

Women More Upbeat About NS

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Women are more upbeat than men in their views about national service (NS), showed a first-of-its-kind independent study to gauge public attitudes towards NS.

In areas such as whether NS helps to build a unique Singaporean identity and whether a serviceman's contributions to NS are valued, women tend to agree more than men.

But they are not as keen to walk the talk.

Although more than 80 per cent of both men and women said yes to voluntary NS for women, only about one in 10 women would actually volunteer for a full two-year NS stint.

The study, conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies, involved face-to-face interviews with over 1,200 Singapore citizens this year.

IPS senior research fellow Leong Chan-Hoong, who was the study's principal investigator, said he was surprised that women scored consistently higher than men in their perceptions of NS.

Women do not have first-hand experience of NS, he acknowledged, but "there is a potential to harness this group of Singaporeans".

The survey found that over 41 per cent of men and nearly 36 per cent of women were in favour of compulsory NS for women.

While few women would actually serve the full two years if given the option to volunteer, nearly 22 per cent would agree to serve a shorter stint.

Nearly 36 per cent would serve in professional roles, such as doctors, accountants and lawyers, and 56 per cent were keen to volunteer in NS events such as open houses.

The study, which was commissioned by the Committee to Strengthen National Service (CSNS), also found that over 77 per cent of Singaporeans were keen to allow permanent residents to serve as NS volunteers.

As a whole, support for NS is strong, with 98 per cent of respondents agreeing that NS is necessary for Singapore's defence.

But employers may not feel the same.

Over 42 per cent of employed servicemen feel that their bosses prefer to hire workers who do not have NS commitments.

Dr Lim Wee Kiak, a CSNS member and Member of Parliament, said the committee is exploring ways to engage employers, for example, by doing more to recognise companies which support NS.

But another CSNS member, Mr Wong Wei Peng, who runs a training and educational company, said the incentives given to employers should move beyond awards or monetary benefits.

Despite these concerns about hiring attitudes, 89 per cent of employed servicemen agreed that employers are supportive, and nearly 77 per cent said employers adjusted their workload when taking into account their NS commitments. –

See more at: <http://news.omy.sg/News/Local-News/Women-more-upbeat-about-NS-211286#sthash.S1SqLCmu.dpuf>