

YOUTH.sg:

The State of Youth in Singapore

2021

Youth & Their Diverse Priorities



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WE HEAR **Y**OUTH
HERE FOR **Y**OUTH

At NYC, we believe in a world where young people are respected and heard, and have the ability to influence and make a difference to the world. 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.

■ Our Vision

Thriving youth who are **Future-Ready** and **Committed to Singapore**

▲ Our Mission

Create **Opportunities for All Youths in Singapore**

To be **heard**, to be **empowered** and to be **the change**

● Our Background

NYC was set up by the Singapore Government on 1 November 1989 as the national co-ordinating body for youth affairs in Singapore and the focal point of international youth affairs.

On 1 January 2015, NYC began its operations as an autonomous agency under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) and housed two key institutions: Outward Bound Singapore (OBS) and Youth Corps Singapore (YCS). Together, the agency drives youth development and broadens outreach to young Singaporeans and youth sector organisations.

Mr Edwin Tong, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth and Second Minister for Law is the Chairperson of the 16th Council. The Council comprises members from diverse backgrounds such as the youth, media, arts, sports, corporate and government sectors.





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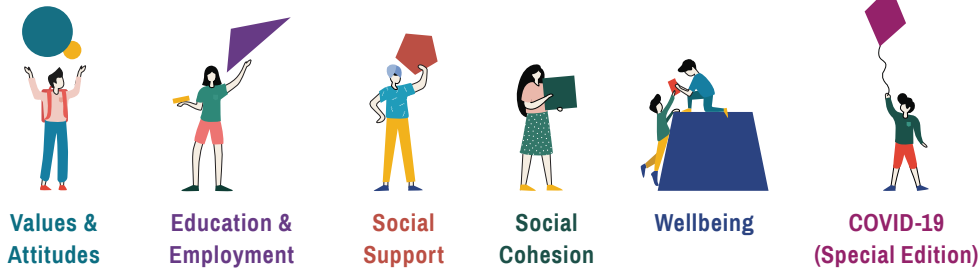
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Preface

The National Youth Survey (NYS) studies the major concerns and issues of schooling and working youths in Singapore. It is a time-series survey that tracks and provides updated analyses of national youth statistics and outcomes to inform policy and practice. To date, NYS has been conducted in 2002, 2005, 2010, 2013, 2016, and 2019. Findings and analyses from each cycle of NYS are subsequently published as YOUTH.sg: The State of Youth in Singapore (YOUTH.sg).

This edition of YOUTH.sg consists of six separate issues covering the topics of



Each issue features youth statistics and insights from the NYS. Complementing the NYS insights are relevant studies and in-depth analyses by practitioners in youth research and development to provide readers with an overview of the state of youth in Singapore.

Contributors comprise NYS' academic collaborators (A/Ps Ho Kong Chong, Ho Kong Weng, and Irene Ng), NYC, Youth STEPS' academic collaborators (Dr Chew Han Ei, A/P Vincent Chua, and Dr Alex Tan) and other contributors (Ministry of Manpower, National Arts Council, National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre, and Sport Singapore). Together, the YOUTH.sg intends to shed light on and explore specific emergent trends and issues of youths.

This publication has been put together by the Research team at the National Youth Council.

Notation

NA Not Available

Notes

Percentages may not total up to 100% due to rounding.

Survey figures may vary slightly due to sample weighting.

Values & Attitudes

Youths are not afraid to stand up for ideals that they resonate with and lead the change. The value orientations of youths towards the world around them reflect the essence of who they are as individuals and what they find to be important. These values inform the decisions that youths will make in their daily lives and at key points of transition. Their values and attitudes offer insights into the life youths envision for themselves and opportunities for advancement as individuals, communities, and as a nation.



Values & Attitudes

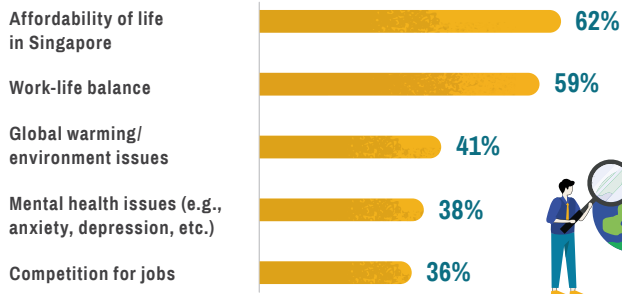
In the fast-changing world, youths have not lost sight of what is important to them. Holding their own views on issues, youths are willing to listen, express themselves, and take action. Their priorities reflect the changes that they want for themselves and the world around them.

Family values consistently come first for our youths. They aspire the most to maintain strong family ties and have a place of their own. With many youths being early in their careers, it is unsurprising that career achievements and financial independence continue to be key goals, and are viewed as important stepping stones for further aspirations, such as marriage and parenthood. Though top aspirations have remained largely unchanged in the past decade, youths' values are shifting in acceptance of greater diversity and concern for the world.

Youth aspirations *have remained consistent* over the past decade.



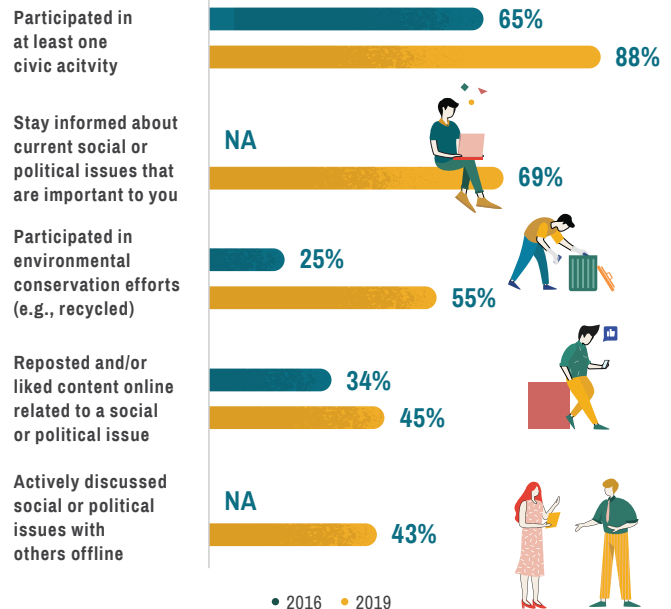
Youths are *concerned about bread-and-butter*, environmental, as well as mental health issues.



Youths have grown more socially conscious. They are looking out for the people around them and placing greater emphasis on staying attuned to current affairs. More aware of issues and civically minded, youths are taking greater action to engage in active discussions and participate in environmental conservation efforts. With civic engagement shifting online, we also see youths being open to the exchange of views on social media and rallying their social networks to champion issues that are important to them.

In understanding the values and attitudes of young people, their evolving priorities and perspectives remind us of the importance to recognise youth voices and harness their energies for a better Singapore.

Levels of *civic participation have risen*, with youths participating in a range of civic activities.



Part A: Life Goals

Section A1: Life Goals

Youths' important life goals have remained largely unchanged since 2013 (**Table A1**). Across age groups, youths continue to prioritise having strong family relationships, home ownership, and acquiring new skills and knowledge (**Table A2**). It is heartening to note that close to 9 in 10 youths regard helping the less fortunate and contributing to society as somewhat and very important life goals (**Table A3**).



Question: How important are the following aspirations or life goals in your life?

◀ **TABLE A1: YOUTHS' "VERY IMPORTANT" LIFE GOALS OVER TIME**

| | 2010 | 2013 | 2016 | 2019 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | (n=1,268) | (n=2,843) | (n=3,531) | (n=3,392) |
| To maintain strong family relationships | 71% | 74% | 70% | 68% |
| To have a place of my own ^a | NA | 70% | 70% | 65% |
| To acquire new skills and knowledge | 57% | 65% | 62% | 53% |
| To have a successful career | 66% | 61% | 59% | 51% |
| To travel the world ^b | NA | NA | NA | 41% |
| To earn lots of money | 48% | 46% | 45% | 36% |
| To help the less fortunate ^a | NA | 41% | 41% | 34% |
| To have a good personal spiritual/religious life | 27% | 36% | 31% | 33% |
| To contribute to society ^a | NA | 39% | 40% | 30% |
| To get married | 35% | 39% | 36% | 29% |
| To have children | 34% | 37% | 35% | 27% |
| To be actively involved in sports | 17% | 18% | 18% | 21% |
| To discover, design or invent something new | 13% | 17% | 17% | 16% |
| To start my own business | 19% | 22% | 21% | 14% |
| To be actively involved in the arts | 8% | 13% | 12% | 11% |
| To be actively involved in local volunteer work | 4% | 12% | 10% | 10% |
| To migrate to another country | 5% | 10% | 11% | 9% |
| To be actively involved in overseas volunteer work | 4% | 9% | 8% | 6% |
| To be famous | 7% | 6% | 6% | 4% |

Notes

a. Items are new to NYS 2013.

b. Item is new to NYS 2019.

TABLE A2: YOUTHS' "VERY IMPORTANT" LIFE GOALS BY AGE

| | 15-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | Overall |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| | (n=716) | (n=804) | (n=926) | (n=946) | (n=3,392) |
| To maintain strong family relationships | 71% | 68% | 67% | 68% | 68% |
| To have a place of my own | 62% | 69% | 63% | 65% | 65% |
| To acquire new skills and knowledge | 58% | 57% | 52% | 45% | 53% |
| To have a successful career | 64% | 58% | 48% | 40% | 51% |
| To travel the world ^a | 38% | 44% | 42% | 39% | 41% |
| To earn lots of money | 38% | 39% | 36% | 32% | 36% |
| To help the less fortunate | 43% | 36% | 32% | 25% | 34% |
| To have a good personal spiritual/religious life | 34% | 33% | 31% | 35% | 33% |
| To contribute to society | 36% | 33% | 27% | 27% | 30% |
| To get married | 28% | 32% | 27% | 30% | 29% |
| To have children | 23% | 27% | 25% | 31% | 27% |
| To be actively involved in sports | 26% | 20% | 19% | 18% | 21% |
| To discover, design or invent something new | 17% | 19% | 15% | 15% | 16% |
| To start my own business | 13% | 14% | 13% | 15% | 14% |
| To be actively involved in the arts | 15% | 14% | 9% | 7% | 11% |
| To be actively involved in local volunteer work | 14% | 11% | 9% | 8% | 10% |
| To migrate to another country | 9% | 10% | 7% | 9% | 9% |
| To be actively involved in overseas volunteer work | 9% | 7% | 6% | 4% | 6% |
| To be famous | 6% | 4% | 3% | 2% | 4% |

Notes

The upper-bound survey population figures are reflected in this table.

a. Item is new to NYS 2019.



TABLE A3: YOUTHS' LIFE GOALS

| | Not important at all | Somewhat unimportant | Somewhat important | Very important |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| (n=3,392) | | | | |
| To maintain strong family relationships | 1% | 3% | 28% | 68% |
| To have a place of my own | 1% | 4% | 30% | 65% |
| To acquire new skills and knowledge | 1% | 3% | 43% | 53% |
| To have a successful career | 1% | 6% | 42% | 51% |
| To travel the world ^a | 4% | 13% | 42% | 41% |
| To earn lots of money | 3% | 11% | 50% | 36% |
| To help the less fortunate | 2% | 9% | 55% | 34% |
| To have a good personal spiritual/religious life | 13% | 18% | 37% | 33% |
| To contribute to society | 2% | 11% | 57% | 30% |
| To get married | 9% | 18% | 44% | 29% |
| To have children | 12% | 19% | 43% | 27% |
| To be actively involved in sports | 10% | 23% | 47% | 21% |
| To discover, design or invent something new | 14% | 30% | 40% | 16% |
| To start my own business | 23% | 33% | 31% | 14% |
| To be actively involved in the arts | 21% | 37% | 31% | 11% |
| To be actively involved in local volunteer work | 10% | 32% | 47% | 10% |
| To migrate to another country | 29% | 38% | 24% | 9% |
| To be actively involved in overseas volunteer work | 27% | 39% | 28% | 6% |
| To be famous | 52% | 33% | 12% | 4% |

Note

a. Item is new to NYS 2019.



Part B: Attitudes Towards Family & Relationships



Section B1: Attitudes Towards Parental Care

Youths value the importance of a strong and stable family unit, with 8 in 10 youths reporting that they would care for their parents in old age regardless of the circumstances (**Table B1**).

Question: Which statement best describes your belief towards caring for your parents?

TABLE B1: YOUTHS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS PARENTAL CARE OVER TIME

| | 2010 | 2013 | 2016 | 2019 |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | (n=1,268) | (n=2,843) | (n=3,531) | (n=3,392) |
| I would take care of my parents in their old age, regardless of the circumstances | 81% | 86% | 85% | 80% |
| I would take care of my parents in their old age, if my circumstances allow | 18% | 13% | 14% | 18% |
| I would leave matters to my parents or to the government | 1% | 1% | 1% | 2% |

TABLE B2: YOUTHS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS PARENTAL CARE BY AGE

| | 15-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | Overall |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| | (n=716) | (n=804) | (n=926) | (n=946) | (n=3,392) |
| I would take care of my parents in their old age, regardless of the circumstances | 82% | 84% | 80% | 76% | 80% |
| I would take care of my parents in their old age, if my circumstances allow | 17% | 16% | 18% | 22% | 18% |
| I would leave matters to my parents or to the government | 2% | 1% | 3% | 2% | 2% |



Section B2:
Attitudes Towards
Marriage

In the face of competing priorities, together with a greater acceptance of singlehood and cohabitation (Tan & Goh, 2020), the perceived necessity of marriage has declined in the past decade (**Table B3**). This is consistent amongst youths across all age groups (**Table B4**).

Question: Which statement best describes your belief towards marriage?

• **TABLE B3: YOUTHS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS MARRIAGE OVER TIME**

| | 2010 | 2013 | 2016 | 2019 |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | (n=1,268) | (n=2,843) | (n=3,531) | (n=3,392) |
| One should marry | 47% | 39% | 30% | 23% |
| It is better to marry | 35% | 35% | 38% | 34% |
| It is not necessary to marry | 17% | 25% | 31% | 41% |
| It is better not to marry | 1% | 2% | 2% | 2% |

• **TABLE B4: YOUTHS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS MARRIAGE BY AGE**

| | 15-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | Overall |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| | (n=716) | (n=804) | (n=926) | (n=946) | (n=3,392) |
| One should marry | 20% | 23% | 23% | 26% | 23% |
| It is better to marry | 39% | 34% | 32% | 33% | 34% |
| It is not necessary to marry | 38% | 42% | 43% | 39% | 41% |
| It is better not to marry | 3% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% |

• **TABLE B5: YOUTHS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS MARRIAGE BY MARITAL STATUS**

| | Unmarried Youths | Married Youths |
|------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| | (n=2,500) | (n=851) |
| One should marry | 20% | 33% |
| It is better to marry | 34% | 34% |
| It is not necessary to marry | 44% | 31% |
| It is better not to marry | 2% | 1% |

Section B3: Readiness For Dating & Marriage

Youths are likely to hold more pragmatic views towards dating and marriage. Those who are single prefer to wait for the right person and date with the intention of marriage (**Table B6**), while those in a relationship find marriage to be stressful, as they hold expectations of attaining necessary prerequisites such as financial stability and personal milestones prior to settling down (**Table B7**).

Question: The following are statements relating to romantic relationships in Singapore. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

(Based on a 7-pt scale where 7="strongly agree", 4="neither agree nor disagree", & 1="strongly disagree".)

• **TABLE B6: SINGLE YOUTHS' READINESS & BARRIERS FOR DATING BY GENDER**

(with standard deviations in parentheses)

| | Male | Female | Overall |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | (n=1,021) | (n=914) | (n=1,936) |
| I have not met the right person yet | 5.47 (1.31) | 5.72 (1.24) | 5.59 (1.28) |
| I prefer to date with the intention of marriage | 5.22 (1.54) | 5.37 (1.43) | 5.29 (1.49) |
| I have more important priorities now (e.g., job, studies, self-discovery) compared to dating | 5.16 (1.44) | 5.34 (1.40) | 5.24 (1.42) |
| Dating in Singapore is stressful (e.g., expensive, high expectations) | 4.85 (1.48) | 4.63 (1.45) | 4.74 (1.47) |
| I do not have the resources (e.g., time, money) to date | 4.53 (1.62) | 4.33 (1.66) | 4.43 (1.64) |
| I do not feel ready to be in a relationship | 4.20 (1.60) | 4.39 (1.56) | 4.29 (1.58) |
| I do not believe that dating someone is essential for me to lead a fulfilling life | 3.94 (1.67) | 4.56 (1.61) | 4.23 (1.67) |
| I am open to using a dating app or go online to meet potential romantic partners | 4.23 (1.69) | 3.74 (1.63) | 4.00 (1.68) |
| There are no opportunities to meet a potential partner in Singapore | 3.79 (1.53) | 4.08 (1.50) | 3.93 (1.52) |
| My past experiences deter me from dating | 3.55 (1.60) | 3.62 (1.69) | 3.59 (1.64) |
| I face pressure from family and friends to find a partner | 3.26 (1.62) | 3.40 (1.73) | 3.33 (1.67) |
| Given a choice, I would choose to remain single | 3.06 (1.66) | 3.44 (1.68) | 3.23 (1.68) |
| People around me (e.g., parents, friends) do not approve of me dating | 2.38 (1.30) | 2.56 (1.39) | 2.47 (1.35) |

Note

The overall unmarried, single youth survey population figures are reflected in this table.

Source: Youth STEPS (National Youth Council & IPS Social Lab, 2019). 🐦

Question: The following are statements regarding marriage. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
(Based on a 7-pt scale where 7="strongly agree", 4="neither agree nor disagree", & 1="strongly disagree").

TABLE B7: DATING YOUTHS' READINESS & BARRIERS FOR MARRIAGE BY GENDER
(with standard deviations in parentheses)

| | Male | Female | Overall |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | (n=448) | (n=622) | (n=1,070) |
| Marriage in Singapore is stressful (e.g., expensive, high expectations) | 5.50 (1.33) | 5.74 (1.25) | 5.64 (1.29) |
| I have more important priorities now than marriage | 5.35 (1.56) | 5.19 (1.61) | 5.26 (1.59) |
| I do not have the resources (e.g., time, money) to take up the responsibilities of marriage | 5.06 (1.57) | 5.04 (1.62) | 5.05 (1.60) |
| My partner has more important priorities than marriage | 5.02 (1.61) | 4.99 (1.59) | 5.00 (1.60) |
| I do not feel ready for marriage | 4.55 (1.80) | 4.36 (1.87) | 4.44 (1.84) |
| There are no opportunities for me to have the married life I want in Singapore (e.g., unable to buy a flat) | 3.84 (1.71) | 3.91 (1.61) | 3.88 (1.65) |
| I do not believe that being married is essential for me to lead a fulfilling life | 3.83 (1.75) | 3.93 (1.74) | 3.88 (1.74) |
| I have not met the right person yet | 2.46 (1.53) | 2.41 (1.34) | 2.43 (1.42) |
| People around me (e.g., parents, friends) do not approve of me getting married | 2.47 (1.57) | 2.33 (1.38) | 2.39 (1.46) |

Note
The overall unmarried, dating youth survey population figures are reflected in this table.

Source: Youth STEPS (National Youth Council & IPS Social Lab, 2019). 📄

Part C: Civic Engagement

Section C1: Civic Engagement

Youths are increasingly civically conscious and active, with close to 9 in 10 youths reporting participation in at least one form of civic activity (**Table C1**). With social media platforms being increasingly used to share information and champion causes (Pew Research Centre, 2018), this has empowered greater civic engagement and a pervasive sense of civic responsibility. Youths across all age bands (**Table C2**) are participating civically within their personal capacity, such as staying on top of current affairs, being environmentally conscious, actively discussing issues, and reposting/liking online content.

Question: Have you done any of the following civic activities in the past 12 months?

TABLE C1: PARTICIPATION IN CIVIC ACTIVITIES OVER TIME

| | 2016 | 2019 |
|---|------------|------------|
| | (n=3,531) | (n=3,392) |
| At least one civic activity^a | 65% | 88% |
| Stay informed about current social or political issues that are important to you ^b | NA | 69% |
| Participated in environmental conservation efforts (e.g., recycled) | 25% | 55% |
| Reposted and/or liked content online related to a social or political issue | 34% | 45% |
| Actively discussed social or political issues with others offline ^b | NA | 43% |
| Deliberately avoided or bought products for ethical, environmental or political reasons | 18% | 37% |
| Supported a social cause through monetary donations (e.g., donated to a crowdfunding campaign) | 33% | 35% |
| Followed elected officials, candidates for office, or other public figures on social media | 20% | 29% |
| Signed a petition | 11% | 27% |
| Attended an event in support of a social or political issue (e.g., Earth Hour) ^b | NA | 20% |
| Joined an online group (e.g., Facebook groups, Telegram channel) dealing with social or political issues ^b | NA | 17% |
| Commented on an online news story or blog post to express an opinion about a social or political issue | 13% | 15% |
| Worked with fellow citizens to solve a problem in your community (e.g., organising a fundraising event, an awareness campaign) ^b | 4% | 12% |
| Created and posted original content online related to a social or political issue | 6% | 10% |
| Attended a discussion on social affairs (e.g., Youth Conversations) ^b | 7% | 10% |
| Contacted a government official about a social issue that is important to you (e.g., Meet-the-People Session, email, etc.) ^b | 3% | 9% |
| Attended a political rally or speech (e.g., election speech) | 4% | 4% |
| Sent a "letter to the editor" to a newspaper or magazine | 1% | 3% |

Notes

The upper-bound survey population figures are reflected in this table.

a. Percentages of overall level of civic participation are calculated based on all 13 items in NYS 2016 and 17 items in NYS 2019.

b. Items are new/refined in NYS 2019.

• **TABLE C2: PARTICIPATION IN CIVIC ACTIVITIES BY AGE**

| | 15-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | Overall |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | (n=716) | (n=804) | (n=926) | (n=946) | (n=3,392) |
| At least one civic activity^a | 91% | 90% | 86% | 88% | 88% |
| Stay informed about current social or political issues that are important to you ^b | 69% | 69% | 67% | 70% | 69% |
| Participated in environmental conservation efforts (e.g., recycled) | 61% | 56% | 51% | 55% | 55% |
| Reposted and/or liked content online related to a social or political issue | 53% | 51% | 40% | 37% | 45% |
| Actively discussed social or political issues with others offline ^b | 45% | 47% | 42% | 39% | 43% |
| Deliberately avoided or bought products for ethical, environmental or political reasons | 42% | 39% | 34% | 34% | 37% |
| Supported a social cause through monetary donations (e.g., donated to a crowdfunding campaign) | 35% | 35% | 34% | 37% | 35% |
| Followed elected officials, candidates for office, or other public figures on social media | 30% | 26% | 28% | 32% | 29% |
| Signed a petition | 36% | 33% | 25% | 19% | 27% |
| Attended an event in support of a social or political issue (e.g., Earth Hour) ^b | 25% | 22% | 16% | 18% | 20% |
| Joined an online group (e.g., Facebook groups, Telegram channel) dealing with social or political issues ^b | 17% | 18% | 16% | 18% | 17% |
| Commented on an online news story or blog post to express an opinion about a social or political issue | 18% | 15% | 13% | 14% | 15% |
| Worked with fellow citizens to solve a problem in your community (e.g., organising a fundraising event, an awareness campaign) ^b | 17% | 12% | 11% | 10% | 12% |
| Created and posted original content online related to a social or political issue | 15% | 10% | 8% | 9% | 10% |
| Attended a discussion on social affairs (e.g., Youth Conversations) ^b | 15% | 9% | 9% | 7% | 10% |
| Contacted a government official about a social issue that is important to you (e.g., Meet-the-People Session, email, etc.) ^b | 7% | 7% | 9% | 12% | 9% |
| Attended a political rally or speech (e.g., election speech) | 6% | 3% | 5% | 4% | 4% |
| Sent a "letter to the editor" to a newspaper or magazine | 4% | 3% | 3% | 2% | 3% |

Notes

The upper-bound survey population figures are reflected in this table.

a. Percentages of overall level of civic participation are calculated based on all 17 items in NYS 2019.

b. Items are new/refined in NYS 2019.



Section C2: Important Youth Issues

Youths are interested in a range of social issues related to the environment, society, and the government. Interest in issues may be driven by life stage, with older youths being more interested in bread-and-butter issues such as affordability and work-life balance, and younger youths being more interested in societal issues such as bullying and racism (**Table C3**).

Question: Which of the following social issues are important to you? Please pick up to 5 items.

TABLE C3: YOUTHS' IMPORTANT SOCIAL ISSUES BY AGE

| | 15-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | Overall |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| | (n=716) | (n=804) | (n=926) | (n=946) | (n=3,392) |
| Affordability of life in Singapore | 48% | 61% | 66% | 71% | 62% |
| Work-life balance | 38% | 56% | 68% | 70% | 59% |
| Global warming/Environmental issues | 51% | 40% | 37% | 39% | 41% |
| Mental health issues (e.g., anxiety, depression, etc.) | 40% | 41% | 38% | 33% | 38% |
| Competition for jobs | 33% | 38% | 36% | 37% | 36% |
| Racism and discrimination | 42% | 37% | 29% | 29% | 34% |
| Social inequality (e.g., income gap) | 27% | 29% | 34% | 36% | 32% |
| Government transparency and accountability | 18% | 27% | 29% | 36% | 28% |
| Data privacy | 21% | 19% | 21% | 19% | 20% |
| Bullying and cyberbullying | 26% | 18% | 17% | 19% | 20% |
| Lack of career-preparedness | 15% | 20% | 18% | 16% | 17% |
| Fake news | 17% | 13% | 15% | 15% | 15% |
| Gender inequality | 22% | 17% | 12% | 10% | 15% |
| Unrealistic beauty standards | 17% | 10% | 7% | 7% | 10% |
| Acceptance of non-traditional careers | 8% | 10% | 9% | 8% | 9% |
| Negative stereotypes of youths | 19% | 10% | 5% | 5% | 9% |
| Lack of youth representation on public issues | 11% | 6% | 5% | 4% | 6% |
| None | 2% | 2% | 2% | 1% | 2% |

Notes

This is a new question introduced in NYS 2019.

The upper-bound survey population figures are reflected in this table.



Section C3:
Attitudes Towards
Justifiability
Of Actions

Youths continue to show increasing tolerance for a range of actions, with greater acceptance of divorce, sex before marriage, euthanasia, and cosmetic surgery (**Table C4**). Younger youths generally expressed less conservative attitudes compared to older youths (**Table C5**). Compared to youths in other countries, youths in Singapore maintain slightly more conservative views (World Values Survey Association, 2020).

Question: The following are some topics that people have differing views on. To what extent do you think each of the following is justifiable (i.e., right or acceptable)?
(Based on a 10-pt scale, where 10="always justifiable" & 1="never justifiable".)

TABLE C4: MEAN RATINGS OF YOUTHS' ATTITUDES OVER TIME
(with standard deviations in parentheses)

| | 2013 | 2016 | 2019 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | (n=2,843) | (n=3,531) | (n=3,392) |
| Divorce | 4.44 (2.86) | 4.58 (2.93) | 5.62 (2.68) |
| Sex before marriage | 4.32 (3.04) | 4.66 (3.11) | 5.51 (3.07) |
| Cosmetic/Aesthetic surgery ^a | NA | NA | 5.39 (2.61) |
| Euthanasia (i.e., intentionally ending a life to relieve pain) | 4.09 (3.08) | 4.20 (3.17) | 5.11 (3.09) |
| Abortion | 3.59 (2.81) | 3.83 (2.95) | 4.75 (3.00) |
| Online vigilantism (i.e., exposing information of a person who committed a misdeed) ^a | NA | NA | 4.13 (2.53) |
| Prostitution | 2.89 (2.48) | 3.02 (2.50) | 3.68 (2.58) |
| Suicide | 2.26 (2.22) | 2.60 (2.38) | 3.04 (2.42) |
| Using drugs for recreation ^a | NA | NA | 2.33 (2.12) |

Note
a. Items are new to NYS 2019.

• **TABLE C5: MEAN RATINGS OF YOUTHS' ATTITUDES BY AGE**
(with standard deviations in parentheses)

| | 15-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | Overall |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | (n=716) | (n=804) | (n=926) | (n=946) | (n=3,392) |
| Divorce | 5.55 (2.69) | 5.97 (2.68) | 5.63 (2.71) | 5.38 (2.63) | 5.62 (2.68) |
| Sex before marriage | 4.98 (3.06) | 5.86 (3.10) | 5.71 (3.06) | 5.41 (3.00) | 5.51 (3.07) |
| Cosmetic/Aesthetic surgery ^a | 5.16 (2.72) | 5.83 (2.65) | 5.40 (2.54) | 5.19 (2.51) | 5.39 (2.61) |
| Euthanasia (i.e., intentionally ending a life to relieve pain) | 4.83 (3.04) | 5.46 (3.13) | 5.17 (3.12) | 4.97 (3.03) | 5.11 (3.09) |
| Abortion | 4.86 (2.99) | 5.28 (3.07) | 4.57 (3.02) | 4.39 (2.85) | 4.75 (3.00) |
| Online vigilantism (i.e., exposing information of a person who committed a misdeed) ^a | 4.31 (2.59) | 4.33 (2.57) | 3.99 (2.49) | 3.94 (2.49) | 4.13 (2.53) |
| Prostitution | 3.65 (2.59) | 4.10 (2.62) | 3.64 (2.56) | 3.37 (2.49) | 3.68 (2.58) |
| Suicide | 3.25 (2.53) | 3.43 (2.57) | 2.94 (2.36) | 2.65 (2.19) | 3.04 (2.42) |
| Using drugs for recreation ^a | 2.39 (2.18) | 2.60 (2.25) | 2.23 (2.07) | 2.13 (2.00) | 2.33 (2.12) |

Note

a. Items are new to NYS 2019.

Part D: Online Use

Section D1: Online Use The growth of smart devices and mobile applications has afforded many a tailored online experience with greater convenience, productivity, and flexibility. Youths frequently go online to stay connected with their social groups, for entertainment, and browse out of habit. Nearly 1 in 2 go online daily to obtain information (**Table D1**). Compared to older youths, younger youths are more likely to go online to maintain or expand their social network (**Table D2**).

Question: How often do you go online (on smartphones, computers, and other devices) for the following?

TABLE D1: FREQUENCY OF ONLINE USE

| | Never | Every few weeks or less | Several times a week | About once a day | Several times a day |
|---|-------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| (n=3,392) | | | | | |
| Communicate with friends and family (e.g., using social messaging apps, social media, etc.) | 2% | 5% | 10% | 10% | 74% |
| For entertainment and leisure (e.g., watching videos, listening to music, reading) | 1% | 4% | 11% | 16% | 68% |
| Browse out of habit | 5% | 9% | 12% | 17% | 57% |
| Search for information that is not for school or work | 4% | 9% | 20% | 19% | 47% |
| Get news or information on current affairs | 7% | 13% | 18% | 24% | 38% |
| To follow the lives of others (e.g., friends, celebrities, etc.) | 13% | 17% | 17% | 19% | 34% |
| Play games | 19% | 18% | 13% | 16% | 34% |
| For convenience of daily tasks (e.g., food deliveries, banking and finance, etc.) | 7% | 21% | 32% | 17% | 23% |
| Connect or network with new friends (e.g., make new contacts, online dating) | 40% | 27% | 11% | 7% | 15% |
| Post updates about yourself/your life (e.g., Insta-story, Snapchats, statuses, tweets) | 20% | 35% | 20% | 11% | 14% |
| Learn new skills/hobbies (e.g., learn a new language) | 24% | 41% | 16% | 8% | 10% |
| Create and post original content (e.g., articles, pictures, videos, etc.) | 38% | 34% | 14% | 6% | 9% |
| Buy things online | 11% | 54% | 21% | 6% | 9% |
| Sell things online | 46% | 37% | 8% | 3% | 6% |

Note
Question is refined in NYS 2019.

• **TABLE D2: DAILY ONLINE USE BY AGE**

| | 15-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | Overall |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| | (n=716) | (n=804) | (n=926) | (n=946) | (n=3,392) |
| Communicate with friends and family (e.g., using social messaging apps, social media, etc.) | 90% | 87% | 82% | 80% | 84% |
| For entertainment and leisure (e.g., watching videos, listening to music, reading) | 90% | 89% | 81% | 77% | 84% |
| Browse out of habit | 73% | 77% | 74% | 72% | 74% |
| Search for information that is not for school or work | 71% | 69% | 65% | 63% | 67% |
| Get news or information on current affairs | 54% | 59% | 66% | 68% | 62% |
| To follow the lives of others (e.g., friends, celebrities, etc.) | 59% | 58% | 51% | 47% | 53% |
| Play games | 59% | 53% | 48% | 44% | 50% |
| For convenience of daily tasks (e.g., food deliveries, banking and finance, etc.) | 30% | 45% | 43% | 42% | 40% |
| Connect or network with new friends (e.g., make new contacts, online dating) | 27% | 24% | 23% | 18% | 23% |
| Post updates about yourself/your life (e.g., Insta-story, Snapchats, statuses, tweets) | 36% | 29% | 21% | 17% | 25% |
| Learn new skills/hobbies (e.g., learn a new language) | 23% | 21% | 18% | 14% | 19% |
| Create and post original content (e.g., articles, pictures, videos, etc.) | 19% | 14% | 13% | 12% | 14% |
| Buy things online | 12% | 14% | 15% | 17% | 15% |
| Sell things online | 10% | 7% | 8% | 10% | 9% |

Notes

Question is refined in NYS 2019.

The upper-bound survey population figures are reflected in this table.

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About the National Youth Survey

The NYS represents a milestone in Singapore’s youth research with its resource-based approach that focuses on the support youths require for societal engagement (social capital) and individual development (human capital).

The National Youth Indicators Framework (NYIF) (Ho & Yip, 2003) was formulated to provide a comprehensive, systematic, and theoretically-grounded assessment of youths in Singapore. The NYIF draws from the existing research literature, policy-relevant indicators, and youth development models. It spans six domains of social and human capital. **Table I** summarises the framework.

TABLE I: NATIONAL YOUTH INDICATORS FRAMEWORK

| | Social Capital (Grootaert & van Bastelaer, 2002; Putnam, 2000) | Human Capital (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001; World Economic Forum, 2017) |
|------------|--|--|
| Definition | Social capital refers to the relationships within and between groups, and the shared norms and trust that govern these interactions. | Human capital refers to the skills, competencies, and attitudes of individuals, which in turn create personal, social, and economic wellbeing. |
| Domains | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social support• Social participation• Values & attitudes | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education• Employment• Wellbeing |
| Focus | The power of relationships | The human potential of young people |

NYS 2019 adopted a random (i.e., probability-based) sampling method to ensure responses are representative of the resident youth population aged 15 to 34 years old.

The fieldwork period spanned from September to November 2019. A total of 3,392 youths were successfully surveyed, of which 227 were surveyed at their households. Demographic proportions of NYS respondents adhered closely to the youth population.

Table II presents the profile of respondents from NYS 2002, 2005, 2010, 2013, 2016, and 2019. Figures referenced in all tables in the publication (with the exception of figures from NYS 2002^a) were weighted according to interlocking matrices of age, gender, and race of the respective youth populations.

Note
a. Figures from NYS 2002 were not weighted due to the non-standard age bands used.



• TABLE II: PROFILE OF NYS RESPONDENTS

| | | NYS 2002 (n=1,504) | NYS 2005 (n=1,504) | NYS 2010 (n=1,268) | NYS 2013 (n=2,843) | NYS 2016 (n=3,531) | NYS 2019 (n=3,392) | Latest Youth Population ^a |
|----------------|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Age | 15-19 | NYS 2002 utilised non-standard age bands | 33% | 24% | 24% | 23% | 21% | 21% |
| | 20-24 | | 31% | 23% | 25% | 25% | 24% | 24% |
| | 25-29 | | 36% | 25% | 24% | 25% | 27% | 27% |
| | 30-34 ^b | | NA | 28% | 28% | 27% | 28% | 28% |
| Gender | Male | 50% | 50% | 49% | 49% | 49% | 50% | 50% |
| | Female | 50% | 50% | 51% | 51% | 51% | 50% | 50% |
| Race | Chinese | 77% | 75% | 72% | 72% | 72% | 72% | 72% |
| | Malay | 15% | 15% | 15% | 16% | 16% | 17% | 17% |
| | Indian | 7% | 9% | 10% | 10% | 9% | 9% | 9% |
| | Others | 1% | 1% | 4% | 3% | 3% | 3% | 3% |
| Nationality | Singaporean | 93% | 90% | 86% | 91% | 94% | 93% | 86% |
| | Permanent Resident | 7% | 10% | 14% | 10% | 6% | 7% | 14% |
| Marital Status | Single | 83% | 85% | 74% | 74% | 74% | 74% | 74% |
| | Married | 17% | 14% | 25% | 25% | 26% | 25% | 25% |
| | Divorced/Separated/Widowed | 0% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| Religion | Buddhism | 35% | 32% | 36% | 25% | 24% | 22% | 28% |
| | Islam | 16% | 17% | 18% | 19% | 20% | 21% | 18% |
| | Christianity | 16% | 16% | 15% | 19% | 19% | 20% | 18% |
| | Hinduism | 5% | 6% | 6% | 6% | 5% | 5% | 5% |
| | Taoism/Traditional Chinese Beliefs | 6% | 6% | 7% | 7% | 6% | 5% | 7% |
| | Other Religions | 2% | 1% | 3% | 1% | 0% | 1% | 0% |
| | No Religion | 21% | 21% | 15% | 23% | 25% | 27% | 23% |
| Dwelling | HDB 1-2 rooms | 5% | 3% | 5% | 3% | 5% | 4% | 3% |
| | HDB 3 rooms | 26% | 24% | 24% | 14% | 14% | 14% | 12% |
| | HDB 4 rooms | 33% | 43% | 34% | 37% | 38% | 35% | 35% |
| | HDB 5 rooms, executive, & above | 24% | 19% | 26% | 31% | 29% | 30% | 29% |
| | Private flat & condominium | 12% | 11% | 3% | 10% | 9% | 12% | 13% |
| | Private house & bungalow | | | 9% | 6% | 4% | 4% | 6% |
| | Others | 0% | NA | NA | 0% | 0% | 1% | 0% |

Notes

a. Latest youth population refers to the most recent available data from the Department of Statistics (DOS) at the time of fieldwork – age, gender, race, and dwelling (DOS, 2019a) as well as nationality (DOS, 2019b), marital status, and religion (DOS, 2016).

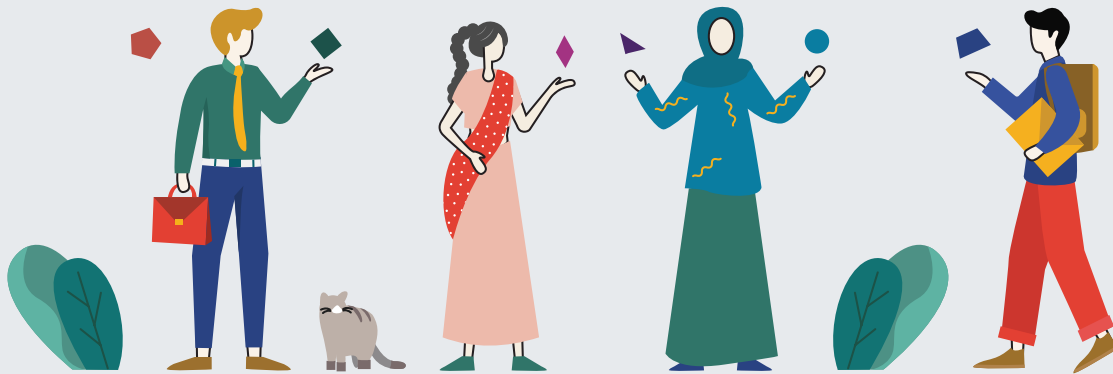
b. The 30-34 age band was included from NYS 2010.

Youth Studies

YOUTH STUDY ON TRANSITIONS & EVOLVING PATHWAYS IN SINGAPORE (YOUTH STEPS)

NYC and the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) Social Lab have partnered to embark on the first national-level longitudinal study of youths in Singapore to better understand young people's experiences as they live, study, work, and play in Singapore. Between 2017 and 2022, the Youth STEPS will explore youths' evolving life aspirations, values and attitudes, and achievements and mobility as they transition from adolescence to adulthood.

A nationally-representative youth panel of 17- to 24-year-old youths were recruited in 2017. Annual survey fieldwork and data analysis are undertaken by IPS Social Lab. To date, three waves of the study have been completed. In the third wave, a total of 3,178 youths aged 19 to 26 were surveyed in 2019.



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Research Takeaways

YOUTH IN SINGAPORE: A BRIEF DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW BY RESEARCH, NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL

1

In 2019, Singapore's resident youth population (aged 15 to 34 years old) accounted for one-quarter of the resident population. As a sizeable segment, young people are especially integral in Singapore's aging population. The gender ratio has held steady with an even split. The ethnic background of our resident youth population continues to be diverse and there is a significant proportion of youths who are holding Permanent Residency.

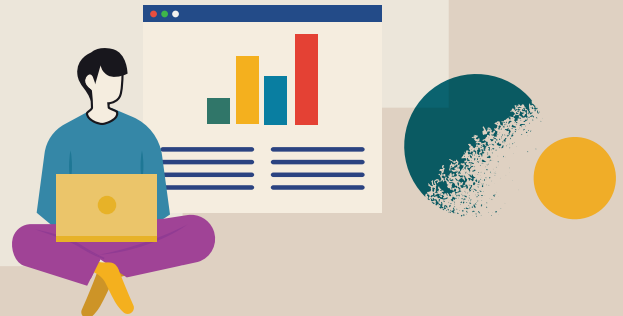


2

The demographic trends of our youths not only reflect the progress of our nation, but also the amalgamation of decisions they have made at each points of transition. Over the past 30 years, young people have been pursuing higher educational attainment and delaying marriage. In 2019, 56% of youths aged 25 to 29 years old in the workforce have attained at least a university degree and 85% of youths aged 20 to 29 years old were single.

3

Beyond a diverse demographic composition, the changes in attainment of milestones reflect the shifting landscape of Singapore's youth. In the YOUTH.sg publication, the National Youth Council explores time trends across both administrative data and perception data from the National Youth Survey to offer a holistic understanding of young people. These deeper insights serve to provide a comprehensive overview to inform youth development, policy, and practice.



THE STATE OF YOUTH IN SINGAPORE

BY CHAN KARYAN, NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL

1

Young people have diverse aspirations and hopes for their future. They are aware of the demands of the future of work to be capable workers, committed to the strong bonds they have formed within their communities as connected individuals, and are activated to be more civically minded and socially conscious as contributing citizens. As youths courageously embark on the course of their lives, trends captured in the 2019 National Youth Survey (NYS) offer insights to the opposing tensions youths have to navigate in a world of possibilities.



2

Aggregating key commonalities and distinctions among the general youth population, six youth profiles were developed in NYS 2016 to inform and guide targeted efforts in youth engagement and programming. Taking on the personas of Aaron, Chloe, Olly, Sonia, Sam, and Lionel, the six youth profiles remind us that the impacts of local and global forces on youths in Singapore carry different weight. To capture their attention, youth engagement strategies will require greater precision, tailored to the traits of each profile and to meet varied youth interests and concerns.



3

As the central youth agency in Singapore, the National Youth Council (NYC) will journey alongside our youths. Even as Singapore eases out of the pandemic and transits into the new normal, emerging youth trends and concerns captured prior to COVID-19 have remained highly relevant and continue to direct our focus for the future. Setting our sights on the challenges ahead, our commitment remains for all youths in Singapore to be heard, be empowered, and be the change.



Youth in Singapore: A Brief Demographic Overview

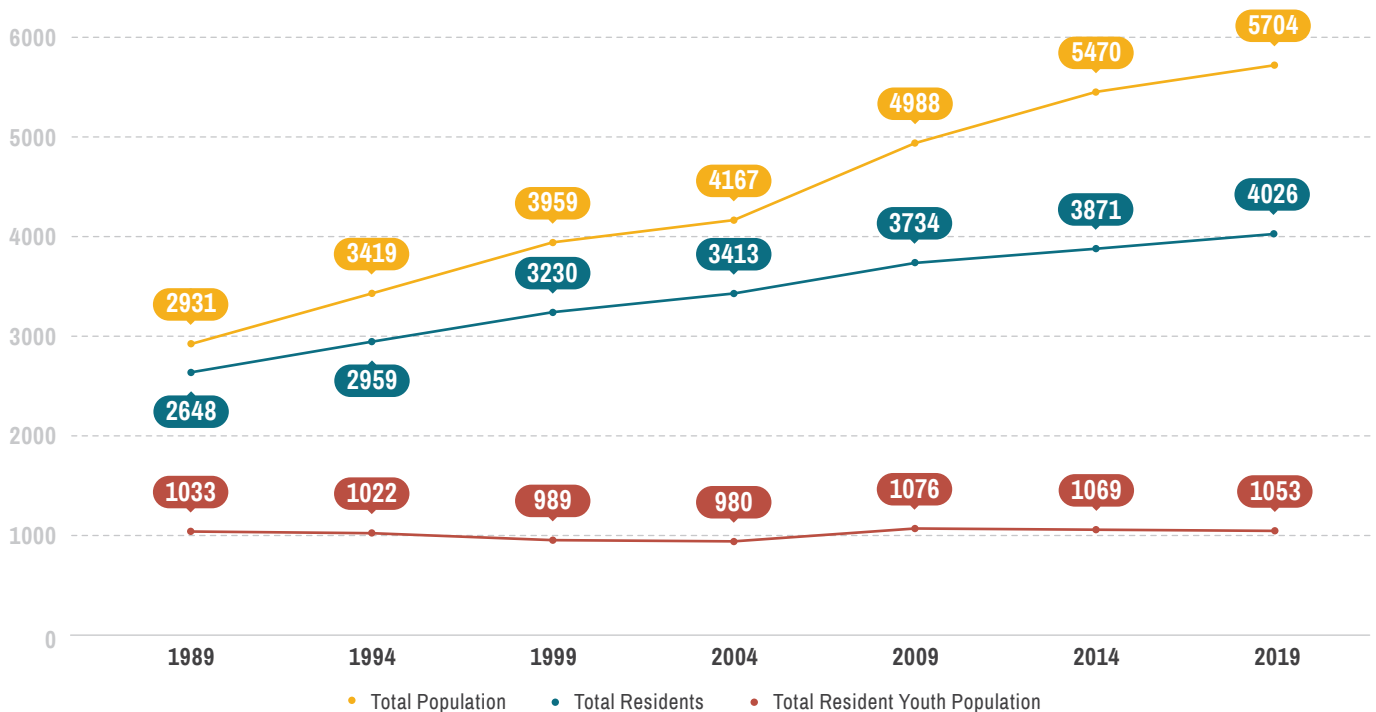


Youth Population

Singapore has a total population of 5.7 million and a resident population of 4 million as at 2019 (Department of Statistics [DOS], 2019a). The overall trend of an increasingly aging population can be seen in the rise of the median age of the resident population from 29

years in 1989 to 41 years in 2019 (DOS, 2019c). At 1 million people, Singapore's resident¹ youth population (aged 15 to 34 years old) has remained a fairly stable and sizeable segment of Singapore's total residents (see **Chart I**).

• **CHART I: OVERALL POPULATION & YOUTH POPULATION IN SINGAPORE IN '000 (1989–2019)**



Source: Department of Statistics (2019b & 2019c)

¹Resident population consists of Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents.



GENDER PROFILE

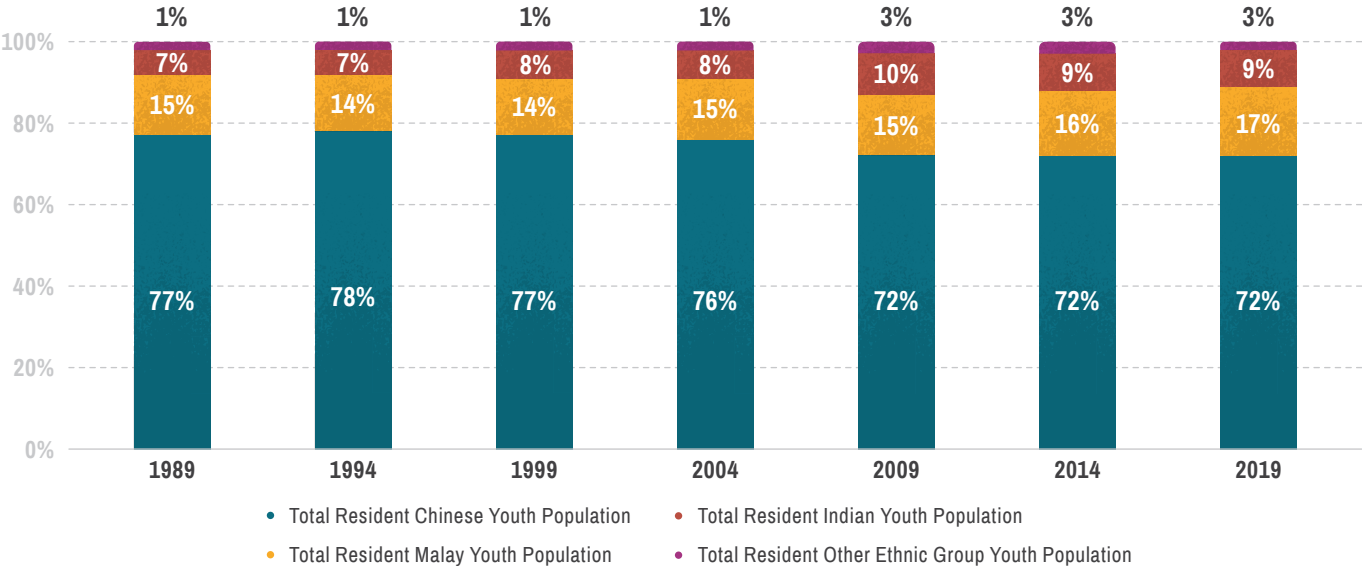
Following overall demographic trends of Singapore's resident population, the gender ratio of the resident youth population has remained relatively even across the past 30 years. In 2019, there is an even proportion of 50% males and 50% females in the resident youth population (DOS, 2019a).



ETHNICITY & PERMANENT RESIDENCY PROFILE

Our resident youth population continues to be increasingly diverse. While Chinese remain as the majority ethnic group of youths in Singapore, there has been an increase in the proportion of youths from other ethnic groups, from 23% in 1989 to 28% in 2019 (see **Chart II**). There is also a significant proportion of Permanent Residents (14% in 2019) among the youth population, particularly those aged 30 to 34 years (22% in 2019; DOS, 2019d).

• **CHART II: ETHNICITY BREAKDOWN OF THE RESIDENT YOUTH POPULATION IN SINGAPORE (1989-2019)**



Source: DOS (2019c)



EDUCATIONAL PROFILE

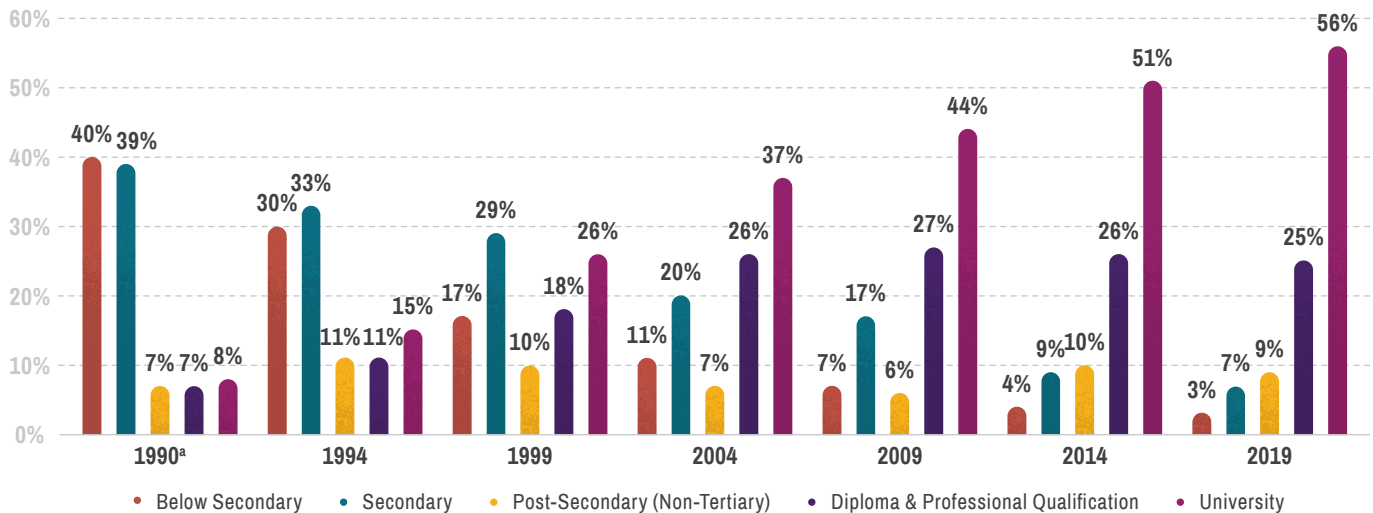
On the whole, Singapore youths have also become increasingly educated. The gross proportion of students enrolled in post-secondary (non-tertiary) institutions and above has steadily risen from 20% in 1990 to 89% in 2019 (DOS, 2019e). The higher educational attainment of youths is also evident in the increasing proportions of those aged 25 to 29 years old in the workforce with at least a university degree in the past 30 years (see **Chart III**).



MARITAL PROFILE

The pursuit of diverse life goals and changing expectations of marriage may have contributed to delayed marriage plans. In the past 30 years, the median age of first marriages has risen from 27.7 to 30.2 for grooms, and from 25.0 to 28.6 for brides (DOS, 2019f). Correspondingly, the prevalence of singlehood amongst youths aged 20-29 remains high, having risen from 72% in 1989 to 85% in 2019 (see **Chart IV**). The proportion of single youths aged 30-39 has also held steady in recent years at 26% between 2014 to 2019, following an increase from 20% in 1989 (see **Chart V**).

• **CHART III: HIGHEST QUALIFICATION ATTAINED OF YOUTHS AGED 25-29 IN THE LABOUR FORCE (1990-2019)**

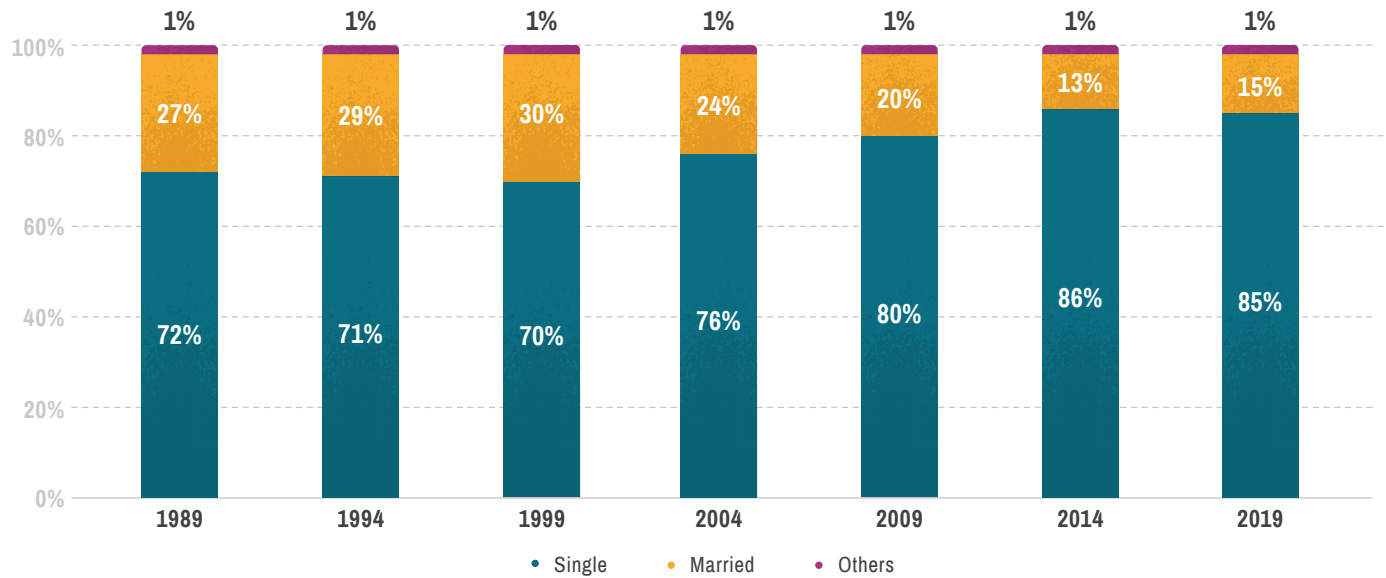


Note

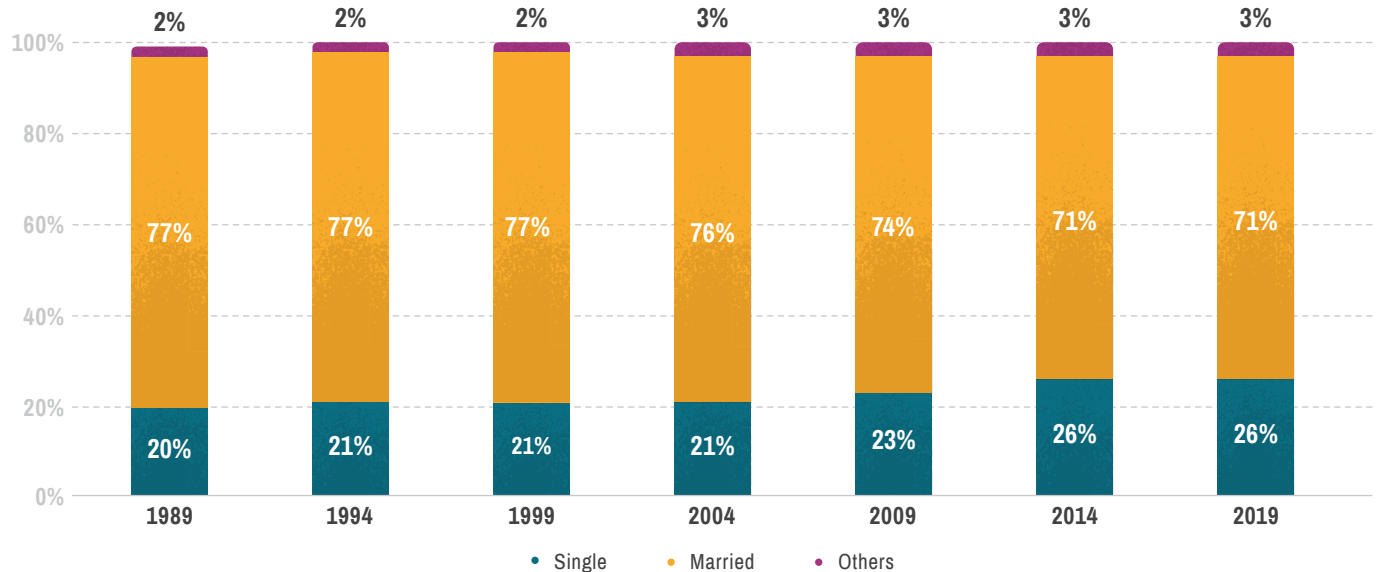
a. 1989 data is not available

Source: DOS (2019e)

• **CHART IV: RESIDENT YOUTH AGED 20-29 YEARS OLD IN SINGAPORE BY MARITAL STATUS (1989-2019)**



• **CHART V: RESIDENT YOUTH AGED 30-39 YEARS OLD IN SINGAPORE BY MARITAL STATUS (1989-2019)**



Source: DOS (2019g)

Conclusion

Accounting for one-quarter of Singapore's resident population, our youth are an integral part of our nation. Beyond an increasingly diverse demographic composition, the changes in attainment of milestones such as achievement of higher education and postponement of marriage reflect the shifting landscape of Singapore's youth. These trends have bearing on our nation's happiness, prosperity, and progress.

Youths are navigating a world where digital advancements are permeating and accelerating changes in the ways in which they work and play. With the nexus between youths and the world around them having grown in complexity, youths have to be ready to seize opportunities that may come their way, and be resilient in facing the challenges of an uncertain future. Thus, efforts to understand and develop youths will require greater curation and timeliness.

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Department of Statistics. (2019c). *M810011 - Singapore residents by age group, ethnic group and sex, end June, annual*. <https://www.tablebuilder.singstat.gov.sg/publicfacing/mainMenu.action>

Department of Statistics. (2019d). *M810671 - Singapore citizens by age group, ethnic group and sex, end June, annual*. <https://www.tablebuilder.singstat.gov.sg/publicfacing/mainMenu.action>

The National Youth Council (NYC) seeks to provide a holistic and comprehensive understanding of young people, by bringing together administrative² and perception data from the National Youth Survey (NYS). The NYS offers deeper insights into social and human capital indicators, which can inform youth development, policy, and practice. With this goal in mind, the YOUTH.sg publications will take on a topical approach to address youth trends and concerns in the areas of Values and Attitudes, Education and Jobs, Social Support, Social Cohesion, Wellbeing, as well as a special edition on the State of Youth in COVID-19.



Department of Statistics. (2019e). *M850581 - Singapore residents aged 25 years & over by highest qualification attained, sex and age group, annual*. <https://www.tablebuilder.singstat.gov.sg/publicfacing/mainMenu.action>

Department of Statistics. (2019f). *M830182 - Median age at first marriage of resident, citizen grooms and brides, annual*. <https://www.tablebuilder.singstat.gov.sg/publicfacing/mainMenu.action>

Department of Statistics. (2019g). *M810641 - Singapore residents aged 20 years & over by sex, age group and marital status, annual*. <https://www.tablebuilder.singstat.gov.sg/publicfacing/mainMenu.action>

²For more details on youth demographic trends, please refer to NYC's annual publication, the Youth Statistics in Brief, at <https://www.nyc.gov.sg/en/initiatives/resources/youth-statistics-in-brief/>

The State of Youth in Singapore

BY CHAN KARYAN, NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL

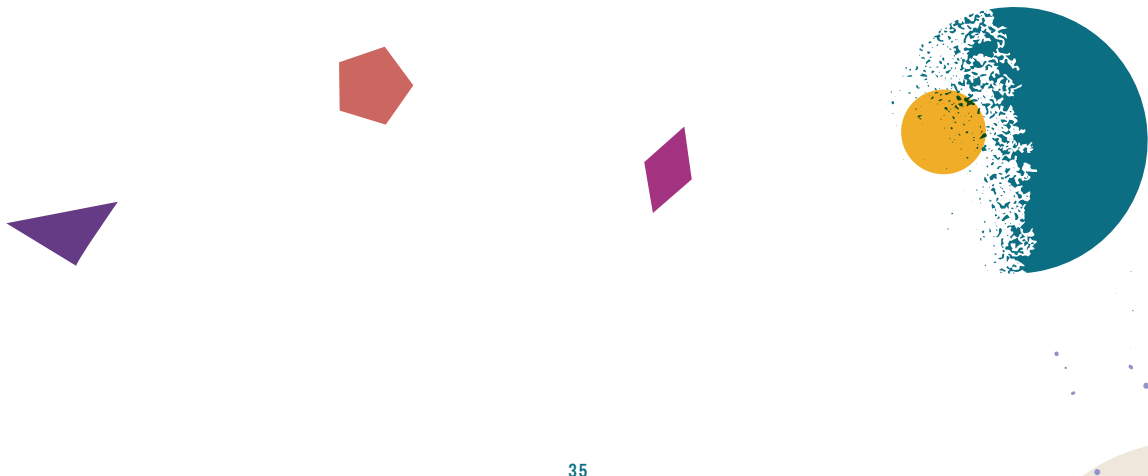




Young people have ambitions and hopes for their future. Against the backdrop of tumultuous change, our youths courageously embark on the course of their lives. They are constantly navigating an intricate web of opposing tensions, making difficult decisions and re-orienting their lives along the way as they find their place in today's world.

Youths today are free to pick and choose from a myriad of possibilities. At the same time, youths are also immensely exposed to the ripples of change as the proximity between them and the world shrinks exponentially. Navigating these current circumstances is no easy feat, much less charting out a blueprint for their future. With the upheavals caused by COVID-19, 2020 has borne witness to the tenacity of our youths. Through it all, youths in Singapore have remained optimistic and adaptable to new ways of work and play.

As the central youth agency in Singapore, the National Youth Council (NYC) will journey alongside our youths through the COVID-19 pandemic and into the post-pandemic world. Setting our sights on the challenges ahead, this series of the YOUTH.sg 2021 publications will feature a variety of youth trends and insights captured before and during the pandemic, to present a holistic understanding of the state of youth. Insights discussed in this chapter are based on data from the 2019 National Youth Survey (NYS), building on trends identified since its inception in 2002.



Similar dreams but in different realities

With diverse aspirations, young people are juggling between commitments to their family and communities with their desires for fulfilment and exploration. Close to 9 in 10 found it important¹ to *acquire new skills and knowledge, maintain a strong family relationship, have a place of my own, have a successful career, and help the less fortunate*. Though these top aspirations have remained largely similar for almost a decade, young people recognise that they are building their futures in vastly different realities.

Faced with concerns of slowing economies, climate change and growing inequalities around the world (United Nations, 2018), youths are keenly aware of what is at stake. Since 2010, over 1 in 3 youths across all ages have expressed tentativeness about achieving their aspirations in life². With the pandemic masking what the future may hold, prolonged deferment or deflection of adulthood milestones can further impede youth aspirations (Benner & Mistry, 2020).

• **FIGURE 1: KEY DOMAINS OF YOUTH ASPIRATIONS**



¹The figure reflects the proportion of youths who reported the life goal to be 'Very Important' and 'Important'.

²The figure reflects the proportion of youths who reported 'Neither agree nor disagree' to the statement 'There are enough opportunities in Singapore for me to achieve my personal aspirations in life'.

Youths today are more aware of their environment, activated to be more civically minded and socially conscious. With greater shifts towards media consumption and expression, youths are engaged in online civic actions such as *staying informed about current affairs* (69%) and *reposting and/or liking online content* (45%) on issues important to them. Attuned to events and conversations around the globe, youths are the gateways for cultural exchanges as they bring global perspectives into our everyday consciousness.

With values and attitudes constantly evolving, having spaces for respectful dialogues and exchanges is ever more important. To bridge the divide, it is important to first understand that underlying these distinctions, young people hold the same dreams about their future. Yet, the changing world presents youths with a unique set of challenges unlike the generations before. The YOUTH.sg 2021 starts with this issue on *Youth and Their Diverse Priorities*. Diving into the values and attitudes of youths in Singapore, we witness the state of youth in a fast-changing environment and understand how they make pivotal decisions for themselves and the world they live in.

Working smart over working hard

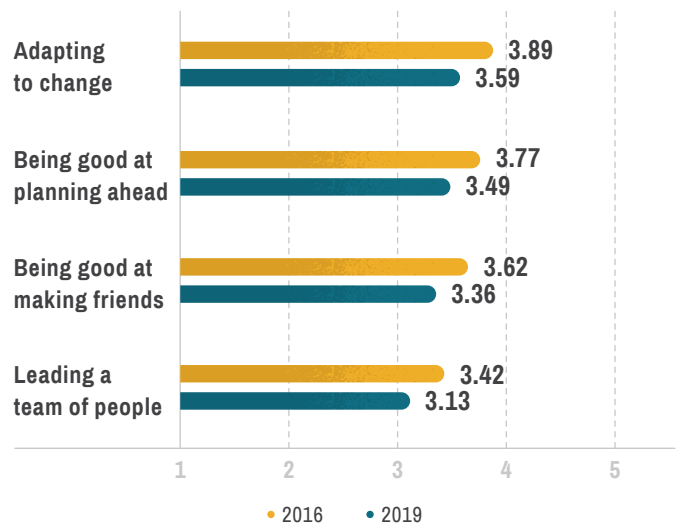
As the world enters the future of work, revolution brought on by automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence has caused unprecedented shifts to labour demands. The skillsets required to navigate within a rapidly evolving labour market is unlike before and is perceived to require constant updating (World Economic Forum, 2019).

Cognisant of this fact, young people continue to aspire towards higher educational attainment (76% aspire towards at least an undergraduate degree and 53% perceive that this is the minimum requirement for a decent job) while increasingly seeking a meaningful and fruitful education that offers them relevant skillsets, experiences, and social capital to better apply themselves in the workforce (WorldSkills Organisation & Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019).

1 in 2 youths are confident in having *the knowledge and skills required in the future economy* (52% agreement). While faring well, youth's self-evaluation across all competencies have dipped in 2019, with the greatest declines in skills in adapting to change, planning ahead, making friends, and leading a team. Taken together, these trends signal youths' awareness and recognition of the need to be better equipped to perform in a diverse and dynamic environment.

"Yes, to answer your question (on having skills for the future), honestly at this point of time yes, we do have, but who knows how things will change in the future. I do not know."
– 26, Indian Male, Working (NYS 2019 FGDs)

CHART 1: MEAN RATINGS OF SELECTED YOUTH COMPETENCIES OVER TIME



The second issue of the YOUTH.sg 2021, *Youth and the Future of Work*, directs our attention towards the intricate balance between addressing perennial concerns over employability and future-proofing our youths to better prepare for the unforeseen demands of the evolving economy. In addition to perceptions captured in the NYS, this issue uncovers the trajectories of young people in education and employment. The Ministry of Manpower offers a time-series view of youth employment trends and a glimpse into youths' labour

market outcomes amidst the pandemic, while research conducted by A/P Irene Ng and Annie Cheong provides insights to the diverse educational pathways young people embark upon and its impact on youth development.

Quality of time with the quantity of time

The formation and maintenance of strong ties and positive relationships are the cornerstones to the development of healthy youth outcomes (Tak & Lok, 2012). It is heartening to observe that youths continually report strong family support (2016: 4.06, 2019: 3.99 out of 5) and have close friends whom they can turn to for help (84% of youths reported having at least 2 to 3 close friends).

Embedded in close-knitted communities, it is unsurprising that youths share a strong sense of belonging to their family, close friends, and the country. However, more can be done as there continues to be a small but consistent proportion of unmarried youths who do not have any confidante for advice on life decisions (5%) and personal problems (4%). When examining the relationships and support systems of young people, it is important to consider the various forms of support which can be given (Thomas et al., 2017).

Beyond social companionship, NYS 2019 found that emotional support and open communication within the family unit can be improved. In the newly introduced Family Environment scale, indicators related to expression of emotions and fears scored significantly lower. As youth navigate new challenges whilst carrying the expectations to resolve their problems independently³, social support now requires a more proactive approach. This involves consistent effort to converse with youths, understand their concerns, and to create a safe space for vulnerability.

³Based on qualitative data collected from follow-up Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted with 40 NYS 2019 respondents from 15 to 21 February 2020.

• **CHART 2: MEAN RATINGS OF YOUTHS' LEVEL OF FAMILY ENVIRONMENT**



Note

a. Items are negatively phrased in the questionnaire and have been reversed-coded for analysis.

"I think as an individual, it is best to handle stress on your own. It is like an exercise for you to handle and to manage your own."
– 23, Malay Female, Schooling (NYS 2019 FGDs)

No matter how the lives of our youths may unfold, a strong support system will help them weather through obstacles that may come their way. The third issue of the YOUTH.sg 2021 covers the topic of *Youth and Their Enduring Bonds*, exploring the varying forms of social support and their effects on youth outcomes. The research by A/P Ho Kong Chong takes a sociological overview of the benefits that supportive relationships and active social participation proffer, while findings from the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre examines factors for young people to become sources of support for those around them.

Looking outwards whilst staying rooted

The lives of young Singaporeans are built in an intricate web of social relations both within and beyond our shores. The strong bonds they have formed within their communities are the result of their commitment to maintaining these ties. 84% of youths went online daily in 2019 to communicate with friends and family, a drastic increase from 47% in 2016. This trend is likely to continue rising, particularly with the pandemic accelerating advancements in social communication tools.

These very same tools have exposed youths to the wider world, allowing them to be connected, informed, and open to diverse views. In 2019, youths reported increased liberality and high levels of comfort working and living together with individuals different from themselves. Confident in their abilities to respect the values and beliefs of people who are of a different race or culture (mean score of 4.02 out of 5), youths are equipped with both the mindsets and skillsets to flourish in our multicultural society.

The prevalence of online-mediated interactions and global exposure will not replace, but instead, serve to enhance youths' offline social interactions. Formal social group participation amongst youths has remained at a healthy baseline, with 64% having engaged in at least 1 social group and 25% taking up leadership positions in 2019. Active in their communities, many youths have forged strong friendships with those of a different religion (82%), race (62%), and nationality (47%) in the country they are proud to call home.

Our youths are a testament to the diverse and multicultural city that Singapore has progressed to be. Engaged within their communities both locally and globally, youths are best positioned to bridge ideas and perspectives. The next issue, YOUTH.sg 2021 *Youth and the Power of Communities*, explores the value of fostering social cohesion and what is at stake for our city-state. Turning to other experts in their respective fields of citizens engagement, insights from the National Arts Council and Sport Singapore shine the spotlight on novel ways in which youths have stepped up, remained actively engaged in their communities as well as the opportunities to do so in the new normal.

• **TABLE 2: TOP 3 SOURCES OF STRESS OVER TIME**

| | 2010 | 2013 | 2016 | 2019 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Studies | Studies | Future Uncertainty | Future Uncertainty |
| 2 | Work | Future Uncertainty | Studies | Adult Responsibility |
| 3 | Future Uncertainty | Finances | Adult Responsibility | Finances |

Burning bright without burning out



"Stress is normal. I mean, if there is no stress, then that is not normal."

25, Chinese Male, Working
(NYS 2019 FGDs)

As our society grows increasingly dynamic and unpredictable, our youths are feeling more exposed and susceptible to the tides of change. *Future uncertainty* has steadily risen to the top stressor, and future confidence has seen a steady decline in the past decade from 7.57 out of 10 in 2010 to 6.12 in 2019. It is in such contexts that young people are being characterised as disillusioned and pessimistic, holding great dissatisfaction and unease with the changes happening around them (Deloitte, 2019). While overall subjective wellbeing has seen a similar decline over time, levels of happiness (mean score of 4.79 out of 7) and satisfaction with life (mean score of 6.44 out of 10) continue to fall within moderate levels. Though assuring, efforts to understand and address the concerns of our youths remain crucial to mitigate these downtrends.

Youths are riding the waves of uncertainty while they remain tenacious, with healthy levels of self-esteem (mean score of 3.59 out of 5), self-efficacy (4.30) and moderate resilience (3.22) to face challenges coming their way. Internalising the need to be capable workers, connected individuals, and contributing citizens, young people are engaged in a constant mission for self-optimisation where every decision is made to maximise their time and resources (Petersen, 2019). Over time, stress has been written into the narratives of hard work, progress, and success. However, the danger of such an intense drive is the increased propensity to experience burnout. With *Work-Life Balance* and *Mental Health* captured in the top

5 important social issues, this signals the need for more sustainable growth, both for society and the individual.

The last issue of the YOUTH.sg 2021, *Youth and Their Strides Towards Flourishing*, focuses on the shifts in youth wellbeing as their relationship with the world around them grows in complexity. Stringing together youth trends and concerns discussed in earlier issues, the topic takes a multidisciplinary approach to understand the varied impacts on youth outcomes. The research conducted by A/P Ho Kong Weng and Solomon Soh will explore the multiple non-economic contributors to youth wellbeing while insights from the Youth Study on Transitions and Evolving Pathways in Singapore (Youth STEPS) by Dr Chew Han Ei, A/P Vincent Chua, A/P Alex Tan, and Yvonne Yap uncovers the impact of youth transitions on life satisfaction.

Each generation of young people are born into and grow up in different environments. Their triumphs and struggles reflect the progress of those made before them and will pave the way for those after. Holding the motivations and desires for a better future, young people are on a journey vastly different from generations who have previously succeeded. They must reinvent the wheel to tackle the unique set of obstacles coming their way. The work to understand and support the ambitions and hopes of our youths will be an ongoing task, as they constantly evolve to tackle the challenges of an ever-changing world.

Meet the Youths of Singapore

As the world grows in complexity and diversity, so have our youths. A closer look reveals a multitude of priorities and pathways taken by each individual with their own hopes and aspirations.

Working with young people requires going beyond a static and one-dimensional view of the youth landscape. Aimed at informing and guiding efforts in youth engagement and programming, the NYC first developed six youth profiles⁴ using data from NYS 2016. These archetypes are based on key dimensions of values alignment and life aspirations (Table 3).

At each crossroad, the aspirations and orientations of young people remain as important anchors informing their actions and decisions

(Hart, 2016). As largely stable constructs, NYS 2019 saw little change to these dimensions across the general youth population in Singapore. These six dimensions continue to serve as holistic measures to meaningfully segment young people, while remaining sensitive to the impacts of evolving youth trends and issues.

Building on previous insights, the following sections present findings from NYS 2019 to explore how our six youth profiles have progressed in the past 3 years. As each profile interacts differently with the world, the changes to their alignments and youth outcomes provide the necessary context to better understand how current trends affect different youths and serve to inform how each group can be empowered to effect change in the world.

• **TABLE 3: THE SIX VALUES & ASPIRATIONS CLUSTERING DIMENSIONS**

| Clustering Dimensions | Values | | Aspirations | | | |
|--|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| | Multicultural | Liberal | Altruistic | Non-Material | Material | Family |
| Example of NYS indicators identified within each dimension | I am comfortable having someone of a different race as a neighbour | To what extent do you think divorce is justifiable? | How important is it to contribute to society in your life? | How important is it to be actively involved in the arts in your life? | How important is it to have a successful career in your life? | How important is it to get married in your life? |
| | I am comfortable working together with someone of a different nationality | To what extent do you think abortion is justifiable? | How important is it to help the less fortunate in your life? | How important is it to discover, design or invent something new in your life? | How important is it to have a place of your own in your life? | How important is it to have children in your life? |

⁴ More information on the methodology and detailed breakdowns of each profile can be found in YOUTH.sg: The State of Youth in Singapore 2018.

The Six Youth Profiles

• **TABLE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF YOUTH PROFILES OVER TIME**

| | | Cluster 1 - Active Aaron | Cluster 2 - Community Chloe | Cluster 3 - Old School Olly | Cluster 4 - Sandwiched Sam | Cluster 5 - Solo Sonia | Cluster 6 - Liberal Lionel | Total |
|------|----------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| 2016 | <i>n</i> | 690 | 545 | 598 | 613 | 578 | 508 | 3,531 |
| | % | 20% | 15% | 17% | 17% | 16% | 14% | |
| 2019 | <i>n</i> | 644 | 466 | 559 | 616 | 578 | 530 | 3,392 |
| | % | 19% | 14% | 17% | 18% | 17% | 16% | |

• **TABLE 5: AGE & OCCUPATION BREAKDOWN OF YOUTH PROFILES**

| | | | Cluster 1 - Active Aaron | Cluster 2 - Community Chloe | Cluster 3 - Old School Olly | Cluster 4 - Sandwiched Sam | Cluster 5 - Solo Sonia | Cluster 6 - Liberal Lionel | Total |
|------------------------|----------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Age | 15-19 | <i>n</i> | 149 | 81 | 164 | 83 | 106 | 133 | 716 |
| | | % | 21% | 11% | 23% | 12% | 15% | 19% | 21% |
| | 20-24 | <i>n</i> | 215 | 97 | 127 | 127 | 121 | 117 | 804 |
| | | % | 27% | 12% | 16% | 16% | 15% | 15% | 24% |
| | 25-29 | <i>n</i> | 151 | 127 | 143 | 182 | 161 | 161 | 926 |
| | | % | 16% | 14% | 16% | 20% | 17% | 17% | 27% |
| | 30-34 | <i>n</i> | 129 | 160 | 125 | 224 | 189 | 118 | 946 |
| | | % | 14% | 17% | 13% | 24% | 20% | 13% | 28% |
| Occupational Status | Schooling | <i>n</i> | 376 | 322 | 349 | 481 | 419 | 329 | 1,116 |
| | | % | 17% | 14% | 15% | 21% | 18% | 15% | 33% |
| | Non-Schooling ^a | <i>n</i> | 268 | 144 | 210 | 135 | 158 | 201 | 2,276 |
| | | % | 24% | 13% | 19% | 12% | 14% | 18% | 67% |

Note

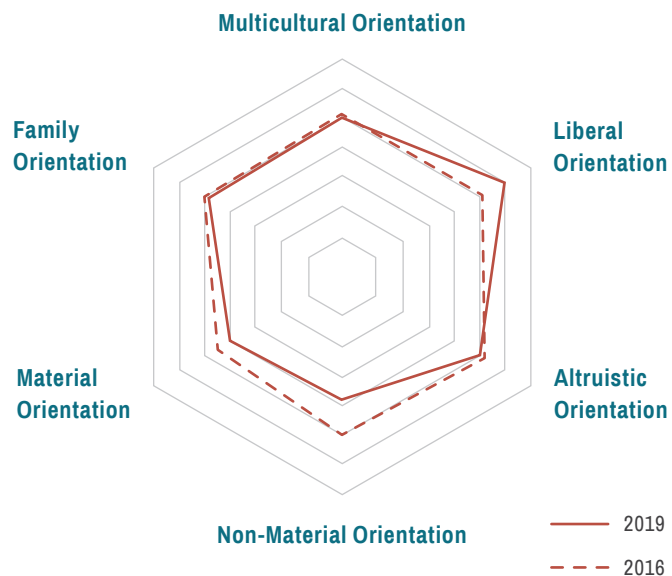
a. Includes youths who are working full-time or part-time, unemployed, serving their National Service full-time or waiting for enlistment, homemakers and others.

CLUSTER 1: ACTIVE AARON

Active Aarons are go-getters, motivated to make the most out of life. Positively oriented on all value and aspiration dimensions, youths belonging to this profile are highly involved individuals and activated to take the lead. They continue to be engaged within various communities, with 71% having participated in at least one social group and 43% in leadership positions. Active Aarons also continue to have an extensive and stable social support network with many close friends and high levels of family support (mean score of 4.18 out of 5).

Consistent with the defining character of Active Aarons, youths in this profile can be most easily engaged in a wide range of social issues. Interested and concerned with the world around them, Active Aarons reported many youth issues to be important to them, ranging from issues of the *environment* (52%) and *mental health* (47%) to *racism and discrimination* (42%) and *equality (social inequality: 39%, gender inequality: 20%)*. Youths in this profile are most likely to take action, as more than 9 in 10 have participated in at least one civic activity in 2019.

CHART 3: CLUSTERING DIMENSIONS ORIENTATIONS OF ACTIVE AARON OVER TIME



Although youths in this profile are faring well with consistently higher levels of overall wellbeing (mean score of 6.33 out of 10 for future confidence) and resilience (mean score of 3.27 out of 5) among the profiles, the high expectations and motivations of Active Aarons may translate to emerging concerns.

In 2019, Active Aarons have reported significant declines in 'very important' life goals across all aspiration dimensions, now placing lower priority on material, non-material, and familial aspirations. With the growth of diverse interests and pathways explored earlier, trends suggest that youths in this profile may be in the process of ascertaining their priorities while navigating competing expectations. Compared to other profiles, Aarons have also grown less confident in their work, social, and cultural competencies in 2019. For a profile with the greatest propensity to lead, it is concerning that significant dips were observed in competencies to *speak publicly* (2016: 3.45, 2019: 2.88 out of 5), *make friends* (2016: 4.06, 2019: 3.46), and *lead a team of people* (2016: 3.89, 2019: 3.33).

Despite being well-equipped to take on challenges in their way, Active Aarons may feel less assured to meet the demands of a changing world. It will be necessary to consider how efforts can be focused on equipping our young people with skillsets that can persist through changing circumstances. More likely to be schooling youths who are soon to be at the stage of transitions, guiding Active Aarons to manage their priorities and expectations is also crucial to ensuring their wellbeing in the long term (Mossakowski, 2011).

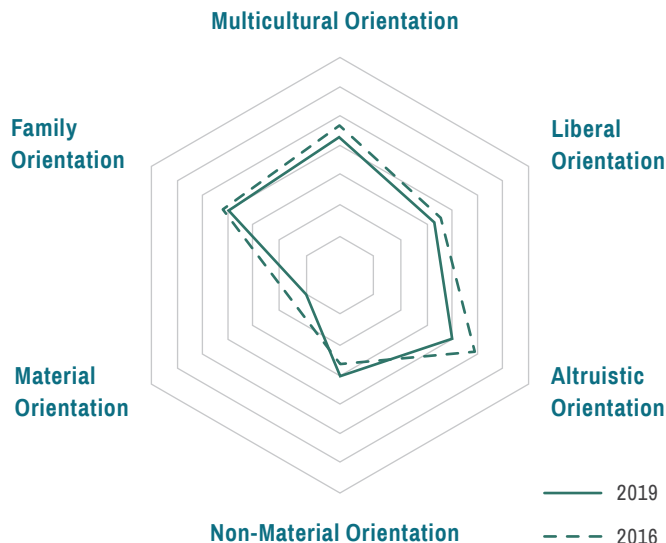
With a keen sense of curiosity, novel and fresh ideas for engagement would speak out to this profile. Beyond simply engaging with Active Aarons, their boundless energy and enthusiasm can also be harnessed as levers to spark greater youth action. Part of an extensive and strong social network, Active Aarons may be leaders in diverse communities with the power to rally their peers. An important multiplier to garner the attention and interest of youths in other profiles, Active Aarons are important sources of organic amplification and partners to the youth sector.

CLUSTER 2: COMMUNITY CHLOE

Community Chloes are contented with where they are in life and are highly devoted to their tight-knitted social circles. Slightly more positive in the dimensions of multicultural, altruistic, and family orientations, Community Chloes make it a priority to dedicate quality time to their immediate communities. Youths in this profile devote a significant portion of their leisure time on activities with their family (35%) and on their commitment to formal social groups. Out of the 67% who have participated in at least one social group in 2019, over half of youths in this profile reported weekly participation.

The enduring relationships that Community Chloes hold within their networks are a result of their devotion to maintaining and strengthening these social ties. Thus, it is unsurprising that Community Chloes boast fairly strong family support (mean score of 4.14 out of 5) and have a group of close friends. With the lowest levels of stress among all six profiles, Community Chloes are contented with life (mean score of 6.75 out of 10 for life satisfaction) and more optimistic about the opportunities available for them to achieve their personal aspirations in Singapore (mean score of 3.36 out of 5).

CHART 4: CLUSTERING DIMENSIONS ORIENTATIONS OF COMMUNITY CHLOE OVER TIME



Though Community Chloes are embedded within a small but strong social support system, minor declines observed in 2019 cautions the need to look closer.

In NYS 2019, Community Chloes reported slight declines in 'very important' life goals across the dimensions of altruistic and familial aspirations, two defining orientations for youths in this profile. Paired with high levels of interest in bread-and-butter issues such as *work-life balance* (60% find it to be important) and *acceptance of non-traditional careers* (12%), the lowered importance in aspirations for marriage and helping others hint at the onset of conflicting expectations and responsibilities. Underlying high levels of contentment, looming concerns to navigate adulthood milestones and juggle responsibilities may be wearing down the spirits of youths in this profile.

In 2019, Community Chloes reported lowered self-efficacy (2016: 4.41, 2019: 4.21 out of 5) and the lowest confidence in their abilities to succeed in the future (mean score of 3.40 out of 5) among the six profiles. Less assured of themselves, poor outlook may impair their abilities to tackle obstacles and succeed in tasks. In times of heightened precarity and instability, promoting positive self-concept is pertinent for youths in this profile. The role of mentors within youth communities offers invaluable guidance, particularly for youths such as Community Chloes, to take on obstacles independently, realise their strengths through positive challenges and cultivate greater self-confidence (Tsang et al., 2012).

Engaging with this profile requires youth practitioners to look towards sustained cultivation of thriving youth communities. More likely to be older non-schooling youths who have been highly involved within their communities, Chloes are also well placed as youth leaders to mentor younger peers. **The cyclical nature of Community Chloes as both mentees and mentors can serve as a self-sustaining catalyst to uplift youths in this profile while empowering other youth segments.** Though Chloes may be less civically active compared to other youth profiles, they are willing to dedicate time and energies on causes they resonate with. Engaging youths in this profile will require more structured initiatives with ample guidance.

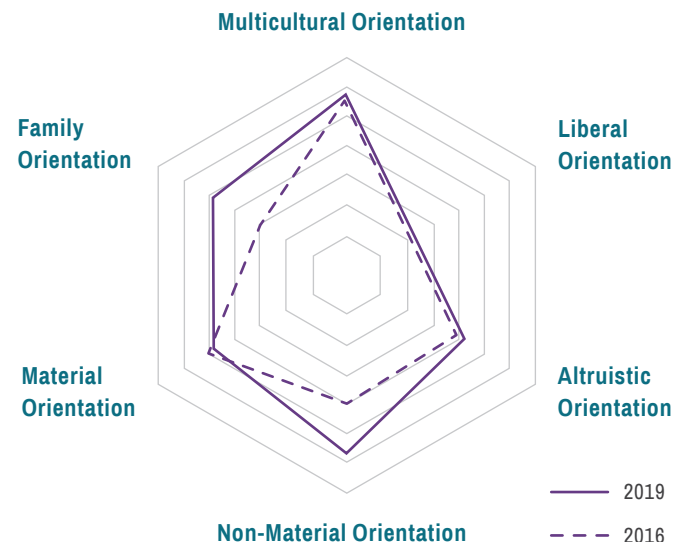
CLUSTER 3: OLD SCHOOL OLLY

Old School Ollies are characterised by their traditional perspectives and aspirations as well as high optimism about life.

Positively oriented on all except liberal orientation, youths belonging to this profile are flourishing. They boast consistently high levels of subjective wellbeing (mean score of 6.89 out of 10 for life satisfaction) and sense of belonging to the country (mean score of 3.37 out of 4). Old School Ollies have also remained confident of their capabilities with overall high levels of self-perceived competencies and self-concept. There is no doubt that Old School Ollies are well-assured of themselves and the opportunities available within our shores.

True to their name, youths in this profile maintain a traditional outlook. Despite shifting values, Old School Ollies continue to believe in the importance of filial piety and marriage with over 89% reporting that they would care for their parents regardless of circumstances and 42% believing that one should marry. This profile also ranked the lowest in their liberal orientation despite increases in 2019, finding actions such as *abortion* (mean score of 2.58 out of 10), *divorce* (3.60) and *pre-marital sex* (3.84) to be less justifiable.

CHART 5: CLUSTERING DIMENSIONS ORIENTATIONS OF OLD SCHOOL OLLY OVER TIME



The supportive networks and positive outlook of youths in this profile has bolstered their outcomes despite declines in wellbeing. More aspirational, Old School Ollies have found new pursuits and are turning their attention to others around them.

In NYS 2019, Old School Ollies placed increased priority on a range of life goals in the dimension of familial and non-material aspirations, while sustaining their existing priorities. Close to half found goals of marriage, parenthood, discovering and inventing something new as well as starting a business to be 'very important'. More likely to be younger schooling youths, buoying wellbeing among Old School Ollies will be contingent on the continued support for and exploration of aspirations through exposure to diverse life trajectories (Westendorp et al., 2020).

No longer as pragmatic as they have been known to be, Ollies are now active contributors in their communities and have replaced Active Aarons as the most socially engaged. They are more likely to participate in a social group (74%) and take on leadership positions (45%). Old School Ollies have shown interests in selected issues of *racism and discrimination* (41% find it to be important), *bullying and cyberbullying* (27%), *negative stereotypes of youths* (13%), and the *lack of youth representation on public issues* (9%). Centred around concerns of social inclusivity, this signals the importance Ollies place on balancing and exchanging diverse viewpoints, especially when we consider their unique perspectives which are likely to differ from other profiles.

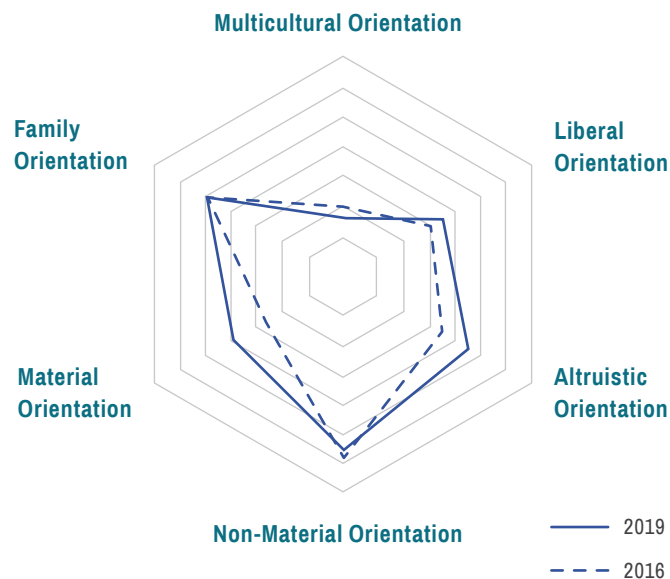
The rise of online civic engagement has offered the necessary steppingstones for youths such as Old School Ollies to become more civically engaged. **Sustaining active participation among youths in this profile will require youth practitioners to meet youths where they are.** Recognising these platforms and conversations will go a long way to encourage greater civic action. As diverse perspectives meet online, the cultivation of brave spaces (Arao & Clemens, 2013) is important to facilitate respectful exchange of opinions in everyday spaces as Old School Ollies kickstart difficult conversations.

CLUSTER 4: SOLO SONIA

Solo Sonias are very independent individuals, leading a life driven by their passions. Highly oriented towards non-material life goals, youths belonging to this profile can be characterised by their niche aspirations and dedication to their interests. Consistent to NYS 2016, over 3 in 5 Solo Sonias find it important to be *actively involved in the arts* (60%), *start my own business* (67%), and *discover, design or invent something new* (77%). With sustained importance placed on *migration* as a life goal (41% find it important), youths in this profile continue to set their sights further beyond our shores.

Youths in this profile are less connected to their key support systems, with a lack of confidantes when facing personal problems or making life decisions (6% reported having no confidantes). Among the six profiles, they consistently report poorer family support and challenge (mean scores of 4.00 and 3.88 out of 5 respectively) and are most stressed by family relationships (mean score of 2.56 out of 5). This weighs heavily on them, as Solo Sonias continue to express relatively poorer wellbeing (mean score of 4.62 out of 7 for happiness).

CHART 6: CLUSTERING DIMENSIONS ORIENTATIONS OF SOLO SONIA OVER TIME



Undaunted by the obstacles in their way, NYS 2019 saw some surprising trends for youths in this profile as they take the initiative to engage with their communities.

From 2016 to 2019, Solo Sonias have shown the greatest increase in 'very important' life goals across the dimensions of altruistic aspirations. With greater priority placed on helping the less fortunate, this echoes the overall shift towards greater social and civic mindedness among the general youth population. Paired with a decline in the proportion of Sonias with no close friends, youths in this profile may also be stepping up to contribute their time and stepping out to build connections with people around them. This is a promising shift for youths in this profile but should not be taken for granted.

Having to overcome the obstacles of a road less travelled, Solo Sonias are tentative of having sufficient opportunities in Singapore and are most interested in the issues related to *competition for jobs* (40% find it to be important) and a *lack of career-preparedness* (21%). More likely to be older youths with technical skillsets, Solo Sonias would benefit most from industry-specific career guidance and networking opportunities to better navigate unique employment challenges. With the lowest levels of self-efficacy and resilience among the six profiles (mean scores of 4.07 and 3.13 out of 5 respectively) as well as moderate future confidence, aiding Solo Sonias to gain exposure and experience in their desired fields is also essential to boost their levels of confidence in themselves and their future.

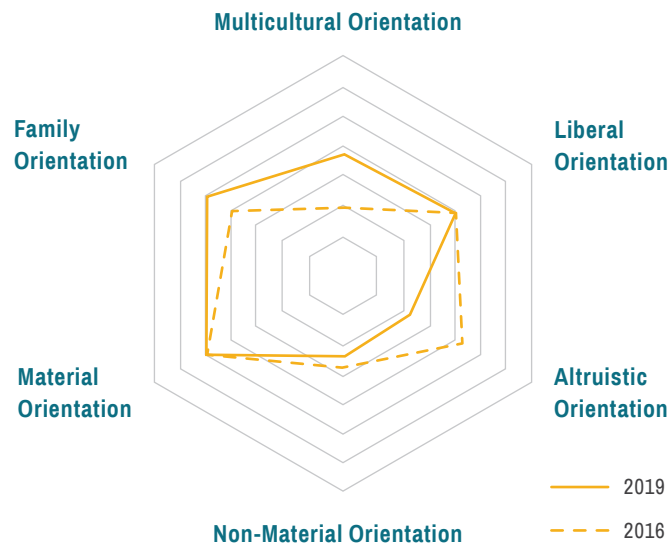
Curation is key when engaging with a profile of youths striving towards niche aspirations. Solo Sonias may be less inclined towards broad-based initiatives and will require tailored engagements to address their interests and concerns. Motivated to carve out a path for themselves, Solo Sonias are most likely to resonate with fellow trailblazers. **Youths in this profile will better appreciate and attribute credibility to role models who share similar struggles on unconventional pathways.** Identifying key information nodes and opinion leaders may be more effective when reaching out to this profile, as these platforms can better relate to and reflect their take on issues.

CLUSTER 5: SANDWICHED SAM

Sandwiched Sams are juggling multiple responsibilities in life, with pragmatic goals and concerns. More positive in the dimensions of material and familial orientations, the priorities of Sandwiched Sams are focused on working hard to secure a good future for their family. Youths in this profile consistently face greater stress, mostly in the areas of *finances* and *future uncertainty*, followed by *emerging adult responsibility* (mean scores of 3.35, 3.35 and 3.31 out of 5 respectively). Reflecting this concern is Sam's interest in bread-and-butter issues relating to *affordability of life in Singapore* (75% find it to be important), *work-life balance* (70%), and *competition for jobs* (48%).

Youths in this profile have limited leisure time and choose to prioritise a greater proportion of this time on activities with family members (37%) and their partners (12%). Focused on the daily grind, Sandwiched Sams are the least socially active out of the six profiles. They consistently report the lowest level of social group participation, which has dipped from 56% in 2016 to 48% in 2019. Over 3 in 5 youths in this profile has yet to take on any leadership positions in their social group. Thus, it is unsurprising that Sandwiched Sams continue to have little to no close friends.

CHART 7: CLUSTERING DIMENSIONS ORIENTATIONS OF SANDWICHED SAM OVER TIME



Though Sandwiched Sams reflect greater pessimism as they shoulder the responsibilities to provide and care for their family, they remain steadfast in their aspirations.

Highly focused on establishing financial stability and security, Sandwiched Sams continue to find material aspirations of *earning lots of money* (49%) and *having a place of my own* (83%) to be 'very important'. Despite stressors from pragmatic concerns and declining societal perceptions on the necessity of marriage, over one-third of youths in this profile maintain aspirations for marriage and parenthood. Having limited time and energy, difficulties in managing their responsibilities have, unfortunately, prompted Sandwiched Sams to significantly deprioritise altruistic aspirations.

While it may be challenging for the youth sector to help Sandwiched Sams achieve their practical pursuits, support can be channelled into making this journey easier for them. With rapid changes to the demands of our economy, addressing macro level concerns for this profile can start with boosting soft skills which are applicable across circumstances. Consistently least confident in their work and cultural competencies of the six profiles, helping Sandwiched Sams thrive in increasingly dynamic workplaces will require improvements in their abilities to *innovate*, *analyse* and *evaluate issues objectively*, as well as *understand the impact of global forces on local issues*.

More likely to be older and married, multiple priorities vie for the time and attention of youths in this profile. Sandwiched Sams may be experiencing a cognitive overload⁵ and are less receptive to take extra time out of their busy schedule. **Hence, outreach for this profile anchors greatly on accessibility and integration.** Engaging with Sandwiched Sams will require a whole-of-society effort to collaborate with different stakeholders. Touchpoints should be weaved into the everyday spaces of work and play as a one-stop shop to incorporate opportunities in the workplace, community-based services, and engagement efforts.

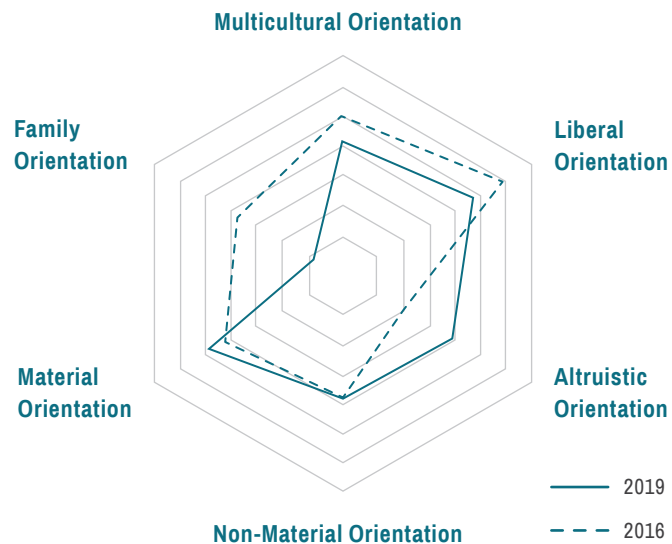
⁵Cognitive overload refers to the exceeding of one's mental capacity to store, process and retrieve information, which typically impairs the completion of daily tasks (Karthikeyan, 2017).

CLUSTER 6: LIBERAL LIONEL

Liberal Lionels are keenly aware of the world around them, in tune with the latest trends and hot-button topics. More positive in the dimensions of liberal and multicultural orientations, youths in this profile pride themselves in being highly exposed and open to diverse perspectives. Liberal Lionels expressed interest in diverse social issues such as *environmental issues* (45% found it to be important), *racism and discrimination* (32%), *government transparency and accountability* (30%) as well as *gender equality* (20%). Such interests may have sparked greater civic action among youths in this profile, as close to 9 in 10 were civically engaged in 2019, particularly in online-mediated engagements.

Spending the largest proportion of their leisure time on online activities, there is no doubt that Liberal Lionels are plugged-in to the world around them. However, their immediate social relations have suffered as a result. Youths in this profile report comparatively poorer levels of familial support and shrinking peer relations (9% have no close friends). Yet to grasp what their future may hold in Singapore, lower levels of national pride (mean score of 3.01 out of 4) and commitment persisted into 2019.

CHART 8: CLUSTERING DIMENSIONS ORIENTATIONS OF LIBERAL LIONEL OVER TIME



Paying close attention to the social, economic, and political affairs around the globe, shifts in values and attitudes suggest that Liberal Lionels are engaging with issues critically.

NYS 2019 saw a stark increased in Liberal Lionels' altruistic orientation. Youths in this profile have placed greater priority on being actively involved in local volunteer work and helping the less fortunate. With high levels of online exposure, social media may have proliferated awareness of social causes and even encouraged Liberal Lionels to step up as more took on leadership positions in their social groups (from 27% in 2016 to 36% in 2019). Having weaker support from family and peers, the increased social engagement presents an opportunity to strengthen support networks and structures for Liberal Lionels within the larger community.

Consuming a wide range of information, Liberal Lionels are open to different viewpoints and are unafraid to take a firm stand on issues. Their changing marriage perceptions best reflect this trait, where less than 1 in 10 reported marriage and parenthood as important aspirations in 2019. While alarming on first glance, we should not be too quick to judge nor dismiss the views of a profile who are more likely to be younger. In the process of forming their views and finding their voice, a delicate balance is required in the holistic development of youths in this profile. As Liberal Lionels gain global perspectives and learn to participate civically, the youth sector plays an important role to bridge differing perspectives and understand the concerns underlying these views.

Liberal Lionels are organic sources of fresh ideas, bringing invaluable perspectives to our attention. Efforts to engage with Liberal Lionels remind us that youth engagement is a constant process to understand changing youth trends and interests. Expressive of their stance and prone to critical analyses of social issues, Liberal Lionels are likely to become opinion leaders amongst their peers. With high expectations for transparency and accountability from public institutions, **engaging with Lionels should focus on open communication and establishing feedback loops to maintain understanding and build trust** (Song & Lee, 2016).

How have our youths fared?

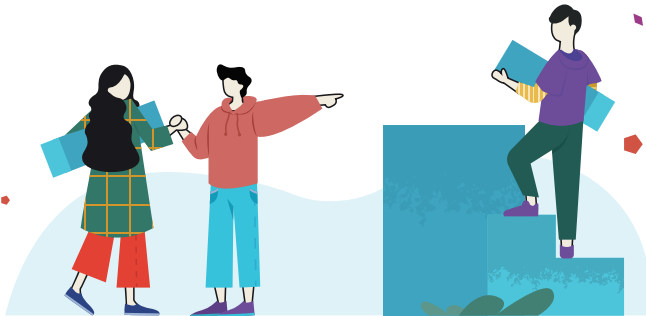
Aggregating key commonalities and distinctions among the general youth population, the youth profiles serve as the first step to understanding a heterogeneous community. It seeks not to ascribe every youth in Singapore to a particular profile, nor to make assumptions about those who fit in one. Instead, the profiles seek to provide the necessary contexts when examining various concerns and issues underlying the currents of change, as well as in the implementation of youth-related engagement and programmes.

Taking on the personas of Aaron, Chloe, Olly, Sonia, Sam, and Lionel, the six youth profiles remind us that the impact of local and global forces on youths in Singapore carry different weight. To capture their attention, youth engagement strategies will require greater precision, tailored to the traits of each profile and to meet varied youth interests and concerns. As we think about how our youths have fared in the past years, and whether they are prepared for new challenges as Singapore battles the COVID-19 pandemic, this section concludes with three key points.



HOW SHOULD WE ENCOURAGE OUR YOUTHS TO LOOK OUTWARDS WHILST STAYING ROOTED?

Youths with weaker social support networks as well as niche aspirations and outlook, such as Solo Sonia and Liberal Lionel, will benefit most from youth initiatives to build social capital and bridge perspectives. Braving unique challenges on their own, supportive communities can serve as anchors to guide and point the way towards opportunities for youths in these profiles.



HOW SHOULD WE EMPOWER OUR YOUTHS TO ATTAIN SIMILAR DREAMS IN DIFFERENT REALITIES?

For youths who are navigating competing commitments and mounting responsibilities similar to Community Chloe and Sandwiched Sam, ensuring sustainable growth in work and life should be a crucial focus for youth advocacy. Beyond cultivating future-ready youths who are confident and competent, addressing issues of work-life balance are essential to alleviate the concerns of youths in these profiles.



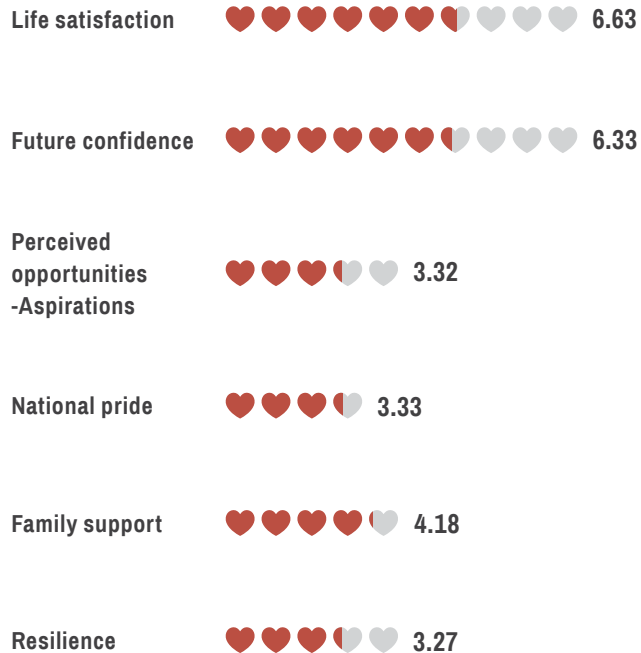
HOW SHOULD WE UPLIFT OUR YOUTHS TO BURN BRIGHT WITHOUT BURNING OUT?

Particularly for highly aspirational and actively engaged youths such as Active Aaron and Old School Olly, points of transitions would be critical junctures for youth outreach. In addition to ensuring smooth transitions across different life stages, aiding youths in these profiles to manage the expectations and priorities from themselves or others will be key to buoying their ambitions.

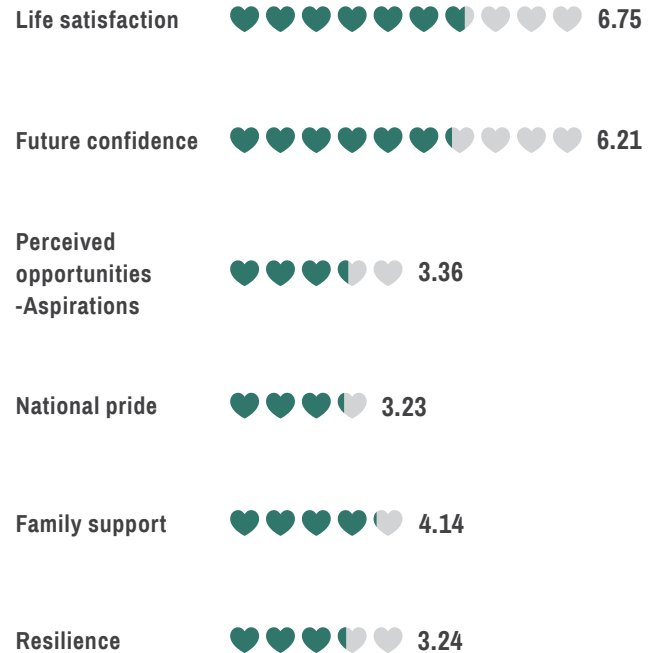
• **FIGURE 2: SENTIMENTS & OUTLOOK OF YOUTH PROFILES**



ACTIVE AARON



COMMUNITY CHLOE



• FIGURE 2: SENTIMENTS & OUTLOOK OF YOUTH PROFILES (CONTINUED)



OLD SCHOOL OLLY

Life satisfaction  6.89

Future confidence  6.69

Perceived opportunities
-Aspirations  3.47

National pride  3.45

Family support  4.39

Resilience  3.30



SOLO SONIA

Life satisfaction  6.22

Future confidence  6.05

Perceived opportunities
-Aspirations  3.26

National pride  3.16

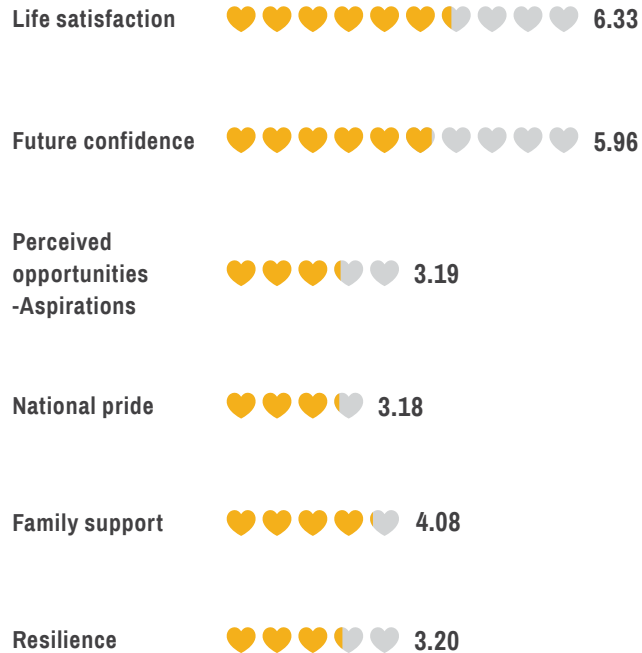
Family support  4.00

Resilience  3.13

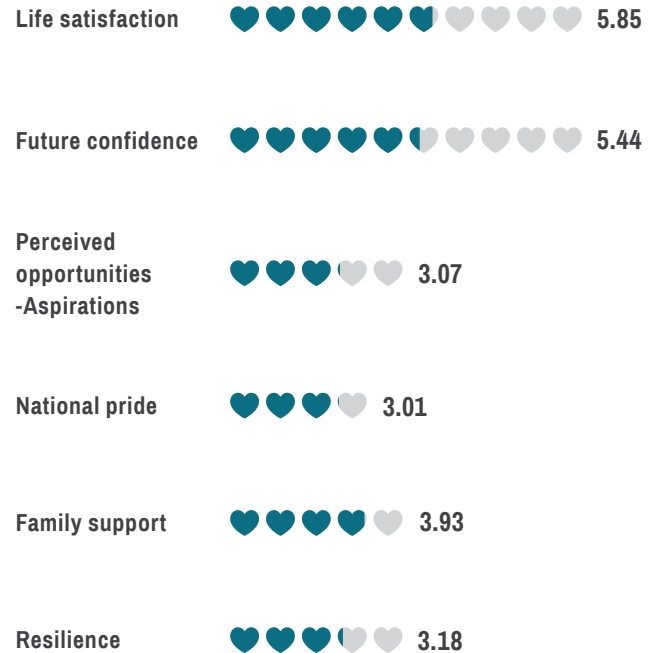
• FIGURE 2: SENTIMENTS & OUTLOOK OF YOUTH PROFILES (CONTINUED)



SANDWICHED SAM



LIBERAL LIONEL



The Future Ahead of Us



As our youths make pivotal decisions in the process of navigating a world filled with increasing dichotomies, these decisions are simultaneously shaped by and shaping our society. Each time we re-visit the State of Youth, the National Youth Survey and insights from esteemed contributors in the accompanying YOUTH.sg publications signpost our current progress in youth development and the existing gaps for greater improvement and innovation.

The emerging youth trends and concerns captured prior to COVID-19 have remained highly relevant and may have even come into sharper focus as a result of the global pandemic⁸. Even as Singapore eases out of the pandemic and transits into the new normal, the interests and concerns of our youths direct our focus for the future ahead.

More than ever, all youths in Singapore need the opportunities to be heard, be empowered, and be the change.

⁸For more information, please refer to YOUTH.sg 2021: COVID-19 Special Edition.



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HDB HUB BIZ THREE #04-10
SINGAPORE 310490

E: NYC_ENQUIRIES@NYC.GOV.SG
WWW.NYC.GOV.SG

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