

**CNA-IPS SURVEY ON ETHNIC IDENTITY
IN SINGAPORE**

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The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) was established in 1988 to promote a greater awareness of policy issues and good governance. Today, IPS is a think-tank within the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP) at the National University of Singapore. It seeks to cultivate clarity of thought, forward thinking and a big-picture perspective on issues of critical national interest through strategic deliberation and research. It adopts a multi-disciplinary approach in its analysis and takes the long-term view. It studies the attitudes and aspirations of Singaporeans which have an impact on policy development and the relevant areas of diplomacy and international affairs. The Institute bridges and engages the diverse stakeholders through its conferences and seminars, closed-door discussions, publications, and surveys on public perceptions of policy.

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CNA-IPS SURVEY ON ETHNIC IDENTITY IN SINGAPORE

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CNA-IPS SURVEY ON ETHNIC IDENTITY IN SINGAPORE

Abstract

In 2017, the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), with funding from Channel NewsAsia (CNA) at MediaCorp, conducted a survey on ethnic identity and the state of inter-ethnic interactions with 2,020 respondents.

This CNA-IPS survey aimed to study what Singaporeans felt were core identity markers of the main ethnic groups in the country. The survey also examined the extent of ethnic cultural performance among Singaporeans, what they believe should be transmitted to their children, and the extent of their understanding of and engagement with other ethnic cultures. In the age of globalisation, when a variety of cultural products are available, the survey also examined the affinity Singaporeans have to different world cultures. All this information is important if we are to better understand the consequences as well as the future of the CMIO framework, which underpins several public policies.

Overall, the survey found that ethnic identity was important to the majority of respondents (63.2 per cent), whether in itself or in combination with the Singapore identity. High proportions of Chinese, Malays and Indians somewhat or strongly identified with the cultures of other major races in Singapore.

At least three in five respondents reported that out of people from 10 backgrounds presented, those from any of them would be acceptable as “truly Singaporean” if they were to become new citizens. However, more respondents reported that new citizens from Malay, Chinese, Indian or Eurasian backgrounds would be accepted as “truly Singaporean”. Although about 60% of respondents reported that citizens from Arab and African backgrounds would be accepted, this was relatively lower than the over 90% acceptance levels for those from Chinese, Malay and Indian backgrounds. This may potentially indicate that there is a close association between national identity, i.e. “Singaporeanness” and the core ethnic groups that have constituted it for decades.

In terms of perceptions of importance of ethnic identity markers, all three major races ranked being able to read, write and speak in one’s ethnic language among the top three markers of ethnic identity. Given that it is compulsory for all children attending mainstream schools to learn English and their Mother Tongue, this finding could be interpreted as Singapore’s bilingual policies causing a convergence towards the perception that language (mother tongue) ability is an important component of one’s ethnic identity. Celebrating the ethnic community’s main festival (Chinese New Year, Hari Raya Puasa or Deepavali) also emerged among the top three markers. Appreciating specific art forms such as calligraphy and *wayang kulit*, and being able to trace one’s ancestry, ranked much lower as important identity markers in comparison.

The survey also found that the majority of respondents reported interest in experiencing other cultures (such as celebrating another ethnic festival, or attending weddings of another ethnic group). However, actual participation in other cultural traditions or customs was lower. Chinese respondents were slightly less likely than Malay and Indian respondents to both express interest in, and actually participate in, the practices of other cultures.

Respondents were also nearly unanimous in agreeing that the ability to read, write and converse in one's ethnic language was an important aspect of their identity that must be passed down to their offspring. Other markers that were accorded high importance for transmission across generations included celebrating of ethnic festivals and the enjoyment of ethnic food.

However, certain traditions, such as the ability to cook ethnic food, and enjoying ethnic art and music, seem to be experiencing gradual decline in terms of importance since younger people place less emphasis on some of these markers. Chinese respondents also placed relatively less emphasis on passing on to offspring the practice of following ethnic wedding traditions. These findings suggest that certain aspects of ethnic identity and heritage are in danger of being eroded.

In terms of cultural affinity, there was overwhelming acceptance among Chinese respondents that they were closest in culture to Malaysian-born

Chinese. The Malays felt the closest in culture to Malaysian-born Malays. The Indians saw themselves as closest to counterparts in India.

In conclusion, the study's findings indicate that the current CMIO classification system, due to its use in public policy, may have resulted in Singaporeans' perceptions of ethnic identity converging on certain key indicators. For instance, the bilingual language policy has arguably resulted in Singaporeans ranking language writing and reading markers as a core aspect of what is expected of a Singaporean Chinese, Malay or Indian.

CNA-IPS SURVEY ON ETHNIC IDENTITY IN SINGAPORE

1. INTRODUCTION

Ethnicity significantly influences identity construction. Phinney's model of Ethnic Identity Development puts forward three stages of ethnic identity development. The first stage is one of unexamined ethnic identity, where individuals remain oblivious to the implications of belonging to a certain ethnic group. The second stage involves an ethnic identity search where a race-related event, such as overt racism, triggers individuals to be conscious of their race and the meanings attached to it. The third stage is ethnic identity achievement, once individuals have gathered sufficient information (Phinney, 1989).

John Berry's theories on acculturation - detailed in Berry (1997) - paint a detailed picture of how identity construction might occur among minorities, in the case of constructing it in relation to dominant host culture. His typology includes assimilation, separation, integration and marginalisation (Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008), the most common being integration, that culminates in bicultural identities.

Ethnic identity development in Singapore is a more complex process, given Singapore's multicultural outlook. At birth, administrative procedures require citizens to be classified into categories of Chinese, Malays, Indians and Others, or CMIO. This CMIO model, which is a relic from Singapore's time as a British

colony but has been retained by the state after independence in 1965, has been employed in various public policies, notably in education and housing. An example would be the Ethnic Integration Policy, which mandates racial quotas in each public flat and neighbourhood, to broadly reflect the overall population make-up.

Chua (2009) has argued that the government plays a part in ensuring that “race” remains highly visible to the public eye. For example, the importance of ethnic festivals such as Chinese New Year, Hari Raya and Deepavali is constantly reinforced through social media broadcasting messages, banners and decorations in public spaces and the declaration of public holidays in recognition of these festivals. In addition, many assume a high conflation of Malay-ness and Islam; Indian-ness and Hinduism; as well as Chinese-ness and Buddhism or Christianity.

Separately, how people perceive ethnicity in relation to their identity may vastly differ from their actual performance of ethnicity. One may identify more with American music, television and attitudes, while simultaneously celebrating Chinese New Year, attending Chinese weddings and speaking Mandarin. Are these necessarily determinants of one’s ethnic identity? Our CNA-IPS study aims to provide a gauge of Singaporeans’ ethnic performance, in areas ranging from language use, consumption of ethnic food, celebration of ethnic festivals, and enjoyment of ethnic music and art.

One key area of concern is the speaking, reading and writing of mother tongues, especially among the young. In Singapore, there has been a steady decline in Mandarin usage amongst the Chinese (Chua, 2009). The removal of second language capabilities as part of the criteria for university admission triggered this decline, as there was no functional use to it. As English is the *lingua franca* of Singapore, many invest in refining their own and their children's proficiency in English. Besides Mandarin, there are also steady declines in the use of dialects and the practice of Taoism and Buddhism, with age (Tan, 2003).

Rapidly declining birth and marriage rates are also testaments to the erosion of filial piety amongst the younger generation; a value heralded as "Chinese" by the state (Chua, 2009). In addition, many Chinese practices today have Western elements incorporated in them. For example, modern-day Chinese weddings tend to include both traditional tea ceremonies as well as Victorian concepts of ring exchanges and white dresses (Heng, 2012). A debate surrounding the issue of Chinese parents picking Western names for their kids has also been a cause of concern for the community, for fear of an erosion of Chinese cultural indicators (Tan, 2003).

There has also been documentation of declining literacy in Tamil, relative to the other official languages (Gopinathan & Mani, 1983). Some Indians may perceive that the Tamil language lacks function in Singapore, whereas Mandarin, with its economic value, aids in employment and Malay is designated

as the symbolic language of Singapore and aids in enhancing diplomatic relations with neighbouring countries. In addition, given the extent of linguistic, religious and ethnic diversity within the Indian community in Singapore, Tamil does not function as a language for intra-ethnic communication among Indians in Singapore. However, a 1994 study discovered that despite 76 per cent of Tamil respondents believing English to be more useful and prestigious over Tamil, 94.7 per cent were proud to speak Tamil. This demonstrates that a preference for speaking English does not necessarily diminish one's affection for Tamil, or erode one's "Indian-ness" (Saravanan, 1999).

Relative to Indians, Malays are stronger in sustaining their second language. Malay literacy is much higher than Tamil, as "the Malay language is an enduring symbol of [one's] identity as a Malay" (Gopinathan & Mani, 1983). It also helps that the Malay community is one that is linguistically homogeneous. However, some studies have found that English is slowly replacing Malay as the language spoken in homes, primarily amongst the Malay youth (Chong & Seilhamer, 2014). Akin to the Indian community, many perceive English as a pathway to upward social mobility. However, the study also found that over 70 per cent of participants attested to having a strong emotional connection to Malay over English, despite speaking English more frequently. This mirrors the results found in the Indian community. The lack of use or proficiency in one's mother tongue may not necessarily diminish their connection to their culture, often taught through language. Given these concerns, one of the research questions the CNA-IPS survey also aimed to answer was to gauge the level of importance

Singaporeans attach to speaking, reading and writing in their mother tongue when it comes to identifying a Chinese, Malay or Indian citizen, relative to other indicators such as celebrating ethnic festivals.

The next section describes the study's methodology. Section 3 provides details of the respondents' demographic profiles, including breakdowns by gender, race and educational background. Sections 4 to 9 discuss the key findings, including the perceived importance of certain ethnic identity markers, Singaporeans' openness to other cultures, and cultural transmission. The final section concludes.

2. METHODOLOGY

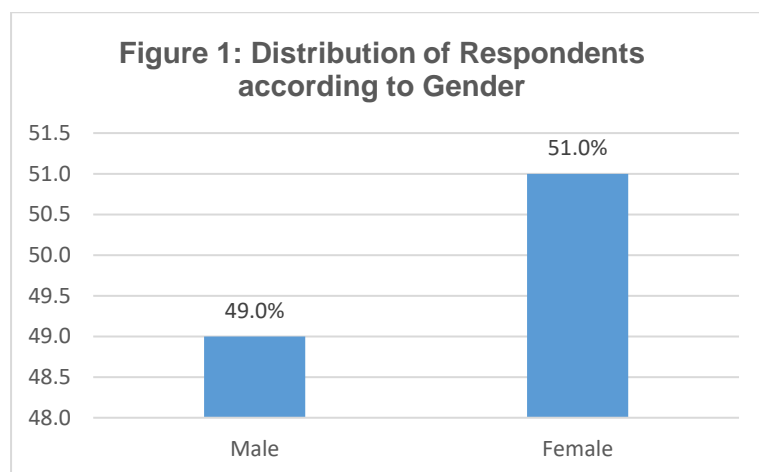
Fieldwork was conducted from May to July 2017 by research company BlackBox. Around 2,020 respondents were recruited through geographical random sampling, to ensure a proportionate representation of people across all races and age groups. There was an over-sampling of minorities, so that trends related to minority identity could be better understood. Results provided in this paper however have been weighted based on the proportion of the different races in the resident population.

Interviewers administered the surveys via a drop-off, pick-up method. This entailed interviewers explaining the survey's background to the respondent,

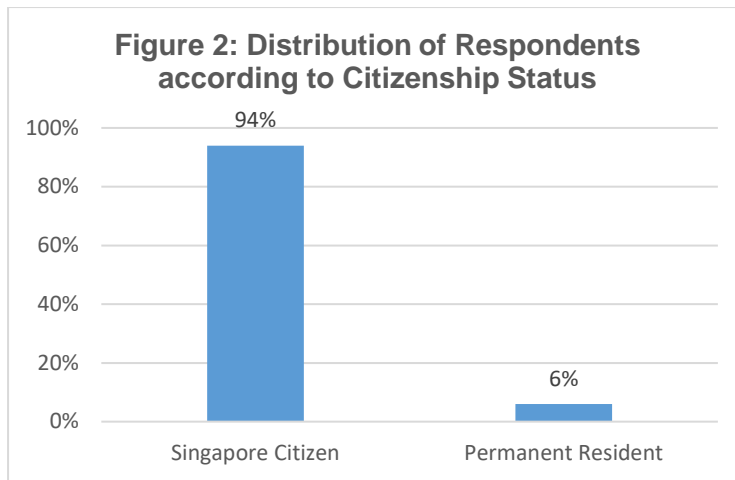
giving the respondents an adequate amount of time to complete the survey, and letting the respondents know they would return after an appropriate amount of time to collect the survey. Such a method allows for anonymity in answers and respondents would not feel pressured to provide socially desirable answers, as some might during face-to-face interviews. Nearly 70 per cent of those identified for the survey returned a completed questionnaire. The results were then compiled and analysed.

3. RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHICS

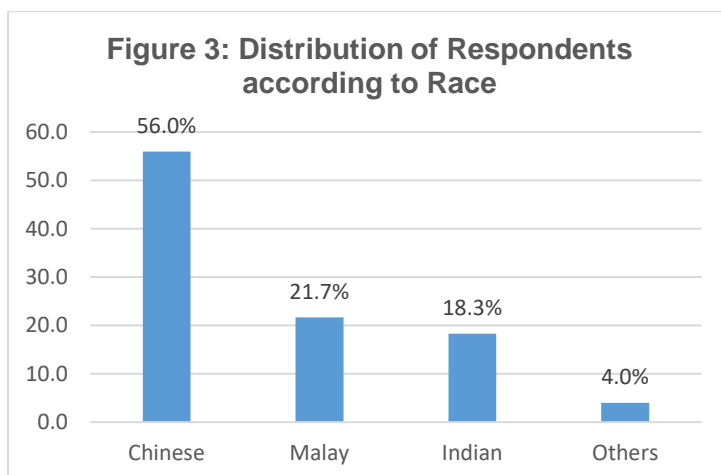
The profile of the sample mirrored the generation population as closely as possible, especially for race and gender. In the surveyed sample, 49 per cent were male and 51 per cent female.



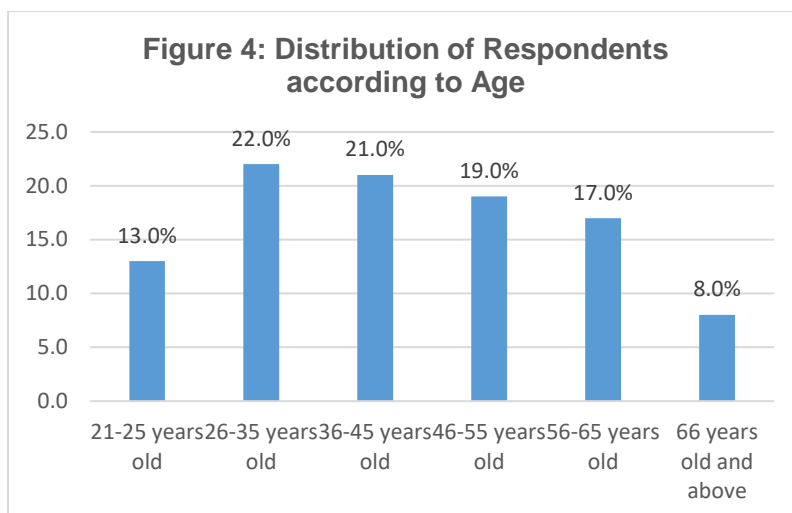
There was an over-representation of citizens among survey respondents with 94 per cent Singaporean citizens and the remaining 6 per cent Permanent Residents (PRs). This limits conclusions about the ethnic identities of PRs.



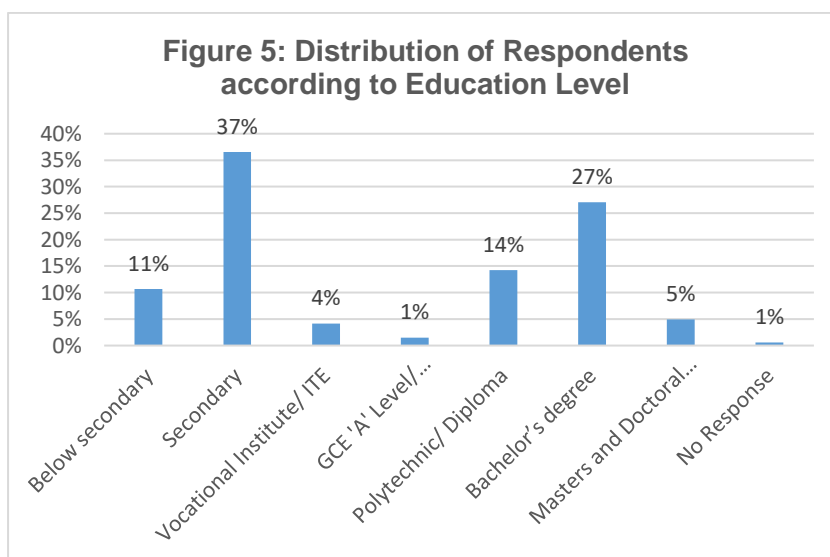
The racial proportions mirrored the population's proportions as closely as possible. As the survey aimed to study ethnic identity and the differences in conceptualisation of ethnic identity between the different races of Singapore, it was imperative that we mirrored the population's racial make-up. The data was weighted to ensure that the respondents' answers were proportionate to their proportions in the population.



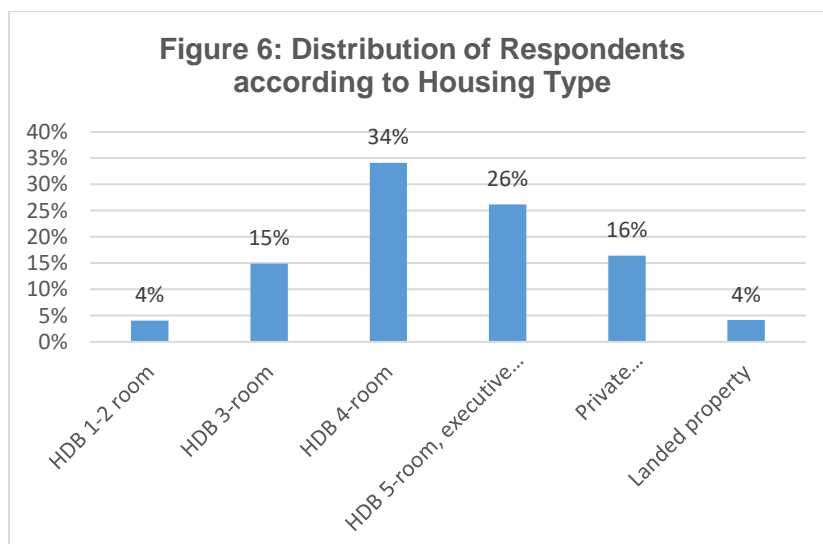
Our survey also aimed to test for differences between millennials and older respondents when it came to ethnic identity, performance and inter-cultural interactions. For equal representation, we ensured a fair distribution of all age groups in the sample.



In terms of educational background, 37 per cent of the respondents held a secondary school level qualification, and 27 per cent of respondents held bachelor's degrees.



In terms of housing types, most of the respondents resided in HDB 4-room flats (34 per cent). The second most common housing type were HDB 5-room or executive flats (26 per cent).



4. IDENTIFICATION WITH ETHNIC IDENTITY

Ethnic identity was important to the majority of respondents (64.0 per cent), whether in itself or in combination with Singapore identity. In terms of respondents' choice of categories, the simultaneous Singaporean and ethnic identity resonated with the highest proportion of respondents (49.0 per cent), contrary to a belief among some that ethnic and Singaporean identities were conflicting. However, Chinese respondents (46.0 per cent) were least likely to identify more with both their ethnic and Singaporean identity compared to the Malays (51.7 per cent) and Indians (53.3 per cent).

Table 1: Identification with ethnic identity (Race)

		Overall	Race of Respondents		
			Chinese	Malay	Indian
Would you say that you identify more with your ethnicity, Singapore or both?	Ethnic Identity	14.2%	15.4%	11.7%	12.0%
	Singaporean Identity	35.0%	36.8%	35.2%	32.6%

	Both ethnic and Singaporean identity	49.0%	46.0%	51.7%	53.3%
	Neither identity	1.8%	1.8%	1.4%	2.2%

There were also high proportions of Chinese, Malay and Indian respondents who were likely to at least somewhat identify with other ethnic cultures in Singapore (>70 per cent), which might be indicative of the effectiveness of the CMIO model Singapore adopts in facilitating a multi-cultural citizenry and consciousness (Tables 2-4).

Table 2: Identification with Chinese culture

Somewhat/Strongly identify		Race of Respondents	
		Malay	Indian
How much do you identify with the Chinese culture?	Don't identify at all	5.4%	6.7%
	Weakly identify	5.8%	8.4%
	Somewhat identify	43.1%	42.7%
	Strongly identify	45.5%	42.2%

Table 3: Identification with Malay culture

		Race of Respondents	
		Chinese	Indian
How much do you identify with the Malay culture?	Don't identify at all	8.3%	4.5%
	Weakly identify	12.1%	9.8%
	Somewhat identify	46.0%	41.2%
	Strongly identify	33.5%	44.5%

Table 4: Identification with Indian culture

		Race of Respondents	
		Chinese	Malay
How much do you identify with the Indian culture?	Don't identify at all	10.1%	5.6%
	Weakly identify	18.6%	9.4%
	Somewhat identify	40.9%	40.5%
	Strongly identify	30.3%	44.5%

5. ACCEPTANCE OF SINGAPOREANS FROM NON-CMIE

BACKGROUNDS

When presented with people from 10 different backgrounds, at least three in five respondents reported that those from any of these backgrounds would be acceptable as “truly Singaporean” if they were to become new citizens.

Respondents were most likely to report that new citizens from Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasian backgrounds would be accepted, as compared to someone from, for instance, a Korean background (see Table 5). Notably, more than 90 per cent of respondents found it at least somewhat acceptable for someone with a Chinese, Malay, or Indian background to be accepted as “truly Singaporean” if they had become a new citizen. Again, this reflects the salience of the CMIO model in reinforcing notions of the definition of what it means to be a Singaporean. This may potentially indicate that there is a close association

between national identity, i.e “Singaporeanness” and the core ethnic groups that have constituted it for decades.

Table 5: Percentage of Singaporeans from various ethnic backgrounds being accepted as “truly Singaporean”

Acceptable/somewhat acceptable for someone from a _____ background to be viewed as “truly Singaporean” if he has become a Singapore citizen		Overall	Chinese	Malay	Indian
	Malay	96.9%	96.6%	95.8%	94.4%
	Chinese	96.0%	96.5%	98.1%	96.4%
	Indian	91.2%	89.5%	93.0%	95.1%
	Eurasian	83.7%	81.8%	85.8%	85.9%
	Caucasian	78.5%	77.9%	79.0%	78.8%
	Japanese	75.5%	75.6%	75.9%	74.2%
	Korean	75.3%	76.2%	76.0%	71.5%
	Filipino	69.9%	68.0%	69.9%	73.6%
	Arab	64.5%	59.5%	73.4%	68.4%
	African	61.7%	61.4%	62.7%	60.4%

New citizens from Caucasian (78.5 per cent) or Japanese (75.5 per cent) backgrounds were more likely to be at least somewhat accepted as “truly Singaporeans”, compared to those from African (61.7 per cent) or Arab (64.5 per cent) backgrounds.

There were some differences among respondents of different ethnic groups in terms of the acceptability of new citizens of different backgrounds. As seen in Table 5, Malay respondents were more open to Arabs (73.4 per cent) compared to the Chinese (59.5 per cent).

6. PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF IDENTITY MARKERS

This section looks at the perceived importance of specific markers to one's ethnic identity and of preserving specific identity markers, as well as the practice of one's culture. For each of the major races in Singapore, respondents were presented with a list of more than 35 indicators across several broad categories: language, religion, food, art and music, traditions and festivals, geographic/religious heritage, lifestyle, as well as one's appearance and socialisation. Respondents were asked how important it was for someone who considers himself a Singaporean Chinese, Malay, Indian, or Eurasian to have or do these. Tables 1.1 to 1.3 in the Appendix report the full rankings of Chinese', Malays' and Indians' overall perceptions of the relative importance of the various identity markers, listed according to importance.

Overall, Chinese, Malays and Indians find that celebrating their community's key festivals, including giving out red, green or purple packets, as well as being able to read and speak the community's language, to be important markers of ethnic identity. They also find these markers important ones to be transmitted to their offspring. The aforementioned markers seem to be perceived as relatively more important than markers such as wearing ethnic dress, appreciating ethnic art and tracing one's ancestry.

6.1 Language

6.1.1 Perceived importance of language to ethnic community

There is unanimous agreement across Chinese, Malays and Indians that being able to read, write and speak in one's ethnic community language is at least somewhat important to one's ethnic identity and should be passed on to offspring. More than 86 per cent of all respondents find language markers to be at least somewhat important to their ethnic identity.

Given that it is compulsory for all children attending mainstream schools to learn English and their Mother Tongue, this finding could be seen as Singapore's bilingual policies causing a convergence towards the perception that language (mother tongue) ability is an important component of one's ethnic identity.

Malay respondents are most likely to emphasise language proficiency as a marker of their ethnic identity, as 95.7 per cent of these respondents regarded being able to read, write and speak Malay to be at least somewhat important. Malays were also more likely to regard this marker as important (71.9 per cent) rather than somewhat important (23.8 per cent).

Indian respondents were the least likely to regard language proficiency in Tamil as at least somewhat important (86.0 per cent), compared to the Malays (95.7 per cent) and Chinese (90.1 per cent).

Table 6: Chinese respondents' perception on the importance of the proficiency in Mandarin

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a	Unimportant	3.1%
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Singaporean Chinese to read, write and speak Mandarin?	Somewhat Unimportant	6.9%
	Somewhat Important	37.6%
	Important	52.5%

Table 7: Malay respondents' perception on the importance of the proficiency in Malay

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Malay to read, write and speak Malay?	Unimportant	1.8%
	Somewhat Unimportant	2.5%
	Somewhat Important	23.8%
	Important	71.9%

Table 8: Indian respondents' perception on the importance of the proficiency in Tamil

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Indian to read, write and speak Tamil?	Unimportant	6.3%
	Somewhat Unimportant	7.7%
	Somewhat Important	29.3%
	Important	56.7%

6.1.2 Practice of ethnic language

While Malay respondents were the most likely to regard their ethnic language as at least somewhat important to their ethnic identity, the Chinese were the most likely to engage and participate in reading, writing and speaking Mandarin. Among Chinese respondents, 71.5 per cent used their ethnic language either often or always, compared to 68.4 per cent of Malays and 62.9 per cent of Indians (Table 9). Given that Singapore has a majority-Chinese population, this finding is unsurprising — the Chinese have more opportunities to interact within

their ethnic community whether at work, school, or in public places, and to communicate in Mandarin.

Table 9: Frequency of reading, writing and speaking ethnic language (Race)

		Race of Respondents		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
How often do you engage/participate in reading, writing and speaking your ethnic language?	Always	33.0%	39.1%	25.3%
	Often	38.5%	29.3%	37.6%
	Sometimes	19.6%	20.0%	26.2%
	Rarely	7.0%	9.8%	8.4%
	Never	1.8%	1.9%	2.5%

Interestingly, despite concerns about the erosion of mother tongue use among younger Singaporeans, the young across all three ethnicities are almost as likely as the elderly to read, write and speak in their ethnic language. Sixty-seven per cent of respondents aged 21-25 years old reported being at least often engaged in reading, writing and speaking their ethnic language, as did 72 per cent of those aged 66 and above (Table 10).

Table 10: Frequency of reading, writing and speaking ethnic language (Age)

		Age of Respondents					
		21-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	≥66
How often do you engage/participate in reading, writing and speaking your ethnic language?	Always	31.9%	32.1%	36.6%	31.1%	28.7%	35.1%
	Often	35.0%	36.0%	34.0%	39.5%	37.1%	37.2%
	Sometimes	23.0%	22.9%	19.3%	18.1%	24.3%	14.9%
	Rarely	8.9%	6.9%	8.3%	7.9%	8.4%	9.5%
	Never	1.2%	1.8%	1.8%	3.3%	1.5%	2.7%

6.2 Religion

6.2.1 Perceived importance of religious markers to ethnic community

The survey found that religious markers are more important to Malays and Indians than to the Chinese. About 93 per cent of Malays perceived being Muslim as at least somewhat important to their ethnic identity, as compared to 70.6 per cent of Indian respondents in the case of Hinduism and 37.4 per cent of Chinese respondents in the case of Buddhism or Taoism. This may be due to the fact that the Chinese in Singapore practice other religions as well (such as Catholicism or Protestant Christianity), or may profess no religious affiliation. Ethnic minorities may also associate the practice of rituals more with ethnic background than the Chinese, who may associate rituals more with religious identity.

Table 11: Chinese respondents' perception on the importance of the practising Buddhism/Taoism

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Chinese to practise Buddhism/ Taoism?	Unimportant	28.6%
	Somewhat Unimportant	33.9%
	Somewhat Important	22.0%
	Important	15.4%

Table 12: Malay respondents' perception on the importance of being a Muslim

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Malay to be a Muslim?	Unimportant	2.3%
	Somewhat Unimportant	4.4%
	Somewhat Important	18.6%
	Important	74.7%

Table 13: Indian respondents' perception on the importance of practising Hinduism

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Indian to practise Hinduism?	Unimportant	12.9%
	Somewhat Unimportant	16.2%
	Somewhat Important	30.8%
	Important	39.8%

6.3 Food

Respondents across all three ethnicities were likely to value the importance of eating food the traditional way (with hands, or chopsticks) and enjoying ethnic food. These markers were considered important to be transmitted to offspring.

6.3.1 Perceived importance of food to ethnic culture

More than half of the respondents across all races were more likely to recognise eating food the traditional way to be at least somewhat important to their ethnic identity (Tables 14 to 16). Being able to eat in the traditional way was also considered to be at least somewhat important a cultural marker to be preserved.

Table 14: Chinese respondents' perception on the importance of being able to use chopsticks for meals

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Chinese to be able to use chopsticks for meals?	Unimportant	14.4%
	Somewhat Unimportant	26.2%
	Somewhat Important	34.2%
	Important	25.3%

Table 15: Malay respondents' perception on the importance of eating food with their hands

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Malay to eat food with their hands?	Unimportant	9.2%
	Somewhat Unimportant	21.6%
	Somewhat Important	33.5%
	Important	35.8%

Table 16: Indian respondents' perception on the importance of being able to eat with hands, without utensils

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Indian to be able to eat with hands, without utensils?	Unimportant	17.8%
	Somewhat Unimportant	25.2%
	Somewhat Important	26.0%
	Important	31.0%

The age effect on eating practices was more pronounced among the Malay community than among the Chinese and Indian communities. About 53 per cent of Malay respondents aged 21-25 years old regarded eating food with their hands to be important, compared to 76.0 per cent of respondents aged 56-65 years old.

Table 17: Malay respondents' perceived importance of eating food with hands (Age)

		Age of Malay Respondents					
		21-25	26-35	36-45	45-55	56-65	≥66
How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Malay to be able to eat with hands?	Unimportant	8.2%	6.6%	9.8%	9.0%	14.7%	0.0%
	Somewhat Unimportant	38.8%	33.0%	17.4%	21.0%	9.3%	3.3%
	Somewhat Important	34.7%	45.1%	34.8%	22.0%	34.7%	28.6%
	Important	18.4%	15.4%	38.0%	48.0%	41.3%	67.9%

6.4 Art and Music

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 CNA-IPS Survey on Ethnic Identity in Singapore
 by Mathew Mathews, Leonard Lim, S. Shanthini and Nicole Cheung

For Chinese, Malays and Indians, appreciating specific ethnic art forms and music were considered to be less important identity markers compared to markers such as speaking and writing one's ethnic language.

6.4.1 Perceived importance of the arts and music to ethnic community

Malays and Indians were more likely to regard the appreciation of cultural art forms to be at least somewhat important to their ethnic identity, compared to the Chinese. Nearly 31 per cent of Chinese respondents perceived the appreciation of ethnic art forms as at least somewhat important to their ethnic identity, as did 62.2 per cent of Malays and 61.5 per cent of Indians.

Table 18: Chinese respondents' perception on the importance of appreciating Chinese art forms

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Chinese to appreciate Chinese art forms?	Unimportant	26.0%
	Somewhat Unimportant	43.4%
	Somewhat Important	21.3%
	Important	9.4%

Table 19: Malay respondents' perception on the importance of appreciating Malay art forms

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Malay to appreciate Malay art forms?	Unimportant	12.4%
	Somewhat Unimportant	25.5%
	Somewhat Important	39.7%
	Important	22.5%

Table 20: Indian respondents' perception on the importance of appreciating Indian art forms

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Indian to appreciate Indian art forms?	Unimportant	22.5%
	Somewhat Unimportant	25.8%
	Somewhat Important	30.4%

	Important	21.1%
	Don't Know	0.3%

6.4.2 Practice of culture

While more than half of the Malay and Indian respondents perceived the appreciation of ethnic art forms to be important to their ethnic identity, they were likely to have only occasional engagement with ethnic art forms. Nearly 18 per cent of Malay respondents and 23.0 per cent of Indian respondents reported appreciating ethnic art forms often or always though the proportion increased to 61.7 per cent and 62.3 per cent when those who sometimes engage in the activity are included. Only 38.8 per cent of Chinese respondents sometimes, often or always engaged in appreciating ethnic art forms.

Table 21: How often respondents appreciate ethnic art forms (Race)

		Race of Respondents		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
How often do you engage/ participate in appreciating ethnic art forms	Always	4.5%	4.2%	8.2%
	Often	5.1%	13.3%	14.8%
	Sometimes	29.2%	44.4%	39.3%
	Rarely	39.8%	28.3%	29.1%
	Never	21.1%	9.6%	8.5%

6.5 Traditions and Festivals

For Chinese, Malays and Indians, celebrating the community's key festival, which includes handing out red, green and purple packets, was regarded as one of the more important ethnic identity markers. Chinese, Malays and Indians perceived the transmission of these markers down generations to be relatively important.

6.5.1 Perceived importance of traditions and festivals to ethnic community

An overwhelming majority of respondents across all three ethnicities recognised the importance of celebrating their ethnic community's key festival. Nearly 92 per cent of Chinese regarded the celebration of Chinese New Year as at least somewhat important, as did 95.9 per cent of Malays when it came to Hari Raya Puasa. A smaller proportion of Indians (88.2 per cent) were likely to hold such sentiments towards Deepavali.

Table 22: Chinese respondents' perception on the importance of celebrating Chinese New Year

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Chinese to celebrate Chinese New Year?	Unimportant	3.3%
	Somewhat Unimportant	4.6%
	Somewhat Important	31.2%
	Important	60.9%

Table 23: Malay respondents' perception on the importance of celebrating Hari Raya Puasa

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Malay to celebrate Hari Raya Puasa?	Unimportant	1.6%
	Somewhat Unimportant	2.5%
	Somewhat Important	21.1%
	Important	74.8%

Table 24: Indian respondents' perception on the importance of celebrating Deepavali

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Indian to celebrate Deepavali?	Unimportant	6.6%
	Somewhat Unimportant	5.2%
	Somewhat Important	30.7%
	Important	57.5%

6.6 Heritage

6.6.1 Perceived importance of heritage to ethnic community

Slightly more than half of Malay and Indian respondents regarded feeling a connection to their country of ancestral origin as at least somewhat important, as did 38.7 per cent of Chinese respondents. This indicates that heritage connection is perceived as less important a marker of ethnic identity, compared to other markers such as celebrating key festivals.

Table 25: Chinese respondents' perception on the importance of feeling a connection to the country of ancestral origin

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Chinese to feel a connection to the country where his ancestors came from?	Unimportant	23.5%
	Somewhat Unimportant	37.8%
	Somewhat Important	29.3%
	Important	9.4%

Table 26: Malay respondents' perception on the importance of feeling a connection to the country of ancestral origin

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Malay to feel a connection to the country where his ancestors came from?	Unimportant	16.7%
	Somewhat Unimportant	30.5%
	Somewhat Important	36.5%
	Important	16.3%

Table 27: Indian respondents' perception on the importance of feeling a connection to the country of ancestral origin

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Indian to feel a connection to the country where his ancestors came from?	Unimportant	27.0%
	Somewhat Unimportant	19.2%
	Somewhat Important	34.3%
	Important	19.5%

Comparatively, Chinese, Malay and Indian respondents were more likely to value the importance of having ethnic pride. More than 70 per cent of Chinese respondents regarded taking pride in their ethnicity as at least somewhat important, as did 83.0 per cent of the Malays and 84.6 per cent of the Indians.

Table 28: Chinese respondents' perception on the importance of taking pride in being Chinese

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Chinese to take pride in being Chinese	Unimportant	8.5%
	Somewhat Unimportant	20.7%
	Somewhat Important	35.5%
	Important	35.3%

Table 29: Malay respondents' perception on the importance of taking pride in being Malay

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Malay to take pride in being Malay?	Unimportant	4.8%
	Somewhat Unimportant	12.2%
	Somewhat Important	33.1%
	Important	49.9%

Table 30: Indian respondents' perception on the importance of taking pride in being Indian

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Indian to take pride in being Indian?	Unimportant	7.7%
	Somewhat Unimportant	7.7%
	Somewhat Important	37.5%
	Important	47.1%

6.6.2 Practice of heritage awareness

About three in five respondents reported that they always, often or sometimes engage or participate in finding out more about their ancestry. Chinese

respondents were the least likely to find out more about their ancestry, with only 54.9 per cent of them having always, often or sometimes engaged in such practices. The corresponding proportions for Malays and Indians were 62.1 per cent and 60.8 per cent, respectively.

Table 31: Engagement in finding out more about ancestry (Race)

		Race of Respondents		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
How often do you engage/participate in finding out more about your ancestry	Always	8.3%	12.8%	13.0%
	Often	13.0%	13.3%	16.0%
	Sometimes	33.6%	36.1%	31.8%
	Rarely	31.4%	25.9%	20.2%
	Never	13.8%	11.9%	19.1%

6.7 Appearance

6.7.1 Perceived importance of appearance

Appearance was considered relatively less important a marker to one's ethnic identity, across all three racial groups. Less than half of Chinese respondents (45.2 per cent) regarded resembling a typically Chinese person to be at least somewhat important. Slightly more than half of the Malay respondents (52.5 per cent) and Indian respondents (55.0 per cent) perceived looking like a typical Malay or Indian as at least somewhat important to their ethnic identity. This implies that a fair proportion of respondents regarded the foundations of their ethnic identity to be cultural, rather than biological.

Table 32: Chinese respondents' perception on the importance of resembling a typically Chinese person

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a	Unimportant	23.3%
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Singaporean Chinese to resemble a typically Chinese person?	Somewhat Unimportant	31.5%
	Somewhat Important	28.7%
	Important	16.5%

Table 33: Malay respondents' perception on the importance of resembling a typically Malay person

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Malay to <i>resemble a typically Malay person</i> ?	Unimportant	20.0%
	Somewhat Unimportant	27.5%
	Somewhat Important	30.0%
	Important	22.5%

Table 34: Indian respondents' perception on the importance of resembling a typically Indian person

How important is it for someone who considers himself/herself a Singaporean Indian to resemble a typically Indian person?	Unimportant	23.6%
	Somewhat Unimportant	21.6%
	Somewhat Important	32.6%
	Important	22.2%

7. OPENNESS TO OTHER CULTURES

Most respondents reported that they were interested in experiencing other ethnic cultures. However, in terms of actual engagement, there appears to be a relatively lower level of inter-cultural exchange. Unsurprisingly, given the majority Chinese population and the subsequent higher level of opportunities for engagement, Chinese culture received the highest level of engagement among Singaporeans, compared to other ethnic cultures.

7.1 Interest

Among Chinese respondents, younger respondents were more likely to be interested in experiencing the culture of other ethnic groups, especially when it comes to eating the food of other cultures. The younger Chinese were more likely to be interested in celebrating ethnic festivals such as Deepavali (80.0 per cent) as compared to the older Chinese (67.0 per cent). The older Chinese respondents were more likely to be interested in learning Malay or Tamil (84.0 per cent), as compared to younger Chinese (73.0 per cent). When it came to dressing in a traditional outfit other than that of one's community there was comparatively less interest — only 57 per cent of those aged 21 to 25 showed interest. This is compared to 80 per cent of young Malays and 75 per cent of young Indians who were interested in cross cultural dressing.

Table 35: Chinese respondents' interest in experiencing the culture of other ethnic groups

Somewhat interested/ Interested to experience	Chinese 21-25 years old	Somewhat interested/ Interested to experience	Chinese 56-65 years old
1. Eating Malay food	92.0%	1. Eating Malay food	86.0%
2. Eating Indian food	90.0%	2. Learning Malay or Tamil	84.0%
3. Celebrating Deepavali	80.0%	3. Eating Indian food	83.0%
4. Celebrating Hari Raya	79.0%	4. Attending Malay weddings	75.0%
5. Attending Malay weddings	78.0%	5. Attending Indian weddings	70.0%
6. Attending Indian weddings	75.0%	6. Celebrating Hari Raya	69.0%
7. Learning Malay or Tamil	73.0%	7. Celebrating Deepavali	67.0%
8. Eating Malay/Indian food with hands	63.0%	8. Eating Malay/Indian food with hands	54.0%
9. Dressing in a traditional outfit other than that of your ethnic community	57.0%	9. Dressing in a traditional outfit other than that of your ethnic community	50.0%

The Malay community was similarly interested in experiencing the culture of the Indians and the Chinese, although when it came to food, there seemed to be more interest in Indian food, most likely because Chinese food is commonly associated with pork.

Similarly, younger Malays were more likely to be interested in experiencing different aspects of other ethnic cultures (68.0 per cent to 94.0 per cent) as compared to their older counterparts (48.0 per cent to 70.0 per cent).

Table 36: Malay respondents' interest in experiencing the culture of other ethnic groups

Somewhat interested/ Interested to experience	Malay 21-25 years old	Somewhat interested/ Interested to experience	Malay 56-65 years old
1. Eating Indian food	94.0%	1. Eating Indian food	70.0%
2. Celebrating Deepavali	86.0%	2. Learning Mandarin and Tamil	64.0%
3. Attending Indian weddings	86.0%	3. Dressing in a traditional outfit other than that of your ethnic community	60.0%
4. Learning Mandarin or Tamil	86.0%	4. Celebrating Deepavali	60.0%
5. Attending Chinese weddings	84.0%	5. Attending Indian weddings	59.0%
6. Celebrating Chinese New Year	84.0%	6. Celebrating Chinese New Year	58.0%
7. Dressing in a traditional outfit other than that of your ethnic community	80.0%	7. Attending Chinese weddings	57.0%
8. Eating Chinese food with chopsticks	78.0%	8. Eating Chinese food with chopsticks	49.0%
9. Eating Chinese food	68.0%	9. Eating Chinese food	48.0%

Among Indian respondents, younger respondents were more likely to indicate their interest in experiencing the culture of other ethnic groups. They were as likely to be interested in experiencing Chinese and Malay cultures.

Table 37: Indian respondents' interest in experiencing the culture of other ethnic groups

Somewhat interested/ Interested to experience	Indian 21-25 years old	Somewhat interested/ Interested to experience	Indian 56-65 years old
1. Eating Malay food	97.0%	1. Eating Malay food	84.0%
2. Attending Chinese weddings	91.0%	2. Celebrating Hari Raya	83.0%
3. Attending Malay weddings	91.0%	3. Eating Chinese food	80.0%
4. Learning Mandarin or Malay	90.0%	4. Celebrating Chinese New Year	79.0%
5. Eating Chinese food	88.0%	5. Learning Mandarin or Malay	76.0%
6. Celebrating Hari Raya	85.0%	6. Attending Malay weddings	73.0%
7. Celebrating Chinese New Year	82.0%	7. Attending Chinese weddings	71.0%
8. Eating Chinese food with chopsticks	82.0%	8. Eating Chinese food with chopsticks	60.0%
9. Dressing in a traditional outfit other than that of your ethnic community	75.0%	9. Dressing in a traditional outfit other than that of your ethnic community	59.0%

The majority of respondents reported their interest in experiencing other cultures. For example, 74.0 per cent of respondents are at least somewhat interested in learning Mandarin, Malay or Tamil if they did not already know it. In addition, 87 per cent of respondents said they would be at least somewhat interested in celebrating Chinese New Year, 76.0 per cent for Hari Raya and

73.0 per cent for Deepavali. A closer look when respondents' ethnicity is taken into account shows that there were slightly more Malays and Indians who were open to this compared to the Chinese. For example, while 71.0% of Chinese respondents indicated interest in celebrating Hari Raya, 81.0% of Indian respondents expressed interest in doing so.

Table 38: Interest in celebrating Chinese New Year (Race)

How interested are you in celebrating Chinese New Year?		Chinese	Malay	Indian
	Somewhat Interested/Very Interested		90.0%	73.0%

Table 39: Interest in celebrating Hari Raya (Race)

How interested are you in celebrating Hari Raya?		Chinese	Malay	Indian
	Somewhat Interested/Very Interested		71.0%	97.0%

Table 40: Interest in celebrating Deepavali (Race)

How interested are you in celebrating Deepavali?		Chinese	Malay	Indian
	Somewhat Interested/Very Interested		70.0%	74.0%

In addition, while 73.0 per cent of Chinese respondents expressed interest in learning Malay or Tamil, 83.0 percent of Malays expressed interest in learning Mandarin or Tamil and 82.0 per cent of Indians expressed interest in learning Mandarin or Malay.

Chinese respondents were also less open to using their hands to eat. While 62.0 per cent and 71.0 per cent of Malays and Indians respectively showed at least some interest in using chopsticks, only 59.0 per cent of Chinese showed similar sentiments in using their hands to eat food.

7.2 Engagement

Despite high levels of interest expressed, generally less than half of respondents have often or always experienced or participated in other ethnic cultures. These include eating with their hands, participating in other cultures' key festivals, attending other cultures' weddings and wearing other traditional ethnic outfits.

When the criteria are expanded to include those who also *sometimes* participated in activities such as another ethnic group's weddings (which respondents may have relatively less opportunities for compared to, for example, eating another ethnic group's food), the proportions increase markedly. For example, 51.0 per cent and 41.0 per cent of Chinese respondents always, often or sometimes attended Malay and Indian weddings, compared to those who reported to have always or often attended (15.0 per cent for Malay and 10.0 per cent for Indian weddings). This is in comparison to 91.0 per cent of Chinese respondents who would always, often or sometimes attend Chinese weddings, and 64.0 per cent of Chinese respondents who would always or often attend Chinese weddings.

In terms of actually engaging other cultures, there appears to be a slightly lower level of inter-cultural exchange, especially in the case of non-Chinese cultures. For example, while 84.0 per cent of respondents testified to often participating in Chinese festivals, only 59.0 per cent testified to participating in Malay festivals and only 49.0 per cent in Indian festivals (tables 41 to 43). Again, this could be due to a lack of opportunities due to the Chinese being the majority race in Singapore.

Table 41: Participation in Chinese festivals (Race)

Participate in Chinese festivals		Overall	Chinese	Malay	Indian
	Always/often/sometimes		84.0%	93.0%	55.0%

Table 42: Participation in Malay festivals (Race)

Participate in Malay festivals		Overall	Chinese	Malay	Indian
	Always/often/sometimes		59.0%	53.0%	93.0%

Table 43: Participation in Indian festivals (Race)

Participate in Indian festivals		Overall	Chinese	Malay	Indian
	Always/often/sometimes		49.0%	44.0%	54.0%

Table 44: Chinese respondents' experience/ participation in other ethnic cultures

Always/often	Chinese 21-25 years old	Always/ Often	Chinese 56-65 years old
1. Eat Western cuisine	79.0% (98.0%)	1. Hearing Malay spoken around you	50.0% (90.0%)
2. Eat non-Singaporean Asian food	73.0% (98.0%)	2. Eat Malay food	45.0% (88.0%)

3. Listen to Western music	56.0% (88.0%)	3. Eat Western cuisine	44.0% (86.0%)
4. Eat Malay food	55.0% (85.0%)	4. Eat non-Singaporean Asian food	43.0% (85.0%)
5. Watch Western TV shows or movies	51.0% (91.0%)	5. Eat Indian food	37.0% (82.0%)
6. Eat Indian food	50.0% (84.0%)	6. Hearing Tamil spoken around you	34.0% (73.0%)
7. Hearing Malay spoken around you	50.0% (92.0%)	7. Watch Western TV shows or movies	27.0% (70.0%)
8. Watch non-Singaporean Asian TV shows or movies (e.g. Korean dramas)	48.0% (86.0%)	8. Watch non-Singaporean Asian TV shows or movies (e.g. Korean dramas)	26.0% (70.0%)
9. Listen to non-Singaporean Asian music (e.g. K-POP)	43.0% (79.0%)	9. Watch Singaporean TV shows or movies	24.0% (69.0%)
10. Hearing Tamil spoken around you	32.0% (75.0%)	10. Listen to Western music	22.0% (60.0%)
11. Watch Singaporean TV shows or movies	22.0% (61.0%)	11. Listen to non-Singaporean Asian music (e.g. K-POP)	16.0% (47.0%)
12. Attend Malay weddings	13.0% (47.0%)	12. Attend Malay weddings	14.0% (56.0%)
13. Eat food with your hands	13.0% (34.0%)	13. Eat food with your hands	13.0% (32.0%)
14. Participate in Malay festivals	12.0% (50.0%)	14. Listen to Singaporean music	12.0% (53.0%)
15. Listen to Singaporean music	11.0% (45.0%)	15. Participate in Malay festivals	11.0% (51.0%)
16. Participate in Indian festivals	10.0% (38.0%)	16. Participate in Indian festivals	10.0% (43.0%)
17. Participate in Indian weddings	8.0% (34.0%)	17. Attending Indian weddings	9.0% (42.0%)
18. Wear traditional Indian outfits	8.0% (22.0%)	18. Wear traditional Malay outfits	3.0% (21.0%)
19. Wear traditional Malay outfits	6.0% (20.0%)	19. Wear traditional Indian outfits	3.0% (16.0%)

(Figures in brackets are the cumulative percentages of respondents who report they always/often/sometimes participate in these activities)

It is interesting to see that both younger and older groups of Malays were more likely to eat food with chopsticks frequently (30.0 per cent and 24.0 per cent,

respectively), as compared to the Chinese eating food with their hands (13.0 per cent).

Table 45: Malay respondents' experience/ participation in other ethnic cultures

Always/often (Figures in brackets are the cumulative percentages of respondents who report they always/often/sometimes participate in these activities)	Malay 21-25 years old	Always/ Often	Malay 56-65 years old
1. Hearing Mandarin/ Chinese dialect spoken around you	72.0% (90.0%)	1. Hearing Mandarin/ Chinese dialect spoken around you	78.0% (92.0%)
2. Eat Western cuisine	72.0% (99.0%)	2. Hearing Tamil spoken around you	58.0% (80.0%)
3. Listen to Western music	61.0% (90.0%)	3. Eat Western cuisine	44.0% (88.0%)
4. Eat Indian food	59.0% (90.0%)	4. Eat non-Singaporean Asian food	31.0% (60.0%)
5. Watch Western TV shows or movies	59.0% (88.0%)	5. Watch Western TV shows or movies	30.0% (73.0%)
6. Hearing Tamil spoken around you	52.0% (76.0%)	6. Eat Indian food	29.0% (60.0%)
7. Eat non-Singaporean Asian food	50.0% (90.0%)	7. Watch Singaporean TV shows or movies	29.0% (71.0%)
8. Watch non-Singaporean Asian TV shows or movies (e.g. Korean dramas)	41.0% (72.0%)	8. Participate in Indian festivals	27.0% (60.0%)
9. Listen to non-Singaporean Asian music (e.g. K-POP)	32.0% (61.0%)	9. Participate in Chinese festivals	26.0% (64.0%)
10. Eat food with chopsticks	30.0% (65.0%)	10. Eat food with chopsticks	24.0% (50.0%)
11. Watch Singaporean TV shows or movies	22.0% (69.0%)	11. Listen to Western music	21.0% (53.0%)
12. Eat Chinese food	20.0% (63.0%)	12. Attend Chinese weddings	19.0% (49.0%)
13. Participate in Indian festivals	18.0% (51.0%)	13. Wear traditional Chinese outfits	19.0% (25.0%)
14. Participate in Chinese festivals	16.0% (55.0%)	14. Attend Indian weddings	18.0% (50.0%)

15. Listen to Singaporean music	12.0% (55.0%)	15. Eat Chinese food	18.0% (39.0%)
16. Attend Chinese weddings	12.0% (41.0%)	16. Watch non-Singaporean Asian TV shows or movies (e.g. Korean dramas)	13.0% (49.0%)
17. Attending Indian weddings	10.0% (32.0%)	17. Listen to Singaporean music	12.0% (44.0%)
18. Wear traditional Chinese outfits	8.0% (22.0%)	18. Listen to non-Singaporean Asian music (e.g. K-POP)	12.0% (41.0%)
19. Wear traditional Indian outfits	4.0% (26.0%)	19. Wear traditional Indian outfits	8.0% (24.0%)

More than 70.0 per cent of Indian and Malay respondents have heard Mandarin or dialects being spoken around them always or often compared to 50 per cent of Chinese who hear Malay and 32 per cent who hear Tamil. This perhaps reflects how much minorities in Singapore are embedded within the majority setting. More than 50.0 per cent of younger Indian respondents reported that they frequently eat Malay and Chinese food. Older Indian respondents were as likely to report eating Malay and Chinese food frequently too (around 50.0 per cent).

Table 46: Indian respondents' experience/ participation in other ethnic cultures

Always/ often (figures in brackets are the cumulative percentages of respondents who report they Always/often/sometimes participate in these activities)	Indian 21-25 years old	Always/ Often	Indian 56-65 years old
1. Hearing Mandarin/ Chinese dialect spoken around you	78.0% (97.0%)	1. Hearing Mandarin/ Chinese dialect spoken around you	75.0% (95.0%)

2. Hearing Malay spoken around you	75.0% (94.0%)	2. Hearing Malay spoken around you	70.0% (95.0%)
3. Eat Malay food	66.0% (97.0%)	3. Eat Western cuisine	51.0% (76.0%)
4. Eat Western cuisine	66.0% (100.0%)	4. Eat Malay food	50.0% (91.0%)
5. Watch Western TV shows or movies	63.0% (97.0%)	5. Eat Chinese food	46.0% (84.0%)
6. Listen to Western music	59.0% (81.0%)	6. Watch Singaporean TV shows or movies	41.0% (82.0%)
7. Eat Chinese food	53.0% (81.0%)	7. Participate in Chinese festivals	39.0% (74.0%)
8. Eat non-Singaporean Asian food	50.0% (88.0%)	8. Participate in Malay festivals	36.0% (79.0%)
9. Watch non-Singaporean Asian TV shows or movies (e.g. Korean dramas)	50.0% (81.0%)	9. Eat non-Singaporean Asian food	28.0% (60.0%)
10. Watch Singaporean TV shows or movies	47.0% (78.0%)	10. Watch Western TV shows or movies	27.0% (77.0%)
11. Eat food with chopsticks	25.0% (69.0%)	11. Attend Malay weddings	22.0% (67.0%)
12. Listen to Singaporean music	22.0% (51.0%)	12. Attend Chinese weddings	19.0% (66.0%)
13. Participate in Malay festivals	22.0% (56.0%)	13. Watch non-Singaporean Asian TV shows or movies (e.g. Korean dramas)	18.0% (66.0%)
14. Attend Malay weddings	19.0% (66.0%)	14. Listen to Western music	17.0% (53.0%)
15. Listen to non-Singaporean Asian music (e.g. K-POP)	18.0% (40.0%)	15. Eat food with chopsticks	15.0% (41.0%)
16. Participate in Chinese festivals	18.0% (49.0%)	16. Listen to non-Singaporean Asian music (e.g. K-POP)	8.0% (32.0%)
17. Wear traditional Malay outfits	16.0% (47.0%)	17. Wear traditional Chinese outfits	8.0% (24.0%)

18. Attend Chinese weddings	15.0% (43.0%)	18. Wear traditional Malay outfits	7.0% (26.0%)
19. Wear traditional Chinese outfits	9.0% (28.0%)	19. Listen to Singaporean music	6.0% (40.0%)

Interestingly, older Indians and Malays were more likely to participate in Chinese festivals than the young. For example, 64.4 per cent of Malay 56-65 year-olds and 74.3 per cent of Indian 56-65 year-olds would at least sometimes participate in Chinese festivals, compared to 54.0 per cent of Malay 21-25 year-olds and 50.0 per cent of Indian 21-25 year-olds. This is most likely due to increased opportunities or larger social networks for older Singaporeans, compared to their younger counterparts and may reflect such opportunities the older one becomes.

Table 47: Percentage of those who always/often/sometimes participates in Chinese festivals

Participate in Chinese festivals		Overall	Chinese	Malay	Indian
	Always/often/sometimes		84.0%	93.0%	55.0%

Participate in Chinese festivals		Chinese	Malay	Indian
	21-25 years old	94.1%	46.0%	50.0%
	26 – 35 years old	94.5%	51.6%	41.4%
	36 – 45 years old	92.6%	35.9%	43.3%
	46 – 55 years old	92.3%	46.4%	25.6%
	56 – 65 years old	95.0%	35.6%	25.7%

Food was one of the primary categories that united the races. All respondents tended to eat Chinese, Malay and Indian food always, often or sometimes. For example, 53.0 per cent of Malay respondents and 81.0 per cent of Indian respondents ate Chinese food with such frequency. A much smaller proportion of Malays partake in Chinese food as pork tends to be a staple of Chinese cuisine, and with most Malays also being Muslim, this would preclude them from consuming such food, or food not prepared using halal methods.

Eighty-eight per cent of Chinese respondents and 88 per cent of Indian respondents ate Malay food with such frequency; 82.0 per cent of Chinese respondents and 84.0 cent of Malay respondents ate Indian food always, often or sometimes. Singaporeans, though, may be bonding through food and this may be one avenue to tap to build deeper bonds across the races.

Besides engagement with local culture in terms of food and media, many Singaporeans across age and ethnic groups seemed to also consume or engage in Western forms of food and media culture. In fact, more Singaporeans consumed Western media compared to local Singaporean fare.

In terms of dating, respondents preferred their children or grandchildren dating Chinese or Caucasians. Ninety-five per cent of respondents were comfortable with their children/grandchildren dating a Chinese person and 75.0 per cent were comfortable with Caucasians. However, only 65.0 per cent and 61.0 per cent of respondents were comfortable with their children or grandchildren dating Malays and Indians, respectively.

While about 90 per cent of Indian and Malay 21-25 year-olds were comfortable with their children or grandchildren dating outside of their race, the Chinese were a little less so. Only 66.5 per cent were comfortable in the case of Malay dating partners and only 62 per cent were comfortable in the case of Indian dating partners.

Table 48: Percentage of those who are comfortable with their children/grandchildren dating Chinese

How comfortable are you with your children/grandchildren dating someone who is Chinese?		Chinese	Malay	Indian
	21–25 years old	98.7%	90.2%	87.5%
	26–35 years old	99.6%	91.2%	89.3%
	36–45 years old	99.1%	91.3%	77.3%
	46–55 years old	99.0%	82.5%	79.1%
	56–65 years old	98.9%	86.3%	83.8%

Table 49: Percentage of those who are comfortable with their children/grandchildren dating Malays

How comfortable are you with your children/grandchildren dating someone who is Malay?		Chinese	Malay	Indian
	21–25 years old	66.5%	96.1%	75.0%
	26–35 years old	64.6%	96.7%	75.4%
	36–45 years old	56.5%	96.7%	61.4%
	46–55 years old	56.6%	98.0%	68.6%
	56–65 years old	55.2%	98.7%	78.7%

Table 50: Percentage of those who are comfortable with their children/grandchildren dating Indians

How comfortable are you with your children/grandchildren dating someone who is Indian?		Chinese	Malay	Indian
	21–25 years old	62.0%	84.3%	93.8%
	26–35 years old	56.5%	81.3%	94.7%
	36–45 years old	50.2%	73.9%	92.1%
	46–55 years old	52.0%	75.3%	96.6%
	56–65 years old	52.2%	80.8%	98.6%

Table 51: Percentage of those who are comfortable with their children/grandchildren dating Caucasians

How comfortable are you with your children/grandchildren dating someone who is Caucasian?		Chinese	Malay	Indian
	21-25 years old	86.7%	84.0%	84.4%
	26 – 35 years old	74.5%	85.7%	87.5%
	36 – 45 years old	71.5%	76.1%	70.5%
	46 – 55 years old	75.6%	71.1%	72.1%
	56 – 65 years old	70.3%	75.3%	74.3%

In some societies, when minority partners marry a member of the majority, there is a tendency for the child to be raised to adopt the majority culture's traditions. In this survey there is widespread acceptance of a bi-cultural identity, in that there was an expectation that a child of mixed-race parentage should adopt the ethnic traditions and language of both parents (see Table 52). For example, in the case of a Chinese father and Malay mother, 63.0 per cent of all respondents felt the child should adopt both parents' traditions, much more than those choosing the father (31.0 per cent) or mother (6.0 per cent) alone. Among those who did not think that the ethnic tradition of both should be adopted, the

tendency reflected patriarchal norms, where the traditions of the father was followed. We noticed however in the case of Malay respondents, for those who did not support the adoption of both ethnic traditions, there was a tendency to prefer the child to follow Malay tradition whenever there was a Malay parent (either mother or father).

Table 52: Respondents' choice on whose ethnic traditions should a child of mixed race parentage adopt

In your opinion, for a child of mixed race parentage, whose ethnic traditions should he/she adopt? In the case of a...	Mother's	Father's	Both
Chinese father and Indian mother	2.0%	35.0%	63.0%
Chinese mother and Indian father	7.0%	29.0%	64.0%
Chinese father and Malay mother	6.0%	31.0%	63.0%
Chinese mother and Malay father	7.0%	29.0%	65.0%
Chinese father and Eurasian mother	1.0%	32.0%	67.0%
Chinese mother and Eurasian father	4.0%	27.0%	68.0%

7.3 Understanding

As described in Section 6, respondents were asked their opinion of important markers of ethnic identity for the main ethnic groups in Singapore —Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasian. In this way we could also compare how individuals of different ethnic backgrounds perceive the importance of various ethnic identity markers for other ethnic communities. Overall, there appears to be some disjuncture in perceptions. This was most apparent when it comes to the ethnic identity markers of Malays. While there seemed to be more consensus among Malay respondents as to the importance of various ethnic identity markers to them, non-Malays were less certain.

Malay respondents were more likely to be unanimous in their perception that eating halal food was an important marker of their ethnic identity. As Table 53 shows, a far bigger proportion of Malay respondents reported that this marker is important (74.8 per cent) rather than somewhat important (18.9 per cent). However, only 32.0 per cent of Chinese respondents and 46.5 per cent of Indian respondents perceived this marker to be important to the Malay ethnic identity. This finding is repeated in the questions for the perceived importance of avoiding touching dogs, avoiding alcohol and the wearing of the *tudung* for female Malays (see Tables 54 to 56).

Table 53: Perceived importance of eating halal food to the Malays

		Chinese	Malay	Indian
Eat Halal food (Malay)	Unimportant	11.5%	1.8%	8.0%
	Somewhat Unimportant	18.1%	4.4%	13.2%
	Somewhat Important	38.4%	18.9%	32.0%
	Important	32.0%	74.8%	46.5%

Table 54: Perceived importance of avoiding touching dogs to the Malays

		Malay		Chinese		Indian	
		21-25 years old	56-65 years old	21-25 years old	56-65 years old	21-25 years old	56-65 years old
Avoid touching dogs	Somewhat important/ Important	74.0%	96.0%	49.0%	56.0%	46.0%	86.0%

(Malay)							
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Table 55: Perceived importance of avoiding alcohol to the Malays

		Malay		Chinese		Indian	
		21-25 years old	56-65 years old	21-25 years old	56-65 years old	21-25 years old	56-65 years old
Avoid alcohol (Malay)	Somewhat important/ Important	84.0%	96.0%	54.0%	61.0%	66.0%	87.0%

Table 56: Perceived importance of wearing tudung for a female, to the Malays

		Malay		Chinese		Indian	
		21-25 years old	56-65 years old	21-25 years old	56-65 years old	21-25 years old	56-65 years old
Wearing <i>tudung</i> /headscarf if female	Somewhat important/ Important	72.0%	93.0%	46.0%	51.0%	54.0%	88.0%

Within the Malay community, younger Malays were less likely to perceive religious markers such as avoiding touching dogs, avoiding alcohol and wearing a *tudung* if female, to be at least somewhat important to their ethnic identity (74.0 per cent, 84.0 per cent and 72.0 per cent, respectively), compared to older Malays (96.0 per cent, 96.0 per cent and 93.0 per cent, respectively).

Among the Chinese and Indian communities, Tables 54 to 56 also indicate that older respondents were more likely to understand the importance of such religious markers to the Malay ethnic identity, as compared to younger Chinese and Indians. This lack of inter-cultural understanding among younger Singaporeans may be a result of less interactions and friendships across racial lines, and is a trend that bears watching in future.

There was a somewhat greater difference between how Chinese respondents perceived the importance of various ethnic identity markers for different communities compared to how Malays and Indians viewed these issues (Appendix Tables 1.4 to 1.12 provide more details). Given that the Chinese form the majority race, it may be the case that a substantial proportion attach relatively less importance to finding out more about ethnic minorities and their practices.

8. CULTURAL TRANSMISSION

Ethnic identity markers related to language, traditions and festivals, and food were regarded as important markers of ethnic identity to be passed on to offspring. In comparison, identity markers related to heritage and art and music were less emphasised.

8.1 Language

There was near unanimous agreement that the ability to read or write in one's ethnic language (93.3 per cent) and converse in one's ethnic language (94.0

per cent) is at least somewhat important to be passed down to future generations.

Table 57: Perceived importance of passing on the ability to read/ write in ethnic language (Race)

		Race of Respondents		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
How important is it for you to be able to pass on the ability to read/ write in ethnic language to your children/grandchildren?	Unimportant	2.4%	1.8%	2.5%
	Somewhat Unimportant	4.2%	1.2%	7.7%
	Somewhat Important	38.3%	35.9%	39.2%
	Important	55.1%	61.1%	50.7%

Table 58: Perceived importance of passing on the ability to converse in ethnic language (Race)

		Race of Respondents		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
How important is it for you to be able to pass on the ability to converse in ethnic language to your children/grandchildren?	Unimportant	1.9%	1.8%	1.9%
	Somewhat Unimportant	4.2%	1.8%	6.0%
	Somewhat Important	37.8%	41.3%	44.7%
	Important	56.1%	55.0%	47.4%

8.2 Traditions and Festivals

Respondents of all three ethnicities were also likely to regard celebrating key festivals in their ethnic culture as important, and were likely to perceive passing on these markers to be at least somewhat important (more than 80.0 percent).

Table 59: Perceived importance of passing on the practice of celebrating ethnic festivals (Race)

		Race of Respondents		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian

How important is it for you to be able to pass on the practice of celebrating ethnic festivals to your children/grandchildren?	Unimportant	4.1%	2.1%	3.8%
	Somewhat Unimportant	11.3%	3.9%	6.3%
	Somewhat Important	42.0%	41.2%	40.7%
	Important	42.6%	52.8%	49.2%

Compared to language markers, there was slightly less emphasis placed on the importance of passing on the practice of following ethnic wedding traditions across all three races. Just under 70 per cent of Chinese respondents perceived the practice of following ethnic wedding traditions as at least somewhat important to be passed on, as did 85.5 per cent of Malays and 82.5 per cent of Indians.

Table 60: Perceived importance of passing on the practice of following ethnic wedding traditions (Race)

		Race of Respondents		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
How important is it for you to be able to pass on the practice of following ethnic wedding traditions to your children/grandchildren?	Unimportant	7.9%	3.9%	6.3%
	Somewhat Unimportant	23.0%	10.6%	11.3%
	Somewhat Important	43.8%	45.6%	44.0%
	Important	25.3%	39.9%	38.5%

8.3 Food

More than 70.0 per cent of respondents from all three races perceived it to be at least somewhat important for them to pass down the ability to eat in a traditional way to their children or grandchildren.

Table 61: Perceived importance of passing on the ability to eat in a traditional way to younger generations (Race)

	Race of Respondents

		Chinese	Malay	Indian
How important is it for you to be able to pass on the ability to eat in a traditional way to your children/grandchildren?	Unimportant	4.8%	5.3%	9.3%
	Somewhat Unimportant	14.7%	12.2%	18.1%
	Somewhat Important	40.2%	38.4%	35.1%
	Important	40.1%	44.1%	37.5%

Respondents from all races were also likely to regard passing on the ability to enjoy ethnic food to their children or grandchildren as at least somewhat important. This is particularly for the Indians, with 81.9 per cent of Indian respondents having such sentiments, compared to the Chinese (76.6 per cent) and Malays (83.7 per cent).

Table 62: Perceived importance of passing on the ability to enjoy ethnic food to younger generations (Race)

		Race of Respondents		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
How important is it for you to be able to pass on the enjoyment of ethnic food to your children/grandchildren?	Unimportant	5.3%	3.9%	3.8%
	Somewhat Unimportant	18.1%	12.4%	14.2%
	Somewhat Important	41.6%	40.7%	43.3%
	Important	35.0%	43.0%	38.6%

Millennials were less likely to perceive the enjoyment of ethnic food and the ability to cook ethnic food as important aspects of their ethnic identity to be passed on to younger generations. Of those aged 21-25 years old, 68.6 per cent and 59.9 per cent perceived passing on the ability to enjoy and cook ethnic food to be at least somewhat important. In comparison, older respondents were more likely to regard these markers as at least somewhat important (83.0 per cent and 78.3 respectively). Will access to ethnic food decline over the years

given the falling emphasis (especially among millennials) on transmitting the skills and knowledge required to prepare such dishes?

Table 63: Perceived importance of passing on the ability to enjoy ethnic food to younger generations (Age)

		Age of Respondents					
		21-25	26-35	36-45	45-55	56-65	≥66
How important is it for you to be able to pass on the ability to enjoy ethnic food to your children/grandchildren?	Unimportant	8.3%	4.6%	6.2%	2.8%	4.4%	2.6%
	Somewhat Unimportant	23.0%	15.5%	16.7%	14.1%	12.6%	11.9%
	Somewhat Important	36.5%	49.4%	34.6%	41.8%	47.4%	41.7%
	Important	32.1%	30.4%	42.4%	41.3%	35.6%	43.7%

Table 64: Perceived importance of passing on the ability to cook ethnic food to younger generations (Age)

		Age of Respondents					
		21-25	26-35	36-45	45-55	56-65	≥66
How important is it for you to be able to pass on the ability to cook ethnic food to your children/grandchildren?	Unimportant	7.9%	7.2%	6.9%	4.3%	6.3%	2.0%
	Somewhat Unimportant	32.1%	21.6%	20.9%	19.4%	15.5%	14.8%
	Somewhat Important	31.7%	47.6%	39.7%	42.8%	49.4%	45.0%
	Important	28.2%	23.7%	32.6%	33.5%	28.9%	38.8%

8.4 Art and Music

Respondents are less likely to think it important to transmit arts-related markers. Approximately 47.0 per cent of respondents find it at least somewhat important to transmit the enjoyment of ethnic music to their kids. There was some difference between ethnic groups — 63.8 per cent of Malays and 65.7 per cent

of Indians perceive passing on the ability to enjoy ethnic music to their offspring as at least somewhat important, compared to 41.8 per cent of the Chinese. The Chinese community seems to regard the appreciation of and engagement with ethnic art and music as less important, compared to the Malays and Indians.

Table 65: Perceived importance of passing on the ability to enjoy ethnic music to younger generations (Race)

		Race of Respondents		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
How important is it for you to be able to pass on the enjoyment of ethnic music to your children/grandchildren?	Unimportant	14.6%	8.5%	11.2%
	Somewhat Unimportant	43.5%	27.6%	23.0%
	Somewhat Important	32.4%	42.4%	46.0%
	Important	9.4%	21.4%	19.7%

Similarly, Chinese respondents were least likely to perceive passing on the familiarity with ethnic art forms to their offspring to be at least somewhat important (42.8%), compared to the Malays (65.1%) and Indians (66.9%).

Table 66: Perceived importance of passing on the familiarity with ethnic art forms (Race)

		Race of Respondents		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
How important is it for you to be able to pass on the familiarity with ethnic art forms to your children/grandchildren?	Unimportant	14.4%	9.2%	11.0%
	Somewhat Unimportant	42.8%	25.6%	22.2%
	Somewhat Important	32.5%	43.6%	44.7%
	Important	10.3%	21.5%	22.2%

8.5 Heritage

Chinese respondents were less likely to regard having a connection to their ancestral home land to be at least somewhat important (41.5 per cent), compared to the Malays (58.6 per cent) and Indians (57.2 per cent).

Table 67: Perceived importance of passing on the practice of having connection to ancestral homeland (Race)

		Race of Respondents		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
How important is it for you to be able to pass on the practice of having connection to ancestral homeland to your children/grandchildren?	Unimportant	17.3%	15.3%	17.7%
	Somewhat Unimportant	41.2%	26.0%	25.1%
	Somewhat Important	31.3%	38.8%	36.5%
	Important	10.2%	19.8%	20.7%

Fewer millennials perceived passing on the practice of maintaining connections to ancestral homelands to be at least somewhat important (43.3 per cent), compared to respondents aged 56-65 years old (48.6 per cent), although the gap is not stark.

Table 68: Perceived importance of passing on the practice of having connection to ancestral home land (Age)

		Age of Respondents					
		21-25	26-35	36-45	45-55	56-65	≥66
How important is it for you to be able to pass on the practice of having connection to ancestral homeland to your children/grandchildren?	Unimportant	21.7%	16.7%	15.7%	15.2%	20.5%	9.4%
	Somewhat Unimportant	34.9%	38.1%	33.1%	34.8%	30.9%	38.3%
	Somewhat Important	33.3%	31.6%	36.8%	35.3%	35.0%	30.2%
	Important	10.0%	13.7%	14.4%	14.7%	13.6%	22.1%

However, respondents of all three ethnicities were more likely to regard passing on ethnic pride to their offspring as at least somewhat important (more than 70 per cent).

Table 69: Perceived importance of passing on ethnic pride (Race)

		Race of Respondents		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
How important is it for you to be able to pass on ethnic pride to your children/grandchildren?	Unimportant	7.3%	5.3%	5.5%
	Somewhat Unimportant	19.9%	11.2%	10.2%
	Somewhat Important	39.8%	38.6%	33.5%
	Important	32.9%	44.9%	50.8%

Younger respondents were also as likely as older respondents to perceive the importance of passing down ethnic pride to their offspring. Three quarters of respondents aged 21-25 years old regarded this to be at least somewhat important, as did 77.4% of respondents aged 56-65 years old.

Table 70: Perceived importance of passing on ethnic pride (Age)

		Age of Respondents					
		21-25	26-35	36-45	45-55	56-65	≥66
How important is it for you to be able to pass on ethnic pride to your children/grandchildren?	Unimportant	8.0%	6.3%	7.2%	5.6%	6.8%	6.7%
	Somewhat Unimportant	16.9%	16.8%	12.5%	15.7%	15.7%	23.5%
	Somewhat Important	35.3%	41.5%	42.8%	40.5%	33.5%	33.6%
	Important	39.8%	35.4%	37.5%	38.2%	43.9%	36.2%

9. CULTURAL AFFINITY OUTSIDE SINGAPORE

Apart from exploring Singaporean and ethnic identities, this study also aimed to gauge how respondents perceived the affinity of cultures outside of

Singapore. Among the Singaporean Chinese, there was overwhelming acceptance (84.0 per cent) that they were closest in culture to Malaysian-born Chinese. This was followed by China-born (64.0 per cent) and Taiwanese-born (59.0 per cent). In contrast, respondents felt that they were less close in culture to Indonesian-born, American-born, or Hong Kong-born Chinese. This finding may be due to the earlier result on the use of Mandarin as being a key ethnic identity marker for the Chinese; Mandarin is the predominant dialect in China, Malaysia and Taiwan.

Table 71: Cultural affinity with Chinese from other countries

		Race of respondents		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
In your opinion, which Chinese from other societies are the closest in culture with Singaporean-Chinese? (Rank 1-3)	Malaysian-born Chinese	84.0%	91.0%	86.0%
	China-born Chinese	64.0%	73.0%	76.0%
	Taiwanese-born Chinese	59.0%	36.0%	32.0%
	Indonesian-born Chinese	46.0%	63.0%	61.0%
	Hong Kong-born Chinese	39.0%	27.0%	32.0%
	American-born Chinese	6.0%	8.0%	11.0%

For the Malays, 96.0 per cent listed Malaysian-born Malays as closest in culture to them, followed by Indonesian-born Javanese (92.0 per cent) and Brunei-born Malays (61.0% per cent). This closeness with Malaysian and Indonesian Malays may be due to the geographical proximity of the two countries to

Singapore, as well as the ancestral ties and lineage that many Malays in Singapore can trace to Malaysia and Indonesia.

Table 72: Cultural affinity with Malays from other countries

		Race of respondents		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
In your opinion, which Malays from other societies are the closest in culture with Singaporean-Malays? (Rank 1-3)	Malaysian-born Malays	95.0%	96.0%	97.0%
	Indonesian-born Javanese	92.0%	92.0%	88.0%
	Brunei-born Malays	52.0%	61.0%	46.0%
	Middle-Easterners	34.0%	33.0%	41.0%
	Thailand-born Malays	20.0%	11.0%	19.0%
	American-born Malays	5.0%	4.0%	5.0%

The Indians saw themselves as closest to counterparts in India (93.0 per cent), Malaysia (90.0 per cent) and Sri Lanka (74.0 per cent). This finding dovetails with the one earlier, where a majority (58.0 per cent) of Indians said they wanted their children to feel a connection to their ancestral country of origin. Even after excluding the responses of India-born Indians in the analysis, the observation remains — Singaporean Indians were more likely to see themselves as closer to their counterparts in India (89.0 per cent) than Malaysia (85.2 per cent).

Table 73: Cultural affinity with Indians from other countries

	Race of respondents

		Chinese	Malay	Indian
In your opinion, which Indians from other societies are the closest in culture with Singaporean-Indians? (Rank 1-3)	Malaysian-born Indians	83.0%	88.0%	90.0%
	India-born Indians	94.0%	94.0%	93.0%
	Sri Lankan-born Indians	74.0%	74.0%	74.0%
	Pakistani-born Indians	34.0%	31.0%	17.0%
	American-born Indians	8.0%	8.0%	14.0%
	Fiji-born Indians	4.0%	2.0%	8.0%

10. CONCLUSION

The study's findings indicate that the current CMIO classification system, due to its use in public policy, may have resulted in Singaporeans' perceptions of ethnic identity converging on certain key indicators. For instance, the bilingual language policy has arguably resulted in Singaporeans regarding the writing, speaking and reading of one's mother tongue as a core marker of what is expected of a Singaporean Chinese, Malay or Indian.

The survey also shows that despite policies to build awareness of, and interactions with, Singaporeans from other ethnic groups, Singapore is still not the multicultural nirvana that some would expect.

A fair number of Singaporeans do not participate in the cultural practices of those from other races. For instance, about half of Chinese respondents aged 21-25 and 56-65 participate sometimes, often or always in Malay festivals, and

four in 10 Chinese in these age groups do so with similar frequency for Indian festivals. This rate of inter-cultural interaction dovetails with a recent National Youth Council survey found that “three in five [respondents] said they had a close friend of a difference race,” (Sin, 2017). In addition, Chinese respondents were less open to Malay and Indian cultures than vice versa. Given the current levels of inter-cultural exchange, it is worth considering if more can be done to promote greater interaction, engagement and learning across the racial groups.

A second point worth highlighting are the findings that mother tongue proficiency and celebrating key festivals ranked highly among young Singaporeans as important aspects of their ethnic identity. Pew Research Center depicts millennials to be a more “post-racial” demographic. Growing up bombarded with images of successful, racially diverse celebrities, many millennials profess to look beyond race, gender and sexuality. Millennials have also constructed a more homogeneous identity; they bond and unite through pop culture references, memes¹ and social media activism.

One may expect that Singaporean millennials are constantly exposed to these ideas, images and news through social media and as a result, would adopt a more homogenised, Westernised identity. With recent findings of declining religiosity amongst Singaporean millennials, we would also expect to see a

¹ A humorous image, video or piece of text that goes viral on the Internet, typically accompanied by differing captions based on a particular context.

gradual erosion of ethnic customs such as following tea ceremonies during marriage for the Chinese (Zaccheus, Pang & Ng, 2016).

However, our findings demonstrate that a high percentage of Singaporeans aged 21-25, especially ethnic minorities, perceive markers such as ethnic language, traditions and festivals to be important to one's ethnic identity. In addition, many Singaporean millennials ranked high on ethnic pride (though they ranked low on markers such as ethnic dress, appreciating ethnic art and tracing one's ancestry).

Our study also found evidence of some cultural exchange and borrowing, especially amongst minorities. When asked about which other cultures they identified with, Chinese, Malay and Indian (CMI) respondents indicated that they somewhat identified with each other's cultures. For example, Chinese respondents testified to identifying with Malay and Indian culture much more than Western culture. Thus, it is evident that there is cultural exchange to some extent in Singapore. This is especially so when it comes to the cuisine of Singapore. CMI respondents all ranked highly when it came to partaking in each other's cuisines.

In addition, our findings indicate the potential presence of a bicultural identity amongst respondents. Around 55 per cent of respondents at least somewhat identified with American culture, while around 48 per cent of respondents at

least somewhat identified with European culture. In addition, over 77 per cent of respondents across all three ethnic groups thought that speaking good English was important to their ethnic identity. The identification with Western culture to a reasonable extent, coupled with prioritising a good command of the English language, indicates the existence of a possible bicultural identity amongst Singaporeans.

Finally, the finding that respondents were most likely to accept new citizens as “truly Singaporean” if they were from Malay, Chinese, Indian or Eurasian backgrounds provides evidence that at least a smaller portion of Singaporeans associate national identity with the core ethnic groups. This may be interpreted as a consequence of the longstanding CMIO framework. However it may be important moving forward, especially with greater cross national marriages and a globalised world, that Singaporeans become more amenable to persons outside the traditional CMI races also becoming part of the Singaporean core.

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APPENDIX

Table 1.1: Chinese respondents' perception of the importance of identity markers to ethnic identity

Identity Markers	Somewhat important/ Important
1. Converse in basic Mandarin	92.0%
2. Celebrate Chinese New Year	92.0%
3. Read, write and speak Mandarin	90.0%
4. Give out hong baos	86.0%
5. Give a Chinese name to children	85.0%
6. Practise filial piety	84.0%
7. Observe customary funeral practices	83.0%
8. Honour ancestors	82.0%
9. Place great value on social relationships	81.0%
10. Follow Chinese traditions for weddings	79.0%
11. Do a tea ceremony if marrying	78.0%
12. Speak good English	78.0%
13. Converse in basic dialects	76.0%
14. Take pride in being considered Chinese	70.0%
15. Lead a relaxed lifestyle	68.0%
16. Concerned about acquiring wealth	60.0%
17. Be able to use chopsticks for meals	59.0%
18. Enjoy Chinese cuisine	59.0%
19. Be financially well-off	58.0%
20. Dress in Chinese attire for special events	53.0%
21. Follow rituals that bring good luck	50.0%
22. Follow rituals that cast away bad luck	48.0%

23. Be conservative	48.0%
24. Resemble a typically Chinese person	46.0%
25. Have close friends who are Chinese	45.0%
26. Use traditional medicine	44.0%
27. Be able to trace ancestry to some part of China	40.0%
28. Marry someone of Chinese descent	38.0%
29. Feel a connection to the country where ancestors came from	38.0%
30. Enjoy Chinese music	37.0%
31. Practice Buddhism/ Taoism	37.0%
32. Watch Channel 8/ Channel U	35.0%
33. Have visited the part of China where ancestors came from	33.0%
34. Be fair-skinned	30.0%
35. Appreciate Chinese art forms such as Chinese calligraphy	30.0%
36. Be good at arguing	25.0%
37. Be familiar with Chinese opera	24.0%
38. Enjoy alcohol	17.0%

Table 1.2: Malay respondents' perception of the importance of identity markers to ethnic identity

Identity Markers	Somewhat important/ Important
1. Read, write and speak Malay	96.0%
2. Converse in basic Malay	96.0%
3. Celebrate Hari Raya	96.0%
4. Seek forgiveness during Hari Raya	95.0%

5. Be a Muslim	94.0%
6. Observe customary funeral practices	94.0%
7. Eat Halal food	94.0%
8. Pray five times a day	92.0%
9. Avoid alcohol	92.0%
10. Give a Malay/Muslim name to children	92.0%
11. Dress in Malay attire for special events	91.0%
12. Give out green packets with money during festivals	88.0%
13. Follow Malay traditions for weddings	88.0%
14. Avoid touching dogs	87.0%
15. Wear a “tudung”/headscarf if female	86.0%
16. Practice filial piety	85.0%
17. Take pride in being considered Malay	83.0%
18. Place great value on social relationships	81.0%
19. Speak good English	79.0%
20. Lead a relaxed lifestyle	78.0%
21. Enjoy Malay cuisine	77.0%
22. Follow rituals that bring good luck	72.0%
23. Eat food with their hands	69.0%
24. Be conservative	68.0%
25. Concerned about acquiring wealth	65.0%
26. Be financially well-off	63.0%
27. Appreciate Malay art forms such as Dikir Barat	62.0%
28. Use traditional medicine	61.0%
29. Follow rituals that cast away bad luck	58.0%

30. Be able to trace ancestry to some part of the Malay archipelago	54.0%
31. Watch Suria Channel on TV	54.0%
32. Feel a connection to the country where ancestors came from	52.0%
33. Resemble a typically Malay person	52.0%
34. Have visited the part of Indonesia/ Malaysia where ancestors originated from	50.0%
35. Have close friends who are Malay	49.0%
36. Marry someone of Malay descent	46.0%
37. Be familiar with Malay theatre such as Wayang Kulit	45.0%
38. Be tan-skinned	35.0%
39. Be good at arguing	31.0%
40. Enjoy alcohol	12.0%

Table 1.3: Indian respondents' perception of the importance of identity markers to ethnic identity

Identity Markers	Somewhat important/ Important
1. Read, write and speak Tamil	96.0%
2. Read, write and speak an Indian language	89.0%
3. Celebrate Deepavali	89.0%
4. Converse in basic Tamil	86.0%
5. Place great value on social relationships	85.0%
6. Follow Indian traditions for weddings	84.0%
7. Speak good English	84.0%
8. Take pride in being considered Indian	84.0%
9. Give an Indian name to children	80.0%

10. Dress in Indian attire for special events	80.0%
11. Practise filial piety	80.0%
12. Observe customary funeral practices	79.0%
13. Wear puttu/ bindhi on forehead	77.0%
14. Give out “purple packets” with money	76.0%
15. Lead a relaxed lifestyle	74.0%
16. Enjoy Indian cuisine	72.0%
17. Practice Hinduism	71.0%
18. Avoid eating beef	70.0%
19. Enjoy spicy food	64.0%
20. Be financially well-off	62.0%
21. Follow rituals that bring good luck	61.0%
22. Concerned about acquiring wealth	61.0%
23. Follow rituals that cast away bad luck	60.0%
24. Be able to eat with hands, without utensils	57.0%
25. Use traditional ethnic medicine	56.0%
26. Be conservative	56.0%
27. Resemble a typically Indian person	55.0%
28. Be able to trace ancestry to some part of India/ South Asia	54.0%
29. Feel a connection to the country where ancestors came from	53.0%
30. Have visited the part of India/ South Asia where ancestors originated from	52.0%
31. Enjoy pop culture from India	52.0%
32. Appreciate Indian art forms such as Bharathanatyam	51.0%
33. Have close friends who are Indian	50.0%
34. Watch Vasantham Channel on TV	48.0%

35. Marry someone of Indian descent	43.0%
36. Be dark-skinned	35.0%
37. Be good at arguing	28.0%
38. Enjoy alcohol	18.0%

Table 1.4: Perceived importance of seeking forgiveness during Hari Raya to the Malays

		Race		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
Seek forgiveness during Hari Raya (Malay)	Unimportant	8.9%	1.4%	8.3%
	Somewhat Unimportant	12.9%	3.7%	10.2%
	Somewhat Important	41.9%	25.2%	33.0%
	Important	36.3%	69.8%	48.5%

Table 1.5: Perceived importance of appreciating Malay art forms to the Malays

		Race		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
Appreciate Malay art forms such as Dikir Barat (Malay)	Unimportant	25.0%	12.4%	24.1%
	Somewhat Unimportant	41.0%	25.5%	27.9%
	Somewhat Important	25.0%	39.7%	32.8%
	Important	9.0%	22.5%	15.2%

Table 1.6: Perceived importance of dressing in Malay attire for special events to the Malays

		Race		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian

Dress in Malay attire for special events (e.g. Baju Kurung) (Malay)	Unimportant	9.1%	1.8%	9.3%
	Somewhat Unimportant	19.5%	6.9%	14.9%
	Somewhat Important	39.3%	31.2%	36.0%
	Important	32.1%	60.1%	39.8%

Table 1.7: Perceived importance of dressing in Malay attire for special events to the Malays

		Race		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
Dress in Malay attire for special events (e.g. Baju Kurung) (Malay)	Unimportant	9.1%	1.8%	9.3%
	Somewhat Unimportant	19.5%	6.9%	14.9%
	Somewhat Important	39.3%	31.2%	36.0%
	Important	32.1%	60.1%	39.8%

Table 1.8: Perceived importance of avoiding eating beef to the Indians

		Race		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
Avoid eating beef (Indian)	Unimportant	19.4%	12.1%	14.6%
	Somewhat Unimportant	26.9%	26.1%	15.7%
	Somewhat Important	30.6%	29.6%	31.1%
	Important	23.1%	32.3%	38.6%

Table 1.9: Perceived importance of wearing pottu/ bindhi to the Indians

		Race		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
Wear pottu/ bindhi on forehead (Indian)	Unimportant	14.4%	7.7%	11.5%
	Somewhat Unimportant	24.2%	18.4%	12.4%
	Somewhat Important	34.9%	38.0%	36.5%
	Important	26.8%	35.9%	39.6%

Table 1.10: Perceived importance of enjoying Indian cuisine to the Indians

		Race		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
Enjoy Indian cuisine (Indian)	Unimportant	20.0%	8.3%	11.2%
	Somewhat Unimportant	26.0%	23.0%	17.3%
	Somewhat Important	34.5%	37.7%	36.7%
	Important	19.5%	31.0%	34.8%

Table 1.11: Perceived importance of eating food with hands to the Indians

		Chinese	Malay	Indian
Be able to eat with hands, without utensils (Indian)	Unimportant	24.6%	13.9%	17.8%
	Somewhat Unimportant	34.0%	28.8%	25.2%
	Somewhat Important	26.2%	33.9%	26.0%
	Important	15.2%	23.5%	31.0%

Table 1.12: Perceived importance of following Indian traditions for weddings to the Indians

		Race		
		Chinese	Malay	Indian
Follow Indian traditions for weddings (Indian)	Unimportant	9.7%	5.6%	8.8%
	Somewhat Unimportant	13.0%	12.5%	7.7%
	Somewhat Important	40.4%	36.3%	35.7%
	Important	36.8%	45.6%	47.8%

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