

Level of satisfaction with Govt's handling of Covid-19 closely tied to daily case numbers: IPS study

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- The IPS study found that satisfaction with the Government's handling of Covid-19 was correlated with trends in the daily numbers of coronavirus infections.
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- An IPS study found that citizen satisfaction with the Government's handling of the Covid-19 situation went up and down
- This was in tandem with the rise and fall of Covid-19 case numbers here
- The study's lead researcher said a majority of people still believed in how the Government handled the Covid-19 situation
- This belief dipped when the pandemic caused more deaths and hospital admissions starting in September
- Older respondents were slightly less likely to believe that the authorities have demonstrated good political leadership in managing the pandemic

SINGAPORE — The proportion of Singaporeans satisfied with the Government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic see-sawed in tandem with infection case numbers. It reached as high as 82 per cent when daily cases in the community fell to under 100 in August this year and as low as 59 per cent when the figure spiked in October.

When it came to vaccination, nearly seven in 10 people felt that the Government should make the jab compulsory for all Singaporeans and long-term residents. About 68 per cent wanted a lockdown or tighter restrictions when cases shot up, especially in September and October this year.

These were among the findings released on Thursday (Dec 2) by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), which studied Singaporeans' attitudes towards living with Covid-19 as an endemic disease.

The study used survey data from technology firm Toluna, which polled residents in 12 "waves", typically done over about a week, between July and November. Each wave comprised 500 respondents across key demographics.

It found that respondents' satisfaction levels with the overall governance of Covid-19 here rose from 77 per cent in July, when the average daily case number was more than 200, to 82 per cent in August, when case numbers had fallen below 100.

By October, when the average daily number of Covid-19 cases here hit 2,000 and higher, this figure declined to 59 per cent. This was the lowest proportion recorded since IPS researchers started tracking in April last year.

Dr Mathew Mathews, who led the study, said that a majority of the respondents still had faith in the Government's handling of the Covid-19 situation here but when the pandemic caused more deaths and hospital admissions, this belief dipped.

"There's a certain kind of pragmatic logic that Singaporeans apply as to how they look at satisfaction with the Government," he said.

"It's very much dependent on whether they see certain kinds of goals achieved and of course, one of it has to do with the number of cases and the number of deaths."

He noted that although the satisfaction level fell slightly for most government policies as the number of community cases shot up, it is stable and remained relatively high.

This was especially the case in keeping the healthcare system running, where around 80 per cent of respondents indicated satisfaction.

Around seven in 10 people were also satisfied with the way the Government had:

- Supported livelihoods and welfare needs during the pandemic
- Ensured that people adhered to safe management measures
- Communicated policies and plans related to the pandemic and the reopening of the economy to the public

OLDER PEOPLE LESS SATISFIED

The study also found that there was an age and class divide when it came to satisfaction levels.

Older respondents were less likely to believe that the authorities had demonstrated good political leadership in managing the coronavirus situation, whereas higher-income earners were more likely to believe the authorities had shown good leadership.

For the proportion of respondents who disagreed that the authorities have demonstrated good political leadership:

- 19 per cent were aged between 21 and 29
- 20 per cent were aged between 30 and 39
- 22 per cent were aged between 40 and 49
- 25 per cent were aged between 50 and 59
- 31 per cent were aged 60 and above

The researchers noted that the slightly greater proportion of older respondents showing dissatisfaction in this area could be indicative of their discontent towards how they felt people in their age group were being treated during the pandemic.

The emphasis on keeping seniors safe from the coronavirus, the constant reminders to vaccinate and discouraging seniors from attending social gatherings had led to some of them feeling alone, the researchers said.

They also felt shut out from daily life and were becoming less satisfied as they saw their younger counterparts slowly taking up their social activities once again, the researchers added.

On the other hand, nearly two-thirds of the respondents earning S\$6,000 or more a month agreed that the authorities have demonstrated good political leadership.

“Singaporeans with higher monthly income were less likely to be affected by the pandemic, at least in their personal finances and job security. For this group of Singaporeans, assessment of the Government’s leadership capabilities may likely be based on public health strategies,” the researchers said.

LIVING WITH COVID-19

The belief in Singapore’s ability to overcome Covid-19 remained high, though in later waves of the study, only slightly more than half of the respondents felt that Singapore had been on the right track to reopening.

In August, at least 70 per cent of the respondents felt that Singapore had been on the right track to reopening safely and successfully. This dropped to 60 per cent in September, possibly in reaction to the deteriorating Covid-19 situation here, the researchers said.

On the best approach to reopening, at least 80 per cent of the respondents believed that Singapore should have a slower reopening with fewer deaths, as opposed to opening quickly but with a higher death count.

Dr Mathews said: “I think the strategy of going on a very calibrated approach in reopening squares quite a bit with the Singaporean population and that is pretty much based on them being very keen to minimise death.

“So there is a strong priority of ensuring life rather than just purely reopening (for) more economic benefit or lots of opportunity to travel.”