

The Quality of Life in Singapore

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Abstract The Asia Barometer Survey of 1,038 respondents shows that most Singaporeans are happy and enjoy life, although they do not feel a correspondingly high level of accomplishment. Good health, a comfortable home, a job, time with family and having enough to eat emerged as key priorities in life. While Singaporeans are most satisfied with their marriages, family life, friendship, housing, and public safety, their perceptions of their overall quality of life are mostly influenced by their relationships with significant others and their satisfaction with their homes. Detailed demographic analyses are provided and policy implications are discussed in light of these findings.

Keywords Singapore · Quality of life · Happiness · Satisfaction · Values · Lifestyles

1 Introduction: Singapore as a Place to Live

1.1 General

Singapore is an island city-state located at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula. She enjoys a tropical rainforest climate, with temperatures ranging from 22 to 34 Celsius throughout the year. Although Singapore consists of 63 islands, it has a total land area of only about 700 square kilometers. Singapore was a fishing village before it was colonized

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by the British East India Company in 1819 and then used as a trading outpost. The island was occupied by the Japanese Empire during the Second World War but was reverted to British rule in 1945. She joined the Malaysian Federation in 1963 but became independent in 1965. Singapore is a republic with a democratic system of unicameral parliamentary government. Most of Singapore's laws are inherited from British and British-Indian laws.

Singapore is considered one of the best places to live in Asia, if not the world. Various surveys of the quality of life have placed Singapore favorably when compared to many cities in the world. The 2007 Worldwide Quality of Living Survey conducted by Mercer Human Resource Consultancy assessed Singapore to be the 34th best city in the world, with an index of 102.5, up from 101 in 2005 (both indices were slightly better than New York's 100). In the 2007 survey, Zurich was ranked first, with an index of 108.1. This survey also placed Singapore one rank ahead of Tokyo's 35th position. Both cities were considered to have the highest quality of life in Asia (excluding Australian cities).

In the sections to follow, we first provide some background information relating to Singapore's demographic, economic, and political development, as well as her global connections, before elaborating on the findings from the 2006 Asia Barometer Survey. In Sect. 2, we outline the profile of respondents in the sample and compare this profile with the national averages obtained from the 2005 Household Expenditure Survey and the 2000 Population Census. In Sect. 3, we describe the lifestyles of Singaporeans, focusing on issues such as language and national identification, household composition and home ownership, dining habits, access to utilities, usage of electronic communication technologies, openness and interaction with others, the degree of secularization or spirituality, political involvement, and standard of living. In Sect. 4, we highlight the priorities in life that are important to Singaporeans and provide additional analyses by demographics. In Sect. 5, we examine how Singaporeans felt about their overall quality of life comprising the three aspects of happiness, enjoyment and achievement. A more detailed evaluation by demographics is also provided. In Sect. 6, we evaluate how satisfied or dissatisfied Singaporeans are with the various life domains. In Sect. 7, we report the results of more analyses of how Singaporeans' levels of happiness, enjoyment, achievement and overall quality of life are influenced by their satisfaction with their lifestyles, priorities in life and specific life domains, and how demographics play a role in affecting satisfaction levels. Finally in Sect. 8, we provide a summary of the key findings and furnish some suggestions for policy-makers.

1.2 Demographics and Human Development

Singapore is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual society although Chinese are the dominant ethnic group (75%), followed by Malays (15%) and Indians, Eurasians and others (10%). There is considerable freedom and plurality in the practice of religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, etc. The national language is Malay but the other official languages of English, Mandarin and Tamil are widely spoken by the population.

In 2006, the population in Singapore was estimated to be 4.48 million, of which 3.6 million were residents. The life expectancy at birth was recorded to be 80 years old, with males averaging 78 years and females 82 years. The literacy rate among residents aged 15 years and above was around 95 percent, with slightly over 60 percent possessing at least a secondary school education. Home ownership was high among residents and recorded to be close to 91 percent. Singapore is a relatively safe place with a crime rate of about 745 per 100,000 (<http://www.singstat.gov.sg/pubn/ssn/archive/ssnmar2007.pdf>).

The United Nations produces an annual Human Development Report which includes the Human Development Index (HDI). This composite index is a simple average of three

indices reflecting a country's achievements in health and longevity (measured by life expectancy at birth), education (measured by adult literacy and combined primary, secondary and tertiary enrolments) and living standard (measured by GDP per capita in purchasing power parity terms). The HDI for Singapore is 0.916, which gives Singapore a rank of 25th out of 177 countries with data (<http://hdr.undp.org>).

1.3 Economic Development, Governance and Stability

Since independence, the current ruling party, the People's Action Party, has been in power. This political stability coupled with an effective government and administration has contributed to the economic development of the country from primarily a trading port to a global city hub. Singapore's development was based on a market-driven economic system, with an emphasis on industrialization and export orientation. In the International Monetary Fund April 2007 report (<http://www.imf.org>), Singapore was ranked 17th in the world with a GDP (Purchasing Power Parity) per capita of US\$32,867 in 2005. According to Statistics Singapore and figures released in 2006 (www.singstat.gov.sg), the economy grew at 7.9 percent and the per capita GDP was reported to be S\$46,832, equivalent to about US\$31,000 (at the exchange rate of US\$1 to S\$1.50 approximately). The average monthly household income in 2005 was S\$5,400, up from S\$4,940 in 2000. The average annual change in the consumer price index between 2000 and 2005 was only 0.6 percent. Generally, the residents have not experienced any dramatic inflationary pressures, although prices for properties and cars were very high. The labor force participation rate in 2006 for men was 76 percent while that for women was 54 percent. The unemployment rate in 2006 was low at 3.6 percent, down from 4.2 percent in 2005. The Singapore General Household Survey 2005 (www.singstat.gov.sg) also noted a slight increase in the number of working hours per week from 47.9 h in 2000 to 48.4 h in 2005.

In the latest Index of Economic Freedom published by the Heritage Foundation which ranks 157 nations in terms of their levels of economic freedom, Singapore was assessed as 85.7 percent free, making her the world's second freest economy. The assessment of economic freedom was based on ten markers, namely business freedom, trade freedom, monetary freedom, freedom from the government, fiscal freedom, property rights, investment freedom, financial freedom, freedom from corruption and labor corruption. According to surveys examined by Transparency International and the Corruption Perception Index that they computed, Singapore was perceived to have the least corrupt public sector among Asian nations in 2006 and was also ranked favorably (5th place) on a global scale. The March 2006 report by Political and Economic Risk Consultancy (PERC) Ltd rated Singapore's government as having the highest level of integrity in Asia. Her level of corruption had a score of 1.3, followed by Japan (3.01), Hong Kong (3.13) and Macao (4.78).

According to the World Bank Annual Report in 2006, Singapore was considered one of the most politically stable countries with good governance. Six dimensions of governance were measured, comprising voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory law, rule of law and control of corruption. In the report, Singapore scored full marks for government effectiveness and regulatory quality, while its rule of law and control of corruption got 96 and 99 out of 100 respectively. Singapore also rated well on political stability but fell short in the voice and accountability category, which measures among other things, the level of civil society and participation.

A global index compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit 2007 aimed to provide "a quantitative measure of peace—internally and externally". The index utilized 24 indicators that were grouped into three broad categories: ongoing domestic and international

conflicts, the level of safety and security in a society, and the level of militarization and access to weapons. Out of 121 countries, Singapore was ranked 29th in the world and 6th in the Asia-Pacific. Topping the list in Asia-Pacific was New Zealand (ranked 2nd in the world), followed by Japan (5th globally), Bhutan (19th), Hong Kong (23rd), Australia (25th) and Singapore (29th).

1.4 Political Rights and Civil Liberties

Although Singapore is ranked highly in terms of economic freedom, political freedom is less favorably assessed. As mentioned earlier, one dimension of governance that Singapore did not perform well in was voice and accountability. In a report published by international NGO, Freedom House, Singapore was described as “partly free”, having a score of 4 and 5 respectively on civil liberties and political rights. A rating of 1 suggests the highest degree of freedom and 7 the least amount of freedom. In East Asia, the only three “free” nations are Taiwan, Japan and South Korea.

1.5 Global Connections

Singapore was ranked as the most globalized nation in the world according to the Globalization Index 2006. Among the 2.8 million residents aged 15 years and over in Singapore, 50 percent made at least one trip overseas. The majority traveled overseas for holidays. As such, the residents are well connected with the outside world. Another indication of the connectedness of Singaporeans is the rate of Internet penetration. The percentage of households with access to Internet at home rose from 50 percent in 2000 to 66 percent in 2005 according to a newsletter published by the Department of Statistics, Singapore dated March 2006.

Singapore is also a hospitable place for non-residents and visitors, welcoming almost 900,000 non-residents and more than 9.7 million visitors from overseas in 2006. In terms of attractiveness to expatriates, Singapore was noted as the best place to live for Asian expatriates (ECA International 2006).

1.6 Concluding Remarks

Overall, Singapore is indisputably one of the best cities to live in Asia. She enjoys political and social stability, and her economy has been growing steadily since the 1997 financial crisis. With a good public administration system, an efficient transportation network, a great infrastructure and comprehensive social services, she will continue to enjoy the status as a most livable city in Asia, if not the world.

2 Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the profile of respondents that were surveyed in Singapore as part of the 2006 Asia Barometer study. The profile is organized along the lines of the six demographic variables that will be used in further analyses and comparisons of the findings. These demographic variables are gender, marital status, age, education, income and religion. The sample is a little over-represented in terms of female respondents (54.2%) compared to male respondents (45.8%). Most respondents (69.7%) are married and approximately a quarter (25.7%) are single. Widowed (1.6%) and divorced/separated (2.9%) respondents

Table 1 Profile of respondents

Asia Barometer Survey 2006	Percent	<i>N</i>	Singapore General Household Survey 2005 ^a	Percent	<i>N</i>
1. Gender			1. Gender		
Male	45.8	475	Male	49.0	1,357,377
Female	54.2	563	Female	51.0	1,412,913
Total	100	1038	Total	100	2,770,290
2. Marital status			2. Marital status		
Single	25.7	267	Single	31.0	858,133
Married	69.7	724	Married	61.4	1,700,462
Divorced/separated	2.9	30	Divorced/separated	2.8	76,346
Widowed	1.6	17	Widowed	4.9	135,349
Total	100	1038	Total	100	2,770,290
3. Age			3. Age (excluding 15–19)		
20–29	19.7	204	20–29	19.0	347,724
30–39	27.7	288	30–39	24.4	446,679
40–49	28.3	294	40–49	26.0	476,447
50–59	17.2	179	50–59	20.4	372,917
60–69	7.0	73	60–69	10.2	186,508
Total	100	1038	Total	100	1,830,275
4. Education			4. Education ^b		
No formal education	2.0	21	No formal education	17.2	335,527
Primary school	16.5	171	Primary school	10.5	205,224
Secondary/ITE	44.3	460	Secondary school	30.9	600,717
GCE A/Diploma	19.0	197	GCE A/Diploma	23.7	460,396
University	18.2	189	University	17.7	343,791
Total	100	1038	Total	100	1,945,655
5. Household Income			5. Household Income ('000)		
No Income	3.0	30	No Income	10.1	106.4
\$1000 or below	6.4	54	Below \$1000	4.8	50.6
\$1001–\$2000	18.4	185	\$1000–\$1999	12.5	130.8
\$2001–\$3000	22.3	224	\$2000–\$2,999	12.7	133.5
\$3001–\$4000	15.7	158	\$3000–\$3,999	11.5	120.2
\$4001–\$5000	10.0	101	\$4000–\$4,999	9.3	97.9
\$5001–\$6000	6.9	69	\$5000–\$5,999	7.9	82.5
\$6001–\$7000	5.0	50	\$6000–\$6,999	6.3	65.7
\$7001–\$8000	4.1	41	\$7000–\$7,999	5.0	52.1
\$8001–\$9000	2.7	27	\$8000–\$8,999	3.9	41.1
\$9001–\$10000	1.7	17	\$9000–\$9,999	2.8	29.7
More than \$10,000	3.9	39	\$10,000 and over	13.2	138.3
Total	100	1038	Total	100	1049.0
Asia Barometer Survey 2006	Percent	<i>N</i>	Singapore Population Census 2000 ^c	Percent	<i>N</i>
Religion			Religion		
Buddhism	30.1	312	Buddhism	42.5	1,060,662
Islam	21.4	222	Islam	14.9	371,660

Table 1 continued

Asia Barometer Survey 2006	Percent	<i>N</i>	Singapore Population Census 2000 ^c	Percent	<i>N</i>
Christianity	16.7	173	Christianity	14.6	364,087
Hinduism	9.0	93	Hinduism	4.0	99,904
Taoism	8.5	88	Taoism	8.5	212,344
Other religion	1.7	17	Other Religions	0.6	15,879
No Religion	12.8	133	No Religion	14.8	370,094
Total	100	1038	Total	100	2,494,630

Source: General Household Survey (2005), Department of Statistics, Singapore <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/pubn/popn/ghsr1.html>

^a Resident population aged 15 years and over

^b Resident non-students aged 15 years and over

^c Based on Singapore Population Census 2000 for residents aged 15 and over

comprised a small proportion of the sample. In terms of age, the two larger groups of respondents are those aged 40–49 years (28.3%) and those aged 30–39 years (27.7%). For income, the majority are medium-income earners of \$2000–\$5000 (48%). Those earning less than \$2000 (27.8%) or more than \$5000 (24.3%) are almost equal in proportion. 18.2 percent have a university or postgraduate qualification, while most would have completed at least secondary school (44.3%). Buddhists (30.1%) comprised the largest religious group in the survey, followed by Muslims (21.4%) and those who do not have any religion (12.8%). As some demographic segments of the sample are very small in absolute numbers, care should be taken in interpreting statistical results in terms of representativeness and generalizability.

The profile of respondents is matched against the national averages derived from the 2005 Household Expenditure Survey for gender, marital status, age, education and income. For religion, national averages from the 2000 Population Census were used as the 2005 Household Expenditure Survey did not have comparable figures. Singapore's population stands at 4,351,400 as at end June 2005, an increase of 1.6 percent per annum since 2000. 18.3 percent of this population (797,000) is non-resident. Based on the national population of individuals aged 15 years and above, the gender ratio is 49 percent male and 51 percent female. Thus males seemed to be a little under-represented in the sample. For marital status, singles (31%) and widowed individuals (4.9%) are under-represented, while married individuals (61.4%) are over-represented. In terms of age groups, people in their fifties and sixties are under-represented while those in their thirties and forties are over-represented. For education, those with lower education (primary school and below) and GCE A level/ Diploma education are under-represented while those with secondary level education are over-represented. In terms of income, the low income group (those with no income and/or earning less than \$2,000) comprised 27.8 percent of the sample. This percentage is close to the 27.4 percent in the population. The medium income group (those earning \$2,000–\$4,999) is over-represented in the sample (48%) compared to the population (33.5%). In contrast, the high income group comprising those earning \$5,000 and more is under-represented (24.3% of the sample) compared to 39.1 percent of the population. For religious groups, Buddhists and those with no religion are slightly under-represented in the survey and Muslims and Hindus were over-represented. Taoists and Catholics/other Christians would be considered adequately represented.

In the following sections, our discussion on the findings will take into account similarities and differences among various demographic groups. For marital status, we will only compare the responses of single and married people as the numbers for those who are divorced, widowed or separated are too small. For education, we have three levels namely, low (those with no formal education or primary school education), medium (those with secondary/GCE O Level, post secondary/ITE or GCE A Level/Diploma qualifications), and high (those with university or postgraduate degrees). Similarly, we have three levels of income. They are low (those earning \$2000 or less), medium (those earning \$2001–\$5000), and high (those earning \$5001 and more). To facilitate comparisons among the religious groups, we have reclassified the groups as follows: (1) Christians (which includes Catholics and Protestant Christians), (2) Muslims, (3) Buddhists (which includes Taoists), (4) Hindus and (5) None (those with no religion).

3 Lifestyles

In this “lifestyles” section, we highlight some of the ways Singaporeans live, how they spend their time and money and how they interact with other people. The findings and discussion are based on the responses of Singaporeans to questions in the 2006 Asia Barometer Survey on various aspects of their living environment in Singapore.

3.1 Language and National Identification

Most Singaporeans are comfortable with speaking English. More than a quarter (28.4%) said “they speak it well enough to get by in daily life” and more than half (54%) claimed “they speak English fluently”. Although Malay is the national language, English is the language of instruction in educational institutions and the language of use for most commercial transactions. The majority of respondents surveyed (84.6%) identified themselves as “Singaporean” although close to 15 percent chose to classify themselves as Chinese, Malay, Indian or Others (CMIO). The CMIO classification has been used for various governmental purposes such as census-taking and the allocation of subsidized housing. 53 percent and 39.5 percent felt “very proud” and “somewhat proud” to be Singaporean respectively, with about four in five respondents (82.7%) stating that they can recite the national anthem by heart. Most Singaporeans would identify themselves primarily as Asians (63%) although 12.7% felt that they do not identify particularly with any group whether it is based on ethnicity, language or religion.

3.2 Household Composition and Home Ownership

Singaporeans generally have mid-sized households that are reflective of nuclear families comprising the parents and one to two children, and occasionally a grandparent or two. With regard to household composition and size, households with two or fewer members (16.5%) and those with six or more members (13.7%) are in the minority. A four-member household is most common (28%) while most households have three to five members (69.8%).

Most respondents currently reside in an owner-occupied terraced house or unit in an apartment (93.4%). It should be noted that the bulk of the respondents are likely to be staying in apartments. Close to 85 percent of Singaporean citizens and permanent residents live in apartments built by the Housing and Development Board (HDB), a government

agency that was set up in 1960 to provide affordable, high-quality homes in integrated townships. The HDB provides a range of apartments for varying family sizes, ranging from three-room, four-room or five-room apartments to executive condominiums with facilities such as swimming pools and gyms.

3.3 Dining Habits

With regarding to eating habits, Singaporeans preferred to eat breakfast cooked at home (77.4%) and are opposed to instant breakfast (6.4%). However, they are amenable to having breakfast, as long as it is freshly cooked, bought from a shop or in a restaurant or outdoor stall (45.5%). It is common for Singaporeans to eat breakfast at food stalls (49.3%) but not at a restaurant (3.3%). Similarly for dinner, Singaporeans generally preferred to eat at home (88.0%), although some are willing to dine out at food stalls (46.2%) and to a much lesser extent, at a restaurant (8.7%). Comparing the percentages between the morning and evening meals, it seems that Singaporeans are more willing to go out for dinner rather than breakfast. Intuitively it is more convenient to go out for dinner after the end of a work-day to unwind and have a leisurely meal. This is especially so for singles who may wish to catch up with their friends, or for busy professionals who do not have time to cook a meal after their work-day.

Out of the list of 11 foods mentioned, Singaporeans' culinary favorites include Curry (63.6%), Pizza (51.3%), Sandwich (50.7%), Dim-Sum (48.8%) Hamburger (44.0%), Sushi (39.4%), Instant Noodles (35.6%) Tom-Yum Goong (31.5%) and Beijing duck (31.1%). However, Singaporean palates do not seem to take very much to Kimchi (11.9%) and Pho (6.7%). It is not surprising that curry emerged the hot favorite as the major ethnic groups in Singapore (the Chinese, Malay, Indians, Eurasians and Peranakans) have multiple variants of curries in their cuisines. Fast foods offered by global brands such as McDonald's, Burger King and Pizza Hut have been a part of the local scene for decades, thus the popularity of items such as pizza, sandwiches and hamburgers. It is somewhat ironic that instant noodles are fairly well-liked as previous figures showed that Singaporeans are partial to freshly cooked food.

3.4 Access to Utilities

Singapore is a city with many modern conveniences. Close to 100 percent of respondents have easy access to essential utilities such as public water supply (99.4%), electricity (99.7%) and LPG or piped gas (93.6%). Most individuals and households have fixed-line phones (92%) and mobile phones (91.2%). At least half of Singaporean households (50.3%) have also subscribed to cable TV. However, facsimile usage is not popular among Singaporeans (11.9%). As shown in Table 2, those who have access to five or more utilities tended to be female, married, younger in age and earning medium and high incomes. While those with low education have access to fewer utilities, interestingly, those with high education do not necessarily have access to more utilities compared to those with medium education. Muslims (17.6%) and those with no religious affiliation (15%) were the two groups with access to fewer utilities.

3.5 Usage of Electronic Communication Technologies (Digital Life Index)

The usage of electronic communication technologies such as computers and mobile phones is a pervasive part of everyday life in modern societies like Singapore. We assessed how

Table 2 Access to utilities by demographic groups

Demographics	Percentages who have access to	
	<5 utilities	5 and more utilities
Gender		
Male	14.1	85.9
Female	12.6	87.4
Marital status		
Single	14.6	85.4
Married	11.3	88.7
Age		
20–29	9.3	90.7
30–39	11.4	88.6
40–49	13.2	86.8
50–59	17.4	82.6
60–69	21.9	78.1
Education		
Low	16.1	83.9
Medium	8.7	91.3
High	10.7	89.3
Household income		
Low	26.1	73.9
Medium	10.7	89.3
High	5.2	94.8
Religion		
Christian	13.3	86.7
Muslim	17.6	82.4
Hindu	10.8	89.2
Buddhist	10.9	89.1
None	15.0	85.0

frequently Singaporeans used these devices and also computed a digital life index to facilitate comparisons across demographic groups. When asked “how often do you view Internet web pages by computers”, almost equal percentages of respondents reported viewing web pages “almost everyday” (36.2%) and “never” (37.0%). This same dichotomy was noted for the frequency of reading and writing emails by computers with 35.8 percent stating that they do so almost daily while 38.6 percent had never done so. These figures point to a cyber-gap between certain segments of the population. The gap is considerably smaller for mobile users as mobile phone technology has been more widely adopted in the Singaporean population. About 3 in 5 Singaporeans (58.2%) read and write messages by mobile phones on a daily basis, compared to 22 percent who have never engaged in this activity.

As far as viewing Internet web pages is concerned, frequent viewers are more likely to be male, married, aged 30–39, highly educated with high household income and are Christians or those with no religion. Those who never viewed Internet web pages are more likely to be female, married, aged 40–49 years with low education and low household income, and are Buddhists or Muslims.

Those who frequently read/write emails by computers are also more likely to be male, married, aged 30–39, with medium education but high household income and are Christians or those with no religion. Those who never read/write emails from computers are more likely to be female, married, aged 40–49 with low education and low household income, and are Buddhists or Muslims.

Frequent and non-readers/writers of messages by phones are more likely to be female, married, and Christians or those with no religion. However, they are dissimilar in terms of age, education, and household income. Frequent readers/writers tend to be younger (30–39 years) and could have low to high education although most have medium to high income. Non-readers/writers tend to be older (40–49 years) with mostly low education and low household income, and are Buddhists.

A digital life index was devised to evaluate how prevalent the usage of electronic communication technologies was. The index was computed by counting the responses to the three questions asking how often respondents view webpages, read emails and send messages on their mobile phones. A higher score shows that a person uses these technologies more frequently. Generally, across different forms of communication technologies, males, single people and those who are younger tend to be more frequent in their usage (see Table 3). Those with lower levels of education and income were not as engaged in the digital life. Christians (56.1%) and those with no religion (59.4%) scored higher on the Digital Life Index compared to the other religious groups with the Muslims (29.7%) being the least frequent in their usage.

3.6 Openness and Interaction with Others (Global Life Index)

From her early history as a colonial trading port for the British empire, Singapore has been very open to interacting with people and institutions from various countries across the globe. From an economic point of view, the government has been constantly encouraging Singaporeans to venture beyond her shores to seek business opportunities. Public and private organizations alike also provide scholarships for promising young Singaporeans to pursue their education or training abroad. On a personal level, the impetus to travel is fueled by rising affluence and an increasing appreciation of and appetite for cosmopolitan experiences. More than half of the respondents surveyed (55.1%) have a family or relative living in another country, and 50.5 percent claimed to have traveled at least three times in the past three years either for business or holiday purposes. Generally, Singaporeans are relatively quite well-traveled.

Singaporeans are also very open to making friends from other countries (45.9%) and are extensively exposed to foreign-produced programs on TV (73.1%). It should be noted that most of the local TV programming are imported from the United States such as Hollywood movies, reality TV shows, situation comedies, etc. Singaporeans communicate fairly often with people in other countries via the internet or email (29.0%). This international contact seems to be more of a personal nature or centered around family and friends rather than with colleagues or work-related personnel, as most of their jobs do not involve contact with organizations or people in other countries (17.5%).

The responses to these six questions on openness and interaction with others were counted to form the Global Life Index. A higher score on this index shows that the respondent is embracing more of the globalized aspects of living in his/her society (see Table 3). Males and females were similar in their global outlook. Younger people in their twenties (56.4%) and thirties (63.9%), and those who are married (53.6%) seemed to be more globally aware and connected. Education and income had a big impact on one's

Table 3 Extent of lifestyles by demographic groups

	Digital life				Global life				Spirituality			
	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3+	0	1	2	3
Entire sample	29.4	20.5	6.6	43.5	9.3	17.3	22.2	51.2	8.0	21.4	31.6	39.0
Gender												
Male	26.9	17.3	7.6	48.2	10.5	16.6	21.1	51.8	7.2	22.3	32.2	38.3
Female	31.4	23.3	5.7	39.6	8.3	17.9	23.1	50.6	8.7	20.6	31.1	39.6
Marital status												
Single	15.0	16.9	6.4	61.8	9.4	18.7	25.1	46.8	9.6	26.6	31.8	32.2
Married	33.0	22.0	6.8	38.3	9.3	15.7	21.4	53.6	7.6	18.9	31.5	42.0
Age												
20–29	5.9	16.2	6.4	71.6	7.8	14.7	21.1	56.4	8.3	24.5	31.4	35.8
30–39	14.2	24.7	9.0	52.1	3.8	15.3	17.0	63.9	10.4	20.8	34.4	34.4
40–49	35.0	24.1	6.8	34.0	12.6	16.0	27.2	44.2	7.8	17.3	33.3	41.5
50–59	52.5	16.8	3.9	26.8	14.5	21.8	22.9	40.8	5.6	24.6	25.7	44.1
60–69	75.3	11.0	2.7	11.0	9.6	27.4	23.3	39.7	4.1	23.3	28.8	43.8
Education												
Low	46.7	26.5	4.5	22.3	12.2	22.9	24.3	40.5	6.2	20.8	33.2	39.9
Medium	8.7	17.1	7.9	66.3	6.7	12.7	22.6	57.9	9.5	23.0	32.1	35.3
High	2.1	6.3	11.1	80.4	3.7	5.8	14.8	75.7	11.6	21.2	25.9	41.3
Income												
Low	53.0	26.2	3.6	17.2	14.3	27.6	24.7	33.3	3.2	24.0	30.5	42.3
Middle	28.5	25.7	5.5	40.3	10.5	18.3	21.7	49.5	7.9	18.8	31.2	42.1
High	29.0	20.7	6.5	43.9	3.2	8.1	20.6	68.0	11.6	23.0	32.3	33.1
Religion												
Christian	20.8	17.3	5.8	56.1	7.5	11.6	17.3	63.6	0.0	13.9	26.0	60.1
Muslim	30.6	34.2	5.4	29.7	11.3	21.2	19.8	47.7	0.0	7.2	28.8	64.0
Buddhist	38.0	17.1	6.2	38.7	11.7	19.1	26.8	42.4	0.0	28.0	46.2	25.8
Hindu	22.6	21.5	8.6	47.3	2.2	10.8	17.2	69.9	0.0	20.4	25.8	53.8
None	19.5	12.0	9.0	59.4	6.8	18.0	21.8	53.4	62.4	34.6	3.0	0.0

global orientation, providing opportunities for those with higher education (75.7%) and income (68%). Hindus (69.9%) and Christians were the most globalised (63.6%) among the various religious groups.

3.7 Degree of Secularization (Spirituality Index)

Singapore is fairly diverse in terms of religion compared to predominantly Muslim countries (such as Malaysia and Indonesia) and Buddhist countries (such as Thailand) in South East Asia. Singapore prides herself on being a multi-religious society and has many public holidays and celebrations with religious roots and significance. Religion tends to be more formally structured and may entail involvement in a religious community. Although many Singaporeans may belong to formal religious organizations such as churches, mosques and temples, there are also many who are not inclined to do so but who remain interested in matters relating to spirituality. Spirituality can be construed as a more

personal form of religious expression which does not require a person to be part of institutionalized religion.

The Spirituality Index was constructed by counting the responses to the three following questions. Firstly, respondents were asked if they belonged to any particular religion. An overwhelming 87.2 percent indicated a religious affiliation. Secondly, they were asked, “How often do you pray or meditate?” Those who said that they engaged in these practices “daily” and “weekly” were categorized as more concerned about their spirituality. About half of the respondents (47.7%) prayed or mediated daily, although there were two out of ten (21.6%) who never did. Thirdly, they were asked to indicate the extent to which they believe in an unseen spiritual world that can influence events in the world around them. Responses to the categories “definitely I believe” and “somewhat I believe” were categorized as an affirmation of this practice of spirituality. The majority of Singaporeans (57.6%) believed in unseen spiritual powers.

Someone who had a score of three on the Spirituality Index would be someone who professed a religious faith, who prayed and mediated daily or weekly and who believed in the powers of an unseen spiritual world. A higher score on this index shows that a person is more engaged in practices relating to spirituality. According to Table 3, Singaporeans placed considerable emphasis on maintaining their spirituality. Close to four in ten respondents (39%) had a score of three on the Spirituality Index, and 70.6 percent had at least a score of two. Both males and females were spiritually-inclined, although more married people were involved in practices of spirituality. The younger age groups (20–29 years and 30–39 years) and the high income earners were not so interested in spiritual matters. Those with high education were more spiritual than those in the other educational levels. For religious groups, those who do not profess a faith were understandably lower scoring on the Spirituality Index (62.4% had a score of zero). In contrast, Muslims (64%) and Christians (60.1%) were devout in their practice of spirituality (scores of three).

3.8 Political Involvement

In response to the question “how often do you vote in each of the following elections (national elections)?”, the majority of Singaporeans (34.7%) said they voted “every time” and 18.3 percent said they voted “most of the time”. There were others who indicated that they voted “sometimes” (14.0%), “rarely” (12.5%) and “never voted” (10.7%). The percentages for political involvement could be misleading because voting is compulsory in Singapore. Also, many Singaporeans may not get a chance to vote because the dominance of the ruling political party results in walkovers and non-contestation in many local elections.

3.9 Standard of Living

The majority of Singaporeans would describe their standard of living as “average” (72.2%) while a combined 22.6 percent felt they had a “high” (6.8%) or “relatively high” (15.8%) standard of living. When we evaluated these responses by examining the respondents’ demographic characteristics (see Table 4), we found that males (23.5%) were more likely to view themselves as enjoying a high standard of living compared to the females (20.2%). Singles (22.5%) and married people (23.5%) were almost equally contented. Among the various age cohorts, the 20–29 year olds (25.0%) perceived their standards of living to be high or relatively high, followed by declining rates to a low of 19.0 percent for those aged 50–59 years and 17.8 percent for those aged 60–69 years.

Table 4 Perceptions of standard of living by demographic groups

Demographics	Percentages who rated their standard of living as		
	High and relatively high	Average	Relatively low & low
Gender			
Male	23.5	69.7	4.8
Female	20.2	74.2	5.5
Marital status			
Single	22.5	71.5	5.9
Married	23.5	72.9	3.6
Age			
20–29	25.0	69.6	5.5
30–39	23.6	71.9	4.5
40–49	23.4	70.7	5.8
50–59	19.0	76.0	5.0
60–69	17.8	76.7	5.5
Education			
Low	16.9	76.4	6.7
Medium	20.7	74.2	5.2
High	43.3	56.1	0.5
Household income			
Low	12.2	73.5	14.3
Medium	21.2	76.4	2.3
High	33.4	65.4	1.2
Religion			
Christian	30.1	63.6	6.3
Muslim	14.0	82.4	3.6
Buddhist	21.1	73.7	5.2
Hindu	32.3	58.1	9.6
None	23.3	73.7	3.0

Those with higher educational levels and households incomes perceived their standards of living to be higher. Among the various religious groups, Hindus (32.3%) and Christians (30.1%) gave high ratings to their perceived standard of living compared to the Muslims (82.4%) who mostly rated their standard of living as “average”. Hindus perceived their standards of living to be either high and relatively high (32.3%) or low and relatively low (9.6%), registering the highest percentages at the extreme ends of the spectrum. Christians had a similar dichotomy with second-place percentages behind the Hindus. The Buddhists and those with no religion shared similar percentages in all three categories of responses, with slightly more than seven in ten rating their standard of living as “average”.

4 Priorities in Life

Priorities in life refer to the resources and activities which people consider important in helping them to live a satisfying life. The frequencies presented in Table 5 show how often a particular priority was chosen and regarded by the respondents as important. In selecting

Table 5 Priorities in life (entire sample)

Resource/activity	Percent	Rank
1. Being healthy	83.8	1
2. Having a comfortable home	62.6	2
3. Having a job	58.5	3
4. Spending time with family	52.2	4
5. Having enough to eat	43.4	5
6. Having access to good medical care	27.6	6
7. Raising children	25.7	7
8. Earning a high income	24.6	8
9. Safe and clean environment	19.2	9
10. Being able to live without fear of crime	18.6	10
11. Living in a country with good government	16.8	11
12. Being successful at work	15.6	12
13. Being on good terms with others	11.1	13
14. Enjoying a pastime	10.0	14
15. Pleasant community to live	7.2	15
16. Having access to higher education	4.2	16
17. Being devout	4.0	17
18. Freedom of expression and association	3.3	18
19. Expressing your personality or using your talents	2.8	19
20. Contributing to your local community or to society	2.7	20
21. Owning lots of nice things	1.8	21
22. Appreciating art and culture	1.3	22
23. Dressing up	0.8	23
24. Winning over others	0.5	24
25. Being famous	0.1	25

Values in bold indicate top five resources or activities which were considered important

the top five resources and activities, Singaporeans valued “being healthy” (83.8%), “having a comfortable home” (62.6%), “having a job” (58.5%), “spending time with family” (52.2%) and “having enough to eat” (43.4%). These priorities reflect the importance Singaporeans place on their personal well-being (in terms of physical health and gainful employment) and by extension, the well-being of their families (in terms of the quality of family life). It should be noted that “being healthy” is closely related to the sixth priority of “having access to good medical care” (27.6%) which represents the means to achieving the top priority of health. The importance placed on “raising children” (25.7%), the seventh-ranked priority, can also be viewed as a natural outcome of spending quality time with one’s family. These priorities appear to be the fundamental bread-and-butter issues that rational and family-oriented Singaporeans are concerned about.

Interestingly, Singaporeans shunned priorities that seemed to promote a temporal sense of personal well-being that is based on outward appearances or the approval of others such as “being famous”, “winning over others”, “dressing up” and “owning lots of nice things”. They also seemed to have little or no interest in “appreciating art and culture”. These priorities collectively represent the bottom five resources and activities that Singaporeans considered important. Priorities that espouse more individualistic freedoms such as “freedom of expression and association” and “expressing your personality or using your talents” were not considered crucial by most Singaporean respondents. Another priority

Table 6 Priorities in life by demographic groups

	Priorities in life (Top five concerns)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Gender					
Male	Health (81)	Job (66)	Housing (62)	Family (50)	Diet (44)
Female	Health (87)	Housing (63)	Family (54)	Job (52)	Diet (43)
Marital status					
Single	Health (79)	Job (67)	Housing (61)	Diet (41)	Family (39)
Married	Health (86)	Housing (63)	Family (57)	Job (55)	Diet (43)
Age					
20–29	Health (76)	Job (63)	Housing (62)	Family (44)	Diet (39)
30–39	Health (83)	Housing (62)	Job (58)	Family (56)	Children (37)
40–49	Health (87)	Job (62)	Housing (60)	Family (55)	Diet (48)
50–59	Health (85)	Housing (63)	Job (62)	Family (48)	Diet (44)
60+	Health (97)	Housing (75)	Diet (66)	Family (63)	Medical care (38)
Education					
Low	Health (85)	Housing (67)	Job (59)	Family (53)	Diet (50)
Medium	Health (79)	Housing (62)	Job (61)	Family (45)	Diet (41)
High	Health (86)	Family (58)	Job (54)	Housing (50)	Diet (27)
Income					
Low	Health (82)	Housing (68)	Job (62)	Diet (54)	Family (46)
Middle	Health (83)	Housing (62)	Job (62)	Family (53)	Diet (47)
High	Health (86)	Housing (60)	Family (57)	Job (54)	Diet (30)
Religion					
Christian	Health (84)	Family (57)	Housing (53)	Diet (38)	Medical Care (27)
Muslim	Health (80)	Housing (75)	Job, Family (62)	Diet (50)	Children (25)
Buddhist	Health (85)	Housing (61)	Job (59)	Family (46)	Diet (45)
Hindu	Health (79)	Housing (69)	Job (68)	Family (55)	Medical Care (34)
None	Health (90)	Housing (55)	Job (54)	Family (44)	Diet (32)

Parentheses are the rounded percentages of respondents who selected the respective priorities in life. The priorities are as follows:

Health—being healthy

Housing—having a comfortable home

Job—having a job

Family—spending time with family

Diet—having enough to eat

Medical care—having access to medical care

Children—raising children

that was not important was the more societally-oriented one related to “contributing to your local community or to society”.

For a more in-depth analysis, we evaluated how various demographic segments of Singaporeans viewed their priorities in life. The statistics are presented in Table 6. The five top priorities in life, namely being healthy, having a comfortable home, having a job, spending time with family and having enough to eat, were similarly chosen by both the male and female respondents. However, the rankings differed marginally. The first choice

(being healthy) and the fifth choice (having enough to eat) were the same for both groups: 87 percent of the female respondents selected “being healthy” compared to 81 percent for the males, while 43 percent of the females vs 44 percent of the males selected “having enough to eat.” The rankings for the other top three concerns differed slightly. While males (66%) chose “having a job” as their second concern, females (63%) chose “having a comfortable home”. For the third concern, males (62%) chose “having a comfortable home” whereas females (54%) are concerned about “spending time with family.” Finally, males (50%) considered “spending time with family” as their fourth concern while females (52%) chose “having a job”.

The discussion for this section is focused on those who were singles and married as the other two groups (divorced and widowed) had smaller sample sizes. The top five priorities in life were chosen similarly by the two groups of respondents, although their rankings differed. However, there were some significant differences in terms of percentages. For instance, almost 86 percent of the married viewed “being healthy” as their top priority while only 79 percent of their single counterparts felt the same way. On the other hand, while singles (67%) chose “having a job” as their second priority, married subjects (55%) considered this their fourth priority. To the married subjects (63%), “having a comfortable home” was their second priority as opposed to it being third in priority for the singles (61%). “Spending time with family” was also of lesser importance (fifth choice) to the singles (39%) as compared to the married (57%) who ranked it as third most important.

Comparing their priorities in life as chosen by respondents in different age groups, it was noted that they exhibited similar choices, with the exception of those aged 30–39 years, who selected “raising children” as their fifth choice. This was in contrast to those in other age groups who mostly chose “having enough to eat” as the fifth priority. For those aged 60–69 years, their third choice was “having enough to eat” as opposed to “having a job” or “having a comfortable home” as expressed by their younger counterparts. For these oldest respondents, their fifth choice was understandably “having access to good medical care” (38%).

There were also significant variations among the five age groups in terms of percentages. For instance, although “being healthy” was the top choice for all the groups, the percentages varied from 76 percent for those aged 20–29 years to a high of 97 percent for those aged 60–69 years. More among those aged 60–69 years (63%) viewed “spending time with family” as of greater importance than the rest, especially those belonging to the age groups of 20–29 years (44%) and 50–59 years (48%). Similarly, more of the oldest respondents worried about “having enough to eat” (66%) compared to those who were younger (range of 39–48%).

The top five priorities in life were similarly chosen by the three educational groups (low, medium and high education). Although “being healthy” was ranked first by the three groups, a slightly smaller percentage of those with medium educational level viewed this as their top priority in life (79%) compared to about 85–86 percent of those in the other groups. While most of the low (67%) and medium (62%) income earners considered “having a comfortable home” as their second most important concern, those with high education (50%) viewed this as their fourth priority. To this group of high education subjects, “spending time with family” was of second priority (58%). It was also not surprising to find only 27 percent of those with high education were concerned with “having enough to eat” as their fifth most important concern compared to their counterparts with lower education (41–50%).

The top five choices of priorities in life were the same for the three household income groups (low, medium and high income) although there were some slight variations in terms

of ranking of each priority. The top two concerns shared by all three income groups were “being healthy” and “having a comfortable home”. The highest income group had marginally more concerned with their health (86% vs 82% and 83%) but less so with “having a comfortable home” (60% vs 62% and 68%). This group was also less worried about “having a job”, ranking it as their fourth concern, as compared to their counterparts with lower income who ranked “having a job” as their third concern (62% for low and medium income groups). Also, only close to 30 percent of the high income group viewed “having enough to eat” as the fifth most important concern, compared to 47 percent for those with medium income.

When comparisons were made across groups who professed different religions, the top five priorities in life chosen were almost identical, with the exception of Muslims whose fifth choice was “raising children”. Christians and Hindus chose medical care for their fifth choice. It was also noted that although “being healthy” was the top choice by all the groups, the percentages making this choice varied significantly from a low of 79 percent for Hindus to a high of 90 percent for those who have no religion. Similar variations were also detected for the other top four choices. For those choosing “having a comfortable home”, the variations were from a low of 53 percent (Christians) to a high of 75 percent (Muslims). In the case of “having a job”, the range was from 54 percent (no religion) to 68 percent (Hindus). For “spending time with family”, the Muslims were most concerned (62%) while the lowest priority was indicated by those with no religion (44%). When “having enough to eat” was compared, only 32 percent of those with no religion picked this item as their top fifth concern while as high as 50 percent of the Muslims considered this as their top fourth priority in life.

4.1 Needs for Having, Being and Relating

To further analyse the priorities in life that are important to Singaporeans, we categorized the twenty five priorities according to the needs that were fulfilled by choosing such priorities. Human needs can be classified into three types: need for having, relating or loving, and being (Allardt 1976; Campbell 1981). The three types of human needs are measured by the priorities as stated below:

Needs for Having

- 1 Having enough to eat
- 2 Having a comfortable home
- 3 Being healthy
- 4 Having access to good medical care if required
- 5 Having a job
- 6 Earning a high income
- 7 Being successful at work

Needs for Relating

- 1 Spending time with family
- 2 Being on good terms with others
- 3 Raising children

Needs for Being

- 1 Enjoying a past time
- 2 Appreciating art and culture

Table 7 Needs for having, relating and being

	Need for having				Need for relating				Need for being			
	0	1	2	3+	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3+
Entire sample	0.2	6.0	20.2	73.6	32.9	45.9	20.4	0.8	68.3	27.3	4.0	0.4
Gender												
Male	0.0	4.2	18.7	77.1	37.3	47.4	14.9	0.4	69.1	28.2	2.5	0.2
Female	0.4	7.5	21.5	70.7	29.3	44.6	25.0	1.1	70.9	25.8	3.2	0.2
Marital status												
Single	0.7	6.4	19.1	73.8	49.1	43.4	7.5	0.0	61.4	33.3	4.5	0.7
Married	0.0	5.7	20.74	73.9	27.2	46.3	25.4	1.1	73.5	24.4	2.1	0.0
Age												
20–29	1.0	5.9	21.1	72.1	45.6	42.6	11.8	0.0	64.7	29.4	4.9	1.0
30–39	0.0	6.6	19.1	74.3	28.5	45.1	25.7	0.7	74.0	24.7	1.4	0.0
40–49	0.0	4.4	19.4	76.2	27.2	46.6	25.5	0.7	75.2	22.8	2.0	0.0
50–59	0.0	7.3	23.5	69.3	35.8	46.9	16.8	0.6	63.7	31.8	4.5	0.0
60+	0.0	6.8	17.8	75.3	31.5	52.1	12.3	4.1	64.4	32.9	2.7	0.0
Education												
Low	0.0	4.7	18.9	76.4	31.5	45.1	22.4	1.0	72.4	25.3	2.3	0.0
Medium	0.4	4.8	17.9	77.0	40.9	43.3	15.9	0.0	69.0	27.0	3.6	0.4
High	0.5	11.6	27.5	60.3	27.0	51.9	20.1	1.1	64.0	31.7	3.7	0.5
Income												
Low	0.0	5.7	16.5	77.8	39.4	41.9	17.6	1.1	71.7	24.7	3.6	0.0
Medium	0.5	5.2	19.4	74.9	32.2	45.3	21.5	1.0	73.6	22.8	3.7	0.0
High	0.0	7.0	23.3	69.8	29.7	48.3	21.8	0.3	64.2	33.7	1.7	0.3
Religion												
Christian	0.6	9.8	27.7	61.8	28.3	46.8	23.7	1.2	63.0	33.5	2.9	0.6
Muslim	0.0	4.1	16.7	79.3	27.0	52.3	20.7	0.0	73.0	24.8	2.3	0.0
Buddhist	0.2	5.7	17.6	76.4	36.5	43.4	18.9	1.2	72.7	25.3	1.7	0.2
Hindu	0.0	2.2	19.4	78.5	34.4	43.4	21.5	1.1	81.7	17.2	1.1	0.0
None	0.0	7.5	25.6	66.9	39.1	43.6	17.3	0.0	56.4	34.2	9.0	0.0

3 Expressing your personality or using your talents

4 Safe and clean environment

Table 7 shows the importance accorded to these priorities by the entire sample and by different demographic groups. The percentages show the importance accorded to zero, one, two, three or more of these priorities. For instance, 73.6 percent of the respondents surveyed felt that three or more of the priorities in the need for having were important to them while a very small 0.2 percent chose none of them. In contrast, almost one-third (or 32.9%) felt that none of the three priorities measuring the need for relating were important to them. In the case of the need for being, a high percentage (68.3%) felt that none of the priorities were important to them at all. The emphasis by the Singapore respondents clearly demonstrated the importance placed on the need of having, less so for the need of relating and an even lesser desire for the need for being.

When the need for having was compared across different demographic groups, it was evident that men (77.1%) expressed a slightly greater need for having compared to women

(70.7%). While there were few differences among people from different age groups and with different marital status, it was observed that people with lower or medium education and income expressed a greater need for having compared to those with high education and income. In terms of religion, the Muslims and Hindus expressed a greater need for having, when compared to the Christians.

When the need for relating was analyzed across different demographic backgrounds, a very small percentage of them indicated importance for all the three priorities. 45.9 percent and 20.4 percent chose one and two priorities out of the three respectively. Males had a lower need for relating compared to females. About 37 percent of the males chose none of the priorities as compared to 29 percent for females. The need for relating was also more crucial to those who were married. About one in four (or 25.4%) of them chose two priorities as important compared to 7.5 percent for the singles. Close to 46 percent of those aged 20–29 years expressed no such need for relating as compared to 35.8 percent for those aged 50–59 years and 31.5 percent for those aged 60 years and above. About two out of three respondents (40.9%) with medium education indicated no priorities as important for their need of relating but 27 percent of those with high income thought so. On the other hand, those with low income had a lower need for relating. About 39 percent of them chose none of the priorities, compared to 29.7 percent of those with high income. It was also noted that those with no religious belief (39.1%) and Buddhists (36.5%) did not pick any priority. In contrast, only 28.3 percent of Christians and 27 percent of Muslims revealed such a sentiment.

Respondents in Singapore appeared to have a very low need for being. On average, 68.3 percent of them did not choose any of the priorities. There was almost no difference between men and women in their need for being. Among people from different age groups, those aged 30–49 years expressed a lower need for being compared to those in other age groups. About 74 to 75 percent of those in this age group accorded no importance to any priority. On the other hand, the single respondents, those with high education and those with high income expressed a greater need for being. When the need for being was compared across people with different religious faiths, it was found that 81.7 percent of the Hindus did not choose any priority as important. On the contrary, 56 percent of the free thinkers and 63 percent of the Christians shared the same sentiment.

In general, the survey results show that Singaporeans are more concerned about their material comforts and yearned more for the need of having. They were less concerned about the need for relating and even less bothered with the need for having. Men, those with lower education and income, and Muslims and Hindus were more concerned with the need for having. In contrast, females expressed a greater need for relating, along with respondents who are married, older and with higher incomes. Christians and Muslims were more concerned about the need for relating than Buddhists and Hindus. Single people and those with more resources (in terms of education and income) expressed a greater need for being.

5 Overall Quality of life: Happiness, Enjoyment and Achievement

As shown in the “Entire sample” row of Table 8, in terms of happiness, more than a quarter of Singaporeans (27.5%) reported being “very happy” and more than half (51.1%) reported being “quite happy”. These two percentages add up to an overwhelming 78.6 percent of Singaporeans expressing contentment with their lot in life (mean of 2.01). Correspondingly, as shown in the “Entire sample” row of Table 9, Singaporeans seemed

Table 8 Levels of happiness by demographic groups

	Very happy (a)	Quite happy (b)	Neither happy nor unhappy	Not too happy (c)	Very unhappy (d)	Balanced (a + b) – (c + d)	Mean
Entire sample	27.5	51.1	15.4	5.2	0.9	+72.5	2.01
Gender							
Male	24.6	52.6	16.8	5.1	0.8	+71.3	2.05
Female	29.8	49.7	14.2	5.3	0.9	+73.3	1.98
Marital status							
Single	20.6	55.1	18.4	4.5	1.5	+69.7	2.11
Married	30.5	50.6	13.7	4.7	0.6	+75.8	1.94
Age							
20–29	26.0	53.9	14.7	3.9	1.5	+74.5	2.01
30–39	28.1	53.1	13.5	4.9	0.3	+76.0	1.96
40–49	29.3	44.9	19.4	5.8	0.7	+67.7	2.04
50–59	25.7	53.1	14.5	5.6	1.1	+72.1	2.03
60+	26.0	54.8	11.0	6.8	1.4	+72.6	2.03
Education							
Low	28.0	49.2	16.4	5.5	0.8	+70.9	2.02
Medium	26.6	52.4	14.3	5.6	1.2	+72.2	2.02
High	27.0	55.0	13.8	3.7	0.5	+77.8	1.96
Income							
Low	21.5	50.2	20.1	6.1	2.2	+63.4	2.17
Middle	31.9	51.0	11.3	5.5	0.3	+77.1	1.91
High	27.6	51.5	16.6	3.8	0.6	+74.7	1.98
Religion							
Christian	26.0	54.3	13.9	4.0	1.7	+75.6	2.01
Muslim	39.6	45.9	9.9	4.5	0	+81.0	1.79
Buddhist	23.3	53.1	17.1	5.7	0.7	+70.0	2.07
Hindu	29.0	50.5	12.9	5.4	2.2	+71.9	2.01
None	21.1	49.6	22.6	6.0	0.8	+63.9	2.16

to be enjoying life with an aggregate of 88.5 percent saying they are enjoying life “often” (34.3%) and “sometimes” (54.2%). In contrast to the glowing statistics on happiness and enjoyment, only 16.9% reported feeling they have accomplished “a great deal” in their lives (see “Entire sample” row in Table 10). Combined with the 59.1 percent who reported “some” accomplishment, the top two response categories for this scale item garnered 76 percent. At least one in five (20.7%) felt they were achieving “very little”. This may seem slightly paradoxical that Singaporeans are happy and enjoy their lives although they feel they are not achieving very much.

5.1 Levels of Happiness by Demographic Groups

Table 8 shows the different levels of happiness experienced by various demographic groups. Overall, about four out of five respondents (or 78.6%) felt quite happy or very happy about life. Females were happier than males although the differences were not statistically significant. Almost 80 percent (79.5%) of the females felt quite happy or very

Table 9 Levels of enjoyment by demographic groups

	Often (a)	Sometimes (b)	Rarely (c)	Never (d)	Balanced (a + b) – (c + d)	Mean
Entire sample	34.3	54.2	10.0	1.5	+77.0	1.79
Gender						
Male	32.7	56.1	8.9	2.3	+77.6	1.81
Female	35.7	52.5	10.9	0.9	+76.4	1.77
Marital status						
Single	31.2	57.5	8.6	2.6	+77.5	1.83
Married	36.3	53.3	9.7	0.7	+79.2	1.75
Age						
20–29	36.3	54.9	8.3	0.5	+82.4	1.73
30–39	34.4	55.2	10.1	0.3	+79.2	1.76
40–49	31.4	54.9	11.6	2.0	+72.7	1.84
50–59	34.1	52.3	10.2	3.4	+72.8	1.83
60+	41.1	49.3	6.8	2.7	+80.9	1.71
Education						
Low	32.0	53.5	12.1	2.4	+61.0	1.85
Medium	34.9	56.0	8.3	0.8	+81.8	1.75
High	40.7	54.0	5.3	0.0	+89.4	1.65
Income						
Low	26.0	53.4	17.0	3.6	+58.8	1.98
Middle	39.5	52.9	6.6	1.1	+84.7	1.69
High	36.3	55.8	7.3	0.6	+84.2	1.72
Religion						
Christian	41.3	50.6	5.8	2.3	+83.8	1.69
Muslim	39.6	49.5	9.9	0.9	+78.3	1.72
Buddhist	30.3	56.8	11.0	2.0	+74.1	1.85
Hindu	37.6	49.5	12.9	0	+73.2	1.75
None	27.8	60.9	9.8	1.5	+77.4	1.85

happy, as compared to 77 percent of their male counterparts. The percentage of those who were quite happy or very happy over those who felt not too happy or very unhappy differed only marginally between males and females (71% vs 73%). Married people felt happier about life than their single counterparts. About four out of five (81.1%) of them felt quite or very happy, as compared to 75.7 percent for the singles. The difference between the level of happiness (very happy and quite happy) and unhappiness (not too happy or very unhappy) for the two groups (69.7% for singles vs 75.8% for married) clearly supported such an observation.

When levels of happiness were compared over age groups, it was noted that those aged 40–49 years reported a lower level of happiness. About 74 percent of them felt very happy or quite happy, as compared to the next group (78.8% for those aged 50–59 years) and the group with the highest percentage (81.2% for those aged 30–39 years). This could be due to the observation that the middle aged group (40–49 years) faced more life pressures as a result of concerns about their job security, their children's education, the rising costs of living and so on.

Table 10 Levels of achievement by demographic groups

	A great deal (a)	Some (b)	Very little (c)	None (d)	Balanced (a + b) - (c + d)	Mean
Entire sample	16.9	59.1	20.7	3.2	+52.1	2.10
Gender						
Male	15.7	59.4	22.5	2.3	+51.2	2.11
Female	18.0	58.9	19.2	3.9	+53.8	2.09
Marital status						
Single	16.2	61.5	20.0	2.3	+55.4	2.08
Married	17.2	59.4	20.4	3.1	+53.1	2.09
Age						
20–29	15.2	60.3	23.0	1.5	+51.0	2.11
30–39	15.7	62.2	19.6	2.4	+55.9	2.09
40–49	15.5	54.0	26.5	4.1	+38.9	2.19
50–59	18.8	64.8	11.9	4.5	+67.2	2.02
60+	28.2	50.7	16.9	4.2	+57.8	1.97
Education						
Low	15.3	57.5	22.2	5.1	+45.5	2.17
Medium	17.6	61.6	20.4	0.4	+58.4	2.04
High	21.3	61.2	16.5	1.1	+64.9	1.97
Income						
Low	10.9	54.9	25.8	8.4	+41.6	2.32
Middle	16.6	59.2	22.1	2.1	+51.6	2.10
High	21.7	62.8	15.0	0.6	+68.9	1.94
Religion						
Christian	25.0	58.1	15.1	1.7	+66.3	1.94
Muslim	14.0	58.6	24.8	2.7	+45.1	2.16
Buddhist	16.2	58.7	20.3	4.8	+49.8	2.14
Hindu	17.4	57.6	23.9	1.1	+50.0	2.09
None	13.3	62.4	21.1	3.0	+51.6	2.14

The better educated generally felt happier compared to those with lower educational achievement. For instance, about 82 percent of the people with high education felt happy as compared to those with medium education (79%) and those with low education (77.2%). The difference between happiness and unhappiness levels was more evident among those with low education (70.9% compared to 72.2% for those with medium education and 77.8% for those with high education).

When the levels of happiness were compared over different income groups, it was interesting to find that those earning middle incomes were the happiest among the three groups analyzed. About 82.9 percent of them felt quite or very happy compared to 71.7 percent of those with low income and 79.1 percent of those with high income. The low income group also reported the biggest difference between happiness and unhappiness among the three groups (63.4% vs 77.1% for medium income and 74.7% for high income).

In terms of religion, those without any religion experienced a lower level of happiness when compared to those who possessed a faith. Only 70.7 percent of them expressed happiness as compared to the next group (Buddhists with 76.4%) and the happiest group

(Muslim with 85.5%). The Christians and Hindus had almost the same level of happiness (80.3% and 79.5% respectively). The same differences were also observed in the difference between the levels of happiness and unhappiness. It was noted that almost 40 percent of the Muslims (39.6%) felt very happy about life, a figure significantly higher than the other four religious groups (ranging from 21.1% to 29%).

Generally, it was noted that across different demographic groups, the percentages of people who were happy were much higher than the people who were not too happy or very unhappy, as reflected by the numbers in the “Balanced” column of Table 8. The percentages ranged from 63.4 percent (for those with low income) to 81 percent (for those who were Muslims), thus indicating that Singaporeans were mostly very happy or quite happy about life.

5.2 Levels of Enjoyment by Demographic Groups

Table 9 shows how people felt when they were asked if they were enjoying life these days. The answers varied from “often”, “sometimes”, “rarely” to “never”. Overall, almost nine out of ten respondents (or 88.5%) replied that they enjoyed life sometimes or often. Males and females reported similar percentages of enjoyment with life, and the same was noted for those who are married or single. The youngest group (20–29 years) experienced the greatest level of enjoyment with 91.2 percent, followed closely by the oldest group (aged 60 years and over) with 90.4 percent. This oldest age group also reported the highest percentage of people enjoying life often. Over 41 percent of them enjoyed life often as compared to other age groups (ranged from 31.4% to 36.3%).

The level of life enjoyment appeared to vary more among those with different levels of education. About 95 percent of those with high education agreed that they enjoyed life often or sometimes, compared to 90.9 percent of those with middle education and 85.5 percent of those with low education. The highly educated group also reported the highest percentage of people who enjoyed life often (40.7% as compared to 32% for low education and 34.9% for medium education). Similarly, people who reported earning middle or high income also enjoyed life more (92.4% and 92.1% respectively), as compared to those with low income (79.4%).

In terms of religion, a higher percentage of the Christians appeared to enjoy life more compared to those who professed no faith or of other faiths. Almost 92 percent of the Christians felt they had enjoyed life sometimes or often, as compared to 89.1 percent of the Muslims, 88.7 percent of the free thinkers, and 87.1 percent respectively for the Buddhists and Hindus. The Christians (41.3%) and Muslims (39.6%) also reported higher percentages of them enjoying life often compared to Buddhists (30.3%) and those with no religion (27.8%).

We note that irrespective of demographics, the percentages of people who enjoyed life often or sometimes were much higher than those who believed they rarely or never enjoyed life. The percentages varied from 58.8 percent (for low income earners) to 89.4 percent (for those with high education).

5.3 Levels of Achievement by Demographic Groups

Table 10 reveals the levels of achievement as expressed by people from different demographic backgrounds. They were asked the question “how much do you feel you are accomplishing what you want out of your life?” The answers ranged from “a great deal”, “some”, “very little” to “none”. Of the entire sample surveyed, about 17 percent felt they

had achieved a great deal, 59 percent felt some accomplishment, 21 percent felt “very little” and 3 percent felt no achievement at all. A marginally higher percentage of women felt they had achieved some or a great deal in life compared to men (76.9% vs 75.1%). The level of felt achievement differed very little between singles and married people (77.7% vs 76.6%).

When such comparisons were made across different age groups, it was noted that those aged 50–59 years reported the highest percentage. About 84 percent of them felt they had achieved some or a great deal, as compared to the range from 69.5 percent (aged 40–49 years) to 78.9 percent (aged 60 years and above). It was also interesting to note that the oldest group reported the highest percentage when they were asked if they had achieved a great deal. About 28 percent of them felt this way, compared to the range from 15.2 percent to 18.8 percent for the other age groups. The differential between achievement and non-achievement (38.9%) was greatest for those aged 40–49 years.

When comparisons were made across respondents with different levels of education, the differences observed were much larger. About 73 percent of those with low education felt they had accomplished some or a great deal, compared to 79.2 percent for those with medium education and 82.5 percent for those with high education. Similarly, the highly educated group also showed a higher percentage of them feeling that they had accomplished a great deal. About 21 percent of them felt so as compared to 15 percent for those with low education and 18 percent for those with medium education.

The differences in felt achievement also varied more among those with different levels of income. Only 66 percent of those with low income felt they had achieved some or a great deal in life. In contrast, almost 85 percent of those with high income and 76 percent of those with middle income shared similar feelings. In addition, almost 22 percent of those with high income felt they had achieved a great deal, compared to 11 percent of those with low income.

When life accomplishment was compared across respondents with different faiths, it was revealed that Christians had the highest percentage of them feeling that they had achieved some or a great deal in life. About 83 percent of them felt this way as compared to the range from 72.6 percent for Muslims to 75.7 percent for those without a religion. Both the Buddhists and Hindus had the same percentage (about 75%) feeling they had achieved some or a great deal in life. The achievement gap was widest for Muslims and then for Buddhists.

All in all, it is noted that across different demographic groups, the percentages of people who felt that they had achieved a great deal or had some level of achievement were generally higher than those who felt they had achieved little or had no achievement at all. The percentages ranged from a low of 38.9 percent (for those aged 40–49 years) to a high of 68.9 percent (for those with high income).

Figure 1 presents the Index of Overall Life Quality, a summative 7-point index that collated the positive scores for happiness, enjoyment and achievement using the top two response categories for these scale items. Only 6.9 percent of the respondents did not report any positive score for this index, while the rest (93.1%) had at least one positive score in either one of the three areas of happiness, enjoyment and achievement. In fact, the majority of respondents (71.6%) had an index of three and above. Generally, Singaporeans appeared to be very satisfied with their overall quality of life.

When we examined how Singaporeans felt about their overall quality of life in more demographic detail, some significant differences are noteworthy (see Table 11). Lower means in Table 11 indicate a higher degree of happiness, enjoyment or achievement. Males (mean of 2.05) are less happy than females (mean of 1.98), although they do not differ in

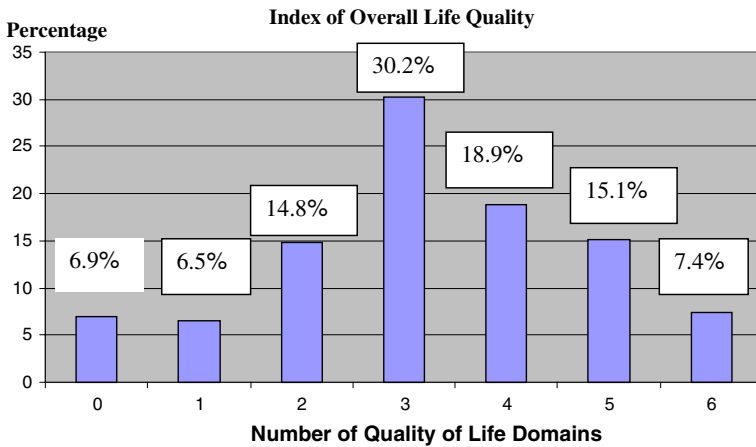


Fig. 1 Index of overall life quality

terms of their views about enjoyment and achievement. The differences for gender were not statistically significant across happiness, enjoyment and achievement. Married people were happier, and enjoyed life more than their single counterparts, although there were no statistically significant differences on their enjoyment and achievement scores. In terms of achievement, those aged 60–69 years were most optimistic about what they were getting done in their lives followed by those aged 50–59 years and then 30–39 years. Generally, those with higher education and income felt happier with their overall quality of life in all three aspects as they seemed to have more resources and opportunities to succeed in life. The difference was statistically significant for the effect of education on enjoyment and achievement. Those with higher education enjoyed life more and achieved more than those with middle education. Those with middle income enjoyed life more than those with higher income, but those with higher income achieved more than those with lower income. In terms of religion, those who have no religion appeared to be least happy, enjoyed their lives the least and were not very proud of their accomplishments. The Buddhists and Hindus were in the average threshold with middle-range scores on happiness, enjoyment and achievement. Muslims were happiest (mean of 1.79) but ironically had the poorest score on achievement (mean of 2.16). They seemed to be deriving happiness from other sources apart from achievement. The Christians had the second highest score on happiness (mean of 2.01), and enjoyed life the most (mean of 1.69) while feeling the best about their achievements (mean of 1.94).

6 Satisfaction with Life Domains

In addition to lifestyles and value priorities, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with their life domains using a scale as follows: 1 for “very satisfied”, 2 for “somewhat satisfied”, 3 for “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied”, 4 for “somewhat dissatisfied” and 5 for “very dissatisfied”. Lower means thus indicated a greater degree of satisfaction. The 16 life domains were housing, friendships, marriage (for those who are married), standard of living, household income, health, education, job, neighbors, public safety, the condition of the environment, the social welfare system, the democratic system, family life, leisure and spiritual life.

Table 11 Means comparison for happiness, enjoyment and achievement by demographics

Demographics	Happiness	Enjoyment	Achievement
Gender			
Male	2.05	1.81	2.11
Female	1.98	1.77	2.09
<i>F</i> -stats	1.843	0.822	0.275
<i>P</i> <	NS	NS	NS
Marital status			
Single	2.11	1.83	2.08
Married	1.94	1.75	2.09
<i>F</i> -stats	8.306	6.895	0.045
<i>P</i> <	0.004	NS	NS
Age			
20–29	2.01	1.73	2.11
30–39	1.96	1.76	2.09
40–49	2.04	1.84	2.19
50–59	2.03	1.83	2.02
60–69	2.03	1.71	1.97
<i>F</i> -stats	0.352	1.334	2.416
<i>P</i> <	NS	NS	0.047
Education			
Low	2.02	1.85	2.17
Medium	2.02	1.75	2.04
High	1.96	1.65	1.97
<i>F</i> -stats	0.437	6.984	7.180
<i>P</i> <	NS	0.001	0.001
Household income			
Low	2.17	1.98	2.32
Medium	1.91	1.69	2.10
High	1.98	1.72	1.94
<i>F</i> -stats	8.03	17.297	22.173
<i>P</i> <	0.000	0.000	0.000
Religion			
Christian	2.01	1.69	1.94
Muslim	1.79	1.72	2.16
Hindu	2.01	1.75	2.09
Buddhist	2.07	1.85	2.14
None	2.16	1.85	2.14
<i>F</i> -stats	5.439	2.522	3.132
<i>P</i> <	0.000	0.04	0.014

Generally, the average number of life domains that Singaporeans were satisfied with was 12.3536 domains. They were dissatisfied with an average of less than one domain (0.8507). 26 percent of Singaporeans were satisfied with all of the 16 life domains, and 57.5 percent were satisfied with at least half of the life domains (total of 83.5%).

The indices for Overall Domain Satisfaction (ODS) and Overall Domain Dissatisfaction (ODD) were also computed. The ODS was computed by counting the number of “very

satisfied” and “somewhat satisfied” responses and dividing this by the total number of responses. Similarly, the ODD was computed by counting the number of “somewhat dissatisfied” and “very dissatisfied” responses and dividing this by the total number of responses. Nine out of ten Singaporeans (91.2%) reported being satisfied with at least eight domains, which is half of the 16 life domains. 63.3 percent did not pick any one domain that they were dissatisfied with.

Table 12 presents Singaporeans’ more specific assessments of these sixteen life domains. The figures show the distribution of responses ranging from very dissatisfied (−2) to very satisfied (+2), the means and finally, the PDI values which reflect the gap between the respondents’ satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels with each domain. The PDI values are positive and greater than 50 percent for all the sixteen domains, ranging from a low of 50.5 percent to a high of 93.4 percent. Generally, it appears that Singaporeans are a contented lot. This mirrors the findings published by Kau et al. (2004) based on a nationwide Values and Lifestyles (VALS) Survey in 2001. Although the aspects of life surveyed were different from the Asia Barometer Survey, the reported life satisfaction among Singaporeans in this 2001 VALS survey was high. 76.9 percent of the people surveyed expressed their overall satisfaction with life in general. More than half (or 56.4 percent) of those surveyed also reported satisfaction with life in Singapore. They were most satisfied with the cleanliness of the country (64%), followed by the level of safety and security (62%), the quality of law enforcement (59%), the availability of public services (57%) and the way the government runs the country (57%). On the other hand, they were least satisfied with the cost of living (35%), the affordability of properties (33%) and the affordability of cars (28%).

Table 12 Assessments of life domains

	Scale Points					Mean	Satisfied (A)	Dissatisfied (B)	PDI (A – B)
	−2	−1	0	1	2				
Housing	0.7	2.9	9.2	33.8	53.4	1.17	87.2	3.6	+83.6
Friendships	0.1	1.5	8.7	35.5	54.2	1.23	89.7	1.6	+88.1
Marriage ^a	0.1	1.2	3.9	61.7	33.0	1.55	94.7	1.3	+93.4
Standard of living	1.1	6.1	16.9	20.3	55.7	0.88	76.0	7.2	+68.8
Household income	2.7	11.6	20.9	15.8	49.0	0.64	64.8	14.3	+50.5
Health	0.6	4.8	11.5	30.7	53.0	1.09	83.7	5.4	+78.3
Education	0.6	8.3	18.2	24.6	48.3	0.88	72.9	8.9	+64.0
Job	2.4	7.5	19.2	21.7	49.2	0.80	70.9	9.9	+61.0
Neighbors	0.7	3.3	15.1	25.3	55.7	1.02	81.0	4.0	+77.0
Public safety	0.5	2.6	9.9	31.0	56.0	1.14	87.0	3.1	+83.9
Environment	1.1	2.3	11.5	24.4	60.8	1.05	85.2	3.4	+81.8
Welfare system	2.9	7.5	28.1	13.9	47.6	0.62	61.5	10.4	+51.1
Democratic system	2.6	5.9	25.1	12.9	53.5	0.68	66.4	8.4	+58.0
Family life	0.3	1.1	6.2	47.0	45.5	1.38	92.5	1.4	+91.1
Leisure	0.3	3.2	12.5	25.9	58.2	1.06	84.1	3.5	+80.6
Spiritual life	0.3	1.6	14.4	29.3	54.4	1.11	83.7	1.9	+81.8

Notes: −2: very dissatisfied; −1: somewhat dissatisfied; 0: neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; +1: somewhat satisfied; +2: very satisfied

^a Only among those who are married

Table 13 Distinguishing three life spheres from 16 life domains

	Factors			h^2
	Personal	Public	Interpersonal	
Standard of living	.48			.41
Household income	.76			.64
Health	.63			.55
Education	.77			.64
Job	.71			.57
Public safety		.76		.63
Environment		.76		.64
Welfare system		.78		.67
Democratic system		.77		.64
Housing			.58	.39
Friendship			.70	.53
Marriage			.65	.58
Neighbors			.41	.34
Family life			.71	.62
Leisure			.69	.59
Spiritual life			.65	.52

Note: The reported loadings were from a principal components solution with varimax rotation using a listwise deletion. Loadings of greater than 0.40 were reported

According to the results of the 2006 Asia Barometer Survey, Singaporeans were most satisfied with their marriages (for those who are married) (93.4%), family life (91.1%), friendships (88.1%), public safety (83.9%) and housing (83.6%). They were least satisfied with their household incomes (50.5%), the social welfare system (51.1%), the democratic system (58%), their jobs (61%) and education (64%).

We performed factor analysis on the sixteen life domains, and three factors or clusters of life domains emerged (see Table 13). The personal sphere comprises domains such as standard of living, household income, health, education and job. These are domains that impinge on a person's sense of subjective well-being in terms of having sufficient financial resources and the physical wellness to enjoy them. The public sphere comprises domains such as public safety, environment, the welfare system and the democratic system. These are domains that ensure a conducive atmosphere for living in a particular society, and they affect a person's sense of physical and psychological safety. The interpersonal sphere comprises the domains of housing, friendship, marriage, neighbors, family life, leisure and spiritual life. This interpersonal sphere is more multi-faceted and reflects the importance of significant others in a person's life (such as one's spouse, family, friends, neighbors and religious community).

Table 14 provides an overview of the domains that Singaporeans are most satisfied and dissatisfied with. Almost all respondents consistently chose marriage and family as the two domains they are most satisfied with. The exceptions were single people (who chose family life and friendship) and Christians (who chose marriage and friendship). In terms of dissatisfaction, almost all respondents chose a combination of the three domains comprising the social welfare system, household income and the democratic system. The exceptions were those aged 60 years and above who were most dissatisfied with their jobs and education, and those with medium income who were concerned about their jobs (in addition to social welfare). Among the 20 categories of demographic variables analysed, the social welfare system appeared as the most common (mentioned 12 out of 20 times) as

Table 14 Satisfaction and dissatisfaction with life domains by demographic groups

	Types of domains most satisfied	Types of domains most dissatisfied	Number of domains	
			Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Entire sample	Marriage, family life	Social welfare, household income	12.4	0.9
Gender				
Male	Marriage, family life	Social welfare, democratic system	12.4	0.9
Female	Marriage, family life	Household income, social welfare	12.3	0.9
Marital status				
Single	Family life, friendship	Social welfare, household income, democratic system	11.7	0.8
Married	Marriage, family life	Social welfare, household income	12.8	0.8
Age				
20–29	Marriage, family life	Household income, democratic system	12.1	0.8
30–39	Marriage, family life	Social welfare, household income, democratic system	12.5	0.8
40–49	Marriage, family life	Household income, social welfare	12.3	0.9
50–59	Marriage, family life	Social welfare, household income	12.5	0.9
60+	Marriage, family life	Job, education	12.3	0.9
Education				
Low	Marriage, family life	Household income, social welfare	12.4	0.9
Medium	Marriage, family life	Social welfare, democratic system	12.2	0.7
High	Marriage, family life	Social welfare, household income	12.5	0.7
Income				
Low	Marriage, family life	Social welfare, household income	11.9	1.2
Middle	Family life, marriage	Job, social welfare	12.6	0.8
High	Marriage, family life	Social welfare, household income	12.5	0.7
Religion				
Christian	Marriage, friendship	Social welfare, democratic system	12.7	0.7
Muslim	Marriage, family life	Household income, social welfare	12.9	0.7
Buddhist	Marriage, family life	Household income, democratic system	12.0	0.8
Hindu	Marriage, family life	Social welfare, household income	12.8	1.1
None	Marriage, family life	Social welfare, household income	11.6	0.9

the domain Singaporeans were most unhappy about. Discontentment with the democratic system was most prevalent among males, singles, those in their twenties and thirties, those with medium income and those who are Buddhists or Christians.

For a more detailed analysis, we compared the means for the top and bottom five life domains using gender, marital status, age, education, household income and religion. Significant differences were found for various demographic groups' levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the life domains. It should be noted that previous quality-of-life studies in the context of Singapore have consistently reported positive correlations between education levels and household income. In the *t*-tests and means comparisons, we have used $p < 0.05$ as the significance level. Our satisfaction and dissatisfaction analyses by demographic groups are reported in the following sections.

6.1 Satisfaction Analysis by Demographic Groups

As shown in Table 15, males and females were equally likely to be satisfied with the top five life domains with the exception of “public safety”. Males were more satisfied than females with this aspect of their lives. Generally, the married individuals were more satisfied over

Table 15 Means comparison for five most satisfied life domains by demographics

Demographics	Marriage	Family life	Friendship	Housing	Public safety
Gender					
Male	1.42	1.59	1.75	1.84	1.81
Female	1.48	1.64	1.78	1.83	1.90
<i>F</i> -stats	1.672	1.397	0.657	0.088	3.460
<i>P</i> <	NS	NS	NS	NS	0.06
Marital status					
Single	NA	1.76	1.78	1.91	1.90
Married	1.45	1.54	1.75	1.79	1.83
<i>F</i> -stats	NA	23.91	0.192	5.514	2.03
<i>P</i> <	NA	0.000	NS	0.019	NS
Age					
20–29	1.33	1.66	1.71	1.91	1.94
30–39	1.43	1.53	1.83	1.89	1.77
40–49	1.42	1.59	1.71	1.78	1.87
50–59	1.52	1.74	1.83	1.75	1.82
60–69	1.57	1.73	1.74	1.82	1.99
<i>F</i> -stats	1.465	3.469	1.866	1.796	2.352
<i>P</i> <	NS	0.08	0.114	NS	0.052
Education					
Low	1.47	1.63	1.77	1.84	1.89
Medium	1.34	1.58	1.75	1.80	1.70
High	1.45	1.62	1.77	1.83	1.86
<i>F</i> -stats	4.527	1.036	0.107	0.316	10.245
<i>P</i> <	0.034	NS	NS	NS	0.001
Household income					
Low	1.45	1.62	1.77	1.83	1.85
Medium	1.65	1.64	1.67	1.85	1.94
High	1.45	1.62	1.77	1.83	1.86
<i>F</i> -stats	1.959	0.015	0.734	0.015	0.439
<i>P</i> <	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Religion					
Christian	1.45	1.62	1.69	1.71	1.84
Muslim	1.29	1.44	1.60	1.75	1.76
Hindu	1.24	1.43	1.65	1.72	1.67
Buddhist	1.55	1.70	1.88	1.89	1.92
None	1.59	1.80	1.83	2.04	1.97
<i>F</i> -stats	7.41	10.10	7.82	5.27	4.04
<i>P</i> <	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

the four domains of family life, friendship, housing and public safety. The domain of marriage is excluded as there are no comparative statistics for the single respondents. In particular, marital status accounted for significant differences in the two domains of “family life” and “housing”. The singles were happy with their family life (mean of 1.76) but not too happy (mean of 1.91) with their housing situation. Those aged 30–39 years and 40–49 years were more satisfied with their family life. The youngest and oldest age groups were less satisfied with public safety compared with the other age groups.

Education accounted for a significant difference in the satisfaction levels for “marriage” and “public safety”. Those who have medium levels of education were most satisfied with these two life domains, followed by those with higher education and then those with lower education. There were no significant differences in satisfaction with the top five life domains across the various income groups. However, there were significant differences in satisfaction with the top five life domains across the major religion groupings. Within all five domains, Hindus and Muslims appeared to be happier. Hindus were the most satisfied about their marriages (their mean of 1.24 is the lowest score across all five domains and five religious groups). Those without any religion (None) were less satisfied with “housing” (mean of 2.04) and “public safety” (mean of 1.97), compared to the rest of the religious groups. Christians were exceptionally more satisfied with their housing.

6.2 Dissatisfaction Analysis by Demographic Groups

Females were significantly more dissatisfied with their jobs and education (see Table 16). This could be attributed to the fact that males tend to have a higher propensity to achieve a university degree (Household Expenditure Survey 2005) and eventually have more access to financial capital and resources. There were no significant differences between married and single people. The older age groups were increasingly dissatisfied with education. This could be due to the fewer opportunities for educational advancement and retraining as one gets older. Those aged 40–49 years registered considerable dissatisfaction (mean of 2.44) with their household incomes, while those aged 60–69 years were unhappy with their jobs.

Although these are the five “most dissatisfied” life domains, the more highly educated group seemed to be coping well with means averaging between the lower and medium income groups. Those with medium educational levels were dissatisfied with their household incomes, jobs and education, and even more so with the social welfare and democratic systems. Similarly, those with lower education were dissatisfied with the social welfare and democratic systems, and this unhappiness was augmented when they considered the economic aspects of their lives such as household incomes, jobs and education. There were no significant differences in dissatisfaction for the various income groups.

However, there were significant differences in the five “most dissatisfied” life domains across the major religion groupings. Buddhists and those without any religion (None) were most dissatisfied with the social welfare system, the democratic system and education compared to the rest of the religious groups. Muslims were consistently the least dissatisfied group over “social welfare system” and “democratic system,” while Christians were the least dissatisfied group about education.

7 Determinants of the Overall Quality of Life

In order to examine whether and how Singaporeans’ degree of happiness, enjoyment, and achievement are affected by their lifestyles, priorities in life, and the degree of their

Table 16 Means comparison for five most dissatisfied life domains by demographics

Demographics	Social welfare system	Household income	Democratic system	Job	Education
Gender					
Male	2.38	2.34	2.36	2.12	2.04
Female	2.38	2.39	2.28	2.27	2.18
<i>F</i> -stats	0.002	0.749	2.295	5.976	6.285
<i>P</i> <	NS	NS	NS	0.015	0.012
Marital status					
Single	2.37	2.37	2.37	2.19	2.03
Married	2.37	2.31	2.30	2.16	2.13
<i>F</i> -stats	0.006	0.841	1.199	0.105	2.373
<i>P</i> <	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Age					
20–29	2.30	2.38	2.32	2.17	1.99
30–39	2.43	2.34	2.34	2.12	2.02
40–49	2.40	2.44	2.35	2.19	2.19
50–59	2.38	2.31	2.30	2.28	2.22
60–69	2.31	2.25	2.16	2.44	2.38
<i>F</i> -stats	0.686	0.962	0.713	1.660	4.716
<i>P</i> <	NS	NS	NS	NS	0.001
Education					
Low	2.34	2.42	2.27	2.23	2.23
Medium	2.55	2.10	2.55	2.06	1.64
High	2.38	2.36	2.32	2.20	2.12
<i>F</i> -stats	8.028	18.100	17.033	4.868	70.999
<i>P</i> <	0.005	0.000	0.000	0.028	0.000
Household income					
Low	2.38	2.37	2.32	2.19	2.12
Medium	2.32	2.31	2.32	2.48	2.24
High	2.38	2.36	2.32	2.20	2.12
<i>F</i> -stats	0.108	0.095	0.000	2.351	0.642
<i>P</i> <	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Religion					
Christian	2.39	2.30	2.31	2.03	1.97
Muslim	2.23	2.36	2.08	2.20	2.03
Hindu	2.43	2.24	2.29	2.11	2.00
Buddhist	2.39	2.43	2.40	2.24	2.26
None	2.55	2.36	2.50	2.32	2.11
<i>F</i> -stats	2.65	0.98	6.51	2.16	4.73
<i>P</i> <	0.03	NS	0.00	NS	0.00

satisfaction with specific life domains, we conducted regression analyses in which degree of happiness, enjoyment, and achievement were used as dependent variables, and the satisfaction scores for the above-mentioned dimensions and five demographics variables

were used as independent variables. Religion was not used in the regression analysis because the Spirituality Index already accounted for religious affiliation. The results are shown in Table 17 for the entire sample and Table 18 for married respondents only. For the entire sample, what were some of the determinants of happiness, enjoyment, achievement and the overall quality of life? And to what extent would these determinants differ, if any, for those who are married? The R-squares for the multiple regressions ranged from 0.18 to 0.32 for the whole sample (Table 17) and from 0.20 to 0.31 for the married subjects sample (Table 18). The standardised *betas* are reported.

In terms of happiness, the important predictors are Standard of Living (0.21), Spiritual Life (0.15), Family Life (0.14), Health (0.10), and Democratic System (0.09) for the entire sample. Two of these predictors are similar for the married sample, namely Standard of Living (0.26) and Family Life (0.12). However, for married respondents, the third important predictor is Job (0.10). Demographic variables, lifestyles and value priorities had no significant effect on happiness for the entire sample or for married people.

The contributing factors for the entire sample's sense of enjoyment are Friendship (0.10) and Leisure (0.9). Interestingly, Standard of Living had a significant but negative impact on enjoyment (-0.21). Again, demographic variables, lifestyles and value priorities had no significant effect on enjoyment. For those who are married, Standard of Living (0.21), Marriage (0.11), and Friendship (0.10) contributed positively and significantly towards their sense of enjoyment. However, having a Spiritual Lifestyle detracted from their enjoyment of life (-0.10). Demographic variables and value priorities had no bearing on one's enjoyment.

There were considerably more varied predictors for achievement. Those who put a premium on Being feel they have achieved something in their lives (0.12). This is the only significant effect of Value Priorities for the entire sample. Income (-0.11) and age (-0.08) had a negative effect on how respondents felt about their achievement. Those living a Digital Lifestyle (-0.09) also feel they have achieved less. Older people might feel less positive about their achievement because on hindsight, looking back on what they have done, they might feel they could have achieved more in life. The negative impact of income may seem counter-intuitive. However, this might be an indication that increasing levels of material wealth might not necessarily lead to higher degrees of life satisfaction. According to a prosperity index developed by the London-based Legatum Institute for Global Development (*Straits Times*, 3 July 2007, p. 22), in terms of material wealth, Singapore was ranked first in the world. However, its life satisfaction index was ranked much lower, securing only the 24th position globally. This phenomenon has also been observed in the case of South Korea and Japan.

For married respondents, nine predictors of achievement were identified. Women (-0.11) and those with more income (-0.13) felt more poorly about their achievement, while those who were younger (-0.13) felt more positively. Similar to the entire sample, those living a Digital Lifestyle (-0.11) feel they have achieved less. Value priorities played a bigger role with Relating (0.14) and Being (0.09) contributing significantly to one's sense of achievement in life. Interestingly, the value priorities related to Having did not have a significant effect. This could indicate that a sense of achievement need not be based on economic wealth and well-being but could be based on emotional wealth and well-being derived from interpersonal relationships and an appreciation of other things in life. The effect of life domains was also slightly different with Education (0.17) and Marriage (0.12) having an enhancing influence while neighbors (-0.10) provided the counter-balance.

Finally, for overall quality of life, the most important indicators were Standard of Living (0.19), Spiritual Life (0.13) and Family Life (0.12) for the entire sample. Demographic variables, lifestyles, value priorities and the public sphere of life domains did not

Table 17 Effects of domain satisfactions on global life quality after controlling demographic variables, lifestyles and value priorities (for whole sample)

	Happiness (0–4)	Enjoyment (0–3)	Achievement (0–3)	Overall quality (0–6)
Demographic				
Gender (2 = female)	−.04	−.03	−.05	.06
Age	−.01	−.02	−.08*	.05
Education	.01	−.03	−.03	.02
Income	−.02	−.03	−.11**	.06
Lifestyles				
Digital life	−.03	−.08	−.09*	.07
Global life	.03	−.02	−.02	.02
Spirituality	.00	−.03	.01	.03
Value priorities				
Having	.05	.04	.04	−.06
Relating	.04	.04	.07	−.07
Being	−.01	−.01	.12**	−.03
Personal domains				
Standard of living	.21**	−.21**	.09*	.19**
Household income	−.02	.02	.07	.02
Health	.10**	.08	.00	.05
Education	−.02	−.01	.06	.04
Job	.04	−.00	.03	.03
Interpersonal domains				
Housing	.01	.02	.05	.05
Friendships	.03	.10**	.01	.05
Neighbors	.01	−.02	.01	.00
Family life	.14**	.08	.09	.12**
Leisure	.05	.09**	.03	.07
Spiritual life	.15**	.07	.07	.13**
Public domains				
Public safety	−.02	.01	.04	−.02
Environment	−.01	−.04	−.08	−.05
Welfare system	.05	−.02	.03	.04
Democratic system	.09*	.05	.03	.08
R^2	.31	.23	.18	.32
(<i>N</i>)	(815)	(812)	(809)	(808)

* Statistically significant at the 0.05 level

** Statistically significant at the 0.01 level

have a significant role. The overall quality of life for married respondents was better for women (0.08) and those who are older (0.09). The standard of living (0.20), the democratic system (0.13) and education (0.10) had positive effects. On the other hand, Relating (−0.09) had a negative relationship with the overall quality of life. This was somewhat surprising as Relating had a positive influence in the Achievement aspect of life for married respondents.

Table 18 Effects of domain satisfactions on global life quality after controlling demographic variables, lifestyles and value priorities (for married subjects sample)

	Happiness (0–4)	Enjoyment (0–3)	Achievement (0–3)	Overall quality (0–6)
Demographic				
Gender (2 = female)	−.03	−.03	−.11**	.08*
Age	.01	−.06	−.13**	.09*
Education	.04	.00	−.01	−.01
Income	−.02	−.04	−.13**	.06
Lifestyles				
Digital life	−.02	−.06	−.11*	.07
Global life	.04	−.06	.00	.03
Spirituality	−.05	−.10*	−.03	.08
Value priorities				
Having	.08	.00	.04	−.05
Relating	.08	.06	.14**	−.09*
Being	.02	−.03	.09*	−.04
Personal domains				
Standard of living	.26**	.21**	.06	.20**
Household income	.00	−.02	.05	.04
Health	.02	.04	−.06	−.01
Education	.02	.08	.17**	.10*
Job	.10*	−.01	.03	.04
Interpersonal domains				
Housing	−.03	−.01	.05	.03
Friendships	.05	.10*	−.05	.04
Marriage	.05	.11*	.12*	.07
Neighbors	−.01	−.03	−.10*	−.04
Family life	.12*	−.01	.03	.08
Leisure	.05	.05	.07	.07
Spiritual life	.06	.02	.03	.07
Public domains				
Public safety	−.06	−.07	−.05	−.09
Environment	.02	.02	.02	.01
Welfare system	.06	−.03	.01	.02
Democratic system	.10	.11	.09	.13*
R^2	.31	.20	.20	.30
(<i>N</i>)	(569)	(567)	(564)	(563)

* Statistically significant at the 0.05 level

** Statistically significant at the 0.01 level

8 Conclusion: Key Findings and their Policy Implications

In this section, we focus on the key findings relating to the standard of living, lifestyles, priorities in life, overall quality of life (happiness, enjoyment and achievement) and satisfaction/dissatisfaction with life domains. These findings are compared across

demographic groups whenever there are important significant patterns. We also discuss the policy implications emanating from these findings.

8.1 Key Findings

Most Singaporeans appeared to be satisfied with their *standard of living*. Those who perceived that they were enjoying a higher standard of living tended to be male, younger (20–29 years of age), with higher educational levels and incomes, and who professed to be Christians or Hindus. Generally, as Singaporeans get older, they tend to have less optimistic assessments of their standard of living. Similarly, those with lower educational levels and incomes rated their standard of living unfavorably. There were no significant differences between single and married people.

Our analysis of the *priorities in life* of Singaporeans indicates a general level of consistency in the choice and ordering of these priorities for the general population and across demographic groups. The top five priorities are being healthy, having a comfortable home, having a job, spending time with family and having enough to eat. The sixth priority of having access to good medical care is closely related to the top priority of health. Singles and younger people (20–29 years) place more importance on having a job and being economically independent, while older people value their health and familial relationships. Those in their forties and fifties are also concerned about their jobs, and this could be a reflection of mid-life career decisions and/or worries about their long-term economic potential. People in their thirties and forties are more family-oriented, with those in their thirties more attentive to the responsibilities involved in raising their children. Those with lower to medium levels of education and income are also more concerned about their jobs and livelihood. Basically, health, home, economic well-being (having a job and having enough to eat), and family are the pillars of Singaporean life and society.

With regard to the *happiness, enjoyment, achievement and the overall quality of life*, we find that the majority of Singaporeans are happy (78.6%) and enjoying life (88.5%), although only 16.9 percent felt they have accomplished “a great deal” in their lives. Happy individuals could be male or female, and of any educational level. Although one could be happy at any age, those aged 40–49 years did not seem very happy. Married people are happier than single people. Higher income does not guarantee happiness; those with medium income are happier. Muslims are happiest and those with no religious faith are the least happy. Males and females both enjoy life, as well as single and married people. The youngest and oldest age groups enjoy life the most. Those with more education and income are enjoying life more. This is also true for Christians and Muslims. A high achiever is slightly more likely to be female (although there is no significant difference between male and female). S/he can also be either single or married. Those who feel they have achieved something are likely to be older (50–59 years, 60 years and above) and those with more education and income. Christians are also high scorers on achievement.

In terms of *satisfaction with specific life domains*, Singaporeans are most satisfied with their marriages (for those who are married), family life, friendship, housing, and public safety. They are least satisfied with the social welfare system, their household incomes, the democratic system, their jobs and education. Singaporeans’ perceptions of their overall quality of life are mostly influenced by their relationships with significant others and their satisfaction with their homes. Housing had a major influence on happiness, enjoyment and achievement. Having strong and supportive interpersonal relationships also contributed to the happiness of Singaporeans.

The regression results showed that, generally for the entire sample and also the married sample, the standard of living had the most wide-ranging positive impact on happiness, enjoyment, achievement and overall quality of life. For the entire sample, friendships and leisure contributed to people's enjoyment in life, and working on their needs for Being helped to enhance their sense of achievement. Their overall quality of life was also influenced by their family life and spiritual life. For married people, their jobs and family life brought them happiness, while marriages and friendships contributed to their enjoyment in life. Married people also seemed to draw from a larger pool of resources such as needs for Having and Being, Education, and Marriage, for their sense of achievement.

8.2 Policy Implications

From the summary of findings presented, we discuss the important policy implications and challenges Singaporeans face in attaining and maintaining their desired quality of life. The policy implications outlined are closely aligned with the value priorities that are important to Singaporeans namely, "being healthy" (83.8%), "having a comfortable home" (62.6%), "having a job" (58.5%), "spending time with family" (52.2%) and "having enough to eat" (43.4%).

8.3 Healthcare Accessibility and Costs

Given Singaporeans' concern about health and access to good medical care, policy-makers have a challenging task to contain healthcare costs while maintaining excellent standards of care. The concern for health was especially prevalent among the older respondents. This is a looming challenge for Singapore as she faces an ageing population with more demand for medical goods and services. The need to increase government spending in healthcare has been recently acknowledged by policy-makers. Various initiatives have been put in place to attempt to provide more comprehensive medical insurance coverage for the general population and subsidized healthcare for the needy. Government-linked agencies (e.g., the Health Promotion Board) have been tasked to promote a healthy lifestyle for all Singaporeans regardless of age. Programs targeted at school-going children emphasize healthy eating in school cafeterias and keeping fit through sports. Community-based programs also play a role in advocating healthy diets and exercise for women, busy professionals, the elderly and those at risk (e.g., diabetics and those with high blood pressure).

8.4 Home Ownership

Having a comfortable home is a treasured priority in life in Singapore where many Singaporeans already own their own homes. The high degree of home ownership is the result of an enduring long-term government initiative to provide affordable and good quality public housing. However, due to the scarcity of land resources, property and housing prices in Singapore can be volatile and subject to inflationary pressures. Also as Singaporeans become more affluent, more aspire to own private housing. Policy-makers would have to manage the expectations of younger Singaporeans amidst the rising costs of properties to ensure that housing remains affordable to this important cohort.

More could be done for some demographic groups in terms of housing. As noted earlier, the singles were unhappy with their housing situation. This could be because they do not

benefit from government subsidies on housing, which are primarily given to married people and singles over 35 years of age. Younger singles who want to have their own homes would have to purchase more expensive private homes. More innovative schemes for home ownership would have to be implemented to ensure that single people do not feel left out of the social fabric of Singapore.

8.5 Jobs and Economic Well-Being

Although Singapore has been a relatively well-off nation in Asia and has successfully weathered the financial crises of 1997 and 2001, many Singaporeans are still concerned about their rice bowls. Our analysis consistently showed that people are concerned about their jobs, incomes, education and standard of living. To ensure that the Singapore economy remains vibrant and robust, policy-makers have identified several growth opportunities. These are in areas such as biotechnologies (including stem-cell research), higher education, financial services, urban renewal and tourism (including meetings, incentive trips, conventions, exhibitions and casinos). The Singapore government has also launched numerous tax and workforce initiatives to increase Singapore's competitiveness and attractiveness to investors from around the globe. For older Singaporeans who are concerned about long-term viable employment, there is an emphasis on lifelong learning and the upgrading of skills for all workers, and the re-training and re-employment of older workers.

One important aspect of training could be to ensure that more Singaporeans are technologically-savvy and competent in the use of computers and the Internet. Singapore prides herself on being at the forefront of technological adoption and Internet connectivity among Asian countries. Singaporeans are strongly encouraged to be computer-literate and internet-savvy from a young age as more schools are using laptops and related technology in their pedagogy. According to a 2001 nation-wide survey on values and lifestyles of Singaporeans (Kau et al. 2004), Singaporeans used the Internet primarily for entertainment (71.7%) and educational purposes (45.2%). From the 2006 Asia Barometer Survey, we find that married men who are 30–39 years old with medium to high incomes are more technologically savvy with regard to Internet and email usage. Conversely, older (40–49 years old) married females with low incomes are lagging behind in the cyber-revolution. The disparities are not as obvious in the use of mobile phone technology. Policy-makers could consider strategies to reach the less e-connected segments through grass-root associations in the housing estates where the majority of Singaporeans reside. Easy access to classes and public computer facilities could be provided to introduce more users to the Internet.

8.6 Family Focus and Other Relationships

The finding about family relationships being closely related to Singaporeans' priorities in life and satisfaction levels is not surprising. Since 1994, the Singapore Government has been using the Family Values campaign to promote family values such as love, care, concern, mutual respect, filial responsibilities, and commitment, which would enhance the well-being of families and undergird the progress of Singapore. In view of the ageing population and the fact that singles and younger people place more importance about having a job and being economically independent, while those in their thirties and forties are more family-oriented, perhaps the focus of the next stage of the Family Values campaign would be to address the issue of how to convince the younger Singaporeans (especially those who are more highly educated) to be pro-family without sacrificing their material well-being.

From our analysis, Singaporeans generally treasure their relationships with people around them. As mentioned earlier, married people seemed to be able to draw on a larger pool of resources for a better quality of life. However, as observed in many modern societies in Asia, women and men are delaying getting married due to the pressures of advancing their career and other goals. While cohabitation is slowly becoming more popular, Singapore is still relatively conservative in this aspect. Thus the general policy-making agenda is to encourage women and men to find suitable marriage partners with the help of government and private dating and matchmaking services. In addition to marriages, campaigns focusing on other relationships such as neighbors and friends could also be organized to help Singaporeans continue to nurture these relationships. This will also help to build more socially-oriented communities and provide the support networks that are critical for maintaining a good quality of life.

8.7 Costs of Living

Although there were no statistically significant differences among the various income groups regarding their dissatisfaction levels, it is still helpful to evaluate some of these findings in light of rising costs of living and the income divide observed in many affluent societies in Asia and other parts of the world. In particular, the social welfare system and the democratic system were identified as contributing to the dissatisfaction levels of Singaporeans. In recent years, the middle-class in Singapore has experienced difficulties in making ends meet. They feel they are not able to enjoy the same standard of living as the previous generation because of rising costs. They are also not entitled to subsidies that are available to families with lower education and incomes. Those with lower education are also dissatisfied with the social welfare and democratic systems, especially when their household incomes, jobs and education are adversely affected.

Policy-makers should be aware of the specific concerns of these segments which face economic and social constraints in attaining or maintaining their desired standard of living. Although the Singapore government is resistant towards socialist forms of welfare, they have recognized that some segments of the population do need financial help and other forms of support.

8.8 Sense of Belonging

In recent years, the Singapore Government has recognized the need to connect Singaporeans to the nation and to fellow citizens. Younger and more educated and well-off Singaporeans are studying/working overseas and becoming more globalised. Thus it is a challenge to keep them engaged as Singaporeans. Singapore has also been opening her doors to economic migrants to boost the current population of four million to six-and-a half million for further economic growth. There is a need to integrate these migrants from diverse ethnic backgrounds into the social and cultural fabric of Singapore.

This sense of belonging cannot be based only on the economic basis of home ownership but should encompass more symbolic and intangible shared values such as taking pride in one's country and doing one's best for the nation. As indicated in the survey findings, the majority of respondents (84.6%) readily identified themselves as "Singaporean", while 53 percent and 39.5 percent felt "very proud" and "somewhat proud" to be Singaporean respectively. This fervent patriotism could be attributed in part to the nation-building effort spearheaded by the Singapore government and its various agencies (such as the Ministry for Community, Youth and Sports). Messages focusing on social cohesion and harmony

among Singaporeans are also frequently disseminated through the largely state-owned media (such as the newspapers, TV and radio broadcasters). In addition, policy makers should consider initiatives to help globalised Singaporeans connect with their homeland. Recent changes to allow Singaporeans based overseas to participate in the voting process for local elections have been welcomed. Other changes that have been suggested include the flexibility of dual citizenship and avenues for more political representation and involvement.

8.9 Conclusion

From the results of the 2006 Asia Barometer Survey, it appears that Singaporeans are still very much concerned about their economic well-being although Singapore has enjoyed many years of financial stability and growth. However, recent developments have shown that Singaporeans are looking beyond the basic bread-and-butter issues. The current generations of Singaporeans who have enjoyed a high standard of living on economic grounds are looking to enhance their lifestyles and enjoyment of life through other means. The Singapore government recognizes that beyond economic fundamentals, it is important to cultivate the heart and soul of a nation. The nurturing of a unique and sustainable cultural identity is becoming critical as Singapore welcomes more economic migrants to her shores. The increasing diversity of Singapore's population presents challenges for policy-makers to maintain social cohesiveness and inter-ethnic harmony while providing an environment for all citizens to sustain their standard of living and realize their aspirations in life.

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