

# Wellbeing of Youths and Perceived Mobility

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# Synopsis

- Wellbeing of Singaporean youths depends much on perceived social mobility and career opportunity, among others.
- In turn, whether forward-looking youths are well prepared for the future depends on various types of competency such as leadership, emotion, innovation, but not diversity.
- Quantile regressions show that intergenerational income mobility is much alive among the broad middle-income groups of youths in Singapore.
- This presentation will discuss some challenges and responses arising from the above findings.

# Wellbeing: A Theoretical Framework

- Youth SWB depends on relationship stocks, life goals, and forward-looking sentiments.
- Relationship stocks: family capital, community capital, and national capital
- Life goals: zero-sum and non-zero-sum life goals
- **Forward-looking** sentiments: career opportunity, perceived meritocracy or social mobility, inequality as an incentive, and competencies for the future

# Relationship Stocks

## Community Capital

Social Participation Index

Community Leadership Index

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*Participation in any social groups in the past 12 months*

*Held leadership positions in any social groups in the past 12 months*

## National Capital

National Capital Index

0.8634

I have a part to play in developing Singapore for the benefit of current and future generations

I will do whatever I can to support Singapore in times of crisis

I have a sense of belonging to Singapore

## Family Capital

Family Support Index

Family Environment Index

0.7944

0.8388

We are willing to help each other when something needs to be done

We are able to make decisions about how to solve problems

No matter what happens, I know I'll be loved and accepted

We confide in each other

I feel appreciated for who I am

We express our feelings to each other

We avoid discussing our fears and concerns with family members<sup>a</sup>

We cannot talk to each other about feeling sad<sup>a</sup>

We don't get along well with each other<sup>a</sup>

# Wellbeing: Relationship Stocks

- Family Capital +
- Social Participation Index +
- Community Leadership Index –
- National Capital +

**TABLE 4: CONSTRUCTED INDICES OF LIFE GOALS**

Non-zero-sum life goals		Zero-sum life goals
Family Life Goals	Altruism Life Goals	Career Life Goals
0.6820	0.7466	0.5832
To maintain strong family relationships	To be actively involved in local volunteer work	To acquire new skills and knowledge
To get married	To be actively involved in overseas volunteer work	To start my own business
To have children	To help the less fortunate	To earn lots of money
	To contribute to society	To have a successful career

# Wellbeing: Life Goals

- Family Life Goals +
- Altruism Life Goals +
- Career Life Goals –
- Same results for both youths in schools and working youths

# Wellbeing: Perceived Opportunities

- Career Opportunity [5-pt Likert]:
  - There are enough opportunities in Singapore for me to have a good career.
- Inequality-Incentive [10-pt Likert]:
  - Incomes should be made more equal ... We need larger income differences as incentives for individual effort
- Work-Connection (Reverse-coded gives Perceived Meritocracy or Social Mobility) [10-pt Likert]:
  - In the long run, hard work usually brings a better life ... Hard work doesn't generally bring success—it's more a matter of luck and connections



# Results on Perceived Opportunities

- Career opportunity +
- Inequality as an incentive +
- Work-connection is the opposite of perceived meritocracy (social mobility)
- Perceived social mobility matters much in subjective wellbeing especially for the poor, and for the rich, the contribution of perceived social mobility to subjective wellbeing is dampened when inequality-incentive is high, suggesting that connections and luck may become more important.

# Future Preparedness and Competencies

- World Economic Forum (2020) identified the top four skills as being in high demand in Singapore: analytical thinking and innovation, active learning and learning strategies, leadership and social influence, and emotional intelligence.
- We construct indices which overlap with those identified in WEF (2020).

**TABLE 8: CONSTRUCTED INDICES OF PERCEIVED COMPETENCIES**

Innovation Competency	Emotion Competency	Diversity Competency	Leadership Competency
0.7656	0.6209	0.6679	0.7912
Learning and applying new knowledge/skills	Being good at making friends	Knowing a lot about people of other races and cultures	Taking initiative
Understanding the impact of global forces on local culture	Caring about other people's feelings	Respecting the values and beliefs of people who are of different culture	Analysing and evaluating issues objectively
Being innovative (i.e., generating new solutions)	Being able to manage my thoughts and feelings	Working well with other people	Being good at planning ahead
Adapting to change			Speaking publicly
			Leading a team of people

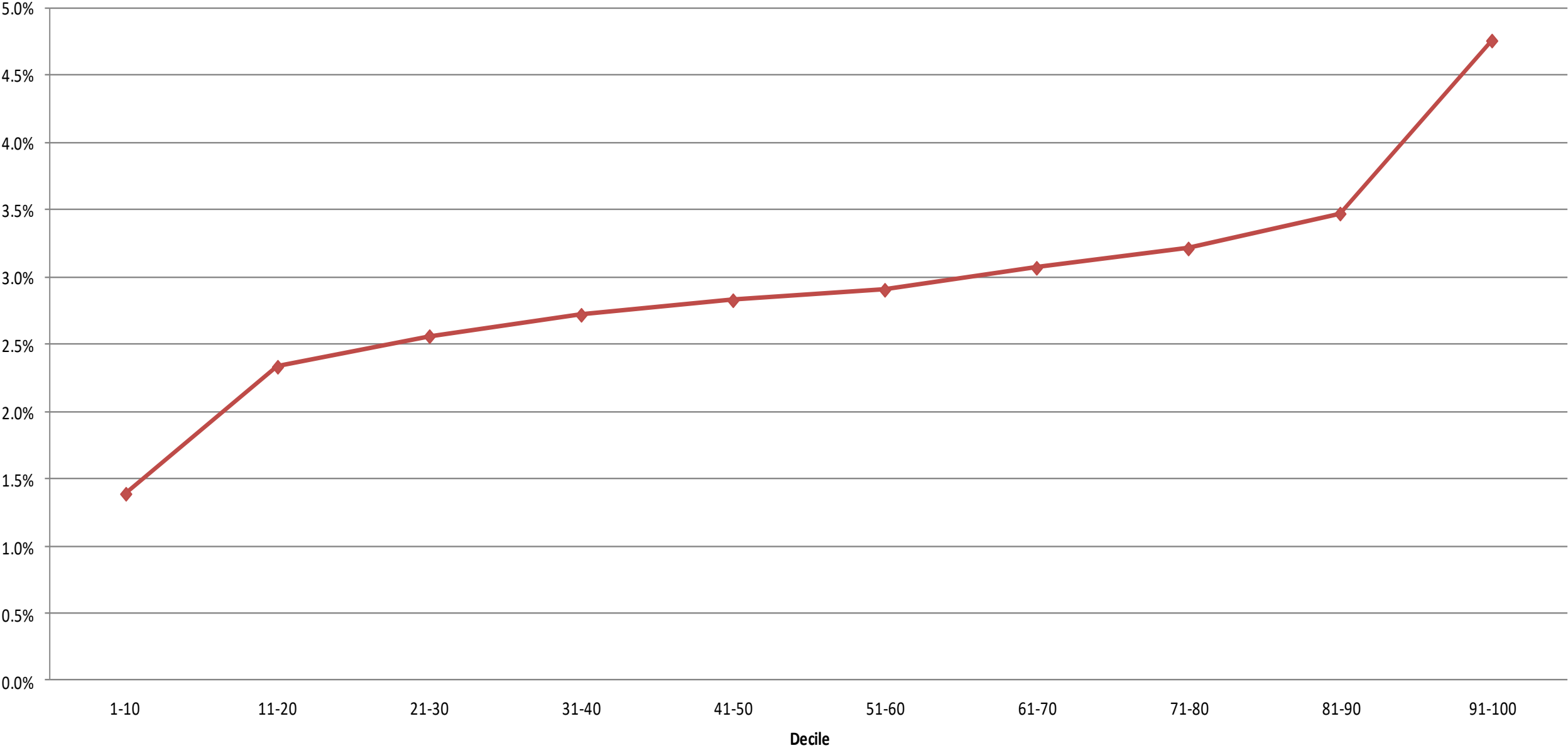
# Future Preparedness

- Leadership Competency +
- Emotion Competency +
- Innovation Competency +
- Diversity Competency has a negative coefficient though it is not statistically significant

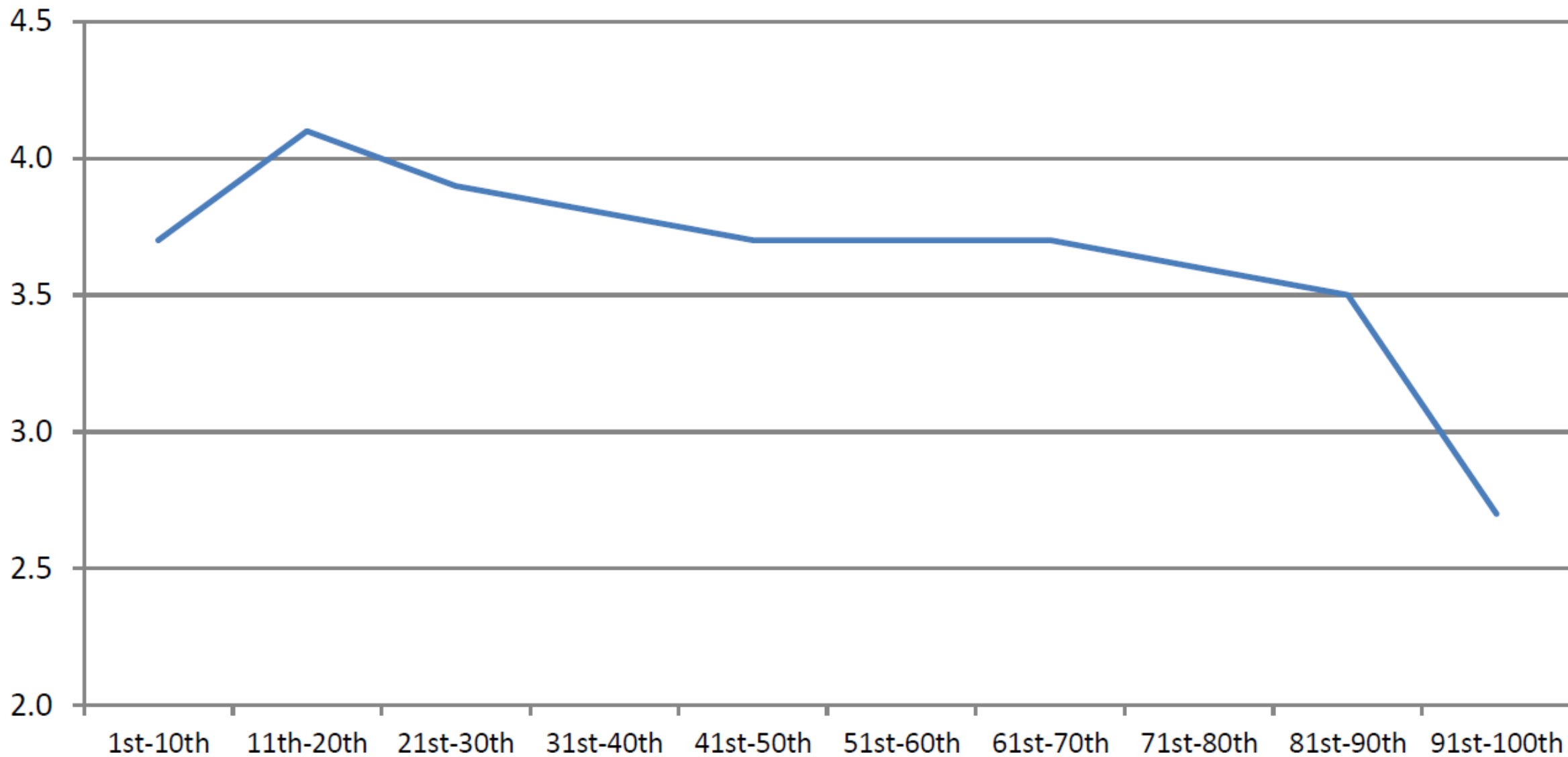
# Intergenerational Income Mobility

- Alesina et al. (2004) found that the wellbeing of the left-winged people and the poor in Europe were hurt by inequality; however, the rich in US, but not the poor, disliked inequality.
- **Why?**
- Poor Europeans perceived being “stuck” in unequal and immobile society while poor Americans perceived hope in upward mobility despite inequality.

# Average Annual Real Growth Rate of Monthly Household Income from Work Per Household Member Excluding Employer CPF Contributions Among Resident Employed Households by Deciles, 1995 to 2012



## Annualised Real Change in Average Monthly Household Income per Household Member from Work (2009-2019)



▲ **TABLE 10: INTERGENERATIONAL INCOME MOBILITY QUANTILE REGRESSIONS**

In Personal Income	P10	P30	P50	P70	P90
	(n=1,946)				
In Parental Income	0.158**	0.096***	0.067***	0.065***	0.110***
Father's Years of Education	-0.003	-0.008**	0.005	0.006*	0.015**
Mother's Years of Education	0.005	0.027***	0.014**	0.009**	0.013**
Age	0.093	0.592***	0.562***	0.218***	-0.296***
Age^2	0.002	-0.009***	-0.009***	-0.003**	0.008***
Male	0.137**	0.027	-0.031	-0.045*	0.005
Non-Chinese	-0.588***	-0.418***	-0.307***	-0.282***	-0.297***
Pseudo R^2	0.2534	0.3543	0.2697	0.1756	0.1403

▲ **TABLE 11: TRANSITION FROM BOTTOM QUINTILE OF PARENTAL INCOME**

NYS 2019	Youth's Personal Income Quintile				
	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
Bottom Quintile of Parental Income	20.84%	25.05%	26.96%	10.90%	16.25%



# Intergenerational Income Mobility

- Equality of opportunity is much alive among our youths in the broad middle-income group.
- Both the bottom quintile and the top quintile have relatively more intergenerational persistence.
- Focus on overcoming the barriers faced by the bottom quintile in upward mobility, formation of relationship stocks, life goals, and competencies for the future.

# Five Aspects of Wellbeing

- **Eudaimonic, physical, financial, social,** and **hedonic** wellbeing are five aspects of wellbeing validated in Lui and Fernando (2018).
- Based on an exploratory study by my students, conducted in Feb/Mar 2023, in partnership with The School of Positive Psychology (TSPP), respondents wished to **improve further** on **Social, Financial,** Physical, Eudaimonic, and Hedonic Wellbeing, in descending order.
- Future research: Relative importance of the five aspects across generations?

# Challenges and Responses



- Future uncertainty and technological disruptions will affect **career opportunity**, in turn, wellbeing of youths, especially those less prepared.
- Competing aspirations related to career, **family**, community, and nation affect time and effort invested in the formation of various relationship stocks, and hence wellbeing.
- Collective pursuit of **social wellbeing** across generations is equally important as or more important than economic growth.