

Seniors in Singapore are more valued than they think

National study points to perception divide between what Singaporeans think of seniors and what they think of themselves

Singapore, June 5 2009 – The overwhelming majority of Singaporeans value and respect seniors – perhaps even more than they value and respect themselves and their peers, according to a national survey.

A nationally representative survey to assess public perceptions and attitudes towards seniors in Singapore – the first to be conducted by the Council for Third Age (C3A) - the *2008 Study on Public Perception and Attitudes towards Ageing and Seniors* found that close to 90 per cent of respondents believe seniors can play an active role in society.

By contrast, less than 70% of seniors aged 65 and above see themselves in the same light.

The study, which involved 2,000 face-to-face interviews with Singaporeans and permanent residents from four age groups – 16 to 24 years, 25 to 44 years, 45 to 64 years and 65 years and older – was commissioned by C3A, an independent organisation that promotes active ageing and addresses ageing related issues in Singapore. This was followed by focus group discussions to delve deeper into some of the findings.

Its results will help the Council better understand existing attitudes towards seniors and ageing, and gain a deep understanding of seniors' relationship with friends and family, the roles they are perceived to play in society, and implications for their overall well being. For a start, the survey results, together with the "Adding Life to Years" report recently published by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), will feed into a public consultation exercise to be jointly conducted by C3A and MCYS next month (July).

"This study helps C3A understand the current perceptions held by individuals and will facilitate the introduction of appropriate programmes to shift paradigms as well as programmes which will address the needs and concerns of the current and future older persons," said Mr Gerard Ee, Chairman of the Council for Third Age.

Beyond the perception divide, the survey uncovered other significant insights.

Close to 80 per cent of Singaporeans under the age of 50 believe that family should be primary care-givers and first line of support of seniors, and said they would be willing to play their part in caring for seniors. Notably, those under 25 years old scored lower relative to the general population when it came to willingness to care for seniors – 67 per cent compared to 77 per cent.

Family also figured very highly during "crunch times", including when important decisions need to be made or when a family member is struck by illness.



Close familial bonds and strong social networks also emerged as key indicators of life satisfaction for those aged over 50. Those less satisfied with their life were significantly less likely – when compared to the general population – to have supportive relationships with friends and family members. On the contrary, those who reported higher life satisfaction were more likely to have supportive friends and family. Stronger family ties are also positively correlated with more positive views of seniors and their roles. This finding was further amplified in the focus group discussions.

Another thing that was closely related to satisfaction: those who had started preparing for their later years – financially and in other ways – showed higher levels of overall life satisfaction.

About half of the respondents had already started planning for their retirement; and three in four planned to retire in Singapore.

One significant thread that ran through the findings and constantly surfaced in the survey and focus group discussions was the interplay between the quality of intergenerational relationships or bonds, satisfaction with life and perceptions of seniors.

That is why the Council is pleased to announce several key initiatives directly relating to solidifying the intergenerational “glue”.

The 4th International Consortium for Intergenerational Programmes (ICIP) Conference

The Council for Third Age and the National University of Singapore will co-organise the ICIP conference, which will bring together 300 international and local experts and delegates to discuss the impact of Intergenerational issues in the workplace and society.

They will share at the conference best practices and potential solutions to those issues, policies and programmes that can help better integrate seniors into the fabric of society.

Intergenerational Bonding Awards

The Council will also launch the Intergenerational Bonding (IGB) Awards to encourage the development of programmes promoting intergenerational bonding and recognise exemplary IGB programmes for families, workplaces, and within the community.

“People do not age in isolation. This survey has served to deepen our understanding of how seniors interact with family and friends, and how these relationships affect the quality of life of seniors. These insights have helped us to identify clear areas where the Council can make a real difference where it matters,” concluded Mr Ee.



About the Study on Public Perception and Attitudes towards Ageing and Seniors

This is the first national study conducted by the Council for Third Age (C3A) on perceptions of seniors by the general population and the senior demographic. The study consisted of 2,000 face-to-face interviews with Singapore citizens and permanent residents aged 16 years old and above, and was representative of the demographic profile of the total Singapore resident population. To give further depth to the report, focus group discussions comprising a total of 63 participants were conducted as part of the study (please refer to accompanying statistics for breakdown). The study was conducted by The Gallup Organization.

About Council for Third Age (C3A)

Set up in May 2007, Council for Third Age is an independent body that promotes active ageing, so that seniors can achieve a better quality of life in all the six dimensions of wellness – social, intellectual, physical, vocational, emotional and spiritual. The Council plays a leadership role in driving the thrust towards creating an active ageing culture in Singapore, and partners businesses and community organisations to develop products and services that fulfill the aspirations and interests of seniors.

For more information on the Survey, please contact:

Council for Third Age

Ms Phyllis Choo
Vice President
Communications & International Relations
Tel: 97866333 / 64785031
E: phyllis.choo@c3a.org.sg

Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide

Ms Arti Mulchand
Ogilvy Public Relations
Tel: 6213 7847 / 9066 6152
E: arti.mulchand@ogilvy.com

Ms Nur Atiqah
Ogilvy Public Relations
Tel: 6213 7888 / 9724 4462
E: nur.atiqah@ogilvy.com