

PERCEPTIONS OF RESIDENTS IN REGIONAL CITIES ON SINGAPORE'S CRIME SITUATION AND LAW 2024

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Abstract

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had commissioned a survey in 2024 to understand the perceptions of residents in regional cities on Singapore's crime situation and laws. This is the second run of the survey; the first run was conducted in 2018. The survey found that the majority of respondents continued to: (a) perceive Singapore to be safe; (b) be aware of laws against serious crimes in Singapore, including the use of the death penalty; (c) believe that Singapore's strict laws and effective law enforcement deter people from committing serious crimes; (d) believe that the use of the death penalty in Singapore deters the trafficking of drugs specifically and the commission of serious crimes in general, and is a more effective deterrent than life imprisonment; and (e) believe that Singapore's criminal justice system is fair.

Background

1. MHA is strongly committed to maintaining Singapore's safety and security, which includes ensuring that travellers to Singapore enjoy a safe experience, and that those with ill intent are deterred from committing crimes while they are in Singapore. To identify areas for improvement, it is important for MHA to understand the perceptions of foreign travellers on Singapore's safety and security situation, our criminal laws, and the fairness of our criminal justice system. To this end, MHA commissioned a survey in 2018 to understand regional residents' awareness of Singapore's laws, as well as their perceptions of crime, safety, and security in Singapore. The 2018 report can be accessed [here](#).
2. MHA conducted the survey again in 2024 as part of our continued efforts to have a better understanding of the perceptions of residents in regional cities in these areas.

Survey Methodology

Participants

3. A survey company was appointed to conduct an online survey of 12,000 residents from 6 regional cities (i.e., 2,000 respondents from each city), aged 20 to 64. The 6 regional cities were selected because there were significant numbers of visitors from these cities who had visited Singapore in recent years. Quota controls were put in place to ensure that the survey sample was representative of the respective cities' population by sex and age (refer to

Appendix 1 for demographic characteristics of the sample by sex and age). The fieldwork took place between September and November 2024. Respondents were assured by the survey company that their responses would be kept anonymous.

Questionnaire Design

4. The respondents were asked questions regarding Singapore under the following categories:
 - a) Perceptions of Safety and Security
 - b) Awareness of Safety, Laws and Crime
 - c) Perceptions of Law and Crime
 - d) Perceptions of Law Enforcement Officers
5. The response options for the questions in the first section that asked the respondents about their awareness of Singapore's safety, laws and crime were dichotomous (i.e., "Yes"/"No" response options). For most of the remaining questions, respondents were provided with an attitudinal statement on a particular aspect of safety, laws and crime, and asked to indicate their position on the statement using a 5-point rating scale: "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Neutral", "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree".
6. The questions that were asked in the 2018 survey were retained, with some changes to the phrasing of selected questions for greater clarity. Several new questions were added to the 2024 survey to enable the Ministry to better understand the perceptions of regional residents on Singapore's laws and criminal justice system.
7. The questionnaire was prepared in English and translated by the survey company into the native languages of the six regional cities. The translated questionnaires were then vetted by a third-party vendor to ensure accuracy. Respondents could participate in the online poll in either their native language or English.

Data Collection and Quality Assurance

8. Various quality assurance measures were implemented to ensure the quality of the collected data. For example, a pilot survey was conducted with 20 respondents from each of the 6 cities (i.e., 120 respondents in total) prior to the start of the fieldwork to test whether the respondents were able to understand the survey questions easily and that the sequencing of the questions was logical.
9. The overall survey findings were weighted to follow the sex and age profile to ensure representativeness at the city level.
10. Random checks were conducted with at least 20% of the respondents in each city by the vendor to verify their participation and their responses in the survey. Additional logic checks were conducted on all responses to ensure data quality.

Methodological Differences from the Previous Survey

11. Several methodological enhancements were made to the 2024 survey as compared to the previous survey in 2018:

- a) **Mode** – The 2024 survey was conducted using an online poll instead of a telephone survey, which was the mode used in the previous survey, to ensure greater consistency in the administration of the survey questionnaire across respondents in the same city.
- b) **Age Range** – The age range for the respondent pool was expanded from 20 – 39 years in the previous survey to 20 – 64 years to ensure greater representativeness of regional residents.
- c) **Sample Size** – The sample size was increased to 2,000 per city from the 1,200 per city in the 2018 survey.

12. Given the various methodological changes, not all the findings from the 2024 survey may be directly comparable with those from the 2018 survey. Nevertheless, overall, both surveys showed that the large majority of respondents perceive Singapore to be safe, are aware of Singapore’s laws, and believe that Singapore’s laws and law enforcement system, including the use of death penalty, are effective in deterring serious crimes such as drug trafficking.

Key Findings from the 2024 Survey

Perceptions of Safety and Security

13. Respondents generally perceived Singapore to be a safe country (Exhibit 1). The majority of respondents indicated that they felt safe if/when they travelled in Singapore (82.3%) and trusted the law enforcement officers in Singapore to keep them safe (87.3%).

Exhibit 1: Perceptions of Singapore’s Safety and Security

Question	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about safety in Singapore? Please select one option per statement (i.e., Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree or Strongly Disagree)			
I feel safe if/when I travel in Singapore	82.3%	15.1%	2.6%
I trust the law enforcement officers (e.g., Police, Narcotics, Immigration) in Singapore to keep me safe if/when I am in Singapore	87.3%	11.3%	1.3%

Notes:

(1) Survey weights were included in the above calculations. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Awareness of Safety, Laws and Crime

14. There was high awareness of laws against serious crimes in Singapore among residents in regional cities (Exhibit 2). The majority of respondents were aware that drug consumption

(95.0%) and drug trafficking (95.2%) are crimes in Singapore, and that people could receive the death penalty for trafficking a substantial amount of drugs (86.8%) and committing serious crimes in general (85.6%). A large proportion of the respondents were also aware that over the past year preceding the survey, there were executions carried out in Singapore for offences that involved the trafficking of a substantial amount of drugs (75.6%).

Exhibit 2: Awareness about Singapore's Safety, Laws and Penalties for Committing Crimes

Question	Yes	No
The following statements are about Singapore's safety, laws and their penalties for committing crime.		
Please indicate your awareness for the following statements.		
I am aware that drug consumption is a crime in Singapore	95.0%	5.0%
I am aware that drug trafficking (e.g., selling drugs, transporting drugs for the purpose of selling) is a crime in Singapore	95.2%	4.8%
I am aware that people can receive the death penalty for trafficking a substantial amount of drugs in Singapore	86.8%	13.2%
I am aware that people can receive the death penalty for committing serious crimes (e.g., intentional murder, smuggling firearms) in Singapore	85.6%	14.4%
[New] I am aware that over the past year, there have been executions carried out in Singapore for offences that involved trafficking a substantial amount of drugs into Singapore	75.6%	24.4%

Note:

(1) Survey weights were included in the above calculations. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Perceptions of Law and Crime, as well as Law Enforcement Officers

15. Respondents were asked about their perceptions of law and crime in Singapore, as well as Singapore's law enforcement officers ([Exhibit 3](#)). The majority believed that Singapore's laws are strict (89.6%), that the strict laws have been effective in preventing crime (88.6%), and that people would hesitate before committing crimes in Singapore due to these strict laws (84.7%).
16. The majority of respondents believed that law enforcement officers in Singapore are effective in catching people who have committed crimes (86.8%), and that people would likely be caught if they committed a crime (87.9%), consumed drugs (86.4%) or got involved in drug trafficking activities (89.6%) in Singapore. Most respondents also believed that people would likely be punished if they were caught for committing a crime (90.3%), consuming drugs (88.2%) or being involved in drug trafficking activities (91.0%) in Singapore.

Exhibit 3: Perceptions of Singapore's Laws and their Deterrent Effect on Crime, and the Effectiveness of Singapore's Law Enforcement Efforts

Question	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Singapore's laws and their penalties for committing crime?			

Please select one option per statement (i.e., Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree or Strongly Disagree)			
I believe that the laws against crime in Singapore are strict	89.6%	8.0%	2.4%
I believe that Singapore's strict laws have been effective in preventing crime	88.6%	9.6%	1.8%
I believe that people will hesitate against committing a crime in Singapore, given its strict laws	84.7%	12.3%	3.0%
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the law enforcement in Singapore? Please select one option per statement (i.e., Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree or Strongly Disagree)			
I believe the law enforcement officers (e.g., Police, Narcotics, Immigration) in Singapore are effective in catching people who commit crimes	86.8%	11.7%	1.5%
I believe people will likely be caught if they committed a crime in Singapore	87.9%	10.7%	1.3%
I believe people will likely be caught if they consumed drugs in Singapore	86.4%	12.0%	1.6%
I believe people will likely be caught if they got involved in drug trafficking activities in Singapore	89.6%	9.0%	1.4%
I believe people will likely be punished if they were caught for committing a crime in Singapore	90.3%	8.3%	1.4%
I believe people will likely be punished if they were caught for consuming drugs in Singapore	88.2%	10.4%	1.4%
I believe people will likely be punished if they were caught for being involved in drug trafficking activities in Singapore	91.0%	7.8%	1.2%

Notes:

(1) Survey weights were included in the above calculations. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

17. Respondents were also asked about their perception of the deterrent effect of the death penalty (Exhibit 4). In line with the findings above, the majority of respondents believed that the death penalty deters serious crimes in general from being committed in Singapore (83.9%), as well as the trafficking of drugs into Singapore (84.2%). Most regional respondents also believed that the executions of drug traffickers in Singapore over the past year preceding the survey had deterred people from trafficking substantial amounts of drugs into Singapore (82.1%). In addition, a large proportion of respondents believed that the death penalty is a more effective deterrent than life imprisonment in discouraging people from committing serious crimes in general (81.0%) and trafficking drugs into Singapore (82.5%).

Exhibit 4: Perceptions of the Deterrent Effect of the Death Penalty

Question	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
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To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Singapore's laws and their penalties for committing crime? Please select one option per statement (i.e., Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree or Strongly Disagree)			
I believe that the death penalty deters people from committing serious crimes (e.g., intentional murder, smuggling firearms) in Singapore	83.9%	13.2%	2.9%
I believe that the death penalty deters people from trafficking substantial amounts of drugs into Singapore	84.2%	12.8%	3.0%
[New] I believe that the executions of drug traffickers in Singapore over the past year have deterred people from trafficking substantial amounts of drugs into Singapore	82.1%	15.5%	2.4%
I believe that compared to life imprisonment, the death penalty is more effective in discouraging people from committing serious crimes (e.g., intentional murder, smuggling firearms) in Singapore	81.0%	15.1%	3.9%
I believe that compared to life imprisonment, the death penalty is more effective in discouraging people from trafficking a substantial amount of drugs into Singapore	82.5%	14.1%	3.4%

Notes:

(1) Survey weights were included in the above calculations. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

18. Respondents were also asked about their perceptions of the fairness of the Singapore criminal justice system and Singapore Courts ([Exhibit 5](#)). The majority indicated that they believed that the criminal justice system in Singapore is fair to all (79.4%) and that the Singapore Courts act fairly (80.4%).

Exhibit 5: Perceptions of Singapore's Criminal Justice System and Courts

Question	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Singapore's laws and their penalties for committing crime? Please select one option per statement (i.e., Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree or Strongly Disagree)			
[New] I believe that the criminal justice system in Singapore is fair to all	79.4%	18.6%	2.0%
[New] I believe that the Singapore Courts act fairly	80.4%	17.9%	1.7%

Notes:

(1) Survey weights were included in the above calculations. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Conclusion

19. Overall, the findings from MHA's 2024 survey on the perceptions of residents in regional cities on Singapore's crime situation and laws found that most regional residents continued to have favourable perceptions of Singapore's safety and security, and the effectiveness of Singapore's

laws, law enforcement officers and law enforcement system. In particular, awareness of crimes and laws in Singapore is generally high and the majority of respondents believed that Singapore's strict laws have been effective in preventing crime. Most respondents also believed that the death penalty deters serious crimes, including trafficking of drugs, from being committed in Singapore, and is a more effective deterrent as compared to life imprisonment. Furthermore, residents in regional cities were confident in the integrity of Singapore's law enforcement system, with the majority of respondents believing that Singapore's criminal justice system is fair to all, and that the Singapore Courts act fairly.

APPENDIX 1 – Demographic Characteristics of Survey Sample by Sex and Age

Demographics of respondents		Percentage (%) of respondents
Sex	Male	49.3
	Female	50.7
Age	20 - 29 Years	30.6
	30 - 39 Years	29.3
	40 - 49 Years	26.9
	50 - 59 Years	10.9
	60 - 64 Years	2.3

Note:

(1) Survey weights were included in the above calculations.