

State of the States

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LGBT Percentage Highest in D.C., Lowest in North Dakota

All states are within two percentage points of the overall national average of 3.5%

by Gary J. Gates and Frank Newport

PRINCETON, NJ -- The percentage of U.S. adults who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) ranges from 1.7% in North Dakota to 5.1% in Hawaii and 10% in the District of Columbia, according to Gallup surveys conducted from June-December 2012. Residents in the District of Columbia were most likely to identify as LGBT (10%). Among states, the highest percentage was in Hawaii (5.1%) and the lowest in North Dakota (1.7%), but all states are within two percentage points of the nationwide average of 3.5%.

LGBT by State, 2012

Do you, personally, identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender?

	Yes, do	No, do not	Number of interviews
District of Columbia	10.0%	88.0%	493
Hawaii	5.1%	91.7%	643
Vermont	4.9%	93.3%	664
Oregon	4.9%	92.1%	3655
Maine	4.8%	91.1%	1286
Rhode Island	4.5%	89.2%	735
Massachusetts	4.4%	91.3%	4253
South Dakota	4.4%	92.1%	722
Nevada	4.2%	92.2%	1493
California	4.0%	91.9%	18636
Washington	4.0%	92.6%	5990
Kentucky	3.9%	92.4%	3415
Arizona	3.9%	92.8%	4793
New York	3.8%	91.2%	9917
Michigan	3.8%	92.1%	5913
Illinois	3.8%	92.0%	7038
New Hampshire	3.7%	90.7%	1009
New Jersey	3.7%	91.3%	4999
Indiana	3.7%	91.9%	4947
Kansas	3.7%	93.6%	2174
Ohio	3.6%	92.5%	7543
Georgia	3.5%	92.1%	6177
Florida	3.5%	91.9%	11286
Arkansas	3.5%	93.1%	2165
Connecticut	3.4%	93.5%	2306
Delaware	3.4%	92.9%	668
Oklahoma	3.4%	92.1%	3060
Alaska	3.4%	93.8%	613
Maryland	3.3%	93.0%	4195
Missouri	3.3%	92.5%	4219
North Carolina	3.3%	91.8%	7175
Texas	3.3%	92.4%	13314
Louisiana	3.2%	90.4%	2888
Colorado	3.2%	93.2%	4400
West Virginia	3.1%	92.5%	1410
Minnesota	2.9%	93.4%	4365
Virginia	2.9%	92.7%	6323
South Carolina	2.9%	93.1%	3370
Wyoming	2.9%	93.7%	735
New Mexico	2.9%	93.1%	1861

Wisconsin	2.8%	92.9%	4633
Iowa	2.8%	93.4%	2692
Alabama	2.8%	92.5%	3603
Pennsylvania	2.7%	92.8%	9716
Nebraska	2.7%	92.9%	1592
Idaho	2.7%	94.4%	1582
Utah	2.7%	94.1%	2726
Tennessee	2.6%	93.0%	4889
Mississippi	2.6%	92.5%	1961
Montana	2.6%	94.8%	1329
North Dakota	1.7%	93.7%	615

Gallup Daily tracking, June-December 2012

GALLUP

These results are based on responses to the question, "Do you, personally, identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender?" included in 206,186 Gallup Daily tracking interviews conducted between June 1 and Dec. 30, 2012. This is the largest single study of the distribution of the LGBT population in the U.S. on record, and the first time a study has had large enough sample sizes to provide estimates of the LGBT population by state.

As was outlined in the first [report](#) of these data in October, measuring sexual orientation and gender identity can be challenging because these concepts involve complex social and cultural patterns. There are a number of ways to measure lesbian, gay, and bisexual orientation, and transgender status. Gallup chose a broad measure of personal identification as LGBT because this grouping of four statuses is commonly used in current American discourse, and as a result has important cultural and political significance. One limitation of this approach is that it is not possible to separately consider differences among lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, or transgender individuals. A second limitation is that this approach measures broad self-identity, and does not measure sexual or other behavior, either past or present.

The number of interviews conducted in each state between June and December is large enough to allow for reasonable estimates of each state's LGBT population. Only eight states had less than 1,000 completed interviews, including the lowest sample size of 613 in Alaska. Gallup also asked the LGBT question of 493 District of Columbia residents. The number of completed interviews conducted in each state is presented in the accompanying table.

The margin of error for each state's estimate varies, depending on the state's sample size. Except for the District of Columbia, all are below ± 2 percentage points. A caution comes in interpreting rankings of states with relatively small populations. Although, as noted, the margins of error in general are quite small with all of these estimates, differences in the rankings of the states with the smallest numbers of interviews are more prone to being byproducts of sampling error.

Overall, the results from this analysis of LGBT identity by state may run counter to some stereotypes that portray the LGBT community as heavily grouped in certain states of the union. With the exception of the District of Columbia, the range in percentage LGBT is 3.4 percentage points, from 1.7% in North Dakota to 5.1% in Hawaii.

LGBT, 2012

State: | % LGBT: **3.5**



While the variation in LGBT identification across states is relatively random, social climates that promote acceptance of LGBT people are more likely to be found in places where they feel accepted and safe. People who live in states with more liberal climates are more likely to disclose their identity to a survey interviewer.

In general, states where residents express more conservative views are less accepting. Of the 10 states and D.C. where at least 4% of the population identifies as LGBT, six are in the West. Conversely, six of 10 states with the lowest percentage of LGBT-identified adults are in the South.

The states with the highest LGBT populations generally have laws that are more supportive of LGBT people. Of the 10 states with the highest LGBT populations, four have laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, and allow same-sex couples to marry, enter into civil unions, or register as domestic partners. Of the 10 states with the lowest percentage of LGBT adults, six have such laws.

Higher proportions of LGBT individuals in a state could also suggest that LGBT individuals move there in higher proportions than the general population does. While highly concentrated (and mostly male) LGBT neighborhoods exist in many cities and are certainly in part a result of this type of migration, little is known about the broader migration patterns of the LGBT community. Given prior Gallup findings showing that the LGBT population is disproportionately young, female, and nonwhite -- all of which are groups with economic disadvantages that could limit their abilities to move -- it seems unlikely that migration is the primary reason for variation in LGBT identification across states.

Bottom Line

From a broad perspective, the variation in the percentage of adults across U.S. states who identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender is relatively small. At the same time, the variation does provide interesting information about LGBT identification and its possible relationship to the ideological and legal climate in different states. All states are within a couple of percentage points of the overall LGBT national average of 3.5%. The LGBT adult population estimate is above 5% only in the District of Columbia and Hawaii, and below 2% only in North Dakota.

States with high LGBT percentages tend to be more liberal and have more supportive LGBT legal climates, while those at the lower end of the LGBT spectrum are generally the most conservative. This suggests that one explanation for the variation across states is the relationship between the willingness to disclose LGBT identity and the environment of one's state of residence. It is also possible that LGBT adults make conscious choices to reside in certain states rather than others, but this possibility is difficult to assess and seems less likely.

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Gallup's "State of the States" series reveals state-by-state differences on political, economic, and wellbeing measures Gallup tracks each day. New stories based on full-year 2012 data will be released throughout the month of February.

Survey Methods

Results are based on telephone interviews conducted Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2012, on the Gallup Daily tracking survey, with a random sample of 206,186 adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the margin of sampling error is ±1 percentage point. The margin of sampling error for each state varies depending on the number of interviews conducted in that state.

Margins of error for individual states are no greater than ±6 percentage points, and are ±3 percentage points in most states. The margin of error for the District of Columbia is ±6 percentage points.

Interviews are conducted with respondents on landline telephones and cellular phones, with interviews conducted in Spanish for respondents who are primarily Spanish-speaking. Each national sample includes a minimum quota of 400 cell phone respondents and 600 landline respondents per 1,000 national adults, with additional minimum quotas among landline respondents by region. Landline telephone numbers are chosen at random among listed telephone numbers. Cell phones numbers are selected using random digit dial methods. Landline respondents are chosen at random within each household on the basis of which member had the most recent birthday.

State samples are weighted to be representative of the state's adult population by gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, and education based on the March 2012 Current Population Survey. All reported margins of sampling error include the computed design effects for weighting.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

For more details on Gallup's polling methodology, visit www.gallup.com.

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