



Singapore

KEY FACTS

Joined Commonwealth: 1965

Population: 5,412,000 (2013)

GDP p.c. growth: 3.5% p.a. 1990–2013

UN HDI 2014: World ranking 9

Official languages: English, Chinese (Mandarin), Malay, Tamil

Time: GMT plus 8 hrs

Currency: Singapore dollar (S\$)

Geography

Area: 699 sq km

Coastline: 193 km

Capital: Singapore

The name 'Singapore' derives from the Sanskrit *Singa Pura* ('City of the Lion'). Situated in South-East Asia and lying just north of the equator, the Republic of Singapore is separated from Peninsular Malaysia by the narrow Johor Straits (1-km wide), crossed by a causeway. A number of smaller islands are included within its boundaries and a few kilometres to the south are islands belonging to Indonesia.

Area: Land area 699 sq km, including 63 small islands.

Topography: The land is flat apart from low hills (highest point is Bukit Timah at 163 metres). In the north-east large areas of swamp have been reclaimed. The island is drained by a number of small streams.

Climate: A hot and humid tropical climate, without defined seasons. Heavy showers run November–January.

Environment: The most significant environmental issues are industrial pollution and seasonal smoke/haze resulting from forest fires in Indonesia; and the finite land and freshwater resources to support a very high population density.

Vegetation: Outside conservation areas, much of the natural dense forest and swamp flora have been cleared, although there is extensive planting on any spare ground in urban areas, and Singapore aims to be a 'garden city state'. To control the impact of industry and urban development, environmental regulations are strict. Forest covers three per cent of the land area and there was no significant loss of forest cover

during 1990–2012. Arable land comprises one per cent of the total land area.

Wildlife: The last tiger was shot in 1932. Most of the animals found in Singapore are confined to the rainforest area of the nature reserves and include flying lemurs, squirrels and long-tailed macaques. Despite the urbanisation of the country, there are over 300 species of bird. Some ten mammal species and 14 bird species are thought to be endangered (2014).

Main towns: Singapore City, Jurong, Bukit Panjang, Serangoon, Katong and Changi.

Transport: There are 3,425 km of roads, all paved, with 118 flyovers, the longest of which is the 2.1 km Keppel Viaduct. The 42 km Pan-Island Expressway is the country's longest road. Traffic congestion became a major problem and private traffic is rationed. A limited number of permits to put a vehicle on the public roads are auctioned every month, greatly increasing the cost of running a car. Traffic in the central business district is further discouraged by a system of tolls, policed electronically.

The Mass Rapid Transit System (MRT) connects the city with all residential areas and the international airport, serving more than 40 stations. A railway across the Straits of Johor causeway connects the island with the Peninsular Malaysian railway system and beyond to Thailand.

Singapore has an excellent harbour and is one of the world's busiest ports. It comprises six terminals, a container port and several deep-water wharves.

Changi International Airport, 20 km east of Singapore City, has three terminals; the third terminal was opened in January 2008.

Society

KEY FACTS 2013

Population per sq km: 7,742

Life expectancy: 82 years

Population: 5,412,000 (2013); 100 per cent of people live in urban areas; growth 2.5 per cent p.a. 1990–2013; birth rate 10 per 1,000 people (23 in 1970); life expectancy 82 years (69 in 1970).

The population is predominantly Chinese (77 per cent in 2000 census), with Malays constituting 14 per cent and Indians eight per



cent, and small minorities of Europeans and Eurasians.

Language: English, Chinese (Mandarin), Malay and Tamil are the four official languages. Several other Chinese dialects are spoken, the most prevalent being Hokkien, Cantonese and Teochew. Singaporeans are mostly bilingual, in a mother tongue and English (the administrative language).

Religion: Buddhists 34 per cent, Christians 17 per cent, Muslims 14 per cent, Taoists 11 per cent and Hindus five per cent (2010 census).

Health: Public spending on health was two per cent of GDP in 2012. Private health care predominates in the primary sector; 80 per cent of hospital care is through public provision. There are more than 20 hospitals, ten of which are government-run. Employees pay into a health insurance fund known as Medisave (which is part of the wider social welfare provision of the Central Provident Fund). There are three medical schools in Singapore, two located at the National University of Singapore and one at Nanyang Technological University. Infant mortality was two per 1,000 live births in 2013, the lowest rate in the Commonwealth and among the lowest in the world (31 in 1960).

Education: Public spending on education was three per cent of GDP in 2013. By the 1990s, primary education was virtually universal. There are six years of compulsory education starting at the age of six. Primary school comprises six years and secondary four, with two cycles each of two years. Secondary education is streamed at three levels, according to measured ability, leading to junior college or vocational institutions. Some 99 per cent of pupils complete primary school (2008). The school year starts in January.

The principal universities are the National University of Singapore (founded in 1905); Nanyang Technological University (1981, as Nanyang Technological Institute); Singapore Management University (2000); Singapore Institute of Technology (2009); and Singapore University of Technology and Design (inaugurated in May 2012). National University of Singapore has 36,000 students from 100 countries; Nanyang Technological University, 33,500; and Singapore Management University, some 7,200. SIM University, a private university founded in 2005, offers academic programmes aimed for working professionals. There are several other private universities, most of which are in partnership with business schools or technology institutes in Europe or the USA.

Other tertiary institutions include the National Institute of Education (founded 1950, as Teachers' Training College, becoming part of Nanyang Technological University in 1991); Singapore Polytechnic (1954); Ngee Ann Polytechnic (1963); Temasek Polytechnic (1990); Nanyang Polytechnic (1992); Institute of Technical Education (1992); and Republic Polytechnic (2002). Co-operation between industry and technological education is well developed, and retraining and education for older adults is an important goal. There is virtually no illiteracy among people aged 15–24.

Media: There are many daily newspapers, among which *The Straits Times* (founded in 1845), *The Business Times* and *Today* are in English, and all three published by Singapore Press Holdings. Other dailies are in Chinese, Tamil or Malay.

MediaCorp, owned by a state investment agency, provides public TV and radio services.

Some 98 per cent of households have TV sets (2006). There are 697 personal computers per 1,000 people (2009).

Communications: Country code 65; internet domain '.sg'. Mobile phone coverage is excellent. Internet cafes and post offices are located throughout the country.

For every 1,000 people there are 364 landlines, 1,556 mobile phone subscriptions and 730 internet users (2013).

Public holidays: New Year's Day, Labour Day (1 May), National Day (9 August) and Christmas Day.

Religious and other festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Chinese New Year (two days), Good Friday, Vesak Day (Buddha Purnima, April/May), Hari Raya Puasa (End of Ramadan), Hari Raya Haji (Feast of the Sacrifice) and Deepavali (Diwali, October/November).

Economy

KEY FACTS 2013

GNI: US\$290.8bn

GNI p.c.: US\$54,040

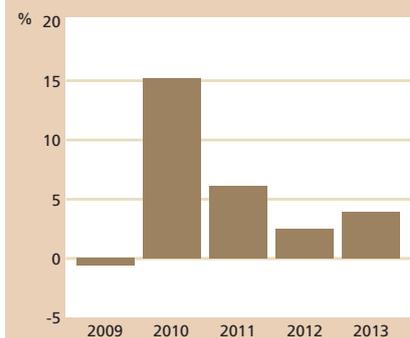
GDP growth: 5.3% p.a. 2009–13

Inflation: 3.1% p.a. 2009–13

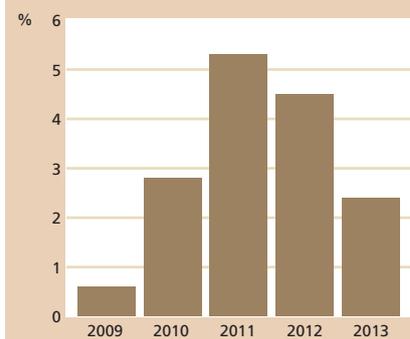
Singapore originally built its prosperity as an entrepot and as an importer of its neighbours' raw materials for processing. At independence in 1965, there was a basic electrical assembly industry and some oil refining. During the 1960s these two sectors took off rapidly. There was a huge expansion of oil refining, and in 1967, attracted by tax incentives, Texas Instruments set up a semiconductor plant. Other electronics companies soon followed, and Singapore swiftly became a world player in the electronics industry. Pharmaceuticals subsequently developed, then financial services and tourism stimulated the economy generally.

Singapore has a high level of government intervention, a strong currency, relatively low inflation, and a long track record of prudent macroeconomic management and outstanding growth. GDP grew by 6.7 per cent p.a. 1980–90 and 7.6 per cent p.a. 1990–2000. Substantial inward investment has stimulated rapid economic development and in the 1990s outward investment increased. Since the latter 1990s policy has

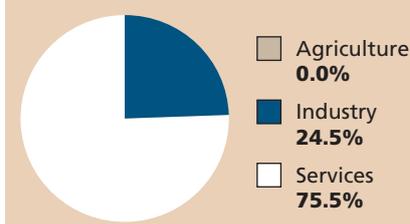
Real growth in GDP



Inflation



GDP by sector (2013)



aimed to increase the innovative, research and development aspects of electronics, biotechnology and other high-tech sectors, so that Singapore would become a centre where new ideas are born rather than one for executing them through skilled and efficient manufacturing.

In the wake of the Asian economic crisis investment and exports (but also imports) were depressed and growth fell sharply from 8.6 per cent in 1997 to -0.9 per cent in 1998, but recovered sharply in 1999–2000, when there was continued heavy investment in new infrastructure. The stock market was liberalised and banking restrictions were eased to allow more competition from foreign institutions.

But the economy plunged into recession in 2001 – shrinking by 2.3 per cent – as a result of the international downturn in information technology. It recovered quickly and returned to vigorous growth during 2004–07, averaging eight per cent p.a., before it again stalled in the world economic downturn of

Singapore on the international stage

Singapore has won the annual Commonwealth Essay Competition nine times since 1983 when it was launched, making it the overall winner so far.

Violinist Vanessa-Mae was born in Singapore in 1978. On the sporting front, Shun Xie Teo and Jasmine Ser both broke Commonwealth records for shooting at the 2014 Commonwealth Games – the former for the 10-Metre Air Pistol and the latter for the 50-Metre Rifle (three positions) event. The Singapore women's pairs team also set a new Commonwealth record in the 50-Metre Rifle (three positions) competition in 2010. Phung Kim Chua set the Commonwealth 56 kg Combined Men's Weightlifting record in 1962 when he lifted a total of 710 lbs (322 kg).

Singapore is by far the most densely populated country in the Commonwealth.

2008–09, showing growth of only 1.7 per cent in 2008 and a contraction of 0.6 per cent in 2009. But the economy bounced back in 2010, when a surge of growth in the last quarter brought the annual growth rate to 15.2 per cent, among the highest in the world for that year. It then grew more slowly 2011–15 (by 3.9 per cent in 2013 and an estimated 3.0 per cent in 2014).

History

Singapore was known to the Javanese as *Temasek* ('Sea Town') in the late 14th century CE, when Siam (Thailand) and the Majapahit Empire of Java were contending for control of the Malay Peninsula. In 1390 Prince Parameswara, in flight from Majapahit, briefly set himself up as prince of Temasek, but was driven out and fled to Malacca. In the early 1400s Temasek was ruled by Siam, but the Malacca sultanate soon took control of the island. The Portuguese took Malacca in 1511, and the Malaccan admiral established himself in Temasek, or Singapura, building a capital which he called Johor Lama.

In 1587 the Portuguese took and destroyed Johor Lama. They made another punitive expedition to Singapore in 1613, destroying a town at the river-mouth. The island, henceforth sparsely populated, remained partly the property of the Sultan of Johor, partly that of the Temenggong (the Malay ruler of the island). In 1819 these two rulers, for a financial inducement, permitted Sir Stamford Raffles, Lieutenant Governor of Bencoolen, to establish a British trading post on the island. Raffles was impressed by the magnificent harbour, and the island's suitable position for both Far East and local trade.

By 1824 Raffles's move was paying off so well that Britain bought the island from its two rulers. In 1826 it was united with Malacca and Penang as the Straits Settlements, which were made a Crown colony in 1867. In 1869 the Suez Canal was opened, increasing the amount of shipping calling at Singapore. Its prosperity increased further after the 1870s, when Malaysian rubber became one of its important exports.

From the mid-19th century, there was considerable immigration from all over the region. In the early 1920s Britain began constructing a great naval base, suitable for the biggest ships, in the Johor Straits. The base was finished in 1938. From February 1942 until August 1945 Singapore was occupied by the Japanese army. In 1946, separated from the Straits Settlements, Singapore became a colony with a provisional advisory council.

In 1955 Singapore became partially internally self-governing, with a Legislative Assembly

with 25 elected members out of a total membership of 32, and a council of ministers. A Speaker presided in the assembly. In 1959 it became a state with its own citizenship and complete internal self-government. The first Prime Minister was Lee Kuan Yew.

In September 1963 Singapore was incorporated into the Federation of Malaysia. But in August 1965 it left the Federation, by mutual agreement, after months of dispute between it and the federal government, over a variety of issues, including ethnic affairs. On 9 August 1965, Singapore became a separate independent state and joined the Commonwealth. In December 1965, it became a republic with a non-executive President.

The People's Action Party (PAP) was first elected in 1959 and was continuously in power for the rest of the century, in many elections winning every seat. In 1981 the Workers' Party (WP) won one seat in a by-election. Two opposition members were returned in the 1984 elections, one in 1988, and four in 1991.

During this period, Singapore developed a highly sophisticated economy with extensive social services and one of the world's highest rates of GNI per capita.

In 1990 Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of the PAP was succeeded by his former deputy Goh Chok Tong, who called elections in August 1991 and was returned to power, though with a reduced majority. In 1991 the presidency was made elective. Ong Teng Cheong won the first presidential election, held in 1993, and S. R. Nathan was the only candidate in the second presidential poll in August 1999.

The PAP won the general election of January 1997 taking 65 per cent of the total vote,

winning 81 seats (including all nine single-member constituencies). The Prime Minister, the two Deputy Prime Ministers, the Senior Minister (former Prime Minister Lee) and many other ministers were returned unopposed. The Singapore Democratic Party took no seats, while the Singapore People's Party held its one seat with a decreased majority. The WP held its one seat with an increased majority, and its leader was offered a non-constituency seat.

Constitution

Status: Republic

Legislature: Parliament of Singapore

Independence: 9 August 1965

Singapore is a republic and a parliamentary democracy, with an elective, non-executive presidency. The constitution came into force on 2 June 1959. It provides for a head of state, a Prime Minister and a cabinet, and a unicameral Parliament. Elections, under universal adult suffrage and compulsory voting, must be held at least every five years.

The Prime Minister is the leader of the majority party in Parliament, who chooses a cabinet from among the members of Parliament.

The Parliament is made up of three types of members: 89 elected members (76 elected in teams of between three and six to represent 16 group representation constituencies and 13 in single-member constituencies); up to nine nominated members (NMPs); and up to three non-constituency members (NCMPs) from the opposition political parties.

The President is directly elected by universal adult suffrage for a six-year term. In practice the President no longer has powers of veto over legislation or appointments. The position is largely ceremonial. The first presidential

Further information

Government of Singapore:

Elections Department:

Parliament of Singapore:

Department of Statistics:

Monetary Authority of Singapore:

Singapore Tourism Board:

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation:

Association of Southeast Asian Nations:

Commonwealth Secretariat:

Commonwealth of Nations:

Media

The Business Times:

The Straits Times:

Today:

MediaCorp Radio:

MediaCorp TV:

www.gov.sg

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www.commonwealthofnations.org/country/Singapore

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mediacorptv.sg

election was held in 1993 but, in 1999 and in 2005, when the election committee, under the very restrictive eligibility rules, found only one candidate to be eligible, there was no election.

Politics

Last elections: 11 September 2015

Next elections: 2020

Head of state: President Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam (2011–)

Head of government: Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

Ruling party: People's Action Party

Women MPs: 24%

In an early general election in November 2001, the electorate gave the People's Action Party (PAP) a decisive endorsement, when it took 82 of the 84 elective seats with 73.7 per cent of the votes. The Workers' Party (WP) and the four-party Singapore Democratic Alliance (SDA) each won one seat.

In August 2004 Goh Chok Tong was succeeded by Lee Hsien Loong, son of Lee Kuan Yew and Deputy Prime Minister since 1990.

The PAP was again returned with 82 seats in the May 2006 general election, receiving 66.6 per cent of the votes. The WP and SDA each won one seat. Opposition parties

contested 47 seats, and it was the first time more than half the seats were contested.

In the May 2011 general election the PAP won 81 seats and received 60.1 per cent of the votes. Opposition parties contested 82 seats and the WP took six. Two non-constituency seats were allocated to the WP and one to the Singapore People's Party. Turnout was 93 per cent.

In a hard-fought presidential contest, in August 2011, former Deputy Prime Minister Dr Tony Tan – with 35.2 per cent of the votes cast – defeated his three rivals; Tan Cheng Bock secured 34.9 per cent of the votes, Tan Jee Say 25.0 per cent and Tan Kin Lian 4.9 per cent. Dr Tan succeeded retiring President S. R. Nathan on 1 September 2011.

Former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew (1959–90) died on 23 March 2015.

In the general election held on 11 September 2015 the PAP decisively increased its share of the votes cast, winning 83 seats with 69.9 per cent of the votes. The WP took six seats and 12.5 per cent of the votes. Turnout was 94 per cent.

International relations

Singapore is a member of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, Association of

Southeast Asian Nations, Indian Ocean Rim Association, Non-Aligned Movement, United Nations and World Trade Organization.

Singapore hosts the headquarters of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.

Traveller information

Immigration and customs: Passports must be valid for at least six months from the date of departure. Visas are required by most Commonwealth nationals. Prohibited imports include chewing gum and cigarette lighters; and alcoholic drinks or tobacco products with 'Singapore duty not paid' on the packaging.

Travel within the country: Traffic drives on the left. Visitors can drive with a foreign driving licence for stays of up to one month. For longer visits an international driving permit is required.

Singapore has one of the most advanced metro systems in the world, the MRT. Taxis are widely available; fares are metered.

Travel health: Prevalent diseases where appropriate precautionary measures are recommended include dengue fever, hepatitis B and Japanese encephalitis.

There were 11,098,000 tourist arrivals in 2012.



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