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Report confirms same-sex marriage does not influence heterosexual marriage

Council on Contemporary Families study focuses on Scandinavian countries where same-sex marriage is legal

You can't prove a negative. But University of Massachusetts economist Lee Badgett demonstrates that the adoption of same-sex marriage and same-sex partnership rights in Scandinavia and the Netherlands has not changed previously-existing trends in marriage, divorce, cohabitation or out-of-wedlock childbearing. Same-sex marriage has not undermined heterosexual marriage where it has been adopted and is unlikely do so in the United States. Surprisingly, in many countries where there is greater tolerance for same-sex marriage and unwed childbearing, children actually spend more of their lives with their two biological parents than in the U.S.

In a briefing paper prepared for the Council on Contemporary Families and the Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies, Professor Badgett presents evidence from Scandinavia and the Netherlands to make her case. Since the passage of partner recognition laws, and contrary to widely-quoted claims, heterosexual marriage rates in Denmark actually increased after adoption of same-sex marriage. They are now the highest they have been since the early 1970s. In other countries that adopted same-sex partnerships, marriage rates remained the same or increased slightly.

Interestingly enough, divorce rates have remained the same.

The majority of families with children in Scandinavia and the Netherlands are still headed by married parents. In fact, in Norway 77 percent of couples with children are married. And 75 percent of Dutch



A study by the Council on Contemporary Families concludes that allowing same-sex marriage in this country would have no impact on heterosexual marriages

families with children include married couples. By comparison, 72 percent of U.S. families with children are headed by married couples.

Acceptance of same-sex partners has not weakened commitments to children. The average Scandinavian child spends more than 80 percent of his or her life living with both parents — more time than the average American child.

According to Badgett, none of the evidence demonstrates that same-sex partnership laws were responsible for the slight increase in heterosexual marriages. The point is that the partner recognition laws have had no impact on the circumstances and situation of marriage and families in Scandinavia and the Netherlands.

"In the end, the Scandinavian and Dutch experience suggests that there is little reason to worry that heterosexual people will flee marriage if gay and lesbian couples get the same rights," concludes Professor Badgett.

info: www.iglss.org

— Wire services contributed to this report.



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