

Cross-national Differences in Attitudes towards Homosexuality

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## Introduction

In five rounds of surveys between 1988 and 2008 the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) has asked questions about homosexuality ([www.issp.org](http://www.issp.org)). In 1988, the ISSP asked in eight countries about gay marriage (“Do you agree or disagree? Homosexual couples should have the right to marry one another.”). In 1991, 1994, 1998, and 2008 the ISSP inquired about approval of same-gender-sexual behavior (“And what about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex, is it always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?”). This paper examines 1) trends in attitudes towards homosexuality, 2) the rank of countries regarding their attitudes towards homosexuality, 3) cross-national differences, 4) the distribution and bimodality of attitudes, and 5) cross-national patterns related to key socio-demographics (gender, age, education, attending religious services, and urbanicity).

## Trends

Table 1 shows approval of same-gender-sexual behavior in 42 countries. There are trends in 31 countries. These 31 trends cover the following spans: 1991-2008 – 12 countries, 1994-2008 – 4 countries, 1998-2008 – 8 countries, 1991-1998 – 4 countries, and 1994-1998 – 3 countries. Overwhelmingly, societies have become more accepting of homosexual behavior. In 27 countries approval of homosexual behavior increased and in only 4 countries did it decrease. Moreover, the growth in approval was stronger than the decline. The overall shift in approval averaged +2.12 points per annum across countries while the overall decline was -1.14 points (Table 2).<sup>1</sup> Thus, the global trend towards more approval of same-gender- sexual behavior has largely paralleled changes in the United States (Avery et al., 2004; Hicks and Lee, 2006; Loftus, 2001; Smith, 2011; Yang, 1997).

For the 24 countries with trends of 10-17 years the response “always wrong” declined an average of 10.0 percentage points and “not wrong at all” rose an average of 11.8 percentage points. In several countries there were large increases in approval of 20 percentage points or greater on one or both responses (Austria, Chile, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and Sweden). No country showed a decrease in approval as large as 20 percentage points.

In 24 of the 31 countries the growth in acceptance was quite consistent with both the % saying homosexual sexual behavior was “always wrong” declining and the % saying it was “not wrong at all” rising. In three countries (Israel, Slovakia, West Germany) the pattern was mixed with the proportion expressing both polar positions increasing, but with the “not wrong at all” choice growing more than “always wrong”. Among the four countries showing less approval, three (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Latvia) had consistent declines and one (Russia) had a mixed pattern with “always wrong” increasing more than “not wrong at all” rose.

Changes have tended to be slower in ex-Socialist countries than in other nations. Three of the four declines were in former Communist nations (Latvia, the Czech Republic, and Russia) and another three ex-Socialist countries (Poland, Slovakia, and East Germany) were also in the bottom half showing

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<sup>1</sup> The overall shift in approval was the % increase in “not wrong at all” plus the % decrease in “always wrong”. When both increased, the overall shift was the % increase in “not wrong at all” minus the % increase in “always wrong”. In no cases did both decrease.

smaller increases (for a total of seven), while only two Communities nations were in the top half (Bulgaria and Hungary). No other strong regional patterns emerged.

### Rank of Countries

In general, the rank order of countries has been quite stable over time (Table 3). A total of 12 countries were covered in 1991, 1998, and 2008. The Netherlands had the highest approval in all years and Norway was second in 1998 and 2008. West Germany, East Germany, Great Britain, New Zealand, and Austria occupied third to seventh positions. The United States and Ireland alternated between eighth and ninth place. The Philippines followed by Russia and Slovenia were at the bottom in that order for all years. For 1998 and 2008 there were 24 countries in both years. The Netherlands was top in both years and the Philippines at the bottom. Among the eight countries in the top third in 1998 six were still in the top in 2008 with Austria slipping from seventh to tenth position and Great Britain from eighth to 11<sup>th</sup>). Of the eight in the bottom third in 1998, seven were still there in 2008 (with only Portugal rising into the middle ranks from 19<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> place).

In 1988, when a gay marriage question was asked in eight countries, the Netherlands showed the most support (although only 31.7% agreed with legalization) and the United States gave the least support with 11.7% supporting gay marriage (Table 4).

Thus, despite the often large changes within individual countries, the structure of attitudes towards homosexual behavior has been rather stable across countries.

### Cross-National Differences

Enormous differences separate countries in their judgments about same-gender-sexual behavior (Anderson and Fetner, 2008a and 2008b; Crowell, 2007; Scott, 1998; Stulhofer and Rimac, 2009). In 2008, at the positive pole stood the Netherlands with 69.6% saying homosexual behavior was “not wrong at all” and at the other end was Turkey at 2.1%. The approval gap was even larger at the other side of the scale with 11.4% in Belgium (Flanders) saying homosexual behavior was “always wrong”, while 90.8% thought so in Turkey. In 2008, majorities in seven countries said homosexual sexual behavior was “not wrong at all” and pluralities in eight more countries backed this judgment. In 14 countries majorities said that homosexual behavior was “always wrong” and in six a plurality thought so.

The top ranks are dominated by countries in northwest Europe. In 2008, no northwestern European country ranked lower than 15<sup>th</sup> and they accounted for 13 of the top 15. Approval was especially strong in the Low Countries with the Netherlands first and Belgium (Flanders) fifth and in Scandinavia with Denmark second, Norway third, Sweden seventh, and Finland eighth. Rounding out the top half were two Southern European countries (Spain fifth and Portugal 18<sup>th</sup>) and three countries mostly settled by Europeans (New Zealand 10<sup>th</sup>, Uruguay 16<sup>th</sup>, United States 17<sup>th</sup>). With the exception of the former East Germany in ninth place, all ex-Socialist countries are in the bottom half (the Czech Republic 19<sup>th</sup>, Slovakia 20<sup>th</sup>, Slovenia 21<sup>st</sup>, Croatia 23<sup>rd</sup>, Latvia 27<sup>th</sup>, Russia 28<sup>th</sup>, and Ukraine 31<sup>st</sup>).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Due to the return of the German capital to Berlin and to geographic mobility within Germany in general, by 2008 residence in the former East Germany no longer clearly indicated origins in the former Socialist state.

Likewise, with the exception of Uruguay at 16<sup>th</sup> place, Hispanic countries are in the lower half (Chile 24<sup>th</sup>, Mexico 25<sup>th</sup>, and the Dominican Republic 30<sup>th</sup>). East Asian countries all place in the bottom half with Taiwan at 22<sup>nd</sup>, Korea 32<sup>nd</sup>, Japan 33<sup>rd</sup>, and the Philippines 34<sup>th</sup>. Rounding out the bottom are Cyprus at 26<sup>th</sup>, South Africa 29<sup>th</sup>, and Turkey 35<sup>th</sup>.

Two factors that explain much of the geographic variation are level of development and religiousness. Countries with the highest level of support tend to have high levels of development (e.g. higher per capital incomes and advanced levels of education)(Andersen and Fetner, 2008b; Stulhofer and Rimac, 2009). and lower levels of religiousness (Smith, 2009). Developing countries and more religious countries express less approval. In addition, approval is lower in East Asian countries and in the one Islamic nation (Turkey) that was covered.

### Ends vs. Middle Ground

The item on same-gender-sexual behavior asks “And what about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex, is it always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?” In addition, don’t know or can’t choose was a precoded response. In 2008, in 34 of 35 countries more people were in the two polar positions than in the middle two options (Table 4). Only in Japan were more people in the middle than at the ends. Across all countries there was an average of 5.1 times as many people in the ends than in the middle. In many countries the large number of polar responses merely reflects that majorities took strong positions either for or against homosexual behavior.

But there is an important second factor. In 2008, in 32 of 35 countries there was some indication of a bimodal distribution since responses in one or both end positions were higher than their adjoining middle category. As Table 5 shows, the ratio of between the end categories (“always wrong”/“not wrong at all”) in 10 countries was between half and two-to-one. The Dominican Republic and Korea showed a leaning against approval with no indication of a secondary peak in the “not wrong at all” category and Japan had essentially the same level of approval from “always wrong” through “wrong only sometimes”. In addition, two countries, Turkey and the Philippines, had strong leanings towards disapproval with only the most minimal indication of a secondary peak. But in 30 countries there were moderate to strong bimodal distributions. In 11 countries (Chile, Croatia, Czech Republic, Mexico, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Taiwan, Ukraine, the United States, and Uruguay), the mode considered homosexual behavior “always wrong” and the next most selected category was “not wrong at all”. For example, in the United States 54% said it was “always wrong,” 5% “almost always wrong,” 6% “wrong only sometimes,” and 32% “not wrong at all”. In 14 countries (Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, East Germany, West Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland) the mode was “not wrong at all” and “always wrong” placed second. For example, in Great Britain, 33% said “always wrong,” 7% “almost always wrong,” 9% “wrong only sometimes,” and 36% “not wrong at all.” In 4 countries (Cyprus, Latvia, Russia, and Ukraine) the distributions were strongly against approval, but there was a small, but notable, uptick at the other end. For example, in Russia 64% indicated “always wrong,” 12% “almost always wrong,” 4% “wrong only sometimes,” and 8% “not wrong at all.” In one country, Belgium, the majority (54%) said homosexual behavior was “not wrong at all,” but there was a small secondary peak (11%) among “always wrong.”

Thus, attitudes towards same-gender-sexual behavior tend to be bimodal both across countries and, to a lesser extent, within countries. Even in most countries with a majority either approving or disapproving of homosexual behavior, the second largest group was often those taking the opposite position and rarely those in the middle. In all eight countries with majorities saying homosexual behavior was “not wrong at all” the opposite choice, “always wrong,” was the second most frequent selection. Likewise, of the seven countries with a plurality approving, in six “always wrong” was the number two choice. Among the 14 countries with a majority saying homosexual behavior was “always wrong,” 7 had “not wrong at all” as the second most frequently selected response. Among the six countries with a plurality saying it was “always wrong,” five had “not wrong at all” as the second place choice.

In 2008, an average of 9.3% replied that they had no opinion on the homosexual behavior item. For five countries (Austria, France, West Germany, Ireland, and Japan) between 15-24% had no opinion. The notable proportion in the DK/Can’t choose category reflects two factors. First, attitudes towards homosexual behavior are changing in most countries and for some these responses are “half-way houses” for people who are pondering a change in their attitude. Second, there are considerable cross-cutting pressures on this issue. On the one hand, traditional morality and Old-Testament strictures push people towards opposing homosexual behavior, but on the other hand principles of tolerance and individual liberty nudge them towards approving it. Such conflicting principles lead some people to ambivalence and the selection of the DK/Can’t Choose response.

#### Socio-Demographic Differences

Both the general literature on tolerance and intergroup relations and the specific body of research on attitudes towards homosexuality in particular suggests that approval should be greater among younger adults, the better educated, the more secular, and residents of large metropolitan areas rather than small towns or rural areas (Elridge, Mack, and Swank, 2006; Hicks and Lee, 2006, Scott, 1998; Stulhofer and Rimac, 2009). In addition, to these general predictors of tolerance, gender differences are also examined.

Gender differences have been small but generally consistent across time and country. As Table 6 shows, men have generally been less approving of homosexuality than women have been. On gay marriage in 1988 men were less supportive in seven of eight countries (87.5%). On approval of same-gender-sexual behavior for 1991-2008, men were less approving in 72.1% of the comparisons, women less approving in 13.5%, and the results were mixed in 14.4% of the instances. Table 7 shows the gender differences for those saying homosexual behavior was “not wrong at all” in 2008. Table 8 summarizes the gender differences across countries for 1991-2008. It shows the % of women saying “not wrong at all” minus the % of men giving the same response, so a positive response indicates greater approval by women than by men. The average gender differences were small, increasing from +1.5 percentage points in 1991 to +6.2 percentage points in 2008. Reversals, when men were more approving than women were, were fairly uncommon (overall 28 of 104 comparisons or 26.9% of the cases). Not only were the cases of men approving more than women less common, they were also smaller. In only one case did men exceed women by five points or more. In contrast, approval by women was greater than by men by five or more points 45 times.

Age differences have been substantial and consistent across countries. Table 9 shows the % saying same-gender-sexual behavior is “not wrong at all” among those under 30 minus those 70+ giving the same response. Negative signs thus indicate that the oldest adults are less approving than the youngest adults. From 1991 to 2008 in 104 of 105 comparisons (99.0%) older adults were less approving than younger adults. (Turkey in 2008 was the only exception.) The averages were between -19.4 and -24.1 percentage points. While these averages were fairly stable across time, there was actually a general increase in the age differences. The annual averages don’t show the increase because the mixture of countries expands and changes across time. There are 31 within-countries changes and for 20 of these the age differences increased, for one there was no change, for four no clear trend with differences going up and down, and for six a decline in the age differences.

Age reflects two distinct factors: a person’s biological age and what birth cohort they are in. If the age differences are due to biological aging and the life-cycle events associated with aging, then there is little implication for long-term, societal change. But if the age differences indicate systematic variation across birth cohorts, then cohort turnover is a powerful engine of societal change. While it is difficult to separate out aging effects from cohort effects, it is plausible that most of the observed age differences on attitudes towards homosexual behavior reflect cohort differences with the more recent cohorts being more accepting of same-gender-sexual behavior than older cohorts have been (Andersen and Fetner, 2008a). As such, cohort turnover has been and is likely to continue to increase approval of homosexual, sexual behavior.

Educational differences have also been substantial, consistent, and growing. As Table 10 shows, the % saying that homosexual, sexual behavior is “not wrong at all” is greater among those with more than 12 years of schooling than among those with 12 years or less. More education is associated with more approval in 99% of the 104 comparisons. (The only exception was the Philippines in 2008.) The average educational differences grew from +10.8 points in 1991 to +13.8 points in 2008. On the 31 within country trends, differences increased in 18 cases, moved back and forth in eight cases, and declined or reversed sign in five instances.

Differences by attending religious services were likewise substantial, consistent, and growing. As Table 11 shows, the % saying that same-gender-sexual behavior was greater among those not attending services vs. those attending at least weekly. In 97 of 99 comparisons (98.0%), the less religious were more approving of homosexual, sexual behavior. The only exceptions were Japan in 1994 and the Philippines in 1998. The averages increased slightly over time from 20.3 points in 1991 to 25.6 points in 2008. Across the 29 within country trends, there were 20 increases, six showing back-and-forth patterns, and three having declines.

The last socio-demographic examined was urbanicity. Unfortunately, communities were not coded in a consistent enough manner across countries to permit the calculation of comparable difference scores nor in many cases even within countries over time. However, the overall pattern is clear. Of 85 comparisons from 1991 to 2008, approval of homosexual sexual behavior was higher in large cities than in small towns and/or rural areas in 72 cases. In only three cases did approval decrease with urbanicity, and in 10 cases the pattern was irregular with approval not consistently differing uniformly across different types of communities (e.g. with the high and/or low approval being in community types in the middle rather than at the top or bottom on an urbanicity continuum).

## Summary and Conclusion

The increase in approval of same-gender-sexual behavior and gay marriage in the United States over the last 20 years (Smith, 2011) is part of a global trend occurring in most nations around the world. While the rate of change is not uniform across countries, the global trend is towards greater approval of homosexual behavior with 87% of countries moving in that direction and with the gains in approval also being larger than the declines. Both the existing momentum of change and cohort turnover with more tolerant younger generations steadily replacing older less accepting generations are likely to continue the shift towards greater tolerance of same-gender-sexual behavior.

Despite the general global movement towards greater acceptance, in 2008, majorities in 14 countries found homosexual behaviors to be “always wrong” as did pluralities in another six countries. At the opposite side majorities in seven countries thought homosexual behaviors was “not wrong at all” as did pluralities in another eight countries.

Cross-national differences are large and the ranking of countries has been fairly stable. In 2008, approval ranged from nearly 70% in the Netherlands saying same-gender-sexual behavior was “not wrong at all” to 2.1% in Turkey sharing this sentiment. (Conversely, the % saying it was “always wrong” went from 90.8% in Turkey to 11.4% in Belgium-Flanders.) Of the 18 countries in the top half, 13 were in northwest Europe, including the top five leaders (the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, and Belgium (Flanders)). No country in northwest Europe ranked in the bottom half. The bottom half consisted of seven ex-Socialist states, four East Asian nations, three Latin American countries and Cyprus, South Africa, and Turkey.

Both within and across countries there is little middle ground on attitudes towards homosexuality. Majorities in all countries except Japan are at the ends points (“always wrong” or “not wrong at all”) with typically small numbers in the middle categories (“almost always wrong” or “wrong only sometimes”). Many countries show a bimodal distribution. For example, in 2008 in the US, 54% said same-gender-sexual behavior was “always wrong” and 32% indicated it was “not wrong at all,” while only 10.5% said it was “almost always wrong” or “wrong only sometimes.” In part, homosexuality has been a contentious, hot-button issue in many societies because there are so few people in the middle ground.

Attitudes towards homosexuality are more tolerant among younger adults, those with more education, those attending religious services less often, and residents of large metropolitan areas. These patterns prevail in almost all countries and the relationships are substantial in most countries. Women tend to be more approving of homosexual, sexual behavior than men are in most countries, but the differences are smaller and less consistent than the other socio-demographics. In general, the differences across ages, educational levels, attending religious services, and gender have increased over time.

What is striking about the United States in particular is how average its views are towards same-gender-sexual behavior. In terms of its rank across countries and its rate and direction of change, the United States patterns are quite close to the cross-national median. Of the 31 countries with trends, the US is near the middle with the 18<sup>th</sup> largest per annum rate of increase. In 2008, of 35 countries, the United States ranked right in the middle being 17<sup>th</sup> highest in the % saying same-gender-sexual behavior was “not wrong at all.” It was also near the middle in its relationships with gender, age/cohort,

education, and attending religious services. In 2008, the United States consistently showed larger differences than the cross-national averages (+8.8 percentage points for the US on gender vs. the cross-national average of +6.2 points; -27.0 points for the US for age vs. -20.1 points; +20.5 points for educations vs. +13.8 points; and +36.6 points for religious services vs. +25.6 points on average), but it was never a strong outlier. In all cases, the United States was closer to the cross-national average than the majority of countries. For example, in 2008 on age, the US exceeded the average age differences by 6.9 points and there were seven countries closer to the cross-national average and 27 countries further from it than the US was. While one often hears of “American exceptionalism,” when it comes to attitudes toward same-gender-sexual behavior, the United States is typical rather than exceptional.



Table 1

## Trends in Approval of Same-gender-Sexual Behavior by Country, 1991-2008

	1991	1994	1998	2008
Australia				
Always Wrong	----	50.4	45.8	----
Almost Always Wrong	----	7.3	8.3	----
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	9.2	14.0	----
Not Wrong at all	----	24.7	26.9	----
Don't Know	----	8.5	5.0	----
		1779	1288	
Austria				
Always Wrong	33.3	42.2	26.5	17.8
Almost Always Wrong	15.0	15.2	8.9	8.0
Wrong Only Sometimes	19.8	12.5	17.8	11.0
Not Wrong at all	16.1	11.8	32.8	39.3
Don't Know	15.8	18.3	13.9	23.9
	962	1000	1001	1020
Belgium (Flanders)				
Always Wrong	----	----	----	11.4
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	----	5.6
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	----	16.3
Not Wrong at all	----	----	----	53.8
Don't Know	----	----	----	13.0
				1258
Bulgaria				
Always Wrong	----	66.4	60.5	----
Almost Always Wrong	----	3.4	8.7	----
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	2.8	2.9	----
Not Wrong at all	----	7.6	13.2	----
Don't Know	----	19.8	14.6	----
		1144	1099	

Table 1 (continued)

	1991	1994	1998	2008
Canada				
Always Wrong	----	32.9	31.6	----
Almost Always Wrong	----	4.4	4.7	----
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	7.3	11.0	----
Not Wrong at all	----	35.1	41.9	----
Don't Know	----	20.4	10.8	----
		1531	946	
Chile				
Always Wrong	----	----	83.8	62.6
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	3.6	7.9
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	3.7	10.2
Not Wrong at all	----	----	5.4	16.8
Don't Know	----	----	3.5	2.5
			1503	1467
Croatia				
Always Wrong	----	----	----	59.0
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	----	8.4
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	----	5.0
Not Wrong at all	----	----	----	17.3
Don't Know	----	----	----	10.3
				1188
Cyprus				
Always Wrong	----	----	56.0	65.8
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	17.6	12.5
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	11.2	5.2
Not Wrong at all	----	----	11.2	8.5
Don't Know	----	----	4.0	8.0
			1000	1000

Table 1 (continued)

	1991	1994	1998	2008
Czech Republic				
Always Wrong	----	23.7	25.5	29.8
Almost Always Wrong	----	10.0	9.7	18.0
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	16.9	17.1	19.3
Not Wrong at all	----	31.7	24.8	21.3
Don't Know	----	17.7	23.0	11.7
		1024	1222	1417
Denmark				
Always Wrong	----	----	27.8	18.1
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	7.1	5.4
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	15.7	10.9
Not Wrong at all	----	----	43.8	57.3
Don't Know	----	----	5.6	8.2
			1101	2000
Dominican Republic				
Always Wrong	----	----	----	72.3
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	----	11.2
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	----	8.0
Not Wrong at all	----	----	----	6.8
Don't Know	----	----	----	1.8
				2086
Finland				
Always Wrong	----	----	----	22.7
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	----	7.1
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	----	8.3
Not Wrong at all	----	----	----	48.6
Don't Know	----	----	----	13.2
				1136

Table 1 (continued)

	1991	1994	1998	2008
France				
Always Wrong	----	----	37.5	26.1
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	7.3	6.5
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	14.0	14.3
Not Wrong at all	----	----	26.9	36.0
Don't Know	----	----	14.4	17.1
			1119	2427
Germany, East				
Always Wrong	26.1	36.5	27.2	21.8
Almost Always Wrong	7.7	6.3	7.7	9.6
Wrong Only Sometimes	8.3	7.3	10.7	15.7
Not Wrong at all	27.2	21.5	27.6	40.4
Don't Know	30.6	28.5	26.9	12.5
	1486	1097	998	510
Germany, West				
Always Wrong	24.6	31.0	22.9	26.3
Almost Always Wrong	8.3	7.7	10.7	7.1
Wrong Only Sometimes	11.7	10.7	14.6	11.8
Not Wrong at all	30.0	24.6	30.3	39.6
Don't Know	25.4	26.0	21.5	15.2
	1346	2324	996	1148
Great Britain				
Always Wrong	52.0	48.4	38.7	33.1
Almost Always Wrong	7.1	5.5	7.1	7.3
Wrong Only Sometimes	10.1	8.6	11.6	9.4
Not Wrong at all	18.8	22.2	30.5	36.1
Don't Know	11.9	15.3	12.1	14.1
	1221	1000	800	3054

Table 1 (continued)

	1991	1994	1998	2008
Hungary				
Always Wrong	77.7	79.4	60.2	----
Almost Always Wrong	10.9	6.9	12.3	----
Wrong Only Sometimes	3.0	4.9	7.3	----
Not Wrong at all	5.1	3.7	13.1	----
Don't Know	3.2	5.2	7.0	----
	998	1493	998	
Ireland				
Always Wrong	60.9	56.8	47.3	24.8
Almost Always Wrong	8.0	4.8	10.5	9.1
Wrong Only Sometimes	8.5	4.8	9.4	13.0
Not Wrong at all	12.5	13.8	19.2	34.6
Don't Know	10.2	19.8	13.6	18.5
	1005	938	1009	2048
Israel				
Always Wrong	50.2	53.2	55.8	----
Almost Always Wrong	9.2	7.7	5.6	----
Wrong Only Sometimes	15.6	6.8	7.0	----
Not Wrong at all	16.8	25.3	26.9	----
Don't Know	8.3	7.0	4.7	----
	991	1287	1203	
Italy				
Always Wrong	61.0	60.3	49.8	----
Almost Always Wrong	12.0	6.1	8.7	----
Wrong Only Sometimes	13.4	6.2	15.0	----
Not Wrong at all	8.5	17.7	16.1	----
Don't Know	5.1	9.6	10.4	----
	999	999	1008	

Table 1 (continued)

	1991	1994	1998	2008
Japan				
Always Wrong	----	55.9	35.6	27.3
Almost Always Wrong	----	19.1	27.0	24.7
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	9.6	15.9	23.6
Not Wrong at all	----	1.5	3.9	5.4
Don't Know	----	14.0	17.6	19.0
		1307	1368	1197
Korea				
Always Wrong	----	----	----	70.6
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	----	13.1
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	----	7.9
Not Wrong at all	----	----	----	6.7
Don't Know	----	----	----	1.7
				1508
Latvia				
Always Wrong	----	----	51.8	67.4
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	12.5	11.8
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	8.1	6.0
Not Wrong at all	----	----	12.4	8.5
Don't Know	----	----	15.2	6.4
			1198	1069
Mexico				
Always Wrong	----	----	----	55.6
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	----	11.2
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	----	10.1
Not Wrong at all	----	----	----	15.2
Don't Know	----	----	----	7.9
				1462

Table 1 (continued)

	1991	1994	1998	2008
The Netherlands				
Always Wrong	14.3	16.6	14.6	11.9
Almost Always Wrong	3.7	3.5	4.4	2.4
Wrong Only Sometimes	12.7	10.6	11.5	10.3
Not Wrong at all	56.3	55.9	61.7	69.6
Don't Know	13.0	13.4	7.8	5.9
	1635	1968	2015	1872
New Zealand				
Always Wrong	55.0	48.0	46.0	31.1
Almost Always Wrong	6.5	4.6	6.1	7.7
Wrong Only Sometimes	9.3	6.9	9.9	11.1
Not Wrong at all	16.8	26.2	28.7	39.9
Don't Know	12.2	14.4	9.3	10.3
	1070	1047	974	995
Norway				
Always Wrong	41.0	38.8	32.9	22.2
Almost Always Wrong	5.4	4.6	5.5	4.0
Wrong Only Sometimes	9.6	9.1	12.2	9.3
Not Wrong at all	26.7	30.2	37.6	56.7
Don't Know	17.3	17.5	11.8	7.9
	1506	2087	1522	1059
The Philippines				
Always Wrong	82.2	84.3	83.5	78.7
Almost Always Wrong	9.9	9.2	11.1	12.1
Wrong Only Sometimes	5.7	2.8	2.5	3.4
Not Wrong at all	2.0	3.5	2.5	4.4
Don't Know	0.2	0.2	0.5	1.4
	2977	3253	1200	1200

Table 1 (continued)

	1991	1994	1998	2008
Poland				
Always Wrong	59.4	68.2	59.2	----
Almost Always Wrong	6.7	5.1	7.1	----
Wrong Only Sometimes	4.2	3.9	4.3	----
Not Wrong at all	12.3	12.6	12.7	----
Don't Know	17.4	10.2	16.7	----
	1063	1596	1138	
Portugal				
Always Wrong	----	----	73.7	41.9
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	4.5	9.2
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	7.3	14.5
Not Wrong at all	----	----	14.1	28.9
Don't Know	----	----	0.4	5.6
			1184	968
Russia				
Always Wrong	58.7	45.0	54.2	64.2
Almost Always Wrong	13.2	12.4	14.2	12.0
Wrong Only Sometimes	6.6	4.3	5.2	3.6
Not Wrong at all	6.3	12.9	14.3	8.3
Don't Know	15.3	25.5	12.1	12.0
	2963	1997	1703	1015
Slovakia				
Always Wrong	----	----	47.2	48.3
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	9.7	12.8
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	8.7	7.9
Not Wrong at all	----	----	18.5	21.0
Don't Know	----	----	15.8	10.0
			1264	1098



Table 1 (continued)

	1991	1994	1998	2008
Slovenia				
Always Wrong	45.7	51.3	41.3	43.7
Almost Always Wrong	11.5	9.5	11.4	9.3
Wrong Only Sometimes	8.8	6.8	13.8	13.3
Not Wrong at all	9.2	5.9	15.0	20.6
Don't Know	24.8	26.6	18.5	13.1
	2080	1032	955	1023
South Africa				
Always Wrong	----	----	----	83.6
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	----	3.8
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	----	3.2
Not Wrong at all	----	----	----	7.7
Don't Know	----	----	----	1.6
				3285
Spain				
Always Wrong	----	39.3	30.0	24.9
Almost Always Wrong	----	6.0	6.3	6.4
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	4.9	9.2	10.0
Not Wrong at all	----	36.3	45.2	51.6
Don't Know	----	13.4	9.3	7.1
		2494	2488	2369
Sweden				
Always Wrong	----	44.6	30.9	25.3
Almost Always Wrong	----	4.7	6.2	6.1
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	4.6	6.7	6.2
Not Wrong at all	----	25.7	43.7	51.2
Don't Know	----	20.3	12.5	11.2
		1472	1182	1232

Table 1 (continued)

	1991	1994	1998	2008
Switzerland				
Always Wrong	----	----	19.7	16.6
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	6.3	5.3
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	15.9	14.7
Not Wrong at all	----	----	39.3	56.6
Don't Know	----	----	18.8	6.8
			1199	1229
Taiwan				
Always Wrong	----	----	----	53.1
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	----	9.0
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	----	10.2
Not Wrong at all	----	----	----	17.5
Don't Know	----	----	----	10.3
				1924
Turkey				
Always Wrong	----	----	----	90.8
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	----	2.9
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	----	1.8
Not Wrong at all	----	----	----	2.1
Don't Know	----	----	----	2.4
				1453
Ukraine				
Always Wrong	----	----	----	81.2
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	----	4.2
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	----	2.3
Not Wrong at all	----	----	----	6.5
Don't Know	----	----	----	5.9
				2033

Table 1 (continued)

	1991	1994	1998	2008
United States				
Always Wrong	67.4	59.0	56.8	53.6
Almost Always Wrong	4.5	3.7	5.1	4.7
Wrong Only Sometimes	5.0	5.8	6.7	5.8
Not Wrong at all	12.9	16.2	22.4	32.3
Don't Know	10.2	15.4	9.0	3.6
	1359	1447	1262	1339
Uruguay				
Always Wrong	----	----	----	46.8
Almost Always Wrong	----	----	----	6.9
Wrong Only Sometimes	----	----	----	9.9
Not Wrong at all	----	----	----	33.2
Don't Know	----	----	----	3.2
				1099

Source: ISSP

Question Wording: And what about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex, is it always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?

Table 2

Average, Net Change per Annum in Approval of Same-gender-Sexual Behavior

(Increase % “Not Wrong at All“+ decrease in “Always Wrong”)

Portugal	+4.66
Hungary	+3.64
Ireland	+3.42
Chile	+3.26
Sweden	+3.20
Bulgaria	+2.88
Norway	+2.87
New Zealand	+2.76
Italy	+2.69
Denmark	+2.32
Japan	+2.32
Austria	+2.28
Great Britain	+2.13
Spain	+2.12
France	+2.05
Switzerland	+2.04
Canada	+2.03
United States	+1.95
Australia	+1.70
East Germany	+1.03
The Netherlands	+0.92
Slovenia	+0.79
West Germany	+0.66
Israel	+0.64
The Philippines	+0.35
Slovakia	+0.14
Poland	+0.09
Russia	-0.18
Czech Republic	-1.18
Cyprus	-1.25
Latvia	-1.95

Source: ISSP

Table 3

Rank of Countries from High Approval to Low Approval on  
Approval of Same-gender-Sexual Behavior

% Not Wrong at All

1991:

The Netherlands	56.3
Germany (West)	30.0
Germany (East)	27.2
Norway	26.7
Great Britain	18.8
Israel	16.8
New Zealand	16.8
Austria	16.1
United States	12.9
Ireland	12.5
Poland	12.3
Slovenia	9.3
Italy	8.5
Russia	6.3
Hungary	5.1
The Philippines	2.0

1994:

The Netherlands	55.9
Spain	36.3
Canada	35.1
Czech Republic	31.7
Norway	30.2
New Zealand	26.2
Sweden	25.7
Israel	25.3
Australia	24.7
Germany (West)	24.6
Great Britain	22.2
Germany (East)	21.5
Italy	17.7
United States	16.2
Ireland	13.8
Russia	12.9
Poland	12.6

Table 3 (continued)

% Not Wrong at All

Austria	11.8
Bulgaria	7.6
Slovenia	5.9
Hungary	3.7
The Philippines	3.5
Japan	1.5

1998:

The Netherlands	61.7
Spain	45.2
Denmark	43.8
Sweden	43.7
Canada	41.7
Switzerland	39.3
Norway	37.6
Austria	32.8
Great Britain	30.5
Germany (West)	30.3
New Zealand	28.7
Germany (East)	27.6
Australia	26.9
France	26.9
Israel	26.9
Czech Republic	24.8
United States	22.4
Ireland	19.2
Slovakia	18.5
Italy	16.1
Slovenia	15.0
Russia	14.3
Portugal	14.1
Bulgaria	13.2
Hungary	13.1
Poland	12.7
Latvia	12.4
Cyprus	11.2
Chile	5.4

Table 3 (continued)

% Not Wrong at All

Japan	3.9
The Philippines	2.5
2008:	
The Netherlands	69.6
Denmark	57.3
Norway	56.7
Switzerland	56.6
Belgium (Flanders)	53.8
Spain	51.6
Sweden	51.2
Finland	48.6
German (East)	40.4
New Zealand	39.9
Germany (West)	39.6
Austria	39.3
Great Britain	36.1
France	36.0
Ireland	34.6
Uruguay	33.2
United States	32.3
Portugal	28.9
Czech Republic	21.3
Slovakia	21.0
Slovenia	20.6
Taiwan	17.5
Croatia	17.3
Chile	16.8
Mexico	15.2
Cyprus	8.5
Latvia	8.5
Russia	8.3
South Africa	7.7
Dominican Republic	6.8
Ukraine	6.5
Korea	6.3
Japan	5.4

Table 3 (continued)

% Not Wrong at All

The Philippines	4.4
Turkey	2.1

Source: ISSP



Table 4

Attitudes towards Same-Gender Marriage (1988)

Do you agree or disagree? Homosexual couples should have the right to marry one another.

	Austria	Germany	Great Britain	Hungary	Italy	Ireland
Strongly Agree	2.0	4.0	2.5	1.6	3.2	2.1
Agree	12.0	9.2	10.8	13.2	13.6	22.8
Neither Agree nor Disagree	9.2	9.7	15.2	11.7	10.7	12.6
Disagree	17.3	13.4	28.6	29.2	13.8	31.3
Strong Disagree	33.3	44.2	38.1	36.4	42.0	24.6
Don't Know	26.3	19.5	4.8	7.9	16.8	6.7
	1000	2985	1263	1716	1025	1001
	Nether- Lands	United States				
Strongly Agree	5.7	3.2				
Agree	26.0	8.5				
Neither Agree nor Disagree	16.7	14.1				
Disagree	18.8	24.2				
Strong Disagree	22.1	44.1				
Don't Know	10.6	5.9				
	1728	1389				

Source: ISSP

Table 5

## Middle/Ends and Bimodal Distributions on Approval of Same-gender-Sexual Behavior

	Always Wrong/Not Wrong at All	Ends/Middle
The Netherlands	0.17	6.42
Belgium (Flanders)	0.21	2.98
Switzerland	0.29	3.66
Denmark	0.32	4.63
Norway	0.39	5.93
Austria	0.45	3.01
Finland	0.47	4.63
Spain	0.48	4.66
Sweden	0.49	6.22
East Germany	0.56	2.46
West Germany	0.66	3.49
Ireland	0.72	2.69
France	0.73	2.99
New Zealand	0.78	3.78
Great Britain	0.92	4.14
Czech Republic	1.40	1.37
Uruguay	1.41	4.76
Portugal	1.45	2.99
United States	1.66	8.18
Slovenia	2.12	2.85
Slovakia	2.30	3.35
Taiwan	3.03	3.68
Croatia	3.41	5.69
Mexico	3.66	3.32
Chile	3.73	4.39
Japan	5.06	0.68
Russia	7.73	4.65
Cyprus	7.74	4.20
Latvia	7.93	4.26
Korea	10.54	5.29
Dominican Republic	10.63	4.12
South Africa	10.86	13.04
Ukraine	12.49	13.49
The Philippines	17.89	5.36
Turkey	43.24	19.77

Table 6

Summary of Gender Differences on Approval of Same-gender-Sexual Behavior and Gay Marriage

	Men Less Approving Than Women Are	Mixed Differences <sup>a</sup>	Women Less Approving Than Men Are	
1988	87.5%	---	12.5	(8)
1991	56.3%	25.0	18.7	(16)
1994	78.3%	13.0	8.7	(23)
1998	71.0%	16.1	12.9	(31)
2008	76.5%	8.8	14.7	(34)
1991-2008	72.1%	14.4	13.5	(104)

Source: ISSP

<sup>a</sup>Mixed differences show opposite gender differences on the Always Wrong and Not Wrong at All categories such as men being higher (or lower) than women on both opposing viewpoints.

Table 7

## Gender Differences on Approval of Same-gender-Sexual Behavior in 2008

% Not Wrong at All

Country	Men	Women
Austria	33.7	41.7
Belgium (Flanders)	46.2	60.9
Chile	14.3	17.6
Croatia	13.4	20.3
Cyprus	8.2	8.8
Czech Rep.	18.1	20.1
Denmark	48.9	65.2
Dominican Rep.	6.8	6.7
Finland	37.6	54.2
France	28.2	35.9
Germany	33.3	46.5
Great Britain	30.8	40.3
Ireland	28.6	34.5
Japan	5.6	5.3
Korea (South)	5.8	7.5
Latvia	8.9	8.3
Mexico	17.8	12.7
The Netherlands	62.3	76.0
New Zealand	31.8	42.6
Norway	49.9	62.5
The Philippines	4.7	3.8
Portugal	24.0	29.5
Russia	8.2	7.4
Slovakia	18.4	22.0
Slovenia	17.2	23.6
South Africa	7.8	7.2
Spain	46.5	55.3
Sweden	39.5	62.5
Switzerland	51.8	62.4
Taiwan	14.8	19.2
Turkey	2.3	1.8
Ukraine	6.6	5.8
United States	26.3	35.1
Uruguay	28.6	35.6

Table 8

## Gender Differences on Approval of Same-gender-Sexual Behavior by Country and Year

Country	1991	1994	1998	2008
Australia	----	+2.8	+11.7	----
Austria	+5.6	+0.8	+2.1	+8.0
Belgium (Flanders)	----	----	----	+14.7
Bulgaria	----	-4.2	+0.0	----
Canada	----	+1.9	+18.0	----
Chile	----	----	-2.0	+3.3
Croatia	----	----	----	+6.9
Cyprus	----	----	-2.2	+0.6
Czech Republic	----	+2.5	+7.6	+2.0
Denmark	----	----	+15.8	+16.3
Dominican Republic	----	----	----	-0.1
Finland	----	----	----	+16.6
France	----	----	+9.9	+7.7
Germany, East	+5.5	+1.6	+0.7	
Germany, West	+5.0	+8.5	+2.0	+13.2
Great Britain	-2.1	+5.7	+8.3	+9.5
Hungary	-3.7	-0.5	+5.0	----
Ireland	-2.1	-0.5	+2.7	+5.9
Israel	+4.1	+3.5	+7.4	----
Italy	+0.4	+1.2	+3.4	----
Japan	----	+0.1	-1.0	-0.3
Korea	----	----	----	+1.7
Latvia	----	----	-2.7	-0.6
Mexico	----	----	----	-5.1
The Netherlands	+6.8	+11.3	+9.0	+13.7
New Zealand	+1.4	+7.3	-0.9	+10.8
Norway	+5.2	+5.9	+10.0	+12.6
The Philippines	-0.8	-1.3	-0.7	-0.9
Poland	+2.3	+1.0	+0.3	----
Portugal	----	----	+10.6	+5.5
Russia	-3.3	+0.5	-1.9	-0.8
Slovakia	----	----	+1.6	+3.6
Slovenia	-0.5	+2.1	+5.0	+6.4
South Africa	----	----	----	-0.6
Spain	----	-0.6	+0.0	+8.8
Sweden	----	+5.1	+17.7	+23.0
Switzerland	----	----	+6.9	+10.6
Taiwan	----	----	----	+4.4
Turkey	----	----	----	-0.5
Ukraine	----	----	----	-0.8
United States	-0.1	+2.9	+6.4	+8.8
Uruguay	----	----	----	+7.0
Average	+1.5	+2.5	+4.5	+6.2

Table 9

## Age Differences on Approval of Same-gender-Sexual Behavior by Country and Year

Country	1991	1994	1998	2008
Australia	----	-17.2	-38.8	----
Austria	-13.1	-13.0	-38.9	-42.0
Belgium (Flanders)	----	----	----	-38.2
Bulgaria	----	-18.2	-22.3	----
Canada	----	-35.0	-41.1	----
Chile	----	----	-6.7	-19.3
Croatia	----	----	----	-14.5
Cyprus	----	----	-24.5	-19.2
Czech Republic	----	-34.2	-31.6	-27.4
Denmark	----	----	-37.1	-45.5
Dominican Republic	----	----	----	-2.1
Finland	----	----	----	-52.5
France	----	----	-42.6	-45.6
Germany, East	-30.7	-28.2	-26.4	-51.5
Germany, West	-34.9	-28.2	-32.4	-40.7
Great Britain	-26.9	-34.7	-49.3	-41.3
Hungary	-9.0	-7.1	-12.4	----
Ireland	-20.9	-24.2	-31.8	-38.7
Israel	-21.2	-23.0	-17.4	----
Italy	-16.8	-25.2	-14.6	----
Japan	----	-2.1	-6.1	-11.9
Korea	----	----	----	-6.3
Latvia	----	----	-15.9	-15.2
Mexico	----	----	----	-15.7
The Netherlands	-42.5	-47.5	-37.2	-38.8
New Zealand	-27.4	-39.1	-43.5	-40.3
Norway	-31.7	-31.5	-31.7	-41.1
The Philippines	-1.2	-5.0	-2.8	-1.2
Poland	-11.8	-19.5	-15.1	----
Portugal	----	----	-19.8	-42.0
Russia	-6.5	-15.7	-16.2	-13.6
Slovakia	----	----	-19.7	-27.5
Slovenia	-1.6	-4.5	-11.8	-20.1
South Africa	----	----	----	-4.6
Spain	----	-54.6	-59.2	-55.4
Sweden	----	-23.7	-48.8	-39.3
Switzerland	----	----	-37.7	-29.3
Taiwan	----	----	----	-30.1
Turkey	----	----	----	+0.6
Ukraine	----	----	----	-8.8
United States	-14.9	-22.3	-28.1	-27.0
Uruguay	----	----	----	-33.0
Average	-19.4	-24.1	-20.0	-20.1

Table 10

## Educational Differences on Approval of Same-gender-Sexual Behavior by Country and Year

Country	1991	1994	1998	2008
Australia	----	+10.8	+18.2	----
Austria	+12.3	+5.8	+17.3	+
Belgium (Flanders)	----	----	----	+17.2
Bulgaria	----	+6.8	+11.7	----
Canada	----	+17.0	+18.1	----
Chile	----	----	+5.6	+8.5
Croatia	----	----	----	+16.3
Cyprus	----	----	+9.1	+10.7
Czech Republic	----	+15.3	+5.5	+9.0
Denmark	----	----	+23.5	+28.3
Dominican Republic	----	----	----	+0.4
Finland	----	----	----	+22.4
France	----	----	+17.4	+21.0
Germany, East	+12.9	+20.6	+17.2	+12.7
Germany, West	+23.3	+16.7	+24.5	+17.8
Great Britain	+21.3	+19.4	+19.1	+19.9
Hungary	+4.3	+5.4	+3.5	----
Ireland	+9.7	+10.7	+6.2	+21.3
Israel	+10.9	+14.9	+1.6	----
Italy	+7.9	+14.6	+10.5	----
Japan	----	+3.3	+1.9	+1.4
Korea	----	----	----	+1.6
Latvia	----	----	+1.7	+7.9
Mexico	----	----	----	+9.0
The Netherlands	+20.2	+24.4	+14.1	+21.7
New Zealand	+11.1	+9.5	+15.4	+13.5
Norway	+19.9	+12.1	+15.6	+19.0
The Philippines	+1.1	+0.4	+0.1	-1.5
Poland	+6.8	+11.8	+13.6	----
Portugal	----	----	+18.6	+21.3
Russia	+0.1	+5.8	+6.9	+4.3
Slovakia	----	----	+8.9	+9.4
Slovenia	+1.9	+5.5	+6.4	+18.2
South Africa	----	----	----	+5.0
Spain	----	----	+21.2	+20.6
Sweden	----	+13.1	+23.5	+14.3
Switzerland	----	----	+10.3	+15.0
Taiwan	----	----	----	+18.7
Turkey	----	----	----	+5.0
Ukraine	----	----	----	+4.0
United States	+9.6	+11.1	+16.3	+20.5
Uruguay	----	----	----	+24.5
Average	+10.8	+11.6	+12.4	+13.8

Table 11

## Religious Services Attendance Differences on Approval of Same-gender-Sexual Behavior by Country/Year

Country	1991	1994	1998	2008
Australia	----	+26.0	+29.3	----
Austria	----	+21.7	+31.9	+28.7
Belgium (Flanders)	----	----	----	+32.1
Bulgaria	----	+0.7	----	----
Canada	----	+36.3	+43.1	----
Chile	----	----	+1.3	+15.4
Croatia	----	----	----	+28.9
Cyprus	----	----	+29.2	+18.3
Czech Republic	----	+18.7	+21.8	+19.3
Denmark	----	----	+35.0	+51.6
Dominican Republic	----	----	----	+2.3
Finland	----	----	----	+60.3
France	----	----	+35.2	+40.8
Germany, East	+19.5	+15.6	+2.9	+17.2
Germany, West	+33.3	+30.0	+22.3	+28.0
Great Britain	+13.3	+18.0	+26.8	+29.2
Hungary	+4.8	+2.6	+10.3	----
Ireland	+23.3	+44.0	+35.4	+32.5
Israel	----	+26.7	----	----
Italy	+18.3	+31.8	+28.4	----
Japan	----	-2.4	+5.2	+7.6
Korea	----	----	----	+6.5
Latvia	----	----	+6.6	+8.9
Mexico	----	----	----	+22.9
The Netherlands	+46.2	+49.6	+52.5	+60.1
New Zealand	+26.3	+33.6	+38.9	+49.3
Norway	+39.0	+40.9	+48.8	+53.0
The Philippines	+0.4	+1.7	-1.5	+0.5
Poland	+15.8	+21.2	+28.7	----
Portugal	----	----	+12.9	+39.9
Russia	+1.4	+4.8	+6.8	+7.6
Slovakia	----	----	+15.1	+20.2
Slovenia	----	+9.3	+17.5	+22.8
South Africa	----	----	----	+3.4
Spain	----	----	+34.7	+35.8
Sweden	----	+26.9	+37.1	+43.6
Switzerland	----	----	+51.4	+35.1
Taiwan	----	----	----	+6.1
Turkey	----	----	----	+2.1
Ukraine	----	----	----	+6.7
United States	+22.8	+20.8	+23.3	+36.6
Uruguay	----	----	----	+21.1
Average	+20.3	+21.8	+25.2	+25.6



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