IPS Working Papers

MOVING FORWARD THROUGH COVID-19 IN SINGAPORE: WELL-BEING, LESSONS LEARNT AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

MATHEW MATHEWS
MIKE HOU
and
FIONA PHOA

July 2022
IPS Working Papers No. 46

Institute of Policy Studies

About Institute of Policy Studies (IPS)

The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) was established in 1988 to promote a greater awareness of policy issues and good governance. Today, IPS is a think-tank within the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP) at the National University of Singapore. It seeks to cultivate clarity of thought, forward thinking and a big-picture perspective on issues of critical national interest through strategic deliberation and research. It adopts a multi-disciplinary approach in its analysis and takes the long-term view. It studies the attitudes and aspirations of Singaporeans which have an impact on policy development and the relevant areas of diplomacy and international affairs. The Institute bridges and engages the diverse stakeholders through its conferences and seminars, closed-door discussions, publications, and surveys on public perceptions of policy.

IPS Working Paper No. 46

MOVING FORWARD THROUGH COVID-19 IN SINGAPORE:

WELL-BEING, LESSONS LEARNT AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS[1]

MATHEW MATHEWS

Principal Research Fellow & Head, Social Lab

Institute of Policy Studies

MIKE HOU

Associate Director

Institute of Policy Studies, Social Lab

AND

FIONA PHOA

Research Assistant

Institute of Policy Studies, Social Lab

July 2022

[1] Please direct all comments and queries related to this study to Dr Mathew Mathews at mathew.mathews@nus.edu.sg. The researchers are grateful for the valuable inputs and comments offered by IPS colleagues. Special thanks to our colleague Evan Lei for his assistance with data visualization and Mindy Chong for her assistance with report editing.

CONTENTS

MOVING FORWARD THROUGH COVID-19 IN SINGAPORE: WELL-BEING, LESSONS LEARNT AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Executive summary

This paper reviews the well-being of Singaporeans during the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also examines Singaporeans' outlook towards the future, such as emerging concerns and perceptions towards government leadership, as well as lessons learnt from the pandemic.

We found that while the proportion of respondents who felt stressed from the pandemic has fallen since its earlier stages in 2020, it did not necessarily translate into respondents' self-perceptions of better mental well-being. Specifically, the proportion of those who felt stressed has fallen from 50 per cent in W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020) to 31 per cent in W52 (24 June 2022 – 4 July 2022). On the other hand, when we asked respondents to rate their mental/emotional health, their perception of their mental/emotional health has slightly declined across the later survey waves from W36 (15 September 2021 – 21 September 2021) to W48 (18 March 2022 – 25 March 2022) as the pandemic dragged on, before slightly improving in the last few survey waves as restrictions were eased to resemble a sense of normalcy as seen in pre-pandemic times.

Individuals' sense of hopelessness and worries over their mental well-being or purpose for living have also not correspondingly improved since the pandemic started, with an average of around 19 per cent feeling hopeless for quite a bit or very much throughout the course of the pandemic, while 17 per cent felt moderately hopeless. The proportion of those who were rather or very worried about their mental well-being rose from 24 per cent in W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020) to 28 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022), while the proportion of those who were worried about losing their purpose for living rose from 23 per cent in W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020) to 28 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022).

We also found that younger respondents aged 21 to 29, as well as middle aged respondents aged 40 to 49 have experienced declining mental/emotional health, as compared to other age groups. The pandemic may have driven youths to re-evaluate their life priorities and question their life choices amidst an uncertain future. The stressors from their fledgling careers and adjusting to workplace dynamics in the face of new workplace arrangements may have further contributed to their lower sense of mental well-being. On the other hand, middle aged respondents may be facing considerable pressures given the need to support their family members financially, including both the old and the young, especially amidst job disruptions and rising costs of living.

Respondents' relationships with their family and friends seem to have improved. The proportion of those who rated their relationship with their spouse as poor or fair declined from 23 per cent in W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020) to 17 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022). As for their relationship with their parents, the proportion of respondents who rated it as poor or fair fell from 21 per cent in W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020) to 16 per cent in W51 (31 May

2022 – 13 June 2022). About one in 10 (12 per cent) rated their relationship with their children as poor or fair on average across all waves. The proportion of those who rated their relationship as poor or fair declined from 19 per cent in W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020) to 15 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022). Perhaps as restrictions related to group sizes, gatherings, and activities were eased, people were able to interact with their communities more frequently, and in a more meaningful and balanced way.

During the early days of the pandemic, children have had to study from home as lessons were brought online. As schools resumed their face-to-face mode, children have had to wear masks during lessons and practise social distancing. There were concerns about how measures such as these would have an impact on children. In our survey, we found that more than four in 10 were concerned that the social development of their children or children they are in contact with would be affected (43 per cent). Respondents were also concerned that the children would develop unhealthy lifestyle habits (42 per cent). Around 35 per cent were concerned that the emotional development of the children would be affected. Indeed, the limitations on movement and the need for safety measures to be observed have caused some anxiety over whether children would be able to interact well with others and whether they would be able to express, recognise and manage their emotions.

Job security and finances have also been major concerns during the pandemic. With restrictions in place, some businesses have struggled to cope with their costs and have closed down or have had to retrench employees. However, as the COVID-19 situation improved, more restrictions were lifted and people could socialise. The government also provided support to businesses to safeguard employment. While the worry over finances has fluctuated depending on the pandemic situation, worry over job security has been on a general decline in later waves of the study. For example, the proportion of those who were rather or very worried about themselves or their family members losing their jobs has been on a general decline from 35 per cent in W40 (28 October 2021 – 1 November 2021) to 28 per cent in W50 (22 April 2022 – 4 May 2022), when measures were relaxed and Singapore seemed to have return to a sense of normalcy, before increasing to 35 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022) as recession concerns grew.

As we move forward post-pandemic, many challenges remain. The biggest issue looming over everyone's minds appeared to be the rising cost of living. On the topic of inflation, we found that more than four in 10 were rather or very worried about the cost of healthcare (45 per cent), cost of utilities (41 per cent) and cost of food (40 per cent) possibly rising this year. On the topic of GST, the proportion of those who were rather or very worried declined slightly from 54 per cent in W48 (18 March 2022 – 25 March 2022) to 47 per cent in W52 (24 June 2022 – 4 July 2022), though still a substantial proportion.

Beyond well-being and financial concerns, the COVID-19 virus itself has also been a major source of anxiety for many. In general, the proportion of those who were rather or very worried about themselves or their family members getting COVID-19 fluctuated with case numbers in Singapore. This proportion has generally fallen from 48 per cent in W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020) to 33 per cent in W50 (22 April 2022 – 4 May 2022), before increasing slightly to 36 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022) as concerns about a new COVID-19 wave grew. The proportion of respondents who were rather or very worried that the number of community infections will rise again was around 30 to 40 per cent during the early and last few waves of the study. The proportion increased between W25 (22 April 2021 – 28 April 2021) to W47 (14 February 2022 – 22 February 2022), when there were stricter safe management measures and higher case numbers since Phase 2 Heightened Alert (P2HA) till the end of the Omicron wave. The highest recorded proportion was 61 per cent in W37 (22 September 2021 – 29 September 2021) as case numbers rose in tandem with the Delta wave and Singapore entered the Stabilisation Phase with stricter measures.

As we recover from the pandemic and move forward, it is also timely to take stock of how far we have come, and to reflect on our experience. When asked about what the top three areas of focus should be for Singapore going ahead, Singaporeans' attitudes were more pragmatic, opting to focus on immediate livelihood needs such as providing support to Singaporeans to cope with the rise in GST (48 per cent), providing immediate financial support to households to cope with daily expenses, utilities and education expenses, and supporting children from disadvantaged families through programmes (45 per cent) and providing immediate support for businesses, such as by supporting those affected most by COVID-19, and encouraging employers to hire Singaporeans through the Job Growth Incentive (44 per cent).

There are also important lessons to be learnt from the pandemic. Respondents highlighted lessons on the theme of *national values*, such as remaining united and having resilience, perseverance and vigilance as a country. These values allow our citizens to move forward together as one united people and work together to overcome challenges. Lessons on the theme of *institutional resilience*, such as on having strong finances, healthcare, being self-sufficient and having good public policy communication also remind us on the importance of having good governance and leadership to implement policies to deal with any crises. Lessons on the theme of *social resilience*, such as valuing harmony, being compassionate and being socially responsible, remind us on the need for citizens to be more caring and understanding in times of crises.

Respondents felt that the top three lessons that Singapore should learn from the pandemic and improve on were that Singapore should be self-sufficient and ensure that essential services and supplies are always available (45 per cent), that Singapore should have strong finances, healthcare and other systems in place to deal with the next crisis (44 per cent), and that the nation should be prepared for an unexpected crisis and never be complacent (38 per cent).

Overall, lessons from the *institutional resilience* theme appeared to be more important for our respondents, with 32 per cent choosing two or more lessons from this theme as one of the top three lessons that Singapore should learn and improve on. Lessons pertaining to *institutional resilience* were more likely to prioritised by older respondents, while lessons pertaining to *social resilience* were more likely to be emphasised by younger respondents. Older respondents may be more pragmatic, preferring lessons which reflect the importance of having good governance and policies to overcome any crises. It may also be reflective of the times they grew up in, when there was a survivalist mentality. Younger respondents may be more attuned to social issues as compared to older respondents, given that younger respondents grew up in a time when there was relative stability in governance and greater emphasis on social cohesion issues. Hence, younger respondents may be more interested in how Singapore citizens should improve on being more inclusive and caring.

Given the importance of governance both in terms of dealing with pandemic exigencies and the longer-term recovery process, the survey asked respondents about their trust in the government to secure their future. Around six in 10 trusted that the Singapore Government has the best possible 4G leader to navigate divisions within the society (60 per cent), to navigate Singapore's dealing with other countries (59 per cent) and to help it navigate post-COVID-19 economic recovery (57 per cent). Interestingly, higher educated respondents were more likely to trust that the government has the best possible 4G leader, despite this demographic usually being more sceptical towards government policies. In addition, those who were more satisfied with the government's management of the pandemic, those who were less worried about the rise in cost of living, and those who were more receptive towards endemic living were more likely to trust that the government has the best possible 4G leader.

A majority trusted that Singapore would remain economically competitive (71 per cent) and that Singapore would emerge out of this crisis stronger and more resilient than before (67 per cent). A fairly large proportion also trusted that the Singapore Government knows how to navigate the global economy so that we will be able to bounce back (64 per cent), that the Singapore Government knows how to navigate and lead Singapore in a post-pandemic world (64 per cent), and that the Singapore Government knows how to deal with new virus strains (61 per cent). Around 64 per cent were confident that Singapore is well-prepared to face the next pandemic.

Based on our national strategy, the ultimate goal is for Singapore to be able to live with COVID-19 in our midst. Yet, people's psychological readiness for endemic living has hitherto varied with case numbers, and being fixated on case numbers may be an obstacle to pandemic living. As such, through an experimental design, we sought to investigate how individuals' readiness for endemic living could be increased through a brief intervention, especially among those more sceptical of the government's strategy. Respondents were randomly assigned to two conditions — the experimental condition where respondents were asked to imagine the longer-term goal of living with COVID-19 and how it was possible for them to do so; and the control condition, where respondents were primed to think about current situation and focus on daily case numbers. We found that among those who were low in government satisfaction, this procedure significantly predicted lower levels of concern about contracting COVID-19, which in turn significantly predicted greater readiness towards endemic living. The results suggest that by reminding individuals to keep the end in mind and to frame their perspectives as driven by a sense of resilience, individuals may be nudged to change their stance and be more willing to embrace endemic living. This may be a useful strategy for public communication in order to encourage more individuals to be receptive towards living with COVID-19 in our midst.

As Singapore moves forward beyond the pandemic, it is important for us to remember how far we have come in fighting against the pandemic, and to take stock of our experiences during these two years. It is also crucial for us to remember the lessons from the pandemic. In the future to come, we hope that Singapore will be better prepared for the next crisis.

MOVING FORWARD THROUGH COVID-19 IN SINGAPORE:
WELL-BEING, LESSONS LEARNT AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Since end-April 2022, Singapore has eased most of its community measures placed to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. There are no longer caps to group sizes or on visitation to homes; safe distancing is no longer required between individuals or groups; all are allowed to return to the office and mask wearing is no longer required except indoors. There has also been relaxation in recent weeks to the operation of nightlife establishments and greater freedom for migrant workers visiting community sites.

Overall, the COVID-19 situation remains relatively stable, and even though there has been a spike in cases with the BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants, the government has announced that there is no imminent need to revert to prior restrictions. There is more confidence today that Singapore has the resources to cope with future waves through the experience accumulated over the past two years as well as the country's high vaccination rates.

While Singaporeans have been able to revert to some behaviours common before the pandemic, such as travelling over the causeway, new ways of living and working have also been embraced.

As Singapore recovers from the pandemic, it is timely to take stock of the population's collective experiences over the past two years, and reflect on how Singaporeans can move forward as a nation to tackle future challenges ahead.

A key area of focus during the pandemic has been its impact on individuals' well-being. The challenges posed by the pandemic has resulted in many stressors that have undermined mental well-being. Popular discourse has increasingly emphasised the need to take care of one's mental well-being and practise self-care. The pandemic's impact on mental health has also possibly reduced the stigma associated with acknowledging mental health care needs or needing professional mental health care.

The pandemic has also had an impact of relationships, finances and job security. At the beginning of the pandemic, Singapore imposed strict measures to restrict the spread of the virus which included restrictions in physical gatherings. This made it difficult for some to stay connected. Job security and finances were also impinged, with various industries such as those in the tourism, meetings and conventions and even food and beverage affected because of various restrictions imposed on these industries.

After two years of battling with COVID-19, Singapore is able to look beyond the pandemic and focus on the future. This first starts with a critical reflection of the lessons learnt through the course of the pandemic. It then requires an inspection of Singapore's priorities in the post-pandemic world and an assessment of the government's capability to navigate the uncertain terrain.

This latter question is especially important as Singapore is also undergoing a leadership transition with the fourth generation (4G) leaders expected to take over the helm soon. The 4G leaders have been fronting Singapore's pandemic response and their performance undoubtedly influences how Singaporeans trust their leadership in ensuring Singapore's recovery.

This paper is divided into two main parts. The first half focuses on describing and analysing respondents' well-being and relationships, as well as concerns over finances, job security and COVID-19.

The second half of the paper focuses on the population's reflections of the lessons learnt and new lifestyle practices acquired during the pandemic as well as public opinion on the future directions and leadership of Singapore. This segment of the paper also discusses about various groups of Singaporeans and their differential experiences and outlook following the pandemic, and how public communication can engender more favourable attitudes towards endemic living.

Current Study

The data used in this report was drawn from an online survey panel of the marketing research firm, Toluna, which IPS has used since April 2020 (i.e., Wave 1). Polling efforts are still ongoing to keep track on sentiments among Singaporeans[2]. The data covered in this report was taken from the period of April 2020 (Wave 1) to 13 June 2022 (Wave 51)[3], covering the period from when Singapore was still in the Circuit Breaker to the present day, after the easing of almost all community measures and border measures.

While the data on well-being measures covered in this report was tracked since the beginning of this study, data related to lessons and the future covered in this report was taken from later waves of the study for more timely relevance. The survey drew on over 2,000 respondents, about 500 of whom were polled every wave. Each wave of the survey was conducted about once in a fortnight. The sample is representative of the national population's gender and race breakdown. The same group of respondents in a wave would be asked to do the survey again after 4 waves, creating a block of around 2,000 unique

[2] This paper is the fifth paper in a series of reports covering the population sentiments on the pandemic in Singapore.
The first paper was released in May 2020: Mathew, M., Tan, A. & Syafiq, M. (2020). Attitudes Towards the Use of Surveillance Technologies in the Fight Against COVID-19.
The second paper was released in April 2021: Mathew, M., Syafiq, M., Hou, M. & Tan, A. (2021). The COVID-19 Pandemic in Singapore, One Year On: Population Attitudes and Sentiments. IPS Working Paper No. 40.
The third paper was released in December 2021: Mathew, M., Syafiq, M., Hou, M. and Phoa, F. (2021). Living with COVID-19 in Singapore: Attitudes, Challenges and the Way Ahead. IPS Working Paper No. 43.
The fourth paper was released in April 2022: Mathew, M., Phoa, F., Hou, M., Lim, E. (2022). Attitudes towards Work and Workplace Arrangements amidst COVID-19 in Singapore. IPS Working Paper No. 45.
[3] Data from Wave 52 (24 June 2022 – 4 July 2022) was used for key charts on mental well-being and worry over GST.

respondents in every 4 consecutive waves. Table A below shows the dates of execution for each wave.

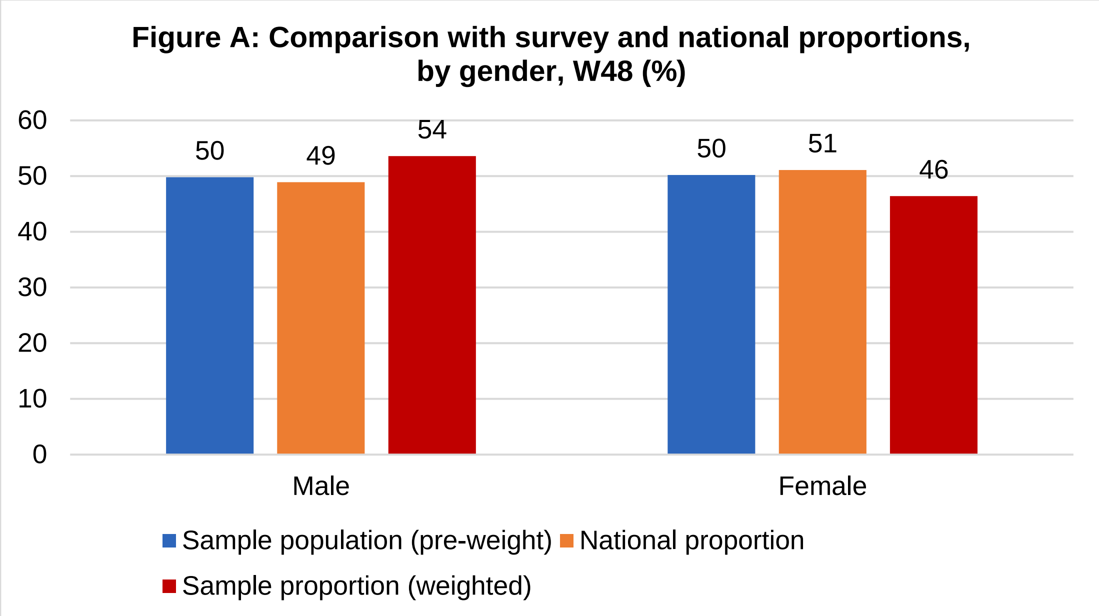
Table A: List of wave start and end dates

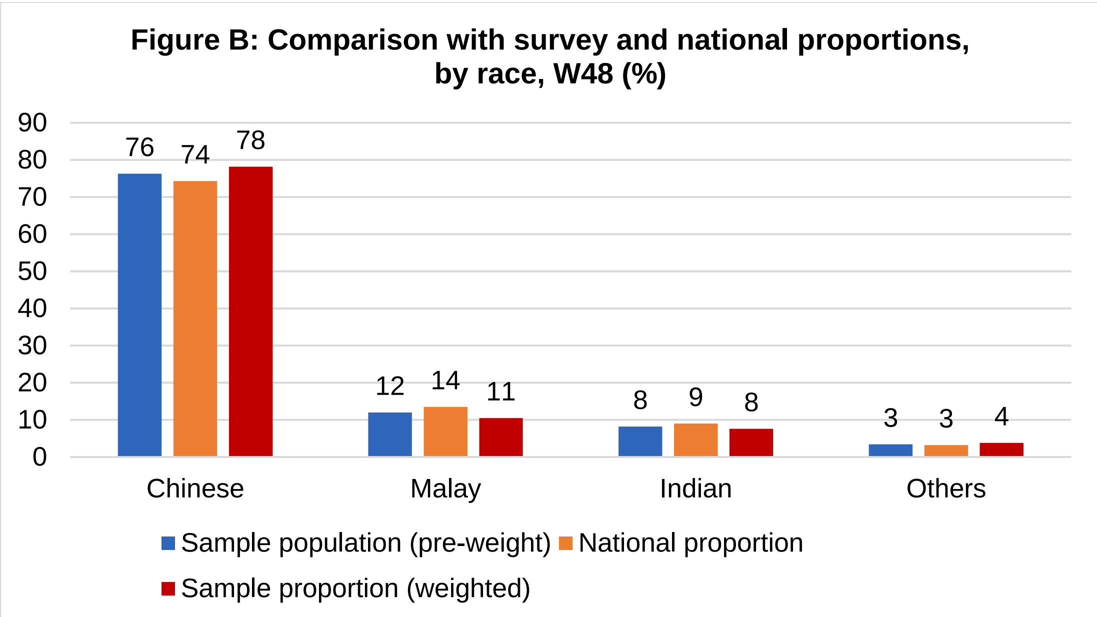
Wave	Start date	End date	Remarks
1	21 April 2020	23 April 2020	21 Apr: Announcement of Extended CB
2	1 May 2020	4 May 2020	
3	14 May 2020	19 May 2020	
4	28 May 2020	31 May 2020	
5	12 June 2020	16 June 2020	15 Jun: Announcement of Phase 2
6	30 June 2020	3 July 2020	18 Jun: Start of Phase 2 10 Jul: GE2020
7	30 July 2020	4 August 2020	
8	4 September 2020	10 September 2020	
9	21 September 2020	28 September 2020	
10	9 October 2020	17 October 2020	
11	22 October 2020	2 November 2020	
12	3 November 2020	9 November 2020	
13	10 November 2020	18 November 2020	
14	26 November 2020	5 December 2020	
15	9 December 2020	18 December 2020	14 Dec: Announcement of Phase 3
16	6 January 2021	13 January 2021	28 Dec: Start of Phase 3
17	15 January 2021	22 January 2021	
18	26 January 2021	2 February 2021	
19	4 February 2021	15 February 2021	
20	17 February 2021	24 February 2021	
21	25 February 2021	4 March 2021	
22	8 March 2021	15 March 2021	
23	5 April 2021	13 April 2021	
24	14 April 2021	21 April 2021	
25	22 April 2021	28 April 2021	
26	29 April 2021	13 May 2021	4 May: Announcement of stricter safe management measures
27	17 May 2021	27 May 2021	16 May: Start of Phase 2 Heightened Alert (P2HA)
28	29 May 2021	7 June 2021	31 May: PM Lee addressed nation on the new normal

29	7 June 2021	14 June 2021	15 Jun: End of P2HA
30	21 June 2021	2 July 2021	
31	14 July 2021	25 July 2021	20 Jul: Announcement of return to P2HA 22 Jul: Start of second P2HA
32	26 July 2021	7 August 2021	6 Aug: Relaxation of P2HA rules announced
33	7 August 2021	19 August 2021	
34	20 August 2021	30 August 2021	22 Aug: Lowest number of community cases reported since mid-July
35	2 September 2021	10 September 2021	10 Sept: Sharp spike in cases to be expected in the community
36	15 September 2021	21 September 2021	15 Sept: Singapore reported more than 800 daily cases 20 Sept: More than 1,000 cases reported, higher than the daily count in April 2020
37	22 September 2021	29 September 2021	24 Sept: Stabilisation Phase announced 27 Sept: Start of Stabilisation Phase
38	1 October 2021	11 October 2021	8 Oct: PM Lee's address to the nation on living with COVID-19
39	15 October 2021	27 October 2021	20 Oct: Extension of Stabilisation Phase announced 25 Oct: Start of extended Stabilisation Phase
40	28 October 2021	1 November 2021	
41	10 November 2021	17 November 2021	10 Nov: Calibrated adjustments to Stabilisation Phase
42	19 November 2021	23 November 2021	20 Nov: Transition Phase announced
43	30 November 2021	9 December 2021	2 Dec: Imported Omicron cases reported in Singapore
44	28 December 2021	8 January 2022	1 Jan: Working from home no longer default working arrangement 4 Jan: Weekly infection rate above 1, warnings of impending Omicron wave

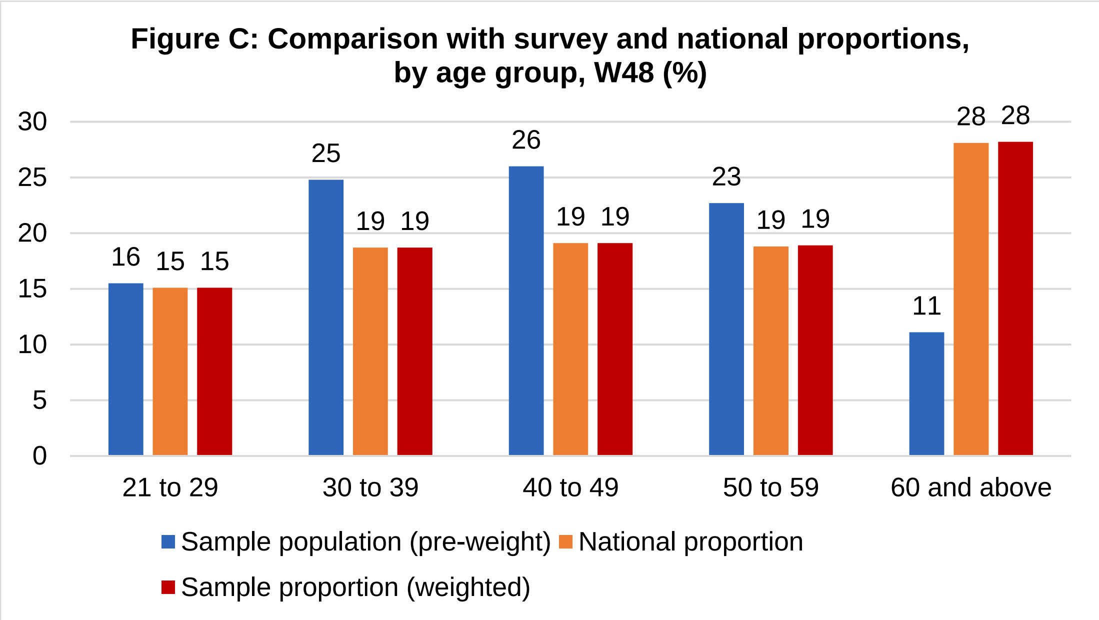
			5 Jan: Announcement of changes in vaccination status policy
45	12 January 2022	25 January 2022	21 Jan: Maximum isolation period for fully vaccinated individuals shortened. 21 Jan: VTL travellers to take ART only if they leave home, no need to report results.
46	31 January 2022	8 February 2022	4 Feb: Number of cases cross 10,000 after Chinese New Year backlog
47	14 February 2022	22 February 2022	16 Feb: Announcement of simplified rules for gatherings and travel on 25 Feb (subsequently postponed) 18 Feb: Budget 2022 announced
48	18 March 2022	25 March 2022	24 Mar: Announcement of easing of community safe management measures and border measures on 29 March
49	1 April 2022	11 April 2022	29 Mar: Easing of community safe management measures and border measures and allowing removal of masks outdoors
50	22 April 2022	4 May 2022	22 Apr: Announcement of further easing of safe management measures from 26 Apr
51	31 May 2022	13 June 2022	2 Jun: Announcement of anticipation of impending wave driven by new Omicron strains

As the study was conducted using an online consumer panel, there were lower proportions of older persons and those from lower income households sampled. This limits the generalisability of the results. To correct such a limitation, age was weighted in each wave according to national proportions[4]. Attempts to correct other variables, like education or housing, resulted in over-magnification of these populations instead and were thus not used. Graphical comparisons of the representativeness of the gender, race and age profile of the sample in Wave 48 with Singapore's resident population are shown in Figures A to C.





[4] Weights were applied only when reporting topline figures, and were not used in further statistical analyses.



Overall, the data captures useful insights on how Singaporeans have adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic[5].

When statistical analysis was carried out, data from W48 (18 March 2022 – 25 March 2022) to W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022) were aggregated into a single block to represent the views of Singaporeans during this three-month period. Regression analysis was also carried out determine the effect of various predictor variables over key dependent variables. The regression results are illustrated in this paper as cross-tabulations[6] where appropriate.

---

[5] Percentages in the figures and tables in this report may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
[6] The regression model and relationships presented in this paper are statistically significant (p <.05).

1. RE-VISITING SINGAPOREANS' WELL-BEING SINCE APRIL 2020

The pandemic has brought about many changes in the past two years including a greater focus on its impact on well-being. In our study, we tracked respondents from the beginning of the pandemic on various well-being indicators to understand how respondents have been coping with the pandemic.

While respondents have generally felt less stressed since the start of the pandemic, this has not necessarily translated into better well-being. There has been a slight decline in respondents' rating of their mental health over survey waves. This has especially been the case for young adults.

1.1 Mental Well-being

The proportion of respondents who felt more stressed from the pandemic has generally fallen since the start of the pandemic. At the start of the pandemic, about half (50 per cent) were stressed about the pandemic in W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020). The proportion of those who were stressed then fell to around 40 per cent in subsequent waves, before increasing to 45 per cent in W11 (22 October 2020 – 2 November 2020). The proportion continued to fall, reaching its lowest point at 29 per cent in W33 (7 August 2021 – 19 August 2021), when there was a relaxation of the rules in the Phase 2 Heightened Alert (P2HA) and more could return to the office. The proportion of those who were stressed from the pandemic then increased to 48 per cent in W40 (28 October 2021 – 1 November 2021), as the Stabilisation Phase was extended to cope with the high number of COVID-19 cases in Singapore. The proportion fell to between

35 to 38 per cent after measures were relaxed from W41 (10 November 2021 – 17 November 2021), when calibrated adjustments were made during the Stabilisation Phase and when measures were not tightened during the Omicron wave. This proportion fell to 30 to 32 per cent in W49 (1 April 2022 – 11 April 2022) and W50 (22 April 2022 – 4 May 2022) as further easing to safe management measures were announced and as life seemed to return to normal. However, news about a new wave reaching our shores with the new Omicron strains as well as inflation worries may have led to a slight increase of respondents being stressed from the outbreak (36 per cent) in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022). The proportion of those who felt stressed from the outbreak fell in W52 (24 June 2022 – 4 July 2022) to 31 per cent.

Figure 1a: To what extent do you feel stressed from the COVID-19 outbreak? (Overall, W1 - W52, %)

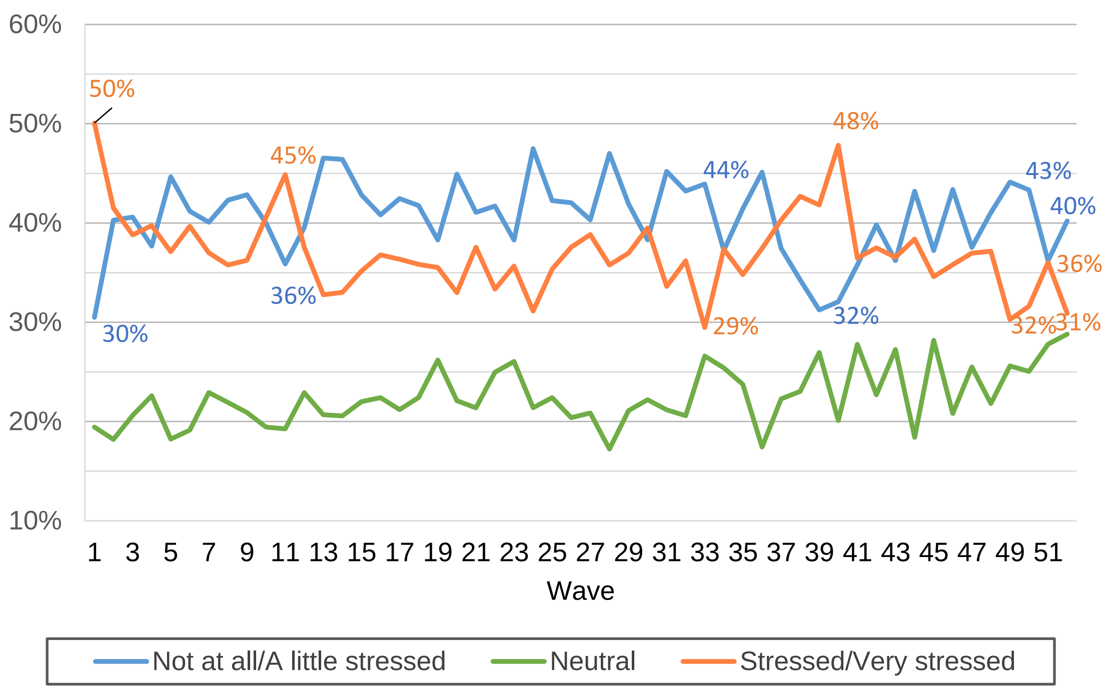
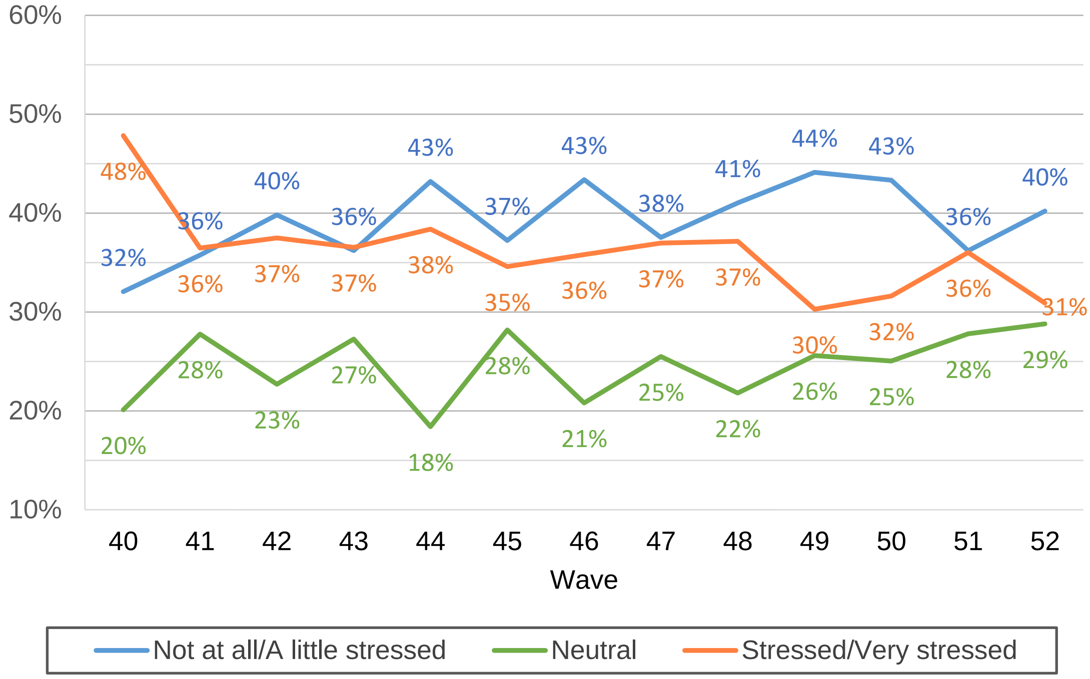


Figure 1b: To what extent do you feel stressed from the COVID-19 outbreak? (W40 - W52, %)



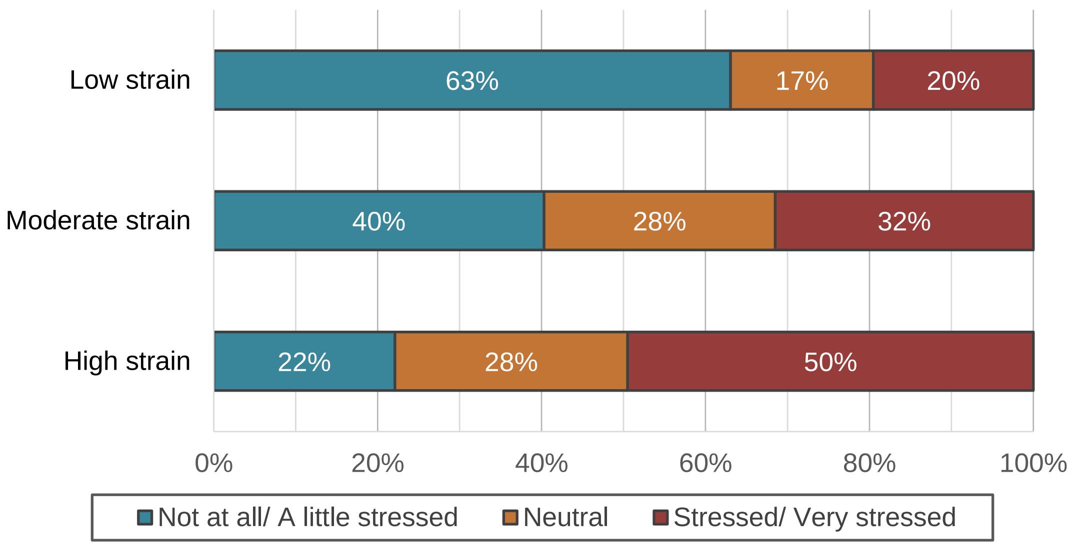
Controlling for age, a partial correlation analysis was conducted to understand how stress from the pandemic is correlated with strained relationships and receptiveness towards endemic living. There was a moderate correlation between feeling stressed from the pandemic and experiencing strained relationships with friends and family[7] (correlation, r = .394). For instance, around half (50 per cent) of those who experienced high strain in their relationships were more stressed from the COVID-19 outbreak, while only 20 per cent of those who experienced low strain in their relationships were more stressed from the COVID-19 outbreak. Respondents felt that it has been difficult to connect with others may have felt more stressed because of a lack of social support through a close social network. Indeed, social dis-connection has been

[7] See Annex A for the scale on strained relationships.

found in a separate study to increase one's vulnerability to develop post-traumatic stress (Matos et al., 2021). Likewise, respondents who have been stressed may have found it difficult to connect with others.

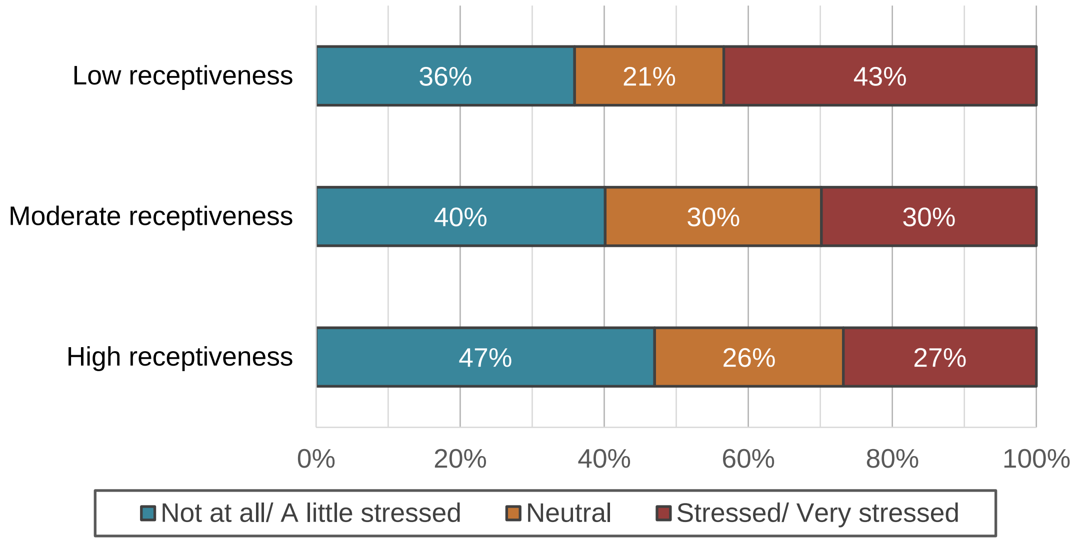
There was a negative correlation between feeling stressed from the pandemic and receptiveness towards endemic living[8] (correlation, r = -.161). For instance, more than four in 10 respondents (43 per cent) who had low receptiveness towards endemic living were more stressed from the COVID-19 outbreak, as compared to 27 per cent who had high receptiveness towards endemic living. Respondents who were less receptive towards endemic living may have felt more stressed as measures were relaxed, possibly as they were less comfortable with having fewer restrictions in place.

Figure 2: To what extent do you feel stressed from the COVID-19 outbreak?, by level of strain in relationships (W48 - W51, %)



[8] See Annex A for the scale on receptiveness towards endemic living.

Figure 3: To what extent do you feel stressed from the COVID-19 outbreak?, by receptiveness towards endemic living (W48 - W51, %)



The proportion of respondents who were worried about losing their mental well-being has been increasing slightly. While 24 per cent in W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020) were rather or very worried, this proportion rose to 28 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022). The proportion of those who were somewhat worried also increased from 16 per cent in W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020) to 24 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022). Levels of anxiety about one's mental well-being has risen since 2020 suggesting that the prolonged duration of the pandemic could have negatively affected the mental well-being of respondents. While the proportion had fallen in recent waves as case numbers came down, the proportion went up again in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022), reflecting concerns about a new COVID wave surfacing, with respondents worried about the return of rising case numbers and possible restrictions.

Figure 4a: In the next six months, how worried are you that you will lose your mental well-being (Overall, W1 - W51, %)

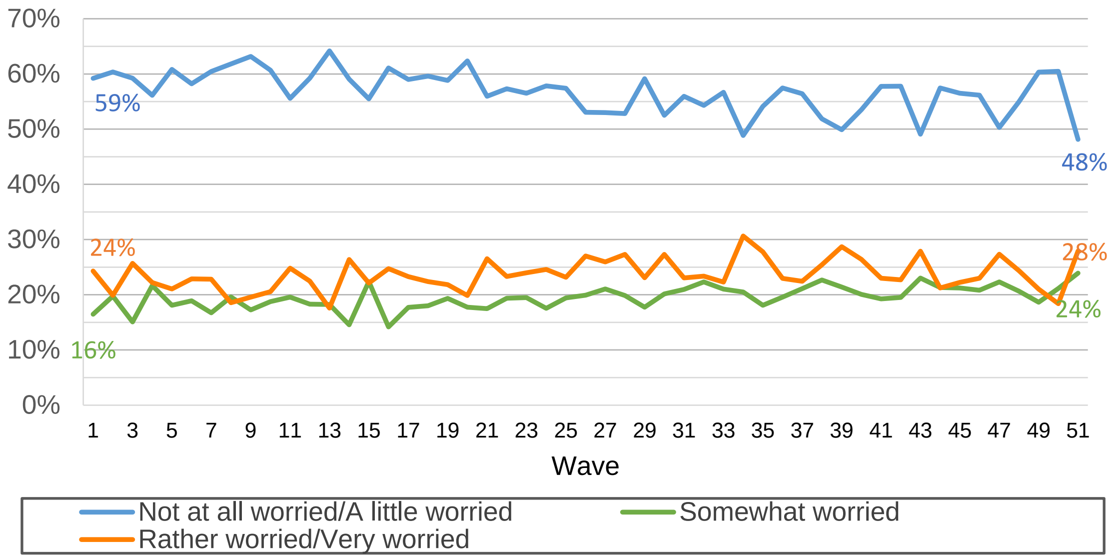
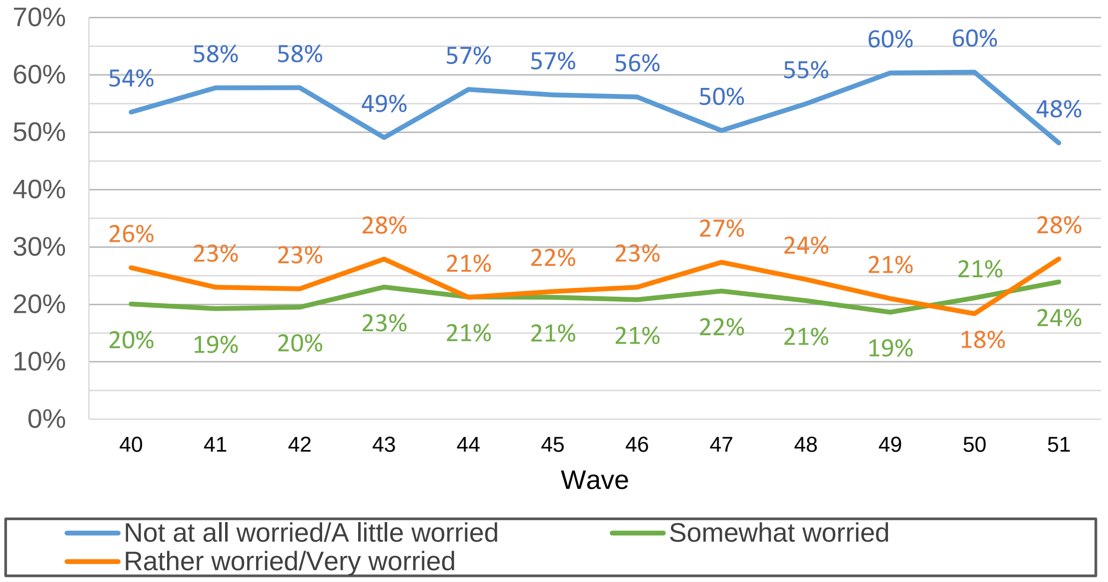
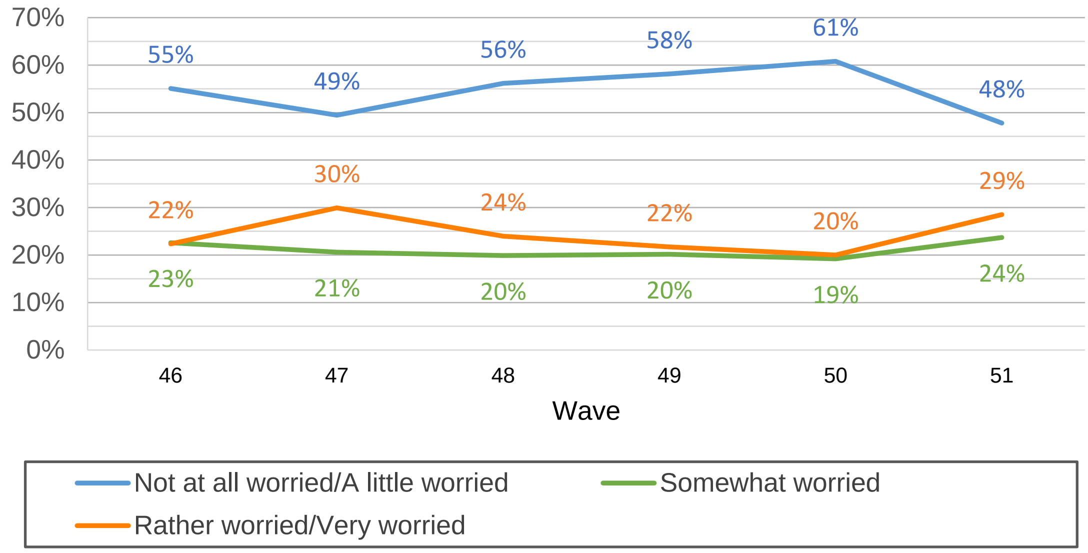


Figure 4b: In the next six months, how worried are you that you will lose your mental well-being (W40 - W51, %)



The proportion of respondents who were rather or very worried that their family member would lose his/her mental well-being rose from 22 per cent in W46 to 29 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022).

Figure 5: In the next six months, how worried are you that your family member will lose his/her mental well-being (W46 - W51, %)



On average, around one in five were rather or very worried about losing their purpose for living. While the proportion was 23 per cent in W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020), the proportion rose to 28 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022). While the proportion has been on a slight downward trend in recent waves as Singapore moved towards endemic living, the proportion increased in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022) given news of an impending wave.

Figure 6a: In the next six months, how worried are you that you will lose your purpose for living (Overall, W1 - W51, %)

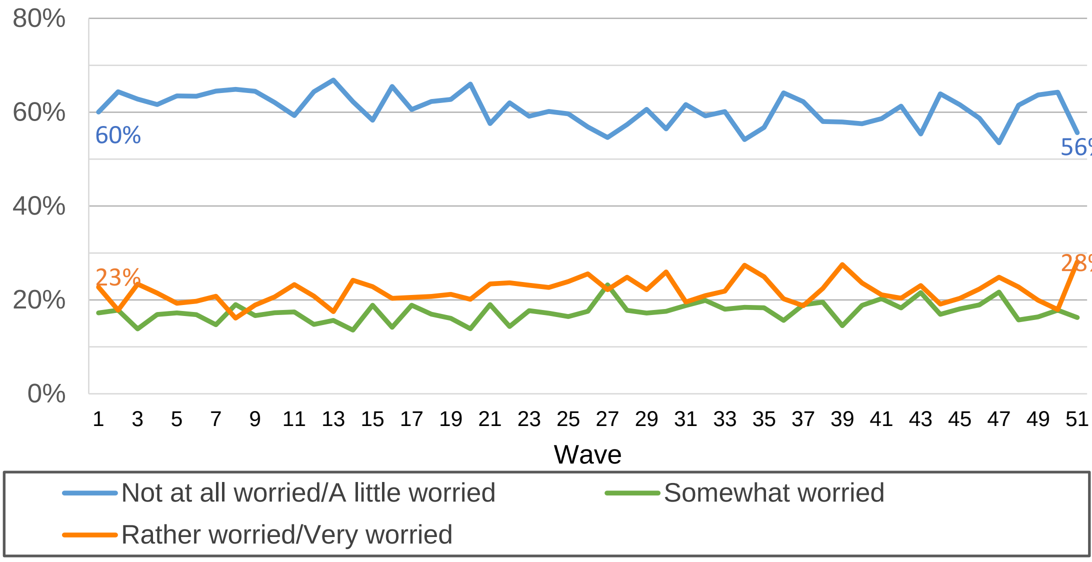
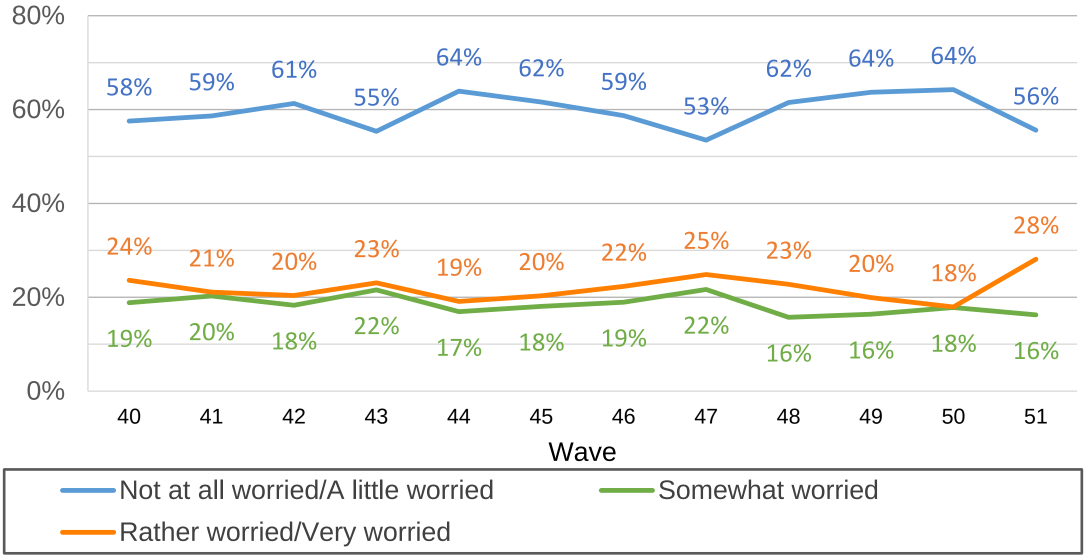


Figure 6b: In the next six months, how worried are you that you will lose your purpose for living (W40 - W51, %)



1.2 Rating of own well-being

Around 30 per cent of respondents on average across the survey waves rated their physical health and mental/emotional health as poor or fair.

The proportion of respondents who rated their physical health as poor or fair fell from 36 per cent in W5 (12 June 2020 – 16 June 2020) to 27 per cent in W35 (2 September 2021 – 10 September 2021). Subsequently, the proportion of those who rated their physical health as poor or fair rose slightly to 34 per cent in W48 (18 March 2022 – 25 March 2022) before falling to 31 per cent in W52 (24 June 2022 – 4 July 2022).

The proportion of respondents who rated their mental/emotional health as poor or fair fell from 34 per cent in W5 (12 June 2020 – 16 June 2020) to 29 per cent in W35 (2 September 2021 – 10 September 2021). There was a sharp spike in COVID case numbers reported at the end of W35 (2 September 2021 – 10

September 2021), and the number of cases reached 1,000 in W36 (15 September 2021 – 21 September 2021), which was the highest recorded number of cases since the pandemic started. Since then, a series of measures were announced in order to control the spread of the virus as the number of cases reached new highs and there was more worry about contracting COVID-19 (See section 4 on worry over contracting COVID-19). Restrictions were regularly tightened and relaxed based on case numbers, and the prolonged duration of having to deal with the challenges of the pandemic may have adversely affected respondents' mental health. In addition, the sudden deterioration of the pandemic situation may have signalled that we were still a long way away from the end of the pandemic despite having lower case numbers after the Phase 2 Heightened Alert (P2HA). The proportion of those who rated their mental/emotional health as poor or fair increased and subsequently rose to 34 per cent in W48 (18 March 2022 – 25 March 2022) before falling to 28 per cent in W52 (24 June 2022 – 4 July 2022) as restrictions were relaxed and life seemed to have returned to pre-pandemic times.

Figure 7a: How would you presently rate yourself on your physical health (Overall, W5 - W52, %)

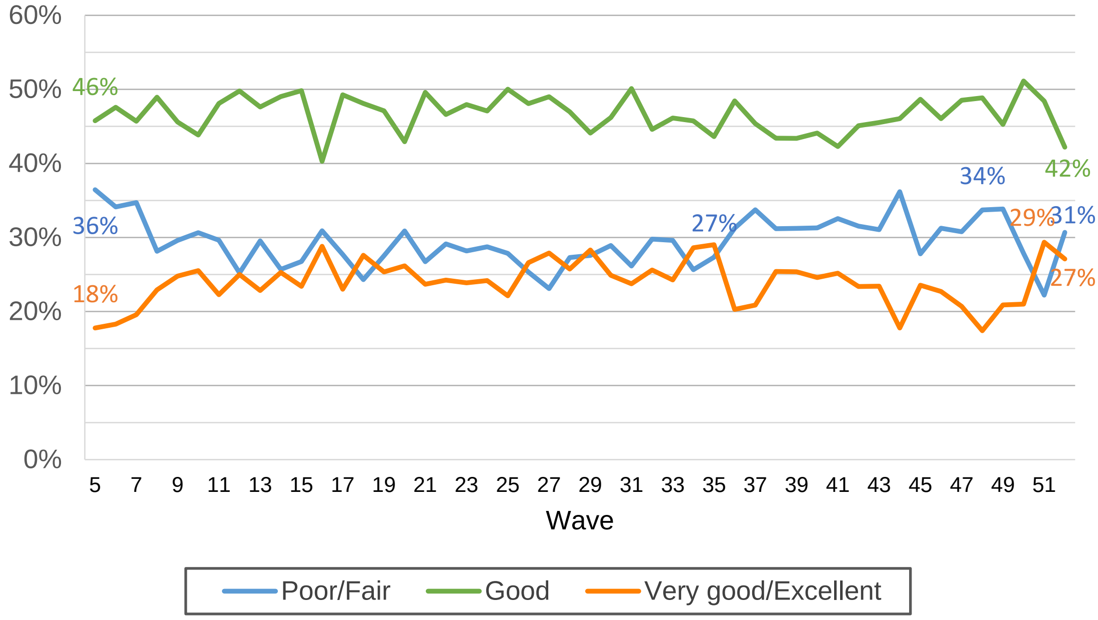


Figure 7b: How would you presently rate yourself on your physical health (W40 - W52, %)

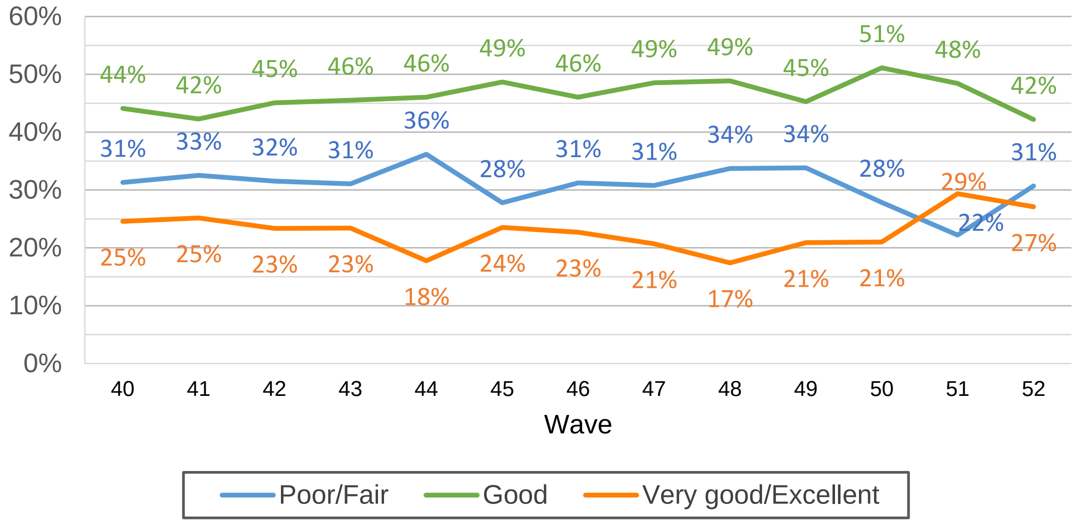


Figure 8a: How would you presently rate yourself on your mental/emotional health (Overall, W5 - W52, %)

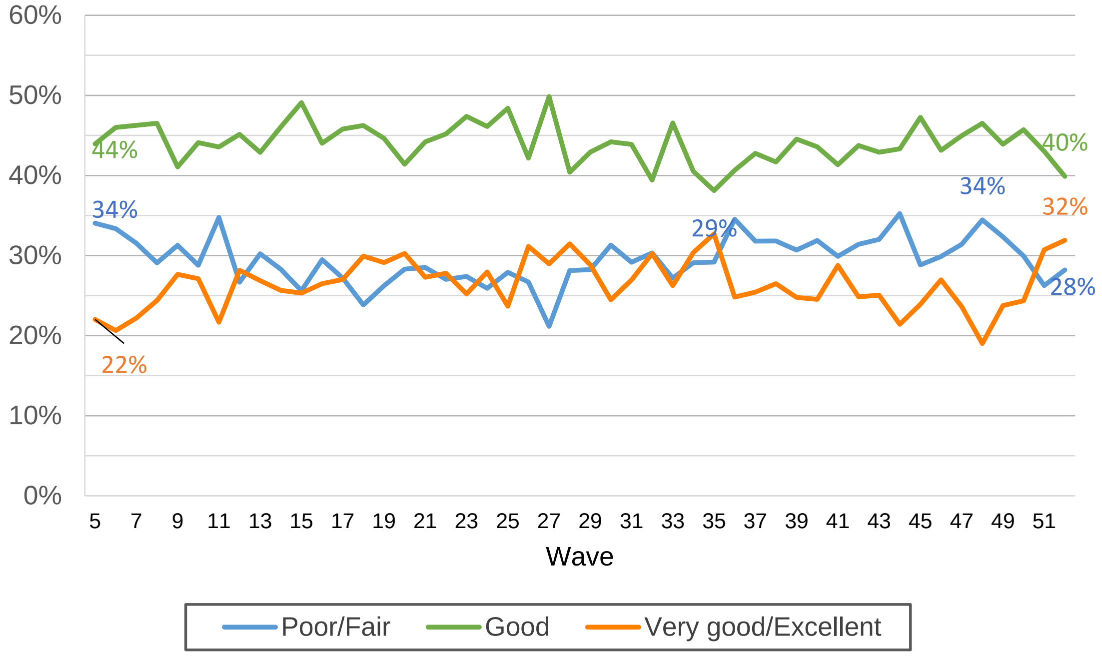
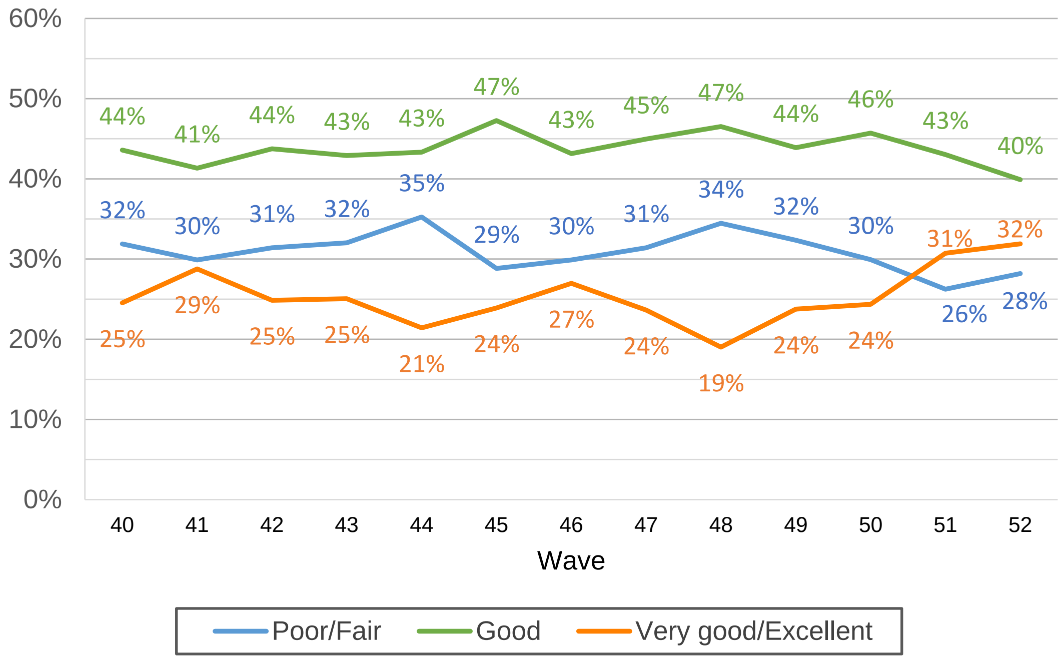
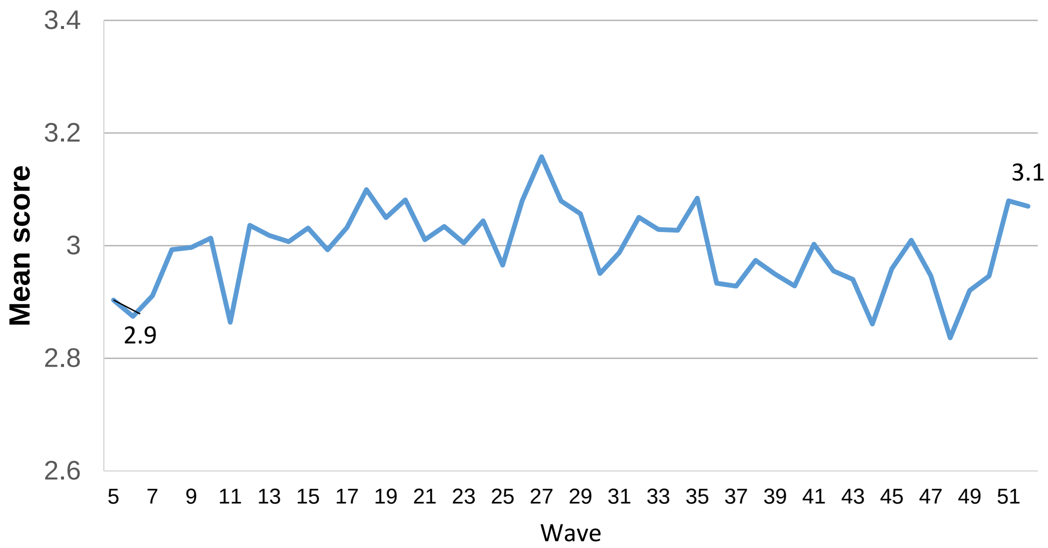


Figure 8b: How would you presently rate yourself on your mental/emotional health (W40 - W52, %)



Looking at respondents' self-rating on their mental/emotional health, it appears that mental/emotional health has slightly declined across the later survey waves. There were noticeable differences across the different age groups.

Figure 9a: Mean score on respondents' rating of their mental/emotional health (Overall, W5 - W52)



In general, young respondents aged 21 to 29 have seen an overall decline to their self-reported mental/emotional health. The pandemic may have restricted their opportunities for meaningful interactions and curtailed many activities which had been commonplace for young adults at this stage of their development such as travel, ultimately taking a toll on these younger respondents. This group may also be at a fledgling stage of their careers, and the pandemic has inevitably caused significant disruptions to individuals' plans or aspirations.

Similarly, respondents aged 40 to 49 saw a steady decline in their rating of their mental/emotional health. This age group, sandwiched between attending to the needs of their parents and school-going children during this trying season may have systematically become more psychologically and emotionally weary.

Interestingly for respondents aged 60 and above, their mental/emotional health has seen a steady increase through the course of the pandemic. In the early days of the pandemic this age group received substantial advice and caution about the dangers of COVID-19 to their health. The impact of a COVID-19 infection among older persons was known to be much more serious with daily reports showing that a number of older persons had succumbed to the virus. This reality is more likely to have affected the mental and emotional well-being of those who were older in the early stages of the pandemic. However, as treatment options progressed, especially with the availability of vaccinations, and with ample social support provided to this group, the more positive outlook may have bolstered their self-reports of mental/emotional well-being.

Figure 9b: Mean score on respondents' rating of their mental/emotional health, by age (Overall, W5 - W52)

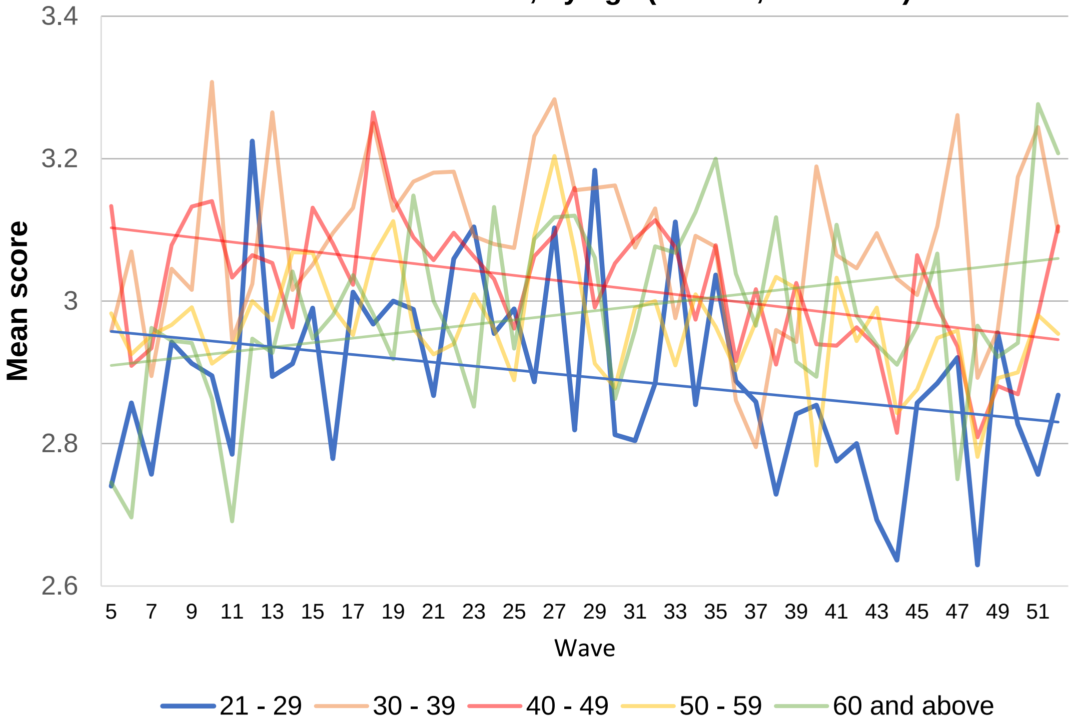


Figure 9c: Mean score on respondents' rating of their mental/emotional health, for age 21 - 29 (Overall, W5 - W52)

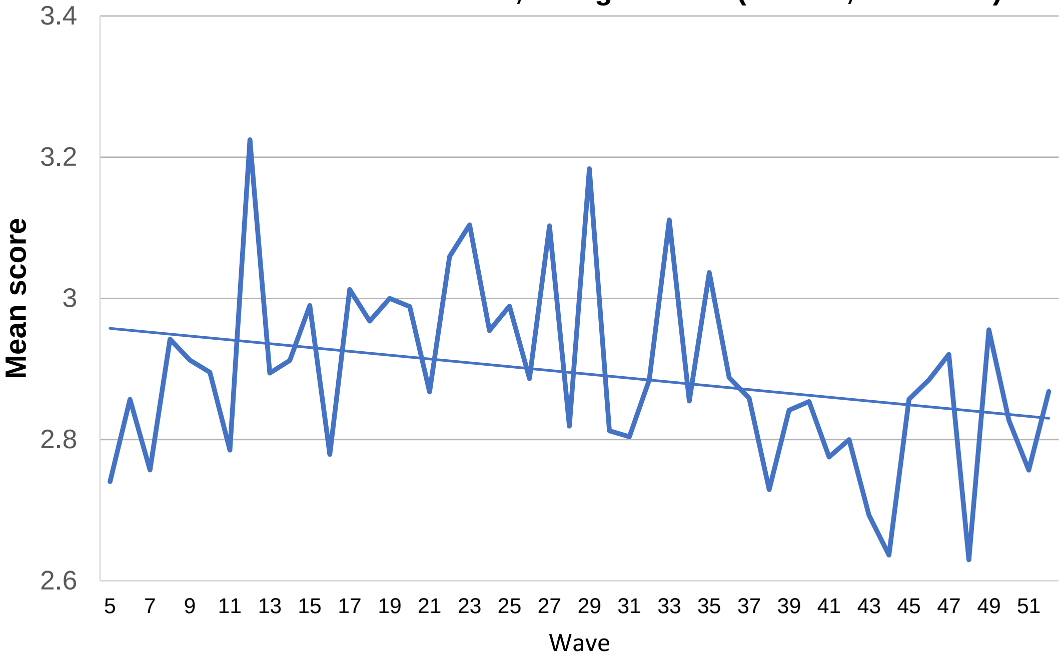


Figure 9d: Mean score on respondents' rating of their mental/emotional health, for age 40 - 49 (Overall, W5 - W52)

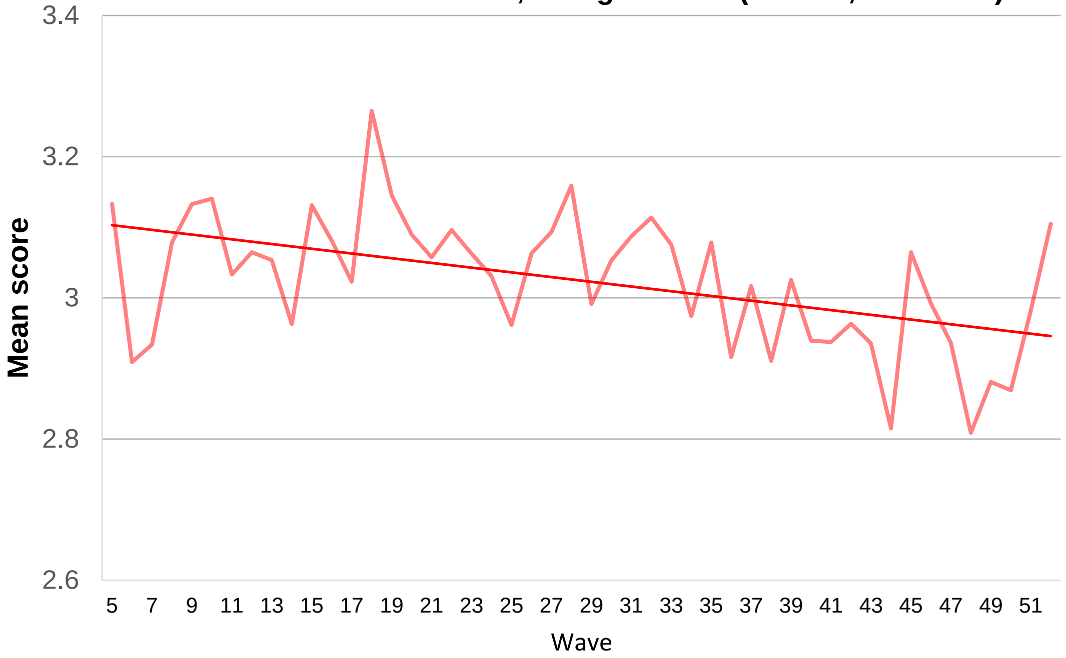
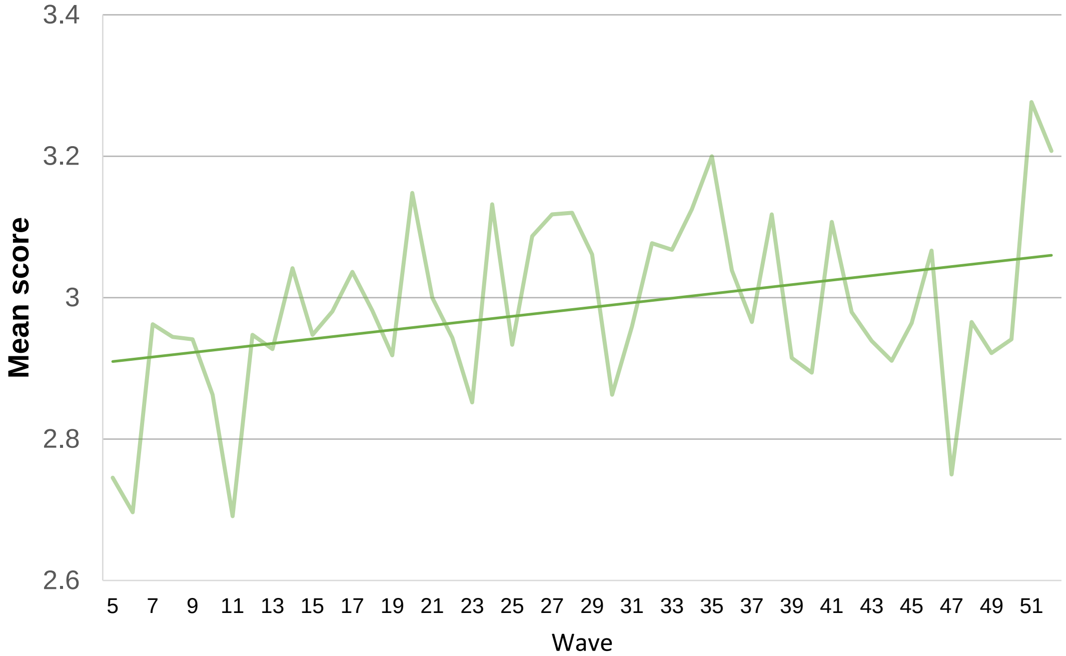


Figure 9e: Mean score on respondents' rating of their mental/emotional health, for age 60 and above (Overall, W5 - W52)



Turning to respondents' rating of their financial situation, on average, about 50 per cent felt that their financial situation was poor or fair. The proportion of those who rated themselves poor or fair fell from 62 per cent in W5 (12 June 2020 – 16 June 2020) to 43 per cent in W52 (24 June 2022 – 4 July 2022). Respondents' poor rating of their financial well-being at the onset of the pandemic may have reflected heightened anxieties of the possibility of major financial loss of income since the pandemic was unprecedented. Various aggressive government support measures rolled out after the Circuit Breaker to safeguard jobs may have helped to rectify these perceptions. This may have led to some of the decline of respondents' who assessed themselves faring poorly on their financial situation.

Figure 10a: How would you presently rate yourself on your financial situation (Overall, W5 - W52, %)

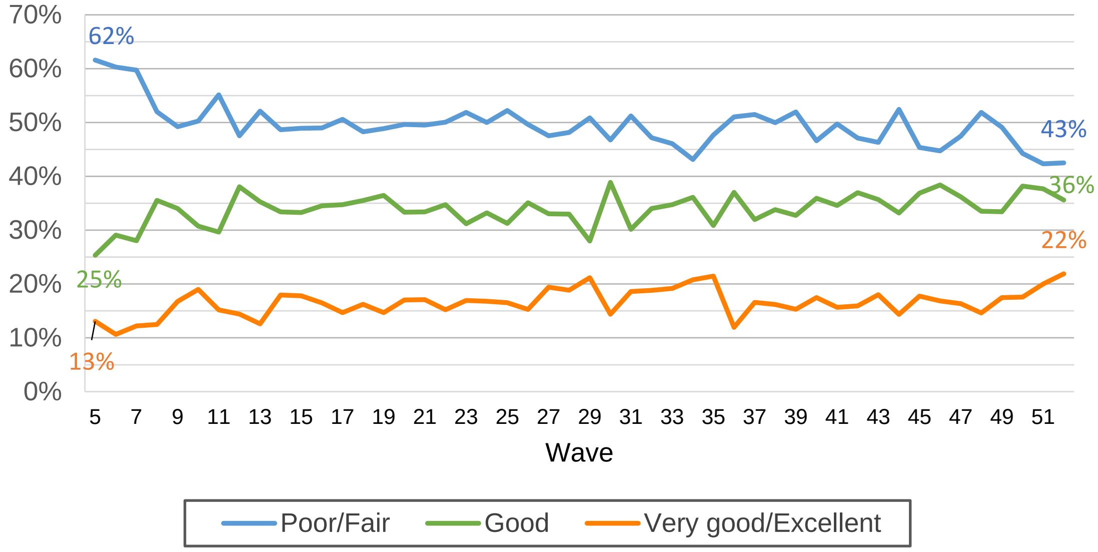
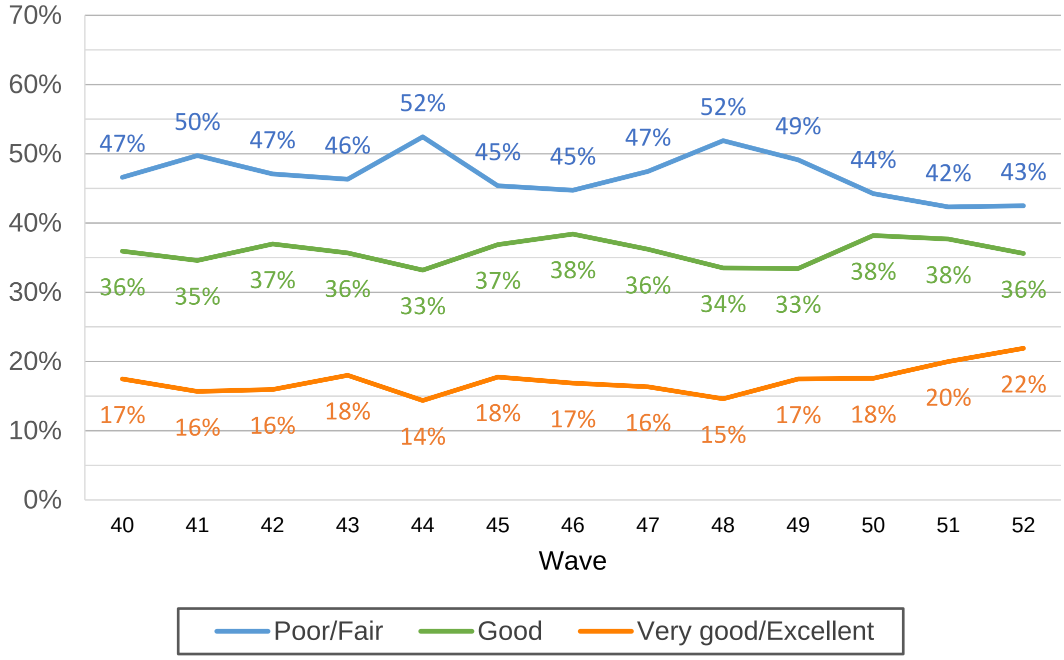


Figure 10b: How would you presently rate yourself on your financial situation (W40 - W51, %)



1.3 Predictors of psychological well-being

While a majority of the respondents experienced relatively good levels of psychological well-being during the pandemic, a significant portion of respondents had lower psychological well-being.

Throughout the course of the pandemic, around one in five (20 per cent) on average felt that they had repeated and disturbing thoughts or dreams about what was happening for quite a bit/very much, while another one in five (20 per cent) felt they moderately had such thoughts or dreams. At the start of the pandemic in W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020), 46 per cent felt that they at least moderately had repeated and disturbing thoughts or dreams about what was happening. This proportion then fell to 35 per cent in W7 (30 July 2020 – 4 August 2020), before increasing to 48 per cent in W10 (9 October 2020 – 17 October 2020). The proportion then hovered around 40 per cent, before decreasing to 35 per cent in W33 (7 August 2021 – 19 August 2021), when there was a relaxation of the rules in the Phase 2 Heightened Alert (P2HA) and some sense of return to pre-pandemic times. The proportion increased to 43 per cent in W43 (30 November 2021 – 9 December 2021) as there were signs that an Omicron wave was arriving. The proportion increased to 47 per cent in W47 (14 February 2022 – 22 February 2022) as Omicron cases continued to be high. This proportion then fell to 36 per cent in W49 (1 April 2022 – 11 April 2022), as safe management measures were further relaxed. The proportion then increased to 45 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022) as there were concerns about a new Omicron wave in the coming months and inflation.

Figure 11a: Having repeated and disturbing thoughts or dreams about what is happening (Overall, W1 - W51, %)

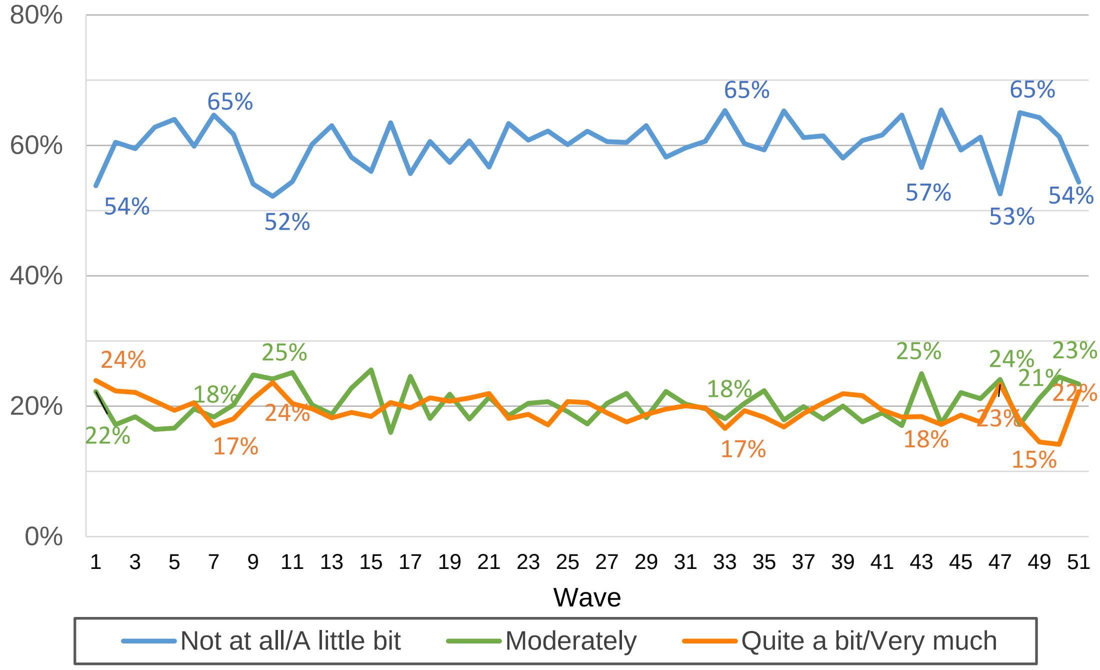
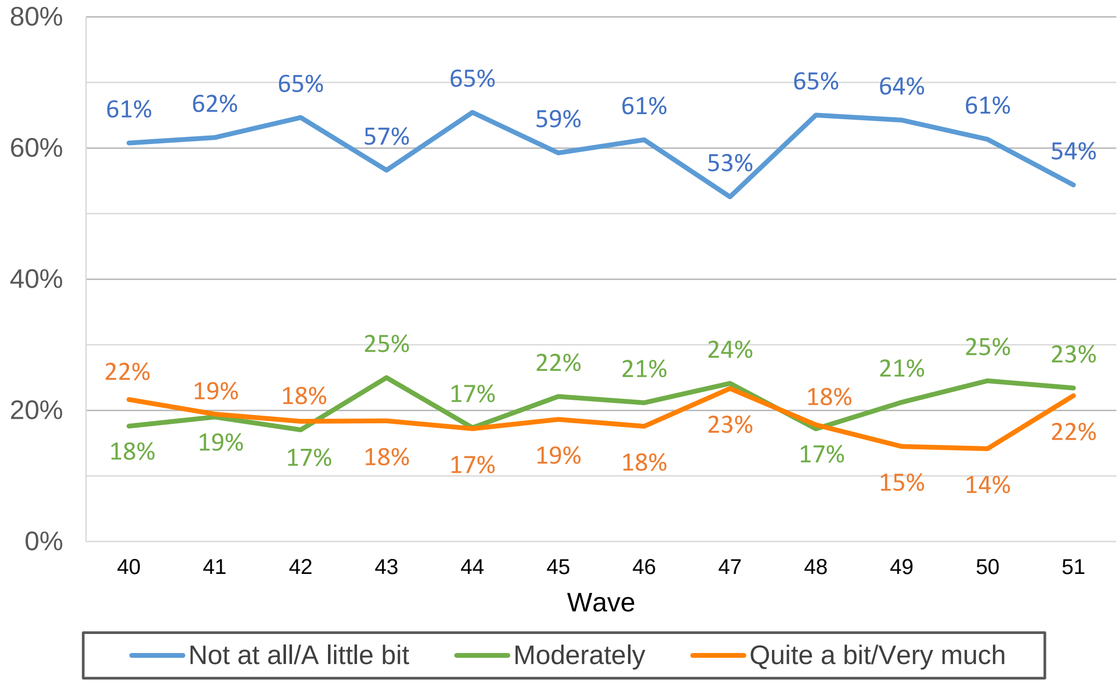


Figure 11b: Having repeated and disturbing thoughts or dreams about what is happening (W40 - W51, %)



The proportion of those who had experienced difficulty concentrating quite a bit or very much was 19 per cent on average across all waves, while the proportion of those who had moderately experienced difficulty concentrating was 20 per cent. In W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020), the proportion of those who at least moderately have difficulty concentrating was 45 per cent. This proportion decreased to 36 per cent in W7 (30 July 2020 – 4 August 2020) before increasing to 46 per cent in W11 (22 October 2020 – 2 November 2020). It then fell to 33 per cent in W24 (14 April 2021 – 21 April 2021). The proportion then increased to 39 per cent in W37 (22 September 2021 – 29 September 2021) when the Stabilisation Phase with stricter measures were announced, and hovered around 34 to 39 per cent till W46 (31 January 2022 – 8 February 2022), where cases first crossed 10,000 in a day. In W47 (14 February 2022 – 22 February 2022), the proportion increased to 43 per cent as cases continued to rise. The proportion then fell to 34 per cent in W48 (18 March 2022 – 25 March 2022) as cases fell and measures were streamlined. However, it rose to 44 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022) as worries grew over the impending wave and inflation.

Figure 12a: Having difficulty concentrating (Overall, W1 - W51, %)

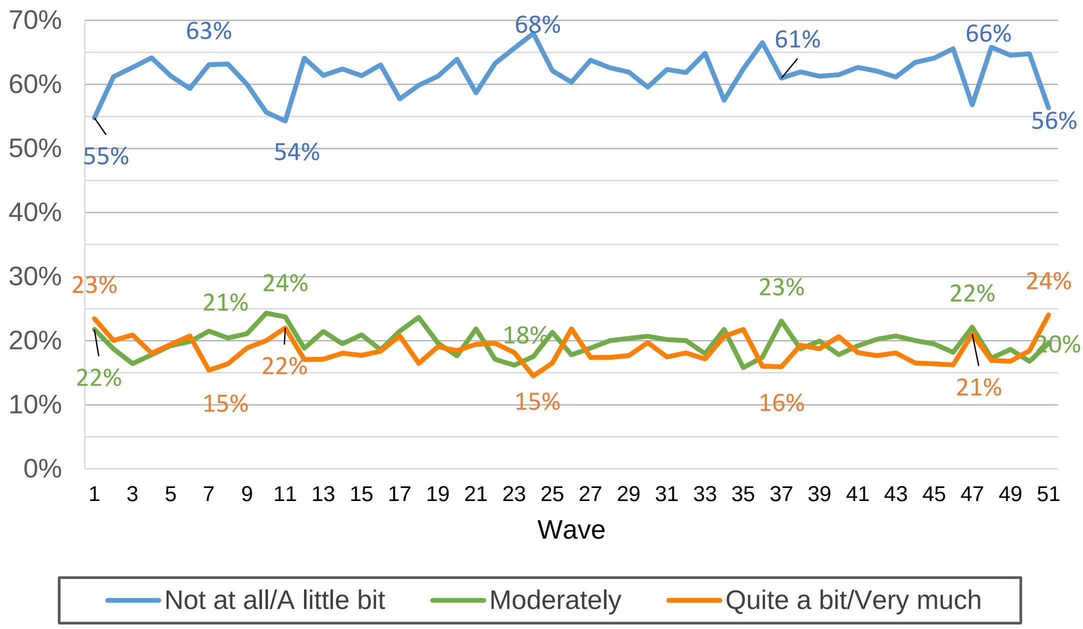
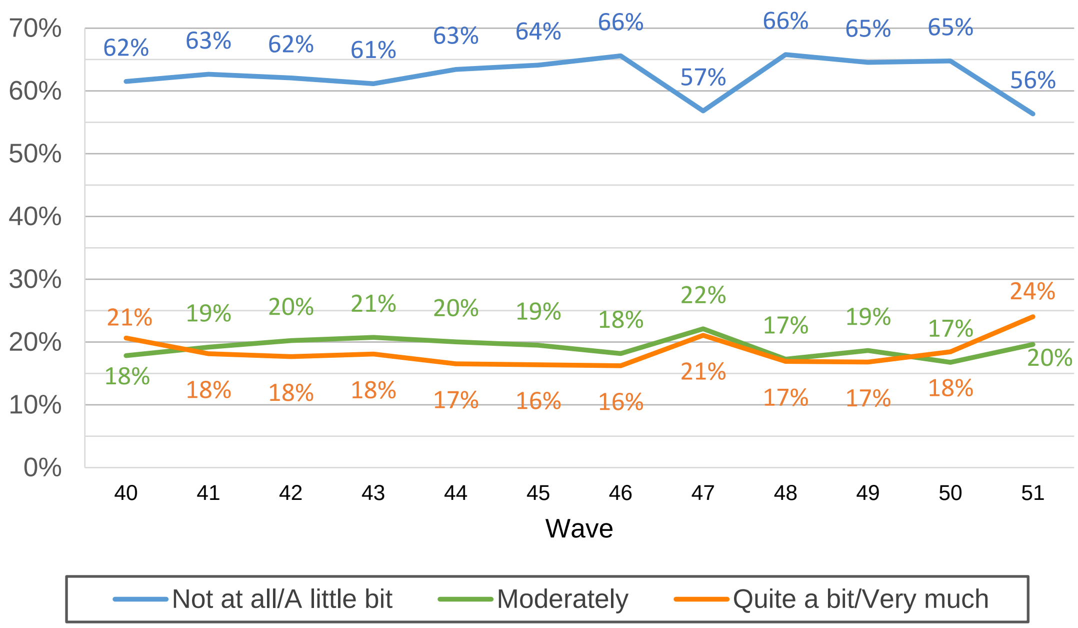


Figure 12b: Having difficulty concentrating (W40 - W51, %)



On average, throughout the course of the pandemic, about 20 per cent had experienced trouble falling or staying asleep quite a bit or very much while around 19 per cent reported that they experienced this at moderate levels.

Figure 13a: Having trouble falling or staying asleep (Overall, W1 - W51, %)

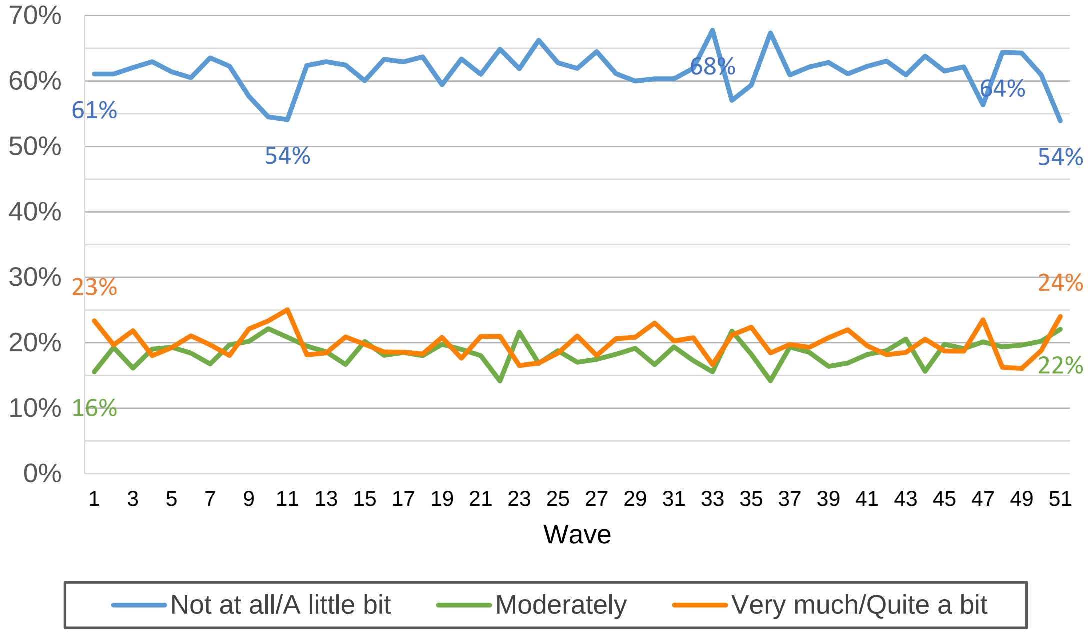
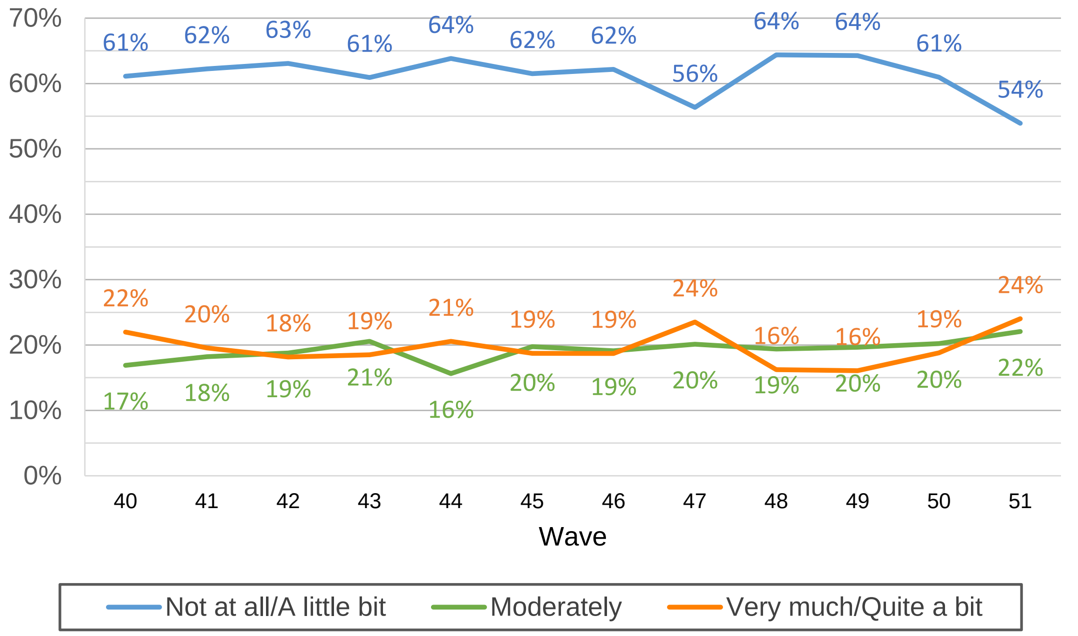


Figure 13b: Having trouble falling or staying asleep (W40 - W51, %)



The proportion of those who felt irritable/had anger outbursts quite a bit or very much hovered around 19 per cent on average throughout the pandemic, while another 19 per cent on average reported moderate levels of these feelings. Notable upticks in proportions of those who had at least moderately felt irritable/had anger outbursts were observed in W10 (9 October 2020 – 17 October 2020) at 47 per cent, W34 (20 August 2021 – 30 August 2021) at 43 per cent when cases rose gradually as up to half of the workforce could return to the office and as more could meet up with family and friends, W47 (14 February 2022 – 22 February 2022) at 43 per cent during the rise in cases during the Omicron wave and W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022) at 44 per cent when there were warnings about an impending wave from the new Omicron strains. These dips coincided with time periods when there were concerns over the pandemic situation in Singapore.

Figure 14a: Feeling irritable or having anger outbursts (Overall, W1 - W51, %)

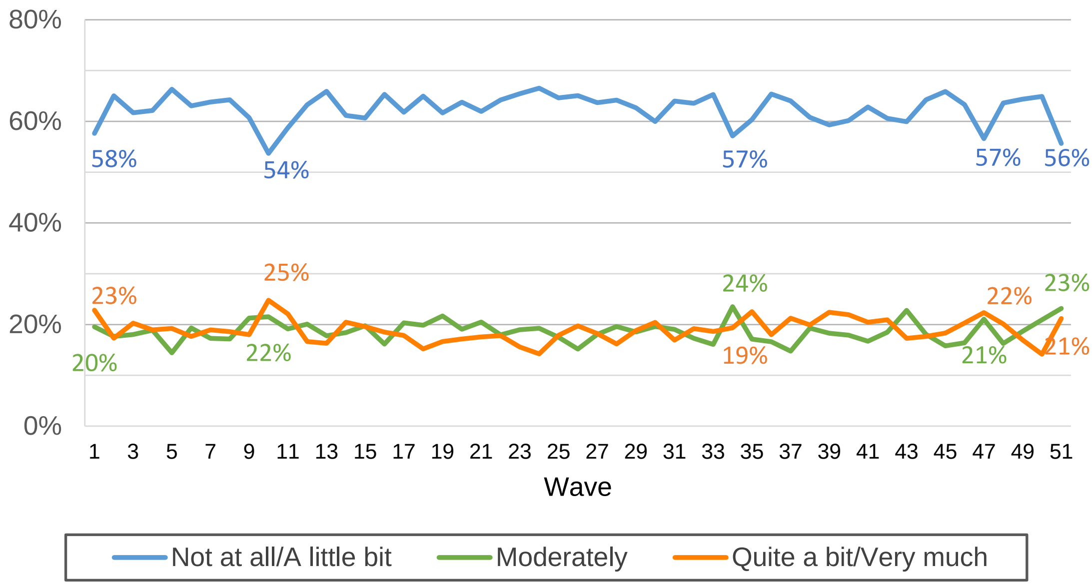
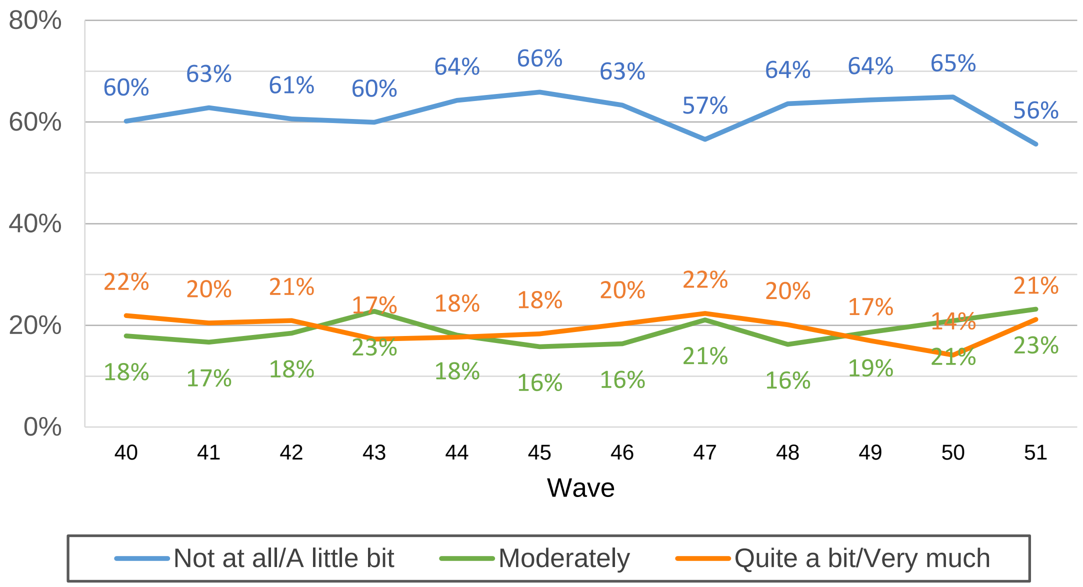


Figure 14b: Feeling irritable or having anger outbursts (W40 - W51, %)



On average, around 19 per cent felt hopeless for quite a bit or very much throughout the course of the pandemic, while around 17 per cent felt moderately hopeless. In W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020), 41 per cent felt at least moderately hopeless. Around 33 to 44 per cent felt at least moderately hopeless from W40 (28 October 2021 – 1 November 2021) to W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022).

Figure 15a: Feeling hopeless (Overall, W1 - W51, %)

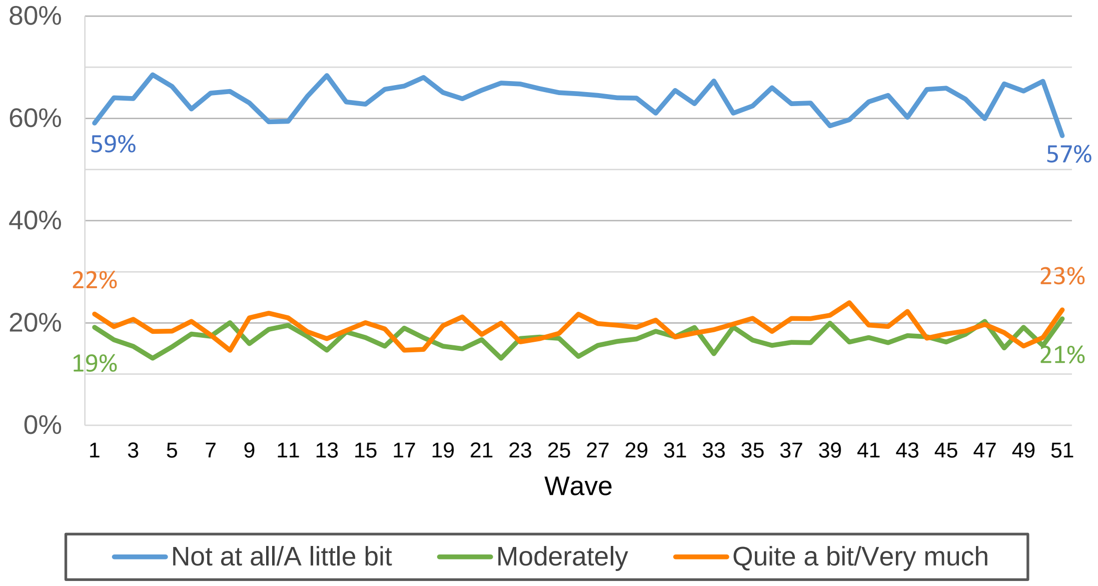
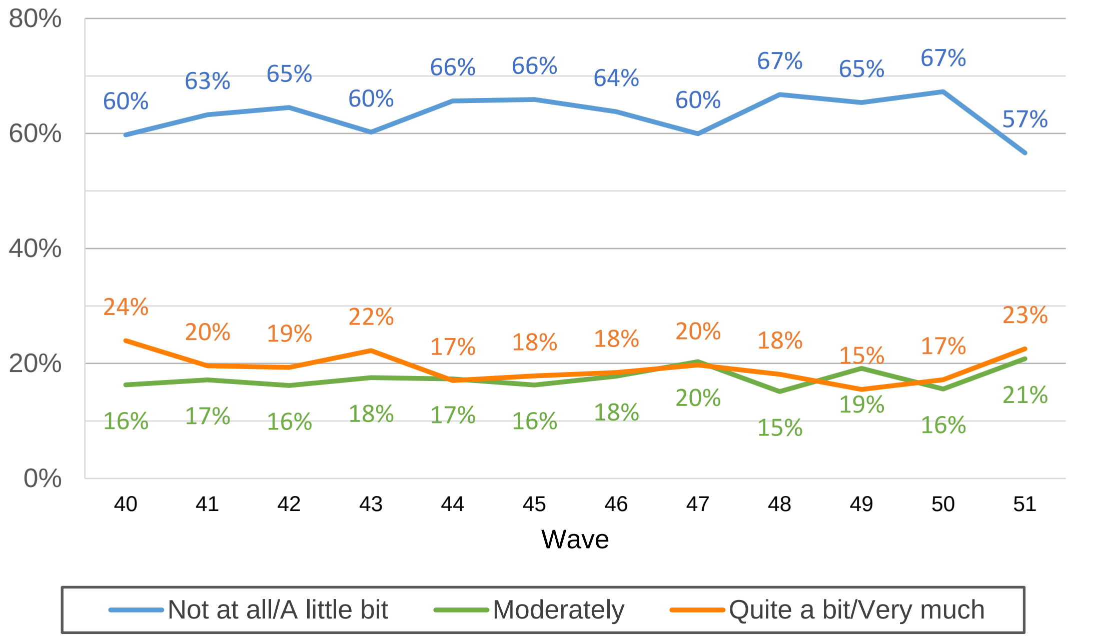


Figure 15b: Feeling hopeless (W40 - W51, %)



2. Relationships with family and friends

In general, respondents' relationships with their family, friends and neighbours seem to have improved, especially in the later waves of the study. However, there has been a slight uptick in the proportions who reported experiencing family related problems or arguments with their spouses in later waves.

More than four in 10 were also concerned about the pandemic's impact on children's social development and whether they would develop unhealthy lifestyle habits.

2.1 Relationship with family

On average, about two in 10 rated their relationship with their spouse (21 per cent) and parents (19 per cent) as poor or fair. The proportion of those who rated their relationship with their spouse as poor or fair declined from 23 per cent in W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020) to 17 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022). As for their relationship with their parents, the proportion who rated it as poor or fair fell from 21 per cent in W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020) to 16 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022).

About one in 10 (12 per cent) rated their relationship with their children as poor or fair on average across all waves.

Figure 16a: How would you presently rate yourself on your relationship with your spouse (Among those who are married, Overall, W5 - W51, %)

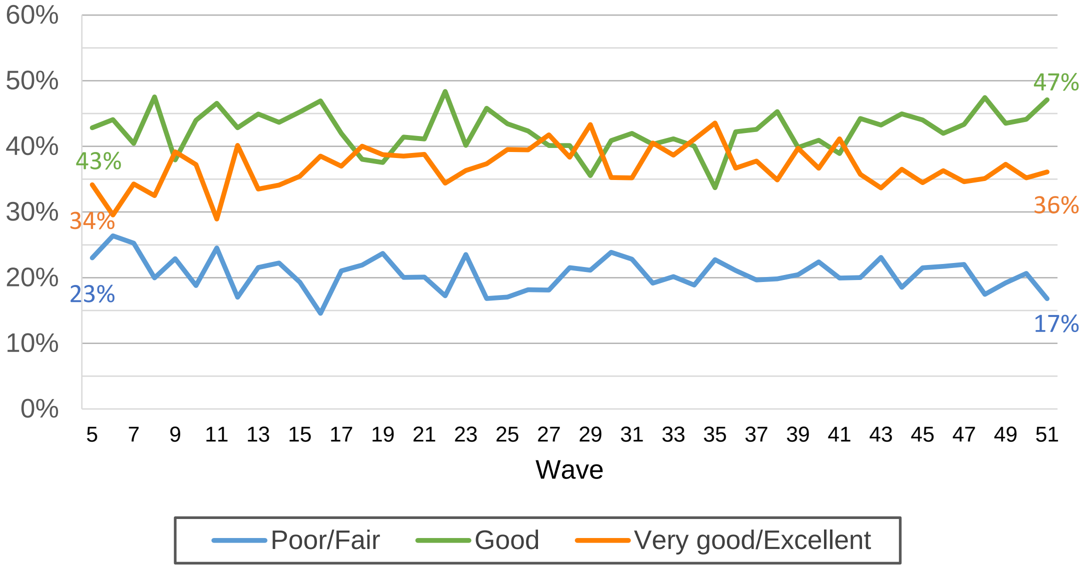


Figure 16b: How would you presently rate yourself on your relationship with your spouse (Among those who are married, W40 - W51, %)

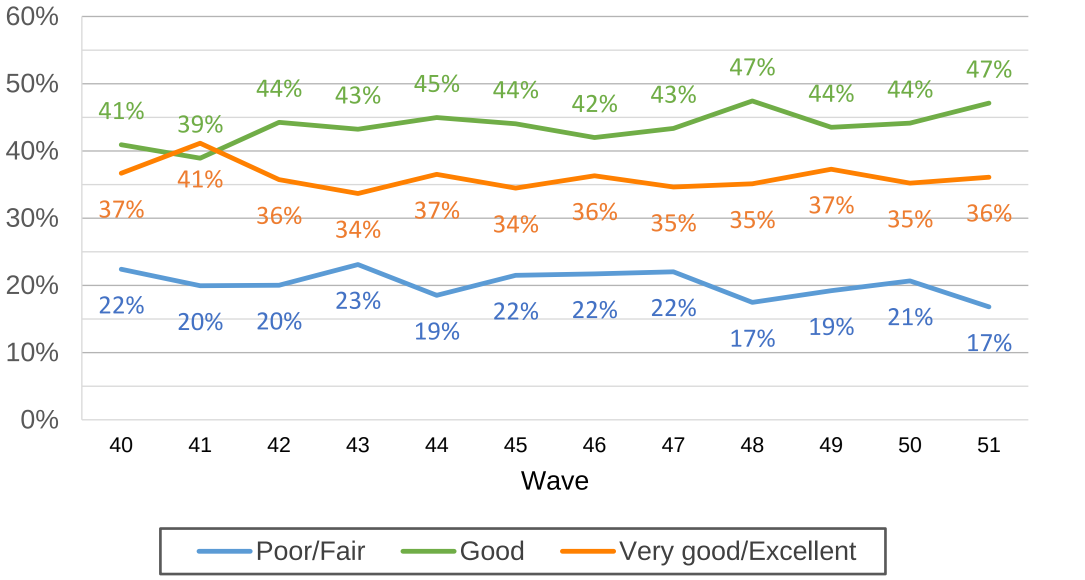


Figure 17a: How would you presently rate yourself on your relationship with your children (Among those with children,Overall,W5 - W51, %)

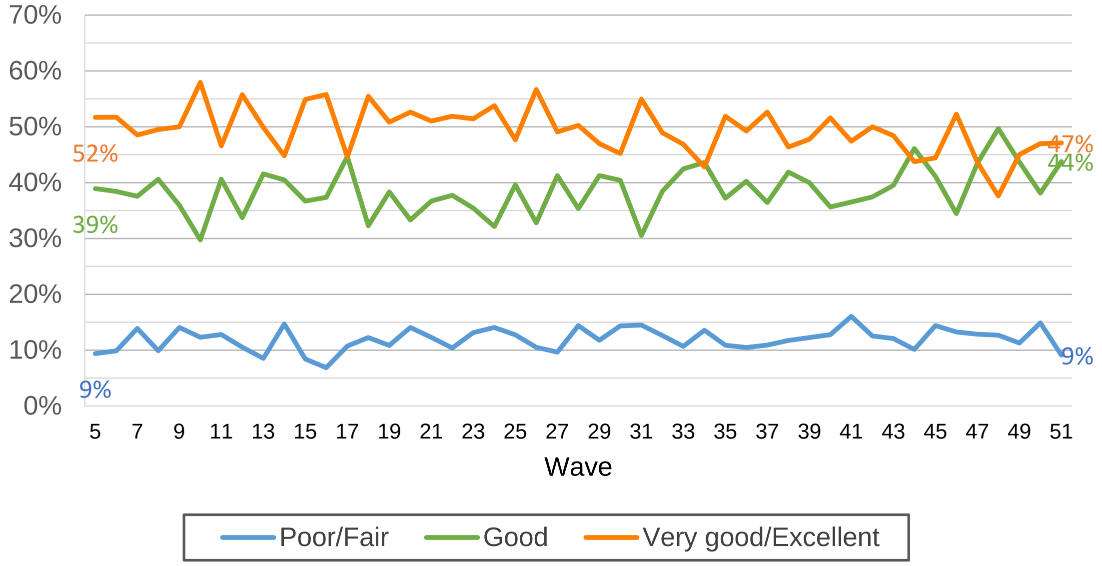


Figure 17b: How would you presently rate yourself on your relationship with your children (Among those with children, W40 - W51, %)

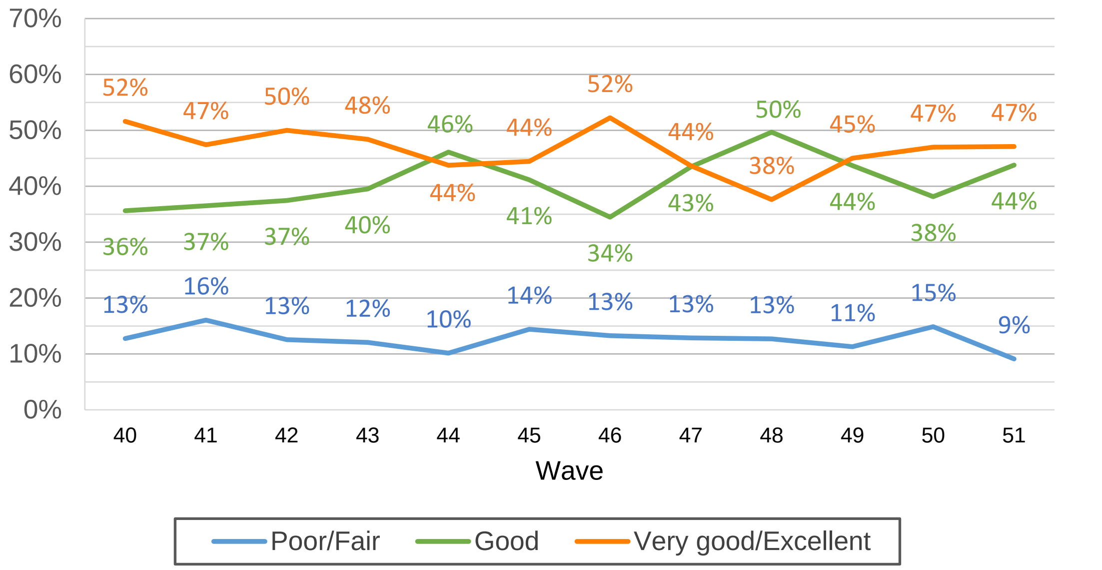


Figure 18a: How would you presently rate yourself on your relationship with your parents (Overall, W5 - W51, %)

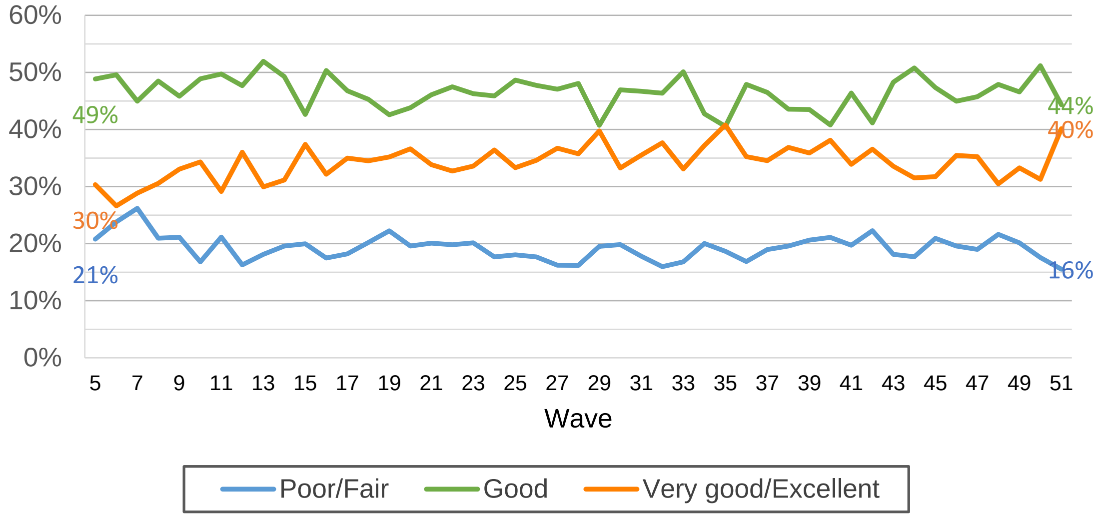
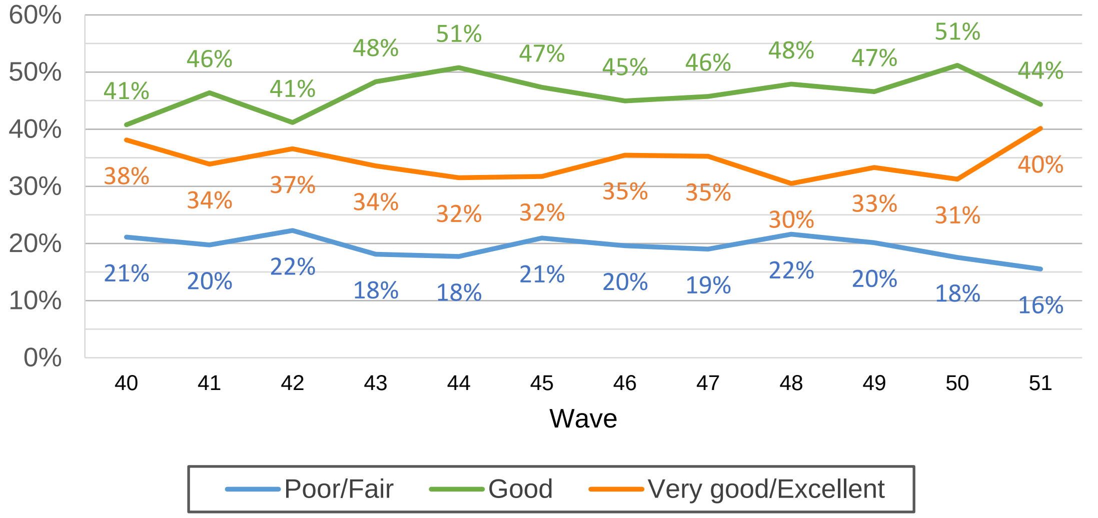


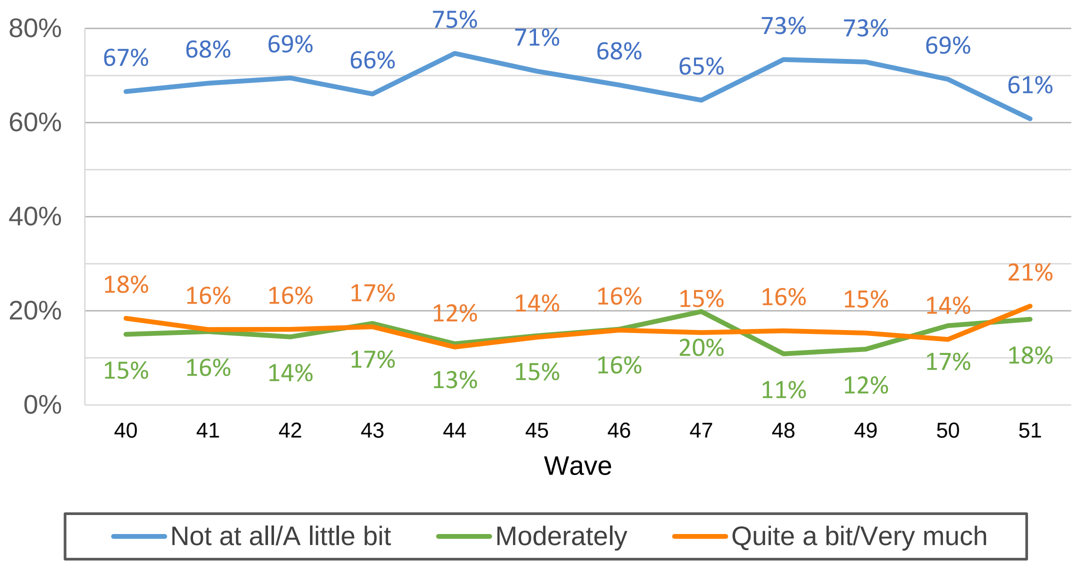
Figure 18b: How would you presently rate yourself on your relationship with your parents (W40 - W51, %)



On average, around 16 per cent had quite a bit or a lot of family related problems over the pandemic, while another 16 per cent reported such problems at a moderate level. In W1 (21 April 2020 - 23 April 2020), three in 10 (28 per cent) had family related problems at least to a moderate extent. From W40 (28 October 2021 - 1 November 2021) to W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022), around three to four in 10 (25 to 40 per cent) had family related problems at least to a moderate extent.

Figure 19a: Having family related problems (Overall, W4 - W51, %)

Figure 19b: Having family related problems (W40 - W51, %)



Around 15 per cent argued quite a bit or a lot with their spouse during the pandemic, while around 14 per cent argued with their spouse to a moderate extent. In W1 (21 April 2020 - 23 April 2020), the proportion of those who argued with their spouse at least to a moderate extent was 27 per cent. The proportion was between 23 to 34 per cent from W40 (28 October 2021 - 1 November 2021) to W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022).

Figure 20a: Arguing with spouse (Overall, W5 - W51, %)

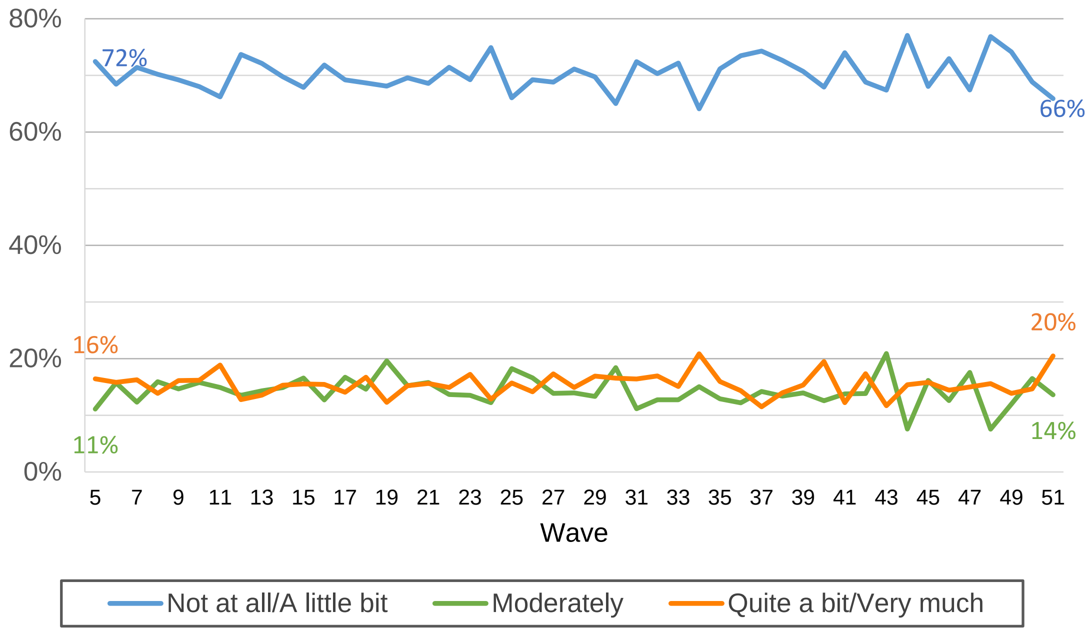
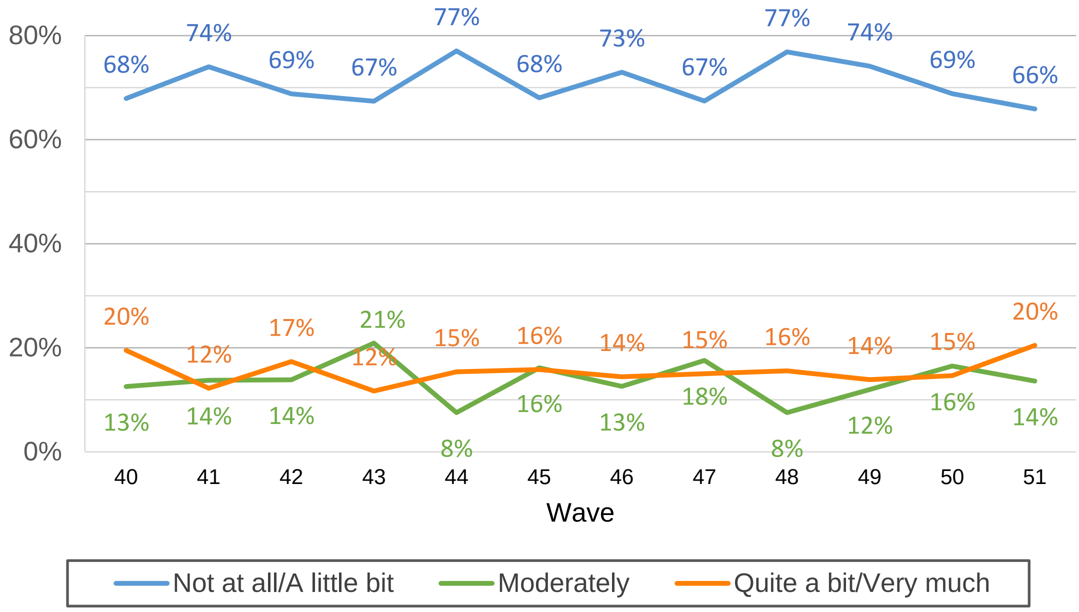


Figure 20b: Arguing with spouse (W40 - W51, %)



2.2 Relationship with friends and neighbours

On average, more than three in 10 (34 per cent) rated their relationship with their neighbours as poor or fair. The proportion who rated it as such fell from 35 per cent in W1 (21 April 2020 - 23 April 2020) to 29 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022). About 21 per cent rated their relationship with their friends as poor or fair. The proportion who rated it as such declined from 19 per cent in W1 (21 April 2020 - 23 April 2020) to 15 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022).

Figure 21a: How would you presently rate your relationship with your neighbours (Overall, W5 - W51, %)

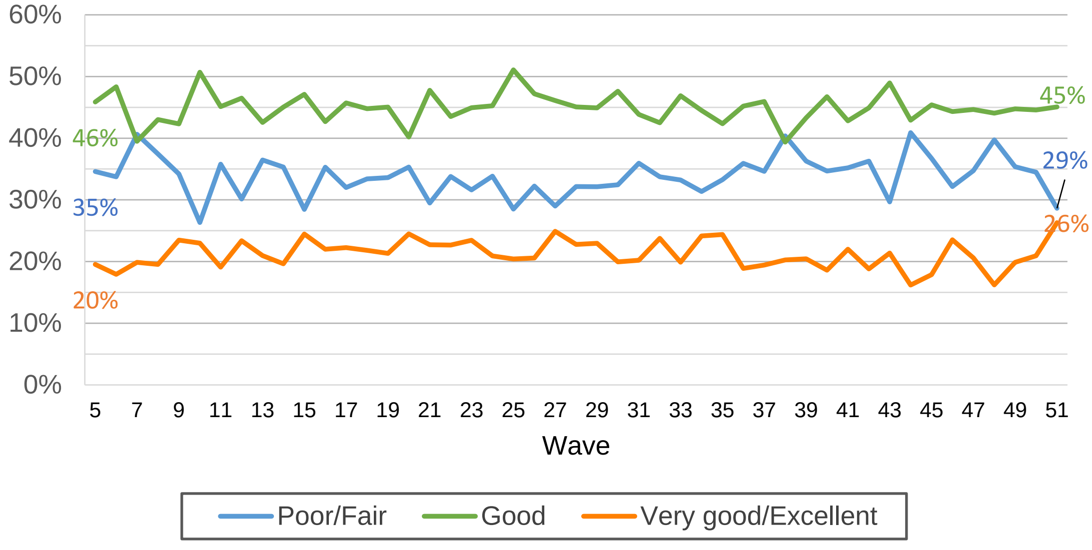


Figure 21b: How would you presently rate your relationship with your neighbours (W40 - W51, %)

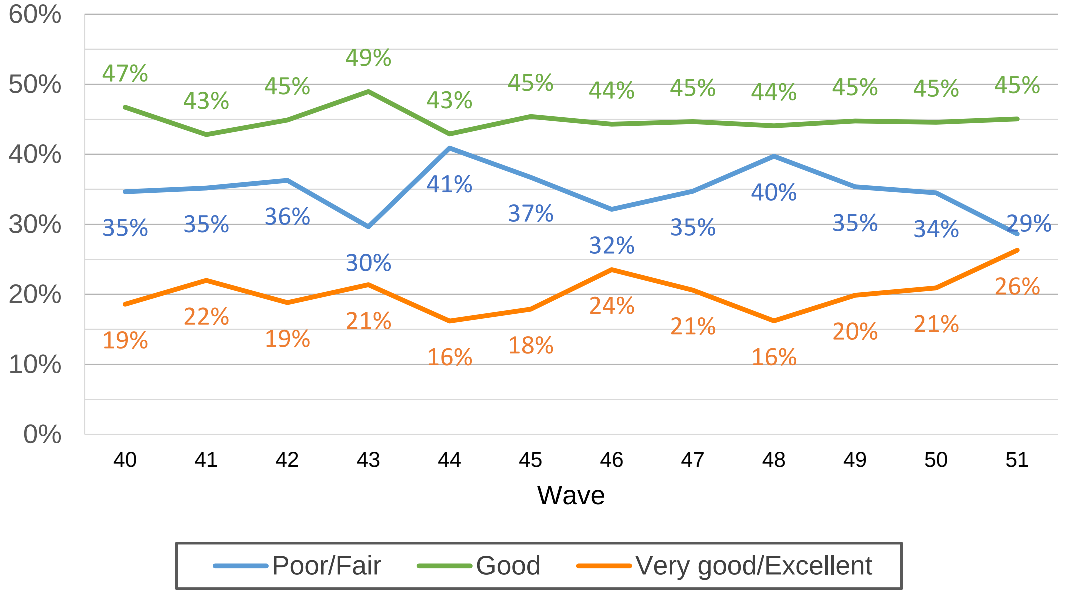


Figure 22a: How would you presently rate your relationship with your friends (Overall, W24 - W51, %)

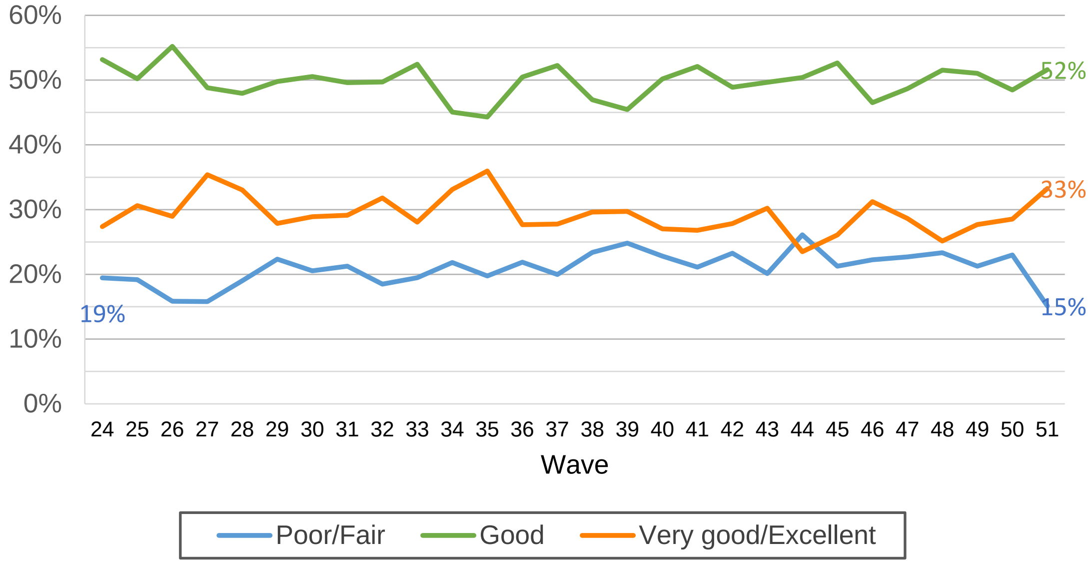
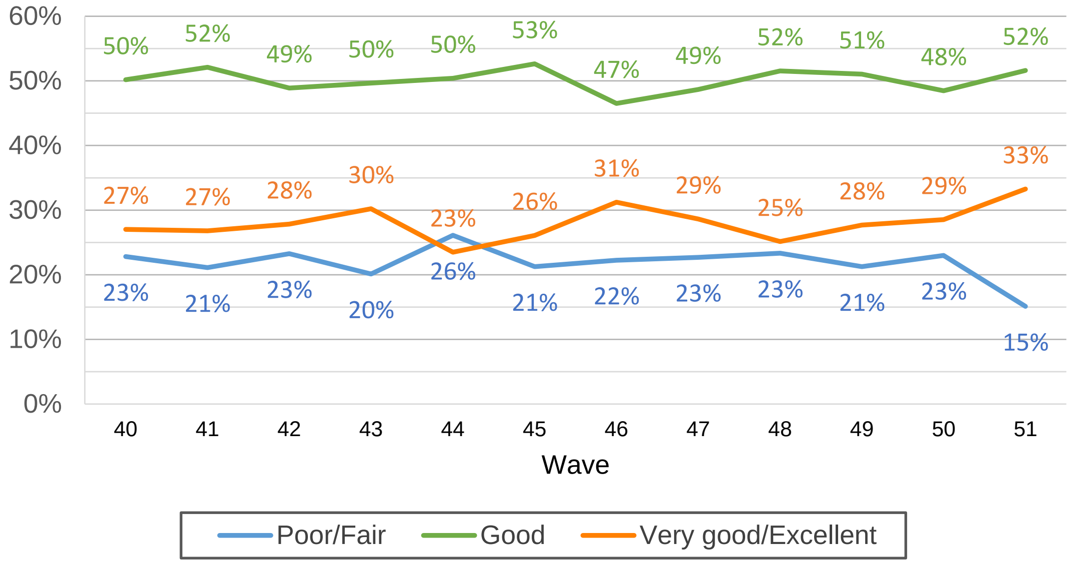


Figure 22b: How would you presently rate your relationship with your friends (W40 - W51, %)



2.3 Strained ties

On average, around 22 per cent were rather or very worried while 18 per cent were somewhat worried that their family relationships would be strained. While the proportion of those who were rather or very worried was 20 per cent in W1 (21 April 2020 - 23 April 2020), the proportion increased to 24 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022).

Figure 23a: In the next six months, how worried are you that your family relationships will be strained (Overall, W5 - W51, %)

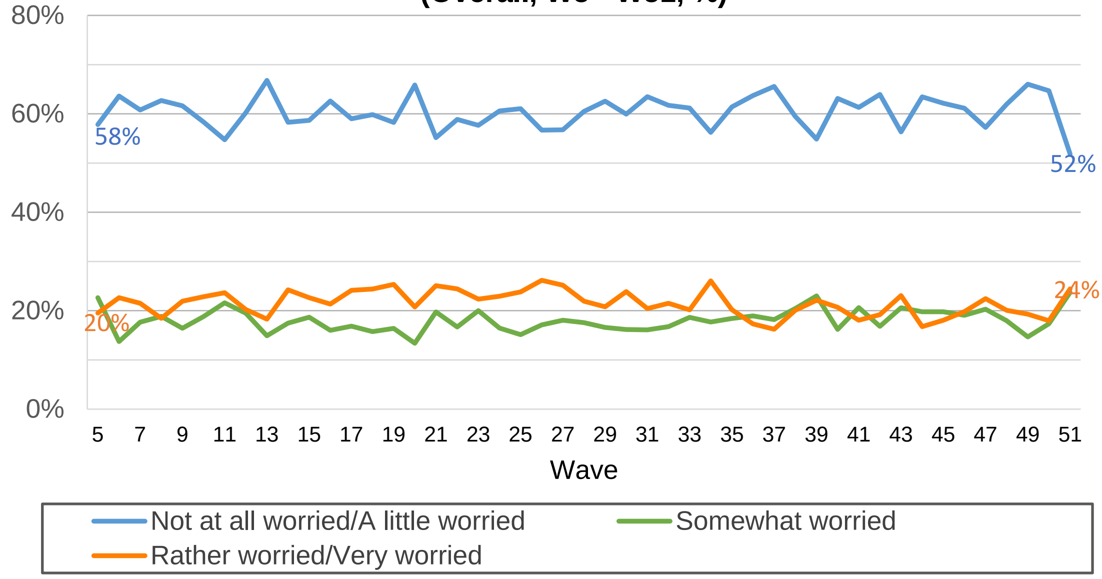
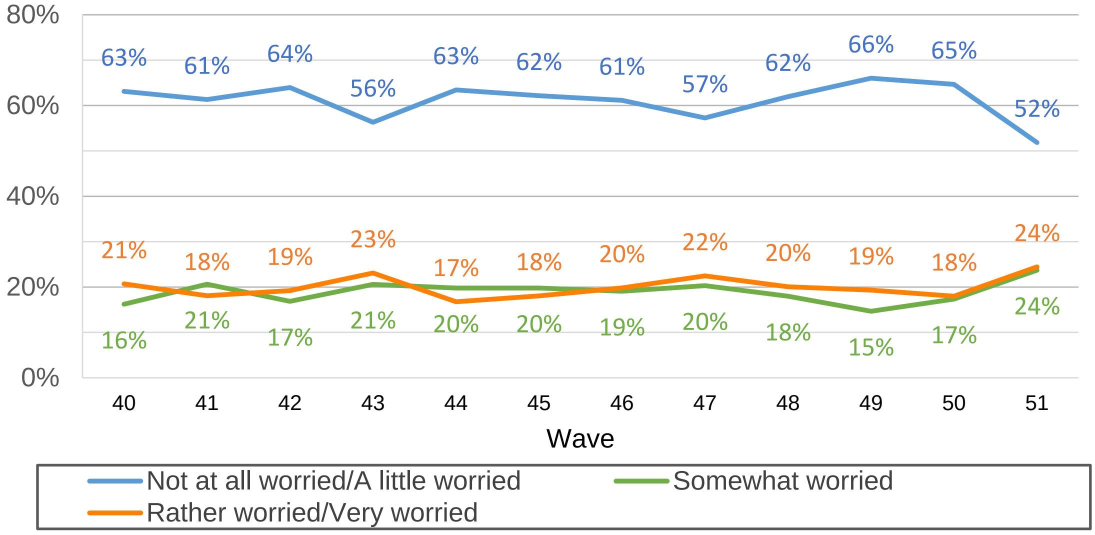


Figure 23b: In the next six months, how worried are you that your family relationships will be strained (W40 - W51, %)



When it came to concerns about strained friendships, about 18 per cent of respondents were rather or very worried about this, while 20 per cent on average were somewhat worried. The proportion of those who were rather or very worried that their friendship would be strained was 23 per cent in W1 (21 April 2020 - 23 April 2020). In later waves from W40 (28 October 2021 - 1 November 2021) to W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022), the proportion was between 14 to 21 per cent.

Figure 24a: In the next six months, how worried are you that your friendships will be strained (Overall, W1 - W51, %)

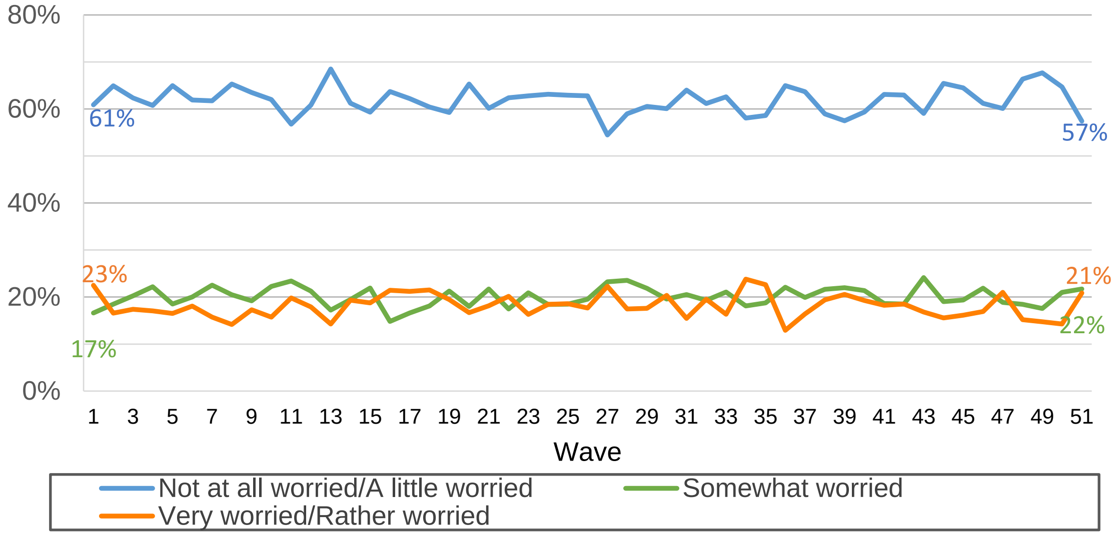
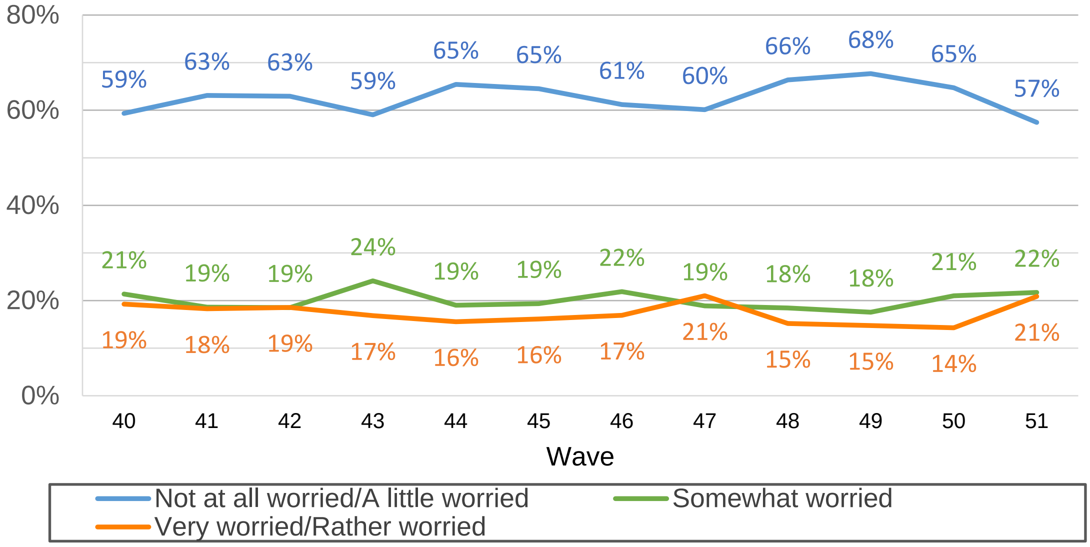


Figure 24b: In the next six months, how worried are you that your friendships will be strained (W40 - W51, %)

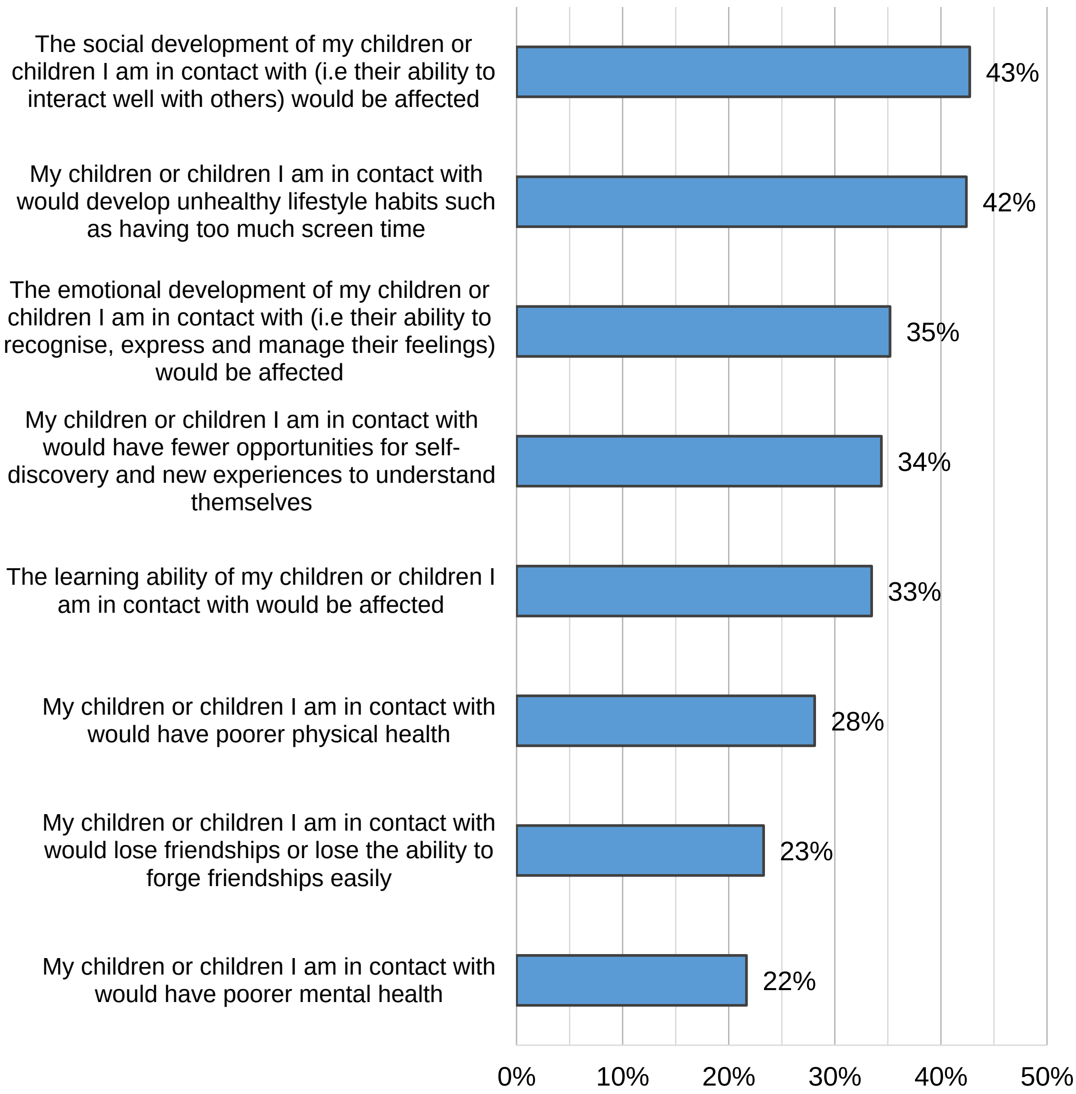


2.4 Concerns over the impact of the pandemic on children

Survey respondents were presented with a list of eight possible concerns they might have about their own children or those that they knew, which they perceived as an outcome of the pandemic. These concerns ranged from the possible impact of the pandemic on children's learning to their emotional, social and physical well-being.

The top three areas of concern on the impact of the pandemic on children were the social development of children (43 per cent), development of unhealthy lifestyle habits such as too much screen time (42 per cent) and emotional development of children (35 per cent). These results highlight parental anxieties that the pandemic and the accompanying restrictions might have had a social and emotional cost on their children's development. This seemed inevitable since children were cooped up at home, engaged in home-based learning and often focused on their electronic gadgets rather than out and about playing with other children. While fewer parents (22 per cent) were concerned that their children or those they were in contact with would have poorer mental health, this proportion is still substantial.

Figure 25: Which of the following are you concerned about for your children or children you are in contact with as a result of the pandemic? (W46 - W49, %)



3. FINANCES AND JOBS

There has been a strong focus on financial and job security during the pandemic. Many faced retrenchments as companies which were hardest hit by the pandemic could no longer stay afloat. The government rolled out schemes to help employers support their wage costs to help employees stay employed, while also coming up with programmes to support Singaporeans in upskilling and transitioning to growth industries. Financial support was also given to those who lost their jobs or had reduced incomes, and also to families who required help during the pandemic.

While the worry over finances fluctuated depending on the pandemic situation, worry over job security has been on a general decline in later waves of the study as the restrictions were less stringent. Nevertheless, respondents remained concerned about the rise in prices of goods and GST.

3.1 Worry over finances and job security

W1 (21 April 2020 - 23 April 2020) recorded the highest proportion of respondents who were rather or very worried about not having enough finances to take care of their personal/family needs (39 per cent). During W1 (21 April 2020 - 23 April 2020), Singapore was in its Circuit Breaker (CB) period and the extension of CB was announced during this wave as well. This proportion then decreased to 27 per cent in W9 (21 September 2020 - 28 September 2020). Subsequently with great control over the pandemic situation measures were relaxed in Phase 3 at the end of December 2020. An uptick was recorded in

W27 (17 May 2021 - 27 May 2021) at 35 per cent when Singapore entered the Phase 2 Heightened Alert (P2HA) as cases rose due to the COVID-19 wave caused by the Delta variant. The proportion of respondents who felt worried about their finances decreased to 29 per cent in W29 (7 June 2021 - 14 June 2021) as the P2HA ended at the end of this survey wave. The proportion increased slightly to 32 to 35 per cent in W30 (21 June 2021 – 2 July 2021) and W31 (14 July 2021 - 25 July 2021) in response to the rising case numbers. This proportion then fell in subsequent waves.

The proportion of respondents who were rather or very worried about not having enough finances to take care of their personal/family needs increased to 36 per cent in W39 (15 October 2021 - 27 October 2021), as the extension of the Stabilisation Phase was announced to cope with the rising case numbers. The proportion then fell to 31 per cent in W41 (10 November 2021 - 17 November 2021) as calibrated adjustments were made to the Stabilisation Phase as the situation became more under control. However, the proportion increased to 34 per cent in W43 (30 November 2021 - 9 December 2021) as the first few imported Omicron cases in Singapore were reported, likely because this seemed to be a pre-cursor for potential implementation of stricter measures and impeding economic recovery. The proportion then fell but increased gradually to 35 percent in W47 (14 February 2022 - 22 February 2022) as case numbers grew, before falling to 30 per cent in W49 (1 April 2022 - 11 April 2022) after the Omicron wave was over and measures were relaxed. However, the proportion rose to 34 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022) as inflation concerns grew and news was heard of an impending wave of infections.

Figure 26a: In the next six months, how worried are you that you will not have enough finances to take care of your personal/family needs (Overall, W1 - W51, %)

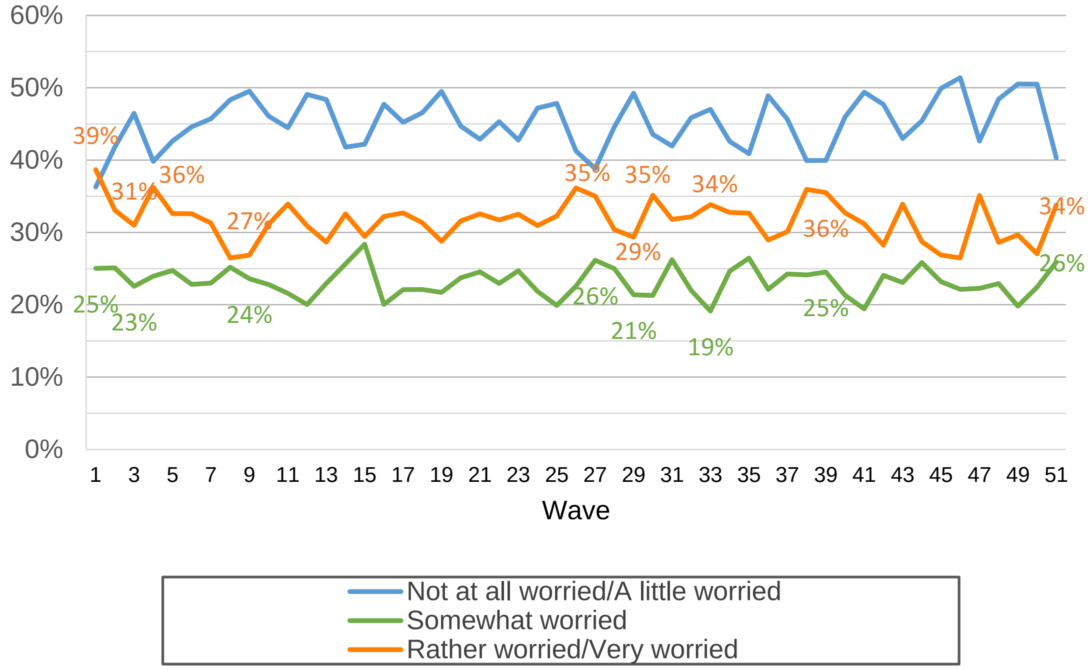
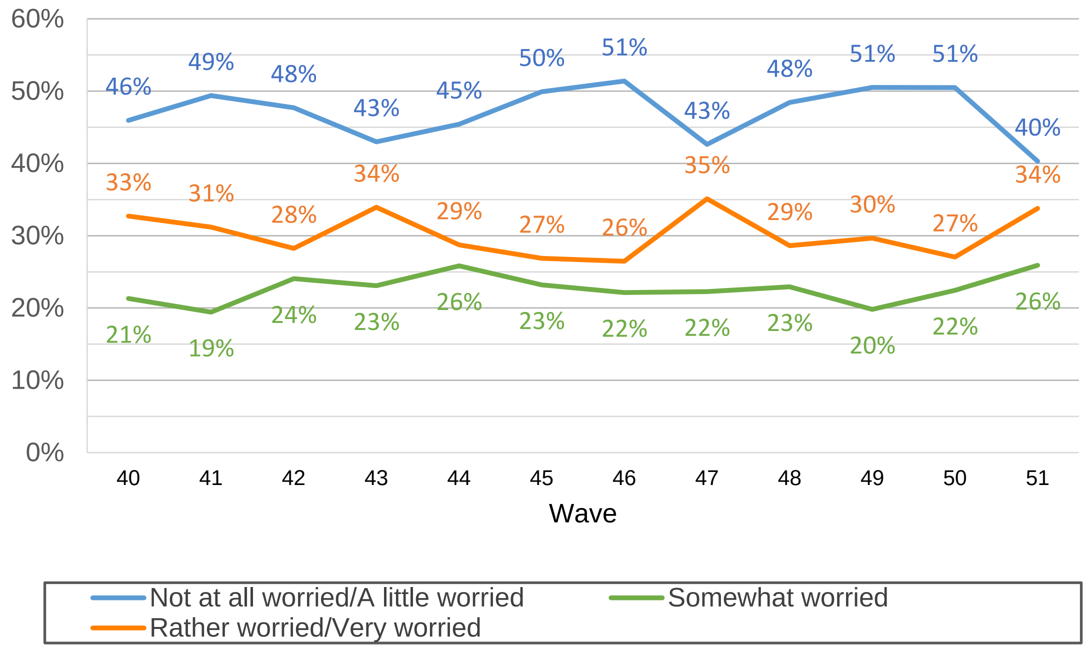


Figure 26b: In the next six months, how worried are you that you will not have enough finances to take care of your personal/family needs (W40 - W51, %)



The proportion of respondents who were rather or very worried about themselves or their family members losing their jobs stood at 42 per cent in W1 (21 April 2020 - 23 April 2020) during the Circuit Breaker period. This proportion has been on a general decline from W40 (28 October 2021 - 1 November 2021). It decreased to 28 per cent in W50 (22 April 2022 - 4 May 2022), when measures were relaxed and Singapore seemed to have returned to a sense of normalcy, before increasing to 35 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022) as recession concerns grew.

While the proportion of those who were rather or very worried was lower than the proportion of those who were not at all or a little worried for most of the survey waves, there were certain survey waves when the proportions were reversed. In W1 (21 April 2020 - 23 April 2020), the proportion of those who were rather or very worried that they or their family members will lose their jobs was 42 per cent. The extension of the Circuit Breaker was announced during this period, which may have led to worries that they or their family members would lose their jobs, especially if they were in blue-collared work. In W27 (17 May 2021 - 27 May 2021), the proportion of those who were rather or very worried was 42 per cent, possibly as Singapore entered the Phase 2 Heightened Alert (P2HA). Lastly, in W39 (15 October 2021 - 27 October 2021), the extension of the Stabilisation Phase was announced, leading to more respondents feeling rather or very worried (40 per cent) as compared to respondents feeling not at all or a little bit worried (37 per cent).

Figure 27a: In the next six months, how worried are you that you or your family members will lose their jobs (Overall, W1 - W51, %)

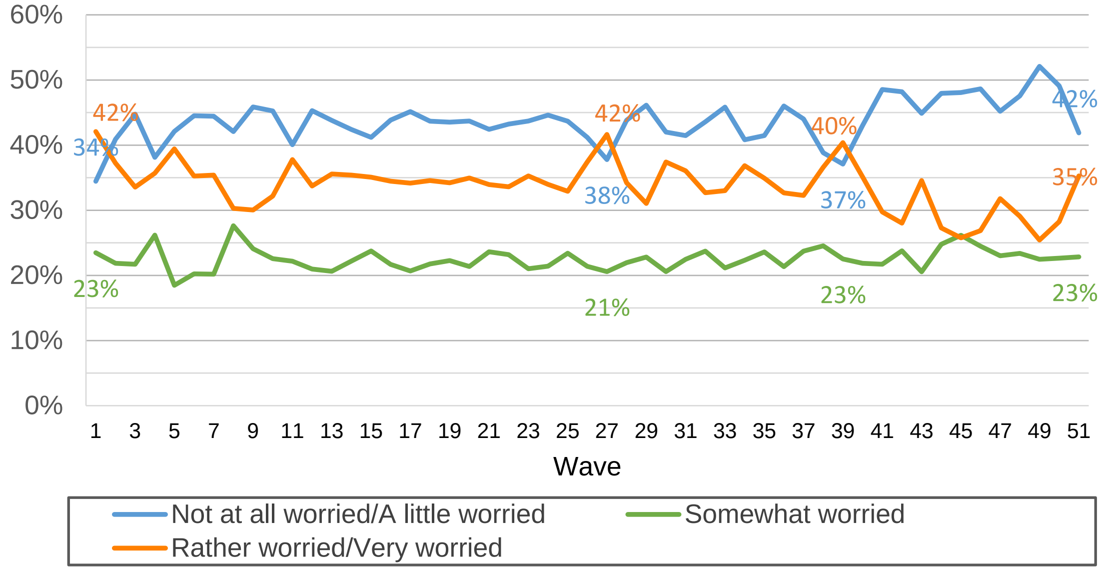
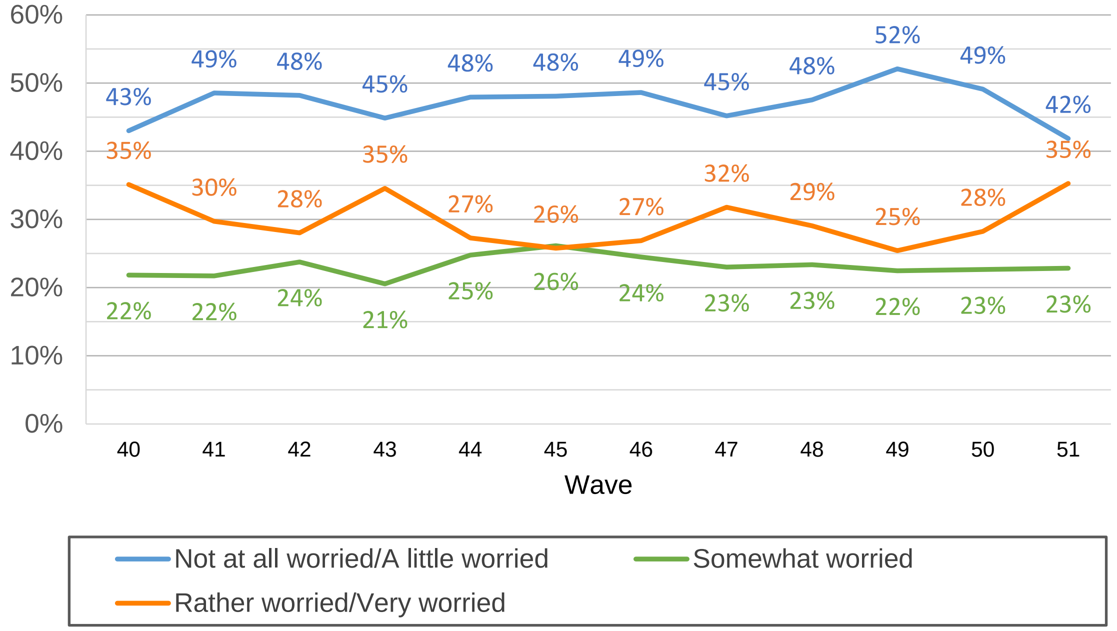
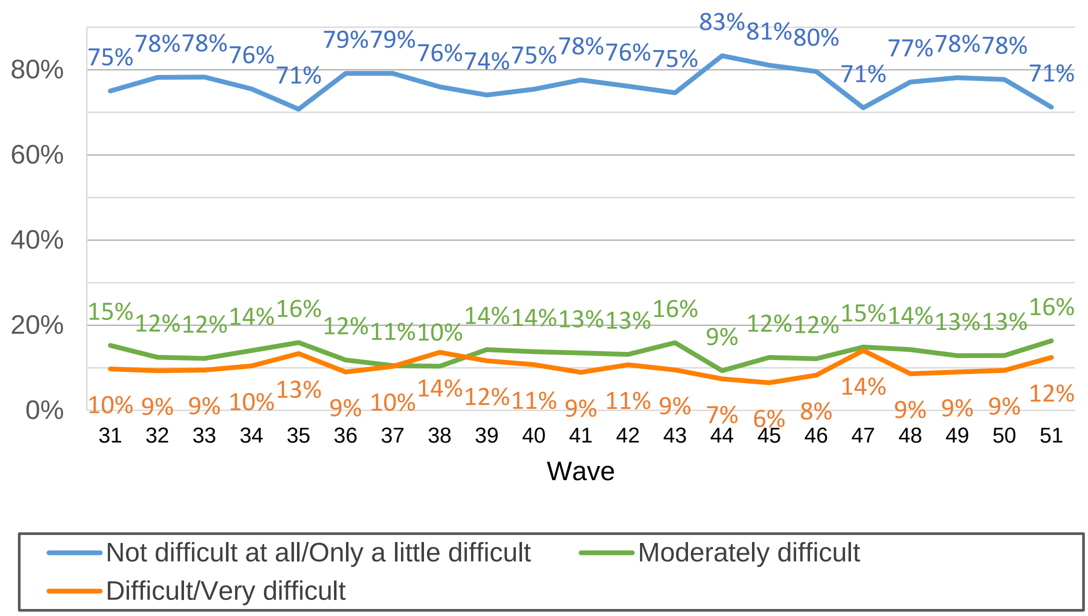


Figure 27b: In the next six months, how worried are you that you or your family members will lose their jobs (W40 - W51, %)



Moving beyond concerns of job loss, we also asked respondents about their ability to manage their monthly expenses. These questions were only asked from Wave 31. Around 10 per cent found it difficult or very difficult to pay their utilities bill on time for the next six months.

Figure 28: How difficult would it be for you to pay your utilities bill on time in the next six months? (W31 - W51, %)



Around 19 to 29 per cent from W31 (14 July 2021 - 25 July 2021) to W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022) found it difficult or very difficult to cope with an unexpected expense of $1,000 in the next six months. During the same period, around 11 to 21 per cent found it difficult or very difficult to pay for all loans on time, and about 7 to 13 per cent found it difficult or very difficult to buy monthly groceries in the next six months.

Figure 29: How difficult would it be for you to be able to cope with an unexpected expense of $1,000 in the next six months? (W31 - W51, %)

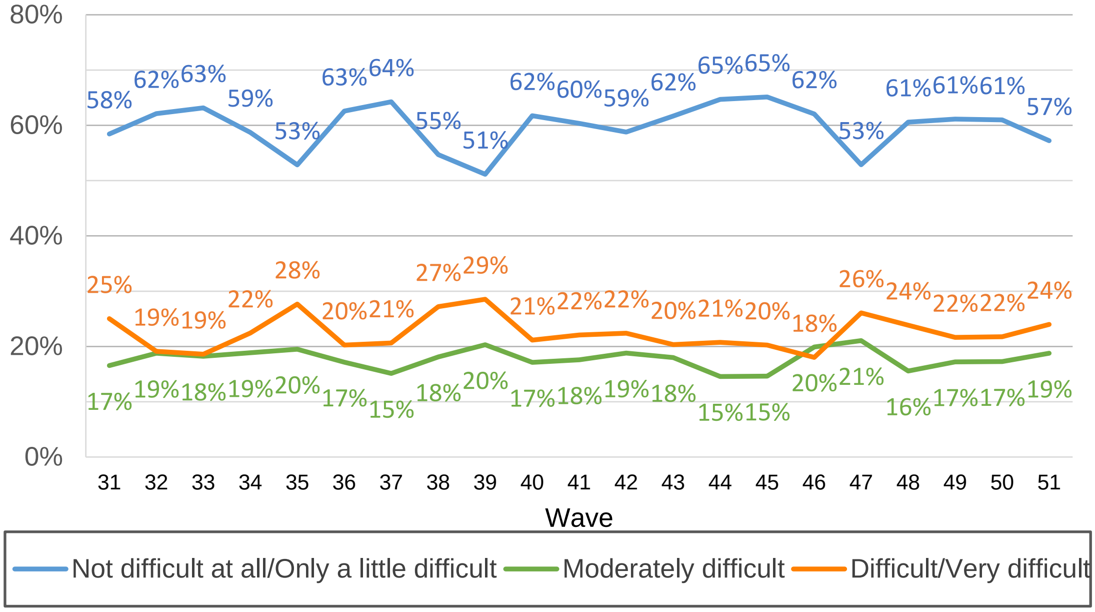


Figure 30: How difficult would it be for you to be able to pay for all your loans on time in the next six months? (W31 - W51, %)

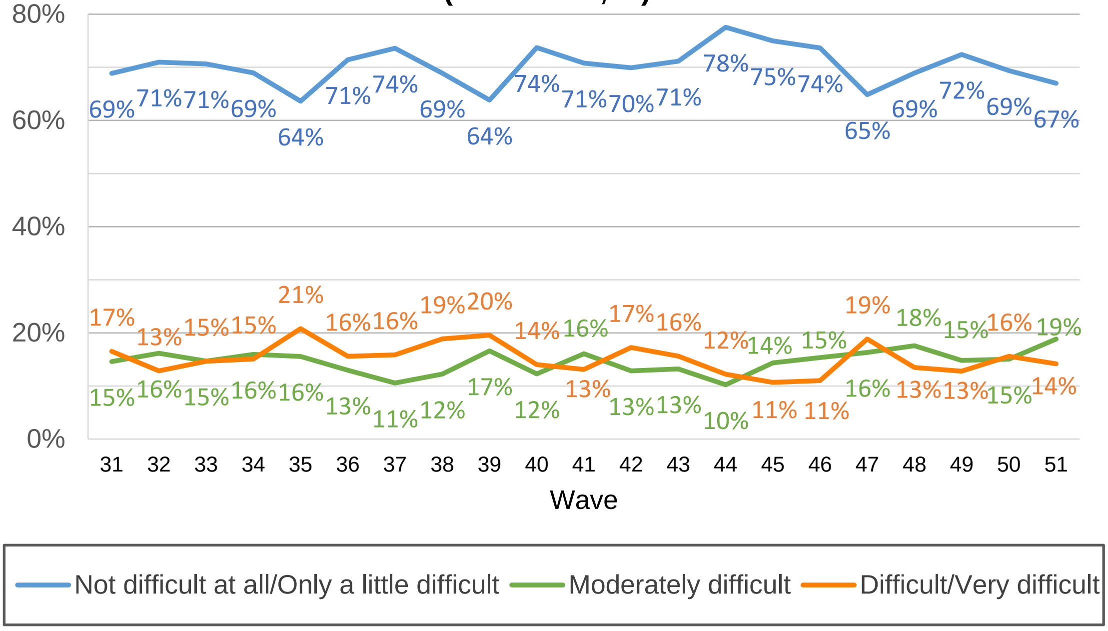
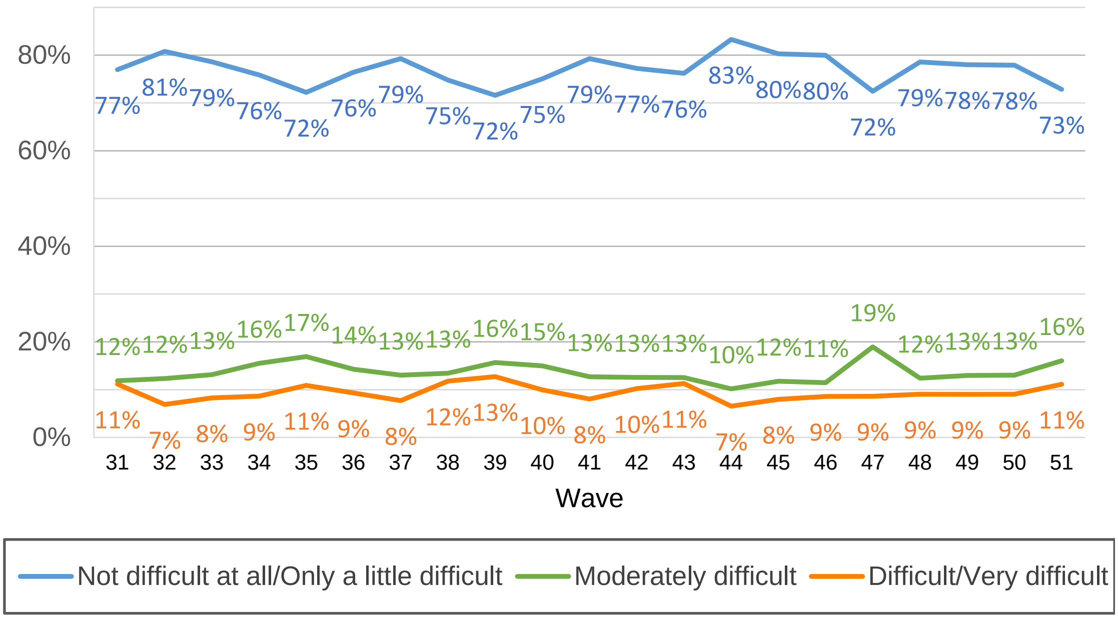


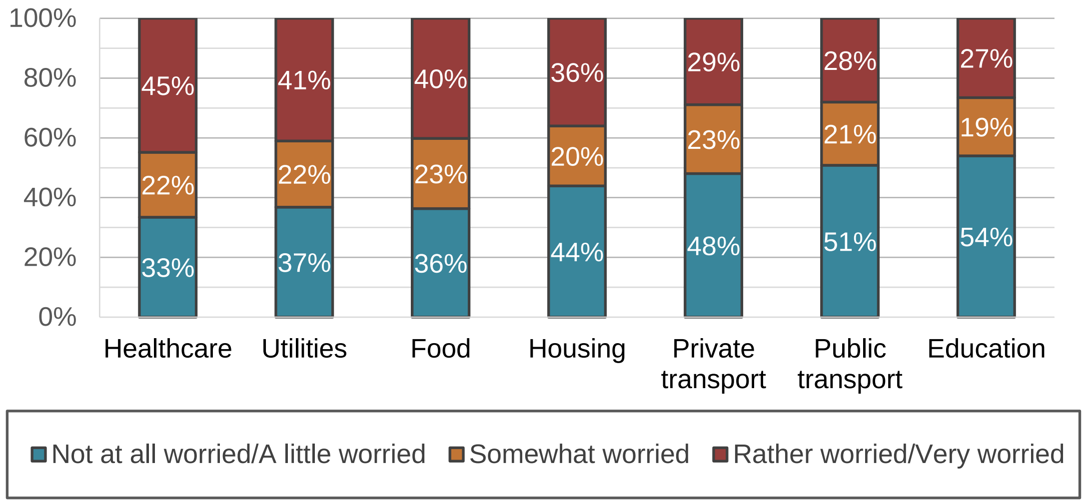
Figure 31: How difficult would it be for you to be able to buy monthly groceries in the next six months? (W31 - W51, %)



3.2 Worry over rising cost of living

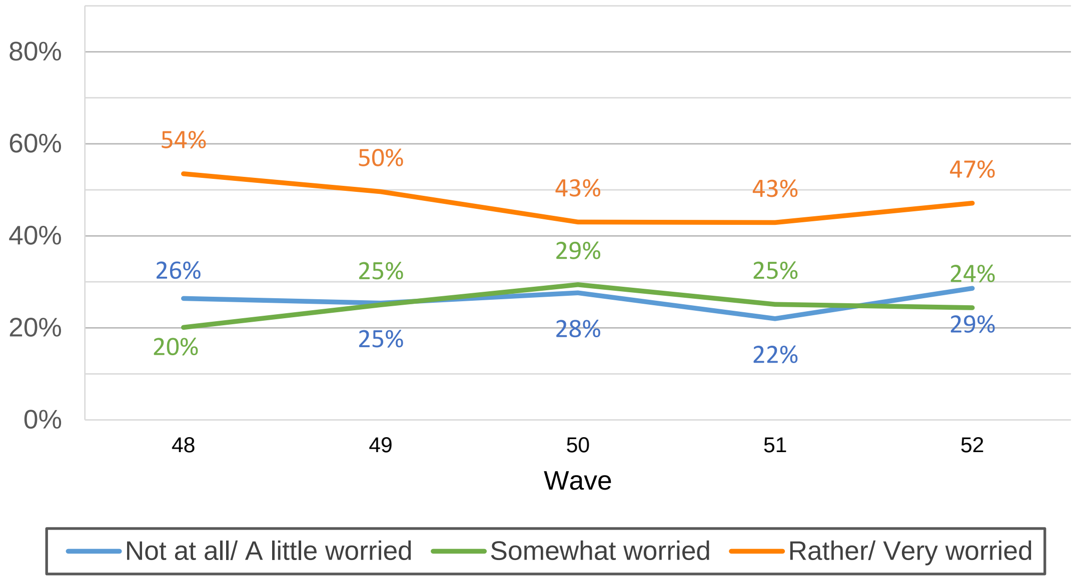
Based on the aggregated data from W48 till W51, which would have covered over 2000 respondents, more than four in 10 were rather or very worried about the cost of healthcare (45 per cent), cost of utilities (41 per cent) and cost of food (40 per cent) possibly rising this year.

Figure 32: How worried or not worried are you about the cost of these items possibly increasing this year? (W48 - W51, %)



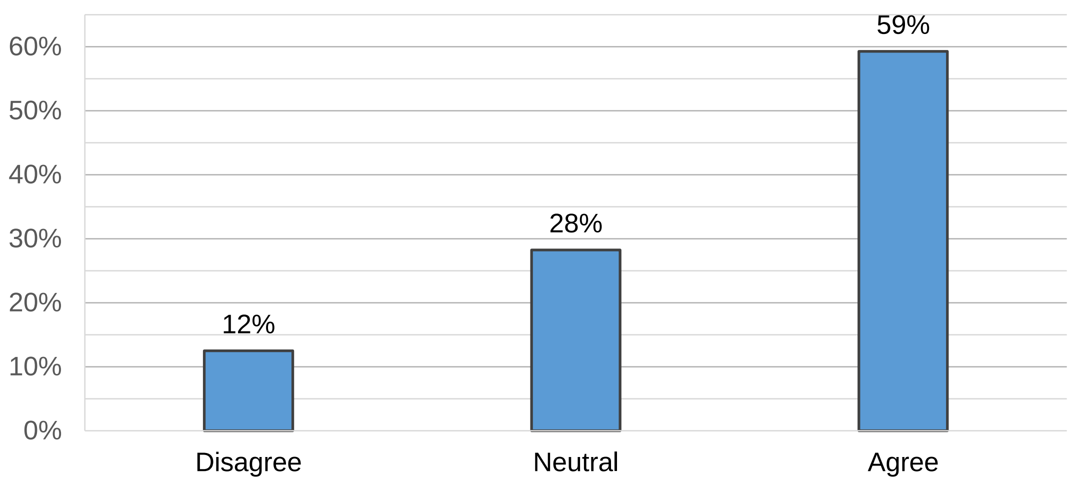
On the topic of GST, the proportion of those who were rather or very worried has been on a decline from 54 per cent in W48 (18 March 2022 – 25 March 2022) to 47 per cent in W52 (24 June 2022 – 4 July 2022). While more than half were worried about the rise in GST in W48, government support in subsequent waves may have helped to ease some worries. For example, a new tranche of Community Development Council (CDC) vouchers was rolled out in May to help Singaporeans cope with rising prices.

Figure 33: How worried are you about the rise in GST? (W48 - W52, %)



About six in 10 (59 per cent) stated that their families have made adjustments to their spending habits in order to reduce expenses to cope with the rise in prices.

Figure 34: My family has made adjustments to our spending habits in order to reduce our expenses to cope with the rise in prices (W50 - W51, %)



We constructed a composite scale using variables measuring respondents' level of worry on the possible rise in prices of a range of items (e.g. healthcare, utilities, food) and rise in GST[9]. This scale represents their level of worry over the rising cost of living. A linear regression was then conducted to examine variables which could significantly predict respondents who had greater worry over the rising cost of living. The outcome variable and the list of predictor variables used for this analysis are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: List of predictor variables

Outcome variable: Worry over rising cost of living (Measured based on a list of variables measuring their level of worry, where a higher score signifies that the respondent is more worried. See Annex A)	
Demographic predictor variables	**Description**
Age	• 21 to 29 • 30 to 39 • 40 to 49 • 50 to 59 • 60 and above
Education level	• Secondary and below • Post-secondary • Degree and above
Salary	• Below $3,000 • $3,000 to $5,999 • $5,999 and above
Household members	• Not living with vulnerable persons • Living with vulnerable persons
Finance Difficulty	• Composite scale of a series of variables measuring respondents' difficulty in meeting financial demands in the next six months • A higher score would mean that the respondent has higher financial difficulty • See Annex A for full list of variables
In light of the impact of COVID-19, do you trust or not trust that Singapore will remain a competitive global economy and an international travel hub?	• Likert scale of 1 "Totally do not trust" to 7 "Totally trust"

[9] See Annex A for variables used in the scale on worry over rising cost of living.

How confident are you that you will be able to keep your job in the next six months?	• Likert scale of 1 "Not confident at all" to 7 "Very confident"

Younger respondents, those who were less trusting that Singapore would remain a competitive economy, as well as those who faced financial difficulty and were less confident in keeping their job were likely to have more worry over inflation and GST.

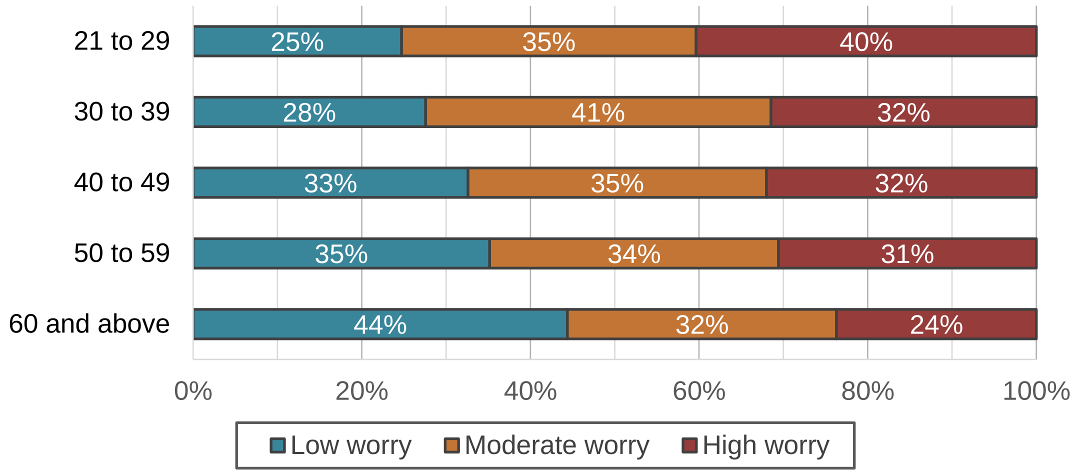
Table 2: Regression analysis on worry over rising cost of living

Predictor variables	Coefficient	Standard error	p-value
Age	-.044	.021	.038
Education	-.039	.043	.358
Salary	.018	.035	.602
Household members	-.036	.049	.460
Finance difficulty	.390	.024	<.001
In light of the impact of COVID-19, do you trust or not trust that Singapore will remain a competitive global economy and an international travel hub?	-.081	.019	<.001
How confident are you that you will be able to keep your job in the next six months?	-.059	.017	<.001
Constant	3.126	.195	<.001

To illustrate the results from the regression, we conducted the following cross tabulations:

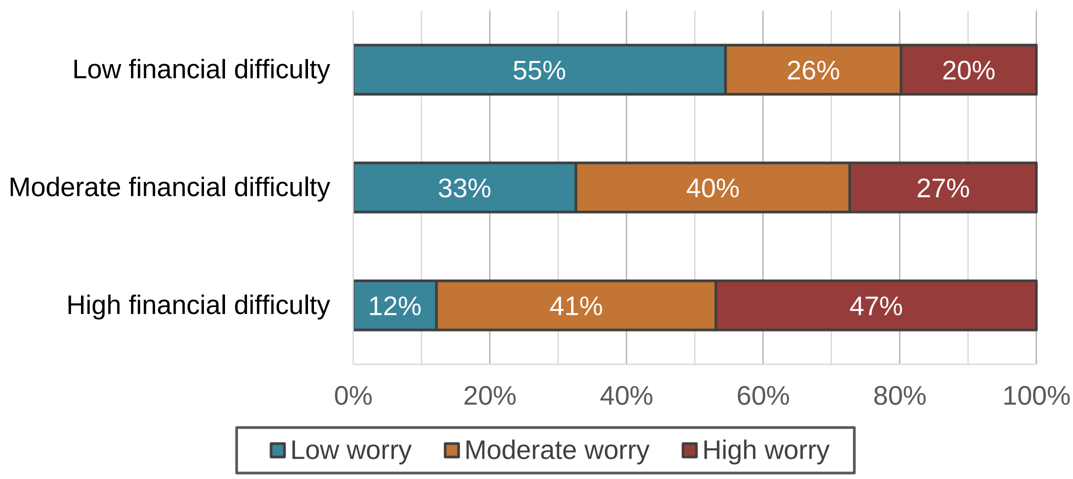
Around 40 per cent of those who were aged 21 to 29 had high worry over the rising cost of living, as compared to 24 per cent of those who were aged 60 and above.

Figure 35: Worry over rising cost of living, by age (W48 - W51, %)



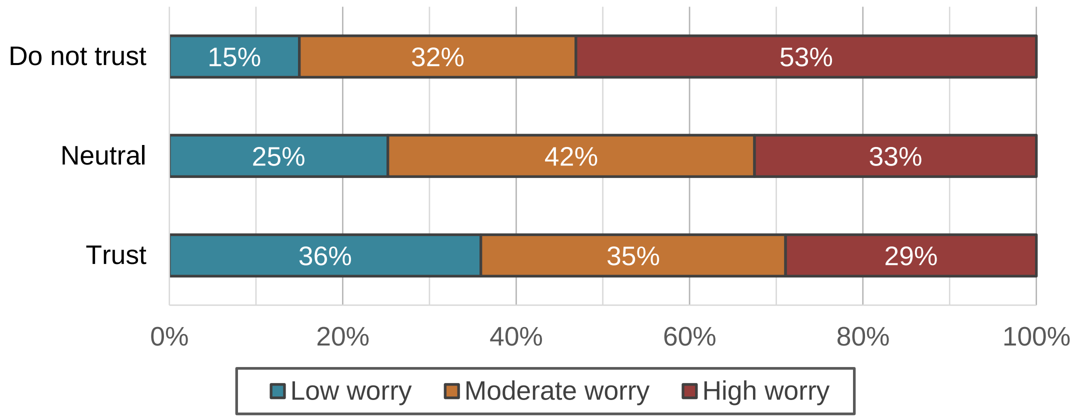
Around 47 per cent of those who had high financial difficulty were more worried about the rising cost of living, as compared to 20 per cent of those with low financial difficulty.

Figure 36: Worry over rising cost of living, by financial difficulty (W48 - W51, %)



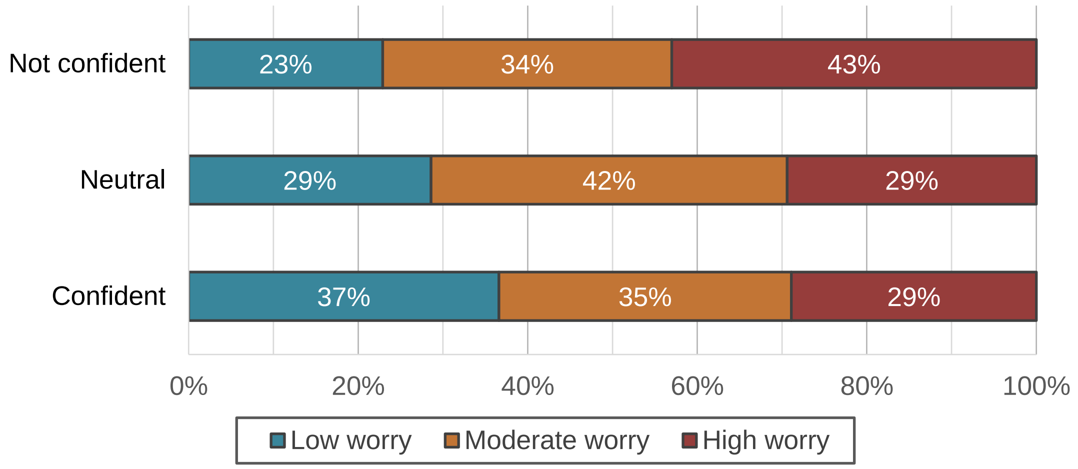
Around 53 per cent of those who did not trust that Singapore will remain a competitive global economy and an international travel hub were more worried about the rising cost of living, as compared to 29 per cent of those who trusted that Singapore will remain competitive.

Figure 37: Worry over rising cost of living, by level of trust that Singapore will remain a competitive global economy and an international travel hub (W48 - W51, %)



Around 43 per cent of those who were not confident of keeping their job in the next six months were more worried about the rising cost of living, as compared to 29 per cent of those who were confident of keeping their jobs in the next six months.

Figure 38: Worry over rising cost of living, by confidence in keeping job in the next six months (W48 - W51, %)



4. Worry over COVID-19

The proportion of those who were rather or very worried about themselves or their family members getting COVID-19 fluctuated with the number of case numbers in Singapore. In W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020) during the Circuit Breaker period, the proportion of those who were rather or very worried was 48 per cent. The proportion of those who were rather or very worried fell over the next few survey waves till W8 (4 September 2020 – 10 September 2020). In W26 (29 April 2021 – 13 May 2021) when the proportion of those who were rather/very worried increased to 41 per cent. The proportion of those who were rather or very worried was higher than those who were not at all or a little worried for subsequent waves as Singapore announced stricter safe management measures. Singapore entered Phase 2 Heightened Alert in W27 (17 May 2021 – 27 May 2021), where about half (50 per cent) were rather or very worried that their family members would be infected by COVID-19.

The proportion of those who were rather or very worried then fell to 35 per cent in W33 (7 August 2021 – 19 August 2021), when rules were relaxed and more could return to their workplaces. The proportion subsequently rose to 51 per cent in W39 (15 October 2021 – 27 October 2021) when the extension of the Stabilisation Phase was announced during the period when cases were rising, recording the highest proportion of respondents who were rather or very worried that their family members would be infected by COVID-19. The proportion fell in subsequent waves before rising to 45 per cent in W47 (14 February 2022 – 22 February 2022), when there were high number of Omicron cases. The proportion then fell to 33 per cent in W50 (22 April 2022 – 4 May 2022) as case numbers became more controlled and measures were relaxed. The proportion subsequently increased to 36 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022) as there were concerns about a new COVID-19 wave.

Figure 39a: In the next six months, how worried are you that you or your family members will be infected by Covid-19 (Overall, W1 - W51, %)

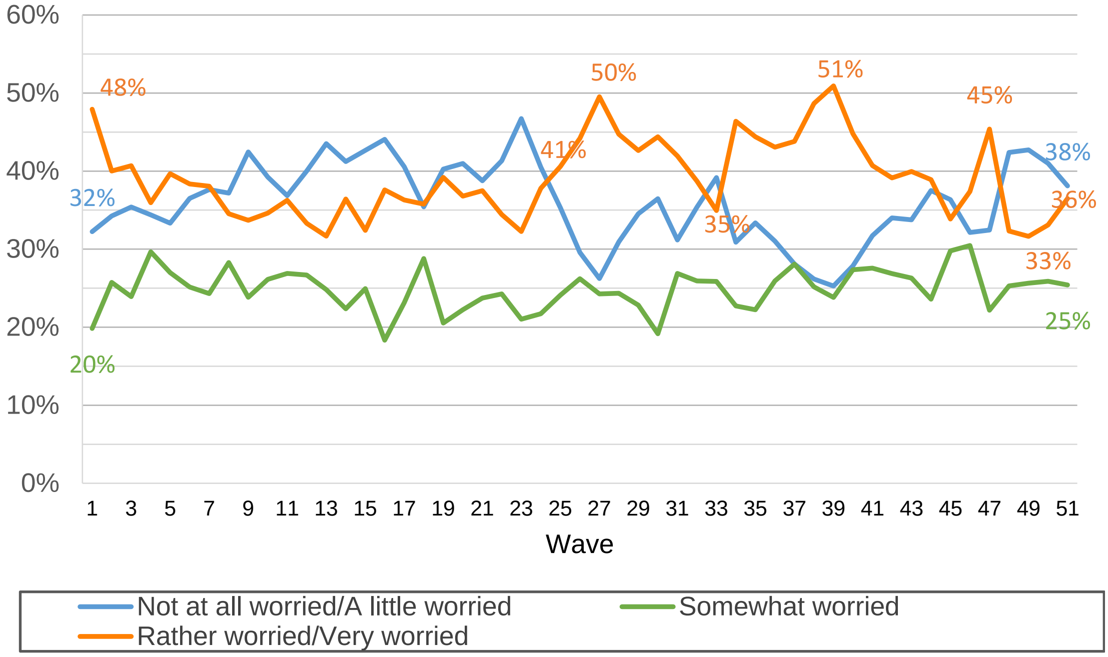
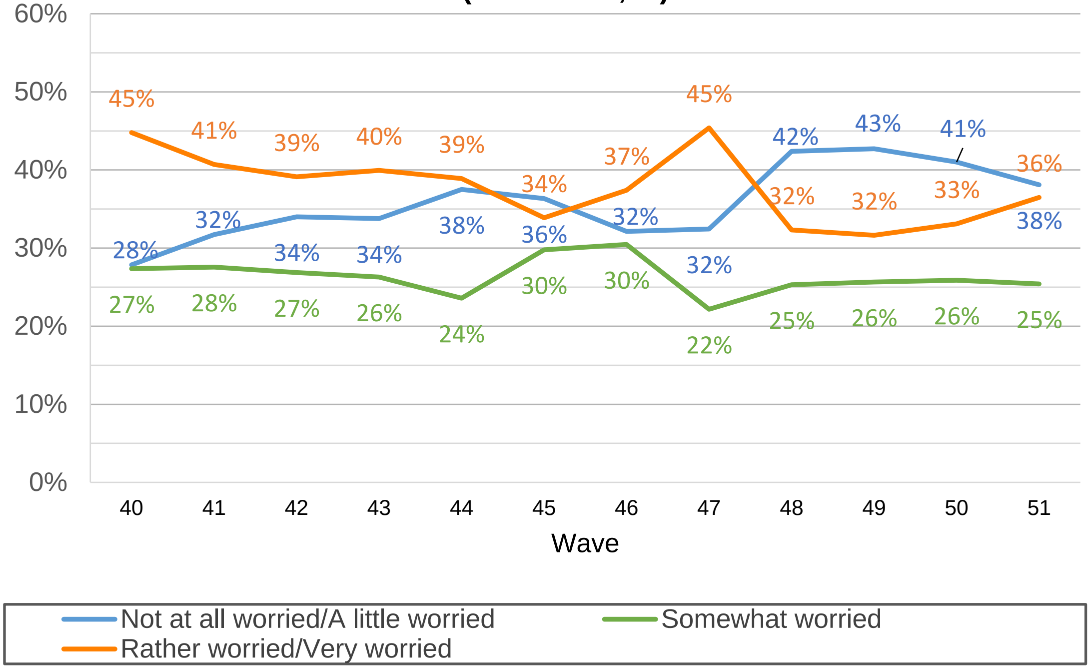


Figure 39b: In the next six months, how worried are you that you or your family members will be infected by Covid-19 (W40 - W51, %)



The proportion of respondents who were rather or very worried that the number of community infections will rise again was around 30 to 40 per cent during the early and last few waves of the study. The proportion increased between W25 (22 April 2021 – 28 April 2021) to W47 (14 February 2022 – 22 February 2022), when there were stricter safe management measures and higher case numbers since Phase 2 Heightened Alert (P2HA) till the end of the Omicron wave. The proportion increased from 44 per cent in W25 (22 April 2021 – 28 April 2021) to 57 per cent in W27 (17 May 2021 – 27 May 2021), which marked the start of the P2HA. The proportion then fell to 39 per cent in W33 (7 August 2021 – 19 August 2021) when P2HA rules were relaxed before increasing to 61 per cent in W37 (22 September 2021 – 29 September 2021) as case numbers rose and Singapore entered the Stabilisation Phase with stricter measures. The proportion then fell in subsequent waves but increased to 46 per cent in W47

(14 February 2022 – 22 February 2022) as cases numbers rose in Singapore. A fall in proportion of those who were rather or very worried soon followed as case numbers fell. However, the proportion increased to 35 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022), suggesting potential rising concerns of a new wave.

Figure 40a: In the next six months, how worried are you that the number of community infections will rise again (Overall, W8 - W51, %)

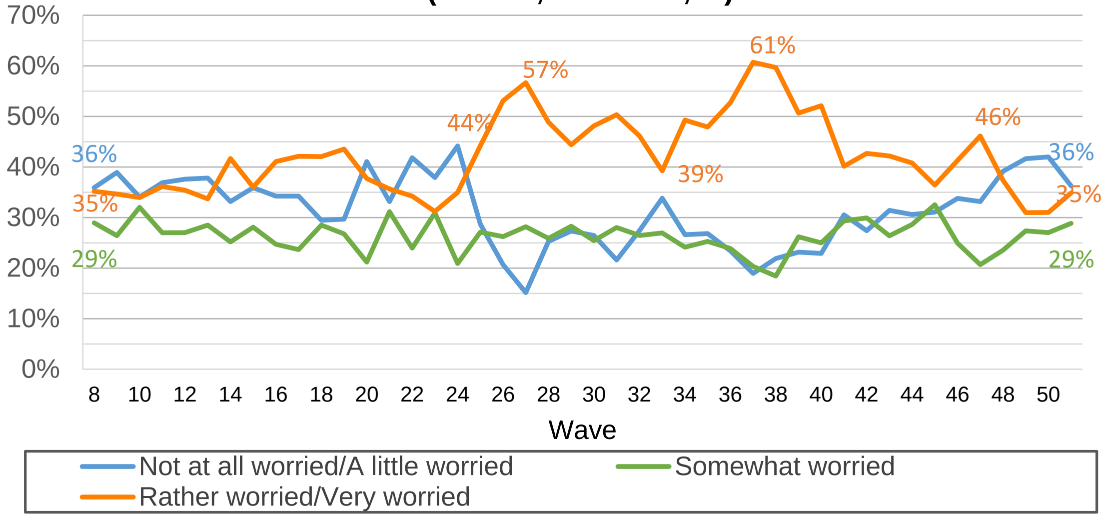
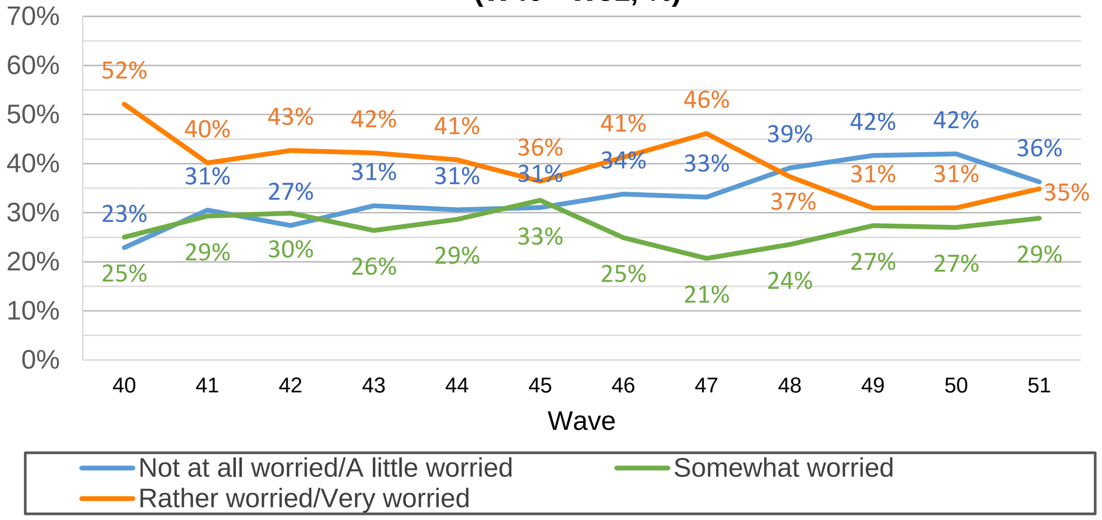


Figure 40b: In the next six months, how worried are you that the number of community infections will rise again (W40 - W51, %)



A significant proportion of respondents continue to be concerned that there might be a second circuit breaker. While the government has mentioned that a second circuit breaker is unlikely as a measure to deal with increased number of cases, and it was not exercised even with the high number of cases that came with the Delta wave, the fact that it remains an option has possibly resulted in some of these concerns.

The proportion of respondents who were rather or very worried that Singapore will enter a second Circuit Breaker (CB) in W1 (21 April 2020 – 23 April 2020) was 36 per cent and fell to 33 per cent in W51 (31 May 2022 – 13 June 2022). From W25 (22 April 2021 – 28 April 2021) to W39 (15 October 2021 – 27 October 2021), the proportion of respondents who were rather or very worried was more than the proportion of respondents who were not at all/ a little worried. The proportion increased from 40 per cent in W25 (22 April 2021 – 28 April 2021) to 51 per cent in W27 (17 May 2021 – 27 May 2021), when Phase 2 Heightened Alert (P2HA) started as the number of COVID positive cases climbed. The proportion then fell in subsequent waves to 36 per cent in W33 (7 August 2021 – 19 August 2021) as cases fell and the P2HA rules were relaxed. The proportion then rose to 39 per cent in W40 (28 October 2021 – 1 November 2021) during the extension of the Stabilisation Phase as cases rose. The proportion then fell in subsequent waves and more respondents were not at all/ a little worried. Even as cases rose during the Omicron wave, further restrictions were not imposed, which may have given confidence to the respondents that it would be unlikely that we would enter into a second CB.

Figure 41a: In the next six months, how worried are you that Singapore will enter into a second Circuit Breaker (Overall, W8 - W51, %)

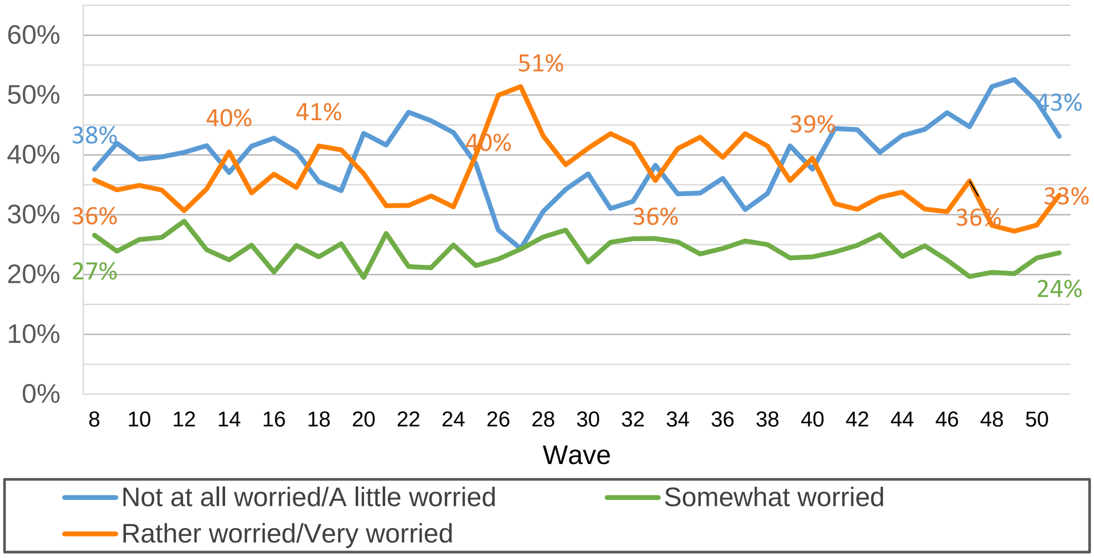
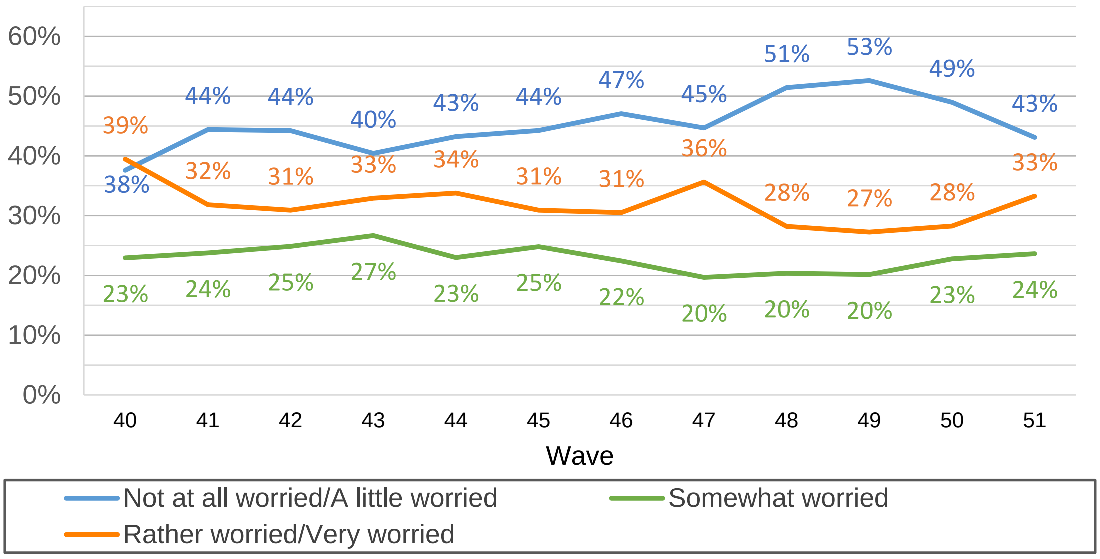


Figure 41b: In the next six months, how worried are you that Singapore will enter into a second Circuit Breaker (W40 - W51, %)



5. MOVING FORWARD: RENEWED FOCUS AND LESSONS LEARNT

After more than two years of fighting against the pandemic, the COVID-19 situation has stabilised in Singapore. While new strains of the COVID-19 virus may emerge from time to time, Singapore has had more experience in dealing with the pandemic. As Singapore moves on from the pandemic from a position of strength, it is timely to reflect and consider how the nation can move forward.

5.1 Renewed focus for Singapore in post-pandemic times

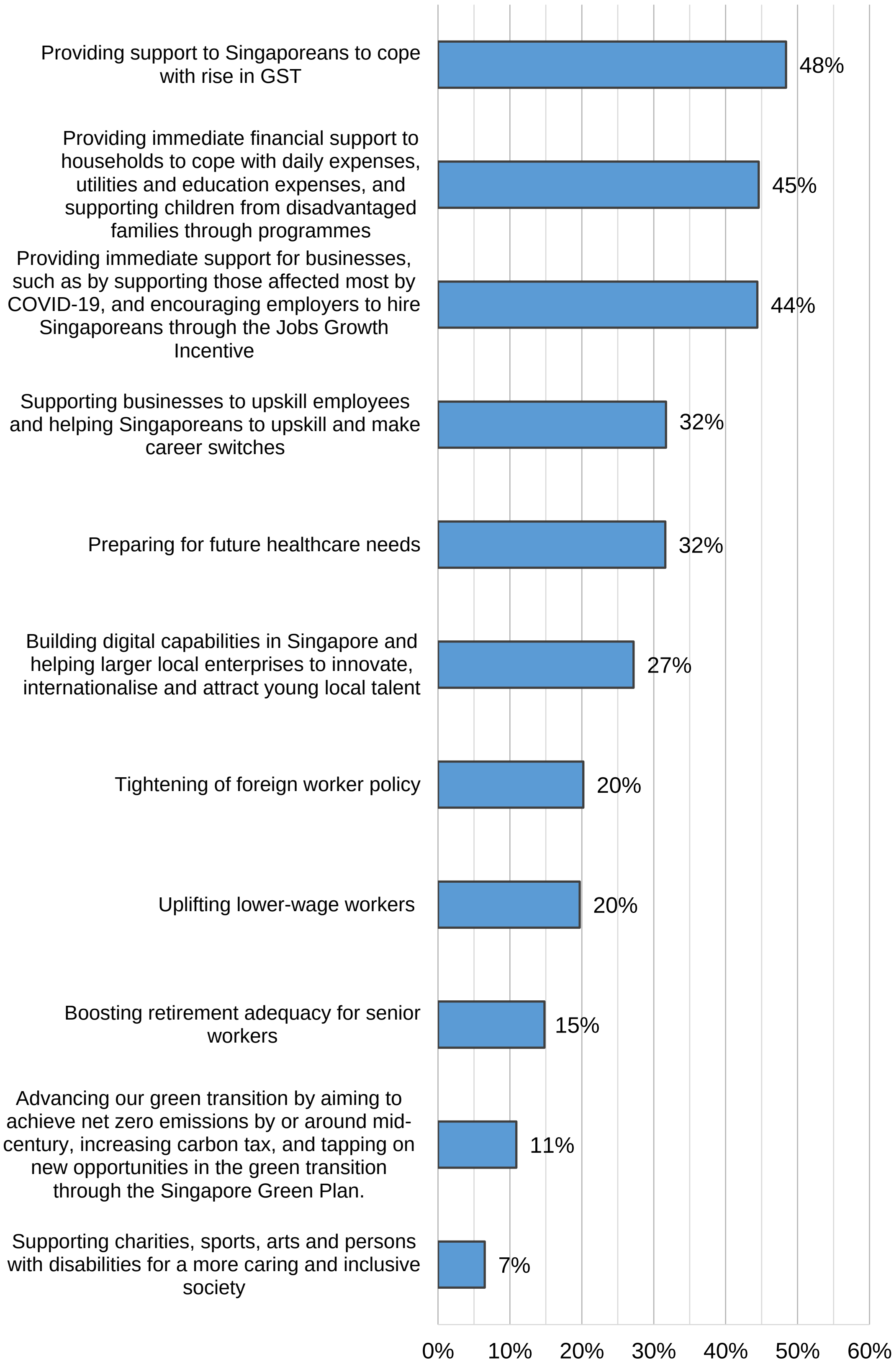
Singapore’s response to the pandemic has primarily focused on safeguarding lives and livelihoods. With the lifting of most safe management measures, we asked respondents from W48 till W51 what they thought should be the top three areas Singapore should focus on as we move forward post-pandemic. There were eleven areas which respondents could pick from.

Based on the results, the top three areas which respondents felt were most important for Singapore to focus on as we move forward post-pandemic were providing support to Singaporeans to cope with rise in GST (48 per cent), providing immediate financial support to households to cope with daily expenses, utilities and education expenses, and supporting children from disadvantaged families through programmes (45 per cent) and providing immediate support for businesses, such as by supporting those affected most by COVID-19, and encouraging employers to hire Singaporeans through the Job Growth Incentive (44 per cent).

This possibly reflects that Singaporeans believe that meeting immediate livelihood needs were most pressing rather than the longer-term horizon concerns such as the Green Plan or a more inclusive society. At the top of citizens' minds was the GST, which has been announced to be raised from 7% to 8% in 2023 and from 8% to 9% in 2024 (Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore, 2022). With the Ukraine war and supply chain disruptions pushing global inflation up, prices are expected to rise. Even without the current factors pushing inflation upwards, raising GST has always been a contentious issue with some citizens concerned that they would not be able to cope with higher prices. As such, almost half of the respondents have identified providing support to Singaporeans to cope with the rise in GST as one of the top three areas for Singapore to focus on.

The next two areas which respondents believed that Singapore should focus on pertain to immediate support for households and businesses. With the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the livelihood of some families, especially those in the lower income segment, as well as the viability of some businesses such as those particularly dependent on tourism, respondents hoped for more support to households and businesses. In addition, respondents may also have been concerned with possible job losses given a looming recession, and hope for employers to support the hire of Singaporeans through schemes such as the Jobs Growth Incentive. It is probably a relief to most that the government has decided to extend the Jobs Growth Incentive to March 2023 (Tang, 2022).

Figure 42: Of the following, which do you think are the top three areas which are most important for Singapore to focus on as we move forward post-pandemic? (W48 - W51, %)



5.2 Lessons learnt from the pandemic

Over a period of four waves, we asked respondents to engage in a free-response question on what they felt were the important lessons that the nation should learn and improve on, based on the pandemic. We then conducted a thematic analysis of respondents' free responses, in order to identify the top 10 more commonly identified lessons by respondents. Respondents were then asked over the next four waves to choose, among the list of 10 lessons generated, the top three lessons that they believed the nation should learn and improve on.

The list of lessons presented to respondents for their ranking are in a randomised order so as to reduce order effects. In the following table, we present the list of lessons learnt that can be grouped according to the following three themes:

Table 3: List of lessons learnt

Theme	Lessons Learnt
National Values	Citizens should remain united to move forward in a crisis
	A country should have resilience, perseverance and vigilance in order to overcome crises
	A nation should be agile and adaptable to changes

	The nation should be prepared for an unexpected crisis and never be complacent
Institutional Resilience	Singapore should have strong finances, healthcare and other systems in place to deal with the next crisis
	Singapore should be self-sufficient in key areas such as in food security and medical supplies, and ensure essential services and supplies are always available
	Policies should be communicated effectively to the public
Social Resilience	Citizens should value harmony and stand against discrimination
	Citizens should be more compassionate, caring and gracious towards one another
	Citizens should be socially responsible such as by wearing masks, having good hygiene, observing rules and taking vaccinations

Respondents felt that the top three lessons that Singapore should learn from the pandemic and improve on were that Singapore should be self-sufficient in key areas and ensure that essential services and supplies are always available (45 per cent), that Singapore should have strong finances, healthcare and other systems in place to deal with the next crisis (44 per cent), and that the nation should be prepared for an unexpected crisis and never be complacent (38 per cent).

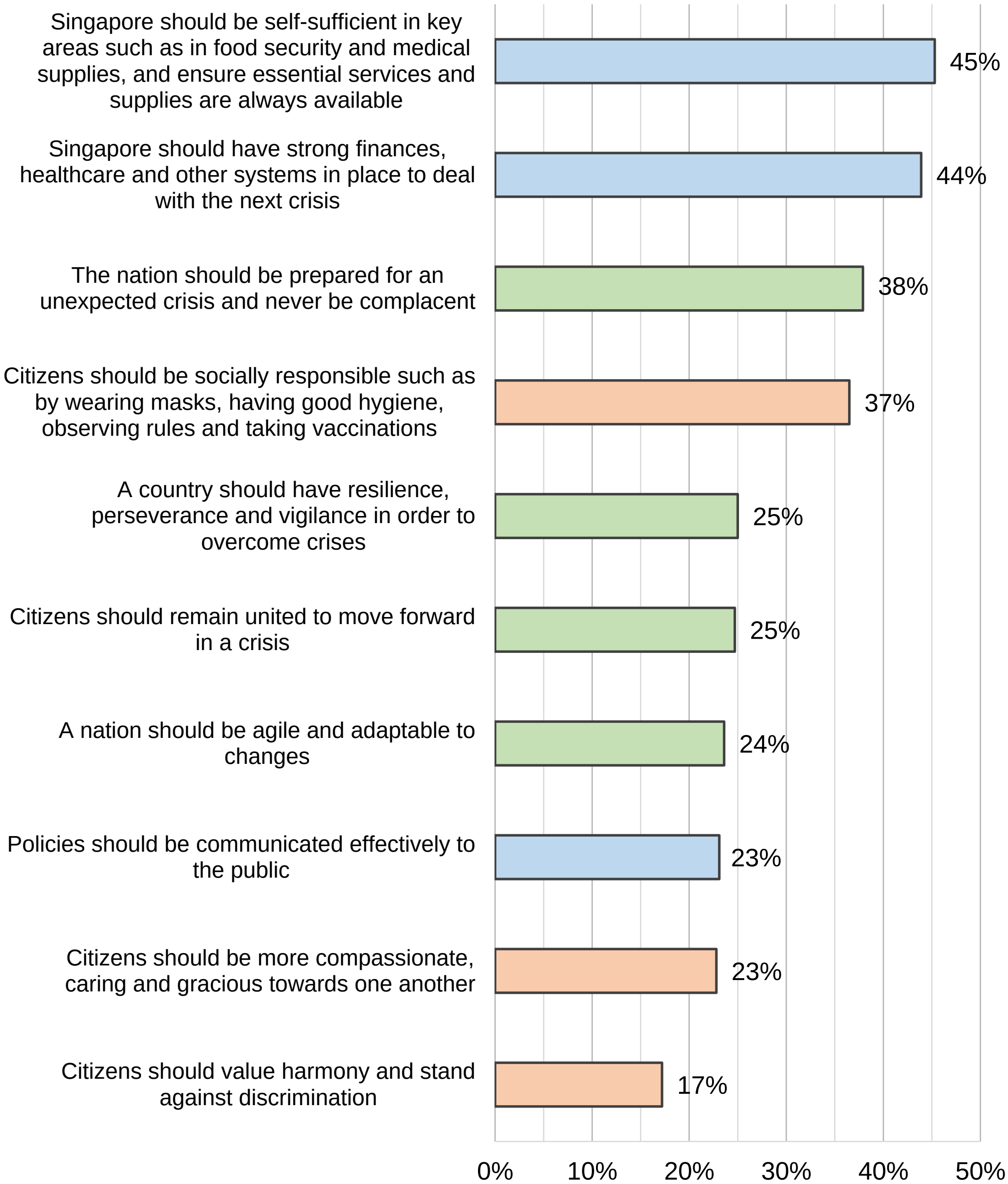
In general, respondents chose more pragmatic lessons on what the nation should learn and improve on. The top two lessons on self-sufficiency and having strong systems points to Singaporeans' preference for having better institutional resilience. These lessons were probably salient to respondents given how Singapore coped with the pandemic. Thinking back to the year 2020 when the pandemic first started, countries worldwide were unprepared for the pandemic. Singapore had to quickly source for masks when the demand for masks surged. One would recall the long queues which lined up in front of supermarkets and pharmacies. With the formation of the multi-ministry taskforce (MMTF), the mask supplies were quickly brought into Singapore and citizens were able to get their masks, including free masks distributed by the government. Singaporeans also rushed to supermarkets whenever there was news about more restrictions, especially during the Circuit Breaker period in 2020. Supply chain disruptions during the pandemic would also delay such supplies from reaching our shores. While the government has reassured citizens that we had sufficient food supplies, some Singaporeans were still afraid and felt the need to stock up. Such experiences with food and medical supplies during the early stage of the pandemic were not unique to Singapore, yet it remains a distinct memory of the pandemic. Perhaps therefore, nearly half of our respondents have felt that being self-sufficient is important in order to avoid such a situation where we are overly dependent on other countries for key supplies.

Having strong finances, healthcare and other systems in place have proven key in Singapore's success in handling the pandemic. With Singapore's substantial financial reserves, the government has been able to roll out many programmes such as those dealing with immediate expenses, helping Singaporeans remain employed and helping businesses stay afloat. Unlike many countries, Singapore did not have to incur a debt in rolling out these support measures for citizens, and this has allowed Singapore to focus on other key areas after the pandemic recovery.

A good healthcare ecosystem, sufficient medical equipment, coupled with the foresight to secure promising vaccine candidates early has allowed Singapore to keep fatality rates low. Nonetheless, there were periods during the pandemic when there were concerns that the healthcare system could have been overwhelmed which would have detrimental to those who require immediate medical attention. Hence, it is not difficult to understand why nearly half of respondents believed that having good finances, healthcare and other systems in place was one of the key lessons for the nation.

Citizens also felt that the nation should be prepared for an unexpected crisis and never be complacent. After all, COVID-19 caught the world by surprise. Singapore’s experience with SARS back in 2003 and the protocols developed through that experience certainly assisted in how it dealt with COVID-19. Even then, the way COVID-19 panned out was different from the SARS outbreak and has been a stark reminder that pandemics can occur anytime and pose wide-ranging challenges; the nation must therefore always be prepared and not be complacent about the potentiality of these unexpected challenges.

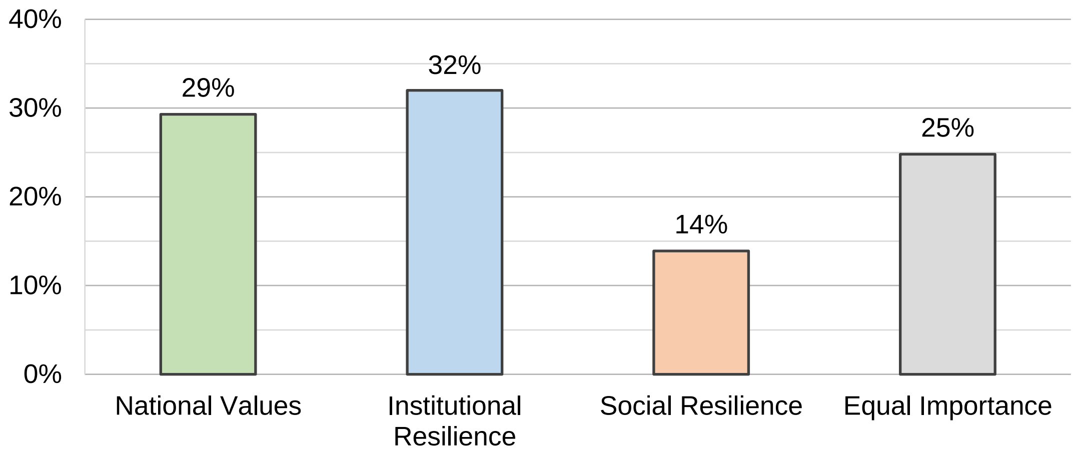
Figure 43: What do you think are the top three (3) lessons that the nation can learn and improve on? (W48 - W51, %)



**Colours in the bar chart corresponds to the themes listed in Table 3.*

We sought to provide a sense of how the selection of important lessons learnt differed across different demographic groups. First, all respondents were categorised based on the lesson themes that they have predominantly selected (i.e., defined by the selection of two or more lessons from the same theme). Those who selected one lesson from each theme were coded as categorised under “Equal Importance”. The following figure illustrates how the themes are distributed across our sample of respondents.

Figure 44: Lessons learnt - theme (W48 - W51, %)

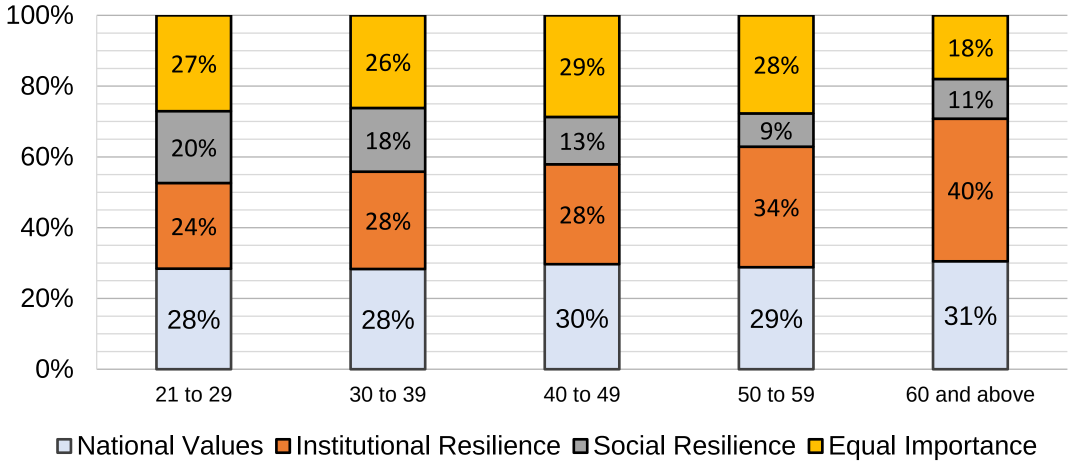


As shown in the figure, one third of the respondents (32 per cent) were categorised under institutional resilience. That is, these respondents have selected at least two lessons from that theme as the top 3 most important lessons to be learnt. Slightly less than three in 10 respondents were categorised under national values, and 14% of respondents were categorised under social resilience.

Next, we sought to identify the relationship between various demographic variables and the themes of the lessons learnt selected, as an illustration of how different demographic groups prioritised different lesson themes.

Most notably, age differences were significant between the groups, $\chi(12)=60.40$, $p < .001$. Lessons pertaining to institutional resilience were more likely to appeal to older respondents, while lessons pertaining to social resilience were more likely to appeal to younger respondents. Specifically, 34 to 40 per cent of respondents aged 50 and above selected lessons pertaining to institutional resilience, as compared to 24 per cent of those aged 21 to 29. Older respondents may be more practical, preferring lessons which reflect the importance of having good governance and policies to overcome any crises. It may also be reflective of the times they grew up in, when there was a survivalist mentality. On the other hand, 18 to 20 per cent of respondents aged between 21 to 39 selected lessons pertaining to social resilience, as compared to 9 to 11 per cent of those who were aged 50 and above. Younger respondents may be more attuned to social issues as compared to older respondents, given that younger respondents grew up in a time when there was stability in governance and more focus on working together with citizens to enhance social cohesion. Hence, younger respondents may be more interested in how Singapore citizens should improve on being more inclusive and caring.

Figure 45: Lessons learnt - theme, by age group (W48 - W51, %)



No significant differences were found between the other demographic variables, such as education, salary and whether they lived with vulnerable persons.

6. TRUST IN LEADERSHIP AND RECOVERY

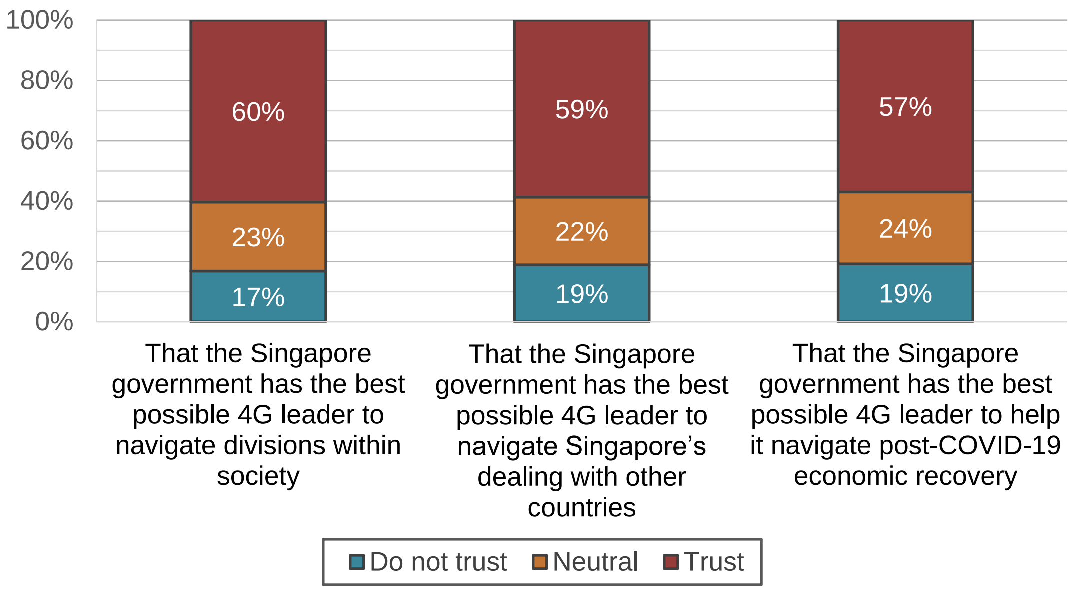
The COVID-19 outbreak was also a test of governance, and especially important to Singapore at the moment given our leadership transition phase. We were hence interested to see if respondents trusted the government's leadership to bring Singapore forward through this pandemic.

6.1 Trust in 4G Leader

The COVID-19 pandemic came during the period where succession plans for Singapore's fourth generation leader was on the minds of many Singaporeans. In April 2022, PM Lee Hsien Loong announced that now Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Lawrence Wong would lead the People's Action Party (PAP)'s fourth generation (4G) team. DPM Lawrence Wong has been a prominent figure in the 4G team, as the co-chair of the MMTF who led Singapore's fight against the pandemic. We thus asked respondents, after this announcement was made, whether they trusted that the Singapore government has the best possible 4G leader.

Around six in 10 (57 to 60 per cent) trusted that the Singapore Government has the best possible 4G leader to navigate divisions within the society, to navigate Singapore's dealing with other countries and to help it navigate post-COVID-19 economic recovery.

Figure 46: In light of the impact of COVID-19, do you trust that ... (W50 - W51, %)



We constructed a composite scale using these three variables to measure respondents' general level of trust that the Singapore government has the best possible 4G leader[10]. The scale was then recoded into a binary variable, to group respondents into those who had high trust and those who had low trust. A binary logistic regression was then conducted to examine the variables that best predicted respondents who had higher trust that the government has the best possible 4G leader. The outcome variable and the list of predictor variables used for this analysis are listed in Table 4.

[10] See Annex A for variables used in the scale on 4G leader.

Table 4: List of predictor variables

Outcome variable: Trust that the Singapore government has the best possible 4G leader (measured using three variables, recoded into 0 = Low trust, 1 = High trust, see Annex A)	
Demographic predictor variables	**Description**
Age	• 21 to 29 • 30 to 39 • 40 to 49 • 50 to 59 • 60 and above
Education level	• Secondary and below • Post-secondary • Degree and above
Salary	• Below $3,000 • $3,000 to $5,999 • $5,999 and above
Household members	• Not living with vulnerable persons • Living with vulnerable persons
Government satisfaction	• Composite scale of a series of variables measuring respondents' level of satisfaction with how the government has managed the COVID-19 pandemic • A higher score would mean that the respondent has greater satisfaction • See Annex A for full list of variables
Worry over rise in cost of living	• Composite scale of a series of variables measuring respondents' worry over rising prices and GST • A higher score would mean that the respondent has greater worry • See Annex A for full list of variables
Receptiveness towards endemic living	• Composite scale of a series of variables measuring respondents' attitudes towards endemic living • A higher score would mean that the respondent is more receptive towards endemic living • See Annex A for full list of variables

Higher educated respondents, those with higher levels of government satisfaction with how the pandemic was handled and had a greater receptiveness towards endemic living were more likely to trust that the Singapore government has the best possible 4G leader. On the other hand, respondents who worry over the rise in cost of living were less likely to be trust that the government has the best possible 4G leader.

The results indicated that respondents who were satisfied with the government's handling of the pandemic, including its decision to pursue the course of endemic living, were more trusting of DPM Wong's future leadership. In particular, the government's approach, which prioritised scientific management of the pandemic, may have also appealed to the better educated.

Nonetheless the results also show that for those who are more concerned about cost of living issues, their ability to trust DPM as the best possible leader may be influenced by how well they see their financial woes resolved.

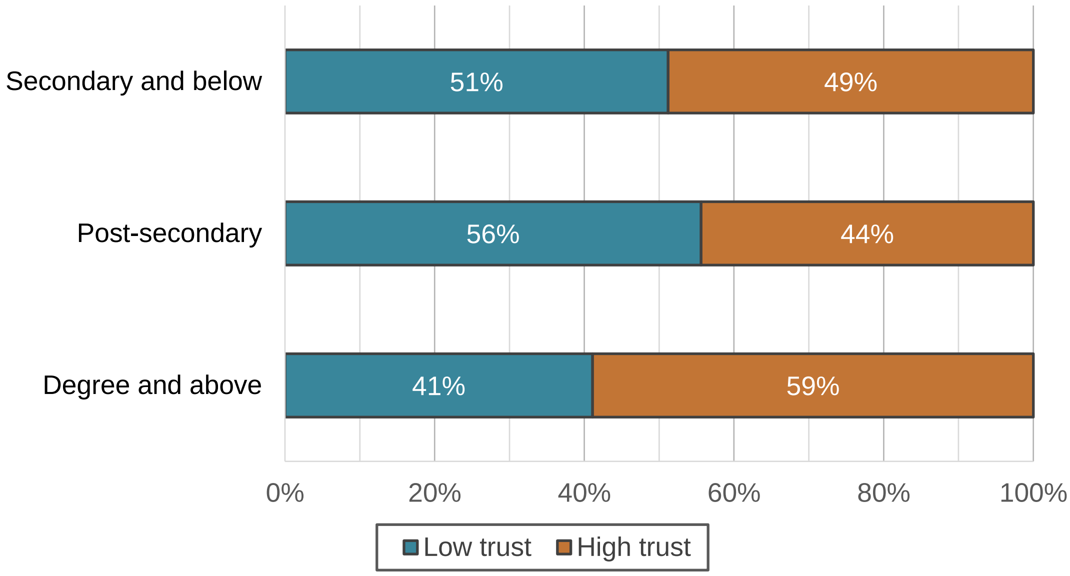
Table 5: Regression analysis on trust that Singapore government has the best possible 4G leader

Predictor variables	Coefficient	Standard error	p-value	Odds Ratio
Age	-.066	.078	.397	.936
Education	.375	.158	.018	1.456
Salary	-.015	.132	.911	.985
Household members	-.005	.183	.977	.995
Government satisfaction	1.343	.119	<.001	3.832
Worry over rise in cost of living	-.316	.095	<.001	.729
Receptiveness towards endemic living	.527	.079	<.001	1.694
Constant	-9.160	.913	<.001	.000

To illustrate the results from the regression, we conducted the following cross tabulations:

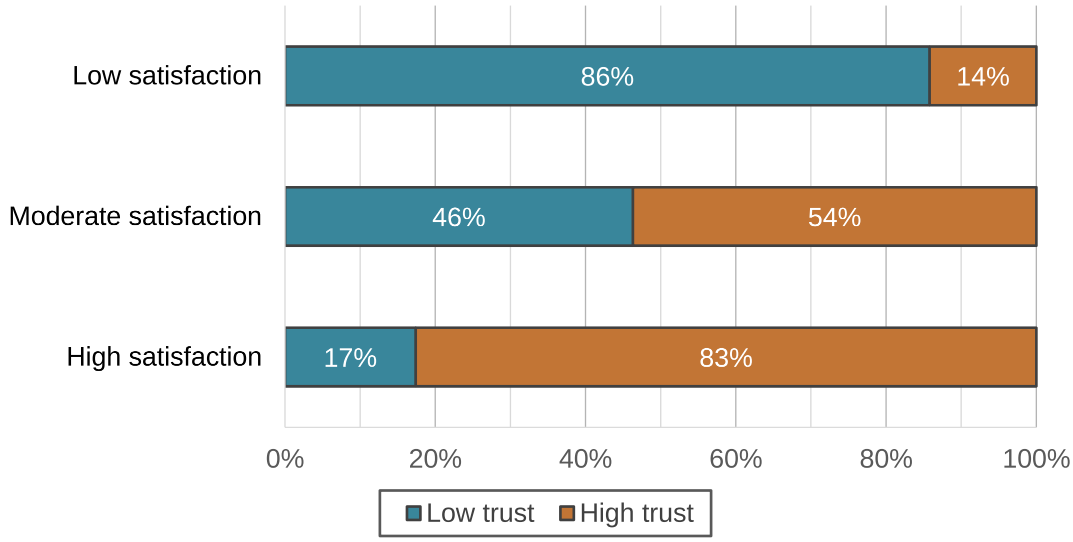
Around 59 per cent of those who had a degree and above had greater trust that the Singapore government has the best possible 4G leader, as compared to 44 per cent to 49 per cent of those without a degree.

Figure 47: Trust that the Singapore government has the best possible 4G leader, by education group (W50 - W51, %)



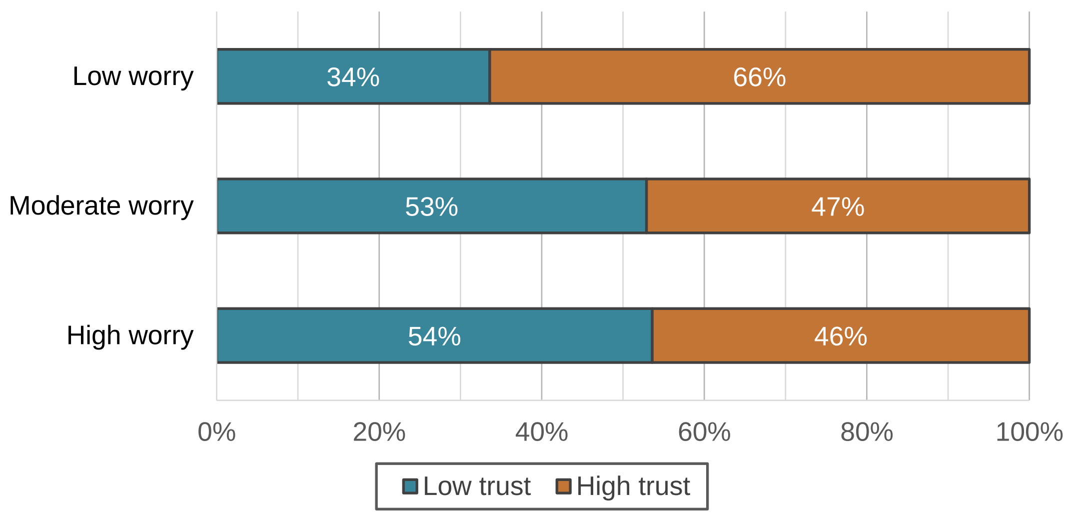
Around 83 per cent of those who had high satisfaction in how the government has handled the pandemic had greater trust that the government has the best possible 4G leader, as compared to 14 per cent of those who had low government satisfaction and 54 per cent of those who had moderate government satisfaction.

Figure 48: Trust that the Singapore government has the best possible 4G leader, by level of government satisfaction (W50 - W51, %)



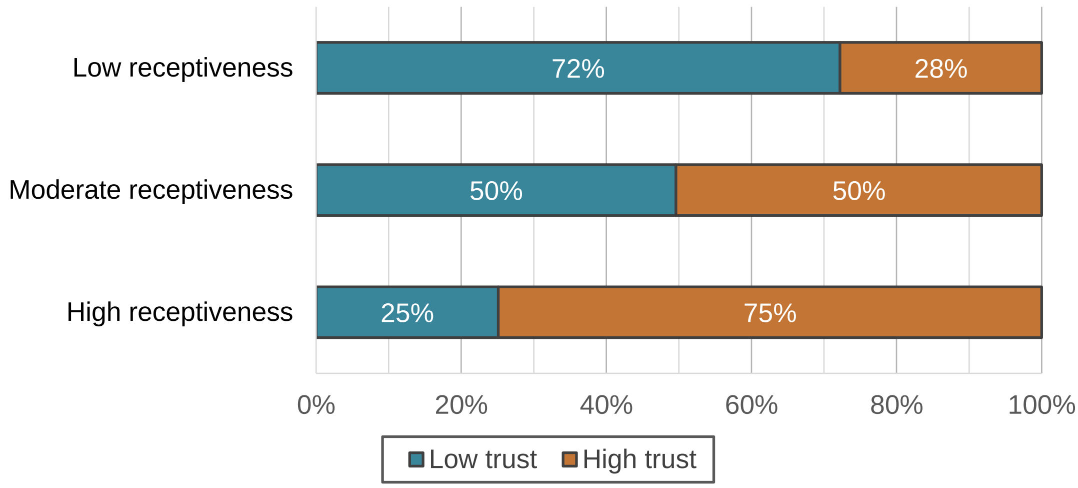
Around 66 per cent of those who had low worry over the rise in cost of living as a result of the increase in prices of goods and GST had higher trust that the government has the best possible 4G leader, as compared to 46 per cent to 47 per cent of those who had higher levels of worry.

Figure 49: Trust that the Singapore government has the best possible 4G leader, by level of worry over rise in cost of living (W50 - W51, %)



Around 75 per cent of those who had a higher receptiveness towards endemic living had higher trust that the Singapore government has the best possible 4G leader, as compared to 28 per cent of those with low receptiveness towards endemic living.

Figure 50: Trust that the Singapore government has the best possible 4G leader, by receptiveness towards endemic living (W50 - W51, %)



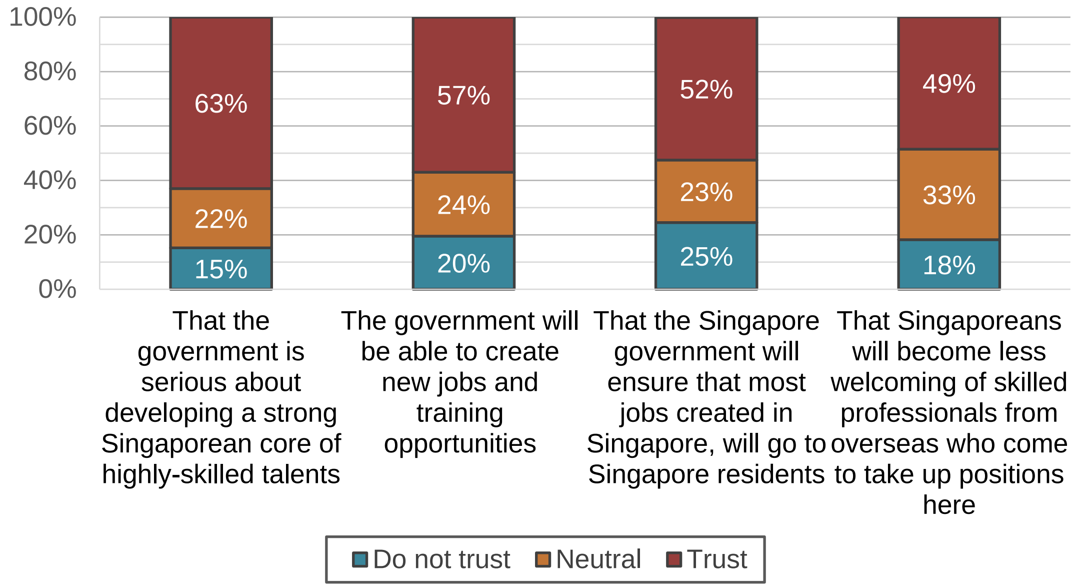
6.2 Trust in Singapore's recovery and government

As Singapore moves forward post-pandemic, we also asked respondents if they had trust in Singapore's recovery and government in light of the impact of COVID-19.

On the issue on jobs, more than half trusted that the government is serious about developing a strong Singaporean core of highly-skilled talents (63 per cent), will be able to create new jobs and training opportunities (57 per cent), and will ensure that most jobs created in Singapore will go to Singapore residents (52 per cent). On the other hand, about 49 per cent felt that

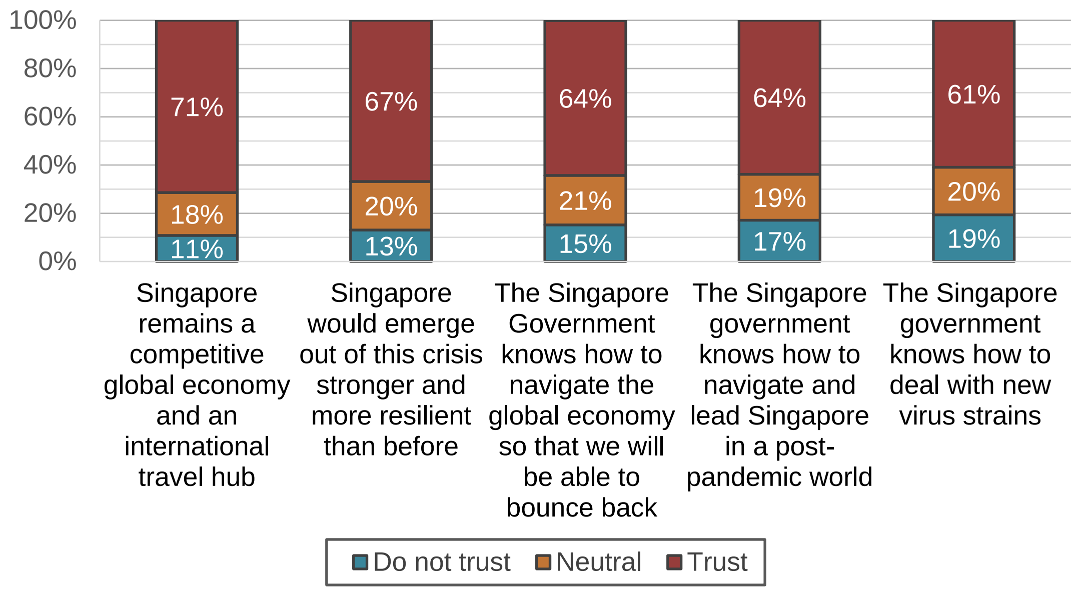
Singaporeans will become less welcoming of skilled professionals from overseas who work here, a view that hopefully will not be realised given the importance of global talent to the Singaporean economy.

Figure 51: In light of the impact of COVID-19, do you trust that ... (W48 - W51, %)



Respondents also had faith in Singapore's governance and economy. A majority trusted that Singapore would remain economically competitive (71 per cent) and that Singapore would emerge out of this crisis stronger and more resilient than before (67 per cent). A large proportion also trusted that the Singapore Government knows how to navigate the global economy so that we will be able to bounce back (64 per cent), that the Singapore Government knows how to navigate and lead Singapore in a post-pandemic world (64 per cent), and that the Singapore Government knows how to deal with new virus strains (61 per cent).

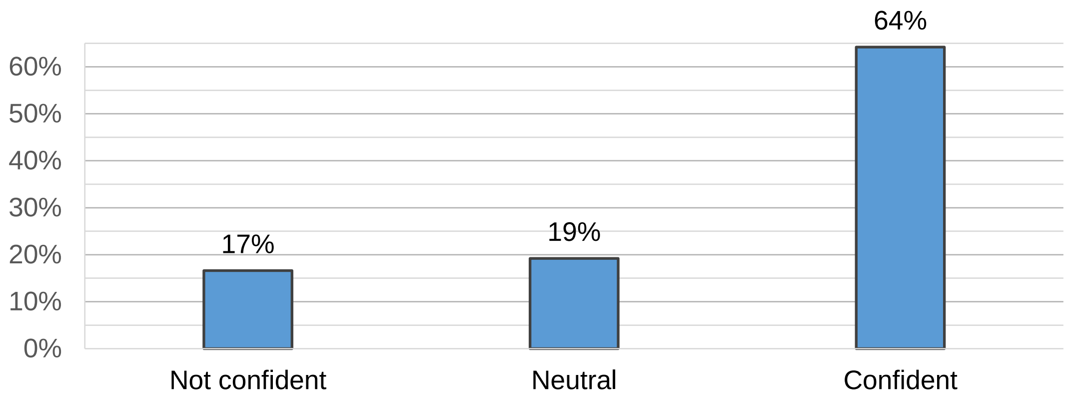
Figure 52: In light of the impact of COVID-19, do you trust that ... (W48 - W51, %)



6.3 Confidence for the next pandemic

Around 64 per cent were confident that Singapore is well-prepared to face the next pandemic.

Figure 53: Based on Singapore's performance in this pandemic, I am confident that Singapore is well-prepared to face the next pandemic. (Wave 48-51, %)



The response to this question was then recoded to separate those who were confident and those who did not feel confident/felt neutral that Singapore is well-prepared to face the next pandemic. A binary logistic regression was conducted to examine the variables that best predict respondents who were confident that

Singapore is well-prepared to face the next pandemic based on Singapore's performance in this pandemic. The outcome variable and the list of predictor variables used for this analysis are listed in Table 6.

Table 6: List of predictor variables

Outcome variable: **Based on Singapore's performance in this pandemic, I am confident that Singapore is well-prepared to face the next pandemic. (0 = did not feel confident/neutral, 1 = confident)**	
Demographic predictor variables	**Description**
Age	• 21 to 29 • 30 to 39 • 40 to 49 • 50 to 59 • 60 and above
Education level	• Secondary and below • Post-secondary • Degree and above
Salary	• Below $3,000 • $3,000 to $5,999 • $5,999 and above
Household members	• Not living with vulnerable persons • Living with vulnerable persons
Confidence in engaging in activities in new normal while virus is in our midst	• Composite scale of a series of variables measuring respondents' level of confidence in carrying out activities in the new normal while the virus is still in our midst • A higher score would mean that the respondent has greater confidence • See Annex A for full list of variables
Government satisfaction	• Composite scale of a series of variables measuring respondents' level of satisfaction with how the government has managed the COVID-19 pandemic • Included as a co-variate* • See Annex A for full list of variables
Psychological well-being	• Composite scale of a series of variables measuring respondents' level of psychological well-being represented by their recent experiences • A higher score would mean that the respondent has better psychological well-being • See Annex A for full list of variables
How do you think the job market will be in the next six months to come?	• Likert scale from 1 "Very bad" to 7 "Much better"

Results revealed that respondents who had better psychological well-being and who perceived the job market outlook to be more positive were more likely to have confidence that Singapore is well-prepared to face the next pandemic.

Indeed, those who have effectively coped with this crisis should be in a better position to tackle similar crises in the future. An improvement in the labour situation should also make respondents feel more confident that their livelihoods can be protected in the event of another pandemic in the future.

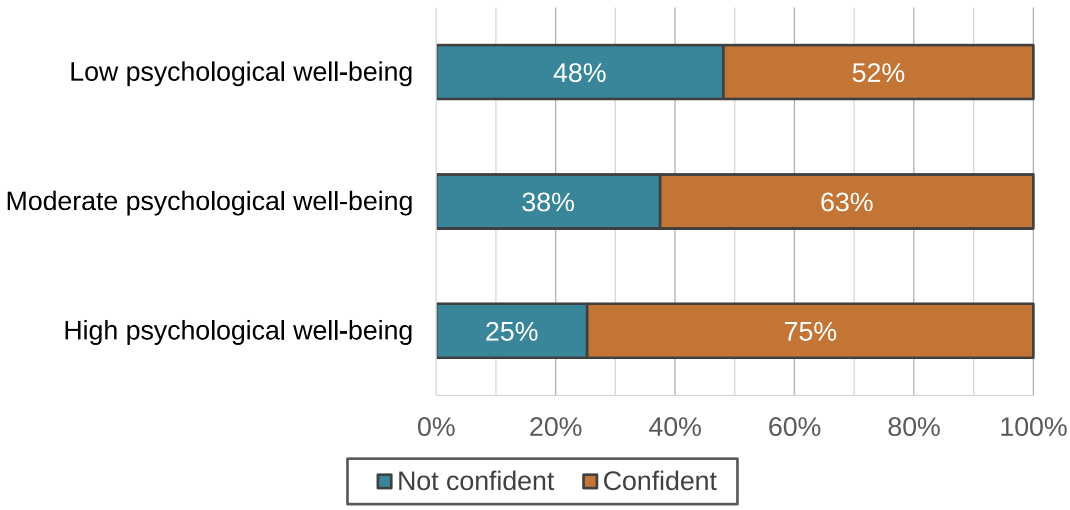
Table 7: Regression analysis on confidence that Singapore is well-prepared to face the next pandemic

Predictor variables	Coefficient	Standard error	p-value	Odds Ratio
Age	.008	.058	.883	1.009
Education	.148	.108	.172	1.160
Salary	.106	.092	.249	1.112
Household members	-.041	.131	.754	.960
Confidence in engaging in activities in new normal while virus is in our midst	.047	.078	.544	1.048
Government satisfaction	1.376	.084	<.001	3.960
Psychological well-being	.304	.063	<.001	1.355
How do you think the job market will be in the next six months to come?	.475	.080	<.001	1.608
Constant	-9.110	.627	<.001	.000

To illustrate the results from the regression, we conducted the following cross tabulations:

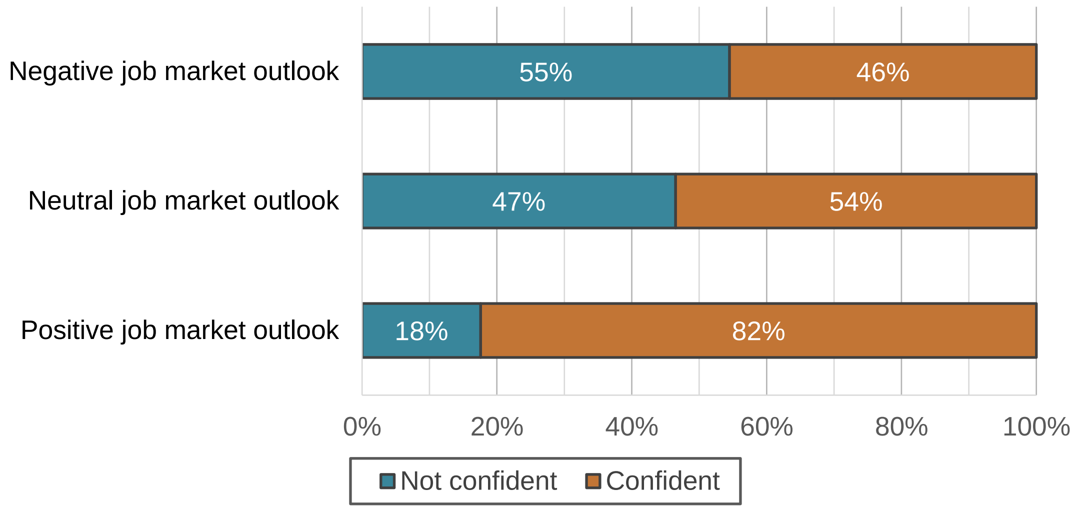
Around 75 per cent of those who had higher psychological well-being felt confident that Singapore is well-prepared to face the next pandemic, as compared to 52 per cent of those who had lower psychological well-being.

Figure 54: Based on Singapore's performance in this pandemic, I am confident that Singapore is well-prepared to face the next pandemic , by level of psychological well-being (W48 - W51, %)



Around 82 per cent of those who perceived the job market outlook to be positive felt confident that Singapore is well-prepared to face the next pandemic, as compared to 46 per cent of those who perceived the job market outlook negatively.

Figure 55: Based on Singapore's performance in this pandemic, I am confident that Singapore is well-prepared to face the next pandemic , by perception of job market outlook (W48 - W51, %)



7. HABITS

The pandemic has upended the way we work and play. Many have developed new habits during the pandemic. Cooking and exercise vlogs became more prevalent, especially during the early days of the pandemic. The importance of personal hygiene has also been repeatedly emphasised during the pandemic to reduce possible infections. With restrictions on movement to curb COVID-19 case numbers, there has also been a boom in online shopping which provides both convenience and protection during the pandemic. Another area of focus during the pandemic was on mental health. Safeguarding mental health had gained greater traction in public discourse during the past two years, as more people raised their concerns about how the pandemic and the accompanying restrictions were affecting their mental well-being.

We asked respondents what habits they picked up during the pandemic out of seventeen possible habits. The more popular habits respondents picked up during the pandemic were cooking at home frequently (38 per cent), exercising regularly (36 per cent), prioritising personal hygiene (32 per cent) and eating healthily (29 per cent). These habits seem to point towards an emphasis on taking ownership of one's health.

We also asked respondents if they would continue with their new-formed habits after the pandemic. Majority of the respondents indicated that they would continue with these habits after the pandemic. Around 91 per cent would continue cooking at home frequently after the pandemic; 95 per cent would continue exercising regularly and 98 per cent would continue prioritising personal hygiene after the pandemic.

Figure 56: Top habits picked up during the COVID-19 pandemic (W44 - W47, %)

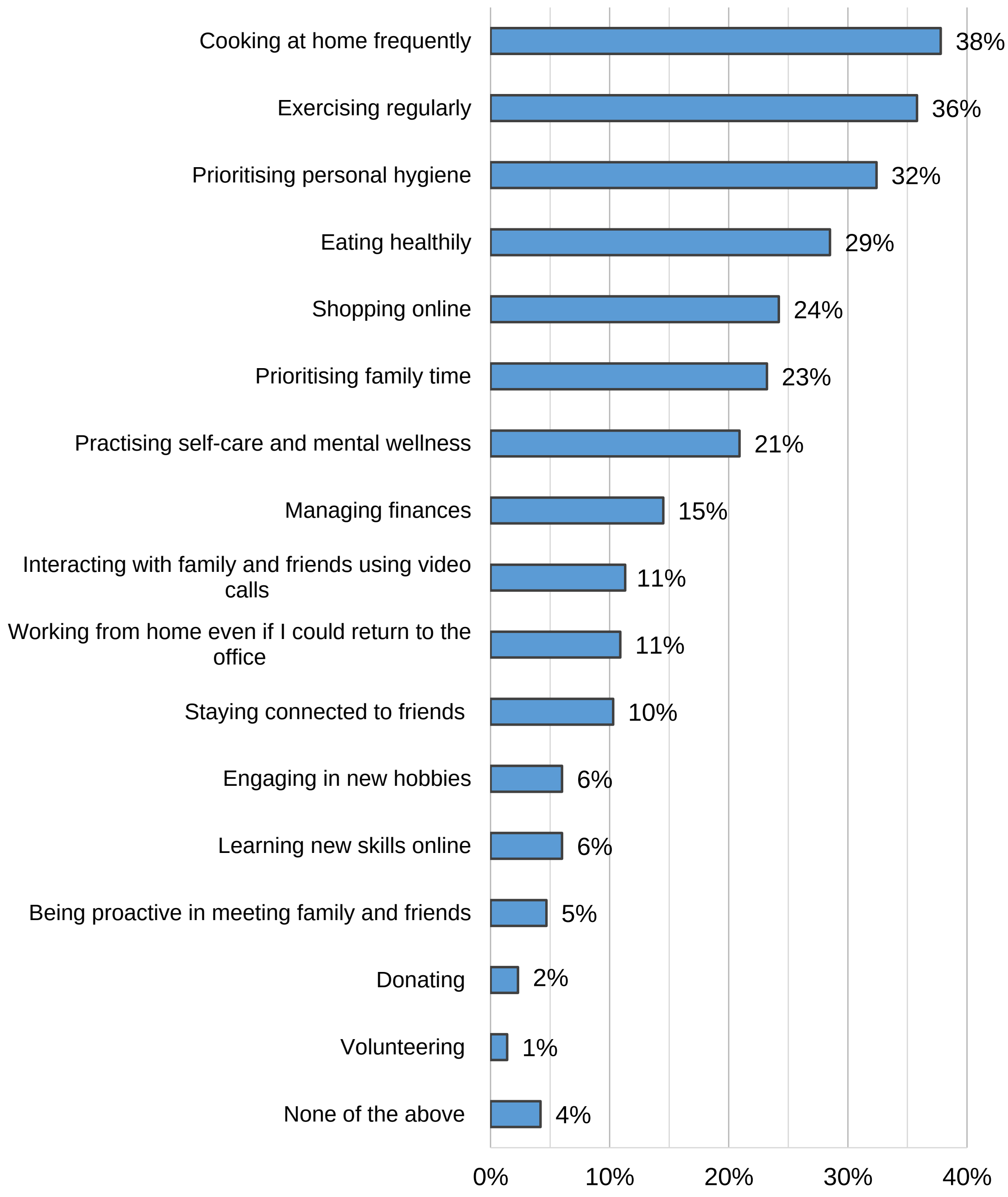
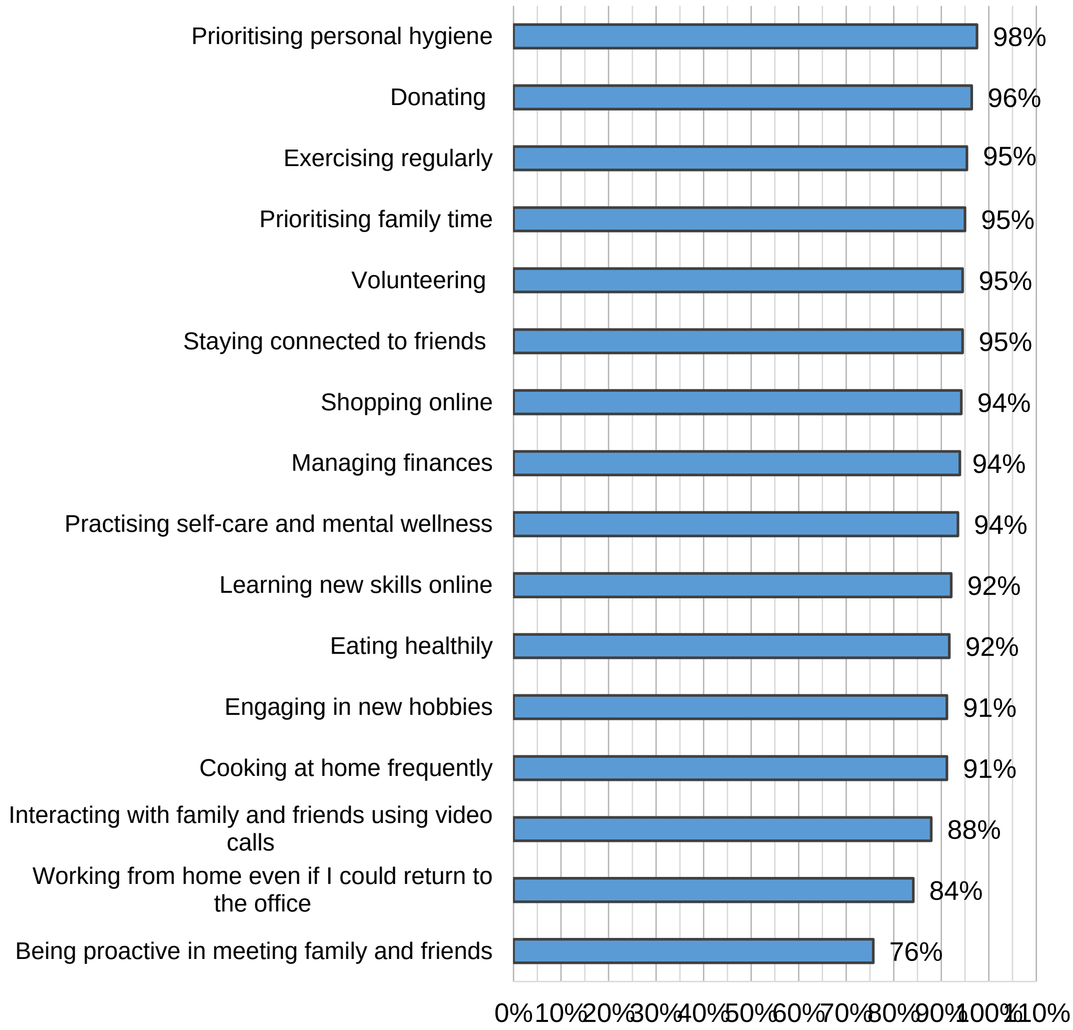


Figure 57: Likelihood of continuing with habits after pandemic (Among people whom had the habit, W44 - W47, %)



8. BEHAVIOURS IN THE NEW NORMAL

With the greater control over the COVID-19 situation and high vaccination rates, safe management measures have been eased. Many behaviours which were commonplace during the initial stages of the pandemic such as mask wearing outdoors are no longer needed. We thus asked respondents about their openness to various behaviours.

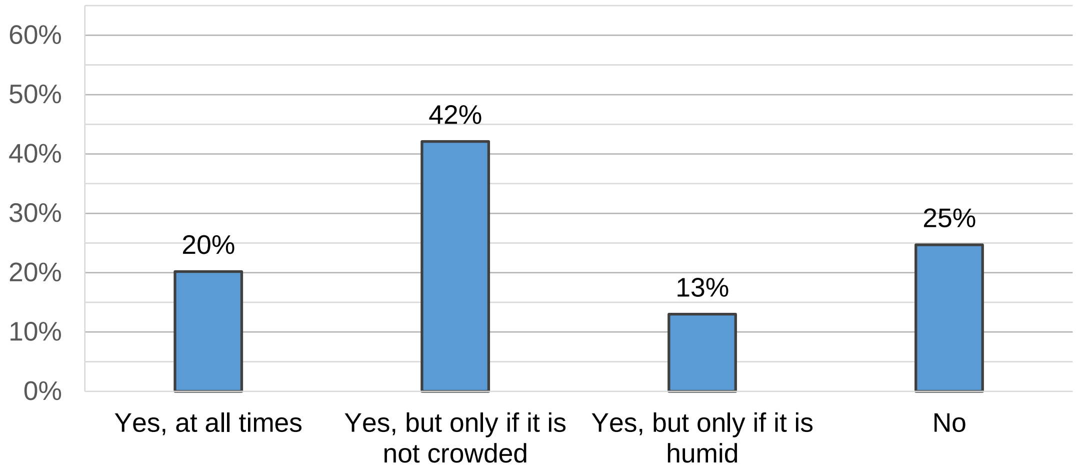
Only about one-quarter would not remove their masks outdoors at all times, even if it was not humid or crowded. Many also did not find it inconvenient to continue with certain measures such as regular testing. Nearly half were planning to travel for leisure in the next six months.

A return to normalcy has been made possible with the high vaccination rates in the population, and the belief that vaccination helps to prevent one from falling seriously ill.

8.1 Continuing with measures in daily life

As the Omicron wave subsided, regulations on mask wearing were eased to allow masks to be removed when outdoors. We asked respondents if they would remove their masks when outdoors since it was no longer mandatory. Nearly three-quarters (75 per cent) would remove their masks outdoors. While 20 per cent would remove their mask outdoors at all times, 42 per cent would remove it only if it was not crowded while 13 per cent would only remove it if it was humid.

Figure 58: Given that wearing masks when outdoors is no longer mandatory, would you remove your mask when outdoors? (Wave 49-51, %)



Given that case numbers have been under control after the Omicron wave, we wondered if people have started to grow weary about the measures put in place to protect the population against the virus. We asked respondents if they felt some of these measures were inconvenient.

About half did not find it inconvenient at all or only a little inconvenient to wear mask in indoor spaces, even when at the workplace (56 per cent) and keeping contact tracing apps active in the phone's background/bringing contact tracing device out (55 per cent). Around 40 per cent of employed and self-employed individuals did not find it inconvenient or only a little inconvenient to take regular ART as part of the workplace safe management measures. It is evident that quite a number of respondents have gotten used to these measures and are still receptive to carrying on with them in order to protect the population and themselves from the virus.

Figure 59: How much of an inconvenience do you find these measures in the new normal? - Having to wear mask in indoor spaces, even when at the workplace (W49 - W51, %)

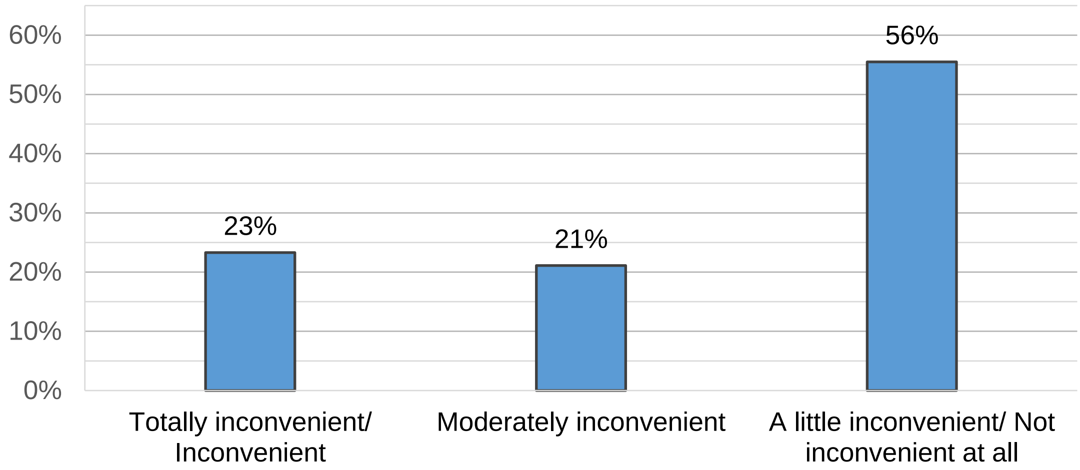


Figure 60: How much of an inconvenience do you find these measures in the new normal?
- Keeping contact tracing apps like TraceTogether active in your phone's background/bringing along a contact tracing device each time you leave the house (W48 - W50, %)

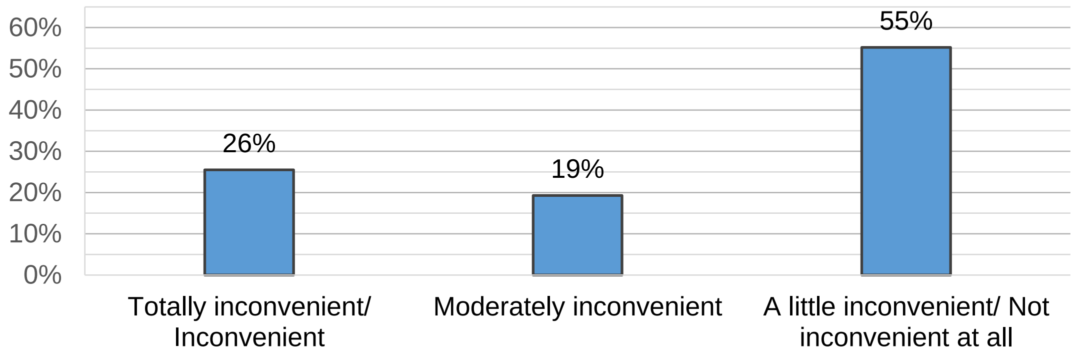
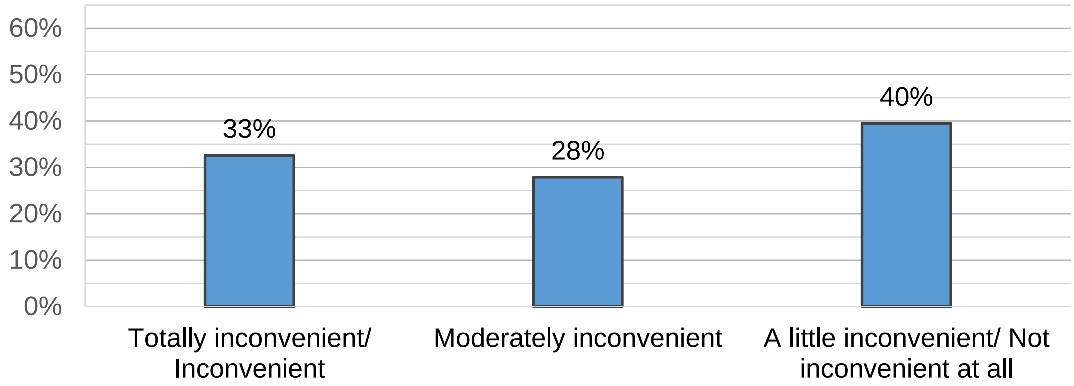


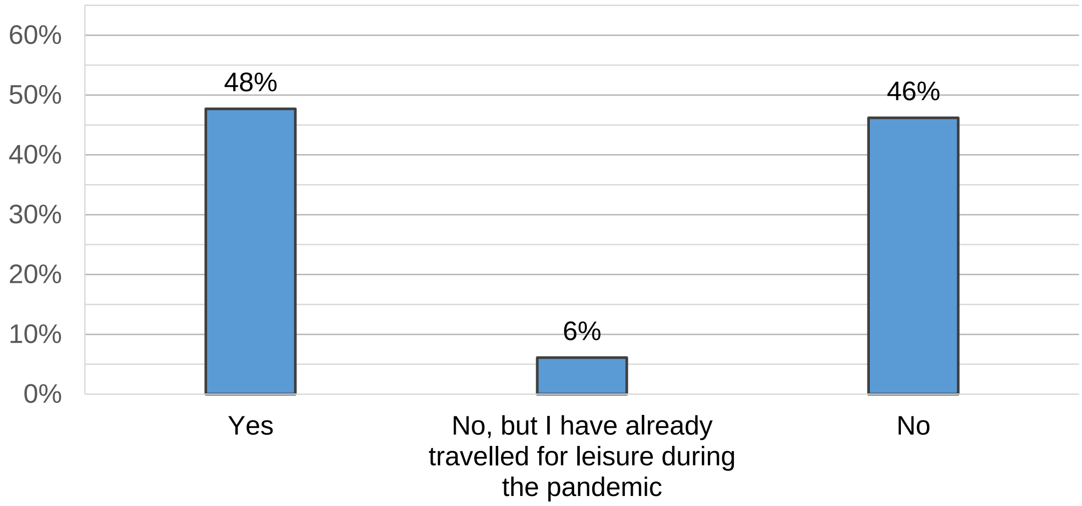
Figure 61: How much of an inconvenience do you find these measures in the new normal? - Taking regular COVID-19 ART tests as part of safe management measures at the workplace (Among the employed/self-employed, W48 - W51, %)



8.2 Travel

Nearly half (48 per cent) were planning to travel for leisure within the next six months, while another 46 per cent were not planning to travel within the next six months.

Figure 62: Are you planning to travel for leisure within the next six months? (W49 - W51, %)



8.3 Vaccination

Around 95 per cent have been vaccinated against COVID-19, while 3 per cent stated that their vaccination status has lapsed as they did not take a booster shot.

Among the 95 per cent who have been vaccinated, 88 per cent have taken their booster shot while 10 per cent planned on taking it.

Figure 63: What is your current vaccination status? (W48 - W51, %)

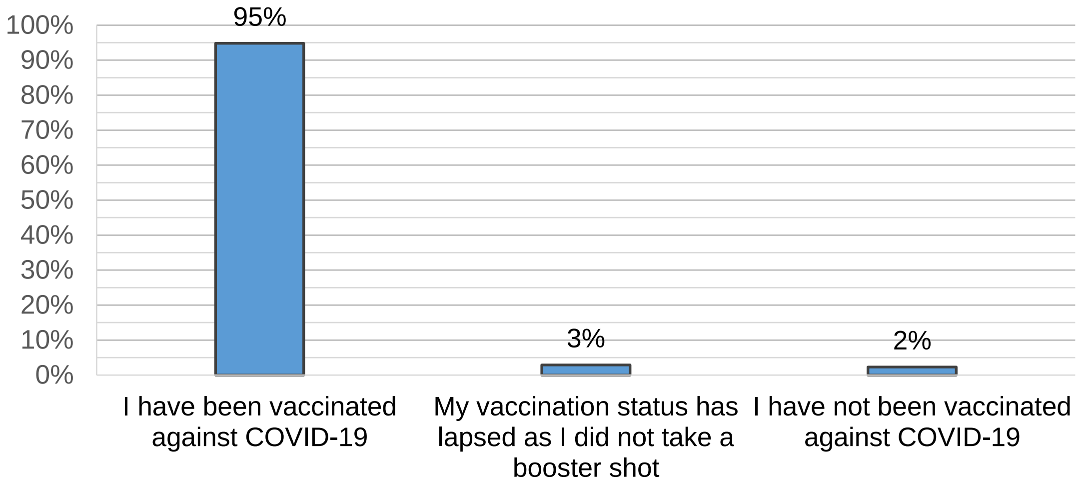
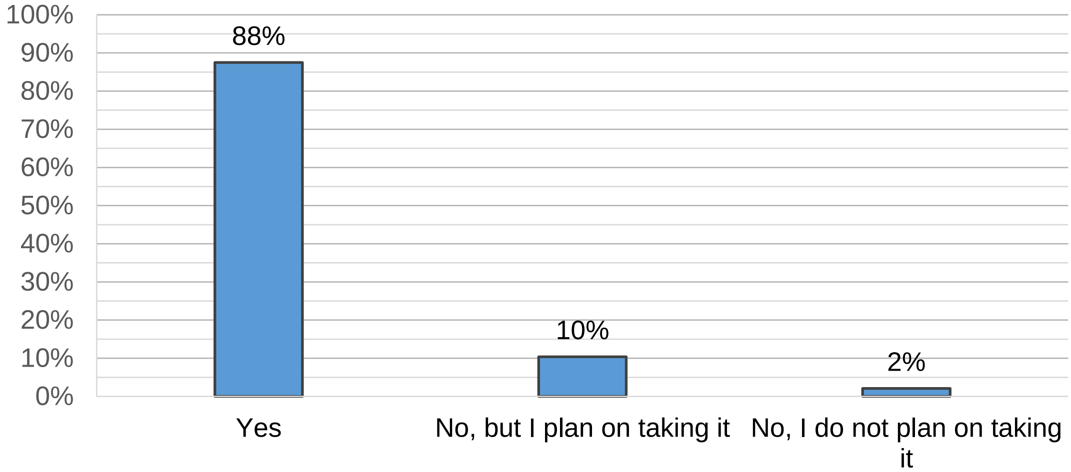
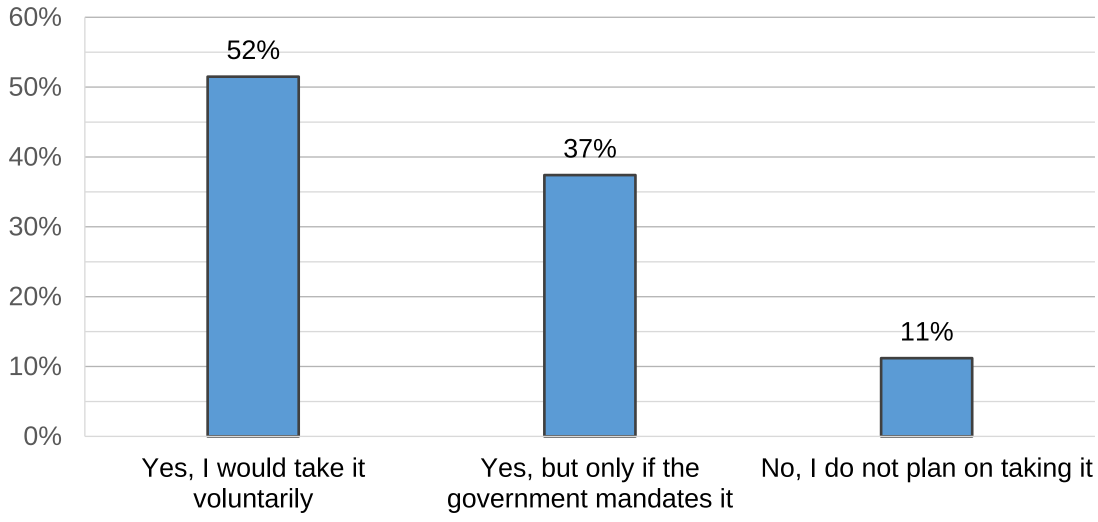


Figure 64: Have you taken your booster shot? (Among the vaccinated, W48 - W51, %)



Among the vaccinated, about half (52 per cent) would take the second booster shot voluntarily while nearly four in 10 (37 per cent) would only take it if the government mandated it. Around one in 10 (11 per cent) did not plan on taking it.

Figure 65: Would you take a second booster shot if it is made available to you? (Among the vaccinated, W49 - W51, %)



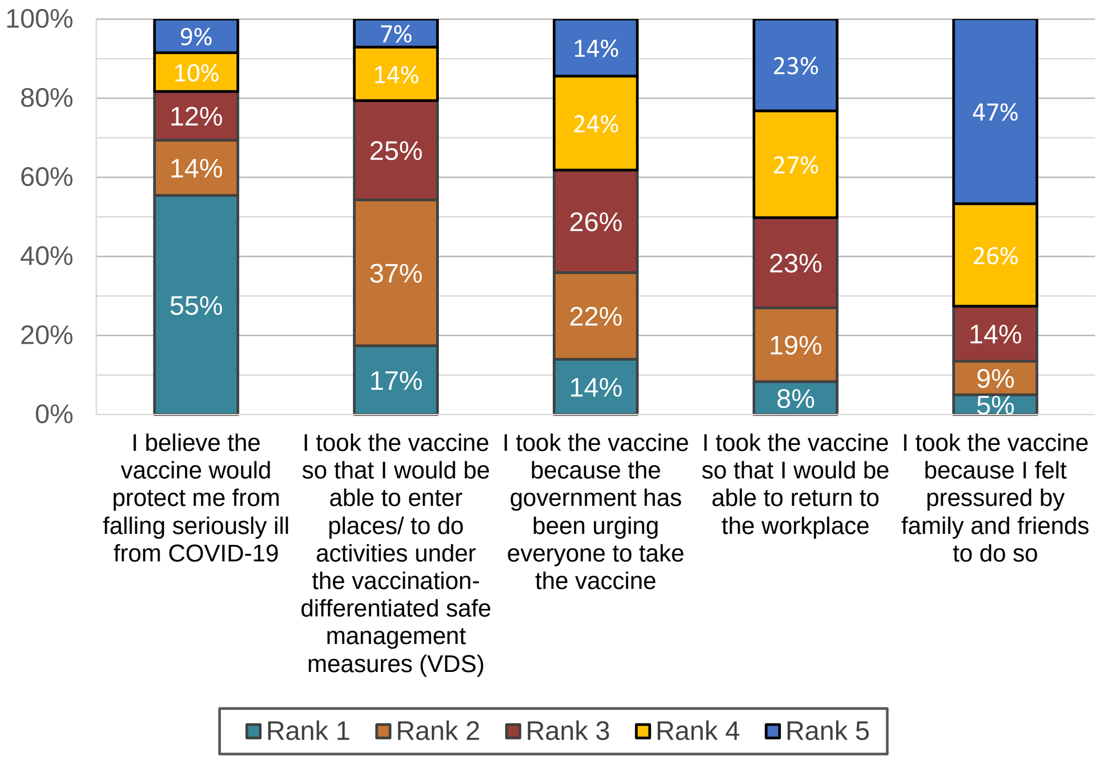
The top reason for taking the vaccine was because respondents believed that the vaccine would protect them from falling seriously ill from COVID-19. Around 55 per cent ranked this as the most important reason.

The next top reason for taking the vaccine was so that respondents would be able to enter places or do activities under the vaccination-differentiated safe management measures (VDS). Around 17 per cent ranked this as the most important reason, while 37 per cent ranked this as the second most important reason.

Other reasons were deemed less important; only 14 per cent felt that the nudging from the government to take the vaccine was the most important reason. Less than 10 per cent of respondents ranked highly that they took the vaccine in order to return to the workplace or pressure by family and friends to do so.

Respondents were thus primarily motivated by their beliefs of vaccine efficacy. Nonetheless, extrinsic motivation appeared to still be necessary to encourage people to take the vaccine, as seen from 54 per cent of our respondents who ranked being able to enter places or do activities under VDS as the most or second most important reason. While there were well circulated anecdotes that many families had experienced major rifts over family members’ different positions on taking the vaccine, we noticed that around 47 per cent ranked pressure from family and friends as the least important reason for getting vaccinated.

Figure 66: How important were the following reasons in your decision to get vaccinated? (W48 - W51, %)

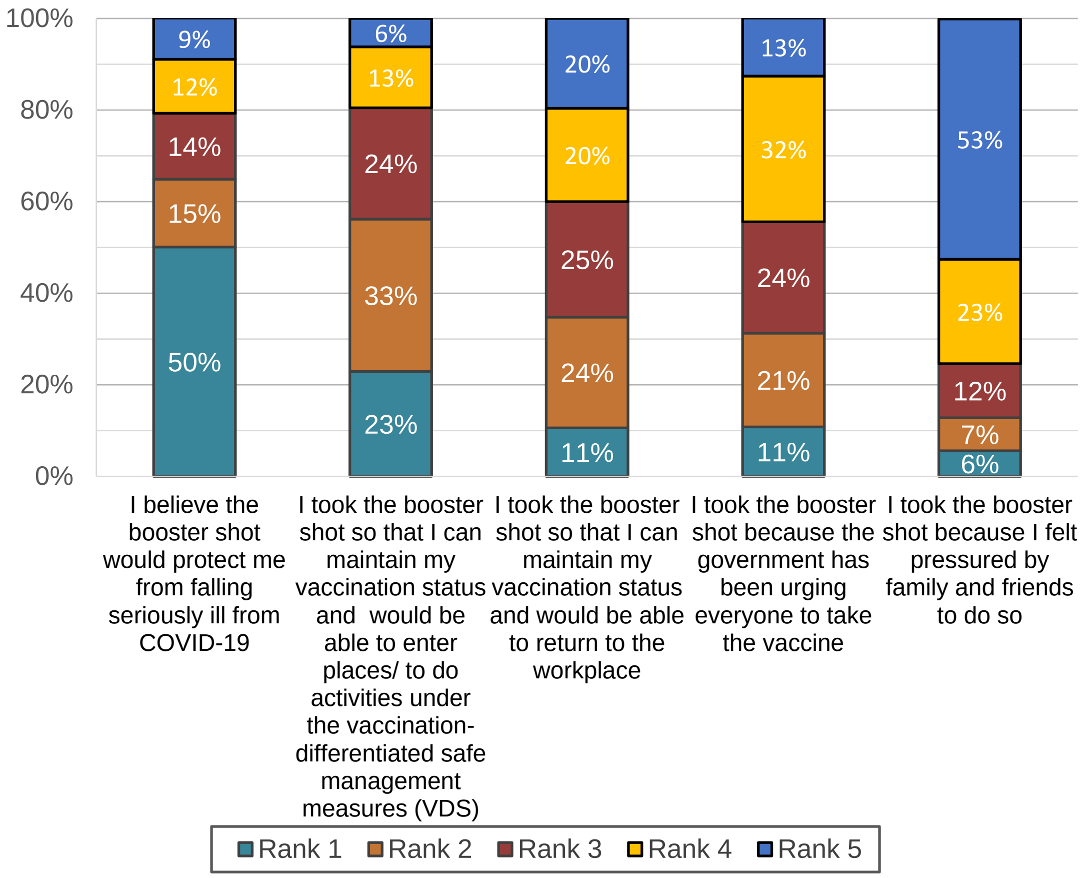


Similarly, among respondents who took the booster, majority took the booster as they believed that the booster would protect them from falling seriously ill from COVID-19. Around 50 per cent ranked this as the top reason for taking the booster, while 15 per cent ranked this as the second most important reason.

Around 23 per cent ranked maintaining their vaccination status and being able to enter places/ do activities under VDS as the most important reason for taking a booster, while 33 per cent ranked this as the second most important reason.

Other reasons were deemed less important; such as taking the booster shot so that they could maintain their vaccination status and return to the workplace.

Figure 67: How important were the following reasons in your decision to get a booster shot? (W48 - W51, %)



While nearly all of our respondents had been vaccinated, received booster shots and had faith in efficacy of the vaccine, around 38 per cent were rather or very concerned about the safety and potential side effects of the COVID-19 vaccines, while around the same proportion also concerned that the vaccine would not effectively prevent themselves from contracting the virus and its newer variants.

Figure 68: How concerned are you that the safety and potential side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine developed by pharmaceutical companies are not fully known yet? (W48 - W51, %)

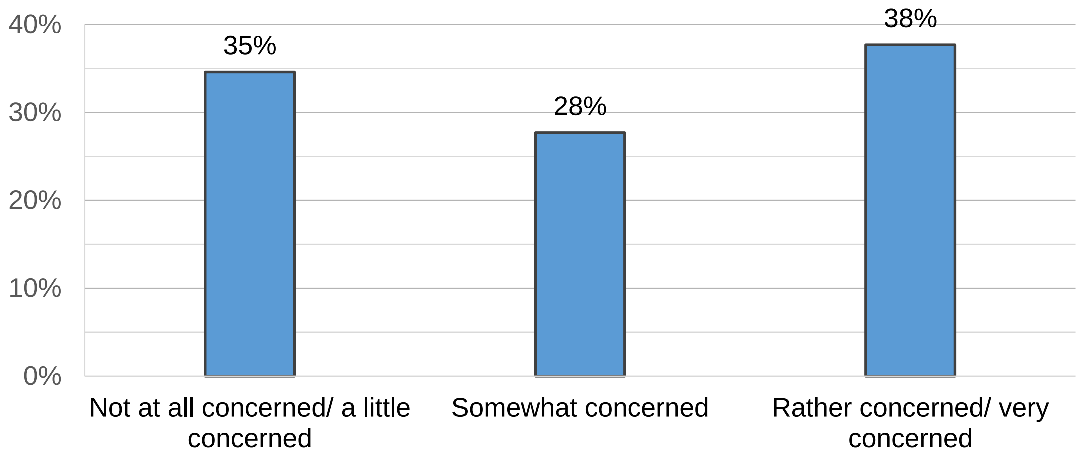
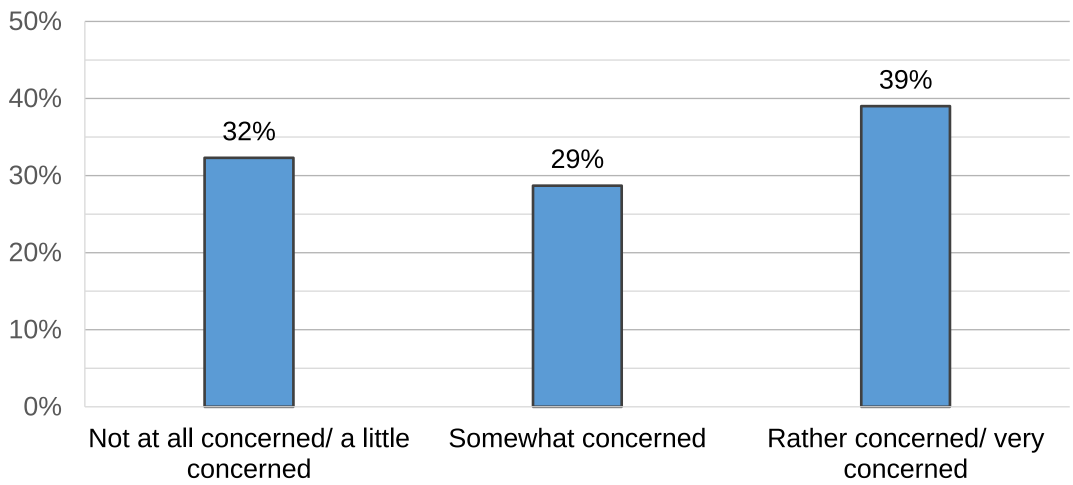
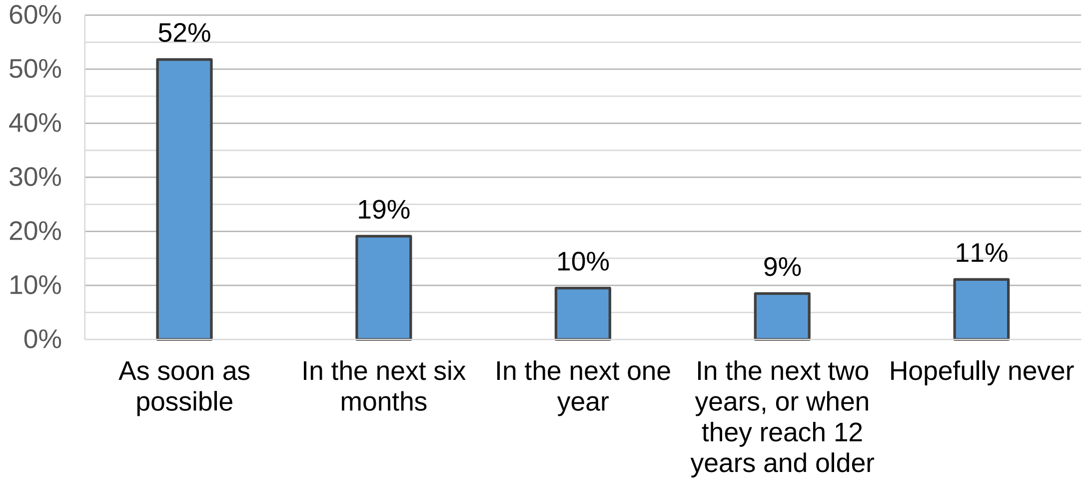


Figure 69: How concerned are you that the COVID-19 vaccine will not effectively prevent you from contracting the virus and its newer variants? (W48 - W51, %)



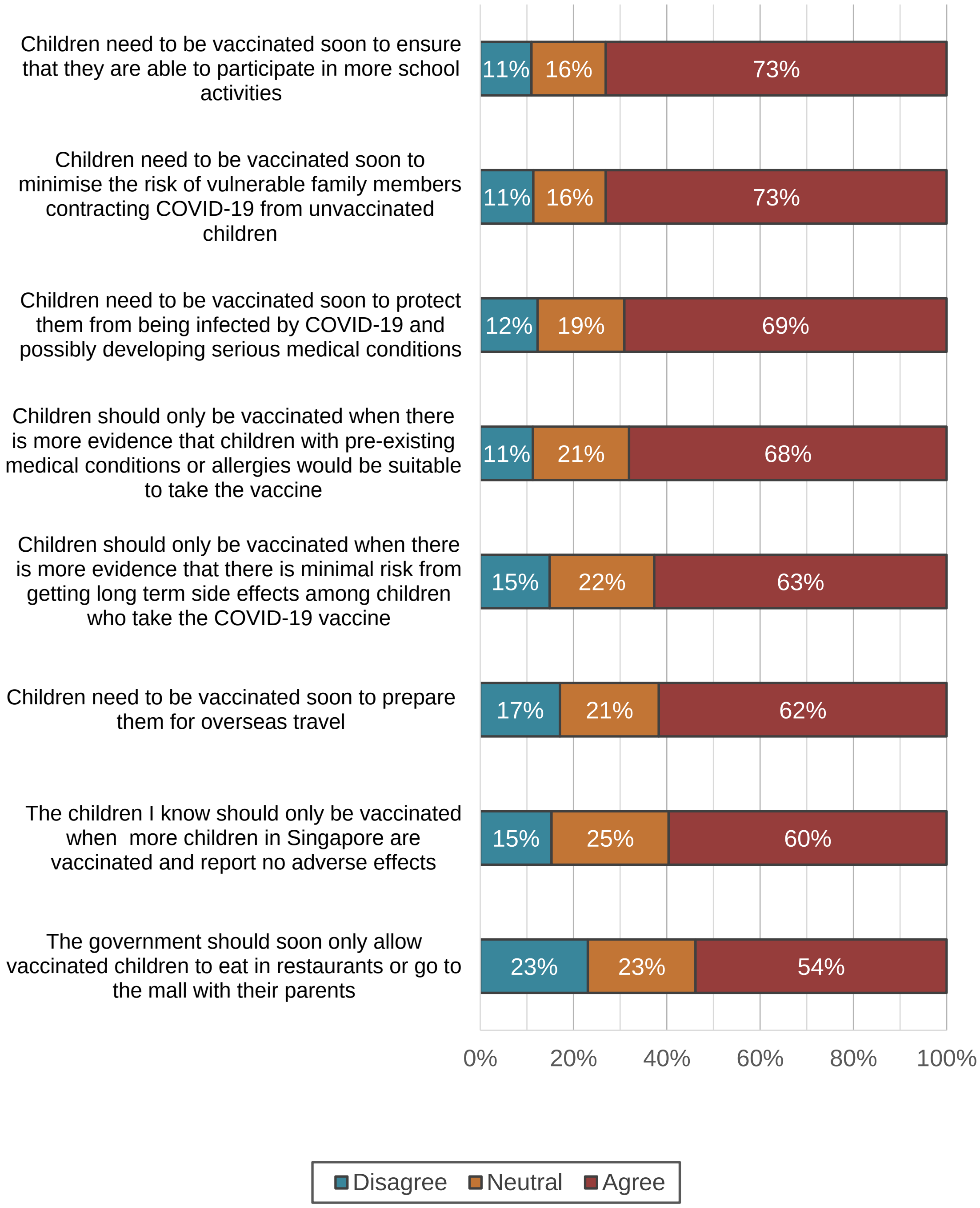
A major development in dealing with COVID-19 this year was the introduction of vaccines for younger children. Slightly more than half (52 per cent) felt that their children or children they know who are aged between 5 to 11 should be vaccinated as soon as possible. Around 29 per cent felt that they should be vaccinated within the next one year.

Figure 70: How soon should your child aged between 5-11 be vaccinated? If you do not have children, please think about children that you know in this age group. (W44 - W47, %)



Slightly more than seven in 10 agreed that children should be vaccinated soon to ensure that they would be able to participate in more school activities (73 per cent) and to minimise the risk of vulnerable family members from contracting the virus from unvaccinated children (73 per cent). Around 69 per cent agreed that children should be vaccinated soon to protect themselves from being infected by COVID-19 and possibly developing serious medical conditions, while around 68 per cent felt that children should only be vaccinated when there is more evidence that children with pre-existing medical conditions or allergies would be suitable to take the vaccine.

Figure 71: How much do you agree on the following considerations related to children being vaccinated against COVID-19? (W44 - W47, %)



9. KEEPING THE END IN MIND: HOW PRIMING A LONGER-TERM GOAL OF RESILIENCE ELEVATES READINESS TO LIVE WITH COVID-19

9.1 Overview

During the pandemic, our national strategy on COVID-19 had been clear – that eventually, Singapore's goal is to live with COVID-19. Yet, given the waves of infection from the Delta and Omicron variants, doubts arose from time to time as to whether or not our people may indeed be ready for endemic living. After all, as our research (Mathew et al., 2021) has shown, people's psychological readiness for endemic living varies in tandem with case numbers.

The fact that individuals appear to remain fixated on case numbers may prove to be an obstacle to endemic living, which in principle requires people to go on about their daily lives even as they may be infected by the virus, just like how we treat the regular cold or flu. To address this phenomenon, therefore, we sought to investigate how it may be possible to elevate individuals' readiness for endemic living, especially amongst those who may be sceptical of the government's strategy.

The theoretical basis underlying this intervention is two-fold, both of which work hand-in-hand to generate the desired psychological effects on people's mindsets.

First, time perspective. According to temporal self-regulation theory (Hall & Fong, 2003; Strathman et al., 1994; Joireman et al., 2008), people differ in the extent to which they adopt a future time perspective in their cognitive representation about various events. That is, when contemplating an event or a situation, individuals differ in the extent to which they consider the longer-term implications or pay attention to the longer-term considerations behind the decision. These differences may be a result of individual differences in disposition or may be situationally manipulated (i.e., as a function of the situation; e.g., Stolarski et al, 2015).

In general, individuals who adopt a more distant, or future time perspective are more likely to consider the longer-term needs of a situation. They are also more likely to consider higher-order elements of a situation, such as collective needs rather than individual concerns, and longer-term goals (Hou et al., 2021). On the other hand, those who are present-oriented may “miss the forest for the trees”, and may be overly focused on immediate fears and make impulsive decisions without thinking about longer-term needs (e.g., Shipp et al., 2002).

In the present context of COVID-19 and Singapore’s eventual desired outcome of living with COVID-19, we hypothesised that adopting a future time perspective on the COVID-19 situation should therefore facilitate greater amenability towards endemic living.

Second, saying is believing. Social psychological researchers have long capitalised on the audience tuning effect (e.g., Hausmann et al., 2008) to effectively manipulate participants' mindsets according to researchers' desired direction in experimental designs. For example, participants who have been explicitly told to adopt a particular position on an issue and to communicate that position to an ostensible audience were more likely to subsequently develop favourable attitudes towards the position which they have been asked to adopt. In other words, people unconsciously shift their attitudes about an issue, so as to be aligned with what they have communicated with others, in a bid to maintain a sense of consistency.

We hypothesised therefore, that those who have been asked to reflect on and articulate a certain position about the COVID-19 situation should come to embrace that position even more strongly – thereby reinforcing the position about the COVID-19 situation that they have been asked to adopt. That is, by capitalising on audience tuning effect, we expected that respondents would more strongly internalise the position towards COVID-19 that we have instructed them to adopt.

Importantly, however, we expected that any attempt to enhance people's attitudes about endemic living should work more effectively amongst those who were more hesitant about it in the first place. This is because there is a ceiling effect when it comes to our attitudes (Miller et al., 1993). In other words, those who are less likely to support endemic living in the first place might "benefit" the most from our present intervention, given that they have more "room" to shift their attitudes to become more favourable towards endemic living; on the other hand, for those who already embrace endemic living, there is little that needs to be done, from a policy perspective, to further align their attitudes.

Now, who might be those that are less likely to be favourable of endemic living? In the present investigation, we operationalised this group as those who express lower levels of government satisfaction about how the COVID-19 pandemic has been handled, especially given that the Singapore government has been consistently advocating for and introducing measures reflective of an endemic strategy (e.g., not tightening measures excessively even during the Omicron surge). As such, we expected that our intervention, grounded on theoretical frameworks of time perspective and audience tuning, should work most effectively amongst the more sceptical, in nudging them towards having more positive attitudes about endemic living.

9.2 Method

In our study, respondents were randomly assigned to two conditions. In the experimental condition (N = 506), respondents were primed with a future time perspective by being asked to imagine the longer-term goal of living with COVID-19. Specifically, respondents were asked to take a moment to imagine that they were living in a Singapore that has finally — and successfully — transitioned to living with COVID-19. Importantly, respondents were then asked to think about what might be some stories that they would wish to share with the younger generation, about how Singaporeans, including themselves, have managed to remain resilient and overcome the challenges associated with COVID-19.

In the control condition (N = 518), respondents were primed to think about the current COVID-19 situation and to focus on daily case numbers. Specifically, respondents were asked to consider the current COVID situation, including the daily case numbers, infection rates, and disease control measures. They were then asked to share in writing about how the immediate COVID-19 situation might have impacted their lives, how they felt when observing how Singapore was dealing with COVID-19 and their current concerns surrounding COVID-19.

To ensure parity in both conditions, respondents were given an equal amount of time to reflect on the question so as to allow them to internalise the required frame of mind. Respondents were also given an equal amount of time to provide their free-response answers in writing, before moving on to the key dependent variables.

Two measures of interest served as the dependent variables. Upon writing their thoughts about COVID-19 based on their assigned conditions, respondents then answered a question to assess their concerns about contracting COVID-19 on a 7-point Likert scale (i.e., "I am worried about contracting COVID-19"; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) as well as their readiness for endemic living (i.e., "I feel ready to live with COVID-19"; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Next, we categorised respondents according to their level of government satisfaction. A median split was conducted based on respondents' average scores of an 8-item composite scale measuring government satisfaction in the handling of the pandemic (i.e., <“Communicating COVID-19 related policies and measures to the public”>, <“Communicating the government’s plans and measures for re-opening”>, <“Keeping the healthcare system running”>, < “Keeping the economy running”>, <“Protecting jobs”>, <“Providing financial aid packages to citizens”>, <“Reducing the number of daily infections in the community”>, <“Overall handling of COVID-19”>; 1 = strongly dissatisfied, 7 = strongly satisfied, α = 0.93). This resulted in two groups, those with high government satisfaction (N = 534), and those with low government satisfaction (N = 490).

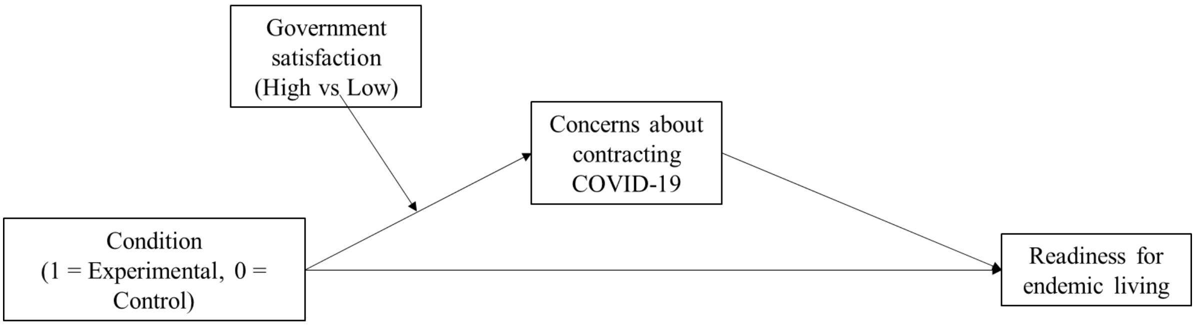
Sensitivity analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2009; ANOVA: fixed effects, special, main effects and interactions) indicated that a minimum sample size of 580 was required to detect a small-to-medium effect size with 95% power. As such, the present sample size of 1,024 far exceeded this minimum required sample size, and the results of the analysis can therefore be taken as robust and reliable.

In addition, given that there had already been a high degree of COVID-19 infections in Singapore driven by the Omicron wave, there was a need to ensure that respondents’ expressed readiness to live with COVID-19 was not merely due to them having been infected and recovered from COVID-19. As such, two variables — i.e., whether respondents themselves have contracted COVID-19 before, and whether any of respondents’ family members have contracted

COVID-19 before — were added into the analysis to serve as statistical controls, so as to remove this confound.

A moderated mediation analysis was then performed in order to test the hypothesis that our present intervention would be especially effective amongst those with low government satisfaction. The theoretical model is illustrated in the diagram below:

Figure 72: Theoretical model for moderated mediation analysis



9.3 Results

Consistent with our hypothesis, results revealed that the intervention was successful at shifting people's attitudes towards endemic living, especially amongst those who were more sceptical.

Specifically, amongst those who were low in government satisfaction, the intervention significantly predicted lower levels of concern towards contracting COVID-19 ($b = -0.35$, $p = 0.019$), which in turn significantly predicted greater readiness towards endemic living ($b = -0.14$, $p < 0.001$). The indirect effect was significant, $b = 0.05$, 95% CI (0.01, 0.10), and the index of moderated mediation was significant, b= -0.07, 95% CI (-0.14, -0.01). On the other hand, there was no significant effect found amongst those with high levels of government satisfaction, indicating that the intervention did not further increase their (already positive) attitudes towards endemic living.

9.4 Discussion

The present investigation suggests important implication about strategies that may be used in public communication to engender more favourable attitudes in line with our national strategy of endemic living.

Specifically, the results suggest that by encouraging people to “keep the end in mind” — i.e., to think about the eventual, longer-term goal of being able to live with COVID-19 — people may be effectively nudged to adjust their mindsets accordingly. Importantly, as the results from the present study has shown, this may come about as people’s fears about contracting COVID-19 cease to be a formidable concern, and in turn, enabling them to feel more prepared to live with the virus.

Notably, we found that these desired effects were the most pronounced amongst the more sceptical — i.e., those who were less satisfied with how the government has been handling COVID-19. Indeed, this group of individuals are likely to have the greatest reservations about the government’s strategies, such as taking decisive steps to open up borders and removing most restrictions on various activities. By encouraging them to focus on the broader narrative of resilience and our ultimate goal to live with the virus in our midst, the study showed that it is possible, at least in the present experimental design, to help them overcome their reservations.

Of course, we note that the endemic strategy is only viable given that the vast majority of our population, including the more vulnerable, have already been sufficiently inoculated against the disease. Now, this important milestone having been achieved, and when our country is finally ready to progress to becoming COVID-19 resilient, we believe that it will be important for us to keep in mind our shared, national goal of overcoming this disease and being able to live life that much more "normally".

10. CONCLUSION

It has been more than two years since COVID-19 arrived at our shores. During this crisis of a generation, many Singaporeans have had their lives upended, with continued financial, emotional, and relational stressors abound. Workplaces have also undergone radical shifts in navigating employee relations and sustainable workplace arrangements; society has had to come face-to-face with dormant and emerging challenges threatening social cohesion and resilience. Singapore and Singaporeans have indeed come a long way in our journey towards becoming a COVID resilient nation.

Against such a backdrop, we took this opportunity in the present study to review Singaporeans' experiences during the past years, with particular emphasis on how our well-being as a population has changed. The study also examined fresh concerns that Singaporeans have, such as rising costs of living. Importantly, as we continue on our trajectory in living with COVID-19, we studied Singaporeans' outlook towards the future, including attitudes and perceptions of our 4G leadership's abilities to lead Singapore successfully in the post-COVID world. We highlight important lessons that Singaporeans believe we as a nation ought to learn from this crisis, which illustrate much needed areas where resources may need to be devoted so as to strengthen our ability to weather a similar calamity in the future.

First, although Singaporeans have in general, demonstrated resilience in the face of COVID-19 and have adapted reasonably well to living with COVID-19, the insidious effects of the pandemic on individuals' psychological well-being especially in the longer-term must not be neglected. On one hand, Singaporeans on the whole are reportedly feeling less stressed about the pandemic now, as compared to when it first began – the proportion of those who felt stressed fell from a high of 50 per cent in early 2020 to just above 30 per cent currently. However, much like how many mental health conditions can often be ambient, the chronic and enduring nature of the pandemic – even the fact that the pandemic has yet to be declared as over – inevitably hangs like a cloud over one's head.

Notably, as our data shows, the lingering effects of the pandemic on the psychological well-being of Singaporeans has had a more significant impact on our youths. After all, if not for the pandemic, some of them might have been able to complete their (overseas) university education; others might have been able to attend their graduation ceremonies or embark on graduation trips. These are examples of important milestones and events that many young adults likely look forward to, which can give them the sense of recognition and identity that they need during this life stage. The absence of such milestone celebrations may have left some psychological gap (aka "unfinished business") or a sense of "missed opportunities" among youths.

Moreover, some youths would also have experienced disruptions to conventional dating and courtship, which are often undertaken during this life stage. Others, as they step into the workforce, might also have missed out on the experience of receiving the support of colleagues in real time rather than virtually, thereby potentially compromising on fostering a stronger sense of organisational identity. This may further pose challenges and stress in the navigating of their workplace environments. Coupled with these has also been the re-evaluation of life priorities and the questioning of life choices amidst the disruptions caused by the pandemic.

All these disruptions can be assumed to have contributed to youths' declining perceptions of their mental health. While it is unclear as of now as to the extent of this negative impact, it will be crucial to monitor this group and ensure that the needed interventions are available to them, so that they can move forward without being too scathed by the pandemic experience, but instead, build resilience through this episode.

Second, although a substantial proportion of our respondents generally expressed healthy levels of trust and confidence in our 4G leadership, more will need to be done to address Singaporeans' concerns about specific areas of their lives – in particular, their livelihood concerns. In general, approximately 60 per cent of respondents trusted that the Singapore Government has the best possible 4G leader to navigate divisions within society, to navigate Singapore's dealing with other countries and to help it navigate post-COVID-19 economic recovery. Interestingly, higher educated respondents, who traditionally have been more skeptical about government policies, took the lead in levels of trust towards the 4G leadership. This is indeed an encouraging sign that reflects a degree of the 4G leadership's resonance with this demographic segment, though it also raises the question as to whether there may be a disconnect with lower educated segments.

A higher proportion of respondents who were not as trusting of the 4G leadership were worried about cost of living issues – a concern more often expressed by those who are less educated and not as financially well off. The ability of the 4G leadership to address people's concerns over their financial abilities to tide through this post-COVID recovery period is key to winning the trust of this group of Singaporeans. Indeed, as can be observed through our analysis of how respondents have experienced stress throughout the course of the pandemic, the peaks of stress points were often brief, given swift government measures and information to manage issues of concern. In the same vein, such attention will similarly be needed in this post recovery stage so that stress and anxiety related to cost of living issues can addressed in as timely a fashion as possible.

Third, self-sufficiency, such as in food security and supplies, should continue to be prioritized especially in view of Singapore's reliance on other markets and economies. Already, the Ukraine war has clearly demonstrated the vulnerability of Singapore to supply chain disruptions, which reflect the degree of our reliance on other countries. This, coupled with how countries in the region have adopted protectionist policies that have further impacted on Singapore's supplies, provide a timely reminder that Singapore needs to remain self-sufficient in times of crises – indeed, the top lesson to be learnt as indicated by our respondents.

That the more ‘social’-type of lessons (i.e., citizens should be more compassionate, caring, and gracious towards one another; citizens should value harmony and stand against discrimination) were ranked lower than other types of lessons should also be worthy of attention. Respondents’ overall ranks of these lessons demonstrate that issues that seemingly pertain directly to existential needs may be prioritized over other social aspects that may be perceived as less directly relevant to our nation’s survival in a crisis. Yet, in no part should this warrant a negligence of ensuring a united core that is so fundamental to our country’s ability to enact sound institutions and systems to weather crises. We as a society must continue to be wary of complacency setting in within the social cohesion realm, that is in the first place the foundational building block of our current – and not necessarily enduring – economic prowess and standing.

Our experience in the last two years have shown that by and large, the majority of Singaporeans are largely aligned with the government in terms of pursuing the goal of endemic living. Indeed, most Singaporeans do understand the ‘bigger picture’ or longer-term considerations that ultimately render endemic living a necessity, rather than a choice. These may include recognizing the existential need for Singapore to remain as a porous, well-integrated entity amidst international economies, and the need to ensure a healthy level of physical and psychological well-being through having social interactions and receiving social support when needed.

Of course, there would inevitably be some resistance or hesitation in living with a potentially deadly virus that has radically impacted the world. It is therefore crucial to continuously examine ways to bring everyone onboard this collective endeavour. In this vein, our analysis found that encouraging individuals to "keep the end in mind", effectively increases readiness towards endemic living especially amongst the more hesitant. Keeping the end in mind entails a clear articulation of the national goal of being able to overcome (though not necessarily eradicate) the virus by being able to live life that much more "normally". It entails embracing the spirit of *resilience*, rather than fear, and a vision of *possibility* – that it is possible to live life as before. It also requires individuals to wean oneself off a narrowly focused attention on case numbers, which is unhelpful in the broader scheme of things, especially since the vast majority of our population, including the more vulnerable, have been sufficiently inoculated against the disease. It is hoped that this aspect of the study provides useful insights to enhance public communication efforts related to COVID-19.

COVID-19 is a defining moment in our nation's collective history. Looking back, much may have been lost. But, looking ahead, we hope that more will be gained as we learn from this experience and move forward together through COVID-19.

ANNEX A: COMPOSITE SCALES

Finance Difficulty (α = .90):

This composite scale captures the level of difficulty in meeting financial demands in the next six months, with a higher score signifying greater difficulty. Respondents were asked to rate their level of financial difficulty based on a five-point scale (1 being “not difficult at all” and 5 being “very difficult”) on the following items: “How difficult would it be for you to meet the following demands in the next six months?”

- Paying your utilities bill on time
- Being able to cope with an unexpected expense of $1,000
- Paying all your loans on time
- Buying monthly groceries

Worry over rising cost of living (α = .92):

This composite scale captures the level of worry about possible inflation and rise in GST, where a higher scores signifies greater worry.

Respondents were asked to rate their level of worry based on a five-point scale (1 being “not at all worried” and 5 being “very worried”) on

“How worried are you about the rise in GST?” and the following items: “How worried or not worried are you about the cost of these items possibly increasing this year?”

- Public transport
- Private transport
- Food
- Housing
- Education
- Healthcare
- Utilities

Confidence in engaging in social activities in the new normal (α = .94): This composite scale captures the level of confidence a respondent has in engaging in social activities in the new normal while the virus is still in our midst, with a higher score representing higher confidence.

Respondents were asked to rate their level of confidence based on a five-point scale (1 being "not at all confident" and 5 being "very confident") on the following items: "In the new normal, with COVID-19 circulating in our midst, how confident are you in carrying out the following activities?"

- Dining out at public places like hawker centres, restaurants or bars
- Attending a live event with a large number of spectators e.g. National Day, sports events
- Going out shopping at crowded places like shopping malls, wet markets, supermarkets
- Travelling to other countries with relatively low cases of COVID-19 for leisure
- Taking public transport
- Having close personal contact e.g. handshaking, hugs, standing together in a group
- Visiting friends and relatives more regularly
- Meeting people who test negative on the antigen rapid test (ART), but are close contacts of those infected with COVID-19 or whose workplace has infections
- Meeting someone who has recently recovered from COVID-19
- Participation in nightlife activities (e.g. nightclubs, discotheques)

Psychological well-being (α = .92): This composite scale captures respondents' psychological well-being, with a higher score representing higher psychological well-being.

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they have experienced the following recently based on a five-point scale (1 being "not at all" and 5 being "very much") on the following items: "To what extent have you experienced the following recently?"

- Having repeated and disturbing thoughts or dreams about what is happening (reverse coded for consistency)
- Having difficulty concentrating (reverse coded for consistency)
- Having trouble falling or staying asleep (reverse coded for consistency)
- Feeling irritable or having anger outbursts (reverse coded for consistency)
- Feeling hopeless (reverse coded for consistency)

Government satisfaction (α = .93): This composite scale captures respondents' level of satisfaction with the government's management of the pandemic, with higher scores representing higher levels of government satisfaction.

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they were satisfied with how government has handled the pandemic based on a seven-point scale (1 being "strongly dissatisfied" and 7 being "strongly satisfied") on the following items: "For each of the following measures, to what extent are you currently satisfied or dissatisfied with the way the government implemented these following policies in handling the COVID-19 pandemic?"

- Communicating COVID-19 related policies and measures (e.g. precautions to take, Circuit Breaker, loosening of restrictions) to the public
- Communicating the government's plans and measures for re-opening
- Keeping the healthcare system running
- Keeping the economy running
- Protecting jobs
- Providing financial aid packages to citizens
- Reducing the number of daily infections in the community
- Overall handling of COVID-19

Strained (correlation, r = .67):

This composite scale captures respondents' level of worry that their relationships with family and friends would be strained in the next six months, with higher scores representing higher levels of worry.

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they were worried about their relationships based on a five-point scale (1 being "not at all worried" and 5 being "very worried") on the following items: "In the next six months, how worried or not worried are you that…"

- Your friendships will be strained
- Your family relationships will be strained

Receptiveness towards endemic living (α = .78):

This composite scale captures respondents' level of receptiveness towards endemic living, with higher scores representing higher levels of receptiveness.

Respondents were asked to rate how they felt towards current situations based on a seven-point scale (1 being "happy" and 7 being "angry") on the following items: "Which of the following best represents YOUR emotions when you consider the following?"

- How COVID-19 will be treated as endemic in Singapore (recoded for consistency)
- How living with COVID-19 will mean that many of us may be exposed to the virus (recoded for consistency)
- How the management of COVID-19 will rely on personal self-responsibility rather than on close government monitoring of those in close contact with COVID-19 (recoded for consistency)

4G Leader (α = .95):

This composite scale captures respondents' level of trust that the Singapore government has the best possible 4G leader, with higher scores representing higher levels of trust.

Respondents were asked to rate how much they trusted that the Singapore government has the best possible leader based on a seven-point scale (1 being "Totally do not trust" and 7 being "Totally trust") on the following items: "In light of the impact of COVID-19, do you trust or not trust that…"

- That the Singapore government has the best possible 4G leader to help it navigate post-COVID-19 economic recovery
- That the Singapore government has the best possible 4G leader to navigate divisions within society
- That the Singapore government has the best possible 4G leader to navigate Singapore's dealing with other countries

REFERENCES

Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Buchner, A., & Lang, A. (2009). Statistical power analyses using GPower 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses. Behavior Research Methods, 41(4), 1149-1160. doi:10.3758/BRM.41.4.1149

Hall, P. A., & Fong, G. T. (2003). The effects of a brief time perspective intervention for increasing physical activity among young adults. Psychology and Health, 18, 685–706. doi: 10.1080/0887044031000110447

Hausmann, L. R. M., Levine, J. M., & Tory Higgins, E. (2008). Communication and group perception: Extending the `Saying is believing' effect. Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, 11(4), 539-554. doi:10.1177/1368430208095405

Hou, M., Jia, L., & Tan, J. (2021). To tip off or not? Predicting gatekeepers' reporting intentions of deviant close-others through desirability and feasibility. Psychology, Crime & Law.

Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore. (2022). *GST Rate Change for Consumers.* https://www.iras.gov.sg/taxes/goods-services-tax-(gst)/gst-rate-change/gst-rate-change-for-consumers1

Joireman, J., Balliet, D., Sprott, D., Spangenberg, E., & Schultz, J. (2008). Consideration of future consequences, ego depletion, and self-control: Support for distinguishing between CFC-Immediate and CFC-Future sub-scales.

Personality and Individual Differences, 45, 15–21. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2008.02.011.

Joireman, J., Shaffer, M. J., Balliet, D. P., & Strathman, A. (2012). Promotion orientation explains why future-oriented people exercise and eat healthy: Evidence from the two-factor consideration of future consequences-14 scale. Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin, 38(10), 1272-1287. doi:10.1177/0146167212449362

Mathew, M., Syafiq, M., Hou, M. and Phoa, F. (2021). Living with COVID-19 in Singapore: Attitudes, Challenges and the Way Ahead. IPS Working Paper No. 43.

Matos M, McEwan K, Kanovský M, Halamová J, Steindl SR, Ferreira N, et al. (2021) The role of social connection on the experience of COVID-19 related post-traumatic growth and stress. PLoS ONE 16(12): e0261384. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0261384

Miller, A. G. , McHoskey, J. W. , Bane, C. M. & Dowd, T. G. (1993). The Attitude Polarization Phenomenon. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 64 (4), 561-574.

Shipp, A. J., Edwards, J. R., & Lambert, L. S. (2002). Conceptualization and measurement of

temporal focus: The subjective experience of the past, present, and future. Organizational
Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 110, 1–22. http://dx.doi.org/10.1006/obhd.2001.2988 .

Stolarski, M., Fieulaine, N., and van Beek, W. (2015). Time Perspective Theory; Review, Research and Application: Essays in Honor of Philip G. Zimbardo. Berlin: Springer, 1–551.

Strathman, A., Gleicher, F., Boninger, D. S., & Edwards, C. S. (1994). The consideration of future consequences: Weighing immediate and distant outcomes of behavior. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 66, 742–752. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.66.4.742

Tang, S.K. (2022, June 21). *Government to increase co-funding share of eligible wage increases for lower-wage workers.* Channel News Asia. https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/lower-wage-workers-government-co-funding-share-increase-mof-2759741

About IPS Working Paper Series

The IPS Working Papers Series is published in-house for early dissemination of works-in-progress. This may be research carried out by IPS researchers, work commissioned by the Institute or work submitted to the Institute for publication.

The views expressed in the Working Papers are strictly those of the author(s) alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the IPS.

Comments on the Working Papers are invited. Please direct your comments and queries to the author(s).

IPS Working Papers are available from the IPS at $7.00 each (before GST). Postage and handling charges will be added for mail orders.

For more information, please visit www.lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips or
contact email: ips@nus.edu.sg or tel: 6516-8388.

Institute of Policy Studies
Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy
National University of Singapore
1C Cluny Road House 5
Singapore 259599

Tel: (65) 6516 8388
Web: www.lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips
Registration Number: 200604346E