

Key findings from Marriage and Parenthood Survey 2016

- *Marriage aspirations remain high, although 4 in 10 singles have not dated seriously before, and close to half prefer to leave dating to chance;*
- *Friends and colleagues play an important role in bringing singles together;*
- *Companies that offer flexible work arrangements are likely to attract talent and foster strong employee commitment. 8 in 10 married respondents state flexible work arrangements as an important consideration when choosing an employer.*

Introduction

The 2016 Marriage and Parenthood (M&P) Survey was commissioned by the National Population and Talent Division, Strategy Group, Prime Minister's Office, to understand public attitudes and perceptions toward marriage and parenthood. Similar surveys were conducted in 2004, 2007 and 2012. A total of 2,940 single (never-married) and 2,861 married Singapore residents, aged 21 to 45 years old, were surveyed from August to December 2016 (refer to [Annex A](#) for the profile of respondents).

KEY FINDINGS ON SINGLE RESPONDENTS

Marriage aspirations remain strong

83% of single Millennials (aged 21-35) indicated they intend to marry, comparable to 86% in 2012.

However, many are not proactive in dating

Of the single respondents surveyed, 59% were not currently dating seriously (i.e. dating with a view toward marriage), and 41% had never dated seriously before. This trend is similar to 2012 ([Annex B](#), Chart 1).

Among those not dating seriously, 42% said that they prefer to leave dating to chance ([Annex B](#), Chart 2).

Friends and colleagues are most likely to bring singles together

Over 70% of singles who were/had been in serious relationships indicated that they had met their partner through friends, at school, or the workplace.

The survey also revealed that single respondents were most comfortable with meeting a partner through friends (86%), recreational/social activities (85%) or through colleagues (79%).

Online channels and dating apps have grown in acceptance. Around 43% were comfortable with meeting a partner through online dating websites or apps, more than double from 19% in 2012. Among singles who were dating/had dated seriously, 13% met their partner through online channels, almost double from 7% in 2012 ([Annex B](#), Charts 3A and 3B).

KEY FINDINGS ON MARRIED RESPONDENTS

Most married respondents prefer 2 or more children

Parenthood aspirations remain strong. When asked about their ideal number of children, a vast majority (92%) indicated preference to have 2 or more children, comparable to 91% in 2012 (Annex B, Table 4).

Respondents who indicated that they were unlikely to have children/more children cited both practical concerns (e.g. financial cost, lack of good caregiving arrangements) and difficulties in managing work and family demands among the top reasons (Annex B, Table 5).

Strong preference for full-time work with flexible work arrangements

Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) are desired by both men and women, and are especially important for those with very young children. A large majority of married respondents agreed that the availability of FWAs would make/have made it easier for them to start a family (87%) and have more children (79%).

Across the infancy and early childhood years (0-6 years), “full-time work with FWAs” was the most favoured option for both men and women, more so than “fulltime work” (without FWAs) and “part-time work”.

The exception was when the child was still an infant (0-18 months), where roughly the same proportion of female married respondents said they would prefer not to work (38%), compared to those who preferred full-time work with FWAs (36%). Even among those who preferred not to work when the child was an infant, most want to return to work when their child was older (Annex B, Chart 6).

FWAs also help companies to attract talent and foster stronger employee commitment. About 89% of married respondents agreed that they were more likely to join an organisation which provides FWAs, while 91% agreed that they were more likely to stay in an organisation that provides FWAs. Around 81% said the provision of FWAs was an important consideration when choosing an organisation to invest their career (Annex B, Table 7).

Fathers equally important as caregivers; can play a greater role at home

Almost all (99%) married respondents agreed that fathers and mothers are equally important as caregivers for children, and 95% agreed that both parents should share the responsibilities of the home equally.

However, most childcare responsibilities such as staying home with the child when he or she is sick, feeding and bathing the child, were still carried out by mothers (Annex B, Table 8). On average, mothers reported spending 2.6 hours on domestic chores on a normal weekday (3.7 hours in 2012), almost twice that of the 1.5 hours spent by fathers (1.4 hours in 2012).

Making Singapore a Great Place for Families

Marriage and parenthood are highly personal life goals that the majority of Singaporeans aspire towards. The Government will continue to support Singaporeans in fulfilling their aspirations to marry and have children, for example, through developing the dating landscape, helping young couples have faster and easier access to housing, encouraging greater work-life harmony including encouraging employers to provide FWAs, and improving pre-school support.

The 2016 M&P Survey findings also point to the important role that the whole of society – family, friends, employers, co-workers, and community organisations – plays in fostering positive mindsets and shaping supportive social norms towards marriage and parenthood.

About the Marriage & Parenthood Survey 2016

Professor Paulin Straughan and Dr Mathew Mathews were appointed as research consultants for the 2016 Survey. They were also the consultants in 2012.

Dr Mathew Mathews highlighted that while majority of singles still aspire to get married, a significant proportion of singles are not dating seriously. “The top reason cited by singles for not dating was not being able to find a partner. However, about half of those who were not dating said that they prefer to leave dating to chance. At the same time, this latest study also showed that friends and colleagues can play an important role in helping singles find their life partner. The advancement in technology has brought about more dating options for singles. Singles have become more open to online dating and dating apps. Hopefully more singles will be proactive and take charge of their dating life, in a similar way as they do when pursuing their career or other personal interests.”

Professor Paulin Straughan emphasised the importance of a pro-family work environment when it comes to encouraging couples to have children. “Majority of the married respondents agreed that the availability of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) had helped make it easier for them to start a family and have more children. Employers should recognise that implementing family-friendly initiatives such as FWAs helps to attract and retain talent, as well as boost productivity in the long run. It also helps if co-workers could be more understanding when parents need to take time off from work to take care of their young child.”