

Press Release

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**The more people prize parenthood,
the less deterred they are by its perceived price**

28 March 2026 – Cultivate SG, a non-profit organisation that researches and dialogues on family issues in Singapore, presents this supplementary analysis of its 2025 survey on Marriage, Parenthood and Success. The survey reached 2,019 Singaporean and Permanent Resident respondents aged 21-45.

Summary:

Key Finding:

**Parenthood aversion is not merely about the affordability of children.
It is whether Singaporeans believe that family life
is worth re-ordering their lives around, and for.**

When parenthood is perceived as a prize, its price undergoes “price-inelasticity” (i.e. less sensitive to the costs / challenges of parenthood). The converse is true; when parenthood is not prized, it becomes highly “price elastic” (i.e. more sensitive to the costs / challenges of parenthood).

- Building on our previously published Marriage, Parenthood and Success Survey (2025), we examined how respondents of different life status and marriage and parenthood orientation (MPO) differ in their perception of the prize and price of parenthood.
- Here are our findings and recommendations at a glance:

	 MNC	 PMNC	 MNCY	 MP-H
Description	Married, have no children and have no parenthood aspirations.	May marry, have no children and have no parenthood aspirations.	Married, have no children but have parenthood aspirations.	Married, have children and have high parenthood aspirations.
Key Differentiating Factors	Practical-Economic Costs Material & Lifestyle Attainment		Parenting-Relational Concerns	Career Disruption (relative to MNC) Positive Aspiration for parenthood
Recommendations	Address pre-existing perceptions of marriage and parenthood.		Empowerment, encouragement and exposure to High MPO parents.	Change work culture

- Stronger convergence of values towards marriage except on parenthood.**

Across groups, respondents broadly agree on the core elements of marriage. The clearest difference is the relative importance of having children in marriage.
- Preference for Material and Lifestyle attainment, and Practical-Economic concerns are key factors for parenthood aversion.**

Respondents without parenthood aspirations tend to prioritise material and lifestyle attainment, and are significantly more concerned with the practical-economic costs of parenthood.
- Parenthood hesitation is first economic, but confidence and health matters too.**

Financial cost surfaced universally as the top barrier to parenthood. But aspiring parents hesitate over concern for a lack of time with children, personal parenting competency and potential health issues of child(ren).

Key recommendations

1. On the overall, address values, norms and narrative concerning marriage and parenthood
2. A Singapore made for families: Implement more family-friendly work rhythms
3. Encourage earlier marriage and parenthood planning

About the Survey

This report focuses on the four mentioned groups of respondents from the Marriage, Parenthood and Success Survey (2025) commissioned by Cultivate SG.

Pureprofile was commissioned to conduct the fieldwork from 22 Aug 2025 to 9 Sep 2025, reaching 2,019 Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents aged 21-45. The survey was a self-administered online questionnaire available only in English. We have chosen to only survey people between ages 21-45 as that is the mainstream age range for marriage and parenthood.

To ensure that the demographic proportions closely approximate the national 21-45 population, overall responses for each question covered in this report are weighted in terms of age cohort, sex, race and religion with reference to prevailing Singapore resident demographics.

All figures in this report are rounded off for readability. As a result, percentages may not sum to exactly 100% due to rounding differences.

As this survey was conducted purely online and in English only, it may under-represent respondents who are less comfortable with English or less likely to participate in online surveys.

By focusing on the age range 21-45, results reflect attitudes of those in mainstream marriage and childbearing years, but may not sufficiently reflect views of older adults or youths.

While results are meaningful, groups with smaller sample sizes, e.g. MNC and MNCY, have relatively small base sizes. These results should be interpreted with appropriate caution.

Attitudes of respondents may change over time. Results reflect associations at the point of survey, and do not establish causation between values, life priorities, and marriage and parenthood orientation.

Responses may be affected by social desirability, recall bias, or differences between stated views and actual future behaviour.

Link to supplementary report: <https://cultivate.sg/research-recommend/eyes-on-the-price-supplementary-analysis-of-the-marriage-parenthood-and-success-survey-2025/>

Link to full report: <https://cultivate.sg/research-recommend/marriage-parenthood-and-success-survey-2025/>

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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.

ANNEX

Introduction

This supplementary analysis builds on our previously published Marriage, Parenthood and Success Report (2025) which explored individuals' various levels of orientation towards marriage and parenthood (MPO).

The report is based on an online survey of 2,019 Singaporean and Permanent Resident respondents aged 21-45.

This supplementary analysis of the same survey examines how respondents of different life status and MPO differ in their perception of prize and price of parenthood.

Concept of Marriage and Parenthood Orientation (MPO)

Our survey developed the concept of “marriage and parenthood orientation” (MPO), based on whether respondents have a positive view of, and aspire towards, marriage and parenthood. Respondents were then classified in three categories according to degree of intensity of views and aspirations: High-MPO, Moderate-MPO and Non-MPO.

For more information on our MPO concept, please refer to our Marriage, Parenthood and Success Report (2025).

Groups Analysed

We analysed four respondent groups:



MNC (Married, No Child) – Married individuals with no child and have no aspiration to become parents



PMNC (Potentially, Married and No Child) – Singles who aspire to marry but not to become parents



MNCY (Married, No Child Yet) – Married individuals without children but do aspire to become parents



MP-H (Married Parents, High MPO) – Married parents with a strong Marriage and Parenthood Orientation

1. Priorities concerning Marriage, Life's Success, Parenthood and Parenting

Perceptions of Elements of Marriage

Values regarding essential elements of marriage do not differ much between groups, with the exception of “having children”.

- “Faithfulness” is the top priority across all groups (1st place, out of 12 elements of marriage).
- MNC and PMNC rank “having children” as the lowest priority in marriage (12th place), while MP-H rank “having children” in the middle (7th place).

Couple-centric elements – “having someone to grow old with”, “intimacy” and “having someone to rely on” – are similarly valued. Those more parenthood-oriented are less concerned about “having someone to rely on” as an essential element of marriage.

- MP-H rank “having someone to rely on” in 6th place, whereas it is ranked MNC ranked it 4th place and PMNC ranked it 3rd place.

Perceptions of a Successful Life

Those who deprioritise marriage and parenthood tend to prioritise material- and autonomy-related elements as markers of success.

- Of all groups, MNC rank “having lots of money” and “travelled the world” the highest (in 6th and 7th place respectively, out of 14 success markers), while MP-H rank these in lowest priority as markers of a successful life (in 13th and 14th place respectively).
- Conversely, all groups rank “having children” at lowest priority in perceptions of a successful life (14th place, out of 14 success markers), while MP-H rank “having children” in the middle (8th place).

Those who prioritise marriage and parenthood tend to prioritise community- and other-centric elements as markers of success.

- Compared to other groups, MP-H rank “being close to family” and “contributing to society” the highest (2nd and 5th place respectively, out of 14 success markers). MNC rank these at 5th and 11th place respectively.

Considerations that cause Parenthood Hesitation

Across all groups, finances are the top factor discouraging parenthood. All groups rank the “high cost of raising children” 1st, out of 13 parenthood hesitations.

Those married without children are more sensitive about disruptions to travel plans, while High-MPO married parents are more sensitive to career disruptions.

- MNC rank “disruptions to travel plans” 11th out of 13 parenthood hesitations, while all other groups rank it last (13th place).
- MP-H rank “disruptions to career” 8th out of 13 parenthood hesitations, though it ranks lower for other groups (12th place for MNC and MNCY, and 11th for PMNC)

Among factors discouraging parenthood, concerns about ability and availability to parent affect non-parents more significantly.

- Among the groups, MNCY are most sensitive to “lack of time to take care of my children” and “concern that I will not be a good parent” (3rd and 5th respectively, out of

13 parenthood hesitations). MNC likewise rank “lack of time to take care of my children” 3rd.

- “Lack of energy to take care of children” ranks highest for MNC and PMNC (2nd and 4th respectively), compared to MNCY and MP-H (7th and 6th place respectively).

Perceptions of Excellent Parenting

Across all groups, there is broad consensus that excellent parenting prioritises marital stability and parental involvement.

- “Having a stable marriage” is in top place (1st place, out of 11 elements of excellent parenting) for all groups, except for MP-H who rank it in 2nd place.
- “Being there for the children while they are growing up likewise ranks near the top as an element of excellent parenting (3rd place for PMNC and MNCY, and 4th place for MNC and MP-H)
- Financial provision ranks in the middle (at 7th place for MNC and PMNC; and 6th place for MNCY and MP-H)

Priorities in parenting excellence are different across all groups. Those more oriented towards parenthood prioritise safety, while those less interested in parenthood prioritise close parent-child relationships.

- “Keeping the children safe” ranks top priority in excellent parenting for MP-H (1st place, out of 11 elements of excellent parenting), and 2nd place for MNCY
- “Having a close relationship with the children” ranks 2nd place for MNC and PMNC, but 5th place for MNCY and MP-H

Sensitivity to Various Elements or Challenges

On the whole, those with less interest in marriage and parenthood are more sensitive to factors that discourage parenthood, while placing less emphasis on elements of marriage or excellent parenting.

2. Views on Marriage and Parenthood

Those who desire children and those who do not have significantly different views on the connection and impact of parenthood in relation to marriage.

- High numbers of MP-H agree that “having children is a natural next step in marriage” except in cases of infertility (83%), and that parenthood “takes the marriage to a higher level” (92%) and “will strengthen the relationship between spouses” (89%). At least seven in 10 MNCY agree with each of these statements also.
- By contrast, a majority of MNC (52%) and nearly four in 10 PMNC (37%) disagree that “having children is a natural next step in marriage”. Around four in 10 MNC disagree that parenthood “takes the marriage to a higher level” (37%) and “will strengthen the relationship between spouses” (40%).

Those with no intentions to have children have a lower view of the positive transformative effect of parenthood on themselves, while married parents seem to be attesting to the effect.

- More than nine in 10 MP-H agree that parenthood makes one a better person (91%) and gives one a sense of purpose in life (93%). Around eight in 10 MNCY agree with the respective statements (76% and 80% respectively).
- By contrast, only around three in 10 MNC agree that parenthood makes one a better person (28%) and gives one a sense of purpose in life (34%). Approximately half of PMNC agree with the respective statements (46% and 50% respectively).

Those with no intentions to have children have a lower view of the positive transformative effect of parenthood on their behaviours and habits, while married parents seem to be attesting to the effect.

- More than nine in 10 MP-H agree that parenthood will motivate them to work harder at one’s job (92%), spend money more wisely (94%) and quit one’s bad habits (91%). At

least eight in 10 MNCY agree with the respective statements (83%, 87% and 82% respectively).

- By contrast, only around four in 10 MNC agree that parenthood will motivate them to work harder at one's job (38%) and quit one's bad habits (44%), and a small majority of MNC agree that parenthood will motivate them to spend money more wisely (52%). A majority of PMNC agree with the respective statements (51%, 56% and 66% respectively).

3. Key Predictors of Different Profiles

Those without parenthood aspirations tend to prioritise material and lifestyle attainment as markers of success in life.

- When compared with MP-H, MNC and PMNC tend to define success in terms of economic achievement, personal advancement, and lifestyle attainment. MNC are nearly three times (+190%) and PMNC are two-and-a-half times (+139%) as likely as MP-H to define success in this way.

Those without parenthood aspirations are more sensitive to practical-economic costs of parenthood.

- When compared with MP-H, MNC and PMNC are most sensitive to practical-economic costs that discourage parenthood. MNC are three-and-a-half times (+255%) and PMNC are around three times (+182%) as likely as MP-H to be discouraged by these costs.

4. Reasons for Delaying Parenthood

Here are some open-ended responses given by different respondents as to why they are delaying parenthood.

Reasons Given by MNC

Reasons given by married non-parent respondents who have no aspirations for parenthood (MNC) for delaying parenthood are about preferring autonomy and a life without hassle.

- “I don’t like getting into trouble” - 31 yr-old, Male, Malay Muslim, married for 4 years
- “I don’t like to be limited by time” - 39 yr-old, Male, Chinese Christian, married for 3 years
- “(I) don’t want added responsibilities” - 39 yr-old, Male, Chinese Christian, married for 3 years

(* Note: Only 8 respondents of this profile gave answers for why they choose to delay parenthood. The other 48 MNC respondents are firmly avoidant of parenthood.)

Reasons Given by MNCY

There is a greater variation in reasons for delay and openness to having children in the future among those who are married non-parents who want children (MNCY).

These range from relational, time, practical-economic concerns, as well as difficulties in pregnancy.

- “Because of work(,) so (I do) not (have) enough time” - 25 yr-old, Female, Chinese, No religion, married for 3 years
- “Not ready. Need time to save money” - 39 yr-old, Male, Malay, Muslim, married for 9 years
- “Still want to enjoy marriage years before having kids” - 34 yr-old, Male, Malay, Muslim, married for 4 years
- “Unfortunately, I lost 2 pregnancies. Praying that someday, God will bless me and my husband with a wonderful and healthy child.” - 41 yr-old, Female, Other Ethnicity, Other religion, married for 7 years
- “I am conflicted about the future educational approach for my child.” - 23 yr-old, Female, Chinese, No religion, married for 1 year
- “I am in (the) accounting line, hence I feel (that having children) is stressful as in this line of work there are a lot of deadline(s) and overtime. (I) felt that if (I) were to get

pregnant, it will (be) even more stressful and (tiring) from both ends. The delay got wors(e) as we had married later.” - 40 yr-old, Female, Chinese, Buddhist, married for 2 years

Key Takeaways and Recommendations

Key Takeaways

- Singapore will require different approaches to address the record-low Total Fertility Rate (TFR) situation. The approach needs to be tailored to meet the needs and concerns of different demographics.
- Demography, when it comes to the TFR matter, has to do with the values, priorities and parenthood aspirations of individuals.
- We therefore recommend the following items in an effort to address concerns and empower people to get married and become parents.

Recommendations

1. On the overall, address values, norms and narrative concerning marriage and parenthood

- Study and directly address negative perceptions of family life, coupled with promotion of the intangible joy of family life.
- Efforts must be multi-pronged and beyond material provision through policy.

2. A Singapore made for families: Implement more family-friendly work rhythms

- Create a regulated part-time or contract economy for parents who want better balance, including those with children under six years old or sandwiched families. Offer a maternity/paternity cover grant to support employers hiring parents who return to the workforce after a period of caregiving, or those who enter into flexible work arrangements to accommodate their childcaring needs.

- Address longitudinal career progression to reduce the sense of caregiver's penalty.
- Introduce more flexible work arrangements with clear and defined work outcomes.
- Clear stipulation of start and end times for jobs that are less flexible, so as to protect personal and family time.
- More rigorous implementation of existing laws regarding overtime (e.g. overtime pay)
- Relooking at Employment Act, especially the salary threshold under which the Act applies to certain workers
- Normalise accepting people at work for taking career breaks to become caregivers at home. Consider measures to encourage employers to employ caregivers returning to the workforce with salary reimbursement for the first three months upon return.
- Revising the maternity leave scheme and have all 16 weeks reimbursed by the Government regardless of the child's birth order
- Deepening partnerships with values-based organisations to address values regarding on success and priorities in life, including marriage and parenthood

3. Encourage earlier marriage and parenthood planning

- Through education, reinstate the importance of planning for family life at different stages of school and life.
- Integrate family life into career fairs and talks, thereby empowering youths to make better decisions about the kind of life they want to have.
- Include in sex education facts about human fertility. Through exposure to facts, enable youths to understand the cost of delaying marriage and parenthood, especially for those who do aspire for them (e.g. moderate-high MPO).
- Through public campaigns and intentional dialogues or community huddles, address concerns of becoming parents or having more children.
- Provide people with (some) aspiration to become parents with opportunities to hear from and interact with married parents. Couples who have multiple children

are especially important to engage with as they can share genuine life experiences for those unsure about having more children.

- Provide subsidies for parenting skills upgrade. This can include financial planning, time management and communication skills between spouses and with children.
- Encourage parents of young couples to be more involved. Communicate expectations and boundaries to increase the capacity of couples in child-bearing ages to have and raise children, not on their own but with the support of their extended family.

- END -