

Family's important but we need our laughs too

Survey shows S'poreans see humour and fun as two of top 10 personal values

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Singaporeans continue to view family as the most important personal value, even as more are taking humour and fun seriously, a survey has found.

Results of the third National Values Assessment survey published yesterday show that family was most frequently cited as an important attribute to Singaporeans personally, just like previous surveys conducted in 2015 and 2012.

The latest survey results also had humour and fun making it to the list of top 10 personal values for the first time. The findings were made known during an Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) roundtable discussion and media briefing yesterday at the National University of Singapore's Bukit Timah campus.

In the study conducted between March and May this year, 2,000 Singaporeans were asked to pick out 10 words from a list of values, beliefs and behaviours that best describe themselves, Singapore society currently, and their notion of the ideal Singapore society.

Besides humour and fun, Singaporeans picked health, compassion, honesty and family, among others, as values and behaviours that best describe them, suggesting an increased importance placed on their personal well-being.

The study was conducted by local business consultancy Advantage and Britain-based Barrett Values Centre.

Miss Sharul Channa, a stand-up comedian of more than eight years, said that the increased value Singaporeans place on humour and fun does not surprise her.

"As our society grows, we have more expectations of ourselves and of the system. The cost of living is going up and I think our society is realising that it is important to laugh and let off some steam," she said.

"I feel that it is a response to external pressures and Singaporeans just need an outlet, which is humour and having fun."

The survey also found that



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"I think our society is realising that it is important to laugh and let off some steam."

— Stand-up comedian Sharul Channa (above)

Singaporeans consider close connections and relationships as important, as they selected values such as family, friendship, caring and compassion to describe qualities that best describe themselves.

But when asked how they view their fellow residents, the results indicate a dissonance between what Singaporeans see as their own personal values and those of society's, which they suggested in the survey are largely kiasu (Hokkien for afraid to lose), complaining and competitive.

Reflecting on this, Dr Gillian Koh, IPS' deputy director for research, told *The Straits Times*: "When people step out of the door in the morning, when they get to their workplaces or their schools, or whatever it is, it sounds like they have to put on a different persona."

This, Dr Koh added, stems from how some Singaporeans feel that the way their life is structured makes it difficult to exercise their personal values outside of their homes and in society.

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How we see ourselves

Here are the top 10 values and behaviours in the eyes of Singaporeans, according to a survey of 2,000 people this year. The list, from a survey conducted between March and May, is based on the number of responses each item received. The attributes are ranked according to the frequency of their response.

PERSONAL VALUES OF SINGAPOREANS

- Family
- Health
- Caring
- Friendship
- Responsibility
- Honesty
- Happiness
- Compassion
- Balance (home/work)*
- Humour/fun*

*The new items replace "positive attitude" and "respect" from the 2015 list.

VALUES, BELIEFS, BEHAVIOURS OF SINGAPORE SOCIETY TODAY

- Kiasu (afraid to lose)
- Complaining**
- Competitive
- Materialistic
- Educational opportunities
- Blame
- Kiasi (afraid to die)
- Self-centredness
- Care for the elderly**
- Effective healthcare

**The new items replace "Security" and "Peace" from the 2015 list.

WHAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN SINGAPORE SOCIETY

- Affordable housing
- Care for the elderly
- Compassion
- Care for the disadvantaged
- Effective healthcare
- Caring for the environment
- Dependable public services***
- Educational opportunities***
- Concern for future generations
- Respect***

***The new items replace "quality of life", "peace" and "employment opportunities" from the 2015 list.