

Most Seniors Optimistic about their Future: Survey But only 4 in 10 agree that elders have little to worry about

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Most seniors in Singapore have a positive outlook about growing old, but are less optimistic about seniors' ageing in general.

A recent survey of more than 2,000 Singapore residents aged between 50 and 74 found that eight in 10 were confident that their needs would be taken care of as they grew older.

However, the survey commissioned by the Council for Third Age (C3A), a government-funded group that promotes active ageing, also found that only four in 10 agreed that "in general most elder Singaporeans have little to worry about".

This was one of the key findings from the study on the perception and attitudes towards ageing and seniors which was conducted between October last year and January this year.

Almost all agreed that successful ageing comprises being physically active and financially independent, and most agreed that lifelong learning would help them keep up with changes. Many also felt that older people were well-respected in society.

Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) senior research fellow Mathew Mathews and National University of Singapore sociologist Paulin Straughan, who released their report on the survey yesterday, said that respondents' positive outlook on ageing was "quite remarkable".

Associate Professor Straughan explained that the finding was surprising because before the Pioneer Generation Package was rolled out, there was little focus on the elderly, with most policies geared towards the education and careers of the younger generation.

C3A chief executive Soh Swee Ping said: "In the past, ageing had been addressed in a negative light, and instilled the feeling of being a burden. But the conversation on ageing has begun moving towards a more positive one."

Explaining the difference in the respondents' outlook on their ageing and on seniors' ageing in general, Dr Mathews said: "In Singapore, we generally accept that things will work out, but that doesn't stop us from feeling that we have to be concerned about matters."

The respondents' housing type may also be another reason for the difference in perception - only seniors living in three-room or larger homes were polled.

Sociologist Tan Ern Ser said that with most respondents coming from at least lower-middle class households, this could be why they are confident of their needs being met but do not say the same for seniors in general.

The researchers said that they excluded those living in smaller flats in the study as they were in "rather different contexts compared to the seniors of the future".

Respondents were also asked about what they are likely to pursue in future. Their top three goals were: pursuing a healthy lifestyle (88 per cent), pursuing spiritual goals (69 per cent) and finding new friendships (68 per cent).

Finance manager Karen Goh said she was confident that she would age well in Singapore and plans to stay put.

"I'm still comfortable here... The Government has been doing more to enhance health-care coverage for seniors, so I'm not too worried about health-care costs," said the 52-year-old.