

# **Citizen Engagement in Singapore: Applications of the Citizens' Panel**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public engagement in Singapore dates back more than three decades and include notable initiatives such as REACH (“reaching everyone for active citizenry @ home), The Next Lap, Singapore 21, Remaking Singapore, Our Singapore Conversation, and engagement with specific communities (e.g., the SGfuture dialogue series, Friends of the Park citizen park engagement launched by the National Parks Board, and the Youth Action Challenge).

Since 2017, the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) has worked with different agencies on citizens' panels. They include the Citizens' Jury on the War on Diabetes (2017), Recycle Right Citizens' Workgroup (2019), and Citizens' Panel on Work-Life Harmony (2019). Given that the citizens' panel is significantly different from other citizen engagement initiatives, IPS was commissioned by the Ministry of Culture, Community & Youth (MCCY) to analyse the application of the engagement process in Singapore. Our analysis was guided by three questions: (1) How ready are Singaporeans for citizens' panels? (2) Do citizens' panels make a difference, and what difference? (3) Where are the gaps in public service? What should public service do?

**How ready are Singaporeans for citizens' panels?** Besides the positive response to the calls for applications despite the mandatory requirement to attend all sessions, particularly for the Citizens' Panel on Work-Life Harmony and Recycle Right Citizens' Workgroup, there were **high levels of on-site and off-site engagement by participants**. In general, despite the rigour of the process, the participants' enthusiasm in what they were doing was sustained throughout the three citizens' panels. In addition to on-site participation, many of the participants conducted evidence gathering during their personal time.

The three citizens' panels were designed with different outcomes in mind. Besides solutions development, citizens' readiness to be involved in co-creation also took place at the level of participatory design in the actual engagement process. We analysed the three citizens' panels based on two observable impact — citizen engagement in the **co-creation of solutions** for the challenge statement and citizen-engagement in the **co-design of the process**. The citizens' panels demonstrated how citizens stepped up to different levels of engagement.

**Do citizens' panels make a difference?** The three citizens' panels had direct and indirect outcomes for policymaking. The **direct outcomes** were observed in the recommendations that were supported and adopted by the relevant ministries. Several participants from the Citizens' Jury on the War on Diabetes have implemented their ideas while others have initiated discussions and rolled out their proposals with community partners. All of the recommendations generated by the Recycle Right Citizens' Workgroup received support from the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, which has since commenced work on supporting four pilot projects. The Citizens' Panel on Work-Life Harmony's recommendations broadly focused on efforts to further

promote and support the provision of flexible work arrangements, and to shape societal norms in support of work-life harmony, which tripartite partners are supporting for implementation.

**Impact on policymaking** was manifested through participants gaining knowledge on the wider decision-making and policy development processes, a typical outcome of deliberative practices. Participants better appreciated the work that policymakers do, and their trust of the government's desire to work with citizens to solve policy problems increased.

The citizens' panels also had an **impact on citizens** — participants made significant gains in terms of their knowledge of the topic and how the government works. Through their experiences in negotiating with fellow participants, getting buy-in from fellow citizens, and making a case to policymakers, they acquired a better understanding of the challenges that are involved when considering different perspectives and needs, and building consensus among a diverse group. The majority of participants became more confident about the value of their contributions (internal efficacy) and came out of the process knowing they are capable of doing more as citizens (external efficacy).

Across the three citizens' panels:

- 86% - 98% felt that the process helped them better understand the challenges of balancing needs and resources to solve community issues.
- 85% - 91% felt that the government is committed to partner citizens to build the future Singapore.
- 86% - 89% would favourably consider participating in future citizen engagement.
- 82% - 94% felt that their experiences made them more confident about the value of their contributions as citizen.
- 81% - 94% believed the panels generated recommendations that will be supported by Singaporeans
- 90% - 93% were keen to be more actively involved in solving the policy problem after their experience

**Where are the gaps in public service and what should the public service do?** To **get more citizens on board**, especially those who are “less accessible”, sufficient time must be allocated to recruitment. In addition, the public sector can tap on community researchers and leverage community organisations. Oversampling minority group members and informing applicants that an honorarium will be given to participants can help encourage those who are structurally disadvantaged (e.g., low-income households) to participate. To **increase citizens' interest**, recognising people's different interests and conveying to them the value of their participation is critical. To **sustain citizen engagement** for the long haul, it is imperative to turn participants to partners, and track their involvement.

The **public sector also needs to be ready for the new mode of engagement** that sees it working closely with citizens in creating and implementing solutions to policy problems. Policymakers have to identify from the onset what outcomes they hope to achieve, and tailor the process accordingly as there is no one way to carry out engagement. If the process is aimed at getting participants to not just co-create solutions but also to co-implement them, advanced setting up of the necessary infrastructure and securing potential partners' buy-in are critical to the success of the process and the impact it makes on the participants.

A whole-of-government approach is required — the support and participation of partner agencies are required in order for citizens' co-creation and co-implementation with the government to work. As Singapore moves into the next phase of public engagement that sees citizens as partners of the government, a paradigm shift is required across the entire public sector.

Finally, **building citizen capacity takes time**. The ability to deliberate with fellow citizens, engage with policymakers and develop solutions that have applications for policy is a muscle that needs to be built. The deliberative nature of the citizens' panel process requires citizens to apply skills that they may not have had the chance to develop and hone. Some ways to help citizens do so include designing the process to encourage critical thinking, incorporating an Oversight Panel, designating roles for Resource Persons and holding deliberative walks.

## INTRODUCTION

The government, under the leadership of then Prime Minister Mr Goh Chok Tong, adopted a more consultative approach and launched a series of initiatives in the 1980s and 1990s to reach out to citizens and get their feedback on a wide range of policy issues. Those initiatives included the creation of the Nominated Member of Parliament scheme, and the setting up of the Feedback Unit (which was later restructured in 2006 and became REACH<sup>1</sup>) and Town Councils.

In his “Building Our Future Singapore Together” dialogue in June 2019, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Mr Heng Swee Keat noted that people’s views have become more diverse and Singaporeans want a change in how they are governed. He also spoke about the threats posed by echo chambers and extreme ideologies manifesting in different parts of the world. While Singapore is what he described as “an oasis of stability” in a turbulent world, the country needs “the wits and will” of all Singaporeans to act together and create solutions.

Thus, Minister Heng said that the fourth-generation leadership would move into the next phase of governance — one where the government would work with Singaporeans to take Singapore forward. He said, moving forward, there would be two key differences in how government will engage citizens. First, it will partner Singaporeans in new ways to co-create solutions for policy problems. Second, it will work with Singaporeans to implement the solutions. All the efforts will be underpinned by the recognition of and tapping on the diversity of Singaporeans.

The emphasis on co-creation and co-implementation requires new ways of engagement. Since 2017, the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) has collaborated with different agencies to design and implement engagement based on the principles of deliberation. Those processes are based on the recognition of key values such as strength in diversity and a belief in citizens’ ability and desire to take ownership for problem solving. As such, the process and duration of citizen deliberation — which has taken on different names such as those three summarised below — aimed at outcomes such as the co-creation of policy solutions are a marked departure from those of other engagement methods (e.g., townhalls and focus group discussions).

In brief, the three citizen deliberative initiatives that IPS collaborated with agencies on are:

### **The Citizens’ Jury on the War on Diabetes (2017)**

In 2016, the Ministry of Health (MOH) launched a nation-wide effort, the War on Diabetes, to rally various stakeholders to help Singaporeans live a life free of diabetes and for those who have the

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<sup>1</sup> REACH (reaching everyone for active citizenry @ home) began as the Feedback Unit in 1985. The Feedback Unit was restructured in 2006 to become the lead agency for engaging and connecting with citizens, and was re-named REACH. In January 2009, REACH was appointed the Singapore Government’s e-engagement platform. See <https://www.reach.gov.sg/about-us/about-reach>.

condition, to manage it well. As part of the effort, the Ministry, in collaboration with IPS, organised the Citizens' Jury on the War on Diabetes (henceforth referred to as "WOD CJ") to develop community-based and community-driven recommendations to combat the problem of diabetes. A total of 76 participants, comprising people with diabetes, caregivers, healthcare providers, those in the secondary circle of influence of diabetic persons, and members of the public who did not have any experience with diabetes, were presented with the challenge: **"As a community, how can we enable one another to live free from diabetes and, for Singaporeans with diabetes, to manage their condition well?"**

The WOD CJ took place over four sessions and spanned seven weeks from 25 November 2017 to 13 January 2018. During the final session, the participants presented and submitted a report comprising their recommendations to Senior Minister of State (SMS) Dr Amy Khor and the Ministry.

The IPS report can be found [here](#).

### **The Recycle Right Citizens' Workgroup (2019)**

In July 2019, SMS for Environment and Water Resources Dr Amy Khor announced that the government would convene a citizens' workgroup to improve recycling among Singapore households. Surveys conducted by the then Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources (henceforth referred to as Ministry of Sustainability and Environment, MSE) and the National Environment Agency (NEA) found that people in Singapore held misconceptions towards recycling, which had contributed to the high contaminant rate of recyclables in the blue bins. The Recycle Right Citizens' Workgroup (henceforth referred to as "RR CW") gathered a selected group of citizens who represented a cross-section of the community. The challenge statement posed to participants was: **"How can we improve the way we recycle at home?"**

A total of 48 participants were recruited for four full-day sessions on 21 and 22 September, and 19 and 20 October 2019 to develop and test solutions to answer the challenge statement. The participants came from diverse demographic backgrounds (i.e., age, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, education, housing type and occupation), practised recycling at different frequencies, and engaged in different levels of participation in green activities. The RR CW culminated in nine proposals that were submitted to SMS Dr Amy Khor.

The IPS report can be found [here](#).

### **The Citizens' Panel on Work-Life Harmony (2019)**

In recent years, work-life issues have gained prominence with surveys indicating that employees are placing increased emphasis on work-life balance and access to flexible working arrangements.<sup>2</sup> Work-life issues may contribute to Singapore's low birth rates; experts have cited

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<sup>2</sup> "Employers Turn Blind Eye to Work-Life Balance: Randstad Employer Brand Research 2017", Randstad, accessed March 1, 2020; Prisca Ang, "70% of Singaporeans respond to work messages out of office hours: Recruitment Agency", *The Straits Times*, July 10, 2019.

long working hours as one of the factors accounting for the rising numbers of singles and people having fewer babies.<sup>3</sup>

Set against this context, the National Population and Talent Division (NPTD), Ministry of Manpower (MOM), Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), and IPS collaborated on the Citizens' Panel on Work-Life Harmony (henceforth referred to as "WLH CP"). A total of 55 citizens from diverse backgrounds, including employers, employees, retirees and students, participated in the CP. The WLH CP took place over four full-day sessions that spanned six weeks — 28 September, 12 October, 26 October and 9 November 2019. The challenge statement that the participants had to discuss and develop recommendations for was: **"How can we create conditions, in the workplace and community, for better work-life harmony? What should we prioritise and act on within the next 12 months?"**

The IPS report can be found [here](#).

## Scope of the Report

Given that the WOD CJ, RR CW and WLH CP are significantly different from other public engagement initiatives, MCCY commissioned IPS to analyse the application of the citizens' panel process in Singapore — how the process has been implemented in Singapore so far, and how it might be improved or applied in future engagements. Our analysis is guided by the following questions:

1. How ready are Singaporeans for citizens' panels?
2. Do citizens' panels make a difference, and what difference?
3. Where are the gaps in public service? What should public service do?

In this report, we use the term "citizens' panels" to refer to the above three public engagement initiatives and the deliberative model of citizen engagement. We begin this report by reviewing some of the earlier public engagement initiatives that have been launched in Singapore, illustrating how the deliberative model is different from what has been done. Drawing from the data that we collected from the three citizen deliberation initiatives — WOD CJ, RR CW and WLH CP — we seek to provide some answers to the above questions. Our data points include on-site observations of the interactions and discussions, pre- and post-polls, and our conversations with some of the participants. We conclude the report by providing recommendations for future citizen engagement exercises.

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<sup>3</sup> Rachel Au-Yong, "Singapore's Fertility Rate Down as Number of Singles Goes Up", *The Straits Times*, August 28, 2018.



## CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN SINGAPORE

While government agencies use different primary research tools (e.g., surveys, focus group discussions and ethnography) to understand public sentiments and opinions, they have also been leveraging public engagement to gain deeper insights into citizens' concerns and suggestions on different issues. Public engagement also provides agencies with the means to communicate and explain policies, particularly the more complex ones. As mentioned in the previous section, citizen engagement is not new. This section reviews some key initiatives in brief and presents the affordances of the citizens' panel process, when compared to the more common tools used.

### REACH

One of the earliest examples of citizens' engagement in Singapore is that of the Feedback Unit. It was established on 15 April 1985 under the purview of the Ministry of Community Development “as a state mechanism through which people could voice their concerns regarding government policies.”<sup>4</sup> The unit was formed partly due to the decrease in government support at the 1984 General Election, which made urgent the need for the government to get a better sense of the people's views so as to plan and communicate effectively its policies to the citizenry. Furthermore, the formation of the Feedback Unit reflected “the more consultative style of the younger-generation leaders” and “their efforts to forge a new consensus with the electorate”.<sup>5</sup>

The following two decades saw a proliferation of avenues and platforms used by the Feedback Unit to engage the public as technological advancements were introduced to the city-state. The platforms used included dialogue sessions, straw polls, public forums, focus groups, telephone calls, email messages, faxes, internet relay chats, and short message service.<sup>6</sup>

In 2006, the Feedback Unit was renamed REACH (“reaching everyone for active citizenry @ home). Today, it employs online and offline platforms to gather feedback from Singaporeans. The online channels consist of a discussion forum on the REACH website and live Facebook Q&A sessions, while offline avenues include “listening points” or booths found in public areas such as shopping malls and transport hubs.<sup>7</sup> While these channels enable REACH to collect feedback on a continual basis, it also takes a proactive stance on salient matters. Recently, REACH worked with the Ministry of Finance and the People's Association to gather the public's views and suggestions on Budget 2020.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “Feedback Unit is Formed — 15th April 1985”, HistorySG, last modified August 1, 2019, <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/history/events/d65e8477-1714-4103-b93a-9d2d6f898d48>.

<sup>5</sup> Kim Chew Lim, “Open Line for Better Decisions”, *The Straits Times*, April 17, 1985.

<sup>6</sup> “Feedback Unit is Formed”.

<sup>7</sup> Walter Sim, “‘A Fresh Pair of Eyes’ to Take Feedback Unit Reach Further”, *The Straits Times*, 2015, October 1, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Jean Lau, “Public Feedback Sought Ahead of Budget 2020”, *The Straits Times*, January 15, 2020.

## THE NEXT LAP AND SINGAPORE 21

The 1990s was characterised by the introduction of two national public consultation exercises.

The first was The Next Lap in 1991, led by a Cabinet sub-committee called the Long Term National Development Committee. It was headed by then Acting Minister for Information George Yeo and its members consisted of ministers and public servants. The Committee looked at ideas suggested by more than 1,000 people from government and private groups.<sup>9</sup> The end product of the public consultation exercise was a 160-page report that mapped out broad plans to make Singapore a nation of distinction.<sup>10</sup>

The second was Singapore 21 (S21), announced in 1996 as an action plan to catapult Singapore into the 21st century. The exercise came from an idea mooted by then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and was spearheaded by a committee overseen by then Minister for Education and Second Minister for Defence Teo Chee Hean. Discussions involving the public lasted over a year.<sup>11</sup> The engagement process saw the participation of 6,000 Singaporeans at more than 80 forums who gave their views on the future challenges they had to resolve as individuals and as a nation.<sup>12</sup> In the end, five ideas for the national vision were put forth: every Singaporean matters, strong families, opportunities for all, the Singapore heartbeat, and active citizenship.<sup>13</sup>

## REMAKING SINGAPORE

Conducted on an even more massive scale was the Remaking Singapore Committee. It was set up in 2002 to seek the public's views on reshaping Singaporeans' political, economic and social norms beyond materialism. The public consultation exercise was led by then Minister of State for National Development Dr Vivian Balakrishnan. The committee was to complement the Economic Review Committee, which was aimed at boosting Singapore's economic competitiveness in the face of challenges such as technological developments and globalisation. Five sub-committees were also formed under the Remaking Singapore Committee to give a new spin to the five "Cs" commonly associated with materialism. Members from these sub-committees were selected from the private sector.<sup>14</sup>

Compared to the earlier S21 public consultation exercise, the Remaking Singapore project reached out to a wider pool of participants — 10,000 people over 65 consultations.<sup>15</sup> As with the past public consultation exercises, the Remaking Singapore Committee and the five sub-

<sup>9</sup> "A Primer on National Conversations", *The Straits Times*, August 23, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Jeremy Au Yong, "The Singapore Perspective: A Brief History of National Conversations", *The Straits Times*, April 15, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Irene Ng and Joanne Lee, "5 Ideas to Guide Singapore", *The Straits Times*, April 25, 1999.

<sup>13</sup> Grace Ho, "From Feedback Unit to Our Singapore Conversation: A Look at Previous National Conversations", *The Straits Times*, July 14, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Laurel Teo Hu Kew, "New Team to Take S'pore Beyond 5Cs", *The Straits Times*, February 15, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Lee Hoong Chua, "Remaking Citizens to be Fit for Democracy", *The Straits Times*, July 9, 2003.

committees were made up of mainly ministers and Members of Parliament, and well-known figures holding senior positions in fields such as journalism, banking, law and academia.<sup>16</sup>

In a speech made in Parliament in 2005, then Member of Parliament Inderjit Singh noted that while the S21 Committee delivered a “great final document”, it made little headway as “the political leadership in its implementation left much to be desired”. As for the Remaking Singapore exercise, the eventual report “failed to ignite any sparks in many people.”<sup>17</sup> There was also disappointment among members of the public and sub-committee members when several proposals produced as part of the Remaking Singapore exercise were publicly dismissed by some ministers before the report had been submitted to the Prime Minister.<sup>18</sup>

## OUR SINGAPORE CONVERSATION

Citizens' engagement exercises conducted during the era of the Feedback Unit, S21 and Remaking Singapore were approached from a rather top-down manner, with political and community leaders engaging with citizens through a question-and-answer dialogue format.<sup>19</sup> The government was the one that set the dialogue's agenda; it selected the individuals to drive the engagement process, and it asked the questions it wanted answers to. The Our Singapore Conversation (OSC) therefore marked a significant improvement by allowing interested individuals to step forward to share their views and issues that mattered to them.<sup>20</sup>

Launched in 2012, the OSC was announced by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong during his National Rally speech and led by then Minister for Education Heng Swee Keat. Compared with the committees of earlier citizen engagement exercises, the 26-person strong committee of the OSC hailed from a broader cross section of society and included a polytechnic student, a taxi driver and a Mandarin-speaking entertainer.<sup>21</sup>

The OSC comprised two phases. The first phase consisted of a series of focus group sessions, each involving 50 to 150 participants. In their small groups, the participants were asked to ponder and discuss questions such as “What matters most to us?”, “What are the values we hold in common?” and “How can we work together to meet the challenges of the future?”. The discussions were facilitated by civil servants, with ministers and policyholders joining to listen to the discussions.<sup>22</sup> The face-to-face engagement of the OSC exercise was also complemented by a survey of 4,000 citizens, some of whom could be the “silent majority” who did not participate in the OSC discussions.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Changing Mindsets, Deepening Relationships: The Report of the Remaking Singapore Committee* (Singapore: Ministry of Community Development and Sports, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> Nirmala, M., “Civil Servants More Open to ‘Not From Govt’ Ideas”, *The Straits Times*, January 18, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Tan, T. H. and Yusof, H., “After Months of Talk, What’s Next?”, *The Straits Times*, July 5, 2003

<sup>19</sup> Rachel Chang, “Framing the Singapore Conversation”, *The Straits Times*, September 15, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Grace Ho, “From Feedback Unit to Our Singapore Conversation”.

<sup>21</sup> Rachel Chang, “Framing the Singapore Conversation”.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Rachel Chang, “OSC Survey: Majority Want Slower Pace of Life”, *The Straits Times*, August 26, 2013.

The OSC participants came from various sources — some wrote in on their own initiative to the OSC website to indicate their interest, while others were either nominated by the OSC committee members or invited through organisations such as universities and the People's Association.<sup>24</sup>

The discussions in the first phase were meticulously recorded and analysed to identify “a set of themes, concerns, and perspectives that informed the agenda for second-phase discussions focused on finding policy solutions. In the second phase, government ministries and community organisations took the lead in managing the forums.”<sup>25</sup> This second phase was further marked by the formation of sub-committees to examine, in an in-depth manner, specific areas generated from the first phase of discussion and to formulate policy recommendations.<sup>26</sup> The policy areas identified included old age, healthcare, education and housing.<sup>27</sup>

In the end, the year-long OSC chalked up over 600 dialogues involving almost 50,000 Singaporeans from all walks of life. The engagement exercise also resulted in policy shifts in areas such as housing, healthcare and education. Speaking at the annual dinner of the Economic Society of Singapore in 2013, Minister Heng said, “The OSC is part of the process of building adaptive capacity, allowing Singaporeans to engage one another on issues close to our hearts, see how the perfect solution may not suit another, and learn to compromise so as to shape the Singapore they hope to see in the future. The OSC process is critical in building trust.”<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, some OSC participants and committee members noted that the exercise involved diverse groups and marginalised voices. Some of them also pointed out that small group discussions were more effective than the town-hall style of engagement. The latter arrangement, with the presence of a policymaker, might not put some people at ease and could prevent them from speaking freely. Vocal participants could also dominate townhall sessions with their questions. Through their small group discussions at the OSC, the participants and committee members also learnt to disagree in a respectful way and to find commonalities among differences. Others realised the challenges involved in making policy changes.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, some commentators and researchers noted that the OSC was regarded by the public with some scepticism.<sup>30</sup> Some felt that civil society and alternative views should have been included in the discussion.<sup>31</sup> Some participants were ambivalent, wondering if the OSC would be any different from previous public consultation exercises in which “the powers that be already knew what they wanted”.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Rachel Chang, “Some Participations are Energised, Others Sceptical”, *The Straits Times*, October 14, 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Kenneth Paul Tan, “Singapore in 2014: Adapting to the ‘New Normal’”, *Asian Survey* 55, no. 1 (2015):157–164.

<sup>26</sup> Rachel Chang, “Let’s Talk About the Future”, *The Straits Times*, December 1, 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Robin Chan, “SG Conversation ‘will be road map’”, *The Straits Times*, April 6, 2013.

<sup>28</sup> Grace Ho, “From Feedback Unit to Our Singapore Conversation”.

<sup>29</sup> Rachel Chang, “Efforts to Get Views of Diverse Groups”, *The Sunday Times*, August 11, 2013.

<sup>30</sup> Kenneth Paul Tan, “Singapore in 2014: Adapting to the ‘New Normal’”.

<sup>31</sup> Andre Ong, “Ex-AMP Head Critiques ‘Myth of Meritocracy’”, *The Straits Times*, September 9, 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Rachel Chang, “Some Participants are Energised, Others Skeptical”.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Apart from the nation-wide citizens' engagement exercises, government agencies and community organisations have embarked on similar projects, albeit on a smaller scale and targeting specific communities.

In 2015, shortly after the country had commemorated its 50th year of independence, the SGfuture dialogue series was rolled out. The first session, organised by the National Youth Council, saw the participation of 100 young Singaporeans in a discussion of their hopes and aspirations for Singapore and their plans to realise these goals.<sup>33</sup> Drawing inspiration from the Future of Us exhibition, held to celebrate Singapore's Golden Jubilee, the SGfuture dialogue series covered 16 sessions and involved more than 800 participants. The participants were encouraged to go beyond discussion to get their ideas off the ground, with the government pointing to funding avenues and facilitating tie-ups.<sup>34</sup>

Another example is the Friends of the Parks citizen park engagement, an initiative launched by the National Parks Board to partner the community to co-create and co-manage parks that meet their needs. The first citizen park engagement was conducted at Pasir Panjang Park (slated for first-phase completion in 2021) and involved about 170 stakeholders, including residents, businesses and interest groups who gathered to brainstorm ideas on how their park should look and how the space could be used.<sup>35</sup> In another initiative, about 2,000 people, including residents, businesses and grassroots leaders, were involved in a three-month envisioning exercise aimed at soliciting ideas to further enhance the Geylang Serai Cultural Precinct.<sup>36</sup>

Policymakers have been keen to reach out to and involve younger people in generating ideas to improve the community. Launched in January 2020, the Youth Action Challenge is a six-month programme organised by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, and the National Youth Council, under the SG Youth Action Plan. Under the mentorship of leaders from the public, private and people sectors, young people work in teams to come up with policy recommendations or bottom-up initiatives. The teams with the winning ideas will receive grants to turn their recommendations into action.<sup>37</sup>

In another example, the Municipal Services Office under the Ministry of National Development has been working with government agencies and partners such as the National Youth Council, Singapore Kindness Movement and South West Community Development Council to organise the "Love Our 'Hood Youth Challenge". Young working adults and students are invited to come up with solutions to address municipal issues like congregation noise and responsible dog

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<sup>33</sup> Walter Sim, "Young Singaporeans Throw Up Ideas for Country's Future at Dialogue", *The Straits Times*, November 30, 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Tham, Yuen-C, "SG50 Has Stirred New Spirit: Heng Swee Keat", *The Straits Times*, December 28, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Yan Han Goh, "Public Engagement for Pasir Ris Park Kicks Off Park Co-Creation Programme", *The Straits Times*, January 18, 2020.

<sup>36</sup> Sue-Ann Tan, "DPM Heng Swee Keat Said S'pore to Nurture Social Togetherness at Wisma Geylang Serai Anniversary", *The Straits Times*, January 18, 2020.

<sup>37</sup> Yan Han Goh, "Chance for Youth to Pitch Ideas to Improve Society", *The Straits Times*, January 19, 2020.

ownership. The winning teams would receive support such as funding and guidance from relevant agencies to implement their ideas within the community.<sup>38</sup>

## HOW DIFFERENT ARE CITIZENS' PANELS?

How is the deliberative model of citizens' panel different from the public consultation exercises such as REACH, Remaking Singapore and the OSC?

It would appear that the focus group discussions under Remaking Singapore and the OSC were one-off sessions, with the participants' contribution limited to exchanging their views and ideas with fellow citizens and policymakers. Given that a priority of those sessions was to ensure that every participant had a chance to articulate his or her views and given the time constraints, it is unlikely that every idea surfaced would be explored and discussed in greater depth. In addition, there is a high possibility that the ideas generated on the spot were formed with less rigour. For example, during the OSC, there was a sense that "there were too many people saying too many things with too little depth" and some participants "got carried away sharing their life stories".<sup>39</sup>

While small group discussions were widely used in the WOD CJ, the RR CW and WLH CP to generate ideas, the multiple sessions of each of these three deliberative exercises meant that the participants had plenty of opportunities to refine their ideas and even gain new perspectives. This is probably the result of the interplay of several factors — the provision of an information kit and briefings prior to the start of the citizens' panel, discussions with fellow participants, and the dialogue with domain knowledge experts and policymakers during specially arranged consultation sessions. It was during such interactions that the participants found themselves going beyond their personal experiences to think about constraints such as budget, sustainability and duplication and trade-offs — "higher-order" considerations that are unlikely to be posed in an early phase of the ideation process. Furthermore, in between the sessions, many of them also embarked on their own research to do more fact-finding and test out the viability of their ideas and solutions. Hence, the depth of discussion and the more rigorous ideation process afforded by the longer format of the citizens' panel type of deliberative engagement would be more useful and effective than a one-off focus group discussion for issues that are less straightforward. It is likely that the citizens' panel deliberative process helps to enhance the quality of the ideas and recommendations generated.

While the group discussions in Remaking Singapore and the OSC provided the platform for participants to meet people of a different background, the one-off session of those discussions was unlikely to provide them with the invaluable opportunity of working as a team towards a shared objective. For the WOD CJ, RR CW and WLH CP, ice-breaker games and conversation circles were introduced during the first session to let the participants know one another. Such sessions were also designed to illustrate the similar traits the participants had, despite their diverse backgrounds. More importantly, throughout each citizens' panel, many of the participants were in close contact with one another for over an average of two months, whether online or offline, as they worked on their project. While some teams found it difficult to work cohesively,

<sup>38</sup> "Love Our 'Hood Youth Challenge: Youths Co-Create Ideas to Improve Our Living Environment", *MNDLink*, Sep/Oct 2019 issue, accessed March 1, 2020, <https://www.mnd.gov.sg/mndlink/2019/sep-oct/article5.htm>.

<sup>39</sup> Yong Chuan Toh, "Making Citizens' Dialogue Productive", *The Straits Times*, October 20, 2012.

many others learnt to agree to disagree and to find a common ground despite the differences in their backgrounds and opinions. For Singaporeans to work together, relationships have to be formed and cultivated first.

For both Remaking Singapore and the OSC, the analysis of the themes surfaced from the discussion and the writing of the report of recommendations were completed by policymakers and the committee and sub-committee members. The citizens who came for the focus group discussions had no hand in the crafting of the report and recommendations, despite their interest in specific topics and their desire to contribute to the betterment of Singapore society.

The next sections address how ready Singaporeans are for citizens' panels and the impact of the modality.

## HOW READY ARE SINGAPOREANS FOR CITIZENS' PANELS?

### Citizens Want to Do More for Issues that Matter

The response to the call for participation for all three citizens' panels was positive, especially for the RR CW and WLH CP, which received 305 and 308 applications, respectively. The WLH CP saw the same level of response as the RR CW despite having a much shorter application period. The WOD CJ received a total number of 114 applications over a period of six weeks. See Table 1.

Table 1: Response for the citizens' panels

Citizens' Panel	Recruitment Period	No. of Applications Received	No. of Participants
WOD CJ	5 weeks (6 Oct – 15 Nov 2017)	114	76
RR CW	5 weeks (17 Jul – 23 Aug 2019)	305	44 (Recruited 48 but four dropped out)
WLH CP	2 weeks (15 Jul – 31 Jul 2019)	308	55

The positive response for the WLH CP and RR CW reflected Singaporeans' preoccupations and interest in both topics. While work-life harmony issues were perennial challenges faced by people from different strata of the population, recycling and its role in promoting environmental sustainability is a topic that has been gaining traction with the public in recent years. The lower response by comparison for the WOD CJ could be attributed to the fact that diabetes is a problem that confronts a smaller segment of the Singapore public, compared with the other two issues.

What was encouraging was the fact that citizens stepped up to the challenge despite the mandatory requirement to attend all four sessions, which applied to all three citizens' panels. All the sessions for the three citizens' panels took place during the weekends, and each session lasted almost an entire day, from around 9am to 5pm. In the case of the RR CW, the first and



second sessions took place on consecutive days, over a weekend, and a month later, the third and last sessions were also held over a weekend. Such a format did not deter interested applicants from signing up. The mandatory requirement to attend all sessions was clearly stipulated in the calls for applications/Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) (e.g., what the deliverables were and how the process was different from other types of public engagement efforts such as focus group discussions whereby participants' views are often not responded to by the sponsor) and reinforced in the application forms (i.e., applicants had to indicate if they were able to attend all four sessions).

For instance, the FAQs for the WLH CP published on the Ideas! portal indicated that the participants would be required to come together to “identify underlying factors and gain deeper insights on issues that affect Singaporeans' work-life harmony”, “develop solutions... to create the conditions for work-life harmony in Singapore” and “prepare a report of their recommendations that will be presented to the Government”.

Furthermore, the participants for all three citizens' panels signed up without expecting to be compensated, other than being reimbursed for transportation (in all three cases, participants were informed that they would be given an honorarium after the panels commenced). This is promising as it demonstrated Singaporeans' willingness and interest to work with the government and develop solutions for problems confronting the Singapore society, even when it demands a significant amount of their personal time.

## **High Levels of On-Site and Off-Site Engagement**

All three citizens' panels required high levels of commitment on the part of participants. As mentioned in the preceding section, each citizens' panel entailed four full-day sessions on weekends. The panels' activities included facilitated discussions that were held in various formats (small groups and large groups) and collective decision-making for various procedural matters (e.g., the voting threshold, norms for communication and delegation of roles).

Table 2 presents some of the activities that participants engaged in. For the RR CW, participants had to frequently alternate between small group discussions and World Cafés, which saw them moving from group to group, to hear each group present their projects which were still work-in-progress, practise active listening and provide constructive feedback.

Table 2: Examples of group work and discussions

WOD CJ	RR CW	WLH CP
<p>Discussion with Resource Persons (Day Two):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the problem to be addressed?</li> <li>2. What is the evidence that this is a problem that is important to merit investment in the action proposed?</li> <li>3. What might be the root causes or deeper level unmet needs?</li> <li>4. Who is affected by the issue and what is the impact on them?</li> </ol>	<p>Discussion using the “Force Field Analysis” framework (Day Two):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A list of enablers that would support their ideas or recommendations</li> <li>2. A list of barriers that could hinder the same ideas or recommendations</li> </ol>	<p>Brainstorming for problems relating to work-life harmony (Day Two):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What was the observable evidence that suggested the problem was a significant one?</li> <li>2. The root cause of the problem</li> <li>3. Who might be affected by the problem, and in what ways?</li> </ol>
<p>Preparation for the plenary presentation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the big idea or broad concept?</li> <li>2. What are the key actions?</li> <li>3. What benefits are expected?</li> <li>4. How does it address the root cause or meet the unmet needs?</li> <li>5. How is this solution different from what has been tried before?</li> </ol>	<p>Preparation for report writing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Objectives (and how they are linked to recycle right)</li> <li>2. Target audience (whom your solution is targeted at)</li> <li>3. Strategies and tactics</li> <li>4. Challenges encountered and how they adapted to them</li> <li>5. Learning points from project (if any)</li> <li>6. Recommendations to MSE</li> <li>7. Annexes for survey findings/pictures</li> </ol>	<p>Preparation for report writing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The issues the CP was addressing which have an impact on work-life harmony</li> <li>2. The proposed solutions and how they would address the identified issues</li> <li>3. The potential benefits, trade-offs and resources required of each solution</li> </ol>

The demands the process exacted on participants for all three citizens' panels were evident in their feedback on their experiences:

The second and third sessions, we may want to be more focused in terms of the discussion, and honestly, the fourth session was a bit of a surprise to us because we ended up having to organise it and emcee it. It was a good thing we had someone who took the initiative to compile the report and format it, so it can come together quickly. Otherwise we would have needed more time to produce a succinct summary of all the recommendations. (Male, 60–64 years old, WOD CJ participant)

Throughout the workgroup, the timeline for many sections seemed a little too tight. For example, on the first day, the many exchanging of groups [sic] were very thought provoking but there was insufficient time to allow opinions and ideas to be properly shared and for them to sink in before we had to move on to the next group. (Female, 18–24 years, RR CW participant)

There was strong discourse [sic]. We were never short of recommendations, but the challenge was to galvanise and present the ideas coherently without discounting them. (Male, 30–34 years old, WLH CP participant)

In general, despite the rigour of the process, participants' enthusiasm in what they were doing was sustained throughout the three citizens' panels. Other than a few exceptions, participants turned up on time for all the sessions and exhibited the spirit of collegial collaboration. Participants taking notes during consultations with domain knowledge experts and presentations by policymakers was a fairly common occurrence. On several occasions, participants also used part of the lunch and tea breaks to continue their project discussion or to consult domain knowledge experts. While there were terse exchanges among participants, they were rare and a natural feature of group work.

Besides on-site participation, many of the participants conducted evidence gathering during their personal time. While some groups conducted secondary research, other groups took the initiative to carry out data collection to understand how their fellow Singaporeans felt about the topic and elicited feedback on their ideas. For example, for the WOD CJ, members of a group that examined the role of education visited the hawker centres that were close to where they lived and observed hawkers' use of the Healthy Choice symbol.

The off-site engagement was the highest for the RR CW and this could be attributed to the requirement for participants to test and prototype their solutions. During the four-week break between the second and third sessions, the groups conducted different forms of evidence gathering, ranging from conducting interviews and surveys, persuading fellow citizens to participate in their trials, to speaking with companies and community leaders.

For example, the group that proposed the DabaoRight! app conducted two surveys, one with about 600 members of the public and another with 22 merchants, to determine if there was a market for the app. The group that came up with the proposal on food composting and converting food waste to energy went door-to-door at selected HDB flats on two nights to recruit residents to

participate. They subsequently spent seven evenings collecting food waste from residents. Another group, which worked on nurturing recycling influencers among corporates, religious leaders and students, visited companies, Residents' Committees and mosques to investigate the feasibility of raising awareness of recycling through gamification. Some participants also mobilised their family members in their promotional and outreach activities.

For both the WOD CJ and RR CW, participants demonstrated high levels of agency in making sure that they met their objectives. They did the groundwork to find out where the existing gaps were so that they would develop useful recommendations. The participants' off-site efforts are highly commendable and send a very positive signal about citizens' willingness to take ownership and initiative in co-creating solutions for policy issues. What was also remarkable was despite the time, energy and commitment required of the participants, the citizens' panels did not see any attrition with the exception of the RR CW, for which the attrition was small (i.e., four out of the 48 participants dropped out, citing work commitments, personal matters and teamwork issues as reasons).<sup>40</sup>

## Different Types of Co-Creation

The WOD CJ, RR CW and WLH CP were designed with slightly different outcomes in mind. As a result, the type and level of citizen engagement differed from panel to panel. Citizens' readiness to be involved in co-creation could also take place at the level of participatory design in the actual engagement process, besides solutions development. In this aspect, the WLH CP proved to be a successful trial as it demonstrated that when given the opportunity, citizens could contribute actively to how the engagement process is conducted and take ownership for their engagement experience. In the post-CP poll, a large majority of the participants, about 87 per cent of them, felt that they had sufficient autonomy in driving the process.

It is worth noting that the secretariats of the WLH CP and RR CW had the benefit of learning from the experiences of the WOD CJ, which was held earlier. The secretariats of the WLH CP and RR CW had met up with and sought advice from the MOH team who ran the WOD CJ in the lead-up to their own citizens' panels. Some of the lessons proffered by the WOD CJ team included the importance of having an independent agency to select the applicants for the citizens' panels and the need for civil servants facilitating group discussions to avoid going on the defensive mode.

We analysed the citizens' panels based on two observable impact — citizen engagement in the co-creation of solutions for the challenge statement and citizen-engagement in the co-design of the process. Figure 1 and Figure 2 present the different levels of engagement that participants from the three citizens' panels were involved in for the co-creation of solutions and co-designing of the process.

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<sup>40</sup> For the WOD CJ, one of the 76 participants withdrew formally after the second session due to a family emergency.

Figure 1: Citizen engagement in co-creating solutions

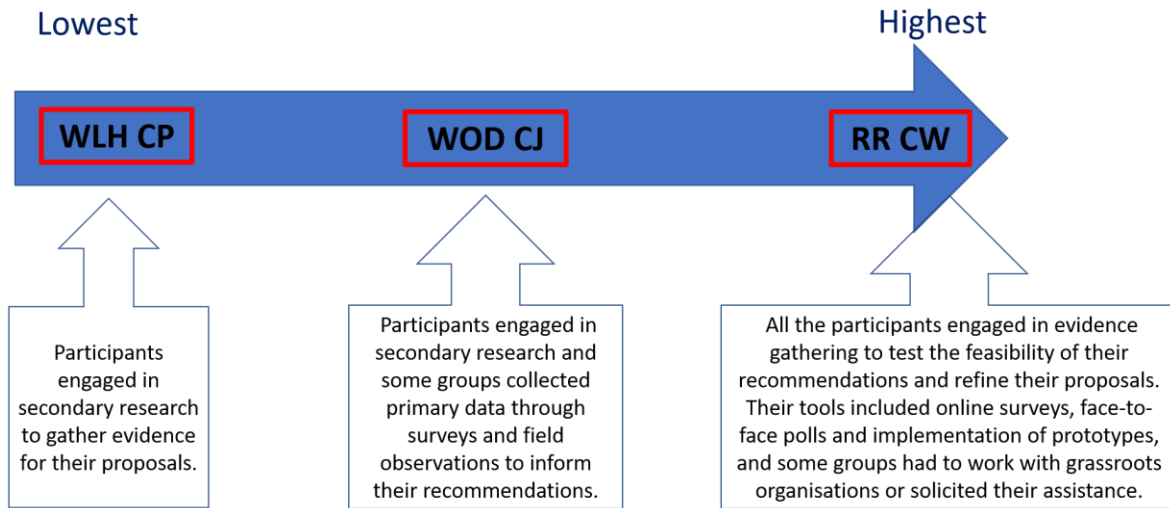
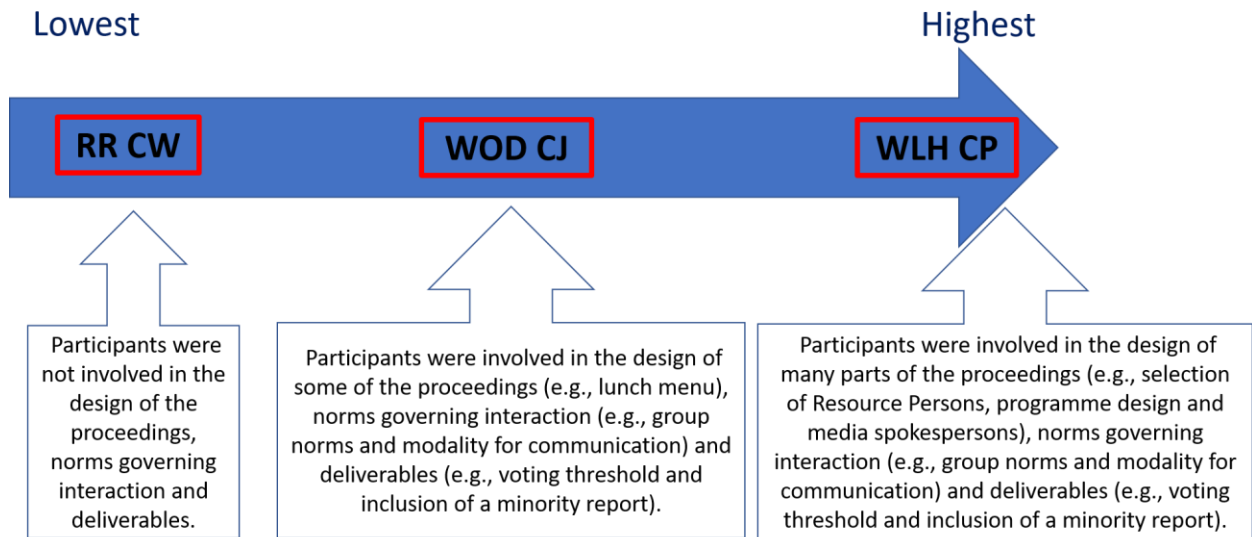


Figure 2: Citizen engagement in co-designing the process



**Scoping of challenge statement is key**

When engaging citizens to co-create and test solutions to policy problems, the challenge statement proved to be an important consideration at the planning stage. This is because the task assigned to the participants influences the outcomes, in terms of the process and impact on the participants. The nature and scope of the problem should be one that is manageable for participants, considering the limited time they have to work on solutioning in a citizens' panel.

Comparing the three citizens' panels, WOD CJ and RR CW dealt with more focused and tangible topics (i.e., diabetes and recycling). The normative definitions of diabetes and recycling meant that participants did not have to spend much time on discussing and agreeing on the parameters of the problem.

In comparison, the WLH CP dealt with a much broader and multi-faceted topic — work-life harmony. The challenge statement posed to the participants was: “How can we create conditions, in the workplace and community, for better work-life harmony? What should we prioritise and act on within the next 12 months?” Such a challenge statement required consensus building on several levels: What does work-life harmony mean? How to measure if work-life harmony has been achieved? Is work-life harmony an achievable ideal? Participants required time and space to explore and arrive at some level of agreement before they could even proceed to the task at hand, which is to identify first, the conditions required for work-life harmony to be achieved and second, the recommendations that promote these conditions.

This could account for why many of the WLH CP participants felt that they needed more time for brainstorming and developing solutions. When asked to suggest the number of additional sessions to address the time constraints, several participants felt that an additional day would be adequate. Given that work-life harmony is a multi-faceted, complex issue with its definition varying among people depending on their life situations and aspirations, it is understandable that participants found four sessions inadequate for discussion:

Sessions 2 and 3 felt pretty rushed without having sufficient time to conceptualise the ideas/solutions. Perhaps allocating more time for sessions 2 and 3 would allow for more in-depth discussion. (Female, 25–29 years old, WLH CP participant)

More time to deliberate and write recommendations, time during sessions to think. (Female, 45–49 years old, WLH CP participant)

The lack of time for participants to discuss and agree on the various components of the challenge statement could have contributed to less evidence gathering, compared to the WOD CJ and RR CW. This is not to say that the citizens’ panel method should not be used for complex problems, but those issues require more time. The lack of time for discussion was reflected in the post-poll findings. Compared with the number of participants from the WOD CJ and RR CW who felt that they had sufficient time to discuss the topic (about 60 per cent for both), the proportion of those from the WLH CP who felt the same way was much lower (about 26 per cent). See Table 3 for a comparison of the three citizens’ panels.

Table 3: Proportion of participants who felt they had sufficient time

	WOD CJ	RR CW	WLH CP
The four sessions provided enough time for discussions on the topic.	60.8%	60.5%	26.4%

*Percentages are for “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.*

Our observations, poll findings and discussions with participants show there is indeed a desire among Singaporeans to work closely with the government using a platform such as the citizens’ panel and to play a larger role in policymaking. Their responses, such as those below, show that there is an appetite among citizens to do more and they will step up when given the chance.

I have not seen the other types of citizen engagement to know the difference and change my perspective [about government-citizen engagement]. There are different talks like Meet-the-MP sessions, *kopi tiam* talk. You still get to voice [your opinion] but you don't know how much of it is being put into practice — CJ a little bit more [sic]. (Male, 25–29 years old, WOD CJ participant)

When I go back, I feel very proud because I attended all four sessions, on four Saturdays. What made me return to each session is we have come such a long way. There is hope that maybe the government will listen. It is more than just a focus group — we can fight it out, ultimately we all want to support one other in this battle. (Female, 40–44 years old, WOD CJ participant)

Meeting different people representing the different interests of the stakeholders. Seeing earnest Singaporeans come together to deliberate and try to make life better for other Singaporeans in future. (Female, 21–24 years old, WLH CP participant)

Encouraging to see other interested citizens caring for the development in Singapore; a different experience from hearing Singaporeans complain about the government. (Female, 50–54 years old, RR CW participant)

## DO CITIZENS' PANELS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Existing research on deliberative methods of engagement points to effects on various levels, the main ones being impact on policymaking, impact on the relationship between the government and citizens, and the differences it makes to people's perceptions and attitudes towards their contributions and competency as active citizens.

### Impact on Policymaking

#### Direct outcomes

An assessment of the impact citizen engagement has could be based on its outcomes for the objective that it sets out to achieve. The impact on policymaking, or lack thereof, can be assessed using questions such as: Has the initiative succeeded? Did it meet the targets or objectives set, and did it result in other achievements? Are the outcomes (i.e., the recommendations developed) better than what would have resulted from more traditional processes of public participation?<sup>41</sup>

The outputs from the three citizens' panels show that they fulfilled the main goal set for the process, which is to get participants to develop a set of recommendations for a specific policy problem or question. In the case of the WOD CJ, participants submitted 28 recommendations to MOH. After reviewing the recommendations, SMS Dr Amy Khor and MOH announced that it would support 14 of the 28 recommendations and explore another 13.

The feedback provided by then Deputy Secretary (Policy) of MOH indicated that the recommendations proposed by the WOD CJ demonstrated applicability in three ways. First, they helped the Ministry refine its existing plans on combating diabetes. Second, some of the recommendations validated the approach that the Ministry was embarking on. Third, the WOD CJ's recommendations prompted MOH to evaluate some of its ongoing and previous initiatives. For instance, the Ministry used to run a campaign on drinking water in the past. Since it was clear from the CJ's proposal that the idea still has traction with members of the public, the Ministry would work with the relevant partners to explore a similar campaign.

The sustainability of the impact on policymaking is evident from the WOD CJ, which took place more than two years ago. Some participants have implemented their ideas (e.g., healthier cooking classes at Community Centres) while others have initiated discussions and rolled out their ideas with community partners (e.g., the South East Community Development Council). For example, to encourage wider adoption of healthy eating in schools, two participants volunteered their time

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<sup>41</sup> Diane Warburton, Elspeth Rainbow and Richard Wilson, *Making a Difference: A Guide to Evaluating Public Participation in Central Government*, Involve.org.uk and Department for Constitutional Affairs UK, June 28, 2007, <https://www.involve.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Making-a-Difference-.pdf>.



to partner the South East Community Development Council and the Health Promotion Board to conduct info-educational talks during school assemblies to teach students on how to read ingredient labels and consume healthier meals.

Similarly, the outcomes for the RR CW at the level of generating solutions for the challenge statement point to discernible impact that process had on policymaking. After reviewing the proposal submitted by the RR CW, MSE announced that all nine recommendations receive support from the Ministry. The Ministry has since commenced work on supporting four pilot projects: developing a sustainable community, piloting a new blue bin design, researching into the Deposit and Return System, and developing the DabaoRight! app.

As for the WLH CP, tripartite partners are progressively implementing the Panel's recommendations to improve work-life harmony. This includes growing a community of Work-Life ambassadors, sector-specific communities of practices and developing a Flexible Work Arrangements implementation guide and videos. Some of the CP participants have indicated that they are interested in further exploring "The Purposeful Life @ SG" initiative while others are keen on becoming WLH ambassadors in the community.

### **Indirect outcomes**

Besides direct impact on policymaking through the generation and implementation of ideas, the citizens' panel process also resulted in changes to participants' attitudes towards the policymaking process. Through engaging with Resource Persons, Subject Matter Experts, policymakers, and in group discussions guided by scaffolds, participants gained knowledge into the various considerations that have to be made when solving a policy problem.

Their engagement with one another, with fellow citizens on the ground and with grassroots agencies provided them with intimate and valuable insights into the intricacies of policymaking. They learned about the challenges and difficulties involved when persuading citizens and relevant stakeholders that a problem exists and why their proposed solution is a viable one, negotiating trade-offs among people with diverse and sometimes conflicting interests, and building consensus to get support for their recommendations — what policymakers themselves have to go through on a day-to-day basis.

Yes. I also realise the challenges faced by the government going to the ground to get people's views — too many people and too many different views. It is difficult to manage these views, especially when people say that government have to do this and that. (Female, 35–39 years old, WOD CJ participant)

The lessons were starkest for the RR CW participants because they had to conduct extensive evidence gathering for their prototype development:

Our group had too little time to work on our project especially as we needed to gain the approval of multiple stakeholders and collect sufficient data to obtain enough conclusions from the project. Some stakeholders, like the TC (Town Council), were uncooperative and possibly belligerent to the proposed solutions [sic], often making ill informed, sweeping

assumptions on the behaviour of the citizens based on few observations. (Male, 25–29 years old, RR CW participant)

The ministry's constraints in financial terms and the amount they could do with constrained resources in terms of communications.... Gained insights on the comms strategy [sic] of MSE for the current situation and understood more about the challenges they face in messaging. (Male, 25–29 years old, RR CW participant)

The poll findings shown in Table 4 show that the majority of the participants understood the challenges of considering trade-offs and deciding how to balance different interests and priorities, and how to balance diverse needs and finite resources.

Table 4: Participants learnt more about policymaking

Citizens' Panel	Question	Pre-CP	Post-CP
WOD CJ	The Citizens' Jury process helped me better understand the challenges of balancing competing needs and finite resources in developing solutions to community issues.	-	86.3%
RR CW	The Citizens' Workgroup process helped me understand how contamination is a problem for our recycling bins and chutes.	-	97.7%
WLH CP	The Citizens' Panel process helped me better understand the challenges of balancing needs and resources to solve community issues.	-	96.2%

Percentages are for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree".

## Impact on Government-Citizen Relationship

Besides making an impact on policymaking (in terms of generating solutions) and citizens' attitudes towards the policymaking process, citizens' panels also made an observable difference on the relationship between the government and citizens who participated in the process. As mentioned in the previous sections, their interactions with one another, policymakers, relevant stakeholders and fellow citizens cultivated a deeper appreciation for the work that policymakers do and the difficulties involved in the formulation and implementation of policies. They also learned that policy formulation and implementation involve balancing stakeholders' different interests and needs. Participants gained knowledge on the wider political decision-making and policymaking processes, an outcome typical of deliberative practices.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Graham Smith and Corrine Wales, "Citizens' Juries and Deliberative Democracy", *Political Studies* 48, no. 1 (2000): 51–65.

A process such as the citizens' panel is different from other forms of engagement (such as the one-off group discussions employed by Remaking Singapore and Our Singapore Conversation) in several ways.

- First, the government agency leading the initiative works very closely with participants throughout the entire process in developing solutions and responses to policy problems, communicating the objectives and designing an effective process.
- Second, the agency responds in real-time to the needs of the participants as their ideas develop, for instance, in connecting them with the relevant experts and grassroots organisations. This was seen in the case of all three citizens' panels.

In the case of the RR CW, to help participants test and refine their ideas, MSE provided the needed information which groups may otherwise had no access to, funding to support prototyping and outreach efforts, and connecting groups to potential partners. As noted by the participants, the assistance MSE provided to the groups was instrumental in helping them achieve their project objectives during the four-week break.

- Third, the lead agency commits to reviewing and even working with citizens to implement solutions, and does so.

The polls conducted at the end of all two of the citizens' panels show an increase in trust among participants of the government's intention and desire to work with citizens to solve policy problems (see Table 5).<sup>43</sup>

Table 5: Participants' perceptions of the government's commitment to work with citizens

CP	Question	Pre-CP	Post-CP
RR CW	I believe that the government is committed to partner citizens to build our future Singapore.	85.7%	90.7% (+5%)
WLH CP	I believe the government is committed to partner citizens to build our future Singapore.	74.6%	84.9% (+10.3%)

*Percentages are for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree". This question was not asked for the WOD CJ as it was included after the launch of "Build Our Singapore Together".*

The above features set the citizens' panel apart from other forms of citizen engagement. It is not just the participants who dedicated time and resources to the process, but government agencies as well. Participants of the WOD CJ, RR CW and WLH CP were aware and appreciative of the government's effort and investment in the process, in terms of the resources and time they expended. The process fulfilled people's normative expectations of the government, such as its

<sup>43</sup> The poll for the WOD CJ did not include this question as it took place before the launch of "Building Our Future Singapore Together".

responsiveness, to their concerns, needs and ideas.<sup>44</sup> The polls conducted at the end of all three citizens' panels show an increase in perceptions among WOD CJ and RR CW participants that the government seriously considers citizens' suggestions at public engagement sessions (see Table 6).

Table 6: Participants' perceptions of the government seriously considering citizens' suggestions given at public engagement sessions

CP	Question	Pre-CP	Post-CP
WOD CJ	I believe the government seriously considers suggestions made by citizens like me at public engagement sessions.	71.2%	75.3% (+4.1%)
RR CW	I believe the government seriously considers suggestions made by citizens like me at public engagement sessions.	71.4%	72.1% (+0.7%)
WLH CP	I believe the government seriously considers suggestions made by citizens at public engagement exercises.	76.4%	73.6% (-2.8%)

*Percentages are for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree".*

For the WLH CP, there was a very slight decrease in the percentage of participants who felt that "the government seriously considers suggestions made by citizens". As explained in the IPS report for the WLH CP, further analysis of the breakdown of responses showed that while there was a decrease in the percentage of participants who agreed with the statement (by 18.2 percentage points), there was a high percentage increase in the number of participants who strongly agreed with the statement, of 15.4 percentage points. Those who felt neutral (neither disagreed nor agreed) increased slightly by 2.6 percentage points.

A stronger indicator of how the citizens' panels affected participants' willingness to work with the government in solving policy problems was the interest expressed by the majority of participants from all three citizens' panels to want to do more on the respective topics (see Table 7) and participate in more engagement in the future (see Table 8). Furthermore, for the WLH CP, close to 95 per cent of the participants said they would recommend fellow citizens to take part in future citizens' panels.

<sup>44</sup> Mark E. Warren, *Democracy and Trust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 346–360.

Table 7: Participants keen to be more involved in solving the respective policy problem

CP	Question	Pre-CP	Post-CP
WOD CJ	After my CJ experience, I am keen to be more actively involved in diabetes prevention and management initiatives.	-	90.4%
RR CW	I am keen to continue working on the recommendations proposed by the Citizens' Workgroup with my fellow participants and the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources.	-	93%
WLH CP	After my Citizens' Panel experience, I am keen to be more actively involved in initiatives that promote work-life harmony.	-	90.6%

Percentages are for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree".

Table 8: Participants will consider participating in future engagement

CP	Question	Pre-CP	Post-CP
WOD CJ	After my CJ experience, I will favourably consider participating in future citizen engagement opportunities.	-	87.7%
RR CW	I will consider participating in future citizen engagement opportunities with the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources.	-	86.1%
WLH CP	After my Citizens' Panel experience, I will favourably consider participating in future citizen engagement opportunities.	-	88.7%

Percentages are for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree".

## Impact on Citizens

The citizens' panel is underpinned by a belief in the advantage of a "talk-centric" deliberative model, over a "vote-centric" system that aggregates numbers to inform policymaking, in encouraging a reasoned and informed exchange of views. Deliberation among citizens is seen as critical to the goal of generating quality decision-making and cultivating mutual respect among diverse social groups. Thus, one important outcome of the citizens' panel process is the impact it makes on the individual, which potentially has long-term implications for active citizenry and the society.

In addition to analysing the outcomes of the citizens' panels on policymaking and the relationship between the government and citizens, our analyses of the WOD CJ, RR CW and WLH CP also

addressed the impact made on an individual level. These included the effects of the process on participants' knowledge on the topic of deliberation,<sup>45</sup> internal efficacy and external efficacy.<sup>46</sup>

- *Knowledge gain* happens on several levels — of the wider policymaking process (as discussed in the section “Impact on Government-Citizen Relationship”), of the topic discussed and of skills pertinent to democratic participation (e.g., willingness to listen and justifying proposals).
- *Internal efficacy* refers to an individual's self-evaluation of how his own competence, knowledge and skills have improved through deliberation.<sup>47</sup>
- *External efficacy* refers to an individual's assessment of the external impact his political views and actions have on the political process.<sup>48</sup>

(Refer to IPS' earlier report published on the WOD CJ for more information on these various dimensions and their measurement.<sup>49</sup>)

As presented in Table 9, participants of the three citizens' panels made significant gains in terms of knowledge of the topic (i.e., diabetes, recycling right and work-life harmony) and how the government works, particularly in the area of formulating and implementing public policies. This is to be expected as the participants were given ample opportunities to learn more about the topic through the information kit, briefings, interactions with policymakers and Resource Persons, and learning journeys (in the case of the RR CW). In some cases, they were given access to what was publicly unavailable information (e.g., during Day One, the Lead Facilitator brought the WOD CJ participants through a set of confidential statistics pertaining to diabetes in Singapore).

As mentioned earlier, the experiences in negotiating with fellow participants, getting buy-in from fellow citizens, and making a case to policymakers helped participants understand the challenges that are involved when considering different perspectives and needs, and building consensus among a diverse group.

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<sup>45</sup> James S. Fishkin, Robert C. Luskin and Roger Jowell, “Deliberative Polling and Public Consultation”, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 53 (2000): 657–666.

<sup>46</sup> Kimmo Grönlund, Maija Setälä and Kaisa Herne, “Deliberation and Civic Virtue: Lesson From a Citizen Deliberation Experiment”, *European Political Science Review* 2, no. 1 (2010): 95–117.

<sup>47</sup> Kasper M. Hansen, *Deliberative Democracy and Opinion Formation* (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2004).

<sup>48</sup> Richard G. Niemi, Stephen C. Craig and Franco Mattei, “Measuring Internal Political Efficacy in the 1988 National Election Study”, *The American Political Science Review*, 85 no. 4 (1991): 1407–1413; Michael E. Morrell, “Deliberation, Democratic Decision-Making and Internal Political Efficacy”, *Political Behaviour*, 27, no. 1 (2005): 49–69.

<sup>49</sup> Carol Soon and Valerie Yeo, “Reflections on the Citizens' Jury for the War on Diabetes”, Institute of Policy Studies, October 19, 2018, [https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/ips/reflections-on-the-wod-cj\\_ips-published-191018.pdf](https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/ips/reflections-on-the-wod-cj_ips-published-191018.pdf).

Table 9: Impact on participants' knowledge

CP	Question	Pre-CP	Post-CP
WOD CJ	I am better informed about public policies and the government than are most people.	58.9%	63.0% (+4.1%)
WOD CJ	How confident are you that your position on the problem of diabetes prevention and management is correct?	53.4%  (Confident/Very confident)	79.4% (+26%)  (Confident/Very confident)
RR CW	I am better informed about public policies and the government than most people.	46.9%	69.8% (+22.9%)
RR CW	How confident are you that you know how to recycle correctly?	51%  (Confident/Very confident)	76.8% (+25.8%)  (Confident/Very confident)
WLH CP	I am better informed about public policies and the government than most people.	56.4%	84.9% (+28.5%)
WLH CP	How confident are you that your view on how to achieve work-life harmony is correct?	45.5%  (Confident/Very confident)	77.4% (+31.9%)  (Confident/Very confident)

*Percentages are for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" unless otherwise stated.*

The polls administered at the end of all three citizens' panels showed that a significant majority (82.2 per cent to 94.3 per cent) felt that their experiences at the citizens' panels made them more confident about the value of their contributions (see Table 10). Such feelings of empowerment bode well for internal efficacy and pave the way for more active citizenry among participants in the future.

Despite the demands of the process, participants had a positive experience, and more importantly, they came out of the process knowing they are capable of doing more as citizens. Their strong sense of external efficacy is indicated by the large majority of participants who believed that their recommendations are worthy of support from the government and fellow Singaporeans (see Table 11).

Table 10: Impact of the citizens' panels on participants' internal efficacy

CP	Question	Pre-CP	Post-CP
WOD CJ	The Citizens' Jury experience strengthened my confidence in the value of my contributions as an active citizen.	-	82.2%
RR CW	The Citizens' Workgroup made me more confident about what I can contribute as a citizen.	-	83.7%
WLH CP	The Citizens' Panel experience strengthened my confidence in the value of my contributions as a citizen.	-	94.3%

Percentages are for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree".

Table 11: Impact of the citizens' panels on participants' external efficacy

CP	Question	Pre-CP	Post-CP
WOD CJ	I believe the Citizens' Jury generated recommendations that are worthy of government support.	-	97.3%
WOD CJ	I believe the CJ generated recommendations that will be supported by Singaporeans.	-	91.2%
RR CW	I believe the Citizens' Workgroup generated recommendations that are worthy of government support.	-	97.7%
RR CW	I believe other Singaporeans will support the Citizens' Workgroup's recommendations.	-	81.4%
WLH CP	I believe the Citizens' Panel generated recommendations that are worthy of government support.	-	94.3%
WLH CP	I believe the Citizens' Panel generated recommendations that will be supported by Singaporeans.	-	92.5%

Percentages are for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree".



## WHERE ARE THE GAPS IN PUBLIC SERVICE? WHAT SHOULD PUBLIC SERVICE DO?

What lessons do the three citizens' panels hold for citizen engagement in Singapore? We group our observations and recommendations in three categories: (i) Getting more citizens on board, (ii) Sustaining engagement for the long haul, and (iii) Readyng the public sector.

### GETTING MORE CITIZENS ON BOARD

#### Recruit the less accessible

All three citizens' panels were designed with the principle of diversity in mind, at both the planning stage (e.g., designing the sampling frame and choice of recruitment methods) and design stage (e.g., creating the environment for inclusive discussions that do not favour specific individuals or segments). As the citizens' panels in general comprise small groups of people due to the nature of the engagement, the panels were not intended to be representative of the general population.

In the case of the WOD CJ, recruitment was done at healthcare facilities such as polyclinics to reach out to people with different diabetic profiles as well as from different socio-economic backgrounds. The RR CW used direct mailing to widen MSE's reach to potential applicants — 8,000 invitation letters were sent to randomly selected households in Singapore. For the WLH CP, MOM leveraged its network of trade unionists and employers to encourage them to apply for the CP. For all three citizens' panels, much effort was put into publicising the initiatives and recruiting potential applicants through a variety of online and offline platforms.

Despite the efforts, observations and participants' feedback indicated that the panels could have been more diverse. For instance, in the case of the WOD CJ, participants felt the panel could have benefited from greater representation of patients with Type 1 diabetes and young people.

I find it well represented but Type 1 is very small [sic]. There were very few participants with Type 1 diabetes. I don't agree with the argument that because there are a small number of Type 1 patients so the focus is lesser. The knowledge of Type 1 is very minimal. It will be more balanced if you could get more of Type 1 patients. (Female, 40–44 years old, WOD CJ participant)

I did not think it was as inclusive as it should have been. I did not feel there were enough young people, aged 25 to 30. I felt the group was on the whole much older which I understand why [sic] because of the subject of diabetes. But it is an issue that is growing and you need to combat it from young. (Male, 25–29 years old, WOD CJ participant)

For the WLH CP, some participants felt that certain groups were under-represented, such as the blue-collar workers and younger Singaporeans who have recently joined or would be part of the workforce in the immediate future.

Tables 12 to 15 provide the breakdown in demographics for the participants. Participants aged 18 to 29 years made up about 25 per cent and 31 per cent of the WOD CJ and RR CW respectively, while they constituted only about 13 per cent of the WLH CP. Those in the middle-aged group (i.e., aged 40 to 59 years) formed the biggest segment for the three citizens' panels (about 47 per cent for WOD CJ, 33 per cent for RR CW, and 55 per cent for the WLH CP).

In terms of education qualification, majority of the participants for all three citizens' panels had a professional qualification/other diploma, a university first degree or a university postgraduate diploma/degree (about 62 per cent for WOD CJ, 71 per cent for RR CW, and 87 per cent for the WLH CP). Based on the breakdown for household income and housing type, the citizens' panels saw a greater participation from those with middle income and above.

Table 12: Breakdown of participants by age for all three citizens' panels

Age	WOD CJ		RR CW		WLH CP	
	(n=76)		(n=48)		(n=55)	
18-24	9	11.8%	7	14.6%	2	3.6%
25-29	10	13.2%	8	16.7%	5	9.1%
30-34	4	5.3%	6	12.5%	8	14.5%
35-39	7	9.2%	6	12.5%	6	10.9%
40-44	10	13.2%	5	10.4%	15	27.3%
45-49	6	7.9%	6	12.5%	8	14.5%
50-54	11	14.5%	3	6.2%	6	10.9%
55-59	9	11.8%	2	4.2%	1	1.8%
60-64	6	7.9%	1	2.1%	3	5.5%
65-69	3	3.9%	4	8.3%	1	1.8%
70-74	1	1.3%	0	0%	0	0%

Table 13: Breakdown of participants by education for all three citizens' panels

Education	WOD CJ (n=76)		RR CW (n=48)		WLH CP (n=55)	
	Post-secondary and below	17	22.3%	10	20.9%	4
Polytechnic diploma	12	15.8%	4	8.3%	3	5.5%
Professional qualification and other diploma	3	3.9%	1	2.1%	8	14.5%
University first degree	26	34.2%	25	52.1%	20	36.4%
University postgraduate diploma/degree	18	23.7%	8	16.7%	20	36.4%

Table 14: Breakdown of participants by household income for WOD CJ and WLH CP

Household income	WOD CJ (n=76)		Household income	WLH CP (n=55)	
	None to \$1,999	10		13.2%	No working person/ Retiree household
\$2,000-\$4,999	23	30.3%	\$2,500 and below	5	9.1%
\$5,000-\$6,999	6	7.9%	\$2,501-\$3,600	4	7.3%
\$7,000-\$9,999	13	17.1%	\$3,601-\$4,500	1	1.8%
\$10,000-\$14,999	14	18.4%	\$4,501-\$10,000	16	29.1%
\$15,000 and above	10	13.2%	\$10,001-\$15,000	11	20%
			\$15,001-\$20,000	5	9.1%
			\$20,001 and above	12	21.8%

Table 15: Breakdown of participants by housing type for RR CW

Housing Type	RR CW (n=48)	
	Count	Percentage
HDB Studio apartment, 1-room or 2-room flat	2	4.2%
HDB 3-room flat	9	18.8%
HDB 4-room flat	10	20.8%
HDB 5-room flat	10	20.8%
HDB Executive Flat	2	4.2 %
Condominium and other apartment	9	18.8%
Landed properties	6	12.5%

The under-representation of some segments could be due to two reasons. One reason is the nature of the topic which has implication for the design of the sampling frame and hence the selection of participants. In the case of the WLH CP, the prevalence of participants in their 30s and 40s, and with university education and professional jobs, could be attributed to the need to ensure adequate representation from employers and managers, a key group in the sampling frame. Employers formed a key segment of the CP as they make hiring decisions and implement initiatives that promote flexible work arrangements and work-life harmony. For these participants to reach the senior positions they were at, they would have to possess certain educational credentials, and would have accumulated sufficient years of working experience. The presence of participants from this segment raised the overall educational and age demographics of the entire CP.

The second reason is the nature of the citizens' panel process. While individuals from the lower income and low-educational groups may be equally concerned about issues relating to diabetes management, recycling and work-life harmony, they might not be able to commit to all the sessions required of them due to work and family commitments (e.g., their need to do shift work or part-time work on weekends to earn extra income and having fewer resources for childcare). This contributed to lower sign-ups from the less educated and lower-income groups (see Tables 16 to 18 for breakdown of demographics for the applicants for the RR CW and WLH CP which attracted many more applications than the WOD CJ).

For both citizens' panels, most of the applicants hailed from the more well-educated and affluent segments of the population. For instance, majority of the people who applied to the RR CW (79 per cent) and WLH CP (83 per cent) had a professional qualification/other diploma, a university first degree or a university postgraduate diploma/degree (see Table 17). Only 11 per cent of the

applicants for the RR CW were dwellers of HDB 3-room flats or smaller (see Table 17). Young people (aged 29 years and younger) made up a small group of the applicants for both citizens' panels (about 28 per cent for RR CW and 17 per cent for WLH CP). See Table 18.

Table 16: Breakdown of applicants by education for RR CW and WLH CP

Education	RR CW (n=305)		WLH CP (n=308)	
	Post-secondary and below	37	12.2%	19
Polytechnic diploma	25	8.2%	20	6.5%
Professional qualification and other diploma	13	4.3%	29	9.4%
University first degree	153	50.2%	129	41.9%
University postgraduate diploma/degree	75	24.6%	99	32.1%
Others	2	0.6%	12	3.9%

Table 17: Breakdown of applicants by housing type for RR CW

Housing Type	RR CW (n=305)	
HDB Studio apartment, 1-room or 2-room flat	4	1.3%
HDB 3-room flat	30	9.8%
HDB 4-room flat	82	26.9%
HDB 5-room flat	62	20.3%
HDB Executive Flat	16	5.3%
Condominium and other apartment	84	27.5%
Landed properties	27	8.9%

Table 18: Breakdown of applicants by age for RR CW and WLH CP

Age	RR CW (n=305)		WLH CP (n=308)	
Below 18	3	1.0%	0	0%
18-24	34	11.2%	12	3.9%
25-29	47	15.4%	40	13.0%
30-34	53	17.4%	51	16.6%
35-39	42	13.8%	47	15.3%
40-44	32	10.5%	56	18.2%
45-49	30	9.8%	35	11.4%
50-54	28	9.2%	26	8.4%
55-59	16	5.3%	16	5.2%
60-64	10	3.3%	14	4.6%
65-69	8	2.6%	7	2.3%
70 and above	2	0.7%	4	1.3%

For future citizens' panels, the following should be considered to recruit citizens who are structurally less available:

1. Sufficient time must be allocated to recruitment: This means that organisers must plan well in advance should they want to engage citizens for such a form of engagement. Should a quick turn-around be required in soliciting citizens' opinions and suggestions, other forms of engagement (such as focus group discussions and dialogue sessions mentioned in Section 3) should be used instead.
2. Tapping on community researchers: Researchers who work with communities form networks with their subjects, and have intimate insights into their needs and challenges. For instance, in the UK, the Camden Council's Citizens' Assembly on the Climate Crisis (held in 2019) relied on its in-house community researchers to reach out to and recruit participants in public spaces and by door knocking. The researchers conducted a face-to-face survey to determine whom among the community members were interested in being involved, and leveraged their contacts who had participated in an earlier related citizens' assembly.<sup>50</sup> Government agencies that do not have in-house researchers can work

<sup>50</sup> Lizzie Cain and Gemma Moore, "Evaluation of Camden Council's Citizens' Assembly on the Climate Crisis", University of London, December, 2019, <https://www.camden.gov.uk/documents/20142/0/FINAL+UCL+Evaluation+of+Camden+Council%27s+Citi>

closely with academics who are domain experts to work out a recruitment plan, as well as identify partners to work with for recruitment and publicity.

3. Leveraging community organisations: One way to reach out to those vulnerable segments, such as low-income families, seniors, the disabled (depending on the subject matter), is to work with community organisations (e.g., non-profit organisations and social service agencies). For instance, MASS LBP, an organisation in Canada that works with governments and citizens on policy deliberation, recommends reaching out to groups such as those experiencing homelessness or underhoused residents who would be typically excluded from the deliberative engagement process by working with shelters and community organisations. Alternatively, community organisations can make presentations to participants at the citizens' panel or organise supplementary sessions to help address participants' concerns.<sup>51</sup>
4. Oversample minority group members: Deliberative scholars such as James (2018) cautioned that there might be little impact for the voices of minority groups to be heard if only one or two participants from such groups were selected. This is because a single voice is likely to get isolated in a bigger group. Thus, it is important to oversample to ensure there is a critical mass of minority group members in a citizens' panel. They will help support one another throughout the process.<sup>52</sup>
5. Honorarium: Another option to be considered is to mention that an honorarium will be given to participants during the recruitment phase so as to assure low-wage earners that their participation in a CP would not result in lost income. Such a practice is used by organisations such as the Jefferson Center in the US. While the mention of an honorarium during the recruitment phase might attract applicants who are more interested in the remuneration than the topic to be discussed at the citizens' panel, such possibilities can be addressed by including in the application form or calls, questions pertaining to applicants' reasons for joining the citizens' panel to understand their intention for participation.

### **Increase citizens' interest**

The citizens' panel as a modality for citizen engagement is a marked departure from the other forms of engagement that the Singapore public is accustomed to, due to its process, demands of the participants and outcomes. A handful of participants from the WOD CJ, RR CW and WLH CP expressed their surprise at the amount of effort and commitment required of them. For citizens' panels to become the new norm of citizen engagement in Singapore, given the government's

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zens%27+Assembly+on+the+Climate+Crisis.pdf/e3f39960-76ce-111d-656b-6154465fc095?t=1579799081501.

<sup>51</sup> Mass Lbp, "How to Assemble a Citizens' Assembly or Reference Panel: Advice for Public Agencies Procuring Long-form Deliberative Processes", March 2019, <https://drd-fab4.kxcdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/MASSLBPProcurementGuide.pdf>.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Rabinder James, "Descriptive Representation in Citizens Assemblies", in eds. Mark E. Warren, E., and Hilary Pearse, *Designing Deliberative Democracy: The British Columbia Assembly* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 106–126. Cited in Peter Bryant and Jez Hall, "Citizens Jury Literature Review", Shared Future, May 2017, [https://www.fairvote.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Citizens\\_Jury\\_literature\\_review\\_May17.pdf](https://www.fairvote.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Citizens_Jury_literature_review_May17.pdf).

interest in co-creating and co-implementing policy solutions with Singaporeans, the following recommendations by NCVO, Institute for Voluntary Research and Involve in the UK can be considered:<sup>53</sup>

1. Recognise people's interest and their role: People participate when the activity or initiative reflects their personal interest or gives them personal meaning. However, participation is also mutual and reciprocal, not purely altruistic. People want to see their participation make a difference, and will engage if it concerns something that matters to them directly and that they believe has value. Agencies need to convey to people that their involvement is needed and valued to pique their interest in participation and for them to stay involved. This message can be reinforced by including examples of projects implemented by participants from the past citizens' panels in publicity materials.
2. Adding a personal touch: Linked to the earlier suggestion on tapping community organisations to reach the less accessible segments, personal invitations have been found to be more effective than the most formal recruitment collateral and professionally designed posters or leaflets. Processes and structures that appear too formalised and structured may be intimidating and put people off from participation.
3. Promote the benefits of participation: Communicate the benefits of participation and use them as a hook to encourage involvement. Benefits from citizens' panels include the formation of new relationships, the enjoyment that participation brings, the difference their participation will make, letting people know that their contribution counts and opportunities to make a visible impact through partnering the government to implement solutions.

In addition to the above, word-of-mouth publicity is also important, especially when more agencies embark on citizens' panel as a method of engaging the public. Individuals who have gone through the process who feel that they were valued and that their participation made a difference will tell positive stories to people they know and encourage others to participate.

## **SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT FOR THE LONG HAUL**

As presented earlier, the majority of participants for all three citizens' panels indicated high interest in participating in future citizen engagement initiatives in general and being actively involved in those specific to their panel. While this indicates that citizens' panels ignite citizens' interest in being more involved in co-creating solutions to help overcome the challenges that Singapore faces, it remains unclear if their engagement will be sustained.

Such a modality of citizen engagement is also new to the Singapore government. However, there are some promising signs that the highly intense method of citizen engagement — with positive

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<sup>53</sup> Ellie Brodie, Tim Hughes, Véronique Jochum, Sarah Miller, Nick Ockenden and Diane Warburton, "Pathways Through Participation: What Creates and Sustains Active Citizenship?", NCVO, Institute for Voluntary Research and Involve, September 2011. [https://www.involve.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Pathways-Through-Participation-final-report\\_Final\\_20110913.pdf](https://www.involve.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Pathways-Through-Participation-final-report_Final_20110913.pdf).



effects observed for knowledge, political trust, internal efficacy, external efficacy and interest to do more in the future — may last beyond the process.

The earlier section on “Impact on Policymaking” (refer to page 23) recapped how some participants are working with agencies in implementing the ideas they developed. A good reference point would be the WOD CJ that sees some participants still being involved in programmes that seek to combat diabetes, two years after the engagement had ended. In the early days after the completion of the WOD CJ, participants continued to demonstrate both internal and external efficacy by following up on their own recommendations. The Diet — Eating Out Group worked with the South West Community Development Council to promote the “Go Green Guide”. Another group, the Diet — Homecooked Food Group met with the South East CDC to promote their healthier cooking programme in the district. Today, some of the participants are working with community partners to roll out their recommendations, such as healthier cooking classes at Community Centres and conducting info-educational talks during school assemblies.

### **From participants to partners**

However, it is clear that such sustained engagement requires support and some form of scaffolding from agencies. The support could come in the form of making connections between participants and potential partners who can help bring the proposed ideas to fruition, and in maintaining ties with participants and engaging them whenever an opportunity arises.

Two examples of citizens' jury conducted by Shared Future<sup>54</sup> in the UK illustrate how to sustain post-panel engagement.

- In East Sussex, a citizens' jury was convened to answer the challenge statement: “What can we all do to make it easier for people to have a healthier relationship with alcohol?” To avoid the scenario where policymakers forget about the jury's recommendations, Shared Future set up a “post-jury” comprising local stakeholders to motivate jury members to continue the deliberative process by putting their plans into action. Participants who were interested in continuing their recommendations post-citizens' jury were given community development support to help them prepare for interactions with decision-makers. They eventually formed a constituted community association.<sup>55</sup>
- In Blackburn, a citizens' jury was convened in 2008 to tackle the problem of obesity.<sup>56</sup> One of the recommendations which was developed from the citizens' jury was to set up a food co-operative in the neighbourhood to provide residents with better access to fresh fruit and vegetables. Their implementation was supported by the Healthy Living Centre.<sup>57</sup> The

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<sup>54</sup> More about Shared Future, an organisation that aims to promote community empowerment, social enterprise and democratic participation, can be found here <https://sharedfuturecic.org.uk/about/>.

<sup>55</sup> Peter Bryant and Jez Hall, “Citizens Jury Literature Review”.

<sup>56</sup> Alison Giles, “Talking Food, Taking Action” [presentation], Our Life, accessed March 1, 2020, <http://champspublichealth.com/writedir/7138TalkingFoodTakingAction.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> Peter Bryant and Jez Hall, “Citizens Jury Literature Review”.

food co-op staffed by jury members and fellow residents was still running eight years later and boasting a membership of 400 families.<sup>58</sup>

The Jefferson Center also has useful examples on sustaining post-panel engagement:

- Recognising that outdated administrative, electoral and participation structures at the level of local government could limit citizens' participation, the Jefferson Center, in collaboration with Hamline University and Forgeworks, a digital engagement firm, organised the Minnesota Community Assembly Project. Two citizens' juries were conducted in 2017 for community members in Red Wing and Willmar to prioritise the qualities of good government and to consider proposals (e.g., how to conduct digital public engagement and better public meetings) to strengthen local government. Following the submission of the final reports from the two citizens' juries, the City of Red Wing invested in an online engagement tool for citizens to make their voices heard on local decisions, in addition to re-designing its website to make city information more accessible. Another interesting outcome of this citizen engagement exercise was that two jury participants ran for City Council a year later.<sup>59</sup>
- Started in 2017, the ongoing Rural Energy Dialogues stemmed from the realisation that rural residents were rarely involved in discussions on the future of energy. To date, three citizens' juries have been held in the Minnesota counties of Redwood, Itasca and Winona for the organisers to learn how energy development is being experienced and perceived by community members. Participants too identified the opportunities and priorities for their county's energy future. Post-engagement, the Jefferson Centre and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy intend to continue working with local partners and leaders "to identify resources and other forms of assistance to bring community energy recommendations to life". For instance, the Jefferson Center and the community members in Winona county brought the message of promoting energy efficiency to the 2018 Frozen River Film Festival.<sup>60</sup>

In Singapore, two years after the completion of the WOD CJ, MOH has been actively engaging participants in its various work streams. One example is the development of the National Diabetes Reference Materials (NDRM), a recommendation from the WOD CJ. Some participants were involved in NDRM workgroups to discuss content development and design, while some were involved in facilitating citizen engagement efforts to get more feedback to develop the NDRM.

Most recently, at the Committee of Supply for Budget 2020, MOH announced its policies, which aligned with the CJ recommendations. They include increasing accessibility of water coolers, running a campaign to popularise drinking plain water, and introducing new labels to nudge

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<sup>58</sup> Peter Bryant, "Citizens Assemblies, Citizen's Juries and Climate Change" [blog], Shared Future, February 14, 2019, <https://sharedfuturecic.org.uk/citizens-assemblies-citizens-juries-and-climate-change/>.

<sup>59</sup> "Minnesota Community Assembly Project", Jefferson Center website, accessed March 1, 2020, <https://jefferson-center.org/mn-community-assembly/>.

<sup>60</sup> "Rural Energy Dialogues", Jefferson Center website, accessed March 1, 2020, <https://jefferson-center.org/rural-energy-dialogues/>.

healthier drink choices. MOH continues to update all the participants of the developments via e-mail as well as through the ministry webpage periodically.

### **Track participants' involvement**

It is important to note that citizens' continued participation is influenced by myriad factors — individual factors (e.g., motivations, personality and resources), relationships and social networks (e.g., the encouragement and support of family, friends, colleagues and wider social networks), and the local environment (including local spaces, events and institutions).<sup>61</sup>

It will be useful to track engagement among those who participated in the citizens' panels. The polls conducted at the beginning and at the end of each citizens' panel served to measure the impact of the process on the key dimensions of the deliberative process (i.e., knowledge, internal efficacy, external efficacy and political trust) and participants' perceptions of the process (e.g., its design, if there was sufficient time and usefulness of the information kit). While the post-citizens' panel poll did include questions that asked participants on their interest to participate in future engagement efforts, the positive responses (from over 85 per cent of participants across the three citizens' panels) could be partly attributed to the positive experience participants just had.

To determine if citizens' panels will have a more lasting impact on citizen engagement, a post survey could be conducted a few months after the process had ended will provide a clearer indication. The survey could include items that measure participants' involvement in ongoing efforts relating to the policy challenge they were involved in, their priorities and concerns for not being involved, the barriers they face, and how else they would like to be involved.

The above tracking could also help government agencies tailor participation for citizens. Even within a citizens' panel, participants demonstrated different levels of readiness and interest in different roles. For example, while some embraced larger roles and bigger responsibilities, such as those in the Report Writing Committee for the WLH CP and the presenters for all three citizens' panels who had to pull together recommendations, there were others who were content with expressing their views and proffering suggestions during group discussions, which was an important contribution on its own.

To help citizens stay engaged, policymakers need to recognise that people get involved in different forms and at different intensities. Every type of involvement counts, from small actions to major commitments. Given that the factors that influence citizens' participation change with time, their contributions should be encouraged with the understanding of the wider context of their participation (such as the constraints they face in their lives) and matched to their motivations and circumstances. As the participants from the citizens' panels had already gained deep knowledge and engaged with solutioning for the respective topic, the respective agencies should consider how to tap on their interest and on-the-ground experiences for ongoing and new workstreams.

## **READYING THE PUBLIC SECTOR**

The above sections dealt with what needs to be done to encourage citizens to get involved in working with the government and to step up their participation. As explained in the section "Citizen

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<sup>61</sup> Ellie Brodie, Tim Hughes, Véronique Jochum, Sarah Miller, Nick Ockenden and Diane Warburton, "Pathways Through Participation: What Creates and Sustains Active Citizenship?", NCVO, Institute for Voluntary Research and Involve, September 2011.

Engagement in Singapore”, which examines past engagement endeavours such as the Feedback Unit, Remaking Singapore and Our Singapore Conversation, the citizens’ panel is a significant departure from the modalities that citizens are familiar with. The citizens’ panel as a tool for public engagement and government-citizen partnership poses a significant change not just to citizens, but to the public sector as well. This section presents what needs to be done within the public sector for it to more effectively leverage the opportunities provided by the citizens’ panel tool and reap its potential benefits.

### **No one way to do engagement**

It is evident that there is no one way to engage the public. As reviewed in the “Reflections on the Citizens’ Jury for the War on Diabetes”,<sup>62</sup> there are many different tools that governments use for public participation. Depending on the objective (e.g., gather information, obtain consensus, assess public attitudes) and the resources available (e.g., time, manpower and budget), policymakers have at their disposal an array of tools, ranging from public opinion surveys, focus group discussions, public hearings, to citizens advisory committees. The various methods differ in terms of scale, nature, type and number of participants, mechanisms, and outcomes. See Figure 3.

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<sup>62</sup> Carol Soon and Valerie Yeo, “Reflections on the Citizens’ Jury for the War on Diabetes”, Institute of Policy Studies, October 19, 2018, [https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/ips/reflections-on-the-wod-cj\\_ips-published-191018.pdf](https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/ips/reflections-on-the-wod-cj_ips-published-191018.pdf).

Figure 3: Formalised public participation methods<sup>63</sup>

<i>Participation Method</i>	<i>Nature of Participants</i>	<i>Time Scale/Duration</i>	<i>Characteristics/Mechanism</i>	<i>Examples/References</i>
Referenda	Potentially all members of national or local population; realistically, a significant proportion of these.	Vote cast at single point in time.	Vote is usually choice of one of two options. All participants have equal influence. Final outcome is binding.	Biotechnology in Switzerland (Buchmann 1995); waste repository in Sweden (af Wahlberg 1997).
Public hearings/inquiries	Interested citizens, limited in number by size of venue. True participants are experts and politicians making presentations.	May last many weeks/months, even years. Usually held during week-days/working hours.	Entails presentations by agencies regarding plans in open forum. Public may voice opinions but have no direct impact on recommendation.	Frequent mechanism in, for example, United States (Fiorino 1990), Australia (Davison, Barnes, and Schibeci 1997); review by Middendorf and Busch (1997).
Public opinion surveys	Large sample (e.g., 100s or 1,000s), usually representative of the population segments of interest.	Single event, usually lasting no more than several minutes.	Often enacted through written questionnaire or telephone survey. May involve variety of questions. Used for information gathering.	Radioactive sites in United States (Feldman and Hanahan 1996); genetically modified food in the United Kingdom (Vidal 1998); biotech surveys (Davison, Barnes, and Schibeci 1997).
Negotiated rule making	Small number of representatives of stakeholder groups (may include public representatives).	Uncertain: strict deadline usually set: days/weeks/months.	Working committee of stakeholder representatives (and from sponsor). Consensus required on specific question (usually, a regulation).	Used by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Hanson 1984); method discussed by Susskind and McMahon (1985) and Fiorino (1990).
Consensus conference	Generally, ten to sixteen members of public (with no knowledge on topic) selected by steering committee as "representative" of the general public.	Preparatory demonstrations and lectures (etc.) to inform panelists about topic, then three-day conference.	Lay panel with independent facilitator questions expert witnesses chosen by stakeholder panel. Meetings open to wider public. Conclusions on key questions made via report or press conference.	Used in Denmark and Netherlands on topics from food irradiation to air pollution (Joss and Durant 1994; Grundahl 1995); also used in United Kingdom on plant biotechnology (Eilahi 1995).
Citizens' jury/panel	Generally, twelve to twenty members of public selected by stakeholder panel to be roughly representative of the local population.	Not precise but generally involve meetings over a few days (e.g., four to ten).	Lay panel with independent facilitator questions expert witnesses chosen by stakeholder panel. Meetings not generally open. Conclusions on key questions made via report or press conference.	Examples in Germany, United States, and United Kingdom (e.g., Crosby, Kelly, and Schaefer 1986; Coote, Kendall, and Stewart 1994; Lenaghan, New, and Mitchell 1996).
Citizen/public advisory committee	Small group selected by sponsor to represent views of various groups or communities (may not comprise members of true public).	Takes place over an extended period of time.	Group convened by sponsor to examine some significant issue. Interaction with industry representatives.	Particularly evident in United States, for example, in cleanup of waste sites (Lynn and Busenberg 1995; Perhac 1998); see Creighton (1993) for guidelines.
Focus groups	Small group of five to twelve selected to be representative of public; several groups may be used for one project (comprising members of subgroups).	Single meeting, usually up to two hours.	Free discussion on general topic with video/tape recording and little input/direction from facilitator. Used to assess opinions/attitudes.	Guidelines from Morgan (1993); U.K. example to assess food risk (Fife-Schaw and Rowe 1995).

Compared with the other modalities which tend to involve citizens for shorter durations of time, and often in one seating, the citizens' panel encourages bottom-up participation and allows for

<sup>63</sup> Gene Rowe and Lynn J. Frewer, "Public Participation Methods: A Framework for Evaluation," *Science, Technology & Human Values* 25, no. 1 (2000): 8–9.

more effective co-creation partnerships between the public sector and citizens. The different features of the citizens' panels (e.g., providing participants with access to information for informed discussion and decision making via information kits, learning journeys, Subject Matter Experts and Resource Persons, designing different formats to facilitate small and big group discussions, using ample scaffolds to shepherd discussions and leveraging facilitators to ensure that all participants have equal opportunities to contribute to the process) allow for ideation, consensus building and the testing/refinement of ideas.

The decision on the engagement modality to use must be outcome-driven. A key insight gained from the past three citizens' panels is that sufficient time must be allocated to recruitment so as to ensure that the less accessible segments of the populations could have a chance to participate in the process. If there is insufficient time, less-intensive modalities such as a citizen advisory committee (that involves a much smaller group of citizen participants) and a modified version of the focus group discussion (involving people for shorter duration of times and holding more than one discussion session with each group) could be used. An even longer runway for recruitment would be required for citizens' panels if the recommendations on how to reach out to groups such as the lower-income households, blue-collar employees and youth (refer to page 46) are to be taken on board.

Another insight is that the purpose and desired outcomes could be different even for the same method (i.e., citizens' panel). For instance, as illustrated in the section on different types of co-creation (refer to page 21), the RR CW took co-creation to an unprecedented level with participants implementing and testing their solutions on the ground while the WLH CP required participants to take ownership of the process by co-designing parts of it. The three citizens' panels demonstrated the wide-ranging possibilities that the process has to offer.

Policymakers have to identify from the onset what outcomes they hope to achieve and tailor the process accordingly. For instance, if the process is aimed at getting participants to not just co-create solutions but also to co-implement them, advanced setting up of the necessary infrastructure (e.g., information resources that are not publicly available and funds to support prototyping and testing) and securing potential partners' buy-in (e.g., that of grassroots organisations and partner agencies) are critical to the success of the process and the impact it makes on the participants.

### **Embrace differences**

In the process of working with different agencies on the three citizens' panels, we encountered officials expressing concerns pertaining to participants who may hold unyielding positions on the topic and dominate group discussions. The deliberative process, especially one that is conducted in a face-to-face setting, has several features that serve to mitigate the dominance of specific perspectives. First, when participants interact with one another face-to-face, they are likely to practise some degree of self-moderation to come across as more socially desirable. While we had observed incidents involving more outspoken and domineering participants at all three citizens' panels, they were in the minority.

Second, opinion giving and expression is a competency that varies from person to person, and one that needs to be cultivated. Hence, while an individual may come across as opinionated

during the application process (when answering open-ended questions in the questionnaire or over the phone), he may acquire the necessary skills and empathy that are part of a deliberative process as he goes through the process.

One of the key outcomes of a deliberative process is the skills participants acquire from the process. According to political scientist James Fishkin, there are five elements integral to legitimate deliberation:

1. Making accurate information and relevant data available to all participants;
2. Attaining substantive balance where different positions are compared based on their supporting evidence;
3. Allowing for diversity, where all major positions relevant to the matter are considered;
4. Practising conscientiousness, in which participants sincerely weigh all arguments; and
5. Giving equal consideration to views based on evidence and not on the people who advocate those views.

The scaffolding and facilitation deployed in the citizens' panels played an important part in bringing to reality these components of the deliberative process, evening out participation across the panel, and helping to minimise domination of the process by individuals.

Third, the key objective of the citizens' panel process is to allow for as much diversity in opinions and ideas relating to the problem/challenge statement as possible, and to surface views of different shades and colours. Hence, irrespective of the views expressed, even those that may be outliers, participant selection should be confined to as few variables as possible, preferably limited to demographic characteristics. During her clinic with MSE, Dr Emily Jenke from DemocracyCo suggested that the application questionnaire to collect information on age, gender, race, housing type, and frequency of recycling. The application questionnaire, which included questions on basic demographic characteristics and a question on involvement in green activities in the past three years, used for the RR CW was kept short.

Allowing for maximum diversity should also extend to other parts of the process, such as the deployment of Resource Persons (or Subject Matter Experts<sup>64</sup>). Resource Persons are part of the knowledge transfer process that informs the recommendations made by the participants and they expose participants' blind spots. In addition, they challenge participants' assumptions. Diversity in Resource Persons' experiences as well as the sectors they hail from is critical in enriching the breadth and depth of participants' considerations.

For instance, in choosing Resource Persons to engage, participants in the WLH CP selected a group that largely comprised representatives from government and government-related agencies,

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<sup>64</sup> Different terminologies were used for different citizens' panels but essentially, they refer to external stakeholders who are experts or representatives from different sectors and domains. They were invited to join the citizens' panel where participants interacted with them and heard from them on their insights on the topic and/or feedback on proposed ideas.

and corporates. This may have contributed to a number of ideas by the Panel that required action by the government and businesses. While there was a representative from the non-governmental sector, there were no other Resource Persons from the people sector. If the participants had the opportunity to interact with a Resource Person who had started a ground-up project to address work-life harmony issues (for example), they might have considered more community-based solutions. On the other hand, the WOD CJ involved a richer mix of Resource Persons, including a person who had Type 1 diabetes and two medical students who were part of the ground-up initiative Tri-Generational Homecare.

If there are concerns over whether the citizens' panel will surface issues and policy directions that the agency feel may be too controversial or is not able to respond to, it could either scope the challenge statement more narrowly or explore another engagement modality. The divergence dimension of deliberation, especially at the ideation or brainstorming stage, is a valuable one and should not be encumbered by concerns of sensitivities and potential controversy.

### **Whole-of-government effort**

The Secretariat teams for all three citizens' panels involved departments from MOH, MSE, NPTD (PMO), MOM and MSF. Some members were from policy divisions and others from communications and engagement divisions. From the conceptualisation and planning phase, to post-citizens' panel engagement, it was all hands on deck among the staff involved. Their effort, given the newness of the process and the fact that they were working on the citizens' panels on top of their own portfolios, and the resource-intensive nature of the process, was nothing short of a tour de force. Moving forward, citizens' panels demand whole-of-government effort. While a citizens' panel may be spearheaded and led by a specific agency or a department within an agency, what is required is the changing of mindsets and buy-in of all parts of the public sector.

The support and participation of partner agencies are required in order for citizens' co-creation and co-implementation with the government to work. As Singapore moves into the next phase of public engagement that sees citizens as partners of the government, a paradigm shift is required across the entire public sector. The challenges faced by the RR CW participants on the ground when soliciting support from some grassroots organisations as they tested their solutions demonstrates that agencies and grassroots organisations have different appetite and readiness when it comes to working with citizens. The support provided by some Town Councils and Community Development Councils made a positive difference for some of the groups for the RR CW (e.g., the groups proposing e-platforms to promote recycling right and to nurture recycling influencers in the community).

Another possible approach is for government agencies to commission a third party to design and manage the entire process, from sample recruitment, selection, coming up with the facilitation plan, developing the collateral (e.g., the information kit), convening the sessions to ensuring that the deliverable (i.e., proposal for solutions submitted to the commissioning agency) is met. The involvement of the commissioning agency will be limited to funding, issuing the charge (i.e., problem to be solved), providing information such as facts and statistics that will be useful to the design of the engagement, and identifying a pool of Resource Persons whom the panel can tap. The advantage of having a third party design and manage the process, such as in the case of



DemocracyCo and the Jefferson Center, is that an external party is less likely than a government agency to be inhibited by the culture of governance which is shaped by history and the structure of government. The organization, situated outside of government, will be responsible for creating and protecting the space for citizen deliberation.

### **Building citizen capacity takes time**

The ability to deliberate with fellow citizens, engage with policymakers and develop solutions that have applications for policy is a muscle that needs to be built. For most of the participants of the WOD CJ, RR CW and WLH CP, the citizens' panels were their first time in working with fellow citizens and the government in solving problems that the Singapore society faces. In our work on the citizens' panels, several officials were concerned that participants might not be considering sufficient evidence when developing their ideas.

While such concerns were understandable given that a large amount of resources went into the providing the participants with relevant information and data, and in organising the citizens' panels to derive new insights and solutions, expectations may need to be adjusted. This is because the deliberative nature of the citizens' panel process requires citizens to apply skills that they may not have had the chance to develop and hone. These skills include: listening to and engaging with people from different backgrounds, which they may not have had opportunities to do so in their day-to-day lives; going beyond their personal experiences and emotions to contemplate the problem and proffer solutions; and relying on evidence and data when doing so. Building such a competency and capacity among citizens requires time and citizens have to be given opportunities in their own lived realities to hone and practise such skills.

The following are practices used in other countries to promote critical thinking and minimise the impact of blind spots on the process:

1. Design to encourage critical thinking: Critical thinking is particularly important when participants interact with, extract useful information and solicit feedback from experts. For instance, in South Australia, participants in the Nuclear Citizens' Jury were introduced to several approaches — clarity, accuracy, relevance, depth, breadth and logic — before they were asked to develop specific questions for the experts. It was emphasised to them that all six approaches had to be used for critical thinking to occur.<sup>65</sup> There were semblances of such an approach in the scaffolds incorporated into some discussion guides for the WOD CJ, RR CW and WLH CP.
2. Incorporate an Oversight Panel: As people — participants and policymakers — hold different values and biases, an Oversight Panel would be useful in monitoring and minimising bias.<sup>66</sup> Members comprising an Oversight Panel are chosen for their knowledge of the topic and lack of conflict of interest in any outcome. The Panel will review the design of the process, which includes the development of questionnaires, information

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<sup>65</sup> Lyn Carson, *Enhancing Citizen Jurors' Critical Thinking Capacity*, The New Democracy Foundation, March 17, 2017.

<sup>66</sup> "Health Data on Trial", University of Manchester, January 2016, retrieved from <https://jefferson-center.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/the-citizens-juries-booklet-2016-1.pdf>.

kits, selection of Resource Persons who serve as expert witnesses, Resource Persons' presentation slides (or other materials shared with participants), and could ask for changes to be made.

3. Designate roles for Resource Persons: Linked to the above, to minimise the influence of bias among Resource Persons, they could be briefed to play specific roles. For instance, for the citizens' jury on patients' records in Manchester (2016), expert witnesses were briefed to be either impartial information givers or persuaders, and not both.<sup>67</sup>
4. Deliberative Walks: A combination of citizens' juries and development walks, Deliberative Walks take deliberation to the street. They are based on the premise that learning can be enhanced by in situ observations of specific situations and places. As a facilitated walk involving participants, local residents and stakeholders, it encourages participants to approach issues from both tangible perspectives (engendered by Development Walks) and the more abstract policy perspectives.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Harri Raisio and Peter Ehrström, "Taking Deliberations to the Streets: Reflections on Deliberative Walks", *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration* 21, no. 4 (2017): 27–51.

## CONCLUSION

Existing engagements such as those mentioned in Section 3 are still largely top-down citizens' engagement exercises. In contrast, the participants involved in the WOD CJ, RR CW and WLH CP were empowered to vote on their recommendations, present their projects to policymakers and stakeholders, and submit reports that were made available to the public. As a result, many of them have expressed interest in continuing with their projects and joining similar citizens' engagements in future. They felt that the citizens' panels provided them with the platform to make contributions beyond the expressing of views.

The key difference between the CJ and previous government consultations was that there weren't prescriptive topics or policies for us to talk about. For the CJ, we could come up with something that we would like to do or would like the government to consider doing, so the approach was very different. It feels more ground-up whereas for other public consultations, such as Our Singapore Conversation which I had participated in previously, they were essentially top-down — like this is what we're thinking, what do you think about it? In that sense, those citizen engagement sessions were more prescriptive. And there is the sense that, regardless of whatever feedback you give, the government has already decided what it wants to do. Your opinion doesn't really matter. The sessions are just for them to tick off the list and say that they've done [sic] public consultation. That's the cynic in me speaking. (Female, 35–39 years old, WOD CJ participant)

I am pleased to know that the government organises this workgroup to get inputs from residents and is willing to consider the recommendations and implement them. (Male, 30–34 years old, RR CW participant)

The informal exchanges between government and civilians [sic] were useful in building trust in the process. (Female, 30–34 years old, RR CW participant)

The fact that we had a platform to voice our issues and it was taken on board and we are going to see results. (Female, 50–54 years old, WLH CP participant)

Each of the three citizens' panels has provided critical insights into the benefits and potential pitfalls of the method, as well as fundamental considerations that should be taken on board when deciding if such a modality should be used. Clearly, there is much potential for citizens' panels in the landscape of citizens' engagement in Singapore. As demonstrated by applications of the citizens' panel method in other countries, it can be tapped for getting citizens to discuss and decide on next steps for difficult and sensitive topics.

In 2016, Ireland, a country said to have some of the most restrictive abortion laws in Europe, held a citizens' assembly on abortion. Close to 100 participants from all walks of life (including

housewives, students and truck drivers) met over five weekends over five months to talk about sex and women's reproductive health, and the possibility of changing the country's abortion laws, topics all too taboo and risky to be broached by politicians. While the participants held very opposing positions towards abortion — some were pro-life, others were pro-choice while others were undecided — the assembly concluded with the majority of the members recommending that the Irish Constitution be amended to allow lawmakers to address the issue of abortion access. They also recommended the legalising of abortion without restriction up to certain gestation limits. In the end, an all-party parliamentary committee tasked with looking into the work of the citizens' assembly "recommended legal abortion without restriction up to 12 weeks of pregnancy".<sup>69</sup>

Closer to Singapore, the South Korean government suspended the construction of two nuclear reactors in Ulsan in 2017 and held a citizens' jury to decide whether or not to abandon the construction. Nuclear energy is a divisive issue in South Korean society, with some local residents and environmental non-governmental organisations concerned over the capacity of such nuclear reactors to withstand earthquakes. Some experts were more concerned about the economic repercussions of a nuclear phase-out policy, citing higher electricity bills and possible energy shortage.<sup>70</sup>

The citizens' jury spanned several months with the jurors engaging in discussions and having access to presentations by experts and interest groups. As the deliberative process continued, four rounds of surveys were administered on the jurors, with the number of them supporting the completion of the nuclear reactor project increasing gradually. By the end of the deliberative process, 59.5 per cent of the jurors were in favour of resuming the nuclear reactors while 40.5 per cent preferred that the project be aborted.<sup>71</sup>

South Korean President Moon Jae-in said that he would respect the jury's decision and the construction of the nuclear reactors would be resumed. He also thanked the jurors for "making the difficult choices on behalf of the people". He added, "I believe democracy becomes perfect when people have the right to discuss, and when they accept the outcome of such discussions."<sup>72</sup>

Three decades ago, when the Feedback Unit was at its nascent stage, the idea of Singaporeans expressing their views on salient issues and even proffering suggestions to improve society might have been unthinkable. Today, with rising educational attainment, overseas exposure through work and travel, and a growing sense of identity and belonging, that Singapore is "this is home, truly", Singaporeans, young and old, are prepared to step forward to contribute and make a difference. Much has been said about Singapore lacking natural resources and that its only natural resource being its people. Singaporeans have made huge strides in domains such as education and the economy; they can do likewise in policy deliberation and the co-creation and co-implementation of policy recommendations.

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<sup>69</sup> Patrick Chalmers, "How 99 Strangers in a Dublin Hotel Broke Ireland's Abortion Deadlock", *The Guardian*, March 8, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/08/how-99-strangers-in-a-dublin-hotel-broke-irelands-abortion-deadlock>.

<sup>70</sup> Young Jang Se, "South Korea's Nuclear Energy Debate", *The Diplomat*, October 26, 2017.

<sup>71</sup> Da-Sol Kim, "Work on 2 Nuclear Reactors to Resume", *The Korea Herald*, October 20, 2017, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20171020000759>.

<sup>72</sup> "South Korean President Accepts Public Decision", *World Nuclear News*, October 23, 2017, <https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/NP-South-Korean-president-accepts-public-decision-2310175.html>.