

# **Sexual Orientation and Intra-household Specialization before and after the Legal Recognition of Same-sex Marriage in Canada**

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## **Abstract**

Using the Canadian Censuses of 2001, 2006 and 2011, this paper compares household specialization patterns of married and cohabiting couples by sexual orientation. Household specialization is operationalized in three ways. The first measure captures the earnings differential between spouses while the second measure relies on labour supply patterns. The third measure used in this paper is based on a unique question in the Canadian long-form censuses, inquiring the respondents on their number of unpaid household labour. In line with previous studies using Swedish and American data, we find a lower level of intra-household specialization for both gay males and lesbians compared with their heterosexual counterparts. Lesbian couples have the lowest level of household specialization. The 2005 legal recognition of same-sex marriage in Canada appears to have weakly increased the level of household specialization between gay and lesbian spouses who were married. Finally, the data show that the presence of children increases the intra-household specialization level for all couple types, but to a considerably lesser extent for gay male households. These conclusions hold regardless of the operationalization approach. Various implications are examined.