

Parliamentary reply by DPM Teo Chee Hean on TFR

TWELFTH PARLIAMENT OF SINGAPORE
ORAL ANSWER
MONDAY, 14 MAY 2012

Ms Denise Phua Lay Peng:

To ask the Prime Minister (a) what is the impact of the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) on the future of Singapore if it continues to remain low; (b) what is the level of awareness among Singaporeans of the impact of low TFR and how this level of awareness may be raised; (c) what measures is the Government adopting to mitigate the negative effects and challenges of the low TFR; and (d) what are the Government's efforts to engage Singaporeans on this significant issue.

Mr Teo Chee Hean (for the Prime Minister):

Singapore's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in 2011 was 1.20, and our TFR has been below the replacement level of 2.1 since 1976.

This means that as a society, we are having fewer children than needed to replace ourselves.

At current birth rates and without immigration, our citizen population is projected to shrink by around 2025.

With fewer Singaporeans being born, our citizen population will also age rapidly.

The median age of our citizen population will rise steadily from 39 years in 2011 to 47 years in 2030.

By 2030, the number of elderly citizens, those aged 65 and above, will triple to about 900,000, but they will be supported by a smaller base of working-age citizens between 2064 years old.

By 2030, there will only be 2.1 working-age citizens to each elderly citizen, as compared to 6.3 today.

This will place greater pressure on the citizen population in the working ages, not just in the household, but in society as well as economically.

These challenges, while serious, are not insurmountable.

We have been making significant investments in supporting marriage and parenthood, from \$500 million in 2001 to \$1.6 billion a year since 2008.

The Marriage and Parenthood package comprises a broad range of measures such as the Baby Bonus, maternity and child care leave, infant care and child care subsidies, as well as tax benefits for parents.

The Government has also invested heavily in education, healthcare and housing to ensure that Singapore remains a good place to get married and raise children.

We will continue to fine-tune our policies and measures to support and encourage Singaporeans in this regard. Apart from policy incentives, we will also need to foster a social climate that supports family life.

Beyond supporting marriage and parenthood, the Government has stepped up efforts to raise

productivity and encourage more locals to enter the workforce, to expand the potential of our small local workforce.

We are also putting in place measures that ensure that older Singaporeans can look forward to an active, fulfilling and secure future.

Over the course of this year, the National Population and Talent Division will be engaging Singaporeans on population issues, including our low birth rates, and discuss how we can overcome these demographic challenges together.

We will share relevant information about our population challenges, like the Occasional Paper on Citizen Population Scenarios released by NPTD last month, to facilitate discussions.

We will take into account the concerns and aspirations of Singaporeans in the White Paper on Population to be released by the end of the year.

Through this process, we hope to engage Singaporeans and develop a shared understanding of our strategies to build a sustainable population that secures Singapore's future.