Poll: Youth likelier to meet more groups for socialising

Those aged 16 to 34 apt to get together with people outside households a few times a week

Timothy Goh and Clara Chong

When it comes to Covid-19, Mt. Lin Chiu Wei plays by the rules. He wears a mask, maintains safe distancing, washes his hands regularly and uses common serving utensils when sharing food.

But the 24-year-old also mentions going to three different groups of friends a week — something not uncommon among people his age.

This online poll commissioned by The Sunday Times, carried out by online market research firm Million Insights, found that young people have been meeting more groups each week in phase two of the reopening.

The poll of 1,000 people, representatives of the Singapore resident population aged 16 and above, was conducted over the recent National Day long weekend. The margin of error was ±3.1 per cent with a 95 per cent confidence level.

Respondents aged between 16 and 24 were more likely to report that they had been socialising with people outside their households once a week or more, while only 14 per cent indicated that they had not socialised with anyone outside their household.

Among those who had socialised, 68 per cent tended to meet one to two different groups a week, while another 30 per cent said they socialised with three to five different groups on a weekly basis.

Those aged between 16 and 24 were statistically more likely than other age groups to socialise with more groups across their networks each week, with 9 per cent saying they met five to nine groups per week.

Mt. Lin said initially, he was very scared of the virus, minimising my number of trips in super markets during the circuit breaker period. After that, he noticed that the communication with others and the idea of being with other people was changing.

He slowly shifted to the belief that “we need to go out safely”, so he takes the necessary precautions while trying to return to normal life, including meeting up with friends.

Fifty-three per cent of those who had visited an outdoor venue two weeks earlier said they tended to hang out in groups of four to five people, while 44 per cent said they usually socialised in groups of 10 or more.

Only 4 per cent said they had been meeting up in groups of five or more. Among this group, almost a third were aged between 16 and 24.

For all youth are social butterflies, however, fifth session per week of those aged 16 between 16 and 24 said they stick to limit meeting two or groups of people each week.

Mr. Goh Lim, 23, who works in the consulting industry, is among them. He said he has grown used to the idea of “social bubbles”.

“Although I am not afraid of getting the virus, limiting meet ups does provide peace of mind,” he said, adding that he avoids visiting leisure spots where there are elderly people to lower the risk of them being infected.

And even though virtual meet ups will never replace the human connection one gets from a physical exchange, it is common now for us to catch up over Zoom. He has also thought about mirror ones, such as not having to use a mask, evening travel time and saving money — and you can still talk to friends from the comfort of your room.

Seventy-seven per cent of those aged 16 and above in the survey said they only used one to two different groups a week.

Housewife Nancy Ong, 55, has stayed home most of the time since the start of the circuit breaker, and resumed visits to her elderly mother only since restrictions were eased.

She said she used to gather with her friends on weekends for activities but must have been cancelled and she avoided the risks.

“I think it’s good to cut out on seeing people in general, but it’s still important to stay close by for all the time. Hence, I have started to join a group of friends for outdoor exercises, once every week or two, and we try to keep the same people,” she said.

The online survey, which was commissioned by The Sunday Times, found that overall, about 57 per cent of those surveyed said they socialised with people outside their households once a week or more, while only 14 per cent indicated that they had not socialised with anyone since phase two began.

Source: The Sunday Times, Page A4, Date: 16 August 2020

Covid-19 fatigue and social bubbles

As the coronavirus pandemic drags on and countries around the world are hit with new waves of infection, the outbreaks and measures put in place to curb it look set to stay for quite a while.

Timothy Goh looks at how those here are coping with the new normal.

How often do you socialise with people outside your household since the start of phase two (June 19)?

Source: The Sunday Times, 16 August 2020

How do you feel about the current Covid-19 outbreak response measures in Singapore?

Source: The Sunday Times, 16 August 2020

How likely are you to continue to strictly adhere to social distancing rules, even when the authorities aren’t around?

Source: The Sunday Times, 16 August 2020

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