



# the ridge - NUS Sex Survey

*A recent Cambridge survey suggests that sex may have a negative impact on a student's grades. If that were true, NUS students have little to worry about.*

text Nurhayati Khan

IN A NUS SEX SURVEY conducted by *the ridge* in January, 53.6% of respondents were virgins, including all respondents from SDE.

## LIFE IS NOT JUST A STRAIGHT LINE

25% of respondents were either homosexual or bisexual. Interestingly, all homosexual and bisexual respondents hail from FASS, while all other faculties were represented by heterosexual male and female respondents.

50% of homosexual and bisexual respondents were gay, while 35% were bisexual. Only 15% of homosexual and bisexual respondents were lesbian.

While FASS students tend to be viewed as more liberal, the large concentration of homosexual and bisexual respondents may be a clear indication that these communities tend towards the more creative or abstract forms of study.

## NUS STUDENTS PROMISCUOUS?

Of the 46.4% of respondents who are not virgins, 28.6% of them come from FASS, forming the majority, while students from Engineering came second, at 5.36%.

More worryingly, 45.7% claim that they do not use protection when they engage in sexual activities. The average percentage of Singaporeans who claim likewise is 35%, which is also the global average (Durex, 2004).

When confronted with their peers' apparent disregard for safe sex, several NUS students attribute the impulsive nature of sex and sexual activities to the lack of preparation.

English Language senior, Asraf Angullia, suggests that "sex may sometimes occur in the heat of the moment [and] some may not be fully aware of the

consequences so they don't see the need for proper protection."

Others believe that instead of abstinence, loyalty is the best protection against STDs and unwanted pregnancy.

"[T]hey probably believe that their partner is clean and is not cheating and take measures to ensure that the girl will not get pregnant," says 3rd year English Literature undergraduate, Wong Pei Yee.

Given the high percentage of respondents engaging in unprotected sex, 85.7% claim to be free of STDs, while the remaining 14.3% chose not to answer.

## SEX IN RESTROOMS

Dorm rooms are the choice areas for sexual activities, where a solid 64% of respondents claiming to engage in sexual activities more than once a week. Second in place is, curiously, restrooms. The cleaners should be awarded for doing such effective work.

While housing agreements issued out to all residents on-campus specifically require doors to be ajar when members of the opposite sex are in the room, there is no mention of denying sex and other sexual activities, prompting most residents to hint at some 'free shows' in some halls and residences.

Other areas respondents found conducive for sexual activities include the Student Lounge at YIH "at night" and the Dungeon.

## SEXING UP SINGAPORE

14.3% of respondents were unaware of Act 377 and 377A of the Penal Code, which states that it is a criminal offence in Singapore for any man or woman to engage in "carnal intercourse against the act of nature" which includes oral and anal sex, homosexual intercourse and sex



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with animals.

Kevaljit Singh, a recent NUS graduate, feels that the Act should be questioned: "Is this law relevant today?"

[I]t came from the colonial times when such acts were outlawed."

Angullia agrees, describing the Act as "an old decrepit law".

"Singaporeans should get over themselves and just accept the world as it is today. Sexual indulgence is a personal choice and it should not be imposed with restrictions, unless it is harmful to unwilling parties, such as sex with children."

Wong echoes his views, asserting that "consensual homosexual intercourse, anal and oral sex are NOT a crime before, now and forever. Authorities just can't face dealing with sensuality and eroticism."

### WHAT SEX ED, AH?

67.9% of respondents claim that they have received sufficient sex education. However, a majority of male respondents, (33.3%), received their sex education from the Internet, and friends (25%). Female respondents claim to receive theirs predominantly from friends(24.6%) and school(20%).

Other avenues of sex education include science classes, brochures, novels and magazines.

Such relatively 'informal' forms of sex education seems to imply that these respondents, aged between 18 and 27, did not receive sufficient sex education in earlier stages of education.

Angullia describes his sex education in an all-boys' school as "very textbook-like". There was constant reference to sexual responsibility and the problems associated with unwanted pregnancy.

"It was quite effective, but they should have also discussed other types of sex, like masturbation, oral and homosexual sex, so that we can also be educated on the safety precautions we need to take."

Wong describes her sex education in upper primary

as "effective" but admits that as one matures, things get more complicated. "The things [they taught] in primary school were just basics."

These basics seem to have evolved into a comprehensive form of sex education, but that which still retains the 'scare' tactic.

A recent re-run of BlogTV involved a group of teenagers discussing their school's sex education video. The video depicted various scenarios of 'wrong' behaviour between teenagers and the consequences. The laughter generated during video indicated that teenagers were more than familiar with such crude and rudimentary depictions of sexual behaviour. One of the teenagers commented that he sees "more in Hollywood movies."

Singh proposes that "depending on how open parents are with us, we tend to perpetuate the same approach toward sex." Hence, if parents are uncomfortable with issues on sex and indeed find it easier to demonise it altogether, their children may feel pressured to act the same way.

Wong points out that "being open to discussions on sex is no longer the problem, but being open in those discussions is key."

Communities may also play a part to expand on the MOE sex education syllabus. Last year's focus on the Malay-Muslim community's efforts to deal with increasing numbers of teenage pregnancies drew an uncomfortable dialectic between social responsibility and adherence to religious teaching. While preaching abstinence was the norm, many found it ineffective and preferred to promote 'safe' sex, which was seen by many as implicitly condoning premarital sex, which is a cardinal sin in Islam.

Perhaps religious institutions could attempt to bridge the gap with social realities by confronting them in a direct and relevant manner. Angullia suggests that since "many Muslim kids attend *madrasah* classes during the weekends, religious teachers should talk about pre-marital sex, its consequences, from a health, social and religious viewpoint."

It is clear that the public and private spaces of discourse create unending conflict; while sex is very much part of the lives of a large number of NUS students, social institutions such as schools, religion and the family continue to reject sex and constructive discussions on the subject, leaving the individual very much alone in negotiating his or her sexual issues.

*For a copy of the survey questions, go to <http://ridgeonline.wordpress.com>.*

