



Media Release

Political Crossfire – Legalizing Same-sex Marriages Generation and Faith Divide Canadians

Ottawa – September 7, 2003 – A national survey of Canadians released by polling firm SES Canada Research Inc. and the Sun Media Group indicates that although marginally more Canadians support legalizing same-sex marriage than oppose, the issue has exposed sharp differences between the young and old and between Canadians based on their religious commitment.

Canadians were asked the following question:

As you may know, there will be a vote in the House of Commons to legalize same-sex marriages. This would give gay and lesbian couples the same legal recognition as heterosexual couples, that is, couples made up of a man and a woman.

[ROTATE] Some people think that same-sex couples should be allowed to be legally married and be recognized like couples made up of a man and a woman. Other people think that only marriages between a man and woman should be legally recognized. Which of these two opinions, if either, best reflects your views?

Currently 47% of Canadians support the legalization of same-sex marriage while 44% think that only marriages between a man and a woman should be legally recognized (9% of Canadian were unsure. Support for same-sex marriages was the highest in Quebec and British Columbia (53% respectively). Conversely, Albertans were the least likely to support the legalization of same-sex marriage (28%).

Canadians under 30 years of age were more likely to support legalizing same-sex marriages (60%) compared to Canadians over 60 years of age (32% support). Canadians who self-identified themselves as individuals who attended church/religious services weekly were the least likely to support legalizing same-sex marriage (24%) compared to Canadians who never attend church/religious services (58% support).

Significantly, 60% of Canadians who opposed same-sex marriage would vote against their local MP. This compares to only 37% of same-sex supporters who would vote against their MP if he/she had a different position from their own.

“Same-sex marriage is shaping-up as a classic hot-button issue,” according to SES President Nikita Nanos. “Canadians opposed to legalizing same-sex marriage are much more likely to strategically vote against their local MP compared to those that support same-sex marriage.”



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When Canadians were asked who they trust on this issue, the number one response was “none of the above – it’s a personal decision” at 33%, followed by the Supreme Court 31%, Church/Religious Leaders (23%) and federal Members of Parliament (7%). Five percent of Canadians were unsure of whom to trust. Among Canadians who weekly attend church/religious services, 54% trusted their religious leaders. Canadians who never attend church were most likely to trust the Supreme Court (39%). Periodic churchgoers were most likely to trust no one (41%).

“This issue will pit the young against the old, and church going Canadians against non-church goers”, said Nanos. “The politicians who both support and oppose may find themselves in a political cross-fire.”

SES’s National Omnibus Survey is conducted every three months. It is based on a random telephone sample of 1,000 Canadians, 18 years of age and older and was conducted between August 24th and September 2nd, 2003. The margin of accuracy for the aggregate survey results is 3.1 percentage points, plus or minus, 19 times out of 20. Within the larger sample sub-groups may have a wider margin of accuracy. Validation of the demographic profile of respondents indicates that the poll is a fair representation of the Canadian populace. The research initiative was registered with the Canadian Survey Research Council of which SES is a member. Established in 1987, SES Canada Research Inc. is a full service marketing and public opinion research firm.

For a detailed review of the survey tables, please visit the SES Research website at <http://www.sesresearch.com> in the on-line polling library.

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QUESTION

As you may know, there will be a vote in the House of Commons to legalize same-sex marriages. This would give gay and lesbian couples the same legal recognition as heterosexual couples, that is, couples made up of a man and a woman.

[ROTATE] Some people think that same-sex couples should be allowed to be legally married and be recognized like couples made up of a man and a woman. Other people think that only marriages between a man and woman should be legally recognized. Which of these two opinions, if either, best reflects your views?

POLITICAL IMPACT

If your local Member of Parliament had different views from your own on the issue of same-sex marriages, would you vote against your local MP?

Canadians Who Support Legalizing Same-sex Marriage (471)

	%
Yes (vote against MP)	37
No	63

Canadians Who Believe Marriage is Comprised Only of a Man and a Woman (440)

	%
Yes (vote against MP)	60
No	40

THE METHODOLOGY

Between August 24th and September 2nd, 2003, SES conducted a total of 1,000 telephone interviews across Canada with eligible voters as part of the SES National Quarterly Omnibus. Aggregate results are accurate ± 3.1%, 19 times out of 20. Validation of the demographic profile of respondents indicates that the poll is a fair representation of Canadian voters and the initiative was registered with the Canadian Survey Research Council.

SAME-SEX MARRIAGES (%)

	Legalize Same-sex	Unsure	Marriage Man and a Woman
Canada (1,000)	47	9	44
Atlantic (100)	48	5	47
Quebec (250)	53	7	40
Ontario (300)	48	8	44
MB/SK (100)	40	14	46
Alberta (100)	28	9	63
BC (150)	53	13	33
18 to 29 (207)	60	10	30
30 to 39 (224)	58	9	34
40 to 49 (208)	43	11	46
50 to 59 (165)	39	9	52
60 plus (196)	32	6	62
Church Attendance			
Weekly (183)	24	2	74
Most of time (94)	37	2	61
Periodically (286)	50	9	41
Never (385)	58	12	30

WHO CANADIANS TRUST (%)

Thinking about the issue of same-sex marriage, whose opinions do you trust the most. . . . [READ AND ROTATE]. . . The Supreme Court. . . Federal Members of Parliament. . . Your Church and Religious Leaders. . . None of the above – it’s a personal decision. . . Unsure.

	Canada (1,000)	Church Weekly (183)	Most of Time (94)	Periodically (286)	Never (385)
None of the above	33	22	25	41	34
Supreme Court	31	16	32	31	39
Church Leaders	23	54	34	17	12
MPs	7	5	4	6	11
Unsure	5	3	5	5	5

ABOUT SES

Established in 1987, SES Canada Research Inc. is a full service public opinion research and management consulting firm.

In order to maximize turn-around time and increase efficiency, SES has a 110-line call centre complete with a predictive dialer. SES is regularly called upon by corporate, government and para-public clients in Canada and the United States to conduct research and provide strategic advice.

For more information on our full range of services please visit our website

www.sesresearch.com or contact:

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