

---

**To:** Interested Parties  
**From:** Alex Lundry, Redbud Consulting  
**Re:** 20 Years of Marriage for Same-Sex Couples - KEY FINDINGS  
**Date:** June 2024

---

The following key findings and data come from a demographic analysis and new polling conducted on behalf of Centerline Liberties around the 20th anniversary of legal same-sex marriages in the United States. Our goal was to compile, review and analyze data from the last 20 years as well as today, allowing us to step back and consider the massive changes that have occurred around American attitudes towards marriage between same-sex couples.

Assessments of American opinion today come from a new national survey of 800 registered voters conducted May 16-20, 2024 that has a margin of error of +/- 3%. Historical analysis includes deep dives into the General Social Survey, the American National Election Studies, the US Census, Gallup, Pew Research and other publicly available polls.

## **HISTORIC ANALYSIS**

**Historic Shift in Public Opinion on SSM:** Over the last two decades we have experienced the largest and fastest shift in the history of mass opinion.

- In the General Social Survey (GSS), support for same-sex marriage was only 30% in 2004, but by 2022 it had more than doubled to 67% support.
- Similarly, Gallup polling put support at 42% in 2004, growing to 71% in 2023.
- Pew Research had support at only 26% in 2004, but by 2023 it was 63%.
- Regardless of the survey organization, this is roughly an average annual increase in support of nearly 1.5 percentage points over the last 20 years.

**Significant Growth Compared to Other Issues:** While hundreds of other issues have stagnated or fluctuated or shifted slightly, Americans have completely reversed course on marriage equality.

- Compared to 150 political and policy issues the GSS studied in both 2004 and 2022, same-sex marriage support experienced significantly larger absolute and percentage change than every other issue.

**Massive Positive Shifts Across All Demos:** Not a single demographic is immune from this mass turnaround. Even among demographics that were initially the most opposed to it. Republicans, Conservatives, regular church attendees are just a few of the groups that have all seen massive changes in net support of legal same-sex marriage.

- In the GSS, across 13 key demographic categories (e.g. gender, age, education) and their 38 subgroups, the average shift in net support for legal same-sex marriage was 71 points. For example, among those that attend church monthly, net support grew from -38 in 2002 to +31 in 2022, a growth of 69 points.

**Substantial Gains Among Conservatives:** While Democrats and Independents continue to be strong supporters of marriage between same-sex couples, Republicans are catching up.

- Republican net support has grown from -59 in 2002 to +9 in 2022, a shift of 68 points. Now most demos within the party are distinctly supportive.

**Not Just an Aging Electorate; Minds Are Changing:** While age continues to be heavily linked with levels of support, our two-decade shift is only somewhat a function of a generational replacement within the electorate. Instead, we clearly see that across all ages, minds are actively changing on the issue, steadily becoming more supportive.

- There is at least plurality support for marriage equality in every single generation, from the Silent Generation at 45% support and 36% oppose, to Gen Z at 82% support and 7% oppose.
- Looking at how attitudes on the GSS changed every two years, you can see older generations becoming more and more favorable.

**Attitudes Towards the LGBTQ+ Community Are Also Changing:** Along the way the LGBTQ+ community has experienced significant gains among Americans when it comes to favorability ratings, moral acceptance and impact on society - each item being both an important precursor to and effect of changing attitudes on same-sex marriage.

- While other group ratings - such as Labor Unions, Big Business and Feminists - have remained relatively stable over the last 20 years, ratings of gay people have grown from 48 on a 0-100 scale in 2004 to 65 in 2022.
- Similarly, in 2004 only 31% of Americans said that “sexual relations between two adults of the same sex” are “not wrong at all” but by 2022 that had completely flipped to 61%.

**Personal Relationships & Visibility a Big Influence:** Meanwhile, other societal trends in LGBTQ+ visibility keep the issue’s momentum going: increasing LGBTQ+ identification, more people knowing someone that is gay, better representation in pop culture and politics, and last but most certainly not least: more happy and loving married LGBTQ+ couples across the country.

- The number of Americans identifying as LGBTQ+ has surged from 3.5% in 2012 to 7.2% in 2022, including a remarkable 20% of Generation Z (Gallup).
- In 2008 only about half of the country knew someone that was gay, lesbian or bisexual, but in 2020 that had grown to 64% (ANES).
- GLAAD tracks the number of LGBTQ+ characters in broadcast primetime television - only 1% in 2006 when they began. This season it is 11%.
- Out for America tracks the number of LGBTQ+ people in elected office: it has grown from 448 in 2017 to 1,185 in 2023.
- And of course, the number of married same-sex couples has increased dramatically from 142,000 in 2008 to 741,000 in 2022 (US Census).

## **NEW POLLING DATA**

**Support Remains Incredibly Strong Overall, Across Many Groups:** Support for legal same-sex marriage continues to be both broad and deep. By sweeping margins, Americans of all stripes support same-sex marriage, the Respect for Marriage Act, or the Obergefell ruling. But many Americans continue to mistakenly believe it is mostly opposed by the country.

- A strong bipartisan majority (66%) agrees that “Same-sex couples should have the right to marry one another,” continuing the 20-year trend in growing support as measured by both [Gallup](#) and the [General Social Survey](#).
- 62% approve of the 2015 Obergefell decision legalizing same-sex marriage.
- 66% approve of the Respect For Marriage Act.
- Yet only 51% believe that Americans overall are mostly in favor of same-sex marriage.

**Republicans More Positive Than Negative on SSM:** Republicans are net positive on the issue, and age/generational patterns show support will only grow as the electorate ages.

- 50% of Republicans agree that “Same-sex couples should have the right to marry one another” while 44% disagree.
- 62% of Republican Gen Z voters support marriage between same-sex couples.

**Equality & Freedom to Marry Best Testing Messages:** A majority of Americans agreed with every one of the five statements we tested in support of legal same-sex marriage. The strongest two were:

- 74% agree (54% strongly) that “Recognizing same-sex marriage promotes equality under the law, ensuring that all couples have access to the same legal rights and protections.”
- 73% agree (54% strongly) that “Strong families and lasting relationships strengthen communities and marriage is a fundamental freedom deeply rooted in the history and traditions of our country. American citizens - including same-sex couples - should have the freedom to marry the person they love.”

**Less Evidence Now of SSM Campaign Impacts:** SSM is not as politically defining and motivating as it used to be:

- 61% of Americans - including 56% of Republicans - believe that someone who supports same-sex marriage can be considered a good Republican.