

Singaporeans' Attitudes to National Service

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Preamble

- National Defence is the bedrock of Singapore's prosperity, and NS is a critical component in the security architecture
- NS policy is grounded in 3 principles: Serves a critical need, equitable and universal implementation; policy is deeply entrenched after 46 years
- NS institution under media spotlight in recent years due to the changing demography and social landscape, e.g., rising public expectations, higher education levels, a mobile workforce in a global economy
- Independent study commissioned by the Committee to Strengthen National Service

Research Objectives

- What does NS mean to Singaporeans? Do Singaporeans see the need for and importance of NS for the future? What is the impact of NS?
- Perceived recognition and support of NS by employers, family members, and the public
- Organisational support for servicemen, policy fairness, training safety, quality of medical support, and NS duration
- Opinions on PRs and women contributing to defence
- Compare views between :
 - a. NS men who have and have not completed ICT
 - b. Men and women
- Ways to strengthen the NS institution

Overview

1. NS goes beyond meeting our defence imperative. It is an institution for nation building and embodies many of our values
2. Positive perception and support of NS. Trust in the institution: safety/medical care and feedback/access to information
3. About 4 out of 5 servicemen perceived their employers to be supportive of NS, while 2 out of 5 felt that employers prefer to hire people without NS commitments
4. Women more positive about NS than men
5. Women expressed interest to contribute to defence as volunteers. For some, this may include 2 years of full-time NS
6. Most Singaporeans agreed that 1st-Gen PRs should be allowed to contribute to defence as volunteers.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

- N = 1,251 Singapore citizens
- Simple random sampling method, weighted by race, age, and gender
- Field work: 12 July – 15 Sept 2013
- Dept of Statistics (DOS) provided the sampling frame of households; random selection in each household using last birthday method
- Prospective participants received an invitation letter by mail, signed by NUS Principal Investigator, Dr Leong Chan-Hoong, followed by interviewers' house visits
- Survey interview 20-30min duration; \$10 supermarket voucher as token of appreciation

Results

What does NS mean to me?

No.	Frequency %	Not important at all (1)	Not so important (2)	A little important (3)	Important (4)	Very important (5)	Extremely important (6)	Mean
1	To instil discipline and values among the young	0.2	1.2	2.1	29.9	38.5	28.1	4.90
2	For National Defence	0.1	1.4	2.1	31.5	38.5	26.4	4.86
3	To transform boys to men	0.9	1.2	3.1	31.7	35.1	28.0	4.83
4	For National Education	1.2	2.7	5.0	34.4	34.5	22.2	4.65
5	To build a unique Singaporean identity	0.6	2.4	5.2	39.3	32.6	19.9	4.61
6	To promote understanding between people from different backgrounds	0.4	2.6	5.9	41.7	32.0	17.4	4.55
7	To learn skills useful for civilian job employment	2.5	4.8	10.9	34.7	30.9	16.3	4.35
8	To integrate new immigrants into our society	4.8	10.2	13.9	34.3	22.9	13.9	4.02

Singaporeans see NS fulfilling a social mission beyond its defence mandate

Employers' Support for NS (pp. 1)

Employed Servicemen Only

No.	Frequency %	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Slightly agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)	Mean
1	My employer is/was supportive of my NS (i.e. ICT) commitments	1.0	6.3	3.7	18.8	53.9	16.3	4.67
2	My employer adjusts/adjusted my workload taking into account my NS commitments	4.2	9.8	9.1	20.9	47.1	8.9	4.24
3	My employer prefers/preferred to hire people who do not have NS commitments	7.1	39.9	10.8	15.5	19.3	7.3	3.22

89% agree that employers are supportive

76.9% agree that employers adjusted workload

42.1% agree that employers prefer to hire people without NS commitments

Most agree that employers support and accommodate servicemen but given a choice they may prefer to hire people without NS commitments

Employers' Support for NS (pp. 2)

Frequency %	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Slightly agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)	Mean
Employers in Singapore are supportive of their employees' NS commitments							
Overall	0.7	1.9	2.8	21.1	55.5	18.1	4.83
- Public (excl. NS servicemen)	0.6	1.2	2.8	20.8	56.7	18.0	4.86
- NS servicemen	0.9	3.2	2.6	21.8	53.2	18.3	4.78

No statistical difference in perceptions between the public and NS servicemen on employers' support

Family Support for NS

Servicemen and NSF

Frequency (%)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Slightly agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)	Mean
My family is supportive/has been supportive of my NS commitments	0.5	1.9	2.4	22.6	51.2	21.5	4.87

95% agreed

Servicemen and Public

Frequency (%)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Slightly agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)	Mean
I am proud that my family member serves or has served NS	0.4	1.0	1.3	16.2	50.7	30.4	5.07

97% agreed

Servicemen enjoy the support from family members

Belief in the Need for NS

Servicemen and Public

No.	Frequency (%)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Slightly agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)	Mean
1	NS is necessary for the defence of Singapore	0.4	0.6	0.5	8.3	48.0	42.2	5.30
2	NS provides the security needed for Singapore to develop and prosper	0.4	0.6	0.6	9.4	52.5	36.5	5.22

Both items > 98%

NS is regarded as a cornerstone for the security and prosperity of Singapore

Recognition of NS Contributions from servicemen

Frequency (%)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Slightly agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)	Mean
The government adequately recognizes the NS contributions of servicemen	0.9	1.3	2.4	15.3	57.3	22.8	4.95
The public adequately recognizes the NS contributions of servicemen					> 95%		
Overall	0.4	1.4	2.2	21.2	53.6	21.3	4.90
- Public (excl. NS servicemen)	0.2	0.8	1.9	20.2	53.8	23.1	4.96
- All NS servicemen	0.9	2.6	2.7	23.0	53.2	17.6	4.78

The public rated significantly higher than NS servicemen on whether NS servicemen are appreciated by the community at large

Benefits and Impact of NS (pp. 1)

No.	Frequency (%)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Slightly agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)	Mean
1	NS will continue to be important for Singapore in the future	1.0	0.6	0.8	9.9	54.6	33.2	5.16
2	NS is essential/necessary for Singapore's survival	0.6	1.4	1.5	11.5	51.7	33.2	5.12
3	NS teaches many important life values	0.2	1.0	1.8	14.9	56.5	25.6	5.03
4	NS is a rite of passage for the Singapore man	0.4	0.8	1.5	15.6	57.2	24.3	5.01
5	NS increases the sense of rootedness to Singapore	0.7	1.1	1.2	17.2	53.6	26.2	5.00
6	NS develops leadership skills	0.2	1.5	1.2	15.0	59.4	22.6	5.00
7	NS makes a person more resilient (able to recover from failures or cope with difficulties)	0.1	1.0	1.4	16.2	58.7	22.6	5.00

Benefits and impact of NS (pp.2)

No.	Frequency (%)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Slightly agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)	Mean
8	NS provides opportunities to learn something useful	0.4	1.5	3.3	14.6	55.8	24.4	4.97
9	NS helps Singaporeans understand people from different backgrounds	0.3	1.1	1.8	18.6	57.9	20.3	4.94
10	NS improves one's civilian employment prospects	1.5	4.7	5.4	25.2	49.1	14.1	4.58

Strong and positive impact of NS for nation building and defence/security reasons

Enhancing employment prospects the least favourable rating although it is positively regarded with close to 90% agreement

Perceived Organisational Support

No.	Frequency (%)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Slightly agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)	Mean
1	Servicemen's contributions during NS are valued	0.9	2.0	2.5	16.8	57.3	20.3	4.89
2	Servicemen's needs are considered during NS	0.7	2.0	3.9	17.2	57.9	18.5	4.85
3	There are feedback channels to suggest improvements to NS	0.9	2.6	4.2	20.7	54.3	17.3	4.77
4	Feedback on NS is taken seriously	1.5	2.6	4.5	22.1	49.9	19.4	4.75
5	Information on NS policies can be easily obtained	0.7	1.6	4.0	17.2	56.4	20.0	4.87

Sufficient organisational support for NSmen, with consideration to their needs and feedback

Policy Fairness

No.	Frequency (%)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Slightly agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)	Mean
1	Servicemen from different family backgrounds are treated equally during NS	1.5	2.2	1.9	19.0	53.0	22.4	4.87
2	NS policies are applied consistently (i.e. in the same way) to everyone in similar situations	0.4	2.0	3.2	19.8	54.1	20.5	4.87

> 94% respondents believe in the impartiality of NS

Training Safety and Medical Support in NS

No.	Frequency (%)	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Slightly agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)	Mean
1	NS training is conducted safely	0.5	2.4	3.1	18.1	60.7	15.2	4.82
2	I have confidence in the medical support that servicemen receive during NS	0.6	2.0	4.1	19.2	56.3	17.8	4.82

Trust and faith in training safety and quality of medical support in NS

NS duration

The current full-time NS duration is 2 years to allow sufficient time for servicemen and units to train and become operationally ready. Do you think the current full time NS duration of 2 years is:	Overall %	Education			Monthly HH income			Gender	
		Sec & below %	Dip. %	Deg. %	< \$4k %	\$4k-\$9k %	>\$9k %	Men %	Women %
• far too long	4.2	3.8	5.1	4.1	4.7	4.0	6.0	6.1	2.3
• slightly too long	10.3	9.9	12.6	9.2	13.6	11.7	7.9	11.3	9.4
• just right	83.8	85.2	80.7	82.9	81.3	82.4	83.8	80.3	87.3
• slightly too short	1.6	1.0	1.6	3.7	0.3	1.7	2.3	2.2	1.0
• far too short	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0

Overall, 83.8% think that 2-year NS duration is “just right” in fulfilling its defence mandate; women more likely than men

**NSmen who have and have
not completed ICT:**

**Inter-generational difference
on NS experience**

NSmen who have and have not completed ICT

- Compares NS experience between NSmen who have (older servicemen) and have not (younger servicemen) completed ICT
- Both groups share similar attitudes on having women and first-gen PRs contribute to defence; policy fairness; NS as a rite of passage for the Singaporean man, and the importance of NS in nation building
- Older NSmen more likely to think that NS is necessary for the defence and survival of Singapore; believe that servicemen's contributions during NS are valued
- Younger NSmen reported having more access to information on NS policies and a stronger safety culture

NSmen who have and have not completed ICT

Examples (with significant differences)	Group Mean	
	NSman who is still serving ICT	NSman who completed ICT
<u>Belief in the Need for NS</u>		
NS is necessary for the defence of Singapore	5.09	5.32
NS provides the security needed for Singapore to develop & prosper	5.04	5.17
<u>Perceived Organisational Support</u>		
Servicemen's contributions during NS are valued	4.59	4.80
Feedback on NS is taken seriously	4.44	4.60
Information on NS policies can be easily obtained	4.91	4.77
<u>Training Safety</u>		
NS training is conducted safely	4.92	4.77
<u>Benefits and Impact of NS</u>		
NS is essential/necessary for Singapore's survival	4.95	5.14
NS provides opportunities to learn something useful	4.76	4.90

NSmen who have and have not completed ICT

Frequency (% yes)	Overall sample	NSman who is still serving ICT	NSman who completed ICT
<i>Serving NS</i>			
Should women serve NS?	38.8	31.3	41.7
<i>Contribute to defence as volunteers</i>			
Should women be allowed to contribute to defence as a volunteer?	80.7	82.1	81.6
Today, those who are already working when they take up PR are administratively exempted from serving NS. Should this group to be allowed to contribute to defence as a volunteer?	77.4	82.7	76.0

Younger NSmen more conservative with regard to women serving NS. They would like 1st Gen PRs to contribute to defence as volunteers

How should women contribute to defence as volunteers?

Frequency (% yes)	Overall sample	NS servicemen
Multiple selections		
• Serve 2-year full-time NS	23.1	24.6
• Serve a shorter military service	53.4	52.9
• Serve in the defence force in a professional role	70.7	71.0
• Serve as volunteer to help out in NS events	71.8	70.3

How should 1st Gen PRs contribute to defence as volunteers?

Frequency (% yes)	Overall sample	NS servicemen
Multiple selections		
• Serve 2-year full-time NS	43.5	48.6
• Serve a shorter military service	45.9	44.6
• Serve in the defence force in a professional role	62.6	63.3
• Serve as volunteer to help out in NS events	63.7	65.0

Gender differences on NS attitudes

Gender differences on NS attitudes

- Women significantly more upbeat about the NS experience, e.g., belief in the need for NS; recognition of servicemen's contribution; perceived organisational support; policy fairness, and impact of NS on nation building
- Both men and women express the same degree of confidence in the quality of medical support and training safety, and the importance of NS for Singapore's survival
- Both men and women are not in favour of mandatory NS for women but are equally receptive to women volunteering to support defence, including NS

Gender differences on NS attitudes

Examples (with significant differences)	Group Mean	
	Men	Women
<u>Belief in the Need for NS</u>		
NS is necessary for the defence of Singapore	5.25	5.34
NS provides the security needed for Singapore to develop and prosper	5.16	5.28
<u>Perceived Organisational Support (POS)</u>		
Servicemen's contributions during NS are valued	4.78	4.99
Servicemen's needs are considered during NS	4.73	4.97
There are feedback channels to suggest improvements to NS	4.65	4.89
Feedback on NS is taken seriously	4.59	4.92
Information on NS policies can be easily obtained	4.81	4.93
<u>Policy Fairness</u>		
Servicemen from different family backgrounds are treated equally during NS	4.83	4.92
NS policies are applied consistently (i.e. in the same way) to everyone in similar situations	4.80	4.94

Gender differences on NS attitudes

Examples (with significant differences)	Group Mean	
	Men	Women
<u>Benefits and Impact of NS</u>		
NS is a rite of passage for the Singapore man	4.98	5.04
NS increases the sense of rootedness to Singapore	4.95	5.05
NS provides opportunities to learn something useful	4.88	5.06
NS improves one's civilian employment prospects	4.48	4.69
NS will continue to be important for Singapore in the future	5.11	5.22
<u>What does NS mean to me?</u>		
NS is To build a unique Singaporean identity	4.56	4.65
NS is To integrate new immigrants into our society	3.92	4.12
NS is To transform boys to men	4.78	4.88
NS is For National Education	4.55	4.75
NS is To learn skills useful for civilian job employment	4.24	4.47

Gender differences on NS attitudes

NS for Women

Frequency (%)	Definitely No (1)	No (2)	Maybe No (3)	Maybe Yes (4)	Yes (5)	Definitely Yes (6)	Mean
Should women serve NS?							
Overall	11.1	30.8	19.3	26.4	11.4	1.0	2.99
• Men	8.0	31.4	18.8	26.6	13.6	1.6	3.11
• Women	14.1	30.3	19.9	26.2	9.2	0.4	2.87

41.8%

35.8%

Women Contribution to Defence as Volunteers

Frequency (%)	Definitely No (1)	No (2)	Maybe No (3)	Maybe Yes (4)	Yes (5)	Definitely Yes (6)	Mean
Should women be allowed to contribute to defence as a volunteer?							
Overall	1.3	8.1	9.9	28.0	41.4	11.3	4.34
• Men	1.2	8.2	9.3	25.9	44.4	11.1	4.37
• Women	1.5	8.1	10.5	30.0	38.5	11.5	4.31

> 80%

Gender differences on women serving NS

How can women contribute to defence as volunteers?

Multiple selections	% of men who agreed with statement	% of women who agreed with statement	% of women who will take up the option for herself
• Serve 2-year full-time NS	24.5	21.7	9.3
• Serve a shorter military service	54.1	52.7	21.9
• Serve in the defence force in a professional role	70.3	71.1	35.8
• Serve as volunteer to help out in NS events	71.1	72.5	56.4

% of women below 30 years old who said they would take up option to volunteer 2-year full-time NS = 13.6%

Strengthening NS

Strengthening NS

No.	Frequency (%)	Not important at all (1)	Not so important (2)	A little Important (3)	Important (4)	Very important (5)	Extremely important (6)	Mean
1	More recognition for servicemen at certain stages of NS such as completion of full-time NS (ORD) and ICT	0.2	0.9	0.6	13.9	53.3	31.2	5.13
2	More public recognition for servicemen's contributions	0.1	0.8	0.8	13.3	55.5	29.5	5.12
3	More matching of servicemen's personal skills and abilities to NS vocations	0.2	1.3	1.4	14.1	50.8	32.1	5.10
4	More recognition for servicemen at certain life stages such as marriage and childbirth	0.2	1.3	1.4	15.5	49.2	32.4	5.10
5	More engagement with the public to improve understanding of NS e.g. army open house	0.2	2.7	4.3	17.2	52.1	23.6	4.89
6	More options for ICT schedule	0.4	4.4	2.0	17.6	51.7	24.0	4.88
7	More options on NS enlistment dates	0.9	8.5	3.7	17.6	45.6	23.8	4.70

Most Important Item to Motivate Servicemen

No.	Description	Overall %	Public (excl. svcm) %	Servicemen %
1	More matching of servicemen's personal skills and abilities to NS vocations	22.0	22.5	21.0
2	More public recognition for servicemen's contributions	16.3	17.4	14.2
3	More recognition for servicemen at certain life stages such as marriage and childbirth	14.5	14.1	15.3
4	More options on NS enlistment dates	13.6	14.4	12.0
5	More options for ICT schedule	13.3	10.1	19.9
6	More recognition for servicemen at certain stages of NS such as completion of full-time NS (ORD) and In-Camp Training	11.6	11.8	11.2
7	More engagement with the public to improve understanding of NS e.g. army open house	8.7	9.8	6.4

No dominant factor but matching of skills and vocations has the highest % point. Different opinion on what is considered important between public and servicemen on the next most important item.

Discussion

Discussion

- Strong public support for NS. NS policy is well regarded by most Singaporeans. Policy goes beyond defence mandate
- Social equaliser and embodies fairness, equality, and identity
- NSmen of all ages have a mainly positive view of NS
- About 4 out of 5 Servicemen perceived employers to be supportive of their NS commitments, but 2 out of 5 also believed employers prefer to hire people without NS commitments

Discussion

- Women feel more upbeat about 2-year full-time NS than men, this could reflect the lack of actual personal experience with NS
- Regardless of background, Singaporeans are not in favour of compulsory NS for women, but 80.7% are receptive to women contributing to defence as a volunteer
- There is interest among women to contribute to defence on a voluntary basis; for some, this includes 2 years of full-time NS
- Regardless of background, about two-third of Singaporeans are receptive to 1st Gen PRs contributing to defence as a volunteer

Appendix

Age Group

Distribution by Age Group	%
15-19 yrs	8.4
20-29 yrs	16.7
30-39 yrs	16.8
40-49 yrs	19.1
50-59 yrs	19.5
60 yrs & above	19.5
Total	100.0

Note: This sampling methodology included PR respondents but as the numbers were too small to be meaningful, PR data was excluded from further analysis.

Gender

Distribution by Gender	%
Male	49.6
Female	50.4
Total	100.0

Note: This sampling methodology included PR respondents but as the numbers were too small to be meaningful, PR data was excluded from further analysis.

Race

Distribution by Race	%
Chinese	77.8
Malay	13.9
Indian	7.2
Others	1.0
Total	100.0

Note: This sampling methodology included PR respondents but as the numbers were too small to be meaningful, PR data was excluded from further analysis.

Marital Status

Distribution by Marital Status	%
Single, Never Married	32.6
Married	61.3
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	6.0
Total	100.0

Employment Status

Employment Status	%
Working - Employee	49.6
Working - Self-employed	5.9
Homemaker	18.3
Student	12.4
Full-time National Service	2.5
Retiree	7.5
Unemployed	3.8
Others	0.1
Total	100.0

Highest Educational Qualification

Distribution by Education*	%
Below Secondary	26.3
Secondary	22.7
Post-secondary (non-tertiary)	10.9
Diploma & Prof Qualification	20.1
University	20.0
Total	100.0

* Statistics based on age 25 and above

Religion

Religion	%
Buddhism	38.3
Christianity - Protestant	10.3
Christianity - Catholicism	8.5
Hindusm	4.7
Islam	14.8
Sikhism	0.2
Taoism	7.0
No Religion/Free-Thinker	16.1
Total	100.0

Household Income

Distribution by Household Income

	% *
Below \$1,000	3.1
\$1,000 to \$1,999	7.5
\$2,000 to \$2,999	10.9
\$3,000 to \$3,999	14.2
\$4,000 to \$4,999	11.9
\$5,000 to \$5,999	9.9
\$6,000 to \$6,999	8.0
\$7,000 to \$7,999	6.8
\$8,000 to \$8,999	4.9
\$9,000 to \$9,999	2.4
\$10,000 & above	12.5
No household Income	7.8
Total	100.0

* Excludes 15.1% who did not disclose HH income

Housing Type

Distribution by Housing Type

	%
HDB 1 and 2 room	6.8
HDB 3 room	22.0
HDB 4 room	38.1
HDB 5 room & Executive Flat	20.9
Private condo, landed and others	12.2
Total	100.0