



23 July 2022

## **Building Social Capital for Youths Key to a Cohesive Singapore**

### *Trust in Government is Stronger When Youths Believe the Government Trusts Them Too*

Preliminary findings of Youth STEPS, a six-year longitudinal study of about 3,000 young Singaporeans<sup>1</sup> jointly conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) Social Lab and the National Youth Council (NYC) on youth transitions and pathways, show that as youths transition into adulthood, their development of social capital and trust are key to a more cohesive Singapore.

2 The study which began in 2017, found that being part of a network of people whom they trust, who can advise them on important life decisions or address life challenges, builds a reserve of capital which enhances youth resilience to adulting stressors. Similarly, youths who are socially active are more likely to be interested in experiences beyond their comfort zone, bond with people outside their communities<sup>2</sup>, and be open to civic participation<sup>3</sup>. Equipped with these social resources, young Singaporeans can better navigate educational, employment, occupational, and marital milestones and achieve better life satisfaction in Singapore.

3 The findings were shared today at NYC's inaugural National Youth Dialogue<sup>4</sup>, a series of dialogues held in tandem with the Forward Singapore exercise, featuring distinguished guests on topics of keen interest to youths. The first session, titled "*Renewing Our Social Compact*," was graced by Minister of State for Culture, Community and Youth & Trade and Industry, Mr Alvin Tan.

### **Trust in Government – Reciprocity is Important**

4 Trust is an important value to youths. 90 per cent of youths trust the Government at least to some extent and 68 per cent of youths are confident to some extent that the Government will be able to implement solutions to address issues they are experiencing. The longitudinal study further uncovered a reciprocal impact of higher trust in Government when youths perceive that the Government trusts them as well.

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<sup>1</sup> The study surveys over 3,000 Singaporean youths (born between 1993 and 2000) annually over a six-year period from 2017 to understand their transition from adolescence to adulthood. For past reports and more information on the study, refer to [Youth Study on Transitions and Evolving Pathways in Singapore \(Youth STEPS\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> Ho, K. C. (2018). Integrating Youth in Singapore. In YOUTH.sg: State of Youth in Singapore 2018, Research Compilation. National Youth Council.

<sup>3</sup> NVPC. (2021). Youth Volunteerism Landscape in Singapore. In YOUTH.sg: State of Youth in Singapore 2021, Youth & Their Enduring Bonds. National Youth Council.

<sup>4</sup> The National Youth Dialogue (NYD) series is organised in partnership between NYC and the Global Shapers Community (Singapore Hub). The conversations will feature distinguished speakers from the public, private and people sector, and allow youth participants to hear from panellists on future-oriented issues, as well as share their views on these topics. Details can be found at <https://go.gov.sg/nyd>

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5 These findings show the need for continued efforts by the Government, through NYC's partnership and engagement platforms, to stay connected with youth and provide them with opportunities to share their views on pertinent national issues such as Women's Development, Long Term Plan Review, and SG Green Plan 2030, as well as their hopes and aspirations for Singapore in the Youth Action Plan 2025. The NYC also offers structured programmes, such as the Youth Action Challenge that empowers youth to take action on issues that matter to them and to Singapore.

6 The study recommended for more two-way communication between youths and the Government to address perceived policy gaps in areas such as work-life balance, housing, and support for young parents, in addition to other challenges in the next phase of our nationhood. For example, housing affordability is one of the key considerations and potential barriers for youths to transition to married life. The study revealed a significant shift to a more favourable perception of housing affordability after youths are married and are aware of the grants and support available to young families.

### **COVID-19 Impacted Youth Mental Well-being but Strengthened Youths' Sense of Community and Nationhood**

7 COVID-19 exacted a toll on the mental well-being of young Singaporeans in 2020 and 2021. The finding is consistent with what youths around the world experienced during the pandemic. The challenges posed by the pandemic wore down youth's individual resources such as resilience and mental well-being but had a curious positive community effect. Civic participation increased significantly as more youths followed the news and government officials online or joined an online group. They continued to build up their social capital, bonding with friends and family. Their sense of nationhood also increased as young Singaporeans rallied around community and the shared adversities. Maintaining a strong Singapore identity and a shared sense of nationhood will be important to Singapore moving forward.

*Refer to ANNEX A for further details of Youth STEPS preliminary findings.*

8 Mr Alvin Tan, Minister of State for Culture, Community and Youth, & Trade and Industry, "Our youths have a stake in Singapore's future. We are partnering them to refresh our social compact, through active dialogue, mutual understanding, and respect for one another's views. Today's inaugural National Youth Dialogue kicks off a series of engagements on issues close to the hearts of youths, in tandem with Forward Singapore."

9 Dr Chew Han Ei, Principal Investigator and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies said, "We often hear leaders say that nations are forged in crises and people come together in times of adversity. The data is indeed showing us that during these unprecedented pandemic years, youths in Singapore have been turning to the community even as they experience difficulties in their personal lives, and through these shared experiences, strengthened their sense of nationhood".

10 IPS and NYC will be releasing more data and findings from Youth STEPS later in the year. For further clarification on Youth STEPS interim findings, please contact:

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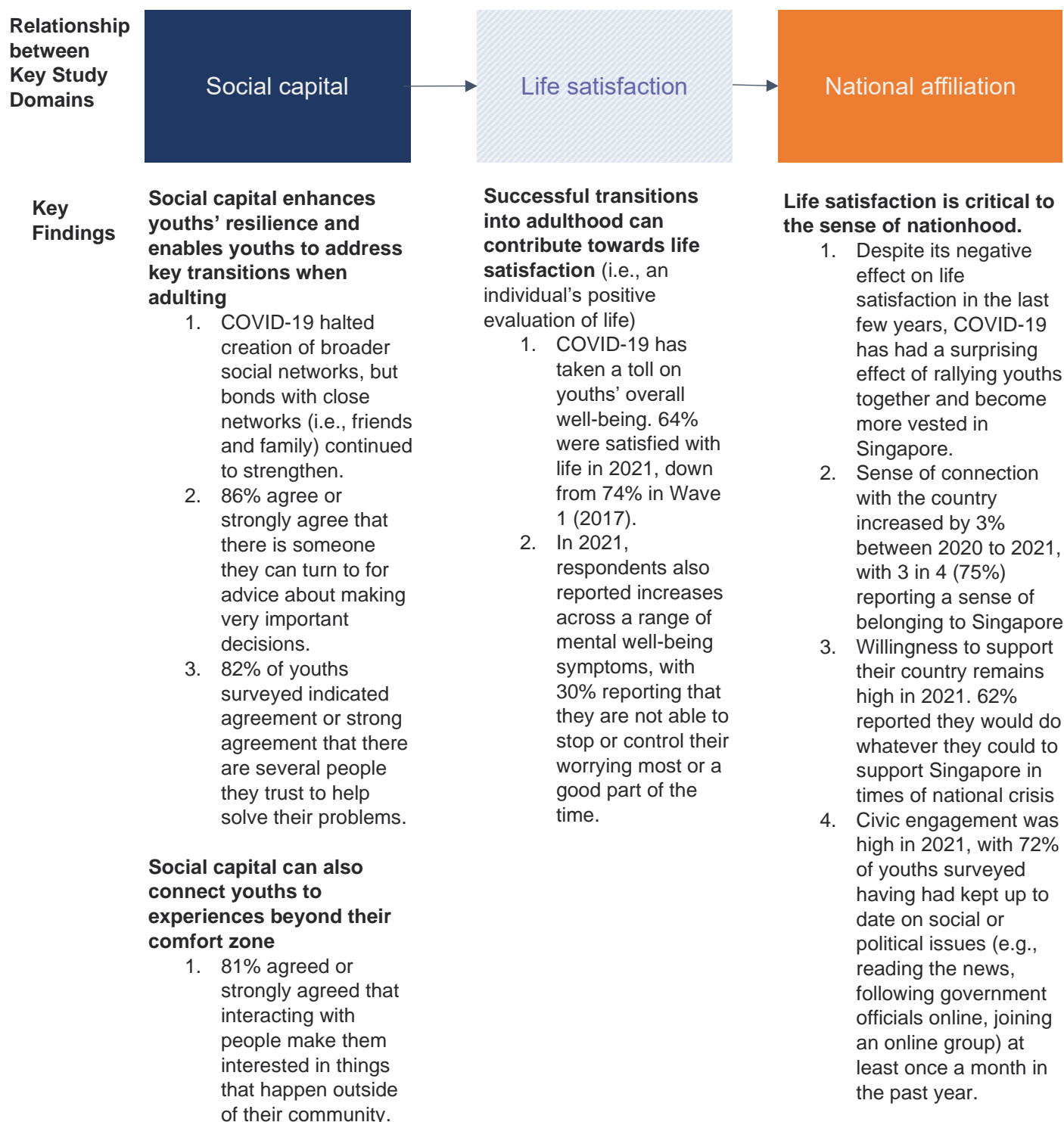
### **About the Institute of Policy Studies and IPS Social Lab**

The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) was established in 1988 as an independent think-tank to study and generate public policy ideas in Singapore. Today, IPS continues to analyse public policy, building bridges between thought leaders, and communicate its findings to a wide audience. IPS Social Lab is an independent centre under IPS for social indicators research. It seeks to understand Singapore society through survey-based research on social perceptions, attitudes and behaviours in Singapore, using the most robust standards in survey methodology and statistical analyses. IPS Social Lab is committed to serve the public interest as a national resource centre for longitudinal data.

### **About the National Youth Council**

At NYC, we believe in a world where young people are respected and heard and have agency to make a difference. Together with our partners, we develop future-ready youth who are committed to Singapore by instilling in them a heart for service, resilience, and an enterprising spirit. We acknowledge the diverse needs and aspirations of young Singaporeans and ensure our youth have opportunities to develop self-awareness, deepen community spirit, and be future-ready. We hear youth, we empower youth and are **HERE FOR YOUTH.**

Diagram 1: Key Findings from Youth STEPS Waves 3 (2019) to 5 (2022)



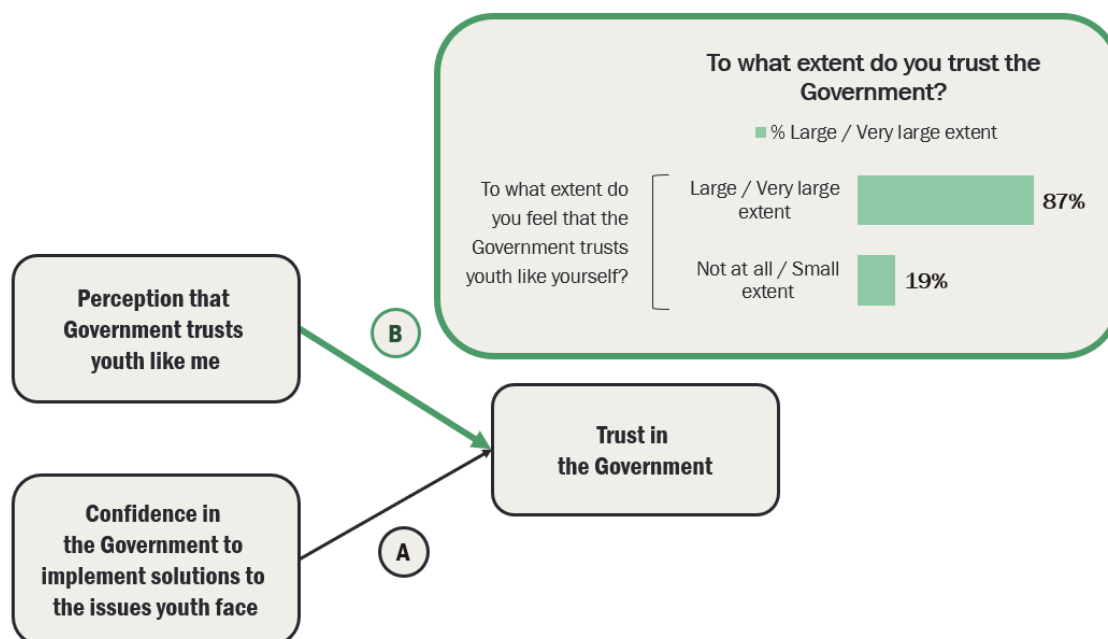
**1 Housing affordability is one of the key considerations and potential barriers for youths to transition to married life. A significant shift to a more favourable perception of housing affordability occurs after youths are married and are aware of the grants and support available to young families.**

- i. Since 2018, the study found housing affordability to be a challenge which affected 3 in 5 youths. Among those who were single in 2021 (of which 2 in 5 were in a relationship), a similar proportion (i.e. 3 in 5) continued to view this as a challenge that affected them as a youth in Singapore.
- ii. This concern eases as youth enter marriage. For those who were single in 2018 but married by 2021, the proportion facing challenges with housing affordability fell from about 3 in 5 to 1 in 2.

**2 Majority of youths trust the government but relatively fewer feel that the trust is reciprocated.**

- i. 90% trust the Government to a very large extent (10%), large extent (38%) and some extent (42%).
- ii. 68% are confident to very large extent (3%), large extent (19%) and some extent (47%) that the government will be able to implement solutions to the issues youths face

Diagram 2: A mediation analysis on two-way trust between government and youth from Youth STEPS Wave 5 (2021)<sup>5</sup>



A. Youth who are more confident in the government to implement solutions to the issues they face are also more likely to have higher trust in the government.

<sup>5</sup> A mediation analysis was conducted to uncover which factors were related and/or mediated youths' trust in the government.

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- B. Among youths, the perception that the government trusts them is related to higher trust in the government. 87% of those who feel that the government trusts them to a large or very large extent also trust the government to a large or very large extent (compared to 19% who feel the government do not trust them at all or to a small extent).

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