

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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55% OF VOTERS OPPOSE PROPOSITION 8, THE INITIATIVE TO BAN SAME-SEX MARRIAGES IN CALIFORNIA.

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

During the past two months, voter opposition has increased toward Proposition 8, the state constitutional amendment on the November election ballot which would ban same-sex marriages.

At present, just 38% of likely voters are backing the initiative, while 55% are intending to vote No. This compares to a 42% Yes and 51% No distribution of preferences in July.

Preferences on Proposition 8 divide sharply by party, ideology, region, religion and educational status of the voter.

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* completed last week among 830 likely voters statewide.

Change in ballot description

Since the last *Field Poll* measurement, the wording of the ballot summary that voters will see when they vote was amended by the Attorney's General office, following the state Supreme Court's decision to overturn the state's previous ban on same-sex marriage law. The differences in the ballot summaries are as follows:

Original summary:

"LIMIT ON MARRIAGE. INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. Amends the California Constitution to provide that only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California."

Amended summary:

"ELIMINATES RIGHT OF SAME-SEX COUPLES TO MARRY. INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. Changes California Constitution to eliminate the right of same-sex couples to marry. Provides that only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California."

In this survey *The Field Poll* attempted to test whether voters react differently to the two alternative ballot descriptions. It did so by dividing the overall sample of likely voters interviewed into two random subsamples. Half were read Prop. 8's original ballot description, while the other half were read the amended version.

When read the amended summary, 55% of voters say they will vote No. This No side proportion is marginally higher than the 52% who are opposed when the initiative's original ballot description is read. Under both scenarios 38% of likely voters say they intend to vote Yes on Prop. 8.

Table 1
Trend of voter preferences regarding Proposition 8, the constitutional amendment that would ban same-sex marriage in California (among likely voters)

	September (amended ballot summary)	September (original ballot summary)	July (original ballot summary)
<u>Intending to vote...</u>			
Yes	38%	38%	42%
No	55	52	51
Undecided	7	10	7

Voter awareness of Prop. 8 and its impact on the two alternative ballot descriptions

Seven in ten of the likely voters in this survey (70%) reported having heard something about Proposition 8 prior to being interviewed, while 30% had not. This represents an 8 percentage point increase in voter awareness since July, when 62% reported some awareness of the initiative.

The survey finds that there are differences in the voting preferences relating to the two alternative ballot descriptions, depending on whether or not voters have any prior awareness of Proposition 8.

While there are no significant differences in preferences between the two versions among voters already familiar with Prop. 8, among those not familiar the differences are striking. The amended summary produces a 28-point No side deficit (30% Yes vs. 58% No) among voters with no prior awareness of the initiative, whereas the original ballot description produces a much narrower 5 point deficit (37% Yes vs. 42% No) among these voters.

These findings indicate that similar to past initiative campaigns the wording of a ballot summary can have a pronounced impact on how voters make judgments about a proposition.

	Amended version	Original version
Voters familiar with Proposition 8 (70% of total)		
Yes voter	41%	40%
No voter	53	56
Undecided	6	4
Voters unfamiliar with Proposition 8 (30% of total)		
Yes voter	30%	37%
No voter	58	42
Undecided	12	21

Big differences in voting preferences across subgroups

Voting preferences on Proposition 8 divide sharply across subgroups of the voting population. For example, Democrats are opposing the initiative nearly four to one (20% Yes vs. 75% No), while Republicans are in favor by a greater than two to one margin (66% Yes to 27% No). A majority (56%) of non-partisans are lining up on the No side.

Conservatives are supporting Prop. 8 by a greater than three to one margin (72% Yes to 21% No). By contrast, liberals are almost uniformly opposed to the initiative, with just 8% intending to vote Yes and 91% on the No side. A 58% majority of political moderates are also taking a No position on Prop. 8, while just 29% are in support.

Voters living in coastal counties or touching the San Francisco Bay are opposed to Prop. 8 by twenty-one points (36% Yes vs. 57% No). By contrast, voters living in inland counties are closely divided (44% Yes vs. 48% No).

While Protestants are backing Prop. 8 52% to 40%, large majorities of Catholics (55%) and those affiliated with other religions or who have no preference (71%) are intending to vote No.

Similarly, evangelical Christians back the initiative 60% to 34%, but others who are not evangelical Christians are voting 31% Yes and 61% No.

Voters who have completed post graduate work are more than three to one against the initiative, while other voters are only narrowly opposing Prop. 8.

Table 3			
Preferences on Prop. 8 across subgroups of the voting population (among likely voters)			
	<u>Intending to vote...</u>		
	Yes	No	Undecided
Total statewide	38%	55	7
<u>Party</u>			
Democrats	20%	75	5
Republicans	66%	27	7
Non-partisans/others*	28%	56	16
<u>Area</u>			
Coastal counties	36%	57	7
Inland counties	44%	48	8
<u>Gender</u>			
Men	39%	54	7
Women	37%	55	8
<u>Political ideology</u>			
Conservative	72%	21	7
Middle-of-the-road	29%	58	13
Liberal	8%	91	1
<u>Religion</u>			
Protestant	52%	40	8
Catholic	36%	55	9
Other/no preference	24%	71	5
<u>Evangelical Christian</u>			
Yes	60%	34	6
No	31%	61	8
<u>Education</u>			
Not a college graduate	43%	49	8
College degree	44%	50	6
Post-graduate work	22%	68	10

* Small sample base.

Information About The Survey

Sample Details

The findings in this report are based on a random sample survey of 830 likely voters in California, including random subsamples of 424 and 406 likely voters statewide. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish between the period September 5-14, 2008. Up to six attempts were made to reach and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize voter fatigue, the overall voter sample was divided into two random subsamples on some of the questions.

The sample was developed from telephone listings of individual voters selected at random from a statewide list of registered voters in California. Once a voter's name and telephone number has been selected, interviews are attempted only with the specified voter. Interviews can be conducted on either the voter's landline or cell phone, depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. After the completion of interviewing, the results are weighted slightly to *Field Poll* estimates of the demographic and regional characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to any probability-based survey depends on the sample size. The maximum sampling error for results based on the overall sample of 830 likely voters is +/- 3.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while findings from each of the random subsamples have a maximum sampling error of +/- 5.0 percentage points. The maximum sampling error is based on percentages in the middle of the sampling distribution (percentages around 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (percentages around 10% or around 90%) have a smaller margin of error. While there are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error, the overall design and execution of the survey minimized the potential for these other sources of error. The maximum sampling error will be larger for analyses based on subgroups of the overall sample.

Questions Asked

Have you seen, read or heard anything about Proposition 8, the state constitutional amendment having to do with marriage that will appear on the November statewide election ballot?

(ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

(As you know) Proposition 8 is the "Limit on Marriage" constitutional amendment. It amends the California constitution to provide that only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California. Fiscal impact: Potential revenue loss mainly to sales taxes, totaling several tens of millions of dollars to state and local government over the next few years. If the election were being held today, would you vote YES or NO on Proposition 8?

(ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

(As you know) Proposition 8 is the initiative to "Eliminate the Right of Same-Sex Couples to Marry" constitutional amendment. It changes the California Constitution to eliminate the right of same-sex couples to marry and provides that only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California. Fiscal impact: Potential revenue loss, mainly to sales taxes, totaling several tens of millions of dollars to state and local government over the next few years. If the election were being held today, would you vote YES or NO on Proposition 8?