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For Immediate Release

Singaporeans' strong support for hawker culture

Hawker food has been the mainstay for Singaporeans when it comes to getting their local food fix. It has even put our country on the global stage, with Singapore's hawker culture getting on the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity¹. What contributes to Singaporeans' love affair with hawker food and how far are they willing to go to support hawker culture? To find out more on the topic, RySense conducted an online poll among 1,048 respondents from our online panel, HappyDot.sg. These are our key findings:

7 in 10 (73%) visit the hawker centre at least once a week

2 in 5 (40%) visit a hawker centre 1 to 3 days a week to get their local food fix. A sizeable 1 in 5 (21%) visit 4 to 5 days a week and 1 in 10 (12%) visit for more than 5 days a week. (Figure 1)

The top reason for visiting the hawker centre frequently is the affordability of hawker food, as cited by 63% of respondents. Apart from this appealing factor, what is it about hawker culture that is special to Singaporeans?

Singaporeans' top 5 favourite hawker foods are:

1. Chicken Rice – 56%
2. Fried Carrot Cake – 27%
3. Economic Rice (Cai Png) – 23%
4. Fried Kway Teow (Char Kway Teow) – 23%
5. Fish Soup – 23%

Notably, there is one 'healthier choice' among the top 5 – fish soup.

Most unique aspect of Singapore's hawker culture – 'choping' seats is in the top 3

When given a list of various aspects of Singapore's hawker culture and asked to select which they find most unique, 4 in 10 (43%) chose 'Chope (reserve) seats using tissue paper/personal belonging'. This came in third on the list, perhaps indicative of how salient this practice is in the minds of Singaporeans. Topping the list was 'wide variety of multicultural local dishes available in the same hawker centre, which reflects the multicultural makeup of Singapore' (61%), followed by 'Good food at affordable prices (55%)'. (Figure 2)

More Singaporeans are hopeful than concerned about the longevity of hawker culture

With long working hours and the challenge of finding successors to take over the stalls of retiring hawkers, the longevity of hawker culture is under threat². Surprisingly, more Singaporeans are hopeful that Singapore's hawker culture can still exist for a long time (58%) than concerned that it is being lost (34%).

¹ <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/singapores-hawker-culture-added-to-unesco-list-of-intangible-cultural-heritage>

² <https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/history-and-civilisation/2021/01/singapores-iconic-but-endangered-street-food-now-has-unesco-status#>



Regardless of their outlook on hawker culture, an overwhelming 9 in 10 (93%) feel it is important/very important to preserve it.

Affordable prices quoted by 75% as key reason for preserving hawker culture

When we asked respondents why they thought it is important to preserve Singapore's hawker culture, the top 2 reasons were reflective of practical concerns - enjoying good food at affordable prices (75%), followed by convenience of hawker centres as our meal sources (64%). 'Dining at hawker centres is part of our national identity' ranked third at 55%.

With practical concerns being a major motivation for preserving hawker culture, are Singaporeans willing to do their part to support it?

At least 1 in 2 are willing to pay more to support Singapore's hawker culture

6 in 10 (63%) are at least somewhat willing to pay more for hawker food to help hawkers cope with the rising costs of raw ingredients. 1 in 2 (52%) are also willing to pay more for hawker food to make the hawker trade more attractive to preserve hawker culture. (Figure 3)

In the face of overall rising costs, the level of support that Singaporeans display for our local hawker culture is most encouraging. Hopefully with the support from the public as well as initiatives such as the Hawkers Development Programme, Singapore's hawker culture can continue to thrive and evolve as our national pride.



Appendix

How often do you visit a hawker centre to get your local food fix?

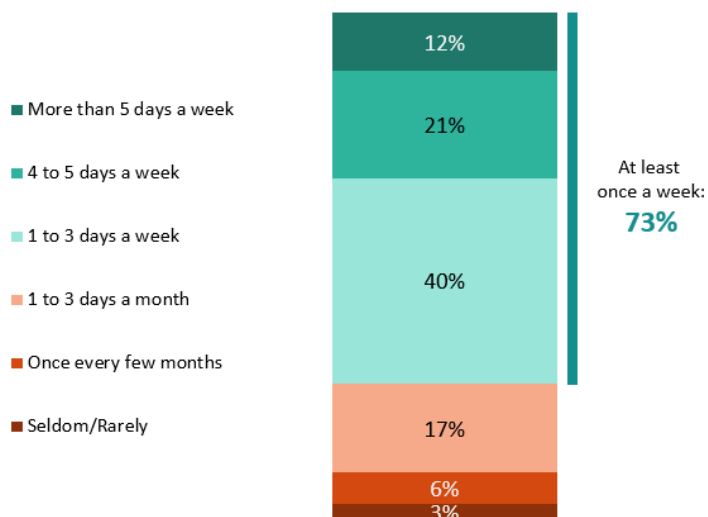


Figure 1

Which of the following is the most unique about Singapore's hawker culture?

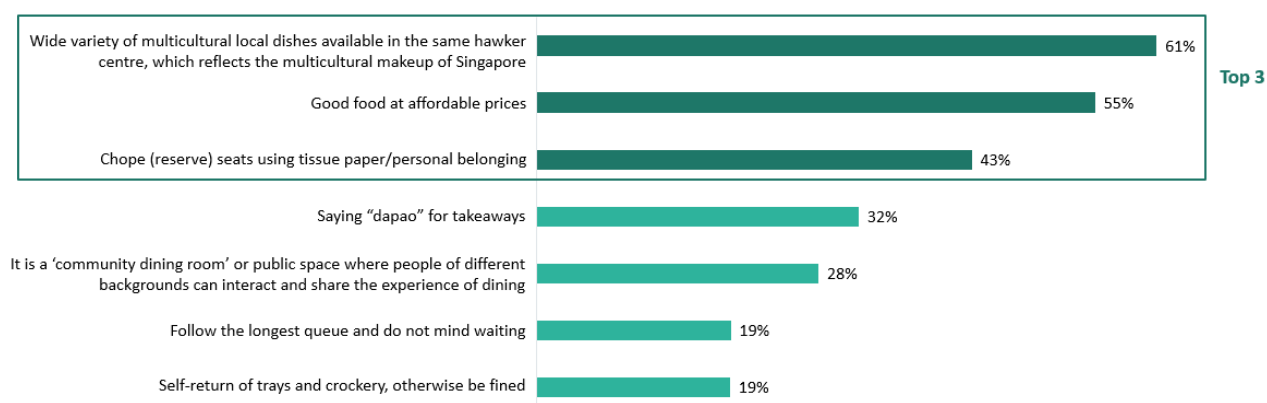


Figure 2

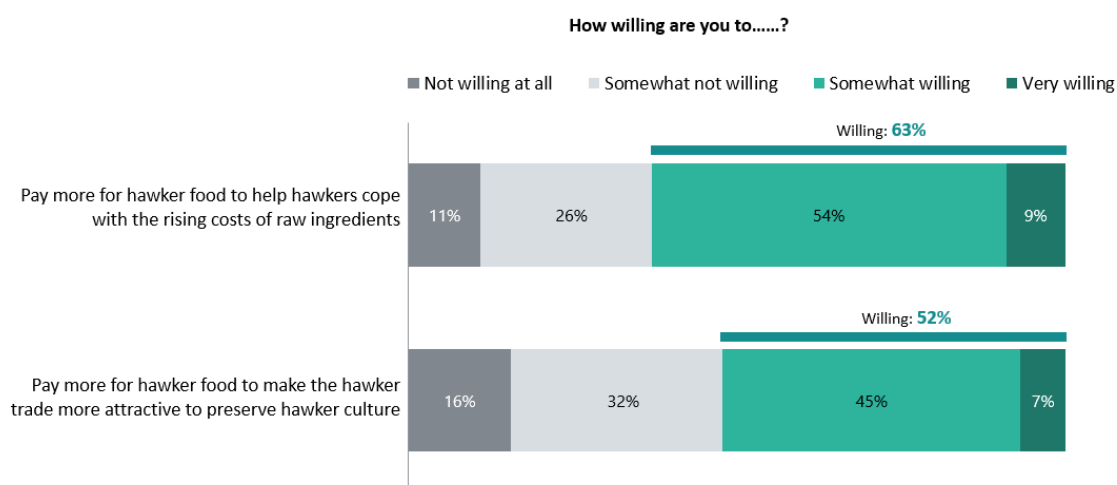


Figure 3

Above Figures 1 to 3 are based on a survey conducted between 17 to 24 April 2023 with 1,048 Singapore residents from RySense's online panel, HappyDot.sg, aged 15+ and representative of national population. Percentages are rounded off and may not add up to 100%.

About RySense

RySense is a Singapore-based research organisation which seeks to understand what people in Singapore think, feel and do. We are specialists in research methods, public opinion research and social trends and have conducted research on a range of socio-economic issues as well as current affairs topics. Using robust approaches, we seek to generate reliable insights about the Singapore landscape, which reflect both subtle nuances and macro perspectives. We are run by a diverse team of market research professionals.

For more information, please visit www.rysense.sg.

About HappyDot.sg

HappyDot.sg is an online survey community for Singapore residents to voice their opinions on issues that impact Singapore. We survey our panellists on a variety of social issues to understand the aspirations of Singaporeans. HappyDot.sg is owned by RySense.

For more information, please visit www.happydot.sg.

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