



# MARKETWATCH

Relocation and International Assignment Trends and Practices Information.

## SINGAPORE



### Residential Leasing Market Outlook, International Schools and Immigration Regulation Updates

With the continuous presence of global leading industries from Consumer Business, Electronics, Energy & Chemicals, Information & Communications Technology, Oil & Gas Equipment Services, Precision Engineering, and more, Singapore remains one of the world’s most progressive and competitive economies, keeping its status as Asia-Pacific’s (APAC) regional financial hub. (Despite the health, social and economic challenges experienced from the global COVID-19 pandemic.)

#### RESIDENTIAL LEASING MARKET

##### Boost in demand. Increase in rental prices

With Singapore’s transition to a COVID-19 resilience phase from November 2021, renters’ return to the market alongside delays in construction have given rise to an increasingly competitive housing market.

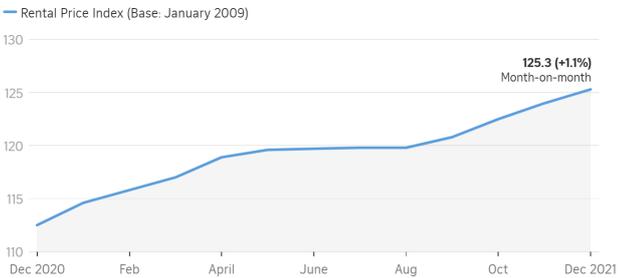
##### Rental Index

Data shared by The Straits Times (12/Jan) indicated rental rates rose by more than 10% in 2021. The highest rental growth recorded in the past six years.

Condominium rentals, specifically in Central Singapore rose by 11.4%, with a 1.1% increase month-on-month. Housing Development Board (HDB) rentals on the other hand rose by 10.4% with a 1.4% increase month-on-month across all flat types.

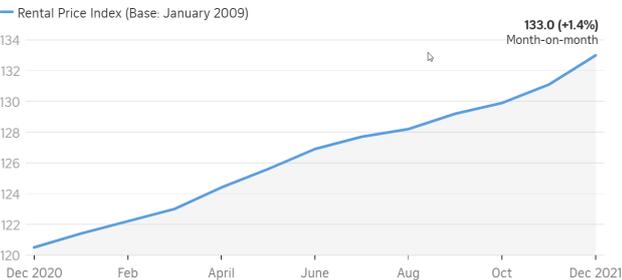
##### Rental Volume

###### Condo rental market



NOTE: Figure for December 2021 is a flash estimate.

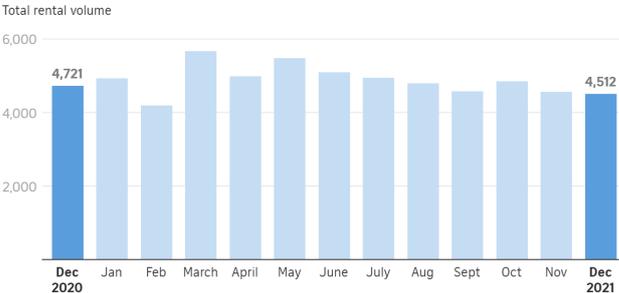
###### HDB rental market



NOTE: Figure for December 2021 is a flash estimate.

Although there is a decrease in volume from November 2021 for units being rented, total rental volume for the whole year was up by 6.8% and 4% for condominiums and HDBs respectively, compared to 2020.

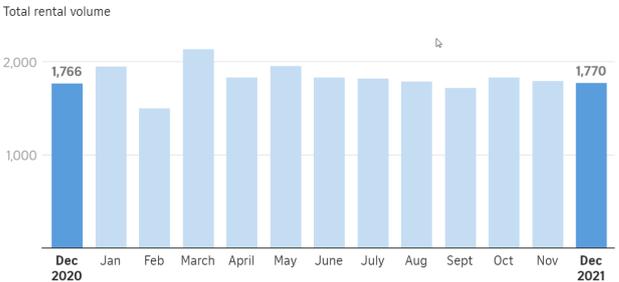
###### Condo rental market



NOTE: Figure for December 2021 is a flash estimate.

Chart: STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS • Source: 99.co and SRX

###### HDB rental market



NOTE: Figure for December 2021 is a flash estimate.

Chart: STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS • Source: 99.co and SRX

This boost in demand and surge in rental price for 2021 were mainly driven by the following factors:

- Abrupt roll-out of Singapore cooling measures implemented in December 2021
- Work from home arrangements
- Delays in building construction due to COVID-19 restrictions
- An influx of overseas returns/transfers and locals entering the condominium rental market, due to unfinished "Buy to Own"

construction projects and the need for more living space brought about by working from home measures

- Limit of five visitors a day as part of the Safe Management Measures implemented to control the spread of COVID-19
- Tenant profiling by property owners

The viewings for properties have also become a challenge despite the ease of restrictions. Property owners are getting more bargaining power as they try to match their rentals with the market and have also prioritised property visits to prospective tenants who fit their preferred tenant profile and budgets.

With this, property viewing has now declined to an average of one to two units per day regardless of property types and rental range. This has extended the typical timeframe to source and secure a property from two to five days prior to the pandemic, to the current timeframe of one to three weeks. Due to high demand and low listings inventory, an increasing number of landlords and their representative agents are less inclined to pay commission to agents who are representing tenants, resulting in tenants having to pay the agent commission fee instead.

The high demand also resulted in scammers taking advantage of the situation by impersonating as real estate agents and asking tenants to pay a deposit prior to property viewing or when securing a property. Subsequently, they will be uncontactable after the money is transferred. Assignees are advised to take extra precaution by verifying the real estate agent's license on the Council for Estate Agent (CEA) public registry [website](#) before engaging them.

## 2022/2023 Market Outlook

It is expected that the market will continue to become more aggressive in 2022 and potentially into 2023, making it challenging to find suitable properties, as demand continues to outweigh supply. Meanwhile, norms in terms of renting remain the same:

- Typical lease term of two years
- Diplomatic clause of 12 months + two months (14 months fixed lease term)
- Holding deposit of one month's rent payable upon signing the letter of intent (LOI)
- Security deposit of two month's rent payable upon signing the tenancy agreement (TA)
- Stamp duty payment of 0.4% of total rent for the period of lease payable upon signing the tenancy agreement (TA)
- Rentals are paid monthly

## INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

### Back To School

Singapore has started the vaccination drive for those aged five to 11 years old and students have now fully returned to school. Currently, there are no plans to introduce Vaccination Differentiated Safe Management Measures (VDS) at schools or to make vaccinations compulsory.

Whilst online learning has been a great tool to ensure continuity with children's education throughout the pandemic, the Ministry of Education (MOE) advised that returning to school will allow teachers to work with students effectively. Campus touring is also now being offered by nearly all schools in Singapore.

With borders re-opening, school availability has returned to a pre-pandemic level where demand for placement is high. Although there are many available schools to select from, getting into top-tier schools is a challenge. Popular schools like Stamford American International School, Tanglin Trust School and United World College of South East Asia (UWCSEA) continues to have limited placement availability for critical school grades and most applications will be placed onto a waiting list sometimes for up to 2 years. In addition, families with 2 or more children, may find it more difficult to gain a place in the same school for their children.

Subject to several factors like repatriations, influx of transfers from several multinational companies and Singapore's focus on re-opening borders to more countries, school availability remains fluid and should be assessed on a case-to-case basis. Early application remains to be the key. It is also highly advised that when looking for a school, assignees should shortlist a few options in case first choices are unavailable. Assignees should also regularly visit school websites for the latest updates and information, working closely with their respective relocation services provider to ensure a successful school application.



### New International School: XCL American Academy

As the newest international school in Singapore opening in August 2022, XCL American Academy offers a rigorous and affordable American education for children aged two to 14.

In addition to closely following the rigorous [AERO Curriculum](#) guidelines and the [Common Core](#) standards issued by the United States Department of Education, XCL American Academy has also adopted internationally recognised curriculum programs such as the University of Chicago Everyday Math, Discovery Works for Science, MIT Scratch for Coding/Programming, and a balanced approach to literacy with materials from Scholastic.



### New Campus: Middleton International School

Driven by strong demand, the [Middleton International School](#) by EtonHouse opened a third campus in February 2022.

The third campus, Middleton West Coast, is conveniently located next to Haw Par Villa MRT station. Occupying three levels at 20 Harbour Drive, this new campus has a capacity of more than 500 students, catering to learners from Nursery 2 to Grade 5 (4 to 11 years). Fees are below S\$20,000 annually (excluding Goods and Services Tax, GST), which is less than most other international schools in Singapore.

## IMMIGRATION

### Reopening Borders. Facilitating Travel

As the local COVID-19 infection rate stabilises and progressive improvement seen on the Omicron situation internationally, Singapore has taken a major step in simplifying traveller requirements and reopening borders to all fully vaccinated travellers.

From 31 March 2022 (23:59 hours), a new Vaccinated Travel Framework will be implemented where travel requirements are determined based on the traveller's simplified country classification (General Travel vs. Restricted) and COVID-19 vaccination status.



Country/Region & Category	General Travel		Restricted
	Fully Vaccinated (or aged 12 and below and not fully vaccinated; vaccinated-recovered traveller)	Non-Fully Vaccinated (children aged 13-17 or certified medically ineligible traveller)	N/A
	All countries/regions	All countries/regions	
<b>Pre-Departure Test</b>	Supervised or Professionally Administered Self-swab ART or PCR (except vaccinated-recovered traveller)	Supervised or Professionally Administered Self-swab ART or PCR	PCR
<b>On-Arrival Test</b>	N/A	N/A	PCR
<b>SHN</b>	N/A	7-day SHN at place of accommodation	7-day SHN at dedicated facility
<b>SHN Exit PCR Test</b>	N/A	Travellers will be notified	Travellers will be notified

SHN – Stay Home Notice; ART – Antigen Rapid Test; PCR – Polymerase Chain Reaction

Eligibility for Employment Pass (EP) and S Pass holders remained the same as of 2020 but will increase by SGD 500 from September 2022. In addition, pass holders (work pass holders, dependants, and helpers) must meet **Singapore vaccination requirements** to apply for and renew passes.

The Singapore Government has also advised on gradually implementing changes to Employment Pass (EP) eligibility framework in the next few years. Plans include the Complementarity Assessment Framework (COMPASS), which is an additional point-based assessment that applicants must pass in addition to meeting the qualifying salary. This is expected to be rolled out on 1 September 2023 for new application and on 1 September 2024 for renewals. [Click here for more information.](#)

Type of Pass	Minimum Qualifying Salary	Minimum Qualifying Salary (by September 2022)	Who Is Eligible?
Employment Pass (General Industries)	SGD 4,500	SGD 5,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have a job offer in Singapore</li> <li>Work in a managerial, executive or specialised job</li> <li>Have met the qualifying salary (older, more experience candidates need higher salaries)</li> <li>Have acceptable qualifications, usually a good university degree, professional qualifications or</li> </ul>
Employment Pass (Financial Sector)	SGD 5,000	SGD 5,500	
S Pass	SGD 2,500	SGD 3,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have met the qualifying salary. The salary should reflect work experience. Older, more experience applicants need higher salaries to qualify.</li> <li>Have a degree or diploma. May consider technical certificates, such as courses for qualified technicians or specialists. The certification should require at least 1 year of full-time study.</li> </ul>
S Pass (Financial Sector)	SGD 3,000	SGD 3,500	

Source: [MOM Passes and Permits](#)

Criteria To Be Considered Fully Vaccinated	
Type Of Pass Holders	They Must Have Received
Have earlier recovered from Covid-19	Minimally 1 dose of a WHO EUL vaccine <b>at least 14 days before</b> arrival in Singapore or the pass application. This vaccination must be done at least 3 months from their COVID-19 diagnosis.
All other pass holders	<p>The full vaccination regimen of WHO EUL vaccine <b>at least 14 days</b> before arrival in Singapore or the pass application.</p> <p>Vaccines requiring 2 or 3 doses must be completed either using the same or different brands and taken based on the recommended intervals between each dose.</p> <p>Note: To keep their full vaccination status, pass holders who are 18 years old and above must take a booster dose within 270 days from their last dose in the primary vaccination series.</p>

Source: [MOM Vaccination Requirements](#)

As the pandemic continues to evolve, the above information is subject to change, as Singapore regularly reviews and updates protocols and requirements. Please refer to the following official government websites for the latest information:

- SafeTravel: <https://safetravel.ica.gov.sg/>
- Ministry of Health: <https://www.moh.gov.sg/>
- askMOH: <https://ask.gov.sg/agency/moh>
- TraceTogether: <https://www.tracetoegether.gov.sg/>
- Ministry of Manpower: <https://www.mom.gov.sg/>

Despite the current challenges, Singapore remains open for business and continues to be a frequented destination for international assignees.