

**Recent fertility trends, policy responses and fertility prospects in low fertility countries of East and Southeast Asia**

Gavin W. Jones

# The Europe-East Asia race to the bottom

- Ultra-low fertility
  - 1990s – Southern and Eastern Europe
  - 2000-2005 – opposite directions – TFR increases in Europe, sharp declines in East Asia
  - Post-2005 – increases in both regions, but modest in East Asia
- The outcome
  - Currently, East Asia winning the ultra-low fertility stakes

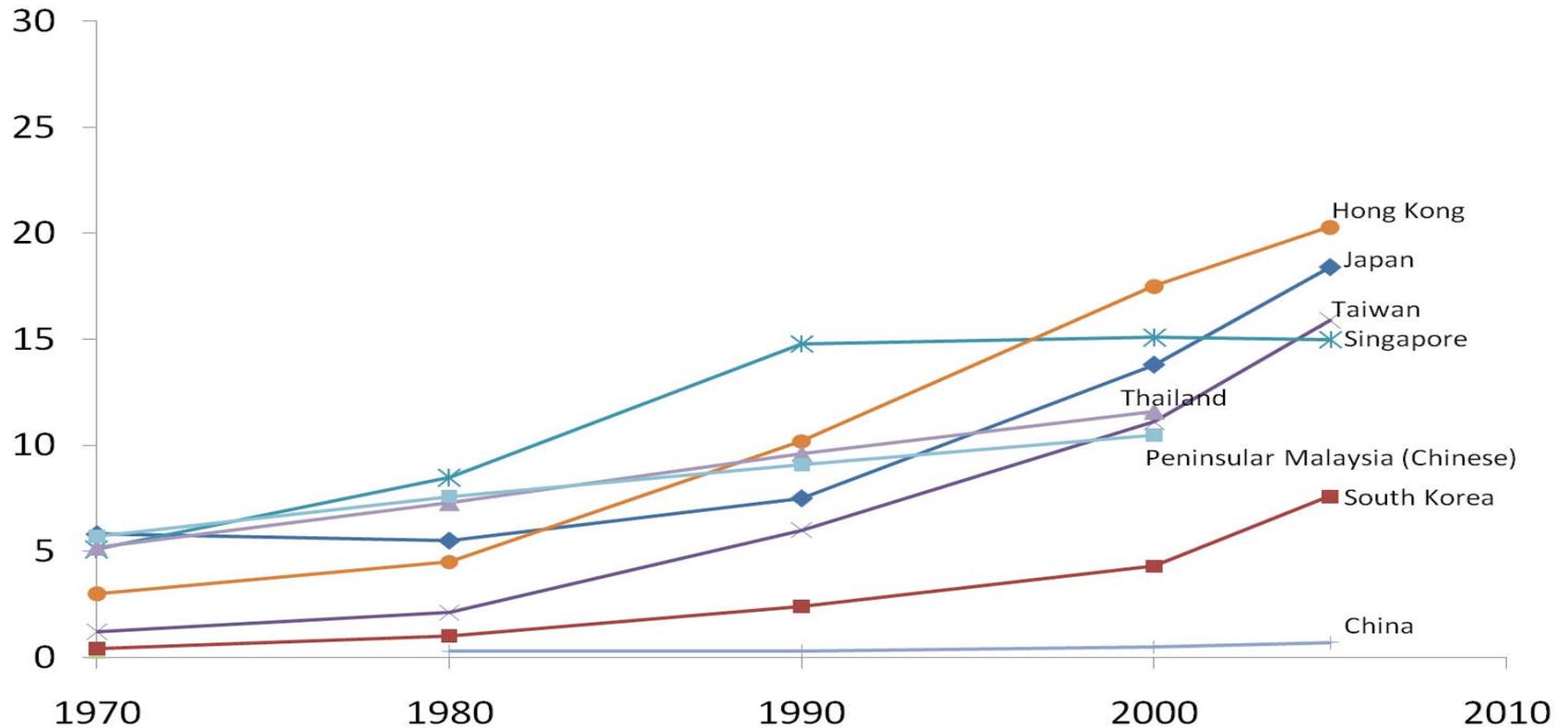
# Trends in total fertility rates, selected East Asian countries

<b>Year</b>	<b>Japan</b>	<b>South Korea</b>	<b>Taiwan</b>	<b>Singapore</b>	<b>Hong Kong SAR</b>
<b>1995</b>	<b>1.42</b>	<b>1.64</b>	<b>1.78</b>	<b>1.67</b>	<b>n.a.</b>
<b>1996</b>	<b>1.43</b>	<b>1.70</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>1.66</b>	<b>1.19</b>
<b>1997</b>	<b>1.39</b>	<b>1.54</b>	<b>1.77</b>	<b>1.61</b>	<b>1.12</b>
<b>1998</b>	<b>1.38</b>	<b>1.47</b>	<b>1.47</b>	<b>1.47</b>	<b>1.02</b>
<b>1999</b>	<b>1.34</b>	<b>1.42</b>	<b>1.56</b>	<b>1.47</b>	<b>0.98</b>
<b>2000</b>	<b>1.36</b>	<b>1.47</b>	<b>1.68</b>	<b>1.60</b>	<b>1.04</b>
<b>2001</b>	<b>1.33</b>	<b>1.30</b>	<b>1.40</b>	<b>1.41</b>	<b>0.93</b>
<b>2002</b>	<b>1.32</b>	<b>1.17</b>	<b>1.34</b>	<b>1.37</b>	<b>0.94</b>
<b>2003</b>	<b>1.29</b>	<b>1.17</b>	<b>1.24</b>	<b>1.25</b>	<b>0.90</b>
<b>2004</b>	<b>1.29</b>	<b>1.16</b>	<b>1.18</b>	<b>1.24</b>	<b>0.93</b>
<b>2005</b>	<b>1.25</b>	<b>1.08</b>	<b>1.12</b>	<b>1.25</b>	<b>0.97</b>
<b>2006</b>	<b>1.32</b>	<b>1.13</b>	<b>1.12</b>	<b>1.26</b>	<b>0.98</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>1.34</b>	<b>1.26</b>	<b>1.12</b>	<b>1.29</b>	<b>1.02</b>
<b>2008</b>	<b>1.37</b>	<b>1.19</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.28</b>	<b>1.06</b>

# TFRs, Metropolitan cities and whole country

	<b>Year</b>	<b>TFR of metropolis</b>	<b>TFR of whole country</b>
<b>Bangkok</b>	<b>1984-87</b>	<b>1.60</b>	<b>2.23</b>
	<b>1991</b>	<b>1.41</b>	<b>2.41</b>
	<b>2000</b>	<b>1.16</b>	<b>1.81</b>
<b>Ho Chi Minh City</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>1.40</b>	<b>2.50</b>
<b>Taipei</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1.37</b>	<b>1.72</b>
	<b>1996</b>	<b>1.45</b>	<b>1.77</b>
	<b>2001</b>	<b>1.21</b>	<b>1.40</b>
	<b>2008</b>	<b>0.97</b>	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Shanghai</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1.29</b>	<b>2.00</b>
	<b>2000</b>	<b>0.70</b>	<b>1.60</b>
<b>Tokyo</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>1.09</b>	<b>1.37</b>
<b>Seoul and Busan</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>1.00 (0.98)</b>	<b>1.19</b>

# Trends in proportion single among women aged 35-39, 1970-2005



# Policy responses

- **Japan**

- Ratcheting up pro-natalist policies since 1990
- Two main approaches:
  - Direct subsidies for childbearing and childraising
  - Changing institutional framework to facilitate marriage and child-raising
- New Angel Plan 1999
  - Expansion of subsidized day care centres
  - Age range for child allowance widened (and in 2006, widened again, and monthly benefit raised from 5000 to 10,000 yen)
  - Proportion of salary received by employee on childcare leave increased (again, to 50% in late 2007)

# Policy responses

- **Korea**

- **Serious policy initiatives were slow to come**
- **2006 First Basic Plan for Low Fertility and Aged Society:**
  - Widening of subsidies of costs of childrearing and education
  - Taxes lowered for households with young dependant children or large families
  - Maternity and childcare leave expanded
  - Starting in 2008, male partners will receive three days of paid leave to help after childbirth
- **Basic aim is to create a favourable environment for childbearing and childrearing by transferring some of the burden of child-raising from family to society**
- **Seoul municipality heavily involved in pronatalist measures**

# Policy responses

- **Taiwan**
- Nothing serious until 2006 (Mega Warmth Social Welfare Program)
- Further measures in 2008 (White Book of Population Policy)
  - Maternity leave benefits (8 weeks paid, covered by labour insurance)
  - Parental leave benefits
  - Childcare subsidy system for early childhood education and care
  - Parental leave of up to 6 months on half pay now available to mothers

# Singapore's 2004 policy initiatives

- ***New schemes***

- Medisave maternity package
- Statutory 2-day paid childcare leave (<7 years of age)
- Lower maid levy (<12 years of age)
- Introduction of five-day working week in civil service
- Tax relief for working mothers
- Equal medical benefits for males and females
- Grandparent childcare relief

- ***Extension of existing schemes***

- Extending paid maternity leave from 8 to 12 weeks (govt. foots bill for extra month)
- Further modification of provisions for getting an HDB apartment
- Extension of baby bonus to first and fourth children
- Increase subsidy for childcare
- Streamlined working mother's child-relief scheme
- More liberal parenthood tax rebate

# Recent policy changes in Singapore

## **2008:**

- Increased child tax relief
- Increased cash baby bonus for first and second children
- Paid maternity leave increased from 12 to 16 weeks
- Unpaid childcare leave introduced
- Paid childcare leave extended
- Employers must give pregnant workers maternity leave benefits if they are fired without good cause in the last 6 months of pregnancy

**However, in last few years, Government giving major attention to gaining acceptance for expanded migration inflow, in recognition of unlikelihood of significant fertility increases**

# Reasons why fertility harder to raise in East Asian countries than in ultra-low fertility countries of Europe

- **Marriage-related**

- Childbearing outside of marriage not acceptable
- Therefore non-marriage (including involuntary non-marriage) a barrier to fertility
- Non-marriage rising because of
  - Issues about raising children (see below)
  - Rising female education and hypergamy factors (marriage squeeze)
  - Concern about responsibilities for ageing in-laws
  - Concern about rising divorce rates

# Reasons why fertility harder to raise in East Asian countries than in ultra-low fertility countries of Europe (cont.)

- **Related to desire for children**

- Financial costs of childrearing (Korea-Singapore US\$250,000; Japan higher; this doesn't include opportunity costs of women's interrupted career)
- Cult of the successful child – intensive child-rearing
- Women's career issues
- Family unfriendly workplaces
- Alternative satisfactions to children (dogs, holidays?)
- Unchanging male attitudes to household roles

# Policy and reality

- Paternity (for childcare) leave participation in Japan: a miniscule 1.2 per cent
- Child-care leave in Korea (3 months of maternal leave and one year of child-care leave):
  - “There is so much peer pressure not to take the whole entitled child-care vacation. Unless you are crazy, you can’t take all the vacation”
- Widening of maternity benefits and childcare leave for working mothers in Singapore:
  - Concern that employers, especially small business, will avoid appointing women in “at risk of pregnancy” groups

# Some conclusions

- Institutional and cultural context in East Asian countries not conducive to a fertility upsurge; patriarchal structures and attitudes hard to change
- Pro-natalist policies are being ratcheted up, with changes almost every year
- But one estimate – spending on family policies in Korea about one fifth that in France
- Except in Singapore, retreat from marriage continuing; tempo effects not yet in play