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Both sides see gay marriage as 'inevitable'

Cathy Payne USA Today | Jun. 10, 2013

About 72 percent of Americans say legal recognition of same-sex marriage is "inevitable," according to a survey released Thursday.

Of those who support same-sex marriage, about 85 percent say it is inevitable, says the Pew Research Center's survey. About 59 percent of opponents also say it is inevitable.

"As more states legalize gay marriage or give equal status, the question in our minds was how the public sees the trajectory on this issue," said Michael Dimock, the report's lead author and director of the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. "Do they see a future in which gay marriage is going to be the rule, not the exception, in American society?"

For the first time in Pew polling, just over half (51 percent) of Americans favor allowing same-sex couples to marry legally, the report says. The telephone survey was conducted May 1-5 among 1,504 U.S. adults. The margin of error was plus or minus 2.9 percentage points.

The survey found a strong link between personal experiences and attitudes about homosexuality. About 87 percent of Americans know someone who is gay or lesbian, up from 61 percent in 1993. About 68 percent of those who know a lot of gays or lesbians favor same-sex marriage, compared with 32 percent of those who don't know anyone.

"As for the gay marriage issue, it's not about whether we will have families. We already do. It's about whether we will enjoy the same protection as our siblings, neighbors and co-workers," says Rick Rosendall, president of the Washington-based Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance.

"The more people recognize that their siblings, neighbors and co-workers include gay men and lesbians, the clearer it is that those family members, neighbors and co-workers should be treated the same as they are."

Same-sex marriage is or will be legal in 12 states and the District of Columbia. Several states also have domestic-partnership provisions for same-sex couples, and the U.S. Supreme Court will rule on two gay marriage cases this month.

"This poll should caution us to redouble our efforts in explaining to Americans what marriage is, why marriage matters, and what the consequences of redefining marriage are," said Ryan Anderson, a scholar at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank.

Anderson, who promotes marriage between a man and woman, said it's not quite clear what Pew's poll question means, since same-sex marriage is legally recognized in 12 states. "The more important question is not what will happen -- but what we should do."

Thomas Peters, communications director of the National Organization for Marriage, which opposes same-sex

marriage, said Pew's poll numbers are no surprise. "Gay marriage activists have spent a huge amount of money and cultural influence trying to convince Americans of the lie that redefining marriage is inevitable," he said.

[Cathy Payne writes for *USA Today*.]

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