

8 July 2017

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).

I. KEY FINDINGS ON SINGLE RESPONDENTS

- ***Marriage aspirations remain strong***
2. 83% of single Millennials (aged 21-35) indicated they intend to marry, comparable to 86% in 2012.
 - ***However, many are not proactive in dating***
 3. 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](#)).
 4. 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***
 5. 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.
 6. 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%).

7. 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).

II. KEY FINDINGS ON MARRIED RESPONDENTS

- ***Most married respondents prefer 2 or more children***

8. 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).

9. 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***

10. 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%).

11. 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 “full-time work” (without FWAs) and “part-time work”.

12. 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).

13. 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***

14. 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.

15. 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

16. 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.

17. 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

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

19. 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.”

20. 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.”

For media queries, please contact:

Seow Hwee Min (Ms), Corporate Communications Directorate,
National Population and Talent Division, Strategy Group, Prime Minister’s Office
Contact: 6354 9171 (DID) 9773 4150 (HP) Seow_Hwee_Min@pmo.gov.sg (Email)

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The Marriage and Parenthood (M&P) Survey 2016 surveyed 2,940 single (never-married) and 2,861 married Singapore residents aged 21 to 45 years old. The profile of the respondents was as follows:

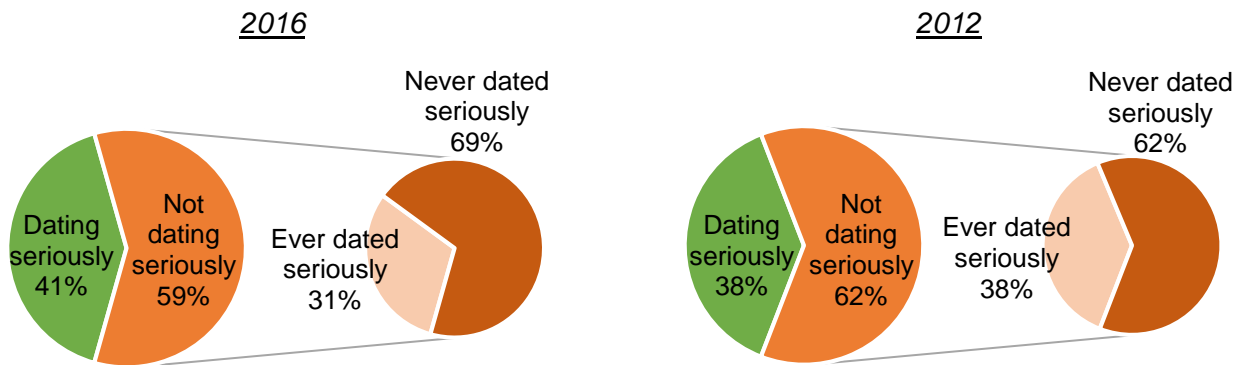
Age Profile	Single respondents	Married respondents
Mean	28.7 years	37.7 years
Median	27.0 years	38.0 years

Profile	Single respondents	Married respondents
Gender		
Male	53%	45%
Female	47%	55%
Ethnicity		
Chinese	78%	71%
Malay	13%	11%
Indian	7%	13%
Others	2%	5%
Citizenship		
Singapore Citizen	92%	90%
Singapore PR	8%	10%
Highest Qualification Attained		
Secondary and below	11%	26%
Diploma/ 'A' Level	40%	30%
Degree and above	49%	44%

.

DETAILS OF FINDINGS FROM MARRIAGE AND PARENTHOOD SURVEY 2016

Chart 1: Breakdown of single respondents by relationship status



Note: "Dating seriously" refers to dating with a view toward marriage.

Chart 2: Single respondents' reasons for not dating (top 5 responses)

Why are you not currently dating? (Tick all that apply)

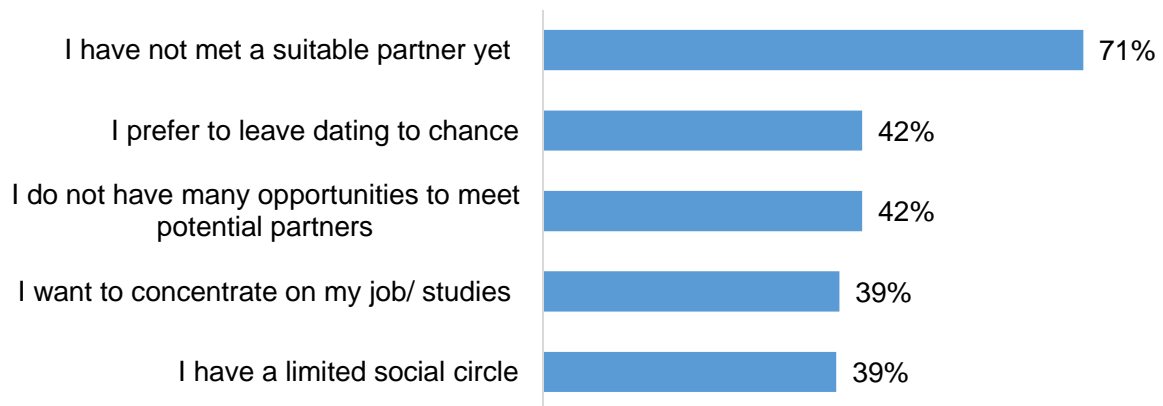


Chart 3A: Singles' level of comfort with ways to meet a potential partner

The following are some ways by which singles may meet their potential partners. Which of these are you comfortable with? (Proportion who indicated "very comfortable"/ "comfortable")

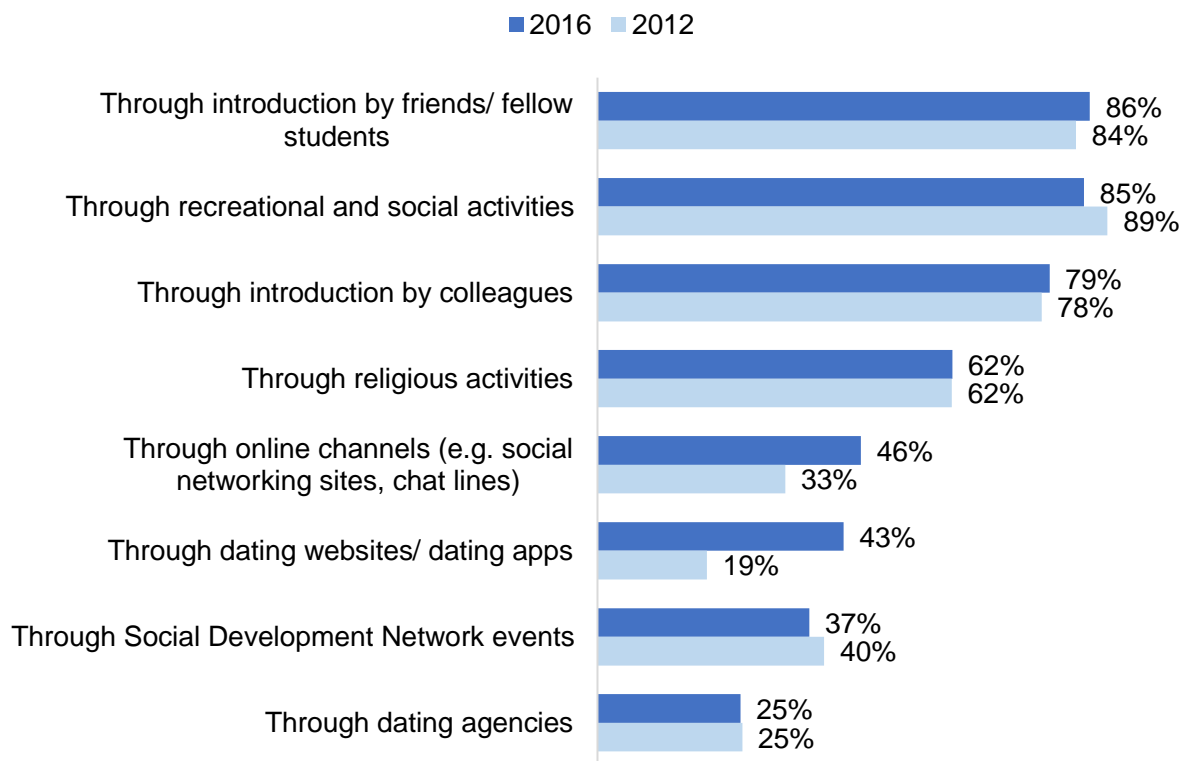


Chart 3B: How single respondents who were/ had been in serious relationships met their partner (top 5 responses)

*How did you meet your partner?
(Proportion among singles who were/ had been in serious relationships)*

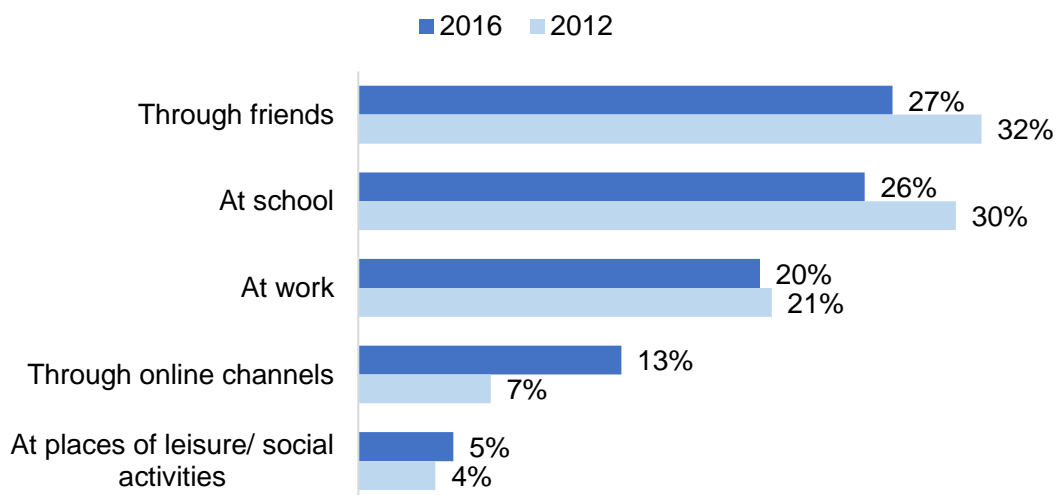


Table 4: Ideal, intended and actual number of children indicated by married respondents

No. of children	All married respondents					
	Ideal		Intended		Actual	
	2016	2012	2016	2012	2016	2012
0	2%	1%	3%	3%	19%	20%
1	6%	8%	12%	13%	26%	29%
2	53%	56%	58%	57%	37%	36%
3 or more	39%	35%	27%	27%	18%	15%
Mean	2.5	2.5	2.2	2.2	2.0	1.9

Table 5: Top reasons cited by married respondents for deciding not to have children/ more children

*What are the reasons you have decided not to have any (more) children?
Please choose the top three in order of priority.*

Reason	Proportion of respondents who selected reason among their top three
Financial cost	61%
Raising children in Singapore is too stressful [^]	56%
Difficult to manage work and family demands [^]	33%
Lack of good caregiving arrangements for my child	19%
Difficulty conceiving	13%

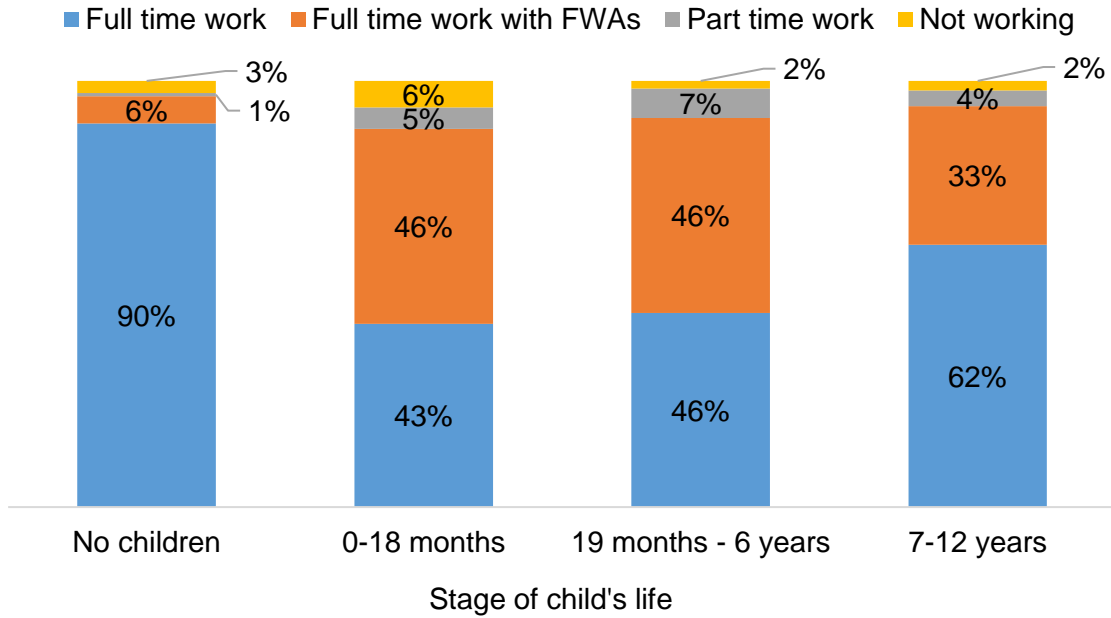
[^] New options included in the 2016 Survey.

Note: The proportions in 2016 cannot be compared with 2012, as new options were included in the 2016 Survey, which were not available in past surveys.

Chart 6: Ideal work arrangements of married respondents, at different stages of child's life

What would your ideal work arrangement be, at the different stages of your child's life?

Male respondents



Female respondents

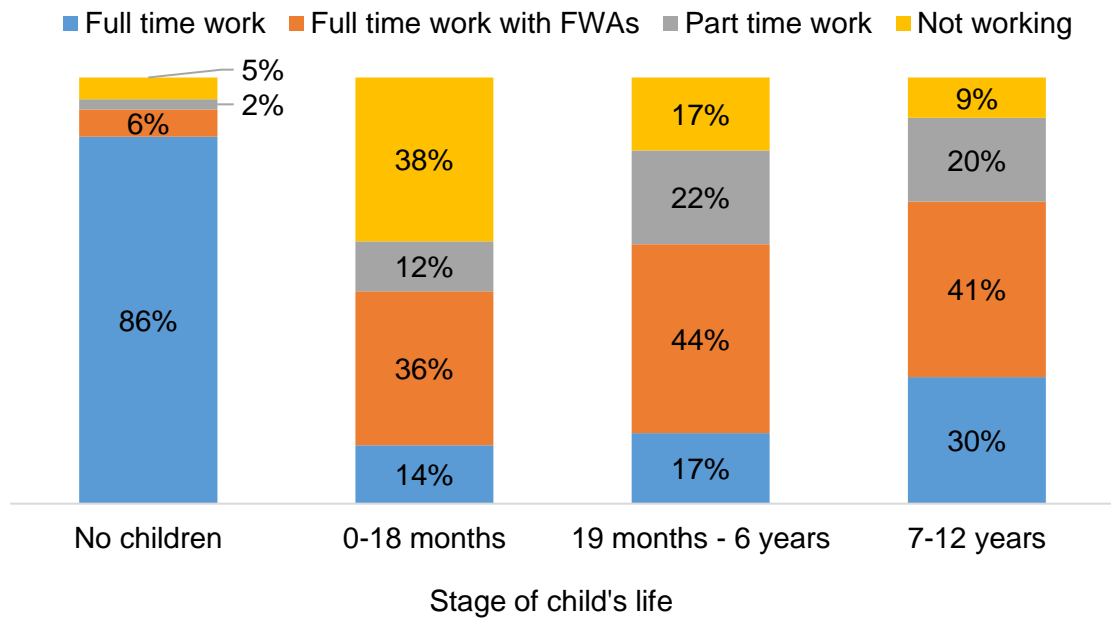


Table 7: Sentiments of married respondents toward FWAs

Statement	Proportion of respondents who indicated Strongly Agree/ Agree
The availability of FWAs would make/ would have made it easier for me to <u>start a family</u> .	87%
The availability of FWAs would make/ would have made it easier for me to <u>have more children</u> .	79%
I am more likely to <u>join</u> an organisation if it provides FWAs.	89%
I am more likely to <u>stay in</u> an organisation that provides FWAs.	91%
The provision of FWAs is an important consideration when I am choosing an organisation to invest my career in.	81%

Table 8: Division of childcare responsibilities

Who is usually responsible for the following tasks in your household?

	Stay home with sick children		Feed young children		Bathe young children	
	2016	2012	2016	2012	2016	2012
Mostly wife	54%	58%	48%	49%	45%	46%
Mostly husband	5%	4%	3%	2%	6%	5%
Shared equally between wife and husband	35%	32%	29%	24%	29%	23%
Foreign domestic worker	3%	2%	13%	15%	15%	16%
Others	3%	5%	6%	11%	5%	11%

Note: Proportions indicated are among the responses of married respondents to whom the question was applicable. Respondents could select more than one option.