Changing Public Opinion about LGBT Issues

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“What about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex - do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?”

Source: data from the NORC General Social Surveys, and Keleher and Smith (2008)
"Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose allowing gay and lesbian couples to enter into legal agreements with each other that would give them many of the same rights as married couples?"

Favor Civil Unions, 2009: 57%

Oppose Civil Unions, 2009: 37%

"Do you think it should be legal or illegal for gay and lesbian couples to get married?"

ABC News/Washington Post Poll, Feb 4-8, 2010
“Do you think homosexuals who do [do not] publicly disclose their sexual orientation should be allowed to serve in the military or not?"

ABC News/Washington Post Poll, Feb 2-8, 2010
Now I have a few questions about the situation for gay men and women in this country and the issue of gay rights. Do you think there should or should not be …

- Legally-sanctioned gay and lesbian marriages: 39%
- Adoption rights for gays and lesbians so they can legally adopt children: 53%
- Legally-sanctioned gay and lesbian unions or partnerships: 55%
- Social security benefits for gay and lesbian domestic partners: 67%
- Gays and lesbians serving openly in the military: 66%
- Health insurance & other employee benefits: 73%
- Inheritance rights for gay and lesbian domestic partners: 74%
- Equal rights for gays and lesbians in terms of housing: 82%
- Hospital visitation rights for gay and lesbian domestic partners: 86%
- Equal rights for gays and lesbians in terms of job opportunities: 87%

Source: Newsweek Poll, Dec 3-4, 2008
“What about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex…” by Age

[Bar chart showing attitudes toward sex by age, with data from the NORC General Social Surveys]

Data from the NORC General Social Surveys
“What about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex…” by Education

Data from the NORC General Social Surveys
“What about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex…” by Religion

Data from the NORC General Social Surveys
“What about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex…” by Race

Data from the NORC General Social Surveys
Do you have close friends or close relatives who are gay or lesbian?

Gallup Poll, May 7-10, 2010
What to do?

• Lots of talk about age
  – That is being told to wait; it’s not a strategy
• Role models in the media
  – If you have the opportunity; most of us don’t
• Contact with friends
  – Coming out to your family & friends
  – Straights: Talking about LGBT friends