

**More S'poreans open to having non-Chinese as PM or president:
CNA-IPS study
As compared to 2016.**

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Singaporeans have become more open to the idea of a non-Chinese prime minister or president, according to findings from a study conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) and CNA.

More Singaporeans were more accepting of an Indian or Malay prime minister or president in 2021, as compared to 2016, when the first edition of the CNA-IPS Survey on Race Relations was conducted.

More acceptance for non-Chinese president than prime minister

Singaporeans are now more accepting of a Singaporean Malay for prime minister, with those responding in the affirmative increasing from 60.8 per cent in 2016 to 69.6 per cent in 2021.

Singaporeans are also more accepting of a Singaporean Indian for prime minister. Those who answered in the affirmative rose from 64.3 per cent in 2016 to 70.5 per cent in 2021.

However, a greater proportion of respondents were more accepting of a non-Chinese for president instead.

Those who are open to a Singaporean Malay president increased from 65.5 per cent in 2016 to 82.2 per cent in 2021.

Those who are more open to a Singaporean Indian president increased from 70.6 per cent in 2016 to 82 per cent in 2021.

**Table 3.41: Respondents' racial preferences in political representation
(figures in brackets are from 2016 wave)**

	Singaporean Chinese	Singaporean Malay	Singaporean Indian	New Citizen from China	New Citizen from India	New Citizen of Western origin
To be the Prime Minister of Singapore	96.8% (95.6%)	69.6% (60.8%)	70.5% (64.3%)	9.1% (6.7%)	8.6% (5.8%)	9.4% (7.1%)
To be the President of Singapore	96.1% (93.2%)	82.2% (65.5%)	82.0% (70.6%)	8.9% (5.9%)	8.6% (4.8%)	9.6% (6.5%)

via Institute of Policy Studies.

Respondents showed the highest preference for a Singaporean Chinese to occupy the positions of prime minister and president, at 96.8 per cent and 96.1 per cent respectively. These were similar to figures in 2016.

In-group preferences still strong, but more acceptance of those from a different race

Researchers also noted that Chinese, Malay and Indian respondents showed the highest preference for someone of their own race to be prime minister or president.

Chinese respondents had the highest level of in-group preference, with 98.9 per cent accepting a Chinese prime minister, but only 63.9 per cent would accept a Malay prime minister, and 65.8 per cent who would accept an Indian prime minister.

92.6 per cent of Malay respondents would accept a Malay prime minister, while 87.5 per cent would accept a Chinese prime minister and 80.4 per cent would accept an Indian one.

Indian respondents demonstrated the least in-group preference, with 91.9 per cent accepting an Indian prime minister.

Table 3.42: Racial preferences for the Prime Minister, by respondents' race (figures in brackets are from 2016 wave)

Racial group	To be the Prime Minister of Singapore					
	Singaporean Chinese	Singaporean Malay	Singaporean Indian	New Citizen from China	New Citizen from India	New Citizen of Western origin
Chinese	98.9% (98.5%)	63.9% (53.3%)	65.8% (59.5%)	8.6% (7.0%)	7.7% (5.8%)	8.5% (6.9%)
Malay	87.5% (86.2%)	92.6% (93.1%)	80.4% (74.9%)	4.6% (2.4%)	4.8% (2.2%)	6.9% (2.6%)
Indian	90.3% (87.6%)	80.8% (70.1%)	91.9% (89.1%)	12.3% (9.7%)	14.4% (10.5%)	15.0% (9.2%)
Others	100.0% (86.7%)	85.2% (80.7%)	88.9% (68.1%)	29.6% (8.7%)	29.6% (6.0%)	29.6% (24.4%)

via Institute of Policy Studies.

The researchers noted that across the three races, respondents have grown more accepting of leaders who are of a different race than themselves, when compared to 2016's figures.

Citing the findings for racial preferences for the president, they said while 73 per cent of Indians in 2016 would accept a Malay president, that proportion has now increased to 83.7 per cent.

The greatest increase was Chinese respondents' acceptance of a Malay president, which has increased from 58.8 per cent in 2016 to 79.4 per cent in 2021.

**Table 3.43: Racial preferences for the President, by respondents' race
(figures in brackets are from 2016 wave)**

Racial group	To be the President of Singapore					
	Singaporean Chinese	Singaporean Malay	Singaporean Indian	New Citizen from China	New Citizen from India	New Citizen of Western origin
Chinese	98.4% (95.8%)	79.4% (58.8%)	79.9% (67.6%)	8.5% (5.8%)	8.0% (4.8%)	9.0% (6.2%)
Malay	86.8% (84.1%)	95.9% (93.7%)	83.5% (74.5%)	4.6% (2.2%)	4.3% (1.9%)	5.6% (2.4%)
Indian	87.7% (86.7%)	83.7% (73.0%)	94.0% (91.6%)	12.1% (10.5%)	12.9% (12.1%)	13.6% (9.7%)
Others	100.0% (84.4%)	92.6% (84.3%)	96.3% (69.1%)	25.9% (7.3%)	29.6% (5.9%)	29.6% (21.8%)

via Institute of Policy Studies.

Researchers said that the rise in acceptance for a Malay president could be a result of the current president, Halimah Yacob, being a Malay, and therefore "dispelling earlier prejudices that a Malay was not suitable for the highest office of the land".

The study also found that respondents remained "very uncomfortable" with the idea of a new citizen from any country taking on the role of prime minister or president.

Researchers suggest naming minority candidate for prime minister "in the near future"

Reflecting on the results of the study, the researchers noted the possibility that the reserved Presidential Election in 2017 that saw Halimah Yacob elected as president came as an "intervention" on Singaporeans' sentiments and led to greater acceptance of other races assuming top leadership positions in the country.

The researchers then suggested that the ruling party consider naming a minority candidate as prime minister "in the near future", as this "could perhaps break barriers and further dismantle prejudices".

However, the researchers recognised that while racial representation in these positions are "crucial", preserving meritocracy was more important.

"It should therefore not lead to a minority Prime Minister being viewed as a token and subsequently not accorded the high level of support needed for his or her leadership," said the researchers.

2,007 Singaporean residents were surveyed for this study, and the responses were weighted to closely approximate the demographics of the national population.