

A Closer Look at Nigeria:

Attitudes on lesbian, gay,
and bisexual people

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nigeria's **Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act** (SSMPA) was signed into law in January of 2014. The law is widely supported by the Nigerian population and includes a number of measures criminalizing people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual, and allied – not just marriage for same-sex couples. Both living in a relationship with someone of the same sex, and getting married to someone of the same sex are punishable with 14 years in prison; membership in a gay-affirming organization is punishable with 10 years; and public displays of an amorous same-sex relationship is punishable with 10 years. The law also criminalizes lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) supporters. Simply witnessing or aiding a same-sex couple's marriage or supporting the registration of LGBT-affirming organizations is punishable by 10 years in prison.

Though the legal and social hostility toward people who are LGBT remains high in the country, a survey of the Nigerian general public indicates the culture is slowly moving in the direction of acceptance for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, aided by familial and interpersonal relationships with lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals.

Methodology

In April and May of 2015, NOIPolls contacted a randomly selected population of 1,000 telephone-owning Nigerians across the six geo-political zones, who were 18 years old and above, and conducted a poll to assess Nigerians' awareness and perception of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community in the country. Because questions were centered around the SSMPA, questions were not asked about transgender people.

Declining Support for the Act

In 2015, 87% of Nigerians supported the SSMPA. However, polling about this issue has been occurring since the law was in planning stages, starting in 2010, and measures of support have been steadily declining ever since. In 2010, 96% of respondents supported the SSMPA; 92% in 2013 and 87% in 2015.

SUPPORT FOR THE SAME SEX MARRIAGE PROHIBITION ACT



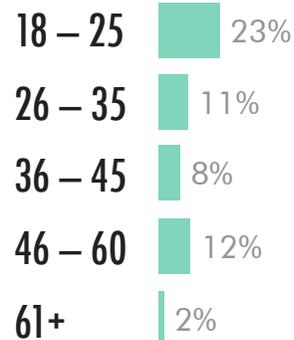
Accepting an LGB Family Member

Eleven percent of respondents stated they would be willing to accept a family member if they were lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Results indicate that younger generations and people with personal connections to lesbian, gay, or bisexual people are, over time, increasingly accepting of them. A greater proportion of young adults, ages 18-25, (23%) would accept a family member in a same-sex relationship compared to the 11% national average.

Familiarity with people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual corresponds with higher rates of acceptance of hypothetical lesbian, gay, or bisexual family members. A greater proportion of those who reported they would accept a family member in a same-sex relationship already had a family member, friend, acquaintance who was openly lesbian, gay, or bisexual, or are familiar with members of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community through the media.

ACCEPTANCE OF LGB FAMILY MEMBERS

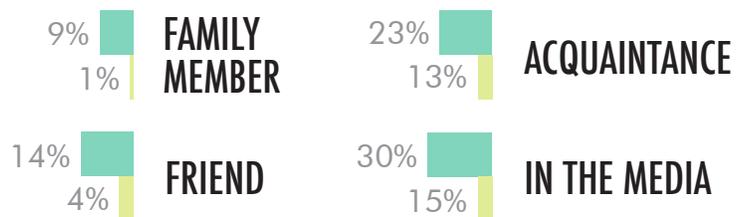
BY AGE GROUP



FAMILIARITY WITH LGB PEOPLE

AMONG THOSE WHO WOULD AND WOULD NOT ACCEPT AN LGB FAMILY MEMBER

■ WOULD ACCEPT LGB FAMILY MEMBER
■ WOULD NOT ACCEPT LGB FAMILY MEMBER



Supporting Protections for LGB People

Marriage is not something the majority of Nigerians believe should be afforded to lesbian, gay, or bisexual people, but opinions are more positive with respect to other protections for lesbian, gay, or bisexual people overall. Thirty percent of respondents believe lesbian, gay, and bisexual people should have access to public services, such as education, health care, and housing; 15% believe they should have the same rights as other Nigerians; and 8% believe they should have the right to organize.

SUPPORT OF RIGHTS FOR LGB PEOPLE

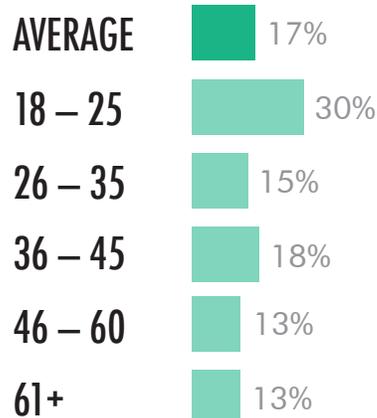


Awareness of the Lives of LGB People

Survey results suggest that knowing that a family member, friend, acquaintance, or even someone as distant as a media personality is lesbian, gay, or bisexual increases the likelihood that Nigerians oppose the SSMPA. It will also increase acceptance of a family member who is lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

Overall familiarity with lesbian, gay, and bisexual people is minimal among Nigerians. 83% of Nigerians do not know openly lesbian, gay, or bisexual people, either as family, friends, persons in their locality, or through the media. However, younger generations show greater familiarity with lesbian, gay, and bisexual people in all social groups.

FAMILIARITY WITH LGB PEOPLE BY AGE GROUP



Conclusion

The data demonstrates that coming out will advance understanding and acceptance for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people in Nigeria. However, Nigeria remains a dangerous place for individuals to come out. We can see the tide turning, albeit slowly, toward acceptance, and hopefully the continued safety, of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people in Nigeria.



The Bisi Alimi Foundation is a non-profit organization providing unbiased information, education, training, and development projects with a focus on sexuality and gender in Nigeria. The aim of the foundation is to build a wealth of knowledge through education, training and community engagement as a means of reducing homophobia in Nigeria.



The Initiative for Equal Rights is a Nigeria-based registered non-profit organization that works to protect and promote the human rights of sexual minorities nationally and regionally. It was founded in 2005 as a response to the discrimination and marginalization of sexual minorities observed in HIV prevention and human rights work.

theinitiativeforequalrights.org
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GLAAD rewrites the script for LGBT acceptance. As a dynamic media force, GLAAD tackles tough issues to shape the narrative and provoke dialogue that leads to cultural change. GLAAD protects all that has been accomplished and creates a world where everyone can live the life they love.

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