

August 8, 2011

Support for Equality in Utah

To: Interested Parties

From: The Human Rights Campaign
Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research

A recent survey of 400 adults in Utah shows one of the most conservative states in the country supporting broad legal protections for the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community, leaving the public well ahead of politicians in the state. A huge majority support protecting gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people from discrimination in the workplace, by better than a 2:1 margin. Utah supports allowing gay and lesbian couples to enter into legal agreements that give them many of the same rights as marriage, and better than seven in ten residents support laws prohibiting bullying and harassment against minority groups in schools, including LGBT students or the children of LGBT parents.

Socially, 70 percent of Utah residents personally know someone who is gay or lesbian, the same number we saw in a recent national survey. And 42 percent describe themselves as growing "more accepting" of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people over the last five to ten years, 42 percent among Mormon residents.

To be sure, there is still work to do in this state. Utah residents are in a far different place than the rest of the country when it comes to marriage. They are divided on allowing gay and lesbian couples to adopt children and a majority would be "bothered a great deal" if one of their children or grandchildren turned out to be gay. But in a state where conservatives outnumber liberals nearly 3:1, the overall results are a striking and substantial step toward equality. On many of these measures, what drives the response is not politics or even faith, but a recognition of a common humanity.

This memorandum summarizes the results of a survey of 400 Utah adults taken between August 2 and 3, 2011. The survey was commissioned by the Human Rights Campaign and executed by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research. It carries on margin of error of +/- 4.90 at a 95 percent confidence level.

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Main Findings

The LGBT community, here and elsewhere is “out of the closet” and achieving social equality

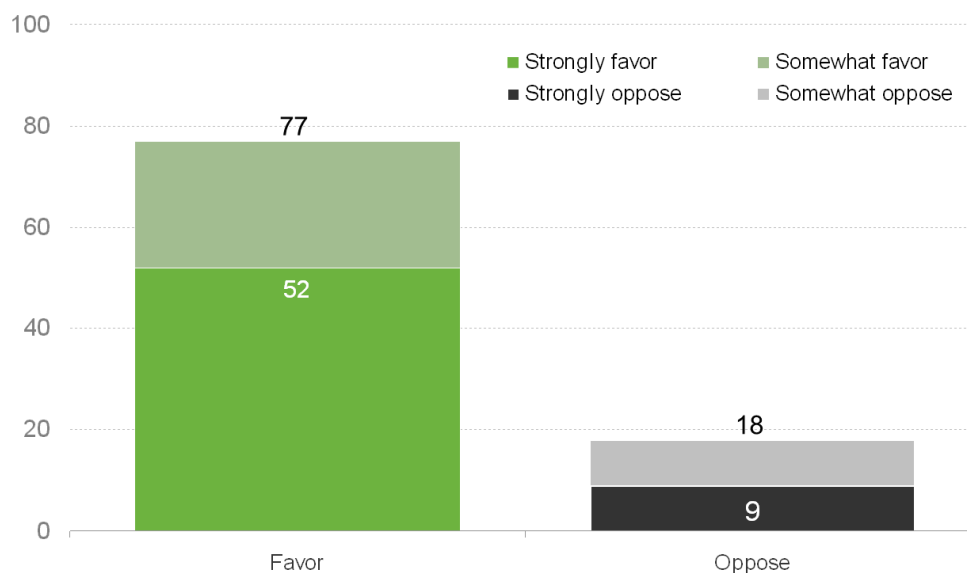
- A whopping 70 percent of Utah residents know a gay or lesbian individual, 64 percent of seniors. On this measure, Utah is no different than the rest of the country. In a recent national survey conducted by the Human Rights Campaign, 69 percent said they knew at least one gay or lesbian individual.
- A 69 percent majority of Utah men say they could be “close friends” with a gay man and 77 percent of Utah women could be close friends with a lesbian.
- More than four in ten (42 percent) describe themselves as “more accepting” of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people over the last five to ten years, only 7 percent are less accepting. A 41 percent plurality Republicans describe themselves as more accepting, 54 percent among seniors.

Utah residents strongly support basic civil rights protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and are well ahead of Utah politicians on this issue.

- A 74 percent majority of Utah residents recognize discrimination is a problem in our country and 26 percent describe it as a major problem. The results on this question are not statistically different among Mormon residents (73 percent problem).
- In the state of Utah, as is the case in a majority of states, it is perfectly legal to fire someone for being gay. This is not the kind of state Utah residents want. A 77 percent majority support protecting gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people from discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations. This includes 73 percent of Mormon residents.

Figure 1: Non-Discrimination Protections

Please tell me if you favor or oppose the following: Protecting gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people from discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations.



Utah is in a different place when it comes to marriage equality, but supports legal steps to recognize same-sex relationships.

- In HRC's national survey, 51 percent supported allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally, one of three surveys taken this year showing a pro-marriage majority. In Utah, however, residents oppose marriage by a 63 to 30 percent margin.
- Nonetheless, 66 percent support allowing gay and lesbian couples to enter into legal agreements that would give them many of the same rights as marriage. Mormon residents support these domestic partnerships 60 to 32 percent.

There is still much work to do in this state.

- In addition to struggling with the marriage issue, Utah is divided on allowing same-sex couples to adopt children (44 percent favor, 48 percent oppose) and divide fairly evenly when assessing their overall reaction to gay and lesbian people (30 percent favorable, 27 percent unfavorable).
- In addition, a 55 percent majority would be "bothered a great deal" if one of their children or grandchildren turned out be gay, 15 points higher than the nation as a whole (just 40 percent).

Conclusion

Utah remains one of the most conservative states in the country. Nothing in this survey changes that reality. However, the LGBT community here is no longer defined by eastern or Hollywood stereotypes, but by neighbors, co-workers and relatives. As Utah residents recognize the common humanity of LGBT people, they extend broad civil rights protections, including protection from employment discrimination and basic relationship recognition, to the LGBT community.