

Do our seniors see themselves as role models for ageing? 12 findings from IPS survey

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How do seniors view ageing in Singapore? A survey commissioned by the government-funded Council for Third Age examined the perceptions and attitudes of 2,006 Singaporean citizens and permanent residents aged 50 to 74.

The respondents were randomly picked from those who live in HDB apartments with three or more rooms, private flats, condominiums, or landed property.

Here are 12 interesting findings about our senior citizens from the [survey report](#), published on Wednesday by the Institute of Policy Studies.

1. Seniors have a positive outlook on their own futures

Eight in 10 are confident that their needs will be taken care of as they age.

The majority is also a self-assured lot, with over six in 10 respondents seeing themselves as “successful agers” who can be role models to others.

2. But they are less confident about whether others will be well taken care of

Nearly two-thirds of seniors disagreed with the statement that, in general, most elder Singaporeans have little to worry about.

3. Just over half feel they have good finances

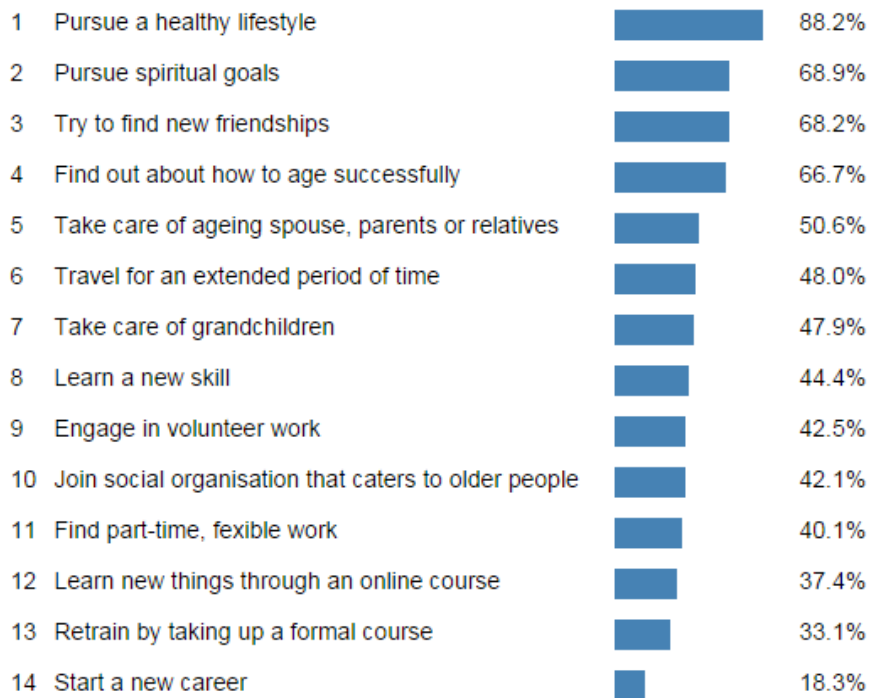
Only 54 per cent rated their current financial adequacy as “good”, “very good” or “excellent”, compared with 46 per cent who rated it “poor”, “below average” or “average”. Slightly less feel confident of their future financial adequacy, with just 52 per cent rating it “good” or better.

4. Wellness is at the top of their minds when it comes to planning future endeavours

The top five things seniors want to do: Pursue a healthy lifestyle; pursue spiritual goals; try to find new friendships; find out how to age successfully; and take care of ageing spouses, parents or relatives.

What are they least keen to embark on? A new career, with only 18 per cent of respondents indicating they were likely to start one.

Pursuits that respondents intend to embark on



SOURCE: IPS/C3A | STRAITS TIMES GRAPHIC: LIN ZHAOWEI

5. Seniors make sacrifices for their family

Thirty-nine per cent say family responsibilities sometimes or often hold them back from doing what they want to do.

6. Working post-retirement is good

It is viewed by seniors as a good way to stay financially independent, stay socially connected, make friends, and have a sense of self-worth.

The biggest barrier to continued employment is not age discrimination, but personal preference: 64 per cent of respondents would like to enjoy a slower pace of life after working so hard over the past few decades, while 63 per cent thought potential employers prefer to hire younger workers.

7. Lifelong learning seen as a tool to help manage ageing

Nearly nine in 10 seniors were motivated to continue learning in order to better manage their daily lives or to keep up with changes around them. Over 63 per cent felt it would improve their job skills or help them be financially independent through work later on in life.

But some seniors are a self-conscious bunch – 15 per cent said they are unwilling to participate in lifelong learning because “friends may laugh at us for wanting to learn new things at such an old age”.

8. Seniors are sticking to their own flock

On a monthly basis, only 8 per cent of seniors joined grassroots or community activities at least once, while 7 per cent used a senior activity club at least once.

They were far more likely to meet up with family members, friends and neighbours.

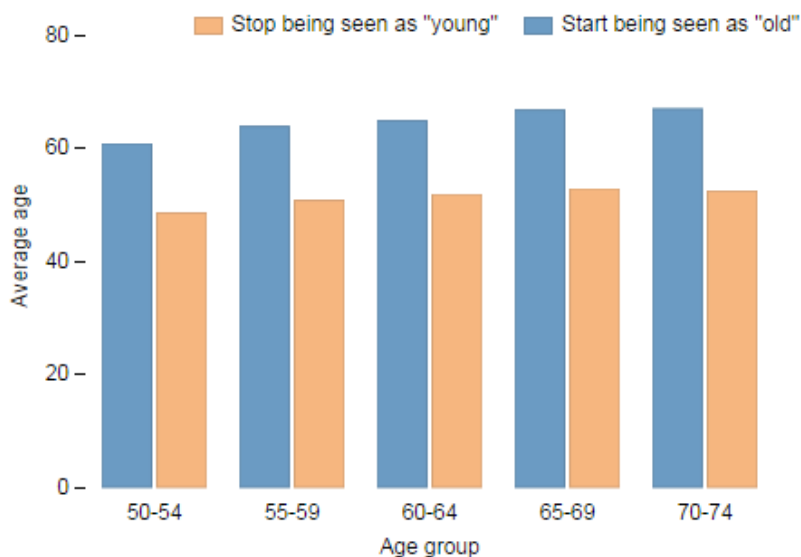
9. The threshold for what is considered “old” gets higher with age

Respondents aged 50 to 54 think people start being seen as "old" at the age of 60.8 years on average. But those aged 70 to 74 think that threshold is 66.9 years.

Perceptions of when people are considered young and old differ by age group

This chart shows the average age at which people stop being considered as "young" and start being considered as "old" among respondents in each age group.

Tap or mouseover each of the bars to see the figure for each category.



SOURCE: IPS/C3A | STRAITS TIMES GRAPHIC: LIN ZHAOWEI

10. Generation gap exists for a small group

Some seniors do not get along well with the younger generation, with over a quarter having negative or very negative feelings towards people in their 20s, and two in 10 not feeling comfortable conversing with people in that age group.

Some seniors do not even like people their age – 13 per cent have negative or very negative feelings towards people in their 60s. But the survey does not delve into the reasons for this.

11. Seniors seldom feel discriminated against

Seven in 10 seniors have never been treated badly because of their age, for example by having their services refused or by being insulted. However, three in 10 do not feel that older persons are well respected in society.

12. On balance, life's been all right

Most seniors – 92 per cent – were able to look back on their lives with a sense of happiness.