

California marries 11,000 same-sex couples: About 10 percent of same-sex couples in the state

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In the first three months that gay and lesbian couples could marry legally in California, an estimated 11,000 of them took their vows—a number that, according to a new study, is higher than the total in the first four years that gay marriage was legal in Massachusetts.

The data were released on October 6 by UCLA's Williams Institute, which compared the number of marriages this year from June 17 to September 17 to the number of marriages recorded by counties in the same period last year. In Massachusetts, 10,385 same-sex couples wed in the four years after that state legalized such unions in May 2004.

"People have waited so long to be able to do this. . . . I'm sure that is the reason for the big response," Stevie St. John, a spokesperson for the L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center, told the *Los Angeles Times*.

Gary Gates of the Williams Institute, which studies sexual orientation and the law, told the *Times* that the 11,000 legal marriages represent only about 10 percent of the same-sex couples in the state. A number of studies have indicated that the newlyweds are in long-term relationships, Gates said.

On November 4, Californians will decide whether same-sex couples may continue to wed. Proposition 8 would amend the state constitution to define marriage as between only a man and a woman.

With support from Catholic bishops, Mormons and many conservative Christians, the Yes-on-8 campaign has raised more campaign funds than opponents of the initiative. The Sacramento-based Protect Marriage Coalition reported October 7 that it has received contributions of \$25.4 million. The No-on-8 campaign had raised \$15.75 million by September 30.