

1 in 2 in Singapore feel premarital sex is wrong: survey

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It looks like Singapore's society is still fairly conservative, with one in two Singapore residents saying that sexual relations before marriage is always or almost always wrong.

Also, more than seven in 10 feel that having a child outside of marriage is wrong as well, while eight in 10 feel the same way about sexual relations with a person who is not one's marriage partner.

Perhaps surprisingly given the number of people who disapprove of premarital sex, only about four in 10 respondents feel that living with a partner before marriage is at least nearly always wrong.

The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) survey, which measured respondents' opinions on morality as well as prejudices and views on national identity, was conducted as a household-based one among more than 4,000 Singapore residents.

With regard to morality, respondents were asked about their views on marriage, reproduction, sexuality, sexual orientation and other perceived vices like gambling.

The survey's findings also revealed that more than 70 per cent of its respondents were averse to homosexuality, with 78.2 per cent saying sexual relations between two adults of the same gender is almost always or always wrong, and 72.9 per cent feeling the same way about gay marriage. Also, 61.1 per cent said the adoption of a child by a gay couple is almost always or always wrong.

At the same time, opinion with regard to divorce appears to have become less negative, with 56.9 per cent of respondents feeling that it is only wrong sometimes, or not wrong most of the time or at all.

When asked about gambling, close to 70 per cent said it is wrong almost all or all of the time.

Asked about the findings, IPS senior research fellow Mathew Mathews, who led the study, told Yahoo Singapore they showed that Singapore still has at its core a conservative society, with a number of traditional values and institutions that people hold firm to.

"For most people, that is the norm they have been used to, and it has served society well," he said. "Also moral values cannot be easily disentangled from religious beliefs and norms—people who are religiously affiliated generally feel quite strongly about some of these issues."

He also said these attitudes make governance complicated, because of the variety and strengths in points of view that various groups possess.

"How to ensure that groups get to discuss these differences and ultimately agree to some policies for the greater good of society is challenging but important to do," he said.

The findings of IPS's latest survey come at a time where numerous activist groups have

been advocating the relaxation or repeal of various laws relating to these issues of morality, for instance Section 377(A) of Singapore's Penal Code, which criminalises sex between men.

Movements such as Pink Dot have over the past four years garnered significant attention and support, while groups such as Fridae, Oogachaga and Sayoni have called for change to the law, a move that Christian church groups have opposed.