Reflections on the
Citizens' Panel on Work-Life Harmony

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22 December 2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Launched in July 2019, the Citizens' Panel (CP) on Work-Life Harmony was a collaboration between the National Population and Talent Division (NPTD), Ministry of Manpower (MOM), Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), and the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS). The initiative is part of the Singapore Together Movement, which calls for Singaporeans to play a part in the designing and implementation of policies. The CP on Work-Life Harmony was modelled closely after the Citizens' Jury process which gathers a selected group of citizens who represent a cross section of a defined community. The challenge statement that the participants had to answer 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?"*

A total of 55 participants were recruited for the CP and the deliberation took place over four full-day sessions that spanned six weeks — *28 September, 12 October, 26 October and 9 November 2019*. The participants included employers (senior management and business owners from a variety of sectors and organisations of different sizes), employees (individuals from different sectors working at the middle management and junior management levels, staff with no managerial responsibility and those who worked part-time or were freelancers), and people in the secondary circle of influence (e.g., students who would enter the workforce in the near future, homemakers, grandparents and retirees).

This report is an analysis of the CP process by IPS. Our evaluation of the CP on Work-Life Harmony is based on the principles of citizen deliberation and engagement, and our assessment is supported by our observations of all the four sessions and findings from the pre- and post-CP polls. The report concludes with several recommendations to inform the design and planning of similar initiatives in the future.

Key Findings

1. **Inclusivity and diversity**: Hailing from different backgrounds, participants brought with them a wide range of viewpoints and experiences to the topic. The participants recognised that work-life harmony is a complex problem that is linked to other issues faced by Singapore society, such as low fertility rate, the new generation of workers, and the education system as a source of stress for not just parents but also children. Throughout the process, participants tapped their personal experiences and professional knowledge to develop recommendations in groups based on the topic they would like to work on.

2. **Fairness and equality**: The mechanisms used by the Secretariat — which consisted of public officers from NPTD and MOM — and the facilitators created a conducive

environment for fair and equal discussion. They included the setting of ground rules and group norms early on in the process. Facilitators also leveraged various strategies to encourage participants to contribute, especially those who were less vocal. The facilitators helped the groups crystallise their ideas and recommendations, probed for elaboration and clarification, nudged contributions from quieter members, and stepped in to mediate conversations where necessary.

3. The Secretariat delegated the decision-making for several key aspects of the CP to the participants, promoting citizen ownership of the process. Though difficult at times (with participants "agreeing to disagree"), participants took part in collective decision-making on important aspects of the CP — the modality for internal communication, the voting threshold for the proposed recommendations, report writing and presentation, and spokespersons for media interviews. The participants also had opportunities to shape the process in a way they felt was useful to them.

   The poll found that close to 87 per cent of the participants agreed and strongly agreed that they had sufficient autonomy in driving the CP process.

4. **Knowledge gain**: Participants made huge gains in knowledge relating to work-life harmony and public policymaking in general. Their knowledge and confidence gains could be attributed to the information kit designed for the process and their interactions with Resource Persons.

   Close to 85 per cent of the participants felt that they were better informed about public policies and the government than most people, and about 96 per cent felt that their involvement in the CP helped them to better appreciate the challenges involved in solving community issues. Compared with before the CP, the proportion of participants who were confident in their views on how to achieve work-life harmony more than doubled from 30 per cent to 77 per cent following the CP.

5. **Efficacy**: There was a significant increase in participants' internal efficacy. The knowledge they gained and the autonomy accorded to them in making the decisions in key aspects of the CP also raised their self-confidence levels.

   Post-CP, about 94 per cent of the participants felt that the CP experience strengthened their confidence in the value of their contribution as citizens. About 85 per cent felt that they were better informed about public policies and the government than most people.

6. The participants' external efficacy was demonstrated by their enthusiasm and interest in continuing their involvement in future citizen engagement opportunities and initiatives relating to work-life harmony.

   About 89 per cent of them would favourably consider joining future citizens' engagement opportunities and 90 per cent would consider being more actively involved in initiatives that promote work-life harmony. A large majority — 94 per cent of the participants — would recommend fellow citizens to participate in future citizens' panels.

7. Another indication of external efficacy is participants' perceptions of support from others for their recommendations — *94 per cent believed that their recommendations were worthy of government support and 93 per cent felt that their recommendations would find support among Singaporeans.*

8. **Applicability**: A total of 17 recommendations were submitted to the relevant stakeholders, which included Minister for Manpower Josephine Teo and representatives from the employer federations and unions, and they dealt with a wide range of domains (e.g., Workplace Norms and Stigma, Human Resource Policies, Employer Constraints, Workload/Nature of Work/Future of Work, Government Policies and Grants, Definition of Work-life Harmony and Unproductive Work Practices). Some of the recommendations were directed at the employers and organisations, while others were pitched at a national level (e.g., "The Purposeful Life@SG" movement). Initial feedback from policymakers and industry partners was positive.

Recommendations

1. **Increase representation of specific groups**: While the primary objective in recruitment was to ensure that the CP comprised participants of diverse backgrounds, there was a need to strike a balance with ensuring adequate representation from the different stakeholder groups, including employers and business owners, who are the ones making hiring and work-life decisions. This led to a smaller representation of certain groups, such as blue-collar workers and younger Singaporeans. From the open call for application, there was also a relatively low number of applicants in blue-collar jobs, with lower household income or of lower educational levels. For future citizens' engagement initiatives, more time and targeted efforts should be allocated to recruit participants from these groups.

2. **Striking the fine balance in co-designing by participants**: This CP saw an unprecedented level of co-designing of process by participants. However, a lot of time was spent on getting the group to agree on administrative matters. For future CPs, collective decision-making could be allocated to the more salient aspects of the citizens' deliberative process. Less critical decisions could be left to each group and the Secretariat (e.g., mode of communication and media spokespersons). Alternatively, participants could cast their votes based on pre-determined nominations and options.

3. **More community-based recommendations**: Many of the recommendations submitted by participants required government agencies and labour organisations to lead and sustain work-life initiatives. There were few recommendations that involved bottom-up, community efforts to help solve a problem that is whole-of-society. For future CPs, the challenge statement could more explicitly articulate the need for whole-of-society solutions. In addition, the process itself can also be designed to nudge participants to think more holistically about the problem and elicit more ground-up and whole-of-society solutioning, e.g., the scope of resources and information that the participants are exposed to and the

diversity of Resource Persons selected for the process. Participants should also be of a wide range of profiles.

4. The design of the process can be tweaked to increase diversity of ideas and improve the quality of the recommendations. Some ways to do so include designing for more cross-sharing of ideas among groups, providing some criteria for the voting of ideas, experimenting with the length of break between sessions, in-between session monitoring that is useful to guide process, and for complex issues such as work-life harmony, to lengthen the process so that participants have more time for deliberation and solutioning.

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INTRODUCTION

During his "Building Our Future Singapore Together" dialogue in June 2019, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Heng Swee Keat noted that over the past decades, Singaporeans have increasingly gotten involved in the policy decision-making process and national engagement efforts such as Our Singapore Conversation. Also evident among Singaporeans was the greater sense of ownership and a stronger desire to have a say in how they were governed. It was in this context that Mr Heng announced that the government would be launching several initiatives that involve Singaporeans in the designing and implementation of policies.[1]

One such initiative was the Citizens' Panel (CP) on Work-Life Harmony. The initiative was a collaboration between the National Population and Talent Division (NPTD), Ministry of Manpower (MOM), Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), and the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS). Work-life issues have gained greater currency among workers, companies and policymakers in recent years. According to the Randstad Employer Brand Research survey in 2017, good work-life balance was the top priority for employees in Singapore but was ranked eighth by employers.[2] The Singapore Happy Work Survey 2019, conducted by recruitment agency Michael Page, found that 70 per cent of the respondents had responded to calls and emails outside office hours. However, the survey also found that eight in 10 Singaporeans were happy with their work-life balance and 55 per cent of the respondents viewed a flexible work environment as important for enabling better work-life balance.[3]

Work-life issues need to be discussed within the larger context of Singapore's low birth rates. Experts have singled out long working hours as one of the factors accounting for the rising numbers of singles and people having fewer babies. Moreover, some mothers have expressed concerns over stalled careers as a result of motherhood.[4] However, it would be erroneous to assume that companies have ignored the work-life concerns of their employees. Some companies offer flexi-work schemes such as compressed schedules in which employees could clock in longer hours at work on certain days and do not have to work on other days.[5] On the ground, organisations like the People's Association and the Empowered Women Entrepreneurs

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[1] Sim, R. (2019, June 16). 4G leaders will partner citizens in policymaking: Heng Swee Keat. *The Straits Times.*
[2] Employers turn blind eye to work-life balance: Randstad Employer Brand Research 2017. (2017). Retrieved from: https://www.randstad.com.sg/about-us/news/employers-turn-blind-eye-to-work-life-balance-randstad-employer-brand-research-2017/
[3] Ang, P. (2019, July 10). 70% of Singaporeans respond to work messages out of office hours: Recruitment agency. *The Straits Times.*
[4] Au-Yong, R. (2018, August 28). Singapore's fertility rate down as number of singles goes up. *The Straits Times.*
[5] Seow, J. (2019, June 12). Dad given option of paid sabbatical. *The Straits Times.*

association have delivered workshops to mothers and working women, covering work-life balance among other topics.[6]

CP on Work-Life Harmony

The CP on Work-Life Harmony was modelled closely after the Citizens' Jury (CJ) process which gathers a selected group of citizens who represent a cross section of a defined community. The citizens "hear evidence, question witnesses and, through a process of collective discussion and deliberation, make informed recommendations on the issues before it."[7] A CJ typically involves a series of meetings, held over a few days, whereby participants would consider a public policy issue (also known as "the charge"), interact with expert witnesses, and discuss the issue(s) with one another in small and large groups.[8]

In 2016, a CJ involving 52 participants whose role was to review the Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission's report was held in Australia. The CJ concluded with the participants developing and submitting a report to help South Australians make better sense of the benefits and risks that accompanied the region's increased involvement in the nuclear fuel cycle.[9] In Singapore, a CJ was convened in 2017, with the objective of developing community-based and community-driven recommendations to battle the health problem of diabetes. A collaboration between the Ministry of Health (MOH) and IPS, the "War on Diabetes" CJ saw 76 participants deliberating ideas over three full-day sessions before presenting 28 recommendations and submitting a report to Senior Minister of State (SMS) Dr Amy Khor.[10]

For the CP on Work-Life Harmony, a total of 55 participants were involved in the deliberation. The deliberation 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 make 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?"***

Towards the end of Day One, the Chief Facilitators identified various themes related to work-life harmony based on the robust discussion among the participants. By the end of the first session, nine workgroups were finalised. During the last session, the participants presented 17 ideas to the relevant stakeholders, which included Minister for Manpower Josephine Teo, and representatives from the employer federations and unions.

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[6] Teh, C. (2019, March 31). Workshops to give women a helping hand on managing family health and work-life balance. *The Straits Times.*

[7] Kuper, R. (2007). Deliberating waste: The Hertfordshire Citizens' Jury. *Local Environment*, 2(2): 139-153.

[8] Barnes, A. P., Vergunsts, P, and Topp, K. (2009). Assessing the consumer perception of the term 'organic': a citizens' jury approach. *British Food Journal*, 111(2): 155-164.

[9] Get to Know Nuclear, *Nuclear Citizens' Jury Report*, South Australia's Citizens' Jury Report One. (2016, July 10) Retrieved from: https://nuclear.yoursay.sa.gov.au/reports/citizens-jury-reports

[10] Soon, C. and Yeo, V. (2018, October 19) *Reflections on the Citizens' Jury for the War on Diabetes*. Retrieved from: https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/ips/reflections-on-the-wod-cj_ips-published-191018.pdf

Group A: **Workplace Norms and Stigma**	Group B: **Human Resource (HR) Policies**	Group C: **Family Demands**
Group D: **Employer Constraints**	Group E: **Workload/Nature of Work/Future of Work**	Group F: **Government Policies and Grants**
Group G: **What is Work-Life Harmony? (Purpose in Life)**	Group H: **Defining Work-Life Harmony**	Group I: **Unproductive Work Practices**

Figure 1: List of the nine workgroups formed by participants

IPS worked closely with the Secretariat in the development of the sampling frame, application form and pre- and post-CP polls, and the recruitment of participants. In addition, IPS also provided input to the design of the challenge statement and CP sessions. This report is an analysis of the CP process by IPS, and it concludes with several recommendations to inform the design and planning of similar initiatives in the future.

The structure of our report is as follows:

1. We begin by providing an overview of the methodology for the CP, in particular, participant recruitment.

2. Following which, we present a summary of the key principles that are necessary for effective citizen deliberation and engagement.

3. We evaluate the CP on Work-Life Harmony based on the principles of citizen deliberation and engagement. Our assessment of the CP is supported by our observations of all the four sessions and findings from the pre- and post-CP polls conducted by NPTD.

4. In the conclusion section, we provide recommendations and learning points for future similar citizen engagement exercises.

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METHODOLOGY

Recruitment of Participants

The open call for application took place within a short span of about two weeks — 15 July 2017 to 31 July 2017. An important consideration of participant recruitment was that of minimising recruitment bias. An example of recruitment bias would be not providing people who are not connected digitally or are uncomfortable with technology with an alternative avenue to apply for the CP.

Hence, to minimise recruitment bias and ensure that the call for application reaches different segments of the population, participant recruitment was done through various platforms:

- An announcement calling for application was made by Manpower Minister Josephine Teo during a visit to Grand Park City Hall Hotel, which has implemented flexible work arrangements for its staff to cope with work and family commitments.[11] Minister Teo's announcement helped to generate media attention, which likely helped raise awareness of the CP. Information on the visit and the open call for applications was also published on the Minister's Facebook page.

- IPS published the call for application on its official Facebook page on 15 July 2019, including information on the web portal and hotline that interested individuals could access to make an application. IPS conducted all the phone applications using the hotline.

- An open call for application was also made on the Hey Baby SG Facebook page as well as the Play A Part portal on the Hey Baby website.

- Interested individuals completed the application form online at the Ideas.gov.sg website.

- MOM leveraged its network of trade unionists and employers to encourage them to apply for the CP.

As the objective of the CP was to generate ideas to create conditions in the workplace and community that were conducive for work-life harmony, Singapore citizens who have directly or indirectly experienced work-life harmony challenges made up the "defined community". Those who were directly involved with work-life harmony issues consisted of employers and employees (full-time, part-time or freelance employees). Those who were indirectly involved made up the secondary circle of influence and they included students who would enter the workforce in the

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[11] Yap, J. (2019, July 15). Citizens' panel to discuss work-life harmony now open for application. *CNA*.

near future, and grandparents and homemakers whose family members may experience challenges with work-life harmony.

IPS worked with the Secretariat to develop a sampling frame to guide the recruitment of applicants. The primary objective was to ensure that the CP comprised participants who would come from diverse backgrounds reflective of the wider Singapore society. Based on the initial target of 50 participants, we established quotas for the various categories of participants (see Table 1).

Table 1: Sampling frame for the Citizens' Panel on Work-Life Harmony

Group	Profile	Quota (%)
Employers	This group comprised senior management (e.g., C-Suite, Board of Directors) and business owners. We recruited employers who came from a variety of sectors, including education, healthcare, manufacturing, construction and logistics. The organisations they worked in should also be diverse in structures — small (one to 49 staff), medium (50 to 199 staff) and large (more than 200 staff).	40%
Employees	This group comprised individuals working at the middle management (manage one or more teams), junior management (manage one or more employees) and staff (no managerial responsibility) levels. Like the employer group, this group hailed from a variety of sectors and worked in organisations of different sizes. Besides workers on full-time work, it was important to recruit applicants who were working on a part-time, freelance or shift basis. Individuals who were unemployed and looking for a job were considered as well. In addition, shortlisted applicants were of different Marriage and Parenthood archetypes, including married with or without young children, single, or single/divorced/widowed parents. The sandwiched generation juggling caregiving duties for their parents and offspring were considered too.	48%
Secondary circle of influence	This group consisted of students who would enter the workforce in the near future, homemakers who had left the workforce for caregiving reasons, and grandparents and retirees who were concerned about their children facing work-life harmony issues.	12%
	Total	100%

Within each group, attention was paid to the participants' demographic backgrounds to ensure that the CP would be diverse in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, and educational and household income levels.

In addition to the quota and demographic considerations, three other factors were considered when forming the CP: participants' reasons for wanting to participate in the CP, their views on improving the state of work-life harmony in Singapore, and their ability to commit to all four sessions of the CP.

To collect the necessary information, all applicants were required to complete an application form developed by the Secretariat and IPS. The questions collected information on the following:

- Participants' demographics, e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, highest educational level attained, occupation, job level, work schedule, industry of employment, monthly household income, marital status, and number of children and/or grandchildren.

- Their interest in the topic of work-life harmony and citizen deliberation and engagement, as evinced by their reasons for joining the CP.

- Their experiences with work-life harmony, as evinced by their views on the state of work-life harmony and their suggestions on improving the work-life harmony situation in Singapore.

- Their ability to attend all four sessions.

The application form was administered online via the Ideas.gov.sg portal and over the telephone. Phone interviews were conducted with individuals who could not access the website or preferred to answer the questionnaire with support from an interviewer. IPS conducted the phone interviews throughout the application period.

The following table illustrates the breakdown of the 55 individuals who were recruited for the CP:

Table 2: Profile of the recruited participants

Profile Type	No. of Participants	Proportion of Panel
Employers	20	36.4%
Employees	31	56.4%
Secondary circle of influence	4	7.3%
Total	55	100%

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EFFECTIVE DELIBERATION

The CP stems from the notion of deliberative democracy, a model that focuses on the communicative processes of opinion- and will-formation. It is a process that involves listening to different viewpoints and examining and debating a policy problem or issue, before arriving at a decision or coming up with the most optimal solution.[12] Deliberative practices are therefore useful for getting different segments of the public to form considered opinions and proffer inputs for policy formulation.[13] (Refer to IPS' earlier report[14] published on the War on Diabetes CJ for more information on how deliberative practices differ from the more traditional forms of engagement.)

Deliberative processes have the following features:[15]

- A clear *task or purpose* relating to a specific decision, policy, service, project or programme;

- Discussion among participants during *interactive* events, which could be held at unmediated settings (i.e., face-to-face) or online, designed to provide opportunities to participants to learn from a variety of sources;

- The events are designed to *facilitate learning*, in a way to enable participants to build on and use the information and knowledge they acquire over the course of the exercise;

- The availability of a *range of resources* which can take the form of information, and evidence and views provided by specialists or experts who have different perspectives, backgrounds and interests; and

- *Facilitation of discussions* to minimise the domination of discussions by certain individuals and the exclusion of minority or disadvantaged groups, and to ensure a diversity of views.

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[12] Carpini, M. X. D., Cook, F. L., and Jacobs, L. R. (2004). Public deliberation, discursive participation, and citizen engagement: a review of the empirical literature. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 7: 315-344.
[13] Habermas, J. (1991). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
[14] Soon, C. and Yeo, V. (2018, October 19) *Reflections on the Citizens' Jury for the War on Diabetes*. Retrieved from: https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/ips/reflections-on-the-wod-cj_ips-published-191018.pdf
[15] Involve.org.uk. *What is Deliberative Public Engagement*. Retrieved from: https://www.involve.org.uk/knowledge-base/deliberative-public-engagement/

In addition, effective deliberation should meet the following criteria:

Inclusivity and Diversity

Ideally, every citizen should participate in a decision-making process. However, that would be a logistical challenge. Hence, the next alternative is to gather a panel of participants with a wide range of experiences and backgrounds.[16] Instead of "representativeness", which is based on the principle of proportionality and requires a much larger panel that is randomly selected,[17] the criterion used for this CP is that of "inclusivity". Inclusivity could be attained by ensuring diversity among participants in terms of their experiences and demographics.

Fairness and Equality

This second criterion can be assessed at the personal and group levels. At the individual level, every participant in the CP process should be provided with the equal opportunity to express his or her opinions and concerns pertaining to the agenda. At the group level, opportunities should be created for participants to propose or approve rules that govern the proceedings, to debate and critique proposals, and influence the final decision about the agenda.[18]

Knowledge Gain

Participation in deliberative exercises has typically contributed to an increase in participants' knowledge on the topic of deliberation.[19] The knowledge gained also extends to the wider political decision-making and policymaking processes. Involvement in deliberative exercises may also improve participants' skills relating to democratic participation, such as the willingness to listen, cooperate and compromise, and in formulating and justifying proposals.[20]

Efficacy

The concept of efficacy consists of three dimensions — internal efficacy, external efficacy and political trust.[21]

Internal efficacy is defined as an individual's evaluation of his own competence and can be measured by his judgment of how his knowledge and skills have improved through deliberation.[22] An individual's assessment of the external impact, especially on the political process, of his own

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[16] Smith, G., and Wales, C. (2000). Citizens' juries and deliberative democracy. *Political Studies*, 48(1): 51-65.
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] Armour, A. (1995). The citizens' jury model of public participation: a critical evaluation. In Renn, O., Webler, T., and Wiedemann, P. (eds). Fairness and Competence in Citizen Participation. Technology, Risk, and Society (An International Series in Risk Analysis), vol. 10. Dordrecht: Springer.
[19] Fishkin, J. S., Luskin, R. C., and Jowell, R. (2000). Deliberative polling and public consultation. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 53: 657-666.
[20] Smith, G., and Wales, C. (2000). Citizens' juries and deliberative democracy. *Political Studies*, 48(1): 51-65.
[21] Grönlund, K., Setälä, M., and Herne, K. (2010). Deliberation and civic virtue: Lesson from a citizen deliberation experiment. *European Political Science Review*, 2(1): 95-117.
[22] Hansen, K. M. (2004). *Deliberative Democracy and Opinion Formation.* Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark.

political views and actions is known as external efficacy. This concept is related to one's perceptions that the political system is responsive to citizens' demands and action.[23]

Closely related to external efficacy, political trust is characterised by the extent to which political institutions and actors meet people's normative expectations, for example, responsiveness.[24] After having participated in the deliberative practices and having better understood the processes of democratic decision-making, people may report having an increased political trust in government institutions and policymakers.

An outcome of this increased efficacy is a desire for greater future involvement with the topic discussed or in similar deliberative exercises, or both.[25]

Applicability

Did the CP meet the targets and objectives set? Did it result in other achievements? What is the impact of the CP on the participants, the quality of policy, on policymakers or on others involved?[26] These are some questions that could be raised to appraise the applicability of a deliberative process. In short, applicability is concerned with the deliverables of the process — the recommendations developed by the participants. A way to gauge the applicability of the recommendations would be to measure the confidence the participants have in their recommendations.

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[23] Niemi, R. G., Craig, S. C., and Mattei, F. (1991). Measuring internal political efficacy in the 1988 national election study. *The American Political Science Review*, 85(4): 1407-1413; Morrell, M. E. (2005). Deliberation, democratic decision-making and internal political efficacy, *Political Behaviour,* 27(1): 49-69.

[24] Warren, M. E. (1999). *Democracy and Trust* (pp. 346-360)*.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[25] Warburton, D., Rainbow, E., and Wilson, R. (2007, June 28). *Making a Difference: A Guide to Evaluating Public Participation in Central Government*, Involve.org.uk and Department for Constitutional Affairs UK. Retrieved from: http://www.involve.org.uk/resources/publications/practical-guidance/making-difference

[26] *Ibid.*

Table 3: Summary of the five evaluation criteria

Criteria	Measurement
Inclusivity and diversity	There should be diversity among participants in terms of their experiences and demographics.
Fairness and equality	Personal: Participants have equal opportunities to express their opinions. Group: Participants have equal opportunities to influence the proceedings and final decision.
Knowledge gain	An increase in knowledge among participants on the: • Topic discussed • Wider policymaking process • Skills pertinent to democratic participation (e.g., willingness to listen, justifying proposals)
Efficacy	Internal efficacy: Participant's judgment of how his political knowledge and skills have improved through deliberation. External efficacy: Participant's assessment that his political views and actions have an external impact on the political process. Political trust: Participant's trust towards government institutions increases due to acquiring a better understanding of the processes of democratic decision-making.
Applicability	Quality of recommendations developed by the participants in terms of: • Impact on policymaking • Yielding better recommendations than what would have resulted from traditional processes of public participation

5

ANALYSIS OF THE CITIZENS' PANEL ON WORK-LIFE HARMONY

Our analysis of the CP is based on several sources — our observations of the interactions and discussions that took place throughout all four sessions of the CP, the pre-CP poll (administered on Day One, N=55) and the post-CP poll (administered on Day Four, N=53), and feedback participants provided to us at the sessions.

The pre- and post-CP polls, comprising a mix of closed-ended questions and open-ended questions, were designed to measure the following:

- Participants' knowledge gain and interest in the topic of work-life harmony

- Participants' perceptions of government engagement

- Participants' assessment of their contribution as citizens and their perceived external impact of their actions on the policymaking process

- Participants' perceptions of the overall CP process and their recommendations

- Participants' interest to participate in future engagement and CP initiatives

We included open-ended questions to elicit participants' responses pertaining to what they thought went well in the CP and what they thought could be improved. To evaluate if the CP process had an impact on the participants (e.g., in terms of knowledge gain and efficacy), some questions in the pre-CP poll were repeated in the post-CP poll.

Inclusivity and Diversity

From a total of 308 applications for the CP, 55 were recruited based on the quota for each group — employers, employees and the secondary circle of influence.[27] As mentioned in the previous section, we ensured that the participants within each group in the sampling frame were as diverse as possible in terms of demographics. The objective was to assemble a CP that was as inclusive as possible, so that people from different walks of life who may have contrasting experiences and viewpoints pertaining to work-life harmony could have a chance to be part of the process. Gathering participants of diverse backgrounds was a necessary first step to eliciting a wide range of perspectives as possible.

Diversity as an asset in citizen deliberative engagement was a point constantly reinforced in the first two sessions of the CP. At one point during the second session, one of the two Chief

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[27] Initially, 58 applicants were recruited for the CP but three of them did not turn up for any of the sessions.

Facilitators noted that the participants came from different sectors and were of different ages. Some were married with children while others were single. She urged the participants who felt that their experiences and voices have not been represented to speak up and express their viewpoints.

Figure 2: Participants sharing their diverse experiences and opinions on work-life harmony on Day One

It was quickly apparent on the first day of the CP that the participants brought with them to the process a wide range of viewpoints and experiences. Participants were also very engaged with the topic of work-life harmony — this was corroborated by the pre-CP poll finding that indicated that about 96 per cent of the participants were interested in issues relating to work-life harmony. The panel's diversity was also reflected in the questions posed by the participants during the "conversation circle" with Minister Josephine Teo.

- One participant felt that work-life harmony was intertwined with Singapore's low fertility rate and he wondered what incentives could be provided to encourage young people to get married and have children.

- Another participant suggested that work-life harmony discussion should take into consideration the mindset of younger workers, many of whom were creative freelancers and digital nomads.

- Several other participants singled out the education system as a source of stress for not only parents but also children.

- A participant mentioned her guilt of missing out on the milestones of her children because of work commitments.

The diversity of personal experiences and perspectives continued to be an integral part of subsequent small-group discussions. Throughout the first three sessions, participants tapped on their personal experiences and professional knowledge to develop recommendations in groups based on the topic they would like to work on. Some examples included:

- The group focusing on family demands looked at the issue from multiple angles, including the stress experienced by children and the lack of a support structure for flexi-work arrangements.

- Another group, which consisted of some members who were HR practitioners, discussed the possibility of having a mandatory national certification for HR professionals to address the limited understanding of work-life harmony and flexi-work arrangements among the profession.

Such diversity was essential in exposing the participants to different considerations and challenges relating to work-life harmony, which they would not encounter in their own lives.

Finally, the notions of diversity and inclusivity in this CP were also extended to applicants who were not recruited to form the panel. On Day One, their viewpoints and suggestions pertaining to work-life harmony, gathered from the application form, were reproduced on notes that were displayed on the walls of the CP venue. The CP Secretariat made the effort to inform the participants to look at these inputs for ideas for further discussion, bringing into the process the voices of the absent.

Fairness and Equality

The CP process was well designed, guiding participants through the different stages of the deliberative engagement, from team building to brainstorming for ideas, and culminating in the presentation of recommendations to the relevant stakeholders, including Minister Teo and representatives from the employer federations and unions. Feedback from the participants included:

> It was well structured, yet provided the space for the citizens to brainstorm and make recommendations. (Male, 40-44 years old, middle management)

> Each session was very well organised and efficient. Welfare of CP well taken care of. (Female, 25-29 years old, junior management)

Varying levels of participation are inevitable in any group discussions or citizen engagement programmes. It was noticeable on Day One that there were several vocal participants who had spoken up repeatedly in a big group setting and in small group discussions. Some participants were more reticent and preferred listening to other participants contributing to discussions. Several participants raised the issue of some participants dominating the conversations and being "too agenda-driven", and there should be stricter moderation to "give others a chance to speak".

> Don't let certain segments dominate conversations during conversation circles. (Female, 30-34 years old, staff)

> Refrain from pursuing your personal agenda. Give others a chance to speak. (Male, 35-39 years old, middle management)

It was therefore important to level the playing field by giving all the participants an equal chance to articulate their opinions and ideas, and provide feedback to other participants' recommendations. On the whole, with the exceptions of a few occasions, the conditions for discussion and engagement were conducive and uninhibited interaction took place among the participants.

Figure 3: There was largely fair and equal discussion among the participants during the CP

For the CP on Work-Life Harmony, the mechanisms employed by the Secretariat and facilitators were useful in creating the conditions conducive for fair and equal discussion.

The first was the setting of ground rules and group norms early on during the first session, with inputs from the participants instead of being imposed from above by the Secretariat or Chief Facilitators. Some of the suggestions mooted by the participants for group norms included: self-regulating one's "airtime", agreeing to disagree when it came to differing viewpoints, not using mobile devices during discussion unless it was for information seeking, and gently reminding participants to go back to their point, if they veered off tangent. Second, the facilitators played an important role in ensuring all participants, especially those who were less vocal, contributed to the discussion and decision-making process.

Role of facilitators

In a deliberative process, facilitation plays a very important role in helping to foster fairness and equality in discussion. For the CP on Work-Life Harmony, the facilitators' role was explained to the participants during the first session — facilitators were there to help structure discussion, not to represent the participants. Instead, participants should own the issues and solutions. In addition, the participants were explicitly told that the facilitators came from different agencies in government and were not the policy owners of work-life issues. Such a briefing was useful in clarifying the role of the facilitators and to dispel any possible suspicion that facilitators were there to steer discussions.

There was ample facilitation throughout the four sessions, with two facilitators attached to each small group. This arrangement ensured that adequate support would be rendered to the participants in guiding the discussion. Equally important, one facilitator could provide reinforcement to the other from time to time, given the rigour and intensity as demanded in moderating group discussions.

Overall, the facilitators played a commendable role in helping the groups crystallise their ideas and recommendations. We observed a number of the facilitators probing participants to elaborate or clarify on certain points they had raised.

- When one group seemed to be not making any headway in its discussion, the facilitator helped to categorise their inputs into "problems" and "solutions", to introduce structure to the discussion.

- At times, the facilitators tried to get the participants to approach their problem from another angle.

The facilitators also used different strategies to ensure participants in their small groups got a chance to contribute to the discussion.

- For one group, the facilitator asked every participant in the group to pen his or her thoughts on the post-its given to them before asking them to paste the post-its on the flip chart board for the group to see. Such a method ensured that the quieter participants had a chance to articulate their views to the group.

- Polite prompts (e.g., "somebody else?") signalled to the more vocal participants to let the others join in the discussion.

- During several occasions when two or three participants in another small group were engrossed in their own conversations and ignored what a fellow participant was saying, facilitators quickly stepped in to mediate the situation and directed the group's attention to the participant giving inputs.

Many of the facilitators enjoyed a strong rapport with the participants and this could be due to the personal touch many of them brought to the discussion. On Day Two, in one of the small groups discussing the ice-breaker question "How was your work-life harmony in the past two weeks?"

the two facilitators shared their personal experiences, prompting a participant to ask one of them about the culture of her workplace. Such exchanges of experiences between facilitators and participants were useful in fostering solidarity, enriching the discussion and promoting mutual learning. The facilitators' efforts were appreciated by the participants, as illustrated by the response below:

> Overall, the facilitators did a fantastic job managing the process, kudos to the team. (Male, 45-49 years old, middle management)

Broadly, the facilitators conducted themselves professionally and maintained an enthusiastic and invested attitude throughout the entire CP. Such a positive mindset could have created a motivating effect on the participants. However, as facilitators' experience varied, it was perhaps inevitable that the quality of facilitation was observed to be slightly uneven at times, although the more experienced facilitators were paired up with less experienced ones, and provided guidance to minimise the exclusion of the less vocal participants from the deliberations.

Figure 4: Facilitators played an important role in introducing structure to the discussion

Generally, the participants were polite and respectful when responding to and even while disagreeing with their fellow participants' recommendations. Such observations were supported by the qualitative responses collated during the post-CP poll. When asked the question "What went well in the Citizens' Panel?" participants indicated that they were impressed by fellow participants' enthusiasm and commitment to contribute to the process:

> Great platform for sharing of ideas. Enhances appreciation of different viewpoints, challenges and concerns. (Male, 40-44 years old, middle management)

> The citizens were helpful, forthcoming, supportive, constructive and took initiative. A joy to work with every single one. Good positive vibes and mindsets. (Female, 40-44 years old, senior management)

Participants shaping the process

To allow for fairness and equality among the participants in deciding how the CP process should be run and to promote ownership of the process, the CP participants were given the autonomy to decide on several key aspects of the CP process. The participants took part in collective decision-making with the decisions reached based on the majority vote. The main aspects of the CP process that involved collective decision-making were:

- The modality for internal communication throughout the course of the CP, such as using WhatsApp and email, with an opt-out option for participants who did not want to be put on the email loop.

- Voting threshold, in which the top 50 per cent of ideas would be included in the main report, and the remaining ideas in the minority report.

- Producing the report — the groups had to nominate a representative to coordinate the writing of the report; a Report Writing Committee consisting of representatives from different groups was later set up; the participants also initiated the nomination and voting for editors for the report.

- Nominating participants to present their ideas to ministers, policymakers and the media, and to speak to the media.

- Format for the morning of Day Three, which was changed from pairing up of small groups for idea pitching to pitching by small groups to the Report Writing Committee.

The Secretariat's efforts in promoting collective decision-making throughout the CP process have been noted by the participants. The poll found that about 87 per cent of the participants felt that they had sufficient autonomy in driving the CP process.

Table 4: Fairness and equality

Question	Pre-CP	Post-CP
The participants in the Citizens' Panel had sufficient autonomy in driving the process.	-	86.8%

Percentage is for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree".

Knowledge Gain

To ensure that the participants had a minimum level of subject competency, an information kit was distributed via email to all the participants prior to the first session. The information kit

provided a copious amount of information on a wide range of topics and developments relating to the work-life harmony:

- Trends on work-life harmony in Singapore, e.g., average weekly working hours, and data on fertility, marriage and birth rates

- Statistics pertaining to the sentiments of employers and employees towards work-life harmony

- Examples of existing measures promoting progressive workplace practices and the different types of flexi-work arrangements available

- Challenges faced by employers and employees in promoting and achieving work-life harmony (e.g., concerns over work distribution among staff and work culture pressures of staying in the office) which provided a broader context to policy initiatives

- Questions for reflection, e.g., "What are the trade-offs and benefits for both employees and employers when introducing measures to enable work-life harmony?"

While a few participants mentioned that they found the information to be quite lengthy and did not finish reading them, the kit seemed to have largely fulfilled its function as 84.9 per cent of them agreed that it was useful in providing more background on the topic of work-life harmony.

As mentioned, knowledge gained through the participation in a process such as the CP should extend beyond the topic discussed to the wider political decision-making and policymaking processes. According to the poll findings, 96.2 per cent of the participants agreed and strongly agreed that their involvement in the CP on Work-Life Harmony has helped them to better appreciate the challenges involved in solving community issues. There was a significant increase in the number of participants who felt that they were better informed about public policies and the government than most people (from 56.4 per cent at the beginning of the process to 84.9 per cent at the end of the process). This better understanding of public policymaking — and the difficulties involved in the formulation and implementation of policies — was partly shaped by their access to and interactions with domain knowledge experts.

Table 5: Knowledge gain

Question	Pre-CP	Post-CP
I am better informed about public policies and the government than most people.	56.4%	84.9%
How confident are you that your view on how to achieve work-life harmony is correct?	45.5% (Confident/Very confident)	77.4% (Confident/Very confident)
The Citizens' Panel process helped me better understand the challenges of balancing needs and resources to solve community issues.	-	96.2%
The information kit (i.e., the booklet distributed at Session 1) was useful in providing more information on the topic of work-life harmony.	-	84.9%

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

Experts as resource

Central to equipping the participants with the necessary knowledge to come up with well thought-out ideas and recommendations was the deployment of experts. During the first session, policyholders and tripartite leaders from MOM, NTUC Women and Family, and the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) were invited by the Secretariat to speak with the participants. The presentations made by the three speakers provided a more comprehensive picture of work-life harmony in Singapore from the policymaking perspectives. Participants were given the opportunities to seek clarification and raise questions at the Question-and-Answer segment with each speaker.

- Besides giving an update on the country's employment landscape (e.g., male and female full-time employment rates, and part-time employment rates), an MOM representative said that flexi-work arrangements were important to help retain staff and spoke about the challenges faced by employers and the unintended consequences of family-oriented work policies.

- A representative from NTUC Women and Family helped to debunk several myths and misconceptions that surround flexi-work arrangements (e.g., flexi-work arrangements are used by mostly mothers, and staff who do not have children do not need such arrangements). She identified three important components of flexi-work arrangements — communication is key, use of technology and support of co-workers.

- A representative from SNEF presented what other countries such as France and the UK have done in legislating for flexible-work arrangements and the right to disconnect, and spoke about the trade-offs of legislating work-life harmony.

The CP on Work-Life Harmony also leveraged experts involved in areas of work closely linked to work-life harmony issues, hailing from myriad sectors, e.g., academia, government, corporate (both multinational corporations and small- and medium-sized enterprises) and non-governmental organisations, as Resource Persons. Participants were given the opportunity on Day One to select from a list of Resource Persons those whom they would like to consult on Day Two, and could request for additional Resource Persons from outside the list (another example of empowering participants to take ownership of the process).

Figure 5: A representative from the Ministry of Manpower sharing an overview of Singapore's employment landscape with participants

To ensure a diverse spread of expertise and insights, the participants had to choose Resource Persons from four groups — academia, tripartite, non-governmental organisations and individuals, and employers from multinational corporations and small and medium-sized enterprises. The fact that the Resource Persons came from different backgrounds was recognised by several participants:

> The Resource Persons Panel list was very comprehensive and very helpful for our discussion. It showed that the organising team [the Secretariat] was well prepared to support us. (Male, 30-34 years old, senior management)

> The breadth of background and experience of CP members and Resource Persons made the process & report more robust. (Male, 40-44 years old, middle management

On Day Two, the Resource Persons were grouped into three zones. Instead of moving from zone to zone in their small groups, the participants were asked to spread the workload among

themselves, with members consulting different experts at the same time. The advantage of this format is that the participants would be exposed to a wider range of knowledge and even unanticipated perspectives.

From our observations, many of the participants used the consultation session with the Resource Persons more for information-gathering purposes than testing out their ideas. Some of the questions asked included the possible yardsticks of successful work-life initiatives, the reasons behind companies' reluctance to support work-life initiatives, whether there was work-life harmony in governmental agencies and statutory boards, and examples of family-oriented policies in other countries. To a smaller extent, the interactions between the participants and Resource Persons helped to debunk some misconceptions.

Figure 6: Participants came prepared with questions during their consultation with Resource Persons

However, as a result of their focus on information-gathering instead of testing their ideas with the experts, there were fewer opportunities for the Resource Persons to push the participants to challenge their assumptions, rethink the usefulness of their ideas and therefore, to improve on their recommendations.

On Day Three, some of the Resource Persons were brought back for another round of consultation with the participants. They were matched with the small groups on the basis of the groups' project topics and the Resource Persons' expertise. This arrangement was beneficial in generating more in-depth discussion and specific feedback to their ideas.

Efficacy

Given that the CP process was new to most of the participants, scaffolds were designed to guide the discussions and provide support to participants. This was important as the proceedings and tasks required of the participants (e.g., writing a report and presenting to policymakers) could have been overwhelming for most of the participants. The scaffolds helped make the tasks more manageable, and built participants' efficacy and competency in engaging with one another, and with experts and policymakers. They included:

- During the small group brainstorming exercises, prompts for facilitators and participants were presented on two screens at the venue to enrich the discussion. For example, besides getting the participants to identify the problem they wanted to work on, questions were provided to elicit deeper thinking. They included: (i) what was the observable evidence that suggested the problem was a significant one; (ii) the root cause of the problem; (iii) who might be affected by the problem; and (iv) in what ways.

- The Secretariat suggested a framework for report writing, comprising: (i) the issues the CP was addressing which have an impact on work-life harmony; (ii) the proposed solutions and how they would address the identified issues; and (iii) the potential benefits, trade-offs and resources required of each solution.

Internal efficacy — Participants' perceptions of their role

Findings from the pre-CP and post-CP polls pointed to an increase in the participants' sense of internal efficacy after the CP. Close to 95 per cent of the participants agreed with the statement "The Citizens' Panel experience strengthened my confidence in the value of my contribution as a citizen". A smaller but significant number (73.6 per cent) of the participants agreed that citizens had a say in the affairs of the government. Significantly more participants after the CP also expressed confidence in themselves being better informed about public policies and the government than are most people.

The participants' strong internal efficacy could be attributed to several reasons. The first is related to knowledge gain. The provision of the information kit, coupled with interactions with Resource Persons, policymakers and fellow participants, helped to increase participants' knowledge and corrected their misconceptions of work-life harmony issues. That could have resulted in them feeling better informed about public policies and the government than are most people.

Second, the autonomy accorded to the participants in making the decisions in important aspects of the CP also raised their self-confidence levels. For each decision that the CP had to make, the Secretariat provided them with the time and space to voice their opinions without rushing them to make a decision. In fact, it was often the participants who felt that they should quickly reach a resolution and to get back to the discussion on their projects. More importantly, the Secretariat respected the eventual decisions made by the participants. Such gestures were likely to inform the participants' perceptions that their opinions and contributions were valued.

Table 6: Internal efficacy

Question	Pre-CP	Post-CP
I am better informed about public policies and the government than are most people.	56.4%	84.9%
Citizens have a say about what the government does.	67.3%	73.6%
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".

Internal efficacy could also be observed among some groups, which took the initiative to conduct research to substantiate their recommendations. While the groups did not conduct fieldwork or polls as part of their research, many of them were mindful of the need for relevant statistics and data to put forth a convincing case. For example, the group that mooted the idea of "The Purposeful Life@SG" movement used Gallup poll findings on "well-being" to support its recommendation. Likewise, the group that recommended implementing "protected work-time" or "white space" to prevent workplace interruptions from colleagues and superiors (which contributed to long working hours) used statistics from MOM and cited productivity experts Tony Schwartz and Jim Loehr ("The Power of Full Engagement") in their report.

External efficacy — Participants' perceptions of their impact on political process

One indication of the participants' external efficacy is their level of enthusiasm and interest in continuing to be involved in future citizen engagement opportunities and future initiatives relating to work-life harmony. The poll found that about 89 per cent of the participants said they would favourably consider joining future citizens' engagement opportunities. Given their positive experience at the CP, almost 95 per cent of them also said that they would recommend fellow citizens to participate in future citizens' panels. According to some participants, the functions of the CP as an avenue for learning about policymaking and expressing one's viewpoints were among the main reasons for their positive experience:

> Networking, knowing more about policies and issues, chance to feedback and raise issues. (Male, 30-34 years old, middle management)

> 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, staff)

On being more actively involved in initiatives that promote work-life harmony, slightly over 90 per cent of the participants have expressed interest to doing so. It remains to be seen though if the participants would continue to demonstrate their internal and external efficacy long after the conclusion of the CP, by following up on their recommendations and working with policymakers and industry stakeholders to co-create projects that promote work-life harmony.

Post-CP, we too observed an almost 30 per cent increase in the number of participants who had discussed work-life harmony-related issues with other people "at least once a week" or "once to a few times a month". While such a finding might not be surprising given the participants' active involvement in the CP, the possibility of a spillover effect should not be negated. When the participants continue to discuss work-life issues, there is a chance that they would spread the related knowledge and raise awareness of the issues among non-CP participants.

Table 7: External efficacy

Question	Pre-CP	Post-CP
After my Citizens' Panel experience, I am keen to be more actively involved in initiatives that promote work-life harmony.	-	90.6%
How often do you discuss issues relating to work-life harmony with other people?	54.5% (Once to a few times a month/ At least once a week)	83% (Once to a few times a month/ At least once a week)
After my Citizens' Panel experience, I will favourably consider participating in future citizen engagement opportunities.	-	88.7%
I would recommend fellow citizens to take part in future Citizens' Panels.	-	94.3%

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

Another indication of external efficacy is the participants' perceptions of support from others for their recommendations. Compared with the beginning of the CP, participants felt more confident about their recommendations after the CP process. About 77 per cent of the participants felt that their views on achieving work-life harmony was correct, as compared with about 46 per cent at the start of the CP. The poll also found that 94 per cent of the participants believed that their recommendations were worthy of government support. A similar number — about 93 per cent — of them felt that their recommendations would find support among Singaporeans.

Another possible reason is that the recommendations were the product of a rigorous deliberative process that spanned multiple sessions, in which the participants' initial ideas went through rounds of discussion and critique, before being refined and voted by the panel as a whole. The statistics pointing to the participants' confidence in their recommendations was also supported by the participants' qualitative responses:

> There was strong discourse. 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, senior management)

Table 8: Confidence in recommendations

Question	Pre-CP	Post-CP
How confident are you that your view on how to achieve work-life harmony is correct?	45.5%	77.4%
I believe the Citizens' Panel generated recommendations that are worthy of government support.	-	94.3%
I believe the Citizens' Panel generated recommendations that will be supported by Singaporeans.	-	92.5%

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

Figure 7: A participant pitching her group's ideas to the CP

Political trust

Findings from the poll have indicated an increase in the participants' belief in the government's commitment to partner citizens to build a better future for Singapore, from 74.6 per cent at the start of the CP to about 85 per cent as the CP drew to a close.

Table 9: Political trust

Question	Pre-CP	Post-CP
I believe the government seriously considers suggestions made by citizens at public engagement exercises.	76.4%	73.6%
The government cares about what citizens think.	85.5%	84.9%
I believe the government is committed to partner citizens to build our future Singapore.	74.6%	84.9%

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

There was a slight decrease in the percentage of participants who either agreed or strongly agreed that "the government seriously considers suggestions made by citizens", and that "the government cares about what citizens think" (by 2.8 per cent and 0.5 per cent, respectively). When we further broke down the responses (see Table 16 and Table 17), there was a high increase in the number of participants who strongly agreed with the two statements (by 15.4 per cent and 13.7 per cent, respectively). The percentages for those who felt neutral (neither disagreed nor agreed) increased slightly (by 2.6 per cent and 4.1 per cent, respectively).

Table 10: "The government seriously considers suggestions made by citizens at public engagement sessions."

Question		
I believe the government seriously considers suggestions made by citizens at public engagement sessions.		
	Pre-CP	**Post-CP**
Strongly disagree	0%	0%
Disagree	5.5%	5.7%
Neither disagree nor agree	18.2%	20.8%
Agree	67.3%	49.1%
Strongly agree	9.1%	24.5%
Total	100%	100%

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

Table 11: "The government cares about what citizens think."

Question The government cares about what citizens think.		
	Pre-CP	**Post-CP**
Strongly disagree	0%	0%
Disagree	5.5%	1.9%
Neither disagree nor agree	9.1%	13.2%
Agree	72.7%	58.5%
Strongly agree	12.7%	26.4%
Total	100%	100%

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

Some participants could have adopted a wait-and-see approach. To them, whether the government seriously considers citizens' suggestions at public engagement exercises would depend on the extent to which their recommendations would be supported by the government. Having gone through the CP on Work-Life Harmony, they could have realised that creating conditions for work-life harmony is a complex and challenging task, and the potential limitations of their recommendations.

There was a noticeable increase in participants' belief that "the government is committed to partner citizens to build our future Singapore" (by about 10 per cent). One reason could be the nature of the deliberation process — the commitment of resources (time and manpower) and commitment to respond to participants' recommendations on the part of the government were clearly evident to all. Towards the end of the CP, participants were asked to come up with one sentence that summed up their reflections of the entire process. One anonymous feedback read: "Appreciative and life-changing. I appreciate the government reaching out to us. It was life-changing knowing what we need to think about." This sentiment was echoed in one of the open-ended responses from the post-CP poll:

> 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, middle management)

The presence of key policyholders throughout the CP further demonstrated and emphasised the government's commitment to the engagement process. During the first session, Minister Teo was joined by Ms Low Yen Ling, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Manpower, and Assoc, Prof. Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Social and Family Development and Ministry of Education, in a "conversation circle" with the participants. All three of them spoke about their experiences in juggling work and family

commitments, and they all attended the participants' presentations on the final session. Besides addressing some of the points raised by the participants, they took the opportunity to mingle with the participants to learn more about their experiences. Minister Teo also came by during other sessions, such as the presentation pitches participants made to the Report Writing Committee.

Applicability

In terms of outcomes, the CP met the targets set at the beginning, which was for the participants to: (i) identify ideas that would create the conditions to improve work-life harmony in Singapore, and (ii) submit a report to relevant stakeholders, including Minister Teo and representatives from the employers federation and unions. After four sessions, the CP participants submitted 17 recommendations for improving work-life harmony — the result of consensus-building and collective decision-making among the participants (participants voted for the ideas they supported). All the ideas presented were ranked according to the number of votes garnered and following some discussion, the group decided that ideas ranked in the top 50 percentile would be included in the main report, while the remaining ideas be featured in the minority report.

Given that the definition of work-life harmony differs among individuals depending on their life circumstances and that different segments in society have contrasting concerns and priorities, some of the recommendations were directed at the employers and organisations, while others were pitched at a national level. For example, one group mooted the idea of "The Purposeful Life@SG" movement to nudge Singaporeans to think more broadly about well-being and the purpose of life so as to engender a shift in societal norms. Other groups proposed recommendations targeting companies; these included a "Front Line Day" for senior management to take on customer-facing jobs for a day to develop empathy for front-line workers, and having frequent dialogues between employees, senior management and HR personnel to discuss improper job sizing.

- Commendable efforts were made by the participants to bring together the various recommendations in a coherent and integrated manner. For instance, the "Purposeful Life@SG" movement was envisaged to serve as a foundation or premise for other recommendations, such as programmes and grants to be implemented at the level of the workplace. In addition, the participants' recommendations received positive feedback from the industry stakeholders and Resource Persons who attended the presentation during the last session. An NTUC representative added that the tripartite committee would be interested in taking up some of the recommendations.

- A Resource Person from the corporate sector said he liked the recommendation on creating a narrative on work-life harmony and agreed that it was important to develop mutual trust between employers and employees.

- Minister Teo said that the CP exceeded all expectations and commended the participants for their creativity, passion and energy. She added that a number of the recommendations, including those in the minority report, looked promising and workable.

Figure 8: A participant presenting the CP's recommendations to relevant stakeholders and Resource Persons

6

CONCLUSION

The recommendations proposed by the 55 participants of the CP on Work-Life Harmony addressed the challenge statement of "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?"[28] In addition to contributing to policymaking in improving work-life harmony among the workforce in Singapore, the post-CP poll responses point to possible long-term effects on citizen participation and public engagement.

For most of the participants, the CP on Work-Life Harmony was their first experience partnering the government and one another in solving a policy problem. Findings from the polls and the sustained level of participants' contributions during all four sessions suggest that the CP had ignited a realisation among the group of citizens that they could make an impact on policy and governance when they stepped up and worked together with fellow citizens as a collective. The fact that a large majority of them were interested in future engagement relating to the topic of work-life harmony and engagement in general was an encouraging outcome:

- Close to 89 per cent would consider participating in future citizen engagement opportunities

- 90 per cent were keen to be more actively involved in initiatives that promote work-life harmony after the CP

- Close to 95 per cent would recommend fellow citizens to take part in future citizens' panels.

- Close to 95 per cent of the participants felt more confident in the value of their contributions as a citizen

Drawing from our participant-observation, pre- and post-CP polls and on-site interviews with several participants, we have established how the design and different components of the process played an important role in ensuring that the CP on Work-Life Harmony met its goal — getting citizens from different walks of life to work with one another and with the government to develop solutions for a specific policy problem. The critical ingredients to the process included recruiting for diversity across different stakeholders whom the issue of work-life harmony resonated strongly with, recruiting people who came from different backgrounds within each group of stakeholders, the deployment of a sufficient number of facilitators who helped ensure that the space for deliberation was a safe and inclusive one, and helping participants to make informed decision-

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[28] The CP report of recommendations is available at:
https://www.ideas.gov.sg/public/CitizensPanel_WorkLifeHarmony

making by increasing their knowledge of the policy problem via the information kit and Resource Persons.

We would like to highlight a critical departure of this CP from other engagement initiatives, including the other deliberative processes such as the War on Diabetes CJ. Citizens were involved not only in co-creating policy solutions but were also highly involved in co-designing the process of engagement as it developed over the six-week period. We had earlier described how the participants were encouraged to take responsibility for the process and its outcomes. They were given the room and time to make decisions that were critical to the process, from setting ground rules for participants' interaction with one another on and off session, deciding on the voting threshold, engagement with the media who were invited to cover the proceedings on the last day, to the actual design of the process (e.g., proceedings for Day Three).

The data gathered from our observation and polls provided some insights, which we present in the following sections for planners' consideration when designing similar engagement processes.

Increase Representation of Specific Groups

The participants recruited for the CP on Work-Life Harmony came from diverse backgrounds. While participants saw the diversity of participants as a positive aspect of the CP and appreciated the opportunities to meet people from all walks of life, there were others who felt that certain groups in society were under-represented, such as blue-collar workers and younger Singaporeans who have recently joined or would be part of the workforce in the immediate future.

The prevalence of participants in their 30s and 40s, and with university education and professional jobs, could be attributed to the employers' sector, a key group in the sampling frame. It was important for employers to be involved in the CP as they were in the position to make hiring decisions and implement initiatives that promote work-life harmony. For these participants to reach the senior positions they were at, they would have to possess certain educational and professional credentials, and would have accumulated sufficient years of working experience. Thus, the presence of participants representing the employers' group raised the overall educational and age demographics of the entire CP.

Added to this was the challenge in attracting applicants from blue-collar jobs, households with lower income or low-educational groups. One possible reason is that while these groups may also be concerned about work-life harmony, they might not be able to commit to all the sessions due to work commitments. For instance, some of them might have shift work or part-time work on weekends. Lower-income families are also likely to have fewer resources such as childcare and caregiving arrangements, which may prevent them from attending the CP sessions. Another possible reason was that the sessions were conducted in English, which would not attract the non-English speaking.

For future citizens' engagement initiatives, it is important to allocate more time for recruitment. The recruitment period for the CP on Work-Life Harmony took place only slightly over two weeks. The open call period could be extended for targeted recruitment to be made, such as approaching the unions to encourage lower-wage workers to make an application to the CP. Another

recruitment method is that of snowballing — the 55 participants from this CP might know of people in their social networks who are blue-collar workers or are fresh school-leavers. Their networks could be tapped for future similar CPs. Another option to be considered is to mention that an honorarium will be given to participants during the recruitment phase, so that participants who have work or caregiving commitments on Saturdays can make alternate arrangements with the assurance that participating in the CP would not result in lost income. Such a practice is used by organisations such as the Jefferson Center in the US.

Striking a Fine Balance in Co-Designing

As discussed in the earlier sections, this CP saw an unprecedented level of co-designing of process by participants. The Secretariat was very approachable and participants could approach them whenever they felt that adjustments to the programme were required. There was much flexibility in designing the CP sessions; changes were made on the fly to the programme in response to time constraints or to facilitate the discussion of ideas. For example, as a significant amount of time was spent on Day One in briefing the participants on the CP process, the "Introductory Session" was shortened and "Discussion in Pairs" segment scraped. On Day Three, the Secretariat brought back some of the Resource Persons from Day Two and matched them to the small groups, based on their needs and the subject matter. We had also earlier mentioned specific instances where participants were tasked with making decisions relating to core features of the process.

While commendable effort was made by the Secretariat in being flexible with the programme design and empowering participants to take ownership of the process, there was a sense among many participants that too much time was spent on getting the group to agree on certain "administrative matters". To these participants, being consultative has come at the expense of the time that could have been better utilised for the brainstorming of ideas and the writing of recommendations. For instance, a fair bit of time was spent on getting the panel to decide on the appropriate modes of internal communication on Day One and who the "media representatives" (i.e., spokespersons who would be interviewed by the media) should be on Day Three.

> Please reduce time spent on administrative things. It should not be more than 30 mins on each session. (Female, 40-44 years old, middle management)

> Be more decisive & try not to please everybody to make the process more efficient. (Male, 40-44 years old, middle management)

Striking a balance between empowering participants and minimising interruptions to the process is difficult and intricate. For future CPs, collective decision-making could be allocated to the more salient aspects of the citizens' deliberative process, e.g., setting of group norms, voting threshold and the nomination of participants for report writing and presentation. Less critical decisions, such as the platforms to be used for internal communication and speaking to the media, could be made by each group (i.e., each group could decide on its own communication channels for the sharing of information and coordination of tasks) or by the Secretariat. Nominations or options for these decisions could also be provided to participants for them to vote on, which in itself is empowering, thereby minimising time spent.

More Community-Based Recommendations

All the groups have addressed the challenge statement, with some recommendations to be implemented nation-wide while others were directed at companies and businesses. However, many of these recommendations, despite being generated by citizens, were dependent on the government. In other words, they required government agencies and labour organisations to lead and sustain work-life initiatives. For instance, the group recommending the implementation of "protected work-time" called for tripartite partners, MOM, NTUC and SNEF to develop a template to help employees initiate a dialogue with employers. It also suggested bringing in TAFEP to work with MOM Work Safety and Health (WSH) to raise awareness of workplace distractions. Other examples of government-led recommendations included implementing mindfulness programmes at work to be promoted by SNEF, MOM and NTUC, and the setting up of a one-stop portal on work-life harmony and flexi-work arrangements, which the participants had described as "an online community approach to be led by TAFEP".

What was lacking in the report's recommendations was the role and potential of bottom-up, community efforts in solving a problem that is whole-of-society. In a "democracy of deeds", [29] the aspiration is for Singaporeans to work together, and for everyone to contribute his or her strengths to improve society.

For future CPs, in addition to a more explicit articulation and framing in the challenge statement, the process can also be designed to elicit even more ground-up and whole-of-society solutioning. For example, the information kit disseminated to participants prior to the first session contained a wealth of information and data on work-life harmony. However, the majority of examples focused on progressive workplace practices. It would have been useful to increase the number of examples on work-life projects initiated by community and non-governmental organisations to provide a more holistic picture of possible interventions.

The emphasis on flexi-work arrangements, although an important tool for promoting work-life harmony, could have also influenced deliberations. Information on the flexi-work arrangements was included in the information kit, and the topic was broached as part of the "Backgrounder on Work-Life Harmony" presentations by MOM, NTUC Women and Family, and SNEF on Day One. The representative from the Ministry of Education (MOE), a curriculum specialist, was invited to speak to the participants on Day Three on the slate of changes that have been implemented to the education system over the years, which have an implication on the stress experienced by working parents. She could have been included in the "Backgrounder on Work-Life Harmony" segment to broaden participants' consideration of the problem.

Resource Persons play an important role in knowledge transfer, which in turn informs the recommendations made by the participants. The Resource Persons were selected by the participants for consultation on Day Two, but came mainly from the government, tripartite movement, academia and the corporate sector. While there was a representative from the non-governmental sector, the CP did not select additional Resource Persons from the civil society and

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[29] Wong, P. T., and Metteo, R. (2019, June 21). Cohesive society calls for everyone to build a 'democracy of deeds': Heng Swee Keat. *TODAY*.

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, they might become more open to the possibilities of community-based solutions. While the participants should be given the autonomy to select Resource Persons for consultation, future CP Secretariats could invite a small number of those not selected, to widen the expertise and experiences of the Resource Persons.

Broader Approach to Shortlisting Participants

The shortlisting of participants for the CP on Work-Life Harmony involved several stages, with the positive intention of ensuring that the deliberations by the Panel would generate recommendations that different stakeholders would find useful. Besides filling in the application form, which included a few open-ended questions that sought applicants' views on what could be done to improve work-life harmony, shortlisted applicants were also contacted over the phone to ascertain their awareness of work-life issues, initiatives and trade-offs.

However, a rigorous shortlisting process can be a double-edged sword. Answering open-ended questions could be difficult for some applicants, be it due to their language proficiency, or lack of time, among other factors.

For future CPs, the selection of applicants should rely less on assessing their responses to open-ended questions. In the case of the CP on Work-Life Harmony, the applicants' qualitative responses were used as an indication of their propensity and ability to provide balanced views and appreciate different perspectives to issues relating to work-life harmony.

The reliance on applicants' qualitative responses to gauge their suitability as participants may not be required. This is because the deliberative nature of the CP process provides several safeguards against domination by individuals who may be more vocal or have fixed positions about an issue. First, when participants interact with one another face-to-face, they are likely to practise some degree of self-moderation, in part to be socially desirable. Second, opinion expression is a competency that needs to be cultivated. While an individual may come across as not being balanced in his views during the application process, he may acquire the necessary empathy and deliberative skills as he goes through the process. Third, scaffolding and facilitation deployed in citizens' panels play an important part in evening out participation across the panel and minimising domination of the process by specific individuals.

Other Design Considerations

Facilitate more cross-sharing of ideas among groups

For the most part of the CP, discussion took place among participants within their small groups before the ideas were pitched to the Report Writing Committee and the other participants in a big group. The "cross-sharing" of ideas among groups could help them acquire fresh perspectives as they develop their recommendations. This could be fostered by placing participants in three bigger groups with each group containing at least one member from each of the small groups. In the three bigger groups, participants would take turns to present the ideas or recommendations of his or her small group. Following each presentation, the other participants in the bigger group are

encouraged to ask questions or provide feedback. While participants may be working on different recommendations, their ideas are still tied to work-life harmony and they might have information or insights that other groups lack or have overlooked. This could also help participants identify potential overlapping ideas at an early stage and sharpen their own ideas.

Another advantage of such cross-sharing is that the quieter participants might be encouraged to speak up since the feeling of having the entire room of people watching them has been eliminated with the splitting of groups. Such an approach was broached by some participants:

> Shouldn't let us stay in the small groups for so long. Allow more mixing — maybe solutioning may have been more robust. (Female, 35-39 years old, middle management)

Provide criteria for voting of ideas

Given their diverse backgrounds and experiences, participants were likely to have different ideas on what constituted a good recommendation to improve work-life harmony. To minimise subjectivity, a set of criteria could be provided to the participants to guide their decisions.

Such criteria could include: (i) the relevance of the recommendation in relation to the challenge statement, (ii) its effectiveness, (iii) its scalability, and (iv) the sustainability of each recommendation. The "relevance" yardstick is particularly useful as it would help participants assess if the recommendations have answered the challenge statement.

Length of break

The two-week-interval between the CP sessions might have been too long, especially when the groups did not embark on conducting their own surveys or data collection to support their recommendations. The breaks might lead some participants to be complacent with the timelines, causing them to run the risk of losing momentum of their projects.

However, it is important to consider the issue from the logistical and operational perspectives as well. For future initiatives, the Secretariat has to ask itself if a shorter interval (e.g., one week) is sufficient for follow-up action, such as responding to participants' queries or requests for data, or contacting and securing Resource Persons after they have been selected by the participants for consultation. This would depend on the Secretariat's bandwidth and experience in organising an engagement process of such a nature. In the case of the CP on Work-Life Harmony, it was the first time the Secretariat held a deliberative citizen engagement project. Hence, the two-week interval between sessions provided an important buffer for planning purposes and for making the necessary improvisations to the programme for subsequent sessions.

In-between session monitoring useful to guide process

Because of their active involvement in the small group discussion throughout the sessions, facilitators served as an important intermediary between the participants and the CP Secretariat. Depending on the comfort level of the participants, the facilitators could be added to small groups' internal communication platform, such as WhatsApp group, for project discussion. The involvement of facilitators in between the sessions, especially when the intervals are long, would

be advantageous in nudging participants to complete the tasks they are lagging behind and in giving prompt feedback to the Secretariat, when quick action has to be taken.

More time for complex issues

According to the post-CP poll, only 26.4 per cent of the participants felt that the four sessions of the CP were adequate for discussion on the topic, with many of them feeling that more time should have been allocated for brainstorming and developing solutions, and finalising the recommendations. When asked to suggest the number of additional sessions to address the time constraints, many participants felt that an additional day would be adequate.

Table 12: Additional time needed

Question How much more time do you think was needed?	
	Post-CP **(N=34)**
Half a day (3 hours)	5.9%
One day	44.1%
Others	50%
2 days	23.5%
3 days	11.8%
Modify programmes and intervals between sessions	64.7%

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 the 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, middle management)

> More time to deliberate and write recommendations, time during sessions to think. (Female, 45-49 years old, senior management)

According to the post-CP poll, about 55 per cent of the participants indicated that the CP had required more from them than they had expected. It should be pointed out that it was mentioned under the FAQs for the CP published on the Ideas! portal 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" and "develop solutions… to create the conditions for work-life harmony in Singapore". The FAQs also indicated that the participants would "prepare a report of their recommendations that will be presented to the Government".

That the participants felt that they could have been better prepared on what was required of them was a feedback that is not unique to the CP on Work-Life Harmony. The CJ on the War on Diabetes and the Recycle Right Citizens' Workgroup[30] received similar feedback. This suggests the need for public education on what the co-creation of policy solutions and deliberative engagement entail. Members of the public who have had experience with government engagement are more accustomed to formats such as focus group discussions and town hall meetings, where the engagement takes place over a much shorter duration and typically involves the proffering of top-of-mind suggestions.

On the whole, the CP on Work-Life Harmony was a success and a commendable effort on the part of the agencies involved in mobilising citizens to step up and play an active role in contributing to policy development for a complex and wicked policy problem. The absence of attrition among participants speaks to their dedication and enthusiasm to the process, despite the time and effort required of them at all four sessions and off session. The CP is a democracy of deeds in progress, and has also demonstrated its positive impact, both in the near-term as well as in the long-term.

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[30] The Recycle Right Citizens' Workgroup, a collaboration between the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources (MEWR) and IPS, took place in September and October 2019 and saw close to 50 participants co-creating solutions to help improve the ways households in Singapore recycle.