

MARRIAGE AND FERTILITY

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The distribution of the resident population by marital status was a reflection of the changes in the marriage institution and the age structure. In 2000, the proportion of married persons had increased further, from 57 per cent in 1990 to 62 per cent in 2000 (Table 1). This was due largely to the changes in age structure with more older, married persons. Even though the proportion of unmarried persons at the younger ages had increased, their population share declined from 36 per cent to 31 per cent on account of smaller cohort sizes. The number of persons who were either divorced or separated doubled. However, they constituted only 2.5 per cent of the resident population.

TABLE 1 MARITAL STATUS OF RESIDENT POPULATION AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER

| | Total | | Males | | Females | |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 |
| | Number ('000) | | | | | |
| Total | 2,078.8 | 2,494.6 | 1,045.6 | 1,229.8 | 1,033.2 | 1,264.9 |
| Single | 747.2 | 760.4 | 422.6 | 413.3 | 324.6 | 347.0 |
| Married | 1,176.4 | 1,543.2 | 586.7 | 771.0 | 589.7 | 772.3 |
| Widowed | 127.3 | 129.2 | 26.1 | 22.6 | 101.3 | 106.7 |
| Divorced/Separated | 27.9 | 61.8 | 10.2 | 22.9 | 17.7 | 38.9 |
| | Per Cent | | | | | |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Single | 35.9 | 30.5 | 40.4 | 33.6 | 31.4 | 27.4 |
| Married | 56.6 | 61.9 | 56.1 | 62.7 | 57.1 | 61.1 |
| Widowed | 6.1 | 5.2 | 2.5 | 1.8 | 9.8 | 8.4 |
| Divorced/Separated | 1.3 | 2.5 | 1.0 | 1.9 | 1.7 | 3.1 |

There were more females than males who were widowed in 2000 due to their longer life expectancy. The unmarried males, however, outnumbered the females. There were fewer divorced males in the population than the females on account of higher re-marriage rates.

Higher Proportion Remaining Unmarried

Among the younger age groups, proportionately more persons were remaining single than ten years ago (Table 2). This was associated with the trend of marrying later in life. The rising trend of singlehood was moderated by immigration as the new permanent residents in these age groups tended to be married. This resulted in the resident population having lower singlehood rates than the citizen population.

In 2000, some 16 per cent of the citizen males were still not married at age 40–44 years, as compared with 14 per cent among the citizen females. This was a reversal of the situation in 1990, when proportionately more citizen females in this age group remained unmarried than citizen males. For the key age group of 30–34 years, one in three of the citizen males and one in five of the citizen females were still unmarried.

**TABLE 2 PROPORTION SINGLE
BY RESIDENTIAL STATUS, SEX AND AGE GROUP**

| Age Group | Per Cent | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|------|--------------------|------|
| | Singapore Residents | | Singapore Citizens | |
| | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 |
| Males | | | | |
| 20 – 24 | 94.2 | 95.2 | 94.1 | 95.4 |
| 25 – 29 | 64.1 | 64.2 | 64.0 | 66.4 |
| 30 – 34 | 34.0 | 30.7 | 33.9 | 33.3 |
| 35 – 39 | 18.1 | 19.7 | 17.8 | 21.5 |
| 40 – 44 | 10.9 | 14.8 | 10.4 | 15.5 |
| Females | | | | |
| 20 – 24 | 78.5 | 83.8 | 79.0 | 86.6 |
| 25 – 29 | 39.3 | 40.2 | 39.6 | 45.5 |
| 30 – 34 | 20.9 | 19.5 | 20.9 | 21.9 |
| 35 – 39 | 14.8 | 15.1 | 14.7 | 16.2 |
| 40 – 44 | 11.5 | 13.6 | 11.4 | 14.1 |

High Proportion Unmarried among Less Educated Males and Better Educated Females

Singlehood was more prevalent among citizen males with below secondary qualifications and graduate citizen females. At age 40–44 years, 21 per cent of the males with below secondary qualifications were single in 2000, as compared with only 9 per cent of the graduate males (Table 3). In contrast, 27 per cent of the older graduate females were single, as compared with 9 per cent of the less educated females in the same age group.

Compared with 1990, singlehood rates among the citizen males had increased generally across all education levels. Those with below secondary qualifications had the largest increase in singlehood rate in the last decade – by 9 percentage points. For the citizen females, the increases occurred mainly among the graduates and those with below secondary qualifications. Singlehood rates had declined for females with secondary or post-secondary qualifications.

**TABLE 3 PROPORTION SINGLE AMONG MALE AND FEMALE CITIZENS
BY AGE GROUP AND HIGHEST QUALIFICATION ATTAINED**

| Highest Qualification Attained | Per Cent | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|------|-------|------|-------|------|
| | 30–34 | | 35–39 | | 40–44 | |
| | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 |
| Males | | | | | | |
| Below Secondary | 37.2 | 41.0 | 21.0 | 29.2 | 12.3 | 21.1 |
| Secondary | 31.4 | 30.4 | 15.2 | 18.3 | 7.9 | 13.8 |
| Post-Secondary | 29.2 | 29.5 | 13.2 | 16.0 | 7.9 | 9.8 |
| University | 31.2 | 33.1 | 12.4 | 17.4 | 6.1 | 8.6 |
| Females | | | | | | |
| Below Secondary | 14.9 | 15.6 | 10.4 | 11.1 | 8.0 | 9.1 |
| Secondary | 23.6 | 18.4 | 19.0 | 14.5 | 17.6 | 14.8 |
| Post-Secondary | 30.6 | 24.4 | 24.7 | 21.4 | 20.9 | 20.4 |
| University | 33.3 | 32.8 | 27.3 | 29.1 | 24.0 | 26.7 |

Ethnic Differentials in Singlehood Trends

Among the older citizen males aged 35–44 years, the Chinese with below secondary qualifications had the highest singlehood rate – 28 per cent in 2000 compared with 14–15 per cent for the Malays and Indians (Table 4). For the university-educated males, the proportion single was higher among the Indians (16 per cent) than the Chinese (14 per cent) and Malays (9.1 per cent). Compared with 1990, the singlehood rate for the older males had increased across all educational levels for all the three main ethnic groups.

The Chinese had the highest singlehood rate for the older females. Some 29 per cent of graduate Chinese females aged 35–44 years were single in 2000, compared with 25 per cent of the Malays and 14 per cent of the Indians. Between 1990 and 2000, the graduate singlehood rate had increased for the Chinese and Malays but not the Indians. For older females with secondary and post-secondary qualifications, the proportion single declined over the decade for all the three main ethnic groups.

TABLE 4 PROPORTION SINGLE AMONG MALE AND FEMALE CITIZENS AGED 35–44 YEARS BY HIGHEST QUALIFICATION ATTAINED AND ETHNIC GROUP

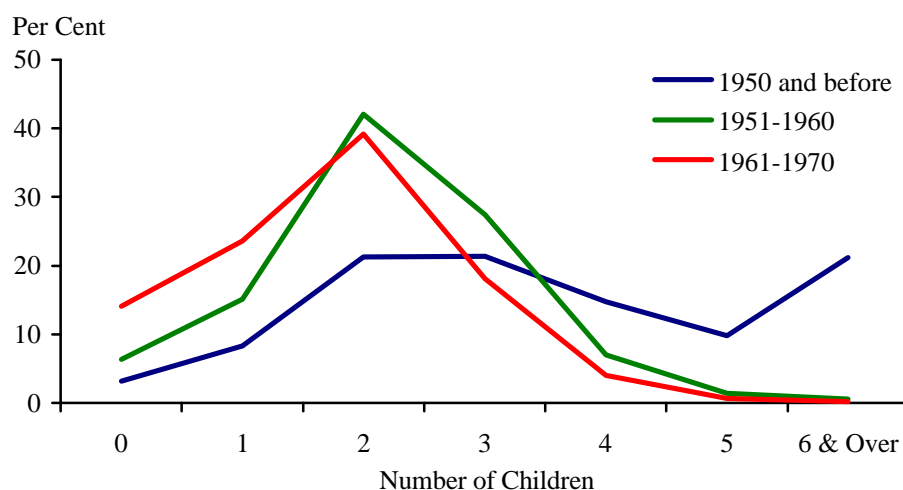
| Highest Qualification Attained | Per Cent | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|------|--------|------|---------|------|
| | Chinese | | Malays | | Indians | |
| | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 |
| Males | | | | | | |
| Below Secondary | 18.3 | 28.2 | 10.5 | 13.7 | 11.8 | 15.2 |
| Secondary | 13.3 | 18.4 | 7.1 | 9.0 | 9.3 | 10.9 |
| Post-Secondary | 11.3 | 13.9 | 6.3 | 7.7 | 10.9 | 10.6 |
| University | 9.4 | 13.5 | 8.2 | 9.1 | 13.9 | 15.7 |
| Females | | | | | | |
| Below Secondary | 9.6 | 10.8 | 7.4 | 7.4 | 8.4 | 8.3 |
| Secondary | 19.5 | 16.5 | 12.0 | 8.2 | 14.9 | 9.9 |
| Post-Secondary | 23.8 | 22.1 | 17.2 | 13.8 | 21.5 | 14.9 |
| University | 26.7 | 29.2 | 23.1 | 25.4 | 20.6 | 14.1 |

NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN

Smaller Family Size

The average family size had become smaller. In 2000, each ever-married female had 2.5 children on average, compared with 2.8 children in 1990. The decline in family size occurred for ever-married females across all age groups. Chart 1 shows the shifting of the graphs towards the left, indicating fewer children born to each birth cohort of the females. The average number of children born had declined from 3.9 for the pre-1950 cohort to 1.8 for the 1961 to 1970 cohort.

CHART 1 RESIDENT EVER-MARRIED FEMALES AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER BY BIRTH COHORT AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN



Older Age at First Marriage

The decline in family size was associated with the trend towards delay in marriage. More females were marrying later than before. The delay in marriage occurred for females at all levels of qualification and in all the main ethnic groups (Table 5). The increase in marriage age was most marked for females with secondary or lower qualifications. Malay and Indian females had the largest increase in marriage age between the period 1960 or earlier and 1991–2000 – 7 years as compared with 6 years for Chinese females.

TABLE 5 AVERAGE AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE BY YEAR OF MARRIAGE OF RESIDENT EVER-MARRIED FEMALES

| | Years | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | 1960 or Earlier | 1961–1970 | 1971–1980 | 1981–1990 | 1991–2000 |
| Ethnic Group | | | | | |
| Chinese | 20.7 | 23.3 | 24.3 | 26.1 | 26.9 |
| Malays | 17.7 | 19.9 | 21.7 | 23.5 | 24.8 |
| Indians | 18.0 | 20.3 | 22.1 | 24.0 | 25.3 |
| Others | 21.1 | 23.2 | 23.8 | 25.7 | 27.0 |
| Qualification | | | | | |
| Below Secondary | 20.0 | 22.4 | 23.6 | 25.3 | 26.9 |
| Secondary | 22.0 | 23.2 | 23.8 | 25.3 | 26.3 |
| Post-Secondary | 23.7 | 24.6 | 24.6 | 25.9 | 26.3 |
| University | 24.5 | 25.3 | 25.2 | 26.3 | 26.9 |

More Women with No Children or Only One Child

Among the younger age groups, the proportion childless had increased significantly. Almost half of the ever-married females below 30 years of age and 14 per cent of those aged 30–39 had yet to have children in 2000 (Table 6). The corresponding proportions in 1990 were 38 per cent and 11 per cent. The rise was due to the delay in marriage and childbearing. However, the proportion of childless families at the end of the reproductive span was still low, though on a rising trend.

TABLE 6 RESIDENT EVER-MARRIED FEMALES AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER BY NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN AND AGE GROUP

| Number of Children | Per Cent | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Total | | Below 30 | | 30–39 | | 40–49 | | 50 & Over | |
| | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| None | 11.5 | 11.7 | 38.1 | 47.3 | 11.0 | 14.2 | 4.7 | 6.4 | 3.5 | 3.2 |
| 1 | 16.2 | 16.6 | 33.3 | 30.7 | 20.9 | 23.6 | 10.5 | 15.1 | 7.0 | 8.4 |
| 2 | 27.2 | 31.2 | 22.1 | 17.1 | 41.4 | 39.1 | 32.2 | 42.0 | 12.9 | 21.3 |
| 3 | 18.0 | 20.3 | 5.5 | 4.1 | 20.9 | 18.1 | 28.3 | 27.4 | 14.8 | 21.4 |
| 4 | 9.2 | 8.4 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 4.5 | 4.1 | 14.1 | 7.0 | 14.6 | 14.8 |
| 5 & Over | 17.9 | 11.9 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 1.2 | 0.9 | 10.2 | 2.0 | 47.2 | 31.0 |
| Average Number of Children | 2.8 | 2.5 | 1.0 | 0.8 | 1.9 | 1.8 | 2.8 | 2.2 | 4.7 | 3.9 |

One-child families were getting more common. Among ever-married females aged 30–39 years, 24 per cent had one child in 2000 compared with 21 per cent in 1990 (Table 6). For women aged 40–49 years who were likely to have completed child-bearing, the proportion with one child also increased, from 11 per cent in 1990 to 15 per cent in 2000.

Smaller Family Sizes for All Ethnic Groups

The average family size declined for all ethnic groups in the last ten years (Table 7). Of the three main ethnic groups, the Chinese had the smallest family size in 2000 within each age group. For the age group 40–49 years, the Chinese had only 2.1 children compared with 2.8 for the Malays in 2000. The difference was similar for the age group 30–39 years. The Chinese had 1.6 children as compared with 2.4 children for the Malays.

TABLE 7 AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN BY ETHNIC GROUP AND AGE GROUP OF RESIDENT EVER-MARRIED FEMALES

| Age Group | Chinese | | Malays | | Indians | | Others | |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 |
| Total | 2.8 | 2.5 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 2.7 | 2.4 | 2.3 | 2.0 |
| Below 30 | 0.9 | 0.6 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 0.9 | 1.0 |
| 30 – 39 | 1.8 | 1.6 | 2.4 | 2.4 | 2.0 | 1.9 | 1.6 | 1.6 |
| 40 – 49 | 2.6 | 2.1 | 3.5 | 2.8 | 2.9 | 2.2 | 2.2 | 1.9 |
| 50 & Over | 4.5 | 3.7 | 5.9 | 4.9 | 4.7 | 3.9 | 3.7 | 3.0 |

Fewer Children among Better Educated Females

There was a strong correlation between family size and educational level of the females. On average, university graduates in all age groups had the fewest children (Table 8). For the age group 40–49 years in 2000, ever-married graduate females had 1.9 children compared with 2.4 children for those with below secondary qualifications. The fertility differential was larger among the younger females in their thirties – 1.3 children for the graduates as against 2.1 children for females with below secondary education. This was largely due to late marriage among the graduates.

TABLE 8 AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN BY HIGHEST QUALIFICATION ATTAINED AND AGE GROUP OF RESIDENT EVER-MARRIED FEMALES

| Age Group | Below Secondary | | Secondary | | Post-Secondary | | University | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|----------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 |
| Total | 3.4 | 3.3 | 1.6 | 1.9 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.4 | 1.3 |
| Below 30 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 0.6 | 0.6 | 0.4 | 0.4 |
| 30 – 39 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.4 | 1.3 |
| 40 – 49 | 3.0 | 2.4 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 1.9 |
| 50 & Over | 4.8 | 4.2 | 3.0 | 2.5 | 2.8 | 2.3 | 2.5 | 2.2 |

Among females who had completed child-bearing, the university-educated had the highest proportion with no children or only one child. Some 10 per cent of the graduate females aged 40–49 years were childless in 2000, almost double the proportion for those with below secondary qualifications (5.4 per cent) (Table 9). Another 19 per cent of the graduates in the same age group had only one child. Taken together, 28 per cent of the university-educated females were childless or had only one child. This was closely followed by those with post-secondary qualification (26 per cent) and secondary qualification (24 per cent).

TABLE 9 PROPORTION OF RESIDENT EVER-MARRIED FEMALES AGED 40–49 YEARS WITH NO CHILDREN OR ONE CHILD

| | Per Cent | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|------------|----------------|-------------|
| | No Children | | One Child Only | |
| | 1990 | 2000 | 1990 | 2000 |
| Total | 4.7 | 6.4 | 10.5 | 15.1 |
| Below Secondary | 4.1 | 5.4 | 8.7 | 12.6 |
| Secondary | 6.4 | 6.6 | 15.9 | 17.2 |
| Post-Secondary | 6.1 | 8.0 | 15.2 | 18.4 |
| University | 7.8 | 9.4 | 15.9 | 18.6 |