

# **Barna: Gap on what's 'morally acceptable' not so wide\_60203**

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## **Gap on what's 'morally acceptable' not so wide**

**By John Hall**

*Texas Baptist Communications*

ARLINGTON-The gap between Christians and the general population on key moral issues isn't as wide as most people think, Christian researcher George Barna said during a conference at Lamar Baptist Church.

One of his polls indicates 36 percent of all adults believe having an abortion is morally acceptable, while 19 percent of "born-again" Christians find the act morally acceptable. Five percent of adults and 4 percent of "born-again" believers said having an affair with a married person is acceptable.

Forty-three percent of all adults believe reading a magazine with sexually explicit pictures is acceptable, compared to 21 percent of "born-again" Christians who agreed. Thirty-six percent of adults believe getting drunk is morally up to par, compared to 20 percent of "born-again" believers who approve.

A quarter of all adults said a sexual relationship with someone of the same gender is morally acceptable, while only 9 percent of "born-again" believers gave the same answer.

Barna defines people as “born again” if they affirm to pollsters that they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their lives today and that they believe when they die they will go to heaven because they have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior.

The difference in perspectives between the general population and those who are “born again” may appear vast, but it's not sufficient to influence society or for the difference to be noticed, Barna insisted.

A 20-point difference would be needed for people to notice a distinction, and a much greater separation would be necessary to influence society, he said.

People's opinions on these moral issues often change, Barna reported, noting that even Christians often are swayed by the last strong stance they have heard.

Churches may be too “timid” when dealing with controversial issues, Barna asserted. “Born-again” believers do not seem to know where the church stands and therefore avoid discussions on moral and ethical issues, he said.

Barna identified five demographic groups he believes are “morally at risk”:

Adults under 35 years old who are activists and future leaders.

- ◆ Men of all ages.
- ◆ The wealthy.
- ◆ Trendsetters of the West Coast.
- ◆ Adults in churches of more than 500 members, whom Barna said are morally at risk because larger churches generally demand less accountability.

## Percent of adults who describe behaviors as 'morally acceptable'

Behavior	All	Mainline	Not	Regularly	"Born Again"
	Adults	Protestant	Mainline	Attend Church	Again"
Having an abortion	36	45	26	22	19
Sexual relationship with	25	24	13	13	9
someone of same gender					
Having an affair with a married	5	3	5	4	4
person other than your spouse					
Having an affair with a person	17	14	12	12	12
who is not married					
Cohabitation	58	54	43	42	36
Using marijuana	25	21	17	15	11
Getting drunk	36	30	20	23	20
Cheating on income tax	9	6	4	6	4
Lying on a resume	9	10	8	9	6
Watching movie with explicit	49	44	33	33	29
sexual behavior					
Using profanity	37	29	25	24	22

Breaking speed limit	39	39	34	33	33
Reading magazine with nudity	43	42	25	26	21
or explicit pictures					
<p><b>Source:</b> <i>Barna Research Group, based on national telephone surveys and reported in the</i></p> <p><i>"Leading Your Church Forward" seminar by George Barna</i></p>					

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