

Citizen Deliberation Experiments

IPS Policy Lab



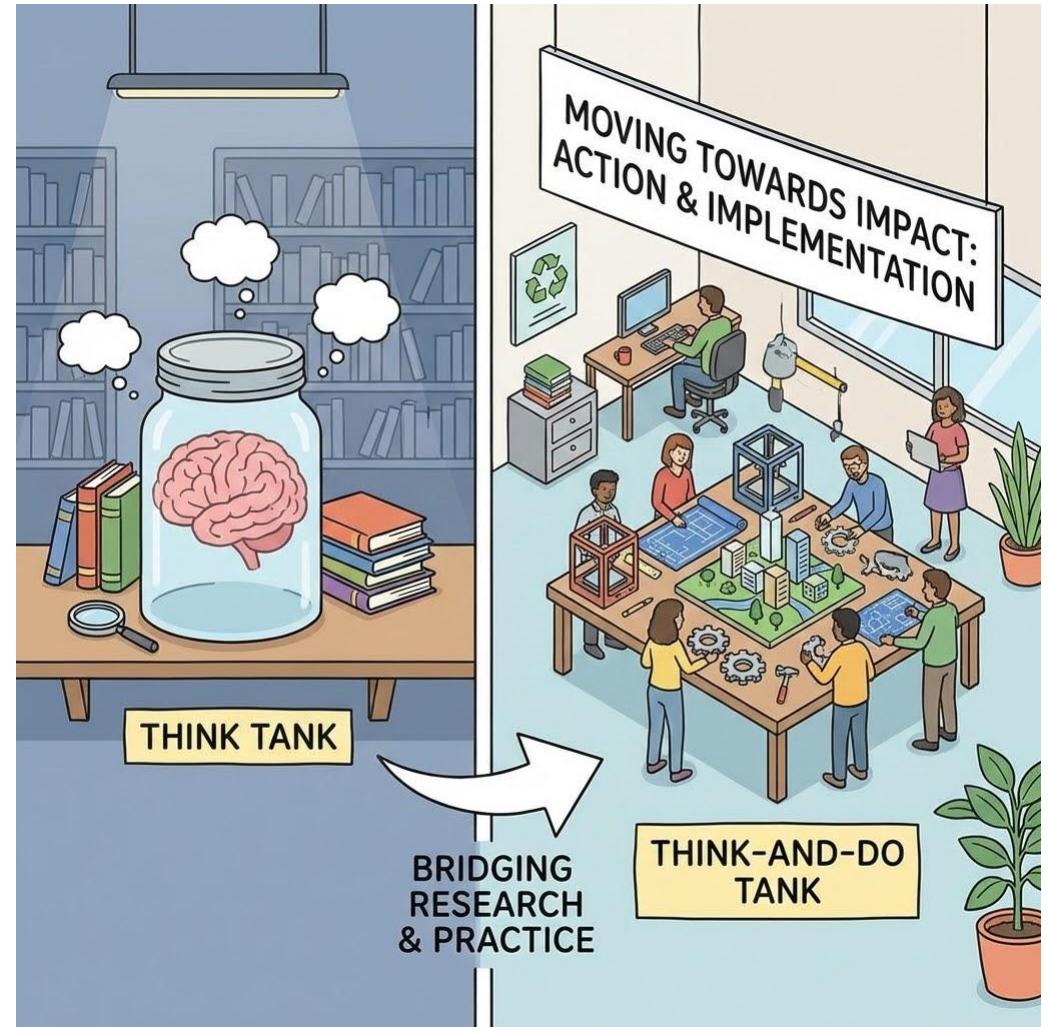
About Policy Lab

- Set up in 2022 as a **policy innovation unit** that engages in R&D to design policy solutions, test their viability via experimentation or pilots, evaluate impact and supporting the mainstreaming of solutions that work.
- **Applied and solutions-focused research** - adapts new ideas to our local context by operationalizing abstract concepts into implementable programmes or actionable policies.



Think-and-Do Tank

- IPS Policy Lab was established to move ideas into action.
- Implementation capabilities, not just research.



Workstreams and Experiments

'We-First Society'		
		Social Mobility
Citizen Deliberation	Community Empowerment	Educational Equity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Consensus Conference● Citizens ReAssembled● Participatory Budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Community Business Incubator● Caring and Connected Communities● Timebanks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Educating Neighbourhood● Peer Learning Circles● School-Community Partnerships

IPS-REACH Consensus Conference on Local-Foreign Integration

Building Bridges Across Differences

IPS Policy Lab

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Admin Support: Cecilia Kuek



Presentation Outline

1. Why this experiment?

2. What is a Consensus Conference?

3. How did we do it?

4. Who was involved?

5. What did we find?

6. What do we recommend?

The Consensus Conference:

1. Why this Experiment?

Why this Research Experiment?

- Non-residents: 2.9% (1970) → 31% (2025)
- Fertility rate: 0.97, below replacement of 2.1
- Close friends among Singaporeans: 10.67 (2018) → 6.49 (2024)
- If immigration mismanaged: 37.5% anticipate anger against communities; 35.5% anticipate weakened national identity

"Singapore is, and has always been, an immigrant nation.

Becoming Singaporean is not a matter of ancestry, but a matter of choice and conviction, and contribution to our shared future."

— Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, Facebook, 31 August 2025

Research Question

Central Question

To what extent can a structured consensus conference in Singapore produce:

- (a) 100% “can live with” consensus on participant-developed statements addressing contested aspects of local-foreign integration, and
- (b) subsequent cross-residency collaborative action through a community project

Hypothesis 1

In Singapore, through structured deliberation and quality facilitation, residents can achieve 100% consensus on statements addressing contested aspects of local-foreign integration.

Hypothesis 2

Participants can co-create a community project in service of local-foreign integration

The Consensus Conference:

2. What is it?

What is a Consensus Conference?

- A **structured deliberative process** where a diverse group of residents discuss contested issues, exchange perspectives, and work toward **common positions through facilitated dialogue.**
- Tests whether process can **surface tensions, build relationships, and catalyse collaborative action.**
- **The process is the intervention**
- Adapted across jurisdictions for complex policy questions



Figure 1: Large-group deliberation process

Video

The Consensus Conference:

3. How did we do it?

Overview

Pre-Deliberation Phase

- Multi-stage recruitment via PA & REACH networks
- Pre-session briefing on study purpose and time commitment
- Pre-deliberation survey: baseline attitudes on trust, belonging, openness to diversity, comfort with differing perspectives



During Sessions (4 sessions)

- 67 participant-generated **statements across 4 domains**
- Small-group deliberations (4 groups of 6) with facilitators & note-takers
- Large-group validation with all 24 participants
- Session evaluations after each session (6-9 process items)
- Structured reflection journals



Post-Deliberation Phase

- Post-deliberation survey: same measures as pre-survey for comparison
- 48-page Residents' Report: 80+ revisions negotiated across residency lines
- Community project proposal

The Four-Session Process



The Four 'Seed' Statements

Each seed statement intentionally contained tension, juxtaposing competing values participants needed to navigate

Statement 1 (Community Life)

"Both locals and foreigners should make equal effort in getting to know each other and build deep relationships in the community."

Statement 2 (Employment)

"Foreign professionals contribute to Singapore's economic growth, but Singaporeans must still be given preferential access to jobs and career progression."

Statement 3 (Education)

"Singaporeans should be given priority at local education institutions, including universities, even as we uphold the principle of meritocracy."

Statement 4 (Multiculturalism)

"Singapore's openness to the world and support for multiculturalism and diversity helps us welcome people of different nationalities without losing who we are."

Statement Deliberation Process

Step 1: Initial Position

Each participant stated position on 5-point scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) and provided reasons (analytic, emotional, or lived-experience narratives)

Step 2: Bidirectional Movement

Participants moved half-step toward disagreement, then toward agreement, articulating "what would it take for you to move?" Conditions captured on flipcharts

Step 3: Statement Drafting

Participants proposed statements that resonated personally and that the group could "live with"

Step 4: Small-Group Validation

Round-robin testing: "Can you live with this?" If no, participant proposed revision. If still no consensus, recorded as "no-go"

Step 5: Large-Group Validation

All 24 participants physically moved to "can live with" or "cannot live with" sides. Amendments proposed and retested until 100% consensus or declared "no-go"

Safeguards

Against False Consensus

If a participant indicated they could live with a statement but had expressed a differing view earlier, facilitators invited that view back into conversation to clarify and prevent conformity pressure.

Protection of Dissent

Lead facilitator repeatedly normalized uncertainty and dissent. Participants invited to move to "cannot live with" when unsure or feeling discomfort they could not yet articulate.

"No-Go Zones" Not Softened

Statements that did not have 100% support were labeled "no-go zones" immediately.

The Consensus Conference:

4. Who was involved?

Participant Profile

N = 24 | Changi-Simei Residents (East Coast GRC)

Residency Status

- ~2 in 3 Singapore Citizens
- ~1 in 3 Non-citizens (PR, EP, etc.)

Gender

- 54% men | 46% women

Age

- 21-30: 8.3% | 31-40: 20.8% | 41-50: 20.8% | 51-60: 20.8% | 61-70: 25% | Above 70: 4.2%

Education / Job Type

- Over 70% with at least bachelor's degree
- 13% non-PME; 25% unemployed

Ethnicity

- Chinese: 58.3% | Indian: 20.8% | Caucasian: 8.3% | Malay: 4.2% | Eurasian: 4.2% | Pakistani: 4.2%

Figure 1. Number of participants by Sex



Figure 2. Number of participants by age range

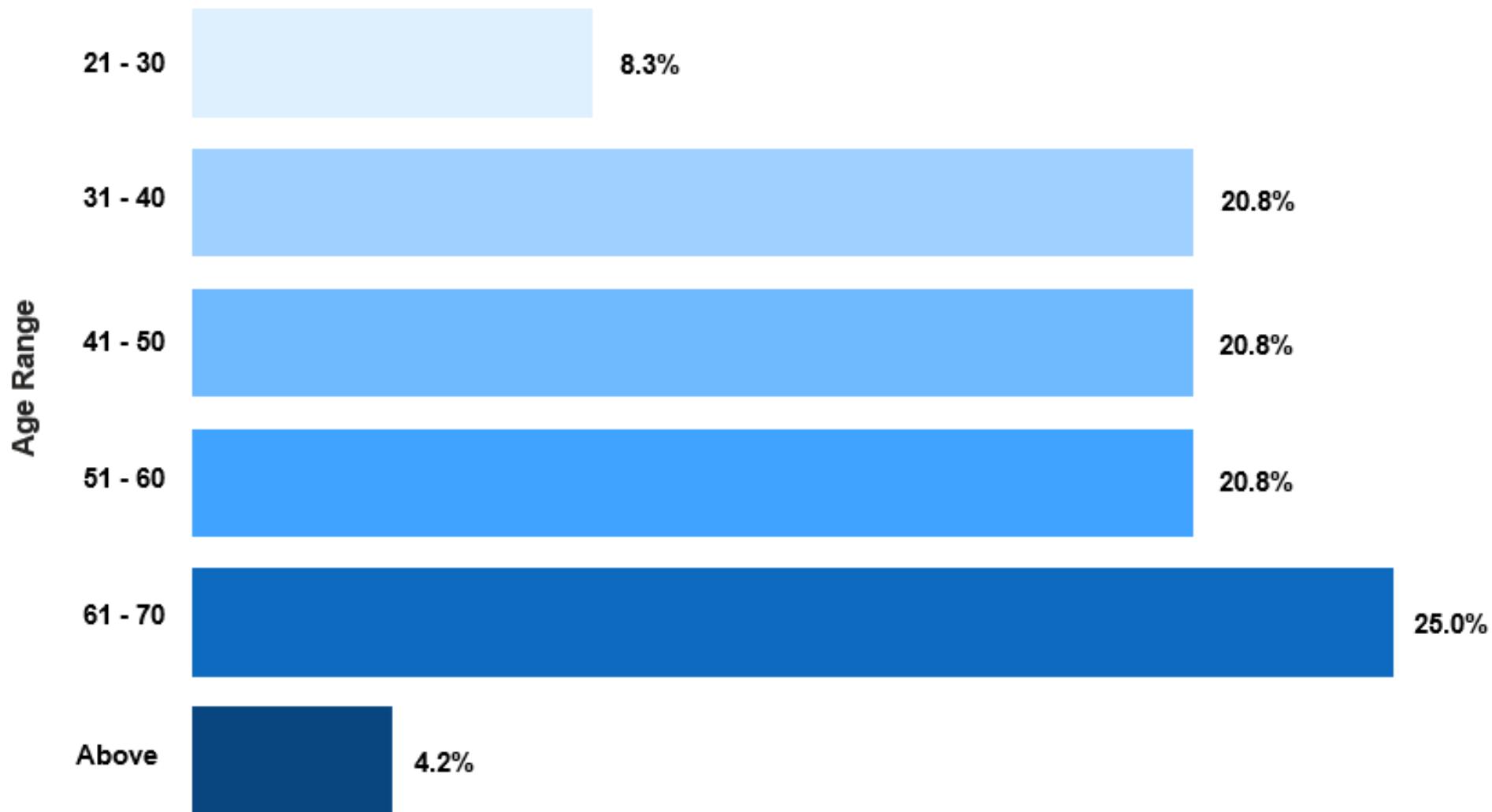


Figure 3. Number of participants by residency status

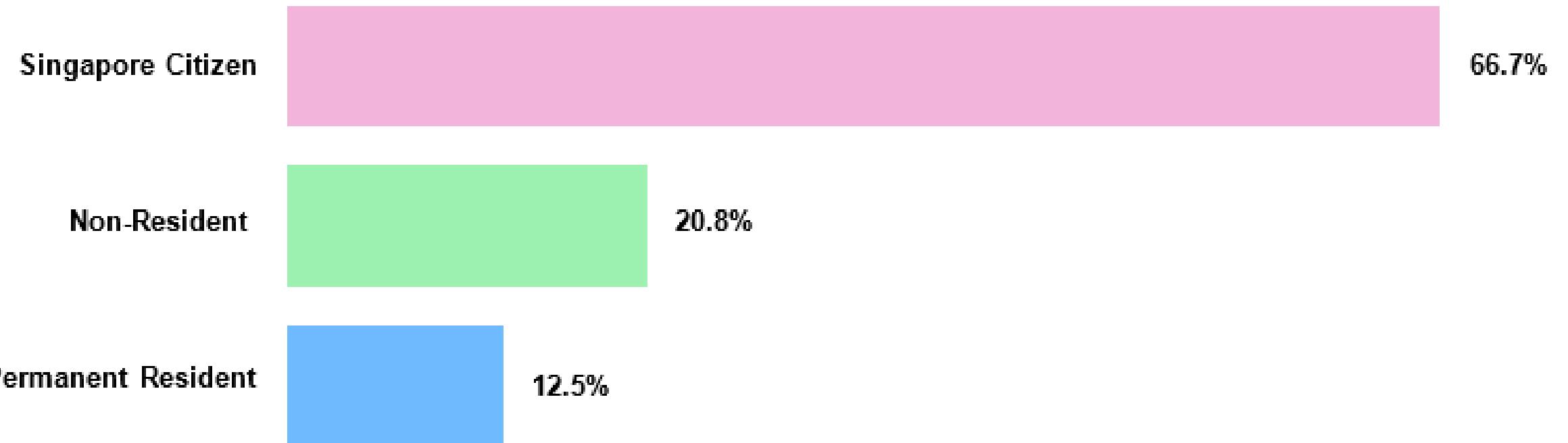


Figure 4. Number of participants by ethnicity

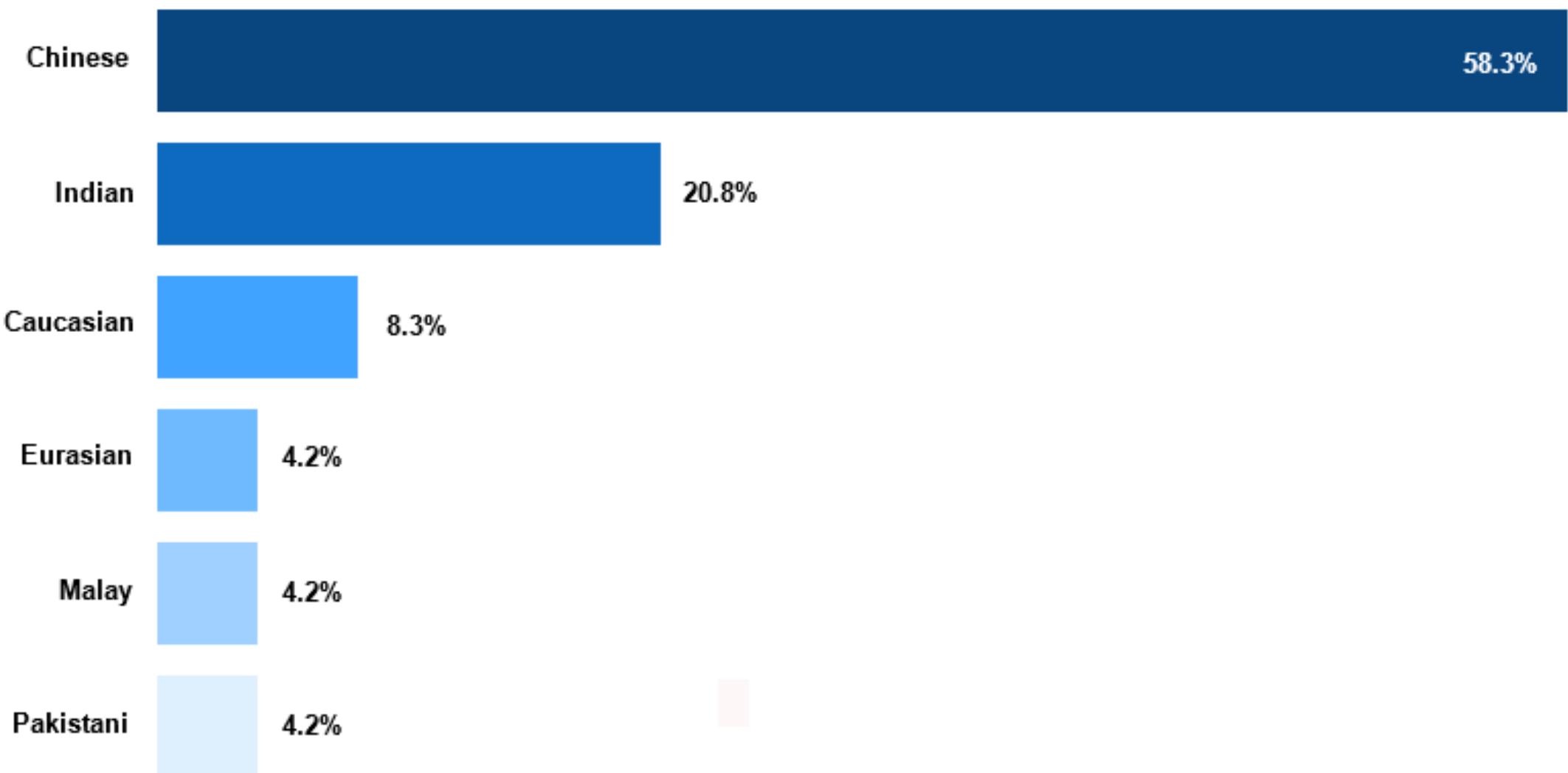


Figure 5. Number of participants by education level

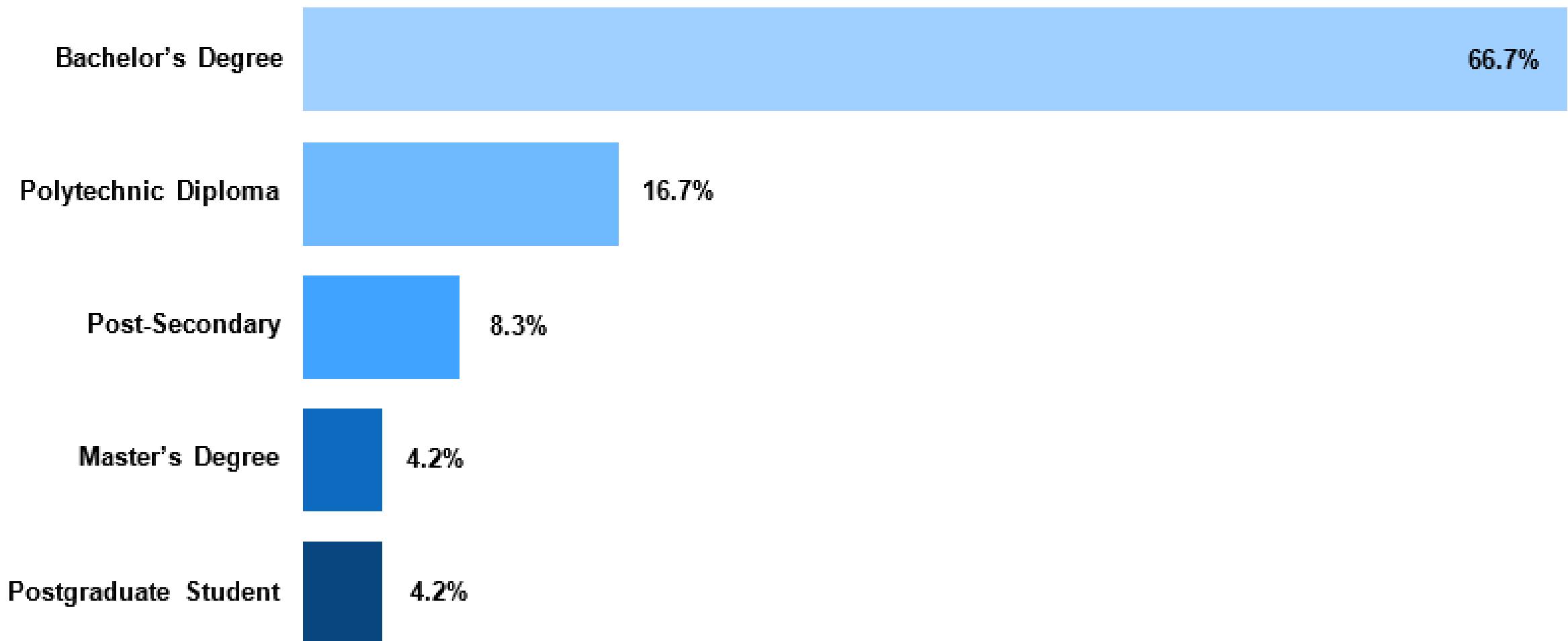


Figure 6. Number of participants by job type

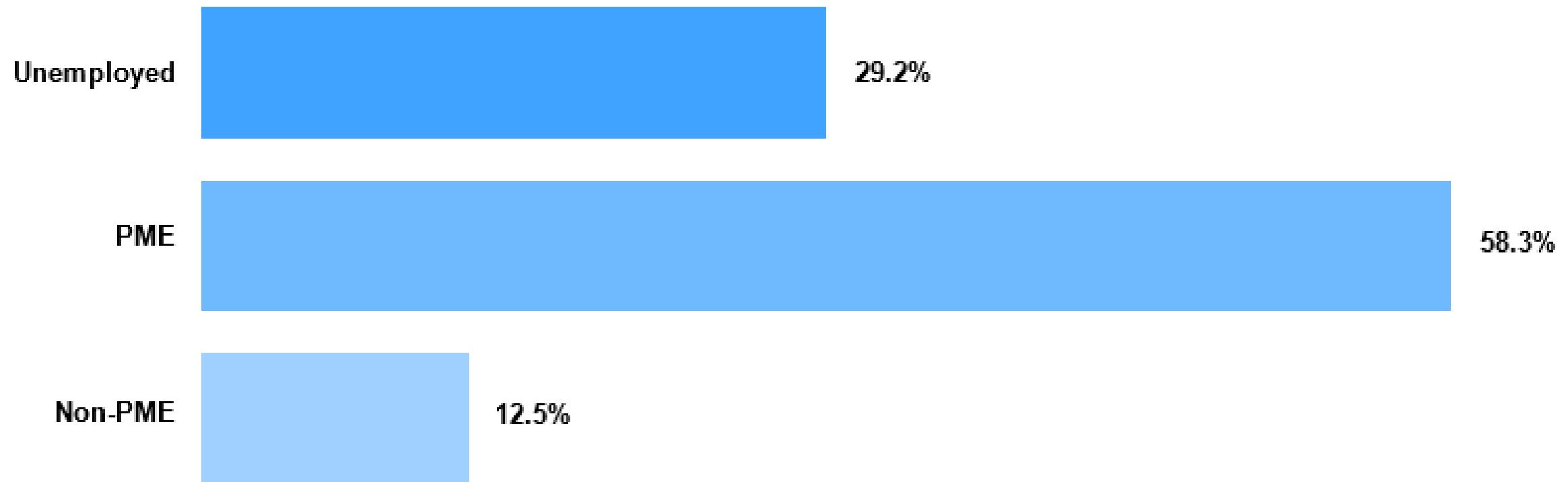
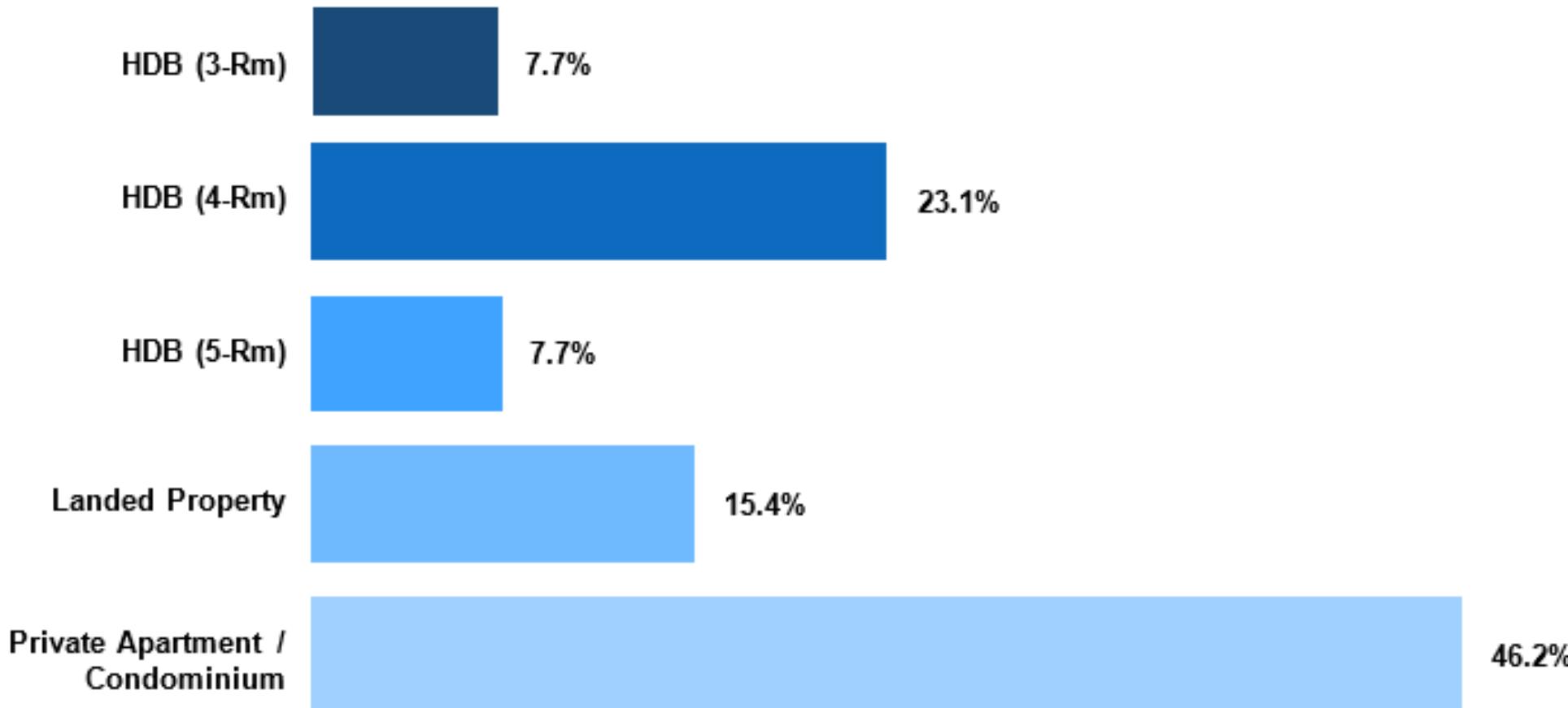


Figure 7. Number of participants by housing type



5. What did we find?

Key Findings from the Consensus Conference on Local-Foreign Integration

- Hypothesis 1
- Hypothesis 2
- Participant Experience
- Key Concerns

Hypothesis 1

Consensus Rate on Different Domains

Hypothesis 1

In Singapore, through structured deliberation and quality facilitation, residents can achieve 100% consensus on statements addressing contested aspects of local-foreign integration.

34.3%

Overall Consensus Rate

23 of 67 participant-generated statements had 100% consensus

Community Life

14 of 18
(77.8%)

Education

4 of 16
(25.0%)

Employment

4 of 18
(22.2%)

Multiculturalism

1 of 15
(6.7%)

Community Life

- Participants reached broad consensus on norms of mutual respect and reciprocal effort in everyday interactions.
- Neighbourhood interactions were "hi-bye" relationships; polite but shallow. The prevailing norm was tolerance rather than trust, coexistence without building community.
- It functions adequately under benign conditions. Under stress, particularly in online spaces, its latent tensions may surface.

Jobs & Education

- Jobs and education drew the strongest emotions because the stakes were higher and the issues felt zero-sum.
- Conditionality as a mechanism for consensus
- Participants endorsed citizen priority **provided that all things are equal**. This formulation balanced meritocratic ideals with conditional preference for locals.
- *I do not want to feel that I'm promoted just because I'm a local.*” (Singaporean, female, 36, Malay)
- Citizens themselves insisted on the qualification, reflecting commitment to meritocracy.

Foreign Support for Citizen Priority

"Singaporeans should get preferential treatment, because they are the core of this country. They pay the most taxes, they are the most invested, and to treat them exactly the same as foreigners that could come from anywhere else, it's just not fair."

— Non-resident, Female, 37, Caucasian

The polarization between locals and foreigners may be narrower than online discourse suggests. When framed as fairness grounded in reciprocity rather than exclusion, foreign participants endorsed citizen priority.

Multiculturalism

- Is Singapore's cultural identity fixed, such that newcomers must adapt to it? Or is it inherently evolving, such that immigration-driven change is another chapter in an ongoing story?

First View

Wanted Singapore to remain open to new cultures and allow the identity to evolve over time

Second View

Prioritized protecting an identity they saw as hard-won and slow to build

- These disagreements could not be resolved through conditional compromise.
- Needs sustained investment in civic infrastructure.
- Policy can enable by cannot mandate.

Hypothesis 2

From Deliberation to Action

Hypothesis 2

Participants can co-create a community project in service of local-foreign integration

Residents' Report

Participants co-authored a 48-page report documenting consensus statements, no-go zones, and reflections, with more than 80 revisions.

Community Project

A voluntary working group of 7 Singapore citizens and 3 foreigners formed to develop a ground-up community integration initiative..

Figure 18. Timeline for Residents' Report



Figure 19. Screenshot of the Writing Group and other participants collaborating on the report

Residents' Report

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coordination. The focus is on shared experiences, informal conversations and simple gestures, to foster local-foreign integration.

Through this design, the project aims to increase interaction between locals and foreigners, deepen understanding of the history behind local cultural practices, and strengthen integration through reciprocity. If the pilot is successful, participants hope that similar ground-up initiatives, supported by community institutions, and can be scaled or adapted to other groups and neighbourhoods.

6. Suggestions for future research, policy and engagement

For the government, researchers and community partners, we highlight the following:

- Keep expectations for everyday integration realistic, focused on cordial relationships, mutual respect, mindfulness and simple gestures.
- Clarify how meritocracy and conditional priority for Singaporeans work together in employment and education, especially as priority visibility and access rather than automatic outcomes.
- Review public narratives on foreign professionals and foreign students so that they acknowledge Singaporeans' contributions and avoid overstating dependence on foreigners or implying that foreigners are merely temporary placeholders.
- Strengthen safeguards, checks and transparent communication on hiring, retrenchment and admissions, to sustain trust in fairness.
- Make key data on foreign presence and enforcement outcomes more accessible and understandable, to help narrow perception gaps.
- Create future platforms like this, and sustain the conversation, which deliberately include jobless or struggling Singaporeans, work permit holders and domestic helpers, so that integration policies and community efforts respond more fully to their lived experiences.

Integration requires an ongoing, coordinated effort

Integration is a long-term effort. Just as Singapore puts in steady work to manage race and religion carefully, it is equally important that integration between locals and foreigners receives planned, sustained effort from different groups in society. Platforms like these are a good start, but this work needs to continue over time.

Comments

All comments For you

All types All tabs

Anonymous 7:59 AM Nov 23 • Made a suggestion

Original content deleted

Anonymous 3:09 PM Nov 23 • Delete: "the "

Introduction / Exec... - Participants

Anonymous 3:07 PM Nov 23 • Sometime use 'participant', sometime 'vet'. Maybe one person from the writing grp can decide.

Nicholas Thomas 10:14 AM Nov 24 • Useful point raised, for writing group to consider.

Original content deleted

Anonymous 3:06 PM Nov 23 • Delete paragraph

Figure 23. The Residents' Report, compiled from participant-generated statements, deliberation summaries, and community project proposals



Participant Experience

Effects on Participants

Greater Perspective-Taking

Singapore citizens showed highest gains on comfort engaging with people whose backgrounds differed from their own.

Intellectual Humility

Non-residents recorded largest reductions in certainty that their views were correct, signaling recalibration.

Increased Civic Efficacy

Participants expressed stronger beliefs that they have a say in what government does and that their voices matter.

Figure 26. "I am comfortable engaging with people whose backgrounds or perspectives differ from mine."
(Pre-Post Survey Shift by residency status)

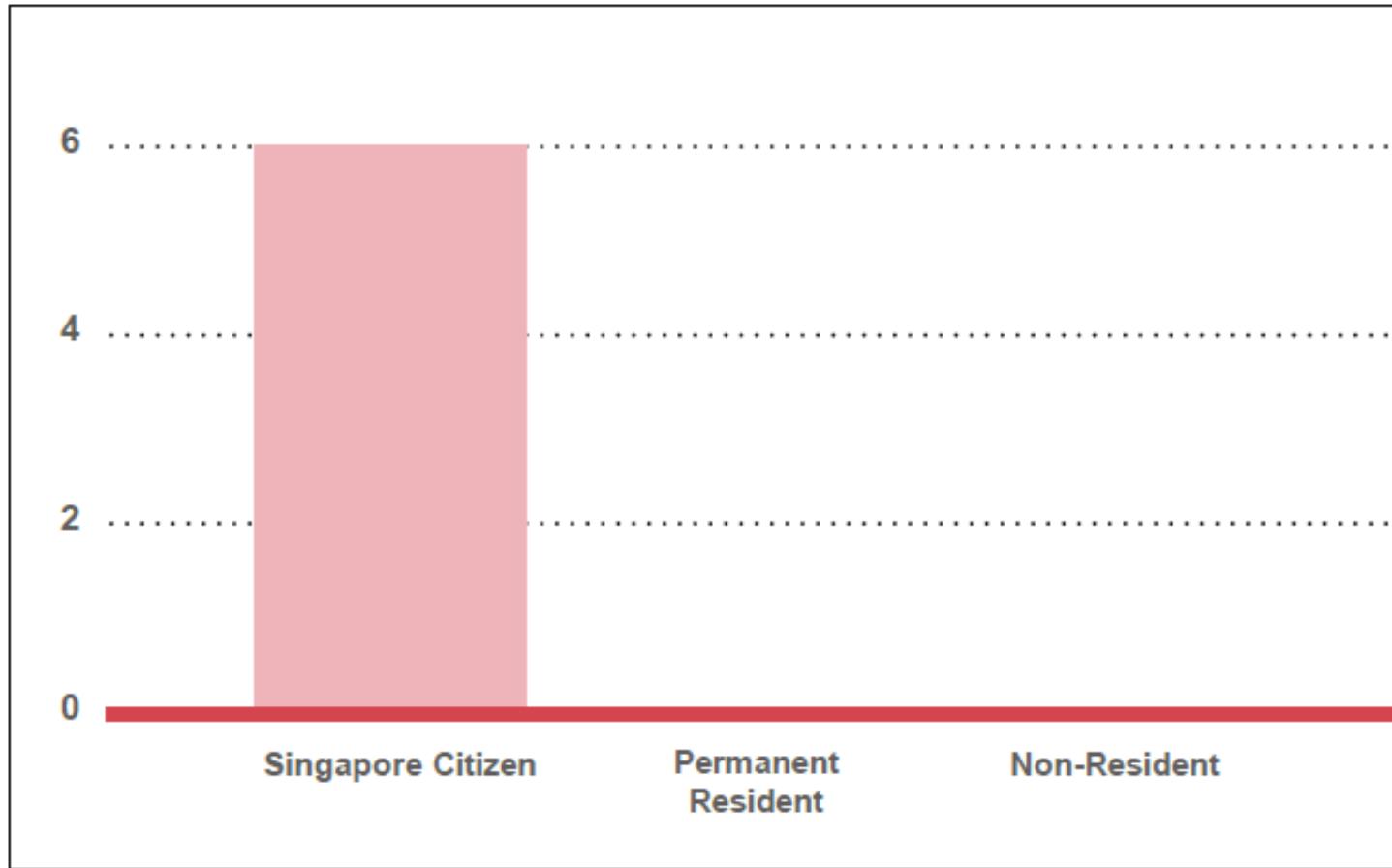


Figure 27. "I value different perspectives from others even when I disagree with them." (Pre-Post Survey Shift by residency status)

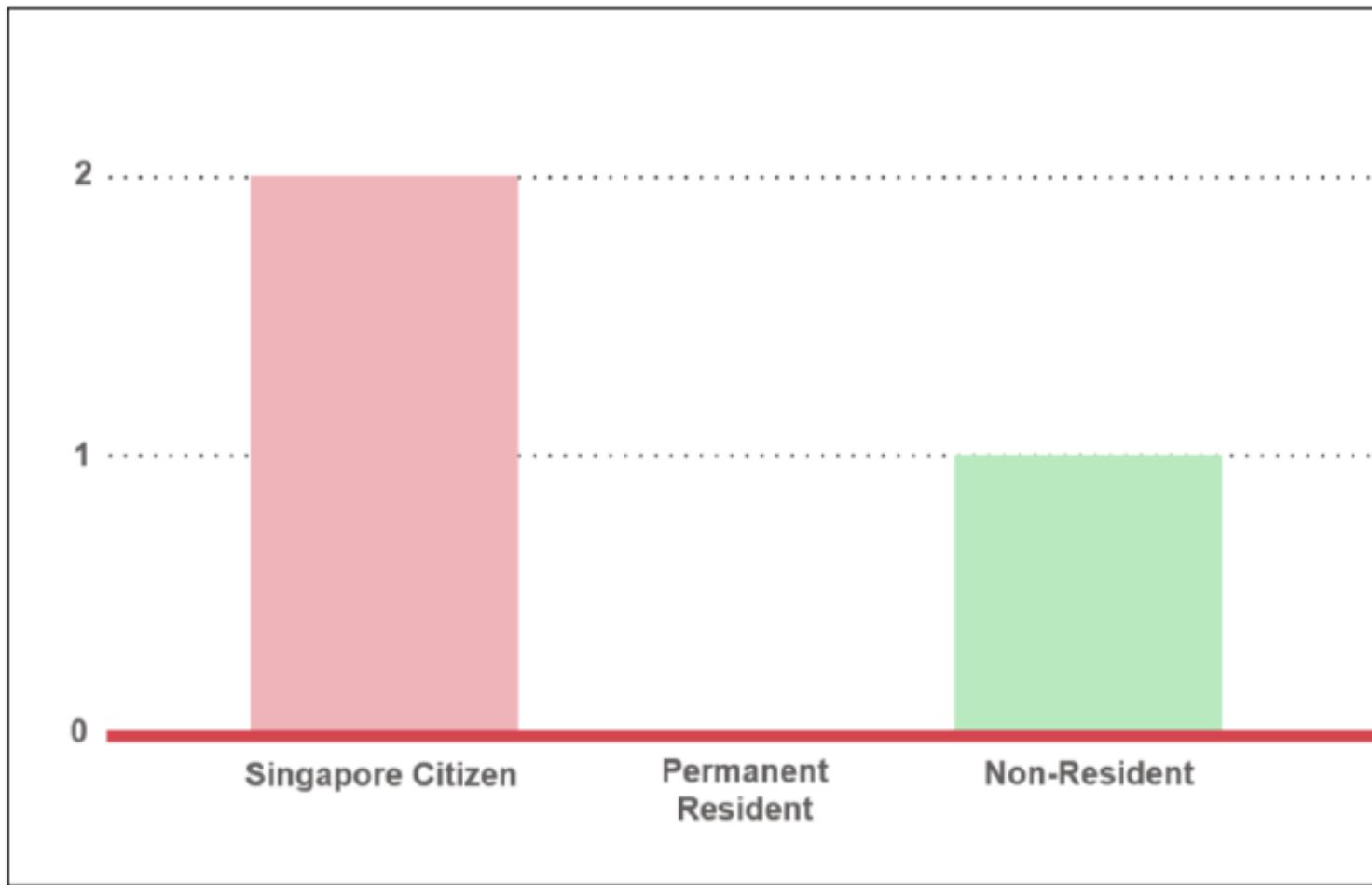


Figure 28. "How sure are you that your views relating to local-foreign integration are correct, given that others may not share your views?"
(Survey Pre-Post Shift by residency status)

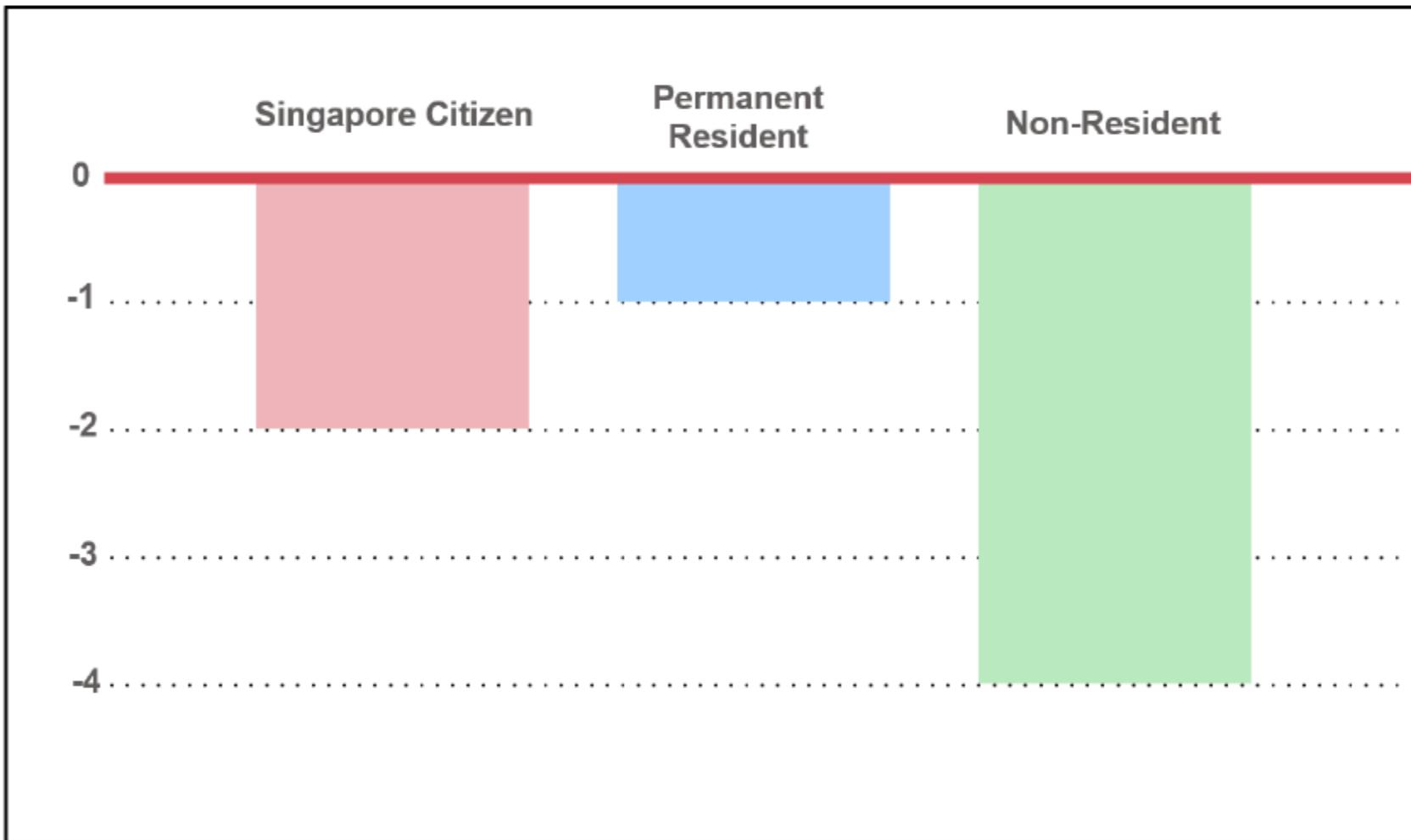
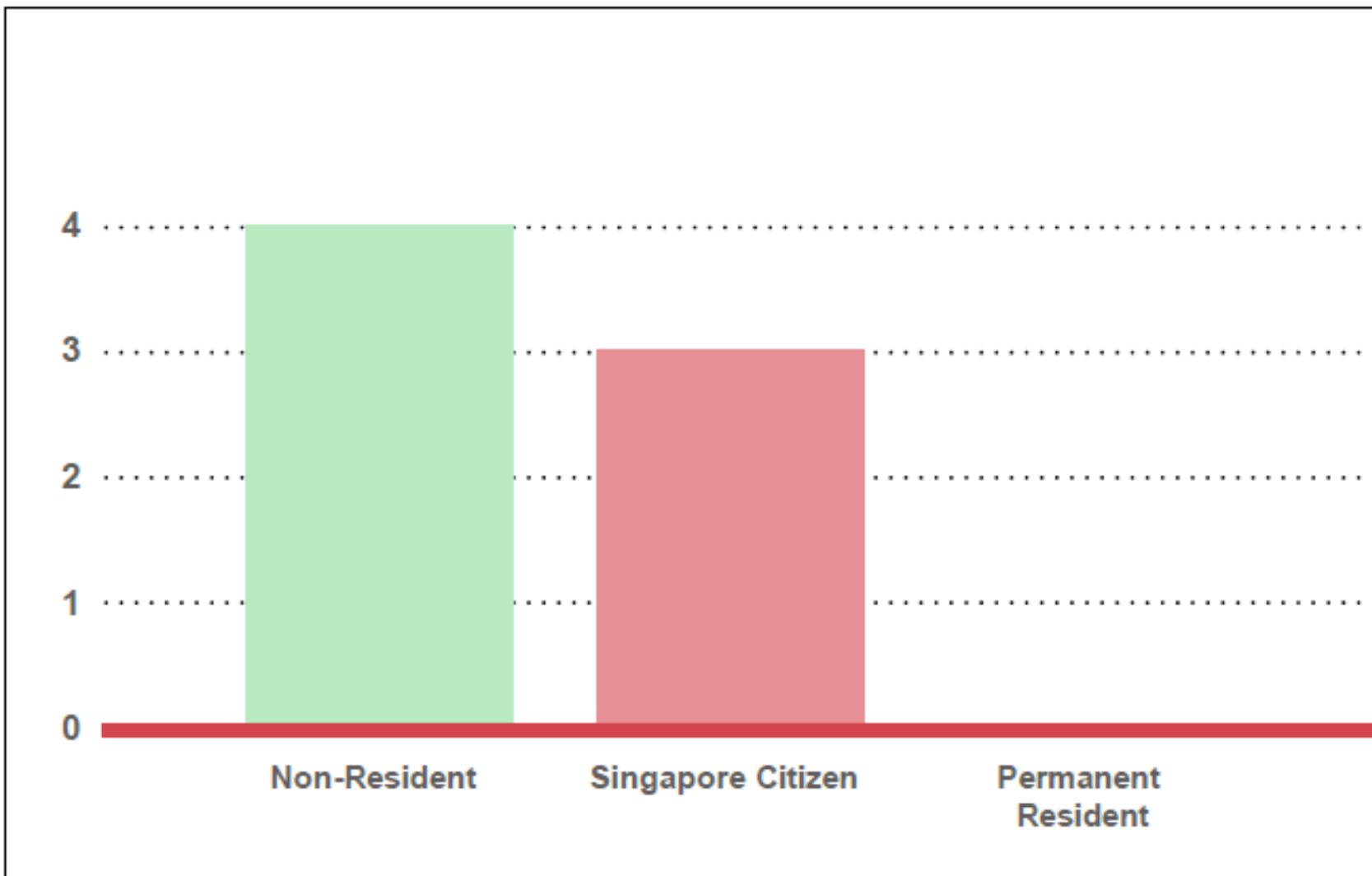


Figure 31. "Citizens in Singapore have a say about what the government does."
(Pre-Post Survey Shift by residency status)



Overall Positive Participant Experience

"Overall, I had a positive experience participating in the Consensus Conference."

**More than 9 in 10
Positive
Experience**

"Overall, I feel that the Consensus Conference was an empowering experience for me."

**Close to 9 in 10
Empowering**

**More than 9 in 10
Meaningful**

"Overall, I feel that the Consensus Conference was a meaningful experience for me."

**More than 8 in 10
Replicable model**

"Overall, I feel that the Consensus Conference can be replicated in other constituencies, communities, or topics."

Key Concerns

Concerns Raised

1. Narratives of Omission

Messaging that foregrounds foreign talent contributions could be balanced with explicit acknowledgment of what citizens contribute through taxes, National Service, and commitment to the nation's future.

2. Framings of Dependency

Policy language could be reviewed for alternatives that position citizens as stakeholders rather than recipients of government generosity.

3. Limited Data Discoverability

Data relevant to local-foreign questions could be made more discoverable on official channels to provide common factual ground.

Overall Concerns Raised

4. “Permanently Temporary”

Long-term foreign residents who wish to sink roots but perceive PR pathways as inaccessible described feeling “permanently temporary.”

- *I’m a foreigner. I’ve been here 10 years [sic]. It’s not that I don’t want to become a PR, it’s that I find it near impossible to become a PR.*” (Non-resident, male, 41, Pakistani)

Implications

- Integration messaging may ring hollow if belonging pathways are perceived as unclear
- May affect talent retention for committed long-term residents
- Creates barrier to deep relationship-building

6. Recommendations

1. Dedicate institutional attention to local-foreign integration as a distinct pillar of Singapore's multiculturalism.

- Existing infrastructure on race and religion (IRCCs, OnePeople.sg) has expertise in fostering social cohesion.
- National Integration Council (NIC) has done extensive work fostering belonging among newcomers.
- Scope to extend and deepen this work
 - **Option A:** Expand mandate of existing bodies (IRCCs, OnePeople.sg, NIC, PA, REACH)
 - **Option B:** Establish dedicated infrastructure with specific mandate on multiculturalism

2. Review public communications with attention to recognition, framing and data discoverability to reduce space for misinformation and ensure balanced acknowledgment of contributions

- **Recognition.** Balance foreign contributions messaging with acknowledgment of citizen contributions
- **Framing.** Review language that positions citizens as recipients rather than stakeholders
- **Data Discoverability.** Make data on local-foreign questions findable on official channels to reduce misinformation

3. Expand the consensus conference pilot to other constituencies and other contested issues where identity and recognition are at stake, to build bridging social capital

- **Other constituencies.** Test replicability in areas with different demographics or more direct friction
- **Other contested issues.** Issues where identity and recognition are at stake
- **Requirements.** Collaboration between partners, and research institutions such as IPS

Conclusion

"The more participation there is by the people in the thousand and one activities of society, the greater the measure of democracy"

— S. Rajaratnam's "democracy of deeds"

- The Consensus Conference suggests this approach can extend across residency lines.
- Participants found workable common ground on contested questions, built relationships that persisted beyond formal sessions, and initiated collaborative action without prompting.
- The polarisation between locals and foreigners may be narrower than public discourse suggests.
- **In Singapore,** Structured deliberation can build bridging social capital, surface common ground, and catalyze collaborative action.

Thank You



Citizens ReAssembled

AI's Impact on Culture and the Creative Industry

Content

1. What is Citizens ReAssembled?
2. Policy Context: AI's effects on Culture & Creative Industry
3. Methodology
 - Sampling
 - Pre-Polling
 - Deliberative Workshop
 - Shareback
 - Post-Polling
4. Evaluation
5. Timeline
6. Budget

Project Team

Design & Implementation (IPS Policy Lab)

- Justin Lee (PI)
- Nick Thomas (Co-PI)
- Wilson Goh (Project Manager)
- Liang Kaixin (Filming/Comms)

Collaborators

- REACH

Polling (IPS Social Lab)

- Mike Hou
- Colin Low

Evaluation (LKYCIC, SUTD)

- Samuel Chng
- Suhaila Binte Zainal Shah

1. What is Citizens ReAssembled?

A kind of Citizen's Panel that is paired together with Polling so that we combine the intense knowledge acquisition and deliberation afforded by small groups of citizen's panels with the mass participation afforded by public polling.

There are certain issues that have persistently divided views amongst different interest groups or the general population at large. This is a citizen deliberation process to see if those who disagree with one another can find meaningful common ground through the result of their own design or deliberation.

The Approach:

- 1. Pre-Deliberation Polling:** Helps to identify diverse opinion groups.
- 2. Deliberation:** Forming citizen's panels made up of people who disagree with one another; and tasking them with arriving at some synthesis or solution.
- 3. Post-Deliberation Polling:** Final round of polling on any new ideas and solutions to see if they can generate mass consensus.

Significance

- Innovation in the approach: Harness collective wisdom of citizens but also complemented by rigor of expert knowledge.
- Policymakers have opportunity to educate citizens on key tensions and critical trade-offs.
- Allows citizens an opportunity to appreciate views different from their own to forge consensus → Breaks apart 'echo chambers' and reassembles citizens to overcome differences.
- Tests and de-risks policy ideas and potential solutions for policy owners.

2. Why this Policy Issue: AI on Culture and Creative Industry

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) is significantly disrupting the cultural industry, transforming various domains such as film, music, visual arts, and literature. This disruption manifests in several key areas including creativity, production processes, distribution, and cultural consumption patterns
- As AI-generated content becomes more prevalent, ethical considerations arise surrounding issues of authenticity, ownership, and copyright. The introduction of AI in creative fields creates complex legal and ethical challenges regarding the extent of human involvement in creative processes.

Policy Issues

1. Transparency & Labelling of AI-made content

How important is it to know whether an artwork or creative product is made by AI?

2. Authorship and Ownership

When art is generated using AI, who owns the art? Is artistic style ownable?

3. AI Training: Copyright & Fair Use: When AI is trained on work that artists put in the public domain, does this count as fair use or infringement?

4. Economic Compensation for Artists

Will AI produced art create new revenue streams for artists they were trained on, or will artists be unfairly compensated?

5. Job Enhancement and Future of Work for Creatives

Will AI produced art create new revenue streams for artists they were trained on, or will artists be unfairly compensated?

6. Cultural Impact: Diversity & Quality of Creative Output

Does AI contribute to job creation or augmentation; or job displacement for the creatives?

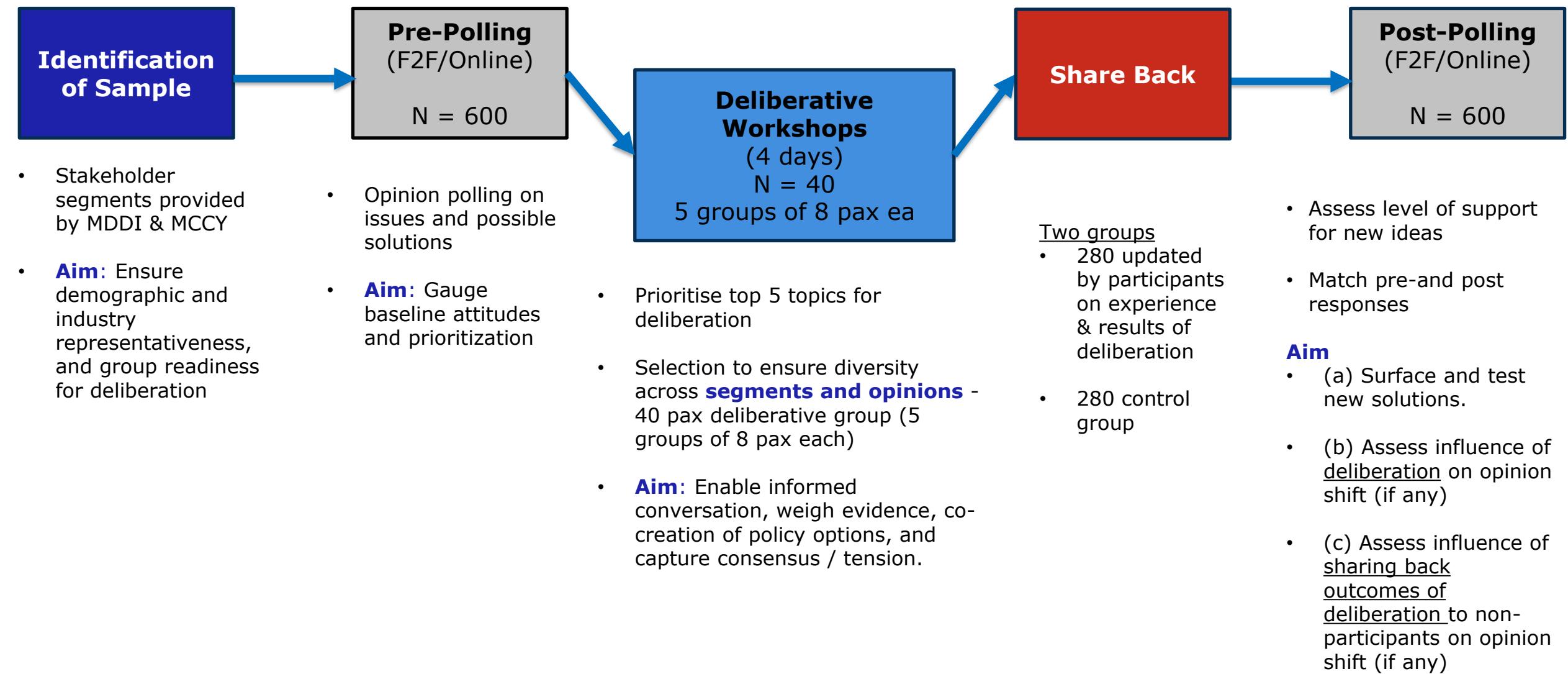
7. Cultural Impact: Discovery & Consumption of Culture

Does AI enable new aesthetic possibilities and enhance the diversity and quality of human creative output; or devalue it through the mass production of art or even low quality 'AI slop'?

Sampling

- N= 600, 100 for each category
- Quota sampling for following Stakeholder Groups:
 1. General Population/Cultural Consumers
 2. Professional Artists and Creatives
 3. AI Developers and Technologists
 4. Creative Industry Executives and Business Leaders
 5. Representatives of Cultural Heritage Institutions and Minority Language Communities
 6. Educators and Students in Creative and Tech Fields

3. Methodology



Pre-Deliberative Polling

Questions have been developed to poll respondents on:

Opinions on issues identified:

- E.g. **Transparency & Labelling** - To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "It is important to know whether an artwork or creative product is made by or assisted by AI."

Views about policy instruments / possible solutions:

- E.g. **Mandatory Labelling System** - "Should there be a mandatory, clear labelling system to identify content that has been generated or significantly altered by AI?"

Deliberative Groups

- N= 40-100
- Deliberative groups of 8 pax
- Each deliberative group will aspire to have the following reps:
 1. General Population/Cultural Consumers x2
 2. Professional Artists and Creatives x1
 3. AI Developers and Technologists x1
 4. Creative Industry Executives and Business Leaders x1
 5. Representatives of Cultural Heritage Institutions and Minority Language Communities x1
 6. Educators and Students in Creative and Tech Fields x2
- Each deliberative group will be filled with those who have varying views with one another

Deliberative Workshops

1. Understand Issues and Appreciate Diversity of Perspectives
2. Understand Existing Policy Instruments and Come up with Ideas
3. Select Concrete and Actionable Solutions (That Balance All Interests)
4. Converge on Policy Solutions
5. Shareback Session - Determine if Interactive Sharing with Participants Affects Opinion Shifts or Views on Proposed Solutions

Post-Deliberative Polling

- All previous respondents will be **re-polled on all the issues**. Our hypothesis is that the groups who have not gone through deliberation will show little change in their opinions. We will be able to determine whether those who have gone through the deliberative workshops have shifted their views—whether extreme views might become more moderated; or whether it simply entrenches their position or otherwise.
- We will also **poll respondents on the new ideas** that have emerged through deliberation, to see if these newly developed ideas or synthesized positions are able to generate more consensus given that they have accounted for diversity of views and gone through reasoned deliberation.

Thank You