



Wills Registry Celebrates 25th Anniversary, Steady Growth in Number of Wills Deposited and Enquiries Received

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The number of wills registered has grown steadily over the past five years, with 1.7 times more wills being registered in 2024 when compared against 2020.

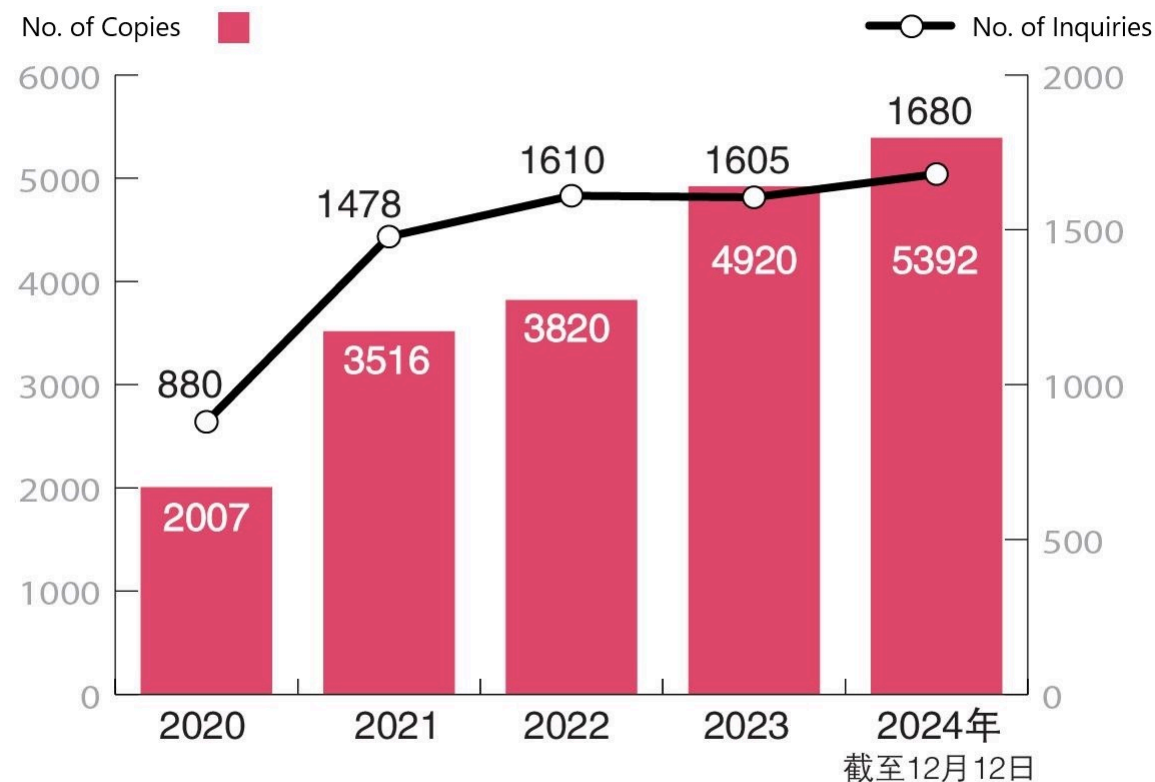
This article was first published on 23 December 2024 in the Singapore Mandarin broadsheet, Lianhe Zaobao. SLW obtained permission to reproduce the article to give the legal community a broader view of legal reports for various news syndicates.

The Singapore Academy of Law (SAL) currently stores information on 150,000 wills, and the number has grown steadily over the past five years. In 2024, almost 1.7 times more wills were registered than in 2020. This is a sign that more Singaporeans are realising the importance of informing their loved ones and lawyers where their wills are held so that inheritance matters can be settled as quickly as possible.

The Wills Registry does not hold original copies of wills at present. Instead, it serves as a registry of a will's basic information including the date of the will, details of the person who drew up the will and where the will is held. The service is non-mandatory and there is a charge; the total number of wills currently registered by testators is unknown.

Figures provided by the Singapore Academy of Law show that the number of enquiries on wills has increased steadily in the last 5 years, from 880 instances in 2020 to 1680 instances in 2024, a growth of nearly 80%.

Copies in Wills Repository & Number of Inquiries



LIANHE ZAOBAO GRAPHICS: By Lee Kok Hean
Source: SINGAPORE ACADEMY OF LAW (SAL)



Among those who have chosen to deposit information with the Wills Registry, more than 80% are aged 50 and above (i.e. those born in or before 1972). The difference between different age groups is striking: among the testators who have chosen to deposit information on their wills, those aged 40 number five times more than those in their thirties. When the Wills Registry was first established in January 2001, it was maintained by the Public Trustee's Office, and the charge of an administrative fee of \$50 began to be charged in March 2014.

Information on Wills will be stored for 120 years.

The Wills Registry has been in existence for 24 years, and the information deposited can be stored for 120 years, starting from the date of the testator's birth.

It also offers enquiry services, to help the deceased's family members or lawyers locate wills as quickly as possible, to facilitate the administration of estates. However, only immediate family members, representing lawyers, lawyers handling probate matters, donees of Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) or court-appointed deputies can submit enquiries on whether a will exists and where it is located, to ensure probate matters can be handled with smoothly.

The enquiry fee is \$10, and those making the enquiry will need to provide their NRIC, the death certificate, proof of relationship, LPA, or court order.

Most elderly not interested in Wills Registry

Mr Wan Kwong Weng, chairman of the Adventist Active Centre and a Corporate Counsel himself, has prepared more than 50 wills for members of the three Active Centres, and recommended the Wills Registry. But most of the elderly were not interested, he said: "They would rather leave it with a trusted friend or even at the elderly care centre." Wan believes registering one's will is worth considering, "But if the testators have trusted friends or organisations, then they don't need the service."

Members of the public who are interested in depositing or updating information related to their will can do so at the Wills Registry website.