RELIGIOSITY AND THE MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS HARMONY: RESPONSES FROM THE IPS SURVEY ON RACE, RELIGION AND LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This paper documents the Singapore population's religious beliefs, and how these relate to life orientation, moral beliefs and inter-religious relations. Based on data from the nationally-representative IPS Survey on Race, Religion and Language, the key findings of the survey are that:

1. Singapore has done well in promoting religious harmony. There is widespread tolerance and acceptance of diversity in the public sphere.

Adherents of all religious traditions in Singapore displayed a near-universal openness to having relationships with those of other religious faiths in the public sphere. The majority of all survey respondents agreed that there is religious harmony here, though particular religious beliefs and practices are highly salient to those of certain faiths.

2. The state is still trusted to play a role in managing the peaceful coexistence of different faiths.

Consistent state policy and action over the decades has ensured that Singaporeans of different faiths live in peaceful coexistence. The survey found strong support for the state to deal firmly with religious bigotry and to check insensitive comments levelled against any religion. Six in 10 respondents said it would be important for a responsible person to report to the authorities any

infractions that threatened religious and racial harmony. Less than three in 10 respondents believed religious groups should be accorded more rights than they currently have.

3. Religion is important to many — especially those from monotheistic religious traditions. Interactions of a religious nature are likely to contribute to the building of a stronger religious identity.

More Muslims, Protestant Christians, Roman Catholics, Hindus, and those from several smaller religions ranked religion as important or very important to their identity, compared to Buddhists and Taoists. Even among those who declared they had no religion, more than one in 10 said that religion was important to their lives. More Muslims and Protestant Christians than those of other faiths felt that their philosophies in life were largely shaped by their ideas of religion and spirituality, and that religious teachers play a significant role in influencing how they live their lives.

Nearly three in 10 survey respondents said they participated in some form of religious activity weekly, with Protestant Christians and Roman Catholics registering the highest numbers attending religious services at least once a month. About a quarter of survey respondents said they had encountered religious services in a setting different from their own in the last two years, with nearly two in 10 having gone to a meeting to learn about other religions.

4. There is substantial diversity in the personal beliefs of religious adherents, and religious labels may not necessarily reflect the religious

beliefs that people have.

Only three in 10 Hindus and half of Buddhists said they believe in the idea of reincarnation although this is a concept present in the official formulation of both these religions. Belief in the existence of hell and heaven was not universal even among Muslims and Christians. Among those who said that they are not affiliated to any religion, two in 10 said they believe that God exists.

5. Personal preferences and customary traditions and practices prescribed by various religions continue to shape relationships in the private sphere.

While inter-religious interactions and relationships were widely accepted in the public sphere, survey respondents were comparatively less comfortable with inter-religious relationships in the private sphere (for example, having someone of a different religion as a close relative or spouse). While the state has adopted a firm approach to preventing social exclusivism in settings ranging from public schools to neighbourhoods, it has not attempted to influence how the religious population interpret and practise their faith in a private or family setting. For religious adherents, personal preferences and religious customs continue to influence their approach to relationships in the private sphere, for example, in the choice of marriage partners.

The survey findings point to the positive state of religious harmony in Singapore, in particular, the tolerance and acceptance of diversity in the common public space. There is an insistence that religious harmony should

not be jeopardised and the belief that the state should step in when necessary. Many religious adherents accept the need to make concessions as part of life in a multi-religious society and there is little demand by the majority of the population for more religious rights.

It should be emphasised though that heterogeneity in the social landscape requires a deepening of inter-cultural understanding, so that different groups can learn to appreciate differences, and be sensitive to the needs of different religious groups.

While religion provides its adherents a framework to evaluate morality, this will need to be tempered with a respect for those who may not share similar religious values. What is needed is greater dialogue to achieve coherence between the various principles espoused by different religions, and a set of universal principles agreeable to all, including secularists.

The current positive state of religious harmony cannot be taken for granted, as several trends ranging from religious innovations elsewhere to immigrant flows could pose challenges to religious harmony.

**RELIGIOSITY AND THE MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS HARMONY:
RESPONSES FROM THE IPS SURVEY ON RACE, RELIGION AND
LANGUAGE**

1.   INTRODUCTION

Even as Singapore moves towards global modernity, religion and its accompanying values remain crucial considerations in the lives of its citizens. In the National Day Rally (2013), Prime Minister (PM) Lee Hsien Loong reiterated the need for solidarity and cohesion between the different ethnic and religious groups in Singapore. Discussing rising religiosity around the world, PM Lee pointed out that while such a phenomenon might have positive implications on a particular country, it might also lead to heightened tensions caused by aggressive proselytising, intolerance and exclusiveness from any religious group. He urged Singaporeans to never forget what being Singaporean means and to open their hearts to all.

The significance of religious issues in the Singapore context has surfaced in a number of ways in recent months. In September 2013, there were calls for public services to allow Muslim women employees to don the *tudung* with their uniforms. The situation abated when the PM assured the Singapore leaders of the Muslim faith in a closed-door meeting that the changes to uniform should be gradual and informal rather than requiring any legislative amendments. More recently there were concerns raised by notable members of the Christian community and later the Muslim community over the Health Promotion Board's online FAQ on sexuality, which allegedly normalised homosexual relationships.

Heightened religiosity is marked by the intensification of religious practice and strong values to embrace religious obligations. This also sometimes includes the adoption of extremist, intolerant and exclusivist orientations that can be detrimental to the social fabric of society and a threat to the secular political space in Singapore. Such increased religiosity could lead to greater misunderstandings and the imposition of religious beliefs and moral boundaries onto others outside of a particular religion.

The Singapore state has however been successful in ensuring that religious harmony is maintained. This is through a combination of hard and soft measures. The main laws at its disposal are the Sedition Act and The Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act. The Sedition Act was last used to protect religious harmony in 2007, when a Christian couple who had distributed religiously offensive literature to several Muslims was charged. The Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act (MRHA), which came into force in 1992, forbids religious leaders or representatives from "causing feelings of enmity, hatred, ill will or hostility between different religious groups". It provides powers to the Minister for Home Affairs to make a restraining order on a religious leader or institution if it is deemed that the individual or institution has breached the act (Attorney General Chambers Singapore, 2001)[2]. Although the MRHA has never been invoked, the government has acknowledged that it was prepared to use it against some religious leaders. The offending parties however had made quick amends once they were warned by the authorities that they were in violation of the MRHA. Other than

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2 . For a more extensive discussion of the management of religion in Singapore, see Mathew (2013).

these hard laws, the Singapore state also has other softer measures in place to maintain religious harmony. The state encourages religious understanding through the Inter-racial and Religious Confidence Circles (IRCC). These circles bring together community and religious leaders at the local level to promote religious understanding. They also develop mechanisms to mediate and resolve inter-religious and racial tension. Additional soft measures include the Declaration of Religious Harmony, a non-binding statement affirming the importance of striving towards religious harmony.[3]

As a result of these measures, Singaporeans have learnt to accept those of different faiths especially in the public sphere. Despite the fact that people of different religious beliefs have sometimes very contrasting practices and preferences ranging from different ideas on appropriate funeral practices to how deities should be honoured, Singaporeans accept neighbours and work mates of other faiths. Since state policies have been respectful of religious sanctions in marriage preferences, in the private sphere, particularly when it comes to who one prefers to marry or have as a relative, there is considerably less acceptance of those of other religions.

The fact that interactions in the public sphere have generally been free of prejudice is well established in previous research. Norman Vasu and Yolanda

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3. The declaration is as follows: "We, the people in Singapore, declare that religious harmony is vital for peace, progress and prosperity in our multi-racial and multi-religious Nation. We resolve to strengthen religious harmony through mutual tolerance, confidence, respect, and understanding.
We shall always recognise the secular nature of our State, promote cohesion within our society, respect each other's freedom of religion, grow our common space while respecting our diversity, foster inter-religious communications, and thereby ensure that religion will not be abused to create conflict and disharmony in Singapore."

Chin in their report, "The Ties that Bind and Blind" (2007) provided an account of the extent to which race and religion have had an effect on the "preferred interaction patterns" of Singaporeans, and assessed the implications on society. Sticking to what the authors regarded as a rigorous 90% approval standard, the study found that religious differences did not have any bearing on Singaporeans' interactions in the public domain. However, they did find that religion affected attitudes towards the formation of very close personal relationships such as marriage partners. In their follow-up study they argued that the survey data they had collected in 2007 and 2011 did not show evidence that Singaporeans — particularly Malays, Christians and Chinese — were becoming less inclusive (Chin & Vasu 2012).

Although there are a number of publications that provide overviews and in-depth ethnographic data on various religious traditions in Singapore and the changes associated with religiosity (Lai, 2007; Sinha 2005), there are few publications of large-scale surveys in Singapore documenting the population's religious beliefs and how these relate to life orientation, moral beliefs and inter-religious relations. Significant attempts to aggregate such information include Tong's (2007) book, *Rationalising Religion* where he used interviews, census data, government reports and survey data to shed light on the religious changes in the country, in particular the greater shift to Christianity by the educated Chinese population.

This paper[4] attempts to fill the gap for more recent survey data examining religion in Singapore by providing data on Singaporean residents' religious affiliations, religiosity, religious beliefs, participation in religious activities, and their views on a number of issues related to inter-religious relations and morality. An appreciation of the attitudes and beliefs of the population on religious issues is important for considering the future of inter-religious relations in Singapore. In light of global developments, identifying possible sites of tension within the population is crucial for better policymaking so as to safeguard social cohesion.

Data for this report is derived from the IPS Survey on Race, Religion and Language. Data collection for the project ended in April 2013 and was conducted by an established market research company. In total, 4,131 Singaporean residents, most of who were Singaporean citizens, participated in the study. Trained interviewers visited the households of those who were selected for the study, explained the study and dropped off a survey which they picked up later. If the respondent was not able to read or write in one of the four official languages, the interviewer would record his or her responses. Allowing the respondent to complete the survey on their own reduced the effect of interviewer bias.

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4. This report represents the third major release of the IPS Survey on Race, Religion and Language. The first release was part of a collaboration with OnePeople.sg to establish the IPS-OnePeople.sg Indicators of Racial and Religious Harmony, which was released on 11 September 2013. Slides from that presentation can be accessed at: http://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2013/08/Forum_-Indicators-of-Racial-and-Religious_110913_slides.pdf
The second release was at Singapore Perspectives 2014. Slides from that presentation can be accessed at: http://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2013/12/SP2014_Insights-from-the-IPS-Survey-on-Race-Religion-and-Language.pdf

There were two portions to this sample: a representative sample and a booster sample. For the representative sample, interviewers visited 5,000 households whose addresses were randomly generated by the Department of Statistics. A total of 3,128 eligible respondents from these households finally participated in this study. The booster sample of 1,003 minorities was obtained through selecting minority households living close to those identified in the main sample. For the purposes of this report, only responses from the representative sample are provided. However, results that reflect the views of those from minority religions in the representative sample have been compared with the booster sample to ensure that the figures are within acceptable levels of deviation.

2.   RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHICS[5]

On the whole, the profile of respondents in the survey mirrored the national population with some deviation common to many national surveys. There were more of those who were better educated and younger in the survey compared to the national population.

Slightly more females (52.4%) were surveyed compared to males (47.6%), which deviate slightly from the gender ratio of the total national population, as shown in Figure 2.1.

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5. All data on the national resident population are published by the Singapore Department of Statistics, which can be accessed via www.singstat.gov.sg. The numbers reflect 2013 data unless otherwise stated.

Figure 2.1: Gender ratio (%)
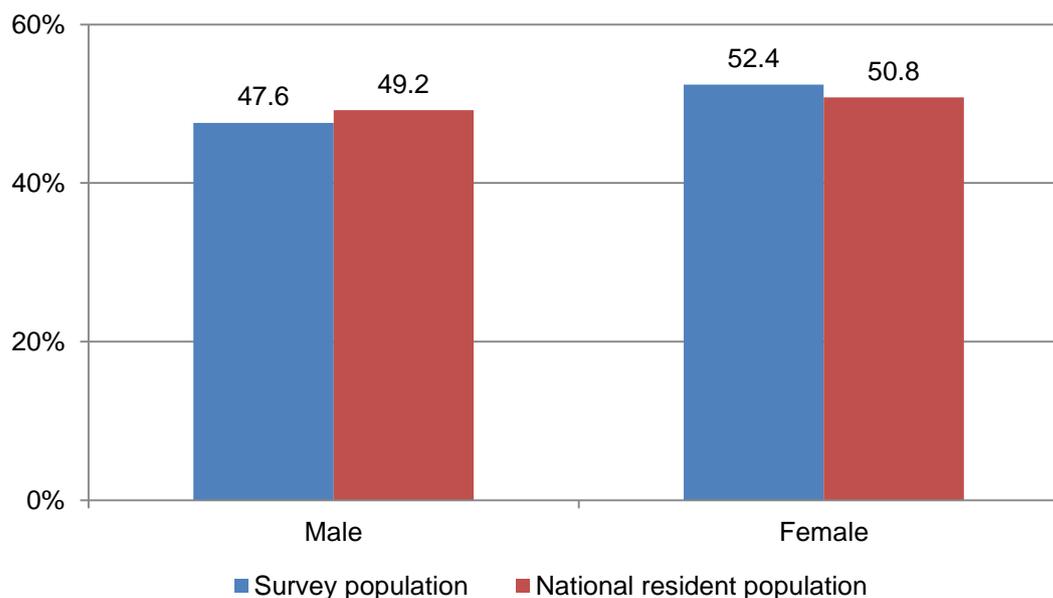
As shown in Figure 2.2, the two largest age groups were those between 35 and 49 years old (34.4%) and those between 20 and 34 years old (29.5%). Since the survey population only included respondents aged 18 and above, the percentage of those below 20 was much lower compared to that of the national resident population. For those who were above the age of 19, the survey population had larger proportions of people belonging to the younger age groups compared to the national population, which reported 21.3% aged 20 to 34 years old, and 24.3% aged 35 to 49 years old.

Figure 2.2: Age composition (%)
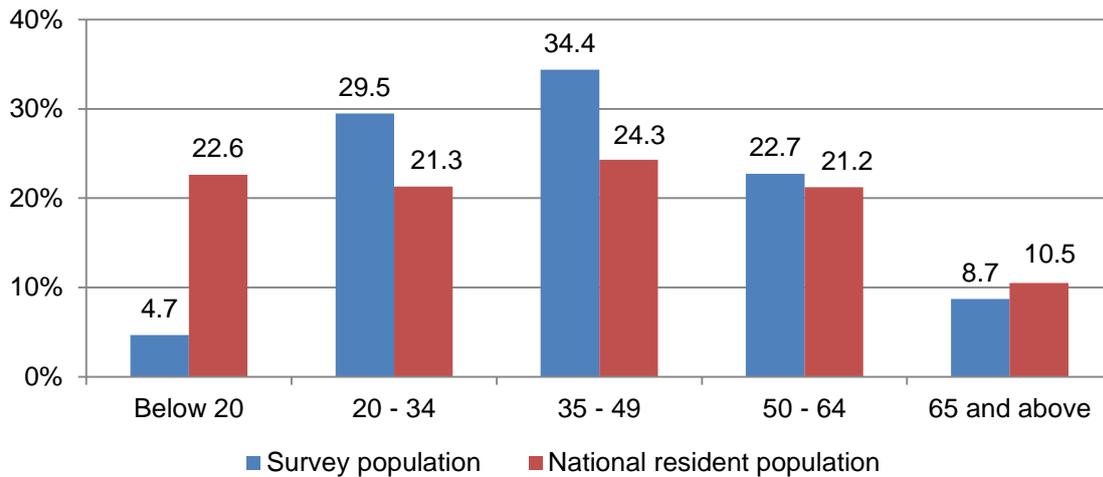
Over seven in 10 respondents (72.6%) were Chinese, while 12.9% were Malays, 11.3% were Indians, and 3.2% indicated that they belonged to other ethnic groups (Figure 2.3). The ethnic distribution of the survey population was very similar to that of the national resident population.

Figure 2.3: Ethnic composition (%)
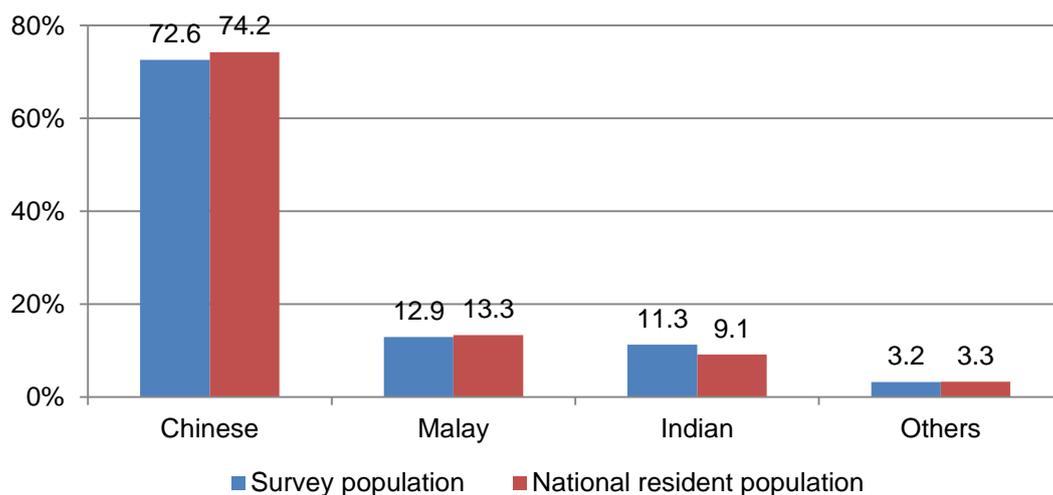
As shown in Figure 2.4,[6] in terms of education level, respondents holding secondary or ITE qualifications made up the largest group at 33.3%, while the smallest group were those with below secondary education (13.1%). Compared to the distribution of educational attainment within national resident population in 2012, the survey population consisted of a higher proportion of people who had at least secondary education. This might be related to the lower number of older respondents, who were much less educated compared to the younger generations.

Figure 2.4: Educational attainment (%)
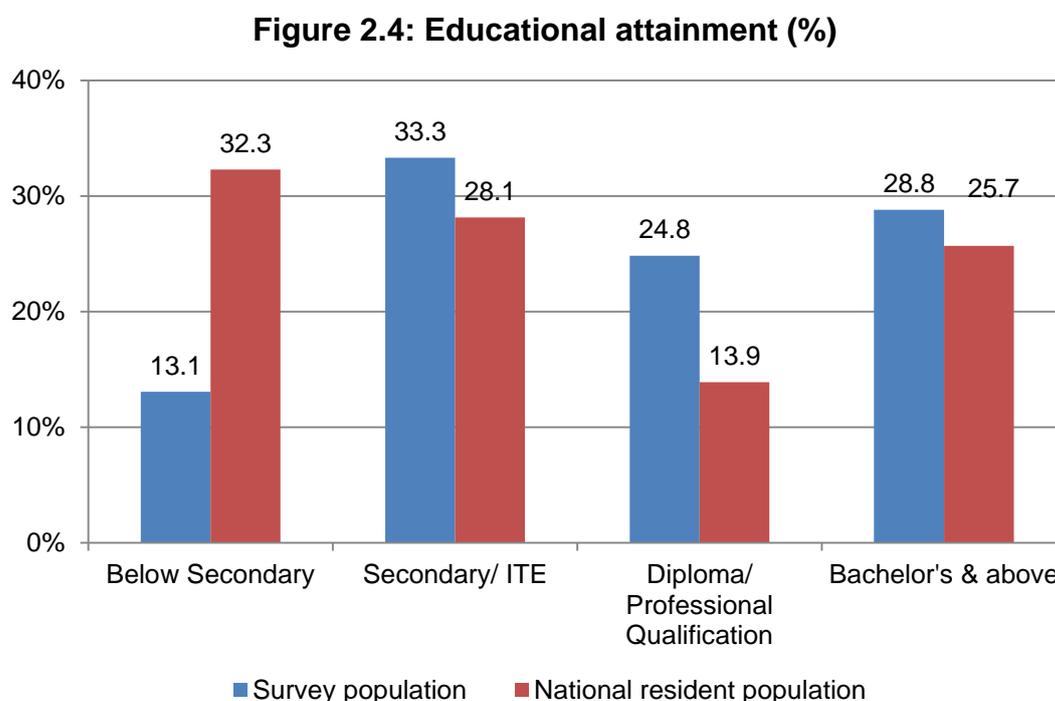
Nearly half the respondents (42.4%) reported monthly incomes from $1,500 to $3,499 as seen in Figure 2.5.

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6. Statistics for the national resident population were taken from the 2012 figures released by the Department of Statistics.

Figure 2.5: Gross monthly income (%)
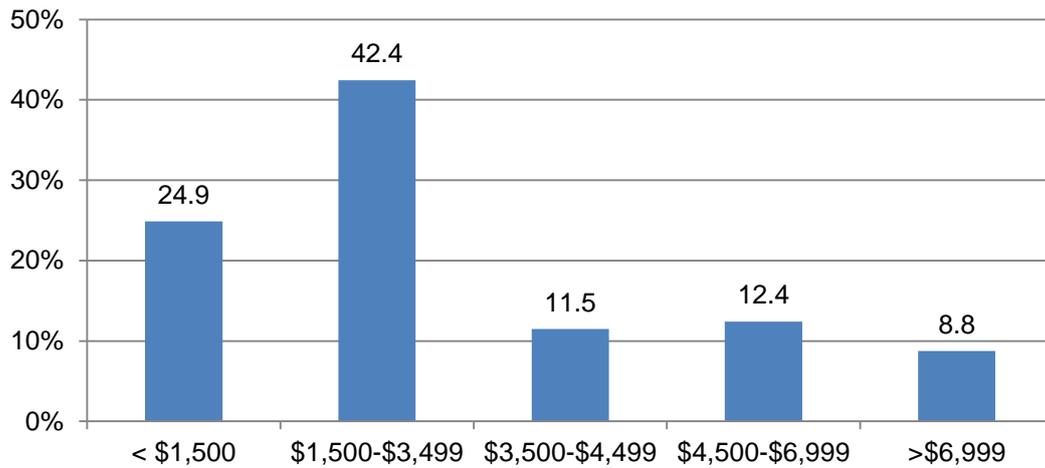
More than half of the respondents surveyed (56.4%) lived in three- or four-room HDB flats, while a small proportion (6.0%) stayed in one- or two-room flats as seen in Figure 2.6. The distribution of housing types was roughly similar to the total resident population, which had 5% in one- or two-room flats, 51.6% in three- or four-room flats, and 42.8% in other larger housing types.

Figure 2.6: Type of housing (%)
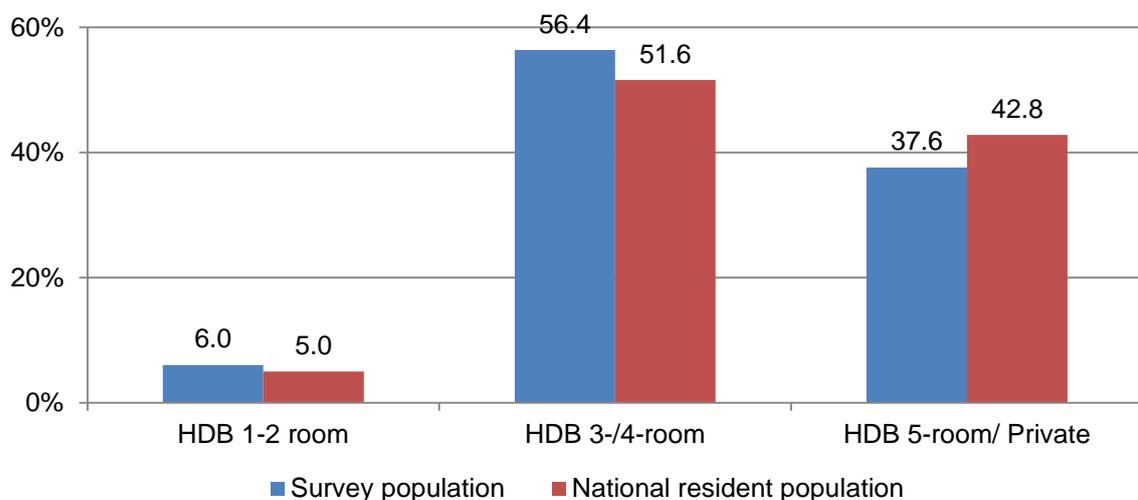
There were 26.3% among those surveyed who claimed that they were Buddhists, followed by 20.9% who were Christians (10.3% Roman Catholics and 10.6% Protestants). Similar proportions of respondents indicated that they were either Muslims (15.6%), Taoists (14.8%), or did not subscribe to any particular religion (14.8%). Hindus constituted 6.8% of the sample while there was less than 1% who subscribed to other religions such as Sikhism, Soka and Baha'ism. Besides a relatively lower proportion of Buddhists compared to that of the national resident population (33.3%), the distributions of religious affiliation for both populations were relatively similar. These are all clearly illustrated in Figure 2.7.[7]

Figure 2.7: Religious affiliation (%)
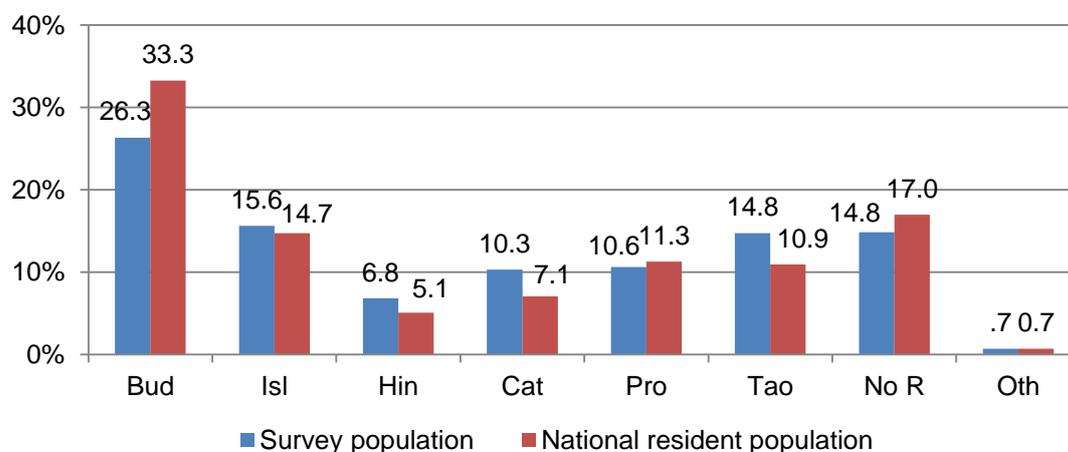
Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Hin – Hindu; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion; Oth – Other religion.

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7. Statistics for the national resident population were taken from the 2010 Census of Population released by the Department of Statistics.

3. RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AND RACE

Based on a recent analysis by the Pew Research Centre (2014), Singapore is ranked the world's most religiously diverse country. It is therefore not surprising to find a mix of religious affiliations even within the same racial group.

Table 3.1: Self-identified religious affiliation by racial groups (%)

	Chinese	**Malay**	**Indian**	**Others**	**Total**
Buddhism	34.8	0.8	4.1	16.2	26.4
Islam	0.6	97.2	19.2	13.1	15.6
Hinduism	0.0	0.3	58.9	4.0	6.8
Catholicism	10.9	0.8	9.0	38.4	10.3
Protestantism	13.3	0.3	4.4	14.1	10.6
Taoism	20.2	0.3	0.3	0	14.8
No religion	19.9	0.3	1.5	7.1	14.9
Other religion	0.2	0.3	2.6	7.1	0.7

As shown in Table 3.1, Malays displayed the greatest religious homogeneity, as nearly all (97.2%) Malay respondents in the survey reported that they were Muslim. In contrast, there was greater religious diversity among the Chinese and Indians.

A third of the Chinese were Buddhists (34.8%), where most of them categorised themselves as Theravada Buddhists and nearly a quarter indicated that they were Christians (13.3% Protestants and 10.9% Roman Catholics). Taoists constituted a fifth (20.2%) of the Chinese surveyed while a similar proportion (19.9%) claimed to have no religion.

Among the Indians, more than half (58.9%) were Hindus, while a large minority were Muslims (19.2%). In addition, nearly one in 10 (9%) were Roman Catholics while 4.4% were Protestants.

While most of those surveyed were born into their religion, some (27.5%) had switched to other religions or were now no longer affiliated with any religion.

Table 3.2: Respondents who were born into their religions (%)

| Bud	Isl	Hin	Cat	Pro	Tao	No R	Oth	Total
79.3	98.3	98.6	52.5	29.5	89.4	48.9	81.0	72.6

Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Hin – Hindu; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion; Oth – Other religion.

As seen in Table 3.2, nearly all Muslims (98.3%) and Hindus (98.6%) were born into their religions. A majority of Protestants (70.5%) were converts and slightly more than half of Roman Catholics (47.5%) and about the same proportion (51.1%) of those who claimed to have no religion were also originally born into other religions.

Table 3.3 below illustrates that in general, Taoists by birth made up a significant proportion of those who chose to convert to other religions. Around half of the converts to Buddhism (50.4%), Protestantism (48.8%) and Catholicism (44.5%) were Taoists by birth. They also took up more than half (51.6%) of the people who decided to give up religious affiliation to any religion.

Table 3.3: Description of religion at birth and current religion among religious switchers (%)

Current Religion / Religion at Birth	Bud	Isl	Hin	Cat	Pro	Tao	No R	Oth	Total
Bud	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	23.4 (32)	23.0 (49)	3.0 (1)	42.1 (53)	25.0 (1)	20.8 (136)
Isl	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.7 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.2 (1)
Hin	1.5 (2)	33.3 (2)	0 (0)	2.9 (4)	2.3 (5)	3.0 (1)	0.8 (1)	0 (0)	2.3 (15)
Cat	4.4 (6)	0 (0)	100 (1)	0 (0)	4.7 (10)	0 (0)	3.2 (4)	25.0 (1)	3.4 (22)
Pro	2.2 (3)	16.7 (1)	0 (0)	2.9 (4)	0 (0)	3.0 (1)	1.6 (2)	0 (0)	1.7 (11)
Tao	50.4 (68)	0 (0)	0 (0)	44.5 (61)	48.8 (104)	0 (0)	51.6 (65)	25.0 (1)	45.6 (299)
No R	41.5 (56)	33.3 (2)	0 (0)	25.5 (35)	20.7 (44)	90.9 (30)	0 (0)	25.0 (1)	25.6 (168)
Oth	0 (0)	16.7 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.5 (1)	0 (0)	0.8 (1)	0 (0)	0.5 (3)
Total	100 (135)	100 (6)	100 (1)	100 (137)	100 (213)	100 (33)	100 (126)	100 (4)	100 (655)

Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Hin – Hindu; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion; Oth – Other religion.
Only 655 respondents answered this question. Numbers in brackets ( ) indicate the actual number of respondents in each cell.

Table 3.4: Some reasons for change in religious status (%)

Respondents' current religion / Reason	Bud	Cat	Pro	No R	Total
My friends/family convinced me to embrace the religion (or lack).	24.8	34.5	33.0	5.3	26.2
I felt dissatisfied with the religion I was born into.	3.8	7.2	12.3	6.7	7.6
The path I have taken gives me greater meaning in life.	29.3	41.7	38.8	14.7	31.0

Note: Bud – Buddhist; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion.

The data from Table 3.4 indicate that religious switching required more of a pull than push factor for the religions with larger number of converts. Less than 15% of the converts in each religious group chose dissatisfaction with their original religion as a reason for the change. In contrast, many converts cited greater meaning in life as their reason for change, including 38.8% of Protestants and 41.7% of Catholics. Friends and family also played a big role for some, especially among those who converted to Catholicism (34.5%) and Protestantism (33%).

4.   RELIGIOUS HARMONY AND RIGHTS

Considering the diversity of religion that exists in Singapore, it is important to establish how the population perceives inter-religious harmony especially under conditions of increasing religiosity. Some contended that increasing

religiosity would destabilise the conditions needed for religious harmony because this might lead to social exclusivism and intolerance.

Based on the survey results, two-thirds (66.6%) of respondents agreed that in Singapore, people of different religions lived in harmony. Just over a third of the respondents (38.5%) believed that increasing religiosity among religious groups could harm religious harmony.

Respondents were asked if religious groups should be given more rights than those they have now and if religious groups should be able to spread their teachings in public areas.

From Table 4.2, a minority, or about a quarter of respondents (23.7%), felt that religious groups should have more rights than they currently have.

Less than a third of Muslims (30.7%) and a quarter of Protestant Christians (25.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that religious groups should have more rights than they currently have. Taoists (16.3%) and those who were not religiously affiliated (20%) had the least proportion of those who agreed or strongly agreed. Almost 30% of Muslims and Protestants agreed or strongly agreed that religious groups should be able to spread their teachings in public areas, with only 17% of those with no religion agreeing to this. These figures indicate that for the most part, religious people are agreeable to the amount of religious rights and freedoms that are accorded to them in Singapore.

Figure 4.1: Agreement on statements on religious harmony (%)[8]

Legend:
- ■ Strongly disagree/Somewhat disagree
- ■ Somewhat agree
- ■ Agree/Strongly agree

Data:
- In Singapore, people of different races live in harmony: 4.1 / 28.4 / 67.5
- In Singapore, people of different religions live in harmony: 4.3 / 29.1 / 66.6
- Increasing religiosity among religious groups could harm religious harmony: 28.5 / 33.0 / 38.5

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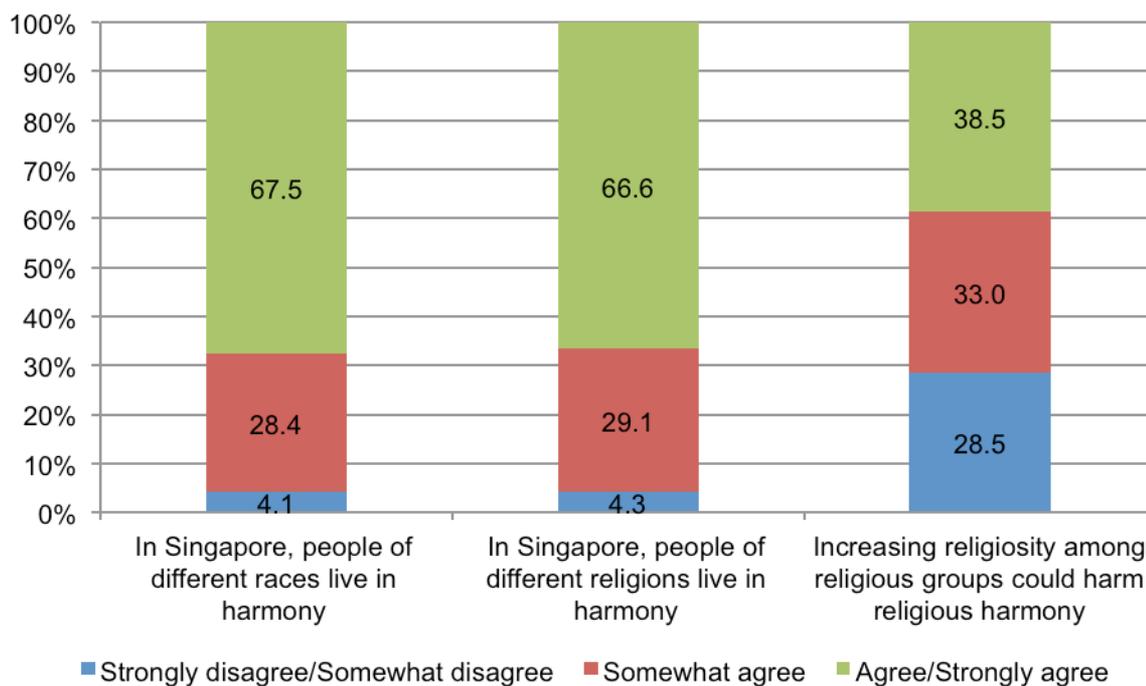
8. The option, "somewhat agree" should be treated as the middle category. As such those who choose "somewhat agree" should be regarded as those who were ambivalent about an issue. In some surveys this option would have read, "neither agree or disagree".

**Table 4.2: Agreement on items on religious harmony and rights in Singapore,
by religious affiliation (%)**

	Bud	Isl	Hin	Cat	Pro	Tao	No R	Oth	Total
In Singapore, people of different races live in harmony	68.8	66.2	66.8	61.3	69.1	69.6	67.4	85.7	67.5
In Singapore, people of different religions live in harmony	66.3	67.2	67.3	64.3	69.4	69.4	63.7	70.0	66.7
Increasing religiosity among religious groups could harm religious harmony	41.7	31.4	41.3	39.7	34.1	41.0	37.5	60.0	38.5
Religious groups should be given more rights than those they have now	24.4	30.7	22.1	25.4	25.9	16.3	20.0	25.0	23.7
Religious groups should be able to spread their teachings in public areas	21.3	28.3	13.5	23.3	29.9	14.1	17.0	20.0	21.3

Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Hin – Hindu; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion; Oth – Other religion.

5.   REPORTING INFRACTIONS TO AUTHORITIES

Living in a multicultural context requires sensitivity in dealing with diversity. This is especially in the age of the Internet where most of what we say or do has the potential to reach millions across the globe. Self-policing aside, the Singapore government also intervenes in some cases where it deems necessary. In fact 70.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the statement, "The government is responsible for racial and religious harmony in Singapore." A number of questions in the study asked if responsible Singaporeans should report certain offensive actions to the relevant authorities. These series of statements were used to provide an indicator to the extent that the survey respondents looked to the state as a guardian of religious harmony.

Looking at Figure 5.1, we can see that about two-thirds of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it was important to report to the authorities any infractions that threatened religious and racial harmony.

**Figure 5.1: I should report to the relevant authorities if
the following happens... (%)**

	Strongly disagree/Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree/Strongly agree
When someone posts something on the Internet (e.g. a picture, commentary) poking fun at racial or religious groups	15.0	21.9	63.1
When someone insults (e.g. verbally or through physical actions) another racial or religious group in a public setting	13.6	20.9	65.5
When a leader of a racial or religious group puts down another religious or racial group in the company of only his/her own followers	14.2	18.4	67.3
When you see or receive materials (e.g. printed, or posted online etc) criticising other religious or racial beliefs	14.0	20.8	65.2

Further breaking the question down to religious affiliation, Table 5.2 shows that Muslims and Protestant Christians saw the highest proportion of respondents, followed closely by Hindus and Taoists who agreed or strongly agreed with the need to report to the relevant authorities if there was an infraction that threatened religious harmony.

Table 5.2: A responsible citizen should report to the relevant authorities if the following happens…(%)

	Bud	Isl	Hin	Cat	Pro	Tao	No R	Oth	Total
When someone posts something on the Internet poking fun at racial or religious groups	59.2	70.8	63.9	59.6	68.5	66.1	57.2	57.9	63.1
When someone insults another racial or religious group in a public setting	60.2	71.3	68.3	64.5	71.9	69.0	58.9	66.7	65.3
When a leader puts down another religious or racial group in the company of only his/her own followers	62.3	70.1	68.6	69.9	70.4	71.6	64.9	61.1	67.3
When you see or receive materials criticising other religious or racial beliefs	60.3	68.6	69.2	67.6	70.9	67.7	60.3	61.1	65.2

Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Hin – Hindu; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion; Oth – Other religion.

Perhaps the well-publicised incidents over the last few years, where netizens had reported various infringements on racial and religious harmony to the authorities, have set the tone for respondents to believe that such action is appropriate (Feng, 2010).

6. RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND ORIENTATION

Having established that Singaporeans perceive healthy levels of religious harmony in Singapore, are satisfied with the amount of religious rights they

have and see state authorities as the recourse to deal with infringements of harmony, we now turn to examine Singaporeans' personal religiosity. First, how important is religion as part of a person's overall identity? While it is obvious that those who claim to have no religion see it as unimportant, it is not clear whether people of different religions view the salience of religion similarly.

Moreover, it is important to evaluate whether religion continues to function as a force to inform people's decision-making and provide a source of emotional security. All these have implications on how they view issues that may relate to their religious identities.

We can see from Table 6.1 below that more Muslims, Protestants, Roman Catholics, Hindus and those who were from several smaller religions ranked religion as important or very important to their identity, compared to Buddhists and Taoists. There were more Muslims (67.6%) who reported that religion was very important to their identity compared to 26.9% of Roman Catholics and 44.1% Protestants.

Table 6.1. Importance of religion to overall sense of identity (%)[9]

	Bud	Isl	Hin	Cat	Pro	Tao	No R	Oth	Total
Unimportant	10.5	1.7	6.2	7.3	3.4	11.3	41.1	0	12.3
Somewhat unimportant	12.0	1.3	6.7	3.2	5.2	14.4	16.9	4.8	9.4
Somewhat important	27.1	7.1	19.6	21.5	12.7	28.6	24.8	19.0	21.2
Important	38.5	22.4	38.3	41.1	34.6	34.4	14.1	38.1	31.6
Very important	12.0	67.6	29.2	26.9	44.1	11.3	3.1	38.1	25.5

Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Hin – Hindu; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion; Oth – Other religion.

Even among those who declared that they had no religion, a portion of them claimed that religion was important to their lives. This indicates that for at least a portion of those who are unaffiliated, religion continues to be important, but they have not chosen to commit to a particular religious identity.

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9. The option "somewhat important" should be treated as the middle category. As such, those who choose "somewhat important" should be regarded as those who were ambivalent about an issue.

Figure 6.2: Religious orientation (%)[10]
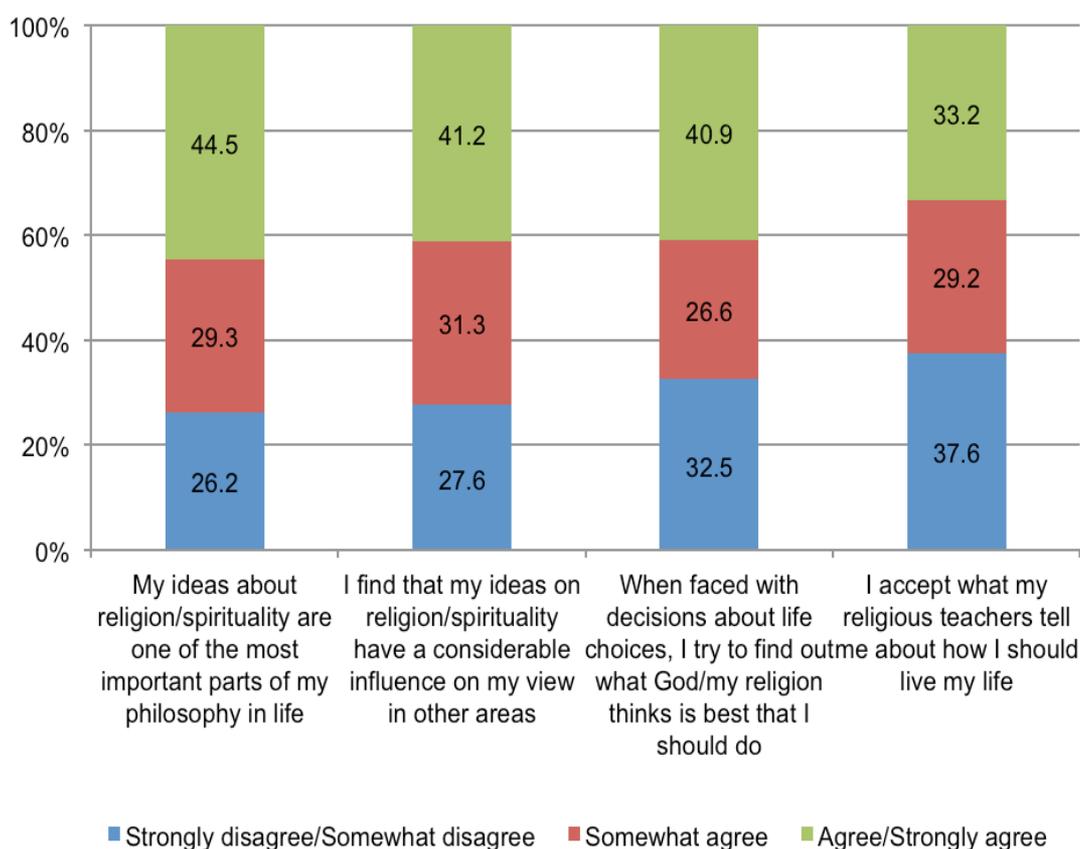
We can deduce from the figures in Table 6.3 below that on the whole, about four out of 10 respondents agreed or strongly agreed to various statements that indicated the importance of religion in ordering their lives. More Muslims and Christians were among this group. About three quarters of Muslims (75.5%), around the same proportion of Protestants (72.6%) and more than half of Roman Catholics (58.7%) felt that their philosophies in life were largely

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10. The option "somewhat agree" should be treated as the middle category. As such, those who choose "somewhat agree" should be regarded as those who were ambivalent about an issue. In some surveys this option would have read, "neither agree or disagree".

Table 6.3: Religious orientation based on religious affiliations (%)

	Bud	**Isl**	**Hin**	**Cat**	**Pro**	**Tao**	**No R**	**Oth**	**Total**
My ideas about religion / spirituality are one of the most important parts of my philosophy in life.	35.8	75.5	47.4	58.7	72.6	28.2	11.6	61.9	44.6
I find that my ideas on religion / spirituality have a considerable influence on my view in other areas.	34.5	64.9	36.5	55.4	72.3	26.2	12.5	38.1	41.1
When faced with decisions about life choices, I try to find out what God or my religion thinks.	32.7	72.1	34.4	59.0	72.9	21.7	8.7	66.7	41.0
I accept what my religious teachers tell me about how I should live.	28.1	59.9	32.2	41.3	58.3	16.6	6.7	42.9	33.2

Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Hin – Hindu; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion; Oth – Other religion.

shaped by their ideas of religion and spirituality. For all these three groups, a majority claimed that their religious beliefs influenced their views in other areas. In the case of Protestants, 72.3% reported such influence while 64.9% of Muslims and 55.4% of Roman Catholics acceded to this. Nearly three-quarters of Muslims (72.1%) and Protestants (72.9%) turned to God or their

religion when faced with life decisions while 59% of Roman Catholics claimed this.

In addition, Table 6.3 also informs us that religious teachers played a significant role in influencing how Muslims (59.9%) and Protestants (58.3%) lived their lives. Among the other religious groups, religious leaders seemed to be less influential, with about 41.3% of Roman Catholics and 32.2% of Hindus agreeing or strongly agreeing that they accepted what their religious leaders told them about how to live their lives.

Table 6.4: More items on religious orientation (%)

	Bud	**Isl**	**Hin**	**Cat**	**Pro**	**Tao**	**No R**	**Oth**	**Total**
My spiritual beliefs give meaning to my life's joys and sorrows.	36.7	74.1	46.6	59.5	78.4	24.9	10.7	76.2	44.7
Without a sense of spirituality, my daily life would be meaningless.	29.0	68.0	40.2	52.5	72.6	19.7	8.3	66.7	38.8
Many people as possible should embrace and believe in my religion.	25.5	48.3	19.6	34.3	57.3	20.8	7.3	38.1	29.6

Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Hin – Hindu; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion; Oth – Other religion.

As seen in Table 6.4, Protestants had the most alignment between their spirituality and daily lives. Nearly eight in 10 (78.4%) felt that their spiritual

beliefs gave meaning to their life's joys and sorrows, and 72.6% said that their beliefs made daily life meaningful. Correspondingly, around half of Protestants (57.3%) felt that more people should embrace their respective religions. This pattern of response was similarly observed among Muslims although there was slightly lesser consensus about these matters. Taoists displayed weaker alignment between spirituality and daily life, with 24.9% saying that their religious beliefs brought meaning to life's joys and sorrows; 19.7% agreeing that spirituality made life meaningful; and 20.8% agreeing that more people should embrace their religion.

7.   SUPERNATURAL BELIEFS AND EXPERIENCE

Some anthropologists view religion as a cultural system that organises beliefs, myths, symbols and narratives (Geertz, 1993, pp.90-91). This system is meaningful to its adherents and provides them an understanding of the world around them, especially the supernatural realm. However, religions vary in their interpretations of the supernatural. Such supernatural beliefs are also not exclusive to the religious — they may also hold true for those who do not subscribe to any particular religion.

Table 7.1 below presents that the belief in the existence of God was the most commonly accepted supernatural belief across all groups. This was more significant among religions like Muslim, Hinduism and forms of Christianity, where the belief in God or deities is a central theme. In contrast, Buddhists (58.9%) and Taoists (52.5%) were less inclined to believe in the notion of God, consistent with some interpretations of these religions.

Table 7.1: Religious beliefs (%)

	Bud	Isl	Hin	Cat	Pro	Tao	No R	Oth	Total
God	58.9	92.9	92.3	91.1	96.9	52.5	21.2	76.2	67.5
Satan	15.0	63.5	16.3	50.3	64.9	12.6	6.2	9.5	29.9
Heaven	57.5	82.2	45.0	79.3	87.1	52.5	18.4	38.1	59.2
Hell	52.5	77.1	33.5	60.5	70.2	45.0	14.8	23.8	50.9
Spirits	50.3	51.8	35.4	53.2	61.2	49.7	19.7	33.3	46.2
Angels	20.9	62.1	25.4	63.1	72.6	16.6	8.8	38.1	35.2
Demons	21.4	48.2	17.7	40.8	51.4	13.7	6.4	23.8	27.2
Ghosts	48.5	50.1	26.8	29.3	31.1	45.2	15.7	28.6	37.9
Reincarnation	47.5	16.8	33.0	20.1	6.5	48.8	13.1	38.1	29.5
Supernatural Powers	24.6	27.0	27.8	25.8	31.4	27.1	12.4	19.0	24.6
None of the above	13.3	4.2	3.3	5.7	0.6	17.3	58.2	14.3	16.3

Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Hin – Hindu; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion; Oth – Other religion.

There was lesser acceptance of evil forces such as Satan and demons, with less than two-thirds of Muslims and Protestant Christians and half of Roman Catholics believing in the idea of Satan, though it is a concept present in the theologies of all three religions.

While most Buddhists and Taoists were sceptical about the presence of demons, 48.5% of Buddhists and 45.2% of Taoists accepted that there were ghosts and about half of them believed that there were spirits. Between 60–70% of Muslims and Christians believed in angels, a belief not shared by most of those from other religions.

In terms of beliefs related to life after death, at least half of Buddhists and Taoists and around 80% of Muslims and Christians believed in heaven. The concept of hell was less popular with nearly 20% of Christians who believed in heaven, perhaps sceptical of the notion of hell. Nearly half of the Buddhists (47.5%) and Taoists (48.8%) and a third of Hindus, believed in the idea of reincarnation. Interestingly 20% of Roman Catholics and 17% of Muslims believed in this idea of re-birth.

Among those who were not affiliated to any religion, slightly less than half (41.8%) of them held onto some form of supernatural belief, with 21.2% within this group also believing that God exists.

The results in Table 7.1 indicate that there is substantial diversity in the personal religious beliefs of those who embrace religion. Moreover, religious labels may not necessarily reflect the religious beliefs people have. There were substantial differences — for instance, only a third of Hindus and half of Buddhists believed in reincarnation, an important tenet in the official formulation of both these religions. Furthermore, substantial numbers (41.8%) of those who claimed to have no religion had some belief in religious or supernatural notions.

Table 7.2: Religious experiences and encounters* (%)

	Bud	Isl	Hin	Cat	Pro	Tao	No R	Oth	Total
A religious vision	10.3	30.7	17.4	17.3	28.7	8.2	3.5	33.3	15.5
Feeling "called" by God/deity to do something	7.6	12.9	16.9	19.5	37.3	6.7	3.1	23.8	12.8
Experiencing a state of religious peace or joy	27.6	40.0	31.4	49.2	64.2	18.3	4.4	57.1	31.3
A healing that could be called miraculous	10.6	18.8	17.4	17.9	29.9	6.2	2.9	28.6	13.5
A dream of religious significance	10.5	18.0	15.5	14.4	18.8	10.2	2.2	14.3	12.0
A life change as the result of a religious experience	13.9	25.2	18.4	31.6	43.5	8.9	2.6	19.0	18.6
A religious conversion experience	6.7	11.8	8.2	21.7	33.3	6.0	3.8	23.8	11.6

Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Hin – Hindu; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion; Oth – Other religion.
*Respondents answered each statement separately.

For some, the strength of religion lies in how it is experienced. Religious experiences provide adherents a deep sense of emotional connection to their faith (Pyysiainen, 2001, p.87). As seen in Table 7.2, among those who identified with a religion, Christians and Muslims were more likely to claim that they had a religious experience. Protestant Christians were most likely to indicate such experiences than Catholics. Nearly half (43.5%) of Protestants

and 31.6% of Catholics reported a life-changing religious experience, while a third (33.3%) of Protestants and 21.7% of Catholics went through a religious conversion experience. In addition, 64.2% of Protestants and 49.2% of Catholics said that they had experienced a state of religious peace or joy, with 29.9% of Protestants reporting that they had also experienced a healing which could be described as miraculous.

Four in 10 Muslims (40%) experienced religious peace or joy, 25.2% had a life-changing religious experience, and 30.7% had instances of religious visions. In contrast, Buddhists and Taoists reported these experiences in much lower proportions, with only 13.9% of Buddhists and 8.9% of Taoists claiming a life change as a result of a religious experience. More than a quarter of Buddhists reported experiencing a religious state of peace and joy.

8.   RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION

Participation in religious activities, both at a communal and personal level is one indication as to how much the individual prioritises his or her religion. In addition, exploring religious literature or media would indicate a proactive interest in one's religion. The reasons for religious participation would also reveal whether people are more interested in spiritual well-being, in seeking guidance, or in seeking to solve problems.

Figure 8.1: Religious participation (%)
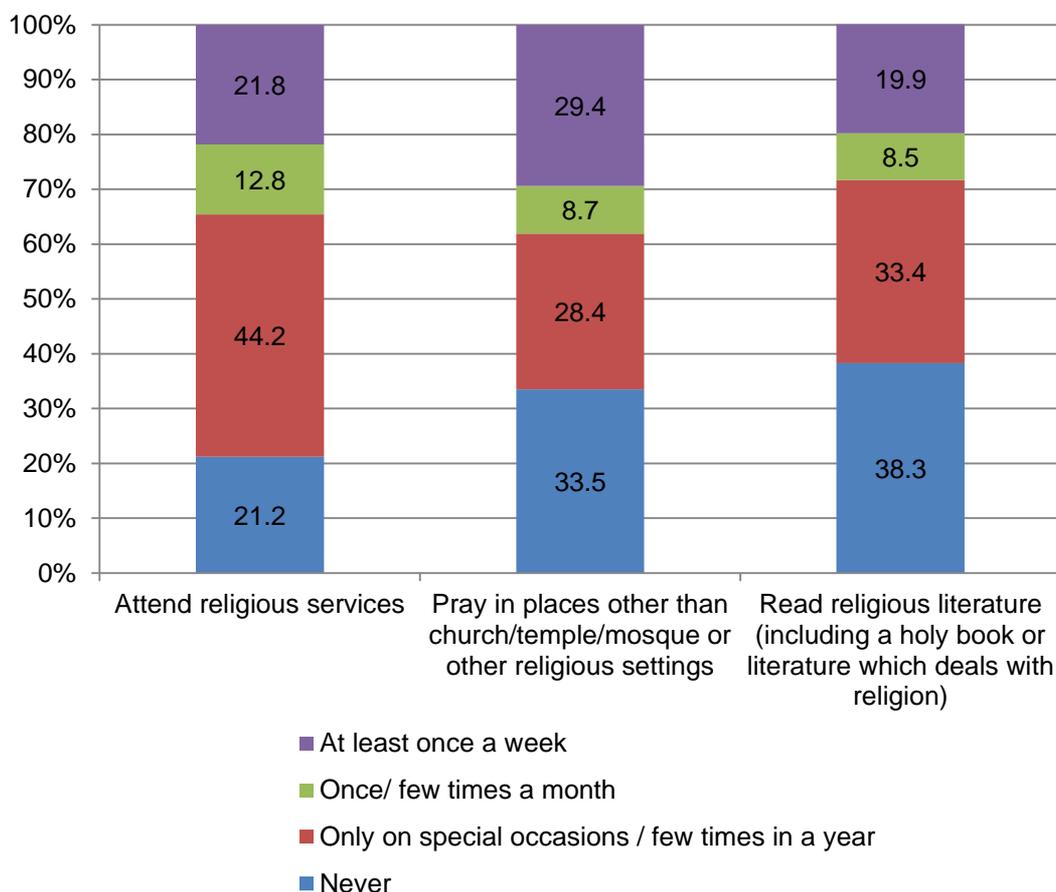
As seen in Figures 8.1 and 8.2 below, nearly 30% of survey respondents participated in some form of religious activity at least weekly. Table 8.3 shows that Protestants (81.5%) and Catholics (70.2%) registered the highest numbers for attending religious services at least once a month. In addition, 76.2% of Protestants said that they prayed in places other than in church and 73.4% read religious literature at least once a month. In comparison, fewer Taoists attended religious services (16.8%), prayed in places besides their place of worship (23.9%), and read religious literature (6.5%) at least once a month.

Muslims were relatively observant, with 48.5% attending religious services at least once a month. Around six in 10 also said that they prayed in other settings (57.7%), read religious scripture or literature (57.1%), and watched or listened to religious media (60.8%) on a regular basis.

Figure 8.2: Frequency of religious activity (%)
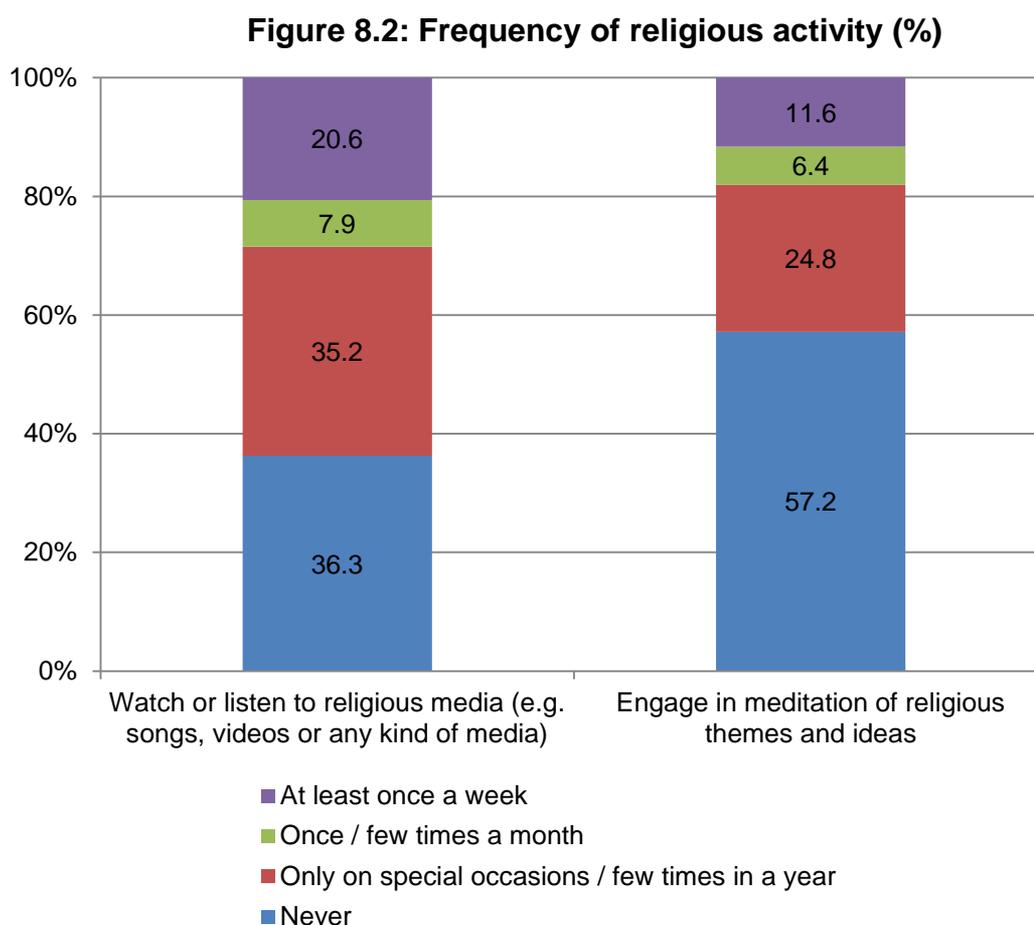
Table 8.3: Engagement with religious activities at least once a month, by religious affiliation (%)

	Bud	Isl	Hin	Cat	Pro	Tao	No R	Oth	Total
Attend religious services	22.7	48.5	26.4	70.2	81.5	16.8	2.7	71.4	34.7
Pray in places other than church / temple / mosque or other religious settings	29.9	57.7	45.0	54.2	76.2	23.9	3.8	71.4	38.2
Read religious literature (including a holy book or literature which deals with religion)	14.8	57.1	20.2	46.8	73.4	6.5	1.6	57.1	28.5
Watch or listen to religious media (e.g. songs, videos or any other kind of media)	14.5	60.8	31.4	41.2	66.7	7.9	2.0	52.4	28.7
Engage in meditation of religious themes and ideas	10.3	32.9	20.6	26.8	45.0	5.6	1.6	38.1	18.1

Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Hin – Hindu; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion; Oth – Other religion.

Table 8.4: Attendance and motivations for attending religious services in the last two years (%)

You attended a religious meeting or have been to a religious place…	Yes
Other than those related to your current religion	25.3
In the hope of healing a medical sickness/disease for yourself or someone else	24.5
In the hope of obtaining direction to make a wish come true	32.3
In the hope of obtaining direction for an important decision	31.8
In the hope of being free from the influence of evil spirits	16.4
In the hope of learning about other religions	16.7

In Tables 8.4 and 8.5 below, we can see that about a third of respondents had been to a religious meeting or place in the hope of obtaining guidance for an important decision (31.8%) or to obtain direction to make a wish come true (32.3%). A quarter of respondents (24.5%) reported that they had been to such a religious site in the hope of obtaining a healing for themselves or others. More Roman Catholics alleged this, with 47.4% of them saying that they had been to a religious place or service to obtain direction for an important decision. More than a fifth of Catholics (21.2%) had actually been to a religious meeting or place to be free from the influence of evil spirits.

A quarter (25.3%) of respondents also mentioned that they had been to religious meetings associated with other religions. Hindus seemed to be the most active in this aspect, with 35.3% indicating that they had done so in the past two years.

The results indicate that a portion, between a quarter to a third of adherents from different religions seek religious meetings and sites to provide them

practical help to deal with life's problems. It also reveals that about a quarter of respondents had actually encountered religious services in a setting different from their own, with 16.7% actually having gone for such a meeting to learn about other religions.

Table 8.5. Attendance at religious meeting in past two years by religious affiliation (%)

	Bud	Isl	Hin	Cat	Pro	Tao	No R	Oth	Total
Other than those related to your current religion	26.1	21.1	35.3	31.4	24.7	26.1	16.6	47.6	25.1
In the hope of healing a medical sickness / disease for yourself or someone else	24.0	24.3	22.1	37.1	36.3	25.3	9.6	31.6	24.7
In the hope of obtaining direction to make a wish come true	37.1	30.3	33.7	43.2	38.6	36.9	10.7	45.0	32.7
In the hope of obtaining direction for an important decision	34.5	32.5	27.9	47.4	45.2	31.3	10.0	50.0	32.2
In the hope of being free from the influence of evil spirits	17.4	22.8	15.1	21.2	19.4	13.4	4.3	25.0	16.2

Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Hin – Hindu; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion; Oth – Other religion.

9.   MORALITY: ATTRIBUTES OF THE "GOOD PERSON"

Religion provides its adherents a framework to evaluate morality. In this report, we examine what respondents of different religious affiliations stated were the attributes of the "good person" and acceptable behaviour.

Table 9.1: To be a good person, one has to… (%)

	Bud	Isl	Hin	Cat	Pro	Tao	No R	Oth	Total
Actively seek equality for all human beings	67.2	77.8	83.3	70.2	68.9	63.9	63.1	81.0	69.5
Teach others your morals	59.6	70.9	62.2	61.9	66.7	51.7	46.6	61.9	59.4
Convert others to your religious faith	16.5	28.2	12.0	29.5	46.1	11.0	9.1	14.3	20.6
Consume or use fewer goods	30.3	34.0	32.4	29.9	36.7	28.8	28.4	23.8	31.1

Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Hin – Hindu; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion; Oth – Other religion.

From Table 9.1, between two-thirds to three-quarters of adherents of different religions viewed that the good person should actively seek equality for all human beings. Muslims (77.8%), Hindus (83.3%), Catholics (70.2%) and those of other religions (81%) were more likely to state this, although the proportion of Buddhists (67.2%) and Taoists (63.9%) and those with no religion (63.1%) were not too far behind. More than half of survey respondents also believed that a good person should teach others their morals. Among Muslims (70.9%) and Protestants (66.7%) there was greater consensus about the importance of doing this.

The issue of environmentally conscious consumption[11] was also surfaced when respondents were asked if a mark of a good person was to consume or use fewer goods. Generally, the data indicates that environmentalism was not strongly associated with the image of the good person. Protestants measured highest for environmentalism with 36.7% of respondents believing it to be important or very important.

For 46.1% of Protestants, converting others to their faith was an important part of being a good person. Muslims and Catholics came closest with slightly less than 30% of them believing that converting others was an important part of being a good person.

While not everyone in the survey agreed with the reality of heaven, it was nonetheless instructive to ask respondents as to who would enter into such a place of bliss. This provides a sense of how theologically exclusive adherents of different faiths were. As seen in Table 9.2 below, only about 30% of Protestants believed that virtuous and good people (regardless of religious beliefs) would likely go to heaven compared to about half of the respondents of other religious affiliations, with 61.2% of Catholics and 59.2% Taoists believing this. Approximately 75% of Protestants believed that those of the same religion as theirs would likely go to heaven while this is the case for 48.9% of Catholics and 51.8% of Muslims.

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11. In the context of this paper, environmentally conscious consumption refers to the act of avoiding overconsumption. For further discussion on religion and environmentally conscious consumption, see Kaynak & Eksi (2011)

Table 9.2: Who will go to heaven? (%)*

	Bud	Isl	Hin	Cat	Pro	Tao	No R	Oth	Total
Your personal friends	13.8	13.7	9.3	15.5	14.6	10.3	5.0	4.8	11.8
Family members	28.8	33.6	21.5	30.7	25.3	23.2	9.8	14.3	25.1
Followers of the same religion as you	22.0	51.8	12.7	48.9	75.3	16.9	3.6	14.3	30.9
Virtuous and good people (regardless of religious beliefs)	58.6	53.4	51.7	61.2	33.9	59.2	29.9	52.4	50.8
Not applicable – I do not believe in a heaven	18.3	7.4%	31.7	6.5	1.9	22.1	60.3	38.1	21.5

Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Hin – Hindu; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion; Oth – Other religion.
* Respondents were allowed to select more than one response. As such numbers in columns do not add up to 100%.

## 10. RELIGIOUS DISAFFILIATION AND MORALITY

When people give up their religious beliefs or faiths, it can be met with some level of unhappiness especially among family members or those in their religious communities. Such emotions sometimes arise because disaffiliation might exclude them from religious activities, which can be important family rituals (Need & Graaf, 1996). For fellow religionists, when someone from their fold gives up their faith, this sometimes raises questions about the strength of their own persuasion.

Figure 10.1: How do you feel when people of the same religion give up their religious beliefs? (%)

■ Not affected at all/Not too affected ■ Quite affected ■ Affected/Very affected
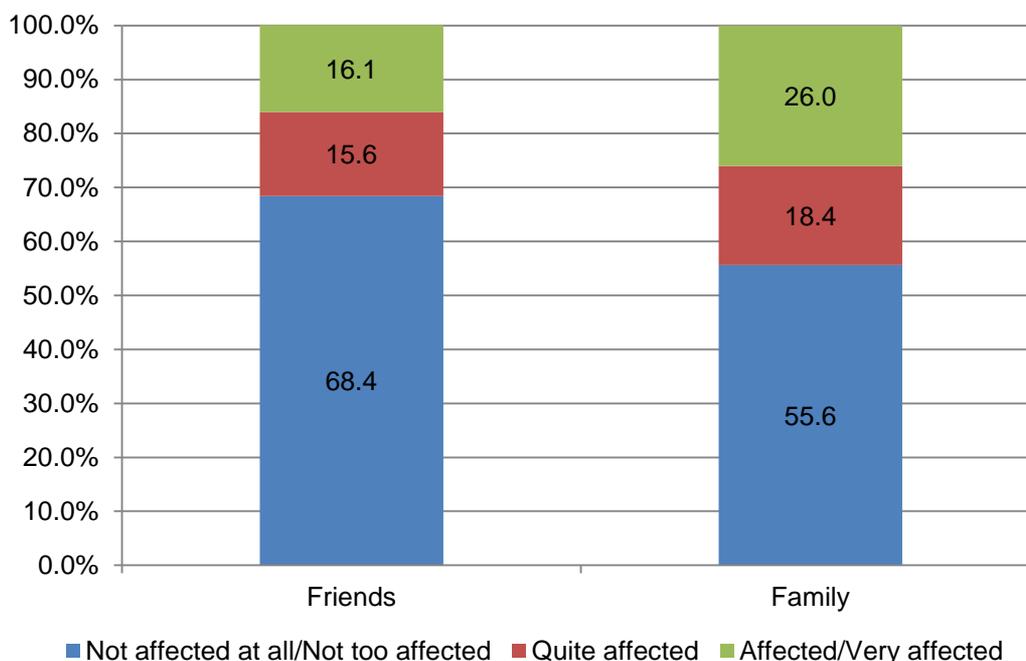
Table 10.2: Proportion affected or very affected by someone giving up their religious beliefs, by religious affiliation (%)*

	Bud	**Isl**	**Hin**	**Cat**	**Pro**	**Tao**	**No R**	**Oth**	**Total**
How affected are you by friends of the same religious group as you giving up their religious beliefs?	6.9	37.7	11.8	17.5	36.8	3.9	1.8	19.0	16.1
How affected are you by family members of the same religious group as you giving up their religious beliefs?	12.1	58.5	22.2	31.4	52.2	10.4	2.8	23.8	26.2

Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Hin – Hindu; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion; Oth – Other religion.
* Respondents were allowed to select more than one response. As such, numbers in columns do not add up to 100%.

Based on Table 10.2, more than half of Muslims (58.5%) and Protestants (52.2%) reported that they would be affected if a family member were to leave their faith, compared to 12.1% of Buddhists, 10.4% of Taoists and 22.2% of Hindus. Fewer among Muslims and Protestants claimed that they would be affected if their friends gave up their religious beliefs.

Figure 10.3: Is it wrong when someone from your religion gives up their religious beliefs? (%)
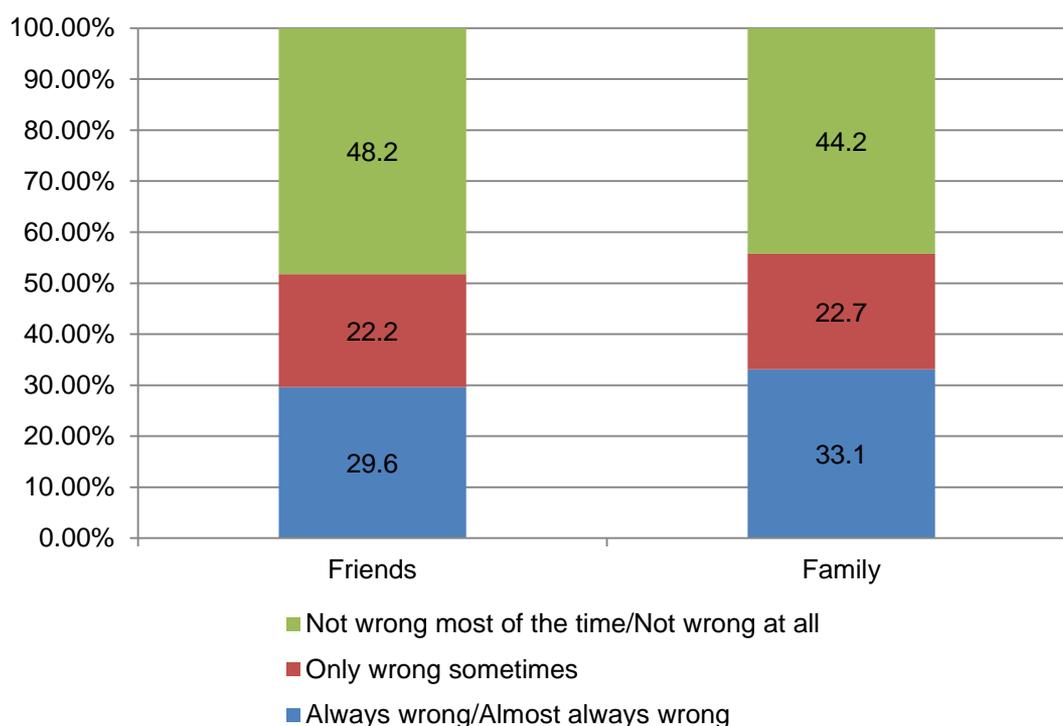
When asked about giving up one's faith, 29.6% of the survey respondents believed it was always or nearly always wrong if their friends did so while 33.1% believed the same if family members did so. Muslims (69.2%) and Protestants (50.3%) were more likely to feel that it was wrong or always wrong when family members give up their religious beliefs, compared to 20% of Buddhists who would feel this way. These are clearly illustrated in Figure 10.3 and Table 10.4.

The results seem to indicate that giving up religious beliefs is more disconcerting among religious groups where there are higher levels of religious participation and identity. In those contexts, family members who leave the faith might disrupt various processes within the family.

Table 10.4: Disapproval of someone giving up their religious beliefs, by religious affiliation (%)

	Bud	Isl	Hin	Cat	Pro	Tao	No R	Oth	Total
Disapproval towards friends of the same religious group as you giving up their religious beliefs	17.5	62.6	25.2	25.3	48.2	15.9	13.7	33.3	29.5
Disapproval towards family members of the same religious group as you giving up their religious beliefs	20	69.2	31.2	30.8	50.2	17.7	15.5	28.6	33.0

Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Hin – Hindu; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion; Oth – Other religion.

Besides an evaluation of how wrong respondents felt about fellow religionists giving up their faith, respondents were asked to weigh in on a series of moral issues. Such moral issues can be sources of contention and it is important to examine whether there is consensus on moral issues across religious groups or whether only some religious groups feel more strongly about these issues.

Table 10.5: Proportion who believed the following acts to be almost always/always wrong *(%)*

	Bud	Isl	Hin	Cat	Pro	Tao	No R	Oth	Total
Sex before marriage	44.3	84.6	67.1	64.2	73.8	44.7	36.8	71.4	56.5
Sex between two adults of the same sex	73.8	93.9	77.8	78.7	85.0	77.6	64.9	76.2	78.2
Sex with someone other than marriage partner	75.0	89.1	82.7	85.9	89.1	78.9	70.0	95.2	80.3
Divorce	35.8	52.6	54.3	54.7	57.9	34.7	30.4	61.9	43.2
Living with a partner before marriage	31.6	74.9	55.3	51.1	60.4	28.0	29.0	71.4	44.4
Pregnancy outside of marriage	65.8	88.1	79.3	76.0	82.8	66.1	62.2	81.0	72.7
Adoption of child by gay couple	56.3	74.0	56.6	62.2	74.9	60.4	48.7	52.4	61.1
Gay marriage	70.3	88.8	71.8	68.0	80.9	71.7	60.2	66.7	72.9
Gambling	59.1	90.8	76.0	74.0	78.4	58.8	61.2	95.2	69.3

Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Hin – Hindu; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; No R – No Religion; Oth – Other religion.

As seen in Table 10.5, less than half of respondents across religious groups disapproved of acts such as living with a partner before marriage (44.4%) and divorce (43.2%). Issues on gay marriage (72.9%), same-sex relations (78.2%), sex with someone other than a marriage partner (80.3%) and

pregnancy outside of marriage (72.7%) saw the highest proportion of respondents stating that such conduct are always or almost always wrong.

For some issues, such as the case of sex between two adults of the same sex, gay marriage and sex with someone other than a marriage partner, there was consensus among different religious groups where the majority believed that the conduct was wrong. Muslims and Protestants tended to be more unified in their positions. For example, in the case of sex between two adults of the same sex, 73.8% of Buddhists, 77.6% of Taoists, 77.8% of Hindus and 78.7% of Roman Catholics believed that such conduct was always or almost always wrong. Among Protestants and Muslims respondents, 85% and 94%, respectively, indicated that this was always or almost always wrong.

For other issues, there was greater diversity, with Protestants and Muslims differing from other religious populations. In the case of sex before marriage, 44.3% of Buddhists and about the same proportion of Taoists believed that such action was always or almost always wrong compared to nearly 85% of Muslims and 74% of Protestants.

In general, among those who claimed to have no religion compared to those with religion, fewer in the former group indicated that certain actions were always or almost always wrong. However, for certain issues both groups were conservative. Nearly 65% of those with no religion believed that sex between adults of the same sex was wrong, 60% felt this way for gay marriage and 70% felt this way about sex with someone other than a marriage partner

11. RELIGIOUS EXCLUSIVISM

While Muslims and Protestant Christians tended to display greater levels of religiosity as a group, did they then also demonstrate greater social exclusiveness compared to other groups? Based on their responses to whether they were comfortable with members of different religious groups in a variety of relationships in the public and private domain, there is little indication of a major difference in the public sphere. We compared Protestant Christians and Muslims to Buddhists since the latter group differed substantially with Muslims and Protestants in terms of religious orientation and participation.

As seen in Table 11.1 below, in the private domain, there were about 95% of Buddhists, Protestants and Muslims who were comfortable with those of their same religion, respectively, as close friends, spouses or in-laws. Protestant Christians and Muslims were however less likely to be comfortable with a spouse who was of another religion compared to Buddhists. Around 63.8% of Buddhists were comfortable with a Protestant Christian spouse, while only 43.4% of Protestants were comfortable with a Buddhist spouse. There were fewer among both groups who were comfortable with a Muslim spouse — 31.7% of Buddhists and 19.3% of Protestant Christians. Much of this discomfort is based on religious sanctions, with Muslim and Christianity encouraging marriages with those of like faith. Those of other faiths are sometimes uncomfortable to engage in such unions as there is greater pressure for conversion when in a relationship with Christians or Muslims.

Table 11.1: How comfortable Buddhists, Protestants and Muslims are with relationships with those of other religions in the private sphere (%)

	Bud	Isl	Cat	Pro	Tao	Hin	Sikh
As your brother/ sister-in-law	96.7 **31.5** *78.7*	51.6 **96.2** *44.2*	80.9 **31.6** *88.3*	80.1 **30.6** *96.6*	87.1 **28.4** *70.1*	53.0 **30.4** *47.3*	49.3 **27.2** *44.7*
As your son/ daughter-in-law	95.3 **24.5** *61.3*	41.2 **94.6** *27.3*	78.0 **25.3** *79.8*	77.8 **24.2** *94.6*	83.9 **22.3** *52.3*	43.7 **24.2** *31.7*	40.6 **20.6** *28.6*
As your spouse	95.8 **20.1** *43.4*	31.7 **94.6** *19.3*	64.6 **22.5** *65.8*	63.8 **22.4** *94.0*	77.3 **19.7** *37.8*	34.9 **19.8** *22.1*	31.6 **17.7** *20.3*
As close personal friends	97.3 **83.4** *91.4*	82.5 **97.6** *84.9*	89.9 **84.0** *95.9*	89.9 **82.5** *97.8*	91.1 **81.3** *89.8*	82.2 **83.1** *82.7*	80.4 **80.6** *82.4*

*Percentages for Buddhist respondents are <u>underlined</u>, percentages for Muslim respondents are in **bold,** percentages for Protestant respondents are in *italics*,
Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; Hin – Hindu; Sikh – Sikhism.

Table 11.2 shows that more than 80% of Buddhists, Protestants and Muslims were comfortable with public sphere relationships with those of other religions. Protestants and Muslims did not differ much from Buddhists in this regard. For instance, 97.2% of Protestants and 92.1% of Muslims were comfortable with a Buddhist colleague while more than 90% of Buddhists and Protestants were comfortable with a Muslim colleague. About 90% of Muslims and Protestants were comfortable with a neighbour who was of a different faith comparable to Buddhists.

Table 11.2: How comfortable Buddhists, Protestants and Muslims are with relationships with those of other religions in the public sphere (%)

	Bud	Isl	Cat	Pro	Tao	Hin	Sikh
As your colleague	<u>97.5</u> **92.1** *97.2*	<u>91.1</u> **98.1** *96.5*	<u>93.3</u> **91.6** *98.1*	<u>92.8</u> **90.1** *98.7*	<u>93.4</u> **89.6** *95.6*	<u>90.5</u> **91.2** *94.9*	<u>89.3</u> **89.8** *94.6*
As your boss	<u>97.8</u> **90.5** *95.0*	<u>85.4</u> **95.9** *88.0*	<u>92.9</u> **91.8** *96.5*	<u>92.2</u> **90.7** *98.7*	<u>93.7</u> **90.0** *91.8*	<u>85.1</u> **88.7** *88.3*	<u>83.8</u> **88.4** *87.9*
As your employee	<u>97.4</u> **91.8** *95.9*	<u>88.4</u> **96.3** *93.3*	<u>93.1</u> **92.0** *97.1*	<u>92.3</u> **91.1** *98.4*	<u>92.9</u> **89.9** *94.9*	<u>88.6</u> **89.3** *92.7*	<u>87.7</u> **89.3** *93.0*
As your next-door neighbour	<u>97.7</u> **93.0** *93.7*	<u>92.3</u> **97.4** *91.7*	<u>93.7</u> **93.2** *97.5*	<u>93.1</u> **92.5** *98.7*	<u>93.9</u> **90.5** *90.8*	<u>89.6</u> **90.5** *89.5*	<u>88.8</u> **90.7** *88.9*

*Percentages for Buddhist respondents are <u>underlined</u>, percentages for Muslim respondents are in **bold,** percentages for Protestant respondents are in *italics*,
Note: Bud – Buddhist; Isl – Muslim; Cat – Catholic; Pro – Protestant; Tao – Taoist; Hin – Hindu; Sikh – Sikhism.

The near universal openness of adherents of all religious traditions in Singapore including Muslims and Protestant Christians, to having relationships with those of other religious faiths in the public sphere is at least partly a result of state policy. State action has ensured that Singaporeans live in peaceful coexistence and tolerate the differences of those of other faiths. The state has adopted a firm approach to preventing social exclusivism in settings ranging from public schools to neighbourhoods. Religious bigotry is firmly dealt with and the state has checked insensitive comments levelled against any religion.

In the private sphere acceptance of those of other religions is comparatively lower. The secular state has not attempted to influence how the religious

population interpret and practice their faith with regards to marriage partner choices.

12. CONCLUDING REMARKS

For the majority of Buddhists, Taoists and Hindus, the influence of religion did not transcend other areas of their lives, unlike in the case of Christians and Muslims. This has implications for inter-cultural understanding. Due to the sheer proportions, there is less probability of meeting a Buddhist who expresses that his or her religion has ramifications for other aspects of life compared to encountering a Christian who professes that he or she makes decisions based on religious convictions. Hence, it is easy to gloss over the fact that a portion of Buddhists, Hindus and Taoists are actually very observant and may have strong positions on matters based on their faith. In the same way, there are likely to be assumptions that Christians and Muslims behave in particular ways if we were to ignore the finding that a quarter of those from these religions may not see their religion as wielding a great influence over their lives. Further, it may be difficult for those who live and experience life without a strong religious orientation, to appreciate why some groups are more pious or allow their religious beliefs to influence other aspects of life. The reverse is also possible. All this calls for greater emphasis on inter-cultural understanding so that different groups can learn to appreciate the heterogeneity in the social landscape and be sensitive to the different needs of groups and moderate their expectations during interaction.

It is widely accepted that religion is highly salient to those from monotheistic religious traditions, such as Muslim and Protestant Christianity, where

frequent interactions with their religious community during weekly services further foster a sense of community and identity. In the case of Hindus and those from smaller religious traditions, their minority status may reinforce a sense of identification with their religious systems in order to maintain group identity. This study further shows that groups that tended to have stronger religious identity were also groups where more religionists would perform religious activities, attend religious meetings and involve themselves in personal religious actions. At the same time there was greater consensus about moral boundaries among those who identified themselves with these religions. The moral community may both police and reinforce such values (Edgell, Gerteis & Hartmann, 2006). Considering that for many Muslims, Protestants and Catholics, a mark of the good person includes the teaching of one's morals, it is important that they temper this with a respect for those who do not share such values. For secular society to function well, it requires that norms be dictated not through religious morality but other universal principles. While some societies in Europe and Asia incorporate religion in politics and governance[12] this is not the case in Singapore. What is then required in this climate of increased religiosity is greater dialogue to achieve coherence between the various principles espoused by different religions and a set of universal principles agreeable to all, including secularists.

Despite the religiosity of different groups, the majority of Singaporean residents agreed that there is religious harmony here. While a third agreed or strongly agreed that increasing religiosity could harm religious harmony, many

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12. For an in depth discussion on religion and politics, see Stepan (2005).

were ambivalent or did not agree to this proposition. This was because current measures put in place by the government to ensure religious harmony have worked well even with heightened religiosity in some circles. This corresponds with the findings of the IPS-OnePeople.sg Indicators of Racial and Religious Harmony, where less than 10% of respondents reported that they had been often upset by overt incidents of religious tension in the past two years.[13] Singaporeans trust the government to manage religious affairs in the public sphere, as shown by their acceptance of state intervention against any form of religious insensitivity. There was corresponding little demand by the majority of the population for more religious rights. The current system is deemed to have worked well to ensure reasonable levels of religious harmony and many religious people accepted the need to make concessions as part of life in a multi-religious society.

While the state of religious harmony continues to be maintained in Singapore, there is no guarantee it will remain as such. There are likely to be challenges. First, vibrant religious centres elsewhere are likely to have some influence on believers in Singapore through constant exchanges and the Internet. Not all such religious innovations are compatible with a society that prioritises peaceful coexistence between different faiths. Able religious leadership is required to help religious adherents mediate religious innovations with considerations of preserving peace. Second, considering immigrant flows from all over the world, there are possibilities for an increase in *intra*-religious

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13. The report on the IPS-OnePeople.sg Indicators of Racial And Religious Harmony which was released on the 11th of September 2013 can be accessed at: http://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2013/08/Forum_-Indicators-of-Racial-and-Religious_110913_slides.pdf

conflicts over issues such as theology, morality and religious practice, since beliefs and practices of a religion can differ depending on its context. Helping new immigrants understand the realities of practising faith in a multi-religious society is crucial. Third, in a postmodern age, religious authority is likely to be dispersed with more splinter groups that have their own interpretation of religion. It is useful that established religious structures continue to be open to incorporate these groups and steer them clear from tendencies that may destabilise religious harmony.

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