

Media Release

Stigma of Suicide still as Strong as in 2022

Nationwide study by SMU shows that 8 in 10 believe in the existence of stigma associated with suicide in Singapore

Singapore, 18 April 2024 (Thursday) – A new study by [Singapore Management University](https://www.smu.edu.sg) showed that there remains a stigmatic attitude towards suicide compared to two years ago. 1 in 3 Singaporeans would do something to help someone who is suicidal, yet 7 in 10 said they are fearful that they might exacerbate the situation by making the suicidal person feel worse. This year's nationwide study was a follow-up to the original, "Save.Me", conducted in 2022 and showed no shift in these perceptions amongst Singaporeans.

Conducted by SMU Principal Lecturer of Statistics Rosie Ching and her 140 undergraduates, in partnership with Samaritans of Singapore Ltd (SOS) the 2024 study, codenamed "Save.Me.Too", took place from January to March. Altogether, Ms. Ching and her students surveyed 5,274 people across Singapore through face-to-face interviews, telephone calls and Zoom.

Said **Mr Gasper Tan, Chief Executive Officer, Samaritans of Singapore Ltd (SOS)**, "We hope the results from this survey will help policymakers make informed decisions about the pressing issues surrounding suicide, and provide datapoints in developing an effective all-of-society approach. When we better understand the struggles individuals face, it will help pave the way for the development and implementation of impactful nationwide suicide prevention strategies".

Said **Ms. Rosie Ching**, "Save.Me.Too. has given students and faculty abundant exposure to our stigmatic attitudes towards mental health, in particular, suicide in Singapore. Drawing from my own personal connections with lives lost to suicide and when I read of Singapore's highest suicide numbers released by SOS last year, I chose to rerun this project with my new students - to connect them with this real-world problem and allow them to develop a poignant understanding of a deeply pervasive issue. It's crucial for us to grasp that those in crisis yearn to be rescued, to have their anguish acknowledged, and for support systems to be known of and readily accessible. I hope that the insights gained from Save.Me.Too will deepen meaningful conversations about suicide, and catalyse tangible action plans to destigmatise mental health struggles and amplify avenues for support, ultimately contributing to Singapore's collective effort to prevent suicides and save lives."

The study analysed Singaporeans' knowledge and beliefs about suicide, instinctive reactions at the news of suicide, preferred platforms for reaching out for help and the perceived efficacy of such support channels.

Key Findings of practical impact:

- 1. The stigma associated with suicide remains high**
 - 8 in 10 believe in the existence of stigma associated with suicide in Singapore.
- 2. False beliefs in suicide prevail**
 - 8 in 10 think that when someone does talk about suicide, that person could take his life. This may be highly significant in society's resistance towards the conversation surrounding suicide, as resistant then as it is today.

- From 2022, there is a rise in those believing that most suicides happen suddenly without warning and that a person dying by suicide was one who was unwilling to seek help.
- 3. Fear of exacerbating the situation for someone who is suicidal**
- Similar to 2022, more than 70 per cent say it is their fear of making the suicidal person worse, their lack of ability to do anything, and their lack of knowledge.
- 4. A well-educated individual may not necessarily have greater knowledge of suicide**
- Just as in 2022, education exerts no significant effect on knowledge of suicide.
 - There is only a marginal rise in knowledge of suicide with more years of education.
 - When asked for the top reason for their low knowledge levels, those people with more intimate connections to suicide (from immediate family to relatives) chose “No outreach or education”, the same as in 2022. Those more removed from suicide (friends to unrelated or nobody) chose “No personal connection”.
- 5. Instinctive reactions at the news of suicide include grief, anger and guilt**
- The most instinctive emotion across survey respondents at the time of a suicide incident was “Confusion / Shock / Disbelief”, with those with immediate family connections choosing most of or all the above including grief, anger and guilt.
- 6. The public perceives a suicide prevention strategy as being critical**
- 9 in 10 (90.2 per cent) believe that suicide can be prevented, a borderline significant dip from 91.9 per cent in 2022, and that Singapore needs a suicide prevention strategy.
 - The older an individual, the more he does not believe suicide can be predicted.
 - More than 70 per cent of survey respondents aged below 21 years old believe suicide can be predicted.

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About Singapore Management University

Established in 2000, Singapore Management University (SMU) is recognised for its disciplinary and multi-disciplinary research that addresses 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 13,000 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 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. <https://www.smu.edu.sg/>

About Samaritans of Singapore Limited

Samaritans of Singapore Limited (SOS) is a secular, non-profit suicide prevention centre. Since its establishment in 1969, SOS has developed into a professionally run and managed organisation. It adopts a holistic approach to suicide-related topics, focusing on prevention, intervention and postvention, an intervention conducted after a suicide for loved ones and friends. With the mission to be an available lifeline to anyone in crisis, SOS offers emotional support to people in crisis, thinking of suicide, or affected by suicide. All information shared with SOS is treated as confidential and people can choose to remain anonymous.

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