

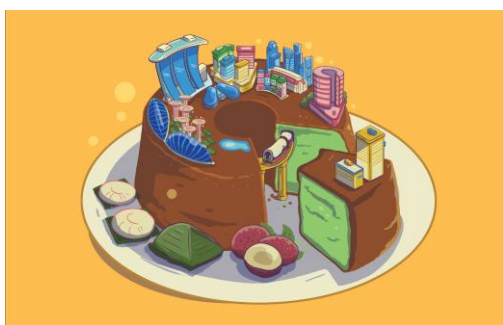
Call for Respondents: IPS Study on Singaporeans Working and Living Abroad

By Eugene Teng
IPS Research Analyst

LAST week, the IPS Social Lab launched its State of the Overseas Singaporeans Study. It is a survey that is being conducted online till 30 September 2017, and aims to understand the profile of Singaporeans living abroad, the issues and challenges they face, and their engagement with and affinity to Singapore and Singaporeans.

Social Lab has reached out to Singaporeans overseas by e-mail and through various social media channels, to ask those aged between 18 and 64 who have been working or studying overseas for at least six months as of 12 May 2017 to register for the survey at: www.tinyurl.com/OSsurvey2017

Eligible Singaporeans will receive a unique web link to fill out the survey online. It will take respondents 30 minutes to do so and they will receive a token of appreciation (an EZ-link card designed by [Caleb Tan, a young Singaporean illustrator](#), with \$10 stored value) at their overseas postal address.



As an added incentive, participants who complete the survey will receive an EZ-link card with \$10 stored value. They can choose one of the above two designs by illustrator Caleb Tan

A timely project

This project is timely given both local and global trends today. The recently released report by the [Committee on the Future Economy](#) places heavy emphasis on deepening and diversifying international connections. Overseas Singaporeans — and there were around 213,400 of them in 2016, according to the Department of Statistics — are crucial to this strategy. They are Singapore's representatives in the global market and the value they bring to their overseas employers will raise Singapore's international profile, encouraging more trade and investment cooperation with local partners.

Singaporeans who choose to return also carry with them deep knowledge of the markets they were in. This experience makes them highly sought after by employers here. A [survey conducted by recruitment firm Robert Walters in 2016](#) found that returning Singaporeans were valued by employers for their international exposure, multilingual skills, and ability to work in cross-cultural contexts. Nine out of 10 employers see hiring returning Singaporeans as a viable option to addressing recruitment challenges.

However, less is understood about the needs and concerns of Singaporeans who live abroad, as well as what can be done to help them make the most of their time overseas and how to ease adjustment should they choose to return. In the same Robert Walters survey, many returning Singaporeans who applied for jobs had to be turned away due to job-skill mismatch. This problem is more common among those that have been away for more than five years.

Furthermore, those who reside in countries where anti-immigrant rhetoric and tighter regulation of foreigners are on the rise are facing new challenges. For instance, Australia has revised its working visa programme to make it more restrictive, including the exclusion of some high-skilled occupations in biomedical research and multimedia design. [Already, some overseas Singaporeans have had their lives unexpectedly disrupted](#). Besides Australia, it is also now harder for Singaporeans to work in [New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States](#).

Answers to some key questions

We aim to achieve a sample of 3,000 overseas Singaporeans from different countries, so that we can have an accurate picture of the Singapore diaspora.

We hope to find answers to questions such as:

- What drives Singaporeans living abroad to work or study where they are?
- What factors into the decision to move elsewhere or return to Singapore?
- How attached are they to Singapore, and how has adopting a new culture affected their Singaporean identity?
- What are their unique needs and concerns, and what would be the best way to support them?

This study is supported by the Overseas Singaporean Unit (OSU), a division within the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Key findings from our study will be shared with policymakers and also publicly in 2018 to promote discourse on how Singapore can better support overseas Singaporeans and maintain links with them even while they are away.

Respondents can rest assured that their privacy will be protected — personal identifiers will only be available to the Principal Investigator (Head of IPS Social Lab Dr Leong Chan-Hong) and a Social Lab data administrator carrying out quality control. OSU and other researchers will only have access to anonymised responses.

A concern about an online survey of overseas Singaporeans is the possibility of a self-selected sample that is skewed towards those who are already actively engaged with Singapore's developments and attached to Singapore. Formal media channels and social

nodes can only go so far in reaching Singaporeans living across the globe. Therefore, we appeal to our IPS readers to help spread the word of this study to friends and family members who meet the eligibility criteria stated above, and invite them to register for our study.

[Eugene Teng](#) is a Research Analyst at [IPS Social Lab](#), a centre for social indicators research. For more information on the State of the Overseas Singaporeans Study, please visit <http://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips/uncategorized/state-of-the-overseas-singaporeans-study>

If you have comments or feedback, please email ips.eneews@nus.edu.sg



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