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A Growing Share of Hong Kong People Support Same-Sex Couples' Rights 60 Percent Support Same-Sex Marriage

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A new [report](#) shows that Hong Kong public opinion on same-sex couples' rights has changed markedly over the past ten years. Earlier this year, 60% of Hong Kong people said they supported same-sex marriage, while only 17% said they were not supportive, and 23% were neutral. In comparison, 50.4% supported same-sex marriage in 2017, and 38% did so in 2013.

The new report is jointly issued by the Centre for Comparative and Public Law at the Faculty of Law, The University of Hong Kong; the Sexualities Research Programme at The Chinese University of Hong Kong; and the Human Rights Law Program at the University of North Carolina School of Law. The report is based on the longest running study to track public opinion in Hong Kong concerning same-sex marriage using representative samples. The research was led by Holning Lau from the University of North Carolina, Kelley Loper from the University of Hong Kong, and Yiu Tung Suen from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The team conducted a telephone survey of Hong Kong residents in 2013, repeated the survey in 2017, and repeated it again earlier this year.

The survey asked about other issues in addition to same-sex marriage. It found growth in support for gay men and lesbians and their rights across various domains. For example, 71% of people in 2023 said that Hong Kong should have a law to protect against sexual orientation discrimination, compared with 69% in 2017 and 58% in 2013. A remarkably small percentage of people in 2023—only 6%—disagreed with having such legislation. The share of Hong Kong people who said they were unaccepting of gay men and lesbians dropped nearly 20 percentage points between 2013 and 2023 (from 32% to 13%).

“Our study shows that support for the rights of same-sex couples has grown quite considerably in the last decade,” said Professor Suen. “The increase in support for same-sex marriage and the decrease in opposition to sexual orientation discrimination legislation are particularly striking.”

Professor Lau noted the legal and social backdrop to the survey. “A lot has changed over the past ten years. Hong Kong courts have made headlines with rulings that protect same-sex couples. The list of jurisdictions around the world that have legalised same-sex marriage has grown rapidly. Representation of lesbians and gay men in local and global media has also grown. These are some of the factors that formed the backdrop to the shifts in public opinion that we found in our research.”

Still, Professor Loper highlighted persisting discrepancies between public opinion and law: “Although 71% of Hong Kong people said they favor having a law to protect against sexual orientation discrimination, and only a small proportion of people disagree, the government of Hong Kong has yet to enact such legislation. Same-sex couples also continue to be excluded from marriage, despite majority support.”

The release of the report coincides with the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT), which is observed annually on 17 May. For the full report see: <https://ccpl.law.hku.hk/content/uploads/2023/05/Change-Over-Time-Report-2023-FINAL-English.pdf>

Professor Lau (hslau@email.unc.edu) and Professor Loper (kloper@hku.hk) are available for press inquiries in English by email. Professor Suen is available for press inquiries in Chinese and English by email (suenyitung@cuhk.edu.hk).