ABSTRACT

Malays form the biggest ethnic minority in multi-racial Singapore. In the past, most of them lived in Tampines and Paya Lebar - namely the Geylang Serai district where their cultural and religious needs could be easily met. However, to maintain racial harmony, the government has imposed an ethnic integration policy to avoid concentration of any racial group in an area.

At 98.3%, according to Census 2000, the proportion of Malays living in public housing is now the highest among the different ethnic groups. Therefore, there is a need to verify if current policies (e.g. the ethnic block limit) remain feasible in today’s context. This study seeks to understand Malay families’ preference and choice of HDB flats.

Survey results demonstrated that Malay households of single nuclear type were dominant among all income groups and pronounced among married couples. Preference towards 4-room flats of areas greater than 101sqm was high among Malay households. There was a strong proclivity to stay on storey 5 to 20. Accessibility of MRT/ bus services topped the other amenities as the most desired facility. Also, the availability of facilities was reported to be the principal factor influencing their purchase of HDB flats. However, demand for new flats in non-mature estates like Bukit Panjang, Sengkang and Jurong West stood out as unfavourable among Malays’ choice of estates. In the investigation of Malays’ willingness to pay for HDB flats, it is recommended that current flat prices be revised to the maximum limit affordable to most Malays. Housing loan
interest rate can also be lowered to offset the high price impact. Further, a certain percentage may be allocated in each storey to the respective races to minimize their uneven spread within a block. More facilities could be provided and functions organized could be included in non-mature estates to help improve the take-up rate of new flats there.