

NATION

Poll: Gays 'immoral' but deserve privacy

By Mark Wingfield
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GLENDALE, Calif.—A majority of Americans believe homosexual behavior is "immoral," but an even larger majority believe a person's sexual relations are nobody else's business, according to a nationwide poll.

The study, conducted among a random sample of American adults earlier this year, was funded and executed by the Barna Research Group of Glendale, Calif. The organization's president, George Barna, is a well-known Christian pollster and church-growth author.

The poll found 61 percent of Americans in agreement with the statement, "It is immoral for a person to have a sexual relationship with someone of the same sex."

Another 35 percent of those surveyed disagreed with the statement, while 3 percent didn't know.

However, 72 percent agreed with the statement, "Nobody has the right to tell someone else what kind of sexual relationships they can have."

The other 25 percent of respondents disagreed, and 3 percent didn't know.

On related questions, a majority of respondents said they don't think peo-

ple who are gay are born that way and that parents of gay children have not failed as parents.

Response to the question, "People who are gay are born that way; it is not a choice they make," drew the largest undecided vote of the six questions asked.

While the other five questions drew "don't know" responses from 3 percent or 4 percent of those polled, the question on what causes homosexuality drew a 13 percent "don't know" response.

Among those who had an opinion, 52 percent said they don't think gay people are "born that way" while 35 percent said sexual orientation is determined from birth.

But even though a majority said homosexuality is in some way learned or acquired, a majority also said parents do not fail if their children are gay. That view was held by 59 percent of those surveyed, compared to 38 percent who said they would feel they failed in parenting by raising gay children.

Despite the measure of privacy Americans believe they should have in sexual practice, a strong majority would prohibit homosexuals from marrying or adopting children.

Homosexual marriages are op-

posed by 61 percent of Americans, while the adoption of children by gay couples is opposed by 67 percent.

Attitudes on some survey questions varied by geographical regions and religious backgrounds, the Barna Group reported.

People in the Northeast and Pacific states were most accepting of homosexuality, while residents of the South, Southwest and Midwest were less accepting.

For example, on the question of whether homosexuality is immoral, only 39 percent of Pacific residents and 36 percent of Northeast residents agreed, compared to 51 percent in the South, 57 percent in the Midwest and 62 percent in the Southwest/Mountain region.

Other findings include:

■ People who attend church or say they read the Bible were about half as likely to support gay marriage as were those not attending church or reading the Bible.

■ Evangelical Christians were among the most conservative on gay issues, with slightly less than half saying a person's sexual orientation is their own business and 84 percent saying gay sex is immoral.

■ No significant difference in opinions was found between generations.