

**THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN SINGAPORE, ONE
YEAR ON: POPULATION ATTITUDES AND
SENTIMENTS**

**MATHEW MATHEWS
SYAFIQ SUHAINI
MIKE HOU
and
ALEX TAN**

APRIL 2021
IPS Working Papers No. 40

About Institute of Policy Studies (IPS)

The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) was established in 1988 to promote a greater awareness of policy issues and good governance. Today, IPS is a think-tank within the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP) at the National University of Singapore. It seeks to cultivate clarity of thought, forward thinking and a big-picture perspective on issues of critical national interest through strategic deliberation and research. It adopts a multi-disciplinary approach in its analysis and takes the long-term view. It studies the attitudes and aspirations of Singaporeans which have an impact on policy development and the relevant areas of diplomacy and international affairs. The Institute bridges and engages the diverse stakeholders through its conferences and seminars, closed-door discussions, publications, and surveys on public perceptions of policy.

IPS Working Paper No. 40

**THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN SINGAPORE, ONE YEAR ON:
POPULATION ATTITUDES AND SENTIMENTS ^{1,2}**

MATHEW MATHEWS

Principal Research Fellow & Head, Social Lab
Institute of Policy Studies
mathew.mathews@nus.edu.sg

SYAFIQ SUHAINI

Research Associate
Social Lab, Institute of Policy Studies
syafiq.suhaini@nus.edu.sg

MIKE HOU

Associate Director
Social Lab, Institute of Policy Studies
houminz@nus.edu.sg

and

ALEX TAN

Former Senior Research Fellow
Institute of Policy Studies

April 2021

¹ Please direct all comments and queries related to this study to Mathew Mathews

² The researchers are grateful for the valuable inputs and comments offered by IPS colleagues. We would like to thank Clara Lee for her invaluable help with the data in the earlier waves of this study

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
1. Methodology	10
2. Lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic	14
3. Well-Being During the COVID-19 Pandemic	18
3.1 Psychological/Behavioral Well-Being	18
3.1.1 Stress From the COVID-19 Pandemic	18
3.1.2 Stress About the Future Given the COVID-19 Pandemic	19
3.2 Behavioural/Psychological Well-Being	20
3.3 Relational Well-Being.....	21
3.4 Financial Well-Being	23
3.5 Predictors of Psychological Well-Being.....	25
3.5.1 Results.....	28
4. Sentiments towards COVID-19 safety measures.....	37
4.1 Sentiments Towards Safe Management Measures	37
4.2 Support for Vaccination.....	40
4.3 Work Arrangements	42
5. Sentiments towards COVID-19 governance.....	47
5.1 COVID-19 Governance Satisfaction.....	47
5.2 Sentiments on the Job Market and Job Prospects	52
5.3 Sentiments on the Economy	59
6. Perceptions of social relations during COVID-19.....	62
6.1 Perceptions of Societal Trust.....	62

	3
6.2 Perceptions of Societal Groups.....	64
6.3 Hopes for a Better Future.....	67
7. Understanding predictors of attitudes towards COVID-19	
measures	69
7.1 Methodology.....	69
7.2 Results	72
8. Protective utility of social trust during COVID-19	75
8.1 Methodology.....	75
8.2 Results	77
Appendix A: Dates of each wave.....	79
Appendix B: Specific item breakdown for variables used in Section 7 ..	80

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN SINGAPORE, ONE YEAR ON: POPULATION ATTITUDES AND SENTIMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper presents the attitudes and sentiments of Singaporeans on various social and economic issues amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. We used data from Toluna's online panel of Singaporean residents aged 21 years and older over 22 waves (April 2020 to March 2021). Each wave collected responses from over 500 respondents, whose profiles approximated the national population in terms of race, gender and housing type.

(1) Majority of respondents were able to adapt well in the pandemic, although younger respondents expressed a lower level of psychological well-being; a substantial proportion of respondents remained concerned about their financial situation

Results from the surveys showed that while respondents had been able to adapt well and cope with the many obstacles and challenges that the pandemic brought, many remained cautious over their livelihoods and future opportunities.

At least half of survey respondents reported being stressed from the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020; this decreased to around 30 per cent in March 2021.

In spite of this, the majority of respondents did not experience notable

behavioural or psychological disturbances, such as having difficulty sleeping or feeling irritable, even during the early days of the pandemic. However, the psychological well-being of younger respondents appeared to be more impacted by the pandemic than older respondents. At least three in 10 Singaporeans aged 21 to 29 years old were found to be rather or very worried about losing their purpose for living, as opposed to only one in 10 of those aged 60 and above. Further, 27 per cent of those in the 21 to 29 age group experienced trouble sleeping or staying awake in the recent months, as opposed to only nine per cent of those aged 60 and above.

As for financial well-being, at least half the respondents reported their finances as being in a poor or fair state. Our study recorded no particular uptick in family or relationship problems throughout the period of study.

(2) Respondents progressively adapted to safety measures over the course of the year; older respondents were less likely than younger respondents to express concerns about vaccine safety

There was a decline in the proportion of respondents who felt inconvenienced by the various safe management measures that were implemented over the year, such as mask wearing or scanning multiple QR codes.

On the topic of vaccination, W22 (March 2021) showed that 67 per cent of respondents were willing to take the COVID-19 vaccine if it were offered to them. Around half of the population still held concerns over the vaccine's safety

and efficacy. Further analyses showed that respondents aged 60 and above were less likely to be concerned about the safety of the vaccine, as compared with the other age groups. Around half of the respondents also said they were concerned about being given a type of vaccine (e.g., Pfizer, Moderna, Sinovac) that they did not trust.

(3) Preference for hybrid work arrangements appeared to be prevalent among respondents

Workplace arrangement patterns have since changed to reflect the current state of the pandemic. In May 2020, 63 per cent of respondents reported working mainly from their homes, as Singapore went through its Extended Circuit Breaker. By March 2021, around 68 per cent of the working population among survey respondents reported working mainly in the office. At least 80 per cent of those who were mainly working from home said that they enjoyed working from home. Around 50 per cent of all working respondents feel that an increased frequency of working from office should be made the new norm in Phase 3. Around 40 per cent of respondents reported that they were afraid of being infected with COVID-19 as they began to return to their workplaces more regularly.

(4) Government satisfaction remained consistently high throughout the year, although concerns about cost of living remain

At least three-quarters of respondents said they were satisfied with the government's overall COVID-19 response. These sentiments also carried through to other aspects of the government's COVID-19 responses — around 90 per cent were satisfied with the government's performance in keeping the healthcare system running while around 70 per cent were satisfied with the government's efforts in protecting jobs. Respondents were also generally positive about the way the government helped vulnerable groups during the pandemic, with positive attitudes over the management of low-wage foreign workers steadily increasing over the waves. However, at least three in five respondents felt that the government should do more in helping Singaporeans cope with their cost of living.

(5) Optimism about the job market improved since last year, although differences in optimism were observed between industry sectors

Perceptions of the job market significantly improved since April 2020, where around 80 per cent of respondents had felt that the job market would remain bad for the next six months. In W22 (March 2021), around 42 per cent held the same opinion. Around half of those working said they were confident they would still have a job within the next six months. Respondents aged 49 years old and younger, those who had at least a degree, those with a monthly income of more than \$5,999, and those in the professional services were more confident of still having a job when compared with other groups. At least half of the survey

respondents said they would most likely pursue upgrading courses or taking up a lower-paying job if they were retrenched within this period.

Around 65 per cent of respondents reported that they trust the government to be able to create new jobs and provide training opportunities during this period, while half of the population believed that the authorities would ensure that these new jobs would go to Singaporean residents. At least seven in 10 Singaporeans believed the government was serious about developing a strong Singaporean core of highly skilled talent. A similar proportion of Singaporeans trusted that the government would know how to navigate and lead Singapore in a post-pandemic world.

(6) Perceptions towards medical workers improved substantially over the year relative to perceptions towards new immigrants

The COVID-19 pandemic has improved Singaporeans' perceptions of medical workers substantially. Over 60 per cent of Singaporeans said they felt more positive about medical workers. On the other hand, around one-fifth of respondents felt more negatively towards new immigrants as a result of COVID-19.

(7) Government satisfaction and societal trust were two important predictors of positive social outcomes (i.e., attitudes towards safety measures, vaccination willingness); Societal trust served as protective social capital against threats from the pandemic

Further statistical analyses were carried out to understand the predictors of attitudes towards COVID-19 countermeasures, such as mask wearing and vaccination. Greater satisfaction with the government was more likely to engender better attitudes towards coping with various safe management measures and also improve one's willingness to vaccinate. Better individual well-being was a significant predictor of one's willingness to vaccinate.

Finally, this study demonstrated societal trust as a form of protective social capital during a crisis. Our analysis showed that respondents with lower levels of societal trust were more likely to experience lower levels of well-being, given a greater sense of threat about the pandemic. In contrast, those with higher levels of societal trust were less likely to be affected by perceptions of threat brought about by the pandemic.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN SINGAPORE, ONE YEAR ON: POPULATION ATTITUDES AND SENTIMENTS

1. METHODOLOGY

This study looks at the changes in Singaporean attitudes to a range of different socio-economic questions. Respondents are taken from Toluna's online consumer panel. The study is split into two phases³ as follows:

- Phase 1: Waves 1 – 7 (April 2020 – August 2020)
 - **Cross-sectional** study of about 500 respondents per wave; each wave was comprised of mainly different respondents
- Phase 2: Waves 8 – present (September 2020 onwards)
 - **Panel study** of about 2,000 respondents divided into four groups of around 500 each
 - Each group is surveyed once every four weeks (i.e., one “cycle”; see Table 1.1 below); each wave has a retention rate of about 60 per cent. Additional respondents drawn from Toluna's panel are used to replenish the sample to obtain 500 respondents in each wave of the study.

³ A full list of wave dates can be found in Appendix A.
IPS Working Paper No. 40 (April 2021): The COVID-19 Pandemic in Singapore, One Year On: Population Attitudes and Sentiments
by Mathew, M., Suhaini, S., Hou, M., & Tan, A.

Table 1.1: Phase 2 distribution chart

	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
Cycle 1	W8	W9	W10	W11
Cycle 2	W12	W13	W14	W15
Cycle 3	W16	W17	W18	W19
Cycle 4	W20	W21	W22	-

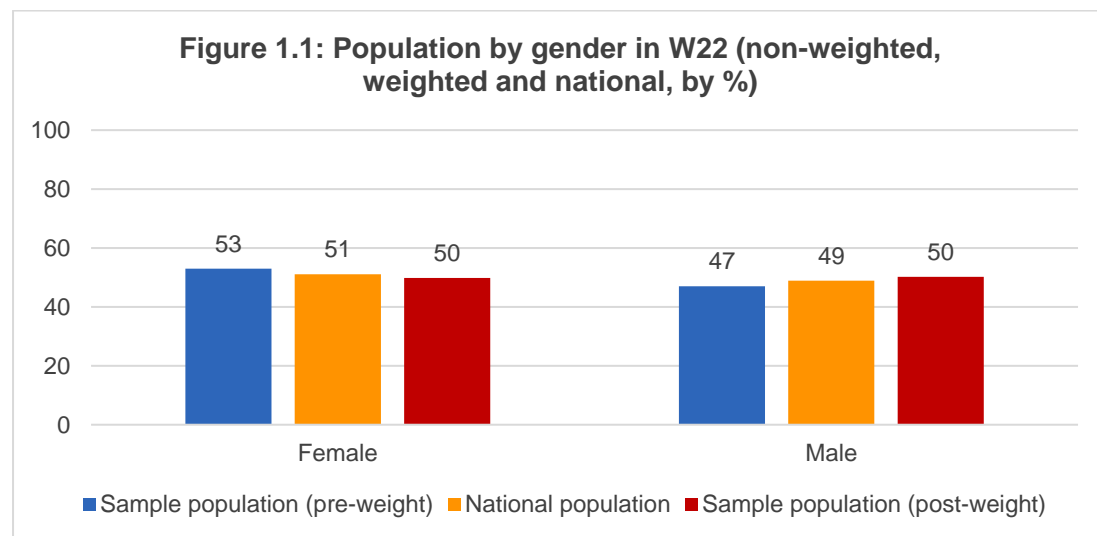
Respondents in both phases comprise Singaporean citizens and Permanent Residents aged 21 years and above. The sample size in each wave is over 500 and representative of the population's gender and race. However, being an online consumer panel, there are some limitations to the sample that should be taken into consideration when generalising the findings of the survey to the entire Singaporean population. There are lower proportions of older respondents and those from lower income families. While age was corrected through weights in each wave⁴, such correction for other variables such as education were difficult as it would, in this case, overly magnify the proportion of smaller number of less educated respondents in the panel (see Figures 1.1 – 1.3 below for examples of how weights were used in W22 [March 2021]). The survey was also conducted only in English which, while used widely, does not account for the small number of those who are more proficient in a vernacular language. Nonetheless, the consumer panel data provides useful insights on

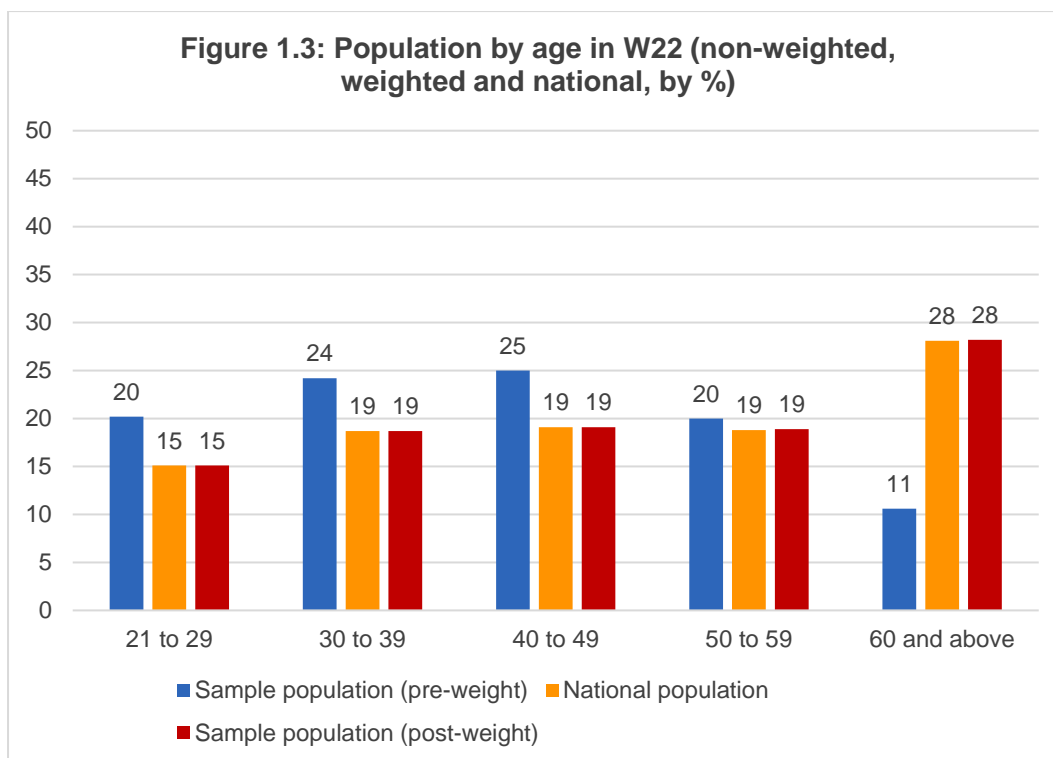
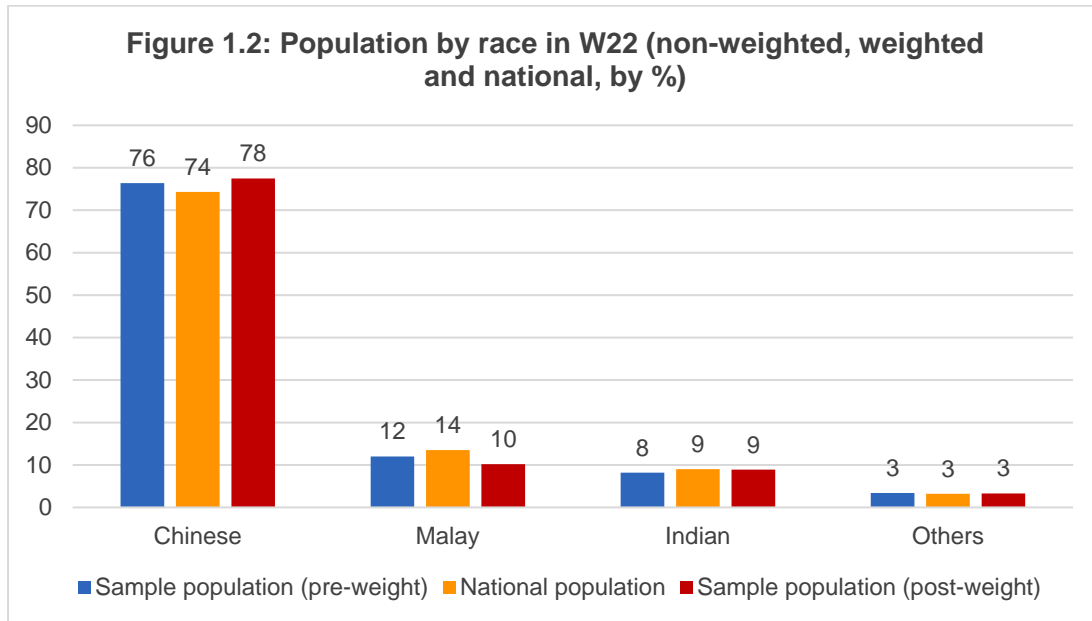
⁴ Weights were applied only when reporting top line figures, and are not used in further statistical analyses.

IPS Working Papers No. 40 (April 2021): The COVID-19 Pandemic in Singapore, One Year On: Population Attitudes and Sentiments
by Mathews, M., Suhaini, S., Hou, M., & Tan, A.

trends, especially during the Circuit Breaker phase of the pandemic when other forms of polling such as face-to-face interviews were difficult to operationalise.

A further caution about the interpretation of population sentiment trends is in order here. Due to the smaller size of the sample at each wave, i.e 500 respondents, it is important to be careful when making major conclusions about fluctuations in sentiments between adjacent waves. Some small differences may be accounted within the margin of error. As such it is most prudent to consider population sentiments over a few waves to be more conclusive about trends.





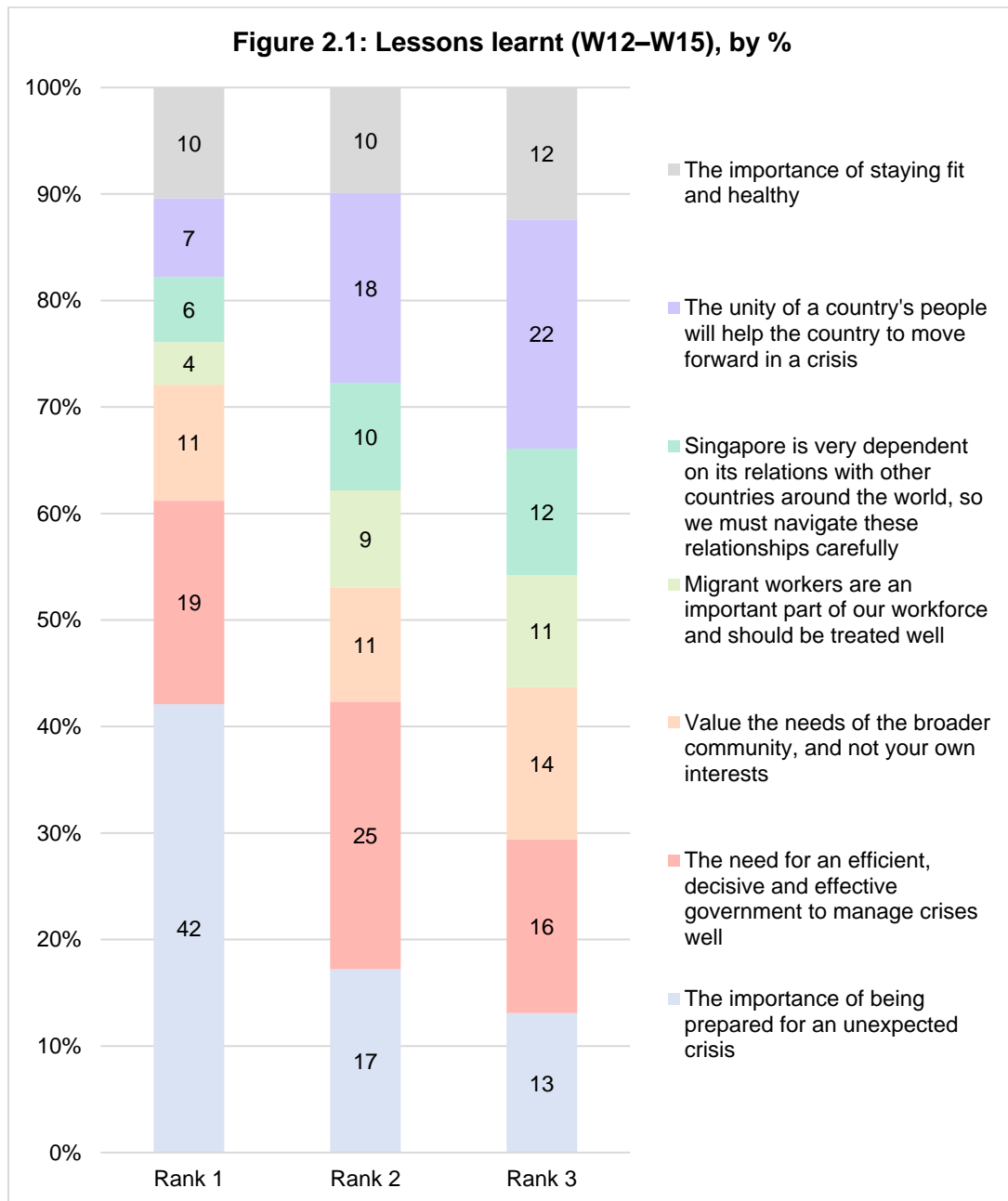
2. LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Respondents were provided a list of seven statements about lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic. These were:

1. Migrant workers are an important part of our workforce and should be treated well
2. Singapore is very dependent on its relations with other countries around the world, so we must navigate these relationships carefully
3. The importance of being prepared for an unexpected crisis
4. The importance of staying fit and healthy
5. The need for an efficient, decisive and effective government to manage crises well
6. The unity of a country's people will help the country to move forward in a crisis
7. Value the needs of the broader community, and not your own interests

Respondents were asked to select three of these statements and to rank them in order of importance, with one being the most important lesson that should be taught to students. This question was introduced in W5 (June 2020) and was discontinued after W15 (December 2020), as the results were fairly consistent from wave to wave.

Results from around 2,000 respondents collected between W12 and W15 (November to December 2020, one cycle) showed that 72 per cent of respondents ranked “the importance of being prepared for an unexpected crisis” as one of the top three important lessons to be communicated to students (see Figure 2.1). This was followed by 60 per cent choosing “the need for an efficient, decisive and effective government to manage crises well” and 36 per cent of respondents choosing “the unity of a country’s people will help the country to move forward in a crisis” as one of their top three options.



3. WELL-BEING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Summary

- Stress levels from the COVID-19 pandemic fell from 50 per cent in W1 (April 2020) last year to 33 per cent in W22 (March 2021).
- The proportion of respondents who were stressed or very stressed about the future given the COVID-19 pandemic fell from 46 per cent in W1 to 35 per cent in W22 (March 2021).
- More than 60 per cent of respondents indicated that they had not experienced much problems, like family problems, difficulty sleeping or anger outbursts; proportions have been stable since W1 (April 2020).
- There were no notable changes in respondents' relational well-being with their spouse, children and parents.
- The proportion of those who indicated their financial situation as poor or fair declined from 62 per cent in W5 to about 50 per cent in W22 (March 2021).
- Those who were worried about not having enough finances fell from 39 per cent in W1 (April 2020) to 32 per cent in W22 (March 2021).
- Multiple regression analyses showed that age, SES (socio-economic status), number of dependents, gender and current workplace arrangement were significant predictors of psychological well-being.

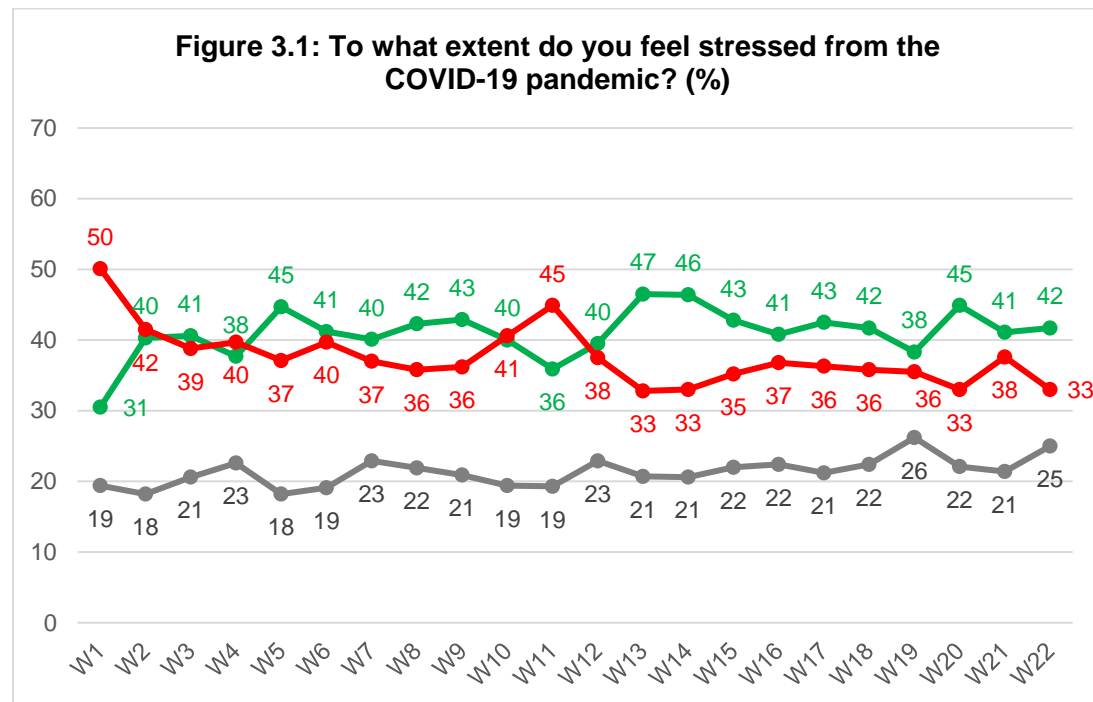
3.1 Psychological/Behavioral Well-Being

3.1.1 *Stress From the COVID-19 Pandemic*

Respondents gauged the extent to which they felt stressed from the COVID-19 pandemic on a five-point scale (1 being “not at all stressed” and 5 being “very stressed”). Results show that in the past one year, there was a significant reduction in the stress levels experienced by respondents (see Figure 3.1).

IPS Working Paper No. 40 (April 2021): The COVID-19 Pandemic in Singapore, One Year On: Population Attitudes and Sentiments
by Mathew, M., Suhaini, S., Hou, M., & Tan, A.

Specifically, in W22 (March 2021), 33 per cent of respondents indicated they were stressed or very stressed as compared with 50 per cent of respondents who indicated the same in W1 (April 2020). The proportion of those who indicated that they were not at all stressed or only a little stressed rose from 31 per cent in Wave 1 to 42 per cent in Wave 22 (March 2021).

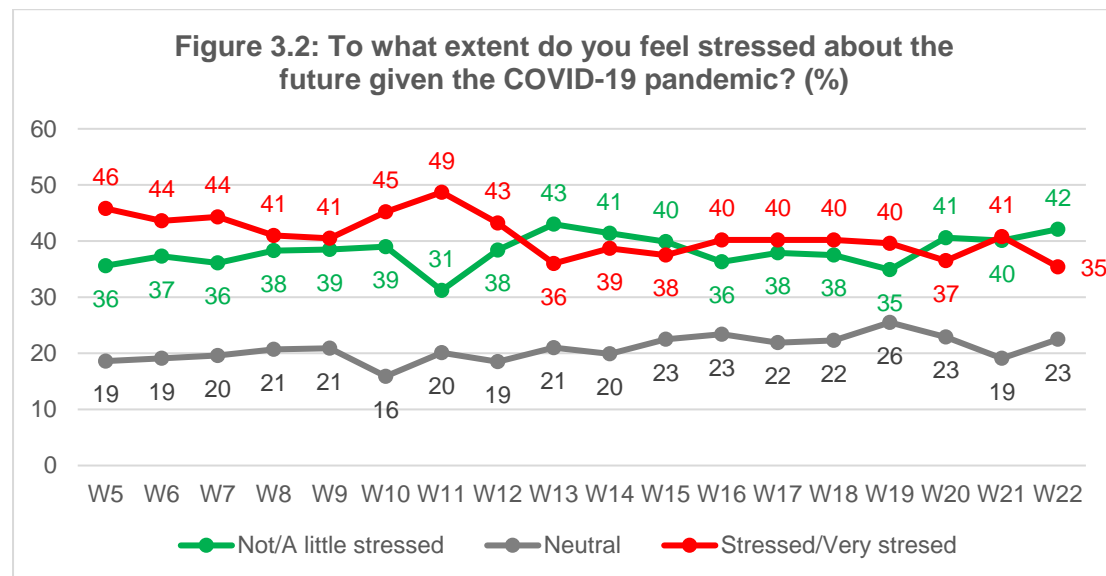


3.1.2 Stress About the Future Given the COVID-19 Pandemic

Similarly, there was an improvement in respondents' outlook towards the future amidst the pandemic. On a five-point scale (1 being "not at all stressed" and 5 being "very stressed"), respondents indicated the extent to which they felt stressed about the future given the COVID-19 pandemic⁵. The proportion of

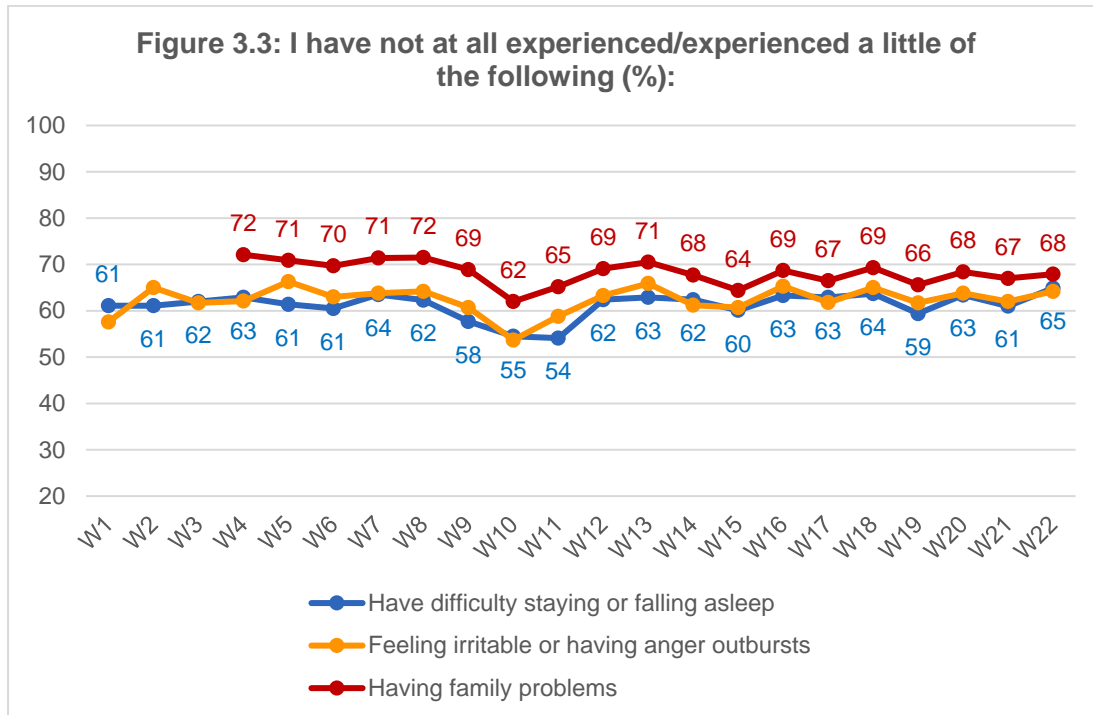
⁵ Throughout this paper we combine response categories together for ease of presentation. IPS Working Papers No. 40 (April 2021): The COVID-19 Pandemic in Singapore, One Year On: Population Attitudes and Sentiments by Mathews, M., Suhaini, S., Hou, M., & Tan, A.

respondents who said they were stressed or very stressed likewise decreased from 46 per cent in W1 (April 2020) to 35 per cent in W22 (March 2021; see Figure 3.2).



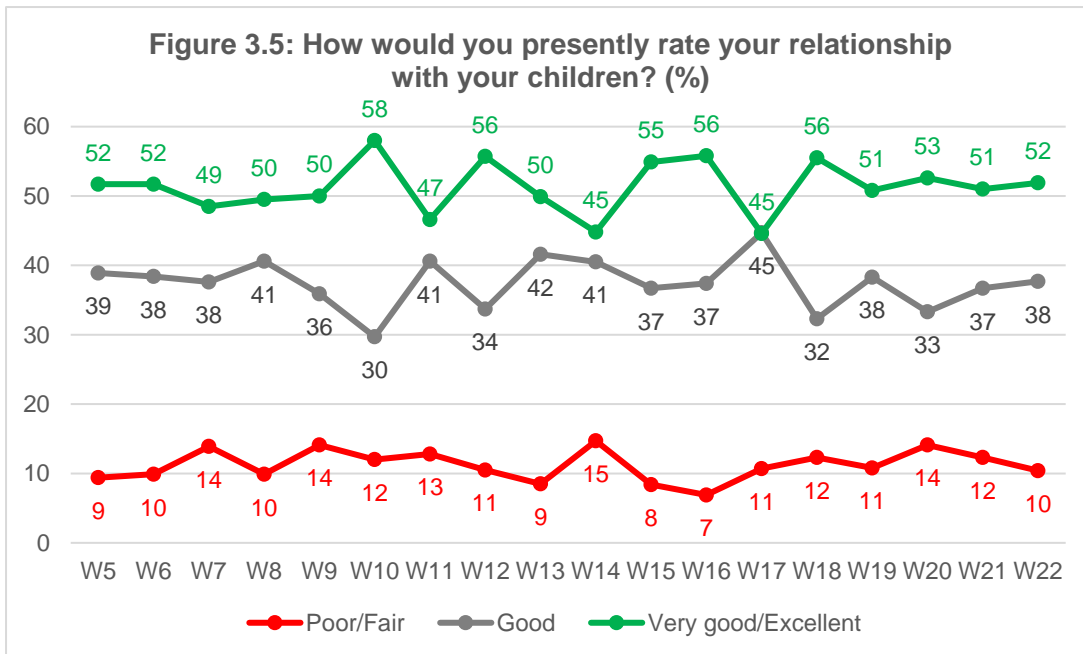
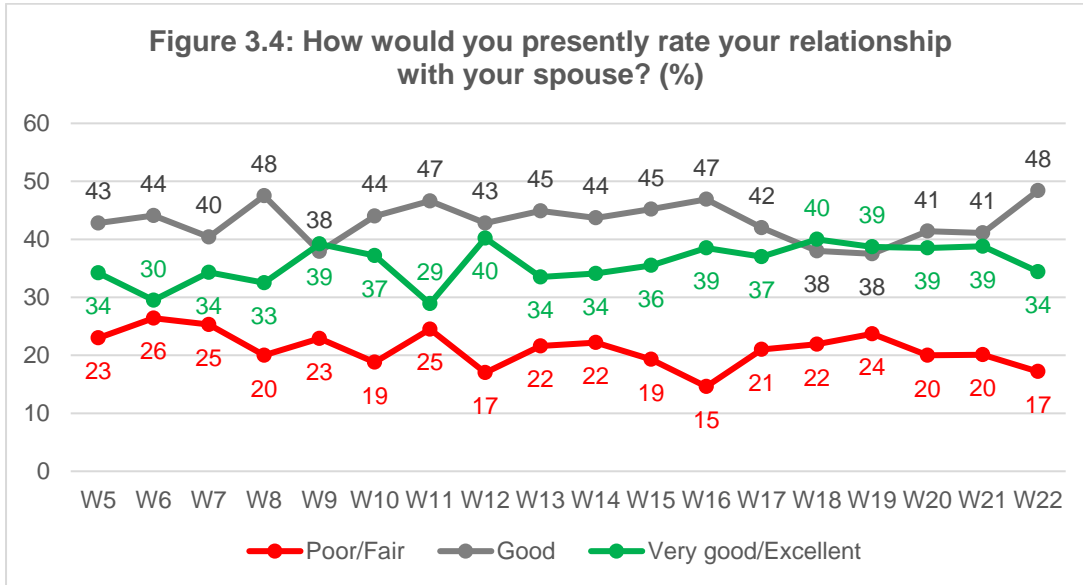
3.2 Behavioural/Psychological Well-Being

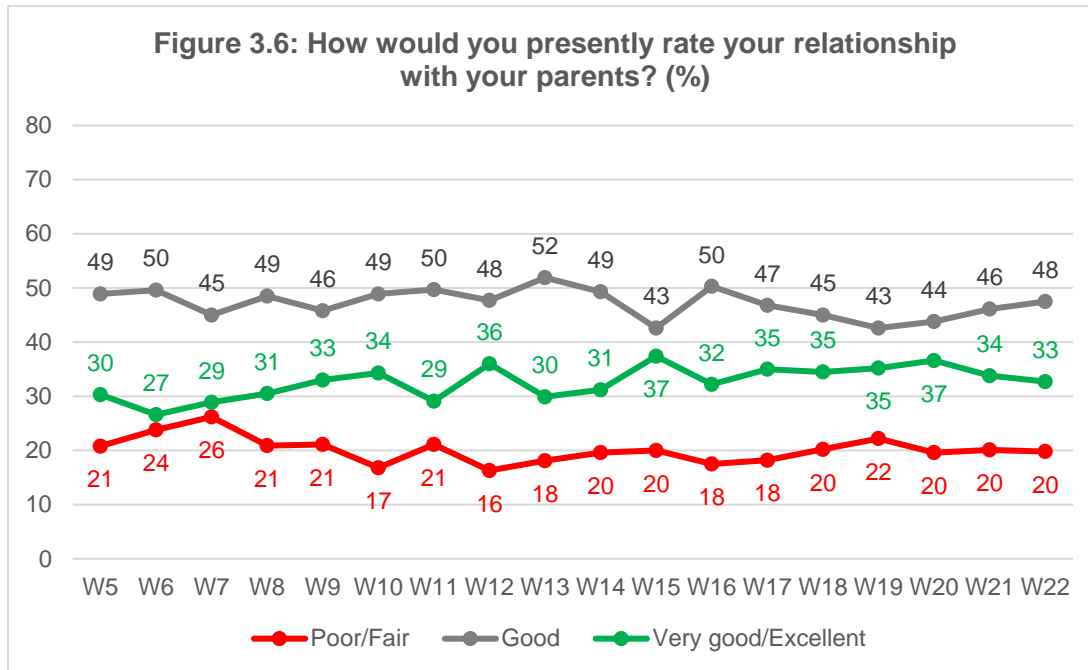
Other psychological well-being indicators were generally positive. For example, the majority of respondents (more than 60 per cent) indicated that they had not experienced much difficulty sleeping, or irritability and anger outbursts (see Figure 3.3). These proportions have largely remained similar across the waves.



3.3 Relational Well-Being

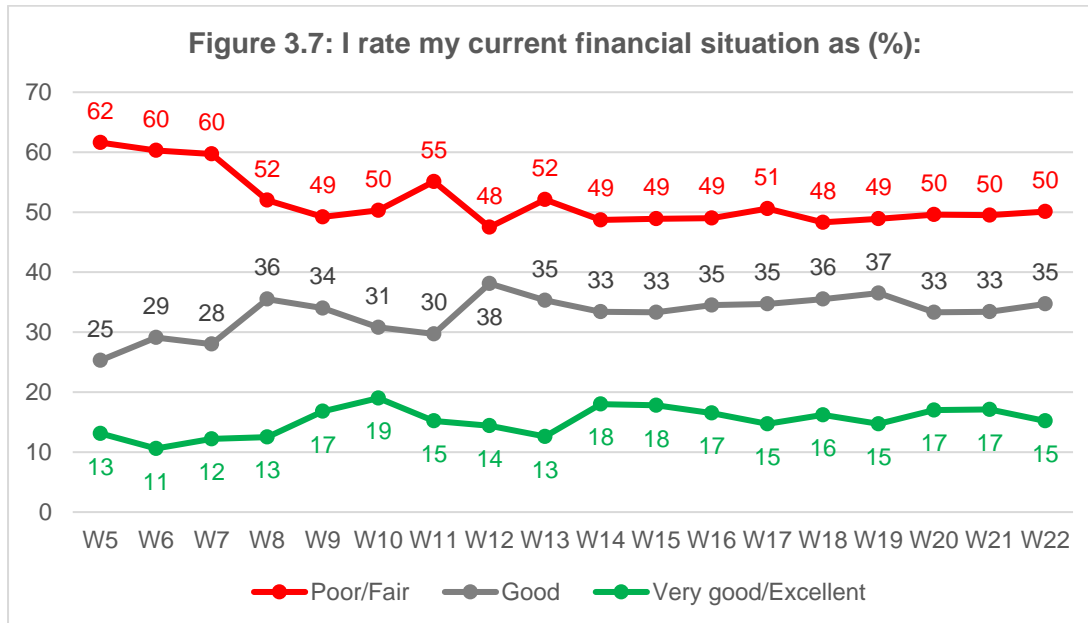
Similarly, there were no notable changes in respondents' who reported family problems (see Figure 3.3). Proportions on specific items on relational well-being (in terms of relationships with spouse, children and parents) when compared with a year ago, were largely similar across the waves (see Figures 3.4-3.6).



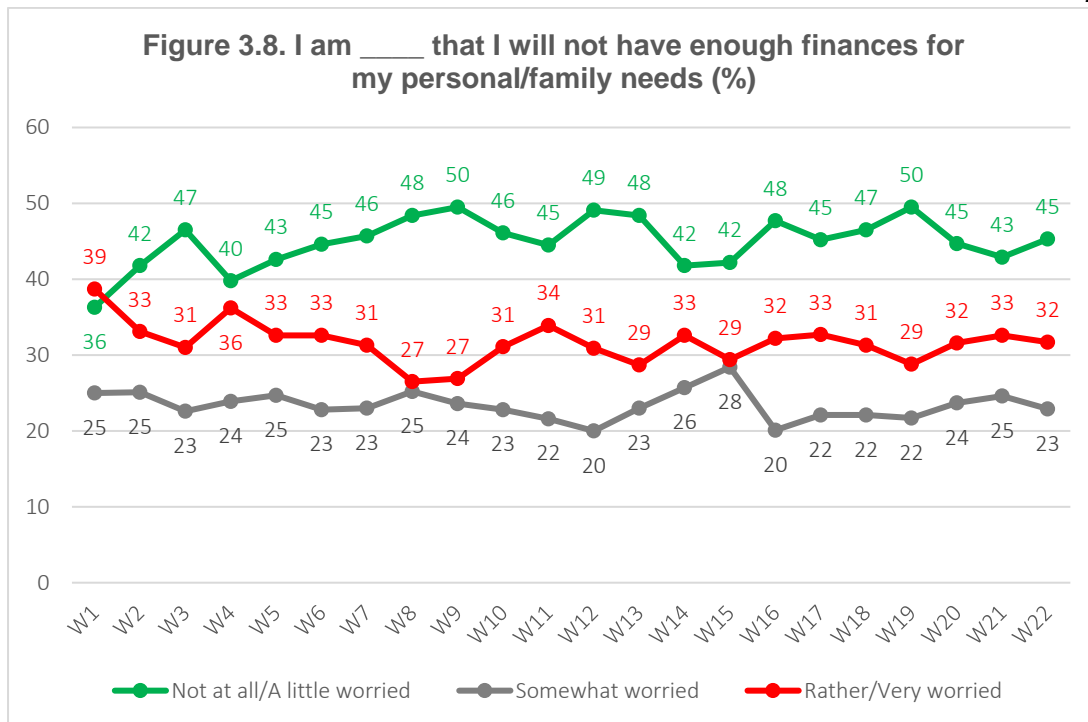


3.4 Financial Well-Being

However, the financial well-being of respondents saw a more prominent degree of positive change during the pandemic. In the earlier stages of the pandemic last year (W5 [June 2020]), 62 per cent of respondents indicated that their financial situation then was poor or fair (see Figure 3.7). This proportion has steadily decreased over the weeks, to about 50 per cent in W22 (March 2021).

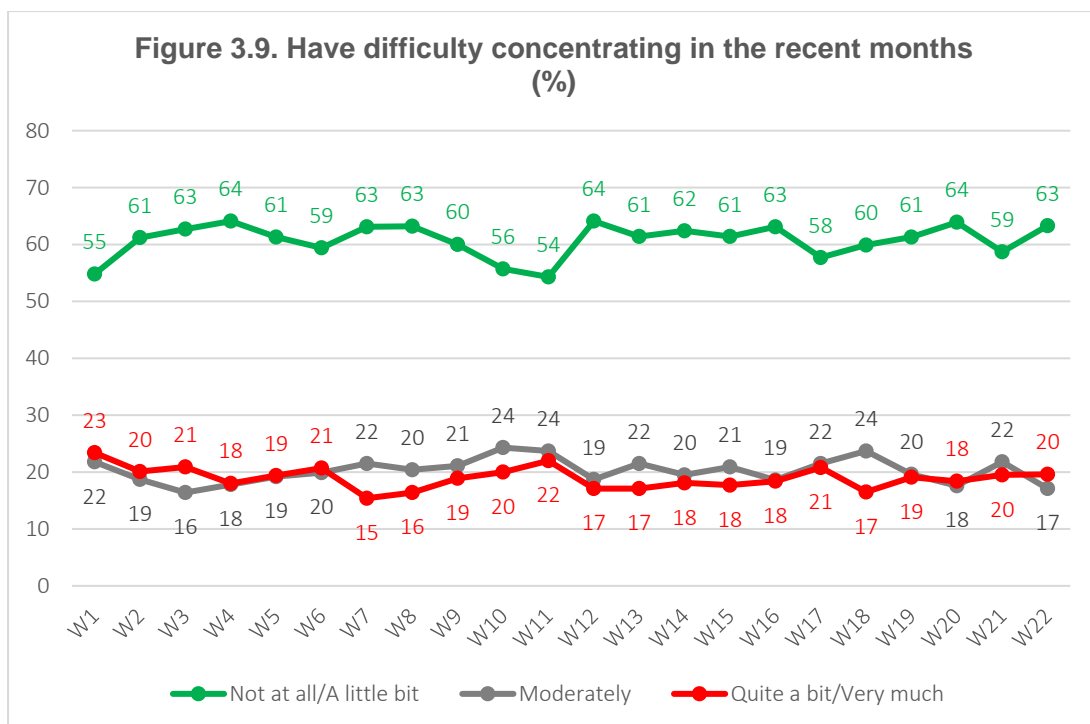
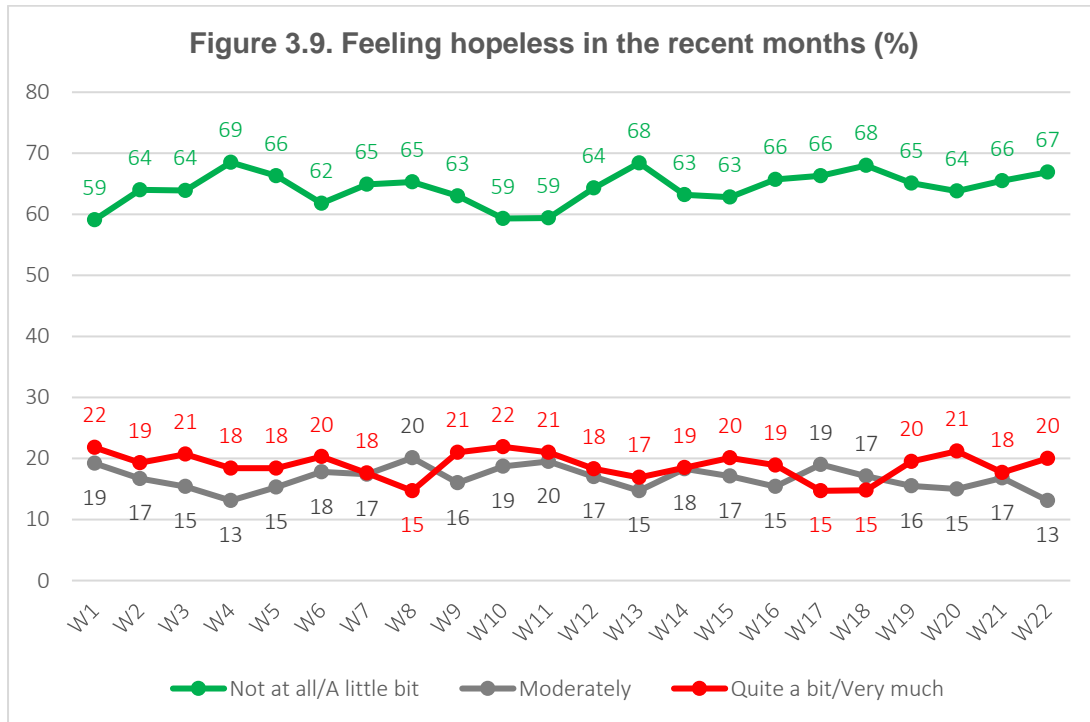


Correspondingly, respondents' financial worries also reduced over time, although about one-third still reported substantial concerns. Specifically, the proportion of those who were not at all worried or just a little worried about having enough finances for their personal or family's needs rose from 36 per cent a year ago in W1 (April 2020), to about 45 per cent in W22 (March 2021; see Figure 3.8). The proportion of those who were rather worried or very worried also reduced slightly from 39 per cent to about 32 per cent.



3.5 Predictors of Psychological Well-Being

While the great majority of respondents seemed to experience good levels of psychological well-being, there was a significant proportion of respondents who did experience some levels of distress. In March 202, about 20 per cent of respondents reported feeling hopeless (see Figure 3.9), and had difficulty concentrating (see Figure 3.10) in the recent months.



As such we sought to more clearly understand the demographic variables that correlated with well-being levels. We conducted a multiple regression analysis with psychological well-being as the outcome variable, and the following demographic variables as the predictors:

- Age (21 to 29, 30 to 39, 40 to 49, 50 to 59, 60 and above)
- Gender (female, male)
- Housing type as a proxy of socio-economic status (one- to three-room HDB, four- to five-room HDB/Executive, Private Housing/Landed)
- Number of dependents⁶ (no dependents, 1 dependent, 2 dependents... etc.)
- Marital status (married, not married)
- Predominant working arrangement (work from home, non-work from home)
- Education level (O-Level and below, post-secondary, degree and above)
- Race was entered as a covariate

The data from W16 to W19 (January 2021 to February 2021) were used for this present analysis, totalling 2,025 observations.

⁶ Dependents were defined as respondents who were living with children or foster children aged 18 and below, and/or parents or grandparents aged 65 and above

Psychological well-being was measured as a composite scale based on the following eight items:

1. To what extent do you feel stressed from the COVID-19 outbreak?
(1 = not at all stressed, 5 = very stressed)
2. To what extent have you experienced the following in recent months?
(1 = not at all, 5 = very much)
 - a. Having repeated and disturbing thoughts or dreams about what is happening
 - b. Having difficulty concentrating
 - c. Having trouble falling or staying asleep
 - d. Feeling irritable or having anger outbursts
 - e. Feeling hopeless
3. In the next six months, how worried or not worried are you that you will lose your mental well-being? (1 = not at all, 5 = very worried)
4. In the next six months, how worried or not worried are you that you will lose your purpose for living? (1 = not at all, 5 = very worried)

The scale demonstrated very high internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$).

3.5.1 Results

Results of the multiple regression analysis showed that age, housing type (as a proxy for socio-economic status), number of dependents, gender, and

workplace arrangement were significant predictors of psychological well-being (see Table 3.1). Education level and marital status were not significant predictors of psychological well-being. More specifically those who were younger, lived in smaller housing types (i.e., those of lower socio-economic statuses), had more dependents, male and working from the office were more likely to have lower levels of psychological well-being.

Table 3.1: Regression model with unstandardised regression coefficients; age, SES, no. of dependents, gender, and workplace arrangements significantly predicted psychological well-being

Predictor	Coefficient	Standard error	p-value
Age	-.146	.022	.000
Education level	.048	.041	.245
SES	-.186	.039	.000
No. of dependents	.103	.023	.000
Marital status	.090	.057	.116
Gender	.138	.049	.005
Predominant workplace arrangement	-.161	.049	.001

To illustrate how the significant predictors mentioned above relate to various aspects of psychological well-being, we show a number of cross-tabulation results:

- Age
 - Around 31 per cent of respondents aged 21 to 29 were rather or very worried about losing their purpose for living as compared with only 11 per cent of those aged 60 and above (see Table 3.2).

Further, 27 per cent of those aged 21 to 29 experienced having trouble falling or staying asleep for quite a bit or very much in the recent months, compared with only 9 per cent of those aged 60 and above (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.2: In the next six months, how worried are you that you will lose your purpose for living? By age group (%)

% of respondents n = 2,025	Not at all worried	A little worried	Somewhat worried	Rather worried	Very worried
21 to 29	53.8		15.2	30.9	
	29.8	24.0		15.7	15.2
30 to 39	51.5		22.3	26.1	
	32.6	18.9		13.8	12.3
40 to 49	58.6		21.1	20.2	
	40.9	17.7		9.6	10.6
50 to 59	63.7		14.1	22.2	
	45.5	18.2		11.2	11.0
60 and above	77.0		12.0	11	
	54.5	22.5		6.2	4.8

Table 3.3: To what extent have you experienced trouble falling or staying asleep in the recent months? By age group (%)

% of respondents n = 2,025	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very much
21 to 29	51.1		22.4	26.6	
	29.0	22.1		19.1	7.5
30 to 39	50.6		21.2	28.2	
	29.2	21.4		18.2	10.0
40 to 49	58.0		20.1	21.9	
	34.8	23.2		15.4	6.5

50 to 59	67.7		16.3	16.1	
	44.3	23.4		12.0	4.1
60 and above	75.6		15.3	9.1	
	47.4	28.2		6.7	2.4

- SES
 - Around 44 per cent of respondents with lower SES (living in one- to three-room HDB flats) said they were stressed or very stressed from the COVID-19 outbreak (see Table 3.4), as compared to 35 per cent of respondents with higher SES (living in private or landed property).

Table 3.4: To what extent do you feel stressed from the COVID-19 outbreak? By SES (%)

% of respondents n = 2,025	Not at all	A little stressed	Neutral	Stressed	Very stressed
Lower SES (HDB 1 to 3 room)	30.6		25.7	43.7	
	6.7	23.9		30.8	12.9
Middle SES (HDB 4 to 5 room/Executive)	36.6		24.3	39.0	
	8.7	27.9		30.2	8.8
Higher SES (Private/Landed)	42.5		22.3	35.2	
	11.3	31.2		27.2	8.0

- Gender
 - Around 38 per cent of female respondents were not at all or just a little stressed from the COVID-19 outbreak, as compared with 36 per cent of male respondents (Table 3.5).
 - Around 21 per cent of male respondents experienced hopelessness for quite a bit or very much, as compared with 18 per cent of female respondents (Table 3.6).
 - On being worried about losing one's mental well-being, 28 per cent of male respondents were rather or very worried, as compared to 24 per cent of female respondents (Table 3.7).

Table 3.5: To what extent do you feel stressed from the COVID-19 outbreak? By gender (%)

% of respondents n = 2,025	Not at all	A little stressed	Neutral	Stressed	Very stressed
Female	37.5		24.0	38.4	
	8.1	29.4		30.0	8.4
Male	35.8		24.3	39.9	
	9.6	26.2		29.4	10.5

Table 3.6: To what extent have you experienced feeling hopeless in the recent months? By gender (%)

% of respondents n = 2,025	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very much
Female	64.8		17.1	18.1	
	40.2	24.6		13.2	4.9
Male	60.7		18.3	21.0	
	40.7	20.0		12.4	8.6

Table 3.7: To what extent are you worried that you will lose your mental well-being? By gender (%)

% of respondents n = 2,025	Not at all worried	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very much
Female	58.2		18.2	23.6	
	33.2	25.0		14.2	9.4
Male	53.3		19.1	27.7	
	31.4	21.9		14.7	13.0

- Predominant workplace arrangement
 - At least 26 per cent of respondents who mostly worked from office experienced quite a bit or very much repeated and disturbing thoughts, as compared to 22 per cent of respondents who mostly worked from home (Table 3.8). Further, one-quarter of respondents who mostly worked from office had trouble falling or

staying asleep in the recent months, as compared to 21 per cent of those who mostly worked from home (Table 3.9).

Table 3.8: To what extent have you experienced repeated and disturbing thoughts or dreams about what is happening in the recent months? By work location (%)

% of respondents n = 1,750	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very much
Return to workplace on most days	50.9		22.9	26.2	
	34.5	16.4		19.2	7.0
Work from home most or all of the time	58.8		19.4	21.8	
	37.9	20.9		17.3	4.5

Table 3.9: To what extent have you experienced having trouble falling or staying asleep in the recent months? By workplace arrangement (%)

% of respondents n = 1,750	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very much
Return to workplace on most days	52.9		22.1	24.9	
	32.5	20.4		16.6	8.3
Work from home most or all of the time	61.9		17.3	20.8	
	36.9	25.0		15.4	5.4

- Dependents
 - The more dependents a respondent has, the poorer his/her psychological well-being. For example, 54 per cent of respondents living with three to four dependents reported being stressed or very stressed from the COVID-19 pandemic, as compared with around 41 per cent of those with no dependents

(see Table 3.10). Having a higher number of dependents is also significantly correlated with having trouble sleeping (Table 3.11) and feeling more irritable or having more angry outbursts (Table 3.12).

Table 3.10: To what extent do you feel stressed from the COVID-19 pandemic? By number of dependents (%)

% of respondents n = 1,171	Not at all	A little stressed	Neutral	Stressed	Very stressed
No dependents	32.3		26.9	40.8	
	8.1	24.2		31.0	9.8
1-2 dependents	33.3		22.7	44.0	
	8.4	24.9		32.4	11.6
3-4 dependents	25.6		20.2	54.2	
	3.4	22.2		40.4	13.8
5 or more dependents (n=11)	9.1		9.1	81.9	
	9.1	0		36.4	45.5

Table 3.11: To what extent have you experienced having trouble falling or staying asleep in the recent months? By number of dependents (%)

% of respondents n = 1,171	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very much
No dependents	59.7		21.6	18.7	
	37.5	22.2		13.4	5.3
1-2 dependents	52.6		22.7	24.7	
	32.2	20.4		16.1	8.6
3-4 dependents	47.3		23.6	29.1	
	28.6	18.7		19.7	9.4
5 or more dependents (n=11)	27.3		27.3	45.5	
	9.1	18.2		36.4	9.1

Table 3.12: To what extent have you experienced feeling irritable or angry outbursts? By number of dependents (%)

% of respondents n = 1,171	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very much
No dependents	57.6		23.2	19.1	
	28.7	28.9		13.2	5.9
1-2 dependents	54.7		23.6	21.7	
	29.8	24.9		14.2	7.5
3-4 dependents	45.8		25.1	29.1	
	29.1	16.7		20.7	8.4
5 or more dependents (n=11)	27.3		45.5	27.3	
	9.1	18.2		9.1	18.2

4. SENTIMENTS TOWARDS COVID-19 SAFETY MEASURES

Summary

- Perceived inconvenience of safe management measures like mask wearing and scanning of QR codes has decreased over time.
- Support for vaccination increased from 60 per cent in early February 2021 to about 67 per cent in March 2021.
- At least half of the population still hold doubts about the vaccine; youths were more likely to be concerned about vaccine safety as compared to Singaporeans aged 60 and above.
- Around 6 in 10 Singaporeans are mostly working from office now; no differences between labour-intensive and professional industries.
- At least half of those who mostly work from office support increasing the frequency of working from office; for those who have been working from home, at least four in 10 say they agree with an increased frequency of working from office.

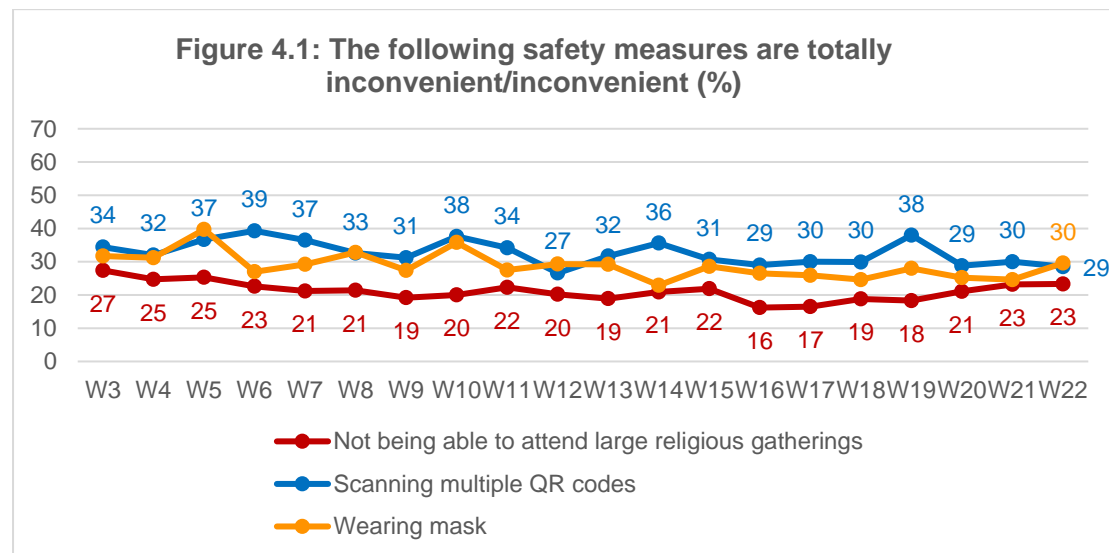
4.1 Sentiments Towards Safe Management Measures

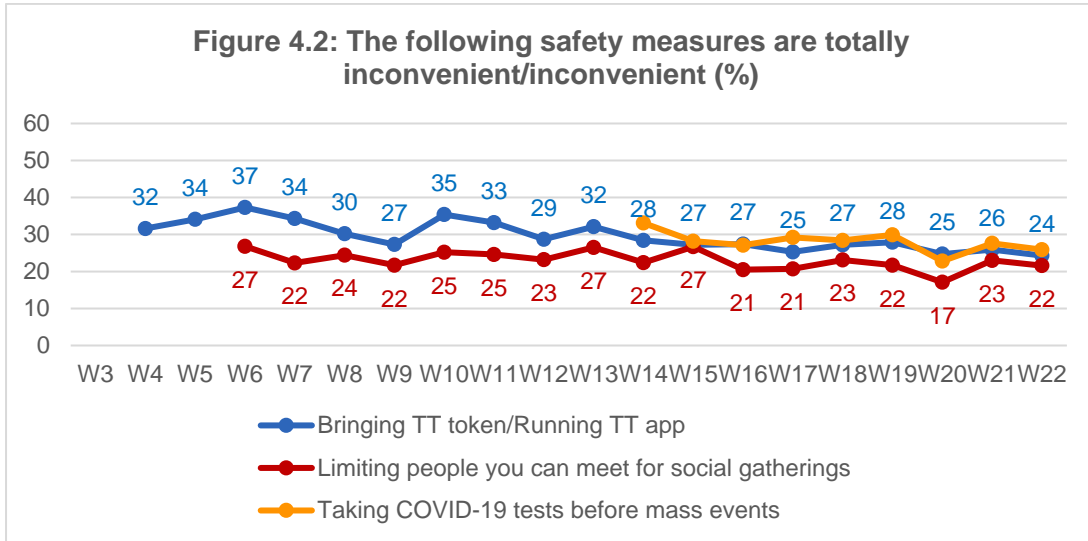
We assessed respondents' views towards a wide range of safety measures that have been implemented throughout the past year. These were, among others:

1. Not being able to attend large religious gatherings
2. Wearing of masks
3. Limiting number of people for social gatherings
4. Scanning of QR codes at public locations
5. The use of TraceTogether app/token
6. Taking COVID-19 tests prior to mass events

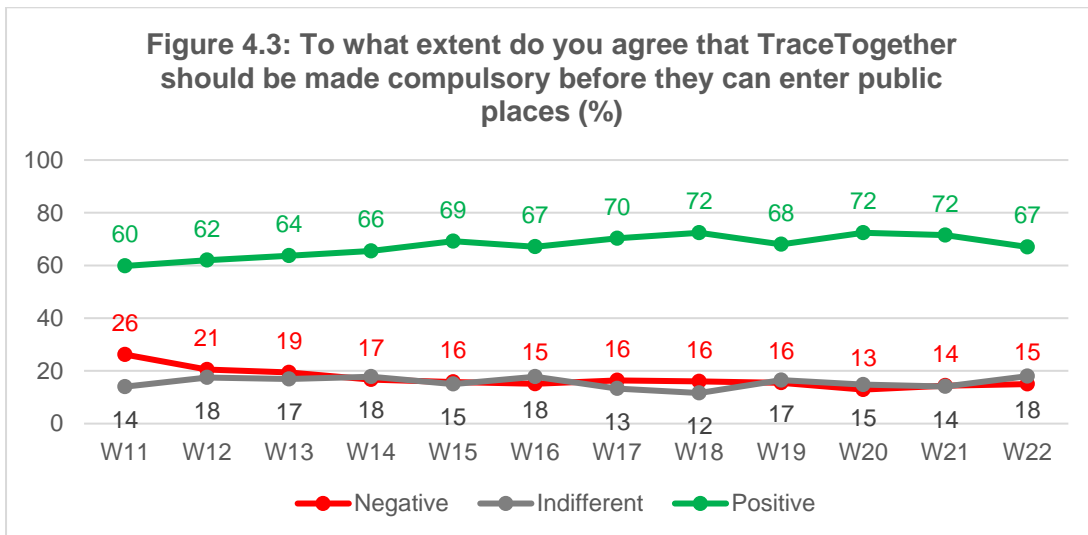
As a reflection of their attitudes towards these measures, respondents indicated how inconvenient these measures were on a five-point scale, with 1 being “totally inconvenient” and 5 being “not inconvenient at all”.

Perceived inconvenience of these measures decreased gradually over time — an indication of the population’s progressive acceptance and adaptation to new safety requirements. For example, 30 per cent of Singaporeans had found scanning multiple QR codes at various entry points to be totally inconvenient or inconvenient at W22 (March 2021; see Figure 4.1), where it was around 34 per cent in W3 (May 2020) and up to 39 per cent in W6. The other safe management measures are detailed in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 below.



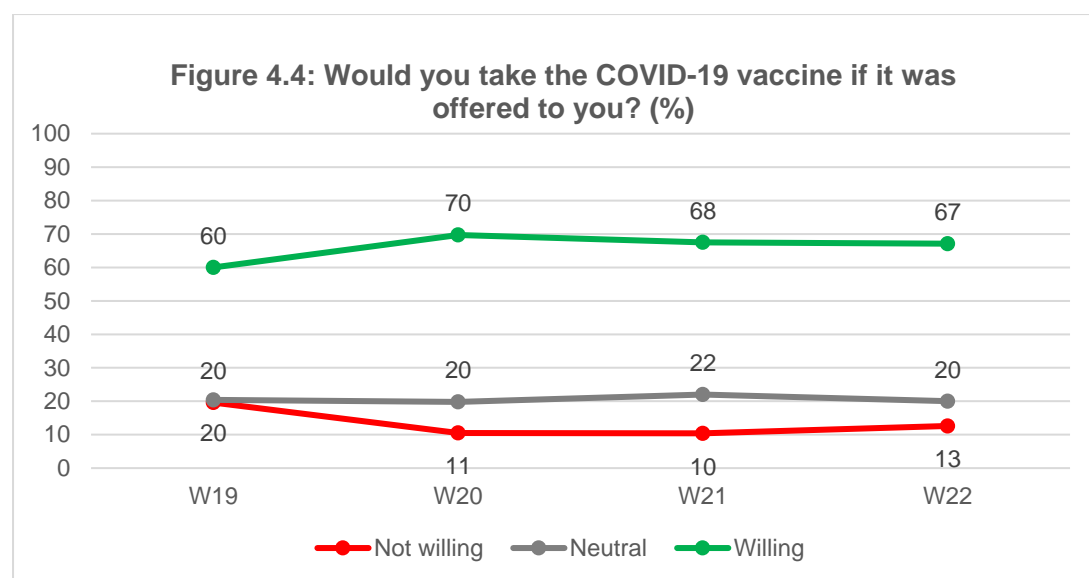


The proportion of respondents who agreed that TraceTogether should be made compulsory for everyone increased from 60 per cent in W8 (September 2020) to 67 per cent in W22 (March 2021, see Figure 4.3).



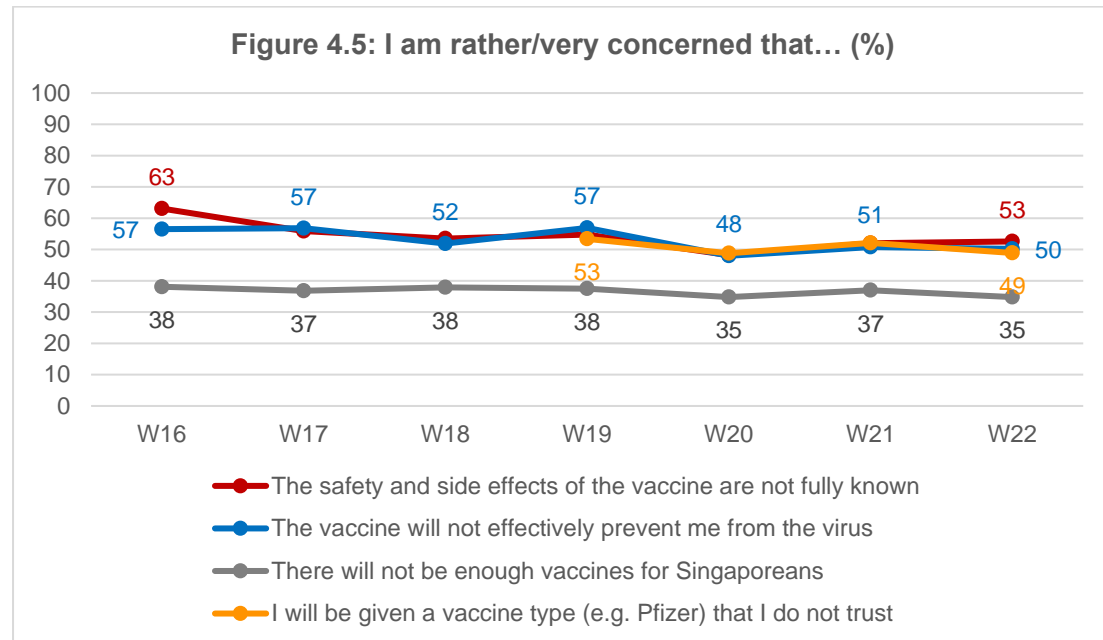
4.2 Support for Vaccination

Support for vaccinations also saw an improvement in recent weeks. Around 60 per cent indicated they were willing to take the vaccine in W19 (early February 2021, see Figure 4.4). This proportion rose to about 67 per cent in W22 (March 2021). Correspondingly, the proportion of those who were unwilling to take the vaccine if offered also decreased from 20 per cent in W19 to 13 per cent in W22 (March 2021).

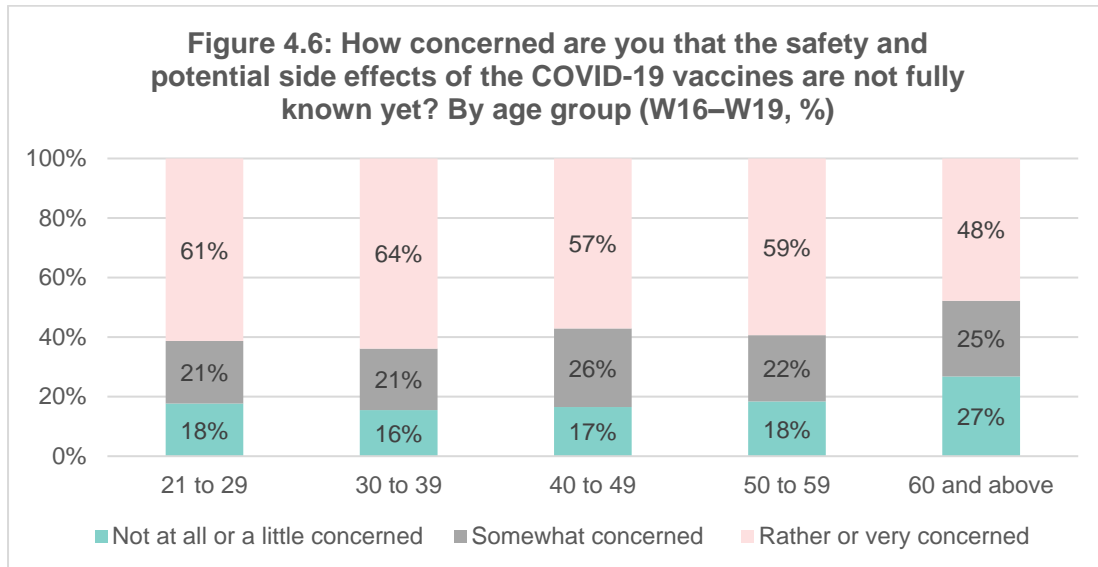


Improved attitude towards vaccination was accompanied by a decrease in concerns about vaccine's safety and potential side effects, from 63 per cent in W16 (early January 2021) to 53 per cent in W22 (March 2021; see Figure 4.5). There was also an improvement in concerns about perceived vaccine efficacy, with the proportion of people who did not believe that the vaccine would effectively prevent them from contracting the virus dropping from about 57 per

cent in W16 to 50 per cent in W22. Nevertheless, these proportions also suggest that about half of respondents still had doubts about the vaccine.

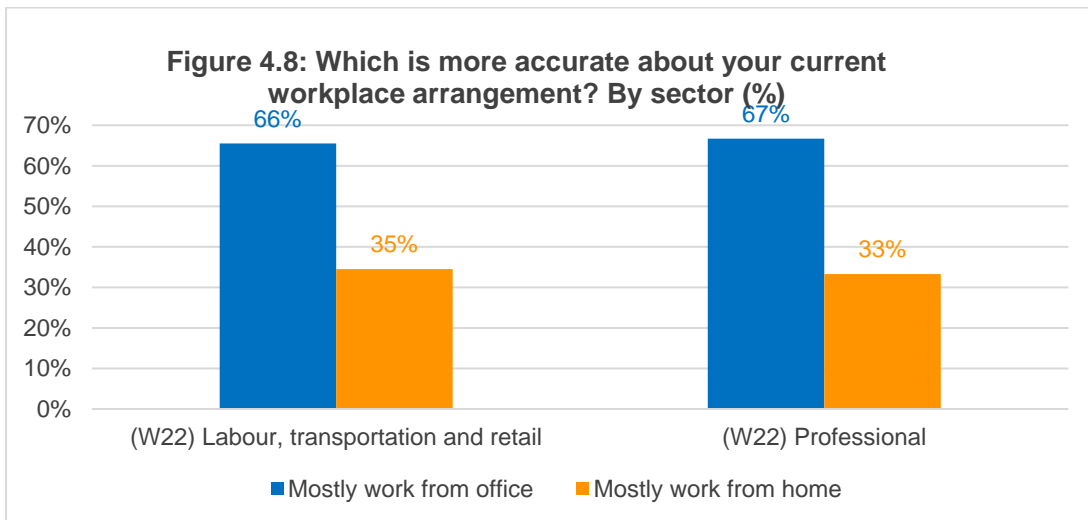
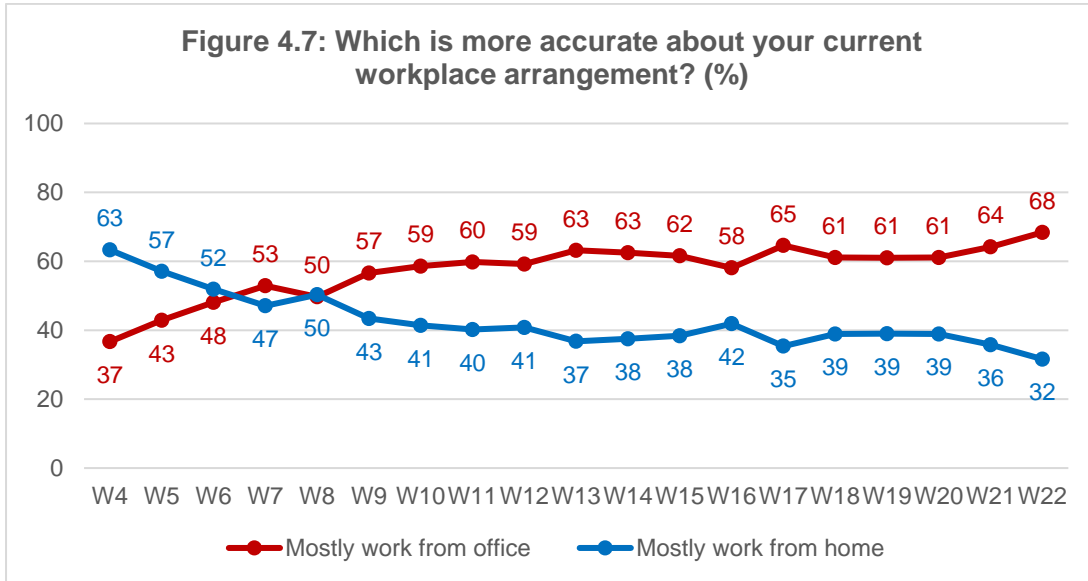


A deeper look at concerns about vaccine safety revealed that younger respondents were more likely to be concerned about the safety of the vaccine when compared with older age groups (see Figure 4.6). At least 60 per cent of those aged 21 to 29 and those aged 30 to 39 were concerned about the safety and potential side effects of the vaccine, compared with 48 per cent of those aged 60 and above.



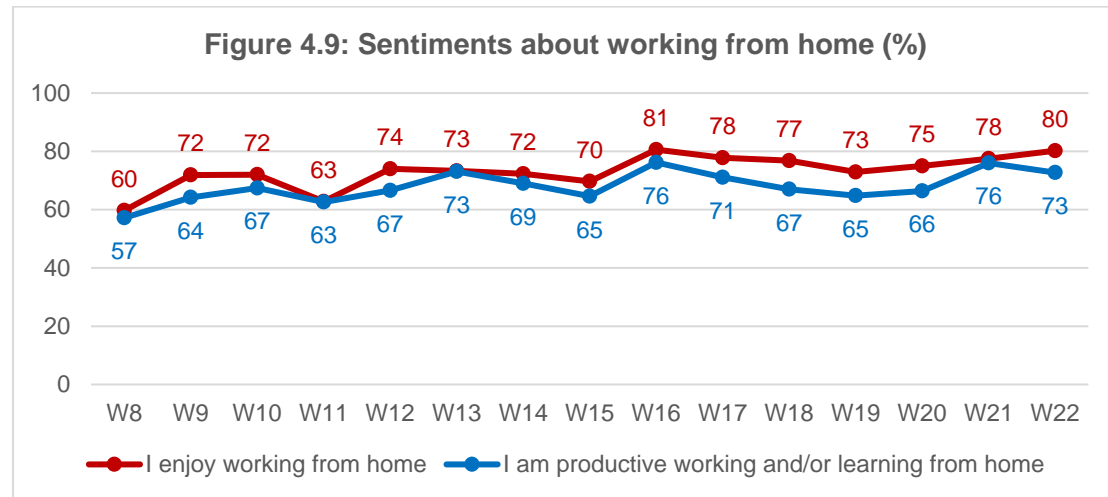
4.3 Work Arrangements

In the past year, employees experienced multiple changes to their working arrangements as a result of COVID-19 measurements. Around 63 per cent of employed respondents said they were mostly working from home in W4 (late May 2020, see Figure 4.7). As the COVID-19 situation improved in Singapore, this proportion steadily decreased. Today, only 32 per cent of respondents said they mostly worked from home. There are no differences in working arrangements between the labour, transportation and retail sector and the professional services sector today; around 66 per cent of respondents from both industries reported working from home and working from the office (see Figure 4.8).

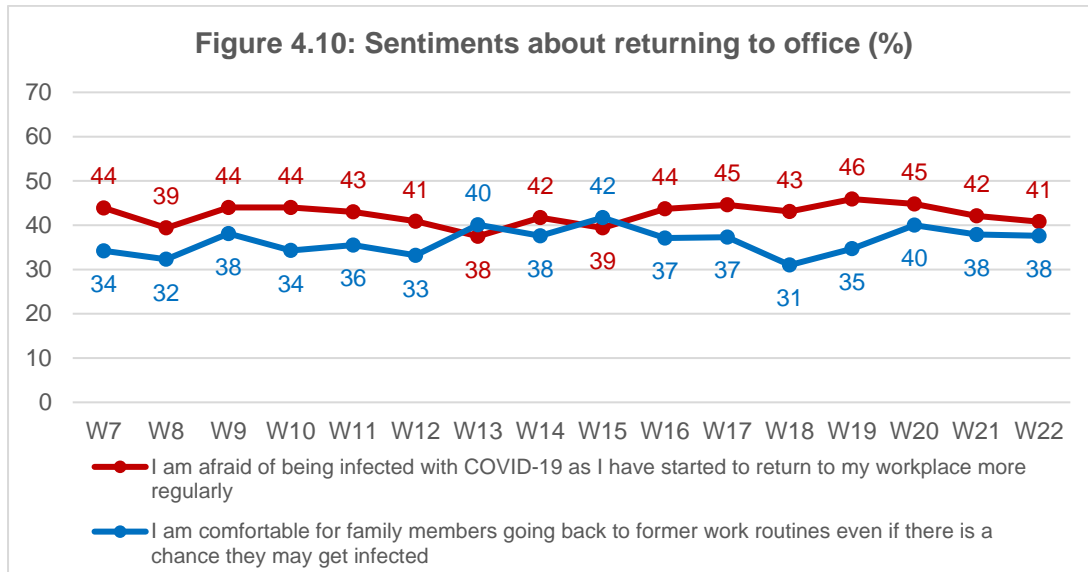


In W8 (September 2020), around 60 per cent of respondents who mostly worked from home said that they enjoyed working from home (see Figure 4.9). This proportion increased 20 points to 80 per cent today. Similarly, around 57 per cent of respondents who mostly worked from home said they were

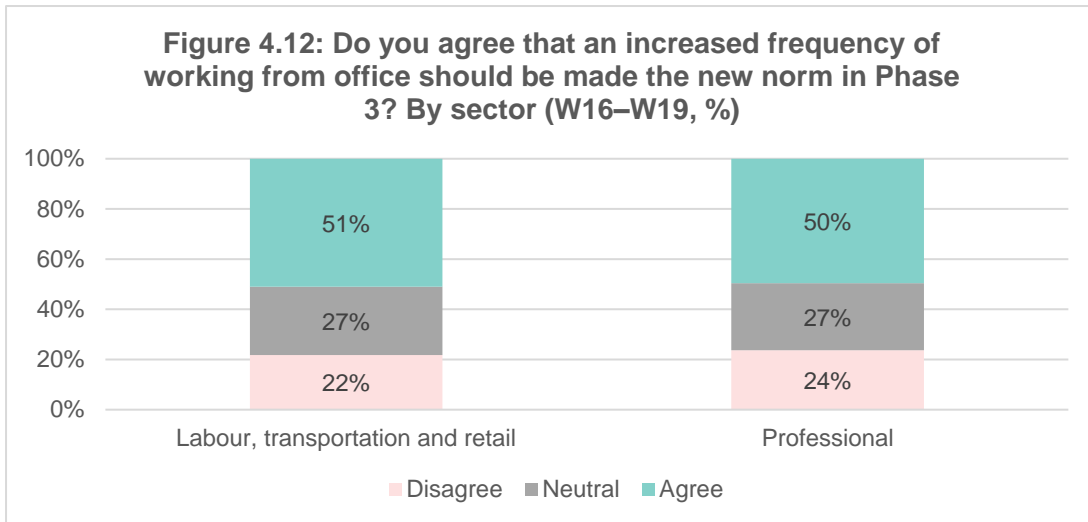
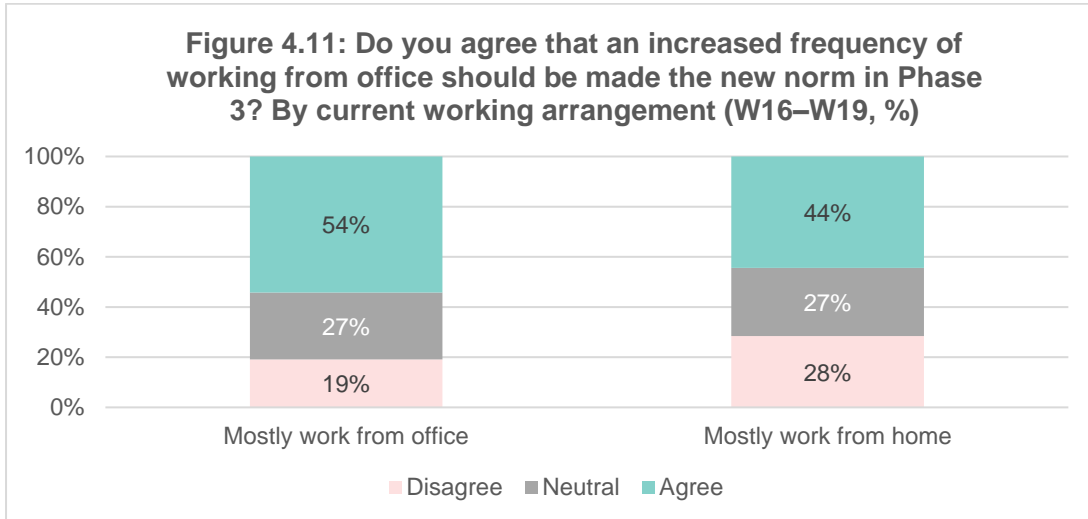
productive working and/or learning from home in W8 (September 2020; see Figure 4.9). This proportion has since increased to 73 per cent today.



Safety concerns in terms of the risk of getting infected with COVID-19 from workplaces remained largely unchanged, hovering at about 42 per cent for those who were concerned about their personal safety as they began to return to the workplace more regularly (see Figure 4.10). There were also no stark changes in the proportion of those who were worried about their family members going back to normal work routines.



The results also revealed interesting differences among respondents in their working arrangement preferences. Among those who were already mostly working from office, 54 per cent agreed that working from the office should be made the new norm in Phase 3 (Figure 4.11). At the same time, among those who were mostly working from home, 44 per cent said that working from office should be made the new norm. These results suggest that many Singaporeans prefer a hybrid working arrangement, where people are able to work from either their homes or offices on a needs basis. There were no notable differences across industries in terms of working arrangement preferences (Figure 4.12).



5. SENTIMENTS TOWARDS COVID-19 GOVERNANCE

Summary

- Satisfaction with the government's overall handling of the COVID-19 remained high across the past year, with around 76 per cent saying they were satisfied.
- Perceptions on the job market significantly improved, from 80 per cent in W4 (late May 2020) believing it would be bad, to around 42 per cent in March 2021.
- Around half of Singaporeans are confident about having a job in the next six months; however, higher confidence levels tend to come from those who were younger, had at least a degree, earned a higher monthly income, and worked in the professional services sector.
- At least half the population said they were willing to pursue upgrading in the event of a retrenchment.
- Around six in 10 Singaporeans trusted that the government was able to create new jobs and training opportunities and was serious about creating a Singaporean core of highly skilled workers.
- Economic concerns remained stable at around 60 to 70 per cent throughout the past year.
- Trust in the government's knowledge to navigate and lead Singapore in a post-pandemic remained at around 65 per cent or above across the past year.
- Half the population felt that Singaporeans were too dependent on the government for their economic problems.

5.1 COVID-19 Governance Satisfaction

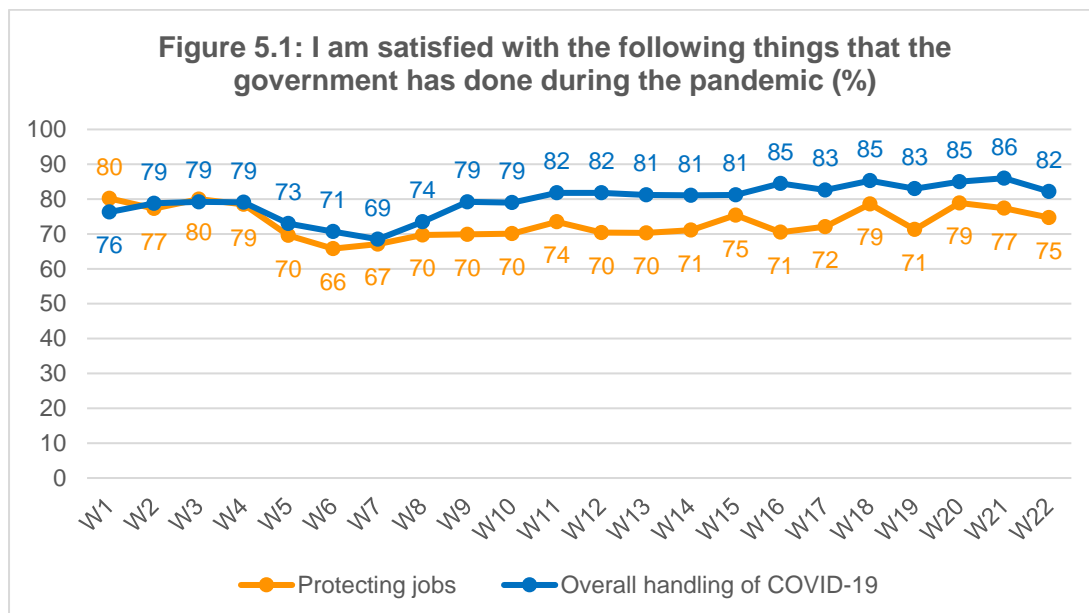
Satisfaction with the government's COVID-19 response was measured across several aspects, using a seven-point scale (1 being "strongly dissatisfied" and

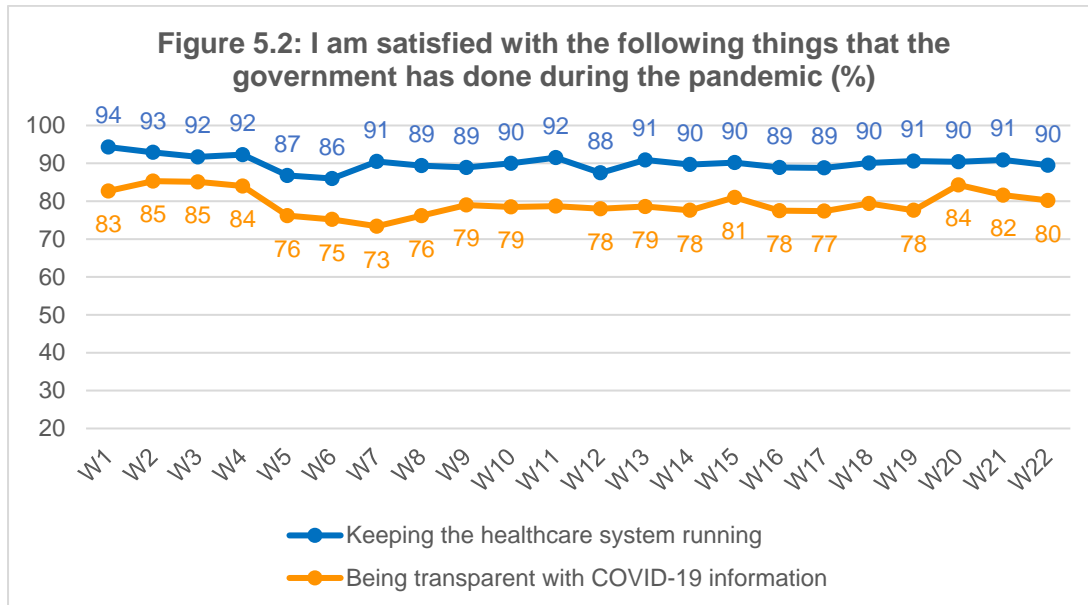
7 being "strongly satisfied"). These are, among others:

IPS Working Papers No. 40 (April 2021): The COVID-19 Pandemic in Singapore, One Year On: Population Attitudes and Sentiments
by Mathews, M., Suhaini, S., Hou, M., & Tan, A.

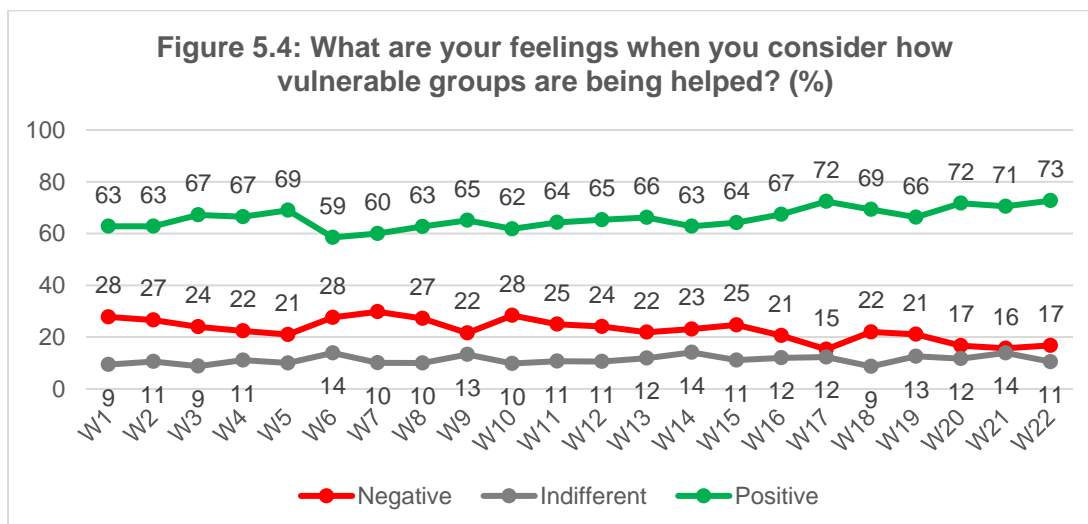
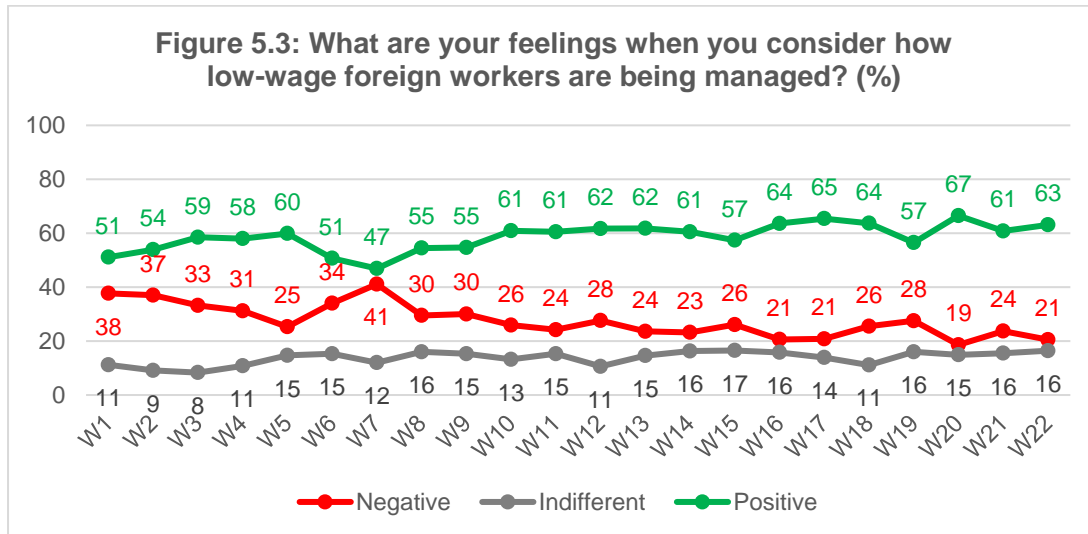
- Keeping the healthcare system running
- Protecting jobs
- Being transparent with COVID-19 information
- Overall handling of COVID-19

Overall, satisfaction with the government’s COVID-19 response remained high, with at least 76 per cent of respondents indicating they were satisfied throughout the 2020 waves (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2). Notwithstanding the stable proportions from wave to wave, satisfaction levels took a temporary dip across all four measures from W4 to W7 (May to late July 2020). For example, satisfaction in the government’s overall handling of COVID-19 fell from 79 per cent in W4 (late May 2020) to 69 per cent in W7 (late July 2020).



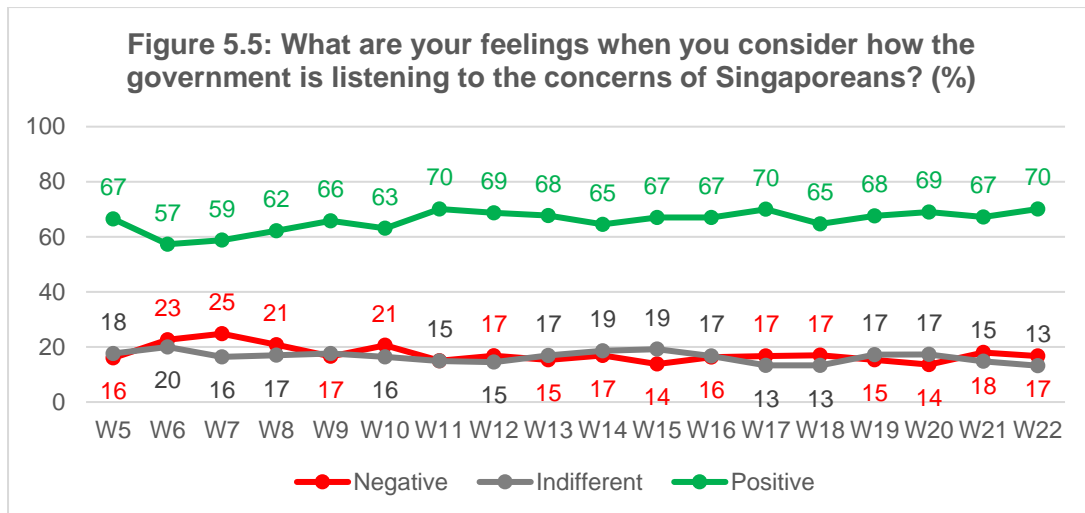


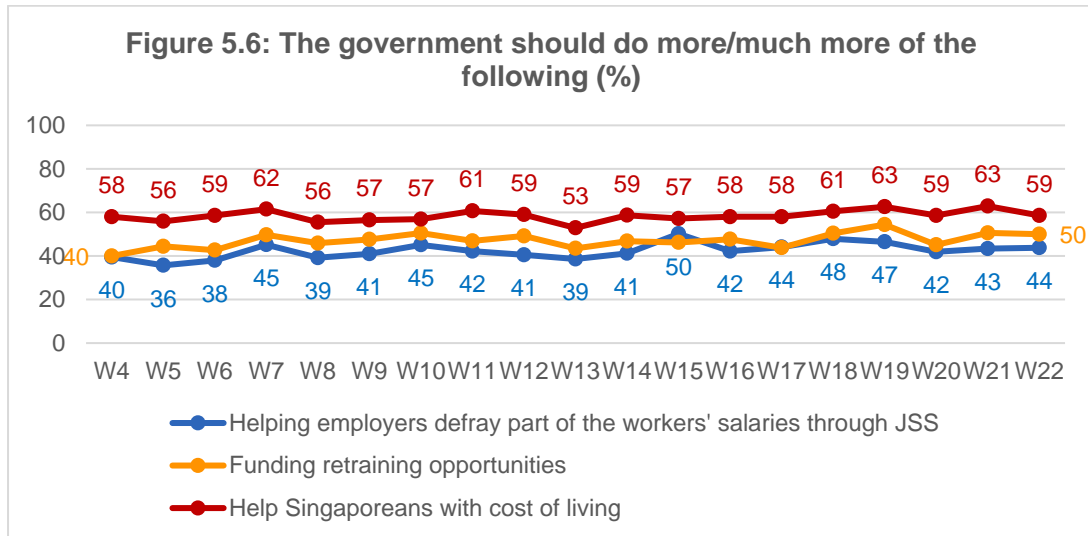
A possible reason for the decrease in satisfaction towards the government's COVID-19 response during this period could be attributed to the handling of vulnerable groups and foreign workers in Singapore. Supporting this perspective, the decrease in overall government satisfaction was accompanied by a deterioration in attitudes towards how vulnerable groups and migrant workers were treated. The proportion of respondents who were positive (happy, reassured or pleasantly surprised) at how low-wage foreign workers were treated fell to its lowest of 47 per cent in W7 (late July 2020; see Figure 5.3). Correspondingly, the proportion of those who were positive (happy, reassured or pleasantly surprised) about how vulnerable groups were helped also hit its lowest of 59 per cent in W6 (late June 2020; see Figure 5.4).



Another possible reason for these changes in government satisfaction could be attributed to the general election season, which happened roughly around W5 (mid-June 2020) to W7 (late July 2020); political discourse was heightened during this period as candidates kickstarted their political campaigns. The proportion of respondents who were positive (happy, reassured or pleasantly

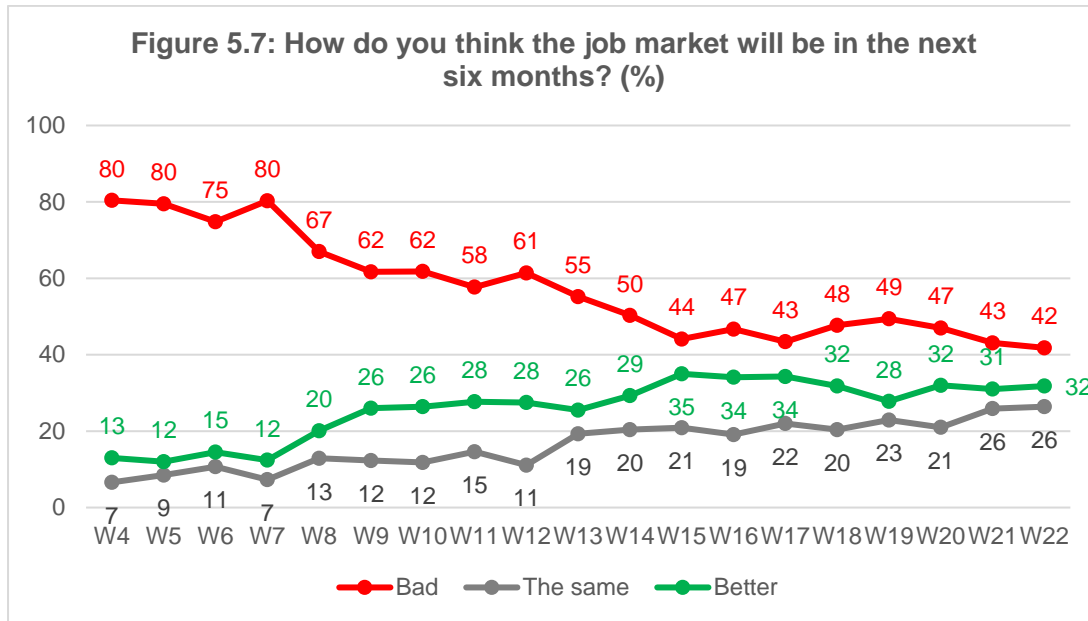
surprised) with how the government was listening to the concerns of Singaporeans fell to its lowest of 57 per cent in W6 (late June 2020; see Figure 5.5). Similarly, belief that the government should do more to help Singaporeans, like defraying workers' salaries, funding retraining opportunities, helping Singaporeans with the cost of living — rose during this period (see Figure 5.6).



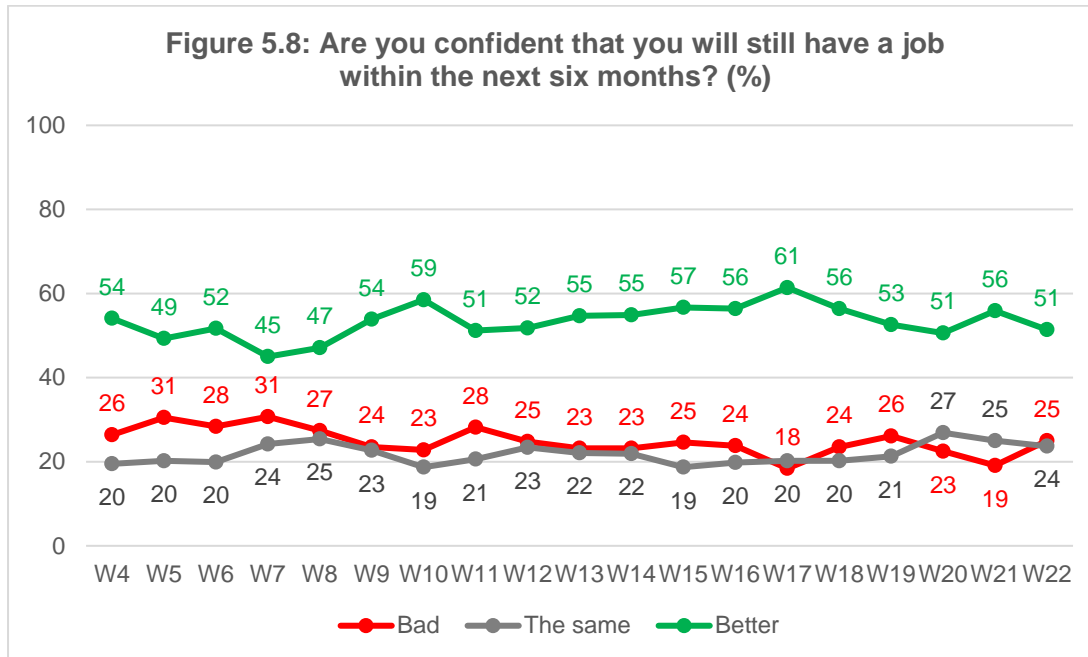


5.2 Sentiments on the Job Market and Job Prospects

Over the course of the year, perceptions about the job market have improved markedly. Around 80 per cent of respondents in W4 (late May 2020) believed that the job market would be bad for the next six months; compared with the most recent wave where 42 per cent believed so (Figure 5.7). On the other hand, the proportion of those who believed that the job market would become better steadily rose from about 13 per cent in W4 to 32 per cent in Wave 22.



Nevertheless, confidence that one would still have a job within the next six months remained at about 53 per cent and did not substantially change throughout the year (see Figure 5.8).



Employment confidence levels differed according to age, education and income levels. At least 60 per cent of respondents aged 39 years and below were confident of having a job in the next six months, compared with around 50 per cent of those aged 50 and above (see Table 5.1). Around 64 per cent of those with at least a degree were confident that they would still have a job in the next six months, compared with around 48 per cent of those with a secondary-level education or below (see Table 5.2). Similarly, 71 per cent those with a monthly income of more than \$5,999 were confident that they would still have a job in the next six months, compared with only 48 per cent of those earning less than \$3,000 monthly (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.1: Are you confident that you will still have a job within the next six months? By age group (%)

% of respondents n = 1,624	Not confident at all	Not confident	Somewhat not confident	Neither unconfident nor confident	Somewhat confident	Confident	Very confident
21 to 29	17.1			22.0	60.9		
	4.5	4.9	7.7		27.3	17.5	16.1
30 to 39	15.7			19.9	64.6		
	3.4	4.9	7.4		26.0	23.9	14.6
40 to 49	19.3			23.9	56.9		
	5.5	5.8	8.0		21.0	21.0	14.9
50 to 59	29.9			19.5	50.6		
	8.3	9.8	11.8		22.8	19.2	8.6
60 and above	32.1			17.0	51.0		
	11.6	8.0	12.5		30.4	15.2	5.4

Table 5.2: Are you confident that you will still have a job within the next six months? By education (%)

% of respondents n = 1,624	Not confident at all	Not confident	Somewhat not confident	Neither unconfident nor confident	Somewhat confident	Confident	Very confident
Secondary and below	30.9			21.1	47.8		
	9.7	10.6	10.6		23.9	16.8	7.1
Post-secondary	28.9			25.2	45.9		
	7.4	9.5	12.0		20.8	15.2	9.9
Degree and above	16.6			19.3	64.0		
	4.6	4.6	7.4		26.2	22.9	14.9

Table 5.3: Are you confident that you will still have a job within the next six months? By monthly income (%)

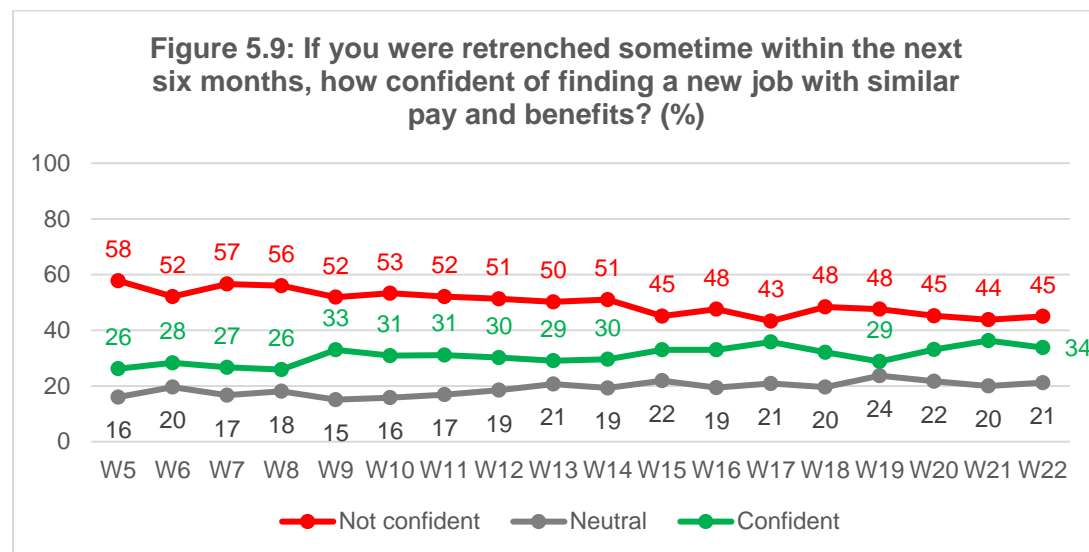
% of respondents n = 1,624	Not confident at all	Not confident	Somewhat not confident	Neither unconfident nor confident	Somewhat confident	Confident	Very confident
Less than \$3,000	27.8			24.5	47.7		
	7.6	8.6	11.6		22.2	15.2	10.3
\$3,000 - \$5,999	22.6			22.9	54.5		
	5.0	7.6	10.0		25.4	19.6	9.5
More than \$5,999	13.1			16.0	70.9		
	5.0	2.9	5.2		25.6	26.0	19.3

Employment confidence also varied based on economic sector. Specifically, 54 per cent of those in the labour, transportation, and retail sector were confident of having a job in the next six months, compared with 62 per cent of those in the professional services sector (Table 5.4).

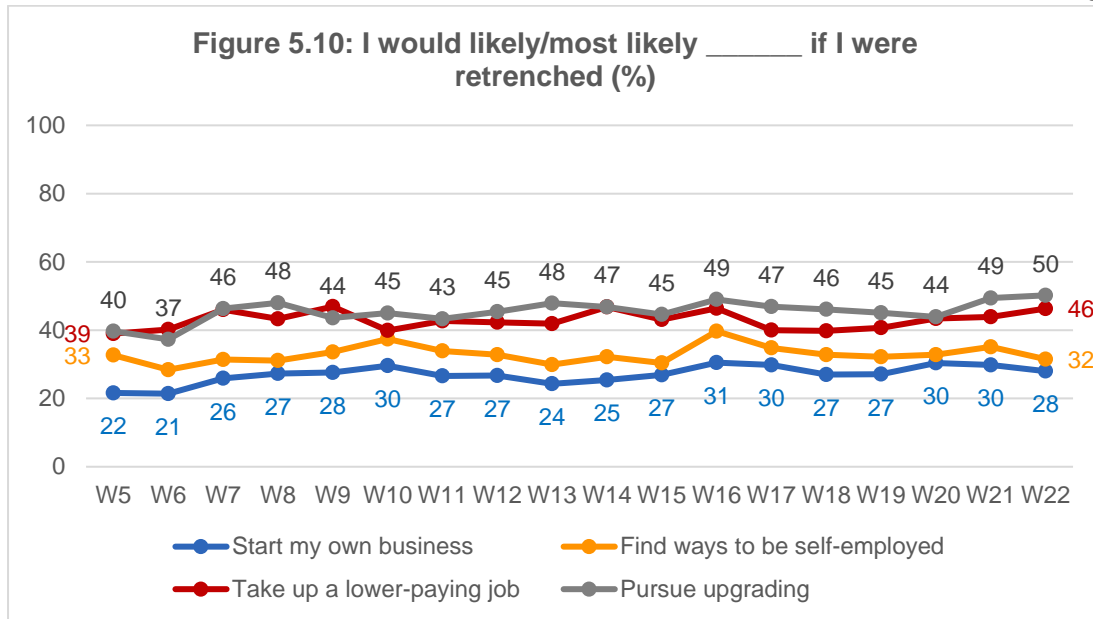
Table 5.4: Are you confident that you will still have a job within the next six months? By sector (%)

% of respondents n = 1,624	Not confident at all	Not confident	Somewhat not confident	Neither unconfident nor confident	Somewhat confident	Confident	Very confident
Labour, transportation and retail	24.4			22.2	53.5		
	7.0	6.9	10.5		25.0	19.1	9.4
Professional services	18.2			20.1	61.7		
	4.7	5.9	7.6		24.3	21.5	15.9

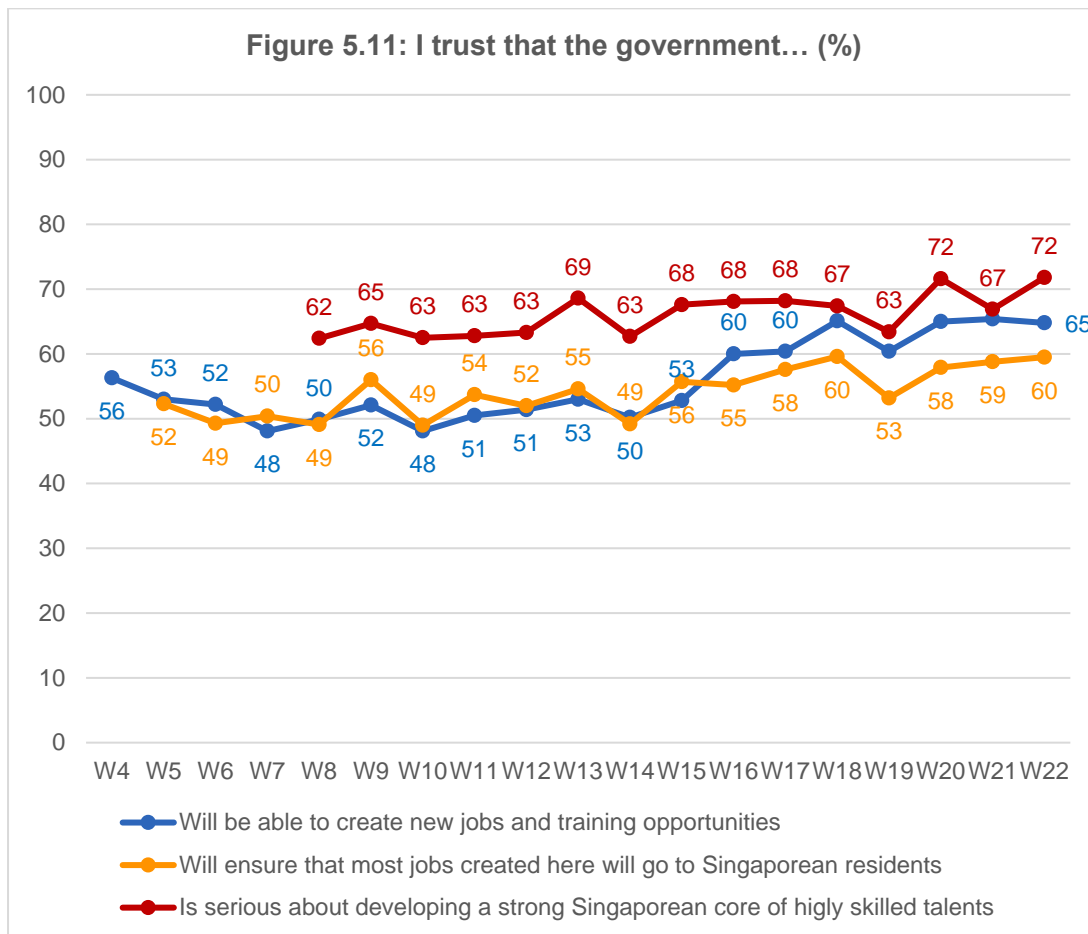
Confidence in securing new employment also improved over the months. About 58 per cent of respondents in W5 (mid-June 2020) said that if they were retrenched sometime within the next six months, they would not be confident in finding a job that had comparable pay and benefits (see Figure 5.9). This proportion declined to about 45 per cent in W22 (March 2021).



Further, at least half of the respondents indicated they were likely or most likely to pursue upgrading courses in the event of a retrenchment. This proportion has been more or less stable since W5 (mid-June 2020; see Figure 5.10). Around 46 per cent of respondents said they would likely or most likely take up a lower-paying job. Less than 30 per cent of respondents said they would likely or most likely start their own business.

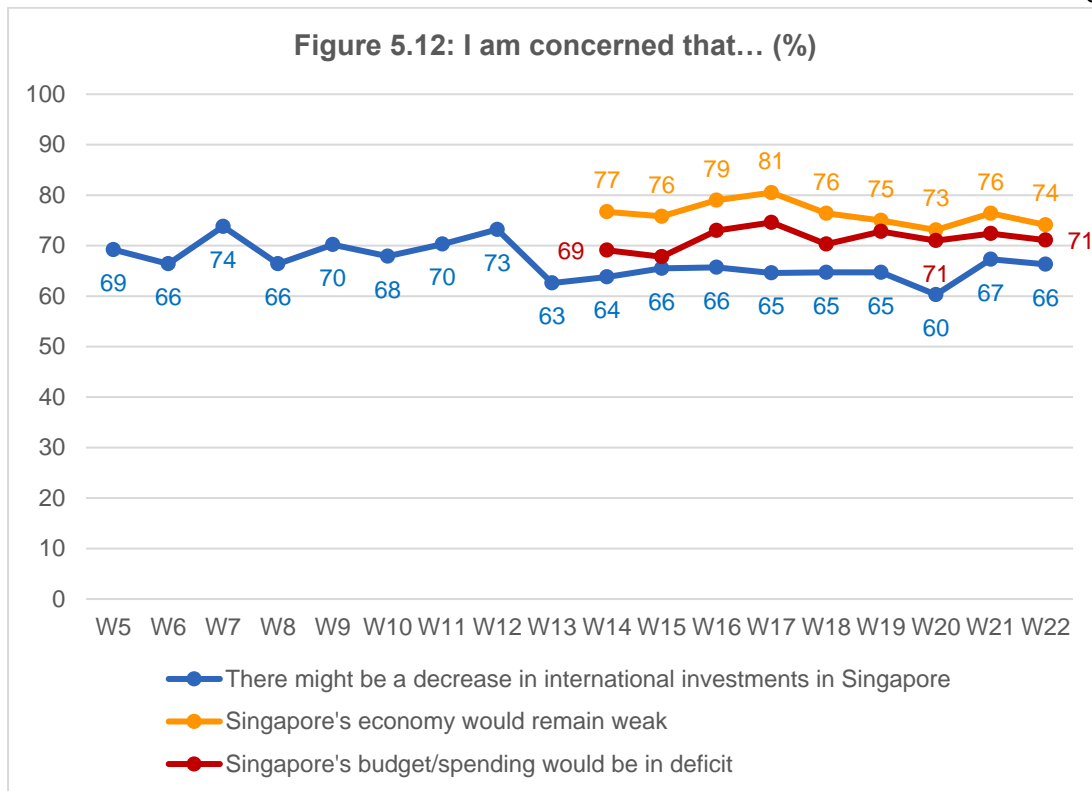


Around 65 per cent of respondents said that they trusted that the government would be able to create new jobs and training opportunities during this period of economic downturn (see Figure 5.11). This proportion is an increase from around 56 per cent in W4 (late May 2020). Further, around 60 per cent of respondents in W22 (March 2021) trusted that the government would ensure that most jobs created here would go to Singaporean residents — an increase from around 52 per cent in W5 (mid-June 2020). The proportion of respondents who trusted that the government was serious about developing a strong Singaporean core of highly skilled talents grew from 62 per cent in W8 (September 2020) to 72 per cent in W22 (March 2021).

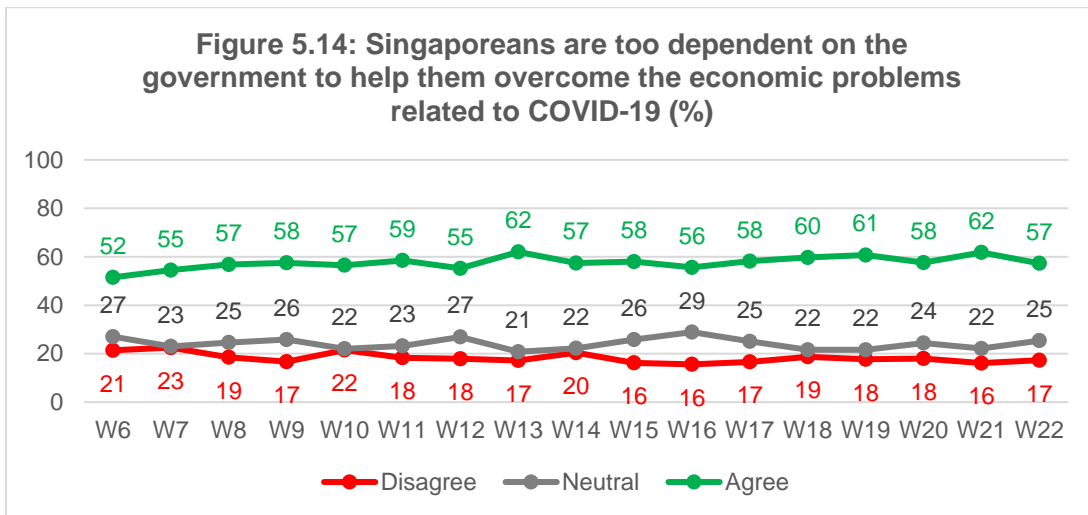
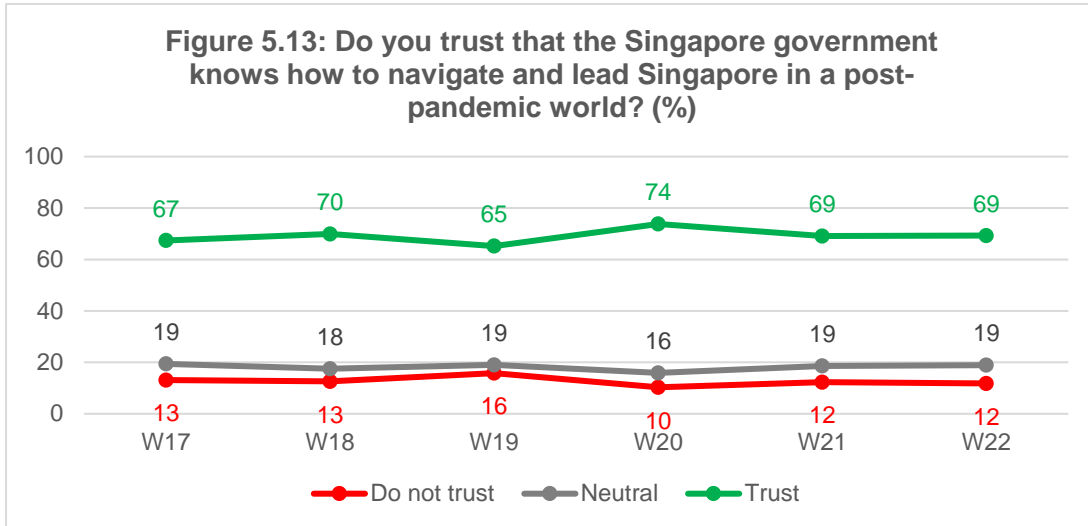


5.3 Sentiments on the Economy

The proportion of respondents who were concerned that there might be a decrease in international investments in Singapore because of the COVID-19 pandemic remained relatively stable at around 60 to 70 per cent over the past year (see Figure 5.12). Other economic concerns, like being concerned that Singapore's economy would remain weak and being concerned that Singapore's budget/spending would be in deficit also remained at around the same proportions.



Overall, trust in the government's knowledge to navigate and lead Singapore in a post-pandemic world remained high across time, at 65 per cent or above (Figure 5.13). Nevertheless, more than 50 per cent of respondents — relatively consistent across time — agreed that Singaporeans were too dependent on the government to help them overcome the economic problems related to COVID-19 (Figure 5.14).



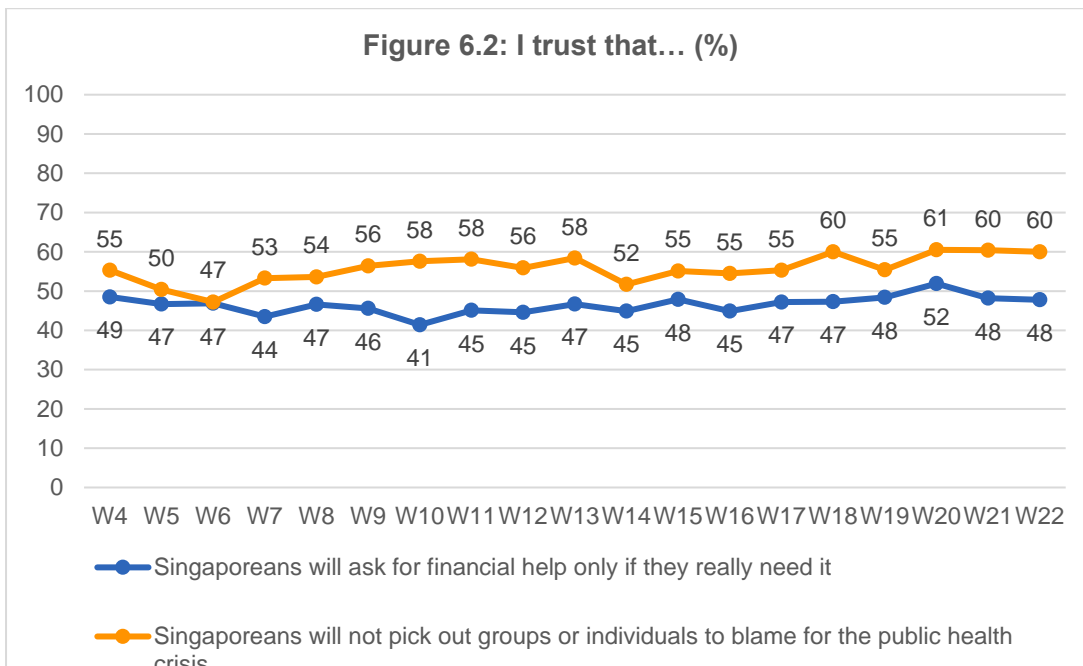
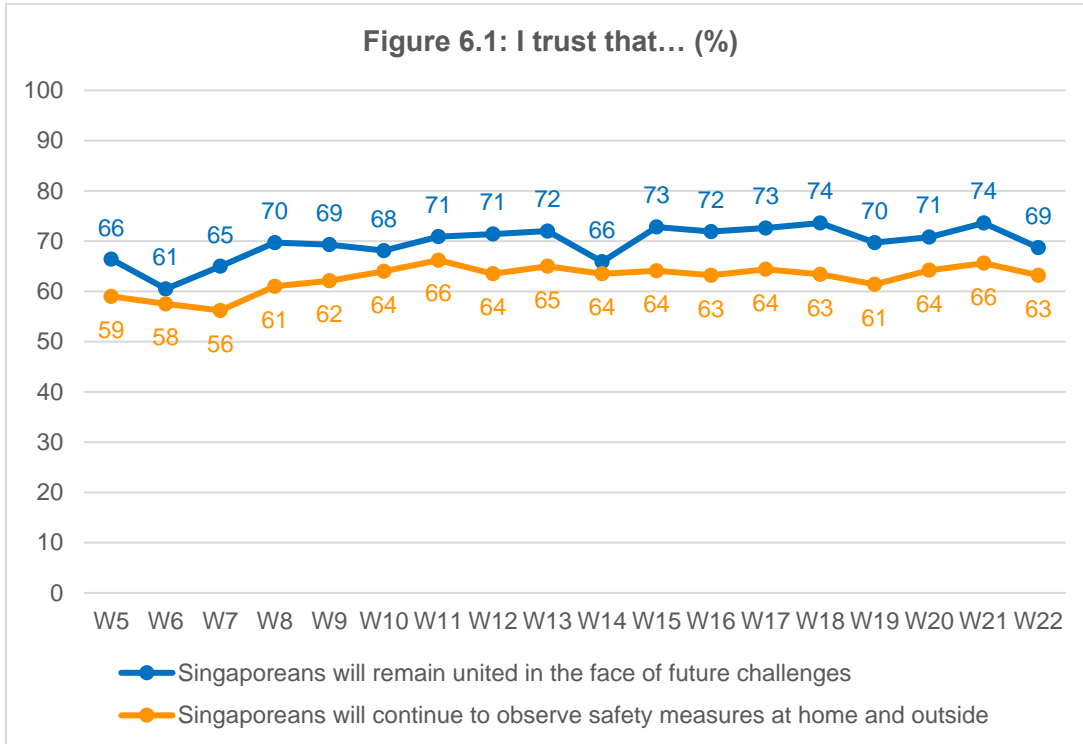
6. PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL RELATIONS DURING COVID-19

Summary

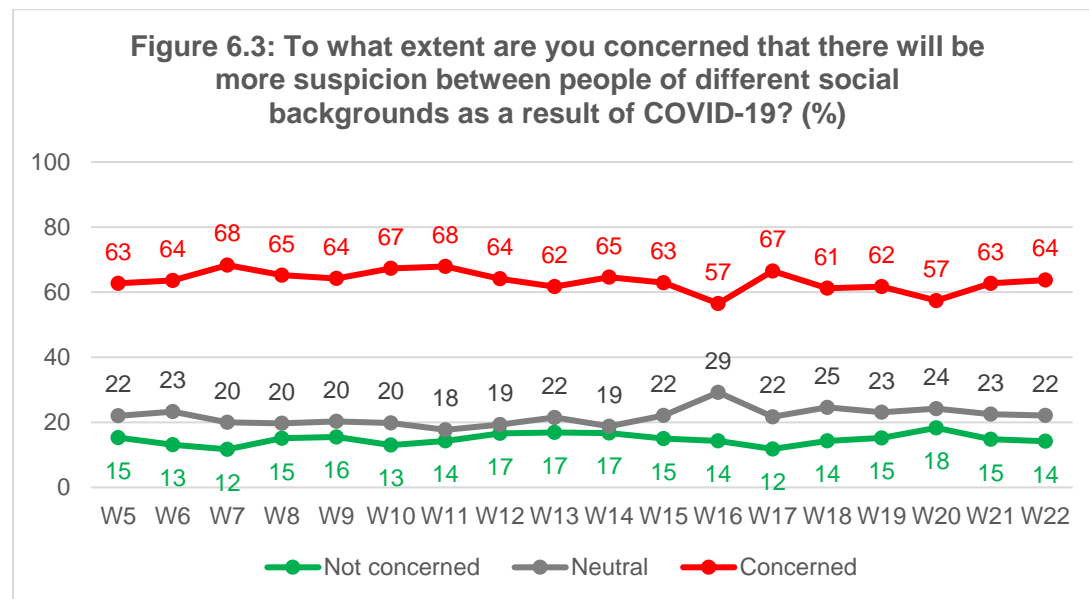
- The proportion of Singaporeans who trusted that Singaporeans would remain united and continue observing safety measures at home and outside was stable over the past year.
- There were no significant changes to the proportion of Singaporeans who felt more negatively towards immigrant groups; these remained at around 25 to 30 per cent since last year.
- At least 60 per cent of Singaporeans felt more positively towards medical workers.
- At least 70 per cent of Singaporeans trusted that Singapore would emerge out of this crisis stronger and more resilient than before.

6.1 Perceptions of Societal Trust

The proportion of respondents who said they trusted Singaporeans would remain united in the face of future challenges stayed at around 70 per cent since W11 (late October 2020; see Figure 6.1). Further, at least 60 per cent of respondents trusted that Singaporeans would continue to observe safety measures at home and outside; the proportion has been relatively stable since W5 (mid-June 2020). Other measures of societal trust have also remained stable over the past year: more than 55 per cent trusted that Singaporeans would not pick out groups or individuals to blame for the public health crisis, while around 48 per cent trusted Singaporeans to ask for help only if they really needed it (see Figure 6.2).



Further, at least 64 per cent of respondents were concerned there would be more suspicion between people of different social backgrounds as a result of COVID-19 (see Figure 6.3).



6.2 Perceptions of Societal Groups

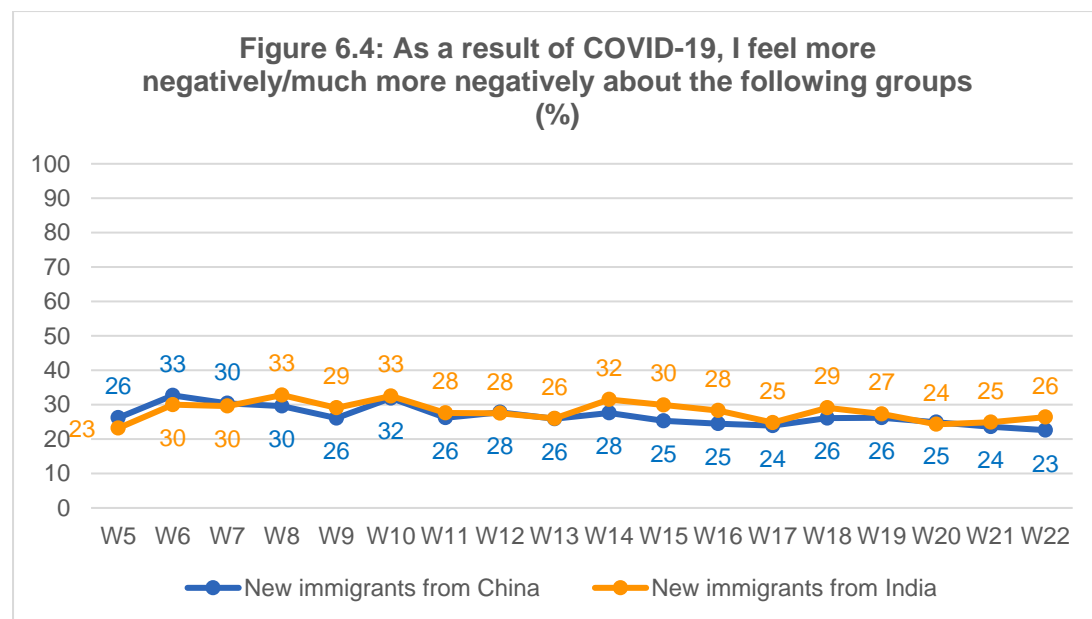
Respondents were asked if the COVID-19 pandemic had changed (more/much more negatively/positively) the way they felt towards various social groups, including:

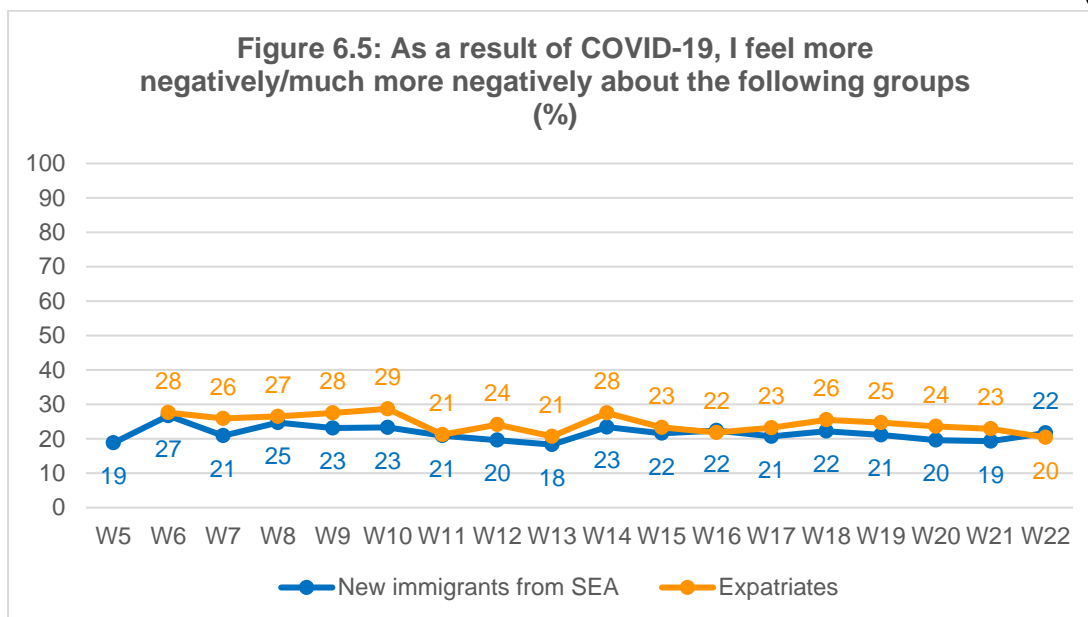
- New immigrants from China
- New immigrants from India
- New immigrants from Southeast Asia (SEA)
- Migrant workers
- Expatriates
- Law enforcement officials
- Government officials

- Medical workers

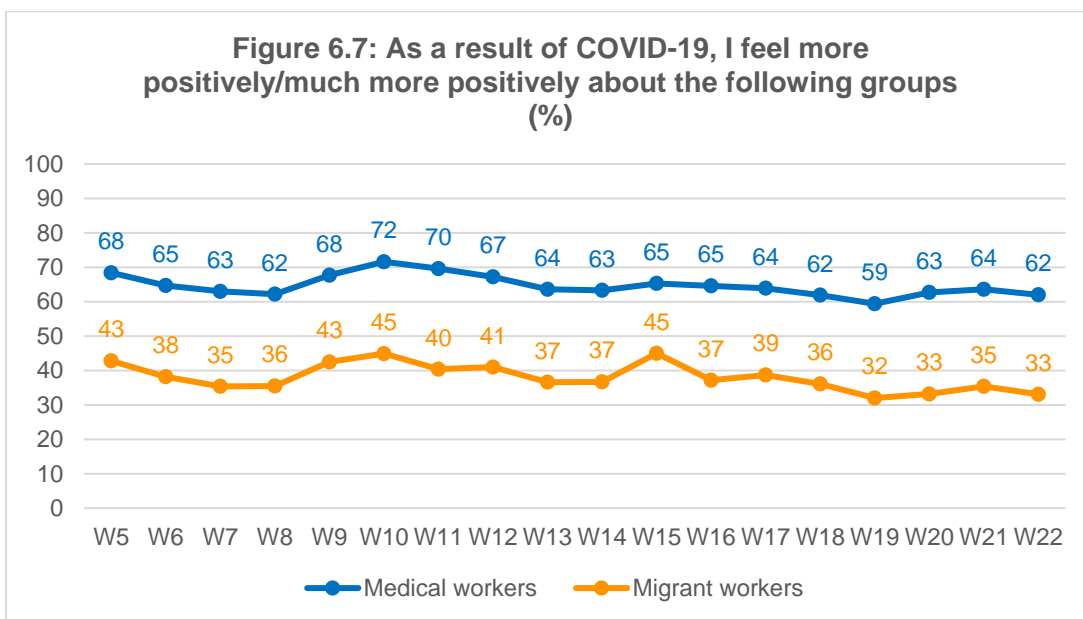
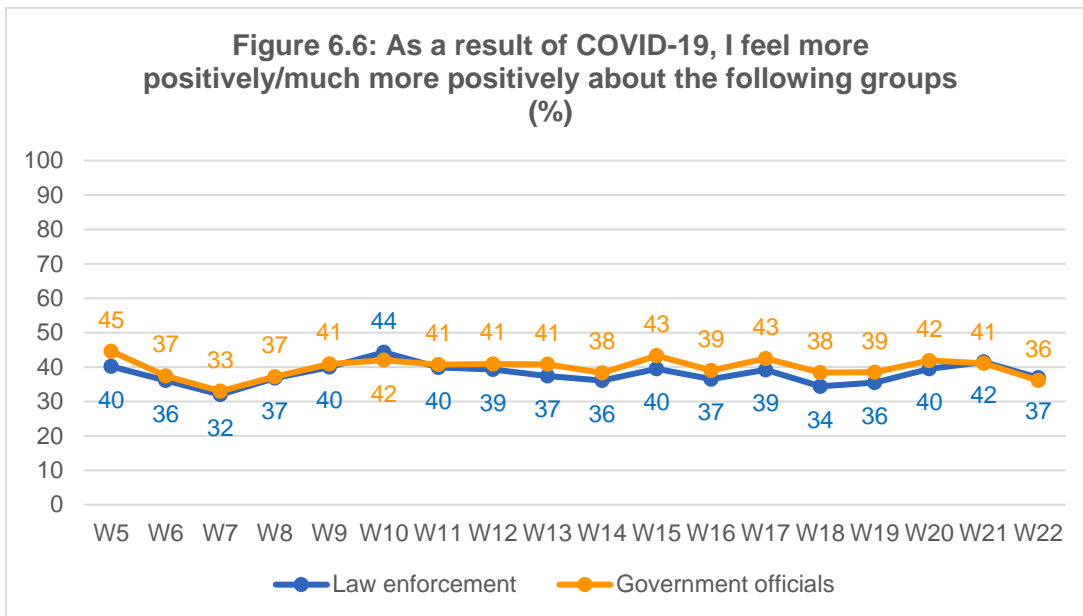
Respondents were also allowed to indicate that there had been no difference in their perceptions since the start of the pandemic.

Generally, the proportion of respondents who felt more or much more negatively about immigrants from China and India (Figure 6.4) and expatriates (Figure 6.5) hovered at around 25 to 30 per cent since W5 (mid-June 2020). Those who felt more or much more negatively about immigrants from SEA hovered around 19 to 22 per cent (Figure 6.5).





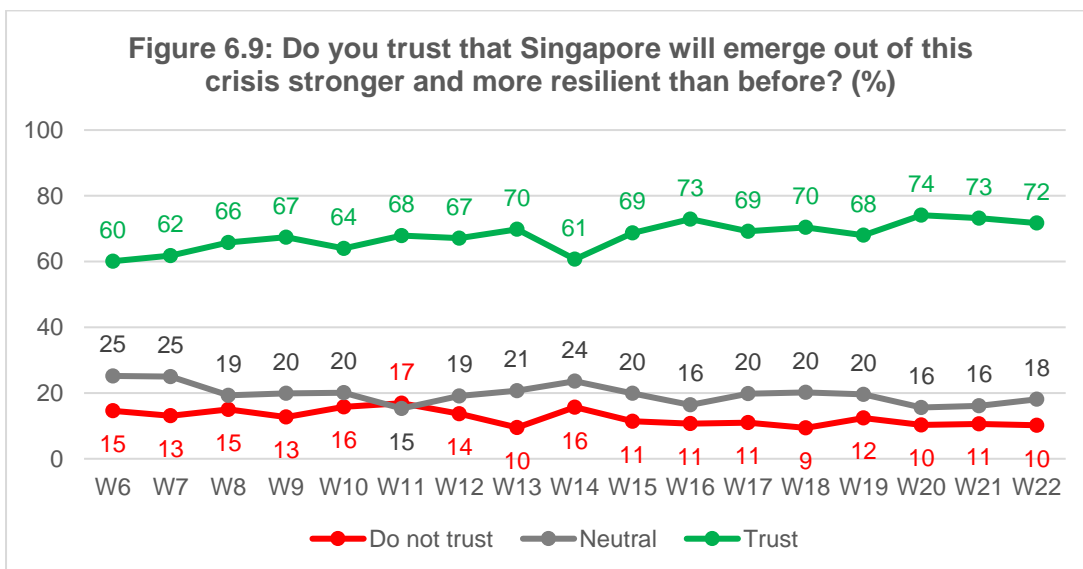
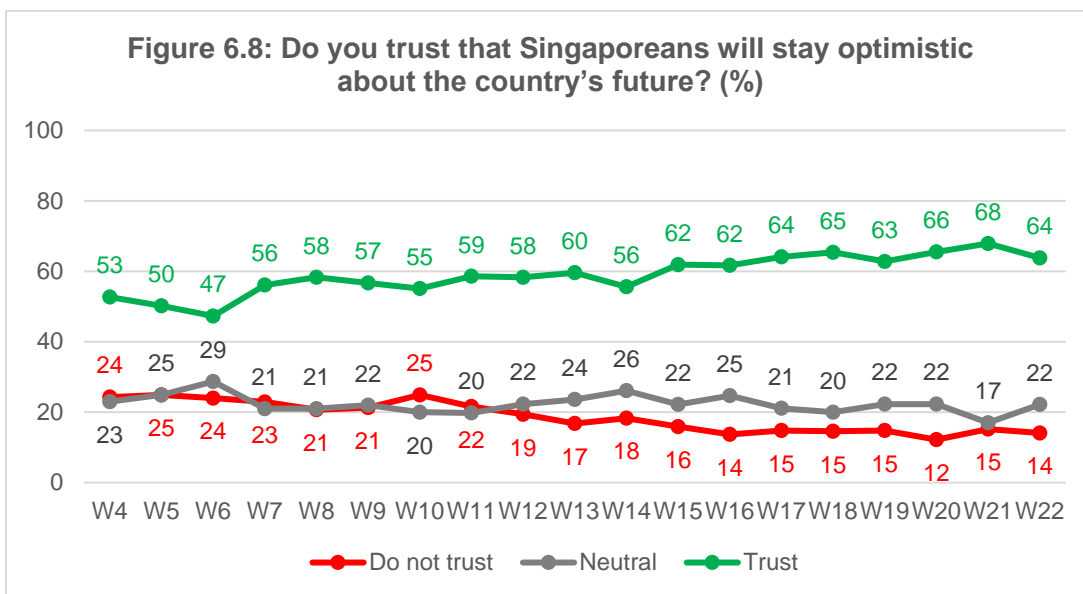
On the other hand, the proportion of respondents who felt more or much more positively about law enforcement officials (Figure 6.6), government officials (Figure 6.6) and migrant workers (Figure 6.7) hovered at around 35 to 40 per cent since last year. At least 60 per cent of respondents felt more or much more positively about medical workers since last year (see Figure 6.7); this proportion peaked at 72 per cent in W11 (late October 2020).



6.3 Hopes for a Better Future

The proportion of respondents who trusted that Singaporeans would stay optimistic about the country’s future rose from 53 per cent in W4 (late May

2020) to 64 per cent in W22 (March 2021; Figure 6.8). Similarly, the proportion of those who trusted that Singapore would emerge out of this crisis stronger and more resilient than before increased from 60 per cent in W6 (July 2020) to 72 per cent in W22 (March 2021; Figure 6.9).



7. UNDERSTANDING PREDICTORS OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS COVID-19 MEASURES

Summary

- Government satisfaction significantly predicted improved attitudes towards safe management measures and vaccination willingness.
- Greater satisfaction with the government and greater societal trust were important factors in facilitating peoples' orientation towards collective interests.
- Individual well-being was also impacted by government satisfaction and societal trust.
- Better well-being also predicted better attitudes towards vaccination.

7.1 Methodology

Singaporeans' attitudes towards and compliance with COVID-19 countermeasures (e.g., mask wearing, safe distancing, vaccinating, etc.) played a crucial role in the collective fight against the pandemic. In this section, we provide a comprehensive understanding of the various factors that can influence attitudes towards these countermeasures.

From the present dataset, we identified both societal- and individual-level variables that predicted respondents' attitudes towards COVID-19 countermeasures. We then performed structural equation modelling to examine how these predictors relate to our outcomes of interest (i.e., attitudes) in an

integrative fashion. Pooled cross-sectional data from W20 to 22 (February and March 2021) were used in the present analysis, with a sample size of 1,531.

First, we provide a description of the key variables in our model. Specific item breakdown for each variable can be found in Appendix B. At the societal level, we examined the following:

- Government satisfaction
 - This 15-item scale measured the extent to which respondents were satisfied with a range of government responses against COVID-19. These included responses relating to public health (e.g., healthcare system, contact tracing), economy (e.g., protecting jobs), information management (e.g., policy communication) and its overall handling of the pandemic.
- Societal trust
 - This was an eight-item scale that measured the level of trust that respondents had towards Singapore and Singaporeans. This multi-faceted scale tapped into diverse domains such as trust that Singaporeans would continue to be united and socially cohesive, that Singapore's economy would be resilient, and importantly, that Singapore would emerge strongly from this crisis.

At the individual/personal level, we examined the following:

IPS Working Paper No. 40 (April 2021): The COVID-19 Pandemic in Singapore, One Year On: Population Attitudes and Sentiments
by Mathew, M., Suhaini, S., Hou, M., & Tan, A.

- Social value orientation
 - This single item scale directly measured respondents' belief in the need for self-sacrifice of personal freedoms for the sake of the greater good in the fight against COVID-19. Conceptually, the scale reflected the extent to which respondents were motivated to act in service of the collective, rather than self-interest.

- Well-being
 - This three-item scale measured respondents' self-assessment of their overall well-being in three aspects: psychological, financial, and physical. It provides a reflection of how well, in general, people coped in light of the pandemic.

Finally, the key outcome variables were:

- Attitude towards vaccination
 - This was a two-item scale that measured respondents' willingness to vaccinate and their belief that vaccination should be made compulsory for all residents in Singapore.

- Attitude towards safety measures
 - This was a seven-item scale that measured the extent to which respondents considered a diverse range of safety measures to be inconvenient. These included safety measures implemented in

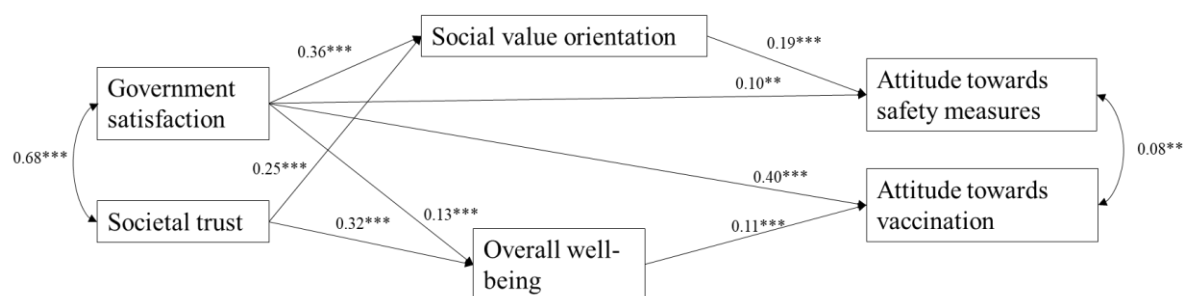
daily life, such as mask wearing, limiting sizes of social gatherings, and checking in at various public locations.

Next, we fitted a path model using structural equation modelling with the *lavaan* package in R. Model fit was assessed based on a joint consideration of the chi-square statistic, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR).

7.2 Results

Overall, the model showed a good fit with the data: $\chi^2(5) = 44.21, p < .001$, GFI = 0.99, CFI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.07, SRMR = 0.03 (see Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1: Structural equation modelling illustrating the relationships between societal level (i.e., government satisfaction, societal trust) predictors, individual level (i.e., social value orientation, overall well-being) predictors, and attitudes towards COVID-19 countermeasures



Note: Standardized path coefficients are displayed.

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$.

The following are some of the key highlights from the model:

IPS Working Paper No. 40 (April 2021): The COVID-19 Pandemic in Singapore, One Year On: Population Attitudes and Sentiments
by Mathew, M., Suhaini, S., Hou, M., & Tan, A.

1. Government satisfaction significantly predicted improved attitudes towards COVID-19 countermeasures. Specifically, the greater the satisfaction with government responses towards the pandemic, the better attitudes one had towards general safety measures ($\beta = .10, p < .01$), as well as vaccination ($\beta = .40, p < .001$). This demonstrates that the endorsement of — and indeed, compliance with — these measures is heavily dependent on the degree of perceived government efficacy. To the extent that people were satisfied with how the government has communicated policies and handled the disruptions across diverse aspects of society, support for corresponding measures rose.
2. More importantly, social value orientation played a key intermediary role in linking government satisfaction and societal trust with the various outcomes. Specifically, results show that greater satisfaction with the government ($\beta = .36, p < .001$) and greater societal trust ($\beta = .25, p < .001$) were important factors in facilitating people's orientation towards collective rather than self-interests. In turn, those who more strongly endorsed the need for sacrifices (of individual freedoms) were more likely to support the government's implementation of safety measures ($\beta = .19, p < .001$). These findings highlight the importance of cultivating a populace that is willing to pursue outcomes for the common good. In other words, willingness to act for the common good is the outcome of building an effective government and a trustworthy society worth sacrificing for.

3. Individuals' well-being was also impacted by government satisfaction ($\beta = .13, p < .001$) and societal trust ($\beta = .32, p < .001$). Indeed, the extent to which people are able to cope with the pandemic depends in part on the government's ability to help people overcome the economic and social disruptions posed by the pandemic, as well as the degree of trust and confidence one has towards others in society. After all, trust has long been recognised as a social glue — facilitating strong, communal bonds that enhance one's psychological and relational well-being.
4. Finally, well-being led to significantly better attitudes towards vaccination ($\beta = .11, p < .001$). Those who were better able to cope with the pandemic likely felt more emotionally and physically ready to undergo vaccination — a decision that no doubt entails a degree of risk, as small as it may be.

8. PROTECTIVE UTILITY OF SOCIAL TRUST DURING COVID-19

Summary

- Societal trust played a significant role in buffering individuals against the negative impact of perceived threat on well-being.
- Those with low levels of trust were more likely to feel more threatened about the pandemic, contributing to lower levels of overall well-being.
- Those with higher levels of trust did not experience the same negative impact of threat on their well-being.
- These results held even after controlling for age, housing and employment status.

8.1 Methodology

Economic and social upheavals arising from the pandemic represent a threat to society and individuals. Inevitably, these threats are likely to influence one's well-being adversely. For example, job security may negatively impact one's financial stability; limiting gatherings may also make it difficult to connect with others within one's social support network. As such, this section investigates how the negative effects of threats posed by COVID-19 on one's well-being may be mitigated. Specifically, we turn our attention to societal trust — that sense of solidarity, unity, and confidence in one another in society.

As a form of social capital, we propose that **societal trust** can potentially safeguard individuals against the detrimental effects of **perceived threat** of COVID-19 on their **well-being**. In other words, the higher the level of trust

Singaporeans have for each other, the more likely it is that their well-being can be protected. We address this by first defining the highlighted terms:

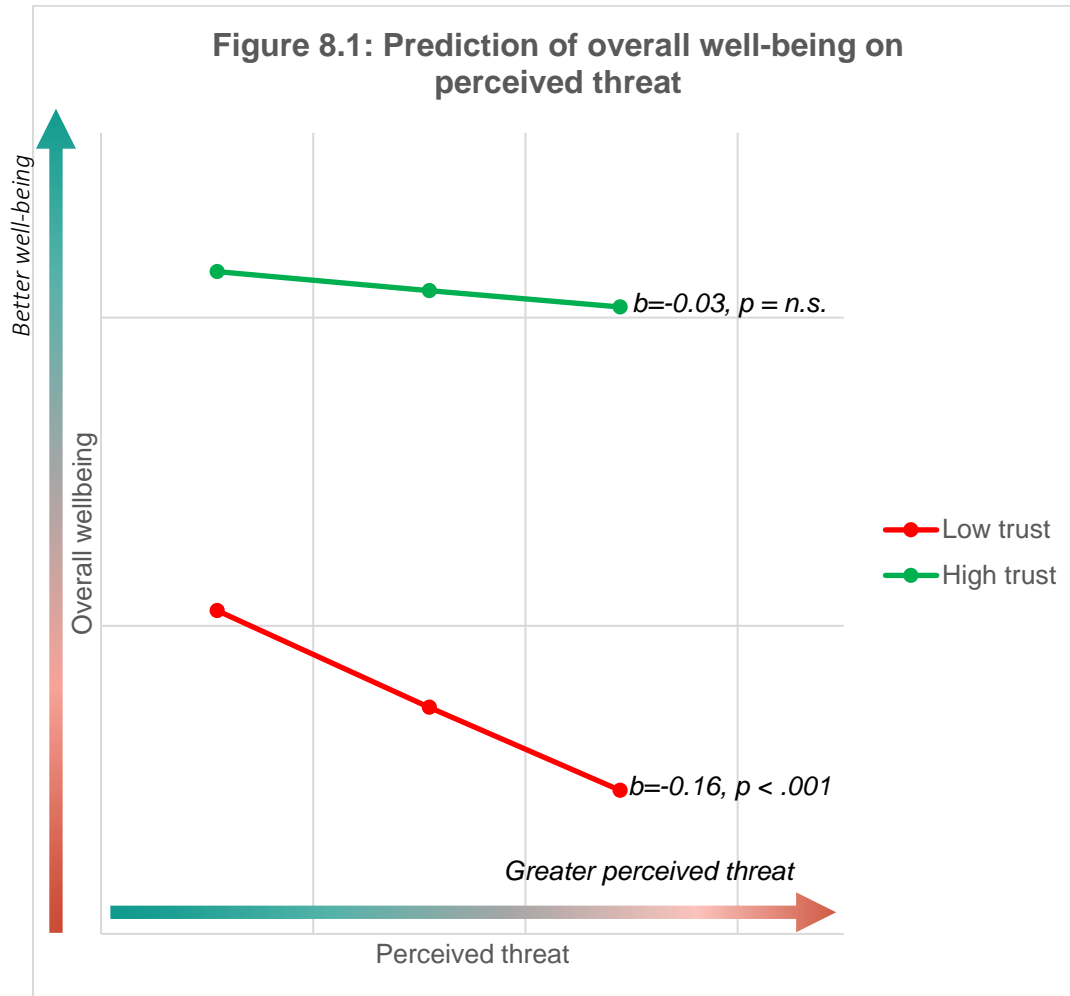
- “Perceived threat” is measured on a seven-point scale (1 being “not concerned at all” and 7 being “very concerned”; $\alpha = .82$) composed of the following items:
 - There will be a decrease in international investments to Singapore
 - There will be major tensions, possibly even wars between different countries
 - Singapore’s economy would remain weak
 - Singapore’s budget/spending would be in deficit
 - Unseen medical complications arising from taking the vaccines
 - Other countries will not know how to adequately contain the virus, resulting in cross-border transmission
 - MNCs based in Singapore will increasingly hire employees who are not physically located in Singapore
- “Societal trust” and “well-being” were previously discussed in Section 7.

A moderation analysis was performed to examine the effect of perceived threat on one’s well-being, at different levels of societal trust. Moreover, we controlled for demographic factors (i.e., age, SES, and employment status) to ascertain

that the protective role of societal trust works across all segments of the population.

8.2 Results

The results support our prediction on the protective role of societal trust — that is, societal trust played a significant role in buffering individuals against the negative impact of perceived threat on well-being. For those with low levels of trust (see Figure 8.1's red line), the more threatened they felt about the pandemic, the worse their overall well-being, $b = -0.16$, $SE = 0.02$, $p < .001$. Importantly, for those with high levels of trust (green line), their well-being was not affected by threat perceptions about the pandemic, $b = -0.03$, $SE = 0.03$, $p = 0.24$. This effect held even after controlling for demographic factors (i.e., age, SES, and employment status).



The present analysis show that societal trust can serve as a form of social capital during times of crisis, protecting people against the harmful and threatening effects of the pandemic. Indeed, as much as the present pandemic is fundamentally a health crisis, it is also a social crisis where fault lines between social groups have been magnified. 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.

Appendix A: Dates of each wave

Table A.1: Details of wave by time period

Wave number	Start date	End date	Remarks
1	21/4/20	23/4/20	Extended CB announced 21/4
2	1/5/20	4/5/20	
3	14/5/20	19/5/20	
4	28/5/20	31/5/20	
5	12/6/20	16/6/20	Phase 2 announced 15/6
6	30/6/20	3/7/20	Phase 2 starts 18/6; GE20 10/7
7	30/7/20	4/8/20	
8	4/9/20	10/9/20	
9	21/9/20	28/9/20	
10	9/10/20	17/10/20	
11	22/10/20	2/11/20	
12	3/11/20	9/11/20	
13	10/11/20	18/11/20	
14	26/11/20	5/12/20	
15	9/12/20	18/12/20	Phase 3 announced 14/12
16	6/1/21	13/1/21	Phase 3 starts 28/12;
17	15/1/21	22/1/21	
18	26/1/21	2/2/21	
19	4/2/21	15/2/21	
20	17/2/21	24/2/21	
21	25/2/21	3/4/21	
22	8/3/21	15/3/21	

Appendix B: Specific item breakdown for variables used in Section 7

Key societal level predictors

- Government satisfaction ($\alpha = .93$)
 - For each of the following measures, respondents were asked to rate the following on a seven-point scale (1 being “strongly dissatisfied” and 7 being “strongly satisfied”): “To what extent are you currently satisfied or dissatisfied with the way the government implemented these following policies in handling the COVID-19 pandemic?”
 1. Keeping the healthcare system running
 2. Keeping the economy running
 3. Being transparent on information related to the COVID-19 outbreak
 4. Protecting jobs
 5. Providing financial aid packages to citizens
 6. Reducing the number of daily infections in the community
 7. Establishing quick contact tracing whenever an infection is discovered
 8. Proactively testing for new cases amongst the population
 9. Allowing certain groups of travellers from ‘safe’ countries to enter Singapore without serving the Stay-Home Notice

10. Penalising individuals/retail businesses who are not observing safety measures
11. Communicating COVID-19 related policies and measures (e.g. precautions to take, Circuit Breaker, loosening of restrictions) to the public
12. Ensuring that Safe Management Measures, like quotas and safe distancing, are adhered in place at public places, like shopping malls, hotels and restaurants
13. Easing restrictions for migrant workers community, like allowing them to visit recreational centres or allowing the use of communal facilities
14. Debunking rumours on COVID-19-related information
15. Overall handling of COVID-19”

Societal trust ($\alpha = .90$)

- Respondents were asked to rate their level of trust based on a seven-point scale (1 being “totally do not trust” and 7 being “totally trust”) on the following items: “Do you trust or not trust that
 1. Singaporeans will not pick out groups or individuals to blame for the public health crisis

2. Singaporeans will continue to observe safety measures at home and outside even if there is less enforcement
3. Singaporeans will reach out and help those who are badly affected by the economic downturn
4. Singaporeans will remain united in the face of future challenges in a post-COVID-19 world
5. Singaporeans will not abuse public funds, and will ask for financial help only if they really need it
6. Singaporeans will stay optimistic about the country's future
7. Singapore would emerge out of this crisis stronger and more resilient than before
8. Singapore remains a competitive global economy and an international travel hub

Key individual/personal level predictors

- Social value orientation: "Singaporeans must accept that they need to give up some freedoms if they and their loved ones can be protected from COVID-19" (1 being "strongly disagree" and 7 being "strongly agree")
- Overall well-being ($\alpha = .83$)
 - How would you presently rate yourself on (1 being "poor" and 5 being "excellent"):

1. Your mental/emotional health
2. Your financial situation
3. Your physical health

Key outcome variables

- Attitudes towards vaccination ($r = .70$)
 1. To what extent are you willing or unwilling to take the vaccine if it is offered to you? (1 being “definitely not willing” and 7 being “definitely willing”)
 2. To what extent do you agree that the government should make vaccination compulsory to all Singaporeans and long-term residents? (1 being “strongly disagree”, 7 being “strongly agree”)
- Attitudes towards safety measures ($\alpha = .81$)
 - How much of an inconvenience do you find these measures (1 being “totally inconvenient” and 7 being “not inconvenient at all”)?
 1. Scanning multiple QR codes at different entry points e.g. mall entrance, restaurant entrance
 2. Wearing mask at all times once outside the home, even when working at the workplace

3. Keeping contact tracing apps like TraceTogether active in your phone's background/bringing along a contact tracing device each time you leave the house
4. Limiting the number of friends/guests you can meet/invite for social gatherings
5. Taking rapid COVID-19 tests before entering mass events like weddings, exhibitions and conferences
6. Not being able to attend large religious gatherings

About IPS Working Paper Series

The IPS Working Papers Series is published in-house for early dissemination of works-in-progress. This may be research carried out by IPS researchers, work commissioned by the Institute or work submitted to the Institute for publication.

The views expressed in the Working Papers are strictly those of the author(s) alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the IPS.

Comments on the Working Papers are invited. Please direct your comments and queries to the author(s).

IPS Working Papers are available from the IPS at \$7.00 each (before GST). Postage and handling charges will be added for mail orders.

For more information, please visit www.lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips or contact email: ips@nus.edu.sg or tel: 6516-8388.

Institute of Policy Studies

Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy
National University of Singapore
1C Cluny Road House 5
Singapore 259599

Tel: (65) 6516 8388

Web: www.lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips

Registration Number: 200604346E