

Caregiving in Singapore

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Introduction

Caregiving refers to the provision of assistance to a person who is ill, disabled, or needs help with daily activities.

Caregivers perform a range of tasks, including providing personal care, performing tasks inside or outside the home, and arranging for transportation and medical care.

As Singapore experiences an ageing population, there is an increasing number of elderly persons, aged 65 years and over, who require support and care.

Data on caregiving were collected for the first time by the Ministry of Health through the National Health Survey 2010.

This article highlights the profile of informal caregivers in the Singapore population and the key characteristics of caregivers and care recipients.

Informal caregivers refer to those who have not undergone any formal training and are not paid for caregiving.

Profile of Caregivers

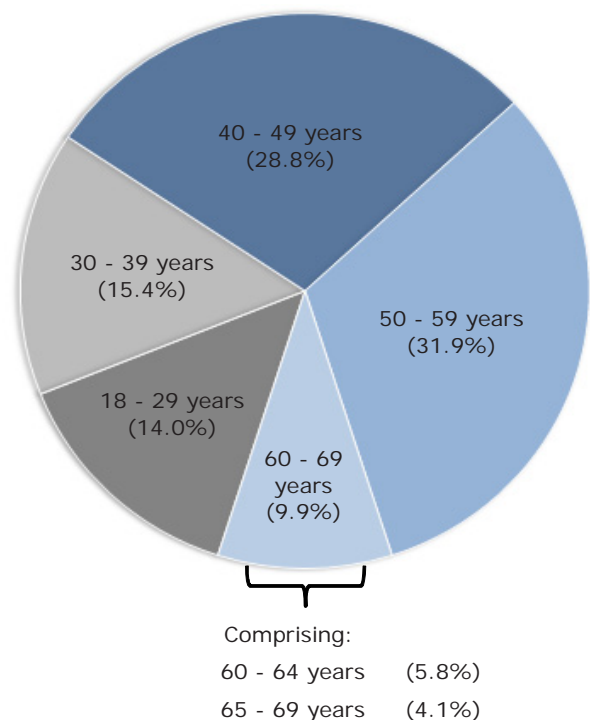
In 2010, 8.1 per cent of Singapore residents aged between 18 to 69 years old indicated that they provided regular care or assistance to friends or family

members. Some 37 per cent of caregivers reported that they had been providing care to their care recipients for over a decade.

On average, they provided around 6.8 hours of care per day in a typical week.

Most of these caregivers were in the older age groups (Chart 1). Around six in 10 caregivers were aged between 40 and 59 years old, while about one in 10 were aged between 60 and 69 years. About one in 25 caregivers were themselves elderly.

CHART 1 AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CAREGIVERS



There was a slightly higher proportion of female caregivers than males (Table 1). The majority of caregivers were currently married (69 per cent) and a quarter (26 per cent) were single.

TABLE 1 PROPORTION OF CAREGIVERS BY SEX AND MARITAL STATUS

	Per Cent
Sex	
Male	45.7
Female	54.3
Marital Status	
Ever Married ¹	5.3
Currently Married	68.8
Never Married	25.6

¹ Separated, divorced or widowed.

Close to three-quarters of caregivers (74 per cent) were employed (Table 2). Only one in 10 caregivers (11 per cent) was retired or not working.

This suggests that most caregivers juggled caregiving tasks with work commitments and family responsibilities.

TABLE 2 PROPORTION OF CAREGIVERS BY WORK STATUS

	Per Cent
Working	74.2
Homemaker / Housewife	14.3
Retired / Unemployed ¹	11.4

¹ Includes full-time students and those serving National Service.

The majority of caregivers (79 per cent) received some form of support from other family members (70 per cent) and/or domestic helpers (14 per cent). However, one in five caregivers (21 per cent) reported being the sole caregiver.

Among all caregivers, approximately six out of 10 mentioned that their care recipients most needed help in taking care of their residences or personal living spaces (60 per cent).

Profile of Care Recipients

While focusing on the profile of caregivers, the survey also collected some information on the recipients of care.

Our analysis below provides some indicative information on this group of persons who require long-term care by friends or family members.

The average age of care recipients was 64 years old. Nearly two in three care recipients (65 per cent) were elderly, with 42 per cent of care recipients aged 75 years and over (Table 3).

TABLE 3 AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CARE RECIPIENTS

	Per Cent
0 - 29 Years	10.9
30 - 64 Years	24.1
65 - 74 Years	22.8
75 - 84 Years	25.7
85 Years & Over	16.5

In addition, about six out of 10 elderly care recipients (63 per cent) were female (Table 4). This could be due to the higher life expectancy of females.

TABLE 4 PROPORTION OF CARE RECIPIENTS BY SEX

	Per Cent
Male	36.7
Female	63.3

Care recipients require assistance for a range of health problems, illnesses or disabilities. The three major doctor-

diagnosed health problems affecting care recipients were diabetes (13 per cent), stroke (9.7 per cent) and heart disease (6.9 per cent), as reported by their caregivers.

Conclusion

Long-term caregiving impacts the caregivers, care recipients, as well as their family, friends and the larger community. It is hoped that the survey findings will shed light on the profile of caregivers and care recipients, as well as provide useful inputs for policy formulation.



Overseas Visitors

The Singapore Department of Statistics (DOS) welcomed the following visitors over the past six months.

Topics discussed included the EU-ASEAN Statistical Capacity Building Programme, and the Australian Bureau of Statistics' experience in compiling Australia's International Investment Position.

Other topics of interest included the methods used by DOS in the production of statistics on household income and expenditure, and an overview of the systems, mechanisms, definitions and institutional framework for trade in services statistics.

The Department's approach in promoting awareness of the importance of statistics to the general public was also shared.

Australia

- *Australian Bureau of Statistics*

- Mr Peter Bradbury
Director, International Services and Investment

European Union

- *EU-ASEAN Statistical Capacity Building Programme*

- Mr Deo Ramprakash
Independent Consultant, Team Leader
- Ms Baya Kebiri
Independent Consultant, Senior Expert

India

- *Research and Information System for Developing Countries*

- Dr Ram Upendra Das
Senior Fellow

Korea

- *Statistics Korea*

- Mr Choi Bong Ho
Director-General, Statistical Training Institute