

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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CENSUS OF POPULATION, 1980 - RELEASE NO. 8

The results of the census of population conducted in June 1980 are scheduled for periodic publication by different topics as and when such data become available. A total of nine periodic releases are planned. The first seven releases on general characteristics of the population, demographic characteristics, literacy and education, economic characteristics, geographic distribution of the population, households and houses and income and transport were published as Release No. 1 to No. 7 between February and August 1981. This Release No. 8 publishes data on principal language spoken at home by persons aged five years and over and languages used by households. Data in this release were estimates based on the 20 per cent sample enumeration which was conducted as part of the 1980 Census of Population.

For the first time, the Singapore population census in 1980 included questions on the principal language or dialect a person used most frequently at home when speaking to different members of his family. The principal language or dialect reported was not necessarily the only language used nor necessarily the language the person was most proficient in. Answers to these questions provide the data for studying the speaking patterns of household members.

Of all persons aged five years and over who lived with their parents, about 67 per cent spoke to their parents in Chinese dialects, six per cent in Mandarin, six per cent in English, 17 per cent in Malay and five per cent in Tamil and other languages. When speaking to their brothers and sisters, a lower proportion of 56 per cent used Chinese dialects but a higher proportion of 10 per cent used Mandarin and 15 per cent used English.

Generally, a /2.

Generally, a higher proportion of older person than younger persons used Chinese dialects while proportionately more younger persons used Mandarin and English. Of the children aged 5-14 years, about 12 per cent spoke in Mandarin to their parents. The corresponding proportion among those aged 40 years and over was less than one per cent. Similarly, the proportion who spoke in English to their parents was the highest at nine per cent among those aged 5-14 years, declining to three per cent among those aged 40 years and over. Conversely, the proportion who spoke in Chinese dialects to their parents decreased from 83 per cent among those aged 40 years and over to 57 per cent among those aged 5-14 years. With the official encouragement on the speaking of school languages and the realization of the practical value of English and Mandarin by younger parents, English and Mandarin will become the principal languages of more and more households.

Students spoke much more in Mandarin and English at home than the general population. They also used more Mandarin and English particularly the latter, when speaking to their brothers and sisters than when speaking to their parents. The proportion of students speaking in English to their brothers and sisters increased with each level of education, rising from 12 per cent among pre-primary and primary students to 35 per cent among upper secondary and tertiary students. Correspondingly, the proportion of students speaking to their brothers and sisters in dialects declined for each higher level of education. This implies that dialects while still prevalent because of tradition are losing their importance to English, especially among the better educated.

The analysis of languages parents used in speaking to their children shows that the higher the qualifications the greater was the proportion using English. Only one per cent among those without qualification spoke in English to their children compared with 51 per cent among those with tertiary qualifications. As qualification is closely related to income which in turn is related to the type of house, the proportion of persons speaking English to their children also increased with each increase in income level and quality of house.

Of the 451,090 private households formed by members who were related to each other, 342,190 used only one language or dialect to speak to one another at home (mono-lingual) even though they may know more than one language or dialect. The remaining 108,900 households comprised members who used more than one language or dialect to speak to each other (multi-lingual).

Proportionately more of the households with two or more family nuclei were multi-lingual compared with households of one family nucleus - 41 per cent against 22 per cent. Among mono-lingual households, those using dialects were in the majority followed by those using Malay. The majority of the multi-lingual households used either Mandarin and dialects or English and dialects.

Chinese dialects were used by the majority of mono-lingual households in all types of houses except for those in private flats and bungalows and terrace houses where English was the most popular language. This shows that English tended to be the language used by the better-off households. Among the multi-lingual households, Mandarin and dialects were more commonly used by those living in the poorer type of houses and English and dialects by those living in the better type of houses.

Chinese and Indian households were proportionately more multi-lingual than Malay households and those of other ethnic groups. This was because most of the senior members in Chinese households spoke only Chinese dialects and the younger members were more conversant with English or Mandarin. Similarly, the older members of Indian households mostly spoke in their mother tongues while the younger members spoke more in English. Malay households were less multi-lingual because Malay was both their mother tongue and school language.

The most popular official language used in households was English - the language of administration and a neutral language to the three main ethnic groups. About 21 per cent of all households used English compared with 17 per cent and 14 per cent using Mandarin and Malay respectively. Tamil was used by 3.3 per cent of the households. Malay was used by practically all

Malay /4.

Malay households (97 per cent). Mandarin was used by only 22 per cent of the Chinese households and Tamil by 55 per cent of the Indian households. English was commonly used by Indian and Chinese households, 37 per cent and 21 per cent respectively. About 72 per cent of households of other ethnic groups used English.

More detailed analysis on the principal language spoken at home by persons aged five years and over and languages used by households as well as statistical tables and charts are presented in Release No. 8. Copies of this 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, 7 and 8 is S\$5.00 per copy.

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