

The Population Conundrum Roundtable on Singapore's Demographic Challenges

Thursday, 3 May 2012
8.30 am – 5.30 pm
Ballroom 2, Level 3, Orchard Hotel



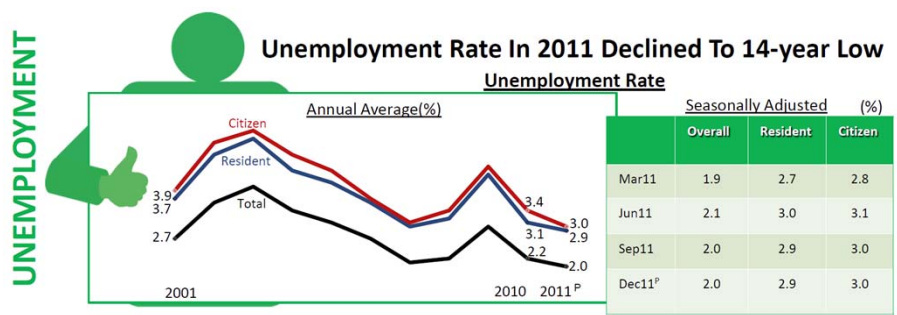
Immigration: Getting the Economy, Society and Polity in Sync

Discussion by
Gillian Koh
Senior Research Fellow
Institute of Policy Studies



The Economic Quandary

Singapore at full employment



Ministry of Manpower, Employment Situation 2011 Infographic, 31 Jan 2012

“Admitting fewer foreign workers also means forgoing business opportunities and accepting slower growth.”

*Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong
2012 New Year’s Day Message*

Biting the Bullet, Taking Heed of the Socio-Political Sentiment

The screenshot shows a news article from the Singaporean newspaper 'The Straits Times'. The article is titled 'Budget 2012: Dependency Ratio Ceilings reduced in certain sectors' and is dated February 17, 2012. The author is Yunita Ong. The article discusses the government's decision to reduce the Dependency Ratio Ceiling (DRC) for certain sectors starting from July 1, 2012. It mentions that the manufacturing DRC will be reduced from 65% to 60%, and the services sector DRC will be lowered from 50% to 45%. The article also notes that the government will be tightening the DRC for workers on the S Pass from 25% to 20% across all sectors from July 1, 2012. A photograph of construction workers is included, with a caption stating: 'The Government will continue to tighten its stance on Singapore's foreign worker workforce. -- ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN'. The article includes social media sharing options for Twitter (6 tweets), Facebook (19 shares), and LinkedIn. There is also a 'PhotoBank' link and a 'Purchase this article for republication' option.

ST. TheBigStory ST Index 2,981.47 +11.7 Singapore weather 26°C 33°C

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Budget 2012: 'Many projects, not enough hands'

Published on Feb 23, 2012 By Daryl Chin

Construction boss Peter Loo has spent 25 years in the sector but he has never been so concerned about the industry's health. The executive director of Eng Lee Engineering cites foreign worker levies and quotas as the biggest threats.

Why so few S'poreans in services sector?

Cut in foreign labour ratios sparks cost concerns

ECONOMISTS are concerned that the latest Budget measures to curb the inflow of foreign workers will inflate labour costs in the short run, thereby raising business expenses. With Singapore's jobless rate at a 14-year low of 2 per cent last year, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) may find it tough to raise their productivity in the short term so as to cut their dependence on foreign workers or offset cost rises, they say. The Straits Times, 20 Feb 2012

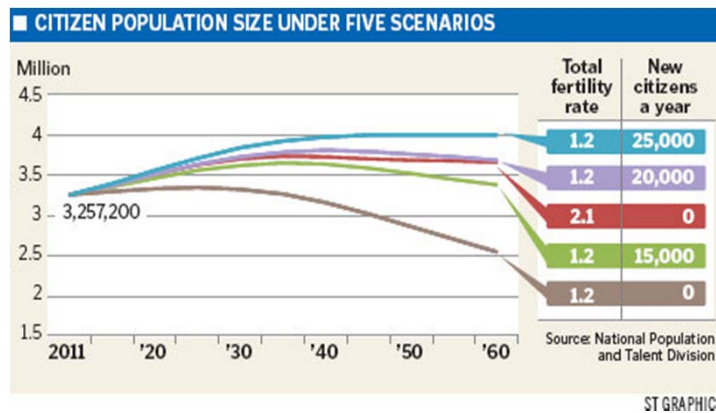
Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy National University of Singapore

IPS Institute of Policy Studies

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NPTD Occasional Paper: "Citizen Population Scenarios", April 2012

If TFR remains at 1.2, an inflow of 25K new citizens will keep size of working-age citizen population relatively stable. The citizen old-age support ratio is key concern. "Raising TFR alone will not fully mitigate effects of ageing citizen population."



Source: The Straits Times, 24 April 2012

The Socio-Psychological Dimension:

What drives anxiety?

Resource competition and congestion



Source: Asiaone.com, Singaporeaninlondon.com, Straitstimes.com

The Discomfort



VRW
Sorry Sir, I don't understand you ... Foreign service staff should be trained to speak English, in order to prevent disputes

Letter from Paul Wee Kian Nghee
 347 words
 3 May 2008
 TODAY (Singapore)
 TDAYSG
 AM N PM
 23
 English
 (c) 2008. MediaCorp Press Ltd.

I REFER to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's May Day Rally speech in which spoke of the rationale and importance of hiring foreigners in Singapore.

Language not key issue in service: Study

We refer to last Sunday's report, "Foreign service staff as good as locals' poll", and earlier reports on the English proficiency of foreign front-line service staff in Singapore.

We would like to take this opportunity to share some relevant findings from the Customer Satisfaction Index for Singapore.

This is a national-level study on customer satisfaction in Singapore. The fieldwork for the study was conducted between May 1 and July 23 last year, and the results were released in April this year.

The study found that 99.16 per cent of 12,388 respondents who were asked about their experiences with front-line service staff indicated that language was not a barrier during interactions with service staff.

This means that only a small 0.84 per cent of the respondents had to use a language different from what they had expected to use when talking to the service staff.

For example, if English was the language that most respondents had expected to use, a majority of them had no problems using English when communicating with service staff.

The more important issue, however, is whether there is effective communication between customers and service staff. The study found that only 90 per cent of respondents felt that they understood what the service staff were telling them, or that their needs and requests were properly understood and communicated across to the service staff.



The conclusion is that language proficiency (be it English or some other language) is a secondary issue which could easily be resolved with the right level of training. The key concern lies in the ability to understand customers and their needs.

The findings present opportunities for companies to invest more time and resources to prepare their service staff (both locals and foreigners) adequately before assigning them to customers.

Service staff should also be trained to be sensitive to the different needs of tourists and local customers, so that they can better anticipate their requirements.

It comes as no surprise that the poll by The Sunday Times revealed that foreign service staff make up for the lack of English ability with their positive service attitude. Language proficiency helps, but it is more valuable for service providers to appreciate what customers want, and deliver the brand promise.

Caroline Lim (M)
 Director
 Institute of Service Excellence
 Singapore Management University

The Straits Times, 29 June 2008



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The Discomfort

This Urban Jungle
 Posted on 20 Jan 2012
Woes of an overseas grad: S'pore doesn't feel like home anymore



ST Breaking News / S'pore
 ST Index: 2,900.19 (+0.7) Singapore was 26°C 33°F
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Breaking News | Parliament | Motoring | Global Perspectives | Communitas | Photos / Art

The Conversation | School Pocket Money Fund | Child Aid

Home > Breaking News > Singapore > Story >

Pictures: A day for curry and camaraderie as Singaporeans come together

Published on Aug 22, 2011

By Kimberly Syleman

Curry was the flavour of the day on Sunday, as thousands of Singaporeans came together to cook some version of this spicy dish and enjoy it with friends and family.

They did so to be part of a ground-up call to "Cook and Share A Pot of Curry", a Facebook event started by freelance writer Florence Leow and her friends.

On Sunday, she and five pals broke bread with China

Friends of full-time national serviceman Benjamin Ang (who took this photo) with plates of curry chicken pasta, which they had for lunch yesterday. For Mr Ang, the cook-a-pot-of-curry day had little to do with indignation. It was a chance to get some friends together and bond over cooking curry. — PHOTO COURTESY OF BENJAMIN ANG

8 Tweets
 156 Shares



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The Discomfort

Residents' Corner in Little India may be cordoned off
Majority of residents support bid to keep out loitering foreigners

Published on Apr 13, 2012
By Gan Shi Ting

A residents' corner at a Little India void deck is likely to be cordoned off.

Residents of four Housing Board blocks in Klang Lane want a permanent barrier erected to keep loitering foreigners away from their newly built recreational area, which has a TV set, games console, treadmill and wireless hotspot.

Foreign workers hanging around Block 671A in Klang Lane last Sunday evening. There are railings built around blocks in Little India to deter people from loitering in the void decks but some still congregate there to chat, eat or nap. — ST PHOTO: NG SZEK LAM

If their wish is granted, it will be a rare move by the Housing Board as Residents' Corners are typically open areas where residents can watch TV together and the elderly attend computer classes, among other activities.



Wrong boy targeted in online witch-hunt for noisy drummer

Published on Apr 10, 2012
By Tessa Wong

Settled social norms and discipline, shaken-up

Source: The Straits Times, Propertyhighlights.blogspot.com

The Solution?



Learning to go local in S'pore

Foreign workers get to understand country better in new scheme

By Melissa KIM

HOTEL server Ruo Jie Ho has never eaten a mooncake, lit lanterns or visited a Hindu temple in all his 24 years.

Yesterday, the South Korean did all three - in less than nine hours.

Under a new integration programme run by the NTUC LearningLab and the Migrant Workers Centre (MWC), Mr Ho joined about 100 other foreign workers on a one-day course that took them around the island to learn about the Singapore way of life.

The workers, mostly from the construction, marine and hospitality sectors, formed the inaugural batch of participants in the KnowSing Singapore Programme yesterday. The organisers hope to sign up 100 workers for the programme over the next 12 months.

The fee, to be borne by the employer, is \$120 for each participant after a 50 per cent subsidy by MWC. But this was waived for yesterday's batch.

Mr Ho, who started working at the Sunlight Merchant Court Hotel just last month, said: "The mooncakes tasted a little strange, but I liked it... I also learnt about pray or traditions when I visited a temple in Little India."

He attended the programme gave him a better understanding of the history and social norms here.

The participants attended short lectures at the TradeHub building in their



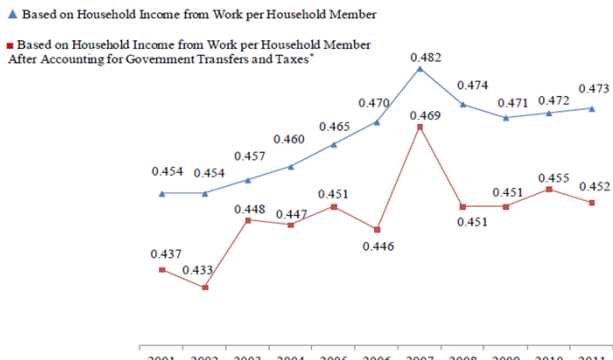
About 100 foreign workers tried mooncakes and visited traditional paper lanterns at the launch of a new integration scheme called the KnowSing Singapore Programme. The participants also went on a field trip to Little India and Chinatown. ST PHOTO: NG SZEK LAM

Will this work at all levels, and with all groups? Is that the expectation?

The New Politics of Identity

Who stole our cheese?

Chart 1 Gini Coefficient Among Resident Employed Households



- Notes:
- (1) Household income from work includes employer CPF contributions.
 - (2) *- Refer to glossary for the government transfers and taxes that were included in the paper. Data on income after accounting for government transfers and taxes for 2011 are preliminary.
 - (3) ** - Based on ranking of all resident employed households by their household income from work per household member.
 - (4) *** - Based on ranking of all resident employed households by their household income from work per household member after accounting for government transfers and taxes.

Singapore Department of Statistics, Key Household Income Trends 2011, February 2012

The Great Bargain

Membership has its privileges. 63% of total population are citizens



Is Singapore still Singaporean?

05:55 AM Nov 21, 2009

by Richard Hartung

Is Singapore still Singaporean? That's the conundrum posed by recent population data. Sometime last year, Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew said that "we must have a core - at least 65 per cent of people born and bred who understand this place" to maintain the national identity of Singapore. After Credentialed early this year that Singapore's population could decrease by 200,000, fr



The Straits Times, 29 June 2008

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Singapore, The Stepping Stone?

300 new citizens give up their status each year

Reasons vary and there is no pattern, says DPM Teo; some MPs concerned about figure

By AMANDA TAN
& TAY SUAN CHIHANG

EACH year, around 300 naturalised citizens relinquish their status, Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean told Parliament on Tuesday.

They are among 1,200 Singaporeans who give up their citizenship each year.

Mr Teo, who is also Home Affairs Min-

ister, said there is no pattern in the reasons given, which vary. Some say they prefer to live overseas, while others are marrying a foreigner or reuniting with their families in other countries.

He was responding to a question from Dr Lim Wee Kiat (Nee Soon GRC), who asked about the number of new citizens who relinquished their status, and their reasons for doing so.

Speaking to The Straits Times the next day, Dr Lim said he felt that 300 was on the "high side".

"Singaporeans are concerned that foreigners are using Singapore as a stepping stone, and when they find greener pastures they will leave us," he said.

"I wanted to find out the characteristic of this group... Did they come here

only for property investment, for instance? I still want to know how long their duration of stay here was."

Nominated MP Eugene Tan agreed, saying the number is "fairly significant" and of concern.

Dr Tan, who is also an assistant law professor at Singapore Management University, said a figure like that "reinforces" public perception that foreigners use Singapore as a stepping stone, or treat the country like a "hotel".

"In deciding who to grant citizenship to, are we too lax? Also, are we doing enough to integrate them?" he asked, adding that "we cannot assume they will seamlessly become citizens just by giving them an identity card".

But Mr Alvin Yeo (Chau Chu Kang

GRC) had a different view, saying the figure is not large, compared with the roughly 20,000 foreigners who are granted citizenship here each year.

"Maybe for those people, plans changed... You'll never get that figure to be zero", he said.

Mr Yeo, who sits on the Government Parliamentary Committee for Home Affairs and Law, said: "Of course we must work to be attractive, but even when people leave, it doesn't mean you're not."

Associate Professor Tan Kim Ser from the National University of Singapore said possible reasons for new citizens leaving include "realising that Singapore is not where they want to spend the rest of their lives, and not feeling a sense of belonging to Singapore".

He added: "Finding better opportunities elsewhere is also a possibility."

Asked if the figure should be of concern, Prof Tan said it "suggests that these foreigners either do not take their new Singapore citizenship seriously, or they did not consider their decisions carefully before applying for citizenship".

However, he also felt that "it is better for Singapore that people who do not wish or cannot continue to be citizens not hold on to a membership they cannot

commit themselves to".

Meanwhile, immigration expert Leong Chan Hoong pointed out that the numbers do not include those who have permanently relocated but did not give up their Singapore citizenship.

Still, he said that regardless of whether the Singaporeans who move away are local-born or naturalised citizens, "the number of emigrants on the whole is relatively small compared with that of other countries".

Dr Leong said tighter immigration policies which may make it harder for people to renounce citizenship may not work.

"Making it more difficult for naturalised citizens to renounce their citizenship will not make them more rooted."

"What we need is a social compact that is agreeable to both the local and foreign-born citizens. We need to ensure that those who take up citizenship understand their rights as citizens, their obligations to Singapore, and the norms, values and ethos practised in our society," he said.

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The Straits Times, 2 March 2012

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What do Singaporeans think?

National Orientations of Singaporeans Survey (NOS) Feb - May 2009

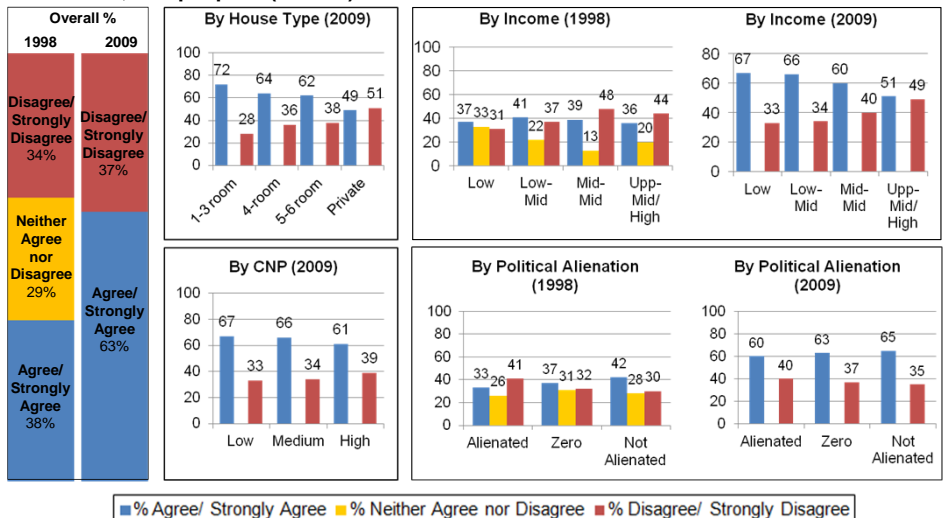
Influence of Immigration on National Unity

Findings

- View of impact of foreigners on unity slightly more positive among those at higher socio-economic level, higher CNP score and no political alienation.
- If it is an economic imperative, the acceptance of foreigners increases among those at a higher socio-economic level, those with a higher sense of citizen-nation ties and those who feel politically alienated.

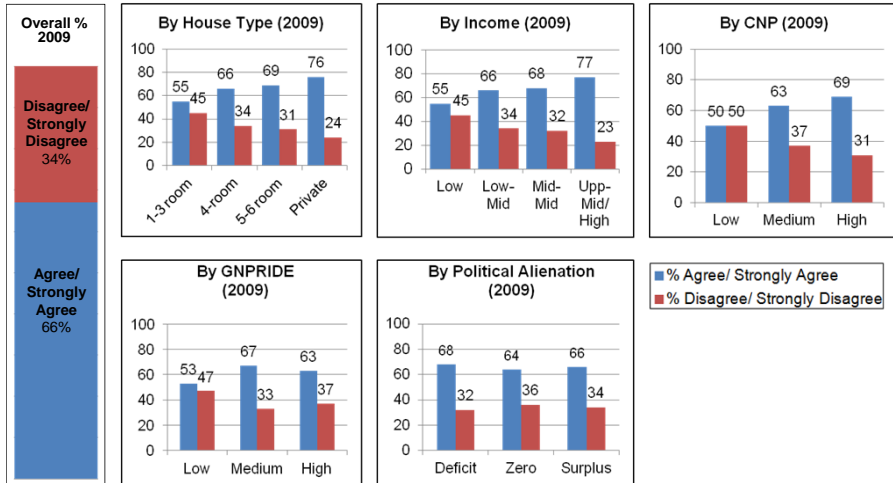
Immigration and National Unity

Table 52: “The policy to attract more foreign talent will weaken Singaporeans’ feeling as one nation, one people.” (Overall)



Saliency of Economic Imperative

Table 53: “The government is right to increase the number of foreigners working in Singapore if our economy needs it.” (Overall)



Perceptions of Policies in Singapore Survey (POPS)

“Resilience in the Economic Crisis”

POPS (1) Feb 2009 (817 pax, quota sample)

POPS (3) Dec 2009 (2109 pax, random sample)

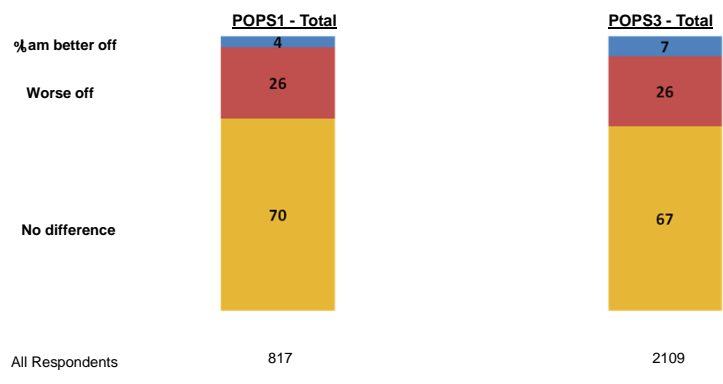
Foreigners Working in Singapore

How does having foreigners working in Singapore affect you economically, during this crisis?

How does having foreigners working in Singapore affect the economic prospects of Singapore?

Foreigners and Economic Impact on Me

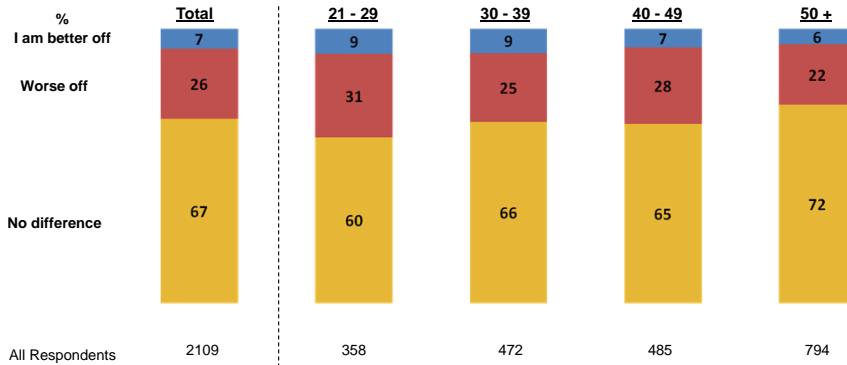
In POPS(1) and POPS(3), 26% of both the samples felt foreigners had a negative economic effect on their personal status.



Foreigners and Economic Impact on Me (Age)

In both the surveys, the largest percentage of those who said they were personally “worse off” were those in the 21-19 category. In POPS(1), it was 26% and in POPS(3), it was 31%.

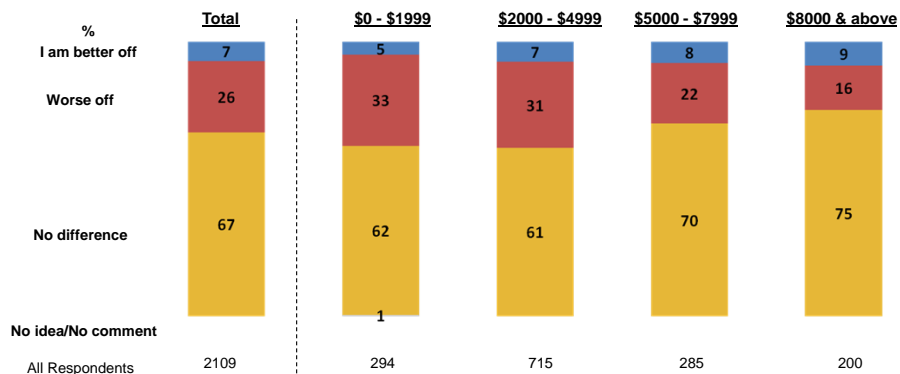
POPS(3) results:



Foreigners and Economic Impact on Me (HH Income)

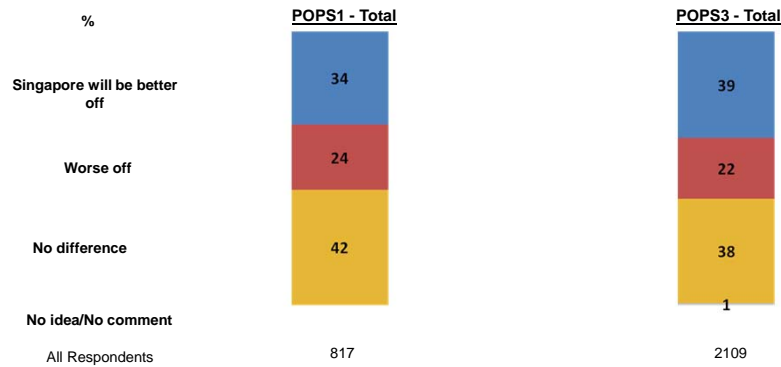
The largest proportion of those who felt they were “worse off” were found in the \$0-\$1999 category. 39% of that category said they were worse off in POPS(1), and 33% said that in POPS(3).

POPS(3) results:



Foreigners and Economic Impact on Singapore

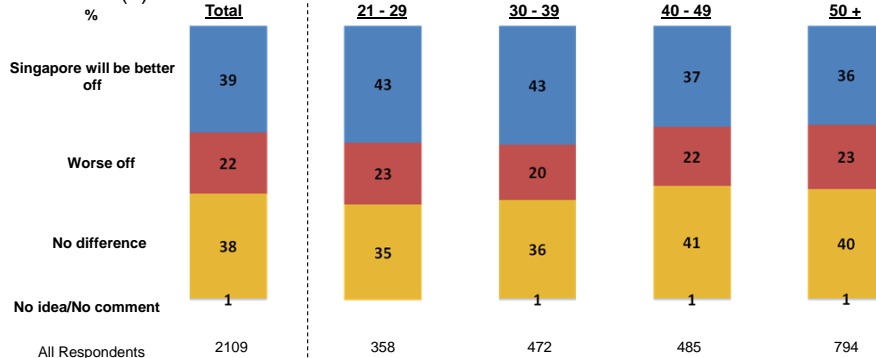
In POPS(1) 24% felt that Singapore economy was worse off with having foreigners. In POPS(3), 22% of the sample believed Singapore was worse off.



Foreigners and Economic Impact on Singapore (Age)

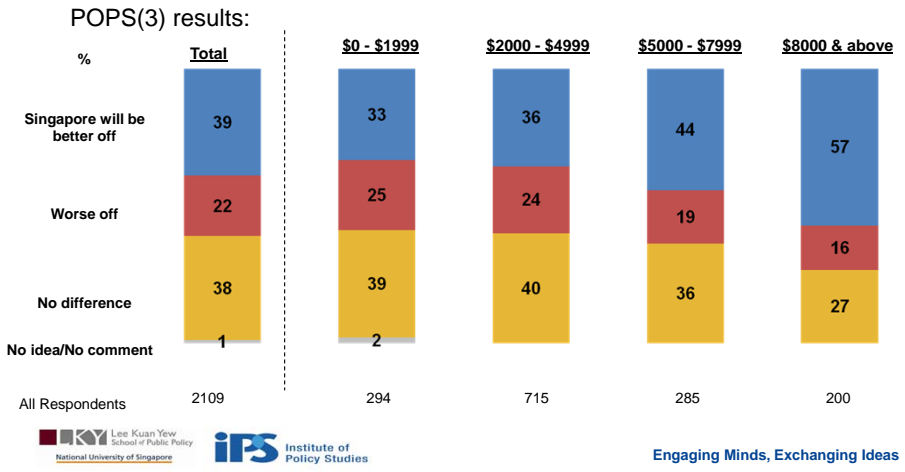
The proportion of those who felt that the country was “worse off” was highest in the 21-19 category. In POPS(1), 29% said that was so, and in POPS(3), 23% said that. 23% in the 50+ category in POPS(3) said Singapore was “worse off” too.

POPS(3) Results:



Foreigners and Economic Impact on Singapore (HH Income)

The largest proportion of respondents who felt that Singapore was “worse off” was found in the \$0-\$1999 category with 30% saying that in POPS(1) and 25% saying that in POPS(3).



Perceptions of Policies in Singapore Survey (POPS)

“IPS Post-Election Survey 2011”

POPS (4) May 2011(2080 pax, random sample)

Immigration as an Election Issue

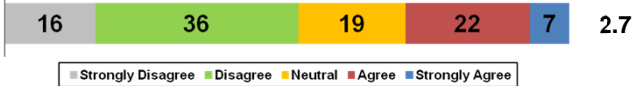
Agree or disagree that

'Foreigners & immigration' was not impt to me in this election

2011

52% felt it was important, and it was more important among Post-Independence respondents, and those in the higher Service class.

Mean



BASE: All respondents (2080)

The New Politics of Identity

- Socio-psychological and political considerations are not in sync with economic imperative of having relatively large-scale immigration. What is the right point? Can we create a consensus around it?
- Transformation of work and family life important to demonstrate government is acting in good faith.
- Details of level of immigration at policy level may not affect day-to-day interaction between locals and foreigners.

The New Politics of Identity

- The emphasis on responsibilities of citizenship in terms of norms, disciplines etc, as well as the highly involved socialisation process make it difficult to 'excuse' those who do not have to take on those responsibilities and those who do not act the same way.
- Fairness is at issue.

The New Politics of Identity – Way Ahead?

- Reinforce the Singapore Way
 - Social norms
 - Liberal cultural, multi-racial regime
 - Pro-natalist policies within strong family structure
 - Get more into the workforce and stay in work longer
 - Reduce 'under-employment'
 - Improve productivity to achieve mature, quality GDP growth that is inclusive.
 - Build on the high-value diaspora
- Every Singaporean matters

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The End