Tackling inequality vigorously: Academics give their views

Claire Cahill

General Instructions

1. For each page, synthesize the reading and research by writing in complete sentences in essay format.
   a. Use the green instructions in the notes below each page to focus your research and writing.
   b. Write about each question, prompt, or process provided in those notes.
   c. Write a full page of text with lots of detail (about 250 words).
      i. Don’t generalize so much that your writing is devoid of detail.
      ii. Don’t repeat yourself.
   d. Cite each source by adding a hyperlink in the Title of the Article or law.
   e. Do not change the template:
      i. Text must be 14 point Lato left-justified type.
      ii. Refrain from adding extra margins or double spacing.
      iii. Do not bullet the paragraphs. Write in essay format only.
   f. Add additional pages if you need more room.

2. Add all sources to the Bibliography page.
   a. Include author, year, title, publisher, and URL.
   b. Number or bullet them using the list button.

When in doubt, write to the instructor for clarification using the Canvas Inbox.
Describe the country

The Republic of Singapore is an urban, island country located in the continent of Asia, and it’s current population is around 5,844,170 people, as reported by Worldometers in [Singapore Population](#). This source also reports that the median age is 40.5 years in Singapore. The Singapore Tourism Board released [Faces of Singapore](#) to describe its unique and diverse population and the different ethnic groups include: Chinese, Malay, Indian, Eurasian, and Peranakan. Most of the Singaporean exports are delivered to Asian countries, and a lot of these transactions are “re-exports from the busy Asian economic hub,” as quoted from the article [Singapore's Top 10 Exports](#). This website lists the highest dollar value exports from the country, starting with the top export electrical machinery and equipment, which is 31.3% of the country’s total exports and has a US dollar value of $128.7 billion. This is followed by machinery (including computers), mineral fuels (including oil), optical, technical, medical apparatus, gems and precious metals, and more. From their top exports of circuits and computing machinery, it shows that Singapore has a strong technology infrastructure, providing evidence that it is the leading tech hub in Asia, according to the article [Singapore flexes its standing as Asia’s technology capital](#) The country supports industry connectivity and encourages digital partnerships and drawing on resources. Companies stay focused on innovation and creating groundbreaking technology. Their “lightning-fast, modern IT infrastructure” allows companies to “tap into that infrastructure to easily test and pilot new products as soon as they set up their WiFi network.” This country is competitive and highly skilled, making Singapore is the Asian equivalent of the Silicon Valley, meaning it’s the best place for tech companies in Asia.
Singapore has a healthy, highly-developed economy that is successful and growing. The World Factbook from the Central Intelligence Agency reports “The economy contracted 0.6% in 2009 as a result of the global financial crisis, but has continued to grow since 2010,” and with its competitive global financial and technological influence they have built a strong, structured economy. These statistics gathered are all reports from 2017. The gross domestic product (GDP) of all goods and services is $528.1 billion, with a growth rate of 3.6%. Industries include “electronics, chemicals, financial services, oil drilling equipment, petroleum refining, biomedical products, scientific instruments, telecommunication equipment,” and more, with the production growth rate of 5.7%. The unemployment rate is 2.2%, ranking number 21 when compared to all countries globally. They earn $396.8 billion in exports and they are number 11 worldwide with public debt, which is reported to be 111.1% of GDP. However, “Singapore's public debt consists largely of Singapore Government Securities (SGS) issued to assist the Central Provident Fund (CPF), which administers Singapore's defined contribution pension fund”. An article Singapore's Digital Economy gunning for four key areas details how the country is using “Immerse Media”, “Artificial Intelligence and Data Science”, “Cybersecurity”, and “Internet of Things and future communications”. As for the Singaporean society, 33% of citizens are Buddhist, and other religions include Christian, Muslim, Taoist, and Hindu. The languages spoken in Singaporean homes are English, Mandarin, other Chinese dialects including Hokkien, Cantonese, and Teochew, Malay, and others. 100% of the population is urban, and “most of the urbanization is along the southern coast, with relatively dense population clusters found in the central areas”. Public expenditures on education take up
2.9% of the GDP, and health expenditures are 4.9%. Singapore’s economy generally has a good reputation, but their diversity in society has caused an inequality that has an impact on the market and services, making it challenging for poor families to afford the needs to life. This is discussed in the article Tackling inequality vigorously: Academics give their views which quotes this: “In a world where income and wealth differentials are huge, in ways that do not reflect people’s contributions, state policies based on redistribution and universal provisions are necessary.” The refactoring of policies is necessary for Singapore to deal with their inequality problems.
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Being one of the wealthiest countries in the world, this leaves Singapore to be vulnerable to challenges with income inequality. The most recent data available from the article *How Big of a Problem is Income Inequality in Singapore?* is from 2012, but the Gini coefficient in that year was 0.381 after taxes and transfers, which means there is a 38.1% inequality rate for Singaporeans. The article ports “while [Singapore] has less income inequality than the United States, China and India, it is significantly more unequal compared to South Korea and Japan”. More recently, *The World Factbook* reports that the Gini index in 2017 for the distribution of family income is .498, ranking number 38 worldwide. Another article gives insight into the *Poverty in Singapore*, reporting that around 10% of their society is living in poverty. This metric is hard to obtain for this country, since “Singapore had never had an official poverty line to measure the rates of poverty in their country.” Although this Asian country has a reputation of being wealthy, lavish, and profitable, there is a considerable income gap and many individuals struggle to find affordable housing and services. The discriminatory family code for Singapore in 2014 is 0.1396, which is considerably low. The legal age for marriage is 0, the parental authority before and after divorce is 0, and the inheritance rights for both women and daughters is 0.5, as reported by *OECD*. Another article from Today on *We need more women in Singapore politics* reports “Currently, 23 per cent of our parliamentarians are women and they make up only around 10 percent of the Cabinet (two out of 21).” A *Global Database on Violence against Women* gives that 6-7% of the population has experienced “lifetime physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence” and there are many groups that advocate against violence for women.
Upon arriving at Singapore, a visitor may never guess that this country full of lavish houses and skyscrapers is dealing with the issue of poverty, yet it is an important problem that the country faces. One implemented solution is a program called KidStart. According to the article Singapore's Poverty Solution, KidStart, this program launched in 2016 and was created to give equal opportunity to children from low-income families. It supports “early childhood education and supports families earning less than $2,500 a month with the additional skills and resources to develop their children’s potential.” KidStart will also incorporate intervention programs for at-risk youth and adults, in addition to parenting workshops and monitoring children's academic progress. This solution involves both early childhood technology education, since the children in the program have opportunities to get exposure to technology at a young age, as well as retraining and re-skilling, which is seen in the intervention programs and parenting workshops.

The Workfare Income Supplement (WIS) “tops up the incomes of those aged 35 and older and earning up to $2,000 a month”, as described by the article NTUC urges higher wage payouts for younger low-income workers. As mentioned in the title, the National Trades Union Congress suggested that the payouts from WIS should be the same for all ages, instead of increasing with age. Since younger individuals are more likely to have even younger dependents, they should have access to funds that will allow them to support those dependents. The NTUC is not calling for the decrease of payouts to older participants, but rather an equal payout to all qualified low-income recipients regardless of age. Aware is a non-profit organization advocating for gender equality and the support of
Initiatives/solutions to poverty

women. This group released a statement in support of NTUC’s movement in the article "Aware backs NTUC’s suggestions to help lower-income workers." This solution involves NTUC, which is a union, and Aware, which is a coop.
Singapore does not have a poverty line, and this makes it difficult for the country to determine where and how to take action. As a high-income developed country, this graphic representing that 26% of individuals are below the poverty line shows that the government’s efforts to target the bottom 20th percentile may not be effective. This poverty rate compares to some of the poorest countries in the world, proving that the Singaporean government needs to consider the severity of the situation and distribute better financial support.

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Ethical Analysis the Country’s Initiatives

While the country of Singapore has some government programs in place to tackle their poverty problem, they have not defined a poverty line, and their Workfare Income Supplement gives more opportunity to older participants, taking away from the younger ones who are likely to have more responsibility if they have younger dependants. For this reason, their actions are unethical according to the Common Good Approach. This ethical approach is defined by Santa Clara University as “the interlocking relationships of society are the basis of ethical reasoning and that respect and compassion for all others -- especially the vulnerable” in the article *A Framework for Ethical Decision Making*. In other words, a community must value each individual’s compassion and make sure they are respected. Liyanga de Silva in her article *The Top 10 Facts About Poverty in Singapore* presents more evidence on why the standard for the Common Good Approach is not met by the country of Singapore. Companies are not required to have a minimum wage, meaning “there is no standard for the lowest an employer has to pay an employee, leaving many laborers without enough money to reach an acceptable standard of living.” This leaves a large number of Singaporeans to be vulnerable to poverty, especially since this high-income country is so expensive to live in. Another factor to consider is the country’s progressive taxation, where anyone with an income less than $20,000 does not have to pay taxes; “however, the cost of living in Singapore also needs to be considered when looking at this minimum income.” Again, this leaves some individuals vulnerable to poverty if their cost of living is too high, so this progressive taxation is not doing enough to contribute to the overall welfare of the community.
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Poverty in Singapore is also more prevalent to the elderly, but the government has not done enough to contribute to increasing their standard for living.


Bibliography


