Society still conservative

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SINGAPORE remains a largely conservative society in which pre-marital sex and having a child out of wedlock are still frowned upon.

That was the finding of a survey on social morality by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), released on Tuesday. The questions were asked as part of a wider survey of more than 4,000 Singapore residents on race, language and religion.

Some 80% of respondents said extramarital affairs were always or almost always wrong, and 72.5% held that view on pregnancy before marriage. 56.4% of respondents felt sex should come after marriage.

The survey's principal investigator, Dr Mathew Mathews, an Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) senior research fellow, said: "Overall, as you can see, Singaporeans are fairly conservative in their outlook to such issues."

The survey asked respondents to indicate how they felt on a range of social issues by choosing whether it was "not wrong most of the time or not wrong at all", "only wrong sometimes" or "always wrong or almost always wrong".

There was wider acceptance for living with a partner before marriage. Some 33.3% said it was not wrong most of the time, compared to 44.4% who said it was always wrong. Meanwhile, 22.5% said divorce was acceptable, while 43.1% said it was always wrong.

The survey also asked about attitudes towards homosexual relations. When it came to sexual relations between two adults of the same sex, 78.2% of respondents said it was wrong, while 72.9% did not agree with gay marriage. However, fewer disagreed with gay couples adopting a child, with 61% saying it was wrong or almost always wrong.

On gambling, 69.2% of respondents said they were against it.

"Those who claimed to have no religion, Buddhists and Taoists were more liberal than those who are Christian and Muslims. Differences were marginal in some areas with high consensus, such as homosexual relations and sexual affairs, but more pronounced for other areas," said Dr Mathews. — The Straits Times / Asia News Network