

Overseas Travel by Singapore Residents

by
 Tan Yeow Lip
 Population Statistics Section
 Singapore Department of Statistics

Introduction

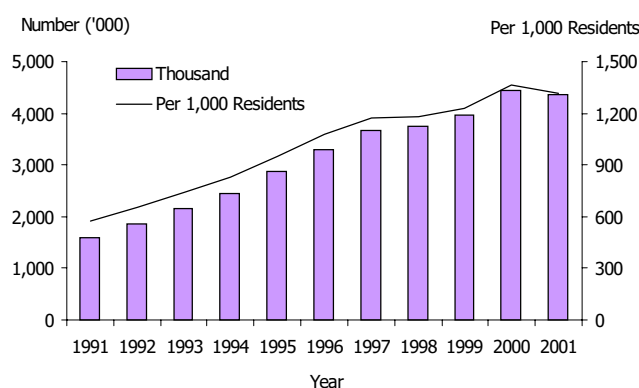
With globalization and greater affluence, more Singapore residents travel overseas for business or leisure. There is also a large number who make multiple trips abroad. The ease of air travel and Singapore's excellent facilities as a transportation hub have facilitated travel overseas.

This paper provides an overview of travel trends among Singapore residents during the last decade and a more detailed analysis of overseas travel in 2000. Data on outbound departures of Singapore residents during 1991–2001 are obtained from administrative records. Socio-economic characteristics of Singapore residents who traveled in 2000 are obtained from Singapore's Census of Population 2000.

Travel Trends

Overseas travel has become more prevalent among the Singapore resident population. In 2001, Singapore residents made a total of 4.4 million trips overseas by air and sea, up from 1.6 million trips in 1991 (Chart 1). This represented an annual growth rate of 11 per cent during the decade, which was much higher than the population growth rate of 2 per cent. Thus, the propensity to travel overseas has increased. The number of outbound departures rose from 575 per thousand residents in 1991 to 1,315 in 2001.

CHART 1 OUTBOUND DEPARTURES OF SINGAPORE RESIDENTS BY AIR AND SEA



Overseas Travel in 2000

Overseas trips in Census 2000 refer to those that lasted longer than two days and were made during the last twelve months prior to enumeration.

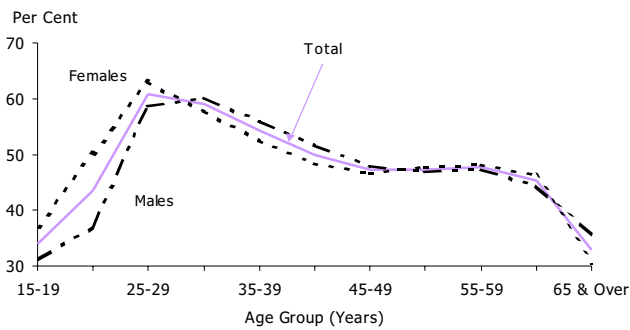
High Proportion who Traveled Overseas

About half of the adult resident population traveled to Malaysia or other countries for more than two days in the last twelve months. Among the 2.5 million residents aged 15 years and over, 48 per cent made at least 1 trip overseas.

Young adults in their late twenties and early thirties had the highest propensity to travel overseas

(Chart 2). The proportion that traveled overseas declined with increasing age. There was a sharp drop in the proportion at age 60–64 years. As older persons entered into retirement, work-related travel would be curtailed and there could possibly be health and financial constraints as well.

CHART 2 PROPORTION WHICH TRAVELED OVERSEAS BY AGE GROUP AND SEX, 2000



Proportionately more young females traveled overseas than their male counterparts. This could be because males serve National Service at

age 18–21 years and pursue higher education in their early twenties. Among both males and females, relatively few of the youths aged 15–19 years traveled overseas, possibly because of study priorities and limited budgets.

Working persons had the highest propensity to travel overseas while retirees and students have the least (Table 1). Among the working residents, managers and professionals had the highest proportion making at least 1 trip overseas.

High Proportion of Multiple Trippers

Given Malaysia’s close proximity and the close family and business ties with Singapore, multiple trips are often made by Singapore residents who travel to Malaysia. Among the total of 372,000 Singapore residents aged 15 years and over who traveled to Malaysia only in 2000, almost half (48 per cent) made two or more trips there (Table 2). For those who traveled to other countries only, only one third made multiple trips overseas.

TABLE 1 SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF SINGAPORE RESIDENTS AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER, 2000

	Number ('000)	Proportion who Traveled Overseas in Last 12 Months
TOTAL	2,494.6	48.3
Males	1,229.8	48.1
Females	1,264.9	48.5
Economic Status		
Working	1,482.6	54.3
Homemakers	361.6	44.7
Retired	247.8	36.2
Students	217.2	37.3
Occupational Distribution		
Managerial & Professional	362.1	75.0
Technical	283.4	63.1
Clerical	213.6	50.8
Sales & Services	183.0	43.1
Others	440.6	38.0

TABLE 2 BROAD DESTINATION OF OVERSEAS TRIPS, 2000

Number of Trips	Total	Malaysia Only	Other Countries Only	Malaysia & Other Countries
No. with At Least 1 Trip ('000)	1,206.0	371.5	516.4	318.1
Per Cent*	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1	44.7	51.6	67.3	–
2 – 3	31.1	30.6	23.6	43.8
4 – 5	10.3	8.8	4.3	21.7
6 or More	13.0	8.5	4.3	32.4

* Includes a small proportion who did not specify the number of overseas trips.

Multiple trips were relatively more common for males than females (Chart 3). Some 57 per cent of resident males had made 2 or more trips overseas, compared with 52 per cent of the resident females.

Frequency of Overseas Travel

Among Singapore residents who traveled overseas, an average of 3.4 trips was made in 2000. Males in the prime working ages of 30–49 years were the most well-traveled, with an average of 5 trips during the 12-month reference period (Chart 4). Among

single and married females, there was no significant difference in the average number of overseas trips for most ages.

Differentials by Economic Status

Working persons traveled more frequently than non-working persons. In 2000, they had the highest average of 3.8 trips in a year, some of which could be work-related (Table 3). Students made the least number of trips overseas and a relatively large proportion traveled only to Malaysia.

CHART 3 NUMBER OF OVERSEAS TRIPS BY SEX, 2000

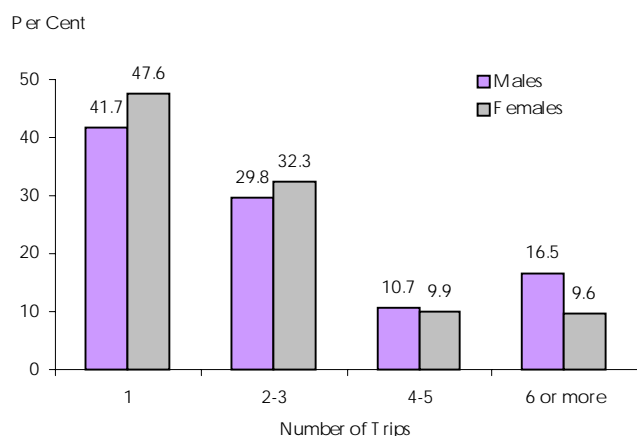


CHART 4 AVERAGE NUMBER OF TRIPS BY MALE AND FEMALE TRAVELERS, 2000

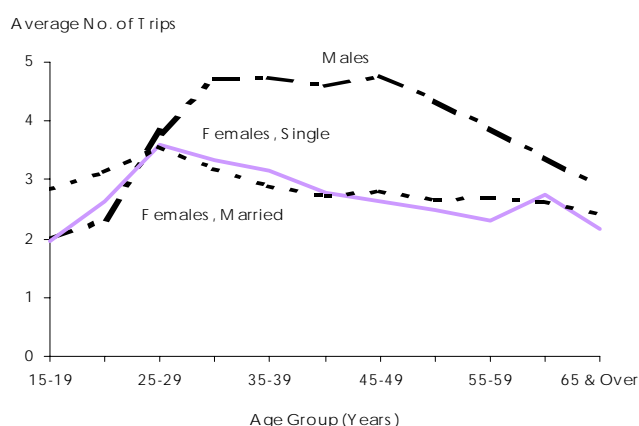


TABLE 3 ECONOMIC STATUS OF OVERSEAS TRAVELERS AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER, 2000

	Total	Working	Homemaker	Retired	Student
No. with At Least 1 Trip ('000)	1,206.0	805.3	161.7	89.7	81.0
Per Cent*	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1	44.7	41.5	49.4	48.5	60.8
2 – 3	31.1	31.2	31.6	31.4	28.7
4 – 5	10.3	11.0	9.6	9.7	6.2
6 or More	13.0	15.3	8.9	9.9	4.2
Average No. of Trips	3.4	3.8	2.7	2.8	2.0
% Who Traveled to Malaysia Only	30.8	28.2	39.6	29.4	38.9

* Includes a small proportion who did not specify the number of overseas trips.
 Note : Average number of trips is computed based on persons with at least 1 trip.

Occupational Differentials

Among the working population who traveled overseas, those in managerial and professional occupations made an average of 5.2 trips in a year (Table 4). In contrast, working persons in clerical positions had the lowest average of 2.7 trips.

Income Differentials

Table 5 shows that the number of overseas trips made in a year is positively correlated with household income. Among residents with household income of \$6,000 and over, an average of 4.2 trips was made. Those with household

income of less than \$6,000 had a lower average of 3 trips and a large proportion traveled to Malaysia only.

Concluding Remarks

Travelling for business or leisure is increasingly common among Singapore residents. Multiple trips have also become more common. With higher disposable income and work-related trips, people are enjoying greater opportunity to travel. Overseas travel by Singapore residents is expected to rise in future with increasing globalization, as the number of business trips will increase.

TABLE 4 OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF OVERSEAS TRAVELERS WHO WERE WORKING, 2000

	Total	Managerial & Professional	Technical	Clerical	Sales & Services	Others
No. with At Least 1 Trip ('000)	805.3	271.5	178.9	108.4	78.9	167.5
Per Cent*	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1	41.5	28.8	41.1	49.9	50.3	52.7
2 – 3	31.2	31.3	33.7	31.9	27.3	29.6
4 – 5	11.0	14.1	11.3	9.3	7.5	8.4
6 or More	15.3	24.6	13.0	8.6	11.3	8.7
Average No. of Trips	3.8	5.2	3.5	2.7	4.0	2.8
% Who Traveled to Malaysia Only	28.2	16.7	27.4	35.0	34.5	40.3

* Includes a small proportion who did not specify the number of overseas trips.
 Note : Average number of trips is computed based on persons with at least 1 trip.

TABLE 5 HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF OVERSEAS TRAVELERS, 2000

	Total	Below \$2,000	\$2,000–\$3,999	\$4,000–\$5,999	\$6,000 & Over
No. with At Least 1 Trip ('000)	1,206.0	167.6	279.7	250.9	507.9
Per Cent*	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1	44.7	53.2	51.9	47.6	36.5
2 – 3	31.1	28.7	29.6	31.2	32.6
4 – 5	10.3	8.4	8.6	9.8	12.1
6 or More	13.0	9.1	9.2	10.7	17.6
Average No. of Trips	3.4	2.7	2.8	3.1	4.2
% Who Traveled to Malaysia Only	30.8	38.9	40.7	33.1	21.5

* Includes a small proportion who did not specify the number of overseas trips.
 Note : Average number of trips is computed based on persons with at least 1 trip.