

Majority of seniors here are positive about growing old: IPS study

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Eight in ten seniors here are confident that their needs will be taken care of as they age, and the majority feel they can get help for successful ageing from their social networks, a study published today (Oct 15) by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) has found.

Jointly authored by the institute's senior research fellow Mathew Mathews and National University of Singapore's sociology professor Paulin Tay Straughan, the working paper on seniors' perceptions and attitudes towards ageing is based on findings from a survey commissioned by the Council for Third Age, which promotes active ageing in Singapore.

The survey of 2,006 Singaporean residents aged 50 to 74 – conducted between October 2013 and January this year – also found that more than 95 per cent of seniors perceive successful ageing as “being happy, healthy, physically active, financially independent and having close friendships”.

While respondents generally had positive attitudes towards lifelong learning and continued employment, there was comparatively less actual participation in these aspects.

Around 89 per cent of respondents agreed that lifelong learning would help them stay relevant and keep up with changes in everyday life, but less than a third said they had learnt something over the past year that helped them stay relevant.

Around 90 per cent of respondents agreed that working after retirement would help them stay financially independent, socially connected, make friendships and give them a sense of self-worth. However, one in four disagreed that their children were supportive of their continued employment. Only half felt there were suitable job opportunities that could match their qualifications and experiences.

The study's authors said redesigning work to make it more manageable and flexible can allow seniors to participate in the workforce “at a pace they are comfortable with”. They added that intergenerational programmes, if shaped to encourage participation from the older and less educated, may also be useful in bridging the gap between seniors and young people.