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Most support gay rights, poll says

OTTAWA – Most Canadians believe gays and lesbians should be protected from discrimination but shouldn't be allowed to legally marry, says a poll released today.

Almost two out of every three Canadians, or 64 per cent, support recently introduced amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act while 28 per cent oppose them, according to the Angus Reid-Southam News poll. Eight per cent were unsure.

The bill, tabled after years of promises by the Conservative government, would add sexual orientation to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination in federal jurisdictions.

But the changes would also define marriage as the union between a man and a woman, thus limiting protection from discrimination based on marital status to opposite-sex couples.

The Reid poll, conducted Jan. 20-30, found

56 per cent of respondents don't believe gay marriages should be legally recognized, although 37 per cent feel same-sex couples should be included in the definition of marriage. Seven per cent were unsure.

Support for extending legal protection from discrimination is high in all walks of life and in all parts of the country.

Alberta, which is embroiled in its own gay rights controversy, has the lowest support, at 52 per cent, followed by Manitoba-Saskatchewan (55 per cent), the Atlantic provinces (58) and Ontario (61).

People in Quebec and British Columbia – which already outlaw discrimination against homosexuals – are the most enthusiastic supporters of the changes at 75 and 68 per cent, respectively.

Support is also highest among young people (70 per cent of those between 18 and 34 and 67 per cent of people between 35 and

54) and those with higher education (73 per cent of those with a university degree and 67 per cent of those with some post-secondary education).

Women are also more inclined to support the changes than men, at 69 per cent versus 58 per cent.

Reid also found that while more than half of Canadians of all political stripes endorse the anti-discrimination change, only 28 per cent of those who support the Reform party agree.

The inclusion of gay and lesbian unions in the legal definition of marriage has the greatest number of backers in Quebec, where 42 per cent support it and 54 per cent are opposed, and among university graduates, with 46 per cent in favour and 47 per cent against.

Canadians under age 35 are evenly divided on the issue (49 per cent in favour and 45 per cent against).

NOTE: The article EM9311 *Most support gay rights, poll says* reprinted above raises two matters of statistical interest.

- In the the context of Chapter 13 of the Statistics 231 Course Notes, the *absence* of confidence intervals to quantify the likely magnitude of sample error.
- More generally, the absence of tabular presentation to make it easier for the reader to assimilate the twenty-six percentages which are quoted. [Readers may like to hone their skills in table construction by drawing up a table that facilitates a reader's assimilation of the information in the 26 percentages.]

The article EM9311 reprinted above is used in Chapter 13 of the STAT 231 Course Materials and in Figure 2.19a of the STAT 332 Course Materials.