

2003 Lethbridge Public Opinion Study (Fall)

Same Sex Marriages

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for
The Lethbridge Herald



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City of Lethbridge

Located in southwestern Alberta, the city of Lethbridge is home to 72,717 residents, 57,674 of which are 18 years of age or older.



The city is divided into six census areas, two each for its South, North and West geographic areas. It is divided north and south by Alberta highway 3, and east west by the Oldman River.

South Lethbridge's 27,941 residents represent 38.4 of the city's total population. West Lethbridge (22,429) and north Lethbridge (22,347) represent 30.8 and 30.7 respectively.

Methodology

This report is based on data collected by students enrolled in STS270 – Social Science Research Methods and PSC150 – Local Government at Lethbridge Community College in the Fall of 2003. Students interviewed 769 adult residents by telephone over a two-week period from October 1 to 15, 2003 using numbers drawn randomly from the Lethbridge telephone directory.

Using this method, the sample yields a margin of error of ± 3.5 , 19 times out of 20. The margin of error increases when analyzing sub-samples of the data.

Analysis of the demographic data indicated that, within acceptable limits, the sample accurately represents the demographic distribution of the voting age population within the city of Lethbridge.

These data are part of a larger study of the opinions and attitudes of Lethbridge residents conducted by the Citizen Society Research Lab at LCC. The Lethbridge Herald sponsored this analysis and we wish to express our thanks for their continuing support of applied research at Lethbridge Community College.

What follows is a selection of our findings based on the questions below.

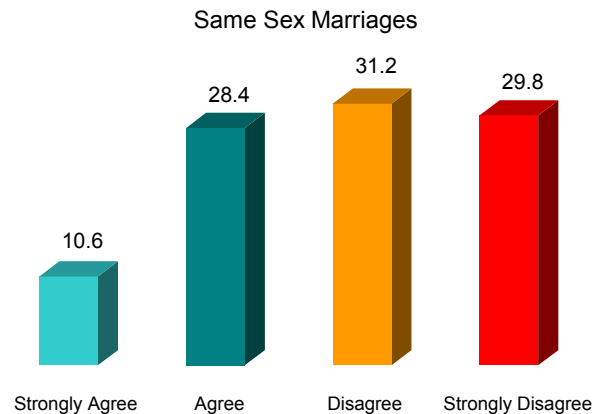
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- Q. The federal government should recognize same sex marriages giving them equal legal standing with traditional marriages.
- Q. Religious institutions should be free to choose whether or not they will perform same sex marriage ceremonies even if the federal government legalizes same sex marriages.
- Q. The Alberta government should use the notwithstanding clause to protect the traditional definition of marriage in Alberta.

Same Sex Marriages

When asked for their opinions on legalizing same sex marriages in Canada, a majority of Lethbridge residents (61%) indicated they disagree with the federal government's plan to give same sex marriages the same legal standing as traditional marriages. However, 40% believe same sex marriages should be legal.

West side residents (50.2%), those with University degrees (52.0%), younger residents (53.4%), and those who never go to church (54.1%) are most supportive. Seniors (83.8%), those with HS or education or less (76.8%), and those who attend church most frequently (85.9%) are most opposed.

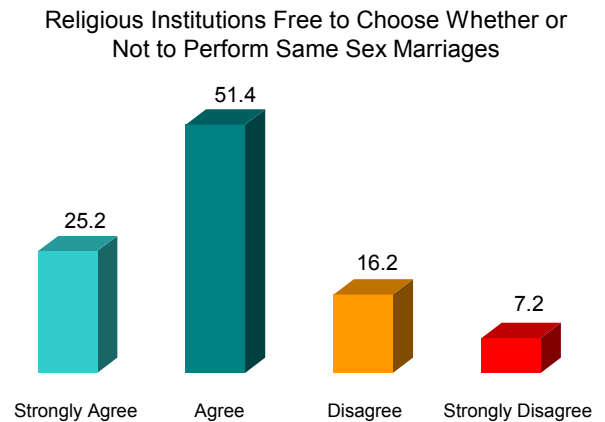


Religious Institutions

A much larger majority of residents (76.6%) believe that religious institutions should be free to choose whether or not to perform same sex marriage ceremonies even if they are legal.

Alternatively, almost a quarter of all residents (23.4%) believe that, if the federal government legalizes same sex marriages, religious institutions should not be free to choose whether or not to marry same sex couples.

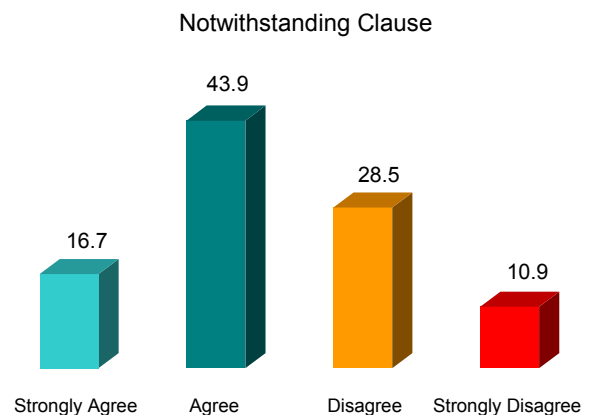
Few demographic differences were measured on this issue with most subgroups of Lethbridge residents demonstrating similar patterns of support and opposition.



Notwithstanding Clause

A majority of Lethbridge residents (60.6%) are also supportive of the Alberta government's plans to use the Charter of Rights and Freedom's notwithstanding clause to protect the traditional definition of marriage.

Support and opposition for using the notwithstanding clause largely mirrored overall support and opposition patterns with a majority of West side residents opposed to using the notwithstanding clause (52.9%). A majority of those with university education are also opposed (53.5%).

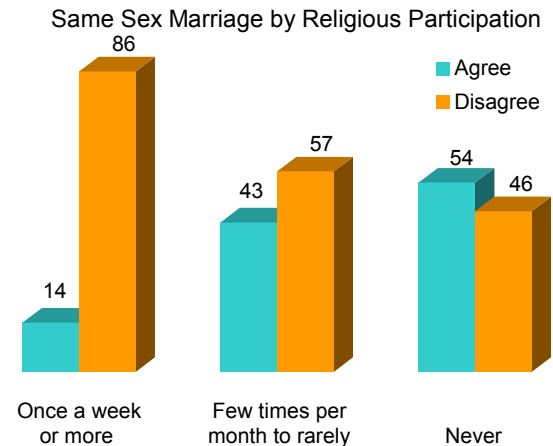


Effect of Religion on Opinion

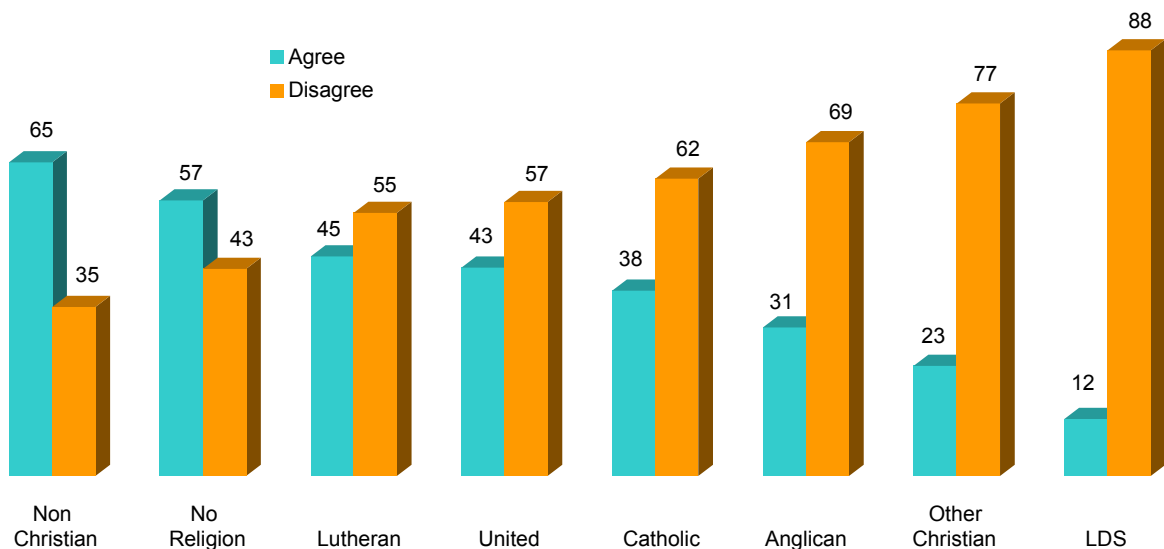
Not surprisingly, frequency of religious participation has a strong influence on whether or not an individual supports or opposes same sex marriages.

Lethbridge residents who attend church most often (once a week or more) are most opposed (86%) while those who never attend are most supportive (54%).

Religious denomination is also a strong predictor of opinion with Lethbridge's Mormon community most opposed (88%), followed by other smaller Christian denominations (77%), Anglicans (69%) and Catholics (62%), United church members (57%) and Lutherans (55%). A majority of individuals with no religious affiliation are supportive of same sex marriages (57%) as are members of Lethbridge's non-Christian churches (65%).



Same Sex Marriages by Religious Denomination

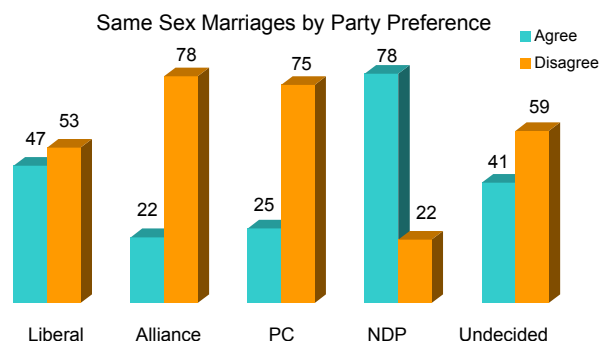


Same Sex Marriage by Party Preference

Not unexpectedly, federal NDP supporters are most likely to agree with legalizing same sex marriages (78%) followed by Liberals (47%).

Alliance (78%) and Progressive Conservative supporters (75%) are most opposed.

Undecided voters hold similar opinions as the average Lethbridge voter with 41% of undecided voters supportive and 59% opposed.



Snapshot of Differences

Same Sex Marriages by Gender (%)

	Male	Female	Total
Agree	36.3	41.3	39.0
Disagree	63.7	58.7	61.0

Same Sex Marriages by Area of City (%)

	South	North	West
Agree	35.3	34.8	50.2
Disagree	64.7	65.2	49.8

Same Sex Marriages by Income (%)

	Under \$30,000	\$30,000 to \$60,000	Over \$60,000
Agree	42.9	37.3	35.6
Disagree	57.1	62.7	64.4

Same Sex Marriages by Education (%)

	H-School or less	Some Post- Secondary	Col-Tech- Trade Grad	University Grad
Agree	23.2	40.9	38.0	52.0
Disagree	76.8	59.1	62.0	48.0

Same Sex Marriages by Age (%)

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 or older
Agree	53.4	41.8	33.0	16.2
Disagree	46.6	58.2	67.0	83.8

Same Sex Marriages by Religious Participation (%)

	Once/week or more	Few/month to rarely	Never
Agree	14.1	42.7	54.1
Disagree	85.9	57.3	45.9

Same Sex Marriages by Religious Denomination (%)

	Non Christian	No Religion	Lutheran	United	Catholic	Anglican	Other Christian	LDS
Agree	65.0	57.1	45.5	43.2	38.4	30.8	22.8	11.8
Disagree	35.0	42.9	54.5	56.8	61.6	69.2	77.2	88.2

Same Sex Marriages by Vote Intention (%)

	Liberal	Alliance	PC	NDP	Undecided
Agree	46.9	22.5	25.5	78.3	41.2
Disagree	53.1	77.5	74.5	21.7	58.8

Tabular Data

Same Sex Marriages (%)

Q. The federal government should recognize same sex marriages giving them equal legal standing with traditional marriages.

Same Sex Marriages by Gender (%)

	Male	Female	Total
Strongly Agree	7.5	13.6	10.6
Agree	28.8	27.8	28.4
Disagree	32.3	30.2	31.2
Strongly Disagree	31.4	28.3	29.8

Same Sex Marriages by Area of City (%)

	South	North	West
Strongly Agree	9.0	8.3	15.4
Agree	26.2	26.5	34.8
Disagree	29.9	34.3	29.4
Strongly Disagree	34.9	30.9	20.4

Same Sex Marriages by Income (%)

	Under \$30,000	\$30,000 to \$60,000	Over \$60,000
Strongly Agree	12.2	9.1	9.3
Agree	31.0	28.4	26.1
Disagree	30.0	31.3	32.3
Strongly Disagree	26.8	31.3	32.3

Same Sex Marriages by Education (%)

	H-School or less	Some Post-Secondary	Col-Tech-Trade Grad	University Grad
Strongly Agree	3.7	11.0	9.2	17.3
Agree	19.5	29.8	28.3	34.6
Disagree	39.0	31.5	31.0	24.0
Strongly Disagree	37.8	27.6	31.5	24.0

Same Sex Marriages by Age (%)

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 or older
Strongly Agree	15.5	12.1	8.7	1.9
Agree	38.2	29.9	24.2	14.3
Disagree	21.8	33.8	31.5	44.8
Strongly Disagree	24.5	24.2	35.6	39.0

Religious Institutions (%)

Q. Religious institutions should be free to choose whether or not they will perform same sex marriage ceremonies even if the federal government legalizes same sex marriages.

Religious Institutions by Gender (%)

	Male	Female	Total
Strongly Agree	26.5	23.9	25.2
Agree	47.6	55.0	51.4
Disagree	17.2	15.3	16.2
Strongly Disagree	8.7	5.8	7.2

Religious Institutions by Area of City (%)

	South	North	West
Strongly Agree	26.3	24.6	25.4
Agree	51.0	51.9	52.6
Disagree	16.8	16.0	14.6
Strongly Disagree	5.9	7.5	7.5

Religious Institutions by Income (%)

	Under \$30,000	\$30,000 to \$60,000	Over \$60,000
Strongly Agree	20.4	24.4	31.5
Agree	57.4	52.0	44.2
Disagree	15.7	15.4	15.2
Strongly Disagree	6.5	8.3	9.1

Religious Institutions by Education (%)

	H-School or less	Some Post-Secondary	Col-Tech-Trade Grad	University Grad
Strongly Agree	16.8	24.7	24.6	33.7
Agree	53.9	52.2	54.5	45.5
Disagree	19.8	19.8	10.5	15.0
Strongly Disagree	9.6	3.3	10.5	5.9

Religious Institutions by Age (%)

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 or older
Strongly Agree	26.7	20.2	31.9	16.8
Agree	52.0	55.8	46.0	53.3
Disagree	13.8	16.0	15.9	22.4
Strongly Disagree	7.6	8.0	6.2	7.5

Notwithstanding Clause (%)

Q. The Alberta government should use the notwithstanding clause to protect the traditional definition of marriage in Alberta.

Notwithstanding Clause by Gender (%)

	Male	Female	Total
Strongly Agree	16.9	16.5	16.7
Agree	42.6	45.0	43.9
Disagree	30.7	26.5	28.5
Strongly Disagree	9.7	12.1	10.9

Notwithstanding Clause by Area of City (%)

	South	North	West
Strongly Agree	19.9	20.7	7.8
Agree	43.8	46.3	39.4
Disagree	25.7	23.8	39.4
Strongly Disagree	10.7	9.1	13.5

Notwithstanding Clause by Income (%)

	Under \$30,000	\$30,000 to \$60,000	Over \$60,000
Strongly Agree	14.1	16.7	20.5
Agree	48.2	45.8	36.4
Disagree	28.8	28.6	27.8
Strongly Disagree	8.9	8.8	15.2

Notwithstanding Clause by Education (%)

	H-School or less	Some Post-Secondary	Col-Tech-Trade Grad	University Grad
Strongly Agree	17.5	14.5	12.8	20.6
Agree	61.5	47.2	44.7	25.9
Disagree	18.9	30.8	30.2	33.5
Strongly Disagree	2.1	7.5	12.3	20.0

Notwithstanding Clause by Age (%)

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 or older
Strongly Agree	7.9	21.6	19.1	23.7
Agree	45.0	38.8	40.2	53.6
Disagree	35.6	33.1	23.9	19.6
Strongly Disagree	11.4	6.5	16.7	3.1