

Demographic Transition in Malaysia: The Changing Roles of Women

A Paper Presented

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“Demographic Transition in Malaysia: The Changing Roles of Women”

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Abstract

Malaysia experienced demographic transition as it swung from agricultural-based economy in early 19th century to knowledge-based economy in the mid of 1990s. Stage one of the demographic transitions began in 1911-1927 (16 years) subsequently entered stage two in 1928-1957 (29 years), before settling to stage three in 1958 till present.

An examination of the demographic transition showed that Malaysia experienced decline in total fertility rate from 6.0 in 1960 to 4.0 in 1980, down 3.0 in 2000 and continued to drop to 2.3 in 2010. This contributed by the change in the age structure, from younger population in 1970's became slightly older in 2010. Share of the population below ages 14 years declined from 44.9 per cent in 1970 to 33.3 per cent in 2000 and the percentage decreased further to 27.2 per cent in 2010. In terms of mortality, the crude death rate showed a declining trend from 9.5 in 1960 to 4.9 in 2010. This resulted in the increase in life expectancy from 61.7 to 71.6 years for male and 65.6 and 76.8 years for female for the period 1970 to 2008.

As in most countries around the world, women make up for almost half of the total population of Malaysia. In view of the current concern and commitment of the Malaysian Government towards its development and in the spirit of sharing of information during this conference, this paper sets out to shed some light on the demographic transition in Malaysia focusing on the changing role of women. It examines macro and micro factors that contributed to the demographic transition. Macro factors will be focusing on government policies on population. Meanwhile, micro factors will be describing the economics and social perspectives such as education and women in employment, mean age at first marriage, family planning programs as well as the change in the value of children and family support.

Increasing educational level and participation in employment among the women lower the uncritical acceptance of childbearing and motherhood as measures of the status of women. Working women have less time to raise children. This is particularly an issue where fathers

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traditionally make little or no contribution to child-raising. Valuation of women beyond childbearing and motherhood becomes important.

Marriage undoubtedly has an effect on the overall fertility levels and thus on the size and age structure of the population. It is observed that the mean age of the first marriage of women has increased from 21.6 to 25.1 years from 1970 to 2000. The opportunity for women to pursue higher education and skills level empowers them to participate in the labour market. This contributed to delay in their marriage.

This paper also provides recommendations outlined by the government of Malaysia. Among others are expanding child care facilities and education center in public sectors, providing incentives such as grants and tax rebates to encourage private sector to build child care centres. Recently, the government also increases the duration of maternity leave from two to three months. Besides that, the Government proposed a tax relief of up to RM5,000 to cover expenses in taking care of one parents. Lastly, the government has formulated the National Women Policy to ensure equitable sharing in order to obtain resources, information, opportunities and benefits of development to the men and women, enabling them to contribute and reach their full potential. The policy also aims to integrate women in all sectors of national development in line with the ability and the will to improve women's quality of life.

INTRODUCTION

The Federation of Malaya, consisting of 11 states in what is now Peninsular Malaysia, became independent from British rule in 1957. Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore joined the federation to form Malaysia in 1963. Singapore left the federation to become an independent nation two years later. Since then Malaysia comprises of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak.

Malaysia is a multi-racial country with more than 70 identified ethnic groups. These ethnic groups are broadly classified into four major groups namely Bumiputera (inclusive of Malay and Indigenous), Chinese, Indians and Others (include non-Malaysian citizen). The population of Malaysia in 2010 was 28.3 million with an annual population growth rate of 1.9 per cent. Bumiputera, the main ethnic constituted 60.3 per cent of the total population followed by Chinese and Indians at 22.9 and 6.8 per cent respectively. The population is estimated to achieve 31.6 million in 2020.

For the bulk of the twentieth century, prior to World War II, population growth was characterised by large-scale immigration of Chinese and Indians. After the war, with the cessation of immigration, natural increase began to play a dominant role in population growth. From the late 1950s, Malaysia was poised for rapid population growth from high fertility as the large cohort of post-war baby boomers began to marry and have children². The industrial transformation during the 1980s and the early 1990s shifted to a more export-led industrialisation and the infusion of foreign direct investment. This resulted in high economic and employment growth which the labour markets could not provide. Thus, migrant workers from neighbouring countries were desired as workers in these sectors. By 2000 the number of foreign workers in Malaysia was 0.8 million and estimated to increase to 1.9 million in 2009.

The main economic activities before 1970 were the production of rubber and tin for export and variety of food crops. In 1970, slightly more than half of the labour force was employed in agriculture, but this has declined to 9.9 per cent in 2000. Malaysia has been one of the success stories among developing countries that began to practice the knowledge-based economy (K-Economy) in the mid-1990s to maintain rapid economic growth and improve competitiveness at the international level. Since 1970, Malaysia's development plans have been guided by the New Economic Policy (1970-1990), National Development Policy (1990-2000) and the National Vision Policy (Vision 2020). These policies were aimed at restructuring society, eradicating poverty and ensuring redistribution of income.

² Warren C. Robinson and John A. Ross, Editors. 2007

Malaysia has also achieved remarkable progress in human development. For the period of 1957 to 2008, life expectancy increased from 55.8 to 71.6 years for males and 58.2 to 76.8 years for females. Gender differentials in educational attainment are narrower than the past. With women comprise nearly half of the population that represent one third of the total labour force, their participation will contribute to the national economic growth. The female labour force participation rate has increased from 37.2 per cent in 1970 to 45.7 per cent in 2008. Concomitant with socio-economic development, the mean age at first marriage among women has increased from 21.6 years (1970) to 25.1 years (2000) and this influences the formation of future generation.

Since 1911, Malaysia has experienced three stages of demographic transition. Stage one of demographic transition in Malaysia began in 1911 till 1927. During this period, the birth and death rates fluctuated with low birth rate and high death rate. Stage two took place during the period of 1928-1957. At this stage, the birth rate reached its peak at 46.2 in 1957, while death rate decreased. Beginning 1958 till present, Malaysia has entered the stage three where both birth and death rates are relatively low.

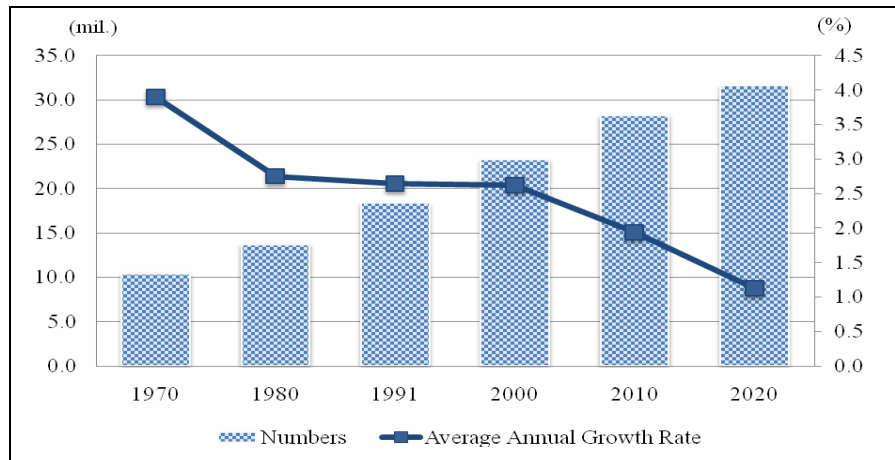
This paper attempts to discuss demographic transition in Malaysia with focus on the changing roles of women which resulted to the decline in fertility level. Population dynamics, demographic transition patterns as well as the factors that committing to transition and the policy recommendations will also be covered. The data used in this report is mainly from the Population and Housing Censuses and Labour Force Survey conducted by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) and also the Vital Registration records obtained from the National Registration Department of Malaysia (NRD).

POPULATION DYNAMICS IN MALAYSIA

Population Growth

Malaysia's population has increased almost three folds over the past four decades (1970-2010), growing from 10.4 million to 28.3 million with an average growth rate of 2.5 per cent. Based on the projection, the population size is expected to reach 31.6 million in 2020 and the average growth rate is 1.1 per cent (Chart 1). Population density in Malaysia continued to increase from 31 persons per square kilometre in 1970 to 42 in 1980, leaping to 56 in 1991 and further increase to 71 in the year 2000. Likewise the level of urbanisation in Malaysia shows an increasing trend. The percentage of population living in urban areas increased from 26.9 per cent in 1970 to 34.2 per cent in 1980 and 50.6 per cent in 1990. By the year 2000, more than two thirds of the population (61.8%) were in the urban areas of Malaysia. (Table 2)

Chart 1: Population growth, Malaysia, 1970-2020

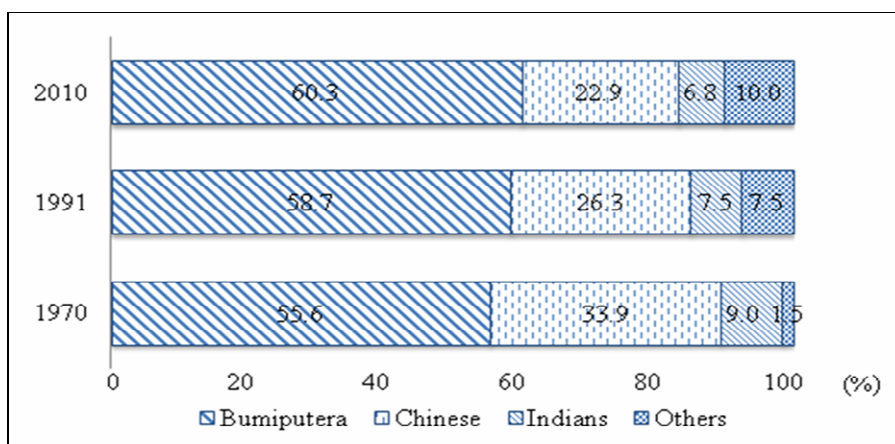


Sources: 1970, 1980, 1991 and 2000: Population and Housing Census, Malaysia
 2010 and 2020: Population Projection, Malaysia, 2001-2020

Ethnic Composition

For the period of 1970 to 2010, Bumiputera was the main ethnic that contributed on the average of 58.2 per cent of the total population. This is followed by the Chinese and Indians who contributing about 27.7 and 7.8 per cent respectively. Bumiputera experienced an increasing trend due to high fertility rates while Chinese and Indians showed a decreasing trend due to low fertility rates. In the case of Others³, a significant increase from 1.5 (1970) to 10.0 (2010) was due to the demand of foreign workers. (Chart 2)

Chart 2: Population distribution by ethnic 1970, 1991 and 2010



Sources: 1970 and 1991: Population and Housing Census, Malaysia
 2010: Population Projection, Malaysia, 2001-2020

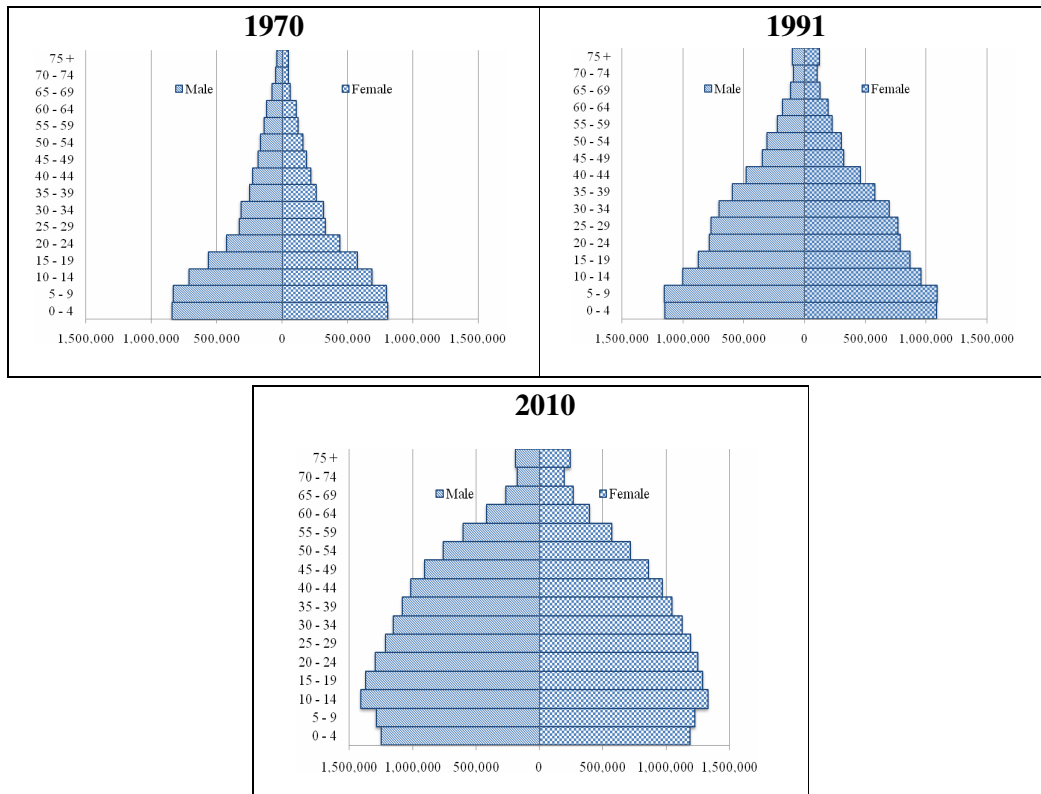
³ Include non-Malaysian citizen

Age Structure

Malaysia has a distinct age structure since 1970 through 2010 as shown in its population pyramid. In 1970s, birth rate was high and death rate was relatively low resulting in continuous expanding (progressive) population. Proportion of large young age population, was consequently contributed to high young dependency ratio. In 1990s, the decline in death rates entails the increasing survival and a growing population (stationary). Hence the proportion of working age population has increased in sequence with the rapid development of the country from industrial to knowledge-based economy. As in 2010, the population structure becomes less triangular (regressive). The decline in the birth rate is due to the increase in the education level of women, their participation in labour market and the success of family planning program. This resulted in the change in age structure of the population where the proportion of young age group reduced and eventually leading to aging population. (Chart 3)

In 2010 the proportion of working age population reached 68.1 per cent, doubling the proportion of young population (27.2%). For the period of 1957 to 2010 the proportion of elderly has increased from 2.8 per cent to 4.7 per cent. (Table 3)

Chart 3: Population pyramid, Malaysia, 1970-2010

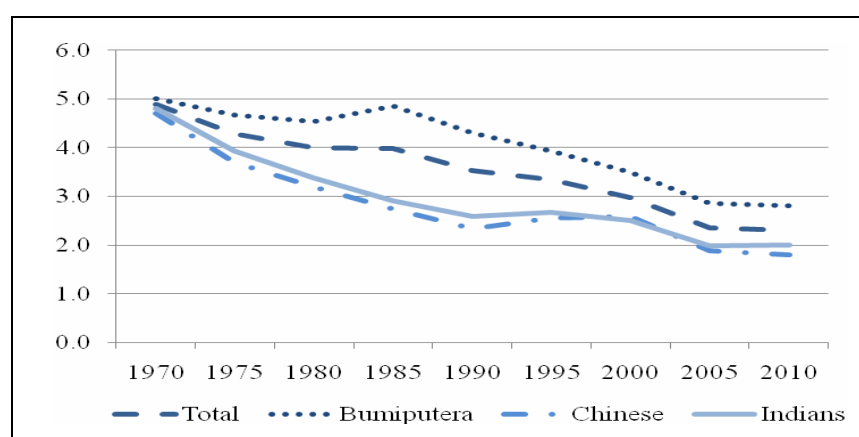


Sources: 1970 and 1991: Population and Housing Census, Malaysia
2010: Population Projection, Malaysia, 2001-2020

Fertility

Total Fertility Rate (TFR) was 4.9 in 1970 and fell to 2.3 in 2010. Bumiputera recorded the highest TFR which contributed to a significant impact to the overall TFR of Malaysia. The TFR for Bumiputera decreased from 5.0 in 1970 to 4.5 in 1980 and increased slightly to 4.9 in 1985 before declining again, reaching 2.8 in 2010. However, the TFR of the Chinese and Indians dropped continuously from 1970 onwards, eventually reaching the levels of 1.8 and 2.0 respectively in 2010. (Chart 4)

Chart 4: Total Fertility Rate by ethnic, 1970-2010



Source: Vital Statistics, Malaysia

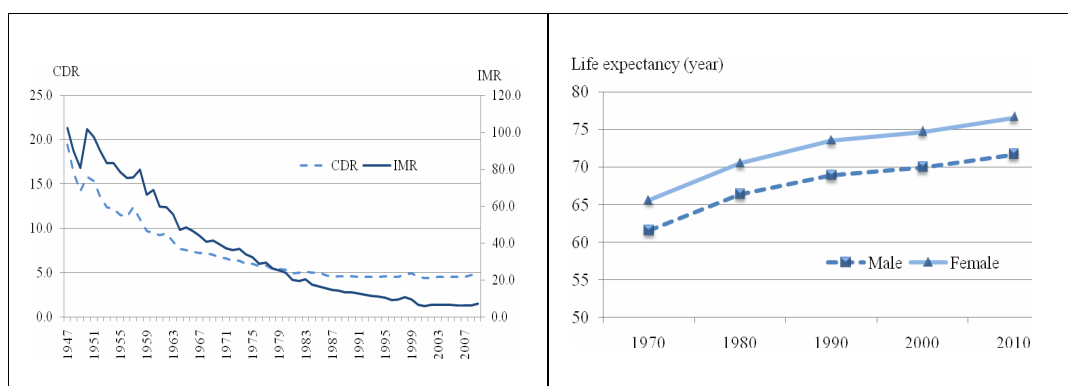
The decline in TFR was evident by the increase in mean age of mother at first live birth. Statistics shows, mean age of mother at first live birth has increased from 26.6 years (2001) to 26.8 years (2008). This was due to the trend of women getting married at a late age. Trend in Live Birth Order (LBO) is also closely related to the decline in TFR. Percentage of fourth and subsequent live births dropped from 28.2 per cent (2001) to 21.4 per cent (2008). The percentage of second and third births showed a stable trend while the percentage of the first live births increased from 28.5 per cent to 35.8 per cent for the same period. This reflects that there were fewer couples having more than four children, thus causing a continuous decline in family size. (Table 5)

Mortality

Both the Crude Death Rate (CDR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) underwent a dramatic decline for the period 1947 to 1980. Conversely during 1980 to 2009, CDR showed a stable trend while IMR decreased steadily. CDR decreased from 19.4 (1949) to 4.7 (2008) whereas IMR decreased from 102.2 to 6.2 for the same period. Besides CDR and IMR, Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) and Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) also showed a remarkable decrease in trend. U5MR has reduced from 15.8 to 8.0 while MMR reduced from 44.0 to 28.9

per 100,000 live births for the period 1991 to 2008. In line with the advancement of the health status and sufficient health care facilities, the mortality levels in Malaysia declined. Thus, consequently contribute to an increase in the number of survival and subsequently escalating the life expectancy of Malaysia's population. For the period 1970 to 2008, life expectancy for male and female have increased by 10 and 11 years reaching 71.6 and 76.8 years respectively. (Chart 5)

Chart 5: Crude Death Rate, Infant Mortality Rate and Life Expectancy, Malaysia



Sources: Vital Statistics, Malaysia

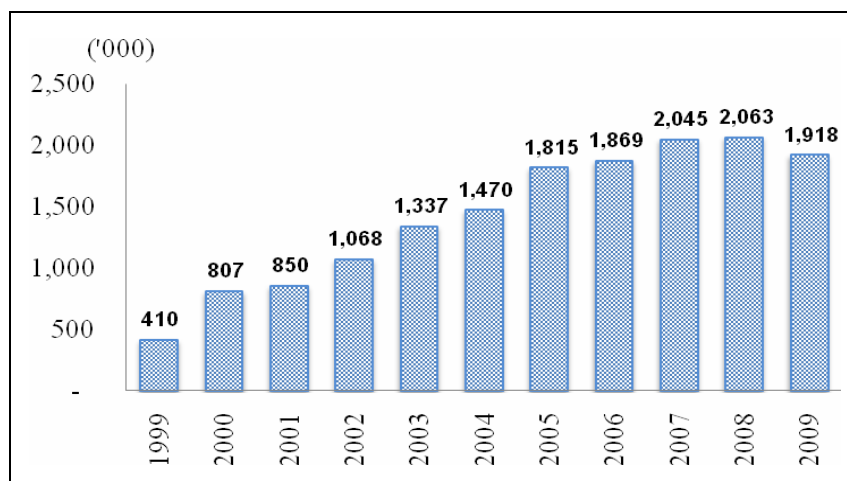
Life Table, Malaysia, 1970-2010

Migration

Migration is one of the defining issues of the twenty-first century in Malaysia. Multi-racial population is evidence of the earlier in-migration during the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Colonial rule saw the entry of foreign labour especially from China and India to work in the plantations, tin mining and the construction sectors. According to 2000 Census, the foreign-born population of Malaysia was 7.0 per cent of the total population, of which 64.3 per cent were non-citizens. Over the period of 1980-1991 the foreign-born increased from 46.8 per cent to 58.1 per cent during 1991-2000. (Table 6)

The industrial transformation during the 1980s and the early 1990s has shifted the country to more export-led industrialisation and the infusion of foreign direct investment. This resulted in high economic and employment growth which the labour markets could not provide. Thus, migrant workers from neighbouring countries are desired as workers in these sectors. Therefore the influx of foreign labour has more than doubled since 2000 to 1.9 million in 2009. In 2010 the stock of the immigrants was 2.4 million which accounted for 8.0 per cent of the total population in Malaysia. Among top sources of the countries are Indonesia, Philippines, China, Bangladesh, India, Singapore, Thailand, Japan, Myanmar and Pakistan⁴. (Chart 6)

⁴ Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011 by World Bank

Chart 6: Number of foreign workers, Malaysia, 1999-2009

Source: 10th Malaysia Plan, 2011-2015

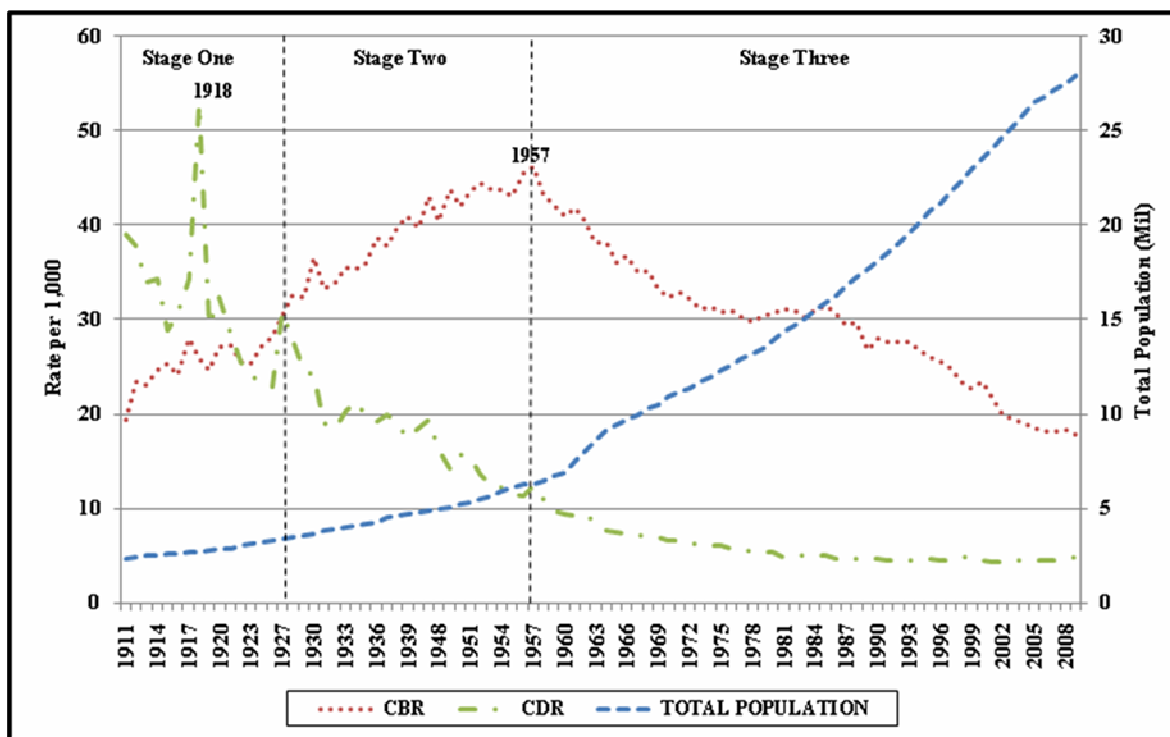
Based on the 10th Malaysia Plan, the Government establishes Talent Corporation to reduce the dependency on foreign labour. Talent Corporation will identify skill shortages in key sectors, attract and retain necessary skilled human capital. The Talent Corporation is expected to attract the Malaysians currently working abroad (Diasporas) back to the country to fulfil the shortage skilled human capital. For this, the Talent Corporation will provide an integrated Skilled Human Capital Blueprint with the cooperation of the public and private sectors. In addition, the Talent Corporation will become a one-stop centre to coordinate with relevant government agencies, including immigration matters, for the entry of skilled workers into the country⁵.

⁵ 10th Malaysia Plan 2011-2015

DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION PATTERNS IN MALAYSIA

From the availability of data, the stage one of demographic transition in Malaysia began in 1911-1927 (16 years), subsequently entered stage two in 1928-1957 (29 years), before settling to stage three in 1958 till present. Advancement in medical, transfer of technology and the family planning program acted as a catalysts to speed up the demographic transition in Malaysia.

Chart 7: Demographic Transition in Malaysia 1911-2009



Source: Vital Statistics Time Series, Malaysia.

Stage One (1911–1927)

Stage one of demographic transition is normally characterised by high death and birth rates. At this stage, Malaysia experienced a different scenario where the birth rate was low. Data shows that from 1911-1921 the death rates continued to exceed the birth rates however in 1922 the birth and the death rates were equal. Beginning 1923 to 1926 the birth rate started to exceed the death rate before becoming equal again in 1927. The death and birth rates also showed a different direction. The crude death rate showed a declining trend except in 1918 in which it increased to unprecedented point (52.9) before decreasing sharply while the birth rate increased steadily.

Two important events that took place in the world calendar may attribute to the high death rates. The first event was the World War I in 1914-1919 and the spread of Spanish Influenza in 1918-1919. The highest death rate recorded in 1918 may be caused by the Spanish Influenza that killed an estimated of 20 to 40 million people worldwide. Other than these, the high death rate was due to common factors such as untreatable disease, malnutrition, poor hygiene and sanitation.

Meanwhile the low birth rate could be due to low number of women in child bearing age. The 1911 Census shows that there were 1.5 million males as compared to 0.8 million females. The low number of females compared to males may be attributed by the entrance of male immigrants brought by British Colony during that time.

Even though initially the CBR was low, it showed an increasing trend. This could be attributed to the fact that during the period of 1911-1927, Malaysia's economy was agricultural based where family relies on children to help with farming and agricultural work. This explains the gradual increase of birth rate at this stage.

Stage Two (1928–1957)

Malaysia's transition to stage two began in 1928-1957. During this stage Malaysia experienced high birth rates and low death rates. The high birth rates were attributed by the fact that Malaysia was still an agricultural based society where family relies heavily on children to help with farming. It was also a custom to have a large family size in Malaysia during that time. Marriage at early age was also a norm and this contributes to the increase in CBR.

Prior to independence, majority of people especially women did not have education even though it was available during that time. This is because people could not afford to send children to school due to poverty. School were mostly located in town while most of the population resided in rural areas. This had made school more inaccessible.

The medical breakthrough in 1928-1957 worldwide has a positive impact on health and wellbeing of the population. The CDR, IMR, and U5MR in Malaysia gradually decrease during this stage.

Stage Three (beginning 1958)

The transition to stage three for Malaysia has a lot to do with government policies, women changing roles and improvement in health facilities. To eradicate poverty, government introduced series of Malaysian Plan to create a balance economy between ethnics. It also

transforms Malaysia's economy from agricultural to industrialised based economy. This in return created job opportunities that were not available in stage one and two. The government also introduced Education Act to ensure that education is compulsory to all.

As a result of government policies, we saw women switching their traditional roles as mother to career women. The number of women participating in labour market has increased and became significant to the Malaysian economy as a whole. Their decision to marry at later age due to career has an important impact to the demographic transition.

Under the Family Planning Program, contraceptive method received a wide acceptance from married couple and this had great impact on reducing the birth rate. Greater access to health facilities has shown a decline in death rate. As a result the life expectancy has improved from 55.8 years for male and 58.2 years for female in 1957 compared to 71.6 years for male and 76.8 years for female in 2008. (Chart 7)

THE CHANGING ROLES OF WOMEN

Demographic transition impacts on family institution and fertility level can be categorised by macro and micro factors. Macro factors will focus on government policies on population. Meanwhile, micro factors will be described in economics and social perspectives. Economic perspectives will emphasis on education and women in employment while social perspectives will include issues such as mean age at first marriage and family planning programs. It will also discuss on the urbanisation that change the value of children and family support.

Macro Factors

Country's policies contribute a lot of changes in the population. The emergence of economic problems and awareness of the long-run social, economic and health implications of the high population growth has prompted the government of Malaysia to launch the National Family Planning Program in 1966. The program was designed to reduce the population growth rate and to increase the average annual per capita income. The change in official policy represented the triumph of economics and health over politics in this multiethnic country, with Islam as the national religion. By the early 1970s, family planning services had been extended to all parts of the country, through integration with the maternal and child health programs of the Ministry of Health.

In 1981, the government adopted different development strategies with great emphasis on the industrialisation program, to be supported by a larger population and a larger domestic market. Subsequently, with rapid industrialisation labour shortages began to emerge. Malaysia is now a major destination for foreign labour. In a speech to a political gathering in 1982, the Prime Minister announced a new demographic target, to achieve a population of 70 million by 2100⁶. That became an official policy in the Midterm Review of the 4th Malaysia Plan (1981-1985). However, this policy has been revised as Malaysia could not afford to reach the target of 70 million population based on the projection by DOSM. The National Family Planning Program was renamed with the National Population and Family Development Program in 1984. Greater concern has been placed on marriage and parenting counseling, reproductive health and gender issues. Great emphasis has also been placed on human resource development and improved status of women.

⁶ Midterm Review of Fourth Malaysia Plan (1981-1985)

Micro Factors

Micro factors referring to individual and family dynamics in terms of changes in social and economics. Among these were women empowerment in education & employment, changes in age of marriage, life expectancy, perspective towards family planning and the value of children.

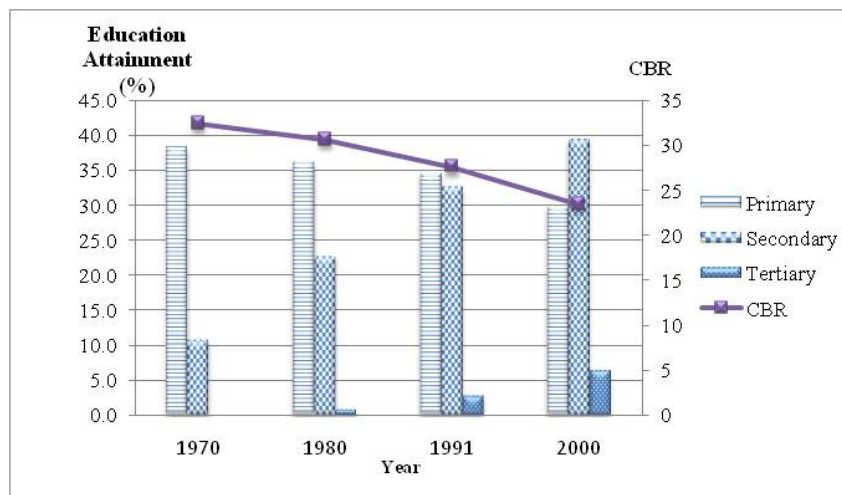
Economics Perspectives

Education Effects

Education plays an important role in every person's life. Apart from reaching good position in the society, education also change the way a person think, react and manage oneself and the environment, in regards with family build up. In this context, education can foresee to encourage delayed marriage and birth control. The capability to attain higher education, especially among women, has caused a delay in marriage. This leads to waste in women reproductive period and forecast a decrease in the number of birth. In the 2nd Malaysia Plan, the Curriculum Development Centre was established to emphasis the availability of vocational and technical training besides the general education. More technical and vocational schools were built to alleviate the problem of unemployment, especially among the youth who are not interested in general education⁷.

There is an inverse relation between the women education level and CBR. Through the years, the number of women attained higher education has increased. For the period of 1970 to 2000, it has increased from 49.0 to 75.2 per cent while the CBR has decreased from 32.4 to 23.4 per cent for the same period. (Chart 8)

Chart 8: CBR and education attainment (female), Malaysia, 1970-2000



Source: Population and Housing Census, 1970-2000

⁷ 2nd Malaysia Plan (1971-1975)

For primary education, the percentage dropped slightly from 38.2 to 29.8 per cent from 1970 to 2000 due to shrinking in the number of young children (aged 6-12 years). For the same period, percentage for secondary education increased from 10.8 to 39.2 per cent while for tertiary education reached 6.2 per cent in 2000. The remarkable achievement in education is reflected by the reduction in the percentage of never attended school from 51.0 to 22.8 per cent. (Table 7)

Women Participation in Labour Market

Overall, the opportunity for women to pursue higher education, empower them to participate in the labour market. *“Simultaneously, expanded education and career options for women increased economic independence. One result is that more women on voluntarily choosing singlehood and like it”*⁸.

Women participation in labour market has increased since the last three decades. From 1970 to 2000, women hovered 49.5 per cent from the total population. The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for women showed that the percentage has raised from 37.2 per cent in 1970 to 42.2 per cent in 1980. This percentage continued to increase to 46.7 per cent in 2000 (Table 8). It shows an inverse relation with the TFR. According to Rosen and Simmons, the declining of TFR in less developed nation is effected by the age at first marriage, education level and social mobility among women while in developed nation, it was caused by the strong women participation in employment⁹.

A visible outcome of the National Policy on Women was the inclusion of a chapter on Women in Development (WID) in the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995). This chapter is significant, as it outlined the issues and concerns regarding the full integration of women in development. Among the role and status of women in society and labour market and lack of support services have enable women to combine care giving and workplace responsibilities. To help these career women, some initiatives taken by the government can be seen in the provision of maternity leaves, tax reliefs and providing childcare centre at the workplace.

Social Perspectives

Mean Age at First Marriage

Marriage undoubtedly has an effect on the overall fertility levels and thus on the size and age structure of the population. It is observed that change in the structure and compositions of families are closely related to marriage trends and marital status of the population.

Mean age at first marriage is one of the demographic indicators that has close relation with fertility level. There are changes in the trend of marriage for the last few decades. Socio-

⁸ Mary Ann Lamanna and Agnes Riedmann, 2005

⁹ Hamid Arshat, Boon Ann Tai, Nai Peng Tey, and Murugappa Subbiah. 1988

economic growth especially in education has a great connection with development and modernisation process that leads to the rising number of women delaying their marriage. This is due to the desire to pursue their studies as well as gain freedom in managing life especially in career development.

The declining in TFR is mostly caused by the increasing number of women choosing to stay single. In 1970, never married women were 26.0 per cent and increased to 30.9 per cent in 2000. Meanwhile currently married women only encountered a marginal decreased from 61.0 per cent in 1970 to 60.6 per cent in 2000. (Table 9)

In a community where almost all births occur in marriage, the age at first marriage would have a strong influence on the level of fertility which in turn will affect the age structure of the population. Between 1970 and 2000, the mean age at first marriage increased for both sexes. In 1970, mean age at first marriage was 25.6 years for men and 21.6 years for women, represents the scenario where women got married at the early age. The mean age at first marriage increased over the years to 28.6 years for men and 25.1 for women in 2000. The later age of marriage resulted in decreasing TFR due to short reproductive period left. (Table 10)

Family Planning

Family Planning Act was enacted in 1966 under the National Family Planning Program. Following the passage of the act, the National Population and Family Development Board (NPFDB) was established. The impact of this program can be assessed from the contraceptive prevalence rate and the decline in fertility. The exposure to education and employment, paved the way of women to gain more knowledge on the program. Public acceptance towards the program contributes to the declining in TFR and CBR.

At the start of the program, pill was the most popular method of contraception among married women of reproductive age. Ministry of Health supplied rural women with pills for free of charge. Nevertheless, household surveys¹⁰ show that the percentage users relying on the pill had declined from 50.7 in 1974 to 27.0 in 2004. In 2004, three method recorded high percentage of users besides pill are rhythm (17.9%), condom (14.5%) and sterilization (12.7%). (Table 11)

To facilitate with the family planning programs, NPFDB Clinics are the main provider and reference centre for contraceptive facilities especially for Sabah and Sarawak. In Peninsular Malaysia, contraceptive facilities can be easily obtained from private clinics/hospitals, NPFDB and FPA Clinics and pharmacies.

¹⁰ NPFDB Malaysia Population and Family Survey

Change in the Value of Children

Transformations from traditional to modern economy of the society have resulted in urbanisation which affected the attitude and behaviour of parents on having the ideal family size. Subsequently, these changes have an effect on the value of children and family support.

In the traditional economy, children are foreseen as the asset by helping in agricultural works, contributing to the family economic growth and doing the domestic jobs. Children also envisage as low or unpaid family worker and as a supporter to the parents. However, the change from agricultural to manufacturing and services economy with the expansion in education has changed the value of children to become the liabilities.

Thus, quantity of children was not the major concern in a family. On the other hand, emphasizing the quality of children as well as quality of life affect major decision on having children. The number of children they decided to have is relatively fewer than previous generation. As the economic develop, almost all parents are working, so children need to be send to childcare centre or taken care by housemaid. Also, under the Education Amendment Act 2002, education is compulsory for all children aged six years and above. As the cost of raising children is increasing, the value of children is subsequently changed. This change influences the household size over the years.

The decreasing trend in the average households size differed by stratum. In urban areas, people tend to have a smaller family size compared to the rural areas. The average household size decreased from 5.1 to 4.2 in urban areas for the period of 1980 to 2004. In the same period, the average household size in rural areas decreased from 5.2 to 4.6. (Table 12)

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATION

This section addresses the challenges raised from demographic transitions by examining issues regarding fertility decline. The main causes of fertility decline are education; notably among women, consequent changes in attitudes towards marriage and childbearing, social and economic problems of childcare and related issues that tend to grow in complexity with urbanisation and industrialisation. The policies and programs recommended by the Government and private sector will be highlighted in this section.

Challenges

The main challenge in facing the demographic transition is the declining fertility rates. Currently, the TFR is 2.3 and expected to reach replacement level (2.1) in 2015. Fertility decline would have an impact on the reduction of young people that are foreseen as an investment in the future human capital. This factor should be considered to maintain the economic growth and to be a developed nation by 2020. With the low fertility level, it can be predicted that Malaysia need to rely on foreign workers. Despite to decrease the dependency on foreign workers¹¹, bringing more women into the workplace was a necessity; to fulfil the labour demand and for both economic development and global competition.

Despite that, the other challenge faced is the increasing cost of raising children. Traditionally, women are responsible for household chores and they are the main care providers for the young. With access to education, more women are engaged in the economy. Some women depend on family members, neighbours and childcare centers to take care of their young children while they are at work. Hence there is a need to allocate fund to these expenses. In addition, education has become compulsory for children¹²; Child Care Education (0-3 years), pre-school education (4-5 years) and primary education (6 years ahead), the cost of raising children is becoming more expensive especially for the lower income family, family with a higher number of children and those who live in urban areas.

Next challenge is to balance between family and career development. As women are mostly involved in the economy, they have to cope with multiple roles therefore balancing motherhood and career will a tough task. Women nowadays are empowered with education and good position in the labour market. Importantly, more women are having higher education, and this has far reaching implications on marriage and family formation such as doing household chores and maternal roles.

¹¹ Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011-2015)

¹² Education Amendment Act 2002

Recommendations

To face these challenges the government has outlined several initiatives. Under the 8th Malaysia Plan, family development programs were focused on building good family relationships and creating awareness as well as recognition of the family as an important social institution. Community development programs were implemented with the participation of Non-Governments Organisation (NGO) and the private sector¹³.

The Family First: Bring Your Heart Home Campaign launched by Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (KPWKM) in 2003. This campaign was to create awareness and recognition of the family as a social priority and fundamental unit of society. These includes a five-day working week to enable parents to spend quality time with their families, the flexibility of maternity leave which do not exceed 90 days compared to 60 days currently, and increasing paternity leave from three to seven days. It also includes three days compassionate leave for death family members and tax relief for those who pay the medical expenses of their parents.

The SMART START package was introduced in 2003 to provide information on marriage preparation, family health, pregnancy and childbirth, parenthood, managing family resources as well as managing stress and conflict. For example, a pre-marriage module was developed in consultation with various religious organisations and NGOs to educate those who plan to get married on their roles and responsibilities in marriage. This package was to help Malaysian families to cope with contemporary living and lifestyles.

Under the 9th Malaysia Plan (2006-2010), steps are being undertaken to create awareness and provide knowledge to parents on the importance and need to balance work and family responsibilities. At the Sixth Women's Summit, the Government recommends that the workplace should include the concept of flexible hours for women at work. In public sector, the Government has implemented three working period instead of nine-to-five routine. Women should be allowed career breaks as well, where they could stop working for a period of time to focus on family issues.

Under KPWKM, the Parenting@Work Program has been launched and implemented since May 2007 in the public sector. This program was to provide guidance on parenting skills, ensure stable and resilient families and to equip families to face modern day challenges and work-life balance issues. The Work@Home Program introduced as an alternative for women who have to choose either to keep working or resign, especially for those who had to commit to their family's need. With this program, the skills and knowledge can continually be practiced even though they are not formally working. Besides that, with the development in K-Economy, teleworking concept has been introduced. This was to create the flexible roles between employees and organisation. It also helps to increase job opportunity for women,

¹³ Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001-2005)

people with disability and older person. Teleworking concept also enables parents to spend more time with their families.

To facilitate the family in providing education for their children, Ministry of Education (MOE) initiated various incentives in term financial assistance, free text-books for primary students and hostel facilities for underprivileged children and those from lower income households. MOE also provide facilities to children with special needs. At tertiary education level, financial assistance is given to those from low-income households through the National Higher Education Fund. To overcome the cost of schooling especially for rural areas, the Government provides subsidies such as Textbook Loan Scheme, hostel facilities, Tuition Voucher Scheme and Poor Students Trust Fund.

The fact that working mothers are contributing towards the family's economy, government has allocated a grant of RM80,000 to both government and private agencies to manage day care centres at the workplace. This is to encourage them to continue focus on work, whilst assured that their children receive the care and early education they need. Civil servants with a minimum household income of RM3,000 per month are eligible for subsidies of RM180 kindergarten fees per child a month. As advance assistance, each established community nursery is given a launching grant of RM50,000. Under 2011 Budget, Government has planned to prepare and re-brand 40 TASKA (kindergarten) 1Malaysia which will be managed by the Department of Social Welfare.

The Government also introduces tax rebates or deduction for dependent children. For each children below 18 years, RM1,000 tax relief given to the family. For children aged 18 years and above who are currently studying, tax reliefs eligible ranges from RM1,000 to RM4,000. For education and health premium insurance, each family are eligible for RM3,000 tax relief. These initiatives show that government policies to promote childbearing can assist to the costs of childrearing, facilitate working couples (especially women), encourage greater parenting and preferences to couples with children, and may be able to influence fertility in an upward direction.

The government has also formulated the National Women Policy. The main goal of this policy is to ensure equitable sharing in order to obtain resources, information, opportunities and benefits of development to the men and women. Goals of equality and fairness should be the core of people-oriented development policies, so that women, who form half the population of the country, will be able to contribute and reach their full potential. It is also to integrate women in all sectors of national development in line with the ability and the will to improve women's quality of life, eradicate poverty, eliminate ignorance and illiteracy, and to uphold peace and harmony in the country.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Table 1: Vital Statistics, Malaysia, 1957-2010

	1957	1970	1980	1991	2000	2008	2010
Total population (mil.)	6.3	10.4	13.7	18.4	23.3	26.5	28.3
Below 15 years (%)	43.8	44.9	39.6	36.5	33.3	29.2	27.2
15-64 years (%)	53.4	52.1	56.8	59.8	62.8	65.9	68.1
65 years and above (%)	2.8	3.1	3.6	3.7	3.9	4.9	4.7
Sex ratio (100 females)	106	102	101	102	104	103	104
Life expectancy at birth							
Male	55.8	61.7	66.4	69.4	69.2	71.6	71.6
Female	58.2	65.6	70.5	73.4	74.7	76.8	76.8
Dependency ratio (100 population aged 15-64 years)	87.4	92.1	76.0	67.2	59.2	51.8	46.9
Crude Birth Rate (1,000 population)	46.2	32.4	30.6	27.6	23.4	18.4	18.8
Crude Death Rate (1,000 population)	12.4	6.7	5.3	4.5	4.5	4.7	4.9
Total Fertility Rate (per woman aged 15-49 years)	6.1	4.9	4.0	3.4	3.0	2.3	2.3
Infant Mortality Rate (1,000 live births)	75.5	39.4	23.8	12.5	6.5	6.2	6.3
Under-5 Mortality Rate (1,000 live births)	n.a	55.9	31.5	15.8	8.9	8.0	n.a
Maternal Mortality Rate (100,000 live births)	282.2	140.8	56.4	44.0*	30.6	28.9*	n.a

Notes: ¹ Data for Peninsular Malaysia^P Preliminary

n.a Not available

* Ministry of Health (MOH)

Sources: Vital Statistics, 1911-1998, 2008

Population and Housing Census, 1970, 1980, 1991, 2000

Population Projection, 2010

Table 2: Population growth, density and urbanisation, Malaysia, 1970-2000

Year	Numbers (million)	Average Annual Growth Rate (%)	Population Density (persons per sq.km.)	Urbanisation (%)
1970	10.4	3.9	31.0	26.9
1980	13.7	2.3	42.0	34.2
1991	18.4	2.6	56.0	50.6
2000	23.3	2.6	71.0	61.8
2010	28.3	1.9	85.0	71.0
2020	31.6	1.1	95.0	83.0

Sources: 1970, 1980, 1991 and 2000: Population and Housing Census, Malaysia
2010 and 2020: Population Projection, Malaysia, 2001-2020

Table 3: Population by age group, Malaysia, 1957-2010

Age group	1957	1970	1980*	1991	2000	2010
('000)						
0-14	2,752.2	4,684.5	5,195.9	6,708.8	7,751.0	7,690.5
15-64	3,351.5	5,434.0	7,464.8	10,991.2	14,623.0	19,230.1
65+	175.0	320.9	475.4	679.6	900.6	1,329.8
Total	6,278.8	10,439.4	13,136.1	18,379.7	23,274.7	28,250.5
(%)						
0-14	43.8	44.9	39.6	36.5	33.3	27.2
15-64	53.4	52.0	56.8	59.8	62.8	68.1
65+	2.8	3.1	3.6	3.7	3.9	4.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notes: * Unadjusted data

Sources: 1957, 1970, 1980, 1991 and 2000: Population and Housing Census, Malaysia
2010: Population Projection, Malaysia, 2001-2020

Table 4: Total Fertility Rate, Malaysia, 1970-2010

Year	Total	Bumiputera	Chinese	Indians	Others
1970	4.9	5.0	4.7	4.8	4.3
1975	4.3	4.7	3.7	3.9	2.9
1980	4.0	4.5	3.2	3.4	3.0
1985	4.0	4.9	2.7	2.9	3.5
1990	3.5	4.3	2.3	2.6	4.1
1995	3.4	3.9	2.5	2.7	2.9
2000	3.0	3.5	2.6	2.5	1.5
2005	2.4	2.9	1.9	2.0	1.3
2010	2.3	2.8	1.8	2.0	1.4

Table 5: Live birth by live birth order and mean age of mother at first live birth, Malaysia, 2001-2008

Year	First	Second & third	Fourth & over	Mean age of mother
2001	28.5	43.3	28.2	26.6
2002	29.2	43.8	27.0	26.7
2003	30.4	43.7	25.8	26.7
2004	31.3	43.2	25.5	26.7
2005	32.4	42.9	24.7	26.8
2006	33.4	42.9	23.7	26.8
2007	34.6	42.4	23.0	26.8
2008	35.8	42.8	21.4	26.8

Table 6: Population born in and outside Malaysia, 1980-2000

Birthplace	% Distribution			% Change	
	1980	1991	2000	1980-1991	1991- 2000
	In Malaysia	94.3	93.7	93.0	33.2
Outside Malaysia	5.1	5.7	7.0	46.8	58.1
Unknown	0.6	0.6	-	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	33.9	26.9

Source: Population and Housing Census, 1980-2000

Table 7:
Distribution of female population by education attainment, 1970-2000

	1970	1980	1991	2000
	(%)			
Never attended school/ Not yet schooling	51.0	40.7	29.5	22.8
Primary	38.2	36.0	34.5	29.8
Secondary	10.8	22.6	32.6	39.2
Tertiary	n.a	0.7	2.6	6.2
Unknown	n.a	n.a	0.8	2.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: n.a Not available

Source: Population and Housing Census, 1970-2000

Table 8: LFPR by sex, 1970-2008

	1970	1980	1991	2000	2008
	(%)				
Labour Force Participation Rate					
Male	79.3	84.8	85.3	83.3	79.0
Female	37.2	42.2	47.8	46.7	45.7

Source: Population and Housing Census, 1970-2000

Table 9: Distribution of female population aged 15 years and over by marital status, 1970-2000

Marital Status	1970	1980	1991	2000
	(%)			
Never Married	26.0	30.5	30.2	30.9
Currently Married	61.0	58.2	60.1	60.6
Widowed	11.5	9.2	8.2	7.2
Divorced or Permanently Separated	1.5	2.1	1.5	1.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Population and Housing Census, 1970-2000

Table 10: Mean age at first marriage by sex, 1970-2000

Year	Males	Females	Total
1970	25.6	21.6	23.8
1980	26.6	23.5	25.0
1991	28.2	24.7	26.4
2000	28.6	25.1	26.9

Source: Population and Housing Census, 1970-2000

Table 11: Distribution of contraceptive users among currently married women by type of method, 1974-2004

Method	1974	1984	1994	2004
		(%)		
Pill	50.7	23.0	24.3	27.0
Intra Urine Device	2.2	4.0	7.1	8.6
Condom	9.1	15.0	9.8	14.5
Other Female Methods	0.4	1.0	1.4	3.2
Sterilization (male & female)	10.6	14.0	12.6	12.7
Rhythm	10.8	14.0	16.1	17.9
Withdrawal	5.7	8.0	12.6	7.9
Abstinence	4.3	4.0	2.3	2.4
Other Traditional Methods	6.2	17.0	13.8	5.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: NPFDB Malaysia Population and Family Survey, various years

Table 12: Average household size, Malaysia, 1970-2004

Age Group	1980	1991	1994	2000	2004
Average Household Size	5.2	4.8	4.7	4.6	4.2
Urban	5.1	4.8	4.6	4.5	4.2
Rural	5.2	4.8	4.9	4.8	4.6
Nuclear Family Households	4.9	4.8	n.a	4.5	n.a
Extended Family Households	7.1	6.5	n.a	6.2	n.a

Note: n.a Not available

Sources: Population and Housing Census 1980, 1991 and 2000

NPFDB Malaysia Population and Family Survey 1994 and 2004