

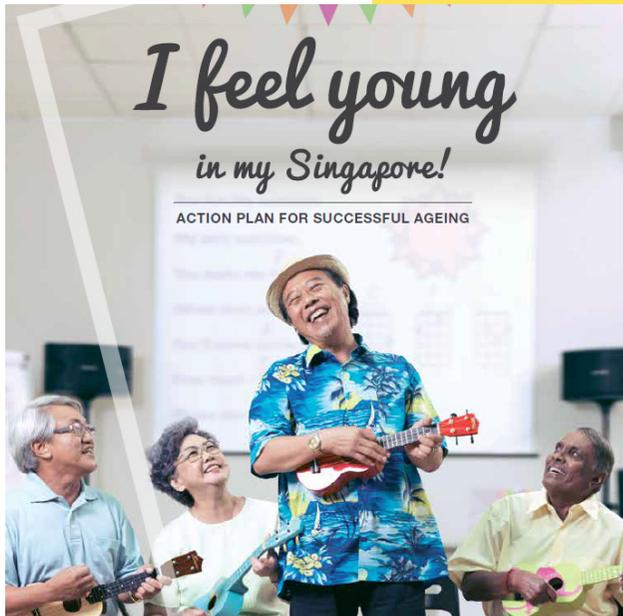


What is Successful Aging for Singaporeans?

FENG Qiushi, PhD
Associate Professor
Department of Sociology
Center of Family and Population Research
National University of Singapore

1980s	Committee on the Problems of the Aged	<p>To improve society's attitudes</p> <p>To increase retirement age</p> <p>To foster filial piety among the young</p>
1998	Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Ageing Population	<p>The vision of “Successful Ageing in Singapore”</p> <p><i>We want Singaporeans to age with dignity and to remain involved in society... we must maintain a strong sense of cohesion between the generations. Singapore should be the best home for all ages.</i></p> <p>The approach of “Many Helping Hands”</p>
2004	Committee on Ageing Issues	<p>To emphasize the life quality of baby boomers</p>
2007	Ministerial Committee on Ageing	<p>To achieve “Successful Ageing for Singapore”, through pursuing a whole-of-government response to ageing along the following four strategic thrusts:</p> <p><i>Enhance Employability and Financial Security</i></p> <p><i>Provide Holistic and Affordable Healthcare and Eldercare</i></p> <p><i>Enable Ageing-in-Place</i></p> <p><i>Promote Active Ageing</i></p>

10 TOPICS THAT WERE DISCUSSED



1 EMPLOYABILITY
Ageless workplaces,
lifelong employability

2 LIFELONG LEARNING
Never too old to go
back to school

3 SENIOR VOLUNTEERISM
Helping others,
fulfilling lives

4 HEALTH AND WELLNESS
Healthy seniors,
happy seniors

**5 SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT
AND INCLUSION**
Connecting people
of all ages

6 AGED CARE SERVICES
Ageing-in-place,
remaining independent

7 HOUSING
Supporting
changing needs

8 TRANSPORT
Re-defining the
travel experience

9 PUBLIC SPACES
Making our urban
infrastructure more
senior-friendly

**10 RESEARCH
ON AGEING**
Understanding needs,
encouraging innovation



Concept of “Successful Aging”

- Elderly people are living **longer and healthier** in our time.
- According to a classical definition by Rowe and Kahn (1987, 1997), successful ageing refers to a later life **with less disease and disease-related disability, high level of cognitive and physical functions, and an active life style.**
- Furthermore, Depp and Jeste (2006) identified **five major domains** frequently used to define successful ageing: 1) disability and physical functioning, 2) cognitive functioning, 3) life satisfaction/well-being, 4) social/productive engagement, and 5) presence of illness.

Successful Aging in Singapore

TABLE 1. Prevalence of Successful Aging in Chinese Elderly Aged 65+

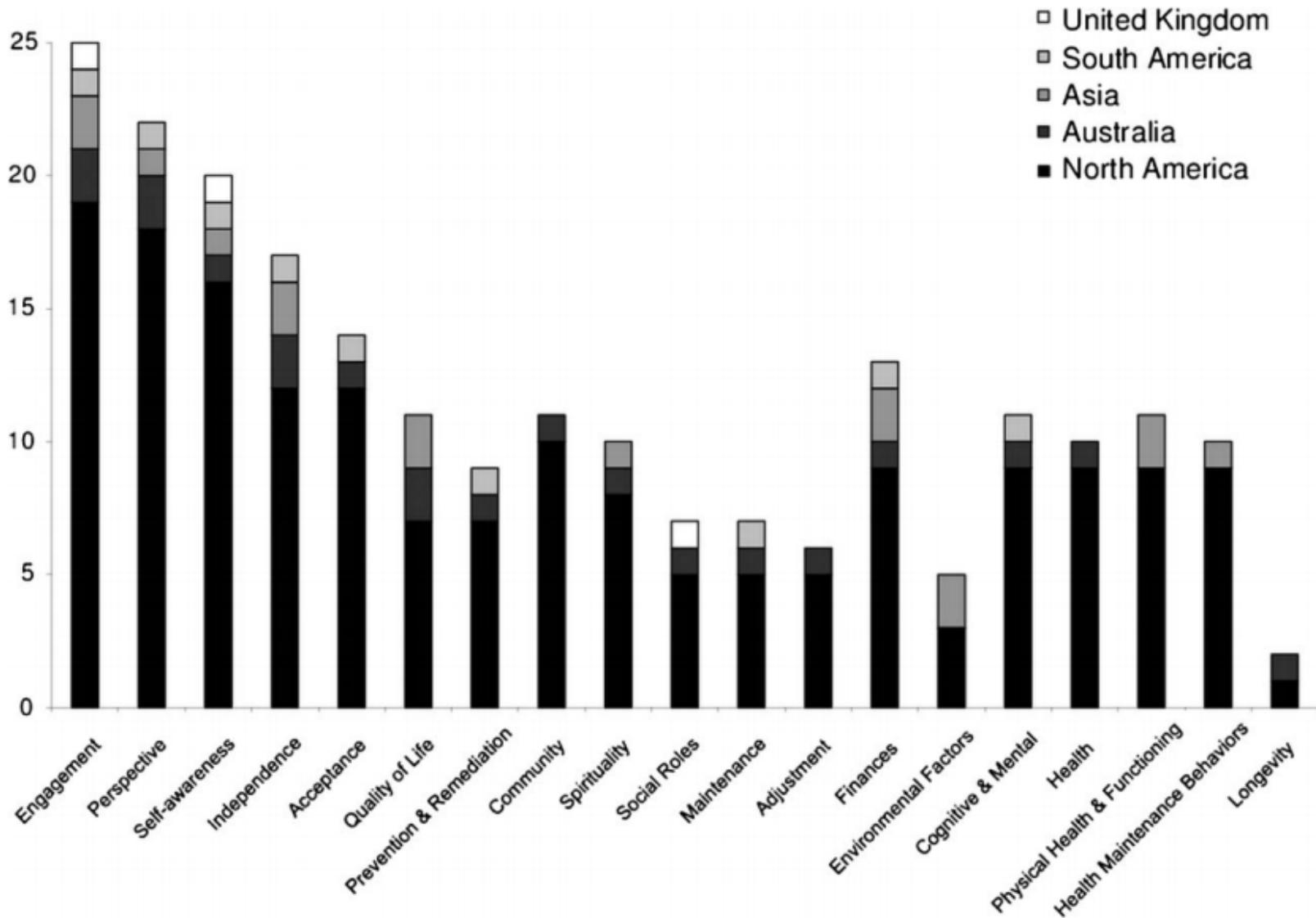
	Prevalence
Total sample size at baseline	1,281
1. Physical health and well functioning	47.9
Good or excellent self-reported health status	64.6
Independent in instrumental ADL	67.1
2. Cognitive and emotional well functioning	61.2
MMSE ≥ 26	68.1
GDS < 5	87.0
3. High social functioning and active life engagement	78.4
Engaged in at least one social activities	82.8
Engaged in at least one productive activities	90.7
4. High life satisfaction (score < 11)	88.2
Successful aging ^a	28.6

Ng, T.P., Broekman, B.F.P., Niti, M., Gwee, X., & Kua, E.H. (2009).

Successful Ageing in Asia: The Lay Model

- Matsubayashi et al. (2006): **Japanese elders** rated 1/3 attributes found in the published literature as important to successful aging.
- Wilcox et al (2007): A traditional weaving activity could be one means to help achieve successful aging in **Ogimi villagers in Japan**.
- Chung and Park (2008): ‘a positive attitude towards life’, ‘success of adult children’, and ‘relationships with others’ are important components of successful ageing among **Korean low-income elders**.
- Chong et al. (2006): **Positive ageing in Hong Kong** should comprise good health, having a positive life attitude, active engagement with an activity or with society, feeling supported by their families and friends, being financially secure, and living in a place with emotional ties
- Hsu (2007): There are 6 themes among **Taiwan elders**, such as physical health and independence, economic security, family and social support, engagement with life, spiritual well-being, and environment and social welfare policy.

Successful Ageing in World: The Lay Model



Successful aging 2.0

- Population aging is a global phenomenon. And for exploring successful aging at society level, the substantial differentials in culture, socioeconomic development, and demographic/epistemological stages needs to incorporate the dimension of culture.
- There is a necessary need to explore the **subjectivity** of successful aging
 - The lay views upon successful ageing
 - The cultural varieties of perception.

What indeed is “successful aging”?

The role of culture in perceiving successful aging has been long acknowledged in the non-western contexts.

“Americans... associated it primarily with self-sufficiency and the ability to live alone, while those in Hong Kong could not understand why one would want to be self-sufficient in old age. Instead, they viewed their families’ willingness to meet their needs as a sign of successful ageing.” (Torres 1999:38).



A Mixed Methodology: Stage I

In-depth interview about personal criteria of “successful aging”

- **Total informants: 49**
 - 26 informants of four focus groups
 - 23 informants of individual in-depth interviews
- Gender: Males – 22; Females – 27
- Ethnicity: Chinese - 34 ; Malay - 7
Indian: – 7; Others - 1

To be happy	R4: “Successful aging is all about a life well-spent is one filled with joy and thankfulness.”
To be physically mobile	R12: “It’s no use if you sit on the wheelchair and somebody must wheel you here and there. And if you cannot move, so you want to go and attend some function, then you cannot go...”
To be free of diseases	R30: “Aging gracefully with sickness or without sickness? If without sickness, it is without any pain in the limbs, headache or long sightedness...”
To be financially secure	R14: “To be successful in active aging, you also need to be financially sound. To spend wisely, and don’t go into gambling...”
To be independent in life	R9: “Independent, do what you want to do. Make sure that everything is ok.”
To be able to take care of other family members	R27: “...My ideal (thing) is to look after grandchildren. Because having kids is passing on the generations, one to the next.”
To have friends	R37: “When you are sick, you have friends to support you, can be through SMS and phones... You need close friends who you can share your problems.”
To be able to continue working	R30: “As the older people will get lonely, when they go out to work they will forget their frustrations and not think too much about them.”
To engage in social activity	R17: “I would say the term would be either a fruitful life, or a meaningful life, a life that has a high level of connectivity within the society.”
To have my spouse with me	R18: “... (When I mentioned about the love and concern for others)... first of all it’s the spouse, and then the children, and the friends that you meet.”
To have children living together with me	R18: “... (When I mentioned about the love and concern for others)... first of all it’s the spouse, and then the children, and the friends that you meet.”
To have my children taking care of me	R18: “... (When I mentioned about the love and concern for others)... first of all it’s the spouse and then the children and the friends that you meet ”

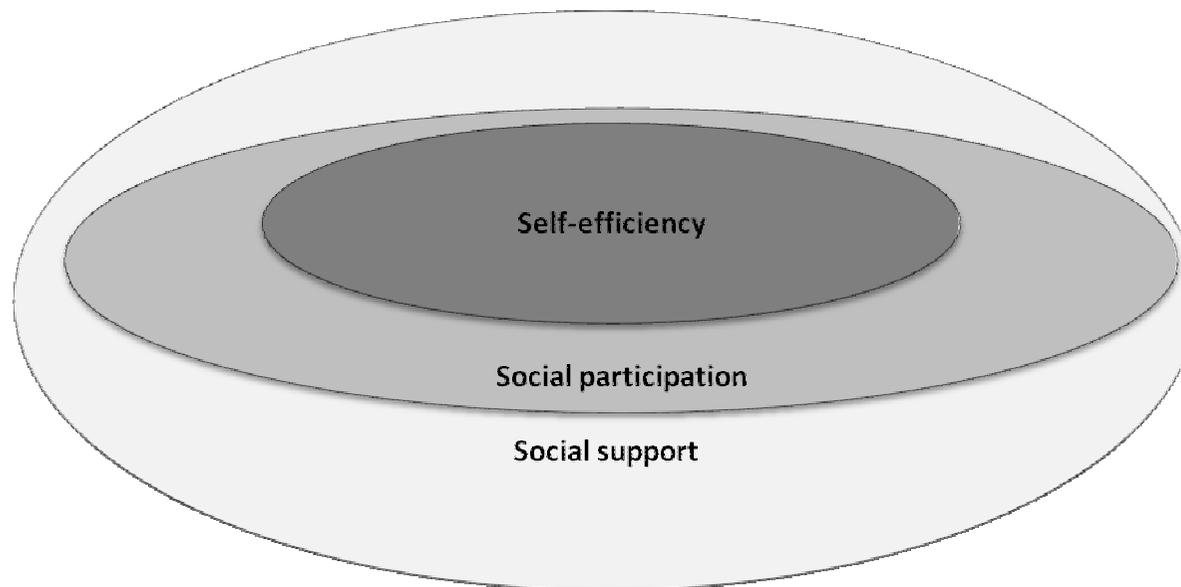
A Mixed Methodology: Stage II

A national survey in Singapore with interviewing 1,540 local residents aged 50 to 69.

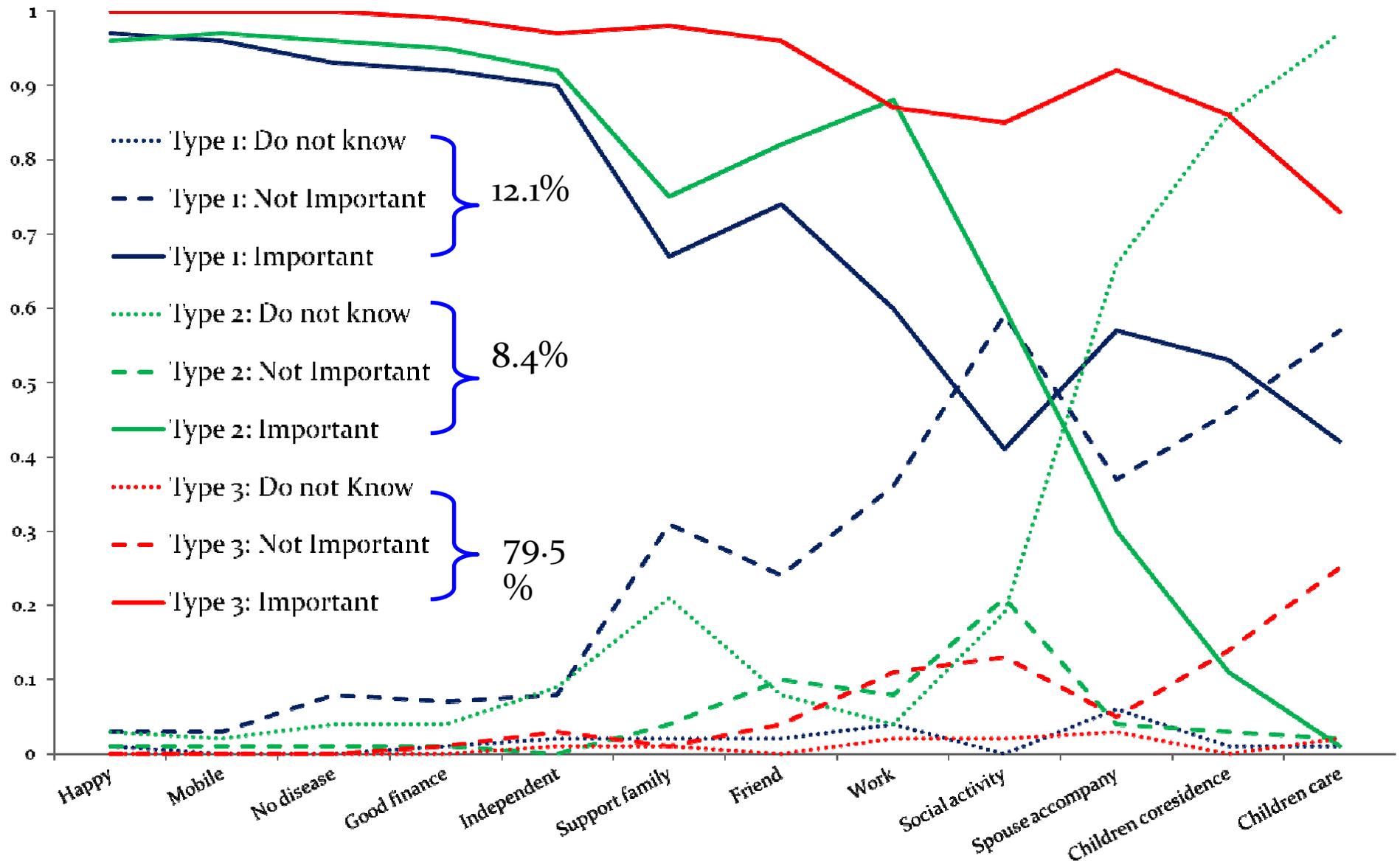
The respondent was asked to rate the importance of 12 specific standards of “successful aging”, which were coded based on previous qualitative research.

A weighting method is developed to further adjust the sampling issue

	Important	Very important	More than important	Not Important	Not important at all	Less than important	Do not know
To be happy	42.1	57.0	99.1	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.4
To be physically mobile	41.8	57.2	99.0	0.2	0.6	0.8	0.2
To be free of diseases	37.4	60.9	98.3	0.1	1.2	1.3	0.5
To be financially secure	44.3	53.6	97.9	0.1	1.5	1.6	0.6
To be independent in life	46.9	48.5	95.4	0.4	2.8	3.2	1.4
To be able to take care of other family members	58.5	33.3	91.8	0.7	5.2	5.9	2.4
To have friends	56.5	35.2	91.7	0.4	6.9	7.3	1.0
To be able to continue working	45.6	37.6	83.2	1.7	13.1	14.8	2.1
To engage in social activity	58.2	18.2	76.4	2.1	18.7	20.8	2.9
To have my spouse with me	44.1	37.6	81.7	2.0	7.5	9.5	8.8
To have children living together with me	47.7	26.9	74.6	1.9	15.9	17.8	7.7
To have my children taking care of me	44.1	18.3	62.4	2.7	25.3	28.0	9.7



Three Types of Perception Structures of Successful Aging



RESULTS

	Type 1 (Type 3 as reference) [†]					Type 2 (Type 3 as reference) [†]				
	I	II	III	IV	V	I	II	III	IV	V
Age	1.04**	1.04**	1.04**	1.03	1.04*	0.94**	0.94**	0.94**	0.97	0.98
Female	1.27	1.14	1.18	0.99	1.04	0.82	1.02	1.08	0.79	0.77
Ethnicity (Chinese)										
Malay	0.62	0.43*	0.40*	0.41*	0.42*	0.36*	0.42	0.38*	0.35	0.37
Indian	0.71	0.68	0.63	0.70	0.68	0.29*	0.20*	0.20*	0.33	1.32
Others	0.95	1.01	1.05	0.97	0.92	0.29	0.36	0.33	0.49	0.48
Education (Primary)										
Secondary		0.85	0.87	0.95	0.91		0.91	0.96	0.85	0.84
Tertiary		1.10	1.17	1.11	1.04		0.99	1.08	0.74	0.70
Occupation (Executive)										
Professional		0.69	0.64	0.62	0.61		1.57	1.42	1.25	1.23
Service worker		0.65	0.63	0.62	0.59		1.25	1.07	1.15	1.03
Agriculture worker		0.97	0.93	0.97	0.92		1.01	0.96	1.18	1.11
Homemaker		1.12	1.09	1.37	1.31		0.20*	0.18*	0.78	0.75
Self-reported Health (Good)			1.66*	1.56*	1.48			1.48	1.17	1.11
Depression			1.17	1.12*	1.04			1.75*	2.21*	2.08*
Disability			2.52*	2.74*	2.40			0.00	0.00	0.00
Spouse (No spouse)				0.49	2.41				0.69	7.03**
Children (No children)										
1 child				0.41*	0.82				0.03***	0.04**
2 or more children				0.44*	0.88				0.02***	0.02**
Living arrangement (Living alone)										
Living with spouse only				0.64	0.84				0.26	0.28
Living with children only				0.29**	0.30**				0.18	0.17
Living with spouse and children				0.33*	0.41				0.27	0.29
Others				0.34**	0.37*				0.53	0.55
Satisfaction on marriage					0.16***					0.09**
Satisfaction on emotional support from Children					1.05					1.22
Satisfaction on economic support from Children					0.41**					0.49

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

RESULTS: “To have children taking care of me”

	“Not Important” (“Important” as reference)					“Do not know” (sure answer as reference)				
	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV	Model V	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV	Model V
Age	0.96**	0.97**	0.97*	0.97**	0.98	0.94***	0.94**	0.94**	0.97	0.97
Female	0.57***	0.66**	0.67**	0.69*	0.75	0.74*	0.94	0.96	0.71	0.71
Ethnicity (Chinese)										
Malay	0.26***	0.30***	0.32***	0.33***	0.35***	0.39*	0.46	0.44	0.49	0.51
Indian	0.56*	0.48**	0.50*	0.57*	0.58*	0.34*	0.27*	0.27*	0.51	0.51
Others	1.21	1.10	1.12	1.13	1.15	0.25	0.29	0.28	0.36	0.35
Education (Primary)										
Secondary		1.26	1.22	1.25	1.20		0.82	0.86	0.72	0.72
Tertiary		1.42	1.39	1.31	1.16		0.86	0.92	0.60	0.59
Occupation (Executive)										
Professional		0.71	0.74	0.73	0.75		1.15	1.08	0.87	0.88
Service worker		0.54*	0.55*	0.55*	0.56*		1.05	0.95	0.98	0.95
Agriculture worker		0.57*	0.57*	0.57*	0.57*		0.73	0.70	0.72	0.71
Homemaker		0.52*	0.53*	0.52*	0.52*		0.22**	0.20**	0.58	0.58
Self-reported Health (Good)			0.86	0.83	0.78			1.28	0.99	0.95
Depression			0.90	0.88	0.82			1.40	1.46	1.41
Disability			0.91	0.90	0.87			0.35	0.32	0.32
Spouse (No spouse)				0.93	1.78				0.60	2.17
Children (No children)										
1 child				0.56	0.99				0.04***	0.05***
2 or more children				0.55	1.05				0.03***	0.04***
Living arrangement (Living alone)										
Living with spouse only				0.75	0.92				0.79	0.86
Living with children only				0.22***	0.23**				0.43	0.42
Living with spouse and children				0.37*	0.44				0.64	0.67
Others				0.37*	0.40*				0.75	0.76
Satisfaction on marriage					0.48					0.25
Satisfaction on economic support from Children					0.68*					0.76
Satisfaction on emotional support from Children					0.58*					0.83

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

RESULTS

	To be able to continue working	To be able to take care of other family members	To have friends	To engage in social activity
Age	1.08***	1.03	0.97	1.03*
Female	1.28	0.75	0.62	0.73*
Ethnicity (Chinese)				
Malay	1.35	0.59	0.81	0.65
Indian	0.99	0.76	0.82	1.06
Others	2.24	0.59	0.45	0.51
Education (Primary)				
Secondary	0.99	0.64	0.43**	0.44***
Tertiary	1.23	0.54	0.09**	0.35**
Occupation (Executive)				
Professional	0.77	0.59	0.71	0.73
Service worker	0.72	0.40	1.25	0.87
Agriculture worker	0.75	0.39*	1.08	1.08
Homemaker	1.29	0.56	2.24	1.19
Self-reported Health (Good)	1.36	1.55	1.82*	1.38
Depression	0.84	1.07	0.96	1.23
Disability	1.40	3.89*	1.70	0.97
Spouse (No spouse)	0.84	2.60	0.73	1.23
Children (No children)				
1 child	0.43	1.51	0.52	0.76
2 or more children	0.94	1.37	0.97	1.00
Living arrangement (Living alone)				
Living with spouse only	0.89	0.53	3.48	2.25
Living with children only	0.61	0.38	0.81	1.30
Living with spouse and children	0.90	0.38	2.23	1.68
Others	0.45	0.42	1.08	1.18
Satisfaction on marriage	0.77	0.24*	0.46	0.73
Satisfaction on economic support from Children	1.05	0.59	1.30	1.15
Satisfaction on emotional support from Children	1.01	0.53	0.46	0.53*

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Conclusion & Discussion

People in Singapore have unique understanding of successful aging in comparison with Western culture. Similar to the western societies, **self-sufficiency** and **social participation** are the key standards for successful aging; however, about 60-70% old Singaporean emphasize **the care from children** as one of the important criteria for their successful aging.

That is, there was an overlap of **about 60%** local Singaporeans who took both independence and dependence together as criteria of successful ageing. The seemingly contradictory coexistence actually makes sense in the Asian context.

Conclusion & Discussion

- In this study, we did not assume that the perception on successful age is universal and stable across a single society.
- It is interesting to observe the three major types of perceptions among Singaporeans.
- **About 20% of old Singaporeans** either devalue or feel not sure about the importance of family support from spouse or children in successful aging.

Conclusion & Discussion

- Our regression analyses help reveal who they are by examining how perceptions of successful ageing vary by different factors.
- Some covariates are found to be highly associated with perceptions over successful ageing, including ethnicity (Chinese), socioeconomic status (the disadvantaged group), and family relationship.

THANK YOU!

