

THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

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**CALIFORNIA VOTERS DISAPPROVE OF
SAME-SEX MARRIAGES, BUT DO NOT
SUPPORT CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT
TO BAR THEM. MAJORITY OPPOSES
SAN FRANCISCO GRANTING SAME-SEX
MARRIAGE LICENSES.**

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

By a narrow 50% to 44% margin, California voters disapprove of same-sex marriages. Voters also oppose 55% to 40% the recent action taken by the city of San Francisco to change its marriage regulations to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Opposition to that action includes majorities of voters in all major regions of the state, except for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area, who support it 55% to 39%.

However, voter disapproval of same-sex marriages does not extend to the step of supporting President George W. Bush's call to amend the U. S. Constitution to make such unions illegal throughout the nation. Voters in this state oppose this change 54% to 41%. These results are similar to results found in an August 2003 survey.

These are the findings from the latest statewide *Field Poll* conducted February 18-22 among a representative sample of 958 Californians registered to vote.

Trend in opinion

The Field Poll has been tracking California public opinion on the issue of same-sex marriages since 1977. While the trend shows a gradual decline in disapproval and a corresponding increase in approval of same-sex marriages, there is still a plurality against the idea.

Table 1
Trend of California opinion about allowing same-sex marriages where regular marriage laws apply (among registered voters)

	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
February 2004	50%	44	6
August 2003	50%	42	8
1997	55%	39	6
1985*	62%	30	8
1977*	59%	28	13

* Survey conducted among all California adults, not just registered voters

Huge differences of opinion across subgroups

The relatively narrow 50% to 44% overall division in voter sentiment on the issue of same-sex marriage obscures extremely large differences of opinion across many voter sub-groups.

For example, there is strong opposition to same-sex marriages among conservatives (86%), born-again Christians (80%), regular church goers (80%), Republicans (76%), Protestants (69%), and the voter areas of Southern California outside Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego Counties (67%) and the Central Valley (64%).

By contrast, majorities of voters in the following subgroups are in favor of same-sex marriage: liberals (81%), those voters with no religious preference (75%), those affiliated with religions other than Protestant and Catholic (61%), Democrats (61%), those living in the San Francisco Bay Area (57%), non-church goers (69%), voters 18-29 (58%), those who are not born-again Christians (56%) and voters with a post-graduate education (56%).

Table 2
California opinion about allowing same-sex marriages where regular marriage laws apply – by subgroup (among registered voters)

	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
Statewide – 2004	50%	44	6
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	34%	61	5
Republicans	76%	19	5
Non-partisans/others	40%	54	6
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	48%	47	5
Orange/San Diego	45%	49	6
Other Southern California	67%	28	5
Central Valley	64%	29	7
San Francisco Bay Area	37%	57	6
Other Northern California*	43%	49	8
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Conservative	86%	9	5
Middle-of-the-road	44%	49	7
Liberal	15%	81	4
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	54%	42	4
Female	47%	47	6
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	49%	46	5
Latino	54%	37	9
Black/African-American*	68%	24	8
Asian/other*	43%	49	8
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	38%	58	4
30-39	43%	52	5
40-49	47%	46	7
50-64	55%	41	4
65 +	66%	26	8
<u>Education</u>			
High school or less	59%	34	7
Some college/trade school	56%	39	5
College graduate	46%	47	7
Post-graduate work	40%	56	4
<u>Religion</u>			
Protestant	69%	28	3
Catholic	54%	37	9
Other religions	33%	61	6
No preference	19%	75	6
<u>Religious attendance</u>			
Every week	80%	16	4
1-3 times per month	56%	37	7
Less than once a month	36%	57	7
Never	27%	69	4
<u>Born-again Christian</u>			
Yes	80%	16	4
No	38%	56	6

* Relatively small sample size.

Amend the U.S. Constitution?

Voter disapproval of same-sex marriages does not extend to the step of supporting President George W. Bush's call to amend the U. S. Constitution to define marriage as being only between a man and a woman. In the current survey 54% of California voters disapprove and 41% approve of making this change to the U.S. Constitution. This is not a lot different from a *Field Poll* survey conducted last August, in which a 50% to 42% plurality opposed such an amendment.

The same kind of sub-group divisions characterize sentiments for and against the idea of a constitutional amendment as is seen on basic issue of same-sex marriage. For example, majorities of Republicans (64%), conservatives (67%), residents of the Central Valley (54%), Protestants (54%), regular church goers (57%) and born-again Christians (61%) favor amending the U.S. Constitution for this purpose.

On the other hand, large majorities of the following subgroups oppose this idea: Democrats (69%), non-partisans (64%), liberals (79%), voters in the San Francisco Bay Area (63%), voters age 18-29 (65%), voters age 30-39 (64%), those with a post-graduate education (65%), voters affiliated with religions other than Protestant or Catholic (67%), those with no religious preference (69%), less frequent (62%) or non-church goers (64%), and voters who are not born-again Christians (62%).

Table 3
Opinion of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution defining marriage as
between a man and a woman (among registered voters)

	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
Statewide – February 2004	54%	41	5
August 2003	50%	42	8
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	69%	25	6
Republicans	30%	64	6
Non-partisans/others	64%	31	5
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	58%	35	7
Orange/San Diego	54%	41	5
Other Southern California	47%	44	9
Central Valley	41%	54	5
San Francisco Bay Area	63%	34	3
Other Northern California*	52%	43	5
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Conservative	28%	67	5
Middle-of-the-road	58%	35	7
Liberal	79%	18	3
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	51%	45	4
Female	57%	37	6
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	53%	41	6
Latino	57%	37	6
Black/African-American*	43%	50	7
Asian/other*	57%	35	8
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	65%	33	2
30-39	64%	33	3
40-49	51%	42	7
50-64	51%	44	5
65 +	39%	51	10
<u>Education</u>			
High school or less	44%	47	9
Some college/trade school	47%	47	6
College graduate	58%	38	4
Post-graduate work	65%	30	5
<u>Religion</u>			
Protestant	41%	54	5
Catholic	52%	41	7
Other religions	67%	29	4
No preference	69%	25	6
<u>Religious attendance</u>			
Every week	38%	57	5
1-3 times per month	52%	43	5
Less than once a month	62%	32	6
Never	64%	32	4
<u>Born-again Christian</u>			
Yes	34%	61	5
No	62%	32	6

* Relatively small sample size.

Reaction to San Francisco's change in marriage regulations

Earlier this month, in a widely publicized move, the city of San Francisco announced that it was changing its marriage regulations and began issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples. That move has led to the issuing of thousands of marriage licenses to same-sex couples in the past two weeks.

By a 55% to 40% margin California voters oppose the steps that San Francisco has taken. Almost four in five Republicans (78%) are in opposition and about four in ten (39%) Democrats statewide also do not favor the move. Majorities of voters in every region of the state oppose the San Francisco action, with the exception of voters living in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area where voters favor the action 55% to 39%.

Table 4
Opinion of San Francisco changing its marriage regulations to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples (among registered voters)

	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
Statewide	55%	40	5
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	39%	57	4
Republicans	78%	16	6
Non-partisans/others	46%	48	6
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	56%	39	5
Orange/San Diego	53%	41	6
Other Southern California	66%	29	5
Central Valley	66%	30	4
San Francisco Bay Area	39%	55	6
Other Northern California*	56%	43	1
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Conservative	89%	6	5
Middle-of-the-road	50%	43	7
Liberal	19%	78	3
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	57%	38	5
Female	53%	42	5
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	54%	40	6
Latino	56%	40	4
Black/African-American*	69%	27	4
Asian/other*	51%	46	3
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	45%	53	2
30-39	46%	49	5
40-49	51%	44	5
50-64	60%	34	6
65 +	71%	23	6
<u>Education</u>			
High school or less	62%	31	7
Some college/trade school	62%	35	3
College graduate	50%	46	4
Post-graduate work	45%	49	6
<u>Religion</u>			
Protestant	74%	23	3
Catholic	60%	36	4
Other religions	37%	56	7
No preference	24%	69	7
<u>Religious attendance</u>			
Every week	83%	13	4
1-3 times per month	60%	37	3
Less than once a month	40%	52	8
Never	36%	60	4
<u>Born-again Christian</u>			
Yes	81%	16	3
No	44%	50	6

* Relatively small sample size.

How voters would vote on the Limitation of Marriage Initiative today

The Field Poll also asked the statewide sample of voters how they would vote if the March 2000 Limitation of Marriage Initiative, which defined marriages in California as being exclusively those between a man and a woman, were on the ballot again today. The survey finds that voters remain supportive of the initiative by 11 percentage points, 53% to 42%. That initiative was approved by the California electorate in the March 2000 primary by a 61% to 39% margin.

Subgroup differences on the initiative mirror those found in the 2000 vote, with Democrats and liberals generally opposed, but larger majorities of Republicans and conservative voters in favor.

Table 5
Current preference if voting again on the Limitation on Marriage initiative
(passed by California voters in 2000) (among registered voters)

	<u>Would vote yes</u>	<u>Would vote no</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
Statewide	53%	42	5
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	37%	59	4
Republicans	76%	18	6
Non-partisans/others	49%	48	3
<u>Region</u>			
Los Angeles County	51%	45	4
Orange/San Diego	53%	40	7
Other Southern California	66%	30	4
Central Valley	64%	32	4
San Francisco Bay Area	40%	56	4
Other Northern California*	54%	38	8
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Conservative	87%	9	4
Middle-of-the-road	46%	48	6
Liberal	26%	72	2
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	56%	40	4
Female	51%	44	5
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>			
White non-Hispanic	52%	43	5
Latino	59%	36	5
Black/African-American*	68%	31	1
Asian/other*	52%	45	3
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	50%	45	5
30-39	47%	50	3
40-49	52%	44	4
50-64	55%	41	4
65 +	64%	29	7
<u>Education</u>			
High school or less	63%	32	5
Some college/trade school	62%	34	4
College graduate	49%	46	5
Post-graduate work	40%	57	3
<u>Religion</u>			
Protestant/other Christian	70%	26	4
Catholic	61%	34	5
Other religions	35%	60	5
No preference	27%	60	3
<u>Religious attendance</u>			
Every week	80%	18	2
1-3 times per month	60%	37	3
Less than once a month	38%	55	7
Never	38%	57	5
<u>Born-again Christian</u>			
Yes	79%	19	2
No	44%	51	5

* Relatively small sample size.

Information About the Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a cross-section sampling of 958 registered voters in California. Interviews were conducted by telephone in English and Spanish February 18-22, 2004. Up to five attempts was made to reach a randomly selected voter at each number dialed. After the completion of interviewing, the sample was weighted to *Field Poll* estimates of the state's total registered voter population.

According to statistical theory, results from the overall sample of 958 registered voters have a sampling error of +/-3.3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. There are other possible sources of error in any survey in addition to sampling variability. Different results could occur because of differences in question wording, sequencing or through omissions or errors in sampling, interviewing or data processing. Extensive efforts were made to minimize such potential errors.

Questions Asked

Would you approve or disapprove of a passing a law that would permit gay and lesbians to marry members of their own sex and have regular marriage laws apply to them?

Do you favor or oppose an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would define marriage as between a man and a women, thus barring marriage between gay and lesbian couples?

Four years ago in the March 2000 statewide election, California voters approved Proposition 22, the Limit on Marriages initiative, which added a provision to the state's family code specifying that only marriages between a man and a woman would be valid and legally recognized in California. Suppose the Limit on Marriages initiative was being voted on again this year. Would you be inclined to vote YES or NO?

Last week, the city of San Francisco announced that it was changing its marriage regulations, and began issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Do you favor or oppose this action by the city of San Francisco?