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SURVEY OF STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONS SOCIAL INDICATORS RESEARCH PROJECT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

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ABSTRACT

The executive summary reports on major findings from a survey conducted among a random sample of 1,054 Singaporeans and Permanent Residents aged 18 to 65. Focus is on views of public policies in three areas, namely, political participation, social capital and trust and provision of public goods and services.

Political Participation

On political participation, the majority's view was that voting gave citizens the most meaningful way to tell the government how the country should be run. More of the older age groups agreed with the view compared to the young aged 24 years and younger. Such views should be considered in relation to the one in three Singaporeans who have said in the survey that it is not possible for citizens to influence public policies in Singapore. Indeed, the proportion who say this has increased from 20% since an earlier IPS survey in 1993. In this present survey, a majority, 73%, said they would like the government to take more time to listen to citizens, even if quick decision is necessary. Equally high proportions among the polytechnic and university graduates shared this view. Among the higher proportions of respondents who wished the government would take more time to listen to them was the oldest group of those 55 years old and above. They were also a group from where the highest proportion indicated that what took place in Parliament had little relevance to their daily lives. While this was a group that did not care about new alternative channels for expression, it seemed like a group that would require attention in any policy consultation process.

Apart from the vote, the majority, 78%, also agreed that there should be other channels by which citizens could express their views on government policies. More people aged 24 years' old and younger, agreed with this view. The higher the educational level, the greater the percentage, who agreed. The people who agreed that what happened in Parliament had little relevance to their daily life were in the minority although at the same

time, only 47% indicated that they disagreed with that statement. The higher the educational level, the greater the proportion with the view that what happened in Parliament mattered to their daily life.

Furthermore, almost nine in ten people agreed that every citizen, regardless of level of income or education, should have equal freedom to express their views on government policies. The largest proportion agreeing were people aged 24 and younger and people with university degrees. Yet, 44% of Singapore citizens were of the view that the government made policies without consulting people like themselves. In the 1993 survey, 47% said the same thing. On the other hand, a larger proportion of respondents with no formal education were indifferent to the question of who should be allowed representation of views when compared to the other groups and did tend also to be indifferent when it came to questions of whether they felt the government should take more time to listen to people and whether they would like to be more involved in the work of government-related and non-government organisations.

Willingness to serve in Public-Spirited Organisations

A relatively larger proportion of people would like to serve in non-government organisations than in organisations such as, Town Councils and People's Association (PA)-related organisations. More of the younger people and university graduates would like to serve in non-government organisations than in say, Town Councils or such PA-related organisations.

A very small number of people have expressed views on public policy with a large proportion saying they have no strong views. Almost one third however, either said that there were no channels available or that none of the channels were effective. Among the channels for expressing views on public policy, the ones thought effective by the most people were MPs' Meet-the-People session and writing to the local newspapers or to the relevant government department.

Social Capital and Trust

On the degree of trust and social capital, defined here in terms of *relations with other Singaporeans*, three in four people agreed that language was the most important factor shaping their relationship with people outside of their family. Eight in ten among the Chinese language stream, agreed. A similarly large proportion, 76%, agreed that more Singaporeans are class-conscious today. Some 59% agreed that they have much in common with Singaporeans of other races.

Almost everyone, nine in ten people, was also of the view that all Singaporeans should share in helping those who are disadvantaged and not just members of their own ethnic group. Such views should be studied alongside the view of three in four Singaporeans that the government should take care of the disadvantaged and the same proportion who agreed that Singaporeans who are well off should help those who are not.

Views on Education and Sharing of Common Interests

The views on relations with Singaporeans based on whether a similar level of education imply the sharing of common interests were more mixed. Almost as large a proportion of people agreed as those who disagreed that they can tell whether they have a lot in common with someone by knowing how much education he or she has.

Policy to Attract Foreign Talent

Similarly, there was mixed response to the impact of the policy to attract foreign talent on the sense of Singaporeans being one country, one nation. Just as many agreed as the proportion who had disagreed with the view that the policy to attract foreign talent would weaken the sense of Singaporeans being one country, one nation.

Provision of Public Goods and Services

On the *provision of public goods and services*, nine in ten Singaporeans agreed that it is the government's responsibility to ensure that the basic level of goods and services like medical care, public transport, housing and education are available, even to those who

cannot afford them. A third among those who agreed actually said they strongly agreed. The views are similar to the finding from the 1993 survey where 96% agreed that the government should give financial assistance to the poor to ensure that poor citizens can maintain a decent standard of living.

In terms of distribution of subsidies, however, 65% agreed that subsidies should be given to the poor alone and not the rich with 77% agreeing that there should be subsidies for everyone, as long as the poor get more than the rich. The views were more mixed in relation to the government charging minimal taxes and leaving the provision of services like medical care, transportation, housing and education to the business sector whenever possible. Very small proportions of the young and the highly educated agreed. The relatively higher proportions agreeing were people aged 25 and older and the primary school education group.

To conclude, the survey has indicated that the younger and better-educated groups are concerned that their capacity for participation be increased in the sense that more channels be available by which they may express their views on public policy. They are more likely to feel that channels should be available to all citizens alike regardless of income level, which is a surrogate for social status, and educational level, which could potentially be perceived as an indication of competence. The younger set but including the young working adults, and the better-educated are more likely than other groups also to feel motivated enough to be involved in active community and political activity through association in government-related, but more so, non-government organisations. It is the better-educated more than the young who may have actually attempted to make their views on policy known to the government, if at all, and choose letters to the press as their preferred tool. Such a tool suggests that their concerns were likely to be nationally-based rather than local to their own community or personal.

Another group of responses which stood out were those from the oldest group of respondents. While they are not as concerned about the capacity to participate, they certainly seem to feel that there was a lack of opportunity for them to voice their views.

They would like this improved. Perhaps they may feel that there is not enough that goes on in Parliament that concerns them.

1. Introduction

In this past decade, a range of institutions and processes have been introduced by the government in its effort to be more consultative of the citizenry in its policy decisions. In 1988, Town Councils were introduced with the aim of promoting self-determination among residents in public housing estates by giving them a say on how their estates would be run. Other channels for public participation have been introduced and last year, the Singapore 21 process was initiated, with the emphasis on consulting Singaporeans and particularly the young Singaporeans in a number of specific areas of policies being considered in the new millennium. To quote the Prime Minister in his speech to Parliament on 5 June, 1997, 'Singapore 21 is about what the people of Singapore want to make of this country. More than a house, Singapore must be a home.'

The Institute of Policy Studies has therefore conducted a survey to assess views of Singapore citizens and Singapore's permanent residents on the relations between state and society, given the processes of consultation which are now in place and in the light of others which may be introduced in the future. In addition, the survey also covered areas and policy issues that are related to state-society relations.

The executive summary reports on highlights from the findings of the survey which was conducted among a random sample of 1,054 Singaporeans and Permanent Residents aged 18 to 65 (see Appendix I for details of sample and survey methodology). This survey was commissioned by National University of Singapore and Institute of Policy Studies during the period from December 1997 to July 1998. Face to face questionnaire interviews were used. While the survey covered several areas, the focus of the IPS section of the survey was on public

policies related to three areas, namely:

- i political participation;
- ii social capital and trust; and
- iii the social compact of the government with citizens in the provision of public goods and services

The aim of this summary report is to highlight patterns and variations of Singapore citizens and permanent residents regarding their views on public policy because of differences in age, ethnic background, gender, education and other variables.

The following summary of key survey findings focuses on the section of the survey commissioned by IPS but draws on a related part of the survey commissioned by NUS which is concerned with public issues such as state and society relations and welfare provision for the disadvantaged.

2. Political Participation

A key objective of the survey was to establish how citizens view the relationship between the government and the citizenry in Singapore. A democracy can be viewed as a polity wherein citizen participation and the social compact of the government with citizens in the provision of goods and services are factored into the process of government policy decision-making. Yet, while political participation and the social compact on provision of goods and services define democracy, views on their extent may differ between the state and its citizenry and among the various segments of the citizenry.

Previous discussions on the political culture of Singaporeans have suggested that they are generally passive 'spectators' in the process of governance, leaving

much to the hands of the elected government and the bureaucracy in-between general elections. On the other hand, policy-making was a very closed process among these state actors. If at all, political participation was more an issue of a sense of political mobilization by the Government and through related grassroots organisations rather than of power-sharing.

There have however, also been suggestions that citizens would become increasingly politically conscious and confident about playing a role in governance in the 1990s, due to a higher level of education among the populace, and the emergence of a new generation that had not been exposed to the socialization of the early Independence years. It has also been proposed that successful industrial development would result in a socially differentiated populace that made the governance process more complex. State actors would find themselves having to respond to different, and sometimes mutually-opposing interests and demands of various emergent sectoral groups in society. Such developments would be marked by a 'repoliticisation' of the citizenry, or if there were no adjustments to the dominant party system, then, political alienation within a younger, better-educated, more worldly and expanding middle class, and substantial sections of the working class and small business sector.

The first section of this report on political participation focuses on providing a comparative view of the nature of political culture among Singaporeans today as well as some in-depth perspective of whether citizens feel it is their role to shape the course of public policy, whether they feel this is welcomed and whether there are channels for them to do so effectively, from the bottom, up. This is set against the backdrop of the efforts to foster something more akin to participative democracy than just representative democracy in the fullest sense of that concept as referred to in the introduction of this report.

In one section of the survey on public issues, the people interviewed (respondents) were asked their views on whether it was possible to influence government decision-making in Singapore as well as whether the government offered people like the respondents, opportunities to express their views or opinions.

Among the respondents who were Singapore citizens, **42% agreed with the view that they had some say in the way Singapore was run, with 31% indicating that it was not possible for citizens to influence public policies in Singapore.** This finding compared less favourably with an earlier survey in 1993 also conducted by IPS, which found that 56% believed that they had a say in how Singapore was run compared to 20% who believed that they had no influence on government policies (see Appendix II for tables and details of the 1993 survey).

The **increase from 20% to 31%, in the proportion of citizens who believed that they had no influence on public policy,** was surprising considering the effort by the state to introduce more channels and mechanisms for citizens to express their views to the government on public policy. Part of the explanation might be the citizens' growing expectation of participation, that is, their desire to influence government decision-making (participation propensity) might have risen beyond opportunities provided by the Government for participation (participation opportunity).

Furthermore, **44% of the Singapore citizens interviewed were of the view that the government made policies without consulting people like themselves while 20% disagreed and were of the view that the government was consultative.** These were findings similar to those of the earlier 1993 survey where 47% of the respondents said the government was non-consultative and 20% said the government was consultative. The indication was that Singaporeans' views had not changed much since 1993.

The survey went on to explore attitudes to more specific questions about participation propensity, opportunity and also capacity (that is, the channels through which citizens can make their views known). Interestingly and notwithstanding the many channels which have been introduced, ***the largest proportion among the people who rated letters to the local press as effective were the people with University degrees, 62%.¹***

¹ P-values of chi-square tests are provided in the tables presented in the report. P-values equal to and less than 0.05 will be considered as significant.

2.1 “Voting gives citizens the most meaningful way to tell the government how the country should be run.”

In a dominant party political system, it seemed plausible that citizenry may feel that voting in the general elections is not an important process by which to shape policy because there tends to be little contestation on policy issues. Voting would decide who or which party the citizens want in office to represent and govern them, but not necessarily their stand on specific policies that might affect them directly. Hence, it was of interest to gauge the level of desire for channels between general elections by which they may indicate their stand on policies. We asked respondents if voting in the general elections were seen as a meaningful way to indicate how the country should be run in the first place, with the important follow-up question of whether there needed to be other channels by which this was done.

A majority of the respondents, 72%, agreed that voting gave citizens the most meaningful way to tell the government how the country should be run. This included 15% of respondents who strongly agreed.

Interestingly ***the older the age group, the greater the proportion of people who agreed with the statement.*** Hence, 69% of the respondents aged 24 and below agreed, while the proportion increased to 81% among people aged 55 and above.

In terms of ***gender***, a lower proportion of women agreed with the statement. A relatively higher proportion of women, 20% compared to men, 15%, felt neutrally about it.

A higher proportion among Malays agreed with the statement, 86%, compared to 70% among the Chinese.

Generally, ***a majority of the respondents agreed with the statement, regardless of educational background.*** Slightly higher proportions of the primary

and secondary school-educated, agreed and increasing proportions disagreed, the higher the educational level.

Table 2.1 “Voting gives citizens the most meaningful way to tell the government how the country should be run.”			
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Overall*	72.1	17.9	10.0
By Age*	p-value=0.085		
24 years old and below	69.4	21.5	9.1
25 – 34 years old	70.2	16.1	13.7
35 – 44 years old	71.0	18.7	10.3
45 – 54 years old	73.7	19.8	6.5
55 years old and above	81.2	13.9	5.0
By Gender*	p-value=0.016		
Male	76.6	14.5	8.9
Female	68.8	20.4	10.8
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.002		
Chinese	69.8	19.8	10.4
Malay	85.8	9.3	4.9
Indian	75.0	12.5	12.5
By Education Level*	p-value=0.260		
No formal education	67.9	24.6	7.5
Primary	72.9	20.1	7.0
Secondary	74.2	16.1	9.7
Polytechnic	66.4	18.2	15.4
Degree holder	68.0	19.7	12.3

* Row percent.

2.2 “Apart from the vote, there should be other channels by which citizens can express their views on government policies.”

In this follow-up question, it is noted that 78%, a figure higher than the overall proportion in the previous question, agreed that other channels apart from the vote should be available for citizens to express their views on government policies.

The most resounding agreement came from the younger people, aged 24 and below, with 86% agreeing with the statement compared to 69% agreeing with the previous statement that the vote was the most meaningful form of

political expression. It is possible to argue that this might include Singaporeans who have yet to reach voting age or those who have just crossed the threshold but have yet to be able to vote. They would certainly feel the need for these alternative channels. On the other hand, the older set of respondents of 55 years and above, were more indifferent to the availability of other channels for expression when compared to the vote - 62% agreed with the statement compared to the 81% for the previous statement, and 34% indifferent, when compared with 14% indifferent to the previous statement on voting as the most meaningful form of political expression.

The same views were shared by people of all the ethnic groups, with generally higher proportions of people agreeing with the statement. A greater proportion of Chinese and Indian respondents indicated support for this statement than the previous. The Malay group was still the largest proportion that agreed but this fell compared to the response to the previous statement.

The higher the educational level, the higher the proportion agreeing with the statement. Among university graduates, 89%, agreed, compared to 49% among people with no formal education and 70% among people with primary school education. This is consistent with the responses to the previous statement with more of the tertiary-educated disagreeing that the vote is the most meaningful way in which to influence how the country is run.

Table 2.2 “Apart from the vote, there should be other channels by which citizens can express their views on government policies.”			
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Overall*	77.9	18.0	4.1
By Age*	p-value=0.000		
24 years old and below	85.7	9.2	5.1
25 – 34 years old	80.0	18.4	1.6
35 – 44 years old	80.2	15.2	4.6
45 – 54 years old	74.7	18.9	6.4
55 years old and above	62.4	33.6	4.0
By Gender*	p-value=0.354		
Male	78.3	16.8	4.9
Female	77.5	19.0	3.5
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.382		
Chinese	77.1	18.7	4.2
Malay	82.2	15.7	2.1
Indian	77.8	15.2	7.0
By Education Level*	p-value=0.000		
No formal education	49.0	35.9	15.1
Primary	69.8	22.2	8.0
Secondary	79.0	18.4	2.6
Polytechnic	88.5	8.6	2.9
Degree holder	89.3	9.9	0.8

* Row percent.

To summarise, respondents have firmly indicated that there is a desire for other channels by which citizens can express their views on government policy apart from registering their vote, in spite of a general agreement that voting gives citizens the most meaningful way to tell the government how the country should be run. The more significant trends are that: the younger the respondents, the greater the desire for alternative channels, the older, the more indifferent; the better educated, the more likely respondents would disagree that voting was the most meaningful channel of political expression and hence, the need for alternative channels.

2.3 “Every citizen, regardless of level of income or education, should have equal freedom to express their views on government policies.”

This question was aimed at assessing the extent to which respondents agreed with the principle of universal franchise, not just in voting but in general to ‘express their views on government policies’. In Asian societies, there have been views that citizens have to earn the right to speak.

There was an overwhelmingly large proportion of people in agreement with the view that every citizen, regardless of level of income or education, should have equal freedom to express their views on government policies, 87%.

Among those aged 24 and below, the proportion was 93%, the highest proportion who agreed. In all the other age groups, the proportion in agreement was more than 80%. However, the proportion of those agreeing fell the older the age group. The older the respondents, the more likely they were to be indifferent to the statement, although they did not go so far as to disagree with the statement. We should not however, discount the possibility that this was a less controversial way they felt they could register their reservations about allowing equal freedom to all citizens to express their views on policy. ***No gender differences*** in views were highlighted, with both more men and women agreeing than disagreeing.

The agreement was equally strong among people of all ethnic groups and particularly so among Malays with 90% agreeing.

Apart from the people without formal education, more than 80% of all the people of all educational levels, agree. ***The largest proportion agreeing were people with university degrees, 93%. It should be noted that almost 21% of those with no formal education registered an indifference to the statement which is surprising given that the question was about whether that part of the citizenry to which they belonged should have ‘equal freedom’ to register their***

views on policies. It may be that they lack the self-confidence to engage in the governance process.

The most notable features of the responses to this statement was first, that the older generation was slightly more indifferent than their younger counterparts. This could be a reflection of some adherence to the notions of meritocracy or social status that should determine one's right to speak, whereas the younger respondents were overwhelmingly in support of the ideal notions of universal enfranchisement. Second, those with no formal education was more likely than the other sub-groups to indicate an indifference perhaps because of their greater concern for 'bread and butter' issues of life and political participation might be deemed to be far removed from them, an indulgence.

Table 2.3 “Every citizen, regardless of level of income or education, should have equal freedom to express their views on government policies.”			
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Overall*	86.6	11.0	2.4
By Age*	p-value=0.030		
24 years old and below	92.9	5.1	2.0
25 – 34 years old	89.5	9.5	1.0
35 – 44 years old	85.9	10.6	3.5
45 – 54 years old	83.7	14.8	1.5
55 years old and above	80.2	14.8	5.0
By Gender*	p-value=0.098		
Male	84.4	12.2	3.4
Female	88.2	10.1	1.7
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.735		
Chinese	86.0	11.5	2.5
Malay	90.0	8.6	1.4
Indian	84.7	12.5	2.8
By Education Level*	p-value=0.095		
No formal education	75.5	20.7	3.8
Primary	83.9	13.1	3.0
Secondary	86.8	10.8	2.4
Polytechnic	88.4	8.7	2.9
Degree holder	93.4	6.6	0.0

* Row percent.

2.4 “I would like the government to take more time to listen to citizens, even if quick decision is necessary.”

This next question seeks to elicit a personal response on the desire to be engaged with the government. On the other hand, it may also provide a gauge indicating respondents’ assessment of how consultative the government has been.

A majority of the people, 73%, agreed that they would like the government to take more time to listen to citizens, even if quick decision is necessary. The proportion in agreement did not vary very much among the different age groups. Among the people ***aged 25 to 34, the proportion was 74%.*** Similarly, 74% of those aged 35 to 44, also agreed. The proportion who agreed among the older age group, 55 and above, was higher, 73%, than those who agreed among the

youngest age group, 24 years and below, 66%. The responses of indifference were of a similar pattern. While the younger group had indicated a desire for alternative channels for political expression, it is now the older age group that has indicated a desire for more attention. They wanted to be heard but it did not matter so much how this was achieved.

The **majority among both men and women** also agreed.

A slightly larger than average proportion of the Malay respondents also indicated agreement with the statement – 75% compared to the 72% of general agreement and a relatively larger proportion of the Indian group of respondents indicated satisfaction with the situation with 15% disagreeing with the statement.

There were slightly higher proportions among the people with secondary school and higher levels of education who agreed. ***The highest proportion who agreed was among the university graduates, 75%, followed closely by people with polytechnic and secondary school education, 74%. Again, a relatively large proportion of the respondents with no formal education as compared with all other sub-groups indicated their indifference to the statement.***

Table 2.4 “I would like the government to take more time to listen to citizens, even if quick decision is necessary.”			
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Overall*	72.6	20.1	7.3
By Age*	p-value=0.724		
24 years old and below	66.3	25.6	8.1
25 – 34 years old	74.1	19.7	6.2
35 – 44 years old	74.4	17.5	8.1
45 – 54 years old	69.8	22.3	7.9
55 years old and above	73.3	20.8	5.9
By Gender*	p-value=0.274		
Male	72.4	19.0	8.6
Female	72.7	21.0	6.3
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.027		
Chinese	73.0	19.7	7.3
Malay	75.2	21.3	3.5
Indian	61.1	23.6	15.3
By Education Level*	p-value=0.353		
No formal education	62.2	30.3	7.5
Primary	67.9	25.1	7.0
Secondary	74.3	18.4	7.3
Polytechnic	74.1	19.2	6.7
Degree holder	75.4	16.4	8.2

* Row percent.

While it is often thought that it is the young who are clamouring to be heard, the responses to this question indicate that the older respondents are of the view that they should not be neglected either even if they are less concerned with the form that the consultation takes. Predictably, the higher educated respondents have also indicated strongly that they would like the government to take more time to listen to them. Those with no formal education however, have indicated a relatively high level of indifference to this whole question. Society and polity will have to decide what kind of role this group can play in governance, or if it must be that this group can only be at the receiving end of the state action.

2.5 “I would like to serve in organisations such as Town Councils, PA-related grassroots organisations, Community Development Councils.”

Having discussed views on the availability and nature of channels for political expression and the opportunities to do so, the next batch of questions in the survey were aimed at establishing the level of motivation the respondents have in participating in governance whether at the local level or national, whether through association with government-related organisations or non-governmental, civil society organisations.

Fewer than a quarter of the people, 24%, agreed that they would like to serve in organisations such as, Town Councils, PA-related grassroots organisations, Community Development Councils. Slightly more than a third, 37%, were neutral with another one third who said they would not like to serve in organisations such as Town Councils.

There were ***age differences***. ***A large proportion of the people from the younger age group, below 24, 42%, would not like to serve in these government-linked organisations.*** Only 16.3% of this age group actually agreed that they would like to serve in the government-linked grassroots and other organisations. They were the least likely age group to want to serve in such organisations. ***The oldest age group of respondents 55 and above, felt almost the same way.*** Among the other age groups, the proportions who would not like to serve ranged from 38% to 43%. The middle band of age groups were more likely to consider involvement in government-related organisations, and less likely to disagree when compared to the other age groups.

No major differences among genders were found. Only a slightly higher proportion of men, 26%, than women, 22%, agreed that they would like to serve in government-related organisations such as, the Town Councils.

The proportion indicating that they would like to serve was highest among the Indians, 38% and lowest among the Chinese, 21%. Among the Malays, a relatively larger proportion, 45%, were neutral.

A very small proportion of the people with no formal education were likely to agree to serve, that is, 8% but this increased with higher educational levels. However, larger proportions were neutral or negative. Among the university graduates, 25% would like to serve compared to 38% who were neutral and 36% who would not like to serve in government-related organisations.

Those would be most likely to actively respond to serving in government-related organisations are the people of working age as well as those who are better educated. The least likely would be the Chinese and those with no formal education. The examples of government-related organisations listed were location-based examples and are associated with service delivery among fellow members of the local community working together with the respective Member of Parliament and the People's Association groups which are also based in the main, on activities within the local community.

Table 2.5 “I would like to serve in organisations such as Town Councils, PA-related grassroots organisations, Community Development Councils.”			
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Overall*	23.9	37.1	39.0
By Age*	p-value=0.331		
24 years old and below	16.3	41.8	41.9
25 – 34 years old	22.6	39.0	38.4
35 – 44 years old	27.8	34.5	37.7
45 – 54 years old	25.3	35.5	39.2
55 years old and above	17.8	39.6	42.6
By Gender*	p-value=0.492		
Male	25.6	36.1	38.3
Female	22.4	38.1	39.5
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.000		
Chinese	21.0	37.0	42.0
Malay	32.0	43.8	24.2
Indian	37.5	27.7	34.8
By Education Level*	p-value=0.52		
No formal education	7.6	41.5	50.9
Primary	18.6	40.2	41.2
Secondary	25.9	35.2	38.9
Polytechnic	28.9	38.4	32.7
Degree holder	25.4	38.5	36.1

* Row per cent.

2.6 “I would be willing to serve in a non-government-related organisation, say, professional bodies, or civic organisations.”

This category of involvement would tend to be nationally-based, organised either around professional concerns or social issues. The latter has recently assumed a higher profile with the promotion of environmental consciousness and increasing levels of civic action in women’s issues. It is accepted that the appeal would be much narrower. However, it would seem these non-government groups will potentially have more impact whether positive or negative upon public policy with higher general levels of education, affluence and time for social concerns. This is associated with desire to shape policy agenda to take these professional and social concerns into account.

Certainly, more agreed that they would be willing to serve in a non-government-related organisation, say, professional bodies or civic organisations, than in government-related organisations. So 38% were willing to work with non-government organisations compared to the 24% who said they would be willing to work for government-related organisations.

Interestingly, ***the largest proportion of people who would be willing to serve in a non-government-related organisation, say, professional bodies, or civic organisations, was among the group aged 25 to 34 years' old, 47%.*** These are people in the early working years and have not reached the stage of heavy family and work commitments. Having said that, a credible 38% among the people aged 24 and below and the 35-44 year-old age group, indicated they would also be willing to participate in non-government organisations. The proportion among the older people aged 55 years and above was lower, at 21%.

There was some slight variation among the genders, with a slightly higher proportion of men saying they would be willing to serve in non-government organisations, 41%, than the women, 36%.

The highest proportion expressing willingness to serve in non-government organisations was among the Indians, 43%, compared to 38% for the Chinese and 34% among the Malays. Again, the proportions are generally, and relatively higher than the proportions expressing a similar willingness to serve in government-related organisations such as Town Councils.

More of the higher educated expressed willingness to serve in non-government organisations, 51% among people with university degrees and 49% among the polytechnic graduates compared to 39% among people with secondary school education.

Table 2.6 “I would be willing to serve in a non-government-related organisation, say, professional bodies, or civic organisations.”			
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Overall*	38.1	32.8	29.1
By Age*	p-value=0.000		
24 years old and below	37.8	38.8	23.4
25 – 34 years old	46.5	31.9	21.6
35 – 44 years old	38.0	31.8	30.2
45 – 54 years old	34.7	29.2	36.1
55 years old and above	20.8	39.6	39.6
By Gender*	p-value=0.220		
Male	41.0	32.0	27.0
Female	36.0	33.2	30.8
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.378		
Chinese	38.4	33.1	28.5
Malay	34.1	36.8	29.1
Indian	43.0	23.6	33.4
By Education Level*	p-value=0.000		
No formal education	7.5	39.7	52.8
Primary	30.1	34.8	35.1
Secondary	39.0	31.2	29.8
Polytechnic	49.0	31.8	19.2
Degree holder	50.8	35.3	13.9

* Row per cent.

In the questions of active involvement in government-related and non-government organisations as a means to shape one's local community, or impact society and the polity at large, the middle band of young working adults would be more likely to be inclined to join, as well as those who are among the higher educated. Overall, the responses seem to indicate only moderate enthusiasm to be actively involved in the work of both groups of organisations. They are however, not the only channels by which citizens can express their views or seek to effect change in the policy agenda.

2.7 “What happens in Parliament has little relevance to my daily life.”

Apart from the focus on political participation, the question remains about how interested the citizenry, really is, in the affairs of the state. Are people generally more interested in the state of their more immediate neighbourhood rather than those at the national level? To gauge these views, we asked the question above.

About half of the respondents disagreed with the view that ‘what happened in Parliament had little relevance to their daily life’. Only about a quarter of the people agreed.

The largest proportion of the people who disagreed was the group aged 24 and below, 53% and this was including 9% who strongly disagreed. Only 13% of this younger age group agreed that Parliamentary proceedings had little relevance to their daily life. This contrasts with 35% among the people aged 55 years’ old and above. For the groups aged 25 to 34 years and 35 to 44 years, the proportions who disagreed with the view, were respectively, 46% and 50%. Similarly, the proportion for people in the older age-groups, was higher than 40%. It was however, also the older group that had the highest proportion agreeing with the statement. Again, it may be due to this group feeling that there is little in the parliamentary process for them.

Little or no difference was found in views among the different genders with both men and women sharing similar views.

A slightly higher proportion among the Chinese disagreed with the view that what happened in Parliament had little relevance to their daily life, 48%, compared to 43% among Malays and 42% among the Indians. The proportions which had disagreed that what happened in Parliament had little relevance in their daily lives were generally larger than those which were neutral or had agreed.

The higher the educational level, the smaller the proportion of people who agreed that what happened in Parliament had little relevance to their daily life. Only 13% among the university graduates agreed and 17% among the polytechnic group, compared to 24% among those with secondary school education and 34% among the people with primary school education.

It is the younger and better educated groups again which recognise that what goes on in Parliament is relevant to their lives. Politics and the process of governance were not some distant abstract notion for the respondents who indicated that they disagreed with the statement. It was interesting to find that the older respondents did not feel that what happened in Parliament was relevant to their daily lives.

Balancing the concerns of the younger generation with those of the older generation of citizens may be an issue that government will have to contend with, as well as giving each of these groups a sense of a stake in the processes and outcomes of governance in Singapore. The present group of middle-aged respondents and their response to questions of motivation to participate indicate that they will desire far more engagement with the government and they will need to be accommodated so that they will not feel excluded when they have reached the older age bands among the citizenry.

Table 2.7 “What happens in Parliament has little relevance to my daily life.”			
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Overall*	24.6	28.6	46.8
By Age*	p-value=0.029		
24 years old and below	13.3	33.6	53.1
25 – 34 years old	23.0	31.1	45.9
35 – 44 years old	24.7	25.3	50.0
45 – 54 years old	27.8	28.1	44.1
55 years old and above	34.7	27.6	37.7
By Gender*	p-value=0.525		
Male	25.4	26.7	47.9
Female	24.2	29.9	45.9
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.522		
Chinese	23.5	28.5	48.0
Malay	29.1	27.7	43.2
Indian	25.0	33.4	41.6
By Education Level*	p-value=0.000		
No formal education	43.3	34.1	22.6
Primary	33.7	29.6	36.7
Secondary	23.6	29.3	47.1
Polytechnic	17.3	24.1	58.6
Degree holder	13.1	24.6	62.3

* Row per cent.

3. Expressing Views to the Government on Public Policy

These questions sought to establish the number who have actually made known their views and the preferred channels as well as whether these were effective.

The majority, 9 in 10 people, said no, they had not expressed their views to the government on public policy. Among those who said they had expressed their views on public policy, the frequency at which they had done so had also been low and practically 9 in 10 had done it only once or occasionally.

Practically everyone aged 24 and younger had never expressed their views to the government on public policy. Among people aged 45 to 54, 7%, said they had and this was the largest proportion to be found when comparing all the age groups.

Relatively more of the university graduates have expressed their views to the government, 12%, compared to 10% among people with polytechnic diplomas and 5% among people with secondary school education.

Table 3 “Have you ever made your views known to the government on any public policy?”		
	Yes	No
Overall*	5.3	94.7
By Age*	p-value=0.531	
24 years old and below	3.1	96.9
25 – 34 years old	5.2	94.8
35 – 44 years old	5.2	94.8
45 – 54 years old	7.4	92.6
55 years old and above	4.0	96.0
By Gender*	p-value=0.088	
Male	6.7	93.3
Female	4.3	95.7
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.468	
Chinese	5.0	95.0
Malay	5.0	95.0
Indian	8.3	91.7
By Education Level*	p-value=0.001	
No formal education / Primary	2.9	97.1
Secondary	4.5	95.5
Polytechnic	9.6	90.4
Degree holder	11.5	88.5

* Row per cent.

3.1 Reasons for not Expressing Views on Public Policy

Among the majority who have not expressed their views, **the main reason was they had no strong views, 54%. Another 15% said there were no channels available. A similar proportion, 16%, thought that none of the channels were effective** and so have not expressed their views.

Some of the reasons cited are interesting although the number who have cited them was very small:

- Government does not need your views
- No chance of speaking up
- Others would be expressing similar views

- Scared of repercussion
- Not qualified to comment/Limited ability in expressing views

Among the young people aged 24 and below, some of reasons cited for not expressing views other than no strong views, were opportunity for speaking up and the view that they had limited ability in expressing views. For the groups aged 25 to 54, the other reason sometimes cited, apart from no strong views, was a lack of time.

Among the very small number of people who have expressed their views to the government, there were almost as many women as men. Of the channels ever used to express views on public policy to Government, more women cited MPs' Meet-the-People sessions compared to more of the male respondents who cited letters to the local newspapers.

Consistently, slightly more women than men professed that they did not know about the effectiveness of the channels for expressing views to the government on public policy. So, when asked about the effectiveness of the relevant interest or civic group, 52% of the men said they did not know compared to 57% of the women.

The reasons for not expressing their views that were cited by people of different educational background, generally reflected the overall pattern. Hence, 55% of the degree holders said they had no strong views and so did 54% of the polytechnic group. More of the people with polytechnic education and those with secondary school education shared the view that there were either no channels available for expressing views to the government on public policy or none of the channels were effective.

3.2 Channels for Expressing Views on Public Policy

The channels cited most often as having been used to express views on public policy are letters to the local newspapers and MPs' (Members of Parliament) Meet-the-People session.

There were no remarkable differences among the people of different ages in the channels selected for expressing views on public policy with MPs' Meet-the-People session being most frequently cited as the channel used by respondents aged 25 years and above.

Among the very few who have expressed views to the government on public policy, more of the Chinese people had used MPs' Meet-the-People session and written letters to the local newspapers whereas for the Malay respondents, the channels were more grassroots organisations and among the Indian respondents, letters to local newspapers.

A very small number of people among the degree holders have expressed views on public policy and about half of these wrote letters to local newspapers. Among the polytechnic people, as many cited MPs' Meet-the-People session as writing to the local newspapers.

3.3 Effectiveness of Channels for Expressing Views on Public Policy

A list of 11 channels for expressing views on public policy was presented to the respondents who were then asked whether they thought the channels effective. **Top of the list with the largest proportion, 61%, agreeing that it was effective was the MPs' Meet-the-People session.** The relevant government office came second followed very closely by letter to the local newspapers. A relatively similar proportion of people agreed that grassroots organisations such as, the Residents' Committees and Feedback Unit were effective.

Lesser known channels appear to be political parties, Prime Minister's Office, Community Development Councils, relevant interest or civic group and relevant professional body. Large proportions professed that they did not know whether these channels were effective. Considering their recent introduction, it should be noted that 34% of the people agreed that Community Development Councils were an effective channel.

Across the different age groups, about half to more than half of the people interviewed claimed that they did not know how effective the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) was as a channel for expressing views on government policy (p-value=0.716). The highest proportion offering such a response was among the people aged 24 years' old and below, 58%. The largest proportion of the people who agreed that the PMO is an effective channel for expressing views on government policy were aged 55 years'old and above, 29.6%.

In contrast, **there was broad agreement among people of different age groups that the relevant government office is effective as a channel for expressing views to the government** (p-value=0.580). Similarly, broad agreement was found in views on the effectiveness of MPs' Meet-the-People session and the Feedback Unit.

Vis-à-vis **letters to the local press, higher proportions of the people in the younger age groups, 44 years and younger, found the channel effective,** compared to groups aged 45 and older (p-value=0.363). In contrast, larger proportions of the people aged 25 years and older, found grassroots organisations such as the RCs, effective channels for expressing views on government policy. **While one in three people across the different age groups said that they did not know whether Town Councils were an effective channel for expressing views on public policy, even more, that is, about one in two said this of Community**

Development Councils, relevant professional bodies, relevant interest or civic groups and political parties (p-value=0.608).

Relatively larger proportions of the Malays agreed that the effective channels for expressing views on public policy were MPs' Meet-the People session, grassroots organisations such as RCs and Town Councils (p-value=0.110). Among the Chinese, a larger proportion considered MPs' Meet-the People session effective whilst for the Indians, the largest proportion cited MPs' Meet-the People session.

The lack of knowledge about professional organisations, interest and civic groups was common to most ***ethnic*** groups. However, the proportions of Malays and Indians who said that Community Development Councils were effective were relatively higher than for the Chinese (p-value=0.025) and the difference was statistically significant.

The highest proportions of those who rated ***MPs' Meet the People session*** as an effective channel for expressing views on government policy were those with secondary school and polytechnic qualifications (p-value=0.018). Again, the finding is statistically significant. ***The largest proportion of the people who rated letters to the local press as effective were people with University degrees, 62%*** (p-value=0.000). A large proportion of people without formal education reportedly did not know about the effectiveness of most channels apart from Feedback Unit and MPs' Meet the People session.

From the findings and the popularity, it would seem, of the MPs' Meet-the-People sessions, the notion of representation and representative democracy are strong and lie intact. The MPs are supposed to represent to Parliament, the interests of the constituents who put them in power. But we cannot tell from this how involved the citizens are in playing a role in governance unless we know the kind of submissions that are presented to MPs at these sessions. Would the citizens be

presenting issues only of private interest or are they offering ideas and feedback on public policy?

4. Opinions on Relationship with Other Singaporeans

This second part of the survey focused on Singaporeans' views of other Singaporeans from different backgrounds and in one question on the policy to attract foreign talent, that is, non-Singaporeans. The ideology about access to channels for expressing views on government public policy reflects the views of citizens on the meaning of citizenship and the relationship between state and society. Relationships within society are important to establish since class or ethnic divides can, as they suggest, be divisive in terms of their influence on views regarding state-society relationships.

4.1 "I can usually tell whether I will have a lot in common with someone by knowing how much education he or she has."

The response to this view was mixed, with almost as many people agreeing with it as the proportion who disagreed. *The people who disagreed with this view that someone's educational level determines common interests in relationships with other Singaporeans were slightly higher in proportion, 39% compared with 35% who agreed.* There was no gender difference, with both men and women sharing similar views.

The proportion who agreed with the statement was highest among people aged from 45 to 54, 41%. The lowest proportion agreeing was among younger people aged 24 and below, 27%.

No major patterns of differences were seen among people with different educational backgrounds. People appeared to share similar views on whether the level of education is linked to common interests, regardless of their educational level.

Among people with university degrees and those with secondary school education, higher proportions disagreed than the proportions who agreed that they can usually tell whether they will have a lot in common with someone by knowing how much education he or she has. For the rest, that is, those with polytechnic, primary school or no formal school education, slightly higher proportions of people agreed than the proportions who disagreed with the link between education and common interests. Among people defining themselves as being of the English, Chinese and Malay language stream, slightly more in the Malay language stream group agreed with being able to tell whether they have a lot in common with people by knowing how much education they have.

Table 4.1 "I can usually tell whether I will have a lot in common with someone by knowing how much education he or she has."			
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Overall*	35.2	26.0	38.8
By Age*	p-value=0.022		
24 years old and below	26.5	24.5	49.0
25 – 34 years old	34.1	26.2	39.7
35 – 44 years old	35.1	23.5	41.4
45 – 54 years old	41.1	24.7	34.2
55 years old and above	36.7	36.5	26.8
By Gender*	p-value=0.605		
Male	37.0	24.9	38.1
Female	34.0	26.7	39.3
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.267		
Chinese	33.8	25.8	40.4
Malay	41.9	25.4	32.7
Indian	40.3	26.4	33.3
By Education Level*	p-value=0.120		
No formal education / Primary	34.2	36.9	28.9
Secondary	34.6	24.0	41.4
Polytechnic	38.5	25.9	35.6
Degree holder	36.1	21.3	42.6

* Row per cent.

4.2 “I do not have much in common with Singaporeans of other races.”

Almost two thirds disagreed that they did not have much in common with Singaporeans of other races, 59%. Only 19% agreed while 22%, were neutral. Both males and females shared similar views and there was generally little difference among the genders.

Views were similar across all the different age groups and the ***largest proportion who disagreed was from the youngest group, aged 24 and below, 68%.***

There were also no major differences in views because of educational differences or language stream. ***Overwhelmingly, more than half to two thirds of the people of different educational backgrounds, disagreed that they did not have much in common with Singaporeans of other races.*** Slightly higher proportions of the people with no formal education and primary school education agreed that they did not have much in common with Singaporeans of other races, 24%. Among the tertiary-educated, only 12% of those with polytechnic education and 13% of degree holders, agreed.

Table 4.2 “I do not have much in common with Singaporeans of other races.”			
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Overall*	19.1	21.7	59.2
By Age*	p-value=0.271		
24 years old and below	12.2	19.5	68.3
25 – 34 years old	18.7	23.9	57.4
35 – 44 years old	18.7	20.7	60.6
45 – 54 years old	21.3	24.3	54.4
55 years old and above	23.8	15.8	60.4
By Gender*	p-value=0.624		
Male	18.7	20.5	60.8
Female	19.3	22.7	58.0
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.264		
Chinese	18.4	22.6	59.0
Malay	19.2	16.9	63.9
Indian	26.4	22.2	51.4
By Education Level*	p-value=0.013		
No formal education / Primary	24.2	23.8	52.0
Secondary	18.5	21.1	60.4
Polytechnic	11.5	23.1	65.4
Degree holder	13.1	23.0	63.9

* Row per cent.

4.3 “I think that language is the most important factor shaping my relationship with people outside my family.”

Three in four people agreed that language was the most important factor shaping their relationships with people outside of their families, 77%. A much smaller proportion, 14%, disagreed. There was again no gender difference in views.

The older the age group the higher the proportion of people agreeing that language was the most important factor shaping their relationship with people outside of their family. Among the people aged 55 and above, the proportion was 83%, compared to 68% among the people aged 24 and below.

The proportion of people agreeing that language was the most important factor shaping their relationship with people outside of their family was relatively higher among those with secondary and primary school

education and those with no formal education, that is, 79% for both groups.

Among the polytechnic degree holders, the proportion agreeing was 69% and for the university graduates, 67%.

When the people were categorised according to self-definition of language stream, a majority of nearly all the groups agreed that language was the most important factor shaping their relationship with people outside of their family. Among people who strongly agreed, the larger proportions were from the Chinese and Malay language streams. ***Within the Chinese language stream group, 83% either agreed or strongly agreed that language was the most important factor shaping their relationship with people outside of their family.***

Table 4.3 “I think that language is the most important factor shaping my relationship with people outside my family.”			
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Overall*	76.7	9.3	14.0
By Age*	p-value=0.147		
24 years old and below	68.4	17.3	14.3
25 – 34 years old	77.1	8.1	14.8
35 – 44 years old	75.6	8.9	15.5
45 – 54 years old	79.2	8.4	12.4
55 years old and above	83.2	6.9	9.9
By Gender*	p-value=0.601		
Male	75.9	10.3	13.8
Female	77.4	8.3	14.3
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.231		
Chinese	76.6	9.3	14.0
Malay	81.6	5.7	12.7
Indian	72.2	15.3	12.5
By Education Level*	p-value=0.019		
No formal education / Primary	78.2	9.0	12.8
Secondary	78.8	7.5	13.7
Polytechnic	69.2	15.4	15.4
Degree holder	67.2	13.1	19.7
By Language Stream*	p-value=0.091		
English	74.5	10.1	15.4
Chinese	82.9	7.3	9.8
Malay	77.8	5.5	16.7
Tamil	72.2	5.5	22.3

* Row per cent.

4.4 “More Singaporeans are class-conscious today.”

Three in four people agreed that Singaporeans were class-conscious, 76%. Some 15% were neutral and only 9% disagreed. There was strong agreement about more Singaporeans being class conscious today and this view was shared by as many women as men.

Generally, *most people agreed, regardless of age differences*, that more Singaporeans were class-conscious. Among the older people, aged 55 and above, a higher proportion, 32%, were either neutral or disagreed.

Educational differences too had little impact on findings with some three among four people, agreeing that more Singaporeans are class-conscious today. Views did not differ much from the views of the whole group of people interviewed. A majority of the people, 82% and 78% respectively defining their language stream as either English or Chinese, agreed. Among the Malay language stream group, a lower proportion, 59% agreed.

	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Overall*	76.3	14.6	9.1
By Age*	p-value=0.323		
24 years old and below	77.5	15.4	7.1
25 – 34 years old	75.0	16.1	8.9
35 – 44 years old	79.8	12.7	7.5
45 – 54 years old	75.3	12.8	11.9
55 years old and above	68.4	19.7	11.9
By Gender*	p-value=0.735		
Male	75.3	15.5	9.2
Female	77.1	13.8	9.1
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.000		
Chinese	78.5	13.6	7.9
Malay	74.5	14.9	10.6
Indian	55.5	26.4	18.1
By Education Level*	p-value=0.056		
No formal education	56.6	28.3	15.1
Primary	75.4	15.1	9.5
Secondary	79.3	13.1	7.6
Polytechnic	75.9	17.4	6.7
Degree holder	72.2	13.0	14.8

* Row per cent.

Overall, the questions above indicate that it is the issues of spoken language and social status that are obstacles or barriers to people relating to each other in Singapore. These are in comparison to the factors of race and educational levels. Efforts made to organise cooperative community programmes or policy consultative groups may have to find a way to accommodate these divisions, either working with them or cutting across them.

4.5 “All Singaporeans should share in helping those who are disadvantaged and not just members of their own ethnic group.”

This question was included in the survey to assess the level of support for ethnic-based self-help groups.

The agreement was resounding, with **92% agreeing that all Singaporeans should share in helping the disadvantaged, regardless of their ethnic group.** The proportion disagreeing was very small, 3%. Some slight variations among gender groups were found with a slightly higher proportion of women agreeing.

There was not much disagreement among people of different ages that all Singaporeans should share in helping the disadvantaged, regardless of their ethnic group. Only in the group aged 55 and above, the proportion who disagreed was 8%, and this was relatively higher than among the other age groups.

People of different educational background shared the view of the majority and agreed that Singaporeans should share in helping those who are disadvantaged and not just members of their own ethnic group. So did most of the people in every one of the language stream categories.

Table 4.5 “All Singaporeans should share in helping those who are disadvantaged and not just members of their own ethnic group.”			
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Overall*	92.0	5.2	2.8
By Age*	p-value=0.02		
24 years old and below	94.9	2.0	3.1
25 – 34 years old	92.8	4.6	2.6
35 – 44 years old	92.0	5.4	2.6
45 – 54 years old	92.0	7.5	0.5
55 years old and above	86.2	5.9	7.9
By Gender*	p-value=0.019		
Male	89.5	6.3	4.2
Female	93.7	4.6	1.7
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.005		
Chinese	91.8	5.2	3.0
Malay	96.5	2.1	1.4
Indian	83.4	13.8	2.8
By Education Level*	p-value=0.148		
No formal education	83.0	15.1	1.9
Primary	90.9	3.6	5.5
Secondary	94.0	4.2	1.8
Polytechnic	89.4	6.8	3.8
Degree holder	90.2	7.4	2.4

* Row per cent.

4.6 “The policy to attract more foreign talent will weaken Singaporeans’ feeling as one nation, one people.”

This next question sought to gauge views on the suggestion that the government’s stated goal to attract more foreign manpower to boost the economy would affect or weaken the emerging sense of national identity.

The views were mixed, with **38% agreeing that foreign talent would weaken Singaporeans’ feeling as one nation, one people and 34% disagreeing**. Some 29% were neutral. A slightly higher proportion of women were either neutral or disagreed.

The older the age-group, the higher the proportion agreeing that the policy to attract more foreign talent would weaken Singaporeans’ feeling as

one nation, one people. Among the group aged 24 and below, the proportion in agreement was 33% compared to 40% among people aged 55 and above.

More than half, 54%, of the people with university degrees, disagreed with the statement. Less than a quarter were of the view that the policy would weaken Singaporeans' feeling of being one nation, one people. Among the other groups, the views were more mixed with almost the same proportions agreeing or disagreeing. Among the people with polytechnic, secondary and primary school education, more than a third agreed. An almost equal proportion also disagreed among the people with polytechnic and secondary school education. Among the people with no formal education and primary school education, slightly more than a third disagreed that the policy would weaken Singaporeans' feeling of being one nation, one people, compared to more than one third who agreed. **No difference was noted among the Chinese and English language stream** but about a half of the Malay language stream group agreed.

Table 4.6 “The policy to attract more foreign talent will weaken Singaporeans’ feeling of being one nation, one people.”			
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Overall*	37.7	28.7	33.6
By Age*	p-value=0.243		
24 years old and below	32.6	32.7	34.7
25 – 34 years old	35.4	26.6	38.0
35 – 44 years old	38.8	26.4	34.8
45 – 54 years old	40.6	31.6	27.8
55 years old and above	39.7	33.6	26.7
By Gender*	p-value=0.040		
Male	40.5	24.7	34.8
Female	35.5	31.8	32.7
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.094		
Chinese	37.1	28.8	34.1
Malay	46.8	28.4	24.8
Indian	30.6	31.9	37.5
By Education Level*	p-value=0.000		
No formal education / Primary	35.1	43.0	21.9
Secondary	41.6	25.6	32.8
Polytechnic	37.5	29.9	32.6
Degree holder	22.9	23.0	54.1

* Row per cent.

5. Provision of Public Goods and Services

This part of the survey sought views on the responsibility for providing public goods and services. In the section just preceding this, the survey finding was that 92% of the people interviewed agreed that all Singaporeans should share in helping the disadvantaged, regardless of their ethnic group.

In Singapore, the government has been explicitly anti-welfarist in its orientation, although in practice, subsidies are provided and there are transfers designed to ‘help citizens help themselves’ without encouraging a ‘welfare state’ mentality or a welfarist approach to the provision of public goods and services. Individuals are responsible for their own welfare although there are subsidies for education, skills training and housing. If individuals are not able to assume the

responsibility of looking after their own welfare, the family should be the next line of defence, followed by community organisations.

The survey however, found that **72% of Singaporeans were of the view that the government should give financial assistance to the less successful among Singapore citizens.** Similarly, **76% agreed with the view that it was the responsibility of government to meet everyone's needs, even in case of sickness, poverty, unemployment and old age.** In the earlier IPS survey in 1993, virtually everyone surveyed, 96%, agreed that the government should give financial assistance to the poor to ensure that poor citizens can maintain a decent standard of living. A possible inference is that the government's stance may have had an impact on people's views since 1993 but possibly, the large difference can be attributed to the addition of the phrase, decent standard of living. The idea of a fellow citizen not able to live at a decent standard appears to be less acceptable.

Singaporeans see a role in welfare provision for the state as well as for citizens. A huge proportion expressed agreement that Singaporeans should help the disadvantaged, regardless of their ethnic group. A further finding was that 73% were of the view that Singaporeans who were doing well should assist others who were less successful.

Singaporeans believe that success lies mainly with the individual. Consequently, 82% to 85% agreed that what one got in life depended mainly on one's own effort and that people with ability and motivation could become successful in Singapore.

5.1 “It is the government’s responsibility to ensure that the basic level of goods and services like medical care, public transport, housing and education are available, even to those who cannot afford them.”

Almost everyone, 92%, agreed that it was the government’s responsibility to ensure that the basic level of goods and services like medical care, public transport, housing and education be available, even to those who could not afford them. About a third, 34%, strongly agreed and only 2% disagreed. There was *no major difference in views among people of different ages*. Among the people aged 24 and below the proportion that agreed was 93% and among those aged 35 to 44 years old, the proportion was 93%.

Generally, *there was agreement, regardless of ethnic group*, that the government was responsible for ensuring that the basic level of goods and services like medical care, public transport, housing and education be available, even to those who could not afford them. *Practically every one among the Malays agreed, 97%.*

There was generally *consensus among people of different educational background*, that it was the government’s responsibility to ensure the basic level of goods and services be provided. Nine in ten among the people with no formal education and primary education agreed, and the proportion agreeing was similar for university graduates and polytechnic degree holders. There was agreement among the majority, regardless of language stream.

Table 5.1 “It is the government’s responsibility to ensure that the basic level of goods and services like medical care, public transport, housing and education are available, even to those who cannot afford them.”			
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Overall*	91.6	6.0	2.4
By Age*	p-value=0.273		
24 years old and below	92.9	6.1	1.0
25 – 34 years old	90.8	7.3	1.9
35 – 44 years old	93.4	4.3	2.3
45 – 54 years old	90.5	7.5	2.0
55 years old and above	88.1	6.0	5.9
By Gender*	p-value=0.857		
Male	91.4	5.9	2.7
Female	91.7	6.2	2.1
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.096		
Chinese	90.8	6.7	2.5
Malay	97.2	2.1	0.7
Indian	87.5	8.3	4.2
By Education Level*	p-value=0.599		
No formal education / Primary	89.5	8.5	2.0
Secondary	92.2	5.4	2.4
Polytechnic	91.4	6.7	1.9
Degree holder	94.2	5.0	0.8

* Row per cent.

5.2 “The government should give subsidies for the basic level of goods and services like medical care, public transport, housing and education only to the poor and not the rich.”

Almost two thirds of the respondents, that is, 65%, agreed that the government should give subsidies for the basic level of goods and services like medical care, public transport, housing and education only to the poor and not the rich. The lowest proportion agreeing was among the group aged 24 and younger, 46%. For the people aged 25 to 34, the proportion was 61%.

Apart from the Malays, the proportions were about the same among the different ethnic groups who were in agreement with the view that the government should give subsidies for the basic level of goods and services like medical care,

public transport, housing and education only to the poor and not the rich. These were similar with the views of all the people interviewed, on the whole. For the Indians, 65% agreed compared to 63% among the Chinese.

Educational differences had little impact on the larger proportion in agreement with the view that the government should give subsidies for the basic level of goods and services to the poor and not the rich. The proportions agreeing ranged from the high of 67% among the people with no formal education and primary education to 64% among the university graduates.

Table 5.2 “The government should give subsidies for the basic level of goods and services like medical care, public transport, housing and education only to the poor and not the rich.”			
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Overall*	64.6	17.8	17.6
By Age*	p-value=0.002		
24 years old and below	45.9	28.6	25.5
25 – 34 years old	61.0	19.7	19.3
35 – 44 years old	67.6	16.3	16.1
45 – 54 years old	71.8	13.3	14.9
55 years old and above	69.3	14.8	15.9
By Gender*	p-value=0.877		
Male	65.5	17.4	17.1
Female	64.0	18.0	18.0
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.312		
Chinese	62.9	18.5	18.6
Malay	72.3	14.3	13.4
Indian	65.2	18.1	16.7
By Education Level*	p-value=0.358		
No formal education / Primary	66.1	16.4	17.5
Secondary	64.4	17.3	18.3
Polytechnic	65.3	23.1	11.6
Degree holder	63.9	14.0	22.1

* Row per cent.

5.3 “The government gives subsidies to everyone as long as the poor get more than the rich.”

A large proportion of the people interviewed, **67%**, *agreed with the statement that the government gave subsidies to everyone as long as the poor got more than the rich.* Again, a *smaller proportion of the young people aged 24 and below agreed, 58%*, compared to 68% among those aged from 35 to 44, and 75% among the respondents 55 years old and above.

The highest proportion who agreed were among the Malays, 69%, followed closely by 68% among Chinese respondents and 60% among the Indians.

No major difference was seen in the views of people when categorised into groups with different educational background. *In every group, from people without formal school education to the university graduates, about two thirds agreed that the government should give subsidies to everyone as long as the poor got more than the rich.*

Table 5.3 “The government gives subsidies to everyone as long as the poor get more than the rich.”			
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Overall*	66.9	18.6	14.5
By Age*	p-value=0.056		
24 years old and below	58.1	28.7	13.2
25 - 34 years old	64.6	20.6	14.8
35 - 44 years old	67.8	15.6	16.6
45 - 54 years old	68.8	19.3	11.9
55 years old and above	75.2	11.9	12.9
By Gender*	p-value=0.050		
Male	64.3	18.1	17.6
Female	68.8	18.9	12.3
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.628		
Chinese	67.6	18.1	14.3
Malay	68.8	17.7	13.5
Indian	59.8	24.9	15.3
By Education Level*	p-value=0.079		
No formal education	67.9	20.8	11.3
Primary	72.9	19.6	7.5
Secondary	65.8	17.9	16.3
Polytechnic	62.5	18.3	19.2
Degree holder	65.6	19.7	14.7

* Row per cent.

5.4 “The government should charge minimal taxes and leave the provision of services like medical care, transportation, housing and education to the business sector wherever possible.”

This final statement was designed to mark out quite a different strategy from the previous statements. The suggestion here would be that citizens would be made to pay only minimal taxes and leave the provision to the Market and competition. This would clearly entail ‘rolling back’ the State and for the government to abandon its earlier tenets of ‘democratic socialism’.

The result was that the proportion of people who disagreed, 39%, was only marginally higher than the proportion who agreed, 38%. In spite of the fact that the previous statements rehearse tenets of government policy till recently to subsidise universal provision of services, rationalised as part of its human resource

development programme and tenets of democratic socialism, 38% of the respondents indicated that a market-led strategy would be acceptable to them.

The proportion agreeing was higher among the groups aged from 25 to 54, being highest among the people aged from 45 to 54, 39%. Among the younger people aged 24 and below, 33% agreed compared to 37% who disagreed and among the older people aged 55 and above, 37 per cent agreed while 39% disagreed.

There was far less consensus among the ethnic groups with 38% of the Chinese agreeing, 43% among the Malays and 29% of the Indians. The proportion among the Indians who were either neutral or disagreed, was highest, 70% compared to 62% among the Chinese.

Similarly, among the different groups categorised according to educational level, the support was mixed for the proposal that the government should charge minimal taxes and leave the provision of services to the business sector where possible. Among university graduates, only 25% agreed. Surprisingly, ***the highest proportion in agreement with the proposal was among the people with primary school education, 42%.***

Table 5.4 “The government should charge minimal taxes and leave the provision of services like medical care, transportation, housing and education to the business sector wherever possible.”			
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Overall*	37.8	23.1	39.1
By Age*	p-value=0.657		
24 years old and below	32.7	30.6	36.7
25 - 34 years old	38.3	22.1	39.6
35 - 44 years old	38.0	20.7	41.3
45 - 54 years old	39.1	25.3	35.6
55 years old and- above	37.6	23.7	38.7
By Gender*	p-value=0.471		
Male	39.2	21.4	39.4
Female	36.7	24.5	38.8
By Ethnic Group*	p-value=0.218		
Chinese	37.7	22.8	39.5
Malay	43.3	20.5	36.2
Indian	29.2	31.9	38.9
By Education Level*	p-value=0.005		
No formal education	32.1	33.9	34.0
Primary	42.2	25.7	32.1
Secondary	40.0	21.4	38.6
Polytechnic	34.6	24.1	41.3
Degree holder	25.4	21.4	53.2

* Row per cent.

Résumé

On *political participation*, the majority's view was that voting gave citizens the most meaningful way to tell the government how the country should be run. More of the older age groups agreed with the view compared to the young aged 24 years and younger. Such views should be considered in relation to the one in three Singaporeans who had said in the survey that it was not possible for citizens to influence public policies in Singapore. Indeed, the proportion who said this had increased from 20% since an earlier IPS survey in 1993. In this present survey, a majority, 73%, said they would like the government to take more time to listen to citizens. Equally high proportions among the polytechnic and university graduates shared this view.

Apart from the vote, the majority, 78%, also agreed that there should be other channels by which citizens could express their views on government policies. More people aged 24 and younger, agreed with this view. The higher the educational level, the greater the percentage, who agreed. The people who agreed that what happened in Parliament had little relevance to their daily life were in the minority and the higher the educational level, the greater the proportion with the view that what happened in Parliament mattered to their daily life.

Furthermore, almost nine in ten people agreed that every citizen, regardless of level of income or education, should have equal freedom to express their views on government policies. The largest proportion agreeing were people aged 24 and younger and people with university degrees. Yet, 44% of Singapore citizens were of the view that the government made policies without consulting people like themselves. In the 1993 survey, 47% said the same thing.

A relatively larger proportion of people would like to serve in non-government organisations than in organisations such as, Town Councils and People's Association (PA)-related organisations. More of the younger people and university graduates

would like to serve in non-government organisations than in say, Town Councils or such PA-related organisations.

A very small number of people had expressed views on public policy with a large proportion saying they had no strong views. Almost one third however, either said that there were no channels available or that none of the channels were effective. Among the channels for expressing views on public policy, the ones thought effective by the most people were MPs' Meet-the-People session and writing to the local newspapers or to the relevant government department.

On the degree of trust and social capital, defined here in terms of *relations with other Singaporeans*, three in four people agreed that language was the most important factor shaping their relationship with people outside of their family. Eight in ten among the Chinese language stream, agreed. A similarly large proportion, 76%, agreed that more Singaporeans were class-conscious. Some 59% agreed that they had much in common with Singaporeans of other races.

Almost everyone, nine in ten people, was also of the view that all Singaporeans should share in helping those who are disadvantaged and not just members of their own ethnic group. Such views should be studied alongside the view of three in four Singaporeans that the government should take care of the disadvantaged and the same proportion who agreed that Singaporeans who were well off should help those who were not.

The views on relations with Singaporeans of different educational background and the policy on attract foreign talent were more mixed. Almost equal proportions of people either agreed or disagreed that they could tell whether they had a lot in common with someone by knowing how much education he or she had. Similarly, just as many agreed as disagreed with the view that the policy to attract foreign talent would weaken Singaporeans' feelings of being one nation, one people.

On the ***provision of public goods and services***, nine in ten Singaporeans agreed that it was the government's responsibility to ensure that the basic level of goods and services like medical care, public transport, housing and education be made available, even to those who could not afford them. A third among those who agreed actually said they strongly agreed. The views were similar to the finding from the 1993 survey where 96% agreed that the government should give financial assistance to the poor to ensure that poor citizens could maintain a decent standard of living.

In terms of distribution of subsidies, however, 65% agreed that subsidies should be given to the poor alone and not the rich with 77% agreeing that there should be subsidies for everyone, as long as the poor got more than the rich. The views were more mixed in relation to the government charging minimal taxes and leaving the provision of services like medical care, transportation, housing and education to the business sector whenever possible. Very small proportions of the young and the highly educated agreed. The relatively higher proportions agreeing were people aged 25 and older and the primary school group.

Appendix 1: Sample Characteristics and Survey Methodology

The sampling frame was drawn from the Department of Statistic's National Database on Dwelling. The sample design adopted was 100 addresses by 25 districts stratified according to house type and geographical spread.

Target population

The target populations of this study were Singaporeans or Singapore permanent residents aged 18 and above for the head of Household and aged 18 - 65 for the second respondent in the same household. Up to two individuals were selected for each address given: the head of household and a second respondent, randomly picked using the Kish grid method, who lived in the same household.

Sample Size

A total of 1,054 households were surveyed.

Survey Instruments

A structured questionnaire was used. Showcards and translated materials (Chinese & Malay), together with letters of introduction to the survey to facilitate the interview. The survey was also announced in the Lianhe Zao Bao on 11 December 1997 for public awareness. Various police headquarters were informed of the survey and the survey period. The average length of the interview was around 30-45 minutes for both respondents.

Data Collection

Pilot study

Eighty respondents from 40 households participated in the pilot study, conducted in September 1997 and Sociology undergraduates were deployed to carry out the face-to-face interviews.

Main survey

The main survey commenced on 8 December 1997 and ended on 15 July 1998. A total of 103 undergraduate interviewers were recruited for the face-to-face interviews. All interviewers were given a detailed training on how to conduct interviews, and administer the questionnaire and sampling procedures before the start of the survey. To ensure that the fieldwork progress was evenly spread, the Joshua Research Consultants (JRC), a research company, was engaged to tie over the period when the student interviewers were preparing their examinations. JRC interviewed a total of 149 households.

Data Validation

Interviewers were asked to review their work after each completed interview. A second round of editing was carried out at the office upon receiving the questionnaires. Incomplete and inconsistent responses as well as errors in the use of the questionnaires were either rejected, returned to the interviewers to clarify with the respondents personally or through the telephone.

Ethnic Profile of the Sample

In terms of ethnic composition, the survey seems to have captured the view of a good representation of the different ethnic groups in Singapore's multi-racial society.

The sample profile on ethnic composition is found to compare favourably with that of the census profile (see below).

Ethnic Composition	Census		SIRP 1998
	1980	1990	Respondents
	%	%	%
Chinese	78.3	77.7	78.0
Malay	14.4	14.1	13.4
Indian	6.3	7.1	6.8
Others	1.0	1.1	1.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Appendix 2: 1993 IPS Survey of National Orientations of Singaporeans

The survey was conducted among a national random sample of 1,405 Singapore citizens aged 15 through 64. Respondents were asked whether they agreed with a series of statements such as those listed below in Tables I and II.

Appendix Table 2.1: Singaporeans' Opinions on Government Policies in Singapore.

Statements on Government Policies:	% Agree	% Not Sure	% Disagree
1. <i>It is possible for citizens to influence government decision-making in Singapore.</i>	56	24	20
2. <i>Government policies are fair to all citizens.</i>	55	21	24
3. <i>The government makes policies without giving people like me a chance to debate the pros and cons first.</i>	47	33	20
4. <i>Government policies benefit the government ministries financially more than citizens.</i>	41	38	21

Appendix Table 2.2: Singaporeans' Opinions on Opportunity and Welfare in Singapore.

Statements on Government Policies:	% Agreeing
1. <i>The government should give financial assistance to the poor to ensure that poor citizens can maintain a decent standard of living.</i>	96
2. <i>People who are more successful have a responsibility to help the less successful ones.</i>	89
3. <i>A person with ability and willingness to work hard has a good chance of becoming successful in Singapore.</i>	88
4. <i>Everyone in Singapore has a good chance to achieve a high standard of living.</i>	73

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