

YOUTH.sg:

The State of Youth in Singapore 2024

Youth & Their Enduring Bonds



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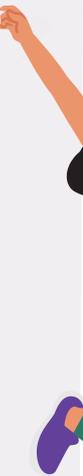
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ISBN: 978-981-94-1777-3

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Published by the National Youth Council





NATIONAL
YOUTH
COUNCIL
SINGAPORE

WE HEAR **Y**OUTH
HERE FOR **Y**OUTH

At NYC, we believe in a world where young people are respected and heard and have the ability to influence and make a difference in the world. Together with our partners, we develop future-ready youth who are committed to Singapore by instilling in them a heart for service, resilience and an enterprising spirit.



Our Vision

Thriving youth who are **future-ready and committed to Singapore**



Our Mission

Create **opportunities for all Singaporean youth** to be **heard**, to be **empowered** and **be the change**



Our Background

NYC was set up by the Singapore Government on 1 November 1989 as the national co-ordinating body for youth affairs in Singapore and the focal point of international youth affairs.

On 1 January 2015, NYC began its operations as an autonomous agency under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) and housed two key institutions: Outward Bound Singapore (OBS) and Youth Corps Singapore (YCS).

Together, the agency drives youth development and broadens outreach to young Singaporeans and youth sector organisations.

Visit www.nyc.gov.sg for more information.



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Preface

The National Youth Survey (NYS) studies the major concerns and issues of schooling and working youths in Singapore. It is a time-series survey that tracks and provides updated analyses of national youth statistics and outcomes to inform policy and practice. To date, NYS has been conducted in 2002, 2005, 2010, 2013, 2016, 2019, and 2022. Findings and analyses from each cycle of NYS are subsequently published as YOUTH.sg: The State of Youth in Singapore (YOUTH.sg).

This edition of YOUTH.sg consists of five separate issues covering topics concerning the state of youth today:



Youth & Their Diverse Priorities

shed light on the aspirations, values & attitudes driving youths



Youth & the Future of Work

focuses on youths' education & employment related attitudes and future readiness



Youth & Their Enduring Bonds

provides insights into the strength and quality of youths' social support



Youth & the Power of Communities

delves into youths' sense of social cohesion and civic engagement



Youth & Their Strides Towards Flourishing

highlights multiple aspects of youths' wellbeing and ability to thrive

Each issue features youth statistics and insights from the NYS. Together, the five issues of YOUTH.sg intend to shed light on and explore specific emergent trends and issues of youths.

This publication has been put together by the Research team at the National Youth Council.

Notation

NA Not Available

Notes

Percentages may not total up to 100% due to rounding.
Survey figures may vary slightly due to sample weighting.

Social Support

Social support refers to the availability and perceived degree of support that youths receive from significant others (e.g., family, friends, partners) in their lives, and is especially salient during times of intense change and uncertainty. The support a young person receives from their family environment as well as the strengths and diversity of their social networks are pivotal in influencing youth development, wellbeing, and their ability to thrive in the face of adversity (Southwick et al., 2016).



Social Support

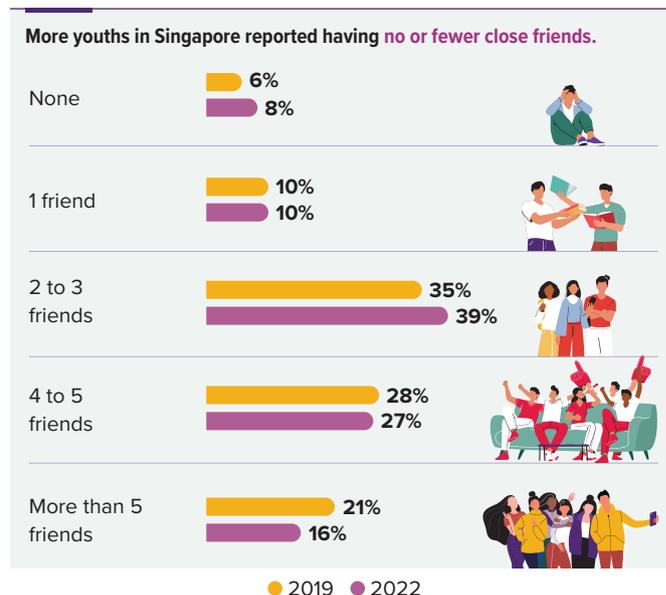
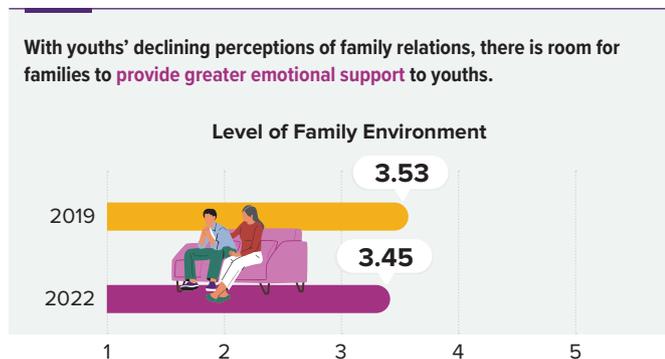
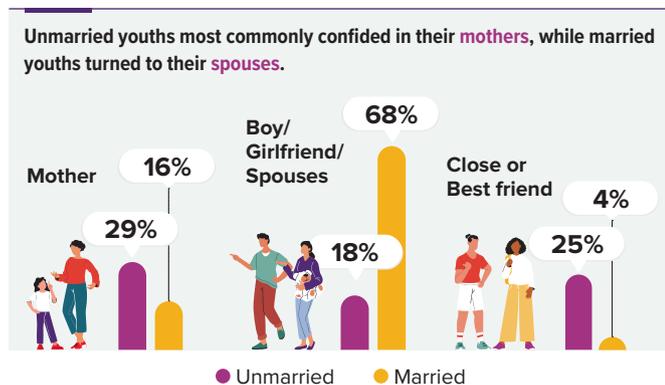
We all have a fundamental need for belonging and the desire to form and maintain interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). These social connections serve as crucial buffers against stressful events (Cohen & Wills, 1985), and without them, our health and well-being may suffer (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). A supportive network plays a significant role in shaping an individual’s well-being, providing a safe space for seeking help and encouragement in an increasingly complex and uncertain world.

Youths demonstrate a strong commitment to nurturing bonds within their communities, dedicating most of their leisure time towards activities with immediate families and friends. This investment in relationships strengthens ties with those they can rely on for support. Consequently, family and friends are primary sources of emotional and developmental support for youths, who turn to them first when seeking advice for personal problems and

important life decisions. However, despite families often providing practical guidance, more can be done to provide greater emotional support in light of gradual declines in the perceived quality of family relationships. This is critical, as the quality of relationships may play a significant role in enhancing well-being and resilience (Nola et al., 2023; Ozbay et al., 2007).

In an age marked by greater polarization and increasing loneliness (Grechyna, 2016; World Health Organization, 2023), robust bonding capital is vital to ensure youths maintain close-knit ties within social networks and loved ones, while strong bridging capital facilitates the formation of new connections and fosters understanding diverse perspectives, thereby preventing societal divide (Putnam, 2000; Williams, 2006). In general, existing relationships remain strong, with high and stable bonding and bridging social capital among youths. Nevertheless, the observed declining size and diversity of close friendship circles warrants attention. It is important to continue providing opportunities for young people to strengthen existing bonds and form new connections beyond their usual social circles, supporting the maintenance of diverse networks.

Social ties can be likened to both a safety net and a scaffold for our youth—catching them when they falter and providing support as they flourish. By fostering strong social circles and families, we can nurture confident young individuals capable of overcoming obstacles and realising their fullest potential.



Part A: FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

Section A1:

FAMILY SUPPORT & CHALLENGE

While on a gradual decline, youths continued to report high levels of support and challenge over the years (Tables A1 and A2). A family environment which is both supportive, and which challenges youths to do well, tends to be closely linked to positive developmental outcomes for adolescents (Rathunde, 2001), and continues to affect the health and wellbeing outcomes of youths even into young adulthood (Chen et al., 2019).



To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your family of upbringing. In my family, (Based on a 5-pt scale, where 5="strongly agree", 3="neither agree nor disagree", & 1="strongly disagree".)

Table A1:

MEAN RATINGS OF YOUTHS' LEVEL OF FAMILY SUPPORT OVER TIME (WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARENTHESES)

	2013	2016	2019	2022
	(n=2,843)	(n=3,531)	(n=3,392)	(n=3,565)
Family Support (Aggregate)^a	4.29 (0.68)	4.28 (0.67)	4.12 (0.71)	4.00 (0.78)
I feel appreciated for who I am	4.18 (0.84)	4.23 (0.79)	3.97 (0.90)	3.84 (0.96)
No matter what happens, I know I'll be loved and accepted	4.36 (0.77)	4.29 (0.79)	4.15 (0.87)	4.00 (0.95)
We are willing to help each other out when something needs to be done	4.35 (0.70)	4.32 (0.72)	4.25 (0.75)	4.17 (0.80)

Note

a. Calculation of aggregate score is based on shortened question barrel in NYS 2019.

Table A2:

MEAN RATINGS OF YOUTHS' LEVEL OF FAMILY CHALLENGE OVER TIME (WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARENTHESES)

	2013	2016	2019	2022
	(n=2,843)	(n=3,531)	(n=3,392)	(n=3,565)
Family Challenge (Aggregate)^a	4.11 (0.64)	4.06 (0.65)	3.99 (0.61)	3.91 (0.64)
I'm expected to do my best	4.22 (0.75)	4.14 (0.78)	4.12 (0.79)	4.05 (0.82)
I try to make other family members proud	4.20 (0.77)	4.17 (0.79)	4.10 (0.83)	4.02 (0.87)
I'm encouraged to get involved in activities outside school and work	3.89 (0.90)	3.83 (0.93)	3.71 (0.93)	3.64 (0.97)
I'm expected to use my time wisely	4.14 (0.76)	4.08 (0.79)	4.03 (0.79)	3.94 (0.83)

Note

a. Calculation of aggregate score is based on shortened question barrel in NYS 2019.

Section A2:

FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

Youths' bonds with their parents are fundamental in shaping their development. These relationships play a crucial role in nurturing key qualities in young people, particularly self-confidence and responsible behaviour (Collins & Laursen, 2004; Frosch et al., 2021).

While perceptions of family environment were generally positive among youths of all age groups, there is room for families to offer greater emotional support to youths (Table A3 and A4).



To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your family of upbringing?
(Based on a 5-pt scale, where 5="strongly agree", 3="neither agree nor disagree", & 1="strongly disagree".)

Table A3:

MEAN RATINGS OF YOUTHS' LEVEL OF FAMILY ENVIRONMENT OVER TIME (WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARENTHESES)

	2019 (n=3,392)	2022 (n=3,565)
Family Environment (Aggregate)	3.53 (0.74)	3.45 (0.76)
We cannot talk to each other about feeling sad ^a	2.59 (1.06)	2.68 (1.10)
We don't get along well with each other ^a	2.13 (0.96)	2.21 (1.00)
We avoid discussing our fears and concerns with each other ^a	2.87 (1.08)	2.94 (1.10)
We confide in each other	3.49 (1.00)	3.39 (1.03)
We express our feelings to each other	3.43 (1.03)	3.31 (1.06)
We are able to make decisions about how to solve problems	3.85 (0.83)	3.83 (0.85)

Notes

This is a new scale introduced in NYS 2019.

a. These items were reverse coded in the aggregated score.



Table A4:
MEAN RATINGS OF YOUTHS' LEVEL OF FAMILY ENVIRONMENT BY AGE (WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARENTHESIS)

	15-19 (n=711)	20-24 (n=802)	25-29 (n=963)	30-34 (n=1,090)	Overall (n=3,565)
Family Environment (Aggregate)	3.56 (0.72)	3.42 (0.77)	3.38 (0.78)	3.47 (0.74)	3.45 (0.76)
We cannot talk to each other about feeling sad ^a	2.61 (1.07)	2.75 (1.15)	2.73 (1.12)	2.63 (1.05)	2.68 (1.10)
We don't get along well with each other ^a	2.13 (0.99)	2.24 (1.07)	2.24 (0.97)	2.20 (0.97)	2.21 (1.00)
We avoid discussing our fears and concerns with each other ^a	2.84 (1.06)	3.00 (1.13)	3.01 (1.11)	2.91 (1.10)	2.94 (1.10)
We confide in each other	3.52 (0.97)	3.34 (1.07)	3.28 (1.04)	3.42 (1.02)	3.39 (1.03)
We express our feelings to each other	3.49 (1.02)	3.30 (1.11)	3.17 (1.06)	3.34 (1.04)	3.31 (1.06)
We are able to make decisions about how to solve problems	3.90 (0.81)	3.87 (0.86)	3.78 (0.86)	3.81 (0.86)	3.83 (0.85)

Note

a. These items were reverse coded in the aggregated score.



Part B: FRIENDSHIP

Section B1:

NUMBER OF CLOSE FRIENDS

Beyond familial bonds, the presence of close friendships and the ability to turn to these friends for advice or help is associated with better life satisfaction over life stages (Gillespie et al., 2015). While the majority of youths reported having at least one close friend, the proportion of those reporting large friendship circles has declined (Table B1). A small but growing segment were likely to have no close friends, a trend potentially exacerbated by the socially disruptive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Goodwin et al., 2020; Ong, 2023). As with previous years, older youths tend to report relatively fewer close friends compared to younger youths (Table B2).



“Close friends are people you feel at ease with, can talk to about private matters, or call on for help.”

With the above in mind, how many close friends do you have?

Table B1:

YOUTHS' NUMBER OF CLOSE FRIENDS OVER TIME

	2013 (n=2,843)	2016 (n=3,531)	2019 (n=3,392)	2022 (n=3,565)
More than 5	26%	20%	21%	16%
4 to 5	30%	29%	28%	27%
2 to 3	32%	36%	35%	39%
1	8%	9%	10%	10%
None	4%	6%	6%	8%

Table B2:

YOUTHS' NUMBER OF CLOSE FRIENDS BY AGE

	15-19 (n=711)	20-24 (n=802)	25-29 (n=963)	30-34 (n=1,090)	Overall (n=3,565)
More than 5	22%	18%	14%	14%	16%
4 to 5	27%	26%	27%	26%	27%
2 to 3	35%	40%	42%	38%	39%
1	10%	9%	10%	12%	10%
None	6%	7%	7%	10%	8%

Section B2:

SOURCES OF CLOSE FRIENDS

School was the top source of close friends for youths of all age groups. This was followed by workplaces among older youths and through other friends or social networks among younger youths (Table B3).



Select up to three ways in which you met your close friends.

Table B3:

YOUTHS' SOURCES OF CLOSE FRIENDS BY AGE

	15-19 (n=666)	20-24 (n=747)	25-29 (n=891)	30-34 (n=982)	Overall (n=3,285)
School	97%	92%	86%	81%	88%
Workplace	5%	17%	35%	51%	30%
Through other friends/social networks	23%	18%	20%	17%	19%
National Service	2%	19%	15%	13%	13%
Hobby/interest groups	14%	13%	12%	9%	11%
Religious community	8%	7%	10%	10%	9%
Internet	15%	9%	7%	5%	8%
Neighbourhood	9%	6%	4%	6%	6%
Sports activities	13%	5%	6%	4%	7%
Public places/gatherings	5%	3%	5%	5%	4%
Through family members/relatives	6%	4%	4%	6%	5%
Others	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Notes

This is a multiple response item, hence figures will not sum to 100%.
The upper-bound survey population figures are reflected in this table.



Section B3:

FRIENDSHIP DIVERSITY

Alongside smaller friendship circles, friendship diversity also saw slight declines by income group, religion, educational background, race, and nationality (Table B4). Younger youths were more likely to report having close friends from diverse backgrounds as compared to older youths (Table B5).



Do you have close friends who are of a different race, nationality, religion, income group, or educational background?

Table B4:

FRIENDSHIP DIVERSITY OVER TIME

	2013 (n=2,723)	2016 (n=3,324)	2019 (n=3,392)	2022 (n=3,565)
Different race	53%	60%	62%	58%
Different nationality	42%	45%	47%	43%
Different religion	80%	80%	82%	78%
Different income group ^a	NA	85%	84%	80%
Different educational background ^a	NA	72%	69%	64%

Note

a. Items are new to NYS 2016.

Table B5:

FRIENDSHIP DIVERSITY BY AGE

	15-19 (n=711)	20-24 (n=802)	25-29 (n=963)	30-34 (n=1,090)	Overall (n=3,565)
Different race	73%	62%	58%	46%	58%
Different nationality	57%	45%	39%	36%	43%
Different religion	84%	84%	77%	71%	78%
Different income group	81%	85%	81%	74%	80%
Different educational background	66%	68%	64%	60%	64%

Table B6:
FRIENDSHIP DIVERSITY BY RACE

	Chinese (n=2,538)	Malay (n=589)	Indian (n=328)	Others (n=110)	Overall (n=3,565)
Different race	51%	71%	81%	87%	58%
Different nationality	41%	40%	59%	64%	43%
Different religion	78%	71%	86%	89%	78%
Different income group	79%	78%	84%	84%	80%
Different educational background	59%	75%	73%	77%	64%



Section B4:

**SOCIAL
CAPITAL**

Bonding social capital refers to the strong ties that closely bind smaller, denser networks together, while bridging social capital involves building connections between different social groups or communities.

Youths continued to report strong social capital overall. A slight increase was observed for bonding social capital (Table B7), where the isolation brought on by the pandemic may have encouraged young people to value their existing connections and relationships (Barker et al., 2022).



We would like to know more about the people around you. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
(Based on a 5-pt scale, where 5=“strongly agree”, 3=“neither agree nor disagree”, & 1=“strongly disagree”.)

Table B7:**MEAN RATINGS OF YOUTHS' BONDING CAPITAL OVER TIME** (WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARENTHESES)

	2019	2020	2021	2022
	(n=3,178)	(n=3,013)	(n=2,740)	(n=2,608)
Bonding Capital (Aggregate)	15.82 (2.78)	16.05 (2.82)	16.18 (2.74)	16.35 (2.69)
There is someone I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions	4.10 (0.80)	4.09 (0.82)	4.18 (0.79)	4.17 (0.77)
I have people who would stand up for me if I were treated unfairly	4.00 (0.81)	4.02 (0.82)	4.05 (0.81)	4.08 (0.79)
There are several people I trust to help solve my problems	3.96 (0.82)	4.04 (0.84)	4.02 (0.82)	4.08 (0.77)
If I needed an emergency loan, I know someone I can turn to	3.75 (1.01)	3.85 (1.00)	3.92 (0.98)	3.99 (0.90)

Source: Youth STEPS (National Youth Council & IPS Social Lab, 2019-2022).

Table B8:**MEAN RATINGS OF YOUTHS' BRIDGING CAPITAL OVER TIME** (WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARENTHESES)

	2019	2020	2021	2022
	(n=3,178)	(n=3,013)	(n=2,740)	(n=2,608)
Bridging Capital (Aggregate)	7.98 (1.42)	7.99 (1.38)	8.05 (1.38)	8.06 (1.40)
Interacting with people makes me want to try new things	4.01 (0.75)	4.02 (0.73)	4.04 (0.74)	4.04 (0.77)
Interacting with people makes me interested in things that happen outside of my community	3.98 (0.78)	3.97 (0.78)	4.02 (0.76)	4.02 (0.75)

Source: Youth STEPS (National Youth Council & IPS Social Lab, 2019-2022).

Part C: LIVING ARRANGEMENTS & BEHAVIOURS

Section C1:

ADVICE-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

Majority of youths continued to have someone to turn to when they need support (Tables C1 and C3). Youths' preferences for their confidantes depend on the situation they find themselves in. Most youths would first turn to their partners for advice on personal problems (Table C1), but would look to their mothers for advice regarding life decisions (Table C3).



Select up to three most important persons you would turn to when you are worried or troubled with a personal problem, with the 1st person being the most important person.

Table C1:

FIRST PERSON YOUTHS TURN TO FOR ADVICE REGARDING A PERSONAL PROBLEM OVER TIME

	2013 (n=2,843)	2016 (n=3,531)	2019 (n=3,392)	2022 (n=3,565)
Father	10%	9%	9%	11%
Mother	28%	28%	28%	26%
Boy/Girlfriend or spouse	29%	31%	33%	30%
Close or best friend	21%	23%	19%	20%
Others	9%	9%	8%	10%
None	4%	1%	4%	4%

Table C2:

FIRST PERSON YOUTHS TURN TO FOR ADVICE REGARDING A PERSONAL PROBLEM BY MARITAL STATUS

	Unmarried Youths (n=2,639)	Married Youths (n=871)
Father	13%	6%
Mother	29%	16%
Boy/Girlfriend or spouse	18%	68%
Close or best friend	25%	4%
Others	11%	5%
None	5%	1%



Select up to three most important persons you would turn to for advice on important life decisions, with the 1st person being the most important person.

Table C3:

FIRST PERSON YOUTHS TURN TO FOR ADVICE REGARDING A LIFE DECISION OVER TIME

	2013 (n=2,843)	2016 (n=3,531)	2019 (n=3,392)	2022 (n=3,565)
Father	19%	19%	19%	20%
Mother	31%	34%	30%	30%
Boy/Girlfriend or spouse	25%	24%	27%	24%
Close or best friend	10%	11%	9%	11%
Others	10%	11%	12%	11%
None	4%	1%	5%	3%

Table C4:

FIRST PERSON YOUTHS TURN TO FOR ADVICE REGARDING A LIFE DECISION BY MARITAL STATUS

	Unmarried Youths (n=2,639)	Married Youths (n=871)
Father	23%	11%
Mother	35%	14%
Boy/Girlfriend or spouse	11%	64%
Close or best friend	14%	4%
Others	13%	6%
None	4%	2%



Section C2:

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OVER TIME

Youths' household living arrangements have remained largely consistent over the years. The majority of unmarried youths resided together with their parents, while nearly all married youths lived with their spouses (Tables C5 and C6).



How many persons in each of the following categories currently live with you in your household?

Table C5:

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF UNMARRIED YOUTHS OVER TIME

	2013 (n=2,089)	2016 (n=2,569)	2019 (n=2,500)	2022 (n=2,639)
Parent(s)	97%	97%	95%	95%
Sibling(s)	72%	68%	66%	65%
Grandparent(s)	13%	10%	13%	12%
Boy/Girlfriend	1%	1%	1%	3%
Child/Children	1%	1%	1%	1%
Relative(s)	5%	5%	4%	5%
Domestic helper(s)	11%	10%	11%	11%

Notes

This is a multiple response item, hence figures will not sum to 100%.
The overall unmarried survey population figures are reflected in this table.

Table C6:

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF MARRIED YOUTHS OVER TIME

	2013 (n=713)	2016 (n=888)	2019 (n=851)	2022 (n=871)
Parent(s)	36%	31%	24%	24%
Sibling(s)	18%	15%	9%	12%
Grandparent(s)	2%	2%	2%	1%
Spouse	89%	93%	92%	95%
Child/Children	61%	58%	54%	54%
Relative(s)	2%	2%	1%	2%
Domestic helper(s)	15%	13%	13%	15%

Notes

This is a multiple response item, hence figures will not sum to 100%.
The overall married survey population figures are reflected in this table.

Part D: NON-SCHOOL/WORK ACTIVITIES

Section D1:

TIME SPENT ON NON-SCHOOL/WORK ACTIVITIES

Frequent and diverse participation in leisure activities can have a positive impact on one's long-term psychological wellbeing (Shin & You, 2013). In an average week, youths spent most of their time with family, going online, and socialising with friends (Table D1). This was consistent across all age groups. However, indicative of life stage priorities, younger youths were more likely to spend their time on learning activities, while older youths were more likely to spend their leisure time with family (Table D2).



On average, how many hours a week do you spend on the following activities outside of school and work? (Please provide your estimate.)

Table D1:

PROPORTION OF TIME SPENT PER WEEK ON NON-SCHOOL/ WORK ACTIVITIES OVER TIME

	2013 (n=2,843)	2016 (n=3,531)	2019 (n=3,392)	2022 (n=3,565)
Average Leisure Time^a	40	49	43	40
Activities with immediate family and other relatives ^b (e.g., going out, having dinner together)	26%	33%	32%	33%
Online activities (e.g., gaming, chatting, social networking, reading blogs)	25%	23%	21%	22%
Activities with friends (e.g., movies, hanging out, concerts)	19%	16%	13%	13%
Learning activities (e.g., reading, studying or doing homework, excluding school hours)	19%	14%	13%	11%
Activities with boyfriend/girlfriend ^c (e.g., dating, hanging out)	NA	NA	10%	9%
Physical activities (e.g., exercising or playing sports)	11%	9%	8%	9%
Entrepreneurship activities (e.g., business planning, running stalls, selling items & services online)	4%	3%	2%	2%
Volunteer activities and/or community projects (e.g., helping in a welfare home or a place of worship, voluntary welfare organisations, grassroots activities)	4%	2%	2%	1%

Notes

The upper-bound survey population figures are reflected in this table.

a. Proportion of time spent is calculated by taking the number of hours reported for each activity over the total number of hours reported for all non-school/work activities.

b. In NYS 2013, family was captured as parents and other relatives. NYS 2016 rephrased the example used to more accurately capture activities with immediate family including one's siblings and spouse, and separately measured activities with other relatives.

c. Item is new to NYS 2019.

Table D2:
PROPORTION OF TIME SPENT PER WEEK ON NON-SCHOOL/ WORK ACTIVITIES BY AGE

	15-19 (n=711)	20-24 (n=802)	25-29 (n=963)	30-34 (n=1,090)	Overall (n=3,565)
Average Leisure Time^a	49	44	37	35	40
Activities with immediate family and other relatives (e.g., going out, having dinner together)	25%	26%	31%	44%	33%
Online activities (e.g., gaming, chatting, social networking, reading blogs)	25%	23%	23%	20%	22%
Activities with friends (e.g., movies, hanging out, concerts)	14%	14%	13%	10%	13%
Learning activities (e.g., reading, studying or doing homework, excluding school hours)	20%	15%	8%	6%	11%
Activities with boyfriend/ girlfriend (e.g., dating, hanging out)	4%	9%	13%	8%	9%
Physical activities (e.g., exercising or playing sports)	9%	8%	9%	9%	9%
Entrepreneurship activities (e.g., business planning, running stalls, selling items & services online)	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%
Volunteer activities and/or community projects (e.g., helping in a welfare home or a place of worship, voluntary welfare organisations, grassroots activities)	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%

Notes

The upper-bound survey population figures are reflected in this table.

a. Proportion of time spent is calculated by taking the number of hours reported for each activity over the total number of hours reported for all non-school/work activities.



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About the National Youth Survey

The NYS represents a milestone in Singapore’s youth research with its resource-based approach that focuses on the support youths require for societal engagement (social capital) and individual development (human capital).

The National Youth Indicators Framework (NYIF) (Ho & Yip, 2003) was formulated to provide a comprehensive, systematic, and theoretically-grounded assessment of youths in Singapore. The NYIF draws from the existing research literature, policy-relevant indicators, and youth development models. It spans six domains of social and human capital. Table I summarises the framework.

**TABLE I :
NATIONAL YOUTH INDICATORS FRAMEWORK**

	Social Capital (Grootaert & van Bastelaer, 2002; Putnam, 2000)	Human Capital (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2017)
Definition	Social capital refers to the relationships within and between groups, and the shared norms and trust that govern these interactions.	Human capital refers to the skills, competencies, and attitudes of individuals, which in turn create personal, social, and economic wellbeing.
Domains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social support • Social participation • Values & attitudes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Employment • Wellbeing
Focus	The power of relationships	The human potential of young people

NYS 2022 adopted a random (i.e., probability-based) sampling method to ensure responses are representative of the resident youth population aged 15 to 34 years old.

The fieldwork period spanned November 2022 to February 2023. A total of 3,565 youths were successfully surveyed, of which 150 were surveyed at their households. Demographic proportions of NYS respondents adhered closely to the youth population.

Table II presents the profile of respondents from NYS 2013, 2016, 2019, and 2022. Figures referenced in all tables in the publication were weighted according to interlocking matrices of age, gender, and race of the respective youth populations.

TABLE II :
PROFILE OF NYS RESPONDENTS

		NYS 2013 (n=2,843)	NYS 2016 (n=3,531)	NYS 2019 (n=3,392)	NYS 2022 (n= 3,565)	Latest Youth Population ^a
Age	15-19	24%	23%	21%	20%	20%
	20-24	25%	25%	24%	22%	22%
	25-29	24%	25%	27%	27%	27%
	30-34	28%	27%	28%	31%	31%
Gender	Male	49%	49%	50%	50%	50%
	Female	51%	51%	50%	50%	50%
Race	Chinese	72%	72%	72%	71%	71%
	Malay	16%	16%	17%	17%	17%
	Indian	10%	9%	9%	9%	9%
	Others	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Nationality	Singaporean	90%	94%	93%	93%	86%
	Permanent Resident	10%	6%	7%	7%	14%
Marital Status	Single	74%	73%	74%	74%	75%
	Married	25%	26%	25%	25%	25%
	Divorced/Separated/Widowed	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Religion	Buddhism	25%	24%	22%	21%	26%
	Islam	19%	20%	21%	20%	20%
	Christianity	19%	19%	20%	20%	18%
	Hinduism	6%	5%	5%	5%	5%
	Taoism/Traditional Chinese Beliefs	7%	6%	5%	4%	6%
	Other Religions	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Dwelling	No Religion	23%	25%	27%	29%	25%
	HDB 1-2 rooms	3%	5%	4%	6%	4%
	HDB 3 rooms	14%	14%	14%	13%	11%
	HDB 4 rooms	37%	38%	35%	30%	34%
	HDB 5 rooms, executive, & above	32%	29%	30%	33%	29%
	Private flat & condominium	9%	9%	12%	13%	15%
	Private house & bungalow	6%	4%	4%	4%	6%
Others	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	

Note

a. Latest youth population refers to the most recent available data from the Department of Statistics (DOS) at the time of fieldwork – age, gender, race, nationality and dwelling (DOS, 2022a, 2022b and 2022c) as well as marital status, and religion (DOS, 2020a and 2020b).

About Youth STEPS

YOUTH STUDY ON TRANSITIONS AND EVOLVING PATHWAYS IN SINGAPORE (YOUTH STEPS)

NYC and the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) Social Lab have partnered to embark on the first national-level longitudinal study of youths in Singapore to better understand young people's experiences as they live, study, work, and play in Singapore.

Between 2017 and 2022, the Youth STEPS has explored youths' evolving life aspirations, values and attitudes, and achievements and mobility as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. A nationally representative youth panel of 17- to 24-year-old youths were recruited in 2017. By 2022, the study has successfully followed the lives of 2,620 youths across waves one through six. Annual survey fieldwork and data analysis are undertaken by IPS Social Lab.

In 2024, Youth STEPS continues to understand young people's experiences as they enter their late youthhood and make further progress on their aspirations. Findings from the longitudinal study generated invaluable insights to inform and improve policies and programmes for youth in Singapore. To find out more, read about the Youth STEPS findings [here](#).

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YOUTH IN SINGAPORE: A BRIEF DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

Takeaways

Young people form a cornerstone of Singapore's social and economic landscape, representing a sizeable segment of the population. In 2023, Singapore's resident youth population (aged 15 to 34 years old) accounted for one-quarter of the resident population. The gender ratio has held steady with an even split. The ethnic background of our resident youth population remains diverse, and there is a sizeable proportion of youths who are holding Permanent Residency.



The demographic trends of our youths not only reflect the progress of our nation, but also the amalgamation of decisions they have made at each point of transition. Over the past 40 years, young people have been pursuing higher educational attainment and delaying marriage. In 2023, 58% of youths aged 25 to 29 years old in the workforce had attained at least a university degree and 87% of youths aged 20 to 29 years old were single.

Beyond a diverse demographic composition, the changes in attainment of milestones reflect the shifting landscape of Singapore's youth. In the YOUTH.sg publication, the National Youth Council explores time trends across both administrative data and perception data from the National Youth Survey to offer a holistic understanding of young people. These deeper insights serve to provide a comprehensive overview to inform youth development, policy, and practice.



Youth Population

As of 2023, Singapore's total population stood at 5.9 million, with a resident population of 4.1 million (Department of Statistics (DOS), 2023a). Within this, the resident youth population (aged 15 to 34 years old) comprised a sizeable proportion at approximately 1 million people (see Chart I). However, this youth demographic is shrinking relative to the overall population, as evidenced by

the rise in the median age of residents from 27 years in 1984 to 42 years in 2023. This demographic shift signalled significant societal changes, with the dwindling youth population and growing elderly cohort suggesting increased pressures on younger generations, as more face greater responsibilities in supporting an ageing society in the years to come.

Chart I.

OVERALL POPULATION AND YOUTH POPULATION IN SINGAPORE IN '000 (1984–2023)



Source: Department of Statistics (2023a & 2023b)

Gender Profile

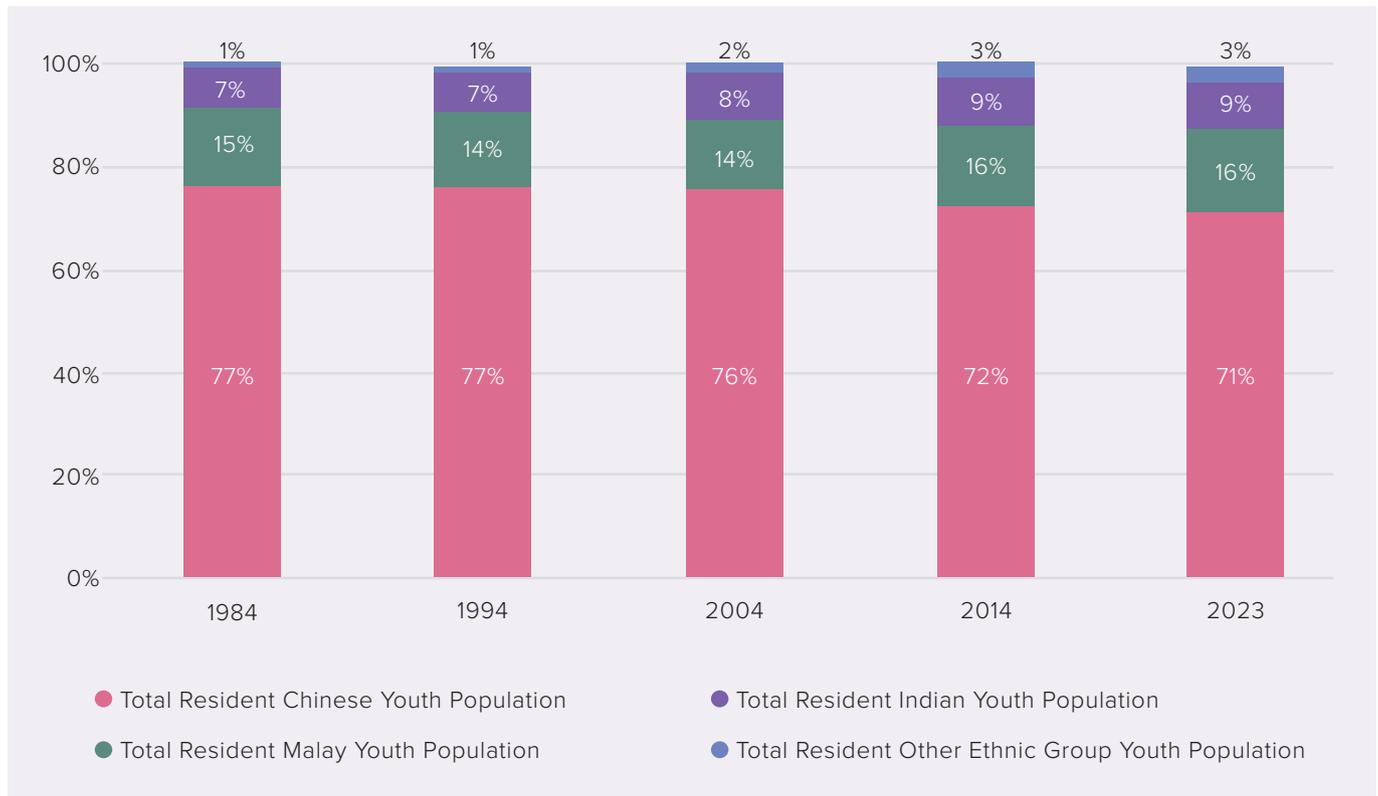
The gender ratio of the resident youth population remained relatively even across the past 40 years, mirroring the overall trends of Singapore’s resident population. In 2023, there was an even proportion of 50% males and 50% females (DOS, 2023b).

Ethnicity and Permanent Residency Profile

Our resident youth population steadily became more diverse over the years. While Chinese remained as the majority ethnic group of youths in Singapore, there was an increase in the proportion of youths from other ethnic groups, from 23% in 1984 to 29% in 2023 (see Chart II). Contributing to our social diversity were our Permanent Resident youths, who formed a sizeable proportion (14% in 2023; DOS, 2023b & 2023c) of the youth population.

Chart II.

ETHNICITY BREAKDOWN OF THE RESIDENT YOUTH POPULATION IN SINGAPORE (1984–2023)



Source: DOS (2023b)

Educational Profile

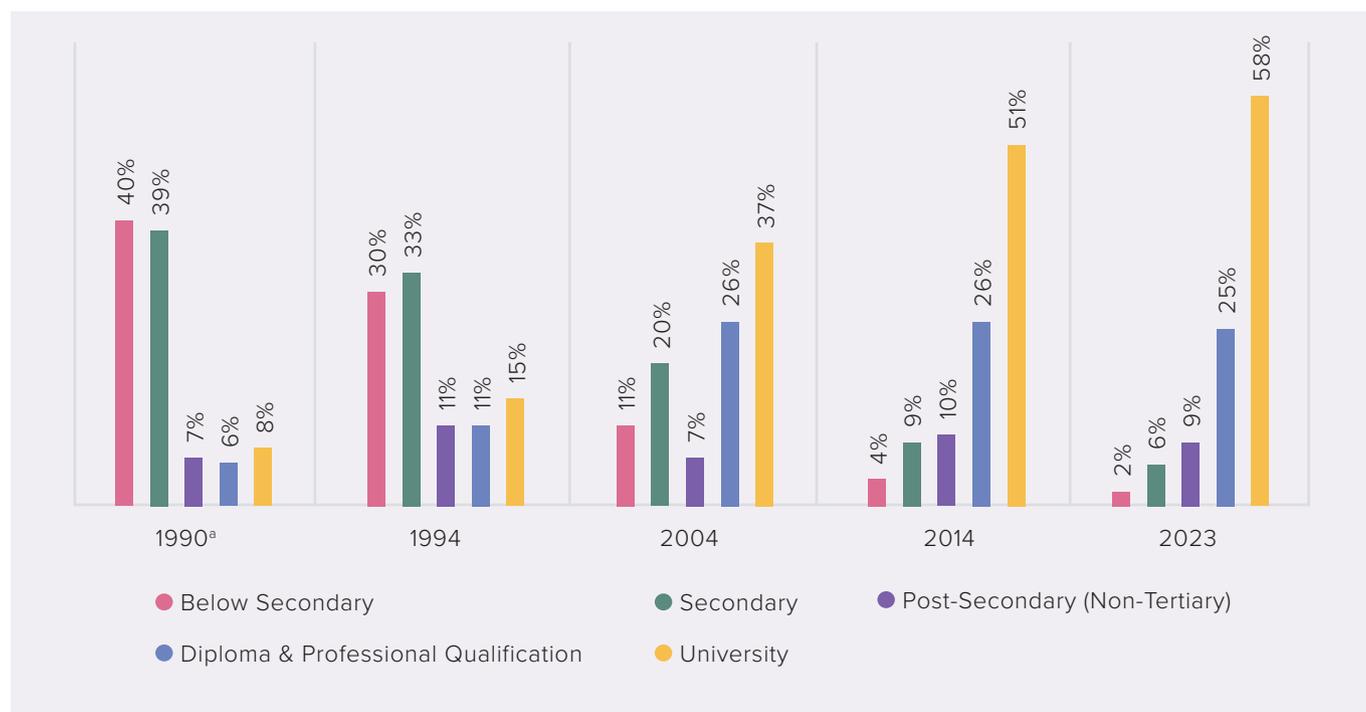
On the whole, Singapore youths had become more educated, with a majority now pursuing higher education beyond secondary-level schooling. The gross proportion of students enrolled in post-secondary (non-tertiary) institutions and above had steadily risen from 21% in 1990 to 92% in 2023 (DOS, 2023d). The majority of those aged 25 to 29 years old in the workforce now have at least a university degree, compared to 30 years ago where having a secondary or below educational attainment was more common (see Chart III).

Marital Profile

The pursuit of diverse life goals, including attaining higher educational qualifications, alongside youths' evolving attitudes and concept of marriage may have contributed to the decision to delay or reconsider marriage plans. Over the last 40 years, the median age of first marriages has risen from 26.9 to 30.8 for grooms, and from 24.1 to 29.2 for brides (DOS, 2023f). Correspondingly, the prevalence of singlehood amongst youths aged 20-29 remained high, having risen from 69% in 1984 to 87% in 2023 (see Chart IV). The proportion of single youths aged 30-39 progressively increased from 17% in 1984 to 30% in 2023 (see Chart V).

Chart III.

HIGHEST QUALIFICATION ATTAINED OF YOUTHS AGED 25-29 IN THE LABOUR FORCE (1990–2023)



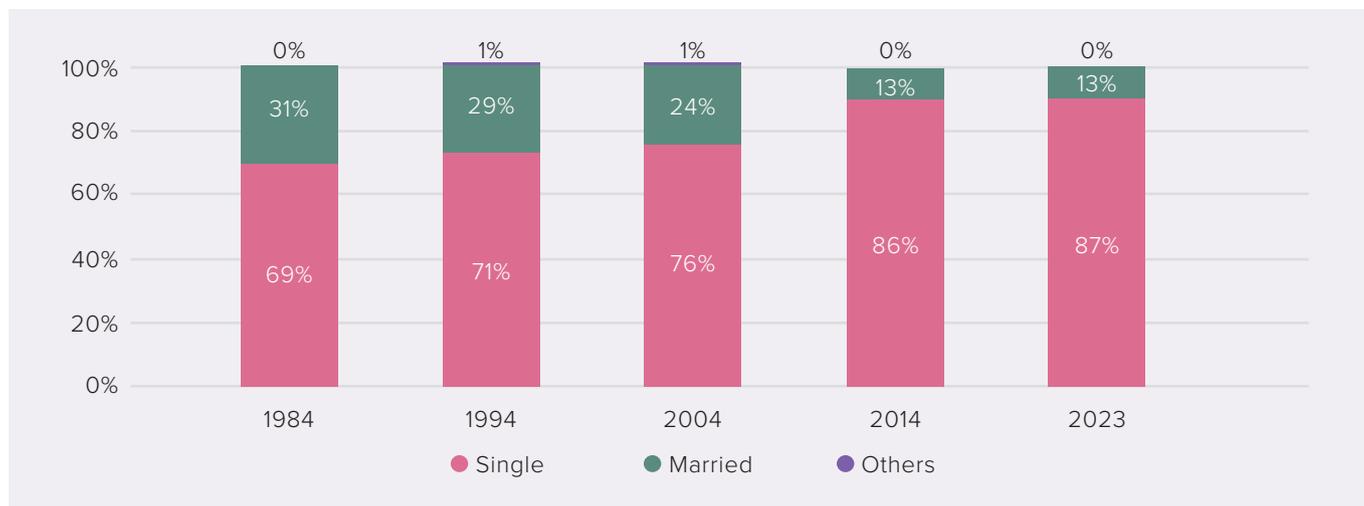
Note

a. 1984 data is not available

Source: DOS (2023d)

Chart IV.

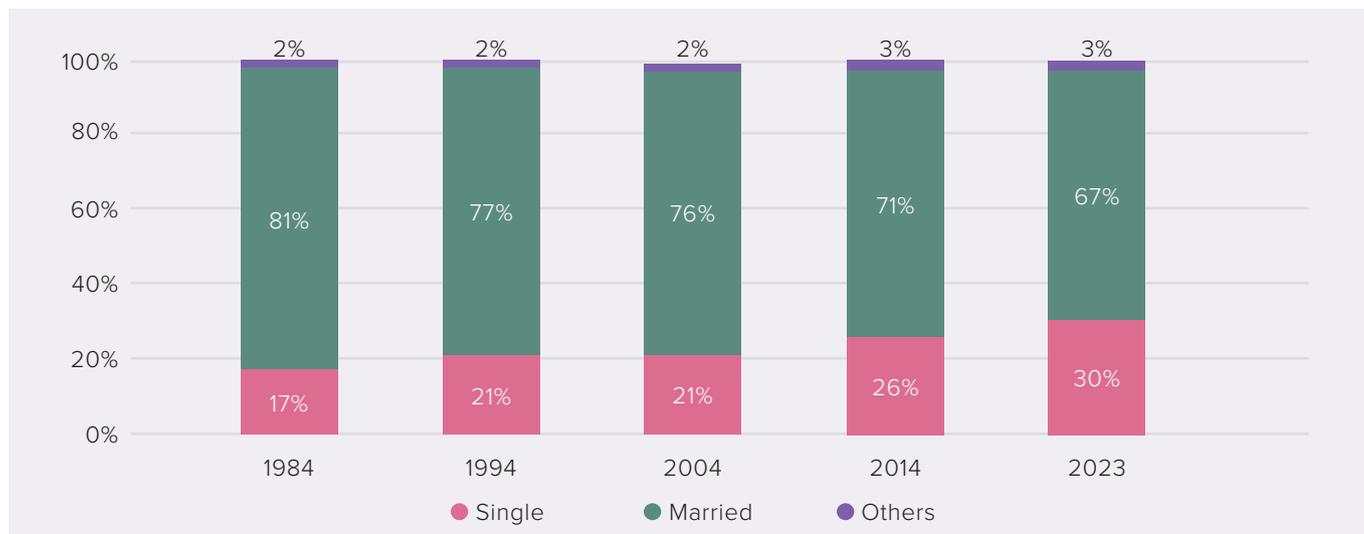
RESIDENT YOUTH AGED 20-29 YEARS OLD IN SINGAPORE BY MARITAL STATUS (1984-2023)



Source: DOS (2023e)

Chart V.

RESIDENT YOUTH AGED 30-39 YEARS OLD IN SINGAPORE BY MARITAL STATUS (1984-2023)



Source: DOS (2023e)

Conclusion

Accounting for one-quarter of Singapore's resident population, our youth are an integral part of our nation. Amidst the backdrop of an increasingly aged and diverse population, youths themselves are driving broader societal trends shaping our demographic composition. In particular, the choices youths make in pursuing higher education and reconsidering marriage have shifted the landscape of Singapore's youth over time. These trends have bearing on our nation's happiness, prosperity and progress.

Efforts to understand and provide appropriate developmental opportunities for youths will require greater understanding of the context in which they live and work. Youths are navigating a world around them which is unprecedentedly complex, uncertain and rapidly evolving. For them to be able to seize opportunities, stay resilient

and adaptable in the face of unanticipated change and make informed decisions to guide their transitions into adulthood and beyond, the stakeholders around them should develop informed, timely and appropriate support.

The National Youth Council (NYC) seeks to provide a holistic and comprehensive understanding of young people, by bringing together administrative and perception data from the National Youth Survey (NYS). The NYS offers deeper insights into social and human capital indicators, which can inform youth development, policy, and practice. With this goal in mind, the YOUTH.sg publications will take on a topical approach to address youth trends and concerns in the areas of Values and Attitudes, Education and Employment, Social Support, Social Cohesion and Participation, and Wellbeing.

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