

Media Release

Close to 1 in 2 Willing to Pay for Public Toilets If Cleanliness is Guaranteed

Nationwide study by SMU shows that Sentosa has the cleanest public toilets, while coffee shop toilets across Singapore remain just as dirty as they were in 2023

Singapore, 23 December 2023 – Despite a common perception that public toilets should remain free, close to 1 in 2 Singaporeans expressed a willingness to pay if cleanliness could be guaranteed.

Public opinion about paying for cleaner toilets however remained divided. Of those willing, 82% were open to paying 10-30 cents, with 42% willing to fork out 50 cents to over \$1 for a spotless experience. These findings, and more were uncovered in a [new nationwide study](#) conducted by [Singapore Management University \(SMU\)](#), with the support of World Toilet Organization (WTO), Restroom Association (Singapore) (RAS), Public Hygiene Council (PHC) and Singapore Kindness Movement (SKM).

Conducted between August and September 2024 by **SMU Principal Lecturer of Statistics Rosie Ching and her 222 undergraduates** in an experiential Statistics project, the study covered 2,602 toilets across 1,428 coffeeshops, hawker centres, SMRT stations and shopping malls. A total of 4,905 people were interviewed, comprising 510 employees and 4,395 customers, on the state of public toilets. These interviews allowed detailed insights into human perceptions of toilet cleanliness and how they compare to 2023 and 2020.

Sentosa emerged as the cleanest region for public toilets in hawker centres and coffeeshops in 2024, topping the list ahead of Newton and Tanglin. Despite ongoing efforts to improve hygiene standards in the Year of Public Hygiene, the sanitation in coffeeshop toilets across Singapore were slightly worse than in 2023.

The study also compared coffeeshop and hawker centre toilets with public toilets in shopping centres and SMRT stations. Shopping centre toilets emerged as the cleanest and significantly outperformed the other categories, highlighting a stark divide in hygiene standards. A whopping 94.29% say they use public toilets in both coffeeshops and shopping centres, with local citizens citing “irresponsible users” for the dirty state of toilets.

The study identified 14 out of 17 key toilet attributes as being below acceptable standards. Wet or oily floors, clogged sinks, dirty toilet bowls, insufficient ventilation, and missing or overflowing bins were among the most frequent complaints. Cleaning schedules were often outdated or entirely absent, with only taps, sinks, and soap achieving reasonable ratings.

A worrying finding is that the closer cooking facilities are to toilets in coffeeshops and hawker centres, the significantly dirtier the toilets are, indicating a strong correlation between the two factors.



All results are accessible at www.toiletstatistics.com and photographs at <https://smu.sg/waterloo24>.

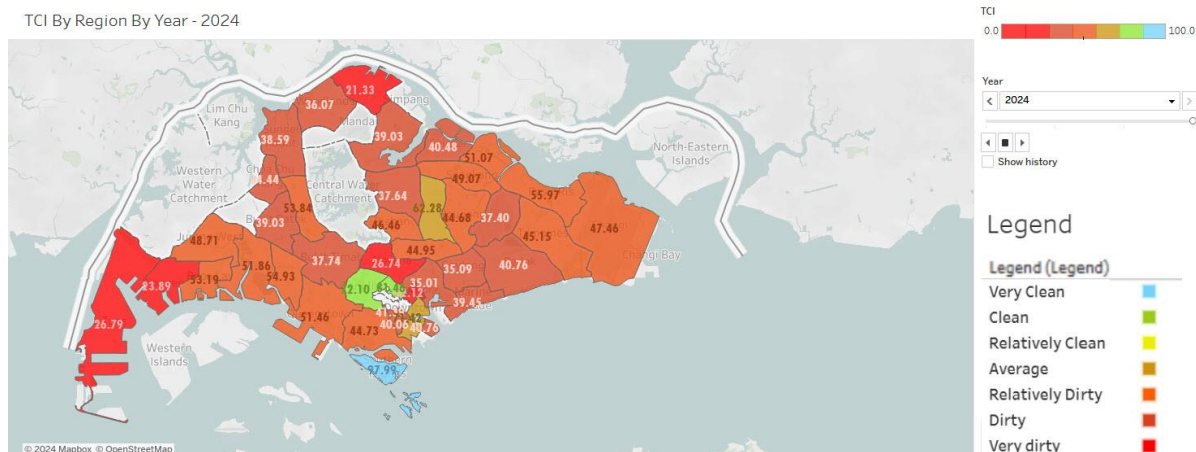
Said **Ms. Ching**, “It’s been nearly a decade since I launched this project in 2015, yet we still find ourselves dealing with dirty public toilets in coffeeshops. As we mark the Year of Public Hygiene, how much longer must Singapore wait for meaningful improvements to public toilets—especially as we move toward becoming a super-aged society? I want to especially commend my tireless toilet student army. Together, we strive for a cleaner, better, and safer Singapore, where every citizen deserves access to a clean and dignified public toilet.”

“The Public Hygiene Council is happy to once again partner Singapore Management University on Project Waterloo, to understand the situation of public toilet cleanliness in Singapore and see how we can collectively help to improve it. Public toilet cleanliness is a shared responsibility. Everyone, including premises operators, cleaners and users, must do their part to keep our public toilets clean. Strengthened partnerships and collaboration across all stakeholder groups remain critical,” said **Mr Andrew Khng, Chairman, Public Hygiene Council**.

Please refer to Annex for the detailed findings of the 2024 survey, titled *Waterloo*.

ANNEX: KEY FINDINGS OF WATERLOO 2025

TCI By Region By Year - 2024



The Good, The Bad and The Dirty

- In 2024, Sentosa topped the list for the cleanest public toilets in hawker centres and coffee shops, followed by Newton and Tanglin. Marina South topped the list in 2023, 2020 and 2016 but emerged in 22nd spot in 2024, even ranking below Singapore River which was one of the three dirtiest regions for toilets in 2023.
- In 2024, the dirtiest hawker centre and coffeeshop toilets were in Sembawang, Rochor and Pioneer, with Pioneer also being voted the worst in 2023.
- In 2020, these were in Tuas, Telok Blangah and Bukit Batok, with Singapore River ranked bottom in 2016.

	2016	2020	2023	2024
Top 3 cleanest	Marina South (best) Novena Western Water Catchment	Marina South (best) Tanglin Changi	Marina South (best) Outram Boon Lay	Sentosa, Newton, Tanglin
Bottom 3 dirtiest	Singapore River (worst) Boon Lay Bukit Panjang	Tuas (worst) Telok Blangah Bukit Batok	Pioneer (worst) Ubi Singapore River	Sembawang (worst), Rochor Pioneer

Toilet Cleanliness Index (0-100)

The Toilet Cleanliness Index (TCI) is a simple number from zero (dirtiest: coded in red on www.toiletstatistics.com) to 100 (cleanest: coded in bright blue). It works as a percentile and incorporates all the following attributes:

- Toilet Entry/Exit Cleanliness
- Toilet Floor Cleanliness
- Toilet “Keep Clean” Posters / Stickers
- Toilet Ventilation Facility
- Toilet Sink Cleanliness
- Toilet Vanity Top Cleanliness (included in 2020)
- Toilet Mirror Cleanliness
- Toilet Tap Cleanliness
- Toilet Soap Dispenser Facility
- Toilet Cleaning & Toilet Checks Signed Schedule Forms
- Rubbish Bin Cleanliness
- Rubbish Bin Facility
- Cubicle Door Cleanliness
- Toilet Bowl Cleanliness
- Toilet Seat Cleanliness
- Toilet Bowl Facility
- Squat Pan Cleanliness
- Toilet Paper Dispenser Cleanliness
- Toilet Paper

MALE TOILETS ONLY:

- Toilet Urinal Cleanliness
- Toilet Urinal Facility

FEMALE TOILETS ONLY:

- Female Sanitation Disposal Bin Cleanliness
- Female Sanitation Disposal Bin Facility

TOILET USER IMPRESSION SURVEY

- How would you rate the smell of the toilet?
- How would you rate the overall cleanliness of the toilet?

Coffeeshop Toilets Remain The Dirtiest After 8 Years

TOILET CLEANLINESS INDEX (0-100)

Toilets	Year	2016 (# of toilets) (# of addresses)	2020 (# of toilets) (# of addresses)	2023 (# of toilets) (# of addresses)	2024 (# of toilets) (# of addresses)
Coffeeshops		46.9984	46.7416	46.8420	46.2615
		(844)	(2233)	(1954)	(1852)
		(1173)	(1330)	(1099)	(1078)
Hawker Centres		67.3152	58.9464	65.5997	66.2837
		(105)	(228)	(302)	(253)
		(109)	(114)	(118)	(116)

- In 2024, coffeeshop toilets scored 46.26 on the Toilet Cleanliness Index, a slight decline from 2023. Over the past eight years (2016–2024), there has been no statistically significant improvement in the cleanliness of 6,883 coffeeshop toilets across Singapore. Coffeeshop toilets remain notably dirtier than those in hawker centres, which scored 66.28.
- Hawker centre toilets continued their upward trend in cleanliness, scoring 66.28 in 2024 compared to 65.60 in 2023. This marks a commendable improvement since 2020, when cleanliness dropped significantly during the COVID-19 outbreak. However, the overall cleanliness of public toilets still falls short of 2016 levels.
- Coffeeshop toilets, by contrast, have shown little progress, with scores stagnating at 47.00 in 2016 to 46.26 in 2024—well below the 50-point threshold for reasonable cleanliness.
- Toilets located closer to cooking facilities in coffeeshops and hawker centres are significantly dirtier. For every 1–2 meters of proximity, cleanliness scores drop by approximately 5 percentiles—a strong correlation observed consistently since 2016 and confirmed again in 2024. This raises major public health concerns, as many food handlers use these toilets. Photographic evidence highlights unsanitary conditions particularly near food preparation areas.

The odour in coffeeshop toilets is significantly worse than in hawker centre toilets, though both fall within the “user breathes lightly” category.

Unisex Toilets Scored Lowest on Cleanliness Levels

		TOILET CLEANLINESS INDEX (0-100)			
Toilets \ Year	Year	2016 (# of toilets)	2020 (# of toilets)	2023 (# of toilets)	2024 (# of toilets)
Handicapped		56.17 (52)	52.26 (221)	54.28 (200)	54.45 (193)
Male		60.41 (780)	52.09 (957)	49.73 (941)	51.62 (831)
Female		65.94 (807)	47.97 (960)	52.33 (892)	51.82 (842)
Unisex		48.80 (156)	43.38 (323)	36.14 (223)	36.51 (239)

- Among public toilets, handicapped toilets were the cleanest in 2024, scoring 54.45 (up from 54.28 in 2023). Women’s toilets followed at 51.81 (down from 52.33), while men’s toilets scored 51.62 (up from 49.73). Statistically, there is no significant difference between these categories in 2024.
- Unisex or shared-gender toilets scored the lowest on the Toilet Cleanliness Index at 36.51 in 2024, showing no improvement since 2016. Predominantly found in coffeeshops, these toilets remain the filthiest compared to male, female, and handicapped facilities, despite the focus on hygiene in 2024.
- In 2024, 14 out of 17 toilet attributes were rated dirtier than acceptable. Common issues include:
 - wet or oily floors;
 - dirty, clogged or non-working toilet fixtures (sinks, toilet bowls, squat pans or urinals);
 - overflowing rubbish bins;
 - inadequate or absent toilet paper;
 - stained mirrors, cubicle doors or toilet seats;
 - poor or no ventilation;
 - missing toilet posters and cleaning schedules.
- Only taps, sinks, and soap achieved “Reasonable” ratings, marking a marginal improvement from 2023, with sinks being a new entry in this rating.

Human Perception of Toilet Cleanliness Index (HPTCI)

The HPTCI measures public perception of toilet cleanliness on a 0–100 scale, with 100 indicating the cleanest perception and 0 the dirtiest. It is based on responses to the following questions:

- Do you, have you used, or would you use the toilets here if you had to?
- To what degree do you think the toilet cleanliness here needs to be improved?
- How would you rate the overall cleanliness of the toilet? If you have not used them, how do you think you would rate it?

In both 2024 and 2023, public perception of toilet cleanliness is significantly lower than in 2020.

Year	HPTCI	Sample size
2020	51.6434	8,278
2023	48.9513	9,411
2024	49.0719	4,905

92% of Singaporeans Find Toilet Cleanup Efforts Ineffective

HUMAN PERCEPTION OF TOILET CLEANLINESS INDEX (0-100)

Year		2020	2023	2024
People		(# of people)	(# of people)	(# of people)
Workers		61.7312 (2284)	77.0461 (460)	79.1803 (510)
Customers		47.7995 (5994)	47.5075 (8951)	45.5782 (4395)

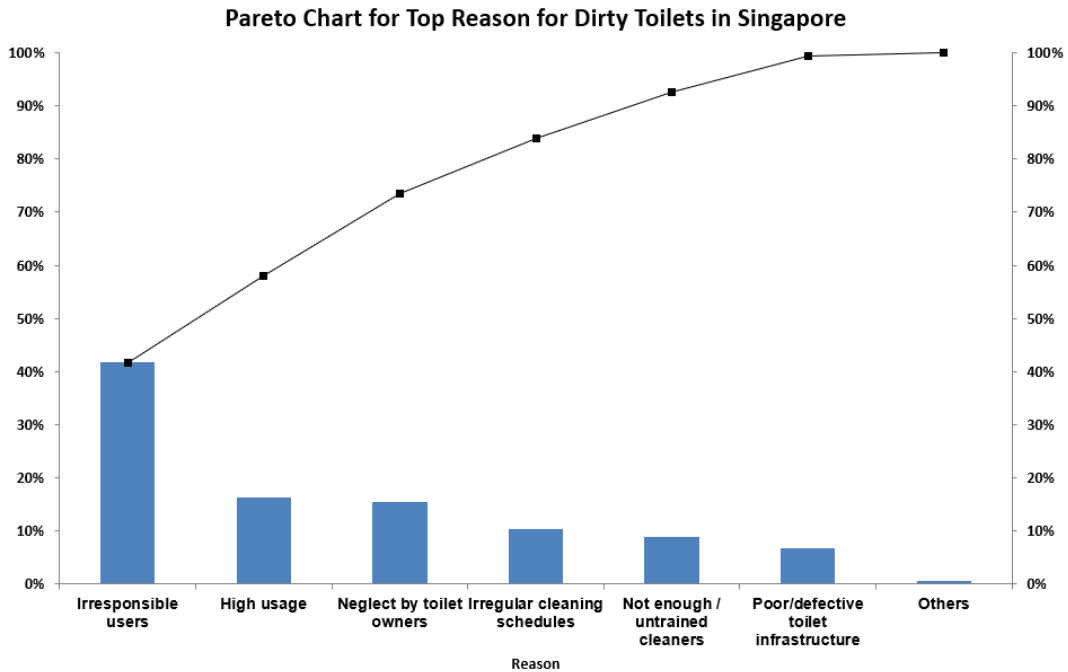
Toilet usage

- 93.73% of workers at hawker centres and coffeeshops use the toilets at their working premises, compared to 39.29% of customers. A total of 4,905 people were surveyed, which includes 510 workers and 4,395 customers.
- 80.8% of customers would only use the toilets for a small call of nature, a significant increase from 2023 but still lower than in 2016. Nearly 70% would avoid using the toilets for larger needs, a higher rate than in 2023 and significantly higher than in 2020 and 2016.

Public sentiment on cleanliness: Hawker centres and coffeeshops

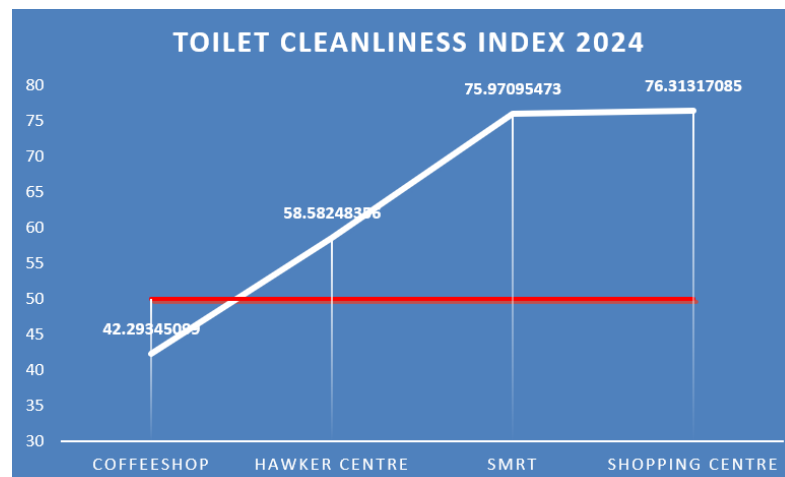
- 92.3% of customers believe the toilets in hawker centres and coffeeshops need a “moderate to a complete overhaul”, compared to 62.9% of workers at these joints. Customers tend to rate the toilets with “a major overhaul required”, while the workers lean towards rating the degree of improvement needed as “moderate”.
- Of those interviewed who believe that toilets in hawker centres and coffeeshops need a “moderate to a complete overhaul”, 92.7% are customers.
- 60% of customers and 40% of workers view the toilets as “dirty” and “less than reasonably clean”, with customers generally having a worse perception of toilet cleanliness than the workers do.
- In 2024, 62% of locals felt toilets in coffeeshops and hawker centres were “much dirtier” or “just as dirty” as they were before COVID-19, a slight improvement from 67% in 2023. Over 50% of the 14,316 citizens surveyed selected “just as dirty”.
- Nearly 60% of people consider these toilets “dirty.” In 2020, 30.22% rated them as “clean,” but this dropped to 6.5% in 2023 and 8.5% in 2024. In total, 8,367 respondents rated the toilets as “dirty” to “very dirty”, representing almost 60% of citizens.
- 42% of local citizens attribute the unclean state of public toilets in coffeeshops and hawker centres to “irresponsible users”, making it the most cited reason among others.

“High usage” ranks second on the list of contributing factors.



Public sentiment on toilet cleanliness: Shopping centres

- 94.29% say they also use shopping centre toilets, citing their superior cleanliness compared to those in coffeeshops and hawker centres. This indicates that the same group of people frequently uses toilets in all these locations.
- Large samples of 206 toilets in 90 shopping centres and 291 toilets in 144 SMRT stations and were also studied and given the same survey treatment as those in coffeeshops and hawker centres. These were the findings:



- This discrepancy remains puzzling, given that 94.29% of respondents reported using both shopping centre and hawker/coffee shop toilets, suggesting similar user demographics. While 42% of locals attribute dirty toilets to "irresponsible users", these findings highlight

concerns about maintenance and enforcement practices in public food establishments.

Calls for Stricter Enforcement

- In January 2024, the National Environment Agency (NEA) and Singapore Food Agency (SFA) increased fines for public toilet cleanliness lapses to between \$1,000 and \$5,000. However, 55.2% of Singaporeans believe stricter enforcement and heavier fines are necessary, with only 41.2% finding current measures adequate. A further 78.2% disagreed with claims that coffeeshop operators are cleaning their toilets as frequently as recommended by authorities.
- When asked about the effectiveness of efforts to improve cleanliness in Singapore’s coffeeshops and hawker centres, the average response was “a little effective”, showing minimal improvement from 2023.
- A staggering 92% of Singaporeans consider efforts to clean up toilets in hawker centres and coffeeshops less than satisfactory, with responses ranging from “completely ineffective” to “only somewhat effective”. Of these, 60% explicitly rate these efforts as “mostly ineffective” or worse.

With just 8% expressing optimism about Singapore’s clean toilet initiatives, the message is clear: more robust measures are needed to meet public hygiene standards, especially in essential community spaces.

Willingness to Pay for Clean Toilets

When asked about paying for cleaner toilets, public opinion was divided. While 51% said public toilets should remain free, 49% expressed willingness to pay if cleanliness could be guaranteed. Of those willing, 82% were open to paying 10-30 cents, with 42% even willing to fork out 50 cents to over \$1 for a spotless experience.



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