

# 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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Release #2443

Release Date: **Thursday, February 28, 2013**

## **RECORD MAJORITY OF CALIFORNIA VOTERS APPROVES OF ALLOWING SAME-SEX MARRIAGE.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

By a nearly two-to-one margin (61% to 32%), California voters approve of allowing same-sex couples to marry. This represents a complete reversal in views about the issue from 1977, when *The Field Poll* conducted its first survey on this topic, and is the highest level of support ever measured by the poll.

Approval of allowing marriage between two people of the same gender includes majorities of men and women, voters in all racial and ethnic groups, and Californians living in each of the major regions of the state. The only subgroups where majorities remain opposed are registered Republicans and voters who classify themselves as conservative in politics.

Six in ten voters (60%) also attach importance to the U.S. Supreme Court's upcoming ruling about the constitutionality of California's Proposition 8, the voter-approved initiative banning same-sex marriage in the state. Supporters of same-sex marriage are nearly twice as likely as opponents to say the ruling is important to them.

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* completed earlier this month updating California voter opinions about same-sex marriage and Proposition 8.

## **Thirty-six year trend in California voter views about same-sex marriage**

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There has been a complete turn-around during the past thirty-six years regarding how California voters feel about allowing same-sex couples to marry and have regular marriage laws apply to them.

In 1977 the *Field Poll* found 28% approving and 59% disapproving of same-sex marriages. In nine periodic surveys taken between that time and 2012, there was a steady increase in support for allowing same-sex couples to marry. The latest survey shows 61% of voters approving and 32% disapproving, a record high level of support.

**Table 1**  
**Trend of California opinion about allowing same-sex couples to marry and having regular marriage laws apply to them (among registered voters)**

	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Disapprove</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
<b>February 2013</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>7</b>
2012	59%	34	7
2010	51%	42	7
2009	49%	44	7
2008	51%	42	7
2006	44%	50	6
2004	44%	50	6
2003	42%	50	8
1997	38%	56	6
1985	30%	62	8
1977	28%	59	13

*Note: Surveys conducted prior to 2003 were conducted among all California adults, not just registered voters.*

### **Support for allowing same-sex marriage is broad-based**

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Examining the results across subgroups of the voter population reveals that there is now majority support for allowing same-sex couples to marry across partisan, ideological, ethnic, age, marital status and the major geographies of the state.

A comparison of the changes in opinions among the sub-groups during just the last three years shows a decline in disapproval among all groups and a correspondingly increase in approval of same-sex marriages.

The only subgroups where majorities remain opposed are registered Republicans and conservatives. Opinions are about evenly divided among voters age 65 or older and Protestants.

<b>Table 2</b>				
<b>Comparing California voter preferences about allowing same-sex couples to marry and have regular marriage laws apply to them</b>				
<b>2010 vs. 2013 – by subgroup</b>				
<b>(among registered voters)</b>				
	<b>2013</b>		<b>2010</b>	
	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Disapprove</b>	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Disapprove</b>
<b>Total registered voters</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>42</b>
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrats	71%	25	68%	27
Republicans	39%	53	26%	66
Non-partisans/others	71%	25	52%	38
<u>Political ideology</u>				
Conservative	25%	67	20%	72
Middle-of-the road	67%	26	59%	32
Liberal	90%	8	82%	14
<u>Region</u>				
Los Angeles County	64%	30	51%	38
Other Southern California	54%	39	47%	47
San Francisco Bay Area	77%	20	63%	29
Other Northern California	55%	38	42%	51
<u>Age</u>				
18 – 39	78%	20	61%	32
40 – 64	56%	35	46%	45
65 or older	48%	44	42%	51
<u>Gender</u>				
Male	56%	37	47%	45
Female	66%	29	54%	39
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>				
White non-Hispanic	65%	31	53%	39
Latino	56%	35	50%	41
African-Amer./Asian-Amer./other	64%	31	41%	51
<u>Marital status</u>				
Married/live together	59%	37	46%	47
Separated/divorced/widowed	51%	37	46%	44
Single/never married	73%	25	67%	25
<u>Religion</u>				
Protestant	45%	48	34%	57
Catholic	55%	37	47%	46
Other religions*	82%	17	75%	20
No religious preference	87%	8	77%	16

\* Small sample base.

Note: Differences between 100% and the sum of each year's findings represent proportion with no opinion.

**Proposition 8 aftermath and court rulings**

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California voters narrowly approved Proposition 8, a statewide constitutional amendment, in November 2008 election. It provided that “only a marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California.” Following the election, same-sex advocates and government entities filed numerous lawsuits challenging the proposition’s validity.

In August 2010 U.S. District Court Judge Vaughn Walker ruled that Proposition 8 was unconstitutional, overturning the law. In February 2012 an appeals court affirmed Walker’s decision. The case is now before the U. S. Supreme Court which is expected to take up the matter next month.

When voters in the survey were asked how important the upcoming Supreme Court ruling on Proposition 8 was to them, six in ten (60%) describe it as very or somewhat important. However, there are big differences in the level of importance attached to the ruling between supporters and opponents of same-sex marriage. Nearly twice as many supporters of same-sex marriage (75%) say the ruling is important to them compared, to 40% among opponents.

**Table 3**  
**Importance of upcoming U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling about the**  
**constitutionality of California’s Proposition 8**  
**(among registered voters)**

	Total registered voters	Supporters of same-sex marriage	Opponents of same-sex marriage
Very important	38%	45%	30%
Somewhat important	22	30	10
Not too/not at all important	35	23	51
No opinion	5	2	9
	60%	75%	40%

## **Information About The Survey**

### **Methodological Details**

The latest *Field Poll* was completed February 5-17, 2013 among 834 registered voters in California. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize voter fatigue, some of the questions were asked of a random subsample of 415 registered voters.

Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish using live interviewers working from Field Research Corporation's central location telephone interviewing facilities. Up to six attempts were made to reach, screen and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period.

Interviewing was completed on either a voter's landline phone or a cell phone depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. After the completion of interviewing, the overall registered voter sample was weighted to *Field Poll* estimates of the characteristics of the overall registered voter population in California.

Sampling error estimates applicable to the results of any probability-based survey depend on sample size as well as the percentage distribution being examined. The maximum sampling error estimates for results based on the overall sample of 834 registered voters have a sampling error of +/- 3.5 percentage points, while findings from the random subsample of 415 voters have a sampling error of +/- 5.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The maximum sampling error is based on results in the middle of the sampling distribution (i.e., percentages at or near 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (those closer to 10% or 90%) have a smaller margin of error. There are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error. However, the overall design and execution of the survey sought to minimize these other possible sources of error.

*The Field Poll* was established in 1947 as *The California Poll* by Mervin Field, who is still an active advisor. The *Poll* has operated continuously since then as an independent, non-partisan survey of California public opinion. The *Poll* receives annual funding from media subscribers of *The Field Poll*, from several California foundations, and the University of California and California State University systems, who receive the data files from each *Field Poll* survey shortly after its completion for teaching and secondary research purposes.

### **Questions Asked**

Do you approve or disapprove of California allowing same-sex couples to marry and have regular marriage laws apply to them?

The U.S. Supreme Court will shortly be deciding the constitutionality of California's Proposition 8 that bans same sex couples in the state from marrying. How important is it to you for the Supreme Court to overturn California's same sex marriage ban and allow same sex couples in the state to marry – very important, somewhat important, not too important or not at all important?\*

\* Question asked of a random subsample of 415 registered voters statewide