

Press Release

7 March 2025

Majority of Singaporeans regardless of religion have positive views towards marriage and family, but non-religious respondents hold slightly less favourable views

7 March, 2025 – Cultivate SG, a non-profit organisation that researches and dialogues on family issues in Singapore, recently commissioned a survey on Marriage, Family and Social Discourse with 2,000 Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents.

Summary:

- Almost 8 in 10 (78%) respondents believe that the institution of marriage is beneficial for society. 7 in 10 (70%) respondents with no religion share this sentiment while 8 in 10 (80%) respondents with a professed religion agree.
- Almost 7 in 10 (69%) respondents agree that Singapore will be better off with more children. Respondents with a religion are more likely to agree with this statement (71%), whereas only 64% of respondents with no religion agree. Muslims (80%) and Hindus (80%) are most likely to agree with this statement.
- Regardless of religion, nearly 9 in 10 respondents (89%) believe that men and women each bring unique contributions to parenting. More than 8 in 10 respondents with a religion (85%) believe that a child needs a father and a mother, while 7 in 10 (73%) of their peers without a religion affirm this view.
- Almost 7 in 10 (67%) respondents say that they do not allow controversial views to stand in the way of them making friends. A majority of respondents regardless of religion disagree with ‘cancelling’ behaviours. 56% find it unacceptable to shame someone online (56% for those with a religion; 57% for those without a religion); 53% find it unacceptable to call for someone to be fired by employers (52% for those with a religion; 55% for those without a religion), for expressing views they disagree with.

1. While majority of respondents regardless of religion have positive views towards marriage and family, non-religious respondents hold slightly less favourable views

Almost 8 in 10 (78%) respondents believe that the institution of marriage is beneficial for society. 7 in 10 (70%) respondents with no religion share this sentiment while 8 in 10 (80%) respondents with a professed religion agree.

Similar trends are observed concerning support for current norms surrounding marriage and family.

Almost 8 in 10 (78%) respondents support the current legal definition of marriage as between a man and a woman. But only 66% of respondents with no religion agree with this legal definition as compared to 81% of their peers with a religion.

Nearly 8 in 10 (78%) agree that the traditional family unit should be upheld as the ideal in education institutes in Primary and Secondary school. Significantly fewer respondents with no religion agree (68%) with this sentiment than their peers with a religion (81%).

More than 8 in 10 (82%) respondents agree that it is good to keep sex within marriage. Those without religion are only slightly less likely to agree, with almost 8 in 10 (78%) holding to this view. Taoists or adherents of traditional Chinese beliefs (TCB) are the least likely to agree, with slightly more than 7 in 10 (74%) agreeing with this view.

Among all single (never married) respondents (regardless of age), about 6 in 10 (60%) indicate aspiration to get married. Respondents with no religion are less interested in marriage, with only about 1 in 2 (51%) desiring marriage as compared to about 6 in 10 (63%) of their peers with a religion.

A high level of support for Government benefits to encourage marriage is noted on the overall (79%). While support for such benefits is lower among those without a religion (73%), it remains a high majority. Hindus (89%) and Muslims (89%) are most supportive of such Government benefits.

2. Respondents who profess a religion tend to have more favourable views towards children, with Hindus and Muslims having the most favourable attitudes

Almost 7 in 10 (69%) respondents agree that Singapore will be better off with more children. Respondents with a religion are more likely to agree with this statement (71%), whereas only 64% of respondents with no religion agree. Muslims (80%) and Hindus (80%) are most likely to agree with this statement.

Respondents with no religion are more likely to say they do not plan to have children. Among those aged 18-44, about 1 in 3 (33%) of the non-religious never-married respondents say they do not plan to have children, as compared to about 1 in 5 (19%) of their peers with a religion. A similar pattern is reflected among married respondents in this age group, where about 1 in 10 (9%) non-religious married respondents say that they do not plan to have children, whereas only about 1 in 20 (4%) of their married peers with a religion say so.

Among never-married respondents aged 18-44, about 4 in 10 (43%) say that not wanting children is a dealbreaker for marriage, meaning that they would not marry (or would not have married) someone who does not want children. There is a significant difference between those with a religion and those without. Almost 1 in 2 (47%) in this category that have a religion say that it is a dealbreaker, while less than 3 in 10 (29%) of their peers without a religion agree.

More than 8 in 10 (82%) agree that the Government should give benefits to encourage childbearing; sentiments are similar across most religious groups apart from those professing Taoism/TCB (73%) and no religion (77%).

More than 8 in 10 agree that the Government should give benefits to recognise parents' efforts to raise children (83%). Hindus and Muslims are most supportive of such benefits, with around 9 in 10 agreeing.

3. Most respondents regardless of religion agree that children need both their father and mother, with Christians, Hindus and Muslims being most likely to hold such views

Regardless of religion, nearly 9 in 10 respondents (89%) believe that men and women each bring unique contributions to parenting.

More than 8 in 10 respondents with a religion (85%) believe that a child needs a father and a mother, while 7 in 10 (73%) of their peers without a religion affirm this view. Hindus (93%), Christians (91%) and Muslims (89%) are most in agreement that a child needs a father and a mother.

Similarly, when asked if as far as possible, children should be raised by their biological parents, about 8 in 10 (81%) of those with a religion agree, whereas the figure is about 7 in 10 (71%) of those without a religion.

More than 8 in 10 respondents (83%), religious or non-religious, believe that single parents should receive more support. Both groups also draw a distinction between supporting single parents and encouraging single parenthood, with only about 1 in 4 saying that single parenting should be encouraged (24% for those with a religion, and 26% for those without a religion). Muslims and Christians seem to make the sharpest distinction between supporting single parents and encouraging single parenthood.

4. Attitudes towards social discourse are diverse across all respondents, with Christians and non-religious respondents most opposed to 'cancelling' behaviours

Almost 7 in 10 (67%) respondents say that they do not allow controversial views to stand in the way of them making friends. Respondents with no religion are less likely to agree (63%) than their peers with a religion (68%). More than 7 in 10 Hindus (77%), Muslims (76%) and Christians (71%) affirm this statement while Taoists and TCB adherents show the lowest support (54%) with 1 in 4 (25%) not having a strong opinion on this matter or have not thought about it.

More than 7 in 10 (74%) respondents believe that such dialogues can happen, with non-religious respondents (76%) more affirmative of this statement than their peers with a

religion (74%). Taoists and TCB adherents show the least agreement (56%) with this statement, with about 1 in 4 (23%) not having a strong opinion on this matter or have not thought about it.

Respondents generally feel more comfortable in-person (64%) rather than online (58%), when discussing controversial issues with people who do not share the same views. Hindus (77%) and Muslims (70%) and Christians (67%) tend to express the highest levels of comfort discussing controversial issues in-person.

Almost 6 in 10 (58%) respondents report that they self-censor due to fear of public criticism. This sentiment is shared across religious (58%) and non-religious respondents (55%). Muslims and Hindus (both 64%) are most likely to self-censor due to such fear.

Concerning attitudes towards social discourse, close to half (48%) of the respondents feel that to accept someone means agreeing with the person. 4 in 10 respondents (40%) say that it is hateful to disagree with someone. Compared to those who have a religion, non-religious respondents are less likely to agree with the statements “to accept someone means agreeing with the person” (40% for non-religious; 51% for those who have a religion) and “it is hateful to disagree with someone” (36% for non-religious; 41% for those who have a religion).

Religious or not, a sizeable number of respondents are favourable towards forms of social sanction against people for expressing views they do not share. More than 1 in 3 respondents (36%) say that it is acceptable to shame someone online for expressing views that one does not agree with. More than 1 in 3 (37%) say that it is acceptable to call for someone to be fired by employers for expressing views that one does not agree with.

On the other hand, a majority of respondents regardless of religion disagree with such ‘cancelling’ behaviours. 56% find it unacceptable to shame someone online (56% for those with a religion; 57% for those without a religion); 53% find it unacceptable to call for someone to be fired by employers (52% for those with a religion; 55% for those without a religion), for expressing views they disagree with.

Christians express the strongest disagreement with such ‘cancelling’ behaviours (65% opposed to online shaming; 61% opposed to calling for someone to be fired), followed by

non-religious respondents (57% opposed to online shaming; 55% opposed to calling for someone to be fired).

Comments and Recommendations

Our findings suggest that Singaporeans have a high level of support for the existing definition of marriage and family. The level of support varies across religious groups, demonstrating that every religious and non-religious viewpoint has its own values and beliefs about marriage and family.

Generally, Singaporeans hold favourable attitudes towards children and parenthood. There are also high levels of support for Government benefits to encourage childbearing.

Following these findings, we highlight three sets of recommendations from our report:

1. **Better communication and engagement on values and beliefs surrounding marriage and family.** Respective community leaders could explore how to better communicate and engage their constituents regarding what their faith or community holds as values and beliefs surrounding marriage and family, both to strengthen their communities as well as to guard against misrepresentation of their respective faiths.
2. **Dialogue on topics relating to marriage, family and children, in a faith-inclusive manner.** Interreligious dialogue, as well as dialogue between religious and non-religious people, on topics relating to marriage and family is important to bridge differences in views on these topics within society. As many are informed by their respective religious beliefs or worldviews, such dialogue should be conducted in a faith-inclusive manner that is open to religious as well as non-religious viewpoints.
3. **Respect and understanding towards different viewpoints on marriage, family and children.** There is room for society to develop a more robust understanding of religious harmony, to encompass respect and understanding towards different

viewpoints, including on topics relating to marriage, family and children. Legal protections should also be carefully balanced between the freedom of people to have and express their views on these topics on one hand, and religious harmony on the other.

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About the Survey

Cultivate SG commissioned Toluna to conduct a self-administered online survey (in English only) between 21 September to 21 October 2024. 2,000 respondents participated in this survey.

Our survey collected the religious affiliations of the respondents in accordance with the categories in Singapore's official census, namely: Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Taoists or adherents of traditional Chinese beliefs (TCB), and no religion. Those who have answered "others" have been omitted as a category from our report, due to low numbers.

Due to the nature of online surveys, 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. Survey participation may also be limited by language barriers.

Despite these limitations, this survey provides valuable insights into the viewpoints and attitudes of nationally representative sample. As with any survey, care should be taken when generalising the results to the entire population due to the limitations inherent this survey's design.

For more details on the demography of our respondents, refer to Annex A in our full report.

Link to full report: <http://cultivate.sg/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/MFSD-Survey-Supplementary-Report-Religion.pdf>

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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.