



## The young are regarded as the most tolerant generation. That's why results of this LGBTQ survey are 'alarming'



*Susan Miller – June 24, 2019*

Young people are growing less tolerant of LGBTQ individuals, a jarring turn for a generation traditionally considered embracing and open, a survey released Monday shows.

The number of Americans 18 to 34 who are comfortable interacting with LGBTQ people slipped from 53% in 2017 to 45% in 2018 – the only age group to show a decline, according to the annual [Accelerating Acceptance report](#). And that is down from 63% in 2016.

Driving the dilution of acceptance are young women whose overall comfort levels plunged from 64% in 2017 to 52% in 2018, says the survey conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of [LGBTQ advocacy group GLAAD](#).

“We count on the narrative that young people are more progressive and tolerant,” John Gerzema, CEO of [The Harris Poll](#), told USA TODAY. “These numbers are very alarming and signal a looming social crisis in discrimination.”

Among the findings:

- 36% of young people said they were uncomfortable learning a family member was LGBTQ, compared with 29% in 2017.
- 34% were uncomfortable learning their doctor was LGBTQ vs. 27% a year earlier.
- 39% were uncomfortable learning their child had a school lesson on LGBTQ history vs. 30% in 2017.

The negative shift for the young is surprising, said Sarah Kate Ellis, GLAAD president and CEO. When GLAAD delved into the numbers, the group found that the younger generation was coming in contact with more LGBTQ people, particularly individuals who are non-binary and don't identify simply as lesbian or gay.

“This newness they are experiencing could be leading to this erosion. It's a newness that takes time for people to understand. Our job is to educate about non-conformity,” she said.

## 'Toxic culture' 50 years after Stonewall

The survey results come during Pride 2019 and on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, which sparked the LGBTQ rights movement.

They also land at a dark hour politically and culturally for the LGBTQ community amid a rise in inflammatory rhetoric and dozens of policy setbacks, such as a ban on transgender people in the military and religious exemption laws that can lead to discrimination, Ellis and Gerzema said. Both are a likely force behind the young's pushback on tolerance, they said.



A new survey out during Pride 2019 shows young people have grown less accepting of LGBTQ individuals.  
*Robert Deutch, USA TODAY*

The young are bombarded by hate speech on social platforms from viral videos to “mean tweets,” Gerzema said. “Our toxic culture is enveloping young people. It instills fear, alienation, but also permissibility” that could sway “impressionable” young minds on what is acceptable.

And there is a more menacing side, Ellis said. “We are seeing a stark increase in violence in the community.” GLAAD has documented more than 40 incidents of LGBTQ hate violence since Jan. 1.

Two recent high-profile incidents: On June 16, a young gay couple were assaulted outside a popular strip of bars in Washington, D.C., in what police are investigating as a hate crime. A few weeks earlier, a Detroit man was charged in a triple homicide in which two gay men and one transgender woman were deliberately targeted, police say.

The FBI released statistics in November showing a 17% increase in overall hate crimes in 2017. Of 7,175 reported crimes, more than 1,200 were based on sexual orientation or gender identity bias.

The transgender community has been especially hard hit. In 2018, there were at least 26 deaths of transgender individuals in the U.S. because of violence, mostly black transgender women, according to the Human Rights Campaign, which has tracked 10 deaths so far this year.

The situation is so grim that the American Medical Association warned this month of “an epidemic of violence” against transgender people, particularly those of color.



### **How this young transgender person fights constant suicidal thoughts**

Shear Avory, a non-binary transgender twenty-year-old who was subjected to conversion therapy, shares how they cope with suicidal ideation. *USA TODAY*

# 'Tolerance parsed out'

The increase in violence and discrimination mirrors the trajectory of the acceptance survey. The report, first commissioned in 2014, reflected positive momentum from historic gains for LGBTQ rights – such as the same-sex marriage ruling – in its first three years. But that shifted in 2017 with fallout from the presidential election, advocates say.

## Fewer non-LGBTQ Americans are 'very' or 'somewhat' uncomfortable with:

● 2016 ● 2017 ● 2018

Having LGBTQ members at my place of worship



Seeing an LGBTQ co-worker's wedding photo



Learning a family member is LGBTQ



Having my child placed in a class with LGBTQ teacher



Learning my doctor is LGBTQ



Seeing a same-sex couple holding hands



Learning my child has school lesson on LGBTQ history



SOURCE The Harris Poll on behalf of GLAAD  
George Petras/USA TODAY

See Comment at end of article

Still, there is cause for optimism this year, Ellis said. Nearly half of all non-LGBTQ adults, or 49%, are classified in the survey as “allies” with high levels of tolerance. That is the same number as 2017, and “that is a big deal,” she said.

Support for equal rights is also stable, with eight out of 10 backing equality for LGBTQ people for the third consecutive year.

Ellis is confident the younger generation can rise again as beacons of unbiased values. When numbers dipped a year ago for young males, GLAAD went to where male audiences consume content: video games. The advocacy group worked with the industry to introduce diverse characters and help shape attitudes.

The group has similar outreach plans for targeting young women in a popular female venue, country music concerts, she said.

It’s crucial LGBTQ advocates stay vigilant, Gerzema said. “In this toxic age, tolerance –even among youths – now seems to be parsed out. Nothing today should be taken for granted.”

**Source:** <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/06/24/lgbtq-acceptance-millennials-decline-glaad-survey/1503758001/>

**Comment:** This well-intentioned mainstream news article demonstrates a clear bias that people who are “uncomfortable” with a person or situation will react more violently toward them. It also assumes the contemporary notion that people who are uncomfortable with their own sexuality or its acceptance by the broader community will be more likely to be suicidal based on their apparent non-acceptance rather than on the inner conflict that underlies their identity struggle. Note also the mislabeled survey result chart on the previous page which gives an interpretation that is at variance with the numbers presented.

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