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Laura Hwang
President,
Singapore Council of Women's Organisations

Singapore's key population challenges



Laura Hwang, President of Singapore Council of Women's Organisations

Singapore - situation overview

Despite its small size

- Land area of 714.3 km²
- Total population 5,183.700 (Singapore citizens 3,257.200)
- A highly developed and successful free-market economy.
- Enjoys a remarkably open and corruption-free environment, stable prices, and a high per capita GDP.
- *The 2011 World Bank Ease of Doing Business Index* ranks Singapore as the best country in the world to do business, while *the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness* ranked Singapore as the third most competitive economy in 2011.

Singapore's key population challenges

Economic prosperity depends crucially on the size and quality of the workforce

Labour force participation in Singapore in 2010

Age Group (Years)	Per Cent						
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total	63.2	63.0	65.0	65.0	65.6	65.4	66.2
15 - 19	14.0	9.8	12.4	13.6	12.8	11.8	15.4
20 - 24	66.0	61.7	70.7	66.6	66.5	63.5	65.8
25 - 29	88.0	87.9	89.0	90.1	88.7	89.3	89.4
30 - 34	83.7	86.5	87.2	87.9	88.6	88.3	89.0
35 - 39	79.8	82.6	83.8	84.6	85.6	85.8	86.2
40 - 44	78.7	81.2	82.5	82.9	83.3	84.4	84.4
45 - 49	76.9	78.8	81.4	80.9	82.8	82.1	82.4
50 - 54	69.1	72.3	76.8	77.3	77.5	78.1	78.6
55 - 59	52.4	57.8	63.5	66.0	66.6	68.4	68.3
60 - 64	32.8	36.6	43.9	46.7	48.8	50.6	51.0
65 - 69	18.6	20.7	25.3	26.6	27.5	29.9	30.9
70 - 74	9.4	9.7	13.2	12.2	15.1	16.8	18.7
75 & Over	3.3	3.4	3.9	5.0	5.4	5.7	5.4

Sources : Labour Force Survey (LFS), Singapore, Ministry of Manpower
Singapore Census of Population (Census) 2000, Singapore Department of Statistics

General Household Survey (GHS) 2005, Singapore Department of Statistics

Notes : Residents comprise Singapore citizens and permanent residents.

Singapore's key population challenges

Economic growth and labour force

Female labour force participation 2010

Age Group (Years)	Per Cent						
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total	50.2	52.0	54.3	54.2	55.6	55.2	56.5
15 - 19	13.5	9.0	12.1	11.8	11.6	10.4	13.1
20 - 24	67.0	62.2	70.0	65.6	67.0	61.8	65.3
25 - 29	82.1	84.7	84.5	86.9	84.5	85.5	85.7
30 - 34	70.7	76.8	77.7	78.6	80.5	79.9	81.3
35 - 39	61.6	69.0	70.4	71.7	74.4	75.5	75.2
40 - 44	60.0	65.6	67.7	69.1	69.9	71.3	72.7
45 - 49	57.5	62.7	66.2	65.7	68.7	67.9	68.9
50 - 54	47.3	54.0	59.5	60.5	62.0	63.0	64.9
55 - 59	31.0	39.4	44.7	46.9	48.0	49.5	51.7
60 - 64	16.3	21.3	26.2	29.2	33.1	33.0	35.4
65 - 69	7.9	10.4	15.6	15.6	16.6	17.7	19.1
70 - 74	3.8	4.5	7.7	6.4	7.9	9.3	11.3
75 & Over	1.2	1.2	2.0	2.7	2.7	2.4	2.7

Sources : Labour Force Survey (LFS), Singapore, Ministry of Manpower
Singapore Census of Population (Census) 2000, Singapore Department of Statistics
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Singapore's key population challenges

Economic growth and immigrant workers

- As Japan, Singapore welcomes skilled workers, especially professionals and those in high demand sectors.
- Singapore manages lower-skilled workers through the work-permit system, the dependency ceiling, and the foreign worker levy.
- Immigrant workers comprise a third of Singapore's labour force.

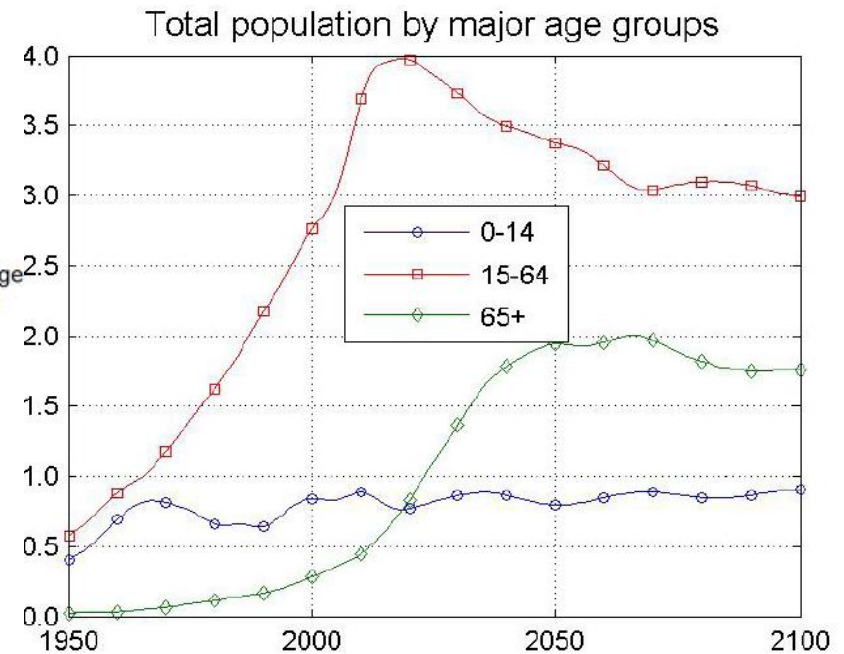
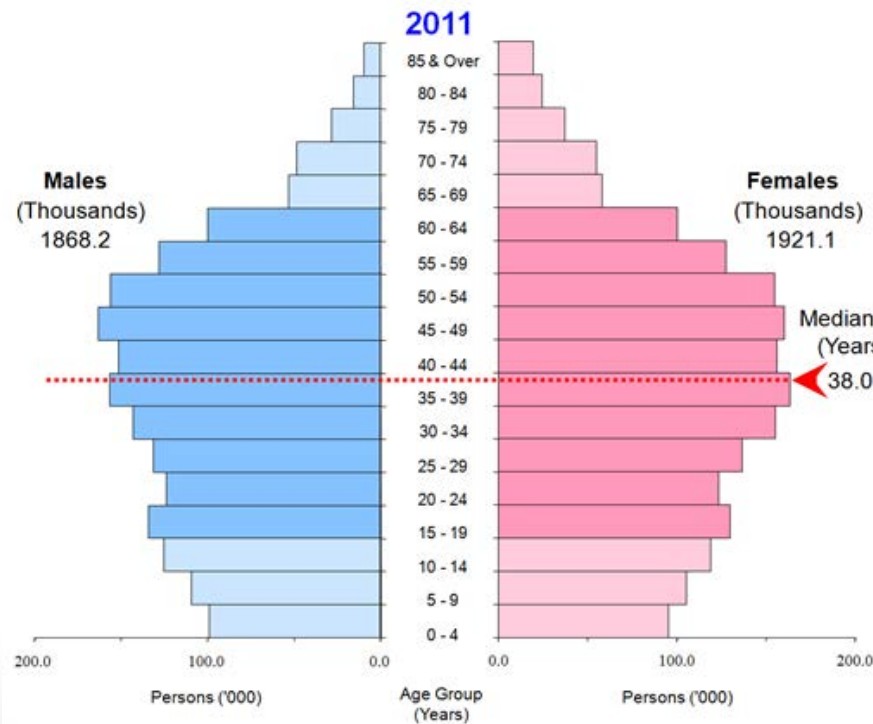
Singapore's key population challenges

Labour market and demographic changes

- Current rapid and sustained economic growth requires a steady increase in the labour force.
- But similarly to Japan, Singapore continues to face significant populations challenges, namely
 - an ageing population &
 - persistently low fertility rates.

Singapore's key population challenges

Labour market and demographic changes



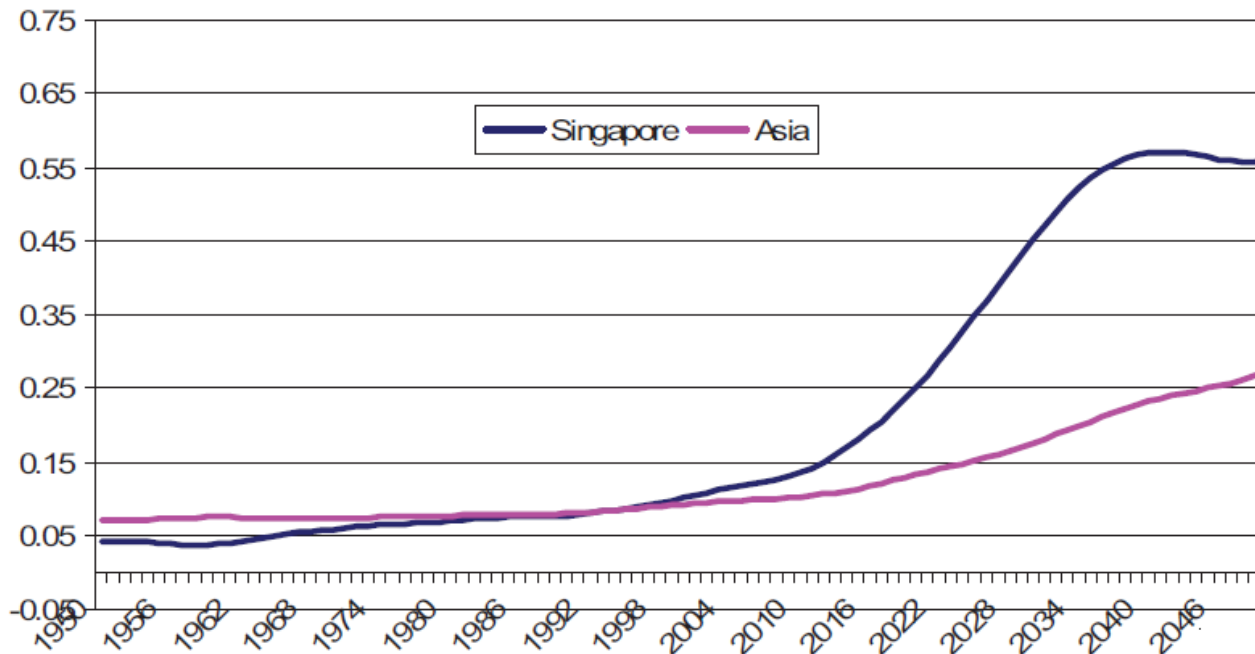
Singapore's key population challenges

Labour market and demographic changes

Ageing

- One of the fastest ageing countries in Asia.
- In 2011, 9.3% of the population over 65.
- As people pass through their 50s and beyond, their likelihood of participating in the labour force tends to decrease.

65 and over population



Singapore's key population challenges

**Countries with the highest shares of 60+ population in 2011 and 2050 (percent)
(among countries with 2011 population of 1 million or more)**

2011	2050
Japan 31	Japan 42
Italy 27	Portugal 40
Germany 26	Bosnia and Herzegovina 40
Finland 25	Cuba 39
Sweden 25	Republic of Korea 39
Bulgaria 25	Italy 38
Greece 25	Spain 38
Portugal 24	Singapore 38
Belgium 24	Germany 38
Croatia 24	Switzerland 37

Source: United Nations Population Division (2011).

Singapore's key population challenges

Labour market and demographic changes

Low fertility rate

- Social and economic factors.
- Has remained below the replacement level of 2.1 since the late 1970s.
- Currently at all-time low **1.16** (Japan 1.32).
- At the same time, the number of marriages has steadily increased (in 2010 **24,363**; in 2011: **27,256**).

Singapore's key population challenges

Labour market and demographic changes

Women's labour force participation

- Educational attainment & increased employment opportunities.
- Dual-career families now the norm, yet the traditional roles of women as home-makers remain.
- Singaporean women express a preference for more flexibility in their work and shorter working hours (Ministry of Manpower, 2005).

Singapore's key population challenges

Labour market and demographic changes

“The fact that we have one of the fastest ageing populations and one of the lowest birth rates in the world did not come about out of thin air. When you put the two factors together what we really have to do is, on the one hand, create an environment so that Singaporean, male and female, young or old, can work longer in good jobs and on the other hand, create an environment that is pro-family so that Singaporean can get married, have children and happy families.”

(Lim Swee Say, NTUC Secretary General, and Minister in the Prime Minister's Office)

Singapore's key population challenges

Government's response to

Ageing population

- Enhance employability and financial security;
- Provide affordable healthcare and eldercare;
- Enable ageing-in-place and senior-friendly communities;
- Promote active ageing.

Singapore's key population challenges

Government's response to

Low fertility

- Relaxed immigration policy to facilitate the entry of qualified foreigners to make up for the shortfall in births;
- Pro-family initiatives, such as Marriage and Parenthood Package 2008, Baby Bonus, tax reliefs & extended maternity leave.

Singapore's key population challenges

Government's response to low fertility level

“If husbands leave everything to the wives, or if women are forced to choose between working and having a baby, the women will go on baby strike.”

(Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at National Day Rally 2008, where he announced the Enhanced Marriage and Parenthood Package.)

Singapore's key population challenges

Government's response to

Female labour force participation

- Increased job opportunities;
- Flexible working arrangements;
- Initiatives and policies to promote work-life balance;
- Supply of foreign domestic help to relieve women of their domestic chores;
- Mandatory retirement age (from 60 to 62 in 1999);
- Childcare and eldercare facilities.

Singapore's key population challenges

Sustainable population “most critical” issue

- Importance of Government & People to have a shared understanding to achieve this.
- White Paper by Prime Minister's Office to be presented by end 2012.
- Aim will be to create a shared strategy to maintain economic vitality, strengthen its harmonious multi-ethnic society.
- Issues considered should include labour market integration for better contribution from women, older workers and immigration

Singapore's key population challenges

Women's groups' feedback on female labour force participation

- Fair pay, fair opportunities
- Parent-friendly workplace practices, i.e.
 - Flexible working arrangements
 - Parental leave/ family illness leave
- Childcare facilities- high quality, flexible and affordable-company and government priority
- Family creation- dual roles of responsibility and investment
- Work-life harmony

IT IS HARD TO BE A WOMAN

*One must think like a man,
Behave like a lady,
Look like a young girl,
And work like a horse*

(Author: Unknown)

IS IT HARD TO BE A WOMAN?

*One must think like a human being,
Act like a lady or gentleman,
Look smart,
And work smart too*

(Author: Laura Hwang)

Singapore's key population challenges

Generation “i” individualism - and i-phones, i-pods & i-pads

- Youths and young people regard their individual rights as paramount
- Connected continually virtually
- New lines of communication, social media, social circles
- The mothers and fathers of the future, 10 years down the road!

Thank you!