

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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CENSUS OF POPULATION, 1980 - RELEASE NO. 9

The results of the census of population conducted in June 1980 have been published periodically by topics as and when they become available. Between February and September 1981, a total of eight releases on general characteristics of the population, demographic characteristics, literacy and education, economic characteristics, geographic distribution of the population, households and houses, income and transport, languages spoken at home were published. This Release No. 9 which is the last of the periodic releases planned provides data on religion, age at first marriage and fertility of women. Data in this release are estimates based on the 20 per cent sample enumeration which was conducted as part of the 1980 Census of Population.

Religion

The distribution of the population of Singapore by religion reflected her multi-racial and multi-cultural characteristics. Singapore did not have any single religion that was professed by the majority of her people. However, the largest proportion of the population of 29 per cent were Taoists and another 27 per cent Buddhists. Islam and Christianity were the other common religions which were practised by 16 per cent and 10 per cent of the population respectively. The population who did not believe in any religion accounted for a significant 13 per cent while those who professed Hinduism the remaining 4 per cent.

Almost all Malays (99 per cent) were Muslims. Of the Indians, more than half (57 per cent) were Hindus, 22 per cent Muslims and another 12 per cent Christians. Among the Chinese, 38 per cent were Taoists, 34 per cent Buddhists, and 11 per cent Christians. Of the three main ethnic groups, the highest proportion of 17 per cent of the Chinese were without any religion compared with only 1.2 per cent and 0.2 per cent of

the Indians and Malays respectively. Among persons of other ethnic groups comprising mainly of Europeans and Eurasians more than 60 per cent were Christians.

Christians and persons without any religion accounted for higher proportions of the better qualified. Among those with secondary and upper secondary qualifications, Christians and those without any religion each comprised 23 per cent. Of those with tertiary qualifications, these two groups each made up more than 35 per cent. On the other hand, the proportions of persons believing in Taoism, Buddhism and Islam were relatively low among those with higher levels of qualifications.

Age at First Marriage

The 1980 census confirmed that women were marrying at older ages. The average age at first marriage of ever-married women in 1980 was 21.3 years compared to 20.9 years in 1970. The mean age at first marriage rose from 18.9 years among the cohort marrying before 1946 to 23.7 years among those who married during the past five years. This rising trend in age at marriage is a reflection of the increasing educational attainment of women, the breakdown of traditional attitudes favouring early marriage and the increased participation of females in the labour force.

Age at marriage differed by ethnic group. Chinese women and women of other ethnic groups married at older ages than Malay and Indian women. The average age at first marriage of the Chinese women was 21.7 years, that of women of other ethnic groups 23.3 years whilst that of the Malays and Indians was 19.7 years.

Women with higher educational qualifications also married at older ages than those with lower qualifications. The average age at marriage was positively related to level of qualifications. Women without any qualification married at the youngest average age of 20.4 years while those with tertiary qualification married at the oldest average age of 24.9 years. The average age at marriage of women with primary level qualification was 21.9 years and those with secondary and upper secondary qualifications married at the average age of 23.7 years.

Fertility

During the past decade, fertility and the average family size declined. The average number of children born alive per ever-married

woman was 3.4 in 1980 compared with four in 1970. The declining fertility was associated not only with rapid socio-economic development of Singapore but also with the introduction of a successful family planning programme through the provision of cheap but effective contraceptives and disincentives to discourage large families.

Variations in fertility were noted among the different ethnic groups. Of the women above 50 years of age, the Malays had the largest average number of children of 5.7 and women of other ethnic groups the smallest average of 3.4 children. The average number of children per Indian women of 5.3 though lower than that of the Malays was higher than that of the average of 4.9 of the Chinese. The generally lower average family size of the Chinese and women of other ethnic groups was related to their higher average age at marriage and their greater knowledge of family planning.

Women who married at older ages had a shorter reproductive life span and hence lower fertility. The older the age at first marriage, the lower was the average number of children. Those who married before age 15 years had the largest average number of 5.8 children; those who married at 15-19 years had an average of 4.4 children while those who married at age 20-24 years had a smaller number of 2.8 children. Women who postponed their marriage to age 25-29 years had only 2.1 children and those who married at age 30 years or older the average number of children was reduced to only 1.8.

The census also shows that fertility was negatively related to educational qualifications. Women without any educational qualification had the highest mean number of children per ever-married woman of 4.4 while those with tertiary education had the lowest average of 1.6 children.

More detailed analysis on the religion of persons aged 10 years and over, age at first marriage and fertility of women as well as statistical tables and charts are presented in Release No. 9. Copies of the release as well as those published earlier can be purchased at the Singapore National Printers (Pte) Ltd, Publications Sales Division, Ground Floor, Fullerton Building, Singapore 0104. The price for Release No. 1, 2 and 3 is S\$4.00 per copy. Release No. 4 and 5 is S\$8.00 per copy and Release No. 6 to 9 is S\$5.00 per copy.