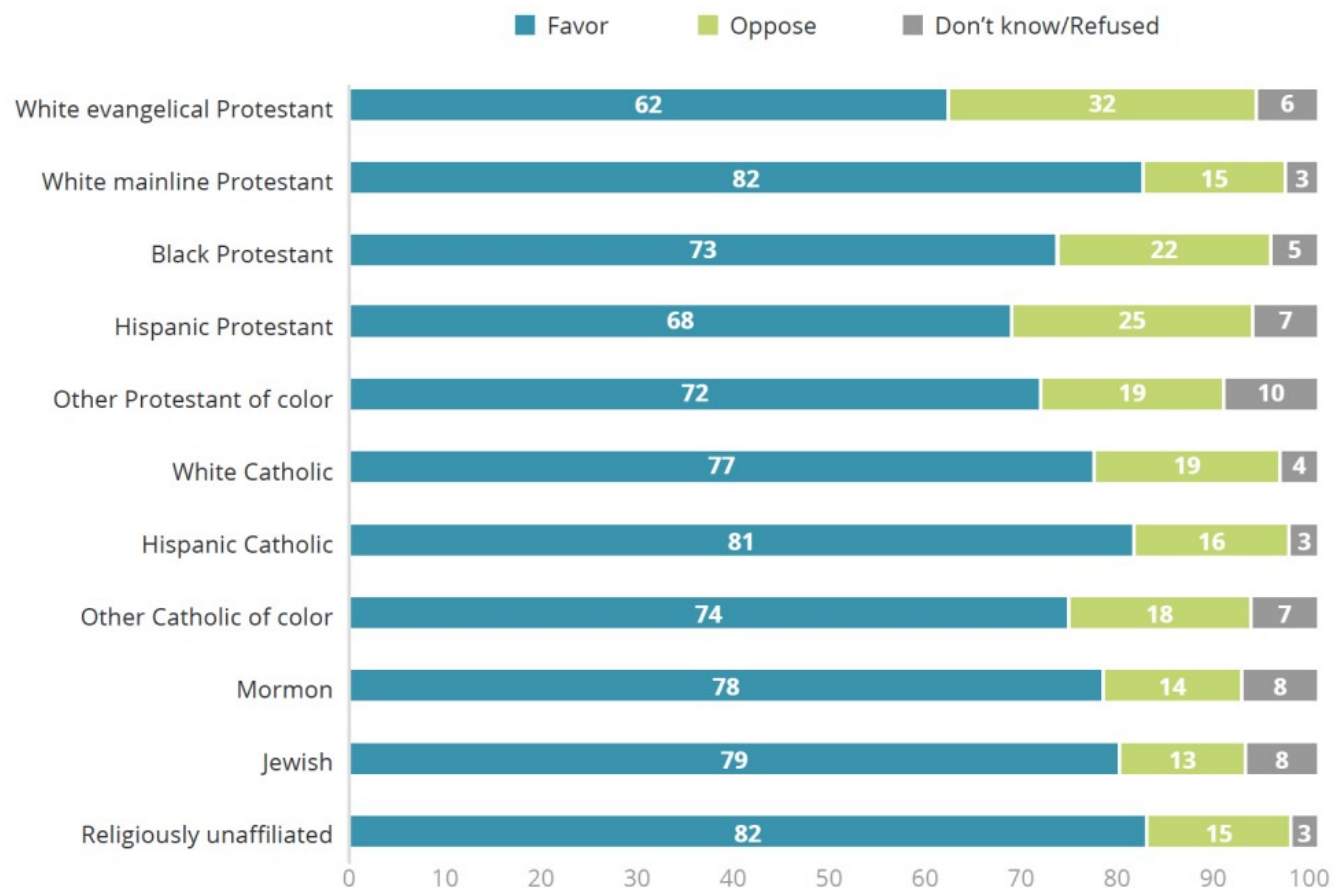


Poll: Most Americans support LGBTQ nondiscrimination laws

by [Yonat Shimron](#) in the [April 21, 2021](#) issue

FIGURE 1.3 Broad Support for LGBT Nondiscrimination Protections, by Religious Affiliation

Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose laws that would protect gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people against discrimination in jobs, public accommodations, and housing?



Source: PRRI 2020 American Values Atlas.

A new study shows overwhelming public support for LGBTQ nondiscrimination laws.

The 2020 American Values Atlas study from Public Religion Research Institute finds 76 percent of Americans favor laws that would protect LGBTQ people from discrimination in jobs, housing, and public accommodations—up from 72 percent in 2019, and the highest percentage recorded by the public polling firm since it began asking the question in 2015.

Support for nondiscrimination laws cuts across age, race, religious, and political lines. It has grown fastest among Black Americans and White mainline Protestants, according to the study—a series of polls conducted in 2020 among 50,334 Americans. These two groups saw a jump in support of 10 percentage points each over the course of the past five years.

Every religious group polled—including White evangelicals—said they supported LGBTQ nondiscrimination laws by at least 60 percent. Among Hispanic Catholics, White mainline Protestants, and unaffiliated Americans, support for such measures tops 80 percent.

But that does not mean religious leaders will follow.

Many evangelical and conservative Christians, such as the Southern Baptist Convention and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, oppose the idea of adding sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes, in addition to those already protected, such as race, color, and national origin.

Other religious groups support broadening the protected classes to sexual orientation and gender identity but oppose the Equality Act, which passed the Democratic-controlled US House of Representatives on February 25, because it lacks sufficient religious exemptions.

The Equality Act would amend the 1964 Civil Rights Act to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. It would also override the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which prohibits the federal government from “substantially burdening” individuals’ exercise of religion unless there’s a compelling government interest.

An alternative bill, called Fairness for All, has also been introduced in the House. It would provide broad protections for LGBTQ people and, at the same time, provide exemptions for religious institutions.

Fairness for All has been championed by the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In March, 57 Black clergy, many of whom lead Black denominations, also said they would support Fairness for All.

The PRRI poll also showed broad opposition to religiously based refusals, such as bakers and florists refusing to serve LGBTQ people. Majorities of White Catholics (60 percent) and White mainline Protestants (59 percent) oppose such refusals. White evangelical Protestants (46 percent) were the only religious group where less than a majority opposes service refusals.

Majorities of most religious groups support same-sex marriage, too, the study found. About 76 percent of non-Christian religious Americans support same-sex marriage, as do 75 percent of White Catholics, 72 percent of White mainline Protestants, 71 percent of Hispanic Catholics, and 81 percent of religiously unaffiliated Americans. Support drops to below half—43 percent—only among White evangelicals. —Religion News Service