



SOCIAL TRENDS & POLICIES RELATED TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN SINGAPORE



Family Research
Network (FRN)
Presentation
28 August 09

新加坡社会发展, 青年及体育部

Ministry of Community Development, Youth & Sports



Objectives of Presentation

- **Current Social Trends Relating to Child Development in Singapore**
- **MCYS Policy Responses for Preschool Children**



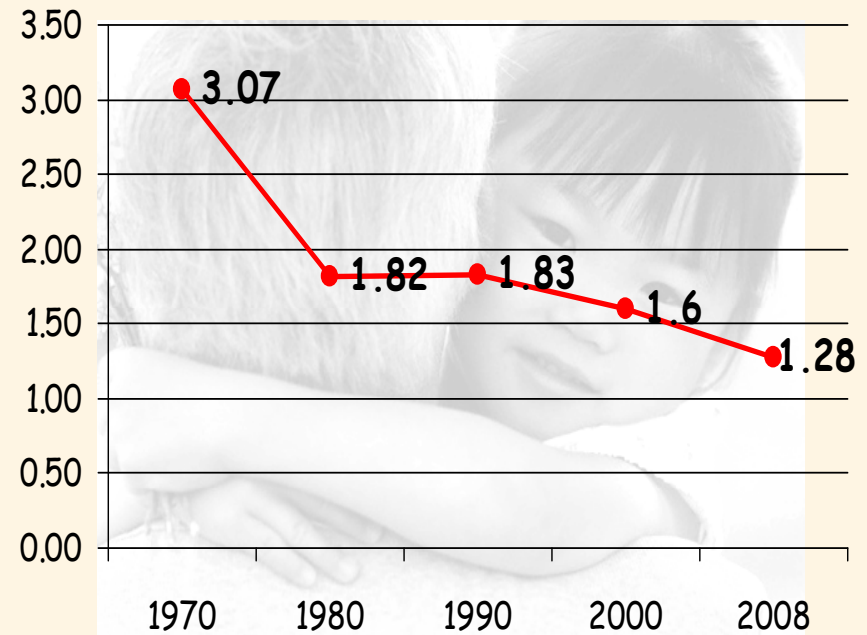
Some Fertility Trends

No of Children	Total Married Respondents (%)			
	2004		2007	
	Intended	Actual	Intended	Actual
0	7	22	2	19
1	14	24	15	28
2	43	36	53	37
3	19	13	24	13
4 or more	5	4	7	4
Mean	2.0	1.5	2.2	1.6

Source: MCYS

In 2007:
The intention to have 2 -3 children was strongest.
However, actually most had 1-2 children.

Falling Total Fertility Rate



Source: DOS

Smaller Household Sizes
1980: 5 persons → 2008: 3.5 persons



Some Divorce Trends

Divorce rate of marriages (after 10 yrs)	1987 cohort	1992 cohort	1997 cohort
Total	8.0%	9.4%	12.6%

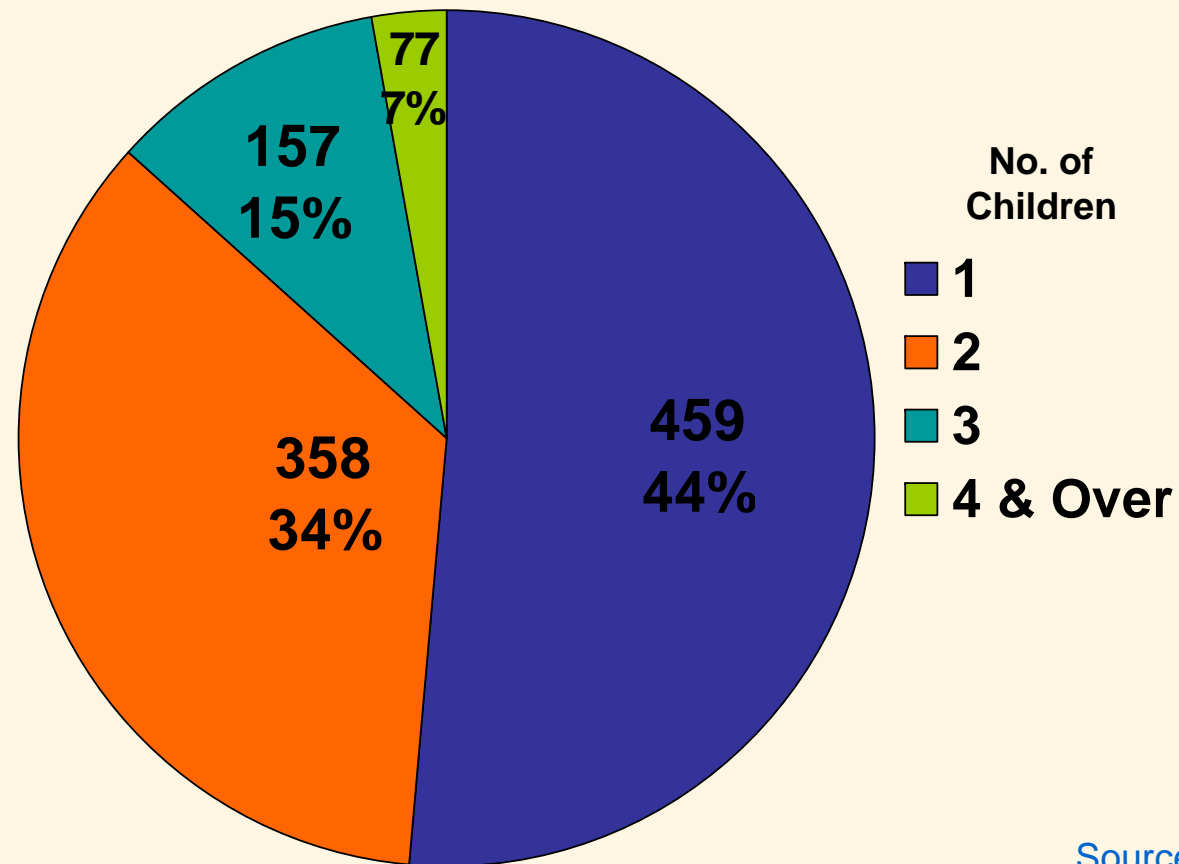
Source: MCYS

Greater challenge relying on family unit as 1st line of support



Divorces with Children

Divorces with Dependent Children, 2008



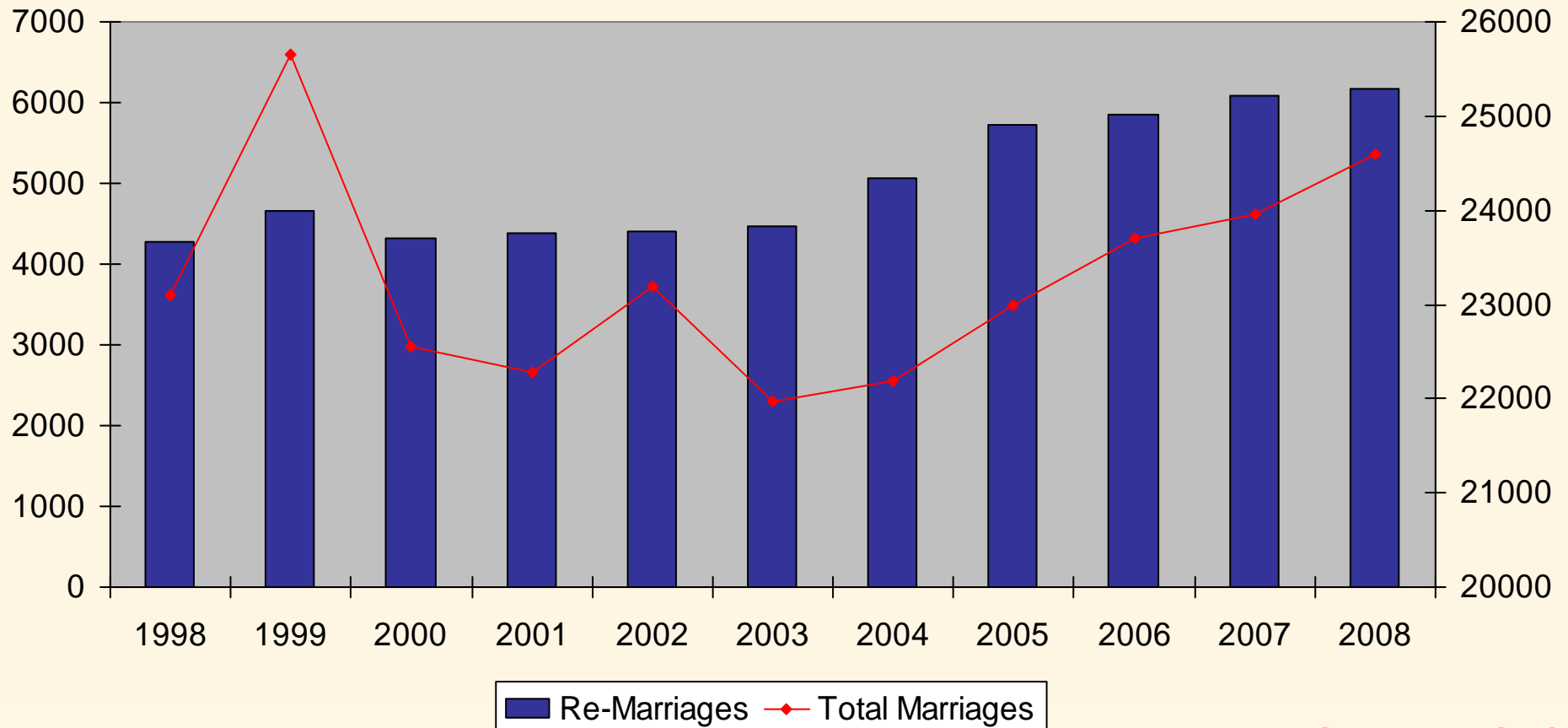
Source: DOS



Re-Marriages and Total Marriages

Re-marriages

Total Marriages



Source: MCYS



Local Findings on Child Development

Quality of Home Environment

- Characterised by the **stimulation and support** available to a child in the home environment
 - *E.g. parental coaching in counting, reading, writing; participation in games, music & art*
- **Parental education & expectations** for children's academic achievement related to providing high quality home environment
- Positive early home learning environment related to better **academic & socio-emotional outcomes**



Local Findings on Child Development

Preschool Experience

- Children who attended preschool **more likely to be school-ready**
- Children from **private and non-private kindergartens**, while controlling for income, did not seem to differ in school-readiness.
- Children who were very regular in **attendance** had better social skills
- Parent-child attachment not different in child care and kindergarten children, since role of mothers is similar for both groups of children



Make Singapore the Best Place for Families and Children



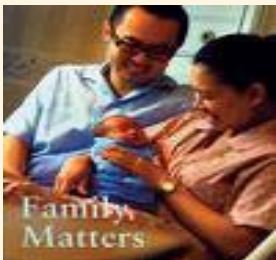
Facilitating life choices

- Marriage & parenthood as life goals
- Personal work-life effectiveness



Make Marriage & Parenthood more joyful

- Family-friendly environment
- Set up Marriage Central to help strengthen marriages
- Quality, affordable, accessible centre-based care/student services
- Enhanced M&P package 2008



Strengthen family relationships

- Education for Stronger Families
- Provides life skills & values in students in schools

Involvement of People Sector

- Setting up of National Family Council



Enhanced Marriage and Parenthood Package (2008)

Baby Bonus Scheme	<p>Cash gift of \$4,000 - \$6,000</p> <p>Supports parents' decision to have more children by lightening the financial costs</p>
Child Development Account	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dollar-for-dollar matching of up to \$18,000 <p>Increase opportunities for child development to maximise their potential</p>
Government-Paid Maternity Leave Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 16 weeks of paid maternity leave <p>Increase opportunities for child development to maximise their potential</p>



Enhanced Marriage and Parenthood Package (2008)

Government-Paid Childcare Leave	6 days of paid leave annually until child turns 7 years old <p>Promotes work-life harmony by allowing parents to spend more time with children</p>
Infant Care Subsidies	Up to \$600 monthly per child <p>Enhance affordability of centre-based infant care to ease costs in parenthood</p>
Centre-based Child care Subsidies	Up to \$300 monthly per child <p>Enhance affordability of centre-based child care to ease costs in parenthood</p>



ComCare Grow

Kindergarten Financial Assistance Scheme	Up to \$98 monthly per child for kindergarten and \$75 for nursery <p>Maximise the potential of children from the low-income families</p>
Centre-based Financial Assistance for Childcare	Up to \$340 each month for each child <p>Provide quality care for children from low-income families while the parents are working</p>
Healthy Start Program	Parenting skills, counselling & support; covers preschool fees <p>Strengthen at-risk families and provide their children with early childhood education/ development programmes</p>



ComCare Self-Reliance & HOPE

Work Support Employment/ Work Support Self-Reliance

E.g. Monthly cash grant to meet basic needs, educational assistance for children, utilities assistance etc.

Provide temporary relief for individuals and families in order to (re-)gain self-reliance

Home Owner- ship Plus Education

Keep family small. E.g. housing grant, education bursaries, grant, mentoring support and cash grants.

Invest in the children's future by helping families break out of the poverty cycle



Family Education & Outreach

Parent Education in Pre-school	<p>Children taught positive family values and life skills. Parenting programmes and support group for parents.</p> <p>Foster stronger and more stable families, and raising home learning environment</p>
Preschool Outreach [MCYS & MOE]	<p>Help families with 5 and 6 year old children not attending pre-school</p> <p>Improve access to Pre-school Education</p>



Improving Childcare Quality

<p>Raising Pre-school Teachers' Minimum Qualifications [MCYS & MOE]</p>	<p>All new teachers to have 5 O-Level credits, including English, and a Diploma in Pre-School Teaching</p> <p>Improve quality of pre-school education through qualification of teachers</p>
<p>Licensing Framework for Child Care Centres</p>	<p>Rigorous licensing criteria for childcare centres with varying tenures depending on the quality of their operations</p> <p>Improve quality of pre-school education by encouraging centres to strive for higher operating standards</p>

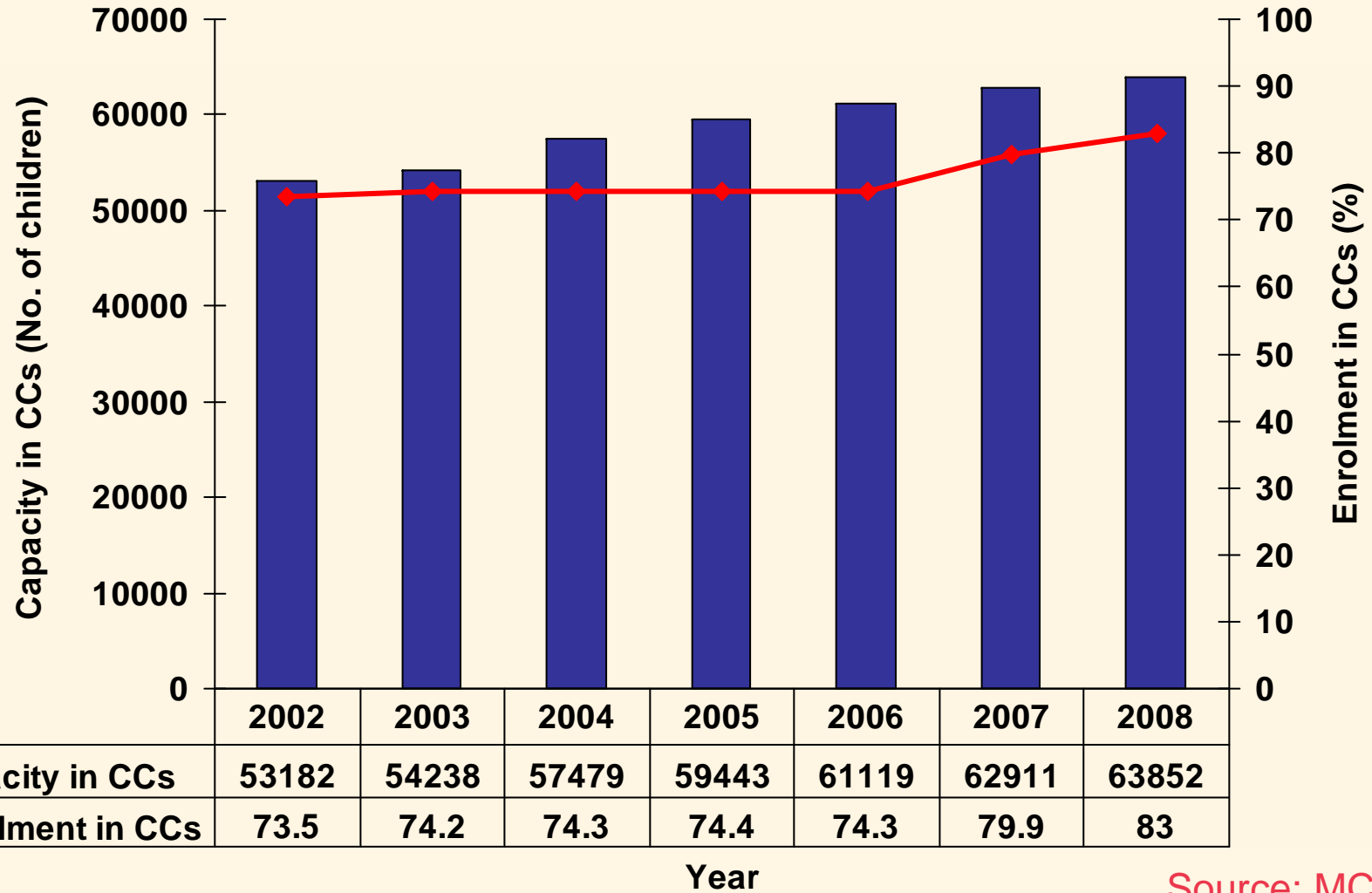


Tax Incentives

Foreign Domestic Maid Levy	Lower maid levy of \$170 if employer has child or grandchild <p>Ease cost of caregiving for married women who choose to remain in workforce</p>
Parenthood Tax Rebate	Income Tax rebates of \$5,000 to \$20,000 <p>Encourage residents to have more children</p>
Working Mothers' Child Relief	Tax relief of 5% to 25% of earned income <p>Ease tax burden of women with children who choose to remain in workforce</p>
Grandparent Caregiver Tax Relief	Tax relief of \$3,000 for working mothers <p>Recognise grandparents for their contribution to the care-giving of their grandchild(ren)</p>



Trends on Childcare Centres



Source: MCYS



Enhancing the Childcare Sector

- Between August 08 and 2013, 200 more childcare centres will be developed
- Since August 08, childcare subsidies increased from \$150 to \$300 monthly; infant care from \$400 to \$600 monthly
- From Jan 09, higher educational and professional requirements for childcare teachers
- Scholarships and bursaries for childcare teachers
- Funding scheme for eligible non-profit childcare centre operators to ramp up the supply of childcare places and set the benchmarks for quality and affordability.



SUMMARY

- There is a need to continually update our policies on child development based on research and changing trends in marriage and parenthood.
- The Government is committed to supporting child development by strengthening families, easing cost of parenthood, and raising standards.