

More say govt right to raise foreigners numbers

Acceptance of them higher when seen as an economic imperative: study

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The Business Times, 2 August 2010

Two-thirds of Singaporeans polled in a recent survey say that the government is right to increase the number of foreigners working here if the economy needed it.

But almost an equal number - 63 per cent - feel that national unity could be affected by the policy to attract more foreign talent. These are the findings of a recent study by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) which polled 2,016 Singapore citizens residing in Singapore, aged 21 to 64 years, between February and May last year.

'The acceptance of the presence of foreigners was therefore higher when viewed with the lens of the economic imperative,' said the IPS study, titled *Citizens and the Nation: National Orientations of Singaporeans*.

The survey also found that there was an increased demand among Singaporeans for political participation and involvement compared to the 1998 version of the study.

Some 85 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that voting gave citizens the most meaningful way to tell the government how to run the country, compared to 72 per cent in 1998.

And while 87 per cent agreed in the 1998 survey that every citizen should have equal freedom to express their views - with another 11 per cent remaining neutral - the number increased to 97 per cent in the most recent poll.

Similarly, even when the government has to make quick decisions, 97 per cent of respondents in the 2009 study wanted the government to take the time to listen to citizens, compared to 73 per cent previously.

However, in practice, only 8 per cent actually proceeded to express their views on public policy issues to the government, though the majority (68 per cent) said this was because they had no strong views.

Another 13 per cent said there were no effective channels to do so, and 7 per cent said they had no channels to do so.

Meanwhile, 48 per cent said they liked to join and serve in government-related bodies such as town councils, the community development councils and grassroots organisations related to the People's Association. In contrast, 24 per cent agreed in the 1998 survey, with 37 per cent in the neutral category.

The survey also showed national loyalty to be stable and national pride to be relatively high and stable.