

One in two young Singaporeans strongly rooted, says survey

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One in two young Singaporeans have little intention of moving overseas. They are rooted by strong family ties, national pride, and have confidence in the country's economic future.

This finding emerged from a study conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies, involving more than 2,013 Singaporeans between 19 and 30 years old.

The respondents were interviewed in door-to-door surveys over three months, from December 2009 to March 2010.

Friends, family and home ownership are the main reasons identified by young Singaporeans when asked what keeps them rooted to the country.

The respondents were asked to pick the reasons from 26 items such as quality of life, finance and career, social bonding and well-being and socio-political considerations.

When Channel NewsAsia took to the streets, many cited similar considerations.

"I don't think I'm moving out of Singapore because of friends and family here," said a young Singaporean.

"Singapore is a good to live in, with a lot of opportunities to excel in life...there's (also) no natural disaster in Singapore, like what happened to Japan," said another.

But others felt emigration represented a better life, citing Singapore's high cost of living and hectic lifestyle as possible reasons for migrating.

The Institute of Policy Studies' survey found that young Singaporeans fell into four broad categories. There is the "Heartland Stayer" - unlikely to emigrate and has strong ties and national pride. Similarly, the "Cosmopolitan Stayer" has low intention of leaving and is rooted in Singapore. However, this group views emigration favourably and has the ability to leave.

There is also the "Explorer" group - the one most likely to emigrate. They have strong family ties but doesn't feel connected to Singapore. And then there is the "Disengaged" have the weakest family bonds and lowest national pride. They also have no strong opinion on emigration, and have a lower ability to migrate.

The Institute of Policy Studies said the survey findings showed that young Singaporeans are not a homogenous group and a one-size-fits-all policy will not work. This makes it challenging for policymakers to engage them on the issue of rootedness as different factors appeal to different segments. But one area that can be looked into is the issue of work-life balance, which emerged as an important anchor.

Dr Leong Chan Hoong, lead researcher and research fellow with the Institute of Policy Studies, said: "They find that this work-life balance is lacking in Singapore. As a result, some of them

consider migrating abroad to achieve that. So it is important for policymakers to pay attention to this area and more importantly, to see whether that attitude, that perception changes over time."

The institute hopes to conduct another survey in two to three years.