




# ETHOS

A PUBLICATION OF CIVIL SERVICE COLLEGE, SINGAPORE

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JUN  
2020



## Reshaping Behaviour and Systems in a Post-COVID Policy Landscape



*By Maryanna Abdo, Jane Lewis  
and Robyn Mildon*

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**Also featuring:**

**James Low**

*COVID-19 Crisis Management: An Early Look*

**Theophilus Kwek**

*Shoulder to Shoulder: Why Partnership Matters in Times of Crisis*

# Editorial

by **Alvin Pang**  
Editor-in-Chief, ETHOS

The COVID-19 pandemic has swept the world with bewildering speed and scale. As most of us reframe our lives and work to keep ourselves and our communities safe, many on the frontline of the crisis continue to grapple with a complex and evolving situation. We now know more about the novel coronavirus and its effects, including how to better reduce our risks and protect our people, but there is still much to be learnt. And we are a long way from being able to assess the lasting implications of this unfolding crisis, which has profoundly unsettled just about every aspect of our society, as well as the world at large.

In this issue of *ETHOS Digital Edition*, we want to document and reflect on various responses to the crisis, to make a start on understanding its multifaceted impacts, and the steps that have been taken to address them.

Maryanna Abdo, Jane Lewis and Robyn Mildon from the international Centre for Evidence and Implementation, [outline findings from behavioural and implementation research](#) that could help public sectors around the world design and encourage the new social behaviours that will be needed to safely function in a post-COVID-19 world. One key insight

is the need to be transparent about data, and crystal clear in communications about what people are expected to do or not do.

In [surveying Singapore's response to the pandemic to date](#), CSC researcher James Low notes the public sector's coordinated crisis management capability, built up in response to past crises, including the SARS and H1N1 epidemics. He underlines how the Public Service's whole-of-government mindset has been an important factor so far in developing swift, decisive measures to curb the spread of the virus and mitigate its impact, while suggesting that this effort

has also expanded into an encouraging whole-of-Singapore move to help those most affected.

Theophilus Kwek [reflects on the present pandemic in light of personal experiences](#) of past crises and his own involvement as a Ministry of Health policy officer as well as a volunteer. He stresses the importance of partnerships across organisational and sectoral divides, as well as a broader sense of empathy, common humanity and compassion, in strengthening our resolve to overcome our formidable national challenges—just as we have done in the past.

There is of course much more to be said about a crisis of such far-reaching ferocity and scope. As the pandemic develops, ETHOS will continue to bring you views and perspectives to help record and make better sense of its impact, and how we might better gird Singapore for the world that may follow in its wake. Canada's Jocelyne Bourgon, whom we interviewed earlier in 2020, is complementing her remarks with additional comments on the COVID situation, and we hope to share them soon in this space.

ETHOS is a platform for anyone with thoughtful perspectives that may benefit Singapore and the broad work of public policy and governance. We'd especially like to hear more from officers who are relatively new to the Public Service, and who may have fresh viewpoints to share. Please do get in touch.

In the meantime, I wish you an engaging read, wherever you might be. Take care and stay safe.