

# Survey Says:

## Continued from page 1

The study, says one of its authors, illustrates that sexual orientation is not a simple question of gay or straight. "I think in most individuals there is some sort of range," said David Wypij, a Harvard University statistician and co-author of the study. "You may be more heterosexual, you may be more homosexual."

The research could be influential in the debates nationwide over whether to extend civil rights protections to gays. Congress is considering legislation that would outlaw job discrimination based on sexual orientation. Opponents have cited research that they say shows only 1 percent of the population is gay, suggesting that gay people have little political clout.

The study, which was presented at the Joint Statistical Meetings in Toronto in August and is being published in the Archives of Sexual Behavior, is the first national survey to look at the question of homosexual attraction. Interviewers spoke with 1,288 American men and 674 women, ages 16 to 50, and asked them each to complete questionnaires. The study said 1,200 men

completed face-to-face interviews, which included 100 questions, and 1,130 answered 68 questions in the written survey. A total of 634 women completed the interviews and 588 finished the written portion.

Other studies that have examined sexual attraction--such as those published by Alfred J. Kinsey in 1948 and 1953--were not based on samples that could be extrapolated to the population as a whole. More recent national surveys have focused on behavior, not same-sex attraction.

Randall Sell, lead author of the study and a doctoral candidate at Harvard, said he hopes the research will help elucidate the complexity of sexual orientation. "It's more than just behavior; that's only one measure," he said.

Tom W. Smith, a statistician at the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, called the study useful, but warned that the question on attraction was imprecise. "They basically asked whether you were ever attracted to a member of the same sex at any time since you were age 15--which can mean one very fleeting, very trivial sensation or feeling," Smith said.

Despite such caveats, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force immediately seized on the report, noting the figures are much higher than those last year from the Battelle Human Affairs Research Center, which reported 2 percent of the men surveyed had engaged in same-sex sexual behavior and 1 percent identified themselves as exclusively gay. That report has been used by religious conservatives to argue that gays are a far smaller minority than previously believed. (AP) ▼

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STEP Learning Center

### Chester

Misty Valley Books Chester

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Craftsbury Public Library

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Rutland Area Gay/Lesbian Connection

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Fair Haven Free Library

### Hardwick

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