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NTU STUDY

‘Slightly more tolerance’ now towards homosexuals here

Attitudes more favourable even if they remain polarised and largely negative: Study

SINGAPORE—Singaporeans and permanent residents appear to have become more tolerant of gays and lesbians, according to a study by the Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

It found that while attitudes remain sharply polarised and predominantly negative, they have shifted slightly to become a little more favourable over a five-year period from 2005.

Even though the change in attitudes is slight, it is “significant as it suggests a temporal shift in values and views about homosexuals”, said researchers from NTU’s Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information.

The study, which polled about 950 adult Singaporeans and permanent residents, was published in last month’s Asian Journal of Social Psychology. It was a follow up of an earlier survey in 2005.

Professor Benjamin Detenber, who

led the research team, said when results from both surveys were compared, Singaporeans’ attitudes towards homosexuals appear to have shifted more positively.

“Taken together, the results show a small but significant trend towards greater tolerance of homosexuals,” he said.

In 2010, 64.5 per cent of respondents held negative attitudes towards homosexuals, lower than the 68.6 per cent in 2005.

The number of those who had positive attitudes rose, from 22.9 per cent in 2005 to 25.3 per cent in 2010. More respondents took a neutral stand — 10.2 per cent were neutral in 2010, compared to 8.5 per cent in 2005.

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

Advocacy groups said it is heartening that there are signs of growing tolerance.

They pointed to the Government’s stance on the anti-homosexual law Section 377A as an example of the

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WHO LED THE RESEARCH TEAM

neutral views held towards gays and lesbians. The Government’s position is that it will keep the law but not proactively enforce it.

The study found that older people tend to have more negative attitudes towards lesbians and gays, as do those with lower levels of education and income.

On the other hand, people who feel it is less important to conform to social norms and those with a more Westernised cultural orientation tend to have less negative attitudes and be more accepting of homosexuals.

The study also found that people with higher levels of education and freethinkers tend to have more positive attitudes.

CHANNEL NEWSASIA, ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY EUGENE NEUBRONNER

Attitude shift over a five-year period

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- Those with positive attitudes rose from 22.9 per cent in 2005 to 25.3 per cent in 2010.
- Rise in those with a neutral stand — 10.2 per cent in 2010, compared to 8.5 per cent in 2005.