

WHY DO MEN AND WOMEN REMAIN SINGLE? FINDINGS FROM THE FIFTH MALAYSIAN POPULATION AND FAMILY SURVEY (MPFS-5) AND FAMILY SURVEY (MPFS-5)

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INTRODUCTION

Marriage is one of the most important social institutions. In Malaysia, the marriage pattern has changed a lot over the past few decades. Socioeconomic development, rising educational level and financial independence have led to the increase in delayed marriage and non-marriage. Between 1980 and 2010, the singulate mean age at first marriage among men and women increased from 26.6 years and 23.5 years to 28.0 years and 25.7 years, respectively. Among men aged 25-29, the proportion never married had increased from 40 percent in 1980 to 53 percent in 2010, while that of the women had also increased from 21 percent to 38 percent. The proportion remaining single at aged 30-34 almost doubled from 15 percent to 28 percent among the men and from 10 percent to 18 percent among the women¹.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents in this survey according to their socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. A total of 1,338 respondents aged 25-49 were interviewed. This sample consisted of 62.6 percent males and 37.4 percent females. Majority (68.2%) of the respondents lived in urban areas. The sample comprised of 61.7 percent Malays, 17.2 percent Chinese and 6.9 percent Indians. Half (51.2%) of the respondents were within the age group of 25-29. Almost all of the respondents had some level of education; the majority had secondary education, 52.2 percent; followed by tertiary education, 40.1 percent; while the rest had primary education, 7.0 percent and no schooling, 0.7 percent. Majority (84.5%) of the respondents were currently working. Almost one-third (33.3%) of the respondents had less than RM1,000 income per month.

Table 1: Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Categories	n	Percent
Gender	Male	837	62.6
	Female	501	37.4
Stratum	Urban	913	68.2
	Rural	425	31.8
Ethnicity	Malay	825	61.7
	Chinese	230	17.2
	Indian	92	6.9
	Bumiputera	127	9.4
	Other Bumiputera	53	4.0
	Others	11	0.8
Age	25 - 29 years	685	51.2
	30 - 34 years	304	22.7
	35 - 39 years	158	11.8
	40 - 44 years	113	8.4
	45 - 49 years	78	5.8
Education Level	No Schooling	9	0.7
	Primary	94	7.0
	Secondary	698	52.2
	Tertiary	537	40.1
Work status	Currently not working	207	15.5
	Currently working	1,131	84.5
Monthly Income	Below than RM1,000	375	33.2
	RM1,000-RM1,999	285	25.2
	RM2,000-RM2,999	180	15.9
	RM3,000-RM3,999	118	10.4
	RM4,000 and above	173	15.3

OBJECTIVE

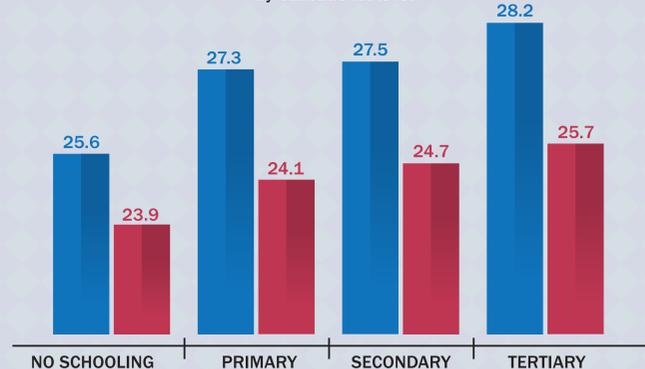
The objective of this study is to identify the reasons why men and women remain single and the criteria for choosing a life partner.

DATA SOURCE

Data for this study is a sub-sample of a national Malaysian Population and Family Survey (MPFS-5) conducted in 2014 by the National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN) of Malaysia. The respondents in this study were men and women who have never married between 25 to 49 years old.

The mean suitable age to get married is reported higher by the respondents as the education level increases. Those respondents with "No schooling" has the opinion that men should get married by age 25 and women at 23 years old. However, respondents with tertiary education felt an ideal age for men and women to be married is around 28 and 26 years old, respectively.

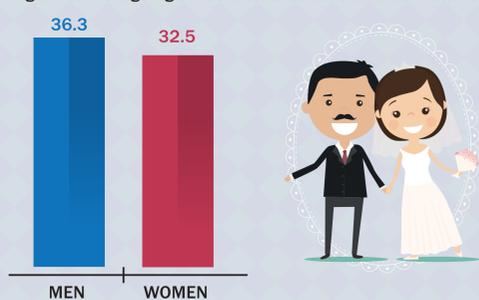
Figure 2: Average suitable age to get married for men and women by educational level



HOW LATE IS "TOO LATE" TO GET MARRIED

Respondents were asked about what age is considered late to get married. Overall, the respondents felt that age above 36 for men and over 32 for women can be considered late (Figure 3).

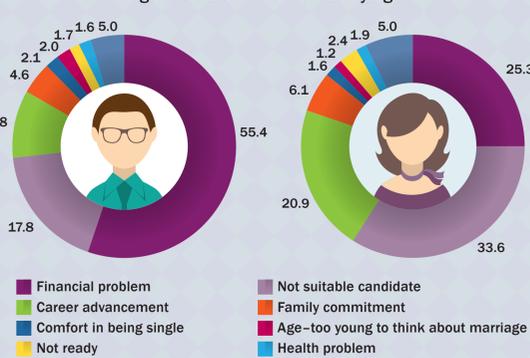
Figure 3: Average age that is considered late to be married



WHY CHOOSE NOT TO MARRY

Majority (87.7%) of the respondents have the intention to marry. However, more than half (53.4%) of the male respondents did not marry due to financial problem (55.4%), no suitable candidate (17.8%) and career advancement (9.8%). Among the female, the reasons of why they are still single were because of they have not found eligible suitors (33.6%), financial problem (25.3%) and career advancement (20.9%) (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Reason for not marrying

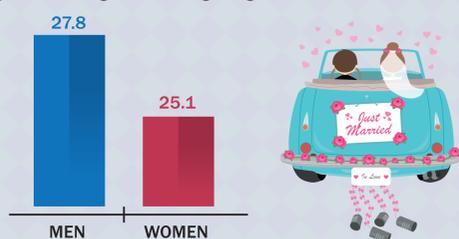


* Includes still studying, long distance relationship, not ready, waiting for engagement

WHEN SHOULD I GET MARRIED?

Generally, men tend to get married later than women. Figure 1 and figure 2 show the respondents' opinion on what age should men and women get married. The ideal age for men to get married is around 28 years old while women should get married at age 25.

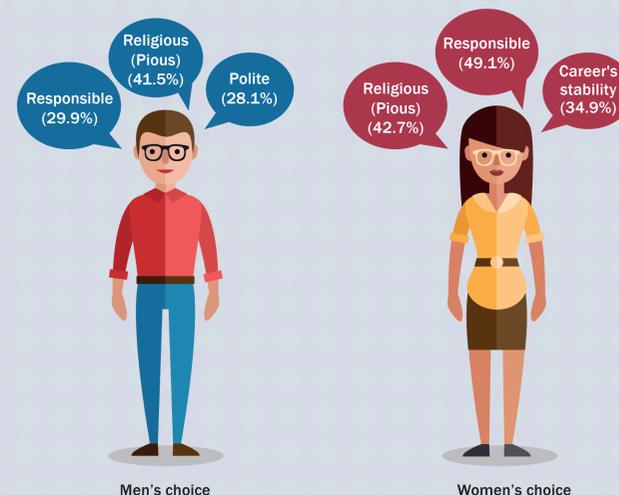
Figure 1: Average suitable age to get married for men and women



QUALITIES OF MARRIAGE PARTNER

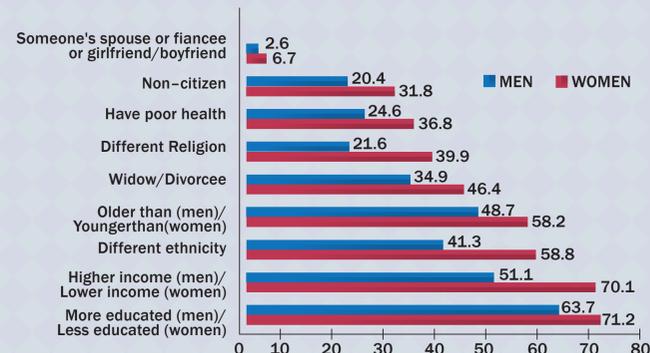
Respondents were asked on the qualities of partner that they are seeking for. Religious (Pious), Responsible and Polite were the top three qualities that male respondents are looking in their choice of partner while for the female respondents, Responsible, Religious (Pious) and Career's Stability were the top three qualities that they wished for in their life partner (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Three (3) Top Qualities in Choice of Marriage Partner



Everyone has their own choice of characteristics (wish list) in choosing their partner. Respondents were also asked if they would accept partners with a certain criteria (Figure 7). Majority of the male respondents would accept partners with higher education qualification, higher income, of a different race or older than them. However, as for the women, most of them would not mind marrying someone with lower education level than them but many would not choose to marry a man/partner with lower income, different race or are younger than them.

Figure 7: Three (3) Top Qualities in Choice of Marriage Partner



COST FOR A WEDDING

It is a known fact that weddings are expensive and there is no way around it. Just how expensive are they? Data from the Fifth Malaysian Population and Family Survey revealed that the perceived average wedding cost is RM21,455.40. However, the affordable average wedding cost is reported much lower at RM16,637.17. Female respondents indicated a slightly higher amount for both the estimated average expenses and the amount that they can afford to spend than their counterparts, RM22,392.12 and RM17,223.24, respectively (Table 2).

	Expenses NEEDED	AFFORDABLE Expenses
Male	RM 20,949.69	RM 16,320.77
Female	RM 22,392.12	RM 17,223.24
All Respondents	RM 21,455.40	RM 16,637.17

Table 2: Perceived Cost of A Wedding

CONCLUSION

While most of them still want marriage, they don't want it with just anybody or at just any price. Both men and women have different reasons for staying single. However, the study revealed that, the two main reasons are financial problems and in search of a suitable candidate as their future husband or wife. Both men and women wished for a responsible and pious partner. For security reason, female respondents indicated career stability as another top criterion in selection of a partner. It is no secret that many women do not choose to marry if the available partners will make their economic situation worse. Male and female respondents also perceived differently on cost of organizing a wedding, the amount that is expected to be spent as well as the affordable amount. Generally, the affordable average wedding cost is much lower than the actual perceived amount. Female reported much higher amount than male respondents for both perceived and amount for a wedding. It depends, of course, on factors like, where you get married, how many people you invite, or is it for immediate family only.

In conclusion, the desire to have a life partner is high among these single respondents (both male and female) that participated in the survey. The problems highlighted need to be given due attention and handle wisely so that they could get married at the desired age and to have a family they wish to build for their love, their partner and their children. Nevertheless, the rise of the voluntarily single person has been happening in Malaysian societies slowly. It is different now as people get pickier, more factors enter into the marriage equation. They want to craft a life instead of having it pressed upon them. That means some of us will be single for a long time, and some of us will be single for life.

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