

PRESS RELEASE

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MARRIAGE AND PARENTHOOD STUDY 2012

The Marriage and Parenthood (M&P) Study 2012 is a survey commissioned by the National Population and Talent Division (NPTD), to understand the attitudes and motivations behind Singapore residents' marriage and parenthood trends. Similar surveys were conducted in 2007 and 2004. A total of 4,646 respondents aged 21 to 45 years old was surveyed for the 2012 study, comprising 2,120 single (never married) and 2,526 married individuals.¹ (Please see [Annex A](#) for profile.)

Key Findings

Most singles desire to get married

2. **Marriage aspirations remained strong.** 83% of single respondents indicated that they desired to get married. This is close to the 85% result in the 2007 survey, and higher than the 74% result in 2004. The top three reasons singles cited for not yet marrying were: i) have not met a suitable partner; ii) desire to concentrate on career or studies; and iii) have not enough money. These were similar to the reasons cited in 2007 and 2004. Among singles who were in serious relationships (i.e. with a view towards marriage), the top three reasons cited by those who did not intend to register their marriage within the next two years included: i) saving money for housing, ii) saving money for the wedding, and iii) too young to get married. (Please see [Annex B, Exhibits 1-2.](#))

Singles prefer meeting members of the opposite sex through recreational/social activities and friends

3. Singles were most comfortable meeting members of the opposite sex through i) recreational, sports and social activities, ii) friends/fellow students, and iii) colleagues and work acquaintances. Singles who were in serious relationships as well as married respondents indicated that they had met their partners/spouses mainly through friends, at school, and at work. (Please see [Annex B, Exhibits 3-4.](#))

Most would like to have 2 or more children

4. **Parenthood aspirations remained strong.** 80% of singles who indicated a desired number of children wanted to have 2 or more children. This is comparable to 84% in 2007. Among married respondents, 84% intended to have 2 or more children in 2012, similar to the 84% in 2007 and higher than the 76% in 2004.² Both male and female respondents intended to have an average of 2.2 children. There was little difference in the desired number of children between male and female respondents. (Please see [Annex B, Exhibits 5-6.](#))

¹ While similar studies were done in 2007 and 2004, not all the questions are comparable across studies. In particular, the survey questions were adjusted in the 2012 Study to allow a better understanding of topics such as life goals and work-life balance.

² Figure for the 2004 study was based on married respondents who indicated an intended family size.

5. The average number of children that married respondents actually have was 1.5. This is comparable to the average of 1.6 in 2007 and 1.5 in 2004. As with past surveys, the average actual family size stabilised at around 2 children for couples towards the end of their child bearing ages (i.e. above 40 years). (Please refer to Annex B, Exhibit 7.)

6. Respondents who indicated they were unlikely to have any more children cited both practical concerns (e.g. financial cost and lack of good child care arrangements) and family considerations (e.g. having enough children and spouse's decisions) among the top reasons. (Please see Annex B, Exhibit 8.)

7. Most respondents viewed having children as taking place within the institution of marriage. 80% of single and 85% of married respondents agreed or strongly agreed that only legally married parents should have children.

Need to improve awareness of fertility issues

8. **More can be done to improve awareness and address misconceptions regarding fertility issues.** About 70% of single and 77% of married respondents assumed that couples would have little problem having children even when they were over 35 years old. This indicates that many are unaware that male and female fertility decline with age, and assisted reproduction technology cannot compensate for the age-related decline in fertility.³

Strong support for shared parental responsibility

9. **Respondents voiced strong support for shared parental responsibility.** 99% of married respondents agreed that fathers and mothers are equally important as caregivers for children.

Women desire both family and work at the same time

10. **Female respondents desired family and employment at the same time.** 80% of single female respondents indicated their preference to be working mothers (comparable to 81% in 2007 and 79% in 2004).

11. Among married female respondents, 77% indicated their preference to be employed after having a child (up from 62% in 2007 and 2004). Respondents were quite equally split between part-time and full-time employment options, although the percentage preferring part-time employment has increased to 40% in 2012 (compared to 19% in 2007 and 21% in 2004). This suggests that part-time opportunities and more workplace flexibility could encourage women to remain in or return to the workforce. (Please see Annex B, Exhibit 9.)

³ For more information, please see:

- "Ageing and Infertility: An Overview" by Juan Balasch, published in Gynecological Endocrinology, 2010. http://www.issues4life.org/pdfs/20100608_ageingandinfertility.pdf

- "Delayed Childbearing" published by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, January 2012. <http://www.sogc.org/guidelines/documents/gui271CO1201E.pdf>

Some aspects of work-life balance can be improved

12. The majority felt that they had good work-life balance. Notwithstanding this, respondents highlighted that some areas could be improved.

- a. 79% of single respondents reported they had good work-life balance. However, 65% were exhausted when they came home from work, 42% had insufficient time to date, and 50% had insufficient time to meet new people.
- b. Among married respondents, 82% reported good work-life balance. However, 62% of them were exhausted when they came home from work, and 54% felt their job prevented them from spending as much time with their families as they would like.

These findings suggest that while Singaporeans generally perceive themselves as having good work-life balance, they may have accepted that achieving work-life balance requires trade-offs in other aspects of their lives. (Please see Annex B, Exhibits 10 and 11.)

Care by family members was the most common child care option

13. Care by parents and grandparents was the most common child care arrangement. 83% of married respondents indicated that they took care of their children during weekdays, followed by 38% who indicated that grandparents played this role. 20% of the respondents indicated that their foreign domestic worker cared for their children during weekdays, while 14% and 5% placed their children in child care centres and kindergartens respectively.⁴ (Please see Annex B, Exhibit 12.)

14. The top three factors parents took into consideration when deciding on their current child care arrangements were: i) trust in caregiver, ii) financial cost and iii) proximity to home. This is largely similar to the 2007 findings where the top three factors were i) trust in caregiver, ii) financial costs and iii) whether the caregiver was trained to care for and develop the child. (Please see Annex B, Exhibit 13.)

Attitude towards Marriage & Parenthood measures

15. The Marriage & Parenthood Package was last enhanced in 2008 to strengthen the pro-family environment and support Singaporeans' aspirations to get married and have children. **Married respondents indicated that maternity leave and the Baby Bonus cash gift were the top two policies that would most likely persuade them to have children or to have more children.** (Please see Annex B, Exhibit 14.)

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⁴ Figures add up to more than 100% as respondents could select multiple options in response to this question.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The 2012 M&P Study surveyed a total of 4,646 respondents aged 21 to 45 years old, comprising 2,120 single (never married) and 2,526 married individuals. The profile of the respondents was as follows:

Age Profile (in years)	Single Respondents	Married Respondents
Mean	28	37
Median	26	37
Mode	24	38

Other Characteristics (in %)	Single Respondents	Married Respondents
Ethnicity (as specified in identity card)		
Chinese	65.0	54.1
Malay	23.6	19.9
Indian	10.2	21.9
Others	1.2	4.0
Sex		
Male	56.2	45.1
Female	43.8	54.9
Citizenship		
Singapore Citizen	91.6	72.0
Singapore PR	8.4	28.0
Highest Education Level		
No Formal Qualification/ Lower Primary	0.2	0.7
Primary	1.3	4.5
Lower Secondary	0.9	2.9
Secondary	7.0	17.8
Upper Secondary	18.7	11.8
Polytechnic Diploma	25.3	14.0
Other Diploma and Professional Qualification	10.8	10.2
University	35.9	37.9

BREAKDOWN OF FINDINGS FROM MARRIAGE AND PARENTHOOD STUDIES 2012, 2007 AND 2004

Exhibit 1: Top reasons cited by singles for not marrying yet

Reasons	2012 Rank	2007 Rank	2004 Rank
I have not met a suitable partner yet.	1	1	1
I want to concentrate fully on my job/studies.	2	2	2
I don't have enough money.	3	5	4
I am not ready or prepared for marriage.	4	N/A*	N/A*
I am too young to marry.	5	4	5

* Option was not available in 2007 and 2004.

Exhibit 2: Top reasons cited by singles in serious relationships, but who did not have immediate plans to register their marriage

What are your reasons for not having any immediate plans to register your marriage? Which options apply to you? (%)

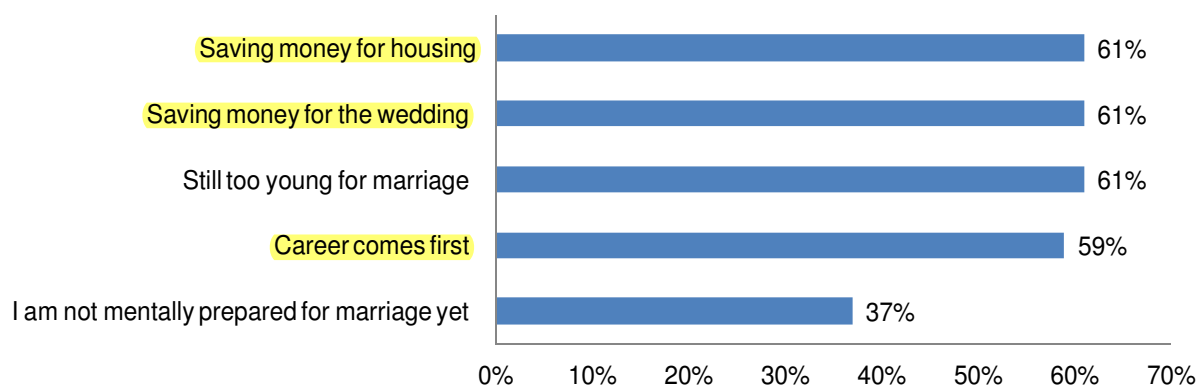


Exhibit 3: Where singles felt most comfortable meeting the opposite sex

The following are some ways by which people may get to meet the opposite sex with the intention of considering a possible relationship. Which, if any, of these are you comfortable with?

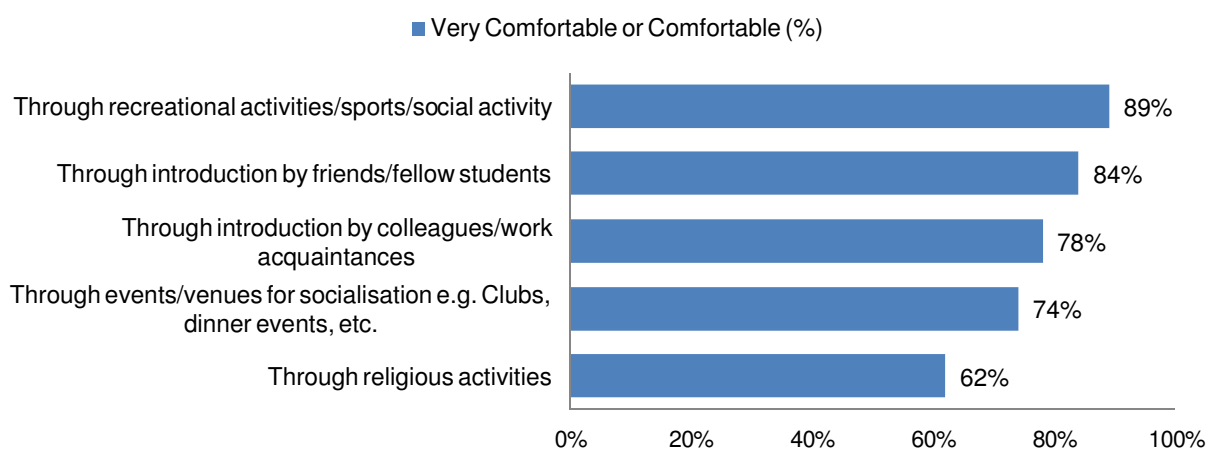


Exhibit 4: Where single respondents in relationships and married respondents met their partners and spouses respectively

	Single	Married
Through friends	1	1
At school	2	3
At work	3	2
Through the internet	4	N/A [^]
At places of leisure (e.g. pubs, discos, clubs)	N/A [^]	5
Through family / relatives	5	4

[^]Not among the top 5 responses

Exhibit 5: Intended and actual number of children indicated by married respondents

No. of children	All Married Respondents (%)					
	2012		2007		2004	
	Intended*	Actual	Intended	Actual	Intended*	Actual
0-1 child [^]	16%	49%	16%	47%	24%	46%
0	3%	20%	2%	19%	8%	22%
1	13%	29%	15%	28%	16%	24%
2 or more [^]	84%	51%	84%	53%	76%	54%
2	57%	36%	53%	37%	49%	36%
3	19%	12%	24%	13%	22%	13%
4 or more	8%	4%	7%	4%	5%	4%
Mean	2.2	1.5	2.2	1.6	2.0	1.5

Based on respondents who indicated a intended number of children

[^] May not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Exhibit 6: Intended and actual number of children indicated by married respondents by sex

No. of children	Total Married Respondents (%) [^]							
	2012				2007			
	Intended		Actual		Intended		Actual	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
0	3%	4%	22%	18%	2%	2%	20%	18%
1	11%	14%	30%	28%	17%	13%	31%	26%
2	60%	55%	35%	37%	53%	54%	36%	37%
3	17%	20%	10%	13%	23%	25%	11%	14%
4 or more	9%	8%	3%	4%	6%	7%	3%	5%
Mean	2.2	2.2	1.4	1.6	2.2	2.1	1.5	1.7

[^] May not add up to 100% due to rounding.

No. of children	2004			
	Intended		Actual	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0	9%	6%	23%	22%
1	14%	14%	26%	23%
2	42%	43%	38%	34%
3	17%	22%	10%	18%
4 or more	4%	5%	3%	3%
Mean	2.0	2.1	1.4	1.6

Exhibit 7: Actual number of children by respondents' age group

Actual number of children	Total Married Respondents (%)^							
	2012 [@]				2007			
	≤ 30	31 - 35	36 - 40	41 - 45	< 30	30 - 34	35 - 39	40 - 44
0	42%	28%	13%	9%	63%	19%	7%	4%
1	36%	34%	27%	23%	28%	38%	28%	18%
2	17%	30%	44%	43%	8%	34%	46%	48%
3	4%	7%	12%	20%	1%	7%	15%	22%
4 or more	1%	1%	4%	6%	1%	2%	4%	8%
Mean	0.9	1.2	1.7	1.9	0.5	1.4	1.8	2.1

[@] Age groups reflected slightly differently from previous surveys

[^] May not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Actual no. of children	2004			
	< 30	30 - 34	35 - 39	40 - 44
0	51%	28%	16%	10%
1	30%	32%	20%	18%
2	16%	30%	43%	43%
3	3%	8%	17%	23%
4 or more	1%	2%	4%	6%
Mean	0.5	1.2	1.7	1.9

Exhibit 8: Top reasons cited by married respondents for deciding not to have any / more children

What is/are the reason(s) you have decided not to have any / any more children? Please choose the top three reasons in order of priority. (Option selected as one of top three reasons)

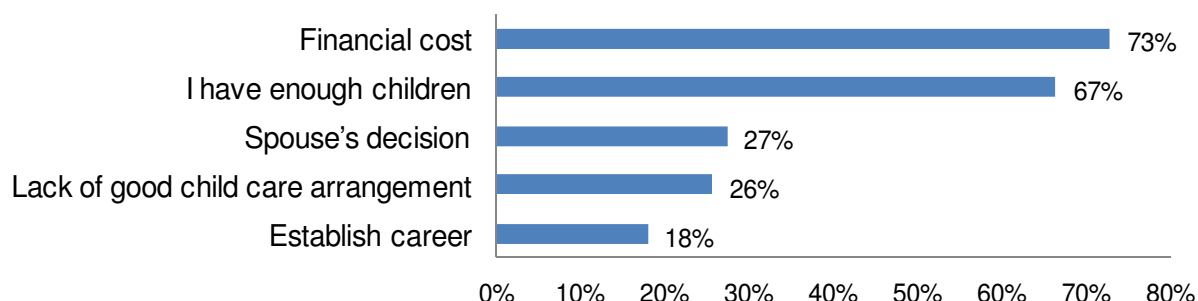


Exhibit 9: Female respondents' ideal employment and child raising arrangement

	Single (%)^			Married (%)^		
	2012	2007	2004	2012	2007	2004
A full time job and no children	8%	4%	7%	2%	3%	8%
A part time job and no children	1%	1%	3%	1%	3%	2%
A full time job and one or more children	56%	61%	60%	37%	43%	41%
A part time job and one or more children	24%	20%	19%	40%	19%	21%
No job as long as the children are young	8%	13%	9%	16%	18%	17%
No job at all when there are children	3%	2%	3%	4%	16%	12%

[^] May not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Exhibit 10: Sentiments towards work-life balance

	Single	Married
	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)	
Overall, I have a good work-family life balance.	79%	82%
I am able to change my work schedule/ arrangements in order to take care of personal matters.	69%	69%
I am usually exhausted when I come home from work.	65%	62%
My job keeps me from spending as much time with my friends and family as I would like.	55%	54%
I have flexibility in my work schedule.	52%	55%

Exhibit 11: Singles' sentiments towards time management

Do you have more than enough time, about the right amount of time or do not have enough time to do the following activity?

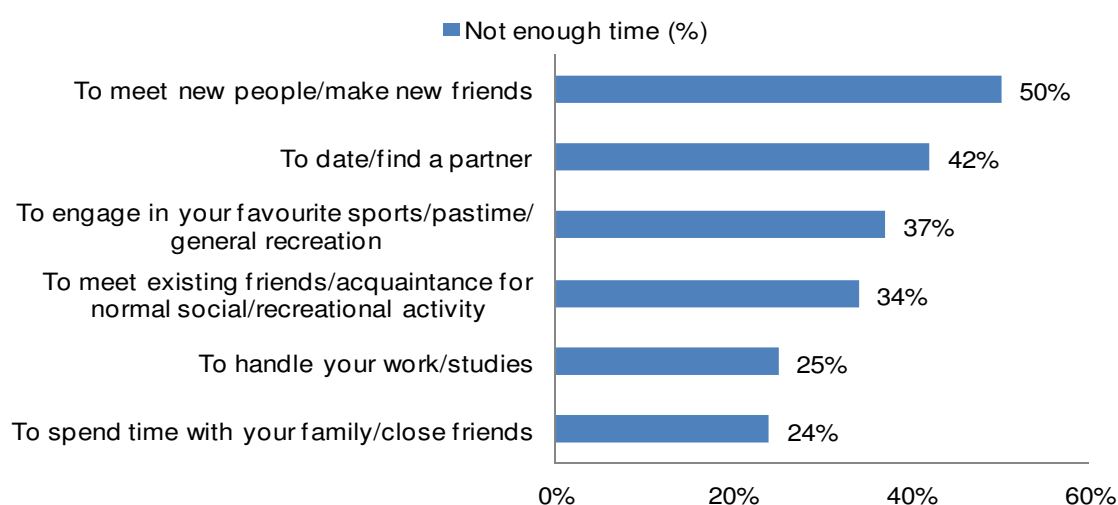


Exhibit 12: Most common weekday child care arrangements among married respondents

**Who takes care of your children during weekdays?
(Please choose all the options that apply)**

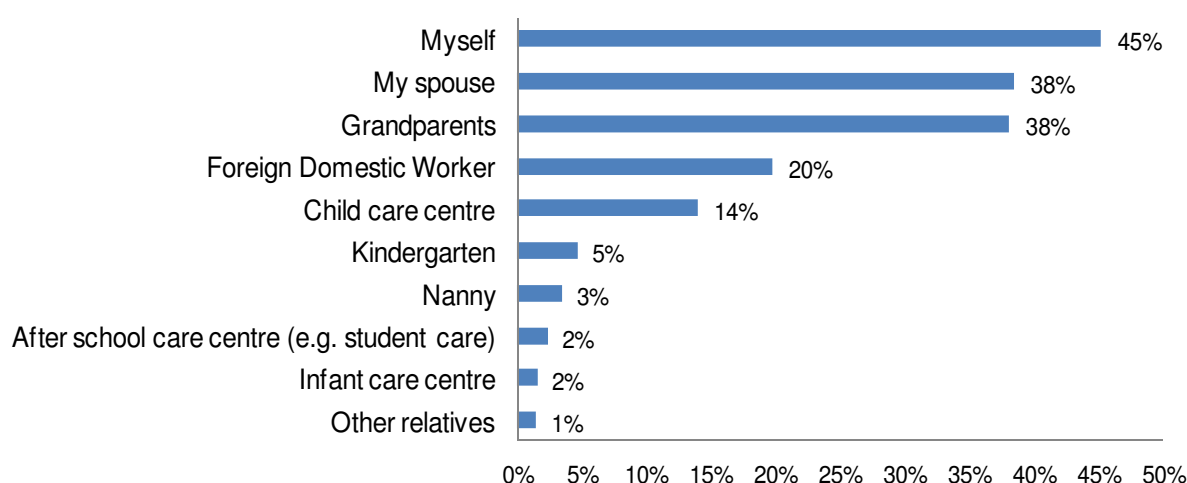


Exhibit 13: Top factors parents took into consideration for current child care arrangement

	2012 Rank	2007 Rank
Trust in caregiver	1	1
Financial cost	2	2
Convenience – close to home	3	4
Caregiver trained to care for and develop child	N/A ^J	3
Caregiver trained to develop and educate child	4	N/A ^L
Caregiver trained to care for child	5	N/A ^L

^J This option was not available in the 2012 survey

^L This option was not available in the 2007 survey

Exhibit 14: Top measures that would influence married respondents to have children / more children

	2012 Rank	
	To Have Children	To Have More Children
Paid maternity leave of 16 weeks	1	1
Baby Bonus Cash Gift for eligible children	2	2
Government Co-Savings via the Child Development Account	3	4
Use of Medisave to defray pre-delivery and delivery costs	4	5
Parenthood Tax Rebate of up to \$20,000 per child	5	3

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