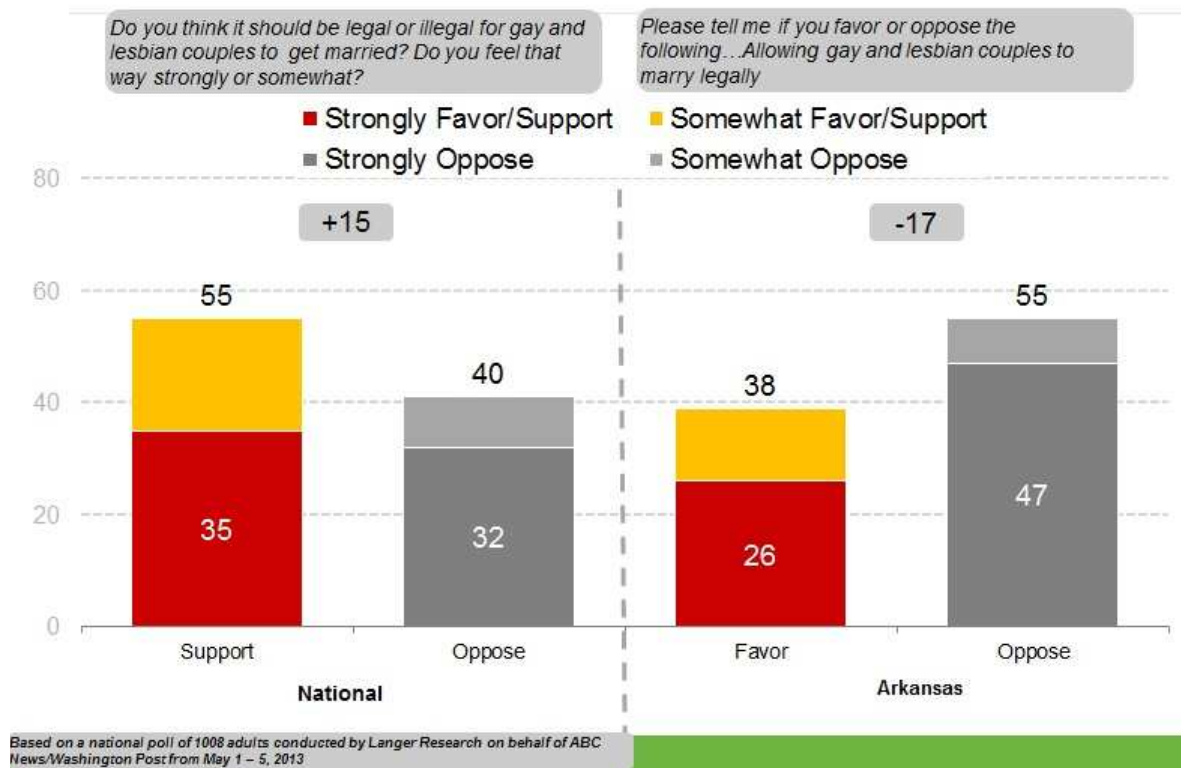
- Arkansas also demonstrates broad support for laws to prohibit the bullying of and harassment of minority groups, including LGBT people (69 percent support).

Still, there is a lot of work to do in Arkansas.

- In 1996, Gallup asked in a national survey whether marriages between “homosexual/same sex couples” should be recognized as “valid.” Only 27 percent said yes. Seventeen years later, marriage is legal in 13 states and a 55 percent majority support marriage equality.
- Arkansas is in a different place, as 38 percent support marriage equality, 55 percent oppose. Opposition is led, largely, by Republicans (80 percent oppose) and by the faith community (66 percent oppose among observant Christians). Views are somewhat more progressive among African Americans (47 percent favor) and, nationally, there has been a significant increase in African American support for marriage since President Obama publicly supported this position.

- Most notably, among Arkansans under age 30, 61 percent support marriage equality. National polls show support for gay marriage at 81 percent among adults under age 30.⁴

■ **Figure 2: Support for Marriage Equality**

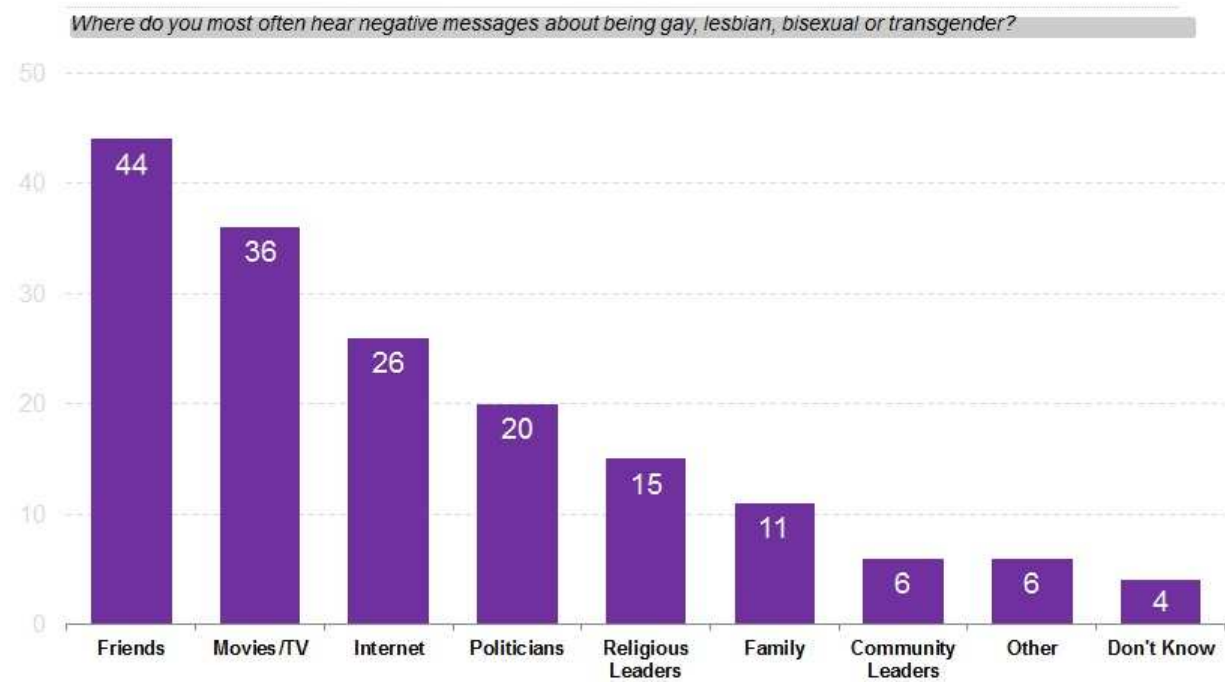


The culture in Arkansas is also slow to change.

- As is the case with racial prejudice, no one is born with homophobic attitudes. Prejudice is a learned behavior. A 63 percent majority of residents hear negative messages about LGBT people.
- Much of this comes from friends and acquaintances (44 percent), but it also comes from popular culture, the Internet and, most notably, political and religious leaders.

⁴ Washington Post/ABC News survey of 1,001 adults nationwide March 7 – 10, 2013.

■ **Figure 3: Source of Negative Messages**



Despite some of these results, religion can play a more progressive role in Arkansas

- The intense opposition of the faith community to marriage equality and other civil rights is no accident; one in three Arkansas residents have heard a sermon condemning gay people in their house of worship. But it is true that religious convictions can promote equality as well. A 55 percent majority, including a majority of observant Christians, believe discrimination against LGBT people is a sin. A 79 percent majority agree (75 percent among observant Christians), “My faith leads me to the conclusion that the law should treat all people equally, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.” Indeed, a full 90 percent agree that “we should all follow the Golden Rule and treat others as we would like to be treated, including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.”
- In addition, Arkansas residents also reveal some resistance to anti-gay politicking emerging from the pulpit. A 64 percent majority (58 percent among observant Christians) agree with the statement, “when religious leaders condemn gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people it does more harm than good.”

Conclusion

Equality is both a journey and a destination. As a country, we have taken huge steps in the last six months. But there are still millions of LGBT people living in states where marriage equality is illegal, facing the potential loss of a job and livelihood due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Despite meaningful improvements, there is still much work to do in Arkansas. The same two forces that have driven the country further on the path toward equality—a sense of fairness and a knowledge of LGBT people—is very present in this state.