

# Global Family Trends and their Policy Implications

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1. The marriage challenge
2. Parenthood, stepchildren and the TEA dilemma
3. Family and social space for the senior generation

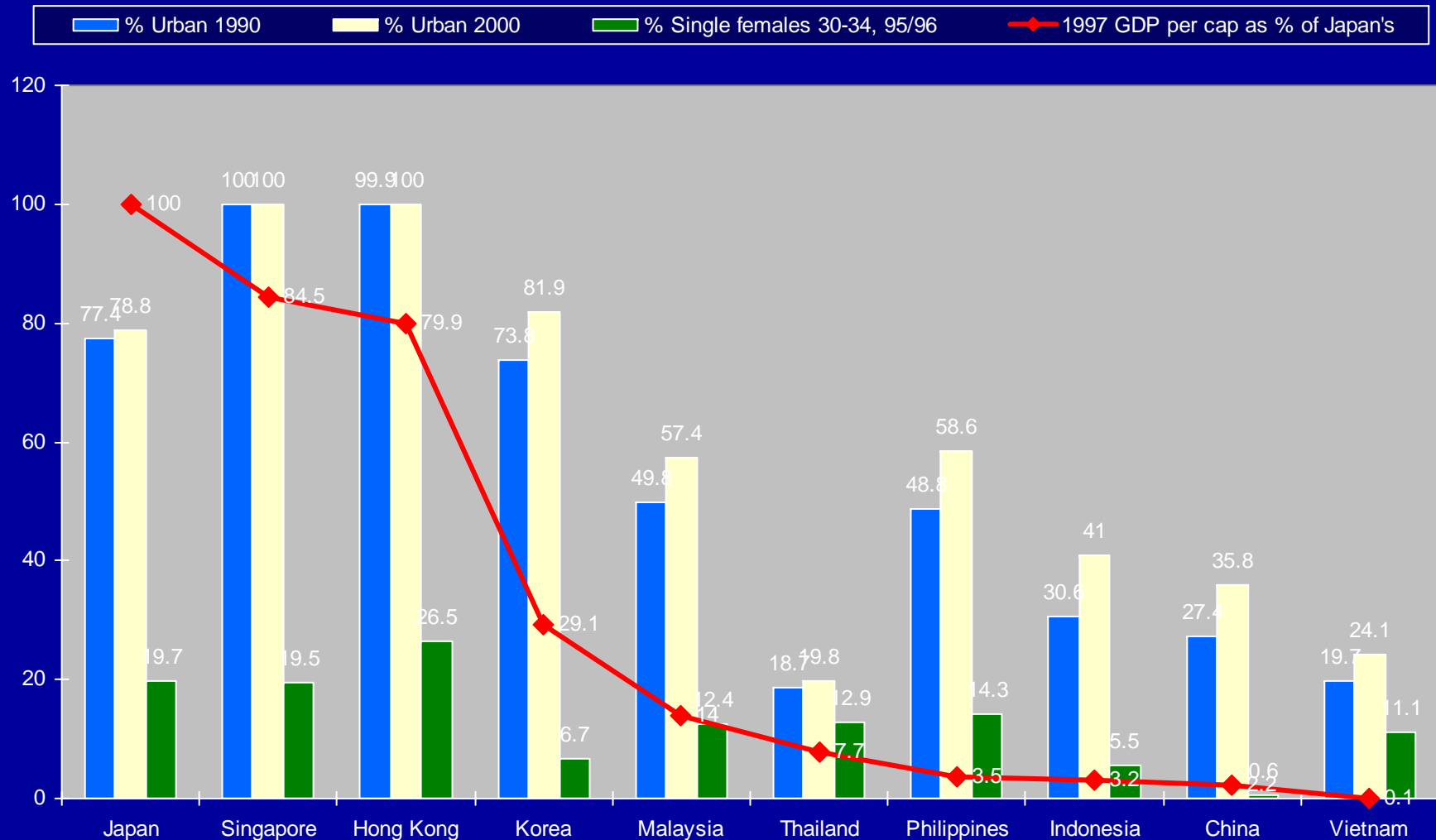
# 1. Marriage challenges

1.1 Postponement

1.2 Compatibility

1.3 Resilience

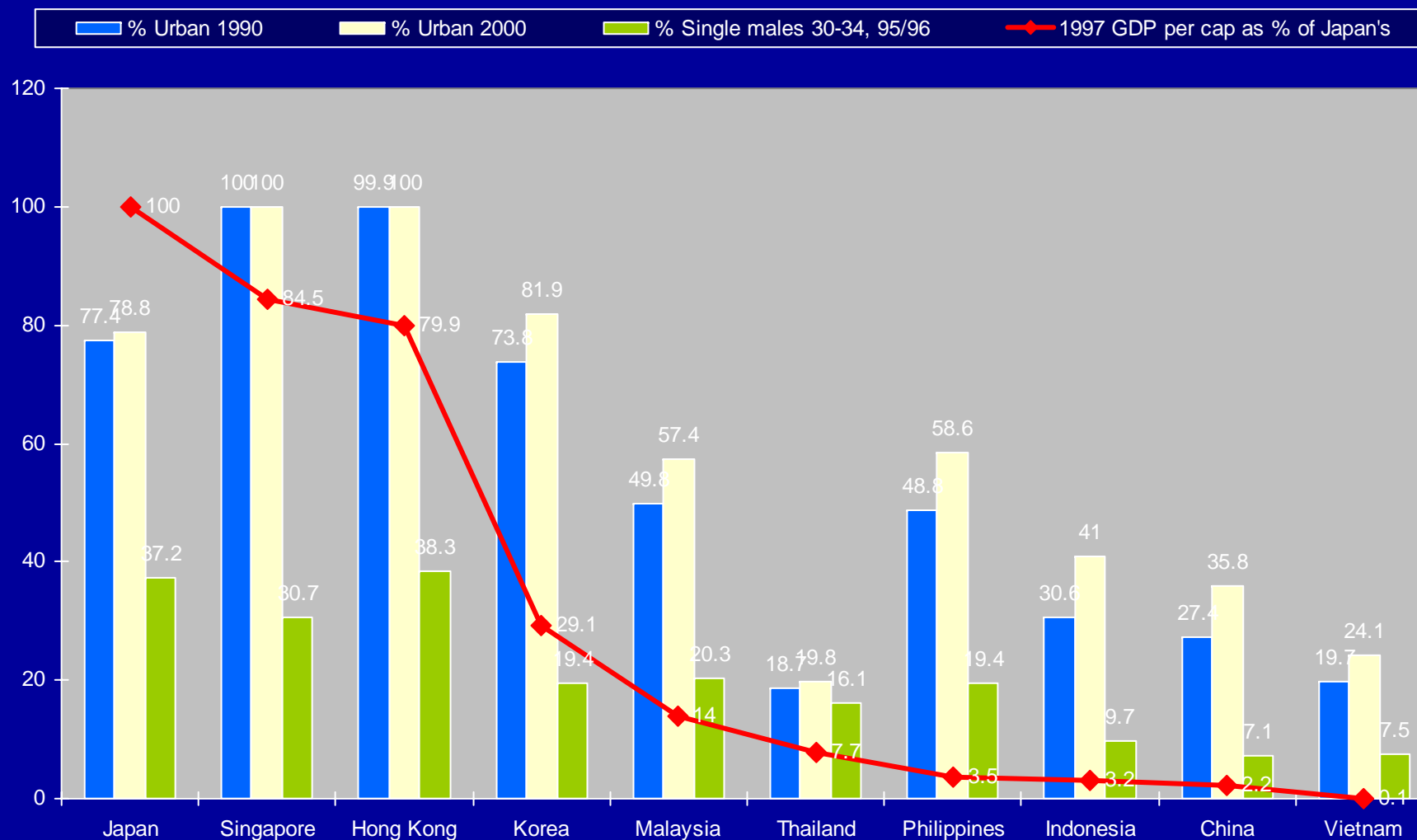
### Chart 2.3. Wealth, Urbanization, and Proportion of Single Women aged 30-34



Source: Quah (2005) *Home and Kin. Families in Asia*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, p. 38.

Per cent urban is the proportion of total population living in cities as defined by the respective countries. Single women percentages for China, Malaysia and Vietnam are for 1990/91 as their figures for 1995/96 were not available. Pearson correlation of 1997 GDP per cap and per cent single females 30-34 in 95/96 is  $r = .767$ ;  $p = .044$ . No significant association with level of urbanization

### Chart 2.4. Wealth, Urbanization, and Proportion of Single Men aged 30-34



Source: Quah (2005) *Home and Kin. Families in Asia*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, p. 39.

Per cent urban is the proportion of total population living in cities as defined by the respective countries. Single women percentages for China, Malaysia and Vietnam are for 1990/91 as their figures for 1995/96 were not available. Pearson correlation of per cent single males 30-34 in 95/96 with 1997 GDP per cap and is  $r = .938$ ;  $p = .002$ . And with level of urbanization in 2000 is  $r = .777$ ;  $p = .040$ .

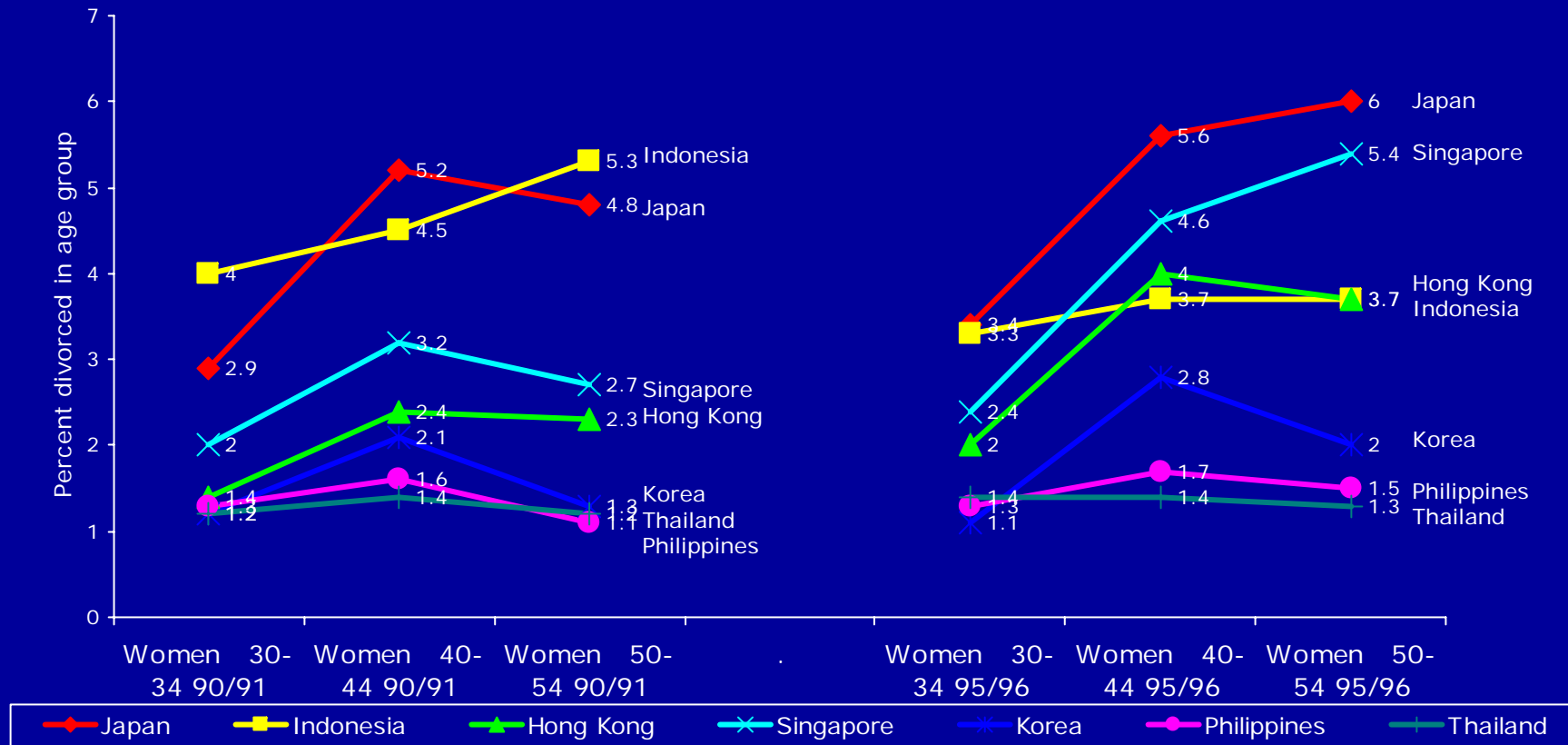
# 1.1 Postponement

- ❑ Young adults postpone marriage in pursue of other personal growth goals (education, job security, financial stability);
- ❑ This trend is intensified in countries that offer wider range of opportunities (higher levels of economic development)

# 1.2 Compatibility

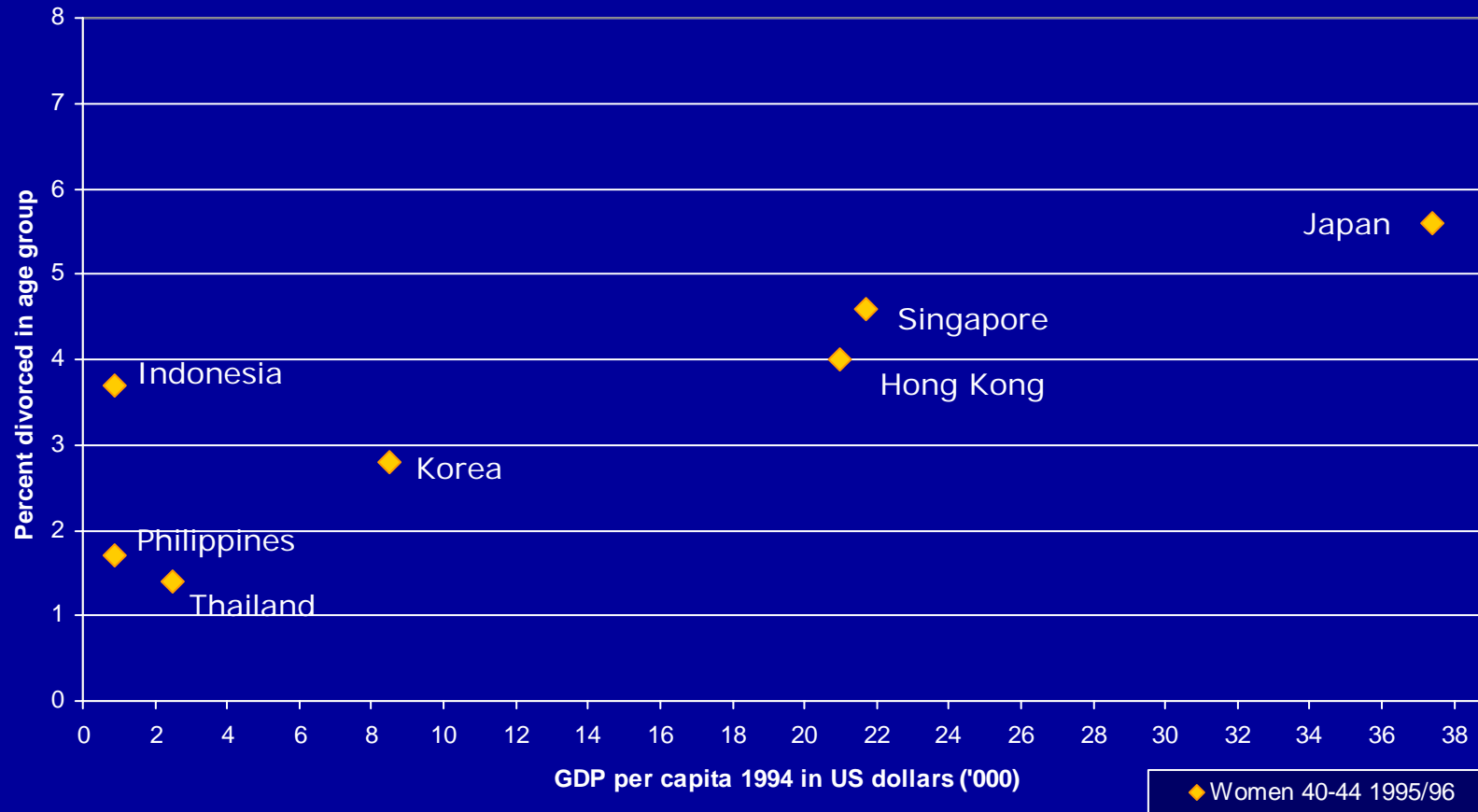
- **Problem for delay:** Stronger emphasis today on complementing personalities and romantic love (especially among women).
- **Problem for duration of marriage:** Incompatible vision of marriage
- **Problem for duration of marriage:** Reverse disparity in socio-economic background (she might be better educated; or hold a higher status job; or earn more than him).

Chart 6.2. Divorce Trends for Women aged 30-54 in 1990/1991 and 1995/1996



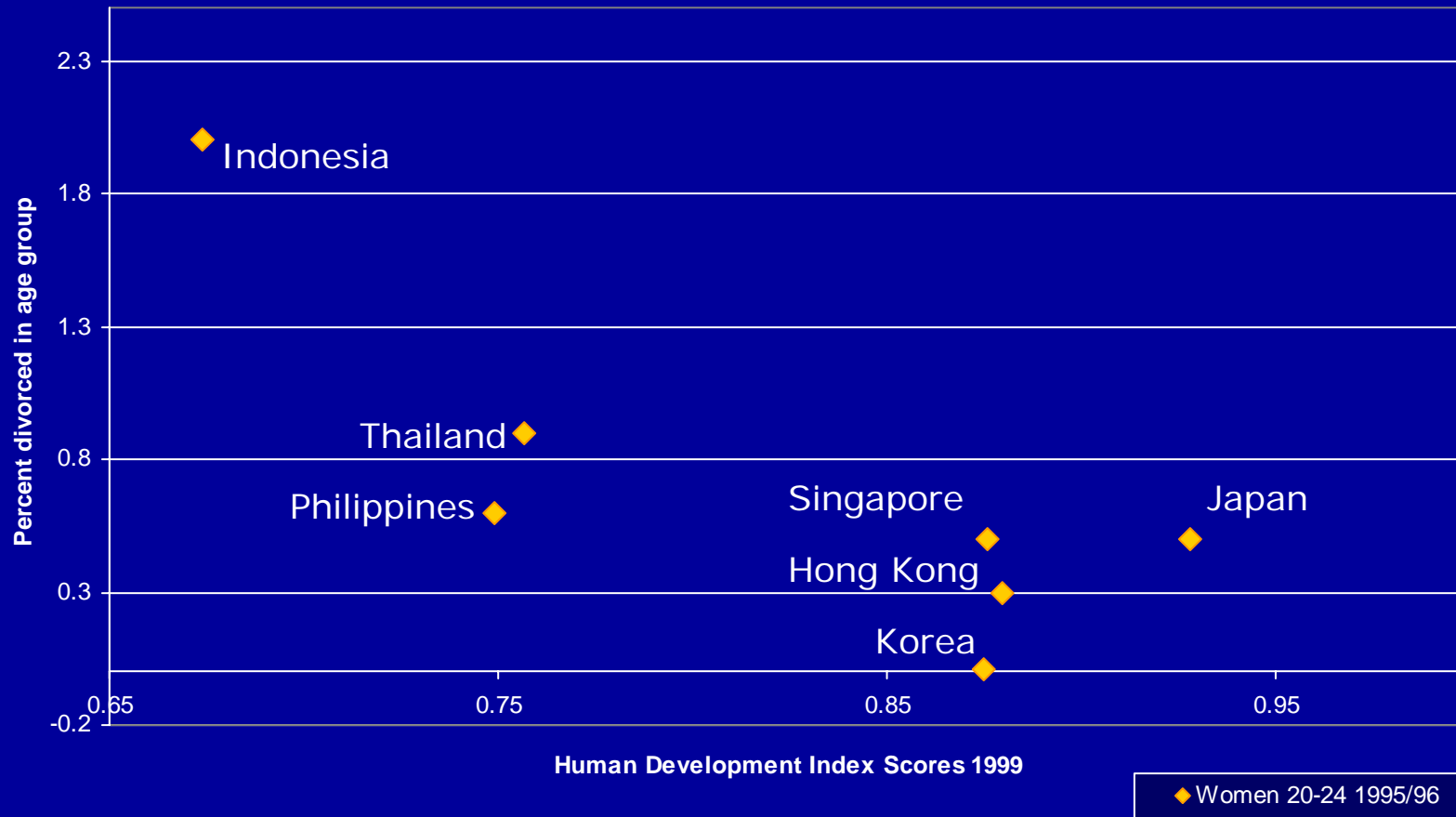
Source: Quah (2005) *Home and Kin. Families in Asia*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, p. 160.

### Chart 6.3. Divorce Trends Among Women Aged 40-44 in 1995/96 And Economic Development



Sources: World Bank (2002); and United Nations Statistics Division (2002).  
Correlation:  $r = .861$ ;  $p = .013$ .

**Chart 6.5. Divorce Trends Among Women Aged 20-24 in 1995/96 and Human Development Index**



Source: Quah (2005) *Home and Kin. Families in Asia*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, p. 162. Correlation:  $r = -.813$ ;  $p = .026$ .

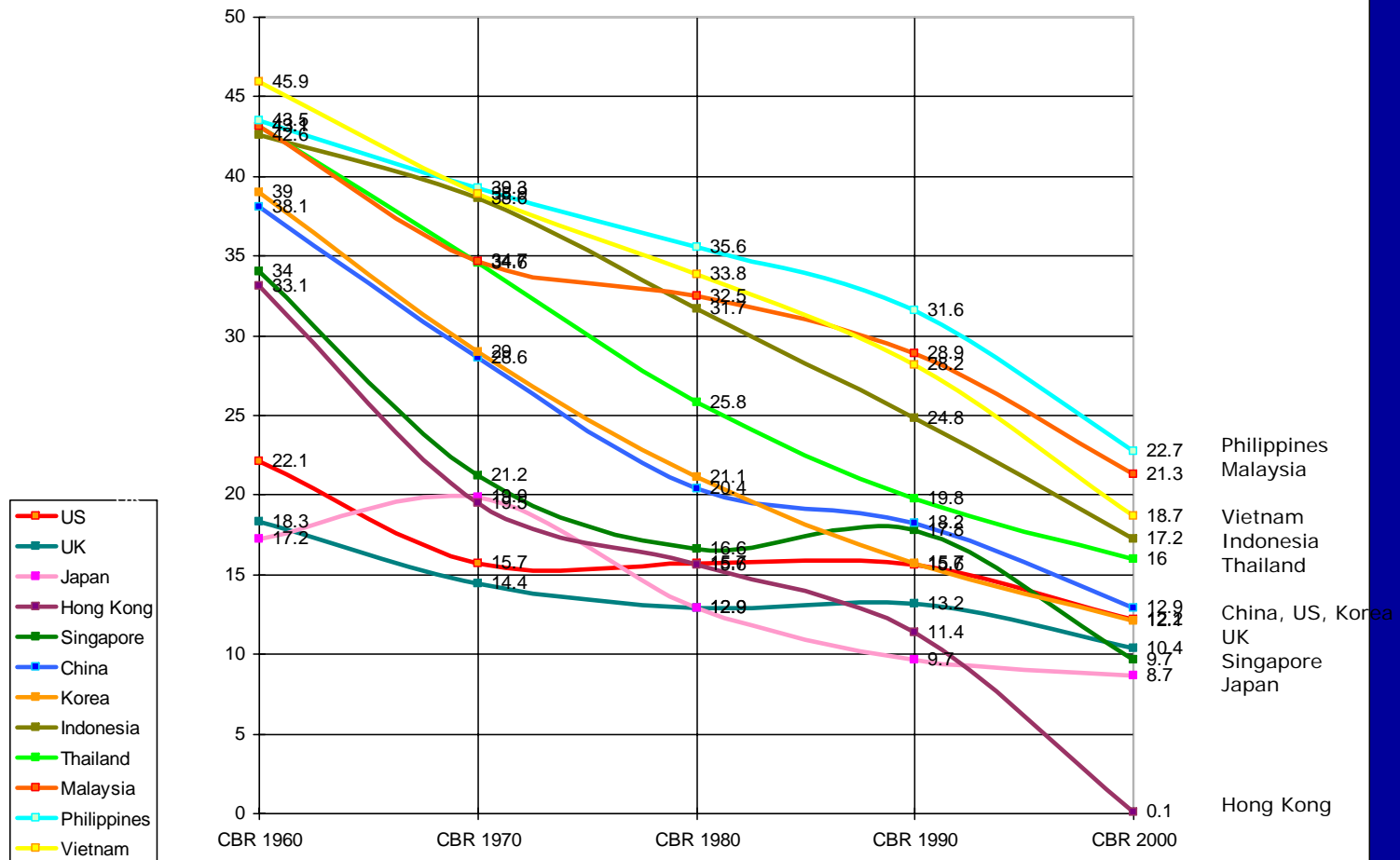
# 1.3 Resilience

- Marital breakdown as shown in divorce statistics is increasing.
- Factors weakening the resilience of marriages and leading to divorce are many and vary across cultures but major trends are:
  - Incompatible life goals
  - Disparate definition of marriage
  - Incompatible norms on husband's and wife's rights and obligations

## 2. Parenthood

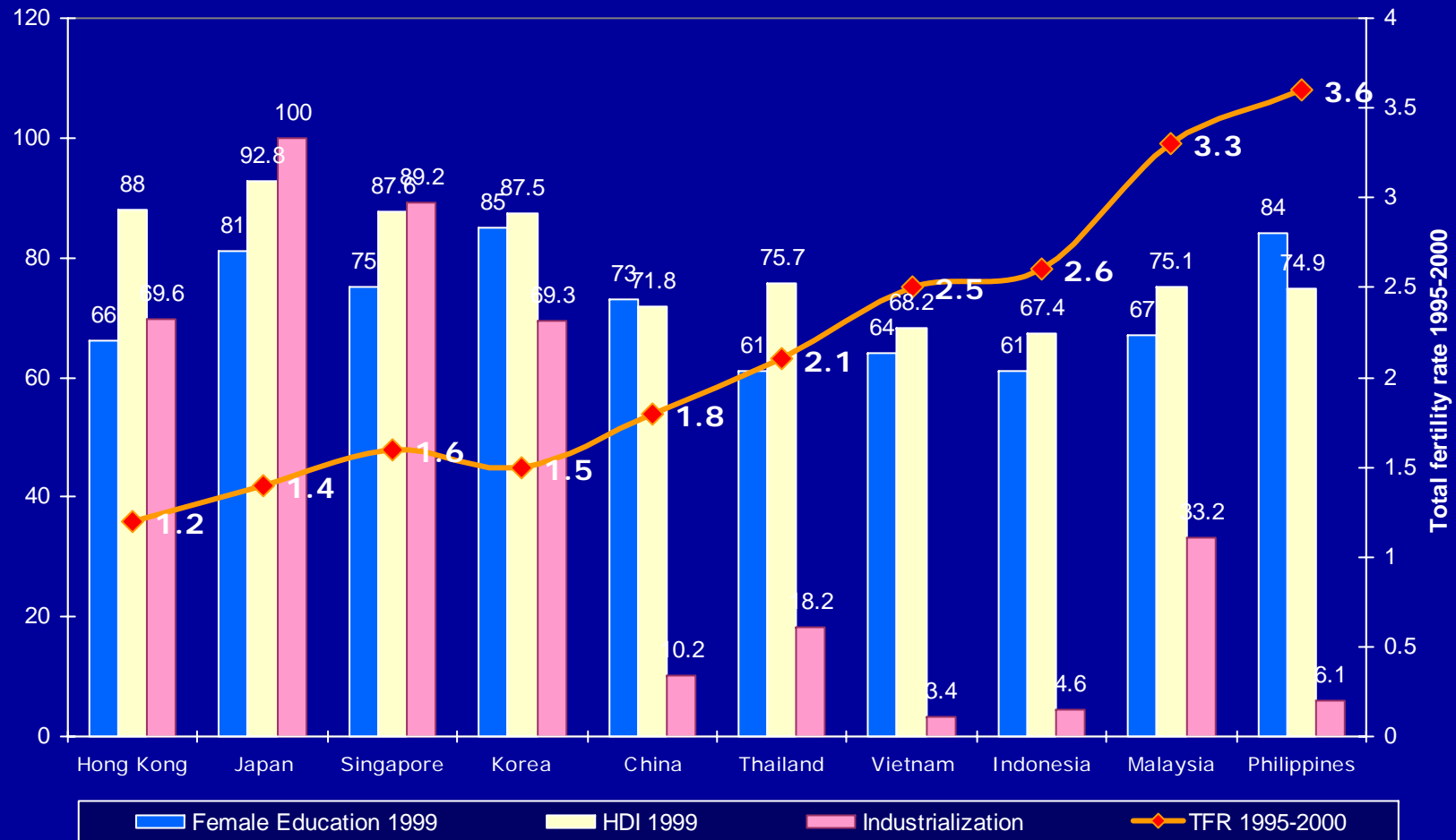
- 2.1 Postponement
- 2.2 Increasing proportion of stepchildren
- 2.3 The TEA dilemma
- 2.4 The problem of single (or lone) parents

Chart 3.2. Change Trends in Crude Birth Rates, 1960-2000



Source: Quah (2005) *Home and Kin. Families in Asia*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, p. 60.  
 Crude birth rate is the number of live births per 1,000 population occurred during the period indicated.

Chart 3.3. Link between Socio-economic Development and Fertility, 1995-2000



Source: Quah (2005) *Home and Kin: Families in Asia*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, p. 61. Definitions: The indicator of industrialization is electric power consumption (kwpc), World Bank (2002). The indicator of female education is the combined school enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education, United Nations Development Programme (2002). TFR (total fertility rate) is the average number of children a woman would bear if age-specific fertility rates remained unchanged during her lifetime, United Nations Development Programme (2002).

## 2.1 Postponement

- Parenthood postponement tends to be driven by similar reasons to those leading to delay in marriage (attaining higher education or skills, or seeking job security, or financial stability);
- But other important additional factors are:
  - Testing the marital relationship before proceeding into parenthood;
  - Evolving perception of the meaning of parenthood and of the value of children.

## 2.2 Stepchildren

- Adults in an unhappy marriage may see divorce as a solution;
- But (when divorce is not caused by domestic violence or abuse), children see divorce as the destruction of their family.
- Stepchildren face the physical absence of the non-custodial parent and often the psychological absence of the custodial parent.

## 2.3 The TEA dilemma

Working parents with dependent children need support to perform their roles as they battle the **TEA** dilemma:

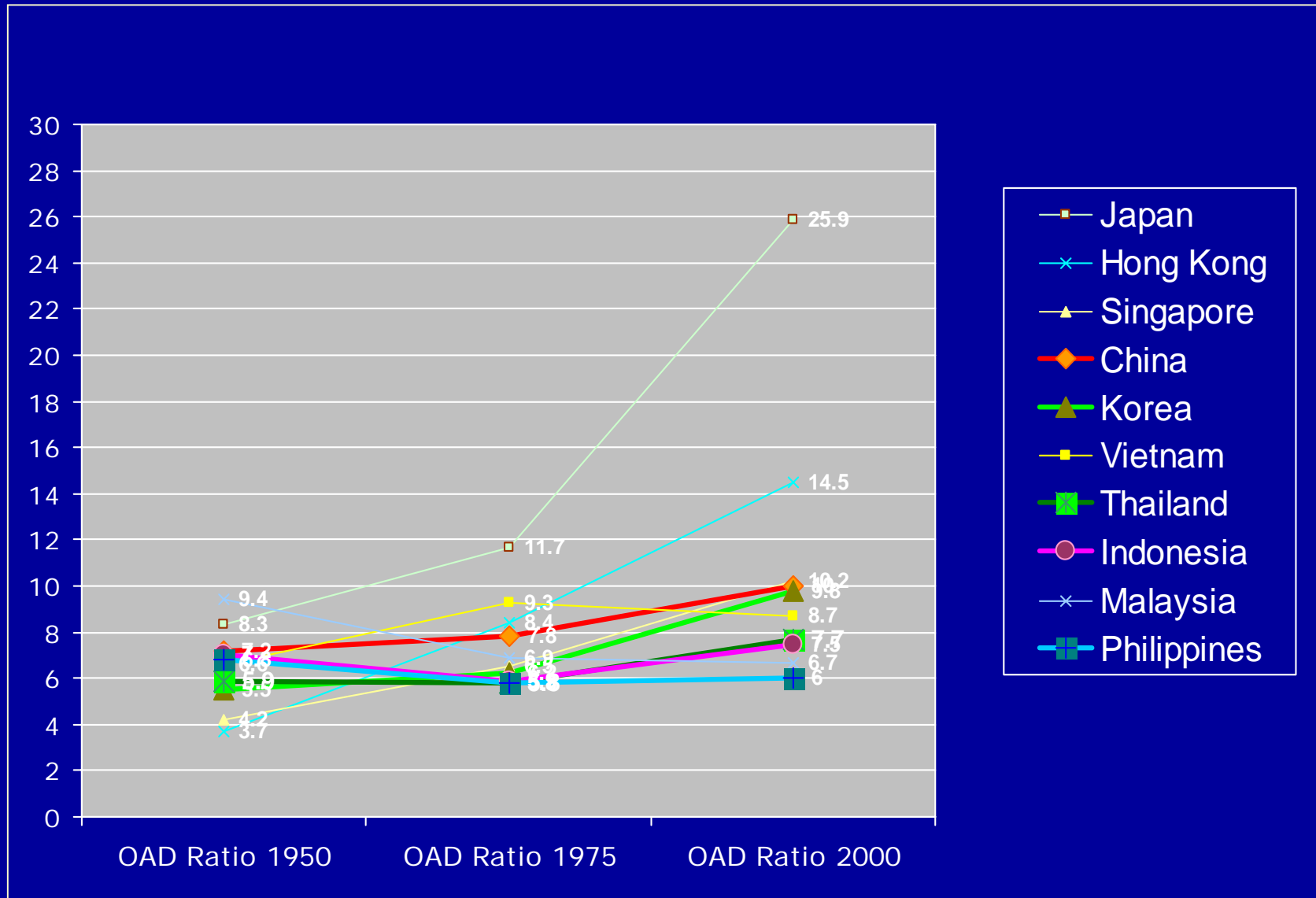
- ❑ **T**ime (never enough for 2 full-time commitments: family and job)
- ❑ **E**nergy (physical stamina needed to be fully engaged in parenthood and career)
- ❑ **A**ttention (children need both the physical and psychological presence of parents)

## 2.4 The problem of single (lone) parents

Close attention is needed to assist single parents of dependent children with the multiple challenges they face in addition to the TEA dilemma:

- ✓ Stress and loneliness
- ✓ Child-rearing issues (discipline, education, physical care, emotional support, etc)
- ✓ Financial resources & income earning
- ✓ Career/skills upgrading

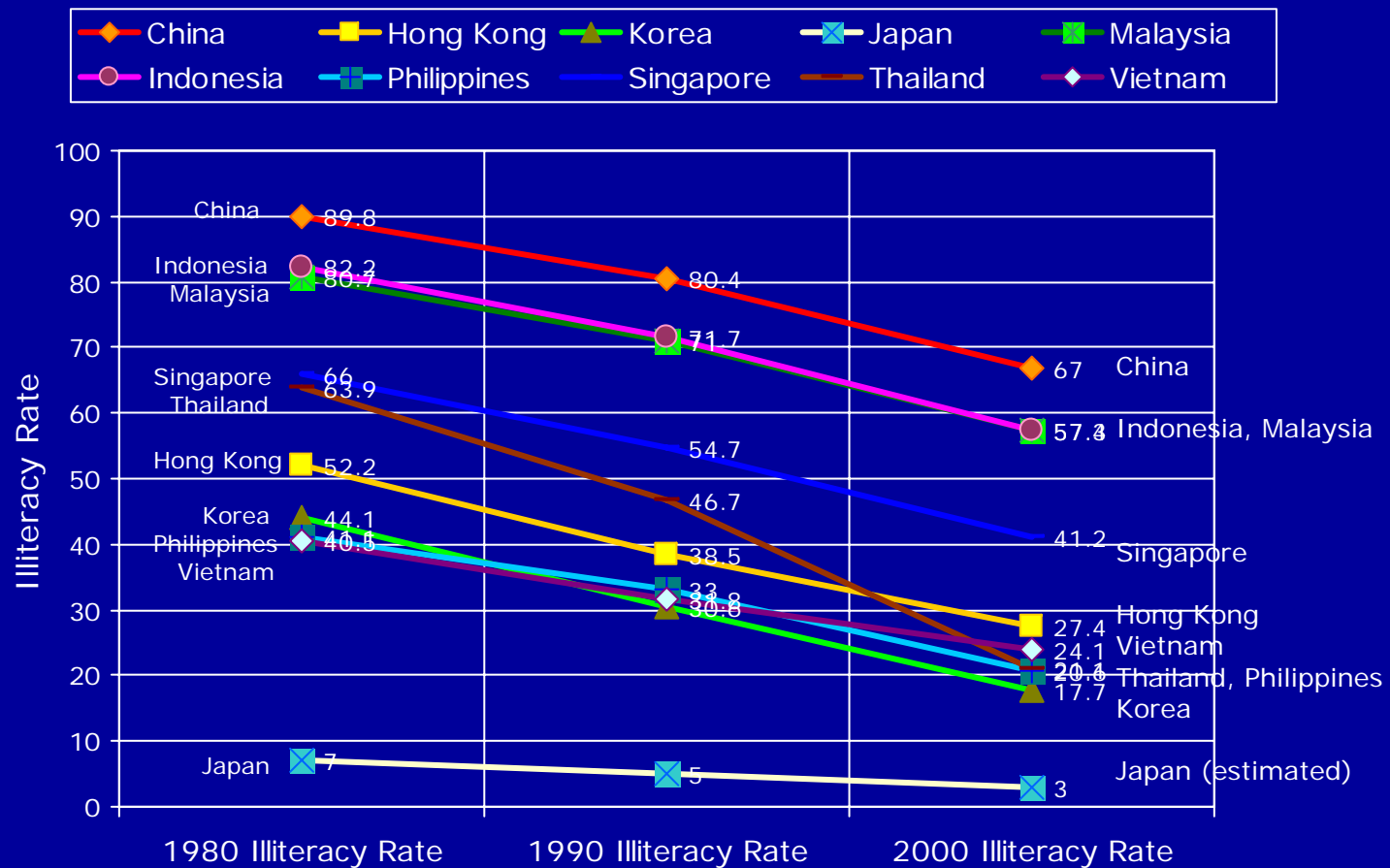
Chart 4.1. Senior-Junior (Old-Age) Ratios, 1950- 2000



Source: Quah (2005) *Home and Kin. Families in Asia*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, p. 94.

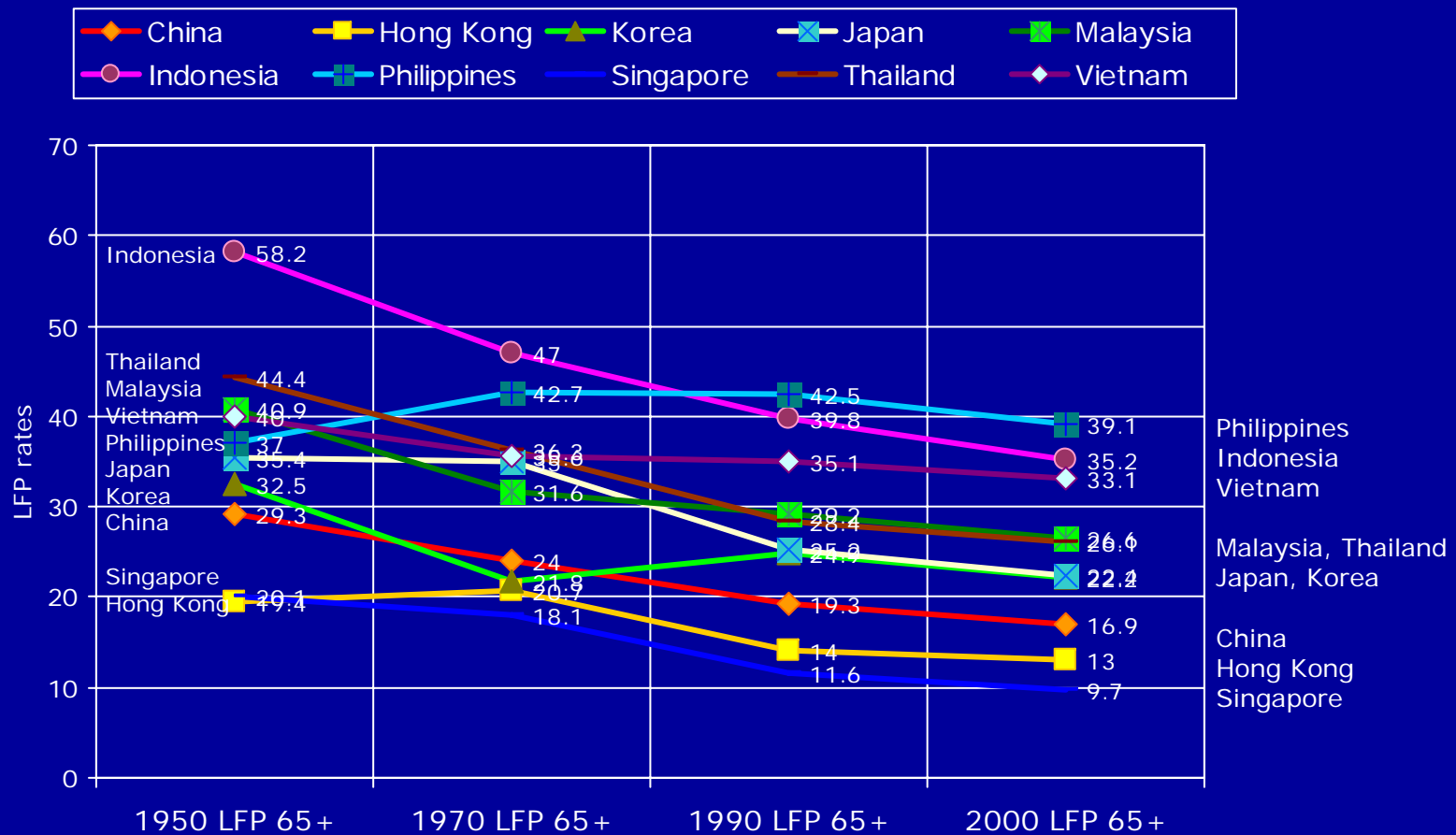
OAD Ratio: Old-Age Dependency ratio is the number of persons 65 years old and older per 100 persons aged 15 to 64.

Chart 4.3. Trends in Illiteracy Rates of People Aged 70 and Older, 1980 - 2000



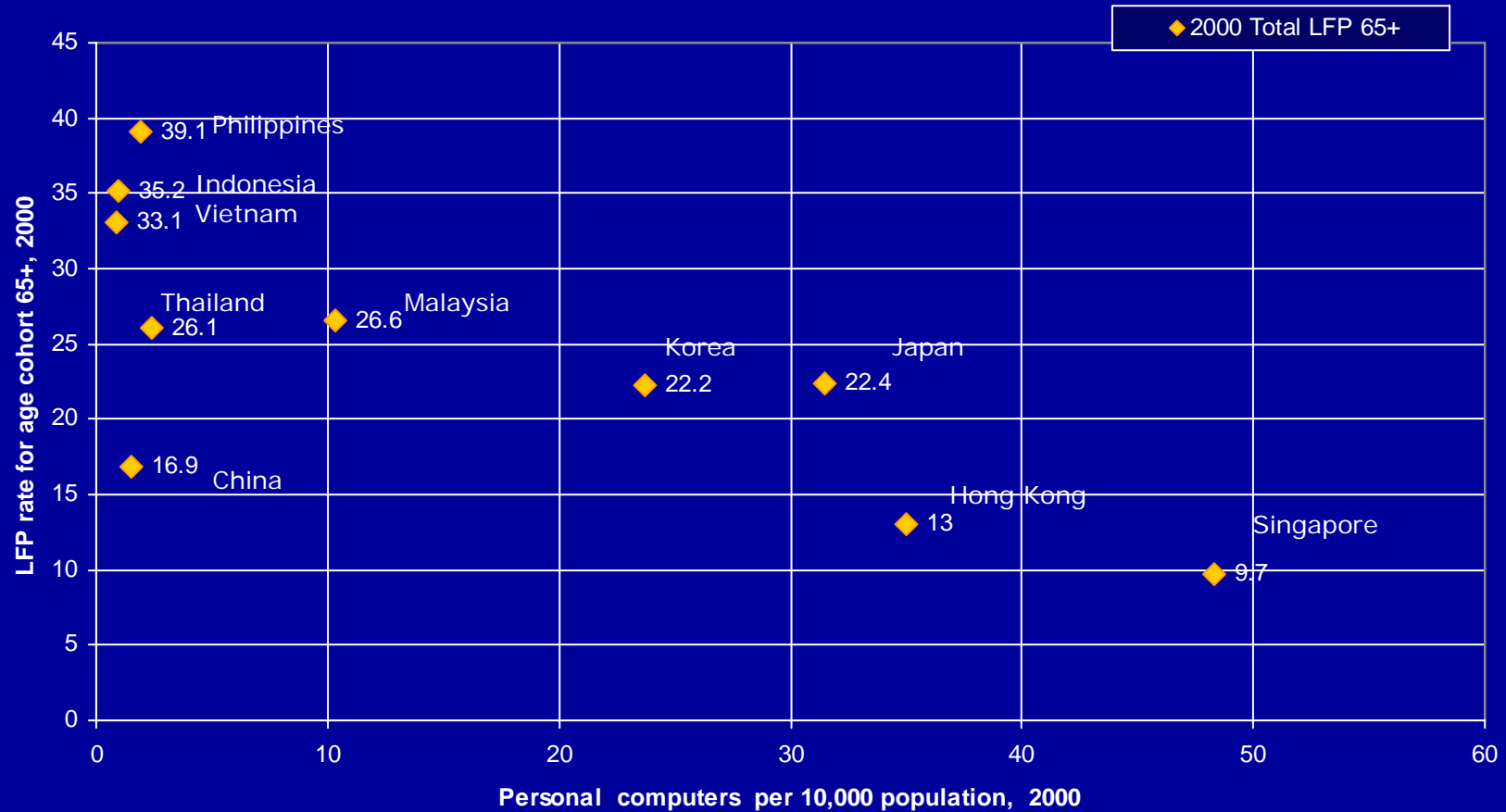
Source: United Nations Population Division (2002).

Chart 4.6. Labour Force Participation of People Aged 65 and Older, 1950 - 2000



Source: United Nations Population Division (2002).

Chart 4.9. Total Labour Force Participation Rate of Population aged 65 and older in 2000, and Personal Computers per 10,000 persons in 2000.



Source: Quah (2005) *Home and Kin. Families in Asia*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, p. 102. Calculated from figures on labour force participation are from United Nations Population Division (2002); figures on personal computers are from World Bank (2002).  
Correlation:  $r = -.770$ ;  $p = .009$ .

### 3. Family & social space for the senior generation

The proportion of people aged 65 and older is increasing rapidly in tandem with economic development. This positive trend, however, is taking our families and societies unprepared:

- ❑ Grandparents will be less available for childcare as they continued with their own activities and self-growth.
- ❑ Governments must open more social 'space' for the active senior generation (bank loans, housing, education/skills upgrading, entrepreneurship, leisure).

# Policy implications: Glimpse of what is needed

1. **Easing the path to Marriage:** Facilitate safe and responsible interaction of single adults seeking a marriage partner.
2. **Support for marriages facing breakup:** Strengthen mediation and reconciliation processes for married couples.
3. **Facilitate path to parenthood:** Provide conducive environment by easing work schedules, financial pressures, and providing safe & trustworthy childcare options.
4. Dedicated support mechanisms must be provided for **lone parents** and **children of divorced families**.
5. **Seniors:** Social space must be expanded for active seniors wishing to continue their contributions to society.

Thank You