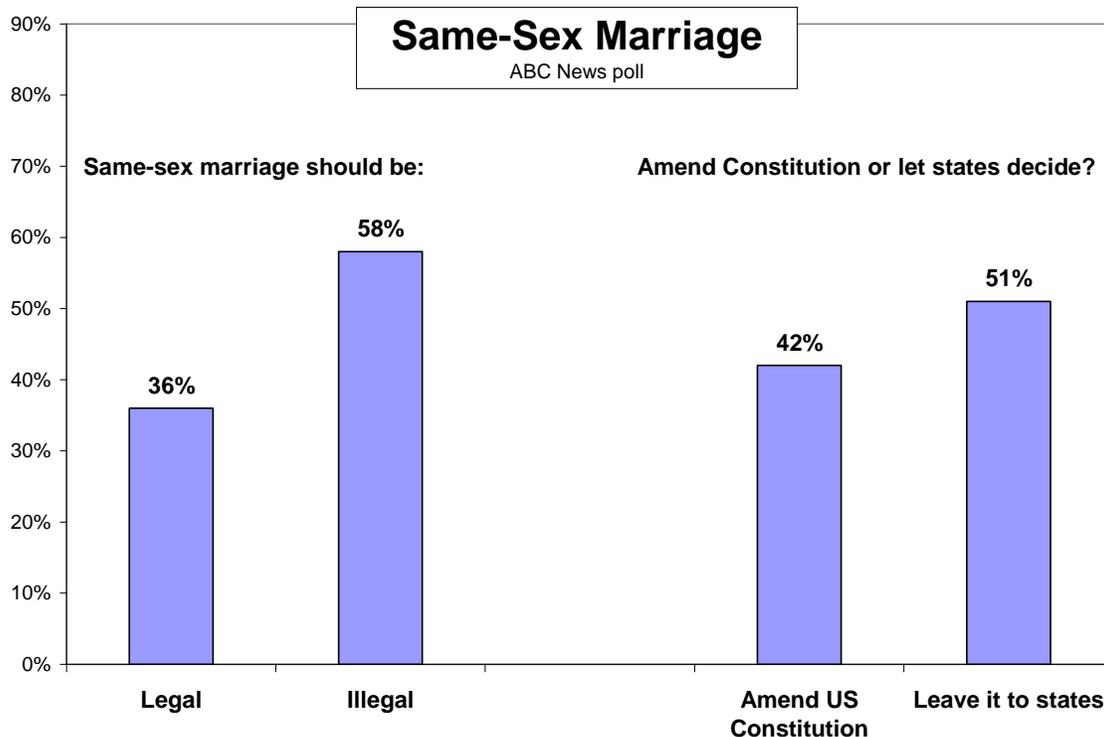


Most Oppose Gay Marriage; Fewer Back an Amendment

Most Americans oppose gay marriage, but markedly fewer – especially outside George W. Bush’s core supporters – would amend the U.S. Constitution to ban it.

Opponents, however, are far more likely to call it a make-or-break issue in their vote for Congress – a finding in this ABC News poll that explains Bush’s renewed push for a gay marriage ban.



Among all Americans, 58 percent say gay marriage should be illegal, but fewer, 42 percent, say it rises to the level of amending the U.S. Constitution. Among conservative Republicans and evangelical white Protestants, though, opposition to gay marriage soars over 85 percent, and two-thirds support a constitutional amendment banning it, a sharp contrast to views in the political center, as well as on the left.

The intensity of these views adds to the political calculation: People who “strongly” oppose gay marriage – 51 percent of the public – outnumber strong supporters by 2-1.

And those strong opponents are nearly three times as likely as other Americans to say they would only vote for a candidate who shares their view on the issue.

Similarly, among people who support a gay marriage amendment, 63 percent say they could only vote for a candidate who agrees with them; among those who oppose an amendment, just 24 percent say the same.

	Could you support a candidate who differed with you on same-sex marriage?	
	Yes	No
Support an amendment	30%	63
Oppose an amendment	68	24
“Strongly” oppose gay marriage	30%	61
All others	71	22

That reality underscores Bush’s positioning. While an amendment banning gay marriage is not broadly popular, it matters most – in a way that potentially could motivate voter turnout – to those in the pro-amendment minority. And voter motivation matters, especially in customarily low-turnout midterm elections.

Bush today held an event expressing his support for an amendment that would prohibit states from recognizing same-sex marriages. The Senate is expected to vote on it this week, and the House in July. It needs two-thirds support in each house – considered unlikely – followed by ratification by at least 38 state legislatures.

TREND – While he supports a ban on gay marriage, Bush has been less specific on gay civil unions; the public overall is more equivocal on those arrangements, with 45 percent saying they should be allowed, 48 percent opposed. Support for civil unions is down slightly from 51 percent in a March 2004 poll, back to its level in earlier polls that year.

Fifty-one percent in this poll say that instead of a constitutional amendment, states should make their own laws on gay marriage; this too is down slightly, from 56 percent in spring 2005 and back near its 2004 levels. The state-level approach has drawn controversy since the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court legalized gay marriages there; they began in 2004. Fifteen other states have banned gay marriages since 2004, and the issue is likely to appear on ballots in six more states this year.

RELIGION – Beyond political affiliation and ideology, some of the most striking differences on this issue depend upon religion and age. Evangelical white Protestants stand out in their opposition to same-sex civil unions (84 percent) and marriages (90 percent) alike, and in their 72-percent support for a constitutional amendment.

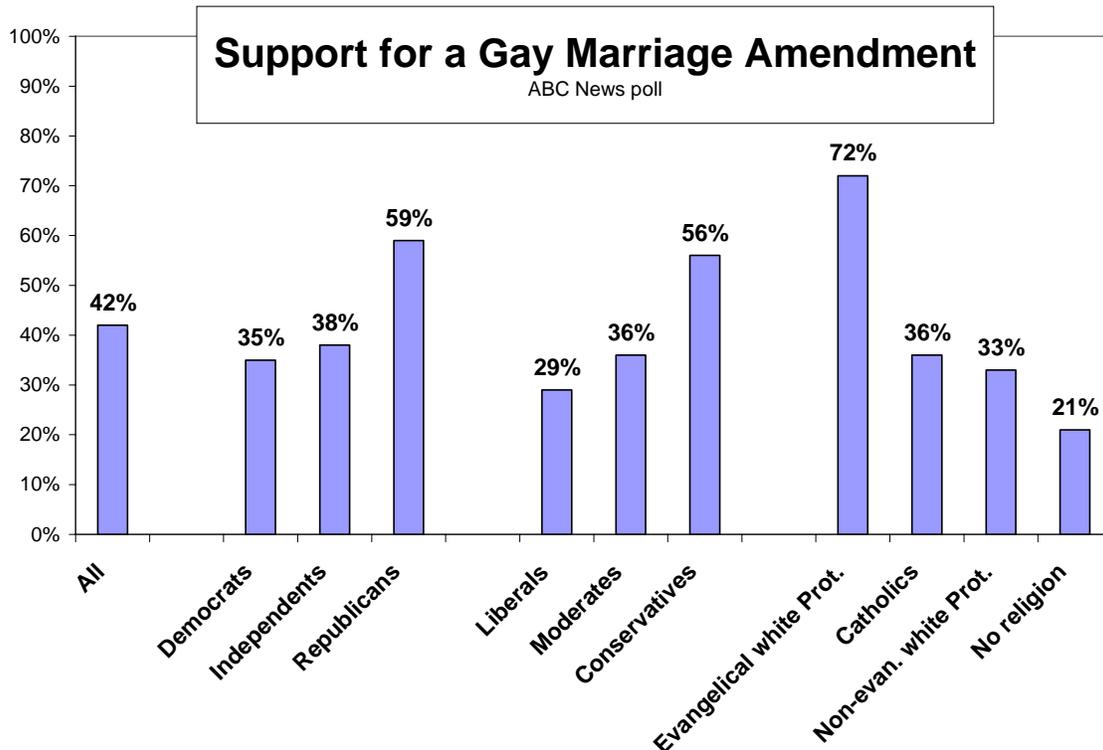
By contrast, civil unions are supported by majorities of non-evangelical Protestants and Catholics, and especially by non-religious Americans. And support for an amendment banning gay marriage drops by nearly 40 points among non-evangelical white Protestants compared with their evangelical counterparts.

	Civil unions		Gay marriage		Amendment	
	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose
White Protestant:						
Evangelical	12%	84	9%	90	72%	25
Non-evangelical	56	37	45	48	33	63
Catholic	53	40	38	55	36	57
No religion	71	24	64	32	21	68

AGE – Younger Americans remain more apt than their elders to support gay civil unions and legalizing gay marriages, and to say laws on the issue should be left up to the states. However, they're the least likely age group to call it a make-or-break issue – 61 percent could vote for a candidate who holds an opposing view.

Seniors, by contrast, are the most opposed of any age group to gay civil unions and marriages – and the most likely to say they'd only vote for a candidate who agrees.

	Civil unions		Gay marriage		Amendment	
	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose
Age 18-34	60%	32	53%	42	33%	62
Age 65+	25	68	15	80	50	38



OTHER GROUPS – All told, support for a constitutional amendment peaks among evangelical white Protestants, conservative Republicans, Republicans overall,

conservatives, Southerners and Americans age 55 and over. Opposition hits its highs not only among liberals, non-religious Americans and Democrats, but also among moderates, independents, non-evangelical white Protestants and Catholics, as well as among those under 35 and residents of the West and Northeast alike.

Women are more apt to support civil unions than men, 51 percent vs. 39 percent, and to support legalizing gay marriage, 41 percent vs. 31 percent. But there's not much difference between the sexes in their views on a gay marriage amendment – 41 percent of women support the idea, as do 43 percent of men.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News poll was conducted by telephone May 31-June 4, 2006, among a random national sample of 1,001 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollvault.html>.

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Full results follow.

1. Do you think homosexual couples should or should not be allowed to form legally recognized civil unions, giving them the legal rights of married couples in areas such as health insurance, inheritance and pension coverage?

	----- Should -----			----- Should not -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
6/4/06	45	28	17	48	7	41	7
3/7/04	51	32	19	46	9	37	3
2/22/04	45	30	16	48	7	41	7
1/18/04	46	NA	NA	51	NA	NA	4
9/7/03	40	NA	NA	51	NA	NA	9

2. Do you think it should be legal or illegal for homosexual couples to get married?

	----- Legal -----			----- Illegal -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
6/4/06	36	24	13	58	7	51	5
8/28/05*	39	NA	NA	58	NA	NA	3
8/29/04 RV	32	18	14	62	10	52	5
3/7/04	38	24	14	59	11	48	3
2/22/04	39	25	13	55	6	49	6
1/18/04	41	NA	NA	55	NA	NA	4
9/7/03	37	NA	NA	55	NA	NA	7

*"gay and lesbian couples"

3. (Would you support amending the U.S. Constitution to make it against the law for homosexual couples to get married anywhere in the U.S.), or (should each state make its own laws on homosexual marriage)?

---Support amendment---	-----State laws-----	No
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	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
6/4/06	42	NA	NA	51	NA	NA	7
4/24/05	39	NA	NA	56	NA	NA	5
8/29/04 RV	44	39	5	51	16	35	5
3/7/04	44	39	5	53	18	35	3
3/7/04*	43	38	5	54	17	36	3
2/22/04*	46	38	8	45	15	31	9
1/18/04*	38	NA	NA	58	NA	NA	3

*"to make it illegal"

4. If you agreed with a candidate for U.S. Congress on other issues, but not on the issue of same-sex marriage, could you still vote for him, or not?

	Could still vote	Could not still vote	No opinion
6/4/06	50	41	9

END