



SEACO Community Briefs

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SEACO – South East Asia Community Observatory – is a community based research platform established by an international partnership of universities. located in the Segamat district of Johor, specifically in the mukim of Bekok, Chaah, Gemereh, Jabi, and Sungai Segamat. This first community briefing paper presents *preliminary* results from the household census.

Background

SEACO commenced data collection in March 2012. The household census was completed in October in the mukim of Bekok, Chaah, and Gemereh. It will be completed in Jabi and Sungai Segamat in January 2013.

In the census, we aim to count the whole population and collect basic household information about residents' age, sex, health, education, and work. Next year we will commence more detailed health screening.

Method

In the census, only household heads, or a person who could speak on behalf of the household was interviewed. That person answered questions on behalf of all the residents of the household.

Household Participation

By the end of October, Data Collectors had visited 8,295 houses. Approximately 10% of the visited houses were vacant. Of the remaining houses, more than 85% agreed to join SEACO.

Population

By the end of October, 21,736 people had joined SEACO (Fig 1).

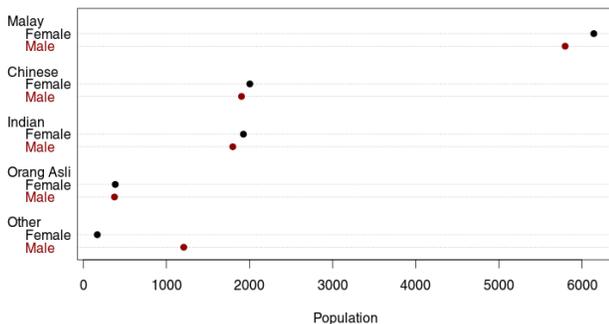


Figure 1
Ethnicity and Sex breakdown of the numbers of people who have joined SEACO

For most groups the numbers of males and females who joined SEACO were very similar. The exception was the *Other* group, which mainly represents Indonesian plantation workers. This explains the large discrepancy in the numbers of males and females in the *Other* group.

The age and sex profile (population pyramid) of the population enumerated by SEACO is shown in Fig 2.

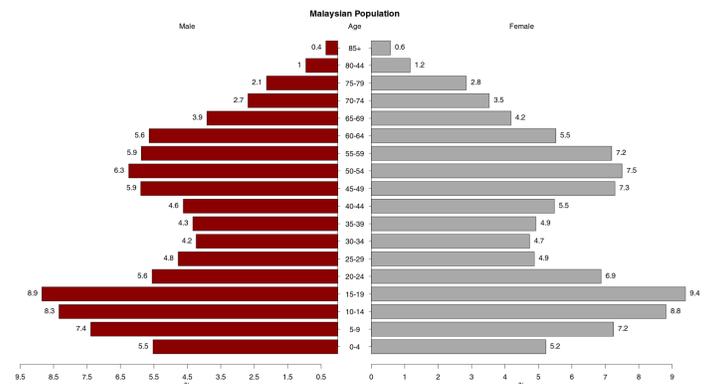


Figure 2
Age and Sex population pyramid for SEACO.
(This only shows the data for Malaysian Citizens)

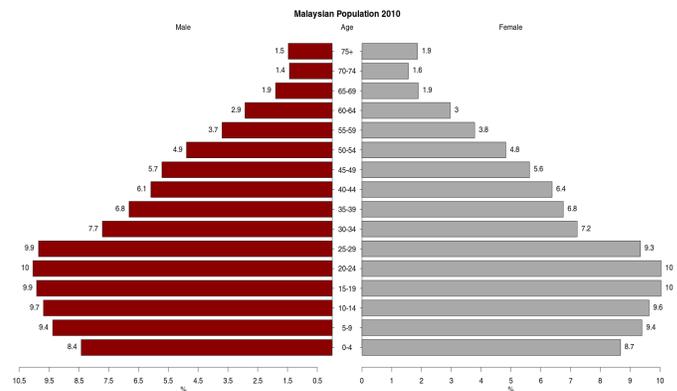


Figure 3
Age and Sex population pyramid for Malaysia.

The population pyramid for Segamat is very different from the population pyramid for the whole of Malaysia (Fig 3.)

It is clear, comparing the two population pyramids that Segamat seems to have a “bite” out of the distributions in the 20-45 year age groups. This is potentially important because of what it might say for the provision of services for the whole of Malaysia – with a clear need for infant and child related services – and services for Segamat which may require greater attention to an ageing population. It also raises important questions about what is causing the “bite” out of the distribution. Why are people leaving, and who is left behind?

Chronic Health Condition

Data Collectors asked about the occurrence of chronic health conditions such heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, etc. The majority (70%) of people had no reported chronic health conditions (Fig 4.).

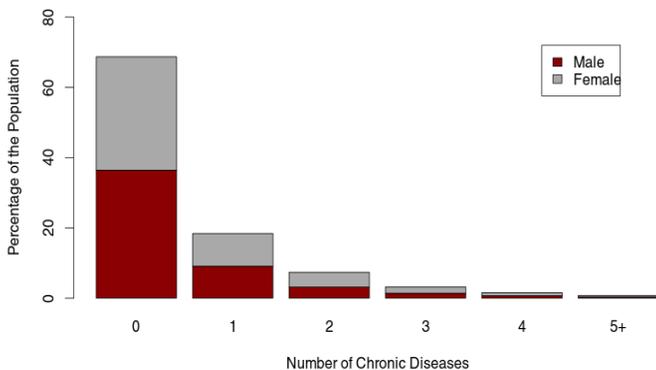


Figure 4

Number of chronic health conditions broken down by sex

Conversely, it was reported that about 30% of people had at least one health condition. Fifty percent (50%) of people over the age of 33 had at least one health condition. In people over the age of 65, about 40% have *two or more* chronic health conditions.

These numbers are well below what might be expected given the national rates of diabetes and hypertension reported in the recent Ministry of Health, *National Health and Morbidity Survey, 2010*. This discrepancy may be because the people of Segamat are particularly healthy, or the person interviewed was unaware of (or didn't want to report) on health conditions of a household member. A third, and more important alternative is that people are unaware of their own health conditions. This is particularly important for conditions such as diabetes,

which can cause health problems while it remains undiagnosed.

Screening for chronic diseases will be a focus of SEACO's household survey in 2013.

Work

The work status of household members was also collected. Focusing on Malaysian citizens in Segamat, aged 18-60 we analysed work status (Fig 5.).

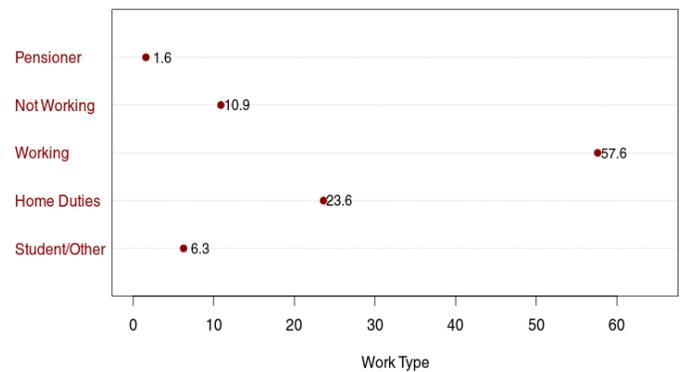


Figure 5
Work Status

The majority (58%) of people were in work. This included full-time, part-time, and casual work, as well as people who were self employed. About one quarter of people 18-60 were engaged in *Home Duties* – the vast majority were housewives. Around 2% were pensioners, 6% were students, and 11% were not working.

Conclusion

These results are preliminary, and provide a snapshot of the work that SEACO is doing to look at community health and well being.

Issues of an “hour-glass” shaped population pyramid raises important questions that will be a focus of future research in SEACO, as does the questions raised about chronic health conditions.

In future rounds we also hope to look at education and socio-economic status and its relationship to health and well being; and we are starting a “SEACO Babies” cohort to follow maternal and infant health and development.

For further information, comments, or inquiries, on SEACO's work in Segamat, please email Ms. Choi Pek Koon (choi.pek.koon@monash.edu).

SEACO is an international research partnership managed by Monash University Sunway Campus Sdn Bhd (Co.No.458601-U).