

Fewer Americans view homosexuality as a sin

by [David Gibson](#) in the [February 6, 2013](#) issue

Americans' acceptance of gays and lesbians is continuing to grow, with a new poll showing that just over a third of Americans view homosexuality as a sin, down from 44 percent a year earlier.

The statistical trend reported by LifeWay Research, which was founded by the Southern Baptist Convention, was released just as a pastor who was to give the inaugural benediction for President Obama withdrew from the program over an antigay sermon he gave 20 years ago.

Pastor Louie Giglio of Atlanta bowed out on January 10 after a liberal group discovered a sermon he preached in the 1990s in which he denounced the gay rights movement and advocated efforts to turn gays straight.

To replace Giglio, Obama chose Luis Leon, rector of St. John's Episcopal Church near the White House, a parish that the families of George W. Bush and Obama have both attended in the past.

Leon's parish, which welcomes openly gay members, announced last summer that it would bless same-sex partnerships. More recently, the Washington National Cathedral, an Episcopal church, said it would start holding same-sex marriage rites.

Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research, said that Obama's own shift in embracing same-sex marriage and other gay rights in the past year may have played a role in the change in public opinion. "The president's evolution on homosexuality probably impacted the evolution of cultural values—there is a real and substantive shift, surprisingly large for a one-year time frame—though this was hardly a normal year on this issue," Stetzer said.

Gay rights groups had criticized Obama in 2009 for inviting evangelical megachurch pastor Rick Warren, an outspoken opponent of gay marriage, to give the benediction at his first inauguration. But neither Warren nor the White House backed down.

LifeWay's survey in November found that 37 percent said they believe that homosexual behavior is a sin, down from 44 percent in September 2011.

The percentage of Americans who do not believe that homosexuality is a sin remained nearly the same, at 43 percent in September 2011 and 45 percent in November 2012. There was an increase in the percentage of those who said they were unsure of what they believe.

Not surprisingly, the new LifeWay survey found that those who identify as "born-again, evangelical or fundamentalist Christian" are the most likely to say that homosexual behavior is a sin (73 percent). Conversely, those who never attend religious services are the most likely to say they do not believe that homosexual behavior is a sin (71 percent). The survey of nearly 1,200 adults has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.9 percent. —RNS

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