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Americans Grow More Liberal on Moral Issues, More Concerned About Moral Values

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Americans are growing increasingly progressive in several areas of morality while also growing increasingly concerned about the current state of moral values and pessimistic about the future.

According to the [latest Gallup survey](#) on moral issues, U.S. adults are more likely than ever to see abortion, suicide, and [polygamy](#) as morally acceptable. In addition, married men and women having an affair, divorce, stem cell research using human embryos, having a child outside of marriage and sex between teenagers are near their highest levels of public acceptability.

Currently, 54 percent of Americans say abortion is morally acceptable, while 37 percent believe it is morally wrong. Since 2001, moral support for abortion had hovered around the upper 30s and low 40s but has grown in the past several years. In 2019, 42 percent said abortion was morally OK and 50 percent believed it was immoral. Since that time, however, the trends have been in favor of abortion.

More than 1 in 5 U.S. adults (22 percent) believe suicide is morally acceptable, a high-water mark reached once before in 2022. The 71 percent who believe it is immoral is the lowest on record since Gallup began the survey in 2001, when 13 percent said suicide was moral and 78 percent thought it was morally wrong. More Americans see [doctor-assisted suicide as a moral choice](#) (53 percent).

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Almost a quarter of Americans (23 percent) now find [polygamy to be morally acceptable](#), while 74 percent disagree. The supportive percentage has been steady for the past three years, but those opposed to the practice are at their lowest percentage. The morally acceptable percentage has risen steadily since 2010 when just 7 percent felt polygamy was OK.

Just 11 percent of U.S. adults say having an affair while married is OK. That is the second highest level of support, however, only behind 12 percent in 2023. Before 2016, adultery had never reached 10 percent who said it was morally acceptable. Recently, however, support has been in the double digits for three of the past four years.

Large numbers of adults also find use of birth control (90 percent), drinking alcohol (86 percent), [in vitro fertilization \(or IVF\)](#) (82 percent), divorce (78 percent), smoking marijuana (70 percent), sex between an unmarried man and woman (69 percent), having a baby outside of marriage (68 percent), gambling (66 percent), gay or lesbian relations (64 percent), and stem cell research using human embryos (63 percent) morally acceptable.

Fewer back pornography (38 percent), cloning animals (34 percent), and cloning humans (12 percent). Americans are more split on buying and wearing clothing made of animal fur (59 percent say it is morally acceptable v. 37 percent say it is morally wrong), the death penalty (55 percent v. 39 percent), [destroying frozen embryos created by IVF](#) (49 percent v. 43 percent), medical testing on animals (48 percent v. 46 percent), changing one's gender (44 percent v. 51 percent), and sex between teenagers (43 percent v. 50 percent).

While U.S. adults have grown more liberal in their moral outlook, according to Gallup, they've also grown increasingly wary of the country's morality. Currently, half of Americans (49 percent) say they would rate the overall state of moral values in the country as poor. A third (34 percent) say they're fair, 14 percent rate them as good, and just 1 percent say they're excellent. Subtracting the poor percentage from the combined good and excellent ratings gives the current moral perspective score a minus-34 – down 12 points from 2002.

Overwhelmingly, Americans think the moral values of the country are worsening. Around 4 in 5 U.S. adults (81 percent) say the state of moral values is getting worse, and only 14 percent say it's getting better. That gives the future outlook a minus-67 score – down 24 points from 2002.

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