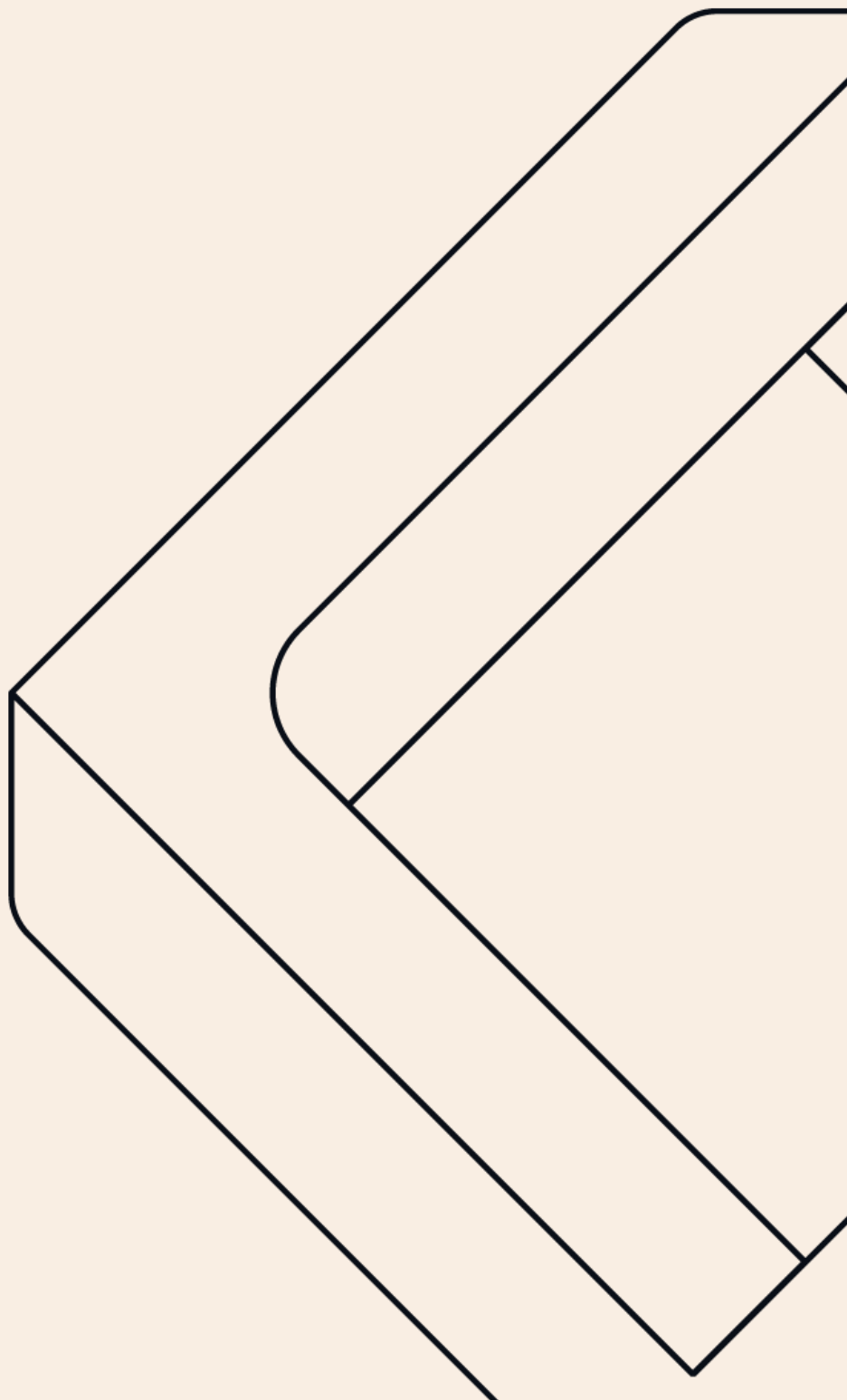


Building a better Singapore for us all



Summary

Singapore's resilience has always been anchored in its people. But in a world shaped by rapid change, social fragmentation, and rising uncertainty, maintaining a strong sense of connection cannot be assumed — it must be intentionally cultivated.

Commissioned by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY), this study explores how Singaporeans experience **Care, Cohesion, and Confidence** — three foundational pillars of social connection that underpin a resilient and future-ready nation. Drawing on a blend of lived experiences, national-level evidence, and participatory engagement, the research uncovers the deeper moral values, shared experiences, and everyday behaviours that shape belonging in Singapore today.

The findings offer more than insight. They provide a **practical, people-centred evidence base** to inform how policies, programmes, and public engagement efforts can strengthen Singapore's social compact — not just in principle, but in how people experience the nation in their daily lives.

Detailed Findings

Introduction

Singapore's progress has been built through collective effort — across generations, communities, and institutions. Yet, in today's increasingly complex global and domestic environment, social connection can no longer be taken for granted.

Global uncertainty, economic pressures, demographic change, and evolving social norms all shape how people relate to one another — and to the nation. At the same time, everyday concerns such as cost of living, mental wellbeing, and inequality can amplify differences in values, expectations, and lived realities.

In this context, **social connection becomes more than a social outcome**. It is a behavioural foundation for resilience — influencing trust, participation, optimism, and the willingness to contribute to the collective good. The question of *what it means to feel Singaporean* — and to feel invested in Singapore's future — has never been more relevant.

Methodology

This study was designed as a **progressive inquiry into how social connection is experienced and shaped in everyday life**. Rather than treating Care, Cohesion, and Confidence as abstract ideals, the research approached them as **behavioural outcomes** — influenced by values, environments, and lived experiences.

1. Listening to Lived Realities

The study began by listening closely to how people naturally talk about connection — what makes them feel heard, valued, and cared for, and what weakens those feelings. This phase drew on reviews of policy and public discourse, digital narrative analysis, and

in-depth conversations with **community “local champions”**, surfacing early insights into shared values, moral drivers, and social tensions.

2. Making Sense of National Patterns

These emerging themes were then explored more deeply through **72 facilitated discussions** with Singaporeans and foreign residents, capturing how Care, Cohesion, and Confidence are experienced across different life stages and backgrounds. Insights were validated at scale through a **nationally representative survey of 4,200 respondents**, allowing the team to identify widely shared drivers of connection — as well as where perceptions begin to diverge.

3. Co-Creating Pathways Forward

Finally, evidence and experience were brought together through a **full-day Social Connection Engagement Workshop**, involving **71 participants** from the public, community leaders, and stakeholders. Participants reflected on the findings and collaboratively developed ideas for strengthening social connection — ensuring that proposed directions were not only evidence-based but grounded in lived realities.

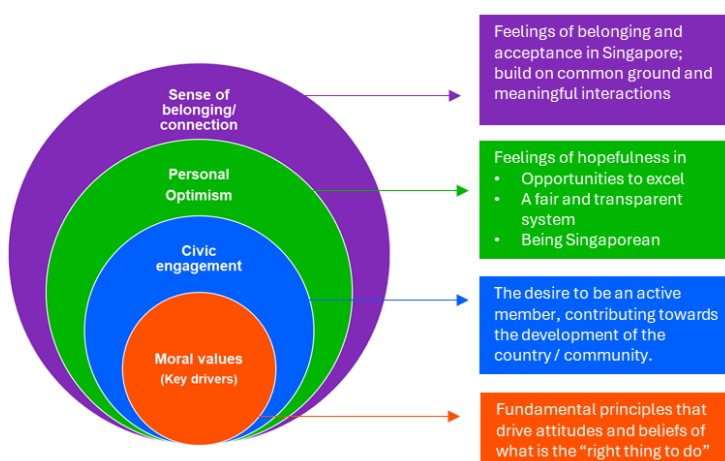
Together, this approach ensured the study remained **credible, people-centred, and action-oriented** — bridging insight and implementation.

Connecting through a Cohesive, Caring, and Confident Singapore

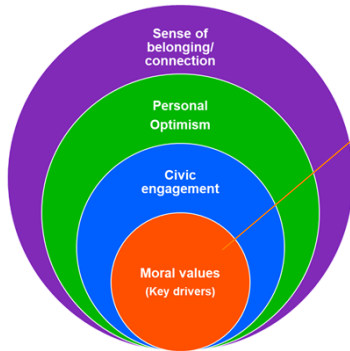
How people experience connection to Singapore is shaped by more than policy or programmes alone. It is built through values, participation, optimism, and everyday interactions that make people feel they belong.

Conducted through multiple studies, MCCY and Verian explored the deeper moral values, attitudes, and behaviours that influence how Singaporeans relate to one another and to the nation. From this work, four interconnected drivers of social connection emerged—together forming a pathway from internal values to lived experiences of belonging.

Four Drivers for Social Connection



1. Moral Values: The Starting Point of Connection



At the heart of social connection lies a shared sense of *what feels right*. The study found that moral values are the **primary drivers** of how Singaporeans interpret care, fairness, and responsibility toward others.

These values shape instinctive behaviours — from helping a neighbour to supporting collective goals — and form the foundation upon which civic participation and belonging are built. While expressed differently across segments, they reflect a shared desire to live in a society that feels fair, compassionate, and principled.

Moral Values Most Singaporeans Resonate With



Fairness Fighters (38%)

- Hardworking heart-landers with strong aspirations for a better life for their loved ones.
- Champions of equal rights and fair treatment for all.
- Most concerned with perceived (un)fairness caused by government regulations.



Compassionates (34%)

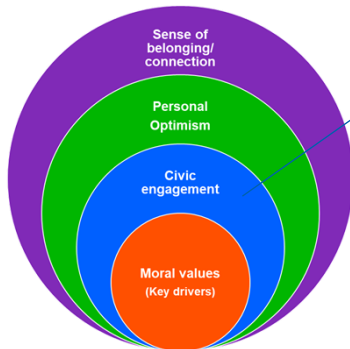
- Nurturing Gen-Ys (millennials) who aspire to make an impact in the world they live in by reducing pain and suffering in the world.
- Stand up for the weak, vulnerable and defenceless.
- Most concerned with acts that inflict pain, hurt and suffering.



Purist Pursuers (20%)

- Affluent 'boomers' who have a penchant for refined living and are currently living the traditional Singaporean '5Cs' Dream.
- Defends and protects the image of a society through one's actions and behaviours.
- Most concerned with actions and behaviours that tarnish and contaminate the values of an ideal society.

2. Civic Engagement: From Voice to Participation



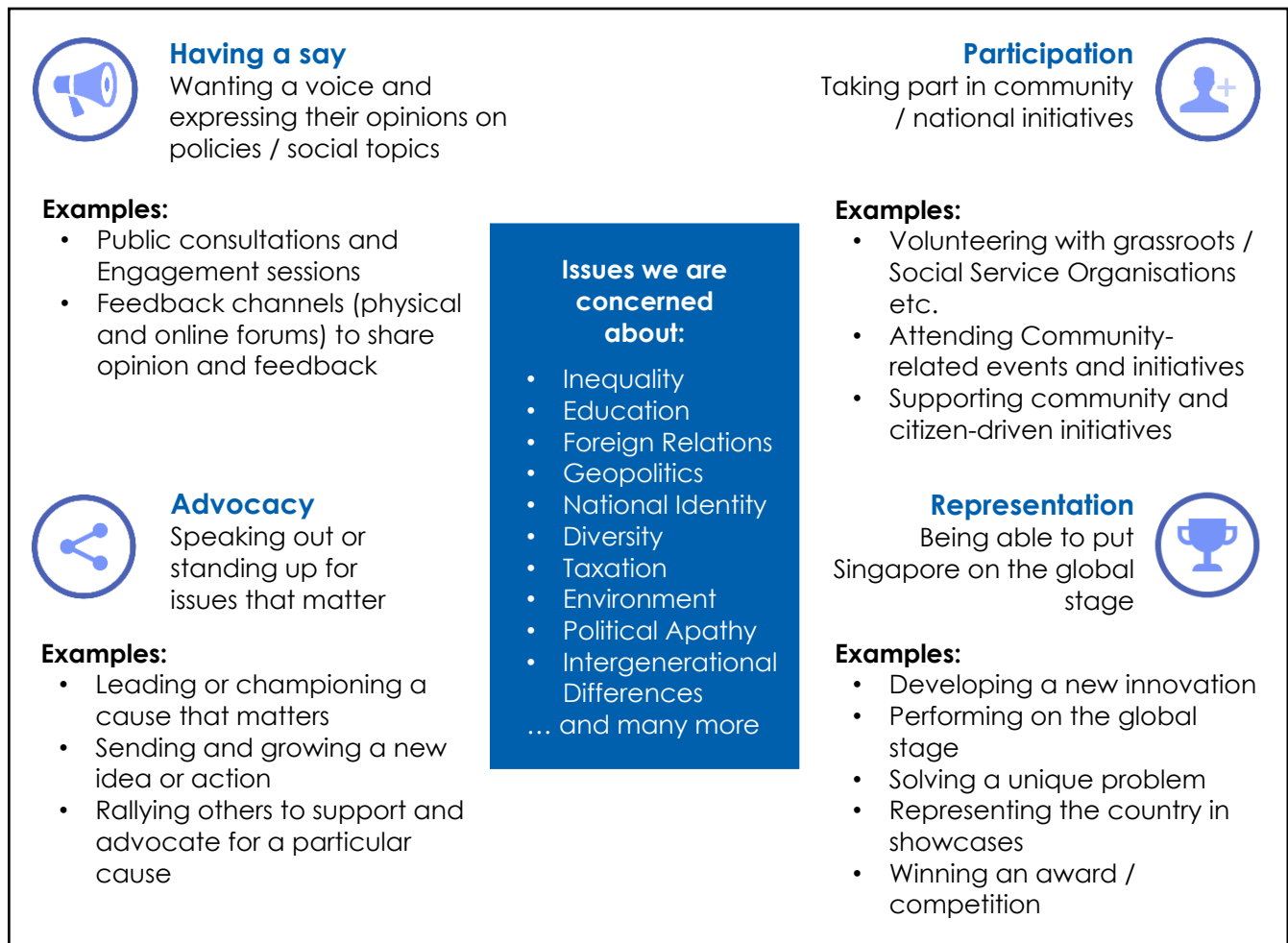
Singaporeans value having a voice — and increasingly, they seek meaningful ways to contribute beyond traditional consultation. The findings highlight a strong appetite for **participatory, representative, and advocacy-based forms of engagement**, where people feel their contributions matter.

Civic engagement is not just about mechanisms; it is about **feeling valued**. When people see how their participation connects to real outcomes, engagement becomes a source of pride and ownership — reinforcing commitment to the nation.

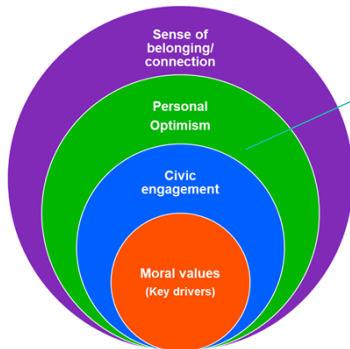
Verian's Citizen Engagement Model



Preferred Modes of Civic Engagement



3. Personal Optimism: Confidence in a Shared Future



Connection is also shaped by how people see their own future within Singapore. Feelings of optimism are closely tied to perceptions of opportunity, fairness, and the belief that personal aspirations can co-exist with national progress.

Singaporeans draw confidence from both inward-focused goals (personal fulfilment, balance, expression) and outward-focused aspirations (national success, global standing). Together, these reinforce a belief that Singapore's future is one worth investing in.

Shared Value

A value, goal or ideal that is appreciated at the individual level, but also adopted by different members of the society.

Inward-focused

Values that are focused on expression and expectation towards self as the focus.

Freedom to express my views

Passion for what I do

Balance between work and play

Outward-focused

Values that are focused on an expression and expectation towards others as the focus (people, communities, nation).

Multicultural tolerance and acceptance

Strong sense of national pride

Strong community links (across different groups)

Belief and commitment to meritocracy

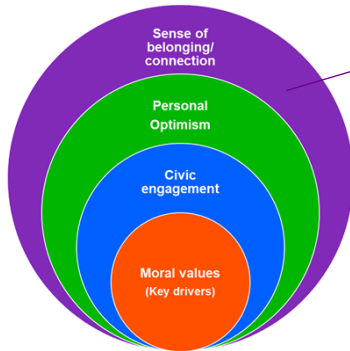
72% (T3B)

I am proud to be a Singaporean / part of the Singapore society.

58% (T3B)

I am confident that Singapore has a bright future ahead.

4. Sense of Belonging: When Values, Experience and Opportunity Align



Belonging represents the highest expression of social connection — a deep emotional attachment to Singapore and to one another. It is built through shared experiences, meaningful interactions across differences, and alignment between personal and national values.

While many Singaporeans value harmony and multiculturalism, the findings also reveal that everyday social circles often remain limited. Strengthening belonging therefore requires **intentional opportunities for interaction**, shared narratives, and environments that make connection easier — not exceptional.

Our findings

64%
(T3B)

I feel close to fellow Singaporeans.

When it comes to forging emotional connections between fellow Singaporeans, the **love for local food is key**.

Emphasis on **shared memories and experiences, accent and language**, and celebrating Singapore's unique social practices.

Maintaining multiculturalism and sharing an understanding of past and history stand out.

For Singaporeans born here, having **shared memories and experiences** with other Singaporeans is important in making them feel closer to others.

63%
(T3B)

I have a strong stake in Singapore.

Sense of Ownership partly involves **having a strong stake in Singapore**.

Having **family and friends** here, **a sense of birth-right**, and an **appreciation of the safety** afforded here contributes to the feeling of having a strong stake in Singapore.

56%
(T3B)

My personal values are similar to Singaporean shared values.

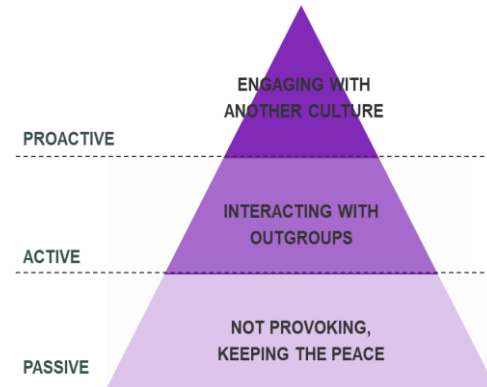
Having **shared values** is an important aspect to strengthening the bond between Singapore and the individual, as our values reflect what is important for us.

Most agree that their personal values align with Singapore's values, with the **biggest gaps existing in Respect and being family oriented** (more important to individuals), **Multiculturalism and Competitive** (important national values, but not so at the individual level).

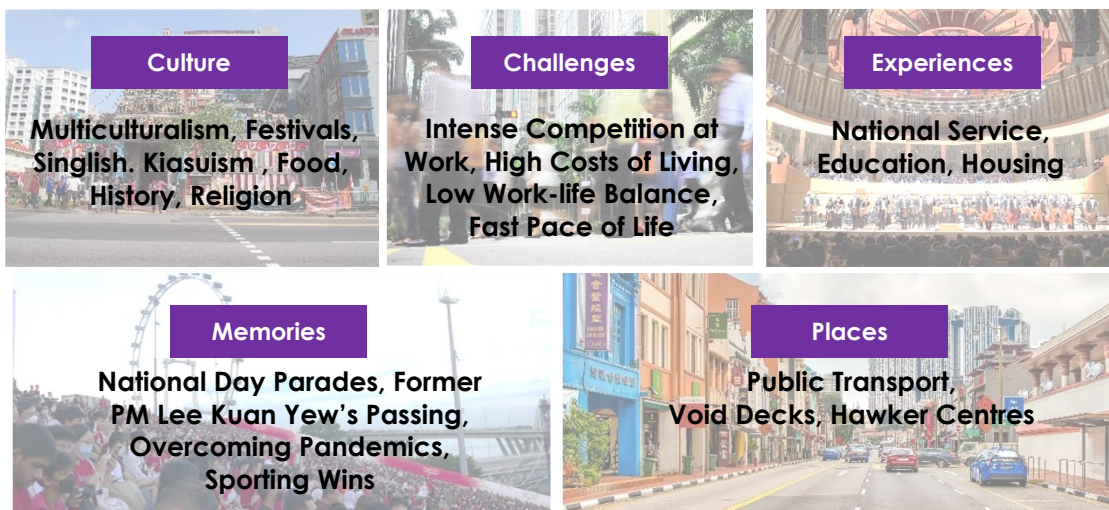
Singaporeans largely believe in the importance and benefits of getting along with everyone and feel they know how to do this well. Yet, for most people, their in-groups still largely consist of people from their own ethnic circle.

Challenges

- **'Automatic' influences** (e.g. habit and heuristics) make it harder to achieve the ideal 'active' form of cohesion.
- **'Proactive' cohesion still niche** – only recognised or desired by a few e.g. seniors and those with good friends from different backgrounds.



Shared Connections for Growth



Conclusion

Strengthening Social Connection for a Resilient Singapore

This study reinforces a simple but powerful insight: social connection is not built through policy intent alone, but through how people experience the nation in their daily lives.

Feeling heard, valued, and cared for shapes how Singaporeans choose to participate, contribute, and commit to the collective good. Civic engagement strengthens confidence when people see their voices translate into meaningful outcomes. Belonging deepens when shared values are reinforced by shared experiences and everyday interactions across differences.

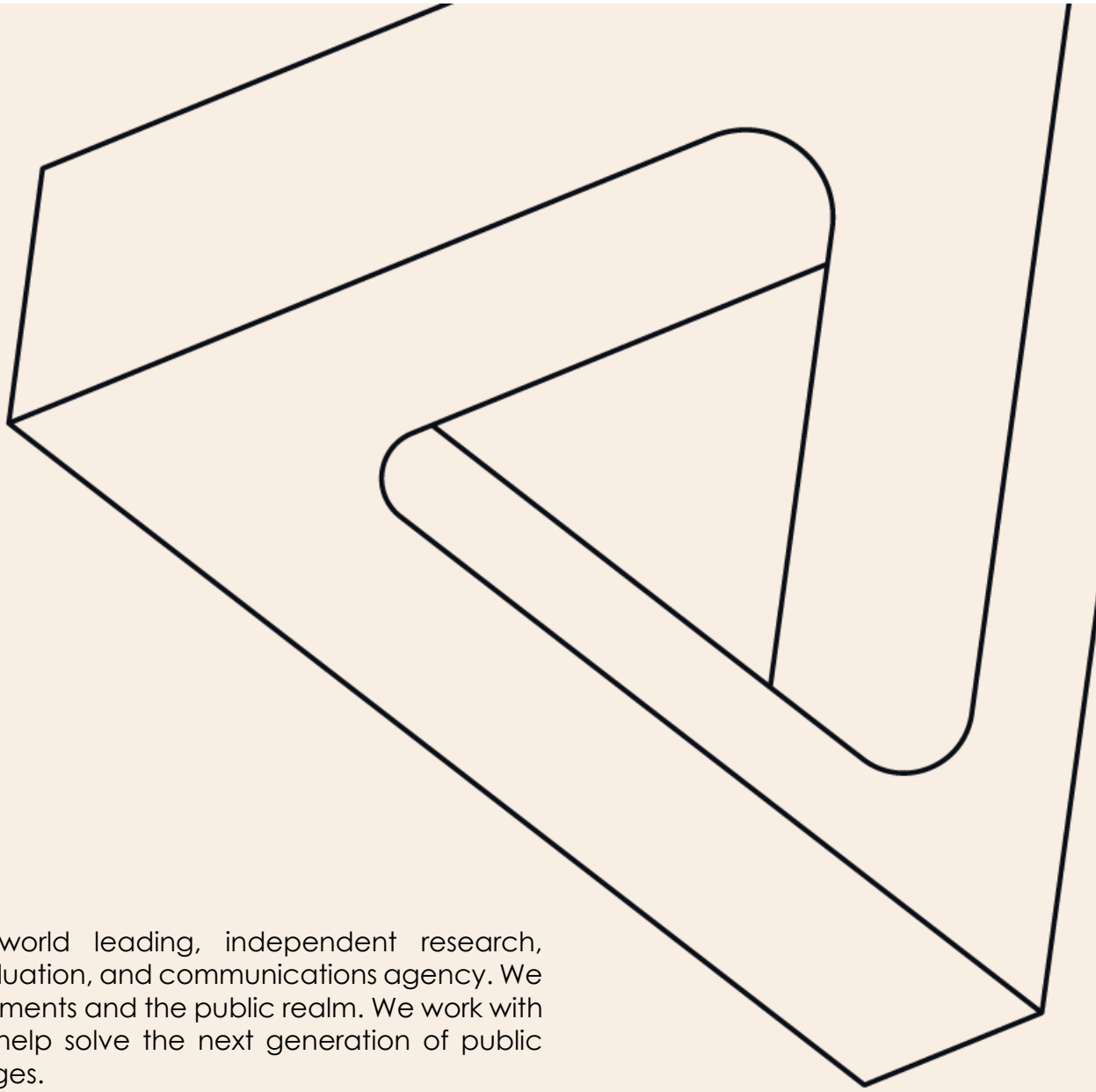
By grounding policy development in lived realities, national evidence, and citizen-led ideation, this work provides a people-centred foundation for strengthening Singapore's social compact.



As the country continues to navigate change, intentionally designing for Care, Cohesion, and Confidence will remain essential to sustaining trust, resilience, and a shared sense of future.

Contact us

Please feel free to contact us at VerianSEAMarketing@veriangroup.com if you have any questions.



Verian is a world leading, independent research, evidence, evaluation, and communications agency. We service governments and the public realm. We work with our clients to help solve the next generation of public policy challenges.

Combining expertise in human understanding with advanced technologies and data science, our work with clients creates policy interventions, designs better public services, and unlocks behaviour change. We support policy thinking and policy implementation by reaching diverse audiences. We bring global best practices and local expertise.

We are Verian. Powering decisions that shape the world.

veriangroup.com/en-sg