NYC

YOUTH.sg:

The State of
Youth
in
Singapore
2014

**Research
Compilation**

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. Till date, NYS has been conducted in 2002, 2005, 2010, and 2013.

NYS represents a milestone in youth research in Singapore. With its resource-based approach, the NYS focuses on the support youths require for societal engagement (i.e., social capital) and individual development (i.e., human capital). NYS 2013 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 September to December 2013. A total of 2,843 youths were successfully surveyed.

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 a dynamic and engaging environment where young people can realise their aspirations and play a part in making Singapore an endearing home for all.

Our mission is to develop our youths to be discerning, resilient and active citizens.

Our key thrusts to support youths:

- Supporting youths to make a positive difference to the community
- Building rugged & resilient youths for the future
- Supporting youth voice and actions

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. Together, the agency will drive youth development and broaden outreach to young Singaporeans and youth sector organisations.

Mr Lawrence Wong, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth & Second Minister for Communications and Information, is the Chairman of the 13th Council. The Council comprises members from diverse backgrounds such as the youth, media, arts, sports, corporate and government sectors.

Foreword

2015 is set to be a significant year for the National Youth Council (NYC)! NYC began operating as an autonomous agency under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth housing two institutions: Outward Bound Singapore, and Youth Corps Singapore. The new NYC family is well-positioned to drive holistic youth development in Singapore.

The National Youth Survey (NYS) findings affirm the role that the restructured NYC is taking to create a land of opportunity and an endearing home that our youths will want to be part of. I'm happy to share that many of our youths today are engaged in society, participating in social groups and various forms of leadership. At the same time, they also face greater challenges in a competitive and complex global landscape. As the lead agency for youth development, we'll continue supporting our youths to drive a democracy of deeds, build rugged & resilient youths and strengthen youth engagement & communications.

Through our research work, we're constantly updated on youth trends that drive our youth policy and programmes. At the forefront of this is our National Youth Survey 2013 and YOUTH.sg: The State of Youth in Singapore 2014 publications. With this fourth edition, the NYS spans more than a decade, with the launch of the first edition in 2002. The wealth of data enables us to gain deeper insights into the youth pulse today.

The NYS and its accompanying publication, YOUTH.sg, were conceived in 2001 to spur dialogue about youth and shape youth development in light of their thoughts, beliefs, aspirations, and concerns in Singapore. In the 1990s, youth research was topical and focused on at-risk behaviours. The NYS thus represented a shift in our approach towards a more holistic understanding of youth in Singapore. More than a decade later, the latest iteration of the NYS and YOUTH.sg continues to affirm our commitment to contribute towards building the nation's knowledge on youths in Singapore.

In order to facilitate the use and understanding of NYS data, YOUTH.sg 2014 was developed into two separate publications. A statistical handbook collates NYS statistics to provide an overview of the state of youth in Singapore. This present publication is a compilation of research articles which explore emergent trends and issues of youths.

Much like the evolution of the NYS, we have seen remarkable development in our youths over the years. I hope that you'll continue to find the NYS and YOUTH.sg useful in better understanding our youths and enhancing your respective efforts in youth development.

As we embark on new milestones, thank you for supporting NYC in our efforts to create a vibrant youth sector!

Ng Chun Pin
Deputy Chief Executive Officer
(Covering Chief Executive Officer)
National Youth Council

Preface

Our youths today face greater challenges than their forebears with increased globalisation and societal heterogeneity, and the latest National Youth Survey (NYS) findings reflect these. Yet, we are encouraged to learn that despite greater stress, our youths maintained close friendships and prioritise strong family ties. They also reported high levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy, despite being less satisfied and confident. These forms of social and human capital are necessary to navigate these challenges. Singapore's youths also remained comfortable with other races and nationalities, although they expressed mixed feelings towards immigration. Regular and sustained social participation among youths are thus crucial to enable youths to bridge diverse social groups and foster mutual understanding.

In an attempt to better understand these trends and tensions, we conducted in-depth research using NYS data that spans over the past decade, starting from 2002. They include the role of youth social participation in light of increasing societal diversity, educational pathways and youth development, and youth stressors and wellbeing. Considering the complexity and depth of youth development, we invited contributions from academia and government agencies to provide complementary research and alternative perspectives to further our knowledge of youth in Singapore.

We thank National Youth Council Chairman Lawrence Wong and the 13th Council for their support and feedback over the course of this project. The NYC team that led this project comprise Deputy Chief Executive Ng Chun Pin, Samuel Tan, Hasliza Ahmad, Helen Sim, Ho Zhi Wei, Charlene Yeo, Suharti Mohd Sulaimi, and Kelvin Teo.

We thank Associate Professors Ho Kong Chong, Irene Ng, and Ho Kong Weng for their invaluable contribution and support as pro-bono collaborators, advisors, and co-authors. Their commitment to this project spans more than 10 years and serves to highlight their dedication to serving the research and youth community in Singapore. We also acknowledge the support and contribution of fellow NYC and MCCY colleagues and interns, Associate Professor Lim Sun Sun, Dr. Elmie Nekmat, Health Promotion Board, Ministry of Manpower, and National Arts Council.

Finally, we thank the youths who participated in the NYS over the past decade. You have enabled us to gain a deeper understanding into the state of youth in Singapore.

Research Section
National Youth Council

Contents

Introduction
The State of Youth in Singapore

The State of Youth in Singapore

Ho Zhi Wei, Research Section, National Youth Council

[1] Social capital refers to social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them (Putnam, 2000; World Bank, 2011). It covers domains such as social support, social participation, and individual values and attitudes. Human capital refers to the knowledge, skills, and competencies embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social, and economic wellbeing (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2001; World Economic Forum, 2013). It covers domains such as education, employment, and individual wellbeing.

The global city is recognised for its interconnectedness within the global economy and for its disproportionate degree of influence on international affairs (Sassen, 2001). By most accounts, Singapore has achieved global city status within fifty years of independence. For instance, the Globalization and World Cities Research Network, Global Cities Index, and Global Power City Index have placed Singapore among the world's global cities, such as London, New York, and Tokyo. These developments carry profound implications for Singapore, its residents, and in particular, its youths.

Beyond sheer economic power and influence, such as the extent to which foreign direct investments, financial services, and corporate headquarters of major global companies are attracted towards a particular city, the global city is also noted for other qualities such as social diversity, cultural influence through technology and media, and its ability to serve as strategic hubs for key global industries (Kotkin et al., 2014). For Singapore, strengths such as quality infrastructure, business friendliness, and strong development in industries such as finance and technology have seen it ascend into a global city. Yet, the global city is fraught with tensions.

The globally mobile Singaporean may easily be regarded as a citizen of the world, with physical and virtual access to social and economic resources both locally and abroad. The global city also stands to benefit from a strong economy, which provides for individual and social wellbeing. This is recognised by many Singaporeans (REACH, 2012). However, the global city also attracts the world's talent, competition, and wealth, which in turn increases social diversity and cost of living, and disrupts local cultures and social mores.

Using the context of the global city, this chapter will introduce the state of Singapore's youths through the lens of social and human capital. The next three chapters in **Section A** expand on the study of social capital by focusing on youths and society. A/P Ho Kong Chong anchors this section with an insightful discussion on youths' social participation. This is followed by the National Arts Council's study on arts participation and A/P Lim Sun Sun's commentary on youths' modes of social interaction. **Section B** focuses on human capital of youths, anchored by A/P Irene Ng's exploration of youths' education pathways and their implications for youth development. This is followed by the Ministry of Manpower's overview of youths' labour participation. **Section C** closes with a topic close to the heart of youths, anchored by A/P Ho Kong Weng's discussion on wellbeing. The Health Promotion Board's study on measuring the mental wellbeing of youths wraps up the research compilation.

The State of Youth in a Global City

As Singapore worked towards being a global city, the National Youth Council (NYC) had sought to develop youths to be "world ready" at the turn of the millennia — to be able to handle the opportunities and challenges that accompany globalisation. NYC initiatives such as the Youth Expedition Project seek to grant youths opportunities to learn more about the world around them through overseas service and adventure learning. Efforts were also trained at encouraging youths to learn more about their local communities, identify the needs that were present, and propose ways in which the problems might be addressed.

Yet, globalisation introduces strains at the individual and societal level that human capital development alone may not be fully equipped to withstand. The development of Singapore into a global city over the past decade has transformed society in at least three areas. First, globalisation has intensified competition, increased the cost of living, and widened income gaps (Yeoh, 2007). Second, Singapore's youths are among the most connected in the world, with almost all youths having access to a smartphone and the internet (Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore, 2013), enabling youths to form communities and access information which were previously unavailable. Third, increased immigration has raised living density and social diversity, introducing new challenges for social integration and concerns of a diluted local identity (Kuah, 2012; Thompson, 2014).

Using findings from the National Youth Survey (NYS) 2002 to 2013, this section seeks to examine youths' social capital development in light of society's human capital gains[1] over the years. Specifically, this chapter will consider youths' involvement and orientation towards the larger community and society, their relationships with family and friends, and individual attitudes and wellbeing. This chapter will subsequently consider the role of social capital in developing youths for the global city and close with a discussion over their desire for a kinder and gentler society. These findings will set the context for the chapters to follow in this publication, which covers in greater detail youths' community involvement, use of social media, development through education and employment, and individual and mental wellbeing.

Society & Community

Public affirmation of community involvement and societal trends are encouraging greater interest and involvement in society among youths. For instance, in addition to national programmes such as Values-in-Action and the Youth Expedition Project, schools and corporations have emphasised the importance of community involvement, sending important signals for youths to be involved in society (Handy et al., 2010). Changing social norms have also encouraged more to be involved in the community, albeit on an episodic basis (Cnaan & Handy, 2005; National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre, 2012). Singapore's growing religiosity (Tan, 2008) and a desire for political participation (Tan et al., 2011) would likewise foster greater involvement in a variety of social groups.

Findings from the NYS confirm some of these larger societal trends. For instance, at least half of schooling youths have participated in some form of school-based overseas programme[2], enabling them to gain an appreciation of foreign cultures. Also, youths' involvement in social groups[3] has seen an upward trend between 2002 and 2013; with approximately two in three youths having participated in some form of social group within a one-year period. Yet, this increase is primarily driven by monthly or episodic[4] participation (**Chart 1**). While weekly participation has plateaued at approximately 40 per cent, monthly and episodic participation has more than doubled between 2002 and 2013.
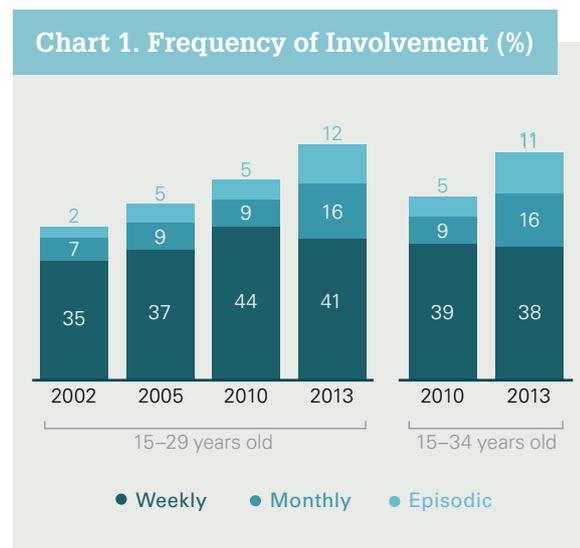
[2] Overseas programmes include study trips, religious and community expeditions, and competitions.

[3] Social groups include sports, arts & cultural, uniformed, community, religious, and workplace-related groups.

[4] Episodic participation refers to a frequency of once every few months or less.

Chart 1. Frequency of Involvement (%)

	15–29 years old				15–34 years old	
	2002	2005	2010	2013	2010	2013
Episodic	2	5	5	12	5	11
Monthly	7	9	9	16	9	16
Weekly	35	37	44	41	39	38

● Weekly   ● Monthly   ● Episodic

Youths' civic engagement has likewise increased. Using comparable measures between 2005 and 2013, more youths have signed a petition (2005: 3%; 2013: 13%) and commented on an online forum or blog (2005: 10%; 2013: 15%) on a topic relating to social or political affairs, with much of the increase driven by the internet or social media. Fewer youths have written in to a newspaper or magazine (2005: 6%; 2013: 3%), while more youths are likely to sign an online petition (12%) compared to a paper petition (3%). These trends mirror the larger global trend that leans towards internet-based civic participation (Lin et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2013).

Attitudinally, Singapore's youths express some form of orientation towards improving society. NYS 2013 found that 39% of youths regard contributing to society as their very important life goal, while 41% desire to help the less fortunate. Credit Suisse's recently concluded Youth Barometer Survey (YBS) 2014 further corroborates these findings, noting that 60% of Singapore's youths assume responsibility for their society and the environment while 34% express strong social commitments through living and acting responsibly, helping disadvantaged people, and being involved with a charitable organisation.

Family & Friends

Youths' immediate family and friends provide an important social support network for youths to cope with the demands of school and work. This support network is particularly relevant, given the intensified rate of technological, cultural, and social changes that youths experience in a global city. Findings from NYS 2013 paint an encouraging picture. In terms of family relationships, 74% of youths regard maintaining strong family ties as a very important life goal. This consistently ranked as the top life goal of youths since the measure was introduced in 2005. Testifying to the strong parent-child relationships in Singapore, 86% of youths would take care of their parents at old age regardless of the

circumstances. A further 13% expressed a similar desire if their circumstances allow (**Chart 2**).

Chart 2. Attitudes towards Parental Care (%)

13% I would take care of my parents in their old age, if my circumstances allow

I would leave matters to my parents or to the government 1%

I would take care of my parents in their old age, regardless of the circumstances 86%
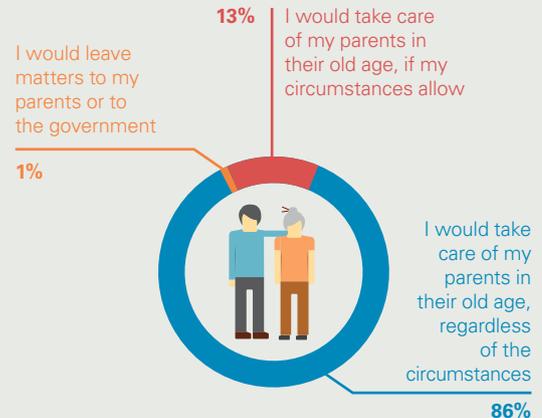
In addition to serving as a stable source of support, strong families also ensure youths receive the necessary socialisation and development to thrive in a complex society. For instance, Singapore's youths know that they can get help from their families if they have a problem (mean score of 4.13; on a 5-point scale, where 5 = strongly agree) and are assured that regardless of the circumstances, they will be loved and accepted (mean score of 4.36). Youths also enjoy having dinner and talking together (mean score of 4.25). These findings mirror the desires of Singaporeans on the whole to maintain strong families, as expressed in a series of national-level focus groups (REACH, 2012).

Friendships similarly play an important role in the support, socialisation, and development of youths. Contrary to popular thought and early studies (e.g., McPherson et al., 2006), the prevalence of internet and

smartphone use do not necessarily result in greater social isolation (Fischer, 2009; Hampton et al., 2009). This finding parallels that of Singapore's youths: almost 9 in 10 continue to report having at least two close friends that they feel at ease with in talking about private matters or call on for help (**Chart 3**), a figure largely similar from 2002. This bodes well for the development of Singapore's youth, given the extent of their internet and smartphone use, and study and work stresses.

Chart 3. Number of Close Friends (%)

4% | No close friends

One close friend
8%

Two or more close friends
88%
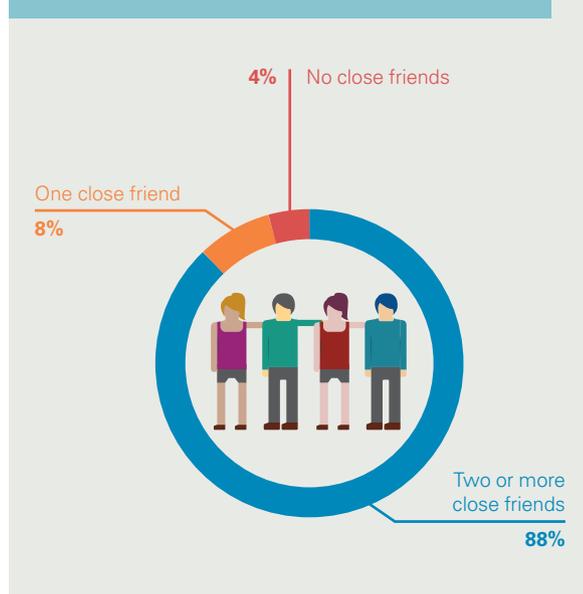
Finally, despite the increasing median age of marriage, approximately three quarters of Singapore's youths continue to express a desire to marry, a figure that has remained consistent from a decade before. With a more heterogeneous population stemming from immigration, strong local-foreigner relationships have also developed in certain instances. For example, approximately 4 in 10 youths report a close friend of a different nationality within their social circles. A similar proportion has also been reported for local marriages that occur between a citizen and non-citizen (National Population and Talent Board, 2014). Nevertheless, local-foreigner relations have emerged as a delicate issue in recent years, and this will be further examined in the next section.

Attitudes & Wellbeing

Local anthropologist Lai Ah Eng (2013) characterises Singapore's multiculturalism as at once a wondrous maze of diversity and a minefield of complexity and challenge. Evolved over generations, multiculturalism in Singapore is unique in its historical and social significance, as individuals from different cultural and religious heritages participate as "kin, friends, neighbours, co-residents, co-religionists, and co-ethnics" and develop a sense of belonging and community. With a majority of the population residing in high-density public housing, Singapore's youths have essentially grown up sharing a common space with diverse others.

As research from the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) shows, Singaporeans value multiculturalism, prioritising the need to respect the values and beliefs of different ethnicities and cultures (Koh & Soon, 2014). Corroborating these findings, when NYS 2013 asked youths the extent to which they agree with the statement that "respecting the values and beliefs of people who are of a different race or culture" reflect who they are, they largely agreed (mean score of 4.23 on a 5-point scale, with 5 being "very much like me"). Furthermore, youths are comfortable with having someone of a different race as neighbours. An encouraging trend for local intercultural relations in Singapore, these figures have held high since the measure was introduced in 2005 (**Chart 4**).

Yet, rapid immigration over the past decade has threatened to strain the nation's social fabric, with high profile fractious incidents between locals and foreigners capturing the public's attention in recent years (e.g., Martinez, 2014; Thompson, 2014). While racist and xenophobic individuals may exist in Singapore, Lai Ah Eng and IPS suggest that the local population is not

necessarily opposed to migrants. Findings from the NYS bear this out. Singapore's youths continue to express a high degree of comfort with someone of a different nationality, although figures have declined slightly from 2005 (**Chart 4**).

The slight decrease in comfort with other nationalities may be expected. Increased social diversity in the short-to-medium has a tendency to erode trust within and across ethnic groups (Putnam, 2007), particularly with limited socially diverse interaction and high income inequality (Stolle et al., 2008; Portes & Vickstrom, 2011). With the proportion of resident youth declining from one-third to one-fifth of the overall population in the span of just over 20 years (DOS 2000, 2014), immigration may have raised social tensions and economic anxieties among youths. Coupled with Singapore's intensified costs of living and widening income gaps, these trends may have resulted in youths' mixed feelings towards immigration (**Chart 5**).

With immigration and new communication technologies exposing youths to global trends and cultures, this has set new reference norms and raised individual aspirations and expectations. However, these new standards may be constrained by individual and local situations (Graham, 2005); aggravating the stress and competition youths already face in schools and workplaces. Thus, while youths continue to report high individual development and wellbeing, they report moderate levels of stress over their future uncertainty, finances, and emerging adult responsibilities (**Chart 6**), and slight declines in life satisfaction and confidence in their future (**Chart 7**).

Finally, as highly connected and mobile residents of a global city, Singapore's youths do not necessarily subscribe to a single national identity or narrative. With globalisation further blurring national boundaries, Kluver & Weber commented in 2003 that Singapore's globalised economy may weaken the already tenuous emotional ties of Singaporeans to the nation. Taken together with increased levels of stresses and anxieties, it is therefore unsurprising to learn that the national pride of Singaporean youths has declined slightly over the past decade, although overall levels still remain high (**Chart 8**).

Chart 4. Attitudes towards Different Race & Nationality (Mean; 5-pt Scale)

Strongly Agree

	2005	2010	2013		2010	2013
I am comfortable having someone of a different **race** as a neighbour	4.28	4.26	4.40		4.24	4.38
I am comfortable having someone of a different **nationality** as a neighbour	4.19	4.09	4.08		4.07	4.06

Strongly Disagree

15–29 years old   15–34 years old

● I am comfortable having someone of a different **race** as a neighbour

● I am comfortable having someone of a different **nationality** as a neighbour

Chart 5. Attitudes towards Immigration (Mean; 5-pt Scale)

Strongly
Agree

3.92   3.76
        3.24

3.80
        3.28

● Singapore should
encourage people of
other nationalities to
come to work or study
in Singapore

Strongly
Disagree

2005   **2010**   **2013**   **2010**   **2013**

15–29 years old   15–34 years old
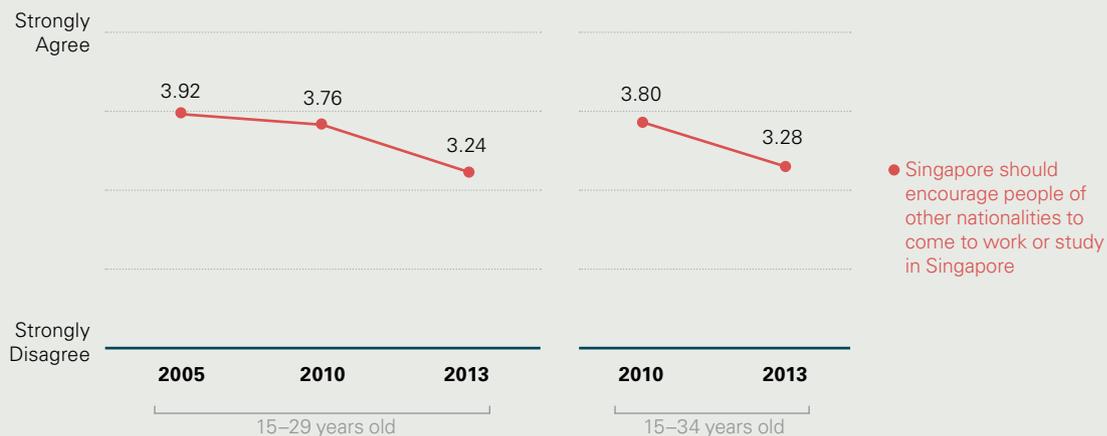
Chart 6. Top 3 Life Stressors (Mean; 5-pt Scale)

Extremely
Stressful

Moderately
Stressful

2.37   3.46   2.28   3.23   2.25   3.22

Not at all
Stressful

**Future
uncertainty**   **Finances**   **Emerging adult
responsibilities**

● 2010
● 2013
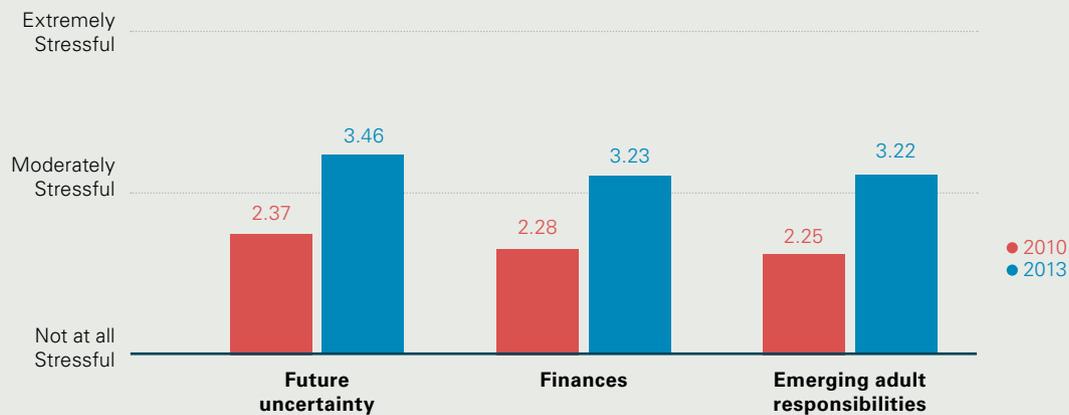
Chart 7. Life Satisfaction and Future Confidence (Mean; 10-pt Scale)

Satisfied /
Very Confident

7.1   6.96   7.58   6.79
       6.92   7.48   6.46

7.64   6.79
7.57   6.49

● Life Satisfaction
● Confidence in Future

Dissatisfied /
Not At All Confident

2002   2005   2010   2013

15–29 years old

2010   2013

15–34 years old
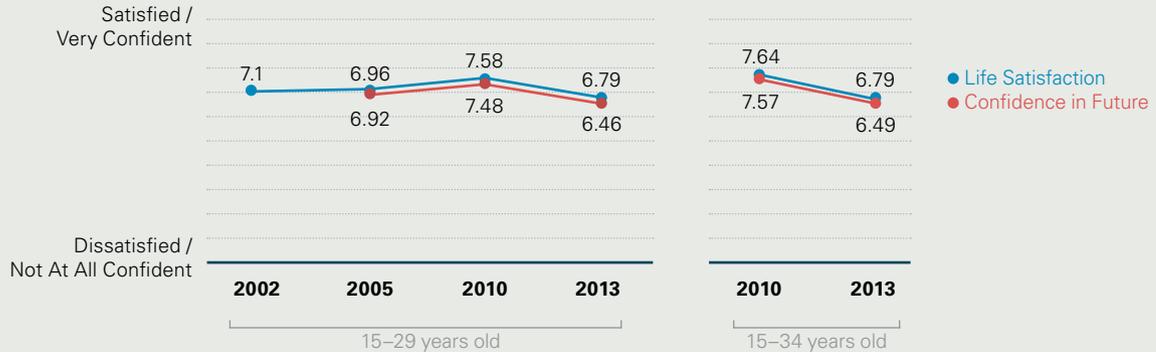
Chart 8. National Pride of Singaporean Youths (Mean; 4-pt Scale)

Very Proud

3.38   3.47   3.43   3.20

3.43   3.18

Not Proud At All

2002   2005   2010   2013

15–29 years old

2010   2013

15–34 years old
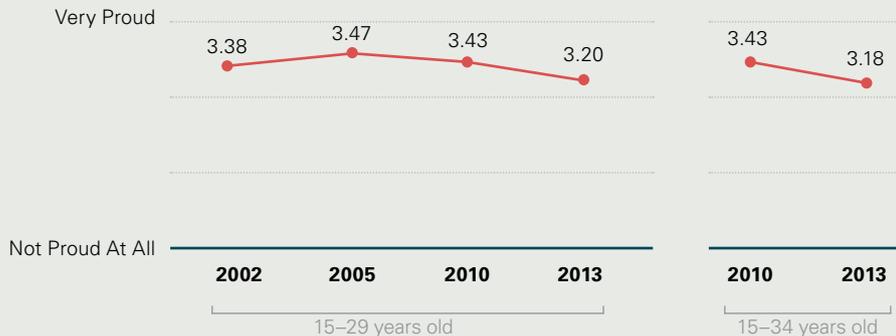
Developing Youths for a Global City

The human capital development of youths has grown with the Republic's rise to prominence as a global city. More youths possess higher education and enjoy a high standard of living. They also report high self-esteem and self-efficacy (mean scores of 3.79 and 4.38 respectively; on a 5-point scale, where 5 = strongly agree). Yet, human capital alone is often insufficient in enabling youths to thrive in an increasingly complex and competitive global landscape. Social capital — the norms and networks of trust that guide social interactions and collective action — will be necessary to mobilise the community to address common needs, foster social cohesion, and increase accountability (World Bank, 2011).

The family environment and social participation are important sources of social capital that enable youths to forge strong community ties and manage emergent challenges, complementing youths' strong human capital to flourish in a complex and diverse society. While the family environment inculcates youths with positive values and attitudes, social group involvement exposes youths to the effects of socialisation. This enables the exchange of social norms and values, introduces them to new ideas and skills, and strengthens social support networks.

Findings from the NYS offer insights into the role of social capital in positive youth development. For instance, youths from more positive family environments[5] are more likely to regard contributing to society as a very important life goal (55% vs. 26% of youths from less positive family environments) and be involved in social groups (72% vs. 60%), and report close friends of a different race (61% vs. 46%) or nationality (50% vs. 36%).

Similarly, youths regularly involved in social groups are more likely to report close friends of a different race and nationality (**Chart 9**) and possess higher levels of wellbeing: youths involved in social groups on a weekly

basis report a mean life satisfaction score of 7.04 on a 10-pt scale, while uninvolved youths report a score of 6.60.

The family environment and social participation are especially crucial to fostering social cohesion by cultivating close ties across social groups and strata, and in turn, respect, trust, and understanding. An example may be seen by contrasting youths' attitudes and close friendships towards other races and nationalities. Youths with close friends of another race are more likely to report greater comfort with someone of a different race as neighbour (mean score of 4.53; on a 5-point scale, where 5 = strongly agree) compared to youths without (mean score of 4.24). Similarly, youths with close friends of another nationality are more comfortable with someone of a different nationality as neighbour (mean score of 4.29) compared to youths without (mean score of 3.91).

Already, youths are expressing mixed feelings over immigration and slightly less comfort with other nationalities from a decade ago, with YBS reporting that 71% of Singapore's youths regard immigrants as posing a big problem in the foreseeable future (Credit Suisse,

[5] Family environment refers to extent to which the youth is supported and challenged positively.

Chart 9. Involvement Frequency and Friendship Diversity (%)

- Youths with close friends of different race
- Youths with close friends of different nationality
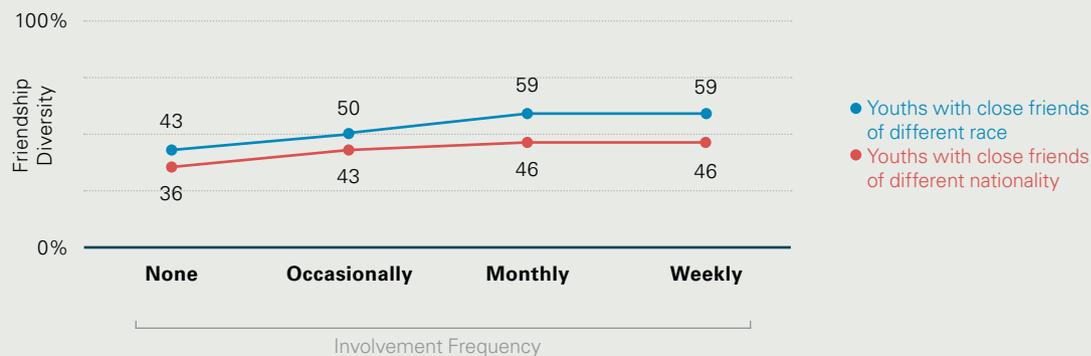
2014). Encouragingly, a good proportion of youths continue to report close ties with other nationalities: the NYS found that 4 in 10 youths have a close friend of a different nationality, while YBS reported that 6 in 10 youths have immigrants within their circle of friends. As globalisation increases social diversity and social stratification, it is critical that individual developmental and social processes enable a larger proportion of youths to maintain close, diverse ties, regardless of their ethnicity, nationality, or social strata.

Looking Forward

Rightly motivated and practised, social capital plays an important role in enabling youths to thrive in a global city. Social capital fosters individual development, provides support for wellbeing, and enhances social cohesion and civic engagement. While the associations between social and human capital are complex and causality remains difficult to establish, the findings are clear in the need to develop social capital in tandem with human capital for a cohesive, compassionate, and resilient youth population to meet the multifaceted challenges that a complex and competitive global landscape brings.

Alongside diversity and competition, globalisation also introduces social stratification and income inequality, which has a negative on social cohesion (Portes & Vickstrom, 2011). In Singapore, academics and policymakers have raised similar concerns over rising income inequality and social stratification that have accompanied immigration (Chan, 2012). Articulating the importance of a fair and just society, Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam (2013) affirmed the nation's commitment towards inclusive and sustainable growth. Crucially, DPM Tharman spoke of the need for quality public spaces; to inculcate a "spirit of fellowship" that respects every individual; and to mobilise the community to improve society.

Indeed, as NYC Chairman Lawrence Wong observed, many youths seek a kinder and gracious society which recognises every individual, regardless of background

or social standing (Toh, 2012). This development bodes well for Singapore's future. As Singapore seeks to mature as both nation and global city, the sustainable way forward may be a fair and just society that incorporates the local and global. The cultivation of social capital through individual upbringing and common platforms for interaction and social participation will be necessary for the inclusive society that youths seek, as participants from various NYC programmes have learnt:

> "As different as we are based on race, culture, and upbringing, ultimately, we all aspire towards the same goals and aspirations in life."
>
> *Youth Expedition Project Participant, Project Diya V, 2014*

> "I made new discoveries about myself through engaging the community, understanding the importance of listening, and changing and opening up new perspectives in the way I view and define things, such as success."
>
> *Youth Corps Singapore Participant, Cohort 1, 2014*

In light of Singapore's evolving social landscape, NYC was restructured in 2015 into an autonomous agency to enable youths to fulfil their aspirations, meet new challenges, and access greater opportunities to be involved in society. Outward Bound Singapore and Youth Corps Singapore are now part of the new autonomous agency under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY), placing NYC in a stronger position to further develop the social capital of youths. With more youths initiating organisations and projects to meet community needs, this development is timely. In addition to expanding initiatives such as the Youth Expedition Project, the new NYC will leverage on public and private sector collaborations to amplify the role of Singapore's youths in society, and enable them to shape a home that they and future generations can be proud of.

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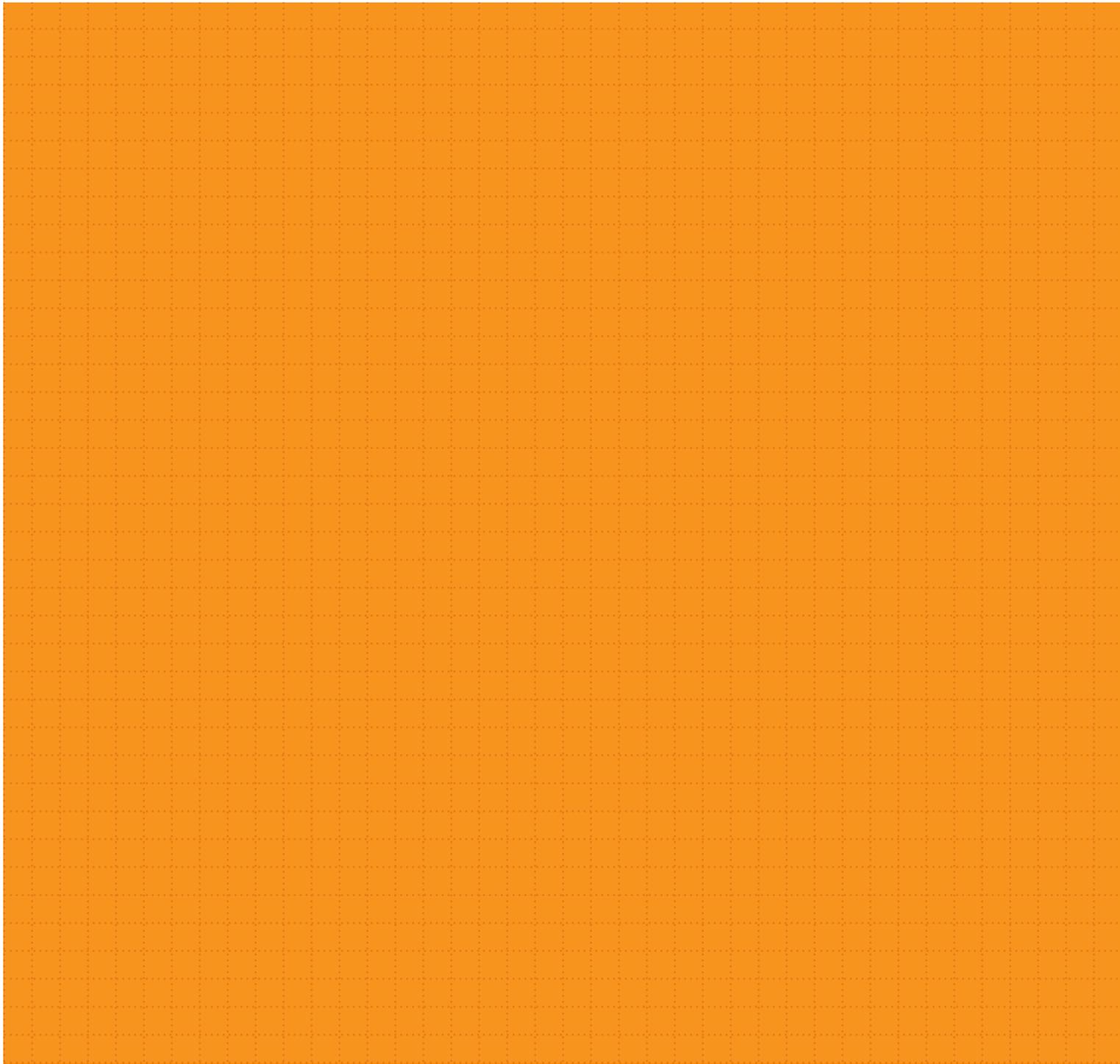
Section A
**Youth &
Society**

A1

Social Diversity and the Importance of Youth Social Participation

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Abstract

Youth participation in social groups offers the unintended by-product of learning social important skills. As Singapore's population grows through immigration and become more heterogeneous, an important case for youth social participation can be made: social participation allows young people to understand and accept people of diverse ethnicities and nationalities. Drawing from the National Youth Survey, youths who were active in social groups were found to report greater friendship diversity, and were more likely to respect and be aware of other cultures, be involved in the community, and report greater levels of social competencies. Taken together, these unintended benefits may potentially allow for a more cohesive society to be developed by bridging individuals across different population segments. Beyond unintended by-products, this chapter will also discuss the nature of youth social participation in Singapore, i.e., the types and frequency of social participation over a 10-year period.

Chapter A1
Social
Diversity
and the
Importance
of Youth
Social
Participation

Introduction

In the 2006 and 2010 YOUTH.sg chapters on social participation, the focus has been to develop the concept of youth participation in various social groups as an important way in which young people learn important social skills. The argument developed is that such informal learning in groups is an important social unintended consequence. Such learning is unintended in the sense that young people join various social groups purposefully for the activities offered (hobby groups, sports, community, arts, religious, etc.). The added learning is often an unintended by-product of this association; in terms of the learning of organisational, cooperative, and leadership behaviour which happens within a normative group environment. Young people learn new skills because these are required in the groups they join. They come to acquire new attitudes because these are shared by the group. The skills and attitudes formed in the context of groups benefit society when youths are able to participate competently in socially worthy causes. Youths gain as well when they are able to navigate their life course more effectively.

As Singapore's population grows through immigration, the population in the Republic will become more heterogeneous as new citizens and permanent residents (PRs) bring with them established ways of doing things, and different cultural norms. The 1970 Census documented only slightly less than 10% non-citizens who were mainly Malaysians (see **Table 1**). As Singapore's economic development progressed and the local labour supply was stretched, non-residents increased as foreign workers were recruited to work in Singapore. Between 1970 and 2013, Singapore's non-resident population grew almost tenfold from a low of 2.9% of the total population to 28.8%. Currently, almost 1 in 3 persons in Singapore is a non-resident.

There are three consequences. First, the increasing population size is a change factor in the social organisation of society by placing additional demands on various public and social services. This is the problem associated with a growing population size. Second, with natural increase stagnant for two decades, the population increase to reduce the dependency ratio is achieved predominantly through immigration. The resulting challenge is the adjustment and social integration of new citizens and PRs whose attitudes and behaviour are shaped by the societies they emigrate from. Hence, as we welcome immigrants from different parts of the world, the greater heterogeneity presents a social integration challenge for hosts and new residents alike. This is the problem associated with

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of Population by Residency Status (1970–2013)

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2013
Total Population ('000)	2,074.5	2,413.9	3,047.1	4,027.9	5,076.7	5,399.2
Citizens	90.4	90.9	86.1	74.1	63.6	61.4
Permanent Residents	6.7	3.6	3.7	7.1	10.7	9.8
Non-residents	2.9	5.5	10.2	18.7	25.7	28.8

Source: Department of Statistics (2013, p. v)

increasing social diversity. Lastly, we should consider the small size of Singapore and the resultant increase in population density with immigrant flows. One of the key social challenges of high density living is that this brings people of different social backgrounds physically closer. Thus, in everyday life, congestion (in the use of social and public services) and competition (in school and work) may create a frequent potential for misunderstanding and conflict, when responses to these common situations stem from different cultural norms and habitual behaviour. Everyday examples include queuing versus rushing, maintaining physical distance in crowded situations, tone of speech in public place, forms of courtesy towards fellow users, etc. This is the problem of density. Collectively, size, heterogeneity and density were highlighted in a classic article by Wirth (1938) to explain how the variables associated with the city impact human behaviour.

With the steady growth of the non-resident population, there is now a clearer distinction between different categories of residency. The Prime Minister mentioned *"the need to make clear the distinction between citizens, PRs, and non-residents… so that people don't feel taken for granted"* (Teh, 2009). The growing distinction between citizens and PRs has been felt with increased healthcare subsidies for citizens, and increased school fees for PRs (Oon, 2010). Earlier measures such as the citizen public housing grant continue to play an important role in valuing citizens and differentiating them from the quasi-citizen category. Perhaps the most important change in recent years has been the review of Singapore's immigration policy in 2009. Following the review, the application process for Singapore citizenship and permanent residence was tightened (National Population and Talent Division (NPTD), 2013, p. 26).

Within this new environment, foreign born residents who decide to stay in Singapore must be more demonstrative: *"permanent residence is granted to those who have a long term stake in Singapore and who intend to sink roots here. It is an intermediate step through which foreigners take up citizenship in Singapore… PRs enjoy certain benefits, pegged at levels below what citizens enjoy, while second-generation male PRs are required to serve National Service"* (NPTD, 2013, p. 27). This represents an important change, from 20 years back where PR status were less obligatory to one where the quasi-citizen category is explicitly viewed as a prelude to citizenship. There is a clearer distinction between PRs and citizens in terms of access to public services, and a stronger expectation of contributory rights. They enjoy the rights to such benefits as schooling, health, and education in return for clear contributions, including national service for second generation males.

At the same time, there has also been an attempt to value non-citizens in Singapore. Those on work permits have their presence validated on the premise that they do work which citizens shun. And those on employment passes are valued for their contribution to growing the economy and increasing its competitiveness. Additionally, the age of migrants are increasingly referenced as a balance to the aging of the citizen population (NPTD, 2013, p. 26) and by inference, their prime working age and the implied lifetime value of such contributions to the collective goals of the country (Turner, 2008).

While there have been systematic efforts to manage the growing non-resident population from the policy perspective, it is in our daily life that relations between Singaporeans and non-residents need to be cultivated. If we accept the argument that Singapore is a global city and a small city state and that movements of people are necessary for the economy (service professionals, industry workers and domestic helpers, tourists, and also students) then it is necessary for the Singapore society to embrace these temporary visitors, PRs, and new citizens.

An important case for youth social participation can be made on the basis of how participation allows young people to understand and accept people of

Chapter A1
**Social
Diversity
and the
Importance
of Youth
Social
Participation**

diverse ethnicities and nationalities. Drawing from the National Youth Survey (NYS) 2013, a number of patterns may be observed from **Chart 1**. Inter-religious friendships are fairly pervasive in Singapore society, with 75% or more of youths indicating close inter-religious friendships regardless of participation. Second, the differences in friendship diversity are minimal for different rates of regular participation. The differences between monthly and weekly participation in terms of friendship diversity (religion, race, nationality) are non-significant. For inter-religious relations, the largest change is between low and non-participation and youths with regular participation (i.e., monthly and weekly). For inter-ethnic relationships, there is a big jump of 7% between non-participants and occasional participants, and another 9% jump from occasional to regular participation. Inter-nationality relations show a dramatic 7% increase between non-participants and those with occasional participation, moderating at 46% for regular participation.

It should also be noted that this trend of social participation and friendship diversity also applies to other forms of civic engagement, such as volunteerism and working with fellow citizens to solve a community problem. Taken together, the survey data suggests that enhancing social participation of youths may be a way forward to building a more cohesive society through the establishment of more diverse friendships, connecting youths with different population segments.

In order to do this, social participation needs to be understood: the different forms that these take, the profiles of participants, their rates of participation, and the changes over the life course of youths as they make different transitions in life.

Types and Frequency of Social Participation

Within the NYS 2013 questionnaire, youths were asked if they participated in any of the following social groups, which included sports-related groups, arts and cultural groups, uniform groups (e.g. red cross, girl's brigade), community groups (e.g. resident committees), welfare

Chart 1. Friendship Diversity and Participation Frequency

Youths with close friends of a different (%)
● Religion
● Race
● Nationality

Religion: None 75, Occasionally 77, Monthly 85, Weekly 83
Race: None 43, Occasionally 50, Monthly 59, Weekly 59
Nationality: None 36, Occasionally 43, Monthly 46, Weekly 46

None   Occasionally   Monthly   Weekly

Social Participation

Source: NYS 2013
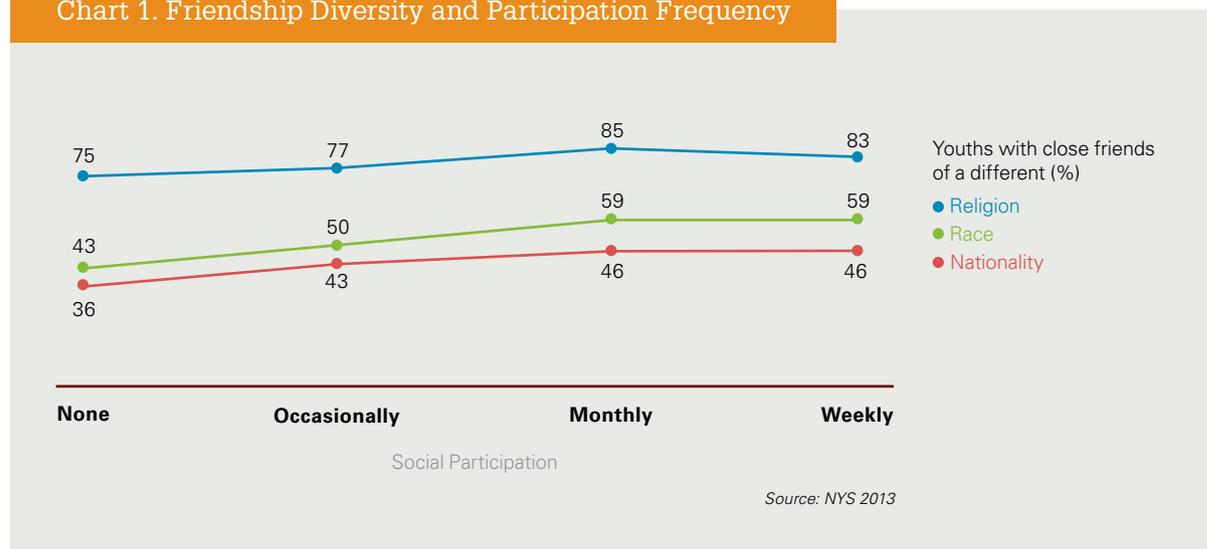
and self-help groups, religious groups, interest and hobby groups, discussion groups and forums (e.g. politics, religion, social affairs), workplace-related groups (union, recreational groups), and other social groups. Membership in such groups constitutes a measure of youth social participation. Additional measures for social participation include their frequency of participation and whether youths are involved in some leadership position (held an official title) in the social groups that they participated in.

Table 2 presents a profile of youths who are involved with groups. From this table, males are observed to be more involved than females. The role of schools in facilitating social involvement of its students can be seen in age group involvements as the highest percentage of involvement (81%) comes from 15 to 19 year olds. The 20 to 24 year olds suffer a significant decline of about 18 percentage points, most probably because this occurs with school leaving and entry into the labour market. We see the role of schools more clearly in the economic status variable as full time students (77%) register the highest participation rate. Homemakers register the lowest participation (39%) probably because of duties associated with childcare. The responsibilities with children also emerge with the marital status variable as married youths with children register the lowest participation at 53%.

The NYS is into the fourth wave in 2013, which gives us a chance to look at comparative data across ten years among youths aged 15 to 29 (NYS 2002 and 2005 surveyed youths aged 15 to 29 only). The membership data presented in **Table 3** shows several patterns.

First, the 2010 period represents a dip in participation for all the social groups and perhaps should be discounted if we want to look at participation levels over the 10 year period. Second, if we look at the remaining three time points (2002, 2005, and 2013), there is some stability in terms of the ranking of the most popular

activity as sports remain the most popular activity over the ten year period. We expect sports participation to be significantly higher in the years to come, given the easy accessibility of facilities throughout the island as well as promotional campaigns such as "Sports for Life" (Soon, 2002, p. 195). Third, several activities have shown a marked increase between the first two time points (2002 and 2005) and 2013. Participation between 2005 and 2013 doubled in certain instances, from 7% to 16% for workplace groups and 5% to 10% for community groups. Religious and discussion groups also experienced substantial increase in participation between 2005 and 2013. Fourth, welfare group participation remained fairly stable and low at between 3% and 6% for the 10 year period.

In 2013, 65% of the youths aged 15 to 34 surveyed indicated they participated in a social group. For this 65%, **Chart 2** shows the frequency of participation by type of social group. The chart shows that different groups have particular regularities or rhythms that are reflected in the frequency of participation. We use the highest percentage within each frequency (weekly, monthly, and occasionally) as our guide to analysis. Sporting activities tend to have a fixed game schedules or people tend to use sports as a form of exercise. As a result, a high 60% of youths who participate in sports do so on a weekly basis. The regular expressions of faith also accounts for a high weekly participation for religious groups (65%). Other high frequency activities include arts and cultural groups (50%) and uniform groups (56%), probably because of the regular practice sessions in school and other organisation-based settings.

Aside from this set of activities which have a strong weekly tendency, other social groups are more divided between two or more frequency categories. Interest and hobby group members for example are almost equally split between weekly (34%) and monthly (41%) participation for members who share a common passion to meet and keep abreast of developments.

Chapter A1
Social
Diversity
and the
Importance
of Youth
Social
Participation

Table 2. Pattern of Social Involvement among Youths (%)

	Group Participation	
Gender	**Not involved in any group**	**Involved in at least one group**
Male	29	71
Female	41	60
Age		
15 to 19	19	81
20 to 24	37	63
25 to 29	38	62
30 to 34	43	57
Economic Status		
Working full-time (employee)	40	60
Working full-time (self-employed)	38	62
Working part-time	33	67
Unemployed	58	42
Full-time Student	23	77
Part-time Student	35	65
National Service (full-time, or waiting for enlistment and not working part-time)	39	62
Homemaker	61	39
Marital Status		
Single	31	69
Married, without children	38	62
Married, with children	47	53
Divorced	46	54
In a relationship	37	63

Source: NYS 2013

Table 3. Membership in Social Groups across Various Years (%; 15–29 years old)

	2002	2005	2010	2013
Sports Groups	24	26	20	28
Arts and Cultural Groups	10	12	10	16
Uniform Groups	8	10	6	7
Community Groups	4	5	4	10
Welfare and Self Help Groups	3	4	5	6
Religious Groups	10	11	9	17
Interest and Hobby Groups	5	8	4	14
Discussion Groups and Forums	NA	4	3	8
Workplace-related Groups	NA	7	3	16

Source: NYS 2002, 2005, 2010, & 2013

Chart 2. Frequency of Attendance in Groups (%)
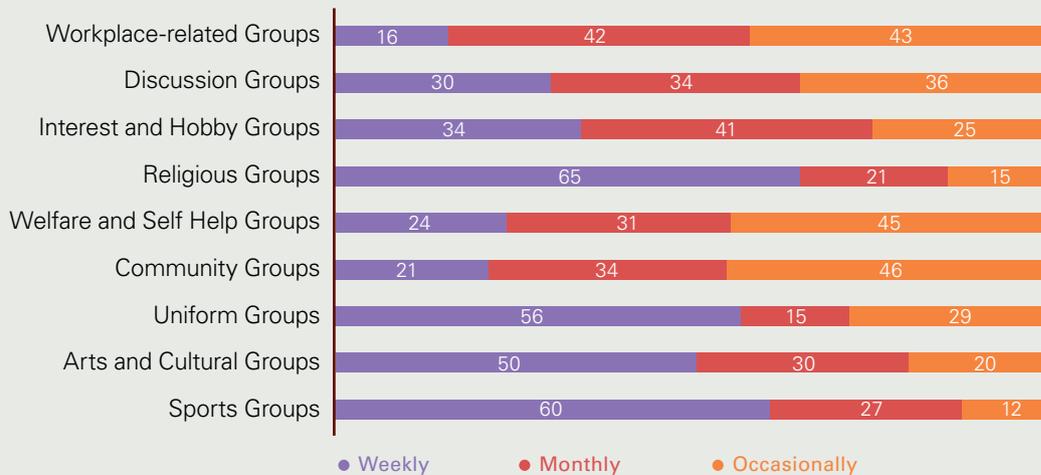
Group	Weekly	Monthly	Occasionally
Workplace-related Groups	16	42	43
Discussion Groups	30	34	36
Interest and Hobby Groups	34	41	25
Religious Groups	65	21	15
Welfare and Self Help Groups	24	31	45
Community Groups	21	34	46
Uniform Groups	56	15	29
Arts and Cultural Groups	50	30	20
Sports Groups	60	27	12

● Weekly   ● Monthly   ● Occasionally

Source: NYS 2013

Chapter A1
Social
Diversity
and the
Importance
of Youth
Social
Participation

Workplace-related groups are also equally split between monthly (42%) and occasional meetings (43%). The frequencies of such tasks are driven by the work of the organisation. Group and committee work comprised individuals with different job scopes and responsibilities, and probably from different divisions and agencies who contribute to a collective task by sharing their job specialisations. Such work-related affairs are over and above the individuals' specific duties and therefore are more likely to have monthly rather than weekly meetings in order to complete tasks and provide for updates. Occasional meetings occur to handle either less urgent workflows; handle assignments that are more periodic; or manage and complete tasks which take a longer time to complete. Discussion groups have a similar monthly (34%) and occasional (36%) meeting frequency probably for the same reasons.

Lastly, volunteering as evidenced from community groups and welfare groups involves on the average less regular forms of participation. With the exception of a core group which participate weekly (21% for community groups; 24% for welfare groups), most opt for either monthly (34% for community groups; 31% for welfare groups), or occasional participation (46% for community groups, 45% for welfare groups). Such less regular forms of volunteering suggests that such activities are embarked upon after other more important (to the individual) concerns are met.

The leadership dimension reveals yet another facet of social groups (**Chart 3**). The hierarchical nature of uniform groups makes this an outlier with 63% of youths who participate in this activity having a leadership role. Most groups have between a quarter to a third of members in leadership positions: arts and culture groups (38%), community groups (28%), workplace-related groups (28%), sports groups (27%), interest and hobby groups (25%), and religious groups (22%). Leadership roles exist to give a priority and direction to the group and allow the critical functions to be assigned and performed. The quarter to a third ratio is probably what works, and is effective, for most groups. Lastly, the more egalitarian nature of discussion groups and

Chart 3. Youths Involved in Leadership (%)

Group	%
Uniform Groups	63
Arts and Cultural Groups	38
Community Groups	28
Workplace-related Groups	28
Sports Groups	27
Interest and Hobby Groups	25
Religious Groups	22
Discussion Groups	14
Welfare and Self Help Groups	13
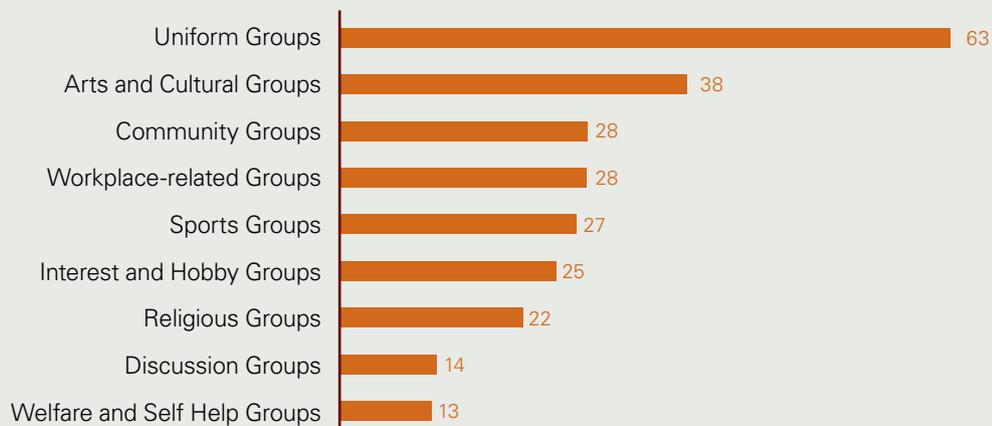
Source: NYS 2013

Chart 4. Indicators of Social Participation (Involvement in at least one group, leadership) (%; 15–29 years old)

- Involved in Leadership
- Involved in at least one group
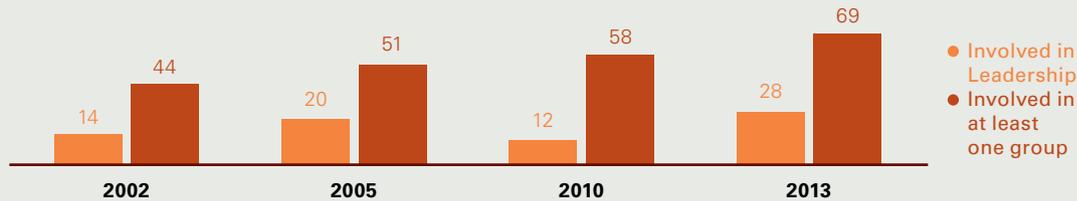
Source: NYS 2002, 2005, 2010, & 2013

welfare groups lends these activities to democratic participation and mutual coordination without much leadership and hierarchy.

We complete this section of profiling group participation by looking at the two summary measures of social groups, group involvement and group leadership, over the four periods covered by the NYS 2002, 2005, 2010, and 2013. **Chart 4** illustrates that the percentage increase in group participation among 15 to 29 year olds was slightly higher compared to past periods. Noting from Table 3 that NYS 2013 yielded the highest participation increase for workplace-related groups (16%), religious groups (17%), interest and hobby groups (14%), and community groups (10%), participation increases in these groups taken together may have lifted the overall participation rate. Compared to 2005, there is a more modest increase of about 8 percentage points for those holding leadership positions.

Benefits of Social Participation

The importance we place on social participation among youths is in the benefits which can be derived from participation. **Table 4** provides a summary of these benefits in terms of multicultural orientation,

interpersonal relationships, outward orientation, and civic engagement.

With the exception of the last item in Table 4, the indicators presented are attitudinal and reflect the degree to which the survey participants agree to these statements about themselves. The differences between the involved and not involved group for the volunteering items (8% local volunteering, 6% overseas volunteering) suggest that involvement in social groups are associated (not necessarily causal in nature) with volunteerism. This is clearly important for society as the care of the weak and vulnerable are in the voluntary sector. Another form of civic engagement is community participation. This item is particularly important because it is a behavioural measure, indicating that respondents actually worked to solve a community problem. For this item, the difference between involved and non-involved youths is a significant 7%.

The other socially important goal is in our multicultural orientation. As the introduction to this chapter indicates, Singapore's growing social diversity makes it more important that we adopt a multicultural orientation. Table 4 indicates that there are significantly higher percentages posted by involved youths with regard

Chapter A1
Social
Diversity
and the
Importance
of Youth
Social
Participation

to respect for the values and beliefs of other groups (difference of 5%) and knowledgeable about people of other races (difference of 11%). Indeed, most social groups which have an open membership criteria, and those which are larger in size, have within these groups social diversity in terms of religion and ethnicity and to a certain extent nationality. Membership in such groupings requires individuals to learn about, accommodate, and embrace such differences.

Besides the socially important goals of volunteering and multicultural orientations, participation in groups is also associated with a set of important interpersonal skills: public speaking (difference of 14%), leadership (difference of 13%), making friends (difference of 9%), adapting to change (difference of 9%), working well with others (difference of 6%) and caring about the feelings of others (difference of 3%). The important point to take away from this set of interpersonal skills is that these cannot really be taught within the classroom. Therefore, to the extent that these are learnt inter-personally and in the everyday routines of group activities, then social groups provide an essential function to prepare individuals for their adult lives.

In summary, there are three important points to make about youths and social participation. The first is the unintended benefits to the individual and society of group participation. Perhaps with the exception of uniform groups which specifically trains young people in leadership and other inter-personal skills, and workplace-related groups which may be assigned by superiors, young people join social groups like sports, arts and cultural, and hobby groups for the immediate benefits of fulfilling their immediate interests. The unintended consequences of such participation are the types of social and personal benefits outlined in Table 4. In the course of fulfilling these interests, youths are embedded in a social and normative environment where they learn new skills necessary in the promotion of such interests, as well as values necessary for teamwork to occur.

For some individuals, such involvement represents a totally transformative experience. I had the pleasure of shaking the hand of a young person who made the following remark in a focus group discussion with ITE students:

> "If you'd seen me in secondary school, I don't think you'd believe I am in Student Council right now. 'Cos I was a devil back then. A troublemaker, prankster; teacher always chase me for some stuff I didn't do, or did.
>
> When I enter ITE, I was given a chance to become a student council, student councillor. I was saying, "Me, a devil, become a student councillor? Cannot be." But my teacher forced me to go for the interview, so I went. The Council president gave me a chance to prove myself wrong, that I am a capable young man. So okay I said, "Why not?" Give it a go.
>
> And now I'm proud myself — I'm a student leader, I'm a student councillor, I have a post in Student Council as a chairman of CCA Enrichment. That's high post for me, I'm like, first-timer, getting something big for myself. For 17 years of my life I was a prankster and devil, then in my eighteenth year, I became mature enough to think on my own two feet. People look to me for decisions, not the other way around. So I said to myself, okay, being in this kind of CCA has given me a leadership role. It's made me able to think more maturely."

Haq, Male, Focus Group Discussion with Institute of Technical Education students, 17 October 2005 (Ho & Chia, 2006, p. 104).

Table 4. Benefits of Social Participation among Youths (%)

	Not Involved in any group	Active in at least one group	Difference
Multicultural Orientation[1]			
Respect values and beliefs of other groups	81	86	5
Knowledgeable about people of other races	39	50	11
Interpersonal relationships[1]			
Caring about other people's feelings	80	83	3
Good at making friends	55	64	9
Work well with others	69	75	6
Leading a team of people	43	56	13
Outward Orientation[1]			
Public speaking	20	34	14
Adapt to change	63	72	9
Civic Engagement			
To be actively involved in local volunteer work[2]	7	15	8
To be actively involved in overseas volunteer work[2]	5	11	6
Worked with fellow citizens to solve a problem in your community	1	8	7

Source: NYS 2013

Notes:
[1] Percentage of youths who agreed that the statements are "quite like me" and "very much like me".

[2] Percentage of youths who indicated the life goal as "very important".

The second point is one made by Eccles and associates (2003) based on their work on extra-curricular activities among American school-going youths: that social groups provide a promotive and protective function for their members. In the survey questionnaire, we have an item "staying away from people who might get me in trouble" which may approximate the protective function of social groups. The difference between youths who belong to groups and those that do not proved insignificant, perhaps because the wording of item is stated too baldly that social desirability effects work to minimize disagreement to the statement. This said, it is possible to suggest an argument that to the extent that the normative environment of social groups are positive, youths, especially the younger ones are protected from a variety of negative elements that they may encounter (relationships, habits, and behaviours).

The last point is about the potential negative outcomes of social participation. The YOUTH.sg 2010 chapter on social participation (pp. 54–55) included some focus group excerpts which mention how students naturally gravitate to co-curricular activities and end up doing badly in their exams. Thus, the danger of an over-emphasis on sports and related extra-curricular activities, especially for younger youths, is something youths need to watch out for. Included in this are potentially negative health damaging habits like smoking and drinking from peers formed within the context of social groups.

Chapter A1
Social
Diversity
and the
Importance
of Youth
Social
Participation

Transitions in Youth Social Participation

If there are clear social and personal benefits to youth social participation, can participation be sustained over time in our youths? **Chart 5** shows youth involvements in the major social groups covered in the survey by the age of respondents.

Perhaps because of the high degree of participation in sports in schools (15 to 19 year olds), there is a rather drastic decline in sports participation for youths in their early to late twenties, with the onset of labour market participation and family formation. With the promotion of sports and healthy lifestyles in Singapore, this decline is arrested at around 21% for older youths in their thirties. A similar account can be made for arts and cultural groups. The high participation for this set of activities is again school-based, and the decline in participation from school (15 to 19 year olds) to work (youths in their twenties) is also quite drastic for uniform groups. There is a small core group of youths who persist in uniform groups, most likely in a volunteer capacity, in their late twenties and early thirties. Interest and hobby groups also show a decline, though more gradual.

A second more stable pattern is welfare and self-help groups and discussion groups. For different reasons, both activities garner a small group of participants ranging from 5% to 6% (welfare and self-help groups) and 6% to 8% (discussion & forums). For both types of groups, Chart 2 shows that most participants tend to be involved on a monthly and occasional basis (76% for welfare and self-help groups and about 70% for discussion groups), suggesting that such activities appeal to a small group who are not likely to place much emphasis on these activities. Lastly, religious involvements have also shown a fairly stable pattern of between 16% and 19% for all the four age groups.

The third pattern showing an increase with age is naturally workplace-related groups. As youths transit from school to work (from the 15 to 19 years to those in their early twenties), more will be involved in work-based groups. The percentage of youths in such groups climb from early to late twenties, most likely because they are entrusted with more work-related responsibilities, and the percentage remains at around 26% for youths in their thirties.

Chart 6 presents two summary measures of involvement and leadership for all the social groups that our survey respondents participated in. As expected, the decline is most drastic from school to work (15 to 19 year olds and 20 to 24 year olds), after which there is a tapering downwards for the progressively older age groups.

The decline in youth participation and leadership rates with increasing age may be a cause for alarm, but it is important to see how values, lessons, and skills learnt in the formative years can be transferred to other domains. For YOUTH.sg 2010, we showed a similar chart to a focus group comprising tertiary students. The comment from one participant continues to be relevant:

> "Maybe, some people at first glance they think it's bad (the decline in involvement and leadership with increasing age), but it's not always bad. You've served people in leadership positions at that age, but… what I understand in this is that it (CCA leadership) fully transforms into personal leadership. At 15 to 19 years old, you are steering a group of friends, students, mentees. Midway, you are leading your own lives, you are a leader to yourself, it's about steering your own future and at 30 to 34, you are steering your family. So, you might not be in an official leadership position, but I think the leadership role is still being played. I hope at 30 to 34 your leadership position is in your family."

> *Sonia, female, Focus Group Discussion, 1 June 2010 (National Youth Council, 2010, p. 58).*

Chart 5. Frequency of Attendance in Groups (%)

- Sports-related
- Arts & cultural
- Uniform
- Community
- Welfare & self-help
- Religious
- Interest & hobby
- Discussion & forums
- Workplace
- Others
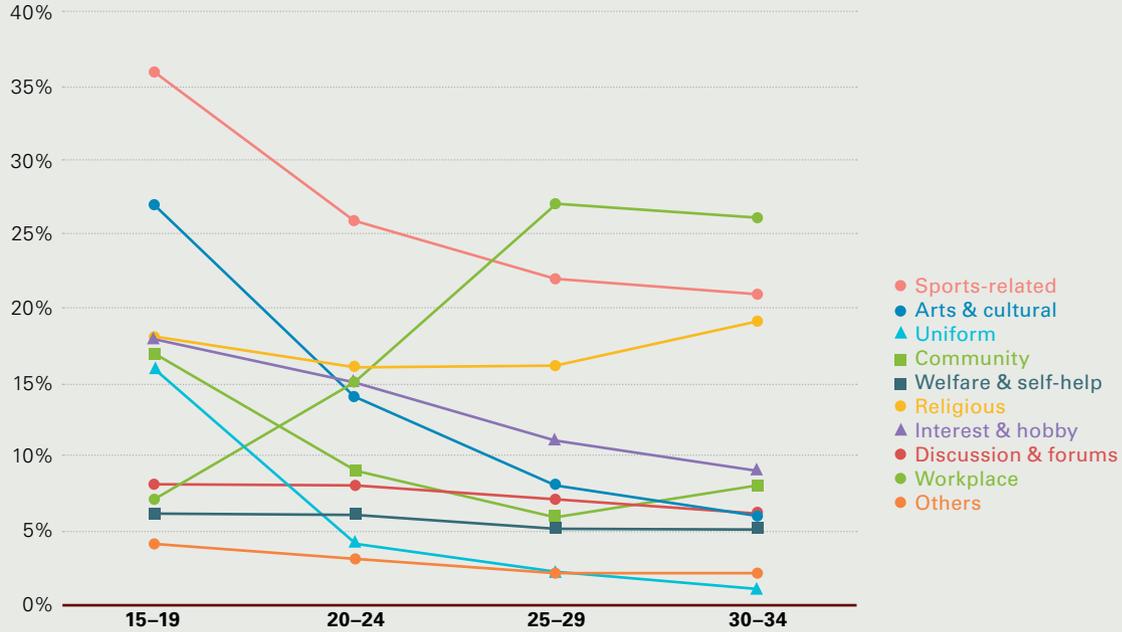
Source: NYS 2013

Chart 6. Youth Involvement and Leadership by Age Groups (%)

- Involved in at least one group
- Involved in leadership

Source: NYS 2013

Chapter A1
Social
Diversity
and the
Importance
of Youth
Social
Participation
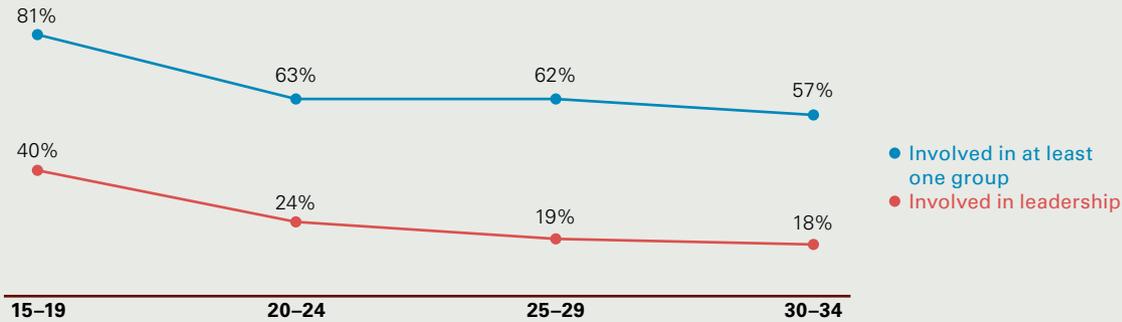
Conclusion

Table 4 highlights the unintended personal and social benefits of social participation and instead of repeating these statistics, it may be more appropriate to reflect on what social participation means to the Singapore society. While the analyses presented in these two tables established correlations and not causality, it is plausible to suggest that the nature of group life, given the necessity of collective tasks which are supported by a normative environment, allows youth participants to acquire new skills and values which benefit the individual in later life.

Perhaps more importantly, such group-derived attributes benefit society, as friendship diversity and multicultural attitudes acquired through social participation work to foster integration in society. It is significant to note that these attributes play a sustained and important role in everyday life. Government efforts work to create new formal organisations or give new roles to existing organisations to do the task, channel resources, and attempt to regulate behaviour through policy measures. It is however in the everyday routines of Singaporeans that the process of integration actually occurs. Individuals with friendship diversity and multicultural attitudes are the brokers or bridges in different communities. Their presence facilitates crossings in inter-personal relations, and through these relationships, fosters a better understanding of social differences. While organisations can only work in prescribed settings, such individuals in significant numbers and socio-economic diversity are able to navigate society more broadly and often unexpectedly.

Within the context of social participation, interactions are regular and sustained, the diverse friendships which emerge are more intimate and multicultural attitudes formed in such settings at a young age are strongly held. The strength of elements allows such individuals to permeate and manage social differences more deeply and effectively. Even weaker relations have the effect of facilitating some level of interaction and understanding. This, in turn, may have a demonstrative and additive effect on others. When Walzer (1986) called for the creation of open-minded spaces in the diverse city, he recognized that even fleeting contacts between members of different groups is sufficient for distrust to be reduced.

If such behaviour cannot be taught in the classroom and can only be learnt within the context of social groups, then there is a renewed role for schools in an increasingly more diverse society to encourage the joining of CCAs in order to facilitate such changes in orientation. This need must be guided by a moderation in the competitive spirit which prevails in schools, supplemented by a more diverse set of activities that focus on cultivation instead of a single-minded focus on excellence. The emphasis on cultivation suggests a more generous membership selection criterion which allows for a broader mix of members. If such activities are deemed important, the term "co-curricular activities" (and not "extra-curricular activities") should be taken seriously with the accompanying planning for a significant time allocated within the general curriculum of schools. Many of such groups are already managed by youths themselves and this should be encouraged further.

The emphasis on cultivation in CCA also suggests a clear role for the National Youth Council to work with schools in youth development, in creating more diverse opportunities for youths to come together, interact and learn. If the results presented in this chapter are to be evidence for best practices, the overriding focus cannot be on integration, because this naked goal can never be the binding agent. Instead, the focus has to be on a set of activities that draw youths of similar interests together: sports, arts and culture, hobby groups, and so on. Common interests sustain, diverse friendships and multicultural orientations can only be a by-product.

Both Haq's experience and Sonia's opinion shape the way we think about youths and social participation. Haq, in terms of the transformative potential of social participation, and Sonia in her inference that skills and attitudes stay on in life and may be passed to future generations through the family. In thinking about what our interventions should be in the life course of young people, we should, as suggested in the earlier paragraph focus on the school-going population to increase various forms of social participation with the objective that lessons learnt will stay on for life and get transferred with different relationships. As youths transit from school to work and beyond, efforts should be made to retain a core in a variety of social groups, for the mentoring and leadership process.

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A2

Barriers and Drivers Towards Continued Arts Participation Amongst Youths

National Arts Council[1]

Abstract

Developmental literature has demonstrated positive consequences of arts involvement, with documented links between arts participation and the development of a young person's social, personal, and academic competencies. Despite these positive benefits of arts involvement, local studies have shown that a large percentage of youths who participate in the arts in school generally are less inclined to participate in the arts upon graduation.

This study seeks to unpack the factors behind this phenomenon of attrition from the arts during Singaporean youths' transition from school to work. Data was obtained from 80 young working adults who were actively involved in the arts during their tertiary education, through two research phases comprising interviews and focus group discussions respectively. The study revealed continued participation in the arts was affected by a consistent set of intrinsic factors as well as a shifting set of extrinsic factors that respectively take precedence during the youths' formation, transitional, and working years.

[1] This chapter was adapted by the author from National Arts Council (2011), Youth Arts Qualitative Study, Singapore.

Chapter A2
Barriers
and Drivers
Towards
Continued
Arts
Participation
Amongst
Youths

Introduction

Arts involvement produces a range of potential benefits for young people, with research linking arts participation with academic, literacy, and cognitive developmental outcomes (CASE, 2010; Deasy, 2002). Arts participation has also been examined for its non-academic benefits, such as emotional, social, and civic development (Mahoney et al., 2005). Studies show correlation between arts involvement and social and personal development such as enhanced self-esteem, sense of purpose, belonging (Hunter, 2005; Martin et al., 2013), initiative (Larson, 2000), as well as heightened civic awareness and engagement (Catteral et al., 2012).

Given that research indicates strong positive benefits of arts participation on youth development, the locally observed trend of decreasing rates of participation amongst youths in the arts scene between their schooling and working years is thus a subject of concern. This study, undertaken by Blackbox Research, endeavours to identify the reasons behind this attrition as well as the range of actions to be undertaken so that more young Singaporeans can adopt and continue to engage in the arts as a fundamental part of their lifestyle, so as to benefit from the positive impact of arts participation.

The Attrition Phenomenon

Whilst various studies in Singapore have consistently shown that arts participation amongst youths aged between 15 and 24 are highest when compared nationally across all age brackets, there are also indications that a large percentage of youths who participate in the arts in school are less inclined to continue with their arts involvement upon graduation. For instance, the 2009 Population Survey of the Arts observed that only 22% of those between the ages of 20 to 29 participated in the arts, compared to a 42% participation rate for those in the typical school-going age of 15 to 19 (National Arts Council, 2009). This trend is also evident in the 2011 Population Survey of the Arts, which sees a steady

attrition of youths who participate in the arts between the school-going (15–19) to post tertiary (25–29) age brackets (**Table 1**).

| Table 1: Youth Arts Participation	
	Arts Participation
15–19	34%
20–24	26%
25–29	19%

Source: National Arts Council (2011a)

The National Youth Survey 2013 found the attrition of arts participation even more pronounced in group settings where only 6% of youths aged 30 to 34 are involved in arts & cultural groups, compared to 27% of those in the 15 to 19 age bracket. Arts-related group participation also declined more sharply compared to other types of group involvement, particularly sports and interest groups (**Chart 1**).

This is particularly noteworthy as while youths cite strengthened social networks and intercultural awareness as one of the benefits of their arts participation, they also indicated the absence of community and like-minded peers as one of the primary reasons why they discontinue engagement in the arts (National Arts Council, 2011b). Increasing group-based arts participation thus has the potential of sparking off a virtuous cycle, which creates more opportunities for positive social outcomes to be reaped.

Most overseas research largely focus on two prongs: (i) how to improve arts experience in curriculum-based and extracurricular arts programmes for adolescents — focusing on the process, environment and features of quality arts programmes (Pavlou, 2006; McCarthy et al., 2004; Montgomery et al., 2013; National Guild

Chart 1: Youths' Involvement in Groups by Category and Age
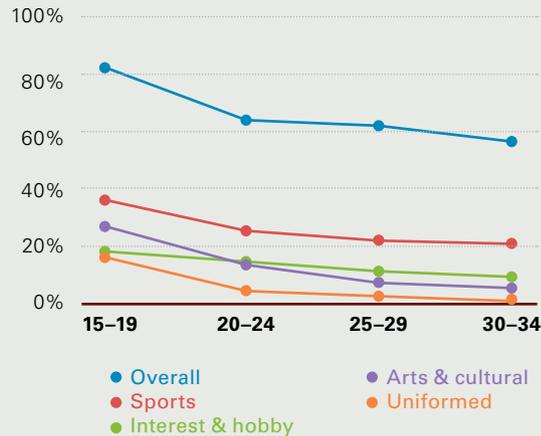
Group Involvement	% Overall Decline
Overall	-30%
Sports	-42%
Interest & hobby	-50%
Arts & cultural	-78%
Uniformed	-94%

Source: National Youth Council (2014)

Legend:
- Overall
- Sports
- Interest & hobby
- Arts & cultural
- Uniformed

for Community Arts Education, 2011); and (ii) youth engagement strategies that address concerns arising either from a talent development (Fredricks et al., 2002) or audience development perspective (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). There is however limited research dedicated to studying the phenomenon of attrition amongst casual hobbyists, who form the local majority of young persons with arts interests (**Figure 1**).

This research thus seeks to understand the key competing factors that draw the typical local young (post-tertiary) adult away from the arts, and to plug the knowledge gap of engagement strategies to better involve and reengage them as casual arts participants.

Given structural similarities between arts participation with other participative and socially-oriented activities (such as sports, community work, and volunteering) that function as one of several myriad interests of local youths, this research also provides insight into reengagement strategies for such activities and areas of interest.

Figure 1: Definition of Casual Hobbyists

	What Defines Casual Hobbyists?
Dedication	See their hobby as one of their leisure activities; therefore hobbies must fit their work schedules and not vice versa.
Skill	Skill development is not a key priority, and enjoyment is sufficient motivation for involvement.
Process Orientation	Typically have not considered going professional, and have less interest in awards, recognition and perfecting their work. Mainly interested in just enjoying the process.

Source: National Arts Council (2011b)

Chapter A2
Barriers
and Drivers
Towards
Continued
Arts
Participation
Amongst
Youths

Research Methodology

Sample and Recruitment Criteria

As this research sought to explore the barriers and drivers to continued participation in the arts, particularly amongst youths who had graduated from school to work life, the study was conducted using a purposive sample of individuals who (i) were actively involved in the arts in their schooling years; (ii) had graduated from their tertiary institution for no more than 5 years; and (iii) were in full-time employment.

There was an even representation of approximately 80 young working adults who, at the time of the interview were actively participating in the arts ("Continuers") as well as those who had given up their involvement in the arts ("Discontinuers"). As a counterpoint to the youths' perspective, several arts instructors and mentors (n=7) were consulted for their insights into perceived motivations and barriers for the participation and progression of youths they work with in the arts.

Youth participants were recruited through the tertiary alumni databases of both private and public art schools, and selected specifically to include an equitable representation of art forms (dance, theatre, music, visual arts, and film) covering both traditional and contemporary genres, as well as population demographics (ethnicity, income, and age).

Method

Phase 1: Interviews were first conducted to ascertain why young working adults were less inclined to maintain active participation in an art form they have pursued while studying, through the following two stages:

(A) Facebook Pre-task
- 27 respondents comprising an even mix of Continuers (n=13) and Discontinuers (n=14)

- Mix of private interviews and group discussions over 7 days

(B) Ethnographic Home Interviews
- 10 of the more vocal respondents from (A), comprising an even mix of art-form respondents
- Further probing of initial feedback, general and art-form specific factors

Phase 2: Focus group discussions were subsequently conducted to test proposed solutions to address perceived barriers to continued arts participation established in Phase 1, comprising:

- Eight Focus groups, with 8 respondents invited to participate per group:
  - 2 x Discontinuers — Performing Arts
  - 2 x Discontinuers — Non-Performing Arts
  - 2 x Continuers — Performing Arts
  - 1 x Continuers — Non-Performing Arts
  - 1 x Teachers & Mentors

Findings

The study found that while most arts participants — including Discontinuers — acknowledged that they had benefited from their involvement in the arts through personal growth, stronger social networks, and a better quality of life, continued arts participation was affected by a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic factors (**Figure 2**).

Critically, innate characteristics, comprising self-motivation, personal passion, and personal expression, form a necessary though insufficient basis for continued arts participation beyond the tertiary level (**Figure 3**).

Furthermore, these intrinsic factors need to be supplemented by a secondary set of extrinsic conditions, with different extrinsic factors coming to fore at the various stages between one's formative to working years (**Figure 4**).

Factors Motivating Continued Involvement / Disengagement

Exposure to the
Arts at School

Social Bonds

Level of Fun &
Commitment

Intrinsic
Factors

Supportive
Social Milieu

New
Commitments

Information &
Communication

Source: National Arts Council (2011b)

Chapter A2
Barriers
and Drivers
Towards
Continued
Arts
Participation
Amongst
Youths

Figure 3: Intrinsic Reasons for Continued Arts Participation

"Being involved with the arts made me feel that I had accomplished something in life. It felt good, and there was a certain high to it. Hence my continuation"
Contemporary Music (Chinese), Continuer

"At one point, singing honestly felt like breathing — it made as much sense and seem as essential to living."
Contemporary Music (English), Continuer

"Arts is just as important, if not important during my working days compared to my tertiary education days. One factor is that it is a main source of relaxation"
Contemporary Music (Chinese), Continuer

Self Motivation & Drive
• Achievement / Accomplishment
• Goal Setting
• Self-worth / Value

Personal Passion
• Enjoyment
• Interest / Desire

Personal Expression
• Freedom / Individuality
• Relieve Pressure

"I've taken away not only soft skills hard skills and everything, but also basically lots of things that have improved me in person as a whole"
Calligraphy, Discontinuer

"Overall it was the unity and having the passion to achieve a common goal that was most memorable"
Orchestra, Continuer

"I've observed that friends with previous arts participation were more open minded, flexible, better people communicators with people in all levels...And generally a more chilled out bunch, despite being in the rat race"
Photographer, Discontinuer

Source: National Arts Council (2011b)

Figure 4: Most Influential Extrinsic Factors at Each Life Stage

Working Years: Social Bonds | Level of Fun & Commitment | Information & Communication

Transitory Years: New Commitments

Formative Years: Supportive Social Milieu | Exposure to the Arts at School

Source: National Arts Council (2011)

Formative Years

The formative years are critical as early influences have a lasting impact on level of interest and continued participation in the arts (Bergonzi & Smith, 1996). The factors identified as influencing the formative years of youths can be categorised as: (a) Supportive Social Milieu and (b) Exposure to the Arts at School.

Supportive Social Milieu

Tracing back their motivations for arts participation, all respondents collectively pointed to support from their social circle — from family, mentors, and at a public level including community, commercial sector, and the government.

The most important form of familial influence proved to be parents who were seen to exhibit polarised views about the arts and the value of being involved. An interesting observation is that while for some individuals, their unsupportive parents continued to influence their decisions following graduation, for others, parental disapproval was a powerful driver that motivated them to carry on with their arts pursuits:

> "There are a lot of performance opportunities and you get paid. I can't do it because of my parents — they don't find it practical but they don't know they're still living in the stone-age."

Theatre, Continuer

Family also exercised an indirect influence on arts participation in that the arts were widely viewed as a leisurely activity for those who could afford it. Respondents from lower income backgrounds tended to give higher priority to spending in areas other than the arts. Some participants also observed that arts participation was more commonly seen in those from higher income backgrounds:

> "I reviewed the people who learnt music, well performed during tertiary...guess what? They all came from rich families — so I can't help associating the arts with those who were very privileged when they were young. Their parents sent them to everything!"

Photography, Discontinuer

Besides family, teachers and mentors also played an integral role in an individual's arts development. They can provide guidance, provide opportunities, act as a source of inspiration, and ensure learning progression. A good or bad teacher can have a lasting and profound impact on a student in the long term:

> "My teacher played an important role in giving me books to read and signing me up for writing competitions as well as publishing my poems in the school magazine. So I guess it is (true to) say that he kinda jump-started my involvement in writing."

Literary Arts, Continuer

However, the lack of interest, appreciation, and support for youth participation in the arts outside of schools were demoralising for those who had invested their time in the arts. While respondents cited the positive support provided by their peers who affirmed their efforts and gave them confidence to continue, these participants also faced a lack of support from other sectors of society:

> "The government can put up grants and whatever, but commercial sponsorship for the arts is the lowest ever."

Teacher / Mentor

Chapter A2
Barriers
and Drivers
Towards
Continued
Arts
Participation
Amongst
Youths

Exposure to the Arts at School

Systemically, the local educational environment was competitive, academically driven, with a tendency to emphasise and favour the sciences rather than the arts and humanities:

> "More effort could be made in teaching the younger generation to appreciate the arts. The sheer emphasis on science and maths denies that. This can be seen by the number of hours allocated each week to the arts in schools."
>
> *Contemporary Music (Chinese), Continuer*

While the focus in recent years for schools to carve out niches in specific areas such as volunteerism, sports, and arts has seen a positive trickle-down effect in students' participation and interest in these areas, such niches also mean that students have limited opportunities to participate in the arts within schools with a non-arts focus. This hinders students from following-through in their areas of interest:

> "I took part in Chinese calligraphy for 2 years. I quite enjoyed it and won awards at a national level. However, I stopped after graduation from primary school as my secondary school did not have such a CCA."
>
> *Ballet, Discontinuer*

Quality of instruction was also cited as a pivotal factor in developing arts interest. On the flip side of good teachers exerting a critical positive influence on their students, the negative effect of poor instruction was also prevalent, due to the lack of regulation. Discontinuers cited disappointing encounters where they did not learn much and felt cheated, consequently losing trust and interest in the arts scene.

Transitory Years

In the transition from school to work, continued arts participation predominantly depends on whether a strong enough passion for the arts had been developed sufficiently to overcome competing commitments. This is a period characterised by new-found financial independence, personal and family financial burdens, work demands, and the need to recalibrate balance of relationships (e.g., family, friends, spouse).

Some respondents noted that work provided them with the financial ability to spend on the arts:

> "I think I really need the arts to balance my work life, which is rather interesting and gives me the financial ability to spend on the arts. Still, it does not give me the intellectual satisfaction the arts can give me."
>
> *Literary Arts, Continuer*

However, most who actively participated in the arts in their tertiary years were likely to prioritise other commitments above arts involvement:

> "Singing is an important aspect of my life but I have no pretensions about it defining who I am. Relationships with the people around me are much more important than an act of service on stage, and they take higher priority in my life."
>
> *Contemporary Music (English), Continuer*

> "My interest began to fade after graduation: job hunting, spouse hunting, material hunting, affording a home, settling down settling with a new set of family... etc"
>
> *Theatre, Discontinuer*

These findings are further corroborated by the National Youth Survey, which found that strong family relationships (74%), home ownership (70%), skills and knowledge acquisition (65%), and having a successful career (61%) to be the main priorities of local youths, in contrast to the minority (13%) who report active involvement in the arts as a very important life goal (National Youth Council, 2014).

Therefore, those who continue to be very passionate about the arts might find themselves increasingly alone as their priorities move out of sync from their friends and former peers. Such an experience of alienation can be a de-motivating factor as described by one of the respondents:

> "Arts is still important i.e. I'll bug my friends to watch musicals and plays with me, visit the museum or be my models while I snap photos... but it's been tough for me to find a large group of peers who have the same interests as me. I sometimes feel like an alien."

> *Sound Mixing, Continuer*

Working Years

The working years were identified as the weakest link in the chain; the arts participation rate of young working adults was the lowest among all age brackets. This is also the age bracket where intervention has the potential to create the biggest impact; once past arts participants have adjusted to their new working lifestyles, they could re-engage with the arts. However, their re-engagement is impeded by an absence of the following conditions: (a) creation and maintenance of social circles; (b) avenues for participation that are fun and require low commitment; and (c) credible information and targeted communications.

Creation and Maintenance of Social Circles

The study identified that continued arts participation relied heavily on social bonds with peers and likeminded individuals. Peers were consistently identified as the number one reason why young adults were engaged in any activities at all.

> "The friends that I made... they are the people who made me want to continue dancing even though I might be more busy now, because it's great to have friends who share the same passion. We can all encourage one another."

> *Contemporary Dance, Continuer*

While this social need may partially be met through alumni networks, these were also reported to have a limited lifespan. Those who continued involvement in alumni groups often experience dissatisfaction in the dynamics of their group as peers slowly dropped out. One respondent describes this alienating experience:

> "I used to go back to my old secondary school and take part in the concert band there. But the juniors I know will graduate soon, and the conductor changed. I feel like I don't belong there anymore. It's not the same old conductor who taught me. Now the bonds are no longer there, it's totally stopped me from going back."

> *Classical Concert Band, Contemporary Jazz Band & Traditional Chinese Orchestra, Continuer*

Instead, a significant proportion of those who continue their arts involvement do so due to relationships forged with a wider network of groups with interest in the

Chapter A2
Barriers
and Drivers
Towards
Continued
Arts
Participation
Amongst
Youths

arts, outside of the school structure. However, such networks are not common due to the lack of inter-school collaboration opportunities, networking platforms, and a credible online social network to stay in touch.

Avenues for Participation that are Fun and Require Low Commitment

As most young working adults approach their participation in the arts as casual hobbyists, they tend to seek enjoyment over achievement through their arts involvement. As a result, most see participating in the arts as one of several avenues to 'have fun', with other leisure activities competing for their attention.

> "I'd rather sit down and watch my television.
> I'm too lazy to draw, relaxing is better."

> *Painting, Discontinuer*

Most also tend to be commitment-averse, only choosing to participate at a level they can commit. Such opportunities were deemed absent, as showcasing platforms such as festivals, performances or exhibitions were largely observed to cater for professionals and not amateurs.

Credible Information and Targeted Communications

Moreover, while most respondents indicated interest to participate in the arts, few were able to recall festivals, events, and programmes for young adults, and fewer knew any for which they were eligible to take part in. Many simply did not know where to look for opportunities, and cited available information as patchy, fragmented, and lacking credibility, requiring substantial time and effort to sieve through and make sense of:

> "I wanted to take up some painting and
> drawing again but the problem is that I don't
> know which course I should go for."

> *Writing, Discontinuer*

To address this information gap, an online information portal was suggested as the best way to engage young tech-savvy adults. In addition to the online presence, respondents indicated the additional need for an offline centralised arts hub, as a physical extension of the online space, where like-minded people could meet, interact, and create.

Addressing the Gaps

In essence, the study has identified the arts as largely a social / group-based pursuit, drawing a distinction between serious hobbyists (i.e., individuals who see the area of practice as a part-time profession), and casual hobbyists (i.e., individuals who see the area of practice as a leisure activity). It has also established that only a minority of young adults are actively engaged in such group-based activities, or see it as a life goal.

The general interventions to sustain intrinsically-motivated arts engagement and create conducive extrinsic conditions for continued arts participation suggested by this study are:

Pre-tertiary Intervention
- Undertake general public advocacy for the arts, recognising that youths' decisions are shaped and influenced by the views of their family, mentors, community, the commercial sector, as well as the government;

- Facilitate more opportunities in school (e.g., enabling a basic level of resources to be committed across all schools) while ensuring the quality of instruction is maintained; and

- Enable interschool collaboration opportunities for wider networks to be formed.

Table 2. Interventions by National Arts Council to Support Continued Arts Participation amongst Youths

Factor	Intervention
Extrinsic	
Supportive Social Milieu	• Advocacy for Youth Arts through **Noise Singapore**[2] • Engaging corporate partners (e.g. Uniqlo-Noise Singapore project)
Arts Exposure at School[3]	• Increasing access to quality arts programmes by professional artists through the National Arts Council — Arts Education Programme, Tote Board Arts Grant and Artist-in-School Scheme, etc. which provide subsidies for arts programmes purchased by schools • **National Arts Education Award** framework that encourages schools to provide holistic arts education, and strengthen schools' arts programmes and processes • Improving quality of arts instruction through a **Pedagogy Training and Accreditation** framework • **Arts and Culture Presentation Grant** that provides students with more opportunities to produce and present to a public audience beyond school
Creation and Maintenance of Social Circles	• Supporting inter-school engagement and collaboration through the **Polytechnic Initiative** • Organising open access networking sessions through **MATCHBOX**[4] Mayhem
Avenues for Participation that are 'Fun' and Require Low Commitment	• Creating opportunities for showcase through the **Noise Festival** • Seeding broad-based Youth Arts programmes through **Noise Movement** • Bringing introductory level arts programmes to the workplace through **Arts@Work**[5]
Credible Information and Targeted Marketing	• Revamping the **Noise Website** as a Youth Arts information portal that aggregates information and resources on youth arts opportunities across Singapore
Intrinsic	
Self-Motivation and Drive	• **Youth Arts Overseas Attachment Programme** which offers capable young arts champions an immersive learning experience at youth-focused arts companies in the UK, with the long-term aim of growing a pool of youth arts champions. • **MATCHBOX** support and funding for youths who want to initiate their own arts projects / presentations
Personal Passion & Personal Expression	• **The Noise Apprenticeship Programme and Music Mentorship Programme** offer budding artists hoping to deepen their knowledge and skills the opportunity to learn from experienced practitioners across various fields.

Source: National Arts Council (2011a)

[2] More information on the Noise festival can be found at www.noisesingapore.com.

[3] More information on the National Arts Council's Arts Education programmes and schemes can be found at http://aep.nac.gov.sg.

[4] More information on the MATCHBOX scheme can be found at https://nac.gov.sg/arts-you/for-everyone/youth/matchbox.

[5] More information on the Arts@Work programmes can be found at https://www.mac.gov.sg/arts-you/for-everyone/adults.

Chapter A2
Barriers
and Drivers
Towards
Continued
Arts
Participation
Amongst
Youths

Post-tertiary Intervention

• Create and maintain social bonds by breaking down the barriers between CCA groups, interest groups, and working through the most immediate social circle of all youths such as their colleagues;

• Create a fun and social experience through participation by structuring programmes that allow participation at a comfortable level with short term commitments;

• Provide more artistic and/or leadership development opportunities for self-motivated youths to enable them to take their arts engagement to the next level; and

• Support these activities generated by various groups through improvements to the software information infrastructure (e.g., centralised information portal, direct email newsletters, social media, and mailing lists) as well as the development of hardware infrastructure (e.g., a physical arts hub).

Guided by the findings of this study and its suggested interventions, the National Arts Council has progressively introduced policies and programmes to increase public support, enable positive arts experiences, and provide opportunities for young people to learn, showcase and meet like-minded people in the arts (**Table 2**).

Through this, the National Arts Council seeks to create an environment where diverse groups of young people, regardless of their socio-economic status or educational background, are able to find fulfilment in and through the arts.

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A3

Face-to-Face, Mobile, and Online: Young People's Use of Media for Social Interaction

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Abstract

This article covers three salient ways in which young people around the world today interact with one another: face-to-face, via the mobile phone, and over the Internet's myriad communication channels, including immensely popular social media platforms. This article focuses on the ways in young people socialise both with and through media, generating distinctive traits, norms, practices, codes, and shared identities that make up their unique peer cultures, while meeting their needs for affiliation and affirmation. It also considers the various risks that young people may encounter as they interact with peers both with and through this rich myriad of media channels and content.

Chapter A3
Face-
to-Face,
Mobile, and
Online:
Young
People's Use
of Media
for Social
Interaction

Media and Youths' Peer Culture

As children and adolescents develop, they are socialised by adults as well as by their peers. These peer groups play critical socialising functions which imbue in children a sense of their peers' norms, values, and behavioural patterns (Handel et al., 2007). While young people imbibe the adult cultures that surround them, they also absorb the peer culture that underpins and sustains their interactions and relationships with other young people (Brown & Klute, 2003). Peer culture encompasses norms and conventions, shared interests and activities, social and instrumental interaction, and the unique modes of communication deployed in all of the afore-mentioned elements.

During the periods of adolescence and early adulthood in particular, peer culture assumes an important role in young people's lives because their emotional centre shifts away from the family (Arnett, 2010). Key constituents of young people's peer culture, given the priorities of their life stage, often include shared interests and involvement in leisure pursuits such as play, sports, shopping and media (Larson & Verma, 1999). Print, broadcast and online media constitute an increasingly important part of young people's lives in both industrialised and developing countries and are invariably woven into their peer culture (Arnett, 2010). The ways in which young people integrate their media consumption into their peer culture is the focus of this chapter.

Specifically, this article reviews how young people incorporate media content into their peer interactions and appropriate a variety of communication platforms to socialise with their peers, thus generating distinctive traits, norms, practices, codes, and shared identities that make up their unique peer culture(s). The article is structured according to the three salient ways in which young people around the world today interact with one another: face-to-face, via the mobile phone, and over the Internet's myriad social media channels.

Media in Face-to-Face Peer Culture

Face-to-face interactions with peers is a key facet of youth development as they gradually mature and steer away from the social world of their families, towards that of their peer groups. As Pasquier (2008) observes, "[c]ultural preferences and practices are at the very heart of the organisation of youth sociability, the base on which one elaborates individual and collective identities" (p. 457). Indeed, extensive research has been conducted on how media content and devices are appropriated by young people for socialisation with peers, as both material for conversation and as a platform for communication.

Prior research has found that as young people interact in school and leisure settings, media content is often commandeered as topics of discussion. A qualitative study of young people in Finland, Switzerland and Spain found that media content lubricates conversation and play, with older children chatting about popular television programs and computer games. For example, younger children engage in role-play where they model themselves after characters drawn from popular culture (Suess et al., 1998). Notably, the teens they studied felt compelled to watch every episode of a popular television programme so that they could participate in discussions about the programme that were likely to take place in school the next day. Indeed, alongside parental mediation of young people's media consumption, peer interaction about media content also generates norms about what constitutes acceptable content for the group and determines which media they should consume (Nathanson, 2001). Similarly, Pasquier (2008) observes that the enjoyment of music assumes a crucial role in the lives of young people, and by implication, peer approval of one's musical tastes is the key to peer acceptance. For example, she found an active disavowal of classical music which has a dated image amongst young people in France, in favour of trendier genres such as rap and grunge rock. To avert marginalisation by

their peers therefore, adolescents tend to subscribe to peer-endorsed musical cultures and the accompanying standards and injunctions.

While the media holds general appeal for young people, its ability to traverse different social milieu and technological platforms is what makes it an excellent source of connection for young people in their peer interactions. In analysing the worldwide popularity of Poke'mon, Buckingham and Sefton-Green (2003) discovered that children could engage with Poke'mon via the television cartoon, computer game and trading cards, and translate this knowledge into social interaction, be it of a playful, friendly, or competitive nature. This "portability" (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 2003, p. 388) of the children's knowledge about the cartoon thus entrenched Poke'mon as a prime ingredient in their peer culture. With growing convergence across media genres and platforms, the portability of media content will become even more palpable, further enlarging the role which media will assume in young people's peer cultures.

Shared media use is another important way in which media enters young people's peer culture. With the rapid diffusion of portable media devices such as mobile phones, MP3 players, laptop computers, handheld video games, as well as media devices that encourage shared usage such as multi-player video game machines and tablet computers, face-to-face encounters with peers are likely to involve a physical convergence around these devices, and a joint viewing of media content. As observed by Suoninen (2001) of European youths, visiting friends to play electronic games or watch videos is a popular activity, with some teenagers planning special video nights where they watch a series of movies that may not have met with parental approval, thus fostering a sense of deviant youth culture. The rising ubiquity of smartphones with location-based services and always-on, always-available Internet access in some countries has also introduced a culture of documenting face-to-face peer interactions and sharing amongst the peer group. Singaporean teen girls, for example, take camera phone photographs during outings with friends and share them on-the-spot via Bluetooth or Facebook for their friends to view and access (Lim & Ooi, 2011). Through this instantaneous capture and dissemination of peer encounters, these young people construct shared memories that serve to enhance their sense of group identity.

Mobile Phone Peer Culture

Another dominant mode of peer interaction amongst young people today is mobile phone communication. Conventions and trends in peer-to-peer communication via text, voice, or photos constitute the cultural dimensions of young people's mobile phone interactions with their friend networks. Mobile phone peer culture comprises idiosyncratic communication practices and linguistic codes in the form of truncated, alphanumeric text-ese, which come with their own tacit rules of adoption and standards of social acceptability (Thurlow & Brown, 2003).

On an instrumental level, young people's use of the mobile phone to identify their friends' whereabouts and micro-coordinate serendipitous gatherings has created a peer culture where "mobility and flexible scheduling are central" (Castells et al., 2007). Ling and Yttri (2002) noted from their study of Norwegian teens that this practice of vaguely specifying where to meet before progressively firming up appointments, while not unique to young people, is especially developed amongst teenagers. Such flexibility hinges on always being accessible to others, which in turn creates an always-on intimate community that keeps in perpetual intermittent contact, constantly updating one another on all aspects of their personal life, from the mundane to the weighty (Ito, 2004). This culture of communication also enables young people to engage in a live, stream-of-consciousness narration of daily events that enable them to live out and share in one another's lives, as seen in a Canadian study (Caron & Caronia, 2007).

The

or fighting, as well as between voice telephony and narcotics use. In addition, the data revealed that extended use of the mobile phone for voice telephony covaries with reported engagement in serious forms of deviance such as breaking and entering, stealing, vandalising, and fighting with weapons. Ling suggests that the low threshold for mobile communication, although applicable to mobile phone use in general, is of particular significance in supporting deviant behaviours because the ephemerality of voice telephony leaves no incriminating evidence and may also signal greater maturity and status amongst the peer group. Although focusing on Internet use by gangs, the study by King, Walpole, and Lamon (2007) is also relevant to our understanding of mobile media and deviance in light of the growing proliferation of smartphones with Internet access. They assert that as more deviant behaviour is shared online by gangs, such as Happy Slapping videos of gang exploits, such behaviour may be increasingly glamorised and spur other gangs to do likewise.

In my own research on mobile phone use by juvenile delinquents and youths-at-risk, we interviewed youths-at-risk and juvenile offenders who were either in- or post-rehabilitation to understand the implications of their mobile phone use for their involvement in delinquency and crime (Lim et al., 2011). Like Ling (2005), we found that the direct link to peers, being both discreet and instantaneous, made co-ordination and engagement in illicit activities much easier, minimising and in most cases obliterating the possibility of adult supervision. Research on juvenile delinquency shows that youths who fraternise with delinquent peers and who do not have exposure to adult company are more likely to be drawn in delinquency (Agnew, 1991; Haynie, 2002). In this regard, the mobile phone and its direct link to peers present a potential risk for juvenile delinquents and youths-at-risk. The stealth with which peer gatherings are organised proves to be particularly challenging in some situations. Some youths reported having been invited to gatherings via SMS, only to realise upon their arrival that they were to partake in a substance abuse

session, by which time it was too late for them to withdraw. Others were mobilised to participate in gang fights and had felt pressured to join in because of the immediacy of the mobile phone-enabled request and a desire to demonstrate gang loyalty. Another youth who had been incarcerated for his involvement in loan shark harassment explained how he had been recruited by the loan shark, given instructions for the harassment tasks and paid entirely via SMS.

Social workers whom we interviewed explained that the mediated nature in which such illegal activities were undertaken ameliorated any reservations or residual fears that the youths might have had about participating. With regard to rehabilitated juvenile offenders, the persistence of their old peer networks proved to be a risk factor that compromised attempts to rehabilitate them. During rehabilitation, the youths had been counselled that they had to discontinue fraternising with their former gangs or groups so as to make a fresh start in life. However, youths who had retained their mobile phone numbers from prior to rehabilitation were quickly contacted by their former peers and found resisting such advances difficult. In such circumstances, mobile links with peers presented an insidious route to recidivism that these youths and their counsellors had to be vigilant about.

Akrich (1992) observes that technical objects can bring together human and non-human actants of diverse shapes and sizes. As existing research shows, the mobile phone's affordances of constant contact, ease of accessibility, low threshold for communication, and discreet, coded messaging can be appropriated by youths for engagement in covert, illicit, and criminal activities.

Online Peer Culture

Online communication platforms enable young people to extend their peer interaction beyond their face-to-face encounters with one another. This multitude of online platforms, including discussion forums, instant messaging, social networking services such

Chapter A3
Face-
to-Face,
Mobile, and
Online:
Young
People's Use
of Media
for Social
Interaction

as Facebook and Foursquare, and virtual worlds such as Club Penguin and Webkinz etc., each with its own set of affordances, communication cues, styles, and rhythms, offer additional means by which young people can nurture their peer cultures. These platforms are too numerous and varied to systematically review in the present article, however, key findings relating to young people's online peer culture will be highlighted.

First, extant research demonstrates that online interactions extend the face-to-face relationships of physically proximate peers and are used to showcase and assert their group identities. Indeed, it is unproductive to regard young people's online interactions as separate and distinct from their offline, face-to-face relationships. As Boudreau (2007) discovered from her study of Girls' Room, a message board created by a group of teen girls in Montreal, the message board rapidly evolved from a site where they chatted about the activities of the day, into a virtual community where they discussed issues in a more reflective manner. Through these online interactions, the girls strengthened their sense of belonging to their offline peer group. A similar finding was drawn from research on the media use of juvenile delinquents in Singapore, though with a notable point of divergence. The study found that a group of delinquent teens who used to congregate at a particular apartment building, but who were subsequently incarcerated for criminal activity, would 'meet' each other in an online chat group labelled '715' — the apartment building number — thus remotely sustaining their face-to-face peer culture even while physically absent (Lim et al., 2011).

Second, online interactions provide young people with a relatively less risky environment in which to acquaint themselves with the norms and rules of their peer groups. In her study of American teens' use of MySpace, Boyd (2008) argues that social network sites allow young people to "work out identity and status, make sense of cultural cues, and negotiate public life" (p. 120). By observing the

mutual interactions, validations, and admonishments of peers in the socially-networked online setting, young people learn to interpret social situations and manage their public personae both online and offline. On a related note, Clark (2005) found that American teen girls appreciated instant messaging because it offered them opportunities to initiate interaction with peers that they would not have dared to attempt in face-to-face settings, and that the asynchronicity of online communication allowed them to plan in advance what they wanted to say and how they wished to present themselves.

Third, although online peer culture is situated within and shaped by offline culture, the dynamics of the online environment can influence the nature of peer interaction and alter the basis of peer culture. Online interaction can occur in text-based chat rooms or graphically-rich virtual worlds such as Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games and virtual environments in which young people participate via avatars, e.g., Club Penguin, Webkinz, and Whyville. The visual anonymity and disembodiment of online text-based interaction relieves youths of the pressures of self-presentation and impression management (Holloway & Valentine, 2003). As the British teens in Holloway and Valentine's (2003) study attest, in text-based chat rooms, the peer culture is built more on shared interests than mutual propinquity, and interactions tend to be on substantive topics rather than the mundane details of everyday face-to-face relationships. With regard to interaction in graphically-rich virtual environments, young people can experiment with their identities as they use the virtual tools available to create personalised avatars that can exercise agency and autonomy. Although expressing one's personality through a disembodied, online instantiation of oneself can be rewarding, online peer interaction then hinges on the appearance of one's avatar (Lim & Clark, 2010). As Lu (2010) discovered from her experience of Neopets.com and Burley (2010) from her explorations of Club Penguin, in

these highly visual and visible virtual worlds, one risks social embarrassment if one's avatar is not sufficiently adorned with the 'right' virtual accoutrements.

Online media-based subcultures have also emerged, where youths leverage the privacy anonymity of computer-mediated communication (CMC) to sustain peer cultures that are considered more 'deviant', in a safe and non-judgemental online space. The proliferation of online pro-anorexic websites is a case-in-point. Gailey (2009) observes that involvement in these "pro-ana" websites, blogs, and social networking sites reflect a conscious attempt to create or seek community. For anorexics, the Internet alleviates feelings of alienation and stigma by providing common spaces to "share ideas, feelings, art, poems, support and friendships" (Gailey, 2009, p. 94). Blogs and websites are places where anorexics contribute to and affirm shared ideologies, while dispensing dieting tips and success stories to motivate others. They are also spaces where members of the subculture stay accountable to each other. Confessions of overeating or the public display of an individual's diet plan for the week are common sightings on personal or community blogs. Unbounded by geographical and cultural constraints, the Internet facilitates an engagement in a community of kindred souls (Polak, 2007).

Conclusion

The media constitutes a cornerstone of youths' peer culture that is at once alluring and difficult for youths to disengage from. Be it mainstream youths or youth subcultures, young people today are avidly appropriating media content and channels to interact with their peers, in the process fostering norms, conventions, shared practices, and collective identities within their peer groups. Yet, as the penetration of Internet-ready smartphones rises and technological convergence gains pace, so too will the convergence of young people's face-to-face, mobile, and online interactions. With the seamless connection of young people's offline and online interactions, there will be greater opportunity for peer cultures to be invigorated, asserted, and shared across multiple realms, both mediated and face-to-face. But will such seamlessness intensify "context collapse" (Wesch, 2009) where people from different realms of one's life converge, further challenging young people's ability to negotiate the competing social expectations imposed by different peer groups? Being constantly connected to their peers both online and off, will young people find the pressure of adhering to peer norms overwhelming and deindividuating? Where and how will young people carve out a personal space for themselves to resist the influences of media-centered and media-facilitated peer culture? It is imperative that future research considers these questions as it tracks the evolving position of media in young people's peer culture.

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Chapter A3
Face-
to-Face,
Mobile, and
Online:
Young
People's Use
of Media
for Social
Interaction

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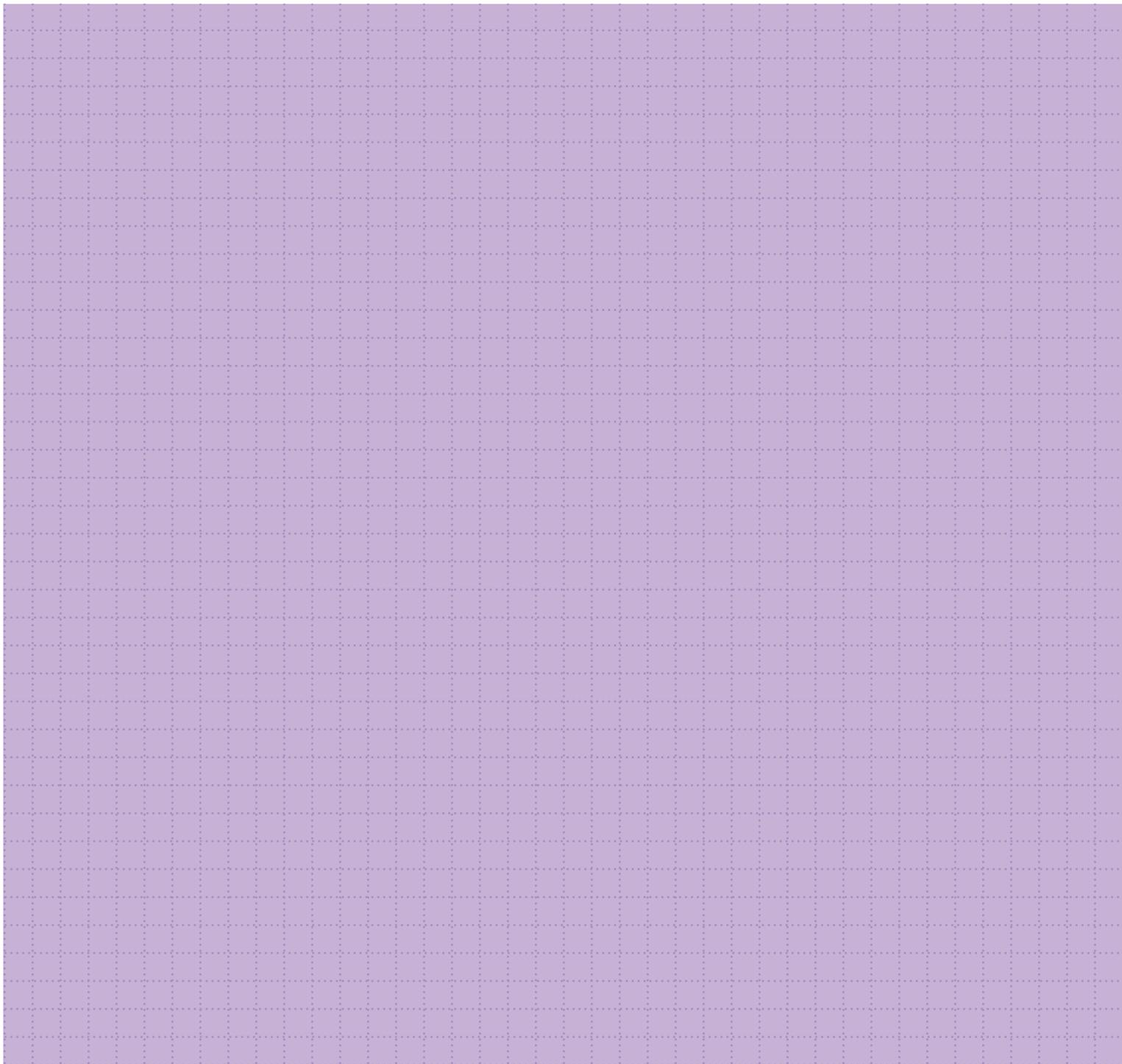
Section B
Youth & Development

B1

Educational Pathways & Youth Development

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Abstract

This chapter examines the role that educational paths play in mediating the effects of youths' background on various developmental outcomes, focusing on students aged 15 to 18 in the National Youth Survey 2013. Although education differed by parental socio-economic status, race, and immigrant status, the role that the education system plays in the reproduction of family advantage or disadvantage is not strong. However, its mediating role transcends academic success to other developmental domains, including self-esteem, social competence, stress, and overseas experience. The findings suggest the importance and potential of reducing these differences through modifications in the educational system as well as larger societal institutions.

Introduction

School is a big part of a youth's life, and especially so in today's context when education is greatly emphasised and a young person spends much of his or her waking hours in school. In Singapore, the school has grown into a central institution that gives students their identity, structures their activities, and shapes their career paths.

While much has been said about how the different streams, programmes, and school types stratify students by socioeconomic status (SES; e.g. Chang, 2011), less is known about whether and how the different educational paths actually lead to different educational and social experiences.

This chapter examines the role that educational paths play in mediating the effects of youths' background on various developmental outcomes for students aged 15 to 18, including educational aspiration, self-esteem, organisational and relational competence, overseas learning experience, and practical and relationship stressors. The outcomes represent a range of academic, psychosocial, and other practical developmental tools that are viewed as important to youth's future success (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Eccles et al., 2003). Background variables in this study include parents' socioeconomic status, marital status, and immigrant status; and youths' ethnicity, age, and gender.

The mediating role of educational paths is studied through a two-step multivariate process. First, in Model 1, the set of background variables are regressed on each of the youth outcomes without the educational pathways. Then, in Model 2, the set of variables representing the educational pathways is added. A significant decrease in the coefficients of the background variables suggests that educational pathway significantly mediates the effect of that background variable.

A pictorial depiction of the empirical model tested in this Chapter is provided in **Figure 1.** For variables that are rank ordered (namely education aspiration, organisational competence, relational competence, practical stressors, and relationship stressors), ordered probit regression is used. For self-esteem, which is treated as a variable on a continuous scale, OLS regression is used. For the two dichotomous variables on overseas experience, probit regression is used.

Before the two-step regression analysis, the background variables are regressed on educational pathways to understand the relationship between the background variables and educational pathways. As educational pathways are in five non-ranked categories, multinomial logistic regression is used.

Data and Methodology

Survey Data & Educational Pathways

The study focuses on youths aged 15 to 18 in the National Youth Survey (NYS) 2013. The age range was chosen to represent the various educational pathways of school-going age youths as illustrated in **Figure 2.**

The most common pathway to a local public university (and one which can perhaps be taken as the default) for most students is the group that enters the Secondary School Express stream in a standard programme and then progresses to Junior College (JC) after the 'O' Level Examination taken at the end of Secondary 4. Another group of students with lower average Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) results enter the Normal (Academic) or Normal (Technical) streams. This group typically go on to the Institute of Technical education (ITE) after the 'N' Level taken at the end of Secondary 4 or 5.

Besides JC and ITE, some students also enter polytechnic after the 'O' Level or 'A' Level. However, as we restrict the sample to youths aged 18 and below, the sample in this study excludes polytechnic students who enter after 'A' Levels, which is usually taken at age 18.

Figure 1: Two-Step Empirical Model of Determinants of Students' Educational and Social Outcomes

Parent's Background
1. Socioeconomic Status
2. Marital Status
3. Foreign/Local-born

Youth's Background
4. Race/Ethnicity
5. Age
6. Gender

Model 1

Model 2
Education Pathways

**Educational and
Social Outcomes**
1. Educational Apirations
2. Self-esteem
3. Organisation Competency
4. Relational Competency
5. Overseas Experience
6. Practical Stressors
7. Relational Stressors
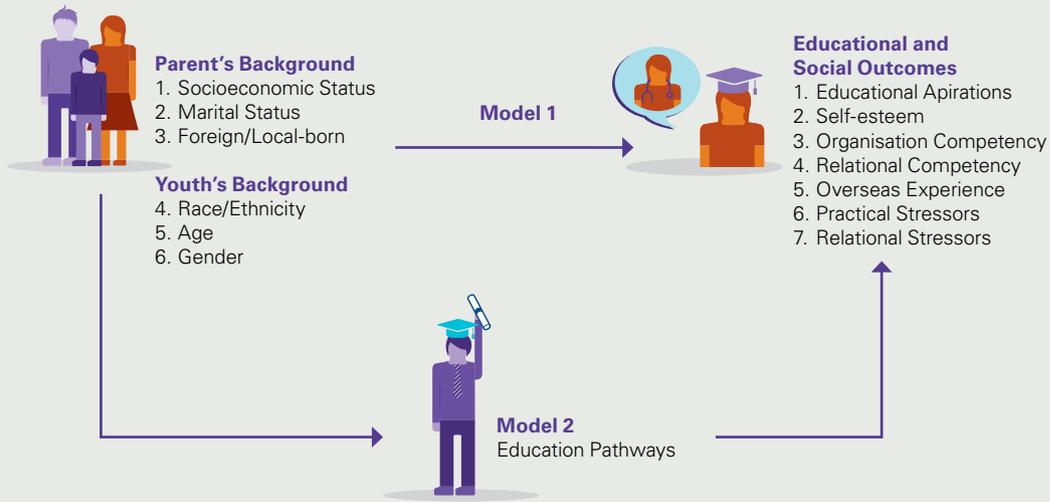
Figure 2: Education Pathways

Lower PSLE Scores — Sec School (NA/NT)

Average PSLE Scores — Sec School (Express)

After "O"/"N" Levels

ITE/Vocational Institute

Polytechnic

Junior College

Higher PSLE Scores — IP/IB/Specialized Schools
(Education provided till Year 6 before applying for University)

Others/Private Programmes
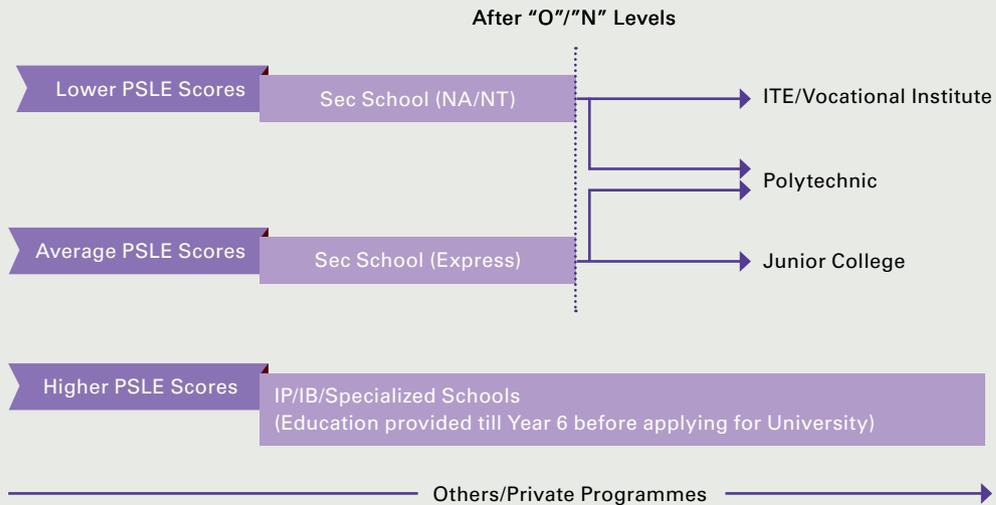
Yet another group of students, usually those with the most outstanding PSLE results, enter the Express stream into the Integrated Programme (IP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme which take them through till Year 6 when they apply for University.

Finally, a small group of students are in private programmes. These might be home-schoolers or those who have failed out of the standard school system. As the results will indicate, this group is a diverse mix.

The overlapping pathways are complex and there is fluidity in some students crossing the different pathways. However, the five categories of education paths in Figure 2 represent the main and common tracks students experience, and thus form the main classification system for the educational pathway variable used in the empirical analysis. The most common pathway of the Express steam to JC is the base category against which the other pathways are compared. This can be called the "standard" track or path. The other categories are then the (a) elite: IP/IB, including also specialized schools, (b) vocational: normal to ITE, and (c) other: private.

This five classification system provides a sufficient sample size to explore the interesting dynamics of not only being a student in the different Secondary level streams, but also the post-secondary routes of ITE, polytechnic, JC, and the through-train IB/IP. The educational experiences in these post-secondary settings are very different for a 17 or 18 year old, and could lead to very different educational and psychosocial development. For example, polytechnic life is probably the most independent, and therefore might afford greater freedom to a 17-year-old who enters polytechnic instead of ITE, JC, or IB/IP.

The age range 15 to 18 excludes University education, which students enter only after age 18. Thus, three respondents who were 18 years old but already in university are excluded. This gives a total sample of 592 youths.

Other Independent Variables

Two measures of parents' SES were first considered: parents' highest qualification and housing type. Parents' highest qualification was found to be more strongly correlated to education paths (see results later), and therefore for the subsequent youth outcomes, only parents' education was used as the proxy for SES.

Parents' highest qualification was based on the highest qualification that either of the parents have. That is, where the father's education was higher than the mother's, father's education was used and vice versa. The level of education was rank-ordered to eight levels as follows (1) PSLE & Below, (2) 'N' Levels, (3) 'O' Levels, (4) ITE/VI, (5) GCE 'A' Levels/Post Secondary, (6) diploma, (7) university graduate or other professional qualifications, and lastly (8) postgraduate.

The second measure of parents' SES was housing type. This variable was rank-ordered into the following seven levels: (1) HDB 1–2 rooms, (2) HDB 3 rooms, (3) HDB 4 rooms, (4) HDB 5 rooms, (5) HDB Executive/Maisonette/HUDC/DBSS/Executive Condominium, (6) private flat/condominium, and (7) landed property/others.

Race/ethnicity was specified with three dummy variables for minority races: (1) Malay, (2) Indian, and (3) others. These were compared with Chinese as the base group.

Family structure affects youths' development (Brooks-Gunn 1997; Painter & Levine 2000), and single parenthood was proxied by a dichotomous variable if parents were divorced, separated, widowed or single. The base group contains married parents.

To study the effects of whether one was a new citizen or resident, two dummy variables were created: (1) for respondents with one parent born in a foreign country, and (2) for respondents with parents who were both born outside of Singapore. These two dummy variables

thus compare against the base group of respondents whose parents were both born in Singapore. This specification was felt to be more reflective of the current demographic dynamic than a citizen-permanent resident dichotomy, because many youth citizens today might be new citizens who are first or second generation immigrants.

Gender and age are dichotomous variables. The age dummy equals one if the respondents are aged 17 to 18. Gender equals one for female respondents.

Dependent Variables

Education Aspirations

The respondents were asked about the highest level of education that they could achieve and this question was used as a measure of their education aspiration. The education aspirations were rank-ordered into four categories: (1) 'N' or 'O' Levels/ITE/ VI/GCE 'A' Levels/

Post Secondary, (2) diploma, (3) university graduate or other professional qualifications, and (4) postgraduate.

Self-Esteem

For self-esteem, the respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with three statements about themselves. The three statements were "on the whole, I am satisfied with myself", "I feel that I have a number of good qualities" and "I feel I do not have much to be proud of." The respondent then chose their responses based on a five-point Likert Scale, namely (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) disagree, and (5) strongly disagree. The self-esteem scale was generated by taking the mean value of the answers to the three statements $(\alpha=.69)$.

Social Competencies

For social competencies, the respondents were asked to rank themselves on ten qualities and how much the qualities reflect who they were based on the

Table 1. Factor Analysis of Social Competencies

	Organisational Competence ($\alpha=.82$)	Relational Competence ($\alpha=.65$)
Being good at planning ahead	X	
Respecting the values and beliefs of people who are of a different race or culture than I am		X
Leading a team of people	X	
Caring about other people's feelings		X
Being good at making friends	X	
Staying away from people who might get me in trouble		X
Knowing a lot about people of other races		X
Speaking publicly	X	
Working well with other people	X	X
Adapting to change	X	

Source: NYS 2013

following five-points Likert scale: (1) not at all like me, (2) a little like me, (3) somewhat like me, (4) quite like me, and (5) very much like me. The higher up the Likert scale, the more they were competent in that particular quality. Through factor analysis, two competency scales were constructed, one representing organisational competence and another representing relational competence. **Table 1** gives the breakdown of which item was used in which competence scale. Each scale was created by taking the mean of the items.

Overseas Experiences

The two variables on overseas experiences, one for school-based and another for non-school-based, were dichotomous variables that took the value 1 if the respondent had been on any of the type of overseas activities listed: internship, student exchange, study trip, community expedition, religious expedition, competition, and other learning programmes.

Youth Stressors

A series of Likert Scale questions were used to track how the respondents viewed various life stressors. Out of the total of nine stressors in the questionnaire, five stressors that had significant results were extracted for reporting in this Chapter. There were three practical stressors, namely finances, studies, and future uncertainty; and two relationship stressors, namely family relationships and friendships (including peer pressure, romantic relationships). The Likert Scale included the following options: (1) extremely stressful, (2) very stressful, (3) moderately stressful, (4) a little stressful, and (5) not at all stressful.

Summary Statistics

Table 2 provides the summary statistics of the key variables. A majority (38.51%) of the sample was either in the Express stream in Secondary School or in regular Junior Colleges, followed by polytechnic (27.36%), normal/ITE (19.09%), IB/IP (9.63%), and other (5.41%). The ethnic composition was comparable to that of

the youth population statistics in 2013 (Department of Statistics, 2014). However, females were slightly over-represented and 15 year-olds under-represented in the sample.

There were two peaks in the parents' highest qualifications — 24.4% of the sample had parents with `O' Levels and 23.3% of their parents had a Bachelor Degree. The next most common qualification types of parents were Diploma (13.37%) and Postgraduate (13.87%).

A majority of the sample stayed in HDB 3–4 room flats (43.58%) followed by HDB 5 rooms/HDB Executive/ Maisonette/HUDC/DBSS/Executive Condominium (34.97%). Only 1.18% of the sample stayed in a HDB 1–2 room flat, and 7% in landed or other property types.

A small but significant proportion (8.46%) of parents was single. A high proportion of parents were foreign-born. With 20.8% where one of the parents was foreign-born, and 17.7% where both parents were foreign-born, 38.5% of the sample youths had at least one foreign-born parent.

Table 3 gives the summary statistics of the dependent variables. A majority of the sample aspired to obtain at least a University Degree or other Professional Qualifications (53.55%), followed by an even higher qualification of a Postgraduate Degree (29.73%). About 12% aspired towards a polytechnic diploma, leaving only about 4% who aspired to qualifications lower than a diploma.

The sample ranked themselves a mean of 3.54 for self-esteem, a moderate level on the Likert scale that hovers between "agree" and "neither agree nor disagree" with the three statements about themselves.

The students felt that they were more competent relationally than organisationally, because relational competency had a higher mean than organisational competency.

School-based overseas experience was widespread, with 70% ever having participated in one. Non-school-based trips were less common; only 13% of the students had participated in them.

Among the five types of stressors, respondents were more stressed over practical matters. All the practical stressors were scored higher than the relational stressors, topmost of which was studies (3.95) followed by future uncertainty (3.52). Relationship stressors scores were lower, with the lowest being family stressors (2.49) and next lowest stress over friends (2.68). Stress over finances was the middle ground, with a score of 2.92.

Findings From Multivariate Analysis

The multivariate analysis starts by examining the independent relationship between students' education paths and the background variables. **Table 4** reports multinomial regression results for the categories of education pathway in columns and the background variables in rows, such that each cell represents the likelihood of being in the particular pathway given the background characteristic.

Using both parents' highest qualification and housing type as measures of the respondents' socioeconomic background, parents' education had stronger effects than housing type. Compared to Express stream and JC students, students in the Normal and ITE track, polytechnic and "other" education tracks had lower educated parents whereas the students in the IP/IB track lived in bigger housing type. Although the coefficient for parents' education indicates that those in IP/IB also had more highly educated parents, the coefficient is not statistically significant when housing type is also in the regression. Since parents' educational qualification is more strongly predictive of students' education tracks than housing, in subsequent analysis, housing type is dropped, and parents' highest education is used as the sole proxy for socioeconomic status.

The coefficients of the other independent variables show that Malays were more likely to be in in the Normal/ITE and other/private tracks, whereas Indians were less likely to be in Polytechnics but more likely to be in the "others" education track. Those respondents who have both parents who were born overseas are more likely to be in IP/IB. Females also less likely to be in the Normal and ITE.

Now turning to the two-steps empirical model being tested in this chapter, the first question to be answered is: how much do parents' SES and youths' educational path determine one's education aspiration? Table 5 indicates that the answer is very much. Respondents who had more educated parents were more likely to aspire towards higher levels of education. Even after adding education types in Model 2, the coefficient for parents' education, although slightly smaller, is still very significant. Thus, education types only partially mediate the effects of parents' SES on aspirations. Unsurprisingly, education types strongly relate to aspirations: compared to students in the express/JC track, vocational and other track students had lower education aspirations and the students in IP/IB/Special Schools aspired towards higher levels of education. Educational aspirations of polytechnic students did not significantly differ from those of Express/JC students.

For this first youth outcome of education aspiration, the only other significant effect is that Indians aspired towards higher education.

Table 5 also gives the results of the next youth development outcome, self-esteem. It shows that the main determinants of self-esteem continue to be parents' educational standing and one's education path. Respondents with more educated parents had higher self-esteem, mediated only slightly by the education pathways. The direction of effects of education paths is the same as education aspiration. However, the only significant effect is that those from the Normal and ITE track had lower self-esteem than students in

Table 2: Summary Statistics of Independent Variables

	N	%	Youth Population in 2013 (%)
Education Types			
Secondary School (NA/NT)/ITE/Vocational Institute (VI)	113	19.09	
Secondary School (Express)/Junior College (JC) (Regular)	228	38.51	
Polytechnic	162	27.36	
Integrated Programme (IP)/International Baccalaureate(IB)/Specialised School (Sec/JC)	57	9.63	
Private Programmes ('O'/ 'A' Levels/ IB)/Others	32	5.41	
Ethnicity			
Chinese	454	76.69	71.57
Malay	72	12.16	16.10
Indian	45	7.60	9.41
Others	21	3.55	2.92
Age			
15	56	9.50	
16	161	27.20	
17	197	33.20	
18	178	30.10	
Gender			
Male	255	43.07	49.35
Female	337	56.93	50.65

	N	%	Youth Population in 2013 (%)
Parents' Highest Qualification			
PSLE & Below	57	9.64	
N Levels	23	3.89	
O Levels	144	24.37	
ITE/VI	30	5.08	
GCE A Levels/Post Sec	39	6.60	
Diploma	79	13.37	
Bachelor Degree/Others	137	23.18	
Post Grad	82	13.87	
Housing Type			
HDB 1–2 rooms	7	1.18	
HDB 3 rooms	64	10.81	
HDB 4 rooms	194	32.77	
HDB 5 rooms	145	24.49	
HDB Executive/Maisonette/HUDC/DBSS/ Executive Condominium	62	10.47	
Private flat/condominium	80	13.51	
Landed property/Others	40	6.76	
Parents' Marital Status			
Married	541	91.39	
Single-Parent	51	8.61	
Parents' immigrant status			
One Parent not born in Singapore	123	20.80	
Both Parents not born in Singapore	105	17.70	

Source: NYS 2013, DOS 2014

Table 3: Summary Statistics of Dependent Variables

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max	%	N
Education Aspirations						
'A' Levels/Post Secondary/ITE/ 'N' Levels/'O' Levels					4.39	26
Diploma					12.33	73
University Graduate/Other Professional Qualifications					53.55	317
Postgraduate					29.73	176
Self-Esteem	3.53	0.74	1	5		592
Social Competency						592
Organisational Competency	3.52	0.76	1.17	5		
Relational Competency	3.90	0.61	1.20	5		
Overseas Experience						
School-Based					70.19	577
Non-school Based					13.34	577
Practical Stressors						
Studies	3.95	1.02	1	5		589
Finances	2.92	1.27	1	5		520
Future Uncertainty	3.52	1.14	1	5		573
Relationship Stressors						
Family Relationships	2.49	1.29	1	5		581
Friendships (including peer pressure, romantic relationships)	2.68	1.19	1	5		576

Source: NYS 2013

	NA/ NT/ ITE	Polytechnic	IP/IB/ Specialised School	Private Programmes/ Others
(Base category: Express/JC)				
Parents' highest qualifications	-0.30 (0.063)**	-0.14 (0.062)*	0.13 (0.096)	-0.21 (0.099)*
Housing Type	-0.10 (0.11)	-0.072 (0.095)	0.42 (0.12)**	0.11 (0.16)
Single parent family	0.054 (0.42)	-0.095 (0.45)	-0.025 (0.71)	-0.087 (0.69)
One parent is foreign-born	0.23 (0.31)	0.054 (0.31)	-0.80 (0.54)	-0.50 (0.61)
Both parents are foreign-born	-0.072 (0.38)	0.13 (0.39)	1.26 (0.39)**	0.72 (0.52)
Malay	1.11 (0.37)**	0.092 (0.41)	-0.83 (1.066)	1.53 (0.54)**
Indian	0.13 (0.45)	-1.28 (0.56)*	-1.21 (0.71)	1.49 (0.52)**
Other Race	0.43 (0.60)	-1.58 (0.83)	-0.26 (0.76)	-17.55 ^(5,968.00)
Female	-0.81 (0.26)**	-0.46 (0.25)	-0.45 (0.32)	0.40 (0.43)
Age between 17–18	0.54 (0.26)*	19.00 ^(856.24)	0.94 (0.34)**	0.90 (0.42)*
N	591	591	591	591

Source: NYS 2013

Standard error in parenthesis
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01
^ Due to there being no students of other race in the "other" education track, and no students aged 15 and 16 in polytechnic, the sizes of the standard errors for the two indicated coefficients spiked up.

the express/JC track. Strikingly, no other independent variables had significant effects on self-esteem.

So far, the story that is unfolding suggests that parents' SES and youths' educational paths are strongly related to academic success and psychological confidence. What about social competencies that are important in life? **Table 6** shows that parents' highest qualification and educational pathways have little bearing in this social sphere. The only significant effect is that the IP/IB students rated themselves lower in relational competence, an interesting finding given that this tracks made up of the most academically successful students.

In fact, none of the background factors matter to organisational competence. However, race, nationality, and gender are important determinants of relational competence. All the minority races (Malay, Indians, and Others), those with two foreign-born parents, and males rated themselves higher in relational competence. Being a minority in Singapore probably necessitate greater knowledge and ability to navigate relationships. It is interesting, however, that females are less confident of their social skills.

One of the ways that the education system and the National Youth Council have tried to develop "international…outlook" and "cosmopolitan mindsets" in youths are to afford students learning opportunities overseas (Ministry of Education (MOE), 2008; National Youth Council, 2010). It would therefore be interesting to uncover whether students from different backgrounds and education pathways have different overseas learning opportunities. **Table 7** shows that it is again parental background that is most strongly associated with overseas experience. Whether school- or non-school-based, the higher their parents' education, the more likely were respondents to have had overseas experience. Among the education pathways, respondents from the IP/IB tracks were more likely to have had school-based overseas experience, thus confirming the conventional wisdom that students from elite schools have more of

such learning opportunities. Female respondents too were more likely to participate in school-based overseas experience, whereas respondents from single-parent families were more likely to participate in non-school overseas experience.

The Singapore education system is known to be highly competitive and stressful. Teenage is also a period of rapid change and uncertainty. Do youths from different backgrounds perceive their stress differently? Looking first at practical stressors, the youths from different SES backgrounds did not differ in terms of stress over studies or future uncertainty (**Table 8**). However, those in polytechnic and other private schools were less stressed over studies. Girls were more stressed over studies and the future than boys.

It is not surprising, perhaps, that financial stress is driven by SES, educational pathways, as well as race. Those with less educated parents were more stressed over finances, an effect that is mediated partially through educational path. Thus, students in the Normal/ITE, polytechnic and other tracks were more stressed over finances. The sign of the IB/IP coefficient shows that they were less worried about finances. However, although the size of the coefficient is large, it is not statistically significant. Malays were also more stressed over finances.

Surprisingly, SES and educational pathways have some significant associations with relationship stress (**Table 9**). Lower SES youths rated themselves more stressed over family relationships and friendships. The association between SES and family relationship is mediated by education pathway, becoming statistically insignificant when education pathway is added in Model 2. The main education path driving the mediation is normal/ITE; students in this track rated more stressed over family relationships. So did respondents from single-parents families.

Discussion

The results show that education differs by parental SES, race, as well as immigrant status. Students from higher SES and with foreign-born parents were more likely to be in the elite educational track of IP/IB, whereas students from lower SES, Malays, and males were more likely to be in the vocational track.

However, the stratification by education tracks does not translate into straightforward advantages or disadvantages for students' development. There are some advantages of being in the more academic tracks, as seen in the higher aspirations and greater opportunities for overseas learning trips by those in IP/IB on one hand, and the lower self-esteem and greater stress over finances and family relationships for those in the vocational track on the other hand.

However, those in the IP/IB programmes also rated lower on relational competence, and students in polytechnic and private/other school types were less stressed over studies. To the extent that social competence and social coping are important for future success as working adults, a less academic and less stressful polytechnic education might better prepare students for a broader range of adaptation to work life. Truth be told, though, in a meritocratic society based on grades and paper qualifications such as Singapore, the key job/wage premium is still on academic and not social ability.

The group of students of concern is perhaps those in the vocational track of Normal stream followed by ITE. Even controlling for parental background, this track of students had lower self-esteem and were more worried about finances and family relationships. Apparently, youths who end up on the vocational track do not only have parents with lower education, but even if parents' are of the same educational level, the families are less financially and relationally secure and the youths themselves are also less emotionally secure.

While Singapore has come a long way in narrowing gender and racial gaps, the findings in this study suggest that some gaps remain. Females were less confident of their social competence, and more worried over studies and future, although they were more likely to be involved in school-based overseas programmes. The findings on females might be deemed unsurprising as girls can be said to fuss over life more (Steinberg & Morris, 2011; Hampel & Petermann, 2006; Brougham et al., 2009). Even if this is true, it does not discount the need for helping girls through developmental issues that affect them more, rather than discount it as a "girl" thing. And while Malays are more likely to be in the vocational track and report higher levels of financial stress (with conditions such as SES controlled for), our Malay youths have made significant academic progress over the past decades, suggesting that community and governmental support will continue to be valuable to improving the lives of Malay youths. These findings mirror those found in the existing literature (e.g., MOE, 2014; Yayasan MENDAKI, 2014).

Interestingly, the findings also yielded a natural finding that students of single parents were more stressed over family relationships, although it also yielded a surprising finding that these students of single parents were also more likely to be involved in non-school overseas programmes. It might be that single parents tend to access non-school-based services (e.g. religious organisations or voluntary welfare organisations), and thus their children gained overseas exposure through these agencies. This latter explanation, however, is a conjecture that the current data is unable to verify.

The most consistent finding, however, is that parents' educational advantage exerts a large influence on all the youths' developmental outcomes, except social competence and stress over studies and future uncertainty. The lack of association between parents' educational level and stress over studies and future might be due to the generally high levels of stress all respondents have over these two matters, as the summary statistics indicate.

Table 5: Ordered Probit (Education Aspiration) and OLS (Self-esteem)
Regressions of Student's Education Aspiration and Self-Esteem

	Model 1		Model 2 (Model 1 + Education Types) Omitted Category: Express/JC	
	Educational Aspiration	Self-Esteem	Education Aspiration	Self-Esteem
Parent's highest qualifications	0.18 (0.022)**	0.059 (0.014)**	0.14 (0.023)**	0.041 (0.014)**
Single parent family	0.11 (0.17)	-0.12 (0.11)	0.14 (0.17)	-0.11 (0.11)
One parent is foreign-born	-0.062 (0.12)	-0.020 (0.078)	-0.024 (0.12)	-0.0020 (0.077)
Both parents are foreign-born	0.14 (0.13)	-0.046 (0.085)	0.068 (0.14)	-0.073 (0.084)
Malay	-0.16 (0.15)	0.095 (0.095)	0.014 (0.15)	0.16 (0.096)
Indian	0.32 (0.18)	0.088 (0.12)	0.45 (0.19)*	0.11 (0.12)
Other Race	0.055 (0.26)	-0.068 (0.16)	0.080 (0.26)	-0.057 (0.16)
Female	0.074 (0.095)	-0.014 (0.061)	0.024 (0.097)	-0.040 (0.061)
Age between 17–18	0.092 (0.098)	-0.026 (0.063)	0.13 (0.11)	0.00 (0.072)
NA/NT/ITE			-0.73 (0.14)**	-0.31 (0.088)**
Polytechnics			-0.21 (0.14)	-0.13 (0.087)
IP/IB/Specialised Sch			0.64 (0.19)**	0.16 (0.11)
Private Programmes/Others			-0.53 (0.22)*	-0.096 (0.14)
N	591	591	591	591

Standard error in parenthesis
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

Source: NYS 2013

Table 6: Ordered Probit Regression of Student's Social Competencies

	Model 1		Model 2 (Model 1 + Education Types) Omitted Category: Express/JC	
	Organisational Competency	Relational Competency	Organisational Competency	Relational Competency
Parents' highest qualifications	0.036 (0.019)	0.061 (0.019)**	0.028 (0.020)	0.065 (0.020)**
Single parent family	-0.016 (0.15)	0.074 (0.15)	-0.014 (0.15)	0.068 (0.15)
One parent is foreign-born	-0.0090 (0.11)	0.085 (0.11)	-0.0090 (0.11)	0.071 (0.11)
Both parents are foreign-born	0.24 (0.12)*	0.15 (0.12)	0.23 (0.12)	0.17 (0.12)
Malay	0.36 (0.13)**	0.65 (0.13)**	0.40 (0.14)**	0.67 (0.14)**
Indian	0.30 (0.16)	0.54 (0.16)**	0.35 (0.16)*	0.60 (0.16)**
Other Race	0.29 (0.23)	0.75 (0.23)**	0.27 (0.23)	0.74 (0.23)**
Female	0.061 (0.084)	-0.018 (0.085)	0.065 (0.086)	0.0020 (0.086)
Age between 17–18	0.057 (0.087)	0.036 (0.088)	0.083 (0.10)	0.017 (0.10)
NA/NT/ITE			-0.084 (0.12)	0.084 (0.12)
Polytechnics			-0.077 (0.12)	0.064 (0.12)
IP/IB/Specialised Sch			0.11 (0.15)	-0.018 (0.16)
Private Programmes/Others			-0.34 (0.20)	-0.35 (0.20)
N	591	591	591	591

Standard error in parenthesis
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

Source: NYS 2013

Table 7: Probit Regression of Student's Overseas Experiences

	Model 1		Model 2 (Model 1 + Education Types) Omitted Category: Express/JC	
	School-based Overseas Experience	Non-school Overseas Experience	School-based Overseas Experience	Non-school Overseas Experience
Parents' highest qualifications	0.084 (0.025)**	0.116 (0.032)**	0.060 (0.027)*	0.10 (0.034)**
Single parent family	0.096 (0.21)	0.67 (0.22)**	0.10 (0.21)	0.70 (0.22)**
One parent is foreign-born	-0.031 (0.14)	-0.36 (0.19)	0.000 (0.15)	-0.34 (0.19)
Both parents are foreign-born	-0.16 (0.16)	-0.12 (0.19)	-0.26 (0.16)	-0.16 (0.19)
Malay	0.080 (0.18)	-0.039 (0.22)	0.13 (0.19)	-0.062 (0.23)
Indian	-0.36 (0.20)	-0.044 (0.26)	-0.32 (0.21)	-0.17 (0.28)
Other Race	0.085 (0.31)	0.097 (0.36)	0.092 (0.32)	0.097 (0.36)
Female	0.25 (0.11)*	-0.031 (0.14)	0.26 (0.12)*	-0.061 (0.14)
Age between 17–18	0.011 (0.12)	0.0090 (0.14)	0.010 (0.14)	0.062 (0.16)
NA/NT/ITE			-0.10 (0.16)	-0.099 (0.21)
Polytechnics			-0.041 (0.16)	-0.20 (0.20)
IP/IB/Specialised Sch			1.15 (0.30)**	0.074 (0.23)
Private Programmes/Others			0.0020 (0.33)	0.49 (0.36)
N	576	576	576	576

Standard error in parenthesis
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

Source: NYS 2013

Table 8: Ordered Probit Regression of Student's Practical Stressors

	Model 1			Model 2 (Model 1 + Education Types) Omitted Category: Express/JC		
	Studies	**Finances**	**Future Uncertainty**	**Studies**	**Finances**	**Future Uncertainty**
Parents' highest qualifications	-0.0090 (0.020)	-0.11 (0.021)**	-0.0050 (0.020)	-0.019 (0.021)	-0.078 (0.022)**	0.0040 (0.021)
Single parent family	-0.073 (0.16)	0.11 (0.17)	-0.077 (0.16)	-0.080 (0.16)	0.10 (0.17)	-0.078 (0.16)
One parent is foreign-born	0.012 (0.12)	0.049 (0.12)	-0.10 (0.12)	0.010 (0.12)	0.023 (0.12)	-0.11 (0.12)
Both parents are foreign-born	0.12 (0.13)	0.17 (0.13)	-0.11 (0.12)	0.11 (0.13)	0.21 (0.13)	-0.097 (0.13)
Malay	0.069 (0.14)	0.55 (0.15)**	0.26 (0.15)	0.067 (0.15)	0.48 (0.15)**	0.22 (0.15)
Indian	-0.023 (0.17)	0.074 (0.19)	-0.21 (0.17)	-0.032 (0.17)	0.039 (0.19)	-0.25 (0.17)
Other Race	-0.16 (0.25)	-0.20 (0.26)	-0.017 (0.25)	-0.28 (0.25)	-0.16 (0.26)	-0.076 (0.25)
Female	0.29 (0.091)**	0.012 (0.094)	0.23 (0.090)*	0.31 (0.093)**	0.041 (0.096)	0.25 (0.092)**
Age between 17–18	-0.031 (0.094)	0.015 (0.098)	0.046 (0.094)	0.17 (0.11)	-0.082 (0.11)	0.12 (0.11)
NA/NT/ITE				0.052 (0.13)	0.47 (0.14)**	0.23 (0.13)
Polytechnics				-0.45 (0.13)**	0.31 (0.13)*	-0.12 (0.13)
IP/IB/Specialised Sch				0.13 (0.17)	-0.36 (0.19)	-0.080 (0.16)
Private Programmes/ Others				-0.44 (0.21)*	0.46 (0.23)*	-0.065 (0.21)
N	588	519	572	588	519	572

Standard error in parenthesis
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

Source: NYS 2013

Table 9: Ordered Probit Regression of Student's Relational Stressors

	Model 1		Model 2 (Model 1 + Education Types) Omitted Category: Express/JC	
	Family Relationships	Friendships (including peer pressure, romantic relationships)	Family Relationships	Friendships (including peer pressure, romantic relationships)
Parents' highest qualifications	-0.043 (0.020)*	-0.057 (0.020)**	-0.025 (0.021)	-0.055 (0.021)**
Single parent family	0.36 (0.16)*	-0.040 (0.16)	0.36 (0.16)*	-0.041 (0.16)
One parent is foreign-born	-0.061 (0.12)	-0.088 (0.11)	-0.075 (0.12)	-0.083 (0.12)
Both parents are foreign-born	0.052 (0.12)	-0.23 (0.12)	0.058 (0.13)	-0.20 (0.13)
Malay	0.20 (0.14)	0.071 (0.14)	0.12 (0.14)	0.038 (0.14)
Indian	-0.069 (0.17)	-0.000 (0.17)	-0.13 (0.18)	-0.042 (0.17)
Other Race	0.10 (0.24)	-0.14 (0.24)	0.057 (0.25)	-0.13 (0.25)
Female	-0.077 (0.090)	0.035 (0.089)	-0.031 (0.092)	0.037 (0.091)
Age between 17–18	-0.073 (0.093)	0.0070 (0.092)	-0.052 (0.11)	0.000 (0.11)
NA/NT/ITE			0.46 (0.13)**	0.098 (0.13)
Polytechnics			0.031 (0.13)	0.027 (0.13)
IP/IB/Specialised Sch			0.050 (0.17)	0.081 (0.16)
Private Programmes/Others			0.21 (0.21)	0.31 (0.21)
N	580	575	580	575

Standard error in parenthesis
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

Source: NYS 2013

That the effects of parents' qualifications are partially mediated by education pathways suggest a role that schools play in facilitating the intergenerational transmission of advantage and disadvantage from parents to students, but only to a limited extent. Parents' education also influences youth development in other ways that are not tested in this study's empirical model.

Limitations And Implications

The usual limitations of a cross-sectional survey apply to this study. First, the quantitative analysis in the study is able to show the associations between factors, but unable to explain why. Second, the lack of longitudinal data limits causal claims. However, this particular study on background factors of social experiences derives greater causal associations than other cross-sectional studies because the background factors all precede the youth outcomes used as dependent variables. For example, parents had achieved their highest qualification and students were streamed before the time of the survey, whereas the respondents' answers on the youth outcomes were real time. Another advantage of this study based on a National Youth Survey is that as a nationally representative survey, the findings in the study can be generalisable to the youth student population in Singapore.

Therefore, the findings in this chapter can be used as the basis to further investigate why and how the background factors influence the various developmental outcomes. For instance, the finding of family background and other psychological set-backs faced by students in the vocational track suggest much value in examining the reason for it through a longitudinal tracking of vocational track students or in-depth qualitative interviews. The findings evidence the continued need to address racial and gender gaps. They also suggest the need to address differences by SES. Given the interaction of race with SES, it might be that addressing SES issues would resolve race issues as well.

To a large extent, greater social and educational differences between groups in society are to be expected given the social development trajectory of Singapore. From a predominantly working class society, the increase in education of the population and the introduction of many more levels of education than the largely uneducated population previously, is bound to develop the differences between groups. However, we must guard against entrenching them, so that they do not transmit across generations.

For youths, the education system is an obvious source of reproduction of advantage and disadvantage, although the findings here suggest that the education system's role in the reproduction exist but is not strong. This is a hopeful finding, in that there is room to manoeuvre the current system towards greater egalitarian goals. The findings also suggest policy implications about reconsideration of streaming, an implication that earlier studies on intergenerational mobility, class and networks have found (Ng, 2013; Chua, 2013; Chua & Leong, 2014). That class and educational path effects exist not just towards academic success, but other social benefits such as self-esteem, social competence, stress, and overseas experiences, suggest wider effects of SES and institutions than previously known.

Overall, the findings in this chapter are stark but not alarming. While the consistent results on SES and education pathways call for addressing SES differences between groups through education, that the findings are not stronger than they are suggest that we have not yet reached the stage of entrenchment. It is therefore possible to tweak the system to reduce differences between students.

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B2

Youths in Singapore's Labour Market

Ministry of Manpower

Abstract

As most of our youths defer entry into the labour market to pursue higher education, the proportion of youths participating in the labour market has generally declined, though the downtrend has moderated in the recent decade, with more youths taking up work and internship while studying. The rising trend of youths working while studying would enable them to acquire skills and experience which would help smoothen their eventual school-to-employment transition.

Youths in Singapore have one of the lowest unemployment and long-term unemployment rates in the world. Economic 'idleness' was also less of a problem in Singapore, as our share of our youths not in employment, education or training was small and lower than in many of the economies compared. Singapore's favourable performance reflects our tight and flexible labour market as well as a quality education and training system that equips our youths to take on the jobs created.

Notations

a	Adjusted figures for 2007
n.a.	Not Available

Abbreviations

CPF	Central Provident Fund
EU	European Union
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LFPR	Labour Force Participation Rate
MOM	Ministry of Manpower
NEET	Not in Employment, Education, or Training
NS	National Service
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PMETs	Professionals, Managers, Executives, & Technicians
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

Introduction

Youths in Singapore have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the world. This is unlike many countries where youths are facing an employment crisis, evident from their high level of unemployment and longer time spent in job search.[1]

This chapter examines the labour market performance of Singapore youths and how this compares against other countries. While there is no international consensus on the definition of youths, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and many countries define "youths" as those aged 15 to 24. This study adopts the same definition to facilitate international comparison. The Singapore data in the paper pertain to the resident population and are mainly obtained from the Labour Force Surveys.

Overview

Decline in youth labour force participation rate has moderated in recent decade, with more youths working while studying

Most of Singapore's youths defer entry into the labour market to pursue higher education. Only slightly more than one-third (36%) of the resident youth population participated in the labour force in 2013. This followed a rapid decline from 55% in 1991 (when comparable data series started) to 38% in 2003, as more youths pursued higher education. In the recent decade, with more youths taking up work and internship while studying (representing 7.0% of all resident youths in 2013, up from 3.4% in 2003), the decline in resident youth labour force participation rate (LFPR) has moderated (**Chart 1**).

Older youths aged 20 to 24 formed the large majority of youth labour force

Youths made up only 8.8% of the resident labour force in 2013 down from 9.5% in 2003, reflecting an ageing population, though the absolute size of the youth labour

Chart 1: Distribution of Resident Youth Population by Economic Activity Status, 1991 to 2013 (June)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
LFPR	54.9	53.5	52.0	51.1	n.a.
Employed — Total	52.9	50.3	48.7	47.7	n.a.
Employed — In Education	2.3	2.3	1.9	1.8	n.a.
Employed — Not In Education	50.6	48.0	46.7	45.9	n.a.
Unemployed	1.9	3.2	3.3	3.4	n.a.
Outside The Labour Force — Total	45.1	46.5	48.0	48.9	n.a.
Outside The Labour Force — In Education	41.7	42.4	44.5	45.6	n.a.
Outside The Labour Force — Not In Education	3.5	4.0	3.5	3.3	n.a.

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
	46.9	44.6	40.5	42.7	n.a.	41.4	38.1	38.0	38.1	n.a.	38.9	36.9	37.1	35.6	39.2	36.7	37.8	36.2
	43.4	42.1	37.2	38.6	n.a.	38.2	33.8	34.1	34.0	n.a.	35.5	33.6	33.7	31.0	35.3	33.3	34.4	32.8
	2.3	2.4	1.6	2.7	n.a.	2.4	2.6	3.4	3.3	n.a.	5.1	5.1	5.6	5.2	5.3	5.5	6.9	7.0
	41.1	39.7	35.6	36.0	n.a.	35.8	31.2	30.7	30.7	n.a.	30.4	28.5	28.2	25.8	30.0	27.8	27.5	25.8
	3.5	2.4	3.3	4.1	n.a.	3.2	4.3	3.9	4.1	n.a.	3.4	3.3	3.4	4.6	3.9	3.4	3.4	3.4
	53.1	55.4	59.5	57.3	n.a.	58.6	61.9	62.0	61.9	n.a.	61.1	63.1	62.9	64.4	60.8	63.3	62.2	63.8
	49.6	52.5	56.5	54.8	n.a.	55.8	59.6	59.8	59.6	n.a.	58.5	60.6	60.6	62.2	57.2	60.7	59.2	61.2
	3.5	2.9	3.1	2.5	n.a.	2.8	2.4	2.2	2.4	n.a.	2.6	2.5	2.3	2.2	3.6	2.6	3.0	2.6

Source: Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, MOM

Notes:
(1) n.a. — Not available. The Comprehensive (June) Labour Force Surveys were not conducted in 1995, 2000 and 2005 due to the conduct of the General Household Survey 1995 and 2005 and Census of Population 2000 by the Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade and Industry.

(2) To facilitate comparison with data for 2008 onwards, the 2007 data have been adjusted based on Singapore Department of Statistics' revised population estimates (released in February 2008) which exclude Singapore residents who have been away from Singapore for a continuous period of 12 months or longer. Adjusted figures for 2007 are the same as the original figures.

[2] 89% of the resident population aged 25 to 29 were in the labour force, compared with 62% for those aged 20 to 24 and 12% for those aged 15 to 19 in 2013.

* Pertain to employed resident youths excluding full-time National Servicemen.

force grew from 162,000 in 2003 to 188,400 in 2013. Similar to a decade ago, older youths aged 20 to 24 formed the bulk or 83% of the resident youth labour force in 2013, while younger youths aged 15 to 19 made up the remaining 17% (**Chart 2A**). Males continued to form a slight majority (55%) of the resident youth labour force (**Chart 2B**), consistent with their representation in the overall resident workforce (55%) in 2013.

Chart 2: Distribution of Resident Youth Labour Force by Age and Sex, 2003 and 2013 (June)

(A) By Age

Per Cent

84.2 / 83.4
15.8 / 16.6
2003 / 2013
● 15–19   ● 20–24

(B) By Sex

Per Cent

47.0 / 45.5
53.0 / 54.5
2003 / 2013
● Male   ● Female

Source: Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, MOM

Note:
Data for each year may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
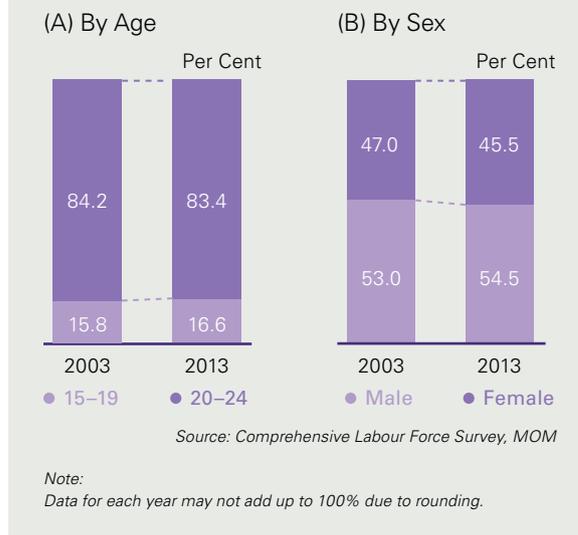
Educational profile of youth labour force improved

Reflecting the longer time spent in education, the educational profile of the resident youth labour force improved over the decade. Slightly more than three in four (77%) youths in the labour force had post-secondary & above qualifications in 2013, up from six in ten (60%) in 2003 (**Chart 3A**).

With more years spent in education, youth degree holders typically enter the labour market later than other

education groups. Hence, degree holders constituted a smaller proportion (12%) of the youth labour force than in the next age band of 25 to 29 (51%), when the large majority of the population would have entered the labour market[2] (**Chart 3A & 3B**).

Chart 3: Distribution of Labour Force for Resident Youths and those aged 25 to 29 by Highest Qualification Attained, 2003 and 2013 (June)

(A) Youths Aged 15 to 24

Per Cent

	2003	2013
	10.4	12.5
	28.4	34.5
	21.1	30.3
	30.1	18.5
	10.1	4.3

(B) Aged 25 to 29

Per Cent

	2003	2013
	37.0	50.7
	26.7	25.5
	7.5	10.6
	20.1	10.0
	8.7	3.2

● Below Secondary   ● Post-Secondary (Non-Tertiary)   ● Degree
● Secondary   ● Diploma & Professional Qualification

Source: Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, MOM

Note:
Data for each year may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
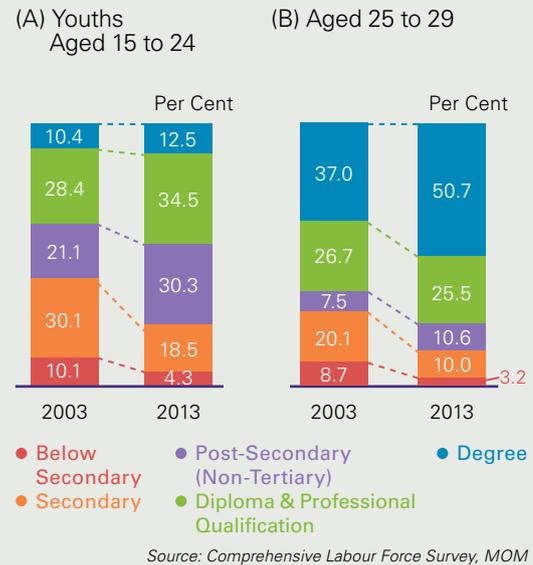
Youths in Employment*

Rising trend of youths working while studying, though the majority of employed youths were fully engaged in work

The share of employed resident youths who were working while studying trended upwards from 15% in

2003 to 30% in 2013. The rise in students in work and paid internship would help them gain work experience and skills which would be beneficial when they fully transit into the labour market, after completing their studies. Meanwhile, the share of employed youths who were not in education (i.e. fully engaged in work) declined from 85% to 70%, though they still formed the majority (**Chart 4**).

Chart 4: Distribution of Employed Resident Youths by whether they were in Education, 2003 to 2013 (June)
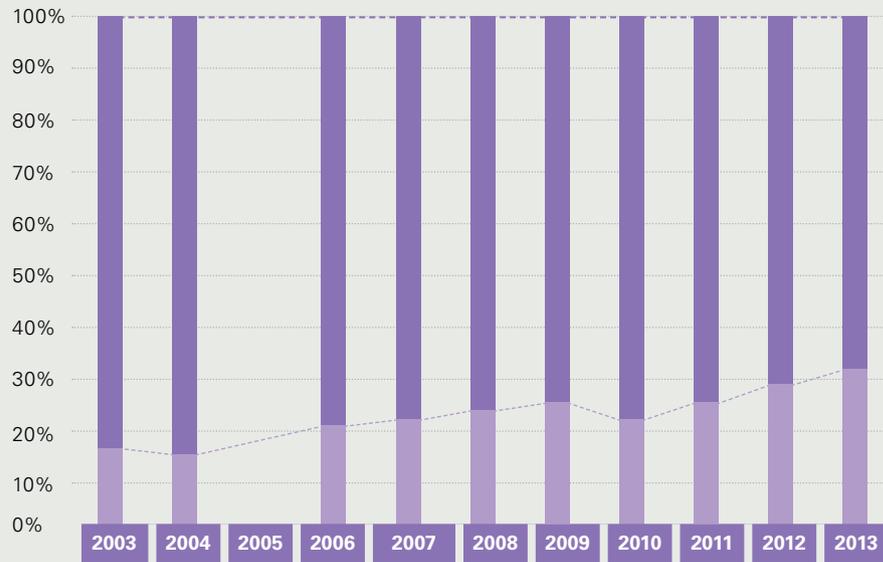
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Employed — In Education	14.7	13.7	n.a.	19.5	20.4 (20.5[a])	22.4	23.6	20.9	23.2	27.7	30.3
Employed — Not In Education	85.3	86.3	n.a.	80.5	79.6 (79.5[a])	77.6	76.4	79.1	76.8	72.3	69.7

Source: Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, MOM

Notes:
(1) n.a. — Not available. The Comprehensive (June) Labour Force Survey was not conducted in 2005 due to the conduct of the General Household Survey 2005 by the Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade and Industry.
(2) [a] — To facilitate comparison with data for 2008 onwards, the 2007 data have been adjusted based on Singapore Department of Statistics' revised population estimates (released in February 2008) which exclude Singapore residents who have been away from Singapore for a continuous period of 12 months or longer.
(3) Data exclude full-time National Servicemen.
(4) Employed youths in education refer to those who are schooling but currently working in a vacation job or undergoing paid internship, engaged in work while schooling and working while awaiting examination results or NS call-up.
(5) Employed youths not in education refer to those who are fully engaged in work.
(6) Data for each year may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Clerical, sales, & service workers formed a slight majority of youth workforce

Amid the opening of the integrated resorts and shopping malls in recent years, a slight majority (56%) of employed youths were working in clerical, sales, & service jobs in 2013, more commonly as general office clerks and shop salespersons. Another one-third (33%) of the youth workforce were professionals, managers, executives, & technicians (PMETs), while production & related workers formed the remaining 11% (**Chart 5**).

While PMETs formed 33% of the youth workforce in 2013, their proportion among employed residents in the next age band of 25 to 29 was substantially higher at 65%, reflecting the higher share of degree holders in the latter age group.

Expectedly, the occupational profile of youths who were fully engaged in work (i.e. not in education) was better than that of youths who were working while studying. Close to four in ten (38%) of the former held PMET positions, higher than around two in ten (21%) among working students (**Chart 6**).

Many youths were working in community, social, & personal services, wholesale & retail trade, and accommodation & food services

Employed youths were mostly concentrated in the services industries (91%). Community, social, & personal services (29%) topped the list, followed by wholesale & retail trade (17%) and accommodation & food services (12%) (**Chart 7**). This reflects the abundant job openings in these industries.[3]

Youths were more likely than the average worker to work part-time, though full-timers still formed nearly eight in ten of employed youths

The majority or 78% of employed youths were working full-time in 2013. Nonetheless, youths have higher incidence of part-time employment than many other age groups, partly reflecting the prevalence of part-time employment among working students whose time spent in a job would be limited by their study commitments. Overall, slightly more than two in ten (22%) employed youths were part-timers in 2013. The proportion was much lower for residents in their prime-working ages (25–29: 3.9%, 30–39: 4.5%; 40–49 7.9%).

Chart 5: Distribution of Employed Resident Youths and those aged 25 to 29 by Broad Occupational Group, June 2013

Per Cent

	PMETs	Clerical, Sales, & Service Workers	Production & Transport Operators
Youths Aged 15 to 24	33.0	55.7	11.3
Aged 25 to 29	65.2	27.7	7.1

● Professionals, Managers, Executives, & Technicians (PMETs)
● Clerical, Sales, & Service Workers
● Production & Transport Operators, Cleaners & Labourers^

Notes:
(1) Data exclude full-time National Servicemen.
(2) ^ Includes Agricultural & Fishery Workers and Workers Not Classifiable By Occupation.
(3) Data may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, MOM

Chart 6: Distribution of Employed Resident Youths by whether they were in Education and Broad Occupational Group, June 2013

Per Cent

Employed In Education	21.2	69.9	8.9
Employed Not In Education	38.1	49.5	12.4

- Professionals, Managers, Executives, & Technicians (PMETs)
- Clerical, Sales, & Service Workers
- Production & Transport Operators, Cleaners & Labourers^

Source: Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, MOM
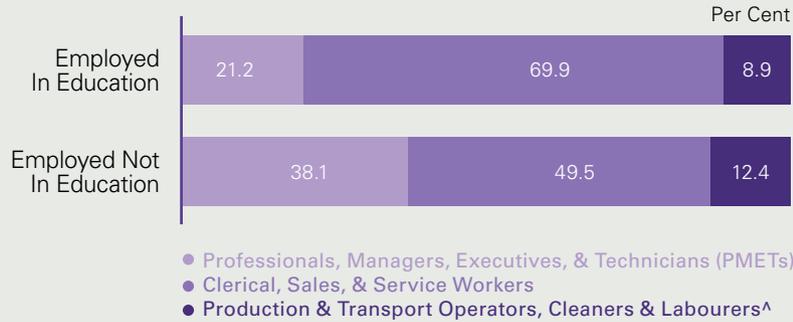
Notes:
(1) See notes (1) to (3) for Chart 5.
(2) Employed youths in education refer to those who are schooling but currently working in a vacation job or undergoing paid internship, engaged in work while schooling and working while awaiting examination results or NS call-up.
(3) Employed youths not in education refer to those who are fully engaged in work.

Chart 7: Distribution of Employed Resident Youths by Industry, June 2013
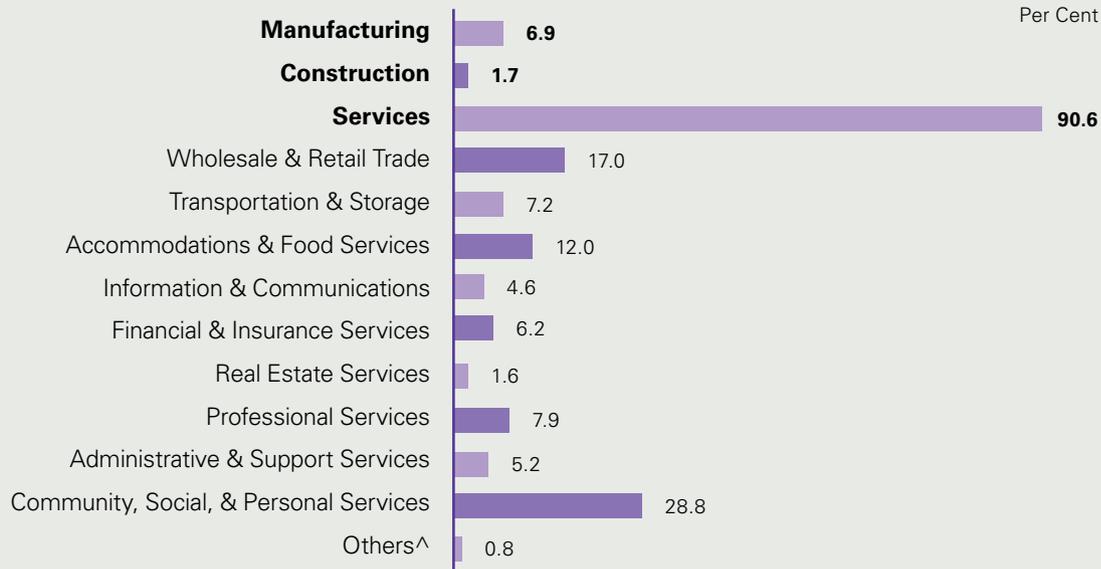
Per Cent

Industry	Per Cent
Manufacturing	**6.9**
Construction	**1.7**
Services	**90.6**
Wholesale & Retail Trade	17.0
Transportation & Storage	7.2
Accommodations & Food Services	12.0
Information & Communications	4.6
Financial & Insurance Services	6.2
Real Estate Services	1.6
Professional Services	7.9
Administrative & Support Services	5.2
Community, Social, & Personal Services	28.8
Others^	0.8

Source: Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, MOM

Notes:
(1) Data exclude full-time National Servicemen.
(2) ^ Others refer to Agriculture, Fishing, Quarrying, Utilities and Sewage & Waste Management.
(3) Data may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

As older workers phased into retirement, employed residents aged 60 & over had comparable part-time proportion (23%) to youths (**Chart 8**).

Youths typically earned less than the average worker, reflecting their shorter work experience

With many in entry-level positions, youths typically earned less than the average worker. In 2013, the median income (including employer CPF contributions) of full-time employed resident youths was $2,088, lower than the $3,705 for all resident workers. The former was weighed down by the lower income of

youths who were working while schooling ($1,160). While the median income of full-time employed youths who were fully engaged in work (i.e., not in education) was substantially higher at $2,264, this was still lower than the $3,705 for all resident workers (**Chart 9**).

Expectedly, income for resident youths rose with education. In 2013, among full-time employed resident youths who were fully engaged in work, the median income (including employer CPF contributions) for those with degree qualifications was $3,364, higher than the $1,404 for the below-secondary educated (**Chart 10**).

Chart 8: Incidence of Part-Time Employment among Employed Residents by Age, June 2013
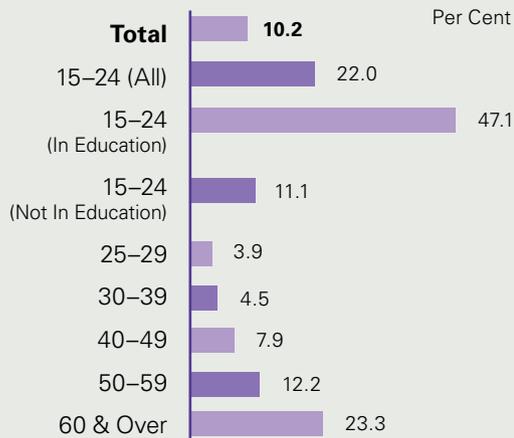
Group	Per Cent
Total	10.2
15–24 (All)	22.0
15–24 (In Education)	47.1
15–24 (Not In Education)	11.1
25–29	3.9
30–39	4.5
40–49	7.9
50–59	12.2
60 & Over	23.3

Source: Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, MOM

Notes:
(1) Data exclude full-time National Servicemen.
(2) Incidence of part-time employment refers to the number of part-time employed residents as a percentage of employed residents in the respective groups.

Chart 9: Median Gross Monthly Income from Work (including Employer CPF Contributions) of Full-Time Employed Residents, June 2013

Group	Income
All	$2,088
Fully Engaged In Work (i.e. Not In Education) Youths (Aged 15–24)	$2,264
In Education	$1,160
15 & Over	$3,705
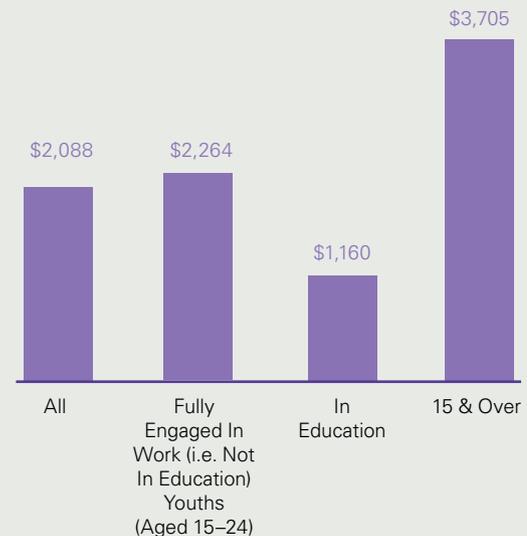
Source: Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, MOM

Note:
Data exclude full-time National Servicemen.

Chart 10: Median Gross Monthly
Income from Work (including
Employer CPF Contributions)
of Full-Time Employed
Resident Youths who were
Fully Engaged in Work
by Highest Qualification
Attained, June 2013

Below Secondary	1,404
Secondary	1,760
Post-Secondary (Non-Tertiary)	1,856
Diploma & Professional Qualification	2,320
Degree	3,364

0   1,000   2,000   3,000   4,000
$

*Source: Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, MOM*

Note:
Data exclude full-time National Servicemen.

Unemployed Youths

Singapore's youth unemployment compared favourably internationally

Like in many countries, youths in Singapore typically experience higher unemployment than the total labour force. This reflects their greater job search activity as many of them are new entrants to the labour market, and even after starting work, tend to change jobs more frequently (**Chart 11**).

Chart 11: Resident Unemployment
Rate by Age, 2013
(Annual Average)

Total	**2.8**
15–24	6.7
25–29	3.9
30–39	2.2
40 & Over	2.2

0   2   4   6   8
%
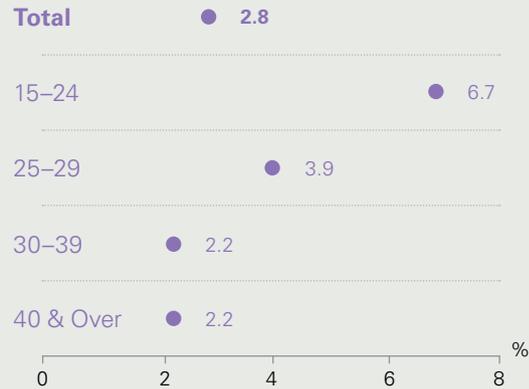
Source: Labour Force Survey, MOM

Note:
Annual figures are the simple averages of the non-seasonally adjusted unemployment figures obtained at quarterly intervals.

Singapore's resident youth unemployment rate at 6.7% in 2013 was one of the lowest among the economies compared, several of which had double-digit rates, such as Greece (58%), Spain (56%), France (24%), Sweden (24%), the United Kingdom (UK) (21%), Finland (20%), and the United States (US) (16%). Our youth unemployment rate also compared favourably against the Asian economies of Taiwan (13%), Hong Kong (9.4%), South Korea (9.3%), and Japan (6.9%) (**Table 1**).

Unemployment mostly a transitional and short-term phase for youths in Singapore

Unemployment among youths in Singapore remained mostly a transitional, short-term phase for them, reflecting the normal time taken for job seekers and employers to find a match. The median duration of

unemployment was only 4 weeks for youths, shorter than the 8 weeks for all resident job seekers in June 2013 (**Chart 12A**). On average, only 7.5% of youth job seekers had been looking for work for at least 25 weeks, compared with 23% among all resident job seekers in 2013 (**Chart 12B**). Consequently, the long-term unemployment rate among youths was only 0.5%, lower than the 0.6% for all residents (**Chart 12C**).

Compared with other economies, Singapore's resident youth long-term unemployment rate and share were among the lowest. In 2013, only 7.5% of resident youth job seekers were long-term unemployed in Singapore, lower than as many as half or more of youth job seekers in advanced economies such as Greece (72%), Spain (59%), Japan (47%), France (47%), and UK (46%) (**Table 2**).

Youths not in Employment, Education, or Training

While the unemployment rate of youths provides an indication of their performance in the labour market, it may not fully capture the employment situation of youths. Specifically, it does not include youths who may have dropped out of the labour force due to difficult job search experience. To better understand youths' difficulty in finding a job as well as their likelihood of being economically 'idle', many countries also monitor the proportion of youth population who are not in employment, education, or training (i.e., the NEET measure).

Share of youths not in employment, education or training in Singapore small

In 2013, only 3.7% or 19,700 of the resident youth population were not in employment, education or training. This is low by international standards. While around half of the NEET youths were actively seeking jobs (1.9% of total resident youth population or 10,000), unemployment was mostly a short-term and transitory

Table 1: International Comparison of Youth Unemployment Rate, 2013

Economies	Unemployment Rate (%)	
	Youth	Total
Singapore (Resident)	6.7	2.8
EU-27	23.1	10.8
Greece	58.3	27.3
Spain	55.7	26.4
France	23.9	9.9
Sweden	23.5	8.1
United Kingdom (UK)	20.5	7.5
Finland	19.9	8.2
United States (US)	15.5	7.4
Denmark	13.1	7.0
Netherlands	11.0	6.7
Norway	9.1	3.4
Switzerland	8.5	4.4
Germany	7.9	5.3
Taiwan	13.2	4.2
Hong Kong	9.4	3.4
South Korea	9.3	3.1
Japan	6.9	4.0

Sources:
(1) Singapore: Labour Force Survey, MOM
(2) Other economies: Based on data from EuroStat Statistical Database and national statistical agencies (Accessed: 28 April 2014).

Notes:
(1) Youth refers to those aged 15 to 24, except for Norway, US, UK, and Spain which refer to those aged 16 to 24.
(2) Total unemployment rate pertain to those aged 15 to 74, except for Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan which pertain to those aged 15 & over, US to those aged 16 & over, and Norway, UK, and Spain to those aged 16 to 74.

Chart 12: Resident Long-Term Unemployment Indicators by Age, 2013

**(A) Median Duration of Unemployment Among Unemployed Residents, June 2013**

Total	● **8.0**
15–24	● 4.0
25–29	● 8.0
30–39	● 8.0
40 & Over	● 12.0

0   5   10   15
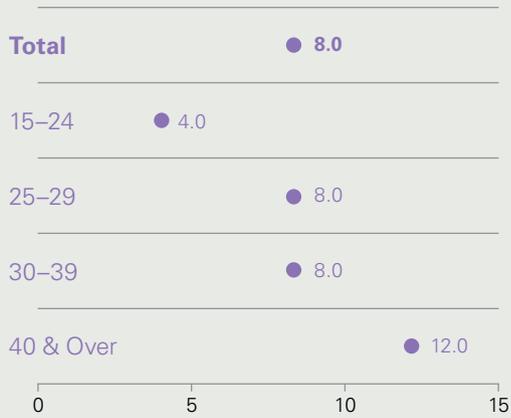
Source: Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, MOM

(B) Long-Term Unemployment Share, 2013 (Annual Average)

Total	● **23.1**
15–24	● 7.5
25–29	● 19.7
30–39	● 24.9
40 & Over	● 31.0

0   10   20   30   40   %
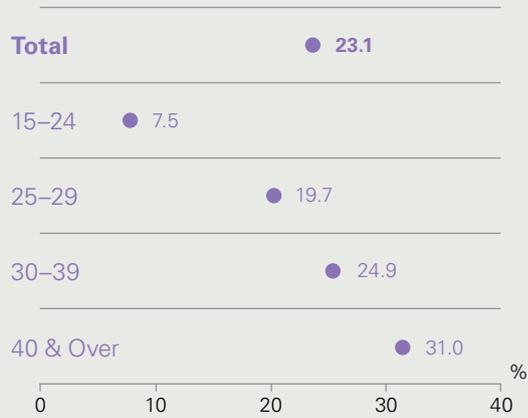
Source: Labour Force Survey, MOM

(C) Long-Term Unemployment Rate, 2013 (Annual Average)

Total	● **0.6**
15–24	● 0.5
25–29	● 0.7
30–39	● 0.5
40 & Over	● 0.7

0.0   0.2   0.4   0.8   1.0   %
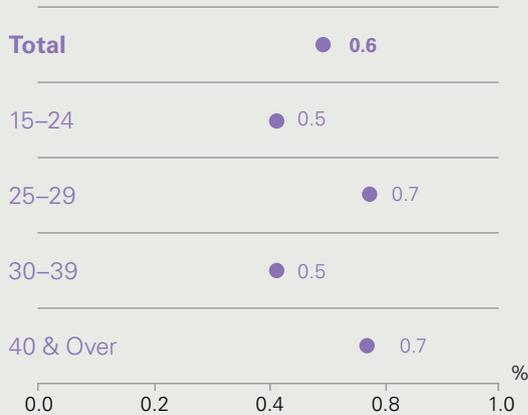
Source: Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, MOM

Notes:
(1) Long-term unemployed refers to those unemployed for at least 25 weeks.
(2) The share represents the long-term unemployed as a proportion of unemployed residents.
(3) Annual figures are the simple averages of the non-seasonally adjusted unemployment figures obtained at quarterly intervals.

Table 2: International Comparison of Youth Long-Term Unemployment Indicators, 2013

Economies	Unemployment Rate (%)		Long-Term Unemployment Share (%)	
	Youth	Total	Youth	Total
Singapore (Resident)	0.5 (0.6)	0.6 (0.6)	7.5 (8.9)	23.1 (21.1)
EU-27	12.1	6.9	52.3	64.3
Greece	42.2	22.1	72.4	81.1
Spain	32.7	17.7	58.7	67.1
France	11.1	5.9	46.5	59.5
United Kingdom (UK)	9.5	4.0	46.2	53.4
Sweden	4.8	3.0	20.3	37.1
United States (US)	3.9	2.8	25.4	37.6
Netherlands	3.8	3.7	34.6	54.9
Germany	3.1	3.2	39.5	60.3
Switzerland	2.9	2.2	33.7	50.6
Denmark	2.4	2.9	18.6	41.9
Finland	2.1	2.9	10.7	35.5
Norway	1.9	1.2	20.4	35.1
Japan	3.2	2.3	47.1	56.3
Taiwan	3.2	1.5	24.1	35.4
Hong Kong	1.3	0.8	13.8	22.8
South Korea *	0.4	0.3	4.8	8.5

Notes:
(1) Data in brackets for Singapore are for 2012.
(2) * Data for South Korea are for 2012.
(3) For Singapore, long-term unemployed refers to those who have been unemployed for at least 25 weeks. In the other economies, long-term unemployed refers to those unemployed for at least 6 months, except for Taiwan and US which refer to those unemployed for at least 27 weeks.
(4) The share represents the long-term unemployed as a proportion of the unemployed (excluding those with unknown duration of unemployment).
(5) Long-term unemployment rate for other economies are estimated based on data on the unemployment rate and long-term unemployment share.
(6) Youth refers to those aged 15 to 24, except for Norway, US, UK, and Spain which refer to those aged 16 to 24.
(7) Total unemployment rate pertain to those aged 15 to 74, except for Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan which pertain to those aged 15 & over, US to those aged 16 & over, and Norway, UK, and Spain to those aged 16 to 74.

Sources:
(1) Singapore: Labour Force Survey, MOM
(2) Other economies: Based on data from EuroStat Statistical Database, OECD Stat Extract Database and national statistical agencies (Accessed: 28 April 2014).

phase for them. Only 900 of NEET job seekers, representing 0.2% of the resident youth population were long-term unemployed in 2013.

Among the remaining NEET youths who were outside the labour force (1.8% of total resident youth population or 9,700), a third of them were taking a break (0.6% or 3,300), while youths who were in poor health or disabled (0.5% or 2,600) as well as with family responsibilities (0.5% or 2,400) each formed another quarter. Only a very small group of around 300 youths (0.1%) were discouraged from seeking work as they believed their job search would not yield results (**Chart 13**).[4]

Singapore's share of youths not in employment, education, or training was one of the lowest internationally

Similar to our favourable youth unemployment situation, Singapore's NEET rate was one of the lowest among the economies compared. In 2013, only 3.7% of Singapore's youths were not in employment, education, or training, substantially lower than the double-digit NEET rates for Greece (21%), Spain (19%), UK (13%), and France (11%). Singapore's NEET rate also compared favourably against the Nordic countries of Finland (9.3%), Sweden (7.5%), and Denmark (6.0%) (**Table 3**).

[4] Discouraged workers are persons outside the labour force who were not actively looking for a job because they believed their job search would not yield results. Reasons cited for being discouraged include:
(a) Believes no suitable work available;
(b) Employers' discrimination (e.g. prefer younger workers), and
(c) Lacks necessary qualification, training, skills, or experience.

Chart 13: Resident NEET Youths, 2013 (Annual Average)

**Total NEET Youths:
19,700**

**NEET Rate:
3.7%**

Unemployed —
Not In Education/
Training

10,000 (1.9%)

Taking A Break

3,300 (0.6%)

Poor Health/Disabled

2,600 (0.5%)

Family Responsibilities

2,400 (0.5%)

Discouraged

300 (0.1%)
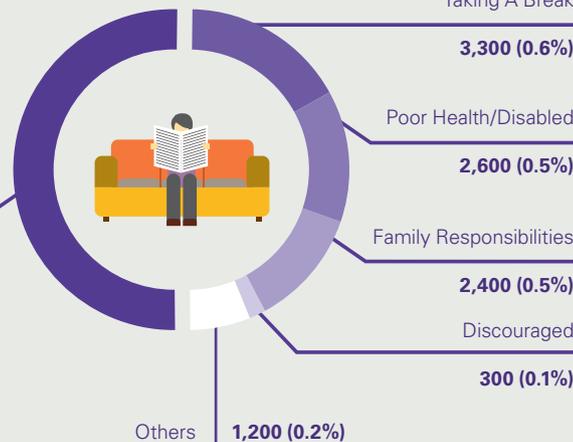
**Outside The
Labour Force
— Not In
Education/
Training**

9,700 (1.8%)

Others | **1,200 (0.2%)**

Notes:
(1) NEET refers to those who are unemployed or outside the labour force, due to reasons other than education or training.
(2) NEET rate represents the NEET youths as a proportion of the resident youth population in 2013.
(3) Figures in brackets refer to the number of resident NEET youths in each category as a percentage of the resident youth population in 2013.
(4) Family responsibilities refer to housework, childcare, and care-giving to families/relatives.
(5) Discouraged refers to those who believed that there is no suitable work available, perceives that there is discrimination from employers or that he or she lacks the necessary qualification, training, skills, or experience.
(6) 'Others' includes having sufficient financial support/means and doing voluntary/community work.
(7) Data may not add up due to rounding.

100

Chapter B2
Youths in
Singapore's
Labour
Market

Table 3: International Comparison of Youth NEET Rate, 2013

Economies	NEET Rate (%)	Unemployed Component (%)	Outside The Labour Force Component (%)
Singapore (Resident)	**3.7**	**1.9**	**1.8**
EU-27	12.9	6.8	6.1
Greece	20.6	14.4	6.2
Spain	18.6	13.2	5.5
United Kingdom (UK)	13.3	7.1	6.2
France	11.2	6.5	4.7
Finland	9.3	4.1	5.2
Sweden	7.5	3.7	3.8
Switzerland	7.1	3.3	3.8
Germany	6.3	2.8	3.5
Denmark	6.0	2.1	3.9
Norway	5.6	2.1	3.5
Netherlands	5.1	2.0	3.0

Notes:
(1) Youth refers to those aged 15 to 24, except for Norway, UK, and Spain which refer to those aged 16 to 24.
(2) Data may not add up to total due to rounding.

Sources:
(1) Singapore: Labour Force Survey, MOM
(2) Other economies: EuroStat Statistical Database (Accessed: 28 April 2014).

Concluding Remarks

As most of our youths defer entry into the labour market to pursue higher education, the proportion of youths participating in the labour market has generally declined, though the downtrend has moderated in the recent decade, with more youths taking up work and internship while studying. The rising trend of youths working while studying would enable them to acquire skills and experience which would help smoothen their eventual school-to-employment transition.

Youths in Singapore have one of the lowest unemployment and long-term unemployment rates in the world. Economic 'idleness' was also less of a problem in Singapore, as our share of our youths not in employment, education or training was small and lower than in many of the economies compared. Singapore's favourable performance reflects our tight and flexible labour market as well as a quality education and training system that equips our youths to take on the jobs created.

Correction: 23 April, 2015
Chart 5 (p. 92) illustrated the distribution of employed residents aged 25 to 29 as 25 to 24 because of a misprint.
This has been corrected.
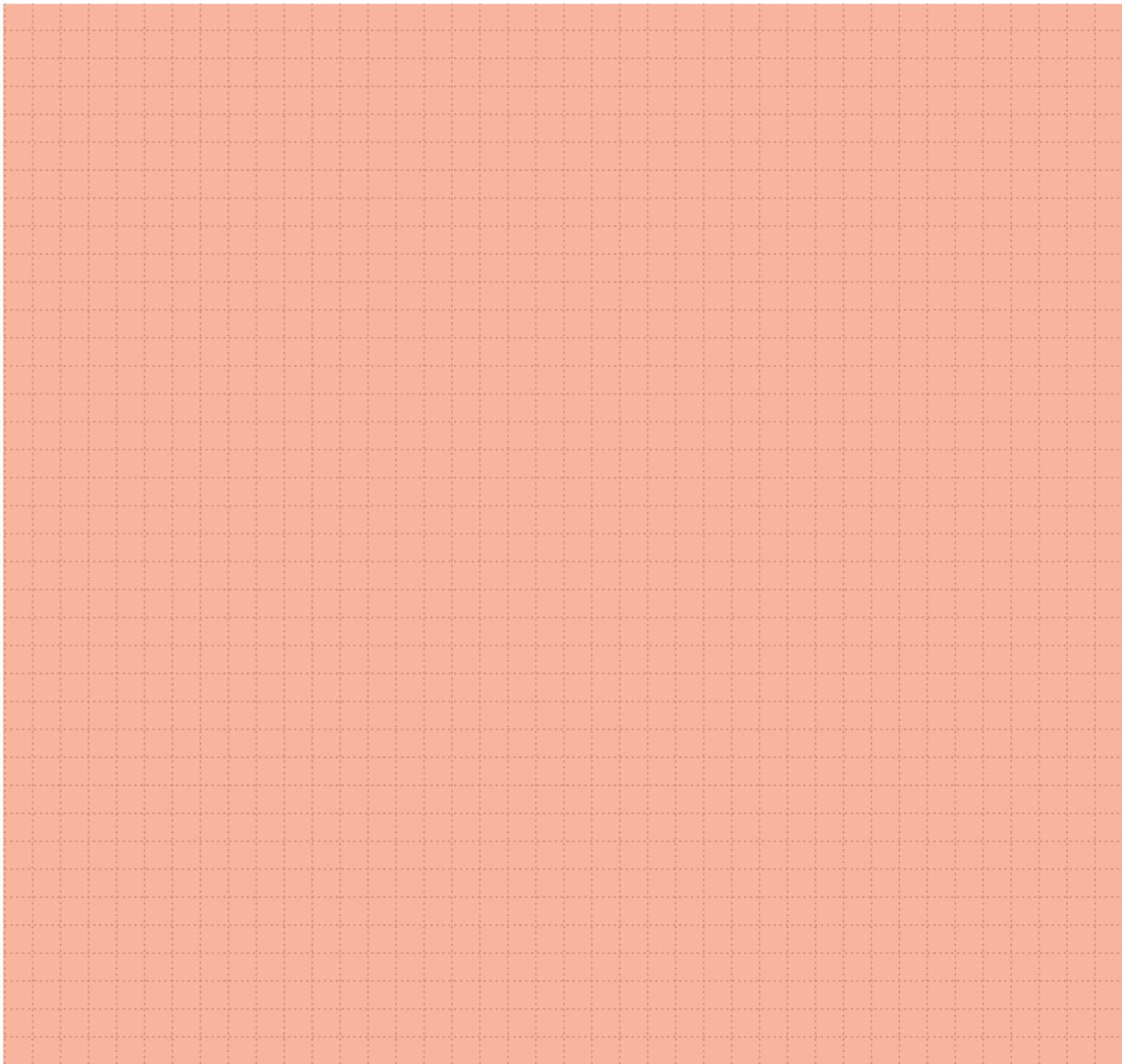
Section C
**Youth &
Wellbeing**

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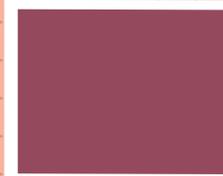
Wellbeing of Singapore's Youths

Ho Kong Weng

School of Economics
Singapore Management University
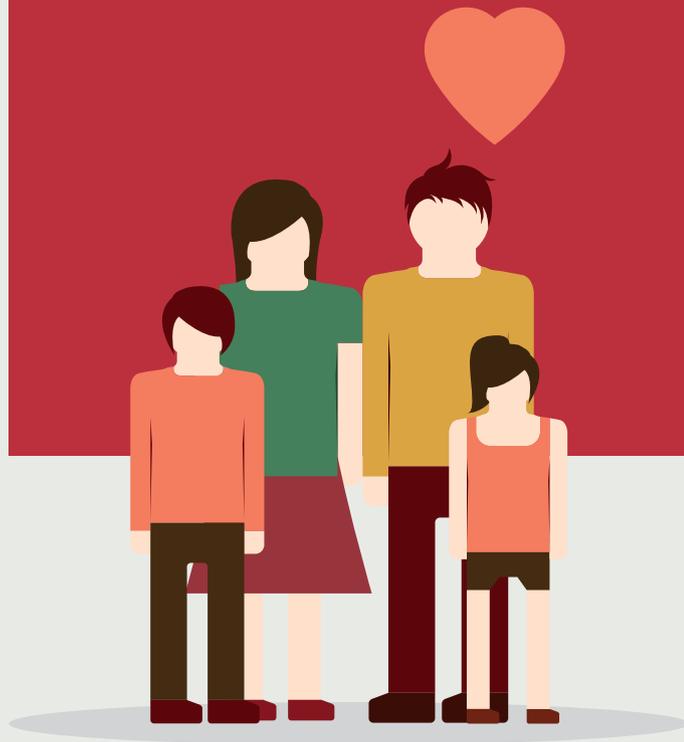
Abstract

Given Singapore's focus on human capital investment in its residents, the nation's youths have experienced increases in their financial, educational, and physical wellbeing. However, how have our youths fared in their emotional and mental wellbeing? Figures from the World Values Survey show reported a gradual decline in life satisfaction for both general population and youths. Data from four waves of the National Youth Survey confirms this trend. This chapter explores and examines the non-economic channels that may have countered the positive influence of economic success on the wellbeing of youths, namely, changing family structure, heightened stressors, shifting life goals, time use, national pride, and perceived opportunities to fulfil aspirations.
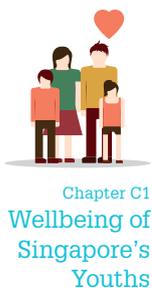
Introduction

Singapore is going to celebrate her first jubilee in 2015 since her independence in 1965. Her economic performance had been impressive with an average real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of 5.18 per cent per annum per person from 1960 to 2013 in constant 2010 prices[1]. Is overall rising economic output measured by GDP translated to overall wellbeing of our youths, economic and non-economic? This chapter aims to examine the current overall wellbeing of our youths using findings on happiness, life satisfaction, and related domains from the National Youth Survey (NYS) 2013.

First, we look at two broad macro indicators which can shed some light on the wellbeing of youths in Singapore: educational attainment and life expectancy at birth. The mean number of years of schooling for residents aged 25 and over in 2013 was 10.3[2], up

from 3.1[3] in 1960, which was more than a threefold increase. Life expectancy at birth for males was 59.4 years in 1957 and had increased to 80.2 years in 2013; for females, it was 63.2 years in 1957, and 84.6 years in 2013.[4] Continued human capital investment in the residents of Singapore, including the youth, by both the public sector and the private sector, in both education and health, was the reason for the above improved statistics over time.

While the above statistics suggest an increase in the financial, educational, and physical wellbeing of youths and their parents, we would also like to examine indicators which can directly measure the emotional and mental wellbeing of youths. Satisfaction with Life, a 10-point Likert scale question was asked in the NYS 2002, 2005, 2010, and 2013. **Figure 1** shows percentage breakdown of Satisfaction with Life for 2013 for youths aged 15 to 34 and the mean scores for

[1]Computed by the author based on online data from the Department of Statistics.

[2]Extracted from online data, Singapore Department of Statistics, www.singstat.gov.sg.

[3]Extracted from Barro and Lee (2000).

[4]Extracted from online data, Singapore Department of Statistics, www.singstat.gov.sg.

Figure 1. Satisfaction with Life

Having considered all things in life, youths were…

Mean = 6.79

Satisfied									Dissatisfied
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
6%	9%	24%	25%	15%	10%	5%	3%	1%	2%

64%

Year-on-Year Comparison (Mean, 15 to 29 year olds)

7.10	6.96	7.58	6.79
2002 (n=1,504)	2005 (n=1,504)	2010 (n=918)	2013 (n=2,061)

Source: NYS 2002, 2005, 2010, & 2013
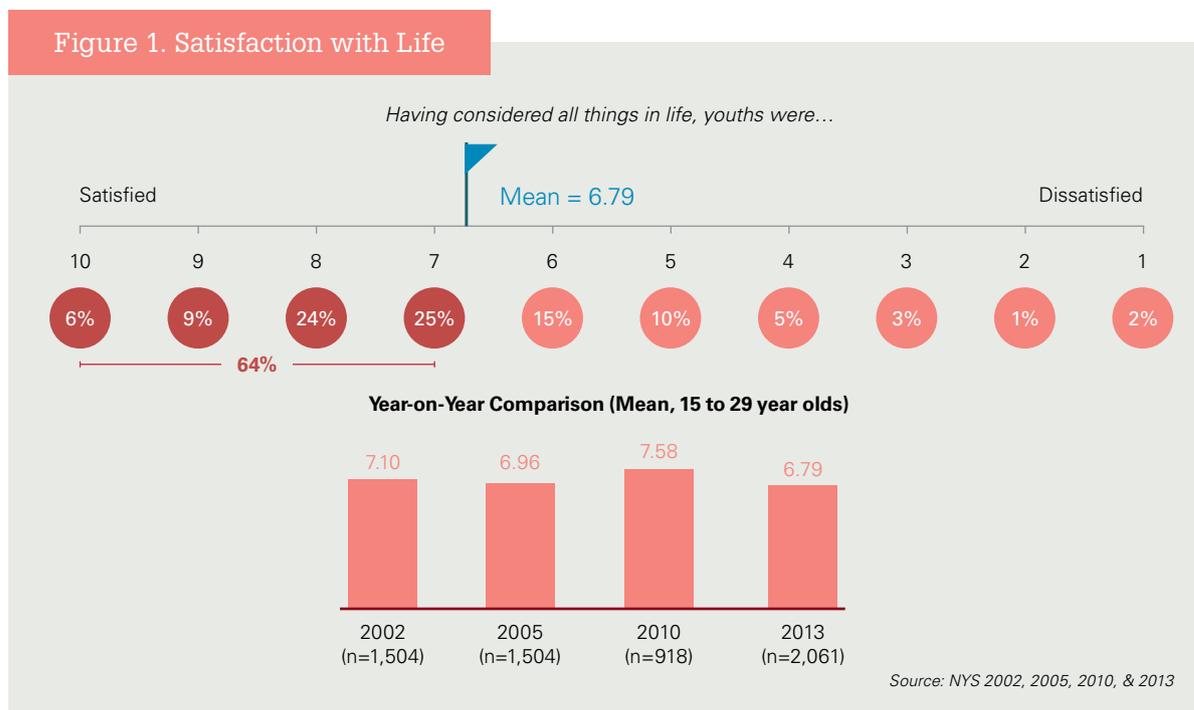
the four waves of NYS for youths aged 15 to 29 (NYS 2002 and 2005 surveyed youths aged 15 to 29 only).

It appears that the Satisfaction with Life mean scores registered a decline from 2010 to 2013. If we disregard the possibly unusual spike in 2010, we still see a gradual decline from 2002 to 2013. Youths are more dissatisfied with life despite overall greater affluence and educational attainment.

Next, we will examine Happiness with Life, another subjective wellbeing indicator first introduced in 2010. **Figure 2** shows the percentage breakdown for 2013 with a mean score of 4.92. The mean score in 2010 was a higher 5.45. Taken together, both measures of subjective wellbeing of youths in Singapore registered declines.

Findings from the World Values Survey (WVS) suggested similar declines in the the subjective wellbeing of youths in Singapore from 2002 to 2012. **Table 1** shows the mean scores on Satisfaction with Your Life for those ages up to 29 in 2002 and 2012, with 1 meaning completely dissatisfied and 10 meaning completely satisfied.

What are the possible reasons for the observed decline in subjective wellbeing of the youths in Singapore? To answer this question, we will first search the literature for the determinants of youth wellbeing, consider the relevant factors in the context of Singapore which are related to the data available in the NYS, and attempt to offer some explanations.

Table 1. Satisfaction with Your Life, World Values Survey, Singapore 2002 and 2012

	Satisfaction with Your Life (Mean[5])	
	2002	2012
Whole sample	7.13 (n=1,512)	6.96 (n=1,972)
Ages up to 29	7.09 (n=722)	6.84 (n=420)

[5] Extracted from online data, World Values Survey, www.worldvaluessurvey.org.

Figure 2. Happiness with Life

Taking all things together, youths were…

Very Happy			Mean = 4.92			Very Unhappy
7	6	5	4	3	2	1
7%	23%	41%	20%	6%	2%	2%

71%

Source: NYS 2013
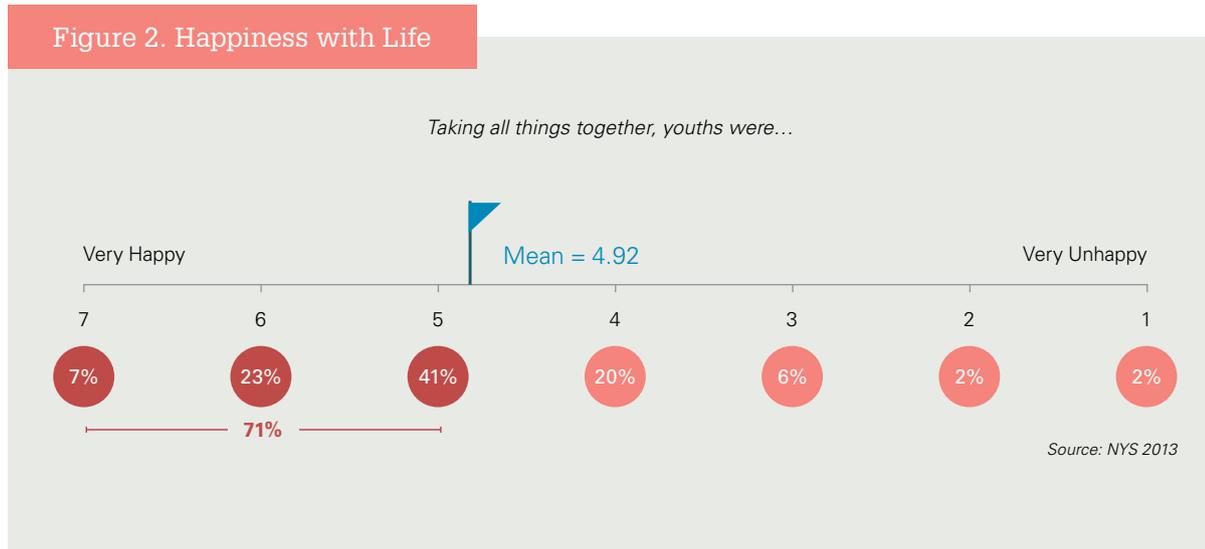
Reviewing international studies on subjective wellbeing of the general population, Blanchflower (2009) found that wellbeing was higher among married people, the highly educated, the healthy, and those with high income. Wellbeing was low among newly divorced and separated people, the unemployed, immigrants and minorities, those in poor health, the less educated, and the poor. While these are factors for the general population, and possibly more relevant for the adults, there could be an influence of such factors on the youth or a direct transmission of the wellbeing of the adults to their youths via such factors in the families.

For example, based on the first four waves of the Household, Income, and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey, Ulker (2008) found that parental divorce significantly and negatively affected the wellbeing of female youths (aged 15 to 24 in the first wave of 2001). As for the males, current living arrangements were important determinants of their mental health and life satisfaction. Similarly, Proctor et al. (2009) reviewed the literature on youth life satisfaction and found that personality, self-esteem, self-efficacy, structured extracurricular activities, intrinsic life goals, hope, parental marital status, as well as social support from friends and family were important determinants for the youths.

Building on the subject of social participation, Gilman (2001)[6] found positive and significant correlations of students' global life satisfaction and their social interests and participation in structured extracurricular activities. Furthermore, Gilman (2004)[7] documented that students who reported low social interests and low participation in structured extracurricular activities scored low in all satisfaction domains. The NYS has several items on social participation and we would be able to examine the relationships using Singapore data.

Casas et. al. (2004)[8] and Kasser (2004)[9] provided extensive review that documented positive correlations of intrinsic goals and personal wellbeing but negative relationships between extrinsic goals and subjective wellbeing. Using data obtained from Germany, Headey (2006) found that nonzero sum goals (likened to intrinsic goals), which include commitment to family, friends and social, and political involvement, promote life satisfaction. Zero sum goals (likened to extrinsic goals), on the other hand, including commitment to career success and material gains, appear detrimental to life satisfaction. In a national survey of American youths, both maternal and paternal support, as perceived by the adolescents, together with intrinsic support were found to be important determinants of life satisfaction (see Vilhjalmsson, 1994[10] and Young et al., 1995[11]).

Having reviewed the literature, we will proceed to examine the association of socioeconomic and demographic background with youths' wellbeing. We will consider the various stressors youths face, and whether life goals, time use, and the family environment have an impact on the wellbeing of youths. We will then extend the analysis to include variables related to Singapore as a nation, cross examining wellbeing and national pride[12], perceived opportunity in Singapore, and views on income inequality, before concluding this chapter.

Socioeconomic Background, Demographic Background, and Youth Wellbeing

This section will examine whether background variables are associated with happiness and life satisfaction. NYS 2013 provides the relevant data for us to examine in detail the determinants of wellbeing of youths in Singapore and to compare our findings with other studies on youths or the general population. The data also allows us to examine whether there is a difference between happiness (which measures the affective aspect of wellbeing) and life satisfaction (which measures the cognitive aspect of wellbeing) empirically.

[6] As reviewed in Proctor et al. (2009).

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Tambyah, Tan, and Kau (2010) analysed Singapore data from the AsiaBarometer 2006 Survey and found that being proud as a Singaporean was highly correlated with happiness.

[13] Differences between males and females are not significant at p<.001.

Table 2 reports the mean happiness and life satisfaction scores by gender, ethnicity, and age groups of youths surveyed in NYS 2010 and NYS 2013. There is no statistical difference in happiness or life satisfaction between males and females[13]. However, Chinese youths seem to score marginally lower in both happiness and life satisfaction than Malays and Indians. There seemed to be a U-shaped age profile[14] of happiness and life satisfaction in NYS 2010 but such an age profile was negligible in NYS 2013, possibly due to a narrow age range in our youth data.

Table 3 computes the mean scores of happiness and life satisfaction by the self-reported state of health. It shows that better health is clearly associated with higher level of wellbeing. The Spearman correlation[15] also shows that health is highly correlated with both happiness and life satisfaction.

Table 4 reports the average scores for happiness and life satisfaction by the marital status of the youth. Divorced or separated youths scored lowest in both happiness and life satisfaction while married youths have higher scores. The result sounds a concern because the general divorce rate in Singapore has been rising since 1980 when data was available. A broken family will bring about stress, both emotionally and financially, leading to lower levels of wellbeing. We have also conducted further analysis by considering those who are married versus those who are not. Using the Spearman correlation, we found that both happiness and life satisfaction were statistically correlated with whether the youth was married or not based on the data of NYS 2013.

[14] Younger people are happier and more satisfied with life; however, as they transit from school to work, and begin to shoulder more responsibilities in life and face more setbacks, their level of wellbeing falls. Later on, as they attain stability in their families and work, and other aspects in life, their wellbeing will start to rise.

[15] Spearman correlation is a statistical measure of the relationship between two variables, with a value ranging from -1 to 1. A positive (negative) coefficient value implies a positive (negative) association between the two.

Table 2. Demographic Background and Wellbeing

	Mean Happiness (Scale 1–7)		Mean Life Satisfaction (Scale 1–10)	
Gender	**2010**	**2013**	**2010**	**2013**
Male	5.45	4.86	7.65	6.70
Female	5.46	4.98	7.64	6.88
Ethnicity				
Chinese	5.40	4.84	7.57	6.72
Malay	5.57	5.10	7.68	6.91
Indian	5.60	5.17	7.94	7.06
Others	5.77	5.01	8.07	7.02
Age				
15 to 19	5.54	4.93	7.76	6.83
20 to 24	5.34	4.89	7.43	6.78
25 to 29	5.40	4.91	7.54	6.77
30 to 34	5.52	4.95	7.80	6.79

Source: NYS 2010 & 2013

[16] There were no
responses for
the "very poor"
category in 2010.

Table 3. State of Health and Wellbeing

	Mean Happiness (Scale 1–7)		Mean Life Satisfaction (Scale 1–10)	
	2010	2013	2010	2013
Very Poor[16]	–	2.72	–	3.19
Poor	4.02	3.94	5.59	5.27
Fair	4.84	4.42	6.59	6.00
Good	5.42	5.18	7.62	7.19
Very Good	5.90	5.60	8.30	7.93

Source: NYS 2010 & 2013

Table 4. Marital Status and Wellbeing

	Mean Happiness (Scale 1–7)		Mean Life Satisfaction (Scale 1–10)	
	2010	2013	2010	2013
Single	5.44	4.84	7.64	6.68
Married without Child or Children	5.65	5.02	7.79	6.92
Married with Child or Children	5.48	5.14	7.82	7.18
Divorced	4.49	4.21	5.53	5.70
Separated	–	5.00	–	7.97
Widowed	6.00	4.72	8.00	7.15
In a Relationship	5.30	4.99	6.85	6.82

Source: NYS 2010 & 2013

The next variable of interest is education. More youths are attaining higher education. For instance, as of 2012, 49% of non-student youths aged 25 to 34 years old had completed university, an increase from 31% in 2002[17]. Data from NYS 2013 reflects this shift: 83% of youths are confident that they can attain a bachelor's degree or higher while about half think that university education is necessary to get a decent job. Is education correlated to happiness and life satisfaction? Our Spearman correlation analysis shows that for NYS 2013, both educational aspiration (for full-time students) and educational attainment (for youth working full-time) are positively correlated with happiness and life satisfaction.

The last socioeconomic background variable we want to examine is income, either allowance received by full-time students or the personal income of youths who are working full-time. Allowance is not correlated with full-time students' happiness or life satisfaction. However, both life satisfaction and happiness of full-time students are correlated with the combined personal income of their parents. This shows that parental influence on the wellbeing of their youths may work through material provision. It is interesting that pocket money has no direct influence and that life satisfaction, not happiness, is associated with parental income. Future research on this channel of intergenerational transmission of wellbeing will be interesting.

As for youths working full-time, both their happiness and life satisfaction are correlated with their personal income as well as the combined income of their parents. The positive association of personal income with wellbeing found here reminds us of the rising macro indicators discussed earlier: real GDP and educational attainment in Singapore. The overall improving economic and educational environment could have contributed to a rising wellbeing of youths in Singapore, but other opposing factors may have led to an overall decline.

Youth Stressors and Wellbeing

This section reports the extent of various life stressors that youths face as surveyed in NYS 2013 and how they may be associated with the wellbeing of the youth in Singapore. **Figure 3** shows that the top three stressors affecting youths are future uncertainty, emerging adult responsibility, and finances, which were also the top three stressors in NYS 2010 but with the second and third stressors interchanged. Youths are most at ease with friendships, family relationships, and personal health. The top stressors are related to challenges faced by youths transiting to adulthood while a strong family relationship and a network of friendship provides the necessary support to handle such challenges.

Are life stressors related to the wellbeing of youths? Not surprisingly, all the nine life stressors reported in Figure 3 are found to be negatively and significantly associated with the happiness and life satisfaction of youths in Singapore. The Spearman correlation shows that the top four life stressors which are negatively and significantly correlated with both happiness and life satisfaction are: future uncertainty, finances, emerging adult responsibilities, and friendships, in order of strength of correlation.

When we conduct additional analysis using ordered probit regressions (with controls on demographic, socio-economic characteristics and background), friendships and future uncertainty emerge as the top two determinants of wellbeing of full-time students. When we analyse youths working full-time, future uncertainty is the only stressor that is statistically significant. Compared to 2010, 2013 sees a fall in confidence about the future, an increase in stress in future uncertainty, and in emerging adult responsibility. These changes contribute to the decline in wellbeing in Singapore from 2010 to 2013. An improvement in these life stressors will improve the wellbeing of youths.

[17] Extracted from online data, Singapore Department of Statistics, www.singstat.gov.sg.

Figure 3. Youths' Life Stressors

Future uncertainty — 26% / 22%
Finances — 21% / 20%
Emerging adult responsibility — 24% / 14%
Studies — 19% / 15%
Health of family member — 21% / 13%
Work — 18% / 9%
Personal health — 15% / 8%
Family relationships — 12% / 8%
Friends — 11% / 5%

● Very Stressful ● Extremely Stressful
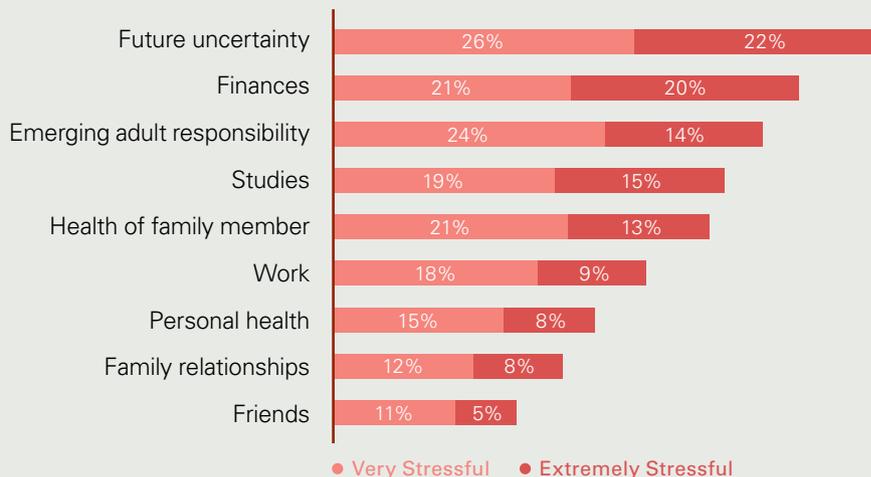
Source: NYS 2013

## Life Goals and Youth Wellbeing

This section reports the findings on the life goals of youths in Singapore. **Figure 4** shows that the top five very important life goals are "maintain strong family relationships", "have a place of my own", "acquire new skills and knowledge", "have a successful career", and "earn lots of money". Out of these top five life goals, three are work-oriented and one is family-oriented. At the bottom of the list are "be famous", "be actively involved in overseas voluntary work", "migrate to another country", "actively involved in local voluntary work", and "be actively involved in the arts".

Interestingly, although top five "very important" life goals includes three relating to work or career: "acquire new skills and knowledge", "have a successful career", and "earn lots of money", the top "very important" life goal is to "maintain strong family relationships". This suggests a possible tension between the allocation of

time between family and work in order to achieve these "very important" life goals.

Are life goals related to the wellbeing of youths in Singapore? When we compute the Spearman correlation coefficients for happiness or life satisfaction and the respective life goals surveyed in NYS 2013, we find that the top three life goals that were positively and significantly correlated with happiness were, "to get married", "to have children", and "to maintain strong family relationships", same as in NYS 2010. Hence, family-oriented life goals matter in the wellbeing of youths. On the other hand, "to earn lots of money" and "to migrate to another country" are negatively correlated with happiness and life satisfaction. Those with higher scores in money-oriented life goals are likely to suffer from lower scores of wellbeing. Those who wish to migrate to another country are likely dissatisfied with the current living environment and hence suffer from lower scores of wellbeing.

Figure 4. Very Important Life Goals

Life Goal	Percentage
Maintain strong family relationships	74%
Have a place of my own	70%
Acquire new skills and knowledge	65%
Have a successful career	61%
Earn lots of money	46%
Help the less fortunate	41%
Contribute to society	39%
Get married	39%
Have children	37%
Have a good personal spiritual / religious life	36%
Start my own business	22%
Be actively involved in sports	18%
Discover, design, or invent something new	17%
Be actively involved in the arts	13%
Be actively involved in local volunteer work	12%
Migrate to another country	10%
Be actively involved in overseas volunteer work	9%
Be famous	6%

Source: NYS 2013

Figure 5 shows the percentages of importance attached to the various life goals from NYS 2005 to NYS 2013 among 15 to 29 year olds. "To get married", "to have children" increased slightly from past years while "to maintain strong family relationships" registered an increase after a significant dip in 2010. Also, while "to earn lots of money" remained constant between the same time periods, "to migrate to another country" registered an increase of six percentage points. A possible shift towards extrinsic value or a zero-sum life goal coupled with dissatisfaction with the current living environment may weaken the wellbeing of youth, consistent with the findings of Headey (2006).

## Figure 5. Very Important Life Goals Trends (15 to 29 year olds)

Maintain strong family relationships
81%
71%
74%

Acquire new skills and knowledge
58%
59%
68%

Have a successful career
67%
65%

Earn lots of money
46%
47%
47%

Have a good personal spiritual/religious life
27%
27%
36%

Get married
32%
31%
36%

Have children
30%
30%
33%

Start my own business
21%
19%
21%

Be actively involved in sports
16%
18%
19%

Discover, design, or invent something new
13%
13%
18%

Be actively involved in the arts
8%
10%
14%

Be actively involved in local volunteer work
6%
5%
13%

Migrate to another country
5%
11%

Be actively involved in overseas volunteer work
5%
10%

Be famous
5%
7%
7%

● 2005
● 2010
● 2013

Source: NYS 2013

Time Use and Youth Wellbeing

Youths in Singapore today are busy with various activities in school, at work, with friends and families. As time is an important input to various socioeconomic outcomes, it would be interesting to examine how youths allocate their time and how such an allocation may affect their happiness and life satisfaction. **Figure 6** shows the time spent by youths on activities outside school/work. Thirty five per cent reported spending 10 hours or more per week on online activities such as gaming, chatting, social networking, and reading blogs, the top activity outside school or work. The second highest is activity with parents or other relatives: 33% reported spending 10 hours or more per week. The third greatest time consumer is learning activity which comprises reading, studying or doing homework (excluding school hours, with 27% reporting spending 10 hours or more per week on such activities. 23% reported spending 10 hours or more per week on activities with friends such as movies, hanging out, and concerts, the fourth activity outside school or work. Much less time is spent on physical activities, voluntary/community and entrepreneurial activities.

When we compute Spearman correlation coefficients for each activity with happiness and life satisfaction, we find that both happiness and life satisfaction are correlated positively with activities with parents or other relatives, volunteer activities and/or community projects, physical activities, and activities with friends, in decreasing strengths of correlation. Time spent on learning activities is also positively correlated with life satisfaction. Both happiness and life satisfaction are negatively correlated with online activities. Ordered probit regressions also show that activities with parents or other relatives, volunteer activities, and/or community projects are positively correlated with happiness and life satisfaction while time spent on online activities is negatively correlated with youth wellbeing. Online activities such as social media and games could be addictive and stressful, which could reduce productivity in school and work.

Figure 6. Time Spent on Activities Outside of School/Work
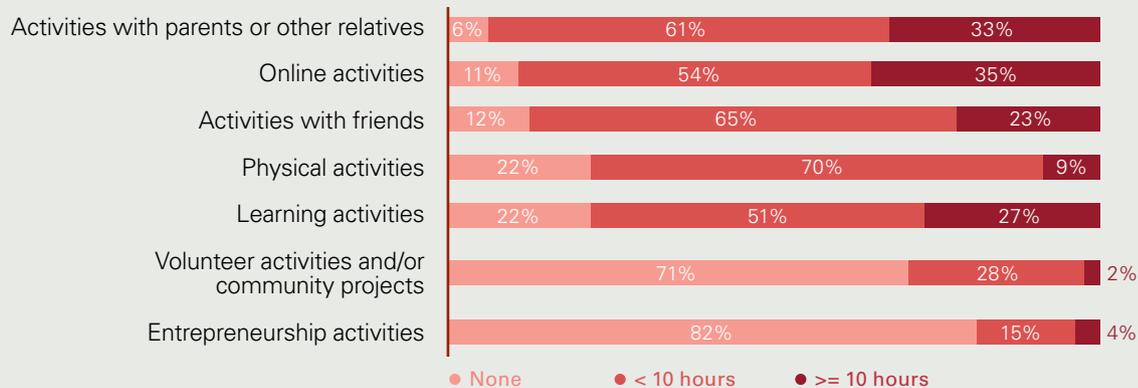
Source: NYS 2013
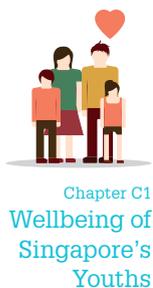
Was there a change in the pattern of time use from 2010 to 2013? **Table 5** shows that time use has largely remain consistent among 15 to 29 year olds. From 2010 to 2013, the amount of time spent online has increased slightly in terms of intensity (i.e., youths going online for more than 10 hours a week has increased), while the amount time spent with family and relatives remained relatively constant, with 2010 and 2013 reporting higher figures than the preceding years. Youths are also spending more time on learning activities, and less time with friends. Given the pervasiveness of smartphone and social media use among youths, more may be spending time with friends using the internet, rather than through face-to-face communications. Finally, between 2002 and 2013, the time spent on physical activities largely remained the same, peaking in 2005.

Table 5. Time Use from 2002 to 2013 (15 to 29 year olds)

	2002	2005	2010	2013
Online Activities				
>= 10 hours			32%	35%
< 10 hours	NA	NA	60%	54%
Not at all			8%	11%
Activities with Parents/Relatives				
>= 10 hours	21%	25%	39%	37%
< 10 hours	74%	70%	58%	58%
Not at all	5%	5%	3%	6%
Learning Activities				
>= 10 hours	12%	19%	20%	33%
< 10 hours	70%	64%	60%	48%
Not at all	19%	17%	20%	19%
Activities with Friends				
>= 10 hours	28%	34%	38%	29%
< 10 hours	69%	64%	60%	62%
Not at all	3%	2%	2%	9%
Physical Activities				
>= 10 hours	7%	10%	9%	10%
< 10 hours	71%	75%	75%	70%
Not at all	22%	15%	16%	20%

Source: NYS 2002, 2005, 2010, & 2013

Family Environment and
Youth Wellbeing

Our earlier discussions showed that variables related to the family, whether family-oriented life goals or time spent in family activities, were highly correlated with the wellbeing of youths in Singapore. Now, we will focus on two concepts related to the family: family support and family challenge. **Figure 7** shows the high percentages agreeing to the six items of family support enjoyed by youths while **Figure 8** reports the six items on family challenge, showing high percentages in agreement to all the questions.

Using factor analysis, we compute the Family Support Index (FSI) and the Family Challenge Index (FCI) as in Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000). Both FSI and FCI are highly correlated with both happiness and life satisfaction of youths, again suggesting the importance of the role of family in their wellbeing. When we examine together the simultaneous influence of FSI and FCI on

the wellbeing of youths using regression analysis, we find that both family support and family challenge have significant influences on happiness and life satisfaction, with family support exerting a stronger impact.

National Pride, Opportunity,
## Inequality, and Youth Wellbeing

This section will go beyond the individual background characteristics and family environment of youths in searching for the determinants of wellbeing. We will explore three questions on national pride, perceived opportunity in Singapore, and views on the role of income inequality to see if these variables are influential on the wellbeing of youths in Singapore. **Table 6** cross-tabulates national pride with the mean scores of happiness and life satisfaction. It clearly shows that wellbeing increases with higher level of pride in being a Singaporean for both 2010 and 2013. Further Spearman correlation analysis confirms the results.

Figure 7. Family Support
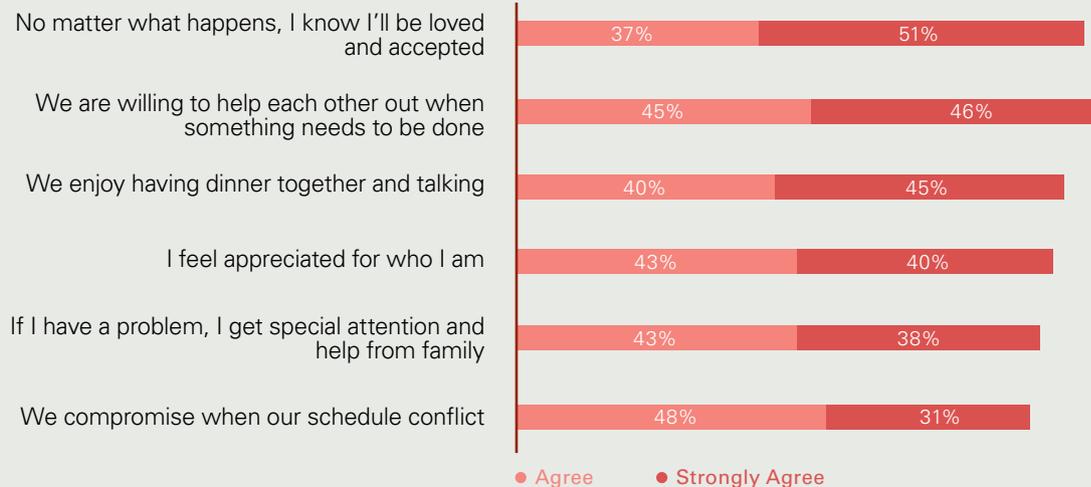
Source: NYS 2013

Figure 8. Family Challenge

I'm given responsibility for making important decisions affecting my life — Agree 47%, Strongly Agree 42%

I'm expected to do my best — Agree 45%, Strongly Agree 39%

I try to make other family members proud — Agree 46%, Strongly Agree 39%

I'm expected to use my time wisely — Agree 48%, Strongly Agree 34%

Individual accomplishments are noticed — Agree 47%, Strongly Agree 30%

I'm encouraged to get involved in activities outside school and work — Agree 43%, Strongly Agree 27%

● Agree   ● Strongly Agree

Source: NYS 2013

Table 6. National Pride and Wellbeing

	Per cent		Mean Happiness (Scale 1–7)		Mean Life Satisfaction (Scale 1–10)	
	2010	2013	2010	2013	2010	2013
Not Proud At All	<1	2	3.79	3.61	5.60	4.41
Not Very Proud	4	11	4.70	4.10	6.44	5.59
Quite Proud	48	53	5.23	4.83	7.34	6.69
Very Proud	48	34	5.74	5.34	8.01	7.42

Source: NYS 2010 & 2013

Note, however, that the percentage of youth reporting being quite proud or very proud has decreased from 2010 (96%) to 2013 (87%). Also, the mean levels of happiness and life satisfaction have decreased for national pride across the board.

**Figure 9** shows the responses to the question on perceived opportunities in Singapore to achieve personal aspirations and a breakdown of those who agreed by age groups. Those aged 20 to 24 are least likely to agree (40%). Compared to 2010, there was a significant decrease in the percentage of youth to 43% in 2013. Disregarding the spike in 2010, there is still a gradual decline between 2005 and 2013, suggesting yet another possible reason for the decline in youth wellbeing.

[18] NYS 2010 asked the same question on opportunities in Singapore to achieve personal aspirations but with different options. Instead of having "Neither Agree nor Disagree" as an option, options "Slightly Disagree" and "Slightly Agree" were made available in NYS 2010.

Figure 9. Perceived Opportunities in Singapore

Youths' responses to the statement
"There are enough opportunities in Singapore for me to achieve my personal aspirations in life."

Strongly Disagree 6%

Disagree 13%

Strongly Agree 9%

Neither Agree nor Disagree 36%

Agree 36%
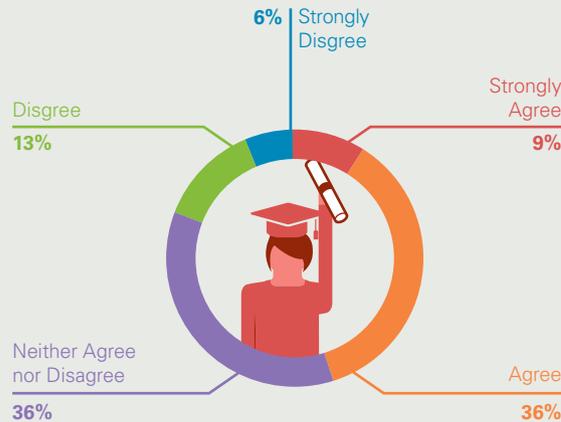
Age Comparison
(Agree & Strongly Agree)

15–19	20–24	25–29	30–34
46%	40%	41%	52%
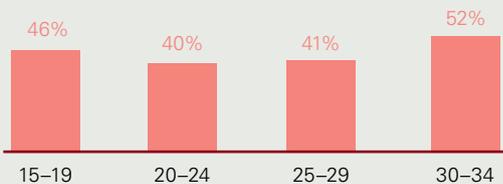
Year-on-Year Comparison[18]
(Agree & Strongly Agree, 15 to 29 year olds)

2005	2010	2013
47%	64%	43%
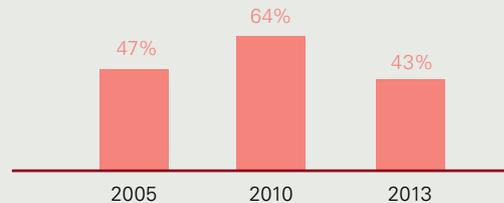
Source: NYS 2005, 2010, & 2013

Table 7 further cross-tabulates the perceived opportunities in Singapore to achieve personal aspiration with wellbeing. It is very clear that both happiness and life satisfaction increase when there are greater opportunities in Singapore for personal aspirations. Spearman correlation analysis confirms the results.

Table 7. Opportunity in Singapore and Wellbeing

	Per cent	Mean Happiness (Scale 1–7)	Mean Life Satisfaction (Scale 1–10)
	2010	2010	2013
Strongly Disagree	6	3.80	4.97
Disagree	13	4.41	6.01
Neither Agree nor Disagree	36	4.82	6.64
Agree	36	5.22	7.26
Strongly Agree	9	5.61	7.87

Source: NYS 2013

Table 8. Income Equality and Differences

We need larger income differences as incentives

Income should be made more equal

	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
2010	6%	3%	18%	23%	15%	18%	7%	5%	3%	3%
2013	9%	3%	10%	16%	12%	21%	7%	9%	4%	9%
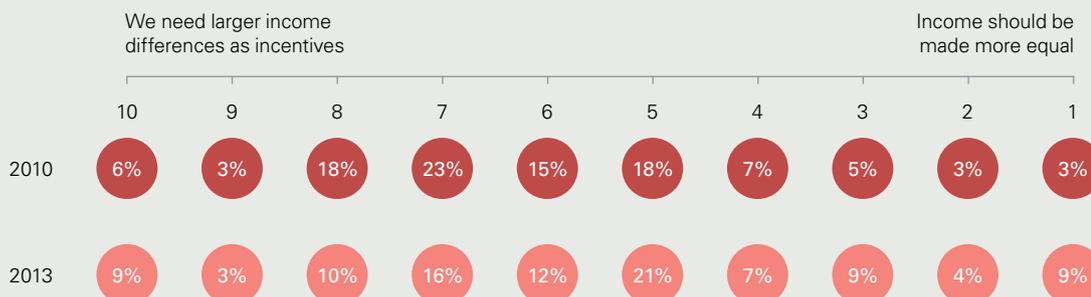
Source: NYS 2010 & 2013

Table 8 shows the views on the role of income inequality. There is quite a spread in the views. Compared with 2010, more have chosen options 1 to 4, and fewer have chosen 5 to 9, although the percentage choosing 10 has increased. Overall it seems that there is a shift toward a demand for income equality. While Spearman correlation coefficients did not reveal any association between the views on income inequality and the wellbeing of youths in 2010, the coefficients are statistically significant in 2013 with very low absolute values. However, this is only a pair-wise comparison. It is important to continue monitoring the views of youths in this aspect and to investigate if there is an association with wellbeing. Happiness research shows that happiness depends on income relative to others, and other comparisons with peers. Hence, there is a possible linkage between income inequality and wellbeing.

Concluding Remarks

The data analysis and discussions in this chapter provide preliminary evidence that despite growing economic affluence, rising educational attainment, and better health conditions generally, the wellbeing of youths in Singapore measured in terms of happiness with life and satisfaction with life might have declined in aggregate and recently from 2010 to 2013. We explored possible non-economic channels that may have countered the positive influence of economic success on wellbeing: changing family structure, heightened stressor in future uncertainty, rise in money-oriented life goals, increased time spent on online activities, decline in national pride, and decreased perceived opportunities in Singapore to achieve personal aspirations.

Youths who are divorced or whose parents are divorced suffer from lower levels of wellbeing. Rising divorce rates in Singapore raise challenges to the overall wellbeing of the families. Family support and family challenge, two important contributors to wellbeing, will be affected not just by divorce. Whether these two determinants of wellbeing are also affected by alternative family structures would be an important and interesting topic of research. Also, with more time spent online, the quality of interaction and bonding with parents, family members, and friends may have weakened, and hence wellbeing.

National pride has declined by nine percentage points from 2010 to 2013, implying possibly a lower sense of belonging and hence lower wellbeing. Similarly, youths agreeing or strongly agreeing that there are enough opportunities in Singapore to achieve their personal aspirations register a drop between 2005 and 2013, signalling a shift in perception. Such attitudinal changes not only affect wellbeing directly and negatively but may also affect youths' time investment in the community and the institutions they are in.

The government has an important role to play in enhancing the wellbeing of youths in Singapore through fostering a sense of belonging, instilling national pride, and providing sufficient opportunities for the youths to realize their aspirations. The Fair Consideration Framework will strengthen the Singaporean Core in the workforce, and likely enhance the opportunities for Singaporean youths competing with foreign professionals. Job opportunities should be given to both locals and foreigners to compete fairly to deliver efficiency and productivity growth. Likewise, whether the current allocation of educational opportunities, market driven or otherwise, is conducive to human capital development and overall wellbeing of the youth would be an important research topic.

In conclusion, youths in Singapore face many challenges, economic and non-economic, currently and in the future, and to better understand the evolution of their wellbeing, we need to consider not just economic determinants but also social trends related to the family, and government policies and global changes related to opportunities.

Chapter C1
Wellbeing of
Singapore's
Youths

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C2

Development and Validation of the Youth Mental Wellbeing Scale

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Abstract

Historically, illness-centric measures have been used to assess the impact of positive mental health programmes. With the increase prevalence of positive mental health programmes, there is a need to develop a more relevant set of indicators to evaluate programmes and to measure positive mental wellbeing. This article seeks to address a gap in the mental wellbeing literature by detailing the development and validation of a mental wellbeing scale for Singapore youths by the Health Promotion Board. Drawing from the Asian Mental Wellbeing Scale, this measure takes into consideration the socio-cultural context and developmental stages of Singapore youths using a two-stage qualitative and quantitative process. Practical applications of the scale are also discussed.

Chapter C2
Development
and Validation
of the Youth
Mental
Wellbeing
Scale

Introduction

In contemporary research literature, *mental wellbeing* is often used interchangeably with *mental health* (e.g., Peterson, 2004) to describe a regular state of health that is free from mental illness (Kessler et al., 1994). However, Jahoda's (1958) seminal work suggests that mental health is not the opposite of being mentally ill. This distinction is crucial, as positive mental health refers to a "super-normal" state with positive psychological functioning (Peterson, 2004); it is a state of *thriving*, a process of growth and development that enables individuals to actualise their potentials, pursue goals, and lead meaningful and satisfying lives.

The definition of positive psychological functioning may also vary by socio-cultural contexts (Kahneman et al., 1999). For instance, the collectivistic cultures in Asia may place greater emphasis on social skills and one's interdependence with others (Markus, & Kitayama, 1991). Recognising these variations, Health Promotion Board of Singapore (Chan et al, 2013) developed the Asian Mental Wellbeing Scale (AMWEBS) among adults in Singapore. AMWEBS consists of five domains of psychological functions — Asian Self-Esteem, Social Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence, Resilience, and Cognitive Efficacy, which focuses on the flexible, interdependent, and dynamic nature of the self. Interdependence is emphasised in AMWEBS' definition of Social and Emotional Intelligence. AMWEBS also moved away from the western's focus on mastery, optimism, and absolute positive self-evaluation, emphasizing instead on being realistic, rational, and flexible for the Resilience and Cognitive Efficacy domains.

Developing a Mental Wellbeing Scale for Singapore Youths

Using the AMWEBS and its five domains as a guide, the Health Promotion Board (HPB) embarked on a project to develop a youth mental wellbeing scale (YMWEBS). Unlike adults, in children and youth the five domains will

go through a dynamic development process. Therefore, it is necessary to take into consideration the evolvement of executive functions that underlie mental wellbeing (Cox, 2007).

Cox (2007) has identified eight executive functions underlying positive living:

1. **Initiation**: Being able to organize one's thoughts well enough to get started on a particular task without having to be asked multiple times.
2. **Flexibility**: Learning to apply by shifting one's focus and pace as various situations unfolds.
3. **Attention:** Focusing long and accurately enough to learn important information.
4. **Organisation**: Managing tasks and space, to be able to break down a task into manageable chunks and to be able to be task focused and with less tolerance of emotional fuzziness and chaos.
5. **Planning/managing time**: Finishing tasks in time.
6. **Working memory/learning**: Retaining things long enough for it to be stored in long term memory and to be able to benefit from learning/experiences.
7. **Self-awareness**: Having sufficient self-knowledge about how one might be seen by others. This information is essential to making purposeful choices about how to act in situations where one wants to avoid unintended consequences that lead to isolation or ostracism.
8. **Managing emotions**: Express one's feelings in proportion to the events that elicited them.

These functions develop continuously throughout childhood and adolescence and are essential to the development of thriving in youth. For example, attention is required to identify and differentiate own and others' mood states form the basis of emotional intelligence (Sfroufe, 1996). The ability to respond to environmental cues and manage emotions and the self are basic features that underlie resilience, emotional intelligence, and social intelligence. Effective working memory provides an important source of information from which

to interpret and maintain stability in both the self and relationships (Davidson et al., 2006; Healy, 2004).

In developing and validating the YMWEBS, a cultural psychology approach was employed using qualitative and quantitative methods. Stage 1 comprised qualitative methods to identify culturally conditioned beliefs and practices that define the concept of mental wellbeing among Singapore youths. Results obtained from qualitative methods are then used to form an initial item pool from which prototypes of YMWEBS were constructed for adolescents (13–17 years) (MWEBA) and children (6–12 years) (MWEBC). Stage 2 quantitatively examined data from youth, parent, teachers and counsellors to determine the psychometric properties of the scale.

Method

Stage 1: Identification, Conceptualization, and Manifestation of Mental Wellbeing

Participants and Procedures

Three groups of participants were recruited for focus group discussions held in Stage 1: teachers and counsellors (n = 47), parents (n = 34), and youths (n = 17). Youths comprised adolescents (aged 13 to 17) and children (aged 6 to 12). Teachers and counsellors were recruited using: convenient and random sampling from Singapore public schools by the Ministry of Education. Teachers and counsellors, parents, and youths were separately interviewed in focus group discussions using two guiding questions: "What do you think is a good/healthy life?" and "How do you achieve the good life?" The discussions were led by researchers who are fluent in either Chinese and English or English and Malay and the proceedings recorded with the permission of the participants. The recordings were subsequently transcribed.

Analysis & Review

The focus group discussion responses were subsequently reviewed to develop the MWEBA and MWEBC. Steps include:

1. **Identify meaningful statements**: Transcripts were reviewed by the researchers involved to identify meaningful statements.
2. **Develop meaningful categories**: Identified statements were reviewed to form larger categorical statements using the AMWEBS dimensions.
3. **Select items for prototyping**: Responses common to youths, parents, and teachers and counsellors were selected to form an initial item pool based on the AMWEBS dimensions. The pool was reviewed to ensure that the representative behavioural manifestations of each wellbeing dimension were captured. Ambiguous items were rephrased to capture the skills intended.
4. **Incorporate inputs**: Responses were gathered from adolescents' and children's reports of behaviours that enabled them to live a happy and productive life, alongside comments from parents, teachers, and counsellors.
5. **Determine face validity**: Additional rounds of interviews were conducted with adolescents and children to solicit comments on the initial prototype item pool.
6. **Determine inter-rater reliability**: Finally, Kappa coefficients were calculated. It yielded high inter-rater reliability scores of 0.87 for MWEBA and 0.90 for MWEBC.

Stage 2: Quantitative Evaluation

The second stage explored the internal structure, tested the construct validity, and evaluated the psychometric properties of the two scales through separate validation studies.

Chapter C2
Development
and Validation
of the Youth
Mental
Wellbeing
Scale

Study A. Adolescent Scale Validation

A total of 983 students randomly drawn from eight Singapore schools participated in the adolescent validation. Construct validity of the MWEBA scale was assessed against conceptually relevant constructs. The validation instruments included the Adolescent Personal Wellbeing Scale (APW; Cummins et al., 2003), Asian Depression Scale (ADS; Woo et al., 2004), Self-rating Anxiety Scale (SAS; Zung, 1971), Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman et al., 1998), and selected items of the Pediatric Symptom Check List (PSMPCLA; Jellinek et al., 1987).

The internal reliability of the 30-item MWEBA scale was α = .911. It suggests that the scale items formed a single underlying psychological construct. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) found that a four-factor solution best represented the conceptual grouping of the items. The factors extracted accounted for 45% of total variance from the EFA results. The structure was then subjected to a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test for best fit. Results showed an excellent fit with χ^2 = 8.39, df = 1, RMSEA = .088, CFI = .936. The final four factors are: Positive Functioning, Asian Self-Esteem, Emotional Intelligence, and Social Intelligence.

The correlation matrix of the MWEBA scale and validating instruments is listed in **Table 1**. The MWEBA scale positively correlated with the APW and the strength subscale of SDQ. This suggested that the MWEBA scale demonstrated concurrent validity of positive affects and positive functions. The MWEBA scale correlated negatively with the ADS, the SAS, and the difficulty subscale of the SDQ. These results supported the MWEBA scale as a measure of positive wellbeing and not negative emotions. The MWEBA was moderately negatively correlated with the SPMPCLA,

Table 1. MWEBA Correlation Matrix

Mean Standard Deviation and Correlation Matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. MWEBA	1						
2. PWEBA	.60**	1					
3. STRENGTH	.47**	.28**	1				
4. DIFFICULTY	-.39**	-.45**	-0.12**	1			
5. ANXIETY	-.16**	-.23**	.01	.52**	1		
6. DEPA	-.42**	-.51**	-.08**	.67**	0.48**	1	
7. SPMCPLA	-.40**	-.44**	-.14**	.67**	0.52**	0.67**	1
M	3.78	7.29	2.36	1.58	1.93	2.27	1.63
SD	0.49	1.28	0.32	0.34	0.39	0.79	0.29

*p<.05;
**p<.01

NB:
MWEBA - Youth Mental Wellbeing Scale - Adolescent form; PWEBA - Personal Wellbeing - Adolescent form; STRENGTH - Strength subscale of Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaire; DIFFICULTY - Difficulty subscale of Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaire; ANXIETY - Zung's Self-rating Anxiety Scale; DEPA - Asian Depression Scale - abbreviated; SMPCLA - Pediatric Symptom Check List selected items.

Source: Children's and Adolescents' Mental Wellbeing Scales in Singapore Final Project Report

suggesting that the MWEBA scale is a separate indicator from mental illness, which measures strength and happiness — the healthy state of the individual and not merely the absence of mental illness.

Study B. Children Scale Validation

One thousand children from eight schools were recruited from schools to participate in the study. Construct validity of the MWEBC scale was assessed against conceptually relevant constructs. The validation instruments included the Children's Personal Wellbeing Scale (PWEBC; Cummins et al., 2003), Asian Children Depression Scale (ACDS; Koh et al., 2007), Asian Children Anxiety Scale (ACAS; Chang, 2013), Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman et al., 1998), and selected items of the Paediatric Symptom Check List (PSMPCL; Jellinek et al., 1987).

EFA was conducted and a three dimensional model was derived. CFA showed a perfect fit with $\chi^2 = 0.00$, df = 0, CFI = 1.00. The final three factors are: Positive Functioning, Emotional Intelligence, and Social Intelligence.

The correlation matrix of the MWEBC and the validating instruments can be found in **Table 2**. Analysis found that MWEBC reported high internal reliability. MWEBC positively correlated with the PWEBC, an established Australian wellbeing scale which primarily captures positive affect. The MWEBC also correlated positively with the strength measure of the SDQ, demonstrating that the MWEBC covers positive functioning. As expected, the MWEBC negatively correlated with both depression and anxiety. It also correlated negatively with behavioural measures of the difficulty scale of the SDQ. As the difficulty (but not strength) scale of the SDQ highly correlates with the clinical screening tool

Table 2. MWEBC Correlation Matrix

Mean Standard Deviation and Correlation Matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. MWEBC	1						
2. PWEBC	.57**	1					
3. STRENGTH	.43**	.27**	1				
4. DIFFICULTY	-.25**	-.21**	.92**	1			
5. ANXIETY	-.21**	-.26**	.06*	.66**	1		
6. DEPA	-.27**	-.31**	-.01	.68**	.79**	1	
7. PSMPCLC	-.25**	-.20**	-.04	.68**	.66**	.71**	1
M	4.04	7.82	2.28	1.68	2.28	2.24	1.68
SD	0.56	1.48	0.37	0.42	0.94	0.88	0.34

**p<.05;
**p<.01*

*NB:
MWEPC - Youth Mental Wellbeing Scale - Child form; PWEBC - Personal Wellbeing - Child form; STRENGTH - Strength subscale of Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaire; DIFFICULTY - Difficulty subscale of Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaire; ANXIETY - Asian Children Anxiety Scale - abbreviated; DEPA - Asian Depression Scale - abbreviated; PSMPCLC - Pediatric Symptom Check List - Child form.*

Source: Children's and Adolescents' Mental Wellbeing Scales in Singapore Final Project Report

128

Chapter C2
Development
and Validation
of the Youth
Mental
Wellbeing
Scale

PSMPCL, this suggests that the MWEBC is a measure of positive mental health that is orthogonal to mental illness as measured by the PSMPCL.

Discussion

The present study thoroughly solicited inputs from youths as well as expected behavioural manifestations from parents, teachers, and counsellors. The MWEBA and MWEBC scale development process was also guided by a conceptual framework based on prior work on an adult mental wellbeing scale in Singapore (AMWEBS) and contemporary literature on the social, emotional, and cognitive development of youths.

The MWEBA and MWEBC scale items reflect an emphasis on a realistic and modest conceptualization of the self, coupled by a strong emphasis for dynamic learning and self-cultivation. This is reflected in the responses of youths, parents, teachers, and counsellors, which is the prevailing cultural values of Singapore (Chang et al., 2003). This sense of self-esteem differs from the Rosenberg's popular conceptualisation of self-esteem (1976), which primarily focuses on the positive

Table 3. Youth Mental Wellbeing Scale (Adolescents and Children)

Youth Mental Wellbeing Scale for Adolescents (aged 13 to 17)

Positive Functioning	Social Intelligence	Emotional Intelligence	Self-Esteem
• I finish my homework and assignments on time	• I talk to my family about my feelings	• I am happy most of the time	• I learn to make myself a better person
• I make good decisions	• I talk to my friends about my feelings	• When I fall, I pick myself up	• I have many interests
• I follow school rules and regulations without difficulty	• I enjoy being with family and friends	• I can get help when I need it	• I enjoy learning
• I am respectful to my elders	• I talk to friends when stressed	• I do not bottle up when I feel sad or angry	• If I put in effort, I can be the person I want to be
• I do not play too much computer and other games	• I can coordinate with others when I am doing group projects	• I have a spiritual life	• I feel comfortable about myself
• I think with reasons	• I consult with my parents and teachers when making major decisions	• I do not feel big ups and downs	• I accept myself
		• I can face reality	• I enjoy helping others
		• I do not dwell on negative emotions	• I strive to fulfil my potential
		• I can cope with stress	
		• I am of good physical health generally	

evaluation of the self. In terms of emotional and social intelligence, the MWEBA scale items showed more autonomy and differentiation from parents; while the MWEBC scale items showed more inter-dependence with parents (Erickson, 1954; 1968).

The validation results of both MWEBA and MWEBC scales showed strong construct validity, concurrent with other measures of strength (SDQ) and happiness (PWEBA & PWEBC). Both scales are negatively correlated with negative emotions and behavioural difficulties, further supporting the scales as measures of positive adjustment and positive affect. The final items are summarised in **Table 3**.

Practical Implications and Future Research

Applied carefully, the MWEBA and MWEBC scales possess the potential to build understanding of mental wellbeing needs of Singapore youths. Examples of nascent efforts may be seen through HPB projects such as Colours of the Mind (COTM) and parental support programmes.

Youth Mental Wellbeing Scale for Children (aged 6 to 12)

Positive Functioning	Emotional Intelligence	Social Intelligence
• I pay attention in class	• I feel relaxed	• I like eating with friends
• I listen to my parents	• I feel happy with myself	• I like playing with friends
• I remember my daily lessons	• I think my parents love me	• I talk to my friends when I am happy or sad
• I listen to others when they are talking	• When I feel sad, I am able to make myself feel better	• I talk to my parents when I am happy or sad
• I do not stay angry or sad for long	• I am comfortable with myself	• I am able to ask my friends for help
• I like going to school	• I am able to ask my parents for help	• I am able to help my friends
• When talking and in group activities, I take turns to participate	• When I am bullied, I am able to get help	
• When I fail, I try to do better		
• When I fall, I cry out		
• I can follow a timetable		
• I can do my schoolwork		
• I like to learn		

Source: Children's and Adolescents' Mental Wellbeing Scales in Singapore Final Project Report

Chapter C2
Development
and Validation
of the Youth
Mental
Wellbeing
Scale

COTM is aimed at strengthening the mental wellbeing of children aged 6 to 17, ensuring that young people flourish and thrive in different settings. The MWEBA and MWEBC scales are provided through toolkits available on an online portal (http://findyourinnerawesome.sg for adolescents and http://coloursofthemind.sg for children). These resources equip youths, parents, teachers, counsellors, youth workers, and other caregivers to assess and learn simple and practical skills to build mental wellbeing in youths. A "Mind Your Mind" curriculum is also available for teachers seeking to develop skills such as change management and offers customised ways to develop mental wellbeing in students.

Concurrent to HPB's efforts to empower parents with skills to build the mental wellbeing of their children, a Parent Programme is available for children aged 6 to 12. This programme was rolled out in schools, self-help groups, and the community to reach parents and other caregivers. Roving exhibitions were also organised for schools and community organisations from August 2013. School-based programmes allowed students to learn about their strengths and ways to handle changes and challenges through theatre-in-education, interactive workshops, and training and project work. Complementary resources served to remind students of their strengths and encouraged them to seek help when required.

In order to better leverage on the insights gained from this present study, future follow-up strategies include inter-agency and partner sharing to build and nurture a more resilient community of Singapore's youths. Future development plans for the MWEBA and MWEBC scales include obtaining baseline normative scores of children and youth in the Singapore population, developing a shortened scale for inclusion in general social and population surveys and to assess the responsiveness of the scale towards mental wellness programmes.

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