



Transgender rights, protections

National survey shows public supports rights, protections for transgender people

2:39 p.m., Nov. 24, 2015--From domestic politics and the Syrian refugee crisis to terrorism and the Islamic State, there will be more than enough political fodder to go around the dinner table this year.

And a new study from the University of Delaware's Center for Political Communication suggests a generational blowup over transgender rights could be on the menu this holiday season.

In the study, a large majority of people surveyed said they favor protection from discrimination for transgender individuals both in schools (71 percent) and in workplaces (70 percent), and a large majority also supports allowing transgender people to serve openly in the U.S. military (62 percent).

The UD survey reveals the public is more divided on requiring public buildings, such as courthouses, to have gender neutral restrooms. Only a slim majority of Americans favor this, by a margin of 51 percent to 43 percent.

The split on this issue has played out across the nation in recent weeks. Last week, the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance was repealed thanks in large part to a campaign by a Christian advocacy group that focused on the threat of "men in women's bathrooms." And, in Wisconsin, Republicans pushed to prohibit transgender public school students from using a bathroom or locker room assigned to the gender with which they identified.

Looking more closely at the results, Paul Brewer, director of the Center for Political Communication, said clear divisions on these issues emerge based on age, gender and political party.

"Compared to Republicans, Democrats are more favorable toward transgender rights – a divide that the 2016 political campaign could highlight," Brewer said.

The sharpest political divisions emerged on the issues of requiring gender neutral restrooms and transgender people serving in the military. Nearly three out of four Democrats surveyed (74 percent) said transgender people should be able to serve in the military, while only 43 percent of Republicans supported that idea. Meanwhile, Democrats backed the idea of requiring gender-neutral bathrooms in public places by a two-to-one margin over Republicans (66 percent - 34 percent).

The CPC study also revealed a generation gap on transgender rights. Respondents between the ages of 18-34 overwhelmingly support transgender protection in schools (83 percent), protection against job discrimination (77 percent) and a right to serve in the military (72 percent), and a clear majority of young people (59 percent) said gender-neutral restrooms should be required.

People 55 and older showed far less support for transgender rights and protections, although a majority of older respondents did favor protecting transgender students (60 percent) and workers (56 percent).

Among older Americans, the issue of gender neutral public bathrooms might be a topic to avoid at the holiday dinner table. Only 43 percent of respondents over 55 favor requiring gender-neutral restrooms.

Women, more than men, support transgender protections and rights, according to the study. Four of the 901 respondents self-identified as transgender.

The telephone survey of 901 U.S. adults was conducted by the University of Delaware's Center for Political Communication from Nov. 11-17, 2015. CPC Director Paul Brewer supervised the study.

About the study

The National Agenda Opinion Project research was funded by the University of Delaware's Center for Political Communication (CPC) and the William P. Frank Foundation. The study was supervised by the CPC's director, Paul Brewer, a professor in the Departments of Communication and Political Science and International Relations.

Results are based on telephone interviews with a representative sample of 901 adult U.S. residents. Telephone interviews were conducted via landline (n=344) and cell phone (n=557). The survey was conducted under supervision of the Center for Political Communication by Princeton Survey Research Associates International, and the interviews were administered in English by Princeton Data Source. The data

were collected from Nov. 11-17, 2015. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is ± 3 percentage points.

Readers should be aware that in addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

Please contact Paul Brewer at 302-831-7771 for more details about the survey's methodology.