

Opposition to gay marriage lower in 2012 campaign

by [Adelle M. Banks](#) in the [May 30, 2012](#) issue

Opposition to gay marriage is significantly lower in 2012 compared to the previous two presidential campaigns, a survey by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press shows.

For the first time, the level of strong support for gay marriage is equal to the level of strong opposition, researchers report. In the April 4–15 survey, 22 percent of Americans say they strongly favor permitting legal marriage for gays and lesbians; an identical percentage said they strongly oppose it. In 2008, strong opposition was twice as high as support—30 percent versus 14 percent.

In 2004, when a host of antigay marriage ballot measures helped propel social conservatives to the polls, opposition was more than three times higher than support, 36 percent to 11 percent.

In comparison to the changes in views on gay marriage, not much has changed concerning support for legal abortion. In 2009, fewer than 50 percent of Americans favored legal abortion, but that support rebounded to more than half of the U.S. population and has generally followed trends dating to 1995.

This time around, as in recent election cycles, voters say social issues—such as gay marriage and abortion—are not as important as the economy and jobs. While more than 80 percent of Americans cite the economy and jobs as top voting issues, far fewer rated abortion (39 percent) and gay marriage (28 percent) as very important.

The survey on gay marriage was based on interviews with 1,514 U.S. adults and had a margin of error of plus or minus 2.9 percentage points. —RNS