

1 in 2 Singapore residents do not have a close friend from another race: survey

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One in two Singapore residents do not have close friends from another race. This finding, and others on race relations, were revealed by community organisation [OnePeople.sg](#) (OPSG) during a press conference on Wednesday.

The five-month survey on the state of racial and religious harmony in Singapore started in late 2012. It was a joint effort between OPSG, which focuses on promoting racial harmony in Singapore, and the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS).

It had over 4,000 respondents, which included about 1,000 Malays and Indians, and 80 Eurasians.

OPSG chairman, Zainudin Noordin, who is a Member of Parliament for Bishan – Toa Payoh Group Representation Constituency (GRC), said that it is “natural” for some people, especially the Chinese, to only have close friends from their own race.

“We cannot run away from the fact that 75 per cent of the population is made up of Chinese people,” he said.

“There is a challenge in terms of numbers... and we [OPSG] need to see how we can provide opportunities for the 25 per cent to become friends with the 75 per cent.”

OPSG aims to provide such opportunities by organising programmes that promote racial and religious harmony. However, Noordin said that individuals also need to take the initiative in befriending people from other races too.

Racial relations in the work place

The survey also revealed that one out of four respondents believed that racial discrimination still happens in the work place and 20 per cent of respondents opined that Malays and Indians have to “work harder than other races to achieve a decent life in Singapore”.

However, a majority of respondents (70 per cent) agreed that “race and religion should be disregarded when considering someone for a job”.

Their answer indicated that the respondents’ interactions with people are not affected by race or religion, said IPS.

No inter-racial and religious tension in Singapore

Overall, OPSG is pleased with the positive findings, which also showed very little racial and religious tension in Singapore, it said.

Seven out of 10 respondents said they have “no experience of tension in their daily lives” and many of them agreed that having different races living in Singapore is a “good thing”.

Only 10 per cent of Malays and Indians said that they have been treated badly when using public services such as in hospitals, schools, social service agencies and in court.

“It is very encouraging to note that we are doing very well in most areas, this is certainly very different from the various countries we’ve looked at,” Noordin said, adding that OPSG had examined the conditions in countries like Australia and Hong Kong.

OPSG has shared some of the findings with nearly 1,000 teachers and school leaders, and will continue to share them with the public.

A youth forum called HarmonyWorks conference will be held on 27 July and a public forum will take place on 11 September.