

Poll: Most Americans Say Boy Scouts Should Drop Gay Ban

The Boy Scouts of America has delayed its vote until May, but a national poll released on Wednesday showed the public has made up its mind, saying the youth group's ban on gay members must end.

By a margin of 55 percent to 33 percent, respondents to the telephone poll by Quinnipiac University said the century-old youth organization should drop its policy against openly gay members.

A broad array of respondents, male or female, **Catholic** or Protestant, favored accepting scouts regardless of their sexual orientation, the poll showed. However, white evangelical **Protestants** opposed gay Scouts by a margin of 56 percent to 33 percent.

"Now that the Armed Forces ban on openly gay service members has been lifted, and polls show increasing acceptance of same-sex marriage, most American voters think it's time to open up the Boy Scouts too," Peter Brown, assistant director of the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute, said in a news release.

The poll results were released on Wednesday, when the **Boy Scouts of America** board was expected to vote on whether to end the longstanding and controversial ban. Instead, the board delayed the vote until May "due to the complexity of this issue."

Women supported **gay Scouts** by 61 percent to 27 percent, compared to 49 percent to 39 percent among men, the poll showed. Support for gay Scouts among white Catholics was 63 percent to 25 percent, among white Protestants it was 44 percent to 41 percent.

“One troubling finding for scouting in America is that 54 percent of voters say they were Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, while only 36 percent of voters, including 55 percent of former scouts, say they have children in scouting,” Quinnipiac said in a statement.

Nationwide, youth membership in the organization that teaches boys skills such as camping and leadership has declined 21 percent since 2000 to less than 2.7 million.

The poll, which reached 1,772 registered voters on land lines and cell phones between Jan. 30 and Feb. 4, had a margin of error of plus or minus 2.3 percentage points.

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