

## **Most Singaporean youths satisfied with life; 2 in 5 have never been in a relationship: IPS-NYC study**

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SINGAPORE — Around three in five young people (64 per cent) felt satisfied with their lives in 2022, based on a study that followed more than 3,000 Singaporeans aged between 17 and 24 over a period of six years from 2017 to 2022.

While this number dropped from 74 per cent in 2017, its researchers said that the general downward trend is consistent with global figures, and reflects a typical life experience where levels of happiness tend to wane as people enter their 20s.

The study also found that two in five of the respondents (39 per cent) had never been in a relationship — with the main barrier being that they had not met the right person yet.

Other reasons commonly given included having more important priorities in life, with some finding dating in Singapore stressful in terms of “expenses and expectations”.

Researchers said that limited opportunities for social interactions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic could have caused what they called a “surprising” statistic.

The study, titled Youth Study on Transitions and Evolving Pathways in Singapore (Youth Steps), is a collaboration between the National Youth Council (NYC) and the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) Social Lab at the National University of Singapore.

### **WHY IT MATTERS**

Youth Steps is the nation’s first longitudinal study on young people and explores their life satisfaction, key aspirations and priorities as they moved from adolescence to adulthood.

Mr David Chua, the chief executive officer of NYC, said at a briefing with the media on Monday (Aug 5) that the study’s insights are important in informing policies from both the Government and stakeholders involved with youth development in order to help them thrive.

### **CAREER A KEY PRIORITY BUT ROADBLOCKS REMAIN**

When it comes to life’s priorities, “having a good career” was ranked second among the respondents’ top life goals in the next five years, coming just below “being in good health” and above “having lots of money”.

Although employed respondents reported experiencing more job stress over the years, more also indicated that they were satisfied with their jobs and were able to tolerate work pressures very well.

Dr Chew Han Ei, the study’s principal investigator, said these findings suggested that the young today are “steadily striving to achieve success in their professional lives — counter to claims that young workers today are quiet quitting”.

However, among the young who were not working, more than four in 10 (43 per cent) were concerned that their lack of connections would hinder the pursuit of their chosen career path.

This has consistently been mentioned as the top barrier to employment since 2019.

### **WHAT DO YOUTH WANT IN A JOB?**

From 2018 to 2021, most of the respondents (94 to 95 per cent) consistently felt that job security and opportunities for advancement were key considerations in a job.

However, several job characteristics were being prioritised by fewer respondents over the same time period:

- A job that is useful to society (79 to 76 per cent)
- An interesting job (92 to 88 per cent)
- A job that allows them to help other people (77 to 73 per cent)
- A job that involves personal contact with other people (60 to 56 per cent)

What has seen a marked increase in desirability among youth is flexible work arrangements.

In 2018, only 60 per cent considered it important to find a job that allows them the flexibility to decide their times or days of work. In 2021, this rose to 76 per cent.

Dr Chew believes this rise is due to an increasing number of young people seeking to accommodate their life's interests beyond work.

"They want to grow and learn in their professions, but they also want to pursue their passions outside of work, and that's why work-life separation is important for them," he said.

Other notable insights the study found included:

- More of the young (43 per cent) felt that the pandemic has had a positive impact on their lives in 2022, compared to sentiments in 2020 (31 per cent) and 2021 (34 per cent)
- In 2022, nearly six in 10 (57 per cent) agreed that there were enough opportunities in Singapore for them to achieve their personal aspirations, a marked rise from the 40 per cent recorded in 2020
- About seven out of 10 (69 per cent) indicated plans to upskill or reskill within the next five years

The IPS Social Lab and NYC said that they will continue their research collaboration and extend the Youth Steps study for a further five years.

The panel will include returning participants from the first phase of the study as well as newly recruited members, and will release its results after the study concludes in 2028.