

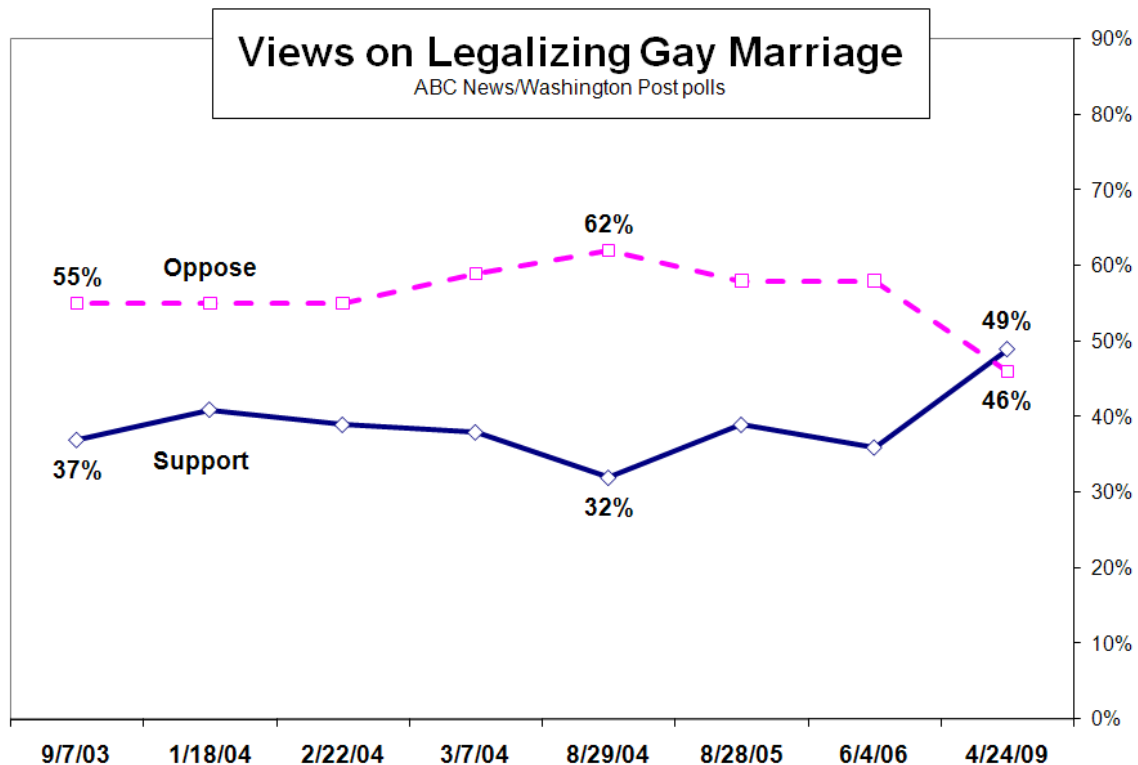
## Changing Views on Social Issues: Allemande Left. Allemande Right

Support for gay marriage, legalizing illegal immigrants and decriminalizing marijuana all are at new highs. Three-quarters of Americans favor federal regulation of greenhouse gases. Two-thirds support establishing relations with Cuba.

But hold tight.

If some views that may be perceived as liberal are ascendant, so are some conservative ones: Opposition to gun control also is at a new high in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll. There's continued broad support for tighter border controls. And contrary to President Obama, half of Americans wouldn't flatly rule out torturing terrorism suspects.

It's a country, in short, in which no fixed ideological orthodoxy holds sway, and attitudes on hot-button issues can and do shift over time – sometimes in surprising ways.



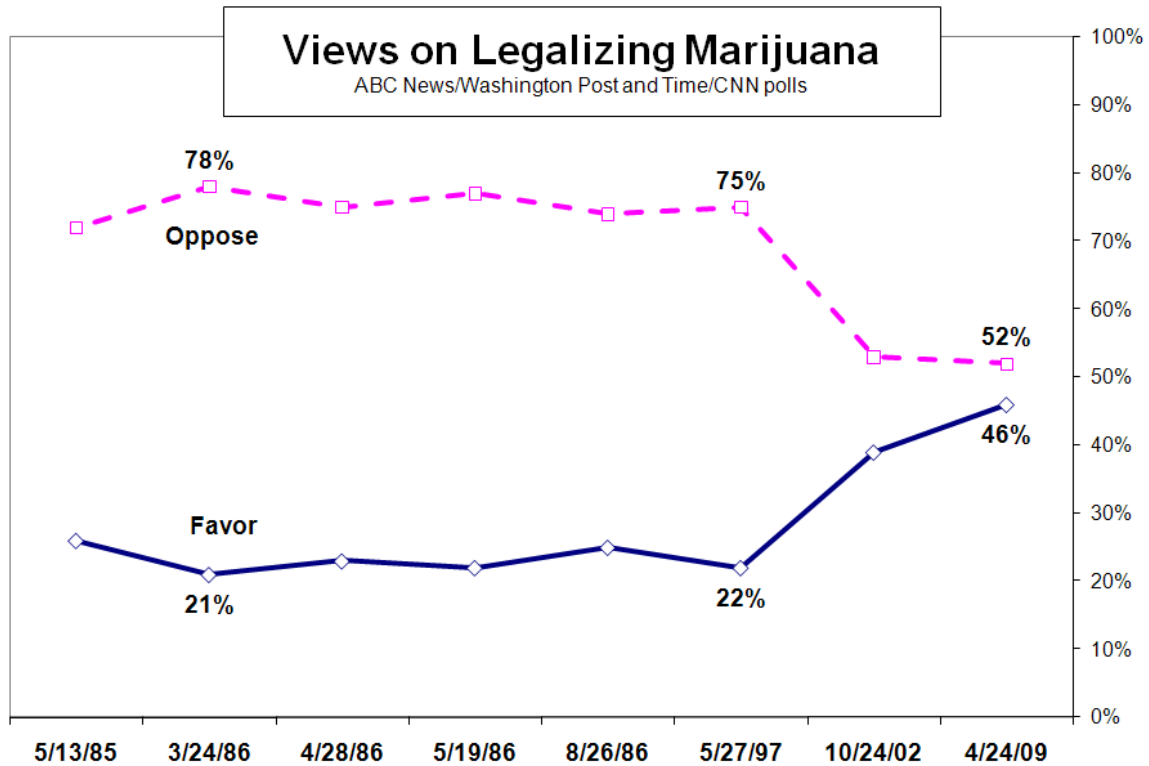
Take gay marriage, legal in Massachusetts, Connecticut and now Iowa, with Vermont coming aboard in September. At its low, in 2004, just 32 percent of Americans favored

gay marriage, with 62 percent opposed. Now 49 percent support it, vs. 46 percent opposed – the first time in ABC/Post polls that supporters have outnumbered opponents.

More than half, moreover – 53 percent – say a gay marriage held legally in another state should be recognized as legal in their own state.

The surprise is that the shift has occurred across ideological groups. While conservatives are least apt to favor gay marriage, they’ve gone from 10 percent support in 2004 to 19 percent in 2006 and 30 percent now – overall a 20-point, threefold increase, alongside a 13-point gain among liberals and 14 points among moderates. (Politically, support for gay marriage has risen sharply among Democrats and independents alike, while far more slightly among Republicans.)

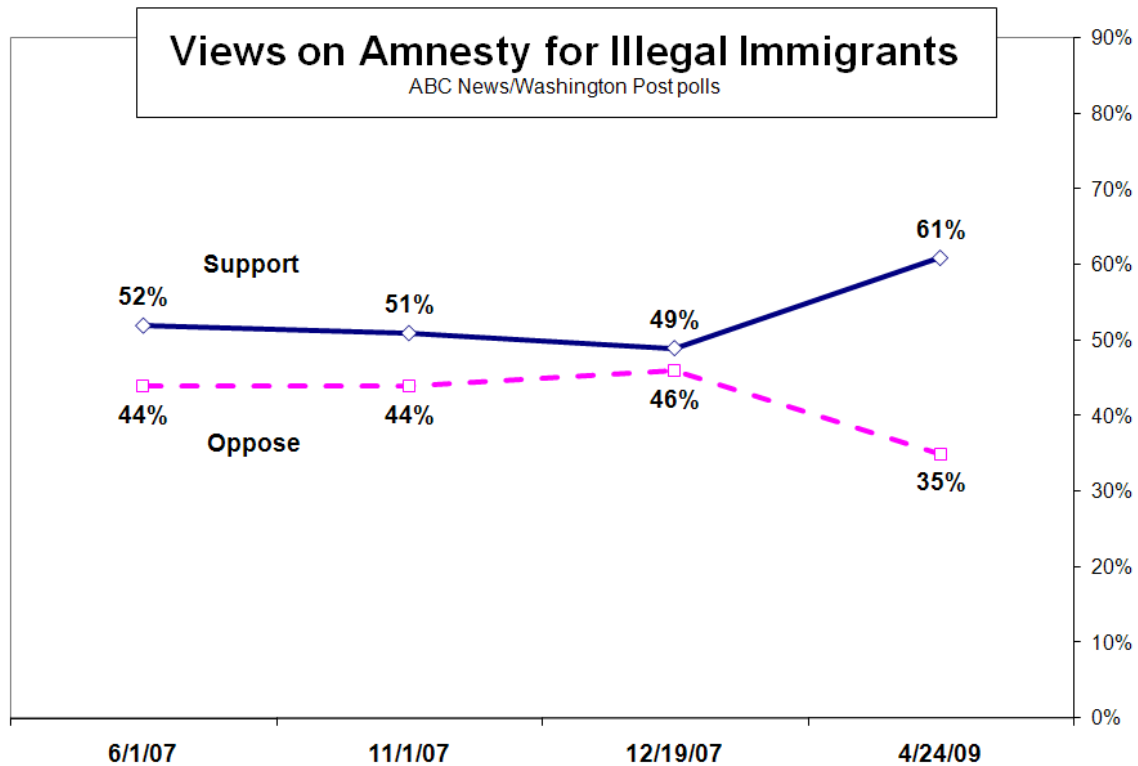
**FIRST LEAN LEFT** – On an entirely different issue, 46 percent of Americans now favor legalizing small amounts of marijuana for personal use, the most in data back to the mid-1980s and more than double its level 12 years ago. While 52 percent remain opposed, that’s down from 75 percent in the late 1990s and 78 percent in 1986.



The biggest changes in the past two decades are 29- and 27-point advances in support for legalization among Democrats and independents, to 49 and 53 percent, respectively. The slightest: a 10-point gain among Republicans, to just 28 percent support.

In another new high, 61 percent now support giving illegal immigrants “the right to live here legally if they pay a fine and meet other requirements.” That’s up from 49 percent in

2007 to a substantial majority for the first time. In this case support is up more sharply among Republicans, a 17-point gain to 59 percent, than among Democrats, up 9 points to 68 percent. It's up 14 points among independents.



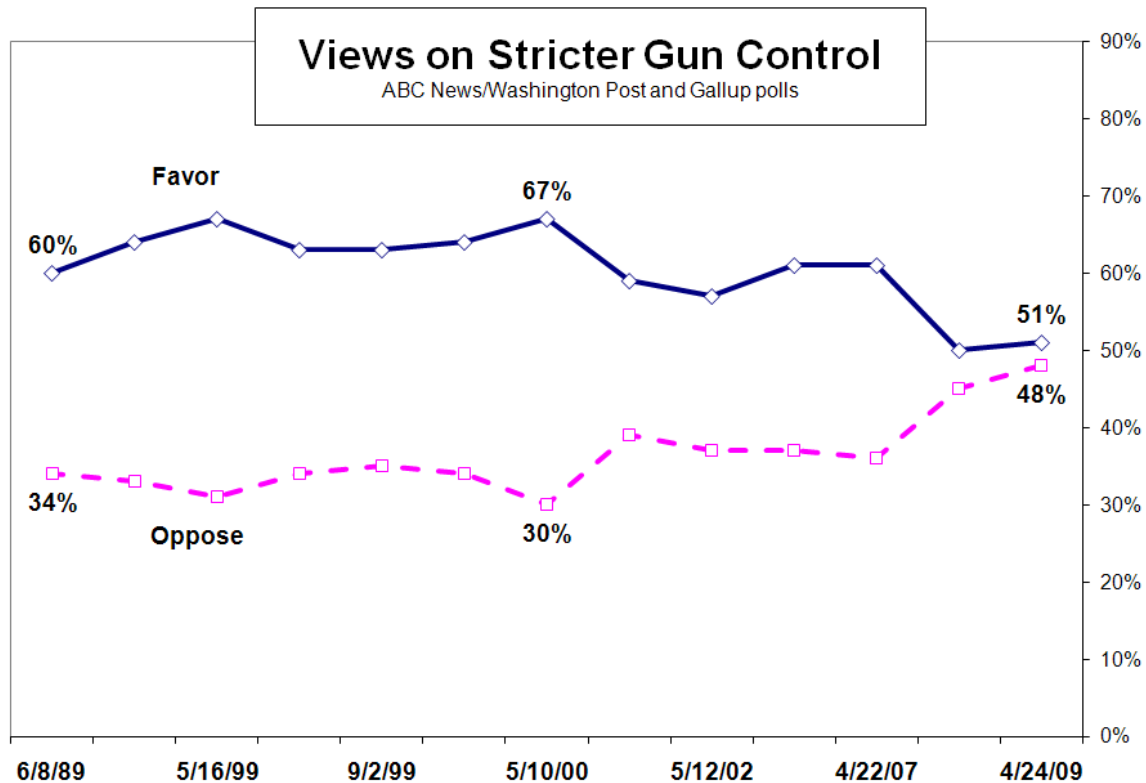
And on global warming, a new question finds 75 percent support for federal controls on the release of greenhouse gases in an effort to reduce global warming; indeed a substantial 54 percent support it “strongly.” The Environmental Protection Agency moved in this direction this month, declaring these emissions a threat.

Regulation wins support even though 77 percent express concern about its impact on the cost of things they buy. Indeed even among those who are “very” concerned about the cost impact, two-thirds support the regulation of greenhouse gases nonetheless.

**THEN TO THE RIGHT** – Other views tilt more to the right. Just 51 percent in this poll support the general principle of “stricter gun control laws,” about the same as last September (50 percent) and down sharply from its peak, 67 percent in mid-2000. The 48 percent now opposed to gun control is the most in polls dating to 1989, and the number “strongly” opposed, at 36 percent, its highest in that time.

The greatest change is a 26-point drop in support for gun control among Republicans, to 31 percent, and a 21-point drop among independents, to 46 percent. Support among Democrats is down by a far milder 7 points, to 69 percent.

Support also is down very steeply among the four in 10 Americans who live in gun-owning households: Fifty-two percent of gun owners supported stricter gun control in 2000; just 29 percent do now.



There are changes in related views as well. For the first time in ABC/Post polls a clear majority of Americans, 57 percent, don't think stricter gun laws would in fact reduce violent crime. And 61 percent – a new high, and again the first substantial majority – say enforcement of existing gun laws would accomplish more than passing new, stricter ones.

On immigration, while support for a path to citizenship is up, interest in greater border control remains high and strong. Seventy-four percent say the United States is not doing enough to keep illegal immigrants out of the country; 59 percent feel “strongly” about it.

Two others issues, covered in separate analyses earlier this week, round out the mixed ideological message. On one hand two-thirds of Americans favor diplomatic relations with Cuba, and more than half support open trade and travel – views that might be seen as less conservative. At the same time the number who side with Obama’s ban on the torture of terrorism suspects in all cases has declined from 58 percent in January to 49 percent now – a move, in this case, toward the more conservative viewpoint.

**MORE MARRIAGE** – Of all these issues, the divisions – and changes – on gay marriage are especially striking. In addition to more support, there’s been a shift in intensity of views: Compared with three years ago, the number of Americans “strongly” opposed has

declined from 51 percent to 39 percent, while the number strongly in favor of gay marriage has advanced from 24 percent to 31 percent.

Polarization is especially broad along political, ideological and religious lines. Seventy-five percent of evangelical white Protestants say gay marriage should be illegal, and 68 percent feel that way strongly. Similarly, 83 percent of conservative Republicans are opposed, 73 percent strongly. Among all conservatives regardless of political affiliation, 66 percent are opposed.

Across the spectrum, 75 percent of secular Americans favor gay marriage, 55 percent strongly; so do 71 percent of liberal Democrats, 57 percent strongly; and 71 percent of all liberals, 54 percent strongly. Among all Democrats, 62 percent are in favor; among all Republicans, 74 percent are opposed.

The middle makes a significant difference: Fifty-four percent of moderates and 52 percent of independents now favor gay marriage, up from 38 and 44 percent, respectively, in 2006. But the single biggest shift has come among moderate and conservative Democrats: in 2006, just 30 percent in this group said gay marriage should be legal. Today it's 57 percent.

One other very pronounced difference is by age: Sixty-six percent of adults under age 30 support gay marriage. That drops to 48 percent of adults age 30 to 64 – and plummets to just 28 percent among senior citizens.

Here's a thumbnail of current views on more of these issues:

POT - Support for legalizing small amounts of marijuana for personal use is nearly twice as high among young adults (57 percent of those under 30) as seniors (30 percent), with middle-aged Americans split about evenly. Nearly six in 10 liberals like the idea; just 36 percent of conservatives agree. Politically, more independents are in favor (53-44 percent), Democrats divide evenly and Republicans broadly are opposed, 28-69 percent. Support's highest of all among people who express no religious preference, 70 percent; and lowest among evangelical white Protestants, 24 percent.

GREENHOUSE – While majorities across the board support government regulation of greenhouse gases, it peaks among liberals (88 percent) and under 30s (80 percent), vs. 61 percent of conservatives and 64 percent of seniors. Support also ranges from 85 percent of Democrats, 65 percent “strongly,” to 64 percent of Republicans, 39 percent strongly. Concern about its cost is broader, and stronger, among those who'd presumably be hit hardest – lower-income adults.

IMMIGRATION – In another difference by age, 85 percent of senior citizens say the U.S. isn't doing enough to keep illegal immigrants from coming into the country; that eases to a still-substantial 65 percent of under 30s. And support for a path to citizenship for illegals is 31 points higher among under 30s than it is among seniors, 73 percent vs. 42 percent.

Seven in 10 liberals and 68 percent of Democrats support an amnesty program. But so do majorities of Republicans and independents (59 percent in both cases), moderates (63 percent) and conservatives (56 percent) alike.

GUNS – Six in 10 women and seven in 10 African-Americans favor stricter gun laws; that falls to 41 percent of men and 47 percent of whites; women and blacks also are much more apt to think such laws will reduce crime, while men and whites are more likely to see enforcement of existing laws as preferable to passing new ones. As noted, there are vast partisan gaps in views of gun control, as well as ideological ones.

TORTURE – About two-thirds of Democrats (65 percent) and liberals (67 percent) alike support Obama’s blanket ban on torture, while only three in 10 Republicans (30 percent) and conservatives (31 percent) agree. There’s greater division in the political center: Moderates are in favor of the ban by 56-41 percent; independents less supportive, 45-52 percent. Women oppose torture in all cases, 56-42 percent, while views among men are exactly the reverse, 42-56 percent.

CUBA – On Cuba the biggest gaps again are political and ideological. Support for establishing diplomatic relations with Cuba peaks among liberal Democrats at 84 percent, and falls to half as many conservative Republicans, 42 percent.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone April 21-24, 2009, among a random national sample of 1,072 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents and an oversample of African-Americans (weighted to their correct share of the national population). Results for the full sample have a 3-point error margin; click [here](#) for a detailed description of sampling error. 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/pollingunit>

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow (\*= less than 0.5 percent).

1-25 previously released or held for release.

26. Do you think the United States government should or should not establish diplomatic relations with Cuba?

	Should	Should not	No opinion
4/24/09	66	27	6
2/24/08*	61	29	10
12/10/06*	67	27	6
3/11/04*	55	38	7
7/27/03**	48	36	16
5/12/02***	47	45	9
4/6/00	47	49	4
1/13/98	38	56	6

\*Gallup: "Do you favor or oppose re-establishing U.S. diplomatic relations with Cuba?"

\*\*CBS: "Do you think the United States should or should not establish diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba?"

\*\*\*ABC/Post 2002 and previous: "As you may know, the United States broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba after it became a communist country under Fidel Castro in 1959. The U.S. also imposed travel restrictions and a trade embargo, which means U.S. companies cannot do business in Cuba and Cuban companies cannot do business here..."

27. (ASKED OF HALF SAMPLE) Do you think the United States should or should not end the trade embargo, and allow U.S. companies to do business in Cuba and Cuban companies to do business here?

	Should	Should not	No opinion
4/24/09	57	36	7
5/12/02	44	48	8
4/6/00	47	47	6
1/13/98	35	58	7

28. (ASKED OF HALF SAMPLE) Do you think the U.S. government should or should not end its travel restrictions, and allow U.S. citizens to visit Cuba and Cubans to visit the United States?

	Should	Should not	No opinion
4/24/09	55	40	5
5/12/02	49	45	6
4/6/00	58	38	4
1/13/98	49	46	5

29. Obama has said that under his administration the United States will not use torture as part of the U.S. campaign against terrorism, no matter what the circumstance. Do you support this position not to use torture, or do you think there are cases in which the United States should consider torture against terrorism suspects?

	Support not using torture	There are cases to consider torture	No opinion
4/24/09	49	48	2
1/16/09	58	40	2

30-31 previously released.

32. On another subject, do you think the federal government should or should not regulate the release of greenhouse gases from sources like power plants, cars and factories in an effort to reduce global warming? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	Should			Should not			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
4/24/09	75	54	21	21	9	12	4

33. How concerned are you that federal regulation of greenhouse gases could substantially raise the price of things you have to pay for - very concerned, somewhat concerned, not so concerned or not concerned at all?

---- Concerned --- --- Not concerned --- No

	NET	Very	Smwht	NET	Not so	At all	opinion
4/24/09	77	36	41	22	14	8	1

34-37 previously released.

38. Do you favor or oppose stricter gun control laws in this country? Is that strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?

	----- Favor -----			----- Oppose -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
4/24/09	51	36	14	48	12	36	1
9/7/08 RV	50	31	19	45	14	30	5
4/22/07	61	41	20	36	12	23	3
10/8/06	61	45	16	37	15	22	2
5/12/02	57	39	19	37	15	22	6
1/15/01	59	46	13	39	13	26	2
5/10/00	67	50	17	30	9	22	3
4/2/00	64	49	14	34	13	21	2
9/2/99	63	52	11	35	11	25	2
8/15/99	63	46	16	34	12	22	3
5/16/99	67	55	12	31	10	21	1
10/13/93*	64	40	24	33	13	20	3
6/8/89*	60	28	32	34	11	23	6

\*Gallup: "Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose enacting tougher gun control laws?"

39. (ASKED OF HALF SAMPLE) Do you think stricter gun control laws would reduce the amount of violent crime in this country, or not? (IF YES) Would it reduce it a lot, or just somewhat?

	----- Reduce -----				
	NET	A lot	Somewhat	Not reduce	No opinion
4/24/09	42	24	18	57	2
4/22/07	49	27	21	50	2
4/2/00	51	24	26	48	2
9/2/99	50	30	21	48	1

40. (ASKED OF HALF SAMPLE) What do you think is the best way to reduce gun violence in this country - (by passing stricter gun control laws), or (by stricter enforcement of existing laws)?

	Passing new laws	Enforcing existing laws	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
4/24/09	27	61	5	4	2
4/22/07	29	52	9	8	1
4/2/00	33	53	7	5	2

41. On another subject, do you think it should be legal or illegal for gay and lesbian/homosexual couples to get married? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Legal -----			----- Illegal -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
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", others "homosexual".

42. If a gay or lesbian couple gets legally married in another state, do you think that marriage should or should not be recognized as legal in your state?

	Should be	Should not be	No opinion
4/24/09	53	43	4

43. Do you think the United States is or is not doing enough to keep illegal immigrants from coming into this country? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	-- Doing enough ---			-Not doing enough -			No
	NET	Strg.	Smwt.	NET	Smwt.	Strg.	opinion
4/24/09	23	11	12	74	15	59	3
4/15/07	17	8	10	81	18	63	2
5/14/06	20	9	11	77	19	58	4
4/9/06	21	7	14	75	19	56	4
12/18/05	20	8	12	79	20	59	2
8/28/05	19	11	9	80	18	62	1
1/16/05	20	9	11	77	18	58	4

44. 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
4/24/09	61	35	3
12/19/07	49	46	5
11/1/07	51	44	4
6/1/07	52	44	4

45. In general, do you favor or oppose legalizing the possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use?

	Favor	Oppose	No opinion
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

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

46. Do you or does anyone in your house own a gun, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
4/24/09	41	58	*
6/15/08	42	58	*
4/22/07	45	55	0

10/8/06	42	58	*
10/20/02	41	59	*
5/10/00	45	55	*
4/2/00	43	56	*
9/2/99	44	56	*
5/16/99	46	53	*

\*\*\*END\*\*\*