



GREENBERG QUINLAN ROSNER RESEARCH

TargetPoint 

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New Attitudes in the New Dominion

To: Interested Parties

The Human Rights Campaign

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On June 26, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community won two great victories at the U.S. Supreme Court. The federal government will no longer be able to discriminate against same-sex couples married legally in their respective states, and marriage equality has returned to California. These judicial victories follow political wins last November, where voters in Maine, Maryland, Minnesota and Washington broke a streak of 29 straight electoral losses by supporting equality at the ballot box. Beyond marriage, patriotic gay and lesbian Americans are free to serve their country, proudly and openly in the military. Jason Collins opened up the world of professional sports to LGBT athletes, and the Boy Scouts will admit openly gay scouts. Our culture clearly is changing.

This great work remains incomplete. There are still 37 states in the country where marriage equality is not yet legal, representing 70 percent of the population. Also, in the majority of states, an LGBT person can be denied employment, housing or a hotel room based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

LGBT people live and work in all 50 states, including in Virginia. A major study done in 2013 by the Williams Institute and Gallup organization involving over 200,000 interviews taken throughout 2012 shows that one third of LGBT people in the country live in the South and 23 percent live in the Midwest.

With this context in mind, the bi-partisan team of pollsters at Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research (Democratic) and Target Point Consulting (Republican) explored attitudes toward the LGBT community in Virginia immediately after the Supreme Court decisions. The results show the state at a cultural crossroads. Like the country as a whole, a majority support marriage. Pro-civil rights majorities grow much stronger when it comes to issues such as employment

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protection and anti-bullying legislation. A plurality describe their reactions to LGBT people in general in positive terms.

To be sure, the work is not finished in Virginia. Sentiments in western parts of the state and among people of faith remain fairly conservative. But for a state with no legal recognition of same-sex relationships and no employment protection for LGBT employees, it is also clear that the residents of Virginia are well ahead of state law.

This memorandum summarizes the results of a survey of 600 Virginia adults taken between June 26 and June 30, 2013. The survey was commissioned by the Human Rights Campaign and executed by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research and Target Point Consulting. It carries a margin of error of +/- 4.90 at a 95 percent confidence level.

Main Findings

Knowing LGBT people is always a harbinger of good things to come.

- A 71 percent majority of Virginians know at least one LGBT person. This number is fairly close to national figures (87 percent).¹ Moreover, the LGBT community is not segregated in Arlington County and the Washington suburbs; 76 percent of residents in the Washington suburbs know a gay person, as do 67 percent of residents in the rest of the state.
- Better than one in four of the state has at least one gay friend and one in ten (11 percent) has a gay family member. A 57 percent majority describe the relationship as “close.” As is the case in the country as whole, knowing, befriending and working with LGBT individuals is changing attitudes here.

Favorable reactions

- A plurality of residents in Virginia indicate a favorable reaction to “gay and lesbian” people (41 percent positive, 24 percent negative). Views run more mixed among religiously observant residents (26 percent favorable, 39 percent unfavorable) and in the western part of the state (33 percent favorable, 36 percent unfavorable). However, among women statewide, 48 percent respond favorably.
- Virginians also recognize the change in their attitudes. Nearly four in ten (37 percent) describe their attitudes toward LGBT people as growing more accepting; just 5 percent describe it less accepting. Among adults over age 50, 40 percent describe their views as growing more accepting, 50 percent among African Americans.

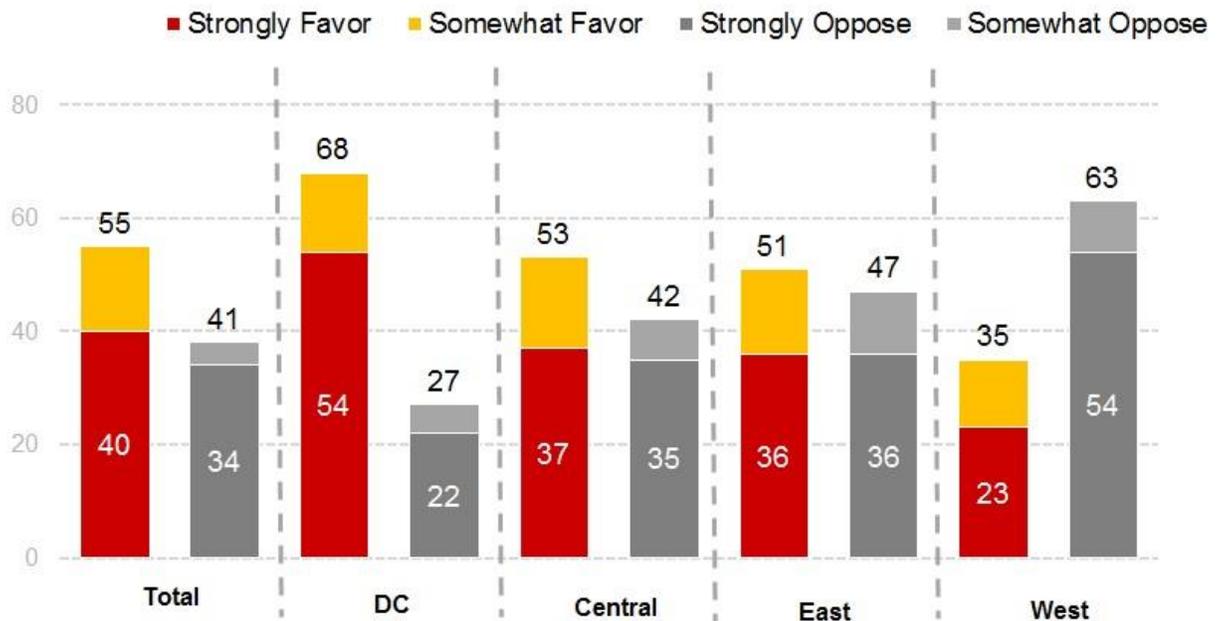
A pro-marriage majority in Virginia.

- Seven years after Virginia voters supported a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, a 55 percent majority Virginia adults support it. Just 41 percent oppose. Pro-equality forces enjoy a six percentage point advantage in intensity (40 percent strongly favor, 34 percent strongly oppose).

¹ A national survey of 1,504 adults, 18 years or older, conducted by the Pew Research Center May 1 – 5, 2013 found that 87% of respondents knew someone who identified as gay or lesbian. Question text: *Do you personally know anyone who is gay or lesbian, or not?*

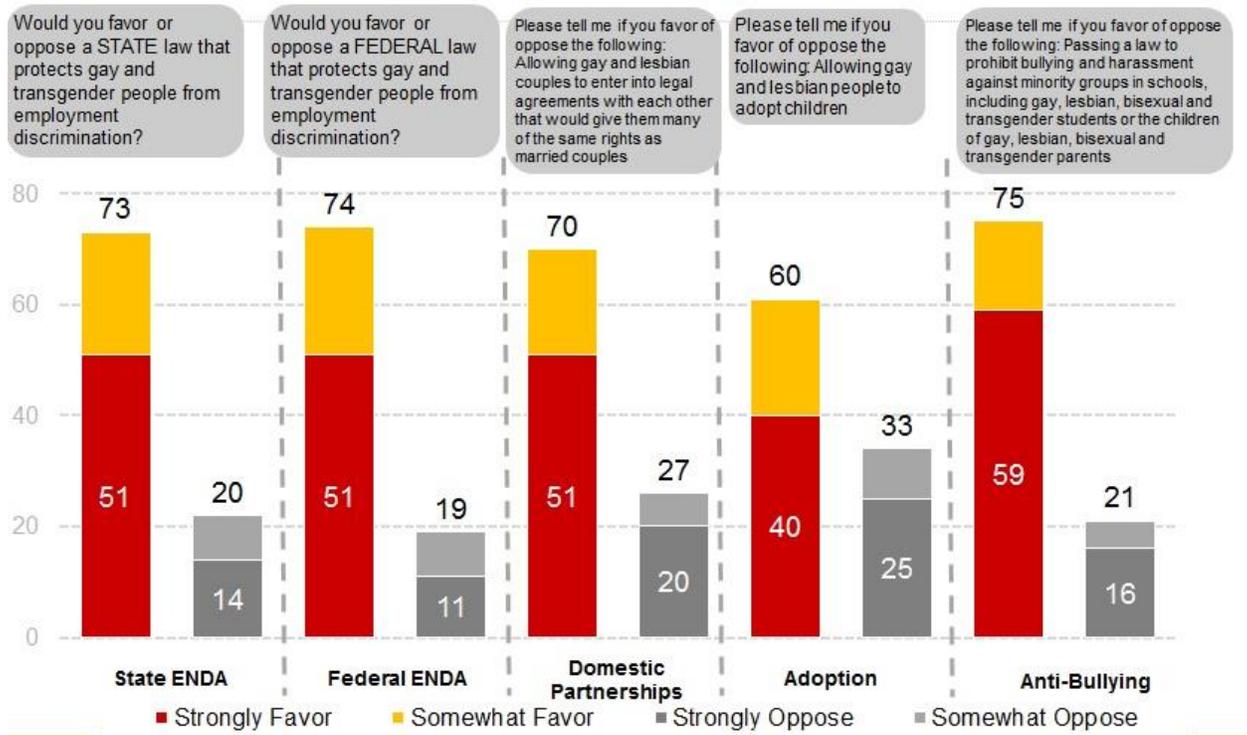
- While Northern Virginia spearheads support for equality (68 percent favor), it also finds support in the Central (53 percent) and Eastern (51 percent) portion of the state. Only in the west does significant opposition emerge (35 percent favor, 63 percent oppose).
- One year after President Obama endorsed marriage equality, 58 percent of African Americans in Virginia now back it.
- Support jumps to 76 percent favor among residents under age 30.
- Not surprisingly, the faith community (71 percent oppose among observant Christians) comes out strongly against marriage.

Please tell me if you favor or oppose the following: Allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally



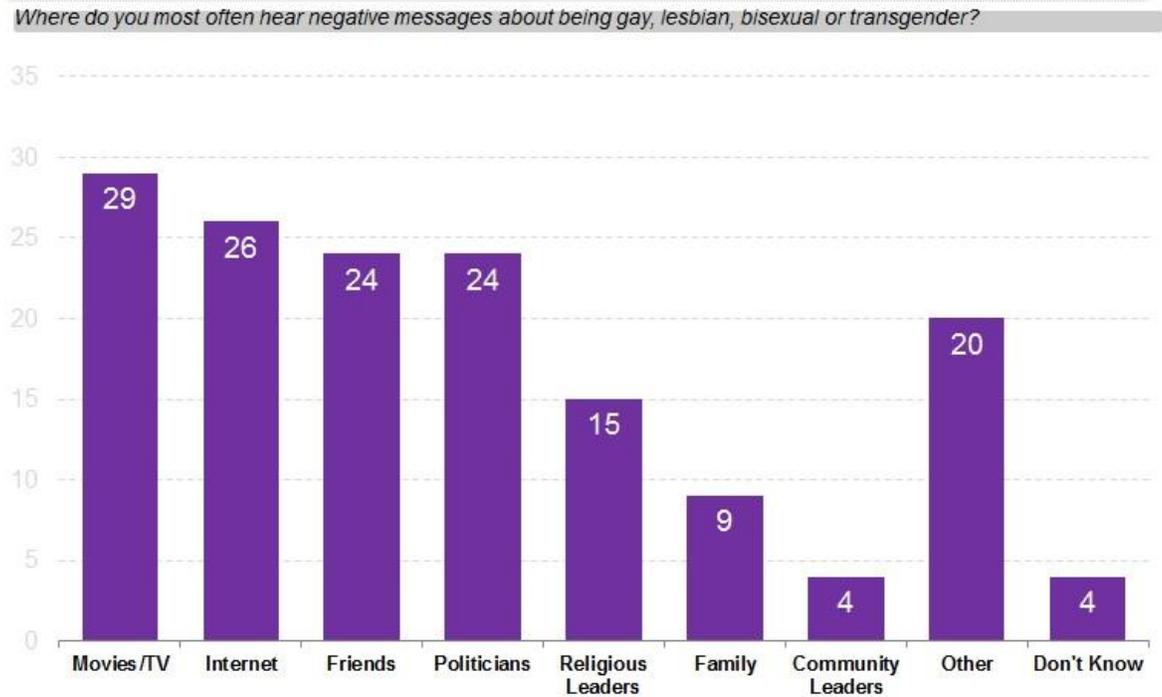
Virginians strongly support other civil rights measures.

- The pro-equality margin grows higher when it comes to other issues. As is the case throughout the country, most in Virginia have no idea it is legal under state law (72 percent believe it is illegal) or federal law (81 percent believe it is illegal) to fire someone for being gay. Nearly three quarters of the state support state or federal legislation ending such discrimination. Similarly, broad majorities support domestic partnerships, allowing LGBT couples to adopt children and laws preventing bullying.



Cultural challenges still emerge in Virginia.

- Virginia residents report hearing a high level of negative messages about LGBT people (71 percent). It may also be that the state is more sensitive to this kind of talk.
- These homophobic messages creep out of the popular culture, as well as the Internet and among friends and acquaintances. Religion also plays a role, if also less of one than we see in states further south. Fifteen percent of the state report hearing anti-gay messages from the pulpit and, when asked about directly, 17 percent of the state heard their pastor, rabbi, priest or other religious figure deliver an anti-gay sermon.



- Faith can play a positive role as well. A 61 percent majority of the state believes, “discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people is a sin,” and 95 percent (!) agree, “we should all follow the golden rule and treat others as we would like to be treated, including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.”

Conclusion

Virginia supports marriage equality, employment protections for LGBT employees, adoption by gay couples and anti-bullying legislation. Despite the Supreme Court victories last month and the electoral victories in November, the LGBT residents of Virginia enjoy none of these protections.