

What Does Citizenship Mean to Me?

Citizenship

Citizenship can be characterised as follows:

- It can be understood as more than just a status that is granted by a country.
- It is a relationship that a person has with the country he or she is a member of.
- It can be understood differently by different people.
- It can be understood differently over time, depending on a person's knowledge, lived experiences and aspirations, and understanding of the four attributes.

Legal Status

A person can gain legal status as a citizen of a country by the following ways:

1. By country of birth
2. By descent
3. By marriage
4. By naturalisation

Rights of Citizens

Citizens enjoy certain **rights** as members of a country.

- Rights refer to the freedom and privileges that citizens in a country have.
- Rights of citizens, which are usually laid out in the constitution, are protected by law and should be respected by everyone in the country.

Obligations of Citizens

Being recognised as a citizen of a country also means having **obligations**. These are duties that citizens are required to fulfil by being members of the country.

An example of an obligation of male citizens in Singapore is to serve National Service (NS). Under the Enlistment Act introduced in 1967, 18-year-old male citizens and Singapore PRs are required to serve NS. Following the completion of full-time NS, they will be required to serve up to 40 days of Operationally Ready National Service per year, until the age of 40 or 50.

Sense of Identity

Shared Values

Values are principles and beliefs that influence a person's attitudes, thinking and behaviour. Values represent what is important to a person and help him or her prioritise, make decisions and exercise judgement.

Shared values refer to values that are embraced and seen as important by a group of people.

Civic Participation

Civic participation refers to citizens actively taking part in public affairs. Public affairs are matters of general interest or concern to most people in society. Those who actively take part in public affairs may see civic participation as an important obligation they want to fulfil as citizens.

Individual Participation

In 2020, Mr Andy Teo initiated the Temporary Academic Assistance project to connect students with volunteer tutors. Mr Teo saw this need when schools moved to full home-based learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. He enlisted the help of tutors through social media to teach for free. In just a week, 250 volunteered to serve.

Community Group Participation

Informal Groups

When there is an issue or area of need that requires attention, people organise themselves into informal community groups to address concerns or specific need. These groups generally exist for a period of time needed to address the specific objectives. They may not be registered with the government.

Formal Groups

Formal community groups have clear objectives and are officially registered with the government. They cater to specific needs and interests of society and generally devote their efforts over a sustained period of time.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and social service agencies (SSAs) are examples of formal community groups. NGOs are not necessarily affiliated with and may not receive any funding from the government. On the other hand, SSAs are affiliated with the government through the National Council of Social Service (NCSS), which provides some coordination and funding.

NGO: Zero Waste Singapore is an NGO leading the drive towards zero waste in Singapore through education and advocacy. It engages the public, companies, schools and government agencies to discuss the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) in relation to food waste, plastic disposables and organisational waste.

SSA: SG Enable is dedicated to enabling persons with disabilities and promoting an inclusive society. Through workshops organised by SG Enable, participants learnt how to interact with consumers with disabilities and improve accessibility of products and services for them.

Functions and Roles of Government in Working for the Good of Society

Government in A Representative Democracy

A **government** is a set of institutions by which a society is ruled. Many countries form a type of government called a **democracy**. Democracy means rule of the people, which refers to the ability of citizens to participate in political decision-making.

One of the forms of democracy is a **representative democracy**, in which citizens elect representatives to form a government to make decisions on their behalf. However, a government in a representative democracy does not have unlimited power to make decisions or carry out **policies**. It is required to act according to the country's constitution.

General Elections in Singapore

• Issuance of the Writ of Election

- The Writ of Election signals the start of the election period.
- The President, on the advice of the Prime Minister, dissolves the Parliament and issues the Writ of Election.
- The Writ of Election is a public document that specifies the date when the nomination of candidates is to be taken and the place of nomination.

• Five days to a month later: Nomination Day

- Aspiring candidates file their nomination papers and make an election deposit within the nomination period between 11 am and 12 noon.
- If there is more than one eligible candidate for a constituency, a contest is declared.
- If there is no contest, the unopposed candidate will be elected by default. This is also known as a walkover.

- **Campaigning**

- Candidates can begin campaigning immediately after a contest has been declared.
- With the appropriate license or permit, candidates may visit homes; distribute pamphlets, handouts and newsletters; display posters and banners; use private vehicles for election advertising purposes; and advertise on the Internet.

- **Cooling-off Day**

- Cooling-off Day is a day for voters to reflect on the issues in a rational manner.
- No new advertising or campaigning is allowed.

- **Polling Day**

- Voting is compulsory in Singapore for all citizens aged 21 and above.
- Polling day is, by law, a public holiday.
- All voters cast their votes. Polls usually close at 8 pm.
- No campaigning is allowed, though the candidates may inspect the polling stations.

- **Counting of The Votes**

- At the counting centres, all the ballot papers from different boxes are mixed.
- Votes are counted in the presence of the candidates or their counting agents.

Functions of Government

The Singapore government serves three main functions:

- **Legislature:** To make and pass laws
- **Executive:** To implement and enforce laws
- **Judiciary:** To interpret and apply laws.

Legislature

The **Legislature** performs the government function of **making and passing laws**. It consists of the President and Parliament.

Composition	President, Parliament
Function	Makes and passes laws

Before a law is passed, the draft, which is called a bill, is debated in Parliament. All bills must receive the President's agreement to become part of the law in Singapore. The President may not agree to certain bills at his or her discretion.

How a Bill Becomes Law

- **First Reading**

- The bill is formally introduced in Parliament. There is no debate at this stage.

- **Second Reading**

- Members debate the general principles and merits of the bill. They then vote on whether the bill should proceed to the next stage.

- **Committee Stage**

- Details of the proposed law are examined. Changes to certain provisions can be proposed.

- **Third Reading**

- Principles behind the bill can no longer be questioned. The bill is then voted on.

- **Scrutiny for the Presidential Council for Minority Rights**

- This ensures the bill does not discriminate against any racial or religious minority.

- **President's Assent**

- The President agrees to the passing of the bill as law.

- **Law**

- The bill becomes an Act of Parliament and part of the law of Singapore.

Executive

The **Executive** performs the government function of **enforcing and implementing laws**. It consists of the President and the Cabinet. The work of the executive is supported by various ministries and statutory boards.

Composition	President, Cabinet
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Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enforces and implements laws passed by the legislature.• Formulates and implements government policies in areas such as education, healthcare, housing and transport.• Responsible for the day-to-day affairs of the state.
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Judiciary

The **Judiciary** fulfils the government function of **interpreting and applying laws** through the courts. The Judiciary consists of the Supreme Court, the State Courts and Family Justice Courts. The head of the Judiciary is the Chief Justice.

Composition	Supreme Court, State Courts and Family Justice Courts
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administers justice by interpreting and applying laws made by the Legislature.• Makes formal judgements on disputes between individuals and on those between individuals and the government.

In January 2020, Singapore announced its first case of COVID-19. Various measures such as temperature screenings and stay-home notices were put in place to prevent the spread of the disease. By April, more than 900 people in Singapore had been infected.

Legislature: In April, amid the growing threat of COVID-19 in the country, the Singapore government urgently passed the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) Act that made the wearing of masks compulsory by law. The Act was passed to prevent, protect against and control the transmission of the virus in Singapore.

Executive: Several government agencies were issued a letter of appointment by the Ministry of Health and involved in enforcing the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) Act. The agencies include the following:

- Land Transport Authority (LTA)
- National Environment Agency (NEA)
- National Parks Board (NParks)
- The Singapore Police Force (SPF)

Officers from these agencies can issue offenders a Notice of Offense, which includes the fine amount and details of the offence. First-time offenders are fined \$300 while repeat offenders are fined \$1,000.

Thousands of Safe Distancing Ambassadors (SDAs) were also deployed. Their main tasks were to remind the public to abide by the regulations and ensure that masks were worn correctly.

Judiciary: Cases involving individuals who defy the law are often resolved with individuals paying the fine meted out by the enforcement officers. However, individuals who ignore the enforcement actions or commit more serious crimes are summoned to the state courts for sentencing.

For example, in 2020, a woman was caught on video arguing with a passer-by who had told her to wear a mask and abide by the law. On 7 May 2021, she was sentenced to two weeks' jail and fined \$2,000 for failing to wear a mask as well as being a public nuisance.

Separation of Powers

The government's power is divided among the three branches of government in carrying out its functions. This **separation of powers** between the three branches prevents the concentration of power within a small select group. Each branch of government may also check that the other branches do not act illegally or irresponsibly.

- Legislature checks the Executive by asking Cabinet ministers questions on government policies for discussion or debate in Parliament.
- The Executive checks the Judiciary by the removal of judges under very limited circumstances (Such as misbehaviour or inability to perform their duties.)
- Judiciary ensures the Executive acts within the powers conferred to them by law.
 - If the Judiciary finds that an authority has acted unlawfully, it can cancel the decision made or order the authority to act lawfully.
- The Judiciary ensures that the laws passed are consistent with the Constitution. The Judiciary can declare that a law passed is void if it is deemed inconsistent with the Constitution.

Ensuring the Economic and Social Well-Being of Citizens

One way for governments to ensure citizens' economic and social well-being is by devoting significant resources to provide goods and services to the public. Such goods and services include education, healthcare, housing and transportation. These goods and services are usually highly subsidised so that all citizens have access to them.

Examples of Goods and Services for the Public

- Polyclinics located throughout Singapore are one-stop healthcare centres that provide subsidised primary care. Services include outpatient medical treatment and diagnostic tests.
- Different designs of public housing in Singapore are built by the Housing and Development Board (HDB). There are more than one million HDB flats which are homes to 80 per cent of the country's population.

- The Central Provident Fund (CPF) is a comprehensive savings plan that provides a foundation for the retirement of most Singaporeans. It can also be used to buy a home, pay for healthcare expenses and take care of loved ones.
 - The employee, employer, and government contribute to the employee's CPF savings.
 - The CPF Ordinary Account can be used to buy a home, pay for insurance and grow your savings through investments.
 - The Medisave Account helps you pay for your healthcare expenses and insurance.

SkillsFuture

SkillsFuture is a national movement to provide Singaporeans with the opportunity to develop their fullest potential throughout life, regardless of their starting points, through skills mastery and lifelong learning.

Key Features

- Skills-focused courses relevant to industry needs, for career development.
- Opening SkillsFuture Credit for Singaporeans in the year they turn 25 years old to encourage continuous learning.
- Work-Study Programmes for students to get a head start in the workforce.
- A subsidy of at least 90 per cent for eligible courses, including Ministry of Education (MOE) funded courses for Singaporeans aged 40 and above.

Promoting and Protecting a Country's National Interests

The government plays a vital role in **promoting and protecting the country's national interests**.

- Countries seek to protect or achieve their national interests.
- A country's national interests refer to what is necessary to ensure its security and well-being.
- These national interests influence the objectives of the country's **foreign policy**.

Diplomacy

- **Diplomacy** is the practice of obtaining agreement between countries to cooperate in order to produce results that align with their interests.
- Countries conduct diplomacy to promote common interests and resolve conflicting interests in a peaceful manner.
- With strong and friendly ties with other countries, a small country like Singapore can promote and protect its national interests.

Singaporean Bilateral Relationships

Singapore actively forges strong **bilateral relationships**. To do so, Singapore's political leaders meet with the leaders of other countries to exchange views and find ways to promote mutual interests in areas such as trade and security.

Singapore maintains strong bilateral relations with Malaysia. An example of this is in **water security**, which serves Singapore's national interests.

Under the **1962 Water Agreement**, Singapore draws 250 million gallons of raw water per day from the Johor River. In return, Singapore provides Malaysia with a daily supply of treated water up to 2 per cent of the volume supplied in Singapore.

Singaporean Multilateral Relationships

Singapore's membership in the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** is one example of how the Singaporean government promotes and protects Singapore's national interests through multilateral relationships.

ASEAN is a cornerstone of Singapore's foreign policy and is of critical importance to Singapore. Through ASEAN, Singapore has been able to establish partnerships with countries within and beyond ASEAN. One such partnership is the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**, a trade agreement signed by Singapore and 14 other Asia-Pacific countries.

RCEP: The World's Biggest Trade Agreement

- Deepen economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Facilitate expansion of trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Increase opportunities for businesses and employment for the people in the Asia-Pacific region.

Businesses have more opportunities to expand in the Asia-Pacific region as the RCEP eliminates tariffs for about **90 per cent** of goods traded among the members.

Companies involved in e-commerce, digital services and digital services and digital trade can gain more confidence in expanding their businesses in the region. This is because RCEP is committed to protecting consumers' personal information, paperless trading, electronic authentication systems and cybersecurity.

Deterrence

Examples

The Ministry of Defence develops the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) to respond to military threats.

Developed and manufactured locally, the **Hunter Armoured Fighting Vehicle (AFV)** is the Singapore Army's first fully digitalised platform. It requires less manpower to operate. It also has touchscreen controls and an automatic system that enables the crew to detect and engage targets quickly and effectively.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) are crucial for effective aerial surveillance and coordinated strikes. The Orbiter 4 CR-UAV can be deployed quickly and in confined areas to scan the battlefield so that commanders can understand the situation and make better decisions during operations.

How Do We Decide What is Good For Society?

Challenges in Deciding What is Good For Society

Differing Needs and Interests

There are generally two types of needs:

- They could be things that people depend on for their survival.
- They could be things that people depend on for their well-being.

Unequal Sharing of Costs

It is also challenging to decide what is good for society because decisions on how to meet various needs and interests may lead to an unequal sharing of costs.

The **unequal sharing of costs** refers to the varying impact that a decision has on different groups of people

Managing Trade-Offs

Cross-Island Line Project

In January 2013, the Singapore government announced plans to build the Cross Island Line (CRL) as Singapore's eighth Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) line. The CRL was proposed to pass through and run under the Central Catchment Nature Reserve. When completed, it will be the longest fully underground line and will link major hubs such as the Jurong Lake District and the Punggol Digital District.

- The CRL is projected to serve 600,000 commuters per day, increasing to over 1,000,000 in the longer term.
- The CRL will have the highest number of interchange stations, with almost half the stations on the line linked to existing rail stations.

In July 2013, the Nature Society (Singapore) (NSS) - a non-government and non-profit organisation dedicated to the appreciation, conservation, study and enjoyment of Singapore's natural heritage - officially raised its concerns about the construction of the CRL.

- It presented to the Singapore government its views on how the CRL would affect habitats within the Central Catchment Nature Reserve.
- The NSS then recommended adjusting the route to skirt around, rather than passing under, the nature reserve.

Before making the final decision on the CRL route in 2019, the Land Transport Authority (LTA) had to consider the two options carefully.

Principles Shaping Governance

- Having Good Leadership
- Anticipating Change and Staying Relevant
- Practising Meritocracy
- A stake for everyone, opportunities for all

Having Good Leadership

Mr Lim Kim San (HDB)

Mr Lim Kim San is the first chairman of the Housing & Development Board (HDB) and became Minister for National Development in 1963.

From 1960 to 1964, he led the construction of low-cost public housing to tackle the housing shortage at that time. In slightly over three years, HDB managed to complete 26,000 flats. This was considered an exceptional achievement considering the **Singapore Improvement Trust**, which came before HDB, took over 32 years to complete 23,019 units.

Mr Lim chaired HDB voluntarily for four years without any salary until he became minister in 1963. During his time at HDB, he helped improve the building and financial processes so that low-cost public housing could be built quickly and cheaply, and according to strict regulations.

Anticipating Change and Staying Relevant

In 2019, during the **National Day Rally**, PM Lee Hsien Loong spoke about the impact of climate change on Singapore. He informed Singaporeans about the government taking early and vital action to prepare the country for rising sea levels caused by climate change.

In 2020, a budget of \$5 billion was set aside for the **Coastal and Flood Protection Fund** to help the country meet the significant risks of rising sea levels.

A Stake for Everyone, Opportunities for All

Singapore Together Movement

One example of a government initiative that illustrates this principle is the engagement with citizens through the Singapore Together movement.

Launched in June 2019, Singaporeans are encouraged to partner the government and one another to shape and act on their shared future in areas they care about. This can be through partnership opportunities or government support for citizen-led initiatives.

The Emerging Stronger Conversations (ESC) series was part of the larger Singapore Together movement. The ESC sessions ran from June to September 2020, involving over 16,000 Singaporeans from different backgrounds, languages and experiences who expressed their hope for how Singapore can emerge stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Practising Meritocracy

Meritocracy refers to a system that distributes opportunities and rewards according to merit. People are rewarded according to the effort they put in rather than factors such as race, religion and family background.

Edusave Award for Achievement, Good Leadership and Service (EAGLES)

For up to **10 per cent** of students from each school who have demonstrated leadership qualities, service to communities and schools, excellence in non-academic activities and good conduct.

Edusave Good Progress Award

For students who are within the top 10 percent of their school's level and course in terms of improvement in academic performance and have demonstrated good conduct.

Edusave Scholarship

For students who are within the top 10 per cent of their school's level and course in terms of academic performance and have demonstrated good conduct.

How Can We Work Together for the Good of Society?

Efforts by Individuals

Mdm Malligesvari

What are the Factors That Shape the Identities of People and Contribute to a Diverse Society?

Race and Ethnicity

In general, **race** refers to the biological classification of people, in which includes their physical characteristics.

Ethnicity is based on the culture of a group of people who share the same **ancestry, customs and traditions** that distinguish them from other groups in society, each ethnic group has its own beliefs, values and practices that shape its identity and way of life.

In Southeast Asia, different groups have their unique customs, traditions and languages. For example, in Singapore, within the Malay community, there are different ethnic groups such as the Javanese and the Bugis.

Chinese, Malay, Indian, Others (CMIO) Categorisation

The government uses the CMIO categorisation to make decisions regarding policies to race and ethnicity in Singapore.

Group Representation Constituency (GRC)

The GRC system was established in 1988 to ensure that the minority races in Singapore are represented in Parliament.

A group of Members of Parliament (MPs) represents the interests of residents in the constituency. At least one of the MPs in the group representing a GRC must belong to the Malay or Indian community, or another minority racial community.

Ethnic Integration Policy (EIP)

The EIP was introduced in 1989 to promote interaction and harmony among ethnic groups in Singapore. Its aim was to prevent the rise of ethnic **enclaves**.

The EIP ensures that there is a mix of various ethnic groups in each HDB block, based on the ethnic make-up of Singapore. Since different ethnic groups live in the same block, they have opportunities to interact with one another.

Social Economic Categorisation

Socio-economic status refers to an economic situation shared by a group of people in society. It is measured based on a combination of social and economic factors.

Families with lower income may face challenges in providing the resources to support their children's development. To ensure children have a good start in life, the Singapore government introduced the KidSTART programme as added support for children aged six and below.

KidSTART equips parents with relevant knowledge and skills to nurture their child's early development. KidSTART is offered to families that need it most, such as those with a household income of \$2,500 or less, or a gross monthly per capita income of \$650 or less.

What are the Experiences and Effects of Living in a Diverse Society?

Interactions in a Diverse Society and Common Space

Common space refers to a physical location and/or a social space where different groups of people interact, cooperate or collaborate on projects or activities. Such interactions allow people to do the following:

- Forge ties and establish mutual understanding between people of different races, ethnicities, religions and socio-economic statuses.
- Create shared experiences and memories.

Void Decks

Void decks are the open and sheltered areas on the group floor of most blocks of flats built by the Housing and Development Board (HDB). Void decks provide opportunities for residents to meet, interact and bond.

Common spaces also include social spaces. Examples of social spaces are social and cultural events, and programmes where people can engage and develop relationships with one another. These events and programmes can be organised by governmental and non-governmental organisations to promote interaction and build understanding among different groups of people.

Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles (IRCCs)

The IRCCs were first established in 2002 to serve as an inter-faith platform. IRCCs are formed in every constituency to promote racial and religious harmony among different religious, ethnic and community groups.

On 30 July 2022, the IRCCs were renamed as Racial and Religious Harmony Circles. It continues to deepen the work of building trust, understanding and confidence among various communities through activities that promote inter-faith and inter-ethnic interactions.

People's Association (PA)

The PA aims to promote racial harmony and social cohesion in Singapore. It offers a wide range of community service, sports and cultural programmes that help connect people to people, and people with the government. These programmes are carried out through a network of over 2,000 grassroots organisations, over 100 Community Clubs/Centres (CCs), five Community Development Councils, the National Community Leadership Institute and PAssion WaVe.

Experiences and Effects of Living in a Diverse Society

An attitude of **openness** or being open-minded helps promote harmonious interactions in a diverse society. When people are open-minded, they are more willing to actively listen, respectfully engage and appreciate the differences between one another.

Just an Extra Chair!

Just An Extra Chair is an initiative organised by the Singaporean Kindness Movement. Singaporeans who are willing, host guests during festive celebrations. Most of the guests are foreigners working or studying in Singapore who would otherwise spend festive seasons alone.

During the Chinese New Year, Mr McRhon Banderlipe, an expatriate from the Philippines, and two other guests joined Ms Sia Yan Dih and her family for dinner.

Cultural Exchange and Appreciation

One outcome of cultural exchange is a deeper understanding and appreciation of the customs and traditions of Singapore's diverse ethnic groups. Different ethnic groups have their own cultures and ways of life, which are commonly reflected in their rituals, greetings, art and music. These aspects have been developed over a long time and have become integral to the identity and cohesion of the people within the ethnic group.

The Lion Dance

The lion dance is a performance dating back to more than 1,500 years. This custom is believed to have originated from the legends of Nian, a monster that terrorised a village in China. The villagers discovered its fear of lions and loud noises and successfully scared the monster off. Today, the lion dance continues to be performed during Chinese celebrations and auspicious occasions as it is believed to bring good fortune.

Cultural exchange also helps deepen understanding and appreciation of uniqueness, commonalities, and differences among people. This can enable people to build meaningful relationships with others from different backgrounds, and to learn from their ideas, experiences and cultures.

Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Youth Fellowship (AYF)

Cultural exchanges can take place through programmes such as the ASEAN AYF. Through the AYF, ASEAN Youth Fellows commit themselves to forging closer partnerships and strengthening connections with young ASEAN leaders from across the region. They also commit to enacting positive change within communities and countries in ASEAN.

Cultural exchange can also deepen one's appreciation of other cultures and contribute to shaping the local cultural and arts landscape.

Dr Iskandar Jalil

Inspired by Dr Iskandar's time in Japan, he integrates Japanese and Islamic styles into his pottery. His art is influenced by *wabi-sabi*, a Japanese approach to life that sees beauty in imperfections and in the passing of time. This is reflected by Dr Iskandar's pottery, which showcases natural weathering and imperfections. His pottery is found in many public and private art collections in Singapore and around the world.

Cultural exchange and appreciation can also result in **cultural fusion**.

Ms Oniatta Effendi

In Ms Oniatta's designs, she incorporates classically Javanese motifs, including the *parang*, *kawung* and *wahyu temurun* together with contemporary patterns such as the Japanese-influenced *sashiko* motif.

When one culture adopts some aspects from another culture, it is important to acknowledge and give recognition to that culture. When the language, cuisine, music, dance or dress of a culture is used without permission or portrayed in an insensitive manner, it is known as **cultural appropriation**.

The Oma Ethnic Minority Group (Laos)

In 2019, a large Italian company plagiarised the traditional designs of the Oma ethnic minority group in their clothing collection. The company digitally duplicated and printed the designs onto their dresses, skirts and blouses. The colours, shapes and arrangement were identical to the traditional Oma designs.

The company was called out for cultural appropriation. People pointed out that simply scanning and printing the traditional designs on clothing was disrespectful to the Oma people, who take the time, skill and patience to create their homemade textiles. Furthermore, the company did not acknowledge the Oma in their marketing, labelling or display of the clothing collection, nor did they provide any compensation to the Oma.

Exchange of Knowledge and Skills

A diverse society like Singapore's brings together people with different backgrounds, qualifications and experiences to share their share their knowledge and skills. An outcome of this exchange is the creation of new ideas, methods and products.

Thermo Fisher Scientific

Thermo Fisher is a multinational company with over 2,000 employees in Singapore and 80,000 employees globally as of 2021. **(1)** Singaporeans in the company are trained in leadership skills and encouraged to collaborate with employees from different cultures and with different experiences and expertise. **(2)** Such collaborations enable employees to sharpen their skills by sharing and learning from one another. It also allows younger technicians to be mentored to produce high-quality equipment. **(3)**

The company also collaborates with Singapore-based design firms, universities and research institutions, such as A-STAR, to support their R&D in a wide range of areas, including genetics and cancer research. **(4)** Thermo Fisher played a critical role in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. It collaborated with the Ministry of Health (MOH) **(5)**, Temasek Holdings **(6)** and the Economic Development Board (EDB) **(7)** in the production of personal protective equipment (PPE) and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) kits. **(8)**

Prejudice

Prejudice refers to attitudes and feelings towards other groups that are not based on reason or fact. It can come in the form of stereotyping, assumptions, generalisations, beliefs or feelings about a group.

Discrimination

In June 2021, an interracial couple comprising a man of Indian and Filipino-Spanish descent and his girlfriend of Thai-Chinese descent were strolling along Orchard Road. A local Chinese man confronted the couple and accused the man of "preying on a Chinese girl" and ordered him to "date people of his own race."

Later, in a social media post, the couple shared that they felt embarrassed and hurt by the way they were treated by a fellow Singaporean. They added that while the Chinese man admitted to being a racist, they hoped that he would learn to stop being racist and allow everyone to live in harmony. The Chinese man was later fired from his job as a polytechnic lecturer and was charged in court for his actions.

Competition for Resources

The inflow of foreigners into Singapore is meant to meet Singapore's shortage of manpower due to its low fertility rate and ageing population. This foreign workforce consists of highly-skilled, high-wage earners and lesser-skilled, low-wage workers.

Employment Passes in Singapore

Employment Pass	S Pass	Work Permit for Migrant Workers	Work Permit for Migrant Domestic Workers
For foreign professionals, managers and executives earning at least \$4,500 a month with suitable qualifications.	For mid-level skilled workers earning at least \$2,500 a month who meet the assessment criteria.	For semi-skilled migrant workers in the construction, manufacturing, marine shipyard, process or services sector.	For foreigners employed as domestic helpers in Singapore.

Singaporeans are concerned about the heightened competition with foreigners over limited resources. These resources include job opportunities and **infrastructure** such as public housing and transportation.

This competition, whether real or perceived, has led to tensions, unhappiness and negative experiences among groups of people in the country.

In 2020, a survey conducted by REACH, a governmental feedback unit, found that Singaporeans generally agreed it was important for Singapore to be regional hub as it provides good opportunities for Singaporeans. This also means remaining open to foreigners.

However, concerns over job security and career opportunities have continued to be source of anxiety for Singaporeans, especially among the unemployed.

Addressing Concerns About Foreigners in Singapore

Stricter Workforce Controls

- **Tightened the criteria for Employment Pass (EP)** resulting in slower growth in the number of EP holders each year.
- **Raised the minimum qualifying salary for the S Pass** to keep pace with rising wages. This means that a foreigner needs to earn a higher minimum salary before they can be considered for a pass.

Responding to Singaporeans' concerns over the competition posed by foreigners in the job market, the government has implemented the Fair Consideration Framework. Under this framework, measures are put in place to promote local hiring and ensure that employers give fair consideration to Singaporeans based on merit. For example:

- Employers submitting EP and S Pass applications must first advertise their job vacancies on MyCareersFuture, an online portal that facilitates job searches for Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents.
- Action is enforced against errant employers who carry out unfair hiring practices that favour foreigners.

Addressing Infrastructure Concerns

Land Transport Master Plan 2040

- Connecting more places by train
- Priority for buses
- Autonomous, on-demand services
- More cycling paths
- More Integrated Transport Hubs

How Can We Respond to Diversity in Society?

Responding to Socio-Cultural Diversity

Responses of Individuals

During a concert at the 2019 Singapore Grand Prix, a social media influencer uploaded a picture of two Sikh men in white turbans in front of her, with the caption "Two huge obstructions decided to pop out of nowhere".

This post went viral on social media and caused unhappiness among the Sikh community. Many online users slammed the beauty and travel content influencer, who had more than 76,000 followers on her social media account. They felt that her comments insulted the two men and their religious beliefs.

Subsequently, the influencer apologised for her comment that many deemed "racist and culturally insensitive". She also insisted that she had not intended to offend the Sikh community or any religion.

The President of YSA responded to the insensitive post by inviting the influencer to the *gurdwara* (Sikh temple) for an informal tour.

Responses of Community Groups

Welcome In My Backyard (WIMBY)

Welcome In My Backyard (WIMBY), a youth-led group, is a ground-up campaign founded in **April 2020** to raise awareness about the lives of migrant workers. It also aims to promote interactions between migrant workers and the local community.

WIMBY's name was chosen in direct response to Singaporeans with the "Not In My Backyard" (NIMBY) sentiments.

During the relocation of foreign worker dormitories to the HDB estates, volunteers of WIMBY engaged Singaporeans to write notes to welcome migrant workers into their neighbourhoods. These notes were then translated into the native languages of the migrant workers to convey Singaporeans' appreciation for their contribution to Singapore.

Comprising almost 50 volunteers, WIMBY has organised several initiatives to encourage interactions between Singaporeans and migrant workers. One such initiative involves partnering schools in their Values-in-Action programmes to address issues facing migrant workers.

Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO)

- A non-governmental organisation
- Founded in 1949 by religious leaders from different faith groups in Singapore
- Aims of building religious harmony and peace.
- IRO leaders and members often gather together to perform joint prayers at national and public ceremonies.
- Also take part in local and international interfaith dialogues and conferences, and visit one another's place of worship.

Responses of Governments

Assimilationist Policies in France

- Immigrants are expected to adopt beliefs and practices of the majority group in the host country.
- Over time, the identities of the assimilated group are expected to become identical to those of the majority group.

Laicite

- All French citizens and immigrants have to abide by *laicite*
 - *laicite*: State secularism
- France believes that the ideal of harmony in society is achieved when every individual puts aside his or her connections to race, ethnicity and religion.
- While it acknowledges the existence of diverse cultural identities, it believes that the French national identity should be prioritised over other identities.

Education

- All children in France, regardless of citizenship status, required to attend school until age 16.
- Adaptation classes introduced to immigrant children to help them improve their French before they can assimilate into French schools.
- No discussion about religion except in **History, Literature, Philosophy, and Art classes**.
- In 2015, launched new course in **moral and civic education** to promote values of national motto, as well as justice, mutual respect and non-discrimination.

Employment

- Diversity Charter introduced in 2004 to raise employers' awareness of recruiting employees from diverse backgrounds.
 - First charter of its kind in Europe
 - Supports assimilation of immigrants into French society.

- Encourages companies to be inclusive and carry out tangible actions to promote diversity at the workplace.
- In 2019, **13.1 per cent** of immigrant workers unemployed compared to **7.8 per cent** of French natives.
 - Discrimination in the hiring practices of companies despite emphasis against discrimination in labour laws.

Naturalisation

- Immigrants seeking citizenship through naturalisation attend four-day civic training course in French principles and values,
 - and practical aspects of life in French society
- Up to 600 hours of free language courses offered to help immigrants master French in daily life.
- Ensure immigrants are able to interact with other French citizens, and adopt French attitudes and beliefs, strengthening national identity.

Tensions Arising From Assimilationist Policies in France

- In 2004, law introduced by France banned wearing of clearly visible religious attire and symbols in schools.
 - Maintain religious neutrality in public schools.

Impact

- Muslim students not allowed to wear religious headscarves.
- Jewish students not allowed to wear *kippahs*
- Christian students prohibited from wearing crosses
- Sikh students not allowed to wear turbans.

Integration Policies in Singapore

- Belief that diverse socio-cultural identities complement Singapore national identity.
- Singapore identity anchored in shared values of upholding law and order, respecting racial and religious harmony, commitment to working together for better future.
- Differences in practices recognised and respected.

- Equality promoted without granting special rights to any groups.

Bilingual Policy in Singapore (1966)

- Bilingualism introduced in schools in 1966.
- Students required to learn English and one of the official Mother Tongues.
- Learning English gives different ethnic groups common language to communicate with one another.
- Helps to build relationships and promote integration in society.

Community Support

- In 2009, **National Integration Council** launched **Community Integration Fund** to support organisations in implementing projects to encourage interactions between Singaporeans, immigrants and foreigners.
 - Deepen mutual understanding
 - Build relationships
 - Develop stronger connection to Singapore.
- At grassroots level, community events and activities organised by **People's Association**
 - Include house visits, block parties, festive celebrations
 - New Singapore citizens and Permanent Residents get to know neighbourhood better and make new friends in community.

Naturalisation Initiatives

- Upon receiving in-principal approval for citizenship, new Singapore citizens go through compulsory **Singapore Citizenship Journey** programme.
 - Collaborative effort between Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, Immigration & Checkpoints Authority, People's Association.

Singapore Citizenship Journey

1. New Citizens learn about Singapore's history and development.
2. They deepen appreciation of Singaporean norms and shared values.
3. They are given opportunity to have meaningful interactions with local community.
4. Receive Singapore citizenship certificates at **Citizenship Ceremony** after completing programme.

Common Experiences

National Service (NS)

- Brings people from diverse backgrounds to train and live together.
- NSmen learn to develop sense of collective interest through common experience.
- Helps strengthen relationships between them and create strong Singapore national identity.

Singapore Armed Forces Volunteer Corps (SAFVC)

- Established in 2014, provides opportunity for individuals who are not required to serve NS, such as women, first-generation Singapore PRs, and new citizens aged 18 to 45, to contribute to national defense.

Responding to Socio-Economic Diversity

Responses of Individuals

Individuals can play their part and respond by contributing their time, effort and money to meet areas of need in society. For example:

- They can start ground-up initiatives and mobilise resources to distribute food to those in need.

- They can also volunteer with existing organisations to provide services to other groups in society, such as helping out at mobile clinics.

Example 1 (Free Food For All)

Free Food For All

In 2014, Mr Nizar Mohamed Shariff started a charity called Free Food For All (FFFA) to provide nutritious halal food to the less fortunate, regardless of their race or religion.

Initially focused on delivering freshly cooked meals, FFFA now offers different food options and channels, which include ready-to-eat (RTE) meals, fresh vegetables, groceries and a weekly stocked community fridge. They also collaborate with other food businesses to cater RTE meals for their beneficiaries.

In 2021 alone, FFFA served more than 160,000 meals, which include RTE meals to more than 1,000 families a month.

Another way that an individual can respond is by adopting an attitude of **grit** and perseverance. This attitude helps strengthen the individual's resilience and motivation to overcome the economic challenges of their situation.

Example 2 (Happy People Helping People)

Happy People Helping People

Ms Fiona Ke grew up in an environment where her family found it difficult to meet their basic needs. Her father left the family when she was around six years old, and her mother struggled alone to raise Ms Ke and her siblings. Motivated to give her mother a comfortable life, Ms Ke studied hard from an early age. She decided to become a nurse as she wanted to help other people. With hard work and financial aid from various organisations, Ms Ke fulfilled her dream of becoming a nurse.

In her second year of working as a nurse, Ms Ke found out that she had a hole in her heart and later had to undergo surgery. Her experience as a patient helped her develop more empathy for her patients.

Benefiting from the help given by various charities while growing up, Ms Ke believes in giving back to society. She helps out at a mobile clinic for the elderly and volunteers with Happy People Helping People, a non-profit organisation which provides food for elderly cardboard collectors. She hopes to start her own mobile clinic for the elderly in the future.

Responses of Community Groups

In a socio-economically diverse country like Singapore, there are some groups in society who may not have enough resources and opportunities to progress. This can lead to challenges with accessing healthcare and education, which can affect their quality of life and opportunities for social mobility.

Formal and informal community groups can step in by providing support in the form of financial aid, guidance and resources.

Example 1 (Daughters of Tomorrow (DOT))

Daughters of Tomorrow

Daughters of Tomorrow (DOT) is a formal community group that conduct programmes to help women aged 20 to 60 upgrade their skills and find jobs. Most of these women come from low-income families or live in subsidised rental flats.

DOT's financial literacy programme is a series of four weekly workshops followed by seven months with a support group. The women learn good money-management skills and progress towards their financial goals.

Example 2 (Keeping Hope Alive (KHA))

Keeping Hope Alive

Keeping Hope Alive (KHA) is an informal group whose volunteers offer their time and skills to help the less privileged in Singapore. Every Sunday, about 50 to 60 volunteers conduct door-to-door visits to one and two-room rental flats to look out for residents who are in need and take action to meet their needs. These actions taken include cleaning their homes, fixing and replacing their home appliances, and providing them with haircuts.

From a single volunteer, KHA has grown into a large community of individuals who share the common goal of improving the quality of life of low-income families in Singapore

Responses of Governments

Different governments adopt different approaches to manage the issues related to socio-economic diversity. In this section, you will explore aspects of:

- the government-financed approach adopted in Sweden; and
- the shared-responsibility approach adopted in Singapore

Government-financed Approach in Sweden

Healthcare

Healthcare services such as hospital care, medicine, dental care, disability support and rehabilitation services are publicly funded.

- All families are covered by a medical protection scheme.
- Children in the household can claim up to 2,466 Swedish kronor (about \$330) in a year from the government.
- Since 2019, dental care costs are free for local residents up to the age of 23. Dental care from the age of 24 is subsidised.

Education

Education is funded by the government and provided to all Swedes.

- Education is compulsory from ages 6 to 16.
 - Sweden provides a free school lunch to every child.
 - All students have access to a school doctor, school nurse, psychologist and school welfare officer at no cost.
- Tuition fees for tertiary education are fully subsidised for Swedish residents.

Housing

Allowance is provided to lower-income individuals or families who need help to pay for housing or housing fees for their own home.

- Families may receive housing allowance if they live with children and pay more than 1,400 Swedish kronor (about \$190) for their housing.
- For the elderly with low or no income, they are entitled to a housing supplement which acts as a form of financial support.

Skills Training

The Swedish Public Employment Service provides training to equip individuals with skills to increase their chances of employment.

- Free vocational courses are provided to train individuals from diverse backgrounds for industries that lack skilled workers.
- Applicants for these courses must be registered as a job seeker with the Swedish Public Employment Service.
- Applicants must be:
 - above 25 years old;
 - under 25 years old and have a disability; or
 - over 18 years and have circumstances that make it difficult for them to be employed.

In Sweden's government-financed approach, the provision of substantial assistance and financial support ensures that citizens and individuals of different socio-economic backgrounds have access to healthcare, education, housing and employment. This also ensures that the needs of the elderly, citizens with illnesses or disabilities, and those with young children are provided for.

Challenges faced by Sweden

High Taxation Rate

The social benefits provided by the Swedish government, such as lengthy parental leave, unemployment allowances, healthcare and free education, are made possible by the high taxation rate in Sweden.

- In 2019, the highest income earners in Sweden pay income taxes of 57.2 per cent, which is one of the highest in the world.
- Besides direct taxation in the form of income tax, there is also indirect taxation in the form of Value-Added Tax (VAT), which is similar to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in Singapore. In 2019, VAT in Sweden was 25 per cent.

Ageing Population

Swedish elder care is largely funded by taxes and government grants. In 2018, the total cost of elder care in Sweden was 126.3 billion kronor (\$17.2 billion). This amount is set to increase as the country's population continues to age.

Sweden's life expectancy is one of the highest in the world - 80.6 years for men and close to 84.3 years for women. More than 5 per cent of Sweden's population is aged 80 or older. With an ageing population and high life expectancy, government spending will increase over time, especially in the areas of health and long-term care.

However, as more people retire, it will be a smaller working population to bear this increased cost. There will be a need to increase employment rates, lengthen the employment years of those still working, or raise taxes on the working population.

High immigrant unemployment rates

Sweden has one of the larger immigrant populations among the European countries. However, there are several challenges in integrating immigrants into the workforce, which widens the income gap between them and other citizens.

Challenges integrating immigrants into the workplace

Mismatch between skills and jobs

- Immigrants may not have received educational opportunities in their home countries, leaving them unable to take up unfilled jobs in Sweden.
- This has resulted in high unemployment for low-skilled workers and immigrants

Difficulty in assessing skills

- If an immigrant's training experience was not in Sweden, employers have difficulties assessing their actual competency.
- The processing time for foreign qualifications is long.
- These have resulted in highly educated immigrants with foreign qualifications facing challenges in finding suitable jobs.

Shared-responsibility approach in Singapore

Singapore adopts a shared-responsibility approach where many helping hands such as individuals and families, community groups and the government work together to address issues related to socio-economic diversity and meet the needs of society.

Individuals play an important role in making the effort to support themselves and their family members. However, some individuals may not have enough resources to take care of themselves or their family members. Hence, community groups and the government step in to support them.

The government provides targeted assistance to individuals and families who are unable to provide for themselves and where support from community groups is inadequate. This targeted assistance takes the form of subsidies, financial assistance and skills training to increase their employability.

Subsidies for essential services

Healthcare

- One example is Singapore's healthcare financing system, which emphasises individual responsibility and affordable healthcare for all.
 - The government adopts multiple tiers of protection to ensure accessible and affordable healthcare for all Singaporeans.
 - Government Subsidies
 - Helps to reduce the cost to the patient. For hospitalisation in public hospitals, subsidy goes up to 80%.
 - MediShield Life
 - Pays for large hospital bills and selected outpatient treatments.
 - MediSave
 - Helps to pay for your medical expenses or that of your immediate family members.
 - MediFund
 - Helps those who are unable to afford their subsidised medical bills.

- While Singaporeans save for their own or their dependents' healthcare needs through the CPF MediSave Account, the government provides subsidies to reduce medical costs for Singaporeans

Education

- Another example takes the form of preschool subsidies to ensure that all children have access to quality education for a good start in life, regardless of their family background.
 - While parents pay for preschool fees, government subsidies across all eligible income tiers have increased.
 - From January 2020, lower-income families earning \$3000 or less per month pay \$3 per month at preschool centres under the Anchor Operator Scheme funded by the government.

Housing

- Public housing subsidies are also provided to ensure affordable housing opportunities for Singaporeans.
 - While Singaporeans pay for their home purchase in cash or with their CPF savings, the government has put in place various housing grant and rental housing schemes to ensure that housing opportunities are kept affordable for Singaporeans.

Social and community assistance to provide targeted support for lower-income Singaporeans

- Long-term assistance is provided for persons who are permanently unable to work due to old age, illness or disability and have little to no income, savings and family support.
- Short-to-medium-term financial support is provided to help families and individuals tide over difficult times and regain stability.

Vouchers to provide more support for lower to middle-income Singaporean households

- Some areas of support provided by the permanent GST Voucher scheme are:
 - Some cash payouts in August every year to support lower-income Singaporeans with their immediate needs.

- Quarterly U-save rebates to help lower and middle-income HDB households offset their utility bills.

Opportunities for upskilling and training

- The programs and initiatives under SkillsFuture Singapore gives students and working adults access to training and courses to continually upskill and equip themselves with industry-relevant skills.
- The Workfare Skills Support scheme provides training allowance and cash awards to encourage low-wage Singaporeans to upgrade their skills.

Challenges faced by Singapore

Ageing Population

By 2030, the percentage of seniors will more than double, while citizens aged 20 to 63 will decrease. This will increase demands on government funding for healthcare and other social services to meet the needs of a larger ageing population.

With a life expectancy of close to 85 years, Singaporeans are living longer. Between 2010 and 2019, the government tripled its healthcare expenditure to \$11.3 billion to meet the growing needs of seniors and ensure that every Singaporean has access to affordable and quality healthcare.

The increasingly heavy cost of supporting an ageing population would affect the working population. With fewer working adults supporting more older people, the cost each working adult needs to shoulder would be higher.

Having fewer working adults would also affect the vibrancy of Singapore's economy. There would be lower productivity, which may lead to decreased economic output. This would result in slower economic growth for the country. If this happens, Singapore would not be able to sustain its resources to care for the elderly and people in need.

Increase in taxation

The Singapore government plans to increase the GST from 7 to 9 per cent gradually from 2023 to 2024. The higher government revenue will help to meet the needs of the population, particularly in healthcare spending.

In Singapore, higher-income earners pay a proportionally higher tax, with the highest personal income tax rate at 22 per cent as at 2021. It is estimated that more than 60 per cent of tax earned from households and individuals is paid by foreigners residing in Singapore, tourists and the top 20 percent of resident households.

Singapore's competitive tax rates are attractive to high earners and entrepreneurs who want to live and do business in Singapore. If taxes keep increasing, this may deter foreigners and tourists from residing in or coming to Singapore.

Limitations in upskilling and training

In the annual pre-budget 2020 Feedback Exercise conducted by REACH, a governmental feedback unit, many respondents who were aged 60 and above shared that they were not sure if attending courses would be sufficient to increase their chances of employment. They also shared that a mindset shift in employers would also be needed so that older workers are valued, accepted and accommodated.

By 2030, with the retirement age set at 65 and re-employment age at 70, mature workers will need more support to continue working for longer.

- Without employment support for mature workers, it would be hard for employers to retain and hire them.
- They may also not be able to advance in their jobs, earning wages that may not be enough to support their needs.