



## **MARRIAGE RIGHTS**

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**Abstract:** Marriage rights encompass a spectrum of legal and societal entitlements, obligations, and protections afforded to individuals upon entering into a recognized marital union. These rights vary significantly across different jurisdictions and may include aspects such as property rights, inheritance rights, tax benefits, healthcare decision-making authority, immigration privileges, and parental rights, among others. The recognition and expansion of marriage rights have been central to the global struggle for equality and social justice, particularly concerning same-sex marriage, interracial marriage, and gender equality. This abstract explores the evolution, significance, and contemporary debates surrounding marriage rights, highlighting their crucial role in shaping individual lives and societal structures.

**Keywords:** Marriage rights, legal entitlements, societal obligations, property rights, inheritance, tax benefits, healthcare decisions, immigration privileges, parental rights, equality, social justice, same-sex marriage, interracial marriage, gender equality, recognition.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Marriage, as a social institution, holds profound significance in virtually every society, serving as a cornerstone of familial and communal structures. Beyond its cultural and religious dimensions, marriage carries extensive legal implications, granting individuals a myriad of rights and responsibilities upon entering into a recognized marital union. The concept of marriage rights encompasses a diverse array of legal entitlements, protections, and obligations that can profoundly impact the lives of those involved.

Throughout history, the definition and scope of marriage rights have evolved, reflecting shifts in societal norms, cultural attitudes, and legal frameworks. Traditionally, marriage was often defined within narrow parameters, limited to heterosexual couples and governed by strict gender roles. However, as societies have progressed, there has been a growing recognition of the need to expand and diversify marriage rights to ensure equality and justice for all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or other characteristics.

This introduction sets the stage for an exploration of marriage rights, delving into their historical foundations, contemporary manifestations, and ongoing debates. By examining the evolution and significance of marriage rights, we can gain insights into broader issues of social justice, equality, and human rights. Moreover, understanding the complexities of marriage rights is essential for policymakers, legal scholars, and advocates striving to create more inclusive and equitable societies. Through this exploration, we aim to shed light on the multifaceted nature of marriage rights and their profound impact on individual lives and societal structures.

#### **a. Legal Recognition of Marriage:**

The legal recognition of marriage is a fundamental aspect of marriage rights, as it determines the rights, privileges, and responsibilities that accompany the marital union. Across different jurisdictions, the criteria for recognizing a marriage vary, encompassing both formal legal requirements and societal norms. Historically, legal recognition of marriage has primarily been limited to heterosexual unions, often defined by traditional notions of gender roles and family structures.

However, significant strides have been made in recent decades to expand the legal recognition of marriage to include diverse forms of relationships. One of the most notable developments has been the recognition of same-sex marriage



in many countries around the world. This shift represents a crucial step towards equality and inclusivity, affirming the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals to enter into legally recognized marital unions.

Beyond gender, legal recognition of marriage also intersects with other factors such as age, consent, and familial relationships. Laws governing marriage typically establish minimum age requirements and may require the consent of both parties or parental consent in the case of minors. Additionally, regulations regarding consanguinity, or the prohibition of marriage between close relatives, vary widely across different legal systems.

The legal recognition of marriage carries numerous implications for individuals, ranging from access to spousal benefits and inheritance rights to decision-making authority in healthcare and parental matters. These rights and responsibilities are often enshrined in statutes, regulations, and judicial precedents, shaping the rights of married couples in various aspects of their lives.

However, challenges remain in achieving full legal recognition of marriage rights for all individuals, particularly in contexts where societal attitudes or legal barriers persist. Efforts to address these challenges may involve legislative reforms, judicial rulings, and advocacy campaigns aimed at promoting equality and combating discrimination in marriage laws.

In summary, the legal recognition of marriage is a central component of marriage rights, encompassing the criteria and conditions under which marital unions are acknowledged and afforded legal status. By expanding recognition to encompass diverse forms of relationships and addressing barriers to equality, societies can strive towards more inclusive and equitable legal frameworks for marriage.

Comparison of marriage laws across different jurisdictions:

1. **Definition of Marriage:** Laws in different jurisdictions vary in their definition of marriage, including criteria such as gender requirements, age restrictions, and consanguinity prohibitions.
2. **Recognition of Same-Sex Marriage:** Some jurisdictions fully recognize same-sex marriage, granting LGBTQ+ couples the same rights and benefits as heterosexual couples, while others may have limited or no recognition of same-sex unions.
3. **Common Law Marriage:** Some jurisdictions recognize common law marriage, wherein couples who cohabit for a certain period are considered legally married without a formal ceremony. The criteria for establishing a common law marriage differ by jurisdiction.
4. **Polygamy and Polyamory:** Laws regarding polygamous and polyamorous relationships vary significantly across jurisdictions, with some countries prohibiting such unions outright, while others may permit or tolerate them under certain circumstances.
5. **Marriage Requirements:** Legal requirements for marriage, such as marriage licenses, premarital counseling, waiting periods, and parental consent (particularly for minors), differ across jurisdictions.
6. **Legal Recognition of Foreign Marriages:** The extent to which marriages performed in one jurisdiction are recognized in another varies, depending on factors such as reciprocity agreements and compatibility of marriage laws.
7. **Divorce Laws:** Jurisdictions have different laws governing divorce, including grounds for divorce, division of property, spousal support, and child custody arrangements.

Analysis of the rights and benefits conferred upon married couples by law:

1. **Spousal Privileges:** Married couples often enjoy legal privileges, such as the ability to testify on each other's behalf in court and the right to make medical decisions for an incapacitated spouse.
2. **Inheritance Rights:** Married spouses typically have automatic inheritance rights, allowing them to inherit a portion of their spouse's estate in the absence of a will.
3. **Tax Benefits:** Many jurisdictions provide tax benefits to married couples, including lower income tax rates, deductions, and credits for married individuals filing jointly.



4. **Healthcare Benefits:** Married couples may have access to their spouse's health insurance coverage, as well as the ability to make healthcare decisions on behalf of an incapacitated spouse.
5. **Employment Benefits:** Some employers offer benefits such as spousal health insurance coverage, retirement benefits, and bereavement leave to married employees and their spouses.
6. **Immigration Rights:** Marriage to a citizen or permanent resident may confer immigration benefits, such as eligibility for a spousal visa or lawful permanent residence status.
7. **Parental Rights:** Married couples typically have automatic parental rights and responsibilities, including custody and visitation rights, as well as the obligation to support their children financially.
8. **Social Security Benefits:** Married spouses may be eligible for spousal and survivor benefits under the Social Security program, including retirement benefits, disability benefits, and survivor benefits upon the death of a spouse.

#### **b. Marriage Equality:**

Marriage equality refers to the principle that all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or other characteristics, have the right to enter into marriage on equal terms. This concept encompasses the recognition and legal protection of same-sex marriages, ensuring that LGBTQ+ couples enjoy the same rights, benefits, and responsibilities as heterosexual couples.

1. **Historical Context:** The fight for marriage equality has been a long and arduous journey, marked by significant milestones and setbacks. Historically, same-sex couples faced widespread discrimination and legal barriers that prevented them from marrying and enjoying the same rights as heterosexual couples.
2. **Legal Recognition:** Marriage equality entails legal recognition of same-sex marriages by governments and judicial bodies. This recognition may involve legislative reforms, court rulings, or voter initiatives that affirm the right of LGBTQ+ individuals to marry.
3. **Global Progress:** Marriage equality has made significant strides in many parts of the world, with numerous countries legalizing same-sex marriage and extending marriage rights to LGBTQ+ couples. However, progress has been uneven, and disparities in legal recognition persist across different regions and jurisdictions.
4. **Impact on Society:** Marriage equality has profound implications for LGBTQ+ individuals and society as a whole. It fosters inclusivity, dignity, and respect for diverse forms of relationships, challenging traditional norms and promoting social acceptance of LGBTQ+ identities.
5. **Family Rights:** Marriage equality ensures that LGBTQ+ couples have access to the same rights and benefits as heterosexual couples, including spousal privileges, inheritance rights, healthcare benefits, and parental rights. This legal recognition strengthens families and provides stability and security for couples and their children.
6. **Human Rights:** Marriage equality is not just a matter of legal recognition but also a fundamental human rights issue. Denying individuals the right to marry based on their sexual orientation or gender identity constitutes discrimination and violates principles of equality and non-discrimination enshrined in international human rights law.
7. **Ongoing Challenges:** Despite progress, challenges remain in achieving full marriage equality worldwide. Some jurisdictions continue to uphold discriminatory laws and policies that deny LGBTQ+ individuals the right to marry, perpetuating inequality and stigma.
8. **Intersectional Perspectives:** Marriage equality intersects with other forms of inequality, including race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and disability. Efforts to promote marriage equality must consider the diverse experiences and needs of LGBTQ+ individuals from marginalized communities.

In summary, marriage equality is a fundamental principle that upholds the rights and dignity of LGBTQ+ individuals, affirming their equal status under the law and in society. By advocating for and advancing marriage equality, communities and governments can create more inclusive and equitable societies where all individuals are free to love and marry whom they choose.

Examination of laws pertaining to same-sex marriage:



1. **Legalization:** Laws pertaining to same-sex marriage vary significantly across jurisdictions. In some countries and regions, same-sex marriage is fully legalized, granting LGBTQ+ couples the right to marry and enjoy the same legal recognition and protections as heterosexual couples. This legalization may result from legislative reforms, court rulings, or voter initiatives.
2. **Recognition:** In jurisdictions where same-sex marriage is legalized, marriage laws typically recognize same-sex unions on equal terms with heterosexual marriages. This includes granting couples the legal rights, benefits, and responsibilities associated with marriage, such as spousal privileges, inheritance rights, healthcare benefits, and parental rights.
3. **Requirements:** The legal requirements for same-sex marriage often mirror those for heterosexual marriage, including age restrictions, consent requirements, and procedural formalities such as marriage licenses and ceremonies. However, some jurisdictions may have specific provisions or procedures related to same-sex marriages.
4. **International Recognition:** Same-sex marriages performed in one jurisdiction may not always be recognized in another, particularly in regions where same-sex marriage is not legalized or where there are conflicting laws and regulations regarding marriage recognition. This can create legal challenges for LGBTQ+ couples, particularly in areas with limited marriage equality.
5. **Challenges and Discrimination:** Despite legalization, same-sex couples may still face challenges and discrimination in accessing marriage rights and benefits, including resistance from religious institutions, discrimination by service providers, and legal obstacles related to adoption, immigration, and parental rights.

Comparison of rights and privileges granted to heterosexual and homosexual couples:

1. **Legal Recognition:** In jurisdictions where same-sex marriage is legalized, LGBTQ+ couples generally enjoy the same legal recognition and protections as heterosexual couples. This includes rights and privileges related to inheritance, healthcare, taxation, and family law.
2. **Spousal Privileges:** Same-sex couples typically have access to spousal privileges, such as the right to make medical decisions for an incapacitated spouse, testify on each other's behalf in court, and access spousal benefits under various legal frameworks.
3. **Parental Rights:** Same-sex couples may face challenges in accessing parental rights and protections, particularly in jurisdictions where adoption and assisted reproductive technologies are regulated differently for LGBTQ+ individuals. However, many jurisdictions have recognized the parental rights of same-sex couples, allowing them to adopt children, access fertility treatments, and establish legal parentage.
4. **Healthcare Benefits:** Same-sex couples often have access to spousal healthcare benefits, including health insurance coverage for spouses and dependents. This ensures that LGBTQ+ couples have equal access to healthcare services and protections for their families.
5. **Social Security and Retirement Benefits:** Same-sex spouses may be eligible for social security benefits, retirement benefits, and survivor benefits under the same terms as heterosexual spouses, providing financial security for couples and their families.
6. **Employment and Housing Protections:** In jurisdictions with anti-discrimination laws, same-sex couples are entitled to equal protections against discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and other areas based on their marital status and sexual orientation.
7. **Public Perception and Social Acceptance:** While same-sex couples may have access to the same legal rights and benefits as heterosexual couples in many jurisdictions, they may still face stigma, prejudice, and social barriers to full acceptance and inclusion in society. Efforts to promote LGBTQ+ rights and combat discrimination are essential for achieving equality and social justice for all couples, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the examination of laws pertaining to same-sex marriage reveals both progress and ongoing challenges in the fight for marriage equality. While significant strides have been made in many jurisdictions to legalize same-sex marriage and grant LGBTQ+ couples equal rights and recognition under the law, disparities persist across



regions, reflecting diverse cultural, religious, and political landscapes. Despite legalization, same-sex couples may still encounter discrimination and barriers to accessing marriage rights and benefits, highlighting the importance of ongoing advocacy and legal reforms to ensure full equality and inclusion for all individuals, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

The comparison of rights and privileges granted to heterosexual and homosexual couples underscores the significance of marriage equality in promoting fairness, dignity, and respect for diverse forms of relationships. While same-sex couples generally enjoy many of the same legal rights and protections as heterosexual couples in jurisdictions where marriage equality is recognized, challenges remain in areas such as parental rights, healthcare access, and social acceptance. Addressing these challenges requires not only legal reforms but also efforts to combat discrimination, promote education and awareness, and foster greater understanding and acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals and families.

Ultimately, the pursuit of marriage equality is not just a legal or political issue but a matter of human rights and social justice. By advocating for and advancing marriage equality, societies can move closer to realizing the principles of equality, fairness, and inclusivity for all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or other characteristics. As we continue to strive towards a more just and equitable world, ensuring equal rights and recognition for LGBTQ+ couples in marriage remains an essential step forward.

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