

6 in 10 Singaporeans trust that Lawrence Wong is best 4G leader to steer country in post-pandemic era: IPS study

This was part of a larger study by the Institute of Policy Studies that looked into the well-being of Singaporeans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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SINGAPORE: Around six in 10 Singaporeans trust that Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong is the "best possible 4G leader" to navigate Singapore through the post-pandemic era, according to a study conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS).

This includes trust in the handling of divisions within society, dealing with other countries and helping Singapore through the economic recovery.

This was among several findings released on Thursday (Jul 14) from IPS' study on the well-being of Singaporeans over the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was based on responses from more than 2,000 people in a poll conducted online.

Given that the coronavirus outbreak was a test of governance, coming at a time of leadership transition, researchers said they assessed if respondents trusted the Government's leadership to bring Singapore forward through the pandemic.

Mr Wong, who is also Finance Minister, was named leader of the People's Action Party's fourth generation (4G) team on Apr 14. About two months later, he was promoted to Deputy Prime Minister.

According to IPS' research paper, better-educated respondents, "who traditionally have been more sceptical about government policies", were more likely to trust that the Government has the best possible 4G leader.

Around 59 per cent of those who have at least a university degree had greater trust that the Singapore Government has the best possible 4G leader, as compared to 44 per cent to 49 per cent of those without a degree.

CONNECTING WITH THE DEMOGRAPHIC

During a media briefing, associate director of IPS Social Lab Mike Hou, one of the authors of the paper, suggested that Mr Wong may have connected with this particular demographic in his role as co-chair of the COVID-19 multi-ministry task force.

"We think that it is in particular because DPM Wong has been quite effective in addressing some of the considerations and concerns of this demographic," he said.

This included social cohesion issues such as race and religion, which Dr Hou described as "dormant challenges" that emerged more during the pandemic.

"This demographic group may be more aligned with our Government's scientific approach in trying to deal with the pandemic," Dr Hou added.

Those who were more satisfied with the Government's management of the pandemic, those who were less worried about the rise in the cost of living, as well as those who were more receptive towards endemic living were more likely to trust that the Government has the best possible 4G leader, the study found.

Around 83 per cent of those who had high satisfaction in how the Government handled the pandemic had greater trust that it has the best possible 4G leader.

This is compared to 14 per cent of those who had low satisfaction, and 54 per cent of those who had moderate satisfaction.

Although a "substantial proportion" of respondents generally expressed "healthy levels" of trust and confidence in the 4G leadership, more will need to be done to address Singaporeans' livelihood concerns such as the proposed Goods and Services Tax (GST) hike, the paper said.

Researchers also asked if respondents had trust in Singapore's recovery and government in light of the impact of COVID-19.

More than half of them trusted that the Government is serious about developing a strong Singaporean core of highly skilled talents on the issue of jobs. A majority also trusted that the Government will be able to create new jobs and training opportunities.

However, about 49 per cent felt that Singaporeans will become less welcoming of skilled professionals from overseas who work here.

A majority, almost three-quarters of the respondents, trusted that Singapore would remain economically competitive. A large proportion also trusted that the Government knows how to navigate the global economy so that the country will be able to bounce back.