



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **BUDGET 2020: SINGAPOREANS SUPPORTIVE OF BUDGET 2020 MEASURES**

**23 MARCH 2020** – It was a responsive Budget for a challenging time and respondents mostly rallied behind it. That is the key takeaway from REACH’s Budget 2020 feedback and engagement exercise<sup>1</sup> conducted in February 2020. Feedback from more than 3,500 respondents were collected across different REACH platforms including face-to-face engagements at the Listening Points, Radio Talk Shows, WhatsApp chat groups, online feedback channels and a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) poll<sup>2</sup>.

#### ***Support for overall Budget 2020***

2 Seven in 10 Singaporeans supported the initiatives. In particular, the SkillsFuture Credit top-up, measures to defray costs-of-living (Care and Support Package), and the announcement of no GST increase in 2021 were the top three Budget topics that resonated with respondents. Support for middle-income families also featured prominently in the survey.

3 66% of the respondents from the CATI poll agreed that the Budget announcements had boosted their confidence in Singapore’s future, while 69% felt that the budget measures would help Singaporeans and businesses tide through COVID-19.

#### ***Support for SkillsFuture***

4 66% of the respondents from the CATI poll supported the \$500 SkillsFuture top-up for all Singaporeans. The additional support of a further \$500 for mid-career Singaporean workers in their 40s and 50s was also well-received by respondents at the REACH Listening Points who shared that the initiative would help them learn, develop new skills and stay employable.

5 At our Listening Points, seven in 10 shared that they intend to obtain more information on the SkillsFuture top-ups or use the credit in the next 12 months. Some

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<sup>1</sup>This included seven Listening Points, three Radio Talk Shows (English and Mandarin), six WhatsApp chat groups, one Facebook contest and feedback given via REACH mailbox. The seven Listening Points were conducted at Ocean Financial Centre, Ang Mo Kio Central Stage, West Coast Market, Paya Lebar Square, Nanyang Technological University, Waterway Point and Telok Blangah.

<sup>2</sup>REACH conducted a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) poll on the Budget 2020 to gauge Singaporeans’ reactions to the Budget measures. The poll was conducted from 19 February to 3 March 2020.

gave suggestions to improve the scheme such as bringing forward the disbursement of the SkillsFuture credits, and making the scheme more inclusive by removing the expiry as well as age limit for the additional top-ups.

### ***Support for costs-of-living measures***

6 On costs-of-living measures, 67% of respondents from the CATI poll agreed that the Care and Support package, which includes cash payout and doubling of U-Save rebates, would provide significant help to Singaporean households. About 89% of the respondents from the CATI poll also supported the Government's move to provide additional help for families taking care of children and elderly parents.

7 Similar sentiments were gathered on the ground. For example, seven in 10 of respondents at REACH Listening Points expressed support for the additional help provided to lower-income Singaporeans through measures such as distribution of the grocery vouchers. Many agreed that the additional support would provide significant help to allay the concerns of lower-income Singaporean households.

### ***Support for announcement of no GST increase in 2021***

8 Noting the evolving COVID-19 situation, many also acknowledged that the pledge by the Government not to raise the GST in 2021 was a commendable step. In addition, half of the respondents polled at REACH Listening Points agreed that the Assurance Package would help to alleviate the impact of the impending GST hike when it is implemented. Nonetheless, many were still concerned how an eventual increase might affect them financially.

### ***Support for middle-income families***

9 There were many calls for greater support for middle-income families. Respondents felt that middle-income earners should be entitled to more benefits and greater financial support, as they are often the group that bore the costs of supporting both their children and their elderly parents at the same time.

### ***Government cares for me***

10 Overall, 57% of the respondents felt the Budget would benefit them personally and seven in 10 felt that the Government cares for them.

11 REACH Chairman Mr Sam Tan, who is also Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Social and Family Development and Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, "The findings from the Budget 2020 feedback exercise show that the initiatives have the support of a majority of Singaporeans. I am also heartened to hear about Singaporeans taking ownership of their own skills upgrading needs by planning to utilise the SkillsFuture

credits. I am very encouraged to see many Singaporeans actively coming forward to share their thoughts amid the COVID-19 situation. I hope that Singaporeans will remain calm and stay united as we get through this together.”

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