

Immigration

THE QUESTIONS

We asked people to respond to five statements and rate their answers as agree, strongly agree, don't care, disagree or strongly disagree. These questions focused on immigration and life in Vietnam for foreigners.

Here are the questions respondents were asked to rate:

- 1) Vietnam is a better place with foreigners.
- 2) Foreigners respect Vietnamese culture.
- 3) I feel good when I see interracial couples.
- 4) Vietkieu are foreigners, they are not Vietnamese.
- 5) Vietnam treats foreigners well.

TOP COMMENTS

"Less than 5% of people I know can pronounce Vietnamese names correctly."

"We live in a bubble and not really privy to most social or political events... unless we really dig."

"Compared to other countries, foreigners in Vietnam get a great deal."

"I just think that it is sad to see the huge gap between some expats living in a villa, and people just living in the same street."

"Love is beautiful and colourful."

STAT ATTACK

- 7 out of 10 people believe that Vietnam treats foreigners well
- Only 7% of people think that Vietnam is a worse place with foreigners
- Three quarters think that Vietnam is a better place with foreigners
- Just over two fifths of people think that foreigners don't respect Vietnamese culture
- 7 out of 10 respondents feel okay when they see interracial couples

With Brexit, the election of Donald Trump, the rise of Macron in France, and the Syrian refugee crisis, when it comes to immigration, nations around the world seem to be pulling in one of two directions. So, which is it to be, Vietnam? Words by **Thomas Barrett**.

Mention immigration to most people these days and you're bound to elicit an emotional response, no matter where in the world you are — and our Vietnam-based readers were no different.

VIETNAM IS A BETTER PLACE WITH FOREIGNERS

57% of our readers agreed with this statement, with a further 17% strongly agreeing that an influx of foreigners is a good thing, believing that variety is the spice of life. A miniscule 2% strongly disagreed.

Interestingly, 62% of Vietnamese respondents said that this country is a better place with foreigners, with only 12% disagreeing. Bearing in mind that the survey was written in English, the opinion of the Vietnamese respondents will not represent your everyday person on the street. Rather it will be the opinion of the bilingual middle class who may well have spent time overseas.

There was a caveat, however. The wealth that foreigners can bring has exposed the divide between rich and poor in Vietnam. One respondent wrote: "I just think that it is sad to see the huge wealth difference between some expats living in a villa, and people just living in the same street."

Another warned: "There is no doubt that foreigners have helped to shape the economy and the opportunities for Vietnamese people, not always in a good way of course."

FOREIGNERS RESPECT VIETNAMESE CULTURE?

There is no manual on Vietnamese culture on arrival, and there have been recent stories in the press such as the girls who lost their function for common sense and went sunbathing on Hoan Kiem lake in Hanoi. In some quarters, their act of 'indecent' caused outrage.

Of course, this question varies depending on the foreigner. Ask a Vietnamese whether they think a visiting Chinese respects their culture compared to a Briton, and the response will likely be wildly different.

40% of readers disagreed with the statement,

which suggests there is work to be done, whereas 43% of respondents went in the other direction.

"I agree the majority do, but there are some bad apples," said one respondent.

Another bluntly put it: "I mean it's a case-by-case thing, but many expats are arseholes."

One respondent probably hits the nail on the head when they wrote: "I think that most of foreigners want to respect it, make some mistakes sometimes (which is normal) but don't learn it enough."

I FEEL HAPPY WHEN I SEE INTERRACIAL COUPLES

Encouragingly, our survey indicates that love has no boundaries for our readers. "Don't care" came out top for this question with 38% of the vote, with 33% agreeing and 27% strongly agreeing. Even Vietnamese respondents seemed to follow this line, with only 4% saying they disagree with this statement. You might see some age gaps between interracial couples that make you cringe, but it seems to be a non-issue for most of our respondents.

We were preaching to the converted with one respondent, who said: "I am married to a Vietnamese girl, who cares?"

There were some critical comments, however, with one person writing: "It's their own business. Unless it's a white older guy with yellow fever being predatory on a young Asian girl."

One forward respondent added "You got 46 chromosomes? Me too. Wanna get a coffee?"

TREAT FOREIGNERS WELL?

In such a large and diverse country, it's pretty unfair to generalise — but a whopping 62% of respondents agreed that foreigners are treated well. But as the recent spate of online videos have shown; don't get into any motorcycle disputes though as it could get hairy.

One respondent said: "Very inviting and welcoming to strangers." Whereas another said "Despite the occasional over-charging and scams, I think foreigners are well liked." Viet-Kieu are Foreigners, they are not Vietnamese.



Responses were mixed for this issue with 24% disagreeing and 31% agreeing. One respondent said “Some are very Vietnamese, and others are very foreign. All depends on their upbringing among the diaspora.”

One respondent clearly felt different, writing: “I consider most Viet Kieu who return

to Vietnam to work as foreigners, as most of them are second or third-generation Viet Kieu.”

34% chose ‘don’t care’, with plenty of comments suggesting that cultural identity is something that can only be decided by the individual.