

83% believe globalisation is good for economy: IPS study

But more than 50% think immigrants may take jobs away from Singaporeans

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Despite the worldwide backlash against open economies and the mass movement of people around the globe, Singaporeans generally have a positive view of globalisation, with 83 per cent of the people polled recognising its benefits, a study has found.

But more than half of the respondents to the study by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) also believed that immigrants may take their jobs, with people of lower socio-economic status more likely to have such worries.

The findings of the study, which polled 2,001 Singaporeans and permanent residents from a representative national sample of households, were released yesterday in the report *Making Identity Count In Singapore: Understanding Singaporeans' National Pride And Identity*.

IPS principal research fellow and head of Social Lab Matthew Mathews, one of the study's four authors, said globalisation has a substantial bearing on national identity and, in Singapore, it has sparked debates on foreign manpower and free trade.

Recently, for instance, Parliament debated the impact of foreign professionals, managers, engineers and technicians and the India-Singapore Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement on jobs for Singaporeans.

The study, which surveyed people between September and November last year, asked respondents about their perceptions of globalisation and immigration.

Overwhelmingly, people – 83 per cent – believed that globalisation benefits the economy and Singaporeans in general. A smaller proportion, 17 per cent, said it benefits only foreigners and the rich.

On immigration, 75 per cent of those polled agreed to a large or moderate extent that immigrants provide a boost to the economy, and 62 per cent agreed that the newcomers improve society by bringing in new ideas and culture.

Even then, 50 per cent of the respondents felt immigrants take jobs away from Singaporeans, and 53 per cent believed the Government spends too much on helping them.

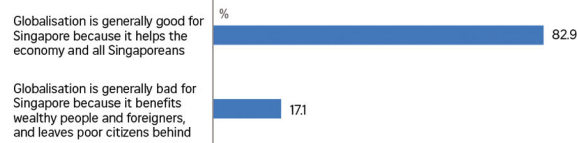
Those who are of a lower socio-economic class and lower education level were more likely to feel the competition.

For instance, 58 per cent of those with lower education levels of secondary school or below, agreed that immigrants take jobs away from Singaporeans, while 43 per cent of those with higher education, with at least a degree, felt the same way.

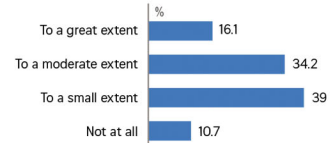
Those of lower socio-economic class, who live in three-room or smaller Housing Board flats, were also more likely to see immigrants as a threat to Singapore's future, compared to those of higher socio-economic class who live in private or landed property.

Views on globalisation and immigration

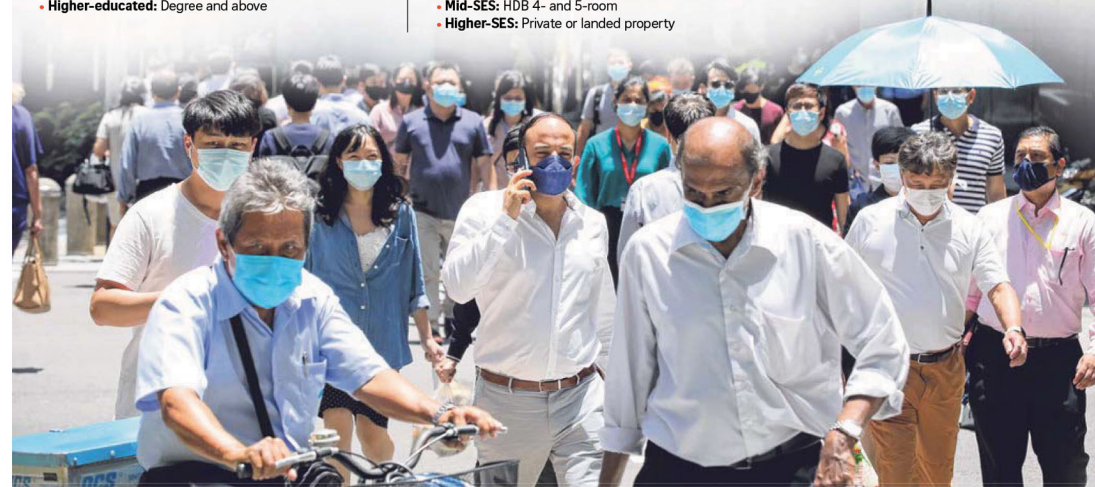
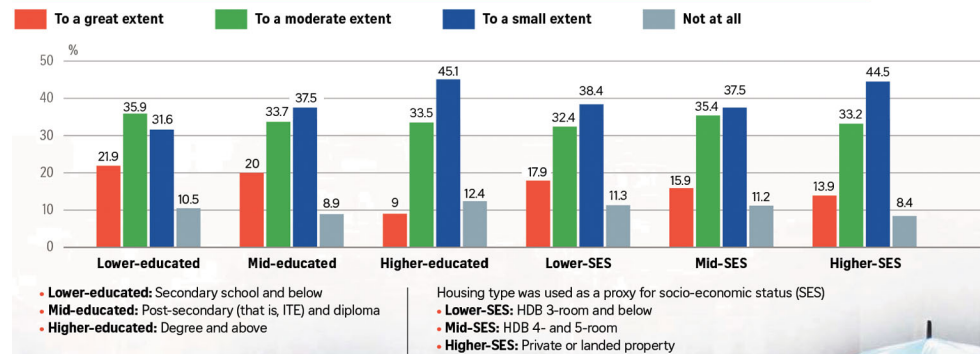
Of these statements, which comes closer to your point of view?



To what extent do you agree that immigrants take jobs away from people born in Singapore



How much do you agree that "immigrants take jobs away from people born in Singapore"?



Source: INSTITUTE OF POLICY STUDIES ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Dr Mathews said this shows issues like foreign competition for jobs affect some groups more keenly than others as they are more likely to suffer economic displacement and jobs losses as a result of globalisation.

"The proper response should be to carefully understand why particular groups are more concerned," he added.

National University of Singapore

Associate Professor of Sociology Tan Ern Ser, who is a co-author of the report, said it was clear that Singaporeans are not anti-globalisation or anti-immigration, but that they want policies on immigration to be improved.

The authors said in the report that immigration remains a delicate matter especially for the economically vulnerable, and called for ample protection for the local

workforce if immigration is to remain as a means to augment the labour force. They cited the recent announcements on workplace anti-discrimination legislation as a step in the right direction.

The study also looked at national pride, and a list of 24 sources of pride, ranging from the healthcare system to racial equality and level of meritocracy, were derived from international studies and focus

group discussions here. Singaporeans were most proud of the healthcare system, cleanliness, Singapore Armed Forces, religious diversity and freedom, the education system and Covid-19 pandemic management.

Meanwhile, they were least proud of having the same ruling party for a long time, government autonomy, sporting achievements, the arts, treatment of migrant

workers and press freedom. The results also showed that respondents of higher socio-economic status were less proud than those of lower socio-economic status on things such as meritocracy. Prof Tan said in general, the research indicated that national pride and identity in Singapore were healthy.

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