

**SINGAPORE CENSUS OF POPULATION, 2000**  
**ADVANCE DATA RELEASE NO. 8**

**– MARRIAGE AND FERTILITY –**

1 The distribution of the resident population by marital status as revealed in Census 2000 data was a reflection of the changes in the marriage institution and the age structure. In 2000, the proportion of married persons had increased further, from 57 per cent in 1990 to 62 per cent in 2000 (Table 1). This was due largely to the changes in age structure with more older, married persons. Even though the proportion of unmarried persons at the younger ages had increased, their population share declined from 36 per cent to 31 per cent on account of smaller cohort sizes. The number of persons who were either divorced or separated doubled. However, they constituted only 2.5 per cent of the resident population.

2 There were more females than males who were widowed in 2000 due to their longer life expectancy. The unmarried males, however, out-numbered the females. There were fewer divorced males in the population than the females on account of higher re-marriage rates.

**TABLE 1 MARITAL STATUS OF RESIDENT POPULATION  
 AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER**

	Total		Males		Females	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
<b>Number ('000)</b>						
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,078.8</b>	<b>2,494.6</b>	<b>1,045.6</b>	<b>1,229.8</b>	<b>1,033.2</b>	<b>1,264.9</b>
Single	747.2	760.4	422.6	413.3	324.6	347.0
Married	1,176.4	1,543.2	586.7	771.0	589.7	772.3
Widowed	127.3	129.2	26.1	22.6	101.3	106.7
Divorced/Separated	27.9	61.8	10.2	22.9	17.7	38.9
<b>Per Cent</b>						
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Single	35.9	30.5	40.4	33.6	31.4	27.4
Married	56.6	61.9	56.1	62.7	57.1	61.1
Widowed	6.1	5.2	2.5	1.8	9.8	8.4
Divorced/Separated	1.3	2.5	1.0	1.9	1.7	3.1

## Higher Proportion Remaining Unmarried

3 Among the younger age groups, proportionately more persons were remaining single than ten years ago (Table 2). This was associated with the trend of marrying later in life. The rising trend of singlehood was moderated by immigration as the new permanent residents in these age groups tended to be married. This resulted in the resident population having lower singlehood rates than the citizen population.

4 In 2000, some 16 per cent of the citizen males were still not married at age 40–44 years, as compared with 14 per cent among the citizen females. This was a reversal of the situation in 1990, when proportionately more citizen females remained unmarried at this age group than citizen males. At the key age group of 30–34, one in three of the citizen males and one in five of the citizen females were still unmarried.

**TABLE 2 PROPORTION SINGLE  
BY RESIDENTIAL STATUS, SEX AND AGE GROUP**

Age Group	Per Cent			
	Singapore Residents		Singapore Citizens	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
<b>Males</b>				
20 – 24	94.2	95.2	94.1	95.4
25 – 29	64.1	64.2	64.0	66.4
30 – 34	34.0	30.7	33.9	33.3
35 – 39	18.1	19.7	17.8	21.5
40 – 44	10.9	14.8	10.4	15.5
<b>Females</b>				
20 – 24	78.5	83.8	79.0	86.6
25 – 29	39.3	40.2	39.6	45.5
30 – 34	20.9	19.5	20.9	21.9
35 – 39	14.8	15.1	14.7	16.2
40 – 44	11.5	13.6	11.4	14.1

## High Proportion Unmarried among Less Educated Males and Better Educated Females

5 Singlehood was more prevalent among citizen males with below secondary qualification and graduate citizen females. At age 40–44 years, 21 per cent of the males with below secondary qualifications were single in 2000, as compared with only 9 per cent of the graduate males (Table 3). In contrast, 27 per cent of the older graduate females were single, as compared to 9 per cent of the less educated females in the same age group.

6 Compared with 1990, singlehood rates among the citizen males had increased generally across all education levels. Those with below secondary qualification had the largest increase in singlehood rate in the last decade – by 9 percentage points. For the citizen females, the increases occurred mainly among the graduates and those with below secondary qualification. Singlehood rates had declined for the secondary and post-secondary females.

**TABLE 3 PROPORTION SINGLE AMONG MALE AND FEMALE CITIZENS  
BY AGE GROUP AND HIGHEST QUALIFICATION ATTAINED**

Highest Qualification Attained	Per Cent					
	30–34		35–39		40–44	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
<b>Males</b>						
Below Secondary	37.2	41.0	21.0	29.2	12.3	21.1
Secondary	31.4	30.4	15.2	18.3	7.9	13.8
Post Secondary	29.2	29.5	13.2	16.0	7.9	9.8
University	31.2	33.1	12.4	17.4	6.1	8.6
<b>Females</b>						
Below Secondary	14.9	15.6	10.4	11.1	8.0	9.1
Secondary	23.6	18.4	19.0	14.5	17.6	14.8
Post Secondary	30.6	24.4	24.7	21.4	20.9	20.4
University	33.3	32.8	27.3	29.1	24.0	26.7

## Ethnic Differentials in Singlehood Trends

7 Among the older citizen males aged 35–44 years, Chinese with below secondary qualification had the highest singlehood rate – 28 per cent in 2000 compared with 14–15 per cent for the Malays and Indians (Table 4). For the university-educated males, the proportion single was higher among the Indians (16 per cent) than the Chinese (14 per cent) and Malays (9.1 per cent). Compared with 1990, the singlehood rate for the older males had increased across all educational levels for all the three main ethnic groups.

8 The Chinese had the highest singlehood rate for the older females. Some 29 per cent of graduate Chinese females aged 35–44 years were single in 2000, compared with 25 per cent of the Malays and 14 per cent of the Indians. Between 1990 and 2000, the graduate singlehood rate had increased for the Chinese and Malays but not the Indians. For older females with secondary and post secondary qualifications, the proportion single declined over the decade for all the three main ethnic groups.

**TABLE 4 PROPORTION SINGLE AMONG MALE AND FEMALE CITIZENS AGED 35–44 BY HIGHEST QUALIFICATION ATTAINED AND ETHNIC GROUP**

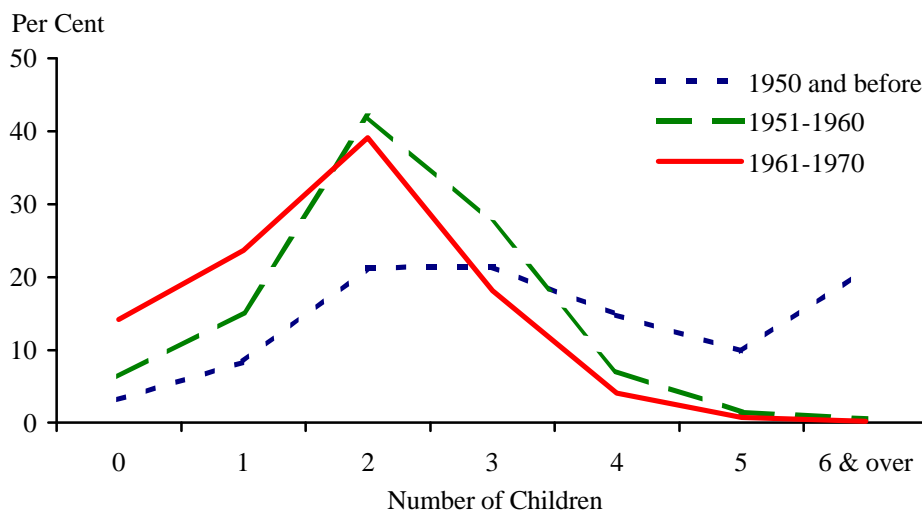
Highest Qualification Attained	Per Cent					
	Chinese		Malays		Indians	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
<b>Males</b>						
Below Secondary	18.3	28.2	10.5	13.7	11.8	15.2
Secondary	13.3	18.4	7.1	9.0	9.3	10.9
Post Secondary	11.3	13.9	6.3	7.7	10.9	10.6
University	9.4	13.5	8.2	9.1	13.9	15.7
<b>Females</b>						
Below Secondary	9.6	10.8	7.4	7.4	8.4	8.3
Secondary	19.5	16.5	12.0	8.2	14.9	9.9
Post Secondary	23.8	22.1	17.2	13.8	21.5	14.9
University	26.7	29.2	23.1	25.4	20.6	14.1

## NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN

### Smaller Family Size

9 The average family size had become smaller. In 2000, each ever-married female had 2.5 children on average, compared with 2.8 children in 1990. The decline in family size occurred for ever-married females across all age groups. Chart 1 shows the shifting of the graphs towards the left, indicating fewer children born to each birth cohort of the females. The mean number of children born had declined from 3.9 for the pre-1950 cohort to 1.8 for the 1961 to 1970 cohort.

**CHART 1 RESIDENT EVER-MARRIED FEMALES AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER BY BIRTH COHORT AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN**



### Older Age at First Marriage

10 The decline in family size was associated with the trend towards delay in marriage. More females were marrying later than before. The delay in marriage occurred for females at all levels of qualification and all the main ethnic groups (Table 5). The increase in marriage age was most marked for females with secondary and lower qualifications. Malay and Indian females had the largest increase in marriage age between the period 1960 or earlier and 1991–2000 – 7 years as compared with 6 years for Chinese females.

**TABLE 5 MEAN AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE BY YEAR OF MARRIAGE OF RESIDENT EVER-MARRIED FEMALES**

	Years				
	1960 or Earlier	1961–1970	1971–1980	1981–1990	1991–2000
<b>Ethnic Group</b>					
Chinese	20.7	23.3	24.3	26.1	26.9
Malays	17.7	19.9	21.7	23.5	24.8
Indians	18.0	20.3	22.1	24.0	25.3
Others	21.1	23.2	23.8	25.7	27.0
<b>Qualification</b>					
Below Secondary	20.0	22.4	23.6	25.3	26.9
Secondary	22.0	23.2	23.8	25.3	26.3
Post Secondary	23.7	24.6	24.6	25.9	26.3
University	24.5	25.3	25.2	26.3	26.9

### More Women with No Children or Only One Child

11 Among the younger age groups, the proportion childless had increased significantly. Almost half of the ever-married females below 30 years of age and 14 per cent of those aged 30–39 had yet to have children in 2000 (Table 6). The corresponding proportions in 1990 were 38 per cent and 11 per cent. The rise was due to the delays in marriage and childbearing. However, the proportion of childless families at the end of the reproductive span was still low, but on a rising trend.

12 One-child families were getting more common. Among ever-married females aged 30–39 years, 24 per cent had one child in 2000 compared with 21 per cent in 1990 (Table 6). For women aged 40–49 who were likely to have completed child-bearing, the proportion with one child also increased, from 11 per cent in 1990 to 15 per cent in 2000.

**TABLE 6 RESIDENT EVER-MARRIED FEMALES AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER BY NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN AND AGE GROUP**

Number of Children	Per Cent									
	Total		Below 30		30–39		40–49		50 & Over	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
None	11.5	11.7	38.1	47.3	11.0	14.2	4.7	6.4	3.5	3.2
1	16.2	16.6	33.3	30.7	20.9	23.6	10.5	15.1	7.0	8.4
2	27.2	31.2	22.1	17.1	41.4	39.1	32.2	42.0	12.9	21.3
3	18.0	20.3	5.5	4.1	20.9	18.1	28.3	27.4	14.8	21.4
4	9.2	8.4	0.8	0.8	4.5	4.1	14.1	7.0	14.6	14.8
5 & Over	17.9	11.9	0.2	0.1	1.2	0.9	10.2	2.0	47.2	31.0
<b>Average Number of Children</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>3.9</b>

## Smaller Family Sizes for All Ethnic Groups

13 The average family size declined for all ethnic groups in the last ten years (Table 7). Of the three main ethnic groups, the Chinese had the smallest family size in 2000. For the age group 40–49 years, the Chinese had only 2.1 children compared with 2.8 for the Malays in 2000. The difference was similar for age group 30–39. The Chinese had 1.6 children as compared with 2.4 children for the Malays.

**TABLE 7 AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN BY ETHNIC GROUP AND AGE GROUP OF RESIDENT EVER-MARRIED FEMALES**

Age Group	Chinese		Malays		Indians		Others	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.0</b>
Below 30	0.9	0.6	1.3	1.4	1.1	1.0	0.9	1.0
30 – 39	1.8	1.6	2.4	2.4	2.0	1.9	1.6	1.6
40 – 49	2.6	2.1	3.5	2.8	2.9	2.2	2.2	1.9
50 & Over	4.5	3.7	5.9	4.9	4.7	3.9	3.7	3.0

## Fewer Children among Better Educated Females

14 There was a strong correlation between family size and educational level of the females. On average, university graduates in all age groups have the fewest children (Table 8). For the age group 40–49 years in 2000, ever-married graduate females had 1.9 children compared with 2.4 children for those with below secondary qualifications. The fertility differential was larger among the younger females in their thirties – 1.3 children for the graduates as against 2.1 children for females with below secondary education. This was largely due to late marriage among the graduates.

**TABLE 8 AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN  
BY HIGHEST QUALIFICATION ATTAINED  
AND AGE GROUP OF RESIDENT EVER-MARRIED FEMALES**

Age Group	Below Secondary		Secondary		Post Secondary		University	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.3</b>
Below 30	1.2	1.3	0.9	0.9	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.4
30 – 39	2.1	2.1	1.7	1.8	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.3
40 – 49	3.0	2.4	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.9
50 & Over	4.8	4.2	3.0	2.5	2.8	2.3	2.5	2.2

15 Among females who had completed child-bearing, the university-educated had the highest proportion with no children or only one child. Some 10 per cent of the graduate females aged 40–49 years were childless in 2000, almost double the proportion for those with below secondary qualification (5.4 per cent) (Table 9). Another 19 per cent of the graduates in the same age group had only one child. Taken together, 28 per cent of the university-educated females were childless or had only one child. This was closely followed by those with post-secondary qualification (26 per cent) and secondary qualification (24 per cent).

**TABLE 9 PROPORTION OF RESIDENT EVER-MARRIED FEMALES  
AGED 40–49 YEARS WITH NO CHILDREN OR ONE CHILD**  
Per Cent

	No Children		One Child Only	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>15.1</b>
Below Secondary	4.1	5.4	8.7	12.6
Secondary	6.4	6.6	15.9	17.2
Post Secondary	6.1	8.0	15.2	18.4
University	7.8	9.4	15.9	18.6