

Do More to Match Personal Skills to NS vocations: Researchers

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The researchers behind the survey felt that more could be done to match a national serviceman's personal skills to what they do during NS, after respondents indicated that having a better fit was most important in motivating NSmen.

The survey, which was commissioned by the Committee to Strengthen National Service (CSNS) and conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies, found that 22 per cent of the 1,251 respondents — comprising Singaporean men and women — ranked this over six other factors, such as more public recognition for NSmen's contributions and more options on enlistment dates.

"More could be done to match servicemen's personal skills and abilities to National Service vocations. This would lessen the perceived opportunity cost of serving two-year full-time National Service," the researchers said in their survey report.

Added Dr Leong Chan-Hoong, the Principal Investigator of the study: "Issues relating to employment prospects, relating to how your skills are used, whether they can be applied in NS vocations, whether you can actually learn something from your two years of service — I think those kind of items tend to score lower compared to the rest of the basket consistently. At least from that point of view, that is something that is worth looking into."

When presented with 10 perceived benefits of NS, 88 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that "National Service improves one's civilian employment prospects". However, this was ranked the bottom among the list of perceived benefits.

Mr Wong Wei Peng, 37, the founder of training company Canact, who sits on the CSNS Steering Committee, said that as an employer, he saw benefits in hiring employees who had served NS. While employers might mainly be concerned with maximising profits, he felt they should also be encouraged to value NSmen for the "soft skills" gained from their NS experience, such as "management, competency planning, rigour of thought". "All these are easily transferable," he said.

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