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Uncertainty over Court's Voting Rights Decision

Public Divided over Same-Sex Marriage Rulings

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Public Divided over Same-Sex Marriage Rulings

The public is divided over last week's Supreme Court rulings on same-sex marriage: 45% approve of the court's decisions, while 40% disapprove.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center conducted June 27-30 among 1,003 adults, finds that most Americans are aware of the ruling and its implications. Two-thirds (66%) know that the court ruled in favor of same-sex marriage supporters, while about the same share (67%) knows that it is up to individual states to determine whether gay couples can get married.

By contrast, there is far less awareness of another major Supreme Court decision last week. Just 34% know that the court overturned parts of the Voting Rights Act; 23% say incorrectly it kept the law intact and 43% have no opinion. Opinions about the court's decision in the case also reflect some confusion: A plurality (43%) has no opinion on the ruling, while 33% approve and 25% disapprove.

Mixed Views of Same-Sex Marriage Rulings

Supreme Court's decisions on same-sex marriage...



Did the court rule in favor of those who support or oppose same-sex marriage?

Response	Percentage
Those who support same-sex marriage	66
Those who oppose same-sex marriage	13
Don't know	21
	100

Do the court rulings mean that ...

Response	Percentage
States determine whether same-sex couples can get married	67
Same-sex couples can get married in all 50 states	15
Don't know	18
	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 27-30, 2013. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Reactions to the court's rulings on same-sex marriage are divided along age, gender and partisan lines. By about two-to-one (58% to 27%), those younger than 30 approve of the court's decisions. People 65 and older disapprove of the rulings by 49% to 36%.

Overall, 61% of Democrats approve of the Supreme Court rulings on gay marriage, while 63% of Republicans disapprove of them. And women (50% approve) are more supportive of the court's actions than are men (39%).

These gaps generally mirror differences in opinions about whether gays and lesbians should be allowed to marry legally. In May, 51% favored same-sex marriage while 42% were opposed. (For more, see "[In Gay Marriage Debate, Both Supporters and Opponents See Recognition as 'Inevitable'](#)," June 6, 2013.)

The survey finds that the court's rulings on same-sex marriage were the public's top news story last week: 30% followed this story very closely; by comparison, no more than about one-in-five tracked any other story very closely, including the George Zimmerman trial (22%), Senate passage of an immigration bill (21%) or the court's ruling on the Voting Rights Act (19%).

[A year ago, there was far more interest in the Supreme Court's decision upholding most provisions of the 2010 health care law:](#) Fully 45% followed news about that ruling very closely.

Familiar Divisions in Reactions to Court's Gay Marriage Rulings

<i>Court's decisions on same-sex marriage...</i>	Approve %	Dis-approve %	DK %
Total	45	40	15=100
Men	39	46	15=100
Women	50	35	15=100
18-29	58	27	14=100
30-49	45	38	17=100
50-64	43	46	10=100
65+	36	49	15=100
College grad+	54	33	13=100
Some college	46	36	17=100
High school or less	38	48	13=100
Republican	22	63	15=100
Democrat	61	29	10=100
Independent	49	37	14=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 27-30, 2013. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Most Know Marriage Rulings Leave Issue to States

Two-thirds of Americans (67%) know that the court's rulings on gay marriage mean that it is up to individual states to determine whether same-sex couples can get married, while 15% say, incorrectly, that as a result of the rulings gay couples can get married in all 50 states and 18% don't know.

About as many (66%) know that the rulings favored those who support same-sex marriage, while 13% say they favor opponents of gay marriage and 21% don't know.

But only about half of Americans (49%) are able to answer both questions correctly, while 51% either answer at least one wrong or do not know the answer to one or both questions.

People who approve of the court's same-sex marriage rulings are more likely than those who disapprove of the rulings to know that the decisions favored supporters of gay marriage (81% vs. 63%). But those who disapprove are as likely as approvers to know that the decisions leave it to individual states to determine whether gay couples can get married (72% of those who disapprove vs. 71% of those who approve).

Young people (18-29) are more likely than those 65 and older to know that the decisions favored same-sex marriage proponents (75% vs. 57%). But there are more modest age differences in the shares that know the rulings leave it individual states to determine whether gay couples can marry.

Identical majorities of Republicans, Democrats and independents (67% each) know that the court's rulings favored gay marriage proponents. And there are only small partisan differences in the percentages saying the court's rulings allow individual states to determine whether same-sex couples can marry.

Awareness of Same-Sex Marriage Rulings

	<i>Percent who know that...</i>	
	Rulings favor supporters of same-sex marriage	States determine same-sex marriage
	%	%
Total	66	67
Men	64	67
Women	68	67
White	66	68
Black	59	70
18-29	75	65
30-49	62	64
50-64	70	70
65+	57	73
Republican	67	71
Democrat	67	72
Independent	67	65
<i>Following court decisions</i>		
Very closely	81	77
Less closely	59	63
<i>Opinion of rulings</i>		
Approve	81	71
Disapprove	63	72

PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 27-30, 2013. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic.

Many Unaware of Voting Rights Decision

Overall, two-thirds of Americans either do not know how the Supreme Court ruled on the Voting Rights Act (43%) or say incorrectly that it kept the law in effect (23%). Only about a third (34%) know that the court overturned parts of the law.

College graduates are more likely than those with less education to correctly answer this question. Nonetheless, only about half of college graduates (51%) know that the court overturned parts of the law. Only about three-in-ten (28%) of those with less education know this.

Overall, slightly more approve (33%) than disapprove (25%) of the court's ruling in the voting rights case, but 43% could not answer. Among those who correctly assess the impact of the court's decision, 45% approve, while 40% disapprove and just 15% offer no opinion.

Both blacks and whites are divided over the court's voting rights decision, though blacks are more likely to express an opinion. About four-in-ten blacks (42%) approve of the decision, while 31% disapprove and 27% have no opinion. Among whites, 29% approve, 25% disapprove and 46% have no opinion.

Widespread Uncertainty over Court's Ruling on Voting Rights

Court's decision on the Voting Rights Act...



Did the court's decision on the Voting Rights Act...

Response	Percentage
Overturn parts of the law	34
Keep the law in effect as it has been	23
Don't know	43
	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 27-30, 2013. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Top News Stories of the Week

The Supreme Court's pair of decisions on same-sex marriage was the public's top news story of the week. Three-in-ten (30%) very closely followed the coverage of these rulings. Fewer (19%) followed the court's decision on the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

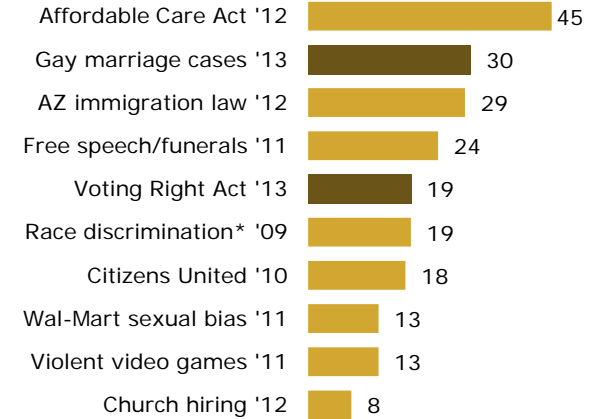
Relative to other major Supreme Court decisions of the last four years, news about the rulings on same-sex marriage attracted about as much interest as the 2012 decision on Arizona's immigration law (29% very closely), but attracted far less attention than the court's judgment to uphold most provisions of the Affordable Care Act. In June 2012, 45% of the public followed this story very closely. Public interest in the court's decision to overturn parts of the Voting Rights Act ranks in the middle of the pack among major court decisions since 2009.

Similar percentage of Republicans and Democrats say they followed news about the same-sex marriage rulings very closely (29% and 35%, respectively). On the Voting Rights Act decision, more Democrats (26%) than Republicans (18%) tracked this very closely.

Among other news stories last week, 22% say they followed George Zimmerman's trial for the shooting death of Trayvon Martin very closely, while similar shares tracked Senate passage of an immigration reform bill (21% very closely) and efforts to apprehend Edward Snowden, the contractor who leaked government surveillance secrets (20% very closely).

Public Interest in Recent Supreme Court Decisions

% following very closely (Rulings 2009 and later)

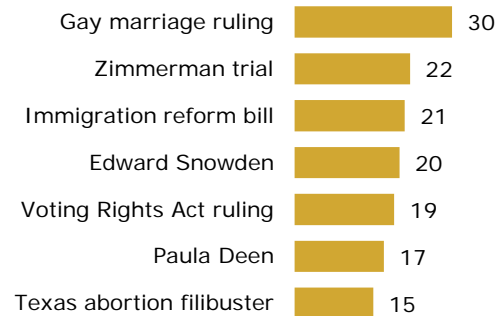


PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 27-30, 2013. *Case involved firefighters unfairly denied promotion based on race.

Weekly News Interest

% following very closely

June 27-30, 2013



PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 27-30, 2013.

The Zimmerman trial drew particularly high interest among African-Americans: 46% reported following news about the trial very closely compared with just 18% of whites. There also was a wide racial gap in interest in Trayvon Martin's death last year: [In March 2012](#), fully 70% of blacks were following the story very closely, compared with just 30% of whites.

Zimmerman Trial Draws Much More Interest Among Blacks than Whites

	Total	White	Black	White-Black Diff
<i>% following each story "very closely":</i>	%	%	%	
George Zimmerman trial	22	18	46	-28
Voting Rights Act ruling	19	15	36	-21
Paula Deen	17	16	27	-11
Texas abortion filibuster	15	13	23	-10
Immigration reform bill	21	18	20	-2
Edward Snowden	20	20	22	-2
Same-sex marriage rulings	30	30	30	--

PEW RESEARCH CENTER. Jun 27-30, 2013. Whites and blacks are non-Hispanic.

More blacks than whites also paid very close attention to news about the Supreme Court's decision on the Voting Rights Act (36% of blacks, 15% of whites) and reports about TV food personality Paula Deen admitting that she used racially insensitive language (27% of blacks, 16% of whites).

About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted June 27-30, 2013, among a national sample of 1,003 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (500 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 503 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 239 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see: <http://people-press.org/methodology/>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region to parameters from the 2011 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2012 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,003	3.7 percentage points
Republican	251	7.4 percentage points
Democrat	327	6.5 percentage points
Independent	329	6.5 percentage points
White	770	4.2 percentage points
Black	102	11.6 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
June 27-30, 2013 OMNIBUS
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1,003

ASK ALL:

PEW.1 As I read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past week, please tell me if you happened to follow each news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. First, **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE] [IF NECESSARY "Did you follow [ITEM] very closely, fairly closely, not too closely or not at all closely?"]**

NO ITEM a.

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) DK/Ref
b. The U.S. Senate passing immigration reform legislation					
June 27-30, 2013	21	29	22	28	*
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
June 20-23, 2013: <i>Debate over immigration policy in the U.S.</i>	20	28	23	29	1
June 13-16, 2013	23	26	22	29	1
June 6-9, 2013	21	28	21	30	1
May 23-26, 2013	17	23	23	37	1
May 9-12, 2013	20	24	25	30	1
April 25-28, 2013	19	25	24	32	*
April 18-21, 2013	21	22	25	31	1
April 4-7, 2013	23	22	22	32	*
January 31-February 3, 2013: <i>Debate in Washington over immigration policy</i>	23	25	22	29	1
June 28-July 1, 2012: <i>The Supreme Court decision on Arizona's immigration law</i>	29	21	19	30	1
April 26-29, 2012: <i>The issue of immigration</i>	21	24	26	27	1
May 12-15, 2011	18	22	27	32	1
September 2-6, 2010	30	31	19	20	1
August 12-15, 2010	27	31	19	21	1
July 29-August 1, 2010: <i>A court ruling that stops most of Arizona's immigration law from going into effect</i>	40	32	17	10	1
July 8-11, 2010: <i>The U.S. Justice Department challenging the legality of Arizona's recent immigration law</i>	30	27	19	23	1
July 1-5, 2010: <i>The issue of immigration</i>	34	30	20	14	1
May 7-10, 2010: <i>A new Arizona law that gives police more authority to question people they suspect might be illegal immigrants</i>	38	27	13	21	1
April 30-May 3, 2010	36	31	13	20	*
October 12-15, 2007: <i>The issue of immigration</i>	23	29	19	29	*
June 29-July 2, 2007: <i>The debate in Congress over new immigration policy</i>	26	30	21	23	*
June 22-25, 2007	24	28	22	26	*
June 15-18, 2007	22	32	21	25	*
June 8-11, 2007	24	29	20	26	1
May 24-27, 2007	27	31	22	19	1
April 12-16, 2007: <i>The issue of immigration</i>	21	29	24	26	*
August, 2006	34	40	16	9	1
June, 2006	36	41	15	7	1
May, 2006	44	33	13	9	1
April, 2006	39	34	16	10	1

PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
December, 1994: <i>Passage of Proposition 187, the California law that bars education, health and welfare benefits from illegal immigrants and their children</i>	26	32	22	20	*
c. The Supreme Court decision on the Voting Rights Act June 27-30, 2013	19	23	20	37	1
TREND FOR COMPARISON: June 20-23, 2013: <i>Recent Supreme Court rulings and cases before the court</i>	13	21	25	40	1
d. The Supreme Court decisions on same-sex marriage June 27-30, 2013	30	31	20	19	*
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON: June 20-23, 2013: <i>Recent Supreme Court rulings and cases before the court</i>	13	21	25	40	1
March 28-31, 2013: <i>The Supreme Court hearing cases about same-sex marriage</i>	22	29	22	26	1
Feb 9-12, 2012: <i>A federal appeals court ruling that California's ban on gay marriage is unconstitutional</i>	16	23	24	37	1
Feb 24-27, 2011: <i>Recent developments in the debate over gay marriage</i>	19	26	20	34	1
May 29-June 1, 2009: <i>The California Supreme Court upholding a ban on gay marriage</i>	22	35	19	23	1
Nov 7-10, 2008: <i>California voting to ban gay marriage</i>	18	26	24	32	*
June 20-23, 2008: <i>Same sex marriage in CA</i>	22	26	25	27	*
May 16-19, 2008: <i>The California Supreme Court's decision giving same sex couples the right to marry</i>	19	27	25	28	1
e. U.S. efforts to apprehend Edward Snowden, who leaked government surveillance secrets June 27-30, 2013	20	30	20	30	1
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON: June 20-23, 2013: <i>Debate over government phone and internet surveillance programs</i>	23	30	17	29	1
June 13-16, 2013: <i>The government collecting information about telephone calls, e-mails and other online communications as part of efforts to monitor terrorist activity</i>	35	27	15	21	1
June 7-9, 2013: <i>The government collecting emails and other online activities directly from large internet companies to track foreign suspects in terror investigations</i>	26	24	17	33	1
June 6-9, 2013: <i>The government collecting records about Verizon phone calls for national security purposes</i>	27	21	17	35	*
Dec 9-12, 2010: <i>News about WikiLeaks and the arrest of its founder</i>	18	24	19	38	1
December 2-5, 2010: <i>The release of classified documents about U.S. diplomatic relations by the Wikileaks website</i>	30	23	20	25	2

PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
May 12-22, 2006: <i>Reports that the National Security Agency has been collecting telephone records of millions of American citizens</i>	33	28	22	16	1
f. The trial of George Zimmerman for the shooting death of Florida teen Trayvon Martin					
June 27-30, 2013	22	29	23	25	1
June 13-16, 2013	15	26	24	35	1
April 26-29, 2012: <i>Developments in the case against George Zimmerman in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin</i>	24	28	22	25	1
April 20-22, 2012	27	29	21	21	1
April 12-15, 2012: <i>George Zimmerman being charged with second-degree murder in the death of Trayvon Martin</i>	35	31	16	17	1
April 5-8, 2012: <i>Controversy over the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, an African American teen in Florida</i>	34	30	18	18	*
March 29-April 1, 2012	30	35	15	20	*
March 22-25, 2012	35	24	15	26	1
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
July 31-August 3, 2009: <i>Reports about the arrest of Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates and President Obama's response to the incident</i>	25	26	22	25	2
July 24-27, 2009: <i>The arrest of Henry Louis Gates, a black Harvard professor, at his home after a dispute with a police officer</i>	30	31	17	21	1
April 25-28, 2008: <i>The acquittal of three New York City police officers in the shooting of an unarmed man on his wedding day</i>	13	24	24	38	1
September 21-24, 2007: <i>Demonstrations in Jena, Louisiana, about six black teenagers involved in a schoolyard fight</i>	18	27	25	30	*
April 2001: <i>Rioting in Cincinnati after an unarmed black man was shot by police</i>	24	32	23	20	1
July 2000: <i>The video showing Philadelphia police kicking and beating a carjacking suspect</i>	22	32	22	23	1
March 2000: <i>The acquittal of four New York policemen who shot and killed Amadou Diallo, an African immigrant</i>	28	35	20	17	0
February 1999: <i>The Texas murder trial of a man accused of dragging a black man behind a pickup truck</i>	24	41	20	14	1
May 1993: <i>The Rodney King trial and verdict in Los Angeles</i>	47	34	13	6	*
May 1992: <i>The verdict in the Rodney King case and the riots and disturbances that followed</i>	70	22	5	2	1
March 1991: <i>The videotaped beating by Los Angeles police of a suspect they apprehended in an auto chase</i>	46	30	13	10	1

PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
g. An 11-hour filibuster against new abortion restrictions debated in the Texas state legislature June 27-30, 2013	15	20	21	44	1
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON: Mar 8-12, 2006: <i>South Dakota's new law banning all abortions unless the mother's life is in danger</i>	21	32	20	26	1
Apr 5-8, 1990: <i>The attempt in Idaho to pass a bill that would severely restrict abortions</i>	23	33	19	24	1
h. TV food personality Paula Deen, admitting that she made racially insensitive comments June 27-30, 2013	17	27	24	31	1
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON: Apr 12-16, 2007: <i>The recent remarks Don Imus made on his radio show about the Rutgers University women's basketball team</i>	24	31	20	24	1

NO QUESTIONS PEW.2-PEW.3**ASK ALL:**

PEW.4 From what you've read and heard about the Supreme Court's decision on the Voting Rights Act, would you say you strongly approve, approve, disapprove, or strongly disapprove of their decision?

Jun 27-30

2013

33	NET Approve
8	Strongly approve
24	Approve
25	NET Disapprove
15	Disapprove
10	Disapprove strongly
43	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK ALL:

PEW.5 Did the Supreme Court's decision on the Voting Rights Act **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]?**

Jun 27-30

2013

23	Keep the law in effect as it has been [OR]
34	Overturn parts of the law
43	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK ALL:

PEW.6 From what you've read and heard about the Supreme Court's decisions on same-sex marriage, would you say you strongly approve, approve, disapprove, or strongly disapprove of their decision?

Jun 27-30

2013

45	NET Approve
19	Strongly approve
26	Approve
40	NET Disapprove
18	Disapprove
22	Disapprove strongly
15	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK ALL:

PEW.7 Did the Supreme Court rule in favor of **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**?

Jun 27-30

2013

- 13 Those who oppose same-sex marriage **[OR]**
- 66 Those who support same-sex marriage
- 21 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

ASK ALL:

PEW.8 Do the Supreme Court's rulings mean that **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**?

Jun 27-30

2013

- 15 Same-sex couples can now get married in all 50 states **[OR]**
- 67 It is up to individual states to determine whether same-sex couples can get married
- 18 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**