



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2010

Most Continue to Favor Gays Serving Openly in Military

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Most Continue to Favor Gays Serving Openly in Military

As the Pentagon prepares to release its highly anticipated survey of military personnel about the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy, most Americans (58%) say they favor allowing homosexuals to serve openly in the armed forces. Fewer than half that number (27%) oppose allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly.

These opinions have changed little in recent years. Since 2005 – including three surveys this year – roughly 60% have consistently favored permitting homosexuals to serve openly in the military. There is greater support for permitting gays to serve openly today than there was in 1994, after President Clinton put in place the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy. In July of that year, 52% said they favored allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military while 45% said they opposed allowing this.

The national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, conducted Nov. 4-7 among 1,255 adults, finds continuing partisan and religious differences in opinions about whether to permit gays and lesbians to serve openly in the nation’s armed forces.

Large majorities of Democrats (70%) and independents (62%) favor allowing gays to serve openly. Republicans are divided (40% favor, 44% oppose). Among conservative Republicans, far more oppose than favor allowing gays to serve openly (52% to 28%).

Nearly half (48%) of white evangelical Protestants oppose letting gays serve openly in the military, while just 34% support this proposal. Majorities or pluralities across other religious groups favor allowing gays to serve openly.

Consistent Support for Gays Serving Openly in the Military

<i>Allow gays and lesbians to serve openly in military...</i>	Favor	Oppose	DK
	%	%	%
November 2010	58	27	16=100
August 2010	60	30	10=100
February 2010	61	27	12=100
March 2009	59	32	9=100
March 2006	60	32	8=100
July 2005	58	32	10=100
July 1994	52	45	3=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Nov. 4-7, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

The balance of opinion across age groups is in favor of letting gays serve openly. Those 65 and older are the only age group in which fewer than half (44%) favors this; still just 28% of seniors are opposed to gays and lesbians serving openly while an identical percentage offers no opinion.

Two-thirds of college graduates (67%) favor gays and lesbians serving openly, as do more than half of those with some college experience (55%) and those with no more than a high school education (54%).

The differences in opinions across political and demographic groups also were evident in 1994. Since then, the balance of opinion among most groups has become more favorable. (*For more on changes in opinion about gays in the military, see [Support for Same-Sex Marriage Edges Upward](#), Oct. 6, 2010.*)

Partisan, Religious Differences Over Gays in the Military

<i>Allow gays and lesbians to serve openly in military...</i>	Favor Oppose		DK	N
	%	%	%	
Total	58	27	16=100	1255
Men	52	32	15=100	549
Women	63	21	16=100	706
White, non-Hispanic	60	26	14=100	920
Black, non-Hispanic	53	30	17=100	147
18-29	68	21	11=100	198
30-49	56	29	15=100	362
50-64	61	27	11=100	351
65+	44	28	28=100	328
College grad+	67	19	14=100	495
Some college	55	30	16=100	347
HS grad or less	54	30	16=100	407
Republican	40	44	17=100	360
Conservative	28	52	19=100	251
Moderate/Liberal	62	26	11=100	105
Democrat	70	18	13=100	389
Conserv./Mod.	66	20	14=100	232
Liberal	78	13	9=100	135
Independent	62	23	14=100	435
Protestant	49	34	17=100	673
White evangelical	34	48	17=100	256
White mainline	64	23	13=100	240
Black Protestant	52	29	19=100	112
Catholic	63	21	17=100	257
White Catholic	66	20	14=100	195
Unaffiliated	71	17	12=100	210
<i>Attend services...</i>				
Weekly or more	40	40	21=100	504
Monthly/yearly	66	20	14=100	427
Seldom/never	71	19	10=100	311

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Nov. 4-7, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Tea Party Republicans Are Less Supportive

Among all Republicans and Republican leaners, those who agree with the Tea Party are less supportive of allowing gays to serve openly than are those who disagree with the Tea Party or have no opinion of the movement.

Only about four-in-ten (38%) Republicans and Republican leaners who agree with the Tea Party favor allowing gays to serve openly while 48% are opposed. Among those who disagree with the Tea Party or have no opinion of the movement, 52% favor letting gays serve openly and just 30% are opposed.

Tea Party Republicans Less Supportive of Gays Serving Openly

<i>Allow gays and lesbians to serve openly in military...</i>	Favor Oppose		DK	N
	%	%	%	
All Reps/Rep leaners	44	39	17=100	574
<i>Among Reps, Rep leaners</i>				
Agree w/Tea Party (51%)	38	48	15=100	319
Disagree w/Tea Party/ No opinion (48%)	52	30	18=100	252

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Nov. 4-7, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

About the Survey

Results from this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted November 4-7, 2010 among a national sample of 1,255 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (828 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 427 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 189 who had no landline telephone). Interviewing was conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. Both the landline and cell phone samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see: <http://people-press.org/methodology/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2009 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2009 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Sample Size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1255	3.5 percentage points
Republican	360	6.5 percentage points
Democrat	389	6.0 percentage points
Independent	435	6.0 percentage points

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

About the Projects

The report is a joint effort of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. Both organizations are sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trusts and are projects of the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of the Center's current survey results are made available free of charge.

The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life seeks to promote a deeper understanding of issues at the intersection of religion and public affairs. It studies public opinion, demographics and other important aspects of religion and public life in the U.S. and around the world. It also provides a neutral venue for discussions of timely issues through roundtables and briefings.

This report is a collaborative product based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
NOVEMBER 2010 POST-ELECTION SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
NOVEMBER 4-7, 2010
N=1255**

QUESTIONS 1-64 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

ASK ALL:

Thinking about some other issues...

Q.65 Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military?

	-----FAVOR-----			-----OPPOSE-----			(VOL.)
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Strongly favor</i>	<i>Favor</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Strongly oppose</i>	<i>Oppose</i>	
Nov 4-7, 2010	58	23	35	27	11	16	16
Jul 21-Aug 5, 2010 ¹	60	21	39	30	13	17	10
Feb 3-9, 2010	61	18	43	27	10	17	12
Mar 9-12, 2009	59	19	40	32	13	19	9
March, 2006	60	20	40	32	13	19	8
July, 2005	58	15	43	32	15	17	10
July, 1994	52	16	36	45	26	19	3

QUESTIONS 66-68 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

NO QUESTIONS 69-70

QUESTIONS 71-73 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

NO QUESTIONS 74-75

QUESTIONS 76-PVOTE08B PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

¹ In July 2010, March 2009, March 2006, July 2005, and July 1994 the question was part of a list. The question was not part of a list in February 2010.