

Singapore's total population reaches 5.4m

By Imelda Saad

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Singapore's total population grew by 1.6 per cent to reach 5.4 million as of June this year. That is the slowest growth rate in the past nine years, according to the latest report from the National Population and Talent Division.



Pedestrians walk down a street in the downtown financial district in Singapore. (AFP/Roslan Rahman)

SINGAPORE: Singapore's total population grew by 1.6 per cent to reach 5.4 million as of June this year.

That is the slowest growth rate in the past nine years, according to the latest report from the National Population and Talent Division.

As the population ages and shrinks, there has only been a marginal increase in the number of Singaporeans getting married and having babies.

This is despite a third round of enhancements to the Marriage and Parenthood (M&P) package at the start of the year aimed at encouraging Singaporeans to get married and have babies.

The M&P package was introduced in 2001 and the previous enhancements were implemented in 2004 and 2008.

There are now 3.31 million Singapore citizens, making up about 60 per cent of the total population.

Together with 0.53 million permanent residents (PR), the total number of residents stands at 3.84 million.

Non-residents, mainly transient workers, number about 1.55 million or a third of the total population.

But the numbers also show that their growth has slowed down due to the tightened foreign manpower policies and weaker economic conditions.

Growth in foreign employment in the non-construction sectors halved to 3.5 per cent from 7.1 per cent in 2012.

The report said foreign employment growth was mainly driven by the construction sector to support major ongoing infrastructure developments in housing and transport.

There are 35,000 foreign workers in the construction sector compared to about 29,000 the year before.

Singapore's population is ageing. The proportion of citizens aged 65 years and above increased from 7.8 per cent in 2002 to 11.7 per cent in 2013.

The median age of the citizen population also rose from 35.3 years in 2002 to 40 years in 2013.

The PR population has remained stable. The number of new PR statuses granted has held steady at about 30,000 a year over the past three years.

These are mainly in the "prime working ages" of between 25 and 49. New citizens are drawn from this pool of PRs.

Over the past five years, there have been some 20,000 new citizens each year.

The government plans to continue its "calibrated rate of immigration" of between 15,000 and 25,000 new citizens each year to keep the citizen population from shrinking.

Professor David Chan, director of Singapore Management University's Behavioural Sciences Institute, said: "It is important to bring in foreigners that are economically active, so that they can contribute to the country.

"But having said that, I think it is important that you bring in people, and some of them may become our PRs, and some of them may want to sink their roots here and become citizens. So you really want people who are not only economically active but who have the integration potential."

Authorities said immigration is needed to balance the effects of Singapore's aging and shrinking population.

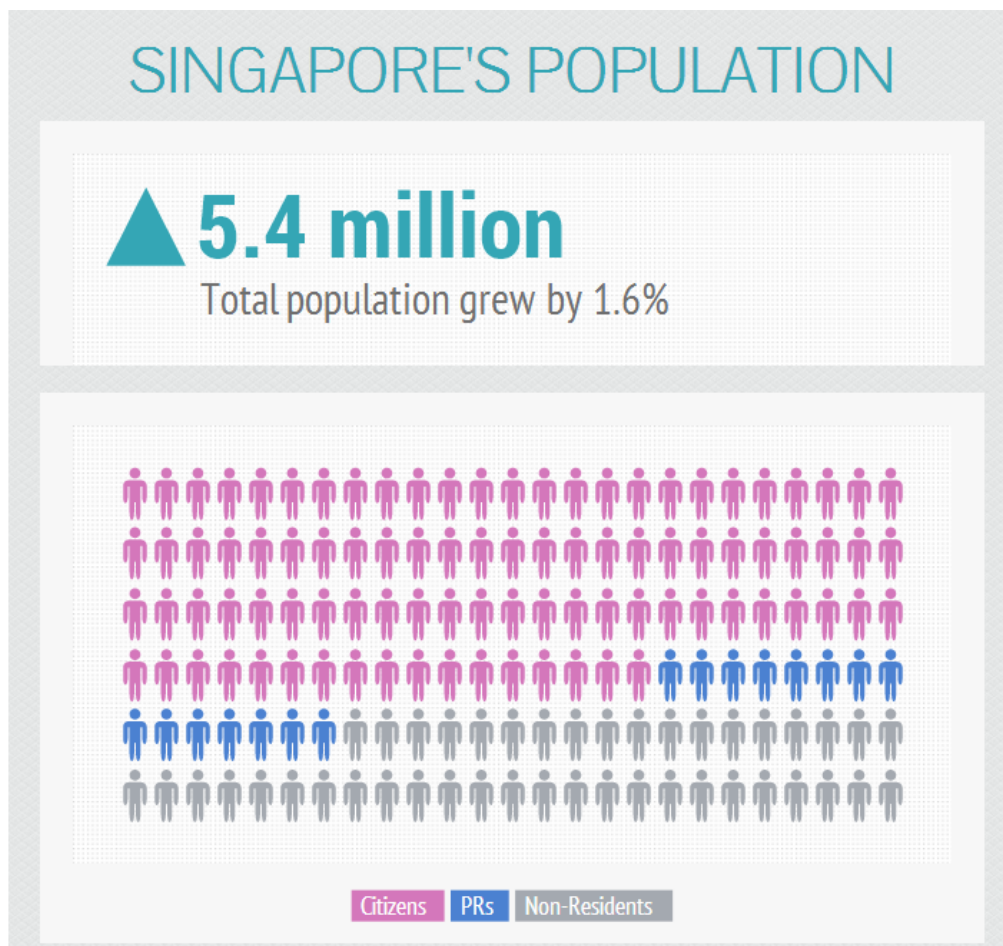
The number of marriages involving at least one citizen has gone up -- but only slightly, by about 2 per cent.

The Total Fertility Rate has increased from 1.2 to 1.29, but that is still well below the replacement level of 2.1.

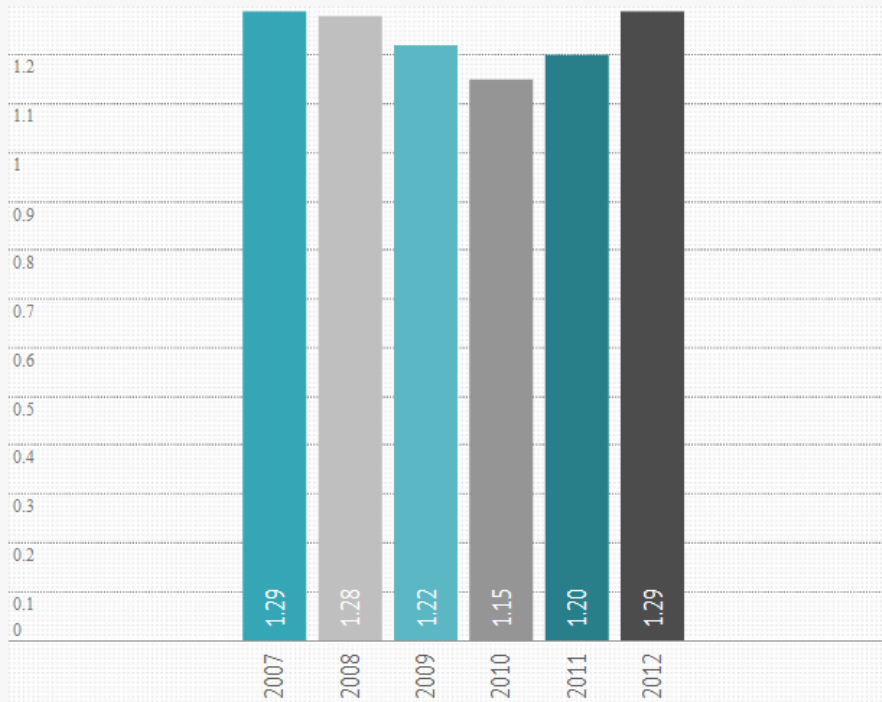
Dr Mathew Mathews, research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, said: "I think a year ago, most people were looking at it as being a Dragon Year effect. But the fact is that we are seeing a shift (in fertility rate) across all races.

"It's not a major change, but it clearly is signalling... that there are good things to come and hopefully when more of the -- whether it's housing infrastructure or clearer articulation by the government in terms of assurances (that) Singaporeans will be taken care of... if they feel more confident they are being taken care of, then people will be more willing to embark into marriage and parenthood."

The government introduced an enhanced Marriage and Parenthood package in January this year to encourage couples to have more children.



Singapore's Total Fertility Rate



Singapore's Total Live-Births

