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As new figures reveal a dramatic decrease in the number of civil partnership ceremonies taking place...

Gino Meriano, Pink Weddings

IN DECEMBER OF 2005 on a cold brisk morning we saw history made, the Introduction of Civil Partnerships became a reality and thousands of gay couples had their chance to express their love and commitment to their family and friends for the very first time and under the eyes of the law.

Some four years later we still see many Civil Partnerships created and couples enjoy not only a fantastic day but gain their long awaited legal rights. We have moved so far in our fight for equality that it is something we should not take lightly or be considered a joke.

While some may say it's still not full equal rights until "marriage" is on the table for the community we have proved that with around 34,000 couples signing the Civil Partnership that this was about our commitment to each other and obtaining our legal rights.

Since the launch of the latest stats earlier this month the figures show that Civil Partnerships are down compared to 2007. Some say the reasons are far too many to list but continue to try and reinforce to our community it's because Civil Partnerships are second class or it's not equal marriage or simply because of a lack of popularity, but when you take a closer look into the figures and this brand new market you will see the full story unfold and in fact figures are not dropping but a Civil Partnership market levelling itself out.

Prior to the Act coming into play, the government estimated that more than 22,000 Civil Partnerships would happen in the first 10 years (around 2,500 a year) in fact we saw over 18,000 in the first year alone and the highest number

of couples holding their Civil partnership at that time were the over 50s. As the years go on it was always going to reduce but not because of the lack of interest but simply because no one could gage a real idea until all the figures were announced for 2007 and 2008.

If we are to believe the figures published by the government that around 6 per cent of the UK's population are gay equating to around 3.2 million people and the most popular age range of Civil Partnerships stands between 35 - 49 we see a niche market unfold and one that has a net worth of around 10 million pounds a year.

The under 35s are now increasing, in fact up by 4 per cent against 2007, which shows a steady but positive move forward for a younger market and a increase in women since 2008, combine this with further protection for women and children under the new legislation only reinforces the power behind our rights and with this in mind we see Civil Partnerships grow steadily for many years to come, not a drop in figures, not a lack of interest but a better understanding behind a new wedding market that has yet to develop.

**When you take a closer look at the figures and this brand new market you will see the full story unfold - and see that in fact the figures are not dropping but the Civil Partnership market is levelling itself out.**

Some believe that it's "marriage or nothing," but around 34,000 people believe it's about gain-

ing their legal rights something that is an ongoing battle but one we are winning. The more steps we take and achievements gained and we're one step closer to seeing the final battle won: "equal marriage and Civil Partnerships open to all". How can anyone deny the community the rights for legal rights and protection under the law, no matter what you call this the UK has moved forward in such a fantastic rate over the last 10 years that we should be proud of our achievements and what the future brings not only for Civil Partnerships but for our rights as a whole.

Over the last six months Pink Weddings has been hosting a rolling survey to find out when couples are now looking to plan their special day and surprising results show that

2009	34%
2010	51%
2011	12%
2012	03%

(Based on survey dated 25 Aug 2009)

So what does the future hold for Civil Partnerships, with more and more couples planning their day the most exciting part is to see a new generation that are growing up knowing that some day they will be able to have their moment, legal rights in place and a day to remember.



Gino Meriano  
Founder Pink Weddings Ltd  
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## ...are gay unions proving to be a novelty after all?

### Ian Ross, Labour

IT WAS A LABOUR Government that bought in the Civil Partnership Act 2004 on 5 December 2005, enabling same-sex couples to obtain legal recognition of their relationship. Civil partnerships meant for the first time ever that gays and lesbians now had every right, privilege and responsibility that married straight couples had enjoyed for hundreds of years.

A civil partnership means that civil partners have equal treatment to married couples in a wide range of legal matters, including inheritance tax, employment benefits, occupational pension benefits and access to fatal accident compensation, amongst many other legal matters.

However, figures from the Office for National Statistics reveal that same-sex couples formed 7,169 civil partnerships in the UK in 2008, a fall of 18 per cent compared with 2007, equating to 1559 fewer civil partnerships. Despite there being a slight drop in the number of couples forming a civil partnership, I completely reject the idea that civil partnerships are a 'novelty'.

Let's start by looking at the statistics. The Government initially expected between 11,000 and 22,000 people to be in a civil partnership by 2010. However this figure has already been exceeded. The total number of civil partnerships formed in the UK since the Civil Partnership Act came into force is 33,954. The fall in rate was not unexpected since many couples had waited for a long time to gain the opportunity to register their relationship, and did so at the first opportunity. As a point of comparison, the number of marriages in 2006 was 236,980 - the lowest since records began. Between 1996 and 2006 there were 39,521 fewer straight weddings. Contrast this to the figures for civil partnerships and it is revealed that we gays are more likely to get hitched!

The trouble makers out there say civil partnerships are a sham as there was a slight decline in civil partnerships compared to the previous year. I would like to think that making such a big life-changing step, like having a partnership, is far more important than having targets to meet for how many of us get hitched.

Since being selected as a parliamentary candidate in November last year, I learnt quickly that if you want immediate publicity you have to say something controversial. Instead of promoting the many benefits of a civil partnership, it is a great pity some have felt it necessary to attack them. These people are simply publicists and attention seekers, and simply don't deserve the time of day.

We need to remember that civil partnerships have been around for almost four years. It was natural that many couples waiting all their lives entered a partnership immediately for legal recognition. Now the rush has eased it can be expected that the numbers will decline in contrast to the first

four years of civil partnerships being introduced.

For the critics out there it should be pointed out that there are few differences between marriage and civil partnerships. Firstly, marriage can be registered at either a civil or a religious ceremony, whereas civil partnerships can only be registered with a secular ceremony or no ceremony at all. Secondly, adultery is a legally valid reason to dis-

solve a marriage, but not a civil partnership.

I strongly believe that civil partnerships are a success story with over 33,000 gay and lesbian people legally recognising

their relationship. Indeed many gay and lesbian people prefer civil partnerships, which is supported by Stonewall. Civil Partnerships directly addressed many of the injustices same-sex couples faced in their daily lives, because of a lack of legal recognition. When it comes to equality I passionately believe that civil partnerships are one of the success stories under this Labour Government, putting right one of the many injustices that gay and lesbians experienced under the homophobic Conservative Governments of the 1980s and 1990s.

So the burning question - would I enter into a civil partnership? Absolutely! I have been with my other half, Matthew, for almost two years. I would personally consider a civil partnership as part of a commitment to one another, let alone the legal security it offers, as part of a long-term relationship. Calling such partnerships a 'novelty' is simply an insult to all the gay-rights activists that fought for them. I think it is about time we celebrate the fact we now have civil partnerships rather than putting them down as a 'novelty', which sounds like something you would buy in the balloon shop.

**Between 1996 and 2006 there were 39,521 fewer straight weddings. Contrast this to the figures for civil partnerships and it is revealed that we gays are more likely to get hitched!**



**Ian Ross**  
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