

Racial Harmony Day 2021



Official (Closed)

Recent race-related incidents

In recent months, we saw an increase in incidents of racial discrimination in Singapore. Police reports on such cases doubled from 31 to 60 in 2020. Here are some examples.

7 Feb 2020

Religious teacher under investigation by MHA, Muis for post saying novel coronavirus was retribution from Allah against Chinese

10 May 2021

'Go back, bloody Indians,' says S'porean man to expat family at Pasir Ris Beach Park

25 May 2021

'You Indians don't follow the rules': Man allegedly insists woman's baby wear a mask at Bedok Reservoir

6 Jun 2021

Man makes racist remarks to interracial couple in viral video; Shanmugam says incident is 'very worrying'

10 Jun 2021

Police investigating after woman filmed striking gong as neighbour carried out Hindu prayers at home



2 Jul 2021

Man arrested over racist remarks, attack on university student at East Coast Park

With **COVID-related misinformation on the rise**, there have been incidents of **prejudice and xenophobia** towards Chinese and Indian nationals in Singapore.

Responses to these incidents

Individuals came forward and shared their personal experiences.

Some were positive...



Vishnu M. Anandh

Another similar incident happened within a span of a few weeks. I got on another Grabcar at Orchard and yet another Grab driver who changed the station to Oli 96.8 just for me. I asked him the same question. In this case, he said he changed the station for me but he also listens to Tamil music and enjoys it. In my hurry, I forgot to screenshot and save his particulars. I hope someone is able to identify that gentleman or somehow this post reaches him. Thank you, brother! Small gestures of graciousness like yours are needed in our society, especially during times like this. I appreciate you.

... while others were negative

Hiya, I'd like to share about my mum's experience with racism + religious intolerance. My family practices Islam and we are of mixed ethnicity (Javanese, Malay, Chinese, etc).

My mum's manager, a Chinese, has always treated my mum badly for being Muslim and of Malay blood. She has mocked things like halal food when my mum told her she cannot consume non-halal chicken. "This one not pork what, why you still cannot eat??" and dismissed my mum when she tried to explain why it wasn't halal even though it wasn't pork.

Story: I worked at ocbo contact centre at 65 Chulia Street for one year. It is really normal to hear the Chinese staff using racial slur on Indian customers who call in. My colleague will shout about "stupid appunehneh" in her frustration after a difficult call with an Indian customer ends. The first time I heard it I was so shocked! However, no one raised any eyebrows so I thought maybe I was over reacting. What made it worse was that even our bosses at the contact centre use racial slurs like appunehneh too! It is common for the Chinese contact centre staff to sit down and have a racist conversation about Indian people right in front of me.

I am PROUD to say that I have since left, closed all my ocbo accounts and have no business with that bank anymore. But I do regret not standing up against those racists.

Singaporeans of all races voiced their disapproval.



Ash Deen

It's very sad to see this happening in SG. Every week there is something disheartening. I guess we need to go back to the roots of how the nation was build and how we were taught to be united. Where is the respect and humanity!

17



Rahmat Sulaiman

What happened to our tolerance and harmonious society. How can this brazen act conducted by neighbour.

1



Shanti Ctrn

Why is the skin color an issue? Isn't everyone's blood red in color

1



Steven WS Ooi

You handled that with a lot of class, Dave. You're a classy guy, I take my hat off to you and I am proud to call you my fellow Singaporean. 🙌

I think what happened stems from insecurity - the idea that an "other" is taking "our" women. It's an understandable emotion, but it has to be managed with maturity - which sadly that guy lacks.

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Open and candid discussions about race were held.



"We're always taught to be politically correct. Always taught to mince our words, maybe sugarcoat it, even so that we don't offend other people... But what is racial harmony if you don't even freaking talk about it?" – RICE video participant

MillennialMind
We need to talk about race issues

The recent racist incidents here makes me wonder: What is happening to Singapore, and will fellow Singaporeans step up or speak up if I am under threat?



Anjali Rajaraman

This post, for the first time, I think I will use an identity card...
You wrote ago, I was asked why Singaporeans get a bad rap...
It was a real life experience. Not all the racist of people in the world...
Anxiety about the fact that while being my job, I am facing these...
Anxiety that I might be the next...
This is not the Singapore I grew up...
The racist incident really, while every day there is a new incident...
I think the incident is a...
I think the incident is a...
I think the incident is a...

Responses to these incidents

Our leaders spoke out to condemn racism



Lee Hsien Loong ✓
about 2 months ago



I am very disappointed and seriously concerned that this racist attack could happen in Singapore.

I understand people being under stress because of COVID-19, and anxious about their jobs and families. But that does not justify racist attitudes and actions, much less physically abusing and assaulting someone because she belongs to a particular race, in this case Indian. The victim happens to be a Singaporean, but even had she not been one the attack would still have been wrong... [See More](#)

“Lately, several worrying incidents have given us pause to consider the state of our racial harmony...**We cannot leave things as they are. We are better than this.**”

- Mr. Lawrence Wong, Minister for Finance

Official (Closed)

Our institutions took swift action

17 Jun 2021

Ngee Ann Poly to sack lecturer in racist remark incident for serious misconduct

18 Jun 2021

Woman who made comments about race charged with public nuisance, acting against racial harmony

23 Jun 2021

Woman who shouted racist abuse on bus jailed for 4 weeks

Sources: The Straits Times, TODAY, AsiaOne

What about you?

How did you feel about the recent issues around race?

If we witness such racist acts or comments, what are some ways in which we can respond?



Racism may still exist in Singapore ...

...but we have achieved much

2019 CNA-IPS Survey

About 40% of respondents said that their close friends were “at least mildly racist”.

Around 40% of Malay respondents felt that they had been treated negatively based on religion and income/education.



The majority of Indian respondents felt they had been treated negatively based on their race (67%) and skin colour (62%).



Source: CNA-IPS Survey on Race Relations (2019), based on a sample of 2,000 respondents

2020 IPS Report on World Values Survey

Low level of perceived racism in Singapore compared to other multicultural societies.

Among the respondents:

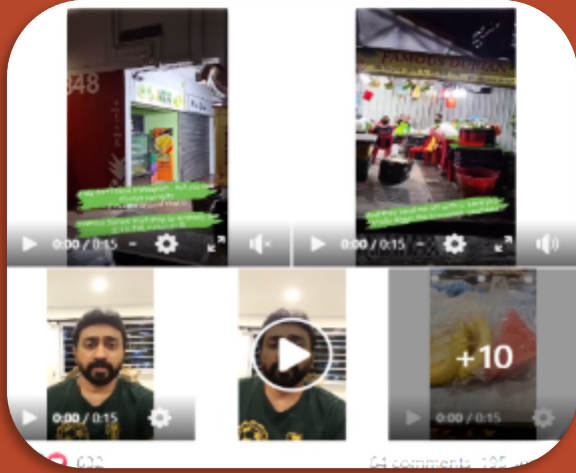
- 65.7% said that racism occurred “not at all frequently”.
- 28.7% said that racism occurred “not frequently”.



Only 5.7% of respondents said that racism “occurred frequently” in Singapore, compared to 23.5% in the US.

Source: IPS Report ‘Our Singaporean Values’ with findings from the World Values Survey (2020), based on a sample of 2,012 respondents

There are many acts of kindness, extended beyond racial lines.



← Indian Facebook user, Vishnu M. Anandh, shared his positive encounter with a Chinese fruit seller, Anthony Gan, who displayed generosity and graciousness when he did not have cash on him (2021).



← Chinese lady showed small gesture of respect to Indian neighbour's Hindu deity (2021).



← Chinese lady gave Malay neighbour Hari Raya gifts and Ang Bao (2020).



← **Project Co-Knit with Love:** Singaporeans helped to knit mask extensions for Malay women who struggled with wearing and taking off their masks with their tudungs on (2020).



← Malay father and son reciprocated by visiting the Chinese neighbour during Lunar New Year (2021).

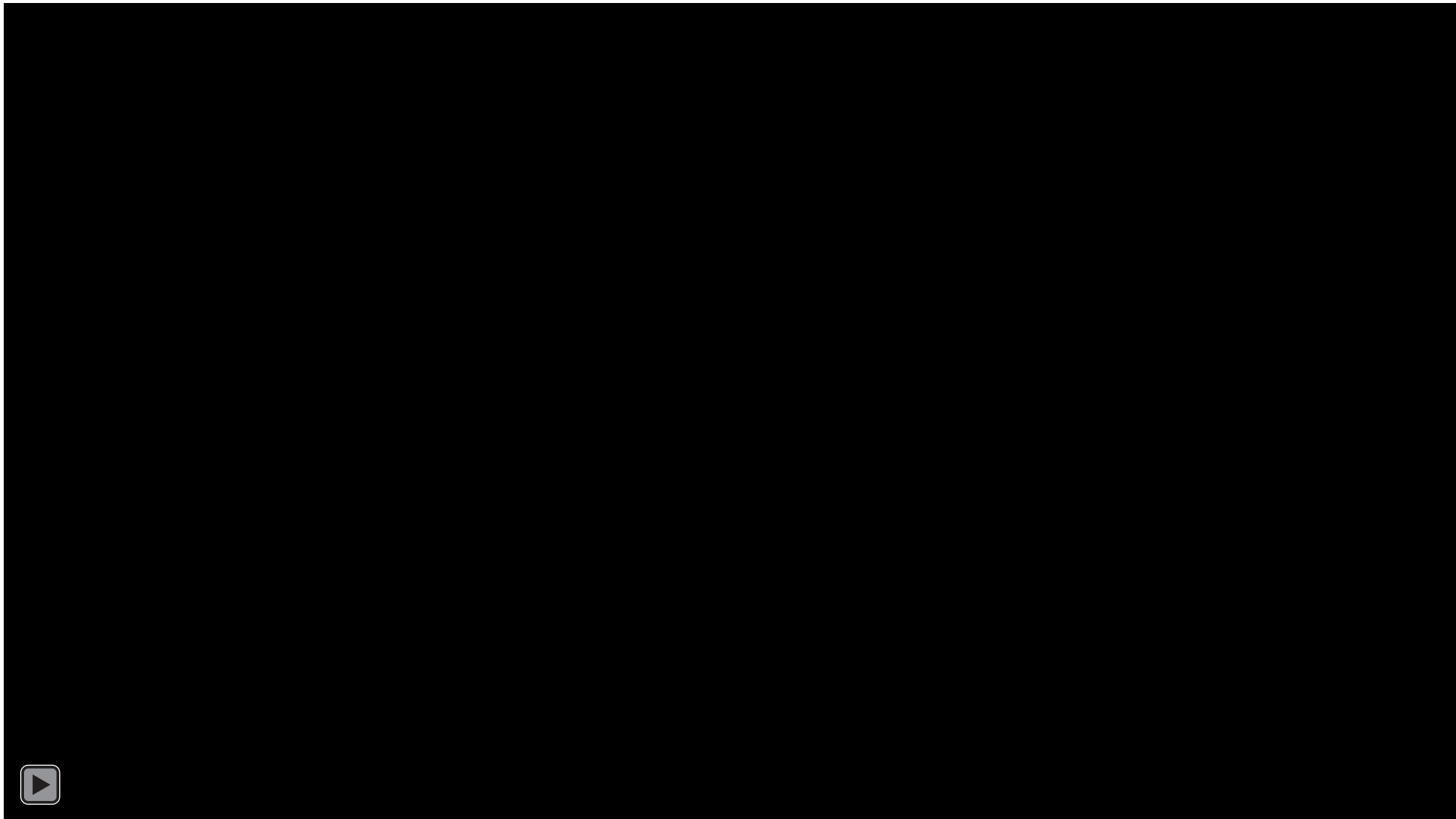
Building a multicultural society is one of our values

“ Here we make the **model multi-racial society**. This is not a country that belongs to any single community: **it belongs to all of us.** ”

– Mr. LeeKuanYew, 1965



*Our founding fathers fought for it,
so that all Singaporeans could live together
as equals, regardless of race or religion.*



Video: The Fight for Multiracialism (Produced by Nexus, 2017)

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Racial intolerance goes against our founding values

Having experienced periods of racial conflict, our **pioneer generation** hold a strong conviction about racial harmony



Over 200 pioneers were honoured at a tribute event in 2014 for their active role in **promoting racial and religious harmony** as religious leaders.

“I witnessed the 1964 riots, and I **don't want it to happen again**. Singaporeans need to know that **misunderstandings are caused by ignorance**. By understanding someone's religion and race, these things won't blow up.”

– Mr. Lionel de Souza, Secretary of Hougang's Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circle (IRCC), 2014. He is first from the right in the picture above

Our **youths** are countering hate through interfaith messages, ambassadorship, and open discussions on racial and religious issues



Since 2012, youth-led interfaith initiative Roses of Peace (ROP) has engaged **over 3,000 youth volunteers** from diverse faiths, recorded **over 4,000 "Peace Pledges"** and distributed **over 50,000 roses with interfaith messages**.



On 21 Feb every year, **21 peace ambassadors** are appointed to **build bridges between different communities** and inspire ongoing inter-racial and inter-religious initiatives on the ground.

Multiculturalism is **a part of our unity**, and is **key to our strength and resilience** as a nation

“

Every one of us – parents, educators, individuals – play a part in safeguarding the treasured and hard-earned legacy of racial harmony. ”

– Mr. Chan Chun Sing,
Minister for Education, 7 Jun 2021



“

There is nothing natural about where we are – multiracial, multi-religious, tolerant and progressive. **We made it happen, and we have got to protect it, nurture it, preserve it, and never break it.** ”

– Mr. Lee Hsien Loong,
Prime Minister, 2017

In the face of uncertainty, our **diversity** can be our **greatest strength**.

Race, and other differences, can polarise us and weaken our precious **unity**.



We must continue to **build strong bonds of trust, friendship, understanding,** and work hard to remain an inclusive society.

This is what keeps our Singapore spirit strong!

How can we better **protect multiracialism?**

Recognise that it is harder to be a minority than the majority.

Let's be sensitive towards the needs of the different communities.



See one another as partners and work together.

Treat each other with mutual trust, accommodation and compromise.

We should speak out about racial prejudices, but do in a civil way.

Learn more about one another's culture.

So we can better understand one another, and build stronger bonds.

Participate in constructive discussions on race and religion.

Voice out your concerns and suggestions, and work together to build common ground.

Let's live out our kampung spirit

“ To **live harmoniously** like in the kampung... there must be **understanding** and there must be **forgiveness.** ”



– Mr. C Kunalan, retired Singapore sprinter,
21 Jun 2021

And build “one united people, regardless of race, language or religion ”

“

Let us each be our brother's keeper, our sister's keeper and let us **move forward with a spirit of mutual respect and fellowship.** Educating each other about what matters to us, helping each other understand our different cultures, and **finding the common stake we all have in one another.** ”



– Mr Lawrence Wong, Minister for Finance
25 Jun 2021