

No impact from foreign workers, 7 in 10 say

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Zakir Hussain, 4 May 2009

SEVEN in 10 Singapore residents say foreigners working here during this downturn have no impact on their livelihood.

But only 4 per cent believe they are better off with these foreigners while 26 per cent say they are worse off, according to a survey by think-tank Institute of Policy Studies.

When it comes to the country, many more say Singapore is better off with these foreigners: 34 per cent.

The institute's senior research fellow Gillian Koh says that while only a few feel better off with foreigners here, a larger number are able to see how the country can benefit from their presence.

The survey of 817 Singaporeans and permanent residents was conducted in late February.

They were asked two questions on foreigners working in Singapore.

The first question: How does having foreigners affect them directly?

Feeling worse off are those in their 20s (32 per cent). The least pessimistic are people aged 50 and above (19 per cent).

The second question: How does having these foreigners affect the economic prospects of Singapore?

Overall, 42 per cent see no difference while 24 per cent feel Singapore is worse off.

Those in their 20s are most likely to feel that Singapore is worse off. A total of 29 per cent said so.

Dr Koh feels this could be a result of their higher exposure to foreigners in schools and tertiary institutions here, as these foreigners compete directly with them at these institutions and in the workplace.

Likewise, lower-wage workers in sectors like services also feel they are competing with foreigners for jobs, she notes.