Information Paper Series

Personal Disposable Income and Personal Saving

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DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS SINGAPORE

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information paper

on

economic statistics

PERSONAL DISPOSABLE INCOME AND PERSONAL SAVING

Singapore Department of Statistics
January 2022

Papers in this Information Paper Series are intended to inform and clarify conceptual and methodological changes and improvements in official statistics. The views expressed are based on the latest methodological developments in the international statistical community. Statistical estimates presented in the papers are based on new or revised official statistics compiled from the best available data. Comments and suggestions are welcome.

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PERSONAL DISPOSABLE INCOME

Personal disposable income enables private consumption expenditure to be expressed as a share of disposable income rather than gross domestic product (GDP), with the former being a more appropriate measure since it compares consumption and disposable income within the personal sector.

PERSONAL DISPOSABLE INCOME (PDI) comprises

- **Compensation of Employees (CoE)**
- **Gross Operating Surplus (GOS)*/ Self-employment Income**
  * Refers to GOS on ownership of dwellings and non-profit institutions serving households (e.g., charities and religious organisations)
- **Property Income Received** *less* **Property Income Paid**
- **Current Transfers Received** *less* **Current Transfers Paid**
- *less* **Personal Income Tax Paid**

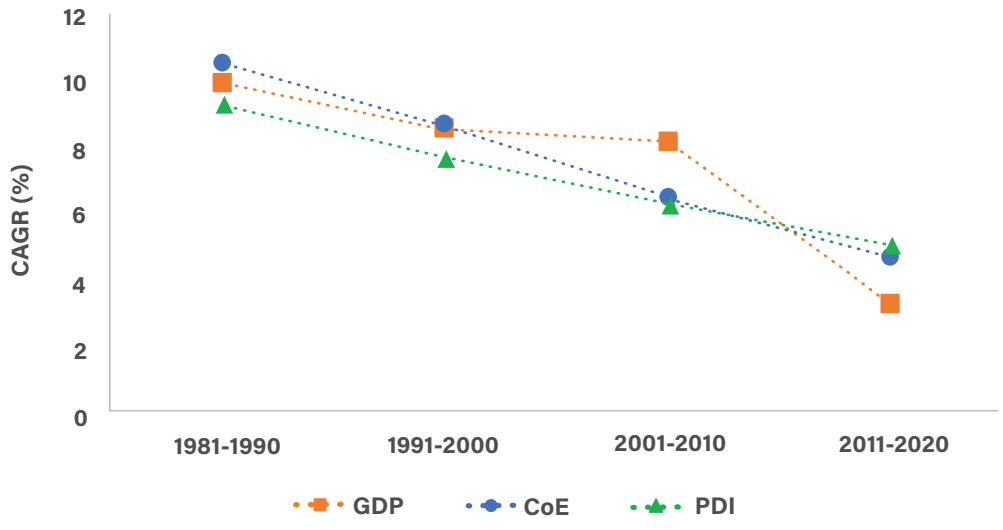
KEY TRENDS

$261 billion
in 2020

5.2%
Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) for 2011-2020

PDI increased about 58 per cent over the last decade, from $165 billion in 2011 to $261 billion in 2020. It is also observed that PDI had grown over the years in tandem with Singapore's economic development, although the rate of growth has tapered as our economy became more developed, an observation which is consistent with international evidence.

Nominal Growth in GDP, CoE and PDI



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PERSONAL SAVING

Personal saving (PS) refers to the difference between **personal disposable income (PDI)** and **private consumption expenditure (PCE)**

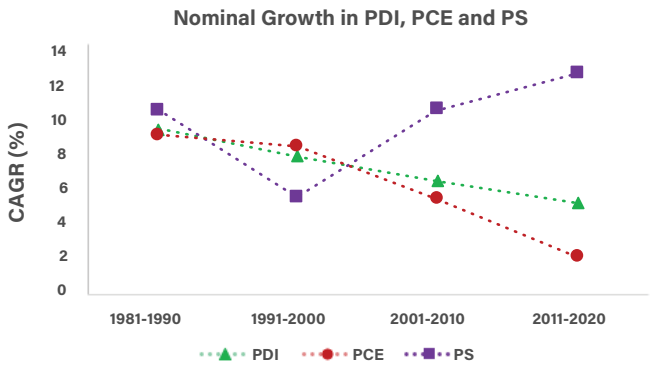
PS in national accounts differs from the common perception of "saving", which often refers to the amount of deposits in bank accounts. Instead, PS is the amount of available funds after consumption and before the purchase of assets or repayments of debts.

KEY TRENDS

$106 billion
in 2020

12.7%
CAGR
for 2011-2020

PS increased almost threefold from $36 billion in 2011 to $106 billion in 2020 as growth in PDI outpaced growth in PCE over this period.

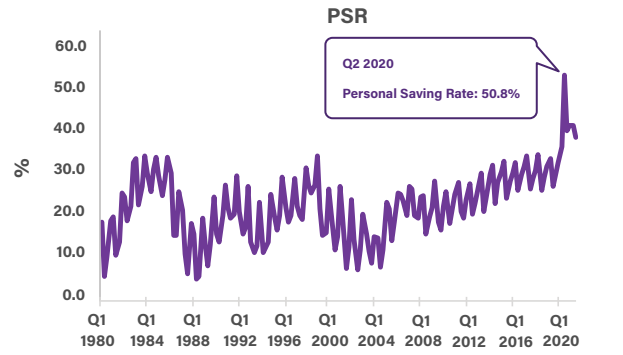


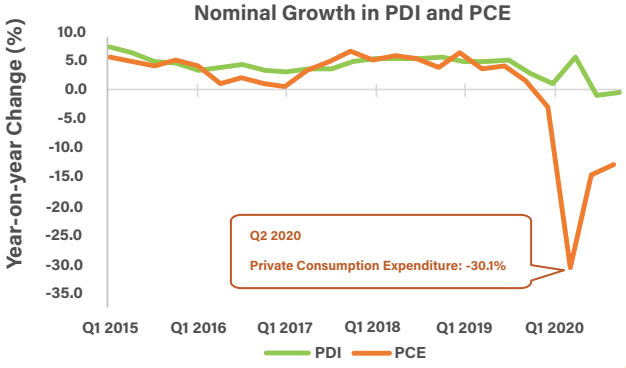
Personal saving rate (PSR) refers to **personal saving (PS)** as a percentage of **personal disposable income (PDI)**

KEY TRENDS

Personal saving rate rose to a record high in Q2 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic due to:

- **Sharp fall in private consumption expenditure** as households' opportunities to spend were constrained by the *Circuit Breaker* measures put in place in Q2 2020.
- **Stronger growth in personal disposable income**, supported by the strong *fiscal stimulus* to help households tide through the crisis.





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PERSONAL DISPOSABLE INCOME AND PERSONAL SAVING

I. Introduction

1. The Department of Statistics (DOS) has successfully developed quarterly data on personal disposable income (PDI) and personal saving (PS). The availability of such key macroeconomic aggregates in the national accounts allows for more timely and in-depth economic analysis of the personal sector (i.e., households [1] and non-profit institutions serving households (NPISHs) [2]), thereby facilitating effective policy formulation and evaluation.

2. PDI increased about 58 per cent over the last decade, from $165 billion in 2011 to $261 billion in 2020. It is also observed that PDI had grown over the years in tandem with Singapore's economic development, although the rate of growth has tapered as our economy became more developed. PS had also increased almost threefold from $36 billion in 2011 to $106 billion in 2020 as growth in PDI outpaced growth in PCE over this period. Notably, PS differs from the concept of personal wealth as the former refers to the amount of funds available after consumption and before the purchase of assets. The high level of PS in recent decade reflects the increase in real wage growth and a maturing population actively saving for retirement.

3. The availability of data on PDI has also enabled private consumption expenditure (PCE) to be expressed as a share of disposable income, rather than as a share of gross domestic product (GDP). The former is a more appropriate measure than the latter as it compares disposable income and consumption within the personal sector. Other than PDI, it is also useful to examine the personal saving rate (PSR), which expresses PS as a percentage of the disposable income available in the personal sector. Notably, Singapore's PSR had risen sharply from about 35 per cent in Q1 2020 to a record high of 51 per cent in Q2 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

[1] The System of National Accounts (SNA) coverage of resident institutional units within the household sector include Singapore citizens, permanent residents, foreigners and unincorporated enterprises (e.g., sole proprietorships) who have engaged in economic activities in Singapore for at least a year.

[2] NPISHs refer to private non-profit institutions (e.g., charities and religious organisations) which provide goods and services to households for free or at subsidised rates.

II. Concept and Methodology

Personal Disposable Income (PDI)

4. The concept of PDI in Singapore's national accounts adheres closely to international standards, i.e., the System of National Accounts (SNA)[3]. Conceptually, PDI can be generated either through the production process or the redistributive process (Box 1). PDI measures the income of the personal sector (e.g., compensation of employees (CoE)[4], self-employment income, gross operating surplus on ownership of dwellings[5] and NPISHs), after accounting for net property income received (i.e., interests and dividends), net current transfers[6] received and personal income tax paid.

Box 1: Formula for Personal Disposable Income

Personal disposable income
=
(1) Compensation of employees
(2) + Self-employment income
(3) + Gross operating surplus on ownership of dwellings and NPISHs
(4) + Property income received
(5) - Property income paid
(6) + Current transfers received
(7) - Current transfers paid
(8) - Personal income tax paid

Items (1) to (3) of the PDI are generated through the production process, while items (4) to (8) are generated through the redistributive process.

Personal Saving (PS)

5. In national accounts, PS is not directly computed, but derived as the difference between PDI and PCE on goods and services (Box 2). It essentially measures the disposable income not consumed within an accounting period and can be viewed as a source of funds available in the personal sector for the purchase of non-financial assets (e.g., residential properties), financial assets (e.g., shares and securities) or repayment of debts (e.g., mortgage loans). In other words, PS refers to the amount of funds

[3] Adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC), the SNA 2008 describes a coherent, consistent and integrated set of macroeconomic accounts in the context of internationally agreed concepts, definitions, classifications and accounting rules. (https://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/docs/sna2008.pdf)
[4] Compensation of employees refers to total remuneration payable by an enterprise to an employee in return for work done.
[5] Gross operating surplus on ownership of dwellings refers to actual and imputed rental less operating expenses of housing services. Consistent with international practice, an imputation to the rental of owner-occupied dwellings is made so that the treatment is comparable to the actual rental of tenant-occupied dwellings.
[6] Current transfers are unrequited transfers by one party to another. Examples of current transfers include government transfers (e.g., Solidarity Payment and Workfare Income Supplement) and transfers with the rest of the world (e.g., remittance).

available after consumption and before the purchase of assets. Notably, PS differs from the common perception of "saving", which often refers to the amount of deposits in bank accounts. Defined as the share of PS out of PDI, the PSR would rise when the personal sector spends less or if disposable income increases.

Box 2: Formulas for Personal Saving and Personal Saving Rate

Personal saving
=
Personal disposable income
- Private consumption expenditure

Personal saving rate
=
Personal saving / Personal disposable income x 100%

III. Analysis on Personal Disposable Income

Slower Growth in PDI Since 1980s

6. In nominal terms, PDI increased from $165 billion in 2011 to $261 billion in 2020, representing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.2 per cent (Table 1). This was slower than the growth in PDI seen in the earlier decades, i.e., since the 1980s, which is consistent with international evidence that PDI growth rates tend to taper as economies mature. With CoE accounting for a significant share of PDI (about 81 per cent during the period of 2011 to 2020), the slower growth in PDI since the 1980s was consistent with the slower growth in CoE over the same period. Over the decades, the slower growth in CoE was in line with the observed slowdown in GDP growth as the Singapore economy became more developed. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that PDI growth, for the first time, had out-paced GDP growth for the period of 2011-2020, suggesting that the income received by the personal sector had grown faster than the total income generated through production in the economy. The quarterly data series on PDI is available in the Appendix.

Table 1: Nominal Growth in PDI, CoE and GDP, 1981 – 2020

Per Cent

	1981-1990	1991-2000	2001-2010	2011-2020
PDI	9.2	7.7	6.3	5.2
CoE	10.4	8.7	6.5	4.7
GDP	9.8	8.6	8.2	3.3

7. Singapore's PDI growth was observed to be comparable with several advanced economies (e.g., US, South Korea, Australia) in recent years (Table 2). Notably, growth in China's PDI was much higher which was in line with her strong economic growth.

Table 2: Nominal Growth in PDI for Selected Economies, 1995 – 2020

Per Cent

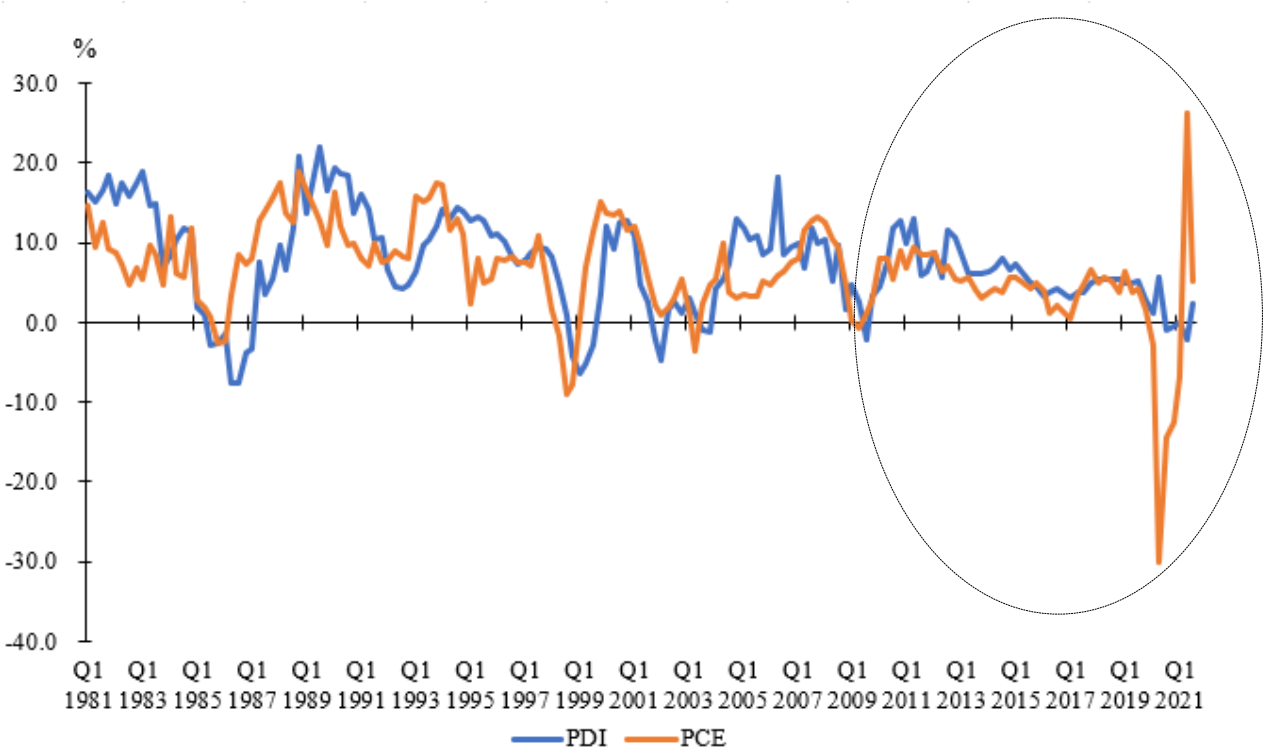
	1995-2004	2005-2014	2015-2020
US	5.5	3.8	4.9
UK	4.5	3.6	2.4
Australia	5.8	6.6	4.2
Japan*	-0.5	-0.1	1.1
Germany	1.9	1.9	2.8
Switzerland	2.4	2.5	1.5
South Korea	7.2	5.0	3.2
China#	11.0	14.8	8.6
Ireland	10.0	1.2	5.9
Singapore	**4.5**	**7.8**	**3.7**

Sources: Various national statistics offices and Singapore Department of Statistics.
* Data are available till 2019.
# Data are available till 2017.

PDI Growth Outpaced PCE Growth in Recent Years

8. With the availability of data on PDI, further insights can now be drawn by analysing the trends in income and consumption within the personal sector (i.e., disposable income and consumption expenditure). For example, while the underlying nominal year-on-year growth in both PDI and PCE had generally slowed since 2010 amid economic challenges following the Global Financial Crisis, growth in PDI had generally outpaced that of PCE (Chart 1).

Chart 1: Nominal Growth in PDI and PCE, Q1 1981 – Q3 2021



Note: Government's growth dividend payout in May 2006 and May 2011 led to stronger PDI growth in Q2 2006 and Q2 2011. Against the backdrop of COVID-19 in 2020, PDI growth was supported by government transfers, while PCE fell in part because of the movement restrictions that constrained households' opportunities to spend. With the re-opening of Singapore's economy, PCE growth rebounded in Q2 2021 as a result of the low-base effect in Q2 2020.

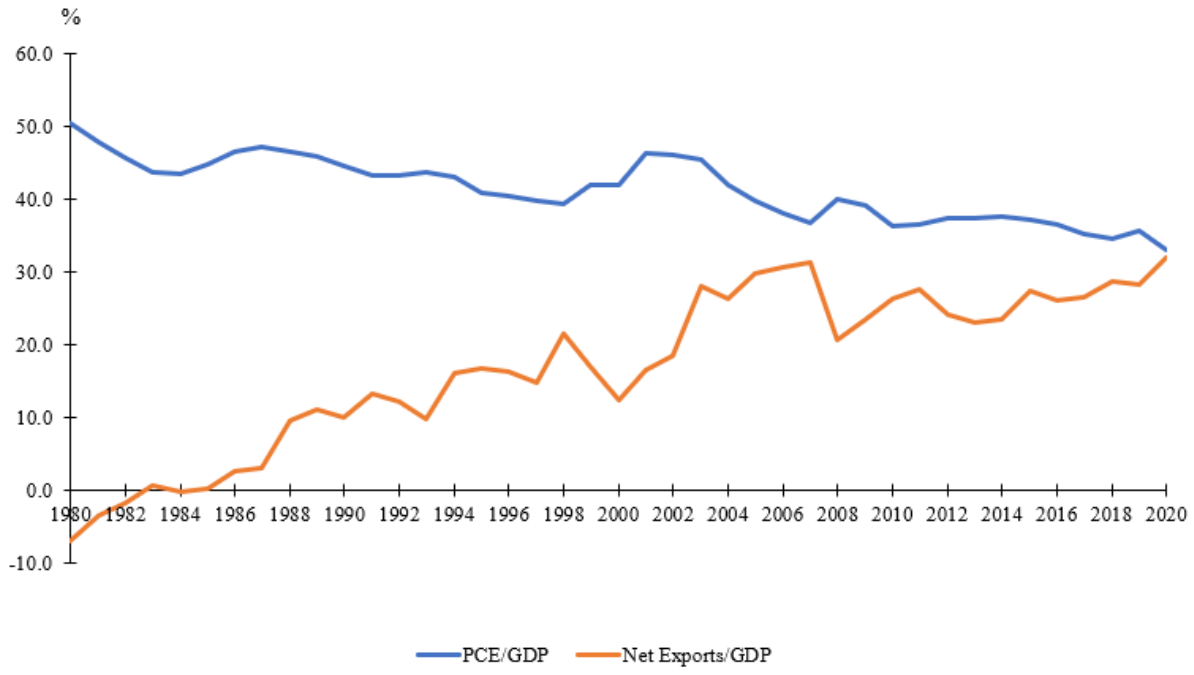
PDI: An Alternative Comparison of PCE Share

9. More importantly, the availability of data on PDI enables PCE to be expressed as a share of PDI rather than GDP, with the former being a more appropriate measure since it compares consumption and disposable income within the same sector. Cross-country comparisons of PCE as a share of income often use GDP as the measure of income, partly because GDP data are more widely available than PDI. Based on such comparisons, it is often suggested that Singapore's PCE[7] as a share of GDP is low. In several advanced economies such as the US and UK, PCE accounted for about two-thirds of GDP, compared to about one-third in Singapore.

[7] The expenditure approach to GDP refers to the sum of final demand components, i.e., GDP = C + G + I + NE, where
C = Private consumption expenditure
G = Government consumption expenditure
I = Gross capital formation
NE = Exports less imports of goods and services
For example, if C increases faster than I, ceteris paribus, then the relative share of C in GDP will rise and the relative share of I in GDP will fall.

10. However, such cross-country comparisons of the share of PCE in GDP may not have accounted for differences in the underlying economic structures and development strategies of the various economies. In Singapore's case, reflecting its status as an open and export-oriented economy, net exports as a share of GDP had risen steadily since the mid-1980s to about 32 per cent in 2020. This was in contrast to net exports' shares of GDP in the US and UK, at -3.1 per cent[8] and 0.2 per cent respectively in 2020. Correspondingly, Singapore's PCE as a share of GDP declined from about 50 per cent in 1980 to about 33 per cent in 2020 (Chart 2).

Chart 2: PCE and Net Exports as a Share of GDP, 1980 – 2020



11. Table 3 shows the cross-country comparisons of the share of PCE in both GDP and PDI. By analysing cross-country data on disposable income and consumption expenditure within the same sector, the PDI provides a more appropriate basis for comparison. Using PDI, Singapore's PCE share was about 69 per cent over the period of 2015-2020, compared to about 35 per cent when using GDP as the basis. Nonetheless, Singapore's PCE share in PDI was still lower when compared to that of other advanced economies. It is further observed that Singapore's PCE as a share of PDI had declined over the years, from 82 per cent during the period of 1995-2004 to 69 per cent during the period of 2015-2020. Correspondingly, PSR had risen during the same period.

[8] Negative net exports as a share of GDP implies that the country's imports of goods and services are larger than its exports.

Table 3: Average PCE/GDP and PCE/PDI Shares for Selected Economies, 1995 – 2020

Per Cent

	Average PCE/GDP Share			Average PCE/PDI Share		
	1995-2004	**2005-2014**	**2015-2020**	**1995-2004**	**2005-2014**	**2015-2020**
US	66.0	67.8	67.6	90.5	91.0	87.8
UK	65.9	64.4	64.0	91.4	91.2	92.8
Australia	57.8	55.5	55.3	97.9	95.2	92.4
Japan*	53.8	56.6	54.9	92.7	97.4	98.4
Germany	56.1	54.9	52.1	89.6	89.8	88.5
Switzerland	55.1	51.1	49.8	80.6	77.5	77.2
South Korea	53.3	51.5	47.9	85.1	91.0	85.8
China[#]	45.3	37.1	39.1	69.0	60.8	63.5
Ireland	47.7	45.5	30.5	91.8	89.1	87.6
Singapore	**42.4**	**37.9**	**35.3**	**81.7**	**77.7**	**69.4**

Sources: Various national statistics offices and Singapore Department of Statistics.
* Data are available till 2019.
[#] Data are available till 2017.

IV. Analysis on Personal Saving

12. As shown in Table 4, PS had registered double-digit growth since the 1980s except during the period of 1991-2000. In nominal terms, PS increased almost threefold from $36 billion in 2011 to $106 billion in 2020, representing a CAGR of about 13 per cent. This came about as growth in PDI outpaced growth in PCE over this period. The high level of PS in recent decade reflects the increase in real wage growth and a maturing population actively saving for retirement. However, Singapore's PSR is expected to decline gradually as the population ages rapidly.

Table 4: Nominal Growth in PDI, PCE and PS, 1981 – 2020

Per Cent

	1981-1990	1991-2000	2001-2010	2011-2020
PDI	9.2	7.7	6.3	5.2
PCE	8.9	8.3	5.3	2.1
PS	10.3	5.4	10.4	12.7

Sharp Rise in PSR during COVID-19

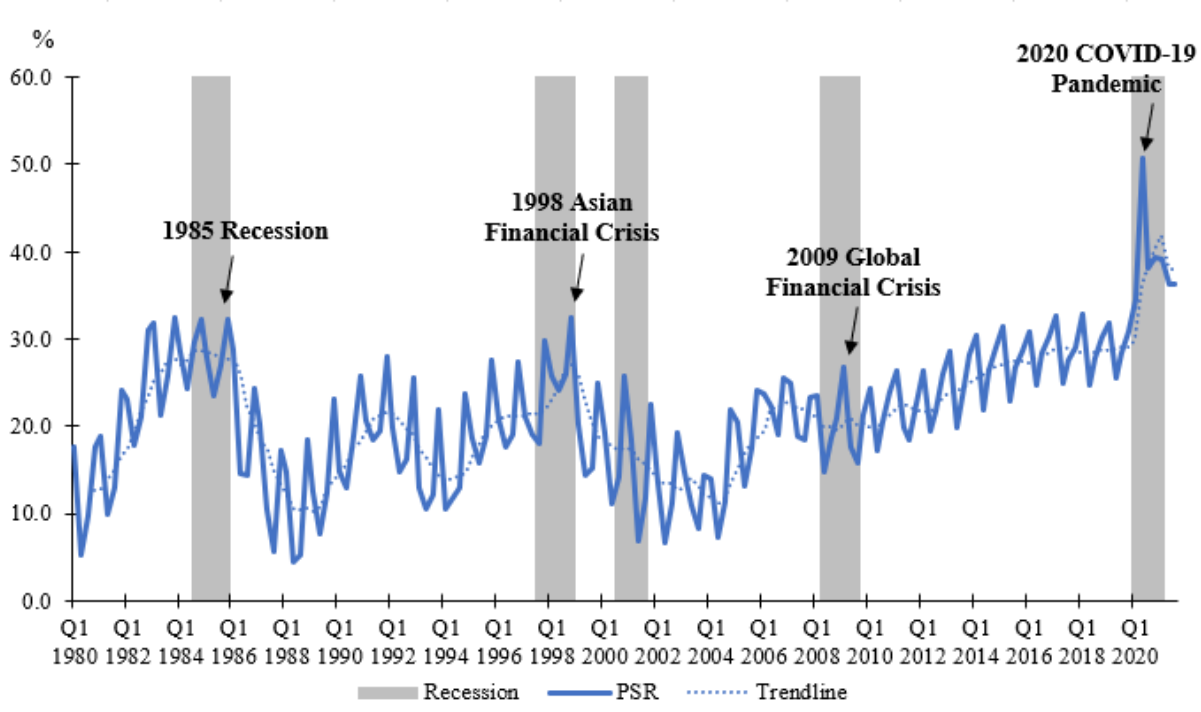
13. It is also useful to examine the trends in PSR, which expresses PS as a percentage of the disposable income available in the personal sector. From Table 5, it can be observed that the PSR had risen sharply from about 35 per cent in Q1 2020 to a record high of 51 per cent in Q2 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 5: PS, PDI and PSR, Q1 2019 – Q4 2020

	Q1 2019	Q2 2019	Q3 2019	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
PS ($ billion)	21.3	15.5	17.7	20.8	23.3	32.6	23.6	26.5
PDI ($ billion)	66.8	60.7	62.5	67.4	67.6	64.1	61.9	67.2
PSR (%)	31.9	25.6	28.3	30.9	34.6	50.8	38.1	39.4

14. As shown in Chart 3, the PSR in Q2 2020 (51 per cent) amid COVID-19 exceeded the peaks observed during the 1985 recession (32 per cent), 1998 Asian Financial Crisis (32 per cent) and the 2009 Global Financial Crisis (27 per cent). Since 1980, Singapore's PSR had consistently peaked during recessions, reflecting households' precautionary savings in response to economic uncertainty.

Chart 3: PSR, Q1 1980 – Q3 2021



15. The significant increase in PSR in Q2 2020 could be attributed to a sharp fall in PCE coupled with stronger year-on-year growth in PDI during the COVID-19 pandemic (Table 6).

Table 6: Nominal Growth in CoE, PDI and PCE, Q1 2019 – Q4 2020

Per Cent

	Q1 2019	Q2 2019	Q3 2019	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
CoE	3.7	4.1	4.7	2.9	2.0	0.0	-2.6	-1.0
PDI	4.9	4.9	5.1	2.8	1.2	5.7	-0.9	-0.4
PCE	6.3	3.7	4.2	1.7	-2.8	-30.1	-14.4	-12.7

(i) PCE declined sharply amid COVID-19

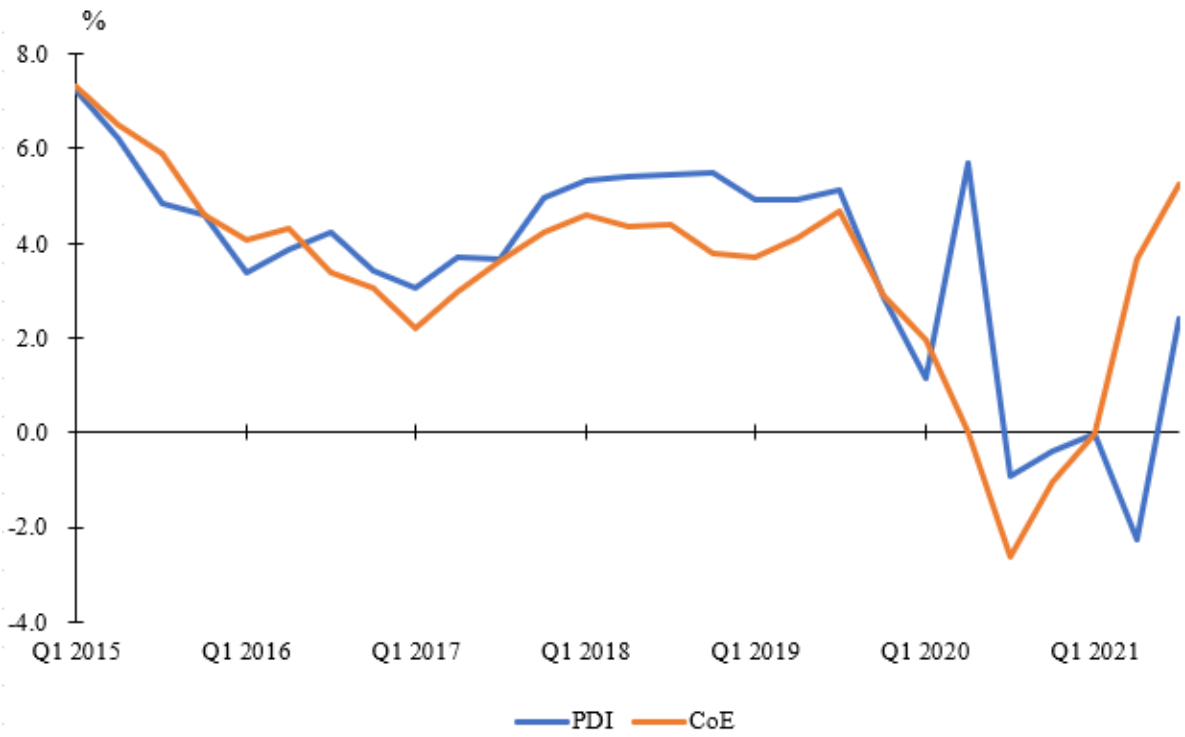
16. In Q2 2020, households' opportunities to spend were constrained by the movement restrictions implemented as part of circuit breaker measures[9]. As a result, PCE declined by 30 per cent in Q2 2020, its worst ever contraction on record. Expenditure on clothes & footwear, transportation, food & accommodation services and recreation & culture were the hardest hit, falling by more than 50 per cent, when compared with a year ago. With all non-essential activities suspended during the circuit breaker period, expenditure on health services, education, communication and miscellaneous goods & services also contracted in Q2 2020.

(ii) PDI supported by strong fiscal stimulus package

17. By contrast, PDI grew by 5.7 per cent year-on-year in Q2 2020 despite a flat growth in CoE (Chart 4). Notably, growth in CoE during the quarter was the lowest in the 16 years prior to COVID-19 and came on the back of a decline in employment. Notably, the impact on CoE could have been much more severe if the government had not provided substantial wage subsidies (i.e., Jobs Support Scheme, Enhanced Wage Credit Scheme) to help employers retain resident (i.e., Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents) employees during this period of economic uncertainty.

[9] Singapore's circuit breaker (from 7 April 2020 to 1 June 2020) was an elevated set of safe distancing measures implemented by the Government of Singapore to reduce movements and interactions in order to stem the spread of the COVID-19 virus and save lives.

Chart 4: Nominal Growth in PDI and CoE, Q1 2015 – Q3 2021



Note: Despite the positive growth in CoE, PDI contracted in Q2 2021 due to the smaller amount of COVID-19 related government transfers received by households in Q2 2021 as compared to Q2 2020.

18. It is noteworthy that the transfers directly received by households from the government had also significantly increased in Q2 2020. For example, the government disbursed the Care and Support cash payments to all eligible Singaporeans in June 2020. The Self-Employed Persons Income Relief Scheme was also set up to support the self-employed, with the first tranche of payment provided in May 2020.

19. In other words, the strong growth in PDI in Q2 2020 was largely supported by the significant amount of government transfers announced in the various budgets of 2020, which was provided to help households tide through the crisis, particularly for the vulnerable households.

V. Conclusion

20. The successful development of quarterly PDI and PS further strengthens the coverage and availability of Singapore's macroeconomic statistics. In so doing, vulnerabilities relating to the personal sector can be more closely monitored, thereby facilitating effective economic surveillance of the sector. These key macroeconomic indicators also facilitate analysis on the consumption and saving behaviour of the personal sector.

Singapore Department of Statistics
January 2022

Appendix

Personal Saving (PS), Personal Disposable Income (PDI) and Personal Saving Rate (PSR), Q1 2011 – Q3 2021

	Q1 2011	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Q2 2012	Q3 2012	Q4 2012
PS ($ billion)	11.1	7.9	7.2	9.8	12.0	8.2	9.4	12.6
PDI ($ billion)	42.1	40.0	38.9	43.7	45.8	42.2	43.4	48.4
PSR (%)	26.4	19.9	18.5	22.5	26.3	19.4	21.6	26.0

	Q1 2013	Q2 2013	Q3 2013	Q4 2013	Q1 2014	Q2 2014	Q3 2014	Q4 2014
PS ($ billion)	14.3	8.9	10.7	14.5	16.0	10.5	13.1	15.8
PDI ($ billion)	49.8	44.9	46.1	51.4	52.9	47.9	49.8	54.8
PSR (%)	28.7	19.8	23.3	28.2	30.3	21.8	26.3	28.9

	Q1 2015	Q2 2015	Q3 2015	Q4 2015	Q1 2016	Q2 2016	Q3 2016	Q4 2016
PS ($ billion)	17.8	11.6	14.0	16.4	18.1	13.1	15.4	17.9
PDI ($ billion)	56.8	50.9	52.2	57.3	58.7	52.9	54.4	59.2
PSR (%)	31.4	22.8	26.8	28.6	30.9	24.8	28.3	30.1

	Q1 2017	Q2 2017	Q3 2017	Q4 2017	Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018	Q4 2018
PS ($ billion)	19.7	13.7	15.5	18.1	20.9	14.3	16.5	19.8
PDI ($ billion)	60.5	54.9	56.4	62.2	63.7	57.8	59.5	65.6
PSR (%)	32.6	25.0	27.5	29.1	32.8	24.7	27.7	30.2

	Q1 2019	Q2 2019	Q3 2019	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
PS ($ billion)	21.3	15.5	17.7	20.8	23.3	32.6	23.6	26.5
PDI ($ billion)	66.8	60.7	62.5	67.4	67.6	64.1	61.9	67.2
PSR (%)	31.9	25.6	28.3	30.9	34.6	50.8	38.1	39.4

	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Q3 2021
PS ($ billion)	26.4	22.8	23.0
PDI ($ billion)	67.6	62.7	63.4
PSR (%)	39.0	36.4	36.3

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Fax to us at **(65) 6332-7689**


Call us at **1800-3238118* (local callers)**

(65) 6332-7738 (overseas callers)

* Calls from mobile telephone lines to 1800 local toll free number may be subject to mobile airtime charges as imposed by the relevant mobile service provider.