

Almost half of Singapore residents clear their food utensils at hawker centres: survey

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Yahoo News, 15 May 2019

SINGAPORE — More Singapore residents are clearing their own food utensils with less noticing rubbish, such as cigarette butts or used tissue paper, at hawker centres, according to a survey on public cleanliness satisfaction.

About 48.7 per cent of over 2,000 respondents said they clear their own food utensils at hawker centres most or all of the time, according to the 2018 Public Cleanliness Satisfaction Survey's findings released on Wednesday (15 May). This was an increase from 35 per cent in the 2017 survey.

Only 6.6 per cent said they never clear their own food utensils, down from 16.3 per cent from 2017.

The survey was led by Singapore Management University's professor of sociology (practice) Paulin Tay Straughan and Institute of Policy Studies' senior research fellow Dr Mathew Mathews.

A total of 2,005 Singaporeans and permanent residents, aged 21 years old and above, were surveyed from August to December last year. In comparison, 2,000 respondents were surveyed in the first wave of the study between October and March 2017.

More respondents also reported seeing others clear their own food utensils at hawker centres at least some of the time at 88 per cent, up from 80 per cent in 2017.

The survey also showed a drop in the proportion of respondents noticing leftover food (57.2 per cent), used tissue paper (47.8 per cent), disposable items (38.9 per cent), cigarette butts (31.1 per cent) and dirt/stains/graffiti (31.4 per cent), compared with 2017.

However, satisfaction with the cleanliness of hawker centres and other food outlets, including coffeeshops, food courts and wet markets, still ranked the lowest among public spaces at 71.4 per cent, despite an improvement from 68.9 per cent in 2017.

Specifically, 62 per cent were satisfied with the cleanliness of hawker centres. In comparison, 87 per cent were satisfied with the cleanliness of air-conditioned food courts.

"We do have quite a bit of expectation when it comes to places where you eat in. Sometimes, benchmarks (of restaurants and air-conditioned food centres) are what we are looking at, despite progress being made," said Dr Mathews.

Among the ways to increase satisfaction are to set out clearer norms across food centres, and implement clear signs and areas for returning food trays, said Prof Tay Straughan.

Keeping Singapore clean is everyone's responsibility, be it in terms of giving feedback and adopting pro-social behaviour in the area of cleanliness, she stressed.

Other public spaces

Among the other public spaces, 95 per cent of respondents said they were satisfied with the cleanliness in transport spaces (roads, bus stops, bus interchanges and MRT/LRT stations), 89 per cent with leisure spaces (parks, shopping malls and playgrounds), 85 per cent with commuter paths, and 79 per cent with neighbour spaces (void decks, lifts, town centres).

In particular, the biggest rise in satisfaction among public spaces was at public events, such as National Day Parades, after their conclusion - 74 per cent in 2018, up from 63 per cent previously.

The main undesirable social behaviours related to cleanliness in public spaces cited by respondents were the same: someone littering, spitting on the ground or not picking up their pets' poo.