

54% of S'porean workers would accept slightly less pay for benefit of family or personal life: IPS Survey

The survey was conducted to assess Singapore's workforce preparedness, aspirations, and perceptions of social mobility.

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According to an Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) survey on the future of work, slightly over half of the respondents, 54 per cent, would be willing to accept somewhat lower pay or a more minor role at work for the benefit of their family or personal life.

The IPS survey, titled "Future of Work Singaporeans Want", was conducted in Oct. 2022 to assess Singapore's workforce preparedness for the future, workers' aspirations, and their perceptions of social mobility.

It also examines how much Singaporeans value and prioritise different job aspects.

With advances in technology, automation, rise of digital, there will be disruptions and shifts in the labour landscape.

Survey Methodology

IPS surveyed 1,010 economically active adults aged 21 to 84, across different public locations in Singapore.

Economically active means that the respondent is either currently working or is actively seeking work.

What do Singaporean workers value at work?

The IPS survey attempted to find out what matters to Singaporeans when it comes to their career and work, and they ask what Singaporean workers value at their job.

Across all age groups, pay adequacy, workplace ethics and values, and comfortable working conditions are the top three most important job aspects.

Receiving recognition for their work, advancement in their career and task variety at their job were ranked least important to workers.

The survey further probed on specific diversity and inclusion issues that Singaporeans care about.

Though workplace diversity ranks close to the bottom (12th out of 15), Singaporeans agree that persons with mental health conditions and persons with disability are the two most important people to include in the workplace.

What are Singaporeans willing to sacrifice for their career?

When asked if they would consider taking a lower pay or a more minor work role for the benefit of family or personal life, only one in five respondents (21 per cent) would not.

However, across age groups, 63 per cent of those aged 55 and above were most willing to take less pay or work.

In fact, a more significant proportion of older respondents have taken up a job with lesser pay or a small role for the benefit of their family, with 37 per cent saying they would do so again.

Many youths aged 21 to 34 have not taken up a job with less pay for the benefit of the family or personal life, and 32 per cent said they would probably do it.

However, youths would not accept lower pay or a more minor role for a meaningful and essential job.

This willingness to make this trade-off increases with age, as 59 per cent of older respondents are also more willing to accept lower pay or a lesser work role if the job is meaningful and contributes to something more substantial.

Meaningful careers

The IPS survey also delves into the meaning people seek and find in their work.

Professionals, Managers, Executives and Technicians (PMETs) are significantly more likely to find meaning and purpose in their work.

More than six in 10 PMETs agree that it is very true or true that they found a meaningful career (64 per cent) and their work makes a positive difference in the world (61 per cent).

On the other hand, 42 per cent of Clerical, Sales and Services Workers (CSSWs) and 43 per cent of Production and Transport Operators, Cleaners and Labourers (PTOCLs) find their current careers meaningful.

46 per cent of CSSWs and 55 per cent of PTOCLs feel their work makes a positive difference.

When speaking to the media, Laurel Teo, Senior Research Fellow at IPS, pointed out that finding meaning in your work is essential to help people find fulfilling careers.

"When you find meaning in your work, and you find [it] fulfilling. It helps you to be motivated to pursue your job further, to sort of improve yourself in a career, and to be slightly more satisfied in your work, and ultimately to stay longer in the job as well," Teo said.

Chew Han Ei, a Senior Research Fellow at IPS, pointed out that the big difference between PMETs and other occupations is a reflection of society.

Teo said that those who find their careers boring and without meaning will not be able to find much satisfaction in their work.

"It is demotivating, and that also has consequences on your personal well-being."

Women less likely to pursue critical core skills than men

In order to be prepared to tackle the future of the labour environment, workers need to possess critical core skills.

These skills are foundational skills that are transferable and generalised across careers and industries, which employers value as it helps businesses remain competitive.

In a SkillsFuture Singapore report published in Nov. 2022, it was identified that the top three most essential skills are self-management, creative thinking, and influence.

However, there are disparities across gender as the women surveyed tend to rate themselves lower in their self-efficacy of creativity skills and interest in creative work.

66 per cent of women believe that they have confidence in their ability to solve problems creatively compared to 79 per cent of men.

In addition, women are less likely to make sure they get credit for the work they do, as only 37 per cent of women ensure their work is credited to them, compared to 42 per cent of men.

While these results do not comment on women's ability in these skills, Chew emphasises this is how women workers are perceiving themselves.

Singaporeans are well-positioned to tackle the future

The IPS survey saw that Singaporeans are relatively open to the impending disruptions to the labour landscape and are highly aware of these disruptions.

There is also the understanding of the need to reskill or pivot to a different role or even occupation.

However, with most non-PMETs, not finding meaning in their career is a cause of concern as it has an impact on work motivation, performance and the satisfaction and sense of fulfilment people derive from work.