

## Singapore



**Population:** 4,701,069  
**Population Growth Rate:** .863%  
**Birth Rate:** 8.65 births/1,000 population  
**Life Expectancy:** total population: 82.06 years; male: 79.45 years; female: 84.87 years  
**Literacy Rate:** total population: 92.5%; male: 96.6%; female: 88.6%  
**Net Migration Rate:** 4.79 migrant(s)/1,000 population  
**Unemployment Rate:** 2.3%  
**Gross Domestic Product per Capita:** \$62,200  
**Religions:** Buddhist: 42.5%, Muslim: 14.9%, Taoist: 8.5%, Hindu: 4%, Catholic: 4.8%, other Christian: 9.8%, other: 0.7%, none: 14.8%  
**Languages:** Mandarin: 35%, English: 23%, Malay: 14.1%, Hokkien: 11.4%, Cantonese: 5.7%, Teochew: 4.9%, Tamil: 3.2%, other Chinese dialects: 1.8%, other: 0.9%  
**Ethnic Groups:** Chinese: 76.8%, Malay: 13.9%, Indian: 7.9%, other: 1.4%  
**Capital:** Singapore City<sup>1</sup>

### Trafficking Routes

Singapore is a destination and transit country for trafficking in persons, mostly women and children. Singapore is primarily a destination country for labor and sex trafficking,<sup>2</sup> particularly from the Philippines<sup>3</sup> as well as Thailand, Indonesia<sup>4</sup> and Nepal.<sup>5</sup>

Singapore is also a source country for trafficking for the purposes of child sex tourism to Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> CIA, THE WORLD FACTBOOK 2010-Singapore( Jan.12, 2011), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/SN.html>.

<sup>2</sup>Jacqueline Joudo Larsen, *Migration and People Trafficking in Southeast Asia*, TRENDS & ISSUES IN CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE NO. 401, available at <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/tandi/401-420/tandi401.aspx> ; See also *Human trafficking is more than sexual exploitation: Experts*, TODAY ONLINE: SINGAPORE (Nov. 29, 2010), <http://www.todayonline.com/Singapore/EDC101129-0000026/Human-trafficking-is-more-than-sexual-exploitation--Experts>.

<sup>3</sup> *Trafficking of Filipinas in Singapore*, HUMANTRAFFICKING.ORG ONLINE DATABASE (June 3, 2008), <http://www.humantrafficking.org/updates/772> (“*Trafficking of Filipinas*”). See also *Trafficking of Filipinas in Singapore at all-time high: report*, EARTH TIMES (Feb. 4, 2008), <http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/news/182514.trafficking-of-filipinas-in-singapore-at-all-time-high-report.html#> (“*Trafficking of Filipinas...at all time high*”).

<sup>4</sup> Larsen.

<sup>5</sup> *China emerging new hub of trafficking Nepali girls*, REPÚBLICA (Jan. 26, 2011), available at [http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news\\_details&news\\_id=27575](http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=27575).

Singapore also acts as a transit country for children from Indonesia, trafficked for the purpose of forced labor.<sup>7</sup>

## Factors That Contribute to the Human Trafficking Infrastructure

Trafficking in persons in Southeast Asia is strongly fueled by criminal networks that are also involved in the trafficking of narcotics, document fraud, money laundering, arms smuggling and other transnational crimes.<sup>8</sup> Organized criminals in Singapore lure women there for prostitution. For example, one syndicate is believed to have a network of recruiters and runners in the Philippines and Singapore. The organization recruits young Filipinas with no other means to earn a living. Once brought to Singapore, prostitution becomes their only option.<sup>9</sup>

Prostitution is legal in Singapore, but soliciting is not<sup>10</sup> This makes Singapore an easy destination country for traffickers.

Geographically, Singapore's juxtaposition in the center of Southeast Asia makes it an easy hub for trafficking transit,<sup>11</sup> while low-cost airlines make the journey an inexpensive one.<sup>12</sup> In addition, women can enter the city-state "without a visa on cheap flights."<sup>13</sup>

## Forms of Trafficking

Many women voluntarily leave their home countries to enter into Singapore in hopes of working as domestic servants or in the commercial sex industry. However, upon arrival, many are sold into debt bondage or slavery.<sup>14</sup> Some women voluntarily migrate to Singapore to become what they believe will be entertainers at bars and restaurants, but are later trafficked into the industry. Some that migrate willingly to become prostitutes are coerced into sexual servitude.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Creating a United Front against the Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism*, END CHILD PROSTITUTION, CHILD PORNOGRAPHY AND TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN FOR SEXUAL PURPOSES (ECPAT) INTERNATIONAL (2009), <http://www.ecpat.net/EI/Publications/Journals/ECPATJournalJune2009.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> *Trafficking of Filipinas*.

<sup>8</sup> *Bali Ministerial Conference on people Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crimes, Co-Chairs' Statement*, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF JAPAN (2011), [http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/i\\_crime/people/conf0202.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/i_crime/people/conf0202.html).

<sup>9</sup> *Women Trafficked to Singapore Lured into Prostitution*, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE (Sept. 1, 2008), available at [http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5gmnM4mWGOx52EtIANioroCZ5u4\\_Q](http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5gmnM4mWGOx52EtIANioroCZ5u4_Q) ("Women Trafficked to Singapore").

<sup>10</sup> *100 Countries and Their Prostitution Policies*, PROCON.ORG, <http://prostitution.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=000772#singapore> (last visited Feb. 1, 2011) (quoting from *Singapore May Raise Minimum Prostitution Age to 18*, AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE (Oct. 4, 2005)). See also *Female escorts hope Singapore race will boost business*, Reuters (Sept. 23, 2009), <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2009/09/23/us-singapore-bargirls-idUKTRE58M1AD20090923> ("Prostitution is legal in Singapore, but the law bans soliciting of sex and penalizes those who live on the earnings of prostitutes.")

<sup>11</sup> *Nabbed at NAIA: 3 Pinays hid papers in underwear and "acted strange"*, GMA NEWS (Nov. 11, 2010), <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/205677/nabbed-at-naia-3-pinays-hid-papers-in-underwear-and-acted-strange>.

<sup>12</sup> *Trafficking of Filipinas...at all time high*.

<sup>13</sup> *Women Trafficked to Singapore*.

<sup>14</sup> *Id*; See also

*Trafficking of Filipinas...at all time high*

<sup>15</sup> *Women Trafficked to Singapore*.

Some people are trafficked into Singapore for forced labor, specifically females forced into slavery as domestic servants.<sup>16</sup> These women learn of potential employment opportunities from false recruiters, only to arrive and find themselves exploited for commercial sex purposes.<sup>17</sup>

Reports have been made about foreign brides from less-developed countries, who have no legal status in Singapore, with little contact outside the home. These women from Thailand, India, China, Indonesia, and the Philippines are highly vulnerable to exploitation.<sup>18</sup>

## Government Responses

The laws that govern trafficking and prostitution in Singapore are the Children and Young Persons Act,<sup>19</sup> the Women's Charter,<sup>20</sup> the penal code,<sup>21</sup> and the Immigration Act.<sup>22</sup>

Under the Children and Young Persons Act, any person who contributes to the delinquency of a child or a young person commits an offense and is subject to punishment by a fine, imprisonment for up to 12 months, or both.<sup>23</sup> The act criminalizes the sexual exploitation of a child or a young person and imposes a punishment of a fine plus imprisonment for up to two years, and up to four years for repeat offenders.<sup>24</sup>

The Children and Young Persons Act restricts the participation of children and young people in public entertainment that is immoral or prejudicial to their health and physical fitness.<sup>25</sup> The act punishes any person who causes, procures, or allows a child to participate in such activities by a fine, imprisonment for up to 12 months, or both.<sup>26</sup>

Trafficking in children is an offense under the Children and Young Persons Act.<sup>27</sup> Anyone who participates in transferring or conferring the possession, custody, or control of a child for "any valuable consideration" is subject to punishment by imprisonment for up to four years.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, anyone who brings or assists in bringing a child into Singapore under false pretenses, false representation, or fraudulent means is subject to punishment by a fine, imprisonment for up to four years, or both.<sup>29</sup>

The Women's Charter prohibits selling, buying, or obtaining possession of any woman or girl for the purpose of prostitution either inside or outside the country.<sup>30</sup> Punishment for the offense is a fine and imprisonment for up to five years.<sup>31</sup> The charter explicitly prohibits "[t]raffic

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<sup>16</sup> *Trafficking of Filipinas in Singapore "unabated"*—Embassy: US To Help Curb Transnational Crime, INQUIRER (Apr. 28, 2008), available at <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/news/breakingnews/view/20080428-133194/Trafficking-of-Filipinas-in-Singapore-unabated--embassy>.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> Larsen.

<sup>19</sup> Children and Young Persons Act of Singapore, Act 1 of 1993, chapter 38.

<sup>20</sup> The Women's Charter of Singapore, Ordinance 18 of 1961, chapter 353.

<sup>21</sup> "Clearinghouse Countries: Singapore" *The Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth, and Family Policies*. Act 4 of 1871 (as revised in 1985), chapter 224, available at <http://www.childpolicyintl.org/countries/Singapore.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Immigration Act of 2004, Act 12 of 1959, chapter 133.

<sup>23</sup> Children and Young Persons Act of Singapore, Part II, Article 6.

<sup>24</sup> Children and Young Persons Act of Singapore, Part II, article 7.

<sup>25</sup> The Children and Young Persons Act of 1993, Part II, Article 11(1).

<sup>26</sup> The Children and Young Persons Act of 1993, Part II, Article 11(2).

<sup>27</sup> The Children and Young Persons Act of 1993, Part II, Articles 12,13.

<sup>28</sup> The Children and Young Persons Act of 1993, Part II, Article 12(1).

<sup>29</sup> The Children and Young Persons Act of 1993, Part II, Article 13.

<sup>30</sup> The Women's Charter of 1961, Part XI, Section 140(1)(a).

<sup>31</sup> The Women's Charter of 1961, Part XI, Section 140(1).

in women and girls”<sup>32</sup> and allows for the relocation of women and girls in danger to a place of safety.<sup>33</sup> The importation of women and girls for the purpose of prostitution by false pretense, false representation, or fraudulent or deceitful means is explicitly prohibited by the charter.<sup>34</sup>

In addition, the Women’s Charter forbids keeping or managing a brothel.<sup>35</sup> Punishment is a fine, imprisonment for up to three years, or both.<sup>36</sup> As to sexual relations with a minor, the charter provides several stipulations. Having unlawful carnal connections with any girl under 16 years of age is<sup>37</sup> an offense punishable by a fine and up to five years of imprisonment.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, owners may not allow a girl under the age of 16 to use his or her premises for unlawful sexual intercourse, and this offense is punishable by a fine, imprisonment for up to three years, or both.<sup>39</sup> Encouraging the prostitution of a girl under 16 years of age is also a criminal offense, punishable with a fine, imprisonment for up to three years, or both.<sup>40</sup>

The penal code also prohibits kidnapping, abduction, forced labor, and slavery.<sup>41</sup>

Importing a woman into Singapore by false pretenses, false representation, or fraud for the purpose of prostitution is a crime punishable by imprisonment for up to 10 years and a fine.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, the penal code punishes the crime of forging documents<sup>43</sup> by imprisonment for up to two years, a fine, or both.<sup>44</sup>

In 2007, the penal code was updated to deal with the transnational scale of human trafficking. To reduce trafficking, the penal code was expanded to forbid commercial sex with a minor, outlaw commercial sex with a minor under the age of 18 outside of Singapore, and outlaw the sexual penetration of a minor under the age of 16.<sup>45</sup> The penal code was also revised to attempt to counter the negative influence of the Internet by clearly forbidding the “grooming” of any individual for pornography or future commercial sex work.<sup>46</sup> The expanded penal code is intended to conquer the transnational issues surrounding human trafficking as well as deal with the issue of Singaporean sex tourists themselves.<sup>47</sup>

The Immigration Act provides that a person is to be considered a prohibited immigrant if he or she is in prostitution, is living on or receiving the proceeds of prostitution, or did so prior to entering the country.<sup>48</sup> The act also considers a prohibited immigrant to be any person who procures or attempts to bring into Singapore women or girls for the purpose of prostitution or for other immoral purposes.<sup>49</sup> A prohibited immigrant is to be removed from Singapore.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> The Women’s Charter of 1961, Part XI, Section 141.

<sup>33</sup> The Women’s Charter of 1961, Part XI, Sections 160–165.

<sup>34</sup> The Women’s Charter of 1961, Part XI, Section 142.

<sup>35</sup> The Women’s Charter of 1961, Part XI, Section 148(1).

<sup>36</sup> The Women’s Charter of 1961, Part XI, Section 148(5).

<sup>37</sup> The Women’s Charter of 1961, Part XI, Section 140(1)(i).

<sup>38</sup> The Women’s Charter of 1961, Part XI, Section 140(1).

<sup>39</sup> The Women’s Charter of 1961, Part XI, Section 143.

<sup>40</sup> The Women’s Charter of 1961, Part XI, Section 145(1).

<sup>41</sup> Penal Code of 1955, Chapter XVI, section 359; Section 362; Section 363; Section 370; Section 371; Section 374; Article 10.

<sup>42</sup> Penal Code of 1955, Section 373A.

<sup>43</sup> Penal Code of 1955, Section 463.

<sup>44</sup> Penal Code of 1955, Section 465.

<sup>45</sup> Penal Code of 1955 (amended in 2007), Section 376B, C, and D.

<sup>46</sup> Penal Code of 1955 (amended in 2007), Section 376 D.

<sup>47</sup> “Penal Amendment Bill Hearing,” 22 October 2007.

<sup>48</sup> Immigration Act of 2004, Section 8(3)(e).

<sup>49</sup> Immigration Act of 2004, Section 8(3)(f).

<sup>50</sup> Immigration Act of 2004, Section 31.

The Immigration and Checkpoints Authority works on the prevention of and protection from trafficking. The Criminal Justice Division prosecutes traffickers in Singapore.<sup>51</sup> Legally, Singapore does not consider anyone who enters the country willingly to be a victim of trafficking, even if he or she enters under false pretenses.<sup>52</sup> The government requires victims to remain in the country in order to prosecute and convict the traffickers, but does not provide any assistance to the victims.<sup>53</sup> As a result, many victims cannot afford to live unsupported, without working, for those months.

## **Nongovernmental and International Organizations' Responses**

The government funds most nongovernmental organization (NGO) initiatives in anti-trafficking efforts. The main NGOs are the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE), Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME), and Tabitha Foundation Singapore.<sup>54</sup>

AWARE offers legal advice and personal counseling to women in need. The group promotes gender equality and works to encourage women to better their own situations.<sup>55</sup>

HOME works closely with government agencies such as the Ministry of Manpower, the Singapore Immigration Checkpoint Authority, the Singapore Police Force, and the Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports to aid trafficking victims.<sup>56</sup> In cooperation with these government agencies, HOME serves as a legal advocate for abused and exploited migrants and victims in dire employment circumstances.<sup>57</sup>

## **Multilateral Initiatives**

In 2007, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union began to take steps to cooperate closely on human trafficking.<sup>58</sup> The ASEAN and EU foreign ministers adopted the Nuremberg Declaration on Enhanced Partnership, calling for closer cooperation in all spheres.<sup>59</sup> Many NGOs are encouraging these inter-governmental organizations to create a body to protect migrant workers in hopes this will encourage workers to report abuse to authorities, curbing the influence of human trafficking.

The ASEAN countries also hope to create a more cohesive region through greater cooperation.<sup>60</sup> In 2008, the countries met for a counterterrorism group and discussed creating a

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<sup>51</sup> *Singapore, Government Agencies*, HUMAN TRAFFICKING.ORG (Sept.2004), [http://www.humantrafficking.org/countries/singapore/government\\_agencies](http://www.humantrafficking.org/countries/singapore/government_agencies)

<sup>52</sup> Larsen.

<sup>53</sup> *Singapore: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR (Mar. 8, 2006).

<sup>54</sup> *Singapore, Non-Governmental Organizations*, HUMANTRAFFICKING.ORG, <http://www.humantrafficking.org/countries/singapore/ngos>.

<sup>55</sup> *History & Achievements*, AWARE SINGAPORE, <http://www.aware.org.sg/about/history-achievements/>.

<sup>56</sup> *H.O.M.E.*, HUMANTRAFFICKING.ORG, <http://www.humantrafficking.org/organizations/449>.

<sup>57</sup> *Id.*

<sup>58</sup> *EU and ASEAN Join Hands to Fight Trafficking*, HUMANTRAFFICKING.ORG ONLINE DATABASE (Apr. 4. 2007), <http://www.humantrafficking.org/updates/551>.

<sup>59</sup> *Id.*

<sup>60</sup> *Human Rights: Asean Urged to Speed Up; Civil Society Organizations Urge Leaders to Hasten Creation of Body to Protect Migrant Workers, Vulnerable Groups*, THE STRAITS TIMES, (Oct. 29, 2007).

body to fight trafficking.<sup>61</sup> The countries all agreed that unity was imperative in the fight against trafficking.

Singapore has not yet signed the Palermo Protocol on human trafficking, but has signed the U.N. Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Indonesia: Asean counter-terrorism meeting for Semarang*, THE JAKARTA POST, (Feb. 15, 2008).

<sup>62</sup> *Poverty at the Heart of the Problem*, STRAITS TIMES, (June 19, 2008).