

→ CHAPTER 1

# OUR NEW WAY FORWARD



## **The Forward SG exercise brought over 200,000 Singaporeans together over the last 16 months to discuss issues ranging from careers to ageing, as well as environmental sustainability.**

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Forward SG builds on the ideas gathered and partnerships developed across various engagements in recent years, including the Singapore Together Emerging Stronger Conversations, the Conversations on Singapore Women's Development, and the Long-Term Plan Review, among others.

- ▶ Reflecting our diverse society, we often encountered differences in views and perspectives during our discussions. The issues we face are complex; some solutions may benefit one group but disadvantage another.
- ▶ But these hard conversations were important. They highlighted the trade-offs involved in policy making and the importance of listening to diverse views to find common ground.
- ▶ The conversations enabled us to reflect on and affirm the core principles and fundamentals we should continue to uphold. We also recognised that there were areas where existing approaches had to be refreshed in light of changing circumstances.

In our engagements with Singaporeans, there was broad consensus on the areas that we are doing well in and should continue to focus on:

- ▶ We must uphold our shared values — fairness, inclusiveness, stewardship, and a shared sense of solidarity and mutual responsibility, where everyone gives back to society and helps those in need.
- ▶ Amidst our diversity, we must strengthen our multi-racial harmony and shared sense of identity as Singaporeans.

Singaporeans also agreed that it was critical to have a strong and vibrant economy. A growing economy will give us the resources to tackle our social challenges and enable everyone to enjoy better standards of living. But if the economy stagnates or shrinks, people will lose hope for the future. Populism and nativism will take root; cohesion and trust in society will begin to fray.

Growing the economy will get harder in the coming years amidst tighter constraints in land, labour and carbon. We must redouble our efforts to push the frontiers of innovation and develop new capabilities and engines of growth:

- ▶ We need to keep our economy open and continue to attract and anchor quality investments here. We must also continue to welcome foreign manpower from around the world to complement Singaporeans; with the best teams here, we can maximise our chances of excelling amidst intense global competition.
- ▶ We have to further improve our productivity over the coming decade. The best way to do so is to allow the process of 'creative destruction'. Some activities will wind down, but new growth areas will emerge. New technologies like generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) will drive this restructuring and transformation. This will result in more churn and disruption in our workplaces. We must therefore provide more support for Singaporeans to adapt and thrive in this rapidly changing environment.



**If Singapore stays open to the global economy, I will continue to stay here. If Singapore becomes more closed off, all the big-tech companies and multi-national corporations (MNCs) will be gone."**

*- Youth participant at the REACH-Friendzone 'Singapore\_v2050' Conversation, 27 September 2022*



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**We always need to keep up to speed. It's a challenge but also something we can exploit to a certain extent because if we can adapt fast enough, we can have first-mover advantage."**

*- Junior Associate at the Forward SG Engagement with Management Associates, 7 October 2022*



## At the same time, one area that constantly emerged from discussions was how the idea of a 'good life' has evolved. What is the Singapore Dream?

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- ▶ In the past, Singaporeans talked about chasing the Five 'C's — condo, car, cash, credit card, country club.
- ▶ Nowadays we no longer focus on the Five 'C's. But as a society, we continue to measure ourselves and others on the same old yardsticks — the size of our pay cheques or the property we own.
- ▶ To be clear, we would all like to have a good career, a good home and to provide for our families. All parents would like their children to get ahead and do well in life.
- ▶ But how far should we go in pursuing these material goals? How much is enough? How do we avoid getting trapped in a vicious cycle of endless hyper-competition where we focus too much on keeping up or even trying to get ahead of others?





**[Success is] fulfilment and contentment. I'm okay with not achieving certain material goals, but the non-material goals are very important. Everything I do should carry some value and meaning."**

*- Student participant at the Forward SG Student Engagement at Nanyang Technological University (NTU), 11 November 2022*

From our engagements, it was clear that the idea of the Singapore Dream is not limited to material success. In particular, there have been discernible shifts in our youths' mindset. When young people today talk about careers and jobs, they often express a desire for meaning and purpose in what they do, not just for good salaries.

In other words, we want to embrace wider definitions of success. We seek a more inclusive Singapore Dream — one where we value every individual, support them in their diverse aspirations and pathways, and celebrate their achievements and successes together.

We already see this in the arts and sports, where we have a growing number of artists and athletes who have achieved success through personal guts and determination. Likewise, there are many Singaporeans bravely forging their own paths to take a chance on their dreams. How can we, as a society, help them feel that they are not alone?



**In my generation, success was all about the Five 'C's. Now, it is about balance and how one could contribute to society."**

*- Middle-aged participant at the Forward Singapore Intergenerational Conversations, 3 December 2022*

## To refresh the Singapore Dream, we must make several changes.

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### Embrace learning beyond grades:

As a society, we still focus too much on who gets the best grades and who makes the cut for perceived brand-name schools or sought-after university places. Instead of getting caught up in an education arms race, we should reorientate our mindsets towards becoming a full-fledged learning society, where we strive to learn and improve throughout our lives.



### Respect and reward different jobs:

We are used to celebrating those who excel in certain fields. We should equally embrace our talents in other areas and create diverse pathways for Singaporeans to be the best version of themselves and make a difference in their own ways.

In a highly competitive environment, it is easy to become narrowly focused on our own pursuits and goals. We have long rewarded and celebrated individual efforts and achievements. It is good to be self-reliant. But if we take this too far, it can lead to the mistaken notion that our achievements are entirely due to our own efforts.

In fact, no one succeeds alone. Every success story is a shared story. We must not lose sight of the fact that we are part of something bigger. Our lives become more meaningful when we are part of a larger whole and are able to care for and help our fellow citizens.

We therefore have to change our attitudes and mindsets about success. It should be less about 'I', 'me' and 'mine' and more about 'we', 'us' and 'ours'.



**We must build upon our strong sense of individual responsibility with a greater sense of collective responsibility. Together, we should strive to provide the following assurance to our fellow citizens:**



More support for our families through every stage of life so they can better adapt to their evolving circumstances and needs, to flourish and thrive



More support for our seniors so that they can retire with peace of mind and live meaningfully and healthily in their golden years



More support for Singaporeans to bounce back from setbacks through a better system of social support so that everyone can improve their circumstances and chase their own dreams





A truly successful society is one where everyone succeeds together. Our enhanced support measures will focus on the lower and middle-income groups, with additional help for the more disadvantaged and vulnerable members of our society. By empowering them and boosting their sense of ownership and agency over their own circumstances, we ensure that everyone is given the opportunity to succeed, while no one is left behind.

Importantly, we have to consider the needs, not just of today but also of tomorrow. We have to think about the next generation, and those yet to be born. We should uphold our ethos of building for the future and steward our resources responsibly and sustainably, without burdening future generations.

Ultimately, we aim to build a stronger sense of solidarity and identity as Singaporeans. As an increasingly diverse society, we should intensify our effort to strengthen our sense of kinship and trust in one another. Those who have succeeded should do their part to help uplift the people around them. We must never be a society where people are left to fend for themselves. Instead, we want every Singaporean to know and feel a stake in our shared future, while possessing a sense of obligation and responsibility to one another.



## This is the Singapore we want to become — a society that is:

- ▶ **Vibrant and Inclusive**, with opportunities for all to learn and progress across diverse pathways, and where everyone is valued and respected for who we are and what we do.
- ▶ **Fair and Thriving**, where Singaporeans are assured of their basic needs through every life stage, and we can all pursue fulfilling and dignified lives, with more help given to our fellow citizens with less.
- ▶ **Resilient and United**, with a stronger sense of shared identity and collective responsibility amongst all stakeholders to do our part for the common good and for future generations of Singaporeans.

This new way forward reflects the shared perspectives and views of Singaporeans across all walks of life who participated in our Forward SG engagements. Taking in these inputs, the Government has begun the work of reviewing and updating policies. We have set out in this report the possible changes in policy directions and also the different ways in which Singaporeans can do their part in shaping our future.

It will not be possible for us to address every topic or suggestion in this report. But we have attempted to capture everyone's voices through various means.



Visit the Forward SG website and social media platforms to view more proposed ideas.



<https://www.forwardsingapore.gov.sg>

FACEBOOK

**oursingapore**

YOUTUBE

**@oursg**

X (FORMERLY KNOWN AS TWITTER)

**@our\_sg**

INSTAGRAM

**@our\_sg**

LINKEDIN

**oursg**



Look out for more specific policy initiatives that will be announced over time, such as at Budget 2024.

The ideas from Forward SG provide a roadmap for our next chapter of the Singapore Story. Together, we can look ahead with confidence and contribute actively towards our shared future.

# Over 200,000 Singaporeans contributed to the Forward SG Exercise



**>35,000**

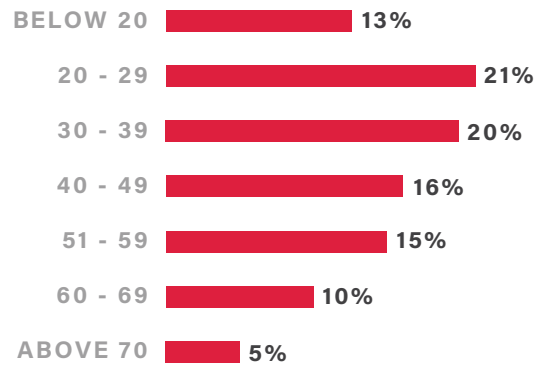
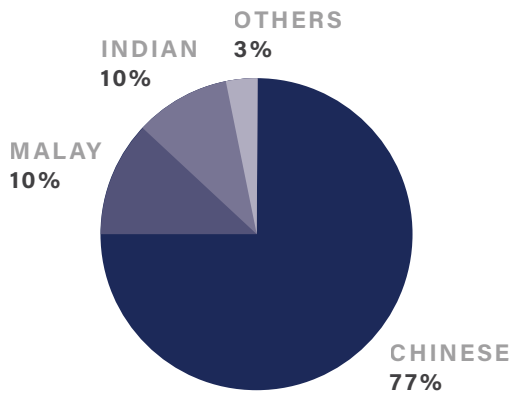
participated in **275** partnerships and engagement sessions



**>165,000**

contributed through surveys, roadshows and other digital platforms

## OUR PARTICIPANTS



Note: Demographics of participants from 102 engagement sessions, where data was collected

The Forward SG exercise builds on the ideas gathered and partnerships developed across various engagements in recent years, including:

- ▶ The Singapore Together Emerging Stronger Conversations
- ▶ The Long-Term Plan Review
- ▶ The Conversations on Singapore Women’s Development
- ▶ Over 35 Alliances for Action on economic, social and sustainability issues



## Engagements were held...



In different languages



In every neighbourhood



Both in-person and online



At timings suited for overseas Singaporeans



With the support of more than 560 volunteer facilitators

## Engagements adopted a wide variety of formats and methods to cater to different interests and profiles:



**Open Space Technology** enabled participants to choose and lead conversations on topics they most wanted to discuss.



**Focus group discussions** explored a specific issue e.g. housing, for groups most affected by the issue.



**Role-playing** enabled participants to stand in the shoes of a demographic profile different from their own and understand it better.



**Intergenerational conversations** brought together people from different ages to build mutual understanding across generations.



**Marketplace for action/partnership** enabled people to learn about and sign up for community initiatives in their neighbourhood.

## Citizens and stakeholders from the private and people sector also led initiatives in support of Forward SG.

- ▶ The NTUC #EveryWorkerMatters Conversations engaged 42,000 employers and workers to refresh the Labour Movement's compact with workers.
- ▶ Some groups submitted policy proposals to the Forward SG Workgroup; others organised Forward SG engagements for their communities.
- ▶ Many kickstarted ground-up initiatives in their neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces to tackle issues related to our social compact.

**Many of these initiatives will continue beyond the exercise.**

**We thank everyone who has contributed, and will continue to grow this spirit of partnership and co-creation.**