

Nearly 1 in 5 young Singaporeans want to emigrate: survey

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Nearly one in five Singaporeans between the ages of 19 and 30 in the Republic wish to emigrate, while almost a third will consider the possibility of doing so within the next five years, according to a survey.

Those who want to emigrate are likely to be males, better educated and also speak English at home. They also harbour positive views towards emigration, and think that it will improve their social status and socio-economic security.

The most desired country for migration? Australia. Among the other countries most favoured by respondents are New Zealand (2nd), the US (3rd), the UK (4th) and Canada (5th).

The survey findings were released by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) on Friday (28 September). It was carried out from June to November 2016 and involved slightly more than 2,000 eligible participants, out of 3,000 Singaporeans approached, aged 19 to 30, who answered questions via face-to-face interviews.

On the whole, the survey findings mirrored that of the IPS' previous study on emigration attitudes of young Singaporeans conducted in 2010.

The 2016 survey also found that those who are less likely to think about emigrating believe they can improve their lot in Singapore, and have a higher sense of national pride and life satisfaction levels.

"Having family and friends, public health and safety were key factors of rootedness in the 2016 survey as they were in the 2010 survey, while medical care, educational opportunities and political stability rose in importance in the second (later) study," said IPS in a media release.

Emigration as "backup plan"

In the latest IPS survey, almost half – 42.6 per cent – of respondents agreed that emigration can provide a "backup plan" in case Singapore fails. This was an increase from 32.8 per cent in 2010.

And nearly 60 per cent of respondents agreed that a rise in emigration is inevitable as Singapore becomes more stressful and competitive. The figure was about 40 per cent in 2010.

Just over half of respondents in 2016 preferred to improve their lot in Singapore, a slight rise from 2010.

Meanwhile, more Singaporeans – almost 60 per cent – said they can achieve the things they wanted without leaving the country, up from about 45 per cent.

And fewer Singaporeans – only about 20 per cent – agreed that the country’s future had become too unpredictable and emigration was their best option, down from nearly 30 per cent.

4 in 5 prefer to be a Singaporean

On citizenship, slightly more than half (53.1 per cent) of those surveyed said they would not renounce their Singapore citizenship even if they got permanent residency overseas. The figure was about 40 per cent in 2010.

But 42.2 per cent agreed that being a permanent resident overseas opened up more opportunities, a rise from 36.8 per cent.

Nearly 80 per cent of respondents preferred being a citizen of Singapore than any other country in the world, up from about 57 per cent in 2010. And 77 per cent said Singapore was a better country than most others, up from 52 per cent.

Too many foreign talent?

Meanwhile, more than 60 per cent of respondents agreed that Singapore benefitted from the presence of ‘foreign talent’, up from about 45 per cent in 2010.

But only 44 per cent of the 2016 survey respondents think that foreign talent are keen to integrate, up from 37.4 per cent in 2010.

And nearly half – 48 per cent – think that having too much foreign talent dilutes the cohesiveness of society, up from 38.9 per cent.

About 56 per cent of respondents also think that foreign talent use Singapore as a stepping stone to other countries, up from 45.5 per cent in 2010.

And about 45 per cent said they wish to emigrate because there was “too much foreign talent in Singapore”, up from 37 per cent in 2010.

Both the 2010 and 2016 surveys were conducted by IPS’ Dr Gillian Koh, Ms Debbie Soon and Dr Leong Chan-Hoong.