

**RELIGION IN SINGAPORE: THE PRIVATE AND  
PUBLIC SPHERES**

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# **RELIGION IN SINGAPORE: THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SPHERES**

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## RELIGION IN SINGAPORE: THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SPHERES

### Abstract

This paper analyses Singapore data from a multi-country survey conducted in late 2018 as part of the International Social Survey Program Study of Religion (2018)<sup>1</sup>. The Singapore component of the survey, conducted face-to-face, examined the views of a random sample of 1,800 Singaporean residents on issues relating to religious beliefs, religiosity and the role of religion in the private and public sphere. The survey sample closely mirrored the general profile of the Singapore population.

In the midst of contradicting trends of both religious resurgence and a decline in religiosity in various parts of the globe, analysing the trends of religiosity in Singapore and its impact on perceptions, attitudes and beliefs is critical. Religion is an influential and powerful force that seeps into multiple domains of public and private life. Tracking the expansive reach and influence of religion is thus crucial in maintaining interreligious harmony and surveying public sentiment in public policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Funding for the Singapore study was provided by a grant to Tom W. Smith of the National Opinion Research Centre at the University of Chicago from Templeton Religion Trust. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Templeton Religion Trust.

In Section 5.1, the paper captures trends relating to religious practice and beliefs in the private sphere. The study found high levels of religiosity among Singaporeans. About three in four Singaporeans said they followed a religion. Christian, Catholic and Muslim respondents were more likely to be steadfast (that is, unequivocal and clear) in their beliefs of God. The opposite was the case for younger and more educated respondents.

The majority of respondents were likely to believe in religious concepts such as heaven, hell, life after death and religious miracles. Even among those who professed no religion, there were substantial numbers who believed in some religious concepts or supernatural powers.

The level of religious practice among respondents differed by religious affiliation, though around half of the respondents in this study prayed at least every week. Hindus, Muslims and Christians were the most likely to pray at least once a day. There was increased piety (as reflected in frequency of prayer) among those who reported having a turning point in their lives where they made a commitment to religion.

There was some relationship between religious affiliation and respondents' attitudes towards some moral issues. While most respondents believed that

infidelity was always wrong (82.4 per cent), comparatively fewer viewed homosexual sex (67.9 per cent) or abortion (38.3 per cent) as always wrong. Religious affiliation was an important determinant in these moral beliefs with Muslims, Hindus and Christians most likely to find homosexual sex always wrong. Younger and more educated respondents were much more likely to not find such practices always wrong.

Considering the high levels of religious belief and practice especially among some religious communities and how this may have some relationship to moral beliefs, in Section 5.2 we report respondents' beliefs about the role of religion in the public sphere. This entailed analysing perceptions of religious institutions compared to other public institutions, interreligious harmony, state-religion separation and the appropriate behaviour of religious leaders in the public domain.

The majority of respondents (52.8 per cent) expressed complete confidence or a great deal of confidence in religious organisations (similar to the proportion of respondents holding such views about Parliament). While the proportion of Muslims and Catholics who indicated a great deal of confidence in Parliament was fairly similar to that of some other religious communities, there were more among them who indicated greater confidence in religious organisations.

Most respondents (72.7 per cent) felt that people of different religious backgrounds can get along when living close together, indicating strong support for interreligious harmony. Muslims and Christians were more likely to feel this way. In the case of perceptions of people of different religious backgrounds, respondents were more likely to view Christians, Buddhists and atheists the most positively. There was a small group (15.6 per cent) of respondents who expressed that Muslims were threatening.

While there was near unanimous support (97.4 per cent) that it was unacceptable for religious leaders to incite hatred or violence against other religions, there was a sizeable number of respondents (26.8 per cent) who were open to religious extremists publishing their views on the internet or social media. Younger respondents were much more open to this, with nearly 46 per cent of those between 18 to 25 years indicating that they would allow for publication such extremist views that considered all other religions as enemies.

When it came to questions relating to state-religion separation, most respondents (76.1 per cent) agreed that a country's laws should not be based on religion. Respondents were divided when asked about the hypothetical emergence of a law that contradicts their religious principles. About 48 per cent would follow the law while 35.6 per cent of them would follow their religious principles. Christians (67.6

per cent), Catholics (61.6 per cent) and Muslims (66.3 per cent) were the most likely to follow their religious principles over the law if they were to contradict.

Finally, the majority of respondents agreed that religious leaders should not comment on politics. However, respondents were slightly more accepting of religious leaders speaking up against laws that contradict their religious teachings (24.1 per cent). Around half of Christian and Catholic respondents were accepting of religious leaders speaking up against laws that contradict their religious teachings. Less educated and younger respondents were also more likely to be accepting of religious leaders commenting on politics/policies.

In order to better control for different demographic variables, several regressions were performed as detailed in Section 6. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions with moral liberalism as a dependent scale variable (constructed by combining and averaging the responses to several questions including whether homosexual sex was wrong or not wrong) showed that having a religious affiliation, having higher education, being married, and having children, were all significant predictors for being morally conservative.

Another OLS regression — to determine the demographics of those who are ambivalent towards people from another religion — found that those who are more

religious are *less likely* to be ambivalent or distant. The dependent variable was a scale variable combining responses to the questions: “What is your personal attitude towards members of the following religious groups: Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and Atheists or non-believers?”

In Section 7 of this report we document the results from a cluster analysis which we undertook to distinguish between groups of Singaporeans based on measures such as moral liberalism/conservatism, religiosity, and warmth towards people from other religious backgrounds. We found four distinct groups which we have named Sacred Seculars, Friendly Faithfuls, Skeptic Scrappers and Tepid Traditionals.

As countries around the world, especially in Southeast Asia, grapple with increasing religious fervour on one end, and rising levels of atheism on the other, these issues will continue to dominate public discourse. On the whole the survey paints a favourable picture of religion in Singapore. Though there is a fairly large proportion of religious Singaporean residents, they appreciate the positive inter-religious relations here and recognise behaviours that are not in keeping with inter-religious peace. More research, including the use of qualitative methods, are needed to delve further into Singaporeans’ thinking on religion, religiosity, and the interplay between these and their attitudes to issues in the public sphere.

## RELIGION IN SINGAPORE: THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SPHERE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper analyses Singapore data from a multi-country survey conducted in late 2018 as part of the International Social Survey Program Study of Religion (2018).

This social survey programme is a cross-national collaboration established in 1984 by leading research institutions including the National Opinion Research Centre at the University of Chicago. The programme now includes 57 nations. The religion component of this programme was first fielded in 1991, then in 1998, 2008 and most recently 2018.<sup>2</sup>

The Singapore component of the survey, conducted face-to-face, examined the views of a random sample of 1,800 Singaporean residents (Citizen or Permanent Resident) on issues relating to religious beliefs, religiosity and the role of religion in the private and public sphere.

In the midst of contradicting trends of both religious resurgence and a decline in religiosity in various parts of the globe, analysing the trends of religiosity in Singapore and its impact on perceptions, attitudes and beliefs is critical. Religion is an influential and powerful force and seeps into multiple domains of public and private life. Tracking the expansive reach and influence of religion is thus crucial

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<sup>2</sup> More information on the International Social Survey Program Study of Religion can be obtained from <https://www.gesis.org/issp/modules/issp-modules-by-topic/religion/>

in maintaining interreligious harmony and surveying public sentiment in public policy.

The first part of the study captured trends relating to religious practice and beliefs in the private sphere. The second part of the study analysed how religious beliefs affected respondents' attitudes towards beliefs and actions in the public sphere. This entailed analysing perceptions of interreligious harmony, religious institutions, secularisation and the appropriate behaviour of religious leaders in the public domain.

The paper outlines several regressions conducted to examine how demographic and socio-economic variables affect attitudes towards moral issues and perceptions of people from other religions. We also attempted to create profiles of respondents based on a number of variables along the lines of moral liberalism/conservatism, religiosity, warmth towards people from other religious backgrounds and the level of comfort with the separation of religion and the state.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Managing racial and religious diversity has always been an integral component of Singapore's governance. Singapore has been acknowledged as the world's most

religiously diverse nation with 43.2 per cent of its population Buddhist or Taoist, 18.8 per cent Christian, 14.7 per cent Muslim, 5.0 per cent Hindu, 0.7 per cent other religions and 18.5 per cent professing not having any religion (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2015). There exists great diversity within each religious strand as well, with varying sects, practices and identities.

The secularisation tendency observed in some societies where greater economic development is associated with a decline in religious activity, has been greatly moderated in Singapore. Instead there has been a rationalisation of religion (Tong, 2008). Since the 1990s scholars have noticed sizeable conversions to Christianity especially among better educated Singaporeans. The evangelical variety of Christianity in Singapore has also resulted in greater fervency among Christians who are active in increasing their proportion in society. Religiosity among Muslims is also evident with high levels of piety and an interest in enhancing religious observance and purity. Overall based on previous large scale surveys such as the World Values Survey-Singapore and the IPS Survey of Race, Religion and Language (2012/2013) religion is an important marker in the identity of most Singaporeans. They have strong beliefs in metaphysical concepts, fulfill their religious roles, obligations and activities and tap on their religious beliefs to inform their decisions (Pereira, 2005; Mathew, Mohammad & Teo, 2014).

Given the immense diversity of religion in Singapore and that a religious identity is salient for many Singaporeans, the emergence of conflict amongst various religious groups on occasion is inevitable. Thus, managing religious diversity through efforts to promote interreligious understanding, empathy, interaction and acceptance is essential to secure interreligious peace and harmony.

Singapore's approach to the management of religious diversity and religious freedom is a pragmatic one; religiosity amongst citizens is functional and desirable to an extent but if left unchecked, it has the potential to develop great power and influence. In the midst of development, Singapore opted to adopt secularism as a means of governance as it was perceived as compatible with economic progress (Mathews, 2013). Simultaneously, there was a shared fear of a "moral backslide" with absolute secularism. Hence, the state channeled resources into fostering the conditions required for religion and religiosity to flourish; religion and religiosity would serve as "cultural ballasts" against perceived threats from Western values.

Maintaining a delicate balance of religion's influence involved cultivating and curtailing religion such that it straddles both private and public spheres to a reasonable extent. For the most part, religion is relegated to the private sphere (Tan, 2008) and the state ensures that religion is kept separate from politics. While religion is deemed a private affair, heavy state involvement in religious management speaks otherwise. This is evident in state -sanctioned spaces for

religious practice such as temples and mosques, state protection of religious minorities as well as consultation of people of different religious backgrounds (through religious leaders and organisations) in policy-making.

Some of the state apparatus in place to manage religious freedom include legal, policy-level, and community-level measures. Legal measures have been introduced to deter interreligious conflict and to prevent interreligious strife especially through curtailing religiously motivated inflammatory speech. Legislation targeted at maintaining religious peace include the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act (MRHA), Sedition Act as well as the Internal Security Act (ISA). These acts prohibit the dissemination of speech deemed inflammatory towards any religious groups. The ISA permits the state to monitor and pursue suspicions of religious extremism.

The state also actively regulates on religious proselytisation that has the potential to cause tension between religious groups. In 2008 the courts jailed a Christian couple under the Sedition Act for the dissemination of religious pamphlets that were deemed to “promote feelings of ill-will between Christians and Muslims” (Chen, 2013). While, the couple stated that their aim was to spread Christianity and not hurt any feelings, the reality as shown by the prosecutors was that highly targeted evangelistic efforts which ridicule other faiths had much potential to cause religious offense.

Community-level measures are also implemented to foster greater interreligious understanding, harmony and acceptance. The Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles (IRCCs),<sup>3</sup> established shortly after the arrest of Jemaah Islamiah operatives in Singapore, foster interreligious harmony through bringing religious practitioners together. IRCCs organise interfaith dialogues, visits to religious places of worship and activity sessions such as sporting events for people of different faiths to mingle. While some contend that such state-initiated and managed community measures like the IRCCs do not allow candid and frank interaction between religious leaders, it has resulted in many such leaders developing social networks with those of other faiths (Mathew & Hong, 2016). It has signaled to members of religious institutions the normative nature of such cordial interactions.

Other community initiatives which were not initiated by the state but currently receive support by state agencies include the Inter-Religious Organisation founded seventy years ago to “promote peace and religious harmony in Singapore” through activities such as interfaith prayers and cultural exhibitions. It currently has representatives from ten major religions in Singapore. Other smaller ground up initiatives such as Roses of Peace and Interfaith Youth Circle use novel methods to spread the message of inter-religious harmony whether by giving out roses to

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<sup>3</sup> IRCCS are local-level inter-faith platforms in every constituency, formed to promote racial and religious harmony.

mark peace or encouraging the comparative study of religious scriptures to find uniting themes.

However, while racial and religious management in Singapore has been successful in establishing base levels of interreligious harmony, challenges and threats to interreligious harmony are constantly emerging. One of these challenges is religious extremism. Given the current proliferation of religious extremism amongst Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar and Malaysia, it is feared that religious extremism could potentially become a divisive force in Singapore (Jumblatt Abdullah, 2017). This is especially so with extremist ideologies which are generated in other societies but easily accessible to Singaporeans through the internet. Online channels such as Telegram, which can be encrypted, pose greater challenges for state regulation and action. The ubiquitous nature of online platforms with its enabling of rapid information exchanges may undermine interreligious harmony if employed as tools to spread religious extremism.

A Ministry of Home Affairs report in 2017 found the terrorism threat to Singapore to be at its peak in that year, with the greatest threat emerging from radicalised individuals or “lone wolves” (Habulan et al., 2018). Singapore is also perceived as the perfect target for religiously motivated extremist attacks given its religiously diverse nature (Tan, 2007). Our analysis of a recent survey on community relations

amidst the threat of terrorism revealed that while many Singaporeans did not anticipate community violence and reprisals after a terrorist attack which claims to be religiously motivated, there would be heightened suspicion towards religious communities which the terrorists are associated with (Mathew, Lim & Selvarajan, 2018).

Potential tensions may also emerge with increasing divisiveness along religious lines in attitudes towards morally-charged issues. Since religious ideals may influence perceptions of certain issues, they have widespread policy implications.

A recent example includes the nationwide dialogue on decriminalising homosexual sex between men in Singapore. Article 377A<sup>4</sup> of the Penal Code has been a hotbed of debate following the decriminalisation of homosexual sex in India in September 2018. Christians, Catholics and Muslims were more likely to advocate for retaining the law, with organisations such as the National Council of Churches, Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers Association (Pergas) and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore coming forward to denounce any form of repeal. On the other hand the president of the Buddhist Fellowship and the Humanist Association were supportive of this repeal (Wong, 2018). Such divisiveness has expanded to the emergence of an online petition to retain the law,

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<sup>4</sup> Section 377A of the Penal Code of Singapore is a legislation which criminalises sex between mutually consenting adult men.

which garnered close to 71,000 signatures, in opposition to a popular online petition to repeal the law (Tan, 2018).

The relationship between religious beliefs and perceptions of issues relating to LGBTQ<sup>5</sup> rights is well documented. Intrinsic religiosity influences people's support on censoring films that depict lesbian women and gay men (Ho et al., 2012) while individuals who were more religious were less likely to support same-sex marriages and hold negative attitudes towards members of the LGBTQ community (Panchapakesan, Li & Ho 2014).

It is evident that religiosity and religious orientation heavily influence opinions of issues. This has far-reaching implication as perceptions could translate into support or lack thereof for public policies that would apply to all residents, regardless of religious orientation. In addition, emerging divisiveness in the realm of public policy, as informed by religion, can create fault lines across various religious groups.

While an analysis of religious trends was previously reported using the large IPS Survey of Race, Religion and Language (Mathew, Mohammad and Teo, 2014), the study focused on documenting personal religiosity. It only briefly examined

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<sup>5</sup> An abbreviation that represents the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Queer community.

issues relating to religion in the public space. This current study, while describing the religious landscape of Singapore including attitudes towards moral issues and interreligious harmony, also examines Singaporeans' opinions of the role of religion in the public sphere and policymaking.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

Data for this report was derived from the Singapore component of a multi-country survey as part of the International Social Survey Program Study of Religion (2018). Fieldwork was conducted in Singapore by a Singapore based market research company ML Research Consultants Pte Ltd between late August 2018 and early December 2018. This was done under the supervision of the National Opinion Research Centre of the University of Chicago. A random sample of three thousand household addresses were obtained from the Singapore Department of Statistics. No substitution of household addresses were allowed for this survey.

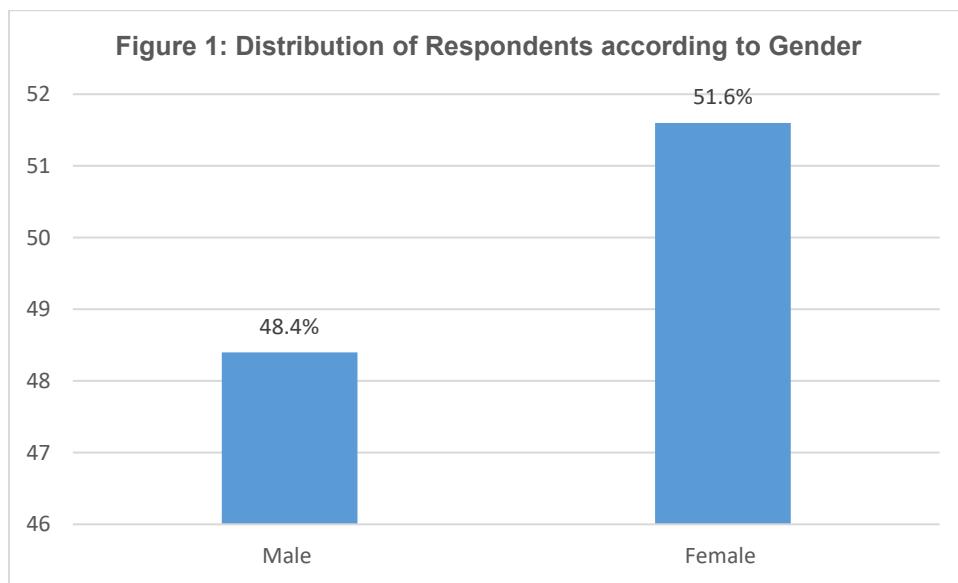
These randomly selected households were sent notification letters of the survey prior to the start of fieldwork. Interviewers then approached households and chose a household member using their last birthday. Only respondents who were 18 years and above were eligible to participate in this face to face interview. They also had to be Singaporean Citizen or Permanent Resident. Those who completed the interview were given a voucher in appreciation for their time in assisting with the study. In total 1,800 respondents completed the survey.

In reporting the results of the study, we only present valid percentages.

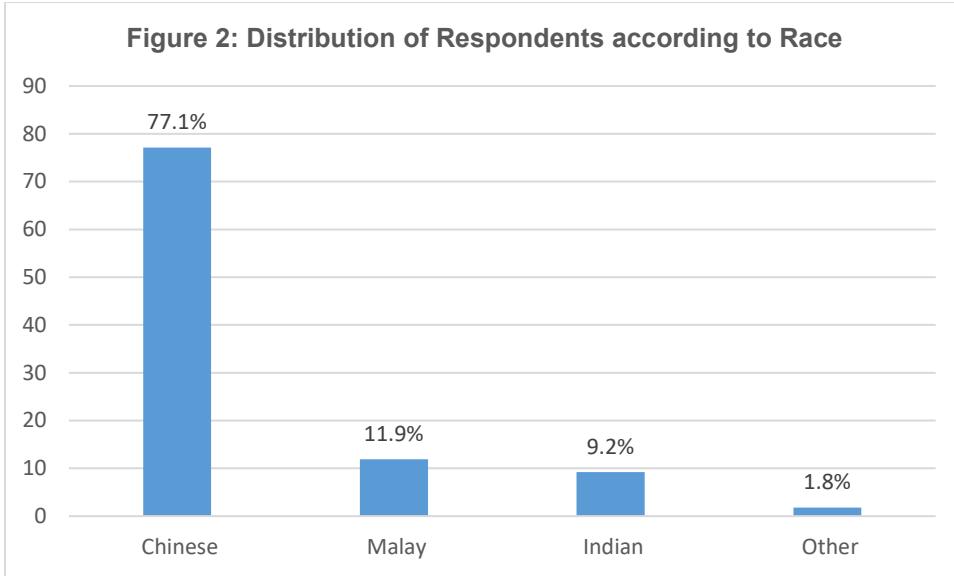
Respondents could choose not to answer any question that was asked of them by the interviewer. We report in footnotes if there are significant numbers of respondents who do not provide responses to any question.

#### **4. RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHICS**

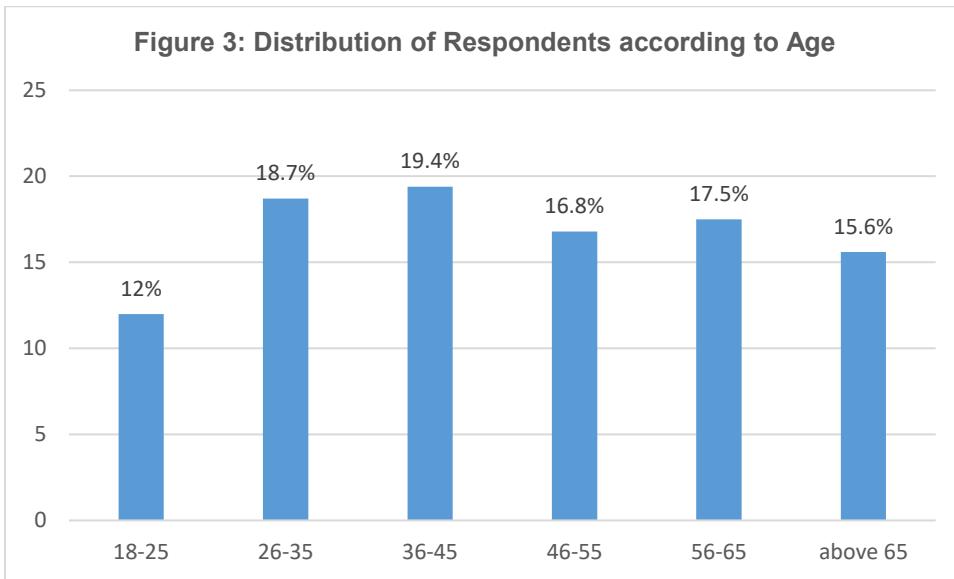
The profile of the sample closely mirrored the general population, especially for race and gender. In the surveyed sample, 48.4 per cent were male and 51.6 per cent female.



In terms of racial profile, 77.1 per cent of the sample reported that they were Chinese, 11.9 per cent Malay, 9.2 per cent Indian, and 1.8 per cent chose the “Others” category.

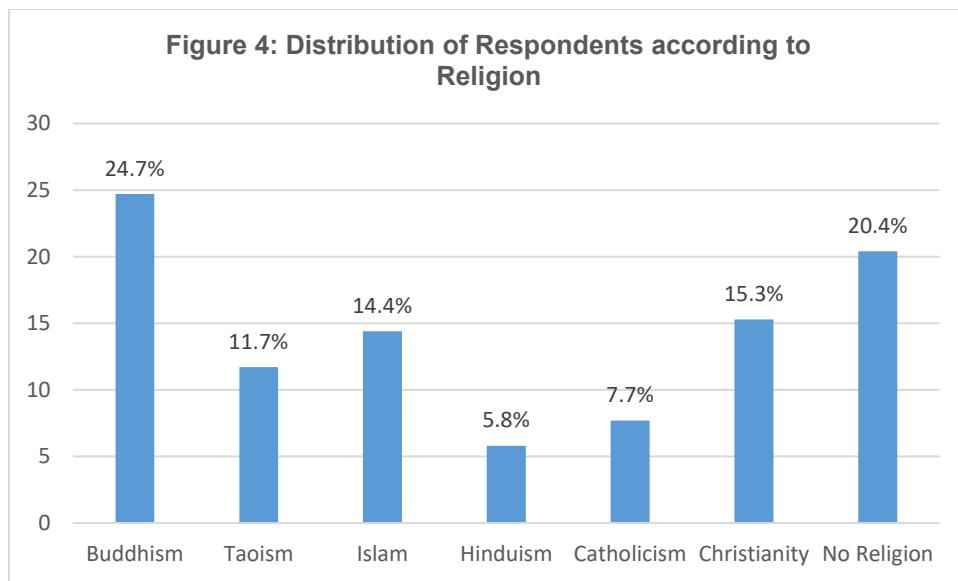


Survey respondents were well represented in the different age bands with 30.7 per cent 35 years of age or younger, 36.2 per cent between 36 to 55 years, and 33.1 per cent aged 56 and above.



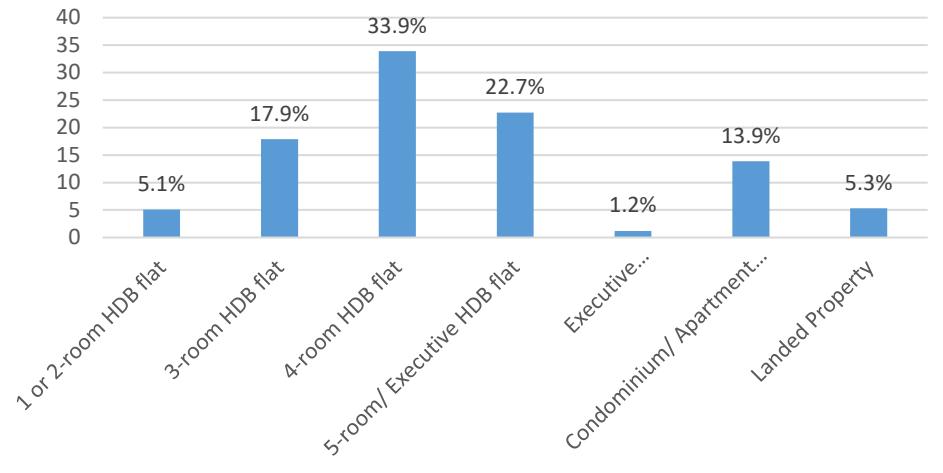
There was a good representation of a range of religions commonly practised in Singapore, including respondents with no religion. Buddhism and Taoism constituted 36.4 per cent of the sample while Roman Catholics and other

Christians (Protestants, Orthodox and those who classified themselves as Other Christianity in the survey) made up 23 per cent. About 20 per cent of the sample comprised respondents who reported no religious affiliation. While Singapore officially groups Protestants and Catholics collectively as “Christians”, our analysis in this study draws a distinction between the two groups, when we present the two communities’ responses to various survey questions.



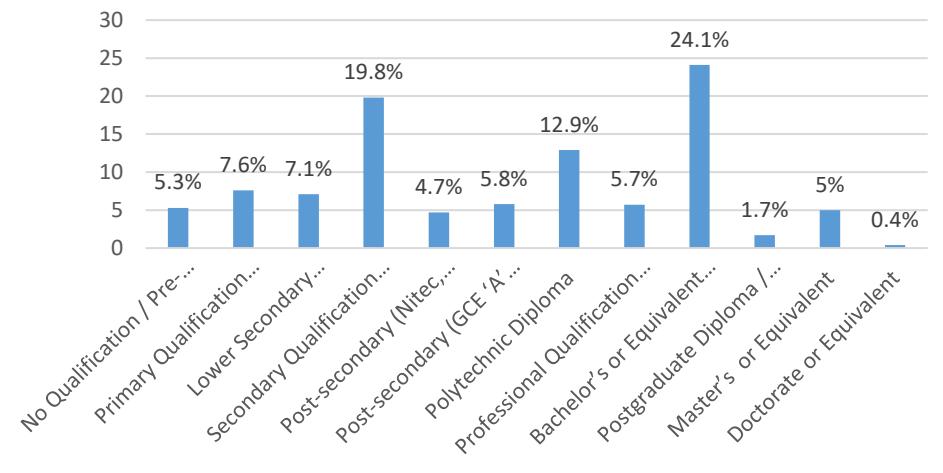
In terms of housing type, a proxy of socioeconomic status, a high number of respondents resided in HDB 4-5 room flats. About a third of respondents resided in HDB 4-room flats, and 22.7 per cent of respondents in HDB 5-room flats.

**Figure 5: Distribution of Respondents according to Housing Type**



A high number of respondents were degree-holders. Nearly one in four graduated with a bachelors' degree and 19.8 per cent of respondents graduated with secondary school qualifications.

**Figure 6: Distribution of Respondents according to Education**



## 5. TOPLINE FINDINGS

### 5.1 Religion in the Private Sphere<sup>6</sup>

This section examines religious trends in the private sphere. This entails examining trends of religiosity, religious beliefs, the practice of religion, the socialisation of religion and the impact of religion on respondents' beliefs towards moral issues such as sexual relations between two adults of the same sex. Studying the phenomenon of religion in the private sphere is imperative to understanding how Singaporeans perceive religion in relation to themselves, which eventually shapes how these beliefs influence their actions in the public sphere.

#### 5.1.1 Religiosity

Religiosity measures religious orientation and the extent to which respondents identify as religious or spiritual. When asked about their level of religiosity, almost half of the respondents (45.5 per cent) identified as somewhat religious, with 18.0 per cent of respondents identifying as neither religious nor non-religious, and 17.6 per cent of respondents identifying as very religious (see Table 1). It is evident that the majority of respondents are, to their mind, religious to some extent.

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<sup>6</sup> Given that the demographics of respondents generally mirrored the national population, we have not applied weights to the data. All data presented in this paper should be treated as unweighted data.

**Table 1: Respondents' self-identification of religiosity (%)**

	Extremely religious	Very religious	Somewhat religious	Neither religious nor non-religious	Somewhat non-religious	Very non-religious	Extremely non-religious
Respondent's identification of religiosity	2.6	17.6	45.5	18.0	6.8	5.8	3.6

Across religious backgrounds, the bulk of respondents still identified as somewhat religious, except for those who did not profess any religious affiliation (see Table 2). Muslim respondents were the most likely to identify as very or extremely religious (38.3 per cent), followed by Hindus (29.6 per cent).

Despite demonstrating high levels of religiosity in other sections of the survey,<sup>7</sup> the bulk of Muslims, Christians and Catholics identified themselves as somewhat religious. Around 50 per cent of Muslims, 58.6 per cent of Christians and 73.9 per cent of Catholics identified as somewhat religious. This may indicate a certain level of modesty when Singaporeans are asked to rate their own religiosity.

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<sup>7</sup> An example would be Catholic, Christian and Muslim respondents' consistently conservative views across issues of abortion, homosexual sex and infidelity compared to respondents from other religious backgrounds.

Interestingly 10 per cent of those with no religious affiliation categorised themselves as at least somewhat religious, though the majority of respondents who were not religiously affiliated viewed themselves also as non-religious.

**Table 2: Respondents' self-identification of religiosity, by religious background (%)**

		Extreme -ly religious	Very religio -us	Somewh -at religious	Neither religio us nor non- religiou -s	Somewha -t non- religious	Very non- religiou -s	Extremel -y non- religious
Religi -on								
Religi -on	Buddh -ism	3.4	13.7	50.4	22.5	6.2	3.1	0.7
	Taoism	3.0	23.4	47.3	18.4	6.5	1.0	0.5
	Islam	4.1	34.2	50.2	9.1	1.6	0.8	
	Hindui -sm	3.1	26.5	59.2	7.1	3.1		1.0
	Catholi -cism	0.7	11.2	73.9	9.7	2.2	1.5	0.7
	Christia -nity	3.8	23.3	58.6	12.0	1.1	0.8	0.4
	No Religio -n		1.6	8.4	30.1	19.3	23.9	16.8

There was a pronounced age difference for Muslims. Younger Muslim respondents (those aged between 18 and 35) were much more likely to perceive themselves as somewhat religious, compared to older Muslim respondents (aged 56 and above). About 6 in 10 Muslims aged 18 to 35 identified as somewhat religious, compared to 32.8 per cent of Muslims aged above 55. About a quarter of younger Muslim respondents identified as very religious, compared to around half of older Muslim respondents (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Respondents' self-identification of religiosity, by religious background and age**

Age		Religion (%)	Extremely religious	Very religious	Somewhat religious	Neither religious nor non-religious	Somewhat non-religious	Very non-religious	Extremely non-religious
			-	6.5	49.6	26.0	10.6	5.7	1.6
18-35	Religion (%)	Buddhism	-	6.5	49.6	26.0	10.6	5.7	1.6
		Taoism	-	10.5	50.0	23.7	13.2	2.6	-
		Islam	2.8	25.2	60.7	10.3	0.9	-	-
		Hinduism	-	27.6	55.2	13.8	-	-	3.4
		Catholicism	-	7.7	69.2	19.2	3.8	-	-
		Christianity	1.3	25.0	60.0	10.0	2.5	1.3	-
		No Religion		0.9	5.2	33.9	20.0	23.5	16.5
Above 55	Religion (%)	Buddhism	5.4	15.4	53.7	21.5	3.4	0.7	-
		Taoism	2.3	34.1	40.9	14.8	6.8	1.1	-
		Islam	8.6	51.7	32.8	3.4	1.7	1.7	-
		Hinduism	8.3	29.2	50.0	8.3	4.2	-	-
		Catholicism	-	13.8	75.9	6.9	1.7	1.7	-
		Christianity	6.9	18.4	65.5	6.9	-	1.1	1.1
		No Religion	-	3.4	10.2	29.5	17.0	25.0	14.8

This trend was evident mostly among Muslims, indicating an increase in perceived religiosity with age for this community. It could be that young Muslims are more modest in reporting their own religiosity, as results in other sections of the survey indicate high levels of religiosity among young Muslims, compared to their peers from other religious backgrounds.

There is increasingly more differentiation made between religion and spirituality in the academic literature. As a concept spirituality is used variably but sometimes refers to "a subjective experience of the sacred" (Vaughan, 1991), or "that vast realm of human potential dealing with ultimate purposes, with higher entities, with God, with love, with compassion, with purpose"(Tart, 1975). Religiousness in contrast often refers to adherence to a set of beliefs or practices relating to a supernatural entity. In the survey respondents were asked about how they would define themselves – as one following a religion or being a spiritual person or some combination of both ideas. The terms however were not defined.

When it came to beliefs about religion and spirituality,<sup>8</sup> the majority of respondents (76.5 per cent) indicated that they followed a religion. However, only 30.9 per cent attested to both following a religion, and being a spiritual person (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Respondents' views towards following a religion and spirituality**

	I follow a religion, I am a spiritual person	I follow a religion, I am not a spiritual person	I don't follow a religion, I am a spiritual person	I don't follow a religion, I am not a spiritual person
Respondent's beliefs about following a religion and spirituality (%)	30.9	45.6	8.6	14.8

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<sup>8</sup> The question was "What best describes you?" Respondents could choose from four options. These were "I follow a religion and consider myself to be a spiritual person", "I follow a religion but don't consider myself to be a spiritual person", "I don't follow a religion but consider myself to be a spiritual person" and "I don't follow a religion and don't consider myself to be a spiritual person".

Buddhists, Taoists and Hindus were more likely to follow a religion but not identify as spiritual, compared to both following a religion and being spiritual (see Table 5). Muslims, Christians and Catholics were more likely to be split between the two options. Christians were also most likely to identify both as following a religion, and as being a spiritual person (55.0 per cent). Among those with no religion, 27 per cent identified themselves as spiritual even if they did not follow a religion. A small minority across all religions (ranging from 1.3 per cent to 5.2 per cent) attested to both not following a religion, and not being spiritual.

**Table 5: Respondents' views towards following a religion and spirituality, by religious background**

		I follow a religion, I am a spiritual person	I follow a religion, I am not a spiritual person	I don't follow a religion, I am a spiritual person	I don't follow a religion, I am not a spiritual person
Religion (%)	Buddhism	26.2	61.7	6.8	5.2
	Taoism	23.1	68.3	4.8	3.8
	Islam	45.7	52.6	0.4	1.3
	Hinduism	36.8	52.6	7.4	3.2
	Catholicism	46.9	48.4	3.1	1.6
	Christianity	55.0	41.1	2.3	1.6
	No Religion	1.3	6.6	27.1	65.0

### **5.1.2 Religious beliefs**

#### **Belief in God**

A series of questions asked about beliefs in God. The concept of a supreme deity however differs between those of different religious beliefs since some religious traditions emphasise such a being while others do not. When asked about the steadfastness of their beliefs in God,<sup>9</sup> around half of the respondents (53.2 per cent) indicated they know that God really exists, and that they did not have doubts about it (see Table 6). This is despite 76.5 per cent of respondents professing to follow a religion, as noted in Section 5.1.1. The rest of the respondents were equally spread out over a spectrum of doubt in the existence of a divine being.

**Table 6: Respondents' beliefs about God**

(%)	I don't believe in God	Don't know whether there is a God and no way to find out	Don't believe in a personal God, but in a higher power	Find myself believing in God sometimes, but not at others	While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God	I know God really exists and have no doubts about it
Respondent's beliefs about God	7.6	7.2	10.8	10.9	10.4	53.2

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<sup>9</sup> The question was "Please indicate which statement below comes closest to expressing what you believe in God". Respondents could choose from six options, ranging from "I don't believe in god", "I don't know whether there is a god and I don't believe there is any way to find out", to "I don't believe in a personal god but I do believe in a higher power", to "I find myself believing in god sometimes, and not at others", to "while I have doubts, I do believe in god" and finally "I know god really exists and I have no doubts about it".

Muslims, Christians and Catholics were the most likely to belong to the segment of respondents who took an absolute stand in God's existence (see Table 7). Nearly 90 per cent of Muslims, 85.3 per cent of Christians and a similar proportion of Catholics attested to knowing that God really exists and to not having any doubts about it. Only 26.6 per cent of those with no religion were unequivocal on their rejection of a belief in God; most of the others subscribed to some notion of a higher power or believed in God sometimes.

**Table 7: Respondents' beliefs about God, by religious background**

Respondent's beliefs about God		I don't believe in God	Don't know whether there is a God and no way to find out	Don't believe in a personal God, but in a Higher Power	Find myself believing in God sometimes, but not at others	While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God	I know God really exists and have no doubts about it	
Religion (%)		Buddhism	5.5	8.7	12.8	16.9	16.0	40.2
	Taoism	3.4	5.3	13.0	19.7	15.4	43.3	
	Islam	1.2	0.8	0.8	3.1	4.3	89.8	
	Hinduism	2.9	1.0	9.8	13.7	9.8	62.7	
	Catholicism	0.7	0.7	0.7	3.7	8.8	85.3	
	Christianity	0.4	0.4	1.8	3.7	8.5	85.3	
	No Religion	26.6	19.9	24.7	11.6	8.0	9.1	

More educated respondents were also less likely to take an absolute stand when it came to knowledge about the existence of God (see Table 8). Around 47 per cent of respondents with a bachelor's degree and above indicated knowing God really exists and not having any doubts, compared to 59.6 per cent of respondents with a secondary school and below education. However, this could be attributed to

the relatively high proportion of better-educated respondents who identified as not having any religion.

**Table 8: Respondents' beliefs about God, by educational background**

		I don't believe in God	Don't know whether there is a God and no way to find out	Don't believe in a personal God, but in a higher power	Find myself believing in God sometimes, but not at others	While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God	I know God really exists and have no doubts about it
Education (%)	Secondary school & below	5.9	6.1	6.7	11.4	10.3	59.6
	Post-Secondary, Diploma & Professional Qualifications	7.1	7.6	10.7	12.6	11.3	50.7
	Degree & above	10.2	8.0	16.1	8.6	9.8	47.3

Similarly, younger respondents were less steadfast when it came to their belief in God (see Table 9). Around 40 per cent of respondents aged between 18 and 25 indicated knowing God really exists and not having any doubts about it, compared to 60.4 per cent of respondents aged above 65. This discrepancy could also be attributed to the high numbers of young respondents who identify as not having any religion.

**Table 9: Respondents' beliefs about God, by age**

		I don't believe in God	Don't know whether there is a God and no way to find out	Don't believe in a personal God, but in a higher power	Find myself believing in God sometimes, but not at others	While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God	I know God really exists and have no doubts about it
Age (%)	18-25	9.3	11.1	15.7	11.6	11.6	40.7
	26-35	10.1	7.4	12.8	11.3	11.6	46.7
	36-45	5.7	6.9	11.4	11.7	10.6	53.7
	46-55	8.9	6.6	11.2	9.2	10.2	53.8
	56-65	6.0	6.7	7.0	11.1	8.3	61.0
	Above 65	5.7	5.4	7.5	10.4	10.7	60.4

There was a significant educational discrepancy when it came to steadfastness in beliefs of God for Hindus, Buddhists and Taoists (see Table 10). For example, while 90.6 per cent of Hindus with a secondary school and below education indicated knowing God really exists and not having any doubts about it, 46.3 per cent of Hindus with a bachelor's degree and above felt the same way. This was the case for Buddhists and Taoists as well.

However, young Muslims and Christians were as likely to be steadfast as older Muslims and Christians. Around 90 per cent of Muslims aged between 18 and 25 indicated knowing God really exists and not having any doubts about it, compared to 88.2 per cent of Muslims aged above 65. Around 85 per cent of Christians aged between 18 and 25, compared to 87 per cent of Christians aged above 65, felt similarly.

**Table 10: Respondents' beliefs about God, by religious background and education**

Education (%)			Respondent's beliefs about God					
			I don't believe -e in God	Don't know whether there is a God and no way to find out	Don't believe in a persona -l God, but in a Higher Power	Find myself believing in God sometime -s, but not at others	While I have doubts , I feel that I do believe in God	I know God really exists and have no doubt -s about it
Secondar -y school & below	Religio -n	Buddhism	4.8	5.8	10.1	15.4	14.9	49.0
		Taoism	3.1	5.3	6.1	17.6	18.3	49.6
		Islam	1.6	-	0.8	3.1	4.7	89.8
		Hinduism		-	6.3	3.1	-	90.6
		Catholicis m	2.5	2.5	-	2.5	2.5	90.0
		Christianity	-	-	1.4	7.1	5.7	85.7
		No Religion	24.7	23.7	13.4	15.5	8.2	14.4
Degree & above	Religio -n	Buddhism	6.9	10.9	17.8	14.9	17.8	31.7
		Taoism	6.1	6.1	30.3	18.2	9.1	30.3
		Islam	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	-	88.2
		Hinduism	4.9	-	17.1	22.0	9.8	46.3
		Catholicis m			1.7	3.4	13.6	81.4
		Christianity	0.8	0.8	1.6	0.8	8.1	87.9
		No Religion	28.0	18.5	31.2	8.3	7.0	7.0

The survey also sought to measure a turning point in respondents' lives which indicated a shift towards a stronger belief in God.<sup>10</sup> The majority of respondents

<sup>10</sup> The question was "What best describes your beliefs about god?". Respondents could choose from four options, ranging from "I don't believe in god now and I never have", "I don't believe in god now but I used to", to "I believe in god now but didn't used to" and finally "I believe in god now and I always have".

do not attest to such turning points; 73.2 per cent of respondents indicated having always believed in God (see Table 11).<sup>11</sup>

**Table 11: Respondents' beliefs about God and whether these have changed**

(%)	I don't believe in God now and I never have	I don't believe in God now, but I used to	I believe in God now, but I didn't use to	I believe in God now and I always have
Respondents' belief in God	11.0	5.3	10.5	73.2

Christians and Catholics were the most likely to have newly-acquired beliefs about God compared to respondents from other religious backgrounds (see Table 12). Around 15 per cent of Catholics and 16.5 per cent of Christians indicated that while they believe in God now, they did not use to previously.

**Table 12: Respondents' beliefs about God and whether there have changed, by religious background**

		I don't believe in God now and I never have	I don't believe in God now, but I used to	I believe in God now, but I didn't use to	I believe in God now and I always have
Religion (%)	Buddhism	9.6	5.0	9.9	75.4
	Taoism	4.6	4.0	9.2	82.1
	Islam	0.4	0.4	2.4	96.7
	Hinduism	1.1	5.4	8.6	84.9
	Catholicism	-	0.8	15.2	84.1
	Christianity		1.1	16.5	82.4
	No Religion	49.6	18.5	12.5	19.4

<sup>11</sup> This variable has 279 missing cases.

### Beliefs in religious concepts

Asked about their beliefs in certain religious concepts,<sup>12</sup> the majority of respondents (at least 70 per cent) either definitely or probably believe in life after death, heaven, hell and religious miracles (see Table 13). This is an indicator of strong religious beliefs amongst respondents. Respondents were most likely to believe in life after death; 47.2 per cent of respondents indicated that they definitely believed in this. However, respondents in general were less inclined to believe in supernatural powers of deceased ancestors.<sup>13</sup>

**Table 13: Respondents' beliefs of religious concepts**

(%)	Yes, definitely	Yes, probably	No, probably not	No, definitely not
Belief in life after death	47.2	31.1	10.7	11.1
Belief in heaven	45.3	32.3	13.9	8.5
Belief in hell	44.3	32.5	14.2	9.0
Belief in religious miracles	35.0	34.8	18.0	12.2
Belief in supernatural powers of deceased ancestors	12.4	28.8	26.1	32.8

Muslims were the most likely to steadfastly believe in life after death (see Table 14). Nearly 70 per cent of Muslims reported definitely believing in this. Christians and Catholics were also more likely to definitely believe in life after death, compared to Hindus, Buddhists and Taoists – who were more likely to be nuanced

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<sup>12</sup> One question was “Do you believe in life after death?”. Respondents could choose from four options. They were “Yes, definitely”, “Yes, probably”, “No, probably not” and “No, definitely not”. Similar questions were posed for religious concepts of heaven, hell, religious miracles, supernatural powers of deceased ancestors, reincarnation and nirvana.

<sup>13</sup> This variable has 207 missing cases.

in their answers. However, the majority of respondents across religious backgrounds at least probably believed in life after death.

**Table 14: Respondents' belief of life after death, by religion**

		Yes, definitely	Yes, probably	No, probably not	No, definitely not
Religion (%)					
Religion (%)	Buddhism	35.5	42.7	13.6	8.3
	Taoism	27.6	47.5	13.8	11.0
	Islam	69.6	14.0	7.2	9.2
	Hinduism	30.6	41.8	13.3	14.3
	Catholicism	54.5	23.9	10.4	11.2
	Christianity	58.4	19.1	6.9	15.6
	No Religion	16.1	35.9	23.8	24.1

The trends for beliefs in heaven, hell and religious miracles mirror the aforementioned trends. Muslims, Christians and Catholics were much more likely to *definitely* believe in these concepts (refer to Tables 15, 16 and 17).

**Table 15: Respondents' beliefs of heaven, by religion**

		Yes, definitely	Yes, probably	No, probably not	No, definitely not
Religion (%)					
Religion (%)	Buddhism	31.9	42.7	18.8	6.7
	Taoism	27.0	48.9	16.3	7.9
	Islam	79.1	15.7	3.1	2.0
	Hinduism	26.4	46.2	15.4	12.1
	Catholicism	73.9	23.1	2.2	0.7
	Christianity	78.1	19.0	1.9	1.1
	No Religion	11.0	35.5	28.9	24.5

**Table 16: Respondents' belief of hell, by religion**

		Yes, definitely	Yes, probably	No, probably not	No, definitely not
Religion (%)	Buddhism	33.6	43.9	17.3	5.2
	Taoism	27.7	49.2	15.3	7.9
	Islam	79.1	15.8	2.8	2.4
	Hinduism	24.4	43.3	16.7	15.6
	Catholicism	69.9	24.1	3.8	2.3
	Christianity	71.9	21.0	4.5	2.6
	No Religion	11.4	33.4	30.0	25.2

**Table 17: Respondents' belief of religious miracles, by religion**

		Q15d Belief in religious miracles			
		Yes, definitely	Yes, probably	No, probably not	No, definitely not
Religion (%)	Buddhism	23.8	43.3	22.5	10.4
	Taoism	21.9	50.3	19.1%	8.7
	Islam	65.6	26.4	3.6	4.4
	Hinduism	29.5	45.3	14.7	10.5
	Catholicism	48.9	31.1	10.4	9.6
	Christianity	59.0	25.7	10.8	4.5
	No Religion	6.8	30.2	32.9	30.2

The trends were reversed when it came to beliefs in the supernatural power of deceased ancestors (see Table 18). Hindus, Taoists and Buddhists are more likely to at least probably believe in supernatural powers of ancestors, compared to Christians and Catholics. However, only a minority of respondents across religious backgrounds (ranging from 7.3 per cent for Christians to 19.1 per cent for Muslims)

indicated that they *definitely* believed in supernatural powers of deceased ancestors.

**Table 18: Respondents' beliefs of supernatural powers of deceased ancestors, by religion**

		Yes, definitely	Yes, probably	No, probably not	No, definitely not
Religion (%)					
Religion (%)	Buddhism	14.9	42.9	28.3	13.9
	Taoism	18.0	48.1	22.4	11.5
	Islam	19.1	13.6	17.0	50.2
	Hinduism	17.2	48.3	18.4	16.1
	Catholicism	9.4	18.8	35.0	36.8
	Christianity	7.3	11.9	20.3	60.5
	No Religion	4.7	25.0	35.3	35.0

### Beliefs in religiously motivated principles

When asked about their beliefs in certain religious principles or ideas,<sup>14</sup> nearly 6 in 10 respondents (58.1 percent) agreed or strongly agreed with the idea that God concerns himself with human beings (see Table 19).

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<sup>14</sup> One question was "Do you agree or disagree with there is a god who concerns himself with every human being personally". Respondents could choose from five options, ranging from "strongly agree", to "agree", to "neither agree nor disagree", to "disagree" and finally "strongly disagree". Similar questions were posed for the following principles: "there is little people can do to change the course of their lives", "to me, life is meaningful only because god exists, "life does not serve any purpose", "life is meaningful only if you provide the meaning yourself" and "I have my own way of connecting with god without churches or religious services".

**Table 19: Respondents' views of religious principles**

(%)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
God concerns Himself with human beings	21.4	36.7	26.2	11.8	3.8
People can do little to change life	4.1	23.3	19.3	40.1	13.2
Life meaningful because God exists	14.8	28.1	24.7	22.9	9.4
Life does not serve any purpose	1.3	7.1	13.6	51.8	26.2
Life meaningful, provide meaning yourself	19.6	55.4	14.7	8.0	2.2
Own way of connecting with God	9.9	33.4	26.4	22.9	7.5

Muslims, Christians and Catholics were the most likely to believe that God concerns himself with every human being (see Table 20). Around 44 per cent of Muslims, 37.9 of Catholics and 46.6 per cent of Christians strongly agreed with this, compared to significantly lower proportions of respondents from the other religious communities.

**Table 20: Respondents' views of religious principles, by religion**

		God concerns Himself with human beings				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Religion (%)	Buddhism	8.4	35.8	38.3	14.0	3.6
	Taoism	8.2	39.0	39.5	11.8	1.5
	Islam	43.9	43.9	7.5	3.3	1.3
	Hinduism	14.1	55.6	17.2	9.1	4.0
	Catholicism	37.9	49.2	9.1	3.0	0.8
	Christianity	46.6	44.4	4.9	4.1	-
	No Religion	2.5	15.4	44.9	25.2	12.0

When it came to the statement that a respondent has his or her own way of connecting with God without churches or religious services (see Table 21), Christians (46.6 per cent) and Catholics (48.5 per cent) were the most likely to disagree or strongly disagree.

**Table 21: Respondents' views of the statement "I have my own way of connecting with God without churches or religious services", by religious background**

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Religion (%)	Buddhism	7.2	37.3	34.2	19.0	2.3
	Taoism	7.0	47.6	25.7	17.6	2.1
	Islam	17.9	29.1	18.3	22.7	12.0
	Hinduism	7.9	48.5	18.8	22.8	2.0
	Catholicism	12.9	25.0	13.6	32.6	15.9
	Christianity	10.8	29.9	12.7	35.8	10.8
	No Religion	5.7	25.7	44.3	15.5	8.8

When it came to issues relating to meaning in life and whether religion was a source of this, three in four had similar sentiments towards the statement that life is only meaningful when you provide the meaning yourself. Respondents did not readily agree with the concept of fatalism; only 27.4 per cent believed that people can do little to change life. Respondents were the least likely to agree or strongly agree that life does not serve any purpose (8.4 per cent).

Across all respondents, Hindus were the most fatalistic (see Table 22). Close to half (47.4 per cent) agreed that there is little people can do to change the course of their life, compared to around one in four respondents from each of the other major religious communities.

**Table 22: Respondents' views of the statement "people can do little to change the course of their life", by religious background**

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Religion (%)	Buddhism	2.9	23.8	25.0	38.0	10.3
	Taoism	4.5	28.2	21.8	39.1	6.4
	Islam	8.9	25.1	15.8	39.7	10.5
	Hinduism	-	47.4	17.5	22.7	12.4
	Catholicism	3.0	25.6	21.8	38.3	11.3
	Christianity	4.1	23.0	13.4	44.2	15.2
	No Religion	3.2	11.9	18.0	46.1	20.9

Less educated respondents were also more fatalistic (see Table 23). Around 36 per cent of respondents with a secondary school or lower educational qualifications agreed or strongly agreed that people can do little to change the course of their life, compared to 19.1 per cent of respondents with a bachelor's degree and above. This could stem from poor financial circumstances significantly shaping how those with lower educational qualifications perceive the role of luck in determining life outcomes.

**Table 23: Respondents' views of the statement "people can do little to change the course of their life", by educational background**

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Education (%)	Secondary school & below	5.3	30.8	21.6	35.6	6.8
	Post-Secondary, Diploma & Professional Qualification-s	3.9	21.3	18.8	41.6	14.5
	Degree & above	2.9	16.2	17.0	44.0	19.9

Muslims and Christians were more likely to agree that life is meaningful because God exists (see Table 24). Around 83 per cent of Muslims and 75.4 per cent of Christians agreed or strongly agreed with this.

**Table 24: Respondents' views of the statement "life is meaningful because God exists", by religious background**

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Religion (%)	Buddhism	4.4	19.6	31.8	33.3	11.0
	Taoism	3.4	20.6	36.8	34.8	4.4
	Islam	37.8	45.0	10.4	4.4	2.4
	Hinduism	6.0	48.0	23.0	17.0	6.0
	Catholicism	23.1	44.8	23.1	7.5	1.5
	Christianity	32.4	43.0	15.1	7.4	2.2
	No Religion	2.3	7.5	28.7	37.1	24.3

The majority of respondents, across religious backgrounds, disagreed that life does not serve any purpose (see Table 25). People with no religious affiliation were nearly as likely as Christians to disagree with this. About 86 percent of Christians and 76.5 per cent of respondents with no religion, disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. This points to the fact that existential questions such as the meaning of life can be resolved without appealing to a religious belief. For the religious, especially Christians, Catholics and Muslims however, meaning of life issues are often settled through religious ideas.

**Table 25: Respondents' views of the statement "in my opinion, life does not serve any purpose", by religious background**

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Religion (%)	Buddhism	0.7	8.2	20.6	51.1	19.4
	Taoism	0.5	7.9	12.4	66.3	12.9
	Islam	3.2	6.0	10.0	51.8	29.1
	Hinduism	-	15.6	10.4	54.2	19.8
	Catholicism	-	5.2	10.4	53.7	30.6
	Christianity	1.1	4.5	8.2	46.8	39.3
	No Religion	1.5	6.7	15.4	47.4	29.1

Hindus were the most likely to believe that life is only meaningful if you provide the meaning yourself (91.0 per cent), compared to respondents of other religions (see Table 26). Despite Hindus being the most fatalistic as seen above, they were also the most likely to perceive agency in meaning-making.

**Table 26: Respondents' views of the statement "life is meaningful if you provide the meaning yourself", by religious background**

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Religion (%)	Buddhism	18.8	58.7	14.9	6.7	1.0
	Taoism	15.3	66.0	11.8	5.9	1.0
	Islam	21.1	53.0	14.3	8.0	3.6
	Hinduism	27.0	64.0	4.0	4.0	1.0
	Catholicism	17.0	47.4	23.7	11.9	-
	Christianity	13.7	43.5	20.3	16.6	5.9
	No Religion	25.0	58.0	11.9	4.0	1.1

While the majority of respondents believed neither in reincarnation<sup>15</sup> nor nirvana,<sup>16</sup> they were still quite divided on the issue (see Table 27). For instance, about 56 per cent of respondents said reincarnation was definitely or probably false, while about 44 per cent said it was definitely or probably true.

**Table 27: Respondents' views of reincarnation and nirvana**

(%)	Definitely true	Probably true	Probably false	Definitely false
Belief in reincarnation	13.9	30.2	19.0	36.9
Belief in nirvana	13.4	27.0	22.1	37.5

However, this could stem from differences in religious beliefs – Hindus, Buddhists and Taoists were more likely to believe in these ideas. When the trends were further broken down by religion, the divide was explained by a high percentage of Hindus, Taoists and Buddhists believing in reincarnation and nirvana (see Tables 28 and 29).

**Table 28: Respondents' views of reincarnation, by religious background**

Religion (%)	Belief in reincarnation				
	Yes, definitely	Yes, probably	No, probably not	No, definitely not	
Buddhism	29.6	47.5	14.4	8.5	
Taoism	23.2	50.8	12.2	13.8	
Islam	5.2	7.0	14.8	72.9	
Hinduism	26.4	36.8	13.8	23.0	
Catholicism	4.1	21.3	32.8	41.8	
Christianity	2.7	10.1	13.6	73.6	
No Religion	4.6	32.1	33.4	29.8	

<sup>15</sup> This variable has 227 missing cases.

<sup>16</sup> This variable has 320 missing cases.

**Table 29: Respondents' views of nirvana, by religious background**

		Belief in Nirvana			
		Yes, definitely	Yes, probably	No, probably not	No, definitely not
Religion (%)	Buddhism	30.0	42.9	16.4	10.7
	Taoism	20.5	48.0	15.2	16.4
	Islam	6.0	7.8	13.8	72.5
	Hinduism	21.8	34.6	19.2	24.4
	Catholicism	7.1	20.4	37.2	35.4
	Christianity	3.2	9.3	17.8	69.6
	No Religion	3.4	25.8	37.8	33.0

A high number of respondents with no religion said that they definitely or probably believed in reincarnation (36.7 per cent) or nirvana (29.2 per cent).

### Magical beliefs

Respondents were asked about their beliefs in certain magical or supernatural powers.<sup>17</sup> They were divided in whether good luck charms sometimes bring good luck (see Table 30). About 47 per cent believed that this was definitely or probably true. Respondents were also relatively divided on the believability of faith healers having God-given healing powers,<sup>18</sup> with 44.7 per cent of respondents definitely or probably believing this. The majority of respondents indicated that fortune tellers

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<sup>17</sup> The question was “Please check one box on each one below to show whether you think each statement is true or false”. Respondents could choose from four options, ranging from “definitely true”, “probably true”, “probably false” and “definitely false”. The statements include “good luck charms sometimes do bring good luck”, “some fortune tellers really can foresee the future”, “some faith healers do have God-given healing powers” and “a person’s horoscope at birth can affect the course of their future”.

<sup>18</sup> This variable has 245 missing cases.

seeing the future, and horoscopes affecting the course of future,<sup>19</sup> were definitely or probably false.

**Table 30: Respondents' views of superstitious beliefs**

(%)	Definitely true	Probably true	Probably false	Definitely false
Good luck charms do bring good luck	6.6	40.5	22.4	30.5
Fortune tellers can see future	3.3	31.7	28.0	37.0
Faith healers have God-given healing powers	5.9	38.8	28.0	27.3
Horoscope affect course of future	3.7	29.9	28.2	38.2

Hindus, Buddhists and Taoists were more likely to at least probably believe that good luck charms bring good luck (see Table 31), compared to those from other religious backgrounds. Around 70 per cent of Hindus, 74.4 per cent of Taoists and 66.8 per cent of Buddhists believed that this was either definitely or probably true. Interestingly, nearly half of respondents with no religion also believed in good luck charms being able to confer good luck.

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<sup>19</sup> This variable has 231 missing cases.

**Table 31: Respondents' views of good luck charms, by religious background**

		Definitely true	Probably true	Probably false	Definitely false
Religion (%)	Buddhism	9.4	57.4	21.6	11.7
	Taoism	10.0	64.4	13.3	12.2
	Islam	4.8	25.3	19.7	50.2
	Hinduism	14.4	55.7	17.5	12.4
	Catholicism	5.7	24.4	31.7	38.2
	Christianity	1.9	8.9	24.1	65.0
	No Religion	3.7	45.8	26.8	23.7

Trends for the believability of fortune tellers seeing the future mirror the aforementioned trends (see Table 32). Hindu, Taoist and Buddhist respondents were more likely to find it at least probably true that fortune tellers can see the future, compared to Muslims, Christians, and Catholics.

**Table 32: Respondents' views of fortune tellers, by religious background**

		Definitely true	Probably true	Probably false	Definitely false
Religion (%)	Buddhism	7.2	43.0	31.6	18.2
	Taoism	2.8	45.3	28.2	23.8
	Islam	1.3	14.6	24.3	59.8
	Hinduism	4.1	44.3	33.0	18.6
	Catholicism	-	22.8	25.2	52.0
	Christianity	0.8	18.5	22.0	58.7
	No Religion	3.8	33.9	30.7	31.7

By religious background, Christians were most likely to believe that faith healers have God-given healing powers (see Table 33). Nearly 6 in 10 Christians definitely

or probably believed in this. This could stem from existing practices of faith-healing in several churches, which routinely post articles or videos on the subject online and on social media. Muslim respondents were the least likely to believe in faith-healers (40.2 per cent), next to respondents with no religion (25.9 per cent).

**Table 33: Respondents' views of faith healers, by religious background**

		Definitely true	Probably true	Probably false	Definitely false
Religion (%)					
Religion (%)	Buddhism	3.9	43.4	34.6	18.0
	Taoism	1.2	46.5	28.8	23.5
	Islam	3.8	36.4	17.4	42.4
	Hinduism	5.4	43.5	28.3	22.8
	Catholicism	8.3	47.1	19.8	24.8
	Christianity	17.6	42.0	18.0	22.4
	No Religion	1.9	24.0	38.3	35.7

Hindus were the most likely to definitely or probably believe that horoscopes affect the course of future, alongside Buddhists and Taoists (see Table 34). Nearly 60 per cent of Hindus had such sentiments, compared to 48.4 per cent of Buddhists and 47.5 per cent of Taoists. This supports the trends of greater fatalism identified amongst Hindus in previous sections

**Table 34: Respondents' views of horoscopes affecting the course of their futures, by religious background**

		Definitely true	Probably true	Probably false	Definitely false
Religion (%)	Buddhism	6.4	42.0	30.8	20.7
	Taoism	2.8	44.7	29.6	22.9
	Islam	2.2	18.4	19.7	59.6
	Hinduism	11.7	47.9	21.3	19.1
	Catholicism	3.4	19.3	31.9	45.4
	Christianity	1.2	11.0	24.7	63.1
	No Religion	1.6	29.4	34.8	34.2

### 5.1.3 Practice of religion

#### Practice of religion in places of worship

Around four in 10 respondents (42.4 per cent) reported that they either pray once daily, or several times a day (see Table 35). Only 17.4 per cent report never praying. This indicates a relatively high level of religiosity amongst respondents. However, respondents were less likely to regularly take part in activities organised by places of worship. Around 36 per cent of respondents attested to never having attended any activities organised by places of worship, about double the proportion who said they had never prayed.

**Table 35: Frequency of respondents praying and taking part in activities organised by places of worship**

	Nev -er	Les- s than once a year	Abou -t once or twice a year	Sev- eral time- s a year	About once a month	2-3 times a mont -h	Nearl -y every week	Ever -y wee -k	Sever- al times -a week	Onc -e a day	Seve -ral times a day
How often respond e-nts pray	17. 4	3.4	5.4	9.7	3.3	4.4	2.7	4.8	6.4	20.2	22.2
How often respon-dents take part in activitie-s organ-ised by places of worship	36. 6	10.6	14.6	15.8	4.7	5.3	2.7	6.9	2.7	-	-

Muslim respondents (77 per cent) were the most likely to pray at least once a day (see Table 36), consistent with the obligatory prayer requirements in Islam. Among those who professed a religion, Buddhists were the least likely to pray either several times a day or once a day. Only 31.7 per cent of Buddhist respondents attested to doing so.

**Table 36: Frequency of respondents praying, by religious background**

		Never	Less than once a year	Abo-out once or twice a year	Several times a year	About once a month	2-3 times a month	Nearly every week	Every week	Several times a week	Once a day	Several times a day
Religion (%)												
Religion (%)	Buddhism	11.9	5.0	7.5	18.0	4.1	7.8	2.3	5.0	6.6	22.6	9.1
	Taoism	6.3	2.4	8.7	16.8	5.8	8.7	1.4	2.4	5.3	20.7	21.6
	Islam	1.2	2.7	0.8	2.7	3.5	2.0	2.7	2.0	5.5	8.6	68.4
	Hinduism	2.0	-	1.0	4.9	2.9	4.9	3.9	12.7	5.9	46.1	15.7
	Catholicism	2.2	-	0.7	5.9	0.7	1.5	3.7	13.2	14.7	38.2	19.1
	Christianity	2.9	0.4	-	2.6	3.3	4.4	5.9	6.6	11.8	30.9	31.3
	No Religion	62.6	7.2	11.6	9.4	1.9	0.8	0.6	1.1	0.6	3.0	1.1

By educational background, those who had higher educational qualifications were less likely to pray regularly (see Table 37). Around half of respondents with a secondary school and below level of education indicated they prayed at least once a day, compared to 34.5 per cent of respondents with at least a bachelor's degree. This trend prevails for respondents from different religious affiliations, except Islam, and lends general support to the pattern of lower religious practice among better-educated segments of the population reported earlier. Muslim respondents, regardless of educational attainment tended to report praying several times a day.

**Table 37: Frequency of respondents praying, by education**

		Never	Less than once a year	About once or twice a year	Several times a year	About once a month	2-3 times a month	Nearly every week	Every week	Several times a week	Once a day	Several times a day
Education (%)	Secondary school & below	14.1	2.5	5.4	7.8	3.2	4.5	2.1	4.9	5.6	24.5	25.4
	Post-Secondary, Diploma & Professional Qualifications	18.9	3.8	4.6	11.1	3.4	5.4	2.7	4.4	5.0	17.8	22.9
	Degree & above	20.4	4.1	6.1	10.9	3.4	3.4	3.4	5.0	8.9	17.0	17.5

Christian respondents were the most likely to have taken part in activities organised by places of worship other than attending services (see Table 38).

Nearly 37 per cent of Christian respondents indicated having participated in activities either several times a week, every week, or nearly every week. Among those who professed a religion, Buddhists were the least likely to have taken part in such activities. About 4 in 10 Buddhists indicated they had never taken part in activities organised by places of worship.

**Table 38: Frequency of respondents taking part in activities organised by places of worship other than attending services, by religious background**

		Never	Less than once a year	About once or twice a year	Several times a year	About once a month	2-3 times a month	Nearly every week	Every week	Several times a week
Religion (%)	Buddhism	39.0	13.2	15.8	18.7	4.6	5.5	0.7	1.6	0.9
	Taoism	31.3	11.1	25.5	23.1	2.9	4.8	0.5	0.5	0.5
	Islam	27.3	9.8	10.5	14.8	8.2	6.6	5.1	11.7	5.9
	Hinduism	25.5	4.9	18.6	17.6	7.8	10.8	3.9	8.8	2.0
	Catholicism	25.7	10.3	17.6	15.4	7.4	4.4	3.7	13.2	2.2
	Christianity	11.8	7.7	13.2	16.9	5.9	7.7	7.0	22.1	7.7
	No Religion	69.3	11.9	9.7	7.8	0.6	0.6	-	-	0.3

#### Practice of religion outside of places of worship

Respondents were roughly split on whether they read or listened to religious scriptures outside of worship services, as well as whether they kept a shrine or altar in their homes<sup>20</sup> (see Table 39).

**Table 39: Respondents' likelihood of practicing religion outside places of worship**

(%)	Yes	No
Last 12 months: Read or listened to religious scripture outside of worship?	47.8	52.2
Shrine, altar in home	55.4	44.6

<sup>20</sup> The question was “During the last 12 months, have you read or listened to the reading of any holy scripture, not counting reading that happened during a worship service?”. Respondents could choose between “yes” or “no”. A similar question was posed for whether respondents have a shrine, altar or a religious object on display in their homes.

By religious background, Muslims, Catholics and Christians were the most likely to have read or listened to religious scriptures outside of worship (see Table 40). Around 87 per cent of Muslims, 72.8 per cent of Catholics and 87.1 per cent of Christians reported reading or listening to religious scripture outside of a worship service in the preceding 12 months. Less than half of respondents of all other religions had done so.

**Table 40: Respondents' likelihood of reading or listening to religious scripture outside places of worship, by religious background**

Religion (%)		
	Yes	No
Buddhism	32.2	67.8
Taoism	24.0	76.0
Islam	86.7	13.3
Hinduism	44.1	55.9
Catholicism	72.8	27.2
Christianity	87.1	12.9
No Religion	14.4	85.6

While there were no pronounced age differences in reading or listening to religious scriptures outside of a worship service, there were some age differences according to religious affiliation (see Table 41). The biggest difference was amongst Hindu respondents: 41.7 per cent of Hindu respondents above the age of 55 indicated not having listened to or read religious scripture outside of worship, compared to 73.3 per cent of Hindu respondents aged 18 to 35. The age differences for Christians were marginal. This indicates high levels of religious practice, in spite

of age, for Christians, while age has more of an effect on the religious practice of Hindus.

**Table 41: Respondents' likelihood of reading or listening to religious scripture outside places of worship, by age**

		Yes	No
18-35	Religion (%)	Buddhism	23.4
		Taoism	30.0
		Islam	83.0
		Hinduism	26.7
		Catholicism	53.8
		Christianity	82.7
		No Religion	12.1
Above 55	Religion (%)	Buddhism	38.0
		Taoism	17.6
		Islam	93.4
		Hinduism	58.3
		Catholicism	83.1
		Christianity	85.9
		No Religion	11.5

Many respondents reported having religious objects in their homes. Around 87 per cent of Hindus and 87.5 per cent of Catholics attested to having shrines, altars or religious objects in their homes. For the other religious groups, more than half of these respondents had such objects.

### 5.1.4 Socialisation of religion

The survey also sought to look at religious transmission between generations and possible shifts in religious affiliation. Results show the shift from Buddhism and Taoism to Christianity and the category of no religion (see Table 45A).

**Table 45A: Respondents' mothers' religious identification, by religious background**

		Mother's religion						
		Buddhism	Taoism/C-hinese Traditional Beliefs	Islam	Hinduism	Roman Catholicism	Christianity	No religion
Respondent's religion (%)	Buddhism	76.1	20.6	-	-	0.9	0.7	1.6
	Taoism	5.4	92.7	-	-		1.0	1.0
	Islam	1.2	-	96.5	-	0.8	1.2	0.4
	Hinduism	-	1.0	2.0	96.0	1.0	-	-
	Catholicism	11.4	16.7	-	-	62.9	3.0	6.1
	Christianity	20.1	28.6	-	0.7	3.7	36.4	10.4
	No Religion	28.8	32.0	0.3	0.6	4.1	4.4	29.9

Among Christian respondents, 28.6 per cent of them had Taoist mothers and 20.1 per cent had Buddhist mothers. In addition, 32.0 per cent of respondents with no religion had Taoist mothers and 28.8 per cent had Buddhist mothers. This indicates that almost half of Christian respondents were not born to Christian mothers. Instead, these respondents converted to Christianity at some point in their life.

This trend was not prevalent for Catholic respondents, who tended to have Catholic mothers as well (62.9 per cent). Almost all Hindu and Muslim respondents also tended to have mothers with the same religion.

When religious transmission was examined with the respondents' fathers' religion and the religion the respondent was raised in, the broad trends prevailed (see Tables 45B and 46).

**Table 45B: Respondents' fathers' religious identification, by religious background**

		Father's religion						
		Buddhism	Taoism/Chinese Traditional Beliefs	Islam	Hinduism	Roman Catholicism	Christianity	No religion
Respondent's religion (%)	Buddhism	71.9	20.2	-	-	0.9	0.5	6.5
	Taoism	6.3	90.3	-	-	0.5	0.5	2.4
	Islam	1.2	-	96.4	0.4	0.4	1.2	0.4
	Hinduism	-	-	2.0	96.1	1.0	1.0	-
	Catholicism	8.3	19.5	-	0.8	54.9	2.3	14.3
	Christianity	18.7	31.1	-	1.1	4.5	27.7	16.9
	No Religion	26.3	33.4	0.6	0.6	4.0	2.6	32.6

**Table 46: Religion respondents were raised in, by religious background**

		Religion respondent raised in						
		Buddhism	Taoism/Chinese Traditional Beliefs	Islam	Hinduism	Roman Catholicism	Christianity	No religion
Respondent's religion (%)	Buddhism	79.7	17.3	-	-	0.7	0.7	1.6
	Taoism	5.3	91.7	-	-	0.5	0.5	1.9
	Islam	1.6	0.8	96.1	0.4	-	0.8	0.4
	Hinduism		1.0	1.0	97.0	1.0	-	-
	Catholicism	8.3	15.2	-	-	65.9	2.3	8.3
	Christianity	17.6	22.4	-	0.7	5.9	41.9	11.4
	No Religion	22.3	26.3	0.6	0.6	4.2	4.2	41.8

When asked if there had ever been a turning point in their lives where they made a new and personal commitment to religion, 31.9 per cent of respondents indicated having undergone such a turning point (see Table 47). This is an indicator of potential religious conversion among respondents.

**Table 47: Respondents' likelihood of experiencing a turning point in their lives where they made a new and personal commitment to religion**

	Yes	No
Turning point new commitment to religion	31.9	68.1

By religious background, Christian respondents (76.1 per cent) were found to be most likely to have undergone a turning point of new religious commitment (see Table 48). This finding supports the trend of high rates of respondents' conversion from Buddhism and Taoism into Christianity found earlier.

However the turning point need not always indicate a religious conversion. There were between 20 to 40 per cent of respondents of other religious backgrounds (including Muslims and Buddhists) who also reported such a turning point in their commitment to religion.

This could then refer to points where faith is revitalised. In general those who reported a turning point in their commitment to religion were also more likely to demonstrate higher levels of religious practice. Sixty four per cent of respondents who reported a turning point of religious commitment pray at least once a day, as compared to 32.3 per cent of those who did not report a turning point.

This trend was evident across religions as well. Forty five per cent of Buddhists who reported a turning point prayed at least once a day, compared to 27.6 per cent who did not report a turning point. Among Muslims, 79.0 per cent who reported a turning point prayed several times a day, compared to 61.5 per cent who did not report a turning point.

**Table 48: Respondents' likelihood of experiencing a turning point in their lives where they made a new and personal commitment to religion, by religious background**

Religion (%)	Turning point new commitment to religion	
	Yes	No
Buddhism	23.7	76.3
Taoism	17.3	82.7
Islam	39.1	60.9
Hinduism	26.5	73.5
Catholicism	55.1	44.9
Christianity	76.1	23.9
No Religion	4.4	95.6

#### 5.1.5 Beliefs involving domestic issues

A number of world religions provide prescriptions for gender and sexual relations and therefore these religious beliefs have an impact on the attitudes of respondents to these issues. An analysis of attitudes by religious background demonstrates the substantial influence respondents' religion and religiosity have on their perceptions of moral issues relating to domestic life.

Respondents were asked about their attitudes towards three moral issues in the domestic sphere - infidelity, homosexual sex and abortion<sup>21</sup>. The majority of respondents indicated that sexual relations with someone other than one's spouse

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<sup>21</sup> The question was "Do you think it is wrong or not wrong if a married person has sexual relations with someone other than his or her husband or wife?". Respondents could choose from four options, ranging from "always wrong", to "almost always wrong", to "wrong only sometimes" and finally "not wrong at all". Similar questions were also posed for the topics of sexual relations between two adults of the same sex and women having an abortion of the family has very low income and cannot afford any more children.

was always wrong (82.4 per cent, see Table 49). Comparatively there was slightly less consensus on homosexual sex and abortion. Around 68 per cent of respondents indicated that sexual relations between two adults of the same sex was always wrong, and 38.3 per cent of respondents indicated that abortion (if the family has very low income) was always wrong.

**Table 49: Respondents' views of issues in the domestic sphere**

(%)	Always wrong	Almost always wrong	Wrong only sometimes	Not wrong at all
Sexual relations with someone other than spouse	82.4	9.7	6.3	1.6
Sexual relations between two adults of the same sex	67.9	8.1	7.6	16.4
Abortion if the family has very low income	38.3	13.5	25.9	22.4

#### Sexual relations with someone other than spouse

Attitudes were then analysed according to religious background. People with no religion had the most liberal attitudes towards infidelity. Around 72 per cent of people with no religion indicated that sexual relations with someone other than one's spouse was always wrong, compared to 92 per cent of Muslims and 91.8 per cent of Hindus (see Table 50). In general, respondents across all religions were more likely to perceive infidelity as always wrong.

**Table 50: Respondents' views of infidelity, by religious background**

Religion (%)	Always wrong	Almost always wrong	Wrong only sometimes	Not wrong at all
Buddhists	81.1	9.8	6.5	2.6
Taoists	81.0	10.8	7.2	1.0
Muslims	92.0	4.8	2.4	0.8
Hindus	91.8	3.1	4.1	1.0
Catholics	86.6	6.0	7.5	0.0
Christians	84.8	7.8	6.3	1.1
No Religion	71.7	17.5	8.7	2.0

While the majority of respondents across age and religion were also highly likely to perceive infidelity as always wrong, better educated and younger respondents tended to have slightly more liberal attitudes towards the issue (see Tables 51 and 52).

**Table 51: Respondents' views of infidelity, by educational qualifications**

Education (%)	Always wrong	Almost always wrong	Wrong only sometimes	Not wrong at all
Secondary school & below	85.1	7.8	5.1	1.9
Post-Secondary, Diploma & Professional Qualifications	82.9	9.3	6.7	1.0
Degree & above	78.6	12.4	7.2	1.8

**Table 52: Respondents' views of infidelity, by age**

Age (%)	Always wrong	Almost always wrong	Wrong only sometimes	Not wrong at all
18-25	81.1	12.1	6.8	0.0
26-35	75.5	14.9	8.0	1.5
36-45	84.0	9.2	4.7	2.1
46-55	84.1	7.6	6.6	1.7
56-65	84.1	7.9	6.6	1.3
66 & Above	86.1	6.4	4.9	2.6

*Sexual relations between two adults of the same sex*

The trends for attitudes towards homosexual sex mirror trends for attitudes towards infidelity. Only half of respondents with no religion (50.2 per cent) said sexual relations between two adults of the same sex always wrong (see Table 53). Muslim respondents were the most likely to find homosexual sex always wrong, alongside Hindu and Christian respondents. Nearly 85 per cent of Muslims, 78 per cent of Hindus and 78.3 per cent of Christians indicated that homosexual sex was always wrong. Muslims tended to have the most conservative attitudes towards homosexual sex.

**Table 53: Respondents' views of homosexual sex, by religious background**

Religion (%)	Always wrong	Almost always wrong	Wrong only sometimes	Not wrong at all
Buddhists	63.0	11.0	7.9	18.1
Taoists	64.8	7.1	11.5	16.5
Muslims	84.8	5.7	4.1	5.3
Hindus	78.0	1.1	5.5	15.4
Catholics	67.7	9.4	6.3	16.5
Christians	78.3	7.4	4.3	10.1
No Religion	50.2	9.3	12.0	28.6

There were stark educational and age differences as well. Highly educated and younger respondents were much more likely to have liberal attitudes towards homosexual sex. Around 79 per cent of respondents with a secondary school and below level of education found homosexual sex always wrong, compared to 55.2 per cent of respondents with a bachelor's degree and above (see Table 54). In addition, 37 per cent of respondents aged 18 to 25 found homosexual sex always wrong, compared to 85.6 per cent of respondents aged above 65 (see Table 55).

**Table 54: Respondents' views of homosexual sex, by education**

Education (%)	Always wrong	Almost always wrong	Wrong only sometimes	Not wrong at all
Secondary school & below	78.6	5.5	6.2	9.7
Post-Secondary, Diploma & Professional Qualifications	66.4	10.4	6.3	16.9
Degree & above	55.2	9.3	10.7	24.8

**Table 55: Respondents' views of homosexual sex, by age**

Age (%)	Always wrong	Almost always wrong	Wrong only sometimes	Not wrong at all
18-25	37.0	10.9	11.4	40.8
26-35	48.8	9.9	13.7	27.6
36-45	69.9	9.9	7.1	13.1
46-55	76.4	7.4	6.3	10.0
56-65	80.9	6.0	3.9	9.2
66 & Above	85.6	4.9	4.2	5.3

Analysing the data by *both* religious background and educational background, the results showed that Hindus, Muslims and Christians with different educational qualifications had broadly similar sentiments, compared to respondents of other religions. More educated Hindus, Muslims and Christians were still quite likely to be conservative towards homosexual sex (see Table 56). For example, 89.2 per cent of Muslim respondents with a secondary school and below education said homosexual sex always wrong, compared to 75.8 per cent of Muslim respondents with a bachelor's degree and above. While there was some decline in conservatism with education, the differences were marginal.

**Table 56: Respondents' views of homosexual sex, by religious background and educational qualifications**

(%)		Always wrong	Almost always wrong	Wrong only sometimes	Not wrong at all
Secondary school & below	Buddhists	77.8	7.0	5.4	9.7
	Taoists	69.7	5.0	10.1	15.1
	Muslims	89.2	4.2	4.2	2.5
	Hindus	86.7	-	3.3	10.0
	Catholics	78.4	10.8	2.7	8.1
	Christians	88.1	4.5	3.0	4.5
	No Religion	68.8	6.3	10.0	15.0
Post-Secondary, Diploma & Professional Qualifications	Buddhists	55.1	16.8	9.3	18.7
	Taoists	63.2	7.9	10.5	18.4
	Muslims	82.4	7.7	2.2	7.7
	Hindus	76.0	4.0	12.0	8.0
	Catholics	74.3	8.6	2.9	14.3
	Christians	75.7	9.5	4.1	10.8
	No Religion	50.6	10.1	6.7	32.6
Degree & above	Buddhists	41.6	12.4	11.2	34.8
	Taoists	44.0	16.0	20.0	20.0
	Muslims	75.8	6.1	9.1	9.1
	Hindus	72.2	-	2.8	25.0
	Catholics	56.4	9.1	10.9	23.6
	Christians	74.4	7.7	5.1	12.8
	No Religion	38.6	10.6	16.7	34.1

However, analysing the data by *both* religious background and age, the differences among Muslim and Christians from different age brackets was much more pronounced (see Table 57). There was a sharp increase in conservatism for older respondents. About three in four Muslims aged 18 to 35 indicated that homosexual sex was always wrong, compared to 93.2 per cent of Muslim respondents aged above 55. Similarly, 54.2 per cent of Christians aged 18 to 35 said that homosexual sex was always wrong, compared to 88.8 per cent of Christian respondents aged above 55. This shows that even if one's religion preaches strong views towards homosexuality, respondents' age has a significant influence on their attitudes

towards homosexual sex, with younger cohorts demonstrating more liberal attitudes.

**Table 57: Respondents' views of homosexual sex, by religious background and age**

(%)		Always wrong	Almost always wrong	Wrong only sometimes	Not wrong at all
18-35	Buddhists	29.7	13.9	16.8	39.6
	Taoists	33.3	9.1	21.2	36.4
	Muslims	75.2	10.5	5.7	8.6
	Hindus	56.0	4.0	4.0	36.0
	Catholics	28.0	4.0	12.0	56.0
	Christians	54.2	13.9	8.3	23.6
	No Religion	25.2	8.1	18.9	47.7
36-55	Buddhists	67.2	12.4	8.0	12.4
	Taoists	66.1	9.7	11.3	12.9
	Muslims	91.3	1.3	3.8	3.8
	Hindus	86.0	-	4.7	9.3
	Catholics	67.4	17.4	6.5	8.7
	Christians	86.6	6.2	2.1	5.2
	No Religion	56.0	11.0	10.1	22.9
56 & Above	Buddhists	82.5	7.7	1.4	8.4
	Taoists	75.9	4.6	8.0	11.5
	Muslims	93.2	3.4	1.7	1.7
	Hindus	87.0	-	8.7	4.3
	Catholics	85.7	5.4	3.6	5.4
	Christians	88.8	3.4	3.4	4.5
	No Religion	76.5	8.6	4.9	9.9

#### Abortion if the family has very low income

The trends for attitudes towards abortion if the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children are similar to the aforementioned trends on homosexual sex and infidelity. Muslims were the most conservative, with 59 per cent of them saying abortion in such circumstances was always wrong (see Table 58).<sup>22</sup> In comparison, less than half of respondents of other religious backgrounds

<sup>22</sup> This variable has 214 missing cases.

had similar sentiments. Respondents with no religion were the least conservative, with 40.1 per cent of them saying this was not wrong at all. Overall, respondents across religious affiliations were more likely to be liberal towards abortion, compared to infidelity and homosexual sex.

**Table 58: Respondents' views of abortion, by religious background**

Religion (%)	Always wrong	Almost always wrong	Wrong only sometimes	Not wrong at all
Buddhists	34.2	15.8	25.9	24.1
Taoists	37.9	14.3	33.0	14.8
Muslims	59.0	10.0	21.8	9.2
Hindus	42.7	19.1	19.1	19.1
Catholics	44.7	12.2	26.0	17.1
Christians	45.7	11.8	23.7	18.8
No Religion	18.9	12.8	28.2	40.1

Analysing by respondents' educational background, the results showed clear differences even for Muslims and Christians (see Table 59). About two in three Muslims with secondary school and below level of education indicated that abortion in such instances was always wrong, compared to 43.3 per cent of Muslim respondents with at least a bachelor's degree. Nearly 60 per cent of Christians with secondary school and below level of education indicated that abortion was always wrong, compared to around 40 per cent of Christians with at least a bachelor's degree. These results indicate that educational background has a strong link with attitudes towards moral issues.

**Table 59: Respondents' views of abortion, by religious background and education**

(%)		Always wrong	Almost always wrong	Wrong only sometimes	Not wrong at all
Secondary school & below	Buddhists	49.2	16.6	19.3	14.9
	Taoists	43.7	14.3	32.8	9.2
	Muslims	66.7	10.8	16.7	5.8
	Hindus	58.6	17.2	10.3	13.8
	Catholics	53.8	12.8	12.8	20.5
	Christians	59.4	9.4	21.9	9.4
	No Religion	30.4	12.7	27.8	29.1
Post-Secondary, Diploma & Professional Qualifications	Buddhists	21.5	15.0	32.7	30.8
	Taoists	37.8	10.8	32.4	18.9
	Muslims	53.9	11.2	22.5	12.4
	Hindus	42.3	11.5	34.6	11.5
	Catholics	42.4	12.1	36.4	9.1
	Christians	42.5	6.8	24.7	26.0
	No Religion	16.2	16.2	22.2	45.5
Degree & above	Buddhists	18.6	15.1	31.4	34.9
	Taoists	11.5	19.2	34.6	34.6
	Muslims	43.3	3.3	40.0	13.3
	Hindus	29.4	26.5	14.7	29.4
	Catholics	39.2	11.8	29.4	19.6
	Christians	39.8	16.7	24.1	19.4
	No Religion	14.2	10.4	32.8	42.5

Analysing the data by respondents' age and religious background, there were less pronounced differences for Muslims. Around 56 per cent of Muslims aged between 18 and 35 indicated that abortion in such instances was always wrong, compared to 57.6 per cent of Muslim respondents aged 56 and above (see Table 60). There was little differences among older and younger Hindus as well, with 42.3 per cent of Hindu respondents aged 18 to 35 saying that abortion was always wrong, compared to 47.6 per cent of Hindu respondents aged 56 and above. However, this was not the case for respondents of other religions such as Christianity. About one in five Christians aged between 18 and 35 felt this was always wrong,

compared to about three in five Christians aged above 55. This indicates that the ages of Muslims and Hindus did not have much links with their views towards abortion, compared to Christians.

**Table 60: Respondents' views of abortion, by religious background and age**

(%)		Always wrong	Almost always wrong	Wrong only sometimes	Not wrong at all
18-35	Buddhists	20.4	13.9	29.6	36.1
	Taoists	20.0	11.4	45.7	22.9
	Muslims	56.4	7.9	23.8	11.9
	Hindus	42.3	7.7	30.8	19.2
	Catholics	8.0	12.0	36.0	44.0
	Christians	21.7	14.5	30.4	33.3
	No Religion	10.4	11.3	29.6	48.7
36-55	Buddhists	33.9	15.3	26.6	24.2
	Taoists	42.9	12.7	31.7	12.7
	Muslims	63.3	11.4	19.0	6.3
	Hindus	40.5	26.2	14.3	19.0
	Catholics	47.6	9.5	35.7	7.1
	Christians	47.3	12.1	26.4	14.3
	No Religion	20.4	11.5	35.4	32.7
56 & Above	Buddhists	45.1	17.6	22.5	14.8
	Taoists	41.7	16.7	28.6	13.1
	Muslims	57.6	11.9	22.0	8.5
	Hindus	47.6	19.0	14.3	19.0
	Catholics	58.9	14.3	14.3	12.5
	Christians	63.5	9.4	15.3	11.8
	No Religion	28.6	16.7	16.7	38.1

### Gender

Respondents were also asked about their views on gender.<sup>23</sup> Close to half of the respondents (48.6 per cent) disagreed or strongly disagreed with a gendered division of labour (see Table 61).

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<sup>23</sup> The question was "Do you agree or disagree with the statement that a husband's job is to earn money; a wife's job is to look after the home and family?". Respondents could choose from five options, ranging from "strongly agree", to "agree", to "neither agree nor disagree", to "disagree" and finally "strongly disagree".

**Table 61: Respondents' views of the statement "a husband's job is to earn money; a wife's job is to look after the home and family"**

(%)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Husband's job to earn money, wife's job to look after family	6.3	17.6	27.6	36.4	12.2

Across all religions, respondents were more likely to disagree with a traditional gendered division of labor. But, Muslims were the most likely to agree that it is the husband's job to earn money and the wife's job to look after the home and family (see Table 62). Around 38 per cent of Muslim respondents subscribed to this traditional view.

**Table 62: Respondents' views of the statement "a husband's job is to earn money; a wife's job is to look after the home and family", by religious background**

Religion (%)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Buddhists	6.1	19.2	27.2	34.3	13.1
Taoists	3.4	22.0	29.8	36.6	8.3
Muslims	15.1	23.4	31.7	24.2	5.6
Hindus	9.1	17.2	19.2	39.4	15.2
Catholics	4.5	15.0	29.3	36.1	15.0
Christians	4.1	19.3	24.8	39.3	12.6
No Religion	3.9	9.6	27.3	43.7	15.5

Less educated and older respondents were also more likely to agree with this gendered division of labor (see Tables 63 and 64). Around 36 per cent of respondents with a secondary school and below education felt this way, compared to 13.2 per cent of respondents with at least a bachelor's degree. Similarly, 8.6 per

cent of respondents aged 18 to 25 felt this way, compared to 41.9 per cent of respondents aged above 65.

**Table 63: Respondents' views of the statement "a husband's job is to earn money; a wife's job is to look after the home and family", by education**

Education (%)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Secondary school & below	10.8	25.5	23.9	34.1	5.8
Post-Secondary, Diploma & Professional Qualifications	4.1	14.5	30.9	37.3	13.2
Degree & above	2.7	10.5	29.2	38.3	19.3

**Table 64: Respondents' views of the statement "a husband's job is to earn money; a wife's job is to look after the home and family", by age**

Age (%)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
18-25	2.4	6.2	27.1	38.6	25.7
26-35	2.7	10.2	29.1	40.5	17.4
36-45	3.2	18.0	32.8	33.9	12.2
46-55	9.1	17.5	27.9	36.0	9.4
56-65	7.4	23.0	25.9	36.6	7.1
66 & Above	13.2	28.7	21.3	32.7	4.0

When asked about gender equality in religion,<sup>24</sup> the majority of respondents with a religious affiliation perceived gender equality in their religion. Around 78 per cent believed that their religion treats men and women equally (see Table 65).<sup>25</sup>

**Table 65: Respondents' perceptions of gender equality in religion**

	I don't belong to or follow any religion	Treats men and women equally	Treats men better than women	Treats women better than men
Gender equality in own religion	14.9	78.1	5.3	1.7

When attitudes were analysed according to religion, Christians were the most likely to perceive gender equality in religion, and Hindus were the least likely to (see Table 66). Almost 95 per cent of Christian respondents believe that men and women are treated equally in Christianity. Meanwhile, 12.1 per cent of Hindu respondents believe that men are treated better in Hinduism, at least double the proportions of those from other religious backgrounds who had such sentiments. However, the bulk of respondents do perceive gender equality in their respective religions.

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<sup>24</sup> The question was "Does your religion treat men and women equally, treat men better than women or women better than men?" Respondents could choose from four options, ranging from "I don't belong to or follow any religion", to "treats men and women equally", to "treats men better than women" and finally "treats women better than men".

<sup>25</sup> This variable has 201 missing cases.

**Table 66: Respondents' perceptions of gender equality in religion, by religious background**

		I don't belong to or follow any religion	Treats men and women equally	Treats men better than women	Treats women better than men
Religion (%)	Buddhism	5.9	88.3	5.1	0.8
	Taoism	6.9	88.8	4.3	-
	Islam	1.2	87.7	4.1	7.0
	Hinduism	-	82.4	12.1	5.5
	Catholicism	0.8	92.7	5.7	0.8
	Christianity	0.8	93.9	5.3	-
	No Religion	65.3	29.0	5.4	0.3

When asked if they thought religion was a barrier to gender equality,<sup>26</sup> the majority of respondents (54.5 per cent) either disagreed or strongly disagreed (see Table 67).

**Table 67: Respondents' perceptions of religion being a barrier to gender equality**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Religions are a barrier to equality between women and men	3.3	16.0	26.2	46.0	8.5

Hindu respondents were the most likely to believe that religions are a barrier to gender equality, with 30.3 per cent of them agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement followed by 27.3 per cent of Muslims (see Table 68).

<sup>26</sup> The question was "Do you agree or disagree that religions are usually a barrier to equality between men and women?". Respondents could choose from five options, ranging from "strongly agree", to "agree", to "neither agree nor disagree", to "disagree" and finally "strongly disagree".

**Table 68: Respondents' perceptions of religion being a barrier to gender equality, by religious background**

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Religion (%)	Buddhism	2.4	16.1	29.0	45.9	6.6
	Taoism	1.5	13.9	23.9	55.2	5.5
	Islam	7.3	20.0	13.9	47.8	11.0
	Hinduism	3.0	27.3	23.2	42.4	4.0
	Catholicism	2.3	10.8	26.2	50.8	10.0
	Christianity	2.2	11.6	23.6	47.9	14.6
	No Religion	3.8	16.9	37.4	35.8	6.1

## 5.2 Religion in the Public Sphere

This section sets out how the respondents' religious beliefs (or lack thereof, in the case of atheists and non-believers), impact their attitudes on issues relating to the public sphere. These range from their views of people from other religious communities, religion and secularisation, religion and the law, and finally their perceptions of the acceptability of various behaviors by religious leaders in the public and political arena. The results point to several areas of tensions between various communities, which we elaborate further on in the next section.

### **5.2.1 Confidence in religious and other public institutions, attitudes towards state of religious harmony, and inter-religious views**

#### Confidence in religious institutions

Respondents were asked for the level of confidence they had in five major public institutions, including churches, temples, mosques and religious organisations.<sup>27</sup> The majority of respondents (52.8 per cent) expressed complete confidence or a great deal of confidence in religious organisations (see Table 69). This was similar to the proportion of respondents holding such views about Parliament, but less than that for courts and the legal system, as well as schools (more than 60 per cent each). It was however higher than those expressing complete or a great deal of confidence in business and industry (47.6 per cent).

Overall, the results point to the fact that the vast majority of Singaporeans hold religious institutions in high regard and have strong levels of confidence in them, on par with the elected Members of Parliament of Singapore.

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<sup>27</sup> The question was “How much confidence do you have in (i) Parliament of Singapore, (ii) business and industry, (iii) churches, temples, mosques and religious organisations, (iv) courts and the legal system, and (v) schools and the educational system.” Respondents could choose from a total of six options, ranging from “complete confidence” to “no confidence at all”, with a final option being “can’t choose”.

**Table 69: Level of confidence in major public institutions**

(%)	Complete confidence	A great deal of confidence	Some confidence	Very little confidence	No confidence at all
Confidence in parliament	18.3	35.4	34.4	8.4	3.5
Confidence in business and industry	11.5	36.1	42.1	8.2	2.1
Confidence in churches and religious organisations	16.6	36.2	38.4	6.7	2.1
Confidence in courts and legal system	21.3	41.3	28.8	6.1	2.4
Confidence in schools and educational system	24.6	45.2	24.8	4.3	1.1

By religious affiliation, Hindus ranked the highest among all communities in having complete or a great deal of confidence in Singapore's Parliament (see Table 70). About 66 per cent of Hindus expressed such views, compared to 46.4 per cent of Catholics and 52.1 per cent of Muslims.

**Table 70: Level of confidence in Singapore's Parliament, by religious background**

Confidence in parliament (%)	Complete confidence	A great deal of confidence	Some confidence	Very little confidence	No confidence at all
Buddhists	18.7	35.4	35.2	6.1	4.6
Taoists	24.7	30.5	35.3	7.9	1.6
Muslims	21.7	30.4	34.6	8.8	4.6
Hindus	36.5	29.2	21.9	9.4	3.1
Catholics	11.0	35.4	37.0	15.0	1.6
Christians	13.4	41.6	34.6	8.2	2.2
No Religion	14.1	38.6	34.3	9.2	3.7

When it came to confidence in religious organisations, about 76 per cent of Hindus, 69 per cent of Muslims and 66 per cent of Catholics had complete or a great deal

of confidence in these organisations. Of the remaining groups, only Buddhists (46.5 per cent) and respondents with no religion (34.6 per cent) did not have a majority that expressed such views (see Table 71).

**Table 71: Level of confidence in churches, temples, mosques and religious organisations, by religious background**

Confidence in churches and religious organisations (%)	Complete confidence	A great deal of confidence	Some confidence	Very little confidence	No confidence at all
Buddhists	14.4	32.1	45.8	7.0	0.7
Taoists	15.4	35.9	42.1	5.6	1.0
Muslims	30.2	39.1	25.0	2.8	2.8
Hindus	38.1	38.1	13.4	8.2	2.1
Catholics	18.8	47.4	31.6	2.3	-
Christians	12.3	43.3	38.4	5.2	0.7
No Religion	5.9	28.7	47.0	12.8	5.6

### Perceptions of inter-religious harmony

The survey sought to gauge respondents' attitudes towards the level of inter-religious harmony in society, by asking them if they agreed that people of different religions cannot get along when living close to each other.<sup>28</sup> In Singapore, people of different races and religions live in close proximity, especially in public housing flats where there is an ethnic integration policy in place to ensure that racial (or religious) enclaves are not formed.

It was encouraging that more than 70 percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that people of different religions cannot get along when living close

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<sup>28</sup> The question was "All things considered, people belonging to different religions cannot get along with each other when living close together." Respondents could choose from six options, ranging from "Strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", with "can't choose" as the final option.

together, pointing to strong levels of inter-religious harmony in Singapore (see Table 72).

**Table 72: Perception of interreligious harmony**

(%)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
People belonging to different religions cannot get along	2.1	8.3	16.9	53.0	19.7

Perceptions, however, differed across religious backgrounds. Christians and Muslims (see Table 73) had the largest proportions of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. About 78 per cent of Muslims and 83.4 per cent of Christians disagreed or strongly disagreed, compared to 63.6 per cent of Hindus and 64.5 per cent of respondents with no religion.

**Table 73: Perception of interreligious harmony, by religious background**

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Religion (%)		1.9	6.2	18.9	58.1	14.8
Buddhism	Taoism	2.0	9.5	17.5	56.5	14.5
Islam	Hinduism	1.2	10.6	10.2	48.8	29.3
Catholicism	Christianity	7.1	13.1	16.2	49.5	14.1
No Religion		1.5	6.7	20.1	48.5	23.1
		1.1	4.4	11.1	56.7	26.7
		2.5	10.8	22.1	48.4	16.1

### Attitudes towards other communities

Respondents' views towards followers of six major communities – Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and atheists or non-believers - were also elicited (see Table 74).<sup>29</sup> Christians (65.2 per cent) and Buddhists (64.9 per cent) were viewed most positively by all respondents. However, the rankings may reflect the fact that people from these three religions are predominantly Chinese, and the majority of survey respondents were themselves Chinese. Of the remaining religions, it was encouraging that the majority of respondents still viewed them very or somewhat positively. The proportions for Hindus were 57.8 per cent, for Jews 54.5 per cent,<sup>30</sup> for atheists or non-believers 53.8 per cent, and for Muslims, 56.5 per cent.

**Table 74: Respondents' attitudes towards people from various communities**

Personal attitudes towards people of various communities (%)	Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither positive nor negative	Somewhat negative	Very negative
Christians	24.4	40.8	29.8	4.3	0.8
Muslims	20.1	36.4	36.6	6.0	0.9
Hindus	18.7	39.1	39.4	2.4	0.4
Buddhists	21.0	43.9	33.0	1.7	0.4
Jews	17.9	36.6	41.8	3.0	0.8
Atheists or non-believers	17.3	36.5	41.5	3.1	1.5

<sup>29</sup> The question was "What is your personal attitude towards members of the following religious groups?" Respondents could choose from six options, ranging from "very positive" to "very negative", and finally "can't choose".

<sup>30</sup> This variable has 282 missing cases.

Analysing responses by respondents' religious affiliation, we found that members from the major religious groups – Buddhism, Christianity and Islam - were viewed positively by the majority of those from other religious backgrounds (see Tables 75 for Buddhists, 76 for Christians and 77 for Muslims). Substantially lower proportions of respondents with no religion, however, viewed Christians (43.8 per cent) and Muslims (32.9 per cent) positively compared to how respondents from other religious groups such as the Hindus and Buddhists viewed the Christian and Muslim communities.

**Table 75: Respondents' attitudes towards Buddhists, by religious background**

		Personal attitude towards: Buddhists				
		Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither positive nor negative	Somewhat negative	Very negative
Religion (%)	Buddhism	17.9	46.7	33.4	1.5	0.5
	Taoism	13.7	51.3	33.5	1.5	-
	Islam	33.2	42.7	22.0	1.2	0.8
	Hinduism	41.7	43.8	14.6	-	-
	Catholicism	20.9	48.8	28.7	1.6	-
	Christianity	23.6	40.3	32.6	3.1	0.4
	No Religion	11.9	38.6	47.5	1.8	0.3

**Table 76: Respondents' attitudes towards Christians, by religious background**

		Personal attitude towards: Christians				
		Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither positive nor negative	Somewhat negative	Very negative
Religion (%)	Buddhism	12.3	42.5	37.2	7.5	0.5
	Taoism	10.5	45.3	37.9	4.7	1.6
	Islam	35.2	43.0	19.7	1.6	0.4
	Hinduism	40.2	41.2	17.5	-	1.0
	Catholicism	37.3	45.5	15.7	1.5	-
	Christianity	47.0	40.7	11.2	1.1	-
	No Religion	11.2	32.6	47.4	7.1	1.8

**Table 77: Respondents' attitudes towards Muslims, by religious background**

		Personal attitude towards: Muslims				
		Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither positive nor negative	Somewhat negative	Very negative
Religion (%)	Buddhism	11.6	39.5	42.3	5.8	0.8
	Taoism	8.5	43.9	42.3	4.8	0.5
	Islam	48.6	36.5	14.1	0.4	0.4
	Hinduism	37.1	39.2	18.6	4.1	1.0
	Catholicism	17.3	42.5	31.5	8.7	-
	Christianity	22.7	38.8	29.2	8.1	1.2
	No Religion	9.3	23.6	56.1	9.6	1.5

It was also noteworthy that Muslims view Christians more favorably than vice-versa. About 61 per cent of Christians said they had very or somewhat positive attitudes towards Muslims, compared to around 78 per cent of Muslims who had similar views of Christians.

Attitudes towards atheists or non-believers, a growing community in Singapore in recent years, were also generally positive with the majority of those from different religious affiliations viewing them positively(see Table 78).

**Table 78: Respondents' attitudes towards atheists and non-believers, by religious background**

		Personal attitude towards: Atheists or non-believers				
		Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither positive nor negative	Somewhat negative	Very negative
Religion (%)	Buddhism	11.3	38.4	47.1	2.4	0.8
	Taoism	10.1	44.4	43.4	2.1	-
	Islam	29.7	36.4	27.5	3.4	3.0
	Hinduism	38.3	40.4	19.1	2.1	-
	Catholicism	14.8	36.9	42.6	5.7	-
	Christianity	19.0	33.2	37.2	5.9	4.7
	No Religion	12.7	31.5	53.3	1.5	0.9

Respondents were also asked whether they considered those from the six communities as threatening or not threatening.<sup>31</sup> Buddhists, Hindus,<sup>32</sup> Jews,<sup>33</sup> and atheists or non-believers<sup>34</sup> were viewed as the least threatening (see Table 79). 97.1 per cent of respondents said Buddhists were “not very threatening” or “not at all threatening”. The corresponding statistics for Hindus was 95.8 per cent, for atheists or non-believers 94.8 per cent, and for Jews 94.7 per cent.

<sup>31</sup> The question was “Do you consider those belonging to the following groups as threatening or non-threatening?” Respondents could choose one of five options, ranging from “very threatening” to “not at all threatening”, with “can’t choose” as the final option.

<sup>32</sup> The variable has 217 missing cases.

<sup>33</sup> The variable has 371 missing cases.

<sup>34</sup> The variable has 262 missing cases.

For the remaining two communities (Muslims and Christians), the vast majority of respondents still found those from these groups either “not very threatening” or “not at all threatening” (84.5 per cent for Muslims,<sup>35</sup> 93.5 per cent for Christians).

**Table 79: Perceived threat of people belonging to the following groups**

(%)	Very threatening	Somewhat threatening	Not very threatening	Not at all threatening
Christians	1.0	5.5	23.8	69.7
Muslims	2.1	13.5	24.4	60.1
Hindus	0.6	3.6	29.0	66.8
Buddhists	0.4	2.4	25.5	71.6
Jews	1.0	4.3	26.3	68.4
Atheists	0.9	4.2	25.4	69.4

By religious affiliation, the majority of respondents from each religious group viewed those from other communities positively and not as a threat. However, our results suggest there may be possible tensions between some people from specific communities.

Nearly 10 per cent of respondents with no religion perceive Christians as very or somewhat threatening, the highest among all religious affiliations (see Table 80).

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<sup>35</sup> This variable has 208 missing cases.

**Table 80: Respondents' perceived threat of Christians, by religious background**

		Perceived threat of people belonging to following group: Christians			
		Very threatening	Somewhat threatening	Not very threatening	Not at all threatening
Religion (%)	Buddhism	1.1	7.8	25.1	66.0
	Taoism	1.1	4.9	24.0	69.9
	Islam		3.4	14.2	82.3
	Hinduism	1.1	4.3	20.7	73.9
	Catholicism	0.8	4.6	22.3	72.3
	Christianity	0.8	2.6	23.8	72.8
	No Religion	1.9	8.0	29.2	60.9

Similarly, about 9.6 per cent of Christians held such views of non-believers, which included people with no religion (see Table 81). Again, among the various communities, this was the highest proportion who viewed people with no religion negatively.

**Table 81: Respondents' perceived threat of people with no religion, by religious background**

		Perceived threat of people belonging to following group: Non-believers			
		Very threatening	Somewhat threatening	Not very threatening	Not at all threatening
Religion (%)	Buddhism	0.3	3.1	24.3	72.3
	Taoism	-	1.7	24.2	74.2
	Islam	2.2	4.0	13.8	80.0
	Hinduism	1.1	5.6	20.0	73.3
	Catholicism	0.9	4.3	29.9	65.0
	Christianity	2.4	7.2	32.1	58.2
	No Religion	-	4.2	29.4	66.5

For Muslims, if we exclude those who practise Islam, they were viewed most positively by Buddhists and Hindus (85.9 per cent each, see Table 82). There were a minority of Catholics (22.6 per cent), Christians (22.1 per cent) and those with no religion (20.3 per cent) who viewed Muslims as a threat. About one in five from these communities said Muslims were either very or somewhat threatening, much higher than the proportion of Muslims who viewed Christians and those with no religion as a threat.

**Table 82: Respondents' perceived threat of Muslims, by religious background**

		Very threatening	Somewhat threatening	Not very threatening	Not at all threatening
Religion (%)	Buddhism	1.6	12.5	24.8	61.1
	Taoism	1.6	13.7	20.9	63.7
	Islam	0.4	1.3	12.4	85.9
	Hinduism	1.1	13.0	19.6	66.3
	Catholicism	0.8	21.8	31.5	46.0
	Christianity	4.7	17.6	29.4	48.2
	No Religion	2.6	17.7	27.7	51.9

Respondents were also asked for their views on inter-religious marriages.<sup>36</sup> The majority of respondents (more than 84 per cent, see Table 83) would definitely or probably accept a relative marrying someone with a different religion or religious view.

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<sup>36</sup> The question was "People have different religions and different religious views. Would you accept a person from a different religion or with a very different religious view from yours marrying a relative of yours?" Five choices were given, ranging from "definitely accept" to "definitely not accept". The fifth choice was "can't choose".

**Table 83: Perception of interreligious marriage**

(%)	Definitely accept	Probably accept	Probably not accept	Definitely not accept
Accept a person from different religion marrying your relative	41.6	42.7	10.8	4.9

By religious background, respondents who were Muslims and Christians were the most likely to *not* accept a relative marrying outside of their religion or marrying someone with a different religious view (see Table 84). Nearly 30 per cent of Muslims and 26.3 per cent of Christians would probably or definitely not accept such an occurrence. However, the majority (70.6 per cent for Muslims, 73.7 per cent for Christians) said they would definitely or probably accept such a marital union.

**Table 84: Perception of interreligious marriage, by religious background**

Religion (%)	Definitely accept	Probably accept	Probably not accept	Definitely not accept
Buddhists	44.5	45.0	8.4	2.2
Taoists	47.2	42.0	10.4	0.5
Muslims	33.6	37.0	12.2	17.2
Hindus	52.6	41.2	5.2	1.0
Catholics	35.6	49.2	12.9	2.3
Christians	32.1	41.6	21.0	5.3
No Religion	47.5	42.7	6.6	3.3

### Attitudes towards religious extremists

Respondents were asked if religious extremists should be allowed to hold public meetings to express their views, or publish their views online.<sup>37</sup> The majority of respondents (more than 73 per cent in both scenarios) said such persons should probably or definitely not be allowed to (see Table 85). This is encouraging, as it signals that most Singaporeans feel such individuals should not be allowed the freedoms to espouse their warped views in a multi-religious and multi-cultural setting where maintaining social harmony is paramount.

**Table 85: Respondents' views towards religious extremists**

(%)	Definitely	Probably	Probably not	Definitely not
Should religious extremists be allowed to hold public meetings to express their views?	4.1	18.4	32.0	45.6
Should religious extremists be allowed to publish their views on internet or social media?	4.5	22.3	30.0	43.3

By religious affiliation, slightly more Muslims (27.5 per cent) and respondents with no religion (25.3 per cent) were likely to say that such persons should definitely or probably be allowed to hold public meetings (see Table 86). In all cases however,

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<sup>37</sup> The question was "There are some people whose views are considered extreme by the majority. Consider religious extremists, that is, people who believe that their religion is the only true faith and all other religions should be considered as enemies. Do you think such people should be allowed to (i) hold public meetings to express their views, and (ii) publish their views on the Internet or social media?" Respondents could choose from five options, ranging from "definitely not" to "definitely", with the last option being "can't choose".

the majority of respondents across all religious backgrounds said they would probably or definitely not allow religious extremists to have such freedoms.

**Table 86: Respondents' views towards religious extremists holding public meetings, by religious background**

Religion (%)	Definitely	Probably	Probably not	Definitely not
Buddhists	3.3	18.3	34.4	44.0
Taoists	1.6	17.6	32.1	48.7
Muslims	7.6	19.9	33.5	39.0
Hindus	4.3	10.9	27.2	57.6
Catholics	3.1	19.2	30.8	46.9
Christians	4.9	16.5	34.6	44.0
No Religion	3.7	21.6	28.8	45.8

Slightly greater proportions of respondents felt it was acceptable for religious extremists to publish their views online, though again they were in the minority.

About 30 per cent of Muslims, and 31.5 per cent of Christians, thought they would probably or definitely allow such individuals to do so (see Table 87). It was noteworthy that even among respondents with no religion, 27.8 per cent said they would probably or definitely allow such views to be published, a statistic comparable with the proportions in the other communities.

**Table 87: Respondents' views towards religious extremists publishing their views online, by religious background**

Religion (%)	Definitely	Probably	Probably not	Definitely not
Buddhists	3.3	21.9	31.3	43.5
Taoists	1.6	20.9	30.9	46.6
Muslims	6.4	23.9	32.9	36.8
Hindus	3.2	17.0	28.7	51.1
Catholics	6.2	19.2	32.3	42.3
Christians	5.6	25.9	26.7	41.7
No Religion	4.9	22.9	29.0	43.2

By age group, younger respondents were more likely to be open to religious extremists holding public meetings or espousing their views online (see Tables 88 and 89). More than a third of those aged between 18 and 25 said they would probably or definitely allow these individuals to hold public meetings, while 45.6 per cent held similar views towards extremists posting their views online. Older respondents were much less likely to hold similar views. Less than one in four of all respondents aged 46 and above said they would probably or definitely allow extremists to have such freedoms. A potential reason for this could be younger respondents' increasingly liberal attitudes towards free speech.

**Table 88: Respondents' views towards religious extremists holding public meetings, by age**

Age (%)	Definitely	Probably	Probably not	Definitely not
18-25	9.4	28.6	38.9	23.2
26-35	3.1	23.5	37.3	36.1
36-45	2.9	20.6	28.9	47.5
46-55	4.3	11.9	33.1	50.7
56-65	2.4	17.1	30.4	50.2
66 & Above	4.3	9.4	24.4	61.8

**Table 89: Respondents' views towards religious extremists publishing their views online, by age**

Age (%)	Definitely	Probably	Probably not	Definitely not
18-25	9.7	35.9	34.0	20.4
26-35	4.1	31.0	34.2	30.7
36-45	3.6	24.9	27.0	44.5
46-55	3.9	13.9	32.4	49.8
56-65	3.8	17.5	24.8	53.8
66 & Above	3.2	11.6	28.4	56.8

### **5.2.2 Religion versus secularisation**

Keeping the public space secular is paramount in Singapore's multi-cultural and multi-religious society. However, some religions exhort their followers to actively

spread their religious teachings and precepts, and such proselytisation may inadvertently lead to conflicts in society. The survey asked respondents for their views on whether the authorities should interfere with attempts to spread religious ideas.<sup>38</sup>

About six in 10 of all respondents agree or strongly agree that the government should not interfere with attempts by a religion to spread its faith (see Table 90A). By religious background, Christians formed the highest proportion among those who agreed or strongly agreed (see Table 90B). Nearly 70 per cent of Christians agreed or strongly agreed that the government should not step in when it came to such matters, probably reflecting the fact that their religion strongly encourages adherents to actively share their faith with non-believers. Atheists and non-believers were most likely to think that the government *should* intervene, with about one in four sharing this view.

**Table 90A: Respondents' views towards government intervention in attempts to spread religious ideas**

(%)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Government should not interfere with attempts of religion to spread	14.2	47.3	21.3	14.6	2.5

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<sup>38</sup> The question was "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Governments should not interfere with the attempts of any religion to spread its faith." Respondents could choose from six choices, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", and the final option was "can't choose".

**Table 90B: Respondents' views towards government intervention in attempts to spread religious ideas, by religious background**

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Religion (%)	Buddhism	12.5	47.5	22.4	15.4	2.2
	Taoism	10.4	52.7	18.4	17.4	1.0
	Islam	16.5	51.0	21.3	9.2	2.0
	Hinduism	20.6	47.4	16.5	13.4	2.1
	Catholicism	17.3	48.1	24.1	9.8	0.8
	Christianity	18.2	51.3	17.8	9.3	3.3
	No Religion	10.6	38.4	25.2	21.5	4.3

In the context of the importance of maintaining a common secular public sphere while providing citizens the freedom to practise their religion in private, the survey also asked respondents if they felt that religious organisations such as churches, temples and mosques in Singapore had too much or too little power.<sup>39</sup> The majority of respondents (nearly 69 per cent) felt that religious organisations have the right amount of power (see Table 91).<sup>40</sup> Less than 10 per cent felt that these groups had far too much, or too much, power.

**Table 91: Respondents' views towards how much power religious organisations have**

(%)	Far too much power	Too much power	Right amount of power	Too little power	Far too little power
Power of churches and religious organisations	1.6	8.0	68.9	15.9	5.6

<sup>39</sup> The question was "Do you think that churches, temples, mosques, and religious organisations in our country have too much or too little power? Respondents could choose from six options, ranging from "far too much power" to "far too little power", with "can't choose" as a final option.

<sup>40</sup> This variable has 301 missing cases.

By religious affiliation, Muslims (29.1 per cent) ranked the highest among all communities in saying that religious organisations had too little, or far too little, power (see Table 92). The Catholics (26.2 per cent) and Christians (25.9 per cent) ranked second and third respectively.

**Table 92: Respondents' views towards how much power religious organisations have, by religious background**

Religion (%)	Far too much power	Too much power	Right amount of power	Too little power	Far too little power
Buddhists	2.3	7.3	70.4	14.9	5.1
Taoists	0.6	5.8	71.7	10.4	11.6
Muslims	1.8	7.1	62.1	22.8	6.3
Hindus	2.4	19.0	67.9	9.5	1.2
Catholics	0.8	4.2	68.6	20.3	5.9
Christians	0.9	4.3	69.0	21.6	4.3
No Religion	1.7	12.0	72.6	9.2	4.5

Respondents were also presented with three statements relating to religion and society, and asked how much they agreed with these statements. The statements were: “We trust too much in science and not enough in religious faith”, “Looking around the world, religions bring more conflict than peace”, and “People with very strong religious beliefs are often too intolerant of others”.<sup>41</sup> The statements were a means of seeking respondents’ views on the importance of religion in society, whether religion has been a force for good, and whether religion has served to separate communities.

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<sup>41</sup> For each statement, respondents could pick from six options, ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”, with the final option being “can’t choose”.

Respondents were largely split on these issues, with about a third saying they agree or strongly agree, approximately another third saying they neither agree nor disagree, and the remainder saying they disagree or strongly disagree (see Table 93).

**Table 93: Respondents' views towards statements about religion and society**

(%)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Too much trust in science	5.4	31.8	37.5	20.8	4.5
Religions bring conflict	5.4	29.4	31.2	27.9	6.1
Religious people are too intolerant	6.3	32.5	28.7	26.5	5.9

There were marked differences when the results were analysed by respondents' religious background. Christians were most likely to say they agree or strongly agree that too much trust has been placed in science, rather than religious faith (see Table 94). More than half of Christians (54.6 per cent) felt so, the highest among all the communities.

**Table 94: Respondents' views toward science and religion, by religious background**

Religion (%)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Buddhists	3.0	30.4	44.8	18.6	3.2
Taoists	2.5	31.0	37.6	24.4	4.6
Muslims	7.3	27.3	31.4	27.3	6.5
Hindus	5.1	36.7	35.7	19.4	3.1
Catholics	6.8	39.4	32.6	18.9	2.3
Christians	9.5	45.1	26.9	15.9	2.7
No Religion	4.9	23.5	43.3	20.9	7.4

Muslims, meanwhile, were the community most likely to disagree or strongly disagree that religions bring more conflict than peace. About 45 per cent of Muslims thought so, with Christians (38.5 per cent) and Catholics (37.4 per cent) second and third respectively in disagreeing with the statement (see Table 95).

**Table 95: Respondents' views toward religion and conflict, by religious background**

Religions bring more conflict than peace (%)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Buddhists	3.9	26.6	37.6	27.3	4.6
Taoists	3.0	33.8	30.3	29.8	3.0
Muslims	5.3	28.9	20.3	28.0	17.5
Hindus	8.2	33.7	28.6	25.5	4.1
Catholics	4.6	25.2	32.8	28.2	9.2
Christians	3.4	28.7	29.5	34.0	4.5
No Religion	8.8	31.9	34.2	22.7	2.4

By religious affiliation, Muslims (43.8 per cent) were most likely to disagree or strongly disagree that people with very strong religious beliefs are intolerant of others (see Table 96). Hindus (56.1 per cent), followed by respondents with no religion (48.2 per cent), were the most likely among the major communities to agree or strongly agree with this statement.

**Table 96: Respondents' views toward religion and intolerance, by religious background**

Religious people are too intolerant (%)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Buddhists	3.9	31.3	32.8	26.9	5.1
Taoists	6.0	32.5	29.0	27.0	5.5
Muslims	3.7	27.3	25.2	32.6	11.2
Hindus	5.1	51.0	22.4	20.4	1.0
Catholics	9.8	25.6	24.8	30.8	9.0
Christians	4.1	31.2	25.9	31.6	7.1
No Religion	11.3	36.9	32.0	16.9	2.9

Finally, respondents were asked about their thoughts towards the relevance of religion presently as well as in the future.<sup>42</sup> The vast majority of respondents were of the view that religion remains relevant today, and will continue to have a role in the future (see Table 97). Nearly 60 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed that religion represents the past and not the future.<sup>43</sup> Also, 62.9 per cent said they agreed or strongly agreed that religion holds as much relevance today as it did in the past.

**Table 97: Respondents' views towards relevance of religion**

(%)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Religion represents the past and not the future	1.7	13.1	25.8	49.1	10.4
Religion is as relevant to life today as in the past	10.2	52.7	23.0	11.7	2.3

By religious affiliation, Christians (73.8 per cent), followed by Catholics (71.3 per cent) and Muslims (68.9 per cent), were the most likely to say they disagreed or strongly disagreed that religion represents the past and not the future (see Table 98).

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<sup>42</sup> The questions were “Do you agree or disagree with each of the following? (i) In Singapore, religion represents the past and not the future. (ii) In Singapore, religion is just as relevant to life today as it was in the past.” Respondents could choose from six options, ranging from “Strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”, with the final option being “can’t choose”.

<sup>43</sup> This variable has 208 missing cases.

**Table 98: Respondents' views towards relevance of religion in future, by religious background**

Religion represents the past and not the future		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Religion (%)	Buddhism	1.6	15.1	30.1	46.2	7.0
	Taoism	2.1	11.5	26.6	52.1	7.8
	Islam	1.8	11.8	17.5	52.2	16.7
	Hinduism	2.3	27.3	28.4	36.4	5.7
	Catholicism		6.2	22.5	58.9	12.4
	Christianity	1.5	8.5	16.2	56.0	17.8
	No Religion	2.3	15.0	35.3	42.2	5.2

Christians were also most likely to agree that religion is as relevant today as in the past (see Table 99). More than 77 per cent of Christians thought so. Notably, even among respondents with no religion, 42.4 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement as well.

**Table 99: Respondents' views towards relevance of religion today, by religious background**

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Religion (%)	Buddhism	7.6	52.2	25.1	14.1	1.0
	Taoism	7.1	54.5	24.7	11.1	2.5
	Islam	16.5	57.1	14.7	7.4	4.3
	Hinduism	10.0	55.6	20.0	13.3	1.1
	Catholicism	14.5	58.0	19.1	8.4	-
	Christianity	17.2	60.3	10.3	9.9	2.3
	No Religion	2.3	40.1	38.1	15.6	3.9

### **5.2.3 Role of religion and religious leaders in legislation and public policy**

The survey also sought to ascertain respondents' views on the role of religion in public policy, as well as the appropriateness of actions that religious leaders could take in the public arena that would possibly have a bearing on social harmony.

#### Legislation and religion

Respondents were asked for their views on whether laws should be based on any religion.<sup>44</sup> Three in four of all respondents (76.1 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed that a country's laws should not be based on a particular religion, emphasising that in Singapore there is a strong belief in secular legislation despite various communities having their own religious teachings and practices (see Table 100).

**Table 100: Respondents' views on basing a country's laws on religion**

(%)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Can't choose
Country's laws should not be based on religion	34.4	41.7	13.3	4.9	1.6	4.1

By religious affiliation, Christians, Catholics and Muslims were the communities with the least agreement. About 14 per cent of Christian respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, along with 8.9 per cent of Catholics and

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<sup>44</sup> The question was "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? A country's laws should not be based on any religion." Respondents were given six choices, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree", with the final option being "Can't Choose".

Muslims (see Table 101). Less than six per cent of Buddhists, Taoists, Hindus and those with no religion disagreed or strongly disagreed that a country's laws should not be based on any religion.

**Table 101: Respondents' views on basing a country's laws on religion, by religious background**

		Country's laws should not be based on religion					
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Can't choose
Religion (%)	Buddhism	31.1	47.9	11.6	3.4	0.9	5.0
	Taoism	36.5	48.6	7.2	2.4	1.4	3.8
	Islam	29.3	39.5	16.8	6.6	2.3	5.5
	Hinduism	43.1	38.2	11.8	2.9	2.9	1.0
	Catholicism	25.0	44.9	19.9	7.4	1.5	1.5
	Christianity	26.5	35.3	21.7	10.7	3.3	2.6
	No Religion	47.6	38.2	8.0	1.7	0.6	3.9

Younger respondents aged between 18 and 25 were slightly less likely to agree that legislation should not be based on a particular religion, compared to their older peers, especially those aged 65 and above (see Table 102). About 73.6 per cent of those aged 18 to 25 thought so, compared to 77.1 per cent of respondents aged 56 to 65, and 79.6 per cent of those aged above 65.

**Table 102: Respondents' views on basing a country's laws on religion, by age**

		Country's laws should not be based on religion					
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Can't choose
Age (%)	18-25	34.7	38.9	13.9	3.7	3.2	5.6
	26-35	36.9	38.4	15.8	2.7	2.4	3.9
	36-45	35.1	40.6	15.7	3.7	0.6	4.3
	46-55	34.3	40.9	11.2	7.9	1.7	4.0
	56-65	31.4	45.7	11.1	6.7	1.0	4.1
	Above 65	33.9	45.7	11.4	4.6	1.4	2.9

Analysing the results further by both age and religious affiliation in Table 103, we found that younger Christians (59.3 per cent of those aged 18 to 35) were less likely to agree or strongly agree that laws should not be based on a religion, compared to older Christians aged above 55 (68.5 per cent). This pattern was also evident among younger and older Hindus (76.7 per cent of younger Hindus agreed or strongly agreed, as opposed to 95.8 per cent of older Hindus).

**Table 103: Respondents' views on basing a country's laws on religion, by age and religious background**

			Country's laws should not be based on religion					
			Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Can't choose
18-35	Religion	Buddhism	35.5	44.4	11.3	1.6	0.8	6.5
		Taoism	42.5	42.5	10.0	2.5	2.5	-
		Islam	30.4	38.4	14.3	5.4	4.5	7.1
		Hinduism	46.7	30.0	13.3	-	10.0	-
		Catholicism	30.8	38.5	23.1	3.8	3.8	-
		Christianity	27.2	32.1	30.9	3.7	2.5	3.7
		No Religion	43.9	40.2	9.8	2.3	1.5	2.3
Above 55	Religion	Buddhism	27.0	52.1	13.5	3.7	0.6	3.1
		Taoism	37.4	48.4	5.5	2.2	1.1	5.5
		Islam	23.0	45.9	16.4	9.8	1.6	3.3
		Hinduism	45.8	50.0	-	4.2	-	-
		Catholicism	23.7	45.8	18.6	8.5	1.7	1.7
		Christianity	27.2	41.3	12.0	12.0	3.3	4.3
		No Religion	50.0	37.5	8.3	1.0	-	3.1

Respondents were also posed a question on whether they would adhere to their religious teaching or a new law, if both were in conflict.<sup>45</sup> Respondents were relatively split on this issue. About 48 per cent would definitely or probably follow the new legislation, while 35.6 per cent would probably or definitely adhere to their religious teachings.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> The question was "Suppose a law was passed which conflicted with your religious principles and teachings. Would you..." Respondents could pick from six choices, ranging from "definitely follow the law" to "I have no religious principles" and finally "can't choose".

<sup>46</sup> This variable has 392 missing cases.

Christians (67.6 per cent), Muslims (66.3 per cent) and Catholics (61.6 per cent) were most likely to follow their religious principles rather than the law, compared to those from other communities (see Table 104). Meanwhile, among the other faith communities, the majority of Buddhists, Taoists, and Hindus said they would definitely or probably follow the new law even though it conflicted with their religious teachings.

**Table 104: Respondents' views on whether they would adhere to new law or their religious principles, by religious affiliation**

		Law conflicts with religious principles				
		Definitely follow the law	Probably follow the law	Probably follow your religious principles	Definitely follow your religious principles	I have no religious principles
Religion (%)	Buddhism	27.4	41.2	16.4	5.7	9.4
	Taoism	32.5	37.9	12.4	7.1	10.1
	Islam	12.2	21.4	30.1	36.2	-
	Hinduism	35.4	27.8	17.7	12.7	6.3
	Catholicism	10.7	25.0	41.1	20.5	2.7
	Christianity	12.7	17.9	39.7	27.9	1.7
	No Religion	18.5	15.4	3.1	2.1	61.0

#### Role of religious leaders in the public arena

Next, respondents were also presented with various actions religious leaders might take in the public arena, and asked if they felt these actions were acceptable or unacceptable. These ranged from encouraging followers to proselytise, to pointing out flaws in other religions behind closed doors, and speaking up against potential legislative changes if these were in conflict with their religious teachings. The

responses are categorized into three sub-sections below – in politics and dealings with the government; religious leaders and (new) legislation that may be in conflict with their teachings; and the acceptability of certain actions by religious leaders that could have a bearing on social and religious harmony.

#### In politics and in dealings with the government

First, respondents were asked if they agreed that religious leaders should not try to influence how people vote in elections.<sup>47</sup> More than four in five respondents (81.9 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed with this (see Table 105), in a clear sign that the majority here subscribe to the long-held view that religion should clearly be kept separate from electoral politics in Singapore.

**Table 105: Respondents' views on religious leaders influencing people's votes in elections**

(%)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Religious leaders should not influence vote	40.6	41.3	13.1	3.4	1.6

By religious background, those with no religion (86.6 per cent) ranked the highest among the various communities in the proportion who agreed or strongly agreed that religious leaders should not influence their followers' voting behavior (see Table 106). Among the other communities, more than 80 per cent also agreed or

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<sup>47</sup> The question was "How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Religious leaders should not try to influence how people vote in elections." Respondents could choose from six options, ranging from "Strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" and finally "can't choose".

strongly agreed with the statement, except for Catholics and Christians (70.1 per cent and 76.2 per cent respectively).

**Table 106: Respondents' views on religious leaders influencing people's votes in elections, by religious background**

Religion (%)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Buddhists	38.2	47.0	10.9	2.4	1.4
Taoists	35.8	47.1	12.7	2.5	2.0
Muslims	38.4	43.6	15.6	2.4	0.0
Hindus	46.7	35.9	9.8	5.4	2.2
Catholics	31.3	38.8	22.4	5.2	2.2
Christians	31.2	45.0	13.8	7.4	2.6
No Religion	56.8	29.8	11.1	1.1	1.1

Respondents were also asked if it was acceptable for religious leaders to make remarks about a politician's character, or have close relationships with government officials. While a clear majority (86.9 per cent) felt that the former was unacceptable or very unacceptable (these could be seen as possibly influencing elections, see above), respondents were slightly more divided on the latter. About 55 per cent felt that religious leaders having close relationships with the government was unacceptable or very unacceptable, compared to 44.9 per cent who felt it was acceptable or very acceptable (see Table 107).

**Table 107: Respondents' views on religious leaders' conduct relating to politicians and government officials**

(%)	Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
A religious leader making remarks to his followers about a politician's morals or character.	28.7	58.2	11.9	1.2
A religious leader having close relationship with government officials.	14.3	40.8	42.2	2.7

By religious background, Christians (20.2 per cent), Catholics (16.9 per cent) and Muslims (14.9 per cent) were more likely than those from other communities to say that that making remarks about a politician's morals was acceptable or very acceptable (see Table 108). Still, the majority in these three religious groups felt it was unacceptable or very unacceptable for such conduct to take place.

**Table 108: Respondents' views on religious leaders' conduct relating to politicians, by religious background**

		A religious leader making remarks to his followers about a politician's morals or character.			
		Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
Religion (%)	Buddhism	29.0	61.2	9.1	0.7
	Taoism	26.0	64.4	8.7	1.0
	Islam	21.9	63.3	13.3	1.6
	Hinduism	29.4	58.8	10.8	1.0
	Catholicism	31.6	51.5	14.7	2.2
	Christianity	22.4	57.4	17.6	2.6
	No Religion	36.8	51.8	11.1	0.3

Younger respondents were also more likely to say this was acceptable, compared to older respondents (see Table 109). Just over 20 per cent of those aged 18 to 25 said it was acceptable or very acceptable for religious leaders to make such remarks, compared to about 7 per cent of those aged above 65, and about 12 per cent of those aged 46 to 55, and 56 to 65.

**Table 109: Respondents' views on religious leaders' conduct relating to politicians, by age**

		A religious leader making remarks to his followers about a politician's morals or character.			
		Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
Age (%)	18-25	22.7	56.0	20.4	0.9
	26-35	25.6	57.1	16.1	1.2
	36-45	31.4	57.4	10.3	0.9
	46-55	30.0	57.8	9.9	2.3
	56-65	30.5	57.8	10.2	1.6
	Above 65	30.0	62.9	6.8	0.4

When we analysed responses by both age and religious affiliation, we found that younger Muslims and Christians were more likely to say such conduct was acceptable or very acceptable (see Table 110). Just over one in five Muslims and Christians aged between 18 to 35 said they would find it acceptable or very acceptable for religious leaders to make such comments, compared to 6.6 per cent of Muslims and 12 per cent of Christians aged above 55.

**Table 110: Respondents' views on religious leaders' conduct relating to politicians, by age and religious background**

(%)			A religious leader making remarks to his followers about a politician's morals or character.			
			Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
18-35	Religion	Buddhism	22.6	59.7	16.9	0.8
		Taoism	20.0	70.0	10.0	-
		Islam	22.3	56.3	18.8	2.7
		Hinduism	26.7	56.7	16.7	-
		Catholicism	30.8	53.8	11.5	3.8
		Christianity	25.9	49.4	24.7	-
		No Religion	25.8	56.1	17.4	0.8
Above 55	Religion	Buddhism	31.9	61.3	5.5	1.2
		Taoism	29.7	59.3	9.9	1.1
		Islam	18.0	75.4	6.6	-
		Hinduism	29.2	62.5	8.3	-
		Catholicism	28.8	57.6	11.9	1.7
		Christianity	27.2	60.9	10.9	1.1
		No Religion	39.6	51.0	9.4	-

Meanwhile, there was a clear divide among different groups when we analysed the results by respondents' religious affiliation (see Table 111). The majority of Muslims (55.5 per cent), Catholics (53.7 per cent) and Christians (59.9 per cent) felt it was acceptable or very acceptable for religious leaders to have close relationships with government officials. This was in stark contrast to the views of Buddhists, Taoists, Hindus and those with no religion. The majority of respondents from these communities felt it was unacceptable or very unacceptable for such relationships to be taking place (63.3 per cent for Buddhists, 55.3 per cent for Taoists, 67.6 per cent for Hindus, and 63.4 per cent for those with no religion).

**Table 111: Respondents' views on religious leaders' conduct relating to government officials, by religious background**

		A religious leader having close relationship with government officials			
		Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
Religion (%)	Buddhism	16.0	47.3	35.8	0.9
	Taoism	9.6	45.7	42.8	1.9
	Islam	10.9	33.6	51.6	3.9
	Hinduism	17.6	50.0	29.4	2.9
	Catholicism	10.3	36.0	49.3	4.4
	Christianity	7.4	32.7	54.0	5.9
	No Religion	22.4	41.0	35.5	1.1

Younger respondents were more likely to say such relationships were acceptable or very acceptable (see Table 112). The majority of those aged 18 to 25 (56.9 per cent), as well as those aged between 26 and 35 (50.6 per cent), said such conduct was acceptable or very acceptable. Conversely, respondents in the older age

brackets were more likely to say these relationships were unacceptable or very unacceptable. For instance, 56.4 per cent of respondents aged 46 to 55 said this was unacceptable or very unacceptable, along with 58.1 per cent of those aged between 56 and 65.

**Table 112: Respondents' views on religious leaders' conduct relating to government officials, by age**

		A religious leader having close relationship with government officials.			
		Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
Age (%)	18-25	11.1	31.9	52.3	4.6
	26-35	13.7	35.7	48.5	2.1
	36-45	18.3	41.1	38.3	2.3
	46-55	14.5	41.9	39.9	3.6
	56-65	13.7	44.4	40.6	1.3
	Above 65	13.2	47.9	36.1	2.9

*In dealing with (new) legislation that may be in conflict with their religion*

Respondents were in broad agreement that it was not acceptable for religious leaders to encourage followers to treat the government's laws as less important than their religion, and speaking up against potential changes to existing legislation that go against their teachings was another red line that should not be crossed. More than nine in 10 felt the former was unacceptable or very unacceptable behavior, while about three in four felt similarly about the latter (see Table 113).

**Table 113: Respondents' views of religious leaders conduct pertaining to conflicts between their religion and the country's legislation**

(%)	Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
Religious leaders openly calling on followers to treat government's laws as less important than their religion	30.4	62.0	6.9	0.7
A religious leader speaking up against potential changes to existing laws because they go against what his/her religion teaches is correct	24.2	51.7	22.2	1.9

By religious background, Muslims (13.7 per cent), Catholics (10.3 per cent) and Christians (10.3 per cent) were more likely than those from other communities to say that it was acceptable or very acceptable for religious leaders to openly call on followers to treat the government's laws as less important than their religion. Still, a majority of Muslims (86.4 per cent), Catholics (89.7 per cent) and Christians (89.7 per cent) said such conduct was unacceptable or very unacceptable.

**Table 114: Respondents' views of religious leaders' conduct pertaining to conflicts between their religion and the country's legislation, by religious background**

		Religious leaders openly calling on followers to treat Government's laws as less important than their religion			
		Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
Religion (%)	Buddhism	29.7	64.2	5.7	0.5
	Taoism	31.7	61.1	6.7	0.5
	Islam	18.4	68.0	12.9	0.8
	Hinduism	32.4	61.8	4.9	1.0
	Catholicism	23.5	66.2	8.8	1.5
	Christianity	27.6	62.1	9.6	0.7
	No Religion	41.8	55.7	2.2	0.3

The same three communities were also more likely to say it was acceptable or very acceptable for religious leaders to speak up against potential changes to existing laws because they go against their teachings (see Table 115). The largest proportions were for Christians (44.5 per cent), followed by Catholics (41.2 per cent) and Muslims (29.7 per cent). Less than one in five of those from other communities said such conduct would be acceptable or very acceptable. However, across all the major communities, a clear majority said such conduct would be unacceptable or very unacceptable.

**Table 115: Respondents' views of religious leaders' conduct pertaining to conflicts between their religion and the country's new legislation, by religious background**

		A religious leader speaking up against potential changes to existing laws because they go against what his/her religion teaches is correct.			
		Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
Religion (%)	Buddhism	26.0	56.8	16.9	0.2
	Taoism	26.0	57.7	15.4	1.0
	Islam	17.2	53.1	28.1	1.6
	Hinduism	27.5	62.7	7.8	2.0
	Catholicism	14.0	44.9	35.3	5.9
	Christianity	17.3	38.2	39.0	5.5
	No Religion	33.0	51.2	15.8	-

There were also differences across respondents from various socio-economic backgrounds. Better-educated respondents (which we classified as degree holders and above) were more likely to say this was an acceptable practice (see Table 116). About 32 per cent of these tertiary-educated respondents had no issues with religious leaders speaking up against potential new legislation on such matters, nearly double the 17 per cent of those with secondary school and below education who said such conduct would be acceptable or very acceptable.

**Table 116: Respondents' views of religious leaders' conduct pertaining to conflicts between their religion and the country's new legislation, by educational background**

		A religious leader speaking up against potential changes to existing laws because they go against what his/her religion teaches is correct.			
		Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
Education (%)	Secondary School & Below	24.4	58.6	15.9	1.1
	Post-Secondary, Diploma & Professional Qualifications	22.0	53.0	23.3	1.7
	Degree & Above	26.1	41.8	29.1	3.0

Younger respondents (aged between 18 and 25) were also less likely to say such practices were unacceptable, compared to those aged 56 to 65, and aged above 65 (see Table 117). Just over 66 per cent of those aged between 18 and 25 said it was unacceptable or very unacceptable for religious leaders to speak up against potential legislative changes if these went against their religious teachings, compared to 80.0 per cent of those aged 56 to 65 and 84.6 per cent of those aged over 65.

**Table 117: Respondents' views of religious leaders' conduct pertaining to conflicts between their religion and the country's new legislation, by age**

		A religious leader speaking up against potential changes to existing laws because they go against what his/her religion teaches is correct.			
		Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
Age (%)	18-25	18.1	48.1	31.5	2.3
	26-35	22.3	50.9	24.7	2.1
	36-45	26.3	47.7	23.4	2.6
	46-55	24.1	51.8	21.5	2.6
	56-65	27.9	52.1	18.7	1.3
	Above 65	24.6	60.0	15.0	0.4

When we analysed the results by both age and religious background, we found clear age divides between Christians and Muslims at both ends of the age spectrum (see Table 118). Younger respondents from these religious affiliations tended to be more accepting of such conduct, perhaps reflecting their greater exposure to Western ideas of liberal freedoms.

About a third of young Muslims (aged 18 to 35) said it was acceptable or very acceptable for religious leaders to be commenting on potential changes to laws if they went against their religious teachings, compared to less than 20 per cent of Muslims aged above 55. Nearly half of Christians aged 18 to 35 had similar views, compared to less than three in 10 Christians aged above 55.

**Table 118: Respondents' views of religious leaders' conduct pertaining to conflicts between their religion and the country's new legislation, by age and religious background**

(%)			Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
18-35	Religion	Buddhism	21.8	51.6	26.6	-
		Taoism	20.0	55.0	25.0	-
		Islam	17.9	47.3	32.1	2.7
		Hinduism	23.3	66.7	6.7	3.3
		Catholicism	15.4	42.3	34.6	7.7
		Christianity	14.8	37.0	40.7	7.4
		No Religion	24.2	55.3	20.5	-
Above 55	Religion	Buddhism	26.4	61.3	11.7	0.6
		Taoism	27.5	59.3	13.2	-
		Islam	16.4	63.9	19.7	-
		Hinduism	25.0	62.5	12.5	-
		Catholicism	15.3	47.5	32.2	5.1
		Christianity	25.0	46.7	28.3	-
		No Religion	39.6	50.0	10.4	-

In maintaining social harmony in a multi-religious context

The vast majority of respondents also felt that religious leaders should refrain from other actions that may be detrimental to social and religious harmony, in a multi-religious setting such as Singapore. For example, more than nine in 10 respondents said it was unacceptable or very unacceptable for religious leaders to incite violence or hatred against other religions, make insensitive comments about

another religion, or encourage their members to refrain from mixing with other religious groups (see Table 119).

**Table 119: The role of religious leadership in influencing interreligious harmony**

(%)	Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
Religious leaders inciting violence or hatred against other religions	57.2	40.2	2.0	0.6
Religious leaders making insensitive comments on another's religion.	51.8	45.3	2.3	0.6
Religious leaders encouraging followers to share their religion with strangers in public.	11.5	40.4	44.3	3.8
Religious leaders encouraging their members to refrain from mixing with members of other religious groups.	40.7	54.1	4.7	0.6
A religious leader pointing out flaws in other religions to his congregants, even if done behind closed doors.	32.6	55.4	10.8	1.2

Eighty-eight per cent, meanwhile, said it was unacceptable or very unacceptable for leaders to point out flaws in other religions to his followers, even if done behind closed doors. Broadly, these findings provide evidence that significant segments of the population feel that religious leaders should conduct themselves with sensitivity and care in a multi-religious society, to safeguard religious harmony.

When it came to encouraging followers to share their religion with strangers in public, there were slightly lower levels of respondents who felt this was unacceptable behavior on the part of religious leaders. This was a particularly divisive issue. About 52 per cent felt this was unacceptable or very unacceptable, while around 48 per cent felt it was acceptable or very acceptable.

There was not much differentiation across religious affiliations, when it came to respondents' views towards whether it was appropriate for religious leaders to make insensitive comments about another religion (see Table 120). Across all major communities, less than 4 per cent of respondents in each community said such acts would be acceptable or very acceptable.

**Table 120: Respondents' views on religious leaders making insensitive comments on another religion, by religious background**

		Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
Religion (%)					
Religion (%)	Buddhism	48.2	48.6	2.7	0.5
	Taoism	49.5	47.1	3.4	-
	Islam	46.9	50.0	2.7	0.4
	Hinduism	42.2	53.9	2.9	1.0
	Catholicism	53.7	43.4	1.5	1.5
	Christianity	53.3	44.5	1.5	0.7
	No Religion	60.4	37.7	1.7	0.3

However, analysing the results by respondents' age, we found that younger respondents were more likely to say that such comments would be very unacceptable. More than 6 in 10 of those aged 18 to 25 felt so, compared to 45 per cent of those aged between 56 and 65, and those aged over 65 (see Table 121).

**Table 121: Respondents' views on religious leaders making insensitive comments on another religion, by age**

		Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
Age (%)	18-25	61.1	36.6	1.9	0.5
	26-35	52.1	43.8	3.6	0.6
	36-45	57.7	40.0	1.7	0.6
	46-55	51.8	46.2	1.3	0.7
	56-65	44.8	51.4	3.2	0.6
	Above 65	45.0	52.9	1.8	0.4

By religious background, there was also little differentiation across communities on whether it was unacceptable for religious leaders to encourage followers to refrain from mixing with other communities (see Table 122). Among the major religious groups, 97.5 per cent of Christians, 93.8 per cent of Buddhists, and 92.6 per cent of Muslims said this would be very unacceptable or unacceptable behavior.

**Table 122: Respondents' views on religious leaders encouraging members to refrain from mixing, by religious background**

		Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
Religion (%)	Buddhism	37.2	56.6	5.7	0.5
	Taoism	36.1	59.1	4.3	0.5
	Islam	36.7	55.9	6.6	0.8
	Hinduism	37.3	54.9	5.9	2.0
	Catholicism	40.4	56.6	2.2	0.7
	Christianity	43.8	53.7	2.2	0.4
	No Religion	48.5	46.5	4.7	0.3

However, when it came to a leader pointing out flaws in other religions to his congregants, even if done behind closed doors, Christians were more likely to deem this practice acceptable or very acceptable compared to those from other communities. About 29 per cent of Christians felt this was acceptable or very acceptable, at least double the proportions of those holding similar views among the other communities (see Table 123). Catholics (13.2 per cent) and Muslims (12.1 per cent) ranked second and third among the communities whose followers were also likely to say that such comments would be acceptable or very acceptable.

**Table 123: Respondents' views on a religious leader pointing out flaws in other religions, by religious background**

		Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
Religion (%)	Buddhism	32.9	59.1	7.3	0.7
	Taoism	28.4	64.4	6.3	1.0
	Islam	27.3	60.5	10.9	1.2
	Hinduism	34.3	55.9	8.8	1.0
	Catholicism	30.9	55.9	12.5	0.7
	Christianity	22.8	48.5	25.4	3.3
	No Religion	44.0	48.2	7.5	0.3

In the area of proselytisation, there was a noticeable split between respondents from the various communities. The majority of Muslims, Catholics and Christians said it was acceptable or very acceptable for religious leaders to encourage followers to share their religion with strangers in public. Conversely, the majority of Buddhists, Taoists, Hindus, and those with no religion, however, felt this was unacceptable or very unacceptable (see Table 124).

**Table 124: Respondents' views on religious leaders encouraging followers to share their religion with strangers in public, by religious background**

		Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
Religion (%)	Buddhism	12.3	45.2	40.4	2.1
	Taoism	7.7	47.1	44.2	1.0
	Islam	7.8	39.1	46.9	6.3
	Hinduism	19.6	51.0	27.5	2.0
	Catholicism	4.4	36.8	54.4	4.4
	Christianity	3.3	24.3	61.0	11.4
	No Religion	21.1	42.4	36.3	0.3

Younger respondents were less likely to say this was unacceptable or very unacceptable, compared to older respondents (see Table 125). Among those aged 18 to 25, 48.2 per cent felt it was unacceptable or very unacceptable. Meanwhile, about 60 per cent of respondents aged 65 and above felt similarly.

**Table 125: Respondents' views on religious leaders encouraging followers to share their religion with strangers in public, by age**

		Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
Age (%)	18-25	8.8	39.4	45.8	6.0
	26-35	10.7	34.5	50.6	4.2
	36-45	10.3	39.7	46.3	3.7
	46-55	12.2	45.2	37.6	5.0
	56-65	14.6	36.2	47.0	2.2
	Above 65	11.8	48.6	37.5	2.1

Analysing further by both age and religious affiliation (see Table 126), we found that younger Christians were less likely than older Christians to say this was unacceptable or very unacceptable (21 per cent of those aged 18 to 35, versus 34.7 per cent of those aged 55 and above).

This trend was replicated among the Buddhist respondents – 47.6 per cent of Buddhists aged 18 to 35 felt this practice was unacceptable or very unacceptable, compared to 66.9 per cent of Buddhists aged 55 and above.

**Table 126: Respondents' views on religious leaders encouraging followers to share their religion with strangers in public, by age and religious background**

(%)			Very Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Very Acceptable
18-35	Religion	Buddhism	7.3	40.3	50.0	2.4
		Taoism	10.0	42.5	47.5	-
		Islam	6.3	39.3	43.8	10.7
		Hinduism	20.0	50.0	26.7	3.3
		Catholicism	15.4	26.9	57.7	-
		Christianity	1.2	19.8	65.4	13.6
		No Religion	15.9	37.9	46.2	-
Above 55	Religion	Buddhism	18.4	48.5	31.9	1.2
		Taoism	6.6	48.4	45.1	-
		Islam	8.2	32.8	59.0	-
		Hinduism	16.7	58.3	25.0	-
		Catholicism	1.7	39.0	50.8	8.5
		Christianity	5.4	29.3	59.8	5.4
		No Religion	28.1	41.7	30.2	-

## 6. PREDICTING MORAL LIBERALISM, STATE-RELIGION SEPARATION AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS OTHER RELIGIONS

In the preceding sections we have described religion in both the private and public sphere. While we noted that religious affiliation, age and education has an effect on a range of attitudes, we have not engaged in analysis where we have controlled a range of variables to elicit those which are statistically significant. In this section we proceed to demonstrate through a series of regression models how variables such as age, gender, socio-economic status, family make-up, and religious background influence respondents' views towards moral issues, state-religion separation and people from other religions.

### Dependent variables

We examine four dependent variables based on several attitudinal variables - *Moral liberalism, state-religion separation, Muslim threat and Attitude towards other religions*. These variables were deemed as having the greatest currency in current discourse on personal religious beliefs and its interactions with society and the state.

*Moral liberalism* is a scale variable that combines three variables, *Infidelity, Homosexual sex, and Abortion*. The more a respondent deems infidelity,

homosexual sex and abortion acceptable, the higher the score of this scale variable.

*State-religion separation* is a scale variable that combines questions concerning whether religion should intervene in the law and in politics. The more religious intervention in politics and law is deemed unacceptable, the higher this scale variable.

*Muslim threat* is a binary variable that indicates the respondent's opinion on whether Muslims are threatening (versus not threatening), from the perspective of non-Muslims. (Muslim threat was picked as the community was seen as having the highest proportion of respondents who viewed them as a threat as reported earlier).

*Attitude towards other religions* is a scale variable that combines questions concerning personal attitudes towards members of other religions. The more distant and ambivalent towards other religions, the higher this scale variable.

### Independent Variables

For all dependent variables except *Muslim threat*, religion was included as the focal independent variable. The religions included are Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. Those with no religion are an omitted category.

For *Muslim threat*, all Muslims are filtered out for the regressions, and Christianity is the omitted category.

*Religiosity* is a scale variable, which when higher indicates greater self-perceived religiosity.

*Trust in Secular Institutions* is a scale variable, which when higher indicates the greater confidence the respondent has in the Parliament and state courts.

*Inter-religious Disrespect* is a scale variable, which when higher indicates that the respondent condones that other religions can be criticised by his/her own religious leaders.

### Controls

Gender, race, housing type and education are controls for the demographic characteristics of the respondents, with female, non-Chinese, public housing (HDB) and non-degree holders as the reference groups respectively. Age was also included as a control variable.

Additionally, marital status and whether the respondent has children were added to control for family characteristics. The non-married was the omitted group. *No child* is a dummy variable which indicates that the respondent does not have a child (versus having at least one child).

**Table 131: Ordinary least squares regression modelling the effects of demographic and scale variables on moral liberalism as dependent variable**

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Christian	-2.07***	-1.93***	-1.953***	-1.835***	-1.284***
Catholic	-1.785***	-1.371***	-1.385***	-1.285***	-.801*
Muslim	-3.066***	-2.552***	-2.549***	-2.433***	-1.909***
Buddhist/Taoist	-1.37***	-.836***	-0.841***	-.81***	-.35
Hindu	-2.07***	-1.559**	-1.505**	-1.468**	-.958
Male		.151	.124	.138	.07
Chinese		.365	.261	.282	.214
Private Housing		.411*	.376*	.361	.318
Degree & Above		.535**	.64***	.633***	.642***
Age		-.056***	-.055***	-.056***	-.053***
Married			-.528**	-.554**	-.541**
No Child			.482**	.459**	.444**
State-Religion Separation				.087*	.072*
Religiosity					-.291***
Intercept	7.844***	9.537***	9.622***	8.569***	9.652***
R-square	.097	.212	.228	.231	.24
Degrees of Freedom	5	10	12	13	14
n	1460	1460	1460	1460	1460

\*P < .05, \*\*P < .01, \*\*\*P < .001

Omitted categories: Atheist, female, non-Chinese, public housing, non-degree holders, non-married, at least one child.

### Predicting Respondents with Greater Moral Liberalism

Regressions (ordinary least squares) were conducted to determine the demographics of those more or less likely to be morally liberal. The dependent

variable is a scale variable, from the average of the responses to three four-point scale questions highlighted in Tables 128 to 130: "Do you think it is wrong or not wrong if a married person has sexual relations with someone other than his or her husband or wife", "And what about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex?" and "Do you personally think it is wrong or not wrong for a woman to have an abortion if the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children?". The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.61. The higher the scale variable, the more morally liberal is the respondent. The results of the regressions are displayed in Table 131.

From Models 1 to 4, all respondents from various religions were significantly less likely to be morally liberal compared to atheists or non-believers. In Model 5, even after religiosity was controlled for, Christians, Catholics and Muslims were still significantly less likely to be morally liberal.

When housing, education, age, marriage and children were included as control variables, they were found to be significant predictors. In Models 2 and 3, those who dwell in private housing (condominium, private apartment or landed property) were more likely to be morally liberal compared to those who dwell in public housing (all HDB). The higher educated, that is, those who have a degree or higher educational qualifications, were always significantly more likely to be morally liberal, compared to those without a degree. In contrast, older respondents and

those who are married were less likely to be morally liberal, while those who do not have a child were more likely to be morally liberal compared to those with at least one child.

Additionally, from Models 4 and 5, those who believe that state and religion should be separate, were more likely to be morally liberal. In contrast, in Model 5, those who are more religious were less likely to be morally liberal.

**Table 132: Ordinary least squares regression modelling the effects of demographic and scale variables on state-religion separation as dependent variable**

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Christian	-1.41***	-1.466***	-1.469***	-1.211***	-1.196***
Catholic	-1.226***	-1.439***	-1.431***	-1.21***	-1.207***
Muslim	-1.191***	-1.511***	-1.509***	-1.272***	-1.284***
Buddhist/Taoist	-.431**	-.43**	-.42**	-.215	-.193
Hindu	-.258	-.653*	-.66*	-.44	-.425
Male		-.116	-.134	-.162	-.182
Chinese		-.458*	-.464*	-.502*	-.529*
Private Housing		.208	.204	.187	.17
Degree & Above		.088	.083	.083	.086
Age		.013***	.01**	.011***	.013***
Married			.184	.186	.184
No Child			.165	.161	.15
Religiosity				-.135**	-.149**
Trust in Secular Inst					-.036
Intercept	12.66***	12.495***	12.408***	12.843***	13.112***
R-square	.066	.08	.082	.087	.093
Degrees of Freedom	5	10	12	13	14
n	1800	1800	1800	1800	1800

\*P < .05, \*\*P < .01, \*\*\*P < .001

Omitted categories: Atheist, female, non-Chinese, public housing, non-degree holders, non-married, at least one child.

### Predicting Respondents with Greater Interest in State-Religion Separation

Regressions (ordinary least squares) were conducted to determine respondents who had greater preference for the state and religion to be separate. The

dependent variable is a scale variable, from the average of the responses to four four-point scale statements, which respondents had to indicate whether they were acceptable or unacceptable. The statements were: "Religious leaders openly calling on followers to treat government's laws as less important than their religion", "A religious leader speaking up against potential changes to existing laws because they go against what his/her religion teachers is correct", "A religious leader making remarks to his followers about a politician's morals or character" and "A religious leader having close relationships with government officials." The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.72. The higher the scale variable, the greater the respondent's preference for state-religion separation. The results of the regressions are displayed in Table 132.

From Models 1 to 3, it is clear that all religions were significantly less likely to prefer state-religion separation compared to those with no religion. In Models 4 and 5, even after religiosity was controlled for, Christians, Catholics and Muslims were still significantly less likely to prefer high levels of state-religion separation.

When race and age were included as control variables, they were found to be significant predictors. Older respondents were more likely to prefer high levels of state-religion separation, while Chinese respondents were less likely to do so.

Additionally, in Models 4 and 5, those who are more religious were less likely to be prefer high levels of state-religion separation.

**Table 133: Binary logistic regression modelling whether Muslims are perceived as threats.**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>	<b>Model 6</b>
Buddhist/Taoist	-.473*	-.356	-.379	-.394	-.34	-.334
Catholic	.066	.022	.022	.015	-.04	-.044
Hindu	-.507	.005	-.01	-.004	-.039	-.034
No Religion	-.069	-.065	-.097	-.184	-.135	-.134
Chinese		.404	.418	.421	.302	.293
Male		.114	.113	.103	.058	.058
Private Housing		.388*	.382*	.377*	.371*	.372*
Degree & Above		.232	.229	.23	.286	.28
Age		.006	.005	.006	.006	.006
State-Religion Separation			.022	.02	.014	.005
Religiosity				-.045	-.038	-.038
Trust in Secular Institutions					-.103**	-.103**
Inter-Religious Disrespect						-.016
Intercept	-1.298***	-2.245***	-2.492***	-2.249**	-1.423	-1.209
n	1358	1358	1358	1358	1358	1358
Nagelkerke R-square	.013	.027	.028	.028	.036	.036
Degrees of freedom	4	9	10	11	12	13
Chi-square	10.635	22.67	23.029	23.428	29.724	29.829

\*P < .05, \*\*P < .01, \*\*\*P < .001

Omitted categories: Christian, female, non-Chinese, public housing, non-degree holders.

Muslims were filtered out in all regressions.

### Predicting Respondents who Believe Muslims are a Threat

A binary logistic regression was carried out to investigate who were more likely to think that Muslims are threats. Demographic and scale variables were included in the regression models, as Table 133 indicates. Muslims were filtered out in all regressions.

*Inter-Religious disrespect* was included as an independent variable. This is a scale variable from the average of the responses to four four-point scale statements, where respondents have to indicate whether they were acceptable or unacceptable: “Religious leaders inciting violence or hatred against other religions”, “Religious leaders making insensitive comments on another’s religion”, “Religious leaders encouraging their members to refrain from mixing with members of other religious groups” and “A religious leader pointing out flaws in other religions to his congregants, even if done behind closed doors.” The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was 0.82. The higher this scale variable, the more inter-religious disrespect.

According to Models 2 to 6, those who dwell in private housing (condominium, private apartment or landed property) were more likely to think that Muslims are threats, as compared to those who dwell in public housing (all HDB).

Additionally, from Models 5 and 6, those who have more trust in secular institutions were less likely to think that Muslims are threats. This independent variable is a scale variable, from the average of the responses to two five-point scale questions: “How much confidence do you have in Parliament of Singapore” and “How much confidence do you have in Courts and the legal system”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was 0.74. The higher this scale variable, the more confidence the respondent has in the political and legal institutions.

**Table 134: Ordinary least squares regression modelling the effects of demographic and scale variables on attitudes towards other religions as dependent variable**

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Christian	-1.519***	-1.533***	-1.429***	-.712	-.772*	-.747*
Muslim	-2.82***	-1.144*	-1.045	-.402	-.604	-.558
Buddhist/ Taoist	-.749**	-.756**	-.729**	-.132	-.093	-.123
Catholic	-1.514***	-1.367**	-1.268**	-.648	-.717	-.683
Hindu	-3.781***	-2.166**	-2.12**	-1.449*	-1.443*	-1.476*
Chinese		1.699***	1.726***	1.601**	1.48**	1.529**
Male		.044	.049	-.054	-.185	-.184
Private Housing		.2	.191	.144	.14	.135
Degree & Above		.232	.229	.223	.315	.365
Age		.005	.004	.008	.011	.01
State-Religion Separation			.063	.042	.016	.086
Religiosity				-.396***	-.388***	-.384***
Trust in Secular Institutions					-.221***	-.223***
Inter-Religious Disrespect						.118
Intercept	12.724***	10.706***	9.914***	11.463***	13.375***	11.764***
R-square	.081	.09	.092	.102	.118	.12
Degrees of freedom	5	10	11	12	13	14
n	1502	1502	1502	1502	1502	1502

\*P < .05, \*\*P < .01, \*\*\*P < .001

Omitted categories: Atheist, female, non-Chinese, public housing, non-degree holders.

Finally, regressions (ordinary least squares) were conducted to determine the predictors of those who have warm or ambivalent attitudes towards people from other religions. The dependent variable is a scale variable, from the average of the responses to six five-point scale statements. These were: "What is your personal attitude towards members of the following religious groups: Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and Atheists or non-believers". Each respondent's response towards members of his or her own religion were filtered out. The higher the scale variable, the more ambivalent and distant is the respondent towards members of other religions. The results of the regressions are displayed in Table 134.

From Models 1 and 2, all religions were significantly less likely to be ambivalent or distant towards other religions compared to those with no religion. In Models 5 and 6, even after religiosity was controlled for, Christians and Hindus were still significantly less likely to be ambivalent or distant towards other religions.

When race was included as a control variable, it was found to be a significant predictor. Chinese respondents were more likely to be ambivalent or distant towards other religions, compared to the non-Chinese.

When religiosity was included as an independent variable, it was found that those who are more religious were less likely to be ambivalent or distant towards other religions. Likewise, those with higher trust in secular institutions were less likely to be ambivalent or distant towards other religions.

## 7. CLUSTERING RESPONDENTS

Given the prominence of religion and religiosity in Singapore, coupled with the state's maintenance of a separation between state and religion (what we denote as secularism in this paper), it is imperative to study and capture the nuanced interaction between religiosity and attitudes towards state-religion separation.

In Singapore, while there is in general separation between the religion issues to do with politics and the government, the state does involve itself in the religious sphere primarily to ensure a base level of religious peace and harmony. It also seeks to impartially assist different religious communities to practise their respective faiths. The Singapore state while not allowing religious actors to pursue political platforms, acknowledges religious voices and opinions in policymaking through regular consultations with religious leaders. While the narrative of secularism in politics resonates with most Singaporeans, there are groups who may have mixed attitudes towards such separation of state and religion. In addition, given the extent to which Singaporeans are confident in religious institutions (on par with state institutions such as courts and parliaments, see

Section 5.2.1), it would be useful to map out the relationship between religiosity and beliefs about secularism amongst Singaporeans.

It is also useful to challenge the notion of religiosity and secularity as mutually exclusive and to study the possible coexistence of both religious and secular identities. In countries like the United States, there is increasing polarisation between religious and non-religious groups, with religious groups advocating for less separation between church and state, and vice versa for non-religious groups. Examples would be heavy lobbying by religious groups to legally prohibit or restrict abortion, as well as same-sex marriage and the rise of militant secularists who decry any influence of religious groups in the wider public space. Such tension and legal contestation strains relations within society and should not be mirrored in Singapore. It is thus imperative to understand the relationship between religiosity and attitudes towards secularism in the context of Singapore. Perhaps, the resilient narrative of secularism in Singapore has resulted in simultaneously religious and secular citizens.

This section aims to classify Singaporeans into four different groups across a range of predictor variables relating to religiosity and secularism to test for the likelihood and prevalence of simultaneous religious and secular identities amongst Singaporeans. These variables include: religiosity, their belief in state-religion separation, their confidence in state institutions, their perceptions of people of

other religions, and their attitudes towards morality. These variables are useful for mapping the study population according to a spectrum of religiosity, secularism and interreligious harmony. Classification systems have their limitations in that they fail to capture the great diversity of attitudes and beliefs resident in the population. However they do provide a simplified way of understanding a population based on a set of defined criteria.

The first variable ‘Religiosity’ is a 7-point Likert scale variable. Respondents had to rate themselves anywhere from not religious at all to extremely religious.

The second variable state-religion Separation consisted of four 4-point Likert items. The first item asked respondents for the extent to which they found religious leaders openly calling on followers to treat the government’s laws as less important than their religion acceptable. The second item tested the acceptability of a religious leader speaking up against potential changes to existing laws because they go against what their religion teaches is correct. The third item tested the acceptability of a religious leader making remarks to his followers about a politician’s morals or character. The fourth item tested the acceptability of a religious leader having close relationships with government officials. Cronbach’s alpha for these four items were 0.72.

The third variable, 'Confidence in state institutions', was based on two 5-point Likert items: the extent of respondents' confidence in (i) the Parliament of Singapore, and (ii) courts and the legal system. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.74.

The fourth variable, 'Perception of people of other religions', consisted of five 5-point Likert items. For Buddhist and Taoist respondents, the variable tested their personal attitudes towards Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews and atheists or non-believers. This refers to whether they had positive, negative or ambivalent attitudes towards people of other religions. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.94.

For Muslim respondents, the variable tested their personal attitudes towards Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and atheists or non-believers. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.94. For Hindu respondents, the variable tested their personal attitudes towards Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Jews and atheists or non-believers. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.93.

For Catholic and Christian respondents, the variable tested their personal attitudes towards Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Jews and atheists or non-believers. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.95. For respondents with no

religion, the variable tested their personal attitudes towards Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Jews. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.95.

The fifth variable 'Moral attitudes' consisted of three 4-point items: the first item tested the extent to which respondents found a married person having sexual relations with someone other than their spouse as wrong. The second item tested the extent to which they found sexual relations between two adults of the same sex wrong. The third item tested the extent to which they found abortion wrong, in the context of these families having low incomes and not being able to afford any more children. The combined measure had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.61.

## **7.1 Cluster Analysis**

Cluster analysis was performed on the sample to split it into typologies; as cluster analysis "is designed to generate subgroups from a sample of respondents that represent genuine within-cluster homogeneity while maximising between-cluster differences" (Cağlar et al., 2010). K-means cluster analysis was chosen in this case as it is recognised for its lack of sensitivity to outliers and greater maximisation of within-cluster homogeneity and between-cluster heterogeneity (Prokasky et al., 2016).

As K-means clustering "requires an a priori selection of the number of clusters" (Prokasky et al., 2016), we selected four clusters, as that would best fit our

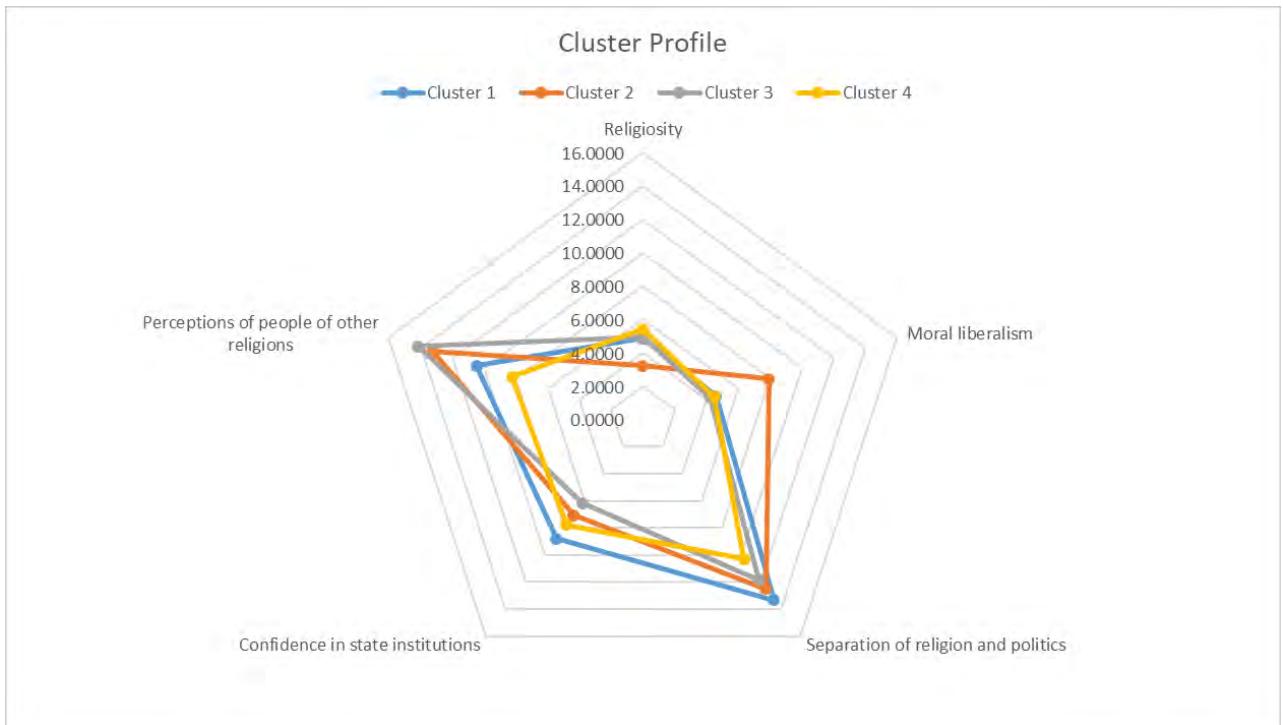
hypothesis of witnessing four different groups across the two dimensions of religiosity and secularity. Based on the technique not all cases can be successfully classified. In this analysis, we were able to classify nearly 75 per cent of respondents.

The five predictor variables were first standardised into z-scores. A K-means clustering was then conducted through factoring in predictor variables and picking a four cluster solution. Table 127 displays the mean and standard deviation coefficients of each predictor variable across the clusters.

**Table 127: Mean of each predictor variable across the clusters**

Clusters	Religiosity	Moral liberalism	Separation of religion and politics	Confidence in state institutions	Perceptions of people of other religions
1	4.8730	4.5993	13.3583	8.7980	10.4886
2	3.2374	7.9080	12.5282	7.0742	13.2136
3	4.9475	4.2362	11.8504	6.1732	14.1601
4	5.4123	4.5065	10.2857	7.7695	8.2500

Figure 7: Spider Map representing predictor variable means across clusters



## 7.2 Cluster profiles

Cluster analysis revealed a four-cluster framework fitting the information the best.

The first cluster ( $n=307$ , which we term “Sacred Seculars”) consists of respondents who are somewhat religious, desire more separation between religion and politics, have complete confidence in state institutions, are open towards people of other religions and are morally conservative. Cluster 1 has the highest proportion of Hindus; 45.5 per cent of Hindu respondents were likely to belong to Cluster 1. Cluster 1 also has a substantial proportion of Buddhists and Taoists; 29.2 per cent of Buddhist respondents and 30.5 per cent of Taoist respondents were likely to

belong to this cluster. Cluster 1 is relatively middle-class in terms of socioeconomic status.

The “Sacred Seculars” in this cluster challenge the stereotype of religiosity as inextricably linked to non-secularity, as the constituents of this group are religious, but desire state-religion separation. It is probable that their moral conservatism is linked to their religiosity, both of which do not adversely affect their perceptions of people of other religions. This cluster is testament to the effects of dominant state narratives of secularism in the public sphere on Singaporeans’ attitudes towards state and religion. Cluster 1 aligns well with the state’s narrative of maintaining religiosity without compromising on secularism and interreligious harmony.

Cluster 2 (n=337, which we term “Skeptic Scrappers”) consists of respondents who are less religious, desire some separation between religion and politics, have a great deal of confidence in state institutions, are ambivalent towards people of other religious and are morally liberal. Cluster 2 is the least religious cluster and as a result a large proportion of the cluster consists of respondents with no religion (51.6 per cent of Cluster 2 consists of people with no religion and 67.7 per cent of people with no religion are likely to belong to Cluster 2). This cluster is also the youngest, most educated and well-to-do. It has the highest proportion of 18-35 year olds (39.5 per cent), the highest proportion of degree-holders and above (35.6 per cent) and the highest proportion of respondents living in landed property (36.5 per cent) compared to the other three clusters.

These “Skeptic Scrappers” represent the perennial segment of less religious people in society. The cluster’s make-up closely mirrors the demographics of politically left-leaning citizens in the US - a group that is increasingly younger, better educated, morally liberal and less religious. The Pew Research Centre found that younger individuals around the world are increasingly professing less religiosity, which is applicable to this cluster as it has the highest proportion of young people (Pew Research Centre, 2018). Studies show also that people of higher socioeconomic status (both education and income) were more likely to be morally liberal (Norton and Herek, 2013). Given that the majority of Singaporeans are religious, this cluster might encourage the emergence of contestations over certain issues pertinent to religion and the law, such as the contentious case of retaining or scrapping 377A of the Penal Code, which criminalises consensual sex between men.

Cluster 3 (n=381, which we term “Tepid Traditionals”) consists of respondents who are somewhat religious, desire some separation between religion and politics, have some confidence in state institutions, are ambivalent towards people of other religious and are morally conservative. Cluster 3 appears to be the most socially isolated cluster. It has a high proportion of the elderly, 35.3 per cent of respondents aged above 55 were likely to belong to this cluster. Cluster 3 is also the opposite of Cluster 2 in terms of socioeconomic status: it is the least educated and well-to-do cluster. Cluster 3 has the highest proportion of respondents with a ‘secondary

school and below' education level (35.1 per cent) and the highest proportion of respondents residing in 1 to 2-room flats (42.6 per cent), compared to the other three clusters. Cluster 3 also has a high proportion of Buddhist (31.1 per cent), Taoist (32.6 per cent) and Catholic (41.4 per cent) respondents. While Cluster 3 is also a religious cluster, levels of religiosity are lower in comparison to Cluster 4.

This cluster is slightly more closed-off than the others. The religiosity and moral conservatism of these "Tepid Traditionals" pits them as similar to Cluster 1. But this group is more ambivalent towards people of other religions and compared to Clusters 1 and 2, desires less state-religion separation. However, across most of the variables, this cluster appears to be relatively neutral. As this group is comprised of mostly older, less educated and less well-to-do individuals, it might explain the disinterest in most things related to the public sphere (religion's role in politics, trust in state institutions, and perception of people of other religions) while being more involved in things related to the private sphere (religiosity and moral conservatism). This group's lack of positive perceptions of people of other religions might require greater intervention at the community level.

Cluster 4 (n=308, which we term "Friendly Faithfuls") consists of respondents who are more religious, desire less state-religion separation, have a great deal of confidence in state institutions, are warm towards people of other religions and are morally conservative. Cluster 4 has the highest proportion of religious respondents, and the highest proportion of Muslims and Christians. Around 46 per cent of

Muslim and 33.8 per cent of Christian respondents were likely to belong to cluster 4. In addition, Muslim and Christian respondents constitute roughly half the cluster (55.8 per cent). Cluster 4 is relatively middle-class (in terms of housing type and education level) in comparison to clusters 2 and 3. Interestingly, despite being the most religious cluster and the cluster that desires the least state-religion separation, there is a substantial proportion of 18 to 35-year-olds in the cluster; 25.6 per cent of 18 to 35-year-olds are likely to belong to the cluster.

These “Friendly Faithfuls” appear to have a strong moral compass comprising high levels of religiosity and moral conservatism (this cluster ranks the highest across all four in religiosity), while not compromising on their involvement in civil society (they trust state institutions), and their perceptions of people of other religions. This cluster’s religiosity and moral conservatism thus do not affect their relationships with people of other religions, or their trust in state institutions. This cluster’s lack of a desire of state-religion separation compared to other clusters demonstrates that they have an opinion when it comes to politics and are politically involved or aware. However, given that this cluster is most likely to desire less state-religion separation, some might worry if these “Friendly Faithfuls” will increasingly demand for the integration of religious beliefs or religious influence in the political arena. Nevertheless considering their warmth to those of other communities, it is clear that the “Friendly Faithfuls” will not want to undermine social cohesion.

## 8. CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to provide a picture of how religious affiliations and religiosity (or lack thereof) influence Singaporeans' attitudes and perceptions in both the domestic, public and political spheres. The data is based on the Singapore sub-set of a multi-country survey conducted in late 2018 as part of the International Social Survey Program Study of Religion.

On the whole, the survey paints a favourable picture of religion in Singapore. While religious beliefs, practice and morality have considerable hold on many Singaporeans, there is also much consensus on issues relating to inter-religious harmony and the need to maintain this through state-religion separation and a disciplined religious leadership who is careful about causing offence to other faiths. This reflects the longstanding emphasis of the Singaporean state, that Singaporeans have the freedom to practise their own religion in private, but the common space should be kept secular so as to maintain social harmony in a multicultural, multiracial and multireligious country. It is evident that such beliefs have been ingrained in the majority of the population.

But, a point of concern our study has surfaced is the significant segment of the population who would allow religious extremists to post their views online or on social media. Slightly above one in four respondents would probably or definitely

allow such individuals (defined as those who believe their religion is the only true faith and people of all other religions are enemies) to publish their views on online platforms. Also, younger respondents (nearly half of those aged 18 to 25 would allow religious extremists such freedoms. Given the rise of self-radicalisation in terrorist incidents, hate speech, and Islamophobia both globally and in Singapore, it is comforting that the majority of Singaporeans would not allow religious extremists to post their views online. But the significant quarter of the population, as well as higher proportions among the young, who would permit such freedoms is worrying.

While one in four respondents would allow religious extremists the freedom to post their views online, more than 97 per cent of respondents said it would be unacceptable or very unacceptable for religious leaders to incite violence or hatred against other religions. This may reflect the fact the while Singaporeans recognise that inciting violence is a clear out-of-bounds marker when it comes to religion, there are some segments who do not have an issue with extremist views being propagated online, as long as these do not stray into the realm of instigating harm on others. However, there is a fine line between espousing extremist views that consider other religions as enemies and straying into the arena of hate speech. How the government navigates the desire by this significant segment of the population for freedom of speech pertaining to extremist views in future will be of interest.

Another point to highlight is the role of religion in encouraging Singaporeans to be more open to those from other backgrounds. Regressions showed that those from a major religious community (Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism) were less likely to be ambivalent or distant towards other religions, compared to those with no religion. Further, those who are more religious were less likely to be ambivalent towards other religions. Perhaps this has been the result of the many engagements by the state directed at religious communities urging them to be more open to those of other faiths. It may be necessary in the longer term to also find ways to engage those with no religious affiliation so more of them can develop a positive view of the many religious communities in Singapore.

However, some results in the study point to potential areas of tension that the authorities and religious leaders should keep an eye on.

First, a majority of Christians (67.6 per cent), Muslims (66.3 per cent) and Catholics (61.6 per cent) would either probably or definitely follow their religious principles rather than the law, if new legislation was passed which conflicted with their religious teachings.

Second, regressions showed that non-Muslims who dwell in private housing are slightly more likely to think that Muslims are a threat, compared to those who dwell in public housing.

Third, on the contentious issue of whether homosexual sex was acceptable or not (a topic which has garnered significant amounts of attention in social media and in the mainstream press in recent years), there was a clear divide on one end between Muslims and Christians whose views on the matter are obviously heavily influenced by their religious teachings, and those with no religion on the other. However, even within the religious communities, there were differences among the young and old. Older Christians and Muslims were much more conservative than younger Muslims and Christians.

This young-old divide can also be glimpsed in our cluster analysis, where older respondents were more likely to be “Tepid Traditionals”, and younger respondents more likely to be “Skeptic Scrappers”. One key question to answer in future will be whether young people with high religiosity (especially Muslims and Christians), who may currently be sympathetic to liberal issues such as homosexual sex, retain such views as they get older, or switch to a more conservative outlook similar to their older peers in the same religious community.

As countries around the world, especially in Southeast Asia, grapple with increasing religious fervour on one end, and rising levels of those who have no religion on the other, these issues will continue to dominate public discourse. Religion, both as part of a person's self-identity and in terms of how personal religious beliefs dictate one's attitudes towards public sphere issues, will also continue to impact citizens' relationship with others and with the state.

Further research on these topics could be of a qualitative nature, to delve further into Singaporeans' thinking on these subjects considering that they might be more nuanced and contextual in their responses compared to what can be obtained through a survey.

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