

Singapore - Human Rights Scorecard ⁱ

Singapore, officially known as the Republic of Singapore, is a sovereign city-state of Southeast Asia. The island of Singapore was discovered by the British in 1819 and became a major trading post of the East India Company. It was then occupied by Japan during the Second World War, before gaining independence from Britain and becoming a sovereign nation in 1965. As one of the “Asian tigers,” Singapore has rapidly developed and has become a global commerce, finance and transport hub. Although it ranks high in regards to human development and income per capita, some consider it as a semi-authoritarian regime.

Official languages: English, Malay, Mandarin, Tamil

Ethnic groups: 74.1% Chinese, 13.4% Malay, 9.2% Indian, 3.3% other

Government: Unitary dominant-party parliamentary republic

- President: Tony Tan

- Prime Minister: Lee Hsien Loong

Death penalty: Retentionist

Population: 5,607,300

Life expectancy: 85 years

Under-5 mortality: Not available

Adult literacy: 96.8 percent



Section 1: Overall Development

The overall development of a country – considering education, health, income, and other factors – is a strong indicator of whether average citizens have a reasonable chance to enjoy social and economic well-being and mobility.

Human Development (UNDP Human Development Index (HDI)) ⁱⁱ



0.925 – Very High Human Development ⁱⁱⁱ

Singapore has one of the highest HDIs, with citizens enjoying a gross national income per capita of \$78,162 and receiving on average 15.4 years of schooling. However, other countries with comparable gross national income tend to have a much higher HDI.

Section 2: Respect for the Integrity of the Person

Respect for the integrity of the individual is the most fundamental of human rights groupings. It guarantees protection of the person to ensure the right to life, and freedom from torture. It also prevents arbitrary detention, and disappearances, and ensures the right to a free and fair trial when accused.

Freedom from arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life



Respected ^{iv}

There has been no reporting that the government or its security forces have committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

Freedom from disappearance



Respected ^v

There are no reports of disappearances in Singapore.

Freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment



Partially respected ^{vi}

Singaporean law prohibits such practices, which has been respected by the government. However, the law mandates caning in addition to imprisonment.

Freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention



Respected^{vii}

The laws prohibiting arbitrary arrest and detention have been largely respected.

Freedom from denial of fair public trial



Partially respected^{viii}

The constitution provides an independent judiciary, which the government has overall respected. However, constitutionally authorized laws limiting judicial review permits restrictions on some individual's constitutional rights.

Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence



Largely disrespected^{ix}

The constitution does not mention privacy rights, although the government generally respects the privacy of families and homes. The police may search a person, home or property without a warrant if deemed necessary. Residents believe that their phones or internet usage are monitored.

Section 3: Respect for Civil Liberties

Civil liberties are a basic category of internationally recognized human rights. They include the freedoms of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. These are inalienable rights which should not be breached by government, and should ensure the rights of all, including women and minority groups.

Freedom of speech and press (*Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index*)^x



Score: 52.96, Rank: 154 / 180 – Highly controlled, limited or intimidated^{xi}

Singapore possesses official restrictions on the freedom of expression and of the press, such as regarding criticism of the government or anything that could undermine social or religious harmony. Journalists and bloggers have been prosecuted.

Freedom from academic censorship



Largely disrespected^{xii}

Singapore limits the autonomy of all public institutions of higher education or political studies. Sanctions may be applied if public comments or publications criticize political leaders, sensitive policies, or issue comments that can disturb ethnic or religious harmony. Films may be banned.

Freedom of peaceful assembly and association



Partially respected^{xiii}

The constitution allows for citizens to assemble peacefully but also allows Parliament to impose restrictions if deemed necessary, in the interest of security and public peace. The "Speaker's corner", a designated public speaking area, necessitates a permit before any kind of speech or assembly.

Freedom of religion



Partially respected^{xiv}

The constitution provides every person with the right to religious freedom, although there are restrictions when relating to public order, public health or morality. Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church are banned. The government is concerned with religious harmony at all costs.

Freedom of movement



Partially respected^{xv}

Although the constitution largely respects freedom of movement, it is restricted in certain circumstances, in particular regarding security. Men and boys above the age of 13 not having completed their military service must obtain an exit permit if they wish to leave for more than 3 months.

Protection of refugees and stateless persons



Largely disrespected^{xvi}

The Singaporean law does not supply the granting of asylum or refugee status, although the government may cooperate with organizations such as UNHCR, providing refugee assistance on a case-by-case basis.

Overall protection of civil liberties (*FreedomHouse Civil Liberties Index*)^{xvii xviii}



4 / 7 – Partly free^{xix}

The media and the legal system are controlled by the government, or individuals close to the government. The government and its supporters regularly persecute human rights activists. Permits must be obtained for demonstrations, and NGOs require a permit to operate.

Section 4: Respect for Political Rights

Political rights ensure all members of society are able to influence the political process. The assessment of political rights includes an examination of the electoral process and the selection of representatives, the political empowerment of the general public, the tolerance of dissent, the accountability of government, etc.

Overall protection of political rights (*FreedomHouse Political Rights Index*)^{xx}



4 / 7 –Partly free^{xxi}

The president is elected for a six-year term, and although elections are free and uncorrupted, the country is missing an independent election authority. One party dominates the political process. Some political films and television programs linked to opposition have also been banned.

Section 5: Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The civil, political, economic and social rights exercised within a country are often modulated by the degree of transparency and freedom from corruption. Various international metrics assess transparency and corruption, including the OECD anti-bribery convention, the Bribe Payers Index, and the Open Budget Index.

Transparency and freedom from corruption (*Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index*)^{xxii}



Score: 84%, Rank: 7 / 176 –Very limited corruption^{xxiii}

There are no cases of official corruption reported, and there exists criminal penalties for officials charged with corruption.

Section 6: Governmental Response to Criticism

This section deals specifically with the response heads of state have to civil society or international human rights reports.

Governmental attitudes vis-à-vis independent investigations of alleged human rights violations



Respected^{xxiv}

The government does not restrict the work of human rights groups. There have been open critics of particular policies, such as capital punishment, migrant workers' rights, freedom of assembly, of speech and LGBT rights.

Section 7: Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Legal and social discriminatory practices related to sex, race, creed or sexual orientation, are violations of human rights. Countries with strong civil liberty traditions should have a fair legal system that ensures the rule of law, allows free economic activity, and ensures equality of opportunity for all.

Endangered Minorities (*Peoples Under Threat – Minority Rights Group International*)^{xxv}



No Threat Listed- Limited dangers to minorities^{xxvi}

According to Minority Rights International, Singapore does not have any minorities which face an immediate threat of violence.

Rights of women (*World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index*)^{xxvii}



Score: 71%, Rank: 55 / 144 –Somewhat unequal rights^{xxviii}

In Singapore women enjoy the same legal rights as men in regards to civil liberties, employment, and education. They are well-represented in most professions, yet still lack representation at higher levels of the workforce.

Rights of Children (*KidsRights Index Overall Score*)^{xxix}



Score: 73.7%, Rank: 94/ 165 – Somewhat protected^{xxx}

Mistreatment of children is unlawful, and there exists a number of protective measures for minors.

Rights of persons with disabilities



Partially respected ^{xxxvi}

Although there exists a Ministry for Social and Family Development, Singapore does not have a legislation ensuring equal opportunities for persons with disabilities, in both education and employment, although there have been efforts in elaborating policy plans for greater inclusiveness.

Rights of national/racial/ethnic minorities (e.g. discrimination, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism etc.)



Respected ^{xxxvii}

Government policy ensures and facilitates interethnic harmony. Ethnic Malays are regarded as the indigenous people of Singapore, and the government is in charge of supporting their rights and access to education, social and economic opportunities.

Freedom from abuse and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity



Largely disrespected ^{xxxviii xxxix}

Same-sex relations among men are criminalized and punished. The LGBTI community is not protected from discrimination by any explicit laws, and any prospective government worker must indicate their sexual orientation on their application.

Section 7: Workers' Rights

Workers' rights are a group of legal rights relating to labour relations between workers and their employers. At their core are things like the ability to negotiate pay, benefits, terms of employment, and safe working conditions. These rights often devolve from the right to unionize and access to collective bargaining.

Rights to freedom of association and to collective bargaining



Partially respected ^{xxxv}

Although the law allows most workers to either form or join trade unions, as well as to strike and bargain collectively, the Parliament may also restrict the right of association on the basis of security or public order. Most unions experienced government intrusion.

Freedom from forced or compulsory labour



Largely disrespected ^{xxxvi}

Singapore law forbids all forms of forced or compulsory labor. There have been reports of forced labor for migrant workers in low-paid sectors, as well as the arrests of employers, while the country's employer sponsorship program has made migrant workers susceptible to their employers will.

Freedom from forced labour for children, and a minimum age of employment



Respected ^{xxxvii}

The law forbids the employment of any child under the age of 13. Children 13 or older may work in a nonindustrial position, with medical authorization. Children 13 and older are also protected under several regulations. These laws and regulations have been properly enforced.

Right to acceptable conditions of work



Largely disrespected ^{xxxviii}

There constitution elicits the principle of equality in employment, although there exists no specific antidiscrimination legislation. Discrimination has been reported concerning employers favoring foreigners. There have also been reports of bias in regards to gender and sexual identity.

Right to employment



3.1% - Reasonable unemployment ^{xxxix}

The unemployment rate in Singapore remains quite low, and is projected to stay at a low level in the upcoming years.

¹ A hybrid human rights and freedoms model, leveraging both legal principles and intuitive classifications, has been used for this human rights assessment. The CJPME Foundation has sought to integrate as many independent sources and metrics into its summary analysis as possible. In many cases, for qualitative material pertaining to the respect for a particular right in a country, the CJPME Foundation has drawn on material from Human Rights Watch and the US State Department country reports. Human Rights Watch (HRW) publishes a World Report which assesses the respect for human rights in each country. HRW uses a methodology of local reporting and interviewing, combined with research and analysis to assess the level of respect of human rights. The U.S State Department keeps an updated publication on the state of human rights internationally. Their system of research and accountability draws from the research of official US State Department officials, as well as local civil-society and international human rights organizations.

ⁱⁱ The UN Development Program HDI was created to emphasize that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone. The HDI can also be used to question national policy choices, asking how two countries with the same level of GNI per capita can end up with different human development outcomes. These contrasts can stimulate debate about government policy priorities. The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017 <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>

ⁱⁱⁱ "Table 1: Human Development Index and its components, Singapore" UNDP, based on 2014 or the most recent year available. Accessed March 28, 2017. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>.

^{iv} "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016 Singapore." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed March 28, 2017. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

^v Ibid. U.S Department of State. For purposes of the present analysis, a "disappearance" is different than simple arbitrary detention because a "disappearance" is considered permanent.

^{vi} Ibid. U.S Department of State.

^{vii} Ibid. U.S Department of State.

^{viii} Ibid. U.S Department of State.

^{ix} Ibid. U.S Department of State.

^x The Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders ranks the level of freedom of information in 180 countries. This is determined through the polling of local NGOs and freedom of expression civil society organizations across the globe. This index is also determined by local correspondents and follow-up work done on reports of infringement to press freedom where ever it takes place. Their methodology looks at six different indicators: 1) Media pluralism, 2) Media independence, 3) Media atmosphere and self-censorship, 4) the Law around media, 5) Media transparency, and 6) Media infrastructure. The score from these six indicators is combined with a rating for the violence against journalists in the country to create an overall score. The CJPME Foundation classifies the Press Freedom Index as follows: 0 – 14.99 (16 countries), Largely free, diverse and independent; 15 – 24.99 (37 countries), Mostly free, diverse and independent; 25 – 29.99 (31 countries), Partially free, diverse and independent; 30 – 39.99 (39 countries), Partially controlled, limited or intimidated; 40 & higher (57 countries), Highly controlled, limited or intimidated.

^{xi} "World Press Freedom Index." Reporters Without Borders: For Freedom of Information, 2016. March 28, 2017. <http://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php>.

^{xii} "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016 Singapore." U.S Department of State. Accessed March 28, 2017. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

^{xiii} "Singapore." World Report 2014: Bahrain. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/singapore>.

^{xiv} "Singapore." International Religious Freedom Report for 2015. Accessed November March 28, 2017.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>.

^{xv} "Singapore." World Report 2017: Singapore. Accessed March 28, 2017. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/bahrain>.

^{xvi} "Singapore." World Report 2017: Singapore. Accessed March 28, 2017. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/bahrain>.

^{xvii} Freedom House is an internationally recognized NGO based in the U.S which documents and rates the quality of democratic practice in a given country. Freedom House splits its grading system between the two areas of civil and political rights in a country. On each scale, the Freedom House rating is 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free).

^{xviii} Freedom House's Civil Liberties index measures things such as a) freedom of expression and belief, b) associational and organizational rights, c) the rule of law, and d) personal autonomy and individual rights. Freedom House rates countries as 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free). Accessed March 28, 2017.

<https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>

^{xix} "Singapore." Freedom in the World: Singapore. January 1, 2014. Accessed March 28, 2017. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/bahrain-0#.VIIHLZGG9e8>.

^{xx} See footnote about the Freedom House organization above. The Freedom House Political Rights assessment looks at a) the electoral process, b) political pluralism and participation, and c) the functioning of government. March 28, 2017 <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>

^{xxi} "Singapore." Freedom in the World 2017: Singapore. January 1, 2014. March 28, 2017. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/bahrain-0#.VIIHLZGG9e8>.

^{xxii} Transparency International (TI) publishes a "Corruption Perceptions Index" annually, which is based on independent research and polling. The main categories of corruption are broken down within the index to provide particulars on issues including things such as perceptions of corruption, control of corruption, and financial secrecy. A country receives a score on 100; the higher the score, the less corrupt the society. The CJPME foundation has classified them into categories as follows: 80-100 (11 countries): Very limited corruption; 60-79 (27 countries): Limited corruption; 40-59 (41 countries): Some corruption; 20-39 (80 countries): Highly corrupt; 0-19 (15 countries): Extremely corrupt

^{xxiii} "Singapore." Corruption by Country. January 1, 2014. Accessed March 28, 2017. <http://www.transparency.org/country#BHR>.

^{xxiv} "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016 Singapore." U.S Department of State. Accessed March 28, 2017.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

^{xxv} The Peoples under Threat assessment by Minority Rights Group International highlights countries most at risk of genocide and mass killing. The ranking is created by compiling data on the known antecedents to genocide or mass political killing. Accessed March 28, 2017 <http://peoplesunderthreat.org/>.

^{xxvi} "Singapore." Peoples under Threat, Minority Rights Group International. 2015, or most recent data. Accessed March 28, 2017. <http://peoplesunderthreat.org/>.

^{xxvii} This metric is based on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index. 0.00 denotes inequality between the sexes, and 1.00 denotes fully equality between the sexes. This index looks at four subdomains: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. The CJPME Foundation classed the percentages as follows: 80-100% (5 countries): Almost equal rights; 70-79% (60 countries): Somewhat unequal rights; 0-69% (77 countries): Very unequal rights

^{xxviii} "Singapore." World Economic Forum. January 1, 2014. Accessed March 28, 2017. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/economies/#economy=BHR>.

^{xxix} This metric is based on the KidsRights Index Overall Score. This index has five subdomains: life expectancy and maternal mortality; health; education; protection; and child rights environment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. KidsRights classed the countries according to these percentages, and the CJPME Foundation has given each class a term as follows: 70-100% (77 countries): Protected; 60-70% (29 countries): Somewhat protected; 45-50% (33 countries): Slightly vulnerable; 30-45% (12 countries): Highly vulnerable; Lower than 30% (11 countries): Extremely vulnerable

^{xxx} "The KidsRights Index: Overall Ranking." The KidsRights Index. Accessed March 28, 2017. <http://www.kidsrightsindex.org/>

^{xxxii} "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016 Singapore." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed March 28, 2017.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

^{xxxiii} Ibid. U.S Department of State.

^{xxxiii} "ILGA World Map." International Lesbian Gay and Intersex Association. January 1, 2014. Accessed March 28, 2017. <http://ilga.org/>. See also Ibid. U.S Department of State.

^{xxxiv} ILGA, the International, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, was founded in 1978 on the principle of highlighting state sponsored homophobia where it exists around the world. ILGA annually publishes a map with an accompanying report on sexual and gender based harassment, which focuses on both the legal and non-legal acts of state sponsored discrimination.

^{xxxv} "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016 Singapore." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed March 28, 2017.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

^{xxxvi} Ibid. U.S Department of State.

^{xxxvii} Ibid. U.S Department of State.

^{xxxviii} Ibid. U.S Department of State. See also a well-done Wikipedia comparison of wage, income and work week metrics across countries at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minimum_wages_by_country

^{xxxix} "Global Employment Trends." International Labour Organization. January 1, 2013. March 28, 2017. http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS_233936/lang--en/index.htm.