

Surviving by success

Singapore is clean and safe. And, given that the small Asian city state is also well-organised and its inhabitants are punctual and prosperous, it is often described as “the Switzerland of Asia”. According to international comparisons, this financial metropolis is one of the most attractive cities in the world – but also one of the most expensive. Singapore is a particularly pricey place for ex-pats living in rented accommodation. With housing construction run almost exclusively by the state, around 85% of Singaporeans own their own homes, which are handed over to them on a leasehold basis and often under the market price.

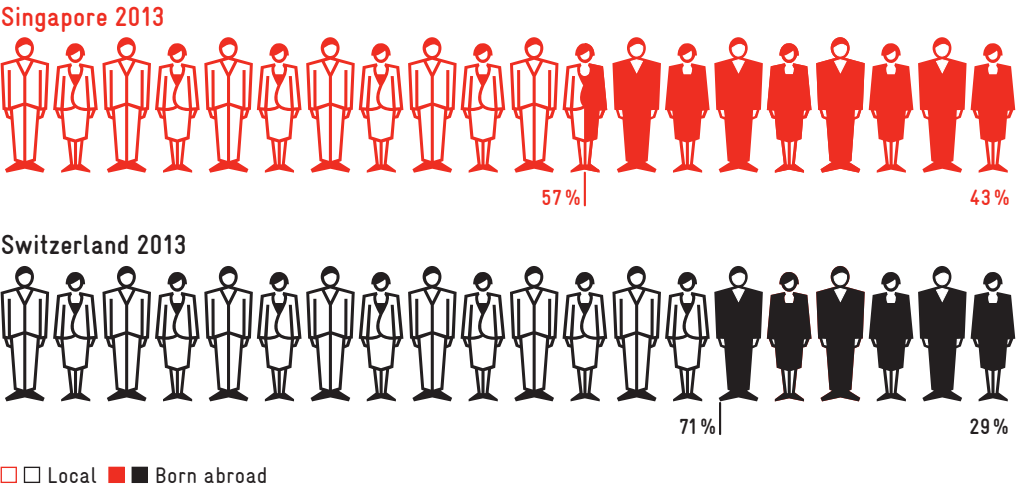
Since Singapore's sovereignty was formally recognised in 1965, the former British crown colony has made the leap from a developing country to one of the world's richest nations within a generation. Now, based on GDP per capita (at purchasing power parity), it even boasts a higher level of prosperity than Switzerland. Also like Switzerland, it has a substantial banking and financial centre (11.4% of GDP), a lack of raw materials – Singapore even relies on water imports from Malaysia – and four official national languages: in Singapore's case, Chinese, English, Malay and Tamil.

Singapore accommodates 5.4 million people, an airport, military bases, industrial facilities, an astonishing amount of green space and, thanks to its favourable location for shipping, one of the largest cargo ports and goods handling hubs in the world – all in an area the size of the canton of Glarus. It is therefore no surprise that the industry which creates by far the highest added value in Singapore is wholesale (18% of GDP). The huge export surplus, almost 20% of GDP, is partly due to the prominence of the country's high-tech sector. Singapore's main trade partners are China, Malaysia, the EU, the USA and Indonesia.

Since land is scarce and becoming ever more so due to constant immigration, Singapore has wrested more habitable and arable land from the sea. Land reclamations have increased Singapore's surface area by over 20% since 1960. Nevertheless, its population density has more than doubled over the last 50 years, with around 7,600 people now squeezed into each square kilometre. As a general rule, little is left to chance in Singapore. The country's success is largely the result of visionary planning – planning, however, which allows plenty of scope in certain areas of the market and price mechanism.

Population growth: Singapore as a magnet

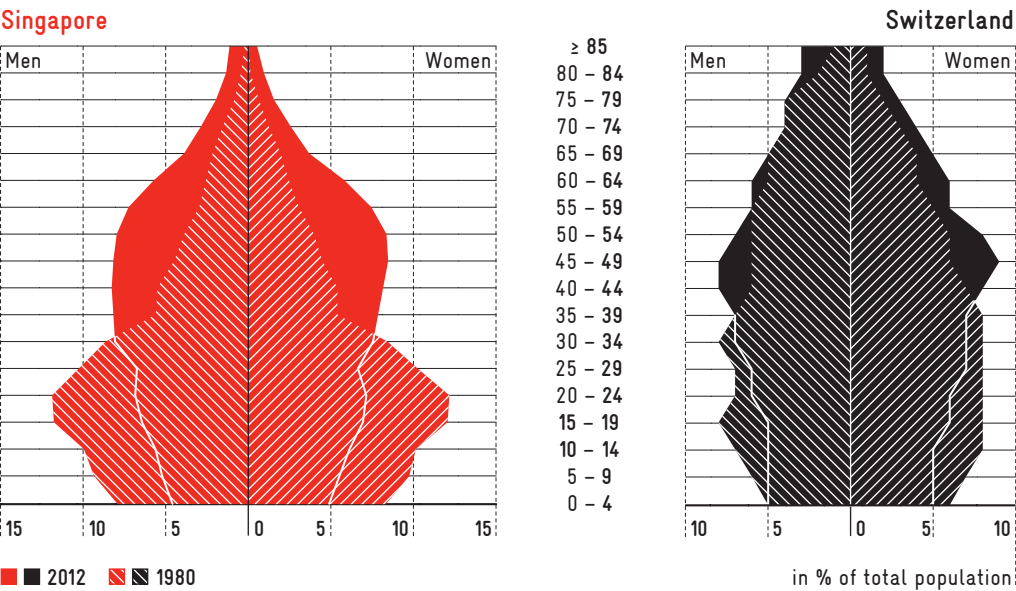
Singapore's labour market is proving to be as attractive as its Swiss counterpart. The proportion of migrants (born outside the country) is actually much higher than Switzerland's at 43%.



Sources: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Demographics: Ageing on both sides

Both Switzerland and Singapore are facing the challenges of a rapidly ageing society. So far gaps in the domestic labour market have been filled mainly by immigrants. In future, however, both countries are planning to draw more on their own labour forces, especially women and older workers.



Sources: SFSO (VGR), Singstat, MTI



Economy

An important goods handling port

Thanks to its favourable location for shipping, Singapore has been a key port and goods handling hub between Asia and Europe ever since colonial times. Despite the growing importance of its financial centre, wholesale remains the biggest industry in Singapore.

in % of total value (2011)*

Singapore

- 1 Wholesale 18%
- 2 Finance and insurance 11%
- 3 Electronics 6%
- 4 Real estate 6%
- 5 Biomedicine 5%

Switzerland

- 1 Wholesale 10%
- 2 Finance and insurance 6%
- 3 Construction 6%
- 4 Consulting, architecture, engineering services 5%
- 5 Retail 5%

Sources: SFSO (VGR), Singstat, MTI

* without public administration, education and healthcare

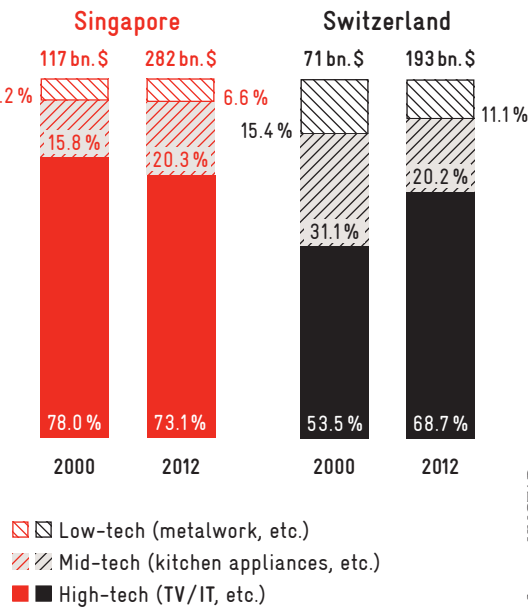


Economy

A high-tech exporter

Both Switzerland and Singapore mainly export high-quality technology, with Switzerland gaining significant pace in this area since 2000. Singapore primarily exports electronic supplier products such as microchips.

Shares in export of manufactured goods



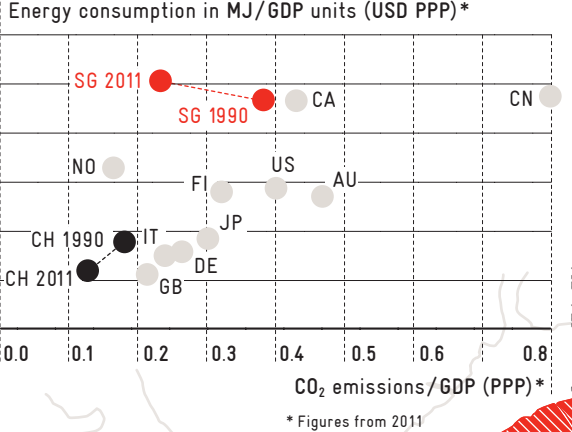
Source: UNCTAD



Environment

Difference in energy efficiency

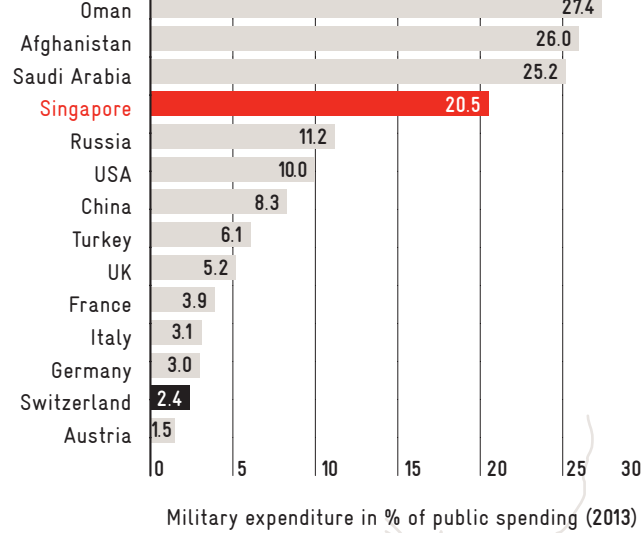
Singapore has succeeded in reducing its CO₂ emissions by shifting its focus from oil to gas. However, since Singapore's industry (chemicals, electronics and pharmaceuticals) still relies heavily on fossil energy, its energy intensity is higher than that of European countries.



Military

High military expenditure

Based on the total budget, Singapore spends a similar amount on its military as countries in conflict-ridden regions.

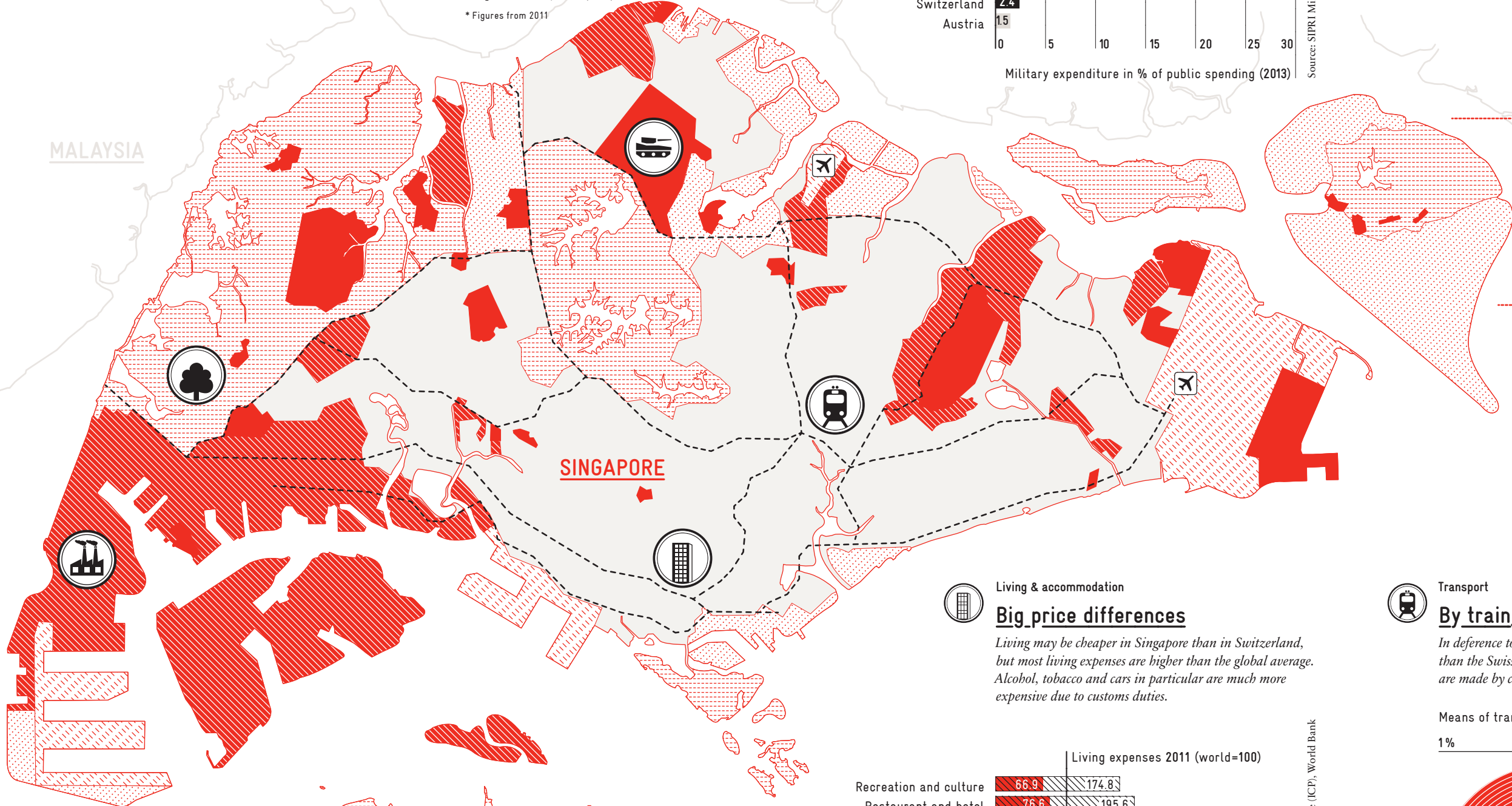


Singapore is roughly the same size as the canton of Glarus

Land is extremely scarce in Singapore: 5.4 million people live in an area of 716 km², about the same size as the canton of Glarus. Only 22% of Singapore's surface area is urban and residential space; much of the rest is split between industry (13%), the military (19%), transport – including the port and airport – (15%) and green spaces (8%).

Singapore	Switzerland	2013
425.2	434.0	GDP (USD, PPP, in bn.)
78 744	53 705	GDP/capita (USD, PPP)
104 %	49 %	Public debt (in % of GDP)
18 %	10 %	Export surplus (in % of GDP)
1.9 %	3.2 %	Unemployment rate

Sources: SFSO, Singstat, IMF, World Bank



Airport facts

Changi Airport Singapore	Zurich Airport	2013
343 765	262 227	Flights
53.7 mio.	24.9 mio.	Number of passengers (arrival & departure)
30%	33%	% of transfer passengers

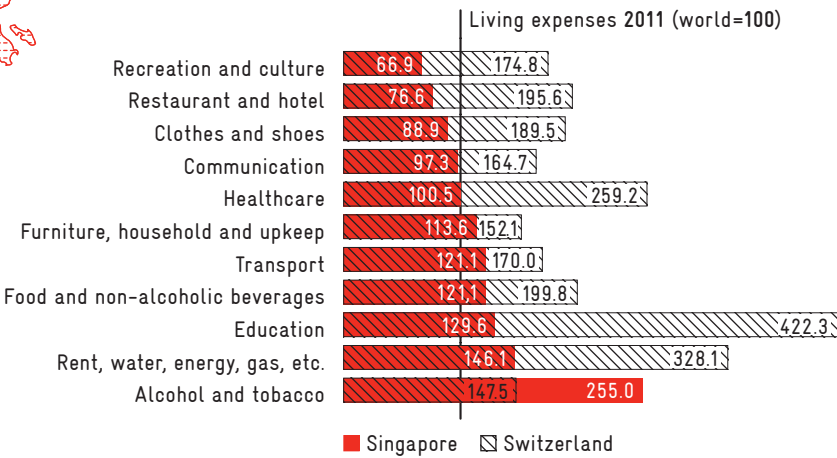
Sources: Changi Airport Group, Zurich Airport



Living & accommodation

Big price differences

Living may be cheaper in Singapore than in Switzerland, but most living expenses are higher than the global average. Alcohol, tobacco and cars in particular are much more expensive due to customs duties.



Sources: International Comparison Programme (ICP), World Bank

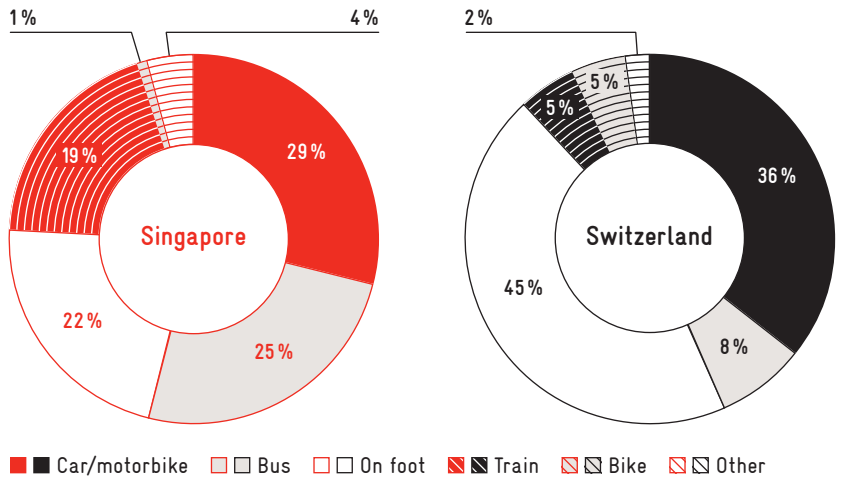


Transport

By train, bus or taxi

In deference to their hot, humid climate, Singaporeans walk significantly less than the Swiss. Even though only 45% of households own a vehicle, 29% of journeys are made by car.

Means of transport (number of trips, 2012)



Transport

Transparent pricing in practice

Singapore has done what Avenir Suisse has been calling for Switzerland to do: implement transparent pricing thanks to a “Travel Smart” transport policy which focuses heavily on financial incentives.

Degree of cost coverage (2013)

