

**Question:** It is beneficial to live in an ethnically diverse society. Do you agree?

***SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:***

**1. What counts as an “ethnically diverse” society? What does it really mean?**

**Let's first define ethnicity:**

- Broadly speaking, ethnicity refers to a group of people bounded by shared culture, practices and values. It could therefore be describing groups of people categorized by *race, citizenship, nationality, religion, language, ancestry and geographical origins*.
- Note that the focus here is *less* on ethnicity but rather what is the **benefits of diversity**
- However, it is still important to clarify **your** definition of ethnicity in order to write your essay and structure your argument

**2. Why is it important we consider the advantages of diversity?**

- Historically, in many different societies that have existed: **diversity has always been present**
- Humans are naturally different from each other, and societies therefore will inevitably be filled with disparate and distinct groups of people with their own beliefs, culture and traditions
- However, diversity as an issue has become increasingly prevalent in today's context due to globalization
- **Globalization**: a phenomenon whereby people, goods, capital, knowledge, ideas are becoming more fluid. They are moving extensively across different parts of the world, different nations and countries as international borders become more open and porous.
- With the advancements in transport, people are become more mobile today. **Migratory trends are increasing** and more people move to different countries as travellers, settlers, workers, etc.
- Globalization enables societies to become more diverse, vibrant and less uniform. The influx of immigrants from many different countries of origin will add on more varieties of cultures, traditions, language and knowledge to existing societies.
- As such, this question is crucial because it is important for us to start thinking about what good can come about from living amongst people of all kinds. This can help to prevent conflicts, misunderstandings, exclusions and discrimination between people in diversifying societies
- Maybe we should also remind ourselves that **a homogenous (which means entirely the same) society has never occurred**, and is in fact a narrow-minded goal and outlook that signifies an immature intolerance for inevitable differences between people

### 3. Narrowing your argument to apply it to the context of Singapore:

- **Why is it so relevant to Singapore?**
- Singapore has always taken to the label of a “multi-cultural society”. Singaporeans take great pride in our ability to co-exist harmoniously despite our differences and we like to see ourselves as inclusive and welcoming.
- Singapore is also renowned for her openness to the world economy and global population. Not only are we a popular tourist destination, Singapore is also celebrated as a wonderful city to work and live in. On top of our racially and religiously diverse community, Singaporeans live amidst newly immigrated citizens, foreign workers and curious travellers.
- All the more, as Singaporeans, it is particularly relevant to analyse **how our social environments has shaped and influence our attitudes and behaviours towards diversity**
- Are we accepting or are we merely tolerating the differences we observe and experience around us.
- If we are able to think about and consider deeply the benefits of living in such diverse societies, we would be able to gain much more knowledge from the people around us: and build a more harmonious, if not, at **least tolerant and understanding society**

### 4. What are some conditions that have to be fulfilled in order for benefits to be reaped from ethnic diversity?

1. People from different backgrounds have to be **willing to come together to interact**, putting aside their differences and learning genuinely about each other’s cultures, traditions, language, etc.

2. **Benefits from ethnic diversity can prevent racial, religious and civil conflicts**, but it is most likely to happen in a stable social environment which proves conducive for people to interact with each other without the fear of being threatened, abuse or harmed.

3. **Appropriate and constructive education for the young on ways to understand and navigate diversity**. When children are inculcated with positive values about how they should approach and interact with those who are different from them, they mature into adults who do not resent or fear diversity, but is apt at socializing and forming bonds with those who do not share similar cultures or backgrounds as they do

4. **Entrenched prejudices and discrimination against groups that are marked as unbelonging outsiders must be slowly dismantled**, rectified and set aside in order to begin any form of interactions as equals

5. In the process of getting to know the other groups of people better, **anti-discrimination laws** should be present to enforce moral and fair behaviour/practices by individuals, corporations, larger social institutions, so that minority groups are fairly represented and treated in society

**If these conditions are not fulfilled, do you think that living in an ethnically diverse society will be beneficial? Beneficial for who and at whose expense (who will be disadvantaged?)**

Yes, it is beneficial for us to live in an ethnically diverse society	No, it is not beneficial for us to live in an ethnically diverse society (what are the dangers involved?)
<p>1. <b><u>Exposure to different cultures and traditions will help us grow as individuals</u></b> – to become more knowledgeable, tolerant, understanding and accepting of diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We travel today to different parts of the world in order to gain precious exposure to various cultures that are unique and exotic</li> <li>- We want to explore the limits of how much we can experience different cultures, challenging ourselves to try out practices exclusive to the communities that we visit abroad</li> <li>- In that sense, what better way to know about different cultures but through the people who experience them as part of their daily lives?</li> <li>- Our interactions with them will serve as good exposure as we can always participate in their local festivals and traditions</li> <li>- This enhances our knowledge about different customs, cultures and practices that were previous unknown to us → helping us grow our understanding about how diverse people's beliefs can be + learn new language to communicate more</li> <li>- Becoming more tolerant and even <i>accepting and welcoming</i> differences is a positive character trait that we will not object to having</li> </ul> <p>2. <b><u>Living in ethnically diverse society, assuming that the right conditions are met</u></b> → can cultivate and nurture citizens who are able to unite despite differences, <b><u>building a stronger country</u></b> that are more immune to attacks attempts to divide the population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If the schools, if individual families, if legislatures, and major institutions are able to provide suitable environments for anti-discriminatory, non-prejudiced and equal forms of interactions to take place between people of all kinds</li> <li>- These interactions could likely produce strong social bonds between members of the same community and nations → allowing greater understanding and appreciation of varying cultures</li> <li>- When ethnically diverse society provides the platform to cultivate citizens into mature individuals who can understand the inevitability of differences between groups of people → the country is less divisible, especially with harmful threats like radicalization or fake news attempting to sow discord between the people (in today's world)</li> </ul>	<p>1. Many societies remain collectively resistant and hostile towards the idea of diversification, including ethnic diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rampant and severe discrimination still occurs in many societies towards minority and marginalized groups (like Blacks in America, indigenous communities in ex-colonial states, immigrants, etc.)</li> <li>- Tensions between different segments of society run high as identity politics fuel inter-group divisiveness, xenophobia and unfair exclusion</li> <li>- More international borders are fenced with higher walls, tighter security patrols and stricter immigration policies.</li> <li>- Schools remain segregated according to different identity markers, anti-discriminatory laws are often violated without consequence, work discrimination is still practiced extensively and mainstream media continues to perpetuate harmful stereotypes about certain groups.</li> <li>- Our existing beliefs <i>about others</i> and our beliefs on the <i>correctness</i> of one's cultural/national identity is going to make ethnically diverse society one that is possibly ridden with violence and conflict. This is especially so if governments and extremist groups continue to insist that there are 'rightful' members of the society.</li> <li>- Given the intolerant and unforgiving climate of many societies today, reaping benefits from ethnically diverse society will take a lot of effort and willingness on part of individuals to truly set aside their prejudice and come together as equals</li> <li>- In the presence of differences and diversity, people tend to search for power and domination in order to secure access to important resources</li> <li>- As they strive to emerge at the top of the social hierarchy, groups perceive differences as threats and are likely to exclude those who they deem do not belong.</li> </ul>

3. It is beneficial to live in an ethnically diverse society because the skills of mutual acceptance, adapting and appreciating the different lifestyles and cultures of others will come in handy when we find ourselves in new contexts.

- In the age of globalization, it is especially important for us to be adaptable to different physical and cultural climates of very diverse national societies
- If we are used to living in diverse societies and regularly exposed to cultures different from ours, we are more likely to be able to respect and be appreciative/tolerant about cultures abroad
- Living in ethnically diverse societies, being instilled with the appropriate values of tolerance and encouraged to be proactive about understanding other racial, religious, national groups will help us to thrive when we migrate, live, study or work overseas, enabling us to better immerse and enjoy our experiences abroad
- Immigration is crucial in enabling Singapore to sustain our labour productivity and shrinking talent pool. Being comfortable with an ethnically diverse society may dissipate xenophobic sentiments and reduce friction between locals and foreigners, allowing more successful and smoother integration process
- Cultivating the ability to appreciate differences and overcome identity contrasts creates a more adaptive and progressive society