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Singaporeans more tolerant of homosexuals: survey

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SINGAPORE, Jan. 9 (Xinhua) -- Singaporeans and permanent residents here seem to be more tolerant of gays and lesbians, according to a study by the city-state's Nanyang Technological University (NTU) released on Wednesday.

It said that the attitudes towards this issue, "although sharply polarized and predominantly negative, have shifted slightly over a five-year span to become a little more favorable."

The study was said to be a continuation of an earlier one in 2005 and was published in the Asian Journal of Social Psychology in December last year.

"By investigating some of the predictors of attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, it can help to inform public debate and guide future policy recommendations," said Professor Benjamin Detenber, chair of the NTU's Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information.

By comparing with the results from both surveys in 2005 and 2010, Detenber said Singaporeans' attitudes towards homosexuals appear to have shifted more positively, adding that they "show a small but significant trend towards greater tolerance of homosexuals."

In 2005, 68.6 percent of respondents expressed negative attitudes, 22.9 percent had positive attitudes and 8.5 percent were neutral. But in 2010, 64.5 percent of those surveyed held negative attitudes towards homosexuals, while 25.3 percent expressed positive attitudes and 10.2 percent were neutral.

"Clearly, public opinion is still highly polarised on this issue, but slightly more people are sharing the middle ground in 2010 compared to 2005," Detenber added.

The study also found that people with higher levels of education and freethinkers tend to have more positive attitudes, while older people tend to have more negative attitudes, as do those with lower levels of education and income.

Moreover, those who had higher interpersonal contact with gay men and lesbians and watched more films and television showing with homosexual characters were also likely to express more positive attitudes toward gays and lesbians, and to show greater acceptance.

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