

Introduction

On June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that state bans on marriage between same-sex couples were unconstitutional, making marriage a possibility for same sex couples across the country (Obergefell v. Hodges).

The Supreme Court ruling reflects a growing acceptance of same-sex marriage in the USA. In a study published before the ruling, Pew Research Center determined that support for same-sex marriage was at an all time high, yet large sub-groups within the general population remain opposed.

Rising Support Within the Public

In the past decade, support for same-sex marriage has grown within most groups of people across a variety of demographics.

Majority of Adults In Favor of Same-Sex Marriage

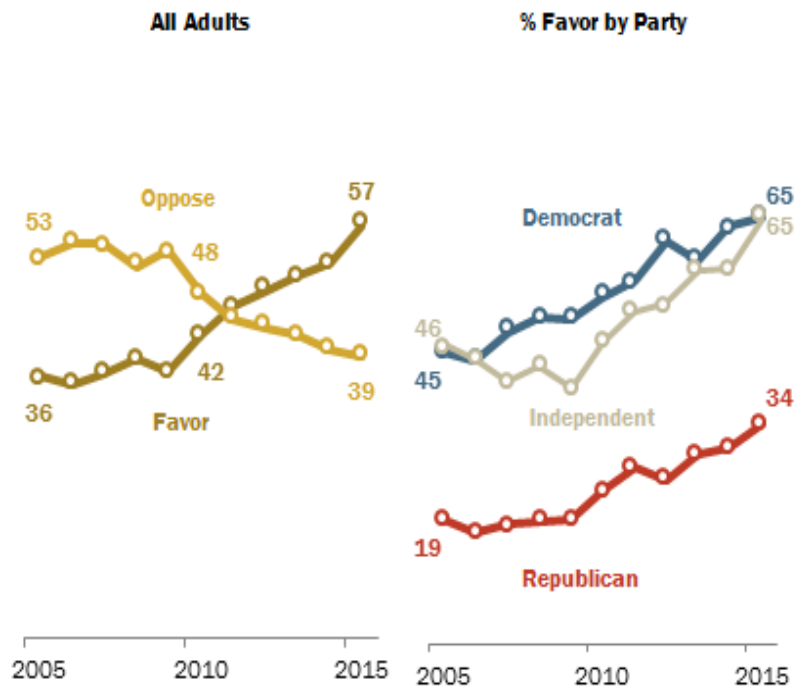
As of June 8, 2015, 57% of American adults said they were in favor of same-sex marriage, while 39% were opposed.

The left side of the chart on the right tracks public opinion on this issue over the past ten years (2005-2015). It shows how public opinion has swung in favor of same-sex marriage within the last decade.

In 2005, more than half of Americans were opposed to marriages between gay and lesbian couples. Only 36% of people were in favor. In 2010 the number of those in favor of same-sex marriage had risen to 42%, while 48% remained opposed.

Support for Same-Sex Marriage Rises Across-the-Board, Partisan Divide Persists

% who say they ___ allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally



Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015.

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Political Breakdown of Same-Sex Marriage Support

The growth in support of same-sex marriage is seen in both major political parties in the United States, although Republicans are still mostly against it. The right side of the above chart shows that the wide difference of opinion between Democrats/Independents and Republicans on this issue remains much as it was in 2005.

In 2005, only 19% of Republicans were in favor. In 2015, 34% of Republicans favor same-sex couples having the ability to marry legally.

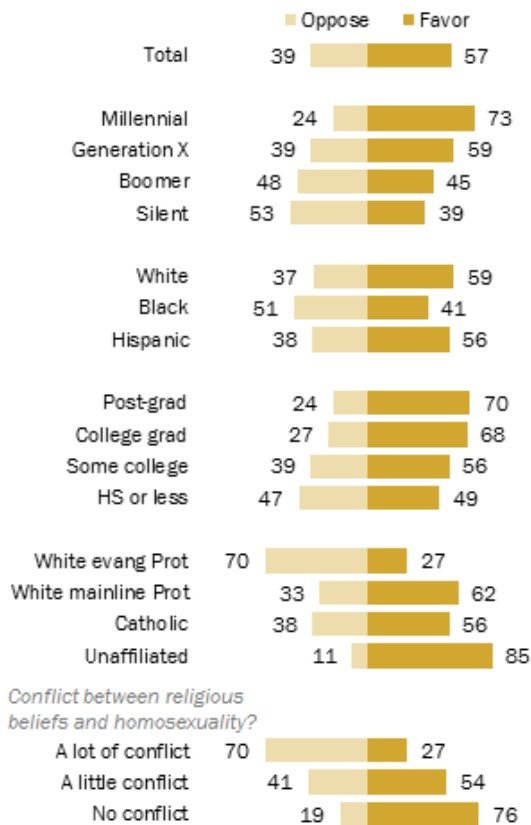
Support among Democrats grew from 45% in 2005 to 65% in 2015. A similar increase in support has occurred among those who identify as Independents, from 46% in 2005 to 65% in 2015.

The Demographics of Same-Sex Marriage Opposition & Support

While most Americans are in favor of same-sex marriage, those that oppose it make up sizeable chunks of certain demographics. The biggest differences are seen between different generations, races, and religious affiliations. The chart below

Current Views of Same-Sex Marriage

Allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally (%)



breaks down how various groups in America see the issue.

The Generational Divide

One of the largest gaps between favoring and opposing same-sex marriage exists between generations. Millennials (ages 18-34) and Generation X (ages 35-50) are more likely to be in favor of same-sex marriage, while those in the Baby Boomer (ages 51-69) and Silent Generations (ages 70-86) are more likely to oppose.

Millennials are overwhelmingly in support of same-sex couples being able to legally marry one another. 73% of Millennials surveyed by Pew were in favor. Support from Generation X members is at 59%.

The opinions of Baby Boomers show more division than younger generations.

Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015. Whites and blacks do not include Hispanics; Hispanics are of any race.

While 48% of Boomers oppose same-sex marriage, 45% are in favor of it. Meanwhile, just over half of those within the Silent Generation are still opposed to same-sex marriage.

As younger generations grow up and begin to participate in the American political and social system, it is likely that support for same-sex marriage will continue to grow.

The Racial Divide

Whites and Hispanics are more likely to hold a favorable position towards same-sex couples marrying, while blacks are more likely to be in opposition. More than half of whites and Hispanics are in support of the issue, while just over half of blacks say they are against it.

The Educational Divide

The Pew Research Center's research suggests that there is a strong correlation between a person's level of education and whether or not they support same-sex marriage. Those who obtain higher education are more likely to support legal marriages for gay and lesbian couples. Of those who have completed college, about 70% of those with post-graduate education or undergraduate degrees stated that they were in favor of same-sex marriages.

Over half of those surveyed who had attended college but had not received a degree were also in favor, with 39% opposed. The division between those with a high school education or less was greater, with 49% agreeing with legal same-sex marriage and 47% disagreeing.

The Religious Divide

The largest opposition to same-sex marriage exists within white evangelical Protestant groups. When surveyed, 70% stated that they were against same-sex marriage. While this suggests that religious beliefs are a large factor in positions on the issue, there are also religious groups whose members who are in support of same-sex marriage.

A majority of white mainline Protestants and Catholics were in favor. 85% of people who are unaffiliated with the above groups also supported legal marriage for gay and lesbian couples.

The feeling of conflict existing between religious beliefs and homosexuality reflects the current tension between those who support same-sex marriage and those who oppose it. 70% of people believe that there is "a lot of conflict" between homosexuality and religious beliefs, while 54% of those in favor of same-sex

marriage feel there is “a little conflict,” and 76% of people in favor believe there is “no conflict.”

Conclusion

Recent trends show that support of same-sex marriage is likely to rise among all demographics. As Millennials and younger generations reaching adulthood are more likely to view same-sex marriage in a positive light, opposition will probably be reduced to a smaller percentage of the population.

Works Cited

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