

# Singapore: Statistical profile

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# SINGAPORE

## *Statistical Profile*

Compiled by Shanyuan Foo



### INTRODUCTION TO SINGAPORE

Singapore is an island city state located at the Southern Malay Peninsula, and is one of the smallest nations in Southeast Asia. A colony of the British Empire since 1819, independence was acquired from Britain through a merger with Malaya, Sarawak and Sabah to form the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. Singapore gained sole independence on 9th of August 1965 when it was forcefully ejected from the Federation, as a result of disparate political views and deep seated tensions between leaders of Singapore and Malaysia. The city state occupies an area of 710.2 square kilometers (274.2 square miles).<sup>1</sup> Which makes it approximately 3.5 times the size of Washington D.C. The structure of the Singapore government is modeled after the parliamentary republic system.

#### About this Statistical Profile -

Organizations striving to be employers-of-choice in different countries around the world need access to current information about the economic, social, political, and demographic characteristics of the countries where their employees live and work.

The Country Profile Series focuses on statistics that can guide decision-making at the workplace: workforce highlights, economic highlights, and population highlights. This Country Profile is part of a set of resources about Singapore available on the website of the Global Perspectives Institute: [www.bc.edu/agingandwork](http://www.bc.edu/agingandwork).

Singapore society is heterogeneous and is made up primarily of Chinese (76.8%), Malays (13.9), Indian (7.9%) and others (1.4%).<sup>2</sup> The official languages are English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil. The education system uses English as the medium of instruction, and is also the predominant language in Singapore. Students are expected to take their mother tongue, which is assigned by race, as their second language.<sup>3</sup> As of 2009, the population is estimated to be around 4.65 million. The country's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is at 1.29, which is well below the 2.21 TFR required for population renewal.

Singapore's GDP in 2008 is approximately 181.9 billion. The lack of a domestic economy as a result of their size requires the country to develop a global economy, and the country depends heavily on exports, manufacturing and the services sector. The government adopts a strong economic interventionist approach with regards to the nation state's affairs.<sup>4</sup> While real economic growth rate has averaged around 7% from 2004 to 2007, the global economic crisis has resulted in real growth dropping to 1.2% in 2008, and a negative annual growth of productivity at -7.8%. As a result, the government intends to make long term changes to the economic model to reduce vulnerability to the shifts and demands of the global economy.

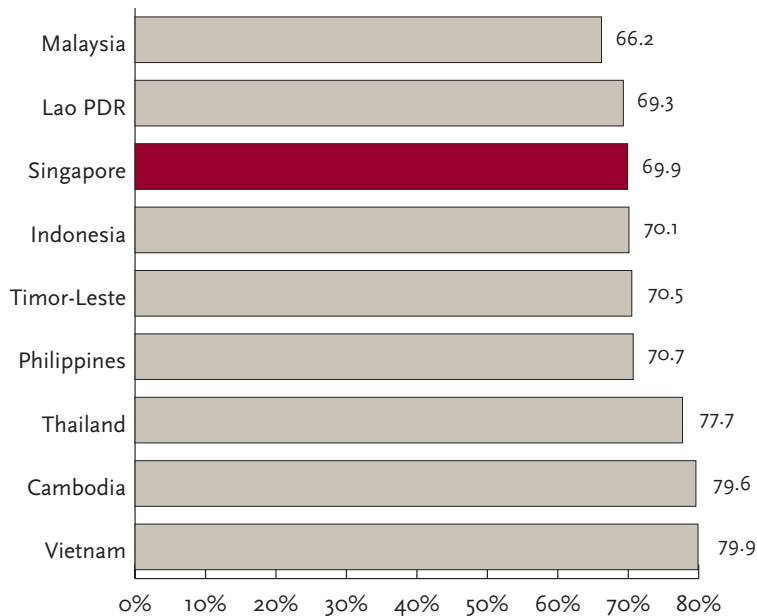
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## LABOR FORCE HIGHLIGHTS

- 🌐 65.6% of the total Singaporean population is in the labor force.<sup>2</sup>
- 🌐 The resident labor force is projected to decrease from 1.74 million in 2005 to 1.14 million in 2050. Resident labor force refers to Singapore citizens and permanent residents aged 15 and over.<sup>2</sup>
- 🌐 The 2007 resident unemployment rate was 3.1%.<sup>6</sup>
- 🌐 In 2007 the average paid hours worked by Singapore employees was 46.3 hours per week. This was a 0.1% increase from the previous year.<sup>8</sup>
- 🌐 In 2006, approximately 4.7% of the labor force was working part time.<sup>7</sup>
- 🌐 In 2006 approximately 13% of the labor force was self-employed.<sup>2</sup>
- 🌐 In 2006 Singapore ranked the highest in total number of hours worked per week (46.3) compared to countries in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 1a. Employed as Percent of Total Population - Selected Regional Countries, 2005



Source: International Labor Organization <sup>8</sup>

Figure 1b. Employed as Percent of Total Population - Selected GNI Countries, 2007 - 2009

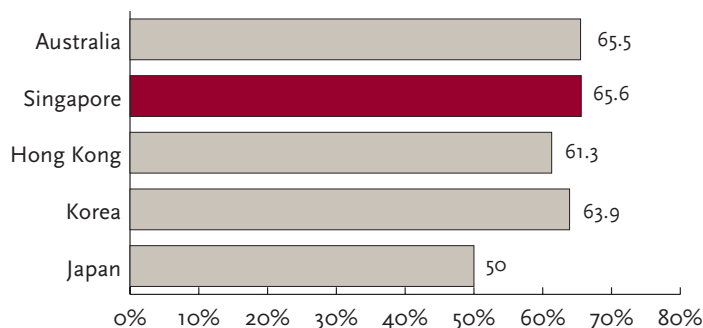
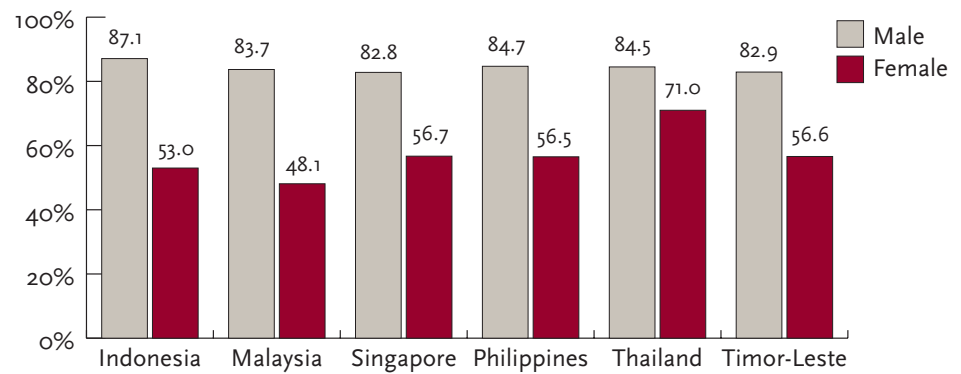


Figure 1b compares the employment as a percent of the total population in Singapore with other countries with high gross national incomes.

Source: Hong Kong Labour Statistics;<sup>9</sup> Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development,<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan,<sup>11</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics,<sup>12</sup> Singapore Department of Statistics <sup>2</sup>

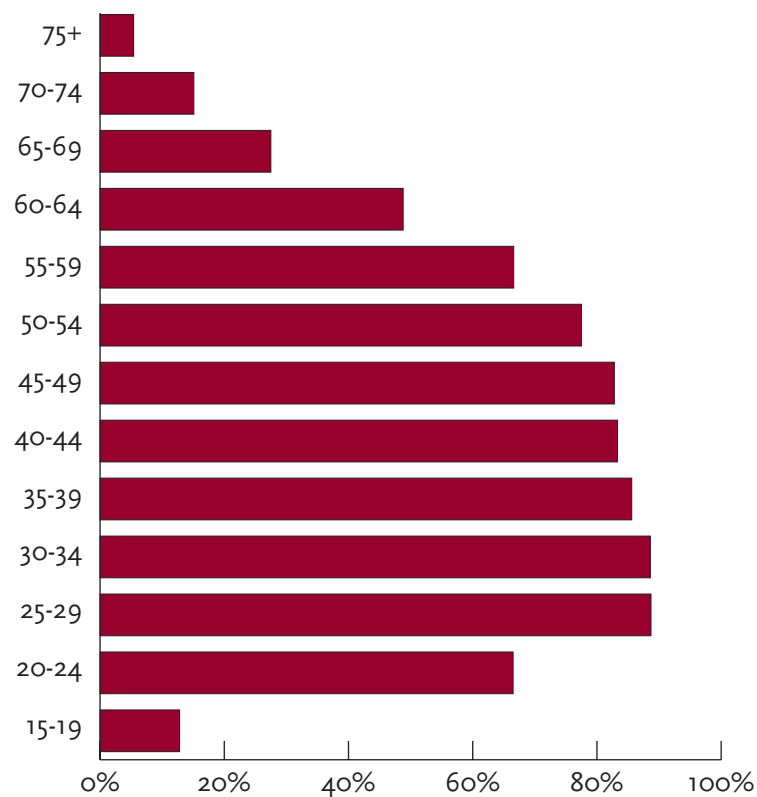
In Figure 2, the employment rate between genders is shown for selected regional nations. Thailand has the least amount of difference between male and female employment rate, followed by Singapore and Timor-Leste.

Figure 2. Employment Rate, Ages 15-64, by Gender, Singapore and Regional Nations, 2005



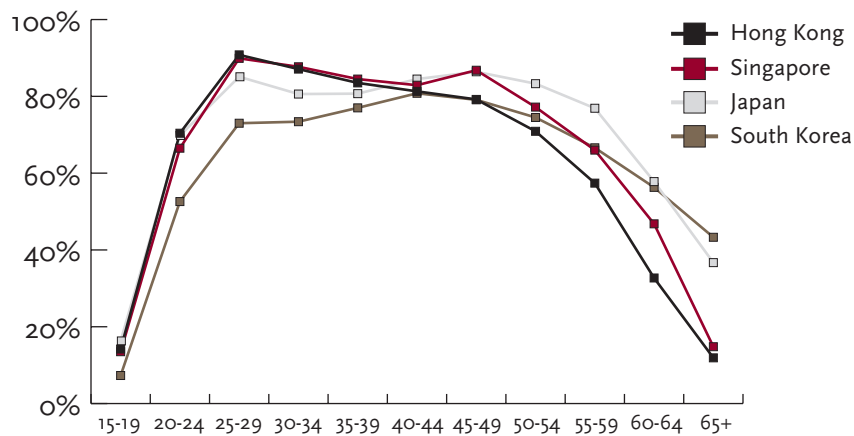
Source: International Labor Organization <sup>8</sup>

Figure 3. Resident Labor Force Participation Rate in Singapore, within age group, 2008



Source: Singapore Department of Statistics <sup>2</sup>

Figure 4. Economically Active Rates in Singapore Compared to Selected Regional Countries, within age group, 2007



Source: International Labor Organization<sup>8</sup>

Figure 5a. Current & Projected Economically Active Population Estimates in Singapore, within age group, 2007-2020

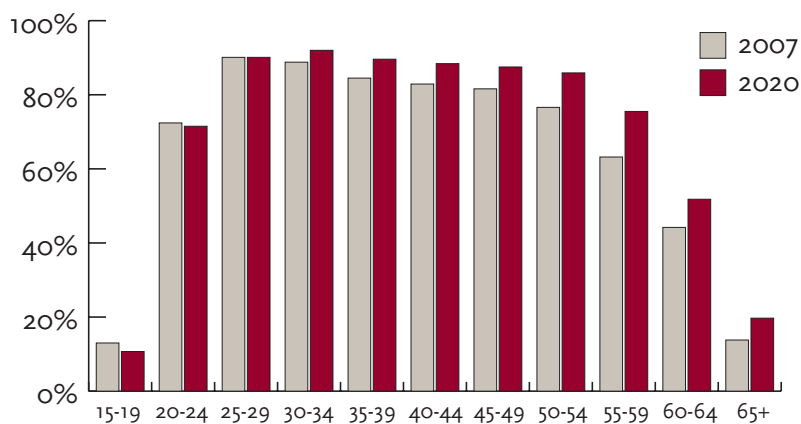
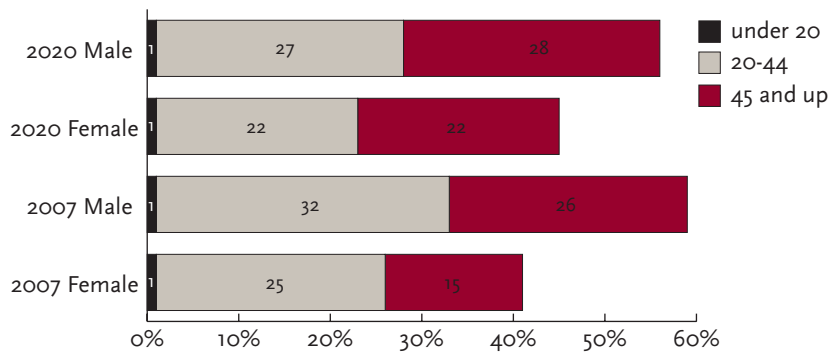


Figure 5a compares the current and projected employment rates in 2020. As noted, the employment rate among people aged 30 and older will increase in the next 13 years.

Source: International Labor Organization<sup>8</sup>

Figure 5b. Current & projected % of Total Population Economically Active in Singapore, 2007-2020

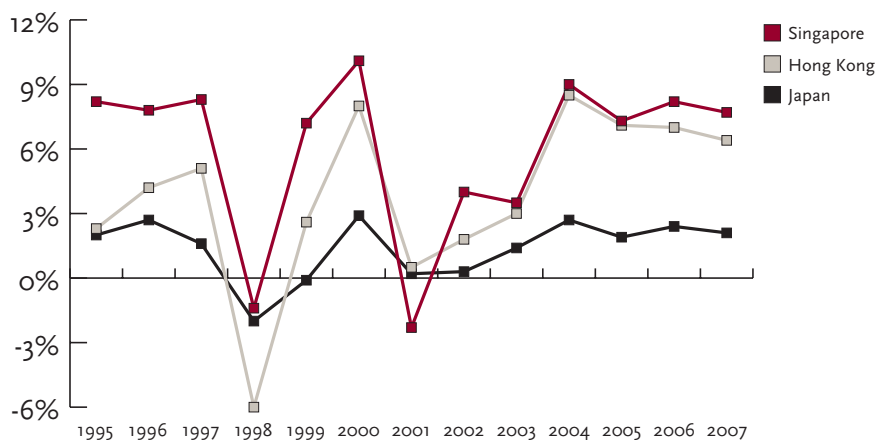


Source: International Labor Organization<sup>8</sup>

## ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHTS

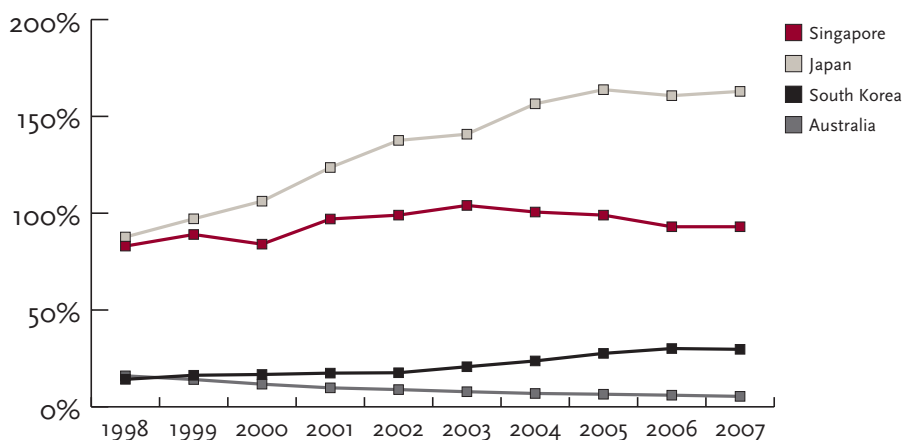
- 🌐 The 2009 Gross Domestic Product per capita in Singapore is \$37,169. This compares to \$39,115 in Japan and \$29,171 in Hong Kong SAR.<sup>9</sup>
- 🌐 The gross domestic product growth of Singapore shrunk by 1.4% in 1998. Gross domestic product growth averaged 7% between 2004 and 2007. However due to the global financial crisis, the projected growth for 2009 is between -9.0 to -6.0%.<sup>13</sup>
- 🌐 As of 2008, Singapore's total foreign reserves stand at \$174 billion. In 2009, for the first time the Singapore government intends to tap \$4.9 billion (approximately US \$3.26 billion) from the reserves to finance a package to relieve the financial crisis.<sup>14</sup>

Figure 6. GDP Growth, Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan, 1995 - 2007



Source: Asian Development Bank<sup>14</sup>

Figure 7. Total External Debt as Percentage of GDP, selected high GNI countries, 1998 - 2007



Source: Singapore Ministry of Trade and Industry<sup>16</sup>, Singapore Department of Statistics<sup>17</sup>, Organization for Economic-Corporation and Development<sup>18</sup>

## DEMOGRAPHIC HIGHLIGHTS

- 🌐 In 2007, the Singapore population was 4.6 million, compared to 6.93 million for Hong Kong and 127.8 million for Japan.<sup>10</sup>
- 🌐 The ethnic composition of Singapore are made up primarily by the Chinese (76.8%), followed by Malays (13.9%), Indian (7.9%) and others (1.4%).<sup>1</sup>
- 🌐 The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) indicates the number of children to be born during her reproductive life span of her life. According to the Singapore Department of Statistics Yearbook 2008, the TFR for Singaporean women is 1.29 children per woman. The Chinese has the lowest TFR at 1.14 while the Malays have the highest TFR at 1.94.<sup>6</sup>
- 🌐 The life expectancy at birth for the Singaporean population was 80.6 years in 2007, 78.2 years for men and 82.9 years for women.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 8. Median Age, by Gender selected countries, 2009

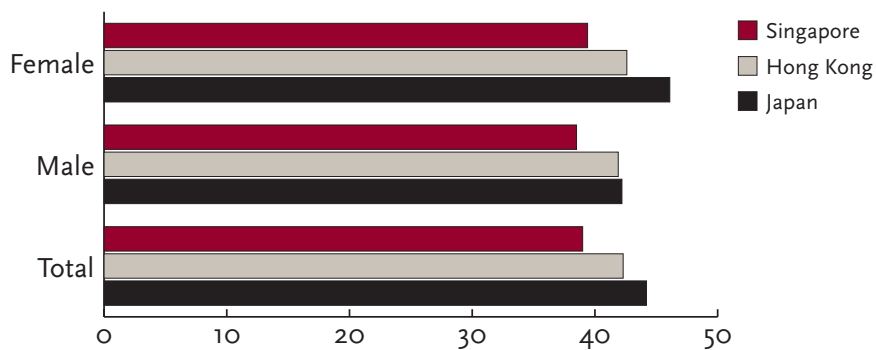
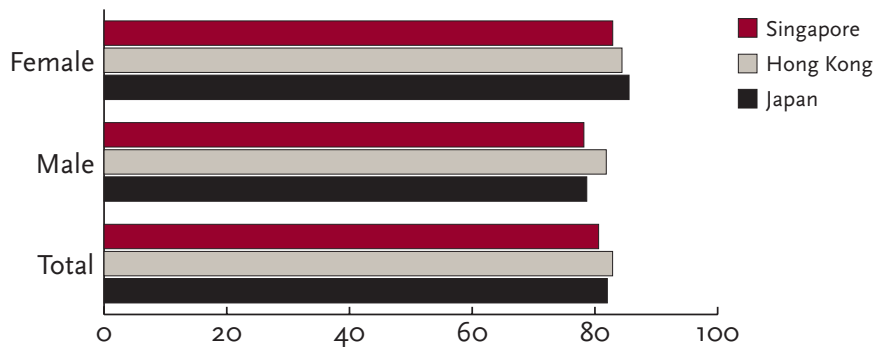


Figure 8 compares the median age of the population by gender to comparable countries. Singapore has the youngest population compared to Hong Kong and Japan.

Source: CIA World Factbook<sup>19</sup>

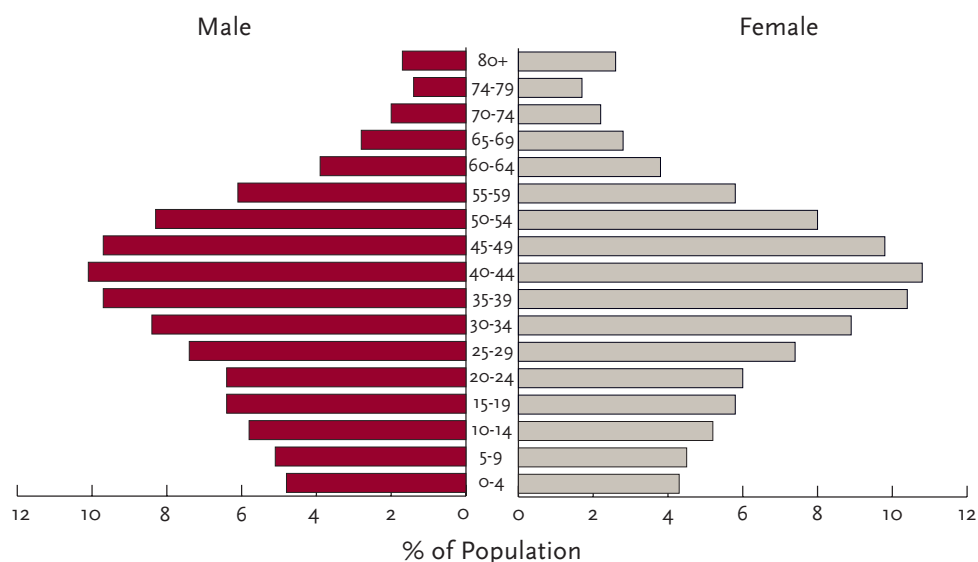
Figure 9. Life Expectancy at Birth, selected countries, 2007



Source: Singapore Department of Statistics<sup>6</sup>, CIA World Factbook<sup>19</sup>

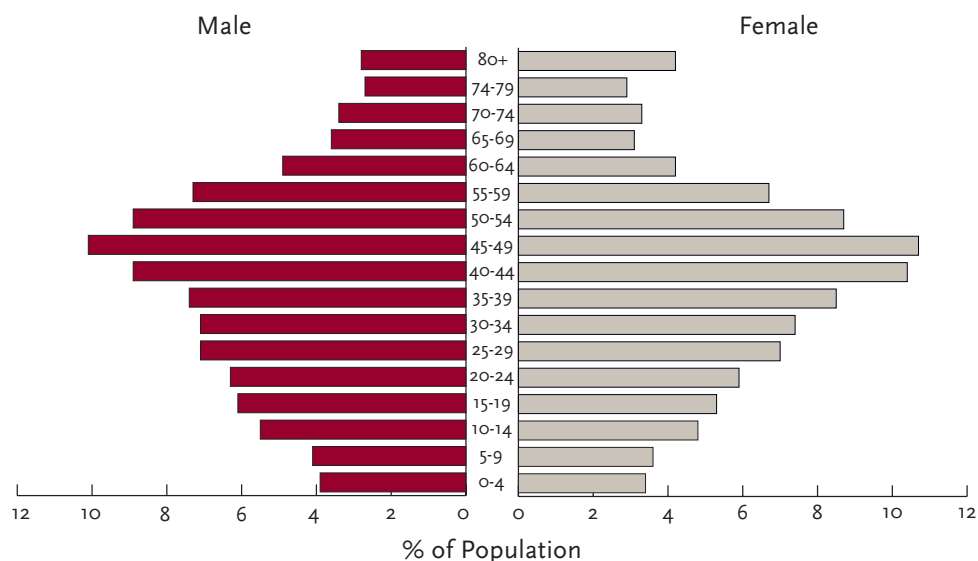
- In Singapore, 7.9% of the male population and 9.3% of the female population is 65 or older.<sup>1</sup> In comparison,
  - In Hong Kong, 12.5% of the male population and 13.5% of the female population is 65 or older.
  - In Japan, 18.8% of the male population and 25.4% of the female population is 65 or older.
- In Singapore, there is a bulge in the population for those aged 40-44 years. Hong Kong shows similar dynamics for the general population. In comparison, there is a population expansion in the older age groups.<sup>20</sup>

figure 10a. Population Distribution of Singapore, 2008



Source: United States Census Bureau<sup>20</sup>

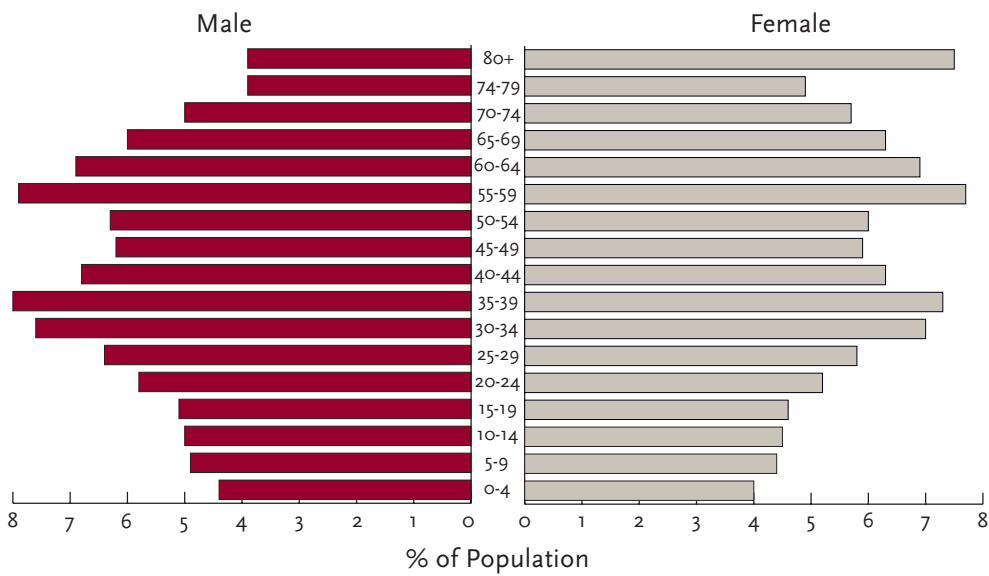
figure 10b. Population Distribution of France, 2008.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, International Database<sup>5</sup>



figure 10c. Population Distribution of Japan, 2008.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, International Database<sup>5</sup>

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# ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

Established in 2007 by the Center on Aging & Work, the Global Perspectives Institute is an international collaboration of scholars and employers committed to the expansion of the quality of employment available to the 21st century multi-generational workforce in countries around the world.

The Global Perspectives Institute focuses on innovative and promising practices that might be adopted by employers and policy-makers.

The Institute’s research, publications, and international forums contribute to:

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- 🌐 informed decision making by employers who want to be employers-of-choice in different countries; and
- 🌐 innovative thinking about private-public partnerships that promote sustainable, quality employment.

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The Sloan Center on Aging & Work at Boston College promotes quality of employment as an imperative for the 21st century multi-generational workforce. We integrate evidence from research with insights from workplace experiences to inform innovative organizational decision-making. Collaborating with business leaders and scholars in a multi-disciplinary dialogue, the Center develops the next generation of knowledge and talent management.

The Sloan Center on Aging & Work is grateful for the continued support of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

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