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Anti-LGBTQ+ Policies and Rhetoric Are Harming LGBTQ+ Lives

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Anti-LGBTQ+ Policies and Rhetoric Are Harming LGBTQ+ Lives

According to 2023 Gallup polling, 7.6% of U.S. adults now identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or some other sexual orientation besides heterosexual. Increases in LGBTQ+ identification over the last decade have corresponded with historic increases in representation in media and government, as well as public support for LGBTQ+ rights.

However, this increase in LGBTQ+ visibility has also been met with a political backlash. Over the last several years, Republican lawmakers have advanced a record number of anti-LGBTQ+ bills in state legislatures all across the country. Most of these bills specifically target transgender and nonbinary people and seek to regulate nearly every aspect of their lives — from access to health care and bathrooms to the ability to play sports and change their legal documents to reflect their gender identity. Other policies seek to censor LGBTQ+ topics in the classroom, out LGBTQ+ students to their parents, roll back protections against anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination and conversion therapy, and rigidly define sex as only male and female in legal codes.

This year alone, nearly 500 anti-LGBTQ+ bills have been introduced in state legislatures nationwide. Last year, more than 75 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were signed into law, prompting the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest LGBTQ+ civil rights organization, to declare a state of emergency for LGBTQ+ people in the United States.

Previous Data for Progress polling of the LGBTQ+ community has found that many LGBTQ+ Americans feel unsafe in their communities and that a majority of transgender adults report a low sense of belonging in U.S. society, while less than half feel comfortable expressing themselves in their local community.

In this new report, Data for Progress surveyed 873 LGBTQ+ adults, including an oversample of transgender adults, nationally using web panel respondents. The findings emphasize the negative impacts of recent anti-LGBTQ+ policies and rhetoric on LGBTQ+ people's lives, including a worse quality of life and mental health, experiences of discrimination and harassment, and difficulties accessing health care. Additionally, the findings point to the importance of having access to LGBTQ+ representation in media and LGBTQ+-affirming online spaces and resources, particularly for young people.

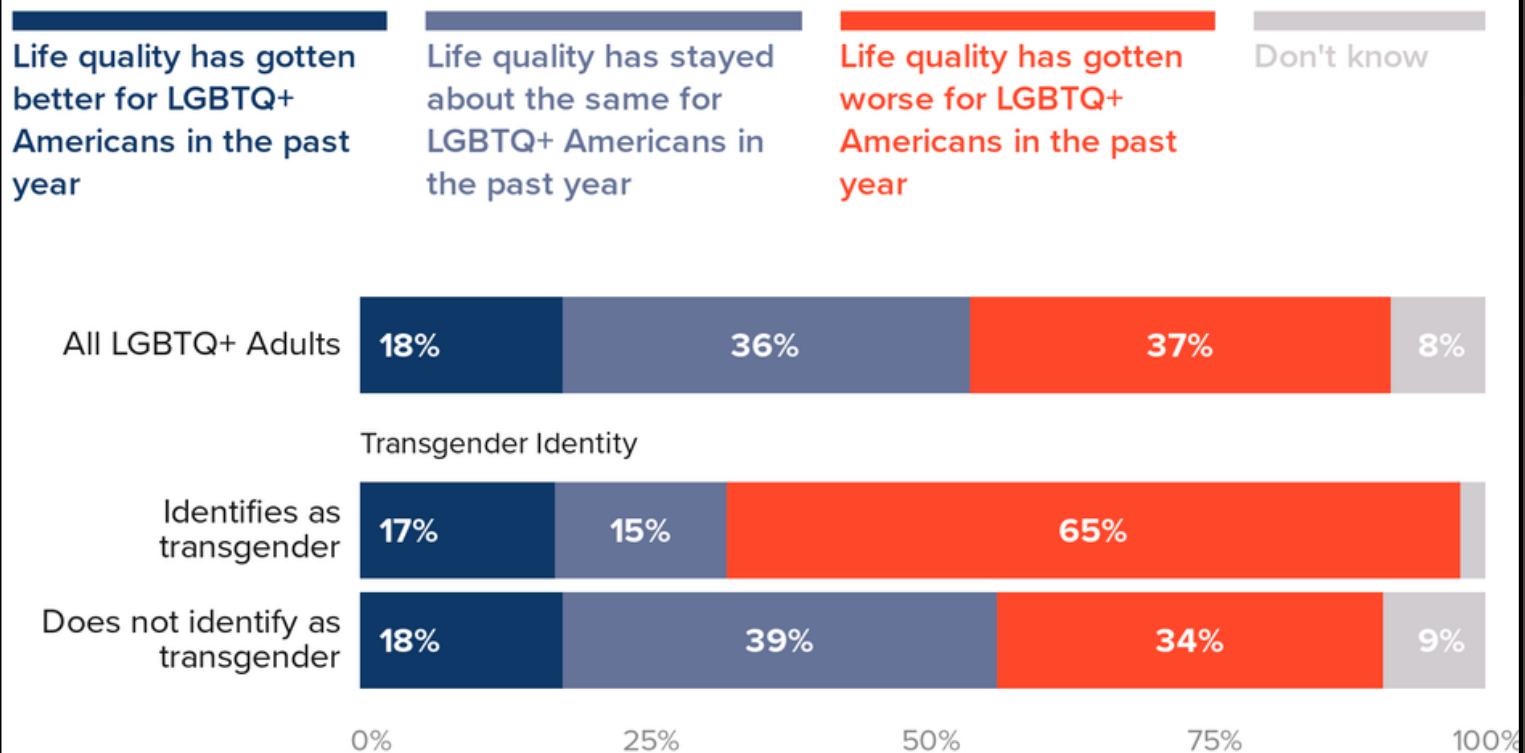
LGBTQ+ People Face a “State of Emergency” and Are Negatively Impacted by Anti-LGBTQ+ Politics

After being informed that the Human Rights Campaign declared a state of emergency for LGBTQ+ people in the United States for the first time in September 2023, citing "an unprecedented and dangerous spike in anti-LGBTQ+ legislative assaults sweeping state houses this year," 70% of LGBTQ+ adults, including 85% of transgender adults, agree that LGBTQ+ Americans are facing a national state of emergency.

More than a third of LGBTQ+ adults (37%), including nearly two-thirds of transgender adults (65%), say quality of life has gotten worse for LGBTQ+ Americans in the past year.

Nearly 2 in 3 Transgender Adults Say Quality of Life Has Gotten Worse for LGBTQ+ Americans in the Past Year

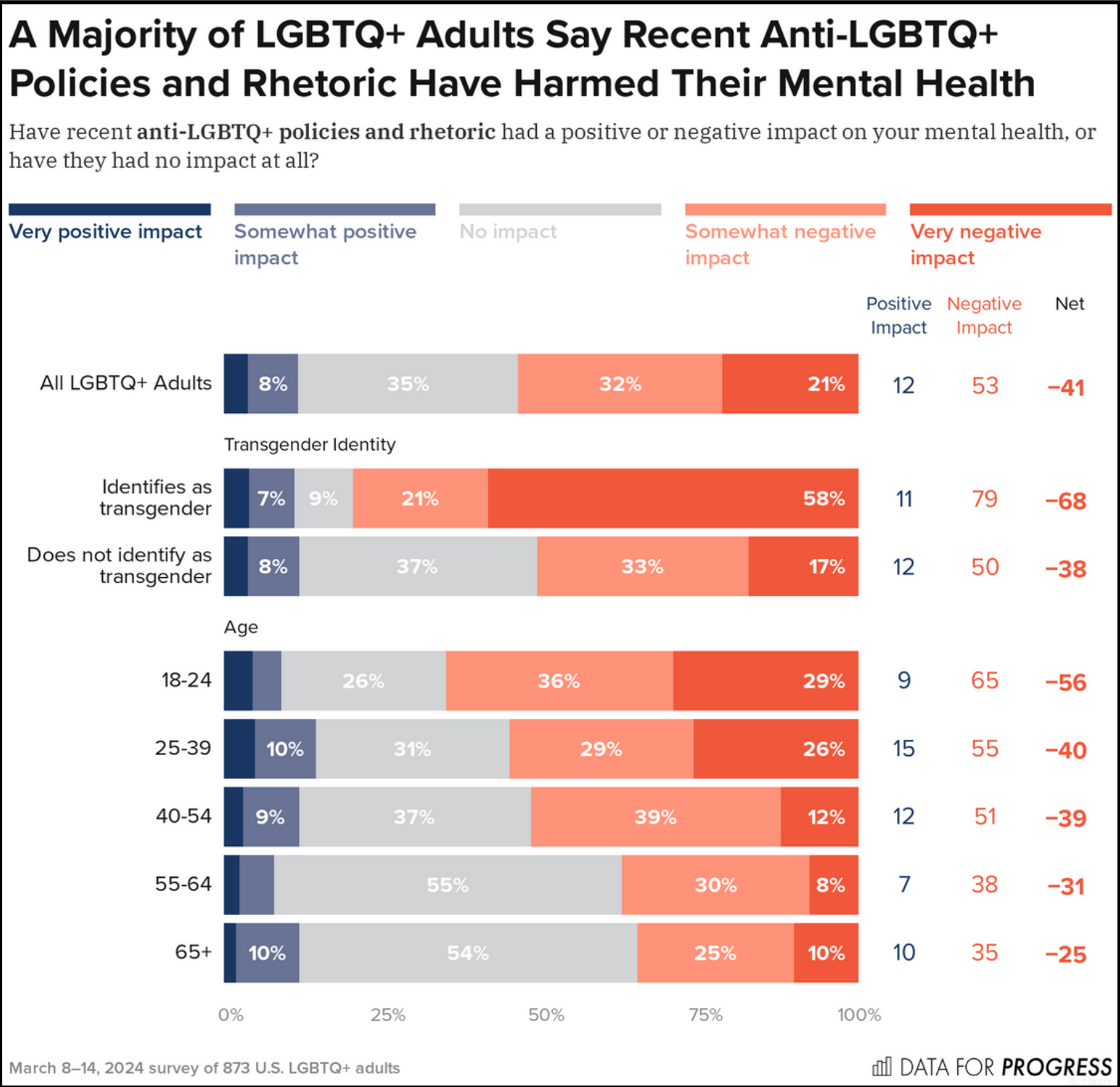
Do you think that life quality for LGBTQ+ Americans has gotten better, worse, or stayed about the same in the past year?



March 8–14, 2024 survey of 873 U.S. LGBTQ+ adults

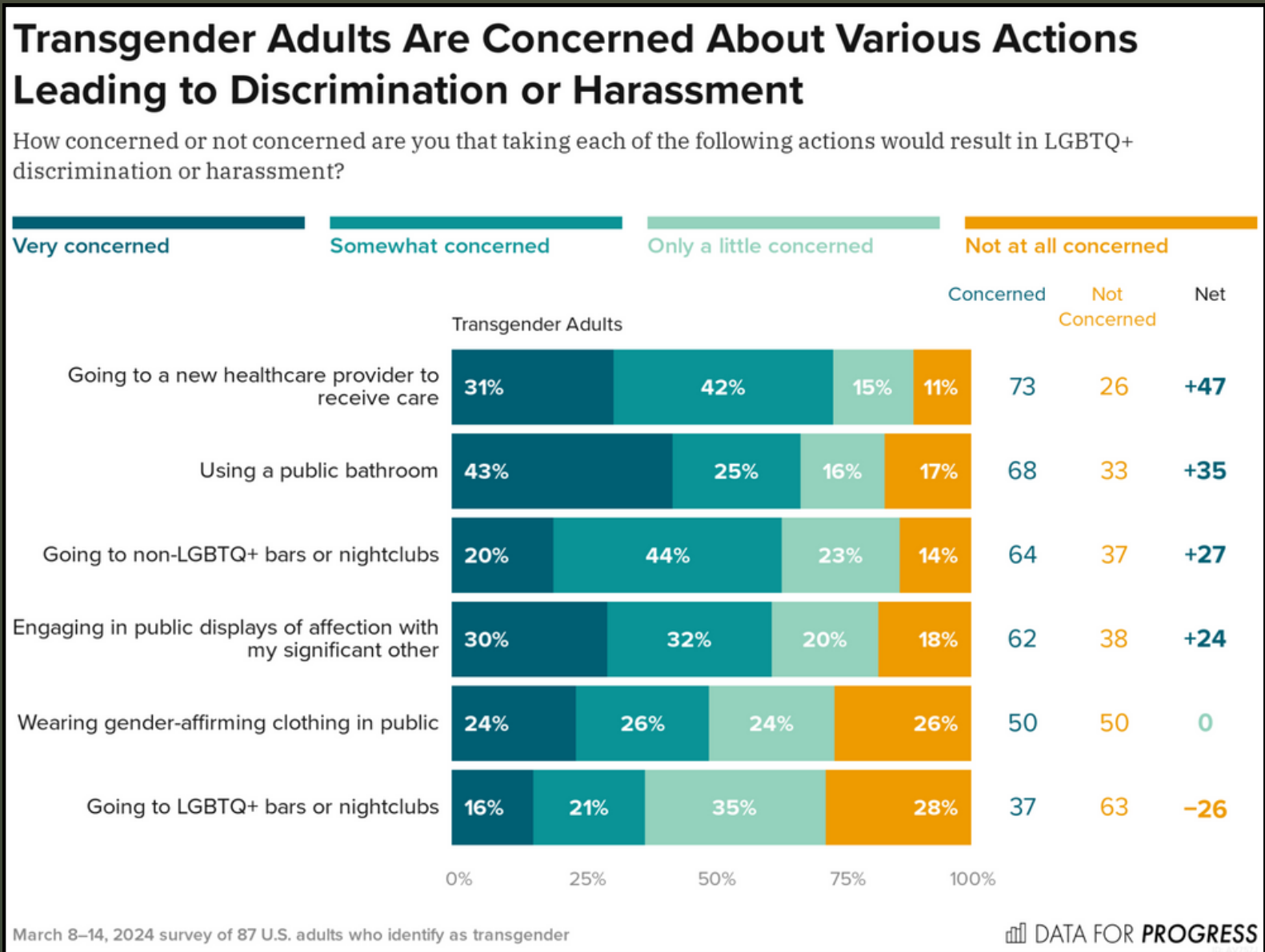
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A majority of LGBTQ+ adults (53%) — including 79% of transgender adults and 65% of LGBTQ+ adults ages 18 to 24 — say that recent anti-LGBTQ+ policies and rhetoric have negatively impacted their mental health.



More than 60% of transgender adults say they are concerned the following actions would result in LGBTQ+ discrimination or harassment: going to a new health care provider to receive care (73%), using a public bathroom (68%), going to non-LGBTQ+ bars or nightclubs (64%), and engaging in public displays of affection with their significant other (62%).

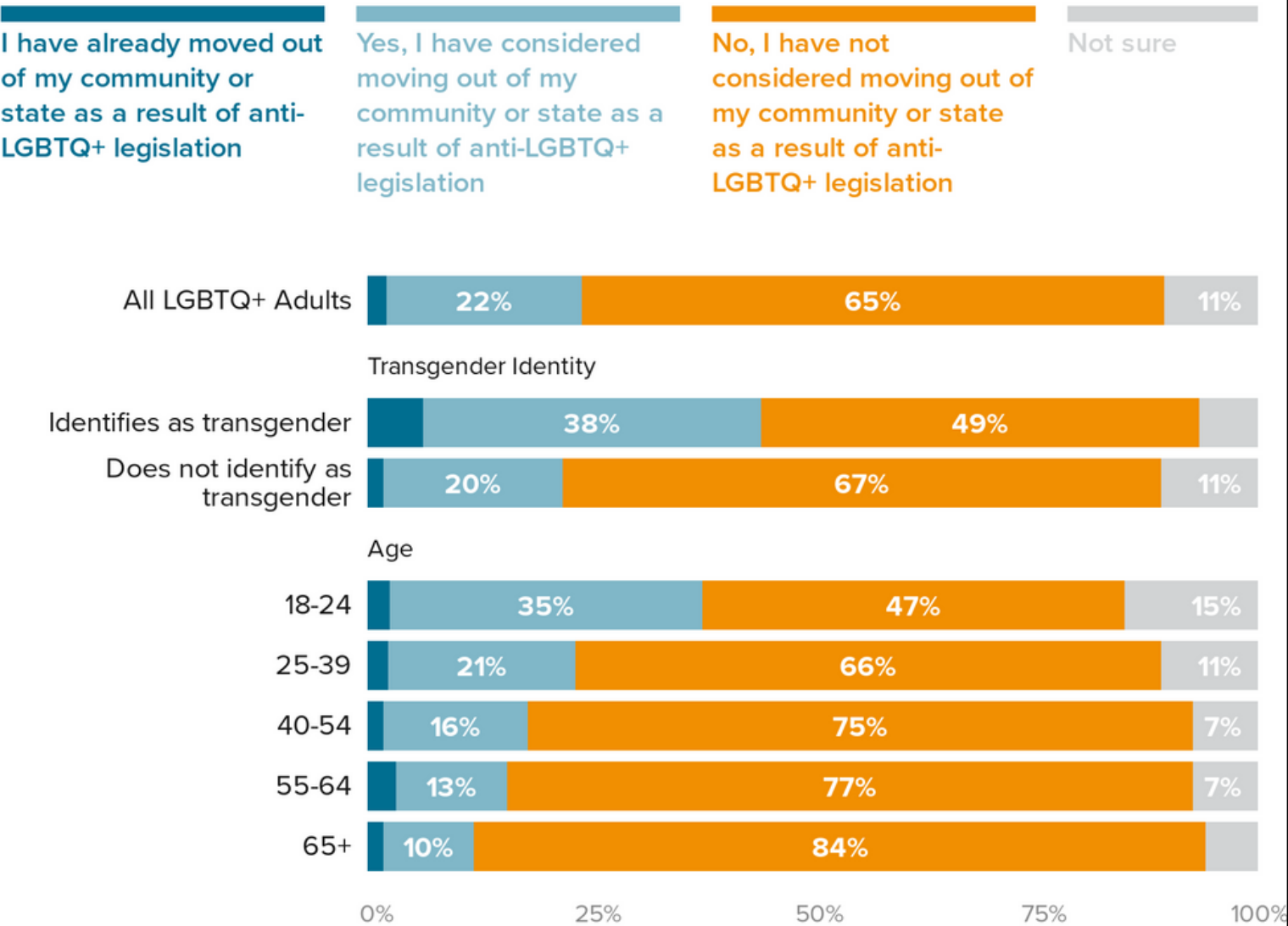
Among all LGBTQ+ adults, 47% say they are concerned that engaging in public displays of affection with their significant other would result in LGBTQ+ discrimination or harassment — and 1 in 5 are “very concerned.”



Furthermore, 44% of transgender adults say that they have considered moving or already moved out of their community or state as a result of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation. This is similar to the finding from the [2022 U.S. Transgender Survey Early Insights Report](#), which surveyed more than 90,000 transgender people, and a [previous Data for Progress survey](#) from 2023.

Around 2 in 5 Transgender Adults Are Considering Moving Out of Their State as a Result of Anti-LGBTQ+ Legislation

In the past year, have you considered moving out of your community or state as a result of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation?



March 8–14, 2024 survey of 873 U.S. LGBTQ+ adults DATA FOR *PROGRESS*

Additionally, around 1 in 10 LGBTQ+ adults, including 13% of transgender adults, say they have friends who have moved out of their community or state as a result of recent anti-LGBTQ+ policies.

When asked about their experiences as a result of anti-LGBTQ+ policies and rhetoric in the last year, 42% of LGBTQ+ adults say they have heard anti-LGBTQ+ remarks from a family, friend, coworker, or neighbor; 1 in 4 have experienced anti-LGBTQ+ cyberbullying or harassment online; more than 1 in 5 (23%) say they have been discriminated against or treated differently on the basis of their LGBTQ+ identity; and nearly 1 in 5 say they have experienced anti-LGBTQ+ bullying or harassment in person (19%) or have stopped speaking to a friend or family member because they do not accept their LGBTQ+ identity (19%).

Comparatively, transgender adults report higher rates of these negative experiences than LGBTQ+ adults who do not identify as transgender. Forty-six percent of transgender adults say they have experienced anti-LGBTQ+ cyberbullying or harassment online; 45% say they have been discriminated against or treated differently on the basis of their LGBTQ+ identity; and nearly 2 in 5 say they have experienced anti-LGBTQ+ bullying or harassment in person (38%) or have stopped speaking to a friend or family member because they do not accept their LGBTQ+ identity (39%).

Transgender Adults Report More Negative Experiences in the Past Year Than LGBTQ+ Adults Who Do Not Identify as Transgender

Have you experienced any of the following as a result of **anti-LGBTQ+ policies and rhetoric** in the last year? Please select all that apply.

Survey respondents who selected: Yes

	All LGBTQ+ Adults	Identifies as transgender	Does not identify as transgender
Heard anti-LGBTQ+ remarks from a family, friend, coworker, or neighbor	42%	67%	40%
Experienced anti-LGBTQ+ cyberbullying or harassment online	25%	46%	22%
Been discriminated against or treated differently on the basis of my LGBTQ+ identity	23%	45%	20%
Stopped speaking to a friend or family member because they do not accept my LGBTQ+ identity	19%	39%	17%
Experienced anti-LGBTQ+ bullying or harassment in-person	19%	38%	17%
Friends have moved out of our community or state as a result of recent anti-LGBTQ+ policies	9%	13%	9%
Experienced anti-LGBTQ+ physical violence	4%	6%	3%
None of these	37%	14%	40%

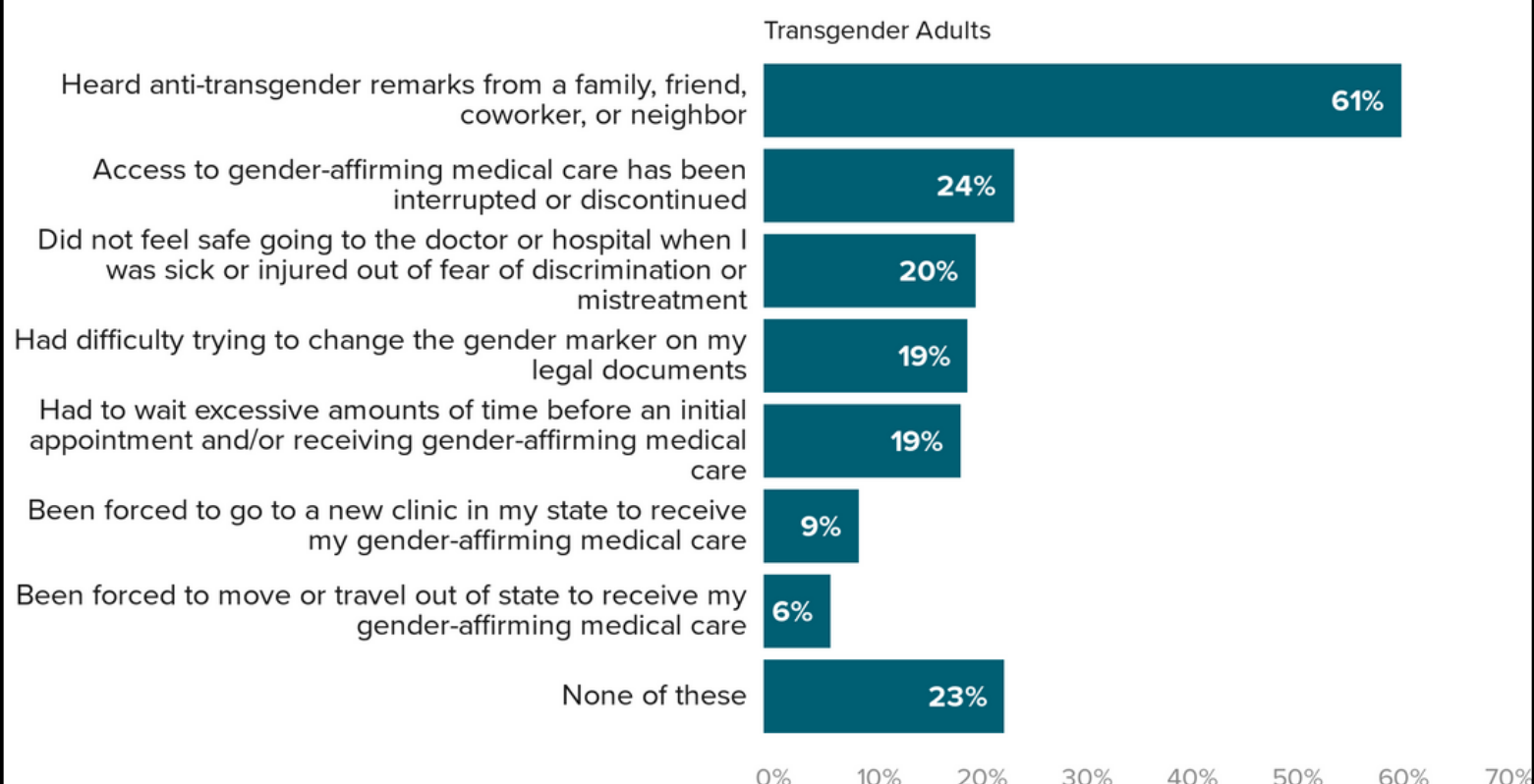
March 8–14, 2024 survey of 873 U.S. LGBTQ+ adults

When transgender adults are specifically asked about their experiences **as a result of anti-transgender policies and rhetoric in the last year**, 61% say they have heard anti-transgender remarks from a family, friend, coworker, or neighbor; nearly 1 in 4 (24%) say their access to gender-affirming medical care has been interrupted or discontinued; 1 in 5 say they did not feel safe going to the doctor or hospital when they were sick or injured out of fear of

discrimination or mistreatment; and nearly 1 in 5 say they had difficulty trying to change the gender marker on their legal documents (19%) or had to wait excessive amounts of time before an initial appointment and/or receiving gender-affirming medical care (19%).

A Majority of Transgender Adults Report Having Heard Anti-Transgender Remarks in the Past Year

Have you experienced any of the following as a result of anti-transgender policies and rhetoric in the last year? Please select all that apply.



March 8–14, 2024 survey of 87 U.S. adults who identify as transgender

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Additionally, a majority of transgender adults (54%) say it is difficult for them to access gender-affirming medical care in general, and more than a third say the same for mental health care (38%) and reproductive health care (38%).

The Importance of LGBTQ+-Affirming Policies, Online Spaces, and Representation in Media

Although many states — predominantly ones with Republican governors and legislatures — have introduced and passed a record number of anti-LGBTQ+ bills in the last few years, several states with Democratic control have worked to pass pro-LGBTQ+ policies. For example, more than a dozen states have enacted “shield” laws that protect transgender people’s access to gender-affirming medical care, and just last year, Michigan became the

latest state to codify protections against anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination and the discredited practice of conversion therapy.

This survey finds that more than 3 in 4 LGBTQ+ adults say they would prefer to:

- Live in cities or states that have passed pro-LGBTQ+ policies and nondiscrimination protections (82%)
- Work at a company that has stated policies protecting its LGBTQ+ workers (86%)
- Buy from brands that have publicly supported the LGBTQ+ community (76%)

LGBTQ+ Adults Strongly Prefer Pro-LGBTQ+ Policies From the States They Live in and Businesses They Interact With

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Survey respondents who selected: *Strongly agree or Somewhat agree*

	All LGBTQ+ Adults	Identifies as transgender	Does not identify as transgender
I would prefer to work at a company that has stated policies protecting its LGBTQ+ workers.	86%	92%	86%
I would prefer to live in cities or states that have passed pro-LGBTQ+ policies and nondiscrimination protections.	82%	93%	80%
I would prefer to buy from brands that have publicly supported the LGBTQ+ community.	76%	86%	75%

March 8–14, 2024 survey of 873 U.S. LGBTQ+ adults

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LGBTQ+ spaces and resources have also been targeted by social media campaigns as well as anti-LGBTQ+ groups and political figures — including attempts to shut down LGBTQ+-themed events at [libraries](#) and [schools](#), laws that [ban books](#) related to LGBTQ+ issues, and [attacks and harassment](#) against queer people online.

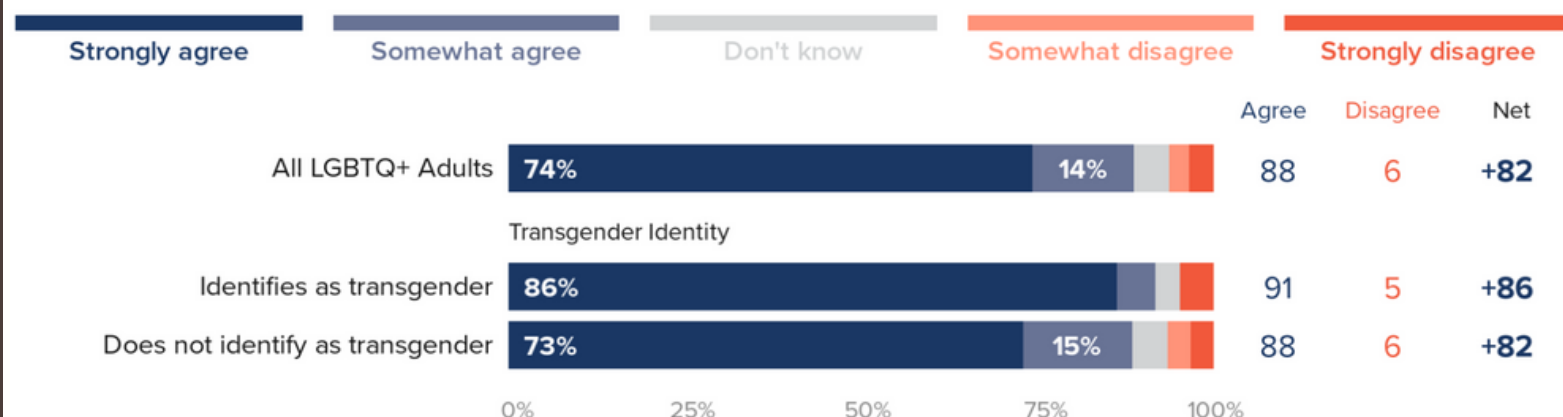
Majorities of transgender adults (68%), LGBTQ+ adults ages 18 to 24 (57%), Latino LGBTQ+ adults (51%), and Black LGBTQ+ adults (51%) say that LGBTQ+ representation in media was important to the process of discovering their LGBTQ+ identity.

And while there is nearly universal agreement among LGBTQ+ adults (88%) that young LGBTQ+ people “deserve access to safe, inclusive spaces online,” transgender adults, in particular, indicate a strong intensity of support for this resource — with 86% saying they strongly agree with this claim, compared with 73% who strongly agree among LGBTQ+ adults who do not identify as transgender.

The Vast Majority of LGBTQ+ Adults Agree That Young LGBTQ+ Individuals Need Access to Safe Spaces Online

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"LGBTQ+ young people deserve access to safe, inclusive spaces online."



March 8–14, 2024 survey of 873 U.S. LGBTQ+ adults

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When shown arguments supporting and opposing social media access for young people, 62% of LGBTQ+ adults, including 75% of transgender adults, say that “access to social media is helpful. LGBTQ+ young people need to have access to safe, inclusive spaces online because many of them lack safe spaces to visit in person.”

In Their Own Words: Finding Joy in the Transgender Community

At the end of our survey, we asked transgender adults to say, in their own words, what part of being a member of the transgender community brings them the most joy. Here are a handful of the responses:

- “Everyone is really nice. Even when it's hard, we always have each other's backs.”
- “Seeing younger generations have more opportunities to discover more about themselves than I did growing up.”
- “Getting to see others find themselves and grow as people.”
- “Living my life on my terms proudly and unapologetically so that the younger queer generation feels empowered to do the same.”
- “The actual community of it all. There is nothing more important to me than having people to talk to and rely on, as well as letting people rely on you.”
- “Being able to drop my guard and be who I am without fear of being attacked.”
- “Nothing will ever replace the joy I've felt when going into queer spaces [...] it is an unimaginable joy for non-queers to feel.”
- “Being able to be myself without feeling tokenized, where my identity as a trans person isn't the sole thing that defines me.”

Conclusion

This report highlights many of the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ adults across the country, especially as a result of recent anti-LGBTQ+ policies and rhetoric. It also underscores the disparities in reported negative experiences between transgender adults and LGBTQ+ adults who do not identify as transgender. Furthermore, this report emphasizes the importance of LGBTQ+-affirming communities, policies, representation in media, and online spaces and resources for LGBTQ+ people.

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Survey Methodology

From March 8 to 14, 2024, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 873 LGBTQ+ adults nationally using web panel respondents. Respondents were defined as LGBTQ+ if they identified as LGBTQ+, transgender, a sexual orientation other than straight or heterosexual, or a gender identity other than male or female. The sample was weighted to be representative of the adult LGBTQ+ community by age, gender, education, and race using the U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey (HPS) data on the national LGBTQ+ adult population. This sample is also weighted to account for an oversample of transgender adults to ensure proportional representation of the LGBTQ+ adult population. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error is ± 3 percentage points.

Estimates of the proportion of adults identifying as LGBTQ+ come from cycles 34-38 of the U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey, collected between July 21, 2021 and September 13, 2021.