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Public Cleanliness Satisfaction Survey: Brief findings

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Public Cleanliness Satisfaction Survey

Brief Findings

Introduction

Professor Paulin Tay Straughan, Professor of Sociology (Practice) at the Singapore Management University (formerly at the National University of Singapore) and Dr Mathew Mathews, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies at the National University of Singapore, undertook the Public Cleanliness Satisfaction Survey. The survey was completed in March 2017 and was made possible through funds from the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources.

The survey was carried out by the research company, Blackbox Research. The survey sample is representative of the demographics of the Singapore population. In particular, we sought the views of 2000 Singapore citizens and Permanent Residents aged 21 years and above (refer to [Annex A](#) for details). A response rate of about 70% of eligible households was obtained.

Satisfaction with the Cleanliness of Public Spaces

In general, we found that there was a high level of satisfaction on the cleanliness of public spaces in Singapore. Based on our Public Cleanliness Satisfaction Index (“Index”), **82%¹ of the respondents were satisfied² with the cleanliness of public spaces that they have visited before** (see [table 1](#) for details). Notwithstanding this, the levels of satisfaction of cleanliness differed across the different domains and different public spaces categorised under each domain. We found that respondents were more satisfied with cleanliness in some domains such as transport (93%), leisure (89%) and commuter paths (83%) and less satisfied with cleanliness in other domains such as neighbourhood (81%), food outlets (69%) and after public events (59%).

The results of the survey show that more can be done by all the stakeholders, be it the Government, the private sector or the community and individuals, to keep public spaces clean and liveable for everyone. Details of the results can be found in [Annex A](#).

¹ In 2017, it was reported to the press that this figure was 87%. This was due to a calculation error. The correct proportion of respondents who were satisfied with the cleanliness of public spaces was 82%. The correct figure has been reflected in Table 1 and 2. The researchers apologise for the error.

² This includes respondents who indicated that they are “satisfied” or “very satisfied”.

Table 1: Public Cleanliness Satisfaction Index

Domains / Spaces	Proportion Satisfied %	Overall Satisfaction % [Public Cleanliness Satisfaction Index]
<p>Transport (roads, bus stops, bus interchanges, MRT/LRT stations)</p>	<p>93</p>	<p>82</p>
<p>Leisure (parks/park connectors, shopping malls in housing estates, playgrounds)</p>	<p>89</p>	
<p>Food Outlets (coffee shops, air-conditioned food courts, hawker centres, wet markets)</p>	<p>69</p>	
<p>Neighbourhood (HDB town centres, void decks, corridors, lifts and lift lobbies)</p>	<p>81</p>	
<p>Commuter Paths (pavements, walkways, overhead bridges, foot bridges, underpasses, roadside drains, grass patches next to pavements)</p>	<p>83</p>	
<p>After Public Events (public spaces after events such as National Day Parade (NDP), concerts, marathons etc)</p>	<p>59</p>	

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the cleanliness of 20 public spaces they frequented in their everyday lives, on a scale of “1” (not satisfied at all) to “4” (very satisfied). To construct the Index, we used a weighted average³ of our respondents’ responses regarding the satisfaction with cleanliness in the 20 public spaces.

Transport

Respondents were most satisfied with the level of cleanliness at transport spaces such as roads, bus stops, bus interchanges and MRT/LRT stations. An average of 93% of respondents reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the levels of cleanliness in transport spaces. In particular, respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with cleanliness at MRT/LRT stations (97%) compared to cleanliness at bus-stops (88%).

Commuter Paths

Regarding the cleanliness of commuter paths such as pavements/walkways, overhead bridges/foot bridges, underpasses, roadside drains and grass patches next to pavements, we found that the levels of satisfaction differed across the different spaces. For example, while an average of 87% of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the cleanliness of pavements/walkways, only an average of 72% were satisfied or very satisfied with the cleanliness of roadside drains.

Neighbourhoods

Respondents generally found neighbourhood spaces such as HDB Town Centres, void decks/corridors/lift lobbies and lifts to their homes relatively clean, with an average of 81% reporting satisfaction with levels of cleanliness. Notwithstanding this, levels of satisfaction with regard to cleanliness at HDB Town Centres (91%) are higher than levels of satisfaction in spaces closer to the homes of our respondents, such as the void decks, corridors, and lift lobbies (74%).

Public Events and Leisure

Regarding the levels of satisfaction of cleanliness after public events (e.g. National Day Parade, Concerts, Sporting events etc.), only an average of 59% reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the levels of cleanliness.

On the levels of satisfaction regarding the cleanliness of leisure spaces such as parks, playgrounds and shopping malls in housing estates, an average of 89% of the respondents reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the cleanliness of such spaces. Respondents were also more satisfied with the cleanliness of some kinds of leisure spaces over others. For example, an average of 93% of respondents reported that they were satisfied

³ A weighted average takes into account that some indicators may not have the same weight. In the case of the PCSS, a substantial portion of respondents have no experience of some public spaces. We did not include a respondent’s opinion about a public space if they stated that they have never been to that space.

with the cleanliness of shopping malls in housing estates compared to 84% of the respondents who reported satisfaction with regard to cleanliness at playgrounds.

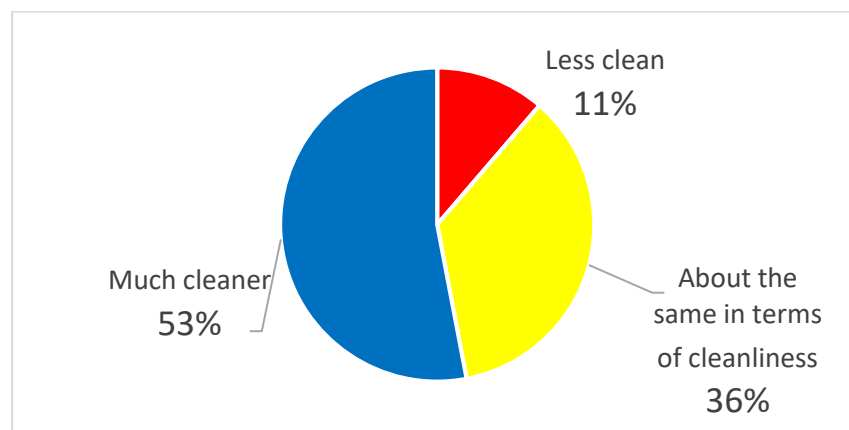
Food Outlets

There was comparatively lower satisfaction with the cleanliness of food outlets including coffee shops, hawker centres, food courts (air conditioned) and wet markets. Overall, compared to the other domains of public spaces, only 69% of respondents reported being satisfied with cleanliness in food outlets. Respondents were also more satisfied with the cleanliness of air-conditioned food courts (87%) compared to hawker centres (60%).

Perceptions of cleanliness now as compared to 5 years ago

When respondents were asked to compare the cleanliness levels now compared to 5 years ago, **more than half of our respondents (53%) felt that Singapore was much cleaner** while 36% reported that the current situation was about the same as before. Only 11% felt that Singapore was less clean as compared to before (refer to [figure 1](#)).

Figure 1: Perceptions of cleanliness now as compared to 5 years ago



Public's Satisfaction Regarding Public Cleaning Services

When comparing the levels of satisfaction of cleaning services across these various public spaces such as common areas in their neighbourhood, hawker centres and coffee shops, and along public pavements/walkways, we found that **respondents were more satisfied with cleaning services at some public spaces as compared to others**. For example, 96% of our respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the thoroughness of cleaning at MRT/LRT stations, while only 66% were satisfied or very satisfied with the thoroughness of cleaning at wet markets and 56% for hawker centres and coffee shops (see [graph 1](#) for details).

For each of the public spaces, respondents were asked what they were specifically satisfied with regarding public cleaning services, including thoroughness of cleaning, number of trash bins, time taken for follow-up action following cleanliness feedback and the amount of enforcement against those who litter.

Across the different public spaces, there were only slight variations in satisfaction ratings for the specific types of cleaning services. The ratings range between 78% for satisfaction on thoroughness of cleaning to 70% on the number of trash bins provided. Refer to [table 2](#) for details.

Graph 1: Satisfaction for thoroughness of cleaning at different spaces

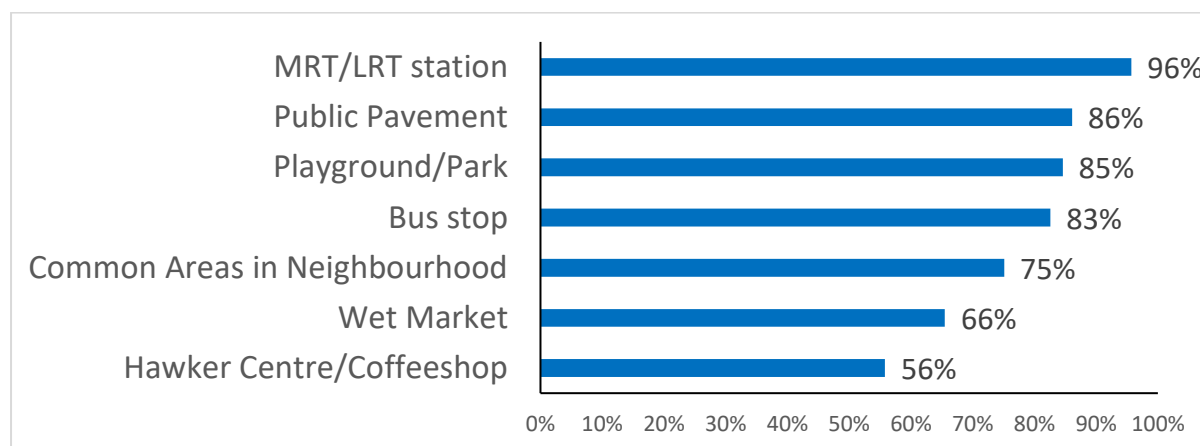


Table 2: Satisfaction with Aspects of Cleaning Services Across Public Spaces

Domain	Average Proportion Satisfied (%)	Component with Highest Satisfaction (%)	Component with Lowest Satisfaction (%)
Thoroughness of cleaning	78	At MRT/LRT Stations 96	At Hawker Centres and Coffee Shops 56
Time taken for follow-up action following cleanliness feedback	77	At MRT/LRT Stations 92	At Hawker Centres and Coffee Shops 62
The frequency of cleaning	76	At MRT/LRT Stations 94	At Hawker Centres and Coffee Shops 57
Amount of enforcement against those who litter	73	At MRT/LRT Stations 89	At Hawker Centres and Coffee Shops 62
The number of trash bins	70	At Bus Stops 83	At Wet Markets 57

Opinions Regarding the State of Cleanliness in Singapore

Referring to [table 3](#), we found that **most of our respondents held the opinion that Singapore is a clean city with 94% of them stating so**. A large proportion of our respondents (85%) felt

that Singapore was a clean city because of the efficiency of its cleaning services. **Most of our respondents (94%) also felt that visitors who came to Singapore admire how clean the city is.** Almost all our respondents (98%) reported that they took pride in keeping Singapore clean. However, fewer felt that fellow Singaporeans did the same (88%) and even fewer felt that visitors who come to Singapore have kept Singapore clean (70%). Perhaps the small proportion who did not agree that Singaporeans took pride in keeping the city clean stems from respondents noticing people littering or not displaying pro-social public cleanliness behaviour.

Table 3: Proportion of respondents agreeing to statements on Singapore cleanliness identity

	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	Agree/ Strongly Agree %
I take pride in keeping Singapore clean	1	1	58	40	98
Visitors who come to Singapore admire how clean the city is	1	5	58	36	94
Singapore is a clean city	1	5	62	32	94
Singaporeans take pride in keeping Singapore clean	2	11	59	28	88
Singapore is clean only because of the efficiency of its cleaning services	2	13	55	31	85
Visitors who come to Singapore have kept Singapore clean	5	25	53	17	70

Observations of Undesirable Social Behaviour Related to Cleanliness

The top 3 undesirable social behaviours related to cleanliness in public spaces observed by our participants was littering, which 90% of respondents reported observing at least sometimes. 87% noted observing others spitting on the ground while 72% observed someone not picking up his/her pets' poo (see [table 4](#) for details).

Table 4: Observations of undesirable social behaviours related to cleanliness

How often have you noticed other people doing the following actions:	Never %	Sometimes %	Most of the time %	All the time %
Someone littering	10	63	22	5
Someone spitting on the ground	13	57	23	7
Someone urinating and/or defecating in public	61	33	4	3
Someone not picking up his/her pets' poo	29	57	11	4

Social Behaviour Related to Public Cleanliness

Prosocial behaviours such as picking up and properly disposing of garbage or litter at a public area and clearing up of one's own food utensils at hawker centres are not entrenched as a habit yet.

It is still not common in Singapore to remind others about keeping public areas clean (see [table 5](#) for details). **65% of our respondents had never reminded a stranger to not litter when they noticed this.** Respondents were, however, more open to reminding family and friends about not littering with 46% of respondents reporting that they did this most or all of the time when it came to a family member and less than a third (31%) when it came to a friend.

Only 35% of respondents said that they had cleared up their food utensils at hawker centres most of the time or all the time while nearly 16% had never cleared their own food utensils at hawker centres. Furthermore, more than 25% of respondents had never picked up and properly disposed their garbage or litter at a public area. Less than 50% of our respondents reported picking up and properly disposing of their garbage or litter at a public area sometimes.

Table 5: Participation in Cleanliness Related Behaviour

How often have you done the following actions:	Never %	Some-times %	Most of the time %	All the time %	Most of the time/ All the time %
Prosocial cleanliness related behaviour					
Reminded a family member to not litter when you noticed them doing so	20	34	28	18	46
Cleared up your own food utensils at hawker centres	16	49	27	8	35
Reminded a friend to not litter when you noticed them doing so	29	40	22	9	31
Picked up and properly disposed garbage or litter at a public area	28	47	16	9	25
Reminded a stranger to not litter when you noticed them doing so	65	29	5	1	6
Anti-social cleanliness related behaviour					
Disposed of garbage/litter inappropriately	55	33	8	4	12

Conclusion

Based on the results of the Public Cleanliness Satisfaction Survey, while a large proportion of Singaporeans are satisfied with the cleanliness of our public spaces, there are still areas where levels of satisfaction regarding public cleanliness can be improved. More can probably be done to keep our food outlets, void decks, lift lobbies and lifts clean as well as maintain the cleanliness of our public spaces after public events (e.g. sporting events or concerts).

Our survey showed that prosocial behaviours such as picking up and properly disposing garbage or litter at a public area and clearing up of one's own food utensils at hawker centres are not yet entrenched as a culture. More can be done to co-create a culture where every individual plays their part to remind others not to litter, and to help pick up and properly dispose of garbage or litter. Public cleanliness is very much part of national pride for Singaporeans, and community efforts can promote positive norms for public cleanliness behaviours so that we can all care for our common spaces.

Methodology

This study received clearance from the National University of Singapore (NUS) Institutional Review Board (IRB). The survey sample was obtained using a Department of Statistics (DOS) listings of households. The identified households were approached by interviewers from a market research company, Blackbox Research with a survey. The survey carried a National University of Singapore Participant Information Sheet, which assured prospective participants of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

Those who agreed to participate in the study completed the survey on their own except for those who were illiterate in any official language. Upon completion, interviewers would pick up the completed surveys from the respondents. In total, there were 2,000 completed responses. This provided an overall response rate of 70% of eligible households.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

Sample Characteristics	Proportion (%)
Age	
21-34 years old	27
35-49 years old	30
50-64 years old	28
65 > years old	16
Gender	
Male	49
Female	52
Race	
Chinese	76
Malay	12
Indian	9
Others	3
Education	
Secondary and below	43
Diploma / A Levels /post sec	33
Degree & Prof qualification	23
Housing Type	
3 room or smaller	27
4 room or bigger HDB	66
Private	7

Details of Public Cleanliness Satisfaction index

Table 2: Public Cleanliness Satisfaction Index

Domains / Spaces		Proportion Satisfied %	Proportion Satisfied with Domain %	Overall Proportion Satisfied across all Spaces % [Public Cleanliness Satisfaction Index]
Transport	Roads	95	93	82
	Bus Stop	88		
	Bus Interchange	94		
	MRT/LRT Station	97		
Leisure	Parks/Park Connectors	89	89	
	Shopping Malls in Housing Estates	93		
	Playgrounds	84		
Food Outlets	Coffeeshops	66	69	
	Hawker Centres	60		
	Food Courts (Air-Conditioned)	87		
	Wet Markets	64		
Neighbourhood	HDB Town Centre	91	81	
	Void decks /Corridors /Lift lobbies	74		
	Lift to your home	79		
Commuter Paths	Pavements / Walkways	87	83	
	Overhead Bridges /Foot Bridges	90		
	Underpasses	83		
	Roadside Drains	72		
	Grass Patches next to Pavements	81		
Public Events	After Public Events (e.g. NDP, Concerts, Sporting events, etc.)	59	59	