

More older adults fearful of being unable to afford basic necessities, new study reveals

SMU Centre for Research on Successful Ageing (ROSA)'s new research on costs of living shows that Singapore's older adults are more concerned now about their financial situations than they were during the circuit-breaker

Singapore, 6 February 2023 (Monday) – A new study by the [SMU Centre for Research on Successful Ageing \(ROSA\)](#) revealed that nearly 1 in 3 older adults in Singapore felt there was at least a 50 per cent chance that they would be unable to afford basic necessities or have difficulties paying bills.

This latest study, "[Concerns over the cost of living among older adults in Singapore](#)", which polled 6,839 Singaporeans aged 57 to 76 in August 2022, showed a marked increase in the number of seniors who expected their financial situation to worsen. Almost half of the respondents surveyed (45 per cent) felt that they would be forced to lower their standard of living, up from 38 per cent who felt the same way in May 2020 during the circuit-breaker.

The three items respondents were most worried about being able to afford were (in order of most to least) (i) medical services, (ii) utilities, and (iii) prescription medication.

"As intuitive as they may sound, these results warrant closer attention given that economic expectations are an important predictor of well-being. With these findings, we are kept abreast of how rapid inflation and rising costs are shaping the economic concerns and consumption decisions of older Singaporeans. These findings also highlight older adults as a demographic group that is particularly vulnerable to the rising cost of living, and help us to better identify measures that effectively help vulnerable seniors cope with the pinch of rising living costs in line with national efforts to promote successful ageing," said Professor [Paulin Straughan, Director, ROSA](#).

This study uses data from the Singapore Life Panel®, a population representative monthly online survey of Singaporeans aged 57 to 76 in 2022 that has been conducted since 2015. This study was made possible through the generosity of The Ngee Ann Kongsi and the support of the Ministry of Education.

Full details of the report can be accessed [here](#).

Key findings and recommendations:

1. Of those surveyed, 45 per cent anticipated that they would be forced to lower their standard of living. This is up from 38 per cent who felt the same way in May 2020 during the circuit-breaker, suggesting that older adults are more concerned now about their financial situations than they were during the circuit-breaker.
2. 32 per cent of respondents surveyed in August 2022 expected that they would be unable to afford basic necessities or have difficulties paying bills, up from 22 per cent in May 2020.
3. The following demographic groups had the highest expectations of negative financial impacts, where they expected that they would be forced to lower their standard of living or be forced to use their savings or liquidate their investments, and anticipated being unable to afford basic necessities or having difficulties paying their bills:

- i. Respondents who were unemployed, laid off, or on sick leave
- ii. Respondents with primary or no education
- iii. Respondents living in 1-3 room HDB flats

Based on the above findings, ROSA makes these policy recommendations for consideration:

1. Support for older adults should be targeted at those likely to experience more severe financial difficulties (older adults with low-SES, as well as older adults who are unemployed, laid off, or on sick leave).
2. Financial support should focus on providing for necessities (utilities, groceries, and healthcare needs), as respondents were most concerned about the affordability of such items.
3. Effective communication of the government's mitigation measures for the inflation and impending GST hikes is warranted to buffer the psychological impact of older individuals' financial concerns.

-end-



About the Centre for Research on Successful Ageing (ROSA)

ROSA is a multidisciplinary research centre based in SMU. It was established with an MOE Tier 3 social sciences research grant, as well as the generous support of The Ngee Ann Kongsi. Research at ROSA seeks to define and measure a holistic construct of well-being and to identify the factors that impact Singaporeans' well-being as they progress through the later phases of life. Through close collaboration with government and other partner agencies, ROSA also aims to translate research insights into policy innovations that advance the well-being of older adults holistically and promote successful ageing in Singapore. ROSA brings together a diverse team of leading international and local researchers in ageing and age-related issues from various disciplines. Through empirical evidence derived from a longitudinal methodological approach, the multidisciplinary and multi-institutional research team advances propositions that promote successful ageing in Singapore.

About Singapore Management University

Established in 2000, Singapore Management University (SMU) is recognised for its disciplinary and multi-disciplinary research that address issues of global relevance, impacting business, government, and society. Its distinctive education, incorporating innovative experiential learning, aims to nurture global citizens, entrepreneurs and change agents. With more than 12,000 students, SMU offers a wide range of bachelors, masters and PhD degree programmes in the disciplinary areas associated with six of its eight schools - Accountancy, Business, Computing, Economics, Law and Social Sciences. Its seventh school, the SMU College of Integrative Studies, offers degree programmes in deep, integrative interdisciplinary education. The College of Graduate Research Studies, SMU's eighth school, enhances integration and interdisciplinarity across the various SMU postgraduate research programmes that will enable our students to gain a holistic learning experience and well-grounded approach to their research. SMU also offers a growing number of executive development and continuing education programmes. Through its city campus, SMU focuses on making meaningful impact on Singapore and beyond through its partnerships with industry, policy makers and academic institutions. www.smu.edu.sg