

# LGBT



# Community in Canada

## Did you Know?

On July 20th, 2005, 99.6% of Canada's population lived in a jurisdiction where same-sex couples could marry. PEI was the only province remaining left to legalize same-sex marriage (until August of the same year.) (4)

## Background:

Although same-sex marriage is now legal everywhere in Canada, discrimination and prejudice against the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community (LGBT) still exists. The Diversity Institute strongly believes that regardless of sexual orientation, individuals should be treated with mutual respect. To promote this goal, the Diversity Institute is committed to raising awareness on this issue.

## By The Numbers:

- A total of 34,200 same-sex common-law couples were counted in Canada in 2001, representing 0.5% of all couples. (1)
- There were slightly more male same-sex common-law couples than female counted in Canada in 2001. (1)
- The 2001 census counted about 19,000 male same-sex couples, which is about 55% of the total. (1)
- The proportion of all same-sex couples who resided in Toronto in 2006 was 21.2%. (2)

## Same-Sex Marriage:

- The number of same-sex couples in 2006 was 45,300. Of these, about 7,500 (16.5%) were married couples and 37,900 (83.5%) were common-law couples. (2)
- 53.7% of the same-sex married spouses were men. (2)
- 46.3% of same-sex married spouses were women. (2)
- Married or common-law couples with children aged 24 and under living at home represented only 44% of all families in Canada. (1)
- In 1991, they accounted for 49% of all families, and in 1981 they represented more than one-half (55%). (1)

## History/Laws:

Since 1969, there have been many changes in the state of LGBT equality rights across Canada:

- In 1999, The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that it is unconstitutional to deny same-sex couples equality;
- Since that time, many governments across Canada have embarked on programs of wholesale legislative reform;
- Many rights such as adoption rights,

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### Status of same-sex marriage in Canada before July 20th, 2005 (4):

**Figure 1:** The dark shaded region is where same-sex marriage was permitted in Canada in 2005

inheritance, and spousal support that was previously reserved for heterosexuals are gradually being extended to same-sex couples;

- In 2000, Parliament passes Bill C-23, the Modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act;
- This legislation amended 68 federal statutes to provide all common-law relationships (including same-sex) with nearly all the rights and responsibilities of heterosexual married couples under federal law. (3)
- On August 19th, 2005, same-sex marriages became legal everywhere in Canada. (4)

### Victimization:

The following information is based on the LGBT community in Canada and was gathered from the Canadian General Social Survey (GSS). This survey gathers data on social trends in order to monitor changes in the living conditions and well being of Canadians over time.(5)

- According to the 2004 GSS, gays, lesbians and bisexuals reported that they experience higher rates of violent victimization including sexual assault, robbery and physical assault, than their heterosexual counterparts;

### References:

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- (5) Beauchamp, D.L. (2004) Sexual Orientation and Victimization. Retrieved August 21st 2009 from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85f0033m/85f0033m2008016-eng.pdf>.
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- (7) Wikipedia. (2009) Retrieved August 24th 2009 from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Same-sex\\_marriage\\_legislation\\_around\\_the\\_world](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Same-sex_marriage_legislation_around_the_world).

- The proportion of gays, lesbians and bisexuals who felt they had experienced discrimination was about 3 times higher than that of heterosexuals;
- Furthermore, 78% of gays and lesbians who experienced discrimination believed it was because of their sexual orientation compared to 29% of bisexuals and 2% of heterosexuals;
- Gays, lesbians and bisexuals expressed lower levels of satisfaction with police performance than their heterosexual counterparts. Fewer gays, lesbians and bisexuals felt that the police were doing a good job of treating people fairly compared to heterosexuals (42% of gays/lesbians and 47% of bisexuals versus 60% of heterosexuals). (5)
- Although many challenges still lie ahead, Governments, courts and the general public across Canada are recognizing the right of LGBT people to be treated equally. (3)

### The Future:

- Canada is one of the most progressive countries in the world at embracing diversity, specifically with regards to the LGBT community. (6)
- Toronto alone has an area devoted to the LGBT community which helps to support the rights and equalities of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered by holding an annual pride week parade in downtown Toronto. (6)
- The issue of legalizing same-sex marriage is very controversial in many jurisdictions, and therefore, many governments tend to create a common-law status for same-sex couples. (7)
- As of July 2009, the debate of legalizing same-sex marriage has been officially proposed in almost a dozen countries, and debates over other forms of recognition continue within several others. (7)
- Canada is one of seven countries to legalize same-sex marriage. (7) Once again, being a leader in embracing diversity and breaking through the opposing and controversial attitudes in hopes to inspire others to follow suit.