

Nearly 1 in 2 young Singaporeans are open to religious extremists posting views on social media – here’s why that’s ‘worrying’

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Almost half of all young Singaporeans are open to allowing religious extremists to post their views online or on social media, a study has found.

Nearly 46 per cent of respondents between 18 to 25 years old indicated that they would allow the publication of extremist views which consider all other religions as enemies, according to a paper by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) published on Thursday (March 28).

Across all age groups, 26.8 per cent of respondents indicated that they were open to religious extremists publishing their views on the internet or social media.

The paper titled “Religion in Singapore: The Private and Public Spheres” is based on data collected from 1,800 Singapore citizens and permanent residents through face-to-face surveys.

But when it came to religious leaders inciting hatred or violence against other religions, there was a near unanimous (97.4 per cent) view that it was unacceptable, the paper said.

The 161-page report said in its conclusion: “On the whole, the survey paints a favourable picture of religion in Singapore.”

However, it added that “a point of concern” is the “significant segment of the population who would allow religious extremists to post their views online or on social media”.

IPS said that the study’s findings were “worrying”.

The report read: “Given the rise of self-radicalisation in terrorist incidents, hate speech, and Islamophobia both globally and in Singapore, it is comforting that the majority of Singaporeans would not allow religious extremists to post their views online.

“But the significant quarter of the population, as well as higher proportions among the young, who would permit such freedoms is worrying.”

The paper also said that there is a fine line between espousing extremist views that consider other religions as enemies and straying into the arena of hate speech.

“How the Government navigates the desire by this significant segment of the population for freedom of speech pertaining to extremist views in future will be of interest,” it added.