

YOUTH.sg:

# The State of Youth in Singapore 2024

*Youth & The Future of Work*



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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**



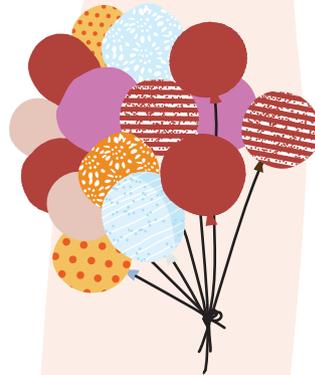
## Our Background

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](http://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.

# Education & Employment

Education comprises learning within formal institutions as well as non-institutional settings. Continual acquisition of knowledge and skills is key to helping youths build future-ready competencies to stay relevant in today's evolving economy. Understanding youths' attained competencies, perceptions of future preparedness and educational aspirations provides additional insight to understanding the interdependent role of human capital accumulation and youth development (World Bank, 2019).

Employment reflects the process by which individuals apply their skills, competencies, and other attributes to create economic value. Looking at youths' perceived employability, job seeking stressors and job expectations could go a long way towards balancing youths' occupational aspirations and readiness with the demands of the economy.



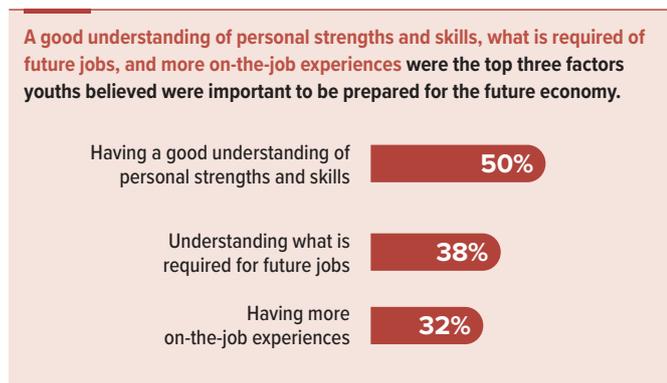
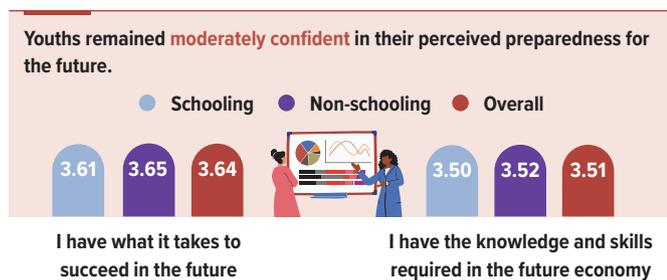
## Education & Employment

**In an age of technological disruption, the nature of learning and work is constantly evolving. Youths today are navigating a dynamic landscape where career paths are being reimagined through digital innovation, artificial intelligence, and hybrid work models. They will need to find a way to balance their educational and career aspirations and personal interests with the demands of the future of work in order to stay relevant.**

Looking ahead, youths hold moderate confidence of their future preparedness. In the face of mounting unpredictability arising from technological advancement and innovations, youths believe that understanding their strengths and skills, identifying in-demand skillsets for emerging jobs and sectors, and acquiring on-the-job experiences are vital to adapt to inevitable change. At the same time, education continues to play a crucial role for youths in Singapore in forging their desired career trajectories and finding their preferred employment. Youths remain confident in their ability to achieve their educational goals, with 1 in 2 youths striving to attain a bachelor's degree.

Beyond building hard competencies, soft skills such as creativity, curiosity, and social intelligence will become increasingly crucial in the future (Willige et al, 2023; Davie, 2024). Encouragingly, youths' self-reported work, social and cultural competencies have seen slight improvements over time. Recognising the ever-evolving nature of the job market, young people remain acutely aware of lifelong learning's critical role in enhancing their employability and advancing their careers, as more intend to engage in continuous skill development.

Today's ever-changing job landscape emphasises the need for adaptability and a diverse skill set which combines both technical proficiency with softer abilities. Notably, better perceptions of one's skillsets are observed to be positively correlated with optimism over their employability, pointing towards a need for a holistic approach to personal and professional development. Beyond skill enhancement, cultivating social capital through personal connections and professional networks can open more doors and opportunities. By fostering an environment which encourages continuous learning and provides a diversity of exposure and mentoring opportunities, youths can be empowered to successfully navigate the complexities of the future economy.



## Part A: FUTURE PREPAREDNESS & COMPETENCIES

### Section A1:

## FUTURE PREPAREDNESS

Across all ages and schooling statuses, youths reported modest levels of preparedness for the future (Table A2 and A3). While youths believed a wide range of factors were required to enable them to be better prepared for the future economy, understanding their own skills, knowing what is required for future jobs, and more on-the-job experiences were particularly important (Table A4).



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 A1:**

**MEAN RATINGS OF YOUTHS' PERCEIVED PREPAREDNESS OVER TIME** (WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARENTHESES)

	2019	2022
	(n=3,392)	(n=3,565)
I have what it takes to succeed in the future	3.62 (0.83)	3.64 (0.82)
I have the knowledge and skills required in the future economy	3.50 (0.85)	3.51 (0.85)

#### Note

This is a new question introduced in NYS 2019.

**Table A2:**

**MEAN RATINGS OF YOUTHS' PERCEIVED PREPAREDNESS BY AGE** (WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARENTHESES)

	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	Overall
	(n=711)	(n=802)	(n=963)	(n=1,090)	(n=3,565)
I have what it takes to succeed in the future	3.56 (0.84)	3.63 (0.87)	3.66 (0.81)	3.68 (0.77)	3.64 (0.82)
I have the knowledge and skills required in the future economy	3.44 (0.87)	3.50 (0.89)	3.51 (0.86)	3.58 (0.80)	3.51 (0.85)

**Table A3:**

**MEAN RATINGS OF YOUTHS' PERCEIVED PREPAREDNESS BY SCHOOLING STATUS** (WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARENTHESES)

	Schooling	Non-Schooling	Overall
	(n=1,109)	(n=2,456)	(n=3,565)
I have what it takes to succeed in the future	3.61 (0.84)	3.65 (0.81)	3.64 (0.82)
I have the knowledge and skills required in the future economy	3.50 (0.87)	3.52 (0.84)	3.51 (0.85)



How important are the following factors in helping you be better prepared for the future economy?

**Table A4:**

**FACTORS TO HELP YOUTHS BE BETTER PREPARED FOR FUTURE ECONOMY**

	Not important at all	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Very important
(n=3,565)				
Having a good understanding of personal strengths and skills	0%	2%	48%	50%
Understanding what is required for future jobs (e.g., emerging job trends/ skillsets)	1%	5%	57%	38%
Having more on-the-job experiences (e.g., internship, vocational training)	1%	7%	59%	32%
Building strong social networks within the industry of my interest	2%	10%	60%	28%
Establishing alternate sources of income (e.g., passive income, take a side-job)	2%	15%	56%	27%
Having opportunities for international exposure (e.g., student exchange programmes)	4%	18%	53%	25%
Being entrepreneurial (e.g., equipped to start own business)	8%	29%	45%	17%

**Note**

This is a new question introduced in NYS 2022.



## Section A2:

**SELF-PERCEIVED  
COMPETENCIES**

Overall, youths' ratings of their work, social emotional, and global and cultural competencies have improved since 2019 (Table A5). Younger youths were more likely to perceive that they possess empathetic and multicultural competencies, while older youths were more likely to see themselves as proficient in planning ahead and problem solving (Table A6). As workplace tasks become increasingly automated, cultivating cognitive skills such as creative and analytical thinking and interpersonal skills such as empathy and active listening will be crucial for youths to navigate the changing job landscape (World Economic Forum, 2023).



**To what extent do these qualities reflect who you are?**

*(Based on a 5-pt scale, where 5=“very much like me”, 3=“somewhat like me”, & 1=“not like me at all”.)*

**Table A5:**

**MEAN RATINGS OF YOUTHS' COMPETENCIES OVER TIME (WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARENTHESES)**

		2013	2016	2019	2022
		(n=2,843)	(n=3,531)	(n=3,392)	(n=3,565)
Work Competencies	Working well with other people	3.95 (0.86)	3.94 (0.84)	3.78 (0.87)	3.82 (0.89)
	Analysing and evaluating issues objectively <sup>a</sup>	NA	NA	3.63 (0.97)	3.76 (0.94)
	Learning and applying new knowledge/skills <sup>a</sup>	NA	NA	3.65 (0.93)	3.75 (0.89)
	Being able to identify and generate solutions for problems <sup>b</sup>	NA	NA	NA	3.64 (0.93)
	Being good at planning ahead	3.70 (1.01)	3.77 (0.98)	3.49 (1.05)	3.58 (1.05)
	Taking initiative <sup>a</sup>	NA	NA	3.42 (1.01)	3.47 (1.03)
	Being innovative <sup>a</sup>	NA	NA	3.11 (1.07)	3.26 (1.05)
	Leading a team of people	3.41 (1.13)	3.42 (1.11)	3.13 (1.16)	3.17 (1.16)
Social Emotional Competencies	Caring about other people's feelings	4.19 (0.84)	4.15 (0.85)	3.92 (0.96)	3.96 (0.96)
	Staying away from people who might get me in trouble	3.74 (1.06)	3.77 (1.03)	3.67 (1.08)	3.85 (1.00)
	Adapting to change	3.86 (0.91)	3.89 (0.91)	3.59 (0.97)	3.68 (0.95)
	Being able to manage my thoughts and feelings <sup>a</sup>	NA	NA	3.51 (0.98)	3.61 (1.00)
	Being good at making friends	3.68 (1.05)	3.62 (1.06)	3.36 (1.08)	3.32 (1.13)
	Speaking publicly	2.75 (1.25)	2.88 (1.23)	2.67 (1.23)	2.69 (1.22)
Global & Cultural Competencies	Respecting the values and beliefs of people who are of different race or culture than I am	4.23 (0.81)	4.20 (0.77)	4.02 (0.92)	4.08 (0.87)
	Understanding the impact of global forces on local issues <sup>a</sup>	NA	NA	3.27 (1.12)	3.34 (1.08)
	Knowing a lot about people of other races and cultures	3.36 (1.08)	3.39 (1.05)	3.24 (1.07)	3.31 (1.04)

**Notes**

a. Items are new to NYS 2019.

b. Item is new to NYS 2022.

**Table A6:**  
**MEAN RATINGS OF YOUTHS' COMPETENCIES BY AGE (WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARENTHESES)**

		15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	Overall
		(n=711)	(n=802)	(n=963)	(n=1,090)	(n=3,565)
Work Competencies	Working well with other people	3.79 (0.93)	3.82 (0.89)	3.82 (0.90)	3.84 (0.85)	3.82 (0.89)
	Analysing and evaluating issues objectively	3.68 (0.97)	3.75 (0.94)	3.78 (0.95)	3.80 (0.91)	3.76 (0.94)
	Learning and applying new knowledge/skills	3.73 (0.93)	3.75 (0.89)	3.76 (0.89)	3.74 (0.87)	3.75 (0.89)
	Being able to identify and generate solutions for problems	3.55 (0.95)	3.60 (0.94)	3.65 (0.93)	3.73 (0.91)	3.64 (0.93)
	Being good at planning ahead	3.39 (1.12)	3.56 (1.02)	3.58 (1.02)	3.71 (1.01)	3.58 (1.05)
	Taking initiative	3.35 (1.07)	3.45 (1.05)	3.44 (1.02)	3.58 (0.98)	3.47 (1.03)
	Being innovative	3.30 (1.05)	3.26 (1.04)	3.20 (1.07)	3.29 (1.05)	3.26 (1.05)
	Leading a team of people	3.19 (1.22)	3.16 (1.18)	3.08 (1.15)	3.23 (1.12)	3.17 (1.16)
Social Emotional Competencies	Caring about other people's feelings	4.04 (0.96)	4.02 (0.92)	3.90 (1.02)	3.92 (0.92)	3.96 (0.96)
	Staying away from people who might get me in trouble	3.85 (1.05)	3.86 (1.01)	3.86 (0.99)	3.84 (0.98)	3.85 (1.00)
	Adapting to change	3.65 (0.98)	3.67 (0.98)	3.63 (0.97)	3.76 (0.90)	3.68 (0.95)
	Being able to manage my thoughts and feelings	3.53 (1.08)	3.56 (1.01)	3.64 (1.00)	3.69 (0.93)	3.61 (1.00)
	Being good at making friends	3.35 (1.17)	3.34 (1.13)	3.26 (1.14)	3.35 (1.09)	3.32 (1.13)
	Speaking publicly	2.73 (1.24)	2.67 (1.23)	2.63 (1.24)	2.71 (1.19)	2.69 (1.22)
Global & Cultural Competencies	Respecting the values and beliefs of people who are of different race or culture than I am	4.17 (0.88)	4.13 (0.86)	4.04 (0.84)	4.02 (0.87)	4.08 (0.87)
	Understanding the impact of global forces on local issues	3.38 (1.10)	3.30 (1.08)	3.30 (1.11)	3.37 (1.05)	3.34 (1.08)
	Knowing a lot about people of other races and cultures	3.35 (1.02)	3.36 (1.03)	3.26 (1.05)	3.29 (1.06)	3.31 (1.04)



## Part B: EXPECTATIONS & ASPIRATIONS

Section B1:

### PERCEIVED HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ACHIEVABLE

Majority of youths remained confident in their ability to attain a bachelor's degree or higher (Table B1). Beliefs in one's ability to achieve a postgraduate degree has increased, particularly among non-schooling youths (Table B2).



What is the highest level of education you think you can achieve?

**Table B1:**

#### YOUTHS' PERCEIVED HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ACHIEVABLE OVER TIME

	2013 (n=2,843)	2016 (n=3,531)	2019 (n=3,392)	2022 (n=3,565)
Postgraduate degree	38%	34%	39%	43%
Bachelor's degree	38%	39%	37%	37%
Diploma	12%	13%	10%	11%
Professional certification	6%	6%	6%	5%
ITE or equivalent	3%	4%	2%	2%
'A' level/Int'l Baccalaureate	1%	1%	1%	0%
'O' or 'N' level	2%	3%	2%	2%
PSLE & below	0%	1%	1%	0%

**Table B2:**

#### YOUTHS' PERCEIVED HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ACHIEVABLE BY SCHOOLING STATUS

	Schooling (n=1,109)	Non-Schooling (n=2,456)	Overall (n=3,565)
Postgraduate degree	34%	46%	43%
Bachelor's degree	49%	31%	37%
Diploma	11%	11%	11%
Professional certification	1%	6%	5%
ITE or equivalent	2%	3%	2%
'A' level/Int'l Baccalaureate	1%	0%	0%
'O' or 'N' level	1%	2%	2%
PSLE & below	1%	0%	0%

## Section B2:

## PERCEIVED EDUCATION TO GET A DECENT JOB

Corresponding with the belief that they can attain at least a bachelor's degree, youths were also more inclined to perceive that a degree is the minimum qualification level necessary to secure a decent job (Table B3).



In your opinion, what level of education/training does a person need to get an average/decent job these days?

**Table B3:**

### YOUTHS' PERCEIVED LEVEL OF EDUCATION NEEDED TO GET A DECENT JOB OVER TIME

	2013 (n=2,843)	2016 (n=3,531)	2019 (n=3,392)	2022 (n=3,565)
Postgraduate degree	6%	5%	6%	4%
Bachelor's degree	52%	50%	53%	54%
Diploma	30%	30%	28%	29%
ITE or equivalent	6%	8%	6%	8%
'A' level/Int'l Baccalaureate	1%	1%	1%	1%
'O' or 'N' level	4%	4%	4%	3%
PSLE	1%	0%	1%	0%
Others	1%	2%	2%	1%

**Table B4:**

### YOUTHS' PERCEIVED LEVEL OF EDUCATION NEEDED TO GET A DECENT JOB BY SCHOOLING STATUS

	Schooling (n=1,109)	Non-Schooling (n=2,456)	Overall (n=3,565)
Postgraduate degree	4%	4%	4%
Bachelor's degree	52%	55%	54%
Diploma	31%	27%	29%
ITE or equivalent	5%	9%	8%
'A' level/Int'l Baccalaureate	2%	1%	1%
'O' or 'N' level	5%	3%	3%
PSLE	0%	0%	0%
Others	0%	1%	1%

## Section B3:

**EXPECTED  
INCOME**

Majority of youths held expectations for a minimum level of income when seeking a job (Table B5). A significant jump in income expectations was observed between 2019 to 2022, where 75% expected to earn at least \$3,000 and above, from 59% previously (Table B7). The increase may be a reflection of broader economic conditions, where youths expect their salaries to keep pace with the increases observed for median gross salaries of fresh graduates (Ministry of Education, 2024; Chan, 2024).



**Is there a minimum level of income per month below which you would not accept a job as your main occupation?**

**Table B5:****YOUTHS WITH EXPECTED LEVEL OF INCOME OVER TIME**

	2013	2016	2019	2022
	(n=2,843)	(n=3,531)	(n=3,392)	(n=3,565)
Yes	72%	83%	85%	88%

**Table B6:****YOUTHS WITH EXPECTED LEVEL OF INCOME BY AGE**

	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	Overall
	(n=711)	(n=802)	(n=963)	(n=1,090)	(n=3,565)
Yes	81%	85%	90%	91%	88%



What is the minimum amount of monthly income at which you would accept a job as your main occupation?

**Table B7:**

**YOUTHS' EXPECTED LEVEL OF INCOME BY AGE**

	15-19 (n=578)	20-24 (n=682)	25-29 (n=869)	30-34 (n=993)	Overall (n=3,123)
S\$10,000 and above	8%	2%	2%	6%	4%
S\$7,000 - S\$9,999	11%	3%	3%	10%	7%
S\$5,000 - S\$6,999	17%	11%	16%	25%	18%
S\$3,000 - S\$4,999	35%	49%	55%	42%	46%
S\$2,000 - S\$2,999	20%	28%	20%	13%	20%
S\$1,500 - S\$1,999	5%	5%	2%	3%	4%
S\$1,000 - S\$1,499	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%
S\$500 - S\$999	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Less than S\$500	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%



## Part C: EMPLOYMENT CONCERNS

### Section C1:

## PERCEIVED EMPLOYABILITY

Overall career outlook was resilient through the pandemic. Perceived employability across schooling and working youths has seen modest increase over the years. Overall, working youths were more confident in their employability, especially if they perceived themselves as having relevant skills and experience (Tables C2 and C3).



**We would like to know about your opinions on your prospects regarding work. Below are some statements that you may agree or disagree with.**

*(Based on a 5-pt scale, where 5=“strongly agree”, 3=“neither agree nor disagree”, & 1=“strongly disagree”.)*

**Table C1:**

**MEAN RATINGS OF SCHOOLING YOUTHS' PERCEIVED EMPLOYABILITY OVER TIME (WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARENTHESES)**

	2019 (n=1,328)	2020 (n=1,078)	2021 (n=865)	2022 (n=621)
I am confident there is a market for the job that I am intending to pursue	3.53 (0.87)	3.68 (0.86)	3.91 (0.79)	3.82 (0.76)
I am confident that my educational qualifications can secure me a job in my chosen field	3.39 (0.95)	3.59 (0.95)	3.80 (0.87)	3.74 (0.88)
People in the career I am aiming for are in high demand in the labour market	3.36 (0.88)	3.47 (1.00)	3.76 (0.92)	3.69 (0.95)
I know what I need to do to get the job that I want	3.53 (0.88)	3.58 (0.90)	3.76 (0.88)	3.63 (0.91)
The skills and abilities that I possess allow me to be employed in any organisation	3.30 (0.92)	3.42 (0.93)	3.62 (0.94)	3.58 (0.89)
There are plenty of job vacancies where I am looking	2.86 (0.85)	2.82 (0.93)	3.26 (0.97)	3.12 (0.95)

### Note

Full-time Students comprise – (1) Full-time Students and not working and (2) Full-time Students and working part-time.

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

**Table C2:****MEAN RATINGS OF UNEMPLOYED YOUTHS' PERCEIVED EMPLOYABILITY OVER TIME** (WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARENTHESES)

	2019 (n=199)	2020 (n=191)	2021 (n=110)	2022 (n=127)
I am confident there is a market for the job that I am intending to pursue	3.58 (0.88)	3.26 (1.04)	3.59 (0.83)	3.51 (0.91)
I am confident that my educational qualifications can secure me a job in my chosen field	3.38 (1.01)	2.88 (1.10)	3.32 (0.96)	3.05 (1.00)
People in the career I am aiming for are in high demand in the labour market	3.51 (0.92)	3.08 (1.02)	3.44 (0.94)	3.35 (0.83)
I know what I need to do to get the job that I want	3.45 (0.92)	3.37 (0.92)	3.55 (0.89)	3.42 (0.85)
The skills and abilities that I possess allow me to be employed in any organisation	3.25 (0.96)	3.05 (1.02)	3.33 (0.90)	3.12 (0.98)
There are plenty of job vacancies where I am looking	2.94 (0.94)	2.53 (0.98)	2.94 (0.95)	2.85 (0.86)

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





We would like to know about the nature of your job. Below are some statements that you may agree or disagree with. (Based on a 5-pt scale, where 5=“strongly agree”, 3=“neither agree nor disagree”, and 1=“strongly disagree”.)

**Table C3:**

**MEAN RATINGS OF WORKING YOUTHS' PERCEIVED EMPLOYABILITY OVER TIME** (WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARENTHESES)

	2019	2020	2021	2022
	(n=1,201)	(n=689)	(n=1,543)	(n=1,725)
I could get any job, anywhere, so long as my skills and experience were reasonably relevant	3.69 (0.79)	3.72 (0.78)	3.82 (0.78)	3.90 (0.77)
I am aware of the opportunities arising in this organisation even if they are different to what I do now	3.62 (0.80)	3.53 (0.93)	3.67 (0.89)	3.81 (0.79)
Even if there was downsizing in my current organisation, I am confident that I could remain employed	3.50 (0.95)	3.59 (1.06)	3.65 (0.97)	3.79 (0.99)
If I needed to, I could easily get another job like mine in a similar organisation	3.52 (0.89)	3.44 (0.91)	3.63 (0.91)	3.74 (0.88)
My personal networks in this organisation help me in my career	3.46 (0.90)	3.36 (1.02)	3.47 (0.98)	3.63 (0.96)
Anyone with my level of skills and knowledge, will be highly sought after by employers	3.39 (0.80)	3.39 (0.87)	3.52 (0.87)	3.63 (0.84)
I could easily get a similar job to mine in almost any organisation	3.29 (0.93)	3.20 (0.97)	3.34 (1.00)	3.48 (0.98)

**Notes**

Employed comprises – (1) Working full-time and not studying, (2) Working full-time and studying part-time, and (3) Working part-time and not studying. Sample size differs from other waves due to a change in fieldwork strategy.

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



## Section C2:

**JOB SEEKING  
STRESS**

Schooling and unemployed youths continued to grapple with job-seeking stress. Young job seekers felt more pressure to select a fulfilling career and from the job search itself, while family approval ranked low on their considerations. Further, unemployed youths felt greater urgency to make a career decision (Table C4 and C5).



**We would like to know about your opinions on your prospects regarding work. Below are some statements that you may agree or disagree with.**

*(Based on a 5-pt scale, where 5=“strongly agree”, 3=“neither agree nor disagree”, & 1=“strongly disagree”.)*

**Table C4:****MEAN RATINGS OF SCHOOLING YOUTHS' JOB SEEKING STRESS OVER TIME** (WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARENTHESES)

	2019	2020	2022
	(n=1,328)	(n=1,078)	(n=621)
I feel stress or pressure to select a fulfilling career	3.79 (0.97)	4.03 (0.90)	3.99 (0.98)
Finding a job makes me stressed	3.51 (0.93)	3.89 (0.92)	3.95 (0.94)
I feel anxious because I ought to make a career decision as soon as possible	3.59 (1.00)	3.81 (1.04)	3.87 (1.02)
I worry about finding a job that would allow me to make ends meet	3.63 (1.01)	3.84 (1.07)	3.79 (1.06)
My family doesn't approve of my career choice, which is hindering me from seeking that career	2.05 (0.93)	2.02 (0.98)	2.04 (0.98)

**Note**

Full-time Students comprise – (1) Full-time Students and not working and (2) Full-time Students and working part-time.

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

**Table C5:****MEAN RATINGS OF UNEMPLOYED YOUTHS' JOB SEEKING STRESS OVER TIME** (WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARENTHESES)

	2019	2020	2022
	(n=199)	(n=191)	(n=127)
I feel stress or pressure to select a fulfilling career	3.84 (0.96)	4.17 (0.83)	3.98 (0.92)
Finding a job makes me stressed	3.69 (1.02)	4.26 (0.81)	4.14 (0.89)
I feel anxious because I ought to make a career decision as soon as possible	3.74 (0.97)	4.14 (0.86)	4.05 (0.86)
I worry about finding a job that would allow me to make ends meet	3.68 (1.07)	4.09 (0.86)	3.91 (1.04)
My family doesn't approve of my career choice, which is hindering me from seeking that career	2.32 (1.13)	2.29 (1.04)	2.36 (1.12)

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

## Part D: OVERSEAS EXPOSURE

Overseas exposure assists in building one's sense of self-confidence and ability to cope with uncertainty (Gmelch, 1997), and allows youths to learn key skills that might help them further their career, take on leadership positions, and compete on a global scale (NTUC, 2023). Additionally, participation in school-based overseas programmes can help our youths build cultural awareness and understanding of economic developments and opportunities around the region.

While the COVID-19 pandemic had inevitably slowed down school-based overseas programme participation (Table D2), participation was higher among university students, with three in four reporting participation in at least one overseas programme (Table D3).



### Have you participated in the following overseas programmes?

**Table D1:**  
**OVERSEAS PROGRAMME PARTICIPATION BY AGE**

	15-19 (n=711)	20-24 (n=802)	25-29 (n=963)	30-34 (n=1,090)	Overall (n=3,565)
<b>Overall participation<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>60%</b>
Study trip	27%	36%	42%	28%	33%
Student exchange	10%	17%	32%	22%	21%
Cultural immersion programme	22%	26%	21%	15%	20%
Community expedition	9%	22%	23%	17%	18%
Competition	5%	6%	9%	9%	8%
Religious expedition	5%	6%	6%	7%	6%
Internship	1%	3%	9%	7%	5%
Other learning programme	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%

#### 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.

a. Overall participation is based on participation in at least one overseas programme.

**Table D2:**  
**SCHOOLING YOUTHS' SCHOOL-BASED OVERSEAS PROGRAMME PARTICIPATION OVER TIME**

	2013 (n=1,057)	2016 (n=1,206)	2019 (n=1,116)	2022 (n=1,109)
<b>Overall participation<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>56%</b>
Study trip	28%	37%	43%	31%
Student exchange	28%	37%	21%	13%
Cultural immersion programme <sup>b</sup>	NA	NA	24%	23%
Community expedition	20%	23%	21%	12%
Competition	7%	10%	6%	4%
Religious expedition	1%	4%	2%	3%
Internship	4%	6%	10%	2%
Other learning programme	7%	4%	0%	0%

**Notes**

- a. Overall participation is based on participation in at least one overseas programme over the course of their schooling life.  
 b. Item is new to NYS 2019.



**Table D3:**  
**SCHOOLING YOUTHS' SCHOOL-BASED OVERSEAS PROGRAMME PARTICIPATION BY ENROLLED INSTITUTIONS**

	Secondary (n=246)	JC/IB (n=102)	ITE (n=67)	Polytechnic (n=243)	Local University (n=310)	Others <sup>a</sup> (n=137)	Overall (n=1,109)
<b>Overall participation<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>56%</b>
Study trip	16%	35%	19%	30%	42%	39%	31%
Student exchange	9%	15%	4%	9%	20%	12%	13%
Cultural immersion programme	17%	21%	10%	25%	28%	23%	23%
Community expedition	2%	10%	3%	10%	22%	15%	12%
Competition	4%	4%	4%	1%	6%	6%	4%
Religious expedition	2%	2%	6%	1%	4%	4%	3%
Internship	1%	1%	0%	1%	5%	1%	2%
Other learning programme	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	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.

a. Youths enrolled in private or foreign institutions.

b. Overall participation is based on participation in at least one overseas programme over the course of their schooling life.



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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**

	<b>Social Capital</b> (Grootaert & van Bastelaer, 2002; Putnam, 2000)	<b>Human Capital</b> (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2017)
<b>Definition</b>	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.
<b>Domains</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social support</li> <li>• Social participation</li> <li>• Values &amp; attitudes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Wellbeing</li> </ul>
<b>Focus</b>	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 <sup>a</sup>
<b>Age</b>	15-19	24%	23%	21%	20%	<b>20%</b>
	20-24	25%	25%	24%	22%	<b>22%</b>
	25-29	24%	25%	27%	27%	<b>27%</b>
	30-34	28%	27%	28%	31%	<b>31%</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	49%	49%	50%	50%	<b>50%</b>
	Female	51%	51%	50%	50%	<b>50%</b>
<b>Race</b>	Chinese	72%	72%	72%	71%	<b>71%</b>
	Malay	16%	16%	17%	17%	<b>17%</b>
	Indian	10%	9%	9%	9%	<b>9%</b>
	Others	3%	3%	3%	3%	<b>3%</b>
<b>Nationality</b>	Singaporean	90%	94%	93%	93%	<b>86%</b>
	Permanent Resident	10%	6%	7%	7%	<b>14%</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	74%	73%	74%	74%	<b>75%</b>
	Married	25%	26%	25%	25%	<b>25%</b>
	Divorced/Separated/Widowed	1%	1%	1%	1%	<b>1%</b>
<b>Religion</b>	Buddhism	25%	24%	22%	21%	<b>26%</b>
	Islam	19%	20%	21%	20%	<b>20%</b>
	Christianity	19%	19%	20%	20%	<b>18%</b>
	Hinduism	6%	5%	5%	5%	<b>5%</b>
	Taoism/Traditional Chinese Beliefs	7%	6%	5%	4%	<b>6%</b>
	Other Religions	1%	0%	1%	0%	<b>0%</b>
<b>Dwelling</b>	No Religion	23%	25%	27%	29%	<b>25%</b>
	HDB 1-2 rooms	3%	5%	4%	6%	<b>4%</b>
	HDB 3 rooms	14%	14%	14%	13%	<b>11%</b>
	HDB 4 rooms	37%	38%	35%	30%	<b>34%</b>
	HDB 5 rooms, executive, & above	32%	29%	30%	33%	<b>29%</b>
	Private flat & condominium	9%	9%	12%	13%	<b>15%</b>
	Private house & bungalow	6%	4%	4%	4%	<b>6%</b>
Others	0%	0%	1%	1%	<b>0%</b>	

**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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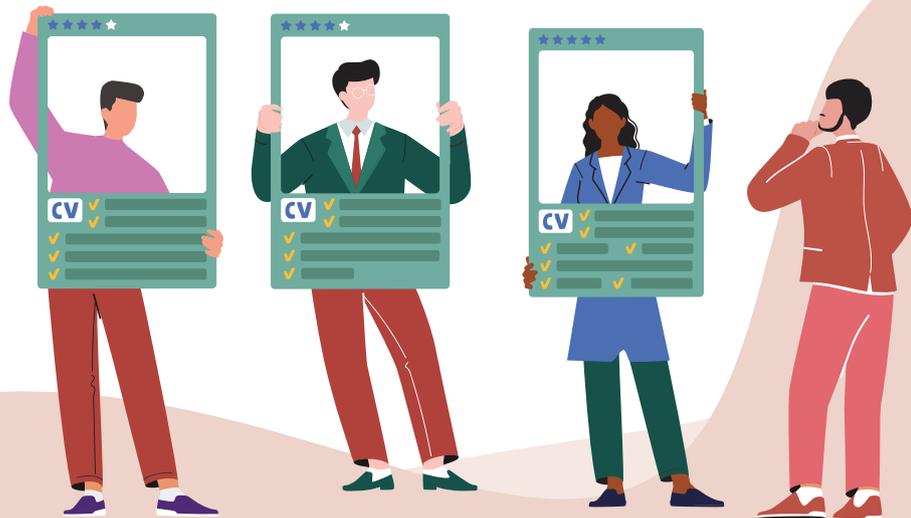
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# YOUTH IN SINGAPORE: A BRIEF DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

## 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.



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.



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.



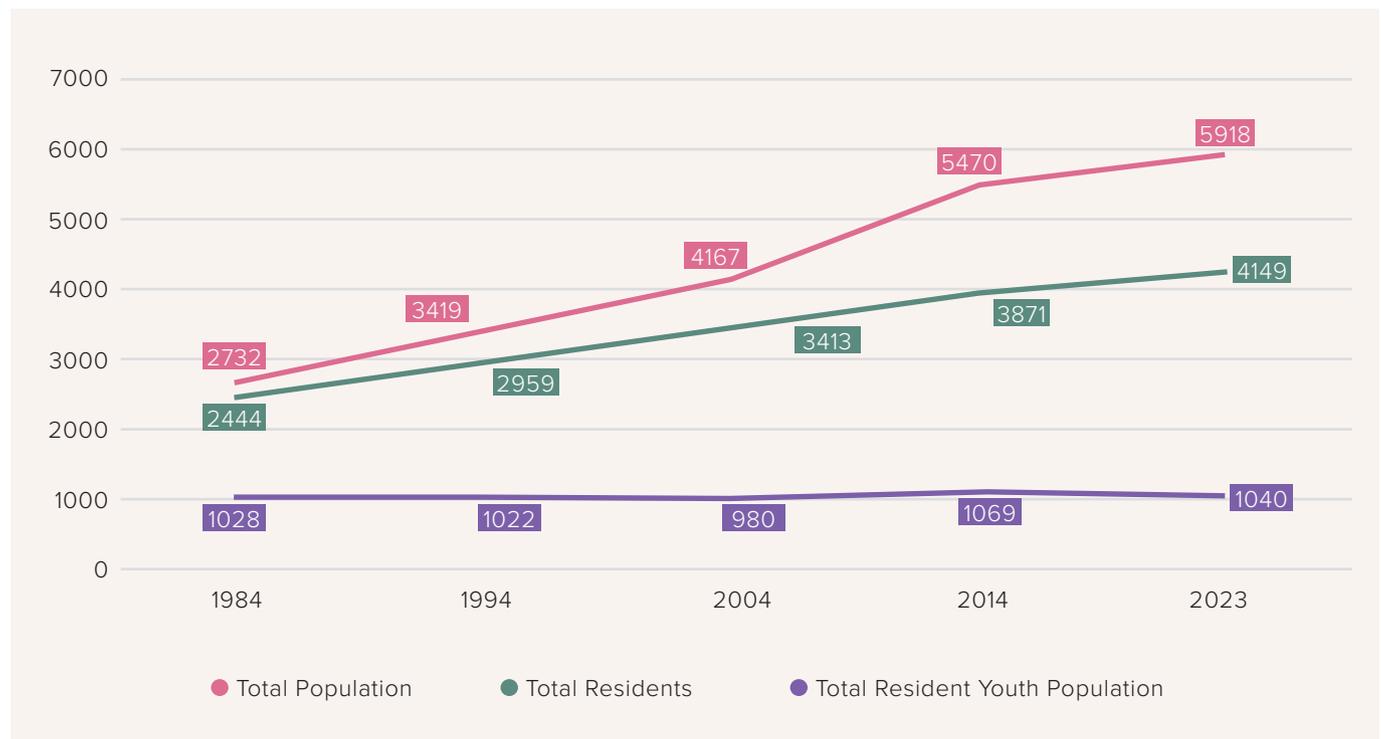
## Youth Population

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

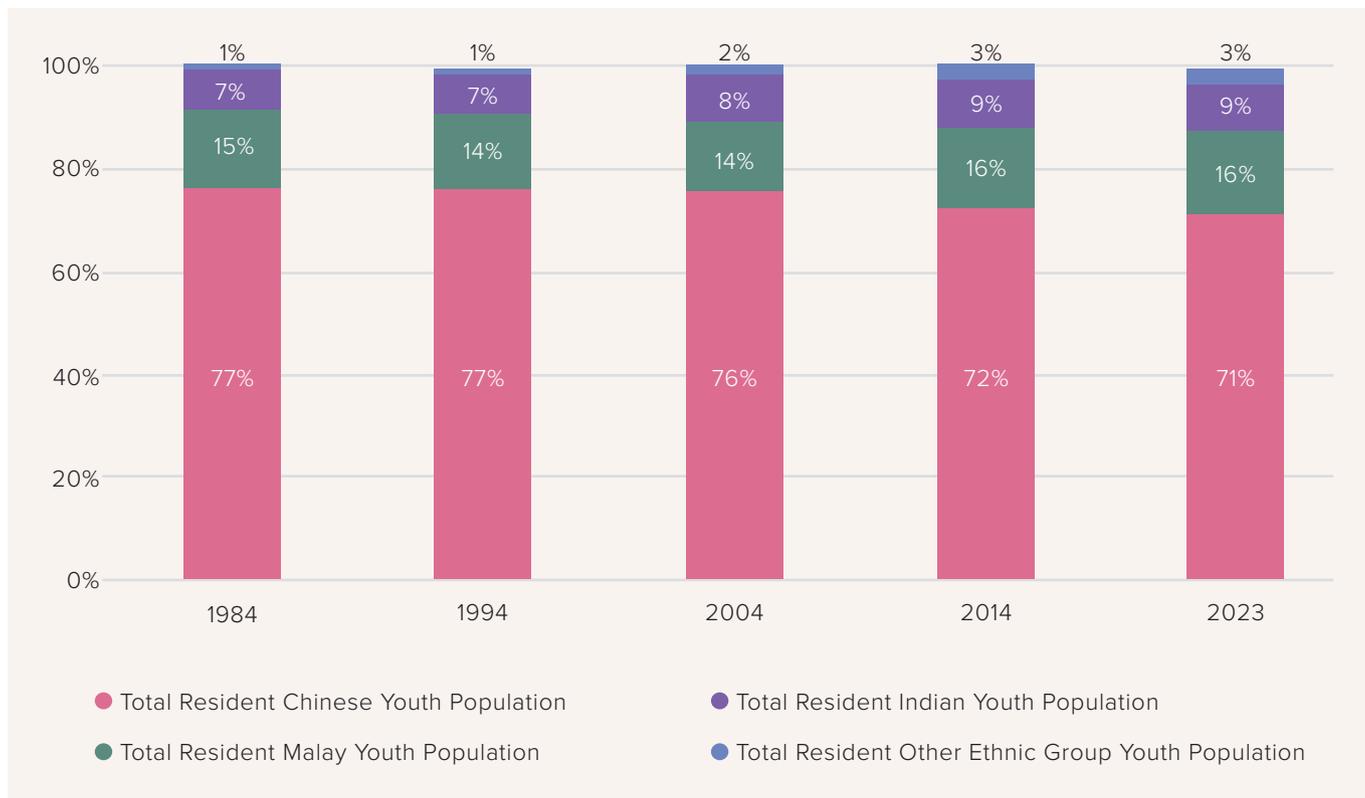
The gender ratio of the resident youth population remained relatively even across the past 40 years, mirroring the overall trends of Singapore’s resident population. In 2023, there was an even proportion of 50% males and 50% females (DOS, 2023b).

## 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)**

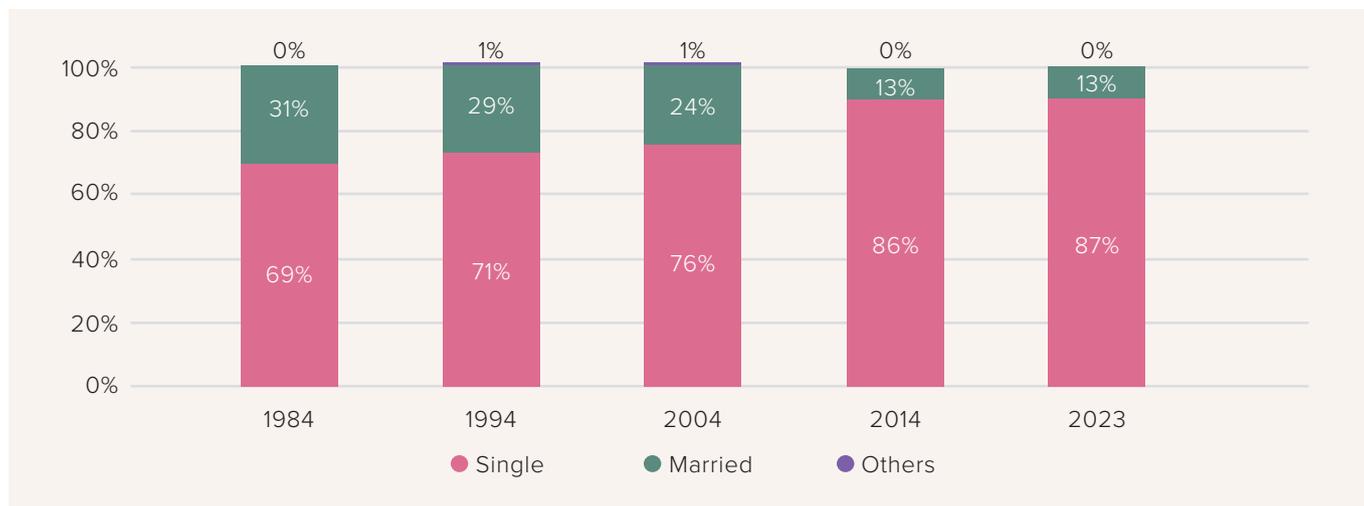


**Note**

a. 1984 data is not available  
Source: DOS (2023d)

Chart IV.

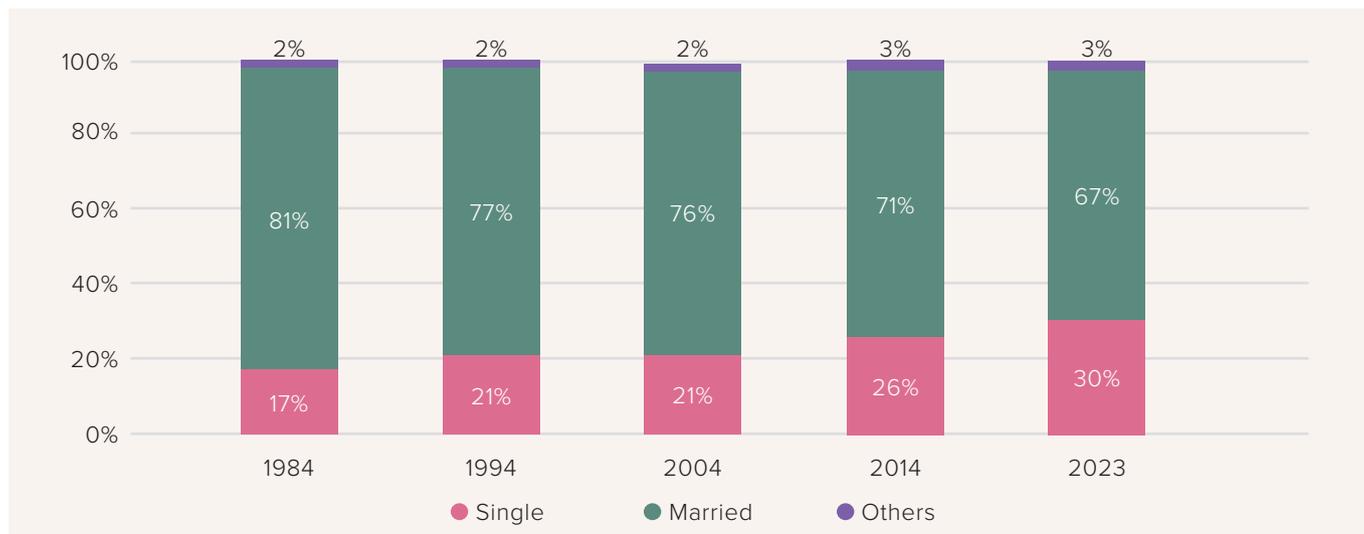
RESIDENT YOUTH AGED 20-29 YEARS OLD IN SINGAPORE BY MARITAL STATUS (1984-2023)



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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