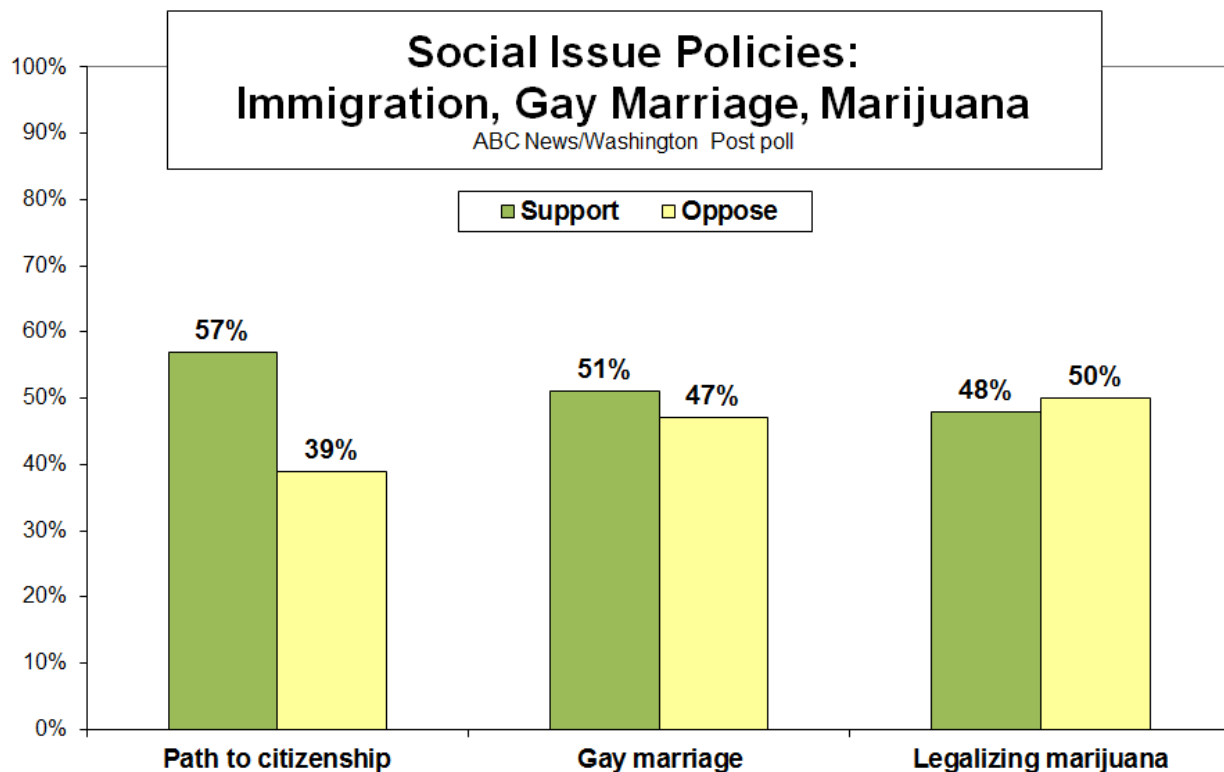


Majority Supports Path to Citizenship; Greater Division on Other Social Issues

Most Americans support a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants, an issue that may be high on the agenda of newly re-elected President Obama and the 113th Congress, given the increased importance of nonwhites – including Hispanic voters – in the nation’s political equation.

On two other prominent social issues in last week’s voting, a bare majority continues to support legalizing gay marriage, and this ABC News/Washington Post poll finds a new high, 48 percent, in support for legalizing small amounts of marijuana for personal use.



A PATH – Fifty-seven percent of Americans in this survey, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), support a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants, with 39 percent opposed. That’s virtually identical to results of a similar question last asked in mid-2010, with support up from its earlier levels, as low as 49 percent in late 2007.

Debate on the issue was heightened by restrictive immigration policies enacted in Arizona in 2010 and Alabama in 2011, and, in June, when Obama moved in another direction, granting

immunity from deportation to many undocumented immigrants who arrived in the country as children.

Hispanics accounted for 10 percent of voters in Tuesday's presidential election, reaching double-digits for the first time, and Obama won them by 71-27 percent, improving on his 2008 margin in this group. In the exit poll, voters overall, by more than 2-1, said illegal immigrants working here should be offered a chance to apply for legal status rather than being deported.

In this survey, support for a path to citizenship peaks at 82 percent among Hispanics, 71 percent among Democrats and liberals alike and 69 percent among young adults, all key Obama groups. Support's at 68 percent among nonwhites overall, compared with 51 percent among non-Hispanic whites. Obama lost white voters by 20 points last week, but won nonwhites -- who accounted for a record 28 percent of the electorate -- by 61 points. It was a record racial gap.

GAY MARRIAGE – Fifty-one percent of Americans support gay marriage, slightly more than half for the fifth time straight in ABC/Post polls since March 2011, and up sharply from its levels in similar questions earlier this decade, as low as 32 percent (of registered voters) in mid-2004.

More in this survey are “opposed” to gay marriage, 47 percent, than said in recent polls that it should be “illegal” (39 percent last May), likely because making something illegal is more punitive than opposing it personally.

While 30 states have constitutionally banned gay marriage, voters approved pro-gay marriage ballot initiatives in Maryland, Maine and Washington last week, and those in Minnesota rejected a constitutional ban on it. Obama announced his personal support for gay marriage in May, saying individual states should decide on its legality.

Last week's exit poll found voters similarly divided, 49-46 percent, on gay marriage. Supporters favored Obama over Mitt Romney by 73-25 percent. And Obama won gay and lesbian voters, 55 percent of the electorate, by 76-22 percent, vs. 70-27 percent in 2008.

Support for gay marriage in this poll tops out at more than three in four liberals and more than six in 10 young adults and Democrats. It's opposed by a broad 81 percent of those who describe themselves as “very conservative,” and by two-thirds of senior citizens.

MARIJUANA – Relaxing restrictions on marijuana met with mixed results on Election Day, approved by voters in Colorado, Washington and Massachusetts, rejected in Arkansas and Oregon.

Americans split by 48-50 percent in this survey on “legalizing the possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use.” Nonetheless that marks a new high in support in polls back to 1985, and the first time opposition has slipped to less than a majority. Support for legalizing marijuana has grown sharply from just 22 percent in 1997.

Despite increased acceptance of the idea, intensity of sentiment is tilted against relaxing marijuana restrictions: Thirty-seven percent are strongly opposed to legalization, vs. 26 percent who strongly support it.

GROUPS – There are sharp differences among generational groups, with support for each item higher among young adults than seniors. There’s also a wide 18-point difference between men and women on gay marriage, as well as racial and ethnic differences on immigration and, on marijuana, a regional gap, with support far lower in the South than elsewhere.

The division between the sexes on gay marriage is especially striking: Women are in favor by 59-38 percent, men opposed by 55-41 percent.

There also are broad divisions across partisan and ideological groups, with support for a path to citizenship, gay marriage and legalizing marijuana alike substantially higher among Democrats and liberals than among Republicans and conservatives. Independents are closer to Democrats in each case.

	----- Support-Oppose -----		
	Path to	Gay	Legalizing
	citizenship	marriage	marijuana
All	57-39%	51-47	48-50
Men	59-39	41-55	52-47
Women	55-39	59-38	45-53
Whites	51-45	51-47	50-48
Blacks	62-33	43-51	54-44
Hispanics	82-17	53-45	34-65
18-29	69-30	66-33	55-45
65+	47-50	31-66	30-67
Northeast	54-40	59-37	52-47
Midwest	55-42	50-49	54-45
South	56-41	45-52	36-62
West	64-33	54-43	60-37
Democrats	71-25	62-35	57-41
Republicans	37-60	31-67	31-69
Independents	59-38	54-43	52-46
Liberals	71-27	77-20	69-29
Moderates	58-38	55-43	50-49
Conserv. NET	47-49	29-68	33-67
Somewhat cons	52-45	38-58	36-64
Very cons	40-55	16-81	28-71

There, however, are some differences between Americans who call themselves “somewhat” conservative compared with those who are “very conservative”; most notably, somewhat

conservatives are 23 points less apt than very conservatives to oppose gay marriage, 58 percent vs. 81 percent.

Moreover, a narrow majority of somewhat conservatives, 52 percent, support a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants, while 55 percent of very conservatives are opposed. That – plus the 60 percent opposition among Republicans – underscores the party’s challenges as it seeks to address its comparatively weak support among Hispanics.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cell phone Nov. 7-11, 2012, among a random national sample of 1,023 adults. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points. The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y., with sampling, data collection and tabulation by SSRS/Social Science Research Solutions of Media, Pa.

Analysis by Gregory Holyk.

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

Media contacts: [David Ford](#), (212) 456-7243, and [Julie Townsend](#), (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow.

1. Do you support or oppose (ITEM)? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

11/11/12 - Summary Table

	---- Support ----			---- Oppose ----			No
	NET	Str	Smwht	NET	Smwht	Str	op.
a. legalizing the possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use	48	26	22	50	13	37	1
b. gay marriage	51	33	17	47	11	35	3
c. a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants	57	30	27	39	12	27	4

Trend:

a. legalizing the possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
11/11/12	48	26	22	50	13	37	1
10/28/10*	43	NA	NA	52	NA	NA	4
1/15/10	46			51			2
4/24/09	46			52			2
10/24/02**	39			53			8
5/27/97	22			75			3
8/26/86	25			74			1
5/19/86	22			77			1
4/28/86	23			75			1
3/24/86	21			78			1
5/13/85	26	"	"	72	"	"	2

**"Favor" or oppose

**Time/CNN: "Do you favor or oppose the legalization of marijuana? (IF FAVOR) What about in small amounts, for example three ounces or less? Do you favor or oppose the legalization of marijuana in small amounts?"

b. gay marriage

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
11/11/12	51	33	17	47	11	35	3

Compare to:

Do you think it should be legal or illegal for gay and lesbian couples to get married? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Legal -----			----- Illegal -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
5/20/12	53	39	14	39	7	32	8
3/10/12	52	36	17	43	7	36	5
7/17/11	51	32	19	45	9	36	4
3/13/11	53	36	17	44	9	35	3
2/8/10	47	31	16	50	9	42	3
4/24/09*	49	31	18	46	7	39	5
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

*2009 "gay and lesbian" and "homosexual" wordings half sampled. 2005 "gay and lesbian"

c. a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
11/11/12	57	30	27	39	12	27	4

Compare to:

Would you support or oppose a program giving ILLEGAL immigrants now living in the United States the right to live here LEGALLY if they pay a fine and meet other requirements?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
6/6/10	57	40	3
4/24/09	61	35	3
12/19/07	49	46	5
11/1/07	51	44	4
6/1/07	52	44	4

*** END ***