



Press Release

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**Chinese University of Hong Kong
New representative telephone survey finds that opposition towards LGBT+ legal rights
in Hong Kong is now at a historical low**

**New findings: opposition towards LGBT+ legal rights in Hong Kong
is now at a historical low**

A new representative telephone survey of more than 1,000 Hong Kong people, released by the Sexualities Research Programme at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, a leading centre for LGBT+ research in Hong Kong, found that opposition towards LGBT+ legal rights in Hong Kong is now at a historical low.

60 percent of the respondents (as compared to 56 percent in 2016 according to the EOC-CUHK studyⁱ) said they very much agreed/ agreed that, overall, there should be legal protection against discrimination for people of different sexual orientations in Hong Kong. 27 percent stayed neutral. Only 12 percent of the respondents said they very much disagreed/ disagreed with that (as compared to 35 percent in 2016 according to the EOC-CUHK study). 49 percent of the respondents said they very much agreed/ agreed that a homosexual/ tongzhi should be able to marry their partner. 28 percent stayed neutral. Only 23 percent said they disagreed/ very much disagreed with that. Among the respondents aged 18 to 34, the support for legal protection against discrimination for people of different sexual orientations in Hong Kong and the right for a homosexual/ tongzhi to marry their partner is at about 80 percent.

74 percent of the respondents said they had heard of the term ‘transgender’. Only 18 percent of the respondents said they were unaccepting of transgender people. Only 10 percent of the respondents said they disagreed/ very much disagreed that, overall, there should be legal protection against discrimination for transgender people in Hong Kong.

When a more relatable language to explain LGBT+ legal rights is used, public support for LGBT+ rights in Hong Kong increased. 45 percent of the respondents said they very much agreed/ agreed with the implementation of a sexual orientation ordinance in Hong Kong. This is in comparison with the 60 percent of the respondents who said there should be legal protection against discrimination for people of different sexual orientations in Hong Kong. 44 percent of the respondents said they very much agreed/ agreed with the legal recognition of same-sex marriage in Hong Kong. This is in comparison with the 49 percent of the respondents said they very much agreed/ agreed that a homosexual/ tongzhi should be able to marry their partner.

In addition, it was found that there is increasing public support for businesses that are LGBT+ inclusive. Only 18 percent of the respondents said they would have a more negative view of a business organization if it provides sponsorship for gay parade. Only 11 percent of the respondents said they would have a more negative view of a business organization if it provides benefits to same-sex partners.

The study also debunks the myths that age, religion and family values translate into wholesale rejection of protection of LGBT+ legal rights. It was also found that those who viewed the



development in Taiwan regarding same-sex marriage more positively were also more supportive of LGBT+ legal rights in Hong Kong.

Background and research methodology

It has often been claimed that the Hong Kong society is ‘not ready’ for legal protection for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+) people because of various cultural and social reasons. However, the cultural and social climate related to LGBT+ issues in Hong Kong is constantly changing. This is especially the case as public presence of LGBT+ people and related issues has been rising locally, regionally as well as globally.

Against this background, Prof. Suen Yiu Tung, Assistant Professor of the Gender Studies Programme, and Founding Director of the Sexualities Research Programme at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, commissioned the Centre for Communication and Public Opinion Survey at the School of Journalism and Communication, the Chinese University of Hong Kong to conduct a territory-wide representative telephone survey from 16th September to 25th September, 2019. A random sample of 1,058 people who are Chinese-speaking and aged 18 or above was successfully contacted.

Implications

Prof. Suen notes, ‘The Government/ politicians/ policy makers stand on no empirical ground to make the argument that Hong Kong is not ready to implement laws and policies that address equal rights for LGBT+ people in Hong Kong. It is not our belief that public opinion shall be the lead indicator as to whether social minority shall be granted human rights protection, but as long as the Government/ politicians/ policy makers continue to make claims about social climate and public attitudes on LGBT+ legal rights, it is our belief that this Study provides data against unsubstantiated claims.’

Prof Suen puts the declining opposition towards LGBT+ legal rights into context: ‘There are many reasons to explain the declining opposition to LGBT+ legal rights. First, it can be attributed to the increasing contact with LGBT+ people and issues. In this survey, it was found that contact with homosexuals in Hong Kong has been on the rise, and that an increasing number of people have heard of the term ‘transgender’. Second, and interrelatedly, the legal cases that relate to LGBT+ rights in the past few years locally, regionally, and internationally have also contributed to changing views of LGBT+ rights in Hong Kong.’

‘This study also debunks the myths that certain groups in society are necessarily against LGBT+ rights in Hong Kong. For example, the respondents aged between 18 and 34 were most supportive (75 percent) of the right for a homosexual/ tongzhi to marry their partner in Hong Kong, but the support among those who were aged 55+ was still at 32 percent. 33 percent stayed neutral. 38 percent of the respondents who had a religion were supportive of the right for a homosexual/ tongzhi to marry their partner in Hong Kong. 30 percent stayed neutral. Among those who said they very much agreed/ agreed with the statement ‘obedience is part of filial piety’, 37 percent said they still very much agreed/ agreed that a homosexual/ tongzhi should be able to marry their partner. 30 percent stayed neutral. Age, religion and family values do not translate into wholesale rejection of protection of LGBT+ legal rights.’ Prof. Suen adds.



Responses of different sectors towards the research findings

‘It is unquestionable that the majority of the Hong Kong public has expressed their view in support of equal rights for sexual minority, and there is already societal consensus on legal protection for sexual minority in Hong Kong. The Government can no longer use the excuse that there is controversy on the topic to delay the legislative process for enacting legal protection for sexual minority in Hong Kong. We urge that the Government should legislate against discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation, and set up mechanism to recognize same-sex relationships. There is no time to wait.’

Hon CHAN Chi-chuen Raymond, member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong

‘This important survey adds to the increasing body of evidence that shows there is widespread LGBT+ acceptance in Hong Kong irrespective of age, religion or family values. Hong Kong people recognise the importance of equal rights for LGBT+ members of the community. Business recognises this. It is high time the government recognised this and introduces LGBT + discrimination legislation and equal marriage status in Hong Kong.’

Mr Michael Vidler, Hong Kong human rights lawyer

‘The EOC commends the professional effort put up by the Sexualities Research Programme at The Chinese University of Hong Kong in conducting the study and producing the report,’ said Mr Ricky CHU Man-kin, Chairperson of the EOC. ‘The report is informative and sheds new insights into the public attitudes towards legal rights and protection of LGBTI individuals in Hong Kong. It will certainly provide valuable reference for the EOC. We would study the issues raised in the report in our assessment of discrimination issues in the relevant areas in future.’

Mr CHU Man-Kin Ricky, Chairperson of the Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)

(For media enquiries directed at the EOC, please contact Mr Sam HO at +852 2106 2187.)



About Sexualities Research Programme

Sexualities Research Programme (SRP) at the Chinese University of Hong Kong is the first research programme in Hong Kong dedicated to conducting rigorous, independent research on sexuality issues, with a particular focus on sexual orientation, gender identity, law and social policy.

Should you wish to request for the full report, or should you have any enquiries, please contact Prof. Suen at suenyiutung@cuhk.edu.hk or Eliz Wong at the Sexualities Research Programme at (852) 65756357 (WhatsApp/phone).

ⁱ EOC-CUHK study refers to:

Suen, Y. T., Wong, A. W. C., Barrow, A., Wong, M. Y., Mak, W. W. S., Choi, P. K., Lam, C. M., & Lau, T. F. (2016). *Study on legislation against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status*. Hong Kong: Gender Research Centre, Chinese University of Hong Kong. Commissioned by Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission.