

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
SINGAPORE
OFFICIAL REPORT
CONTENTS

Written Answers to Questions

	Page
1. Statistics and Profiles of Private-hire Drivers (Mr Patrick Tay Teck Guan)	1
2. Legislation on Statutory Rape and Sexual Misconduct Involving Minors, Children and Young Persons (Miss Cheng Li Hui)	1
3. Permits for Public Assemblies Issued Under Public Order Act in 2017 (Ms Sylvia Lim)	2
4. Inmates Who Go Through Divorce Proceedings During Incarceration or After Release (Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang)	3
5. Update On Appropriate Adult Scheme for Young Suspects Below 16 Years of Age (Ms Rahayu Mahzam)	4
6. Health Effects from Exposure to Phthalates and Plasticizers Linked to Hormone Disruption and Reproductive Harm (Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang)	5
7. Government Entities Knowingly Investing in Corporations in Businesses Harmful to Health or Environment (Ms Sylvia Lim)	6
8. Review of Economic Restructuring Strategies to Deal With Rapid Change in Technology, Deglobalisation and Protectionism (Mr Gan Thiam Poh)	6
9. Impact of US Tariffs on Singapore Economy (Mr Gan Thiam Poh)	7
10. Number of Subsidised and Non-Subsidised Rental Flats in Singapore (Mr Patrick Tay Teck Guan)	9
11. Adequacy of Current Sex Education Curriculum to Equip Students With Knowledge to Protect Themselves Against Predatory Sexual Behaviours (Miss Cheng Li Hui)	10
12. Number of Companies Applying for WorkPro Grants (Ms Rahayu Mahzam)	12
13. Breakdown of Persons Employed in Accounts and Bookkeeping (Mr Patrick Tay Teck Guan)	13
14. Statistics on Children and Youth Under 21 in Children's Homes, Shelters and Welfare Homes (Mr Kwek Hian Chuan Henry)	14

STATISTICS AND PROFILES OF PRIVATE-HIRE DRIVERS

1 **Mr Patrick Tay Teck Guan** asked the Minister for Transport (a) how many private-hire drivers are there as at 31 March 2018; (b) what is the gender/race/age profile of these drivers; (c) what is the number of full-time private-hire drivers; and (d) what is the number of drivers who are doing it on an ad-hoc basis.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: As of 31 March 2018, there are approximately 54,000 private hire car (PHC) drivers. More than 90% of them are male. About 70% of the drivers are Chinese, 17% are Malays, 8% are Indians and 5% are Others. About half the drivers are between 20 and 39 years old; 40% between 40 and 59 years old; and the rest between 60 and 74 years old. We do not have the breakdown between drivers who drive full-time, and those who drive on an ad-hoc basis.

[Back to Contents](#)

LEGISLATION ON STATUTORY RAPE AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT INVOLVING MINORS, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS

2 **Miss Cheng Li Hui** asked the Minister for Home Affairs (a) whether current legislation regarding statutory rape and sexual misconduct involving minors, children or young persons will be enhanced in light of the recent cases involving persons known to the victims; and (b) whether current legislation has sufficiently accounted for the increasing use of online platforms for the sexual grooming and engaging of unsuspecting victims.

Mr K Shanmugam: We have provisions in the Penal Code, Children and Young Persons Act, and Women's Charter that cover sexual offences against children and young people. For example, rape of a woman under 14 carries a mandatory minimum of eight years' imprisonment, and a maximum of 20 years. There is also mandatory caning of not less than 12 strokes.

As part of the ongoing Penal Code Review, we are reviewing these laws and seeking to enhance protection for such vulnerable persons.

To the Member's second question, sexual grooming of a minor under 16 is currently criminalised under section 376E of the Penal Code. This offence is also being reviewed, and we are also looking to enhance protection for minors against online communications of a sexual nature.

The proposals from the Penal Code Review will be tabled for public consultation later this year.

[Back to Contents](#)

PERMITS FOR PUBLIC ASSEMBLIES ISSUED UNDER PUBLIC ORDER ACT IN 2017

3 Ms Sylvia Lim asked the Minister for Home Affairs with respect to the over 900 permits for public assemblies issued under the Public Order Act in 2017 (a) what proportion of permits related to events held at Speakers' Corner as opposed to events at other venues; (b) whether there have been any permits issued for outdoor assemblies at venues other than Speakers' Corner and, if so, what has been the nature of these assemblies; and (c) for the permits granted for events at Speakers' Corner, what are the reasons for requiring a permit for those events.

Mr K Shanmugam: Of the over 900 Police permits issued for public assemblies in 2017, only one was for a public assembly at Speakers' Corner.

The rest were for public assemblies held elsewhere. 835 of them were outdoor events. These events were mostly religious celebrations, and constituency events organised by grassroots organisations. Under the Public Order Act, a Police permit is required for a public assembly if the purpose of the gathering is to:

- (i) Demonstrate support for or opposition to the views or actions of any persons, group of persons or any government;
- (ii) To publicise a cause or campaign; or
- (iii) To mark or commemorate any event.

As for Speakers' Corner, there were 40 public events held there in 2017. A Police permit is not required if the event meets the conditions set out in the Public Order (Unrestricted Area)

Order 2016.

The one event in 2017 at Speakers' Corner where a Police permit was granted was a public assembly to promote awareness on breastfeeding. The event involved the participation of foreigners, which is against one of the exemption conditions. The Police granted a permit after assessing the event in totality, including that it did not promote a cause that was political, controversial, or divisive in nature.

[Back to Contents](#)

INMATES WHO GO THROUGH DIVORCE PROCEEDINGS DURING INCARCERATION OR AFTER RELEASE

4 **Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang** asked the Minister for Home Affairs for each of the past three years (a) how many inmates go through divorce proceedings while in the Drug Rehabilitation Centres, or while undergoing incarceration under the Long-Term Imprisonment 1 and Long-Term Imprisonment 2 regimes respectively; (b) how many go through divorce proceedings within two years of release respectively; and (c) what is the recidivism rate of inmates who have undergone divorce during incarceration and following release respectively.

Mr K Shanmugam: The Singapore Prison Service (SPS) does not maintain records of inmates undergoing divorce proceedings, nor after they are released.

Regardless of marital status, inmates undergo programmes based on their risk of re-offending and their needs. These include family programmes to address transitional issues for inmates and their families, and to equip them with knowledge and skills that will help strengthen their relationships with each other. More than 4,000 inmates benefitted from family programmes in 2017. SPS aims to work with community partners to extend family programmes to more inmates.

[Back to Contents](#)

UPDATE ON APPROPRIATE ADULT SCHEME FOR YOUNG SUSPECTS BELOW 16 YEARS OF AGE

5 Ms **Rahayu Mahzam** asked the Minister for Home Affairs (a) whether he can provide an update on the Appropriate Adult Scheme for young suspects below 16 years of age; (b) what is the current number of volunteers under the scheme; (c) whether the scheme is implemented at all police divisions; and (d) what is the number of times a volunteer has been called upon under this scheme since April 2017.

Mr K Shanmugam: The Appropriate Adult Scheme for Young Suspects was launched in phases from April 2017. During the pilot phase, from April 2017 to April 2018, Appropriate Adults were activated to provide emotional support to young suspects investigated by the Police and Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) at Bedok Division, by the Police's Criminal Investigation Department, and by CNB's Investigation Division.

Feedback from investigation officers and Appropriate Adults has been positive. Since April 2018, the scheme has been expanded to cover Police and CNB cases investigated at Clementi, Central, and Tanglin Divisions, as well as cases investigated by the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau and Singapore Customs. With this expansion, the scheme is expected to support about half of all young suspects investigated by the Police and CNB. The full roll-out is expected to be completed in mid-2019.

The Singapore Children's Society (SCS) manages the scheme, and is responsible for recruiting, training, and deploying Appropriate Adults. There are currently 408 Appropriate Adults, and they have been activated about 690 times since April 2017.

Volunteers have to undergo a day-long training session by SCS. The training is supported by the Association of Criminal Lawyers of Singapore, the Law Society of Singapore, Attorney-General's Chambers, Singapore Police Force, Central Narcotics Bureau, Ministry of Social and Family Development, Ministry of Home Affairs, and the National Council of Social Service.

[Back to Contents](#)

HEALTH EFFECTS FROM EXPOSURE TO PHTHALATES AND PLASTICIZERS LINKED TO HORMONE DISRUPTION AND REPRODUCTIVE HARM

6 **Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang** asked the Minister for Health (a) whether the Ministry monitors health effects from exposure to phthalates and plasticizers that are linked to hormone disruption and reproductive harm, particularly in male infants; and (b) whether the Ministry will consider putting in place regulations for consumer goods that contain harmful plasticizers.

Mr Gan Kim Yong: Phthalates are common substances added to plastics to improve their flexibility and durability. MOH does not routinely monitor the health effects from exposure to phthalate among male infants, but we monitor global data and studies on the impact of exposure to phthalates on an ongoing basis. The findings of some studies have suggested that there is some potential for harm in humans, particularly when ingested, although the evidence is not conclusive. Nevertheless, Singapore has established regulations, based on international standards, to reduce exposure to phthalates as a precautionary measure.

Enterprise Singapore regulates the use of phthalates in general consumer goods under the Consumer Protection (Consumer Goods Safety Requirements) Regulations (CGSR). The Regulations are aligned with applicable international, regional or national safety standards, and Enterprise Singapore monitors compliance through post-market surveillance. Additional regulatory requirements are imposed for toys and childcare articles in particular, including that on allowable concentrations of specified phthalates.

The Health Sciences Authority administers the Health Products (Cosmetic Products -- ASEAN Cosmetic Directive) Regulations and bans the use of plasticizers that are harmful to consumers in cosmetic products.

The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore administers the Food Regulations to ensure the safety of plastic food packaging, including plastic milk bottles. Through routine surveillance, any food with phthalate amounts above allowable limits would not be allowed for sale.

[Back to Contents](#)

**GOVERNMENT ENTITIES KNOWINGLY INVESTING IN CORPORATIONS
IN BUSINESSES HARMFUL TO HEALTH OR ENVIRONMENT**

7 **Ms Sylvia Lim** asked the Minister for Finance whether the Government has set any restrictions on Government entities knowingly investing in corporations whose main business activity is harmful to health or the environment, such as those in the tobacco products industry.

Mr Heng Swee Keat: Government entities (ie, Ministries and Statutory Boards) set up or own companies to achieve specific public policy purpose. Examples include Public Hospitals which provide healthcare services and the Employment and Employability Institute which supports the training and placement of workers and job seekers. Such corporate entities will not engage in activities that are harmful to health or the environment.

Government's investments are done mainly through GIC and Temasek. As has been explained previously, GIC and Temasek operate on a commercial basis in order to maximise long-term risk-adjusted returns. Their individual investment decisions are independent of the Government. While the Government does not prescribe how GIC and Temasek invest, both emphasise sustainability in their investment activities. Both recognise that good sustainability practices are good for business and can have a positive impact on long-term returns. Conversely, companies with poor sustainability practices carry business and reputational risks.

[Back to Contents](#)

REVIEW OF ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH RAPID CHANGE IN TECHNOLOGY, DEGLOBALISATION AND PROTECTIONISM

8 **Mr Gan Thiam Poh** asked the Minister for Trade and Industry whether there is a need to review our economic restructuring strategies in view of the rapid change in technology, increased risk of deglobalisation and protectionism so as to continue strengthening our competitiveness.

Mr Chan Chun Sing: The Committee on the Future Economy (CFE) had identified the key global and structural shifts, as well as rapid technological changes and growing sentiments against globalisation that would impact us, in developing a comprehensive set of recommendations to guide our economic strategy for the next five to 10 years. Given this, our key economic restructuring efforts will be centred on strengthening enterprise capabilities,

building strong digital capabilities, deepening the skills of Singaporeans, and continuing to work together with other economies to stay open and connected, build stronger links, and collaborate closely to boost growth and competitiveness.

One of the recommendations of the CFE was the development of Industry Transformation Maps (ITMs), which are industry-specific roadmaps that organise our economic restructuring efforts. The ITMs were developed through an integrated and coordinated tripartite approach, that brought together key stakeholders. We have since launched ITMs for each of the 23 ITM sectors, which together cover 80 percent of the Singapore economy. Each ITM is tailored to the opportunities, needs, and challenges of specific sectors. Some sectors, such as those in the Manufacturing and Modern Services clusters will focus on growth and strengthening their competitive edge, while other sectors such as those in the Lifestyle and Built Environment clusters will be transforming for higher productivity and better jobs. There will be bright spots within every sector.

The ITMs are dynamic plans that will be updated to respond to changes in the economic environment. We will continue to monitor the progress of our ITMs, refining strategies where necessary to ensure they stay relevant as new trends emerge.

Ultimately, the success of our economic restructuring efforts depends on the collective efforts of all stakeholders. Besides the Government, which will serve as an enabler to support this transformation, our trade association and chambers (TACs) and unions also have a key role to galvanise firms of every size, and mobilise workers in every sector, to be part of this transformation journey. Our companies need to reconsider the way they operate and compete, and how they partner one another to sustain competitiveness and create good jobs.

[Back to Contents](#)

IMPACT OF US TARIFFS ON SINGAPORE ECONOMY

9 **Mr Gan Thiam Poh** asked the Minister for Trade and Industry (a) whether the tariffs imposed by the US on solar panels, washing machines, steel and aluminium have any impact on the Singapore economy; (b) what is the estimated impact on businesses; and (c) how will it affect

our economic strategy.

Mr Chan Chun Sing: The US announced a series of safeguard measures in the form of tariffs on solar panels and washing machines under Section 201 of the 1974 Trade Act in January 2018, as well as steel and aluminium under Section 232 of the 1962 Trade Expansion Act in March 2018.

In 2017, Singapore's domestic exports to the US was S\$228.9 million for solar cells and modules, and S\$36,000 for washing machines. Domestic exports to the US totalled S\$4.6 million for steel, and S\$7.1 million for aluminium. In aggregate, these exports made up 1.4% of Singapore's total domestic exports to the US, and a smaller 0.09% of Singapore's total domestic exports to the world.

The US tariffs have the effect of making the prices of these products more expensive to US importers, which may reduce their demand for overseas products. Given the modest share that the products affected by the US tariffs have as a percentage of Singapore's total domestic exports, the direct negative impact of the US tariffs on the Singapore economy is limited.

Nonetheless, we are closely monitoring developments on these safeguard measures, which do impact some companies in Singapore. Singapore has registered our concerns with the relevant US departments and consulted with the US on possible exemption from the safeguard measures.

As a small and open economy, having free and connected markets is critical for Singapore. It is important that Singapore and like-minded partners uphold the rules-based multilateral trading system, and ensure that such safeguard measures do not become entrenched and turn into barriers to trade.

Even as Singapore continues to build stronger links and collaborate closely with our trading partners to boost growth and create jobs, we will continue to safeguard our trade interests and resist protectionist practices which could disrupt the flow of global commerce.

[Back to Contents](#)

NUMBER OF SUBSIDISED AND NON-SUBSIDISED RENTAL FLATS IN SINGAPORE

10 **Mr Patrick Tay Teck Guan** asked the Minister for National Development (a) what is the current number of subsidised and non-subsidised rental flats in Singapore; (b) what is the distribution in terms of one-room, two-room, three-room and four-room and above flats; (c) how many Singaporeans are currently living in subsidised rental flats; and (d) what is the gender/race/age profile of those living in subsidised rental flats.

Mr Lawrence Wong: HDB currently manages about 60,600 subsidised rental flats under three schemes:

- (a) The Public Rental Scheme, for Singapore Citizen (SC) households who have no other housing options or family support;
- (b) Interim Rental Housing, for SC families who are in financial hardship and require urgent temporary accommodation; and
- (c) The Parenthood Provisional Housing Scheme (PPHS), mainly for first-timer families who are awaiting the completion of their new flats.

HDB does not rent out non-subsidised flats.

The distribution of subsidised rental flats by flat type is in Table 1, and the details requested about the households living in these flats are in Tables 2 to 4.

National Archives of Singapore

Table 1: No. of Units of each Flat Type¹

Flat Type	No. of Units
1-room	29,500
2-room	29,800

¹ The stock of rental flats includes a buffer of vacant rental flats which have been set aside for existing tenants who will be affected when their rental blocks are due for redevelopment.

3-room	1,200
4-room	100
Total	60,600

Table 2: By Main Tenant's Gender

Gender	No. of Households
Female	22,800
Male	28,100
Total	50,900

Table 3: By Main Tenant's Race

Race	No. of Households
Chinese	27,800
Indian	6,200
Malay	16,200
Other	700
Total	50,900

Table 4: By Main Tenant's Age

Age Range	No. of Households
< 35	4,800
35 – 54	14,700
>= 55	31,400
Total	50,900

National Archives of Singapore
[Back to Contents](#)

ADEQUACY OF CURRENT SEX EDUCATION CURRICULUM TO EQUIP STUDENTS WITH KNOWLEDGE TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AGAINST PREDATORY SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS

11 **Miss Cheng Li Hui** asked the Minister for Education (a) whether the current sex education curriculum adequately equips students with the knowledge to protect themselves against predatory sexual behaviours; (b) whether there are plans to engage and involve parents to introduce appropriate sex education content at home; (c) what is the number of cases involving

statutory rape and predatory sexual behaviours that have been reported through schools over the last five years; (d) whether teachers are adequately trained to identify students who are victims of such sexual misconduct; and (e) how are such reported cases being dealt with.

Mr Ong Ye Kung: We have a carefully planned curriculum, starting from lower primary and to upper secondary, to impart to our students the awareness and skills to protect themselves from sexual exploitation and abuse.

For example, in lower primary, students are taught how to differentiate between a good and bad touch; in upper primary, they learn things like how to protect themselves from sexual advances, setting clear physical boundaries in a relationship, and the double-edged nature of the Internet. In secondary school, they learn more about the usefulness and dangers of cyberspace, dealing with relationships, and differentiating between healthy relationship and sexual grooming, etc.

All these aim towards inculcating in our students a strong sense of the right to be treated with respect, to protect themselves, to not feel guilty or shame if they are victims, and seek help and counsel.

Parents too play a key role in their children's sexuality education. The schools support parents with information on what their children are learning about sexuality and also offer parenting advice on how to initiate discussions on sexuality issues at home. We encourage parents to be open in discussing their beliefs and values, and being available to guide their children on sexuality matters.

We understand the member is concerned about this issue and wishes to know the number of cases of sexual offences every year. Our numbers are low by international standards. We monitor the numbers but have not been releasing them. Instead, we are raising awareness through education, counsel and advice in schools and within families.

Our teachers are trained to look out for signs of distress in students and refer them to the school counsellors or other professional support when necessary. Suspected cases of statutory rape and predatory sexual behaviours involving a parent, carer or other household member are

reported to the Ministry of Social and Family Development's Child Protection Service. When cases involve non-household members, parents will be advised to report to the police. If parents refuse to do so, the schools will make the report. However, it is sometimes difficult for schools to track such cases as parents may not keep the schools informed, and the outcomes of the police investigation may not be made known to schools.

[Back to Contents](#)

NUMBER OF COMPANIES APPLYING FOR WORKPRO GRANTS

12 **Ms Rahayu Mahzam** asked the Minister for Manpower (a) how many companies have applied for WorkPro since its introduction in 2013; (b) whether there has been an increase in the number of applications after the introduction of the enhanced scheme in 2016; and (c) whether there are any reviews of the age management practices, redesigned work places and processes and/or flexible work arrangements implemented by the companies after the disbursement of the grant.

Mrs Josephine Teo: Under WorkPro, companies can receive funding support to (i) implement age management practices through the Age Management Grant (AMG); (ii) redesign workplaces and processes to create easier, safer and smarter jobs for older workers through the Job Redesign Grant (JRG); and (iii) introduce and sustain use of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) through the Work-Life Grant (WLG).

From 2013 to 2017, over 3,400 companies employing about 368,000 workers have benefited from WorkPro grants.

We have continuously enhanced the WorkPro scheme. In 2016, we raised the maximum grant for the JRG from \$150,000 to \$300,000 per company to further facilitate job redesign efforts. To encourage more capability development projects to incorporate the requirements of older workers, JRG can be applied as a rider on top of other Government grants. Since the enhancement, and with additional effort to promote the scheme, the number of companies that benefitted from the JRG has increased from about 30 a year to about 440 a year.

WorkPro funding is only disbursed when we are satisfied that the company has achieved the

corresponding grant deliverables and is able to demonstrate the impact to their employees.

Companies claiming for the AMG and JRG are required to submit evaluations of how projects undertaken have created a positive impact on their older employees. Similarly, under the WLG, companies claiming the Developmental Grant (DG) are required to submit evaluation reports on their FWA pilot projects, in addition to formalising these FWAs in the companies' HR policy to be offered to all other employees. The FWA Incentive (FI) is disbursed to companies after their employees have regularly used FWAs.

[Back to Contents](#)

BREAKDOWN OF PERSONS EMPLOYED IN ACCOUNTS AND BOOKKEEPING

13 **Mr Patrick Tay Teck Guan** asked the Minister for Manpower for each year from 2012 to 2017, how many persons have been employed in the respective occupations of (i) accounting associate professional (ii) bookkeeper (iii) ledger and accounts clerk (iv) audit clerk (v) payroll/wages clerk (vi) billing clerk (vii) procurement/purchasing clerk and (viii) other accounting clerks.

Mrs Josephine Teo: The table below shows the number of residents who have been employed as (i) Accounting Associate Professionals and (ii) Accounting and Bookkeeping Clerks, which comprise the following occupations:

- (a) Bookkeeper;
- (b) Ledger and accounts clerk;
- (c) Audit clerk;
- (d) Payroll/wages clerk;
- (e) Billing clerk;
- (f) Procurement/purchasing clerk; and
- (g) Other accounting clerks

A further breakdown by these occupations is not available, as we have not captured a sufficient number of observations in our sample to enable us to provide a meaningful estimate of

their employment size.

Numbers in Thousands

Occupation	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
3313 Accounting Associate Professionals	19.2	19.6	23.0	24.0	28.2	29.8
4311 Accounting and Bookkeeping Clerks	31.8	31.5	32.1	31.4	27.0	26.9

[Back to Contents](#)

STATISTICS ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH UNDER 21 IN CHILDREN'S HOMES, SHELTERS AND WELFARE HOMES

14 **Mr Kwek Hian Chuan Henry** asked the Minister for Social and Family Development what is the current number of children and youth under 21 who are currently residing within various children's homes, shelters and other welfare homes and whether this number has increased or decreased over the years.

Mr Desmond Lee: As of 31 December 2017, there were about 700 children and youth residing in Homes licensed under the Children and Young Persons Act (CYP Homes). This number has decreased over the years, because we are transforming the out-of-home care sector so that more children are placed in foster care rather than homes and institutions.

In contrast to the licensed CYP Homes, shelters and welfare homes serve different target groups. Shelters are intended for adults who have exhausted all other means of accommodation or those who face family violence, while welfare homes are intended for destitute persons who are unable to work, have no financial means and do not have accommodation and family support.

[Back to Contents](#)

Office of the Clerk of Parliament
Singapore, 18 May 2018