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1 in 4 Singaporeans say they are not in good mental health

Latest findings from an Ipsos survey

Singapore, 8th May 2020 – A new Ipsos survey conducted over the period of 24th Apr to 4th May 2020, sought to understand how Singaporeans were coping with the mental stress in the first weeks of the Circuit Breaker.

From 7th Apr 2020, Singapore was placed under a slew of Circuit Breaker measures in the effort to curb the COVID-19 outbreak in Singapore. The measures include social distancing measures that allow only essential businesses and services to maintain physical operations. All other businesses are required to have employees work from home or temporarily suspend their operations.

In a previous Ipsos poll conducted in early February when the DORSCON alert level was raised to Orange, 74% of Singaporeans agreed that their income would be affected if the COVID-19 situation does not improve in the following 6 months, indicating a real concern over the maintenance of their livelihood in the months to come.

The latest nationally representative survey conducted by Ipsos has 1 in 2 (54%) of adults say that they are now working from home. There are 14% who continue to work from outside of home and 16% has had their work suspended or completely stopped due to COVID-19.

Among the 68% who are still working (be it work-from-home or otherwise), a third claim that their work has become more challenging or work has increased.

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It is encouraging to see that overall, 3 in 4 Singaporeans rate their mental health as good, very good or excellent. The remaining 25%, however indicate fair or poor mental health. Those who are not fairing so well generally exist across the population regardless of their work situation. Naturally, the least affected are those whose work situations have had little change (ie. Continue to work outside of home, and work volume has not dropped.)

By demographics however, more men (57%) rate their mental health as very good or excellent than women (43%). Half (51%) of those who report great mental health are those aged 45 years old and above. Youths aged below 34 were more likely than older individuals (>45 years old) to indicate 'poor/fair' mental health.

When asked about how their current mental health has changed, majority of Singaporeans (68%) indicated that it was fairly unchanged over the 'past 7 days' (this refers to the period over the second week of the Circuit breaker). While 14% say that it is getting better as the days pass, we see a concerning 18% who share that they deem their mental health as getting worse. In particular, those who rated that their current mental health as 'fair/poor' were more likely to have shared that their mental health is 'getting worse as the days pass'. Youths aged below 34 were also more likely than older individuals to indicate their mental health is 'getting worse as the days pass' while those aged 45 and above tend to claim their mental health is fairly unchanged.

Tan Hui-Ching, Director of Public Affairs at Ipsos in Singapore said, "Of those who say that their mental health is good at the moment, it is not to say that it will continue to be good. There are some in this group who also say that their mental health is declining as the days pass; Neither are the mental health levels significantly different between those who are working from home and those working in essential services. It is interesting to note that more women expressed poorer mental wellness than men. This is probably reflective of a variety of factors, but it begs to understand if the stresses that women go through are

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significantly higher than the men in the Circuit Breaker period.”

Tan adds, “Mental wellbeing is a complex matter that have come to the fore in recent years. It is becoming less of a taboo topic as awareness increases. Employers and individuals are paying more attention to the matter, recognising the multiple factors that contribute to a person’s mental and emotional wellbeing. Whatever the causes of poor mental health are for Singaporeans, it is important to recognise that the resilience of any society to overcome any crisis depends as much on their mental strength as it is on physical measures. As individuals, the help we extend to the community could start with a simple, “How are you?”

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Note to Editors

About the study

This study did not have any external sponsors or partners. It was initiated and run by Ipsos with the intention to share our understanding about the world we live in and how citizens think and feel about their world.

- The survey was conducted online between **24th April and 4th May 2020**, among a nationally representative sample of n=1,000 Singaporean Citizens and Permanent Residents aged 18 and above.
- Quotas on age, gender and ethnicity were employed to ensure that the sample’s composition reflects the overall population distribution, based on Singapore Department of Statistics population estimates.
- The precision of online surveys is measured using a credible interval. In this case, the results reported are accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points of the views and

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perspectives of all Singaporeans aged 18 and above (at 95% confidence interval).
Credible intervals are wider among subsets of the population.

For further information or to set up further interviews with opinion leaders cited in this article,
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