



FAMILY
EQUALITY
COUNCIL

LGBTQ Family Building Survey

January 2019



INTRODUCTION

In 2018, Family Equality Council commissioned the LGBTQ Family Building Survey, a comprehensive research study designed to help us better understand the landscape of family-building for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) adults in America today. As the leading national nonprofit dedicated to supporting LGBTQ families and those who wish to form them, we at Family Equality Council know that expectations around family building in the LGBTQ community are changing rapidly, particularly in the wake of the 2015 *Obergefell* marriage equality ruling that legalized same-sex marriage nationwide.

While studies indicate that the number of Americans openly identifying as part of the LGBTQ community is growing quickly,¹ we still know little about this community's feelings and intentions around starting or growing their families.

The sparse data we have available is, in many cases, five, ten, or more years old. In order to serve our community of LGBTQ families, and those who wish to form them, we need to understand this unique community's needs, fears, and aspirations around the prospect of becoming parents. This research study is designed to address this gap, and this report provides an initial review of what we have learned.

The. Rev. Stan J. Sloan
Chief Executive Officer,
Family Equality Council



Family Equality Council advances legal and lived equality for LGBTQ families, and for those who wish to form them, through building community, changing hearts and minds, and driving policy change.

Family Equality Council believes every LGBTQ person should have the right and opportunity to form and sustain a loving family, regardless of who they are or where they live.

Learn more at familyequality.org.

LGBTQ FAMILY BUILDING SURVEY: KEY FINDINGS

The number of LGBTQ-headed families in the United States is set to grow dramatically in coming years

Among LGBTQ Millennials (aged 18-35):

77% are already parents, or are considering having children, a 44% increase over older generations



63% are considering expanding their families, as first-time parents or by having more children



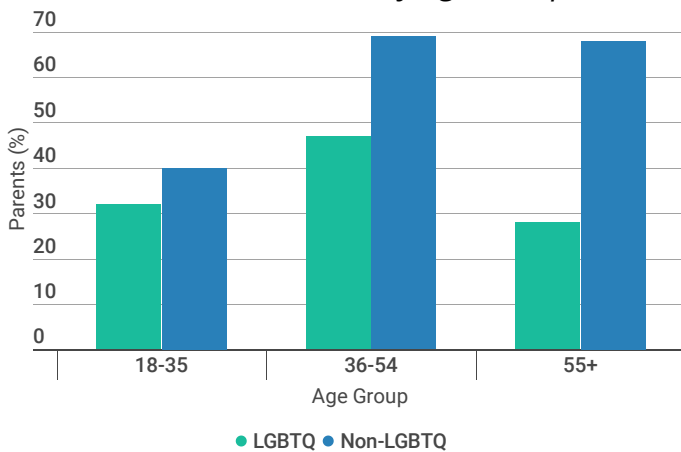
48% are actively planning to grow their families or intending to do so in the future



3.8 million LGBTQ Millennials are considering expanding their families in the coming years, and **2.9 million** are actively planning to do so.

Gaps both in parenthood rates and plans to become parents between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ people are narrowing

Parenthood Rates, by Age Group

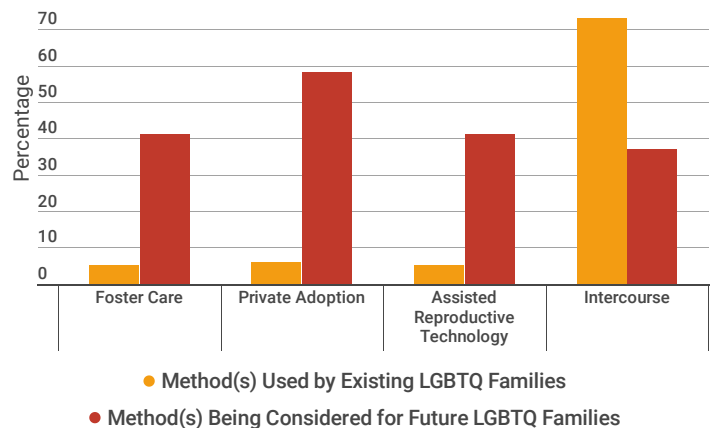


48% of LGBTQ Millennials are planning to grow their families, compared to **55%** of non-LGBTQ Millennials — a gap of only **7%**.

In future, more LGBTQ families will be formed through assisted reproductive technology, adoption, and foster care

63% of LGBTQ people planning families are looking to foster care, adoption, and assisted reproductive technology.

This is a dramatic shift from existing LGBTQ families, in which **73%** have children conceived from intercourse.



#1: NUMBER OF LGBTQ FAMILIES SET TO GROW DRAMATICALLY

After marriage equality was secured in 2015, family building suddenly seemed more within reach for many members of the LGBTQ community, and there was speculation the United States might see new growth in the number of LGBTQ-headed families in the following years.

Data gathered during 2018 by the LGBTQ Family Building Survey indicates that this shift is occurring. By comparing the family building experience of older LGBTQ survey respondents to younger generations, we are able to better understand how barriers and aspirations about parenthood are changing. Of LGBTQ survey respondents aged 55 years and older, 33% either already have children or are considering having children. This finding is consistent with the 2013 Pew Research Center’s finding that approximately 35% of LGBTQ adults are parents.

However, 77% of LGBTQ “Millennials” (aged 18-35) are either already parents or are considering having children, a 44% increase over their elders (Figure 1).²

Figure 1: LGBTQ People Who Already Have or are Considering Having Children, by Age

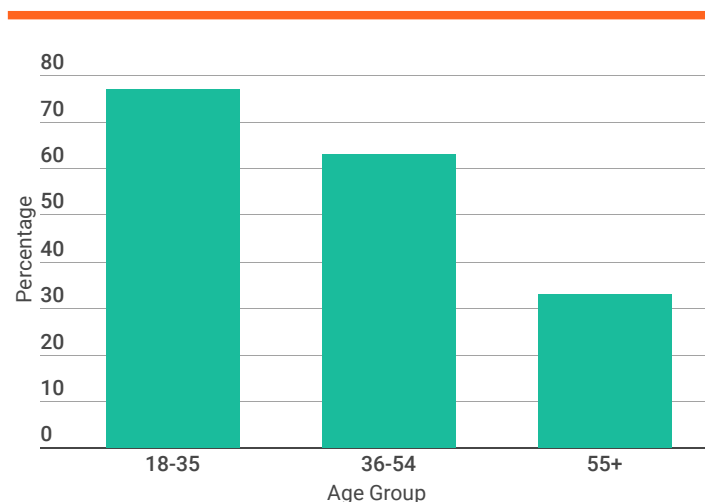
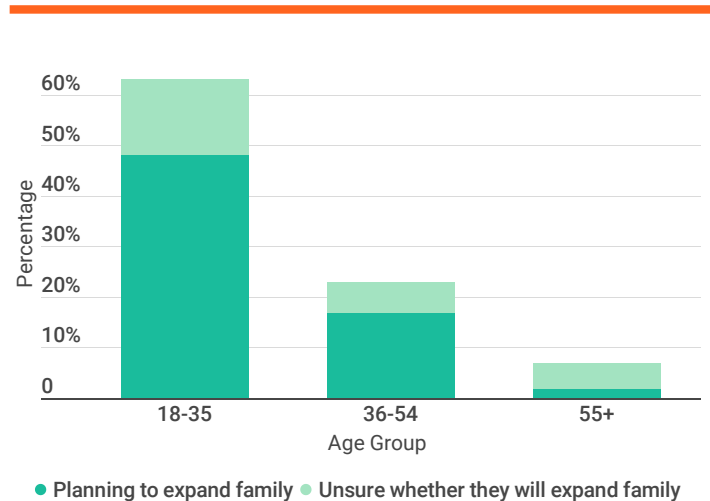


Figure 2: LGBTQ People's Family Building Intentions, by Age



The aspirations and current realities of LGBTQ Millennials provide a preview of a future wave of LGBTQ family building in America. Looking more closely at LGBTQ Millennials, the survey finds that **63% of all LGBTQ individuals in the 18-35 year old range are considering expanding their families in the coming years, either by becoming parents for the first time, or adding more children to their family.**

Removing the percentage of LGBTQ millennials who are considering but unsure about future family building, **the survey reveals that 48% of LGBTQ Millennials are actively planning to grow their families or intending to do so in the future (Figure 2).³** Transgender survey respondents are just as likely to be considering expanding their families as their cisgender peers.

A Gallup poll⁴ conducted in May 2018 indicated that 4.5% of American adults identify as LGBTQ; a total of 15.9 million LGBTQ Americans. That percentage increases to 8.1% for Millennials, resulting in over 6.1 million LGBTQ-identified 18-35 year-olds. This means that as many as 3.8 million LGBTQ Millennials are considering expanding their families in the coming years, and 2.9 million are actively planning to do so.

#2: THE GAP BETWEEN LGBTQ AND NON-LGBTQ PARENTHOOD RATES IS NARROWING

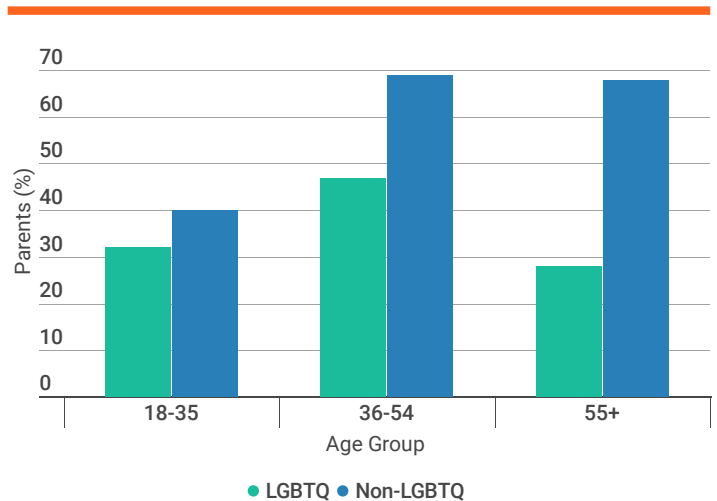
The historical gap between the number of LGBTQ adults who are parents and their cisgender and heterosexual peers still exists in older generations of the LGBTQ community. In 2013, Pew Research Center reported that 35% of LGBTQ adults are parents, compared with 74% of non-LGBTQ adults.⁵ Data from the 2018 LGBTQ Family Building Survey affirms this gap in parenthood between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ parents 55 years and older. **68% of non-LGBTQ identified individuals over age 54 already have children, compared to only 28% of LGBTQ-identified individuals in the same age range.**

Family-building options for the LGBTQ community looked very different 10 years ago, and even more dramatically so 20 and 30 years ago. There were significantly fewer options for those in the LGBTQ community pursuing foster care and adoption, fewer safeguards for securing legal parentage of biologically-conceived children, and a lack of parenting resources for the community as a whole. A decade ago, a majority of Americans still opposed same-sex marriage, let alone equality that extended into the realms of parental rights for all members of the LGBTQ community. As such, family building was an uphill battle for many, and was often challenging to achieve within the context of an LGBTQ relationship.⁶

63% of LGBTQ Millennials are considering having children or expanding their family

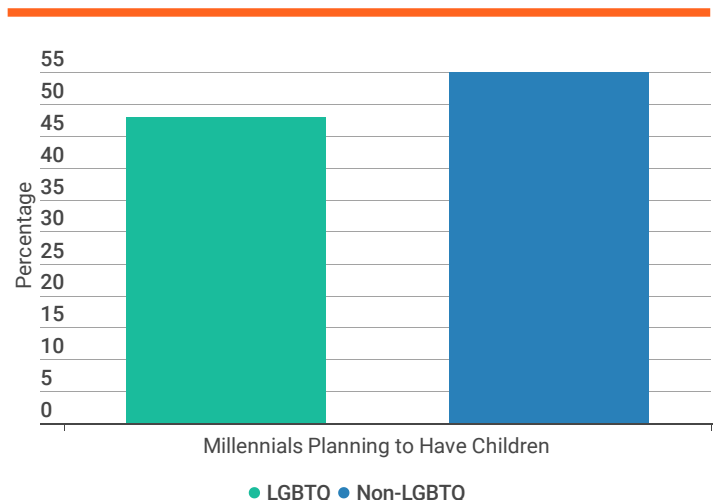
Based on the Family Building Survey, **this difference in parenting rates between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ adults is expected to narrow in the future.** Comparing the wide 40-percentage-point gap in parenthood between 55+ LGBTQ adults (28% are parents) and non-LGBTQ adults (68% are parents) with the parenting aspirations of Millennials aged 18-35 suggests that this gap is likely to close significantly (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Comparing Parenting Rates Between LGBTQ and Non-LGBTQ Adults, by Age



Among Millennials, 55% of non-LGBTQ individuals and 48% of LGBTQ individuals reported that they are planning to have children,⁷ a difference of only 7% (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Family Building Intentions Among LGBTQ and Non-LGBTQ Millennials (18-35)



#3: THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY IS RELYING ON CONCEPTION FROM INTERCOURSE SIGNIFICANTLY LESS OFTEN FOR FAMILY BUILDING

The average age at which members of the LGBTQ community come out to their family and friends is getting younger. In 2010, Stonewall released data⁸ indicating that for those in their 60s at the time of the poll, the average age of coming out was 37. For those in their 30s, the age dropped to 21, and for those between 18-24, the age dropped further to 17. Social and legal advances have resulted in a generation of LGBTQ individuals who are entering adulthood already identifying as members of the LGBTQ community.

Members of older generations who, on average, came out in their mid to late 30s, had a very different reality, and often entered adulthood identifying or presenting as heterosexual. These older generations were more likely to first marry different-sex partners, starting families via intercourse, and only later coming out and entering into an LGBTQ relationship. Their families, then, were defined as blended families or families where the children were conceived from prior heterosexual relationships. In contrast,

younger generations are entering into LGBTQ relationships primarily and forming families within those partnerships utilizing modalities available to the LGBTQ community.

In the Family Building Survey, **LGBTQ respondents who are already parents reported that intercourse was utilized 73% of the time to build their families**, either within the context of a previous heterosexual relationship or as part of a different-sex relationship where one or both partners identifies as bisexual.

For those LGBTQ people considering starting or expanding their families, just 37% reported considering intercourse as a method for family building (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Use of Intercourse for Family Building in the LGBTQ Community

Existing LGBTQ families formed from intercourse:



LGBTQ families considering intercourse for *future* family building:



METHODOLOGY

Research was conducted via an online omnibus survey tool with census balancing in place to provide a nationally representative sample. This report presents the findings of this survey, conducted between July 11-18, 2018, among a sample of 500 adults who identify as LGBTQ, are ages 18+, comprising 237 men, 253 women, and 10 other, and 1,004 adults ages 18+ who identify as non-LGBTQ

comprising of 488 men and 516 women.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have volunteered to participate in online surveys and polls. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to multiple sources of error, including, but not limited to sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, and error associated with question wording and response options.

#4: FAMILY BUILDING PROVIDERS SHOULD PREPARE FOR THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

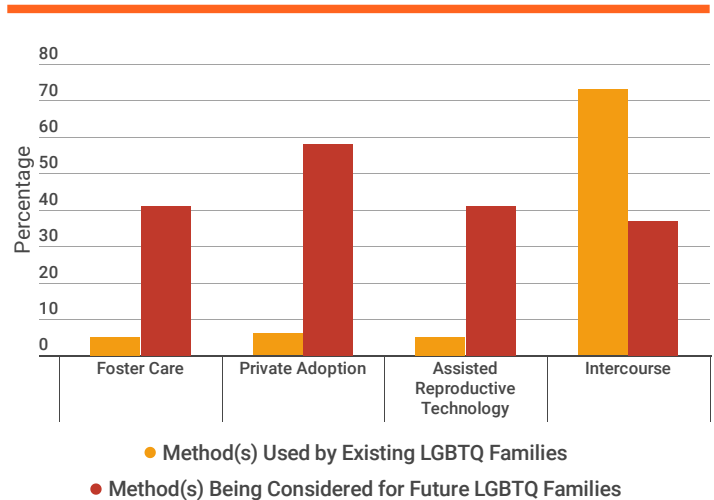
For LGBTQ people, the process of becoming a parent is far more complex and challenging than for non-LGBTQ people. While family building via intercourse remains an option for some in the LGBTQ community, particularly bisexual people in different-sex relationships and couples where one or more partner identifies as transgender, it is far more common for those in LGBTQ relationships not to have the components needed for biological conception (eggs, sperm, and a uterus), in comparison to non-LGBTQ relationships.

Those who are considering growing their families now have an abundance of options available to them. In this report, we focus on the following general methods of family building, as they were the top-reported options being considered for future LGBTQ family building:

- **Child Welfare System:** This includes families who choose to foster children or adopt through the foster care system.
- **Private adoption:** Private adoption includes domestic or international adoption through an adoption agency or private attorney.
- **Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART):** This category includes at-home insemination, intrauterine insemination, in vitro fertilization, reciprocal in vitro fertilization, and gestational and traditional surrogacy.
- **Conception from Intercourse:** This includes intercourse that results in pregnancy from either a previous different-sex relationship, a bisexual different-sex relationship, a relationship where at least one partner identifies as transgender, or biological conception outside of a same-sex relationship with the intent to achieve pregnancy.

As noted above, a smaller percentage of the LGBTQ community are considering using intercourse as a method to grow their families in the future, compared to LGBTQ people who already have children. **Instead, the majority of respondents – 63% – are looking to foster care, adoption, and assisted reproductive technology to grow their families** (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Comparing Existing and Future LGBTQ Family Building Methods



Beyond the challenges of starting a pregnancy or deciding to foster or adopt a child, there are complex legal, physical, financial, and socio-emotional challenges to overcome on the path to parenthood for LGBTQ people who experience poverty at disproportionate rates, and face discrimination in everyday life. Most options for becoming parents involve interacting with a variety of professionals and institutions — from midwives and fertility specialists to social workers and lawyers — many of whom may not always be welcoming to prospective LGBTQ parents.

Such providers and professionals do not typically receive training about the unique needs of the LGBTQ community; forms and computer systems are not developed with LGBTQ families in mind; insurance policies are rarely created to meet the needs of LGBTQ family building; and discrimination against LGBTQ prospective parents by agencies and providers remains widespread.⁹

CONCLUSIONS

The LGBTQ Family Building Survey indicates that up to 3.8 million LGBTQ millennials are considering expanding their families in the coming years. Furthermore, the research reveals that young LGBTQ people intend to use either assisted reproductive technology or foster care and adoption to form their families.

Family Equality Council recommends that family building providers — from reproductive endocrinologists and obstetricians to neonatal social workers, family law practitioners, and child welfare workers — **begin preparing their organizations to welcome members of the LGBTQ community today.**

Creating an inclusive practice for the LGBTQ community requires time and intentionality. Family Equality Council is here to help.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Gallup (2018), *In U.S., Estimate of LGBT Population Rises to 4.5%*, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/234863/estimate-lgbt-population-rises.aspx> (Accessed: 12/18/2018)
- 2 To determine those who are “considering” expanding their families, we combined responses from those who are currently attempting to grow their families, those who anticipate growing their families within 5 years, those who anticipate growing their families eventually, and those who are unsure.
- 3 To determine those who are “planning” to expand their families, we removed the “unsure” category from the “considering” population.
- 4 Gallup (2018) *In U.S., Estimate of LGBT Population Rises to 4.5%*, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/234863/estimate-lgbt-population-rises.aspx> (Accessed: 12/18/2018)
- 5 Pew Research Center (2013), *A Survey of LGBT Americans: Chapter 4 – Marriage and Parenting*, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/06/13/chapter-4-marriage-and-parenting/> (Accessed: 12/18/2018)
- 6 Gates, Gary J. (2015) “Marriage and Family: LGBT Individuals and Same-Sex Couples”. In: *The Future of Children*, 25(2), https://www.jstor.org/stable/43581973?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents (Accessed: 12/18/2018)
- 7 To determine those who are “planning” to have children, we combined responses from those who are actively trying, those who plan to expand their families within 5 years, and those who plan to expand their families eventually.
- 8 M.PACT (2010), *People coming out as gay at younger age, research shows*, <https://mpactglobal.org/people-coming-out-as-gay-at-younger-age-research-shows/> (Accessed: 12/18/2018)
- 9 Center for American Progress (2018), *Discrimination Prevents LGBTQ People from Accessing Health Care*, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/news/2018/01/18/445130/discrimination-prevents-lgbtq-people-accessing-health-care/> (Accessed: 12/18/2018)

SUGGESTED CITATION:

Family Equality Council (2019) *LGBTQ Family Building Survey*. <https://www.familyequality.org/fbs> (date of access)