

Need for new citizens

Phua Mei Pin

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TWO agencies have in recent months released different sets of population scenarios.

They are the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), a think-tank under the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, and the National Population and Talent Division (NPTD), the Government's lead agency on population matters.

Both said they had arrived at their projections independently.

Sept 7, 2011: IPS' first set of population scenarios on citizens and permanent residents (PRs)

- **Variables:** Total fertility rate (TFR) and migration level
- **In a nutshell:** Even with TFR raised to 1.85 from today's 1.2, if no new citizens or PRs are taken in, the total number of citizens and PRs will decline from 2025.
- **What it implies:** If TFR and migration are the only levers available to the Government, bringing in new citizens will be critical to a population growth strategy. Neither strategy can stop the ageing trend.

April 24, 2012: NPTD's first set of population scenarios on citizens only

- **Variables:** TFR and migration level
- **In a nutshell:** Even with TFR raised to 2.1, if no new citizens are taken in, the population will shrink. If TFR remains at 1.2, a yearly intake of 20,000 to 25,000 new citizens is required to keep the population size steady.
- **What it implies:** New citizens are needed to prevent population decline.

May 3, 2012: IPS' second set of population scenarios, on citizens, PRs and non-residents

- **Variable:** Ratio of non-residents to residents (citizens and PRs)
- **In a nutshell:** Across various ratios, bringing in more non-residents mitigates population ageing and slowdown in total labour force growth, but does not stop those processes.
- **What it implies:** A robust population policy will need to include other strategies, such as productivity growth.

In the coming months before the release of the Government's White Paper on population, expect more papers from various sources and the launch of public engagement platforms. Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, who oversees population matters, said the process is to 'bring to light issues that are important to Singapore and Singaporeans, and develop a shared understanding of our strategies to build a sustainable population that secures Singapore's future'.