

**The Presidential Election, Same-Sex Marriage, and the Economy**  
 May 11-13, 2012

- The race for president remains close, but Republican Mitt Romney now has a three-point lead over President Obama, despite positive movement on the economy.
- 32% say the economy is in good shape – the highest percentage since January 2008 – but most (67%) still say it’s bad. 36% say the economy is improving.
- While most voters say the President’s support of same-sex marriage will not impact their vote, 25% say they are less likely to vote for him because of it.
- Most Americans favor some type of legal recognition of same-sex relationships, including 38% who support marriage. When asked directly whether same-sex marriage should be legal or not, 42% say it should be, but 51% say it should not.

Presumptive Republican nominee Mitt Romney now has a three-point edge over President Barack Obama (a lead that’s within the poll’s margin of error) in a head to head match-up. The race was dead even last month. 46% of registered voters say they would vote for Romney if the election were held today, while 43% would back the President. Slightly more are undecided now (7%) compared to last month (3%).

**Who Would You Vote for if the Candidates Were...?**

(Among registered voters)

	Now	4/2012	3/2012	2/2012	1/18/2012	1/9/2012
Barack Obama	43%	46%	47%	48%	45%	45%
Mitt Romney	46	46	44	42	45	47

In the days after President Obama publicly stated his support for same-sex marriage, more than half of voters say the presidential candidates’ views on same-sex marriage will have no effect on their vote choice, but 25% are less likely to vote for the President because of his support of same-sex marriage (many of them are Republicans). Fewer -- 16% -- are more likely to back him because if it.

23% of voters say they are more likely to support Romney because of his stance on the issue, while 17% are less likely to vote for him.

**Impact of Candidate Same-Sex Marriage Views on Vote Choice**

(Among registered voters)

	Obama’s support of same-sex marriage	Romney’s opposition to same-sex marriage
More likely	16%	23%
Less likely	25	17
No effect	58	59

Among independent voters, whose votes are up for grabs this year, most would be unswayed by either candidate's position on the issue either.

**Independents: Impact of Candidate Same-Sex Marriage Views on Vote Choice**

	(Among registered voters who are independents)	
	Obama's support of same-sex marriage	Romney's opposition to same-sex marriage
More likely	14%	20%
Less likely	22	20
No effect	63	59

Romney now leads the President among independents; they were nearly tied among this group last month. Obama beats Romney among moderates. Both candidates continue to perform well with their political base: the President gets solid support from Democrats and liberals, while Romney is running strong with Republicans and conservatives. More than seven in 10 white evangelicals are backing Romney – similar to last month.

**Who Would You Vote for if the Candidates Were...?**

	(Among registered voters)			
	---- Now ----		---- April ----	
	Obama	Romney	Obama	Romney
Total	43%	46	46%	46%
Men	42%	45	43%	49
Women	44%	46	49%	43
< Age 45	46%	44	50%	42
Age 45+	41%	47	43%	49
Reps	5%	91	4%	90
Dems	84%	10	87%	11
Inds	36%	43	41%	42
Liberal	89%	10	82%	16
Moderate	50%	39	55%	35
Conservative	8%	75	17%	73
White evangelicals	20%	74	21%	73

There is skepticism about the President's motivations for publicly supporting same sex-marriage. Two in three Americans think President Obama did so for political reasons; just 24% think he mostly did so because he thinks it is right. Majorities of Republicans and independents say the President's public statement on the issue was politically motivated, while Democrats are more divided.

**Pres. Obama Publicly Supported Same-Sex Marriage Because...**

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
He thinks it is right	24%	8%	42%	20%
For political reasons	67	86	48	70

## Public Opinion on Same-Sex Unions

Most Americans support some type of legal recognition for same-sex couples, although not necessarily through marriage. 38% think they should be allowed to legally marry, and a quarter support civil unions without legal marriage. 33% think there should be no legal recognition for such couples. These views have been consistent for the past few years; prior to that, support for same sex marriage was lower.

### Same-Sex Couples...

	Now	2/2012	9/2011	4/2010	3/2009	6/2006	7/2005	7/2004
Should be allowed to marry	38%	40%	38%	39%	33%	27%	27%	28%
Should be allowed civil unions	24	23	27	24	27	30	27	31
Should have no legal recognition	33	31	28	30	35	40	43	38

However, when asked directly whether same sex marriage should be legal, just over half say it should not be. 42% think it should be legal, but more, 51%, say it should not be legal. Views divide along partisan lines: 81% of Republicans think it should not be legal, while 63% of Democrats think it should be legal. Independents are more divided, but tend to think it should not be legal.

### Same-Sex Marriage Should Be...?

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
Legal	42%	13%	63%	43%
Not legal	51	81	25	53

Younger Americans are more apt to support allowing these couples to marry, and more likely to say same-sex marriage should be legal.

### Views on Same-Sex Relationships by Age

	Age 18-44	Age 45+
Same-sex couples:		
Should be allowed to marry	53%	24%
Should be allowed civil unions, but not marry	17	31
Should have no legal recognition	30	36
Same-sex marriage should be:		
Legal	55%	31%
Not legal	44	56

Half the public supports an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow marriage only between a man and a woman. Again, views vary according to partisanship.

### Constitutional Amendment Making Marriage Only Between Man and Woman

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
Favor	50%	70%	36%	50%
Oppose	46	26	59	47

Most support allowing states to decide whether same-sex marriage should be legal or not, and just a third thinks the federal government ought to decide. Republicans and independents think this issue should be decided by state governments, while Democrats are divided.

### Who Should Decide?

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
Federal government	32%	27%	43%	27%
State governments	57	63	43	66

Majorities of Americans say they have a colleague, close friend or relative who is gay or lesbian (70%), or have a friend or family member in a committed or married same-sex relationship (60%). Those who know someone in a committed same-sex relationship, are more likely to support same-sex marriage, favor making it legal, and oppose a Constitutional amendment defining marriage as between a man and a woman.

### The Economy Remains the Top Issue for Voters

While the issue of same-sex marriage may be dominating much of the current political discussion, the economy remains the most important issue to voters in the Presidential election. When asked to choose from a list of six issues, 62% pick the economy and jobs as most important in their vote for President. The budget deficit is a distant second (11%), followed by health care (9%). Only 7% pick same-sex marriage, but that issue does come out ahead of foreign policy (4%) and immigration (2%).

### Most Important Issue in the Presidential Election

(Among registered voters)

Economy and jobs	62%
Federal budget deficit	11
Health care	9
Same-sex marriage	7
Foreign policy	4
Immigration	2

Among voters who choose the economy as the most important issue in their vote, 44% pick health care as their second most important issue, followed by the budget deficit with 28%. Only 3% of these voters choose same-sex marriage.

32% of Americans now think the economy is in good shape, up slightly from last month, when 27% said that. However more than twice as many, 67%, think it is bad. This is the most positive Americans have been about the economy since January 2008.

### Rating the Economy

	Now	4/2012	3/2012	1/2012	1/2008
Good	32%	27%	22%	21%	38%
Bad	67	70	75	79	61

36% think the economy is improving, the highest that number has been in two years. 24% think it is getting worse.

### Economy is...

	Now	4/2012	3/2012	1/2012	9/2011	4/2011	1/2011	9/2010	4/2010
Getting better	36%	33%	30%	28%	12%	23%	30%	22%	41%
Getting worse	24	28	24	23	43	39	21	30	15
Staying the same	39	38	44	49	44	38	46	48	43

## The President

The President's job approval rating in this poll is 50%, while 48% disapprove. With the exception of just after the killing of Osama bin Laden, 50% is the highest his approval rating has been in the last two years.

	<b>President Obama's Job Approval Rating</b>						
	Now	4/2012	2/2012	1/2012	5/2011	11/2010	4/2010
Approve	50%	48%	50%	47%	57%	45%	51%
Disapprove	48	42	43	45	37	45	39

Overall opinions of both the presidential candidates are not especially positive, and similar to what they were last month. Voters are divided in their views of President Obama, while opinions of Romney are more negative than positive. Many voters continue to be undecided about Romney or haven't heard enough about him to have an opinion.

	<b>Overall Views of the Candidates</b>			
	(Among registered voters)			
	Obama		Romney	
	Now	April	Now	April
Favorable	45%	42%	31%	29%
Unfavorable	45	45	38	34
Undecided	9	11	19	22
Haven't heard enough	2	2	12	15

---

This poll was conducted by telephone on May 11-13, 2012 among 615 adults nationwide, including 562 registered voters, who were first interviewed for a CBS News/New York Times Poll conducted April 13-17, 2012. Phone numbers were dialed from samples of both standard land-line and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus four percentage points. The margin of error for the sample of registered voters is four percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher. This poll release conforms to the Standards of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

**CBS NEWS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL**  
**The Presidential Election, Same-Sex Marriage, and the Economy**  
**May 11-13, 2012**

rq1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				Apr12a
	Total	*** Party ID ***			
	%	Rep %	Dem %	Ind %	%
Approve	50	10	79	50	48
Disapprove	48	90	17	46	42
DK/NA	2	0	4	4	10

rq2 How would you rate the condition of the national economy these days? Is it very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or very bad?

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Apr12a
Very good	1	0	3	0	1
Fairly good	31	12	50	28	26
Fairly bad	39	45	33	39	41
Very bad	28	42	13	32	29
DK/NA	1	0	2	1	3

rq20 Do you think the economy is getting better, getting worse, or staying about the same?

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Apr12a
Better	36	7	60	34	33
Worse	24	40	12	23	28
Same	39	53	28	39	38
DK/NA	2	0	0	4	1

rq3 If the 2012 presidential election were being held today and the candidates were Barack Obama, the Democrat, and Mitt Romney, the Republican, would you vote for Barack Obama or Mitt Romney?

	** REGISTERED VOTERS **				
Obama	43	5	84	36	46
Romney	46	91	10	43	46
Other (Vol.)	3	3	0	7	2
Won't vote (Vol.)	1	0	0	2	3
Depends (Vol.)	3	0	1	6	1
Don't know/No answer	4	1	4	6	2

rq4 In deciding who you would like to see elected President this year, which one of the following issues will be most important to you - 1. foreign policy, 2. the economy and jobs, 3. health care, 4. immigration, 5. the federal budget deficit, 6. same-sex marriage or 7. something else?

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
The economy and jobs	62	60	67	58
The federal budget deficit	11	17	4	13
Health care	9	7	12	9
Same-sex marriage	7	6	8	6
Foreign policy	4	2	5	6
Immigration	2	2	0	5
Something else	3	4	4	2
DK/NA	2	2	0	1

rq5 And which one of the following issues will be the next most important to you in deciding who you would like to see elected President this year - 1. foreign policy, 2. the economy and jobs, 3. health care, 4. immigration, 5. the federal budget deficit, 6. same-sex marriage or 7. something else?

\* REGISTERED VOTERS WHO PICKED ECONOMY IN RQ4 \*

	%
Health care	44
The federal budget deficit	28
Foreign policy	9
The economy and jobs	6
Immigration	5
Same-sex marriage	3
Something else	4
DK/NA	1

rq6 Is your opinion of Barack Obama favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Barack Obama yet to have an opinion?

\*\* REGISTERED VOTERS \*\*

	Total %	Rep %	Dem %	Ind %	Apr12a %
Favorable	45	9	83	37	42
Not favorable	45	86	7	48	45
Undecided	9	5	7	14	11
Haven't heard enough	2	1	4	0	2
Refused	0	0	0	1	0

rq7 Is your opinion of Mitt Romney favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Mitt Romney yet to have an opinion?

Favorable	31	60	8	29	29
Not favorable	38	8	57	45	34
Undecided	19	23	23	11	22
Haven't heard enough	12	8	12	15	15
Refused	0	1	0	0	0

rq8 Which comes closest to your view? 1. Gay couples should be allowed to legally marry., 2. Gay couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not legally marry., or 3. There should be no legal recognition of a gay

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

Allowed to legally marry	38	9	58	39	40
Allowed to form civil unions	24	37	17	23	23
No legal recognition	33	49	19	35	31
DK/NA	5	5	6	3	6

rq9 BLANK

rq10 Does Barack Obama's support of same-sex marriage make you more likely to vote for him, less likely to vote for him, or wouldn't it affect how you will vote one way or another?

\*\*\* REGISTERED VOTERS \*\*\*  
 \*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
More likely	16	2	29	14
Less likely	25	43	12	22
No effect	58	53	58	63
DK/NA	1	2	1	1

rq11 Does Mitt Romney's opposition to same-sex marriage make you more likely to vote for him, less likely to vote for him, or wouldn't it affect how you will vote one way or another?

More likely	23	40	11	20
Less likely	17	2	28	20
No effect	59	57	60	59
DK/NA	1	1	1	1

rq12 Do you think that Barack Obama publicly supported same-sex marriage mostly because he thinks it is right, or mostly for political reasons?

	**	TOTAL	RESPONDENTS	**
What is right	24	8	42	20
Political reasons	67	86	48	70
Both equally (vol.)	2	2	3	2
DK/NA	7	4	7	8

rq13 If you had to decide, do you think it should be legal or not legal for same sex couples to marry?

Legal	42	13	63	43
Not legal	51	81	25	53
DK/NA	7	7	12	4

rq14 Would you favor or oppose an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow marriage only between a man and a woman?

					May04a
					%
Favor	50	70	36	50	60
Oppose	46	26	59	47	37
DK/NA	4	4	5	3	3

rq15 Do you think laws regarding whether same-sex marriage is legal or not should be determined by the federal government or left to each individual state government to decide?

Federal government	32	27	43	27
State governments	57	63	43	66
Both (vol.)	1	0	1	1
DK/NA	9	10	13	6



rq16-19 BLANK

rq21 Do you have a work colleague, close friend, or relative who is gay or lesbian?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	*** Party ID ***				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	May10c
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	69	63	75	69	63
No	28	33	25	28	35
I am (vol.)	1	0	1	2	--
DK/NA	2	4	0	1	2

rq22 Do you have a gay or lesbian friend or family member who is married or in a committed same-sex relationship, or not?

	*HAVE GAY COLLEAGUE, FRIEND, OR RELATIVE*			
Yes	59	63	52	63
No	39	35	45	36
I am gay/committed (vol.)	1	1	1	0
DK/NA	1	0	2	1

	<u>Unweighted</u>	<u>Weighted</u>	
Total Respondents	615		
Total Republicans	175	156	(25%)
Total Democrats	202	208	(34%)
Total Independents	238	251	(41%)
Total Registered Voters	562	499	
Reg. Voters - Republicans	169	150	(30%)
Reg. Voters - Democrats	185	178	(36%)
Reg. Voters - Independents	208	171	(34%)