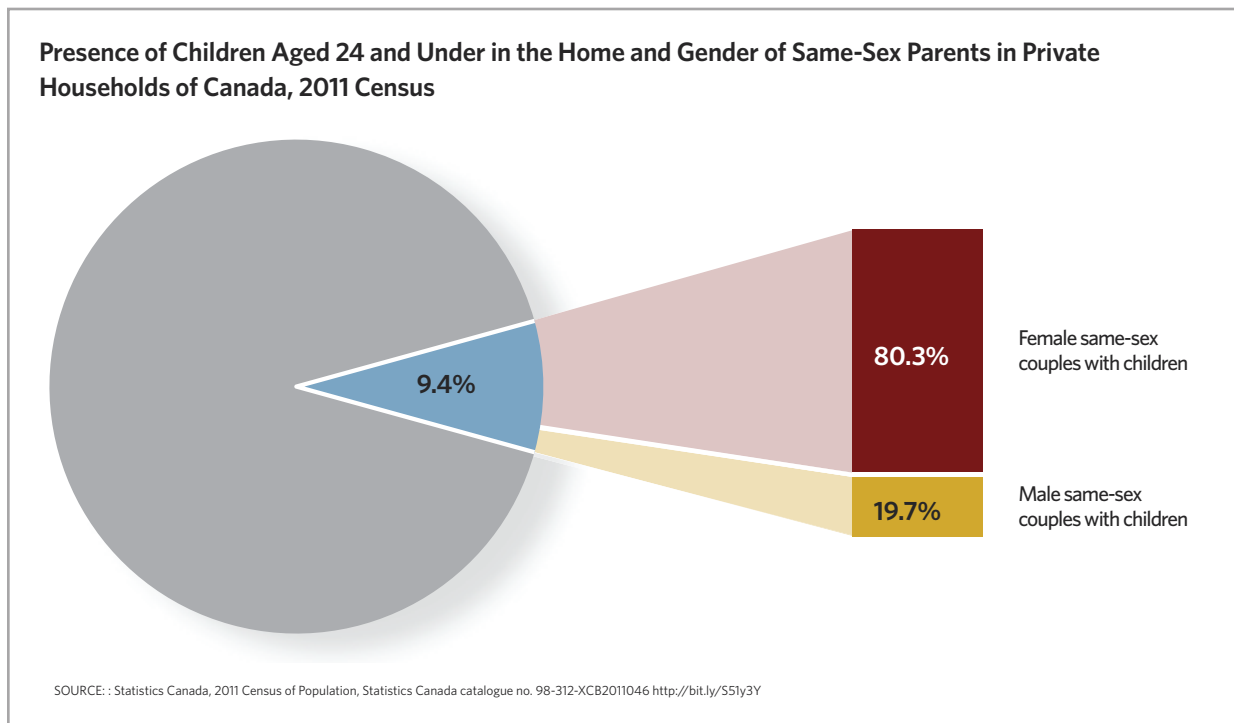


FASCINATING FAMILIES

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Same-Sex Couples Raising Children



Over the past decade, same-sex couples in Canada have made significant progress, both in terms of legal recognition and social acceptance. Following the nationwide legalization of same-sex marriage in 2005, the number of these families in Canada has increased significantly, growing by 42% since the 2006 Census to 64,575 couples in 2011.¹ These changes have helped pave the way for a generation of same-sex couples aspiring to raise children of their own.

Data from the 2006 and 2011 censuses show that many same-sex couples are raising children: the proportion who have children in the home rose from 9% in 2006² to 9.4% in 2011.³ Female same-sex

couples are the most likely to be raising kids, with 16.5% of this group reporting children in the home in 2011.⁴ Male same-sex couples are also raising children, 3.4% of whom brought children into the home though adoption, surrogacy or from a previous opposite-sex relationship.⁵

Despite the recent progress made by same-sex couple families in Canada, and countless studies that have shown that children of LGBTTTQ* parents are as well-adjusted and psychologically healthy as those of opposite-sex couples,^{6, 7, 8} some children in these families continue to face social discrimination.

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* LGBTTTQ refers to individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirit or queer.

In a 2011 survey of Canadian high-school students, many children of LBTTQ parents reported receiving verbal (37%) and physical (27%) harassment related to the sexual orientation of their parents while at school.⁹

This discrimination is not always at the hands of peers, either: one-fifth of this group said that their teachers “sometimes” or “frequently” make homophobic comments.¹⁰ This climate affects not only the overall well-being of children in these families, but their academic experience as well – for example, they were far more likely than children of opposite-sex parents to report having skipped school because they “did not feel safe there” (40% and 13%, respectively).¹¹

Family Lens

The legal and social changes of the past decade point toward a growing recognition of diverse family types in Canadian society. Same-sex parents, like all parents, face their own set of issues – they often have to navigate complex legal issues related to adoption and fertility, while their children must be prepared to deal with possible discrimination they may experience. Their experiences may be unique, but these families are networks of care and support like any other, and contribute equally to the fabric of Canadian society.

¹ Statistics Canada, “Portrait of Families and Living Arrangements in Canada,” *2011 Analytical Products*, Statistics Canada catalogue no. 98-312-X-2011-001 (accessed January 30, 2013), <http://bit.ly/RsSNGZ>.

² Statistics Canada, “2006 Census: Family Portrait: Continuity and Change in Canadian Families and Households in 2006: National Portrait: Census Families,” *2006 Census Analysis Series*, Statistics Canada catalogue no. 97-553-XWE2006001 (accessed January 28, 2013), <http://bit.ly/SGKBIX>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ M. Dufur, B.A. McKune, J.P. Hoffmann and S.J. Bahr, *Adolescent Outcomes in Single Parent, Heterosexual Couple, and Homosexual Couple Families: Findings from a National Survey*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, New York, New York CityOnline (2007) (accessed January 25, 2013).

⁷ E. Short, D.W. Riggs, A. Perlesz, R. Brown and G. Kane, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Parented Families: A Literature Review Prepared for the Australian Psychological Society* (2007) (accessed January 29, 2013), <http://bit.ly/bLBt5a>.

⁸ American Psychological Association, *Lesbian and Gay Parenting* (2005) (accessed January 20, 2013), <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/parenting-full.pdf>.

⁹ C. Taylor and T. Peter with T.L. McMinn, T. Elliott, S. Beldom, A. Ferry, Z. Gross, S. Paquin and K. Schachter, *Every Class in Every School: The First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools*, Toronto, ON: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust (2011) (accessed January 24, 2013), <http://bit.ly/2vKsL90>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

