

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FROM PAST CITIZEN AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENTS FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

From 2020 to 2022, Government agencies¹ have conducted many engagements on mental health and well-being to hear the voices of the general population including youths, parents, employees, employers and seniors. A summary of the findings from some of the past citizen and stakeholder engagements are provided below.

(I) State of mental health and well-being in Singapore

- Based on the National Population Health Survey 2019, Mental well-being among Singaporeans aged 18 to 74 years old has declined. The mean mental well-being score, as measured by the Singapore Mental Well-being Scale on a scale of 1 to 9, has decreased from 7.40 in 2017 to 7.28 in 2019. Past engagements have also revealed that mental well-being has been a significant concern, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Engagement	Key Findings
National Youth Council (NYC)'s digital poll on youth mental well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted with 1,500 youths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50% of youths said their mental health had deteriorated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Anxiety over future uncertainty and feeling disconnected with friends and partners were the top two cited reasons for a decline in mental health. Social stigma (i.e., fear of being judged) is the top concern of youths when confiding in someone about their mental health issues.
REACH (the Singapore Government's feedback unit) e-Listening Point on Youth Mental Well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted with 128 students and 123 parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key findings were shared on REACH's social media on 27 September 2021 (link). Top concerns for students included workload, examinations and career prospects. Top concerns for working adults included work-life balance, cost of living and career prospects.
REACH-Friendzone Neighbourhood Conversations: Youth Aspirations Series <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted with around 200 youths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key concerns for youths during the COVID-19 pandemic included being cut off from friends and family (especially those living apart or overseas) and interruptions to plans for self-development. Youths highlighted the importance of self-care in dealing with burnout from balancing commitments to friends, family and work. Youths relied heavily on immediate support systems (e.g., friends) to share about their mental health struggles, though professional help was sometimes also necessary.
REACH—National University of Singapore (NUS) Students'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youths expressed concern that lower-income groups struggled disproportionately more with

¹ Government agencies include the Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY), Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), Ministry of Communications and Information (MCI), Ministry of Manpower (MOM), Agency for Integrated Care (AIC), National Youth Council (NYC), National Council of Social Service (NCSS) and Health Promotion Board (HPB).

Political Association's NUS Social Policy Forum 2022 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted with around 80 youths 	mental health, though Singapore has done well to ensure a high baseline quality of life for all.
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(II) Awareness and perceptions of mental health and well-being

- Past engagements have revealed a need to raise greater awareness on mental health issues and support, as there is stigma regarding mental health issues. A survey that HPB conducted in 2021² found that 52% of Singaporeans viewed mental health as being all about mental illnesses, while another 41% of Singaporeans felt that their mental well-being was not as important as their physical health.
- Mental health promotion and upstream prevention is an on-going strategic effort for the mental health and well-being of the population. Several mental health campaigns have been implemented in recent years including the 'Brave the New' campaign (in response to the COVID-19 pandemic), which ran from August 2020 to December 2020, and the 'Hi#JustCheckingIn' campaign from January 2021 to March 2021. In addition, the Health Promotion Board (HPB) launched its mental health literacy campaign ('It's OKAY to Reach Out'), which reached about one million people from October 2021 to March 2022. An evaluation of the campaign is currently being conducted.

Engagement	Key Findings
REACH e-Listening Points with youths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted with around 1,950 students and young working adults below 30 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40% of youths believed that most of their family would view them negatively if their family thought they had mental health issues. 20% of youths believed that most of their friends would view them negatively if their friends thought they had mental health issues.
REACH e-Listening Point on Youth Mental Well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted with 128 students and 123 parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youths felt that they faced social stigma most from family and relatives, followed by colleagues, then friends. 80% of youths said that they were willing to befriend people with mental health issues.
National Council of Social Service (NCSS) – Institute of Mental Health (IMH) – Jardine Mindset's 'Collective Impact for Inclusive Employment' dialogue session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted with 65 participants from 36 private companies, public agencies, social service agencies and individuals with lived experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants shared that there was a need for more awareness on mental health issues among leaders, supervisors and staff through trainings and sharing sessions. Participants shared that organisations should prioritise generating awareness and safe spaces for conversations on mental health.

² The "Hi" #JustCheckingIn campaign evaluation report was conducted In March 2021 by HPB.

(III) Help-seeking and resources available

- Based on the National Population Health Survey 2019, 74.5% of Singaporeans reported that they were willing to seek help from informal support networks (e.g. a friend, relative, colleague, religious leader, or teacher).
- To encourage help-seeking and increase the mental health literacy of the population, Health Promotion Board (HPB) launched MindSG in late November 2021. MindSG is a one-stop online portal for national mental health and well-being resources, developed by Government partners and mental health experts to provide Singaporeans with information on mental health and well-being. As of 31 December 2021, the portal has garnered 93,000 unique views, with over 20% of users who had actively utilised the portal's tool to help them find the mental health services and resources they need (e.g., helplines / text-based services / medical services / self - help tools etc).
- However, despite existing efforts, there is still feedback that some youths did not actively seek help. For youths who actively sought help, they usually turned to peers and/or family members and were not as comfortable with seeking external help.

Engagement	Key Findings
<p>REACH e-Listening Points with youths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted with around 1,950 students and young working adults below 30 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% of youths knew where to seek help from, yet only 50% were comfortable to seek professional help. • Youths felt uncomfortable to seek help due to stigma, uncertainty if professional help was needed, financial costs and time, unfamiliarity with therapists, and dislike for speaking about their problems. • When asked who they would approach if they needed help with mental health issues, most youths selected friends and family members. 10% of youths said they would not seek help.
<p>National Youth Council (NYC)'s digital poll on youth mental well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted with 1,500 youths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 57% of youths turned to peers for mental health support. • 31% of youths did not take active steps to help others, with the top reason being "I am not exactly sure how to help." • Over 70% of youths felt that more mental health support at workplaces was needed.

- Youths also shared their views regarding help-seeking and resources available in schools and Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs), including peer support structures. Within these structures, peers, identified by teachers or counsellors, are trained in empathetic listening and basic mental health first aid skills. They support their peers who show signs of emotional distress and encourage them to seek help from counsellors or teachers, if required. As of December 2021, more than 3,200 students have been trained by HPB as peer supporters. Out of 230 peer supporters surveyed, 66% of the respondents indicated that they have reached out to at least one peer.

Engagement	Key Findings
TikTok 'Youth for Good' initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youths shared that counsellors should not be dismissive of students' mental health concerns or be

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted with 51 youth creators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> quick to offer easy fixes. Instead, students appreciated being listened to and understood. Youths shared that they could lose trust in counsellors when there was unnecessary disclosure of personal information to parents or teachers (i.e., no intention to self-harm / harm others). Youths appreciated practical guidance and interactive discussions during Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) lessons. Youths shared that there was a need to ensure that mental health issues were taken seriously and that teachers were professionally trained on mental health-related topics.
<p>Mental Health Collective Conference ‘The Next Step for Us’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted with around 100 youths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youths suggested that teachers and school management should build trust with students over time, refrain from judging or doubting students’ experiences, and foster a school-wide culture of well-being. As teachers might not have sufficient bandwidth due to the need to balance teaching duties with caring for students, youths shared that working with community partners and teaching self-compassion and self-care to students were important.

- Youths also shared possible ways forward to improve access to mental health services in the community.

Engagement	Key Findings
<p>TikTok ‘Youth for Good’ initiative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted with 51 youth creators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youths felt that Government and social service agencies could provide more accessible and clear information on mental health services outside of schools. Youths shared that it would be useful for peer supporters to have guidelines on how to talk about emotionally heavy topics. Check-ins with professionals could also be helpful for peer supporters.
<p>REACH—NUS Students’ Political Association’s NUS Social Policy Forum 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted with around 80 youths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youths shared that it would be helpful to be triaged at the school or community level first, before seeking specialist care for mental health struggles.

- Besides sharing from youths, parents shared that they might not feel confident in supporting their children’s social-emotional well-being. To address this, several resources have been developed for parents, who have shared their feedback.

Engagement	Key Findings
<p>Survey on the Ministry of Education’s (MOE) Parent Kit ‘Journeying Through Challenging Times, Together’</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents agreed or strongly agreed that they had a better idea of how to support their child as they journeyed through challenging times, and would use the resources to help

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessed by 291,909 parents of primary and secondary students <p>Survey on MOE Parent Kit 'Supporting Your Child through the Exam Season'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessed by 251,269 parents of primary and secondary students <p>Survey on MOE Parent Kit 'Celebrating Your Child's Effort, Guiding Them Forward'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessed by 33,599 parents of Primary 6 students 	<p>their child develop healthy habits to deal with challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When asked to share good practices of how they usually supported their child when they were troubled, parents shared the importance of spending time to check in with their children. • Parents shared that they would try to have regular conversations with their children to check in on their well-being, affirm their child's efforts and motivate them to do their best. • Parents shared that they would always be there for their children regardless of whether they did well in life.
<p>Engagement sessions, targeted resources and workshops for Parent Support Groups (PSGs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement sessions conducted with PSG Leaders and about 700 participants across schools in Singapore • 1,253 total visitors to online Mental Well-being Resource Guide and PSG Repository • COMMunity and Parents in Support of Schools (COMPASS) online sessions: conducted with about 45 participants per session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSGs shared that the engagement sessions, workshops, and resources have equipped them to support parents to build good relationships with their children and enhance their overall mental well-being. • Parents and educators shared that the resources helped them better support their children and students amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

- In relation to mental health and well-being for working adults, several initiatives have been implemented. For example, HPB conducts trainings for managers and Human Resource (HR) personnel to help them recognise signs and symptoms of common mental health conditions, approach and encourage colleagues to seek help early (if required) and emphasise the importance of self-care to prevent burnout. As of December 2021, more than 2,400 managers and HR personnel have participated, with 93% of participants reporting an increase in knowledge and skills, and 81% of participants implementing the skills learnt to support staff back at their workplaces. Past engagements with employers and persons with mental health conditions have also surfaced useful suggestions to make workplaces more inclusive.

Engagement	Key Findings
<p>NCSS-IMH-Jardine Mindset's 'Collective Impact for Inclusive Employment' dialogue session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted with 65 participants from 36 private companies, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to review Human Resource (HR) policies / processes to encourage help seeking. • Policies should formalise workplace support (e.g., insurance coverage for counselling, reduced premium for workplace insurance). • There is a need to create workplace support structures for employees with mental health

public agencies, social service agencies and individuals with lived experiences.	conditions (e.g., peer supporters, workplace counselling).
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- The mental health and well-being of our seniors is also important, especially for those who experience social isolation. Research has shown that social isolation is often associated with negative mental health outcomes. Therefore, it is important for social and mental well-being efforts to be strengthened and more targeted at seniors who live alone.
- In response to these findings, the Silver Generation Office (SGO), the outreach arm of the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC), has pivoted towards preventive health visits since April 2022 for seniors aged 65 and above. During these visits, SG Ambassadors proactively share with seniors how to manage their health, active ageing programmes to stay healthy and connected in the community, and ways to plan for their future needs. SG Ambassadors are trained to identify seniors' strengths, to seek out what matters to them and their readiness to change. SG Ambassadors then gently nudge seniors towards lifestyle and behavioural change. More targeted support will also be provided for seniors with at least one risk factor. Risk factors include living alone, being lonely, having no or limited support as well as not being keen to or not participating in any activities.

Engagement	Key Findings
<p>The Singapore Management University Centre for Research on Successful Ageing (ROSA)'s Singapore Life Panel study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted with about 7,500 older Singaporeans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older Singaporeans reported a stark increase in feelings of isolation as the Circuit Breaker began in April 2020, with larger increases for those living alone, as compared to one year ago. • Older Singaporeans also reported that their overall life satisfaction dropped by 3.8% in April 2020 and 4.0% in May 2020, compared to January 2020.