Habits Singaporeans find most annoying

**IN PUBLIC**
- 93% Not clearing plates
- 76% 'Chope-ing' seats
- 65% Not treating others with respect, regardless of status
- 55% Not being considerate to the elderly, pregnant

**DISGUSTING!** **NO MANNERS.** **CHOPE!**

Gracious, really? 90 per cent of Singaporeans think so

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Talking loudly during a movie, doing nothing to help while a mother struggles to board a bus with her baby and a pram, or walking past someone who has fallen down.

These are common complaints that invariably crop up when graciousness is mentioned. Yet, according to a recent survey, nine out of 10 Singaporeans are happy with the level of graciousness here.

The findings, however, contrast somewhat with the views of 20 foreigners Tan spoke to. Seventeen of them felt that Singaporeans could do with some improvement in being gracious.

Commissioned by the Singapore Kindness Movement (SKM), the survey interviewed 502 Singaporeans face to face.

It looked at gracious behaviour in five areas — public places, home, work, school and on the roads.

"I find it annoying that people don't allow you to exit, before they rush into the train," said Mr Jose Gerardo, 39. The Filipino architect has lived in Singapore for 10 years.

We also placed ourselves as the fifth most gracious country after Japan, Australia, Thailand, and the United States, and before the Philippines, China, Malaysia and India.

Image consultant Eunice Tan, a Singaporean, was not surprised.

"We've definitely improved over the last five years. I'd say it's because of Government campaigns and (the fact) that Singaporeans are more well-travelled," the 36-year-old said.

"When they see overseas that others are more gracious, they put (what they see) into practice when they come back."

Writer and critic Kirpal Singh was less complimentary. "Where road manners are concerned, we clearly don't have any degree of graciousness," said Dr Singh, 60. "Drivers cut lanes, and when you want to overtake, they speed up."

Singaporeans too, don't really go out of their way to help. "If you ask someone overseas how to get to a museum, they will not only tell you how to go there, they will tell you about other museums. They are more willing to engage with you," he said.

Marketing manager Marina Poturica, an Australian who has been living in Singapore for five years, agreed.

"Compared to Australians, Singaporeans seem less friendly. I'd go to a bar and no one would really come up and talk to me," said the 32-year-old. "My other grouse is that service staff don't engage much with their customers. It's always 'hmm,' or 'yup.'"

But American Michael Podolsinsky, 54, here for 20 years, disagreed. "When I go to someone's home here, they would walk me to the lift and all the way to the taxi. Americans don't do that," said the motivational coach.

"Chope-ing" also came in for scrutiny, but the majority said it was unimportant to how gracious we are.

Said National University of Singapore sociologist Paulin Straughan: "It's a pragmatic reaction when you have a short period of time. The kind of food we eat is served piping hot in a bowl rather than a takeaway. It makes more sense to secure a spot first, rather than to be carrying a hot bowl with no place to sit.

It only becomes ungracious if you then hog the spot, she said.

**MOST ANNOYING HABITS**

**ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT**
- 75% Not making way for others to alight, board
- 72% Talking, playing music loudly
- 68% Not keeping to the left on escalators

**ON THE ROAD**
- 77% Cutting lanes without warning
- 72% Tailgating, cutting queue to turn at junctions

**AT WORK**
- 64% Not doing part to curb office politics
- 55% Juniors not appreciated by seniors

**AT HOME**
- 57% Not showing basic courtesy to the maid

*502 Singaporeans were interviewed.*