

Social Institutions and Gender Index

Singapore

SIGI Country Profile

19 of March 2024

SIGI Country Profiles are produced by the OECD Development Centre

The information and analysis contained in this profile are based on data from the fifth edition of the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) published in March 2023. The cut-off date for legal data is 31 August 2022; the cut-off date for quantitative data is 1 January 2023.

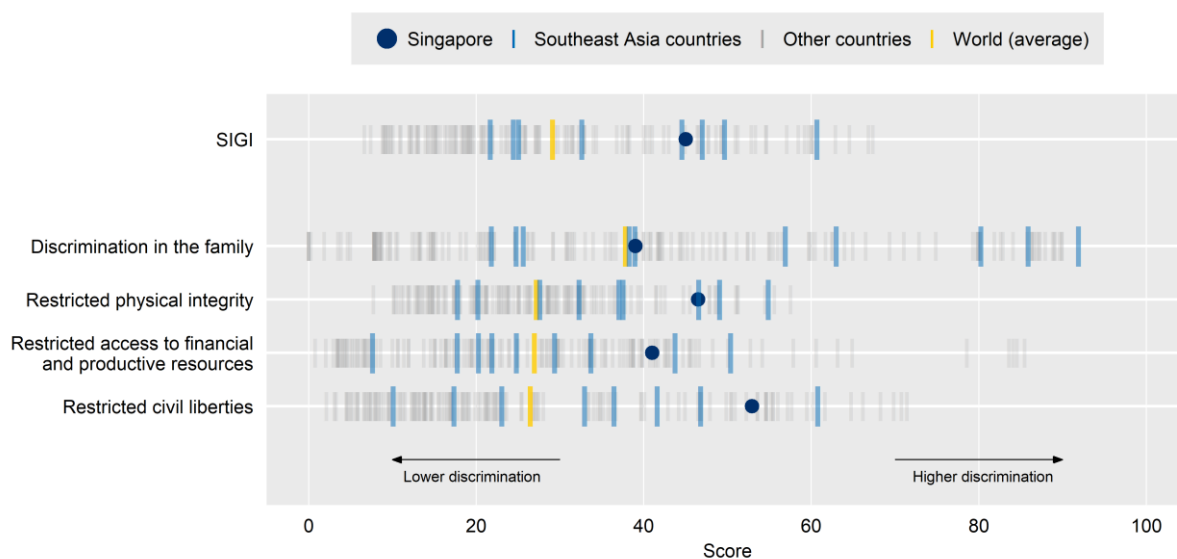
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Social institutions in Singapore

The state of gender equality in Singapore

The SIGI 2023 profile for Singapore provides a comprehensive overview of the state of gender equality in the country, as measured by the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI). The fifth edition of the SIGI, released in 2023, assesses 140 countries based on the level of gender-based discrimination in their social institutions. These discriminatory social institutions encompass both formal and informal laws, as well as social norms and practices that restrict women's and girls' access to rights, justice, empowerment opportunities and resources, thereby undermining their agency and authority.

Figure 1. SIGI and dimension scores for Singapore, 2023



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The Southeast Asia region covers Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

Source: OECD (2023), "Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)", *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), <https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en>.

In 2023, Singapore obtained a a SIGI score of 45 denoting high levels of discrimination, compared to an average score of 39 in Southeast Asia, denoting medium levels of discrimination, and a world average score of 29 (Figure 1).¹ The country obtained a score of 53 in the "Restricted civil liberties" dimension,

¹ Levels of discrimination in the SIGI and its dimensions are assessed based on scores as follow: very low [0-20]; low [20-30]; medium [30-40]; high [40-50]; and very high [50-100].

followed by “Restricted physical integrity” (46), “Restricted access to productive and financial resources” (41) and “Discrimination in the family” (39).

Legislative framework in Singapore

The legal system of Singapore is based on common law, but Article 153 of the Constitution,² as amended, provides that the legislature shall make provisions to regulate Muslims’ religious affairs. Sharia law (also known as *Syariah* in Singapore) is administered by the Administration of Muslim Law Act (or AMLA). Section 3 of the Administration of Muslim Law Act,³ as amended, establishes the Majlis Ugama Islam, also known as the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, to advise the President on matters relating to the Muslim religion and entrusts it with the function of administering Muslim law in specific personal legal matters governing marriages, divorces, annulment of marriages, judicial separations, among others. Moreover, Article 2 of the Constitution addresses the presence of customary law in the country and Article 152 stipulates the responsibility of the government on caring for the interests of the racial and religious minorities. Article 152 specifically recognises the special position of the Malays, the indigenous people of Singapore, as well as the State’s responsibility to protect and support their political, educational, religious, economic, social, and cultural interests.

Articles 12 and 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Singapore recognise and prohibit multiple and intersectional discrimination – which constitutes an essential element to enhance gender equality. Singapore ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)⁴ in 1995 but expresses reservations on Articles 2(a) to 2(f), 16(1)(a), 16(1)(c), 16(1)(h), 16(2) and 29(1) on the basis that compliance with these provisions would be contrary to Singapore’s religious or personal laws.⁵ Specifically, Article 2 covers the incorporation of the principle of equality between men and women in the Constitution and other appropriate legislations, as well as the elimination of any existing legal discrimination, and Article 16 covers equality in marriage and family life. Moreover, Singapore expresses reservations on Article 11, on eliminating discrimination against women in the field of employment, considering it unnecessary for the minority of women who do not fall within the ambit of Singapore’s employment legislation.

Gender-disaggregated, gender-relevant and intersectional data and indicators are essential to better identify policy areas that have strong linkages with gender. In Singapore, there are no applicable legal provisions regulating the production and dissemination of gender statistics.

Positive highlights and significant challenges since the fourth edition of the SIGI

Positive highlights

The law in Singapore generally grants women the same rights as men, although specific pieces of legislation may apply to distinct groups of the population, undermining certain women’s rights (see below). The law notably guarantees women and men equal rights to own and use financial assets, which translates

² Republic of Singapore (1965), “Constitution of the Republic of Singapore”.

³ Republic of Singapore (1966), “Administration of Muslim Law Act 1966”.

⁴ United Nations (1979), “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women”, *Treaties Series*, vol. 1249, United Nations, New York, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>.

⁵ United Nations (2023), “Status of Treaties: Chapter IV - 8. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women”, *Treaty Collection*, United Nations, New York, https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4.

into an extremely high financial inclusion of both men and women. Likewise, Singapore has a strong legal framework that guarantees women and men equal rights in terms of access to justice and freedom of movement. Additionally, abortion is legal and accessible without restriction with the written consent of the pregnant woman. Concrete practical gains have also been made. Girl child marriage has been virtually eliminated, and the share of women who have experienced domestic violence during the last 12 months has fallen to 2%. Although women's representation in economic and political spheres has not attained parity yet, it has increased. In 2023, 37% of managers and 29% of the members of parliament were women.

! Significant challenges

Discriminatory social institutions continue to undermine women's rights and opportunities in certain spheres of their lives. In Singapore, distinct laws regulating family and marriage matters – including divorce, inheritance or the administration of assets within the household – apply to different groups of the population, with varying levels of gender-based discrimination. For instance, the Administration of Muslim Laws Act contains discriminatory provisions that restrict Muslim women's rights to file for divorce and to inherit on equal grounds as men. Legal loopholes also put women's physical integrity and reproductive rights at risk. For instance, female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C) is not prohibited and the legal framework on violence against women does not comprehensively protect women and girls, failing to criminalise marital rape or to include sexual and economic abuse in the definition of domestic violence. Moreover, the law does not prohibit sex-based discrimination in employment and fails to mandate equal remuneration for equal work nor equal remuneration for work of equal value. Finally, rules to retain and confer citizenship through marriage differ for married men and women.

Summary of results for Singapore

Discrimination in the family	Unit	Value
Laws on child marriage	Score	50
Girl child marriage rate ¹	%	0.4
Boy child marriage rate ¹	%	0.1
Laws on household responsibilities	Score	25
Share of the population that agrees or strongly agrees that “if a woman earns more than her husband, it is a problem”	%	21.5
Share of the population that agrees or strongly agrees that “when a mother works for pay, the children will suffer”	%	35.6
Female-to-male ratio of time spent on unpaid care and domestic work	Ratio	-
Number of hours spent by men on unpaid care and domestic work in a 24-hour period	Hours	-
Number of hours spent by women on unpaid care and domestic work in a 24-hour period	Hours	-
Laws on divorce	Score	50
Laws on inheritance	Score	50
Restricted physical integrity	Unit	Value
Laws on violence against women	Score	50
Share of women who consider a husband to be justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances	%	13.8
Lifetime intimate-partner violence rate ²	%	11
12-month intimate-partner violence rate ²	%	2
Laws on female genital mutilation	%	100
Share of the female population who has heard about female genital mutilation and think the practice should continue	%	-
Prevalence of female genital mutilation (% of women aged 15-49 years who have undergone FGM)	%	-
Boy-to-girl ratio at birth (natural = 105) ³	Ratio	107.3
Laws on reproductive autonomy	Score	0
Unmet needs for family planning ⁴	%	9.7
Restricted access to productive and financial resources	Unit	Value
Laws on land assets	Score	50
Share of women among landowners	%	-
Laws on non-land assets	Score	50
Share of women among house owners	%	-
Laws on financial assets	Score	0
Share of women among bank account owners	%	47.4
Laws on workplace rights	Score	75
Share of the population declaring that “when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women”	%	27.9
Share of the population declaring that “men make better business executives than women do”	%	23.4
Share of women among managers	%	37.2
Share of firms with a woman as top manager	%	-
Restricted civil liberties	Unit	Value
Laws on citizenship rights	Score	100
Laws on political voice	Score	50
Share of the population declaring that “men make better political leaders than women do”	%	31
Share of women in Parliament (lower chamber)	%	29.1
Laws on freedom of movement	Score	0
Share of women among those who declare not feeling safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live	%	84.1
Laws on access to justice	Score	0
Share of women among those who declare not having confidence in the judicial system and courts of their country	%	48.4

Note: Scores of legal variables range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination.

¹ % of girls/boys aged 15-19 years who have been or are still married, divorced, widowed or in an informal union.

² % of ever-partnered women and girls who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner during their lifetime/over the previous 12 months. Population base for lifetime IPV: 15-49 years. Population base for 12-month IPV: 15 years and older.

³ A natural boy-to-girl sex ratio at birth is generally estimated to be below 105. A ratio exceeding 105 implies the existence of more boys aged 0-4 than one would expect, indicating a potential phenomenon of son preference resulting in the systemic elimination of new-born girls.

⁴ % of married or in-union women of reproductive age who want to either stop or delay childbearing but are not using any contraception method.

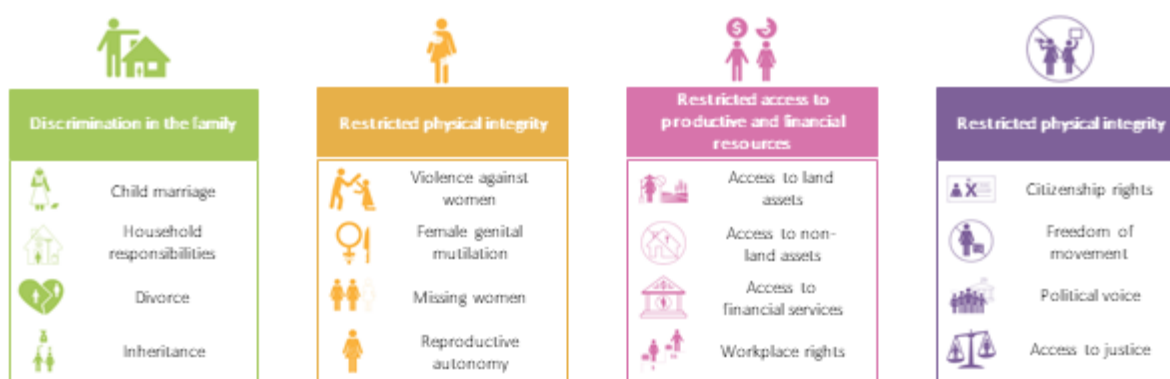
Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), “Gender, Institutions and Development Database”, <https://doi.org/10.1787/7b0af638-en>.

Results across the SIGI's four dimensions

The SIGI measures gender-based discrimination across four dimensions covering the major socio-economic areas that affect women and girls throughout their lifetime:



- The **“Discrimination in the family”** dimension captures social institutions that limit women’s decision-making power and weaken their status in the household and the family.
- The **“Restricted physical integrity”** dimension captures social institutions that increase women’s and girls’ vulnerability to multiple forms of violence and limit their control over their reproductive autonomy.
- The **“Restricted access to productive and financial resources”** dimension captures social institutions that limit women’s economic opportunities and rights.
- The **“Restricted civil liberties”** dimension captures social institutions restricting women’s access to, and participation and voice in, the public and political spheres.

Figure 2. Conceptual framework of the fifth edition of the SIGI



Each dimension builds on four indicators which, in turn, build on one to three variables depending on data availability (Figure 2). This section features the results by dimension, examining the pertinent social norms, practices and legal frameworks for each indicator.

The legal information collected through the *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey* covers both formal and codified laws, as well as informal laws. The information is assessed based on whether the law protects women’s rights or not, and is icon-coded as follows:

-  : The legal framework protects women’s rights.
-  : The legal framework does not fully protect women’s rights.

There is no universal agreement on what informal laws refer to, given contextual differences across time and place, as well as distinct disciplinary or theoretical approaches. In the context of the SIGI, informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) describe mechanisms that operate outside the formal legal system of state-based laws. Informal laws vary from one community to another and are generally uncodified and unwritten. In some cases, informal laws may reflect unequal power dynamics within a given community and discriminatory social norms, with adverse consequences on women and girls and other vulnerable groups. Informal laws are unsteady and have been adapted over time in response to external factors.

For example, customary laws are laws that are embodied in customs, rules or traditions and accepted by members of the community as binding but remain adaptable, dynamic and flexible.⁶ The CEDAW General Recommendation No. 33 also recognises indigenous laws.⁷ These are similar to customary laws but are often given a distinct identity in recognition of the specific international standards related to the rights and protections of indigenous peoples and their justice systems. Informal religious laws may refer to norms that are derived from interpretations of codified religious texts and/or longstanding traditions.

⁶ United Nations (2018), "Module 1: The Theory and Practice of Women's Access to Justice Programming", *A Practitioner's Toolkit on Women's Access to Justice Programming*, UN Women, UNDP, UNDOC and OHCHR, New York, Vienna and Geneva, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/PractitionerToolkit/WA2J_Module1.pdf.

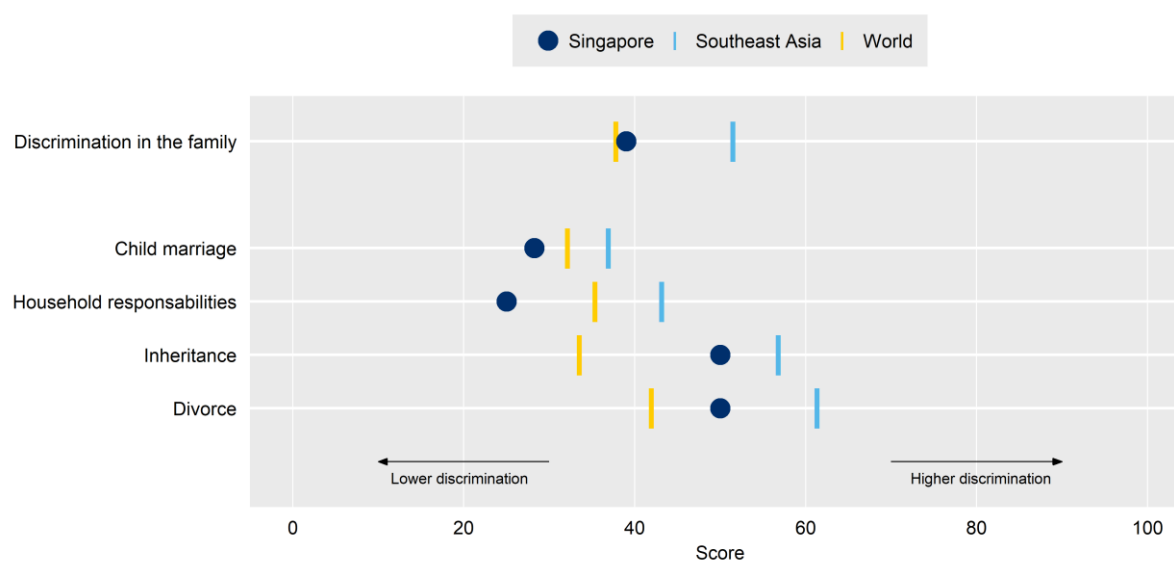
⁷ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2015), "General recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice", *CEDAW/C/GC/33*, United Nations, New York, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/807253>.

Discrimination in the family

Singapore exhibits medium levels of discrimination within the family with a score of 39, compared to a world average of 38 and an average score of 52 in Southeast Asia – based on countries for which scores could be calculated.

In this dimension, women and girls in Singapore experience the highest levels of discrimination in the “Household responsibilities,” “Inheritance” and “Divorce” indicators, with scores of 50. The lowest levels of discrimination are found in the “Child marriage” indicator with a score of 28.

Figure 3. Discrimination in the family scores for Singapore, 2023



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The Southeast Asia region covers Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

Source: OECD (2023), “Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)”, *OECD International Development Statistics (database)*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en>.

Child marriage

Practices related to child marriage

Child marriage is almost inexistent in Singapore. In 2023, 0.4% of girls aged 15-19 were or are still married, divorced, widowed or in an informal union, compared to 0.1% of boys. In addition, 0.1% of women aged 20-24 were married or in a union before the age of 18,⁸ compared to a world average of 26% and an average of 17% in Southeast Asia – based on countries for which data are available.

Legal frameworks concerning child marriage

The Women’s Charter,⁹ as amended, establishes the minimum legal age of marriage for women and men at 18 years. However, Section 9 and 21 of the Women’s Charter introduce legal exceptions and authorise

⁸ This indicator corresponds to SDG indicator 5.3.1

⁹ Republic of Singapore (1961), “Women’s Charter 1961”.

minors to get married before the minimum legal age with a special marriage licence granted by the Minister. Section 13(1) further stipulates that the marriage license must not be issued or granted without the consent of a person mentioned in the Second Schedule (parent or guardian) who is authorised to give such consent. These sections were amended at the end of 2022 – after the cut-off date of the SIGI legal data – to remove most of the legal exceptions provided by the law.

Question	Answer	Assessment
What is the legal age of marriage for men?	18	✓
What is the legal age of marriage for women?	18	✓
Are there legal exceptions to the legal age of marriage that allow women and men under the legal age of marriage to marry with the consent of parent and/or legal guardian?	Yes	!
Are there legal exceptions to the legal age of marriage that allow women and men under the legal age of marriage to marry with the consent of judge or court?	Yes	!
Are there legal exceptions to the legal age of marriage that allow women and men under the legal age of marriage to marry with the consent of another person or institution?	Yes	!
Does the legal age of marriage apply to all groups of women?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that allow or encourage the early marriage of girls?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Household responsibilities

Practices and social norms related to household responsibilities

There are no available data in Singapore that are comparable to other countries on practices related to the division of household responsibilities. In 2023, worldwide, women dedicate 2.6 times more time on unpaid care and domestic work than men,¹⁰ while in Southeast Asia this ratio is 3.1 – based on countries for which data are available.

However, data on attitudes indicate the presence of prevailing discriminatory social norms that confine women to the household. In Singapore, 22% of the population thinks that if a woman earns more than her husband, it is almost certain to cause problems. Moreover, 36% of the population agrees that children will suffer if the mother has a paid job outside the home, compared to a world average of 56% and an average of 35% in Southeast Asia. Likewise, 67% of the population thinks that being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay.

Legal frameworks concerning household responsibilities

Sections 46 of the Women's Charter,¹¹ as amended,¹² guarantee equal rights to married women and men to be recognised as head of the family. However, pursuant to Section 35 of the Administration of Muslim Law Act,¹³ as amended, marriage and family matters – including spouses' duties – of Muslim individuals are governed by the Administration of Muslim Law Act. The Act is silent on the right of a married woman to be recognised as head of the family.

¹⁰ This indicator corresponds to SDG indicator 5.4.1

¹¹ Republic of Singapore (1961), "Women's Charter 1961".

¹² Amendments in 2022, after the cut-off date of the SIGI legal data, entirely modified Part 6 of the Women's Charter on rights and duties of husband and wife, without any substantive changes to women's and men's equal rights to be recognised as head of the household or head of the family (Section 48). See: Republic of Singapore (2022), "Women's Charter (Amendment) Act 2022 (No. 3 of 2022)".

¹³ Republic of Singapore (1966), "Administration of Muslim Law Act 1966".

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to be “head of household” or “head of family”?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to be the legal guardians of their children during marriage?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to be legal guardians of their children in informal unions?	Yes	✓
Regarding women’s legal rights to be recognised as head of household or head of family, does the law apply to all groups of women?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to being recognised as the head of household?	Yes	!
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to being the legal guardians of their children?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to the choice of where to live?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Divorce

Legal frameworks concerning divorce

Section 95(1) of the Women’s Charter,¹⁴ as amended, guarantees equal rights to women and men to file for divorce. The law also grants equal rights to women and men to finalise divorce proceedings and to obtain the custody of children. Section 3 of the Guardianship of Infant Act¹⁵ also stipulates that custody of a child shall only depend on the welfare of the child, without any parent having superior rights to the other one. Nevertheless, pursuant to Section 35 of the Administration of Muslim Law Act,¹⁶ as amended, marriage and family matters – including divorce and inheritance – of Muslim individuals are governed by the Administration of Muslim Law Act. In line with the principles of Islamic Sharia, Section 46B of the Administration of Muslim Law Act grants a married man the right to divorce his spouse at will, without any restrictions (*talaq*). Conversely, a married woman’s rights to obtain a divorce are very limited and precisely specified. Sections 48 and 49 list the grounds under which a woman is allowed to ask for a divorce. Finally, Section 47 grants a married woman the right to seek divorce by *khul’* – the process whereby the woman obtains divorce in exchange of paying her spouse an agreed financial compensation. Sections 2 and 97 of the Administration of Muslim Law Act also establish a waiting period (*iddah*) for the Muslim divorced woman until she can remarry.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Do women and men have the same rights to initiate/file for a divorce?	Yes	✓
Can women and men finalise a divorce or annulment with the same requirements?	Yes	✓
Do women and men have the same rights to child custody following a divorce?	Yes	✓
Regarding divorce, does the law apply to all groups of women?	No	!
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to initiating divorce?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to being the legal guardians of their children after divorce?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

¹⁴ Republic of Singapore (1961), “Women’s Charter 1961”.







¹⁵ Republic of Singapore (1934), “Guardianship of Infants Act 1934”.

¹⁶ Republic of Singapore (1966), “Administration of Muslim Law Act 1966”.

Inheritance

Legal frameworks concerning inheritance rights

Under Section 7 of Intestate Succession Act,¹⁷ as amended, women and men have equal inheritance rights, with daughters and sons as well as widows and widowers receiving equal shares. However, pursuant to Section 35 of the Administration of Muslim Law Act,¹⁸ as amended, marriage and family matters – including divorce and inheritance – of Muslim individuals are governed by the Administration of Muslim Law Act. Section 112 of the Administration of Muslim Law Act notably stipulates that inheritance rules of Muslim individuals must follow Islamic law, whereby female heirs are entitled to half of the inheritance share of male heirs.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Do daughters and sons have the same rights to inherit?	Yes	
Do female and male surviving spouses have the same rights to inherit?	Yes	
Regarding inheritance rights of daughters, does the law apply to all groups of women?	No	
Regarding inheritance rights of female surviving spouses, does the law apply to all groups of women?	No	
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between sons and daughters when it comes to inheritance?	Yes	
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between male and female surviving spouses when it comes to inheritance?	Yes	

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

¹⁷ Republic of Singapore (1967), "Intestate Succession Act 1967".

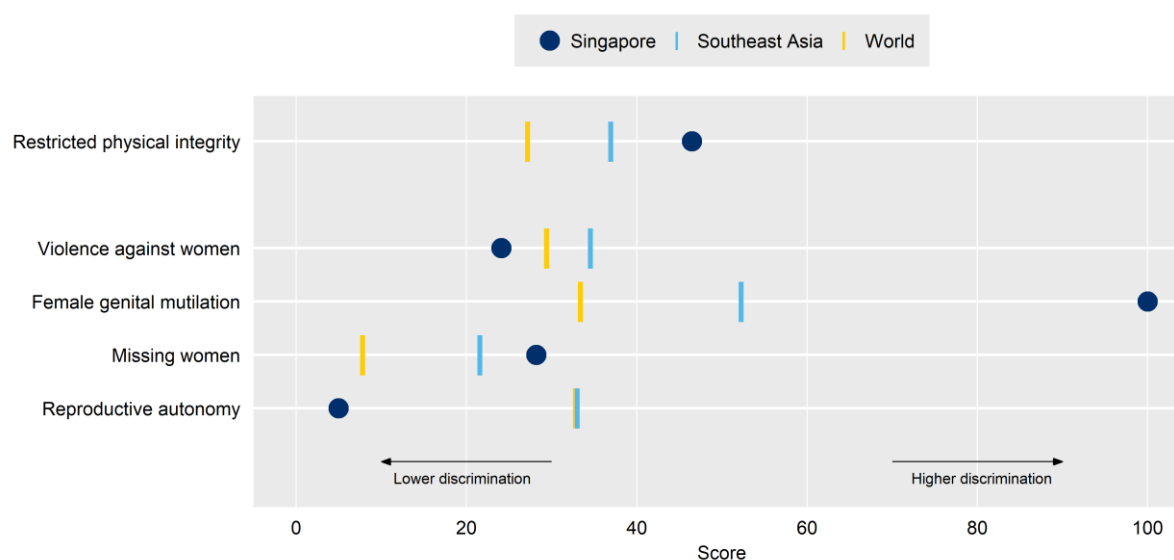
¹⁸ Republic of Singapore (1966), "Administration of Muslim Law Act 1966".

Restricted physical integrity

Singapore exhibits high levels of discrimination within the family with a score of 46, compared to a world average of 27 and an average score of 37 in Southeast Asia – based on countries for which scores could be calculated.

In this dimension, women and girls in Singapore experience the highest levels of discrimination in the “Female genital mutilation” indicator, with a score of 100, followed by “Missing women” (28) and “Violence against women” (24). The lowest levels of discrimination are found in the “Reproductive autonomy” indicator, with a score of 5.

Figure 4. Restricted physical integrity scores for Singapore, 2023



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The Southeast Asia region covers Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

Source: OECD (2023), “Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)”, *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), <https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en>.

Violence against women

Practices and social norms related to violence against women

Violence against women remains present in Singapore. In 2023, 11% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former partner at least once during their lifetime, and 2% of women over the age of 15 have experienced such violence at least once over the last 12 months.¹⁹

These levels of intimate-partner violence are rooted in its social acceptance. In 2023, 14% of women aged 15-49 think that it is justified for a husband to hit or beat his wife under certain circumstances, such as burning the food, arguing with the spouse, going out without telling him, neglecting the children, or refusing

¹⁹ This indicator corresponds to SDG indicator 5.2.1

to have sex. In comparison, 33% of women holds these discriminatory attitudes worldwide, as well as across Southeast Asia – based on countries for which data are available.

Legal frameworks concerning violence against women

Singapore does not have a dedicated law addressing all forms of violence against women. Different forms of violence against women are covered in separate or general pieces of legislation. Section 65 of the Women's Charter,²⁰ as amended, addresses domestic violence and provides for the issuance of protective orders whose breach leads to criminal charges. However, Section 64, which defines domestic violence, does not specifically extend the definition of it to sexual and economic abuse. Moreover, although Section 375 of the Penal Code,²¹ as amended, criminalises rape and grounds its definition on the notion of free consent, it does not specifically cover marital rape. Section 375 also bases the definition of rape on the notion of penetration by the male organ.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Is there a law specifically addressing violence against women?	No	!
If there is a specific law addressing violence against women, are there specific provisions for investigation, prosecution and punishment of the perpetrator?	n.a.	n.a.
If there is a specific law addressing violence against women, are there specific provisions for protection and support services for victims/survivors?	n.a.	n.a.
Does the law include reduced penalties in case of so-called "honour crimes"?	No	✓
Domestic violence		
Is domestic violence a criminal offence?	Yes	✓
Does domestic violence legislation cover physical abuse?	Yes	✓
Does domestic violence legislation cover sexual abuse?	No	!
Does domestic violence legislation cover psychological abuse?	Yes	✓
Does domestic violence legislation cover economic abuse?	No	!
Are there any exceptions included in informal laws (traditional, religious, and/or customary rules/laws) that reduce penalties for domestic violence?	No	✓
Rape		
Is rape a criminal offence?	Yes	✓
Is the legal definition of rape based on lack of consent?	Yes	✓
If the legal definition of rape is based on lack of consent, does this require proof of physical force?	No	✓
If the legal definition of rape is based on lack of consent, does this require proof of penetration?	Yes	!
Does the legal definition of rape include marital rape?	No	!
Does the law permit the reduction or removal of legal punishment if the perpetrator marries the victim?	No	✓
Sexual harassment		
Does the law prohibit sexual harassment?	Yes	✓
Does the law on sexual harassment include criminal penalties?	Yes	✓
Do legal protections from sexual harassment apply in the workplace?	Yes	✓
Do legal protections from sexual harassment apply in educational establishments?	Yes	✓
Do legal protections from sexual harassment apply in public spaces?	Yes	✓
Do legal protections from sexual harassment apply online / on the internet?	Yes	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Female genital mutilation

Practices and social norms related to female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C)

²⁰ Republic of Singapore (1961), "Women's Charter 1961".

²¹ Republic of Singapore (1871), "Penal Code 1871".

Female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C) is traditionally concentrated in a limited number of countries that have been well-identified and documented by international organisations at the forefront of the fight against this harmful practice. Yet, evidence highlights that FGM/C takes place across all regions, among indigenous and/or diaspora communities originating from countries where FGM/C is known to be common. In some contexts, girls are taken across national borders to undergo FGM/C in a country where the legislation against the practice is either non-existent or less strict.²²

There are no available data in Singapore that are comparable to other countries on practices and social norms related to female genital mutilation and cutting.

Legal frameworks concerning female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C)

Singapore's legal framework fails to protect women and girls from FGM, whether on broad or narrow grounds.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law criminalise FGM/C on broad or narrow grounds?	No	!
Does the law criminalise FGM/C on narrow grounds only?	No	!
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws) that allow or encourage FGM/C?	Yes	!
Does the law take precedence over informal laws (customary, traditional or religious laws) that allow, condone or prescribe FGM?	No	!

Note: The SIGI methodology assesses laws on FGM/C according to two scenarios: (1) criminalisation on narrow grounds includes laws that contain criminal penalties for acts of “female genital mutilation”, “permanent altering/removal of external genitalia”, “female circumcision”, “excision”, “infibulation” and “genital mutilation”; (2) criminalisation on broad grounds includes “mutilation”, “harming of a person’s organs”, “serious bodily injury” and “bodily injury/hurt/assault.” The presence of informal laws that allow or encourage FGM/C is proxied by the existence of nationally representative data on FGM/C or the existence of indirect estimates (usually used in countries where FGM/C is mainly practiced by diaspora communities), small-scale studies, or anecdotal evidence and media reports as reported by Equality Now, the End FGM European Network and the US End FGM/C Network in 2020.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>, and Equality Now, End FGM European Network and US End FGM/C Network (2020), *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Call For A Global Response*, <https://www.equalitynow.org/resource/female-genital-mutilation-cutting-a-call-for-a-global-response/>.

Missing women

Practices related to missing women

The “Missing women” indicator captures whether there are any existing imbalances in the natural sex ratio between girls and boys aged 0-4 due to pre- and postnatal gender-biased sex selection. These imbalances can result from sex-selective abortions, female infanticide, and/or inadequate healthcare and nutrition for girls. A natural boy-to-girl sex ratio at birth is generally estimated to be below 105. A ratio exceeding 105 implies the existence of more boys aged 0-4 than one would expect, indicating a potential phenomenon of son preference resulting in the systemic elimination of new-born girls.

In Singapore, the “missing women” phenomenon is an issue. The boy-to-girl sex ratio for children aged 0-4 is estimated at 107.3, which means that there are approximately 107.3 boys aged 0-4 for 100 girls of the same age. This ratio is substantially higher than the natural sex ratio at birth.

²² Equality Now, End FGM European Network and US End FGM/C Network (2020), *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Call For A Global Response*, <https://www.equalitynow.org/resource/female-genital-mutilation-cutting-a-call-for-a-global-response/>.

Reproductive autonomy

Practices related to women's reproductive autonomy

Unmet needs for family planning are calculated as the proportion of women of reproductive age (15-49 years), married or in union, who wish to interrupt or delay childbearing but do not use any method of contraception.

In Singapore, the gap between women's reproductive intentions and their contraceptive behaviour exists, with 10% of women aged 15-49 who declare having an unmet need for family planning, compared to a world average of 12% and an average of 11% in Southeast Asia – based on countries for which data are available.

Legal frameworks concerning women's reproductive autonomy

Women's reproductive autonomy can be restricted by laws that prohibit the access to safe and legal abortion under essential circumstances (in cases of rape, incest, threats to the life or health of the pregnant woman and severe foetal impairment).²³ Evidence shows that the share of unsafe abortions is higher in countries with restrictive abortion laws. Unsafe abortions are a leading but preventable cause of maternal mortality and millions of girls and women are hospitalised every year following complications of unsafe abortion procedures.²⁴

Question	Answer	Assessment
Is abortion illegal under any circumstances?	No	✓
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: it is essential to save the woman's life?	Yes	✓
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: it is essential to preserve the physical health of the woman?	Yes	✓
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: it is essential to preserve the mental health of the woman?	Yes	✓
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: pregnancy is the result of rape or statutory rape?	Yes	✓
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: pregnancy is the result of incest?	Yes	✓
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: social and economic reasons do not allow the mother to sustain a pregnancy?	Yes	✓
Is abortion legally permitted in cases where: foetal impairment?	Yes	✓
Does a woman require the approval of a medical practitioner to seek a legal abortion?	No	✓
Does the law require the approval of the father of the foetus to seek a legal abortion?	No	✓
Is there any national plan or policy that provide universal access to family planning services?	No	!
Is there any law or national policy that provide free or subsidised access to contraception?	No	!
Does the national school curricula include mandatory and comprehensive sexuality education?	Yes	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

²³ CEDAW (2022), *Access to safe and legal abortion: Urgent call for United States to adhere to women's rights convention*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/07/access-safe-and-legal-abortion-urgent-call-united-states-adhere-womens-rights>.

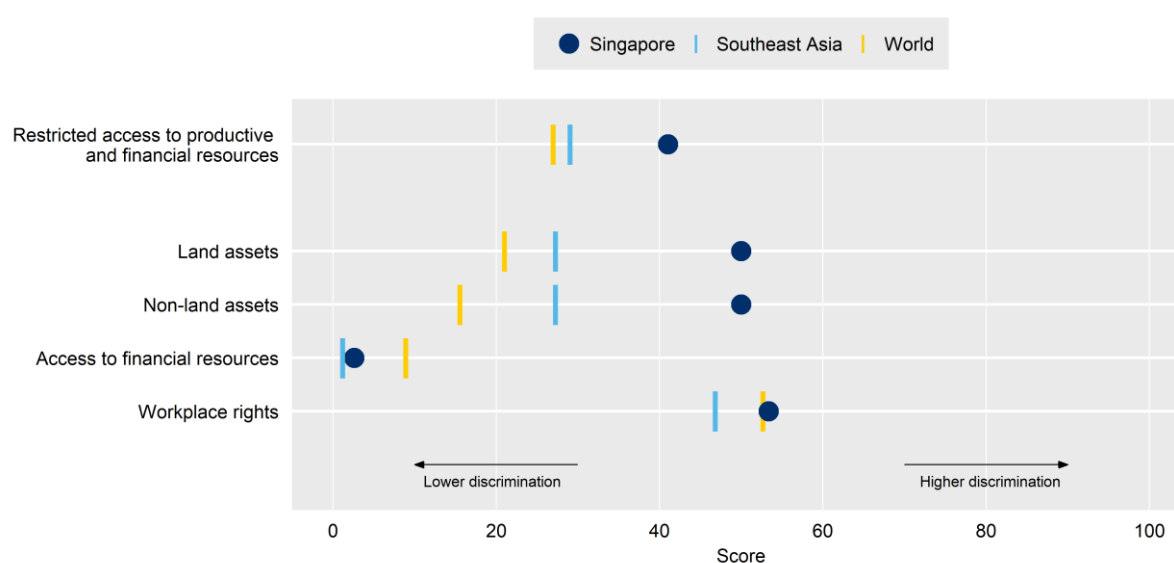
²⁴ UNFPA (2022), *State of World Population 2022: Seeing the Unseen - The Case for Action in the Neglected Crisis of Unintended Pregnancy*, UNFPA, Geneva, <https://doi.org/10.18356/9789210015004>.

Restricted access to productive and financial resources

Singapore exhibits high levels of discrimination within the family with a score of 41, compared to a world average of 27 and an average score of 29 in Southeast Asia – based on countries for which scores could be calculated.

In this dimension, women and girls in Singapore experience the highest levels of discrimination in the “Workplace rights” indicator, with a SIGI score of 53, followed by “Access to land” and “Access to non-land assets” indicators, with a score of 50 for both. The lowest levels of discrimination are found in the “Access to financial services” indicator, with a score of 3.

Figure 5. Restricted access to productive and financial resources scores for Singapore, 2023



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The Southeast Asia region covers Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

Source: OECD (2023), “Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)”, *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), <https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en>.

Access to land assets

Practices related to women’s access to secure land assets

In Singapore, there are no available data that are comparable to other countries on practices related to access to land assets.

Legal frameworks concerning women’s access to land assets

Sections 51 and 52 of the Women’s Charter,²⁵ as amended,²⁶ guarantee equal rights to married women and men to own and use assets, including land. However, pursuant to Section 35 of the Administration of Muslim Law Act,²⁷ as amended, marriage and family matters – including the administration of assets within the family – of Muslim individuals are governed by the Administration of Muslim Law Act. Section 119 of the Administration of Muslim Law Act guarantees married men and women the same rights to own and use property but authorises the married parties to establish a contract that stipulates otherwise.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to own land?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to use land?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to own land?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to use land?	Yes	✓
Regarding land, does the law apply to all groups of women?	No	!
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to the ownership or use of land assets?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Access to non-land assets

Practices related to women’s secure access to non-land assets

In Singapore, there are no available data that are comparable to other countries on practices related to access to non-land assets.

Legal frameworks concerning women’s access to non-land assets

Sections 51 and 52 of the Women’s Charter,²⁸ as amended,²⁹ guarantee equal rights to married women and men to own and use assets, including non-land assets such as houses. However, pursuant to Section 35 of the Administration of Muslim Law Act,³⁰ as amended, marriage and family matters – including the administration of assets within the family – of Muslim individuals are governed by the Administration of Muslim Law Act. Section 119 of the Administration of Muslim Law Act guarantees married men and women the same rights to own and use property, but authorises the married parties to establish a contract that stipulates otherwise.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to own property and other non-land assets?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to use property and other non-land assets?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to own property and other non-land assets?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to use property and other non-land assets?	Yes	✓

²⁵ Republic of Singapore (1961), “Women’s Charter 1961”.

²⁶ Amendments in 2022, after the cut-off date of the SIGI legal data, entirely modified Part 6 of the Women’s Charter on rights and duties of husband and wife, without any substantive changes to women’s and men’s equal rights to own and use land and non-land assets (Sections 50 and 53). See: Republic of Singapore (2022), “Women’s Charter (Amendment) Act 2022 (No. 3 of 2022)”.

²⁷ Republic of Singapore (1966), “Administration of Muslim Law Act 1966”.

²⁸ Republic of Singapore (1961), “Women’s Charter 1961”.

²⁹ Amendments in 2022, after the cut-off date of the SIGI legal data, entirely modified Part 6 of the Women’s Charter on rights and duties of husband and wife, without any substantive changes to women’s and men’s equal rights to own and use land and non-land assets (Sections 50 and 53). See: Republic of Singapore (2022), “Women’s Charter (Amendment) Act 2022 (No. 3 of 2022)”.

³⁰ Republic of Singapore (1966), “Administration of Muslim Law Act 1966”.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Regarding property and other non-land assets, does the law apply to all groups of women?	No	!
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to the ownership or use of non-land assets?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Access to financial services

Practices related to women's access to formal financial services

Gender imbalances in terms of access to financial services are very limited in Singapore and the overall access of the population is extremely high. In 2023, 97% of women have a bank account at a financial institution, compared to 98% of men. This translates into women accounting for 47% of bank account holders. In comparison, at the global level, 67% of women have a bank account, compared to 72% of men. Across Southeast Asia, on average, 52% of women have a bank account, compared to 54% of men.

Legal frameworks concerning women's access to financial services

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to open a bank account at a formal financial institution?	Yes	✓
Does the law require married women to obtain the signature and authority of their husband to open a bank account at a formal financial institution?	No	✓
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to obtain credit?	Yes	✓
Regarding access to formal financial services, does the law apply to all groups of women (regardless of race, ethnicity, caste, etc.)?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to opening a bank account?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to obtaining credit?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Workplace rights

Practices and social norms related to women's workplace rights

Women remain partially excluded from decision-making power positions in the economic sphere. Women account for 37% of employees in a managerial position,³¹ compared to a world average of 25% and an average of 36% in Southeast Asia – based on countries for which data are available.

These gender gaps are upheld by discriminatory social norms that establish men as the main breadwinners and more fit to hold leadership positions. In Singapore, 23% of the population believes that men make better business executives than women, compared to a world average of 42% and an average of 53% in Southeast Asia. Likewise, 28% of the population agrees that when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women. In comparison, 45% of the population holds these discriminatory attitudes worldwide, and 64% of the people across Southeast Asia – based on countries for which data are available.

Legal frameworks concerning women's workplace rights

³¹ This indicator corresponds to SDG indicator 5.2.2

Singapore's legal framework, and notably the Employment Act,³² as amended, does not specifically prohibit gender-based discrimination in employment. It does not mandate either equal remuneration for equal work, nor equal remuneration for work of equal value, which constitutes a key provision to overcome gender pay gaps.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law prohibit discrimination in employment on the basis of sex?	No	!
Does the law mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value?	No	!
Does the law prohibit women from entering certain professions?	No	✓
Does the law allow women to work the same night hours as men?	Yes	✓
Does the law mandate paid maternity leave?	Yes	✓
Does the law mandate paid paternity leave?	Yes	✓
Does the law mandate paid parental leave?	Yes	✓
Does the law require women to have permission from their husband or legal guardian to take a paid job?	No	✓
Does the law require women to have permission from their husband or legal guardian to register a business?	No	✓
Regarding women's legal right to take a paid job or work and/or register a business, does the law apply to all groups of women (regardless of race, ethnicity caste, etc.)?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to entering certain professions?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that require women to have the permission from their husband or legal guardian to take a paid job?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that require women to have the permission from their husband or legal guardian to register a business?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

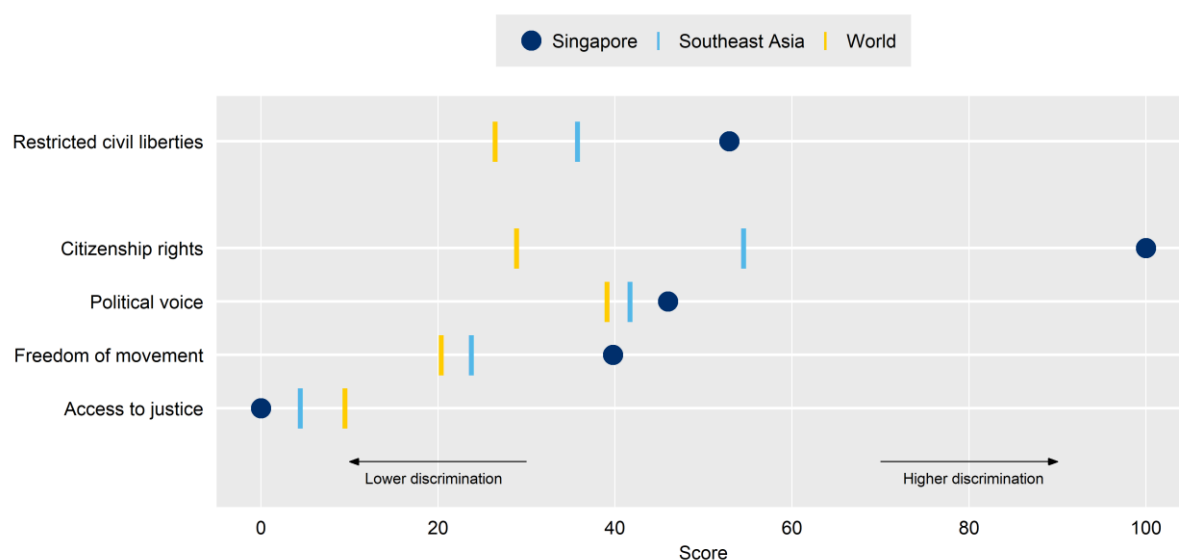
³² Republic of Singapore (1968), "Employment Act 1968".

Restricted civil liberties

Singapore exhibits very high levels of discrimination within the family with a score of 53, compared to a world average of 26 and an average score of 36 in Southeast Asia – based on countries for which scores could be calculated.

In this dimension, women and girls in Singapore experience the highest levels of discrimination in the “Citizenship rights” indicator, with a score of 100, followed by “Political voice” and “Freedom of movement” with scores of 46 and 40, respectively. No discrimination is found in the “Access to justice” indicator, with a score of 0.

Figure 6. Restricted civil liberties scores for Singapore, 2023



Note: Scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination. The Southeast Asia region covers Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

Source: OECD (2023), “Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)”, *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), <https://doi.org/10.1787/33beb96e-en>.

Citizenship rights

Legal frameworks concerning women’s citizenship rights

The national legislation does not provide married women the same rights as married men to retain their nationality or to confer it to their spouse. Article 129(6) of the Constitution,³³ as amended, establishes that a Singaporean woman who has obtained her citizenship through marriage can have it revoked by the government if the marriage is dissolved, otherwise than by death, within the first two years of the marriage. The same provision does not exist for a married man who has acquired Singaporean citizenship through marriage. Moreover, Article 123(2) stipulates the specific conditions under which a married man can confer the citizenship to his spouse – namely two years of residence in Singapore, the intention of residing permanently in Singapore and being of good faith. The same provision does not exist for a married Singaporean woman wishing to confer her citizenship to her spouse.

³³ Republic of Singapore (1965), “Constitution of the Republic of Singapore”.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to acquire nationality?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to acquire nationality?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to change their nationality?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to change their nationality?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to retain their nationality?	No	!
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to retain their nationality?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to confer nationality to their spouse?	No	!
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to confer nationality to their children?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide unmarried women with the same rights as unmarried men to confer nationality to their children?	Yes	✓
Regarding women's nationality rights, does the law apply to all groups of women (regardless of race, caste, ethnicity, etc.)?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional, or religious laws) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to acquiring, changing, or retaining their nationality?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, traditional, or religious laws) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to conferring nationality to their spouse and/or children?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Freedom of movement

Practices related to women's freedom of movement

Freedom of movement is recognised as a human right and mobility is essential in everyday life, for instance to reach the workplace or healthcare facilities. In Singapore, women feel more unsafe than men, but only a small part of the overall population feels that way. Across the country, only 7% of women declare not feeling safe walking alone at night in the city or in the area where they live, compared to 1% of men. This translates into women accounting for 84% of those who do not feel safe walking alone at night.

Legal frameworks concerning women's freedom of movement

Beyond the challenge of ensuring that everyone feels safe enough to move around in public spaces, laws must guarantee women and men the same rights to obtain identification documents and to travel by themselves within and outside of their country.

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the government provide national identity cards?	Yes	✓
Can a married woman apply for a national identity card in the same way as a married man? (in terms of rights and procedures)	Yes	✓
Can an unmarried woman apply for a national identity card in the same way as an unmarried man? (in terms of rights and procedures)	Yes	✓
Can a married woman apply for a passport in the same way as a married man (in terms of rights and procedures)?	Yes	✓
Can an unmarried woman apply for a passport in the same way as an unmarried man (in terms of rights and procedures)?	Yes	✓
Regarding identity cards and/or passports, does the law apply to all groups of women (regardless of race, caste, ethnicity, etc.)?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to travel outside the country?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide married women with the same rights as married men to travel outside their homes?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious, or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to applying for identity cards or passports?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Political voice

Practices and social norms related to women's political voice

Women's political representation in the country remains limited, with women accounting for 29% of the members of parliament in 2023, compared to a world average of 27% and an average of 22% in Southeast Asia.

Discriminatory attitudes that exclude women from positions of power in the political sphere remain present with 31% of the country's population declaring that men make better political leaders than women.

Legal frameworks concerning women's political voice

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to vote?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to hold public and political office in the legislative branch?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to hold public and political office in the executive branch?	Yes	✓
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to hold public office in the judiciary branch?	Yes	✓
Do constitutional/legislated gender quotas exist to promote women's political representation at the national level?	No	!
Do constitutional/legislated gender quotas exist to promote women's political representation at the local level?	No	!
Does the law provide for special measures other than quotas to promote women's political representation at the national level?	No	!
Does the law provide for special measures other than quotas to promote women's political representation at the local level?	No	!
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to voting?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to holding public office?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.

Access to justice

Practices related to women's access to justice

In Singapore, women trust the judicial system and courts as much as men. Across the country, only 9% of women and men declare not trusting the country's judicial system.

Legal frameworks concerning women's access to justice

Question	Answer	Assessment
Does the law provide women with the same rights as men to sue?	Yes	✓
Does a woman's testimony carry the same evidentiary weight as a man's in the civil courts?	Yes	✓
Does a woman's testimony carry the same evidentiary weight as a man's in the criminal courts?	Yes	✓
Does a woman's testimony carry the same evidentiary weight as a man's in the family courts?	Yes	✓
Does a woman's testimony carry the same evidentiary weight as a man's in the tribunals?	Yes	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes suing someone?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to providing testimony in court?	No	✓
Are there informal laws (customary, religious or traditional laws/rules) that create different rights or abilities between men and women when it comes to being judges, advocates or other court officers?	No	✓

Note: Cut-off date for the legal data is 31 August 2022.

Source: OECD Development Centre/OECD (2023), *SIGI 2023 Legal Survey*, <https://oe.cd/sigi-dashboard>.