



Ageing

Newsletter August



Editor's Choice

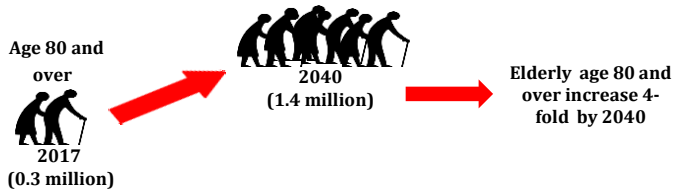
The issue of population has always been on the world's attention, especially the issue of fertility, birth, death, migration, education, poverty and ageing. In this issue, the editorial board will discuss on one of population process called ageing. According to United Nations in their publication of *Ageing in the Twenty-First Century* (2012), an ageing population refers to a phenomenon in which older individuals become a proportionally larger share of the total population due to declining fertility and increasing life expectancy. So, let's have some brief idea on population ageing or SILVER TSUNAMI!

Silver Tsunami

The growth of the older population – population aged 65 years and over is one of the most significant demographic trends all over the world.

Baby boomers refer to those born between 1946 and 1964 – have grown up and now are on the way to becoming ageing boomers. The number of people aged 65 years and over in Malaysia has increased steadily since the 1970s, and it is projected the number will triple from 2.0 million today to more than 6.0 million by 2040. Although much smaller in total size, the number of people ages 80 years and over is projected to grow more than four folds from 0.3 million today to nearly 1.4 million by 2040. While the youngest member of the baby boomers generation is not yet entering the ageing boomers, the recent decline in fertility has accelerated the growth in terms of the share of the older population.

In 1970, only 3.3 per cent of the population was aged 65 years and over, and almost half of the population (44.5%) was under the age of 14 years. By 2017, children make up less than one-fourth of the total population (24.1%), while those aged 65 years and over comprise 6.2 per cent of the total population. Malaysia will have nearly equal share of the young (18.6%) and older population (14.5%) in 2040. **By this time, there will be three older persons for every 20 population.**

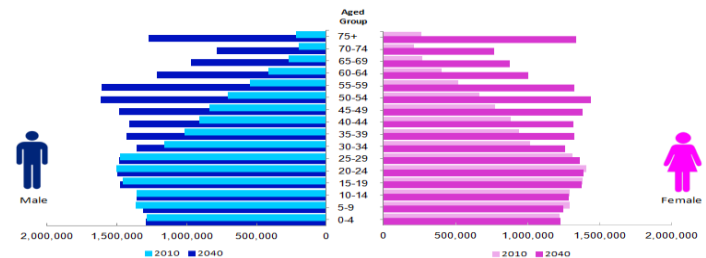
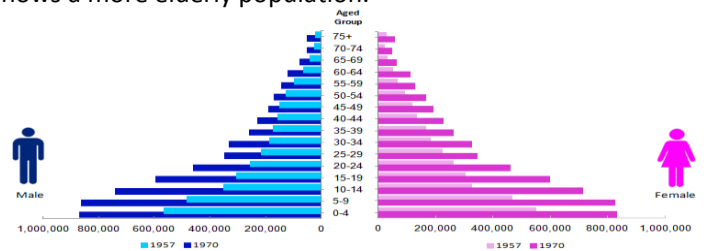


Malaysia's Population Pyramid

Malaysia's population has almost quadrupled over the past five decades, growing from a population of 7.4 million in 1957 to 27.4 million in 2010.

The population age structure has also changed. How does the population aged? **It has been shown that population ageing is determined primarily by fertility decline and modified to a greater or lesser extent, by mortality or migration¹.** For instance in Malaysia, the fertility rate decreased from 6.7 in 1957 to 2.0 (2015) children per woman as well as death rate also declined from 12.4 in 1957 to 5.0 (2015) per 1,000 population. Changes in the population age structure can be described through the population pyramid shown here. In 1957, the shape of the Population pyramid is progressive with a broad base, concave slope and sharp peak. In 2010, the shape of Malaysia population pyramid was regressive and expected to remain as such until 2040.

Regressive pyramid has a smaller base which indicates low birth rates and a convex slope that reflects low mortality rates of the adult population. The apex which is flat and wide shows a more elderly population.



Malaysia Population and Housing Census 2010

- Females were the majority among the elderly in Malaysia
- Perak was the most ageing state with 7.8% followed by Perlis (7.3%)
- Most ageing ethnic was Chinese with 7.8% followed by Indians (4.6%)

note: Ageing refer to population aged 65 years and over

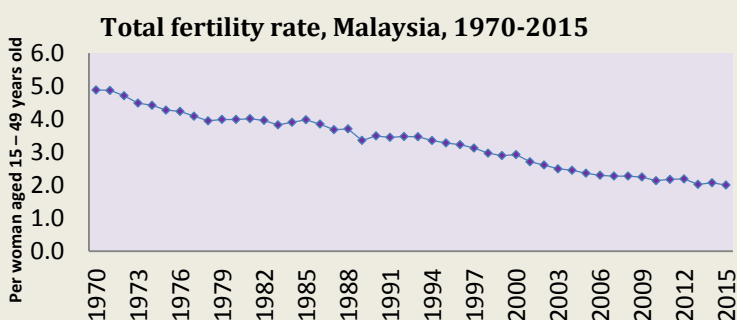
Sources: Population & Housing Census Peninsular Malaysia 1957/Population & Housing Census Malaysia 1970/Population Projections Malaysia 2010 - 2040

¹ - Coale AJ. (1956) . *The Effects of Change in Mortality and Fertility on Age Composition*. *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*. 34: 79-114

Factors Leading to Malaysia's Ageing Population

1. Lower birth rates and declining Total Fertility Rate (TFR)

Birth rates had decreased from 32.4 in 1970 to 16.7 per 1,000 population in 2015. TFR declined from 4.9 in 1970 to 2.0 in 2015. Falling birth rates and TFR were due to higher education and late marriage. Late marriage leads to couples having fewer children. As women gain higher education and better employment opportunities become widely available to them, the opportunity cost for those who marry goes up and the percentage of unmarried people eventually rises and this is a common phenomenon in industrialized countries². **The effects of late marriage have resulted in an increase in the mean age of mother at first birth from 26.6 (2001) to 27.6 in 2015.**



Sources: Malaysia Economic Statistics Time Series 2015/Vital Statistics 2014/Vital Statistics 2015

2. Increasing life expectancy

Increasing life expectancy has led to the increase of older age population. Life expectancy at birth had risen from 61.6 in 1970 to 74.7 in 2016 due to excellent medical health care, good diets, and high quality of life. Lindsay GB, et al., (2014) stated that public health historians and epidemiologists calculate that the majority of the life expectancy increase during the last 200 years resulted from control of infectious diseases, more abundant and safer foods, better sanitary conditions, and other nonmedical social improvements³.

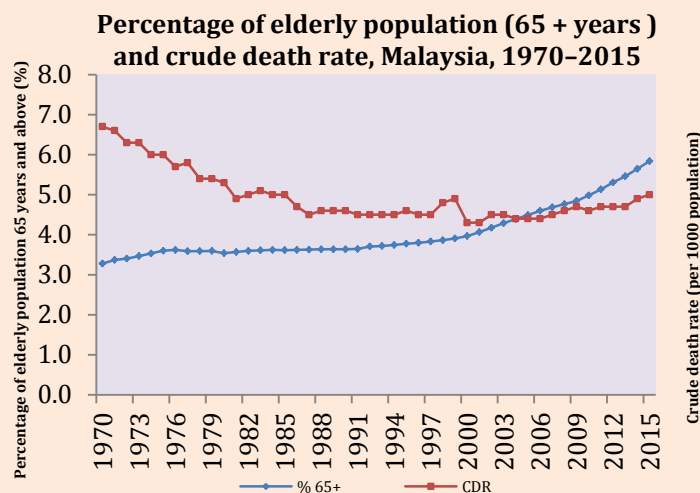
² - Naohiro YASHIRO. (1998). *The Economic Factors for the Declining Birth Rate. Review of Population and Social Policy*. No. 7. 129-144

³ - Lindsay GB, et al. (2014). *The Contribution of Public Health and Improved Social Conditions to Increased Life Expectancy: An Analysis of Public Awareness. Journal of Community Medicine & Health Education*. 4:5

Changes in the size and composition of the population continue to occur in tandem with the changing times. Malaysia's population is rapidly changing in size, distribution and location. It is essential that these trends be assessed quickly and analysed clearly in relations with policy development and implementation. The population structure will change from young population to older population in 2020 when the population aged 65 years and above is expected to

Ageing and Mortality in Malaysia

One of the important features of mortality rate is that it depends on the age structure of the population. Meanwhile, one of the factors contributing to the increase of mortality rate is the increase in the population aged 65 years and over. According to WHO in their Global Health and Aging 2011 publication stated that in early nonindustrial societies, the risk of death was high at every age, and only a small proportion of people reached old age. In modern societies, most people live past middle age, and deaths are highly concentrated at older ages⁴. **Concurrent with the increase in the elderly population in Malaysia, death rate began to depict plateau formation in 1988 but gradually increase in a very small degree every year from 2011 to 2015.** Life expectancy is still increasing because of a low rate of infant mortality, but mortality rate for the whole population ironically began to increase slightly due to the increasing number of death from an older population. It was a sign that leads to the ageing populations. The number of deaths depends on the size of the population age groups or cohorts reaching the end of their life cycle. The changes in mortality may assume a greater importance for population ageing later in the demographic transition.



Sources: Malaysia Economic Statistics Time Series 2015/Vital Statistics 2014/Vital Statistics 2015

⁴ - World Health Organization. (2011). *Global Health and Aging*, 6

reach more than 7 per cent. Hence, population policies on the elderly need to be segregated into short term and long term development with consideration of the population dynamics in terms size, distribution and location. It is also recommended that under the next Malaysia Plan, development programs need to focus on monitoring specific needs of the aged, especially for citizen aged 60 years and above.



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