

SAGE2025

Summit for Action on Gender Equality



REPORT

About SCWO

The Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO) is the national coordinating body of women's organisations in Singapore. Established in 1980, SCWO currently has more than 60 organisations and represents over 600,000 women in Singapore, and strives for the ideals of 'Equal Space, Equal Voice, and Equal Worth' for women in Singapore.

Equal Space: Women should feel safe wherever they are, free to live their lives as they choose without any danger of discrimination, harassment, sexual assault, and violence.

Equal Voice: Women should be equally represented in political, corporate, and community leadership. Policymaking will benefit from the perspectives they bring to the discussions and decisions.

Equal Worth: Women should be fully recognised and valued for their contributions to society, family, and the workplace, where there should be no gender wage gap for work of equal value.

About SAGE 2025

Setting out with a goal – Changing Mindsets in a Changing World – this summit convened 330 corporate leaders, changemakers and civil society partners nationwide to advance meaningful, solutions-driven conversations on gender equality in Singapore.

Focusing on shifting perspectives and sparking progress across three critical topics, Male Allyship & Positive Masculinity, Mid-life Health & Wellbeing and Technology & Artificial Intelligence, SAGE continues to serve as a collaborative platform for organisations committed to building more inclusive workplaces and stronger support systems, highlighting practical strategies and real-world impact.

This report will delve into the addresses, panel discussions, and their corresponding breakout sessions at SAGE 2025, and provide analysis into Singapore's context with existing studies and research. The report will include actionable suggestions to support the key themes to change mindsets in three areas: community and peer groups, workplaces, and policies.

Acknowledgements

The Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO) expresses its sincere appreciation to the James Cook University Singapore (JCUS) for their contribution to SAGE 2025 as Research & Knowledge Partner.

JCUS Contributors

Dr Sherry Aw	Research Lead Senior Lecturer, Psychology
Associate Professor Ai Ni Teoh	Academic Head, School of Social and Health Sciences Associate Professor, Psychology
Dr DaXuan Ng	Lecturer, Counselling
Tan Zi Xin Geraldine	Research Assistant
Lee-Ng Tjun, Killian Raphael	Research Assistant

SCWO Committee

Dr Angelique Chan	Member
Junie Foo	Member
Ong Soh Chin	Member
Dr Seow Yian San	Member
Sim Hwee Hoon	Member
Georgette Tan	Member

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Executive Summary

The second Summit for Action on Gender Equality (SAGE), organised by the Singapore Council of Women’s Organisations (SCWO), was held on 29th September 2025 with the theme Changing Mindsets in a Changing World. International and local champions of gender equality shared their reflections on the state of gender equality in Singapore – perceived challenges, opportunities, and their vision for the future.



Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for Social and Family Development, delivering the Opening Remarks at SAGE 2025.

Guest of Honour Mr. Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for Social and Family Development, noted Singapore’s progress and achievements in gender equality over the past 60 years, including the passage of the Women’s Charter by the Singapore government; growing representation of women in traditionally male-dominated fields such as in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), as well as leadership; the 30th anniversary of Singapore’s ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); and ranking 8th globally on gender equality, 1st in Asia, by the Human Development Report (United Nations Development Programme, 2024). Despite this progress, key domains highlighted by Minister Masagos – caregiving, workplaces, and technology – remain highly gendered, with women continuing to shoulder the primary

burden of care and men dominating technological fields.

Minister Masagos affirmed Singapore’s continued commitment toward gender equality, outlining current efforts to garner feedback on Singaporeans’ concerns, and emphasised the role of government, private sectors, and communities in building an equal society.



Ms Bandana Rana, expert member of the UN CEDAW Committee, delivering the Keynote Address at SAGE 2025.

Keynote speaker, Ms. Bandana Rana, expert member of the UN CEDAW Committee drew on poignant personal and real-life stories to illustrate how stereotypes and stigma serve as powerful forces that reinforce systems of gender inequality in both private and public spheres, in spite of laws and policies that promote equal opportunities and protect against discrimination.

She commended Singapore’s progress and position as a regional role model, while calling for continued efforts to advance gender equality and inclusion by harnessing the nation’s resources, innovation, and technological capabilities to drive transformative change.

Ms. Rana highlighted that one of the most persistent challenges lies in deconstructing mindsets around caregiving, parenting, and eldercare – roles that remain feminised and undervalued. Addressing these stereotypes and engaging men and boys as role models and

partners in care work, Ms. Rana noted, is critical to achieving gender equality. Finally, Ms. Rana also highlighted emerging challenges in the digital era, where algorithms, social media narratives, and technological design can unintentionally perpetuate gender stereotypes. This highlights the importance of embedding gender perspectives into digital innovation and policy frameworks, ensuring that technology becomes a tool for empowerment rather than exclusion. Her keynote set the stage for the rest of the Summit, where diverse voices came together to explore how gender equality can be advanced through mindset shifts, inclusive systems, and collective action.



From the left: Ms Anna Vanessa Haotanto, Ms Trisha Suresh, Ms Kang So-Young, and Ms Ong Soh Chin, on the Panel Discussion – Women in the Loop: The Role of AI in Gender Equality at SAGE 2025.



From the left: Dr Huang Zhongwei, Dr Razwana Begum, Dr Ang Seng Bin, and Dr June Goh, on the Panel Discussion – Not Done Yet: Thriving in the Midlife Years at SAGE 2025.



From the left: Ms Bandana Rana, Mr Ben Ang, Mr Goh Pei Ming, and Ms Georgette Tan, on the Panel Discussion – Man Enough to Change: Reframing Masculinity in the Age of Influence at SAGE 2025.



Mr Ben Ang (second from left) with members of the Brotherhood Family Violence Support Group (THK FSC) in Breakout 1 – Holistic Intervention for Families Facing Domestic Violence at SAGE 2025.

ial – forming and maintaining positive relationships
others

sical – body's physical condition, stress level,
g conditions, disease/injury



Dr Sherry Aw in Breakout 2 – Understanding Mental Health Realities of Midlife Women at SAGE 2025.

These were followed by three breakout sessions that delved into specific social issues, including the complexities of domestic violence and pathways toward healing and restoration of family relationships (Breakout 1: Holistic Intervention for Families Facing Domestic Violence), the role of stigma and psychosocial factors influencing mental health and help-seeking among midlife women (Breakout 2: Understanding Mental Health Realities of Midlife Women), and the gendered nature of online harm and digital safety (Breakout 3: 404: Help Not Found? Understanding Online Harms Through Research and Experiential Workshop).



Ms Natalie in Breakout 3 – 404 Help Not Found? Understanding Online Harm Through Research and Experiential Workshop at SAGE 2025.



Mr Ho Kwon Ping, Founder and Executive Chairman, Banyan Group, at the Closing Fireside Chat at SAGE 2025.



Ms Junie Foo, Immediate Past President of SCWO, at the Closing Fireside Chat at SAGE 2025.

Finally, the closing Fireside chat between Mr. Ho Kwon Ping of Banyan Group and Ms. Junie Foo, Immediate Past President of SCWO reflected on the evolution of gender equality, how broader societal currents in Singapore and beyond, as well as technological advancements, have shaped gender discourse, and the efforts that Banyan Group in particular have made to enhance women's participation at all levels of the organisation.

Together, these sessions revealed how gender norms, systems, and lived experiences intersect to shape gender dynamics, outcomes, and well-being across society.

Across these panels and discussions on Changing Mindsets in a Changing World, three interconnected sub-themes emerged: The Need for Collaboration, The Impact of Technology, and

The Importance of Communities. Adding to these sub-themes were findings from a mental health research study conducted by SCWO and James Cook University Singapore (JCUS) focusing on the mental health of midlife women in Singapore.

Collectively, they highlight challenges, identify opportunities for progress, and chart actionable next steps for Singapore's continued journey toward gender equality and inclusion. A summary of each sub-theme is presented below and elaborated upon in subsequent sections of the Report.

Overall, these discussions underscored that advancing gender equality in Singapore requires

not only progressive policies, but sustained mindset shifts, inclusive systems, and shared responsibility across society.



Group photo of participants at SAGE 2025.

Understanding Attitudes and Perceptions of Mental Health amongst Middle-Aged Women in Singapore

A Survey Study by SCWO and JCUS

To ground the Summit's discussions in empirical evidence, SCWO partnered with James Cook University Singapore (JCUS) to examine the mental health experiences and needs of midlife women in Singapore, and conducted a cross-sectional survey study with women aged 40-59, and who were Singaporean Citizens or Permanent Residents, to better understand their mental health needs and concerns. A total of 550 eligible respondents participated in the survey.

On average, participants were 48.77 years old (SD = 5.49), majority were of Chinese ethnicity (76.9%), 8.5% were of Malay ethnicity, 7.8% were of Indian ethnicity, 1.1% identified as Eurasian, and 5.6% had other ethnicities (e.g., Japanese, Caucasian, Filipino). Majority of the sample had a university degree or higher (74.4%), 16.4% had a Diploma or Professional Qualification, 3.6% had post-secondary (non-tertiary) qualifications, 5.3% had a Secondary qualification, and 0.4% were below secondary. Majority of the sample was married (67.7%), 2.2% in a long-term partnership, 13.7% never married, 14.8%

divorced or separated, and 1.6% widowed. Most respondents were also employed (60.9% full-time, 9.6% part-time or contract, 12.4% self-employed), while 7.3% were unemployed but looking for work, and 9.8% retired.

In this study, respondents were asked about their past mental health history, sources of their distress, awareness of female-specific mental health services, what they thought would be the most important support systems for women's mental health, and also responded to several survey measures of their mental well-being, life satisfaction, perceptions of norms surrounding seeking professional help for mental health treatment, mental health stigma, help-seeking stigma, male allyship, and their general willingness to seek help from various sources if they were to experience a mental health concern. Some preliminary results from this study are discussed in this SAGE 2025 report. The full results of this study will be published in a separate report.

Changing Mindsets in a Changing World

Gender equality begins with transforming the way we think about gender roles, mental health, and well-being. This year's SAGE theme addresses unconscious biases and stereotypes – automatic assumptions that lead to unequal treatment or exclusion. Such biases can manifest in how we think about gender and how men and women should behave, leading to systematic differences in caregiving, leadership potential, and even emotional expression. Toxic masculinity and how we redefine masculinity in ways that allow for empathy and caring is a key focus of this theme. This theme also highlights the importance of normalising conversations around stigmatised topics such as mental health and help-seeking, menopause and perimenopause, which have deterred help-seeking and left many women to navigate physical and emotional challenges alone. By breaking taboos and fostering open dialogue, society can create environments where people feel safe to seek help without judgment.

Mindset change, in this summit, refers to addressing the biases that shape our perceptions and decisions. Indeed, combating unconscious biases was the number one action point identified by attendees at the end of the summit. Mindsets refer to the conscious or unconscious beliefs and perceptions that individuals hold about various things – social groups, behaviours, institutions, and even themselves. Across panels and breakout sessions, speakers highlighted how these entrenched beliefs, including those related to gender and mental health, play an important role in shaping our behaviours toward ourselves and others. Similarly, summit attendees perceived that persistent gender roles in families and society were the biggest barrier toward gender equality in Singapore. This section first examines gender biases and how these lead to systematic differences in the family, work, and societal spheres, before turning to gendered health stigmas surrounding mental health, menopause, and perimenopause.

A. Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are deeply rooted and pervasive, shaping expectations and behaviours across the lifespan. Research consistently shows that women are stereotyped as warm, communal, and emotionally attuned, whereas men are perceived as competent, analytical, and agentic (Fiske et al., 2002; Heilman et al., 2024). These patterns have been documented across cultural contexts (Fiske, 2017; Guimond et al., 2007), and Singapore is no exception. A 2023 study by SG Her Empowerment found that women were strongly associated with being compassionate (76%) and indecisive (67%), while men were associated with being analytical (66%) and competent (60%). Women were also perceived as more organised (68%), whereas men were more often labelled as frivolous (55%). These findings reflect enduring gendered expectations that continue to shape social judgments and behavioural norms.

These stereotypes have tangible consequences, shaping how society perceives and assigns roles to men and women. Women, for instance, are often viewed as “natural” caregivers, leading to assumptions that they bear primary responsibility for domestic and family-related tasks—from managing household chores to coordinating caregiving schedules (Heilman et al., 2024). These sentiments were echoed by Minister Masagos at SAGE 2025 in his speech, where he stated that “wives were four to five times more likely than husbands to be the one managing daily household tasks and handling urgent childcare needs”. This pattern of unequal division of labour at home is evident across the globe, with research showing that caregiving and domestic responsibilities continue to fall disproportionately on women despite women's increasing participation in the workforce and the rise of dual-income households (National Population and Talent Division, 2022; OECD, 2025; Seedat & Rondon, 2021).

In the workplace, gender bias underlies the well-documented glass ceiling, where feminine stereotypes are perceived as incompatible with leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2024), and limits women's opportunities in technical fields (Heilman et al., 2024). Such discrimination is exacerbated when women are sanctioned for taking on roles which deviate from stereotypical societal norms, such as with leadership, STEM fields, the military, and even entrepreneurship (Carli et al., 2016; Heilman & Manzi, 2022; Kanze et al., 2020; Pazy & Oron, 2001). In Singapore, gender disparities are evident in STEM pathways, where women account for only 48.25% of degree programme enrolments (Ministry of Education, 2020), and where men are overwhelmingly recipients of research fellowships and grant awards (Ramachandran, 2017). At SAGE 2025, Minister of State (MOS) Mr. Goh Pei Ming celebrated Singapore's progress in increasing female representation in the Singapore Armed Forces during the panel discussions. However, he noted that these numbers remain small, as the armed forces continue to be highly male dominated. Similarly, more work needs to be done to improve female representation in board positions (30%), and in technological fields, which is still at approximately 30%. These examples demonstrate how longstanding gender norms perpetuate unequal treatment and exclusion in both domestic and organisational contexts.

That said, it is important to recognise that while gender inequality often focuses on disadvantages faced by women, men too are not immune from gender stereotyping (Van Laar et al., 2024). Where women are viewed as high in warmth but low in competence, men are viewed as high in competence, but low in warmth (Fiske, 2017), and often face pressures to uphold unrealistic and unhealthy expectations about 'ideal' manhood (Van Laar et al., 2024), such as self-reliance, emotional restraint, toughness, and being the provider and decision-maker of the family. While these stereotypes mean that men are often perceived to be natural leaders and better decision-makers, thus allowing men to gain and retain positions of power in the workplace, they also impose restrictive norms

that discourage feminine-coded behaviours such as emotional expression (particularly vulnerability and other-oriented emotions such as empathy, love, and compassion), caregiving, and help-seeking.

These norms are reinforced by cultural expectations within families, workplaces, and community spaces that are highly gender-coded and that frown upon men who deviate from stereotypical behaviours. Even at young ages, boys are penalised more harshly than girls for gender-nonconforming behaviour, such as playing with dolls instead of male-typed toys (Kane, 2006; Skočajić et al., 2019), with these pressures to conform escalating in adolescence (Nielson et al., 2020; Wye, 2019), and persisting in adulthood (Moss-Racusin et al., 2010). As a result, men may feel pressure to prioritise work over family, avoid roles perceived as "feminine", and hold back from participating fully in parenting, eldercare, and household responsibilities. Such rigid gender expectations, otherwise known as hegemonic masculinity, can undermine men's socio-emotional well-being and limit their engagement at home, reinforcing unequal divisions of labour and perpetuating gender inequalities (Croft et al., 2015). For instance, men may avoid flexible work arrangements or feel discouraged from taking parental leave, for fear of penalty or backlash from colleagues and supervisors if they appear to prioritise family over work (Rudman & Mescher, 2013). Such dynamics can inhibit men from fully participating and connecting with their families, harm men's socio-emotional health, and also slow broader progress toward gender equality.

In an illustrative example shared during Breakout 1, Ms. Lim described how entrenched gender roles and unequal divisions of labour within households can fuel conflict and perpetuate harm. She highlighted how deep-rooted assumptions, such as viewing women as primary homemakers responsible for ensuring a quiet household and managing all domestic tasks, or believing that men who work outside the home need not contribute to caregiving or chores, and narrow beliefs about fatherhood, such as equating paternal love with financial provision or

endorsing harsh discipline and physical punishment as the “proper” way to guide children, can create tension within families. These entrenched expectations not only strain relationships but may also trigger cycles of intergenerational conflict and, in some cases, generational patterns of abuse. Indeed, research shows that men who more strongly internalise traditional masculine ideals experience poorer psychological outcomes, including heightened stress, depression, and loneliness (Harrington, 2021; Wong et al., 2017). Recognising the constraints of rigid gender norms - for both men and women - and subsequently changing mindsets about gendered norms, would thus be crucial toward a more inclusive and equal society.

During SAGE 2025, MOS Goh observed how perceptions of national service as a “test of manhood” could perpetuate gendered beliefs on how the military is for men only, and undermine the legitimacy of female soldiers and officers in the military. MOS Goh suggested a two-pronged approach to addressing the gendered perceptions of the military - first by increasing and normalising female role models, and also being mindful of the values that national service instils in each serviceman - about discipline, resilience, emotionally balanced, and respectful. Importantly, these reflections extend beyond the military context. Institutions can challenge unhealthy gendered expectations through purposeful re-examination of the implicit messages and values within their culture, and how behaviours are reinforced or rewarded.

Building on this, while much of the conversation at SAGE 2025 (and more generally) has been focused on increasing female-representation in traditionally male-dominated domains such as the military, STEM fields, or leadership roles, far less attention has been given to the reverse: how do we meaningfully increase representation of men in traditionally-female dominated industries, such as in caregiving or early childhood education? The absence of this perspective from the conversation may reflect several societal assumptions: that feminine-coded occupations carry less status and

therefore require no push for male inclusion, or that men are inherently unsuited for such roles, mirroring deep-seated gendered biases about caregiving, emotional labour, and nurturance. In reframing masculinity then, society could expand our understanding of masculinity, for instance, by incorporating “caring masculinity” and its characteristics of emotional sensitivity, nurturance, care, and relational competence, as part of rather than as deviating from masculinity (Elliot, 2015; Hunter et al., 2017).

Supporting this, MOS Goh pointed out during Panel 1 that reframing masculinity and laying the groundwork for equality begins at home – with how fathers and mothers model respect, involvement, and allyship within the family. MOS Goh provided a personal example of participative decision-making within his own family, and reflected on how such mental models can be rooted and passed down through generations. This exemplifies how families can build and sustain healthy relational norms and equality regardless of gender. In the same panel, Mr. Ben Ang echoed how gender norms begin at home, from simple statements such as “men don’t cry”. Mr. Ang discussed how purposeful and intentional actions that normalise vulnerability from boys and encourage men to recognise unhealthy gender norms and learned behaviours, can have long-term consequences. Although much of the existing scholarship on caring masculinities has focused on fatherhood, there is no reason to confine men’s capacity to care to the familial sphere. Caring behaviours can and should extend beyond the family to workplaces, communities, and society at large, and recognising this allows for a more equitable society where caregiving is not seen solely as a feminine responsibility.

Reframing masculinity is therefore a complex but crucial endeavour. In line with the sub-theme of *The Need for Collaboration*, speakers repeatedly emphasised that male youths and men cannot be left out of these conversations. Meaningful engagement requires that men feel invited rather than coerced into participating (Yuen, 2021). This sentiment was echoed by Mr. Ang, who alluded to the importance of exercising compassion even to

perpetrators of domestic violence. He noted that open, honest, and non-judgmental dialogue is necessary for genuine change. Such approaches model respectful and healthy norms of masculinity grounded in empathy, accountability, and emotional openness. Further, MOS Goh emphasised the need for equal opportunities and equal access for all genders and suggested greater open conversations on gender equality at the familial, societal, and public levels. Schools and organisations thus play a crucial role in enabling this shift. For instance, schools can play a pivotal role by incorporating discussions of emotional literacy, respectful relationships, and consent into sex education curricula, and normalise help-seeking behaviour. In the workplace, organisational policies that normalise flexible work arrangements and shared caregiving responsibilities can not only dismantle stigma around men expressing care or prioritising family and wellbeing but can also reduce penalties surrounding female employees' requests for flexible work arrangements, which have been shown to impair women's career opportunities and performance evaluations (Chung, 2020). The Shared Parental Leave Scheme, introduced earlier this year, is thus a first step toward reframing masculinity, increasing paternal involvement in the home, and promoting equality at home. As Ms. Rana cautions however, it is important to evaluate the efficacy of such schemes, not only on a public policy level but also within organisations, to ensure that policies work as intended.

B. Stigma

Beyond stereotypes and gendered expectations, a recurring sub-theme across the panels and breakout sessions at SAGE 2025 was on the invisible but powerful role of stigma in shaping Singaporeans', particularly women's, health and well-being. While some forms of stigma arise from gendered beliefs about how "good" men and women should behave (e.g., "real men" should not show weakness or that "good women" should endure burdens quietly), others stem from broader mental or physical health stigmas that nonetheless manifest differently

across genders. One notable example concerns midlife women's experiences of menopause and perimenopause. These transitions remain poorly understood, under-discussed, and often unacknowledged, with limited public awareness of the symptoms, challenges, and coping strategies associated with menopause, even though many women require support during this period.

In the second panel, Not Done Yet: Thriving in the Midlife Years, panellists Dr. Razwana Begum, Dr. Ang Seng Bin, and Dr. Huang Zhongwei discussed differing perspectives on how best to support women navigating menopause, especially in the workplace. A central tension raised was whether women should disclose their menopause-related challenges to supervisors or colleagues in order to receive support, given the deeply personal nature of this issue. Underlying this discussion is the stigma surrounding menopause - that women who speak openly about their experiences fear being perceived as less emotionally stable, less capable of managing personal challenges, or more broadly, reflecting negatively on midlife women as a whole as 'troublesome' and therefore not ideal workers. Importantly, the discussion underscored that the responsibility should not fall on women to "advertise" or justify their health conditions. Rather, workplaces must cultivate environments that are inherently inclusive, respectful, and supportive, where health needs are accommodated regardless of gender or the specific reason behind them.

In addition to its physical symptoms, the onset of menopause can have significant psychological effects for midlife women. Menopause often signals a transition in female identity, a heightened awareness of aging, and emotional or cognitive changes linked to hormonal fluctuations and fatigue. As Dr. Ang noted in Panel 2, the onset of menopause often coincides with other major life transitions and challenges, including career inflection points and sandwich caregiving responsibilities for both children and aging parents as well as themselves and their spouses. This convergence of biological, social, and role-related pressures can place

considerable strain on midlife women's mental health and overall well-being. Breakout 2, which focused on the mental health realities of midlife women, further elaborated on these challenges by discussing risk and protective factors for midlife women and highlighted the role of stigma in shaping women's willingness to seek help. Speakers Dr. Sherry Aw and Dr. Daxuan Ng from James Cook University Singapore discussed how culturally embedded expectations – such as the belief that women should shoulder burdens silently or avoid “airing dirty laundry”, can lead women to dismiss their own needs, interpret distress as personal failure, and delay or avoid seeking support. These sentiments align with findings from the SCWO x JCUS survey study. Although most midlife women respondents agreed that help-seeking is becoming more commonplace (76.1%) and believed that their loved ones would encourage them to seek help if they needed to (65%), many still reported that experiencing mental health concerns would make them feel like a failure (54%), weak (58.3%), or a burden to others (73.8%). Further, women in the study who endorsed stronger mental health and help-seeking stigmas were significantly less likely to seek support when needed, underscoring the need to confront mental health

stigmas and address the underlying beliefs that perpetuate these stigmas.

Importantly, the discussion of stigma was not unique to the context of menopause or midlife women's mental health. It emerged as a concern across the two other breakout sessions on domestic violence and online harms, where speakers Ms. Lorraine Lim and Ms. Si Han described how both perpetrators of domestic violence and victims of cyber harassment experience shame and fear of judgment, which hindered their willingness to disclose their experiences or seek counselling. Across all three sessions, a common recommendation was the need to normalise help-seeking and to create supportive environments grounded in empathy and non-judgmental listening. These support groups can help bridge perceived isolation and can be a source of strength for individuals in times of stress (Grishina et al., 2023). Peer support groups were ranked as the most important form of support for midlife women's health in the SCWO x JCU mental health study, and these will be discussed in further detail in the section on *The Importance of Communities*.

Overview of Key Sub-themes

1. The Need for Collaboration

This sub-theme centres on the role of men in gender equality. Increasingly, there is greater recognition that gender equality is not solely a women's issue, but a shared societal endeavour that requires the active participation of everyone – women, men, and the wider community. This sub-theme emphasises the importance of men and women working together in families, workplaces, schools, and communities, and what it means to be a male ally – role modelling gender equality at home, championing fairness and respect in professional settings, and speaking out against discrimination.

2. The Impact of Technology

This sub-theme concerns the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in shaping and potentially reinforcing gendered experiences and outcomes. As AI is increasingly embedded in organisational and everyday decision-making, its influence on human cognition and behaviour remains poorly understood. Speakers highlighted how AI systems are often developed by male-dominated teams and trained on data that contains existing cultural, gender, and racial biases. These biases can, in turn, be embedded in organisational processes and perpetuate gender stereotypes. At the same time, the rise of generative AI has intensified concerns about technology-facilitated violence, such as sexual deepfakes and online harassment. Survivors of such harassment require more sensitive and accessible support systems. Despite these

challenges, panellists also noted that AI can present opportunities for advancing gender equality, if appropriate ethical frameworks and diversity are incorporated in AI development and use.

3. The Importance of Communities

Finally, this sub-theme emphasises that achieving gender equality requires more than changing individual attitudes and biases. Meaningful change requires a whole-of-society partnership, including workplaces, communities, institutions, and the government. Findings from the SCWO x JCUS mental health study highlighted how workplaces remain one of the most significant sources of stress for midlife women, and discussions from the summit reveal how disclosure of health challenges in the workplace, such as perimenopause and menopause, continue to be sensitive and often stigmatised. At the same time, participants highlighted the critical role of community networks and peer-support groups in enhancing mental health, providing safe spaces for sharing experiences and fostering resilience.

These sub-themes are connected and underscore that meaningful change must occur at multiple levels: within individuals, through reflection and allyship; within communities, through empathy, inclusion, and peer support; and within systems, through inclusive policy and partnerships. The following discussions are informed by insights from the Summit discussions, academic literature, and Singapore-specific research.

Key Sub-themes from SAGE 2025

1. The Need for Collaboration

The first sub-theme highlighted throughout the summit was the essential role of men; both as allies and as individuals who themselves are constrained by entrenched gender norms, in advancing gender equality. Speakers throughout the breakout sessions and panels underscored that men are not only potential advocates and role models but are sometimes also “victims” of rigid expectations surrounding masculinity, caregiving, emotional expression, and career choices. This recognition reinforces the need for a broader, more inclusive framing of gender equality – one that acknowledges how harmful norms affect all genders. Panellists and keynote contributors, including Minister Masagos Zulkifli and Mr. Ho Kwon Ping of Banyan Group, emphasised that achieving meaningful progress requires men to be active participants, champions, and co-creators in shaping a more equitable society.

For decades, gender equality has been largely framed as a women’s issue, focusing on empowering women through education, employment, and leadership opportunities (Kabear, 2005; Magar, 2015). This focus has contributed to significant advances in women’s rights and representation across sectors. Yet, by positioning gender equality as only addressing biases against women or increasing women’s representation in various sectors, it risks reinforcing the perception that women alone benefit from or bear sole responsibility for correcting systemic imbalances (Hardacre & Subašić, 2018; Subašić et al., 2018). Ms. Georgette Tan mentioned during SAGE 2025, how recent statistics from the United Women Singapore show that only 47% of men think that it is important to achieve gender equality, while 59% of female respondents agree with this. Such disparities in perceptions underscore how true gender equality cannot be realised through the efforts of only half the population. It requires transforming systemic structures, norms, and power relations that sustain gender inequities

and limit full participation across society (Newman et al., 2023).

Men are uniquely positioned to contribute to gender equality because they are more likely to hold positions of power, influence, and privilege (Smith, 2023). Recognising this, global movements have increasingly called on men to play an active role in advancing gender equality alongside women. In 2014, the United Nations launched the “HeForShe” campaign in New York, inviting men to step forward and, in collaboration with women, make gender equality possible (UN Women, 2014). Indeed, research suggests that solidarity is unlikely to emerge when gender inequality is framed solely as a women’s issue to be addressed by governments or human resource departments (Subašić et al., 2018). When gender equality is framed as a collective social goal, men would be more likely to challenge entrenched norms, support equitable practices, and work collaboratively with women toward change (Subasic et al., 2008). Supporting this, a global survey by the Boston Consulting Group (2017) found that organisations made greater progress in gender diversity when men were actively engaged in related initiatives, with 96% observing tangible progress when men participated publicly in diversity efforts, compared to only 30% when men were not involved (Krentz et al., 2017).

Despite these benefits, men’s voices and concerns have often been sidelined in gender equality conversations. Including men in the conversation is important for two reasons. First, when men perceive that gender equality does not represent or include them, they may disengage from, or even resist, gender equality efforts, particularly if they perceive that they are threatened by the potential loss of their power or advantaged position in the gender hierarchy (Van Laar et al., 2024). This could lead to misunderstanding, defensiveness, or narrative

backlash, slowing collective progress. In Breakout 1 on Holistic Intervention for Families Facing Domestic Violence, Ms. Lorraine Lim noted how men who caused harm often attend reconciliation sessions with a defensive mindset, fearing and perceiving that counsellors and social workers label them only as problematic abusers and try to tear their family apart. Such mindsets of opposition (vs. partnership) can hinder rather than facilitate meaningful engagement, and more broadly, can make or break conversations about gender equality and the success of these conversations. Relatedly, Mr. Ho observed during the fireside chat how men feel left behind and left out in issues of gender equality, and that many young men, uncertain about the role of masculinity and men in a changing world, now need as much help and support as women do. As such, acknowledging men's concerns and recognising how gender norms can negatively affect their socio-emotional health is critical. Reframing gender equality as a collaborative win-win, rather than a win-lose issue, can help men feel included and reduce defensiveness, motivating them to contribute meaningfully to the pursuit of equality.

Second, when men are intentionally included and empowered as allies, this allows for an expanded reach, stronger legitimacy, and greater momentum. The growing recognition of the important role that men play in advancing equality has given rise to the concept of male allyship. Social psychology conceptualises allyship as an identity taken on by individuals from dominant or majority groups who actively work to challenge inequality and support those who are marginalised (Washington & Evans, 1991). Allyship is not fixed but develops through personal attitudes, experiences, and relationships that cultivate understanding and empathy (Broido, 2000; Reason & Broido, 2005; Drury & Kaiser, 2014). In the context of gender equality, such individuals are often referred to as male allies. Research on allyship demonstrates that men who participate actively in gender equality initiatives – whether through modelling inclusive behaviour, advocating for equitable policies, or

offering mentorship – play a critical role in normalising gender-equitable norms within their organisations and communities. By putting allyship into practice, men not only demonstrate leadership but also create tangible benefits. Male allyship positively influences individuals, organisations, and society by promoting gender-equitable behaviours and challenging traditional norms (DeSouza & Schmader, 2025). Disadvantaged group members (i.e., women) can be buffered from exclusion by signalling identity safety, and allyship does so at lower cost to the advantaged group member (i.e., men; DeSouza & Schmader, 2025).

Allyship can operate at the systemic, organisational, and interpersonal levels. At the broadest level, systemic allyship could involve challenging entrenched gender norms, advocating for equitable public policies, and participating in national conversations that recognise how both men and women are constrained by rigid gender roles. In Singapore, legislation that promotes shared caregiving (e.g., paternity leave expansion), workplace anti-discrimination laws, and male leaders in the private and governmental sectors who champion gender-equitable norms are examples of systemic allyship. Public role modelling by respected men, such as community champions and corporate leaders, further normalises allyship and signals that advancing gender equality is a collective responsibility (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). For instance, during the panel on reframing masculinity at SAGE 2025, Ms. Rana shared how celebrated male footballers carrying banners renouncing violence against women or wearing t-shirts about respecting women signalled how challenging gender bias was an honourable and collective responsibility. Similarly, discussions in Breakout 1 on domestic violence echoed such sentiments of utilising role models to break the cycle of generational domestic violence. Together, these examples show how including men as co-champions of gender equality can gradually shift societal expectations and normalise positive gender roles.

At the organisational level, male allyship can include promoting gender equality through collaborative relationships, visible sponsorship, advocacy, and the transformation of workplace culture (Smith, 2023), with studies showing greater diversity progress when men are actively engaged (Krentz et al., 2017; Morrell & Jewkes, 2011). Allies help drive structural change by questioning biased policies, supporting inclusive leadership pipelines, and ensuring that organisational systems meaningfully support women's career progression. As an illustration of such organisational policies, Mr. Ho Kwon Ping, Executive Chairman of Banyan Group, emphasised the importance of recognising and addressing the structural and cultural barriers that limit women's career advancement during the closing fireside chat at SAGE 2025. At Banyan Group, this includes initiatives such as flexible job-swap programmes to support women with family responsibilities, company-funded childcare centres, and leadership development efforts encouraging women to speak up – all aimed at creating equitable opportunities for women to thrive alongside men.

Finally, at the personal level, allyship can manifest in everyday accountability and relationship building. Allies take responsibility for how they show up at work and at home, from the relationships they build with their female colleagues and speaking up when witnessing bias or exclusion to modelling inclusive behaviour at home by sharing caregiving responsibilities, emotional labour, and decision-making as equal partners to reinforce equitable household norms (Lazarus & Mandel, 2023; Tatak & Ndakeyo, 2023), or in the community by supporting initiatives that challenge harmful gender stereotypes among boys and youth. Such modelling behaviours are central to sustaining allyship. Studies have shown that when men act as role models, such as by publicly supporting women's leadership or sharing domestic duties, they normalise equitable behaviour and foster broader cultural change (Morrell & Jewkes, 2011; Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Tatak & Ndakeyo, 2023; Lazarus & Mandel, 2023). This sentiment was echoed by Minister Masagos at SAGE 2025, who

emphasised that equality begins at home – through fathers sharing caregiving responsibilities and modelling partnership and respect between parents. He highlighted that active fatherhood not only lightens the caregiving load on women but also instils values of respect and shared responsibility in the next generation. Minister Masagos also shared a personal example of modelling shared household responsibilities with his wife, demonstrating to his children the importance of partnership and equality at home. Similarly, in the panel on reframing masculinity, Mr. Goh Pei Ming, Minister of State, highlighted the importance of partnership and shared decision-making. He described how, before entering politics, he discussed with his wife how they would balance responsibilities and involve their children in these conversations, modelling open communication, mutual support and equality within the family. Further, Mr. Ben Ang, Centre Director of THK Family Service Centre @ Bedok North, discussed how men who share their lived experiences and advocate for gender equality can be more powerful in reaching the male audience. Collectively, these illustrate how male allyship can be operationalised concretely: mentoring in the workplace and supporting women professionally, implementing family-supportive organisational practices, sharing caregiving at home, and educating the next generation of men about equality through outreach programmes and visible role modelling.

Beyond SAGE 2025, several programmes in Singapore are putting the theory of male allyship into action across the home, workplace and educational contexts. For example, the corporate advisory, consulting and training arm of the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE), Catalyse, launched a “Male Allies for Change Programme” in 2022, designed to empower men with the knowledge, mindset and practical tools to actively support gender equality and drive inclusive workplace and societal change (Catalyse, n.d.). For youths, United Women Singapore's “Boys Empowered” initiative engages young men aged 13 to 25 through workshops on masculinity, gender stereotypes, and allyship, fostering safe and

inclusive environments where young men can openly reflect on and discuss gender-related issues (United Women Singapore, n.d.). This programme also includes speaker sessions in which male ambassadors share their personal experiences to model healthy masculinity and guide youth in conflict resolution, online conduct, and emotional regulation.

While male allyship offers significant promise, it also comes with important cautions. Research in institutional settings has shown that men acting as allies may experience uncertainties about their role and find it challenging to sustain engagement when their actions are perceived as tokenistic or performative (Nash et al., 2021). In male-dominated workplaces, these uncertainties can hinder ongoing participation, highlighting the importance of long-term commitment and culturally sensitive approaches that recognise organisational norms and constraints (DuBow, 2016). Evidence further suggests that one-off interventions or symbolic gestures are unlikely to produce durable change; allyship is most effective when actions are embedded in systemic practices, such as organisational policies and inclusive processes (DeSouza & Schmader, 2025). Finally, research underscores that allies should avoid centring themselves in advocacy efforts and instead prioritise the voices and agency of women and other marginalised groups to ensure interventions are supportive rather than performative (Paluck & Green, 2009). Recognising these caveats helps ensure that male allyship translates into meaningful, lasting impact rather than temporary or superficial actions.

2. The Impact of Technology

A second sub-theme that emerged from SAGE 2025 concerns the growing influence of technology in shaping and reinforcing gendered experiences and outcomes. In particular, the effects of artificial intelligence on human behaviour are still insufficiently understood, despite its rapid adoption by individuals and organisations. Given our increasing reliance on

AI, societies have to be cautious about how AI shapes our knowledge and cognition, and the potential for misuse of generative AI. Various speakers at SAGE 2025, including Minister Masagos, Ms. Rana, Mr. Ho, and Ms Kang So-Young noted how AI systems are learning and amplifying human biases, including gendered, racial, and cultural biases. AI systems are largely developed by men and trained on existing knowledge bases that contain and reflect existing societal biases (Nadeem et al., 2021; Shrestha & Das, 2022), such as the gender stereotypes described above. These stereotypes and biases can then unknowingly become embedded in organisational processes, such as in hiring and promotions, and can negatively impact working women when the presumably “impartial” AI algorithm favours men for leadership positions and other masculine-coded roles (Ho et al., 2025; UN Women, 2025). In the panel on AI and gender, Ms. Ong Soh Chin shared an example of how AWARE conducted an experiment with an AI module contrasting a male and female job applicant. The AI module described the female job applicant as “overbearing” while the male job applicant was described as “proactive”, and ultimately recommended hiring the male applicant, despite being provided with identical descriptors.

Further, in the words of Ms. Rana, biases within AI systems can lead to “hard-coding yesterday’s prejudices into tomorrow’s minds”. This concern reflects a broader risk: when AI models trained on historical data reproduce gender-stereotypical patterns, they can inadvertently legitimise outdated norms as objective truths. Youths and individuals who rely heavily on AI for knowledge and information would therefore be repeatedly exposed to, and eventually internalise, distorted representations of gender roles, leadership capabilities, or emotional characteristics, thereby perpetuating systemic inequalities. Moreover, images generated by AI could further amplify gender biases compared to text-based information, as visual content exerts a stronger and more lasting cognitive impact than text alone (Hartmann et al., 2025; Locke & Hodgdon, 2025). When such gender-biased imagery, such as depicting men as leaders and women as support

staff, is circulated via advertisements or social media, they can perpetuate and amplify societal biases.

In his speech as Guest of Honour at SAGE 2025, Minister Masagos highlighted how Singapore is proactively taking steps to ensure fair and responsible development and use of AI systems, including introducing guidelines for implementing bias-correction techniques and enhancing transparency of AI systems. Going further, it would be important to also include greater diversity, not only in terms of gender but also racial diversity, in designing, developing and training these AI systems, and integrating gender-responsive policies and strong ethical frameworks for AI systems (UN Women, 2025). During the panel on AI and gender equality, panellists discussed how AI has the potential to facilitate gender equality, with Ms. Kang advocating for women and girls to upskill their AI literacy, and Ms. Trisha Suresh emphasising how AI can be used to support women in tech roles in order for women to gain parity in the technological space.

The rise of generative AI has also brought about new and pressing concerns regarding online harms, particularly with sexual deepfakes that can harm both men and women alike. In the breakout session on understanding online harms, Ms. Natalie Chia, Director of Research at SG Her Empowerment, highlighted the high prevalence of technology-facilitated violence, where women are often on the receiving end of unwanted sexual contact and remain the primary target of sexual deepfakes. According to Ms. Chia, many survivors have described how dating apps normalise online sexual harassment, and how victim-blaming responses often deter them from seeking help. At the same time, Ms. Chia emphasised that boys and men can also be victims of such abuse. She described the experiences of an image-based sexual abuse survivor, who recounted his fear, shame, and mental distress when attempting to seek support. Within the breakout session, participants heard about the lived experiences of a female survivor and reflected on the biases and stigmas associated with online harms. The

session also underscored how helplines are perceived as limited in scope, and at times can inadvertently be a source of stress for victims. These insights highlight the urgent need for more robust, empathetic, and accessible support systems, ranging from peer-support networks to strengthened policy interventions and laws governing AI usage and cybercrimes.

3. The Importance of Communities

Building on the earlier themes of *Changing Mindsets in a Changing World, The Need for Collaboration, and The Impact of Technology* on gendered outcomes, a critical theme emerging from SAGE 2025 is the need to design robust and inclusive support systems. While intra- and interpersonal efforts such as mindset shifts to combat unconscious biases and collaborative efforts in the form of male allyship are important for gender equality, genuine, sustainable progress requires a whole-of-system approach that embeds gender equality efforts into the systems that shape daily life - from community networks to workplaces and national policy (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Kawachi & Berkman, 2001).

The summit discussions consistently highlighted two key domains of support: peer support networks and workplaces. Speakers and participants repeatedly emphasised the critical role of community and peer-support groups as one of the most effective avenues for reducing stigma, encouraging help-seeking, providing psychological safety, and counter isolation. Further, because workplaces occupy a substantial part of our daily lives, and are often where gender biases manifest, such as with hiring, salaries, performance appraisals, and promotions, and are also institutions that rely on AI-driven decision tools, it is critical to include workplaces as critical partners for strengthening gender equality and support for women. The importance of peer support networks and workplaces was also affirmed from the SCWO x JCUS mental health study. Survey respondents ranked workplaces as a significant source of their mental health distress, greater even than family

issues, caregiving duties, and unresolved trauma, and separately, ranked peer support as the most important support system for female-specific mental health concerns.

3.1 Communities and peer support groups

Communities form the foundation of such systemic support, serving as vital sources of resilience and inclusion. Early community psychology research identified a “sense of community” as essential to psychological well-being, characterised by belonging, mutual support, and shared responsibility (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Peer and community-based programmes have since been shown to reduce isolation, enhance coping, and support individuals experiencing mental health challenges (Repper & Carter, 2011; Lyons et al., 2021). Singaporean research similarly highlights the value of peer and community networks in sustaining mental well-being and reducing stigma. Studies of local peer-support initiatives, such as those involving peer support specialists and youth peer programmes, show that structured peer relationships foster trust, empathy, and recovery (Ng & Barlas, 2023; Ma et al., 2022; Shorey et al., 2025). While these programmes are primarily mental-health focused, their mechanisms of safe space for disclosure, normalising help-seeking, and shared learning are directly applicable to gender-related challenges such as workplace stigma, caregiving stress, and menopause transitions. Evidence from Singapore’s LGBTQ+ and women’s community networks also demonstrates how peer-led spaces encourage open conversations about identity, discrimination, and belonging (Toh et al., 2023).

In peer-support groups, members can share their lived experiences with others who have experienced similar challenges and receive (and provide) emotional support and guidance (Agarwal et al., 2025). The simple act of sharing about one’s struggles can directly combat stigma by humanising stigmatised or taboo topics (Zhamaliyeva et al., 2025), such as the experience of menopause, mental health concerns, cyber harassment, or even

perpetration of domestic violence, and also reduce isolation by challenging the notion that such experiences are rare, shameful, or indicative of personal weakness (Schon, 2010; Turuba et al., 2023). Being able to share and receive validation from others without fear of judgment, blame, or negative consequences can build a sense of psychological safety and solidarity (World Health Organisation, 2019).

This importance of cultivating psychological safety was echoed across all three breakout sessions. For instance, Ms. Deborah Wan and Mr. Ben Ang emphasised in Breakout 1 that perceptions of psychological safety provide an environment where perpetrators are able to express their feelings, vulnerabilities, and perspectives. This shifts the locus of shame from the person to the behaviour, while also reducing the isolation that separates individuals from the community. In Breakout 2, Dr. Aw discussed how identifying and pinpointing the root of our internalised stigmas can help to dispel these cognitive distortions, while Dr. Ng discussed how empathy, psychological safety, and informal support groups are critical elements in creating safe support systems for midlife women with physical or mental health concerns. Finally, in Breakout 3, participants reflected on how empathic emotions and reflections on their own reactions toward victims of online harms can surface biases that may lead to judgments antithetical to the supportive spirit of community networks. Ms. Chia also noted that there is a huge gap in ensuring that survivors are able to seek support and experience a sense of community that can help them through their trauma. Together, these examples and reflections underscore the importance of community-anchored interventions for men and women alike.

3.2 Workplaces

Workplaces also function as critical systems of support and equity. Research consistently demonstrated that psychologically safe and inclusive work environments foster engagement, learning, and well-being by allowing individuals to voice challenges without fear of reprisal

(Edmondson, 1999). Structural measures such as flexible scheduling, equitable promotion criteria, and family-friendly policies are associated with improved work-life balance and reduced gender disparities, especially when supported by visible leadership commitment and accountability mechanisms (Chung & van der Lippe, 2020; Mousa et al., 2021). However, many organisations continue to treat gendered health issues as private concerns, rather than systemic priorities. Evidence suggests that perimenopause and menopause symptoms, such as fatigue, sleep disruption, or cognitive strain, can affect work performance, yet stigma often discourages disclosure or accommodation (Jack et al., 2016). Underscoring the personal and sensitive nature of menopause, the panellists on the midlife panel generally agreed that workplaces could be more supportive of menopause, but appeared mixed as to whether employees should specify their condition when seeking support from their workplaces. Generally, the panel advocated for workplaces to be more inclusive in their support for employees' needs, not only in terms of physical health concerns but also in supporting mental health concerns and personal and familial demands, to mitigate potential stigma and backlash against marginalised employees.

Implementing inclusive policies, such as manager training, flexible work options, and access to occupational health services, has been shown to enhance retention, well-being, and organisational climate (Jack et al., 2016). Organisations that proactively attend to employees' diverse needs, monitor patterns in promotion and turnover, and investigate the underlying reasons for disparities are better equipped to mitigate systemic barriers and implement policies that can empower employees and enable them to maximise their potential. During SAGE 2025, Mr. Ho Kwon Ping illustrated this approach through the example of Banyan Group's efforts to identify and address obstacles affecting female employees' career progression, such as by creating intentional spaces for employees, particularly women, to voice their challenges and concerns. An initiative that was born from these discussions is on-site

kindergartens at Banyan Tree hotels to support frontline staff who were working parents, as they faced challenges in availability and affordability of childcare. This example demonstrates how targeted, context-specific interventions can meaningfully advance inclusion and empower employees.

Specific to menopause and perimenopause, practical workplace adaptations, such as adjustable thermostats, personal fans, flexible dress codes, and access to cooler spaces, can help employees manage menopausal symptoms, such as hot flashes and night sweats, thereby supporting comfort and productivity at work (Jack et al., 2016). Recent reviews underscore that menopause-related interventions should not exist in isolation but be embedded within broader diversity and well-being strategies to ensure cultural sensitivity and sustained impact (Taylor et al., 2025).

In addition to supporting employees' daily needs, organisations are essential in combating gender stereotyping and inequality. As mentioned in Panel 3 on AI and gender, organisations need to be transparent in their development and use of AI decision tools, make efforts to diversify datasets used to train AI models, as well as commit to regularly evaluating these systems to assess their gender impact and whether technology may inadvertently be reinforcing gender biases. Organisations should also support female employees' development in the technological space, provide training in digital literacy and AI, and encourage women to participate in technology teams. This ensures that women's perspectives are incorporated into the design of technological tools and policies governing these tools.

Finally, workplaces have significant potential to cultivate male allyship, where male leaders can use their influence to spearhead equitable policies or design mentorship programs for women in leadership roles, and encourage other men to participate in gender-equality initiatives (Smith, 2023; Center for Creative Leadership, 2021). This can help to shift workplace norms and reduce the burden on women to advocate for

themselves. In recognition of the need for empowering male collaboration, it is also important to understand men's concerns and address how gender norms and hegemonic masculinity can negatively affect both men and women, and how a more equitable workplace can benefit all employees. In this way, men are included and empowered to advance gender equality.

3.3 Policies

While community and workplace support are vital, sustainable progress for gender equality ultimately depends on enabling policy environments. International evidence links social protection, equitable employment legislation, and accessible healthcare to improved population well-being and gender equality outcomes (World Health Organisation, 2016; Perera et al., 2022). In Singapore, government initiatives and frameworks further demonstrate the importance of coordinated policies: the Ministry of Social and Family Development promotes equal opportunities in the workplace (MSF, n.d.), while the Singapore Alliance for Women in Ageing highlights policy measures that strengthen gender equality and access to support services (SAWA, 2021). These efforts reflect a growing national recognition that gender-responsive policy is essential.

At SAGE 2025, Minister Masagos affirmed the government's commitment to equality and inclusivity, citing the newly enacted Workplace Fairness Act, which prohibits discrimination in the workplace based on protected characteristics, including gender. However, as Minister Masagos shared, policies alone are not sufficient; employees may be reluctant to utilise measures such as parental leave or flexible work

arrangements if they fear being perceived as less committed or overlooked for promotions (Rudman & Mescher, 2013), underscoring the need for cross-sector collaboration that engages workplaces, communities, and institutions in supporting gender equality.

Embedding gender-sensitive indicators into corporate reporting or public health frameworks can institutionalise accountability and track long-term progress, as suggested by Mr Edwin Tong, Minister for Law and Second Minister for Home Affairs at the 7th Annual Women in Leadership Summit in 2021 (MCCY, 2021), ensuring that policies are translated into meaningful, sustained outcomes.

Finally, in her keynote speech, Ms. Rana emphasised that laws and policies must not only be enacted but also evaluated to ensure that they are achieving their intended outcomes, as even well-intentioned measures may fall short or fail to respond to emerging needs.

She illustrated this with an example from Nepal, where women reported dissatisfaction with the implementation of paternity leave because some husbands were spending the leave on social activities with friends and adding to their wives' duties, rather than using the time to share domestic responsibilities or support their wives. This example underscores the importance of monitoring and evaluating policy uptake, paying greater attention to lived experiences. In closing, Ms. Rana called for Singapore to take the lead in changing mindsets about gender and to be a role model for the region by embedding equality and inclusion at all levels of households, schools, workplaces, and communities.

Conclusion

SAGE 2025 celebrated the progress and significant strides Singapore has made in gender equality but also highlighted areas which require action and improvement. Four themes have emerged from these insightful panels and sessions, supported with evidence from the SCWO x JCUS mental health study.

The overarching theme of *Changing Mindsets in a Changing World* highlighted the importance of identifying and addressing deep-seated stereotypes, unconscious biases, and stigmas surrounding gender roles, mental health, menopause, masculinity, and help-seeking, as these mindsets can shape our behaviours in invisible ways. Addressing them requires public education and environments that normalise vulnerability and support, thereby fostering psychological safety and reducing stigma.

The Need for Collaboration highlighted how men need to be active participants in gender equality efforts in order to achieve meaningful progress.

The Impact of Technology emphasised the need to be cautious of how AI can perpetuate outdated stereotypes and entrench existing inequalities. Ensuring transparency, including greater diversity in the development of AI, equipping women with technological skills, and embedding gender-responsive and ethical policies are key priorities that can mitigate some of the dangers of AI, and instead lead to greater gender parity.

Finally, *The Importance of Communities* recognises that individual mindset shifts are not enough. Sustainable progress depends on integrated, multi-level efforts spanning the community-, organisational-, and policy-levels. These involve strengthening peer-support networks to normalise help-seeking, cultivate inclusive organisational cultures through gender-sensitive and inclusive workplace practices, male allyship, and ethical AI use, and finally, to embed gender indicators in evaluating policy efficacy. A strong partnership among workplaces, communities, and government agencies would be necessary to work toward gender equality in Singapore.

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SAGE 2025 In the News

Date	Publication	Article
27-Sep-25	Money FM 99.3	Saturday Mornings : Changing Mindsets, Changing Lives: SAGE 2025 Tackles Gender Norms and Family Healing
29-Sep-25	The Straits Times	About half of middle-aged women in Singapore experience mental health concerns: Study
29-Sep-25	Lianhe Zaobao	妇女组织理事会：本地中年女性近半曾有心理健康问题
29-Sep-25	Lianhe Zaobao	近半本地中年女性曾面对心理健康问题
29-Sep-25	Channel News Asia (CNA)	Singapore Tonight - Mon 29 Sep 2025
29-Sep-25	Suria Berita	Suria Berita Sep 2025 - 29 Sep 2025
1-Oct-25	The Online Citizen	Nearly half of middle-aged women in Singapore face mental health issues: Survey
1-Oct-25	Mothership	Almost half of middle-aged women in S'pore experience mental health issues: Survey

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