

Parenthood and Work

Survey 2024



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Introduction

Since 1 January 2024, working fathers of Singaporean children can take up to four weeks of government-paid paternity leave, an increase from just two weeks of paternity leave previously. The additional two weeks are currently given on a voluntary basis, subject to the employer's discretion.¹

In her speech during the 2024 Committee of Supply debate, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Indranee Rajah said that the Government is looking to mandate this additional paternity leave to benefit more fathers "as soon as possible" while encouraging employers to begin adjusting to ensure a smoother transition when the mandatory provision eventually kicks in.² This is one of the initiatives which the Government has taken to create a Singapore that is "made for families".

Just how welcome is this move among Singaporeans and what are Singaporeans' perceptions regarding paternity leave, in relation to encouraging child-bearing and family-building in Singapore? Do people feel that paternity and maternity leaves are sufficient? What other approaches could the Government explore to make Singapore a nation truly "made for families"?³

Cultivate commissioned Milieu Insight to conduct an online survey to explore the relationship between Parenthood and Work. This online, self-administered survey was completed by 1,000 Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents, comprised of 300 fathers, 300 mothers and 400 non-parents over the period of 20 June to 3 July 2024.

In this survey, we explored the attitudes towards parenthood, parental leave and realities of work and parenting. Sentiments between the ages, sexes and parental status are compared, revealing differences in perspectives.

Our findings show the potential and room for further studies concerning the hiring of temporary work covers, expanding options for childcare (e.g. grandparents) and even the nature of the work and workplace.

Key Findings

1. **Paternity and maternity leaves are perceived as too short, although taking them in full is a challenge due to work commitments and circumstances**

Currently, eligible working fathers are given 4 weeks of paternity leave and mothers are given 16 weeks of maternity leave (inclusive of 4 weeks of shareable parental leave). 68% of Singaporeans say that paternity leave is too short, while 55% of Singaporeans say the same for maternity leave.

Most Singaporeans report different ideal durations of maternity and paternity leaves. The median ideal maternity leave duration (20 weeks) is more than double the median ideal paternity leave duration (8 weeks). This suggests that respondents see a difference between the respective needs of fathers and mothers.

However, taking paternity or maternity leave in full is still a challenge.

At least 1 in 5 respondents expressed that their companies have been reluctant to let employees go on their respective parental leave (21% for maternity leave; 27% for paternity leave). Fathers are more likely to point this out, and companies are reportedly more reluctant to let them go on paternity leave (among fathers, the figures are 26% for maternity leave; 38% for paternity leave).

When parents were asked what might cause or prevent them from taking paternity or maternity leave in full, almost 1 in 2 (46%) indicated work commitments and work circumstances as such possible barriers.

2. **Paternity leave is believed to make it easier for people to have children**

Most respondents (61%) agree that paternity leave would make it easier for people to have children. Parents are more likely to agree (64%) as compared to non-parents (56%).

This could be linked to another finding, where most respondents believe that paternity leave allows fathers to be more involved in their newborn's life (83%). Similarly, parents are more likely to agree (87%) as compared to their non-parent counterparts (77%).

3. **Married non-parents at typical child-bearing age are still largely interested in having children**

78% of married respondents who are of typical childbearing age (22-44)⁴ and without children expressed interest in having children. A majority said that they want to have children (54%), and another 24% responded 'not now' to having children. The remainder (22%) said 'no' to having children.

Overall, about 1 in 5 Singaporeans wished they had children earlier (18%). This sentiment is most pronounced among those aged 35–44 (30%), and is also higher among those who are married without children (24%).

4. Parents are more satisfied with their decisions regarding career and having children, compared to those married without children

55% of parents reported being satisfied with their decisions regarding career and having children. By contrast, only 30% of respondents who are married without children share this sentiment.

Less than 1 in 10 respondents (8.9%) felt that career has held them back from having children.

5. Temporary hires are preferred as work covers for employees on parental leave by their colleagues

The experience of covering a colleague on parental leave was overwhelmingly described as negative (86% of all points raised in collected responses). Only 4% of the points raised by respondents are positive.

By contrast, experiences with having a temporary hire cover a colleague on parental leave seemed relatively more desirable, with about 29% of the points raised as positive, and only 49% raised as negative.

6. Material and financial provision continues to be the most commonly perceived role for fathers, while care-oriented roles dominate perceptions of a mother

Material and financial provision stands as the top-mentioned perceived role of a father (44.6%), far above other roles such as giving moral guidance (14.0%), caregiving (14.0%) and education (13.3%).

There are however some differences between how a mother perceives a father's role, as compared to how a father perceives his own role. While more fathers hold "Material/financial provision" (47.7%) as a role for themselves, only 39.7% of the mothers felt that way about a father's roles. Instead, mothers regard "Caregiving" as a role for fathers (18.3%) more commonly than fathers do (11.0%).

Care-oriented roles dominate as the 3 most common perceived roles of a mother. Material/financial provision is hardly mentioned (6.4%) as a role for mothers.

Parenthood *and* Parental Leave

Aspirations for having children remains close to population replacement rate of 2.1 in spite of Singapore hitting its lowest ever total fertility rate of 0.97 in 2023.⁵ Our survey found that about 6 in 10 youths (age 16-34) still perceive “2” to be the ideal number of children they want to have (see Fig. 1).

This said, the younger generations are more likely (about 1 in 10) to not desire having children (see Fig. 2).

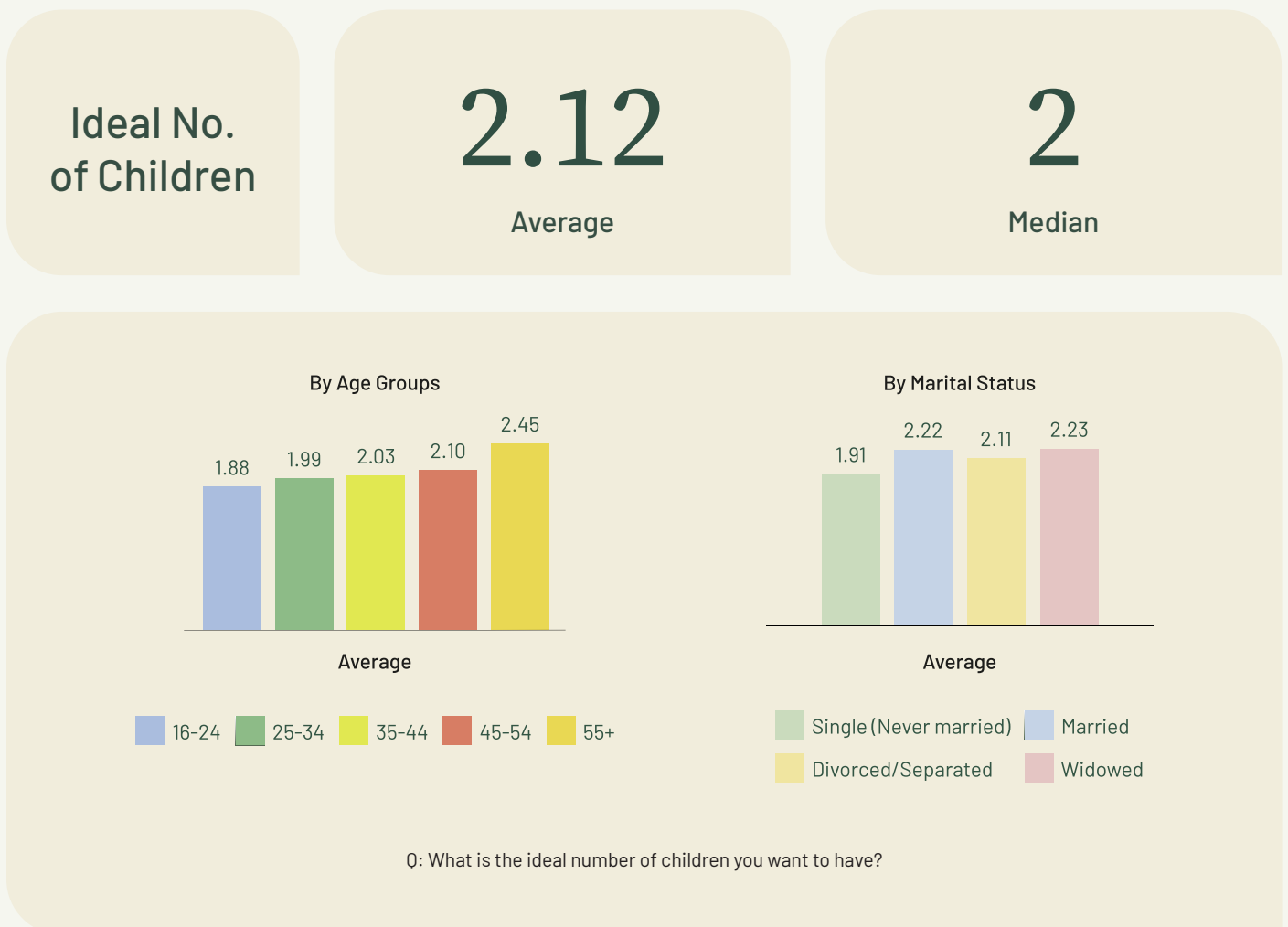
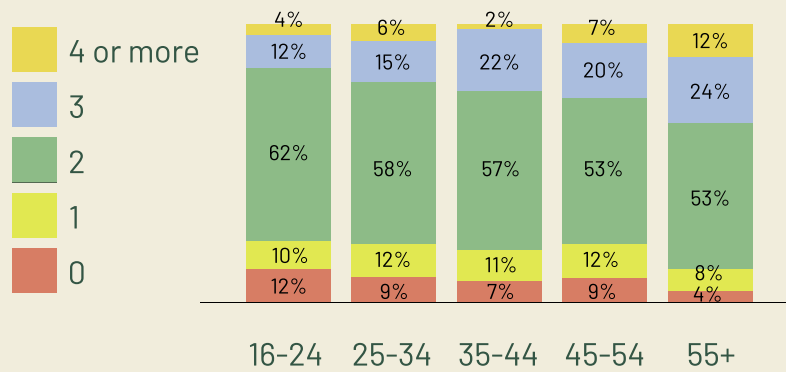


Fig. 1 – Ideal number of children respondents want to have (average)



Q: What is the ideal number of children you want to have?

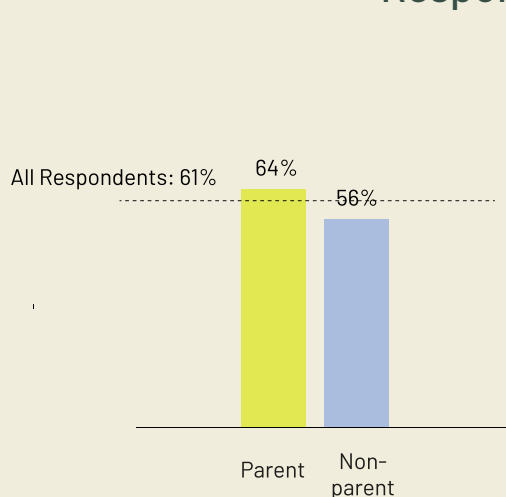
The sum of the %s for all answer options may not be 100% as all are rounded to nearest whole %

Fig. 2 – Ideal number of children respondents want to have (breakdown by age group)

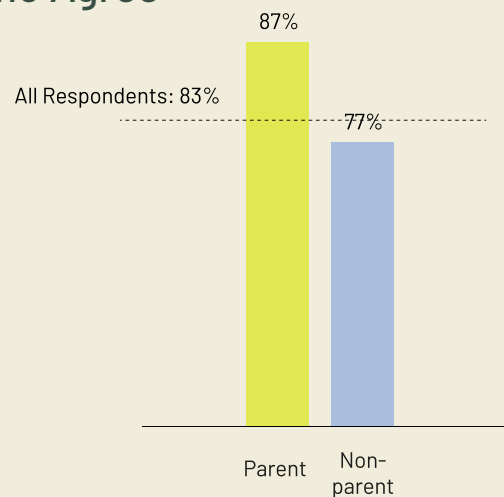
Maternity and Paternity Leave Durations Matter

Most respondents (61%) believe that paternity leave makes it easier for people to have children (see Fig. 3). This could be related to how most respondents (83%) believe that paternity leave allows fathers to play a bigger role in their newborn's life (see Fig. 4).

Respondents who Agree



Q: Please let us know your views concerning the following statements: Paternity leave makes it easier for people to have children



Q: Please let us know your views concerning the following statements: Paternity leave allows fathers to play a bigger role in their newborn's life

Fig. 3 - Paternity leave makes it easier for people to have children

Fig. 4 - Paternity leave makes it easier for people to have children

However, only 4 in 10 respondents (39%) agree that maternity/paternity leave durations influence their decision on whether to have children (see Fig. 5). Parents are more likely to appreciate parental leave durations and have their personal decisions affected by it. The difference between fathers and mothers is not statistically significant.

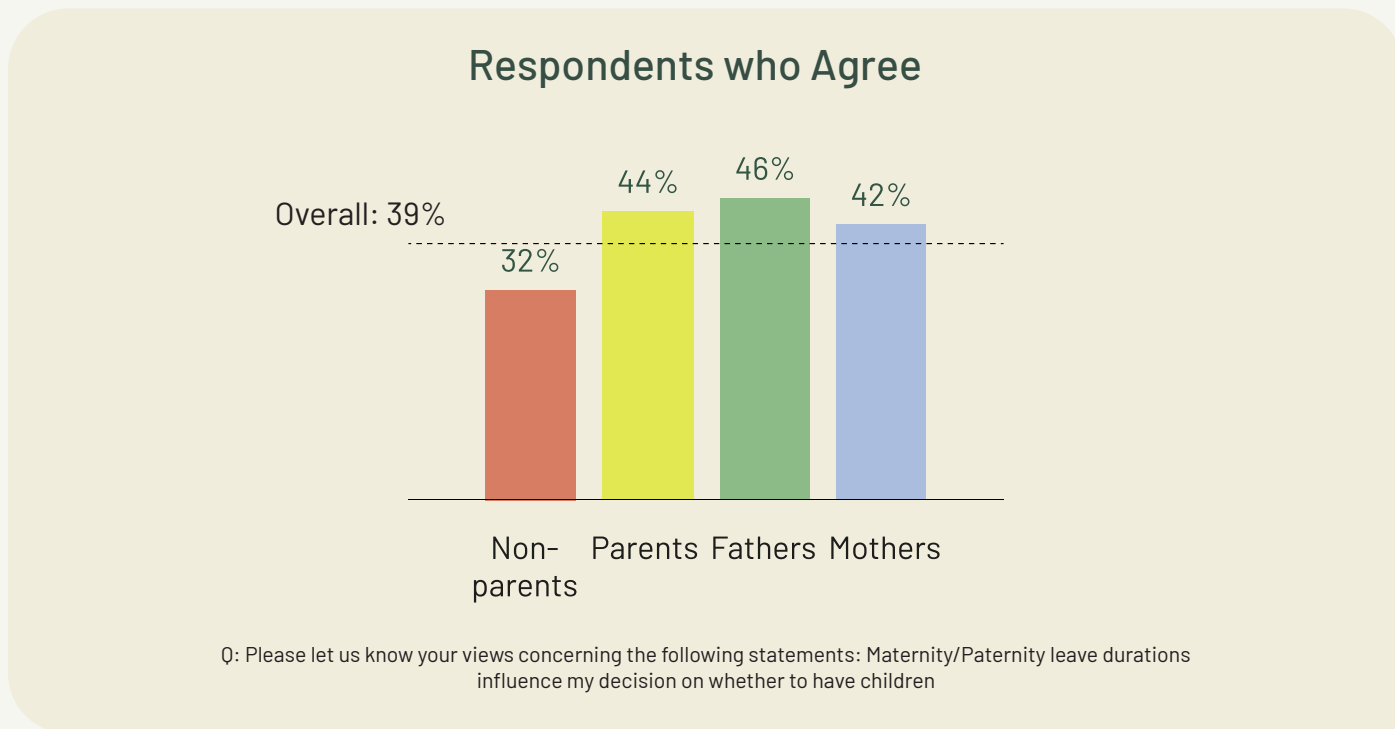
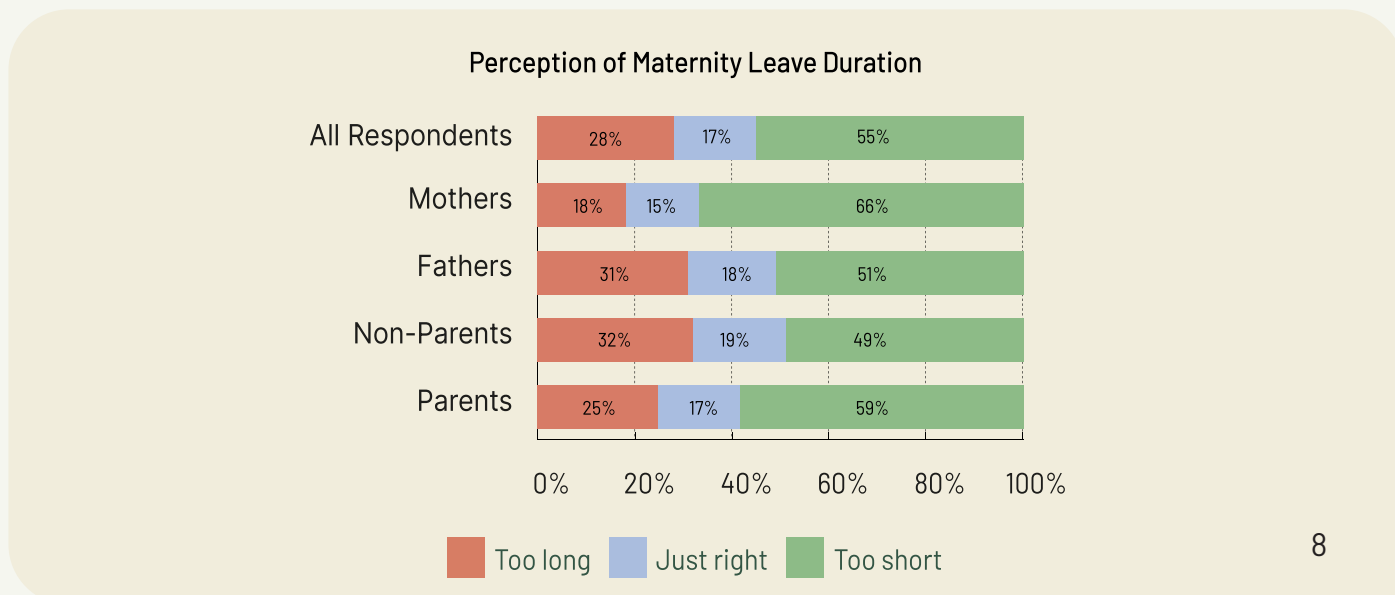


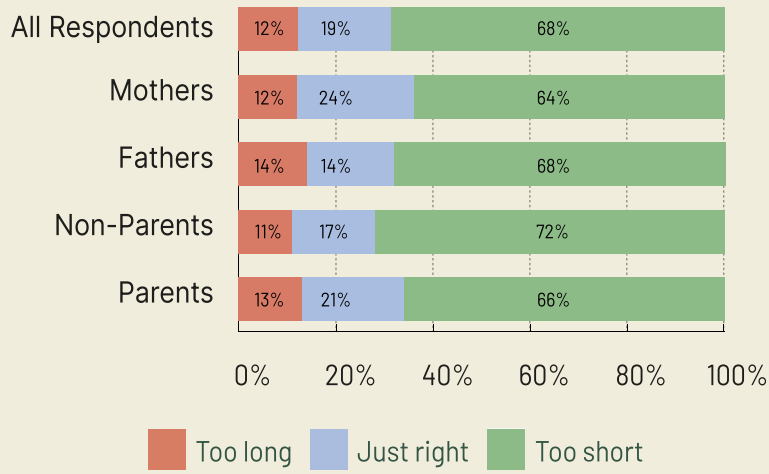
Fig. 5 - Maternity/Paternity leave durations' influences my decision whether to have children

Ideal Duration of Leaves

Overall, respondents feel that existing parental leave durations are too short (see Fig. 6). More respondents feel that paternity leave duration is too short (68%) as compared to maternity leave (55%). Mothers are more likely to feel that existing maternity leave provision is too short (66%).



Perception of Paternity Leave Duration



The sum of the %s for all answer options may not be 100% as all are rounded to nearest whole %

Q: What is the ideal duration (in weeks) for Paternity/Maternity/Shared Parental leave in your opinion?

Fig. 6 – Perception of Paternity/Maternity Leave duration

Among respondents, the ideal duration for paternity leave is 15 weeks on average (median 8 weeks), for maternity 25 weeks on average (median 20 weeks), and for shared parental leave 15 weeks on average (median 8 weeks)(see Fig. 7).

	Paternity		Maternity		Shared	
	Average	Median	Average	Median	Average	Median
All Respondents	15.3	8	25.0	20	15.1	8
Fathers	14.4	8	25.0	19	14.0	6
Mothers	16.0	8	27.5	24	15.3	8

Q: What is the ideal duration (in weeks) for paternity/Maternity/Shared Parental leave in your opinion?

Fig. 7 – Ideal duration of leave (Indicated by all respondents, fathers and mothers only)

Respondents aged 25-34 are most keen on longer durations for paternity, maternity and shared parental leave (see Fig. 8). The differences across the age groups could be indicative of different attitudes towards paternal and maternal involvement in the life of a newborn and/or towards work.

	Paternity		Maternity		Shared	
	Average	Median	Average	Median	Average	Median
All Respondents	15.3	8	25.0	20	15.1	8
16-24	15.6	10	23.3	18	15.5	10
25-34	18.1	12	28.3	20	17.2	10
35-44	14.5	8	26.7	20	14.5	8
45-54	14.1	8	22.7	16	14.9	6
55+	15.3	6	23.3	16	14.3	4

Q: What is the ideal duration (in weeks) for paternity/Maternity/Shared Parental leave in your opinion?

Fig. 8 – Ideal duration of leave (Indicated by all respondents, split by age groups)

The findings suggest that respondents perceive differences between fathers and mothers, in relation to their needs and roles when caring for a newborn and therefore require differential treatment to more appropriately support them in their parenthood journey.

Our study did not examine the reasons for why respondents had different ideal durations between paternity and maternity leaves. However, in public discussions,⁶ several reasons have been given for the differences in durations between paternity and maternity leaves:

1. Mothers need more time to physically recuperate from birth;
2. Mothers are more needed in a newborn’s life (e.g. breastfeeding);
3. Fathers are expected to return to work earlier.

The actual reasons for such a difference are worth investigating further to finetune provisions to better support fathers and mothers.

Work Circumstances *and* Parental Leave

Respondents perceive their companies to be slightly more reluctant to let fathers go on paternity leave (27%) than maternity leave (21%)(see Fig. 9 and 10), even though paternity leave is significantly shorter than maternity leave.

More numbers of parents than non-parents report company reluctance to let parents go on their respective maternity or paternity leave, with more fathers (26%) than mothers (21%) saying so.

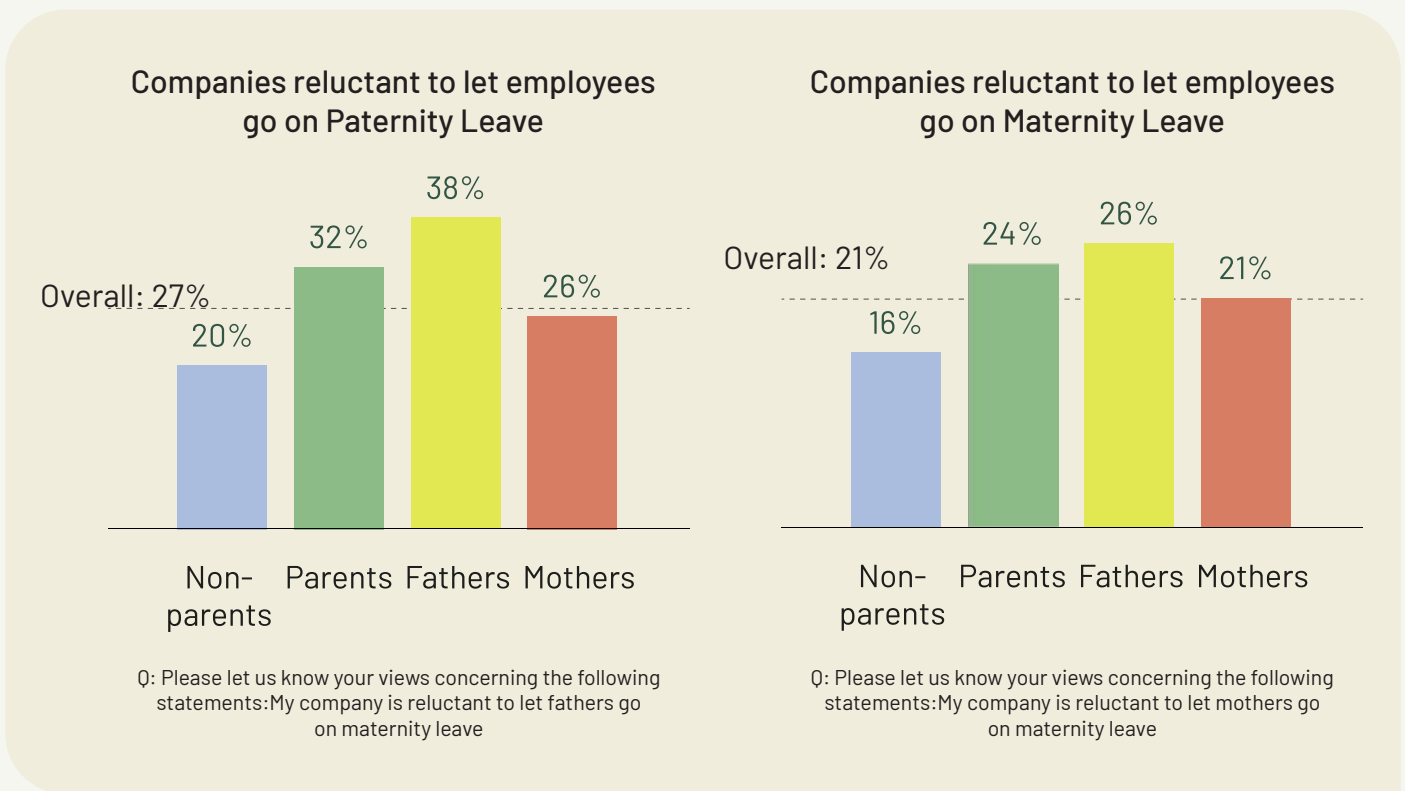
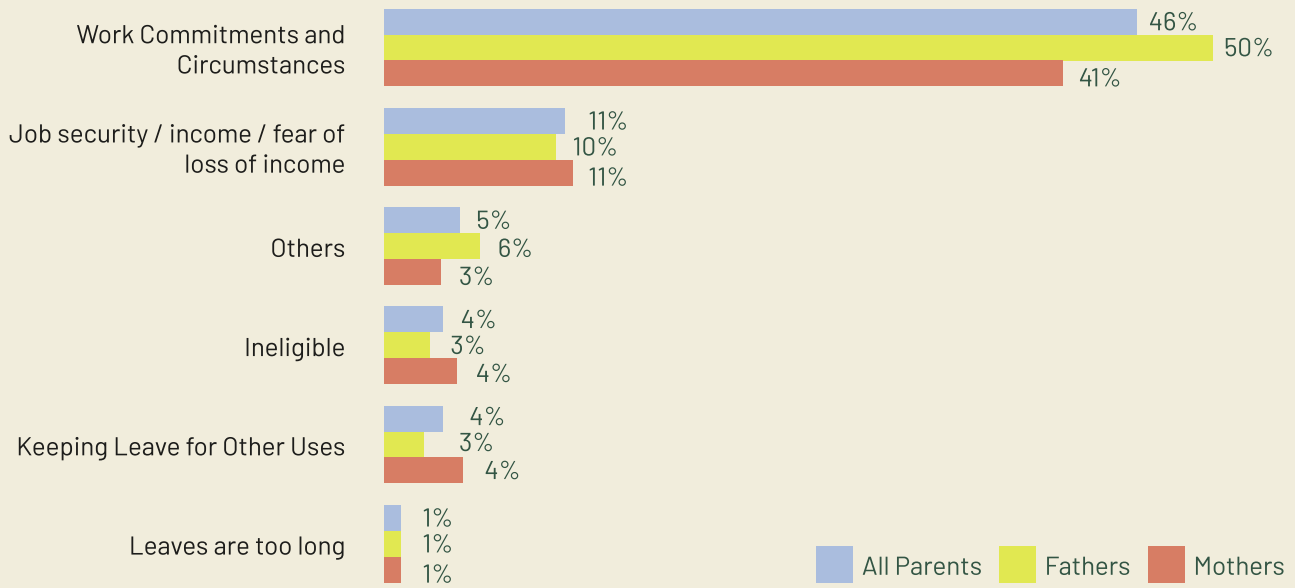


Fig. 9 - % of respondents agree that company is reluctant to let employees go on paternity leave

Fig. 10 - % of respondents agree that company is reluctant to let employees go on maternity leave

Our survey invited respondents who are parents to fill in open-ended responses for what might cause or prevent them from taking their maternity or paternity leaves in full. Almost 1 in 2 (46%) indicated work commitments and work circumstances as reasons for what might cause or prevent them from taking paternity or maternity leave in full (see Fig. 11).

Reasons which may prevent taking Maternity/Paternity leave in full



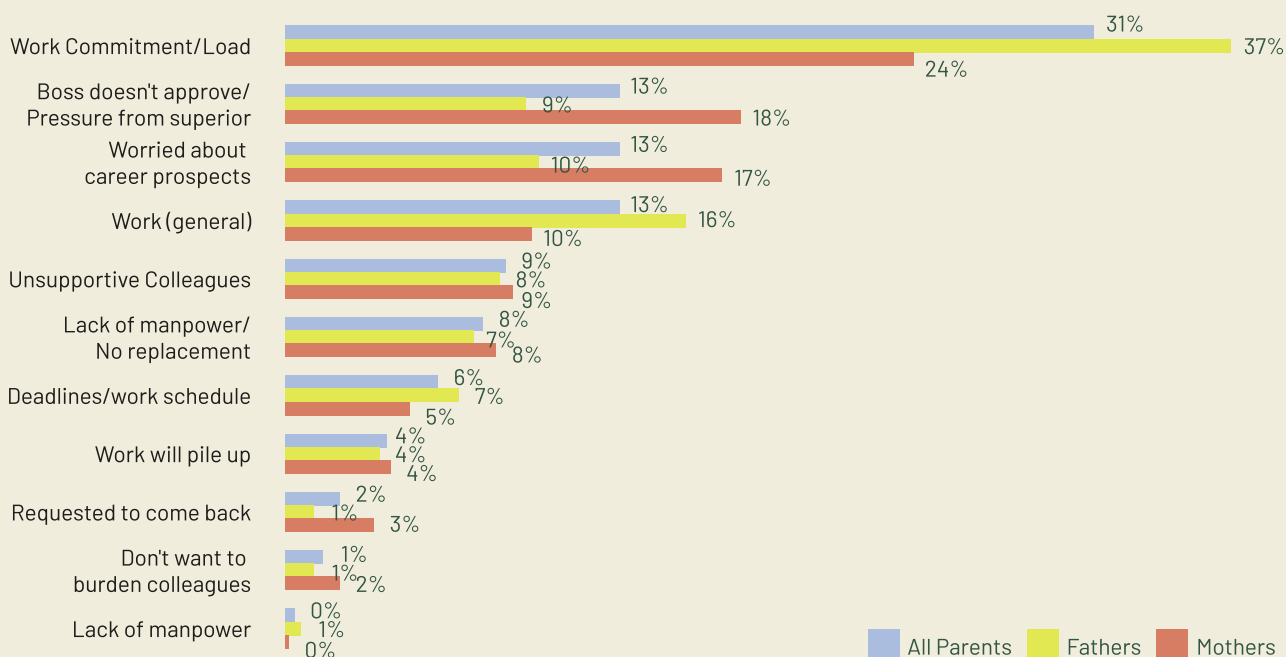
Q: What might cause or prevent you from taking your paternity/maternity leave in full? You may list up to 3 factors.

Fig. 11 – Reasons which may prevent taking Maternity/Paternity leave in full (open-ended responses)

Among the responses that can be categorised as “work commitment and circumstances” related, “work commitment or workload” emerges as the top concern, followed by two related reasons which can affect career prospects, namely disapproval or pressure from superiors, or worries about career prospects (see Fig. 12).

While fathers seem more burdened by concerns with work commitment/load, mothers who currently enjoy longer leave entitlements are more concerned with disapproval from superiors and with negative impact on career prospects. This may be a reflection of the findings from the Ministry of Manpower’s “Singapore’s adjusted gender pay gap” which showed “women opt[ing] out of competitive professional occupations and careers possibly because of increased awareness of gender/family identity over the life cycle”.⁷

Reasons which may prevent taking Maternity/Paternity leave in full (work-related only)



Q: What might cause or prevent you from taking your paternity/maternity leave in full? You may list up to 3 factors.

Fig. 12 – Breakdown of reasons under “Work commitment and circumstances” (open-ended responses)

These concerns of parents which are related to their entitled leaves are not unfounded.

About 1 in 3 respondents report feeling frustrated when required to cover work for a colleague on parental leave (28% for paternity leave; 29% for maternity leave) (see Fig. 13). The good news is that slightly more report not feeling frustrated while the others either have not yet encountered such a situation or have no strong opinion about it.

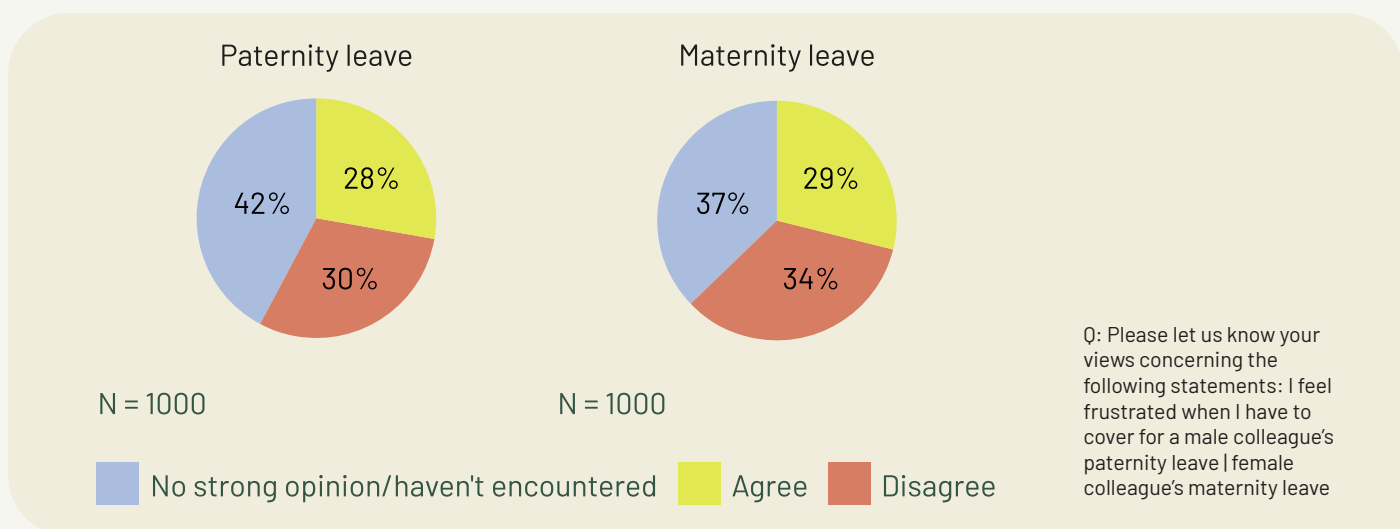


Fig. 13 – Feel frustrated when required to cover for a colleague on parental leave

Our survey invited respondents to fill in open-ended responses regarding their feelings of frustration. According to the responses, reasons for frustration stem from perceived unfair compensation, an already high workload and poor handover processes. The following are some selected responses expressing reasons for their frustrations:

“In reality of the s[t]ipulated maternity leave, mothers can abuse the system unfairly and take urgent leave in addition and singles always has the lowest priority and has to handle s***load”.

- 36, Works in a Multi-National Company (MNC), "Other Industries"

“It was additional work on top of an already short handed situation. There was no compensation or recognition of the work i did to cover for the staff who went on maternity leave. I felt like i was subsidising the govt agency for a gap in the policy, or that i was subsidising for the mother.”

- 39, Currently in-between jobs

“Extra load and no recognition. Never handover properly, Cleaning up mess.”

- 51, MNC, Architecture/Engineering Industry

Temporary Work Covers as a solution?

Some companies hire temporary staff to cover employees who go on paternity or maternity leave. These are sometimes known as “maternity covers” or “paternity covers”. Could hiring a temporary staff to cover for an employee on parental leave be the solution?

Our survey invited respondents to fill in open-ended responses regarding their experiences with temporary work covers (if any); each respondent was permitted to write a short paragraph.* We received 242 points in responses related to hired covers or personally covering for a colleague. Of this number, only 82 points were clearly addressed to experiences with temporary work covers, and the rest reflected on their experiences personally covering for a colleague on parental leave.

Based on the responses received, experience with a temporary work hire is perceived more favourably even though many still have negative comments about it (see Fig. 14).

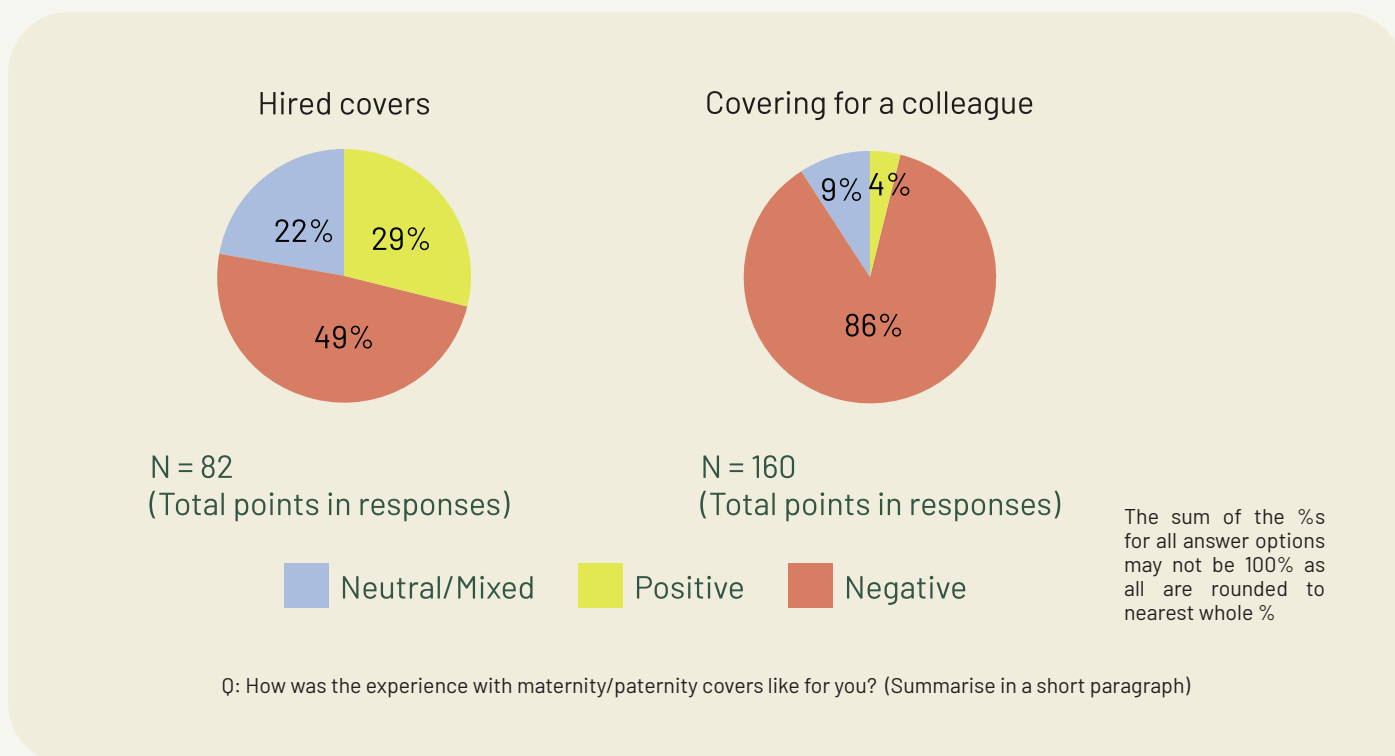


Fig. 14 – Feel frustrated when required to cover for a colleague on parental leave (open-ended responses)

The following are some selected responses expressing positive experiences with a hired temporary work cover:

“I was a manager of a team in which one of our employees went on maternity leave. Our solution was to split complex duties to senior employees and hire a contract staff to take over simple duties from those senior employees. This way operations managed to still run smoothly.

- 34, MNC, Pharmaceutical Industry

“[T]he covers are experienced so the handover was quite satisfactory and it has been a great help”

- 46, Now Homemaker

The following are some selected responses highlighting challenges concerning hiring a temporary work cover:

By the time train finish them an[d] they are independent, its quite a waste the maternity person is back”

- 40, Large Local Enterprise (LLE), Procurement Industry

“Depending on the position you are at when going for maternity. Become i am only away for 16 weeks technically 3months and 20days. It is not easy for someone with experience to cover for a short period of time. Especially for higher position in office.

- 32, MNC, Real Estate Industry

“2nd experience was not pleasant. Company didn't manage to hire contract staff on time, hence assigned a part-timer to cover. However, that part-timer was always on urgent leave, and paperwork must be done by full time staff, I had to step-in to do MOST of the work, on top of mine.

- 34, Small-Medium Enterprise, Education/Library Industry

Based on our findings, temporary work covers seem to be a possible solution to help both employers and employees cope with the absence of an employee on parental leave, although the responses also emphasise the importance of proper handover processes and finding suitably skilled and committed temporary covers. Our survey reveals some key areas to improve on in order to maximise uptake of the current parental leave provision while minimising the burden on employers and colleagues.

Views on Parental Roles and Caregiving

Expectations of fathers and mothers have not shifted much since the “Fatherhood Public Perception Survey” study done by the then Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) in 2009. In that study, 46% of respondents perceived a father’s role and responsibility as that of a “breadwinner”.⁸

Similar to the 2009 MCYS study, “Material/Financial Provision” emerged as the most commonly perceived (44.6%) role of a father (see Fig. 15). However, there is an observable difference between how fathers perceive their own roles as compared to how mothers perceive a father’s roles.

Top mentions	All Respondents (N=1000)		Fathers (N=300)		Mothers (N=300)	
#1	Material/financial provision	44.6%	Material/financial provision	47.7%	Material/financial provision	39.7%
#2	Moral guidance/advice *	14.0%	Moral guidance/advice	19.3%	Caregiving	18.3%
#3	Caregiving *	14.0%	Education	13.0%	Education	13.3%
#4	Education	13.3%	Role modelling	11.7%	Play with child/sports	13.3%
#5	Be present	11.0%	Caregiving	11.0%	Doing chores *	12.7%
#6	Role modelling	10.3%	Be present	10.3%	Be present *	12.7%
#7	Disciplinarian	9.7%	Disciplinarian	9.7%	Disciplinarian	9.0%
#8	Provide emotional care/support	9.3%	Be of good character *	9.0%	Provide emotional care/support	8.7%
#9	Be of good character	8.8%	Provide emotional care/support *	9.0%	Role modelling *	8.3%
#10	Provide safety	8.6%	Provide safety	8.3%	Share responsibilities with spouse *	8.3%

Fig. 15 – Perceived roles of a father (open-ended responses)

* Responses are tied
Highlights are statistically significantly different across Father and Mother responses

While more fathers hold “Material Financial Provision” (47.7%) as a role for themselves, only 39.7% of the mothers felt that way about a father’s roles. Instead, mothers regard “Caregiving” as a role for fathers (18.3%) more commonly than fathers do (11.0%)(see highlights above). This gap suggests an expectation among mothers for fathers to take up more caregiving responsibilities at home.

On the other hand, care-oriented activities dominate the top perceptions of roles of a mother (see Fig. 16). “Providing emotional care/support” (26.8%), Caregiving (25.4%) and “Nurturing/Giving love and affection” (22.6%) are related and most commonly perceived roles for mothers. A special mention should be made for “Cooking/Providing Meals/Being a Nutritionist” (13.9%) being an almost unique mention as a role for mothers alongside more uncommon but biologically fixed roles of “breastfeeding”, “giving birth”, and “loving the husband/father”.

Top mentions	All Respondents (N=1000)		Fathers (N=300)		Mothers (N=300)	
#1	Provide emotional care/support	26.8%	Provide emotional care/support	28.7%	Caregiving	30.3%
#2	Caregiving	25.4%	Caregiving	24.3%	Provide emotional care/support	25.7%
#3	Nurturing/giving love & affection	22.6%	Nurturing/giving love & affection	22.0%	Nurturing/giving love & affection	21.7%
#4	Education	14.6%	Education	12.7%	Cook/provide meals/nutritionist *	17.3%
#5	Cook/provide meals/nutritionist	13.9%	Cook/provide meals/nutritionist	11.3%	Education *	17.3%
#6	Doing chores	9.6%	Moral guidance/advice	10.7%	Doing chores	11.7%
#7	Moral guidance/advice	9.3%	Be present	7.3%	Be present	9.3%
#8	Be present	8.2%	Be of good character	6.7%	Moral guidance/advice	8.3%
#9	Material /financial provision	6.4%	Material/financial provision	5.7%	Material/financial provision	5.3%
#10	Be of good character	5.8%	Doing chores	5.3%	Disciplinarian	5.3%

Fig. 16 – Perceived roles of a mother (open-ended responses)

* Responses are tied

Mothers show a greater emphasis on care-oriented activities, perceiving them to be a larger role for themselves than fathers. This suggests that in order to help mothers succeed better at work-life balance, more consideration must be given to their aspiration to provide such care for their children and family.

Realities of Caregiving and Parenting

The perceived roles of fathers and mothers among respondents do play out quite predictably in the realities of caregiving and parenting. Mothers are the main caregivers throughout a typical week (see Fig. 17).

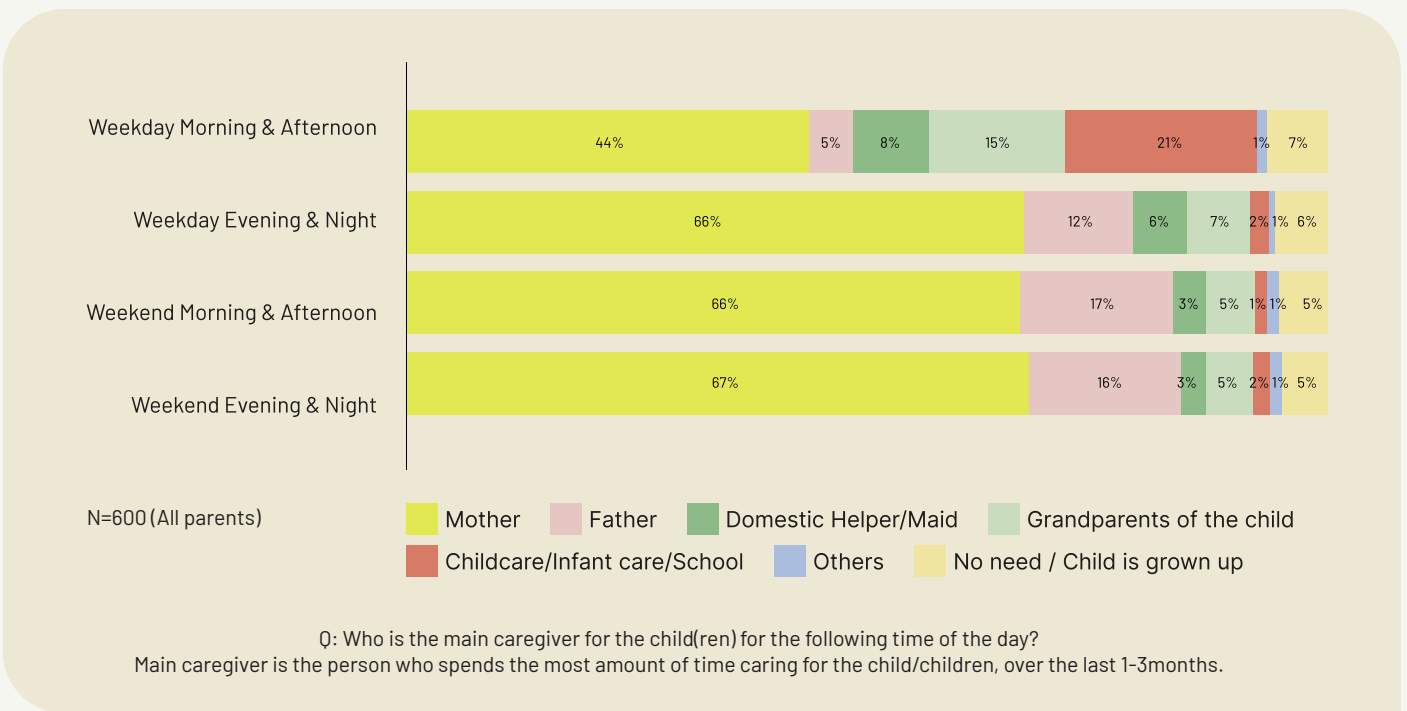


Fig. 17 – Main Caregiver on a typical day

This becomes more pronounced outside of regular working hours (see Fig. 18). More mothers (22%) take over caregiving work when the child returns from childcare/school, even though there are fathers (7%) who do so too.

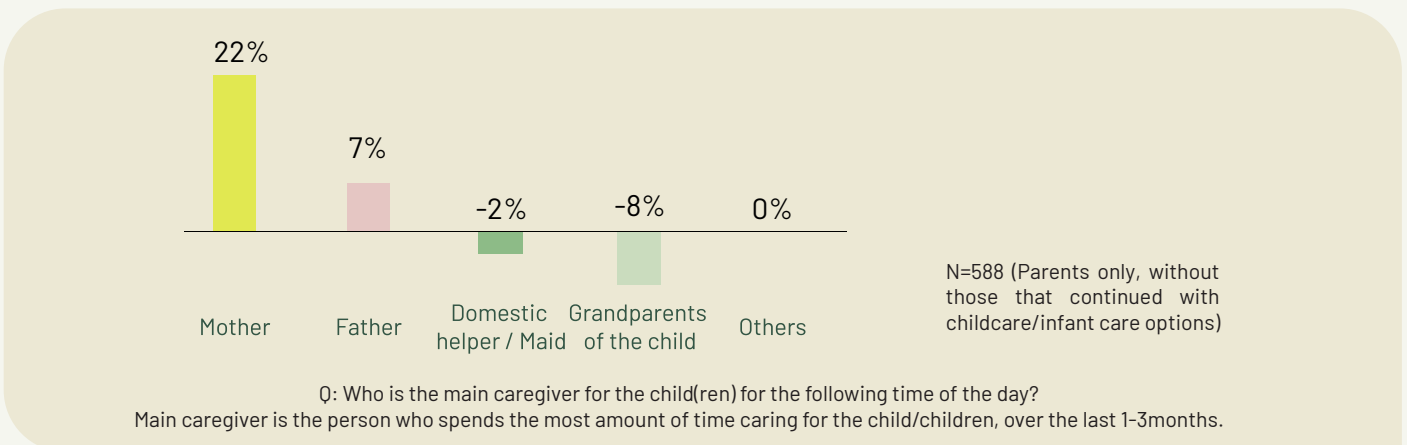


Fig. 18 – % difference in person being the main caregiver on weekday evening and nights as compared to weekday morning and afternoon

More than 1 in 8 (15%) have grandparents filling up the care gap during working hours on weekdays, which is the third most common childcare arrangement after mothers (44%) and institutionalised childcare (21%) during working hours on weekdays. This suggests a need to look into how to better support grandparents who have taken up this caregiving function within the family.

A large majority of respondents (89.4%) feel that parents need more time to spend with their children (see Fig. 19). The perception of time required to be spent with children seems different across the horizons of a parent (86.3%) as compared to a non-parent (94.0%).

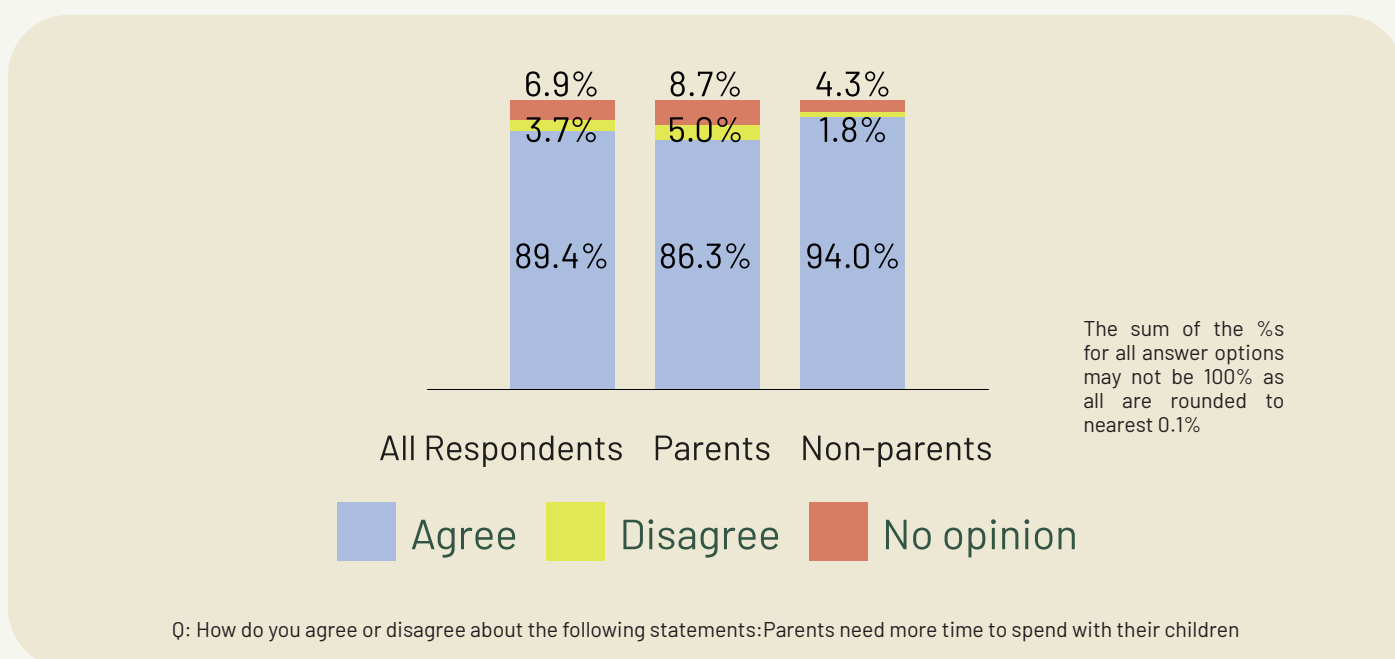
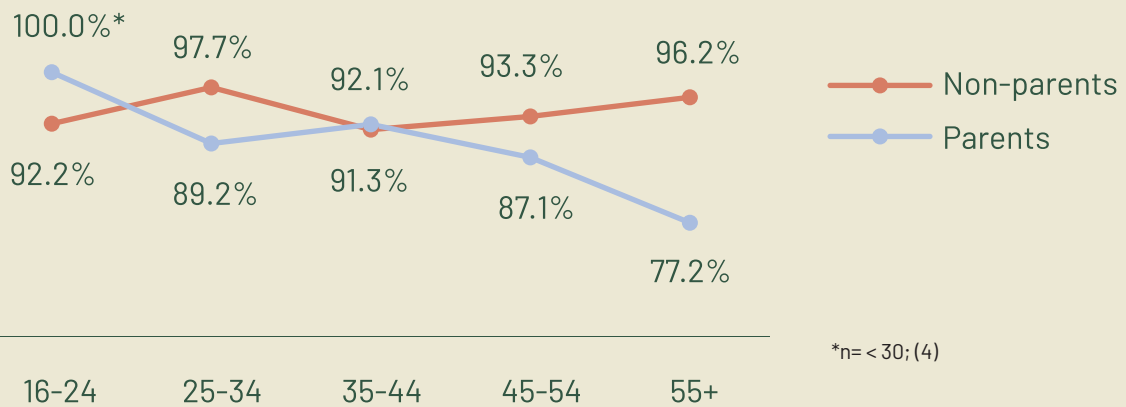


Fig. 19 – % say parents need more time to spend with children

Parents are more likely to say that the need for more time spent with children decreases as children grow older – a trend not observed among non-parent respondents (see Fig. 20). The gap may be an indication of a general unfamiliarity with the realities of parenting, while parents may be more aware of how children gain greater independence as they grow up.



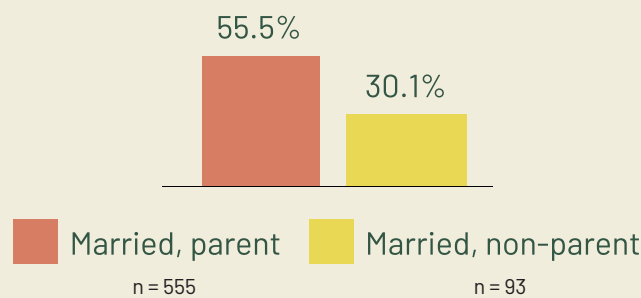
Q: How do you agree or disagree about the following statements: Parents need more time to spend with their children

Fig. 20 – % say parents need more time to spend with children (breakdown by age)

Parenthood – a satisfying choice?

While having children may be a life-changing event, parents are less likely to regret their childbearing choices relative to their career.

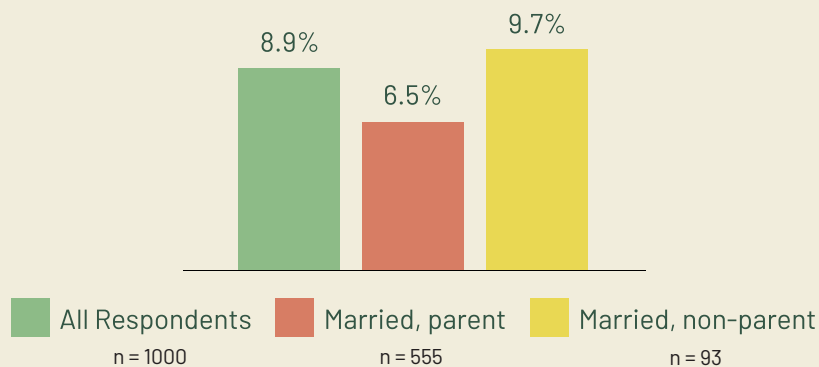
Married parents are much more likely to report satisfaction (55.5%) with their decision regarding career and having/relationship with their children than married respondents who do not have children (30.1%) (see Fig. 21).



Q: Which of the following statements about career and children do you agree with? – I am satisfied my decision concerning career opportunities and my/having children

Fig. 21 – % of married respondents satisfied with decision regarding career and my/having children

Parents are less likely to say that their careers held back their childbearing (6.5%), whereas only 9.7% of those married without children felt held back by their careers in childbearing. (see Fig. 22)

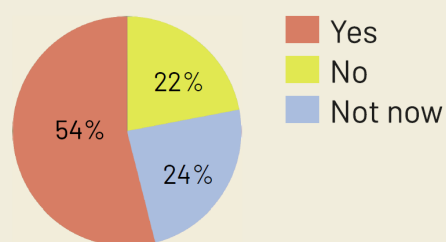


Q: Which of the following statements about career and children do you agree with? - My career is holding me back from having children

Fig. 22 – % of respondents saying their careers held them back from having children

Parenthood aspirations

In spite of the above challenges and concerns with work, aspirations to have children remain high among married couples of typical childbearing age (22-44)* and without children. 78% want to have children or are open to having children in the future. A majority said that they want to have children (54%), and another 24% responded 'not now' to having children; the remainder (22%) said 'no' to children (see Fig. 23).



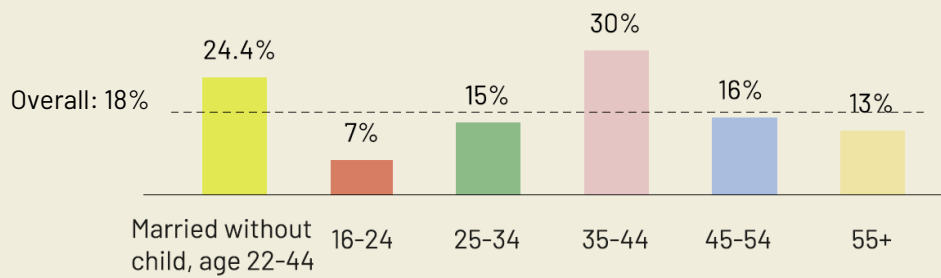
22-44

n = 41
(married, non-parent, age 22-44)

Q: Do you want to have children?

Fig. 23 - Do you want to have children?

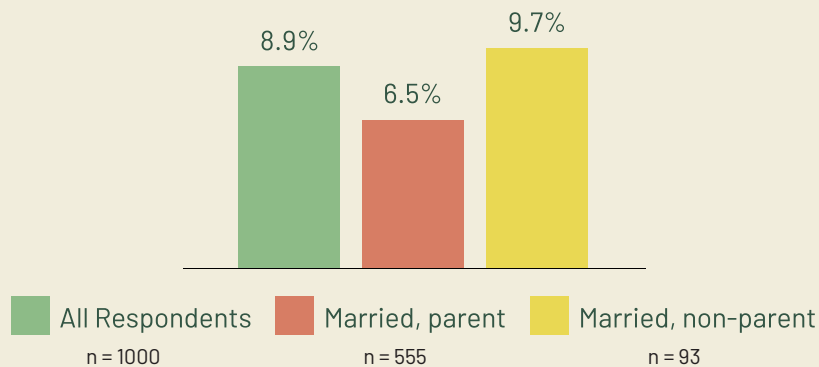
Among this pool of respondents, almost 1 in 4 (24%) wished they had children earlier while about 1 in 5 (18%) of all respondents indicated so. This sentiment is also most pronounced among those age 35-44 (30%)(see Fig. 24).



Q: Which of the following statements about career and children do you agree with? - I wish that I had children earlier

Fig. 24 - % wish had children earlier

Parents are less likely to say that their careers held back their childbearing (6.5%), whereas only 9.7% of those married without children felt held back by their careers in childbearing. (see Fig. 25)



Q: Which of the following statements about career and children do you agree with? - My career is holding me back from having children

Fig. 25 – % of respondents saying their careers held them back from having children

Comments and Recommendations

Our findings suggest that Singaporeans are not averse to the idea of having children, even as many are not having as many children as they ideally want. While work commitments and circumstances affect parents and their usage of parental leave, there seem to be other reasons that are holding Singaporeans back from childbearing.

Contributing factors for Singapore's low birth rates include the impact of the COVID-19 on marriage and parenthood, the financial costs of child-raising, pressures to be an excellent parent, difficulties managing work and family commitments, and changing individual priorities and societal norms.⁹ One recent study has suggested that other factors such as relationship quality among family and in the community are seen as important attributes of an ideal family, and not merely the attaining the ideal number of children.¹⁰

This reflects the importance of examining the actual needs, hopes and experiences of parents and aspiring parents. It is important to communicate such needs, hopes and experiences better for the wider public to have a clearer picture of family life, as well as to increase support for marriage and parenthood.

Our findings suggest that building a Singapore "made for families" will require more than just providing monetary bonuses or longer leave durations, even though they are helpful in alleviating some challenges for parents.

Recommendation 1: More Flexibility in Work, and Growing Temporary Hire Industry

It has been observed that the workplace has long been shaped as a "masculine" space,¹¹ resulting in an often family-unfriendly structure of 9-5 (or 9-6) work hours or more. This has perhaps perpetuated attitudes towards fathers and mothers where a substantial portion of society expects fathers to provide materially and financially (which is only possible through employment), while the expectation on mothers is substantially caregiving-related despite a high female workforce participation rate in Singapore.¹²

Work, as it is currently structured, is therefore perceived as unfriendly towards parenthood. Our findings suggest that colleagues may also experience a significant degree of frustration because of paternity or maternity leaves. More restructuring needs to take place in order to maximise the impact of parental leaves in encouraging Singaporeans to have more children.

We suggest a relook at the current work structure to consider more flexible arrangements as well as fostering a more structured and regulated temporary work force to provide cover for those on paternity or maternity leave. This might better alleviate the pressures which frustrate parental leave policies. A change in attitude towards work can also result in lesser “parental penalty” at work in terms of their career prospects.¹³

Recommendation 2: More feedback from parents and youths with aspirations to become parents to inform policymaking regarding marriage and parenthood

Our findings show that only a small proportion of Singaporeans feel that their careers held them back from childbearing. Thus, if career is not holding people back from having children, what is? What exactly do Singaporeans who aspire to be parents or to have more children need to enable them to do so better?

In light of Singapore’s fertility challenge, we strongly recommend that the Government make more effort in reaching out to youths to hear their concerns and hopes for marriage and family life. It is also important for more effort to be invested to reach Singaporeans who already are parents but at a relatively young age. These Singaporeans may currently be busy trying to balance work and family lives and thus have little ability to find time to participate in national feedback exercises like the Forward Singapore sessions. The Government can consider pursuing their views more intentionally, creating more opportunities that suit their availabilities in order to collect valuable feedback.

Recommendation 3: Explore and expand different caregiving arrangements that may better support mothers who are currently the main caregivers

Our findings suggest that caregiving remains a significant challenge for working parents, and caregiving is still commonly perceived as being a role of a mother. In terms of caregiving practices, mothers are the most common main caregivers during working hours on weekdays (44%), followed by institutionalised childcare (21%) and grandparents (15%).

Thus, a third recommendation is to explore and expand different caregiving arrangements, which may better support mothers who are currently the main caregivers.

Options may include normalising greater involvement of fathers in caregiving, expanding childcare options, and involving extended family members such as grandparents. For grandparents who are providing care for grandchildren, there is room to explore ways to better recognise and support them in their caregiving functions.

About Cultivate SG

We are an organisation that wants to see families and society thrive for generations. We call this social sustainability. This involves individual rights and responsibilities, stable marriages, strong families, children's interests, a cultural climate that supports personal and family growth, and social harmony. We are committed to research, education, and dialogue on these issues to build up other people, families, and communities who share our heart. This is how we grow the good, one conversation at a time.

www.cultivate.sg

Annex: About This Survey

Methodology

Milieu Insight was commissioned to conduct this survey using its online survey platform. Fieldwork took place between 20 June and 3 July 2024, gathering a total of 1,000 responses from Singapore Citizens or Permanent Residents for this online, self-administered survey (in English only).

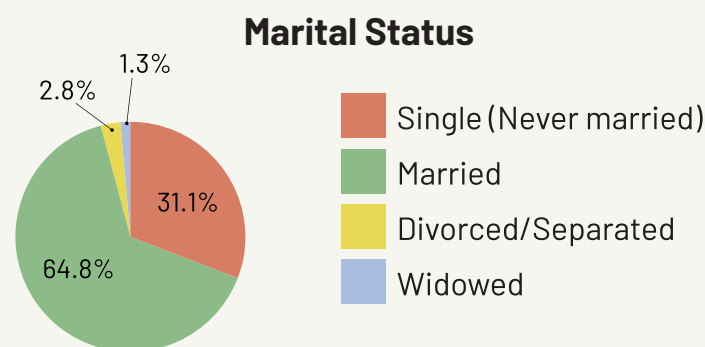
The respondents of this study are Milieu Insight's panelists, who provided their gender and date of birth during registration as part of the requirements to join the Milieu app platform. The sample is segmented into 300 fathers, 300 mothers and 400 non-parents.

Limitations

Due to the nature of online surveys (via a phone application), respondents tend to be from the demography that is more "connected" and technologically savvy. It may therefore not have reached respondents who are more offline and beyond the typical ready-reach for online market research panels.

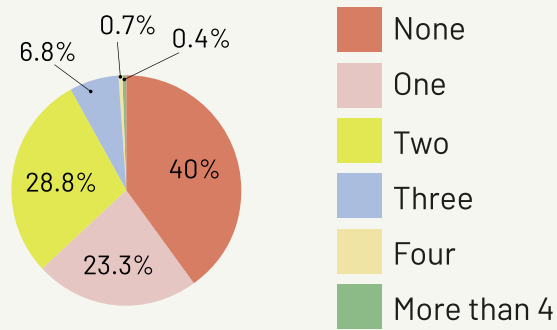
Qualitative answers in this survey are limited in length of reply. Further qualitative studies can be conducted to gather deeper insights into reasons for the patterns of behaviour highlighted in this report.

Sample Breakdown

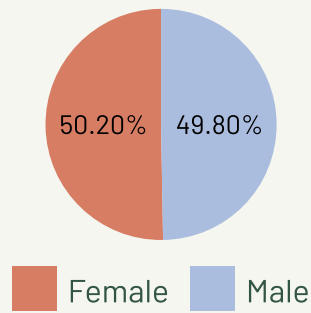


The sum of the %s for all answer options may not be 100% as all are rounded to nearest 0.1%

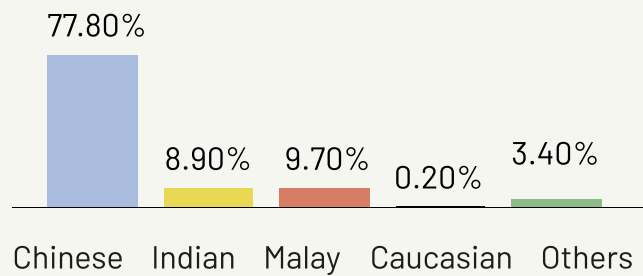
Number of Children



Gender



Ethnicity

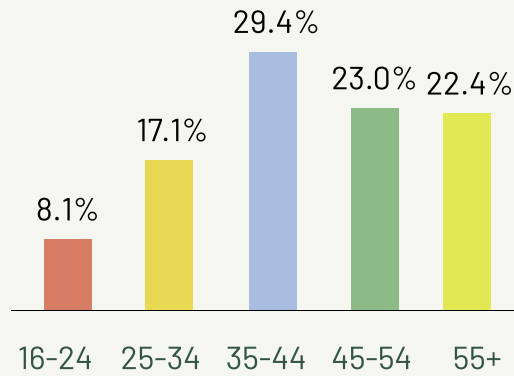


The sum of the %s for all answer options may not be 100% as all are rounded to nearest 0.1%

Age Groups

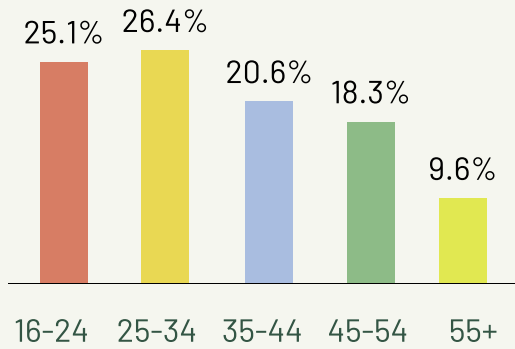
Overall

The sum of the %s for all answer options may not be 100% as all are rounded to nearest 0.1%



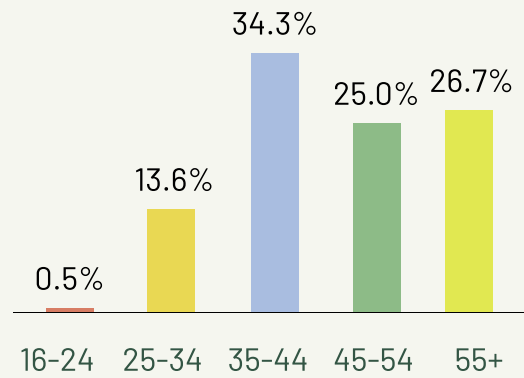
N=1000

Singles



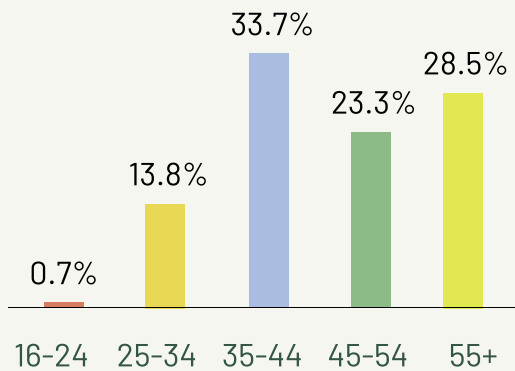
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Married



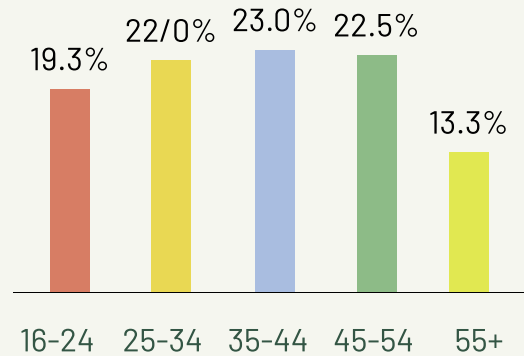
N=648

Parents



N=600

Non-parents



N=400

Appendix:

Endnotes

¹ Ministry of Manpower, "Paternity Leave": <https://www.mom.gov.sg/employment-practices/leave/paternity-leave>.

² National Population and Talent Division, "Speech by Minister Indranee Rajah on Population at the Committee of Supply Debate 2024" (28 February 2024): <https://www.population.gov.sg/media-centre/speeches/speech-by-minister-indranee-on-population-at-the-cos-2024/>.

³ Ministry of Social and Family Development, "A Singapore Made for Families 2025' Plan - Strengthens Commitment to a Family-Friendly Society" (8 November 2022): <https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/article/A-Singapore-Made-for-Families-2025-Plan-Strengthens-Commitment-to-a-Family-Friendly-Society>.

⁴ Youngest married respondent is 22. Upper limit for this is set at 44 which according to [Pew Research](#) has typically been the convention, partly due to the fact that until recently data on the completed fertility of women ages 45 and older were not typically collected, and partly due to the fact that few women have babies beyond these ages."

⁵ Singapore Department of Statistics, "Births and Fertility": <https://www.singstat.gov.sg/find-data/search-by-theme/population/births-and-fertility/latest-data>.

⁶ See, for example, Ministry of Social and Family Development, "Closing Speech by Ms Sun Xueling, Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Social and Family Development for Second Reading of Child Development Co-Savings (Amendment) Bill on 19 September 2023" (19 September 2023): [https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/article/closing-speech-by-ms-sun-xueling-minister-of-state-ministry-of-home-affairs-and-ministry-of-social-and-family-development-for-second-reading-of-child-development-co-savings-\(amendment\)-bill-on-19-september-2023](https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/article/closing-speech-by-ms-sun-xueling-minister-of-state-ministry-of-home-affairs-and-ministry-of-social-and-family-development-for-second-reading-of-child-development-co-savings-(amendment)-bill-on-19-september-2023).

⁷ Eileen Lin, Grace Gan and Jessica Pan, "Singapore's Adjusted Gender Pay Gap" (January 2020): https://stats.mom.gov.sg/iMAS_PdfLibrary/mrsd-Singapores-Adjusted-Gender-Pay-Gap.pdf.

⁸ Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, "Fatherhood Public Perception Survey 2009: Key Findings": https://dadsforlifessg.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/singapore_fatherhood_public_perception_survey_2009.pdf.

⁹ National Population and Talent Division, "Speech by Minister Indranee Rajah on Population at the Committee of Supply Debate 2024" (28 February 2024): <https://www.population.gov.sg/media-centre/speeches/speech-by-minister-indranee-on-population-at-the-cos-2024/>.

- ¹⁰ Arnstein Aasve, et al., "Family ideals in an era of low fertility" (2024) 121(6) PNAS, e2311847121: <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2311847121>.
- ¹¹ Kimberly Lim, "Woman Up: From job interview to the boardroom, gender bias often follows women through each step of the career ladder" TODAY (11 July 2022): <https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/woman-job-interview-boardroom-gender-bias-often-follows-women-through-each-step-career-ladder-1933866>.
- ¹² In 2023, the share of females in the resident labour force was 47.2%. (Ministry of Manpower, "Labour Force in Singapore 2023": https://stats.mom.gov.sg/iMAS_PdfLibrary/mrsd_2023LabourForce.pdf)
- ¹³ Amelia Teng, "Paternity leave has doubled, but do fathers dare take more of it?" The Straits Times (17 February 2023): <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/paternity-leave-has-doubled-but-do-fathers-dare-to-take-more-of-it>.