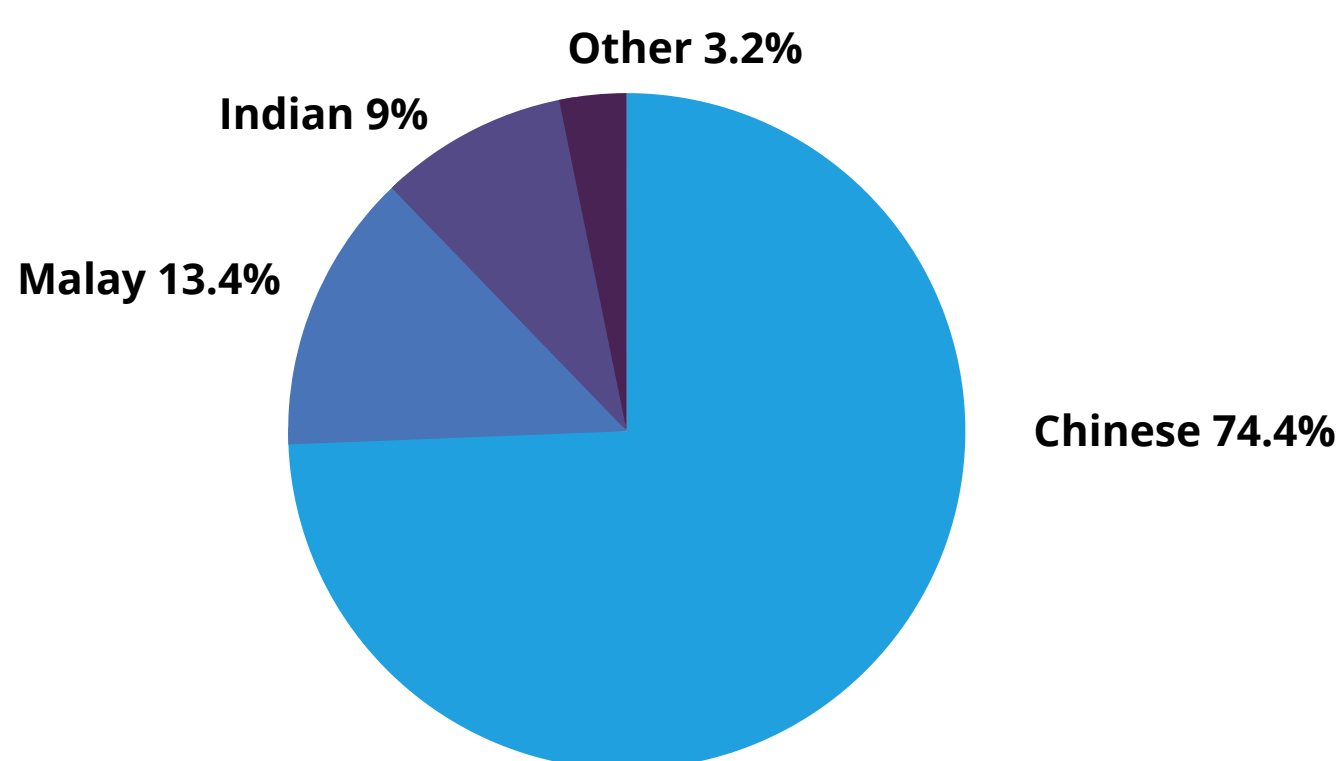




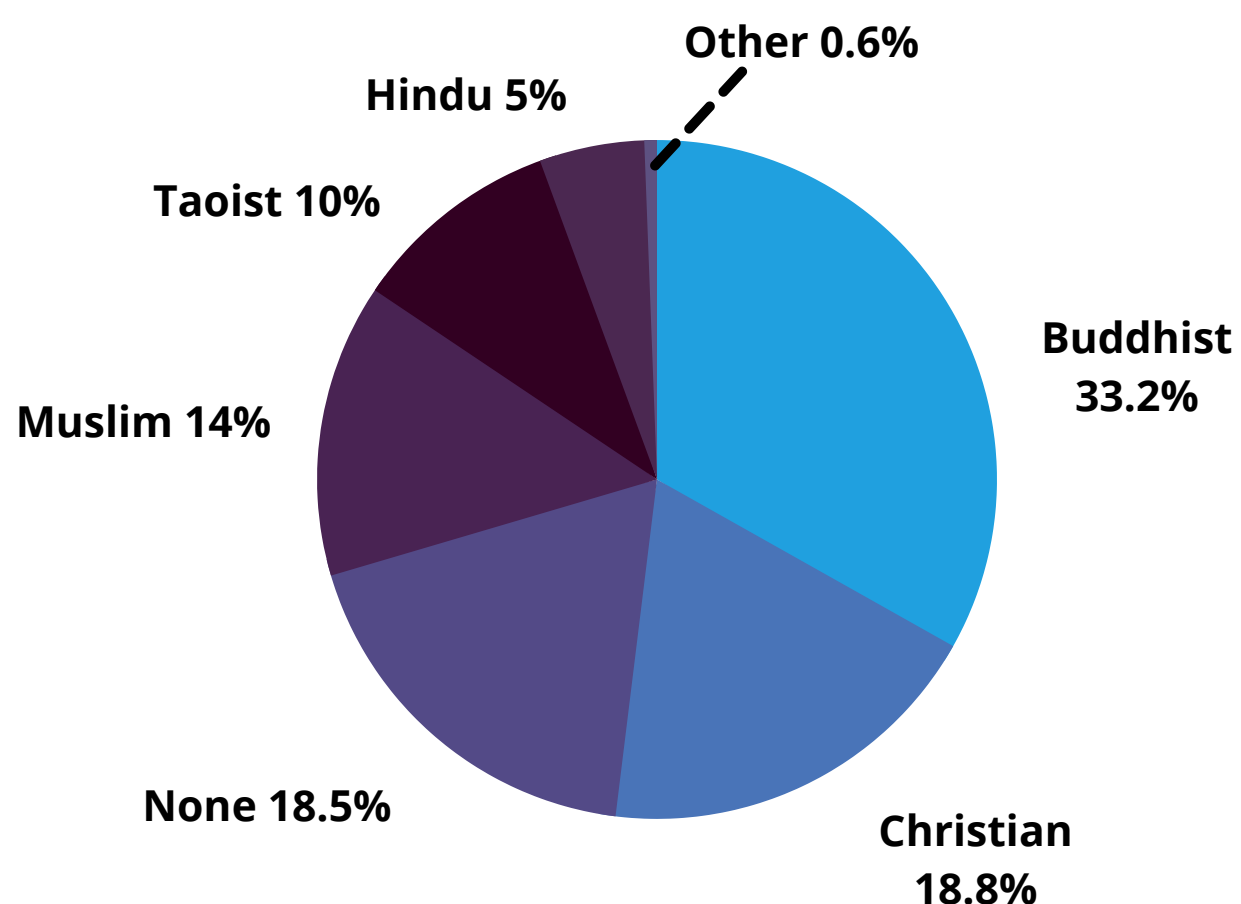
## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Republic of Singapore was established in 1965. Its legislation was designed around the recognized racial classifications: Chinese, Malay, Indian, and others. Measures to ensure harmony between these groups has been at the forefront of domestic policy.

## DEMOGRAPHICS



## RELIGION



## MULTICULTURALISM POLICY

- **Term:** Racial harmony, religious harmony, and multiracialism.
- **Approach:** Top-down, through constitutional provisions and domestic policies.

## DOMESTIC

- The Constitution of Singapore prohibits discrimination and promotes the state's responsibility to protect and support minorities.
- The constitution recognizes the Indigenous Malays, whose culture and languages must be protected.
- The Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act (1990) enforces tolerance and established presidential advisory councils.
- The Ethnic Integration Policy (1989) limits the percentage of any ethnic group that can live in a neighbourhood, promoting diversity.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Treaties

- ✓ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- ✗ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

# Singapore

## Background<sup>i</sup>

- Population: 5,866,139 (July 2021 est.)
- Demographics: 74.3% Chinese, 13.4% Malay, 9% Indian, 3.2% other (2018)
- Languages: 36.9% English, 34.9% Mandarin, 10.7% Malay, 3.3% Tamil. Other languages include different Chinese dialects (12.2%), and more (2015 est.)
- 18.5% none (2015)
- Religions: 33.2% Buddhist, 18.8% Christian, 14% Muslim, 10% Taoist, 5% Hindu, 0.6% other, 18.5% none (2015)
- Term: Religious harmony and racial harmony; multiracialism
- Top-down or Bottom-up: Top down

Singapore is a small, coastal city-state located in Southeast Asia, bordering Malaysia. Its population of 5.8 million is diverse, with large Malay and South Asian populations alongside a Chinese ethnic majority.<sup>ii</sup> Singapore is well-known and celebrated for its recognition of diversity and legislative efforts towards a pluralistic society. Given its small size and geographical distinctions, the country provides an interesting comparative analysis with Canada. Additionally, the Chinese ethnic majority contrasts the white European majority in Canada.

Rather than the term “multiculturalism”, Singapore uses “religious and racial harmony” to promote pluralism between groups. The approach is top-down, with robust constitutional and legislative protection for different racial and religious groups. When the country was established in 1965, it officially recognized four classifications of racial backgrounds: Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Others (CMIO).<sup>iii</sup> The Malay category includes Indigenous peoples, and the Indian category encompasses a variety of South Asian ethnicities. External sources often use the term “multiracialism” to describe Singapore’s approach due to this focus on racial classifications.<sup>iv</sup> The constitution of Singapore recognizes these groups as well as the four official languages: English, Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil.<sup>v</sup> The constitution provides most of the frameworks for multiracialism, including equal protection from discrimination and the active protection of racial and religious minorities.

These laws extend into specific policies, such as presidential councils, which are appointed to provide advice and recommendations on legislation from the perspectives of racial and religious minorities.<sup>vi</sup> The state’s Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth includes a variety of boards and programs to promote cultural and racial diversity.<sup>vii</sup> However, Singapore is largely inactive in multiculturalism in the international sphere. The state has not signed several key treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

## Comparative Analysis: Domestic Legal

### ***Approach***

Singapore takes a mainly top-down approach by the government, as it explicitly recognizes the rights of its main ethnic groups and languages.

The Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act was enacted in 1990 to enforce tolerance and establish presidential advisory councils.<sup>viii</sup>

The government has well-established presidential councils, such as the Presidential Council for Minority Rights and the Presidential Council for Religious Harmony, which examine bills and policies and provide advice or recommendations.<sup>ix</sup>

The Ethnic Integration Policy (1989) is a government-led housing policy that limits the percentage of any ethnic group that can live in a neighbourhood.<sup>x</sup>

In 1988, the Group Representation Constituency (GRC) was implemented. This policy requires that a team of candidates represents a single constituency as members of parliament, with at least one person from an ethnic minority.<sup>xi</sup>

### ***Constitutional Protections***

Article 12 of the Constitution of Singapore (1965) is focused on equal protection. The article states that “All persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law”. This extends to freedom from “discrimination against citizens of Singapore on the ground only of religion, race, descent or place of birth”.

Article 12 states that this protection applies to the movement of citizens, their rights to run for office, their rights to own property, and more. It also mentions more everyday experiences such as employment or establishing businesses.

Article 15 of the constitution ensures freedom of religion.

Article 16 of the constitution ensures that “there shall be no discrimination against any citizen of Singapore on the grounds only of religion, race, descent or place of birth” in education institutions.

Article 152 of the constitution focuses on racial minorities, and notes “the responsibility of the Government constantly to care for the interests of the racial and religious minorities in Singapore”. This article states that the Government shall exercise its functions in such manner as to recognise the special position of the Malays, who are the indigenous people of Singapore”. This extends to the protection of the Malay language and the group’s interests.

### ***Explicit Recognition of Multiculturalism***

There is no explicit recognition of the terms multiracialism or multiculturalism in the Constitution of Singapore.

The Government of Singapore does use the terms “religious harmony”, “multiracial” and “racial harmony” in its publications and legislation.

The government explicitly recognizes these main racial distinctions: Chinese-Malay-Indian-Others (CMIO). These classifications aim to recognize the country’s different groups equally.

## Comparative Analysis: Domestic Practical

### *Multiculturalism as a Means to Integration*

The Ethnic Integration Policy promotes racial dispersion and interfaith interactions to promote tolerance.<sup>xii</sup> It is founded on the belief that living amongst different groups enhances cross-cultural understanding and creates bonds between groups.

### *Affirmative Action Policies*

Historically, Singapore has not adopted any official affirmative action policy for minorities, as the foundations of the state in the constitution are meant to eliminate all forms of discrimination.

However, the constitution does explicitly recognize the rights of the Malay indigenous people. According to the document, Malay's hold a "special position" in Singapore, and therefore the government is specifically responsible for protecting their language, culture, and interests.<sup>xiii</sup>

## Comparative Analysis: International

### *International Treaties*

Singapore signed the International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 2015 and ratified the covenant in 2017 with several declarations.<sup>xiv</sup>

Singapore has not signed or ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.<sup>xv</sup>

### *International Promotion of Multiculturalism*

No promotion in the international sphere.

<sup>i</sup> "Singapore," The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, accessed March 10, 2021.

<sup>ii</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Singapore".

<sup>iii</sup> "Diversity and Nation-Building in Singapore," Global Centre for Pluralism, April 2017 [https://www.pluralism.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Singapore\\_Case\\_Note\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.pluralism.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Singapore_Case_Note_ENG.pdf).

<sup>iv</sup> Global Centre for Pluralism, "Diversity and Nation-Building in Singapore" 2.

<sup>v</sup> "Constitution of the Republic of Singapore," Government of Singapore, 1965, accessed March 10, 2021, <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/CONS1963?ProvIds=P1IV-#pr12->.

<sup>vi</sup> "Other Presidential Councils", The President of the Republic of Singapore, Government of Singapore, accessed March 10, 2021, <https://www.istana.gov.sg/Presidents-Office/Other-Presidential-Councils>.

<sup>vii</sup> "Arts and Heritage Institutions", Ministry of Culture, Community, and Youth, Government of Singapore, accessed March 10, 2021, <https://www.mccy.gov.sg/sector/initiatives/arts-and-heritage-institutions>.

<sup>viii</sup> "Safeguarding Race and Religious Harmony", Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of Singapore, accessed March 10, 2021, <https://www.mha.gov.sg/about-us/key-topics/law-and-order/safeguarding-race-and-religious-harmony>.

<sup>ix</sup> The President of the Republic of Singapore, "Other Presidential Councils".

<sup>x</sup> "HDB's Ethnic Integration Policy: Why it still matters", Government of Singapore, accessed March 10, 2021, <https://www.gov.sg/article/hdbs-ethnic-integration-policy-why-it-still-matters#:~:text=The%20Ethnic%20Integration%20Policy%20applies,of%20rental%20flats%20by%20HDB.&text=It%20was%20introduced%20in%201989,the%20formation%20of%20racial%20enclaves>.

<sup>xi</sup> Matthew Matthews, "Singapore's Lessons on Affirmative Action," Foreign Affairs, September 5 2017, [https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/singapore/2017-09-05/singapores-lessons-affirmative-action?utm\\_medium=email\\_notifications&utm\\_source=reg\\_confirmation&utm\\_campaign=reg\\_guestpass](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/singapore/2017-09-05/singapores-lessons-affirmative-action?utm_medium=email_notifications&utm_source=reg_confirmation&utm_campaign=reg_guestpass).

<sup>xii</sup> Government of Singapore, "HDB's Ethnic Integration Policy".

<sup>xiii</sup> Government of Singapore, "Constitution of the Republic of Singapore".

<sup>xiv</sup> "Status of Ratification Interactive Dashboard", United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, accessed March 10, 2021, <https://indicators.ohchr.org/>.

<sup>xv</sup> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Status of Ratification Interactive Dashboard".