

Hawker centres and major events rank lowest in public cleanliness satisfaction survey

Lack of cleanliness at food centres irks Singaporeans

DANIEL ONG, THE STRAITS TIMES

Residents here are satisfied with the cleanliness of public spaces such as MRT stations and HDB town centres, a new survey has found, although hawker centres came in for some flak.

The Public Cleanliness Satisfaction Survey was done from late last year to March this year, and involved 2,000 Singaporeans and permanent residents aged 21 and above.

And though nearly nine in 10 said they were generally satisfied with the cleanliness of public spaces they frequent, the numbers differed for the 20 categories of spaces.

Satisfaction was highest for train stations – both MRT and LRT stations – and roads, standing at 97 per cent and 95 per cent respectively.

But satisfaction was lowest for cleanliness of hawker centres and public spaces after events such as concerts and sporting events, at 60 per cent and 59 per cent respectively.

Professor Paulin Tay Straughan, a Singapore Management University professor of sociology (practice), and Dr Mathew Mathews, a senior research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, headed the survey, which was fully funded by the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources.

Dr Mathews explained that commuters and road users have



Only 35 per cent of people cleared their utensils at hawker centres most of the time or all the time, the survey revealed. ST FILE PHOTO

been “well socialised to keep from littering and that is partly because of enforcement action, such as fines”.

The situation in hawker centres, however, was different.

Prof Straughan said: “Considering the number of people who frequent hawker centres, it is unlikely that the army of cleaners can keep up with clearing tables and keeping the tables clean without patrons pitching in.”

The survey also assessed social behaviours related to public cleanliness.

It found that only 35 per cent

cleared their own food utensils at hawker centres most of the time or all the time.

Some 49 per cent did so only sometimes, while 16 per cent never did so at all.

Public Hygiene Council chairman Edward D’Silva said one reason why some people do not return their trays could be that tray-return facilities are not conducive to use.

“Many older hawker centres and food courts do not have proper tray-return facilities,” said Mr D’Silva.

“If they do have, they are not very visible and (are) located in

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— SMU’s Professor Paulin Tay Straughan

inconvenient locations.”

He has proposed to the relevant authorities to better incorporate such facilities in future hawker centres.

The survey also showed that 33 per cent of respondents said they threw away their litter inappropriately sometimes, with 12 per cent doing so frequently.

Most of the respondents believed that Singapore has become much cleaner than before, with 53 per cent indicating that Singapore was much cleaner compared with five years ago.

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