

**An occasional paper on**

**MARRIAGES BETWEEN  
SINGAPORE CITIZENS AND NON-SINGAPORE CITIZENS,  
1998-2008**



June 2009

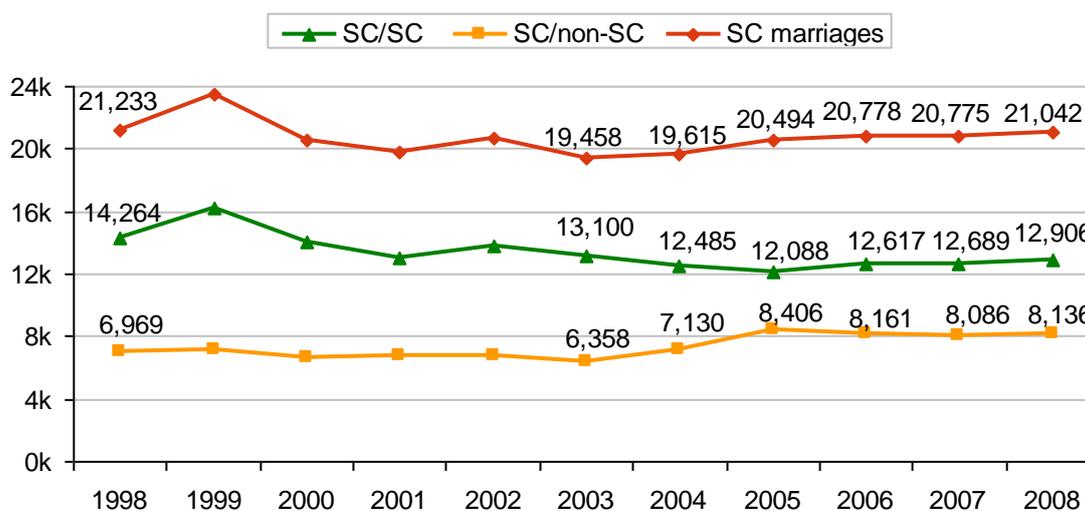
## 1. Introduction

1.1 This paper provides a statistical profile of the marriages between Singapore citizens (SCs) and non-Singapore citizens (termed “SC/non-SC marriages”) over 1998-2008<sup>1</sup>. Key characteristics such as gender, age and educational levels are compared between SC/non-SC marriages and marriages involving only SCs (termed “SC/SC marriages”).

## 2. Overview

2.1 The share of SC/non-SC marriages among total SC marriages<sup>2</sup> increased from about three in 10 (33%) in 1998 to almost four in 10 (39%) in 2008. The number of SC/non-SC marriages stayed relatively stable between 1998 and 2003, hovering around 6,800 per year, before increasing steadily between 2003 and 2005 to reach 8,406 (41%) in 2005 and stabilising at an average of 8,100 marriages per year between 2006 and 2008 (Chart 1).

**Chart 1: Number of SC marriages by residency status ('000)**



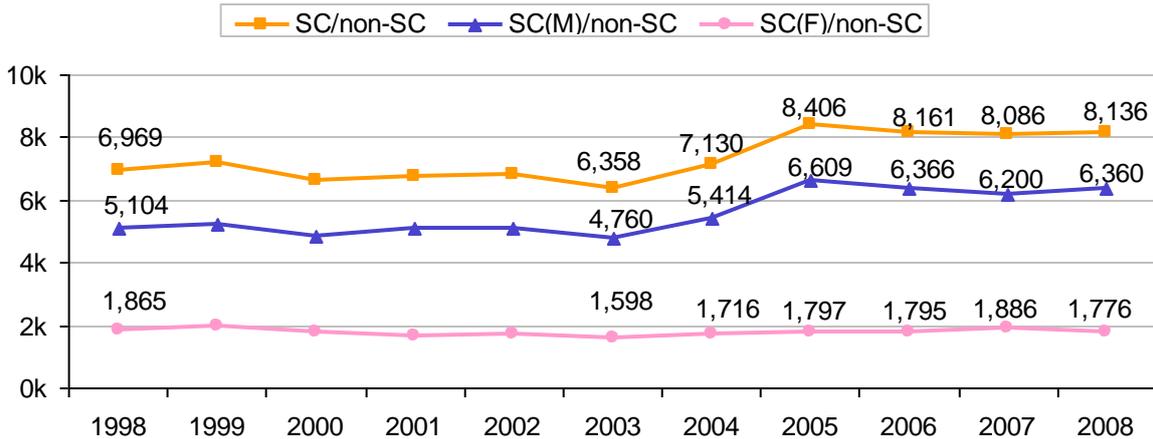
<sup>1</sup> Data are based on marriage registrations at the Registry of Marriages and the Registry of Muslim Marriages (ROM and ROMM). As marriages registered overseas are not captured by ROM or ROMM, the actual number of SC/non-SC marriages could be higher.

<sup>2</sup> SC marriages refer to marriages where either the groom or the bride, or both parties, are SCs.

### 3. Profile

3.1 More than three quarters (76%) of the SC/non-SC marriages over the past decade were between SC grooms and non-SC brides. In 1998, 73% of SC/non-SC marriages involved SC grooms, and this proportion stayed relatively stable until 2003. This proportion increased to 79% by 2005, and stayed around that level up until 2008. Comparatively, SC bride/non-SC groom marriages remained relatively stable throughout the past decade, averaging about 1,800 marriages per year (Chart 2).

**Chart 2: Marriages by gender of SC spouse ('000)**



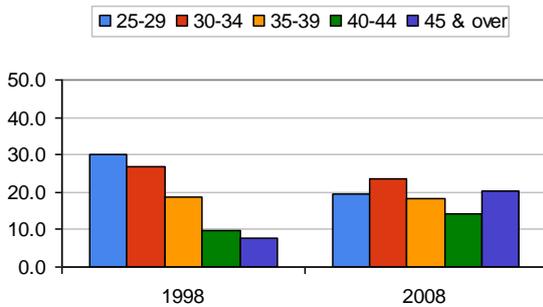
Note: Parentheses refer to gender of SC spouse – M for males and F for females.

### Age of SC spouse at marriage

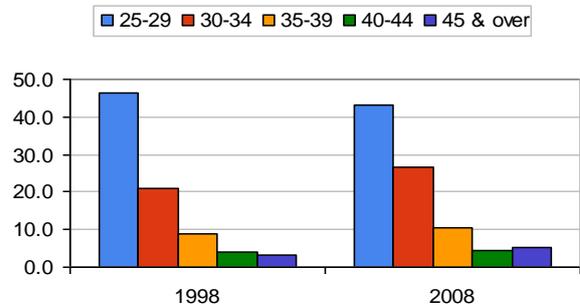
3.2 The majority (62%) of the SC grooms who married non-SC brides in 2008 were aged 25-39. The proportion of SC grooms aged 40 and over who married non-SC brides (35%) in 2008 was higher than that of those who married SC brides (10%) (Chart 3). The delay could be due to difficulties in finding suitable potential spouses – SCs or non-SCs – until at a later stage in life. We will need to enhance our efforts in creating more social interaction opportunities for singles and to start from young.

**Chart 3: Marriages by age group of SC groom (%)**

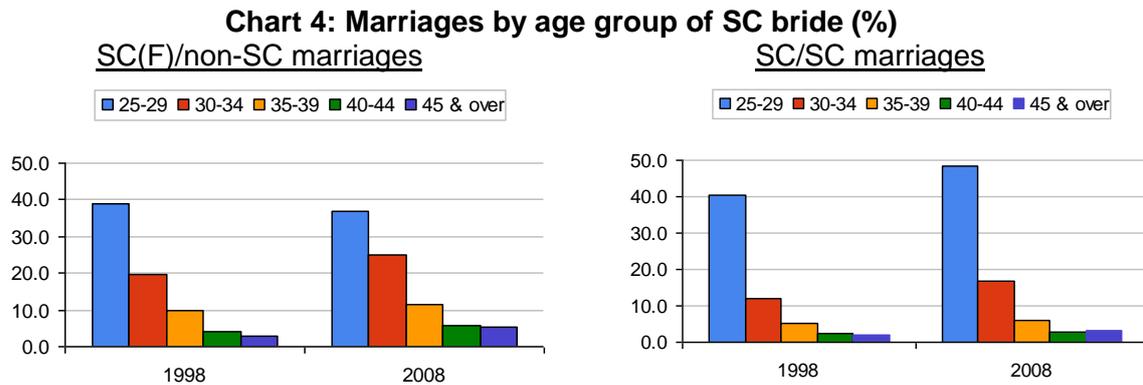
SC(M)/non-SC marriages



SC/SC marriages

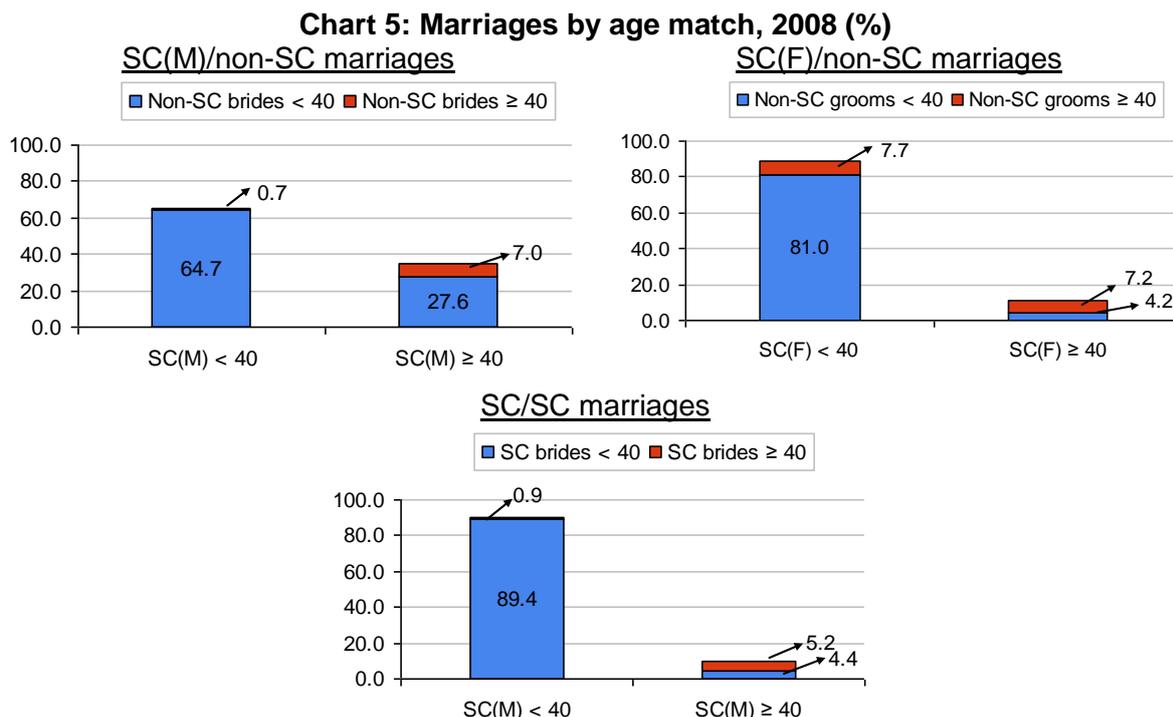


3.3 Compared to SC grooms marrying non-SC brides, SC brides who married non-SC grooms tend to be younger. 73% of these SC brides in 2008 were aged 25-39 while 11% were aged 40 and over. More of the SC brides who married non-SC grooms (25%) were aged 30-34 at the point of marriage compared to those in SC/SC marriages (17%) (Chart 4). This group of SC brides tends to be highly educated (para 3.8) and could have spent more time pursuing higher qualifications and building careers, including venturing overseas. This could have resulted in more female SCs marrying non-SCs at a later age.



**Age difference between spouses**

3.4 Among SC/SC marriages, the majority tends to marry within the same age group. This trend is also observed for SC/non-SC marriages involving SC brides and non-SC grooms. In contrast, a higher proportion of older SCs grooms married younger non-SC brides compared to SC/SC marriages. In 2008, 1,753 (28% of SC grooms who married non-SC brides) SC grooms aged 40 and above married non-SC brides who are aged below 40, compared to 574 (4.4%) SC grooms in SC/SC marriages (Chart 5).



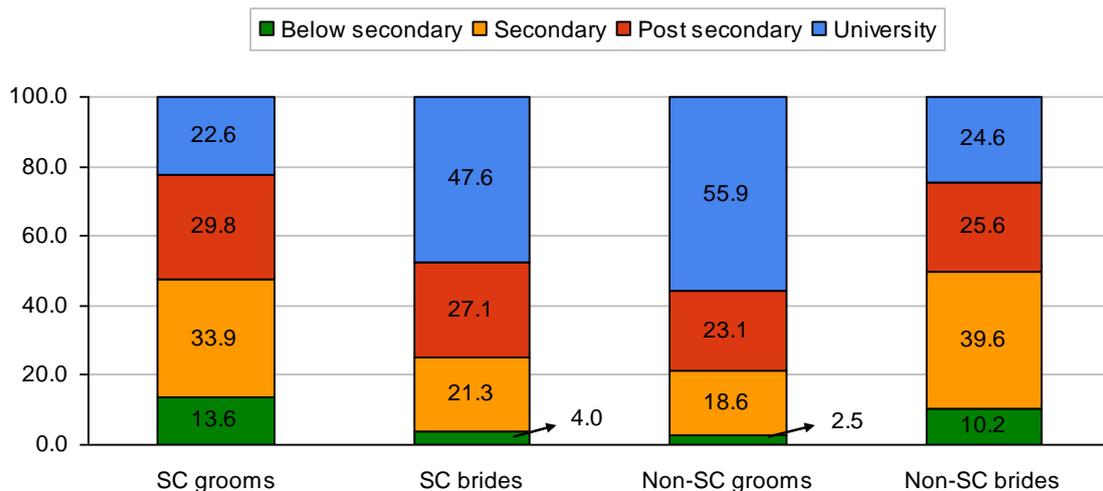
## Education level of SC spouses

3.5 Most SC/SC marriages (64%) in 2008 were between persons of similar educational levels. Most SC grooms and brides (74% of each) had post secondary and higher education.

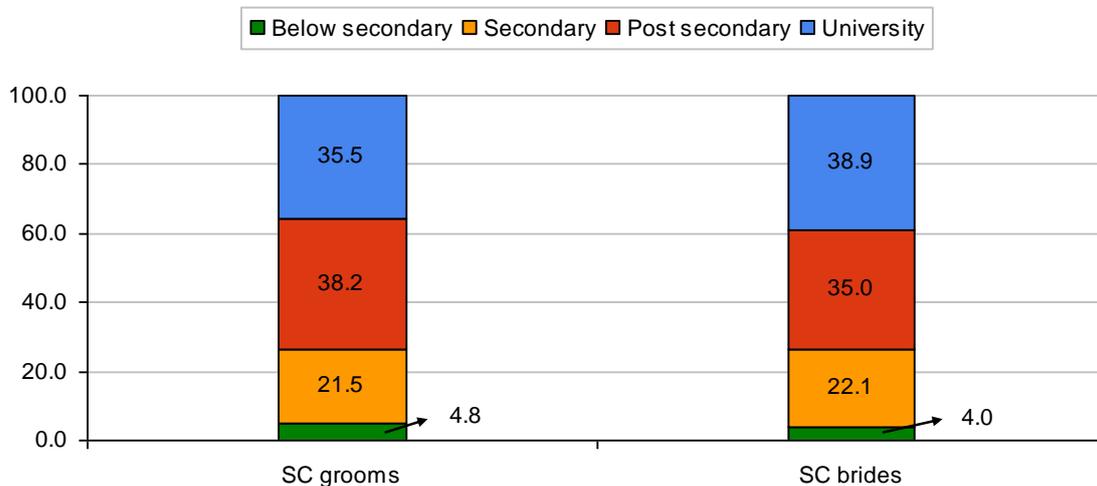
3.6 Among the non-SC grooms and brides, while most non-SC brides had secondary education, most non-SC grooms had university education. Most of the SC grooms who married a non-SC bride had secondary education (34%), followed by those with post secondary education (30%). As with SC/SC marriages, most of the SC groom/non-SC bride marriages were between persons of similar educational levels; most of the non-SC brides also had secondary education (40%), followed by post secondary education (26%).

3.8 On the other hand, most of the female SCs who married a non-SC spouse had university education (48%), followed by those with post secondary education (27%). Their non-SC grooms were even better educated: 56% of them had university education, and another 23% had post-secondary education (Chart 6).

**Chart 6: SC marriages by highest qualifications attained, 2008 (%)**  
SC/non-SC marriages



SC/SC marriages



### **Origins of non-SC spouses**

3.10 In 2008, non-SC grooms who married SC brides came predominantly from Asia (69%). There were also non-SC grooms from diverse places such as Americas, Oceania and Europe. On the other hand, most non-SC brides of SC grooms came from Asia (97%) (Table 7).

**Table 7: Origins of non-SC spouses in SC/non-SC marriages, 2008**

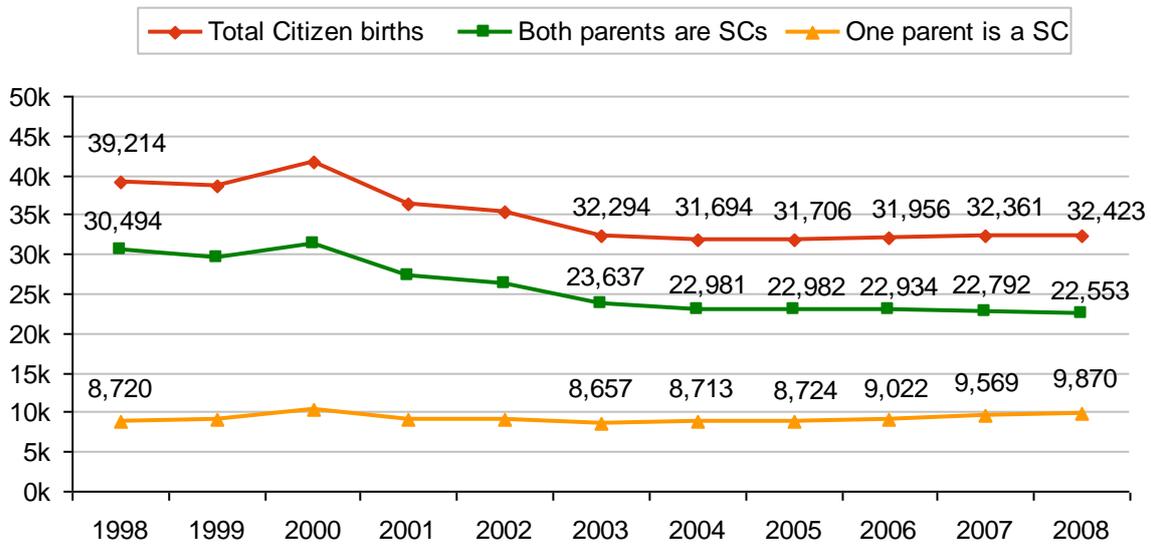
|                            |              |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| <b>SC/non-SC marriages</b> | <b>8,136</b> |
| Non-SC brides              | 6,360        |
| Americas                   | 19           |
| Asia                       | 6,160        |
| Europe                     | 40           |
| Oceania                    | 27           |
| Others                     | 114          |
| Non-SC grooms              | 1,776        |
| Americas                   | 102          |
| Asia                       | 1,226        |
| Europe                     | 264          |
| Oceania                    | 84           |
| Others                     | 100          |

## 4. Fertility trends

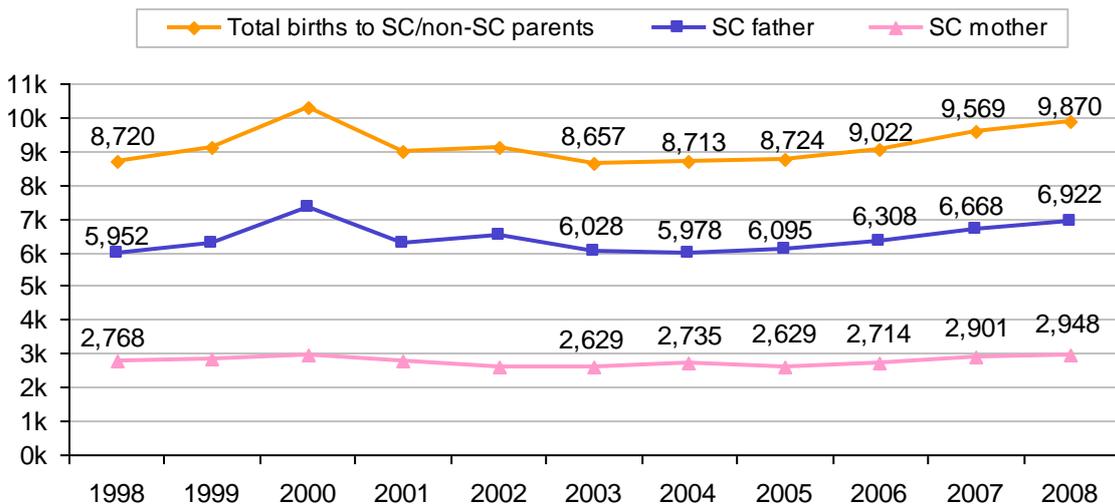
4.1 The number and proportion of citizen births to SC/non-SC couples have been increasing over the last few years. In 2008, about 30% of citizen births had a non-SC parent, as compared to about 22% in 1998 (Chart 8).

4.2 On average from 1998 to 2008, almost three-quarters of these births involved a SC father and non-SC mother. This is in line with the proportion of SC groom/non-SC bride marriages. In 2008, 70% (or 6,922) of the 9,870 births to SC/non-SC couples were contributed by non-SC mothers (Chart 9). The majority of these non-SC parents were from Asian countries.

**Chart 8: Citizen births by residency status of parents ('000)**



**Chart 9: Citizen births to SC/non-SC parents by gender of SC parent ('000)**



## **5. Concluding remarks**

5.1 The generally rising share of SC/non-SC marriages could reflect the increased opportunities for interaction between SCs and non-SCs as Singapore strives to become a global city. As Singapore continues to globalise, we can expect the share of SC/non-SC marriages to increase, hence contributing to a society made up of families with more diverse origins.

5.2 The trends highlighted above could also reflect the difficulties of segments of SCs, regardless of gender, age and educational profile, in finding a suitable spouse. The merged SDU-SdS has enhanced its efforts in creating greater social interaction opportunities for singles to meet potential partners, through its dating services and events and developing the private dating industry. At the same time, we recognise that there will always be trans-national marriages. It is important that these non-SC spouses are well-integrated into the Singaporean culture and way of life.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Registry of Muslim Marriages  
Singapore Department of Statistics

## **ENQUIRIES AND FEEDBACK**

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