

Younger people more liberal than older respondents polled

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Age is a factor in the liberal-conservative divide in Singapore, with the young more liberal than the old, a survey has found.

The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) survey on religion, morality and conservatism in Singapore, first conducted in 2013, and again last year, found that older people were likely to be much more conservative compared with their younger counterparts.

For instance, among those aged 18 to 25, about 47 per cent indicated they were not opposed to premarital sex. Among those older than 65, only 16 per cent felt the same way.

On homosexual sex, about 49 per cent of those in the younger age group thought it was not wrong, compared with only 10 per cent in the older age group.

In fact, it is in the area of gay rights that the divergence is the most stark.

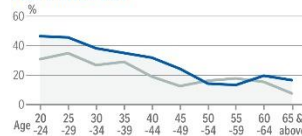
The survey found that over time, younger respondents were more likely to become more liberal in their views on such issues compared with older people.

Shift in attitudes on moral issues over time

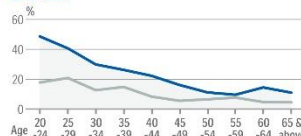
Younger people are more liberal in general in their views

Not wrong
— 2018 — 2013

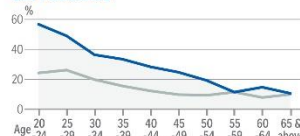
PREMARITAL SEX



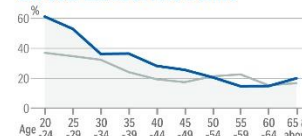
GAY SEX



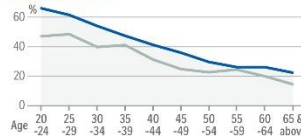
GAY MARRIAGE



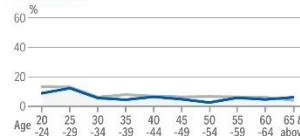
GAY COUPLES ADOPTING A CHILD



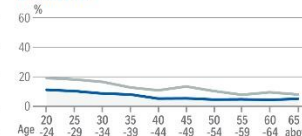
COHABITATION



INFIDELITY



GAMBLING



Source: INSTITUTE OF POLICY STUDIES STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

In 2013, about 18 per cent of those aged 20 to 24 felt that gay sex was not wrong. Five years on, more than 40 per cent of the cohort, now aged 25 to 29, felt the same way.

This shift to a more liberal attitude in a cohort was much less pronounced among older respondents, a sign that they are slower in accepting issues such as gay marriage.

For instance, in 2013, 11 per cent of those aged 55 to 59 said gay marriage was not wrong. Last year, about 15 per cent of the cohort, now aged 60 to 64, said the same thing.

The results of the two surveys show today's young people are also more liberal in their attitudes on gay rights issues compared with young people polled in 2013.

For instance, the latest survey shows about half of those between the ages of 18 and 25 did not frown on sex between adults of the same sex. In comparison, about 20 per cent in the same age group felt the same way in the earlier survey.

These developments could be the result of growing activism among millennials in the area of gay rights, said the researchers.

Young people are also more likely to know someone who identifies as gay, and have come across the theme of homosexuality in sitcoms and movies from countries where homosexuality is socially acceptable, said the survey authors - IPS senior research fellow Mathew Mathews, research associate Leonard Lim and research assistant Shanthini Selvarajan.

This divergence between the young and the old was also reflected among Christians and Muslims polled, with younger Christians and Muslims less conservative than their older counterparts in general.

Among older Christians and Muslims, there was a hardening of positions, with a growing proportion of older people in these religions opposed to gay sex, the survey found.

Over time, if these trends continue, the young will pull further away from the old, with society becoming more polarised on moral issues along age lines, noted the authors.

This inter-generational divide on moral issues is one area that Singapore society will have to confront eventually, they added.