

## Government completes 'most comprehensive' study of Singaporean hopes and dreams

**YAHOO! NEWS**

By Chiu Peace | Yahoo! Newsroom – Sat, Aug 10, 2013



47,000 participants.

660 dialogues.

One big national conversation.

These numbers tell the story of the year-long “Our Singapore Conversation” (OSC) – a national initiative announced by PM Lee last August to get citizens to share their vision of the Singapore of the future.

At a Tuesday press conference to announce the Saturday launch of “Reflections” -- a 48-page newsmagazine that documents the findings of the year-long process -- OSC chairman Heng Swee Keat said OSC is the most “representative” and “comprehensive” national dialogue ever undertaken.

# Our Singapore Conversation

## IN NUMBERS

All that you need to know about the national conversation at a glance

**ESTIMATED NUMBER OF DIALOGUES**  
 (as of 15 July 2013)

~660



Organised by:  
 • OSC Secretariat  
 • Community groups  
 • Government agencies

**ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS**  
 (as of 15 July 2013)

~47,000  
 + 4,000 surveyed

**TOTAL NUMBER OF LOCATIONS**

75

**NUMBER OF LANGUAGES USED**

7

English, Mandarin, Malay, Tamil, Cantonese, Hokkien, Teochew

**NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED**  
 not including government agencies  
 (as of 15 July 2013)

>40

**ESTIMATED TOTAL NUMBER OF HOURS OF CONVERSATIONS**

1,645 hrs



Watching all 8 Harry Potter movies  
 82 times

**NUMBER OF ONLINE CONTRIBUTIONS**  
 (as of 15 July 2013)



1,331  
 EMAIL  
 THREADS

4,050  
 FACEBOOK  
 WALL POSTS

211  
 FACEBOOK  
 PRIVATE MESSAGES

230,000  
 ONLINE REFERENCES  
 TO OSC



based on  
 "Our Singapore Conversation"  
 Google search

73

OSC YOUTUBE VIDEOS



**TOTAL DURATION OF YOUTUBE VIDEOS**



149  
 MINUTES

### PUBLIC DIALOGUES ORGANISED BY THE OSC SECRETARIAT

**VOLUNTEERS**



120  
 FACILITATORS



83  
 NOTE-TAKERS

**SHEETS OF FLIPCHART PAPER DRAWN ON**



6 sheets per group  
 × 5 groups  
 × 35 dialogues

1,050

When laid out, they cover the floor of about 10 3-room HDB flats



**CUPS OF COFFEE & TEA DRUNK**



90 cups per canister  
 × 4 canisters  
 × 35 dialogues

12,600

Enough to fill 1/1000 of an Olympic-sized pool



**NUMBER OF MR SKETCH MARKERS USED**



15 boxes  
 × 8 markers

120

Form a straight line with the markers and it will take about

60 steps

to cover the length



**NUMBER OF STICKY NOTES USED**



8 pads per group  
 × 5 groups  
 × 35 dialogues

1,400

× 100 pieces per notepad = 140,000 pieces of sticky notes

When laid out, they cover the floor of about 10 MRT carriages



"Our Singapore Conversation" in numbers. (Photo by OSC)

Over 47,000 participants across all walks of life had participated in around 660 dialogues organised by OSC Secretariat, community groups and government agencies. Heng, who is

also the Education Minister, said these sessions were deliberately conducted using varied formats and different languages, and held across locations such as food courts and hawker centres islandwide in order to be as inclusive as possible.

To complement the findings of the sessions, a statistically-representative survey of 4,000 Singaporeans was also conducted to gather views on a range of issues, such as Singaporeans' top priorities. Besides the dialogues and survey, Singaporeans also shared their views via emails to the OSC Secretariat and through social media.

OSC committee member, Kuo Jian Hong, the artistic director of theatre company The Theatre Practice, said special steps had been taken to ensure that different groups of Singaporeans — such as minorities and those who had no access to computers or online information -- were involved in the national conversation.

Another committee member, Stanley Chia Ding Li, the managing director of education enterprise Envisage Education, said community groups and voluntary welfare organisations were also not left out of the dialogue.

### **'Open-ended' format**

Kuo admitted she was initially "sceptical" about OSC, but she changed her mind and agreed to join the committee when Minister Heng said he didn't have a "concrete ABC plan".

Another committee member, Mahdev Mohan, who is an assistant professor of Law at the Singapore Management University, said OSC was not "one-dimensional" and people were able to freely express their views, even if they were "not conventional or populist".

Chia echoed Mohan's views, adding that unlike townhalls on policy planning where only the vocal ones spoke up, there was a high level of participation from people who took part in the sessions.

In gathering and analysing the feedback from Singaporeans, Minister Heng said that while the OSC team had identified core aspirations and common themes, it was careful not to neglect diverse views that were raised.

To illustrate, he said a common theme was to make public housing affordable, but many differed in their views on how to achieve this, and sometimes these views might be on "opposing ends".

### **Putting ideas into action**

Feedback gathered from OSC have since been passed on to various ministries for consideration, added the Minister.

Some ideas, like the free museum entry for Singaporeans and PRs and the inclusion of congenital conditions in MediShield coverage, have already been put into practice.

And while the inputs may not affect policy planning "directly", they will help "shape" and provide direction in the coming years.



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Policy changes are also expected to be announced during PM Lee's National Day Rally speech on 18 August, added the Minister.

And even as OSC comes to a close, he said the conversation will not end and that the government has learnt how to better engage the public through the exercise.

He also encouraged Singaporeans to continue discussing the future they want for Singapore and said that these conversations don't always need to involve the government. In fact, he said he was heartened to see some citizens conducting their own dialogues.

Here's a video shot by a group of film students from Ngee Ann Polytechnic capturing some of the views of the Singaporeans who took part in the year-long "Our Singapore Conversation" process.