



## Marriage equality: the international experience

### The research

**Professor M. V. Lee Badgett** is a prominent researcher and acknowledged expert on the impact of marriage equality.

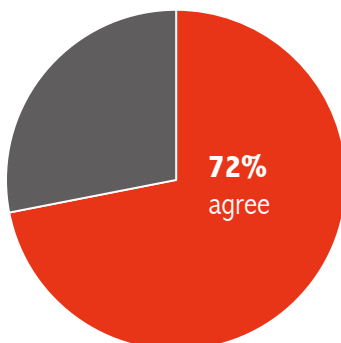
In this fact sheet we summarise her research into marriage equality in the Netherlands and Massachusetts. Prof Badgett is a professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts and the research director of the Williams Institute at UCLA. She is the author of *When Gay People Get Married: What happens when societies legalize same-sex marriage*.

### The impact on couples

The right to marry reduces the sense of **social exclusion** of gay men and lesbians. Gains from inclusion include improvements in the mental and physical health of gay people by reducing “minority stress” and increasing social support for gay couples.

Marriage **strengthens relationships**. Seventy-two percent of individuals in married Dutch couples reported feeling more responsible and committed to their spouse as a result of marriage. These effects translate into healthier, longer-lasting relationships.

#### Marriage “made me feel more committed” to spouse



### The impact on families

Access to a social institution that is widely recognized—marriage—enhances same-sex couples’ interactions with their families and communities.

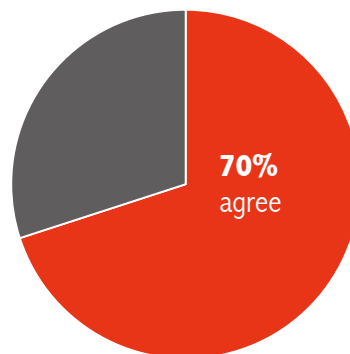
Seven out of ten feel **more accepted** in their own community as a result of being

### At a glance...

- **93%** of same-sex who marry do so because of the love and commitment they share.
- **72%** of married same-sex partners feel greater commitment to their spouses.
- **60-70%** feel more accepted by family and community.
- **25%** of married same-sex partners have children and most of these marry because of their children.
- **93%** of gay parents say their children are happier having married parents.
- **Civil unions** are seen as “making a statement about the inferiority of gay people”.
- **In the first year** after marriage equality in Iowa, Vermont and Massachusetts, 30% of same-sex couples had married. After one year of civil unions in six different states, only 18% of same-sex couples had entered such unions.
- The economic benefit of marriage equality to the Australian economy will be at least **\$161 million**.
- If Tasmania goes it alone the benefit will be **\$96 million**.

married. Sixty-two percent of same-sex couples agreed that their families have become more accepting of their partner as a result of being married.

#### Marriage “made me feel more accepted”

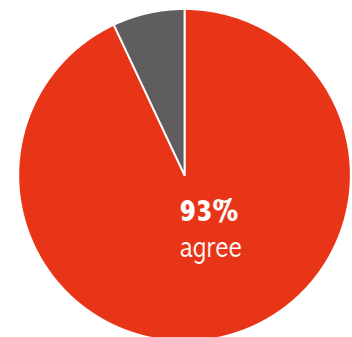


### The impact on children

The **children** in same-sex couples’ families gain when their parents can marry. More than one-quarter of same-sex couples indicate that they have children in their home and that they and/or their spouse serves as a parent to those children. Of these households, nearly all (93%) agreed that their children are happier and better off as a result of their marriage.

Many parents reported that their children felt more **secure and protected**. Others noted that their children gained a sense of stability. A third common response was that marriage allowed children to see their families as being validated or legitimated by society or the government.

#### Children “happier & better off” as a result of parents’ marriage



### Civil unions rejected

Lesbian and gay people see alternative ways of granting legal status, such as civil unions, civil partnerships, domestic partnerships or registered partnerships, as **inferior** social and legal statuses.

When given an option of marriage or registered partnership, Dutch same-sex (and, for that matter, different-sex) couples were much more likely to formalize their unions with marriage.

Dutch couples understood the political point of registered partnerships as making a statement about the inferiority of gay people generally.

Likewise, in the United States, there is strong evidence that same-sex couples **prefer marriage to civil unions**, even though civil unions come with very similar legal rights and benefits.



In the first year after marriage equality in Iowa, Vermont and Massachusetts, **30%** of same-sex couples had married. After one year of civil unions in six different states, only **18%** of same-sex couples had entered such unions.

**Take-up of Marriage vs. Civil unions**

Marriage: (1 year on)	<b>30%</b> of same-sex couples were married. <sup>1</sup>
Civil unions: (1 year on)	<b>18%</b> of same-sex couples were 'civil-unioned'. <sup>2</sup>

1. Iowa, Vermont & Massachusetts, USA  
2. An average of six different states, USA

**Benefits for the economy**

Marriage equality also benefits the economy. In Massachusetts the economic dividend from same-sex weddings was a boost of **\$111 million** over five years.

In Australia, allowing same-sex marriages would inject at least **\$161 million** into the national economy.

If a state like Tasmania were to become the first state to allow same-sex marriages it would benefit by at least **\$96 million**.

**Note:** These Australian estimates, above, are conservative figures based on the lowest estimate of the number of same-sex couples and the lowest estimate of same-sex wedding spend. In 2010 Australian Marriage Equality estimated that the Australian same-sex wedding spend would be \$742 million. This was based on same-sex couples spending the same amount on their weddings as heterosexual couples. Prof Badgett assumes same-sex couples spend 75% less on their weddings than heterosexual couples because same-sex couples may receive less financial support from their parents to cover wedding costs, and same-sex couples who have been together for many years might not spend as much as newer couples.

**Benefit to the economy**

