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Results from the perception and attitudes towards ageing and seniors survey (2013/2014)

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**RESULTS FROM THE PERCEPTION AND
ATTITUDES TOWARDS AGEING AND SENIORS
SURVEY (2013/2014)**

**MATHEW MATHEWS
and
PAULIN TAY STRAUGHAN**

October 2014
IPS Working Papers No. 22

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TOWARDS AGEING AND SENIORS SURVEY (2013/2014)**

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October 2014

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RESULTS FROM THE PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS AGEING AND SENIORS (PATAS) SURVEY (2013/2014)

Abstract

While discussions on ageing previously centred on dependency ratios and healthcare infrastructure, there has been a growing attention to the other aspects of growing old, such as its social and emotional dimensions. There has also been a move in recent years to rethink the construct of ageing and frame it in a more positive way.

In this paper we document some of the results derived from the Perception and Attitudes towards Ageing and Seniors (PATAS) survey completed in early 2014. These results delve into respondents' beliefs about achieving successful ageing — what it constitutes how it can be achieved and respondents' appraisal of their preparation to age successfully. We also document respondents' experience of age in terms of quality of life, integration within the community and their experience and attitudes towards ageism. Perceptions about lifelong learning and employability, especially what motivates older persons to consider such pursuits, are also reported.

The results from the survey showed that there is a high level of consensus on what senior respondents believed constituted successful ageing. Being

happy, healthy, physically active, financially independent, and having close friendships were very highly endorsed. Most respondents believed that family support, information about what to expect as one ages, and information on how to take care of their health and ensure sufficient savings would help them to age successfully.

In terms of their experience of ageing, most respondents were optimistic. Eight in 10 respondents felt confident that their needs would be taken care of as they aged. They also enjoyed a good quality of life with nearly 70% indicating that they often looked forward to each day; and rarely or never having felt that things were out of control in their lives. Most seniors reported that they had people in their social network who could provide them with a range of assistance. Most of their social activities tended to be with their families, with considerably less involvement in community activities. Respondents were generally positive that those who were older were well respected in society and they seldom experienced prejudice or discrimination because of their age.

Respondents were motivated to engage in lifelong learning so that they could better manage everyday life and keep up with changes. Seniors were also motivated to learn so they could understand themselves and others better. While attitudes were generally positive about the benefits of lifelong learning, there was comparatively less awareness and participation in lifelong learning programmes.

There was much consensus among seniors that working after retirement was positive. Around 90% of respondents agreed that continued employment would help them stay financially independent, socially connected, make friendships, give them a sense of self-worth and enable an active and productive life. Voluntary work was viewed by about eight out of 10 respondents as a good way to stay socially connected, and lead a meaningful life. However, less than half of the respondents reported that they would consider volunteering in the next few years.

Perhaps the one key highlight from this study is how positive survey respondents are about growing old. In terms of public policy, the challenges are now focused on how to actively engage older Singaporeans so that the third age can be reconstructed to reflect their tremendous potential for involvement in the community. We make several recommendations for future programmes based on results from the survey.

RESULTS FROM THE PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS AGEING AND SENIORS SURVEY (2013/2014)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Ageing And Policy

Across the globe, countries are undergoing a demographic transition that will lead to an unprecedented number of elderly persons in the population. This has prompted many governments to invest more of their energies and resources to equip themselves with the requisite knowledge and infrastructure to cope with this phenomenon. The United Nations (UN) has been promoting an enlightened discourse on global ageing, delineating provisions, to better equip governments in managing the onset of an ageing population. Among other things, it has identified aspects such as independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity for governments to consider when crafting ageing policies (United Nations, 1991).

In Singapore, preparations for an ageing population began as early as the 1980s with the formation of the Committee on the Problems of the Aged. In subsequent years much discussion has been made to identify the needs of an ageing population. While policy discussion on ageing previously centred on dependency ratios and healthcare infrastructure, there has been growing attention to the other aspects of growing old, such as its social and emotional dimensions.

There has also been a move to rethink the construct of ageing and frame it in a more positive way. Given that a significant proportion of Singaporean society will be over 65 years old in the near future, it is critical that ageing is framed in a more positive way. This will allow the population to look forward to enjoying a meaningful third age and make preparations for it.

In May 2014, Singapore's Minister of Health Gan Kim Yong announced that the government wants a shift in the conversation on ageing, away from a focus on the challenges and towards greater celebration of longevity. He also announced that the Ministerial Committee on Ageing would coordinate a whole-of-nation effort to put together a coherent national agenda to prepare our population for successful ageing. Among the seven areas that were highlighted as part of this plan was lifelong learning for seniors, employment and volunteerism (Chia, 2014).

While the three areas — lifelong learning, employment and volunteerism — are beneficial to seniors and society in a number of ways, they are also sites of social engagement. For some elderly, the continuation of paid employment constituted one form of engagement but for others, social engagement was fulfilled through channels such as leisure activities or volunteer work (Luoh & Herzog, 2002; Teo, 1997). Regardless of the type of activity, maintaining social connections and participating in social activities (Krueger et al., 2009, p.46) allow for the establishment of a group identity or network that the elderly are able to associate with (Lim & Putnam, 2010). This consideration is crucial considering how most older persons would have ended their formal careers,

effectively disengaging from an integral part of their identity and network. New forms of engagement therefore help in the appraisal of one's newfound position in society (Keyes, 1998).

Various studies point to the positive effects that older persons can obtain from social engagement. A longitudinal study conducted by Glass, Leon, Bassuk & Berkman (2006, p.618–9) shows that a greater level of social engagement reduces the risk of depression amongst the elderly. Other studies highlight that higher levels of social engagements reduce the probability of mortality (Croezen et al., 2010) and cardiovascular diseases (Kawachi et al., 1996). Frequent social engagement is also associated with higher levels of cognitive functioning (Barnes et al., 2004; Fratiglioni et al., 2000; Fratiglioni et al., 2004). For elderly individuals, activities that require the development of a new set of skills actively engage their cognitive abilities, providing protection against the onset of dementia (Youssef & Addae, 2002).

Lifelong learning has commonly been singled out as a very important way for older people to stay healthy and active, and that encourages independence and possibly, helps open new channels and networks for opportunities (Jones & Symon, 2010). It also helps the elderly achieve social wellness because they feel integrated, socially accepted and have an increased sense of worth through perceived contributions to the community and society (Keyes, 1998). Often, lifelong learning allows older persons to be better prepared for transitions in old age, especially when they are looking to continue working in a different sector upon retirement. Nations promoting lifelong learning among

older persons might also benefit from indirect economic returns in the form of enhanced social capital which has the potential to “yield human capital and lessen the burden of health and welfare spending as the elderly could be more active” (Jones & Symon, 2010, p.280). The Singapore government actively promotes lifelong learning by providing platforms for adult education and funding for initiatives that promote lifelong learning (Committee on Ageing Issues, 2006).

The various initiatives to encourage successful ageing consider why some older persons disengage from the social sphere. Innately, as some scholars point out, growing older just means that social roles and position take new forms. However, socio-economic and health status influences one’s access to new roles, networks and opportunities in society. As such, research has highlighted how these forces make a difference in explaining the various levels of social engagement of different groups of elderly (Glass et al., 2006).

In order to understand the needs and aspirations of an ageing population, a number of local surveys dedicate some attention to variables linked to successful ageing. This includes the periodic National Survey of Senior Citizens and the Singapore Longitudinal Study of Ageing. These large sample surveys comprehensively cover aspects such as health, leisure, finance and social support.

In 2013, the Council for Third Age (C3A) commissioned the Institute of Policy Studies at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of

Singapore to conduct a study to understand the perception and attitudes towards ageing among seniors who were between 50 to 74 years old. The Perception and Attitudes towards Ageing and Seniors survey (hereafter referred to as PATAS) was conducted to provide data on the experience of ageing and the kinds of social engagements that seniors were involved in and amenable to. Seniors' perception of successful ageing and their views of lifelong learning and employability were also discussed.

1.2 Methodology

A listing of 3,000 randomly selected households that had at least one Singaporean resident at 50 to 74 years of age was obtained from the Department of Statistics. Only respondents living in three-room flats or larger housing units were included in this study. The sampling restrictions based on age and housing type were applied because the results of the study were to provide insight for the development of future programmes. Since the very old today and those who live in one- to two-room flats are generally situated in rather different contexts compared to the seniors of the future, they were not included in this survey.

A survey company, which had previously conducted other large-scale surveys on seniors, was hired to approach these households and conduct face-to-face interviews using a survey instrument. Substitution of households was allowed in the case where the selected household did not have a Singaporean resident above 50 years old. In such a case, the survey company had to find a matching dwelling on the left, right, above or below the dwelling that met the

criteria for inclusion. In total, 2,006 Singaporean residents participated in the study. This provided a completion rate of 75% of eligible households. Fieldwork for this survey began in October 2013 and ended in late January 2014.

1.3 Structure of Paper

In this paper we document some of the results derived from the PATAS survey. These results are presented in five sections to provide a broad overview of the profile, experiences, attitudes and aspirations of seniors.

The first section describes the surveyed population in terms of a number of demographic characteristics and our respondents' perception of the status of their health, mobility and finances.

The second section delves into respondents' beliefs about achieving successful ageing — what it constitutes, how it can be achieved and respondents' appraisal of their preparation to age successfully. The section also deals with the intentions that seniors have of future pursuits related to the ageing life course.

The third section of this paper examines respondents' experience of age. Here, both their quality of life as measured using CASP-12 (a scale measuring the domains of Control, Autonomy, Self Realisation and Pleasure) and the extent to which the respondents are integrated within their community

as seen in the strength of their social networks are reported. Their experience and attitudes towards ageism are also discussed.

In the final section, focus shifts to lifelong learning and employability. What motivates older persons to consider such pursuits and what are some of the barriers towards achieving this? How do seniors perceive voluntary work?

We periodically showcase some of the main demographic predictors of different perceptions and experiences. Age, educational attainment, markers of social economic status, such as housing type or income and gender, are sometimes mentioned. We also mention how perceived health, mobility status and financial adequacy are useful in understanding some attitudes and behaviour.

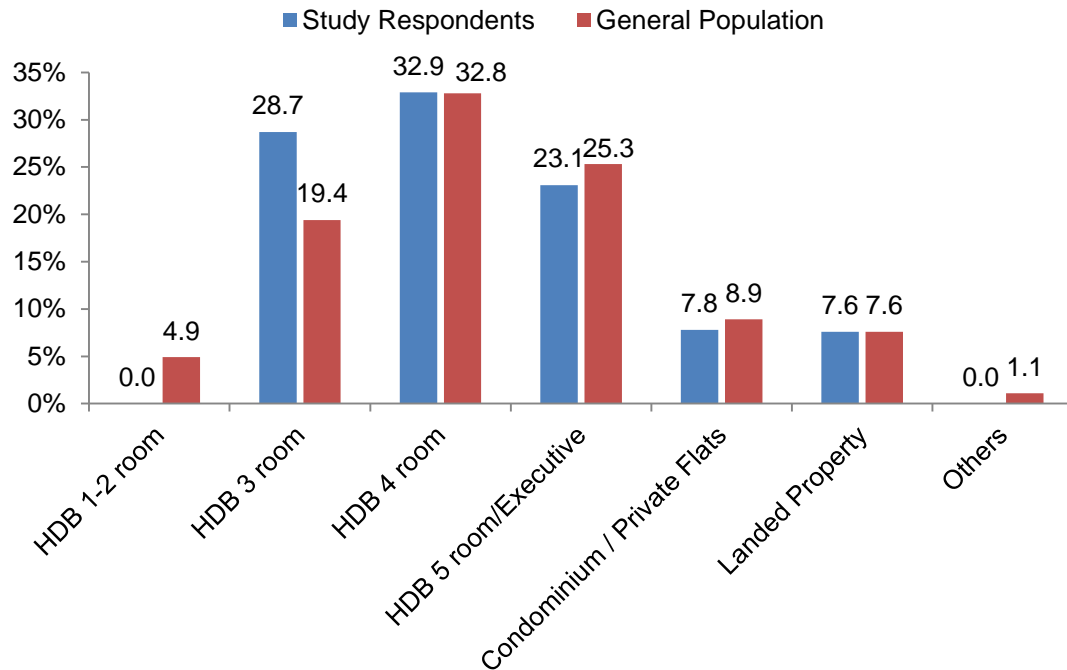
1.4 Sample Profile

The profile of the sample did not completely match the profile of older Singaporeans since it did not include the full range of the elderly living in Singapore (See Figure 1.1). It also did not include those who lived in one- and two-room flats. To some extent, the survey findings are only generalisable to the Singaporean population in their third age who are homeowners.

Among those surveyed, 62% lived in HDB three- and four-room housing while 23% lived in five-room or executive HDB apartments. About 15% of respondents lived in private housing. While the proportion of the survey respondents who lived in four-room and larger housing mirrored the

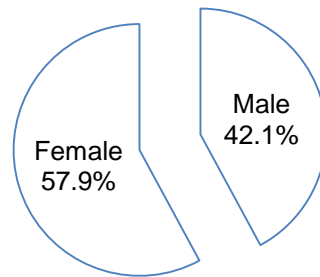
population, there were more survey respondents who lived in three-room flats compared to the national proportion.

Figure 1.1: Distribution Of Respondents And General Population Between 50–74 Years, By Housing Type



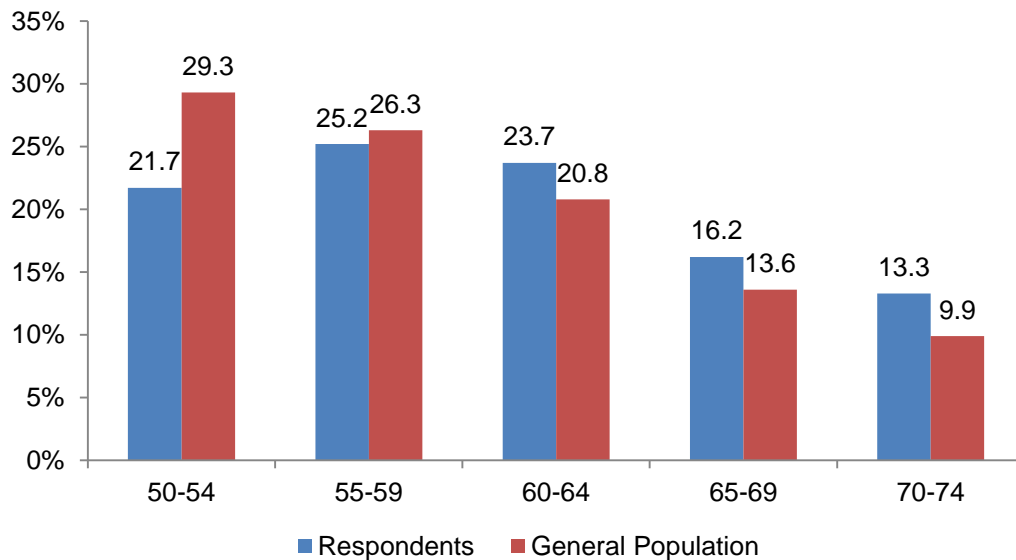
There were fairly equal proportions of males and females in the study, with 42% males and 58% females (See Figure 1.2). Slight deviations are expected considering the slightly higher numbers of females in the overall population compared to males and the tendency of women to be more responsive to interviews.

Figure 1.2: Distribution Of Respondents By Gender



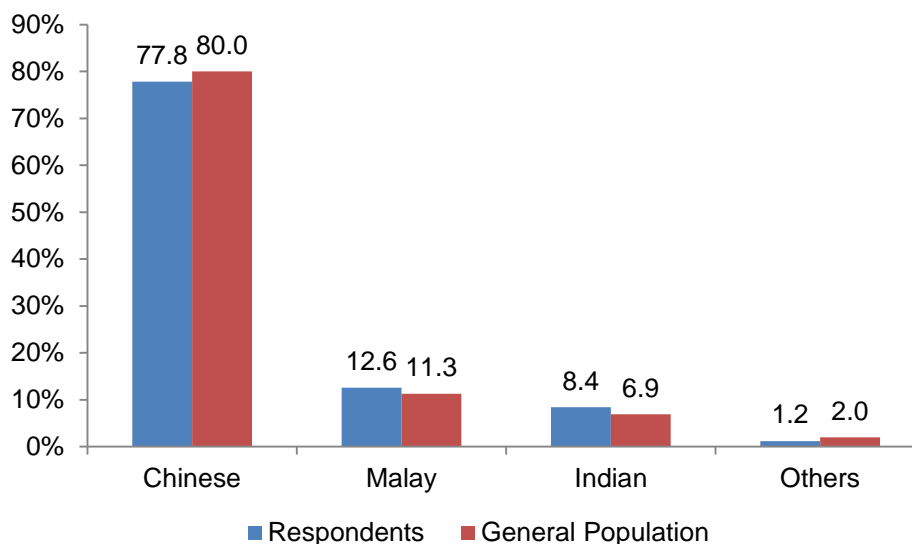
There was good representation of respondents by age group, with 47% of respondents between 50 and 60 years old; 40% who were between 61 to 70 years old; and 13% who were between 70 and 74 years old (See Figure 1.3). The median age of respondents was 60 years old.

Figure 1.3: Distribution Of Respondents And General Population Between 50–74 Years, By Age Group



The bulk of respondents were Singaporean citizens, with only 4% who were permanent residents. Racial representation in the survey sample followed closely to those of the general population (See Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4: Distribution Of Respondents And General Population Between 50–74 Years, By Race



Most of the survey respondents (81%) were married; 8% were widowed; 3% divorced; and 8% single and never married (See Table 1.5). Among those who had ever married, 96% had at least one child with the average being two children (See Table 1.6). The median age of the youngest child was 27 years old. More than three quarters (78%) of the respondents were living with their children, most likely their youngest child considering that the average age of marriage is about 30 years.

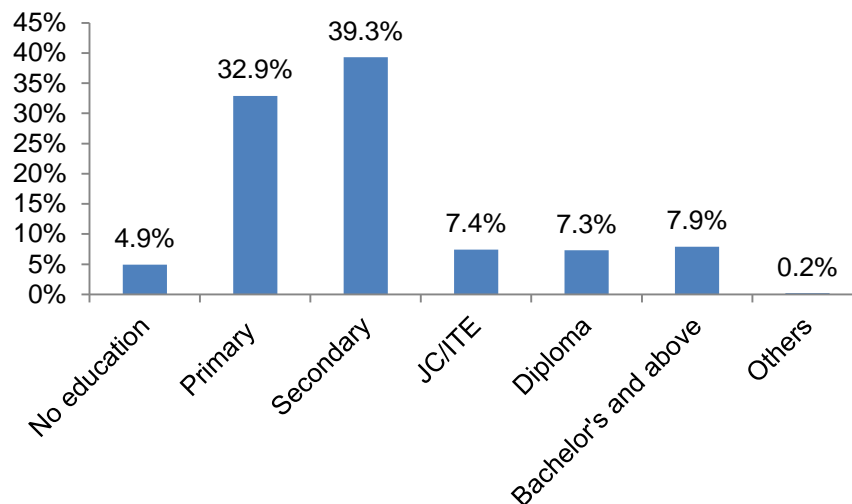
Table 1.5: Distribution Of Respondents' Marital Status By Gender

| Marital Status | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| Single, never married | 6.8% | 9.5% | 8.3% |
| Married | 89.4% | 74.1% | 80.5% |
| Widowed | 2.0% | 13.0% | 8.4% |
| Divorced / Separated | 1.8% | 3.4% | 2.7% |

Table 1.6: Number Of Children Of Respondents, By Marital Status

| | | Married | Widowed | Divorced/ Separated | Total |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Number of Children | 0 | 4.3% | 1.2% | 12.7% | 4.3% |
| | 1 | 11.8% | 13.8% | 29.1% | 12.5% |
| | 2 | 38.9% | 32.3% | 29.1% | 38.0% |
| | 3 | 30.9% | 28.7% | 21.8% | 30.5% |
| | 4 | 10.5% | 12.0% | 3.6% | 10.4% |
| | 5 and above | 3.5% | 12.0% | 3.6% | 4.3% |

The bulk of respondents in this study had primary (33%) or secondary education (39%). Around 15% of respondents had post-secondary education with 8% having a university degree. Almost 5% of the respondents had no education (See Figure 1.7).

Figure 1.7: Respondents' Educational Attainment

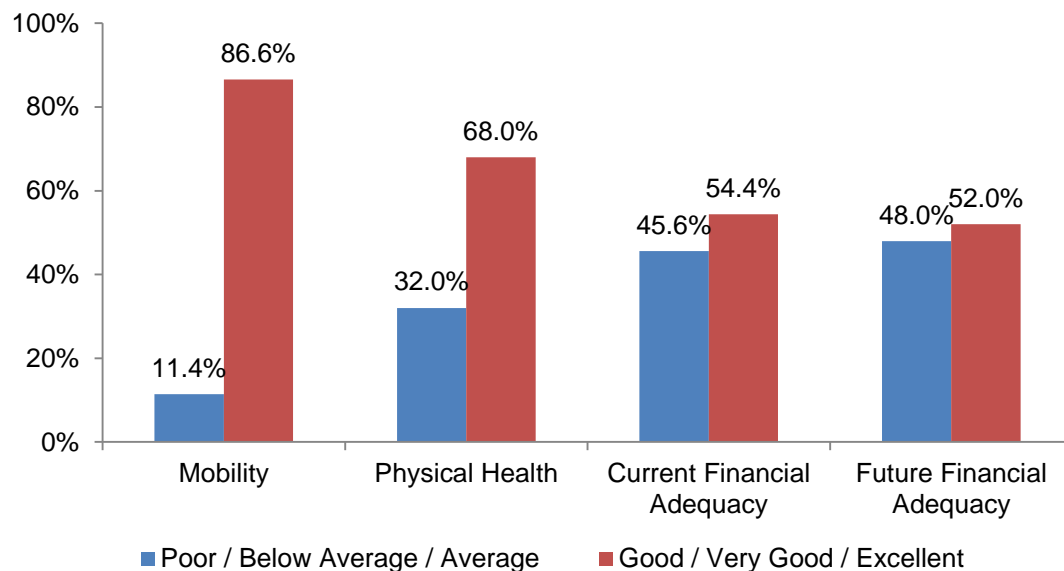
More than half (55%) of the respondents were currently employed, with 12% working part-time and 9% self-employed. Around 23% of respondents said they were homemakers and 19% stated that they were retired. Among those between 65 and 69 years old, 38% were still employed in some capacity (See Table 1.8).

Table 1.8: Distribution Of Respondents' Employment Status, By Age Group

| | 50–54 | 55–59 | 60–64 | 65–69 | ≥ 70 | Total |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Self-employed | 11.7% | 10.9% | 9.1% | 7.1% | 3.7% | 9.1% |
| Full-time employment | 51.5% | 44.0% | 32.4% | 19.1% | 7.9% | 34.0% |
| Part-time employment | 12.6% | 15.4% | 11.4% | 11.7% | 6.0% | 12.0% |
| Homemaker | 17.5% | 20.0% | 24.0% | 26.9% | 29.6% | 22.8% |
| Unemployed | 3.7% | 4.6% | 3.2% | 2.2% | 2.2% | 3.3% |
| Retired | 2.8% | 5.1% | 20.0% | 33.0% | 50.6% | 18.7% |
| Others | 0.2% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

In terms of an overall rating of their general well-being, most of the respondents (87%) stated that their mobility was excellent, very good or good. Fewer (68%) deemed their health to be in a similar state, with 32% stating that it was average or poor. About 46% of respondents rated their financial adequacy for their current needs as average or poor, and slightly more (48%) felt this in terms of their future financial adequacy (See Figure 1.9).

Figure 1.9: Respondents' Self-rating On Mobility, Physical Health, Current Financial Adequacy And Future Financial Adequacy



2. TOWARDS SUCCESSFUL AGEING

2.1 Beliefs about the Constituents of Successful Ageing

Research done in different cultural contexts reflects that while there is some variation in how laypersons conceptualise successful ageing, there are many similarities (Fernandez-Ballesteros et al., 2010). This reality could be the result of global efforts and action to disseminate findings on successful ageing.

The lay assessment of successful ageing often includes health, psychological and social components (Bowling, 2007). Economic and family support is particularly important in Asian populations (Hsu, 2006).

Based on results from the PATAS survey, there were very high levels of consensus on what senior respondents believed constituted successful ageing. Being happy, healthy, physically active, financially independent, and having close friendships were very highly endorsed, with more than 95% of respondents endorsing these items as entailing successful ageing. Comparatively fewer (84%) agreed that contributing back to society was a part of successful ageing. (See Table 2.1)

Table 2.1: Responses To What Constitutes Successful Ageing

| Successful ageing includes | Agree/ Strongly agree |
|---|------------------------------|
| Being happy | 99.7% |
| Being healthy | 99.3% |
| Being physically active | 99.4% |
| Being financially independent | 98.5% |
| Having close personal relationships | 97.8% |
| Contributing back to society (e.g., volunteering, etc.) | 83.6% |

2.2 Aids To Achieve Successful Ageing

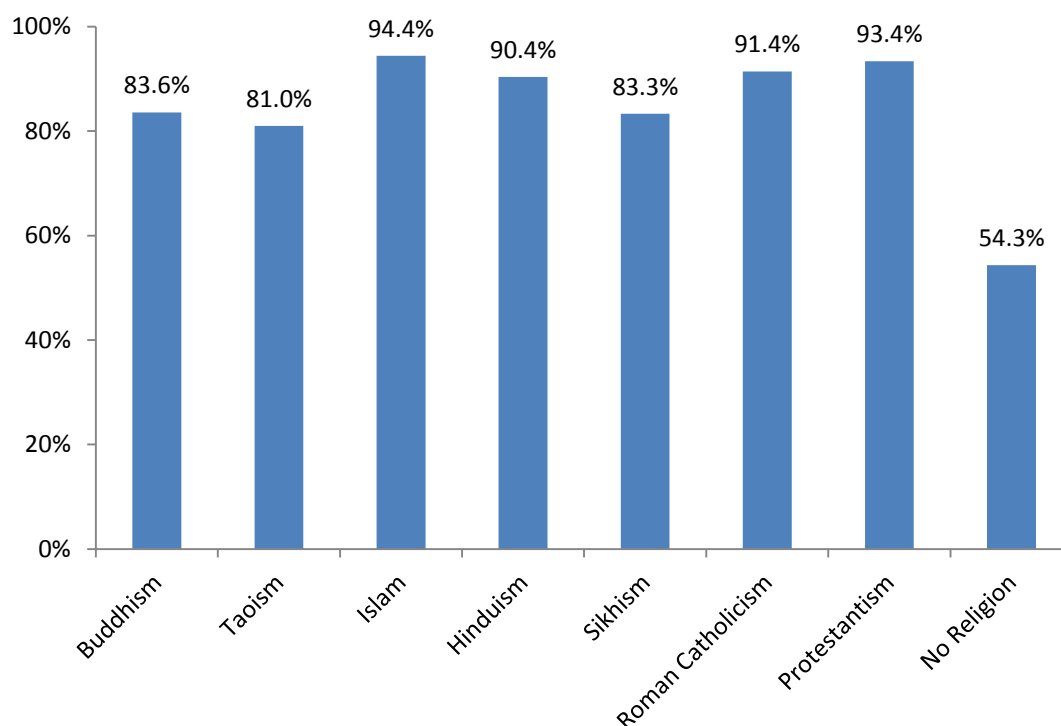
In terms of what could help people age successfully, 96% of respondents mentioned the importance of family support (Table 2.2). Information about what to expect as one ages, as well as what constituted successful ageing, was also seen as helpful for more than 90% of respondents. Around 80% to 90% of survey respondents who had a religious affiliation agreed that

encouragement and advice from religious authorities would be helpful for successful ageing (see Figure 2.3).

Table 2.2: Responses To Possible Sources Of Help For Successful Ageing

| Possible help to successful ageing | Agree/ Strongly agree |
|--|--------------------------|
| My family being supportive of my growing older | 96.5% |
| Information about what to expect as I age such as social, health and emotional changes | 91.4% |
| Knowing what successful ageing involves | 93.2% |
| My spiritual and religious beliefs or religious teachers encouraging me and showing me how to age successfully | 83.5% |
| Courses to help me set goals for my future | 63.2% |
| Courses to help me build better relationships with family and friends | 67.9% |
| Personal counselling or coaching to deal with personal challenges | 66.7% |

Figure 2.3: Proportion Of Respondents Who Endorsed Encouragement And Advice From Religious Authorities By Religious Affiliation



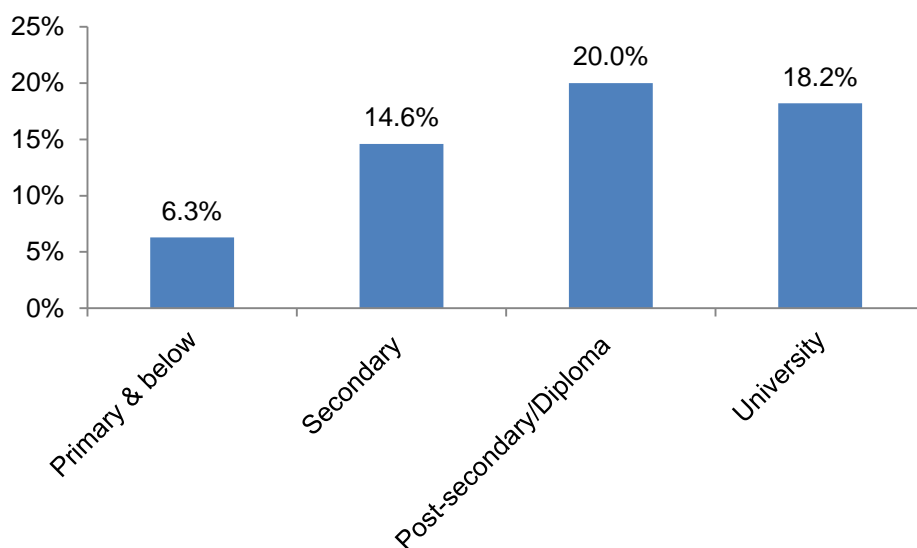
Practically all respondents believed it was important to know how to take care of their health and ensure sufficient savings to age successfully (see Table 2.4). Many also believed it was important to know how to relate to other family members as they grew older (96%), be better prepared for end-of-life issues (93%) and how to develop their spiritual /religious part of life (86%).

Table 2.4: Importance Of Knowledge On Issues Concerning Old Age

| How important is it to know about the issues below? | Important/ Very important |
|--|----------------------------------|
| How to take good care of my health | 99.4% |
| How to have sufficient savings for the rest of my life | 98.2% |
| How to relate to children and family members as I grow older | 95.6% |
| How to be better prepared for end-of-life issues | 93.4% |
| How to develop the spiritual/religious part of my life | 85.9% |

There was considerably lesser agreement when it came to believing that various kinds of courses, coaching or counselling would help people age successfully (at about two-thirds of respondents; see Table 2.2). In fact, only 13% had been to a seminar or programme that dealt with some aspect of ageing in the past one year. Those who had tertiary education were more likely to attend such programmes (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: Proportion Who Attended Seminar On Ageing, By Educational Status



2.3 Outlook on Ageing

Overall, senior respondents viewed ageing positively. Nearly 81% felt confident that their needs would be taken care of as they age and about the same number claimed that they understand what is required for someone to age successfully and have the necessary information as to what to expect for the changes they will encounter. Despite this, 63% disagreed with the statement that “In general most elder Singaporeans have little to worry about” (See Table 2.6).

Table 2.6: Respondents' Views On Ageing

| | Agree/ Strongly agree |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Views of ageing | |
| I feel confident that my needs will be taken care of as I age | 80.8% |
| I understand what is required for someone to successfully age | 87.3% |
| I have been able to obtain information about what to expect as I age such as the social, health and emotional changes that I will encounter | 79.7% |
| In general most elder Singaporeans have little to worry about | 37.3% |
| There are people I know who are successful agers | 75.1% |
| I have good role models to show me what is possible for older persons to do | 70.3% |

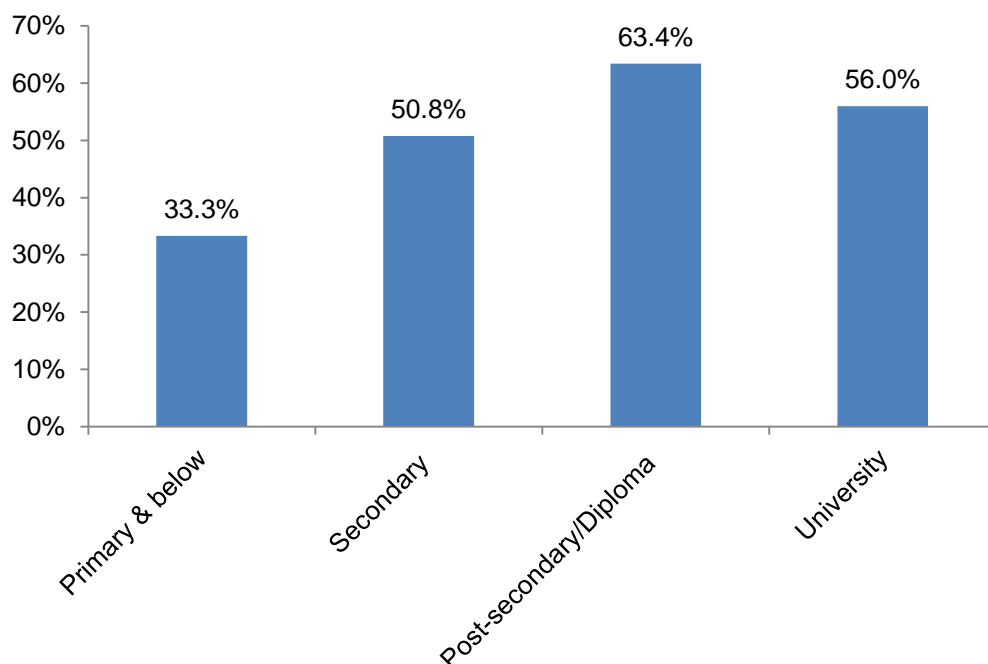
2.4 Role Models

Three-quarters of senior respondents agreed that they knew other successful agers, while 70% agreed that they had good role models to show them how to age successfully (Table 2.6). However when asked to name a person in their immediate social circle who they believed was a successful ageing role model, only 46% were able to do so (See Table 2.7). Among those who had a diploma qualification, 63% of them were able to do so compared with 33% of those with a primary education (Figure 2.8).

Table 2.7: Successful Ageing Role Models

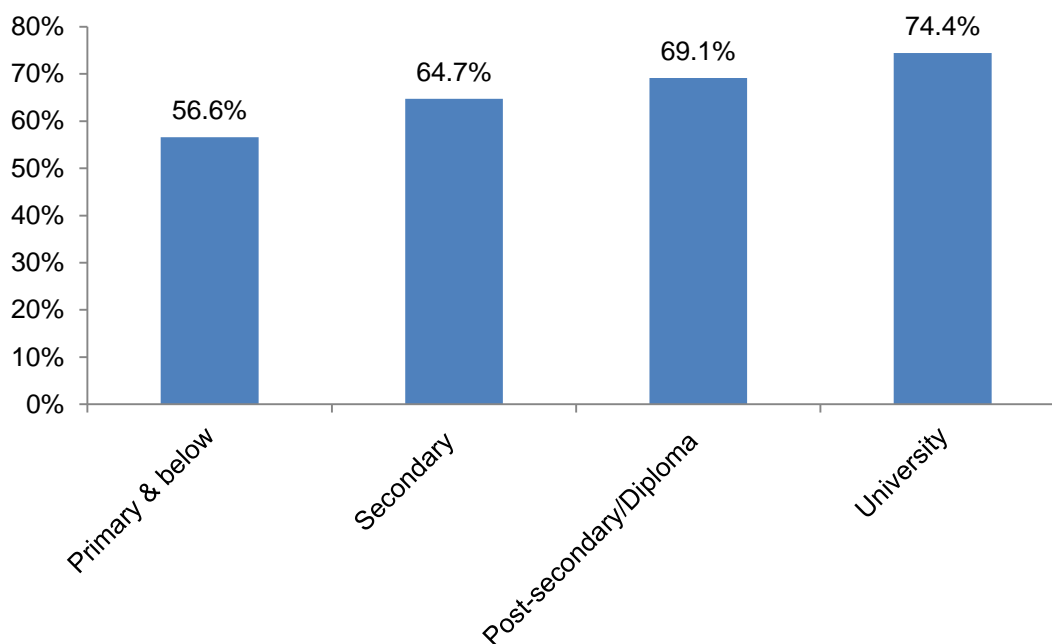
| | Yes |
|---|------------|
| Can you name one person in your immediate social circle that you believe is a successful aging role model? | 46.4% |
| In the past year, have you paid attention to the life of a successfully ageing senior who has been identified by the media? | 39.6% |
| I see myself as a successful ager who can be a role model to others | 63.2% |

Figure 2.8: Percentage Of Respondents Who Could Name A Successful Ageing Role Model In Their Immediate Social Circle, By Educational Status



About 40% of respondents also indicated that in the past year they had paid attention to the life of a successful ager who was identified by the media. Nearly two-thirds of respondents viewed themselves as successful agers who could be role models for others (See Table 2.7). Those who had university qualifications (74%) were more likely to feel this way.

Figure 2.9: Percentage Of Respondents Who See Themselves As A Role Model For Ageing, By Educational Status



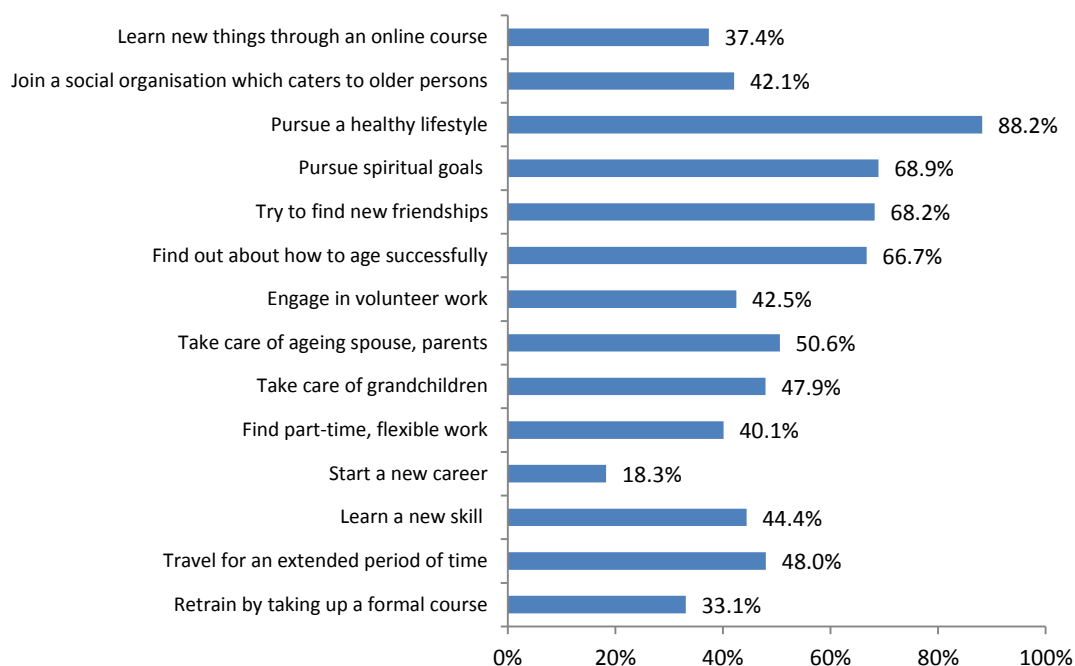
2.5 Future Intentions

Respondents in the PATAS survey were asked about their intentions to engage in the near future in a series of pursuits commonly associated with ageing. The 15 pursuits included dimensions such as work, learning, care-giving, establishing social connections and engaging in meaningful activities.

2.5.1 Top Three Intentions

As seen in Figure 2.10, among the top three pursuits that seniors stated that they would likely or very likely embark on in the future included a healthy lifestyle (88.2%), spiritual goals (68.9%) and new friendships (68.2%).

Figure 2.10: Percentage Of Respondents With Intention To Embark On Various Pursuits



Nearly all of those with university degrees (99%) wanted to pursue a healthy lifestyle, compared to 87% of those without university qualifications. Similarly, the better educated and those who were in some form of employment were more likely to indicate that they wanted to find new friendships (Table 2.11 and Figure 2.12). More than three-quarters (78%) of the respondents who said they were religiously affiliated wanted to pursue spiritual goals, while only 32% of those who were not religiously affiliated wanted to do so (See Figure 2.13). Religious denomination did not affect the importance of spiritual pursuits. Gender differences were apparent, with more females (72%) than males (65%) wanting to seek spiritual goals (Figure 2.14).

Table 2.11: The Top Three Intentions Of Respondents By Educational Status

| | Primary & below | Secondary | Post-secondary/ Diploma | University |
|---|----------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Pursue a healthy lifestyle (e.g., more exercise) | 81.9% | 89.8% | 94.2% | 98.7% |
| Pursue spiritual goals (such as spending more time in prayer or meditation) | 63.4% | 72.2% | 71.8% | 73.6% |
| Try to find new friendships | 58.8% | 71.5% | 78.5% | 77.4% |

Figure 2.12: Percentage Of Respondents With Intention To Try To Find New Friendships, By Employment Status

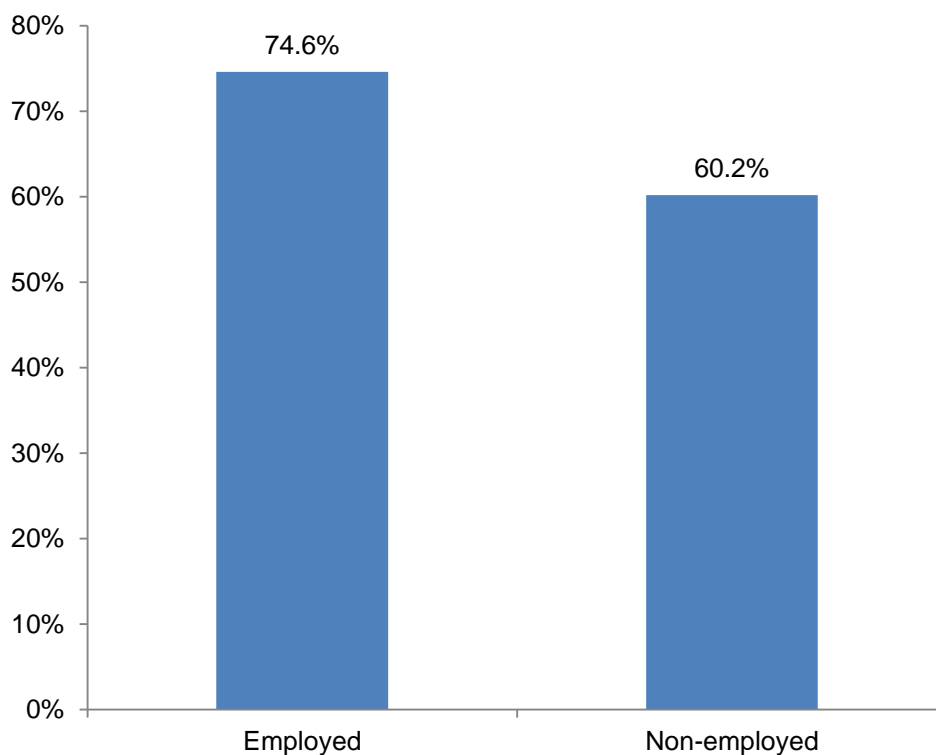


Figure 2.13: Percentage Of Respondents With Intention To Pursue Spiritual Goals, By Religious Affiliation Status

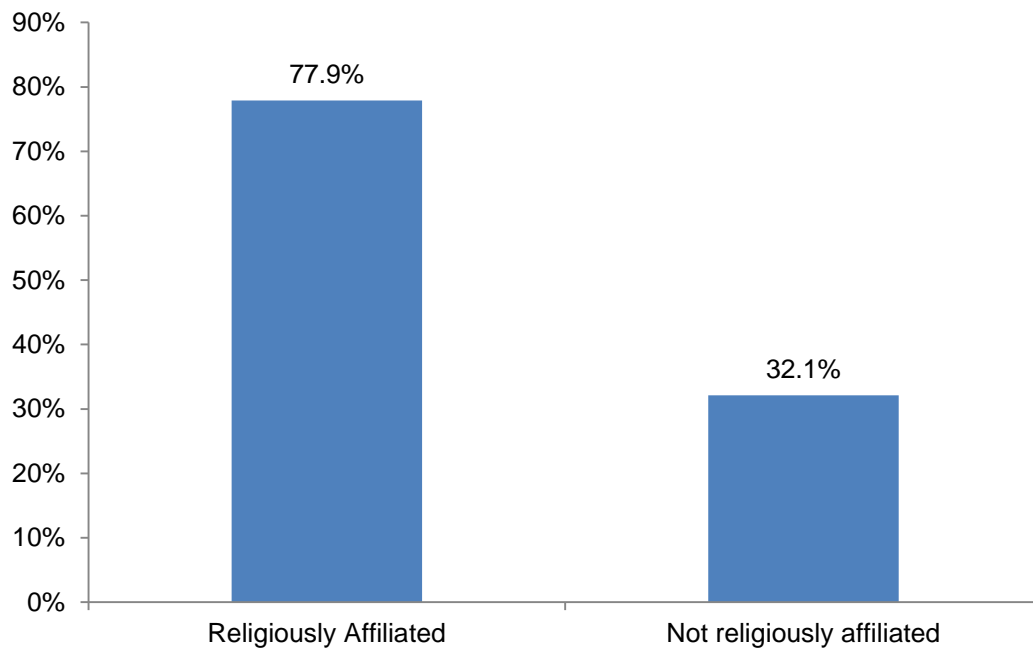
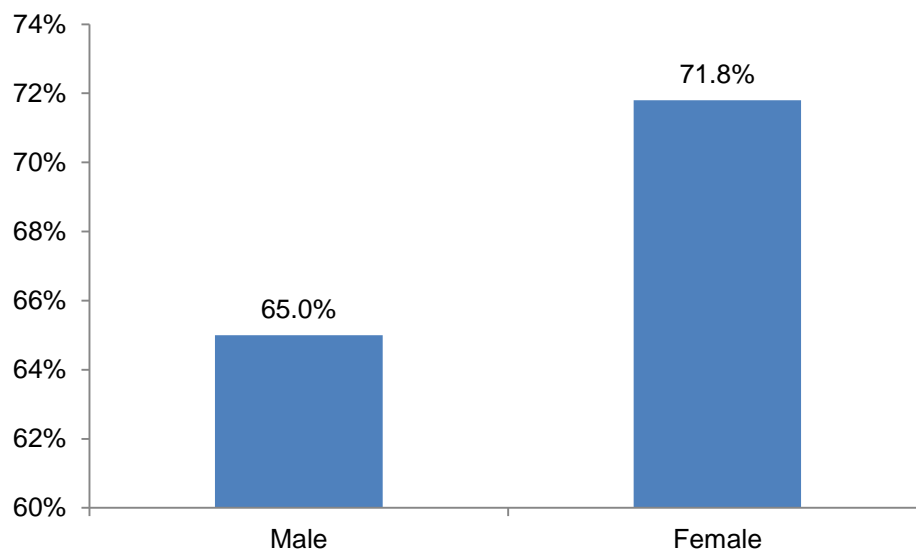


Figure 2.14: Percentage Of Respondents With Intention To Pursue Spiritual Goals, By Gender



2.5.2 Care-giving Responsibilities

About half of the survey respondents said they would be involved in care-giving responsibilities, with 51% stating that they would likely care for another ageing spouse, parent or relative, and 48% indicating that they would be involved in taking care of their grandchildren (See Table 2.15). Fewer among those aged 50 to 54 years stated this intention, compared with those of other age groups (See Table 2.16). Among those who were over 55 years of age, about half of the respondents believed that they would be involved in caring for their grandchildren compared to about a third of those between 50 to 54 years of age. However, more in their 50s saw themselves caring for an ageing family member compared to those over 65 years of age (See Table 2.16).

Table 2.15: Percentage Of Respondents With Intention Of Providing Care-giving Responsibilities

| Care-giving Responsibilities | Likely / Very Likely |
|--|----------------------|
| Take care of ageing spouse, parents or relatives | 50.6% |
| Take care of grandchildren | 47.9% |

Table 2.16: Percentage Of Respondents With Intention Of Caring For Family Members, By Age Groups

| | 50~54 | 55~59 | 60~64 | 65~69 | 70~74 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Take care of grandchildren | 35.6% | 48.3% | 54.8% | 53.7% | 47.5% |
| Take care of ageing spouse, parents or relatives | 56.8% | 56.9% | 49.8% | 41.7% | 40.7% |

2.5.3 Learning

As for their interest in continued learning, 44% of survey respondents indicated they were likely to learn a new skill over the next few years and 37% said they would learn new things through an online course (See Table 2.17). Respondents who were more interested in learning new skills or in taking up online courses reported higher levels of education and also held some form of employment (Table 2.18 and Figure 2.19). Those who did not have any form of employment were less likely to want to learn a new skill.

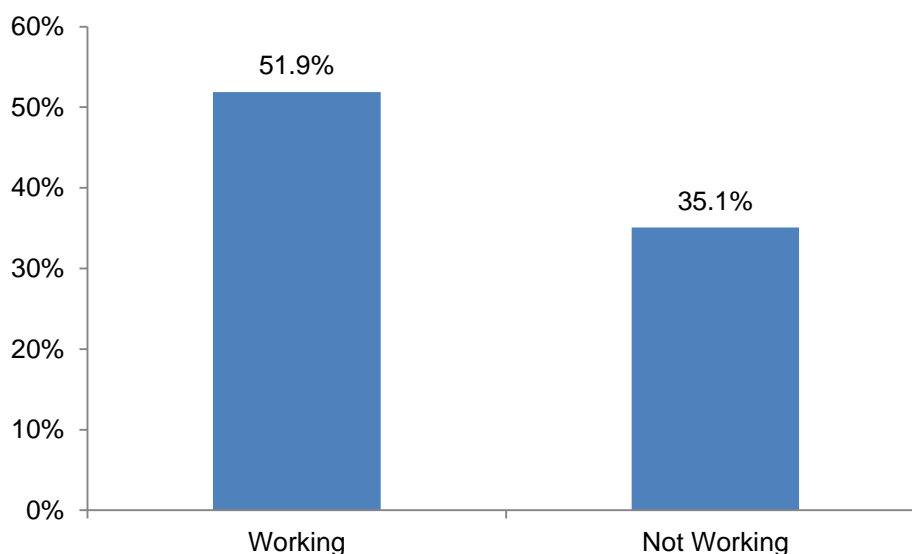
Table 2.17: Percentage Of Respondents With Intention To Engage In Continuous Learning

| | |
|---|-------|
| Learn new things through an online course | 37.4% |
| Learn a new skill (e.g., driving, painting, writing, using computers) | 44.4% |
| Retrain by taking up a formal course | 33.1% |

Table 2.18: Percentage Of Respondents With Intention Of Following These Pursuits, By Educational Status

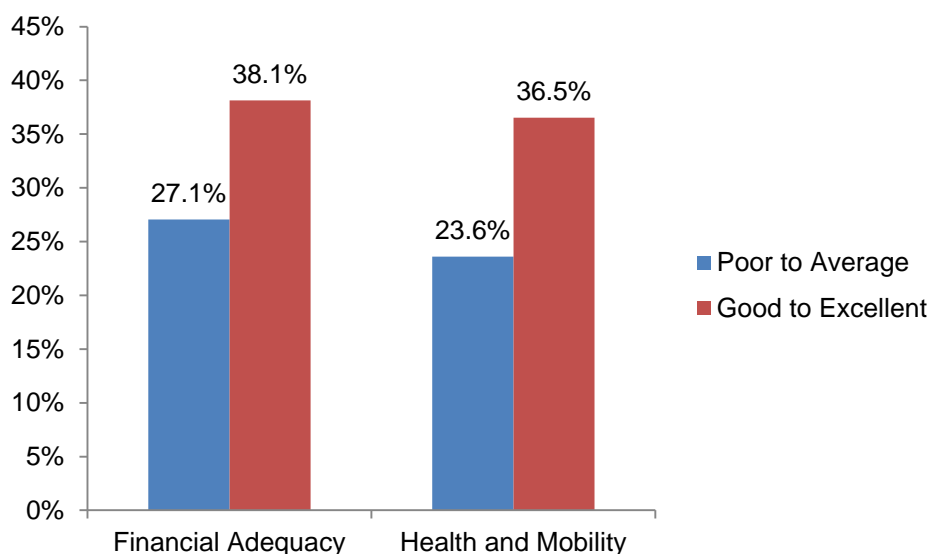
| | Primary & below | Secondary | Post-secondary/ Diploma | University |
|---|-----------------|-----------|----------------------------|------------|
| Learn a new skill (e.g., driving, painting, writing, using computers) | 26.5% | 50.0% | 64.1% | 66.0% |
| Learn new things through an online course | 15.7% | 44.5% | 58.6% | 66.0% |
| Retrain by taking up a formal course | 20.3% | 40.3% | 43.7% | 39.2% |

Figure 2.19: Percentage Of Respondents With Intention Of Learning A New Skill, By Employment Status



About a third of respondents (33%) indicated they would retrain by taking up a formal course (See Table 2.17). Educational attainment (Table 2.18), the type of housing they lived in, as well as their health and financial status had positive effects on whether they intended to enrol in formal courses (Figure 2.20). With education, it should be noted that those holding a post secondary or diploma qualification held the highest interest in taking up formal courses with 44% stating this interest. Fewer, about 39% of degree holders expressed this interest (Table 2.18). While those with higher levels of education would be less intimidated by the prospect of formal learning, this may not be that important for those who have already attained a relatively high level of education such as a university degree or post-graduate qualifications. Those of higher socio-economic status and in better health would also be more able to afford the time and resources to start their studies.

Figure 2.20: Percentage Of Respondents By Health And Financial Status With Intention Of Taking Up A Formal Course



2.5.4 Work

Only 18% of survey respondents indicated that they were likely to start a new career although 40% of them were likely to find part-time, flexible work. Significantly more (43%) said they would like to engage in volunteer work (See Table 2.21).

Those with higher education levels were more likely to want to start a new career (Table 2.22), as were those who had better self-reported health and mobility ratings. Part-time work was more attractive to females and those who were still working as part-time or full-time employees. Interest in volunteering waned for older respondents. Those in their 50s showed greater interest in volunteer work compared to those who were older (Table 2.23).

Table 2.21: Percentage Of Respondents With Intention Of Continuing Work In Various Forms

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| Engage in volunteer work | 42.5% |
| Find part time, flexible work | 40.1% |
| Start a new career | 18.3% |

Table 2.22: Percentage By Educational Status With Intention To Work And Volunteer

| | Primary & below | Secondary | Post-secondary/ Diploma | University |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|-------------------------|------------|
| Start a new career | 14.0% | 20.5% | 19.7% | 25.8% |
| Find part-time, flexible work | 33.6% | 43.4% | 47.9% | 41.4% |
| Engage in volunteer work | 28.5% | 44.5% | 59.9% | 67.7% |

Table 2.23: Percentage Of Respondents With Intention To Work And Volunteer, By Age Group

| | 50–54 | 55–59 | 60–64 | 65–69 | 70–74 |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Start a new career | 28.2% | 23.9% | 15.4% | 11.1% | 5.6% |
| Find part time, flexible work | 49.7% | 51.4% | 37.2% | 33.7% | 15.8% |
| Engage in volunteer work | 47.7% | 51.6% | 40.5% | 38.3% | 25.8% |

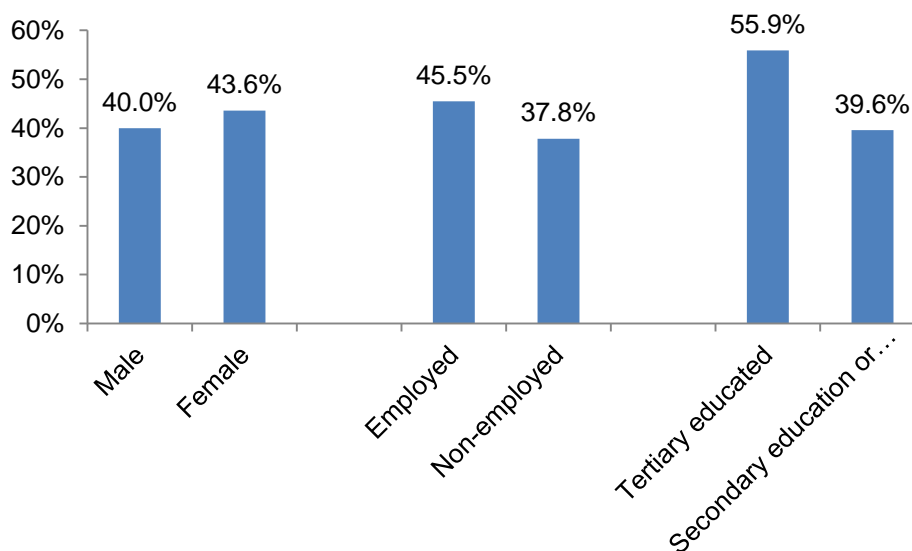
2.5.5 Social Connections

As seen in Table 2.24, 68% of survey respondents reported that they were likely to try to find new friendships in the next few years. However, fewer (42%) seniors indicated an interest to join a social organisation or club that caters to older persons. Those who showed such interest were more likely to be female, held some form of employment, and better educated (Figure 2.25).

Table 2.24: Percentage of Respondents With Intention Of Making New Connections And Other Pursuits

| | |
|---|-------|
| Try to find new friendships | 68.2% |
| Join a social organisation/club which caters to older persons | 42.1% |
| Others | |
| Travel for an extended period of time | 48.0% |
| Find out how to age successfully | 66.7% |
| Pursue spiritual goals (such as spending more time in prayer or meditation) | 68.9% |
| Pursue a healthy lifestyle | 88.2% |

Figure 2.25: Percentage Of Respondents By Gender, Employment Status And Educational Status With Intention Of Joining Organisations For Seniors

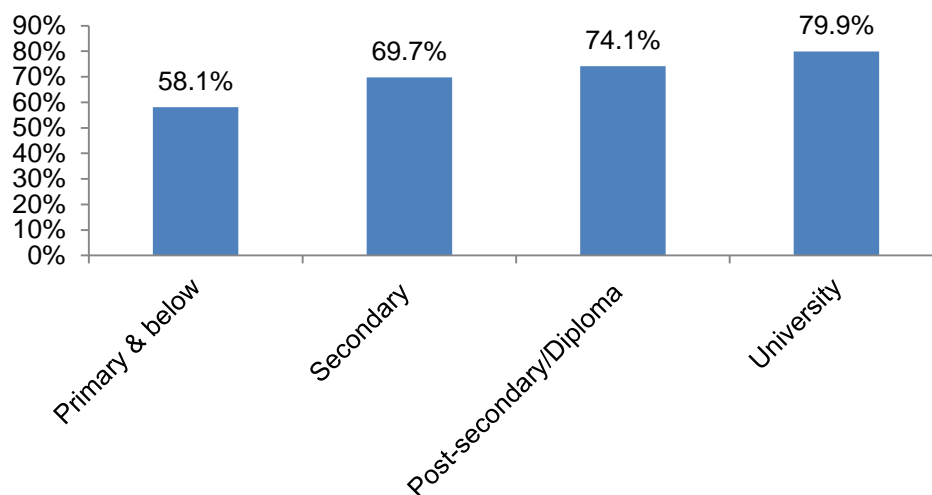


2.5.6 Others

About two-thirds (66.7%) of survey respondents stated that they were likely to try to find out how to age successfully. This intention was more prominent among those who were better educated with 80% of those who had university

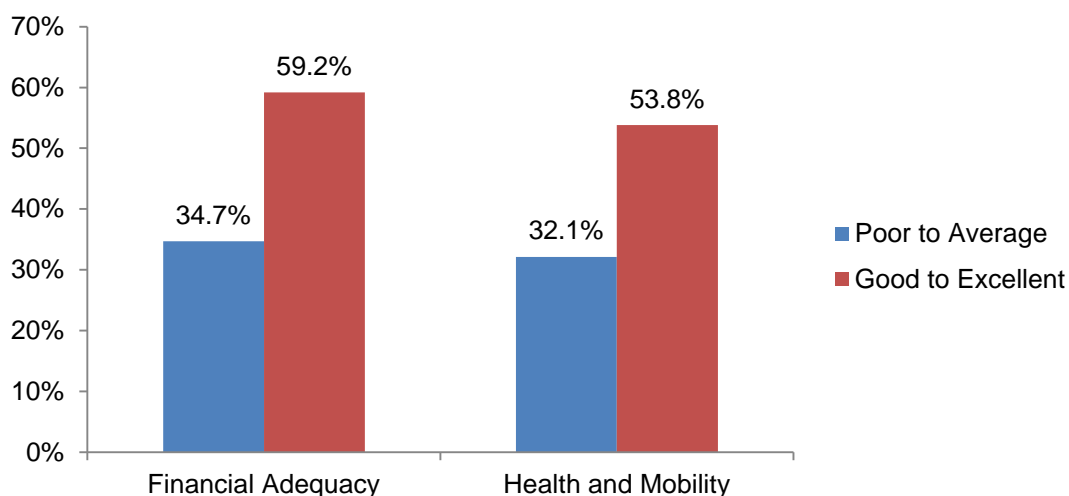
education stating this intention compared to 70% among those with secondary education (Figure 2.26).

Figure 2.26: Percentage By Educational Status With Intention To Find Out How To Age Successfully



Slightly less than half of the survey respondents (48%) indicated that they would want to travel for an extended period of time. Those who were more likely to embark on extended travels were those who perceived greater current financial adequacy, as well as those who reported better health and mobility status (Figure 2.27).

Figure 2.27: Percentage By Health And Financial Status With Intention To Travel



3. EXPERIENCE OF AGEING

3.1 Quality of Life

Measures of subjective well-being are increasingly used to assess successful ageing (HM Government, 2010; National Prevention Council, 2011). Among these measures, the CASP-12 and its longer versions were “developed with a strong underpinning theory relevant to the third age, distinguishing it from many other measures of quality of life” (Netuveli & Blane, 2008, p.6). The instrument is based on four domains of control, autonomy, self-realisation and pleasure. Factor analysis of the Singaporean sample derived from the PATAS survey indicated only three factors. Control and autonomy were combined, while pleasure and self-realisation continued to maintain separate structures.

Most seniors scored well on the series of 12 questions from CASP-12, internationally used as part of a measure of quality of life. While scores were

comparable to those of developed Western countries — in fact they were as high as those in the upper range — comparison is difficult because the current sample used in PATAS was of Singaporean seniors between 50 and 74 years old. International studies also include a substantial segment of those older than 75 years, where quality of life is generally expected to decline because of disease.

Based on mean scores of the three constructs, respondents scored highest for pleasure, then the combined construct of control and autonomy, and finally self-realisation.

3.2 Pleasure

Many seniors scored high on the construct of pleasure in their lives. Nearly 70% indicated that they often looked forward to each day; 68% often felt that life has meaning; and 63% often looked back on their lives with a sense of happiness (See Table 3.1). Those who scored higher on this construct tended to also score higher on self-ratings on physical health, current financial adequacy as well as their physical mobility (see Figures 3.2, 3.3, 3.4).

Table 3.1: Responses On The Construct Of Pleasure

| | Never/ Rarely | Sometimes | Often |
|--|----------------------|------------------|--------------|
| I look forward to each day | 8.8% | 21.4% | 69.8% |
| I feel that my life has meaning | 7.2% | 24.6% | 68.2% |
| On balance, I look back on my life with a sense of happiness | 8.2% | 28.8% | 63.0% |

Figure 3.2: Graph Of Dimensions Of Quality Of Life By Health Status

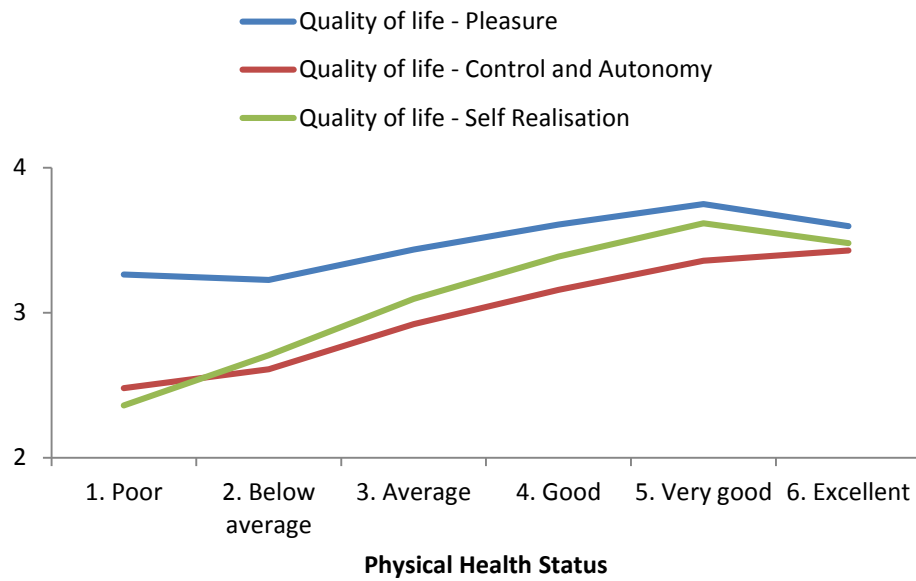


Figure 3.3: Graph Of Dimensions Of Quality Of Life By Financial Status

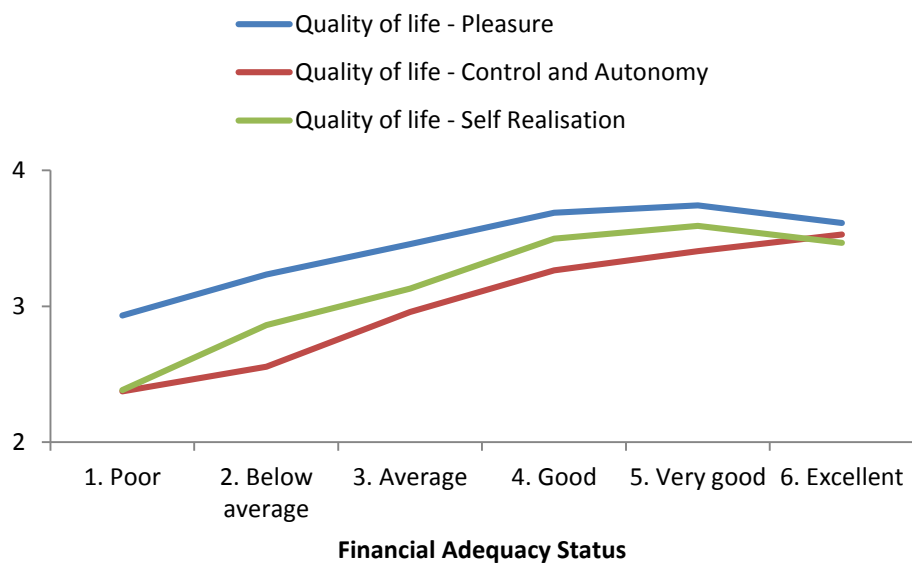
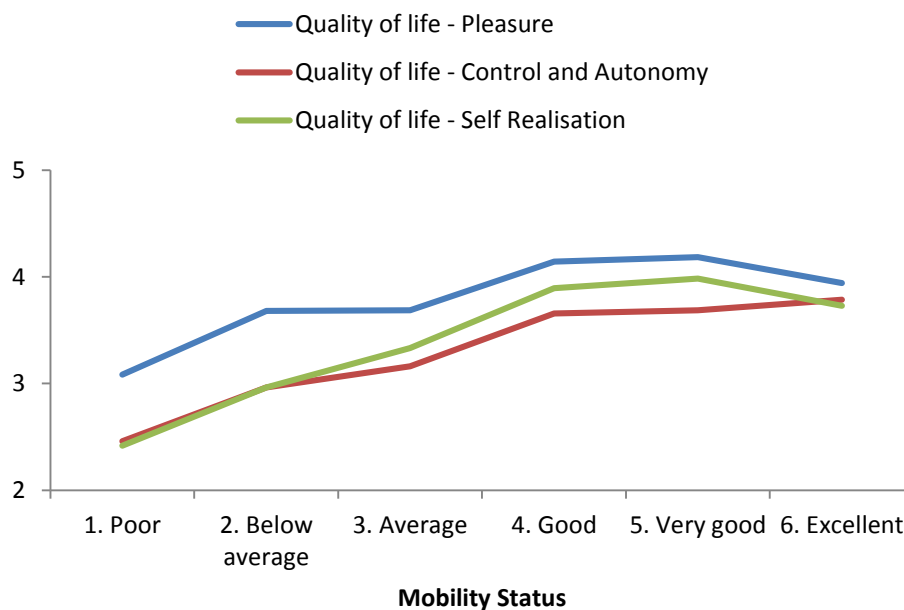


Figure 3.4: Graph Of Dimensions Of Quality Of Life By Mobility Status



3.3 Control and Autonomy

Most seniors also indicated that they generally felt that they had control over their lives and also had autonomy to fulfil what they wanted to do. Around 70% of the seniors rarely or never felt that things were out of control in their lives, while 80% never felt left out. About 64% of seniors rarely or never felt that age prevented them from doing the things they would like to do. Family responsibilities and a lack of money, rather than age, seemed to be the main barriers for most respondents in doing what they wanted to do. Just below 40% of respondents indicated that they were at least sometimes hindered in fulfilling what they wanted to by family responsibilities, while 45% of those surveyed acknowledged that this was the case because of a lack of money (See Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Responses On The Construct Of Control And Autonomy

| | Never/ Rarely | Sometimes | Often |
|---|----------------------|------------------|--------------|
| My age prevents me from doing the things I would like to | 64.3% | 29.8% | 5.9% |
| I feel that what happens to me is out of my control | 69.9% | 24.9% | 5.2% |
| I feel left out of things | 79.4% | 17.1% | 3.5% |
| I can do the things that I want to do | 12.8% | 25.3% | 61.9% |
| Family responsibilities prevent me from doing what I want to do | 61.4% | 29.9% | 8.7% |
| Shortage of money stops me from doing the things I want to do | 54.8% | 33.6% | 11.6% |

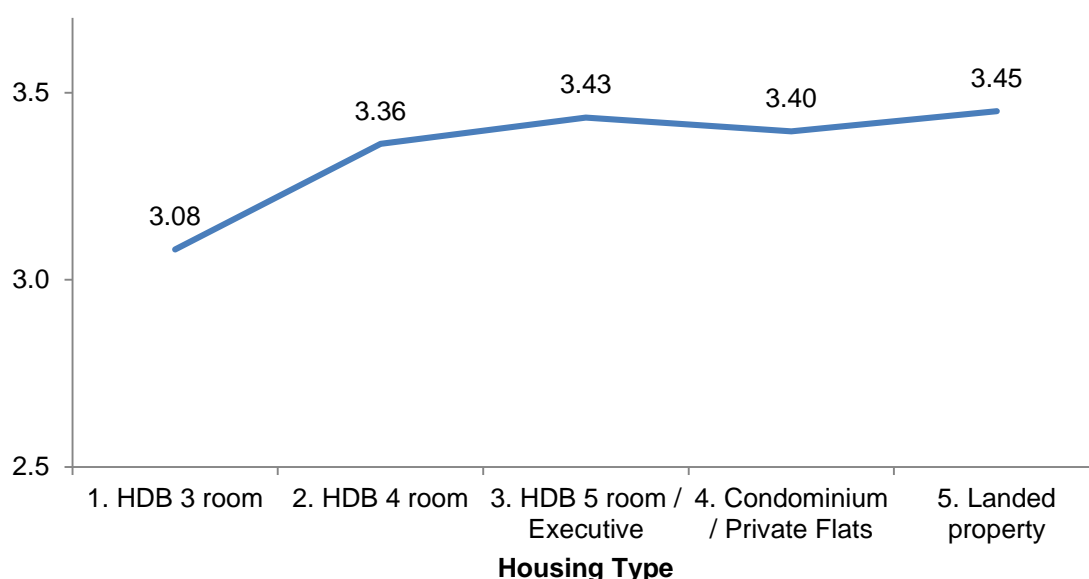
More of those who scored lower on control and autonomy tended to score lower on self-ratings on physical health, current financial adequacy and their physical mobility (Figures 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4).

3.4 Self-realisation

Around half of the seniors in this survey had a positive outlook to life. Nearly 50% indicated that they often felt full of energy, while 51% felt that life was full of opportunities, and 49% of survey respondents reported that they were optimistic about the future most of the time (See Table 3.6). Respondents who scored higher on this construct were less likely to live in three-room HDB apartments compared to larger housing types, signifying that socio-economic factors were possibly related to the underlying issues that shaped positive outlook among seniors (Figure 3.7). In addition, similar to the construct of control and autonomy, those who rated themselves lower on the Health, Financial and Mobility index tended to have less positive outlooks to life (Figures 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4).

Table 3.6: Responses On The Construct Of Self-realisation

| | Never/ Rarely | Sometimes | Often |
|---|---------------|-----------|-------|
| I feel full of energy these days | 14.0% | 36.5% | 49.5% |
| I feel that life is full of opportunities | 17.9% | 33.4% | 51.1% |
| I feel that the future looks good for me | 15.1% | 33.9% | 48.7% |

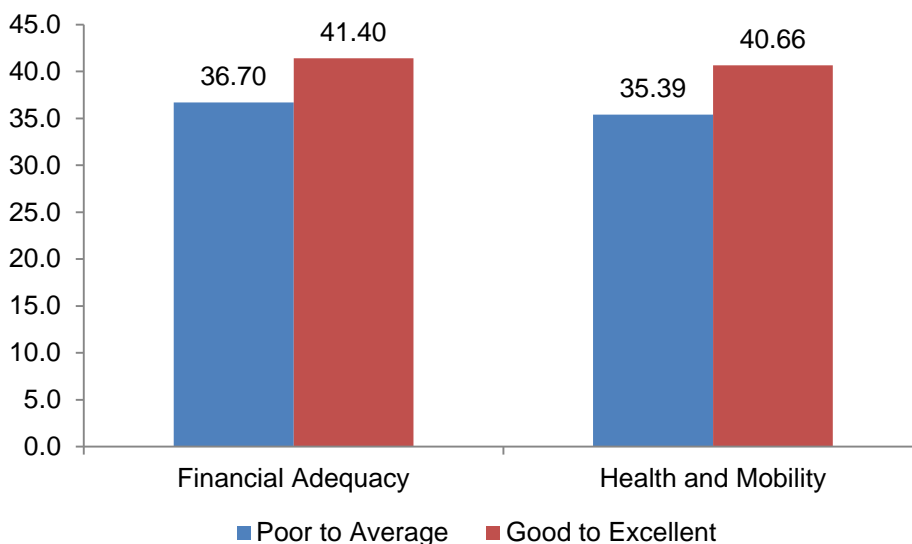
Figure 3.7: Mean Scores Of Self-realisation By Housing Type

3.5 Overall Trends

Regression analysis was carried out for the overall CASP-12 scale to examine important predictors. Higher self-ratings on physical health, current financial adequacy and physical mobility generally indicated higher overall scores. There was some difference between the genders with males scoring slightly lower than females (Figure 3.8). It is easy to explain that self-ratings on health, mobility and financial adequacy greatly affect perception of one's quality of life. The gender difference is harder to explain, although we can

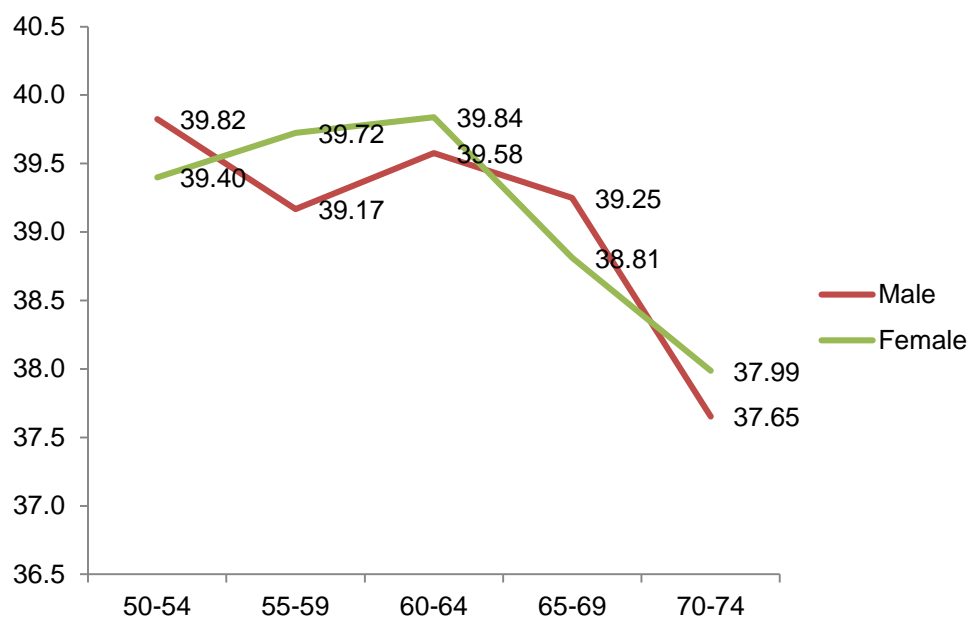
posit that prospects of retirement with its loss of job identity might be more challenging to men than women.

Figure 3.8: CASP-12 Scores By Financial Adequacy, Health And Mobility Status



Age had a statistically significant effect on the overall CASP-12 score. At an older life stage, there are expectedly greater negative correlations between age and quality of life. As can be seen from Figure 3.9, quality of life as measured by CASP-12 seemed to peak at ages 60–64 but declined by ages 65–69 for both males and females. The age at which decline in quality of life as based on CASP-12 scores was observed in Singapore was somewhat earlier compared to results derived from a United Kingdom study. There, scores began to peak at around 65 years and declined after 75 years (Netuveli et al, 2006).

Figure 3.9: CASP-12 Scores By Age Groups And Gender



3.6 Social Networks and Activities

For some, the experience of ageing can include a gradual withdrawal from society especially as one leaves employment. In this section we continue to look at how survey respondents are integrated within the community by focusing on their social networks and activities. Based on their responses, the main sources of social activity among seniors were through get-togethers with family and friends. Around 89% of respondents stated they had such get-togethers with their family at least once a month. Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents (62%) had such get-togethers with their friends or neighbours. In a month, less than 10% of respondents engaged in social activity through attending a course, participating in grassroots or community activities or using a senior activity centre (Table 3.10). About 40% of survey respondents however attended religious gatherings, especially among Christians, Muslims

and Hindus (see Table 3.11). Religious gatherings may then be an important site of social participation for at least some seniors.

Table 3.10: Sources Of Social Activity

| | At least once a month |
|--|------------------------------|
| Family and friends | |
| Get-together with family members (children, grandchildren or siblings) | 88.9% |
| Get-together with friends or neighbours | 62.4% |
| Community events | |
| Participate in grassroots or community activities | 8.4% |
| Use a senior activity club | 6.9% |
| Others | |
| Attend a course or class | 8.8% |
| Attend a religious gathering | 39.4% |

Table 3.11 Religious Attendance, By Religion

| | Buddhism | Taoism | Islam | Hinduism | Roman Catholicism | Protestantism | No Religion |
|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Nearly never | 47.6% | 51.4% | 12.5% | 23.3% | 19.0% | 10.7% | 85.5% |
| At least once in 2 years | 8.6% | 8.3% | 2.3% | 6.8% | 2.9% | 5.7% | 4.3% |
| A few times a year | 18.8% | 21.2% | 15.5% | 16.5% | 5.7% | 4.9% | 5.6% |
| At least once a month | 16.7% | 14.4% | 18.4% | 21.4% | 9.5% | 9.4% | 1.7% |
| At least weekly | 8.4% | 0% | 51.4% | 32.0% | 62.9% | 69.3% | 3.0% |

The adequacy of social connections is often measured through eliciting whether individuals have recourse to others in their networks who can provide them assistance. Over 80% of respondents had people in their social network

who could provide them advice, help them in special circumstances such as an illness, or invite them for a meal or visit. Few of the respondents were socially isolated with 96%, having at least one family member who would meet them at least once a week. Nearly 86% respondents also indicated they have at least one close relationship with a person whom they could share their problems with (Table 3.12).

Table 3.12: Presence Of Social Support

| Do you have... | Yes |
|--|------------|
| People who give you good advice? | 88.6% |
| People who provide you with help in special circumstances such as illness? | 82.1% |
| People who invite you to a party or a dinner? | 90.2% |
| People who drop in for a visit? | 89.5% |
| At least one family member who would meet them at least once a week | 95.9% |
| At least one close relationship who they could share their problems with | 85.7% |

3.7 Age and Sense of Inclusion

Besides examining quality of life measures and social networks, the experience of older persons in society includes ageism. As first defined by Robert N Butler (1969, p. 243), ageism involves “prejudicial attitudes of one age group towards other age groups” and the “deep seated uneasiness on the part of the young and middle-aged—a personal revulsion to and distaste for growing old, disease, disability; and fear of powerlessness, "uselessness," and death.” The concept also includes discriminatory behaviours and institutional policies that perpetuate stereotypes about older people. Current research has greatly questioned earlier assumptions about an age-related decline, noting that such declines come closer to end of life rather than a gradual deterioration throughout the ageing years (Pasupathi & Löckenhoff, 2002). Other supposed incapacities such as slower learning among older

workers are better explained as a product of the generally lower educational attainments of earlier cohorts (Nelson, 2005).

We considered three aspects of ageism: (i) the act of categorising people with labels such as old and young; (ii) negative views of people based on age; and (iii) experience of age-related prejudice and discrimination.

Survey findings indicated slight differences in the definition of “old” that were applied by people of different ages. On average, respondents believed that those who were 51 years or older were no longer described as young. The mean age people start to be described as old was 64.2 years. Those who were younger tended to report earlier ages when people were no longer considered young or perceived as old compared to those who were older (Figure 3.13). Respondents were generally positive that those who were older were well respected in society, with nearly 70% of respondents agreeing to this (Table 3.14). Those in their 70s were more likely to agree to this compared to those in their 50s (Figure 3.15). There was consensus that older people must not burden young people, with 90% agreeing to this. That said, 95% of respondents also believed that younger people should accommodate the needs of older persons (Table 3.14).

Figure 3.13: Mean Age When People Are Considered Old And Mean Age People Are No Longer Considered Young, By Age Group

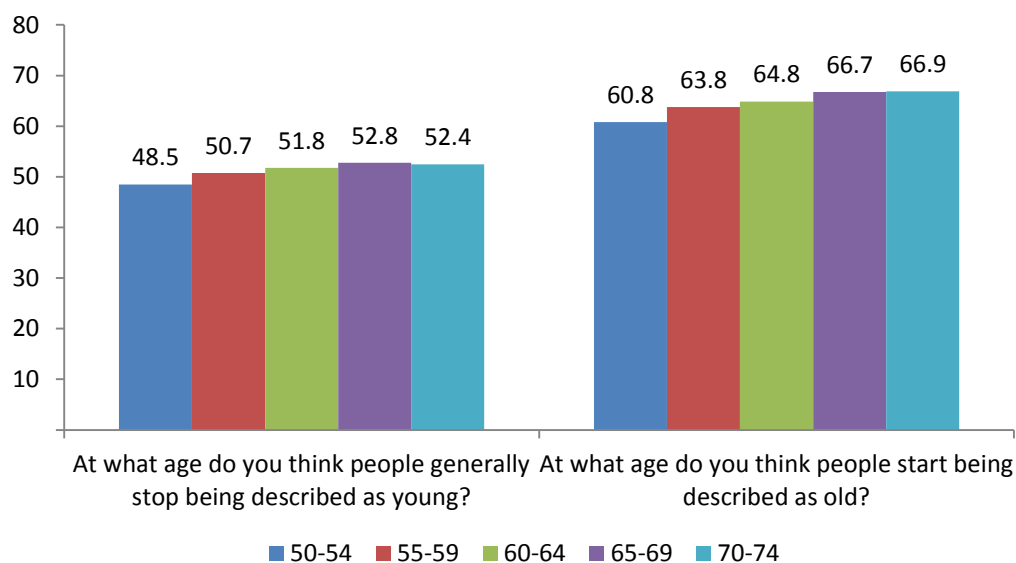
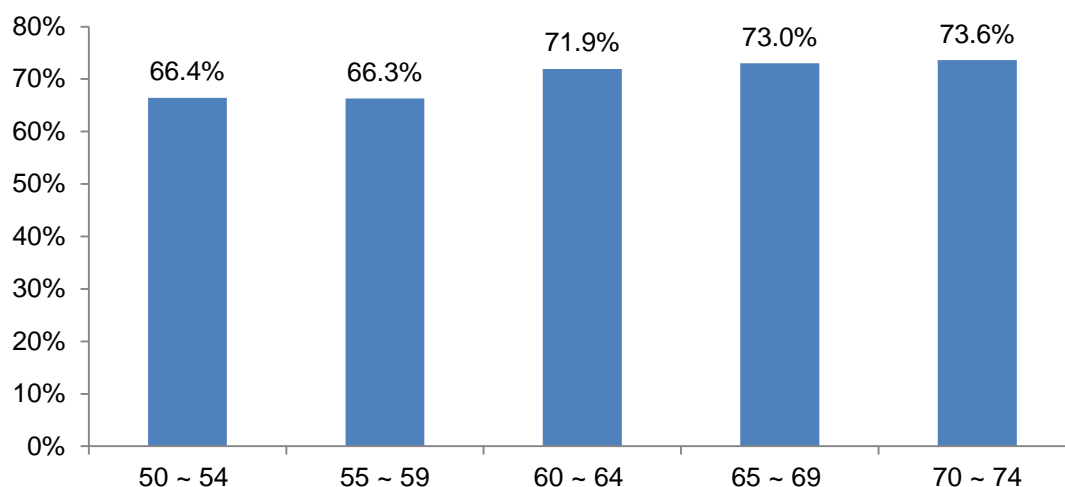


Table 3.14: Views About Ageing

| | Strongly Agree/ Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Older persons are well respected in society | 69.7% | 28.7% | 1.6% |
| Older persons must not be a burden to younger people. | 89.7% | 9.8% | 0.6% |
| Younger people should learn how to accommodate the needs of older persons. | 95.2% | 4.6% | 0.2% |

Figure 3.15: Percentage By Age Group In Believing That Older Persons Are Well Respected In Society



Respondents on the whole seldom experienced prejudice or discrimination because of their age. Nearly three-quarters of respondents (72%) said they had never been treated badly because of their age and 67% indicated they had never been prejudicially treated because of age. However, about 21% had often heard of other older persons being discriminated against (See Table 3.16). In general, those who were holding some form of employment were more likely to have experienced or heard of some form of age discrimination, at 64% compared to 36% of respondents who were not working. This might be because the workplace is an environment where discussion of age discrimination might be more common.

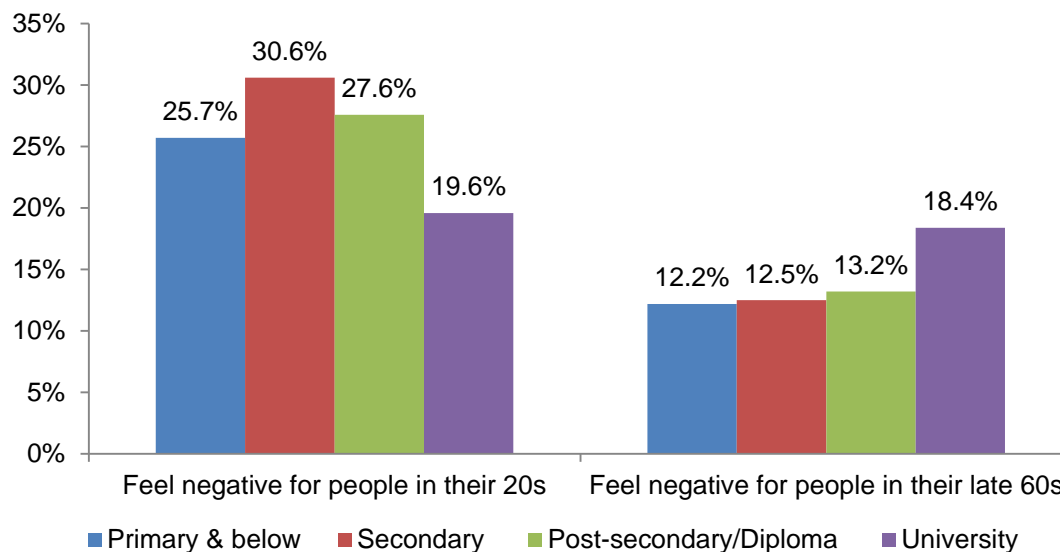
Table 3.16: Experience With Ageism

| How often in the past year... | Often/ Very often | Seldom | Never |
|--|-------------------------|--------|-------|
| Has someone treated you badly because of your age, for example, by insulting you, abusing you or refusing your services? | 4.8% | 22.9% | 72.3% |
| Has someone shown prejudice against you or treated you unfairly because of your age? | 6.4% | 26.6% | 66.9% |
| Have you heard about older persons being discriminated against because of their age? | 20.8% | 38.6% | 40.6% |

While only 13% of respondents felt negative about people in their 60s (Table 3.17), and the effect was slightly more pronounced among university graduates where 18% felt this way (Figure 3.18), nearly 28% of our respondents felt negative towards those in their 20s (Table 3.17). Those with university qualifications were less likely to feel this way towards those who were younger with 20% stating such negative feelings (Figure 3.18).

Table 3.17: Sentiments Towards The Young And The Old

| Overall, how negative or positive do you feel towards... | Negative/ Very negative |
|--|----------------------------|
| People in their 20s | 27.5% |
| People in their late 60s | 12.9% |

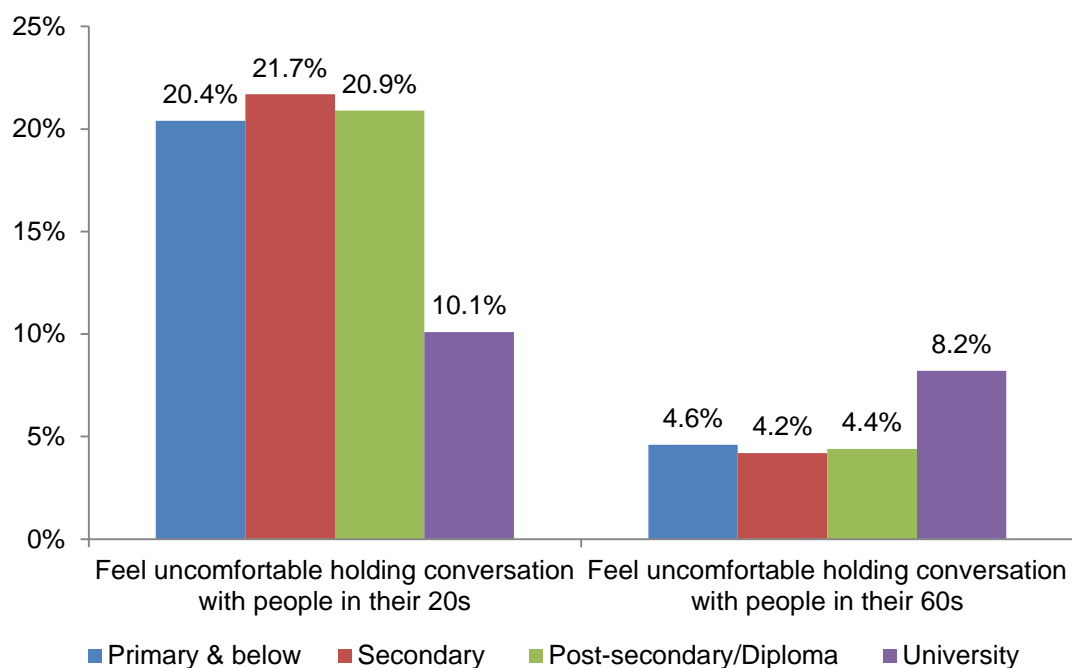
Figure 3.18: Sentiments Towards Young And Old, By Educational Status

The same trend was seen when respondents were asked about their comfort in holding a conversation with those who were in their 20s. Around 20% said they were not comfortable (Table 3.19). Among those who had university qualifications, only 10% felt this way (Figure 3.20).

Table 3.19: Comfort Level With The Young And The Old

| Overall how comfortable are you holding a conversation with... | Not really comfortable/uncomfortable | Predictors |
|--|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| People in their 20s | 20.2% | Lower levels of education |
| People in their late 60s | 4.7% | Higher levels of education |

Figure 3.20: Percentage Who Felt Uncomfortable Interacting With Young And Old, By Educational Status



4. LIFELONG LEARNING AND OPTIMISM IN EMPLOYABILITY

Research indicates that both lifelong learning and employability are important means for older persons to be engaged in society. They are also closely related to each other. Both learning and access to employment is important in facilitating participation in society and allowing older adults to enjoy a positive quality of life (WHO, 2002, p. 16). For example, the ability to solve problems and adapt to change is a strong predictor of active ageing and longevity (Smits et al., 1999; cited in WHO 2002, p26). Similarly, employability allows older workers to find productive activities to be engaged with, contribute to society and also fund some of their expenses.

4.1 Motivation for Lifelong Learning

When survey respondents were asked about their motivation to continue learning formally or informally, the motivators that resonated with most of the sample included how lifelong learning could help them better manage everyday life (89%) and keep up with changes (89%). Seniors were also motivated to learn so they could understand themselves (89%) and others (88%) better (See Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Motivations For Lifelong Learning

| | Agree/ Strongly agree |
|--|------------------------------|
| Improve employability | |
| So that I can improve my job skills to work easier or to get ahead | 63.6% |
| So I can earn a degree or certification that will advance my career | 23.2% |
| Staying relevant | |
| So I can better manage my everyday life | 89.3% |
| To keep up with changes around me | 88.7% |
| So I can understand and get along with others better | 88.0% |
| So I can understand myself better | 88.5% |
| Instrumental | |
| Makes me more confident that I will be employed in my later years | 64.2% |
| Allows me to find a job which will make me financially independent in my later years | 63.4% |
| Allows me to identify suitable employment opportunities | 64.0% |

There was lesser agreement among survey respondents about the motivation to learn for the purpose of employability. More than six out of 10 respondents (64%) agreed or strongly agreed that they would continue learning so that they could improve their job skills to work easier or get ahead. Fewer (23%) said they would learn to earn a degree or certificate to advance their career (See Table 4.1). Such instrumental motivations for learning were slightly more popular among those who were between 50 and 54 years of age, where about a third of survey respondents stated such a motivation (Figure 4.2). Among

those who had a diploma qualification, 34% reported that they wanted to learn for this reason (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.2: Percentage By Age Group Who Agreed On The Following Motivation To Learn

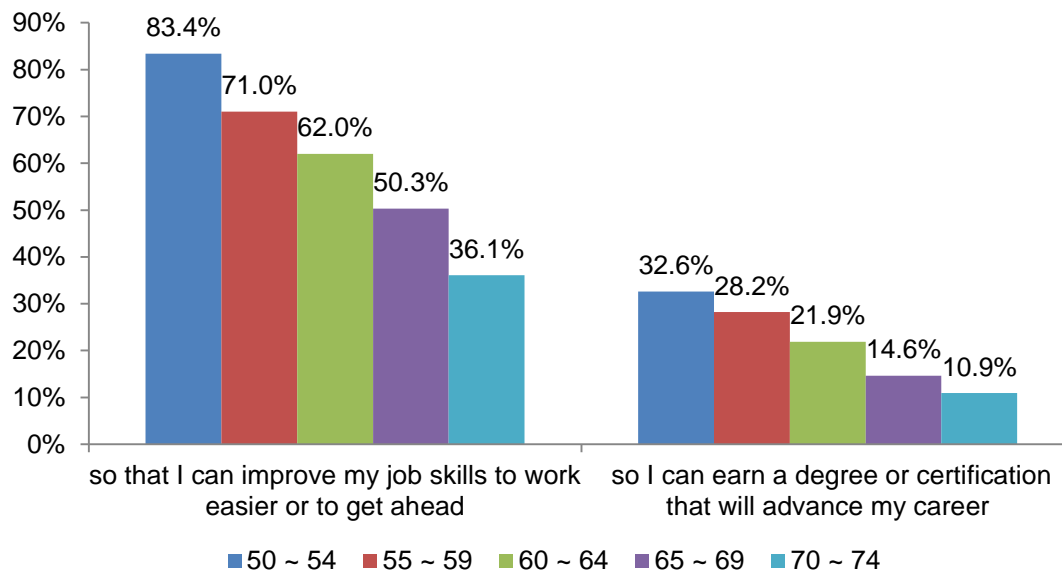
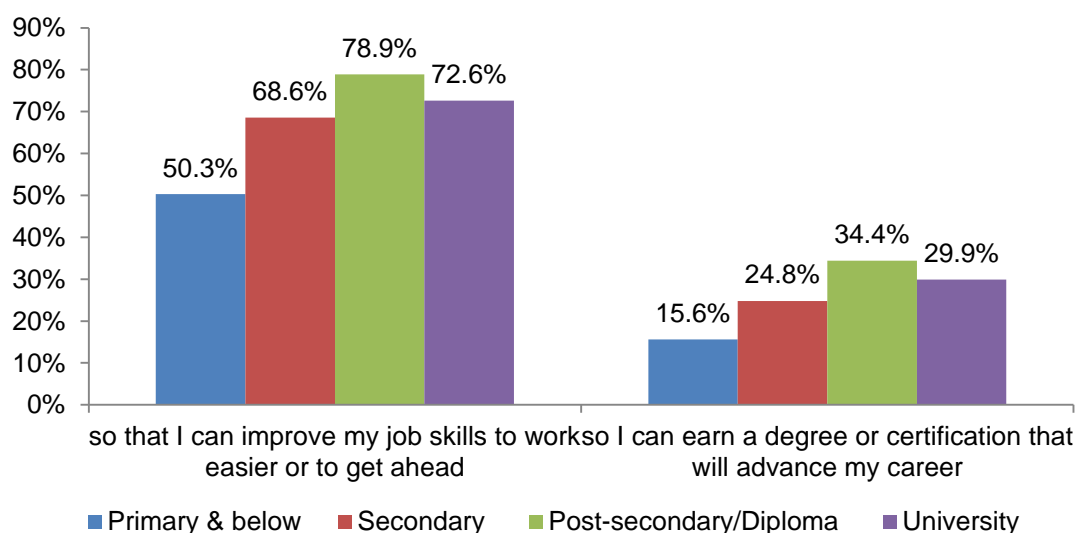


Figure 4.3: Percentage By Educational Status Who Agreed On The Following Motivation To Learn



About two-thirds of senior respondents agreed or strongly agreed that attending lifelong learning programmes would be beneficial in terms of increasing their confidence for employment in their later years, helping them identify suitable employment opportunities, or finding a job that will make them financially independent (See Table 4.1). They tended to be those who had secondary or diploma education (Table 4.4)

Table 4.4: Percentage Of Respondents By Educational Status Who Agreed On Following Benefits Of Lifelong Learning Programmes

| | Primary & below | Secondary | Post-secondary/ Diploma | University |
|--|-----------------|-----------|----------------------------|------------|
| It makes me more confident that I will be employed in my later years | 56.2% | 68.3% | 74.1% | 64.6% |
| It allows me to find a job that will make me financially independent in my later years | 56.0% | 68.3% | 71.0% | 61.4% |
| It allows me to identify suitable employment opportunities | 56.3% | 69.3% | 71.2% | 62.0% |

4.2 Preferred Learning Methods

Survey respondents acknowledged a variety of methods as helpful for their learning. There was greater preference for non-traditional learning methods. Compared with formal teacher-classroom settings (endorsed by 60%) or completing formal courses and completing assignments (endorsed by 45%), 84% of survey respondents agreed that learning through hands-on activities would be helpful. Other learning styles that seniors found helpful in their efforts to learn included asking family members (83%), informal groups where member teach one another based on experience (79%) and through the help of a senior guide (77%) (See Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Responses On Preferred Learning Methods

| | Agree/ Strongly agree |
|---|------------------------------|
| Formal methods | |
| In a formal teacher-classroom setting | 59.3% |
| By taking formal courses and completing assignments | 45.2% |
| Informal methods | |
| Through hands on activities | 83.7% |
| By asking my family members | 82.7% |
| In an informal group where members teach one another based on their expertise | 79.0% |
| When I have a guide, instructor, tutor, or mentor who is also a senior | 77.2% |
| In a group where students come from different age groups | 62.3% |

There seemed to be a slightly lower preference (62%) for learning in a group where students come from different age groups. Those who were older and less educated had more objections to such intergenerational-styled learning programmes. While nearly 75% of those between 50 to 54 years were open to learning in groups of people of varied ages, only 52% of those who were in their 70s agreed. Similarly, only 47% of those who had primary school or less education endorsed such intergenerational learning compared with about 70% for those with more education (Figures 4.6 and 4.7).

Figure 4.6: Respondents Who Indicated Preference For Learning In Groups With People Of Varied Ages, By Age Group

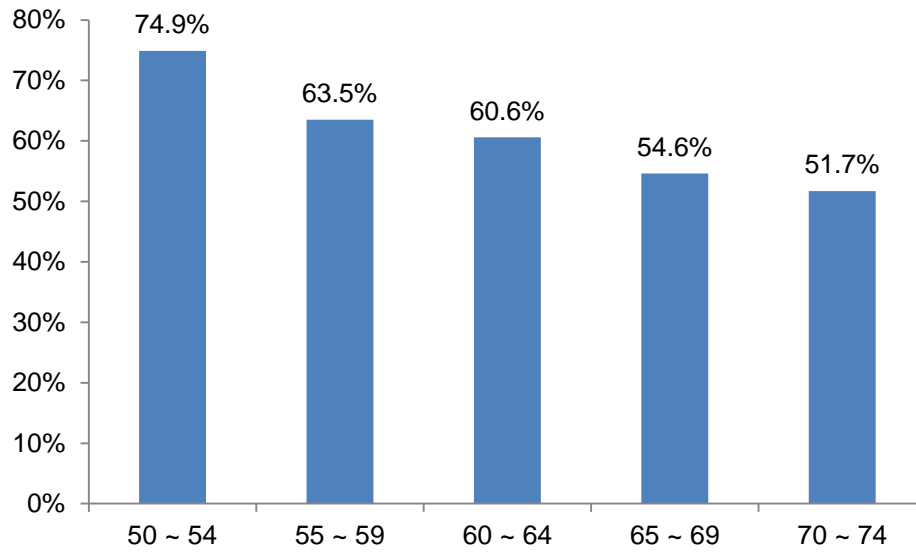
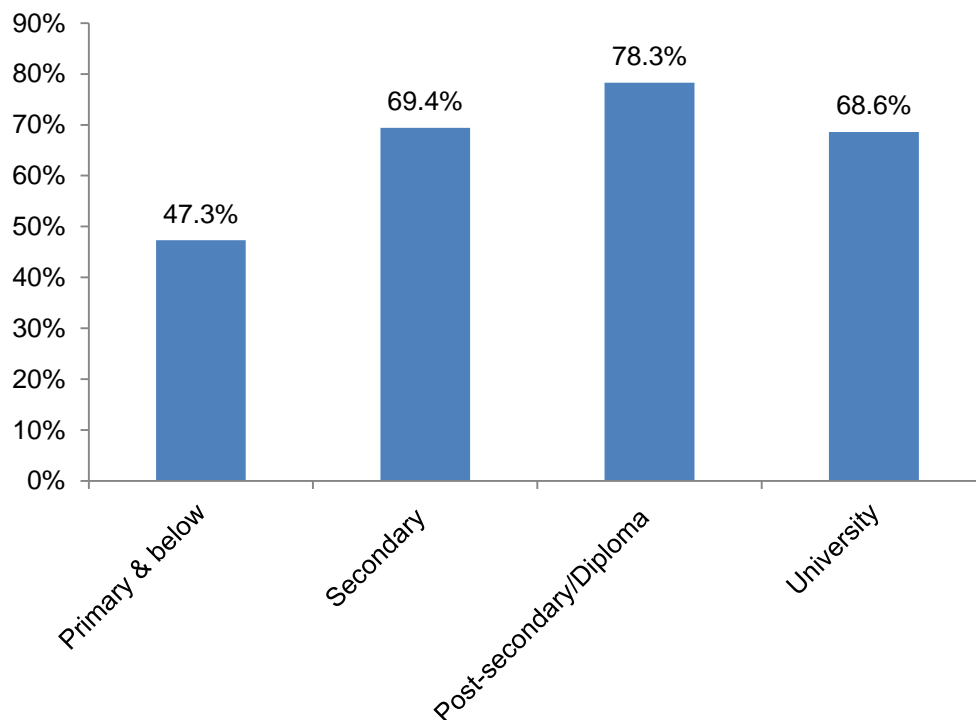


Figure 4.7: Respondents Who Indicated Preference For Learning In Groups With People Of Varied Ages, By Educational Status



4.3 Knowledge and Participation in Lifelong Learning

While attitudes were generally positive about the benefits of lifelong learning, there was comparatively less awareness and participation in lifelong learning programmes. About 58% of survey respondents knew about such programmes offered in places that were easily accessible to them, although less than 13% knew about courses near to where they lived (Table 4.8). Nearly half of the respondents (49%) were aware of lifelong learning courses guided by seniors and 47% knew about programmes that were in line with their past work experiences. Only 17% of respondents had enquired about a course that could help them stay employed (Table 4.9).

Table 4.8: Awareness Of Lifelong Learning Programmes

| Awareness | Agree/ Strongly agree |
|---|-----------------------|
| I know of lifelong learning programmes in places easily accessible to me | 58.0% |
| I know of lifelong learning programmes that are guided by seniors | 49.0% |
| I know of lifelong learning programmes that are in line with my past work experiences or the skills that I have | 47.1% |
| I have been able to locate courses that are near to where I live | 12.7% |

About 29% of seniors indicated that they had learnt something over the last one year that helped them stay relevant. Nearly a quarter (24%) had participated in new activities that provided them the experience of learning something new and interesting, while 18% had attended a course that allowed them to be better equipped to help their family and friends. About 17% had learnt something new from another senior (Table 4.9).

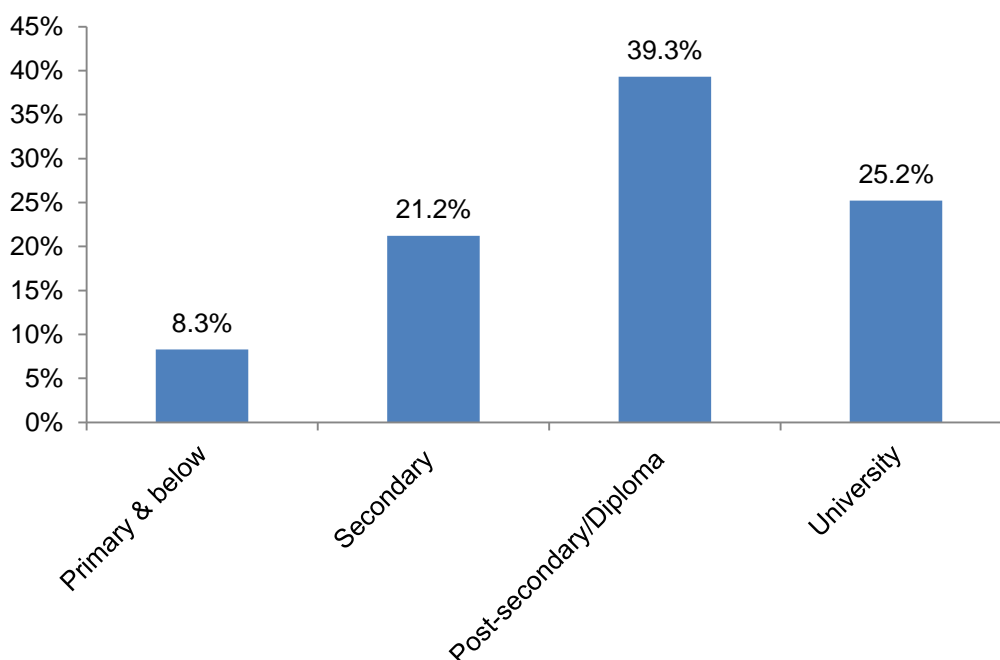
Table 4.9: Participation In Lifelong Learning Programmes

| Participation | Yes |
|--|------------|
| In the past year, you have learnt something that helps you stay relevant in a fast changing world | 29.1% |
| In the past year, you have participated in new activities that have provided you with the experience of learning something new and interesting | 24.1% |
| In the past year, you have attended a course that allowed you to be better equipped to help your friends and family in some way | 18.0% |
| In the past one year, have you enquired about a course that could help you stay employed? | 17.4% |
| In the past one year, have you learnt new things taught to you by a senior? | 16.6% |

4.4 Interest in Institutional-based Learning

The majority of respondents were not interested to enrol in university-level courses even when they did not need to complete formal requirements. Only 19% indicated interest in such programmes. Among those interested, there was greater interest among those with post-secondary and diploma qualifications where about 39% of them showed such interest compared with 21% of those with secondary school education and 25% of those with degrees (See Figure 4.10). The greater interest among those with post-secondary education probably stems from an interest and inclination for tertiary education, which they were not able to realise when they were younger. Those who had already obtained university education are probably less interested having had such opportunities earlier.

Figure 4.10: Percentage Of Respondents By Educational Level Who Indicated Interest In Enrolling For University-level Courses



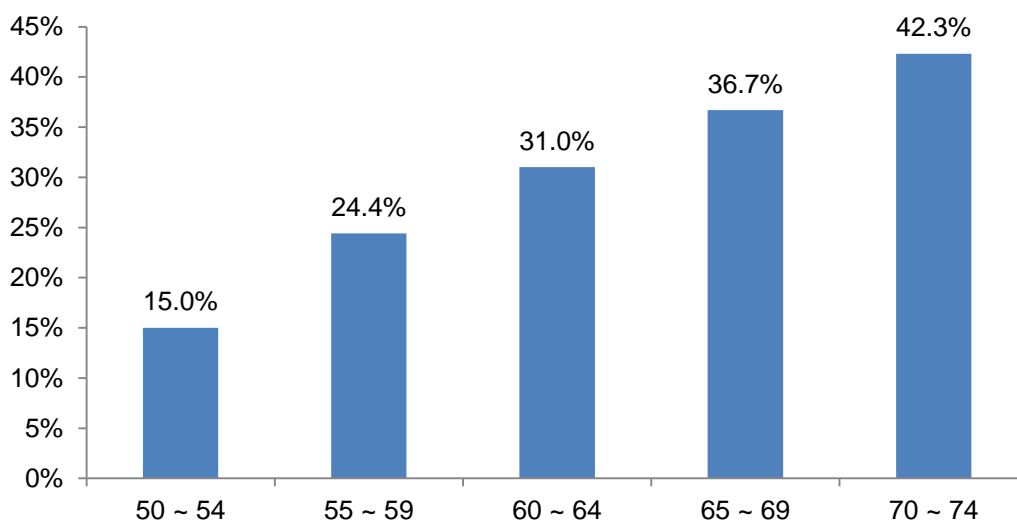
4.5 Barriers to Participation in Lifelong learning

The more commonly cited barriers to participating in lifelong learning included being busy with housework (49%); the fact that they were still working (49%); and that available courses are not relevant to everyday life (48%). More females (61%) were likely to cite housework commitments, while those who were in their early 50s were more likely (65%) to indicate their work as a barrier.

Table 4.11: Barriers To Lifelong Learning

| | Agree/ Strongly agree |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| I am busy with housework | 48.9% |
| I am still working | 48.9% |
| I am too old to learn new things | 28.3% |
| The courses available are not relevant to my everyday life. | 48.1% |
| Friends may laugh at us for wanting to learn new things at such an old age | 15.2% |

Few respondents (15%) agreed that a potential barrier to lifelong learning was related to being embarrassed that friends would laugh at them for wanting to learn new things at an old age. Similarly, only 28% of respondents agreed that they were too old to learn new things (See Table 4.11). This was a response that was more common among those between 70–74 years, where 42% agreed with the statement (Figure 4.12).

Figure 4.12: Percentage By Age Group On Believing Their Age Is A Barrier To Learn New Things

4.6 Perceptions on Employability

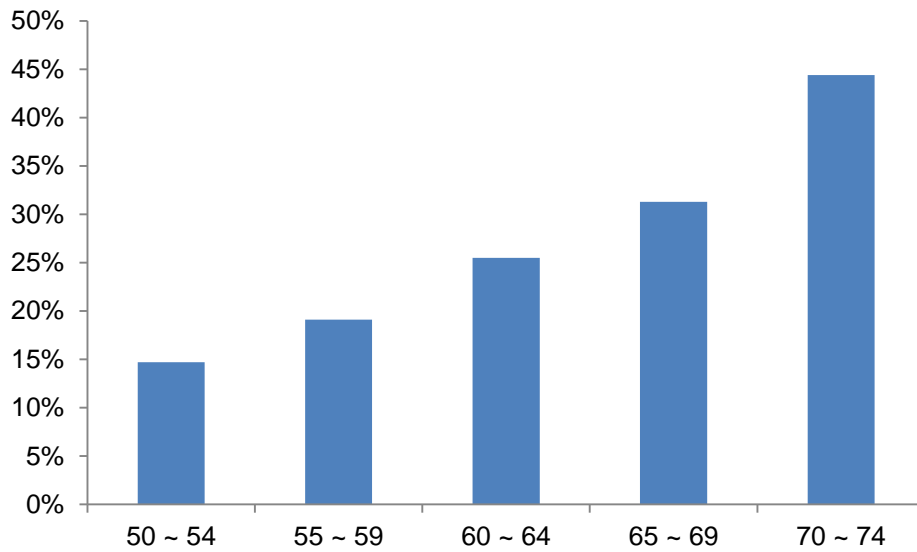
There was much consensus among seniors that working after retirement was positive. Around 90% of respondents agreed that continued employment would help them stay financially independent, socially connected, make friendships, give them a sense of self-worth and enable an active and productive life (See Table 4.13).

Table 4.13: Responses To Motivators Of Employment After Retirement

| | Agree/ Strongly agree |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Reasons to continue working | |
| Working after retirement is a good way to stay financially independent. | 91.1% |
| Working after retirement is a good way to stay socially connected with society. | 91.1% |
| Working after retirement is a good way to make friends. | 89.8% |
| Working after retirement gives people a sense of self-worth. | 88.6% |
| Working after retirement allows me to remain active and lead a productive life. | 87.5% |
| Personal motivators | |
| My children are supportive of my continued employment | 74.9% |

While the majority believed that their children were supportive of their continued employment, 25% disagreed (See Table 5.13). More of those who were between 70–74 years of age (44%) disagreed with this view (Figure 4.14).

Figure 4.14: Percentage Who Disagreed That Their Children Were Supportive Of Continued Employment, By Age Group



There was lesser agreement, however, as to whether it was easy to find employment. Only 53% of respondents agreed that there were sufficient job opportunities for seniors in the current job market, and 52% agreed that there were suitable jobs that could match their qualifications, experience or desired work experience (See Table 4.15).

Table 4.15: Summary Of Responses On Barriers To Employment After Retirement

| | Agree/ Strongly agree |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Employment opportunities | |
| There is a lack of job opportunities in the job market | 44.0% |
| There is a lack of suitable jobs to match my qualifications, experience or desired working arrangement | 48.1% |
| Personal barriers | |
| I would like to take slower pace to life since I have worked so hard over the past few decades | 63.5% |
| Work-based barriers | |
| Potential employers prefer to hire younger workers | 62.6% |
| I have to take a pay cut | 33.4% |
| I do not possess the right job hunting skills, e.g., resume writing and interviewing skills, etc. | 36.3% |

Prominent barriers to continued employment past official retirement age included a desire to take on a slower pace of life. This was endorsed by 64% of those between 55 to 59 years of age. In general, those who were still working were less prone to agree with this view. Overall, 69% of those holding some form of employment disagreed, compared to 50% of the unemployed and homemakers, and this trend was consistent across the different age groups surveyed.

Work-based barriers seemed to be a deterrent for those in their early 50s, compared with other age cohorts. For 68% of the cohort, it was agreed that potential employers preferred to hire younger workers, while 51% said that there was a lack of job opportunities in the market and 53% that there were a lack of suitable jobs to match their expectations. Around 44% among this

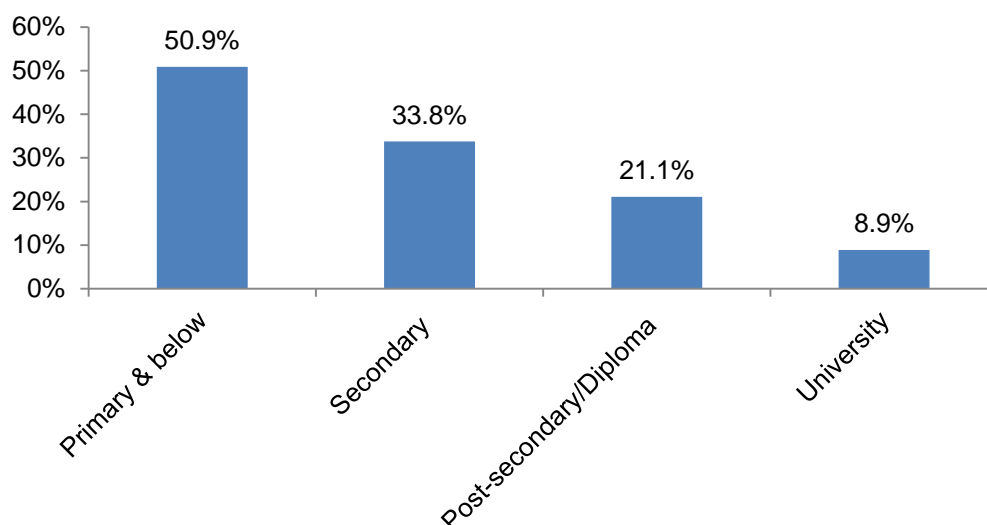
cohort agreed that having to take a pay cut would influence their decision to remain employed (Table 4.16).

Table 4.16: Percentage Who Agreed To The Following Being Barriers To Employment After Retirement, By Age Group

| | 50–54 | 55–59 | 60–64 | 65–69 | 70–74 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Potential employers prefer to hire younger workers | 68.0% | 61.2% | 61.9% | 60.9% | 59.7% |
| There is a lack of job opportunities in the job market | 51.3% | 42.0% | 42.9% | 38.9% | 44.2% |
| There is a lack of suitable jobs to match my qualifications, experience or desired working arrangement | 53.8% | 46.2% | 46.2% | 45.8% | 48.3% |
| I have to take a pay cut | 43.7% | 32.8% | 26.8% | 30.8% | 31.9% |

About a third of respondents of all age cohorts agreed that their lack of job-hunting skills was a barrier to continued employment (Table 4.15). They generally tended to be those with lower educational attainment. Among graduates, only 9% agreed to this compared to 51% of those who had primary education (Figure 4.17).

Figure 4.17: Percentage By Educational Status Who Felt Their Lack Of Job-hunting Skills Was A Barrier To Continued Employment



Among those who were 65 to 69 of age, 59% were not working while for those between 70 to 74 years, 77% were unemployed. Those who were working did so to be financially independent or to stay active. Among this older group, about 15% had recent experiences of their children discouraging them from working, although this was not the case for those who were more educated.

4.7 Voluntary Work

There was general agreement that voluntary work was beneficial in allowing seniors a way to stay socially connected (80%), find a sense of self-worth (79%) and lead a meaningful life (76%) (See Table 4.18). There was more consensus among those who were better educated. Among those who were university-educated, 89% agreed to the statement that, “Doing voluntary work after retirement allows me to remain active and lead a meaningful life.” This was in contrast to 72% of those who had a primary school education and 76% of those with secondary school education (Table 4.19). Those who were between 55 to 59 years tended to be more likely to agree that voluntary work

after retirement would give them a greater sense of self worth. Nearly 84% of those from this age group compared to about 75% of those who were 65 years and above agreed to the statement, “Doing voluntary work after retirement gives me a sense of self-worth” (Figure 4.20). Nonetheless, despite the generally positive sentiments towards doing voluntary work embraced by at least three-quarters of the PATAS respondents, only 43% acknowledged that they would consider volunteer work in the next few years (see Table 2.11).

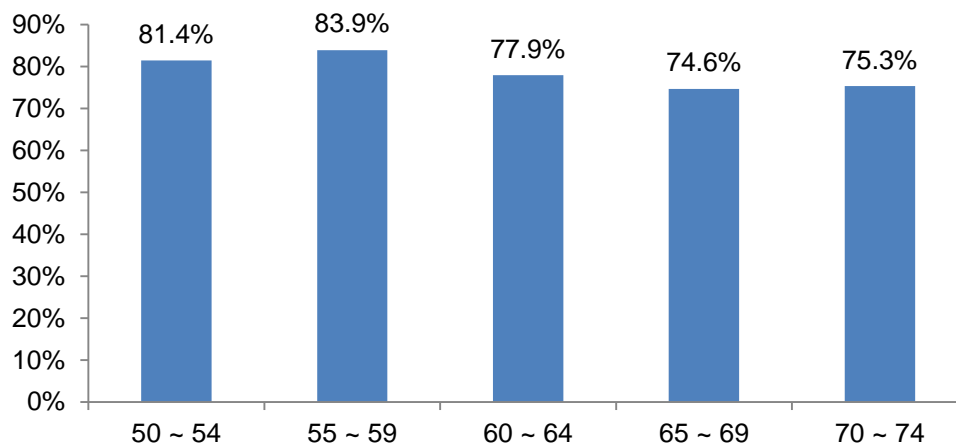
Table 4.18: Responses On Voluntary Work

| | Agree/ Strongly agree |
|--|------------------------------|
| Doing voluntary work after retirement allows me to remain active and lead a meaningful life. | 75.8% |
| Doing voluntary work after retirement is a good way to stay socially connected with society. | 80.2% |
| Doing voluntary work after retirement gives me a sense of self-worth | 79.3% |

Table 4.19: Percentage By Educational Status Who Agreed The Following About Volunteer Work

| | Primary & below | Secondary | Post-secondary/ Diploma | University |
|---|----------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Doing voluntary work after retirement allows me to remain active and lead a meaningful life | 71.5% | 75.5% | 80.3% | 89.3% |
| Doing voluntary work after retirement is a good way to stay socially connected with society | 78.3% | 79.6% | 82.4% | 88.1% |
| Doing voluntary work after retirement gives me a sense of self-worth | 77.3% | 79.2% | 80.0% | 88.1% |

Figure 4.20: Percentage Of Respondents Who Agreed That Voluntary Work After Retirement Would Give Them A Greater Sense Of Self-worth, By Age Group



5. Concluding Remarks

Perhaps the one key highlight from this study is how positive survey respondents are towards growing old. This is quite remarkable, given the youth-oriented stance of our society. As the baby-boomer generation moves progressively into the third age, they also shift the demographic profile of the post-65 years. With the majority enjoying the benefits of employment and formal education, the new old are savvier, financially better prepared for retirement, and socially more connected with their peers and the community they live in. In terms of public policy, the challenges are now focused on how to actively engage older Singaporeans so that the third age can be reconstructed to reflect their tremendous potential for involvement in the community.

The idea of engaging in voluntary work to lead a meaningful life was well endorsed by many, especially among the better-educated respondents of the

survey. More effort needs to be placed in promoting voluntary options for seniors. There should be a range of such options so that seniors who have different skills can make use of their talents for the benefit of the community. It is also important to help people redefine volunteerism as not being limited to helping in organised set-ups or institutions but also in many informal settings such as the neighbourhood.

There was much consensus on what successful ageing constituted and what was important in order to achieve such an ageing. This study shows that older adults value among other things physical health, financial independence and social connectedness. This means that to support Singaporeans in this endeavour, we will have to promote preventive health behaviour to sustain good health, empower retirement preparation with astute financial acumen, and promote a healthy work-life balance so that they can expand their social networks and leisurely interests outside of paid work.

There was also consensus of the kinds of knowledge that was required for people to age well. However, there was less enthusiasm about learning how to achieve successful ageing through courses. It will be important to consider how knowledge of successful ageing can be integrated in other avenues and through the use of role models who can share pertinent information to their social networks. With less than half of respondents able to identify one successful ager in their immediate social circle, it does seem that more can be done to identify and highlight such successful agers, especially among those who are not highly educated.

The seniors in our study, especially those who had better financial and health status, tended to have a good quality of life. Their social needs were also well met and many had the social support they needed. However, much of their social networks were based on family ties. Participation in the community was very much lower. While family ties at this stage are very strong, it is not clear whether shifting family norms, will result in the weakening of family based ties in years to come. As such it will be important for seniors to find opportunities to build meaningful connections through community-based activities.

It is also important to note that as more singles and childless couples move into the third age, we need to debunk the traditional expectation that the needs of the elderly can be taken care of by the family. We will have to ensure that there is sufficient infrastructure for ageing in place, and community social support for those who grow old in the absence of extended family support. As Singapore continues to grey, we will have to evolve a community self-help eco-system where older adults learn to rely on each other (rather than on their children, if any) as they strive to live independently for as long as possible. This means that rather than view ageing simplistically as a natural progression of the life cycle (and allow ourselves to work till we cannot continue), we must promote awareness that we have to prepare for the third age if we want to age gracefully. Successful ageing requires us to set specific goals, and work towards achieving these goals.

There was much consensus that lifelong learning was beneficial especially in allowing seniors to stay relevant in society. There were also fewer who subscribed to ageist beliefs about the difficulty of older people to learn. While lifelong learning seems to be normative among seniors, only a quarter had in the past year learnt something to keep themselves relevant. Fewer had attended courses. The learning needs of seniors differ and their preferences for learning are varied. As such, it is important for many different learning options, i.e., classroom-structured, informal and those guided by seniors to be made available. We should not merely imprint the model used for teaching young people on older persons since their motivations for learning differ substantially.

There was much consensus among seniors to remain employed. Respondents were aware of the positive benefits of this, including how work would enhance their social and financial independence. However, about half of the respondents in this survey expressed apprehension about whether there would be enough job options. This was especially so for those who were of lower socio-economic profiles. The issue of employability and seniors is complex. On one hand, there seems to be concerns raised by seniors about structural constraints based on hiring practices. On the other hand, a sizeable portion of seniors preferred a slower pace of life and a third felt that they did not possess needed job-hunting skills. Added to this, fewer seniors saw lifelong learning as a useful mechanism to remain employed. As such, increasing optimism for employability has to involve both greater buy-in from employers and also more realistic expectations by seniors about work and the

need for retraining. Redesigning work to make it more manageable and flexible is a step in the right direction since it allows seniors to participate in the work force, though hopefully at a pace they are comfortable with.

It is heartening that few seniors experienced age discrimination or felt that others were prejudiced against them. However, one in five respondents felt uncomfortable in holding conversations with young people. Considering that those with lesser education were more likely to feel this way, it is important to help this group with the needed skills to maintain such connection with younger people who on the whole are IT-savvy and knowledgeable. The ability to bridge the gap with those who are younger is needed to ensure good intergenerational cohesion. Intergenerational programmes are probably useful in this regard but it is important to position them in a way that will encourage those who are older and less educated to participate since they are currently not as amenable to this as other groups.

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