

3 in 10 See Prejudice Based on Nationality Being More Widespread But Most Feel That Bias in All Aspects Has Not Increased, Survey Shows

Maryam Mokhtar And Tham Yuen-c
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WHEN it comes to prejudice, some 32.1 per cent of Singapore residents see prejudice based on nationality as being more widespread than five years ago, a survey found.

This type of prejudice is also more prevalent than that based on race, religion, language, gender or age.

These were the findings, released yesterday, of the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), which surveyed over 4,000 Singapore residents in a study of race, language and religion here. Other parts of this survey were released last year.

The latest results, presented at the IPS Singapore Perspectives 2014 conference, shed some light on the differences between various groups in Singapore and how they have changed over the years. The results showed a growing divide between those who are born here, and those who are born elsewhere, even though racial and religious tensions have smoothed and most feel that prejudice across the board has not increased.

While 94 per cent of respondents said they were comfortable working for a boss who is a Singapore-born Chinese, that number fell to 74 per cent for a boss who is a new citizen from China.

There was a similar result for foreign-born Malays and Indians. Those born here are also less comfortable with new citizens in personal and social settings, even if they are

of the same race, the survey found. Singapore-born Chinese have greater affinity to Singapore-born Malays and Indians compared to Chinese from China, for example, said IPS director Janadas Devan.

The findings give warning to the rising levels of anti-foreigner sentiment here, he said, with the anger such as that directed recently at British wealth manager Anton Casey "frightful".

"Hatred of the foreigner, xenophobia, is re-shaping the politics of many developed countries, including in Europe and Scandinavia, where we are seeing the growth of extreme right, sometimes neo-fascist, parties. Do not assume this cannot happen here," he said.

As such there is a need to better integrate foreigners into society while retaining the country's Singaporean identity, he added. IPS senior research fellow Mathew Mathews, who headed the survey, said younger and more educated respondents feel these differences more acutely as they are "more sensitised" and exposed to these differences online.

Singaporeans also expect the Government to manage the issue of immigration in the "well-orchestrated" manner as it has done with race and religion, he said, and want results quickly.

But it is more difficult to do so today with more platforms such as social media for different voices to be heard, he noted. The survey also found that while most feel that Singapore is

free from racial and religious tension, some want the Government to do more to address issues of discrimination against minorities.

Among the Malay and the Indian respondents, 40.8 per cent and 33.6 per cent respectively said that the Government should give preferential treatment to minority races, a larger number than those who disagreed. But more than half of the Chinese respondents said they disagreed with preferential treatment for minorities.

The more educated were also more likely to disagree with preferential treatment. More university-educated respondents of each race do not want preferential treatment given to minorities, than those who do.