



10 REASONS WHY THE GOVERNMENT IS WRONG TO REDEFINE MARRIAGE



Reason 1

It will undermine marriage

Evidence shows that redefining marriage actually undermines support for marriage in wider society. Neither has it delivered the promised stability for same-sex couples. In Spain, after gay marriage was introduced, marriage rates across the whole population plummeted.¹ In the Netherlands too there has been a significant fall in the marriage rate since marriage was redefined.² Same-sex marriage does not promote marriage.

Reason 2

Marriage is part of our history

Marriage between a man and a woman is not a recent social invention. Everyone knows that marriage predates law, nation and church. It goes back to the dawn of time. Yes, matrimonial law may have been tweaked over the years, but the law has never fundamentally altered the essential nature of marriage: a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman. Same-sex marriage would rewrite hundreds of years of British legal tradition and thousands of years of cultural heritage.

Reason 3

Equality already exists

Same-sex couples already have equality. All the legal rights of marriage are already available to same-sex couples through civil partnerships. Equality doesn't mean bland uniformity or state-imposed sameness. If the Government genuinely wants to pursue equality, why is it banning heterosexual couples from entering a civil partnership? Same-sex couples have equal rights through civil partnerships, but they don't have the right to redefine marriage for everyone else.

Reason 4

Impact on schools

The current law requires schools to teach children about the importance of marriage. If marriage is given a new definition, it will be endorsed in schools. According to expert legal advice, any teacher who fails to endorse same-sex marriage in the classroom could be dismissed. Parents will have no legal right to withdraw their children from lessons which endorse same-sex marriage across the curriculum. Already supporters of gay marriage are recommending books for use in schools which undermine traditional marriage, and call on schools to get children to act out gay weddings.³ The effect on schools will be polarising and divisive.

Reason 5

Thin end of the wedge

If we redefine marriage once, what's to stop marriage being redefined yet further? If marriage is solely about love and commitment between consenting adults, what's to say we shouldn't recognise three-way relationships? It's already happened in nations that redefined marriage. In Brazil, a three-way relationship was given marriage-like recognition under civil partnership laws.⁴ A similar situation has existed in the Netherlands for several years.⁵ In Canada after marriage was redefined, a polygamist argued in court that his relationship should be recognised in law.⁶ When politicians meddle with marriage it all starts to unravel.

Reason 6

Marginalises the majority

Calling opponents "bigots" is meant to shut down debate and stop people thinking for themselves. Nick Clegg landed in hot water over a draft speech which called opponents of redefining marriage "bigots".⁷ He later retracted

the word, but there's no doubt that many who support this radical agenda think anyone who disagrees is not worthy of respect. However, support for traditional marriage has come from many respected academics, lawyers, politicians of all parties, and religious leaders. They all know that redefining marriage would have a profound impact.

Reason 7

Many gay people don't want it

Polling shows that only a minority of gay people (39 per cent) believe gay marriage is a priority.⁸ And according to the Government only 3 per cent of gay people would enter a same-sex marriage.⁹ A number of gay celebrities and journalists are themselves opposed to gay marriage. Latest official data shows that only 0.5 per cent of households are headed by a same-sex couple.¹⁰ Not all of them want, or will enter, a same-sex marriage. So, why is such a monumental change being imposed throughout society?

Reason 8

The public don't want it

Seven in ten people want to keep marriage as it is.¹¹ Other polling which purports to show public support for gay marriage fails to tell respondents that equal rights are already available through civil partnerships.¹² When people are told this crucial fact, most people say keep marriage as it is.¹³ MPs say their postbags have been dominated by public opposition to redefining marriage.¹⁴ Ordinary people want the Government to concentrate on reviving the economy and providing better public services, not meddling with marriage.¹⁵

Reason 9

A huge change to society

Since we already have civil partnerships, isn't same-sex marriage just a small logical next step? No. Rewriting the meaning of marriage will have a far-reaching impact on society. Over 3,000 laws make reference to marriage. The Government has already admitted that official documents will need to be rewritten to remove words like 'husband' and 'wife'. In France the Government is eradicating the words 'father' and 'mother' from all official documents. The Church of England has warned that it could lead to disestablishment and a constitutional crisis.¹⁶

Reason 10

Freedom of conscience will be eroded

The civil liberty of people who believe in traditional marriage is already being eroded. A housing manager from Manchester was demoted and lost 40 per cent of his salary for stating, outside work time, that gay weddings in churches were "an equality too far".¹⁷ Conferences and symposiums in support of traditional marriage have been thrown out of venues. Adverts in support of a 600,000-strong public petition in favour of traditional marriage have been investigated as "offensive".¹⁸ And all this has taken place before any change to the law has taken place. What will it be like if the law does change? A leading human rights lawyer has outlined the devastating impact of redefining marriage on civil liberties.¹⁹

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References

- ¹ Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Press Release, *Vital Statistics and Basic Demographic Indicators: Preview data for 2011*, 29 June 2012, page 5
- ² Duncan, William C, 'The Tenth Anniversary of Dutch Same-Sex Marriage: How Is Marriage Doing in the Netherlands?', *iMAP Research Brief*, Vol.4, No.3, 2011; *Marriages and Partnership registrations: Key Statistics*, CBSStatLine, 2012, see <http://tinyurl.com/colyp2o>
- ³ Stonewall Education Guides, *Including different families*, Stonewall, pages 11-13
- ⁴ *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 August 2012
- ⁵ *The Brussels Journal*, 26 September 2005, see <http://www.brusselsjournal.com/node/301>; This was an example of a cohabitation agreement [Government of the Netherlands, *Marriage, Registered Partnership and Cohabitation Agreements*, see <http://tinyurl.com/bdykz59>]
- ⁶ *PinkNews.co.uk*, 4 February 2009, see <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2009/02/04/mormon-accused-of-polygamy-to-use-gay-marriage-as-defence/>
- ⁷ *The Daily Mail*, 12 September 2012
- ⁸ 39 per cent of respondents identifying as gay/lesbian/bisexual or other agreed with the statement "I think redefining marriage is a priority for gay people". 27 per cent disagreed, 34 per cent said "don't know". See *Civil Partnerships Survey*, ComRes, 27 April - 20 May 2012, Table 3, page 12
- ⁹ The Government's "best estimate assumes no increase in demand" for same-sex marriage, over and above the current demand for civil partnerships as they have "no evidence that there would be such an increase" [*Equal civil marriage consultation Impact Assessment*, Government Equalities Office, January 2012, pages 2 and 5].
- Around 3 per cent of homosexuals have ever been in a civil partnership (based on ONS figures of civil partnership registration and using the Government's estimate that 6 per cent of the population are LGB)
- ¹⁰ *Families and Households, 2012*, Office for National Statistics, 1 November 2012, Table 1, page 4
- ¹¹ *Marriage Survey*, ComRes, 23-24 February 2012, Table 1, page 2
- ¹² *Gay Couples' Rights Survey*, Populus, 9-11 March 2012, Table 2, page 2; *Sunday Telegraph Survey*, ICM, 7-8 March 2012, Table 1, page 1
- ¹³ *Sunday Times Survey*, YouGov, 8-9 March 2012, page 7; *Marriage Attitude Survey*, ComRes, 6-8 January 2012
- ¹⁴ *The Daily Telegraph*, 1 October 2012
- ¹⁵ *Sunday Telegraph Survey*, ICM, 7-8 March 2012, Table 4, page 7; *The Sunday Telegraph*, 11 March 2012
- ¹⁶ *The Daily Telegraph*, 14 March 2012; *Equal Civil Marriage – Impact Assessment*, Home Office, January 2012, pages 7-8; *Mail Online*, 24 September 2012, see <http://tinyurl.com/9trjds8>; *Telegraph.co.uk*, 12 June 2012, see <http://tinyurl.com/7h4mp3w>
- ¹⁷ *The Mail on Sunday*, 23 October 2011
- ¹⁸ *Mail Online*, 15 May 2012, see <http://tinyurl.com/b3jdx8n>
- ¹⁹ *Re: The Implications for Freedom of Conscience and Religious Liberty Arising from Redefining Marriage in England and Wales*, Aidan O'Neill, 27 July 2012. See summary at <http://c4m.org.uk/downloads/legalopinionsummary.pdf>



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