

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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**PUBLIC FAVORS GAY/LESBIAN
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OPPOSE SAME-SEX MARRIAGES.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

While sizable majorities (ranging from 59% to 67%) of the public favor some steps to allow gay and lesbian couples in a loving domestic partnership to have many of the benefits now provided to married heterosexuals, an almost equally large majority (56%) disapproves of legalizing same-sex marriages.

In a statewide survey completed last month, *The Field Poll* interviewed a representative cross section of 1,045 California adults to measure a variety of issues relating to gays and lesbians. Some highlights of the findings are:

- ... Two thirds (67%) of the public would favor a law granting legal recognition to domestic partners living together in a loving relationship to have such family rights, such as hospital visitation rights, medical power of attorney and conservatorship.
- ... Almost six in ten (59%) would grant financial dependence status to domestic partners, whereby partners would receive benefits such as pensions, health and dental care coverage, family leave and death benefits.
- ... However, only a 38% minority would approve of a law that would permit homosexuals to marry members of their own sex and to have regular marriage laws apply to them. A majority (56%) disapproves of such a law and 6% have no opinion.
- ... The public is almost evenly divided (49% in favor and 43% opposed) on the question of whether there should be legislation which would mandate that California **not** recognize same-sex marriages performed legally in other states.

Legislative/Court Actions

In recent months California legislators have been discussing and debating a number of gay and lesbian issues. Some legislators, primarily Assembly Democrats, are promoting new legislation which would protect and extend the rights of gays and lesbians. Other legislators, generally led by Republicans, want to restrict granting any new rights particularly in regard to legalizing gay marriages here and barring the recognition of same-sex marriages performed legally in other states.

A recent court ruling in Hawaii sanctioned legalized same-sex marriages in that state. If that ruling is upheld in the higher courts, then other states would be required under federal law to recognize those marriages as legal unions. This prospect has galvanized opponents of gay and lesbian marriages to introduce legislation in California and other states which would bar the recognition of gay marriages performed out of state.

In reaction to the Hawaiian court ruling, the Hawaii State Senate has called for a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriages while approving a new law that would give gay and lesbian couples many of the benefits of married heterosexuals.

Findings in detail

The following four tables show the findings of the main questions asked in this survey. As can be seen, Democrats divide more on the side of expanding gay rights, while Republicans are more likely to be opposed.

Women and people with no religious preference and those whose religion is something other than Protestant or Catholic are also disproportionately more supportive of the gay rights measures measured in this survey.

That portion of the population which say they themselves identify “a lot” with the gay or lesbian community (representing about 6% of the respondents found in this survey) overwhelmingly favor same-sex marriages as well as granting domestic partner rights to homosexuals. On the other hand, those who report no identification with the gay and lesbian community favor the granting domestic partner rights to gay couples but they largely disapprove of same-sex marriage legislation and are opposed to recognizing such marital unions performed in other states.

Table 1
Grant legal recognition to domestic partners in areas
of family rights such as hospital visitation rights,
medical power of attorney and conservatorship?

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide	67%	24	9
<u>Party Identification</u>			
Democrats	72%	19	9
Republicans	64%	29	7
Other	61%	24	15
<u>Gender</u>			
Men	67%	25	8
Woman	68%	22	10
<u>Religion</u>			
Protestant/Christian	65%	28	7
Roman Catholic	62%	23	15
Other religions	80%	14	6
No religious preference	81%	16	3
<u>Personal identification with gay/lesbian community</u>			
A lot	90%	6	4
Some	77%	16	7
Not at all	62%	28	10

Table 2
Grant financial dependence status to domestic partners
to receive benefits such as pensions, health and
dental care coverage, family leave and death benefits?

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide	59%	35	6
<u>Party Identification</u>			
Democrats	68%	27	5
Republicans	47%	48	5
Other	58%	29	13
<u>Gender</u>			
Men	53%	41	6
Woman	64%	30	6
<u>Religion</u>			
Protestant/Christian	50%	46	4
Roman Catholic	65%	28	7
Other religions	67%	28	5
No religious preference	67%	24	9
<u>Personal identification with gay/lesbian community</u>			
A lot	81%	14	5
Some	71%	24	5
Not at all	52%	42	6

Table 3 Have law permitting homosexuals to marry members of their own sex with regular marriage laws applied to them			
	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide	38%	56	6
<u>Party Identification</u>			
Democrats	47%	47	6
Republicans	24%	72	4
Other	43%	44	13
<u>Gender</u>			
Men	35%	61	4
Woman	40%	51	9
<u>Religion</u>			
Protestant/Christian	29%	65	6
Roman Catholic	29%	61	10
Other religions	50%	44	6
No religious preference	66%	31	3
<u>Personal identification with gay/lesbian community</u>			
A lot	67%	30	3
Some	58%	38	4
Not at all	27%	65	8

Table 4
Favor/oppose proposed California law to not recognize
same-sex marriages performed in other states

	<u>Favor not recognizing</u>	<u>Opposed to not recognizing</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Statewide	49%	43	8
<u>Party Identification</u>			
Democrats	41%	52	7
Republicans	62%	31	7
Other	41%	44	15
<u>Gender</u>			
Men	50%	43	7
Woman	48%	44	8
<u>Religion</u>			
Protestant/Christian	57%	36	7
Roman Catholic	55%	35	10
Other religions	32	57	11
No religious preference	27%	69	4
<u>Personal identification with gay/lesbian community</u>			
A lot	19%	70	11
Some	35%	59	6
Not at all	58%	34	8

Information About the Survey

Sample Details

The results in this report are based on a survey conducted February 11-17, 1997, among a representative statewide sample of 1,045 adult Californians. The survey was completed by telephone in either English or Spanish using random digit dialing methods.

The sizes of the subsamples reported in this release are as follows: Democrats (518), Republicans (387), others (140), men (519), women (526), Protestant/Christian (449), Roman Catholic (281), other religions (70), no religious preference (183), identify with gays/lesbian community "a lot" (64), identify with gays/lesbian community "some" (265), identify with gay/lesbian community "not at all" (696).

There are many possible sources of error in any survey other than sampling variability. Different results could occur because of differences in question wording, sequencing or through undetected errors or omission in sampling, interviewing or data processing. Every effort was made to minimize such errors.

It is difficult in general public opinion surveys such as this one to obtain accurate measures as to whether a respondent is heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual. Typically, a straightforward demographic question usually produces statistics which understate the true incidence of homosexuals within the population.

A surrogate measure often used in surveys is to ask respondents to describe how much personally they identify with the gay or lesbian community---a lot, some or not at all. That portion which attests to "a lot of identification" usually includes a large proportion of homosexuals.

Questions Asked

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

Some states are considering legislation that would permit their state not to recognize same-sex marriages performed legally in other states. Do you favor or oppose a proposed California law to not recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states?

Some states are considering legislation about domestic partnership laws. These are laws applicable to unmarried people who are living together in a loving relationship. Do you favor or oppose (STATEMENTS ROTATED TO AVOID POSSIBLE SEQUENCE BIAS)

- a. granting legal recognition to domestic partners in the areas of family rights, such as hospital visitation rights, medical power of attorney and conservatorship
- b. granting financial dependence status to domestic partners, whereby partners would receive benefits such as pensions, health and dental care coverage, family leave and death benefits

- Nearly half (45%) of Californians say they are financially better off compared to a year ago, up from 38% who reported such an improvement in their personal financial well-being in 1996. Additionally, four in ten (41%) expect to be better off in their own personal financial situation a year from now.
- Currently, 59% say they are confident that inflation can be kept within reasonable bounds, compared to 71% who held this opinion in 1996. Half (50%) the public believes that now is a good time to make a major household purchase, similar to the 52% who felt this way the previous year.
- Short-term employment confidence among Californians working for wages is on the rise, with 79% reporting that they are very confident about being employed six months from now. Another 15% are somewhat confident, and just five percent say they are not confident about being employed in six months.
- Self-employed Californians are less concerned about doing a sufficient amount of business than in past years. For the first time since 1990, a majority (58%) says they are not concerned about maintaining enough business over the next six months.
- About a third (34%) of Californians sees the U.S. stock market going up by year's end, compared to just 16% who feel that it will be lower. Those Californians who report having funds invested in the market are more likely than others to believe that the market will be higher by year's end.
- Californians are slightly less favorable this year with regard to the direction California is headed, with a majority (54%) seeing the state as being on the wrong track, compared to 49% who felt this way last year. However, optimism about the direction of the country overall is on the rise, with 43% saying the country is going in the right direction, up from 34% the previous year.

Note to Editors: The attached California Opinion Index report presents the complete 1997 findings and year-to-year trends in greater detail.

Information About the Survey

Sample Details

The results in this report are based on a survey conducted February 11–17, 1997, among a representative statewide sample of 1,045 adult Californians. The survey was completed by telephone in either English or Spanish using random digit dialing methods.

According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from the overall sample would have a sampling error of +/- 3.3 percentage points.

There are many possible sources of error in any survey other than sampling variability. Different results could occur because of differences in question wording, sequencing or through undetected errors or omission in sampling, interviewing or data processing. Every effort was made to minimize such errors.

Questions Asked

Would you say that you and your family are financially better off or worse off today than you were a year ago?

Looking ahead, do you think that a year from now you will be better off financially, worse off or just about the same as now?

How would you generally describe economic conditions in California now? Would you say that economically, California is in good times or bad times right now?

What about the next 12 months or so? Do you expect economic conditions in California to get better, get worse or stay the same?

Do you think that in the next five years or so, economic conditions in California will generally be good most or all of the time or do you think there will be periods of serious downturns in the economy?

About the big things people buy for their homes — such as furniture, a refrigerator, stove, television, and things like that. Generally speaking, do you think now is a good or bad time for people to buy major household items?

How confident are you that inflation can be kept within reasonable bounds in the future — are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident or not at all confident?

Where do you think the U.S. stock market is headed during 1997? Do you think that by year's end the overall market will be higher, lower or about the same as it is today?

Do you or does anyone in your household currently have money invested in the stock market, either directly, through mutual funds or a retirement account or pension fund?

What is your current employment status... that is, are you self-employed, are you employed by someone else, are you unemployed, are you a homemaker or are you retired from the labor force?

IF SELF EMPLOYED: Looking ahead to the next six months, how concerned are you that you will be doing a satisfactory amount of business... very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned?

IF EMPLOYED BY SOMEONE ELSE: Is your monthly pay more, about the same, or less than it was last year?

How confident are you that you will be employed in a job six months from now — very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?