

SINGAPORE'S  
ACCESSION TO  
UN CEDAW

# SUPPORTED, PROTECTED, EMPOWERED.

---

CELEBRATING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR WOMEN IN SINGAPORE

20TH  
ANNIVERSARY



# 20 YEARS AGO,

on 5 October 1995, Singapore acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (UN CEDAW).

Today, we take pride in how far we have come. In the following pages, we will take you through these achievements, highlighting the progress women in Singapore have made over the years. It is a testament to the effort of various stakeholders working in concert, including individuals, companies and organisations. More importantly, it is an inspiring affirmation of what women can achieve when given access to fair rights and opportunities.

It is an ongoing effort that will continue to need support, commitment and cooperation from everyone to build a society where every individual – man or woman – matters.

## THE CEDAW VISION

---

Adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, CEDAW is an international bill of rights for women that defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

The Convention provides the basis for realising equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in areas such as education, health, employment, etc.

# ENHANCING THE STATUS OF WOMEN

---

Singapore is committed to the advancement of women as integral and equal members of our society. Gender equality in Singapore is founded on the principle of meritocracy, where equal opportunities are available to men and women. Singapore has put in place key legislation that protects women:

## WOMEN'S CHARTER

- Safeguards women's interests in matters relating to marriage and divorce
- Protects women against family violence

## PENAL CODE

- Covers criminal offences in Singapore, including violence, exploitation, trafficking and prostitution

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS ACT

- Protects girls and young women against abuse, neglect and exploitation

## PROTECTION FROM HARASSMENT ACT

- Protects against harassment within and outside the workplace

## EMPLOYMENT OF FOREIGN MANPOWER ACT

- Stipulates terms and conditions of employment to protect the welfare of foreign domestic workers

## EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES ACT

- Prevents exploitation of employees, including foreign domestic workers

## EMPLOYMENT ACT

- Prohibits dismissal of an employee because of her pregnancy or any other grounds deemed to be unfair

# CADENCE'S STORY

---



"My name is Cadence Yu and I'm a proud mother of one. As a working mum, it's assuring to know that I have the support of my employer and my peers, with helpful colleagues who will offer to cover each other's work when we need to attend to family commitments. My job allows me to reach home earlier to cook for my family, while weekends are left for me to spend time with loved ones.

Such a thing was unheard of during our parents' time. Once a woman started a family, she was not expected to continue working. A pregnant woman especially would face difficulty in finding a job or keeping her current one. It's encouraging to see that all these have changed today. With benefits like the Baby Bonus, enhanced maternity leave, the new paternity leave, and recent legislative changes protecting mothers, we mums can get the support we need to balance work and family."

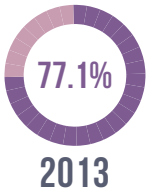
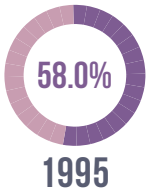
- Cadence Yu,  
Assistant Manager from  
the real estate industry

# THERE'S SO MUCH TO CELEBRATE

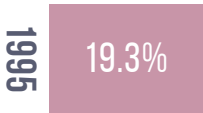


## INCREASED PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMY

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION  
RATE OF FEMALES  
AGED 25 TO 54 YEARS



EMPLOYMENT RATE OF OLDER  
FEMALES AGED 55 TO 64 YEARS



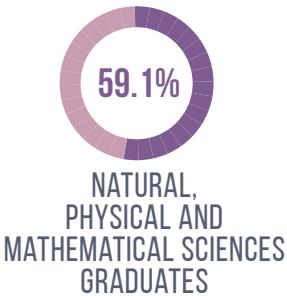
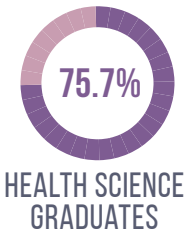
MORE WOMEN IN THE CIVIL SERVICE



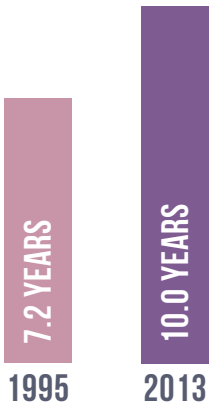
## HIGHER LITERACY AND BETTER EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

WOMEN IN UNIVERSITY  
WELL-REPRESENTED IN SUBJECTS  
TRADITIONALLY VIEWED  
AS MALE DOMAINS

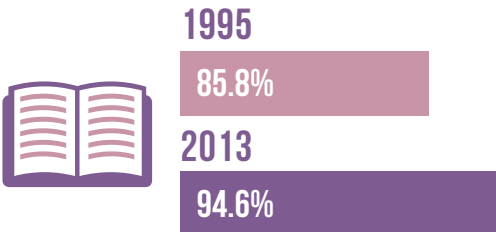
2013



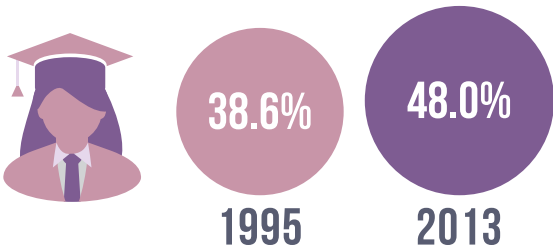
MEAN YEARS OF SCHOOLING  
FOR RESIDENT FEMALES



LITERACY RATE OF  
RESIDENT FEMALES

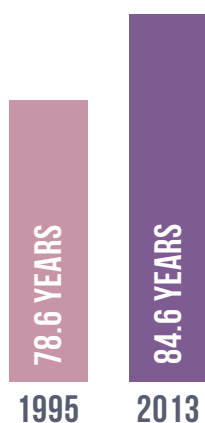


MORE FEMALE UNIVERSITY GRADUATES  
( AGED 25 YEARS AND OVER )

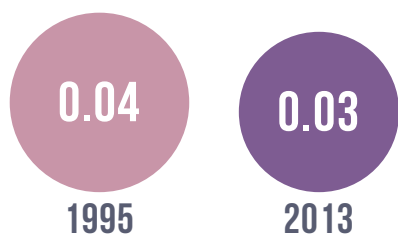


# + BETTER HEALTH OUTCOMES

## LIFE EXPECTANCY OF RESIDENT FEMALES



## MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE ( PER THOUSAND LIVE AND STILL BIRTHS )



## MORE WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT

### WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT



## GOOD INTERNATIONAL RANKINGS



THE UN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2014  
RANKED SINGAPORE 15TH OUT OF 152 COUNTRIES ON  
THE GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX (GII) WITH A SCORE OF 0.090.  
THE GII RANGES FROM 0 (WOMEN AND MEN FARE EQUALLY)  
TO 1 (TOTAL INEQUALITY)

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S MOTHERS REPORT 2014  
RANKED SINGAPORE 15TH OUT OF 178 COUNTRIES  
AND BEST PLACE IN ASIA TO BE A MOTHER.



# ONGOING LASTING

## ACCORDING GENDER-NEUTRAL CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS BY DESCENT

- The **Singapore Constitution** was amended in 2004 to allow overseas-born children to acquire Singapore citizenship by descent from their Singaporean mothers. Children of Singaporean women are hence accorded the same citizenship rights as the children of Singaporean men.

## PROVIDING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL TO REACH THEIR GREATEST POTENTIAL THROUGH EDUCATION

- **Compulsory Education Act** passed in 2000 mandates the first six years of primary education, to ensure that all Singaporean children have equal access to quality education.
- **Quota on intake of female medical students** in the National University of Singapore was lifted from academic year 2003.
- **Vocational training programmes** (ranging from engineering to technical courses) are offered to both Singaporean boys and girls at the Institute of Technical Education and polytechnics.

## ENGAGING MEN IN BUILDING EQUAL PARTNERSHIP IN THE FAMILY

- **Centre for Fathering** was set up in 1999 to champion the role of responsible fatherhood in Singapore by inspiring and equipping young fathers to be more involved in the lives of their children.
- **Association for Devoted and Active Family Men** was set up in 2004 to raise awareness of men's responsibilities and roles in the society – as fathers, husbands and individual members of the family.
- **FamilyMatters@School for Fathers** was launched in 2009 to encourage fathers to be role models to their children and to be more active in their children's school lives.

## COMBATING TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

- The new **Prevention of Human Trafficking Act** criminalises exploitation in the form of sex, labour and organ trafficking.
- **Inter-Agency Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons** was set up in 2010 to adopt a whole-of-government approach to trafficking in persons.

## ADDRESSING WOMEN'S SPECIFIC HEALTHCARE NEEDS

- **BreastScreen Singapore** was launched in 2002 to encourage all women aged 50 years and above to go for a mammography every two years. Subsidised rates and payment through Central Provident Fund's Medisave accounts are available.
- **CervicalScreen Singapore** was introduced in 2004 to encourage women aged 25 years and above to go for pap smears once every three years. A subsidy of up to 60% of the screening cost is available for Singaporeans at all government clinics.
- **Women's Health Advisory Committee** was set up in 2012 to equip women with the knowledge and skills to look after their health.

# EFFORT, IMPACT

NEW INITIATIVES AND POLICIES  
HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED TO  
ELEVATE THE STATUS AND  
FACILITATE THE PROGRESS OF  
WOMEN IN SINGAPORE OVER  
THE YEARS

## PROTECTING WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

- **Maternity protection** was enhanced in 2013 to prohibit an employer from unfairly dismissing an employee throughout her pregnancy.
- **Protecting Foreign Domestic Workers (FDWs)**
  - **Employment of Foreign Manpower Act** was amended in 2012 to impose harsher penalties on errant employers in breach of work pass conditions.
  - **More stringent safety requirements imposed** on employers in 2012 to ensure the safety of their FDW employees.

## STRENGTHENING MEASURES TO TACKLE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- **Family Violence Dialogue Group**, comprising various government agencies, was established in 2001. It is a strategic planning and policy group to facilitate work processes among the agencies providing services for families affected by violence, coordinate public education effort and develop new areas for collaboration on family violence.
- **National Family Violence Networking System** was established in 1996 to provide multiple access points for victims to obtain help.
- **Public education initiatives** are implemented to raise awareness on family violence and encourage help-seeking behaviour.

## SUPPORTING WOMEN TO ACHIEVE WORK-LIFE HARMONY

- **More funding support** for companies to build a **more holistic family-friendly workplace environment**.
- **More childcare centres** to be built from 2013 - 2017.

## SUPPORTING WOMEN IN MOTHERHOOD

- **The Marriage and Parenthood (M&P) Package** was introduced in 2001 and has been enhanced over the years. The 2013 Package aimed to (i) improve access to housing to encourage earlier marriages and births; (ii) ease conception and delivery costs; (iii) further defray child-raising costs; and (iv) help working couples to balance work and family commitments, and encourage shared parental responsibility (e.g. new paternity leave).

## FACILITATING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS

- The **Diversity Task Force regarding Women on Boards** was formed in 2012 to study and develop recommendations to address the under-representation of women on boards of listed companies.
- The **Diversity Action Committee** was established in 2014 to drive measures to push for higher women representation on boards. It comprises illustrious business leaders and professionals from the private, people and public sectors.



**ENHANCING THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
IS AN ONGOING JOURNEY AND SINGAPORE  
REMAINS COMMITTED TO THIS EFFORT.**



For more information, please visit: [www.msf.gov.sg](http://www.msf.gov.sg)

March 2015