IPS Roundtable

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"Survey on Attitudes to Emigration"

IPS Meeting Room

NUS National University of Singapore

Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

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Survey on Emigration Attitudes of Young Singaporeans

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Outline

- Research Objectives
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RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Background

- 'Wanted: Strong wings, deep roots' SM Goh (28/6/09, ST)

- 'PM warns of talent loss, leaving no central core to lead S'pore' (12/4/08, ST)

- MM's comment (14/2/2008, CNA) on top tier talent moving out of Singapore

- ESC report (Jan 2010) emphasised the need to maintain and deepen contact with overseas Singaporeans

Research Objectives

This survey takes a *prospective* approach to studying emigration attitudes of young Singaporeans still in Singapore.

'Emigration' is defined as relocating to another country permanently or for an extended period of time, although most think of it as only the former.

It is based on a face-to-face interview, using an attitudinal survey instrument.

What are the views of young Singaporeans on emigration?

METHODOLOGY

Sample Profile

Interview Method	Door to Door Interview
Respondent Criteria	Singapore citizens aged 19 to 30 yrs old
Sampling	Quota sample with age, gender and race as parameters using DOS June 2009
Sample Size	2013 interviews
Fieldwork	26 December 2009 to 19 March 2010

* Demographic Breakdown in Appendix

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Main Findings

Statistical analysis suggests that 'Intention to Emigrate' is positively linked to:

- Liberal emigration norms
- Perceived higher status of Singaporeans who have emigrated
- Socio-economic security offered by the recipient country
- Self-rated competence to migrate
- Openness & achievement-oriented values

And negatively related to:

- Perceived social mobility
- Sense of well-being, national pride and familial ties
- Perceived threat from foreign talent

Correlation between Variables

No.	Measurements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1	Intention to Emigrate	-													
2	Emigrate in Next 5 Years	.28***	-												
3	Emigration Attitude	.28**	.42***	-											
4	Social Norm	.24**	.31***	.67**	-										
5	Social Status	.16**	.22***	.51*	.28**	-									
6	Social-economic Security	.25**	.38***	.94**	.45**	.34**	-								
7	Social Mobility	-.24**	-.12***	-.08**	-.06**	-.01	-.09**	-							
8	Ability to Emigrate	.22*	.30***	.38**	.32**	.17**	.35**	.02	-						
9	Threat	-.07**	.13***	.30	.18**	.17**	.29**	.11**	.18**	-					
10	Relative Deprivation	-.01	.19***	.38**	.22**	.20**	.36**	.22**	.14**	.38**	-				
11	National Pride	-.23**	-.10***	-.07**	-.06*	-.00	-.08**	-.06**	.36**	.17**	.06**	-			
12	Subjective Well-being	-.14**	.01	.03	.01	.05*	.02	.14**	.27**	.10**	.10**	.34**	-		
13	SG Economic Future	-.17**	-.04	.03	.03	.01	.01	.03	.30**	.16**	.15**	.34**	.37**	-	
14	Family Ties	-.16**	.03	.14**	.09**	.07**	.12**	.08**	.30**	.26**	.39**	.23**	.22**	.36**	-

•p < .05; ** p < .01   Note: Emigration Attitude = Social Norm + Social Status + Socio-economic Security

Multiple Hierarchical Regression

Step	Predictors (Std. Beta Coeff. at Step 3)	DV1: Intention to Emigrate (composite 5 items)	DV2: I will actively examine the possibility of migrating to another country within the next 5 years.
1	Age	-0.05*	0.03
	Gender (Dummy)	-0.03	0.00
	Housing Type	0.02	0.01
	Spoke English at Home (Dummy)	-0.01	0.04
	Highest Education Attainment	-0.01	0.02
	HH Income	0.05	-0.02
	Employed (Dummy)	0.01	0.03
	Chinese (Dummy)	0.03	-0.00
	Malay (Dummy)	-0.04	0.02
2	Social Norm	0.13***	0.12***
	Social Status	0.07**	0.06**
	Socio-economic Security	0.14***	0.21***
	Social Mobility	-0.11***	-0.09***
	Ability to Emigrate	0.14***	0.15***
	Threat from FT	-0.08***	0.02

Multiple Hierarchical Regression

Step	Predictors (Std. Beta Coeff. at Step 3)	DV1: Intention to Emigrate (Composite of 5 items)	DV2: I will actively examine the possibility of migrating to another country within the next 5 years.
	Relative Deprivation from FT	-0.03	0.05
	National Pride	-0.08**	-0.03
	Family Ties	-0.09***	-0.02
	Singapore's Economic Future	-0.04	-0.02
	Subjective Well-being	-0.06**	0.03
3	Openness – Conservation ^	0.06**	0.04*
	Self-enhancement – Self-transcendence ^	0.05*	0.01
	Step 1	R^2 = 0.02	R^2 = 0.03
	Step 2	R^2 = 0.20	R^2 = 0.21
	Step 3	R^2 = 0.21	R^2 = 0.21
		$F_{(22, 1947)}$=22.77, p<.001	$F_{(22, 1947)}$=23.27, p<.001

^ Pairwise orthogonal assumption requires one value score to be deducted from the other in a regression model.

ROOTEDNESS
What keeps you rooted to Singapore?

(One item for rootedness)

* Select up to a maximum of 5 items from a 26-item checklist

Top Factors of Rootedness
(and % level of endorsement)

Having Friends Here	39.8
Having Family Members Here	39.0
Home Ownership	33.4
Financial Reward	31.9
Public Health and Safety	27.5
Equal Opportunity for Everyone	27.5

No.	Item	%
	Quality of Life	
1	**Home ownership**	**33.4**
2	Public health and safety	27.5
3	Medical care	23.6
4	Educational opportunities	20.8
5	Opportunities to improve standard of living	18.8
6	Variety of entertainment, cultural and leisure activities	20.8
	Finance and Career	
7	**Financial reward**	**31.9**
8	Economic opportunities and dynamism	13.5
9	Connectedness to the region and world	11.1
10	Career development	22.0
	Social Bonding and Well-being	
11	**Having friends here**	**39.8**
12	**Having family members here**	**39.0**
13	Having familiar landmarks and authentic buildings	10.0
14	Able to plan and raise a family here	20.5
15	Able to lead an enjoyable life	20.4
16	Able to lead a spiritual life	12.3
17	A fair, compassionate and caring society	11.9
18	Openness to diversity	18.4
	Socio-Political Considerations	
19	Equal opportunity for everyone	27.5
20	Meritocracy in public administration	7.7
21	Transparency and accountability	8.1
22	Political stability	20.5
23	Social stability	18.9
24	Competent government	11.1
25	Political engagement	5.1
26	Personal autonomy	3.5

CLUSTER ANALYSIS

Main Findings

Intersection of 'Intention to Emigrate' with other socio-psychological factors like family bonding, national pride, subjective well-being, social norms, and socio-economic security.

Singaporeans can be differentiated into four distinct groups each with unique socio-psychological attitudes and demographic profiles on the questions on 'Intention to Emigrate'.

The finding reinforces the view that emigration is a multi-dimensional and non-monolithic variable.

Cluster Analysis

Cluster analysis is a statistical method that 'groups' people with similar inclinations on chosen factors.

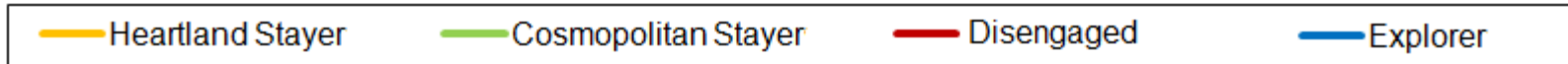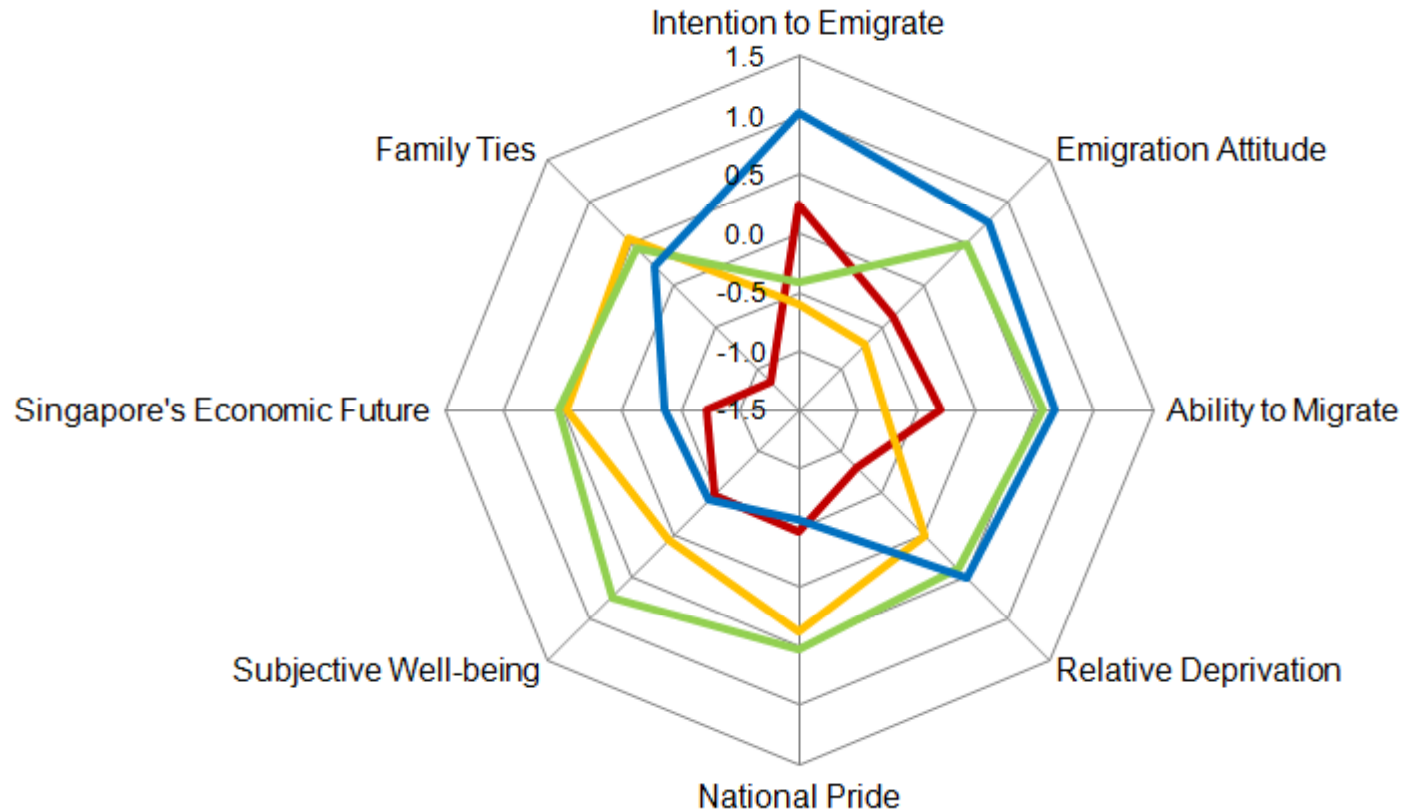8 socio-psychological factors were used in the analysis:

1. Intention to Emigrate
2. Emigration Attitude (Social Norm + Status + Socio-economic Security)
3. Ability to Emigrate
4. Relative Deprivation from Foreign Talent
5. National Pride
6. Subjective Well-being
7. Singapore's Economic Future
8. Family Ties

Main Findings

Four clusters:

1. Heartland Stayer (26.5%)
2. Cosmopolitan Stayer (26.7%)
3. Disengaged (26.5%)
4. Explorer (20.2%)

Socio-psychological Profiles of Young Singaporeans

Heartland Stayer: 26.5%   Cosmopolitan Stayer: 26.7%   Disengaged: 26.5%   Explorer: 20.2%

Heartland Stayer (26.5%)

- Conservative attitude towards emigration
- Strong family ties and national pride
- Optimistic about Singapore's economic future
- Improve their standard of living in S'pore rather than leave
- Endorse communal values
- No strong opinion towards foreign talent

- Factors of rootedness: Having family members (48.1%) & friends (40.3%) here, Home ownership (34.8%)

- Disproportionately more females, people in their late teens/ early 20s, non-English speakers, middle income families, and residents of 4-room HDB flats.

Cosmopolitan Stayer (26.7%)

- Not keen to relocate but has a liberal view on emigration
- Strong family ties and national pride
- Positive economic outlook
- Highest level of subjective well-being
- Embraced conservative values
- Felt threatened by foreign talent

- Factors of rootedness: Having family (46.8%) members and friends (39.6%) here, Home ownership (35.5%)

- Disproportionately more females, late 20's, better educated, and from English-speaking families.

Disengaged (26.5%)

- No strong opinion on emigration
- Disconnected from their families and the country
- Pessimistic about Singapore's economic future
- Low ratings on subjective well-being
- Perceived impediment to upward social mobility.
- Open to new experiences, motivated by personal needs
- Not threatened by foreign talent

- Factors of rootedness: Having friends here (37.1%), Financial reward (36.3%), Variety of entertainment, cultural & leisure activities (35.8%)

- Disproportionately more people from their late 20's, middle-high income families, lived in bigger more expensive housing type

Explorer (20.2%)

- Greatest intention to emigrate
- Liberal attitude towards emigration
- Strong family ties but did not feel connected to the country
- Pessimistic view on Singapore's economic future
- Lower scores on subjective well-being & social mobility.
- Embraced communal values and receptive to new experiences
- Felt threatened by foreign talent

- Factors of rootedness: Having friends (43%) and family members (39.1%) here, and Financial reward (30.2%)

- Disproportionately more people from middle-high income families, predominantly English speakers, and better educated

CONCLUSION

Anchors to Singapore are the quality of relations with friends, family members and home ownership. Equal opportunities, safety and security are also important. Some of these are personal and affective, some of these are areas that public policy has leverage over.

There are four different profiles of young Singaporeans with regard to their view on emigration.

More than 50% of the sample had a low intention to emigrate, were strongly rooted by their social ties and were positive about the country and their prospects here. These were the Cosmopolitan and the Heartland Stayers.

The Explorers, 20.2%, are rooted via their ties with friends and family and value 'financial reward' highly. They are not as optimistic about their life in Singapore as the 'stayers' and they feel threatened by the presence of foreign talent. They expressed a strong desire to work and live abroad.

The Disengaged, 26.5%, have no strong opinion on emigration but have lower social anchors to the country and have a poorer sense of well-being.

The heterogeneity of young Singaporeans makes it challenging for policymakers to engage them on the issue of rootedness.

We should continue to complement the discussion of national obligations as citizens, with family bonding and friendship network.

Looking at the anchors, issues of work-life balance, ensuring equal opportunities, and home ownership, will continue to be important areas of public policy to address.

The End

Sample Profile

Sample Profile

Variable	Frequency	%
Age		
19 – 21 years old	567	28.2
22 – 24 years old	458	22.8
25 – 27 years old	474	23.5
28 – 30 years old	514	25.5
Language Spoken at Home		
English	926	46.0
Mandarin	833	41.4
Malay	189	9.4
Tamil	47	2.3
Others	18	.9

Sample Profile

Variable	N (Freq.)	%
Place of Birth		
Singapore	1965	97.6
Malaysia	22	1.1
Others	26	1.2
Gender		
Male	988	49.1
Female	1025	50.9
Race		
Chinese	1514	75.2
Malay	287	14.3
Indian	183	9.1
Others	29	1.4

Sample Profile

Variable	N (Freq.)	%
Educational Qualification		
No qualification/Lower Primary	3	.1
Primary	10	.5
Lower Secondary	27	1.3
Secondary	289	14.4
Upper Secondary	472	23.4
Polytechnic Diploma	541	26.9
Other Diploma/ Professional Qualification	244	12.1
Degree	408	20.3
Post-graduate Qualification	19	.9

Sample Profile

Variable	N (Freq.)	%
Religion		
Taoism	227	11.3
Buddhism	566	28.1
Islam	300	14.9
Hinduism	129	6.4
Christianity	374	18.6
Catholicism	82	4.1
Others	5	.2
No Religion	330	16.4

Sample Profile

Variable	N (Freq.)	%
Total Gross Monthly Household Income		
Below $500	8	.4
$500 to $999	18	.9
$1,000 to $1,999	87	4.3
$2,000 to $2,999	204	10.1
$3,000 to $3,999	267	13.3
$4,000 to $4,999	301	15.0
$5,000 to $5,999	309	15.4
$6,000 to $6,999	263	13.1
$7,000 to $7,999	162	8.0
$8,000 to $8,999	134	6.7
$9,000 to $9,999	66	3.3
$10,000 and above	151	7.5
Refused	43	2.1

Sample Profile

Variable	N (Freq.)	%
Accommodation Type		
HDB 1 – 3 Room	353	17.5
HDB 4 Room	780	38.7
HDB 5 Room	397	19.7
Executive/Maisonette	263	13.1
Condominium/HUDC/Terrace/ Semi-detached/Bungalow	220	10.9

Survey Questions

Intention to Work and Live Abroad

No.	Item	Never (%)	Once in Awhile (%)	Frequently (%)	Very Frequently (%)	All the time (%)
1	How often do you think about pursuing an overseas education?	15.6	39.0	29.3	13.3	2.7
2	How often do you think about searching for better job prospects abroad?	15.2	39.2	27.0	15.1	3.6
3	How often do you think about setting up a business in another country?	29.1	31.8	21.7	13.9	3.5
4	How often do you think about working and living in another country for an extended period of time?	14.8	35.0	27.4	17.6	5.2
5	How often do you think about emigrating to another country to live there permanently?	22.2	35.7	21.0	14.6	6.6

Emigrate In the Next 5 Yrs ... ...

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree or Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)
Others				
1	I will actively examine the possibility of emigrating to another country within the next 5 years	38.9	34.8	26.4

Emigration Attitudes: Social Norms

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree or Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)
Social Norms				
1	Many of my Singaporean friends want to emigrate	34.7	35.8	29.5
2	My friends and family members think I should emigrate	49.9	32.7	17.3
3	Getting PR status in another country is becoming a popular trend among the young in Singapore	31.1	35.8	33

Emigration Attitudes: Social Status

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree or Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)
Social Status				
4	People who have successfully emigrated overseas enjoy a higher social status compared to those who remain in Singapore	34.9	36.3	28.8
5	The ability to emigrate is an indication of a person's success and competence	34	32.8	33.2

Emigration Attitudes: Socio-economic Security

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree or Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)
Social-Economic Security				
6	Emigrating overseas can provide a "backup plan" in case Singapore fails	33.7	33.5	32.8
7	Increase in emigration is inevitable as Singapore gets more stressful and competitive	29.4	27.3	43.3
8	Being a PR overseas opens up more opportunities for me	28.9	34.4	36.8
9	Singapore's future has become too unpredictable and emigration is the best option	36.8	35.7	27.5
10	Compared to Singapore, many overseas countries can offer a better environment to raise a family	34.9	35.7	29.4

Emigration Attitudes: Socio-economic Security

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree or Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)
Social-Economic Security				
11	Singaporeans want to emigrate because there are too many foreign talent here	31.2	31.7	37.0
12	Emigration is a solution to problems related to work needs	34.2	31.5	34.3
13	Emigration is a solution to problems related to educational needs	34.5	32.2	33.2
14	Emigration is a solution to problems related to security needs	47.5	30.2	22.3
15	Emigration is a solution to problems related to social needs (e.g. raising a family)	35.9	35.4	28.7

Ability to Emigrate

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree or Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)
Ability to Emigrate				
1	I can easily emigrate to other countries if I want to do so	32.7	40.0	27.2
2	My family's social network can help me emigrate easily	41.7	34.6	23.6
3	My family's business network can help me emigrate easily	44.4	32.7	22.8
4	The educational qualifications that I earned in Singapore enabled me to emigrate easily	33.2	34.2	32.7

Social Mobility

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree or Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)
Social Mobility				
1	I prefer to improve my socio economic well being in Singapore (e.g. by studying and working hard) rather than to emigrate for a better life	20.0	31.7	48.2
2	I can achieve the things that I want even without leaving Singapore	19.9	34.4	45.6

Foreign Talent: Threats

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree or Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)
Threats from foreign talent				
1	Our job security is compromised due to the influx of foreign talent	23.9	31.2	44.8
2	Having too many foreign talent in Singapore dilute the cohesiveness of our society	27.3	33.7	38.9

Foreign Talent: Relative Deprivation

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree or Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)
Relative Deprivation				
3	Foreign talent is using Singapore as a stepping stone to other developed countries.	21.3	33.2	45.5
4	Many foreign talent on Singapore government scholarship will break their study bond upon graduation	27.1	39.5	33.4
5	Foreign talent enjoys many benefits that a Singaporean is not entitled to have (e.g. housing assistance, scholarships and subsidies)	29.5	36.4	34.2
6	Singaporeans shoulder more social responsibilities compared to foreign talent	20.9	30.8	48.1
7	Many foreign talent are here just for the benefits	18.7	31.6	49.7

National Pride

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree or Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)
1	I would prefer to be a citizen of Singapore than any other country in the world	12.4	30.5	57.2
2	There are some things about Singapore that make me feel ashamed of Singapore	34.5	34.4	31.5
3	The world would be a better place if people from other countries were more like the citizens of Singapore	25.2	36.1	38.7
4	Generally speaking, Singapore is a better country than most other countries	15.8	32.0	52.2
5	People should support their country even if the country is in the wrong	39.7	34.6	25.7

Subjective Well-being

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree or Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)
1	In most ways, my life is close to my idea of perfection	27.7	39.8	32.6
2	The conditions of my life are excellent	25.5	36.5	38.0
3	I am satisfied with my life	23.3	33.6	43.1
4	So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life	29.8	34.5	35.7
5	If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing	33.1	32.7	34.2

Singapore's Economic Future

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree or Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)
1	Singapore will continue to be economically prosperous over the next 10 years	16.4	33.1	50.5
2	There will be sufficient jobs and opportunities for every Singaporean in the next 10 years	24.0	33.4	42.7
3	Singapore can continue to attract good foreign investment into the country for the next 10 years	17.1	35.1	47.9

Family Ties

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree or Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)
1	My family is always there for me in the times of need	13.9	19.3	66.8
2	I know that my family has my best interests in mind	12.0	18.9	69.0
3	In my opinion, the family is the most important social institution of all	11.5	18.4	70.1