

AGEING FAMILIES IN SINGAPORE, 2000 - 2017

INSIGHT SERIES

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INSIGHT SERIES

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DEFINITIONS

Household

A household refers to (i) a group of two or more persons living together in the same house and sharing common food or other essential arrangements for living; or (ii) a person living alone or a person living with others but having his own food or other essential arrangements for living. Although persons may be living in the same house, they may not be members of the same household. A resident household refers to a household headed by a resident (i.e. Singapore citizen or permanent resident). An aged resident household is defined as a resident household with at least one member aged 65 years and above.

Generation

Generation in this report refers to the number of unique generations present in the household.

Nuclear Families

Nuclear families consist mainly of two-generation couple-based (i.e. with a married head and spouse) households either living with parents or with children, or where the head of household lives with his/her married parents.

3G Households

A 3G household refers to a household with three or more generations.

Single Parents with Children

A single parent with children household refers to a two-generation household headed by a divorced/separated, widowed and never-married parent living with at least one child in the same household.

Married without Co-Residing Children

A married without co-residing children household refers to a one-generation couple-based household with no children living in the household. Such couples may be childless or have children who are not residing with them.

One-Person Households

A one-person household refers to a person living alone, such as a widowed person whose children have moved out, or a never-married person who has moved out from his/her parents' home.

Other Households

This refers to households that do not fall into any of the above categories.¹

¹ Examples include households comprising siblings only, households comprising a widowed grandparent and his/her grandchildren only, as well as households composed of a divorced/separated, widowed or never-married aunt/uncle living with his/her nieces/nephews only.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1 This report, *Ageing Families in Singapore, 2000 – 2017*, is the second in a series of publications. It provides an overview of families and households with elderly members in Singapore, focusing on the demographic characteristics and the role of family as a key source of physical, emotional and financial support for the elderly.
- 2 The following key findings are highlighted in this report:
 - a. Number and proportion of aged households is increasing as population ages
 - i. The number of resident households with at least one member aged 65 years and above was 401,800 in 2017 compared to 192,800 in 2000.
 - ii. In 2017, those aged 65 years and above constituted 13.0% of the resident population, an increase from 7.2% in 2000.
 - iii. The composition of aged resident households is also changing. Between 2000 and 2017, 3G aged households declined in proportion. The proportion of one-person aged households and one-generation married without co-residing children aged households increased over the same period. Nuclear families remained stable at around one in four aged resident households.
 - b. Family is a key source of physical, emotional and financial support for the elderly
 - i. Family is an important source of support for most elderly persons as the majority aged 65 years old and above reported that they will turn to their family for help when they need physical support (86%), financial support (76%) and emotional support (79%).
 - ii. While there exists a small group of elderly who may require state intervention to have their children support them, the number of elderly persons who lodged cases against their children under Maintenance of Parents Act is small and has declined from 286 in 2011 to 176 in 2017.
 - iii. Majority of our elderly also have a strong sense of closeness to their family with a proportion of 93% of elderly aged 65 years and above reported having a close-knit family in 2016.
 - c. Elderly members have an important role in their families
 - i. Elderly members play an important role in the ageing family, either as confidants or helping with physical and caregiving tasks.
 - d. Majority hold positive attitudes towards the older generation
 - i. Family support for the elderly may be affected as people have fewer children. Nonetheless, societal attitudes towards the elderly are mostly positive. Majority of Singaporeans value the importance of intergenerational ties.

AGEING FAMILIES IN SINGAPORE

Introduction

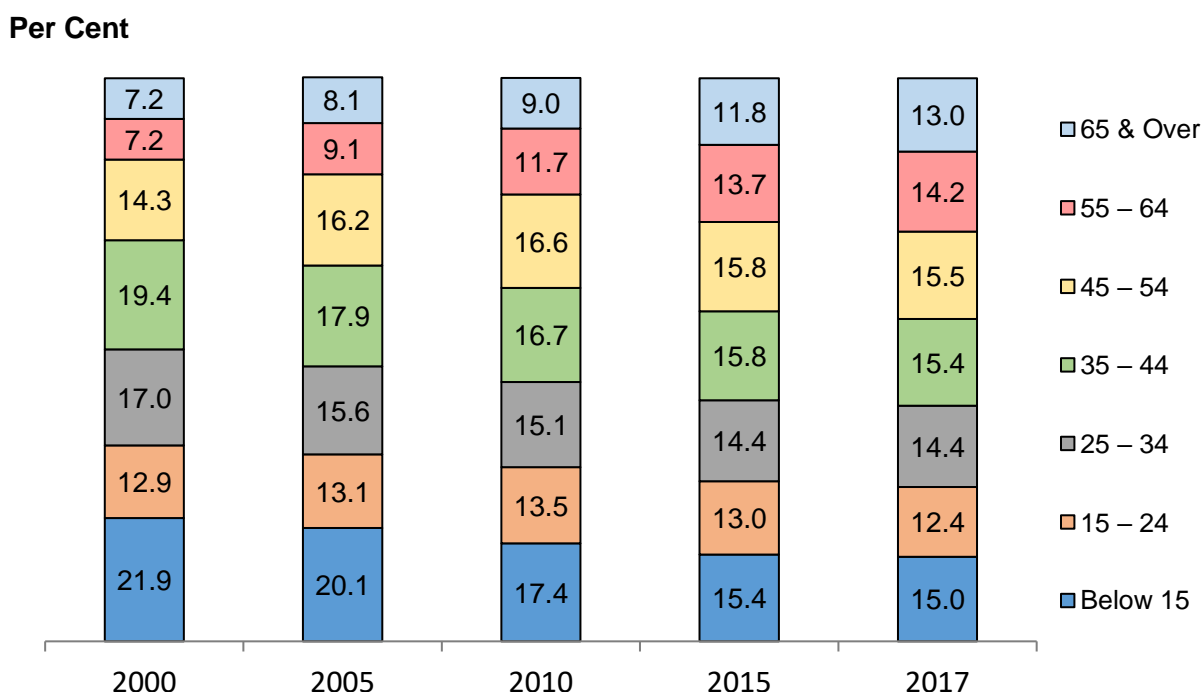
1 This report provides an overview of families and households with elderly members in Singapore, focusing on the demographic characteristics and the role of family as a key source of physical, emotional and financial support for the elderly.

How have families in Singapore aged?

Number and proportion of aged households are increasing as population ages

2 There has been a steady increase in the size of Singapore's elderly population over the years. In 2017, those aged 65 years and older increased to 13.0% of the resident population from 7.2% in 2000 (Chart 1). It is projected that 22.1% of the resident population will be aged 65 years and over in 2030.² These changes may have implications on the family unit.

Chart 1: Age Distribution of Resident Population, 2000 – 2017



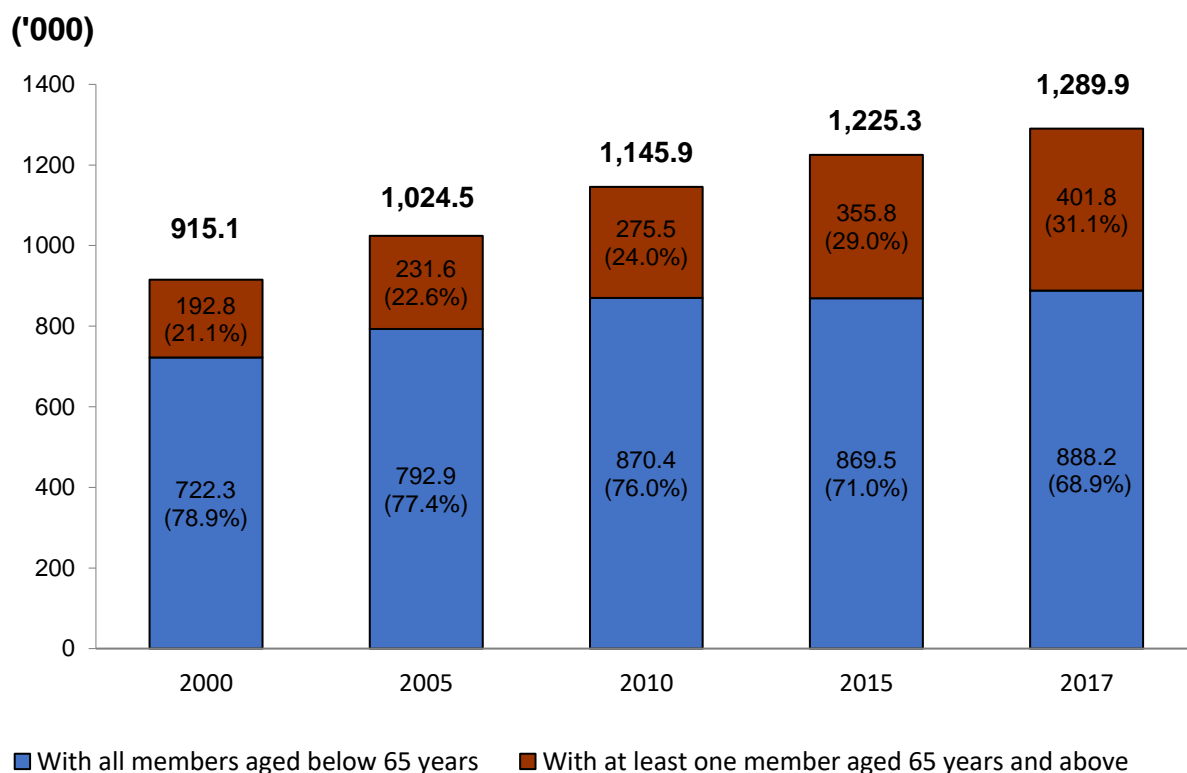
Note: Proportions may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Source: Department of Statistics

² Source: Department of Statistics. The resident population as at end-Jun 2017 was used as the base population for the resident population projections. These projections are not predictions or forecasts, or reflections of future policy changes. The projections are based on the midpoint of a range of scenarios to illustrate the possible growth and change in population that could occur if certain demographic assumptions prevail over the projection period. These assumptions may or may not be realised.

3 The greying population has resulted in an increase in the number and proportion of aged resident households, which are defined as resident households with at least one member aged 65 years and above. In 2017, there were 401,800 aged resident households, compared to 192,800 in 2000. Similarly, the proportion of aged resident households has increased from 21.1% to 31.1% over the same period (Chart 2).

Chart 2: Resident Households by Presence of Member Aged 65 Years and Above, 2000 – 2017



Source: Department of Statistics

What does an ageing family in Singapore look like?

More married couples without co-residing children and one-person aged resident households

4 The composition of aged resident households has shifted over the years (Chart 3):

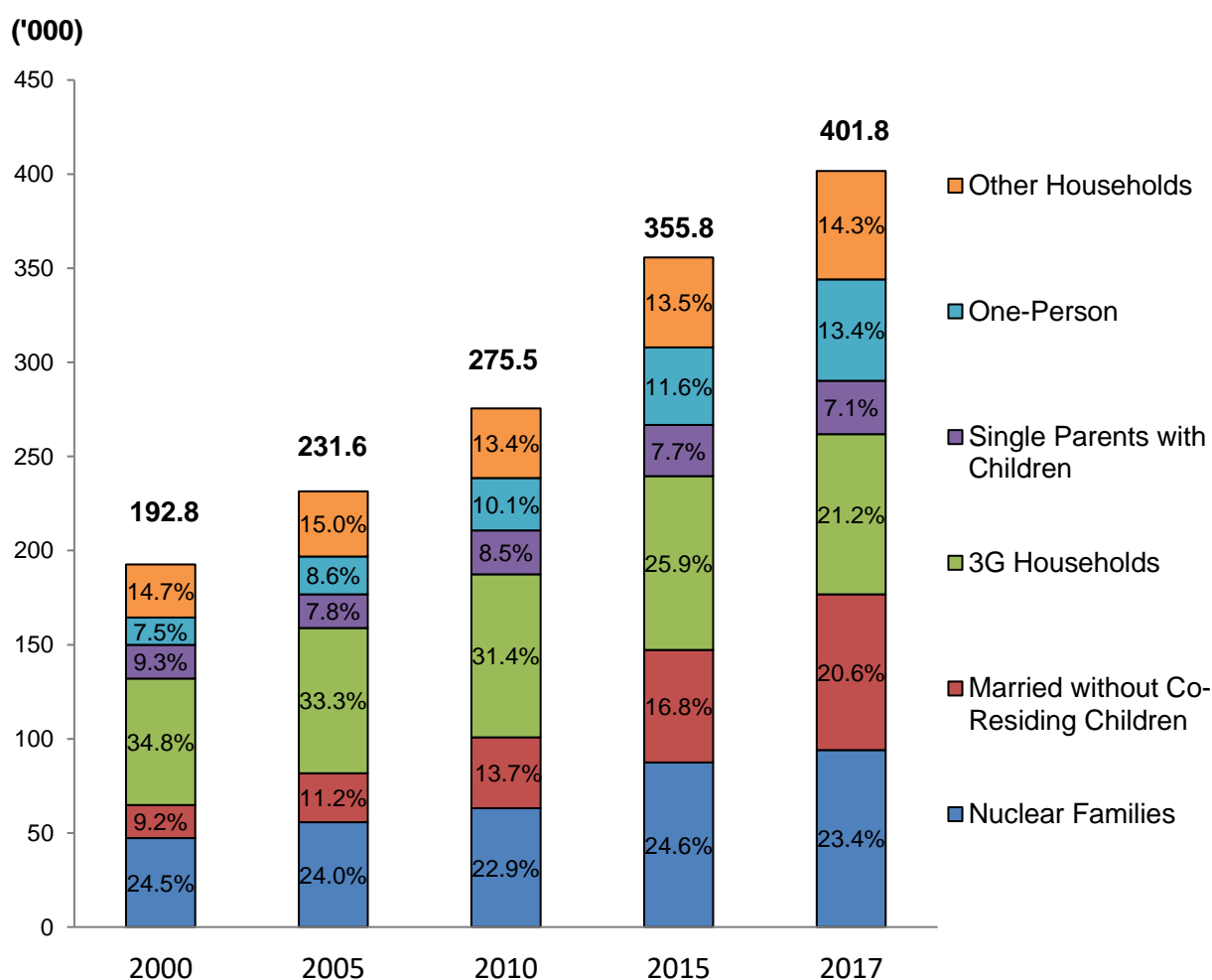
- (i) Amongst aged resident households, the proportion of nuclear families remained stable between 2000 and 2017, at approximately 24%.
- (ii) Three-generation (3G) households have declined in proportion. They comprised 21.2% of aged resident households in 2017, compared to 34.8% in 2000.

(iii) The proportion of single parents with children among aged resident households decreased slightly, from 9.3% in 2000 to 7.1% in 2017.

(iv) The proportion of one-generation households comprising a married couple without co-residing children increased considerably from 2000 to 2017, from 9.2% to 20.6% of aged resident households. These couples could be childless, or have children who are not living with them.

(v) The proportion of one-person resident households among aged resident households rose from 7.5% in 2000 to 13.4% in 2017.

Chart 3: Aged Resident Households by Household Structure, 2000 – 2017



Note: Proportions may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Source: Department of Statistics

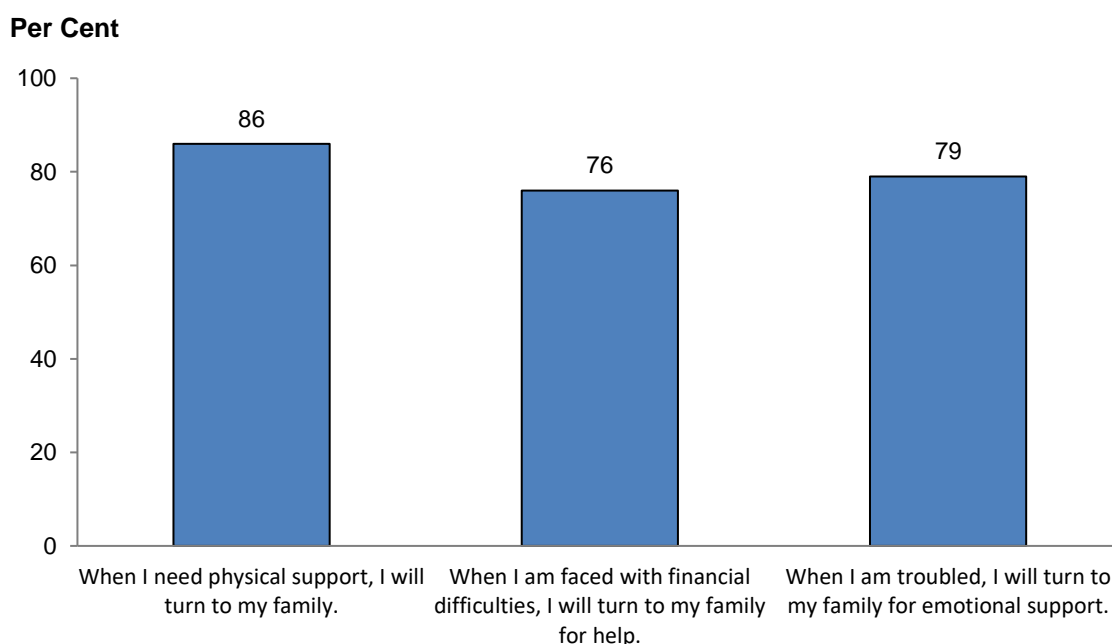
How does the family support its elderly members?

Family is a key source of physical, emotional and financial support for the elderly

Physical/Caregiving Support

5 Family is an important source of support for most elderly persons. Based on MSF's Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans (SAS) 2016, 86% of respondents aged 65 years old and above reported that they will turn to their family for help when they need physical support such as for caregiving (Chart 4). There is also strong consensus among non-aged family members about their role in caring for their elderly parents. Findings from SAS 2016 showed that 98% of respondents aged 15 to 64 years old agreed that it is their responsibility to take care of their parents regardless of their parents' qualities and faults.

Chart 4: Proportion of Respondents Aged 65 and Above Who Will Turn to their Families for Physical, Financial and Emotional Support When Needed, 2016



Source: MSF (Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans)

Financial Support

6 Family members provide financial support to our elderly in times of need. Based on MSF's SAS 2016, the majority (76%) of respondents aged 65 years and above reported that they will turn to their family for help when faced with financial difficulties (Chart 4). In addition, adult children also provide regular financial support to the elderly. Findings from MSF's SAS 2016 suggest that 74% of respondents aged 25 and above and whose parents have not passed away provided an allowance to their parents.

7 While a majority of adult children reported providing an allowance to support their parents, there may be a small group of elderly who may require state intervention to have their children support them. Under the Maintenance of Parents Act, elderly parents aged 60 years and above who are not able to provide for themselves financially are allowed to claim maintenance from their adult children. In 2017, there were 176 cases lodged with the Commissioner for the Maintenance of Parents (Table 1). This was lower than the numbers lodged in the preceding years, despite the increasing number of elderly over the years.

8 Among those who lodged cases in 2017, 59% were fathers while 41% were mothers (Table 1). The majority (75%) were between 60 and 79 years of age and living with at least a family member (50%). A higher proportion was divorced (39%) and widowed (30%) compared to married (27%) and separated (4%) elderly.

Table 1: Number of Cases with the Commissioner for the Maintenance of Parents, 2011 – 2017

Years	2011	2013	2015	2017
Number of Cases	286	257	221	176
a) By Sex of Parent who Lodged Case				
Female (Mother claiming)	104 (36%)	110 (43%)	84 (38%)	72 (41%)
Male (Father claiming)	182 (64%)	147 (57%)	137 (62%)	104 (59%)
b) By Age Group				
Below 60 years	26 (9%)	13 (5%)	7 (3%)	8 (5%)
60 to 79 years	212 (74%)	202 (79%)	179 (81%)	132 (75%)
80 years & above	48 (17%)	42 (16%)	35 (16%)	36 (20%)
c) By Living Arrangement				
Alone/Homeless	82 (29%)	60 (23%)	48 (22%)	51 (29%)
Living with Family Members	124 (43%)	137 (53%)	115 (52%)	88 (50%)
Living with Non-Family Members	61 (21%)	50 (20%)	51 (23%)	31 (18%)
Living with Community	19 (7%)	10 (4%)	7 (3%)	6 (3%)
d) By Marital Status				
Married	74 (26%)	78 (30%)	64 (29%)	47 (27%)
Divorced	108 (38%)	87 (34%)	86 (39%)	68 (39%)
Widowed	89 (31%)	69 (27%)	58 (26%)	53 (30%)
Separated	15 (5%)	23 (9%)	13 (6%)	8 (4%)

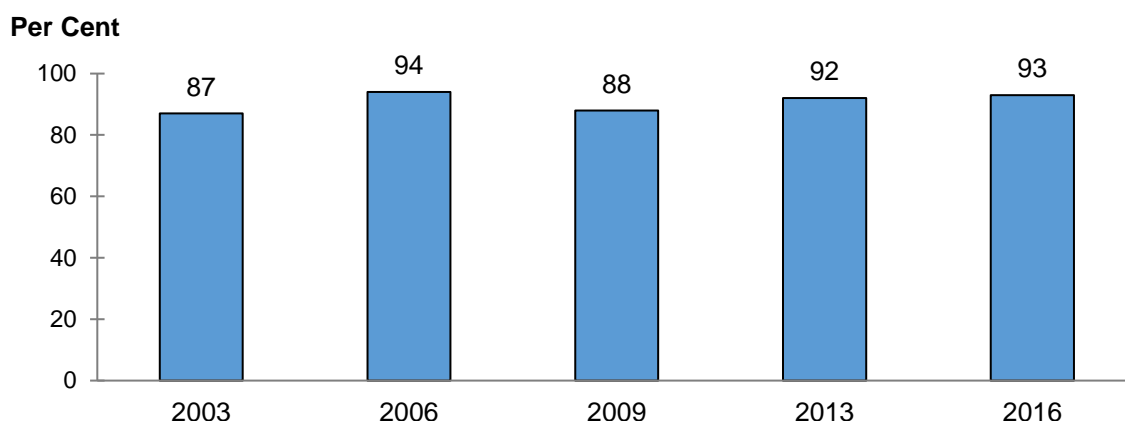
Source: Commissioner for the Maintenance of Parents

Emotional Support

9 Family members also provide emotional support to the elderly. According to MSF's SAS 2016, majority of respondents aged 65 years and above (79%) reported that they will turn to their family for emotional support when they are troubled (Chart 4). Most elderly also have a strong sense of closeness to their family. Findings from the SAS showed that the majority of respondents

aged 65 years and above reported having a close-knit family. The proportion has fluctuated slightly over the years while remaining high within the range of 87% to 94% (Chart 5).

Chart 5: Proportion of Respondents Aged 65 and Above Agreeing with the Statement “I have a close-knit family”, 2003 – 2016



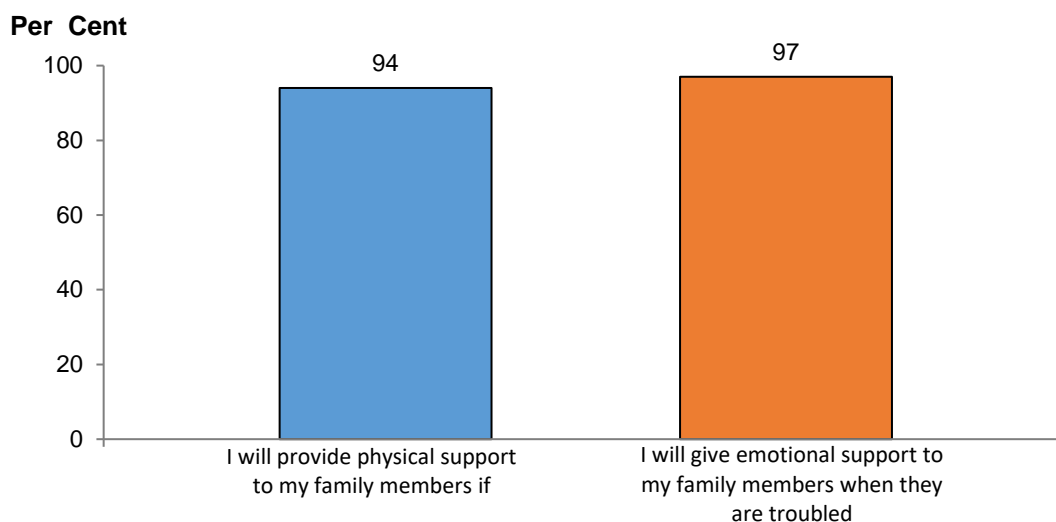
Source: MSF (Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans)

What roles do the elderly play in the ageing family?

Elderly help with physical and caregiving tasks as well as offer emotional support to their families

10 Many elderly also provide physical and emotional support to their family members. Based on SAS 2016, 94% of elderly respondents aged 65 years and above indicated that they will provide physical support such as caregiving, helping to pick up children from school or running errands for family members who need such help while 97% of elderly respondents indicated that they will provide emotional support such as listening or giving advice to family members who are troubled (Chart 6).

Chart 6: Proportion of Respondents Aged 65 Years and Above Who Provide Physical and Emotional Support to Family Members When Needed, 2016



Source: MSF (Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans)

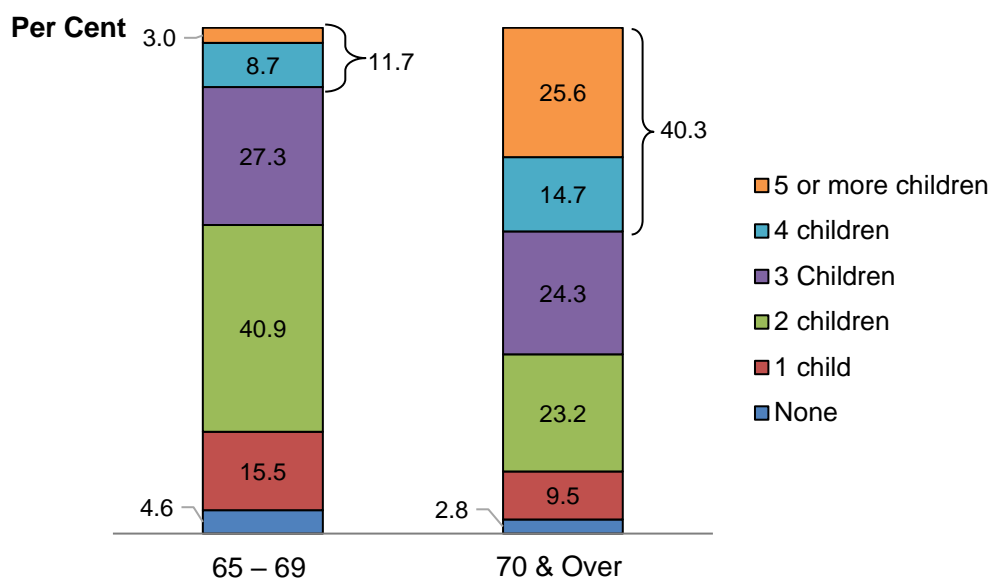
Can the immediate family continue to be the main source of support for the elderly?

Younger cohorts of elderly persons have fewer children to rely on for support

11 There are fewer children now to support parents in their old age. In 2017, 40.3% of ever-married women aged 70 years and above had at least four children (Chart 7). The corresponding proportion was lower for younger cohorts, with only 11.7% of those aged 65 to 69 years having at least four children. With more recent cohorts having even smaller families, there will be fewer children for parents to rely on in old age, especially for emotional support. Nonetheless, younger cohorts of elderly persons are likely to save more during their working years with the enhancements made to the Central Provident Fund (CPF) system over the years³, and may hence require less financial support.

³ For example, the higher salary ceiling (introduced in Budget 2015 and with effect from 1 Jan 2016) indicates that a 45 year-old worker who earns \$6,000 or more today will save an additional \$60,000 by the time he reaches 65. Amount is based on additional contributions to the CPF Special, Medisave and Retirement Accounts only. The Ordinary Account has not been included as the additional contributions can be withdrawn for housing.

Chart 7: Resident Ever-Married Females Aged 65 Years and Above, by Age Group and Number of Children Born, 2017



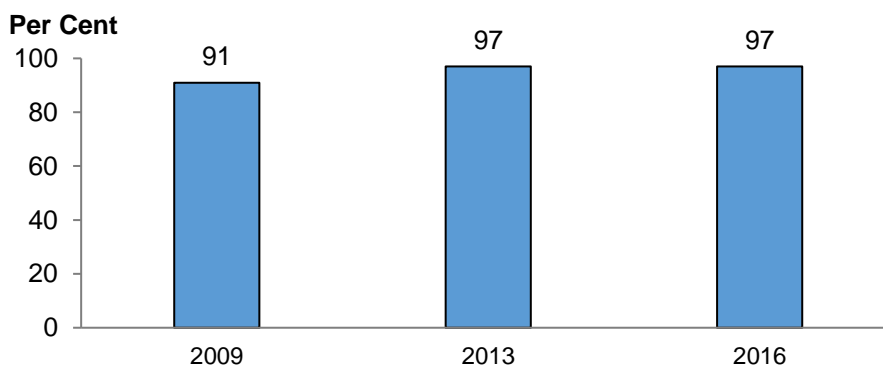
Note: Proportions may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Source: Department of Statistics

Singaporeans hold a positive attitude towards the older generation

12 Despite smaller family sizes, family members can continue to be a source of support for the elderly. On the whole, Singaporeans value intergenerational closeness. Based on MSF’s Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans, 97% of respondents in 2013 and 2016 felt that it is important for grandparents and their grandchildren to maintain close ties with each other. This is an increase from 91% in 2009 (Chart 8). Such a positive attitude for intergenerational ties bode well for ageing families in Singapore.

Chart 8: Proportion of Respondents Agreeing with the Statement “It is important for grandparents and their grandchildren to maintain close ties with each other”, 2009 – 2016



Source: MSF (Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans)



Appendix

(All tables in the Appendix are provided by the Department of Statistics)

Table A: Age Distribution of Resident Population, 2000 – 2017

Age (Years)	Number ('000)					Per Cent				
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2017	2000	2005	2010	2015	2017
Total	3,273.4	3,467.8	3,771.7	3,902.7	3,965.8	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Below 15	717.6	695.3	654.4	602.4	594.5	21.9	20.1	17.4	15.4	15.0
15 – 24	423.5	453.9	510.9	507.0	492.0	12.9	13.1	13.5	13.0	12.4
25 – 34	557.5	541.2	571.3	561.6	569.5	17.0	15.6	15.1	14.4	14.4
35 – 44	635.0	620.6	629.5	617.8	612.4	19.4	17.9	16.7	15.8	15.4
45 – 54	468.9	561.7	626.5	618.5	616.3	14.3	16.2	16.6	15.8	15.5
55 – 64	235.6	315.4	440.7	535.6	564.3	7.2	9.1	11.7	13.7	14.2
65 & Over	235.3	279.7	338.4	459.7	516.7	7.2	8.1	9.0	11.8	13.0

Note: Proportions may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Table B: Resident Households by Presence of Member Aged 65 Years and Above, 2000 – 2017

Presence of Member Aged 65 Years and Above	Number ('000)					Per Cent				
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2017	2000	2005	2010	2015	2017
Total	915.1	1,024.5	1,145.9	1,225.3	1,289.9	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
With all members aged below 65 years	722.3	792.9	870.4	869.5	888.2	78.9	77.4	76.0	71.0	68.9
With at least one member aged 65 years and above	192.8	231.6	275.5	355.8	401.8	21.1	22.6	24.0	29.0	31.1

Table C: Aged Resident Households, by Household Structure, 2000 – 2017

Household Composition	Number ('000)					Per Cent				
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2017	2000	2005	2010	2015	2017
Total	192.8	231.6	275.5	355.8	401.8	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Nuclear Families	47.2	55.7	63.2	87.5	94.0	24.5	24.0	22.9	24.6	23.4
Married without Co-Residing Children	17.7	26.0	37.6	59.7	82.7	9.2	11.2	13.7	16.8	20.6
3G Households	67.1	77.1	86.6	92.3	85.2	34.8	33.3	31.4	25.9	21.2
Single Parents with Children	17.9	18.0	23.3	27.2	28.4	9.3	7.8	8.5	7.7	7.1
One-Person	14.5	20.0	27.9	41.2	53.8	7.5	8.6	10.1	11.6	13.4
Other Households	28.3	34.7	36.9	47.9	57.6	14.7	15.0	13.4	13.5	14.3

Note: Proportions may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Table D: Resident Ever-Married Females Aged 65 Years and Above, by Age Group and Number of Children Born, 2017

Age (Years)	Number ('000)						
	Total	None	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	4 Children	5 or More Children
Total (65 & Over)	277.3	9.5	32.3	81.6	70.3	34.9	48.8
65 – 69	98.0	4.5	15.2	40.1	26.8	8.6	3.0
70 & Over	179.3	5.0	17.1	41.6	43.5	26.3	45.8
	Per Cent						
65 – 69	100.0	4.6	15.5	40.9	27.3	8.7	3.0
70 & Over	100.0	2.8	9.5	23.2	24.3	14.7	25.6

Note: Proportions may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.