ANNEXES

PERCEPTION SURVEY ON THE MALAY/MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN SINGAPORE

BACKGROUND

The Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP) commissioned a perception study in 2011 to better understand the aspirations and expectations of the Malay/Muslim community (MMC) today in terms of its progress and position in Singapore's development and its contribution to nation building.

Approximately 350 members of the Malay/Muslim community were interviewed over a period of two months. The sample was representative of the age, gender and socio-economic composition of the Malay/Muslim community as reflected in the most recent Department of Statistics' Census data.

Additionally, 59 key influencers identified by AMP as prominent figures in the Malay/Muslim community completed online interviews. A small number of these figures include non-Malay/Muslim figures who are deemed as being familiar with the community. This group comprised leading individuals from various sectors such as the media, civil service, social and business sectors, as well as entrepreneurs who have considerable influence on the community.

In-depth interviews were also conducted with a handful of opinion leaders in the community including policymakers and leaders of prominent ethnic-based community organisations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Generally Contented Community

The survey found that the community was satisfied with the direction that the country is taking and was optimistic of the progress made by local Malay/Muslims over the last five years.

Nearly two in three Malay/Muslim respondents (63%) believed that Singapore is currently on the right track, largely attributable to the country's economic stability and growing prosperity. Those who felt Singapore is on the wrong track (17%) cited the high cost of living today as the main factor for thinking so.

56% of Malay/Muslims believed that Singapore has made progress in the last five years. In comparison, only about a third (31%) believed the Malay/Muslim community has made progress in the last five years. Less than one in ten (9%) believed the situation has gotten worse for Malay/ Muslims, while 59% think that things have remained stable.

According to more than half of those who indicated that things have gotten better in the last five years, the main area of improvement identified was education.

Cost of Living is Main Issue

More than three in five Malay/Muslims (62%) highlighted the general cost of living as an important issue for the community, ahead of the issues of employment (35%) and housing affordability (31%). From the demographic analysis, cost of living is a far bigger issue among those with lower education (secondary and below).

Most Malay/Muslims (65%) believed their community enjoys the same

opportunities as other Singaporeans. In contrast, nearly half (48%) of the key influencers who were surveyed thought otherwise.

Likewise, cost of living is cited as an area where Malay/Muslims felt that they are worse off compared to other Singaporeans. Among the key influencers, the community is seen as being greatly disadvantaged when it comes to competing against foreigners for employment, as compared to other Singaporeans.

Optimistic About the Future

Over three in four Malay/Muslims (76%) indicated their confidence in the prospects for the community over the next decade. Key influencers were, however, more polarised in their opinions with many expressing skepticism about the community's prospects.

Community Leadership

Malay/Muslims generally felt that their community organisations should be involved and engaged in a wide variety of areas. Support for families is identified as the top most priority – with 88% believing that it needs higher priority. A wide range of other issues are felt to be deserving of greater priority by Malay/Muslim organisations.

Employment-related support is found to be an emerging issue among Malay/Muslim women. Job training and job search support were issues more likely to be identified by women as requiring higher priority from community organisations.

Malay/Muslims generally felt that their community organisations are effective, although their influence on government policies is rated lower.

Community Indicators

Social Issues

Cost of living and youth behaviour were identified as the two biggest issues facing the Malay/Muslim community today. In terms of social support, about one in three did not believe they receive enough external support to assist them in coping with life in Singapore. This segment indicated that housing and financial support are two highly important assistance that are most needed.

Housing support was perceived by many to be the most inaccessible form of assistance. Key influencers also singled out housing support as a social safety net that has been least successful in assisting those in the community.

Economy & Employment

Most Malay/Muslims felt that they are in control of their finances, with two out of three (67%) indicating they are coping well. Those who felt that their finances are not in order (12%) cited the rising cost of living and low or stagnant salaries as key reasons.

Many felt that lower food prices would assist them significantly , while others are of the view that financial support and affordable childcare are most important.

Generally, Malay/Muslims felt that they enjoyed the same economic opportunities as other Singaporeans. However, one in three Malay/Muslims believed they experience more impediments when trying to find a job of choice, obtaining a promotion or starting a business. In addition, about half rated their prospects of getting promoted and starting a business as unfavourable.

Education

The community is generally satisfied with Singapore's education system, with most indicating that Malay/Muslim students enjoy the same opportunities as other Singaporean students.

Although a majority of the Malay/Muslims believed that students from the community are attaining the best results possible, key influencers were less positive. Nearly three in four key influencers believed that Malay/Muslims are underperforming in relation to other Singaporean students.

In terms of attitudes toward education, most Malay/Muslims believed a good education is very important, with a clear majority postulating the view that the community placed equal importance to education as other Singaporeans. Again, key influencers were more likely to disagree with this sentiment.

Among the Malay/Muslim parents, most believed that they are sufficiently involved in their children's education. However, more than half of all parents have never attended a school function and nearly half of them do not enroll their children in any other courses or enrichment programmes outside of school.

While more than half of Malay/Muslim parents hoped their children attain a tertiary degree, two in three (62%) anticipated challenges in doing so due to affordability and academic eligibility concerns. More than half (52%) felt that the prospect of them sending their child abroad for further studies is bleak.

Culture & Religion

Malay/Muslims are equally supportive of strengthening their traditional culture while maintaining a strict interpretation and following of Islamic teaching. Four in five Malay/Muslims (80%) expressed strong satisfaction with their religious leadership, but only half of the key influencers felt the same.

STATE OF THE COMMUNITY TODAY

General Community Perspectives

A majority of Malay/Muslims (63%) viewed Singapore as being on the right track, pointing to its economic stability and prosperity as key reasons. However, those who viewed Singapore as being on the wrong track singled out cost of living as the main factor.

The progress of the Malay/Muslim community is not perceived as being as encouraging as Singapore's progress in general, while there were also some who thought that the community's state of affairs has regressed. The main areas of improvement identified are education and employment, while perceived weakening of traditional values is cited as an area of most concern.

Malay/Muslims believed their community has the same opportunities as other Singaporeans, although key influencers felt that the community is disadvantaged in terms of the opportunities available.

The key challenges for the Malay/Muslim community today are cost of living and employment. These are also areas where Malay/Muslims most likely felt worse off as compared to other Singaporeans.

Malay/Muslims are optimistic about their community's future prospects,

but felt that the result of the 2011 General Election is unlikely to change their prospects for a better future. The opposite is true for key influencers.

Opinion leaders felt that progress has been made in employment and education, but while achievements are to be applauded, both remain areas which need further progress. However, social and moral deterioration are areas and trends which they felt require close monitoring and attention.

National Direction

Malay/Muslims are generally positive about Singapore's direction. Key influencers, however, are slightly less positive with one in three (32%) indicating that Singapore is heading in the wrong direction.

Do you think Singapore is on the right track or is it heading in the wrong direction?

Malay/Muslim Community

19% DK
17% Wrong Track
63% Right Track

Key Influencers

12% DK
32% Wrong Track
56% Right Track
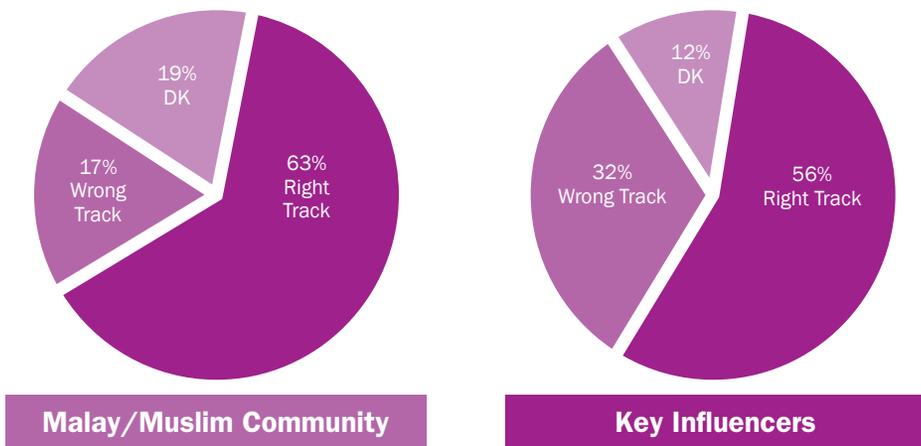
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While the country's economic stability and prosperity are cited as the main reasons for Malay/Muslims feeling that Singapore is on the right track, key influencers identified an overemphasis on economy as a critical reason why Singapore is on the wrong track.

Economic pressures are also identified as the key reason why Malay/Muslims believed the country is heading in the wrong direction. Cost of living is cited by nearly half of those who felt that Singapore is on the wrong track (43%), while some also pointed to high housing costs.

Both Malay/Muslims and key influencers also cited the influx of foreign talent as an issue that puts Singapore in the wrong direction.
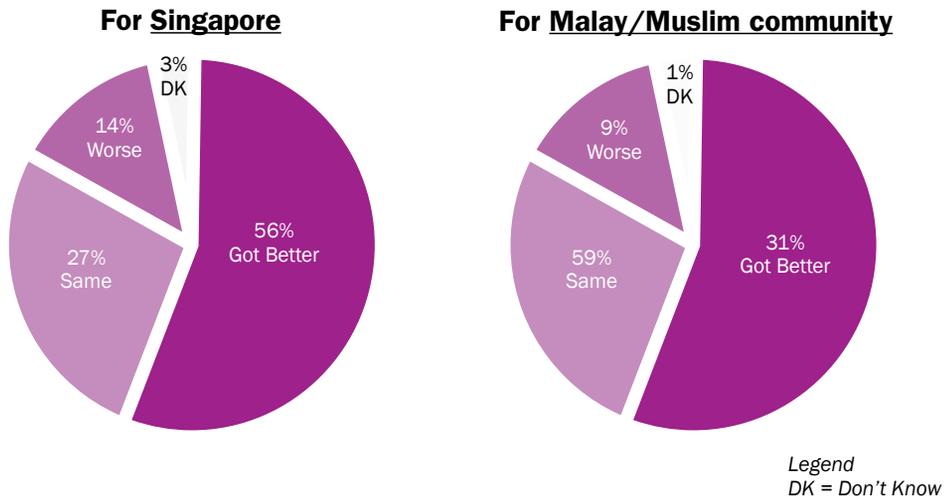
Why is Singapore on the right or wrong track?		
	Right Track	**Wrong Track**
Malay/Muslim Community	1. Economic stability & prosperity 2. Job opportunities & employment rate 3. Peaceful & harmonious society	1. High cost of living 2. Too many foreigners 3. High housing costs
Key Influencers	**Good governance** "The fundamentals of our governance are sound. We have forward-thinking leaders who are committed to the continued development of Singapore."	**Overemphasis on economy** "Overemphasis on economic gains at the expense of local welfare and quality of life for Singaporeans."
Malay/Muslim Community	"Policies are formulated with a long term view in mind, and not based on popularity. We are strong enough to resist the temptations of being a welfare state."	**Influx of foreign talent** "With the influx of foreign talents, Singaporeans have begun to feel like second class citizens. This may eventually lead to larger social issues."

Among the Malay/Muslims who felt that Singapore is on the right track, harmonious social relations between segments of the society is highlighted as a contributing factor towards the country's positive national direction; while key influencers pointed towards good governance, sound fundamentals and strong national policies.

National and Community Progress

More than half of the Malay/Muslims (56%) felt that Singapore has made progress in the last five years. However, not all agreed that the community has improved, with only a third of respondents (31%) indicating that things have gotten better for them.

In the last five years, do you think things have generally gotten better, gotten worse or stayed about the same?

For <u>Singapore</u>

- 3% DK
- 14% Worse
- 27% Same
- 56% Got Better

For <u>Malay/Muslim community</u>

- 1% DK
- 9% Worse
- 59% Same
- 31% Got Better

Legend
DK = Don't Know

154

Malay/Muslims identified education and employment as the main areas where things have improved for the community. More than half of those who believed the community has progressed (56%) highlighted improvements in education as a key contributing factor.

| In what ways have things gotten better or worse for the MMC?		
	Areas where things have gotten <u>better</u> for the community	Areas where it things have gotten worse for the community*
Malay/Muslim Community	1. Improvements in education 2. Better job opportunities 3. Greater support & assistance given 4. More financially-able Malay/Muslims	1. Rising cost of living 2. Youth delinquency 3. Weakening of traditional values

comprising a small base

Other areas of progress for the community include better job opportunities and having more financially-able Malay/Muslims. Those who believed the community has progressed pointed towards greater support and assistance that have been provided to the community in recent years.

Cost of living is featured prominently again as an area where things have gotten worse. However, social issues like youth delinquency and the weakening of traditional values are also highlighted as particular problem areas facing the community today.

Opportunities for the Community

There are distinct differences between the Malay/Muslims' and key influencers' perspectives with respect to opportunities afforded to the community. In general, nearly two in three Malay/Muslims believed that they enjoy the same opportunities as other Singaporeans. However, key influencers were less likely to believe so. Nearly half of them (49%) indicated they do not believe the community enjoys the same opportunities.

Do the Malay/Muslim community enjoy the same opportunities as other Singaporeans?

Malay/Muslim Community

- 5% DK
- 31% No
- 65% Yes

Key Influencers

- 14% DK
- 49% No
- 37% Yes
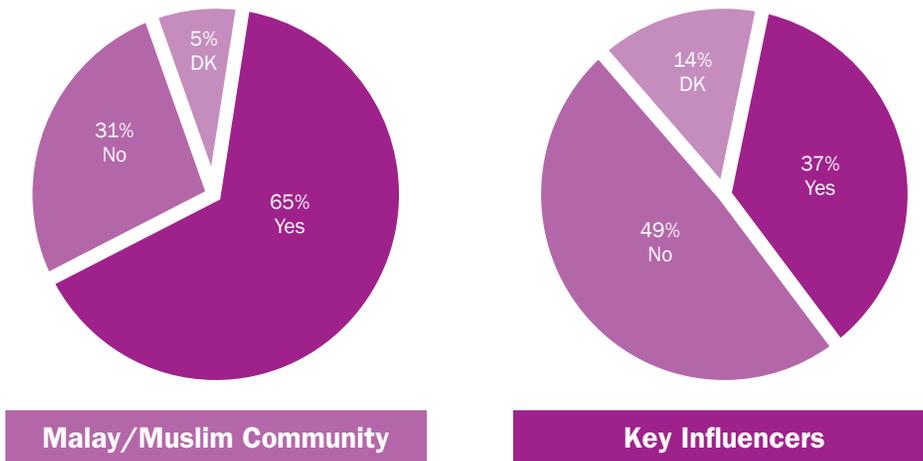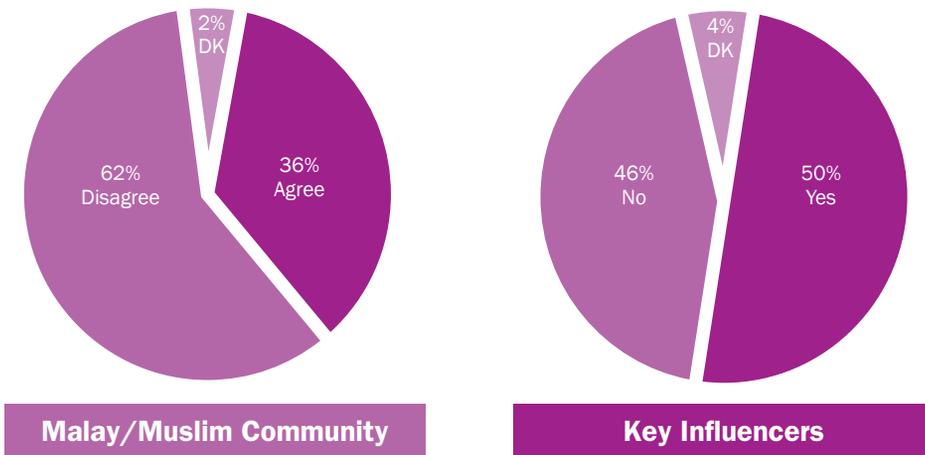
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Among the Malay/Muslims who did not believe they enjoy the same opportunities as other Singaporeans (about a third of them), most cited employment as a key area of unequal opportunity. Some also believed that not speaking Mandarin puts them at a disadvantage when looking for employment.

National Service policies and issues with Malay/Muslims in the military are also identified by this segment as areas where the community does

not enjoy the same opportunities as other Singaporeans.

Consistent with earlier findings, only about a third of the community (36%) felt that Singapore government policies have disadvantaged Malay/Muslims more than others, while nearly half of key influencers thought that policies are skewed.

"Singapore government policies <u>disadvantage</u> the Malay/Muslim community more than others"
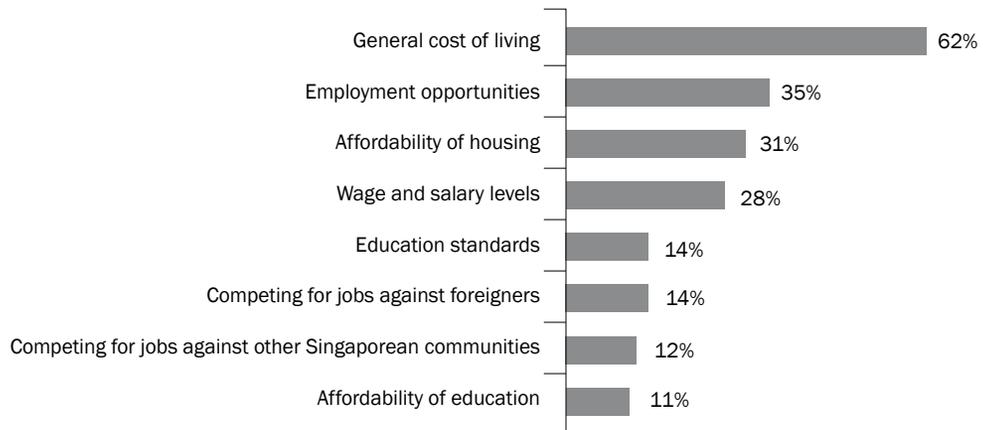
Malay/Muslim Community	Key Influencers
2% DK	4% DK
62% Disagree	46% No
36% Agree	50% Yes

Legend
DK = Don't Know

Key Community Issues Today

Malay/Muslims highlighted cost of living difficulties as the single most important issue facing the community today. Those over the age of 30 and with lower education levels are more likely to believe so.

What is the most important issue for the Malay/Muslim community in Singapore today?

Issue	Percentage
General cost of living	62%
Employment opportunities	35%
Affordability of housing	31%
Wage and salary levels	28%
Education standards	14%
Competing for jobs against foreigners	14%
Competing for jobs against other Singaporean communities	12%
Affordability of education	11%

Employment issues such as job opportunities (35%) and wage and salary levels (28%) are identified by about a third of the community as issues of importance. Affordability of housing is also an equally important issue (31%).

Additional demographic insights:

- Respondents coming from middle- and high-income households are more likely to identify **cost of living, housing affordability** and **employment opportunities** as key issues than those coming from low-income households.

- Low-income households tend to highlight the **ability to compete for jobs against foreigners** more frequently as an area of concern, compared to those from other income brackets.

- Males (33%) are more likely to worry about **wage and salary levels** than females (22%).

- Respondents above the age of 30 (36%) show greater concern about the **affordability of housing** than the younger members of the community (24%).

- Malay/Muslim university graduates are more likely to show concern about **employment opportunities** (50%) for the community and their ability to compete for jobs (25%) than those of other academic backgrounds.
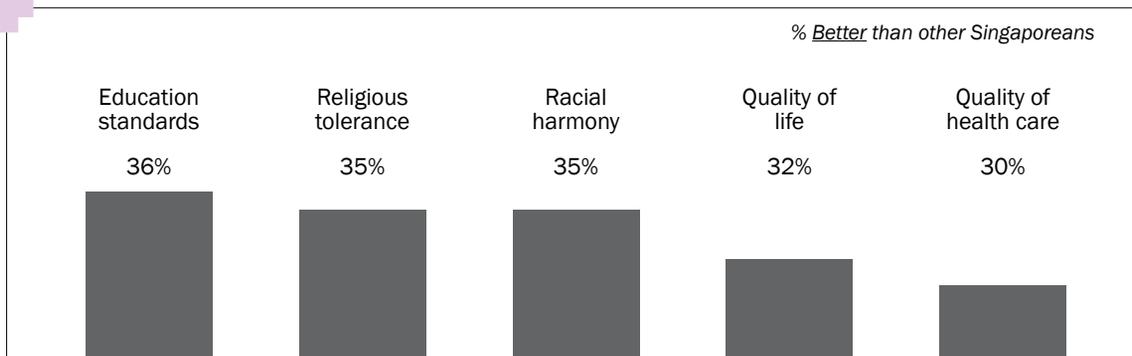
Comparative Community Performance

Malay/Muslims felt that their community is more likely to be doing worse off in the areas of economy and employment, in comparison to other Singaporeans.
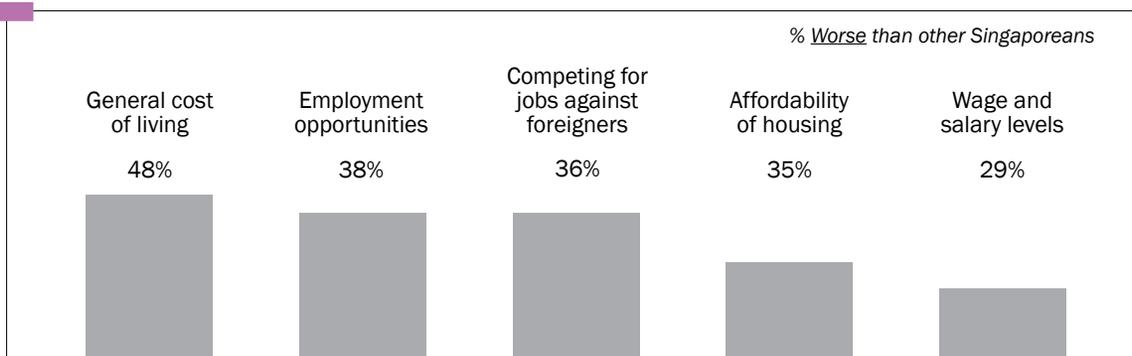
Consistent with other study findings, nearly half of the Malay/Muslims (48%) indicated cost of living as the critical area where the community is at a disadvantage.

Malay/Muslim Community

Areas MMC is doing BETTER than other Singaporeans

% Better than other Singaporeans

Education standards	Religious tolerance	Racial harmony	Quality of life	Quality of health care
36%	35%	35%	32%	30%

Areas MMC is doing WORSE than other Singaporeans

% Worse than other Singaporeans

General cost of living	Employment opportunities	Competing for jobs against foreigners	Affordability of housing	Wage and salary levels
48%	38%	36%	35%	29%

While Malay/Muslims focused on cost of living as a specific pain point, key influencers are more likely to believe the community does far worse than other Singaporeans in competing for jobs against foreigners (71%). In contrast, only slightly more than a third of Malay/Muslims (36%) felt the same.

Interestingly, Malay/Muslims felt that their community is doing better than other Singaporeans in terms of its education standards (36%). Their clear sense of pride and achievement towards the community's education progression and performance are consistent with other findings that are reflected in the education section of the study.

Malay/Muslims also ranked themselves as doing better than other Singaporeans in the areas of religious tolerance and racial harmony.

Future of the Community

Malay/Muslims are fairly confident (76%) about the prospects for their community in the next 10 years. However, key influencers are less optimistic, with less than half indicating so (49%).

How confident are you about prospects for the Malay/Muslim Community in Singapore over the next 10 years?

24%
Not confident

76%
Confident

51%
Not confident

49%
Confident

Malay/Muslim Community

Key Influencers
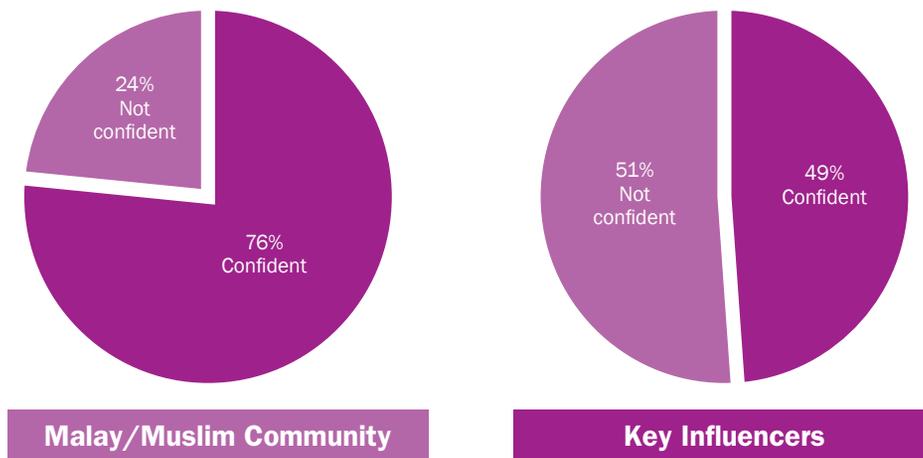
Those who did not feel confident about future prospects cited youth delinquency as an ongoing cause of concern. Employment issues (particularly foreign competition and the lack of job opportunities) are also featured as one of the top concerns. However, there is a small segment of the community who did not feel adequate support and assistance is available to them, especially from the government.

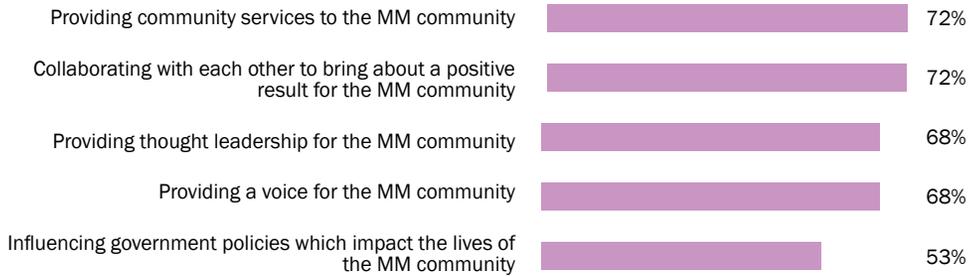| Why are you not confident about prospects for the MMC over the next 10 years? |
| --- |

Malay/Muslim Community	1. Youth delinquency and moral breakdown 2. Competition with too many foreigners 3. Inadequate government support 4. Poor job opportunities 5. Difficulty in getting higher education

Community Organisations & Leadership

In evaluating the effectiveness of Malay/Muslim organisations as a whole, the organisations are perceived to be doing a fairly good job in providing services to the community and collaborating with each other for the advancement of the community (72%). More than two in three (68%) also find MMOs effective in providing thought leadership and a voice for Malay/Muslims.

However, the organisations are perceived to be less effective when it comes to influencing government policy with only 53% indicating so.

How effective are Malay/Muslim organisations in the following areas?

Providing community services to the MM community	72%
Collaborating with each other to bring about a positive result for the MM community	72%
Providing thought leadership for the MM community	68%
Providing a voice for the MM community	68%
Influencing government policies which impact the lives of the MM community	53%

There has not been any single issue identified, which Malay/Muslims believe their organisations should focus exclusively on. Instead, they appear to believe that MMOs have a broad role to play.

Which of the following should be given higher or lower priority by Malay/Muslim organisations?

Providing community support for families	88%
Dealing with the government to bring about policy changes which help the MM community	84%
Strategies to help reduce family breakdown	84%
Helping those in the community who are most economically disadvantaged	83%
Providing financial support for the MM community	83%
Strategies to deal with juvenile delinquency	83%
Strategies to get young people involved in the MM community	77%
Lobby government to publicly discuss and highlight MM views	70%
Job retraining support	67%
Job search and support	67%

State of the Community: Opinion Leader Perspectives

The opinion leaders interviewed were generally upbeat about the state of the Malay/Muslim community today. All felt that significant progress has been made and key social and economic indicators show real improvement.

Main Advancements

Integration with Wider Singapore Society

Opinion leaders believed that the community has done well in participating as active and contributing members to the wider Singaporean society. The efforts made to engage other communities and build relationships are contributing to this success.

Strengthening Cultural Identity

Opinion leaders strongly believe that Malay/Muslim culture in Singapore today is alive and vibrant. The youth movement and their efforts in keeping cultural traditions alive, especially in the performing arts in recent years, were often highlighted as a positive sign of cultural renaissance.

Areas of Real Improvement

As with the wider Malay/Muslim community, opinion leaders highlighted real progress in both education and the economic well-being of the Malay/Muslim community. Most felt the advancements, while noteworthy, are still a work in progress and the community cannot rest on its laurels.

Education

Opinion leaders felt that the community has made good progress in education over the last decade. Improving rates of passes and the visibility of high-achieving Malay/Muslim students are notable academic achievements for the community. However, there remains significant room for improvement.

Opinion leaders would like to see closer collaboration among Malay/ Muslim organisations to reduce duplication of work and to ensure Malay/ Muslim students from various backgrounds, levels and academic abilities are afforded education support.

Economic Well-Being

Opinion leaders believed that the community has made advancements in their overall economic well-being, pointing to increasing affluence in the community and a growing Malay/Muslim middle class.

Still, most felt that economic pressures and the cost of living in Singapore continue to be a challenge for the community, especially among low-income households.

Employment

Opinion leaders highlighted a lower rate of unemployment and diversification of employment in different industries as key areas of improvement. The fact that more Malay/Muslim women are part of the labour force is also seen as a positive development.

However, it is important to keep Malay/Muslim workers up-to-date and better educated about Singapore's changing economic landscape by emphasising the need for continuous upgrading and job skilling. Some opinion leaders also acknowledge continuing challenges to ensure equal employment opportunities are provided to Malay/Muslims.

Areas of Concern

Opinion leaders did, however, express concern about important social issues in the Malay/Muslim community and believe some issues require ongoing attention.

Youth Delinquency

Opinion leaders highlighted youth delinquency as a key area of concern for the community. The involvement of Malay/Muslims in youth gangs and other criminal activities are issues that are seen to require more community attention and vigilance.

Family Breakdown

Malay/Muslims' divorce levels are also a cause of worry for some opinion leaders. Some view this as a transitional problem; as dual-income households become more commonplace, resulting in changes in family dynamics. Most agreed that greater support is needed for families to cope with these changes.

Future Advancement for the Community

Opinion leaders were of the view that advancements for the community have come about as a result of a changing focus and improved dialogue between the government and Malay/Muslim community leaders/ organisations.

Importantly, the community's goals today are seen as aligning with national goals and this is helping Malay/Muslims to make strides in a range of areas.

Opinion leaders, however, do feel there remain barriers within the community that hinder progress.

With the changing role of women and their increased participation in employment, culturally conservative attitudes are viewed as potentially posing a problem with a level of resistance seen among some segments of the community.

Moreover, some felt that there is often a reluctance to openly discuss social problems within the community. Some felt that community leaders tend to focus on the positive developments without the same attention given to problems within the community. They pointed towards the success the Malay/Muslim community had in the 1970s and 1980s with drug problems. Some opined that tackling the problem head-on with the help of the community is a better strategy than playing down the severity of the problem.

Opinion leaders also felt that it is important that those segments of the community, who still face the greatest economic challenges, are given the tools to help them escape hardship and ensure they can join mainstream society. Government and community assistance alone will not resolve all social ills. People need to be empowered to help themselves and their families.

COMMUNITY INDICATORS

Social Issues

The two most critical social issues identified by the Malay/Muslims are cost of living and youth behaviour.

While family breakdown is not an issue which troubles men, women cite this issue as a major concern among the Malay/Muslim community. Nearly a third (32%) do not believe that they get enough outside support to help cope. Among this group, most believed they need help dealing with the increasing cost of living and housing support.

While the Government is generally seen as best placed to provide necessary support, family welfare stands out as the key area where Malay/Muslim community organisations can offer greater help and are
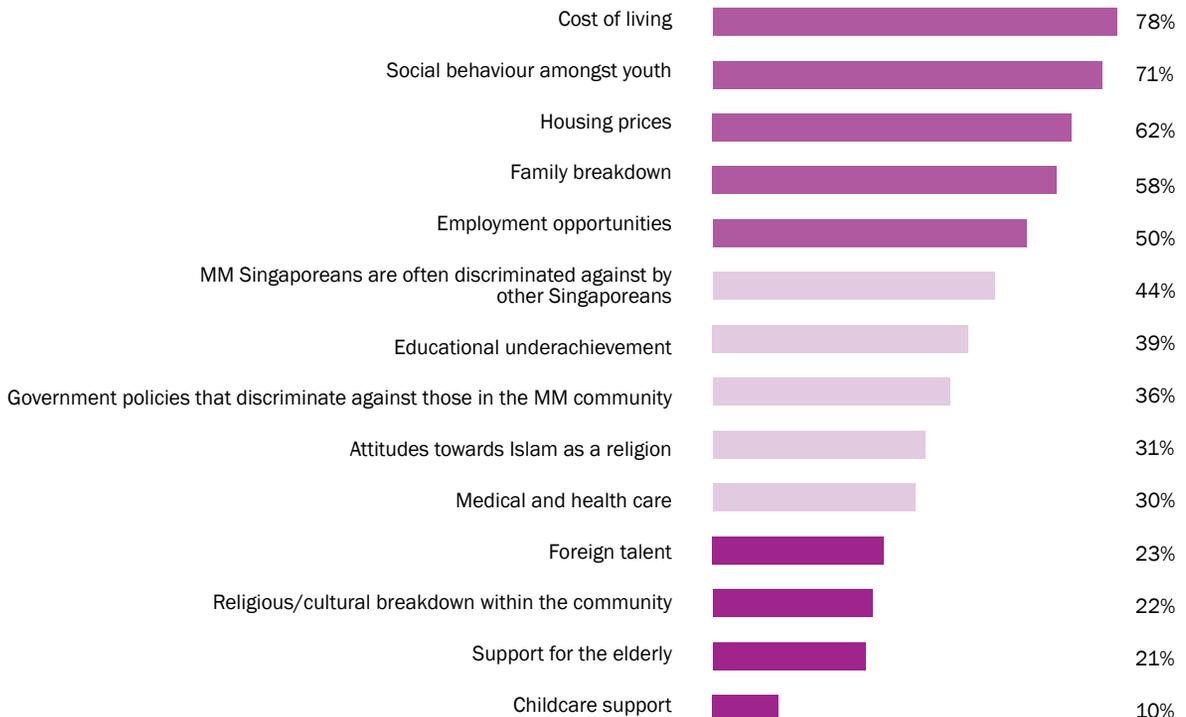
better placed than the government to do so.

Housing support stands out as the area where most felt that assistance is least accessible (44%). In contrast, childcare end elderly supports are seen as far more accessible.

Among key influencers, more than half believed that Singapore's social safety nets are not enough to help Malay/Muslims who are in need of help. Public housing safety nets, in particular, are singled out as inadequate.

Key Social Issues for the Community Today

Malay/Muslims cited cost of living as the most important social issue for the community today.

What do you think are the biggest issues facing the Malay/Muslim community in Singapore today?

| Issue	%
Cost of living	78%
Social behaviour amongst youth	71%
Housing prices	62%
Family breakdown	58%
Employment opportunities	50%
MM Singaporeans are often discriminated against by other Singaporeans	44%
Educational underachievement	39%
Government policies that discriminate against those in the MM community	36%
Attitudes towards Islam as a religion	31%
Medical and health care	30%
Foreign talent	23%
Religious/cultural breakdown within the community	22%
Support for the elderly	21%
Childcare support	10%

However, there is also a growing concern among Malay/Muslims for its youth segment (71%) and the breakdown of the family unit (58%) within the community. This echoes the sentiment put across by opinion leaders, who also highlighted these two issues as areas of concern for the community.

Women are more likely to show concern for these two issues than men. It was also found that 18-24 year olds and those in low-income households are more likely to cite social behaviour among youth as key social concerns.

Social Support and Assistance

With respect to issues and difficulties faced by themselves and their immediate family, one in three Malay/Muslims (32%) did not think they get enough external support to help them cope.

Do you think that you and your immediate family get enough support that helps you to cope better with issues you face?

60%
Yes

32%
No

8%
DK
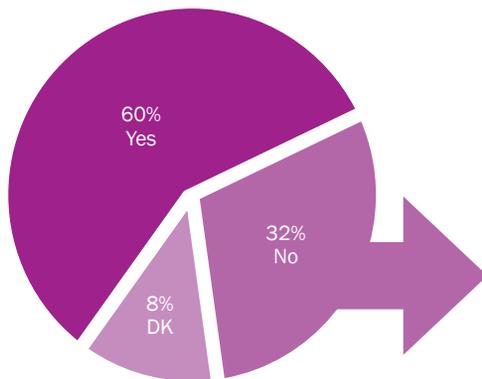
Legend
DK = Don't Know

Which types of support would help you and your immediate family most?

Type of support	%
Financial support to cope with cost of living	69%
Housing support	61%
Education subsidies	53%
Job training/skills upgrading	52%
Health/medical support	41%
Family welfare advice	31%
Childcare support	19%
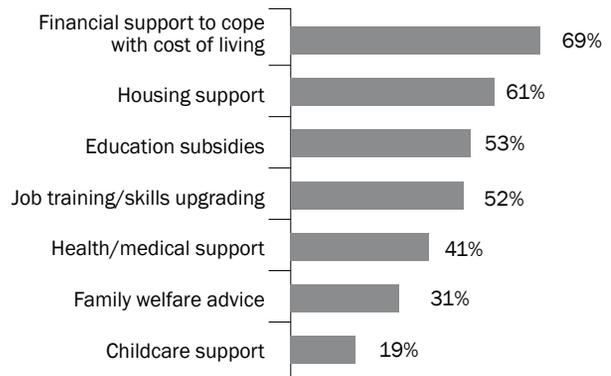
Those who felt that they are not given enough support tend to be older, have children and fall within the middle to lower personal income range.

Of those who indicated they are not receiving enough external support, financial support for cost of living, housing and education are identified to be the most helpful forms of assistance.

However, the most needed forms of support are also perceived to be the most inaccessible. Nearly half (44%) felt that housing support is less available to them while more than one in three (35%) expressed similar views about cost of living assistance. This illustrates a gap between the assistance needed, and the community's awareness and knowledge of the social support and safety nets available to them.

Evaluation of Social Safety Nets

Key influencers were asked to evaluate social safety nets provided to the Malay/Muslim community to assist help them to cope with the cost of living. More than half of them (56%) indicated that the nation's social safety nets are not addressing key needs of the Malay/Muslim community.

In particular, 39% of them highlighted public housing policies as an area where safety nets have failed.
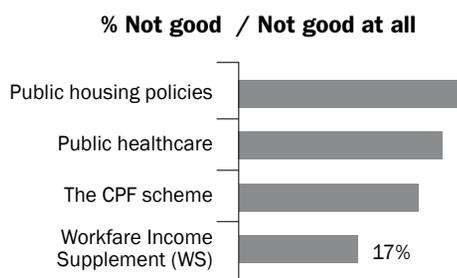
How successful have Singapore's social safety nets been in helping Malay/Muslim Singaporeans who require support?
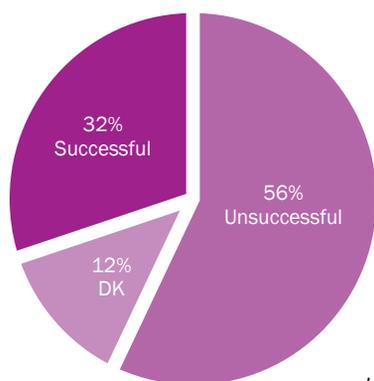
How would you rate the following safety nets in providing support to those in the Malay/Muslim community?

% Not good / Not good at all

Pie chart:
- 32% Successful
- 56% Unsuccessful
- 12% DK

Bar chart:
- Public housing policies
- Public healthcare
- The CPF scheme
- Workfare Income Supplement (WS) — 17%

Legend
DK = Don't Know

Economy and Employment

A majority of Malay/Muslims are coping financially at present, with two-thirds (67%) indicating they were doing alright. In addition, a similar proportion (61%) believed that their personal spending habits are balanced.

However, those who are finding it difficult to cope (12%) pointed to the rising cost of living in Singapore, coupled with low or stagnant salary levels. Many believed that easing food and housing prices would improve their economic challenges. More importantly, Malay/Muslim families seemed to require the most assistance in the areas of financial assistance and affordable childcare.

By and large, Malay/Muslims do not view themselves as enjoying less economic opportunities than other Singaporeans. It was also revealed that a third of Malay/Muslims believed that finding a job of choice,

securing a promotion or starting a business are areas where they are worse off in comparison to other Singaporeans. Many also do not believe that their personal employment and business-starting prospects are good, which suggested that individuals do see themselves as being disadvantaged from specific day-to-day issues.

When it comes to career and skills upgrading, a majority of the economically active Malay/Muslims (65%) believed that they currently possess the right qualifications to advance in their career. In contrast, those with lower education levels tend to be less optimistic. Those who did not think they have the right skills currently are more likely to identify trade qualifications and IT training as skills that could help them advance further.

Economic Well Being

Overall, Malay/Muslims perceived themselves to be coping financially with only about one in 10 (12%) stating they are not doing well.

Financial Well Being

21% Doing well

12% Not doing well

67% Doing OK
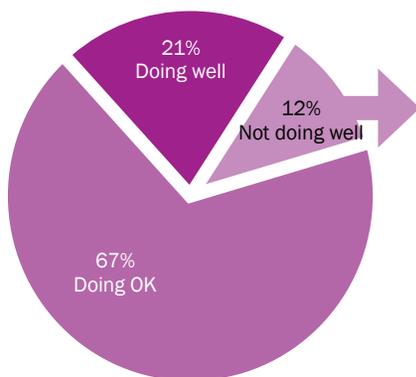
Why are you not coping well?

1. **Rising cost of living**
2. Low salary
3. No increase in salary
4. Housing affordability
5. Illness/disabilities
6. Only one income earner in household
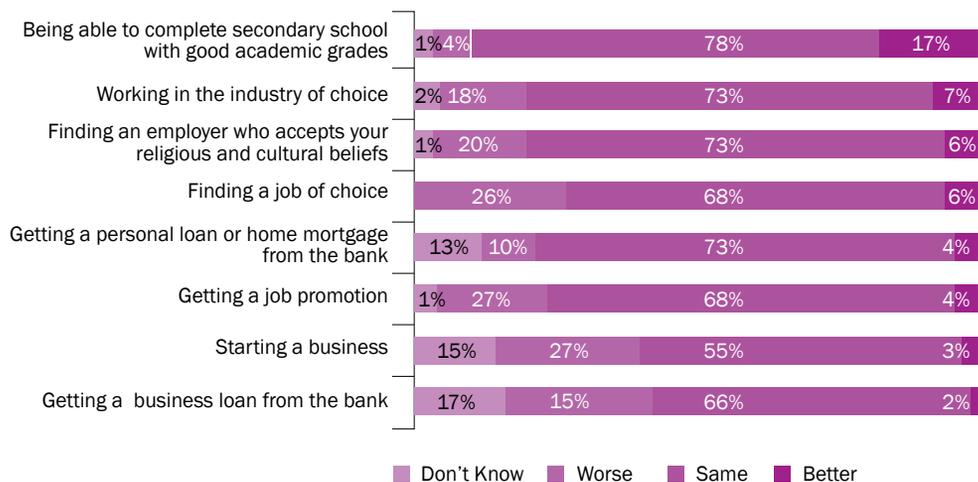
What will help you cope better?

1. **Cheaper food prices**
2. Financial assistance for families with children
3. Cheaper housing
4. Affordable childcare services

Those who are not faring well are likely to be older and less educated. These individuals tend to be from the low-income bracket although a small group comprises the middle-income range and/or have children. This group also pins the blame on the rising cost of living in Singapore coupled with low or no increments in salary.

Economic Opportunities for the Community

Malay/Muslims interviewed do not view themselves as enjoying significantly less economic opportunities as compared to other Singaporeans. Most felt they enjoy at least the same opportunities across most areas.

Do you think Malay/Muslim Singaporeans enjoy better, the same or worse <u>opportunities</u> compared to other Singaporeans with respect to the following?

	Don't Know	Worse	Same	Better
Being able to complete secondary school with good academic grades	1%	4%	78%	17%
Working in the industry of choice	2%	18%	73%	7%
Finding an employer who accepts your religious and cultural beliefs	1%	20%	73%	6%
Finding a job of choice		26%	68%	6%
Getting a personal loan or home mortgage from the bank	13%	10%	73%	4%
Getting a job promotion	1%	27%	68%	4%
Starting a business	15%	27%	55%	3%
Getting a business loan from the bank	17%	15%	66%	2%

Indeed, nearly one in five Malay/Muslims (17%) felt that their community enjoys better opportunities to complete secondary school than other Singaporean communities.
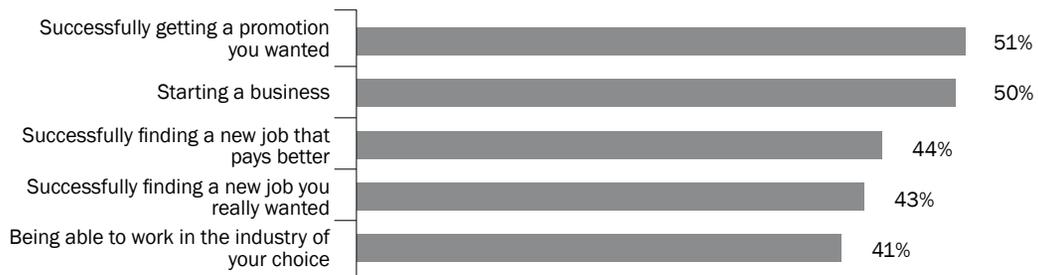
While most ranked opportunities for the community as largely equal, nearly one in three felt that finding their job of choice (26%), getting a promotion (27%) and starting a business (27%), are areas in which the

Malay/Muslim community is worse off.

Personal Economic Prospects

While Malay/Muslims largely felt that they enjoy the same economic opportunities as other Singaporeans, some have a less favourable view of their own personal economic prospects.

Those who rated their prospects as "not good" in...

Category	Percentage
Successfully getting a promotion you wanted	51%
Starting a business	50%
Successfully finding a new job that pays better	44%
Successfully finding a new job you really wanted	43%
Being able to work in the industry of your choice	41%

Nearly half of the Malay/Muslims rate their prospects of getting a promotion and starting their own business as *"not good"*. Those with lower academic qualifications or who fall into lower personal income brackets are more likely to rate their prospects poorly.

Specifically, women are consistently less optimistic than men across all factors including finding a new job and being able to work in the industry of their choice.

Job Skilling for Career Advancement

While nearly half of Malay/Muslims rated their personal prospects for career advancement as poor, more than two in three (65%) of those who are economically-active considered themselves sufficiently equipped with the right skills and qualifications to help them advance in their career.

Do you think you have the <u>right skills and qualifications</u> to help you advance further in your job/career?

65%
Yes

7%
DK

28%
No
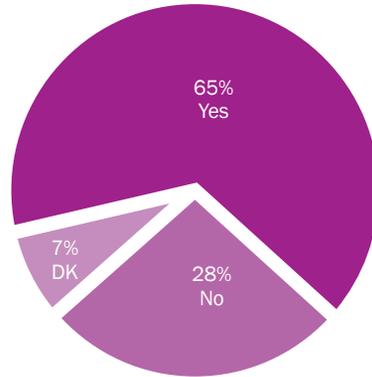
Those who indicated that they do not have the right skills presently (28%) were more likely to be lower-educated males. This segment also believed that getting a trade certificate (44%), IT training (31%) or a diploma (29%) would help them further their career.

While most felt they already had the right skills to advance their career, 41% of them felt that they were not given the opportunity to upgrade or acquire skills for career advancement should they want to. Those in this segment are more likely to be older, low-income earners with lower academic qualifications.

Do you believe you have been given <u>sufficient opportunity</u> to acquire the skills you need to advance your career?

55%
Yes

42%
No

3%
DK

174
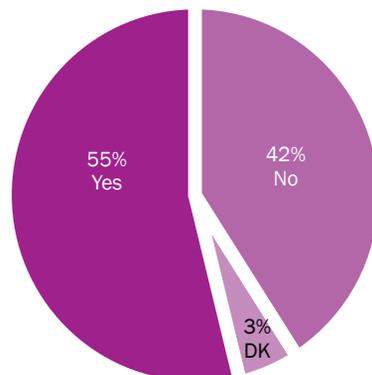
Education

The vast majority of Malay/Muslims are satisfied with Singapore's education system. Most (70%) agreed that Malay/Muslim students are given the same educational opportunities as other Singaporean students.

Education performance is a badge of pride for the general Malay/Muslim community, with a vast majority of the respondents believing that results are now as good as they could be. Key influencers, however, are far less positive with 71% saying that Malay/Muslims are performing worse than other Singaporean students.

Malay/Muslims believe a good education is very important and a key indicator for success in life. Most of them felt that they place the same level of importance on education as other Singaporeans, although key influencers are again more inclined to disagree.

Most Malay/Muslim parents perceived themselves to be involved in their children's education, although specific questioning suggests that actual involvement in specific areas are not especially high. For example, more than half of all parents surveyed have never attended a school function and nearly half of them do not enroll their children in any other courses/ enrichment programmes outside of school. This appears to be out of step with current community trends in Singapore.
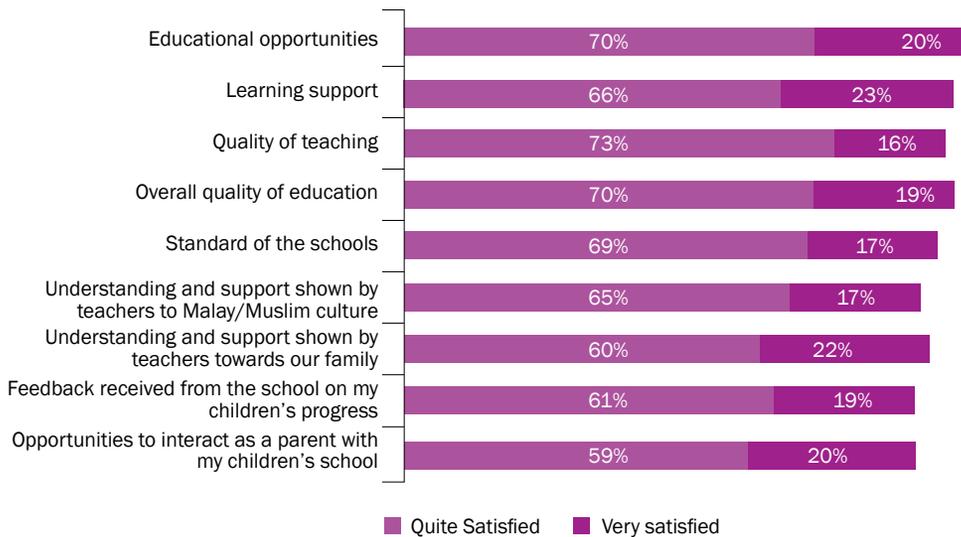
About half of Malay/Muslim parents hoped their children will eventually hold a tertiary degree or higher, but 62% anticipated challenges that may affect their child's ability to enter university in the future. These include affordability and exam results.

Evaluation of Singapore's Education System

There are no serious points of dissatisfaction with Singapore's education

system among Malay/Muslims. Parents are largely satisfied on almost all factors, with educational opportunities (90%) and learning support (89%) topping the list.

How satisfied are you with the following with respect to your children's education?

	Quite Satisfied	Very satisfied
Educational opportunities	70%	20%
Learning support	66%	23%
Quality of teaching	73%	16%
Overall quality of education	70%	19%
Standard of the schools	69%	17%
Understanding and support shown by teachers to Malay/Muslim culture	65%	17%
Understanding and support shown by teachers towards our family	60%	22%
Feedback received from the school on my children's progress	61%	19%
Opportunities to interact as a parent with my children's school	59%	20%

Malay/Muslims also largely believed that their students enjoy equal opportunities in Singapore's education system, with four in five (81%) agreeing that the system offers the same opportunities to Malay/Muslim students as it does to students from other backgrounds.

"The Singapore education system offers the same opportunities to children and students from the Malay/Muslim community as it does to students from other cultural backgrounds"


19%
Disagree

81%
Agree
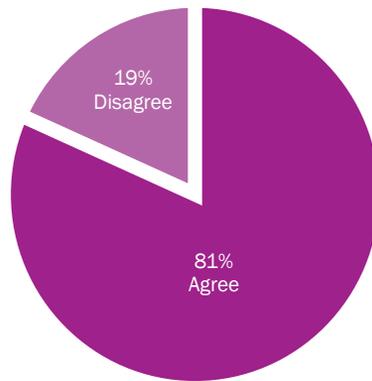
Academic Performance of Malay/Muslim Students

In evaluating the current academic performance of Malay/Muslim students, the Malay/Muslim respondents generally believed that their education results are good enough. In contrast, four in five key influencers (83%) did not believe this to be the case, which could possibly reflect a difference in expectations.

"I do not think that the educational results of students from the Malay/Muslim community are as good as they could be."

5%
DK

27%
Agree

68%
Disagree

7%
DK

10%
Disagree

83%
Agree
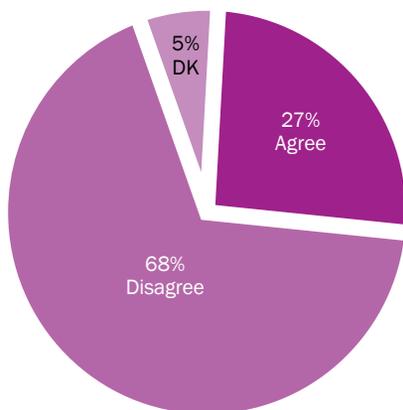
Malay/Muslim Community
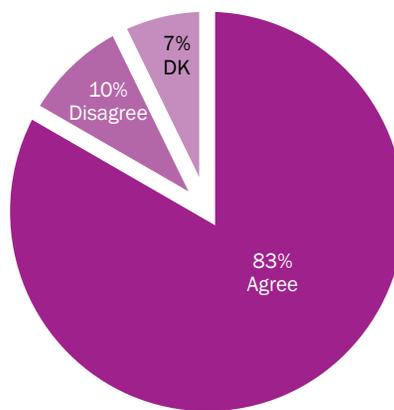
Key Influencers

Legend
DK = Don't Know

Those who believed the academic performance of Malay/Muslim students are not as good as they could be tend to be younger, aged between 18 and 24 years old and have post-secondary or tertiary qualifications.

General Attitudes towards Education

Malay/Muslims clearly have positive attitudes towards education and consider it very important for success in life. When it came to their personal education experience however, not all identified themselves as doing their best. Still, most Malay/Muslims believed that they place the same level of importance on education as other Singaporeans do. Key influencers, however, were less likely to believe so.

Importance of Education

While more than half of Malay/Muslims (59%) indicated that having a good education is essential to success in life, there are more than one in three (39%) who said that education, while important, is not everything.

Having a good education...

Is essential to success in life	59%
Is important but is not everything	39%
Is not so important. Other things contribute to success	2%
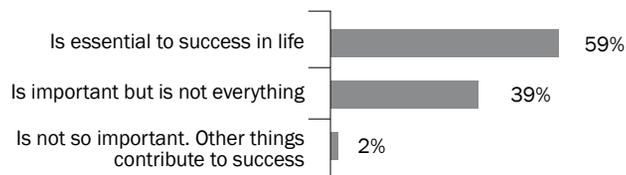
Those who believed that a good education is essential to success are more likely to be older, have children and belong to high-income households.

Personal Education Experience

Despite nearly 59% of respondents indicating that education is essential for success in life, less than half (43%) admitted to studying to the best of their abilities.

178

How would you describe your own educational experience?

|	
I always studied to the best of my abilities	43%
I sometimes studied to the best of my abilities	48%
I rarely or never studied to the best of my abilities	9%
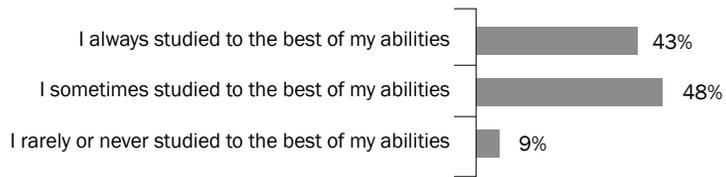
Those who indicated they studied to the best of their abilities are likely to enjoy higher levels of academic qualifications (polytechnic and above) and are younger (between the ages of 18 and 24 years).

Comparing Attitudes

In general, Malay/Muslims strongly believed that they place the same level of importance on education as other Singaporeans (93%). Key influencers, however, were more skeptical with only 54% agreeing.

"Malay/Muslim Singaporeans place the same level of importance on education as other Singaporeans do"

7%
Disagree

93%
Agree

Malay/Muslim Community

4%
DK

42%
Disagree

54%
Agree

Key Influencers
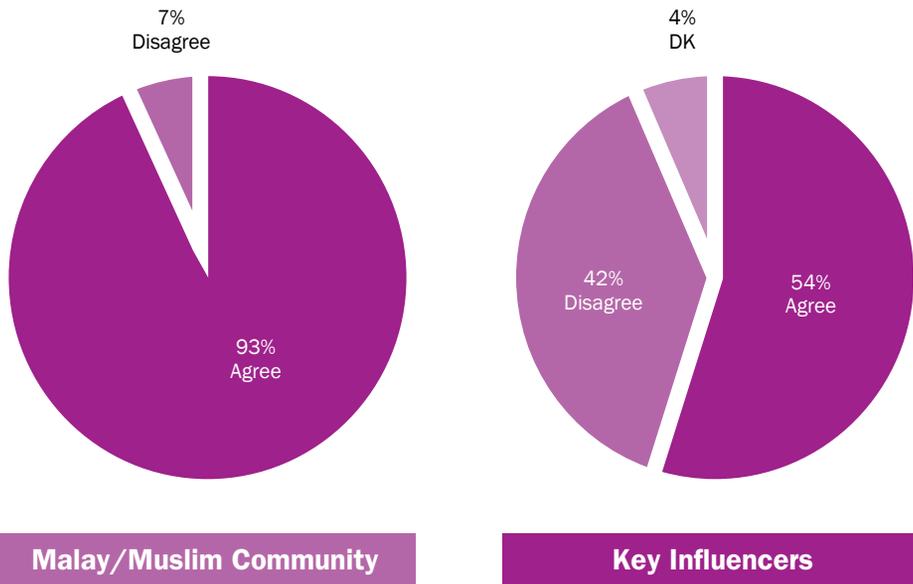
Legend
DK = Don't Know

Parental Attitudes and Behaviour With Respect to Learning

Malay/Muslim parents are generally supportive, with most indicating that they encourage their child to do his/her best in school. A majority said they face few real challenges with their child's education at the moment. While Malay/Muslim parents perceived themselves to be fairly involved in their child's education, their behaviour and academic choices for their child suggested that there might be a gap between their perception and actual involvement.

Many parents would like their children to pursue a tertiary education, but affordability and academic performance issues remain as challenges to further education.

Parental Attitudes & Challenges So Far

While one in five (20%) would encourage their children to be top achievers, two-thirds of Malay/Muslims (61%) would encourage their children to do the best they can.

How would you describe your own attitude and behaviour when it comes to your children's education?

| Top of class	Best they can	Do the necessary	Do not encourage	None of the options
20%	61%	12%	6%	1%
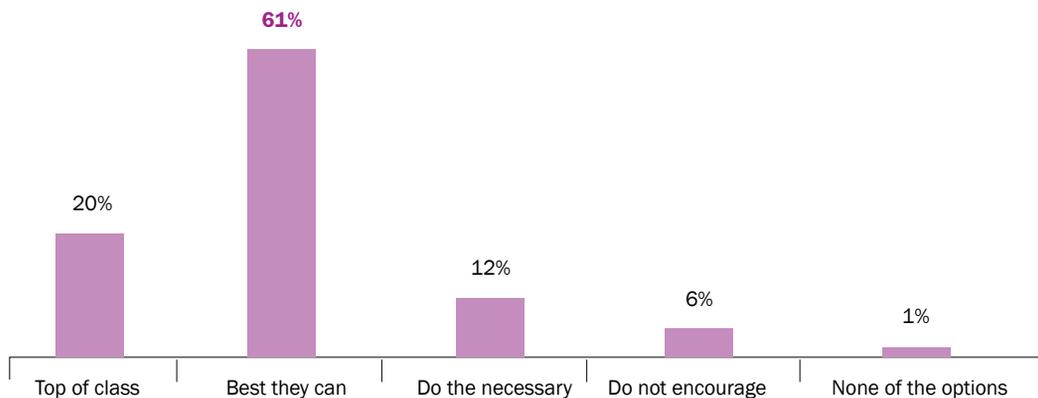
Malay/Muslim parents who indicated they encourage their child to be top of class are more likely to be higher-income earners and aged between 25 and 29. Mothers stood out strongly as important motivators with respect to a child's education.

81% of Malay/Muslim parents indicated there are no major challenges with the education of their children so far. Those who did face challenges, however, were more likely to be older (in their 50s), less educated, and fall within the middle- to low-income brackets.

The key parental challenges cited include children's lack of desire to study and academic performance. However, some also cited financial burden as a key barrier to their children's education.

Have you faced any <u>major challenges or problems </u>with respect to your children's education?

19%
Yes I do

81%
No I don't
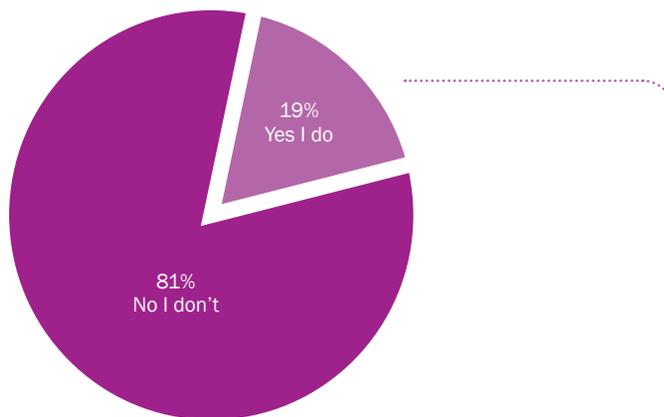
What are some of the problems you face?

1. Children don't want to study

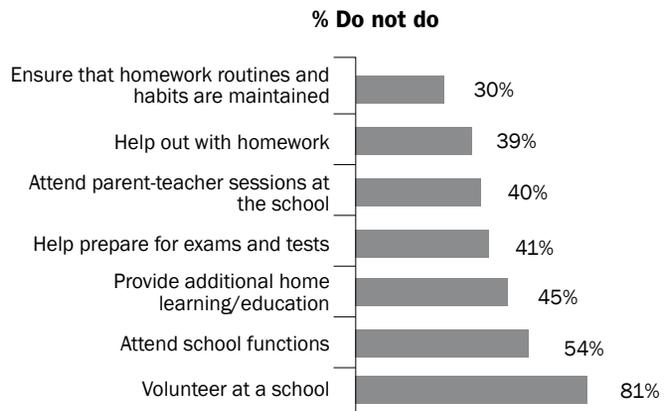2. Financial burden

3. Children not getting good grades

Parental Involvement

When it comes to the level of involvement in their children's education, most Malay/Muslim parents (68%) perceived themselves to be fairly involved. However, it was found that the actual involvement of Malay/Muslim parents in activities related to their child's education do not always match this perception.

How would you describe your own efforts when it comes to your children's education?
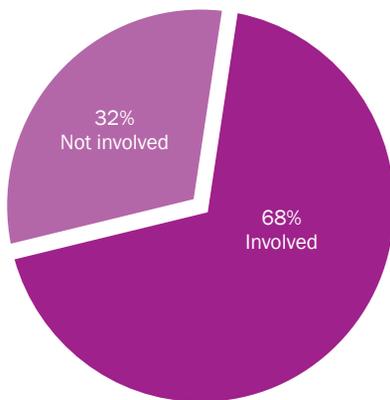
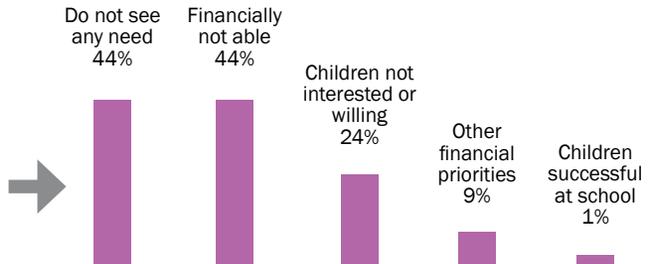**Do you do any of the following in relation to your children's education?**

% Do not do

Ensure that homework routines and habits are maintained	30%
Help out with homework	39%
Attend parent-teacher sessions at the school	40%
Help prepare for exams and tests	41%
Provide additional home learning/education	45%
Attend school functions	54%
Volunteer at a school	81%

32% Not involved

68% Involved

A majority of the parents (81%) indicated that they do not volunteer at their child's school, and about half of them do not attend school functions (54%) or parent-teacher sessions at school (40%).

In addition, a portion of the Malay/Muslim parents do not ensure that homework routines are maintained (30%), help out with homework (39%) or prepare their children for tests and exams (41%). Nearly half of them (47%) also do not enroll their children in any other courses outside of school, such as remedial, tuition or enrichment programmes, to assist the children in their education.

Why not?

1. No other courses attended	**47%**
2. Tuition	38%
3. Remedial	25%
4. Enrichment programmes	12%

Do not see any need 44%

Financially not able 44%

Children not interested or willing 24%

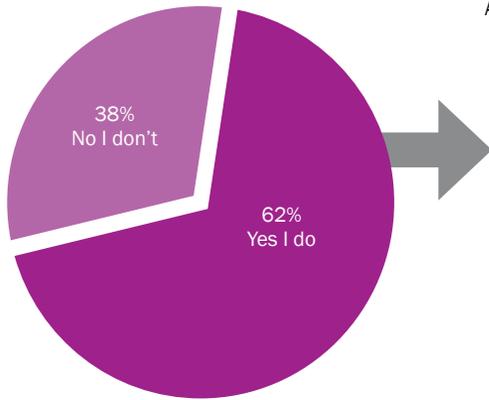Other financial priorities 9%

Children successful at school 1%

Those who do not enroll their children in other courses are likely to come from lower-income households and cited the lack of financial means (44%) as the main reason why they have not done so. However, an equally substantial segment of parents also indicated that they do not see any need for their children to be enrolled in enrichment classes at all.

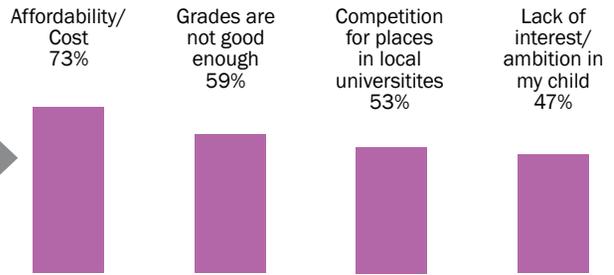*Parental Aspirations and Tertiary Education*

When it comes to aspirations for their children's future, 56% of Malay/Muslim parents hope their children will eventually hold a tertiary degree or higher.

However, two in three (62%) indicated that they anticipate challenges that may affect their child's ability to enter university. Of those who anticipated challenges, 73% cited the cost of a university education as the key challenge they face. Other challenges include the academic performance of their child (59%), competition for places in local universities (53%) and lack of interest or ambition in their child (47%).

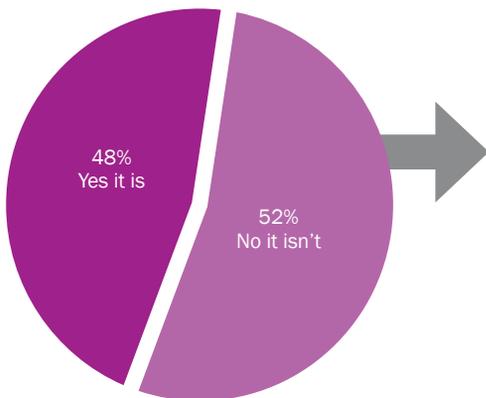**Do you anticipate any challenges that might affect your children's ability to get a university education?**
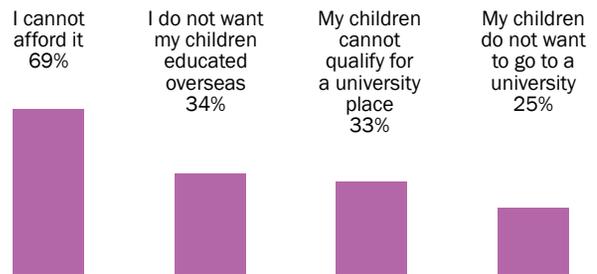
What are some of the challenges you anticipate?

38%
No I don't

62%
Yes I do

Affordability/
Cost
73%

Grades are
not good
enough
59%

Competition
for places
in local
universitites
53%

Lack of
interest/
ambition in
my child
47%

Many Malay/Muslim parents also acknowledged the challenges of sending their children overseas to study at a foreign university. More than half (52%) indicated that it would be unrealistic, citing the cost of an overseas education (69%) as the key reason for this.

Do you think it is realistic for you to send your child overseas to study at a foreign university?

Why not?

48%
Yes it is

52%
No it isn't

I cannot
afford it
69%

I do not want
my children
educated
overseas
34%

My children
cannot
qualify for
a university
place
33%

My children
do not want
to go to a
university
25%

Culture and Religion

Malay/Muslims are overwhelmingly supportive of strengthening both the traditional Malay culture and Islamic teaching.

Satisfaction with local religious leadership is also high. Religious leaders (or *asatizahs*) enjoy at least 80% satisfaction levels within the community. In contrast, only half of the key influencers expressed satisfaction with the current religious leadership.
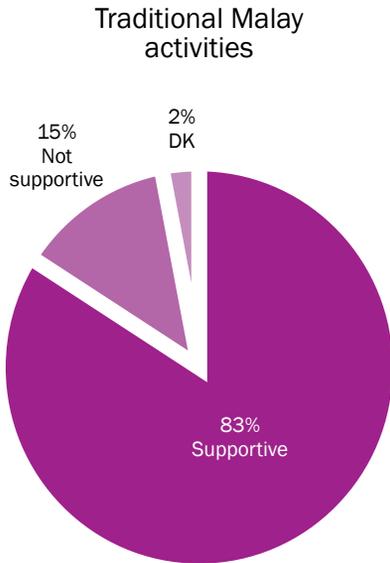
While satisfaction with religious leadership is positive, it is interesting to note that more than a third of Malay/Muslims still feel that *asatizahs* are failing to keep in touch with young Malay/Muslims. This is an important finding, considering the community's broader concerns about youth behaviour and moral deterioration.

Both Malay/Muslims and key influencers agreed that religious leaders could do better by adopting more progressive attitudes and through closer collaboration with Malay/Muslim community organisations.

Malay Culture and Islamic Tradition Equally Championed

Malay/Muslims evidently do not see the Malay culture and Islam as being mutually exclusive elements of their society. While a stricter interpretation of Islamic teaching is supported by more than 90% of Malay/Muslims, cultivating traditional Malay activities is also equally supported.

How supportive are you of the following?

Traditional Malay activities

15% Not supportive

2% DK

83% Supportive

Stricter interpretation and following of Islamic teaching

6% Not supportive

1% DK

93% Supportive
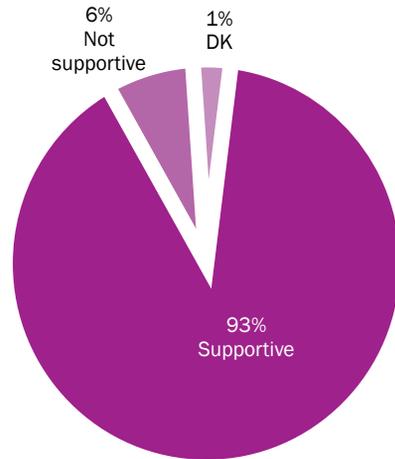
Legend
DK = Don't Know

Islamic Leadership

Malay/Muslims are generally satisfied with the religious leadership provided by key *asatizahs*, with four in five indicating so. Key influencers, however, expressed lower levels of satisfaction with the religious leadership in general.

**How satisfied are you with religious leadership in Singapore provided by key religious teachers?**

2%
DK

Not satisfied
18%

Malay/Muslim Community

80%
Satisfied

12%
DK

Key Influencers

Not satisfied
36%

52%
Satisfied
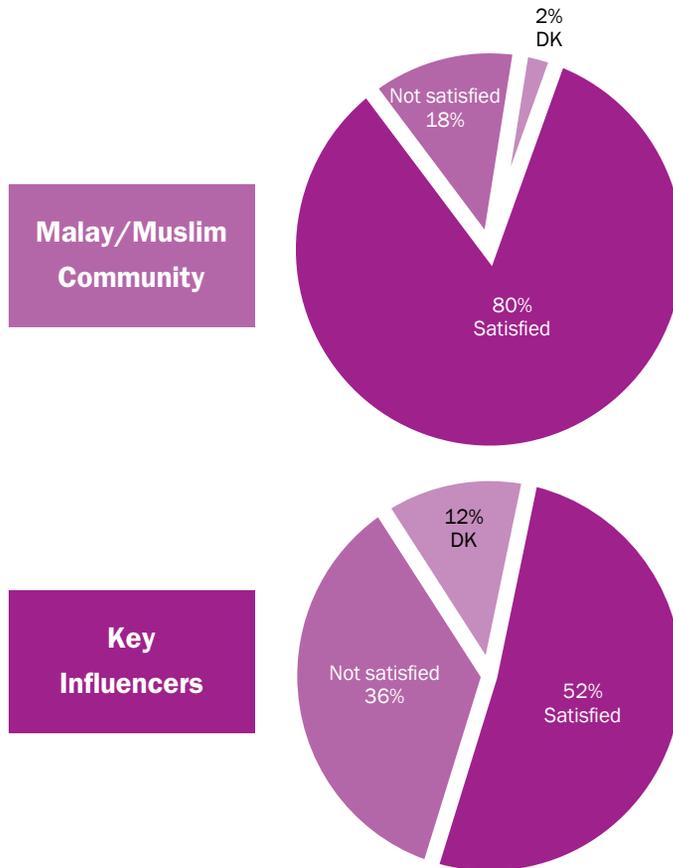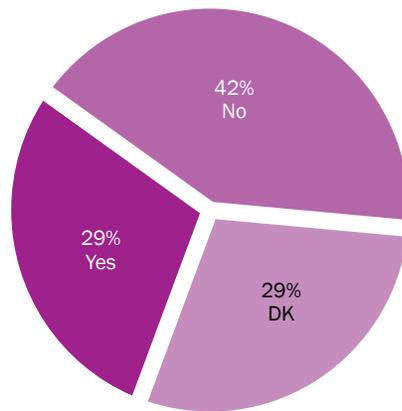
Legend
DK = Don't Know

Islamic Teaching and Young Malay/Muslims

Considering Malay/Muslims' concerns about youth delinquency, it is notable that more than a third of them felt that *asatizahs* are not in touch with young Malay/Muslims. An equal percentage of key influencers (42%) also indicated so.

Do you feel that Islamic teachers (*asatizahs*) are in touch with the attitudes of young Malay/Muslims today?

54%
Yes

37%
No

9%
DK

Malay/Muslim Community

42%
No

29%
Yes

29%
DK
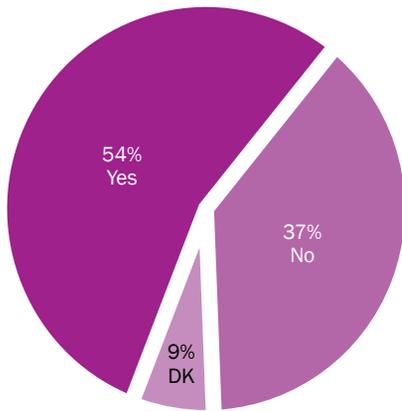
Key Influencers

Legend
DK = Don't Know

Across both segments, *asatizahs* are encouraged to collaborate with Malay/Muslim organisations to better understand their youths and adopt more progressive attitudes to better connect with young Malay/Muslims.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

1. Malay/Muslims are generally satisfied with the progress made in recent years, while increases in cost of living are putting pressure on many today. Overall, most felt that Singapore is on the right track and that the community enjoys equivalent opportunities with respect to access and support.

2. However, many Malay/Muslims still felt that their personal economic prospects are weak. This is acutely felt by women in particular.

3. Malay/Muslims place importance on education and believe that good progress has been made in recent times. In contrast, key influencers are less likely to think that sufficient progress in education has been made while opinion leaders felt that the community cannot rest on its laurels. Ensuring that Malay/Muslims reach their full potential is still a work in progress.

4. There could be more active parental involvement in education, as it was found that there is some disjoint between the perceptions and actual involvement among Malay/Muslim parents when it comes to various aspects of their children's education.

5. In addition to pressures from the cost of living, Malay/Muslims are also concerned about youth behaviour and the threats to family stability. These concerns, which were echoed by opinion leaders, are partly attributed to the changing dynamics at home, with more Malay/Muslim women seeking employment. Most also believed that this is something Malay/Muslim organisations need to be more actively involved in solving, and not just leaving it to the government.

6. There is widespread enthusiasm on the positive cultural renaissance among the Malay/Muslims, which has blossomed in recent times. Although this is a source of pride, many still felt that religious leaders (*asatizahs*) need to do more to stay in touch with today's younger generation.