

HELPING YOUNG SINGAPOREANS FEEL LESS *SIAN*



Singapore
Perspectives 2024

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POSITIONALITY

“I AM...”

A young Singaporean

I am 32 years old, not married, and spent the last six years as an academic in the US.

A social work researcher

I engage in social work research, evaluation, and practice-research with social service agencies in Singapore.

Drawing from different perspectives

I'll draw from my co-presenters today, research experiences, and work at The Majority Trust.

HELPING YOUNG SINGAPOREANS FEEL LESS *SIAN*

BROAD THEMES

DISPARITIES

The ongoing pandemic has highlighted that some feel more *sian* than others.

DIVERSE PATHWAYS

There is growing social awareness and acceptance of diverse life pathways.

DO MORE WITH LESS

What does community and social support look like for a busy, “beehived” generation?

DISPARITIES

The ongoing pandemic has highlighted that some feel more *sian* than others.

Surveys and focus groups with low-income Singaporean youth (Kwan et al., forthcoming):

- Live-learn-work-play problems faced before COVID-19.
- How problems were exacerbated.
- How youth-serving professionals responded.

Youth STEPS: “Even in the worst years, a good number reported being unaffected or positively affected by COVID-19.”



DISPARITIES



| | Existing problems | Exacerbated problems | Short-term professional responses |
|--|---|---|--|
| Live: “It really gets a bit squeezy” | Small flat | Completely no privacy | Created safe spaces |
| | Poor familial relationships | Increased familial conflict | Counselling interventions |
| Learn: “I miss school” | School disengagement | Inadequate technological necessities | Provided additional necessities |
| | Poor school relationships | More intense isolation | Text- and online-based support |
| Work: “Can I catch up? Am I missing out?” | Stress from economic disadvantage | Unemployment and risks of essential work | Grants and financial assistance |
| | Economic necessity of labour | Limited career guidance | Financial literacy and mentorship |
| Play: “I feel like I’m going to lose my mind” | Heavy friend- and social media-reliance | No in-person interactions and cyberbullying | Transitioned interventions online |
| | Psychological vulnerabilities | Compounded by other stressors | Positioned as “first responders” |

DIVERSE PATHWAYS

There is growing social awareness and acceptance of diverse life pathways.

“More youth (aged 22-29) hold the belief that dating, marriage, and parenthood are not essential for a fulfilling life.”

Youth STEPS:

- What about those not satisfied or challenged by their jobs? Those not planning to upskill? Those who get married later?
- What about those who do not transition into full-time employment? Or into marriage?



DIVERSE PATHWAYS



Education and employment

Diploma > Degree > Full-time employment >
Further education and/or skills upgrading >
Steady career advancement > Retirement

Housing

HDB BTO flat > Upgrade to a condominium

Marriage and parenthood

Engagement > Marriage > Starting a family

What does it mean to lead a good life?

DO MORE WITH LESS

What does community and social support look like for a busy, “beehived” generation?

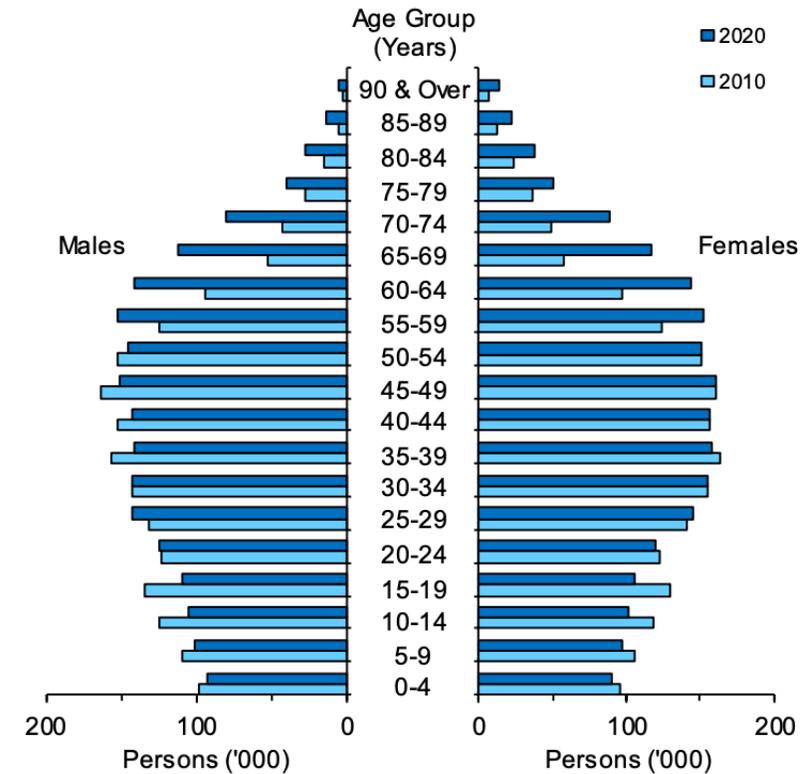
Youth STEPS:

- Consistent and persistent concerns over cost of living, jobs and the economy, and balance in life.
- “Ageing decreases life satisfaction.”

Day in the life of a young Singaporean

- **Weekdays:** Work (or study), dinner, brief rest and relaxation (or more work).
- **Weekends:** Friends and family.

Chart 1.2 Age Pyramid of Resident Population



DO MORE WITH LESS

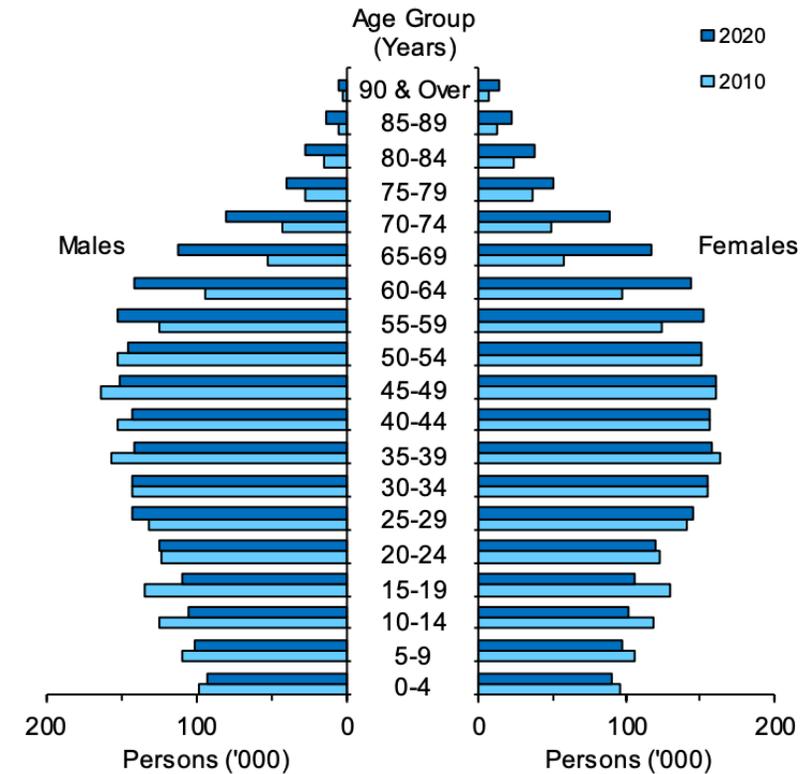
How do we make space to breathe?

Besides adding more programmes and interventions – however well-intentioned – to address concerns and needs, can we do more with less?

How do we make life less rigid and routinised, and instead make space for seemingly frivolous pursuits?

Collectively, how do we help those squeezed by multiple roles and responsibilities?

Chart 1.2 Age Pyramid of Resident Population



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BROAD THEMES (AND QUESTIONS)

DISPARITIES

The ongoing pandemic has highlighted that some feel more *sian* than others.

How do we identify groups and remedy pre-existing problems?

DIVERSE PATHWAYS

There is growing social awareness and acceptance of diverse life pathways.

What does it mean to lead a good life, and how do we embrace different versions of “a good life”?

DO MORE WITH LESS

What does community and social support look like for a busy, “beehived” generation?

How do we slow down, make space, and grow as communities?

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A large number of bees are flying around a white container in a field. The bees are in various stages of flight, some near the container and others further away. The background is a blurred green field under a bright sky.

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CREDITS AND REFERENCES

Slide 01: Photo by Damien TUPINIER on Unsplash.

Slide 04: Photo by abigail low on Unsplash.

Slide 06: Photo by Victor on Unsplash.

Slide 08: Population Trends 2020 (Department of Statistics Singapore).

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