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SLIPPING ACCEPTANCE, OUTNESS, AND VISIBILITY IN THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

Findings from the 2025 Annual LGBTQ+ Community Survey

Last updated: December 17, 2025

A Changing Climate for LGBTQ+ Acceptance

Public attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people in the United States have shifted substantially over the past several decades, with long-term gains in social acceptance. Yet those gains appear increasingly fragile: nearly **three in ten (29.7%)** LGBTQ+ adults say LGBTQ+ people are less accepted today than they were a year ago.

This analysis shows that experiences of discrimination are a key driver of perceived declines in LGBTQ+ acceptance among both LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people. In response, many LGBTQ+ individuals report limiting disclosure of their identities, contributing to reduced visibility of the LGBTQ+ community.

For LGBTQ+ people, acceptance shapes whether it is possible to live openly and authentically in everyday life. In this brief, *acceptance* refers to perceptions of how LGBTQ+ people are treated in society, *outness* refers to openness about one's sexual orientation or gender identity, and *visibility* refers to public or symbolic expressions of LGBTQ+ identity.

National polling illustrates the durability of these long-term gains. Today, most Americans support same-sex marriage, a public opinion that has held for more than a decade, based on Gallup data.

At the same time, long-term progress can coexist with short-term erosion. PRRI found that three-quarters (75%) of Americans believe that LGBTQ+ people, including transgender Americans, should be protected from discrimination—down from 80% in 2022.

This analysis uses data from the 2025 Annual LGBTQ+ Community Survey (ALCS) and general structural equation modeling to examine how experiences of discrimination are associated with perceived declines in LGBTQ+ acceptance, and how those perceptions, in turn, relate to changes in outness and visibility among LGBTQ+ adults over the past year.

By modeling acceptance as a contextual precursor to outness and visibility, the analysis evaluates how broader social conditions translate into changes in everyday behavior. The findings provide insight into the mechanisms through which discrimination reshapes everyday life for LGBTQ+ people, with broad implications for workplace inclusion, public engagement, and community visibility.



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LGBTQ+ Acceptance Over the Last Year and Discrimination

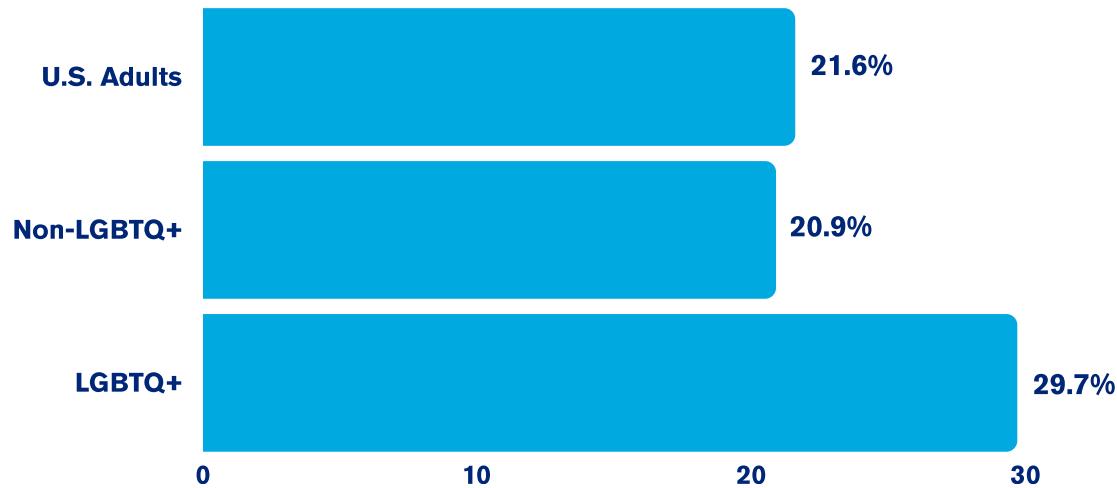
Perceptions of LGBTQ+ acceptance provide important insight into how broader social conditions are experienced at the individual level.

A substantial share of U.S. adults report that acceptance of LGBTQ+ people has declined over the past year. Roughly **one in five** U.S. adults (**21.6%**) say that LGBTQ+ people are less accepted today than they were 12 months ago.

Among LGBTQ+ adults, perceptions of declining acceptance are more pronounced. Nearly **three in ten** (**29.7%**) LGBTQ+ respondents report that acceptance has worsened over the past year, compared with about **one in five** (**20.9%**) non-LGBTQ+ adults.

Reported declines span multiple domains, including workplaces, interactions with supervisors and coworkers, health care settings, and public institutions. These patterns suggest that perceived changes in acceptance reflect broad features of the social environment rather than isolated incidents.

LGBTQ+ Adults Substantially More Likely to Say LGBTQ+ Community Less Accepted % Who Said Acceptance for Community is Worse (Compared to 12 Months Ago)



Experiences with sex-, sexual orientation-, or gender identity-based discrimination in the past 12 months are strongly associated with these perceptions. Adults who report experiencing these kinds of discrimination in the past year are **three times (OR = 2.92; p < .001)** more likely to say that acceptance of LGBTQ+ people has declined.

This relationship holds among both non-LGBTQ+ and LGBTQ+ adults, indicating that discrimination functions as a visible signal of the broader social climate. Notably, LGBTQ+ adults report substantially higher perceptions of declining acceptance even when accounting for experiences of discrimination.



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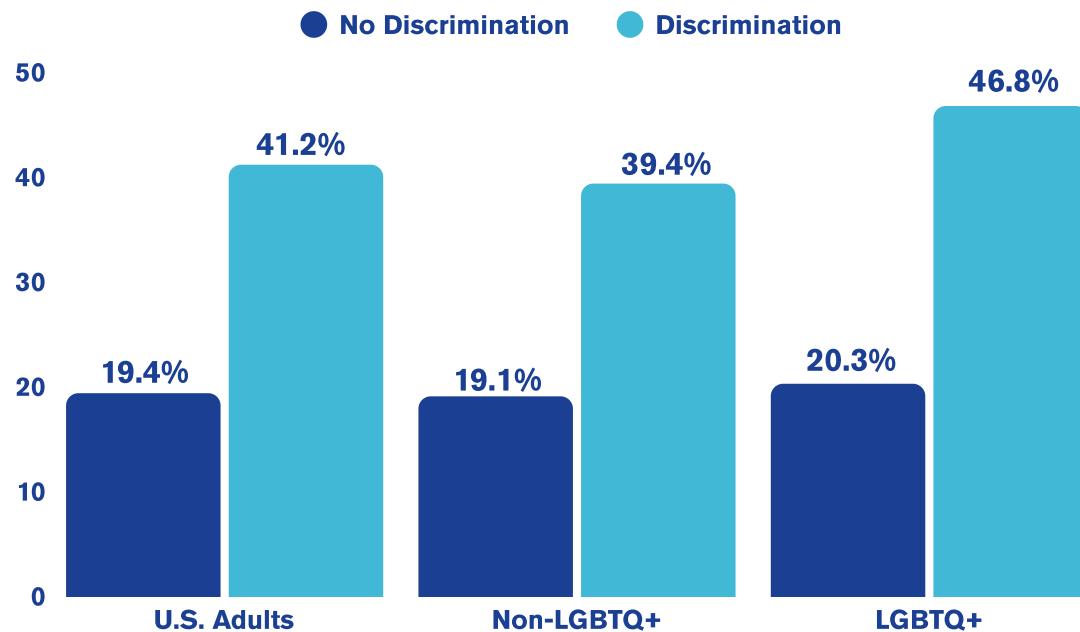
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Discrimination Elevates Perceptions that LGBTQ+ Community is Less Accepted

% Who Said Acceptance for LGBTQ+ Community is Worse

(Compared to 12 Months Ago)



Outness

If discrimination shapes perceptions of acceptance, those perceptions appear to directly influence how openly LGBTQ+ people live their lives.

Nearly **half (47.5%)** of LGBTQ+ adults report becoming less open about their sexual orientation or gender identity compared to 12 months ago. Declines in outness are reported across multiple domains, including workplaces, interactions with supervisors and coworkers, health care settings, schools, and public spaces.

Perceptions of declining acceptance play a central role in shaping outness. LGBTQ+ adults who perceive declines in acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community are **3.5 times (OR = 3.54; p < .001)** more likely to report becoming less open about their identity, even after accounting for recent experiences of discrimination and other factors.

This suggests that reduced levels of outness may be an early form of behavioral retreat. As acceptance erodes, LGBTQ+ people appear to limit openness in everyday interactions, particularly in settings tied to employment, health care, and public life.



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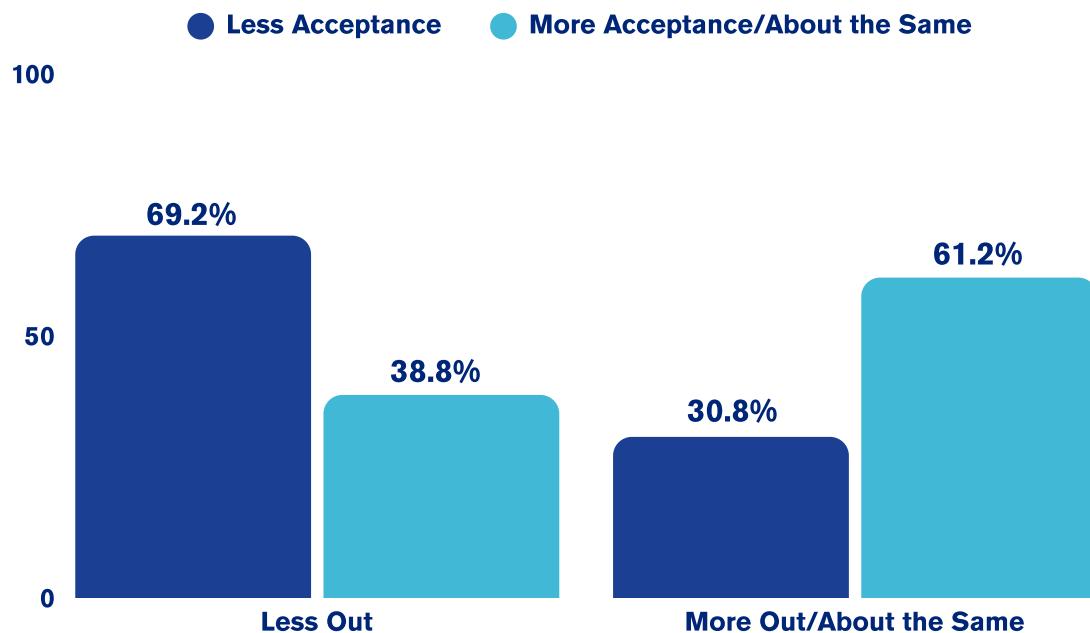


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Perceived Declines in Acceptance Are Associated With Reduced LGBTQ+ Outness
% LGBTQ+ Adults Reporting Changes in Outness by Perceived Community Acceptance
(Compared to 12 Months Ago)



LGBTQ+ adults' openness about their identity varies sharply by perceptions of acceptance. Those who perceive declining acceptance are significantly more likely to report becoming less out, while those who view acceptance as stable or improving are more likely to remain as open or become more open.

Nearly **seven in ten (69.2%)** LGBTQ+ adults who say acceptance has worsened report being less open about their identity. By contrast, a **majority (61.2%)** of LGBTQ+ adults who perceive acceptance as stable or improving report being as open or more open than they were a year ago. This pattern suggests that outness is highly responsive to social climate, with perceived declines in acceptance associated with behavioral retreat.

Visibility

Changes in outness, in turn, appear to shape whether LGBTQ+ people remain visible in public and symbolic ways. Broader declines in visible expression of LGBTQ+ identity appear to follow earlier declines in both perceived acceptance and outness. Just over **half (51.1%)** of LGBTQ+ adults report becoming less comfortable displaying visible signs of LGBTQ+ identity, such as wearing Pride symbols or displaying LGBTQ+ affirming items, compared to a year ago. These declines indicate that behavioral retreat extends beyond interpersonal disclosure to include public and symbolic forms of expression.



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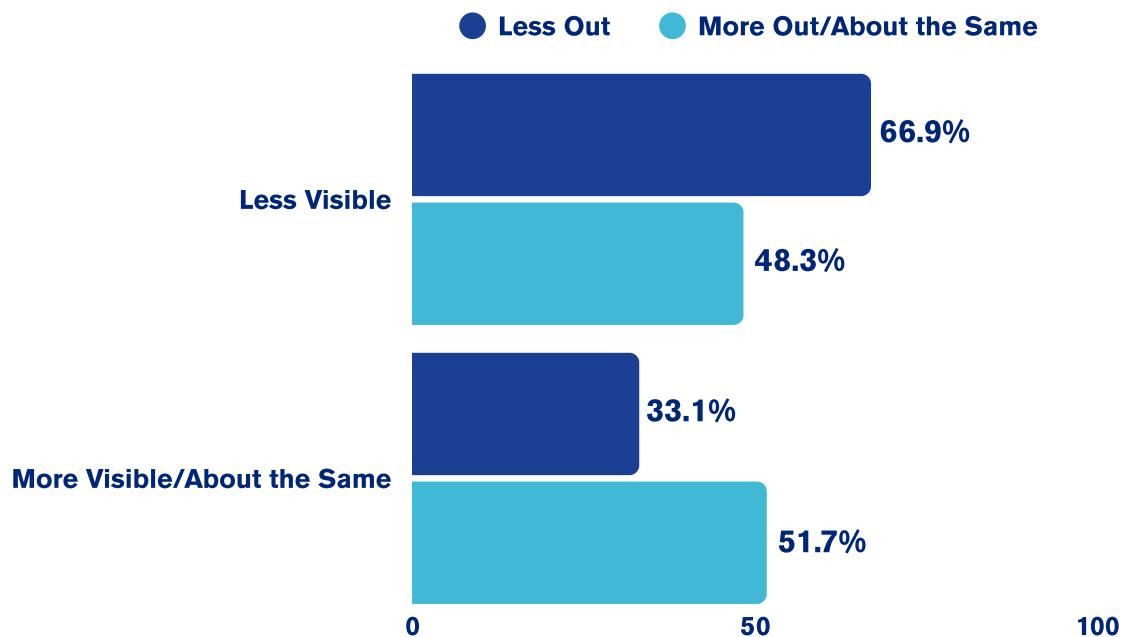
Reductions in LGBTQ+ visibility are closely tied to perceptions of LGBTQ+ acceptance and outness. Perceived declines in acceptance, driven by experiences with discrimination, are associated with increased odds of reduced visibility, but this relationship operates primarily through changes in outness. Once declines in outness are accounted for, outness emerges as the strongest predictor of reduced visibility.

Among LGBTQ+ adults who reported becoming less out about their identity over the past 12 months, **two-thirds (66.9%)** also reported becoming less visible. By contrast, among those who were more out or about as open as they were compared to a year ago, **half (51.7%)** reported being more visible or about as visible.

Perceived Declines in Outness Are Associated With Reduced Visibility Among LGBTQ+ Adults

% LGBTQ+ Adults Reporting Changes in Visibility by Outness

(Compared to 12 Months Ago)



The Bottom Line

These findings suggest that discrimination matters not only through direct harm but through its downstream effects. By eroding perceptions of acceptance, discrimination prompts LGBTQ+ people to limit disclosure, which in turn contributes to reduced visibility—even in the absence of overt exclusion. This cascading process highlights why nondiscrimination protections and inclusive policies matter. By promoting equal treatment and acceptance, they help reduce behavioral retreat and support participation, trust, and well-being across workplaces, public institutions, and communities.



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Methodology

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation's 2025 Annual LGBTQ+ Community Survey (ALCS) provides robust data on the experiences, attitudes, and well-being of LGBTQ+ adults in the United States. The 2025 ALCS version included a supplemental comparison sample of non-LGBTQ+ adults.

Data were collected online from September 29 to October 27, 2025, among U.S. adults aged 18 and older. The LGBTQ+ sample, which includes nearly 10,000 LGBTQ+ adults, was drawn through the HRC Foundation's Community Marketing & Insights research panel of LGBTQ+ adults as well as from participants recruited from community organizations, while the non-LGBTQ+ sample (approximately N = 5,000) was fielded by PSB Insights during the same period. To ensure demographic representativeness, PSB used quotas for respondents' race, age, geography, education, and gender.

Post-survey weighting was applied to correct for non-probability sampling bias and align the dataset with external benchmarks. Estimates are predicted probabilities from logistic regression with robust standard errors controlling for race/ethnicity, education, and age.

See the [report methodology here](#).

See the [complete ALCS methodology and data quality report here](#).

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