



# PRESS RELEASE

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### Singapore families show high resilience during pandemic

***NUS study demonstrates that families with mothers exhibiting self-efficacy, lower work-life conflict, coupled with quality family time, better neighbourhood, greater government and community support, are more resilient***

Singapore, 7 October 2024 – A new study by the National University of Singapore Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (NUS Medicine) analysing the resilience of Singaporean families during the COVID-19 pandemic has uncovered significant findings that highlight how most families with young children successfully adapted to the challenges brought by the global crisis.

Led by Prof Jean Yeung Wei-Jun from the Department of Paediatrics and the Human Potential Translational Research Programme at NUS Medicine, and Dr Chen Xuejiao, a researcher at A\*STAR Institute for Human Development and Potential, the research team looked at data from 2,818 families before and during the pandemic, and identified six distinct family groups with varying degrees of economic and relational resilience. Prof Jean Yeung is also currently a researcher at A\*STAR Institute for Human Development and Potential.

The data was drawn from a nationally representative longitudinal study - the Singapore Longitudinal EARly Development Study (SG-LEADS), and collected across two time periods – Wave One in 2018-2019 before the COVID-19 outbreak and Wave Two in 2021 during the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings were based on 2,818 households across all planning areas in Singapore.

The study, one of the first to examine the economic and relational responses of Singaporean families to the pandemic with a national sample, found that a majority of families showed considerable resilience:

- 31% of families were classified as “economically secure and relationally strengthened,” having improved family relationships.
- 28% were deemed “economically secure and relationally stable,” maintaining their pre-pandemic family dynamics.
- 11% were “economically struggling but relationally improved,” highlighting a significant relational boost despite financial difficulties.
- 14% were “economically struggling but relationally stable,” enduring economic challenges while preserving family relationships.

However, two groups faced more considerable challenges:

- 11% of families were “economically secure but relationally deteriorating,” where financial stability coexisted with worsening family dynamics.
- 4% were classified as “economically and relationally fragile,” suffering from both financial hardship and deteriorating family relationships.

The study emphasised that families with greater socioeconomic resources before the pandemic were more economically resilient, while families with strong relational factors, such as maternal self-efficacy, quality family time, low work-life conflict, and living in supportive neighbourhoods, demonstrated higher relational resilience. Notably, government and community support played a critical role in sustaining both groups of economically struggling families during the crisis.

### **Key Findings:**

- 42% of families were able to maintain their pre-pandemic family dynamics, with 44% reporting strengthened relationships despite varying economic challenges.
- Families with greater access to multilevel resources—including individual psychological strengths, family cooperation, and external support from communities and government—were better positioned to withstand adversity.
- Families with mothers who exhibited higher self-efficacy and confidence helped foster positive family dynamics.
- The study highlighted the vital role of family cooperation, where mothers, supported by fathers, managed lower work-life conflict and quality of family time, contributing to a more supportive and cohesive family relationship.
- Family relationships deteriorated when the mother experienced work-life conflict such as shouldering the majority of childcare responsibilities while the father had the flexibility to work from home, and when the quality of family time worsened.
- Families residing in cohesive and safe neighbourhoods were better able to preserve family well-being under environmental stress.
- Government and community support emerged as significant factors for economically disadvantaged families, underscoring the importance of external assistance in times of crisis.

“Our findings demonstrate that family resilience is not uniform, and it’s shaped by a combination of economic, psychological, and social factors. At the individual level, personal psychological characteristics such as self-efficacy may foster a positive adaptation and growth of the family relations during the pandemic. At the family level, low childcare burdens, and effective couple cooperation, and high quality of family time can aid in maintaining or strengthening family relations during the pandemic. At the community level, living in a safe and cohesive neighbourhood preserves and enhances family well-being when facing environmental stresses. Additionally, external resources such as government support may serve to alleviate the economic hardships and disruptions in family dynamics, especially for economically disadvantaged families,” said Prof Jean Yeung.

“Families can develop varying pathways to resilience depending on their resources and circumstances. It is essential to mobilise both individual and public resources to enable families to withstand and rebound from adversity and foster positive adaptations in the long term. This study offers valuable insights for designing more effective support and intervention programmes and policies to assist families in times of crisis.”

The research provides critical data to inform future interventions aimed at strengthening family resilience, particularly in light of potential social inequalities that may be amplified during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study is part of *SG-LEADS*, a large nationally representative longitudinal study examining the impact of COVID-19 on Singaporean families with young children. It sheds light on the complex relationship between economic and relational resilience and emphasises the need to mobilize both public and private resources to support family well-being in the face of adversity.

This research study was published in a top Sociology journal – the *Journal of Marriage and Family*, titled [COVID-19 experiences and family resilience: A latent class analysis](#).

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### **About National University of Singapore (NUS)**

The National University of Singapore (NUS) is Singapore's flagship university, which offers a global approach to education, research and entrepreneurship, with a focus on Asian perspectives and expertise. We have 16 colleges, faculties and schools across three campuses in Singapore, with more than 40,000 students from 100 countries enriching our vibrant and diverse campus community. We have also established more than 20 NUS Overseas Colleges entrepreneurial hubs around the world.

Our multidisciplinary and real-world approach to education, research and entrepreneurship enables us to work closely with industry, governments and academia to address crucial and complex issues relevant to Asia and the world. Researchers in our faculties, research centres of excellence, corporate labs and more than 30 university-level research institutes focus on themes that include energy; environmental and urban sustainability; treatment and prevention of diseases; active ageing; advanced materials; risk management and resilience of financial systems; Asian studies; and Smart Nation capabilities such as artificial intelligence, data science, operations research and cybersecurity.

For more information on NUS, please visit [nus.edu.sg](https://nus.edu.sg).

### **About the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (NUS Medicine)**

The NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine is Singapore's first and largest medical school. Our enduring mission centres on nurturing highly competent, values-driven and inspired healthcare professionals to transform the practice of medicine and improve health around the world.

Through a dynamic and future-oriented five-year curriculum that is inter-disciplinary and inter-professional in nature, our students undergo a holistic learning experience that exposes

them to multiple facets of healthcare and prepares them to become visionary leaders and compassionate doctors and nurses of tomorrow. Since the School's founding in 1905, more than 12,000 graduates have passed through our doors. In our pursuit of health for all, our strategic research programmes focus on innovative, cutting-edge biomedical research with collaborators around the world to deliver high impact solutions to benefit human lives. The School is the oldest institution of higher learning in the National University of Singapore and a founding institutional member of the National University Health System. It is one of the leading medical schools in Asia and ranks among the best in the world (Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2024 by subject and the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings by subject 2024).

For more information about NUS Medicine, please visit <https://medicine.nus.edu.sg/>.