

# News Release

For Immediate Release  
March 8 2019

## Manulife Heart Health Survey: 7 out of 10 Singaporeans would not be able to identify a heart attack if it happens in front of them

**Singapore** - A recent study conducted by Manulife revealed that the lack of awareness around heart attack warning signs and risk factors is still dangerously high among Singaporeans. The survey of 500 respondents highlighted a clear problem – if people are not aware of the symptoms of heart diseases, they're less likely to seek help quickly.

The Manulife Heart Health Survey was conducted to uncover insights about Singaporeans' attitudes, understanding and behaviour towards heart health. It forms part of Manulife's overarching focus to be a trusted health partner, helping customers establish long-term healthy lifestyle habits and rewarding them for staying active.

### **Lack of awareness is still a problem, particularly among women**

An average of 17 people die every day from cardiovascular disease in Singapore. Heart disease and stroke are the number one killers of women, having claimed more lives in a single year than breast cancer has over a four-year period.

Despite this, only 15% of women are aware of just how deadly cardiovascular disease is in Singapore. In fact, one out of two Singaporeans perceive having little or no personal risk of getting heart disease. When asked to evaluate their general knowledge of heart disease, close to half of Singaporeans rated their level of understanding as 'poor' or 'very poor'. This suggests that this awareness gap is giving Singaporeans a false sense of safety.

### **The Heart Truth: Women have heart attacks, but their symptoms are often dismissed as something else**

The survey revealed that only 30% of respondents can identify all the major signs and symptoms of heart disease. About 80% of respondents surveyed indicated chest pain as a key symptom of a heart attack. However, only a minority are aware that stomach discomfort (11%),

fatigue (25%), jaw pain (26%) and nausea (28%) are also possible signs of early symptoms of a heart attack.

More shockingly, 80% of respondents are not aware that women and men may experience different heart attack warning signs.

“TV shows and movies have taught us to recognise dramatic symptoms of a heart attack. Crushing chest pain, profuse sweating, fainting. The problem is, people then miss the warning symptoms of an early heart attack, which are almost always milder. And that could cost lives,” said Professor Carolyn Lam, Senior Consultant, Department of Cardiology and Director of Women’s Heart Health, The Women’s Heart Clinic, National Heart Centre Singapore.

The survey results were released on International Women’s Day, in conjunction with the Singapore Heart Foundation’s Go Red for Women campaign, a movement that seeks to bring heart health messages to women in Singapore. It also marked the launch of Manulife Singapore’s ‘Stop the Drama’ campaign that aims to shed light on the subtle warning signs of a real heart attack.

“We’ve all seen scenes of the heart attacks on TV and in movies, depicting an actor clutching his chest before kneeling over. Everyone thinks that’s what a heart attack looks like – but they’re not always dramatic chest crushing pain like what we see in movies. Through our partnership with the Singapore Heart Foundation, we’re hoping to raise awareness around the fact that a real heart attack might be really subtle, with symptoms differing between men and women. This was also the inspiration behind running the Stop the Drama campaign, which brings real heart attacks ‘to life’, to save lives. We want to raise overall awareness about heart health, with the goal of improving the health of our customers, employees and communities,” said Kwek-Perroy Li Choo, Chief Customer Officer of Manulife Singapore.

To bring the message to life, Manulife Singapore released a ‘Stop the Drama’ film featuring veteran actor Lim Kay Tong giving a masterclass on dramatic ‘movie’ heart attacks vs real life heart attacks. Watch the video at [Manulife.com.sg/stopthedrama](https://www.manulife.com.sg/stopthedrama).

### **‘Wait and see how’ approach: people are not talking about heart health**

Even though one out of three deaths in Singapore is due to heart disease, over 60% of respondents have never discussed heart health issues with anyone.

Social stigma and a false sense of security are reasons why people are not talking about it. 22% fear that bringing up heart disease will cause others to assume that they are not eating right or exercising enough, 22% think that heart disease will not affect them if they maintain a healthy lifestyle and close to 20% believe that heart disease only affects the elderly.



In reality, 50% of Singaporeans have encountered a moment when they thought there might be something wrong with their hearts. Of those, less than 40% of respondents sought medical advice. 34% chose to rest without taking any further actions, 27% surfed the internet for answers to their symptoms and close to 20% chose to ignore the symptoms completely. 65% of the respondents who did not seek medical attention assumed that the symptoms were only temporary, while 15% put off going to the doctor as they were afraid to find out what the diagnosis for their problems were.

### **Singapore – one of the healthiest countries in the world?**

Living up to the nation's title as the healthiest country in Asia, the survey revealed heartening findings that indicates healthy living being a key priority among Singaporeans. Over the past year, almost all respondents took steps to improve their health and wellbeing. The top three actions taken were: reducing sugar and salt intake (61%), increasing fruits and vegetables intake (61%) and increasing physical activities (55%).

Interestingly, over 60% of men indicated “reducing the risk of critical illnesses” as the main motivational factor for leading a healthy lifestyle, while the majority of women do so to regulate their weight.

The survey also found that the average Singaporean practises healthy eating regularly, sleeps an average of 6 - 7 hours a day and exercises for about 1 - 2 hours a week. The top three factors that would encourage people to be more health conscious are healthy reward programmes (43%), body weight increases (40%) and a sudden decline in health (32%). This suggests that most people are driven to take action only after they experience changes to their physical bodies and health.

**- End -**

### **Survey methodology:**

The study was conducted online among 500 respondents based in Singapore between the ages of 21 – 64. Percentages may not total to 100 due to rounding.

## About Manulife

Manulife Financial Corporation is a leading international financial services group that helps people make their decisions easier and lives better. We operate primarily as John Hancock in the United States and Manulife elsewhere. We provide financial advice, insurance, as well as wealth and asset management solutions for individuals, groups and institutions. At the end of 2018, we had more than 34,000 employees, over 82,000 agents, and thousands of distribution partners, serving almost 28 million customers. As of December 31, 2018, we had over \$1.1 trillion (US\$794 billion) in assets under management and administration, and in the previous 12 months we made \$29.0 billion in payments to our customers. Our principal operations in Asia, Canada and the United States are where we have served customers for more than 100 years. With our global headquarters in Toronto, Canada, we trade as 'MFC' on the Toronto, New York, and the Philippine stock exchanges and under '945' in Hong Kong.

[www.manulife.com.sg](http://www.manulife.com.sg)

### Media Contacts

Rachel Lok / Esther Subramaniam

AKA Asia

[Manulife@aka-asia.com](mailto:Manulife@aka-asia.com)

+65 6222 6136