

Religious students' politics cross lines_80904

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Religious students' politics cross lines

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WASHINGTON (RNS)-Strongly religious college students have conservative views on sex, abortion, gay rights and drugs, but more liberal views on gun control and the death penalty, a new study says.

The study by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute polled nearly 3,700 college juniors at 46 schools across the country, and found that one-fifth of college students are "highly religious." A similar percentage said they have little interest in religion.

Those two groups have widely divergent views on a number of social issues, the study found. While 80 percent of the least religious students said they felt casual sex was acceptable, only 7 percent of the most religious students felt the same way.

The least religious students were more than three times as likely to support legalized abortion, while highly religious students were more than twice as likely to support laws prohibiting homosexual relationships.

But while highly religious students tend to be more conservative than less religious students on certain issues, they can be more liberal on other

issues, the study found.

Compared to those with little or no religious interests, a higher percentage of highly religious students supported federal controls on handguns sales (75 percent to 70 percent) and they also were more likely to support abolition of the death penalty (38 percent to 23 percent).

College women reported higher levels of spirituality and religiousness in the study than did college men.

Women reported more than 150 percent more commitment to religion and spirituality and half as much religious skepticism as men.

To determine their level of religiosity, students were asked whether they attended religious services, read sacred texts or joined a religious organization on campus.

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