Happiness, Singapore style

A detailed local survey finds that in the last 10 years, Singaporeans have become less materialistic and more family-focused, but are no happier. Andrea Ong explores the reasons.

Not hot about excitement

TWO recent findings by international organisations that have released studies about the "happiest" people in the world have piqued the interest of local researchers and analysts.

Earlier this week, Gallup released its annual report "The 15 Happiest Countries in the World", which Singapore topped in Asia and came in 10th in the world, a position it has maintained since 2006.

Respondents were asked a series of questions on how they felt the day before, such as whether they felt well-rested, how satisfied they were with their health and how happy they felt about their life in general.

On average, 64 per cent of Singaporeans said they felt satisfied with their life, a figure similar to those in countries such as Switzerland, Canada and the Netherlands.

On the other hand, researchers from the World Happiness Report, which was released earlier this month, found that Singapore's happiness levels had declined significantly in the last two years.

The report, which is based on surveys conducted by the World Values Study, found that Singapore's happiness levels had dropped from 7.05 in 2016 to 6.85 in 2018.

But despite this, Singaporeans still ranked among the top 10 happiest countries in the world.

The report found that Singaporeans were happy with their jobs, education, and family life.

They also had high life expectancy, low crime rates, and a low level of corruption.

But researchers from the World Happiness Report also found that Singaporeans were less satisfied with their level of education, health, and income.

A recent survey by the Singapore Management University found that Singaporeans were less satisfied with their level of education, health, and income.
Front image: Vivian Schleffer, happiness in having close friends and being able to develop herself and being granted to work for a particular project. (Photo: Courtesy of Vivian Schleffer)

The introduction is perhaps drawn from the sense that society is changing, especially in terms of work-life balance and personal values. In fact, personal values such as self-care, happiness, and social connection are becoming more important than ever, and this is reflected in the work environment as well. In the study of Prof. Tan’s, he found that workers are seeking a better work-life balance and arevaluing their personal values more than previously. The survey of 1,500 Singaporeans commissioned by Prof. Tan and his colleagues also supports this finding.

The survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of various values and the results were as follows:

- Most important: family, 62%
- Most important and self-realization of all: Meaningful life to work and family
- Place great value on family and religion, tend to be conservative
- Not at all important: Traditional values, 44%

However, measuring happiness and work-life balance depends on how one defines happiness. In a survey by the United Nations World Happiness Report, Singapore ranked 13th in the world and the World Economic Forum ranked Singapore at 13th in the world. However, the happiness index may vary depending on one’s perspective.

There was another question that Singapore did well in, which is about the satisfaction of their work-life balance. The survey was conducted by the Asia World Forum and Singapore ranked 13th in the world.

In conclusion, the survey results show that happiness and work-life balance are important to Singaporeans, and the government and society should continue to support the efforts of the respondents to achieve these goals.

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