

Netizens dismiss IPS study findings that state younger, higher-income Singaporeans are more accepting of immigrants

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Younger Singaporeans as well as those who fall under the higher-earning bracket view immigrants more positively, according to a study conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) released on Wednesday (24 March).

This includes naturalised citizens as well as permanent residents.

Individuals with higher education, earning higher salaries or who live in larger housing types are more positive about the economic impact of immigrants and immigration.

However, they are less accepting when it comes to the social and cultural implications, the study noted.

IPS stated in its study that it is not surprising to discover that naturalised citizens and PRs view immigration and immigrants in a more positive manner given that they were once part of this group.

It continued, "(Singaporeans) who were less well-off viewed immigrants as economic and employment threats, while those who were more well-off were more concerned about the social and cultural dimensions."

The study also revealed that about 45.1 per cent of Singaporeans were on the fence with regards to the impact of immigrants on Singapore's development, just like the results found in Taiwan, the United States, Sweden and Switzerland.

This is different from the results gathered in countries like Malaysia, Thailand and Australia where more than 40 per cent of its citizens expressed that immigrants had "quite bad" or "very bad" impact on their country's development.

In Singapore, naturalised citizens, PRs and younger Singaporeans were more positive of the economic impact of immigrants to the country. They were also more likely to agree that immigrants strengthen cultural diversity.

In the IPS study, 60 per cent of individuals in the youngest group aged 21 to 35 agreed that immigration helps to fill important job vacancies, in comparison to just 43 per cent in the older than 65 group.

The youngest group also agree that immigration provides people from poor countries a better living, and asylum to political refugees.

Head of the IPS Social Lab, Dr Mathew Mathews said that although both the social and economic implications of immigration weigh on people's minds, a larger number of them are worried about the impact of immigration on unemployment.

He also went on to note that it is more obvious for those who are above 50, as well as those who are less educated and have lower incomes.

“For these groups, the economic threat weighs more strongly, as they wonder how much more immigration will continue to impact their livelihoods,” he said.

He added, “It is inevitable that when people are concerned about immigrants as potential hindrances to their economic well-being, that they will also be more antagonistic to them – and it has social implications.”

The study found out that only slightly over 46 per cent of those aged 21 to 35 disagreed with the statement that immigration increases the crime rate.

However, the older group along with locally born citizens want stricter limits imposed on the number of foreigners who can enter Singapore.

Close to half of Singaporeans above the age of 50 believe that immigration caused the rise of unemployment for Singapore, compared to only 38.4 per cent of those aged between 21 and 35 who think so.

“This diversity of views when it comes to immigration highlights the need for policymaking to consider potential impacts as well as the population’s threshold for immigration in lived spaces,” said IPS.

It continued, “When it comes to policy preferences vis-a-vis immigration, the majority of Singapore respondents are open to foreigners coming into Singapore, but believe that numbers should be within strict limits enforced by the state.”

Netizens’ slam the findings from the study

Over on social media, online users slammed the IPS study, questioning who the Institute had picked as its respondents for this survey.

Penning their points on The Straits Times’ Facebook page, they said that the survey “does not make sense or simply a biased one”, adding that it is not an “accurate conclusion”.

Some of them even pointed out that those surveyed must be “new citizens”, given how they feel about immigrants and immigration in Singapore.

A number of them noted that foreigners are needed in certain industries like Food & Beverage, construction and cleaners, but not for white collar jobs as they are then “stealing jobs and promotion opportunities” from local Singaporeans.

Some expressed that the rich will not find foreigners a threat to their livelihood, as their employment is not affected by them.