

Beat: Miscellaneous

Singaporeans becoming more tolerant of gays, lesbians: study

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USPA News - While a vast majority of Singaporeans continue to hold negative attitudes towards homosexuals, residents in the Asian city-state are slowly becoming more tolerant of gays and lesbians, according to the results of a study which was released on Wednesday. A research team from Nanyang Technological University (NTU) found that the attitudes of Singaporeans towards homosexuals has shifted more positively since their last study in 2005. "The results show a small but significant trend toward greater tolerance of homosexuals," said Professor Benjamin Detenber, who led the team of researchers.

In 2005, 68.6 percent of respondents expressed negative attitudes towards homosexuals, 22.9 percent had positive attitudes and 8.5 percent were neutral. In 2010, however, 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 polarized on this issue, but slightly more people are sharing the middle ground in 2010 compared to 2005," Detenber said. He said older people tend to have more negative attitudes towards lesbians and gays, as do religious people and those with lower levels of education and income. The study further found that people who have a gay or lesbian family member or know someone who is homosexual are less likely to have negative attitudes and be more accepting. Seeing gays and lesbians in films, television programs and on the Internet also appears to have a big influence in shaping attitudes and acceptance of homosexuals. "As more Singaporeans come into contact with gay people and with the rising availability of films and television programs with gay characters via cable television, local cinemas and the Internet, it seems possible that there will be a more significant shift in attitudes towards gays and lesbians over time," said co-investigator Dr Shirley Ho. The Singaporean government also appears to have become more tolerant toward gays and lesbians in recent years, but both same-sex marriage and gay sex remains illegal. Although rarely enforced, Section 377A of the Penal Code deems sexual activity between men to be "an act of gross indecency" and punishable by up to two years in jail.

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