

More S'poreans Open To A Minority PM But Chinese Still Get Most Votes: CNA Survey

Over 95% felt comfortable with a Singaporean-Chinese as PM or President.

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2021 CNA survey finds that more Singaporeans are open to having a minority PM

Despite being a racially and religiously diverse country, sentiments on such topics seem to always be in flux in Singapore.

Hence, it's important to conduct surveys from time to time to find out how residents are feeling about them.

A recent survey by Channel NewsAsia (CNA) and the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) found that more Singaporeans are now open to having a non-Chinese Prime Minister (PM) or President, compared to 5 years ago.



However, a Singaporean-Chinese candidate still gained the highest number of votes, with more than 95% of responders across all races expressing their comfort with such an appointment.

Roughly 70% of respondents open to having a minority PM

Conducted in 2021, the CNA-IPS Survey on Race Relations found that Singaporeans have become more accepting of the idea of a minority PM or President:

- Singaporean-Indian President: **82.0%** (2021), 70.6% (2016)
- Singaporean-Indian PM: **70.5%** (2021), 64.3% (2016)
- Singaporean-Malay President: **82.2%** (2021), 65.5% (2016)
- Singaporean-Malay PM: **69.6%** (2021), 60.8% (2016)

On average, 'acceptance rates' increased by about 10% across the board.

Interestingly, researchers pointed out that the differences in figures for a minority President could be larger due to "the presence of a Malay President" since 2017.

A Singaporean-Chinese candidate, however, remained the most 'acceptable' choice for such positions, with **96.8%** and **96.1%** of respondents saying they'd be comfortable with a PM and President of the race profile respectively.

Here's a breakdown of the figures compared to 2016:

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%)

Source

More young & educated respondents say racism is an important issue

While Singapore prides itself on being a multi-racial society, there has been a spate of incidents over the Covid-19 pandemic that has thrust the issue of racism into the spotlight.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, a larger proportion of respondents felt that racism remains an issue today — **56.2%** compared to 46.3% in 2016.

Respondents who expressed such sentiments were apparently younger and had higher education qualifications. The survey supposed that greater exposure to social media, where woke and cancel cultures encourage minorities to call out casual racism, influenced this.

While the majority of respondents felt that racism and discrimination will improve or remain just as prevalent moving forward, many foresee more of such attacks happening online.

Table 2.57: Respondents' views on racism and discrimination in the future

In terms of the following aspects, do you think things will improve, stay the same, or worsen in the next five years in Singapore?	Worsen	Stay the same	Improve
The prevalence of racism	8.6%	65.5%	25.9%
Online comments attacking other races	23.1%	49.7%	27.2%
Workplace discrimination based on race	9.3%	57.4%	33.4%
Housing rental discrimination based on race (e.g. certain races find it more difficult to rent a room or place)	9.4%	69.0%	21.7%

Source

Meanwhile, respondents remain divided on the existence of majority privilege in Singapore, with **53.9%** feeling that it's advantageous to be of the majority race — relatively close to the 52.7% figure from the previous survey in 2016.

Despite the concerns surrounding racism and preferential treatment, most respondents are confident in the meritocratic system in Singapore, with **more than 80%** feeling that everyone can be rich or famous regardless of their race.

Respondents likelier to perceive own community as not racist

The survey also found that respondents are more likely to perceive their family and close friends as being hardly or not racist at all. This figure has risen from 73.6% in 2016 to **83.6%** in 2021.

Respondents were also found to perceive Singaporeans of other ethnicities as being more racist than those of the same race.

For instance, **63.6%** of Chinese respondents felt that most Singaporean Chinese are hardly or not racist at all.

However, only **57.5%** and **52.8%** of Malay and Indian correspondents felt the same way about members of the Singaporean Chinese community.

This phenomenon was also observed for Singaporean Malays and Indians, albeit to lesser extents.

The full CNA-IPS Survey on Race Relations 2021 can be found [here](#).

Hope findings will be useful

Race and religion are certainly tricky topics that many may not feel comfortable speaking about in public.

As such, surveys like these are useful in giving the authorities a better sense of sentiments on the ground and how they should formulate policies moving forward.

Were any of the findings surprising to you? Let us know in the comments.