Key Household Income Trends –
Glossary of Terms and Definitions

Resident households

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 where the household reference person is a resident (i.e. Singapore citizen or permanent resident).

Resident employed households

Resident employed households refer to resident households with at least one employed person.

Household reference person

The household reference person may refer to the oldest member, the main income earner, the owner-occupier of the house, the person who manages the affairs of the household, or the person who supplied the information pertaining to other members.

Prior to Census of Population 2020, survey respondents were asked to identify the 'head of household'. The identified person is used as the reference person to determine relationships between household members. In Census of Population 2020, the term 'head of household' has been replaced with 'household reference person'.

Household employment income

Household employment income refers to the sum of income received by employed members of the household from employment and business, excluding the income of live-in domestic workers. Monthly household employment income includes one-twelfth of the annual bonus. Data on household employment income refers to household employment income before accounting for Government transfers and taxes, unless stated otherwise.

Household employment income per household member

Household employment income per household member refers to the household employment income divided by the total number of members in the household. For example, if there is one employed person in a household of four, his income is divided by four to derive the income per household member. This takes into account the different sizes of households in each group and enables analysis of changes in household

income, adjusted for changes in household size over time.

Median household income

Median household income refers to the household income in the middle of the income distribution, i.e. half of the households have higher income than the median household income and half have lower income than the median household income.

Decile (decile group)

A decile group is one tenth of all households arranged by their household incomes from minimum to maximum. The first decile group is the first one-tenth, i.e. 10% of all households with lowest incomes. The last decile is the one-tenth of the households with the highest incomes.

Not all households are consistently in the same decile group from one year to the next. For example, an employed household may move from a higher to a lower decile in a particular year due to the temporary unemployment of a household member, before moving up the deciles when the member resumes employment in the subsequent year. In comparing the performance of any particular decile group over time, it is therefore relevant to note that the comparison may not pertain to the same group of households.

Percentile ratios

A percentile indicates the relative position of a household, dividing all households into 100 equal parts based on their household incomes, arranged from minimum to maximum. Percentile ratios are one measure of the spread of incomes across the population. P90 refers to the income level at the 90th percentile. P10 refers to the income level at the 10th percentile.

Source of data

The data are based on the sample of households surveyed in the June Comprehensive Labour Force Surveys conducted by the Ministry of Manpower every year, except for 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2020 which are based on the Censuses of Population and the mid-decade General Household Surveys. The income estimates are based on income as reported by survey respondents and augmented with administrative data. Survey estimates are subject to sampling variability.

Of the 33,000 housing units selected in the sample for the June Comprehensive Labour Force Survey 2024, some 1,506 households were excluded from the survey as they were unoccupied, non-residential or demolished. A total of 27,374 households responded to the survey, achieving an overall response rate of 86.9%.