

Majority now aware of race, religious issues, but study flags new fault lines

A large majority of Singaporeans are aware of the seriousness of race and religious issues, and feel the Government has done enough to manage these divisions.

But fault lines have emerged on class, immigration and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights, where more Singaporeans, especially younger ones, want to see greater state involvement and public discourse.

These emerging issues, if mismanaged, are also seen to affect Singaporeans' trust in the Government the most, compared with race and religion.

These and other findings from a study of public opinion on fault lines in Singapore, carried out by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), were re-

leased on Tuesday.

Based on a survey of about 4,000 citizens and permanent residents last year, the study noted that about a third of the respondents identified race and religion as having the potential to result in violence in Singapore if not managed properly – significantly more so than class, immigration and LGBT issues.

Yet only about a quarter tied race and religion to trust in the state and politicians, compared with almost 40 per cent who said trust levels in the Government would likely fall if class and immigration issues are mismanaged.

Close to half of both younger and older respondents felt there should be more state involvement in immigration, reflecting possible higher levels of xeno-

phobia and job insecurity in recent times, regardless of age, said the researchers.

“People may feel that the Government already has clear policies and frameworks that are fairly robust when it comes to race and religion. But perhaps for immigration, socio-economic status and LGBT issues, people might want the state to be more involved in managing those issues,” said IPS senior research fellow Mathew Mathews.

This is unlike in the early years after independence, when the focus was on surviving communal politics.

Besides Dr Mathews, the other researchers were IPS research associate Melvin Tay and research assistant Shanthini Selvarajan.

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