

Closing the Generational Gap: Efforts to Enhance Intergenerational Bonding in Singapore

Co-Authored by:

Dr Thang Leng Leng, National University of Singapore
Council for Third Age

Presented by:

Ms Alice Chin

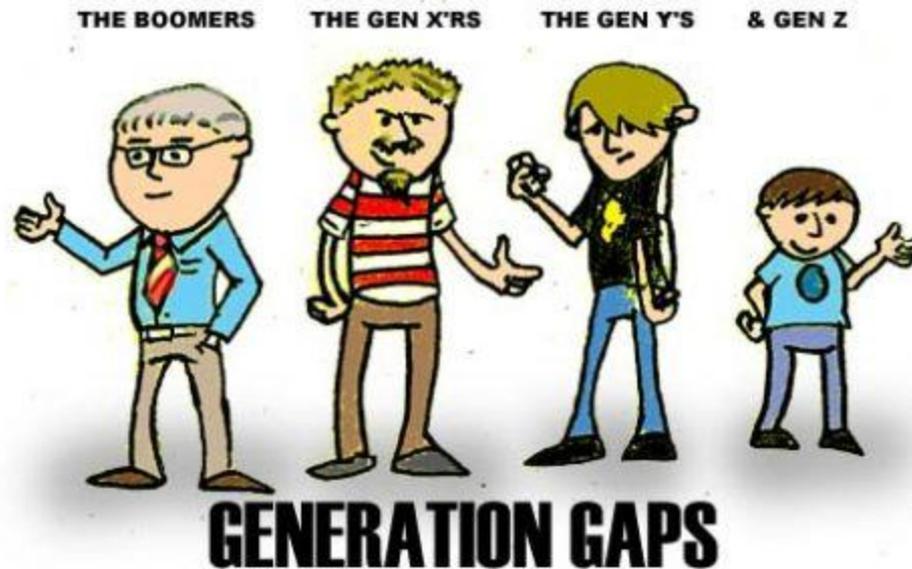
Vice President, Strategic Planning
Council for Third Age



SEAC and ACAP Meeting, 13 – 14 October 2011 Bali

Overview

- The reality about Intergenerational (IG) Solidarity
- The Singapore Experience
 - What research says
 - Platforms for IG Bonding
 - Intergenerational Learning Program
- Closing the Generational Gap



The Reality

IG Solidarity

- Solidarity between and among generations ensure continuity of culture, knowledge, values and history from one generation to another, provides human and social security (Cruz-Saco & Zelenev, 2010)

vs

Institutional Age Segregation

- Socially constructed division according to chronological age and age cohorts
- Increasing doubt on the family as the truly age integrated institution (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005) to promote IG solidarity with trend towards nuclear families, more divorces, singlehood and migration.
- Intergenerational connections at risk



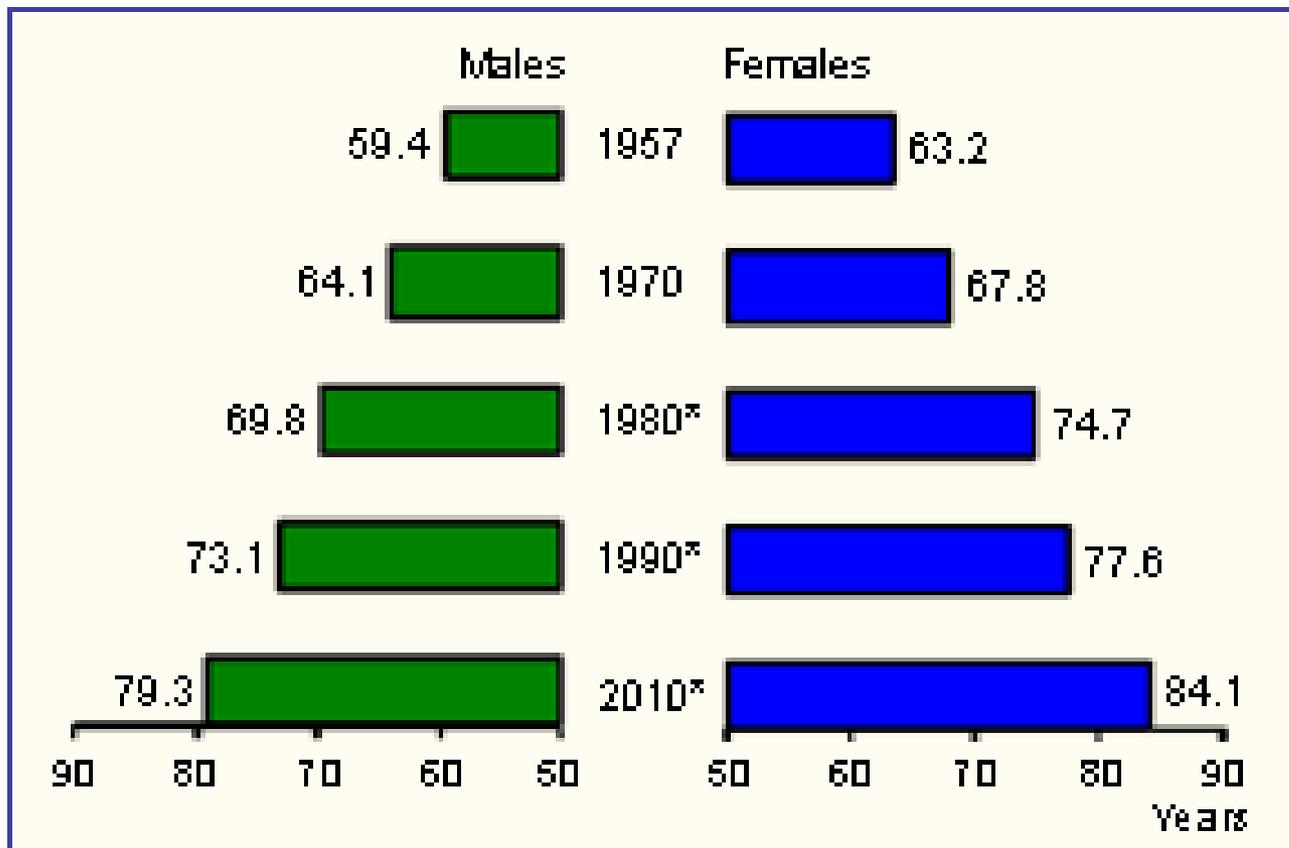
The Reality

Undesirable consequences of Generational Disconnections

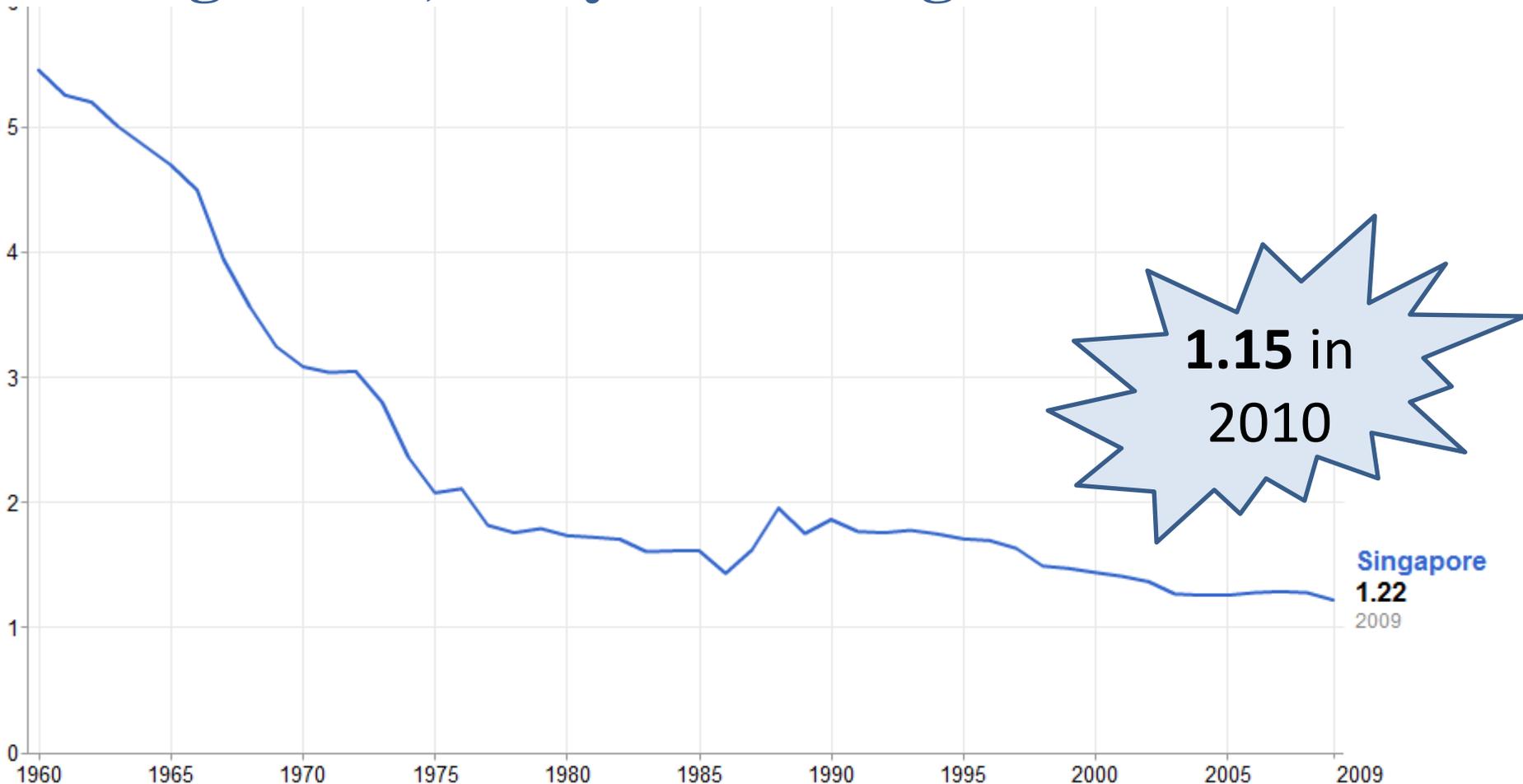
- Ageism and age discrimination
- Weakened social support network
- Threat to social cohesion and social stability



Singapore: Increasing Longevity



Singapore's Plummeting Total Fertility Rate: singlehood, delayed marriages & childbirth



Singapore: Family Trends

- Family as primary building block of society
- More nuclear families, lesser living with grandparents
- More seniors only households (24% in 2010)
- Dual-income families, changing preferences among seniors for more independent lifestyle vs grandparenting
- Within 3G families, separate islands of activity

Widening IG gap



What Research Shows

2008 Study on Public Perception and Attitudes towards Ageing and Seniors

- Stronger social and family networks - greater life satisfaction
- 93% believes strong intergenerational relationships are important
- Seniors still valued for their contributions

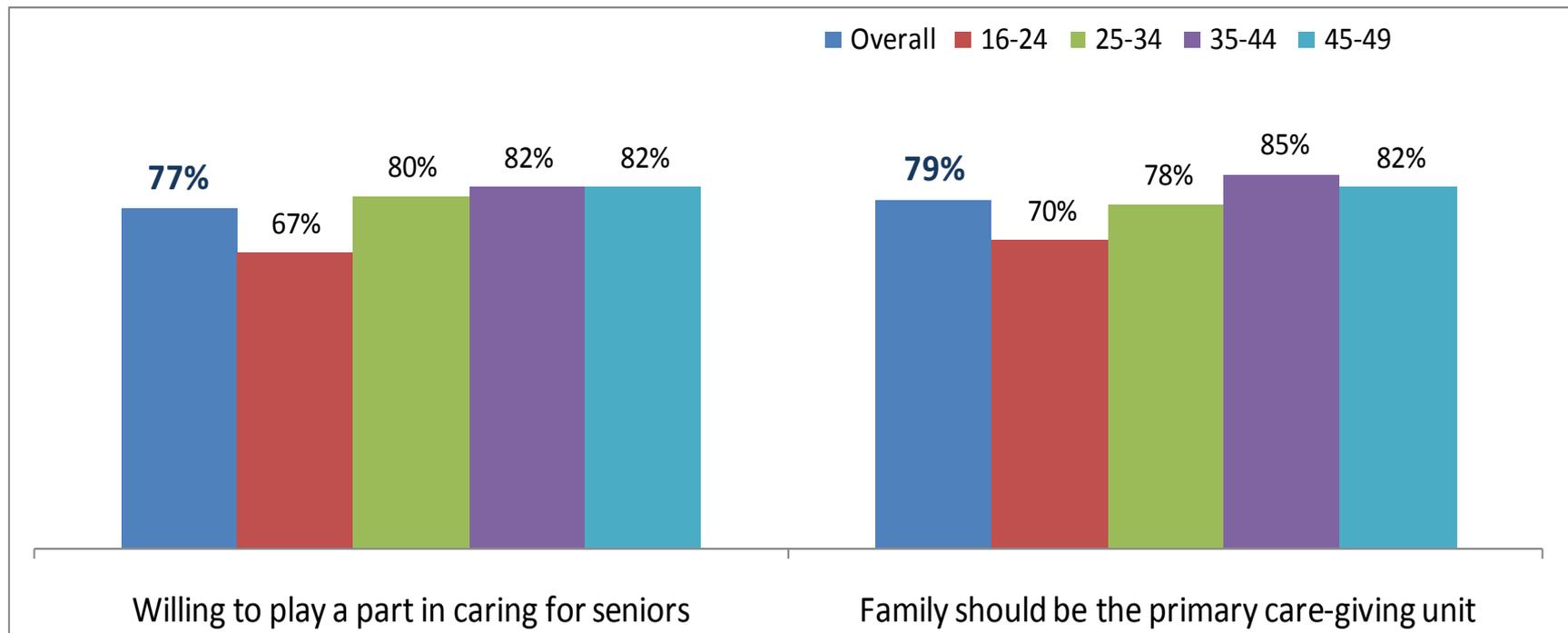
Base: Those aged below 50 years (n=1345)

	TOTAL (T2B)
I would want to be included in the family decision making process when I am old.	87%
I would consult senior family members for advice when making important decisions.	72%
I would turn to older family members for support and assistance when I face difficulties in life.	63%

What Research Shows

BUT...the research also shows:

- Younger generation less willing to care for seniors
- Difference between values and actions
- 25% communication gap between the young and the old



National Platforms to promote IG Bonds

Taskforce to promote Grandparenting and IG Bonding

- Set up in 2002, focus on families and communities, instituted Grandparents Day
- 2003: RSVP Intergenerational Strategy Committee
- 2005
 - National Family Week “Bonding Generations, Binding Families”
 - Gen3 Fund
 - Association of Early Childhood Educators Annual Seminar on Inclusive Society and IG workshops



National Platforms to promote IG Bonds

Council for Third Age (C3A)

- Set up in 2007 to promote active ageing with the belief that seniors do not age in a social vacuum
- Annual Active Ageing Carnival and Grandparents Day with IG focus
- 2009: co-opt youths to organise IG programmes e.g. YO! Forum
- 2009: \$2M GO! Fund for Intergenerational Bonding Awards
- 2010: co-organised international conference on IG practices & programs with ICIP
- 2011: Ageing is Beautiful intergenerational fashion showcase



Intergenerational Bonding Awards 2009

S/N	Name of Organisation / Project Title	Category
1	National Library Board: With my Grandpa and Grandma	Community
2	YMCA – Adventure in the Great Outdoors & Enrichments	Community
3	Dynaforce International – Famili Club	Family
4	Virginia Langley: Hand Me Down (The Great Cook Off)	Family
5	WINGS: “The Bonds” Workbook and Workshops	Family
6	Centre for Senior – Senior Mentors @ Work	Workplace

IG Practices in the Community

Schools:

- Community Involvement Programs & Service-Learning Projects
- Dialect classes

NGOs:

- RSVP senior mentoring programme for latchkey students
- SAGE: IG table tennis program

Age-Integrated Centers:

- Ayer Rajah Day Care Center since 1986
- Tampines 3-in-1 Family Center since 1995

IG Interest Groups:

- People's Association since 2008
- NYC and NIE Youth Service-Learning

Award since 2007



New

Intergenerational Learning Program

Objectives

- Enhance mental and social wellbeing of seniors through learning and IG interactions
- Create a flourishing community-based lifelong learning landscape
- Improve public perception and attitudes towards ageing and seniors through IG interactions



Intergenerational Learning Program

InfoComm Technology (ICT)

- eComms and Social Networking tools to bridge digital divide
- 1 on 1 senior-youth buddy system to foster friendship over 8 weeks
- Expanded learning beyond curriculum e.g. mobile phone apps
- Reciprocal learning: seniors teach youths life skills & experiences, cultures, values, character development and even oral history



Intergenerational Learning Program

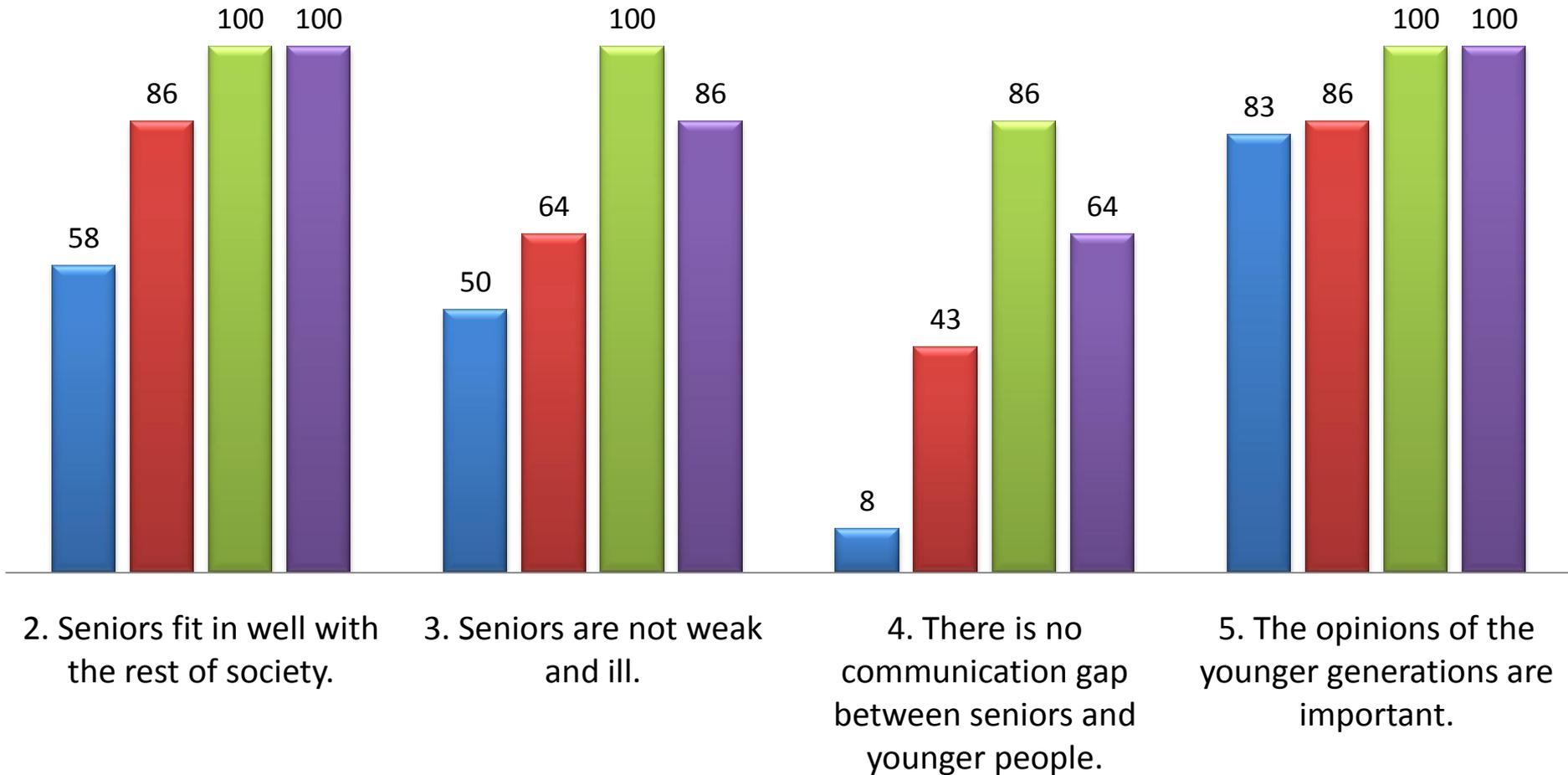
Health Management

- self care, healthy ageing, mental wellbeing, nutrition, physical activity, falls prevention
- 1 on 1 senior-youth buddy system to foster friendship over 4 weeks
- Reciprocal learning: seniors teach youths about outlook in life, take charge of personal health



Perceptions Towards Seniors, Youths and Their Roles

■ Pre-Survey: Youths (%) ■ Pre-Survey: Seniors (%) ■ Post-Survey: Youths (%) ■ Post-Survey: Seniors (%)

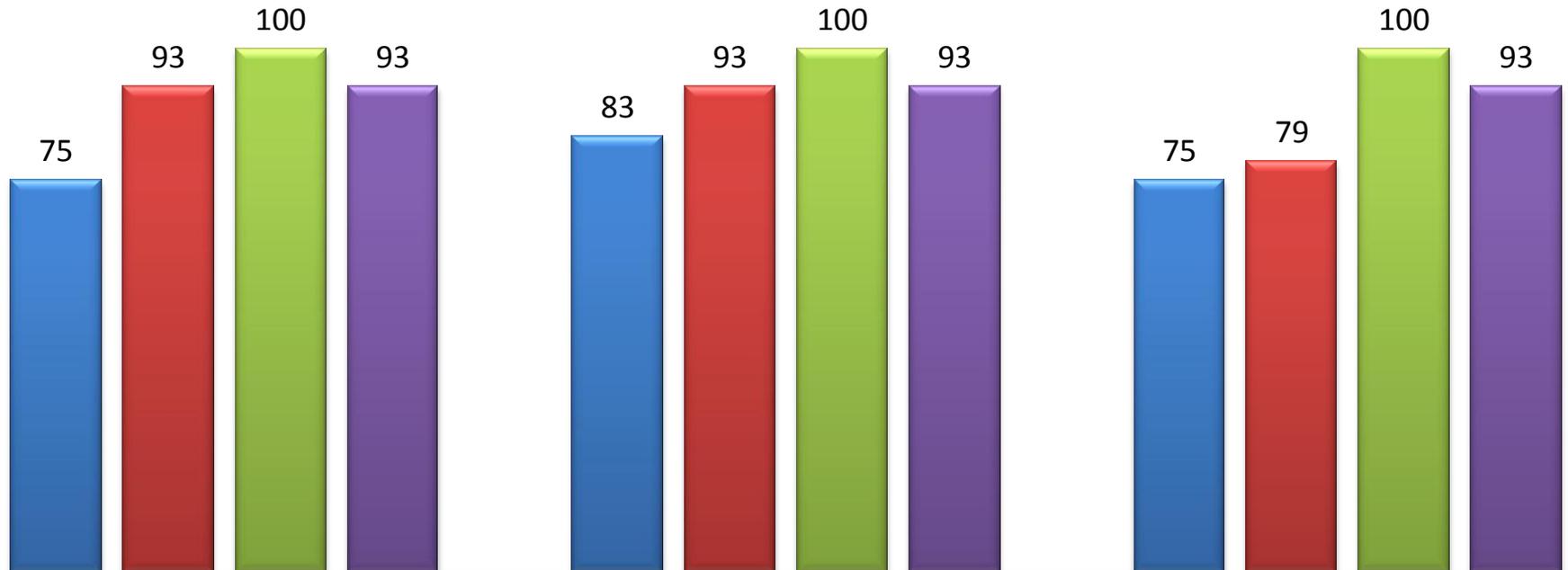


How old is old?

Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Median Age	
Youths: 60	Youths: 70
Seniors: 80	Seniors: 80

Intergenerational Interactions

■ Pre-Survey: Youths (%) ■ Pre-Survey: Seniors (%) ■ Post-Survey: Youths (%) ■ Post-Survey: Seniors (%)



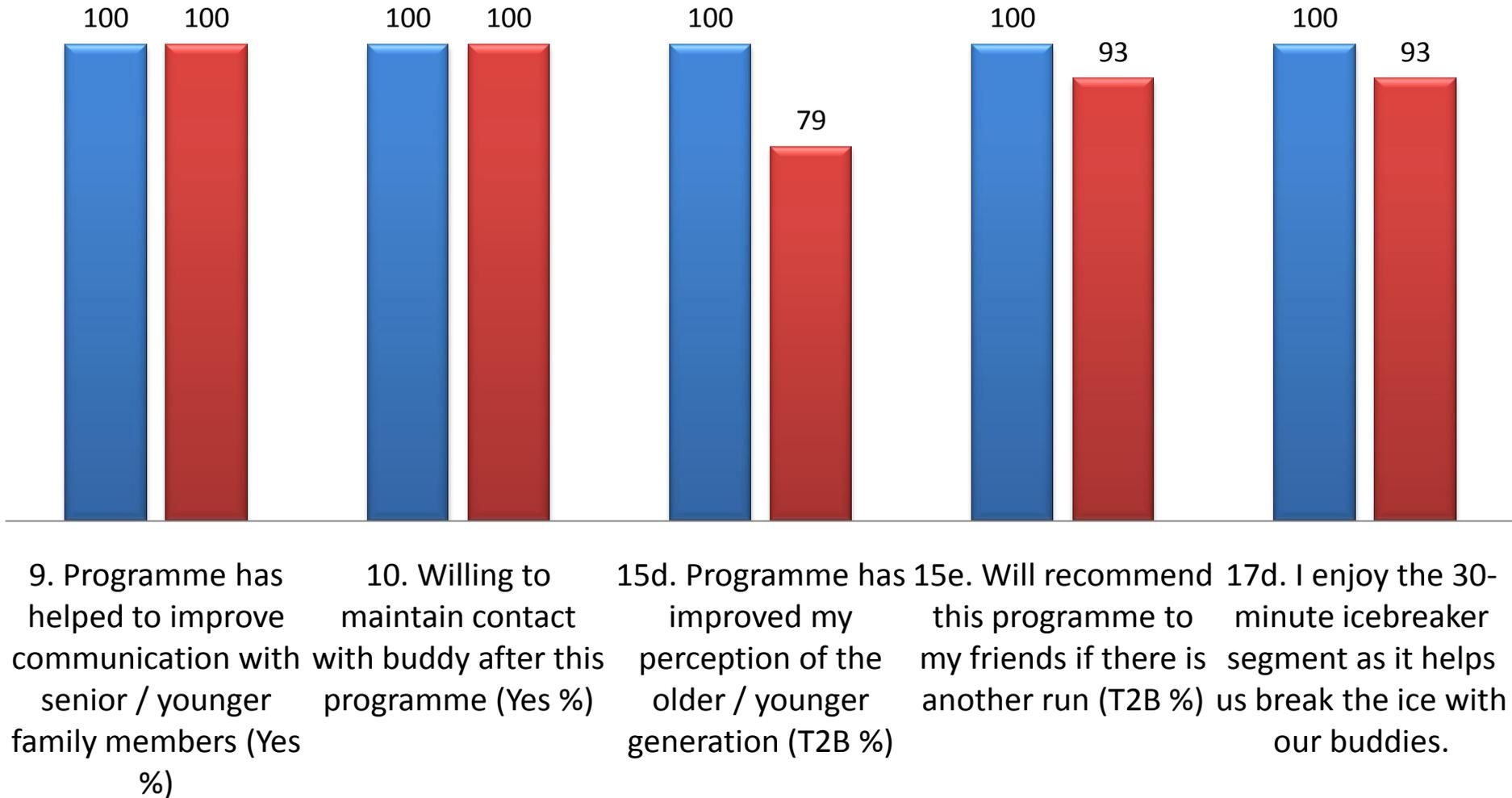
11. Intergenerational relationships and friendships are important to me.

12. I am interested to make friends with people from the older / younger generations.

15c. To make / Have made new friends from an older / a younger generation

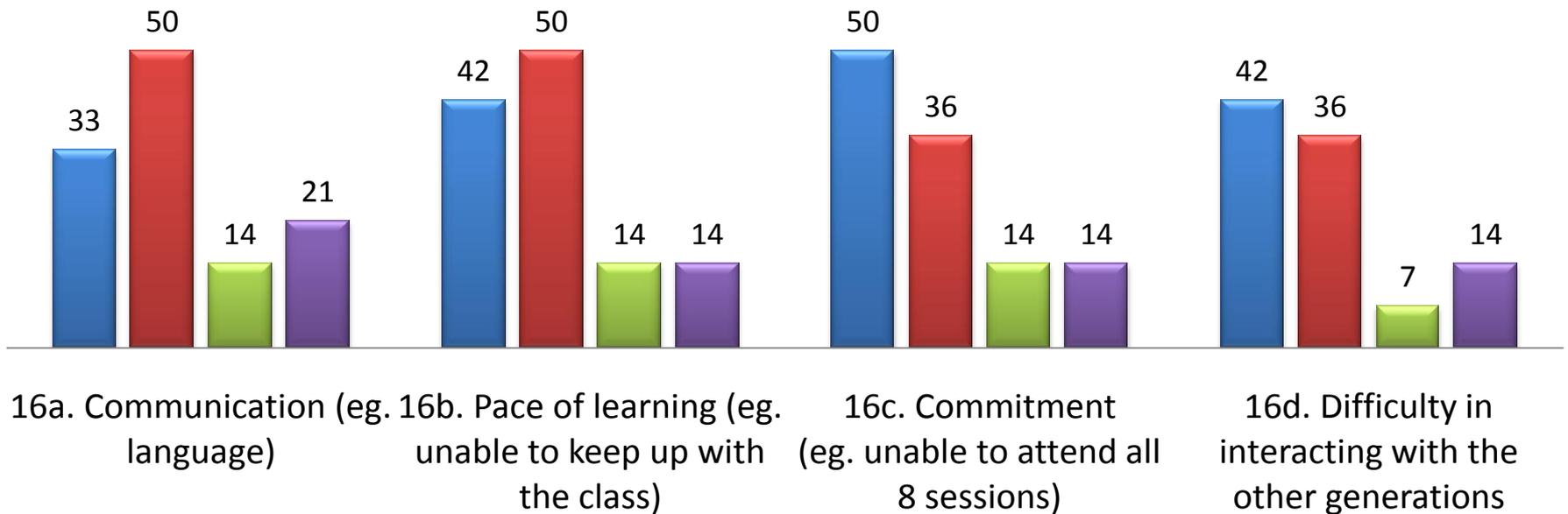
Impact of Programme

■ Post-Survey: Youths (%) ■ Post-Survey: Seniors (%)



Challenges faced in the Programme

■ Pre-Survey: Youths (%) ■ Pre-Survey: Seniors (%) ■ Post-Survey: Youths (%) ■ Post-Survey: Seniors (%)



Intergenerational Learning Program (ILP)

Going forward

- Ongoing curriculum development and enhancement
e.g. photography, IG debate teams
- 5 new schools committed to roll out the program
- Advocate incorporation of IG learning into school curriculum
- Target schools in all neighbourhoods to offer ILP

“Now, going forward, values and character education will take centre stage...” said Minister for Education Heng Swee Keat in his first major policy address to school heads at his ministry's annual workplan seminar.

- September 2011



Closing the Generational Gap

- Provide opportunities for IG engagement
- Create IG interactive space/ shared-sites
- Cultivate common interests across generations
- Incentivise private spaces to open up to other generations
- Teach young and old about each other's sub-cultures and perceptions to understand differences and celebrate similarities



Inter-generational Conflict reflects the division of values between older and young people.

Closing the Generational Gap

- Equip managers with generational intelligence to break down communication barriers, foster mutual understanding and cooperation in a multi-generational workforce
- Encourage multi-generational work teams based on competency rather than age
 - embrace diversity and inclusion
 - bring new perspectives and approaches to work
 - reduce potential for conflict through keeping an open mind
 - IG knowledge & skills transfer



Vision: Age-Friendly Community

- Integration of all generations
- Age-friendly spaces and design that promote generational exchanges and breakdown institutional isolation.
- A community setting with high level of depth in engagement (Kaplan, 2002) also requires the sensitivities of policy-makers and social institutions (such as work, education, welfare institutions) to recognize the significance of age-integration across the domains of family, community and the workplace and committed to intergenerational solidarity for an age-inclusive society



THANK YOU