2018 National Values Assessment Provides Update on Singaporeans' Views about Society and their Workplace

The study suggests that affordable housing, effective healthcare, care for the elderly and disadvantaged, respect and compassion are what would define Singaporeans' ideal society, while employee recognition, engagement and fulfilment, mentoring and continuous learning are what would define employed Singaporeans ideal workplace.

Singapore, 30 July 2018, 5:30pm – aAdvantage Consulting Group and Barrett Values Centre (BVC) jointly conducted the 2018 Singapore National Values Assessment, which examined what Singaporeans consider to be the values, beliefs and behaviours that best describe them at a personal level, their perceptions of Singapore society and their workplace today, and their vision of the ideal society and workplace. Values, as defined by BVC includes beliefs and behaviours that together, are expressions of human needs and desires.

2,000 Singaporeans were surveyed, primarily face-to-face, between March and May 2018 using a stratified quota sample that represents Singapore society by gender, age, ethnicity and housing type was taken for the survey process. *(Refer to Annex 1 for the detailed respondent profile)*.

The survey consisted of three questions where respondents chose, out of a list of values, beliefs and behaviours, 10 words each that best described themselves, Singapore society currently, and their notion of the ideal Singapore society. 956 of the 2,000 surveyed, selected because they worked in organisations with at least five employees for at least three months when they were approached, answered two further questions about their perceptions of the workplace currently and their desired workplace.

"The objectives of the study are to obtain preliminary insights into what matters to Singaporeans, and to generate meaningful dialogue about the society and workplace environment that Singaporeans desire," said Vincent Ho, Director of aAdvantage Consulting Group.

This is the third time aAdvantage and BVC has jointly conducted this study. The previous two surveys were conducted in 2012 and 2015.

"Our motivation in embarking on the 2018 National Values Assessment was drawn from the previous two rounds as the results not only resonated with what we felt about the Singapore society then, including the workplace environment, but the key topics that surfaced were subsequently discussed in the media, government, interest groups and among the general public," said Vincent.

The 2018 National Values Assessment results were released on 30 July 2018 at a closed-door discussion organised by the Institute of Policy Studies where Mr Vincent Ho was the speaker, and Associate Professor Tan Ern Ser from the NUS Department of Sociology, Mr Ho Meng Kit, CEO of Singapore Business Federation, and Ms K Thanaletchimi, President of the Healthcare Services Employees' Union were the

From vision to results

discussants. Participants of this session were from the public and private sectors, non-government organisations and academia.

What Singaporeans Consider to be the Values and Behaviours that Best Describe Themselves

Top 10 Values – Personal (in no particular order of importance)		
2012	**2015**	**2018**
Family	Family	Family
Friendship	Responsibility	Health
Health	Friendship	Caring
Happiness	Happiness	Friendship
Caring	Health	Responsibility
Honesty	Caring	Honesty
Responsibility	Honesty	Happiness
Well-being (physical/ emotional/ mental/ spiritual)	Compassion	Compassion
Respect	Positive attitude	Balance (home/work)
Balance (home/work)	Respect	Humour/ fun

Blue = common across 2012, 2015 and 2018

The 2018 study showed that Singaporeans value their personal well-being, with values such as Health, Happiness, Balance (Home/Work) and Humour/Fun among the most commonly cited. Singaporeans also prioritise having close connections and relationships, selecting values such as Family, Friendship, Caring and Compassion.

How Singaporeans perceive the Singapore society as it is today

Top 10 Values – Current Society (in no particular order of importance)		
2012	**2015**	**2018**
Kiasu (L)	Kiasu (L)	Kiasu (L)
Competitive (L)	Competitive (L)	Complaining (L)*
Self-centred (L)	Materialistic (L)	Competitiveness (L)
Material needs	Self-centered (L)	Materialistic (L)
Kiasi (L)	Kiasi (L)	Educational opportunities
Deteriorating values (L)	Blame (L)	Blame (L)
Elitism (L)	Security	Kiasi (L)
Blame (L)	Education opportunities	Self-centredness (L)
Uncertainty about the future (L)	Effective healthcare	Care for the elderly
Security	Peace	Effective healthcare

Blue = common across 2012, 2015 and 2018

From vision to results

(L) = Potentially Limiting Value
Complaining was a new value added into this year's study

Of the Top 10 values, the positive values Singaporeans selected for what best reflect Singapore society today are Educational Opportunities, Effective Healthcare and Care for the Elderly, with the latter appearing in the top 10 for the first time in three rounds of survey (Figure 1). "This could be an indication of positive change," remarked Vincent.

The remaining seven Top 10 values selected are "potentially limiting", which refers to values, beliefs and behaviours that may not be intrinsically negative can be harmful if lived to excess. These were 'Kiasu', Complaining and Competitiveness. With the exception of Complaining, which was a new value added into this year's study for a more comprehensive reflection of Singapore society, all other potentially limiting values were also present in the Top 10 current society values in the 2015 survey.

"It would be interesting for Singaporeans to reflect on the stress experienced within the society today and think about what we can do as individuals to effect positive change," noted Vincent.

What Singaporeans said would define their desired Singapore society

Top 10 Values – Desired Society		
(in no particular order of importance)		
2012	**2015**	**2018**
Affordable housing	Affordable housing	Affordable housing
Caring for the elderly	Caring for the elderly	Care for the elderly
Effective healthcare	Effective healthcare	Compassion
Caring for the disadvantaged	Compassion	Care for the disadvantaged
Compassion	Quality of life	Effective healthcare
Concern for future generations	Caring for the disadvantaged	Caring for the environment
Quality of life	Peace	Dependable public services
Equal opportunities	Employment opportunities	Educational opportunities
Social responsibility	Caring for the environment	Concern for future generations
Employment opportunities	Concern for future generations	Respect

Blue = common across 2012, 2015 and 2018
Dependable Public Services was a new value added into this year's study to better reflect societal expectations

The 2018 study showed three new additions to the list of Top 10 desired values which were not in the Top 10 list in 2015. These are Dependable Public Services, Educational Opportunities and Respect.

"While basic needs will always be important, it is heartening the survey provides evidence that Singaporeans do want our society to be defined by higher order values like Compassion and Respect. We need mutual support and a strong sense of solidarity to overcome the more negative values like

Complaining, *Kiasu* and *Kiasi* found in our current culture that are barriers to that aspiration," remarked A/P Tan.

Values that Singaporeans want to see more of in the desired society when compared to current conditions

The survey also measured which values within the current society Singaporeans want to see more of in their desired society. These are called values jumps. The values with the highest value jumps, those with the biggest increase in votes in terms of current versus desired society, are Affordable Housing, Compassion, Care for the Disadvantaged, Care for the Elderly, Respect and Care for the Environment. (*Refer to Annex 2 for more information*).

In the Workplace – What Employed Singaporeans consider are the values and behaviours that best describe themselves

Top 10 Values – Personal (Employed Singaporeans)		
(in no particular order of importance)		
2012	**2015**	**2018**
Family	Family	Family
Friendship	Responsibility	Responsibility
Happiness	Friendship	Balance (home/work)
Responsibility	Happiness	Friendship
Health	Balance (work/home)	Health
Balance (work/home)	Positive attitude	Caring
Well-being (physical/ emotional/ mental/ spiritual)	Caring	Compassion
Positive attitude	Honesty	Honesty
Honesty	Health	Positive attitude
Accountability	Adaptability	Happiness

Blue = common across 2012, 2015 and 2018

The 2018 study showed that employed Singaporeans value individual traits such as Responsibility and Honesty, as well as descriptors focused on the overall sense of well-being, including Happiness, Positive Attitude, Health and Balance (Home/Work). They also chose relational values such as Family, Friendship, Compassion and Caring, as part of the top 10 values that describe themselves.

In the Workplace – How Employed Singaporeans perceive their workplace as it is today

Top 10 Values – Current Workplace		
(in no particular order of importance)		
2012	**2015**	**2018**
Customer satisfaction	Customer satisfaction	Teamwork
Teamwork	Teamwork	Continuous improvement
Cost reduction (L)	Cost reduction (L)	Continuous learning

From vision to results

Long hours (L)	Brand image	Cost reduction (L)
Brand image	Balance (home/work)	Customer satisfaction
Results orientation	Long hours (L)	Results orientation
Continuous improvement	Achievement	Achievement
Accountability	Profit	Balance (home/work)
Continuous learning	Results orientation	Long hours (L)
Hierarchy (L)	Professionalism	Information sharing

Blue = common across 2012, 2015 and 2018
(L) = Potentially Limiting Value

Based on the 2018 results, it appears that organisations are trying to balance the need for Business Change (Continuous Improvement and Learning, Team Work and Information Sharing) and Excellence (Results Orientation, Achievement, Customer Satisfaction) at the same time.

The two potentially limiting values in the Top 10 current culture values – Cost Reduction and Long Hours, were observed in the 2012 and 2015 study as well. "The resulting behaviours of potentially limiting values may create negative 'energy' if continued to a certain extent. Given the current uncertainties in the market today, it is certainly a good sign that organisations are spending more positive energies in enabling its people towards change. However, if there are negative behaviours arising out of potentially limiting values (i.e. long hours, cost reduction), full transformation may be impeded despite the best of intentions," explained Vincent.

Among the new values that surfaced in the Top 10 current culture values are Continuous Improvement, Continuous Learning and Information Sharing. "This appears to reflect an alignment to a nationwide movement towards learning, upgrading, upskilling and innovation that the government has been encouraging individuals and businesses to do more of," commented Vincent.

Mr Ho Meng Kit added, "It Is heartening to observe a shift in the top workplace values towards transformation from 2015 to 2018. This shows that the call for businesses to transform and respond to the changing economic landscape has received some traction. I encourage the business community to press on with these efforts relentlessly to be better positioned to seize opportunities ahead."

"In addition, local firms are increasingly realising the need to venture abroad as internationalisation becomes more crucial and prevalent. In light of these developments, I hope to see values like Ease with Uncertainty, Embracing Diversity and Risk-Taking become more important in the workplace."

In the Workplace – What Singaporeans said would define their desired workplace

Top 10 Values – Desired Workplace		
(in no particular order of importance)		
2012	**2015**	**2018**
Balance (home/work)	Balance (home/work)	Employee recognition
Teamwork	Employee recognition	Balance (home/work)
Employee recognition	Teamwork	Teamwork
Employee fulfilment	Caring	Continuous improvement

Continuous improvement	Coaching/ mentoring	Continuous learning
Continuous learning	Employee engagement	Employee engagement
Respect	Cooperation	Coaching/ mentoring
Staff engagement	Fairness	Employee health
Coaching/ mentoring	Efficiency	Open communication
Leadership development	Respect	Employee fulfilment

Blue = common across 2012, 2015 and 2018

When matched against the Top 10 current culture values selected, four of the Top 10 desired values (Teamwork, Continuous Improvement, Continuous Learning and Balance (Home/Work)) are currently experienced by Singaporean employees in their organisations. "This suggests that workplaces are laying a good foundation that would put them in good stead to meet the needs of both organisations and employees moving forward. There is a strong call for a more fulfilling work experience through coaching/ mentoring, open communications and employee engagement within the organisation. It would be worthwhile to understand how these can be developed to sustainably meet desired organisational outcomes such as business growth, employee and customer satisfaction," explained Vincent.

Half of the top 10 values selected in the 2018 study for the desired workplace culture are similar to what was desired in the 2015 study, reflecting what remains important to working Singaporeans: Employee Recognition, Teamwork, Balance (Home/Work), Employee Engagement and Coaching/ Mentoring.

In the Workplace – Values in the current workplace Singaporeans want to see more of

The survey also measured which values in the current workplace Employed Singaporeans want to see more of in the workplace. These are called values jumps. The values with the biggest increase in votes in terms of current versus desired workplace, are Employee Recognition, Employee Fulfilment, Balance (Home/Work), Employee Engagement, Open Communication and Employee Health *(Refer to Annex 3 for more information)*.

Next Steps

"Given the nature and practical limitations of the study, the findings are not intended to be conclusive, and we make no attempt to interpret the results. The value of the study comes in the form of subsequent dialogues with relevant stakeholders over what is flagged out as key questions," said Vincent. "Perhaps some of these key questions or talking points would be:

For the Singapore Society at large

1. How do we manage the priorities between more basic needs like effective healthcare and affordable housing vis-à-vis aspirations of compassion and care for the less privileged?
2. What does it take for us to move from "blaming/complaining" to taking personal accountability of what's desired in our society?
3. What roles and responsibilities can the community of stakeholders play to effect the desired change?

For organisational leaders and management

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1. As the economy restructures, what's the correct balance in terms of excellence in execution, financial results and innovating for the future?
2. What's currently inhibiting organisations in terms of leadership and culture? What's being done to address these?
3. What can organisation leaders do to create a conducive workplace environment to meet the personal aspirations and motivations of your employees?

About aAdvantage Consulting Group

aAdvantage Consulting is a business consultancy firm that partners organisations in leading their business and organisational transformation from "Vision to Results". Established in 2002, we help our clients turn strategies into business results through our People, Process and Performance solutions. As part of our organisation development and business transformation consulting services, we provide holistic and customised solutions to assist clients achieve lasting change. We believe that a shared leadership, vision, clear standards, processes and roles, performance management and people development all come together to ensure sustainable change in organisations.

www.aadvantage-consulting.sg

About Barrett Values Centre

The Barrett Values Centre provides powerful metrics that enable leaders to measure and manage the cultures of their organisations, and the leadership development needs of their managers and leaders. The core products of the organisation are the Cultural Transformation Tools (CTT) which have been used to map the values of over 6,000 organisations and 3,000 leaders in 90 countries. The CTT values assessment instruments are available in over 50 languages and are used by corporations, NGOs, government and municipal agencies, communities, schools and nations.
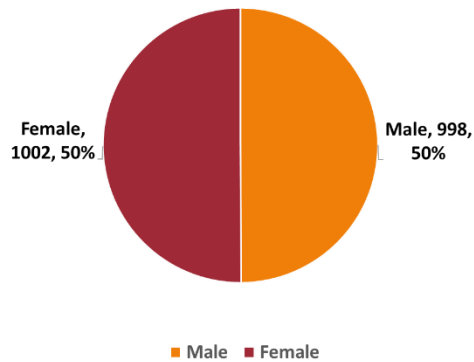
www.valuescenter.com

About the National Values Assessment

The survey instrument was developed by Barrett Values Centre which has offices in the United States and the United Kingdom. The questionnaire has been previously administered in more than 20 countries. Some of the items in the questionnaire were adapted to suit Singapore's context.
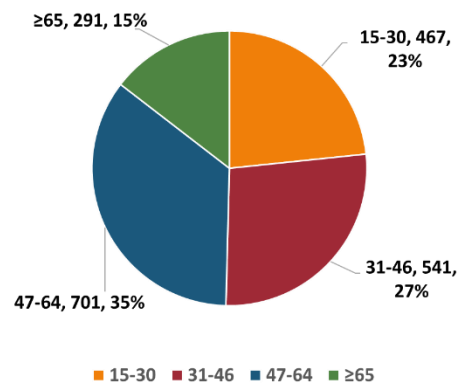
From vision to results

Annex 1 – Respondent Profile

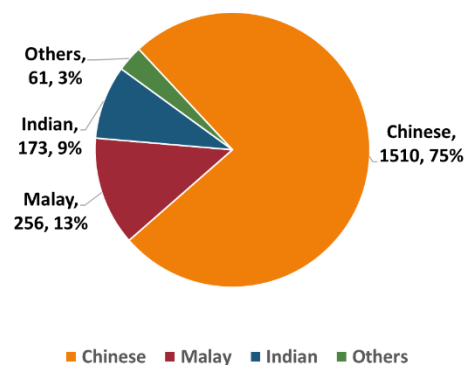<u>Out of 2,000 Singapore Citizens</u>

Gender (n=2000)

Female, 1002, 50%
Male, 998, 50%

■ Male ■ Female

Age (n=2000)

≥65, 291, 15%
15-30, 467, 23%
31-46, 541, 27%
47-64, 701, 35%

■ 15-30 ■ 31-46 ■ 47-64 ■ ≥65

Housing Type (n=2000)

HDB 1-3 Rm, 389, 20%
Landed, Shophse, 122, 6%
Private Apt, Condo, 268, 13%
HDB 4-5 Rm, Exec, 1221, 61%

■ HDB 1-3 Rm ■ HDB 4-5 Rm, Exec
■ Private Apt, Condo ■ Landed, Shophse
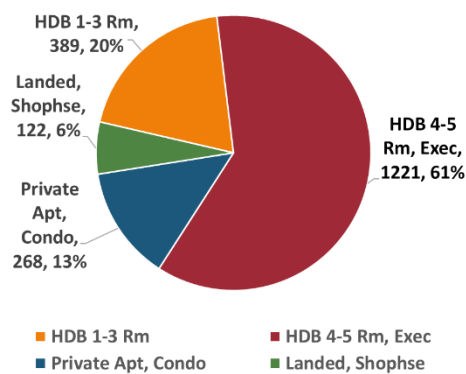
Education Qualifications (n=2000)

Pri Sch & below, 323, 16%
O' lvl, 'N' lvl, NITEC, 585, 29%
A' lvl, Diploma, 422, 21%
Degree and above, 670, 34%

■ Pri Sch & below ■ O' lvl, 'N' lvl, NITEC
■ A' lvl, Diploma ■ Degree and above

Ethnicity (n=2000)

Others, 61, 3%
Indian, 173, 9%
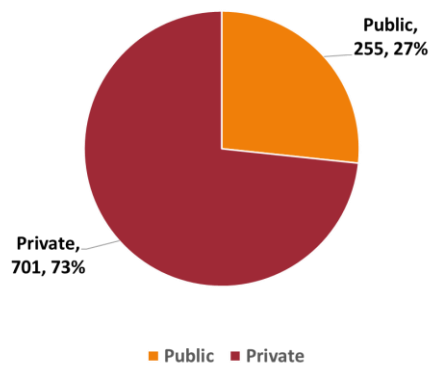Malay, 256, 13%
Chinese, 1510, 75%

■ Chinese ■ Malay ■ Indian ■ Others
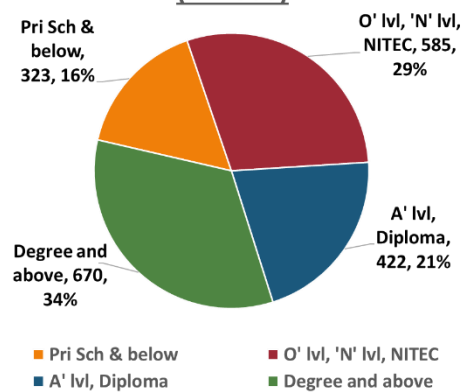
Out of 956 Employed Singaporeans (subset of 2,000 respondents surveyed)

Employment Sector (n=956)

Public, 255, 27%

Private, 701, 73%

■ Public   ■ Private

Company Size (n=956)

≤200 employees, 451, 47%

>200 employees, 505, 53%

■ ≤200 employees   ■ >200 employees

Job Level (n=956)

Support/ Ops, 323, 34%

Top Mgmt, 72, 7%

Middle Mgmt, 249, 26%

Exec/Snr Exec, 312, 33%

■ Top Mgmt   ■ Middle Mgmt
■ Exec/Snr Exec   ■ Support/Ops

Length of Service (n=956)

≥20 years, 87, 9%

< 1 year, 110, 12%

10 to < 20 years, 166, 17%

1 to <3 years, 209, 22%

5 to < 10 years, 189, 20%

3 to < 5 years, 195, 20%

■ < 1 year   ■ 1 to <3 years
■ 3 to < 5 years   ■ 5 to < 10 years
■ 10 to < 20 years   ■ ≥20 years
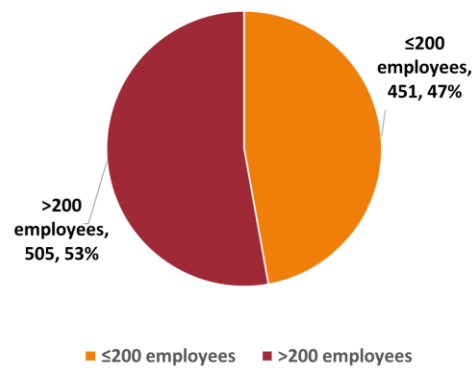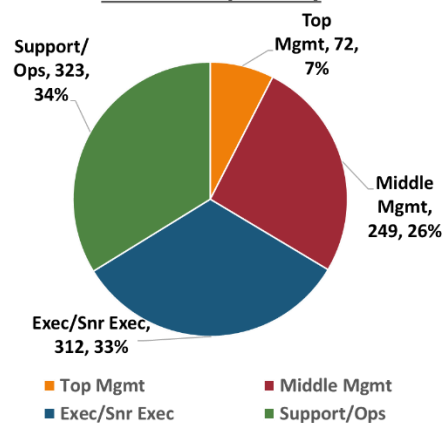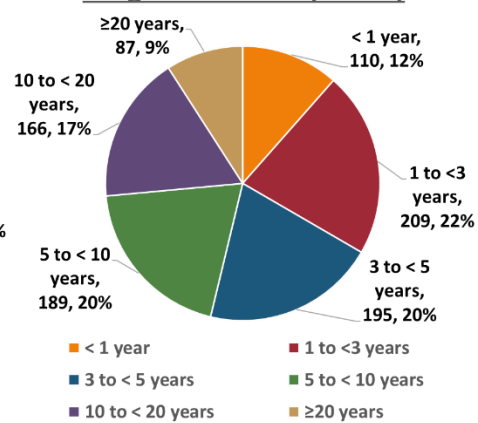
Annex 2 – 2018 Value Jumps (Singapore Society)

Singapore NVA 2018: Value Jumps

A value jump occurs when there are more votes for a value in the Desired Culture than in the Current Culture. Listed below are the values with the largest increase in votes. The values in bold are represented in the Desired Culture.

	Current Culture Votes	Desired Culture Votes	Jump
Affordable housing	251	773	522
Compassion	208	656	448
Care for the disadvantaged	243	562	319
Care for the elderly	446	725	279
Respect	124	400	276
Care for the environment	232	503	271
Positive attitude	50	288	238
Transparency	63	284	221
Integrity	92	308	216
Helpfulness	160	372	212

Annex 3 – 2018 Value Jumps (Singapore Workplace)

Singapore Workplace CVA 2018: Value Jumps

A value jump occurs when there are more votes for a value in the Desired Culture than in the Current Culture. Listed below are the values with the largest increase in votes. The values in bold are represented in the Desired Culture.

	Current Culture Votes	Desired Culture Votes	Jump
Employee recognition	153	360	207
Employee fulfilment	46	204	158
Balance (home/work)	190	321	131
Employee engagement	129	255	126
Open communication	109	205	96
Employee health	118	209	91
Trust	73	161	88
Encouragement	94	179	85
Fairness	118	202	84
Well-being (physical/ emotional/ mental/ spiritual)	47	128	81

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