

S'pore residents have adapted well to pandemic: Study

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SINGAPORE: Over the past year, Singapore residents have better learnt to cope with the pandemic on various fronts, even as many remain cautious over their livelihoods, the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) has found in a new paper.

And societal trust - the "social glue" that builds strong communal bonds and improves psychological well-being - has played a key role in helping the country adapt to the new normal, researchers said.

Broadly, people's attitudes on issues such as job prospects and overall well-being took a hit last year when the pandemic began, but had recovered by the time the study ended last month.

"What we see, one year into the crisis, is that our society is clearly vulnerable to crisis, but Singaporeans are clearly adaptable," said IPS principal research fellow Mathew Mathews, who also heads the institute's Social Lab for social indicator research

One reason why society has been able to adapt to the challenges of living in a pandemic has been the raft of government policies that has helped reduce people's concerns and fears, he added.

The study carried out online polls with groups of 500 Singapore residents each at regular intervals between April last year and last month.

It asked for their thoughts on topics such as stress levels and finances, as well as attitudes towards safe management measures and the ongoing vaccination drive.

Researchers also polled respondents on their work arrangements, perceptions of the job market and satisfaction with how the Government has handled the pandemic.

Those who had less trust in Singapore and Singaporeans - measured by their responses to questions such as whether the country would remain united and emerge stronger - tended to feel more threatened by the pandemic, and therefore had worse overall well-being.

In contrast, the well-being of people with high levels of trust was less affected by perceived threats posed by Covid-19.

These results show that trust can serve as a form of social capital in the crisis, "protecting people against the harmful and threatening effects of the pandemic", researchers said. "Enablers of societal trust - such as effective information management, enforcement of desirable social norms, and fair and equitable treatment for all - must therefore continue to be a priority for governments."