

Broad views on 'family'

RELIGIOUS people take as broad a view of what constitutes a "family" as the general population does, new research suggests. But only 21 per cent of those surveyed believe that churches are welcoming to gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, writes *Madeleine Davies*.

The YouGov survey of attitudes towards the family was commissioned for the latest Westminster Faith Debate, held last month: "What's a traditional family, and do we need it?" A total of 4437 adults were polled, including 1261 Anglicans, 354 Roman Catholics, 58 Baptists, 162 of the Jewish faith, and 1649 who did not identify with a faith.

Almost half (47 per cent) of the

4437 considered a same-sex couple in a civil partnership to be a family, compared with half of the Christians. Seventy per cent of the entire sample applied this definition to a same-sex couple with children, compared with two-thirds of the Christians.

The perception that churches would not welcome gay people was "clearly a problem for Churches", the director of the Religion and Society Programme at Lancaster University, Professor Linda Woodhead, said. "Not only because they fail to reflect the views of most Christians, but because they purport to welcome people even if they didn't necessarily approve of their lifestyle."