SURVEY OF ATTITUDES TOWARD HOMOSEXUALS IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (2013)

Press Summary

This study is a seminal exploration of Trinbagonians’ attitudes toward homosexuals and is an individual component of a three-country research project that sought to collect similar data in Guyana and Barbados. It was funded in Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and designed by a team which included CADRES, CAISO, UWI and SASOD representatives. This summary of the overall research findings does not attempt to present the voluminous quantum of data collected, but represents the general tone of the report.

Generally this survey demonstrates that a majority of Trinbagonians are either tolerant or accepting of homosexuals, with the quantity of persons that could genuinely be described as “homophobic” amounting to approximately 36% of the population. Conversely this means that 64% of Trinbagonians are either “tolerant” or “accepting” of homosexuals. It is also immediately noticeable that homophobia, or alternatively tolerance of homosexuals, correlates directly with age, sex and, to a lesser extent, religion, place of origin and education. As such, women, younger persons and Trinbagonians who were not born in Trinidad and Tobago tended to be more comfortable with homosexuals, while those who have had fewer years of formal education tended to be more homophobic.

Notwithstanding the largely positive stance of the majority of Trinbagonians toward homosexuals, it is also clear that fundamental misunderstandings exist among Trinbagonians regarding several basic facts about homosexuality, and it is entirely possible that these misunderstandings could impact negatively on attitudes, including attitudes about legislative change. Trinbagonians generally believe that it is a “choice”, and this misunderstanding carries substantial baggage. With regard to discrimination (as manifested in violence) the survey demonstrates clearly that Trinbagonians do dislike the idea of violence against minorities and discrimination in all its manifestations. Moreover, Trinbagonians largely consider discrimination against homosexuals to be wrong.

Although there is no profound appetite for repeal of the sodomy laws at this time, if it can be proven that these laws are impacting negatively on the physical or psychological well-being of young people or adults, then Trinbagonians would support a change in the laws. Similarly, if it were proven that the laws contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS, this basis would also provide good grounds for change.

Finally, the potential political impact of policy or legislative changes in relation to homosexuality is important to advocacy, and this paper demonstrates that there is no significant political impact likely as a result of such change. Although the survey did not explore the direction of change in party stance on homosexuality, a majority of persons interviewed were either not likely to change their voting as a result of such change or were unsure if they would. Those would change their vote are in the minority and, when the data are further disaggregated, it reveals a significantly larger proportion of those who would not be influenced by a party’s stance on homosexuality are actually uncommitted voters.

CADRES, May 2013
ATTITUDES TOWARD HOMOSEXUALS IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Press Summary
Comparative Sizes of Sexual and Religious Minorities (Survey, 2011 Census Data)

- Religious Minorities Moravian
- Religious Minorities Methodist
- Religious Minorities Orisa
- Religious Minorities Other Baptist
- Religious Minorities Jehovah’s Witness
- Religious Minorities Presbyterian/ Congregational
- Religious Minorities Seventh Day Adventist
- Spiritual Baptist
- Islam
- Anglican
- Bi-sexual
- Homosexual
- Non-Heterosexuals Prefer not to say
• The majority of Trinbagonians are either tolerant or accepting of Gays, with only 36% being potentially homophobic.
Trinbagonians with Gay family members or Gay friends are less likely to be homophobic.
The vast majority of Trinbagonians consider violence against Gays or sexual minorities to be discrimination.
• Trinidadians generally oppose discrimination of all types, INCLUDING discrimination against Gays
• Trinbagonians generally understand the problems caused by homophobia
Possible reasons for changing laws

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Trinbagonians would support the repeal of the “Buggery” laws IF...
• Trinbagonians believe that homosexuality is a “choice” and is not an illness that can be cured
• A party’s position on “gay issues” is no more likely to influence committed voters’ support of them than not.
• Uncommitted voters are even less likely to be swayed by a party’s position.