

SINGAPORE

COMPANY
OF GOOD



ISSUES FACED BY
CHILDREN AND YOUTH
IN SINGAPORE

In 2016, there were
596,200
 children aged 14 and below
 residing in Singapore



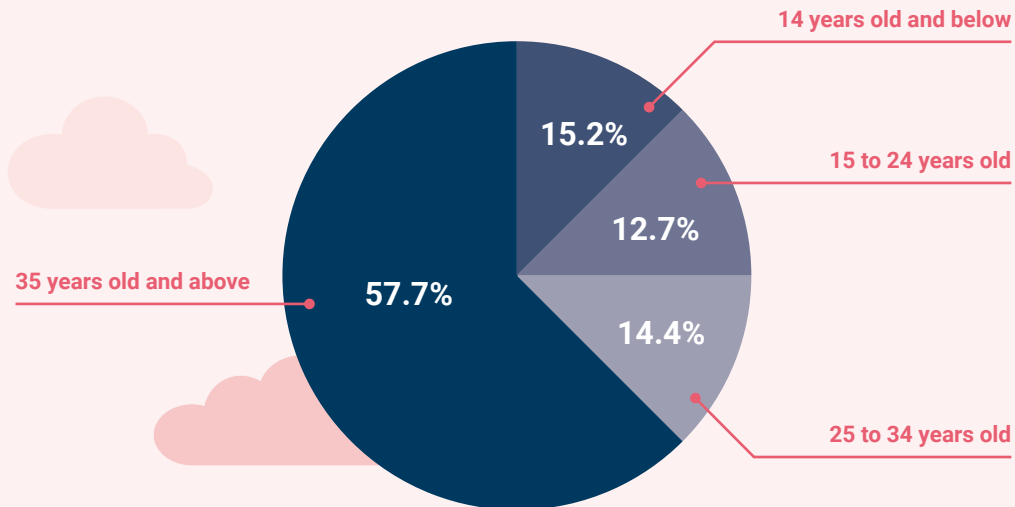
In 2016, there were 596,200 children aged 14 and below resident in Singapore, while the youth population between 15 and 34 years old stood at 1,066,000¹. Children and youth below 25 years old made up 27.9% of the resident population. As of March 2017, there were approximately 179 charities registered with the Commissioner of Charities (COC) primarily working on issues related to children and youth.

On the face of it, children and youth face relatively carefree developmental years in Singapore, with a low infant mortality rate and a high literacy rate. However, selected social statistics from the **Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF)**, specifically those measuring child protection and welfare, juvenile delinquency, youth at risk, or those needing social assistance point towards pertinent issues that still need to be addressed.

Singapore has been a signatory to the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** since 1995. This is a comprehensive charter on the rights of children and sets out minimum state obligations in the areas of healthcare, education and legal and social services. The 54 articles of the UNCRC affirm four basic principles: a child's right to survival, a child's right to development, a child's right to be protected, and a child's right to participate actively in his/her community. MSF uses the UNCRC as a guiding document, with non-profits working in the sector following suit. The UNCRC also informs the **Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA)**, which safeguards the care, protection and rehabilitation of children aged below 16.

In alignment with the government's approach, this landscape review uses the UNCRC as a basis to explore the issues and needs of

Resident population in Singapore in 2016



Source: Singstat data

children and youth in Singapore. However, in unpacking the different dimensions of these issues, it also acknowledges the role of the family in predicting the outcomes for children. The family's socio-economic status for example, determines the depth and breadth of family assets e.g. housing that are important resources in a child's development². The reach of the child's social safety nets, in the form of parents, neighbours and peers, also plays a part in heightening or mitigating a family or a child's issues, with children with stronger social support structures better able to navigate external challenges and obstacles.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of issues facing children and youth based on media and academic reports, as well as ground validation with academics and expert practitioners. The list will continue to grow as more needs surface and information becomes available. The list is organised according to the articles in the UNCRC, as categorised in the table on the following page. The tables shows the number of charities that we see as currently addressing the issues in each category.

The team is grateful to the following individuals for their support and guidance in the preparation of this review:

- Kevin See, Social Worker, Kreta Ayer Family Services
- Dr Irene Ng, Director, Social Service Research Centre
- Joyce Teo, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Community Foundation of Singapore
- Belinda Lee, Principal Consultant, Community Foundation of Singapore
- Benjamin Seow, Manager, National Council of Social Service
- En Yeow Wang, Manager, National Council of Social Service

¹ Age Pyramid of Resident Population. (2016, Sep 27). Retrieved from <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/statistics/visualising-data/charts/age-pyramid-of-resident-population>

² Shanks and Robinson. (2013). Assets, economic opportunity and toxic stress: A framework for understanding child and educational outcomes. *Economics of Education Review*, Volume (33), pp. 154-170.



CONTENTS

	Issue Framework for Children and Youth in Singapore	5
1	Suicide among Children and Youth	8
2	Mental Health & Socio-emotional Resilience	12
3	Slow Learners	15
4	Impact of Parental Incarceration	18
5	Impact of Divorce	21
6	Protection of Children in Abusive Situations	24
7	Juvenile Delinquency	28
8	Teenage Pregnancy and Underage Sex	32
9	Substance Abuse Among Youth	35

Issue Framework for Children and Youth in Singapore

Based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child & the WHO Quality of Life Framework

The table shows the number of charities that we see as currently having programmes addressing the issues in the personal domain of a child's life.

Personal	No. of charities
Civil rights and freedoms [S] Every child must not suffer discrimination, whatever his race, colour, sex, language, religion, beliefs, origins, property, disability or other status	0
Best interests and respect for views of the child [S] Everyone should make decisions and act in the best interests of children and every child must be allowed to be an active participant in all matters affecting his or her life	7
Lives, Survival and Development [S, NP, O] Every child has the right to life, survival and development in all aspects of his or her life	39
Disability [S, NP] Every child who has any kind of disability should have special care and support, so that he or she can lead a full and independent life	12
Health and Health Services [S, NP] Every child has the right to the best standards of health and health services	13
Standard of Living & Social Security [S, O] Every child has the right to an adequate standard of living, social security and to benefit from childcare services and facilities	23
Education & access to information [S, NP, O] Every child has the right to a good education that develops his or her personality to the fullest	111
Leisure, recreation and cultural activities [S, NP, O] Every child has the right to leisure and play, and the opportunity to participate in cultural and artistic activities	35

Charities may have programmes in more than one category.

Note: The letters S, NP and O in square parenthesis refer to the players currently active in addressing this issue in some way: S=State, NP=Non-profit, O=Others (including corporates and social enterprises)

Issue Framework for Children and Youth in Singapore

Based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child & the WHO Quality of Life Framework

The table shows the number of charities that we see as currently having programmes addressing the issues in the child's immediate environment.

Immediate Environment	No. of charities
Shared Responsibilities of Parents [S, NP, O] Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their children, and should always consider what's best for each child	0
Provision of Childcare Facilities [S, NP] Government should help parents and legal guardians by providing services to support them	51
Contact with Parents [S, NP, O] Every child has the right to live with his or her parents or to maintain contact if separated from either one	3
Protection from Abuse and Neglect [S, NP] Every child has the right to protection from abuse and neglect by parents or caregivers	6
Alternative Care [S, NP, O] Every child has the right to receive alternative care when a family environment cannot be maintained	14
Adoption [S] Every child has the right to a safe adoption system	1

Charities may have programmes in more than one category.

Note: The letters S, NP and O in square parenthesis refer to the players currently active in addressing this issue in some way: S=State, NP=Non-profit, O=Others (including corporates and social enterprises)

Issue Framework for Children and Youth in Singapore

Based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child & the WHO Quality of Life Framework

The table shows the number of charities that we see as currently having programmes addressing the issues a child may face in society.

Public Space	No. of charities
Parental Guidance [S, NP] Government will ensure the rights of parents and families to provide guidance to their children	0
Protection of Children in Emergency Situations [S, NP] Every child has the right to special protection in emergency situations	2
Protection of Children from Minority Communities [S] Children of minority communities have the right to enjoy and practice their own culture	1
Protection from Situations of Exploitation [S, NP] Every child has the right to special protection in situations of exploitation	5
Protection of Children in Conflict with the Law [S, NP] Every child has the right to special protection when he or she is in conflict with the law	18
Protection from torture, degrading treatment or punishment [S] No child shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment	0

Charities may have programmes in more than one category.

Note: The letters S, NP and O in square parenthesis refer to the players currently active in addressing this issue in some way: S=State, NP=Non-profit, O=Others (including corporates and social enterprises)

Why should you care?

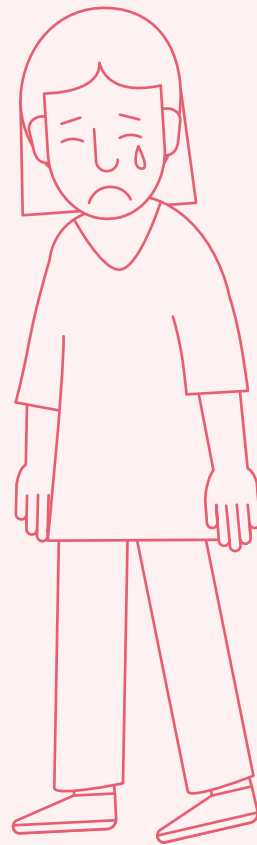
Suicide – the act of deliberately killing oneself, is a socio-psychological barometer of the health of the nation. In 2016, the suicide of an 11-year-old boy after failing his examinations³ shocked the nation, reopening discussions on childhood stressors and how national policies or culture could be revised to prevent such tragic consequences.

High levels of stigma hinder those who need help from seeking it

There is a high level of stigma around mental health issues, which makes it difficult for youth to speak about suicidal thoughts. Seen as cowardly and selfish behaviour, such conversations often result in distrust, shunning and avoidance by others. Such judgment tends to stem from ignorance, fear and misunderstanding⁴. More efforts to raise public awareness are therefore necessary to improve information and dialogue on youth suicide.

Low mental health literacy results in suicidal tendencies being ignored

Peers and parents also need to know how to identify and address signs of suicidal behaviour. Anti-social behavior such as changes in personality, behavior, sleep patterns and eating habits suggest high levels of depression and anxiety. These can be addressed if brought to the attention of medical professionals.

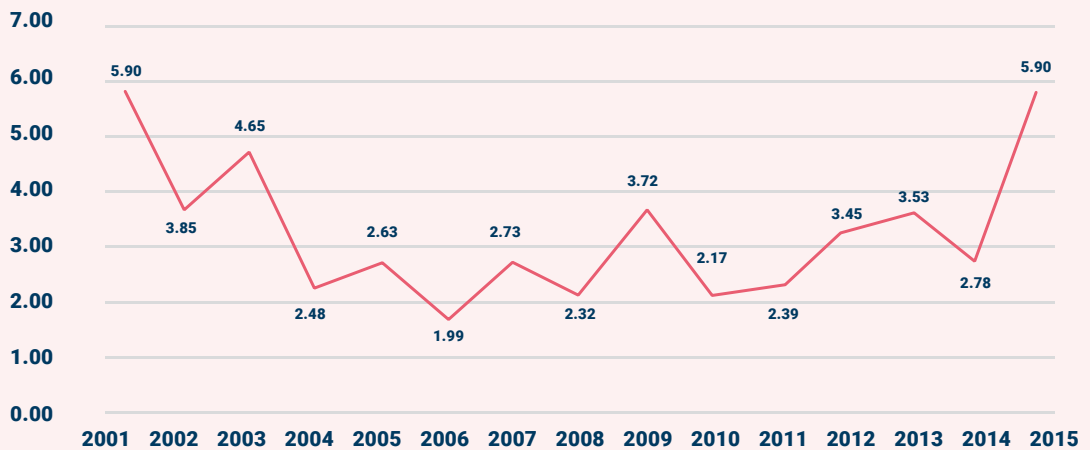


What you need to know

Suicide attempts among youth are more common than we perceive

The suicide rate of those aged 10-19 reached a 15-year high in 2015⁵. However, according to the **Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)**, only 9.0% of hotline calls and 35.2% of their Email Befriending Service received in 2015 were from that age bracket. Yet face-to-face interviews done by **Agape** with 3,000 people aged between 13 to 21 years old in 2016 showed that one in 50 has suicidal thoughts and one in 200 has attempted suicide before⁶.

Annual suicide rate of those aged 1-19 years old (per 100,000)



Source: Singstat data

Suicide results from a combination of stressors, sustained over time

Among Singaporean youth aged 10-19, SOS cited mental health issues, academic pressure and relationship problems either at home or school as common stressors – on top of the usual challenges of adolescence⁷. There are several risk factors leading to suicidal thinking or behavior, such as life history, an existing mental health condition, lifestyle vices, environment related stress and poor relationships⁸.

It is important to note that suicide is not the result of a single source of stress, but of several that are sustained over time⁹. The most common method of suicide for young persons below 24 years old was jumping from a high-rise building, with drug overdose as the most common method for attempted suicides¹⁰.

What's being done and how can you help?

Government-led initiatives

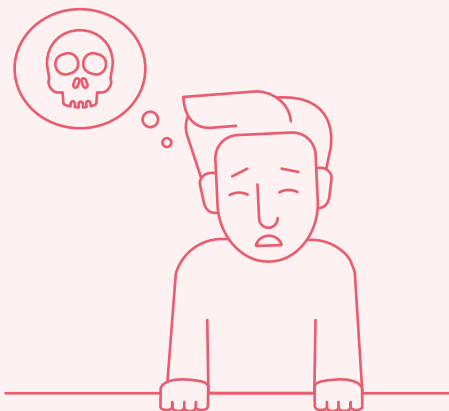
The **Institute of Mental Health (IMH)** encourages a multiple-stakeholder approach to preventing suicides among youth, including collaborations between ministries and national agencies.

At the ministerial level, the **Ministry of Education (MOE)** has sought to change the examination system and also introduce socio-emotional learning programmes in existing curriculum. MSF also refers mental health cases to the **Child Guidance Clinic (CGC)**, which is housed under IMH.

Community-level support

At the community level, counsellors are attached to all government schools working in coordination with IMH, the **National University Health System (NUHS)** and **KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKWCH)** looking into providing mental health care for all students. **Silver Ribbon Singapore** also acts to combat mental health stigma through providing counselling and workshops, and also works with the Community Court to offer support for ex-offenders with mental health issues.

Non-profits that look into suicide among children and youth include the **Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH)**, **Care Corner**, the **Counselling and Care Centre** and **Singapore Children's Society (SCS)**. They offer counselling help (some operate public help hotlines, such as SCS's Tinkle Friend), public education and support services for both child and family.



Starhub and Samaritans of Singapore - Dial-A-Tone Campaign

In 2013, Starhub worked with Samaritans of Singapore (SOS) to implement the “Dial-A-Tone” campaign. Leveraging its 2.5 million mobile subscriber database, Starhub transformed connecting tones into a message from SOS to harness volunteers and donors. Callers listening in to the message could also adopt it, snowballing the reach to their own contacts.

Impact:

In two months, 141,840 tones were sent out worth \$1.4 million in media space (without having spent money on media). SOS raised 17 times the donations received over the same period in the previous year, and saw a 450% increase in volunteer enquiries. SOS’ message was also the most downloaded tone of the month for two consecutive months.

Source: StarHub. (2013, Feb 1). StarHub Lets Consumers Give Voice to Charity. StarHub Newsroom. Retrieved from <http://www.starhub.com/about-us/newsroom/2013/february/starhub-lets-consumers-give-voice-to-charity.html>

³ **Suicide among Children and Youth.** Hussain, A. (2016, Oct 21). Death of boy, 11, who fell 17 floors after failing his exams for the first time ruled a suicide. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/courts-crime/death-of-boy-11-who-fell-17-floors-after-failing-his-exams-for-the-first-time>

⁴ **Samaritans of Singapore.** (2016). Suicide rate lower, but number of suicides at highest in recent years [Press release]. Retrieved from <https://sos.org.sg/press-release-2017>.

⁵ **Tai, J.** (2016, Apr 9). Youth on board for mental wellness drive. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/youth-on-board-for-mental-wellness-drive>

⁶ **Olson, R.** (2013). Suicide and Stigma. *InfoExchange*, Volume(12), Retrieved from <https://www.suicideinfo.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/IE12StigmaandSuicide.pdf>

⁷ **Samaritans of Singapore.** (2016). Suicide rate lower, but number of suicides at highest in recent years [Press release]. Retrieved from <https://sos.org.sg/press-release-2017>.

⁸ **Why people attempt suicide.** (2015, Feb 9). Retrieved from <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Suicide/Pages/Causes.aspx>

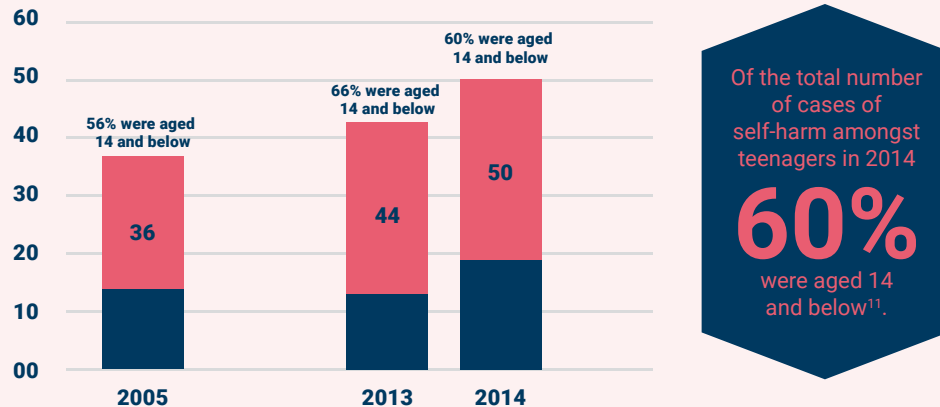
⁹ **Mohammad, N.** (2016, Nov 6). Suicide not usually result of single source of stress, says IMH doctor. *Channel NewsAsia*. Retrieved from <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/suicide-not-usually-result-of-single-source-of-stress-says-imh/3265742.html>

¹⁰ **Lim, C.G., Ong, S.H., Chin, C.H., & Fung, D.** (2015). Child and adolescent psychiatry services in Singapore. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*. 9(7), Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276299899_Child_and_adolescent_psychiatry_services_in_Singapore

Why should you care?

Self-harming behaviour is increasing among younger children

Number of reported cases of self-harm among teenagers (2005-2014)



Source: Teng, Amelia. (2015, Dec 28). Rising trend of self-harm among young. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/rising-trend-of-self-harm-among-the-young>

Low mental health levels have several repercussions

A child's social and emotional well-being is crucial to his/her development. A well-adjusted child or youth should be able to connect with others, form and maintain relationships. Conversely, a low level of mental health results in the inability to cope with normal stresses of life and/or realise his/her potential¹².

High-pressure academic environment raises levels of self-criticism

Understanding children's abilities and giving them space to learn at their own pace is a gap in the high-pressure academic environment in Singapore. A five-year study by researchers from the National University of Singapore's department of psychology showed that well-intentioned parents inadvertently raise young children's levels of self-criticism and risk of depression, anxiety and even suicide by overreacting when their children make even slight mistakes. Of the 263 7-year old children assessed in the study, those with intrusive

parents were two times more likely to develop high levels of self-criticism compared with others in the five-year period¹³.

Common mental disorders are most visible amongst those between 35 and 65 years old, the age bracket of many parents

According to *Mind Matters: A Study of Mental Health Literacy*, conducted by IMH in 2015¹⁴, greater recognition of common mental disorders including major depressive disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder and schizophrenia is needed. These disorders tend to affect those aged between 35 and 65 years old more, the age bracket of many parents with youth.

The unaware public label the mentally ill as dangerous

Those with lower education and income tend to see the mentally ill as "weak, not sick" and "unpredictable/dangerous". Such public attitudes and perceptions towards mental illness remain a significant gap in preventive action.

What you need to know

Mental wellness is a journey, not a checklist

Mental health should be seen in a continuum, where mental wellness is achieved through increasing resilience and developing socio-emotional competencies and life skills in youth and childhood, as well as through creating a supportive environment.

Changes in family circumstances, relationships and academic performance are major risk factors among youth

Risk factors that increase the likelihood of youth developing a mental illness include changes in family circumstances such as divorce or incarceration of a parent and social relationships such as bullying or a romantic break up. School stress and academic performance are also prominent risk factors

among Singaporean youth. At the same time, underlying issues such as poverty, crime or substance abuse are potential longitudinal risk factors.

A healthy family life and positive relationships with peers can promote mental health

Mental health professionals believe that protective factors can help to mitigate the risks and help youth achieve markers of good mental health such as a high self-esteem, feelings of competency and social connectedness. Some of these protective factors include healthy attachment to parents as well as positive and loving relationships with family and friends. At school, supportive mentors, involvement in school activities and positive friendships with peers are crucial. Of these, parent-child interactions matter the most in mitigating the mental health effects of poverty and violence¹⁵.

What's being done and how can you help?

Government-led initiatives

Since 2007, the **Health Promotion Board (HPB)** has worked with MOE to promote mental wellness programmes in schools to help children understand socio-emotional changes and develop resilience. Child and adolescent mental health services are made available at IMH's **Child Guidance Clinic (CGC)** and five other public hospitals – KK Women's and Children's Hospital, National University Hospital, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, Singapore General Hospital and Changi General Hospital.

On the community front, multi-disciplinary teams comprising mental health professionals, NPOs and schools have been formed to provide consultation liaison services¹⁶.

In January 2016, a three-year nationwide movement called **HappYouths** was launched by Character and Leadership Academy with the support of the National Youth Council, Health Promotion Board and Singapore Turf Club to train 10,000 young people every year to spot signs of depression and reach out to their affected peers¹⁷.

In parallel, a group of youth volunteers from IMH started **Campus PSY** (Peer Support for Youths) in July 2016 to raise awareness of mental health issues so that their peers are able to detect early symptoms of mental illness in their friends; youth are able and empowered to access relevant resources for early intervention; and informed and supportive communities are developed for youth in distress within tertiary institutions.

Community-led initiatives

There are several hotlines for children and youth to seek help from such as those manned by **Singapore Children's Society's** Tinkle Friend, **Samaritans of Singapore** and **SAGE Counselling Centre**.

Once a mental health issue has been identified, there are several options for counselling and treatment. Besides the CGC, some NPOs offering these services include the **Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH)**'s YouthReach Centre, **the Counselling and Care Centre** and **Care Corner**.

Jardine Matheson Group - MINDSET initiative

MINDSET is the CSR initiative of the Jardine Matheson Group, established in 2011 to promote mental health and eradicate social stigma. MINDSET ambassadors are Jardine executives chosen to encourage other employees to participate in year-round events.

Impact:

One of the key objectives was job placement; MINDSET managed to secure 22 jobs for clients from various mental health agencies. On the advocacy side, social enterprise projects and roadshows are held to push for awareness. The MINDSET Challenge also raises funds each year for like-minded charities such as Singapore Association for Mental Health, Silver Ribbon and Singapore Anglican Community Services.

Source: **Jardine Matheson**. (2017). About MINDSET. Jardines. Retrieved from <http://www.jardines.com/community/mindset.html>

¹¹ **Teng, A.** (2015, Dec 28). Rising trend of self-harm among the young. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/rising-trend-of-self-harm-among-the-young>

¹² **Health Promotion Board**. Understanding Students' Mental Health. The Agape Counselling Sanctuary. Retrieved from <http://sites.acsindep.edu.sg/counselling/uploads/Understanding%20Students'%20Mental%20Health%20-%20A%20Guide%20for%20Teachers.pdf>

¹³ **Yang, C.** (2016, Jun 22). Kids of pushy parents 'face higher risk of depression': NUS study. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/kids-of-pushy-parents-face-higher-risk-of-depression?login=true>

¹⁴ **Institute of Mental Health**. (2015). IMH's National Mental Health Literacy Study Shows Dementia, Alcohol Abuse and Depression are the Most Recognisable Among Common Mental Disorders. [Press Release]. Retrieved from https://www.imh.com.sg/uploadedFiles/Newsroom/News_Releases/6Oct15_Mind%20Matters%20Media%20Release.pdf

¹⁵ **Patterson, J.** (2016). Risk and Protective Factors Associated With Children's Mental Health. Retrieved from <https://www.extension.umn.edu/family/cyfc/publications/docs/risk-and-protective-factors-associated-with-childrens-mental-health.pdf>

¹⁶ **Lim, C.G., Ong, S.H., Chin, C.H., & Fung, D.** (2015). Child and adolescent psychiatry services in Singapore. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*. 9(7). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276299899_Child_and_adolescent_psychiatry_services_in_Singapore

¹⁷ **Tai, J.** (2016, Apr 9). Youth on board for mental wellness drive. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/youth-on-board-for-mental-wellness-drive>

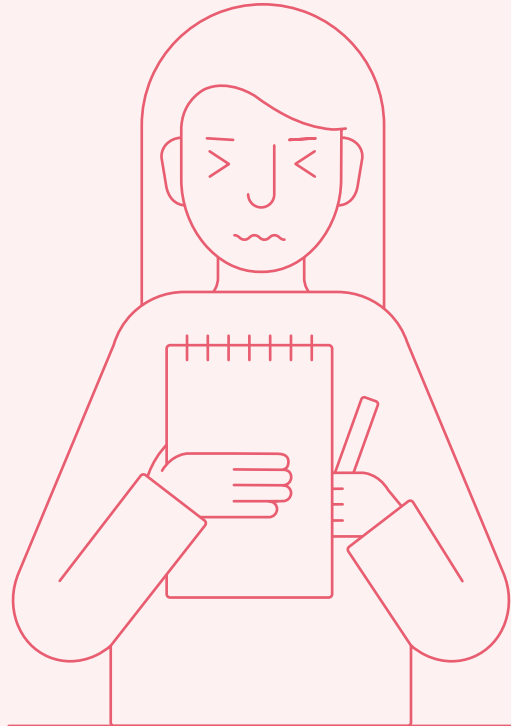
Why should you care?

Those who fail PSLE don't always have an alternative educational pathway

Of the approximately 400 students who graduate from Northlight and APS every year, only 40% proceed to ITE or other training programmes and a further 25% go on to work^{18,21}. The future of the remaining 35% as well as those who fall out of the system along the way is unknown.

These students are often facing challenges on several fronts

The challenges for these students are multi-faceted. Besides learning difficulties, their EQ levels were tested and found to be low in interpersonal skills and general mood (happiness and optimism)¹⁹. Their socio-emotional statuses can be correlated to their families' financial and social situations. As of 2012, half of APS students were on financial assistance, while 20% came from single-parent families²⁰.



What you need to know

Not everyone passes the PSLE

Between 2006 and 2015, an average of 2-3% of PSLE candidates, approximately 1,000 to 1,500 students a year (depending on the size of the cohort and the pass rate that year) do not pass PSLE²¹. These students may either choose to re-take their exams or apply to specialised schools such as Northlight School and Assumption Pathway School (APS) for more hands-on and practical learning programmes.

The pathways for slow learners are gradually increasing

In 2014, a two-year work-study programme was introduced as a separate curriculum to offer **Northlight** and **APS** graduates who do not qualify for ITE an opportunity to gain a Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) certification²². This caters to about 90 students a year²³.

The learning outcomes at Northlight and APS include character education, literacy and vocational training. Graduates from both schools leave with ITE Skill Certificates (ISC) in areas such as hospitality, mechanical servicing and facility operations.

In 2016, another two schools offering the ISC certification were opened: **Spectra** and **Crest Secondary Schools**. These cater to students in the Normal Technical stream, who have similar challenges to those in Northlight and APS. Together, the four schools increase the chances for these students to enter ITE to further their skills-based education²⁴.

What's being done and how can you help?

Joint corporate and community initiatives

Communities consisting of industrial attachment partners, neighbourhood businesses and NPOs have converged to work together with these schools. Out of Northlight's 45 partners, 18 provided internship opportunities. Northlight's Reach-out programme, which aimed at supporting alumni students in gaining employment and skills, also pulled in **Temasek Cares** and **Capitaland** to improve alumni employability and help them find jobs²⁵.

Foundations such as Temasek Cares and Capitaland Hope Foundation are increasingly coming on board as community partners for specialised schools, in providing work experience, facilities and mentorship.



Ritz Carlton – Succeed through Service

The Succeed Through Service youth engagement programme sees Ritz-Carlton in partnership with American youth non-profit, Promise Alliance. The programme pairs employees with at-risk students to teach them critical life and career skills. It is run in locations around the world and in three phases emphasising workplace and presentation skills. The final phase is the execution of a community volunteer project.

Impact:

Since its launch in 2009, the programme has benefited over 15,000 students. The toolkit developed is also shared on an open source basis so that others can also get involved.

Source: **The Ritz Carlton.** (2017). The Ritz Carlton Community Footprints. The Ritz Carlton. Retrieved from <http://www.ritzcarlton.com/en/community-footprints/programs/succeed-through-service>

¹⁸ **Prime Minister's Office, Singapore.** (2016, Sep 21). PM Lee Hsien Loong at the Opening of NorthLight School's New Campus and 10th Anniversary. Retrieved from <http://www.pmo.gov.sg/newsroom/pm-lee-hsien-loong-opening-northlight-schools-new-campus-and-10th-anniversary-0>

¹⁹ **Leong, L.** (2009). The Story of Northlight – A School of Opportunities and Possibilities, Part I. Retrieved from <https://www.ccollege.gov.sg/Knowledge/Pages/The-Story-of-Northlight-A-School-of-Opportunities-and-Possibilities.aspx>

²⁰ **The Straits Times.** (2012, May 2). Pathway to Success for 2nd Chance Students. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <http://ifonlaysia.blogspot.sg/2012/05/pathway-to-success-for-2nd-chance.html>

²¹ **Ministry of Education, Singapore.** (2016). Education Statistics Digest 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.moe.gov.sg/docs/default-source/document/publications/education-statistics-digest/esd-2016.pdf>

²² **Siau, M.** (2014, Nov 6). NorthLight, Assumption Pathway launch new work-study programme. *Today Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/northlight-assumption-pathway-launch-new-work-study-programme>

²³ **NorthLight School.** (2014). New work-study programme for graduates of Northlight, Assumption Pathway schools. Retrieved from <http://www.nls.edu.sg/new-work-study-programme-for-graduates-of-northlight-assumption-pathway-schools>

²⁴ **Mokhtar, F.** (2016, Oct 5). Crest, Spectra students to get advantage entering ITE. *Channel NewsAsia*. Retrieved from <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/crest-spectra-students-to-get-advantage-entering-ite/3178648.html>

²⁵ **Mokhtar, F.** (2016, Oct 5). Crest, Spectra students to get advantage entering ITE. *Channel NewsAsia*. Retrieved from <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/crest-spectra-students-to-get-advantage-entering-ite/3178648.html>

IMPACT OF PARENTAL INCARCERATION

Why should you care?

According to the UNCRRC, two contexts in which separation is notable are when parents are incarcerated or going through a divorce. This issue addresses support for children with incarcerated parents.

There are few provisions for non-financial aid for children with incarcerated parents

While there are provisions for reintegration and reunification efforts of families post-incarceration, there are fewer programmes that look into non-financial aid while a parent is incarcerated. More can be done to support the socio-emotional health of the remaining family members, as well as to build occupational and recreational pathways for existing caregivers.

Foster parents are not always able to fill in the gap

In instances where the child loses both parents (or in single-parent families, loses his or her only parent) due to incarceration, he or she will fall into the care of foster parents or families. This leads to issues of social adjustments. More often than not, foster parents spend less quality time with the foster children and/or tend less to their emotional and psychological needs²⁶. Although foster parents receive grants and allowances from MSF, the Fostering Scheme does not entitle foster parents to take childcare leave.

What you need to know

There are more families with incarcerated parents than are known

A good gauge of the number of families with an incarcerated parent can be traced by the Yellow Ribbon Fund (YRF), which has helped 39,000 beneficiaries (including their families) between 2004 and 2015²⁷.

Parental presence is a vital component of every child's development

Attachment theory dictates the role of a parent as an attachment figure as predictive of a child's future social and emotional state. Parents are influential in moulding an individual's personality, are a platform for cohesion, and serve as a support system²⁸. When one or both parents are missing, one or more developmental domains are affected in children, be it cognitive, social, emotional or academic. Separation from one or both parents may also lead to the child feeling undeserving of parental affection and care as a reaction to the loss of the relationship²⁹.



Separation from parents brings stress and trauma to their children

Having an incarcerated parent brings great stress and trauma to a child with long-term effects. Firstly, there is the financial loss which places an extra burden on the remaining family members, possibly leading to a child taking up more caregiving and financial responsibilities.

Secondly, a child's socialisation process tends to be affected by the change as well as the loss of supervision, role models and support. This may lead to issues related to juvenile delinquency. Crucially, the stigma of having an imprisoned parent simultaneously disrupts the parent-child relationship and results in the loss of social networks and capital due to the incarceration³⁰.

What's being done and how can you help?

Government-led initiatives

The Fostering Scheme by MSF arranges foster care for children who require alternative family care, including those with parents that have been incarcerated³¹. The Fostering Scheme provides temporary care to meet the emergency care needs of children before re-integrating them with their natural family. This may become long-term when parents or guardians are unable to make other suitable arrangements for their children.

Community-led initiatives

The **Yellow Ribbon Community Project (YRCP)**, under the CARE Network, acts to reach out to individual families and linking them up to community or state resources. YRCP also aids family reconciliation while the parent is incarcerated and during the rehabilitation process.

Community agencies such as **MENDAKI** and **Family Service Centres** also provide counselling, educational and employment support to children of offenders. In the same vein, the **Yellow Ribbon Fund (YRF)** supports programmes targeting structural (financial, employment) and psychosocial needs (family strengthening, parenting, children behavioral problems). This is done through linking up with NPOs such as **The Salvation Army** and **Focus on the Family**³². In 2015 alone, 48% of the YRF reached 2,475 beneficiaries to help rebuild familial relationships³³.

The **Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE)** is the current statutory board under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) managing all rehabilitation and aftercare services for inmates and ex-offenders through training, work, employment assistance and community engagement.

SCORE is also the secretariat of **CARE Network**, the first formal structure bringing nine member agencies in alliance to coordinate re-entry management of ex-offenders. Available institutional support for families revolves around ongoing care (while the parent is incarcerated) and aftercare. Current priorities of MHA include reducing inter-generational offending and deepening community involvement³⁴.

Non-SCORE linked entities also include **Life Community Services Society**, which provides educational, counselling and recreational support to children and youth, as well as their families. **New Life Stories** offers a more targeted approach by improving the reading and pro-social skills of pre-school children. They also offer in-prison and after-care support for incarcerated mothers.

Sesame Workshop - Little Children, Big Challenges

Little Children, Big Challenges is a multi-year, multimedia bilingual outreach initiative by the non-profit educational organisation Sesame Workshop with partners such as BAE Systems, Inc., The Prudential Foundation, the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, the USO and Military Child Education Coalition. It aims to provide tools for parents, caregivers and educators to help foster young children's resilience mechanisms; with respect to day-to-day challenges as well as more serious changes and transitions such as parental incarceration, divorce or bullying.

These multimedia resources are provided free for all families raising preschoolers. Sesame Workshop is also in partnership with parenting, child-care, health, and education programs, social work organisations, counselors and psychologists, and bullying prevention organisations.

Source: Sesame Workshop. (2017). Little Children, Big Challenges. Sesame Workshop. Retrieved from <http://www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits/challenges>

²⁶ Tan, A. (2017, Apr 3). Foster parents need more support: Experts. *The New Paper*. Retrieved from <http://www.np.sg/news/singapore/foster-parents-need-more-support-experts>

²⁷ This has been done through the provision of financial support, residential support, reconnecting families, educating and training in their rehabilitation and reintegration process.

²⁸ Biller, H. B. (1970). Father absence and the personality development of the male child. *Developmental Psychology*, 2(2), 181-201. doi:10.1037/h0028764.

²⁹ Bretherton, I. (1992). The origins of attachment theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. *Developmental Psychology*, 28(5), 759-775. doi:10.1037//0012-1649.28.5.759

³⁰ Hagan, J., & Dinovitzer, R. (1999). Collateral Consequences of Imprisonment for Children, Communities, and Prisoners. *Crime and Justice*, 26, 121-162. doi:10.1086/449296

³¹ Ministry of Social and Family Development. (2016). About the Fostering Scheme. Retrieved from <https://www.msf.gov.sg/Fostering/Pages/About-the-Fostering-Scheme.aspx>

³² Yellow Ribbon Project. (2016). Programmes by Yellow Ribbon Fund. Retrieved from <http://www.yellowribbon.org.sg/yellow-ribbon-fund/programmes/>

³³ Yellow Ribbon Fund. (2015). Hope Unlocks Yellow Ribbon Fund Annual Report 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.yellowribbon.org.sg/docs/default-source/module/report/yrf-annual-report-2015.pdf>

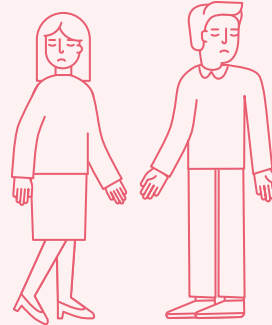
³⁴ Ang, J. (2016, May 13). CARE Network Workplan 2016: Deeper Community Involvement in Reintegration of Ex-Offenders. *Home Team News*. Retrieved from https://www.hometeam.sg/article.aspx?news_sid=20160513v4bNPM39KZsK

Why should you care?

According to the UNCRG, two contexts in which separation is notable is when parents are incarcerated or going through a divorce. This issue addresses support for children with divorced parents.

There is little support for families post-divorce

While the mandatory pre-divorce counselling and advocacy for co-parenting best practices are definitely a step forward, more can be done to look into sustained efforts in helping post-divorced families in the transition stage, be it with regards to their financial or socio-emotional health. More can also be done to explore the conditions of reconstituted families and the problems they face.

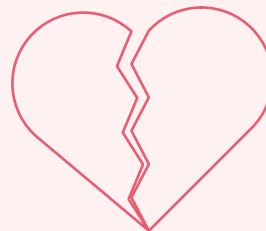


Parental presence is vital in any child's development

Though clichéd, parental presence remains a vital component for every child's development. Attachment theory dictates the role of a parent as an attachment figure as predictive of a child's future social and emotional state. Besides creating a safe and secure environment for a child, other parenting aspects include disciplining, teaching, caring and playing³⁵. Parents are influential in moulding an individual's personality, are a platform for cohesion, and serve as a support system³⁶.

Loss of parental affection and care has long-lasting negative impact

Separation from one or both parents may lead to the child feeling undeserving of parental affection and care as a reaction to the loss of the relationship. The absence of a parent can also lead to cognitive, social, emotional and academic issues.

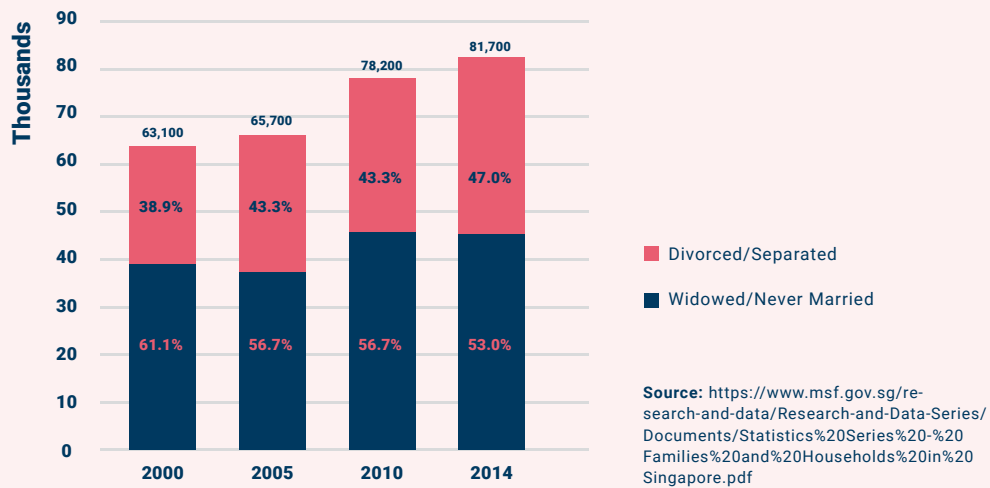


What you need to know

The proportion of households headed by divorced or separated parents is increasing

Out of all single-parent households, 47% were headed by divorced or separated parents in 2014, an increase by 8.1% from 2000. Over one-third of all single-parent households included a youngest child below the age of 21³⁷.

Number of single-parent households by marital status of head of household



Parental absence is related to economic disadvantage and family conflict

Generally, three perspectives have been used to understand the effect of divorce on a child – parental absence, economic disadvantage and family conflict. Parental absence may lead to a decline in support for a child’s psycho-social and emotional well-being³⁸. Having to rearrange

a family’s financial flows may lead to economic difficulties as well. Assuming that divorce heightens the level of discord and conflict within the non-intact family, longitudinal impact on a child’s psychological well-being can be expected, affecting their future quality of life and attainment in adulthood.

What's being done and how can you help?

It is useful to think of the support given to a family in preventing cases of divorce and after a divorce, including the legal, financial and psychological aspects.

Government-led initiatives

Pre-divorce

In 2015, four VWOs were mandated to act as **Divorce Support Specialist Agencies (DSSAs)** as per Family Justice Committee recommendations. They are **Care Corner Centre for Co-Parenting, Centre for Family Harmony, HELP Family Service Centre** and **PPIS As-Salaam Family Support Centre**. The DSSAs take a child-centric approach to provide divorce support through information sharing, non-legal advice on case management, counselling, dispute management and programmes.

Under the Women's Charter, there is also a Mandatory Parenting Programme, a two-hour counselling session administered by the DSSAs to discuss financial, living and co-parenting arrangements.

Community-led initiatives

Pre-divorce

A number of NPOs engage in family strengthening through marital counselling and support, such as **Focus on the Family** and **REACH Community Services Society**. Family counselling services are also available at all Family Service Centres.

Post-divorce

While there are few NPOs providing specific support for children affected by divorce, many cater to children from a wide range of single-parent families. **Fei Yue Community Services** and **Morning Star Community Services** for example, provide family-based programmes and services, as well as counselling for parent-child and marital relations. In addition, the **Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO)** runs a one-stop centre to help women with problems accessing their court-ordered maintenance.

³⁵ **Benoit, D.** (2004). Infant-parent attachment: Definition, types, antecedents, measurement and outcome. *Paediatrics & Child Health*, 9(8), 541–545.

³⁶ **Biller, H. B.** (1970). Father absence and the personality development of the male child. *Developmental Psychology*, 2(2), 181-201. doi:10.1037/h0028764.

³⁷ **Ministry of Social and Family Development, Republic of Singapore.** (2015). *Families And Households In Singapore, 2000 – 2014* (Report No. 2/2015). Retrieved from Ministry of Social and Family Development Website: <https://app.msf.gov.sg/Portals/0/Summary/publication/FDG/Statistics%20Series%20-%20Families%20and%20Households%20in%20Singapore.pdf>

³⁸ **Amato, P. R., & Keith, B.** (1991). Parental divorce and the well-being of children: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 110(1), 26-46. doi:10.1037//0033-2909.110.1.26

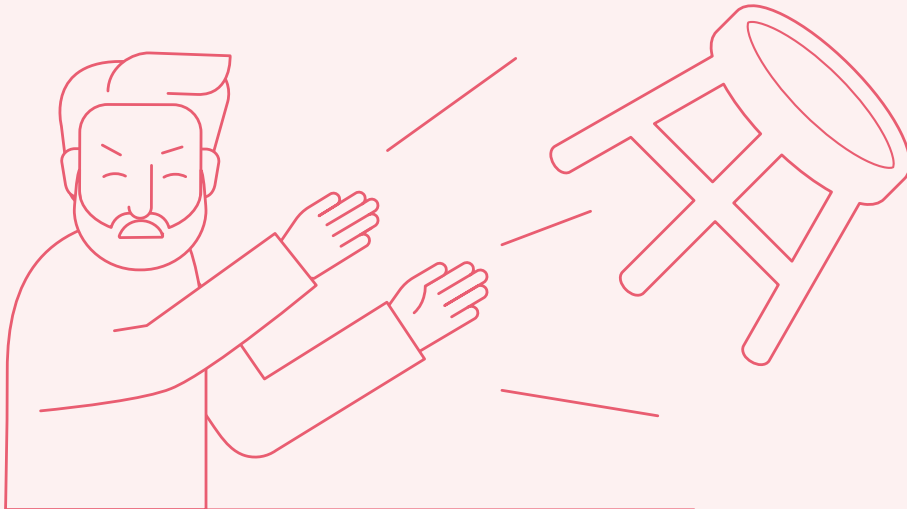
Why should you care?

Minors do not always understand what qualifies as abuse

Abuse comes in various forms, some of which can be more insidious and therefore difficult for young people to identify. Helping them understand the boundaries and giving them confidence to report cases of abuse is important, especially given the prevalence of online media. In one of the worst cases in recent history, a Malaysian engineer sexually abused 31 boys aged between 11 and 15 in Singapore over three years from 2009 to 2012, grooming them after befriending them on Facebook³⁹.

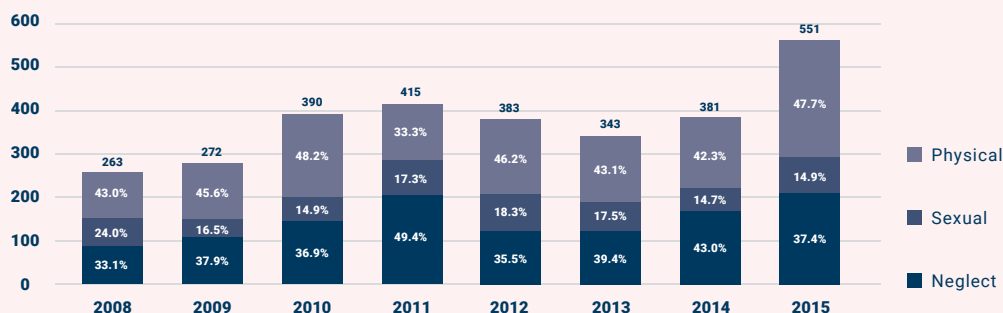
Adults need confidence to act to protect a child

Despite the stigma and potential ruptures to the family situation, adults also need to have confidence to act to protect the child. In removing a child from a situation of abuse, it is also important to consider the psycho-social, emotional and behavioural implications of removing him/her from the environment and community in which he/she has learned to feel safe. These can have long-term consequences, even if the child is eventually reunited with his/her community. Adults, particularly parents and educators, also need to be more cognisant of the warning signs of abuse. These could include children being very active online late at night, receiving gifts they cannot afford, or even being social isolated and withdrawn.



What you need to know

Number of child abuse investigations by abuse type (2008 – 2015)



Source: Ministry of Social and Family Development. (2017). Child Abuse Investigations. MSF Research and Statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.msf.gov.sg/research-and-data/Research-and-Statistics/Pages/Child-Abuse-Investigations.aspx>

There are several forms of child abuse

Child abuse is defined under the Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA) as any form of physical, sexual, neglect, emotional or psychological mistreatment⁴⁰. Under the Act, it is an offence for anyone possessing custody or in charge of such a young person to ill-treat, cause, procure, or knowingly permit abuse from another person.

Physical neglect and emotional abuse cases have increased, in part due to better awareness

In 2015, the number of child abuse investigations hit 551, up 44.6% from 2014. The types of abuse have changed since 2008, with more cases of physical neglect and emotional abuse in the last seven years. Investigations of sexual abuse cases have increased by 30% while those of physical abuse cases have gone up by 133% between 2008 and 2015⁴¹.

Reasons for the spike in statistics include the changing perceptions of child abuse and neglect, the seriousness of events as well as attitudes towards reporting. For example, the public is now more inclined towards reporting cases of abuse and supports mandatory reporting. Neglect and emotional maltreatment are also recognised by the public as abuse cases. There is increasing awareness of the need for evidence and thus the provision of it where necessary⁴².

State obligations to a child begin once a case is reported

Under the state's child protection services, addressing the issue of child abuse is bounded within structures of legislation, policies, programmes and services. The state's obligation to a child begins when a case has been reported to the police. Interventions are determined by the **Child Protective Service (CPS)** within the MSF and involves either the removal of child from an abusive environment or the removal of the adult responsible for the abuse⁴³.

What's being done and how can you help?

There are programmes that aim to educate children and youth on how to recognise and report abuse, as well as others who help those who have been abused.

Community-led initiatives

Pre-Intervention

NPOs such as **Singapore Children's Society** and **Big Love** (under **Montfort Care**) provide help hotlines for vulnerable children and youth to report cases of abuse and also raise public awareness on child protection issues. The Children's Society also runs the KidzLive programme in pre-schools and primary schools to teach children how to protect themselves against sexual abuse.

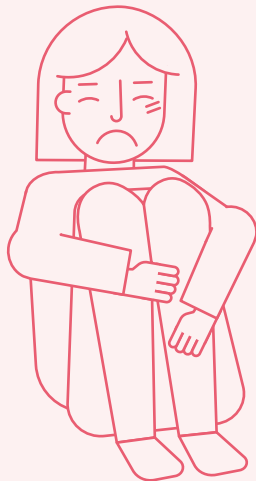
In February 2017, MSF introduced a pilot programme, Safe and Strong Families (SSF) which aims to reach 400 eligible families over three years. The programme provides intensive support to children who are at risk of being removed from their families due to safety concerns, so that they can remain with their families. This family preservation service (SSF-P) is provided through NPOs such as **Montfort Care, AMKFSC Community Services** and **Kampong Kapor Family Service Centre**⁴⁴.

Post-Intervention

SSF also provides family reunification services to support children who have been placed in foster care to be reunited with their natural families. The family reunification service (SSF-R) is offered through NPOs such as **Singapore Children's Society, Chen Su Lan Methodist Children's Home, Boys' Town, The Salvation Army** and **Muhammadiyah Welfare Home**.

NPOs such as **Big Love, HEART@Fei Yue** and **PAVE** help manage cases and also work towards re-integration of a child back into his/her family through counselling and co-creating better parenting strategies and skills. Big Love has worked with 338 cases since its inception in 2013⁴⁵, while HEART@ Fei Yue has helped 178 children and their families in the last year.

Some NPOs like Chen Su Lan Methodist Children's Home and **Melrose Home-Children's Aid Society** provide residential care in addition to casework, family and community partnership. In 2015, Melrose Home took in 74 children and teenagers who were referred by the courts, MSF as well as social service or community agencies⁴⁶.



Vodafone Ireland Foundation and Childline

In 2016, the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's (ISPCC) Childline and the Vodafone Ireland Foundation embarked on a five-year partnership to enhance Childline's communications infrastructure, improve children's access to Childline and provide a 24-hour online digital platform. Call costs for the service up to 2026 and €2 million in direct funding over five years were committed by the Foundation. Vodafone's 2,000 employees supported the partnership, pledging to raise additional funds for Childline through various activities.

Impact:

As the national listening service for those under 18, Childline responded to over 420,000 calls and online contacts in 2015; it has seen a 75% increase in children seeking support online in the last 10 years. With Vodafone's support, it will expand its platforms, including live chat apps and other digital platforms. Vodafone's Be Strong Online Programme will also offer educational tools for educators, parents and children on issues such as bullying and online privacy.

Source: Vodafone. (2016). Be Strong Online. Vodafone. Retrieved from <http://www.childline.ie/childlinefiles/BeStrong/index.html>

³⁹ Kok, X. H. (2015, Jan 18). Call to educate children, parents on online risks after sexual grooming case. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/call-to-educate-children-parents-on-online-risks-after-sexual-grooming-case?login=true>

⁴⁰ The CYPA, which is a national legislation, safeguards the care, protection and rehabilitation of children and young persons under the age of 16.

⁴¹ Ministry of Social and Family Development, Republic of Singapore. (2016). Child Abuse Investigations. Retrieved from Ministry of Social and Family Development Website: <https://app.msf.gov.sg/Research-Room/Research-Statistics/Child-Abuse-Investigations>

⁴² Tan, J. C., Elliott, J. M., & Teo, C. E. (2016). Changing public perceptions of child abuse and neglect in Singapore. Singapore: Singapore Children's Society. Retrieved from https://www.childrensociety.org.sg/resources/ck/files/CAN%20Monograph%2010b_Revised.pdf

⁴³ Singapore Children's Society. (2005). Protection of Children in Singapore: An Overview. Retrieved from https://www.childrensociety.org.sg/resources/front/template/scs/files/child_protection.pdf

⁴⁴ <https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/Pages/Strengthening-family-based-care-for-vulnerable-children.aspx>

⁴⁵ Montfort Care. (2016). We Chiong We Inspire: Annual Report 15/16. Retrieved from http://www.montfortcare.org.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/AR_1516_Final.pdf

⁴⁶ Melrose Home Children's Aid Society. (2016). 2015 Annual Report. Retrieved from [http://www.childrensaidsociety.org.sg/images/uploadedimages/file/CAS%20-%202015%20Annual%20Report\(1\).pdf](http://www.childrensaidsociety.org.sg/images/uploadedimages/file/CAS%20-%202015%20Annual%20Report(1).pdf)

Why should you care?

Family conflict or dysfunction can lead to deviancy

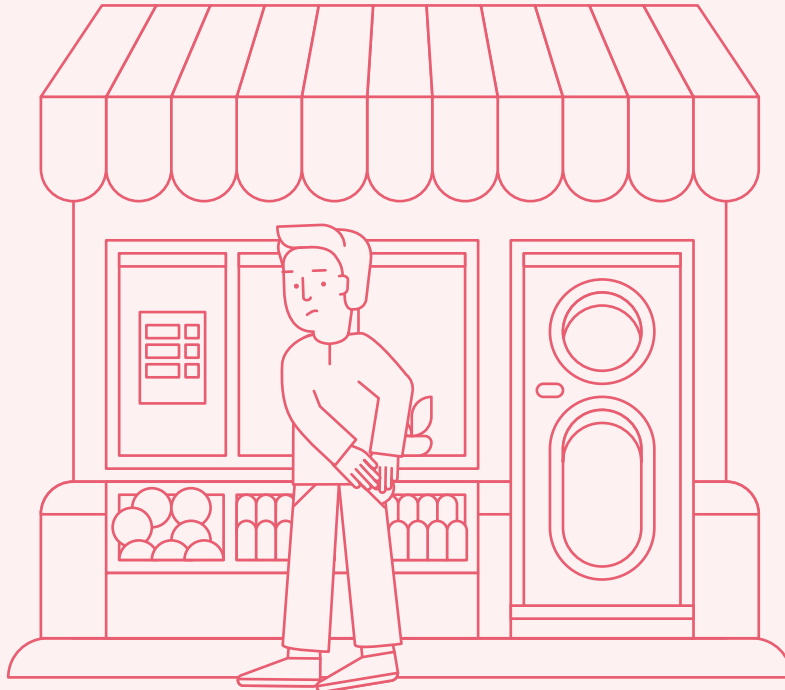
Dysfunctional families and parental conflict can have long-lasting and severe impact on a youth's turn towards deviant behavior. For example, between 2013 and 2014, 53% of youth arrestees or those with a BPC order came from families of divorce, while 59% came from single-parent families⁴⁷.

Offenders only have the option of residential or community-based rehabilitation

Juvenile offenders are taken to the juvenile court, where court orders are either resolved through residential or community-based rehabilitation. The former includes residing in a place of detention or undergoing reformatory training, while the latter includes a fine, community service, weekend detention or probation⁴⁸.

Services for post-rehab youth offenders are limited

Current gaps in the service landscape identified by the executive arm of the National Committee on Youth Guidance and Rehabilitation⁴⁹ include the lack of alternative pathways to success, youth work capability, and a comprehensive and coordinated post-care after rehabilitation leading to more falling through the cracks, unsupported by current programs⁵⁰.



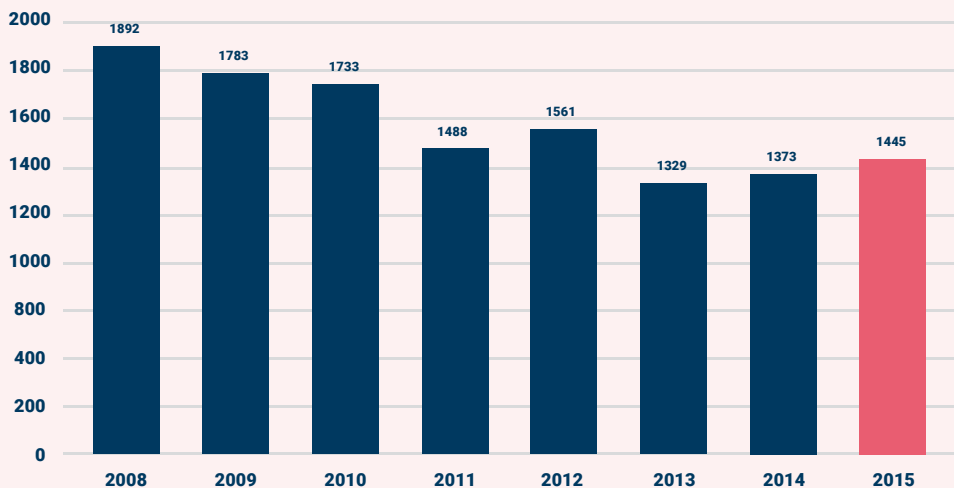
What you need to know

Juvenile delinquency is a catch-all term with multi-faceted root causes

Youth crime and juvenile delinquency are generally associated with each other, and defined by involvement in petty crimes such as shop theft, unlawful assembly or crimes of violence such as extortion, rioting or even murder. Accepted major factors include interpersonal variables such as antisocial behavior, lack of attachment to school and socio-economic ones such as poverty, dysfunctional families or easy access to negative influences such as gangs or substance abuse.

Juvenile arrests have fluctuated over the years, with 1,445 arrests made in 2015⁵¹, while youth arrests have remained relatively stable, with 3,121 arrests in 2015^{52,53}. Numbers aside, the increasing complexity of these cases must also be noted. While the number of arrested youth have plateaued, cases of youth-at-risk are becoming more complex. For example, public acts of violence are often rooted in issues of stress, lack of anger management and pre-existing exposure to acts of violence⁵⁴.

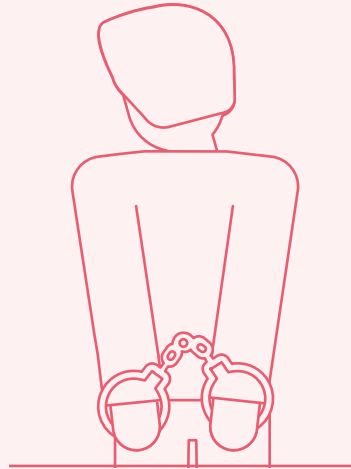
Number of juvenile arrests (2008-2015)



Source: Ministry of Social and Family Development. (2017). Juvenile Delinquents: Juveniles Arrested. MSF: Research and Statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.msf.gov.sg/research-and-data/Research-and-Statistics/Pages/Juvenile-Delinquents-Juveniles-Arrested.aspx>

The number of Beyond Parental Control cases has fallen

Relatedly, the number of Beyond Parental Control (BPC) cases has fallen from 83 to 66 cases between 2013 and 2014⁵⁵. The BPC can be applied by parents when there is a breakdown in the relationship and communication with their child/young person, and if the child displays risky or delinquent behavior⁵⁶.



What's being done and how can you help?

NPOs working with juvenile delinquents work in both reactive and preventive aspects.

Community-led initiatives

Reactive

Reactive work is done by VWOs such as **Boys' Town**, **The Ramakrishna Mission Boy's Home** and **Pertapis Education and Welfare Centre** among others, which provide residential care for a total of 300 new admissions each year. Others such as social enterprise Youth Employment and Advancement Hub or the state-run **V Hub** have reached out to provide training and employment opportunities – the latter has found jobs for 65% of youth on probation seeking their help.

Preventive

Preventive strategies for youth-at-risk include skills building and exposure to alternative career pathways. Others such as **Beyond Social Services** and **Focus on the Family** believe in upstream work through increasing embedment and solidarity in families and communities.

For example, **Beyond Social Services** works on strengthening families through upskilling parents and helping them enquire employment. The asset-based approach used by Beyond Social Services aims to build communities through nurturing, relationship building, counselling and community participation. As of 2015, they have reached out to 7,326 children and youth⁵⁷.

Microsoft and Children's Home Society of Florida

In 2015, the Children's Home Society of Florida was awarded a \$7.3 million grant from Microsoft's YouthSpark software grants programme to help bridge the digital learning divide for disadvantaged youth. A technology training programme called Tech Success Florida was created to help 7,000 disadvantaged youth, including those in poverty, foster care and in the juvenile justice system. Skills such as basic computer and IT skills were imparted to enhance their life prospects. Microsoft employee volunteers also donated their time to help the Home advance key technological initiatives. For every hour volunteered by Microsoft, \$25 is donated to the Home.

Impact:

To date, Microsoft has contributed more than \$9,500 through the donation-matching for volunteer hours initiative. A Hack-a-thon event in May 2015 also resulted in a groundbreaking task management tool, the first in the child welfare arena. 40 volunteers from three organizations – Microsoft, Nintex and Children's Home Society of Florida – collaborated on a software project to ease the burden of administrative tasks on case managers, saving eight hours per week. The hack-a-thon also produced a new intranet for the Home.

Source: Children's Home Society of Florida. (2017). Children's Home Society of Florida receives \$7.3 million grant from Microsoft. Children's Home Society of Florida: Media Room. Retrieved from <https://www.chsf.org/MicrosoftPartnership>

⁴⁷ Supreme Court, Singapore. (2015, Nov 3). Conference on At-Risk Youth 2015: Achieving, Connecting and Thriving. Retrieved from http://www.supremecourt.gov.sg/Data/Editor/Documents/Achieving_Connecting_and_Thriving_031115.pdf

⁴⁸ Ministry of Social and Family Development, Republic of Singapore. (2016). Management of Juvenile Delinquency in Singapore. Retrieved from Ministry of Social and Family Development Website: <https://app.msf.gov.sg/Portals/0/Management%20of%20Juvenile%20Delinquencyv3.pdf>

⁴⁹ An-inter agency committee comprising representation from the education, community and social services sectors, the police, prisons, Central Narcotics Bureau, National Youth Council, Attorney-General and the Courts.

⁵⁰ Based on a 2012 CYGO presentation that has changed with new national frameworks rolled out

⁵¹ Ministry of Social and Family Development, Republic of Singapore. (2016). Juvenile Delinquents: Juveniles Arrested. Retrieved from Ministry of Social and Family Development Website: <https://app.msf.gov.sg/Research-Room/Research-Statistics/Juvenile-Delinquents-Juveniles-Arrested>

⁵² Numbers are provisional, as provided by MSF as of Dec 2016.

⁵³ While youth includes anyone in the 7-19 age bracket, the Children and Young Persons' Act states that juveniles are those who are aged 7 years and above, but below 16 years old while young persons are those aged between 16 and 19 years old.

⁵⁴ Baharudin, H. (2016, Mar 6). More young people in Singapore turning to violence. The New Paper. Retrieved from <http://www.np.sg/news/singapore/more-young-people-singapore-turning-violence>

⁵⁵ Government of Singapore. (2016). New Beyond Parental Control Cases, Annual. Retrieved from <https://data.gov.sg/dataset/new-beyond-parental-control-cases>

⁵⁶ A child with a BPC status will either go through a non-judicial diversionary programme, or be placed under statutory supervision, or admitted into a residential facility.

⁵⁷ Beyond Social Services. (2016). Annual Report 2015. Retrieved from <http://beyond.org.sg/pdf/annual15.pdf>

Why should you care?

Pregnant teenagers make uninformed choices due to lack of awareness of support services

Less than 2% of teenagers surveyed in 2014 were aware of the avenues to seek professional help for teenage pregnancy⁵⁸. This was despite extensive outreach efforts by organisations such as **Babes** through interactive roadshows, events, theatre performances and focus group discussions with youths^{59,60}. The lack of awareness amongst pregnant teenagers of the various avenues of support may lead them and their families to make less informed choices regarding their pregnancy.

Little support is available for teenage fathers

Most services currently focus on teenage mothers, and little support is extended to teenage fathers⁶¹, particularly in terms of financial assistance, vocational programmes, parenting education and, medical and mental health services. Teenage fathers need to be better equipped to provide financial and emotional support to their new family. This includes better guidance on parenthood⁶² as well as emotional and psychosocial support to help them transition into their new role⁶³.



What you need to know

More teenagers are sexually active today

In 2015, 359 babies were born to girls under the age of 19 and 347 abortions were performed on teenagers under the age of 20⁶⁴. Social workers have noted an increasing trend of sexually active teenagers, which has the potential to lead to higher rates of teenage pregnancy, often unplanned. Teenage pregnancy may mean the premature ending of education for the parents and early entry into the workforce to support their new family⁶⁵.

Teenage pregnancies are correlated with lower socio-economic status

In 2016, Babes Pregnancy Crisis Support Ltd (Babes) reported that 57% of their beneficiaries came from families who earn less than \$2,500 monthly while **Pertapis Centre for Women and Girls** reported that most of the pregnant teenagers they helped came from unemployed families^{66,67}. In some cases, these teenagers have parents who neglect them or who are incarcerated.

Parental presence is vital in helping teenagers make better life decisions

When parents are absent or focused on making ends meet, they may not be able to provide their children with timely advice and sex education⁶⁸. In fact, given the sensitivity of the topic, parents even when able, may feel uncomfortable discussing these issues openly with their children^{69,70}. The responsibility for sex education then shifts to schools or social workers⁷¹.



The message of abstinence can be ineffective

Sex education is mandatory in Singapore schools from Primary 5 until tertiary level and the main message communicated through these sessions is to practice abstinence before marriage⁷². However, the message of abstinence may be ineffective in preventing teenage pregnancy, especially when teenagers today perceive losing their virginity as a gain⁷³. According to research from the University of Georgia, there is a positive correlation between the message of abstinence before marriage used in sexual education and the teenage pregnancy rate in US students aged 15 to 19 years old⁷⁴. VWOs in Singapore suggest that the message of abstinence before marriage is similarly ineffective here⁷⁵.

What's being done and how can you help?

Community-led initiatives

Babes is the only VWO that provides specialised services to support pregnant teenagers. These services include case management, community integration and, youth engagement and outreach⁷⁶. These are further supported by peripheral services which include post-natal confinement nanny assistance, a befriender service, financial and employment assistance and collaboration with schools on campaigns. These initiatives have also been supported by campaigns and advertisements over the radio and on public buses⁷⁷. Babes also has a helpline providing advice on abortion and other pregnancy-related concerns.

The **DaySpring NewLife Centre** is the only dedicated shelter for pregnant teenagers. The centre and its partners also provide counselling and linking residents with adoptive parents should they decide to give up the baby. The centre also offers post-abortion therapy⁷⁸. There are other VWOs who also take in pregnant teenagers such as **Pertapis** and **Good Shepherd Centre-Rose Villa**⁷⁹.

Pregnancy Crisis Service (PCS) is a 24-hour helpline run by **Family Life Society** since 1985 to support to those with unplanned or unwanted pregnancies. PCS collaborates with schools to assist pregnant teenagers by forming plans to ensure their studies are disrupted as little as possible by the pregnancy⁸⁰. In addition, PCS provides assistance to pregnant teenagers to find shelter homes for them to stay.

-
- ⁵⁸ **Latiff, H.** (2015, Jan 24). Less than 2% of youths know of support avenues for pregnant teens: Study. *Today Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/less-2-youths-know-support-avenues-pregnant-teens-study>
- ⁵⁹ **Latiff, H.** (2015, Jan 24). Less than 2% of youths know of support avenues for pregnant teens: Study. *Today Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/less-2-youths-know-support-avenues-pregnant-teens-study>
- ⁶⁰ **Babes Pregnancy Crisis Support Limited.** (2016). Annual Report. Retrieved from <http://babes.org.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Babes-Annual-Report-2016.pdf>
- ⁶¹ **Interview with Babes by SMU students**
- ⁶² **Kiselica, M. S. & Kiselica, A. M.** (2014). The Complicated Worlds of Adolescent Fathers: Implications for Clinical Practice, Public Policy, and Research. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 15 (3): 260-274. DOI: 10.1037/a0037043
- ⁶³ **Interview with Babes by SMU students**
- ⁶⁴ **Babes.** (2016). Next Steps. Retrieved from <http://babes.org.sg/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/BABES-Newsletter.pdf>
- ⁶⁵ **Sulaiman, S. & Nadarajah, S.** (2009). Teenage Pregnancy: An Obstetrical or a Social Problem?. Association of Muslim Professionals. Retrieved from <http://amp.org.sg/edisi/data/Publications/Karyawan%20-%20Vol%2010%20Issue%201/Vol10%20Iss1%20-%20Teenage%20Pregnancy.pdf>
- ⁶⁶ **Babes Pregnancy Crisis Support Limited.** (2016). Annual Report. Retrieved from <http://babes.org.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Babes-Annual-Report-2016.pdf>
- ⁶⁷ **Interview with Pertapis by SMU students**
- ⁶⁸ **Abdul Rahman, N. A.** (2009). Teenage Marriage in the Malay/Muslim Community of Singapore: Problems, Perceptions and Programmes. *Asian Journal of Social Science* 37 (2008) 738–75637, no. 5: 738-56. doi:10.1163/156848409X12474536440546
- ⁶⁹ **Gene, N. K. & Young, C.** (2016, May 3). Experts: Schools have role but sex education begins at home. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/experts-schools-have-role-but-sex-education-begins-at-home?login=true&paywall-error-type=access_denied
- ⁷⁰ **Interview with Babes by SMU students**
- ⁷¹ **Interview with Pertapis by SMU students**
- ⁷² **Ministry of Education.** (2016). Scope and Teaching Approach of Sexuality Education in Schools. Retrieved from <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/programmes/social-and-emotional-learning/sexuality-education/scope-and-teaching-approach-of-sexuality-education-in-schools>
- ⁷³ **Lim, Y. H.** (2015, Feb 9). Underage sex on the rise in Singapore, say social workers. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/underage-sex-on-the-rise-in-singapore-say-social-workers>
- ⁷⁴ **Hall, D. W. and Stanger-Hall, K. F.** (2011). Abstinence Only Education And Teen Pregnancy Rates: Why We Need Comprehensive Sex Education In The US. *PLoS ONE*, 6(10). doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0024658
- ⁷⁵ **Interview with Babes and Pertapis by SMU students**
- ⁷⁶ **Babes.** (2016). Next Steps. Retrieved from <http://babes.org.sg/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/BABES-Newsletter.pdf>
- ⁷⁷ **Interview with Babes by SMU students**
- ⁷⁸ **DaySpring.** (2014). Newsletter for December. Retrieved from http://dayspring.org.sg/files/DS_Dec_2014_Newsletter.pdf
- ⁷⁹ **Tan, T.** (2014, Sept 30). Refuge for young women facing pregnancy crisis. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from <http://dayspring.org.sg/dswp/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Refuge-for-young-women-facing-pregnancy-crisis.pdf>
- ⁸⁰ **Pregnancy Crisis Service.** (2017). We Are Here For You. Retrieved from <http://pregnancycrisis.sg/we-are-here-for-you/>

Why should you care?

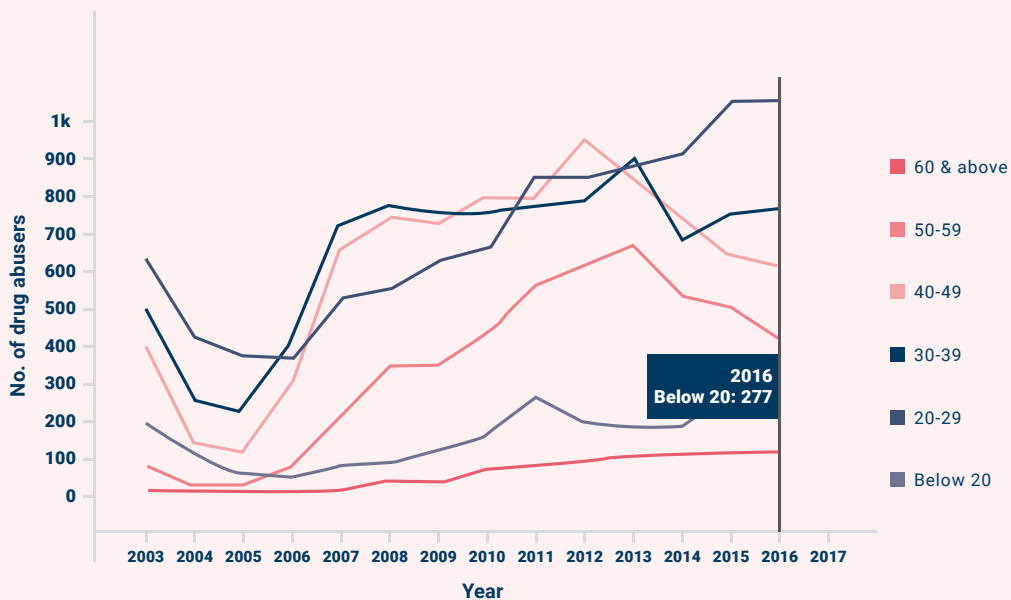
There is a lack of peer support for young drug users

With young drug abusers on the rise, the need to strengthen anti-drug education in schools remains paramount, including raising awareness among our youth of new forms of illicit synthetic drugs. At the same time, there is a need to expand the pool of young anti-drug advocates who can offer peer support to their fellow youth⁸¹. More campaigns that empower parents to play a vital role in keeping drug use at bay will be crucial⁸².

Greater community support and longer-term rehabilitative services are needed

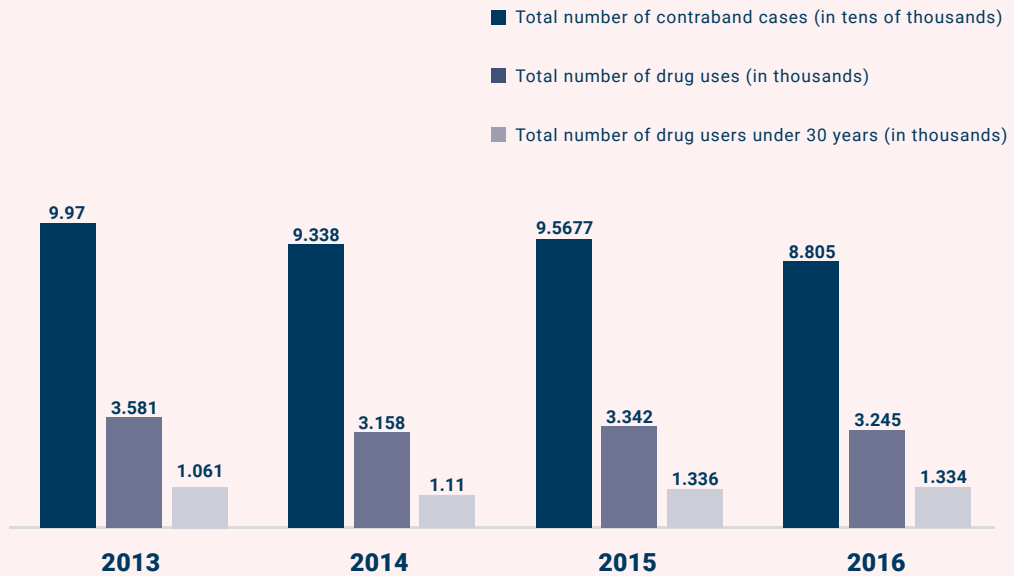
Facilitating greater community support and access to long-term rehabilitative services will enhance the recovery process for drug abusers and their family members, especially for lower-risk inmates who have higher chance of recovery⁸³. **Breakthrough Missions** and the **Association of Muslim Professionals** are among a growing number of organisations that are seeking long-term approaches to help former abusers reconnect with their families and society⁸⁴.

What you need to know



Source: Government Technology Agency of Singapore. (2017). Demographic Profile of Drug Abusers. Ministry of Home Affairs, Central Narcotics Bureau-Overview of Singapore's Drug Situation in 2016. Retrieved from data.gov.sg https://data.gov.sg/dataset/demographic-profile-of-drug-abusers?resource_id=becd5ec5-9f45-4646-bf26-456d3a1b574a

Singapore's Drug Situation (2014-2016)



Source: Victoria Wah. (2017, Apr 1). High society: Why Singapore's young people are at risk. Retrieved from ASEAN Today <https://www.aseantoday.com/2017/04/high-society-why-singapores-young-people-are-at-risk/>

Drug abusers are getting younger

Singapore is well-known for its tough anti-drug laws. However, the number of young drug abusers has been growing steadily. Between 2014 and 2016, the number of residents and permanent residents studying in primary to

tertiary public educational institutions who were caught for drug offences almost doubled, from 83 to 151⁸⁵. In fact, 40% of those arrested for abuse in Singapore in 2016 were less than 30 years old⁸⁶.

There is an increase in educated and affluent recreational drug users

There is also a rising perception that drugs are “cool” among well-educated and affluent young Singaporeans. A 2013 Youth Perception Survey conducted by the **National Council Against Drug Abuse** (NCADA) showed that older youths aged between 17 and 21 were more likely to have liberal attitudes towards drug abuse, which can be correlated to the legalisation of marijuana for recreational use in some Western countries⁸⁷. Moreover, anecdotal evidence suggests an underground party drug scene at night clubs frequented by wealthy students and professionals⁸⁸.

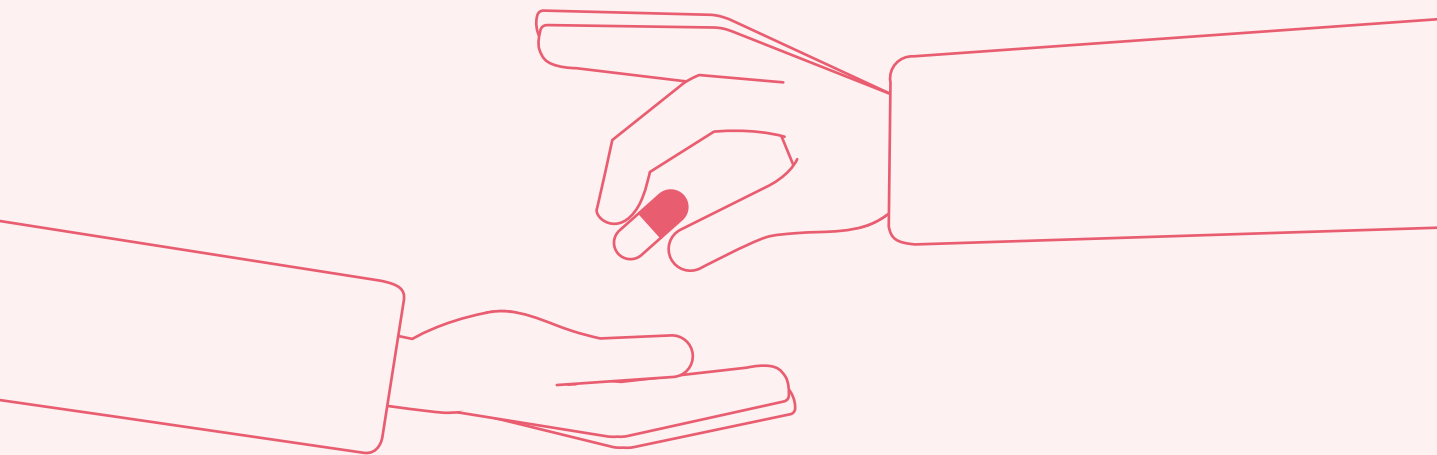
Online drug purchases are at a high

According to the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), heroin, methamphetamine and cannabis are the most commonly abused drugs in Singapore, with the latter two also the most common amongst new abusers. Access to drugs through online channels has increased in recent years, with the number of people arrested for buying drugs and drug-related paraphernalia online increasing significantly from 30 in 2015 to 201 in 2016⁸⁹.

Substance abuse at a younger age has longer-lasting impact

There is ample research detailing the severe impact of drugs on the socioemotional wellbeing of youth, including anxiety, depression and alienation from peers. Substance abuse has been associated with absenteeism from school, as well as violent and income-generating crimes by youth. Marijuana use has been demonstrated to disrupt short-term memory, learning and psychomotor skills⁹⁰.

Moreover, substance abuse interferes with the development of the adolescent brain, and can affect important functions like risk assessment, impulse control and consequence prediction and planning⁹¹. According to an Oxford University study, some of the popular explanations for drug use were to relax, keep awake at night while socialising and alleviate depressed moods. A significant number of female interviewees also reported using a stimulant drug to help them lose weight⁹².



What's being done and how can you help?

Government-led initiatives

Preventive

In March 2017, CNB introduced a pilot **Anti-Drug Advocate** programme which leverages on positive influencers among youth, such as footballer Irfan Fandi, to spread the anti-drug message. The programme will also take students from ITE, polytechnics and universities to halfway houses and drug rehabilitation centres to give them a better understanding of the harmful impact of drugs⁹³. The government also plans to model its **United Against Drugs** coalition, launched in April 2017, after Iceland and Finland's successful anti-drug awareness strategies^{94,95}.

Moreover, the annual **Anti Drug Abuse Campaign** run by NCADA has been ongoing for more than 20 years, and recently stepped up its outreach to parents and NS commanders to spread awareness through toolkits and brochures⁹⁶.

Reactive

The **Youth Enhanced Supervision (YES)** Scheme is a 6-month rehabilitation programme for first-time drug offenders aged 21 and below under Singapore Prison Service and CNB⁹⁷.

The **National Addictions Management Service (NAMS)** within the Institute of Mental Health runs various integrated services for people with addiction issues like substance abuse⁹⁸. For instance, NAMS runs **ReLive**, a clinic providing treatment to adolescents aged 13-18 years old who are struggling with substance abuse, and **Families in Recovery through Education and Empowerment (FREE)** that educates family members of drug users in enhancing the recovery process and preventing relapse.

Community-led initiatives

Preventive

Amongst community organisations, **Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association (SANA)** runs the SANA Badge Scheme, a half-day drug awareness workshop for secondary school students from the uniformed groups, that impacts more than 5,000 individuals a year.

Nanyang Polytechnic collaborated with CNB to incorporate an anti-drug theme in the 2014 **Singapore Games Creation Competition**, enabling participants to gain a deeper understanding of the consequences of drug use during the game development process. **Clubs Against Drugs**, established in 2000 by NCADA, partnered with 302 night establishments in 2015 to spread the anti-drug message "Get high on life, not drugs".

Reactive

There are various peer support groups for drug abusers like **Narcotics Anonymous** and the **Women in Recovery Association**. **WE CARE Community Services** is an addiction recovery centre that offers counselling and preventive education for drug users and their family members.

The **Yellow Ribbon Community Project** is an upstream intervention programme driven by grassroots volunteers who reach out to families of incarcerated drug abusers. SANA on the other hand, collaborates with **Luxasia** to help female ex-offenders gain jobs in the beauty industry and with **Brother's Barber Holdings** to help male ex-offenders obtain employment in hairstyling. SANA has also partnered with **Barclays Bank** to assist ex-youth offenders aged 17-25 years to gain financial and employability skills.

Case Study: Brother's Barber Holdings

Brother's Barber Holdings, owned by duo Noor Izwan Noor Jali and Zen She Yikai, both 28, collaborates with SANA to offer free basic haircutting training for ex-offenders since September 2016. The training lasts one to three months and takes place three times a week, lasting five hours each session. The training is held at SANA and at Brother's barber shop at a foreign workers' dormitory in Seletar.

Impact:

Brother's trains six participants per batch and gives each participant an allowance of \$200 per month to sustain themselves before finding a permanent job. Brother's also invites graduates from the course to join any of Brother's Barber Holdings' three outlets. The Seletar shop now sees about 100 customers on weekdays and 200 customers on Sundays, most of whom are foreign workers.

Source: The New Paper. (2016, Jul 26). They aim to give ex-offenders a fresh start. *The New Paper*. Retrieved from <http://www.tnp.sg/news/singapore/they-aim-give-ex-offenders-start>

⁸¹ Lianne Chia, J. A. (2017, Apr 4). Singapore to make fight against drugs a 'national priority': Shanmugam. *Channel NewsAsia*. Retrieved from: <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/singapore-to-make-fight-against-drugs-a-national-priority-shanmu-8710276>

⁸² Shanmugam, K. (2017, Apr 6). Standing firm against pressure to soften stance on drugs. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from: <http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/standing-firm-against-pressure-to-soften-stance-on-drugs>

⁸³ Lianne Chia, J. A. (2017, Apr 4). Singapore to make fight against drugs a 'national priority': Shanmugam. *Channel NewsAsia*. Retrieved from: <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/singapore-to-make-fight-against-drugs-a-national-priority-shanmu-8710276>

⁸⁴ Alkhatib, S. I. (2017, Apr 16). Yaacob: Youth can help peers keep off drugs. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from: <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/yaacob-youth-can-help-peers-keep-off-drugs>

⁸⁵ Yi, S. B. (2017, Apr 4). Parliament: More students, professionals caught for drug use yearly: Shanmugam. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from: <http://www.straitstimes.com/politics/parliament-more-students-professionals-caught-for-drug-use-yearly-shanmugam>

⁸⁶ Lianne Chia, J. A. (2017, Apr 4). Singapore to make fight against drugs a 'national priority': Shanmugam. *Channel NewsAsia*. Retrieved from: <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/singapore-to-make-fight-against-drugs-a-national-priority-shanmu-8710276>

⁸⁷ Bureau, C. N. (2015). Staying Drug Free: A Parental Guide to a Child's Recovery from Drug Abuse. Retrieved from Central Narcotics Bureau: https://www.cnb.gov.sg/PDE_PDFs/Staying_Drug_Free_English_v2.pdf

⁸⁸ Lee, M. (2007, Dec 10). Party drugs a hit with wealthy in Singapore. *Reuters*. Retrieved from: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSSIN135004>

⁸⁹ Bureau, C. N. (2017). Drug Situation Report 2016. Retrieved from Central Narcotics Bureau: <https://www.cnb.gov.sg/drugsituationreport/drugsituationreport2016.asp>

⁹⁰ Ann H. Crowe, S. B. (1998). Drug Identification and Testing. Retrieved from The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: <https://www.ojjdp.gov/pubs/drugid/ration-03.html>

⁹¹ drugrehab.us. (2013, Oct 22). The Long-Term Effects Of Substance Abuse On Youth Development. Retrieved from drugrehab.us: <http://www.drugrehab.us/news/the-long-term-effects-of-substance-abuse-on-youth-development/>

⁹² Annabel Boys, J. M. (2001). Article Navigation. Health Education Research Volume 16 Issue 4, 457-469. Retrieved from <https://academic.oup.com/her/article/16/4/457/558793/Understanding-reasons-for-drug-use-amongst-young>

⁹³ Yi, S. B. (2017, Mar 4). CNB to use positive 'influencers' to spread anti-drug message. *The New Paper*. Retrieved from: <http://www.tnp.sg/news/singapore/cnb-use-positive-influencers-spread-anti-drug-message>

⁹⁴ Lianne Chia, J. A. (2017, Apr 4). Singapore to make fight against drugs a 'national priority': Shanmugam. *Channel NewsAsia*. Retrieved from: <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/singapore-to-make-fight-against-drugs-a-national-priority-shanmu-8710276>

⁹⁵ Shaffiq Idris Alkhatib, S. B. (2017, Apr 5). Singapore studying best practices overseas, building anti-drug coalition. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from: <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/spore-studying-best-practices-overseas-building-anti-drug-coalition>

⁹⁶ Huiwen, N. (2016, Jun 26). Rising number of drug abusers under age 30. *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from: <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/rising-number-of-drug-abusers-under-age-30>

⁹⁷ Bureau, C. N. (2015). Staying Drug Free: A Parental Guide to a Child's Recovery from Drug Abuse. Retrieved from Central Narcotics Bureau: https://www.cnb.gov.sg/PDE_PDFs/Staying_Drug_Free_English_v2.pdf

⁹⁸ About NAMS. Retrieved from National Addictions Management Service: <http://www.nams.sg/About-Us/Pages/About-NAMS.aspx>

Brought to you by:



In partnership with:



Supported by:



In support of:

