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Household survey also shows S'poreans are older, better-educated and work longer hours

By SIM CHI YIN

THE English language is making bigger inroads into Singapore homes, with a bigger proportion of families speaking it at home compared to five years ago.

Among Chinese families, the proportion speaking English at home grew from 24 per cent in 2000 to 29 per cent last year.

Among Malays, it nearly doubled, from 7.9 per cent to 13 per cent. In Indian families, the figure was up from 36 per cent to 39 per cent.

The snapshot comes from the latest General Household Survey, and comes at a time when concern has been expressed about standards of spoken and written English among students.

The once-a-decade survey done last year was released by the Singapore Department of Statistics last night. The 2005 survey's results were compared with findings of the 2000 census.

These showed that Singaporeans as a whole are older, better-

educated, and work longer hours, than five years ago.

For example, elderly residents aged 65 or older made up 8.4 per cent of the resident population of about 3.5 million citizens and permanent residents last year. This was up from 7.3 per cent in 2000.

The ratio of older people to younger people has gone up as a result.

Last year, there were 12 residents aged 65 or older for every 100 people aged 15 to 64. In 2000, it was 10 per 100.

But the population has also become better-educated, with a hike in the number of polytechnic and university graduates

across all major ethnic groups.

Last year, graduates made up 25 per cent of the resident population, up from 18 per cent in 2000.

The Chinese community saw a jump in number of graduates: from 20 to 27 per cent in the five year period.

Likewise, the percentage of Malay graduates improved from 4.9 per cent to 8.6 per cent. Among Indians, it grew from 20 to 31 per cent.

They not only studied harder — Singapore residents were also found to be working longer hours.

The average number of working hours per week climbed from 47.9 in 2000 to 48.4 last year.

Those who clocked 60 or more hours a week grew from 17 to 19 per cent in the same period.

Men worked harder than women, with 24 per cent of men clocking 60 or more hours last year and just 12 per cent of women doing so.

Sales and service industry workers were often the most hard-working, with 31 per cent of them clocking 60 hours or more per week last year.

For this study, some 90,000 selected households — about 10 per cent of local households — were polled over five months last year.

Other key findings concerned more people delaying marriage

and starting families.

More men (37 per cent) aged 30 to 34 were single last year, compared with 33 per cent in 2000.

The jump was similar for women in the same age group: 26 per cent remained single, up from 22 per cent.

More women who have been married are remaining childless: Among those aged 30 to 39, 18 per cent had no children, compared with 14 per cent in 2000.

More women are entering the workforce compared to five years ago, especially married women re-entering the job market.

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