

## Are the Old-Age Support Ratio Trends Similar Across Different Working-Age Groups?

The old-age support ratio (OASR) is the ratio of persons in the working-age group to those who are older. It is one of the frequently used indicators for monitoring changes in the age structure of a population.

The working-age group of 15-64 years is conventionally used in the computation of OASR. Since the early 2010s, Singapore has also been publishing the OASR based on the working-age group of 20-64 years, in view of the later entry of youths into the workforce due to their pursuit of tertiary education.<sup>1</sup> Arguably, one may suggest an even later entry age for the youths and a later retirement age for the elderly in Singapore.

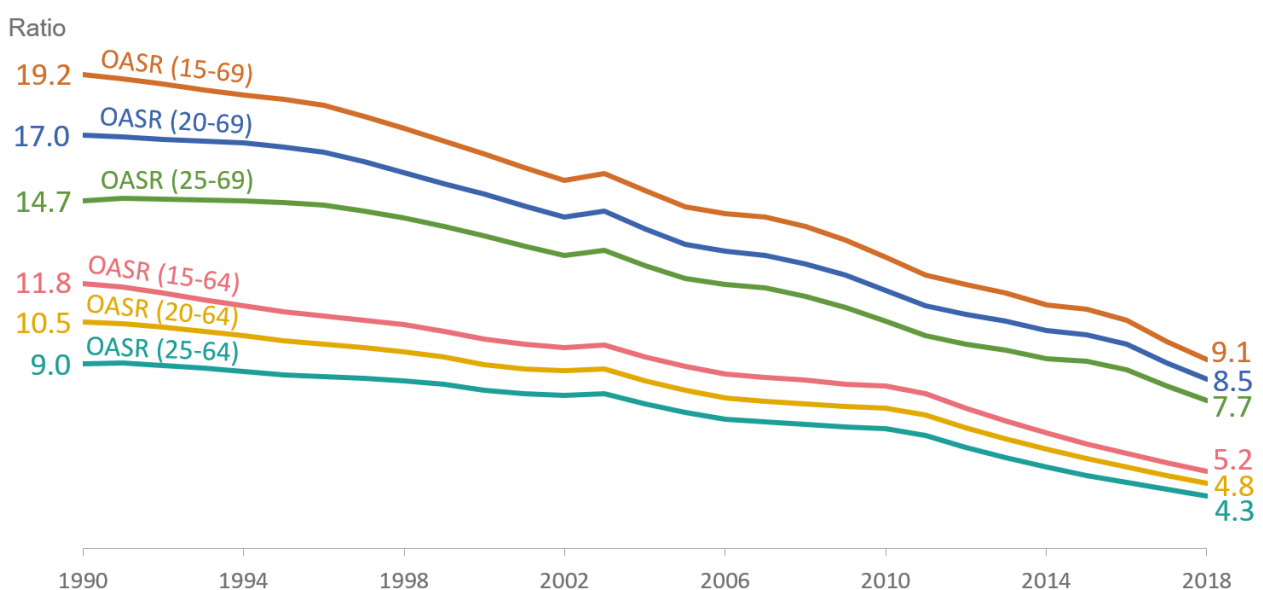
Singapore’s labour force participation rate of those aged 20-24 years has been falling over the years. Conversely, an increasing proportion of those aged 65 years and over continues to work beyond the current minimum retirement age of 62 years.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, to look at the trends in the OASRs for varying working-age cut-offs using the standard 5-year age groups intervals, the following six working-age groups are considered:

- Conventional group of 15-64 years
- Group of 20-64 years generally used in Singapore
- Group of 25-64 for later entry into the workforce
- For the same starting ages of 15, 20 and 25 years, with a later cut-off age at 69 years to take into account those who work beyond 64 years old

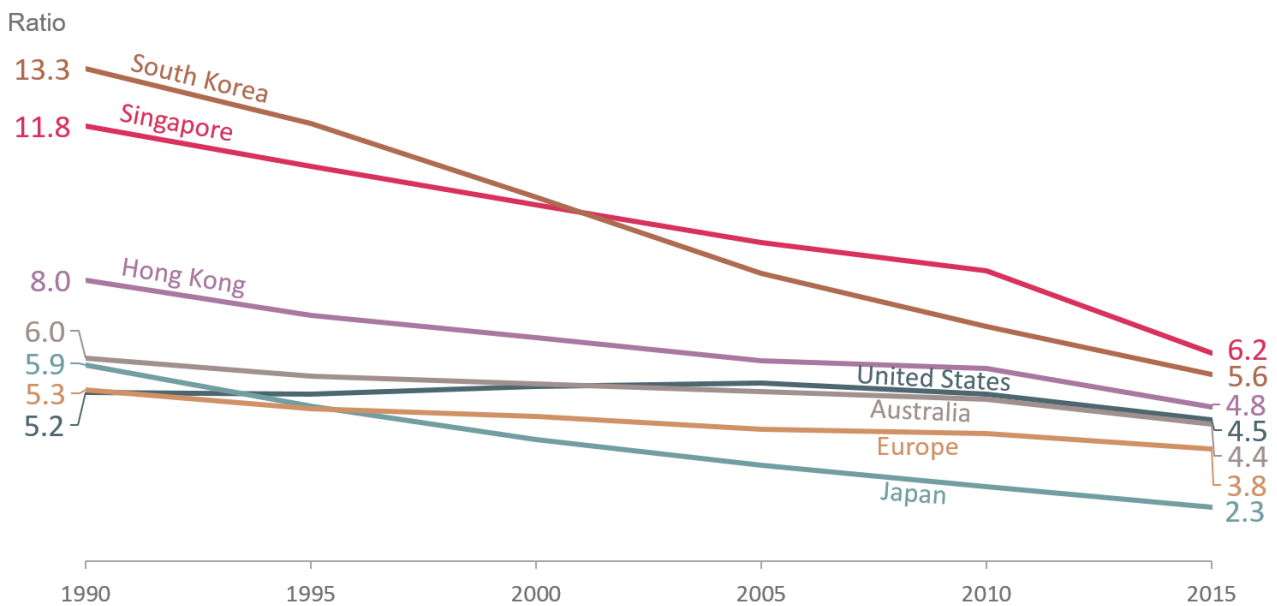
OASRs from 1990 to 2018 based on the six working-age cut-offs listed above for the Singapore resident population (i.e. Singapore citizens and permanent residents) are plotted in Chart 1, which shows that **the OASR has been trending downwards over the years for the different working-age cut-offs.** This trend is likely due to factors such as rising life expectancies and falling birth rates.

CHART 1 OLD-AGE SUPPORT RATIO (OASR) BASED ON VARIOUS WORKING-AGE GROUPS, 1990—2018



1 More historical data on Singapore’s OASR indicators as well as resident population by age group, ethnic group and sex, are available on the [SingStat Website](#).  
 2 Based on resident population, with reference from the Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, Ministry of Manpower.

CHART 2 INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON OF OLD-AGE SUPPORT RATIO (OASR) BASED ON WORKING-AGE GROUP 15-64 YEARS, 1990–2015



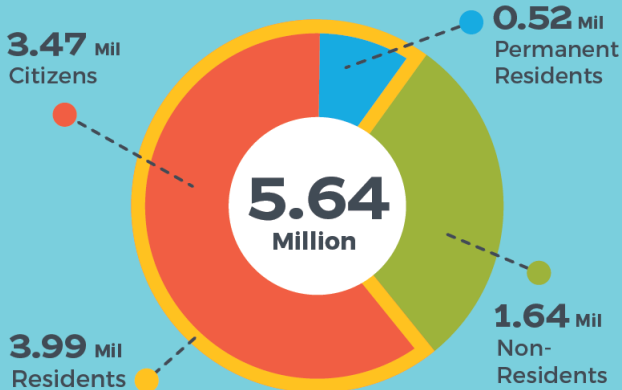
The declining OASR in Singapore between 1990 and 2015 mirrors the falling trend in other economies<sup>3</sup> such as South Korea, Hong Kong and Japan (Chart 2).

Statistical indicators such as the OASR allow researchers, policymakers and the public to monitor

how the age structure of the population changes over time.

In view of the declining OASR, economies could take steps to enable their older residents to lead active lives, or to continue working if they wish to.

Singapore's Total Population as at end-June 2018:



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<sup>3</sup> Data source for the indicator "Potential Support Ratio (Age 15-64 / Age 65+) De Facto population as of 1 July of the year indicated" for other economies: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). [World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, DVD Edition](#).