

Country gains more from govt measures: Poll

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Sue-Ann Chia, 4 May 2009

6 in 10 say steps to tackle slump make no difference to them but poorer folk see benefit

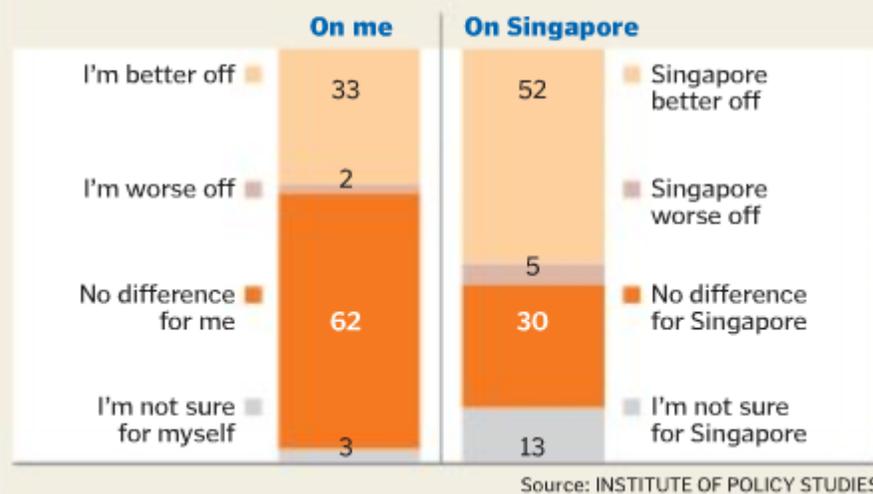
WHEN it comes to the benefits of government measures for tackling the recession, more locals believe they help the country more than the people.

One in three says he is 'better off' because of the measures, but more believe the country stands to gain.

Slightly more than half feel this way, according to a survey of 817 Singaporeans and permanent residents by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS).

■ GOVERNMENT MEASURES: THE IMPACT

More among the older folk believed they are better off with the government measures, while more of the young felt it made no difference to them. When asked how the measures had an impact on Singapore, more among those aged 30 to 39 said the country was better off, while more of the young felt there was no difference.



Presenting the findings, IPS senior research fellow Gillian Koh concluded: 'Singapore as a country is always better off as a result of government policy than one's own self.'

Elaborating later, she said it was because some government policies and measures have been targeted more at the 'national level'.

She cited the Jobs Credit scheme which partly defrays employers' wage bills for local workers in a bid to help companies cut costs and save jobs.

'It is to help the economy pull out of the recession, and there is a trickle-down effect for workers,' she said.

Thus, there is a 'differential impact' on how people view the effect of the measures on self and state.

But one finding that could raise some eyebrows is this: Six in 10 of those surveyed say government measures make no difference to them.

A typical response comes from engineer David Chan, 46, who was laid off late last year and is still seeking work.

'The measures don't help me much. They seem to help the employers more, like Jobs Credit.

They can get the money and still retrench workers,' he lamented.

Asked if this means the measures are ineffective, Dr Koh does not think so.

'The finding is not surprising because the Government has been very focused on helping the low-income, the older and the low-wage workers,' she said.

So a better gauge, she added, would be to look at how these 'vulnerable' groups of people responded.

The survey shows the poor from households earning \$2,500 and less a month, and older folk aged 50 and above, were least likely to say the measures made no difference to them.

For both groups, half felt this way.

When compared to the others, more of the poor and older people - four in 10 - also say there are better off because of the measures.

'This indicates the measures are helping the targeted group,' said Dr Koh.

Among five government measures listed in the survey, the two most useful are rebates and direct financial assistance.

Rebates, however, are least useful to the poor and those in their 20s. Both groups prefer direct financial assistance.

More among them also believe job training is important.

The middle-income, from households earning \$2,501 to \$8,000 a month, find rebates to be the most useful.

It is similar for the well-off, whose household income is above \$8,000 a month; they also like tax cuts.