

Publication: The Straits Times, pg B01

Date: 16 May 2019

Headline: More clear own tables at hawker centres



Discarded food and drinks at Orchard MRT station (left) and a Toa Payoh hawker centre (right). In the Public Cleanliness Satisfaction Survey last year, respondents said trash was seen more in hawker centres than in places like wet markets and on public pavements. Only 71.4 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the cleanliness of hawker centres, which were ranked the lowest for cleanliness among the public spaces polled. PHOTOS: NG SOR LUAN, ST FILE

# More clear own tables at hawker centres

**But cleanliness at these eating places ranked lowest among public spaces covered in poll**

**Rosalind Ang**

People are getting better at returning their utensils and crockery at hawker centres, and while more are doing their bit, yet the cleanliness of these public food spaces still leaves much to be desired.

The second Public Cleanliness Satisfaction Survey (PCSS) conducted last year found that 48.7 per

cent of Singaporeans cleared their tableware at hawker centres most or all of the time.

In the first survey, conducted in 2017, just 35 per cent per cent said they did so.

However, only 71.4 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the cleanliness of hawker centres, which were ranked the lowest for cleanliness among the public spaces covered in the poll.

In comparison, 94 per cent said they were satisfied with the cleanliness of transport spaces such as roads, bus stops and MRT stations, 84.8 per cent with commuter paths and 79.3 per cent with their neighbourhoods.

Last year's survey also found 74.3 per cent of people to be satisfied with the cleanliness of public spaces, such as stadiums, after an event, compared with 62.6 per cent in 2017.

Respondents said trash, such as leftover food and used tissue paper, was seen more in hawker centres than in other places like wet markets and on public pavements.

Conducted by the Singapore Management University (SMU), the PCSS polled more than 2,000 Singapore residents aged 21 and above.

"The culture of clearing our food is not consistent across all food-courts and hawker centres - we have to work towards making it a social norm," said Professor Paulin Tay Straughan, Dean of Students and Professor of Sociology (Practice) at SMU, who led the survey.

"Depending on cleaning services is unsustainable for Singapore's cleanliness in the long run."

The authorities have turned to different methods to improve cleanli-

ness at hawker centres.

For instance, last year, the National Environment Agency (NEA) rolled out an initiative to charge deposits for food trays, to motivate people to return them and get their deposits back.

"Over the years, we have taken things for granted with our army of cleaners cleaning up after us," said Mr Edward D'Silva, the chairman of the Public Hygiene Council. People have to be involved in keeping public spaces clean.

Food workers said they have noticed and welcomed the greater cleanliness in hawker centres.

Hawker stall assistant Gwee Gek Moi, 46, said: "Hawker centres have indeed become cleaner than they were years ago. We hope that customers will continue to work with us in keeping our eating spaces clean." Singaporeans say that more can be done to maintain a clean city.

"Collectively, Singaporeans have a long way to go in terms of graciousness," said Mr Gavin Choo, a 27-year-old public relations executive. "More of us should have the initiative to clean up after ourselves and be considerate."

sweewena@sph.com.sg

Source: The Straits Times @ Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Permission required for reproduction