

# Youth Scan

## Special Edition - YOUTH.sg 2006

December 2006

From the National Youth Council  
"Developing a Vibrant, Highly-Connected, and  
Self-Sustaining Youth Sector, and Nurturing World-Ready Youth"

Bringing you snippets of youth trends and issues compiled from  
diverse sources such as news reports, journals and press releases,  
Youth Scan aims to help you stay in touch with the constantly evolving youth scene.

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In this issue, we feature snapshots from the "YOUTH.sg: The State of Youth in Singapore 2006" (Ho & Chia, 2006):

- 1. Youth Transitions in the New Economy**
- 2. Family and Social Support**
- 3. Social Participation and Active Citizenship**
- 4. Values and Attitudes**

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### **1. Youth Transitions in the New Economy**

In 2005, 83% of young people (ages 15-29) versus 81% in 2002 indicated that part-time work has contributed positively to their life, while:

- 87% indicated that part-time work has taught them to be more responsible,
- 88% felt that they have learnt useful social skills,
- Only 8% felt that part-time work has affected their studies in a negative way.

In both the 2002 and 2005 National Youth Surveys:

-- Youths who work part-time see this as a positive experience, creating responsibility and developing social skills in people management.

-- On a cautionary note, the youth workers, parents and teachers we spoke to in our focus group discussions cite the potential danger of part-time work affecting schoolwork and possibly leading to early school leaving for younger secondary school youths.

-- This should be taken seriously, given that there is a significant increase in part-time work among secondary school students between 2002 and 2005.

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## **2. Family and Social Support**

YOUTH.sg 2006 found that a balance of family support and challenge essential for youth to thrive. To put it simply, family challenge refers to "high expectations, high standards, allowing the child a lot of independence, exposing them to new opportunities whenever possible. Support means that the child feels that the family as a whole is interested in every member's welfare." (Scherer, 2002)

### Role of the Family in Youth Development

A typology of four family types was identified as follows:

(a) High Support, High Challenge

-- Youth has close relationships and are set clear markers of achievement and responsibility.

(b) High Support, Low Challenge

-- Youth has strong relationships but little or no performance expectations from parents.

(c) Low Support, High Challenge

-- Parents are emotionally distant but enforce clear rules for behaviour and achievements.

(d) Low Support, Low Challenge

-- Absentee parenting where the youth neither receives directions nor nurturance from parents.

It was found that youths who come from a High Support, High Challenge family environment reported the highest levels of social competencies, compared to youths from the other three family environments.

Youths who belonged to the two "Low Challenge" family environments (i.e. High Support, Low Challenge and Low Support, Low Challenge) scored the lowest levels of social competencies. These results reiterate the fact that support must go hand-in-hand with challenge (setting of expectations and boundaries) in order to develop socially competent youth.

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## **3. Social Participation and Active Citizenship**

Social participation refers to the involvement of youths in various organizations and social groups.

### Drop in Participation during transition from school to work

-- School-associated group activities, such as sports, uniformed groups and arts and cultural activities show a clear decline with age.

-- Participation in these social groups declines steeply between the age groups of 15-18 and 19-22.

-- As youths graduate and enter into the workforce, the combination of work, marriage and the lack of opportunities reduce the social participation rate.

Given that the participation rates start leveling off and declining when youths start working, there should be a more sustained effort to develop opportunities for working youths. We should be creating opportunities and structures for young working adults to join various groups to pursue various social and recreational activities. The encouragement of backward linkages is another important step. Schools can possibly spend more attention courting their school leavers with the aim of involving them in the various CCA groups.

We also highlight the need for companies to be good employers and good corporate citizens by taking the lead to provide their employees with a range of recreational as well as volunteer opportunities, thereby sustaining social participation of workers.

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#### **4. Values and Attitudes**

According to the findings of the 2005 National Youth Survey, inter-racial trust is evident across all the racial groups in Singapore -- 90% of young people (ages 15-29) indicated that they felt comfortable having someone of a different race for a neighbour and working with someone of a different race.

There is also an increase in the proportion of young people who indicated that they have a close friend of a different race. All these point towards a healthy state of inter-racial trust and understanding.

On the other hand, although youths are open to people of other races, less than half of them (47%) indicated that they knew a lot about other races.

This may suggest that programmes that promote interaction among youths may only address half the entire issue; the other half requires concerted efforts to help youths understand other racial cultures and traditions.

Interaction without comprehension would be meaningless because it only reaches the superficial level of inter-racial trust and integration.

Multi-racial programmes targeted at youths should therefore also preferably include education on the traditions, cultures and beliefs of the different ethnic groups.

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**About "YOUTH.sg: The State of Youth in Singapore 2006" (Ho & Chia, 2006)**

Published by the National Youth Council, this handbook provides a glimpse into the psyche of young people in Singapore. It shares findings drawn from the 2005 National Youth Survey and focus group discussions with different segments of youths and various stakeholders in youth development.

Together with contributions from other government agencies, namely: Health Promotion Board, Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education, National Arts Council and Singapore Sports Council, YOUTH.sg 2006 provides a comprehensive picture of the state of youth in Singapore today.

This full-coloured, 330-page handbook will be of particular value to policy-makers, educators, parents and all who have an enduring interest in youth.

This book is now available at only S\$30.00 (incl. GST). The order form may be downloaded from our research website: [www.nyc.gov.sg/research](http://www.nyc.gov.sg/research).

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