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Update on Same-Sex Marriage Data

Recent interviewing shows no basic change since late November in the levels of opposition to both legalizing same-sex marriages and to a constitutional amendment banning them. More people still oppose legalizing same-sex marriages than favor them, and more people still oppose a constitutional amendment than support it.

In 4,451 interviews conducted between Dec. 1 and Dec. 22, 42 percent of the public favored such a constitutional amendment and 51 percent opposed it. In polling conducted in six days just after the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court's Nov. 18 decision ordering the state's legislature to enact a same-sex marriage statute, 40 percent of the public favored such an amendment and 51 percent opposed it.

Opposition to legalizing same-sex marriages themselves also persisted. Fifty-nine percent of the public opposed passage of a law in their state explicitly permitting same-sex marriages while 33 percent favored such a law. In November, the same 59 percent opposed such a law while 34 percent favored it.

While attitudes on same-sex marriages remained the same, there was a decline in acceptance of same-sex civil unions, which would give couples rights such as inheritance, insurance and pension coverage. In November enough of the opponents of a same-sex marriage law said they would accept civil unions so that in all, 56 percent of the public would accept one or the other. That total dropped to 50 percent in the December polling. The margin of sampling error on the constitutional amendment question was plus or minus one percentage point; on the questions about state laws on same-sex marriage and civil unions it was plus or minus three percentage points.

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Forty-three percent of men and 37 percent of women favored a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, while 48 percent of men and 53 percent of women opposed it. Those 18 to 29 were most strongly opposed, by 55 to 38 percent. People who said they had a friend, colleague or family member who was gay or Lesbian – about 44 percent of the public – opposed an amendment by a 63 to 29 percent margin. People who attended religious services at least once a week favored it by 53 to 39 percent. Answers to the questions about marriage and civil union statutes followed similar patterns.

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