

Small numbers of churches embrace same-sex marriage

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Researchers at the Universities of York and Leeds have found that the majority of places of worship that permit same-sex marriage carry out small numbers of ceremonies, with just over half having actually married a couple.

Same-sex couples are prohibited from marrying in approximately 40,000 places of worship that permit different-sex couples to marry, and there are only 182 places of worship registered for [same-sex marriage](#).

The research, which is based on a survey of 71 places of worship, shows that of those that have performed a same-sex [marriage](#), three-quarters provided a religious marriage ceremony to a same-sex couple that had not previously worshiped there, indicating that they welcome couples who are excluded from marrying in their own place of worship.

Dr Silvia Falchetta, from the University of York's Department of Sociology, said: "This report shows that same-sex couples are at a significant disadvantage to different-sex couples, because [same-sex couples](#) are more likely to live in an area where there is no scope to be married in a place of worship according to a desired religious ceremony."

The research team also found that registering a place of worship for same-sex marriage can sometimes create tensions between it and the broader religious group of which it is a part, and can attract opposition and antagonism from other [religious groups](#) in their local areas.

Registering a place of worship can also produce conflict within a congregation and some members of a church may decide to leave.

Many places of worship, however, report that registering for same-sex marriage has produced positive benefits within a congregation. These include strengthening the solidarity of existing members, supporting existing LGBT members, and attracting new members.

Professor Paul Johnson, Head of the University of York's Department of Sociology, said: "Some places of worship regard their commitment to same-sex marriage as a positive way of advertising and marketing their faith and practice."

During debates over the enactment of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013, considerable attention was given to the need for protections for individuals who do not want to participate in same-sex weddings - as ministers, or choristers, for example. The research shows, however, that very few people refuse to participate and therefore need these legal protections.

Professor Robert Vanderbeck of the University of Leeds said, "Although many claims have been made about how the introduction of same-sex marriage would affect religious groups that offer it, these data provide the first systematic glimpse of what is actually happening on the ground in churches and other places of worship.

"Despite worries to the contrary, in 90% of places of worship no person has refused to participate in a same-sex marriage ceremony."

The report is published by White Rose Research Online:

http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/124435/1/Same_Sex_Religious_Marriage.pdf

Provided by University of York

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