What happens to marriage and families when the law recognises "Same-Sex Marriage"?

Experience of legalising marriage for same-sex couples in Europe and North America

Executive Summary

The claim that "same-sex marriage"* dilutes or even abolishes the institution of marriage is often countered by the claim that opening up marriage to same-sex couples will actually strengthen the institution. It is claimed that same-sex marriage will thus serve the common good as well as promoting equality. This paper examines the evidence for these claims.

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She has produced the following paper for SPUC based on research and data from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain, Canada the US, and concludes that:

- As marriage is redefined to accommodate same-sex couples, this reinforces the idea that marriage is irrelevant to parenthood.
- Same sex marriage leads to the casualisation of heterosexual unions and separation of marriage and parenthood.
- Spain saw a pronounced acceleration in the decline of marriage following the introduction of same-sex marriage (same-sex marriage was introduced at the same time as the 'express divorce bill').
- Across all countries analysed no causal link has been established to support the idea that same-sex marriage prevents marital decline.
- In the move to same-sex marriage, opposite-sex relationships have to conform to gay norms rather than vice-versa.
- A publicly professed, legal, partnership does not prevent homosexual couples from breaking up more frequently than married heterosexual couples.

- Experience with same-sex partnerships/marriage legislation tends to suggest that *availability* is all, and participation more or less irrelevant to sexual minorities.
- Same-sex marriage may be the end-game of long-running anti-marriage, anti-family policy typified by Sweden.
- Same-sex marriage may begin the process of severing marriage from family in otherwise family-friendly societies such as Spain and the Netherlands.
- Same-sex marriage triggers dismemberment of family structures in family-friendly societies.

**Note: We introduce the term "same-sex marriage" with quotation marks because it is not really marriage – but in the text we ask the reader to take the distinction as read.*

What happens to marriage and families when the law recognises "Same-Sex Marriage"?

The case for (and against) the rejuvenation argument.

1. Part of the argument for 'equal' marriage – especially from conservatives - is how homosexuals are eager to get married and, as they do so, this will increase and strengthen heterosexual marriage.

   "At a time when many heterosexuals are spurning the idea of marriage, here is a section of society positively lobbying for the right to respect and continue the institution. Perhaps gay marriage will encourage more straight people back on to the marital path." (Douglas Murray, D Gay rites. *The Spectator* 01.10.2011)

   Homosexuals will be missionaries to the wider society and make it "stronger" (Home Secretary Teresa May reported: *Daily Telegraph* 25.05.2012).

   As homosexuals increase the marriage rate, we are told, this will have a profound effect on social problems, saving us all much tribulation, tears and treasure.

   "… the most significant driver of social instability and poverty – [is] family breakdown... Backing marriage... would encourage strong and stable families, and tackle the social breakdown that fuels poverty." (Skelton, D and Flint, R ed Gibbs, B *What's In A Name?* 2012 Policy Exchange Quoting the Centre for Social Justice, p.22)

   Homosexuals will, we are told, bring back foundational marital virtues in danger of being lost. Same sex marriage promises to be a force for revival which will:

   "…strengthen – rather than undermine – the institution of marriage and valuable notions of commitment, fidelity and responsibility…" (Skelton, D and Flint, R ed Gibbs, B *What's In A Name?* 2012 Policy Exchange. p.60)

   Any claim that giving marital rights to gay couples will:

   "… undermine heterosexual marriage is based on the consistent misuse and misinterpretation of data". (Lee Badgett, M. V Will Providing Marriage Rights to Same-Sex Couples Undermine Heterosexual Marriage? *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* 2004 Vol. 1 (3) pgs. 1-10)

2. Following on this optimism, suggestions are that marriage rates have remained stable or even grown in countries that have enacted (either or both) 'partnerships' and 'marriage'. Constant rates are not, of course, the same as rising rates.

What is available?

3. In the Nordic countries civil unions or 'registered partnerships' have been available for the longest time - ***Denmark*** *from 1989;* ***Norway*** *from 1993 and* ***Sweden*** *from 1995.* The **UK** introduced civil partnerships in 2005.

Norway moved to 'gender-neutral' marriage in 2008. **Sweden** followed in 2009 and imposed its law virtually overnight without consultation. Since marriage, particularly in ***Sweden**, has long had little or no recognition or status, partnership morphed seamlessly into marriage and the two have been treated de facto* and, for all intents and purposes, as virtually identical – both before and after the transition. Initially, the exceptions for partnerships were that these did not bestow a right to marry in a state church, adopt children or access reproductive technologies. Afterwards, while there were 'faith' groups no longer "willing and able to continue to act as a state agent in the form of religious ceremonies of confirmation" the Church of Sweden grumbled but complied in this highly conformist society and created a 'gender neutral' liturgy' as they lost independent solemnizing powers. The state is supreme and "once the applicable legal framework has been established, this framework is alone decisive".[1] The country's parliament voted through the new law on same-sex marriage by a large majority, making it mandatory for all churches to conduct gay marriages. Similarly, Churches in Denmark were obliged to carry out same sex weddings in 2012. If individual priests refuse to carry out the ceremony, the local bishop must arrange a replacement for their church.

4. The ***Netherlands** first introduced same sex marriage in 2001, followed by **Belgium** in 2003 - b*oth countries created civil partnerships a few years earlier. The Netherlands was unsure that paternity could be ascribed to a non-generative 'parent', and made it necessary for the partner of a mother to adopt any child they both regarded as their own. Same-sex marriage in **Spain** and ***Canada** followed in 2005; dispensing with civil unions as a prelude to marriage.* **France** introduced PACS or civil contracts in 1999 which gave limited rights to cohabiting couples, regardless of gender. In 2004, a mayor conducted a same sex marriage ceremony and a court nullified the union, but there is movement towards same sex marriage going on at present.
5. Since 1997, when **Hawaii** became the first state in the US to allow reciprocal-beneficiary registration for same-sex couples, 19 states and the District of Columbia have granted some form of legal recognition to same sex relationships. The variants include marriage, civil unions, domestic partnerships, and reciprocal-beneficiary relationships. Most prominently, there have been civil unions in **Vermont** (2000), domestic partnerships in **California** (1999) and marriage in **Massachusetts** (2004).
6. **In the move to same sex marriage, opposite sex relationships have to conform to gay norms**, rather than vice versa, since matters pertaining to complementary sexes cannot apply to those of the same sex. For example: Spanish birth certificates record 'progenitor A'

and 'progenitor B' rather than 'mother' and 'father'. In Canada, the concept of natural parent has been erased from law - for every child and every couple - with court rulings that children could have three parents. Sweden has also moved to eliminate the words 'boy' and 'girl' in return for one neutral word.

Have gays rushed to make partnerships or marry?

7. Since same-sex marriage has only recently been legalized in a handful of countries, data on how the laws have affected marriage rates – for heterosexuals or homosexuals - is limited.

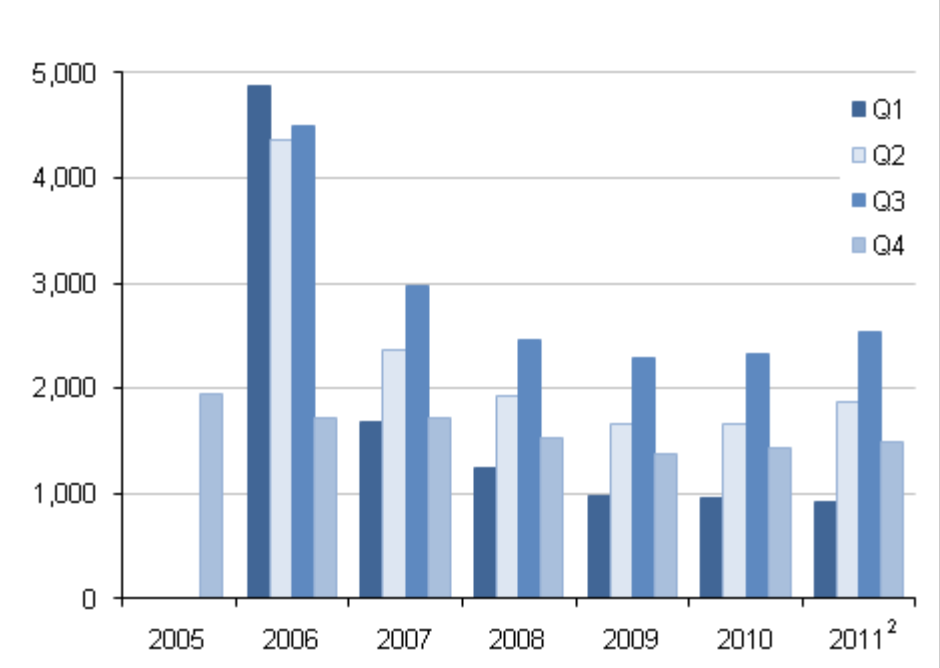
   In discussions of same sex marriage, one of the questions rarely asked is 'How interested are 'gay' couples in actually getting married?'

8. In the **Netherlands,** which has had same-sex marriage as a legal option for the longest period (since 2001), 2% - 6% of homosexuals entered marriages in the first five years; much the same as **Belgium**.[2] One in three Dutch homosexual couples living together had their relationships officially registered by 2010 -with nearly 11,000 married and more than 6,000 in registered partnerships. Survey data suggest that 2.8% and 1.4% of Dutch men and women are gay or lesbian. The population of the Netherlands is just over sixteen and a half million; indicating that the homosexual population is approximately two thirds of a million – a high estimate.
   There are claims that same sex marriage in the Netherlands is actually declining in popularity: 2,500 gay couples married in 2001- the year it was legalized - dropping to 1,800 in 2002, 1,384 in 2010 and 1,355 in 2011 – with a 52 fold difference with the heterosexual marriage total of 70,217. By 2009, less than 2 per cent of marriages were between same-sex couples. The number registering partnerships varies between 400 and 600 per year.
9. Researchers remark how, their "first observation is that the incidence of same-sex marriage in Norway and Sweden is not particularly impressive."[3] For the 1,293 partnerships contracted in **Norway** in 1993–2001, 196,000 heterosexual marriages were entered; indicating a ratio of around 7 new same-sex unions to every 1,000 marriages. In almost 20% of Norwegian registered partnership over the 1990s, one partner had been previously married and in least 16% of the cases, one was also a parent, although not very likely to be living with their children.[4] In **Sweden,** there were 1,526 partnerships entered during 1995–2002 compared to 280,000 heterosexual marriages - a ratio of 5 to 1,000. It is suggested that one to

five per cent of the homosexual population contract a civil partnership or marry, with trend data indicating that - as elsewhere - numbers tend to decrease after an initial burst (reflecting pent up demand). In the years 1990-1998 – a cumulative total of 2168 partnerships were registered in **Denmark**, encompassing 1.7% of the homosexual population.[5]

10. In the **UK**, approximately 53,417 civil partnerships have been formed since December 2005. Numbers fell from 16,106 in 2006 to 8728 in 2007 to 6281 in 2009, with a rise to 6795 in 2011 - when less than one person per 1,000 unmarried adults aged 16 and over entered into a civil partnership in England and Wales.

No. of civil partnerships in UK by quarter of occurrence 2005-2011



Source: Office for National Statistics

11. The most recent **U.S.** Census data reveal that, in the last 15 years, 150,000 same-sex couples have taken advantage of official unions - equivalent to around one in five of the self-identified same-sex couples in the United States. This number is not just low because only a few states have allowed full 'marriage'. In the first four years when same sex marriage has been an option in **Massachusetts,** there was an average of only about 3,000 per year - including many who came from out of state. Overall, same sex households have increased in the US - from 358,000 same-sex (married or unmarried) partner households in 2000 to 646,000 plus in the 2010 census (roughly 131,729 married couple and 514,735

same-sex unmarried partner households). They accounted for 0.6 per cent or less than one per cent of **all households in the US**. [6]

12. The period in which same-sex marriage has been available in **Canada** varies from province to province – all maintain their own statistics – with national legislation taking effect in July 2005. Depending on the province, it seems that between 0.15% and 14% of Canadian homosexuals have entered marriages. As elsewhere, the rate trails off over time.

13. **Experience with same sex partnerships/marriage tends to bear out claims that availability or the 'right' is all and participation more or less irrelevant** to sexual minorities. There is little or no difference in take-up between 'marriage' and registered partnerships. In places that have one or both **and** significant numbers of homosexuals, there has been no groundswell.

    From the beginning, the debate over marriage has not necessarily hinged on its popularity among the eligible, with advocates of same sex unions insisting that "equality" was not a numerical proposition. It is the mere existence of a right to marry which is important, irrespective of whether anyone partakes of it or not. This has tended to be ignored by naïve heterosexual supporters, who believe they are speaking for reticent homosexuals desperate to share in a heterosexual privilege.

Splitting Up.

14. When same sex couples do get married, they are more likely than their heterosexual equivalents to change their minds later. A publicly professed, legal partnership does not prevent homosexual couples from breaking up more frequently than married heterosexual couples.[7]

    We might have predicted **low separation** *rates with the advent of same sex unions, as only the most eager and committed would be the first to move in together – but this is not so.*[8]

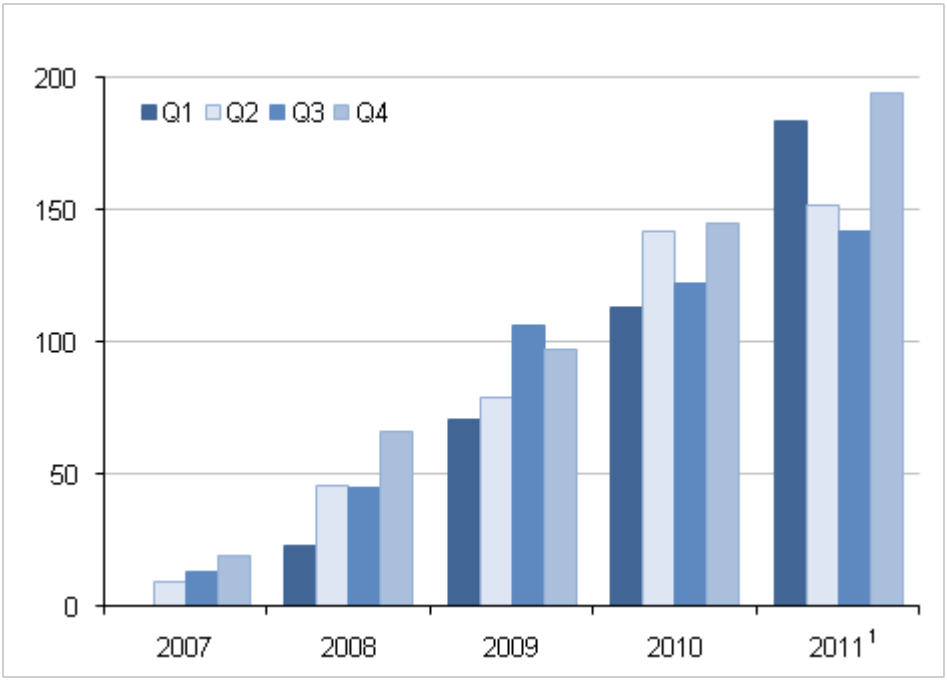
15. Longitudinal ***Swedish and Norwegian*** *data on 2,819 homosexual and 222,000 opposite-sex marriages included information on characteristics such as age, geographic background, as well as experience of previous opposite-sex marriage, parenthood and education. Breakdown rates in* ***Norway*** *revealed that same-sex male couples were 1.5 times more likely (and same sex female couples were 2.67 more likely) to break up compared to heterosexual unions: within five years 20% of male and 30% of female same sex unions were terminated, compared to 13% for heterosexuals. Similarly in* ***Sweden,*** *male unions are* 50% more likely to end in divorce than heterosexual marriages and the risk for female partnerships is nearly double

that for men. Comparison with childless unions leaves this unchanged as do controls for various demographic and socioeconomic differences.[9] The instability of same sex unions has been labelled 'dynamism' to indicate superiority to the 'inertia' of marital stability - a dynamism attributed to the lack of 'clear power structures' which supposedly oppress opposite sex relationships.

16. In the **Netherlands,** there have been 1,078 same sex 'divorces' up to 2010 - two thirds were by females and a similar pattern is present elsewhere, as in **Massachusetts** and **Sweden**.[10] This follows the heterosexual pattern, where more females than males instigate divorce. Previously, a study compared same-sex cohabiters, different sex cohabiters and different sex married couples in the ***Netherlands*** *between 1989 and 1999 (after which same sex partners could move into same sex marriages). The dissolution rate for same-sex cohabitation was 12 times higher than the rate for different-sex marriage and three times higher than the rate for opposite sex cohabitation.*[11] The breakdown rates here were higher for male unions.

    Dissolutions appear to be increasing for ***UK*** *civil partnerships, with a 28.7% rise between 2010 and 2011. Again, female dissolutions are double those of male.*

No. of civil partnership dissolutions in the UK, by quarter of occurrence, 2007–2011



Source: Office for National Statistics

17. A **Vermont** study compared same sex partners in civil unions, those outside unions and heterosexually married siblings. It was hypothesized that lesbian and gay male couples in civil unions would be more similar in monogamy to married heterosexual couples than to same-sex couples not in civil unions.[12] Non-monogamy was reported by over one-half of homosexual men in both types of couples (compared with 15.2% of married heterosexual men). A half of the homosexual men in civil unions and one-third of those not in civil unions had an agreement that sex outside their relationship was permissible, compared with 5% or fewer lesbian and heterosexual couples. This did not prevent homosexual men having extra-relational sex regardless. With or without such an agreement there is no sign that considerable conflict has been avoided by such arrangements.

18. There are a couple of features of Scandinavian unions that warrant mention:

    i. High death rates - seen in the early years of same sex unions in Denmark, [13] plus the way that partners have also been, on average, considerably older than corresponding opposite-sex spouses in Norwegian and Swedish data.[14] This suggests that **matters of inheritance** as much or more than home building may be uppermost.

    ii. High rates of non-national partners, *suggesting that many same sex unions serve* ***immigration purposes -*** particularly for male partnerships. Sweden is considered one of the most globalised countries. In the last few decades, the potential marriage market has increased dramatically, with increasing numbers of migrants living in Sweden, along with Swedes who travel, work or study abroad, and the rise of internet usage.[15]

19. In Norway, 43% of male partnerships included a non-Norwegian citizen and 45% in Sweden. It is part of a wider process, where about three out of 10 Norwegian marriages involve one or two persons with immigrant backgrounds. A total of 13.5% of Norwegian marriages in mid-decade were between a man without and a woman with an immigrant background, and 7% between a woman without and a man with an immigrant background.[16] The probability of marrying spouses from outside the European Union has doubled for native Swedish women and quadrupled for men in less than 20 years and many will not have met in Sweden.

    Even these figures fall far short of figures for same sex unions and it is significant that those with one foreign partner are particularly likely to dissolve - with nearly a half rapidly folding up. This suggests unions of convenience made (or bought and sold?) for resident rights and citizenship.

This does not appear to be considered in the UK, but it is a possibility - particularly given the low number of homosexuals at all interested in unions for themselves.

What has happened to heterosexual marriage rates where gays marry?

Some background considerations:

20. Declining marriage rates, paralleled by increasing rates of unmarried cohabitation and births are generally seen as parts of a second demographic transition in the Western world, where marriage and family have been weakened as the primary child rearing environment.
21. The Nordic countries are leaders here. Moral and cultural controls have largely disappeared and religious influence has faded. Not far behind are France, Belgium, Great Britain, and Germany, along with the U.S and Canada. With tighter family patterns and lower rates of cohabitation, family dissolution, and out-of-wedlock births are the southern European countries of Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece. There is a general drift towards the Nordic pattern, promoted not only by secularisation, increasing sexualisation and easy marital dissolution but also, significantly, by welfare states. Privileges once reserved for marriage are given to individuals regardless of relationships or family arrangements. Male provision for families is frowned upon and mothers are expected to be employed and self-sufficient, with wage subsidies and children in day care. Spousal benefits or exemptions do not exist, income tax is individual and state support is targeted to lone parents with the stand alone mother the locus of family 'diversity'.
22. The disintegrative process is somewhat held in check by tendencies for parents to marry after a couple of births; pointing to the persistence of residual norms and family pressures connecting child rearing to spousal commitment. As out-of-wedlock childbearing pushes beyond 50% a stalling process is evident as it enters the toughest area of cultural resistance. Once that marker disappears and the tendency to marry at the second birth dissipates, the path opens to the terminus of marriage which, if it survives at all, rests only upon residual sentiment. While mass cohabitation is not initially a long-term form of living together, but rather a prelude to marriage or separation, it then becomes extended and a substitute for marriage. People conform to suggestion and example and, as married parenthood becomes a minority phenomenon, it loses the critical mass needed to be a socially normative force.
23. When same sex partnerships - readily absorbed to marriage - made their appearance in **Scandinavian** countries, marriage had been more or less dismantled in all but name.

Sweden's anti-marriage policy has been implemented earlier than those in Norway and Denmark as well as being more explicit and coordinated than in the UK, where there has been considerable prevarication and subterfuge.[17] Sweden's politicians' and planners' 'ideology of neutrality' (sic) amounted to about the most concerted attempt in history to engineer a liberated sexuality free from moral and social norms, freedom of women from child care responsibilities and the demise of interdependence through economic manipulation, social pressures and massive public re-education. With radical feminist and socialist ideology dominant from an early period, powerful social scientists have seen marriage as a barrier to full equality between the sexes. Re-defined as "a form of voluntary cohabitation between independent persons"[18] anything which might benefit it over cohabitation was stripped away as couples living together acquired much the same rights as married people. Divorce was made available on request without giving reason(s). There could not be a 'right to choose', since people were deemed 'culturally conditioned' into an impoverishing mould. The withdrawal of support for two parent families, imposition of penalties on non-working 'partners' and very high taxation made it impossible to live on one wage. The word 'custodian' has designated the person closest to a child, who serves the state as the supervisor and agency on whose behalf parents act. Norway and Denmark experienced similar moves away from the largely self-financing two parent family towards employed mothers and public child care supported by social security.

24. Removing any incentives to get and stay married have had direct and unsurprising effects on marriage. Sweden's rates were falling dramatically by the end of the 1960s (it registered the lowest rate in recorded history in 1997), accompanied by rising cohabitation, unwed births and high levels of single person households.[19] By the 1980s, boast was that Sweden was "moving faster than most other advanced industrialised counties toward a society of cohabiting individuals, temporary families, and single individuals with and without children."[20] Unwed births were at 48.2% in 1991 and hit the 55% mark in the next decade. With marriage neither legally nor normatively a precondition for a family this has become simply a matter of the fact of parenthood.

25. If **Sweden and Norway are the kind of places where we are expected to find that same sex unions have rescued marriage** after heterosexuals have trashed it, then marriage has hardly been welcome in recent Scandinavian history – or not by governments. Hardly promising, is it?

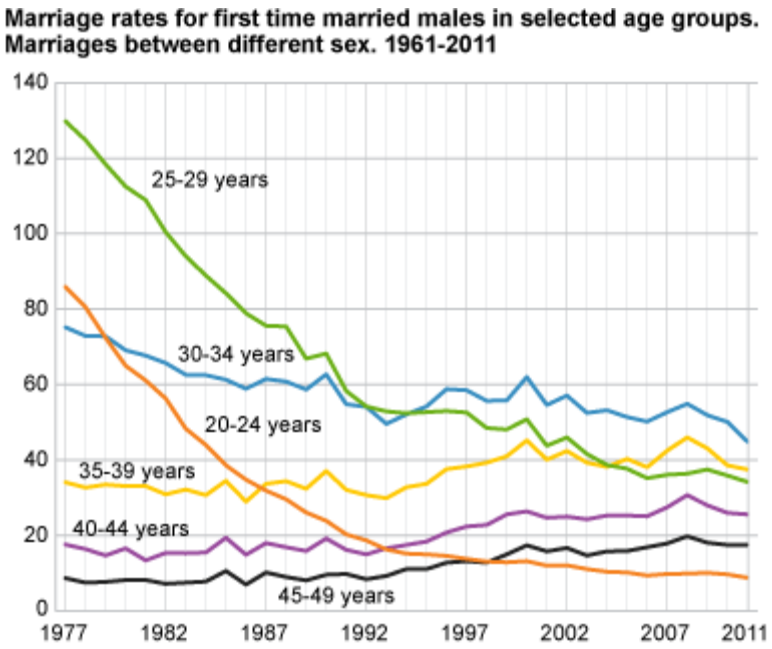
Notwithstanding, oscillations in Scandinavian marriage rates post 1990 have led to claims that same sex partnership/marriage has helped to revitalise the institution. And, the argument goes, if societies with such low marriage rates can see a boost from same sex marriage, why not elsewhere?

26. **For example:** this has been forcefully put – mainly in reference to Norway - by US 'gay' advocates William N. Eskridge and Darren R. Spedale.[21] They accept the data showing a close correlation between legal and economic changes and lower marriage rates, high divorce rates and unwed births. Throughout the 1980s, Norwegian marital households with children plummeted; falling 18% from 1989 to1993 as cohabiting with children rose 70%. So, would we not expect same sex partnerships and marriage to cause an acceleration - whether temporarily or long term - in changes that have been going on since the 1970s? But they argue that we do not see a further plunge. Instead, while there is still a continuous rise in cohabitation with children and a decline in marriage both absolutely and comparatively in the 1990s, same sex unions were "no stake through the heart of marriage." Instead, they were responsible for how "the trend slowed down a little bit after 1993."[22]

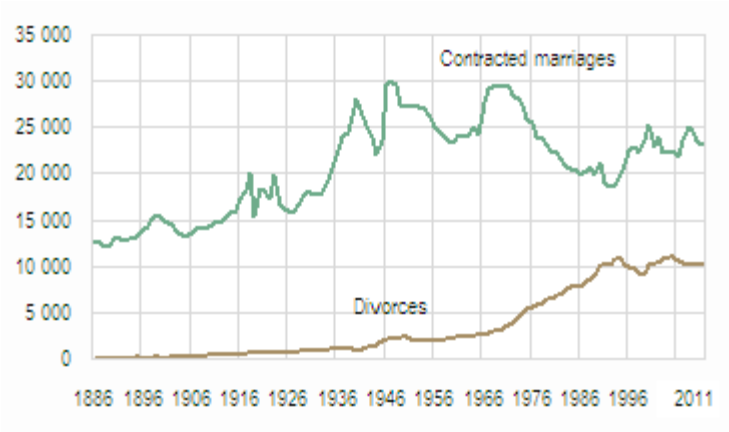
    Norwegian tabloids and media suggest that marriage was made 'fashionable' among young people due to royal rather than 'gay' weddings.

27. Both perspectives are described by demographers as 'misguided'.[23] **Marriage statistics in societies with very low rates present problems for analysis.** Marriage rates are fairly volatile anyway; affected by economic conditions and predictions as well as one off events.

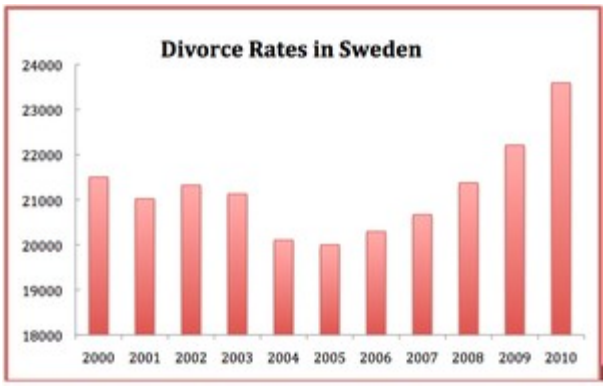
    Small rises in the number of Norwegian marriages over recent years appear to result from increasing numbers of people of marriageable age (including immigrants), along with catching-up by people who marry later in life (often with children born out of wedlock), and increasing numbers of divorcees available for remarriage (not a rise in their frequency of marriage). People marry late and divorce frequently, and they increasingly cohabit for long periods instead of marrying. Among those in their 20s, marriage rates have has not changed much – in fact, these are still falling heavily up to the mid-30s. Even after that age, recent years have seen a further tip downwards for older age groups.



At the same time, divorce has generally remained high. While the period 1995 to 1999 saw divorce rates stabilise in Norway, by 2000-2001 the projections were back at 1994-levels.



Slightly more marriages and lulls in rising divorce levels in countries with generally low marriage rates do not mean that two parent married families have undergone a revival. All has more to with the institution's overall decline than any renaissance. Why not look at Sweden's divorce rates? There has been no pause there - so not saved by same sex unions.



28. Between 1990 and 2000, Norway's out-of-wedlock birthrate rose from 39% to 50% as, tail gunning Swedish rates, the tendency to marry with the second child weakened in both. **Denmark** saw a levelling off during the 1990s at around 45% - which seems to relate to a slight increase in fertility among older couples, who marry after multiple births as, at the same time, there was a 25% increase in cohabitation and unmarried parenthood among mainly younger couples. About 60% of first born children in Denmark now have unmarried parents.
29. Family dissolution rates differ from divorce rates when so many people rear children outside of marriage. We need to know the rate at which parents (married or not) split up and suggestions are that throughout Scandinavia and Europe cohabiting couples with children break up at three times the rate of married parents. Rising rates of cohabitation and out-of-wedlock births are true proxies for rising rates of family dissolution.

30. **Finally**: a case has also been made for **Belgium** having a slightly upward marriage trend. Like Scandinavian experience, this is difficult to reconcile with the marriage rate per thousand population dropping from 6.5 in 1990 to 4.4 in 2000 and 4.0 in 2009.[24] Again, the waters are muddied somewhat by immigration, where entrants from the Muslim world will have a higher marriage rate than the resident population.

    Belgium's divorce rate is amongst the highest in the European Union. The crude divorce rate per 1,000 inhabitants stood at 47.0 in 2010, the same as Denmark's. Higher levels are recorded for Sweden at 54.1 and Norway at 54.8. (Otherwise, there is Bulgaria at 54.1: Estonia at 59.1 and Slovenia at 55). Belgium's unwed birth rate rivals the UK's at 45.7% in 2009. This is a swifter rise than in the UK or from 4.1% in 1980 and 11.6% in 1990, compared with the UK's 11.5% in 1980, 27.9% in 1990 and 46.3% in 2009.[25] Children

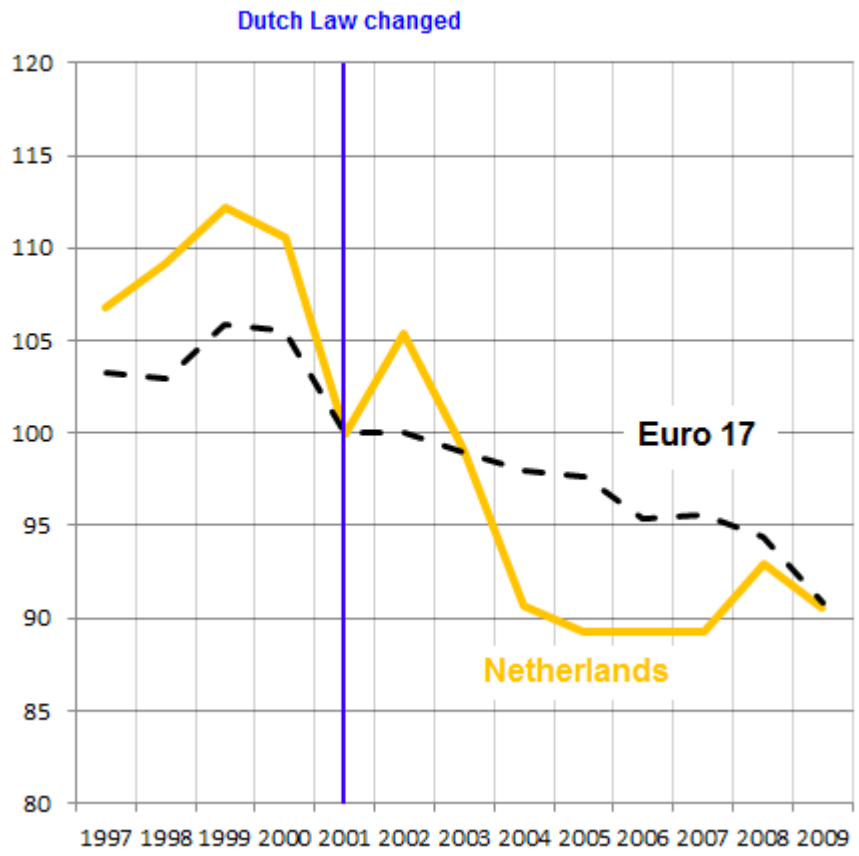
living with two parents at 14 are 65% in Belgium compared with the UK at 68.9% - a Western world low (apart from Latvia).

31. **In Sum:** from what we know about demographic trends, it is preposterous to argue that people suddenly somehow embrace marriage and slow or reverse its decline because homosexuals can have it. Exponents cherry pick their statistics. They also fail to suggest how this could possibly be so and how it is supposed to operate. Why grasp same sex marriage as the reason for the slowing of disintegrative trends, if that is what is even going on in the first place, rather than a plethora of other explanations? As already mentioned; explanations in societies with low formal union rates are bound to be more complex than simplistic mono-causal hunches. It has also been mentioned how the third phase of marital decline tends to stall around the 50% unwed birthrate level due to residual attachment to traditional forms in sections of society more resistant to the de-institutionalisation of cohabitation and procreation.

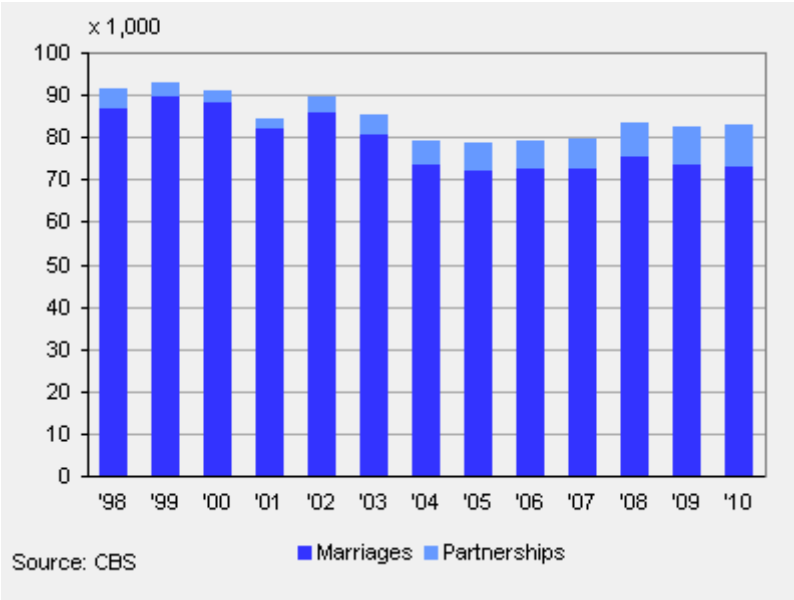
32. **As we move to more traditionally family centred societies** the picture is bleak.

    In the **Netherlands,** marriage even had a bit of a mini-renaissance in the late 80′s and early 90′s then, between 1993-4 and 2009, the trend is downhill. A slight upward move in 2002 may be partly accounted for by same sex unions – partnerships and marriages. Otherwise, marriage is declining among heterosexuals, with higher rates of divorce and out of wedlock childbearing. Dropping quite steeply from 88,000 plus in 2000, marriage is at its lowest since WWII (with 70,000 plus in 2010). There is an increase in registered partnerships – which offer a lighter relationship for heterosexuals. Nearly one in three women who enter into a registered partnership are over 40 years old, compared to more than one in five women who get married. If this suggests a remaining connection between marriage and family building, so might the way in which nine in ten couples plan to live together before marrying and two-thirds of cohabiting couples aspire to marry some time.[26]

Marriages index: Netherlands and Euro area: 1997-2009

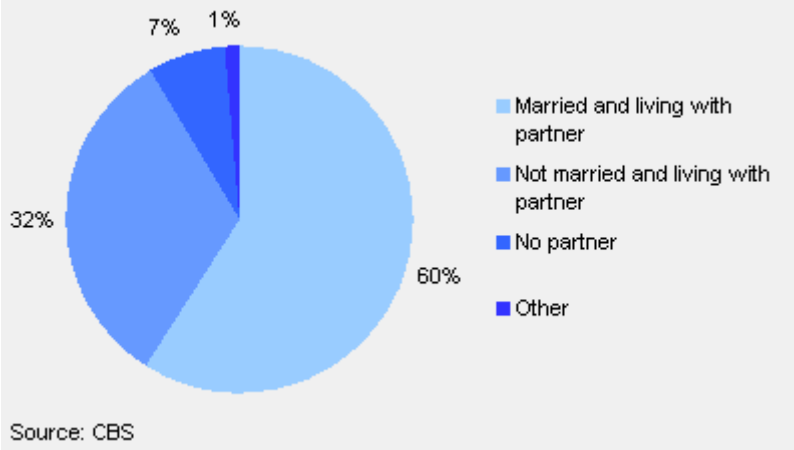


Marriages and registered partnerships: Netherlands



33. From 2001, the formal divorce rate in the Netherlands dropped. However, from 2001 – the same year as same sex marriage - couples could convert their marriages to registered partnerships, which could be annulled without a court order. Using this process of 'flash divorce', some 30,000 couples separated in this way up to 2009; almost completely compensating for the decrease in formal divorces. At the same time, rights of married couples and registered partners were extended to unregistered cohabiters. Four in ten babies are now born to unwed mothers – although if the mother has a subsequent child she is likely to marry. The rise has been particularly rapid, from 24.9% in 2000 to 43.3 % in 2009, compared with 11.4 in 1990 and only 4.1 in 1980. (UK comparisons: 46.3% in 2009, up from 27.9% in 1990 and 11.5% in 1980.) In the decade ending in 2009, the share of unmarried parents among people in their thirties went from eight to 28%. However, provinces (containing cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam) with the highest proportion of babies born to single mothers contain large immigrant groups among whom casual partnerships are more common. The level of single lone mothers seen for the UK and US is still not matched in the Netherlands.

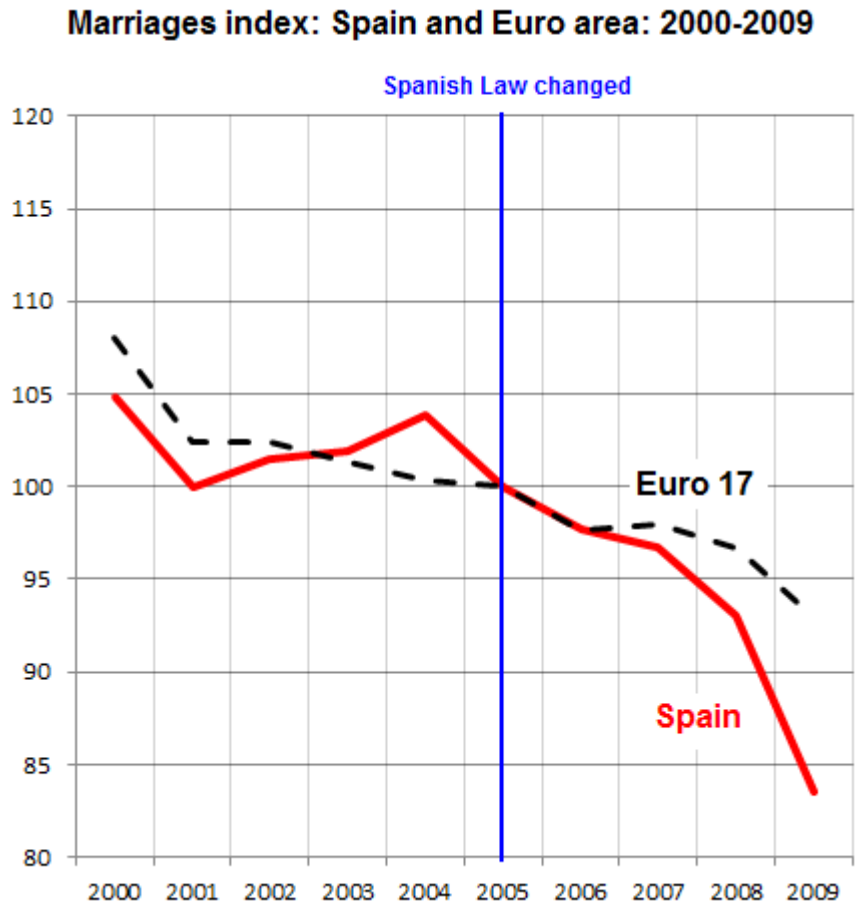
Proportion of live-born babies by marital status of the mother, 2009



34. This is happening in what has been a generally family centred country which otherwise more resembles Italy's than Scandinavian or Anglophone nations- and whether we look at low proportions of children aged three and under attending day care or nursery school, youngsters eating meals with their family, the influence of local citizens on education and

tax relief for families. Making registered partnerships available to heterosexuals and distributing the privileges of marriage to uncommitted relationships appears to be associated with the casualization and trivialization of unions.

35. **Spain** saw a pronounced downwards acceleration in its marriage decline following the introduction of same-sex marriage. This started to abate a little by 2009 – perhaps due to more same sex unions being formalized in the event of a centre right government terminating the arrangement (it has not). The annual number of marriages fell by over 14,600 over the first three years (2005-2007) in which same sex couples were able to marry. For the next three years (2008-10), the annual fall was 34,000. The descent is quite precipitous, since Spanish marriage rates (per thousand population) have been reasonably steady compared to some other countries – at 5.9 in 1980: 5.7 in 1990 and 5.4 in 2000 before the plunge to 3.8 in 2009. This includes the more than 18,000 same-sex couples who got married in Spain between 2005 and the end of 2010 (when 2.1 per cent of marriages were between people of the same sex, with 2,216 female). The State Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Transsexuals and bisexuals (ELGBT) believes that the actual number is 23,000, since not all have been recorded.



36. At the same time as Spain's socialist government introduced same sex marriage it also brought in legislation known as the 'express divorce' bill, to make the process easier and faster.

    Again, we have the association between the drive for same sex marriage in the context of a general libertarianism which trivialises and is fundamentally hostile to marriage. The legal change eliminated the need for couples to be physically separated for a period before legal proceedings could begin. In the following year (2006), 126,952 divorces were registered in 2006, a 74.3% increase on the previous year. The sharpest rise was seen in divorces between those who had been married for less than a year: up 330.6%.

37. **Verdict:** Optimistic accounts of a re-vitalisation of marriage or even 'no damage done' are, at very least, premature. This is not saying that same sex marriage is *the reason* for marital decline anywhere - simply how it does nothing to prevent it.

We can be certain that same sex marriage will do no such thing as encourage stable marriage whether for heterosexuals and/or homosexuals. Marriage in Scandinavia, Spain, Netherlands and elsewhere is in deep decline.

What does same sex marriage do to marriage?

38. Same sex marriage is both an effect and a cause of the evisceration of marriage - especially the separation between this and parenthood. As rising out-of-wedlock births and cohabitation rates - as well as legal changes - disassociate marriage from parenthood, same sex marriage becomes conceivable. If marriage is only about couple relationships, and is not intrinsically connected to parenthood, why not give the leavings to homosexuals? As marriage is redefined to accommodate same-sex couples, this reinforces the irrelevance of marriage to parenthood. Elsewhere, same sex marriage is an instigator for the casualisation of heterosexual unions and separation of marriage and parenthood.

39. In the feedback loop, either:

'Gay' marriage is the end game of long running anti-marriage and family policy - typified by Sweden. Cohabitation and out-of-wedlock birth rates were rising and marriage rates were falling in Scandinavia long before the enactment of homosexual partnership/marriage laws. These trends are explicable in terms of the removal or reduction of incentives to marry by forces hostile to traditional conjugality. Same sex partnership/marriage then locks in and reinforces existing trends toward the separation of marriage and parenthood.

Or:

Gay marriage initiates the severance and dismemberment of marriage and family in more family friendly societies, such as Spain and the Netherlands. There is free-fall towards the Scandinavian model – driving "home the message that marriage itself is outdated, and that virtually any 'family form', is acceptable."[27]

Either which way, same sex marriage is more a terminus for marriage or ultimate act of dissolution, rather than a force for revival.

By products

40. **Education.** Everywhere, the remaking of the sexes has been inseparable from an aggressive policy to equalize 'sexualities' within the context of its overriding ethos that expert elites possess a superior knowledge of how best people should live. In Sweden, the National Academy for Education conducted an extensive review of school material and schools were ordered to 'integrate gender equality and sexual orientation issues into their operations and everyday tasks. Research is meant to focus upon how 'norms and attitudes make homophobia possible' even where there are 'no statistics or consistent studies which can pinpoint discrimination due to sexual orientation', and making what might be considered offensive statements about homosexuality merit a prison term.[28]

41. **Spreading the practice.** There is the suggestion of a big, recent rise in sex ever or recently with a same sex partner and LGB-identities in the Netherlands.[29] Same for Massachusettes. This is, of course, seen elsewhere where there are homosexual endorsing and promoting curricula in schools, but it is likely to increase with same-sex marriage. This has massive health implications.

42. **Other institutions.** Churches in the UK might be better protected from hostile litigation if the established church's legal obligation to marry any eligible persons in England and Wales was ended, or the rights of any religious bodies to conduct marriages were taken away – as in Sweden. Some clearly hope that compulsion to perform same sex weddings will sever church and state and further push Christianity out of the public arena and, therefore, consciousness.[30] Undermined and stigmatized for their unreasonableness and prejudice, the moral authority of religious institutions will further retreat in favour of a narrow secular ideology, particularly as sexual behaviour at odds with traditional norms is further encouraged and advanced.

43. The prospect of disciplinary procedures faces chaplains for the NHS, universities, armed forces or anywhere else, even if they were acting in their own church outside work time. Charities may be forced to close if they cannot affirm equal marriage. Bodies which pay to use premises provided by local authorities, like a school hall for a charity sale, face bans - and so the civic and social implications go on.

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