



Being gay is faddish in today's Russia

04.12.2006 ■ **Source:** ■ **URL:** <http://english.pravda.ru/society/sex/85760-gay-0>

Homosexuals were rare species in Russia some 10 years ago. Homosexual males met one another in secrecy, they might be sent to prison because sodomy was a punishable practice under the penal code effective at the time. But things have changed dramatically. These days it is faddish to be a gay in Russia. The 'lavender invasion' has reached the scale of an epidemic. Nowadays Russia's gays launch their own web sites, open cafes and clubs.

Family man with a 'boyfriend' on the side

I did not have to talk Sergei and Pavel into coming for an interview. I just asked them, and they agreed on the spot. Sergei is 21 and Pavel is 23. Both of them look like real lady killers. They are tall and full of muscles. They are stylishly dressed too. There is nothing feminine about them.

'Why aren't you interested in dating girls? Both of you look so handsome,' I could not help asking them the question.

'Have you ever dreamed of having sex with a woman?' Sergei fired back without missing a beat.

'No, I haven't. I'm into men.'

'We're into men too. A man can always understand another man as best as he can,' says Sergei.

Sergei is a resident of the city of Novosibirsk. He moved to Krasnoyarsk to live with Pavel. They have been together for three months now. They share an apartment with Pavel's parents. Pavel says he used to date with a TV journalist in Krasnoyarsk. According to Pavel, the journalist was courting him in style.

'Homosexuals are like heterosexuals when it comes to dating, falling in love or falling apart,' says Pavel. 'Well, we can come to blows sometimes during an argument, that's the only difference. We mind our business, we never impose our ways on anybody,' added he.

According to Pavel and Sergei, 10% of all males in Krasnoyarsk are gay. The local gay community comprises not only men involved in fashion industry or show biz. Some gay parties in the city are often attended by officials of the Krasnoyarsk regional government, deputies of the local parliament, well-known journalists, businessmen, and even deans of the city's universities. It would be pretty hard for a commoner to estimate the scale of a 'lavender epidemic.' Just a handful of gays live like married pairs. Some of them have wives and children who apparently know nothing about the other side of life of their husbands and daddies.

Boys got beaten up and girls were raped

The majority of homosexuals prefer to keep their sexual orientation undercover. One of the officials of the Krasnoyarsk regional government is rumored to be frequently flying to Moscow to hang out at gay parties out there because he does not want to be 'sighted' at the local gay scene.

Krasnoyarsk gays and lesbians used to hang out at Neon, one of the city's clandestine gay clubs. The partygoers would invariably get a pretty sour welcome from local youths after the party.

'Locals would confront us near the club's exit late at night. The thugs would beat up the boys and rape the girls,' said Ivan.

'I remember the night when the authorities shut down the club. It's just a panic. The party was in full swing when a group of camouflaged and masked men with submachine guns came running into the center of the dance floor. Everybody thought it was part of the show and began to clap hands. Fun was cut short when those 'strippers' told us to lie face down and keep hands above our heads. Then they started knocking glasses off the tables, they smashed the tables too. By the way, they videotaped the havoc and all the patrons of the club that night. Apparently, they wanted to make a database of those who have nontraditional sexual orientation. What a bunch of idiots,' concluded Ivan.

'The authorities in Novosibirsk show more tolerance toward gays,' says Sergei. 'There're two members-only gay clubs in the city. There's also a square in the center where we usually hang out. The police don't bother us; they don't shut down the clubs. Well, there were several incidents when the gays were taken into custody and spent some time in a holding cell. But all the cases were investigated and the homophobic cops were brought to justice. I believe the situation is different in Novosibirsk because a lot more gays are among the high-ranking officials out there than over here,' adds Sergei.

However, the homosexuals in Krasnoyarsk can still enjoy themselves despite all the persecutions. There is a web site to help those who are on the make. According to Ivan, the city's numerous escort agencies have plenty of 'call boys' to choose from. The male prostitutes are said to belong to the widest age group imaginable. In terms of call boys, Krasnoyarsk is on a par with Moscow, said Ivan.

Being gay is faddish

The number of those who practice same-sex relationships has grown dramatically over the last several years in Russia, Krasnoyarsk inclusive. Needless to say, no official statistics are available. Members of the local gay community put it like this: 'We're all over Krasnoyarsk.'

Propaganda of homosexuality via the media is one of the reasons behind the current popularity of 'men's love.' By and large, it is pretty trendy to be a gay these days.

Pavel is strongly opposed to such a statement. He says that he started showing interest in men when he turned 13. He calls his homosexuality a 'natural thing.' I asked him what sort of thing or person influenced him into trying it out for the first time. 'You know, I was watching a series called Faculty on MTV. Two of the characters ended up being gay. So I decided to give it a try too,' said he. At 23 years of age, he has slept with more than a dozen men. He never had sex with a woman.

'Homosexuality is not a disease, it has to do some peculiarities of a person's upbringing,' said Dr. Irina Upatova, a psychotherapist. 'A child forms his behavioral stereotypes before reaching the age of 7. Growing up in a single-parent family, without a father or father figure, a child may later feel the need to experience this kind of love. Sometimes men become homosexuals after being raped. No doubts about it, the Russian media actively sparks enthusiasm for homosexual relationships. You may rest assured that a pubescent boy will try it out if he's being told all the time that gay love is fun. And he's likely to favor men over women if his first sexual experience with a woman is a failure. Having said that, I believe that treating homosexuality is pointless if it's not related to some kind a mental deviation, and an individual feels comfortable about the way his sex life is arranged. On the other hand, the media should take a more careful approach and stop popularizing the lifestyle,' said Dr. Upatova.

Russian government officials at all levels are now holding a lively debate about steps that should be taken to encourage population growth in this country. Meanwhile, some of them at times practice homosexual relationships instead of taking action to curb the spread of the lifestyle. Besides, in Krasnoyarsk some 'pretty grown-up guys' look for the green boys and seduce them on purpose, according to accounts by some of the gays in that city.

Where does the future hold for a nation where being abnormal is faddish? How on earth will the Russian women conceive in some 20 years if 10% of today's males are gay and the number keeps growing? 'I feel sorry for you girls. There's only 6 men for 10 women in this country. One out of those six is a gay, another one is a drug addict, two more are alcoholics, and the last but one is a waste of space, an impotent. I guess you can figure out the rest,' said Pavel before bidding his good-byes.

Reference information courtesy of Argumenty i Fakty

Under the Soviet criminal code, sodomy had been a crime since 1934. In accordance with Article 121 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic, men found guilty of committing acts of sodomy were to be sentenced to 5 years in prison. In 1993, the Russian Supreme Soviet repealed the article to meet the requirements for the admission of Russia to the Council of Europe. In 2002, the State Duma faction called People's Deputy came up with a motion to reintroduce criminal prosecution for sodomy. Yet the motion was rejected by a majority of 294 votes against 54 votes.

Russians reportedly show the least amount of tolerance toward the following social groups: HIV-patients, transsexuals, gays.

Source: *Argumenty i Fakty*

Translated by Guerman Grachev

Discuss this article on Pravda.ru [English Forum](#)

© 1999-2006. 'PRAVDA.Ru'. When reproducing our materials in whole or in part, hyperlink to PRAVDA.Ru should be made. The opinions and views of the authors do not always coincide with the point of view of PRAVDA.Ru's editors.

