

How IPS emigration survey was done, what its focus was

Gillian Koh, Debbie Soon and Leong Chan-Hoong
The Straits Times, 5 October 2018

We welcome Mr Kwan Jin Yao's interest in the Institute of Policy Studies' (IPS) emigration survey (Emigration survey doesn't capture more complex motivations of young S'poreans; Oct 3).

His letter gives us the opportunity to explain that we built an analytical model comprising 11 possible factors to examine the complexity of what drives the desire among 19-to 30-year-old Singaporeans to work and live overseas, both for the short term and permanently, precisely because they will be in the transitional phase of their lives.

The institute conducts other studies of those already living overseas, but this one takes a prospective approach so that all of us can act upon what we learn.

Scanning the results of two waves of this survey, conducted in 2016 and in 2010, seven factors proved significant in explaining whether respondents were already thinking seriously about going overseas or will do so over the next five years.

These were:

- whether their friends and family were also thinking of it
- if they believed they could improve their lot in Singapore
- if, on the other hand, they thought emigrating provided greater socio-economic security
- if they thought it brought higher social standing
- if they were confident in their ability to emigrate
- their level of life satisfaction
- their level of national pride

The full picture of the study is on the institute's website and this can inform efforts to strengthen our sense of rootedness or shape emigration attitudes.

For those who hope more young Singaporeans will consider spending time overseas, it indicates who might be in this group and why.

The study also provides profiles of those who feel disconnected from Singapore even though they are living here.

This can help us work towards making them feel that Singapore is home.