Marriage, Family & Social Discourse

Survey 2024

Supplementary Report on Religion

Contents

Cultivate

Introduction

In November 2024, Cultivate SG published a report on its Marriage, Family and Social Discourse survey conducted over the period of 21 September to 21 October 2024.[1] The survey explored attitudes concerning marriage, family, children as well as related expectations and desires. Views on social discourse were also explored to better understand attitudes towards dialogue and interpersonal relationships.

Singapore is a multi-religious society, with about 80% of its population professing a religion.[2] Each religious worldview, including non-religious ones, informs a person's outlook of the world. It is therefore important to consider how religion (or lack of) may have informed our respondents' views on marriage, family, children and social discourse.

This is a supplementary report to our report on our "Marriage, Family and Social Discourse" survey published in November 2024, and should be read together with it. In this supplementary report, we look at how respondents of respective religious backgrounds and worldviews have answered the above-mentioned survey.

We surveyed 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.[3] Those who have answered "others" have been omitted as a category from this report, due to low numbers.

Deeper dives into the views of respondents from respective religions may be shared upon request.

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[1] Cultivate SG, "Marriage, Family and Social Discourse Survey 2024": https://cultivate.sg/research-recommend/marriage-family-and-social-discourse-survey-2024/

[2] Department of Statistics, "Census of Population 2020 – Statistical Release 1: Demographic Characteristics, Education, Language and Religion": https://www.singstat.gov.sg/-/media/files/publications/cop2020/sr1/cop2020sr1.ashx.

[3] See, for example, Department of Statistics, "Census of Population 2020 – Statistical Release 1: Demographic Characteristics, Education, Language and Religion": https://www.singstat.gov.sg/-/media/files/publications/cop2020/sr1/cop2020sr1.ashx.

Key Findings

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).

Views Concerning Marriage and Family

The Institution of Marriage and Society

Almost 8 in 10 (78%) respondents believe that the institution of marriage is beneficial for society. This sentiment is more supported by religious respondents (80%) than those without a religion (70%) (see Fig. 1). Muslims (88%), Hindus (86%) and Christians (86%) are more likely to believe in the benefit of the institution of marriage for society.
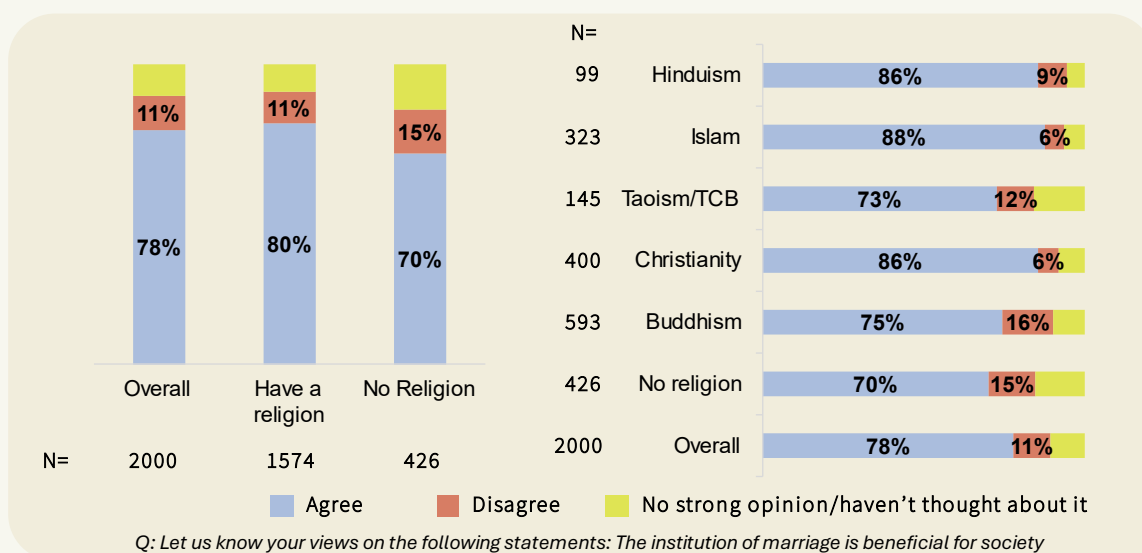

Q: Let us know your views on the following statements: The institution of marriage is beneficial for society

Fig. 1 – Institution of marriage is beneficial for society (by religion)

More than 8 in 10 (87%) respondents agree that men and women each bring unique contributions to a marriage. While there is little difference across those with a religion and those without religion concerning this matter, views differ across religious groups (see Fig. 2). More than 9 in 10 Muslims (93%), Christians (92%) and Hindus (91%) believe in this complementary contribution to marriage while Taoist and adherents of traditional Chinese beliefs (TCB) are most ambivalent towards it (only 78% agree, 6% disagree while the rest have no strong opinion or have not thought about it).
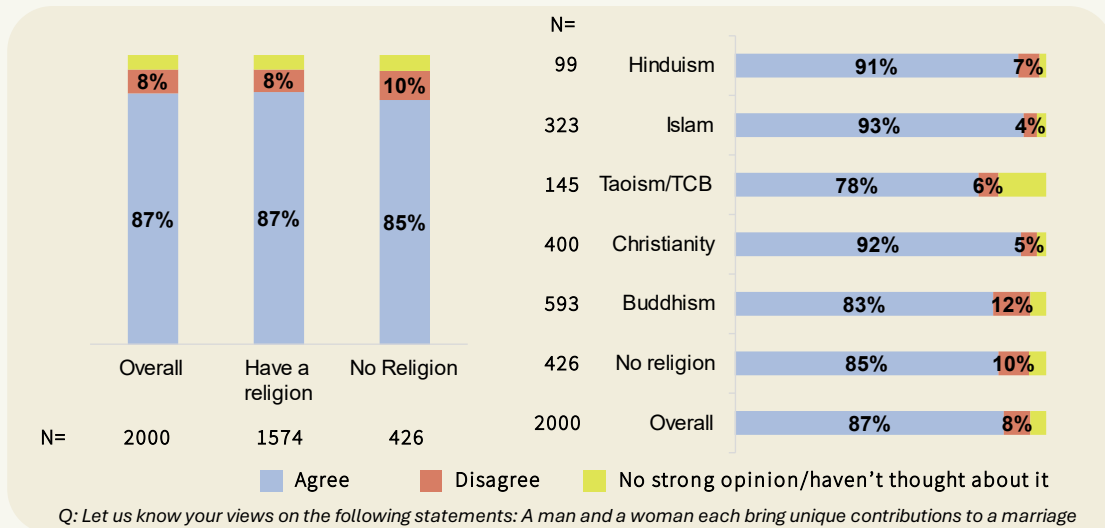
Fig. 2 – A man and a woman each bring unique contributions to a marriage (by religion)

Marriage as the Legal Union between a Man and a Woman

On the overall, almost 8 in 10 (78%) support the definition of marriage remaining as the legal union between a man and a woman (see Fig. 3). A significant difference is observed in the support for the existing definition of marriage when comparing those without a religion (66% agree) and those who profess a religion (81% agree). Across religious groups, more than 8 in 10 Christians (88%), Muslims (86%) and Hindus (84%) want the definition to remain, while more than 7 in 10 Buddhists (76%) and Taoists/TCB (73%) agree.
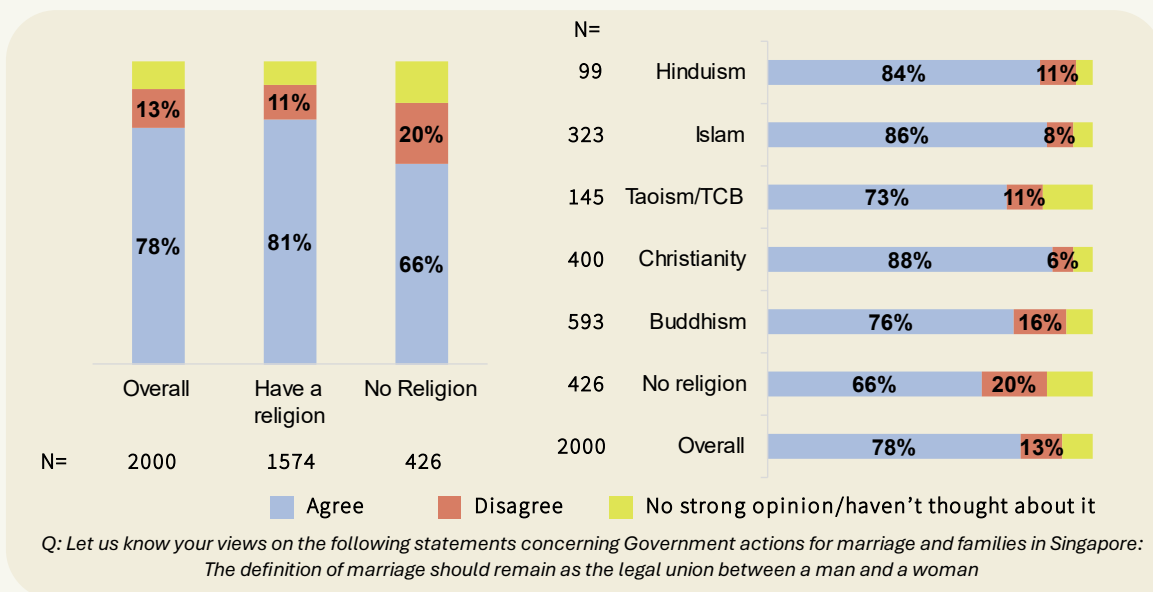
Fig. 3 – The definition of marriage should remain as the legal union between a man and a woman (by religion)

This suggests that those without a religion are more likely to hold more liberal attitudes towards the institution and definition of marriage.

Ideal Family Unit

Support for the current definition of marriage is paralleled in the support for upholding the traditional family unit as the ideal in education institutes in Primary and Secondary school, with nearly 8 in 10 (78%) agreeing (see Fig. 4). Significantly fewer respondents with no religion agreed (68%) with this sentiment than their peers with a religion (81%).

Breaking it down across religious groups, more than 8 in 10 Christians (88%), Muslims (88%) and Hindus (86%) want the traditional family unit to be upheld as the ideal in schools. Almost 8 in 10 (77%) Buddhists agree, while only about 7 in 10 of those without religion and Taoist/TCB respectively agree (68% for both groups).

Q: Let us know your views on the following statements concerning Government actions for marriage and families in Singapore: Education institutes (from Primary to Secondary school) should uphold the traditional family unit as the ideal
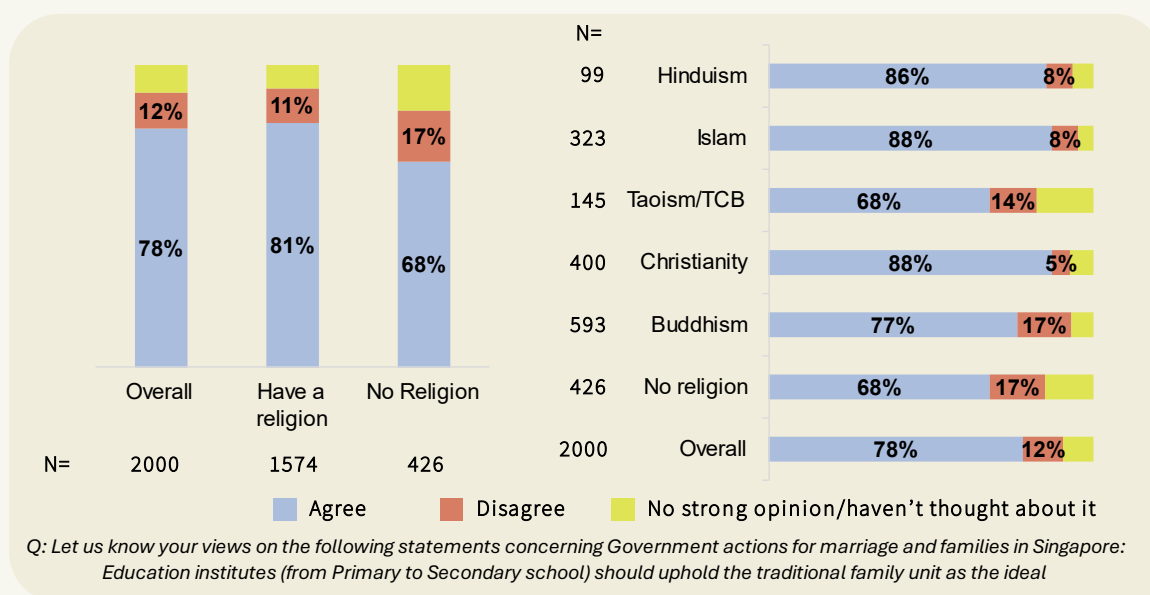
Fig. 4. – Education institutes (from Primary to Secondary school) should uphold the traditional family unit as the ideal (by age)

Marriage as the Appropriate Context for Sexual Relations

More than 8 in 10 (82%) respondents agree that it is good to keep sex within marriage (see Fig. 5). Those without religion are only slightly less likely to agree, with almost 8 in 10 (78%) holding to this view. All religious groups have at least 8 in 10 respondents believing in marriage being the appropriate context for sex, while slightly more than 7 in 10 (74%) Taoists/TCB agree.
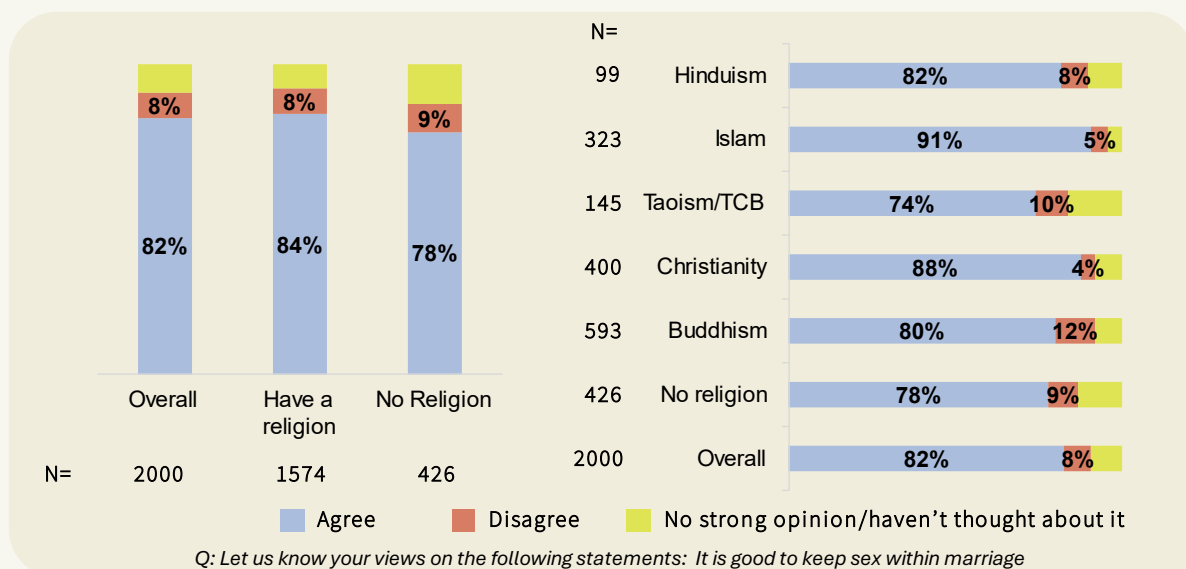

Q: Let us know your views on the following statements: It is good to keep sex within marriage

Fig. 5 – It is good to keep sex within marriage (by age)

Aspirations for Marriage

Among all single (never married) respondents (regardless of age), about 6 in 10 (60%) indicate aspiration to get married (see Fig. 6). 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.
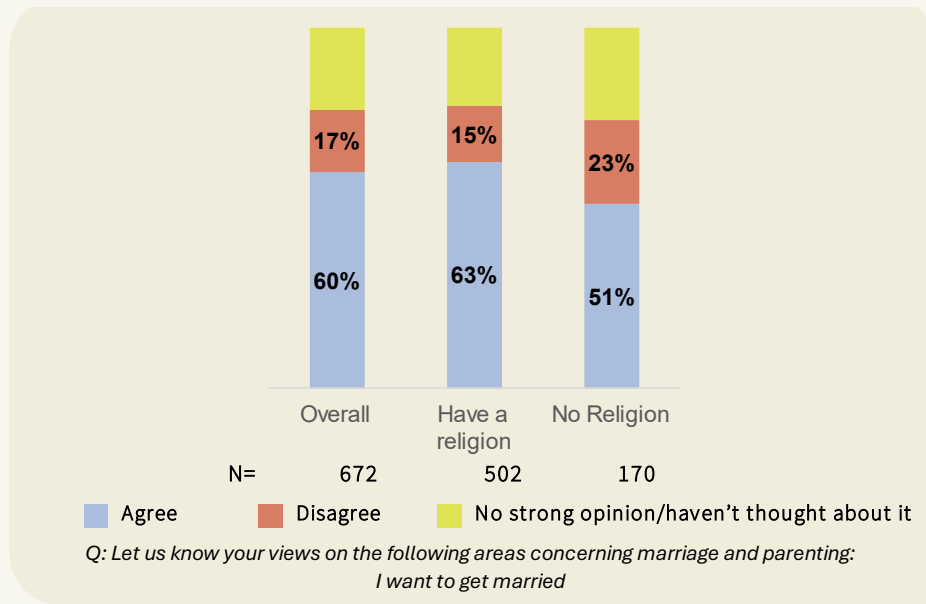
Fig. 6 – Singles (never married) who want to get married (religion / no religion)

Focusing on those age 18-44, the overall aspiration to get married is higher among those with a religion (69%) than their peers with no religion (60%) (see Fig. 7). The difference is largely due to the larger number of respondents with no religion who have no strong opinion or have not thought about getting married (25%).
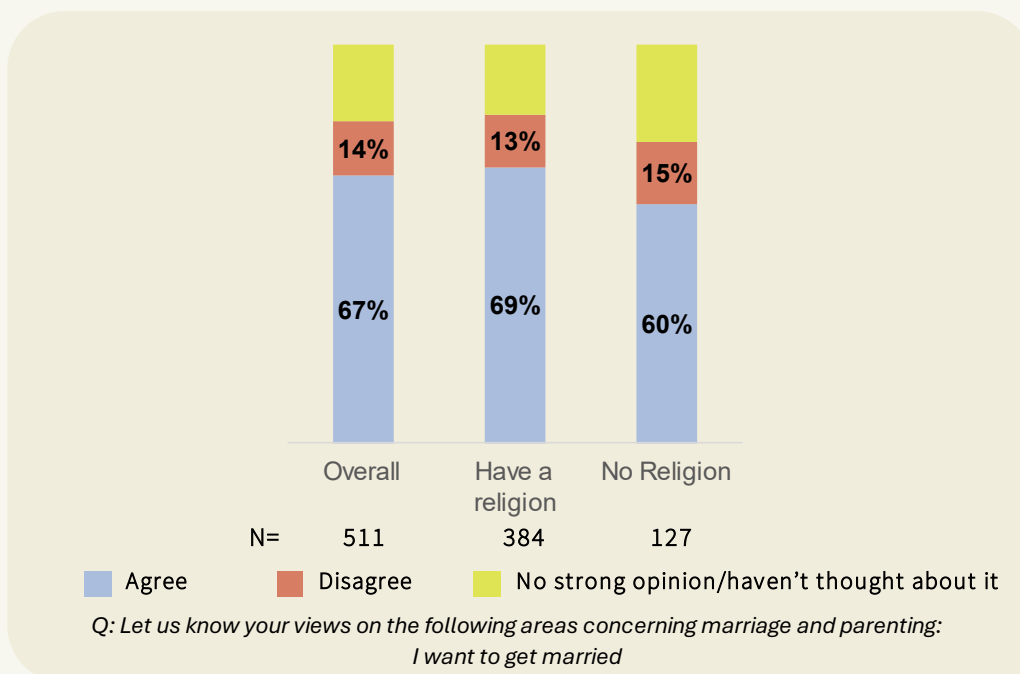

Fig. 7 – Singles (never married) age 18-44 who want to get married (religion / no religion)

Support for Government Benefits to Encourage Marriage

A high level of support for Government benefits to encourage marriage is noted on the overall (79%)(see Fig. 8). 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, while support is slightly lower across other religious groups.

Q: Let us know your views on the following statements concerning Government actions for marriage and families in Singapore: The Government should give benefits to encourage marriage
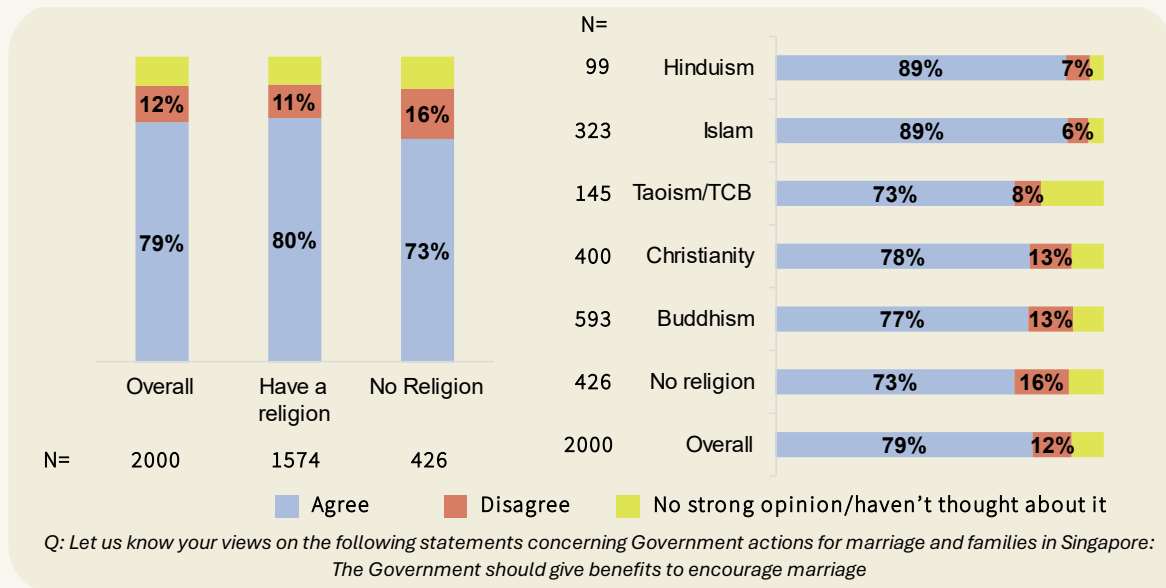
Fig. 8 - The Government should give benefits to encourage marriage (by religion)

Views and Aspirations Concerning Parenthood and Children

Children and Society

On the overall, about 7 in 10 (69%) believe that Singapore will be better off with more children (see Fig. 9). Respondents with a religion are more likely to view children's place in Singapore society more favourably (71%) than their peers without a religion (64%).

Muslims (80%) and Hindus (80%) are most likely to agree with this statement. Sentiments are slightly lower among Christians (71%) and Buddhists (67%).
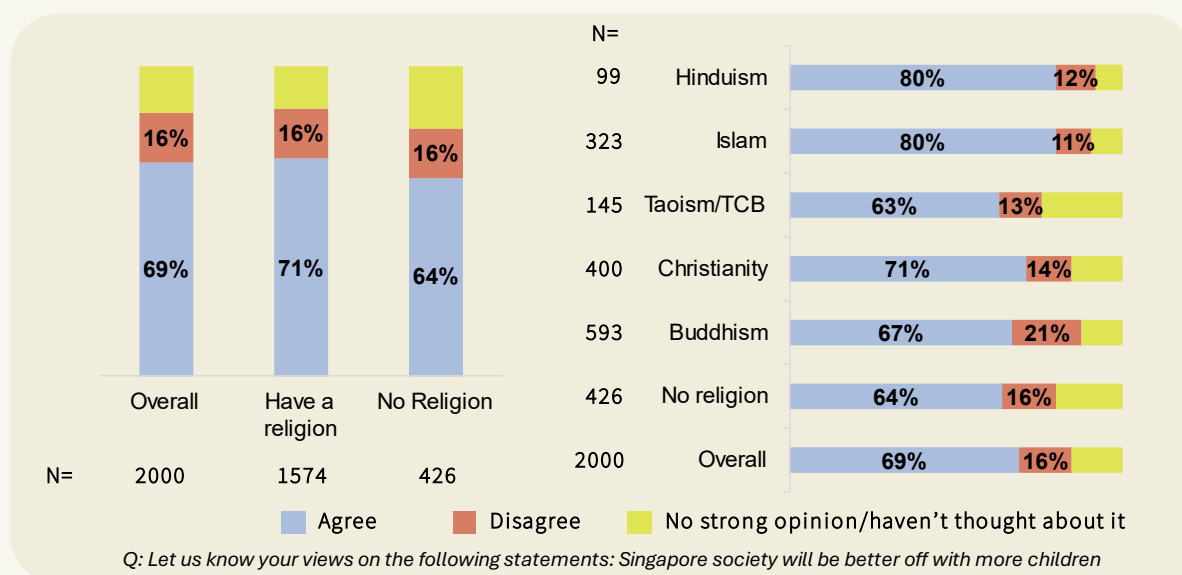

Q: Let us know your views on the following statements: Singapore society will be better off with more children

Fig. 9 – Singapore society will be better off with more children (by religion)

Aspirations for Parenthood

One of our goals in this survey was to investigate whether Singaporeans are generally averse to parenthood or have unfulfilled aspirations for parenthood. We thus asked the respondents about the *ideal* number of children they would want to have, the number of children they *planned* to have, and how many children they *currently have*. We then compared their responses to generate the findings in this section.

Generally, those who have a religion tend to indicate a stronger desire for children, in terms of their *ideal* and *planned* number of children. Almost half of each group felt that "2 children" is the

ideal (and planned) number of children to have, although 1 in 4 (25%) of those with a religion indicated that, ideally, they would have 3 or more children (see Fig. 10). Even fewer plan to have 3 or more children. On the other hand, 11% more non-religious married respondents planned or plan for no children or 1 child only (41%) as compared to their counterparts who have a religion (30%).

Q: How many children do you have? What is the ideal number of children you would want to have? What is the number of children you plan/planned to have?

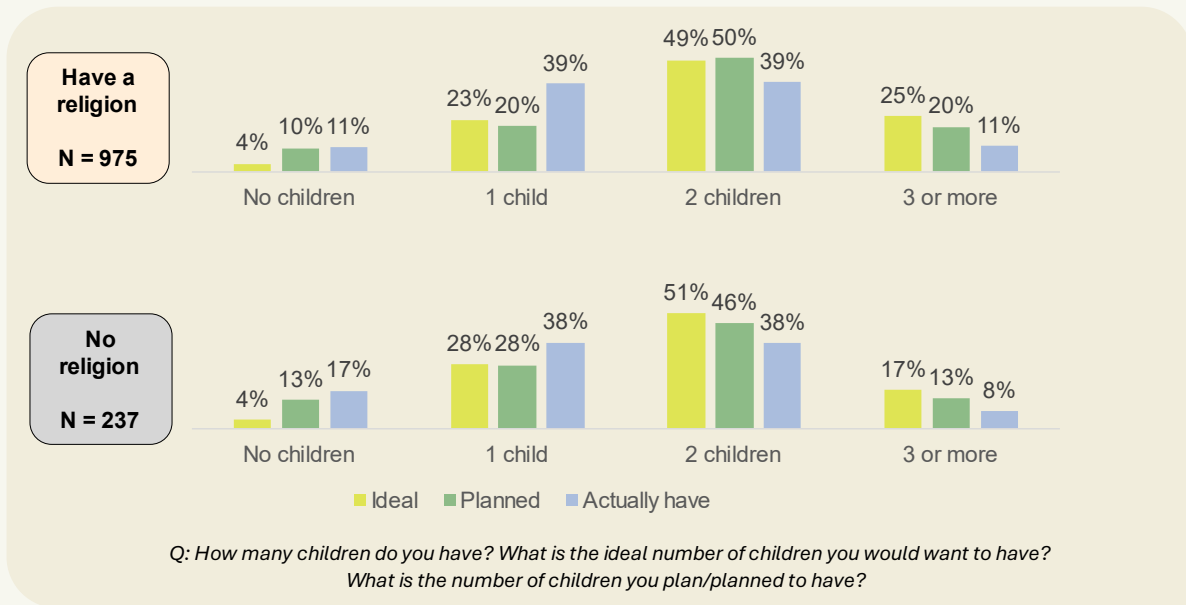*Fig. 10 – Number of children: idealised, planned, and actually / currently have (married respondents only, all ages)*

Q: What is the ideal number of children you would want to have? What is the number of children you plan/planned to have?
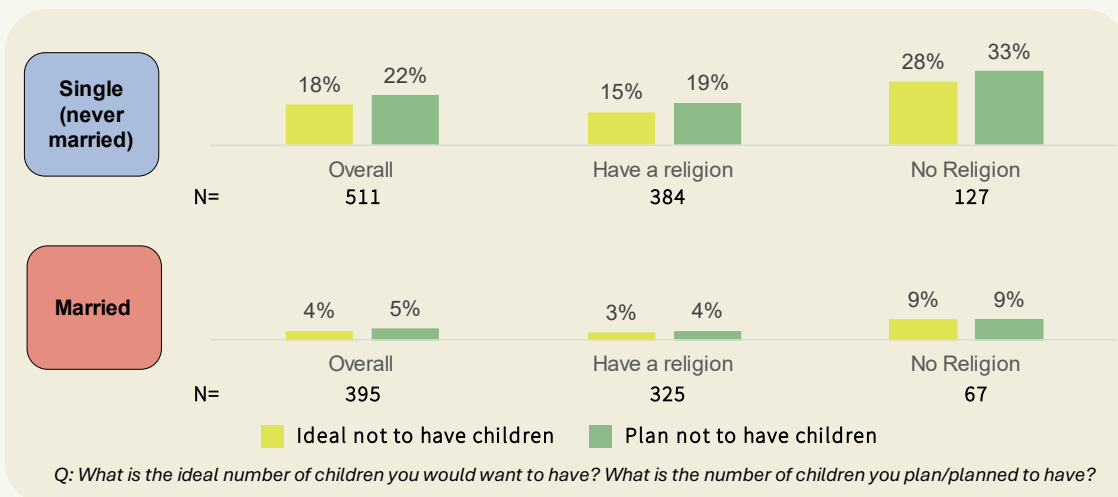
Fig. 11 – % of single (never married) or married respondents age 18-44 who want no children (as an ideal vs plan to)

Among respondents age 18-44, those who are married largely want to have children. Only 1 in 20 (5%) plan not to have children (see Fig. 11). Almost 1 in 10 (9%) of those without religion say so as compared to almost 1 in 20 (4%) of their peers with a religion. Respondents age 18-44 who are not married are less likely to want children. Slightly more than 1 in 5 (22%) say they plan not to have any children. 1 in 3 (33%) of those without a religion say so as compared to about 1 in 5 (19%) of those with a religion.

Among married respondents aged 18-44, those with religion are more likely to indicate not yet meeting their ideal or planned number of children (see Fig. 12).

Fig. 12 – Percentage of married respondents aged 18-44 (and their respective number of children) not yet meeting their ideal or planned number of children

Among married respondents aged 18-44 with a religion, 50% had not met their ideal number of children, and 59% had not met their planned number of children. Those without children are most likely to say that they have not yet achieved their ideal (80%) or planned (86%) aspirations for parenthood.

Among their peers without a religion, the figures are just slightly lower; 45% had not yet met their ideal number of children, and 54% had not met their planned number of children. The difference seems most pronounced for those who currently already have 1 child, where those

with only 55% of those with no religion planning to have more children as compared to 71% of their peers with a religion (see Fig. 12).[4]

Do not want children: A dealbreaker?

Our survey investigated whether respondents would consider a potential spouse's refusal to have children to be a "dealbreaker" in marriage, meaning that (if unmarried) they will not marry such a person or (if married) would not have married such a person.

Among never-married respondents aged 18-44, about 4 in 10 (43%) say that they will not marry someone who does not want children, while about 3 in 10 (34%) disagreed (see Fig. 13). There is a significant difference between those with a religion and those without. Almost 1 in 2 (47%) respondents 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.
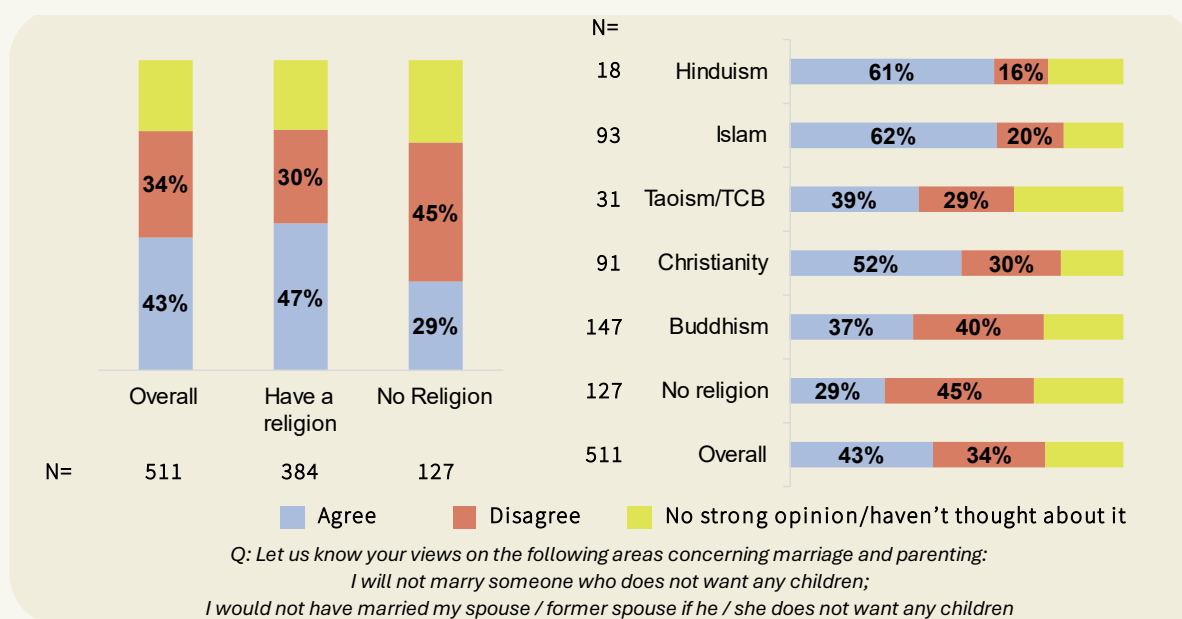

Fig. 13 – I will not marry / would not have married someone who doesn't want children
(by religion, never-married only)

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[4] Note that the base sizes for those with no religion is very small and therefore findings in this chart are only indicative from our limited sample.

Muslims (62%), Hindus (61%)[5] and Christians (52%) are more likely to consider not desiring children a dealbreaker for marriage. Taoists and TCB adherents are most undecided (33%) on this matter, while more Buddhists (40%) and those without religion (45%) say that it is not a dealbreaker.

Support for Government benefits to encourage childbearing and parenting

More than 8 in 10 (82%) agree that the Government should give benefits to encourage childbearing, sentiments are similar across most religious groups with the exception of Taoists/TCB adherents (73%) and non-religious respondents (77%) (see Fig. 14). Hindus and Muslims are the most supportive (both 89%). The levels of support are similar to views concerning whether Singapore society will be better off with more children (see Fig. 9 above).

Q: Let us know your views on the following statements concerning Government actions for marriage and families in Singapore: The Government should give benefits to encourage childbearing
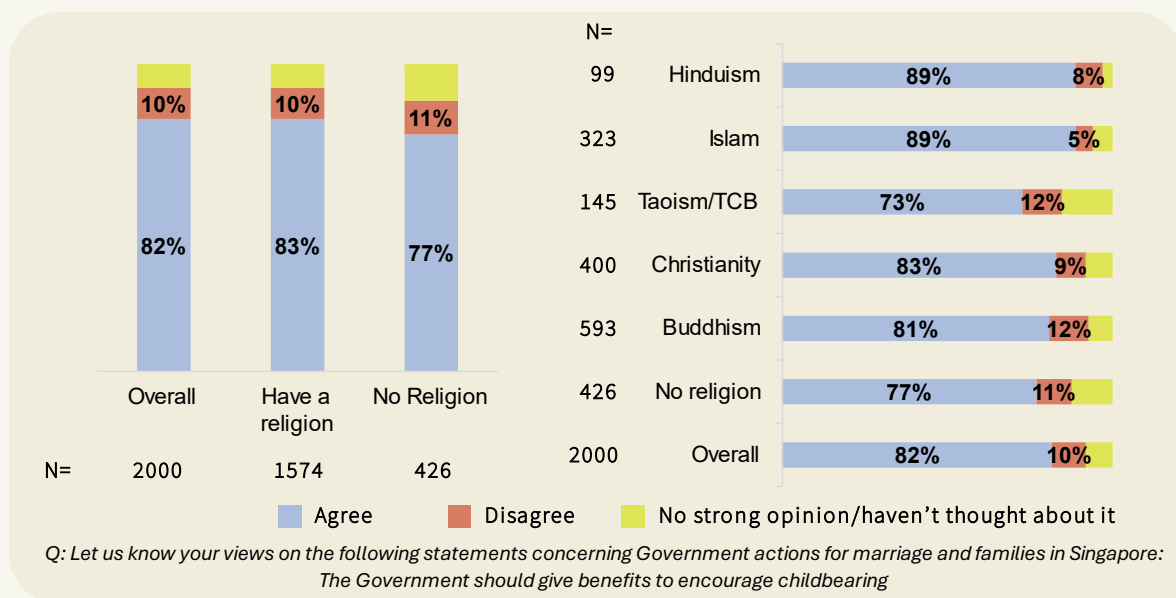
Fig. 14 – The Government should give benefits to encourage childbearing (by religion)

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[5] Note the small sample size, figures are indicative only.

The level of support for the Government giving benefits to recognise parents' efforts to raise children (83% on the overall) is largely similar to the support for giving benefits for childbearing. Hindus (89%) and Muslims (93%) remain the most supportive (see Fig. 15).

Q: Let us know your views on the following statements concerning Government actions for marriage and families in Singapore: The Government should give benefits to recognise parents' efforts to raise children
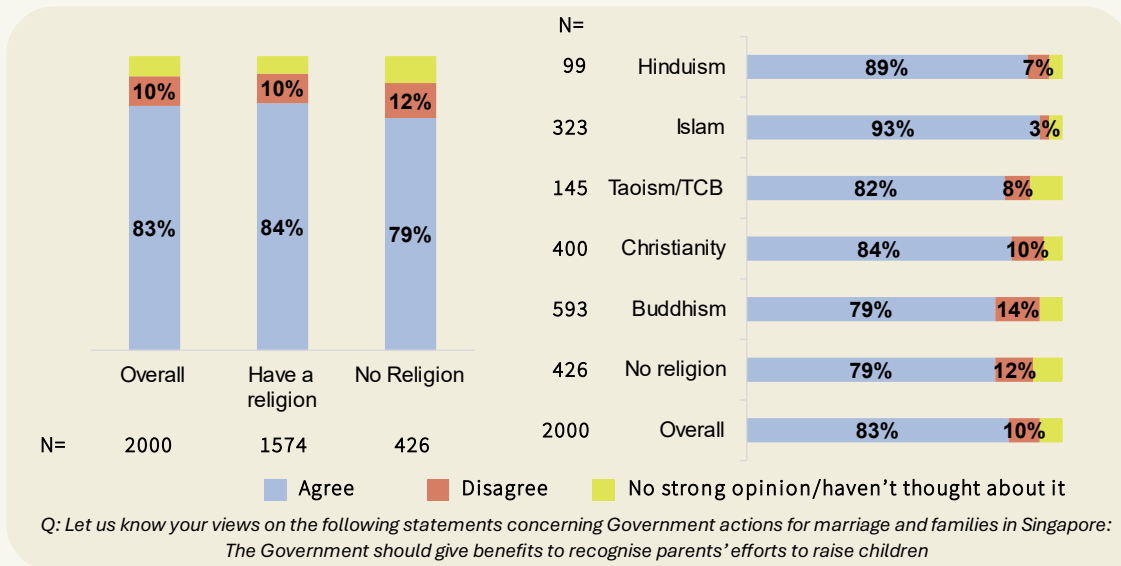
Fig. 15 – The Government should give benefits to recognise parents' efforts to raise children (by religion)

Views on Parental Involvement

Father–Mother unit important for children

Nearly 9 in 10 (89%) of respondents believe that men and women each bring unique contributions to parenting (see Fig. 16). Religious (89%) or non-religious (87%) alike, respondents overwhelmingly perceive fathers and mothers to be important in children's lives. Such perceptions are the strongest among Christians (95%), Muslims (93%) and Hindus (93%).

Q: Let us know your views on the following statements: A man and a woman each bring unique contributions to parenting
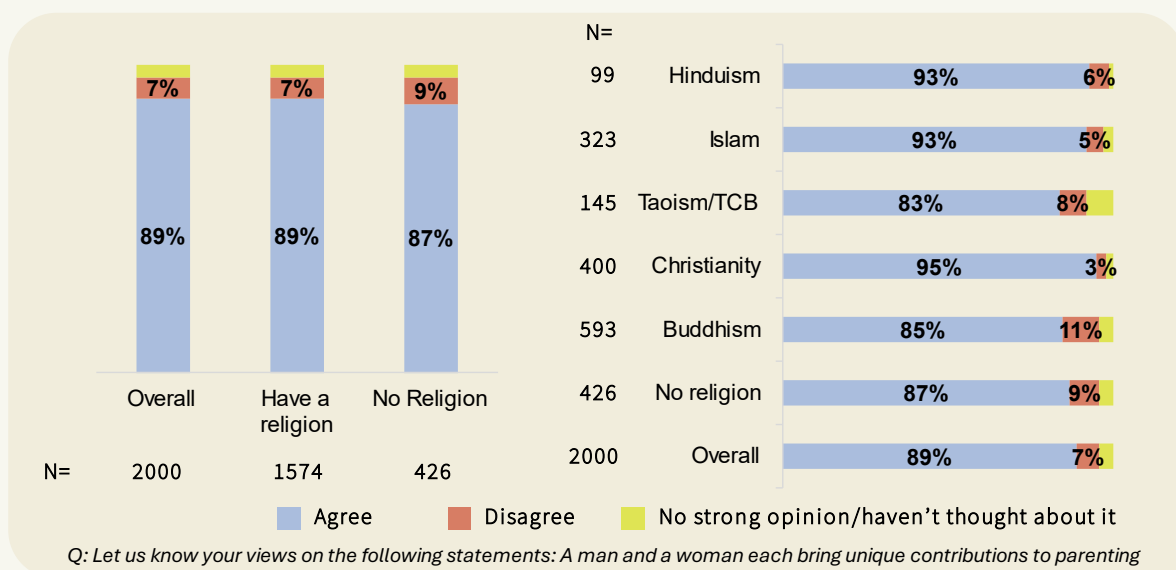
Fig. 16 – A man and a woman each bring unique contributions to parenting (by religion)

However, when respondents were asked whether a child needs a father and a mother, differences between those who have a religion and those who have no religion emerge. 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 (see Fig. 17). The difference is not so much in disagreement, but in a lack of strong opinion or thoughts about it.

N=

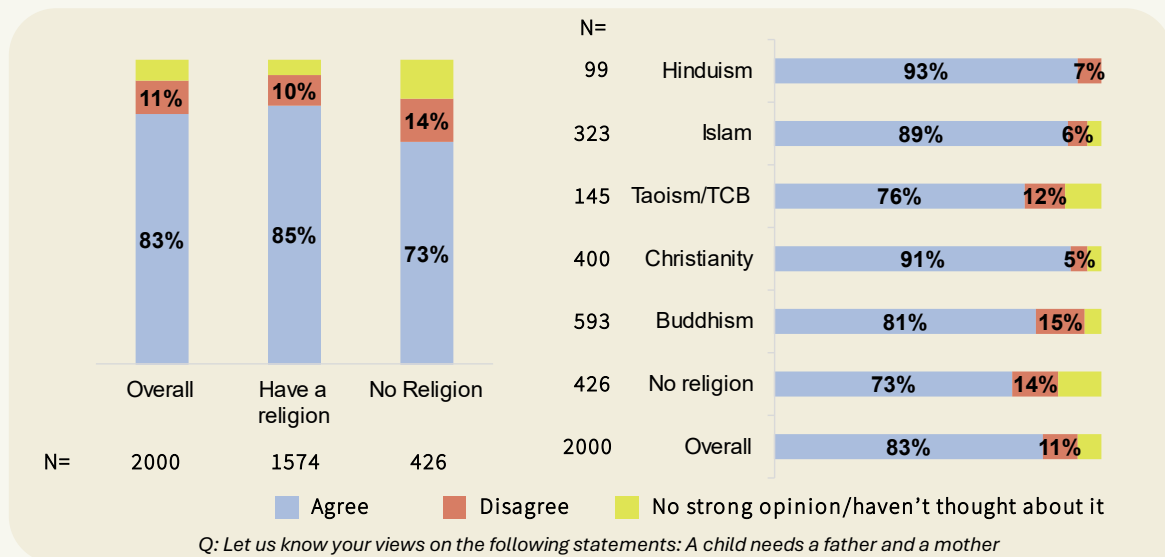|	N=	Agree	Disagree	No strong opinion
Hinduism	99	93%	7%	
Islam	323	89%	6%	
Taoism/TCB	145	76%	12%	
Christianity	400	91%	5%	
Buddhism	593	81%	15%	
No religion	426	73%	14%	
Overall	2000	83%	11%	

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ No strong opinion/haven't thought about it

Q: Let us know your views on the following statements: A child needs a father and a mother

Fig. 17 – A child needs a father and a mother (by religion)

Most religious groups have at least 8 in 10 respondents agreeing that a child needs a father and a mother. Taoists and TCB adherents (76%) and those with no religion (73%) tend to agree in fewer numbers, whereas Hindus (93%), Christians (91%) and Muslims (89%) are most in agreement.

Beyond just the figure of a father and a mother, biological relationship matters to respondents too. About 8 in 10 (79%) respondents agree that 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 only about 7 in 10 (71%) of those without a religion (see Fig. 18). Across the board, fewer respondents with a religion agree with this statement while retaining the same pattern of support when compared to their views on whether a child needs a father and a mother.
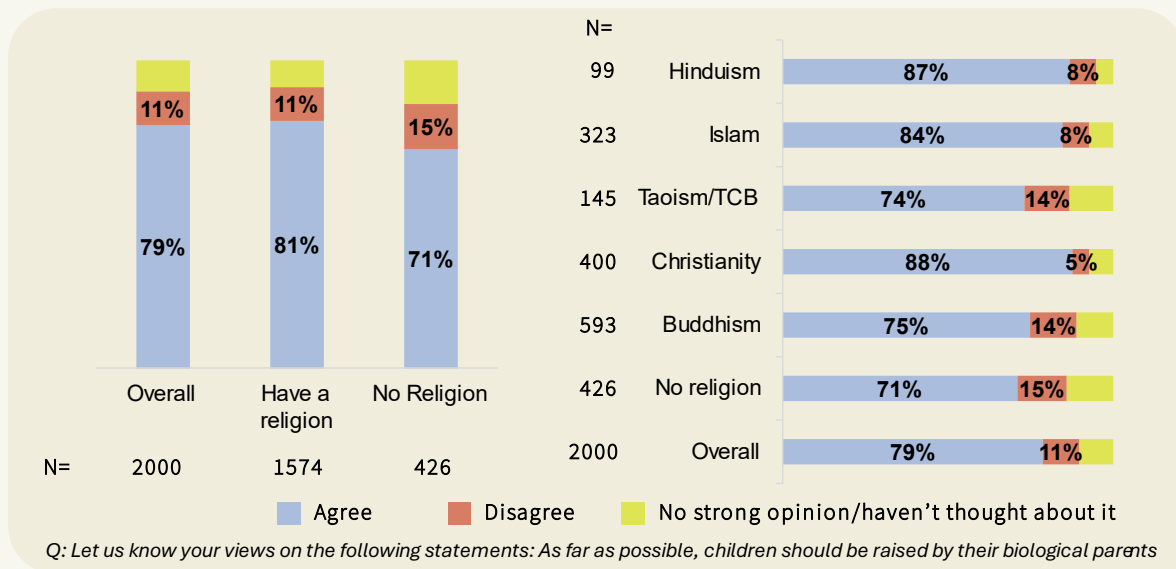
Q: Let us know your views on the following statements: As far as possible, children should be raised by their biological parents

Fig. 18 – As far as possible, children should be raised by their biological parents (by religion)

Between Supporting and Incentivising: Single Parenting

More than 8 in 10 (83%) believe that single parents should receive more support (see Fig. 19).[6] The level of agreement is the same across respondents with a religion and those without. Both also draw a distinction between supporting single parents and encouraging single parenthood, with only about 1 in 4 (24%-26%) believe that single parenting should be encouraged.

Muslims and Christians seem to make the sharpest distinction between supporting single parents and encouraging single parenthood. While Muslims are most in agreement that single parents should receive more support (93%), much fewer agree that single parenthood should be encouraged (23%). Likewise, 86% of Christians agree that single parents should receive more support, but much fewer agree that single parenthood should be encouraged (17%).

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[6] Our survey was focused on the topic of receiving support in general, and the question did not explore whom should be providing such support. Therefore, respondents may possibly be referring to support from various sources like family, community groups and friends, and not necessarily the Government.
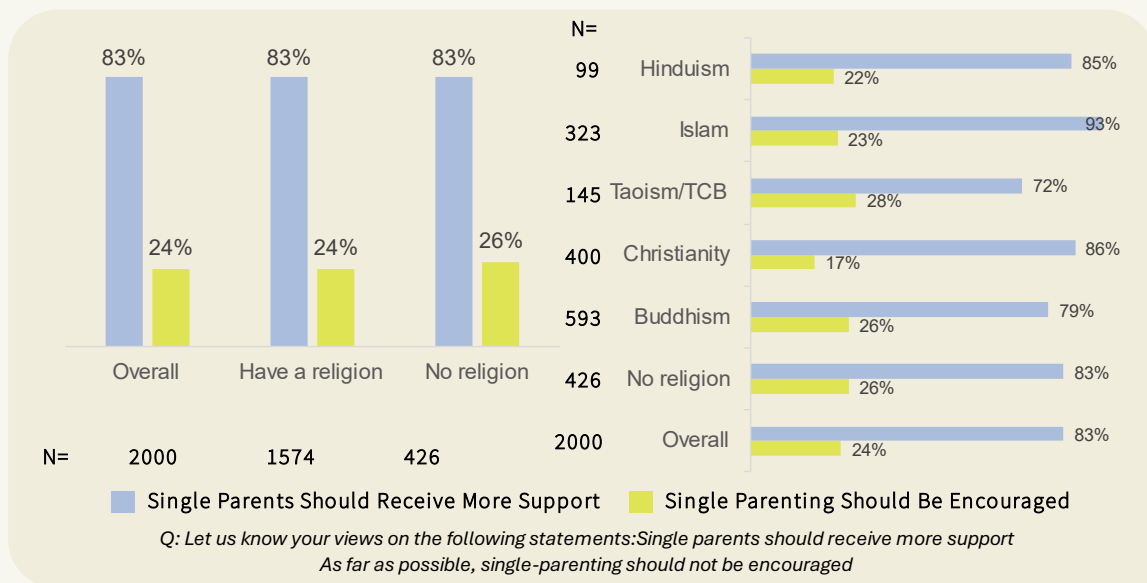
N=

99	Hinduism	85%	22%
323	Islam	93%	23%
145	Taoism/TCB	72%	28%
400	Christianity	86%	17%
593	Buddhism	79%	26%
426	No religion	83%	26%
2000	Overall	83%	24%

Single Parents Should Receive More Support   *Single Parenting Should Be Encouraged*

Q: Let us know your views on the following statements:Single parents should receive more support
As far as possible, single-parenting should not be encouraged

Fig. 19 – Percentage of respondents who feel that single parents should receive more support
or that single parenting should be encouraged (by religion)

Parental Involvement in their children's lives

More than 8 in 10 respondents (83%) agree that parents should be involved in major decisions in their children's lives (see Fig. 20). The difference between respondents with a religion and those without is only 4%. Taoists and TCB adherents are much least likely to agree, with slightly less than 7 in 10 (68%) agreeing and the remaining disagreeing (16%) or having no strong opinion about it (16%).

Agree   *Disagree*   *No strong opinion/haven't thought about it*

Q: Let us know your views on the following statements: Parents should be involved in major decisions in their children's lives
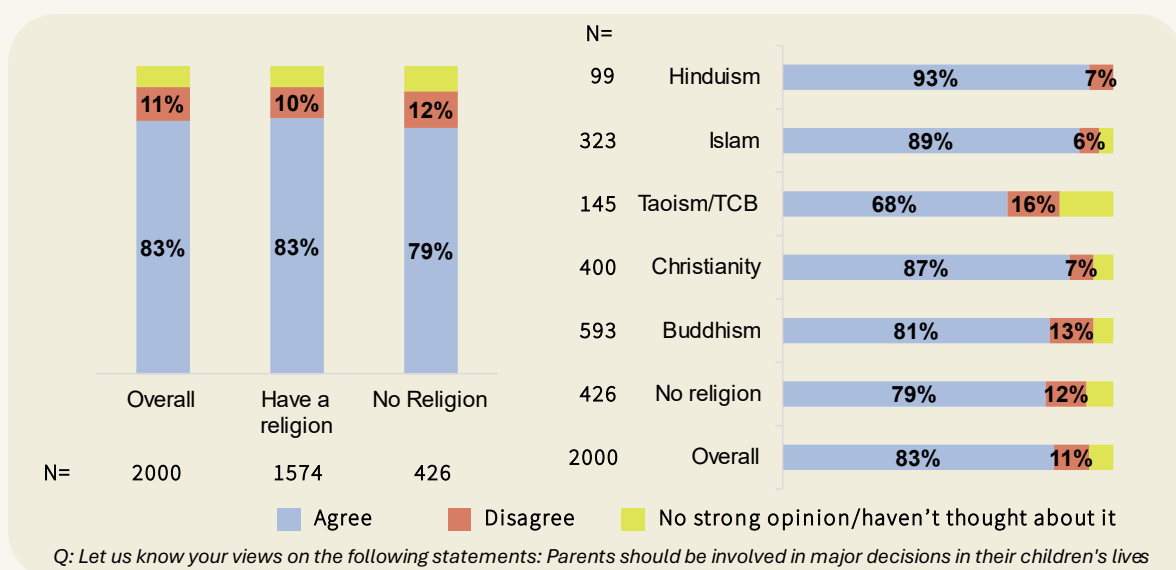
Fig. 20 – Parents should be involved in major decisions in their children's lives (by religion)

When it comes to moral values, there is little difference between those with a religion and those without (see Fig. 21). About 9 in 10 (89%) respondents believe that parents should have the primary responsibility to educate their children on moral values. Across religious groups, Christians (95%), Muslims (94%) and Hindus (94%) are most likely to hold this sentiment.
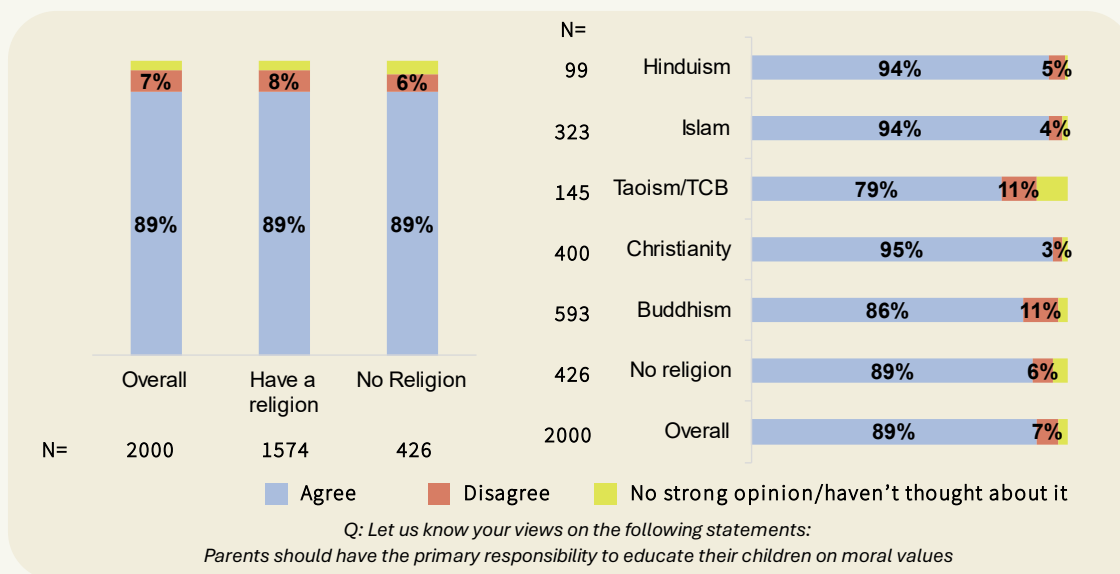

Q: Let us know your views on the following statements:
Parents should have the primary responsibility to educate their children on moral values

Fig. 21 – Parents should have the primary responsibility to educate their children on moral values (by religion)

A similar attitude is also evident in relation to sexuality education, more than 8 in 10 (83%) respondents believe that parents should have the primary responsibility for sexuality education of their children (see Fig. 22). The sentiment is slightly less affirmed by respondents without a religion (80%) as compared to their peers with a religion (84%). Muslims (90%), Hindus (89%) and Christians (87%) indicate the highest support for parents being responsible for their children's sexuality education.
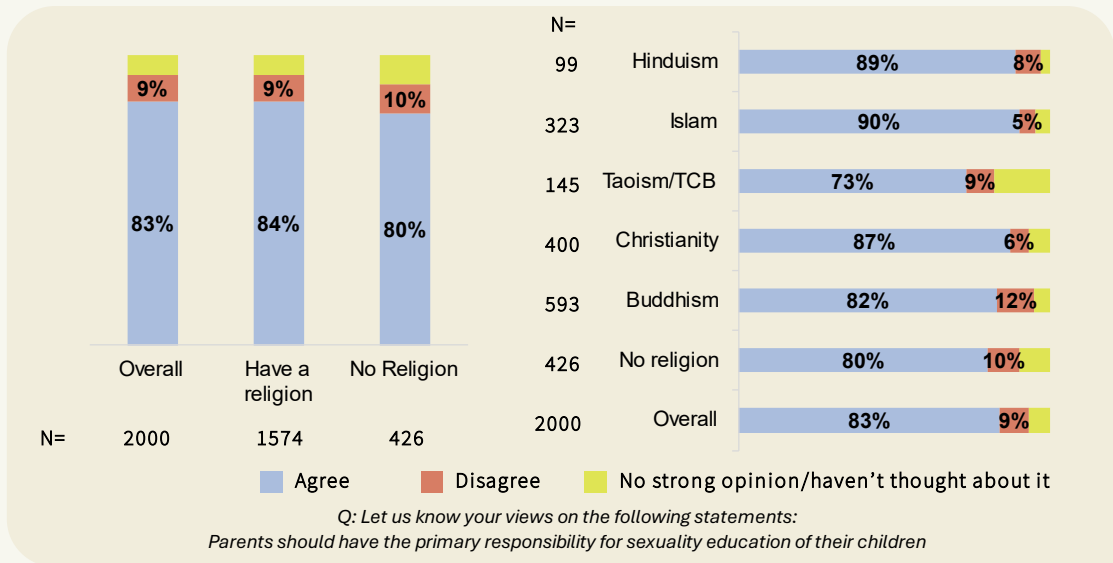
Left chart:

	Overall	Have a religion	No Religion
No strong opinion			
Disagree	9%	9%	10%
Agree	83%	84%	80%

N= 2000 | 1574 | 426

Right chart:

N=	Religion	Agree	Disagree
99	Hinduism	89%	8%
323	Islam	90%	5%
145	Taoism/TCB	73%	9%
400	Christianity	87%	6%
593	Buddhism	82%	12%
426	No religion	80%	10%
2000	Overall	83%	9%

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ No strong opinion/haven't thought about it

Q: Let us know your views on the following statements:
Parents should have the primary responsibility for sexuality education of their children

Fig. 22 – Parents should have the primary responsibility for sexuality education of their children (by religion)

Controversial Views Not a Barrier to Friendship

Our survey explored attitudes towards social discourse in general, including attitudes towards controversial views and views that respondents disagreed with.

Concerning attitudes towards social discourse in general, almost 7 in 10 (67%) respondents say that they do not allow controversial views to stand in the way of them making friends (see Fig. 23). 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 more than 1 in 4 (25%) not having a strong opinion on this matter or have not thought about it.
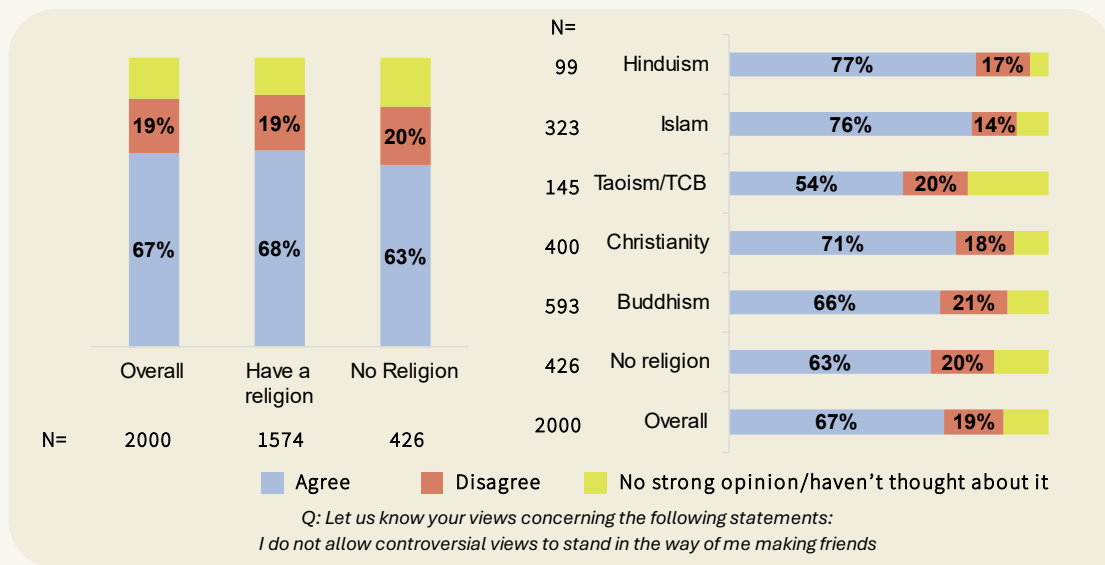

Fig. 23 – I do not allow controversial views to stand in the way of me making friends (by religion)

Most respondents believe that it is possible for people with strongly opposing views to dialogue with each other. 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%) (see Fig. 24). 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.
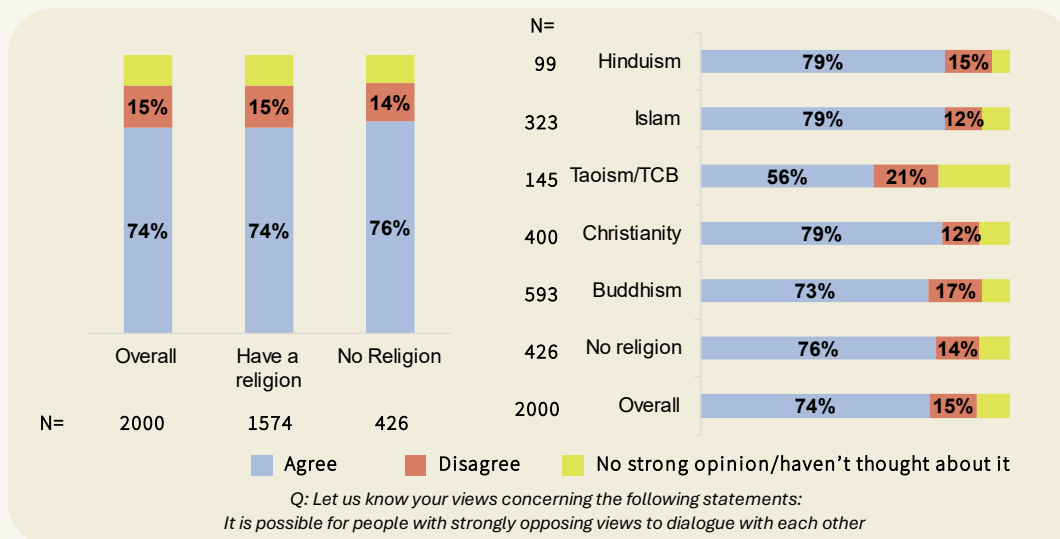
Q: Let us know your views concerning the following statements:
It is possible for people with strongly opposing views to dialogue with each other

Fig. 24 – It is possible for people with strongly opposing views to dialogue with each other (by religion)

Discussions Online Are Less Comfortable

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 (see Fig. 25).

Hindus (77%) and Muslims (70%) and Christians (67%) tend to express the highest levels of comfort discussing controversial issues in-person. On the other hand, Christians (53%) express the lowest levels of comfort discussing these issues online.
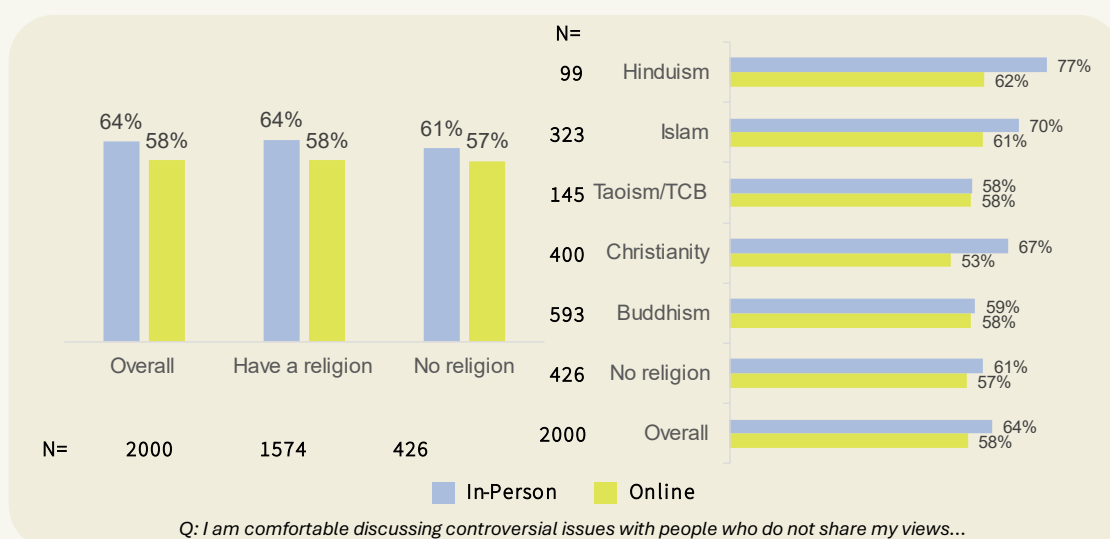

Q: I am comfortable discussing controversial issues with people who do not share my views…

Fig. 25 – I am comfortable discussing controversial issues with people who do not share my views (in-person vs online) (by religion)

26

Self-censorship

Respondents show a sense of fear concerning conversations, leading to almost 6 in 10 (58%) reporting that they self-censor due to fear of public criticism (see Fig. 26). This sentiment is shared across religious (58%) and non-religious respondents (55%). Muslims and Hindus (both 64%) are most likely to self-censor in public due to such fear.
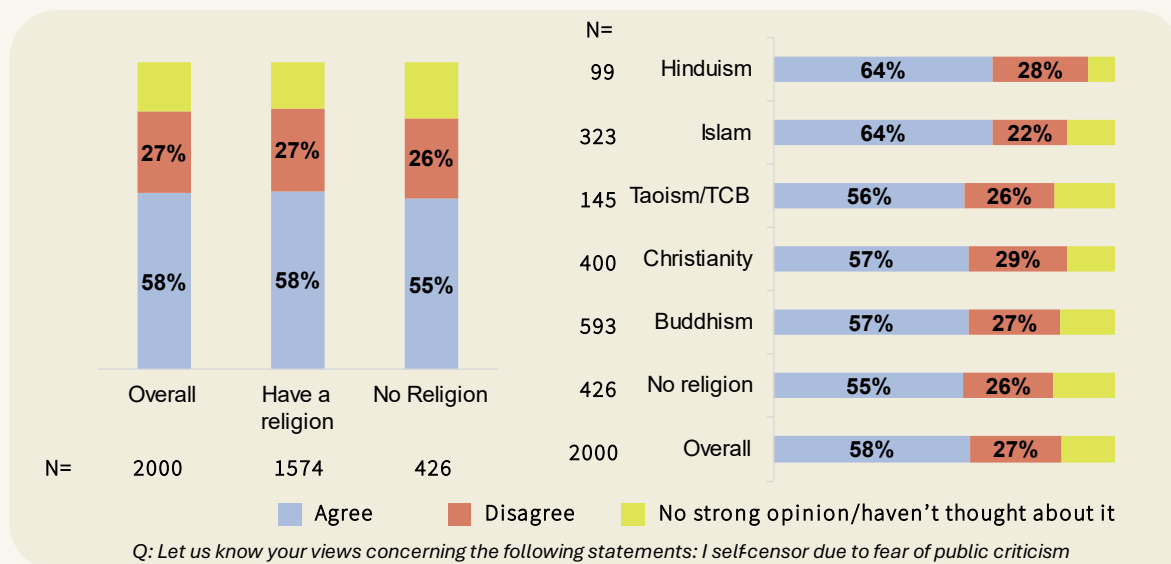

Fig. 26 – I self-censor due to fear of public criticism (by religion)

General Views on Social Discourse

We observed in our main report that there is a heightened sensitivity to criticism, where people are "walking on eggshells" which could be due to certain ideas and attitudes concerning social discourse.

Almost 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.

However, we found that respondents with no religion are less likely to agree with the statements "to accept someone means agreeing with the person" (40%) and "it is hateful to disagree with someone" (36%) as compared to their peers who have a religion (51% for the former statement; 41% for the latter statement) (see Fig. 27). A breakdown of views held by respondents with a religion can be seen from Figs. 28-31.

Religious or not, a sizeable number of respondents are favourable towards forms of social sanction against people for expressing views they do not share. Concerning "calling out" behaviour, 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. Similarly, on "cancelling", 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, although those with no religion are slightly less (33%) agreeable to this.

Fig. 27 – Views on statements concerning social discourse (by religion or none)

While more than half of the respondents with a religion (51%) think that "accepting with someone means agreeing with them", there is a significant variation across different religious groups (see Fig. 28). Similar to those without a religion, only about 4 in 10 (39%) Christians agree with this statement whereas more than 6 in 10 (66%) Hindus agree with it. Slightly more than half of surveyed Buddhists (54%), Taoists and TCB adherents (53%) and Muslims (52%) agree with the statement.
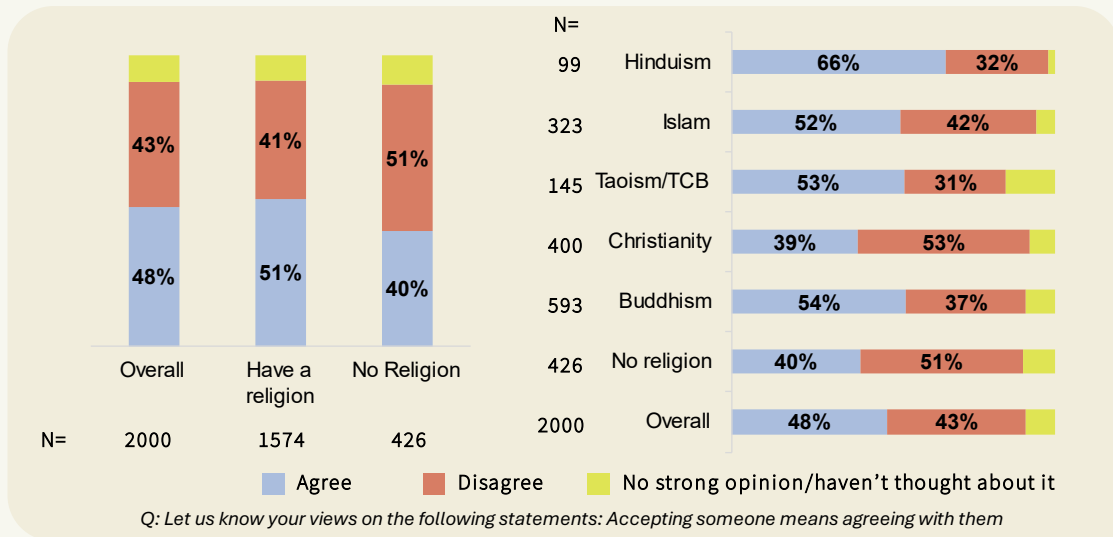
N=
		Agree	Disagree	No strong opinion
99	Hinduism	66%	32%	
323	Islam	52%	42%	
145	Taoism/TCB	53%	31%	
400	Christianity	39%	53%	
593	Buddhism	54%	37%	
426	No religion	40%	51%	
2000	Overall	48%	43%	

Agree   Disagree   No strong opinion/haven't thought about it

Q: Let us know your views on the following statements: Accepting someone means agreeing with them

Fig. 28 – Accepting someone means agreeing with them (by religion)

A similar situation applies for the statement "it is hateful to disagree with someone" (see Fig. 29). About 4 in 10 (41%) of the respondents with a religion agrees with the statement, but only about 3 in 10 (32%) Christians agree with it. Hindus (47%), Buddhists (46%) and Muslims (44%) are more likely to consider disagreement hateful.
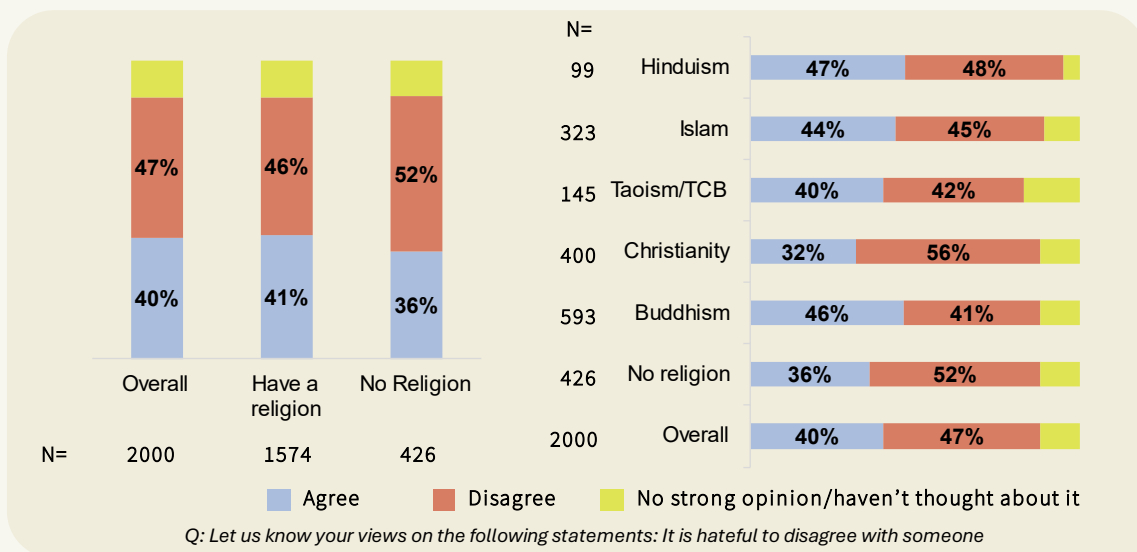

N=
		Agree	Disagree	No strong opinion
99	Hinduism	47%	48%	
323	Islam	44%	45%	
145	Taoism/TCB	40%	42%	
400	Christianity	32%	56%	
593	Buddhism	46%	41%	
426	No religion	36%	52%	
2000	Overall	40%	47%	

Agree   Disagree   No strong opinion/haven't thought about it

Q: Let us know your views on the following statements: It is hateful to disagree with someone

Fig. 29 – It is hateful to disagree with someone (by religion)

A majority of respondents (56%) find it unacceptable to shame someone online for expressing different views, and this sentiment is similar across religious and non-religious lines (see Fig. 30). Christians have the strongest disagreement with this statement (65%), followed by those without a religion (57%) and the Hindus (55%).
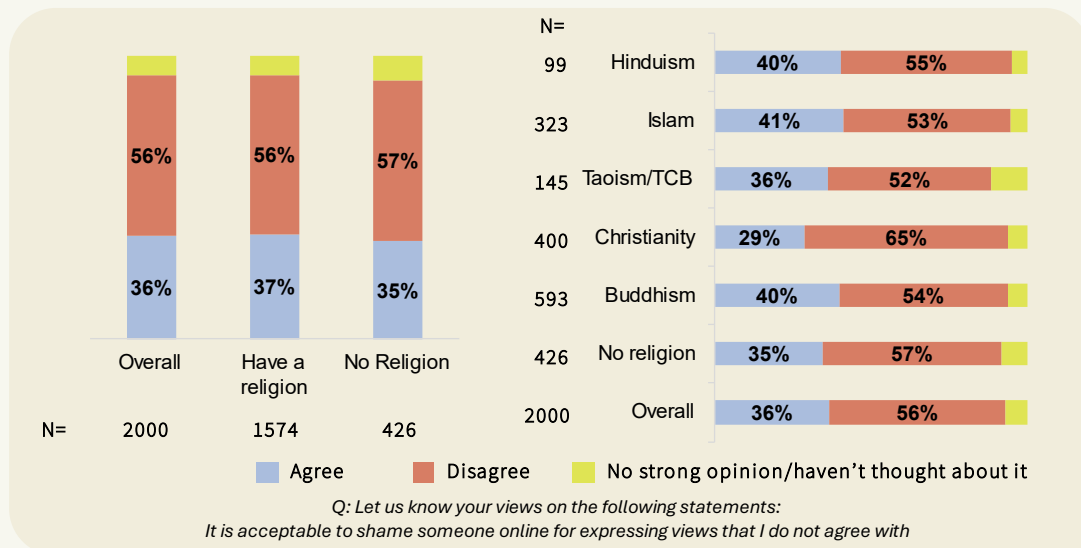
Fig. 30 – *It is acceptable to shame someone online for expressing views that I do not agree with (by religion)*

A similar level of disapproval (53%) is observed concerning calling for people to be fired for expressing views that one does not agree with (see Fig. 31). Again, this sentiment is similar across religious and non-religious lines. Christians have the strongest disagreement with this statement (61%), followed by those without a religion (55%) and the Buddhists (51%).
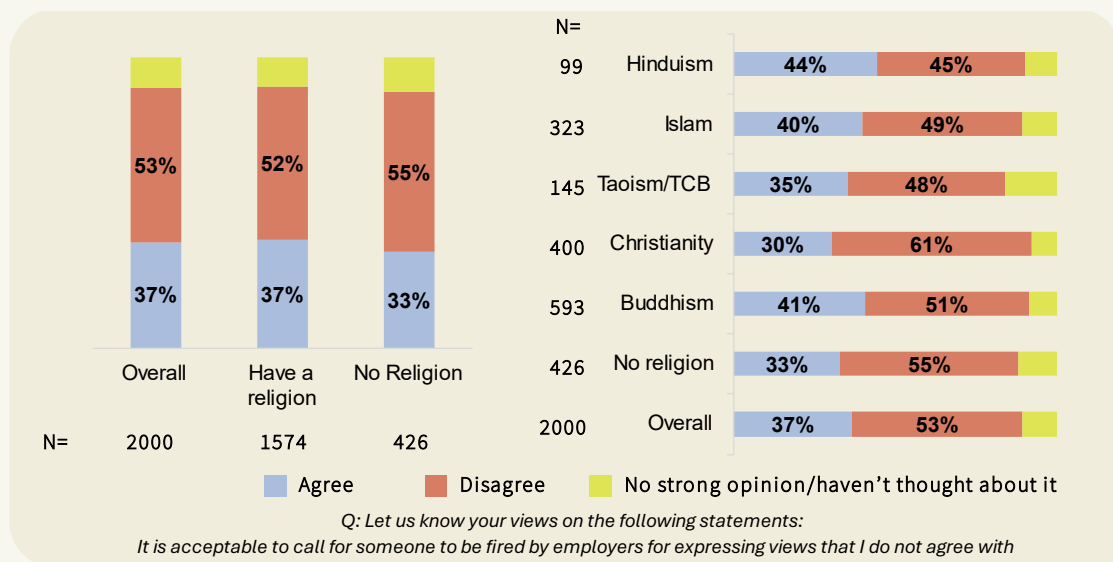

Fig. 31 – *It is acceptable to call for someone to be fired by employers for expressing views that I do not agree with (by religion)*

Comments and Recommendations

On Marriage and Family

As mentioned in our main report, respondents show 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.

We make some observations across the different viewpoints.

Firstly, our findings are consistent with observations made elsewhere, which suggest that religious people tend to have more favourable views towards marriage, family and children, and are more open to having more children.[7] Various studies have suggested contributing factors for such attitudes, including religious teachings on matters of marriage and fertility, religious community support for childbearing and family, and that people who are more religious tend to perceive greater benefits in having children.[8]

Secondly, support for the institution of marriage and its current structure is strong across all viewpoints, with differences largely driven by those with no strong opinion or have not thought about it. This indicates room for communities to be more intentional in their communication and teaching concerning marriage and family values.

Thirdly, while a high number of respondents recognise the unique contributions of a man and a woman bring to a marriage, support for the existing definition of marriage is not paired with such recognition. This indicates a need for greater awareness about the meaning of marriage and the value of a man-woman family unit to bridge what respondents seem to intuitively agree or recognise with their cognition.

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[7] See, for example, Eric Kaufmann, *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth?: Demography and Politics in the Twenty-first Century* (London: Profile Books, 2011).

[8] Iim Halimatusa'diyah and Dzuriyatun Toyibah, "Do Religious People Have More Children? The Effect of Religious Affiliation and Religiosity on Fertility" (2021) 29 Journal of Population and Social Studies 479; Christoph Bein, *et al.*, "Do costs and benefits of children matter for religious people? Perceived consequences of parenthood and fertility intentions in Poland" (2021) 53(3) Journal of Biosocial Science 419; Isabella Buber-Ennser and Caroline Berghammer, "Religiosity and the realisation of fertility intentions: A comparative study of eight European countries" (2021) 27(6) Population, Space and Place e2433.

Lastly, aspiration for marriage is significantly higher among never-married respondents aged 18-44, with a religion as compared to their non-religious peers. It will be useful to dive deeper into how one's religious or non-religious beliefs have affected their views and desire towards marriage.

Recommendations:

In addition to our recommendations in the main report,

1. Further study may be necessary to explore how religious or non-religious worldviews influence attitudes towards current norms surrounding marriage and family.

2. As Singapore is a multi-religious society, it is important to engage various stakeholders and representatives of religious communities to gain a better consensus concerning marriage and family policies.

3. 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.

4. 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.

On Children and Parenthood

Across the religious and non-religious viewpoints, Singaporeans generally hold favourable attitudes towards children and parenthood. There are also high levels of support for Government benefits to encourage childbearing.

We make some observations across the different viewpoints.

On the overall, respondents with a religion have showed a stronger interest in having children. While sample size is small for those without a religion, this survey showed that respondents with a religion are more open to or plan to have more children than their peers without a religion.

Similarly, never-married respondents age 18-44 and have a religion are more intentional in seeking a spouse that is willing to have a child, than their peers with no religion. These indicates potential for further exploration to understand the reasons for the difference in attitudes towards children and parenthood across communities. Working with community leaders to understand their constituents' aspirations, concerns and challenges may help to finetune marriage and parenthood incentive policies for more effectiveness.

Respondents with religious or non-religious viewpoints believe that parents should have the primary responsibility for moral and sexuality education of their children. This shows a strong recognition of the role of parents in children's upbringing. The Government would therefore do well to facilitate parents in fulfilling their duties in such areas of upbringing. Some communities feel stronger about these, but again the difference seems to be driven more by a lack of strong opinion or not having thought about these matters at the point of taking this survey.

Recommendations:

In addition to our recommendations in the main report,

1. Further exploration is needed to understand the reasons for the difference in attitudes towards children and parenthood across communities, including how religious or non-religious perspectives shape such attitudes.

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2. More work needs to be done with community leaders to understand their constituents' aspirations, concerns, and challenges, which may help to finetune marriage and parenthood incentive policies for more effectiveness.

3. Support, including support from the Government and community groups, should be provided to help parents fulfil their responsibility for moral and sexuality education of their children.

On Social Discourse

We noted in our main report that Singaporeans are generally open to dialogue and form friendships with people who hold opposing views, but they are also cautious and engage in self-censorship due to fears of public criticism. Part of this may stem from the willingness among a significant number of people to shame others online and to call for employers to fire them, arising out of disagreement.

Cultivate has previously noted that we are currently facing a "cultural lag" where technological advancements have outpaced our legal and moral norms, and there are gaps in these norms surrounding online harms.[9]

This need for stronger legal frameworks to address online harms has been acknowledged by the Ministry of Law. It is also looking into possible legal reforms to address cancel culture, noting "limitations" in the "existing civil legal framework" and types of remedies that may be ordered by the Singapore courts.[10]

In this cut of the survey, we found that religious or cultural viewpoints may affect attitudes towards social discourse and behaviour. To complement efforts for legal reforms to address

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[9] Darius Lee, "As technology outpaces law on online harms, new solutions are needed" *The Straits Times* (19 October 2023): https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/as-technology-outpaces-law-on-online-harms-new-solutions-are-needed.

[10] Ministry of Law, "Closing Address by Mdm Rahayu Mahzam, Senior Parliamentary Secretary of Ministry of Health and Ministry of Law, at the Online Harms Symposium 2023" (27 September 2023): https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/news/speeches/closing-address-by-mdm-rahayu-mahzam-at-online-harms-symposium-2023/.

cancel culture, more can be done to understand the reasons for the observed differences in this survey.

<u>Recommendations:</u>

In addition to our recommendations in the main report,

1. There is a need to create conductive environments for people of diverse views to dialogue with one another, including on topics relating to marriage, family and children. 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.

2. 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.

3. Work with community leaders (including religious leaders) to understand how their community (including religious leaders) perceives different aspects of social discourse. This may provide valuable input to finetune and complement existing efforts to build social harmony even in a time of increasing identity politics.

Annex: About this survey

Methodology

Toluna was commissioned to conduct this survey using its online survey platform. Fieldwork took place between 21 September to 21 October 2024. The survey was a self-administered online questionnaire that was only available in English.

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.[11] Those who have answered "others" have been omitted as a category from this report, due to low numbers.

Two tranches of fieldwork were required to reach the required respondents to achieve a sample close to national demographic distributions. Results in this report are weighted to align the sample to the demographic profile of Singapore's overall population. For further details, please refer to the "Demographics" section in this annex for more information regarding the sample. Figures presented in this report may not always add up to 100% due to rounding.

Limitations

The survey was a self-administered online questionnaire that was only available in English. As this survey is done with Singapore's general population in mind, sample sizes for each religious group varies and is limited in number. This has caused limitations in exploring differences, especially intra-religious differences. We did not include respondents who had indicated "Others" for their religious affiliation in this report as the sample size is too small for meaningful comment.

We have also noted in the main report that the responses by those aged 65 and above may be less than expected as they seem to be an anomaly or deviate from expected trends. This could be due to several reasons including the following:

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[11] See, for example, Department of Statistics, "Census of Population 2020 – Statistical Release 1: Demographic Characteristics, Education, Language and Religion": https://www.singstat.gov.sg/-/media/files/publications/cop2020/sr1/cop2020sr1.ashx.

a) As the survey is purely self-administered online, 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.

b) As the questionnaire was only in English, participation in this survey is limited to only English speakers. There may also be some difficulty understanding and responding to the survey if a respondent's command of the language is weaker.

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.
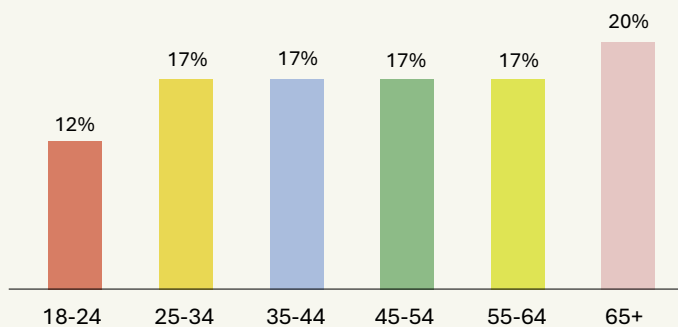
Demographics

Sex

49.6% 50.4%
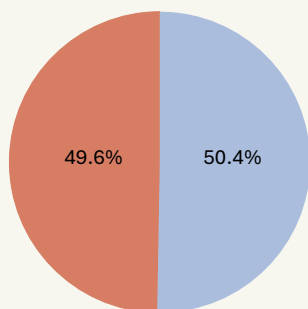
■ Female   ■ Male

N=   *2000*

Age Groups

Overall

Note: Figures may
not add up to 100%
due to rounding.

| 12% | 17% | 17% | 17% | 17% | 20% |
| 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65+ |

N=   *2000*

Ethnicity

Overall

Note: Figures may
not add up to 100%
due to rounding.

| 73% | 15% | 9% | 3% |
| Chinese | Malay | Indian | Others |
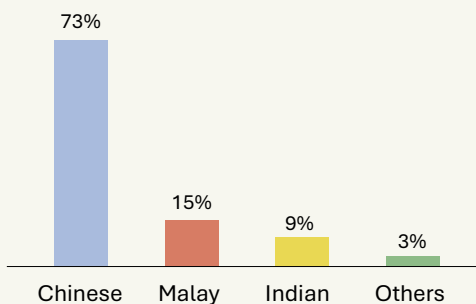
N=   *2000*

Marital Status

Overall
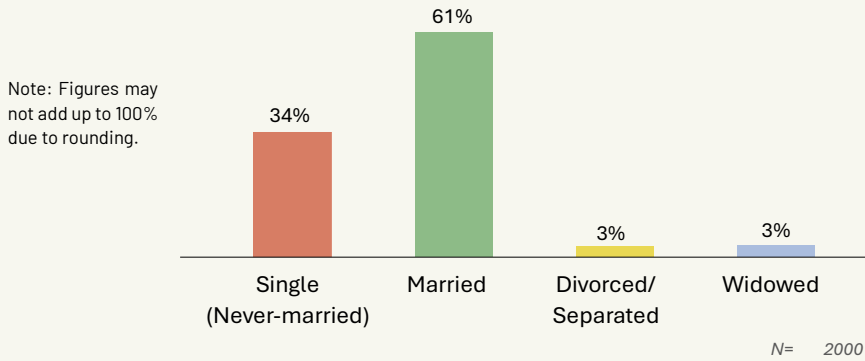
Note: Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

- Single (Never-married): 34%
- Married: 61%
- Divorced/Separated: 3%
- Widowed: 3%

N= 2000

Marital Status (By Age)

Note: Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Single (Never-married)

- 18-24: 35%
- 25-34: 27%
- 38-44: 14%
- 45-54: 10%
- 55-64: 9%
- 65+: 4%

N= 672

Married

- 18-24: 1%
- 25-34: 13%
- 38-44: 19%
- 45-54: 21%
- 55-64: 21%
- 65+: 25%

N= 1212

Legend
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 38-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+
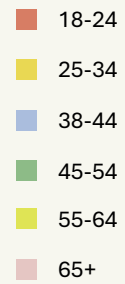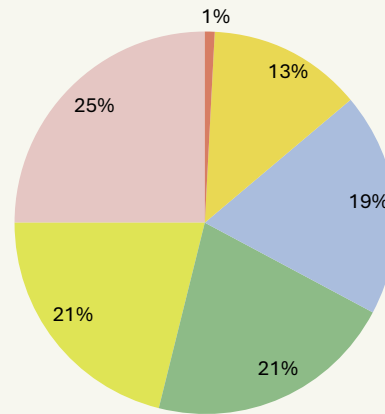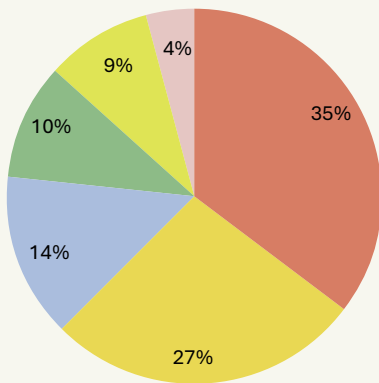
Number of Children

Overall

Note: Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

- None: 40%
- One: 27%
- Two: 26%
- Three: 6%
- Four: 1%
- More than Four: 0%

N= 2000
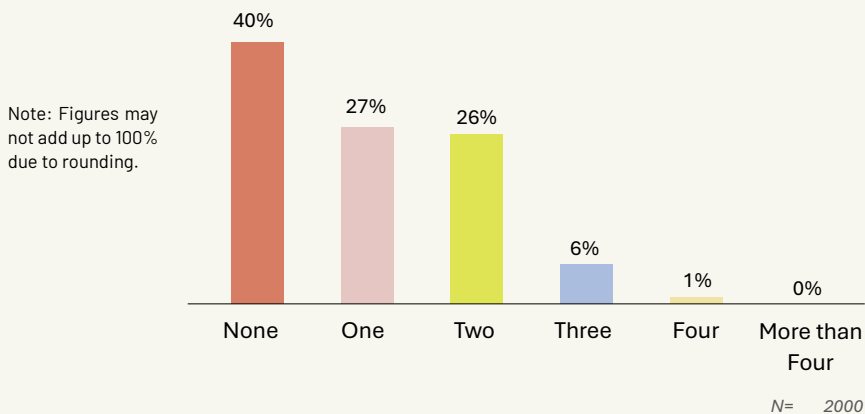
Religion

Overall

Note: Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Category	Percentage
No religion	21%
Buddhism	30%
Christianity	20%
Taoism / Traditional Chinese Beliefs	7%
Islam	16%
Hinduism	5%
Others	1%

N=   2000