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## Gay Couples Rush to the Altar in California Ahead of November Vote

By [JESSE MCKINLEY](#)

SAN FRANCISCO — With four weeks to go before a statewide vote on [same-sex marriage](#), a study has found that 3,800 gay couples are marrying each month in [California](#).

The study, released Monday by the Williams Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, estimated that 11,440 couples had married since the state Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage in May.

Same-sex weddings began in California in mid-June after the court's decision became final. The study looked at the three-month period ending Sept. 17. In those months, California had more same-sex marriages than Massachusetts had in four years, researchers say. Massachusetts, the first state to allow such unions, in 2004, has had about 10,300 same-sex ceremonies.

In California, several counties with large gay populations — including Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco — have seen a marked increase in the number of marriage licenses compared with the same period last year, a trend researchers ascribe to same-sex couples.

Kate Kendell, the executive director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, said the surge was due in part to the looming vote on Proposition 8, which would amend the state Constitution to outlaw same-sex marriage.

“After Nov. 4, it's possible the door to having that experience of a legally recognized marriage will be closed,” Ms. Kendell said. “And faced with that, many couples have, to some degree, rushed to get married in order to assure that they are legally recognized.”

Gary J. Gates, a senior research fellow with the Williams Institute, said California's large gay population — some 109,000 couples, according to census estimates — could explain the large number of weddings, as could the state's reputation as a tourism hub.

“For certain, some portion of these 11,000 are not California residents,” said Mr. Gates, adding that the counties that have seen the biggest increases in weddings “tend to correlate with tourist places in the state.”

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