



The bank for a changing world

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Singapore is a small territory with few natural resources. It enjoys a strategic geographical location in Asia and a world-leading, technically competent and productive workforce. Singapore ranks as one of the world's most open economies and well-run states. Over the past decade, the focus of Singapore's economic policy has shifted to maintaining its competitiveness in attracting trade and investment flows by building a more technology-driven, innovation-based growth model.

Singapore's real GDP growth has been more volatile since the early 2000s. It already slowed from 3.5% in 2018 to 1.3% in 2019 as Singapore is vulnerable to the impact of the US-China trade conflict and global trade weakening given its very high degree of trade and financial openness (exports represented more than 200% of GDP in 2019 and trade-related sectors account for more than 50% of GDP). The city-state was very hard hit by the COVID-19 shock, with an economic contraction of 5.4% in 2020. However, Singapore's strong macroeconomic fundamentals, with solid external and fiscal accounts, and sound policy management represent comfortable cushions against shocks. Economic growth is expected to be modest, with the government forecast at between 1.0% 3.0% for 2024.

Summary

BNP Paribas presence

BNP Paribas has had a presence in Singapore since 1968, with 850 employees and a full banking license. In addition, Singapore is BNP Paribas' regional hub for south-east Asia, enabling customers to access comprehensive payments, collections, cash and liquidity management and international trade finance solutions across the region. This is particularly important for regional treasury centres of multinational corporations that are seeking to implement cohesive regional and global solutions.

Currency

Currency

Singapore dollar (SGD).

Exchange rates

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Exchange rate: SGD per USD	1.36	1.38	1.34	1.38	1.34

Source: IMF, International Financial Statistics, June 2024.

Central Bank

• The Singapore central bank is the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS -www.mas.gov.sg).

Bank supervision

• Singapore banks are supervised by the MAS.

Bank accounts

Resident / non-resident status

• A company is considered resident in Singapore if it has a permanent or registered address in Singapore and maintains its place of effective management in Singapore.

Bank accounts for resident entities

	Within SINGAPORE	Outside SINGAPORE
Local Currency	Permitted without restriction, fully convertible	Permitted although subject to the restrictions of that particular currency, fully convertible
Foreign Currency	Permitted without restriction, fully convertible	Permitted without restriction, fully convertible

Bank accounts for non-resident entities

	Within SINGAPORE	Outside SINGAPORE
Local Currency	Permitted without restriction, fully convertible	Permitted without restriction, fully convertible
Foreign Currency	Permitted without restriction, fully convertible	Not applicable

Lifting fees

• Lifting fees, most typically per item-based charges and/or subscription fees, are applied on payments between resident and non-resident bank accounts.

BNP Paribas Cash Management Capabilities

Collections

Cash collections	
Cheque collections	
Direct debit collections	
Domestic incoming transfers	
Virtual IBAN	
Virtual accounts	•
International incoming transfers	•
Card acquiring	•

Payments

Cash withdrawals	●
Cheque payments	
Direct debit payments	•
Domestic outgoing transfers	•
Commercial cards	
Virtual cards	•
International outgoing transfers	•
SWIFT gpi	•
Real-time international payments through BNP Paribas' network	
Card issuing	

Channels

Local e-Banking	
Global e-Banking - Connexis	
SWIFT/ host to host	✓

Payments & collections

Market overview

Cash payments have been replaced by card-based e-money, which is the most popular non-cash payment instructions in volume terms in Singapore. The Singapore Quick Response Code (SGQR) was also launched in 2018 and is now the primary means for Scan and Pay, available at over 210,000 merchant payment points.

Electronic banking services are available from all banks. There is no national electronic banking standard in Singapore, so companies use banks' proprietary services.

Online and mobile banking services are provided by all of the country's banks. The country is third in the digital competitiveness ranking 2023. As of October 2023, the number of digital banking users reached 1 million and this is expected to grow to 1.7 million by 2025. Payments via internet and mobile banking with a value of up to SGD 200,000 can be processed in near real time via FAST.

PayNow Corporate, an electronic fund transfer service for businesses and corporates, enables businesses and the Singapore Government to pay and receive SGD funds instantly with the linking of the Unique Entity Number (UEN) to their Singapore bank account.

Payment Systems

MEPS+	Туре	Real-time gross settlement.
	Participants	• 60 direct (as of 03 June 2024)
	Transaction types processed	High-value and urgent SGD-denominated credit transfers. Net obligations from Singapore's other payment systems.
	Operating hours	• 09:00-19:00 SGT, Monday to Friday.
	Clearing cycle details (e.g. cut- off times)	 Payments are cleared and settled in real time. Customer payment cut-off time = 19:00 SGT.

	System holidays	MEPS+ is closed on all Singaporean bank holidays. Singapore's bank holidays are: 2nd half 2021: July 20*, August 9, November 4*, December 25. 2022: January 1, February 1, 2, April 15, May 2, 3*, 16*, July 11*, August 9, October 24*, December 26. Singapore bank holidays can be found on the Ministry of Manpower website: https://www.mom.gov.sg/employment-practices/public-holidays .
IBG	Туре	Multilateral deferred net settlement system.
	Participants	• 48
	Transaction types processed	Low-value and non-urgent SGD-denominated electronic credit and debit payments.
	Operating hours	• 08:00-18:45 SGT, Monday to Friday.
	Clearing cycle details (e.g. cut- off times)	 Payments are cleared and settled for same-day on a basis up to three business dayswithin three business days. Cut off time = 17:00 SGT.
	System holidays	Singapore bank holidays can be found on the Ministry of Manpower website: https://www.mom.gov.sg/employment-practices/public-holidays
SGDCTS	Туре	Multilateral net settlement.
	Participants	• 60
	Transaction types processed	SGD-denominated cheques which are truncated into electronic items before being processed.
	Operating hours	• 08:30-23:00 SGT, Monday to Friday.
	Clearing cycle details (e.g. cut- off times)	 Payments are cleared and settled on a next-day basis. The SGDCTS operates two clearing cycles daily: 12:00 and 17:30 SGT. Return cheque cut-off time = 12:00 SGT. Normal cheque cut-off time = 17:30 SGT. Final settlement takes place via MEPS+. Funds are typically available by 14:00 SGT the following day.

	System holidays	Singapore bank holidays can be found on the Ministry of Manpower website: https://www.mom.gov.sg/employment-practices/public-holidays
USDCTS	Туре	Multilateral deferred net settlement system.
	Participants	• 50
	Transaction types processed	USD-denominated cheques drawn on Singapore banks Cheques are truncated into electronic items before being processed.
	Operating hours	• 11:00-23:00, SGT Monday to Friday.
	Clearing cycle details (e.g. cut off times)	 Payments are cleared and settled on a two-day cycle (three-day cycle if beneficiaries or remitting banks are indirect members). Return cheque cut-off time = 12:00 SGT. Normal cheque cut-off time = 17:30 SGT. Final settlement takes place across participants' accounts held at the USDCTS's settlement bank, Citibank. Funds are typically available by 14:00 SGT the following working day.
	System holidays	Singapore bank holidays can be found on the Ministry of Manpower website: https://www.mom.gov.sg/employment-practices/public-holidays US bank holidays can be found from the Federal Reserve website: https://www.federalreserve.gov/aboutthefed/k8.htm •

Credit transfers

(Please note that the below is all based on what is available in Singapore but does not reflect BNPP's capabilities.)

- Credit transfers are used by companies to pay salaries and suppliers, and for treasury payments.
- Credit transfers are available as both paper-based and electronic payment instruments.
- High-value and urgent domestic SGD-denominated credit transfers can be settled in real time via MEPS+.
- Low-value, non-urgent and high-volume credit transfers can be settled via the IBG on a same day basis or up to three business days.

- Low-value credit transfers can also be settled via FAST (SGD 200,000 or less). FAST can be used 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Thirty banks and seven non-financial institutions participate in FAST.
- Low-value credit transfers can also be made via PayNow (SGD 200,000 or less) on a near real-time basis. Payments are settled via FAST. PayNow has adopted the Singapore Quick Response Code (SGQR) specifications, enabling businesses to collect payments via the service through QR codes. There are nine bank participants in PayNow, and three non-bank financial institutions. There are twenty-one bank participants in PayNow, and five non-bank institutions. Over 80% of individuals and businesses are registered on PayNow.
- PayNow Corporate enables entities such as businesses to pay and receive SGD funds instantly with the linking of the Unique Entity Number (UEN) to their Singapore bank account. PayNow corporate registrations totalled 240,000 by end 2020.
- As of February 2021, eligible non-bank financial institutions have had direct access to FAST and PayNow, enabling users of e-wallets to make real-time transfers between bank accounts and ewallets as well as across different e-wallets.
- Cross-border transfers can be made via SWIFT and settled through correspondent banks abroad.
- In 2020, the volume and value of credit transfers increased 24.4% and 10.8% respectively, to 255 million transactions, with a value of SGD 664.3 billion.

Direct debits

In 2021, the Association of Banks in Singapore (ABS) launched the eGIRO service that fully digitises the current paper-based GIRO process.

Cheques

- The cheque is a popular cashless payment instrument, used by both consumers and companies.
- Cheques are truncated into electronic items before being settled on a next-day basis.
- Singapore has two cheque truncation systems: one for SGD-denominated cheques (SGDCTS), the other for USD-denominated cheques (USDCTS).
- Final settlement of SGD and USD-denominated cheques takes place via MEPS+.
- In July 2023, MAS announced that all corporate cheques will be eliminated by end-2025 while individuals will still be able to use cheques for a period after 2025.

Card payments

• Card payments are increasingly popular, especially for retail transactions. There were 7.0 million credit cards in circulation at the end of December 2023.

- Contactless payment cards are issued and their use increasing.
- Visa-branded payment cards are the most widely issued, although MasterCard, American Express and Diners Club credit cards are also available.
- All card payments are processed via NETS on a same-day basis.
- All cards issued have EMV chips.
- In 2023, the volume of card payments grew 21.6% year on year to 1.98 million transactions. The total value also grew 13.7% to SGD 1.41 billion.

ATM/POS

- There are three main ATM networks in Singapore: the proprietary DBS-POSB network, the atm5 network, which is used by six foreign banks, and the NETS network, which is operated by MasterCard and used by the United Overseas Bank and the Overseas-Chinese Banking Corp. The networks are not interoperable.
- All payments are processed via NETS on a same-day basis.
- All ATMs and POS terminals are EMV-compliant.
- The MEPS operated Shared ATM Network switch connects all ATMs in Singapore.

Electronic wallet

- The dominant electronic wallet schemes are the NETS operated CashCard and FlashPay schemes, as well as an independent EZ-Link card.
- Single and multi-purpose stored-value cards are both available.
- Card-based e-money transactions fell 33.8% and 36.7% in volume and value terms respectively in 2020, on 2019 figures.
- Mobile wallets are widely accepted throughout Singapore due to the SGQR code. Popular e-payment methods include GrabPay, AliPay Nets and PayLah.
- E-money payments are settled on a next-day basis via NETS.
- In 2023, E-money transactions saw a slight decline of 6.8% in terms of volume to 2.22 million transactions compared to the previous year. The total value grew by 11.5% to SGD 2.4 billion in the same period.

Short term investments

Market overview

Interest payable on credit balances

Interest-bearing current accounts are permitted, although not widely available.

Demand deposits

• Demand deposits denominated in SGD or major foreign currencies are available with terms ranging from overnight to over one year.

Time deposits

• Time deposits are available in SGD or major foreign currencies for terms ranging from one week to over one year.

Certificates of deposit

- Domestic banks issue SGD-denominated certificates of deposit with terms ranging from three months to five years. The minimum investment is SGD 100,000.
- Some banks issue foreign currency denominated certificates of deposit with terms ranging from one month to five years. The minimum investment is USD 100,000.
- Certificates of deposit can be issued paying fixed or variable interest.

Treasury (government) bills

 MAS auctions various treasury bills based on their auctions and issuance calendar found at https://www.mas.gov.sg/bonds-and-bills/auctions-and-issuance-calendar. The minimum investment amount is SGD 1,000.

Commercial paper

• Singapore's most reputable companies do issue commercial paper, but it is not widely available.

Money market funds

Money market funds are popular short-term investment instruments.

Repurchase agreements

Repurchase agreements are commonly available in Singapore.

Banker's acceptances

• Banker's acceptances are rarely used in Singapore.

BNP Paribas Trade Finance Capabilities

Trade payments

Documentary credits	
Documentary collections	

Guarantees

Bank guarantees	
Standby letters of credit	

Supply chain management

Receivables	
Payables	
Inventory	⊘

Trade channels

Connexis Trade	

Connexis Supply Chain	•
SWIFTNet Trade for Corporates	
Connexis Connect	
Connexis Guarantee	•
SWIFTnet Supply Chain	•

• The professionals in the BNP Paribas Global Trade Solutions (GTS) team in Singapore offer both local and regional support across Asia Pacific. GTS in Singapore provides a wide range of product offerings from traditional trade products to supply chain management solutions complemented by excellent service delivery by ISO-certified middle and back offices. With strong product expertise and in-depth knowledge of local market requirements, BNP Paribas has become a leading trade finance bank in the region.

International trade

General trade rules

- As a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Singapore has entered into the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) between member states (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam). Singapore is also a member of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and is committed to reducing and eliminating tariffs between members.
- As a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, Singapore has agreed to liberalise trade and investment rules between members.

Trade agreements

- Singapore has 27 implemented free trade agreements in place with more than 30 trading partners, including USA, China, Australia, the GCC, the TPSEP, EFTA and Japan.
- Singapore is a signatory of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). The CPTPP came into force in December 2018.

- Singapore is a signatory of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RECP). The country ratified the agreement in April 2021.
- ASEAN has signed free trade agreements (FTAs) with Australia, China, Japan, Hong Kong, India, New Zealand and South Korea.

Imports / exports

Imports	Integrated circuits	Gold	Refined petroleum products	Gas turbines	Crude petroleum	
Primary Import sources	China (16.0%)	Malaysia (11.0%)	USA (9.0%)	Taiwan Japan (7.0%)		Indonesia (5.0%)
Exports	Integrated circuits	Gold	Refined petroleum products	Gas turbines	Packaged medicines	
Export markets	China	Hong Kong	Malaysia	USA	Indonesia	India
	(15.0%)	(13.0%)	(9.0%)	(8.0%)	(7.0%)	(5.0%)

Import / export volumes

		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Exports	- goods USD m	371,402	413,883	458,950	441,350	411,634
	- services USD m	155,160	169,686	206,748	217,187	187,564
Imports	- goods USD m	284,256	316,496	357,370	344,508	317,991
	- services USD m	157,599	180,247	200,122	208,198	172,689
Current account as % GDP		18.0	18.2	17.1	16.9	NA

Source: IMF, International Financial Statistics, June 2021.

Trade finance - Imports

Documentation

- The following documentation is required in order to import goods into Singapore:
 - o commercial invoice
 - o customs declaration
 - o packing list
 - o import permit.

Import licences

• Licences are required for reasons of national security, environmental protection and on health and safety grounds.

Import taxes and tariffs

- Tariffs are generally not set on imports.
- Only samsoo, beer and stout products currently attract import tariffs.
- There are eight free trade zones in Singapore.

Financing requirements

None

Risk mitigation

None

Prohibited imports

• Prohibited imports are available on the Singapore Customs website. Refer to

https://www.customs.gov.sg/businesses/importing-goods/controlled-and-pr...

for more information.

Trade finance - Exports

Documentation

- The following documentation is required in order to export goods from Singapore:
 - o commercial invoice
 - o export permit
 - o customs declaration
 - o packing list.

Export licences

- Licences are required when exporting ozone depleting substances and rubber.
- Licences with quotas are required when exporting certain pine and mahogany wood products.

Export taxes and tariffs

None

Financing requirements

Risk mitigation

• Export credit insurance is available from the privately owned ECICS.

Prohibited exports

• Prohibited imports are available on the Singapore Customs website. Refer to

https://www.customs.gov.sg/businesses/exporting-goods/controlled-and-pr...

for more information.

Regulatory requirements

Reporting regulations

• Singapore does not apply reporting requirements for companies.

Exchange controls

- Singapore does not apply exchange controls.
- There are some restrictions on the use of SGD for non-domestic transactions.

Taxation

Resident / non-resident

https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/Tax/dtt...

Financial instruments

- For accounting purposes, the adoption of Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 39 requires companies to reflect their financial assets and liabilities at market values in their financial statements.
- The income tax treatment of financial instruments on the revenue account follows the accounting treatment under FRS 39. This has the following implications:
 - Financial instruments classified as fair value through the profit and loss account: realised and unrealised gains or losses recognised in the profit and loss account are taxable or deductible.
 - Financial instruments classified as available-for-sale: gains or losses which are recognised in the balance sheet are not taxable or deductible. At the time of de-recognition (e.g. when the assets are disposed of), the cumulative gains or losses recognised in the balance sheet that are transferred to the profit and loss account are taxable or deductible. Accordingly, impairment losses, reversal of impairment losses, and foreign exchange gains or losses that are recognised in the profit and loss account are also taxable or deductible.
 - Financial instruments classified as held-to-maturity and loans: the 'interest income' that is shown in the accounts and calculated using the effective interest method is taxable.
- Gains or losses reflected in the profit and loss account for financial instruments held on capital account are not taxable or deductible.

Interest and financing costs

• For Singapore income tax purposes, companies can deduct interest expenses to the extent the related financing is used for income-producing purposes. An asset is considered as income producing if it is used to generate income, which is assessable to Singapore income tax.

Foreign exchange

N/A

Advance tax ruling availability

• A taxpayer can request an advance ruling from the IRAS on the tax consequences of a particular transaction or arrangement.

Capital gains tax

Capital gains are exempt from tax.

Withholding tax (subject to tax treaties)

Payments to:	Interest	Dividends	Royalties	Other income
Resident entities	None	None	None	
Non-resident entities	15%**	None	10%**	

^{*} Excluding certain literary and artistic copyright royalties, approved invention or innovation royalties.

- There is no withholding tax on dividends paid by companies resident in Singapore.
- Interest paid to a non-resident generally is subject to a 15% withholding tax, unless the rate is reduced under a tax treaty or an exemption applies under certain domestic concessions (broadly applicable to interest received on deposits held with approved banks or licensed finance companies in Singapore, and interest from debt securities not derived from a partnership in Singapore, nor from carrying on a trade in debt securities). The 15% withholding tax is a final tax and applies to interest (i) derived by the non-resident from a business carried on outside Singapore, or (ii) not effectively connected to a permanent establishment (PE) in Singapore. Any other interest paid to a non-resident company that does not qualify for the final rate or an exemption (including interest derived from a business in Singapore or effectively paid to non-resident individuals that does not qualify for the 15% final rate or a domestic concession) is taxed at 22%, Interest paid to a Singapore resident is not subject to withholding tax.
- Royalties paid to a non-resident are subject to a 10% withholding tax, unless the rate is reduced under a tax treaty. The 10% withholding tax is a final tax and applies to royalties (i) derived by a non-resident from a business carried on outside Singapore, or (ii) not effectively connected to a PE in Singapore. Any other royalties paid to non-resident companies that do not qualify for the final rate are taxed at the prevailing corporate tax rate (17% for 2021). Payments to non-resident individuals are subject to withholding tax of the lower of 22% on net income or 10% on the gross royalties. Royalties paid to a Singapore resident are not subject to withholding tax.
- Payments to non-residents (other than individuals) for technical services rendered in Singapore are subject to a 17% withholding tax, unless the rate is reduced under a tax treaty. This includes fees for the rendering of assistance or services in connection with the application or use of scientific, technical, industrial, or commercial knowledge or information; or for management or assistance in the

^{**} The withholding tax at 15% (or 10% for royalties) on the gross payment is a final tax. It applies provided that the income is not derived by the non-resident through its operations carried out in or from Singapore. Operations carried out in or from Singapore will continue to be taxed at the prevailing corporate tax rate on their chargeable income.

management of a trade, business, or profession, unless the services are rendered entirely outside Singapore, and not performed through a business carried on in Singapore or a PE in Singapore. For non-resident individuals, withholding tax applies at 15% on the gross income, unless the individual opts to be taxed at 22% on the net income. Fees for technical services paid to a Singapore resident are not subject to withholding tax.

Tax treaties / tax information exchange agreements (TIEAs)

- Singapore has concluded over 80 comprehensive tax treaties.
- The OECD MLI entered into force in Singapore on 1 April 2019.

Thin capitalisation

• The deductibility of interest expense generally depends on the specific purpose of the loan. Interest is deductible where the loan is obtained for revenue purposes (i.e. to finance the purchase of inventory). Interest incurred on a loan to finance the purchase of a capital asset is deductible to the extent that the capital asset is used to generate income that is subject to Singapore income tax. The interest may be apportioned where loans are obtained for both income-producing and non-income producing purposes.

Transfer pricing

- Mandatory transfer pricing documentation for companies is imposed as from 2019 year of assessment, subject to safe harbor provisions.
- Penalties may be imposed for noncompliance.
- Transfer pricing adjustments made by the IRAS may be subject to an additional surcharge of 5%.
- Transfer pricing guidelines cover the application of the arm's length principle, documentation requirements, advance pricing agreements and requests to invoke the mutual agreement procedure under Singapore's tax treaties.
- The IRAS also has issued transfer pricing guidelines for related party loans and services.
- Singapore has introduced country-by-country (CbC) reporting requirements.

Stamp duty

 Stamp duty applies only to financial instruments (written or electronic form) relating to stock and shares and immovable property. These include the sale of a mortgage of immovable property and shares and a lease of immovable property. An ad valorem stamp duty is chargeable on a lease or agreement for a lease of any immovable property with annual rent exceeding SGD 1,000. Leases with annual rent not exceeding SGD 1,000 are exempt.

- Buyer's stamp duty (BSD) of up to 4% is payable on acquisitions of residential properties, and up to 3% is payable on acquisitions of non-residential properties. Additional buyers stamp duty (ABSD) is payable by certain groups that purchase or acquire residential property (including residential land).
 The additional buyers stamp duty is 5% to 30%, depending on the category of the buyer and is computed on the higher of the purchase price or market value of the property.
- Seller's stamp duty (SSD) of up to 15% and 12% applies to industrial and residential property depending on the holding period and date of acquisition.
- The buyer's stamp duty on the acquisition of stock and shares is 0.2% of the market value or value of consideration, whichever is higher. The acquisition of equity interests in a company that primarily owns (directly or indirectly) residential property in Singapore may attract additional conveyance duties (BSD and ABSD for buyers and SSD for sellers).
- The transfer of scripless shares listed on the Singapore stock exchange, however, is not subject to stamp duty. Stamp duty relief is available in a number of cases, subject to conditions.

Cash pooling

• Singapore has no specific tax rules that apply to <u>cash pooling</u> arrangements.

Financial transactions / Banking services tax

• Singapore does not have specific taxes applying to financial transactions and banking services, including loans, money transfers, letters of credit, and foreign exchange.

All tax information supplied by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu and Deloitte Highlight 2021 (<u>www.deloitte.com</u>).



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