# Family Survey 2021

## General Survey

**Final Report** | December 2022

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# Final Report of
# General Survey

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# Executive Summary

## Background

1. The Family Council ("the Council") is an advisory body set up by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("the Government") in December 2007 to promote a culture of loving families in the community. The Council actively promotes the family core values of "Love and Care", "Respect and Responsibility", and "Communication and Harmony".

2. With a view to collecting updated and empirically based information on families in Hong Kong, the Council has been engaging research organisations to conduct family surveys. The aims of the Family Survey are to track the changes in and the development of Hong Kong families under seven themes: the importance of family, parenthood, family functioning, satisfaction with family life, work-family balance, availability of social support networks, and awareness of and participation in family-related programmes [1].

3. In 2020, the Council commissioned a research team to conduct a "Consolidation of Findings of Family Surveys Conducted since 2011" ("the Consolidation Exercise"). The objective of the Consolidation Exercise was to conduct a comprehensive and critical review on the results and data of the four Family Surveys conducted in 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2017 in order to provide clear and practical recommendations on how future Family Surveys should be positioned and conducted. With reference to the recommendations of the Consolidation Exercise, the Council decided to carry out a Family Survey in 2021 comprising both a general survey and a thematic survey, with the theme being "Preventing and Resolving Family Disputes". This Survey Report presents the findings of the General Survey ("the Survey") of the Family Survey 2021 while the findings of the Thematic Survey of the Family Survey 2021 will be presented in a separate report.

# Objectives

4.    The primary purpose of the General Survey was to collect relevant information and data on the existing circumstances of families in Hong Kong, with the following objectives:

(a)    to ascertain the attitudes of respondents toward family in terms of (i) importance of family, (ii) parenthood, (iii) family functioning, (iv) satisfaction with family life, (v) work-family balance, (vi) availability of social support networks, and (vii) awareness of and participation in family-related programmes;

(b)    to formulate indices on various family-related dimensions and compare with other similar surveys in other cities for benchmarking purposes;

(c)    to conduct a trend analysis, having regard to the survey results of previous rounds of the Family Survey, and identify patterns of changes related to families;

(d)    to provide observations on policy implications; and

(e)    to provide research contributions.

# Methodology

5.    A mixed method including a Questionnaire Survey and Qualitative Study was adopted.  The target respondents of the Survey were persons aged 15 or above residing in Hong Kong (excluding foreign domestic helpers) at the time of enumeration and able to speak Cantonese/Putonghua or read Chinese/English.

6.    The fieldwork of the Questionnaire Survey was conducted from 22 November 2021 to 1 May 2022.  Before conducting the interviews, invitation letters with QR codes were sent to the sampled respondents.  The respondents could either scan the QR code and self-administer the questionnaire through the survey platform or contact the hotline to arrange a telephone or face-to-face interview. For those respondents who did not respond by the deadline, arrangements were made for interviewers to visit them and invite them to participate in the Survey. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the household visits were suspended from 17 January 2022 to 1 May 2022. A total of 3,650 quarters was sampled, and after excluding 568 invalid cases, 3,082 cases were found to be valid.  A total of 2,010 interviews were successfully enumerated, giving a response rate of 65.2%.

7.    The Qualitative Study discussions were conducted from 13 July 2022 to 1 September 2022. Six focus group discussions with 49 participants were conducted.  Ten stakeholder interviews with 16 participants were conducted.

# Survey Results

8.　After reviewing the results of the Survey, trend analyses covering the results collected from the five Family Surveys (2011, 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2021) and in-depth analyses, some phenomena are identified.

(a)　Changing of family structure

In recent years, there has been an increasing tendency toward marriage postponement or non-marriage in both genders, and the standardised percentages of married men and women dropped continuously from 1991 to 2020[2]. Moreover, a decreasing trend on number of births was observed from 95,500 in 2011 to 43,000 in 2020. This decline has been attributed to women pursuing higher studies, late marriages, higher proportion of people who prefer singlehood, an increasing participation by women in the labour force, concern of health risks during COVID-19 pandemic, etc[3].

From 2011 to 2021, an increasing trend was observed in regard to attitudes toward singlehood, cohabitation and divorce. More people are choosing to embrace their singlehood, resulting in lower levels of motivation to get married and have children. Concepts of marriage and family are changing. Singlehood is altering our ideas of marriages and affects the family structure in the society in long run.

(b)　Deterioration in family functioning, family life and communication among family members

Family functioning refers to the frequency of normal family routines, effectiveness of family communication and problem solving, family cohesiveness and family harmony.

From 2011 to 2021, though respondents exhibited mutual support and love among family members and parents exercised fewer controlling acts on their children, the communication between family members worsened and the conflicts with family members existed. Hence, the perceived overall family functioning weakened across the years.

Furthermore, from 2011 to 2021, respondents were generally satisfied with family life and relationships between family members and inter-generations. However, the decreasing trends were observed. Respondents reported talking about personal issues less frequently with their parents, spouse/partner, family members, and inter-generations.

In sum, the perceived family functioning, satisfaction with family life, satisfaction with the relationships with family members, and frequency of talking about the personal concerns with family members had gradually deteriorated over time.

(c)　Difficulties and stress in balancing work and family

In Family Survey 2021, respondents encountered difficulties and stress

in balancing work and family in general. Though their attitudes toward work-family balance had improved in 2021, their level of satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family had decreased as compared from 2011 to 2021. In addition, respondents who had children under the age of 18 indicated poorer work-family balance, more difficulty and stress in achieving work-family balance, and lower level of satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family.

The dual-career family lifestyle is becoming more common in our society and has created a unique set of challenges, including work-family imbalance, family role conflicts, and parental stress.

(d)    Challenges of parenthood

In Family Survey 2021, among parent respondents with children under the age of 18, about one quarter were in clinically significant levels of stress that needed additional follow up, nearly two-thirds encountered somewhat difficult and very difficult in parenting, and over two-thirds were somewhat stressful and very stressful in parenting. Besides, those who were divorced/widowed (i.e. single parents) indicated higher level of difficulty in parenting and higher level of parental stress, resulting from poorer interaction between parent and child.

(e)    Deterioration in mental health

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic from late-March to mid-April 2020, one in seven respondents had anxiety symptoms (15.8%) and depressive symptoms (14.8%).[4] In Family Survey 2021, nearly one in four (24.5%) of the respondents indicated that they had anxiety symptoms and about one in five (20.5%) of respondents expressed that they had depression symptoms. With reference to the two representative large-scale population surveys and adoption of the same instrument, the results showed that the proportions of respondents with anxiety and symptoms increased significantly from late 2021 to early 2022 which the fifth wave of COVID-19 pandemic has reached the peak during the fieldwork period.

9.    Correlational analyses between key indices were compiled with the control of age, gender and educational attainment of the respondents.

(a)    Family functioning

Better family functioning was correlated with more satisfaction with family life, better social support, more frequent participation in family activities, higher levels of happiness, better physical and mental health, and more life satisfaction.

(b)    Quality of life

Better quality of life in terms of higher levels of happiness, better physical health, and more life satisfaction were correlated with more

satisfaction with family life, better social support, and more frequent participation in family activities.

(c)    Anxiety and depression

Lower levels of anxiety and depression were correlated with more satisfaction with family life, better social support, and more frequent participation in family activities.

(d)    Work-family balance

Among those respondents who were economically active, better work-family balance was correlated with more satisfaction with family life, better social support, more frequent participation in family activities, higher levels of happiness, better physical and mental health, and more life satisfaction.

(e)    Interaction between parent and child

Among those parents with children under 18, better interaction between parent and child was correlated with more satisfaction with family life, better social support, more frequent participation in family activities, higher levels of happiness, better physical and mental health, and more life satisfaction.

(f)    Level of difficulty and stress in parenting

Among those parents with children under 18, less difficulty and stress in parenting were correlated with more satisfaction with family life, better social support, more frequent participation in family activities, higher levels of happiness, better physical and mental health, and more life satisfaction.

10.    Three research areas were identified and regression analyses were performed to examine the associations between the dependent variables and explanatory variables. The regression models were found to be significant with good fits.

(a)    Contributing factors for dysfunctional interaction between parent and child

Parent respondents with children under the age of 18 who had higher level of parental stress, whose partners did not adopt positive parenting, who perceived worse overall family functioning and less satisfaction with relationships with children, and who had a higher level of anxiety had poorer parent-child interactions.

(b)    Factors affecting the level of happiness

Subjective happiness was associated with a higher level of satisfaction with family life, better perceived physical health, better social support, less conflict among family members, and lower levels of anxiety and

depression.

(c) Associations between family relationships and life satisfaction

Higher levels of life satisfaction were associated with higher levels of satisfaction with family life, higher levels of satisfaction with the relationships with family members, more frequent use of modern technology to communicate with family members, better perceived physical health, better social support, less harsh parenting behaviour, and lower levels of anxiety and depression.

# Recommendations

11. Based on the identified phenomena, the following recommendations are proposed:

(a) *Create positive family dynamics* – to convey messages on mutual social support, sharing of family roles and responsibilities, and caring each other with love and respect.

(b) *Promote responsible and happy parenthood* – to build up positive parenting approaches, to share parenting responsibilities, to have reasonable expectations on children's development, to have emotional awareness on dealing with parenting stress, to find some "me-time" for enjoying own life, and to find own purpose and meaning of parenthood.

(c) *Promote work-family balance* – to promote family-friendly employment practices (FFEPs) in different companies and institutions, especially the SMEs.

(d) *Enhance family education* – to conduct more family-oriented programmes with team-building activities in order to create more family moments by walking through some meaningful tasks, guide family members to explore their own family dynamics, and help family members learn how to get along with each other.

(e) *Promote mental health* – to educate the public about the signs and symptoms of distress, to raise awareness and promote self-care, to destigmatise mental health concerns, to facilitate effective prevention and treatment strategies and to help people access mental health services.

(f) *Recommend the ways to improve future family surveys* – to monitor the changes over time in people's attitudes and behaviour related to family issues.

# 報告摘要

## 背景

1.　家庭議會（下稱「議會」）是香港特別行政區政府（下稱「政府」）於 2007 年 12 月成立的諮詢委員會，目的是向市民宣揚仁愛家庭的文化。家庭議會積極推廣「愛與關懷」、「責任與尊重」及「溝通與和諧」三組家庭核心價值。

2.　為了收集有關香港家庭最新及具有實證基礎的資料，議會一直聘請研究機構進行家庭狀況統計調查。家庭狀況統計調查的目的是追蹤香港家庭的變化和發展，調查分為七個主題，分別為家庭的重要性、父母角色、家庭功能、家庭生活滿意度、工作和家庭的平衡、社會支援網絡的可用性，以及對家庭相關活動的認識和參與程度 [5]。

3.　議會於 2020 年委託一研究小組進行了「整合自 2011 年進行的家庭狀況統計調查的調查結果」（下稱「整合調查」）。整合調查的目的是對 2011 年、2013 年、2015 年和 2017 年進行的四次家庭狀況統計調查的結果及資料進行全面和嚴格的檢討，以便為日後的家庭狀況調查的定位及進行方法提供明確和實用的建議。參照整合調查的建議，議會決定在 2021 年進行新一輪家庭狀況統計調查，其中包括一般統計調查和專題統計調查，而專題統計調查的主題為「預防和解決家庭糾紛」。本調查報告為 2021 年家庭狀況統計調查中一般統計調查（下稱「調查」）的結果，而 2021 年家庭狀況統計調查的專題調查結果將記錄於另一份報告中。

## 目標

4.　　調查的主要目的是收集有關香港家庭現況的資料和數據，目標如下：

(a)　調查受訪者對家庭的態度，包括 (i) 家庭的重要性、(ii) 父母角色、(iii) 家庭功能、(iv) 家庭生活滿意度、(v) 工作和家庭的平衡、 (vi) 社會支援網絡的可用性以及(vii) 對家庭相關活動的認識和參與程度；

(b)　制定與家庭相關的各種指數，並與其他城市的類似調查進行比較，以確立基準；

(c)　參照前幾輪家庭狀況統計調查的結果並進行趨勢分析，以確定與家庭有關的變化模式；

(d)　提供對政策方面的意見；以及

(e)　為研究作出貢獻。

## 調查方法

5.　　是次調查採用了混合方式進行，包括問卷調查和質性研究部份。調查的目標對象是在統計時居住在香港的 15 歲或以上（不包括外籍家庭傭工）並能以廣東話／普通話溝通或閱讀中文／英文人士。

6.　　問卷調查的調查工作於 2021 年 11 月 22 日至 2022 年 5 月 1 日進行。在進行訪問之前，我們向被選中的受訪者發出了附有二維碼的邀請信。受訪者可以透過掃描二維碼，在調查平台自行填寫網上問卷，或聯繫熱線電話以安排電話或面對面的訪談。對於那些在截止日期前未有回覆的受訪者，我們安排了訪問員到訪及邀請他們參與調查。由於受到 2019 冠狀病毒病 (COVID-19) 疫情的影響，調查在 2022 年 1 月 17 日至 2022 年 5 月 1 日期間暫停上門訪問。是次調查共抽選了 3,650 個屋宇單位，在排除 568 個無效個案後，共有 3,082 個有效個案。是次調查共成功訪問了 2,010 個個案，回應率為 65.2%。

7.　　質性研究的小組討論及訪談於 2022 年 7 月 13 日至 2022 年 9 月 1 日進行。共進行了 6 次聚焦小組討論，共有 49 人參與。此外，亦進行了 10 次與持分者的深入訪談，共有 16 人參加。

# 調查結果

8.　在審視是次調查的結果、涵蓋五次家庭狀況調查（2011 年、2013 年、2015 年、2017 年和 2021 年）收集所得結果的趨勢分析及深入分析之後，發現的現象如下：

(a)　家庭結構的變化

男女雙方近年都有推遲結婚或不結婚的趨勢，已婚男性和女性的標準化百分比從1991年到2020年持續下降[6]。此外，出生人數亦呈下降趨勢，從2011年的95,500人降至2020年的43,000人。這種下降趨勢的成因包括女性追求更高的學歷、晚婚、更多人喜歡單身、越來越多女性投入勞動市場、對2019冠狀病毒病疫情期間的健康風險的擔憂等[7]。

從2011年到2021年，我們觀察到人們對接受單身、同居和離婚的比率呈上升趨勢。越來越多人選擇接受單身，導致結婚和生育的動機降低，婚姻和家庭的概念亦正在改變。單身正在改變我們的婚姻觀念，並從長遠來看影響社會的家庭結構。

(b)　家庭功能、家庭生活和家庭成員之間的溝通變差

家庭功能是指正常家庭活動的頻率、家庭溝通和解決問題的有效性、家庭凝聚力和家庭和諧。

從2011年到2021年，雖然受訪者表現出家庭成員之間的相互支持和關愛，父母亦減少了對子女的控制行為，但家庭成員之間的溝通卻變差了，而且存在衝突。因此，在這幾年裡，人們認為整體家庭功能有所減弱。

此外，從2011年到2021年，受訪者對家庭生活以及家庭成員和跨代之間的關係普遍表示滿意。然而，我們觀察到有關的滿意程度有下降的趨勢。受訪者稱不太頻繁與父母、配偶/伴侶、家庭成員和跨代之間談論個人問題。

總括而言，人們對家庭功能的認知、對家庭生活的滿意度、對家庭成員關係的滿意度以及與家庭成員談及個人問題的頻率都隨時間而逐漸變差。

(c)　平衡工作和家庭的困難和壓力

在2021年的家庭狀況統計調查當中，受訪者在平衡工作和家庭方面普遍遇到困難和壓力。雖然他們對工作與家庭平衡的態度在2021年有所改善，但與2011年至2021年這段時間相比，他們對花在工作和家庭上的時間的滿意度有所下降。此外，有18歲以下子女的受訪者表示工作與家庭的平衡較差，在取得工作與家庭平衡

方面有更多的困難和壓力，對花在工作和家庭上時間的滿意度也較低。

雙職家庭的生活方式在我們的社會中越來越普遍，並產生了一系列獨特的挑戰，包括工作與家庭的不平衡、家庭角色衝突及作為父母的壓力。

(d) 父母身分的挑戰

根據2021年的家庭狀況統計調查，在有18歲以下子女的父母受訪者當中，約有四分之一有臨床程度的壓力水平，需要額外跟進；近三分之二在管教子女方面遇到了一些困難和很大的困難；及超過三分之二在管教子女方面有一些壓力和有很大的壓力。此外，離婚/喪偶人士（即單親父母）表示由於父母與子女之間的互動較差，在管教子女的困難和作為父母的壓力程度均較高。

(e) 心理健康變差

在2019冠狀病毒病 (COVID-19) 疫情初期（即2020年3月下旬至4月中旬），每七個受訪者中就有一個有焦慮症狀（15.8%）和抑鬱症狀（14.8%）[8]。 在2021年的家庭狀況統計調查中，近四分之一（24.5%）的受訪者表示他們曾有焦慮症狀，約五分之一（20.5%）的受訪者表示他們曾有抑鬱症狀。 參考兩項具代表性並採用相同調查工具的大規模人口調查，結果顯示在2021年底到2022年初的統計調查期間（即2019冠狀病毒病(COVID-19)第五波疫情的高峰期），有焦慮和抑鬱症狀的受訪者的比例明顯增加。

9. 在控制受訪者的年齡、性別和教育程度的情況下，我們對關鍵指數之間的相關性進行了分析。

(a) 家庭功能

較好的家庭功能與較高的家庭生活滿意度、較多的社會支援、較頻繁參與家庭活動、較高的快樂水平、較好的生理和心理健康以及較高的生活滿意度相關。

(b) 生活素質

較好的生活素質（包括較高的快樂水平、較好的生理健康和較高的生活滿意度）與較高的家庭生活滿意度、較好的社會支援和較頻繁參與家庭活動相關。

(c) 焦慮和抑鬱

較低水平的焦慮和抑鬱與較高的家庭生活滿意度、較好的社會支援和較頻繁參與家庭活動有關。

(d) 工作與家庭的平衡

在那些從事經濟活動的受訪者中，較好的工作與家庭平衡與更高的家庭生活滿意度、較好的社會支援、較頻繁參與家庭活動、較高的快樂水平、較好的生理和心理健康以及較多的生活滿意度相關。

(e) 父母和孩子之間的互動

在那些有18歲以下子女的父母受訪者中，較好的親子互動與較高的家庭生活滿意度、較好的社會支援、較頻繁參與家庭活動、較高的快樂水平、較好的生理和心理健康以及較高的生活滿意度相關。

(f) 管教孩子的困難和壓力程度

在那些有18歲以下子女的父母受訪者中，較少的管教子女困難和壓力與較高的家庭生活滿意度、較好的社會支援、較頻繁參與家庭活動、較高的快樂水平、較好的生理和心理健康和較高的生活滿意度相關。

10. 調查確定了三個研究領域，並進行了回歸分析，以分析應變數與解釋變數之間的關聯。分析結果發現回歸模型顯著地合適。

(a) 父母與子女之間互動失調的影響因素

對於有18歲以下孩子的父母受訪者，如果他們有較高的親職壓力、伴侶沒有採取正向的管教方式、較差的整體家庭功能、不太滿意與孩子的關係，以及有較高的焦慮水平，他們的親子互動會較差。

(b) 影響快樂水平的因素

主觀快樂感與較高的家庭生活滿意度、較好的生理健康、較好的社會支援、較少的家庭衝突以及較低的焦慮和抑鬱水平有關。

(c) 家庭關係和生活滿意度之間的聯繫

較高的生活滿意度與較高的家庭生活滿意度、較高的家庭成員關係滿意度、較頻繁地使用現代科技與家庭成員溝通、較好的生理健康、較好的社會支援、較少對孩子有嚴厲的管教行為以及較低的焦慮和抑鬱水平有關。

# 建議

11.　根據上述的現象，我們提出以下建議：

(a)　*創造正向的家庭動力*——傳達關於社會互助、分擔家庭角色和責任，以及用愛和尊重來關心對方的訊息。

(b)　*推動負責任和快樂的父母角色*——父母應建立正向的管教方式、分擔管教責任、對孩子的發展有合理的期望、有處理管教壓力的情感意識、安排「個人時間」來享受自己的生活，及尋找自己管教孩子的目的和意義。

(c)　*推廣工作與家庭的平衡*——在不同的公司和機構，特別是中小型企業中推廣家庭友善僱傭措施。

(d)　*加強家庭教育*——舉辦更多以家庭為目標的項目，包括團隊建設活動，通過一些有意義的任務讓家庭成員創造更多家庭時刻，並引導家庭成員探索其家庭動力，以及幫助家庭成員學習如何與對方相處。

(e)　*推廣心理健康*——教育公眾有關焦慮的徵兆和症狀、推廣自我照顧和提高此意識、消除對心理健康關注的標籤、宣傳有效的預防和治療策略，以及幫助公眾獲得心理健康服務。

(f)　*建議改進未來家庭狀況調查的方法*——建議將來的調查可探討人們對家庭相關議題的態度和行為有否隨時間而改變。

# Introduction

## Section I

## 1.  Background

1.1  The Family Council ("the Council") is an advisory body set up by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("the Government") in December 2007 to promote a culture of loving families in the community.  The work of the Council includes advocating cherishing the family and promoting family core values as a main driver for social harmony, advising Government bureaus and departments (B/Ds) on the application of family perspectives in the policy formulation process, and conducting studies and surveys to foster a better understanding of the issues relating to the family.

1.2  With a view to collecting updated and empirically based information on families in Hong Kong, the Council has been engaging research organisations to conduct family surveys.  The aims of the Family Survey are to track the changes in and the development of Hong Kong families under seven themes: the importance of family, parenthood, family functioning, satisfaction with family life, work-family balance, availability of social support networks, and awareness of and participation in family-related programmes[9].

1.3    Details of the previous four Family Surveys are summarised below.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Objectives** | To keep track of the changes in and the development of Hong Kong families |
| **Data collection method** | Personal interview household survey<br>Started to adopt the computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) method in 2017 |
| **Survey design** | Cross-sectional survey |
| **Target respondents** | Individuals aged 15 or above |
| **Sampling method** | Two-stage stratified random sampling |
| **Frequency** | Biennial basis |
| **Years** | 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017 |
| **Effective sample size** | 2,000 in 2011, 2013, and 2015; 3,000 in 2017 |
| **Response rate** | From 66% (2011) to 57% (2017) |

1.4    The findings of the Family Surveys have provided useful information to facilitate the tracking of changes in Hong Kong families, the challenges they face, and the support they require.  The findings and recommendations of these surveys were shared with the relevant B/Ds to facilitate their formulation of policies and strategies to support and strengthen families.

1.5    In 2020, the Council commissioned a research team to conduct a "Consolidation of Findings of Family Surveys Conducted since 2011" ("the Consolidation Exercise").  The research team conducted a comprehensive and critical review of the results and data of the first four Family Surveys (2011, 2013, 2015, and 2017) to ascertain the attitudes of respondents on various aspects of the family over the years; presented more in-depth comparisons and analyses of the data collected from the Family Surveys; identified and articulated the trends, observations, findings, and recommendations; and provided clear and practical recommendations on how future Family Surveys should be positioned and conducted.   The Consolidation Exercise was completed in March 2021[10].

1.6    The research team recommended the way forward for conducting future Family Surveys, including the research method, research design, survey design, data collection method, target respondents, sampling method, frequency of conducting the surveys, sample size, response rate, etc.  Among other things, it was recommended that in each round of future Family Surveys, on top of a general survey to cover basic questions in order to collect up-to-date and empirically based information on the existing circumstances of families in Hong Kong, a thematic survey should be conducted separately to gather in-depth data on specific topics selected according to the social and economic situations at the time, where appropriate.

1.7 With reference to the recommendations of the Consolidation Exercise, the Council decided to carry out a Family Survey in 2021 comprising both a general survey and a thematic survey, with the theme being "Preventing and Resolving Family Disputes".

1.8 The details of the Family Survey 2021 are summarised below.

| | General Survey | Thematic Survey |
|---|---|---|
| **Research method** | Mixed method | Mixed method |
| **Quantitative views** | | |
| **Data collection method** | Multimodal approach:<br>○ Face-to-face interviews with smartphone-assisted personal interviewing (SAPI) and/or tablet-assisted personal interviewing (TAPI) by interviewers<br>○ Self-completion with computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) by respondents | |
| **Survey design** | Population trend survey | Cross-sectional survey |
| **Target respondents** | Individuals aged 15 or above | |
| **Sampling method** | Two-stage stratified random sampling | |
| **Year** | 2021 | |
| **Effective sample size** | 2,000 respondents | 1,000 respondents |
| **Response rate** | Over 65% | Over 65% |
| **Qualitative views** | | |
| **Focus group discussions / In-depth interviews** | ○ 6–8 focus group discussions with participants from different backgrounds<br>○ 6–8 in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders | |

1.9 Given their different objectives, themes, and sample size, the survey reports of the General Survey and the Thematic Survey are presented by separate reports. This Survey Report presents the findings of the General Survey ("the Survey") of the Family Survey 2021 while the findings of the Thematic Survey of the Family Survey 2021 are presented in a separate report.

# 2.   Objectives

2.1   The primary purpose of the General Survey was to collect relevant information and data on the existing circumstances of families in Hong Kong, with the following objectives:

   (a)   to ascertain the attitudes of respondents toward family in terms of:

      (i)   importance of family,

      (ii)   parenthood,

      (iii)   family functioning,

      (iv)   satisfaction with family life,

      (v)   work-family balance,

      (vi)   availability of social support networks, and

      (vii)   awareness of and participation in family-related programmes;

   (b)   to formulate indices on various family-related dimensions and compare with other similar surveys in other cities for benchmarking purposes;

   (c)   to conduct a trend analysis, having regard to the survey results of previous rounds of the Family Survey, and identify patterns of changes related to families;

   (d)   to provide observations on policy implications; and

   (e)   to provide research contributions.

# 3. Organisation of the Report

3.1    The Survey results are provided in the Final Report of General Survey:

## Section I    Introduction
provides background and objectives of the Survey

## Section II    Methodology
details the methodology of the Survey including the sampling, procedures of data collection and data analysis of the Questionnaire Survey and Qualitative Study, the enumerations results and limitations

## Section III    Survey Results
presents the key results of the Questionnaire Survey, views collected from in-depth discussions, in-depth analyses of the research areas, and views collected from stakeholder interviews

## Section IV    Conclusion and Recommendations
summarises the results and provides recommendations

## 4.  Questionnaire Survey

### *Coverage and Target Respondents*

4.1  The Survey covered the land-based non-institutional population[11] of Hong Kong.  Inmates of institutions, people living on board vessels, and foreign domestic helpers were excluded from the Survey.

4.2  The target respondents of the Survey were persons aged 15 or above residing in Hong Kong (excluding foreign domestic helpers) at the time of enumeration and able to speak Cantonese/Putonghua or read Chinese/English.

### *Sampling Design*

4.3  A sample list was obtained from the Census & Statistics Department (C&SD).  The list is based on the frame of quarters maintained by the C&SD, which includes the Register of Quarters and the Register of Segments.  This is the most up-to-date, complete, and authoritative sampling frame available in Hong Kong at the time when the Survey was conducted.

4.4  A two-stage stratified sample design was adopted for the Survey.  In the first stage, a list of quarters was randomly sampled by geographical area, type of quarters, etc.  In the second stage, a household member aged 15 or above (excluding foreign domestic helpers) in the households sampled was randomly selected for the interview by adopting the last birthday method.  Where there were more than one household in the sampled quarter, one household was randomly sampled.

### *Procedures*

4.5  Prior to the main survey, a pilot survey was conducted to field test the survey platform and the questionnaire design.  Findings and feedback from the pilot survey were documented and fully considered in finalising the questionnaire and survey platform.

4.6    The figure below summarises the procedures of the Questionnaire Survey.

**Preparation Works**
- ○ Formulate a Survey Plan
- ○ Set an enquiry hotline for arranging appointments and enquiries from respondents
- ○ Set up data collection team

**Pilot Test**
- ○ Pilot-test the questionnaires and the procedures of the data collection method
- ○ Conduct 30 General Survey interviews
- ○ Finalise the questionnaire for the General Survey

**Survey**
- ○ Conduct briefing sessions with interviewers to ensure that they understand the question items and the fieldwork procedures
- ○ Send invitation letters with QR codes for the online questionnaire to the sampled households to explain the purposes of the Survey and reassure the respondents that the data collected would be kept strictly confidential
- ○ Arrange self-completion of the questionnaires by the target respondents through the online survey platform
- ○ Visit households that have not yet provided information after deadline (visits to be made by the trained interviewers), and conduct interviews with the sampled respondents
- ○ Monitor the fieldwork progress and survey results through online real-time monitoring system
- ○ Provide supervision and advice to the interviewers during the fieldwork period
- ○ Make efforts to protect confidentiality of data collected

**Quality Assurance**
- ○ Provide on-site support to the interviewers
- ○ Conduct independent quality checks
- ○ Data cleaning and validation

**Provide quantitative views
on the family-related topics**

## *Questionnaire*

4.7 Based on the proposed themes of the Consolidation Exercise, the General Survey questionnaire consisted of nine parts. The first part included 12 question items related to household and personal characteristics. The other eight parts included eight themes with 35 dimensions and a total of 120 question items.

Theme 1     Family Structure consisted of 9 question items with three constructed indices to explore respondents' attitudes toward singlehood, cohabitation and divorce, and current family structure.

Theme 2     Parenthood consisted of 24 question items with one constructed index to assess parenting stress, parenting methods, respondents' intention to have children, and respondents' desire to have more children.

Theme 3     Family Functioning consisted of 36 question items with one constructed index to identify family functioning, relationships, and conflicts.

Theme 4     Satisfaction with Family Life consisted of 5 question items to examine respondents' satisfaction with family life, and the relationships and communication among family members and between generations.

Theme 5     Work-Family Balance consisted of 11 questions with one constructed index to explore respondents' attitudes toward work-family balance, the level of difficulty and stress in achieving work-family balance, satisfaction with work life, and current flexible working arrangements.

Theme 6     Social Support Network consisted of 14 question items with one constructed index to assess respondents' level of perceived social support from family, friends, and others and their awareness of and participation in family-related programmes.

Theme 7     Family Hierarchy consisted of 7 question items to explore household roles, household decision-making, and the extent of respondents' participation in household activities.

Theme 8     Quality of Life consisted of 14 question items with three constructed indices to evaluate respondents' physical health, mental health, level of happiness, and life satisfaction.

4.8    On the basis of the results of the trend and in-depth analyses, ongoing data collection in future Family Surveys could help to refine and finalise the framework, through which a better interpretation of findings and a more comprehensive understanding of trends can be attained.

*Figure 4.1 Themes and Dimensions of the General Survey*



**Household and Personal Characteristics**

**Parenthood**
Parenting stress
Intention to have children
Parenting methods

**Work-Family Balance**
Attitudes
Difficulty and stress
Work life satisfaction
Family-friendly Practices

**Family Structure**
Attitudes
Household Composition

**Family Hierarchy**
Household role
Household decision-making
Household participation

**Quality of Life**
Subjective happiness
Physical and mental health
Life satisfaction

**Social Support Network**
Social support network
Awareness and participation in family-related programmes

**Satisfaction with Family Life**
Family life satisfaction
Relationship and communication

**Family Functioning**
Family functioning and assessment
Family conflicts

## Quality Control

4.9    To ensure that the data collected from the Survey were credible, quality control measures were implemented. During the data collection, on-site supervision was provided to the interviewers. A quality-checking exercise of 15% of the completed cases (by means of random sampling), 15% of the invalid cases, and 3% of the non-contact cases was successfully conducted to countercheck the accuracy and quality of the data collected. After the data collection, the collected data were validated, and within-record inconsistency and other out-of-range errors were detected.

4.10    Questionnaires could only pass the quality check if they met the following criteria:

(a)    Respondents confirmed that they had been interviewed by our interviewers in proper interview settings or had completed the online survey form by themselves.

(b)    The answers of five question items, especially the demographic background items, were matched with the collected data.

## Data Analysis

4.11    To ensure the representativeness of the findings, the survey results were weighted to infer the target population in Hong Kong. On the basis of the ratio between the survey data and the data of the 2021 Population Census released by the C&SD, the survey data were adjusted proportionally to account for the gender, age group, and residence location of the respondents. The resulting estimation of total population aged 15 or above (excluding foreign domestic helpers) was reconciled with the population in 2021 (i.e. 6,284,200 for those aged 15 and over). The weighted percentages and mean scores are presented in this report unless otherwise specified.

4.12    Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the findings of the Survey to provide a holistic picture of the attitudes and views among the target respondents. More specifically, the adopted data analysis procedure was as follows:

   (a)    produce a summary for each question, expressed in terms of percentage distribution or mean scores;

   (b)    produce cross-tabulations of the dimensions of each theme by demographics of respondents and other aspects, where appropriate;

   (c)    construct key indices for various family-related dimensions and compare with survey results of previous rounds of the Family Survey and identify patterns of changes related to families.

4.13    Attention is drawn to the fact that some figures may not add up to a total of 100% due to rounding. Likewise, summations of percentages may exceed 100% since the selection of more than one answer was allowed for some questions. In most cases, "agree" in the text included the "agree" and "strongly agree" responses presented in the tables and charts. By the same token, "disagree" included "disagree" and "strongly disagree" unless otherwise specified. The same applies to "satisfied" and "dissatisfied".

4.14    For the analyses, appropriate statistical tests were conducted depending on the nature of the variables. To identify any trends and conduct in-depth comparisons, different statistical methods, including partial correlation tests, chi-square tests, t-tests, ANOVA tests, and a general linear model (GLM), were used according to the data fields and the fulfilment of the assumptions. For example, a GLM was used to determine the differences in mean scores across years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents. With the results of the GLM, trends across the five surveys could be identified after controlling for the demographics of the respondents. A monotonic upward (downward) trend meant that the variable consistently increased (decreased) over time.

4.15    For the constructed indices, Cronbach's alphas were compiled to assess the consistency of the results across question items. A satisfactory Cronbach's alpha would be one larger than 0.7 [12].

4.16    Regarding the in-depth analyses, three research areas were identified to explore the correlations between the respondents' attitudes toward the family and their backgrounds (e.g. age, sex, educational attainment, marital status, household size, etc.). Correlation analysis, multiple regression, and logistic regression models were performed to assess the associations of all explanatory variables with the dependent variable.

4.17    In these analyses, p-values were calculated in order to evaluate the statistical significance of the results; a p-value of less than .05 ($p < .05$) was statistically significant, or p-values of less than .05 ($ps < .05$) were statistically significant. Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26.0 (IBM SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA).

# 5.  Qualitative Study

## Target Participants

5.1 The target participants of the focus group discussions were persons aged 15 or above who were residing in Hong Kong at the time of enumeration (excluding foreign domestic helpers) and who had completed the Questionnaire Survey. In addition, 10 in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders were conducted to collect qualitative views related to social services.

## Sampling Design

5.2 For focus group discussions, it is desirable to ensure that the participants cover a sufficiently wide cross-section of views.  A total of six focus group discussions, including two with young people, two with parents (with parental stress, or encountered problems in caring for their children), one with parents (encountered problems in balancing work and family), and one with grandparents, were conducted.

| | Groups | Number of groups |
|---|---|---|
| | **Young people**<br>○ Both genders<br>○ Aged 15–29<br>○ Students, employees / self-employed persons, and unemployed persons | 2 groups |
| | **Parents (with parental stress or encountered problems in caring for their children)**<br>○ Both genders<br>○ With one or more children aged below 18<br>○ Employees / self-employed persons, homemakers, and unemployed persons | 2 groups |
| | **Parents (encountered problems in balancing work and family)**<br>○ Both genders<br>○ With one or more children aged below 18<br>○ Employees / self-employed persons covering different occupations | 1 group |
| | **Grandparents**<br>○ Both genders<br>○ With one or more grandchildren<br>○ Encountered communication problems with family members<br>○ Employees / self-employed persons, homemakers, and retired persons | 1 group |

5.3    For the stakeholder interviews, 10 in-depth interviews including representatives of social welfare organisations, scholars, and representatives of parental or family support groups were conducted.

## *Procedures*

5.4    Conducting focus group discussions or in-depth interviews is very different from administering questionnaire surveys.  The aim of a discussion is not to seek definitive responses from individual participants following the sequence dictated by the interviewer based on a predesigned structured questionnaire; rather, the role of the moderator in a discussion is to encourage participants' responses to a topic and to elicit their thinking, attitudes, and ideas on the issue[13].  Each focus group discussion in the Qualitative Study was conducted in about one and a half hours while each stakeholder interview was conducted in about one hour.  Supermarket coupons were provided to the participants of the focus group discussions as an incentive.  The figure below summarises the procedures of the Qualitative Study.

**Preparation Works**
- Review preliminary results of the Questionnaire Survey
- Design discussion guidelines
- Draw up a list of participants

**Focus Group Discussions / Stakeholder Interviews**
- Recruit participants from the Questionnaire Survey for the focus group discussions
- Invite relevant stakeholders to the interviews
- Proceed with a list of issues to be raised by moderators during the discussions
- Adopt Zoom conference mode
- Provide appropriate assistance to those who are not capable of setting up the device

**Quality Assurance**
- Recruit participants from different backgrounds
- Carefully draw up the guidelines for the in-depth interview discussions
- Use experienced moderators to host the discussions

**Provide qualitative views on the family-related topics**

## *Discussion Topics*

5.5    The focus group discussion topics are listed below.

| Groups |
| --- |
| **Young people**<br>○ Attitudes toward marriage and singlehood<br>○ Motivation to have children and rationales<br>○ Anticipated lifestyle and family composition in future<br>○ Methods of communication among family members<br>○ Relationship with parents<br>○ Difficulties encountered in communications with family members, and any methods used to tackle them<br>○ Attitudes toward living with parents<br>○ Academic and career prospects |
| **Parents (with parental stress or encountered problems in caring for their children)**<br>○ Desire to have more children<br>○ Problems in caring for their children and issues related to parenthood<br>○ Any methods to tackle the problems and their effectiveness<br>○ Forms of parental stress encountered and reasons<br>○ Stress-coping strategies and their effectiveness<br>○ Relationship with child(ren)<br>○ Difficulties encountered in communications with child(ren) and other family members, and any methods used to tackle them |
| **Parents (encountered work-family balance problems)**<br>○ Desire to have more children<br>○ Time spent on work and family<br>○ The work-family balance situation and factors affecting the balance<br>○ Current coping strategies for work-family balance and their effectiveness<br>○ Relationship with child(ren)<br>○ Difficulties encountered in communications with child(ren) and other family members, and any methods used to tackle them |
| **Grandparents**<br>○ Attitudes toward tri-parenting<br>○ Grandparent roles and degree of involvement in parenting<br>○ Time spent with child(ren) and grandchild(ren)<br>○ Relationship with child(ren) and grandchild(ren)<br>○ Impacts of modern technologies on communication with family members<br>○ Difficulties encountered in communications with family members, and any methods used to tackle them |

5.6    The topics of stakeholder interviews are listed below.

| Groups |
|---|
| **Stakeholders**<br>○    Overall family situations and challenges<br>○    Views on family education<br>○    Factors promoting family harmony |

## *Quality Assurance*

5.7    A number of measures were put in place to ensure that the information gathered from the discussions was credible:

○    Attempts were made to recruit participants from different backgrounds and with diverse views on the themes.

○    The materials and guidelines used for the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were carefully drawn up after reviewing the findings collected from the Questionnaire Survey.

○    The moderators of the discussions were experienced researchers who had ample experience of conducting qualitative interviews.

## *Data Analysis*

5.8    A special team of indoor staff, who had many years of experience conducting research, were responsible for analysing the views collected from the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.  After the discussions were completed, the views collected were organised, coded, and connected with the findings of the Questionnaire Survey.  Direct quotes or excerpts from the discussions were also presented to provide the basis for qualitative views.

# 6. Enumeration Results

## *Questionnaire Survey*

6.1   The fieldwork of the Questionnaire Survey was conducted from 22 November 2021 to 1 May 2022.  Before conducting the interviews, invitation letters with QR codes were sent to the sampled respondents.  The respondents could either scan the QR code and self-administer the questionnaire through the survey platform or contact the hotline to arrange a telephone or face-to-face interview.  For those respondents who did not respond by the deadline, arrangements were made for interviewers to visit them and invite them to participate in the Survey.

6.2   A total of 3,650 quarters was sampled, and after excluding 568 invalid cases, 3,082 cases were found to be valid.  A total of 2,010 interviews were successfully enumerated, giving a response rate of 65.2%.

*Table 6.1 Enumeration Results of the Questionnaire Survey*

|  | Number | % |
|---|---|---|
| **Quarters sampled** | **3 650** | |
| Valid cases | 3 082 | |
| Successfully completed cases | **2 010** | **65.2%** |
| *(i) Self-completed* | 1 028 | |
| *(ii) Telephone interviews* | 138 | |
| *(iii) Face-to-face interviews* | 844 | |
| Cases not completed due to refusal by household concerned, household concerned could not be contacted, etc. | 1 072 | 34.8% |
| Invalid cases | 568 | |
| Incomplete address | 376 | 66.2% |
| Vacant | 192 | 33.8% |

6.3   With an effective sample size of 2,010, based on simple random sampling for the Survey, the precision level of the estimates was within the range of plus or minus 2.19 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

6.4   Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the household visits were suspended from 17 January 2022 to 1 May 2022.  Comparisons were made between the profiles of the demographic characteristics of the respondents before and after the suspension, and no significant differences were observed.

# *Qualitative Study*

6.5 The Qualitative Study discussions were conducted from 13 July 2022 to 1 September 2022. Of the 300 respondents who agreed to participate in the focus group discussions, 140 were selected and sent invitations to attend the discussions. Six focus group discussions with 49 participants were conducted. 10 stakeholder interviews with 16 participants were conducted.

*Table 6.2 Enumeration Results of the Qualitative Study*

| | Number | Number of participants |
|---|---|---|
| **Focus Group Discussions** | | |
| Young people | 2 | 18 |
| Parents (with parental stress or encountered problems in caring for their children) | 2 | 15 |
| Parents (encountered problems in work-family balance) | 1 | 8 |
| Grandparents | 1 | 8 |
| **Stakeholder Interviews** | | |
| Representatives of social welfare organisations | 4 | 7 |
| Scholars and researchers | 3 | 3 |
| Representatives of parental or family support groups | 3 | 6 |

# 7. Survey Limitations

7.1 Although the results of the Survey are believed to be as accurate as practically possible through the implementation of thorough data validation and processing procedures, there may still be sampling errors and non-sampling errors. Readers should bear in mind the limitations and the attempts to alleviate their impact:

- *Data accuracy*: A retrospective cross-sectional approach was adopted, and the results are considered to be exploratory ones. Retrospective study relies on the one's memories of experiences and feelings, which may vary in accuracy. To minimise the errors, the Survey adopted a detailed interview approach, and all the respondents were carefully informed of all the question items before providing their comments.

- *Could not measure attitudes and behavioural changes:* Changes in the respondents' attitudes and behaviours could not be measured in a cross-sectional questionnaire survey.

- *Qualitative views could not be generalised to represent the wider population*: Given the limited number of participants for the focus group discussions, the qualitative views could not be generalised to represent the wider population. Nevertheless, the qualitative views collected from the focus group discussions provided valuable insights to explore in-depth views and feedback from the general public.

7.2 There are several limitations to the trend analyses that should be noted:

- *Non-explainable trends:* Each trend suggested many lines of enquiry. Combining several trends and considering the questions raised by each can generate a more holistic picture. However, some large fluctuations across years or trends were inexplicable. This may be an empirical issue due to data handling issues or resulting from different interpretations by the respondents in different years and a lack of explanatory factors. The possible factors for the emergence of this phenomenon were not explained comprehensively on the basis of the data obtained.

- *Inconsistent views collected:* Given the comprehensive scope of the Survey, respondents might have been overloaded by the long questionnaire design, resulting in inconsistent views, particularly in the 2017 Survey, as reported in the Consolidation Exercise.

## 8. Profiles of Respondents of the Questionnaire Survey

### *Household Characteristics*

8.1    Information on household characteristics, including household size, type of housing, tenure accommodation, mortgage or rent as a proportion of average total monthly household income, saleable area of current accommodation, and household income, was collected.

### *Household Size*

8.2    Small households predominated: 27.8% were two-person households, 30.1% were three-person households, and 22.3% were four-person households. 13.1% of the households were one-person households, and 6.8% were households with five or more persons.

*Chart 8.1 Household size*
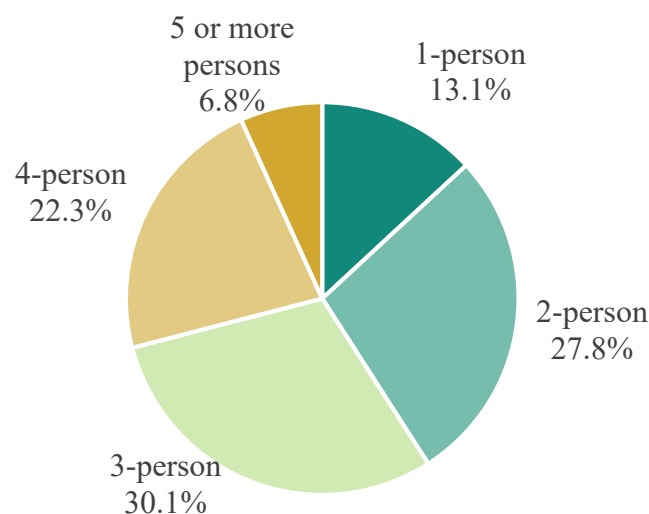
## Type of Housing and Tenure of Accommodation

8.3    53.8% of the households were living in private residential housing (including 0.2% in Government or private quarters and 0.3% in cubicle apartments or roof or subdivided units), 37.1% in public housing and 9.1% in subsidised housing.

*Chart 8.2 Type of housing*
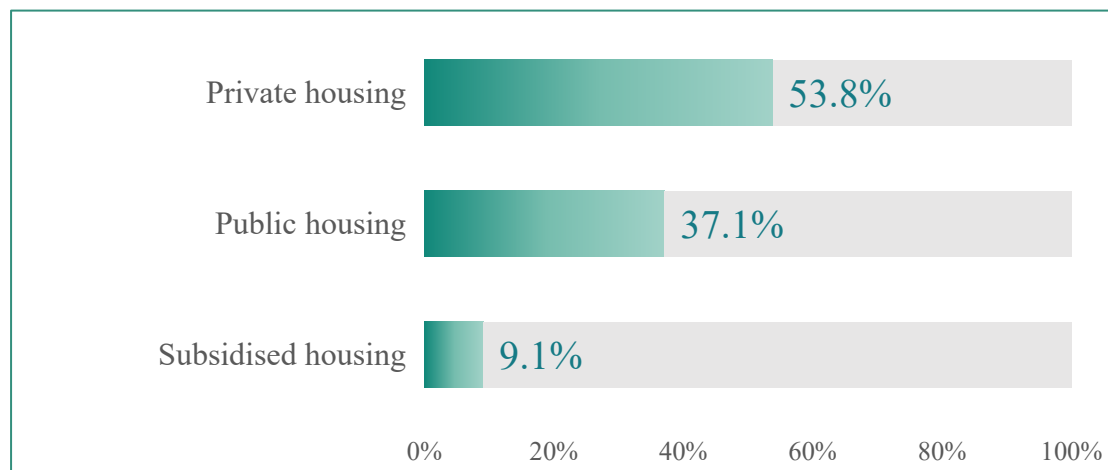


8.4    57.6% of the households were owner-occupiers, including 35.7% had already completed paying for their mortgage and 21.9% were currently repaying their mortgage.  40.2% of the households were sole tenants.  The remaining 2.2% of the households were classified as others, including 1.9% living in rent-free flats, and 0.3% shared living quarters with other households, that is, they were either main tenants, subtenants, or co-tenants.

*Chart 8.3 Tenure of accommodation*



41
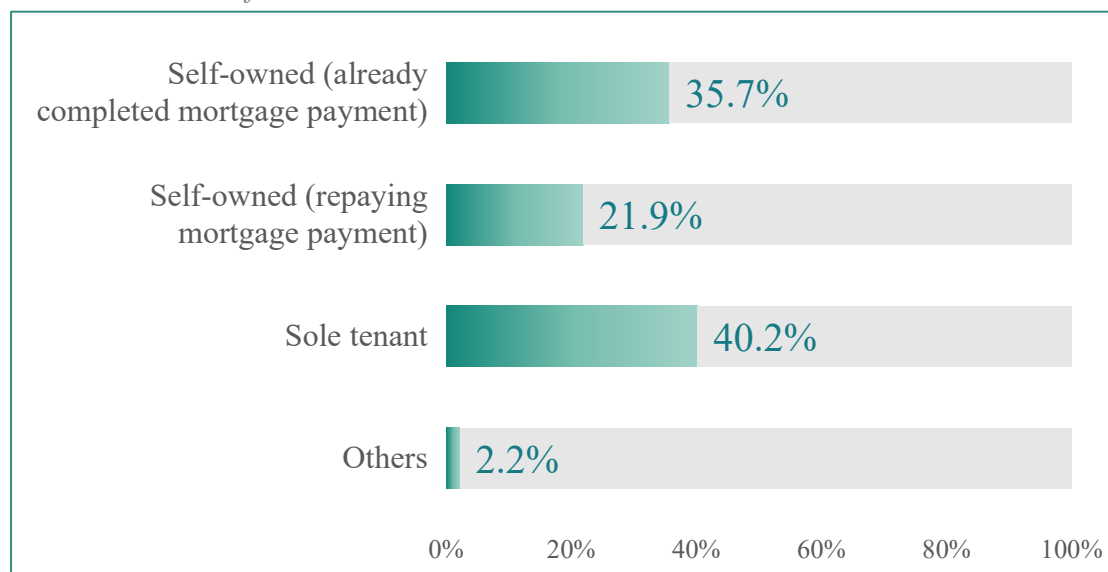
## Mortgage or Rent as a Proportion of Average Total Monthly Household Income

8.5    For those 21.9% of households that were currently repaying their mortgage, mortgage payment as a proportion of average total monthly household income was estimated. Among these households, mortgage payment as a proportion of average total monthly household income was as follows: for 27.7%, the proportion ranged from 30% to 39%; for 26.8%, it ranged from 20% to 29%; for 19.6%, it was less than 20%; for 13.7%, it ranged from 40% to 49%; and for 12.2%, it was 50% or more. The median proportion was 30.0%, and the average proportion was 29.2%.

8.6    For those 40.4% of the households that were tenants, rent as a proportion of average total monthly household income was estimated. Among these households, rent as a proportion of average total monthly household income was as follows: for 52.4%, the proportion was less than 20%; for 26.3%, it ranged from 20% to 29%; for 10.8%, it ranged from 30% to 39%; for 7.8%, it was 50% or more; and for 2.7%, it ranged from 40% to 49%. The median proportion was 15.0%, and the average proportion was 20.4%.

*Chart 8.4 Proportion of mortgage or rent to the average total monthly household income*
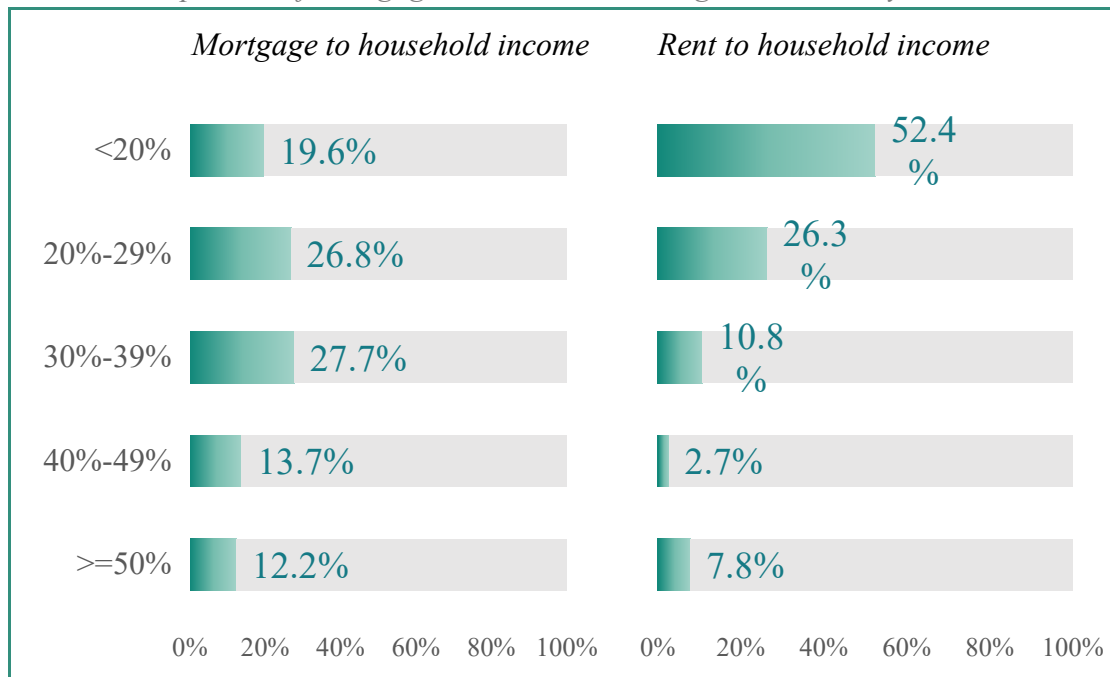
## Saleable Area of Current Accommodation

8.7 Households were asked to provide details of the saleable area of their current accommodation. About one quarter (25.1%) of the households were living in an area of 300 to 399 square feet, 22.4% in 400 to 499 square feet, 14.4% in 500 to 599 square feet, 12.1% in 200 to 299 square feet, 8.3% in 100 to 199 square feet, and 7.5% in 600 to 699 square feet. About one in ten households were living in a saleable area of 700 square feet or above. A small proportion of the households (0.1%) were living in a saleable area of less than 100 square feet.

8.8 The median saleable area was about 450 square feet per household, and the median per capita saleable area was about 150 square feet.

*Chart 8.5 Saleable area of the current accommodation*

| Saleable area | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Below 100 square feet | 0.1% |
| 100-199 square feet | 8.3% |
| 200-299 square feet | 12.1% |
| 300-399 square feet | 25.1% |
| 400-499 square feet | 22.4% |
| 500-599 square feet | 14.4% |
| 600-699 square feet | 7.5% |
| 700 square feet or above | 10.1% |
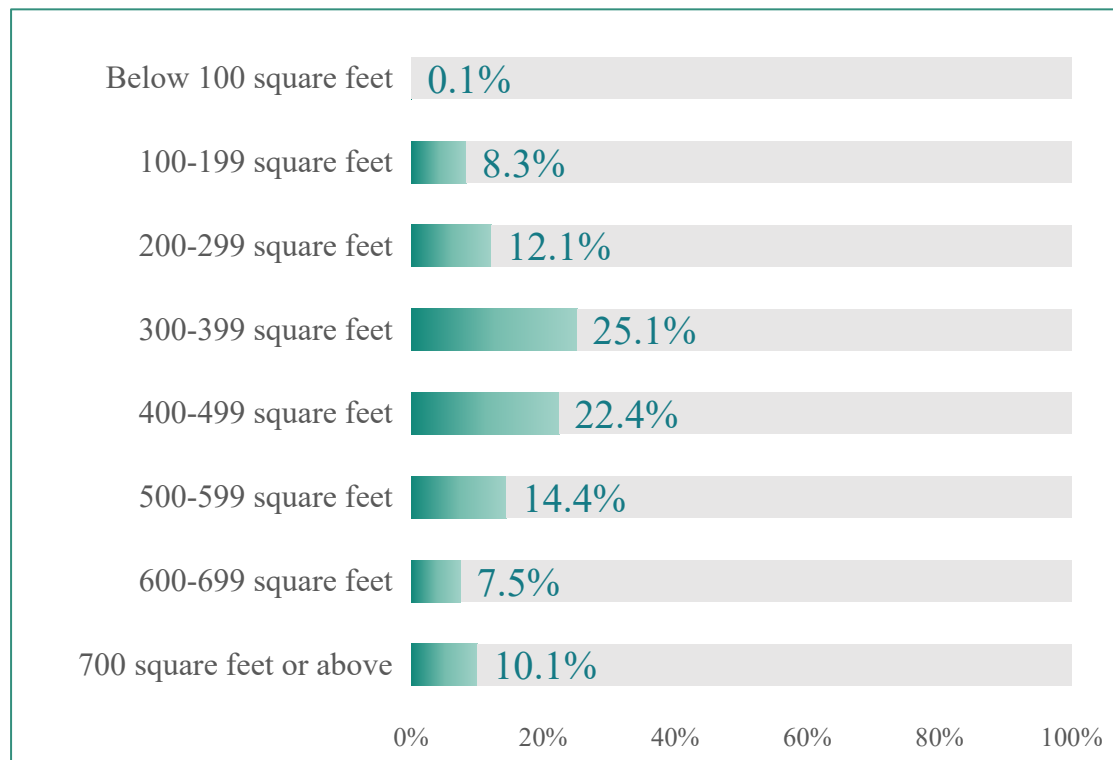
## *Monthly Household Income*

8.9 Monthly household income refers to the total cash income (including earnings from all jobs and other cash incomes but not including Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) or other assistance) received in the month before enumeration by all members of the household.  According to the 2021 Population Census (C&SD), the median monthly domestic household income was HK$27,650.

8.10 Among the households, 26.8% had a monthly household income of $25,000 or below and 48.0% had a monthly household income of $25,000 or above.  The survey results also indicated that 11.1% of the households had no income at all (e.g. the retired couples).  The median monthly household income was $27,500.

8.11 It is worth noting that 14.2% of the respondents refused to provide household income information.  In view of the refusal rate, care should be taken in interpreting the findings on income.

*Chart 8.6 Monthly household income*

| Category | Percentage |
|---|---|
| No income | 11.1% |
| Below $5,000 | 2.1% |
| $5,000 - $9,999 | 4.2% |
| $10,000 - $14,999 | 6.6% |
| $15,000 - $19,999 | 5.8% |
| $20,000 - $24,999 | 8.1% |
| $25,000 - $29,999 | 6.6% |
| $30,000 - $39,999 | 9.7% |
| $40,000 - $49,999 | 11.3% |
| $50,000 - $59,999 | 7.9% |
| $60,000 - $79,999 | 5.5% |
| $80,000 - $99,999 | 2.8% |
| $100,000 - $119,999 | 1.4% |
| $120,000 or above | 2.8% |
| Refuse to answer | 14.2% |
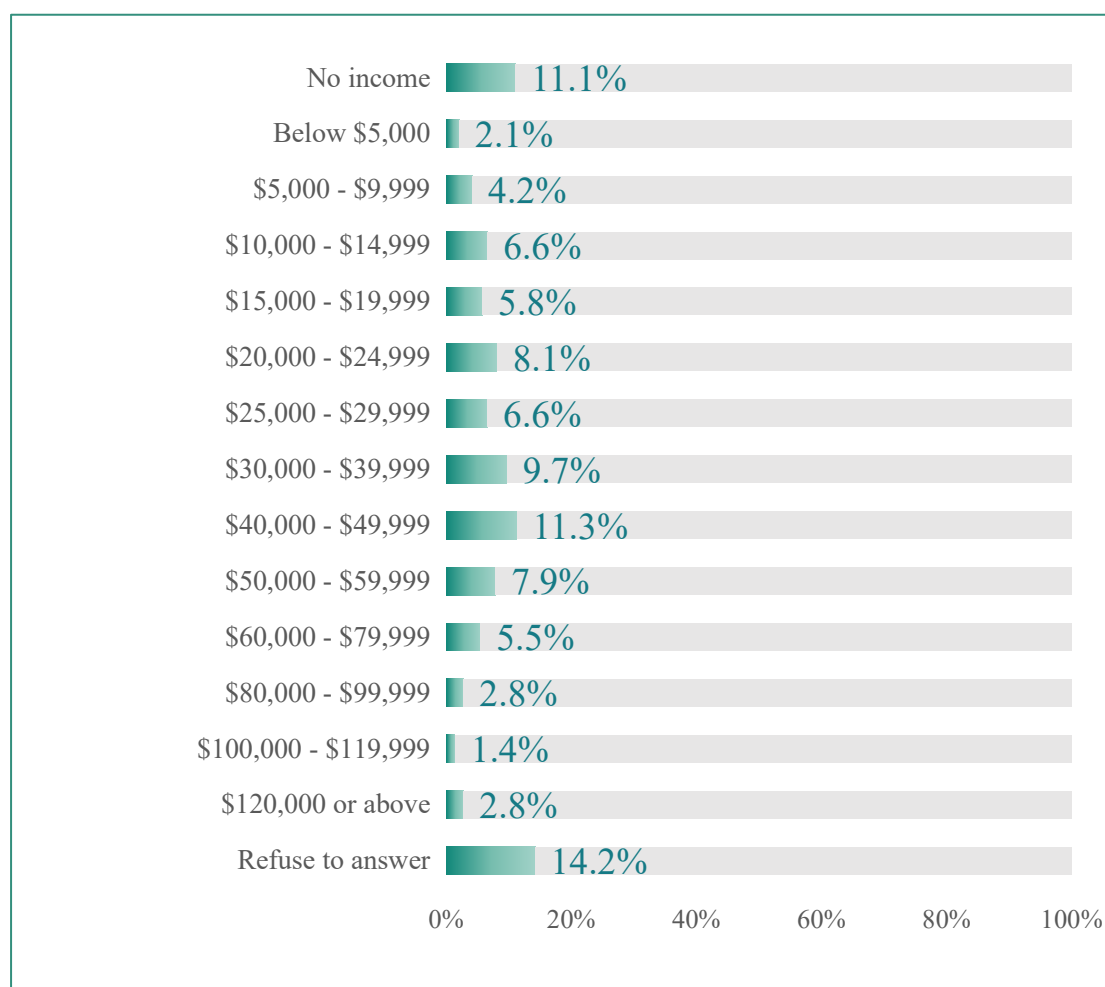
## Demographic Characteristics

8.12     Information on the demographic characteristics of individual household members, including gender, age, marital status, educational attainment, length of residence in Hong Kong, economic activity status and working arrangements, average working hours per week, and monthly personal income, was collected.  An analysis of their socio-economic characteristics is set out in the following paragraphs.

### Gender and Age Group

8.13     52.8% of the respondents were female and 47.2% were male.  21.5% were aged between 15 and 34, 35.2% were aged between 35 and 54, and 43.3% were aged 55 or above.

*Chart 8.7 Age group by gender*
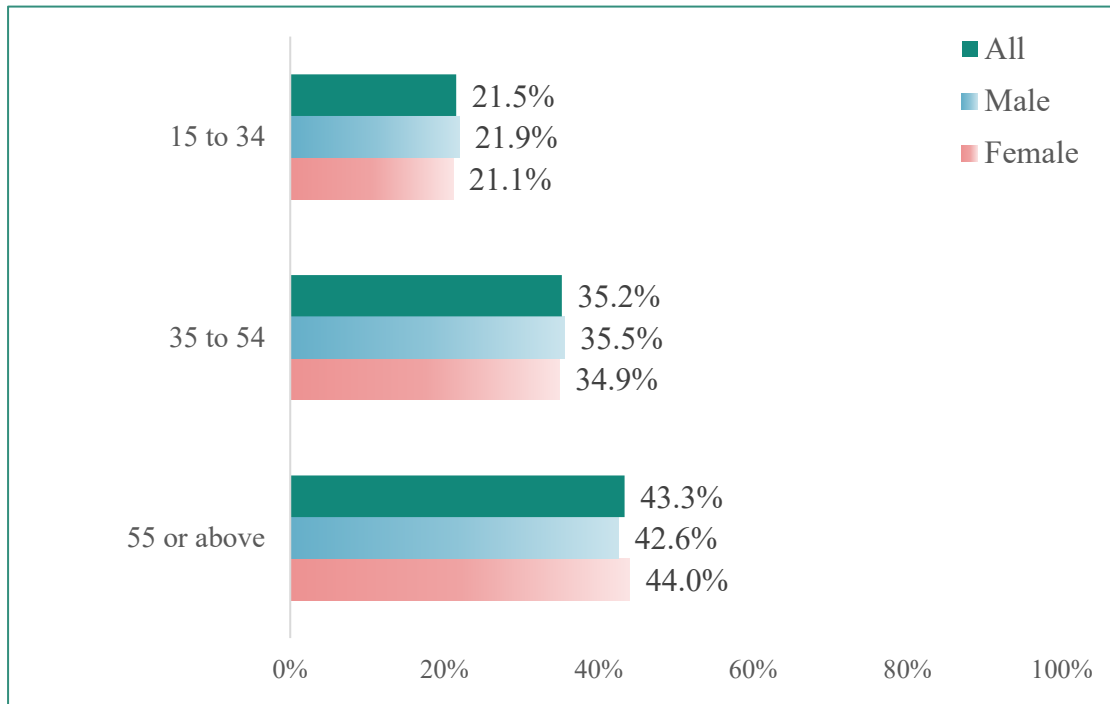
## *Educational Attainment*

8.14    Over half (52.9%) of the respondents had attained a secondary level of education, a diploma, a certificate, or an associate degree. About one quarter (24.3%) had a university or above level of education (e.g. a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, or a post-doctoral degree). About 22.8% had attained a primary level of education or below.

*Chart 8.8 Educational attainment by gender*
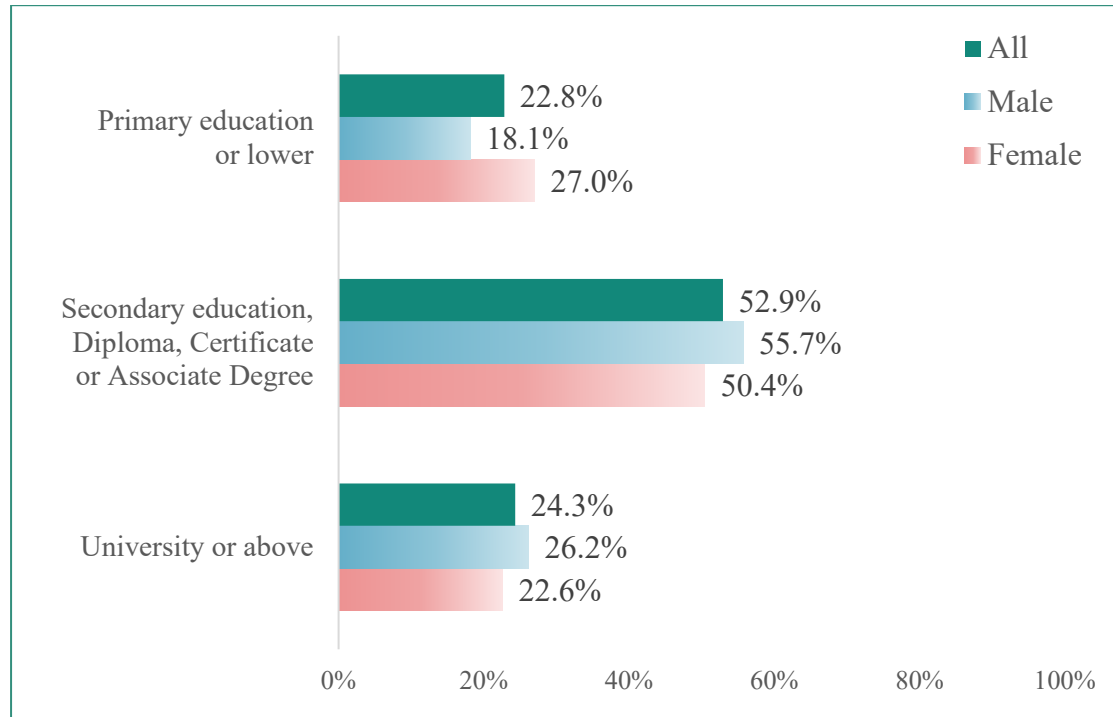
## Marital Status

8.15    Over half (58.9%) of the respondents were either married or cohabiting. 28.4% were never married. The remaining 12.6% were either divorced (or separated) or widowed. It was noticeable that the number of divorced or widowed female respondents was about three times that of male respondents.

*Chart 8.9 Marital status by gender*
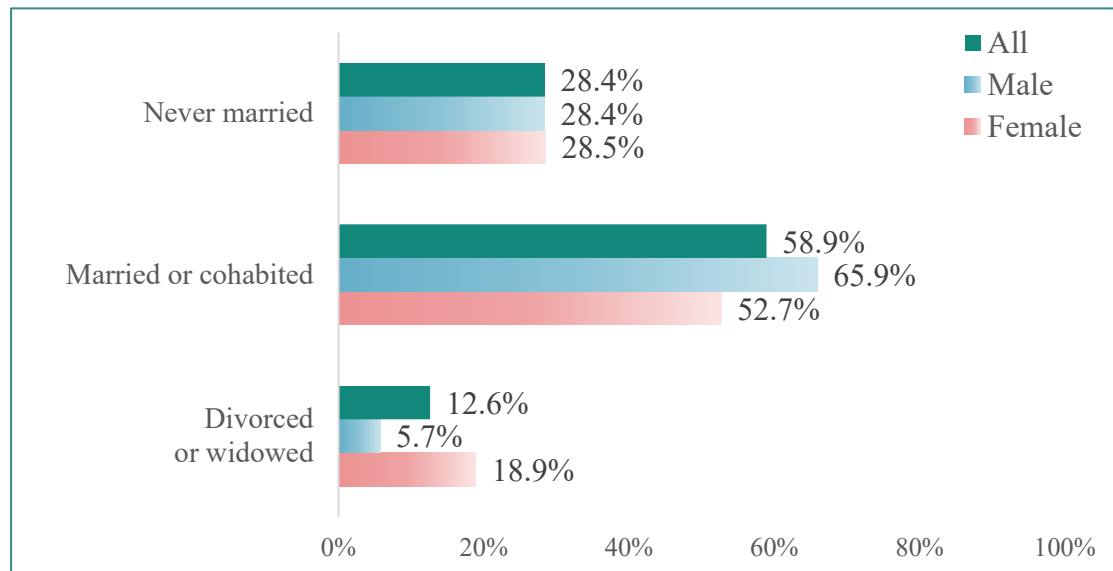


## Length of Residence in Hong Kong

8.16    95.9% of the respondents had lived in Hong Kong for more than 7 years, and 4.1% of them were new arrivals who had lived in Hong Kong for less than 7 years.

*Chart 8.10      Length of Residence by gender*
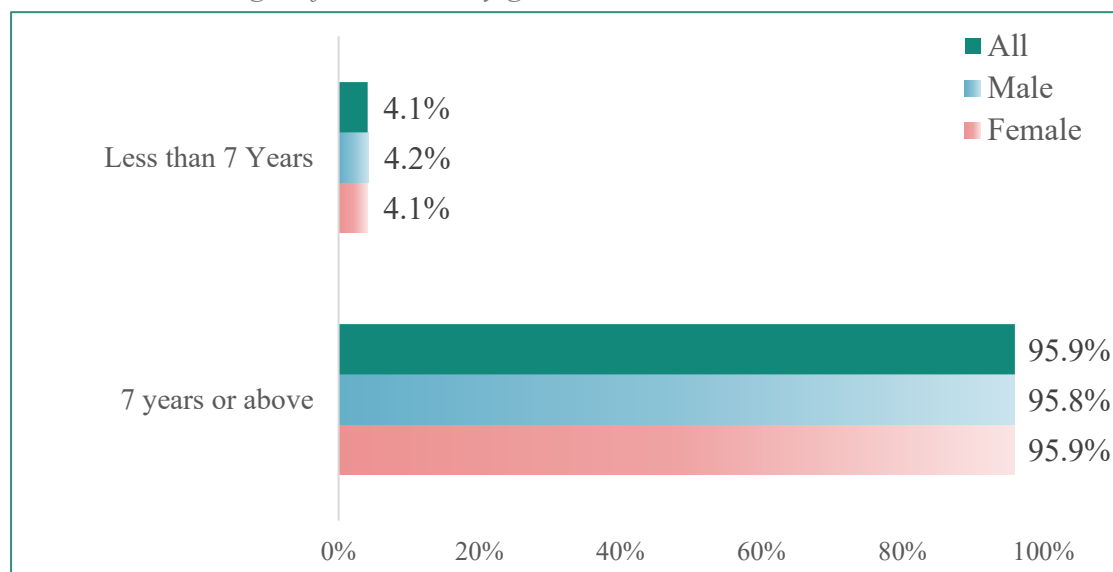
## *Economic Activity Status and Working Arrangements*

8.17　Over half (56.6%) of the respondents were employed persons.  About 37.4% were economically inactive (e.g. retirees, homemakers, or students), and another 6.0% were neither at work nor at school.

8.18　Among the male respondents, 61.9% were employed, 26.0% were retirees, 5.8% were students, 5.7% were neither at work nor at school, and only 0.5% were homemakers.  Among the female respondents, 51.8% were employed, 19.8% were retirees, 17.4% were homemakers, 4.8% were students, and 6.3% were neither at work nor at school.

*Chart 8.11　　Economic Activity Status by gender*
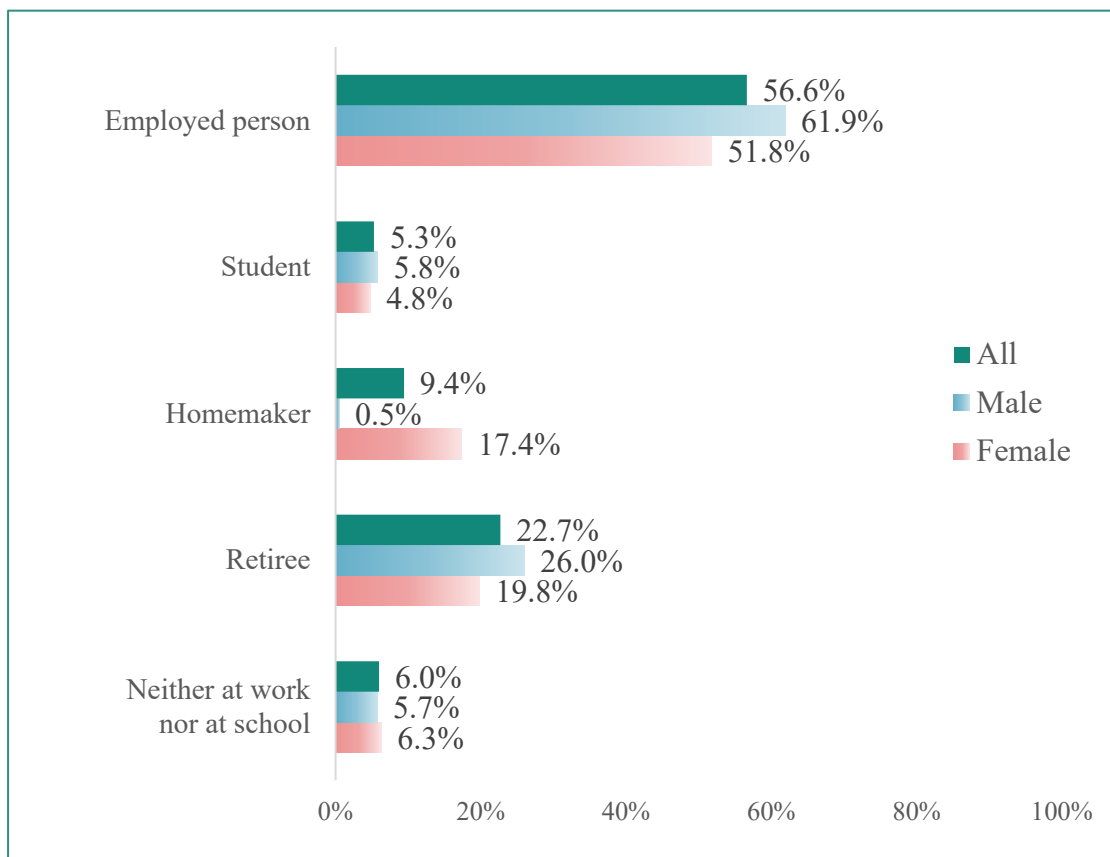
8.19    Of the 56.6% of respondents who were employed, over half (54.4%) worked 5 days per week, 30.2% worked 6 days or more per week, 8.2% worked 5.5 days per week, and 7.2% worked less than 5 days per week.  The average number of working days per week was 5.2 (5.3 for male respondents and 5.2 for female respondents).

*Chart 8.12      Working Days per week by gender*
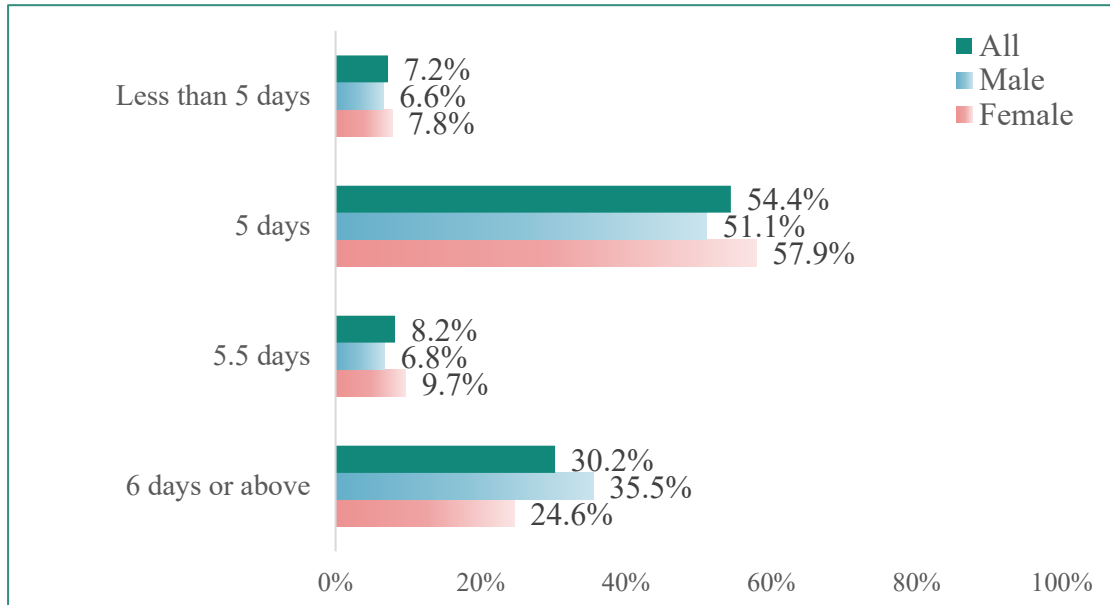


8.20    Of those 56.6% employed person, about 48.2% worked 44 hours or below per week, 38.8% worked from 45 to 54 hours per week, and 13.0% worked 55 hours or above per week.  The average number of working hours per week was 44.7 hours (46.0 hours for male respondents and 43.3 hours for female respondents).

*Chart 8.13      Working hours per week by gender*
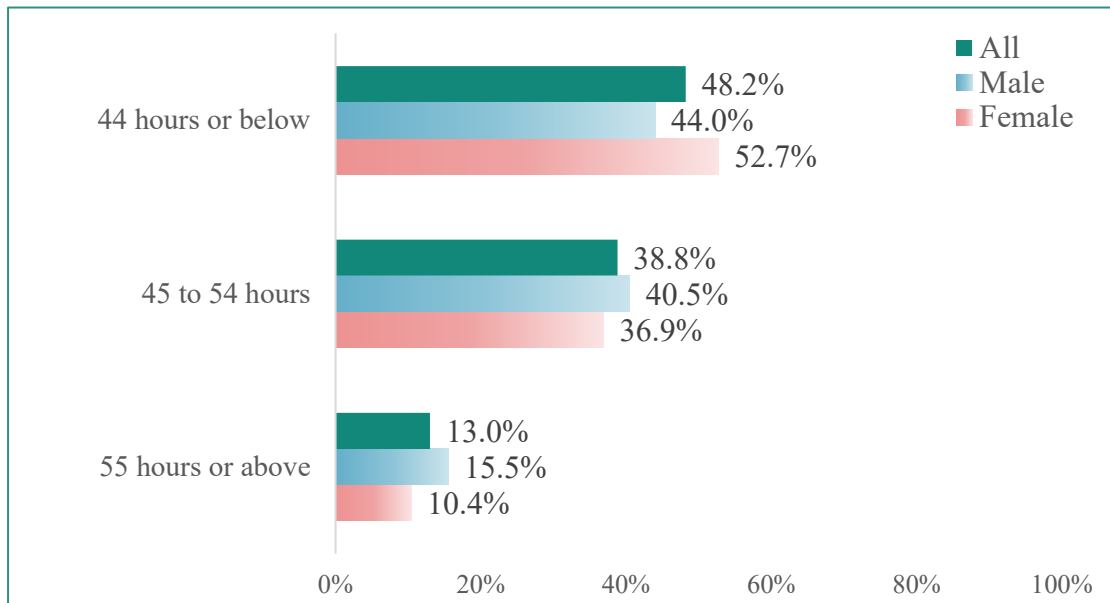
## Monthly Personal Income

8.21 Monthly personal income refers to earnings from employment and other cash income, such as rent, dividends, cash gifts received, and other capital gains.

8.22 29.3% of the respondents had a monthly personal income of $20,000 or above, and 22.4% had a monthly personal income under $20,000.  The survey results also indicated that 43.4% of the respondents had no income at all as they were economically inactive.

8.23 Among those who were economically active, the median monthly income was $22,500 ($22,500 for male respondents and $17,500 for female respondents).

*Chart 8.14     Monthly personal income by gender*
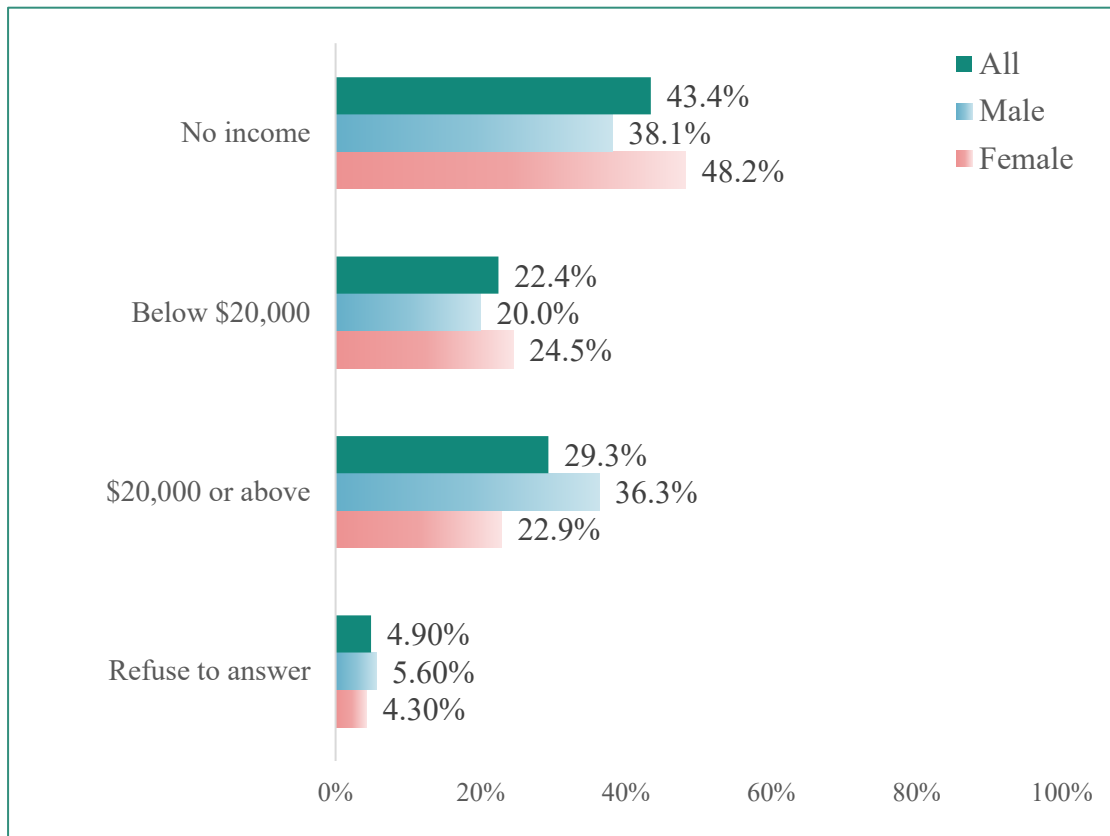
# 9. Profiles of Participants of the Qualitative Study

## *Young People Groups*

9.1 Two young people focus groups, one for youths aged 15 to 18 and one for young people aged 19 to 29, were conducted.  The nine participants in Young People Group I were aged 15 to 18 students, and had never been married.  The participants in Young People Group II included four men and five women aged between 19 and 29; the group consisted of two students, five full-time employees, one part-time employee, and one homemaker.  Regarding marital status, six participants had never married and three were married, and two had children.  Table 9.1 presents the profiles of the young participants

*Table 9.1 Profiles of the young participants*

| | Age | Gender | Economic Activity Status | Marital Status | Have Children (Y/N) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Young People Group I** | | | | | |
| Youth 1 | 15 | M | Student | Never married | N |
| Youth 2 | 15 | M | Student | Never married | N |
| Youth 3* | 16 | M | Student | Never married | N |
| Youth 4 | 16 | M | Student | Never married | N |
| Youth 5 | 17 | M | Student | Never married | N |
| Youth 6 | 16 | F | Student | Never married | N |
| Youth 7 | 16 | F | Student | Never married | N |
| Youth 8 | 16 | F | Student | Never married | N |
| Youth 9 | 18 | F | Student | Never married | N |
| **Young People Group II** | | | | | |
| Youth 10 | 19 | M | Student | Never married | N |
| Youth 11 | 24 | M | Full-time employee | Married | N |
| Youth 12 | 25 | M | Full-time employee | Never married | N |
| Youth 13 | 29 | M | Full-time employee | Never married | N |
| Youth 14 | 19 | F | Student | Never married | N |
| Youth 15 | 27 | F | Homemaker | Married | Y |
| Youth 16 | 27 | F | Part-time employee | Never married | N |
| Youth 17 | 29 | F | Full-time employee | Married | Y |
| Youth 18 | 29 | F | Full-time employee | Never married | N |

*\* Ethnic minority*

## Parent Groups

9.2    Three parent focus groups were conducted.  The participants in Parent Group I and Parent Group II reported parental stress or encountering problems in caring for their children.  The participants in Parent Group III encountered problems in balancing work and family.  Table 9.2 presents the profiles of the parent participants.

*Table 9.2 Profiles of the parent participants*

| | Age | Gender | Economic Activity Status | Marital Status | Children With SEN (Y/N) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Parent Group I** | | | | | |
| Parent 1 | 38 | M | Full-time employee | Married | N |
| Parent 2 | 38 | M | Full-time employee | Married | N |
| Parent 3 | 49 | M | Full-time employee | Married | N |
| Parent 4 | 26 | F | Full-time employee | Never married | N |
| Parent 5 | 30 | F | Homemaker | Married | Y |
| Parent 6 | 37 | F | Homemaker | Married | N |
| Parent 7 | 38 | F | Full-time employee | Married | N |
| Parent 8 | 39 | F | Full-time employee | Divorced | N |
| **Parent Group II** | | | | | |
| Parent 9 | 30 | M | Full-time employee | Married | N |
| Parent 10 | 35 | M | Full-time employee | Married | N |
| Parent 11 | 42 | M | Full-time employee | Married | N |
| Parent 12 | 36 | F | Homemaker | Married | N |
| Parent 13 | 36 | F | Full-time employee | Married | Y |
| Parent 14 | 37 | F | Part-time employee | Divorced | N |
| Parent 15 | 46 | F | Homemaker | Married | N |
| **Parent Group III** | | | | | |
| Parent 16 | 34 | M | Full-time employee | Married | N |
| Parent 17 | 35 | M | Full-time employee | Married | N |
| Parent 18 | 41 | M | Full-time employee | Married | N |
| Parent 19 | 42 | M | Full-time employee | Married | N |
| Parent 20 | 28 | F | Full-time employee | Married | Y |
| Parent 21 | 32 | F | Self-employed person | Married | N |
| Parent 22 | 39 | F | Part-time employee | Married | N |
| Parent 23 | 44 | F | Part-time employee | Married | N |

## *Grandparent Group*

9.3   One grandparent focus group was conducted.  The participants in Grandparent Group included two men and six women ranging in age from 56 to 72; three were homemakers, four were retired, and one was a full-time employee. Regarding marital status, seven were married and one was divorced.  Table 9.3 presents the profiles of the grandparent participants.

*Table 9.3 Profiles of the grandparent participants*

| | Age | Gender | Economic Activity Status | Marital Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grandparent Group** | | | | |
| Grandparent 1 | 68 | M | Retiree | Married |
| Grandparent 2 | 68 | M | Retiree | Married |
| Grandparent 3 | 52 | F | Full-time employee | Married |
| Grandparent 4 | 56 | F | Homemaker | Married |
| Grandparent 5 | 58 | F | Homemaker | Divorced |
| Grandparent 6 | 61 | F | Retiree | Married |
| Grandparent 7 | 65 | F | Homemaker | Married |
| Grandparent 8 | 72 | F | Retiree | Married |

## *Stakeholder Interviews*

9.4    10 in-depth interviews were conducted with three groups of stakeholders, namely, representatives of social welfare organisations, scholars, and representatives of parental or family support groups. Specifically, four in-depth interviews with seven representatives of social welfare organisations, three in-depth interviews with three scholars, and three in-depth interviews with six representatives of parental or family support groups were conducted.

*Table 9.4 List of stakeholders*

| | Sectors |
|---|---|
| **Social welfare organisations** | |
| Stakeholder 1 | Representative of social welfare organisation A |
| Stakeholder 2 | Representative of social welfare organisation A |
| Stakeholder 3 | Representative of social welfare organisation A |
| Stakeholder 4 | Representative of social welfare organisation B |
| Stakeholder 5 | Representative of social welfare organisation B |
| Stakeholder 6 | Representative of social welfare organisation C |
| Stakeholder 7 | Representative of social welfare organisation D |
| **Scholars** | |
| Stakeholder 8 | Representative of university E |
| Stakeholder 9 | Representative of university F |
| Stakeholder 10 | Representative of university G |
| **Parental or family support groups** | |
| Stakeholder 11 | Representative of parental or family support groups H |
| Stakeholder 12 | Representative of parental or family support groups H |
| Stakeholder 13 | Representative of parental or family support groups H |
| Stakeholder 14 | Representative of parental or family support groups H |
| Stakeholder 15 | Representative of parental or family support groups I |
| Stakeholder 16 | Representative of parental or family support groups J |

# 10. Theme 1 – Family Structure

## Overview

10.1    Research on family structure has burgeoned over the past few decades. Family structure experiences, including family roles and routines, caring for children, parenting, family instability, and family cohesion, are linked to an individual's development[14]. Household composition refers to the information on each household member's relationship to the head of household and the identification of relationships among members of the household. The three main categories of household composition are nuclear family households, relative households, and other households[15].

10.2    Family attitudes refer to the attitudes of individuals toward a wide range of family issues, including the role of men and women, cohabitation, marriage, divorce, parenthood, and childbearing[16]. Three dimensions, with a total of eight question items, were adopted to ascertain respondents' attitudes toward singlehood, cohabitation, and divorce. Reliability analyses (presented as α) were compiled to construct the indices for trend and in-depth analyses. The alphas of three indices were larger than 0.7, indicating a satisfactory level of reliability and internal consistency.

10.3    Table 10.1 presents the dimensions and details of family structure.

*Table 10.1    Dimensions of Theme 1 - Family Structure*

| Theme | Dimensions | Year | | | | | No. of items | α | Index construct? | Single item? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | | | | |
| 1A | Household composition | - | - | - | - | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |
| 1B | Attitudes toward singlehood | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | 2 | > 0.7 | ☑ | - |
| 1C | Attitudes toward cohabitation | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | 2 | > 0.7 | ☑ | - |
| 1D | Attitudes toward divorce | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | 4 | > 0.7 | ☑ | - |

## Household Composition

10.4     About three quarters (75.3%) of the respondents lived in nuclear family households, comprising various combinations of households, including households composed of a couple and unmarried children (i.e. a household comprised of a couple and their unmarried child(ren) without any other related persons) (33.3%), a lone parent and unmarried children (i.e. a household comprised of a father or mother and their unmarried child(ren) without any other related persons) (25.7%), and a couple (i.e. a household comprised of a married couple without any other related persons) (16.3%).

10.5     About 15.0% of the respondents were classified as other households, including one-person households (13.1%) and non-relative households (i.e. a household comprised of unrelated persons) (1.9%).

10.6     About one in ten (9.6%) of the respondents were classified as living in relative households, including households comprised of a couple, at least one of their parents, and their unmarried children (i.e. a household comprising a couple, at least one of their parents (including the parent(s) of the wife and/or husband) and their unmarried children without any other related persons) (4.1%); households with other relationship combinations (i.e. a household comprising a group of related persons but not being classified in the above categories) (3.6%); and households comprised of a couple and at least one of their parents (i.e. a household comprising a couple and at least one of their parents (including the parent(s) of the wife and/or husband) without any other related persons) (1.9%).

*Chart 10.2     Major categories of household composition*



Relative households 9.6%

Other households 15.0%

Nucluear family households 75.3%
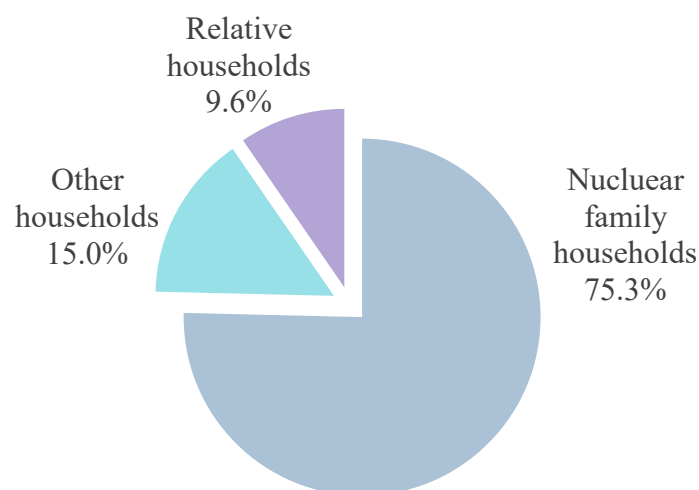
*Table 10.3*　　　*Detailed breakdowns of household composition*

| Major categories | | % | Sub-total % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nuclear family households | Composed of couple | 16.3% | 75.3% |
| | Composed of couple and unmarried children | 33.3% | |
| | Composed of lone parent and unmarried children | 25.7% | |
| Relative households | Composed of couple and at least one of their parents | 1.9% | 9.6% |
| | Composed of couple, at least one of their parents and their unmarried children | 4.1% | |
| | Composed of other relationship combinations | 3.6% | |
| Other households | One-person household | 13.1% | 15.0% |
| | Non-relative household | 1.9% | |

## Attitudes toward Singlehood

10.7  The index regarding attitudes toward singlehood consisted of two question items.  Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the two question items using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

10.8  In 2021, 40.3% of the respondents accepted the view of "being single and not having any plan to get married", whereas one in five respondents disagreed.  At the same time, 30.1% of the respondents found it acceptable for a woman to give birth to a child if she had no intention of getting married, whereas 30.4% disagreed.  About two fifths of the respondents did not provide their views.

*Chart 10.4    Attitudes toward singlehood in 2021*

**I accept myself as being single and not having any plans of getting married**

Agree
40.3%

Neutral
39.5%

Disagree
20.2%

**It is acceptable for a woman to give birth to a child if she has no intention of getting married**

Agree
30.1%

Neutral
39.5%

Disagree
30.4%
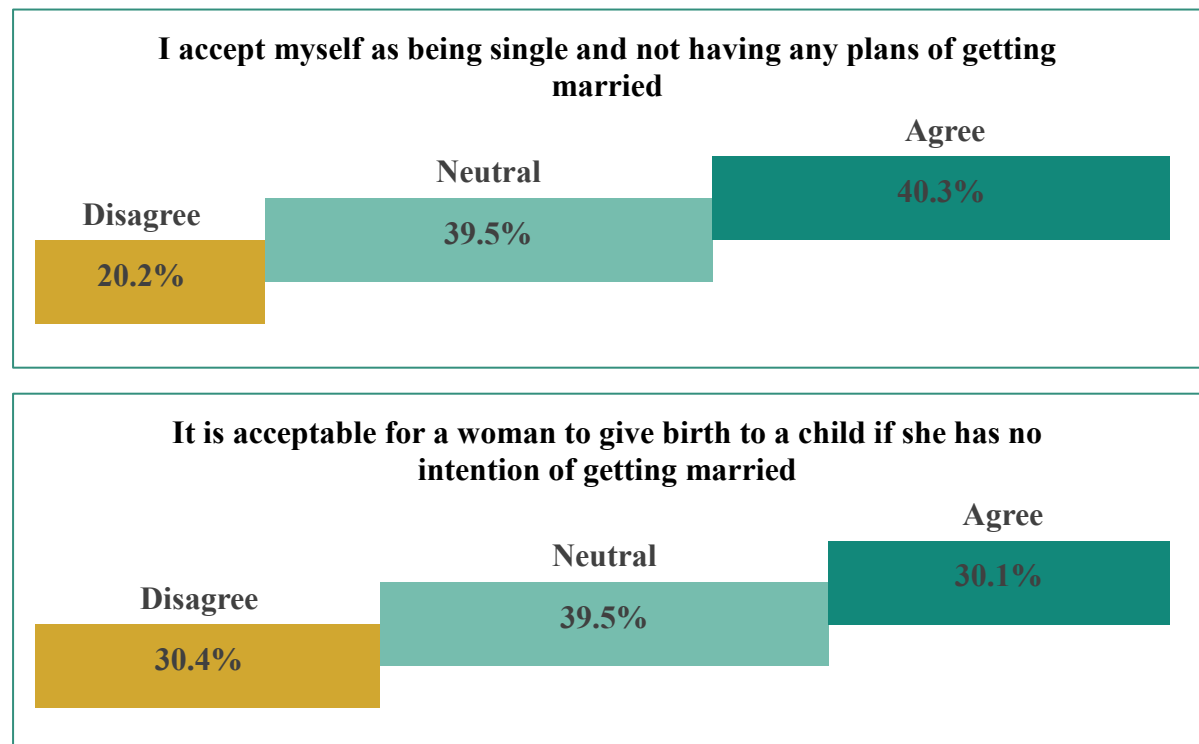
10.9 An index of attitudes toward singlehood was compiled. A higher score indicated more positive views on singlehood. The scores by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status, were also compiled and analysed.

10.10 The mean score of attitudes toward singlehood was 3.09 out of 5. Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents in the following groups had significantly less positive attitudes toward singlehood: aged 55 or above (2.97), married/cohabiting (2.95), and economically inactive (2.97) (*ps* < .05). Without doubt, the respondents who had never been married demonstrated more positive views toward singlehood (3.36 out of 5). There was no significant gender difference.

*Chart 10.5     Attitudes toward singlehood by key demographics in 2021*
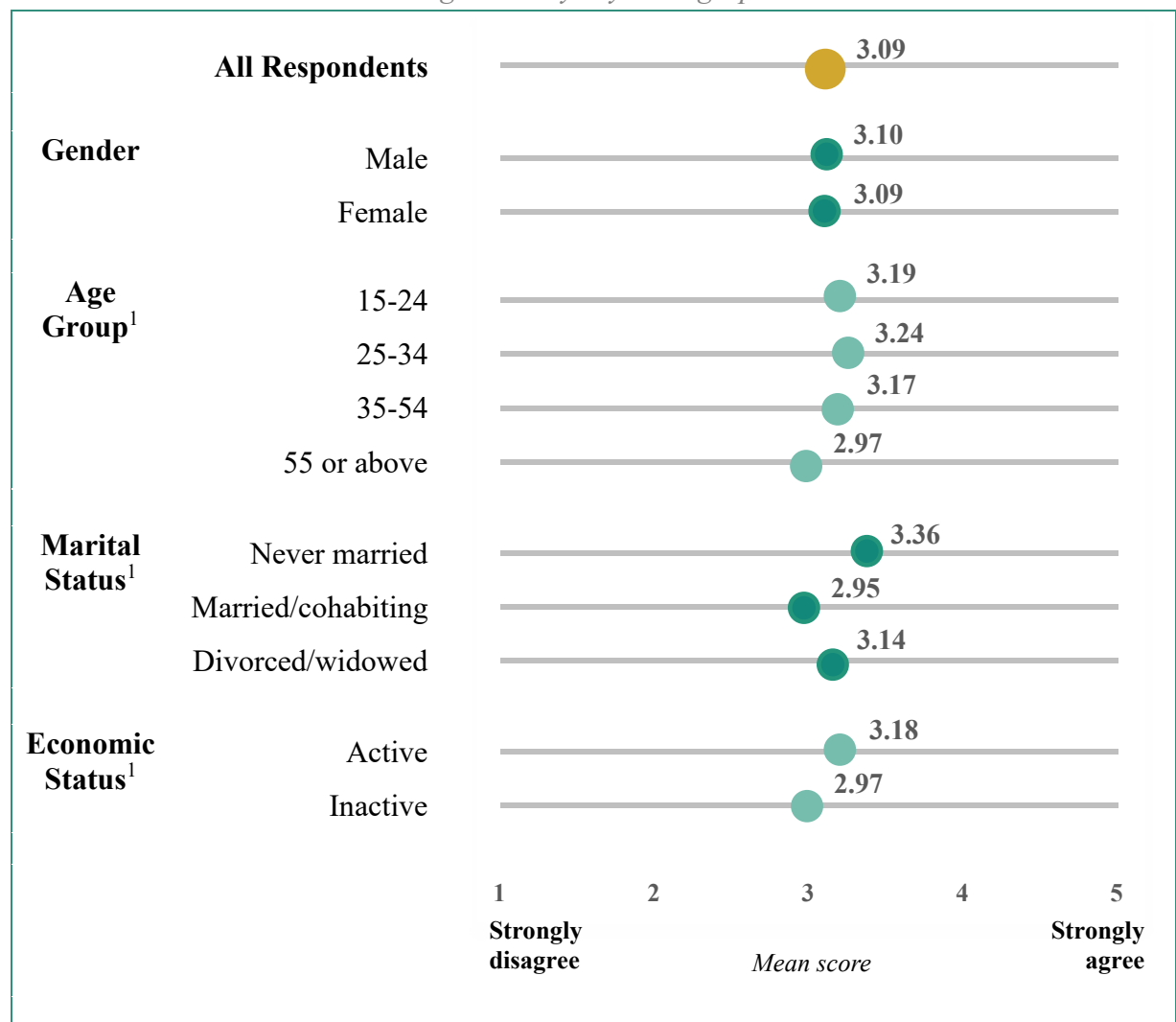


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

10.11　The mean score of attitudes toward singlehood grew steadily from 2.89 in 2011 to 3.09 in 2021.  A mild increasing trend was observed from 2011 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p < .05$).  Analysed by demographics, though no monotonic trend was observed, significant differences were found in some mean scores across the years.

Chart 10.6　　Attitudes toward singlehood across years
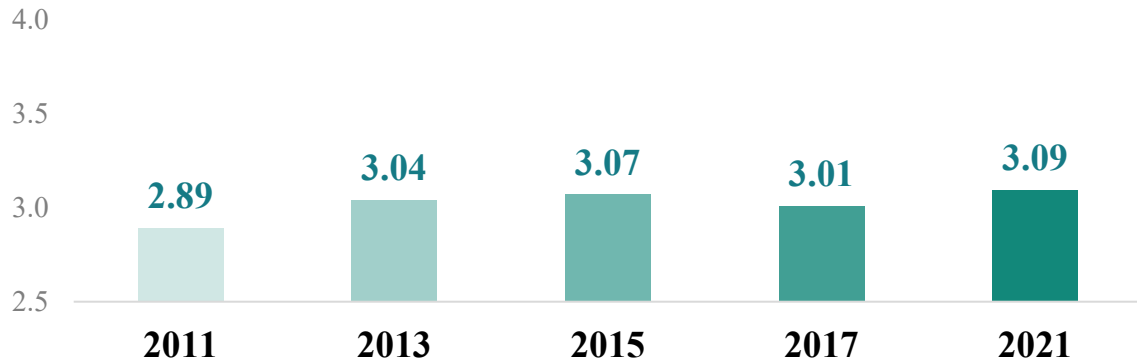


| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 2.90 | 3.07 | 3.11 | 3.03 | 3.10 | <.001 |
| | Female | 2.88 | 3.02 | 3.04 | 3.01 | 3.09 | <.001 |
| Age Group | 15-24 | 3.01 | 3.22 | 3.11 | 3.07 | 3.19 | .071 |
| | 25-34 | 3.08 | 3.14 | 3.17 | 3.14 | 3.24 | .166 |
| | 35-54 | 2.93 | 3.12 | 3.13 | 3.09 | 3.17 | <.001 |
| | 55 or above | 2.66 | 2.81 | 2.93 | 2.86 | 2.97 | <.001 |
| Marital Status | Never married | 3.17 | 3.29 | 3.32 | 3.26 | 3.36 | .001 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 2.72 | 2.91 | 2.89 | 2.86 | 2.95 | <.001 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed | 2.92 | 3.03 | 3.15 | 3.03 | 3.14 | <.001 |
| Economic Status | Economically active | 2.95 | 3.09 | 3.14 | 3.12 | 3.18 | <.001 |
| | Economically inactive | 2.82 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 2.90 | 2.97 | <.001 |

Note [1] GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents.

## Attitudes toward Cohabitation

10.12   The index regarding attitudes toward cohabitation consisted of two question items.  Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the two question items using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

10.13   In 2021, 37.9% of the respondents accepted "cohabitation without the intention of getting married", whereas about 22.9% disagreed.  At the same time, 39.8% of the respondents agreed that it was a good idea to cohabitate before getting married, whereas 16.2% disagreed.  About two fifths of the respondents did not provide their views.

*Chart 10.7      Attitudes toward cohabitation in 2021*

**"Cohabitation without the intention of getting married" is acceptable to me**

Disagree
22.9%

Neutral
39.3%

Agree
37.9%

**"Cohabitation before marriage" is a good idea**

Disagree
16.2%

Neutral
44.0%

Agree
39.8%
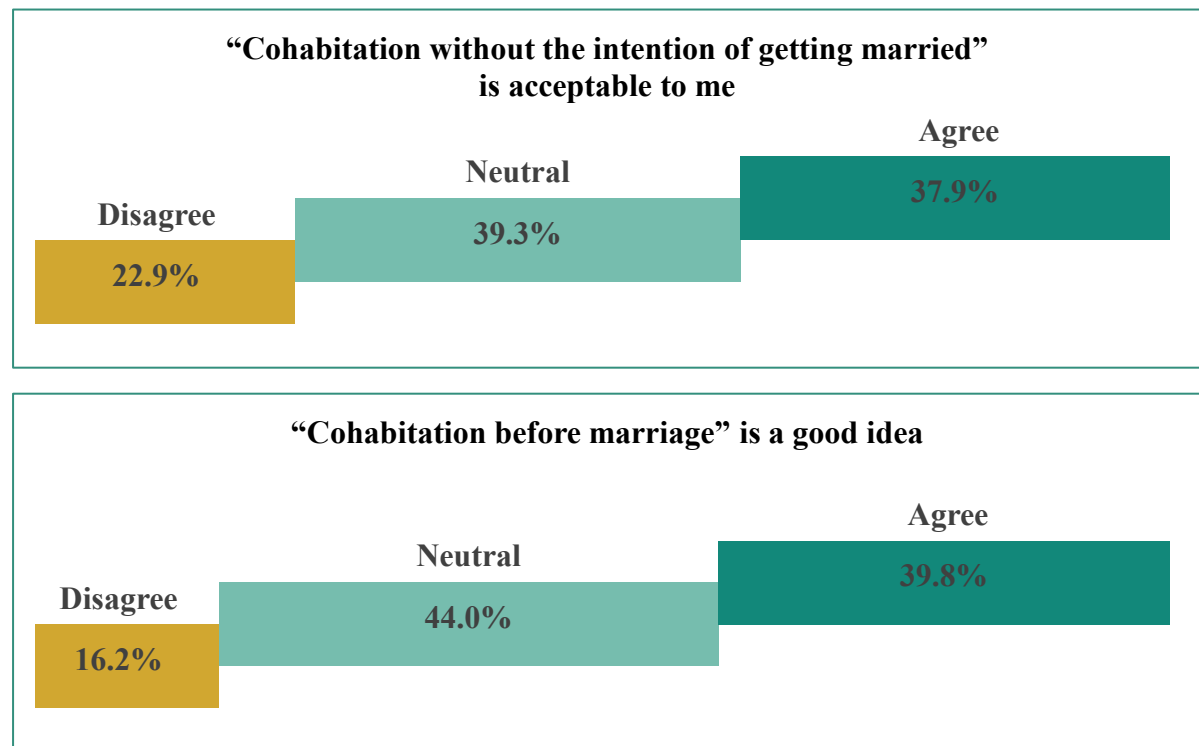
10.14 An index of attitudes toward cohabitation was compiled.  A higher score indicated more positive views on cohabitation.

10.15 The mean score of attitudes toward cohabitation was 3.22 out of 5.  Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents in the following groups had significantly less positive attitudes toward cohabitation: aged 55 or above (2.96), married/cohabiting (3.13), divorced/widowed (3.08), and economically inactive (3.05) ($ps < .05$).  On the other hand, respondents in the following groups had more positive views on singlehood: aged 25 to 34 (3.61), aged 15 to 24 (3.42), and never been married (3.45).  There was no significant gender difference.

*Chart 10.8    Attitudes toward cohabitation by key demographics in 2021*
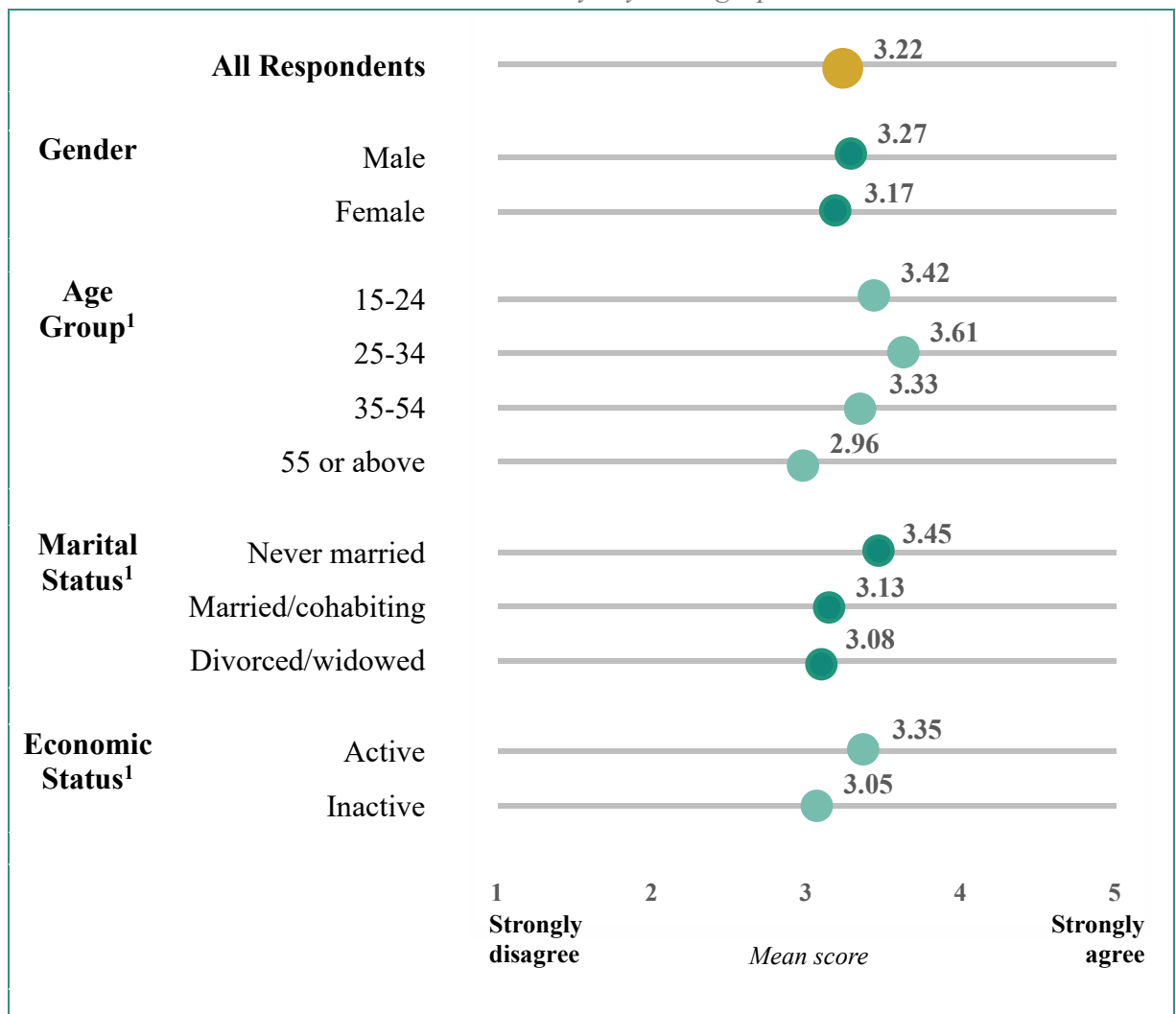


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

10.16　The mean score of attitudes toward cohabitation grew from 3.03 in 2011 to 3.22 in 2021.  An increasing trend was observed from 2011 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p < .05$).  Analysed by demographics, a monotonic increasing trend was observed among the female respondents ($p < .001$).

*Chart 10.9　　Attitudes toward cohabitation across years*
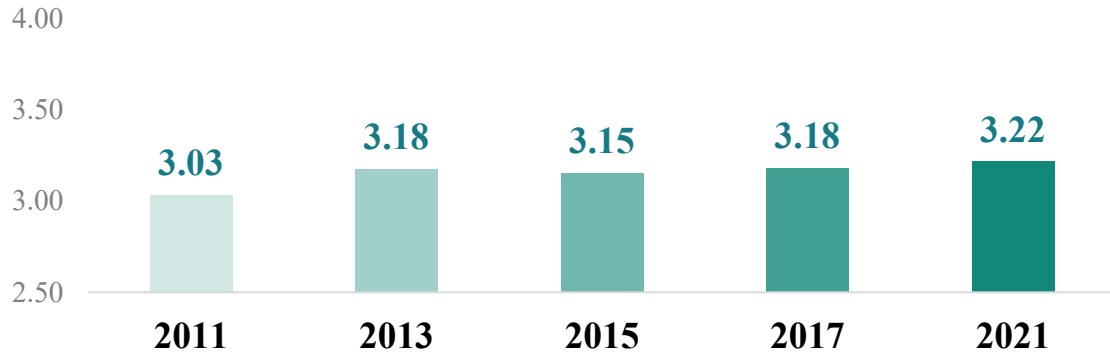


| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 3.16 | 3.30 | 3.24 | 3.30 | 3.27 | <.001 |
| | Female[2] | 2.93 | 3.07 | 3.08 | 3.08 | 3.17 | <.001 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | 3.23 | 3.26 | 3.33 | 3.30 | 3.42 | .050 |
| | 25-34 | 3.33 | 3.36 | 3.35 | 3.35 | 3.61 | <.001 |
| | 35-54 | 3.06 | 3.29 | 3.20 | 3.27 | 3.33 | <.001 |
| | 55 or above | 2.74 | 2.90 | 2.92 | 2.97 | 2.96 | <.001 |
| Marital status | Never married | 3.31 | 3.34 | 3.37 | 3.34 | 3.45 | .001 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 2.91 | 3.12 | 3.04 | 3.12 | 3.13 | <.001 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed | 2.89 | 3.05 | 3.04 | 3.04 | 3.08 | .003 |
| Economic status | Economically active | 3.15 | 3.30 | 3.26 | 3.30 | 3.35 | <.001 |
| | Economically inactive | 2.91 | 3.06 | 3.06 | 3.05 | 3.05 | <.001 |

Note 1 GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents. Note 2 A monotonic increasing trend.

## *Attitudes toward Divorce*

10.17 The index regarding attitudes toward divorce consisted of four question items. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the four question items using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

10.18 In 2021, over half (57.2%) of the respondents agreed that divorce was usually the best solution for a married couple who could not live together harmoniously, provided that they did not have children, whereas about one in ten (11.2%) disagreed. For the same situation but where children were involved, about one third (33.6%) agreed and 21.2% disagreed. 42.4% agreed that divorce affected the woman more than the man, whereas 17.6% disagreed. 44.2% accepted marrying a divorced person, whereas 10.2% did not.

*Chart 10.10    Attitudes toward divorce in 2021*



**Divorce is usually the best solution for a married couple who cannot live together harmoniously provided that they do not have children**

Disagree 11.2%  Neutral 31.7%  Agree 57.2%

**Divorce is usually the best solution for a married couple who cannot live together harmoniously even though they already have children**

Disagree 21.2%  Neutral 45.1%  Agree 33.6%

**Divorce affects woman more than man**

Disagree 17.6%  Neutral 40.0%  Agree 42.4%

**It is acceptable for me to marry a divorced person**

Disagree 10.2%  Neutral 45.6%  Agree 44.2%

64

10.19    An index of attitudes toward divorce was compiled.  A higher score indicated more positive views on divorce.

10.20    The mean score of attitudes toward divorce was 3.34 out of 5.  Compared with the other demographic groups, the female respondents (3.40) and those who were economically active (3.37) had significantly more positive views on divorce ($ps < .05$).  No statistically significant difference was found between marital status groups.

*Chart 10.11    Attitudes toward divorce by key demographics in 2021*
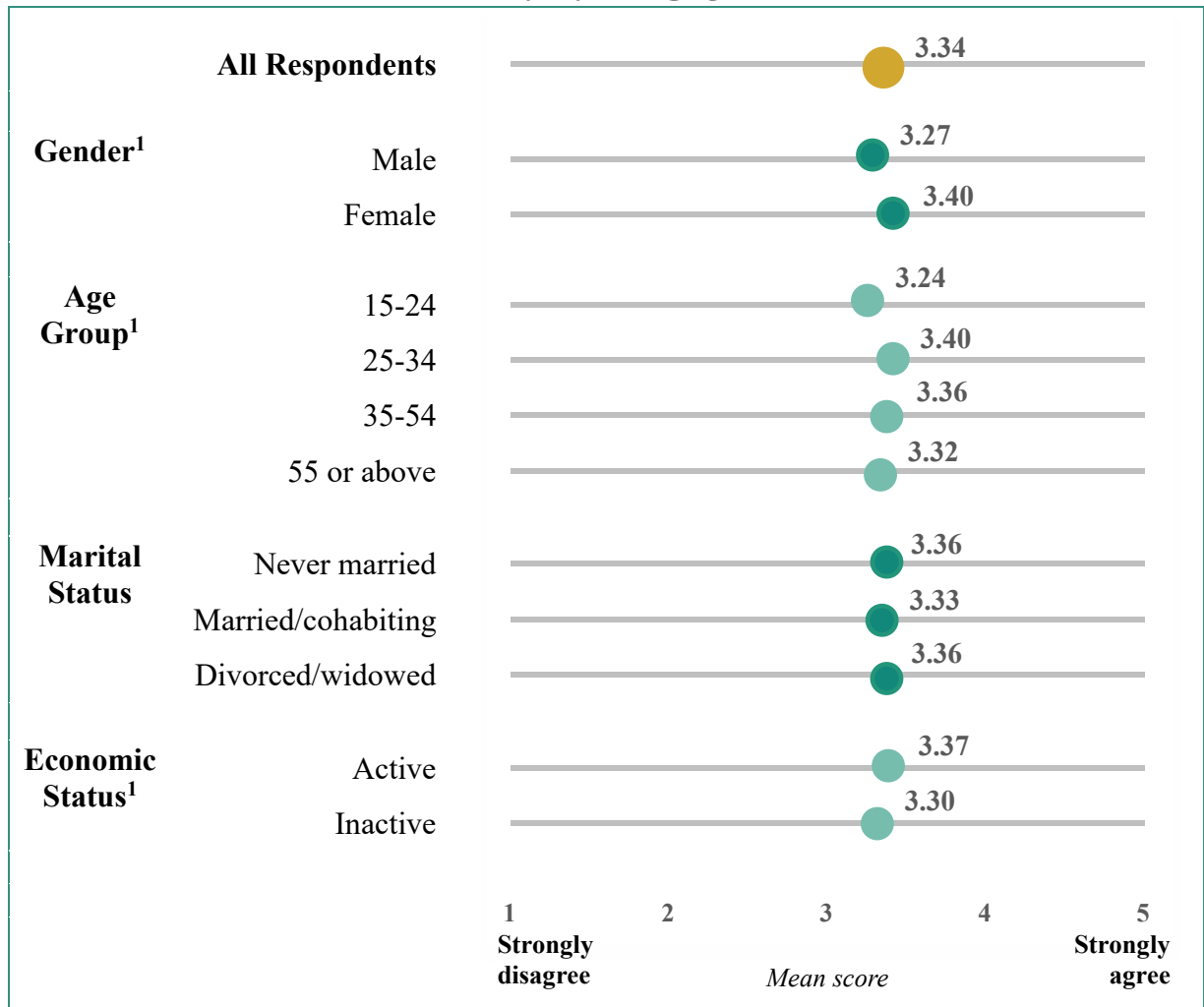


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

65

10.21    The mean score of attitudes toward divorce fluctuated between 3.20 and 3.34 across the years, and the score reached its highest (3.34) in 2021.  An increasing trend was observed from 2011 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p < .05$).  Analysed by demographics, though significant differences were found in some mean scores across the years, no particular trend was observed.

Chart 10.12    Attitudes toward divorce across years
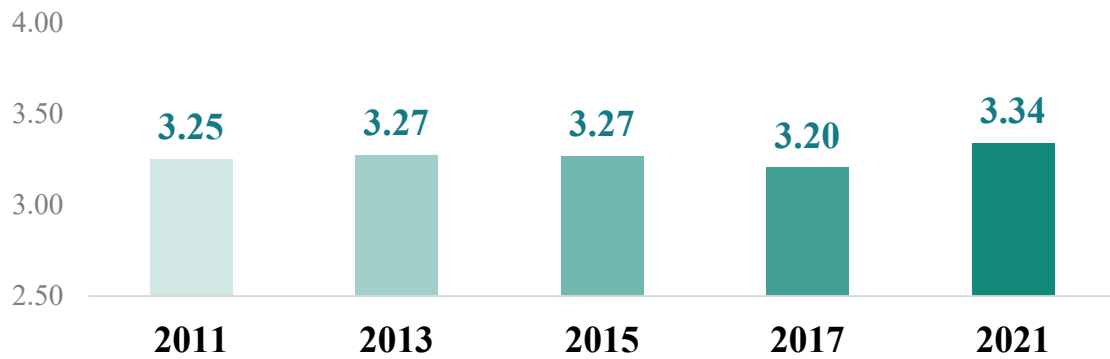


| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 3.23 | 3.24 | 3.29 | 3.17 | 3.27 | <.001 |
| | Female | 3.27 | 3.30 | 3.25 | 3.23 | 3.40 | <.001 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | 3.23 | 3.11 | 3.20 | 3.18 | 3.24 | .110 |
| | 25-34 | 3.27 | 3.28 | 3.27 | 3.19 | 3.40 | .001 |
| | 35-54 | 3.28 | 3.36 | 3.31 | 3.23 | 3.36 | <.001 |
| | 55 or above | 3.21 | 3.22 | 3.24 | 3.19 | 3.32 | <.001 |
| Marital status | Never married | 3.29 | 3.21 | 3.29 | 3.20 | 3.36 | <.001 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 3.21 | 3.29 | 3.23 | 3.19 | 3.33 | <.001 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed | 3.32 | 3.33 | 3.34 | 3.27 | 3.36 | .109 |
| Economic status | Economically active | 3.26 | 3.29 | 3.31 | 3.24 | 3.37 | <.001 |
| | Economically inactive | 3.24 | 3.25 | 3.23 | 3.17 | 3.30 | <.001 |

Note 1 GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents.

## Views Collected from In-depth Discussions

### Anticipated Future Family Structure

10.22 The results of the Questionnaire Survey show that the family structure in Hong Kong today is mainly composed of nuclear families. 18 participants aged 15 to 29 participated in the focus group discussions to express their views on their anticipated future ideal family structure and living patterns.

10.23 Most of the participants indicated that the ideal is to live in a family structure consisting of a husband and a wife. If there are children in the future, they will live in a family structure consisting of a husband, a wife, and children. Most of the participants indicated that they did not wish to live with their own or their partner's parents. The main factors to consider were the economic situation, the relationship between the husband and wife, and in-law conflicts.

10.24 Taking the economic situation as an example, most of the participants commented that the property prices in Hong Kong were too expensive and that it was difficult to cope with the property prices of larger flats. In addition, because of the small unit space, if there was only a couple and children to accommodate, each person could have a more comfortable living space and their own private space, which could avoid conflicts caused by a lack of space. Hence, in general, people would prefer living with their spouse/partner and their children, not with their parents.

10.25 In terms of getting along with each other, the participants shared that it took time to accommodate lifestyles when a couple started to live together. If one chose to live with parents-in-law, it would be more difficult to adapt or more conflicts would occur.

10.26 The participants expressed that parental interference in their children's lives and conflicts between children and parents would be caused by the different views and ideas of the two generations. Living together would always lead to various problems (e.g. problems concerning house decoration, living habits, etc.) which might induce conflicts among family members. Parents might also interfere in the actions or thoughts of their children: for example, urging their married children to have children, handling conflicts between their married children and child(ren)-in-law. Because of the inherent concept of age superiority in East Asian society, even if there were conflicts between parents and their children, the children would not be allowed to point out the mistakes of their parents. In addition, living with parents reduces an individual's life enjoyment with their spouse/partner. It is believed that parents and children should have their own way of life and should not choose to live together after the latter have grown up.

10.27 On the other hand, some participants aged 19 to 29 suggested that they wanted their parents to live nearby as they could look after each other and it would be much easier to visit their parents. Furthermore, it would be more convenient to seek help from parents in taking care of their children.

**Youth 3**

If I live with my parents and they find out about problems between me and my spouse/partner, they will interfere or care about me. It would not feel good to me if they witnessed me having conflicts or not getting along very well with my spouse/partner. They should have their own life, as should my spouse/partner and I.
If my spouse/partner wants to have children in the future, I shall choose to live with my children, but I shall not let my children live with my parents.

I may choose to live with my husband and pets. I do not want to live with my parents because my partner and I need time to get used to each other. However, I do not want my partner to compromise with my parents. It is a little problematic, and I don't want to compromise with my parents-in-law. After all, there must be arguments between the two generations due to different points of view.
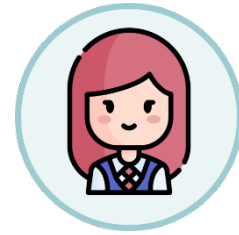
**Youth 8**

**Youth 12**

I wish to have children. It seems to be a much happier and complete life to live as a couple with children. As for my parents, I wish that they can live nearby so that we can take care of each other and I can visit them when I have time. It is quite difficult in Hong Kong to find a place to live with many people. And I would like to have my private space.

I agree that it would be good to have my parents living nearby. I am already married, and both of us need to work. When my wife wants to have children, my parents can take care of them. Besides, when both of us have to work and do not have time for daily living matters, it will be helpful if my parents lived nearby.

**Youth 11**

*Attitudes toward Singlehood*

10.28    Most of the participants aged 15 to 29 stated that they accepted being single and did not have any plans to get married or to cohabit with the intention of getting married.  They believed that marriage was a personal choice or just a ceremony.  Some participants stressed that apart from the legal benefits of getting married, marriage was unnecessary.

10.29    In addition, some participants stated that they accepted having children without getting married.  Nowadays, we are living in an open-minded society where people might not discriminate against unmarried pregnant women as long as the parents can afford the expenses and take care of the children.  However, some participants commented that if a woman gives birth before marriage, more care should be provided by family members to prevent emotional problems.
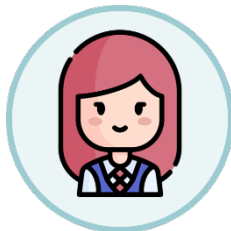
> I can accept that people have children without marriage as society is more open-minded and there are fewer boundaries nowadays. I believe that this situation will not cause discrimination anymore, and I don't want my freedom to be limited by ceremonies and documents.

**Youth 8**

> Not getting married and being single is common and acceptable in society nowadays, as is having children but not intending to marry. This is because the world has become less traditional and gender equality has improved a lot. Therefore, most people can accept singlehood.

**Youth 11**

*Attitudes toward Cohabitation*

10.30    Most of the participants accepted "cohabitation before marriage". Cohabitation allows a couple to understand each other (e.g. living habits, daily interactions, and value judgements), strengthen their joint ability to solve problems, and reinforce their relationship before making a decision on marriage, which could instil more confidence in their decision to get married. If a cohabiting couple finds that they are not suitable for each other, they can choose to break up without going through legal issues.

10.31    Regarding attitudes toward cohabitation without marriage and marriage being an essential path in one's life, some participants believed that they would remain single if they could not find their true love. They agreed that singlehood could be awesome, sometimes more comfortable, but without the burden of a family. Staying single is common nowadays.

10.32    Some participants commented that teenagers or new generations are more open-minded nowadays, and thus marriage is not necessary for them. Cohabitation is a way to test-drive a relationship before getting married. In addition, for couples, another advantage of not getting married is that it avoids pressure being put on them by their parents such as family responsibilities and giving birth.

> Many lovers choose to cohabit before marriage. Sometimes, couples may realise that they have different lifestyles and habits after getting married. If they try living together first, they can come to understand each other. If they find that they are not suitable for each other, they can break up without going through legal issues.

**Youth 2**

> Cohabitation is acceptable as everyone has different living habits. Couples live together to try to get along with each other, accommodate each other's living habits, strengthen their joint ability to solve problems, and reinforce their relationship, which can instil more confidence in the decision to get married.
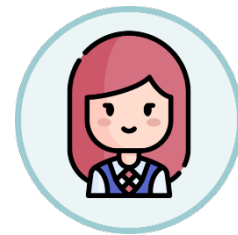
**Youth 6**

> Marriage seems to be a legal document. As long as the relationship of a couple is comfortable, they could choose to cohabitate instead of getting married. In addition, another advantage of not getting married is that it avoids pressure being put on a couple by their parents. If I got married, I would have to bear many family responsibilities and I would get tired of it. Hence, I fully agree with cohabitating instead of getting married.

**Youth 17**

*Attitudes toward Divorce*

10.33　Regarding attitudes toward divorce, most of the participants agreed that "divorce is usually the best solution for a married couple who cannot live together harmoniously, provided that they do not have children".  However, with regard to the statement that "divorce is usually the best solution for a married couple who cannot live together harmoniously even though they already have children", the participants had diverse views.  Some claimed that a married couple could divorce after their children had grown up, while others stated that a married couple could divorce if they were not getting along well and then co-parent after the divorce.

10.34　Some participants who supported the view of divorce after children have grown up believed that care and love from both parents were necessary to the development of children.  If the children were too young, they might not be able to deal with the problems caused by their parents' divorce, such as getting along with divorced parents and coping with their emotions.  Therefore, it would be in the children's best interests for parents to wait until their children have grown up before getting a divorce.  This would give the children a more stable home environment and potentially minimise the stress of working out a custody plan.

10.35　Some participants who supported the view of co-parenting after divorce thought that even though parents get divorced, their roles in the family would not change.  The major changes would be the housing and daily care arrangements.  If parents experience conflicts or physical abuse at home, their children might witness these situations and suffer unpleasant childhood or psychological impacts.  Hence, co-parenting after divorce would be the best way to handle things.

10.36　Some participants commented that divorce is very common nowadays.  Two participants were growing up in single-parent families, and they shared that their parents' divorce had adverse impacts on their attitudes toward marriage.  They believed that marriage would not last for a long time.

**Youth 3:** I think parents should not get divorced if they have children. Even if couples do not get along well, they should resolve the problems themselves. After all, children need love and caring. Parents should play their roles in the family while their children are growing up. The situation could be different if the children have already grown up. But if the children are still young, parents should not get divorced.

**Youth 11:** Whether the children are living in healthy and caring conditions is a key factor in the decision of whether to divorce or not. Another factor is the age of the children. If the children are too young, they may not be able to deal with the issues caused by their parents' divorce. For the best interests of the children, it would be better to wait until the children have grown up. This would give the children a more stable home environment and potentially minimise the stress of working out a custody plan.

**Youth 2:** In fact, divorce is all about signing a piece of paper. Even if a married couple chooses to divorce, they can still raise their children together. If the parents experience conflicts or physical abuse at home, their children might witness these situations and suffer unpleasant childhood or psychological impacts.

**Youth 6:** From the perspective of the child, they may prefer their parents to be separated instead of having conflicts at home. Having a place where children are physically, socially, and emotionally secure is imperative for healthy child development.
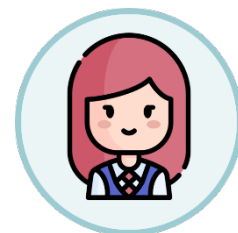
# 11. Theme 2 – Parenthood

## *Overview*

11.1  To explore the factors leading to the decline in births in Hong Kong, questions about the respondents' intention to have children and their desire to have more children were included in the four rounds of the Survey[17].

11.2  Parenting is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood. The Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction (PCDI) subscale of the Chinese version of the Parenting Stress Index–Short Form (PSI-SF) is a self-report screening tool that can be used to assess the extent to which a parent feels that his/her child is not meeting expectations and that interactions with the child are not reinforcing. This is a psychometrically sound and efficient abbreviated version of the PSI-SF suitable for use among Chinese parents. There are three subscales: parental distress, parent-child dysfunctional interactions, and difficult children[18].

11.3  Different parenting styles have different impacts on children. The prevalence of positive parenting, psychological aggression, and corporal punishment were examined with reference to the Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scale (CTSPC) and two positive parenting methods (e.g. explain to my children what to do and express my love to my children through words and/or actions)[19]. In addition, two questions were designed to investigate the level of difficulty and stress experienced in parenting.

11.4  The alphas of the PCDI subscale were larger than 0.7, indicating a satisfactory level of reliability and internal consistency. Table 11.1 presents the dimensions and details of parenthood.

*Table 11.1    Dimensions of Theme 2 - Parenthood*

| Theme | Dimensions | Year | | | | | No. of items | α | Index construct? | Single item? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | | | | |
| 2A | Intention to have children | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |
| 2B | Desire to have more children | - | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | 2 | > 0.7 | - | ☑ |
| 2C | Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction (PCDI) | - | - | - | - | ☑ | 12 | > 0.7 | ☑ | - |
| 2D | Level of difficulty in parenting | - | - | - | - | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |
| 2E | Level of parental stress | - | - | - | - | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |
| 2F | Parenting methods | - | - | - | - | ☑ | 6 | - | - | ☑ |

## *Intention to Have Children*

11.5    The intention to have children was investigated among the non-parent respondents.  They were asked to indicate their intention to have children (including adopted children) using a four-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = not at all likely to 4 = very likely).

11.6    In 2021, among the non-parent respondents, over two thirds (68.6%) indicated that there were either not very likely (36.6%) or not likely at all (32.0%) to have children in the future; about 27.4% expressed they were somewhat likely to have children in the future; and only 3.9% stated that were very likely to have children in the future.

*Table 11.2        Intention to have children in 2021*
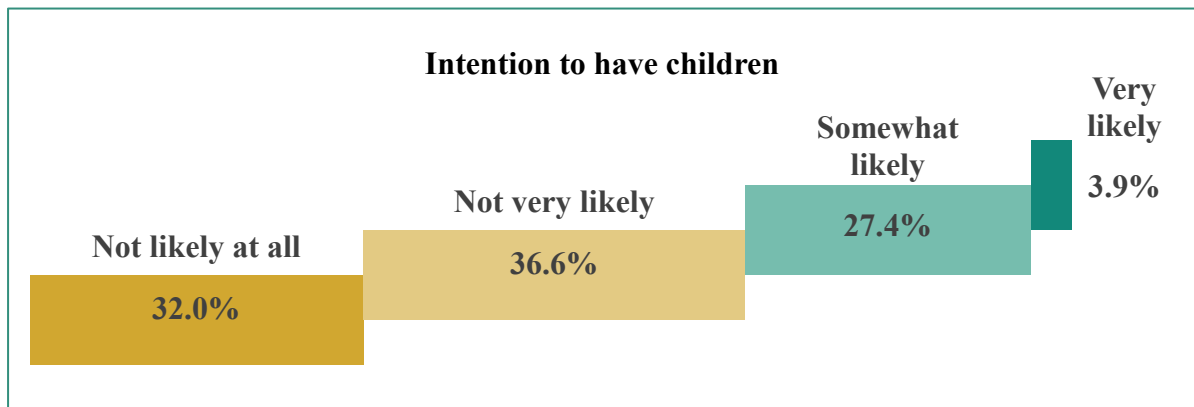
11.7 Details of the proportions of non-parent respondents who intended (very likely or somewhat likely) to have children in the future were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.

11.8 About 31.3% of the non-parent respondents indicated that they were very likely or somewhat likely to have children in the future. Compared with the other demographic groups, a significantly higher proportion of respondents in the following groups indicated that they had the intention of having children in the future: aged 25 to 34 (54.7%), aged 15 to 24 (52.7%), never been married (34.8%), and economically active (34.8%) ($ps < .05$).

11.9 It was understandable that the proportion of respondents intending to have children was relatively low for the older generation aged 55 or above (2.9%) and for those who were divorced/widowed (11.5%). It is worth noting that only one in four of the non-parent respondents in the 35 to 54 age group (24.3%) and the married/cohabiting group (27.2%) had the intention to have children in the future. There was no significant gender difference.

*Table 11.3 Intention to have children by key demographics in 2021*
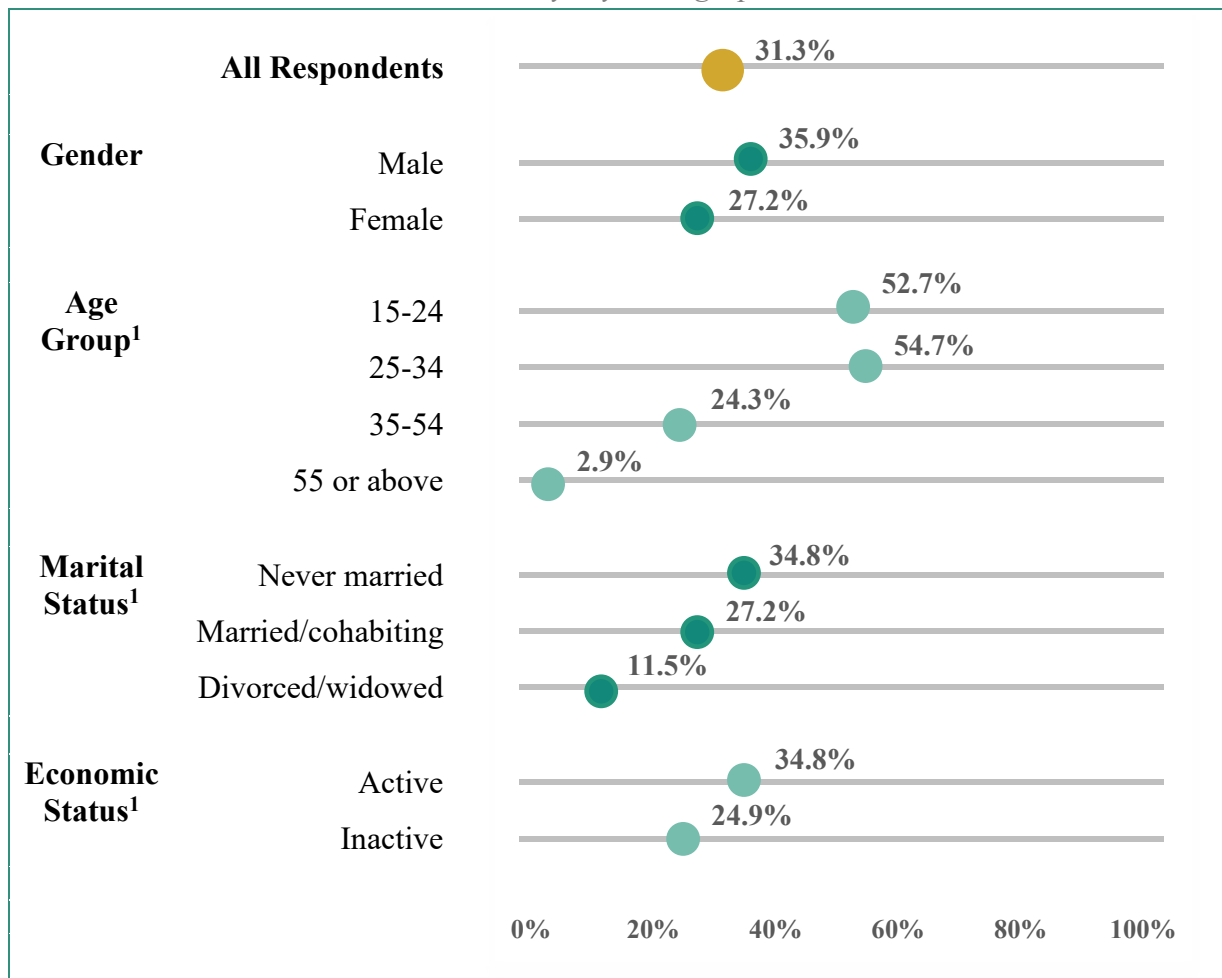


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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11.10 Among the non-parent respondents, the proportion intending to have children decreased significantly from 58.0% in 2011 to 31.3% in 2021. A notable decreasing trend was observed after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p < .05$), suggesting that the intention to have children was weakening.

11.11 Analysed by demographics, monotonic decreasing trends were also observed among the male respondents, those who were aged 35 to 54, those who had never been married, and those who were economically active ($ps < .05$).

*Table 11.4    Intention to have children by key demographics across years*
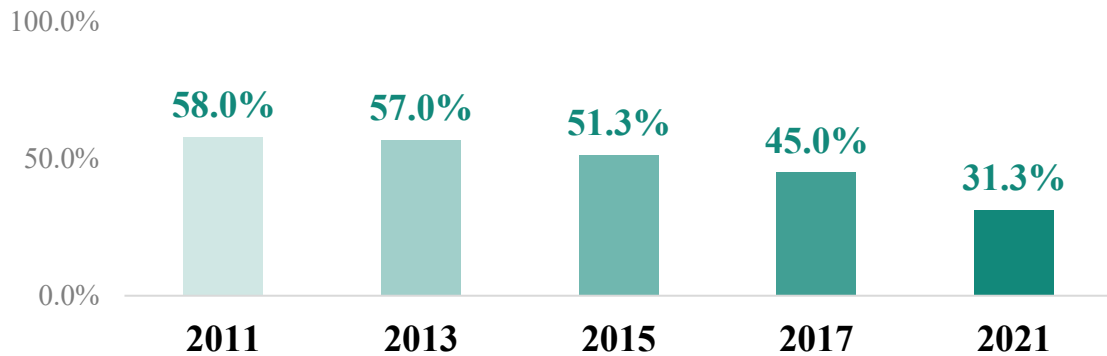


| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male[2] | 0.60 | 0.54 | 0.48 | 0.45 | 0.36 | <.001 |
| | Female | 0.56 | 0.60 | 0.54 | 0.45 | 0.27 | <.001 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | 0.81 | 0.73 | 0.83 | 0.64 | 0.53 | <.001 |
| | 25-34 | 0.71 | 0.72 | 0.58 | 0.61 | 0.55 | <.001 |
| | 35-54[2] | 0.35 | 0.35 | 0.35 | 0.29 | 0.24 | .054 |
| | 55 or above | 0.03 | 0.19 | 0.01 | 0.07 | 0.03 | <.001 |
| Marital status | Never married[2] | 0.63 | 0.60 | 0.56 | 0.47 | 0.35 | <.001 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 0.48 | 0.51 | 0.42 | 0.45 | 0.27 | .025 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed | 0.17 | 0.13 | 0.08 | 0.13 | 0.12 | .822 |
| Economic status | Economically active[2] | 0.59 | 0.54 | 0.48 | 0.44 | 0.35 | <.001 |
| | Economically inactive | 0.57 | 0.61 | 0.55 | 0.46 | 0.25 | <.001 |

Note [1] GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents. Note [2] A monotonic decreasing trend.

## *Desire to Have More Children*

11.12 The desire to have more children among the parent respondents aged 18 to 54 was investigated. They were asked to indicate their intention to have children using three options.

11.13 In 2021, among the parent respondents aged 18 to 54, the majority (83.0%) indicated that they did not want to have more children, 11.7% had not yet decided, and only 5.3% wanted to have more children in the future.

*Table 11.5      Desire to have more children in 2021*
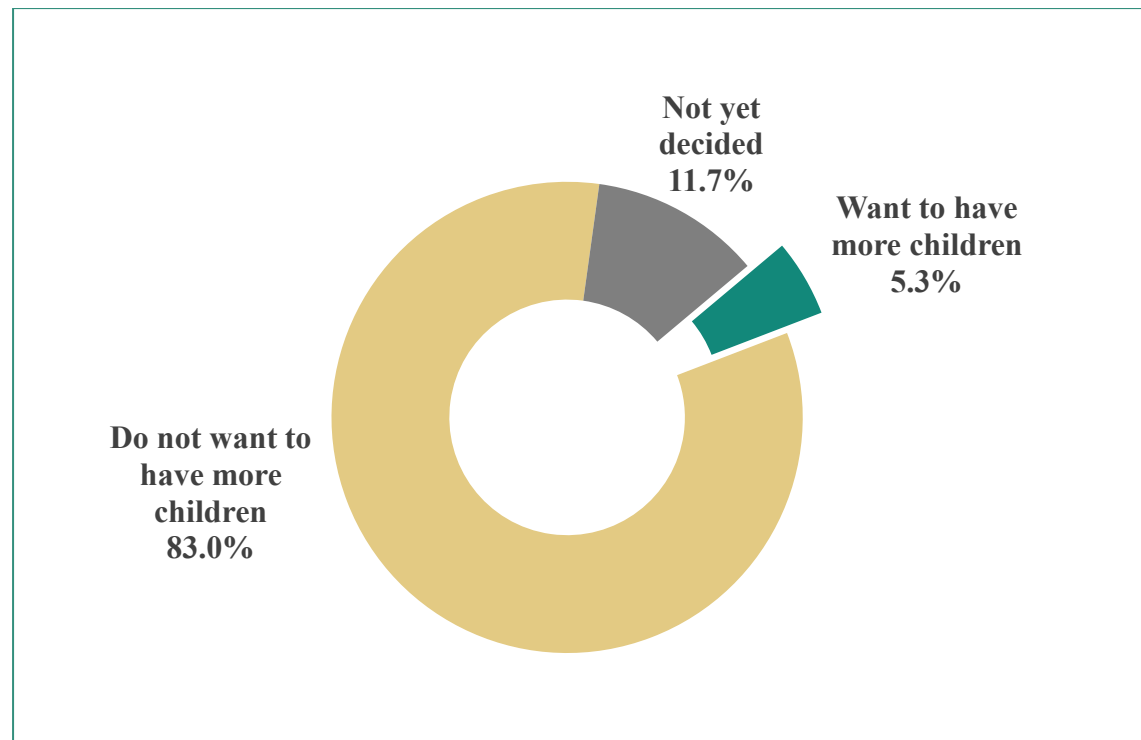
11.14    Details of the proportions of parent respondents aged 18 to 54 who wished to have more children in the future were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.

11.15    Compared with the parent respondents aged 35 to 54 (4.2%) and 15 to 24 (0.0%), a significantly higher proportion of the parent respondents aged 25 to 34 (12.2%) wanted to have more children in the future ($p < .05$).   No statistically significant differences were found between gender, marital status, and economic status groups.

*Table 11.6        Desire to have more children by key demographics in 2021*
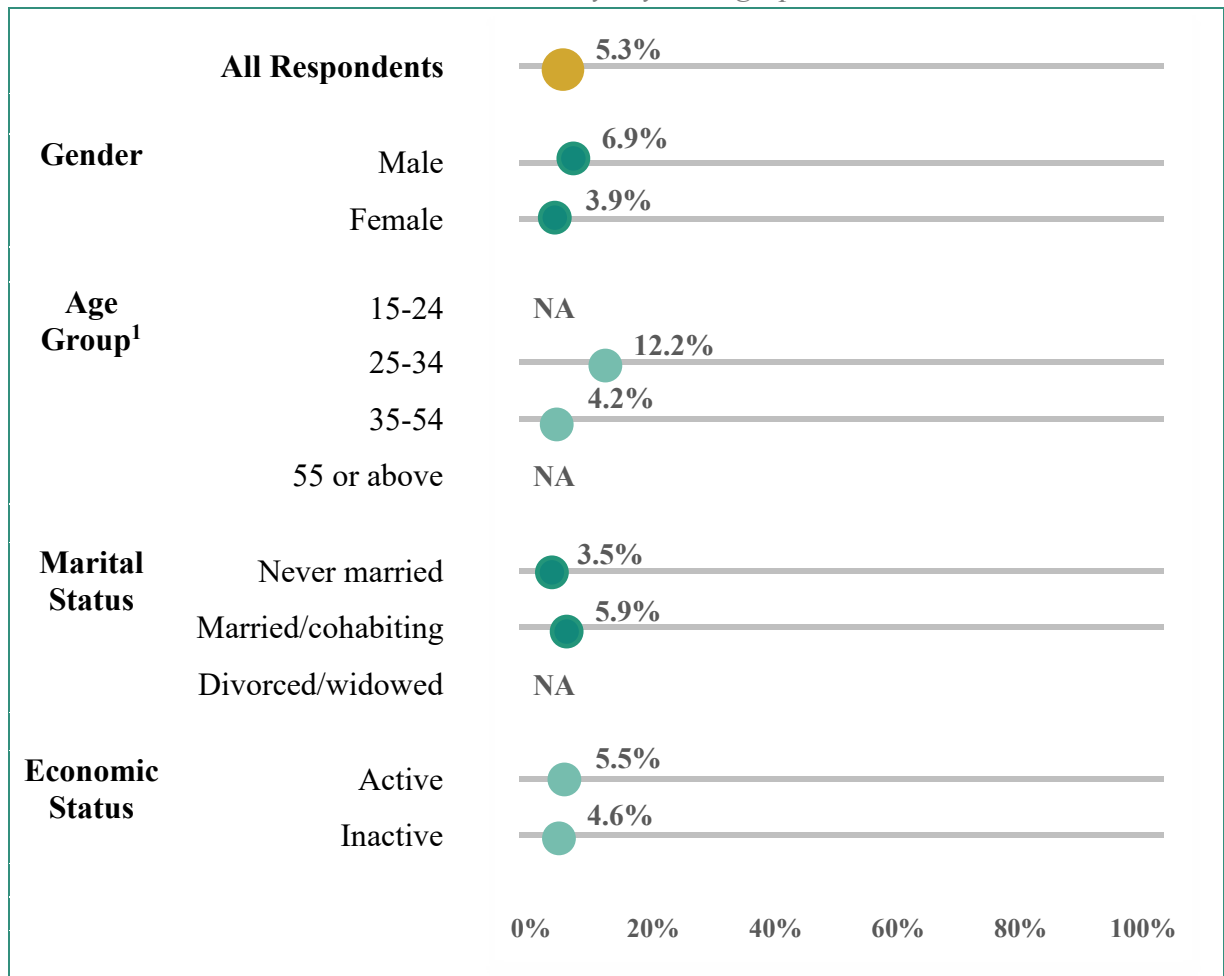


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

11.16 Among the parent respondents aged 18 to 54, the proportion desiring to have more children dropped from 9.1% in 2013 to 5.3% in 2021. Though the proportion decreased gradually, no significant decreasing trend was observed after controlling for the demographics of the respondents.

*Table 11.7     Desire to have more children across years*
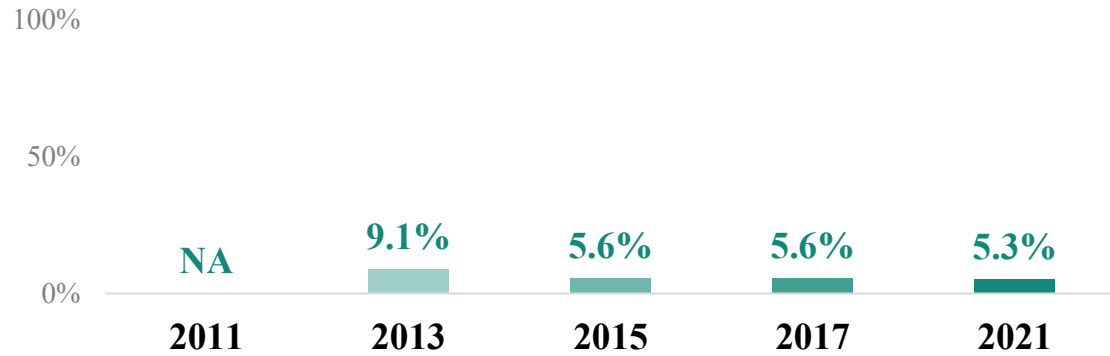


|  |  | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | - | 0.10 | 0.06 | 0.08 | 0.07 | .523 |
|  | Female | - | 0.08 | 0.06 | 0.05 | 0.04 | .135 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | - | 0.82 | - | 0.00 | 0.00 | <.001 |
|  | 25-34 | - | 0.24 | 0.21 | 0.13 | 0.12 | .222 |
|  | 35-54 | - | 0.06 | 0.03 | 0.05 | 0.04 | .317 |
|  | 55 or above | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Marital status | Never married | - | - | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.03 | .689 |
|  | Married/cohabiting | - | 0.10 | 0.06 | 0.06 | 0.06 | .194 |
|  | Divorced/separated/widowed | - | 0.05 | 0.02 | 0.04 | 0.00 | .333 |
| Economic status | Economically active | - | 0.09 | 0.06 | 0.06 | 0.05 | .186 |
|  | Economically inactive | - | 0.09 | 0.05 | 0.05 | 0.05 | .461 |

Note [1] GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents.

## *Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction (P-CDI)*

11.17    The P-CDI subscale of the Chinese version of the PSI-SF was used to examine the extent to which parents feel satisfied with their children and their interactions with them.  Parent respondents with children under the age of 18 were asked to indicate their level of agreement with 11 question items using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) and respond to one question item to describe their feelings about themselves as parents using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = I am the best parent to 5 = I am not suitable to be a parent).

11.18    Among the parent respondents with children under the age of 18, about two thirds (65.4%) experienced typical stress such as the proper bonding and daily interactions with their children.  One in ten (10.3%) experienced high stress in their parent-child interactions including feelings of disappointment and rejection by the child.  About one quarter (24.3%) experienced clinically significant levels of stress that needed additional follow-up in their parent-child interactions including feelings of disappointment, rejection, or alienation by/from the child, or a lack of proper bonding with their children.

*Table 11.8      Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction (P-CDI) in 2021*
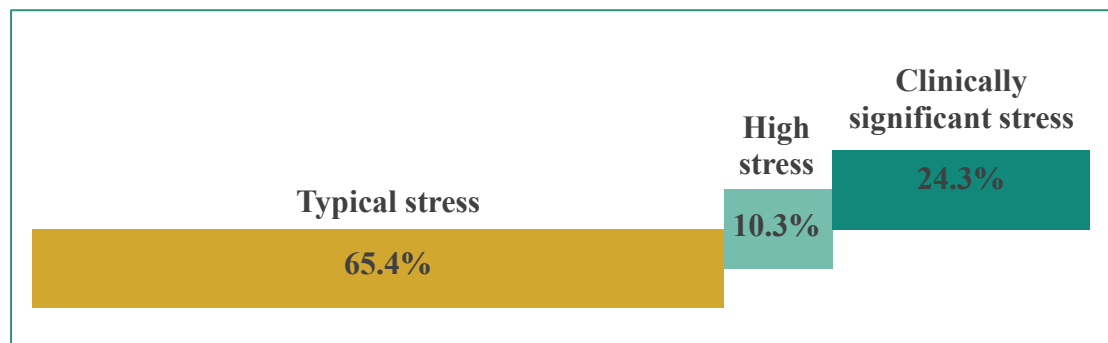
11.19  A P-CDI index was compiled.  A higher score indicated a parent's feelings of disappointment, rejection, or alienation by/from their child or a lack of proper bonding with their child.

11.20  The mean score of P-CDI was 28.54 out of 60.  Compared with the other demographic groups, the parent respondents with children under the age of 18 in the following groups indicated poorer parent-child interaction: aged 55 or above (32.20), divorced/widowed (32.86), and economically inactive (29.83) (*ps* < .05).  There was no significant gender difference.

*Table 11.9     Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction (P-CDI) by key demographics in 2021*

| | | Mean score |
|---|---|---|
| | **All Respondents** | 28.54 |
| **Gender** | Male | 28.59 |
| | Female | 28.49 |
| **Age Group[1]** | 15-24 | NA |
| | 25-34 | 26.89 |
| | 35-54 | 28.55 |
| | 55 or above | 32.20 |
| **Marital Status[1]** | Never married | NA |
| | Married/cohabiting | 28.23 |
| | Divorced/widowed | 32.86 |
| **Economic Status[1]** | Active | 28.17 |
| | Inactive | 29.83 |
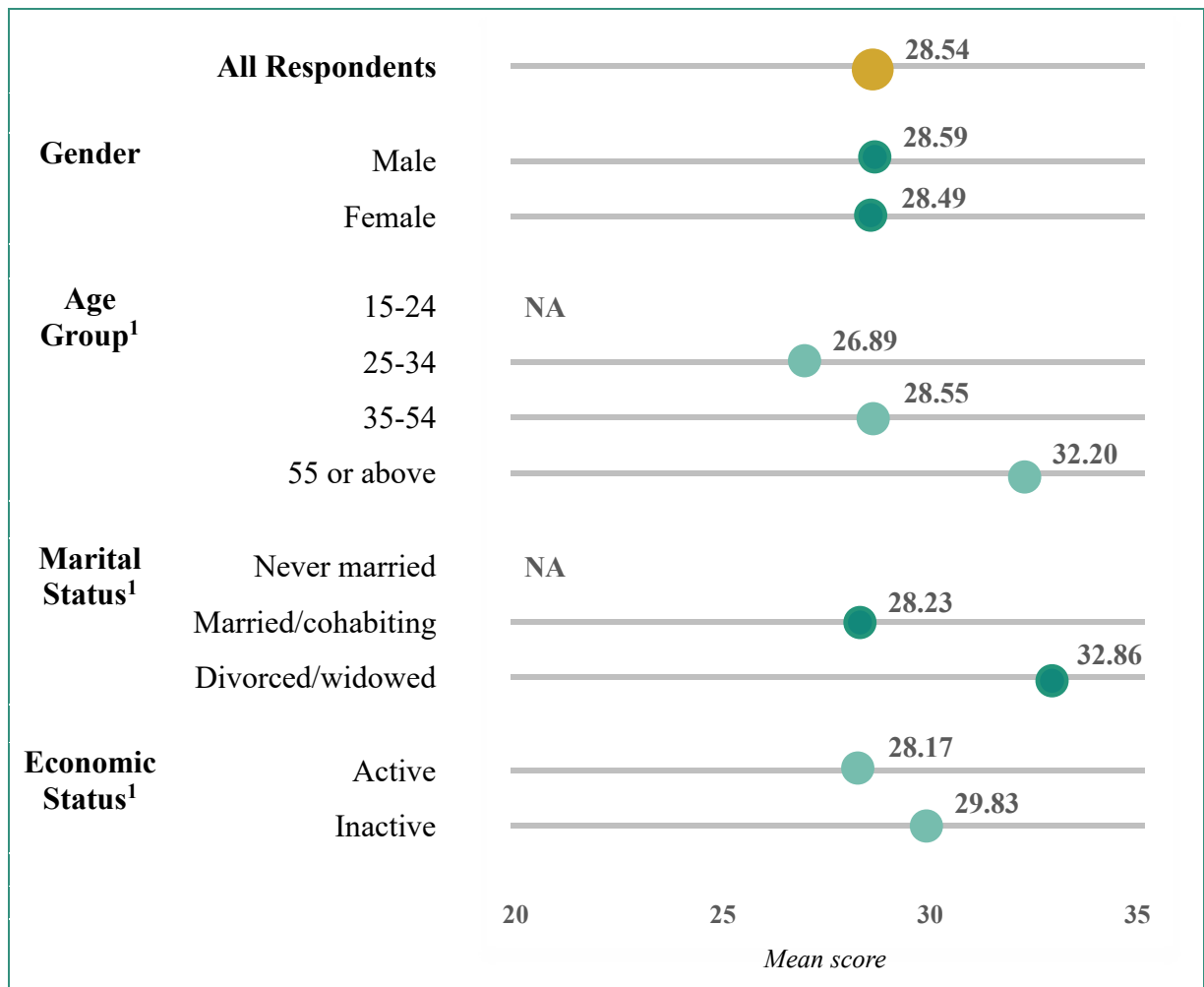
[Note 1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

## Level of Difficulty in Parenting

11.21　Parent respondents with children under the age of 18 were asked to rate level of difficulty in parenting on a four-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = very difficult to 4 = not difficult at all).  A higher score indicated a lower level of difficulty in parenting.

11.22　In 2021, nearly two thirds (66.7%) of the parent respondents with children under the age of 18 shared that they found parenting somewhat difficult (57.2%) or very difficult (9.5%).  About 29.4% expressed that parenting was not very difficult.  Only 3.8% did not encounter any difficulty in parenting.

*Table 11.10　　Level of difficulty in parenting in 2021*
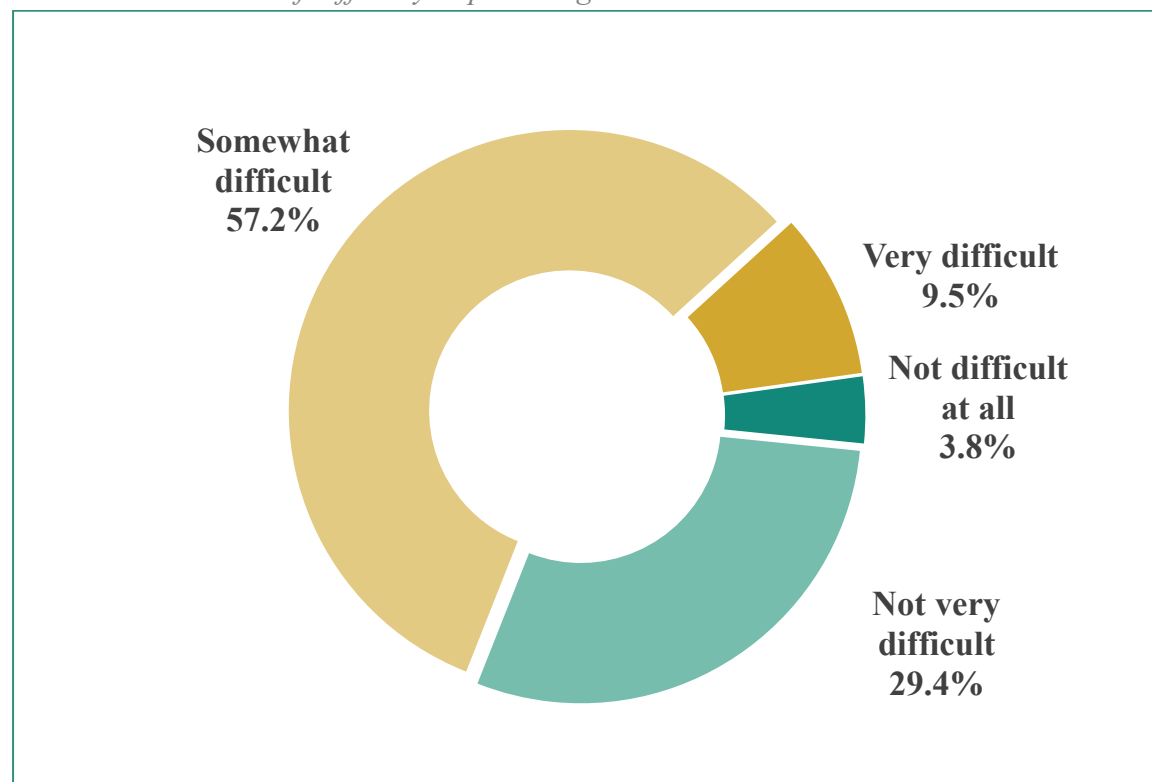
11.23   An index of level of difficulty in parenting was compiled.  A higher score indicated a lower level of difficulty in parenting.

11.24   The mean score of level of difficulty in parenting was 2.28 out of 4.  Among the parent respondents with children under the age of 18, those who were divorced/widowed (1.63) indicated a higher level of difficulty in parenting than those who were married/cohabiting (2.32) ($p < .05$). No statistically significant differences were found between gender, age, and economic status groups.

*Table 11.11     Level of difficulty in parenting by key demographics in 2021*
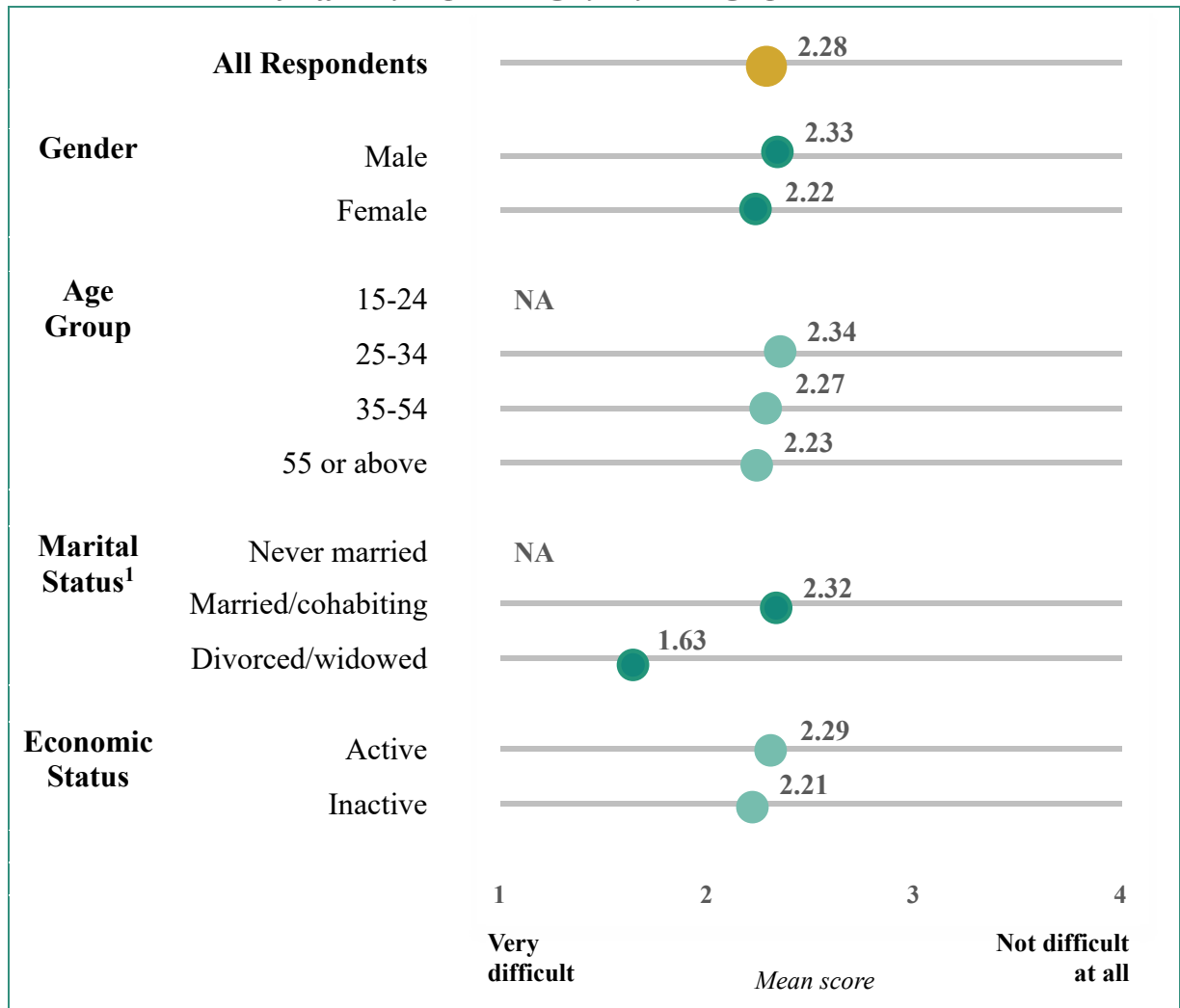


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

## Level of Parental Stress

11.25  Respondents with children under the age of 18 were asked to rate level of parental stress using a four-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = very stressful to 4 = not stressful at all).  A higher score indicated a lower level of parental stress.

11.26  In 2021, over two thirds (69.9%) of the parent respondents with children under the age of 18 shared that they found parenting somewhat stressful (60.1%) or very stressful (9.8%).  About 27.2% expressed that they did not find parenting very stressful.  Only 2.9% stated that they did not find parenting stressful at all.

*Table 11.12      Level of parental stress in 2021*



Somewhat stressful 60.1%

Very stressful 9.8%

Not stressful at all 2.9%

Not very stressful 27.2%
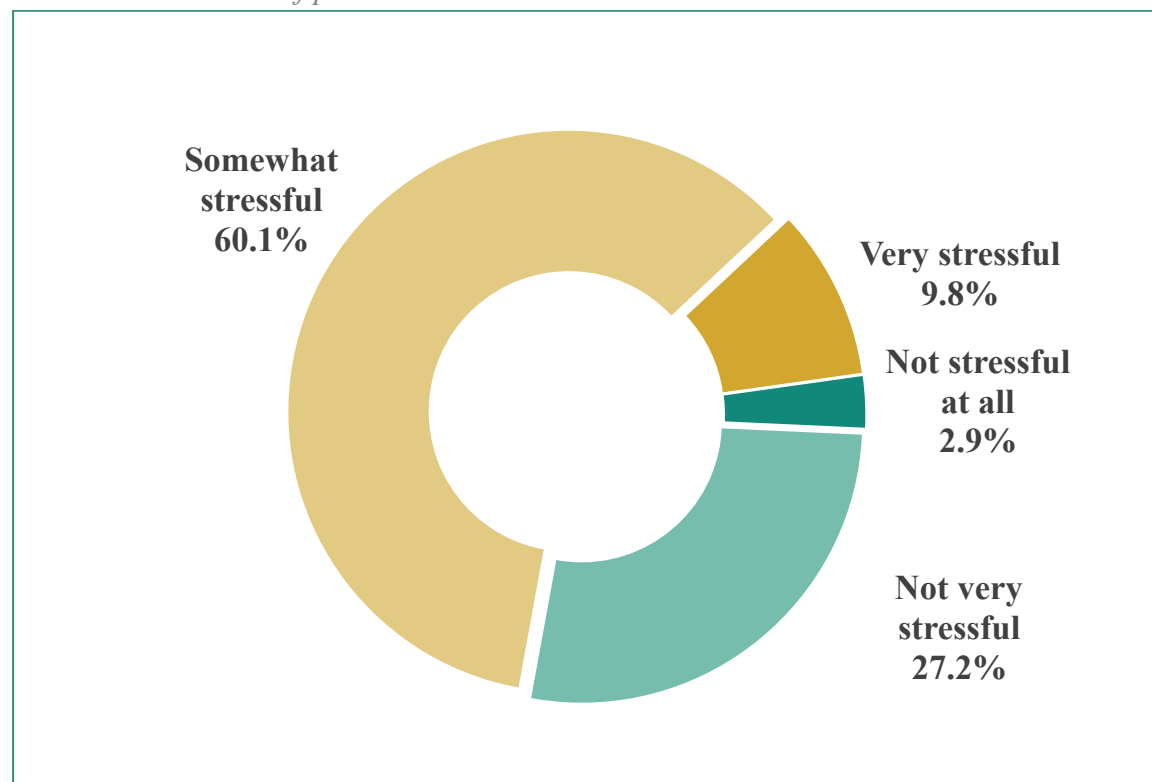
11.27 An index of level of parental stress was compiled. A higher score indicated a lower level of parental stress.

11.28 The mean score of level of parental stress was 2.23 out of 4. Among the parent respondents with children under the age of 18, those who were divorced/widowed (1.80) indicated a higher level of parental stress than those who were married/cohabiting (2.26) ($p < .05$). No statistically significant differences were found between gender, age, and economic status groups.

*Table 11.13    Level of parental stress by key demographics in 2021*
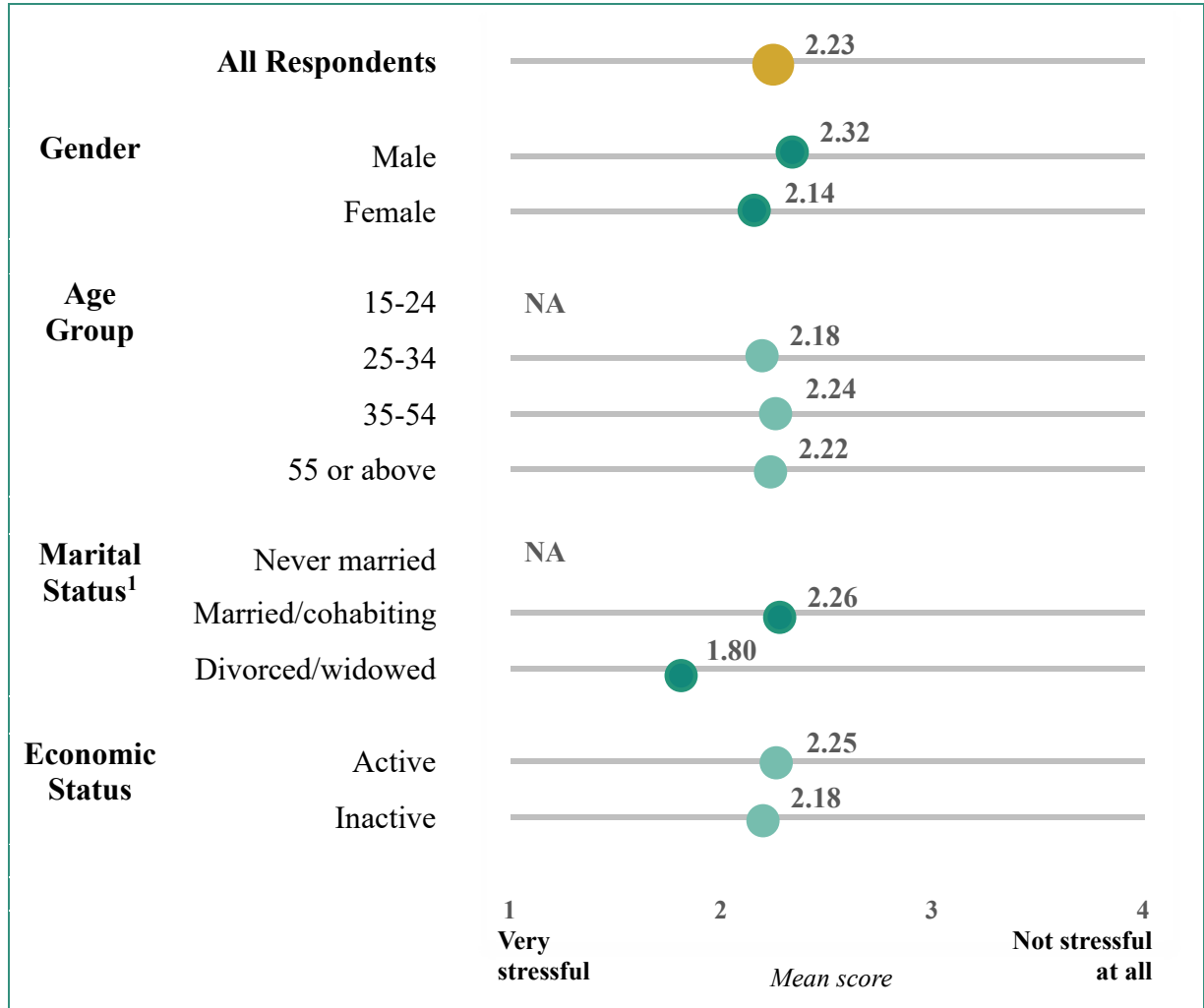


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

## *Parenting Methods*

11.29 Parent respondents with children under the age of 18 were asked whether they and their spouse/partner had used the listed six methods to parent their children aged under 18 in the past year. The three positive parenting methods were explaining to the child what to do, expressing love to the child through words and/or actions, and asking the child to step out for a while or go back to his/her room. Psychological aggression was measured by whether the parents had scolded or yelled at their child. Corporal punishment included spanking the child's bottom with the hand or hitting the child's hands or feet.

11.30 In 2021, the great majority of the respondents and their spouses/partners reported that they had adopted positive parenting methods to teach their children aged under 18 in the past year.

11.31 On the other hand, over half of the respondents (55.8%) and their spouses/partners (54.0%) indicated that they had scolded or yelled at their children. About one quarter of the respondents (26.6%) and their spouses/partners (22.1%) used corporal punishment to discipline their children.

*Chart 11.14    Parenting methods in 2021*
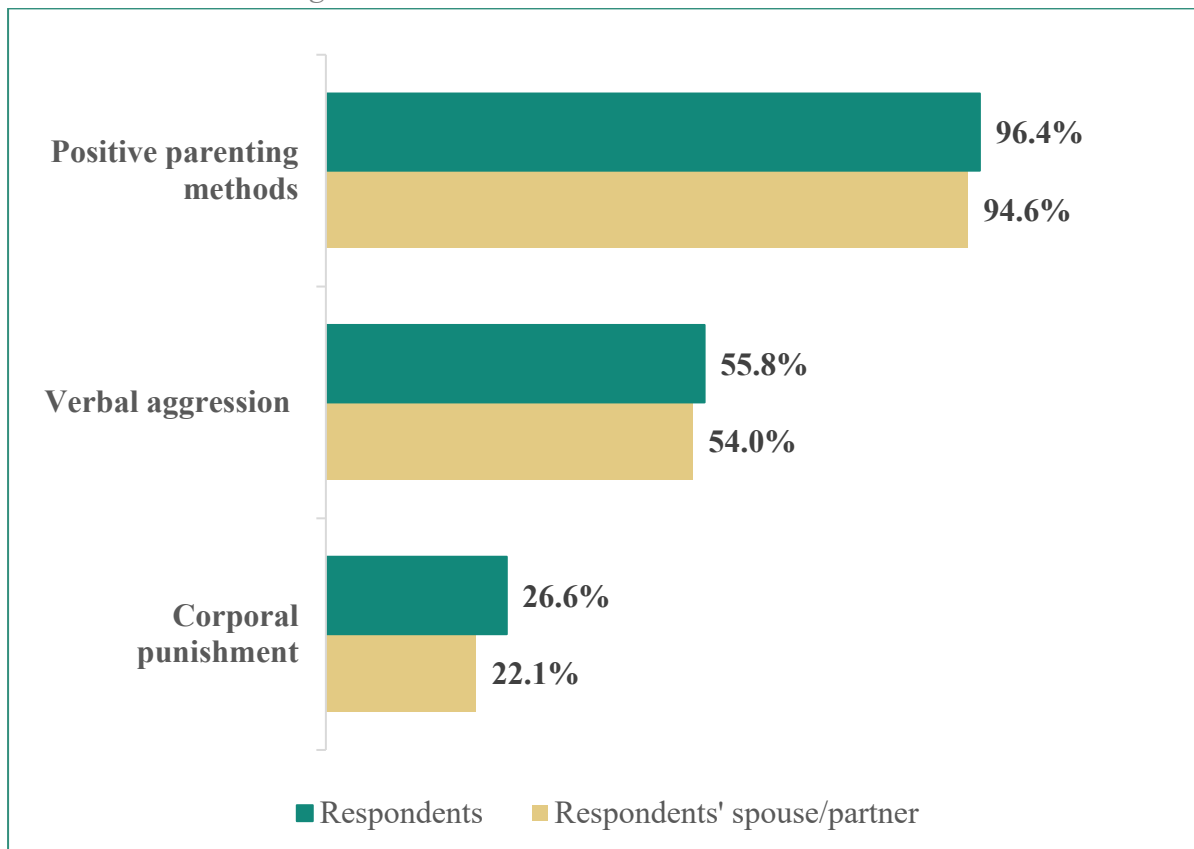
11.32    Details of the proportions of parent respondents with children under the age of 18 who had scolded or yelled at their children were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.

11.33    Compared with the male respondents (48.6%), a significantly higher proportion of the female respondents (63.0%) indicated that they had scolded or yelled at their children to discipline them in the past year ($p < .05$). No statistically significant differences were found between age, marital status, and economic status groups.

*Chart 11.15    Verbal aggression by respondents by key demographics in 2021*
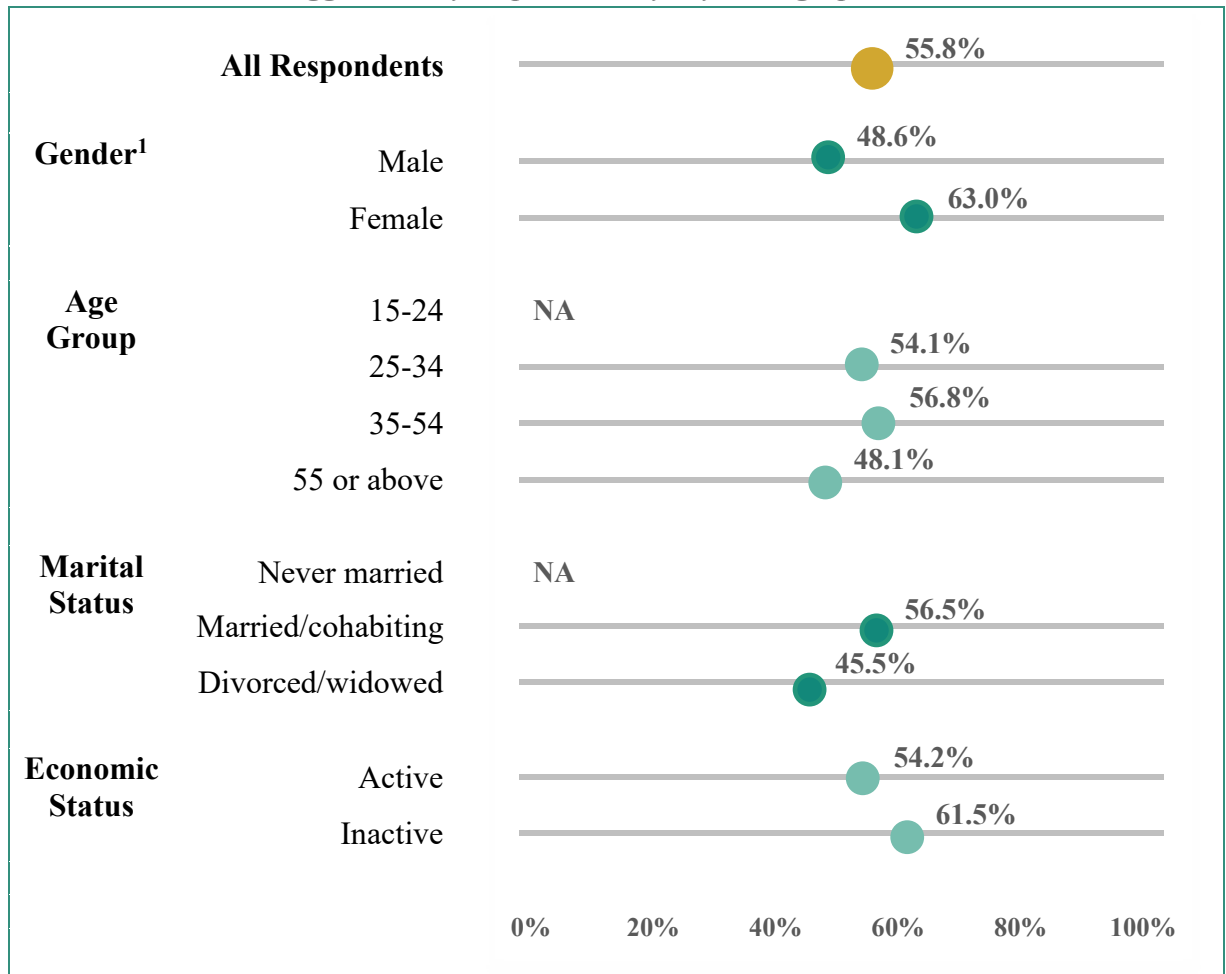


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

11.34    Details of the proportions of parent respondents with children under the age of 18 who used corporal punishment to discipline their children were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.  No statistically significant differences were found between gender, age, marital status, and economic status groups.

*Chart 11.16    Corporal punishment by respondents by key demographics in 2021*
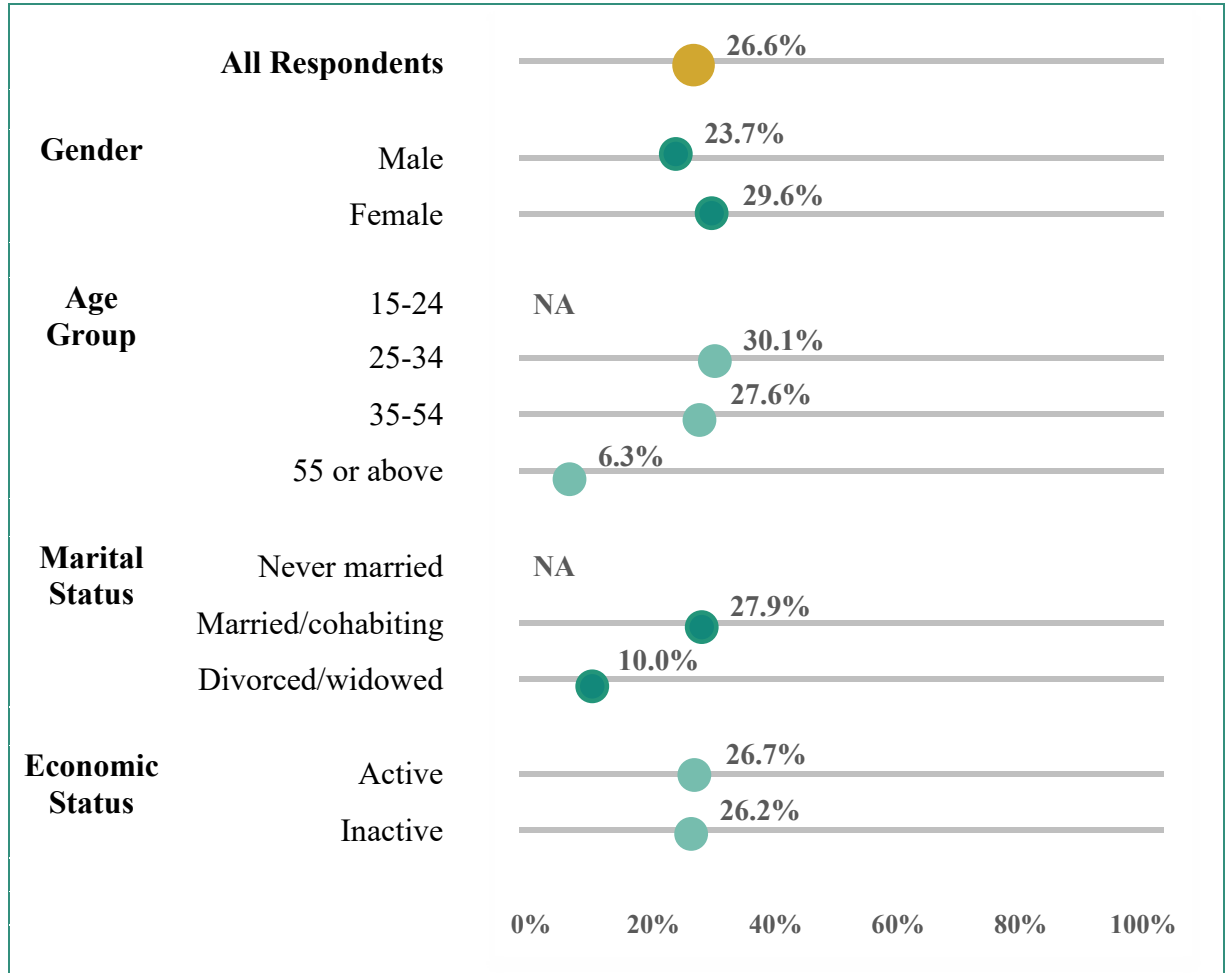
## *Views Collected from In-depth Discussions*

### *Parenthood*

11.35 Focus group discussions were conducted with 18 young participants aged 15 to 29, 23 parents and eight grandparents to understand through in-depth discussions the intention and willingness to have children among the young people, to explore parenting style, childcare approaches, and the difficulties encountered, and to ascertain parental stress and attitudes toward inter-generational parenting.

### *Motivation and Reasons for Having Children*

11.36 All participants aged 15 to 29 agreed that "having children was not a necessary stage of life". Their reasons included that having children might affect their relationship with their partner, the high financial burden of having children in Hong Kong, and the lack of a sense of responsibility needed to raise a child. Moreover, some female participants claimed that having children not only placed a great burden on them physically and emotionally but also that their work was affected during pregnancy. They also felt that women could pursue many different goals other than having children in modern society and they should not be forced to give birth and pay such a price.

11.37 The young people aged 15 to 29 had differing views on whether they wanted to have children in the future. In general, male participants expressed a preference to have children and a wish that their children would be there for them when they were getting older. Some further pointed out that as the only son in the family, they were expected to pass on the family name and continue the family lineage.

11.38 The young people who did not intend to have children in the future indicated the high financial burden of having children and a lack of the sense of responsibility needed to take care of and guide children at different stages of their development. Social factors, the educational system, and emigration trends in Hong Kong were also significant factors affecting their intention not to have children.

I believe that giving birth is not a necessary stage of life. Even though kids are adorable, raising children is tough. From a female perspective, a man does not understand the pain a woman has before she gives birth. If I decide work comes first in the future, pregnancy will affect my work. Also, there is a high financial burden of having children in Hong Kong. I won't give birth unless I am capable financially, emotionally, and spiritually to raise children.

**Youth 8**

I believe that giving birth is not a necessary stage of life. A couple can live happily without children, or they can have pets. But I wish to have children in the future as I like children. The factors that affect the birth rate are mainly related to social conditions – Hong Kong society is less stable in recent years, and many people choose to emigrate. There are financial factors as raising children requires high costs.

**Youth 12**

*Desire to Have More Children*

11.39   Most of the parent participants who had two or more children indicated that they did not plan to have more children due to the financial burden, limited living space, pressure on childcaring and parenting, the political environment, and their political stance.

11.40   Some parent participants stated that when their children entered primary schools, they would not plan to have more children due to the wide age range between siblings, and that taking care of a baby was the hardest time for them. Some parent participants had conflicted with their spouses regarding childcare problems and did not want to experience this again.

11.41   Some parents with one child indicated that they would consider having more children as the siblings could take care of each other.  Other parents were considering having more children later as they were worried about the impact of having babies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Approaches and Difficulties in Parenting Style and Childcare*

11.42    Parent participants had different parenting styles.  Some would explain the rationale to the children, some would adopt schooling methods, some would provide rewards when the children managed tasks, and some would not compare school results of their children.  Some parent participants stated that they would scold their children or use corporal punishment to discipline them, but that this was ineffective.  They felt that parents should only talk or discuss calmly with their children as the new generation might not accept authoritative parenting styles.  In addition, some parent participants stressed that their spouses adopted different parenting styles and that they would try to compromise with their spouses.

11.43    Most of the parent participants indicated that they had conflict with their spouses on childcaring and parenting issues.  Some lacked consensus on parenting styles.  Some mothers stated that their mothers-in-law would help take care of their children, and due to different parenting styles they sometimes had conflict with their mothers-in-law and spouses.

**Parent 13**

My children are taken care of by my mother-in-law and the domestic helper. My mother-in-law and I have different parenting styles, but we look after my children by the schedule. However, my mother-in-law spoils my children and we have had conflicts over this. I even argue with my husband about it, but he thinks it doesn't matter and we can teach our children later. I believed that we are supposed to correct the views of our children immediately. I used to have conflicts with my mother-in-law directly but now I have told my husband to handle it, even it didn't work.

*Pressure in Parenting*

11.44    Some parent participants felt that the pressure of being parents was coming from the academic performance of their children, the family financial situation and social issues.  Pressure from children's academic performance included worries about the children's academic results and entrance to primary and secondary school.  Pressure on the family finances included the tuition fees of play groups, extra-curricular activities, and tutorials.  Some parents indicated that their children were not attending tuition classes, and they worried whether this would affect their children's academic results, especially when other children were attending extra tuition classes after school.  Regarding parenting pressure, parents worried that they did not have sufficient time to spend with their children.  In terms of pressure from social issues, parents were worried about the future of Hong Kong.

11.45    Some parent participants would choose to talk with friends and their spouse or partner or would play sport to relieve the pressure of taking care of children.  Some parent participants also mentioned events or activities organised by schools enabling them to meet other parents, share their views, encourage each other, and relieve some of the pressure.

11.46    Most of the parent participants had not sought help from organisations on parenting and child caring problems.  Some parent participants said they would prefer to talk about their children with the school social worker and class teacher.  Some parents indicated that the school's childcare services had greatly reduced the burden on dual career parents before the COVID-19 pandemic; however, many of these organisations did not provide services during the pandemic.

**Parent 5**

Most of my pressure came from my children, then my family financial situation, and finally my children's extra-curricular activities. As our family is not wealthy, my children did not participate in any activities and learnt by themselves. I would rather save money for future uses than having classes that my children are not interested in. I would let my children attend tuition classes when I am not capable to teach them myself.

Most of my pressure came from financial burdens including tuition fees for activities (play group, playhouses), books and toys for children. My children are going to kindergarten soon and I should start prepared for it. And I felt the pressure.

**Parent 10**

## *Attitudes toward Inter-generational Parenting*

11.47   Most of the participants who were grandparents believed that as a grandparent, they had a duty to take care of their grandchildren's needs, to play with them, help with their homework, and provide emotional support.

11.48   Regarding attitudes toward inter-generational parenting, some grandparent participants agreed that grandparents could look after their grandchildren but should not interfere in the parenting methods adopted by their children.  As society was changing there were different parenting styles adopted by the two generations.  Some grandparent participants indicated that many couples were dual-career parents who could not take care of their children, so whether it was suitable or not, grandparents would be required to help take care of their grandchildren.

# 12. Theme 3 – Family Functioning

## *Overview*

12.1    Family functioning comprises two main components: family interaction and parenting.  In the Survey, the 33-item Chinese Family Assessment Instrument (CFAI) and one question on perceived overall family functioning were used to assess family functioning in Hong Kong[20,21].The CFAI has five subscales to assess family functioning: mutuality, communication, conflict and harmony, parental support, and parental control.  The alphas of the five subscales were larger than 0.7, indicating a satisfactory level of reliability and internal consistency.

12.2    In the 2021 Survey, one question was adopted to examine the frequency of conflicts with family members, including spouse/partner, child, parents, and father or mother of spouse/partner.

12.3    Table 12.1 presents the dimensions and details of family functioning.

*Table 12.1        Dimensions of Theme 3 – Family Functioning*

| Theme | Dimensions | Year | | | | | No. of items | α | Index construct? | Single item? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | | | | |
| 3A | Chinese Family Assessment Instrument (CFAI) | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | 33 | > 0.7 | ☑ | - |
| 3B | Perceived overall family functioning | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |
| 3C | Conflicts with family members | - | - | - | - | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |

## *CFAI Mutuality*

12.4    The mutuality subscale of the CFAI assesses mutual support, love, and concern among family members.  It consists of 12 question items ($\alpha$ > .07), including "family members love each other", "family members support each other", "family members tolerate each other", and "good family relationships".  Respondents were asked to assess their family situations on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = does not fit our family to 5 = very much fits our family).  A higher score indicated better mutual support among family members.

12.5    The mean score of mutuality was 3.97 out of 5.  Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents in the following groups reported better mutual understanding among family groups: married/cohabiting (4.10), aged 35 to 54 (4.00), and aged 55 or above (4.00) (*ps* < .05).  On the other hand, respondents who were divorced/widowed (3.77) and those who had never been married (3.79) perceived worse mutual support among family members.  No statistically significant differences were found between gender and economic status groups.

*Chart 12.2     CFAI Mutuality by key demographics in 2021*
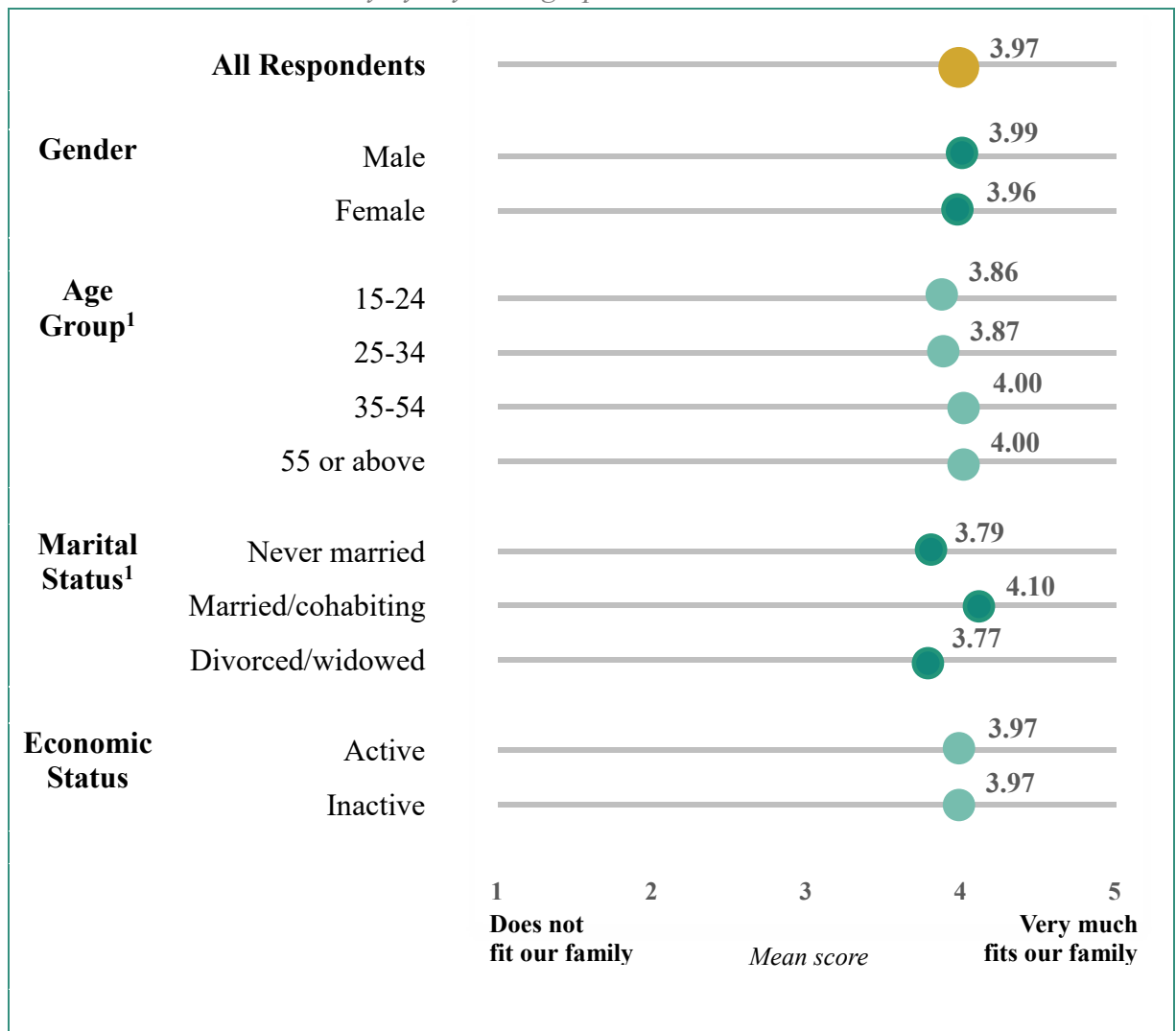
| | | Mean score |
|---|---|---|
| **All Respondents** | | 3.97 |
| **Gender** | Male | 3.99 |
| | Female | 3.96 |
| **Age Group**[1] | 15-24 | 3.86 |
| | 25-34 | 3.87 |
| | 35-54 | 4.00 |
| | 55 or above | 4.00 |
| **Marital Status**[1] | Never married | 3.79 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 4.10 |
| | Divorced/widowed | 3.77 |
| **Economic Status** | Active | 3.97 |
| | Inactive | 3.97 |

1 = Does not fit our family ... Mean score ... 5 = Very much fits our family

Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

95

12.6      The mean score of CFAI mutuality gradually dropped from 4.13 in 2013 to 3.97 in 2021. A decreasing trend was observed from 2013 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p < .05$). Analysed by demographics, monotonic decreasing trends were observed among those aged 15 to 24 and those who had never been married ($ps < .001$).

*Chart 12.3    CFAI Mutuality across years*
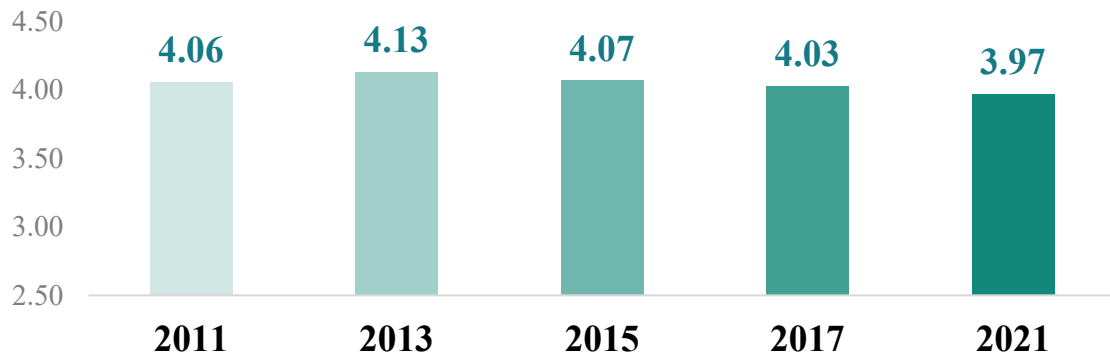


| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 4.03 | 4.10 | 4.05 | 4.00 | 3.99 | .001 |
| | Female | 4.09 | 4.16 | 4.09 | 4.05 | 3.96 | <.001 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24[2] | 4.10 | 4.04 | 3.97 | 3.92 | 3.86 | <.001 |
| | 25-34 | 4.06 | 4.11 | 4.13 | 4.13 | 3.87 | <.001 |
| | 35-54 | 4.08 | 4.17 | 4.12 | 4.08 | 4.00 | <.001 |
| | 55 or above | 4.02 | 4.13 | 4.01 | 3.97 | 4.00 | <.001 |
| Marital status | Never married[2] | 4.01 | 3.99 | 3.96 | 3.95 | 3.79 | <.001 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 4.14 | 4.24 | 4.18 | 4.13 | 4.10 | <.001 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed | 3.84 | 3.99 | 3.89 | 3.85 | 3.77 | .018 |
| Economic status | Economically active | 4.06 | 4.15 | 4.10 | 4.08 | 3.97 | <.001 |
| | Economically inactive | 4.07 | 4.11 | 4.03 | 3.98 | 3.97 | <.001 |

Note 1 GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents. Note 2 A monotonic decreasing trend.

## CFAI Communication

12.7      The communication subscale of the CFAI assesses the frequency and nature of interactions among family members. It consists of nine question items ($\alpha$ > .07), such as "family members enjoy getting together", "family members talk to each other", "there are not many barriers among family members", and "parents share their children's concerns". Respondents were asked to assess their family situations on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = does not fit our family to 5 = very much fits our family). A higher score indicated better communication among family members.

12.8      The mean score of communication was 3.51 out of 5. Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents in the following groups reported better mutual communication among family members: married/cohabiting (3.63), aged 35 to 54 (3.59), and economically active (3.54) (*ps* < .05). On the other hand, respondents who were divorced/widowed (3.30) and those who had never been married (3.35) perceived worse communication among family members. There was no significant gender difference.

*Chart 12.4       CFAI Communication by key demographics in 2021*
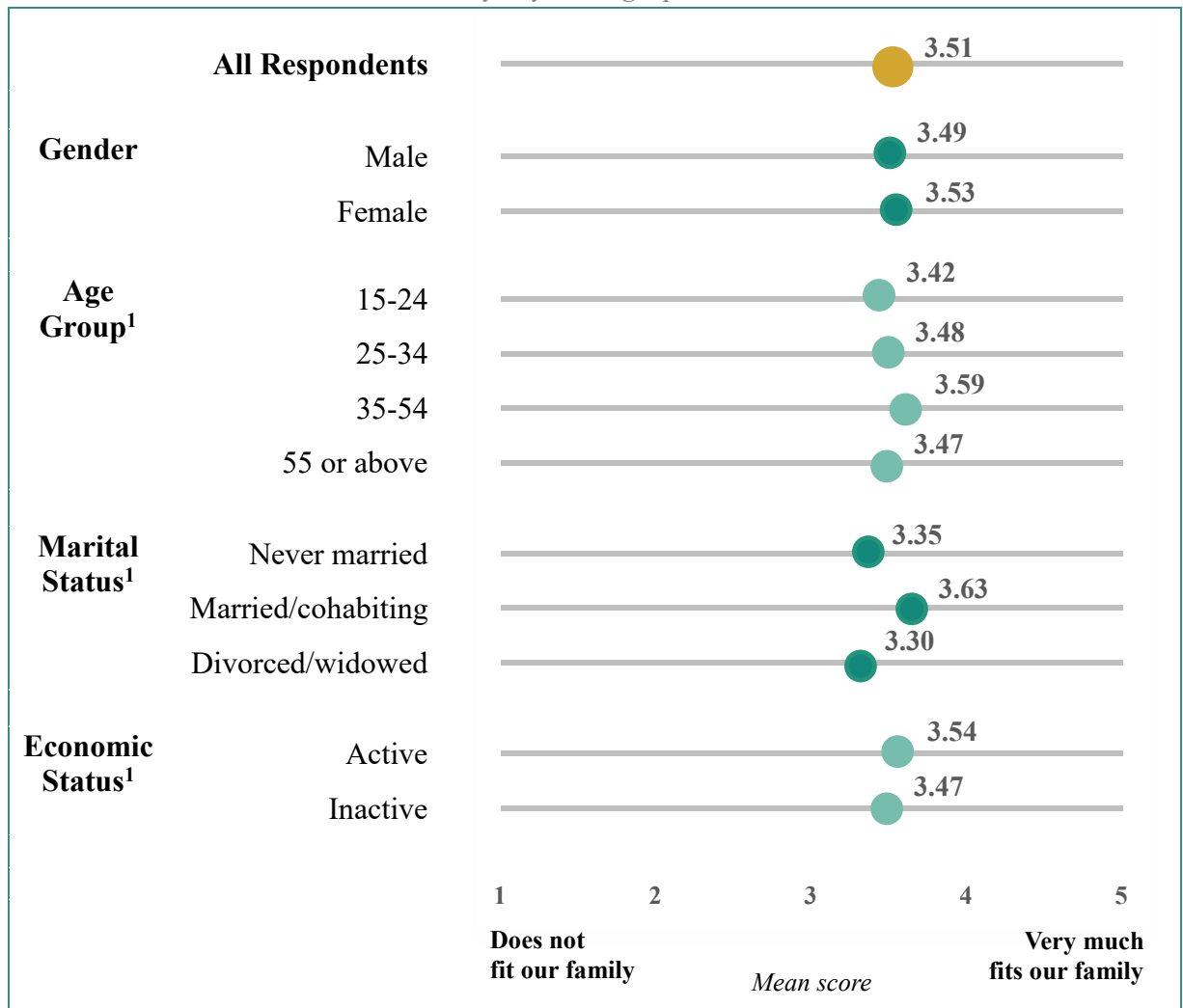


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

97

12.9      The mean score of CFAI communication dropped from 3.75 in 2013 to 3.51 in 2021. A decreasing trend was observed from 2013 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p < .05$). This decreasing trend indicates that communication between family members has been worsening over time. Analysed by demographics, monotonic decreasing trends were observed among those who had never married, and those who were economically inactive ($ps < .001$).

*Chart 12.5      CFAI Communication across years*
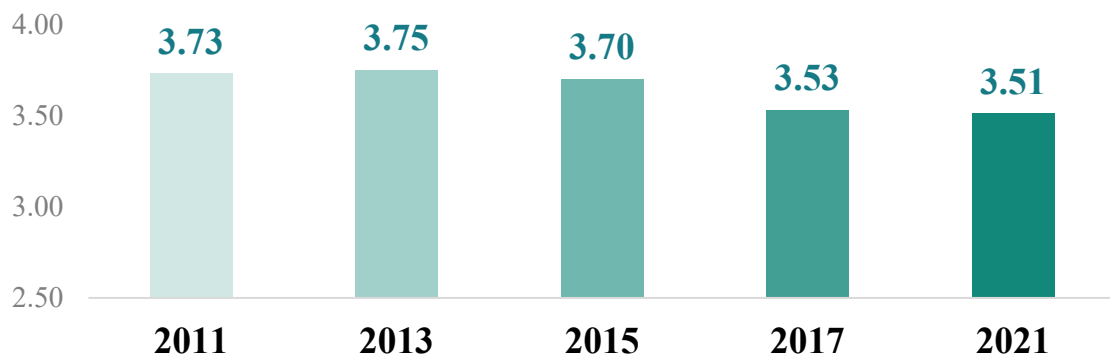


|  |  | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 3.69 | 3.67 | 3.67 | 3.47 | 3.49 | <.001 |
|  | Female | 3.77 | 3.81 | 3.73 | 3.59 | 3.53 | <.001 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | 3.79 | 3.63 | 3.68 | 3.49 | 3.42 | <.001 |
|  | 25-34 | 3.73 | 3.74 | 3.73 | 3.71 | 3.48 | <.001 |
|  | 35-54 | 3.78 | 3.85 | 3.78 | 3.66 | 3.59 | <.001 |
|  | 55 or above | 3.63 | 3.69 | 3.60 | 3.35 | 3.47 | <.001 |
| Marital status | Never married[2] | 3.63 | 3.57 | 3.56 | 3.39 | 3.35 | <.001 |
|  | Married/cohabiting | 3.84 | 3.89 | 3.85 | 3.71 | 3.63 | <.001 |
|  | Divorced/separated/widowed | 3.53 | 3.58 | 3.51 | 3.21 | 3.30 | <.001 |
| Economic status | Economically active | 3.71 | 3.78 | 3.73 | 3.59 | 3.54 | <.001 |
|  | Economically inactive[2] | 3.74 | 3.72 | 3.68 | 3.47 | 3.47 | <.001 |

Note 1 GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents. Note 2 A monotonic decreasing trend.

## CFAI Harmony

12.10    The harmony subscale of the CFAI assesses conflict and harmonious behaviour in the family.  It consists of six question items ($\alpha > .07$), such as "a great deal of friction among family members", "not many quarrels among family members", "lack of harmony among family members", and "parents' poor marital relationship".  Respondents were asked to assess their family situations on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = does not fit our family to 5 = very much fits our family).  Some items were reverse coded.  A higher score indicated more harmonious behaviour in the family.

12.11    The mean score of harmony was 3.91 out of 5.  Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents in the following groups reported more harmonious behaviour in the family: married/cohabiting (4.01), aged 55 or above (4.00), and male (3.94) ($ps < .05$).  On the other hand, respondents who had never been married (3.74) and those aged 15 to 24 (3.70) reported less harmonious behaviour in the family.  No statistically significant difference was found between economic status groups.

Chart 12.6    CFAI Harmony by key demographics in 2021
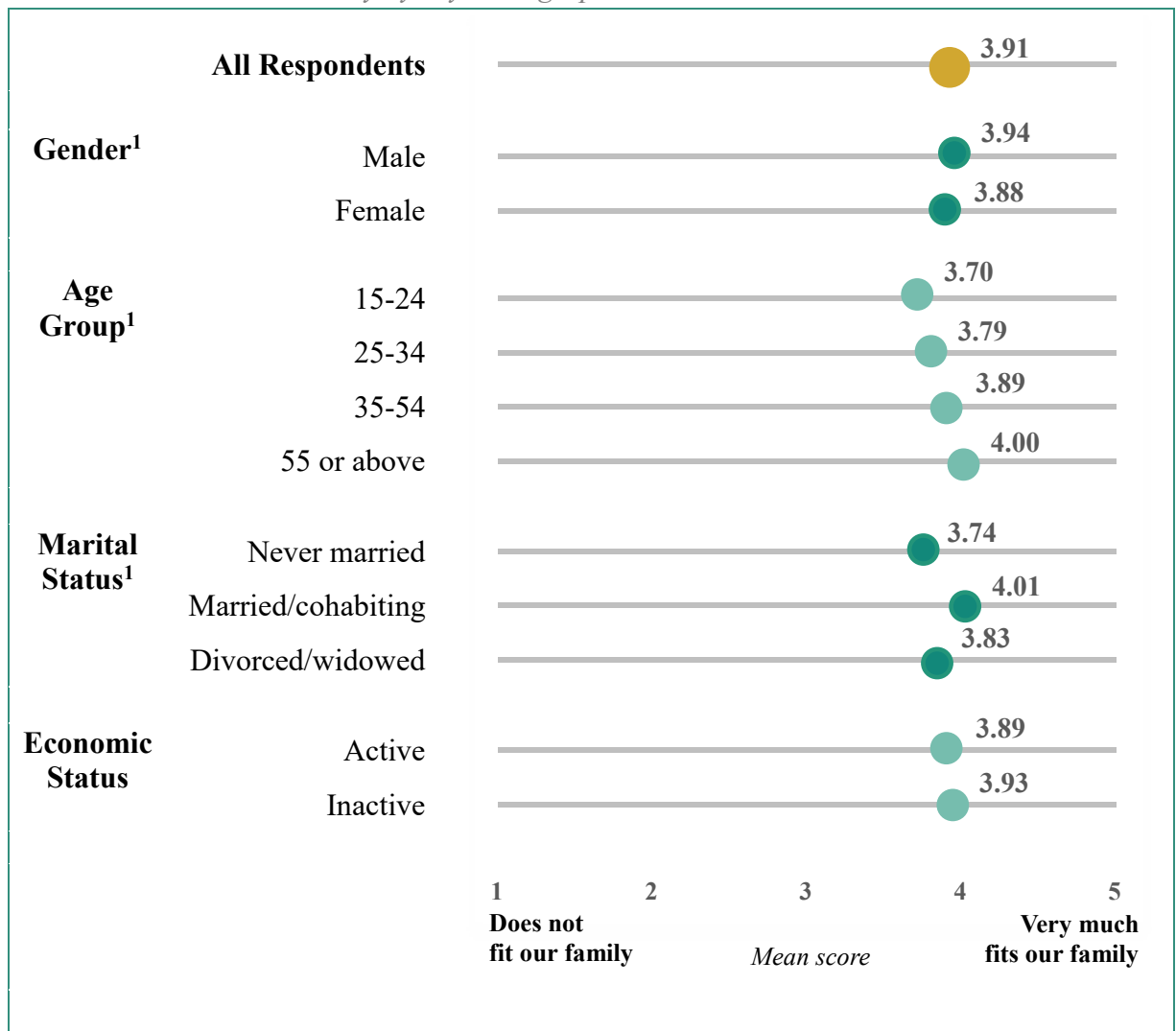
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **All Respondents** | | 3.91 |
| **Gender**[1] | Male | 3.94 |
| | Female | 3.88 |
| **Age Group**[1] | 15-24 | 3.70 |
| | 25-34 | 3.79 |
| | 35-54 | 3.89 |
| | 55 or above | 4.00 |
| **Marital Status**[1] | Never married | 3.74 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 4.01 |
| | Divorced/widowed | 3.83 |
| **Economic Status** | Active | 3.89 |
| | Inactive | 3.93 |

1  Does not fit our family
2
3  *Mean score*
4
5  Very much fits our family

Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

99

12.12 The mean score of CFAI harmony fluctuated between 3.91 and 4.04 across the years. A decreasing trend was observed from 2015 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p < .05$). Although the scores gradually dropped, the respondents did not frequently experience conflict such as fighting and quarrelling among family members. Analysed by demographics, though significant differences were found in some mean scores across the years, no particular trend was observed.

*Chart 12.7    CFAI Harmony across years*
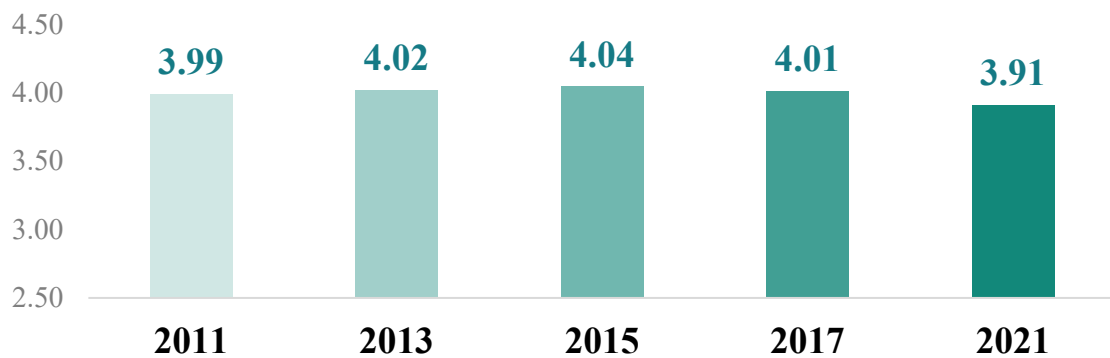


| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 3.98 | 4.00 | 4.02 | 4.01 | 3.94 | .034 |
| | Female | 4.00 | 4.03 | 4.06 | 4.01 | 3.88 | <.001 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | 3.93 | 3.97 | 3.89 | 3.88 | 3.70 | <.001 |
| | 25-34 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.07 | 4.04 | 3.79 | <.001 |
| | 35-54 | 4.02 | 4.03 | 4.07 | 4.04 | 3.89 | <.001 |
| | 55 or above | 3.97 | 4.04 | 4.06 | 4.01 | 4.00 | .008 |
| Marital status | Never married | 3.94 | 3.92 | 3.97 | 3.95 | 3.74 | <.001 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 4.07 | 4.11 | 4.13 | 4.09 | 4.01 | <.001 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed | 3.79 | 3.87 | 3.92 | 3.84 | 3.83 | .008 |
| Economic status | Economically active | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.06 | 4.04 | 3.89 | <.001 |
| | Economically inactive | 3.98 | 4.03 | 4.03 | 3.98 | 3.93 | .002 |

Note 1 GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents.

## CFAI Parental Support

12.13　The parental support subscale of the CFAI assesses parental support behaviour among family members.  It consists of three items (α > .07): "parents are not concerned with their children", "parents love their children", and "parents take care of their children".  Respondents were asked to assess their family situations on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = does not fit our family to 5 = very much fits our family).  Some items were reverse coded.  A higher score indicated better parental support among family members.

12.14　The mean score of parental support was 4.05 out of 5.  Compared with the other marital status groups, the respondents who were married/cohabiting (4.14) indicated better parental support among family members ($p$ < .05).  No statistically significant differences were found between gender, age, and economic status groups.

*Chart 12.8　　CFAI Parental Support by key demographics in 2021*
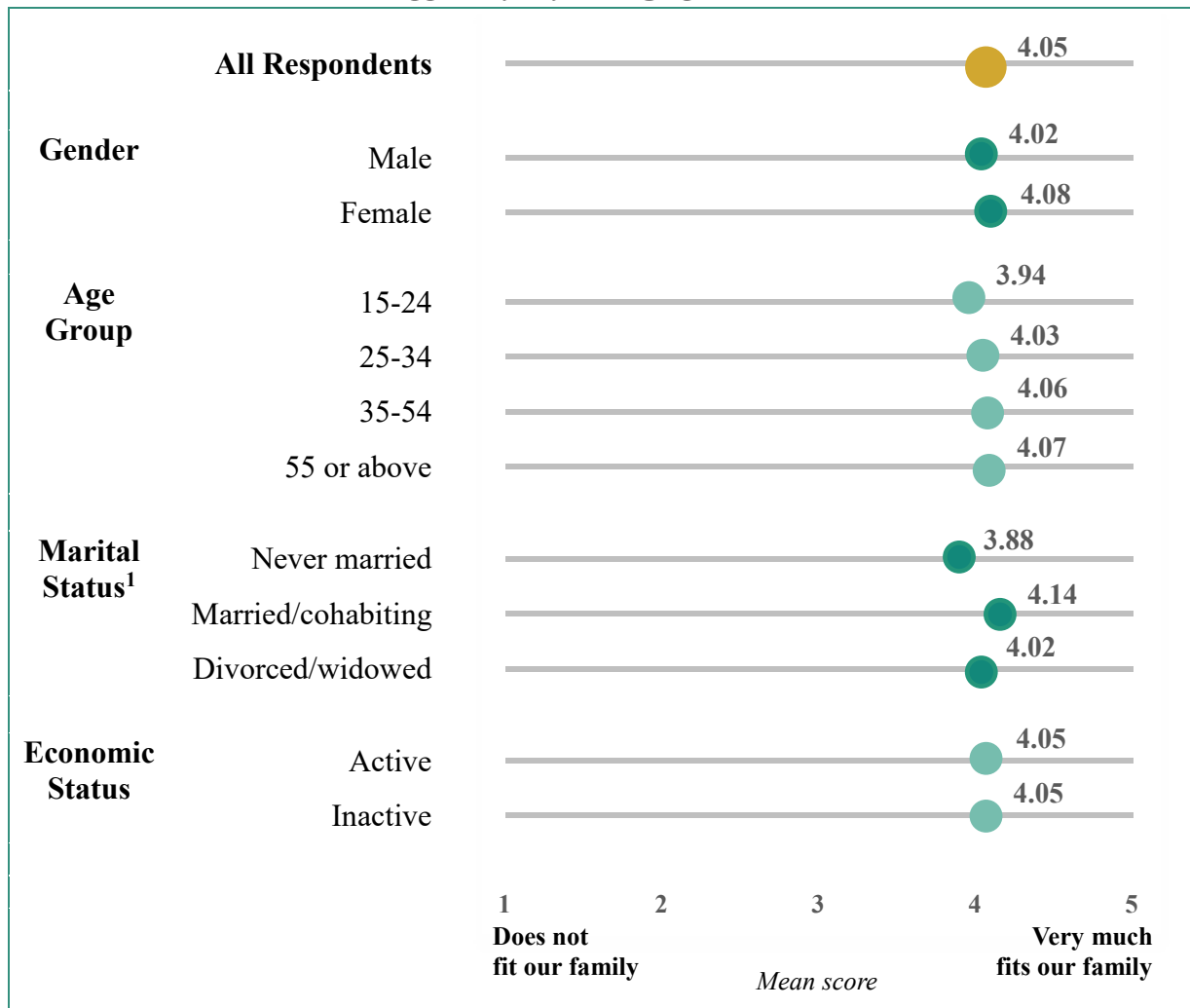


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

12.15 The mean score of CFAI parental support gradually decreased from 4.22 in 2013 to 4.05 in 2021. A decreasing trend was observed from 2013 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p < .05$). Although the scores gradually dropped, the respondents exhibited supportive behaviour among family members. Analysed by demographics, though significant differences were found in some mean scores across the years, no particular trend was observed.

*Chart 12.9    CFAI Parental Support across years*
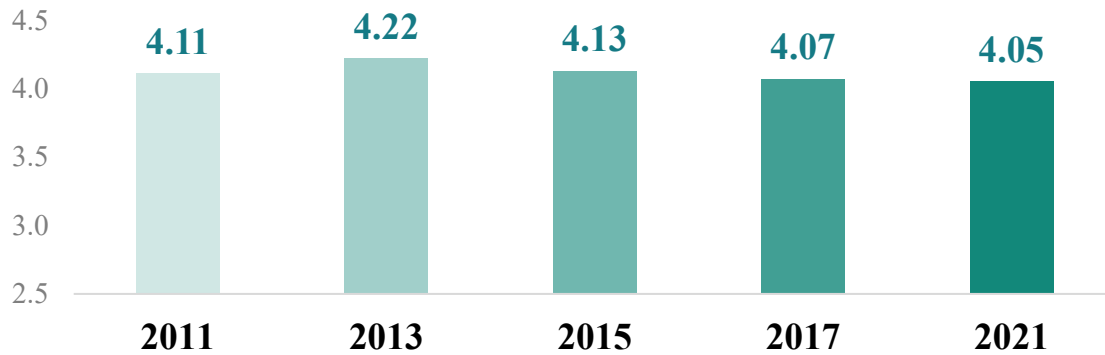


| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 4.07 | 4.16 | 4.12 | 4.03 | 4.02 | <.001 |
| | Female | 4.14 | 4.27 | 4.14 | 4.11 | 4.08 | <.001 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | 4.14 | 4.23 | 4.08 | 3.95 | 3.94 | <.001 |
| | 25-34 | 4.15 | 4.24 | 4.12 | 4.17 | 4.03 | .003 |
| | 35-54 | 4.11 | 4.26 | 4.22 | 4.13 | 4.06 | <.001 |
| | 55 or above | 4.05 | 4.17 | 4.06 | 4.01 | 4.07 | <.001 |
| Marital status | Never married | 4.06 | 4.13 | 4.04 | 3.98 | 3.88 | <.001 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 4.15 | 4.29 | 4.21 | 4.16 | 4.14 | <.001 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed | 4.02 | 4.14 | 4.04 | 3.99 | 4.02 | .063 |
| Economic status | Economically active | 4.09 | 4.20 | 4.16 | 4.09 | 4.05 | <.001 |
| | Economically inactive | 4.12 | 4.24 | 4.10 | 4.06 | 4.05 | <.001 |

Note [1] GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents.

## CFAI Parental Control

12.16    The parental control subscale of the CFAI assesses parental control behaviour among family members.  It consists of three items ($\alpha > .07$): "parents scold and beat their children", "parents force their children to do things", and "parents' control is too harsh".  Respondents were asked to assess their family situation on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = does not fit our family to 5 = very much fits our family).  All items were reverse coded.  A higher score indicated that the parenting behaviour toward the children was less harsh.

12.17    The mean score of parental control was 4.19 out of 5.  Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents who were aged 55 or above (4.33) and those who were divorced/widowed (4.29) reported less parenting control behaviour (ps < .05).  No statistically significant difference was found between gender.

*Chart 12.10    CFAI Parental Control by key demographics in 2021*
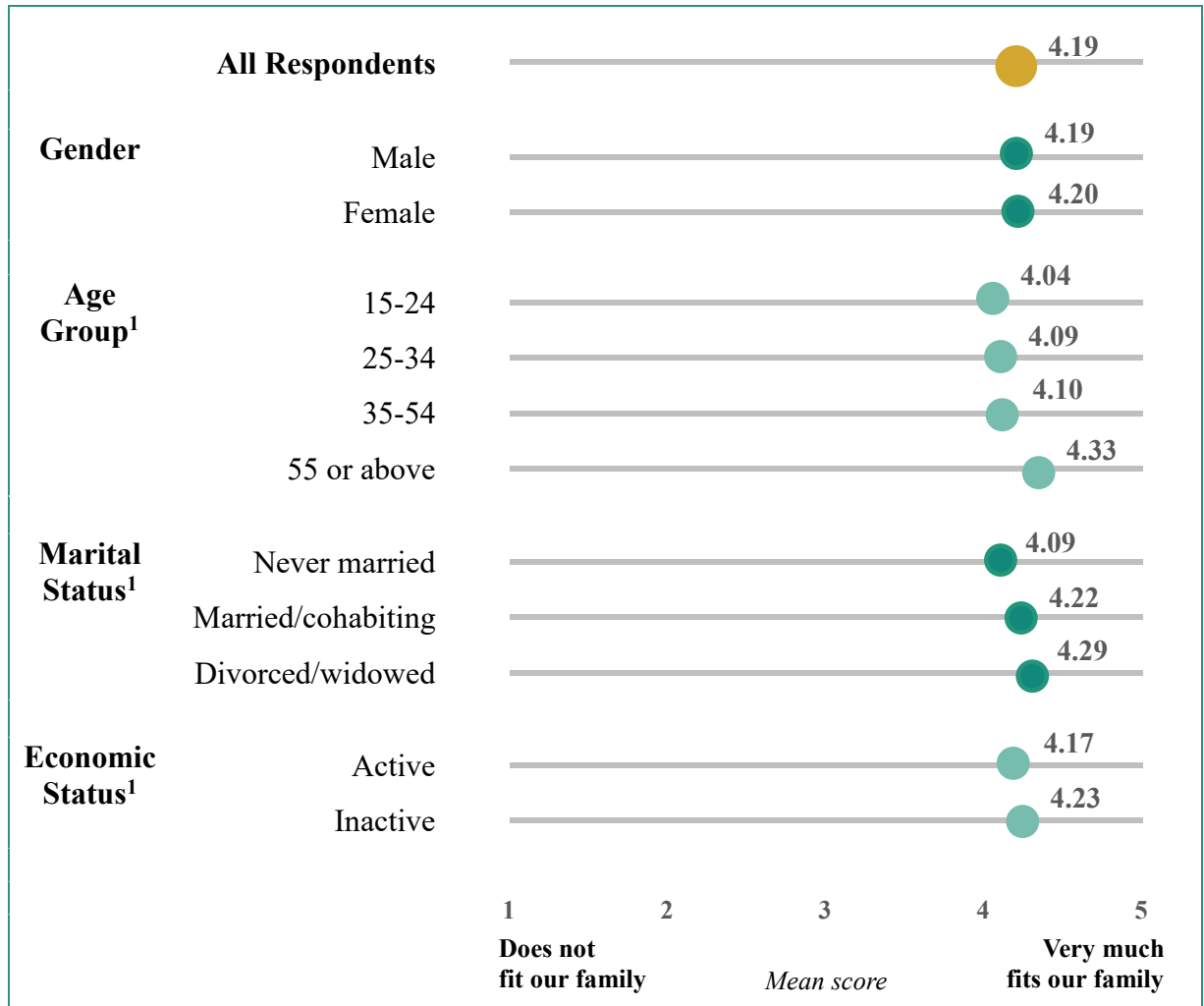


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

12.18　The mean score of CFAI parental control increased from 3.99 in 2011 to 4.19 in 2021; this increasing trend indicates that parents exercised fewer controlling acts on their children over time.  An increasing trend was observed from 2011 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p < .05$).  It may be attributed by the changing of parenting styles nowadays and some qualitative views were collected from in-depth discussions.  Analysed by demographics, monotonic increasing trends were observed among female respondents, those aged 55 or above, those who were married/cohabiting, and those who were economically inactive ($ps < .001$).

*Chart 12.11　CFAI Parental Control across years*
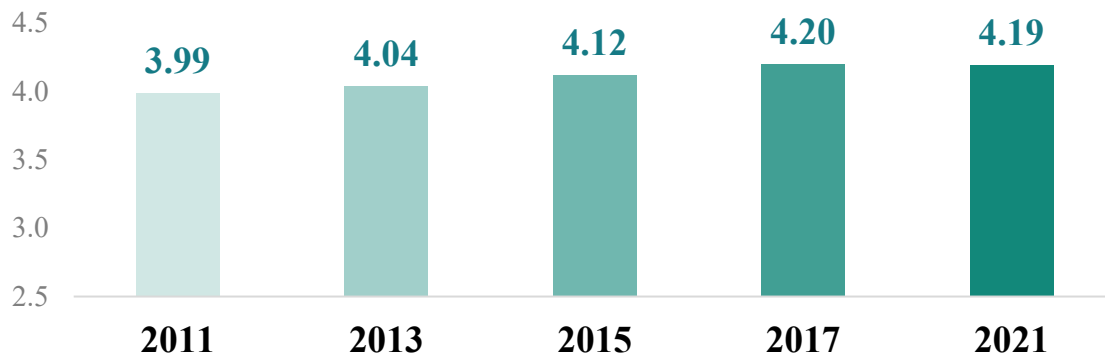


| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 3.99 | 4.03 | 4.06 | 4.22 | 4.19 | <.001 |
| | Female[2] | 4.00 | 4.04 | 4.18 | 4.19 | 4.20 | <.001 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | 3.96 | 3.98 | 3.99 | 4.12 | 4.04 | .064 |
| | 25-34 | 3.97 | 3.97 | 4.13 | 4.14 | 4.09 | .024 |
| | 35-54 | 3.96 | 3.99 | 4.11 | 4.13 | 4.10 | <.001 |
| | 55 or above[2] | 4.07 | 4.15 | 4.20 | 4.32 | 4.33 | <.001 |
| Marital status | Never married | 4.00 | 3.93 | 4.06 | 4.20 | 4.09 | <.001 |
| | Married/cohabiting[2] | 3.99 | 4.09 | 4.16 | 4.17 | 4.22 | <.001 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed | 4.00 | 4.07 | 4.16 | 4.32 | 4.29 | <.001 |
| Economic status | Economically active | 3.99 | 4.01 | 4.11 | 4.19 | 4.17 | <.001 |
| | Economically inactive[2] | 4.01 | 4.06 | 4.14 | 4.21 | 4.23 | <.001 |

Note 1 GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents.  Note 2 A monotonic increasing trend.

## *Perceived Overall Family Functioning*

12.19   Respondents were asked to rate their family functioning on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = family does not function very well together at all and we really need help to 5 = family functions very well together).  A higher score indicated better perceived family functioning.

12.20   In 2021, about two thirds (66.7%) of the respondents considered that their family functioned very well.  28.4% chose the neutral option.  4.8% expressed that their family did not function very well together and that they needed help.  Across the years, the proportion of better family functioning dropped from 79.2% in 2011 to 66.7% in 2021.

*Chart 12.12    Perceived overall family functioning across years*
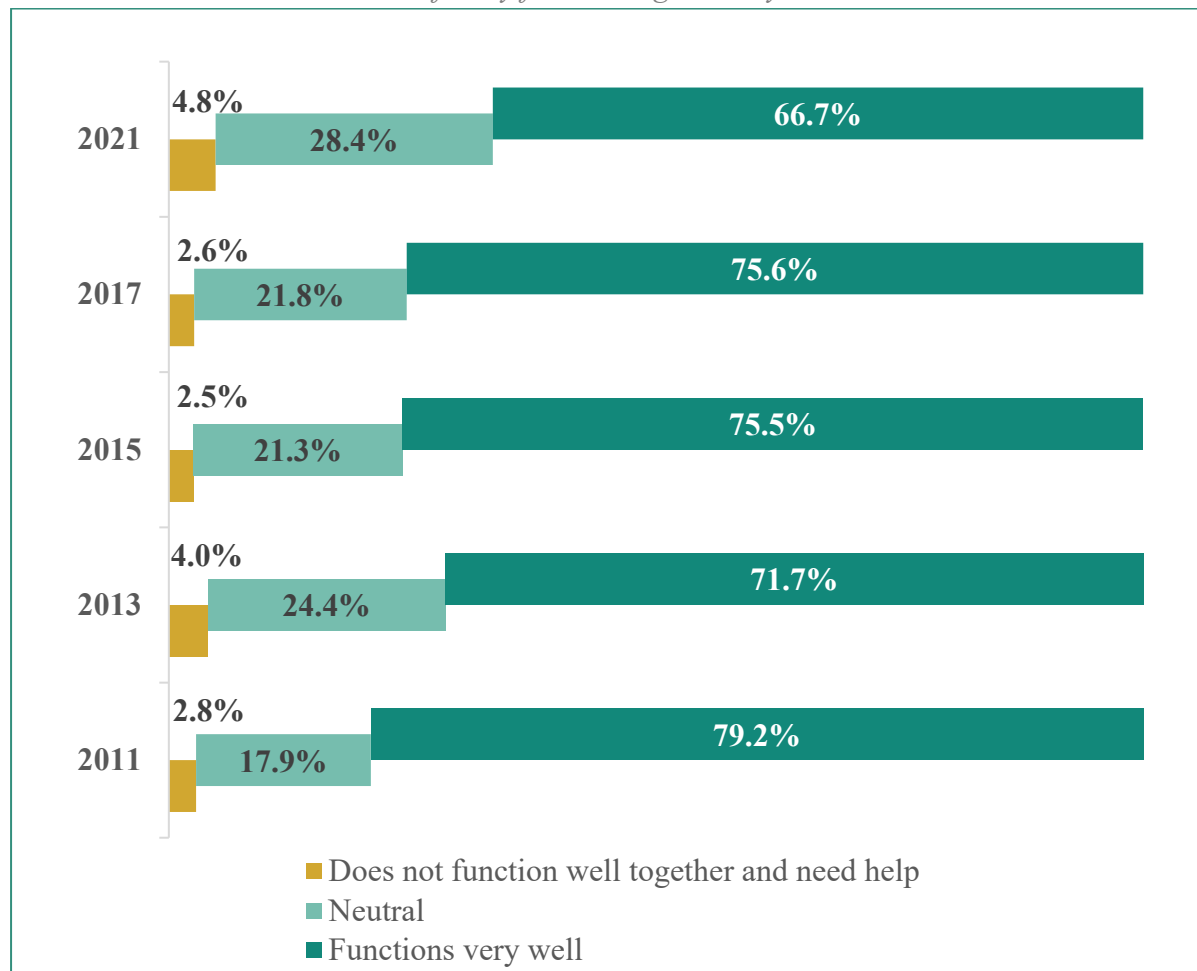
12.21  An index of perceived overall family functioning was compiled.  A higher score indicated better perceived family functioning.

12.22  The mean score of conflict was 3.90 out of 5.  Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents in the following groups indicated better family functioning: married/cohabiting (4.01), aged 55 or above (3.95), and male (3.96) (ps < .05).  On the other hand, respondents aged 15 to 24 (3.74), those who were divorced/widowed (3.71), and those who had never been married (3.76) reported worse family functioning.  No statistically significant difference was found between economic status groups.

*Chart 12.13    Perceived overall family functioning by key demographics in 2021*
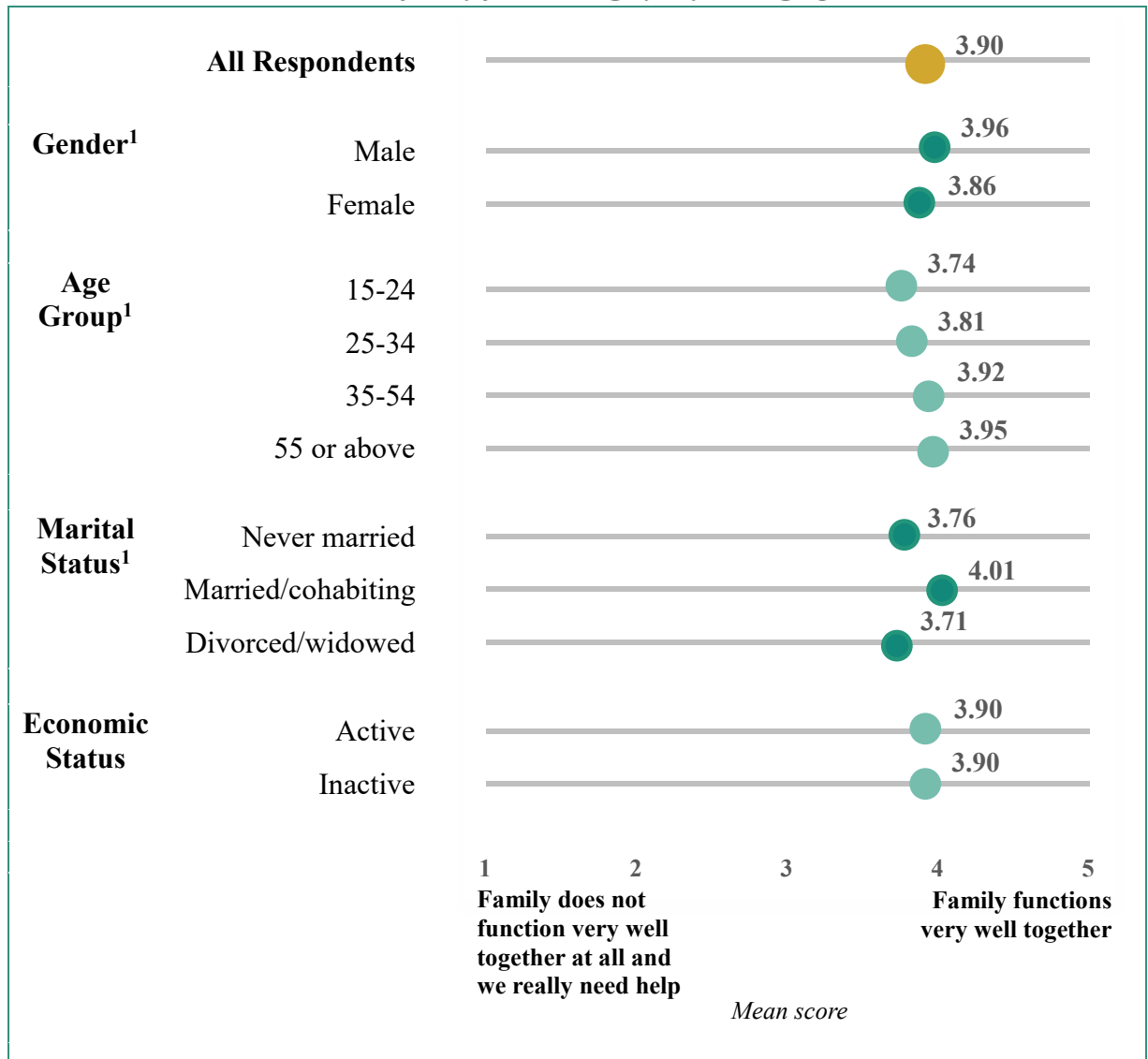
| | Mean score |
|---|---|
| **All Respondents** | 3.90 |
| **Gender[1]** Male | 3.96 |
| Female | 3.86 |
| **Age Group[1]** 15-24 | 3.74 |
| 25-34 | 3.81 |
| 35-54 | 3.92 |
| 55 or above | 3.95 |
| **Marital Status[1]** Never married | 3.76 |
| Married/cohabiting | 4.01 |
| Divorced/widowed | 3.71 |
| **Economic Status** Active | 3.90 |
| Inactive | 3.90 |

1 — Family does not function very well together at all and we really need help

5 — Family functions very well together

*Mean score*

Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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12.23    The mean score of overall family functioning gradually dropped from 4.06 in 2011 to 3.90 in both 2017 and 2021.  A decreasing trend was observed after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p < .05$).  Analysed by demographics, monotonic decreasing trends were observed among those who had never been married and those who were economically active ($ps < .01$).

Chart 12.14    *Perceived overall family functioning across years*
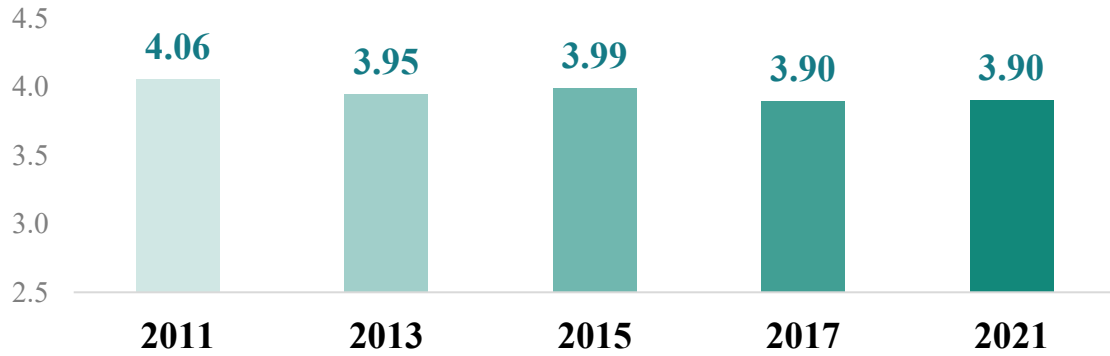


| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 4.04 | 3.91 | 3.95 | 3.88 | 3.96 | <.001 |
| | Female | 4.08 | 3.97 | 4.01 | 3.92 | 3.86 | <.001 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | 4.09 | 4.01 | 4.02 | 3.92 | 3.74 | <.001 |
| | 25-34 | 4.13 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.03 | 3.81 | <.001 |
| | 35-54 | 4.07 | 3.94 | 3.98 | 3.91 | 3.92 | <.001 |
| | 55 or above | 3.98 | 3.89 | 3.97 | 3.84 | 3.95 | <.001 |
| Marital status | Never married[2] | 4.01 | 3.95 | 3.95 | 3.88 | 3.76 | .004 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 4.15 | 4.03 | 4.05 | 3.99 | 4.01 | <.001 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed | 3.80 | 3.59 | 3.82 | 3.65 | 3.71 | .002 |
| Economic status | Economically active[2] | 4.09 | 4.01 | 4.01 | 3.94 | 3.90 | <.001 |
| | Economically inactive | 4.03 | 3.89 | 3.96 | 3.87 | 3.90 | <.001 |

Note [1] GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents.  Note [2] A monotonic decreasing trend.

## Conflicts with Family Members

12.24 Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of conflicts with their family members, including spouse/partner, children, parents, and father or mother of spouse/partner, in the past year on a four-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = almost never to 4 = frequently). A higher score indicated more frequent conflicts.

12.25 In 2021, less than one third (30.4%) of the respondents expressed that they had conflicts with their spouse/partner sometimes (26.6%) or frequently (3.8%). About one quarter (23.9%) had conflicts with their children sometimes (20.5%) or frequently (3.4%). Furthermore, 17.9% of the respondents had conflicts with their parents sometimes (15.3%) or frequently (2.6%). About 13.7% of the respondents had conflicts with the father or mother of their spouse/partner sometimes (12.6%) or frequently (1.1%).

*Chart 12.15    Conflicts with family members in 2021*
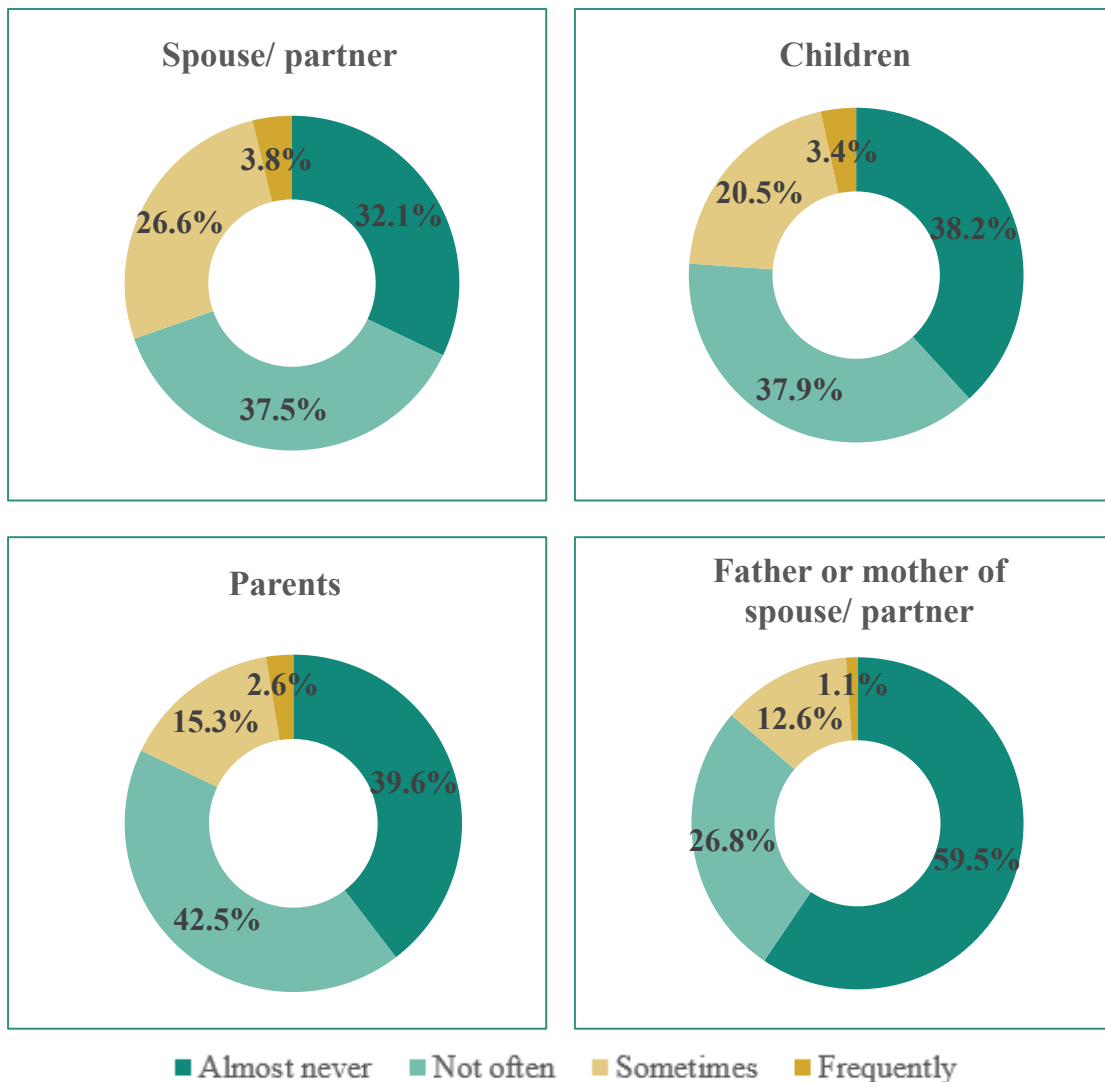
12.26　Details of the proportions of respondents who had conflicts (sometimes or frequently) with their spouse/partner were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.

12.27　About 30.4% of the respondents sometimes or frequently had conflicts with their spouse/partner. Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of the respondents who were female (34.8%) and those who were aged 15 to 24 (48.9%) reported conflicts with their spouse/partner in the past year ($ps < .05$). It is worth noting that nearly one in two of the younger respondents aged 15 to 24 (48.9%) reported conflicts with their spouse/partner in the past year. No statistically significant differences were found between marital status and economic status groups.

*Chart 12.16　Conflicts with spouse/partner (sometimes or frequently) in 2021*
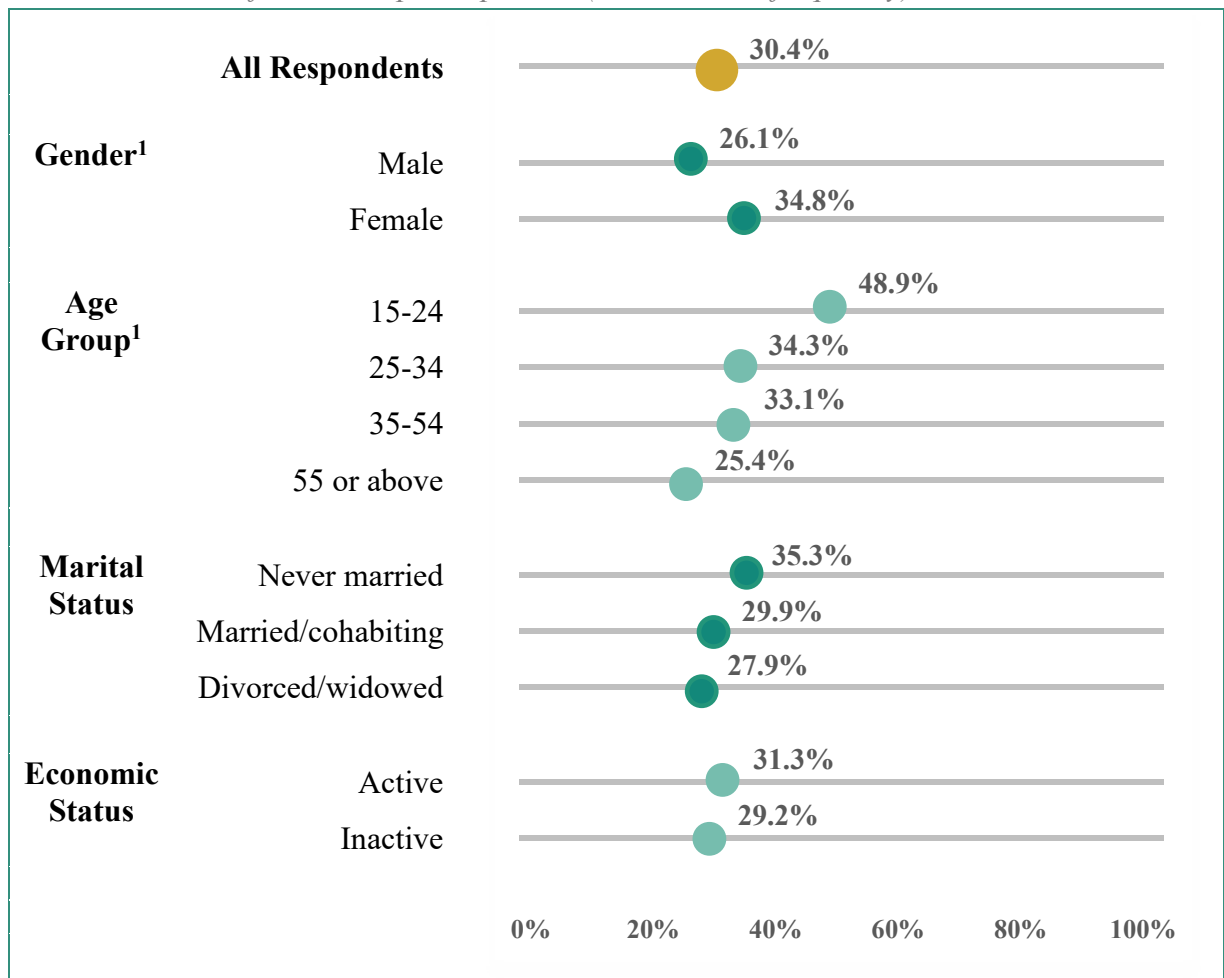


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

12.28 Among the parent respondents, about 23.9% sometimes or frequently had conflicts with their children. Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of parent respondents in the following groups reported having conflicts with their children in the past year: female (27.6%), aged 25 to 34 (39.1%), and economically active (26.7%) ($ps < .05$). It is worth noting that nearly two in five of the parent respondents aged 25 to 34 (39.1%) had conflicts with their children in the past year. No statistically significant difference was found between marital status groups.

*Chart 12.17    Conflicts with children (sometimes or frequently) in 2021*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **All Respondents** | | 23.9% |
| **Gender**[1] | Male | 19.6% |
| | Female | 27.6% |
| **Age Group**[1] | 15-24 | 19.6% |
| | 25-34 | 39.1% |
| | 35-54 | 30.5% |
| | 55 or above | 18.0% |
| **Marital Status** | Never married | 33.3% |
| | Married/cohabiting | 23.8% |
| | Divorced/widowed | 23.5% |
| **Economic Status**[1] | Active | 26.7% |
| | Inactive | 21.1% |

0%    20%    40%    60%    80%    100%
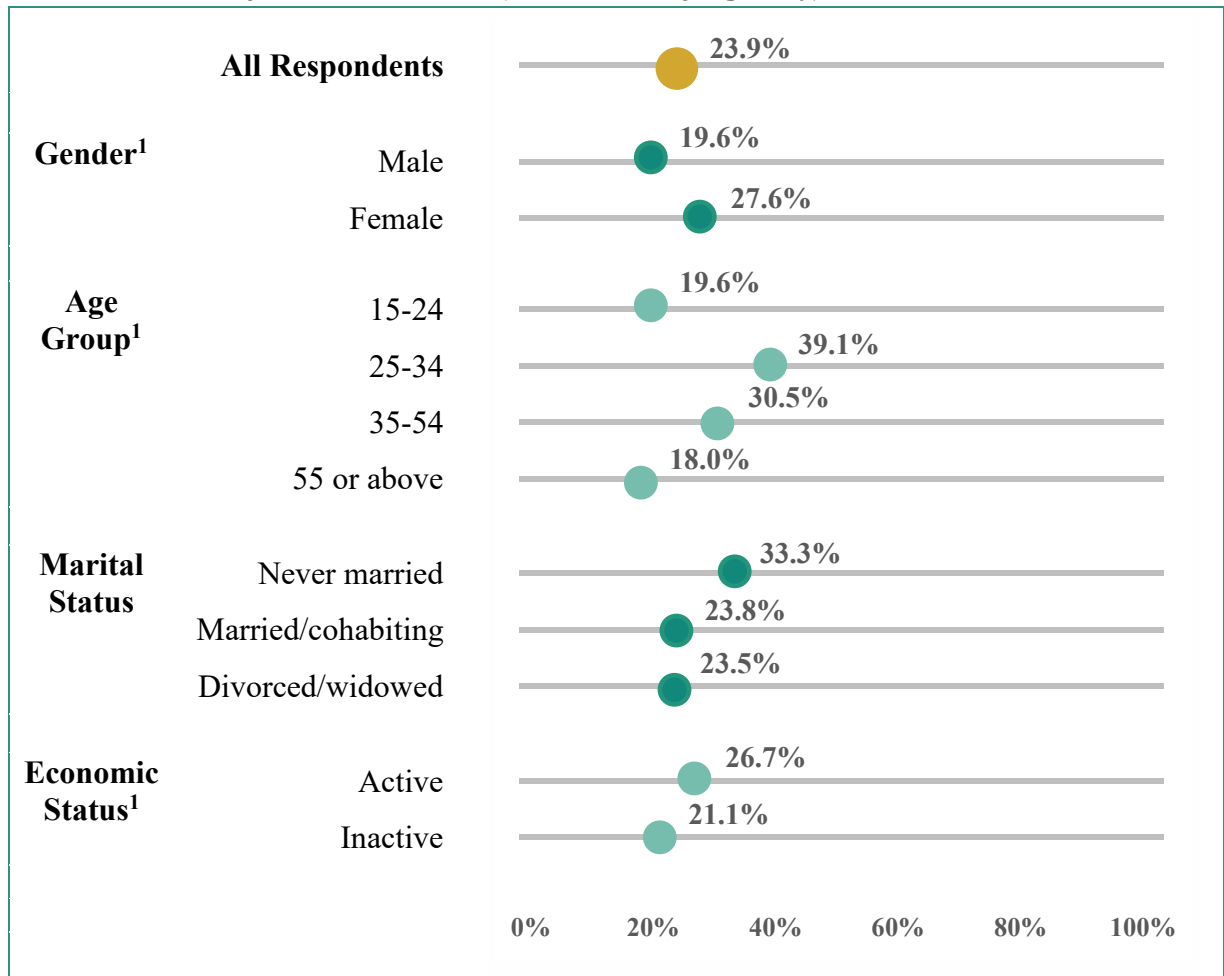
Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

12.29 Among the respondents who had had contact with their parents in the past year, about 17.9% sometimes or frequently experienced conflicts with their parents. Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of these respondents in the following groups reported conflicts with their parents in the past year: female (20.4%), aged 15 to 24 (29.3%), and never been married (27.8%) (ps < .05). No statistically significant difference was found between economic status groups.

*Chart 12.18    Conflicts with parents (sometimes or frequently) in 2021*
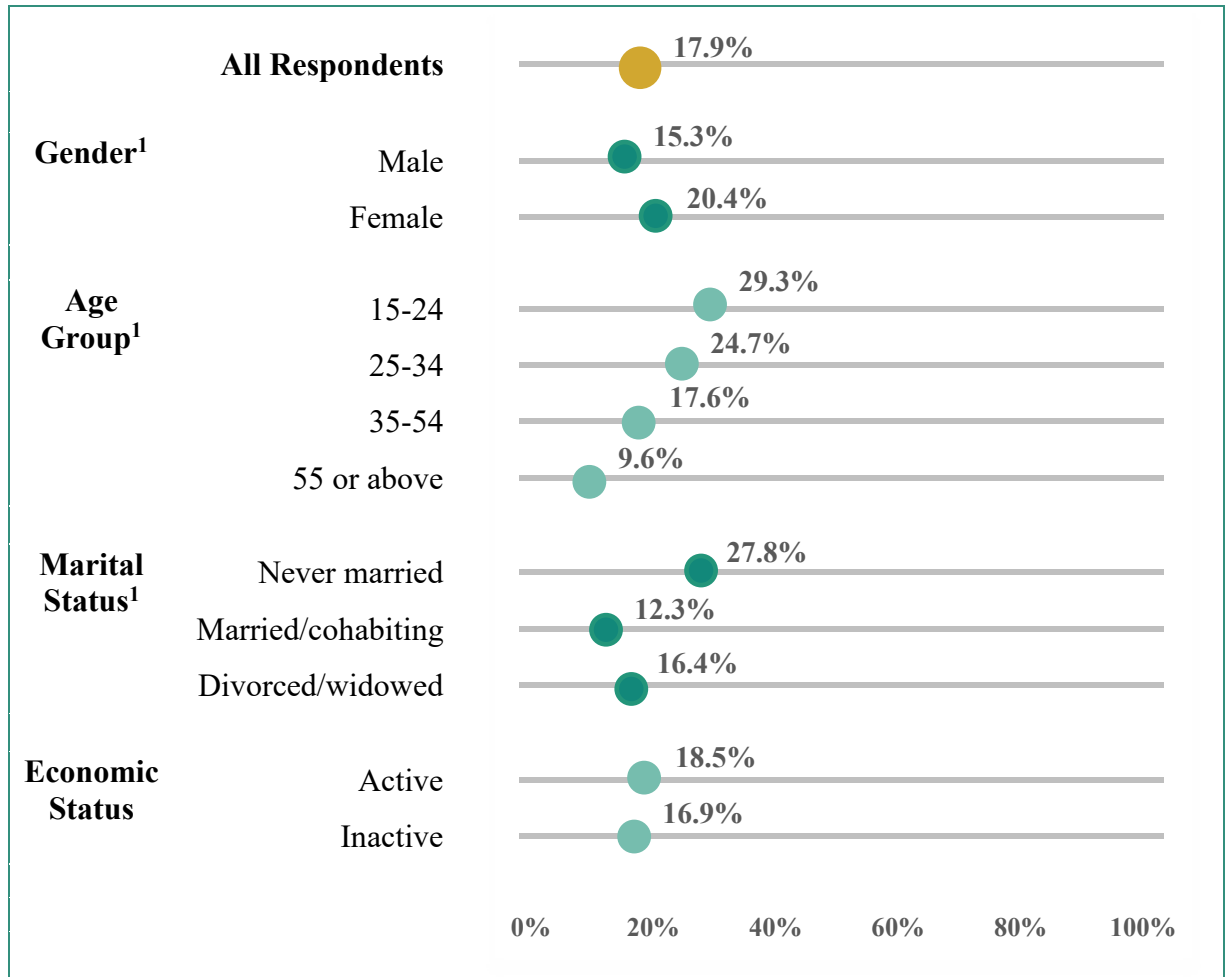


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

12.30  Among the respondents who had had contact with the father or mother of their spouse/partner, in the past year, about 13.7% sometimes or frequently experienced conflicts with the father or mother of their spouse/partner. No statistically significant differences were found between gender, age, marital status, and economic status groups.

*Chart 12.19     Conflicts with the father or mother of their spouse/partner (sometimes or frequently) in 2021*
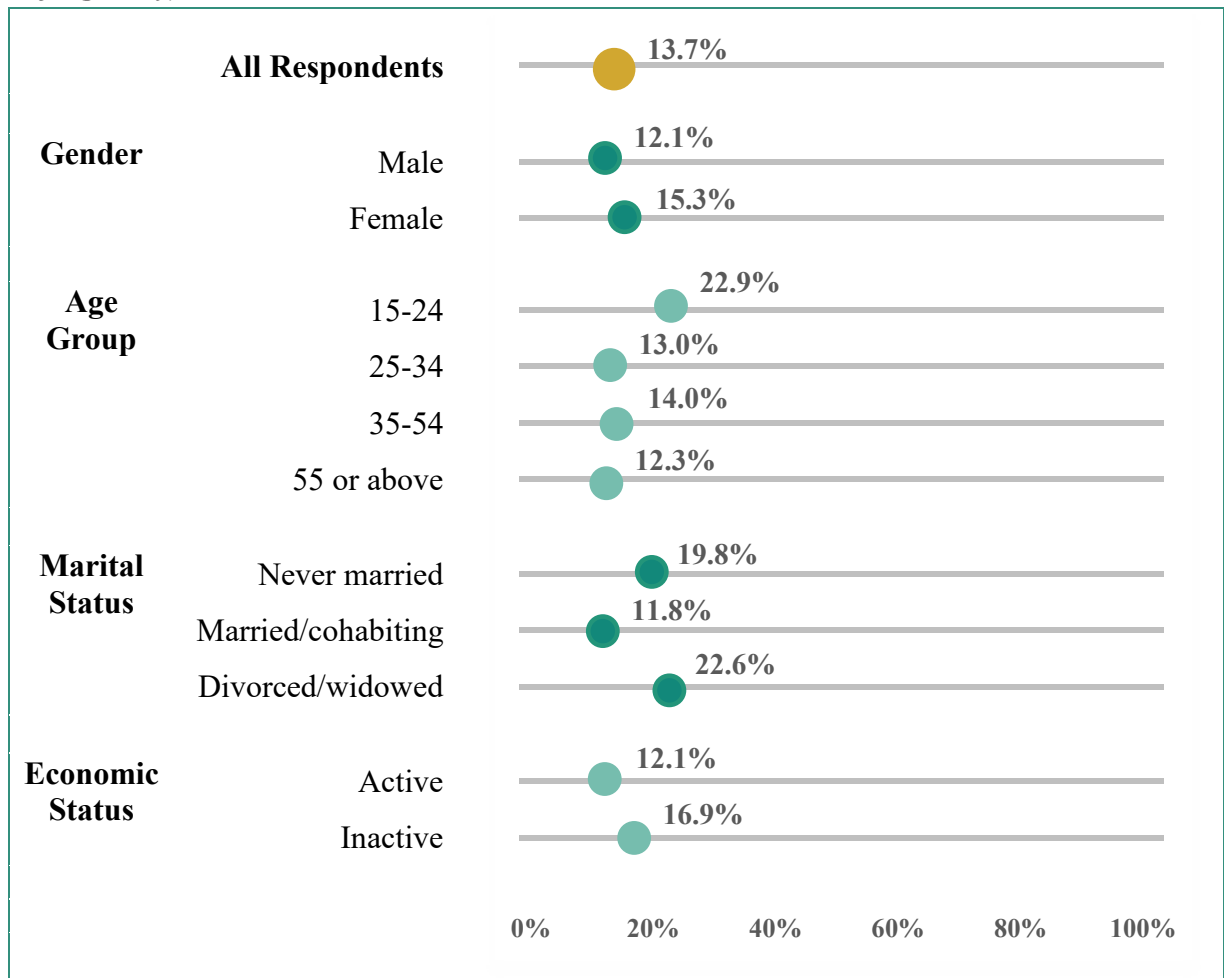


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

## Views Collected from In-depth Discussions

### Family Relationship and Conflict

12.31 Focus group discussions were conducted to collect in-depth views from 18 young participants aged between 15 and 29, 23 participants who were parents, and eight participants who were grandparents. The discussion topics included understanding whether they were satisfied with the relationships with their parents, children, spouse or partner, and grandchildren, exploring situations of conflict, and ways to resolve them.

### Relationship and Conflicts between Young Participants and their Parents

12.32 Most of the young participants aged 15 to 29 were satisfied with their family relationships, but some participants claimed that they had arguments and fights with their parents.

12.33 The participants aged 15 to 29 who were satisfied with their family relationships, no matter the gender, tended to have a better relationship with their mother. Most of them would discuss school matters, share daily life experiences, or hang out with their mothers. They believed that sharing common interests or life experiences, having more communication and spending more time with each other (e.g., eating out together) were the best ways of maintaining good family relationships.

12.34 Those young people who were not satisfied with their family relationships indicated that they usually had different value judgements from their parents. They were often annoyed by the advice from their parents and arguments started when they shared different views. Conflict issues were related to daily life, schooling, future careers, and different political ideologies and stances.

12.35 Some young participants indicated that they would spend time discussing their school life or daily experiences with their parents although they did not meet their parents very often. When they felt depressed due to schooling or other issues, they would have a bad attitudes toward their parents, resulting in worse parental relationships.

*Ways to Resolve Conflict*

12.36   Some young people tried to explain the value judgement differences between the two generations to their parents, and with communication and discussion, the conflict and disagreements were reduced.  However, some parents insisted on their views and would not try to understand the views of their children, who would not explain further, leading to the conflict not being resolved, and sometimes worsening.

12.37   Some young participants suggested that both parents and children needed to calm down when they were having conflicts and could then bring up the issue again.  They should let each of them have the opportunity to air their views and perceptions in a positive and assertive manner.  Both parties should articulate their thoughts openly and honestly as well as understanding the causes of the conflict and identifying solutions.

> Although I already have children, I still hang out with my mother once a week. I will share anything including life difficulties with my mother, as she is good listener. I believe that more communication is the main way to maintain a good relationship.

**Parent 15**

> I am not happy with the relationship between me and my parents. As I am aged 15 to16, the time of teenage rebellion, I often get annoyed by the opinion of my parents. Maybe my parents and I have different value judgements, and it can easily cause arguments. Furthermore, if I did not meet my parents many times a week, the generation gap will increase, and our relations will worsen.
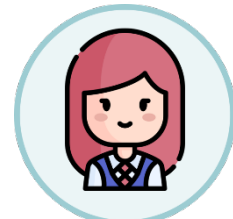
**Youth 6**

## Relationship and Conflicts between parents and their children

12.38   Most participants who were parents were satisfied with their relationship with their children.  But some participants claimed that they had arguments and conflict with their children.

12.39   Parent participants who were satisfied with their family relationships stated that parents should communicate more, doing homework, studying, and outdoor activities with their children, or engaging in family activities such as going to theme parks or farms.  Some participants who had older children claimed that they got along with their children as a friend.  They would also try to find common interests and know their friends, to understand more about their children's lives.

12.40   Some parents believed that more communication, more listening, and more accompaniment were key to maintaining good relations.  If the children were still young, then more physical contact would be needed to show the children how much they loved them.  As for older children, respect, freedom, and personal space were needed.

12.41   The parents who had conflict with their children considered that these conflicts were mostly because their children did not listen to them or follow their instructions.  They had arguments with their children, and a few chose corporal punishment.  On the other hand, some parents commented that they could not adopt strict controlling acts on their children nowadays when their children did not listen or follow their instructions.

## Ways to Resolve Conflict

12.42   To resolve conflict between parents and their children, some parent participants thought that parents should respect their children.  For example, when children were grumpy and in conflict with their parents, parents should try to calm their children down rather than keep shouting at them and making them emotional.  Afterwards, parents could explain and discuss the issues once their children had calmed down.

12.43   Some parent participants who had older children claimed that parents could be strict when their children were kids but should be friendly and try to communicate with their children when they were older.

## *Ways to Resolve Conflict related to Parenting between Spouses*

12.44   Some parent participants stated that couples would have disagreements on parenting such as parenting decisions, childcare time, and parenting styles.

12.45   Although many parent participants found it hard to reach a consensus with their spouses on parenting, they were willing to share their solutions, such as discussing feelings after calming down, discussing which method was best for their children, and understanding each other's thoughts.

12.46   However, some parents felt that their spouses did not understand their thoughts and feelings.  They would try some time out and communicate with each other later to reduce the conflict.

> My children are still young, our relations are usually close, and I have communication with my children every day. We will talk about daily life topics and more company is also a good way to maintain a good relationship.

**Parent 13**

> The conflicts I had with my wife are hard to solve, my wife is very independent, and she will be in charge of everything. Even if I felt uncomfortable sometimes, I would not bring it up and would compromise, I would only remain silent when we had conflicts. However, it cannot solve the problem but is only annoying. I will choose to walk away to reduce conflicts and talk with my wife later.

**Parent 1**

*Relationship and Conflict between Grandparents and their Children*

12.47    Most of the participants who were grandparents had good relationships with their children.  Some grandparent participants indicated that their relationship with their children changed positively when their children became parents.  They shared the same goal of raising their grandchildren.

12.48    However, half of the grandparents indicated that they had arguments and conflict with their children or daughter/son-in-law on parenting issues; for example, whether to allow their grandchildren to use a notepad during mealtimes or whether to allow them to run in a shopping mall.

12.49    Most grandparent participants believed that proposing a parenting method to their children was easier than proposing it to their daughter/son-in-law.  As sometimes grandparents reflected the problem to their daughter/son-in-law via their children, this made their communication harder.  Eventually, parents and grandparents used their own parenting styles to teach or to discipline their children and grandchildren.

> I have disagreements with my daughter-in-law on parenting and I am not allowed to teach my grandchildren in my own way. I have tried to reflect the situation to my son, but he did not talk with his wife about it, so I decided to stay silent. What else I can do?

**Grandparent 7**

> As my daughter-in-law and I are not very close, conflicts appear when I take care of her child. However, it is easier when I take care of my daughter's child as I can reflect any problems to her directly. There is no difference in parenting and caring for the child of my son or daughter. However, when the grandchild is naughty, it is much easier to talk to my daughter than to talk to my daughter-in-law. In general, elderly people are too straightforward, which may cause conflicts between the two generations.

**Grandparent 2**

*Relationship and Conflict between Grandparents and their Grandchildren*

12.50     Most of the participants who were grandparents were satisfied with the relationship with their grandchildren and did not have conflict with their grandchildren. They helped take care of their grandchildren such as taking them to school, helping with their homework, playing games, and going to the library. They felt that they maintained a good relationship with their grandchildren and their grandchildren showed great respect for them.

# 13. Theme 4 – Satisfaction with Family Life

## *Overview*

13.1 Communication between members of a household is crucial to harmonious family relationships. Five single question items (i.e. satisfaction with family life, satisfaction with the relationships between family members and between generations, frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members and between generations, frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members and between generations, and communication with family members and between generations) were adopted.

13.2 Table 13.1 presents the dimensions and details of satisfaction with family life.

*Table 13.1        Dimensions of Theme 4 – Satisfaction with Family Life*

| Theme | Dimensions | Year | | | | | No. of items | α | Index construct? | Single item? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | | | | |
| 4A | Satisfaction with family life | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |
| 4B | Satisfaction with the relationships with family members | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |
| 4D | Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |
| 4E | Frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members | - | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |
| 4F | Communication with family members | - | - | - | - | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |

## *Satisfaction with Family Life*

13.3    Respondents were asked to indicate their satisfaction with family life on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied).

13.4    In 2021, less than three quarters (72.8%) of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their family life, whereas around 5.8% were not satisfied with their family life.  21.3% chose the neutral option.  Across the years, the proportion of respondents who were satisfied or very satisfied with their family life decreased from 80.5% in 2011 to 72.8% in 2021.

Chart 13.2    *Satisfaction with family life*
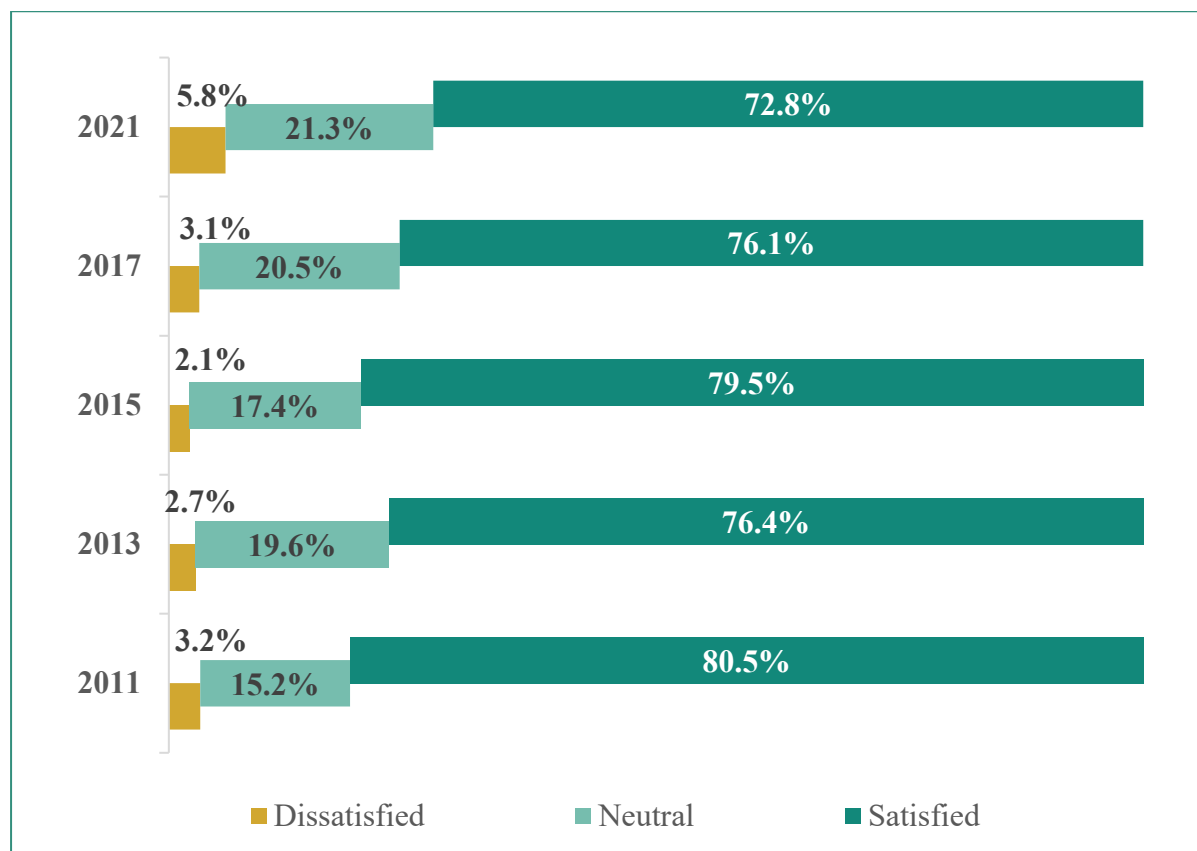
13.5    An index of satisfaction with family life was compiled.  A higher score indicated more satisfaction with family life.

13.6    The mean score of satisfaction with family life was 3.82 out of 5.  Respondents who were married/cohabiting (3.96) indicated more satisfaction with family life than those who had never been married (3.65) and those who were divorced/widowed (3.55) ($p < .05$).  No statistically significant differences were found between gender, age, and economic status groups.

*Chart 13.3    Satisfaction with family life by key demographics in 2021*
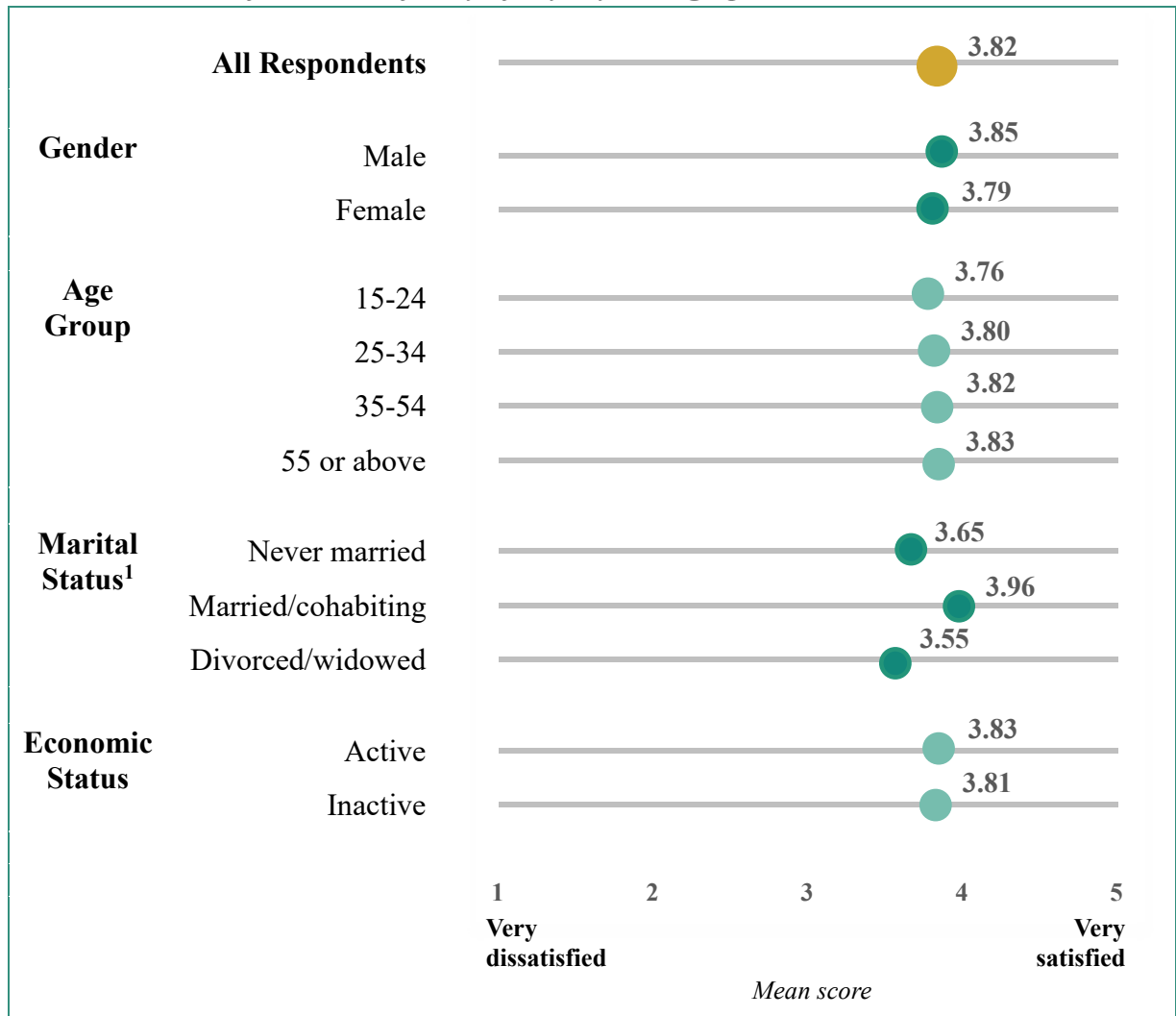
| | | Mean score |
|---|---|---|
| **All Respondents** | | 3.82 |
| **Gender** | Male | 3.85 |
| | Female | 3.79 |
| **Age Group** | 15-24 | 3.76 |
| | 25-34 | 3.80 |
| | 35-54 | 3.82 |
| | 55 or above | 3.83 |
| **Marital Status[1]** | Never married | 3.65 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 3.96 |
| | Divorced/widowed | 3.55 |
| **Economic Status** | Active | 3.83 |
| | Inactive | 3.81 |

1    Very dissatisfied          2          3          4          5    Very satisfied

*Mean score*

Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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13.7 Though respondents were generally satisfied with family life, the mean score gradually decreased from 3.97 in 2011 to 3.82 in 2021. A decreasing trend was observed from 2011 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p < .05$). Analysed by demographics, monotonic decreasing trends were also observed among female participants and those who were economically active and economically inactive ($ps < .05$).

13.8 There were significant positive correlations between CFAI mutuality and satisfaction with family life (r = .614, $p < .001$) and between CFAI communication and satisfaction with family life (r = .387, $p < .001$). The results indicated that the respondents reported better communication and support among family members and more satisfaction with their family life.

*Chart 13.4     Satisfaction with family life across years*
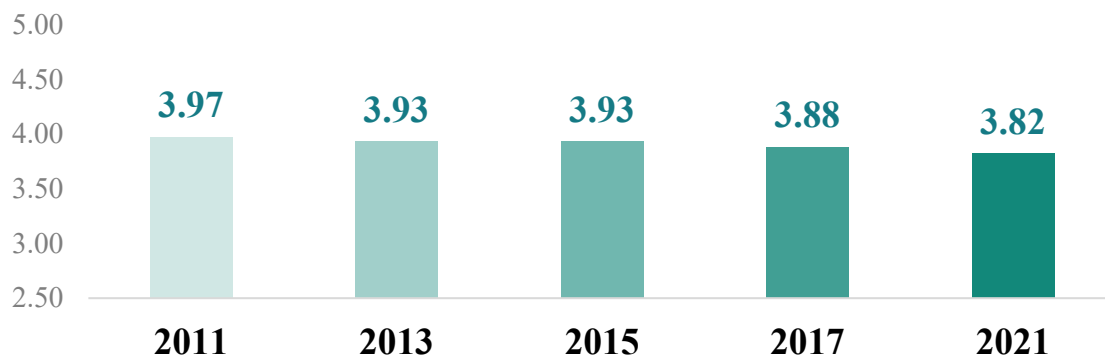
| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 3.95 | 3.89 | 3.91 | 3.87 | 3.85 | .263 |
| | Female[2] | 3.99 | 3.96 | 3.94 | 3.88 | 3.79 | <.001 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | 4.04 | 4.10 | 3.96 | 3.93 | 3.76 | <.001 |
| | 25-34 | 3.90 | 3.98 | 3.99 | 3.99 | 3.80 | .003 |
| | 35-54 | 4.02 | 3.90 | 3.91 | 3.85 | 3.82 | <.001 |
| | 55 or above | 3.91 | 3.86 | 3.90 | 3.84 | 3.83 | .171 |
| Marital status | Never married | 3.90 | 3.97 | 3.90 | 3.88 | 3.65 | <.001 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 4.07 | 3.96 | 3.99 | 3.95 | 3.96 | .007 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed | 3.70 | 3.71 | 3.76 | 3.61 | 3.55 | .005 |
| Economic status | Economically active[2] | 3.99 | 3.94 | 3.94 | 3.90 | 3.83 | <.001 |
| | Economically inactive[2] | 3.95 | 3.91 | 3.91 | 3.85 | 3.81 | .042 |

Note 1 GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents.  Note 2 A monotonic decreasing trend.

## Satisfaction with Relationships with Family Members

13.9 Respondents were asked to indicate their satisfaction with relationships between family members (spouse/partner, children, parents, and father or mother of spouse/partner) and between generations in general on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied).

13.10 In 2021, about two thirds (67.7%) of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with relationships between family members and between generations, whereas around 4.1% were not satisfied.

13.11 Over three quarters of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with relationships with their children (82.6%), parents (75.8%), and spouse/partner (75.1%), whereas less than 5% were not satisfied. About two thirds (65.0%) of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with relationships with father or mother of spouse/partner, whereas 4.1% were not satisfied.

*Chart 13.5     Satisfaction with relationships with family members in 2021*
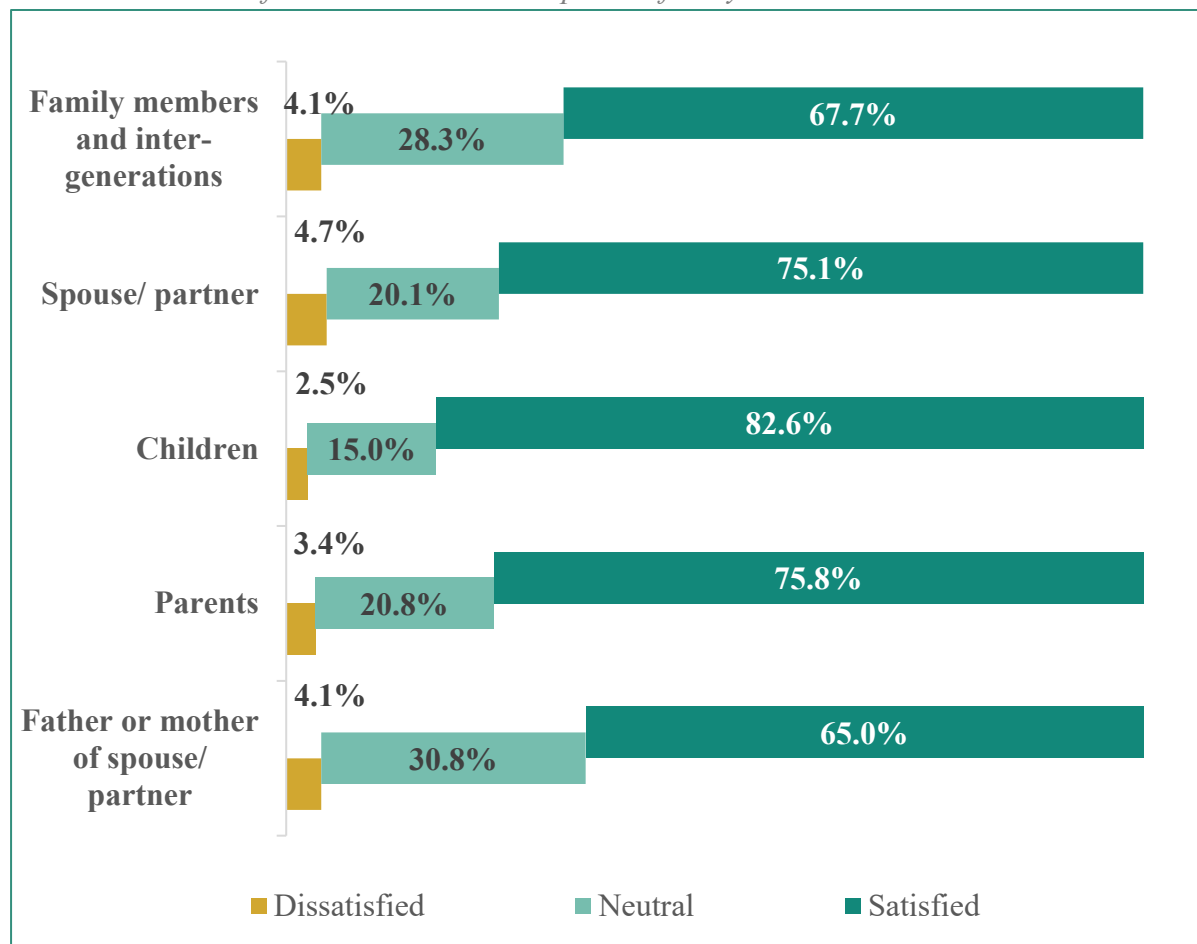
13.12　An index of satisfaction with relationships between family members and between generations was compiled.  A higher score indicated more satisfaction with relationships between family members and between generations.

13.13　The mean score of satisfaction with relationships between family members and between generations was 3.76 out of 5.  Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents who were married/cohabiting (3.87) and those who were male (3.80) indicated more satisfaction with relationships between family members and between generations ($ps < .05$).  No statistically significant differences were found between age and economic status groups.

*Chart 13.6　Satisfaction with relationships between family members and inter-generations by key demographics in 2021*
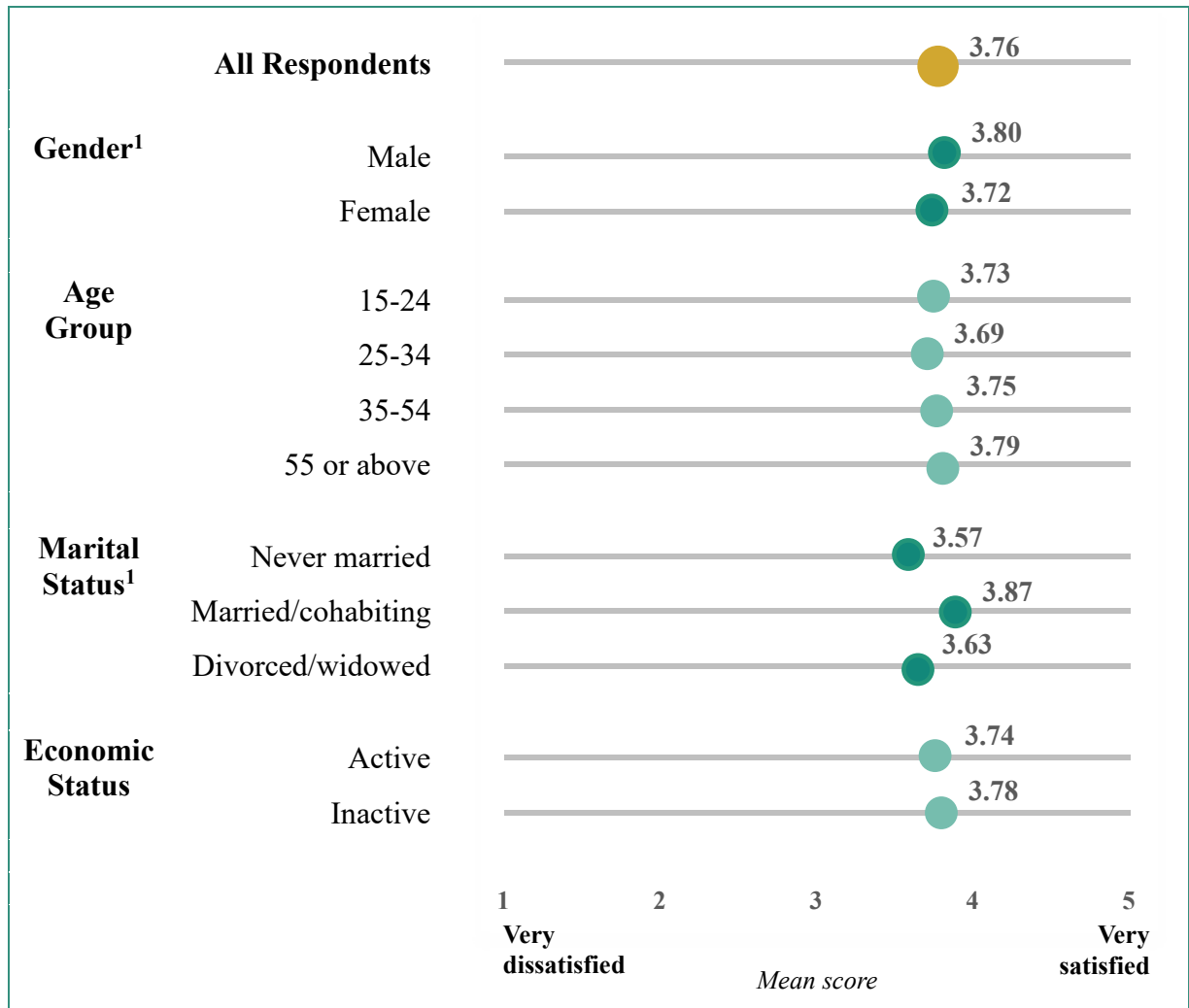


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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13.14 Though respondents were generally satisfied with relationships between family members and between generations, the mean score gradually decreased from 3.88 in 2011 to 3.76 in 2021.  A decreasing trend was observed from 2011 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p < .05$). Analysed by demographics, monotonic decreasing trend was also observed among those aged 15 to 24 ($p < .01$).

13.15 There were significant positive correlations between CFAI mutuality and satisfaction with relationships between family members and between generations (r = .590, $p < .001$) and between CFAI communication and satisfaction with relationships between family members and between generations (r = .397, $p < .001$).  The results indicated that the respondents reported better communication and support among family members and more satisfaction with relationships between family members and between generations.

*Chart 13.7    Satisfaction with relationships between family members and inter-generations across years*
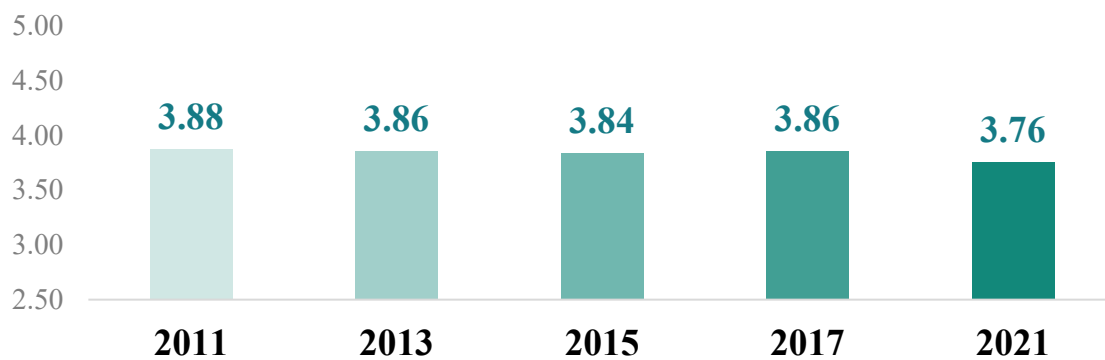


| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 3.87 | 3.81 | 3.81 | 3.84 | 3.80 | .226 |
| | Female | 3.90 | 3.91 | 3.87 | 3.88 | 3.72 | <.001 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24[2] | 3.98 | 3.94 | 3.89 | 3.86 | 3.73 | .004 |
| | 25-34 | 3.96 | 3.94 | 3.89 | 3.95 | 3.69 | <.001 |
| | 35-54 | 3.88 | 3.85 | 3.82 | 3.87 | 3.75 | <.001 |
| | 55 or above | 3.80 | 3.80 | 3.82 | 3.82 | 3.79 | .519 |
| Marital status | Never married | 3.88 | 3.91 | 3.85 | 3.85 | 3.57 | <.001 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 3.95 | 3.88 | 3.84 | 3.91 | 3.87 | <.001 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed | 3.62 | 3.70 | 3.83 | 3.72 | 3.63 | <.001 |
| Economic status | Economically active | 3.89 | 3.88 | 3.83 | 3.88 | 3.74 | <.001 |
| | Economically inactive | 3.88 | 3.85 | 3.85 | 3.84 | 3.78 | .295 |

Note [1] GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents.  Note [2] A monotonic decreasing trend.

13.16 An index of satisfaction with relationship with spouse/partner was compiled. A higher score indicated more satisfaction with relationship with spouse/partner.

13.17 The mean score of satisfaction with relationship with spouse/partner was 4.01 out of 5. Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents in the following groups indicated more satisfaction with their relationship with their spouse/partner: male (4.12), married/cohabiting (4.11), and economically active (4.04) ($ps$ < .05). Respondents who were divorced/widowed (3.22) reported a lower level of satisfaction with their relationship with their spouse/partner. No statistically significant difference was found between age groups.

*Chart 13.8 Satisfaction with relationships with spouse/partner by key demographics in 2021*
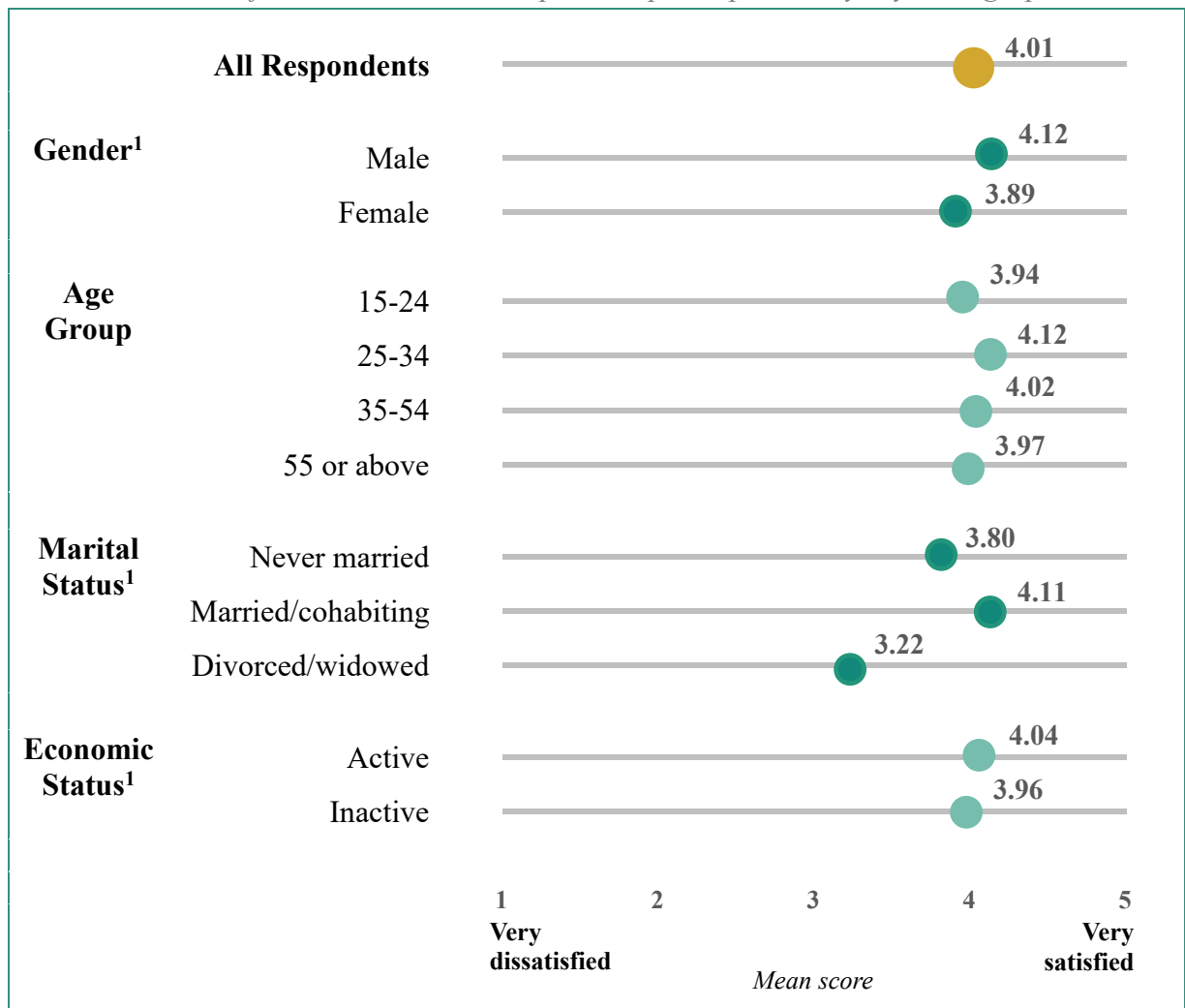


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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13.18 An index of satisfaction with relationships with children was compiled. A higher score indicated more satisfaction with relationships with children.

13.19 The mean score of satisfaction with relationships with children was 4.13 out of 5. Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents in the following groups indicated more satisfaction with their relationships with their children: aged 25 to 34 (4.25), aged 35 to 54 (4.25), married/cohabiting (4.18), and economically active (4.20) ($ps < .05$). It is worth noting that respondents who were divorced/widowed (3.89) reported lower levels of satisfaction with their relationships with their children. There was no significant gender difference.

*Chart 13.9    Satisfaction with relationships with children by key demographics in 2021*
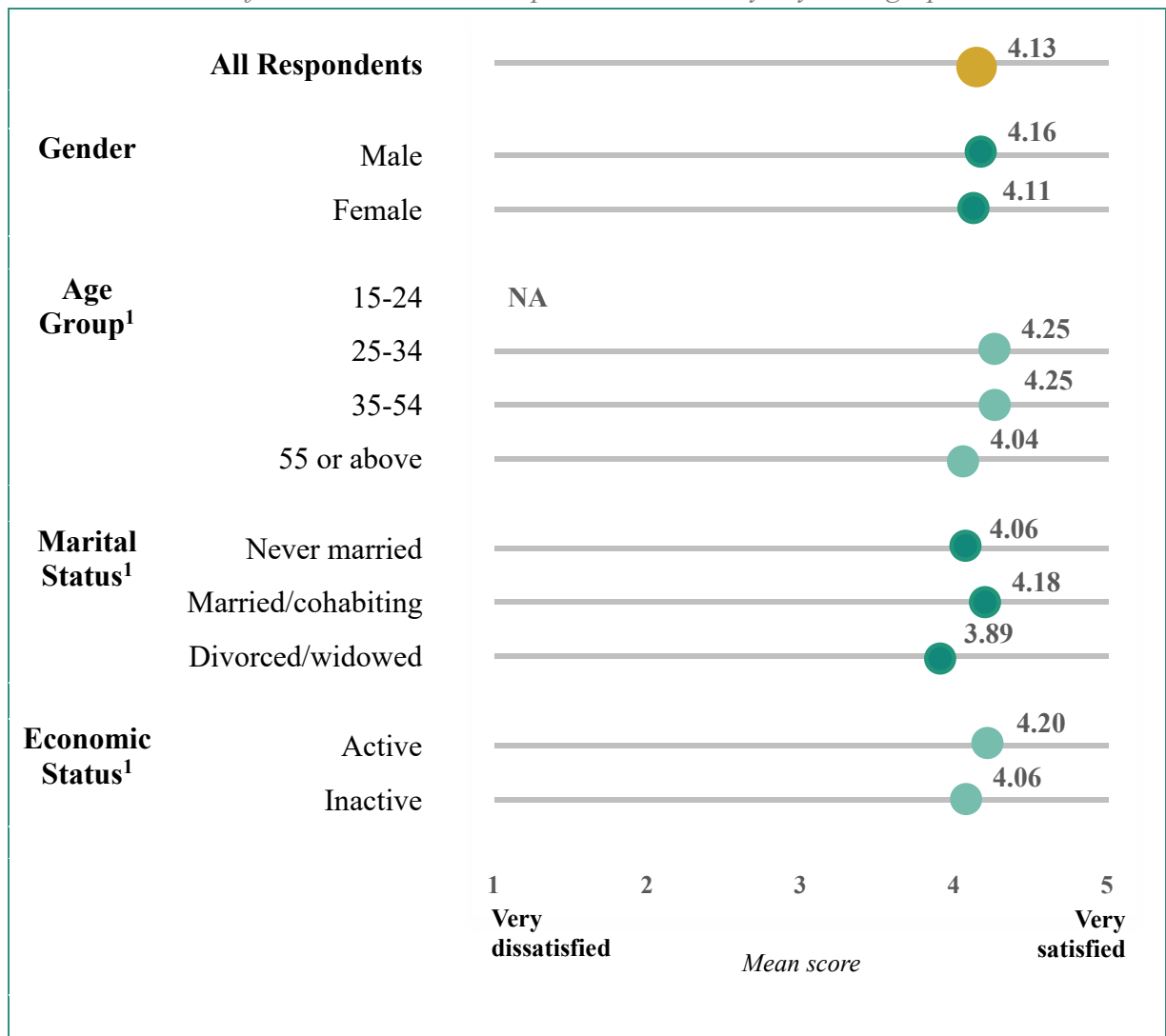


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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13.20 An index of satisfaction with relationships with parents was compiled. A higher score indicated more satisfaction with relationships with parents.

13.21 The mean score of satisfaction with relationships with parents was 3.97 out of 5. Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents who were married/cohabiting (4.03) and those who were economically active (4.00) indicated more satisfaction with their relationships with their parents (*ps* < .05). No statistically significant differences were found between gender and age groups.

*Chart 13.10    Satisfaction with relationships with parents by key demographics in 2021*
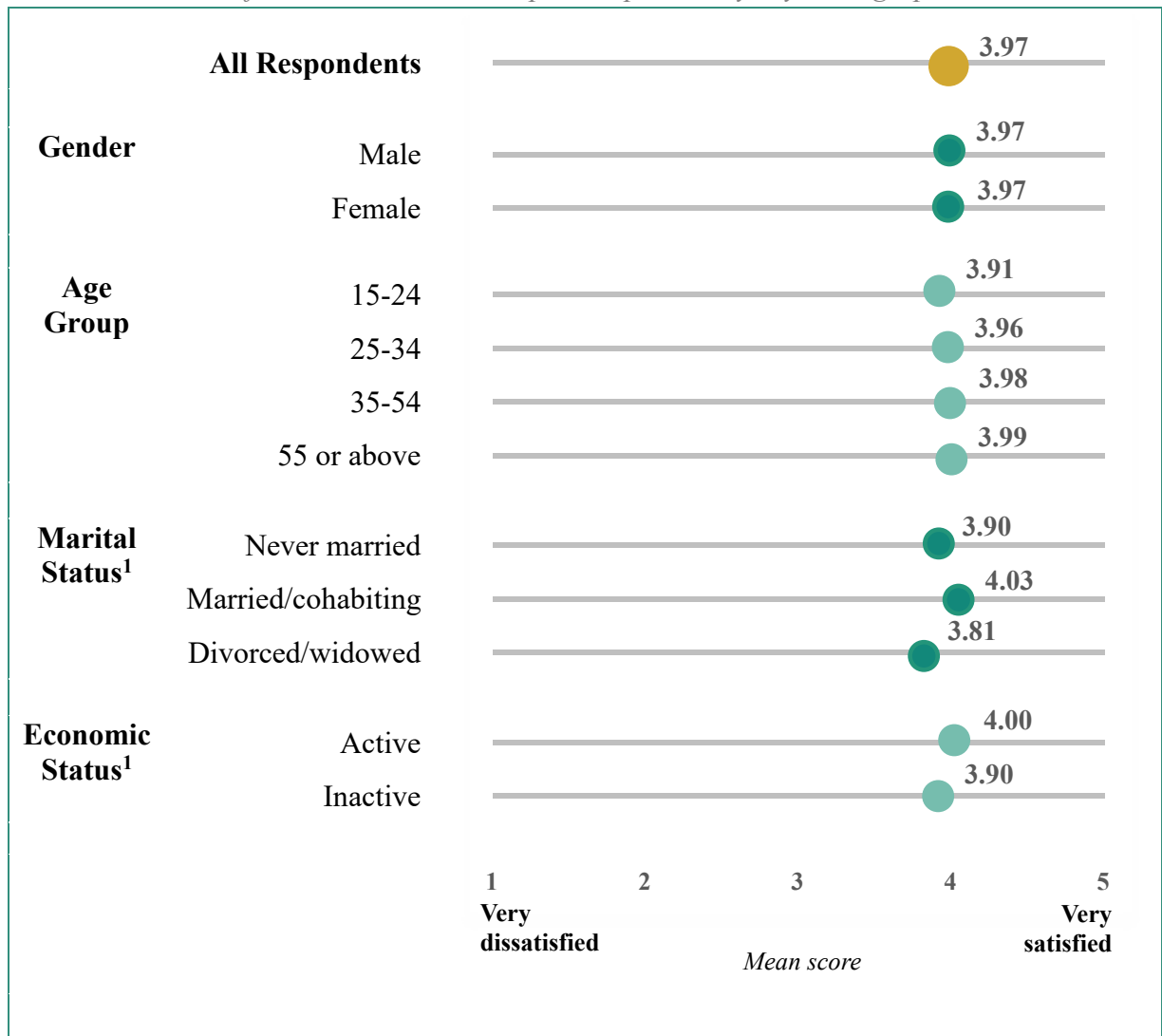
| | | Mean score |
|---|---|---|
| | **All Respondents** | 3.97 |
| **Gender** | Male | 3.97 |
| | Female | 3.97 |
| **Age Group** | 15-24 | 3.91 |
| | 25-34 | 3.96 |
| | 35-54 | 3.98 |
| | 55 or above | 3.99 |
| **Marital Status**[1] | Never married | 3.90 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 4.03 |
| | Divorced/widowed | 3.81 |
| **Economic Status**[1] | Active | 4.00 |
| | Inactive | 3.90 |

1   Very dissatisfied    2    3    4    5   Very satisfied

*Mean score*

Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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13.22  An index of satisfaction with relationships with father or mother of spouse/partner was compiled.  A higher score indicated more satisfaction with relationships with father or mother of spouse/partner.

13.23  The mean score of satisfaction with relationships with father or mother of spouse/partner was 3.76 out of 5.  Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents in the following groups indicated more satisfaction with their relationships with father or mother of their spouse/partner: male (3.84), married/cohabiting (3.84), and economically active (3.82) ($ps < .05$).  No statistically significant difference was found between age groups.

*Chart 13.11    Satisfaction with relationships with father or mother of spouse/partner by key demographics in 2021*
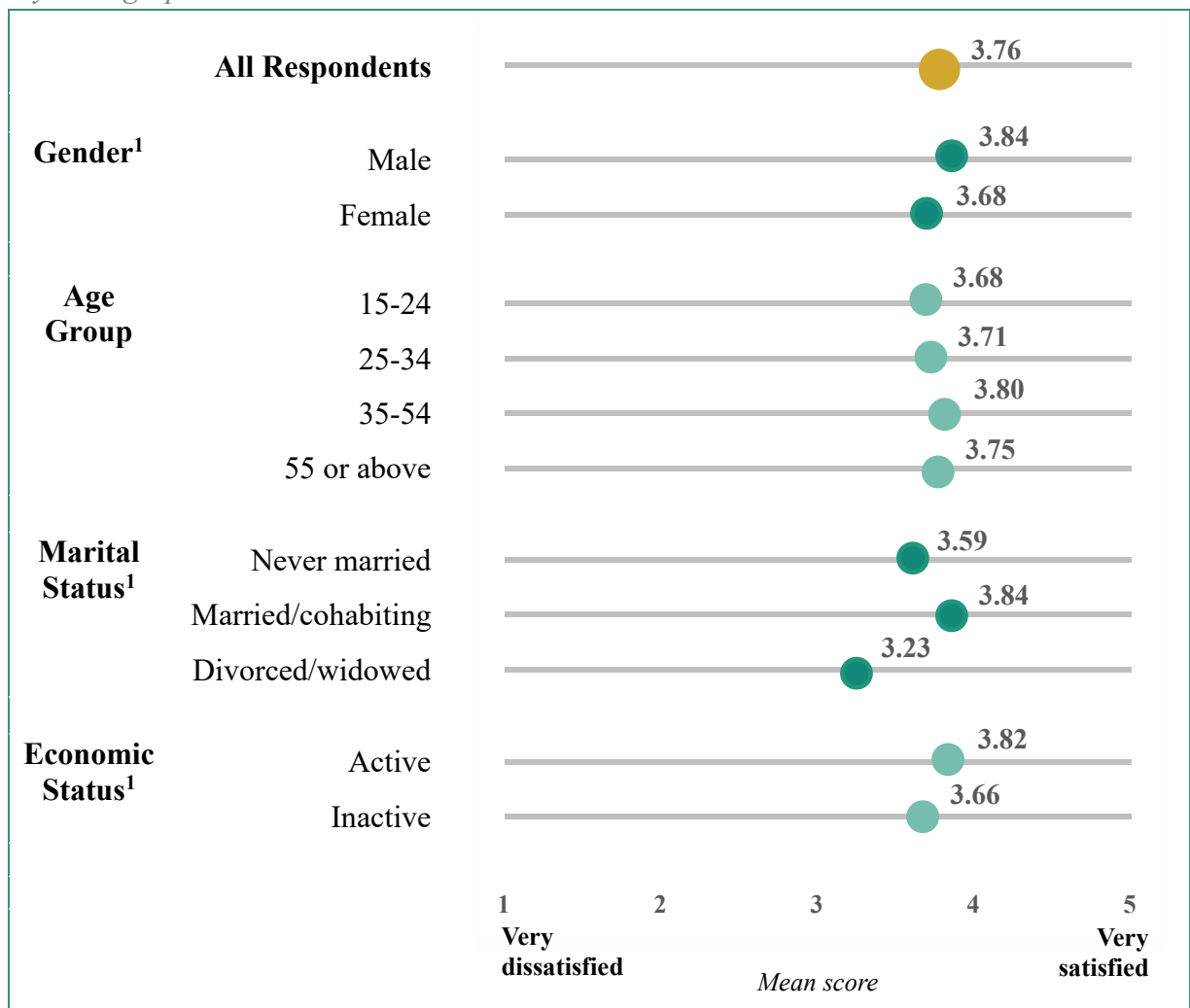


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

## *Frequency of Talking about Personal Concerns with Family Members*

13.24   Respondents were asked to indicate how frequently they talked about personal issues with their family members and between generations using a four-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = almost never to 4 = frequently).

13.25   In 2021, over half (54.3%) of the respondents sometimes (49.6%) or frequently (4.7%) talked about their personal concerns with family members and between generations.  About 30.3% and 15.4%, respectively, expressed that they did not often talk or almost never talked about their personal concerns with family members or between generations.

*Chart 13.12    Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members in 2021*



**How often do you talk about your personal concernsf with family members including family members of different generations?**

| Almost never | Not often | Sometimes | Frequently |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15.4% | 30.3% | 49.6% | 4.7% |
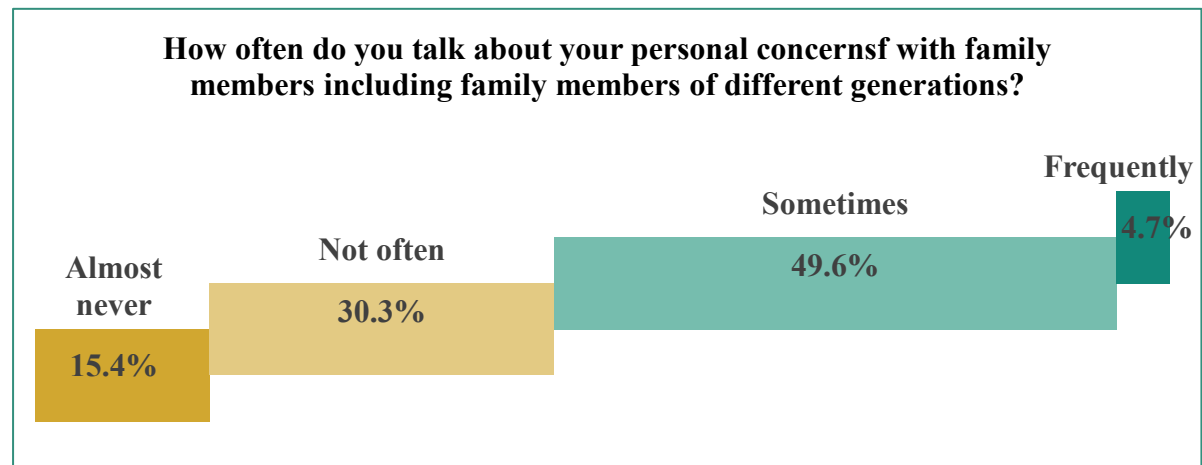
13.26　An index of frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members and between generations was compiled.  A higher score indicated that a respondent communicated more frequently with their family members and between generations.

13.27　The mean score was 2.44 out of 4.  Compared with those who were divorced/widowed (2.13), respondents who were married/cohabiting (2.53) and those who had never been married (2.38) indicated more frequently talking with family members and between generations about their personal concerns ($p < .05$).  No statistically significant differences were found between gender, age, and economic status groups.

*Chart 13.13　Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members by key demographics in 2021*



Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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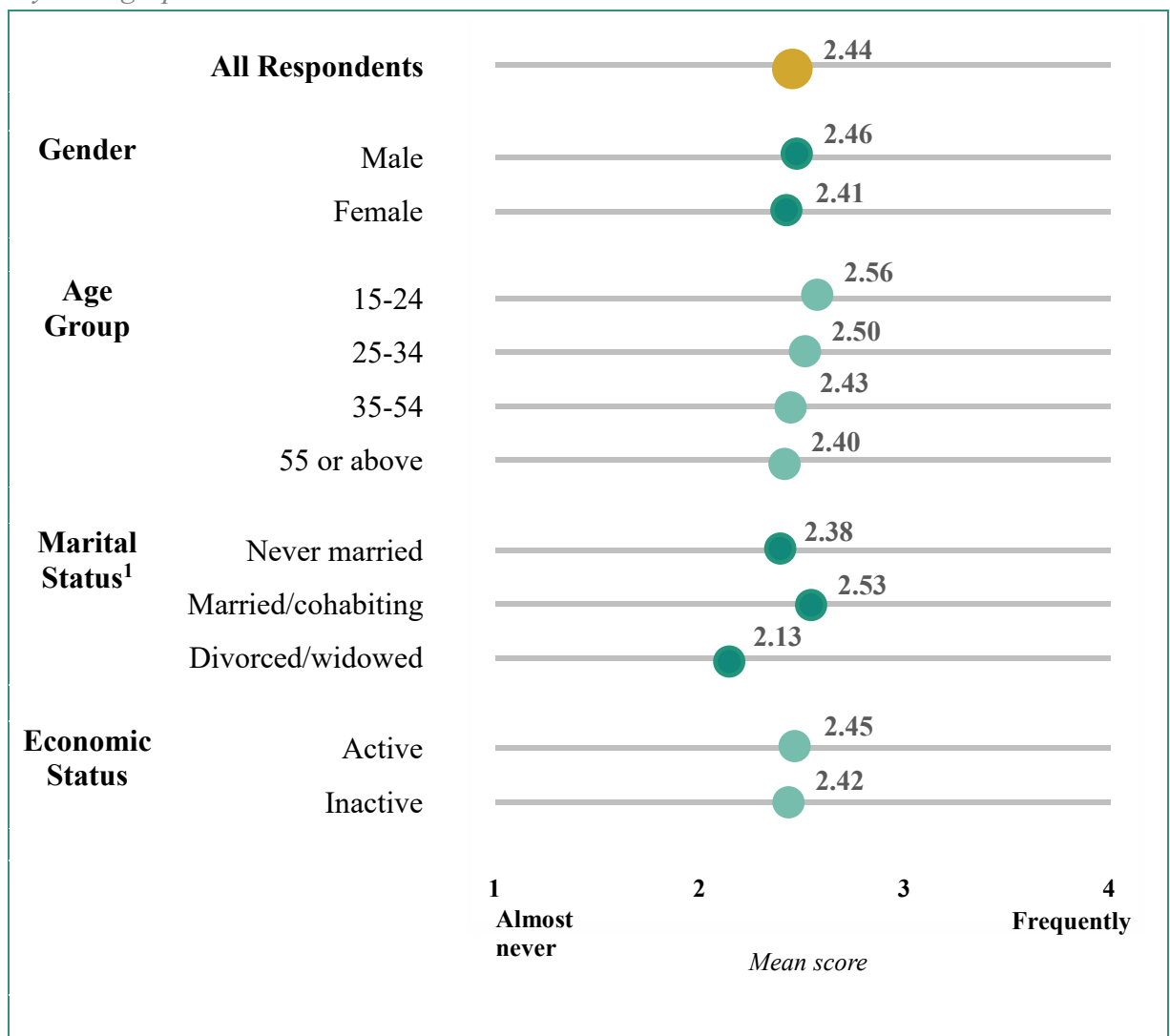
13.28 Respondents reported that they talked about personal issues with their family members and between generations less frequently. The mean score of frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members gradually decreased from 2.68 in 2011 to 2.41 in 2017, then flattened at 2.44 in 2021. This echoes the communication aspect of the CFAI, in that communication between family members worsened across the years. A decreasing trend was observed from 2011 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p < .05$).

13.29 Analysed by demographics, monotonic decreasing trends were also observed among female respondents, and those who had never been married ($ps < .001$).

*Chart 13.14    Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members across years*
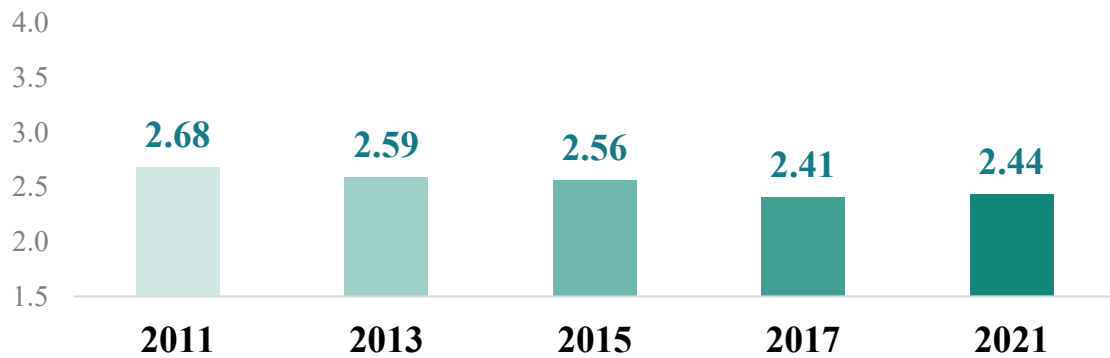


| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 2.59 | 2.52 | 2.54 | 2.38 | 2.46 | <.001 |
| | Female[2] | 2.76 | 2.65 | 2.58 | 2.43 | 2.41 | <.001 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | 2.95 | 2.71 | 2.51 | 2.40 | 2.56 | <.001 |
| | 25-34 | 2.85 | 2.69 | 2.62 | 2.44 | 2.50 | <.001 |
| | 35-54 | 2.67 | 2.61 | 2.54 | 2.42 | 2.43 | <.001 |
| | 55 or above | 2.47 | 2.46 | 2.57 | 2.38 | 2.40 | <.001 |
| Marital status | Never married[2] | 2.79 | 2.62 | 2.55 | 2.38 | 2.38 | <.001 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 2.74 | 2.63 | 2.54 | 2.42 | 2.53 | <.001 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed | 2.14 | 2.34 | 2.65 | 2.42 | 2.13 | <.001 |
| Economic status | Economically active | 2.71 | 2.59 | 2.53 | 2.42 | 2.45 | <.001 |
| | Economically inactive | 2.66 | 2.59 | 2.59 | 2.39 | 2.42 | <.001 |

Note 1 GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents. Note 2 A monotonic decreasing trend.

## Frequency of Use of Modern Technologies to Communicate with Family Members

13.30   Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they used modern technologies to communicate with family members and between generations using a four-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = almost never to 4 = frequently).

13.31   In 2021, over three quarters (76.8%) of the respondents sometimes (40.5%) or frequently (36.3%) communicated with family members, including family members of different generations, via email, social networks, and instant messaging tools (e.g. SMS, WhatsApp, etc.). About 15.1% and 8.1%, respectively, expressed that they did not often communicate or almost never communicated with family members via modern technologies.

*Chart 13.15    Frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members in 2021*

**How often do you communicate with family members including family members of different generations via email, social network and instant messaging tools (e.g. SMS, WhatsApp, etc.)?**

| | | | Frequently |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Sometimes | 36.3% |
| | Not often | 40.5% | |
| Almost never | 15.1% | | |
| 8.1% | | | |
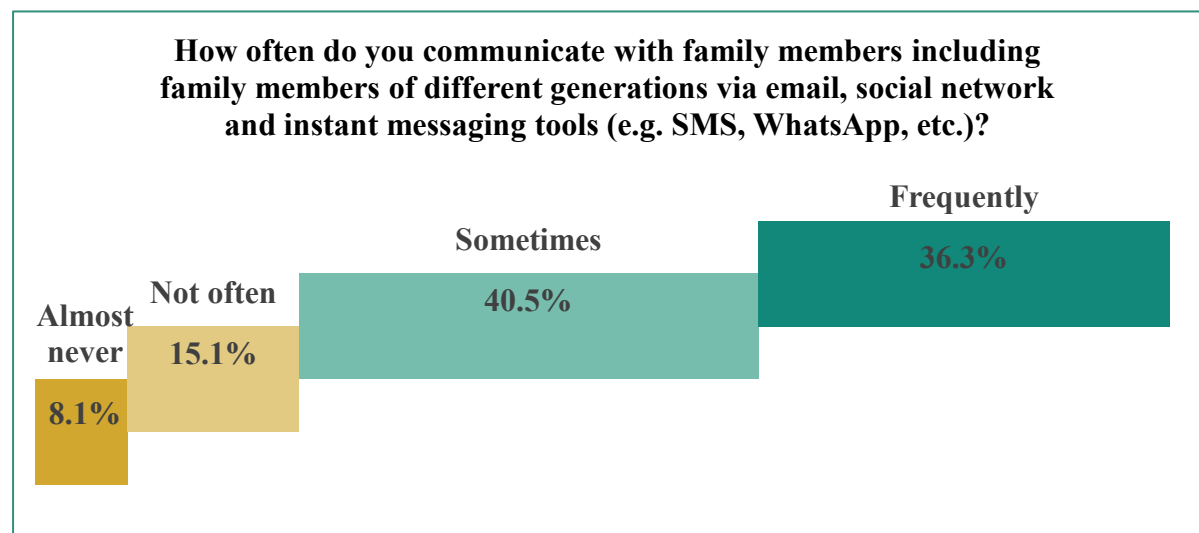
13.32 An index of frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members was compiled. A higher score indicated modern technologies were used for communication more frequently.

13.33 The mean score was 3.05 out of 4. Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents in the following groups indicated less frequent use of modern technologies for communication with their family members and between generations: aged 55 or above (2.94), divorced/widowed (2.70), and economically inactive (2.92) ($ps < .05$). There was no significant gender difference.

*Chart 13.16    Frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members by key demographics in 2021*
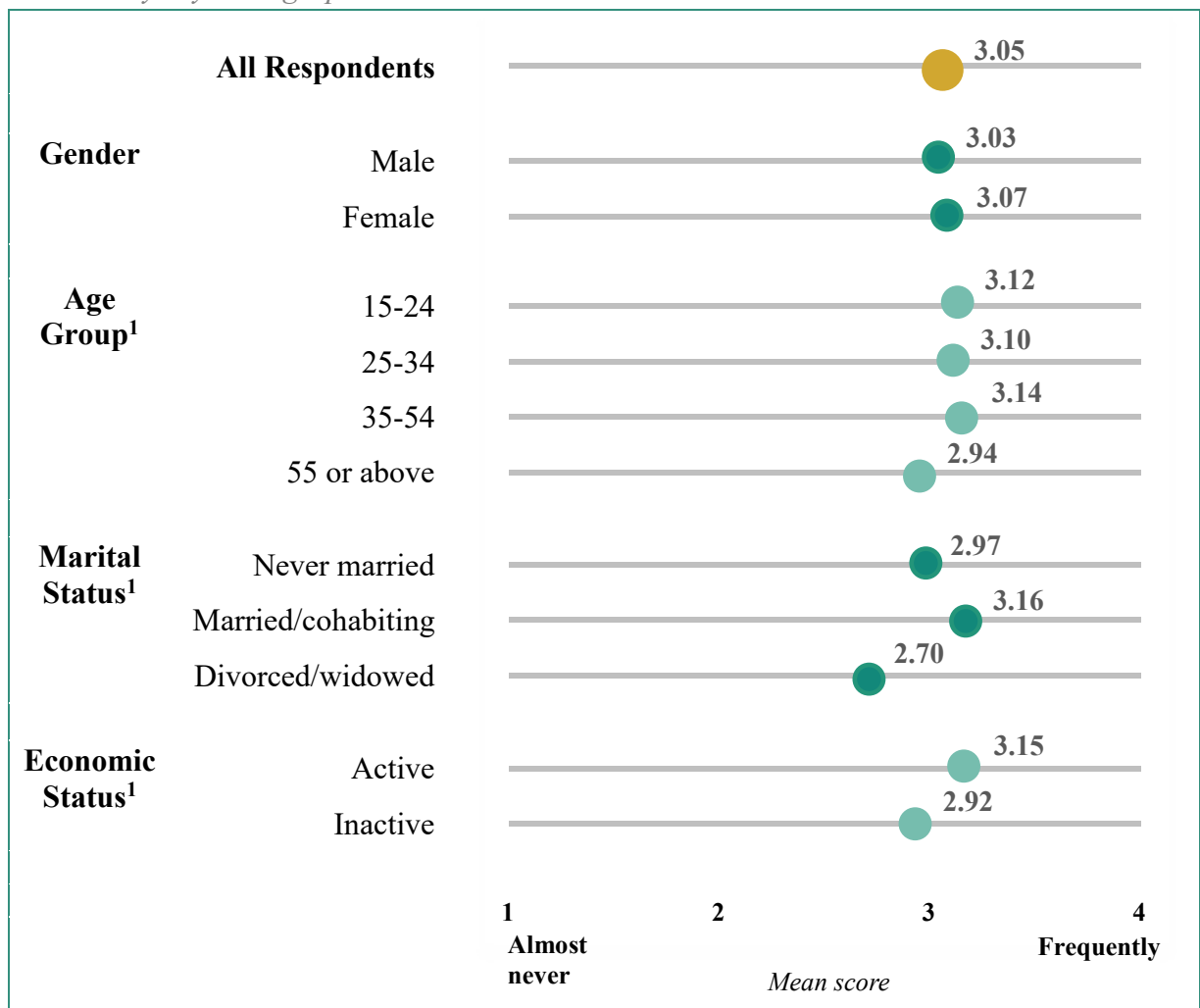


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

13.34 With the rapid development of mobile devices, an increasing number of respondents used modern technologies (e.g. SMS, WhatsApp) to communicate with family members and between generations, and a significant surge in 2021 was observed. The mean score of frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members increased from 1.90 in 2013 to 3.05 in 2021. An increasing trend was observed from 2013 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p < .05$).

13.35 Analysed by demographics, monotonic increasing trends were observed among those who were aged 55 or above, those who were divorced/separated/widowed and those who were economically inactive ($ps < .001$).

Chart 13.17    Frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members across years
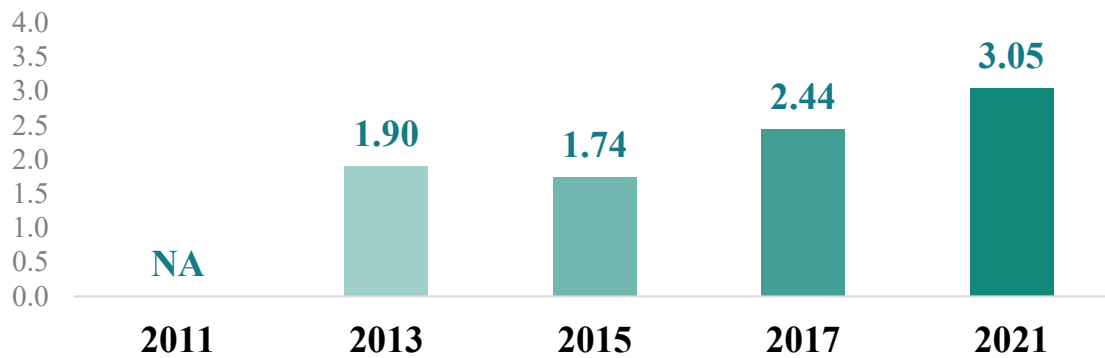


| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | - | 1.87 | 1.71 | 2.39 | 3.03 | <.001 |
| | Female | - | 1.92 | 1.76 | 2.47 | 3.07 | <.001 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | - | 2.24 | 1.84 | 2.76 | 3.12 | <.001 |
| | 25-34 | - | 2.30 | 1.78 | 2.79 | 3.10 | <.001 |
| | 35-54 | - | 2.01 | 1.74 | 2.56 | 3.14 | <.001 |
| | 55 or above[2] | - | 1.41 | 1.67 | 2.04 | 2.94 | <.001 |
| Marital status | Never married | - | 2.12 | 1.82 | 2.59 | 2.97 | <.001 |
| | Married/cohabiting | - | 1.87 | 1.71 | 2.46 | 3.16 | <.001 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed[2] | - | 1.55 | 1.63 | 2.00 | 2.70 | <.001 |
| Economic status | Economically active | - | 2.08 | 1.72 | 2.62 | 3.15 | <.001 |
| | Economically inactive[2] | - | 1.74 | 1.76 | 2.23 | 2.92 | <.001 |

Note 1 GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents.  Note 2 A monotonic increasing trend.

## Communication with Family Members

13.36    Respondents were asked to indicate whether, in a normal week, they talked with their father, mother, and spouse/partner about something important to them.

13.37    In 2021, among the respondents with a spouse/partner, about two thirds (67.2%) communicated with their spouse/partner about something important to them in a normal week, whereas 32.8% did not.  Respectively, 36.9% and 20.8% of the respondents expressed that they would communicate with their mother and father about something important to them in a normal week.

*Chart 13.18    Communication with family member*

**Do you communicate with family members?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Father | 79.2% (No) | 20.8% (Yes) |
| Mother | 63.1% (No) | 36.9% (Yes) |
| Spouse/partner | 32.8% (No) | 67.2% (Yes) |

■ No          ■ Yes
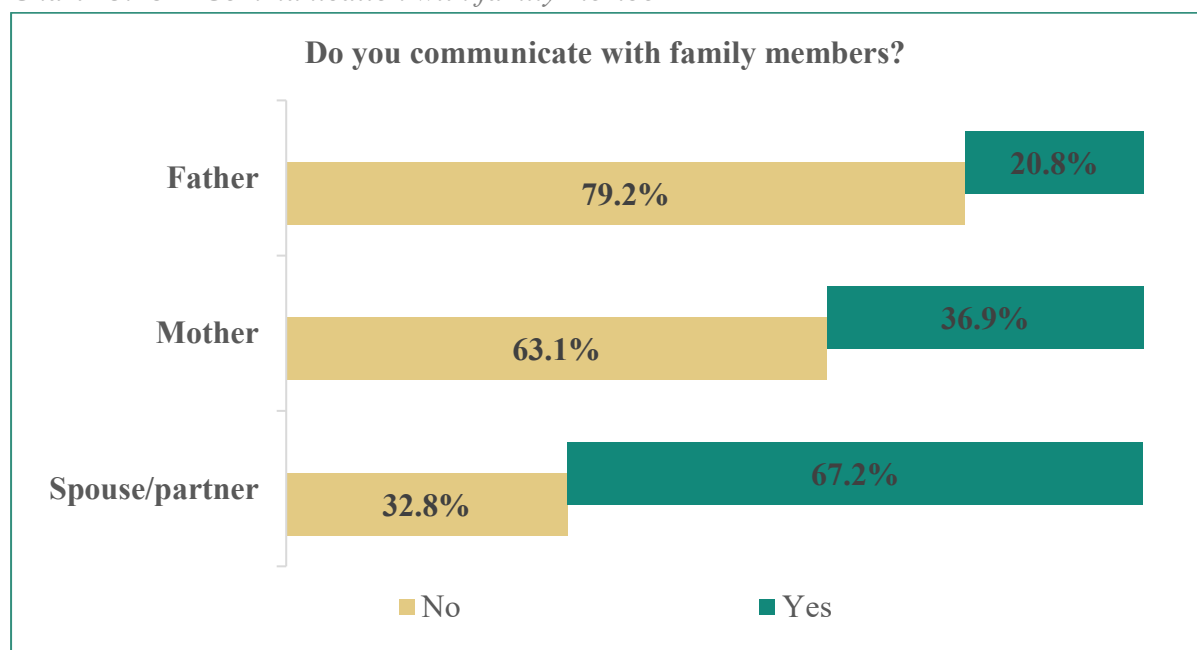
13.38    About 20.8% of the respondents reported that they communicated with their father about something important to them in a normal week.  Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of the respondents who were aged 15 to 24 (30.1%) and those who had never been married (22.5%) communicated with their father about something important to them (*ps* < .05).  No statistically significant differences were found between gender and economic status groups.

*Chart 13.19    Communication with father by key demographics in 2021*



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **All Respondents** | 20.8% |
| **Gender** | Male | 21.3% |
| | Female | 20.3% |
| **Age Group[1]** | 15-24 | 30.1% |
| | 25-34 | 24.1% |
| | 35-54 | 22.5% |
| | 55 or above | 12.3% |
| **Marital Status[1]** | Never married | 22.5% |
| | Married/cohabiting | 20.9% |
| | Divorced/widowed | 13.0% |
| **Economic Status** | Active | 21.4% |
| | Inactive | 19.7% |
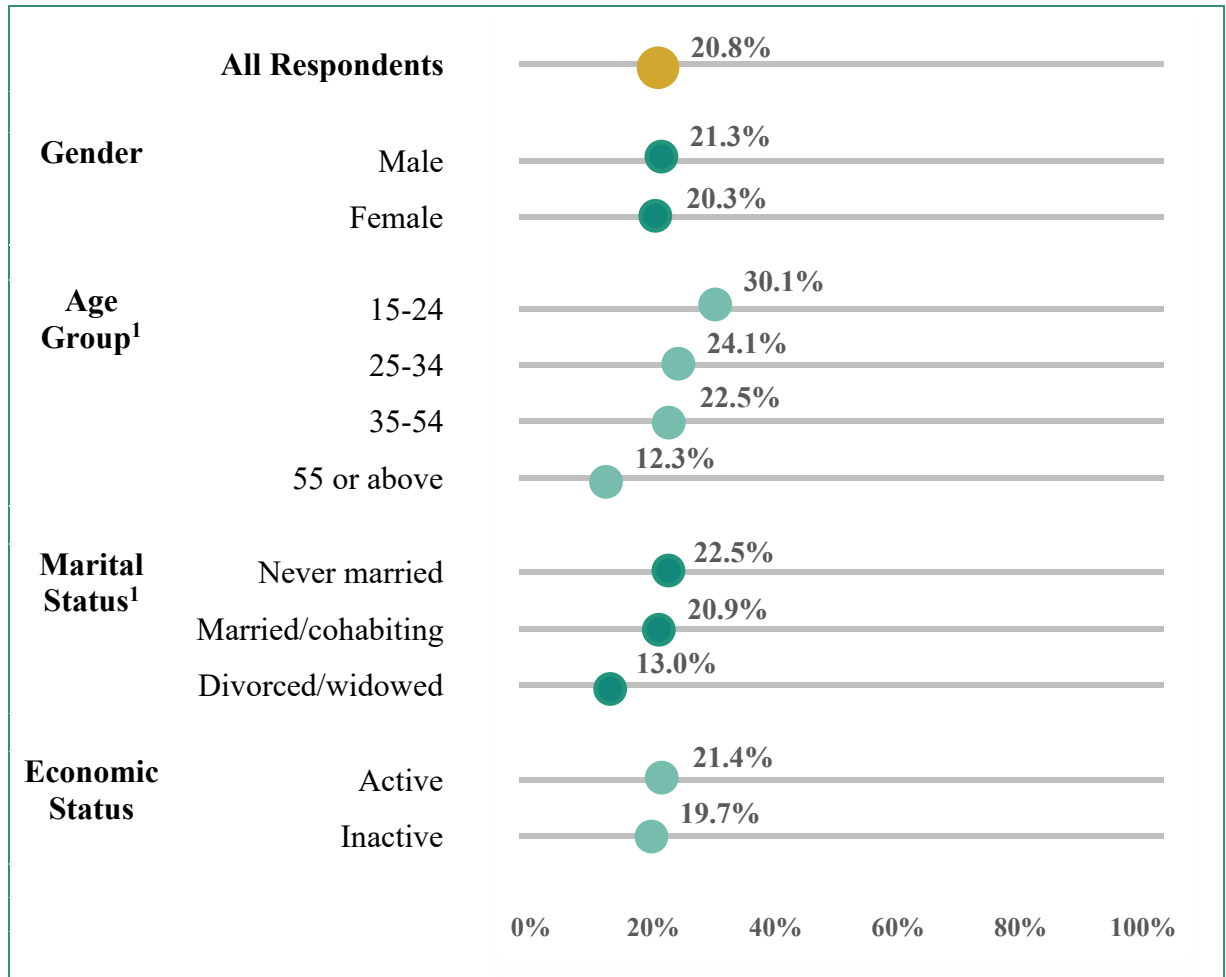
Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

13.39 About 36.9% of the respondents reported that they communicated with their mother about something important to them in a normal week.  Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of respondents in the following groups communicated with their mother about something important to them: female (40.4%), aged 15 to 24 (55.7%), and never been married (44.7%) (*ps* < .05).  No statistically significant difference was found between economic status groups.

*Chart 13.20    Communication with mother by key demographics in 2021*
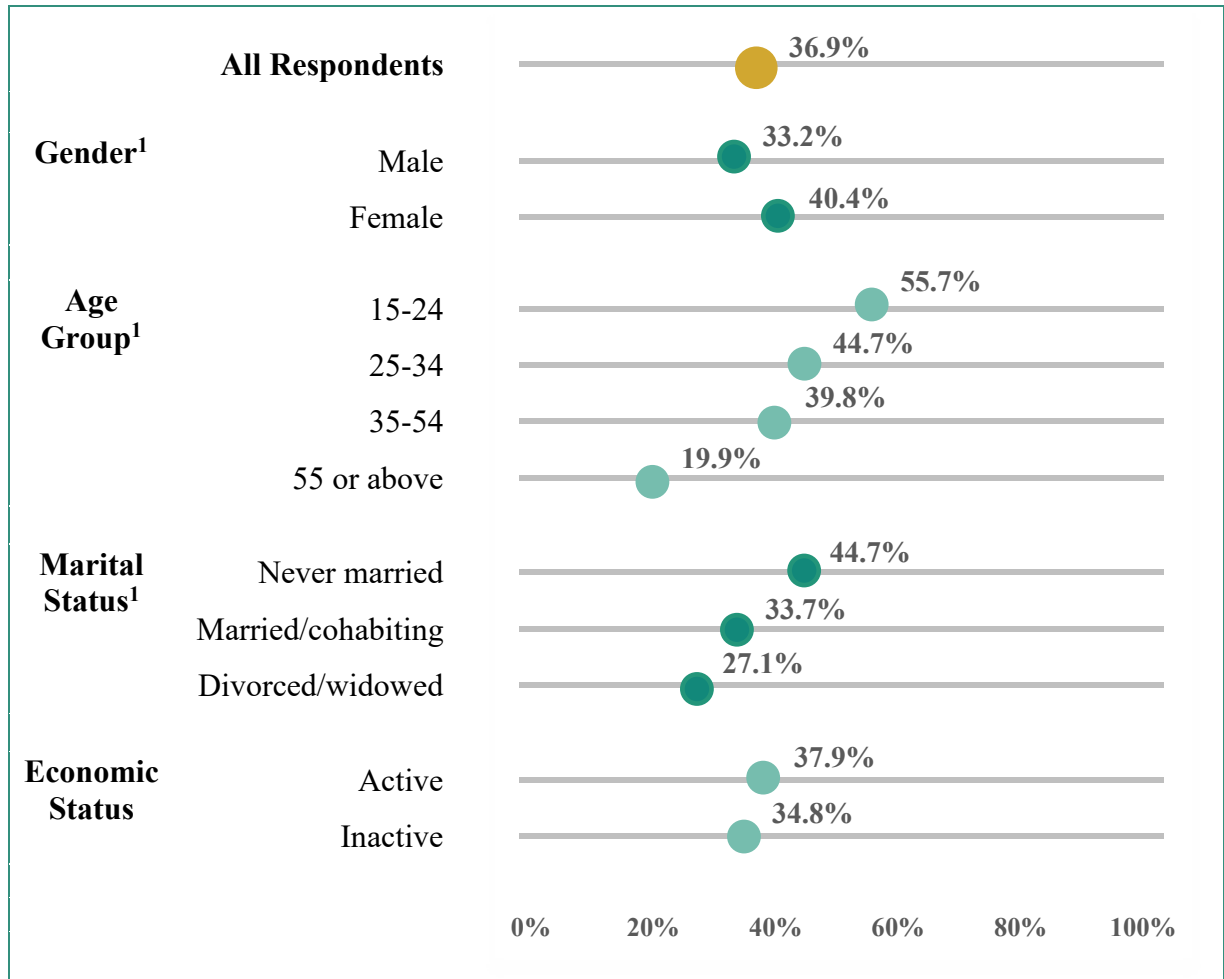
13.40 About 67.2% of the respondents reported that they communicated with their spouse/partner about something important to them in a normal week. Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of respondents in the following groups communicated with their spouse/partner about something important to them: male (71.4%), aged 35-54 (71.3%), and married/cohabiting (74.8%) ($ps < .05$). No statistically significant difference was found between economic status groups.

*Chart 13.21    Communication with spouse/partner by key demographics in 2021*
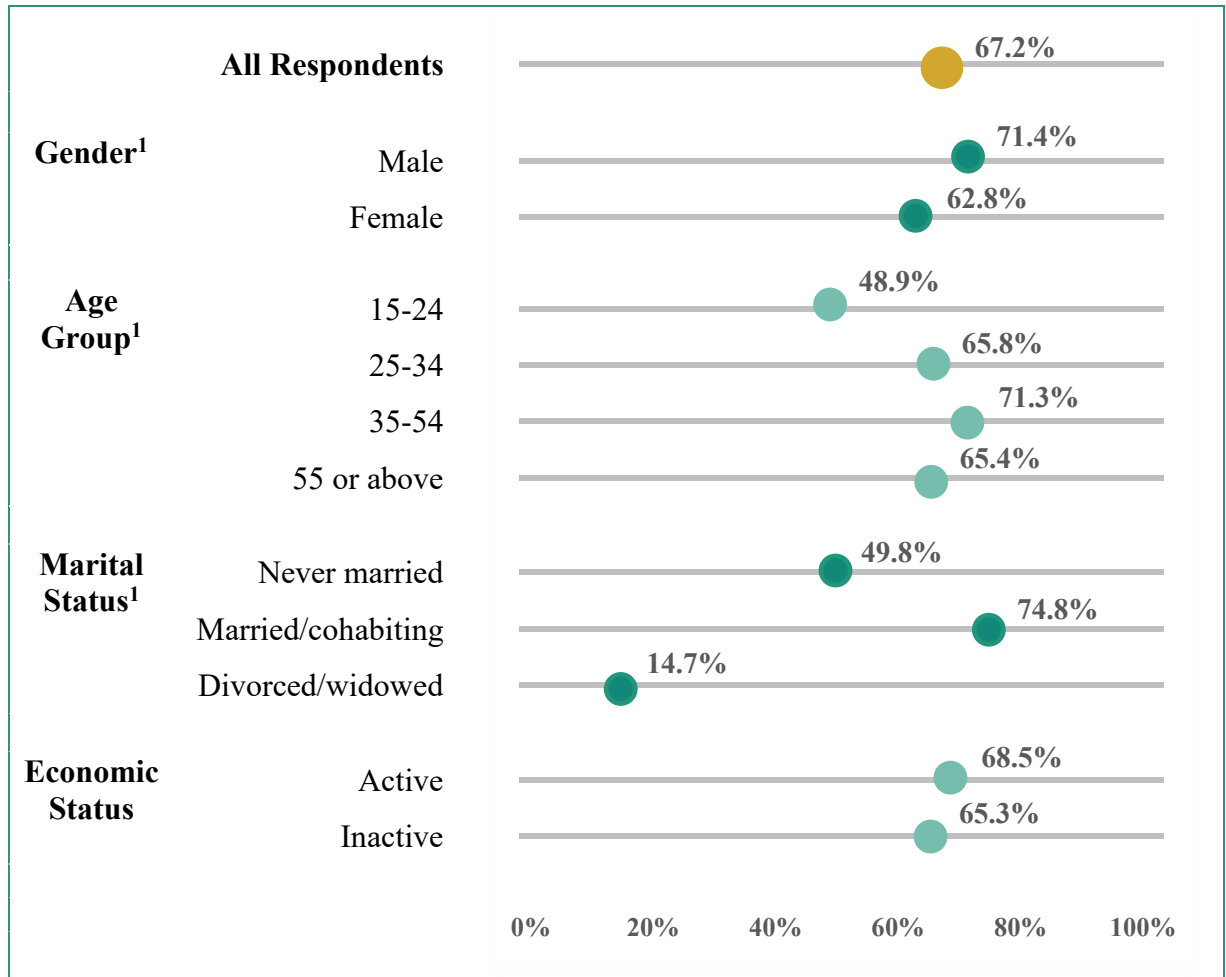
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **All Respondents** | | 67.2% |
| **Gender**[1] | Male | 71.4% |
| | Female | 62.8% |
| **Age Group**[1] | 15-24 | 48.9% |
| | 25-34 | 65.8% |
| | 35-54 | 71.3% |
| | 55 or above | 65.4% |
| **Marital Status**[1] | Never married | 49.8% |
| | Married/cohabiting | 74.8% |
| | Divorced/widowed | 14.7% |
| **Economic Status** | Active | 68.5% |
| | Inactive | 65.3% |

Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

## Views Collected from In-depth Discussions

13.41 Focus group discussions were conducted to collect views with 18 participants aged 15 to 29, 23 parents and eight grandparents to understand their communication approaches with family members, explore the difficulties encountered during communications and their solutions.

## Communication with Family Members for the Participants Aged 15 to 18

13.42 Most of the participants aged 15 to 18 stated that they usually talked with their mothers about topics related to schools and daily lives. Apart from parents, they usually communicated with siblings because they mostly lived together, and they could interact face-to-face frequently. They would talk about topics on their interesting experiences with friends, favourite idols, songs and dramas, etc. When they grew up together, they could understand each other as they shared similar experiences.

13.43 Compared with parents, the participants aged 15 to 18 felt more relaxed and pleasant with siblings. Although they might bicker with each other sometimes, they were caring about each other.

13.44 In addition, the participants aged 15 to 18 expressed that though they would have conflicts with their parents resulting from the divergence of values, they did not encounter communication difficulties with their parents.
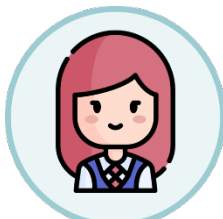


**Youth 6**

I will talk with my little sister because we are at similar ages and have similar experiences, so we understand each other well. I feel more relaxed and happier when talking about something in mind. Compared with parents, I do not need to spend much time to talk about how the things happened before I express my feelings.

## Communication with Family Members for the Participants Aged 19 to 29

13.45 Most of the participants aged 19 to 29 agreed that face-to-face communication was a better communication approach. Some of them stated that despite the importance of face-to-face communication, it was also important to communicate by instant-messaging tools which enabled sharing of interesting activities or contents on online family groups, thus aroused the conversations between family members, which even made it possible to do the activities together later.

13.46 Two of the participants aged 19 to 29 admitted that they had difficulties to communicate with their fathers due to the divergence of values on the standards on school performances, life planning and political stance.

> Although face-to-face communication was important, it was also important to communicate by phones. It is because when we see something fun or interesting, we can share it on the family group and discuss together, and my family members will propose to do it together next time.

**Youth 12**

## Communication with Family Members for Parents

13.47 Most of the participants who were parents were satisfied with the communication with their children because their children were mostly young. The parent participants were getting along with their children on daily lives including teaching homework, playing sports, out-going activities, etc.

13.48 Parent participants with older children, on the other hand, stated that they would get along with their children as friends. They believed that if they communicated with their children in an authoritative way, the children would gradually not share their own things with them and even estranged them.

13.49 Regard the communication difficulties, some parent participants had either full-time or part-time jobs, they shared that they had spent not much time to communicate with the children. Hence, they would try to stay with their children during holidays as more time as possible. They agreed that communication was important in relationships. They needed to talk openly and be good listeners with their children.

13.50 Further, some parent participants with more than one child reflected that they would pay more attention on taking care of their youngest children due to their age and lower self-care abilities, sometimes, they might not consider the needs of their elder children.

13.51 Three parent participants expressed that their children had special educational needs such as hyperactivity disorder, speech and language impairment and autism, etc, which made them difficult to communicate with their children. As the children were difficult to express themselves, the parents needed to spend more time to communicate with them and understand their needs. After a long-time communication deficit, some of them argued that their emotion states or relationship with children were affected. The frustration they had even made them to disregard the needs of their children intentionally. For those who had other children on normal condition, they stated that the children would complain about why they spent most of their time on their siblings with special educational needs, resulting from an adverse effect on their relationship with other children.

**Parent 5**

> I think I am the one with the most difficulties because my son is diagnosed with autism and studies in special school. I spend 6 hours a day to look after him. As a result, I can only spend little time on my daughter. She had complained to me about why I always paid attention to my son and forgot her. Sometimes I really ignored her and only helped her to do revision before examination. Most of the time, I need to help my son to learn spelling and can only talk with my daughter when he is asleep.

## *Communication with Family Members for Grandparents*

13.52 Most of the participants who were grandparents were satisfied with their relationship with children or grandchildren who typically communicated with their families face-to-face. However, due to COVID-19 pandemic, they had fewer chances to meet with their family members or relatives considering the risk of infection and social distancing measures which adversely affected the family communication.

13.53 Some grandparent participants stated that although they had fewer chances to meet with their family members or relatives, they were making use of communication software such as WhatsApp, FaceTime and Zoom for communication. It enabled them to see their children or grandchildren easily by video calls, to understand what happen to them daily and to enrich their conversation. Some grandparent participants further indicated that while they would communicate with their children by phone calls typically, it was more convenient to contact them by instant-messaging tools like WhatsApp now. Even though their children were working, they would still reply to them when they were free. They believed that more communication approaches and methods were beneficial for improving the relationship with each other.

**Grandparent 7**

I always made video calls during the pandemic. For example, my son or my daughter-in-law will show me how my grandchildren were. Although sometimes my parenting approaches maybe different from my daughter-in-law's, still our relationship is good, and she will teach me how to use my phone which can increase our interactions.

It (family relationship) is better now. By video calls, I can see their living situations and what they are doing. Now we always have a chat by video calls which make me feel like we are being together just like the way we see each other face-to-face.

**Grandparent 5**

# 14.  Theme 5 – Work-Family Balance

## Overview

14.1     The previous rounds of the Survey demonstrated that nearly half of those at work reported stress in balancing work and family life.  Apart from exploring attitudes toward work-family balance, four questions related to work-family balance, namely the levels of difficulty and stress resulting from efforts to meet the competing demands of work and family life[22], satisfaction with amount of time spent with family, and satisfaction with overall working conditions, were adopted.  In addition, one question was designed to explore family-friendly policies and practices.

14.2     The alphas of attitudes toward work-family balance were larger than 0.7, indicating a satisfactory level of reliability and internal consistency.  Table 14.1 presents the dimensions and details of work-family balance.

Table 14.1     Dimensions of Theme 5 – Work-Family Balance

| Theme | Dimensions | Year | | | | | No. of items | α | Index construct? | Single item? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | | | | |
| 5A | Attitudes toward work-family balance | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | - | ☑ | 6 | > 0.7 | ☑ | - |
| 5B | Level of difficulty in achieving work-family balance | - | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |
| 5C | Level of stress in achieving work-family balance | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |
| 5D | Satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |
| 5E | Satisfaction with overall working conditions | - | - | - | ☑ | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |
| 5F | Family-friendly policies and practices | - | - | - | - | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |

## *Attitudes toward Work-Family Balance*

14.3  The index regarding attitudes toward balancing work and family life consisted of six question items ($\alpha > .07$), including "reducing the number of hours I spend at work is simply not an option", "I want to work more, but am afraid it would hurt my family life", "at this stage in my career, my job has to be my first priority", and "I enjoy going to work because it gets me away from my family". Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a list of statements using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

14.4  In 2021, about two thirds (66.7%) of the respondents shared that they had no choice to reduce their work hours, whereas 17.2% did not encounter this situation.

14.5  About 42.4% of the respondents expressed that they would not put work as their first priority at this stage, 21.6% did not provide views, and 36.0% stated that they would put work as their first priority.

14.6  Over one third of the respondents wanted to spend more time on working but were afraid it would affect their family life (41.7%), and they often felt guilty for spending time on work but not getting along with their family (37.0%), whereas about two fifths did not experience these two situations.

14.7  About 36.1% of the respondents agreed that they wanted to spend more time with their family, but they were afraid it would reduce promotion opportunities, whereas 42.2% disagreed.

14.8  About 62.9% of the respondents disagreed that they enjoyed working because it kept them away from the family, whereas 21.1% admitted that this was the case for them.

*Chart 14.2    Attitudes toward work-family balance in 2021*

**I have no choice to reduce my working hours**

Disagree
17.2%

Neutral
16.1%

Agree
66.7%

**At this stage, I will put my work as the first priority**

Disagree
36.0%

Neutral
21.6%

Agree
42.4%

**I want to spend more time on working, but I am afraid it will affect my family life**

Disagree
36.7%

Neutral
21.7%

Agree
41.7%

**I often feel guilty for spending time on working but not getting along with my family**

Disagree
40.5%

Neutral
22.5%

Agree
37.0%

**I want to spend more time with my family, but I am afraid it will reduce my promotion opportunities**

Disagree
42.2%

Neutral
21.7%

Agree
36.1%

**I enjoy working because it keeps me away from my family**

Disagree
62.9%

Neutral
16.0%

Agree
21.1%

14.9 An index of attitudes toward work-family balance was compiled. All items were reverse coded. A higher score indicated a healthy work-family balance. Scores by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and whether the respondents had children under the age of 18, were also formulated and analysed.

14.10 The mean score of attitudes toward work-family balance was 2.98 out of 5. Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents who were aged 25 to 34 (2.84) and those who had children under the age of 18 (2.76) indicated a poorer work-family balance ($ps < .05$). Those respondents aged 55 or above (3.23) showed a better work-family balance. No statistically significant differences were found between gender and marital status groups.

*Chart 14.3    Attitudes toward work-family balance by key demographics in 2021*
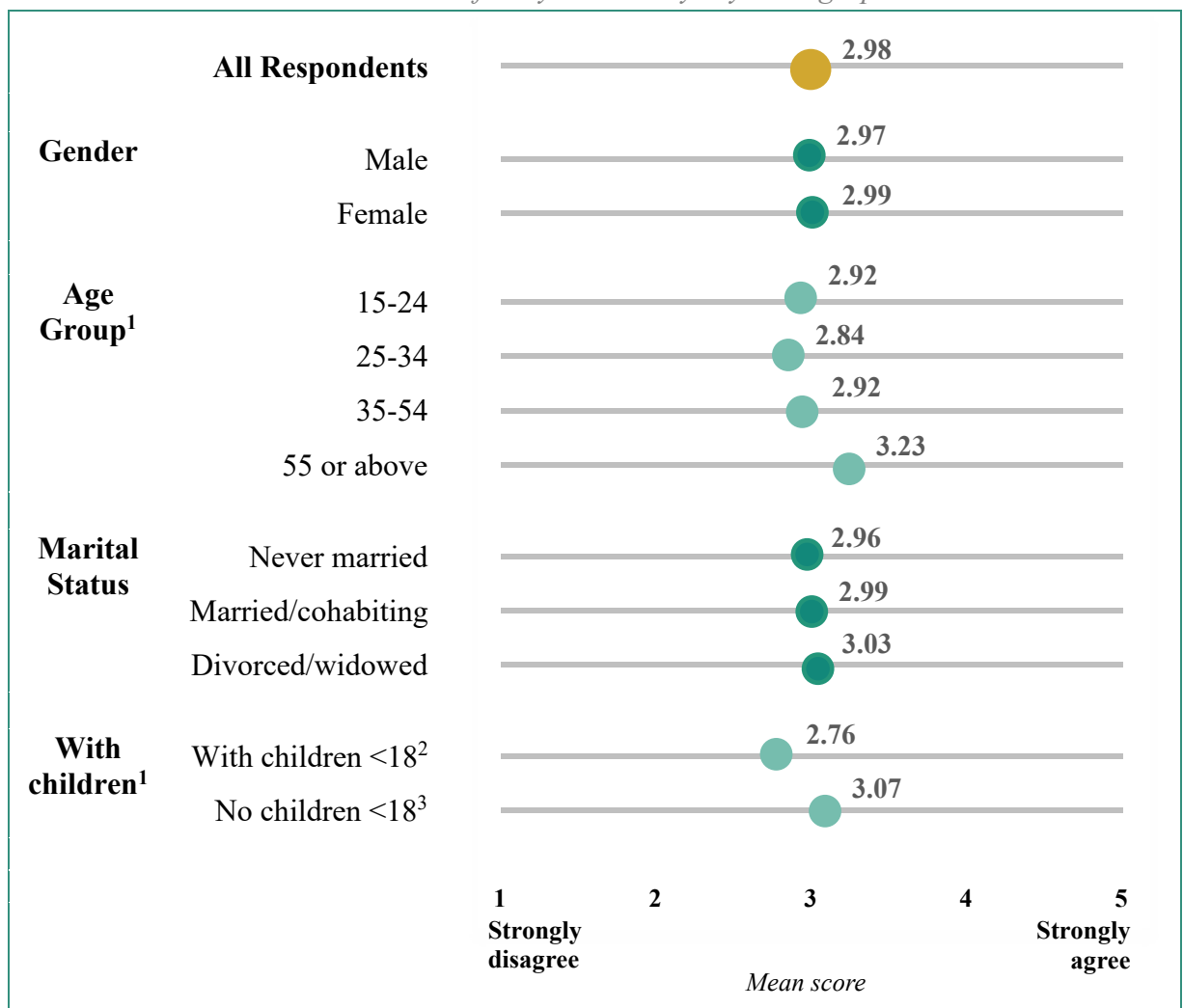


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups
Note [2] "Respondents with children < 18" refers to those who had children under the age of 18.
Note [3] "Respondents with no children < 18" refers to those non-parent respondents or those parent respondents who had children aged 18 or above.

14.11 The mean score of attitudes toward work-family balance dropped from 2.87 in 2011 to 2.71 in 2013, then increased to 2.98 in 2021. An increasing trend was observed from 2013 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p < .05$). The results indicated that respondents' attitudes toward work-family balance had improved. Analysed by demographics, though significant differences were found in some mean scores across the years, no particular trend was observed.

*Chart 14.4    Attitudes toward work-family balance across years*
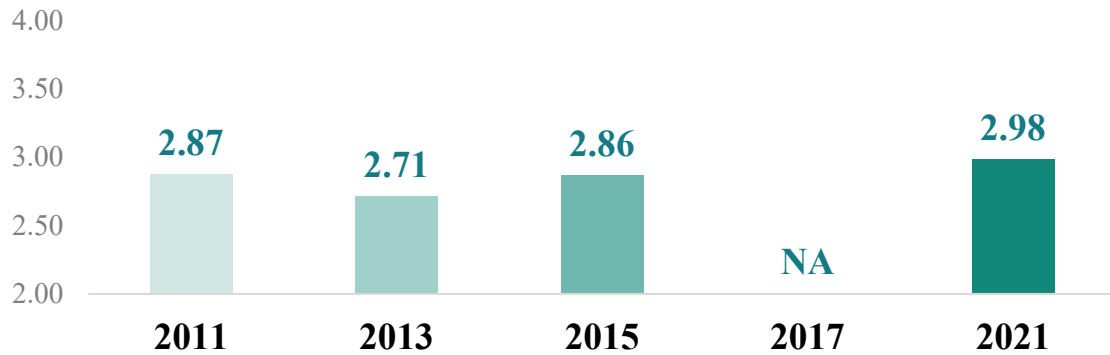


|  |  | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 2.92 | 2.80 | 2.97 | - | 2.97 | <.001 |
|  | Female | 2.81 | 2.60 | 2.73 | - | 2.99 | <.001 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | 3.04 | 2.77 | 2.77 | - | 2.92 | .049 |
|  | 25-34 | 2.98 | 2.73 | 3.05 | - | 2.84 | .019 |
|  | 35-54 | 2.86 | 2.74 | 2.83 | - | 2.92 | <.001 |
|  | 55 or above | 2.59 | 2.57 | 2.69 | - | 3.23 | <.001 |
| Marital status | Never married | 2.98 | 2.77 | 2.97 | - | 2.96 | .073 |
|  | Married/cohabiting | 2.82 | 2.69 | 2.80 | - | 2.99 | <.001 |
|  | Divorced/separated/widowed | 2.76 | 2.62 | 2.79 | - | 3.03 | <.001 |
| With Children | With children (<18) | - | 2.74 | 2.84 | - | 2.76 | .164 |
|  | No children (<18) | - | 2.57 | 2.87 | - | 3.07 | <.001 |

Note [1] GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and with children under the age of 18.

## Level of Difficulty in Achieving Work-Family balance

14.12    Respondents who worked were asked to indicate the level of difficulty they experienced in trying to meet the competing demands of work and family life using a four-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = very easy to 4 = very difficult).

14.13    In 2021, about half (50.6%) of the respondents who worked reported that it was very difficult (7.6%) or quite difficult (43.0%) to balance work and family life. On the other hand, about half (49.4%) found it easy or very easy to achieve work-family balance.

14.14    Across the years, the proportion of respondents experiencing difficulties in achieving a work-family balance increased from 38.1% in 2013 to 50.6% in 2021.

*Chart 14.5      Level of difficulty in achieving work-family balance across years*



| Year | Very difficult | Quite difficult | Quite easy | Very easy | Refused to answer |
|------|----------------|-----------------|------------|-----------|-------------------|
| 2021 | 7.6% | 43.0% | 40.4% | 9.0% | |
| 2017 | 4.5% | 30.0% | 50.8% | 13.5% | 1.1% |
| 2015 | 4.9% | 34.6% | 38.6% | 18.5% | 3.4% |
| 2013 | 5.7% | 32.4% | 43.9% | 13.7% | 4.3% |

Legend: ■ Very difficult  ■ Quite difficult  ■ Quite easy  ■ Very easy  ■ Refused to answer
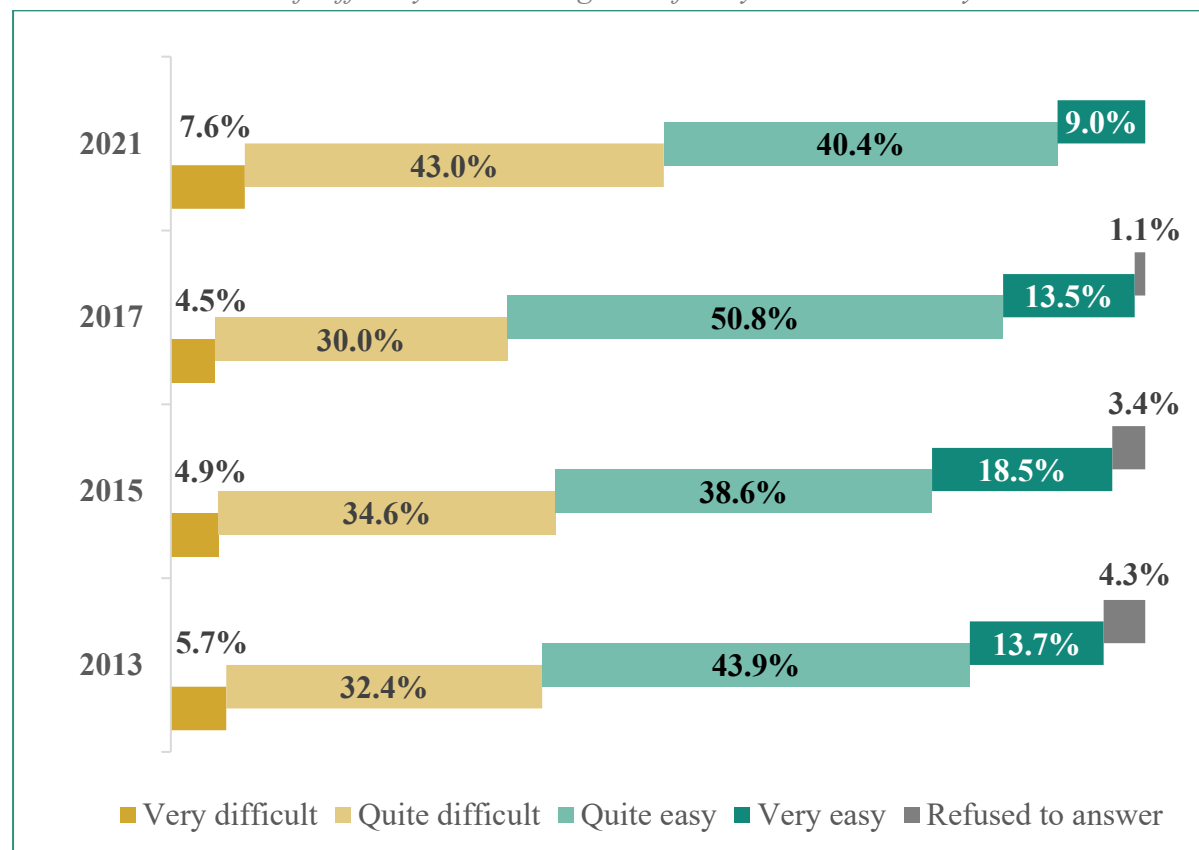
14.15 Details of the proportions of respondents who worked experienced difficulties (very difficult and quite difficult) in achieving a work-family balance were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and whether the respondents had children under the age of 18.

14.16 About half (50.6%) of the respondents who worked reported that it was very difficult or quite difficult to balance work and family life.  Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of respondents in the following groups experienced difficulties in achieving a work-family balance: female (54.0%), aged 25 to 34 (53.3%), and aged 35 to 54 (53.7%) (*ps* < .001). . .  No statistically significant differences were found between marital status groups, and whether the respondents had children under the age of 18.

*Chart 14.6    Level of difficulty in achieving work-family balance by key demographics in 2021*
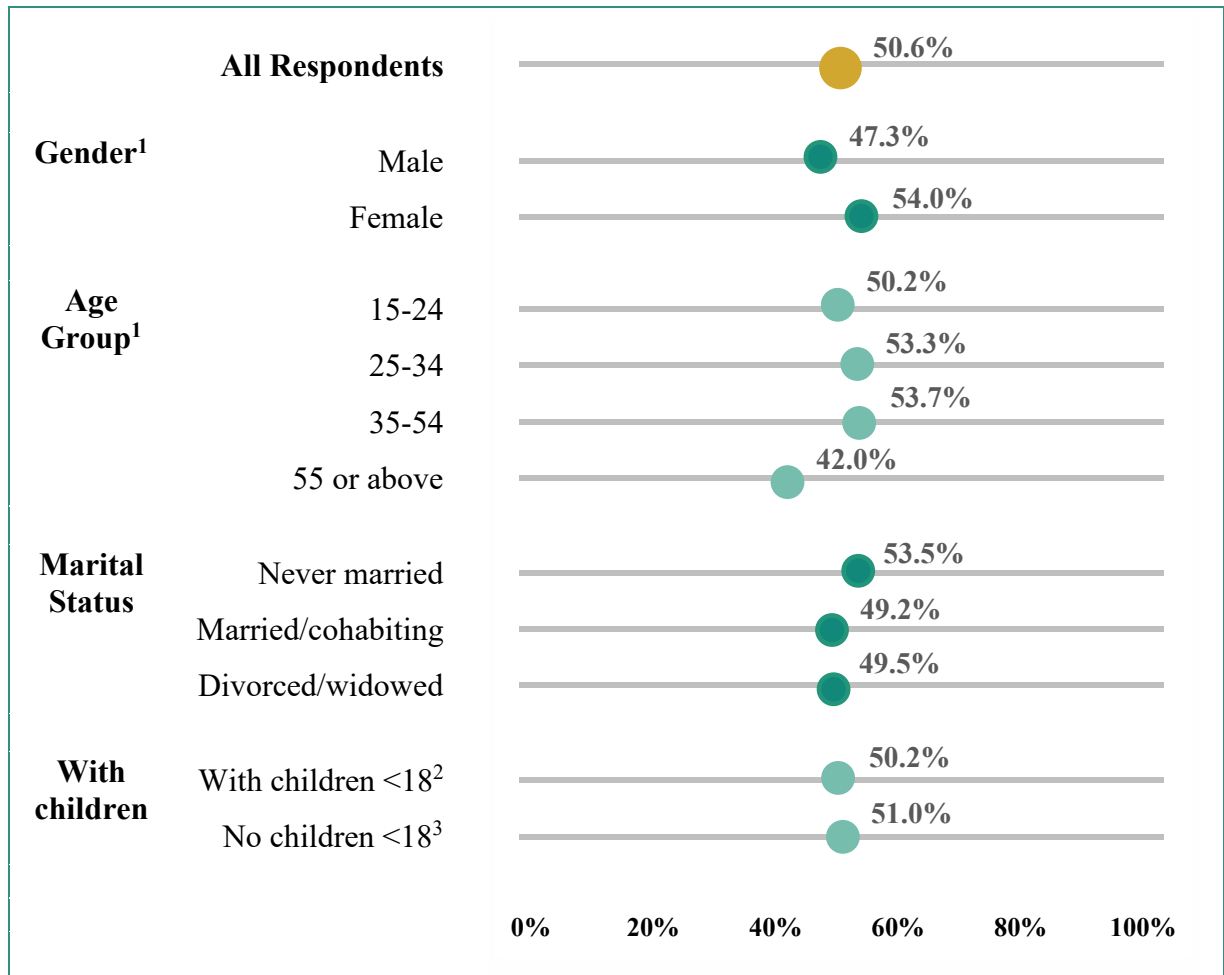
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **All Respondents** | 50.6% |
| **Gender[1]** | Male | 47.3% |
| | Female | 54.0% |
| **Age Group[1]** | 15-24 | 50.2% |
| | 25-34 | 53.3% |
| | 35-54 | 53.7% |
| | 55 or above | 42.0% |
| **Marital Status** | Never married | 53.5% |
| | Married/cohabiting | 49.2% |
| | Divorced/widowed | 49.5% |
| **With children** | With children <18[2] | 50.2% |
| | No children <18[3] | 51.0% |

0%    20%    40%    60%    80%    100%

Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups
Note [2] "Respondents with children < 18" refers to those who had children under the age of 18.
Note [3] "Respondents with no children < 18" refers to those non-parent respondents or those parent respondents who had children aged 18 or above.

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14.17   The proportion of respondents who worked experiencing difficulties (very difficult and quite difficult) in achieving a work-family balance decreased from 38.1% in 2013 to 34.2% in 2017, then increased to 50.6% in 2021. Analysed by demographics, monotonic increasing trend was observed among respondents with no children < 18 who were either non-parent respondents or those parent respondents who had children aged 18 or above ($p < .001$).

*Chart 14.7     Level of difficulty in achieving work-family balance across years*
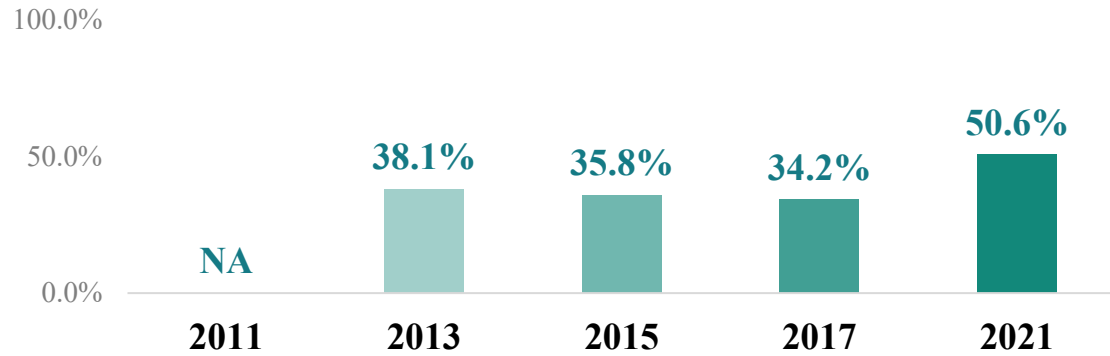


| % | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | - | 41.1 | 37.5 | 32.3 | 47.3 | .002 |
| | Female | - | 34.1 | 33.7 | 36.3 | 54.0 | <.001 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | - | 26.5 | 14.1 | 28.7 | 50.2 | .001 |
| | 25-34 | - | 29.9 | 43.9 | 28.0 | 53.3 | .017 |
| | 35-54 | - | 44.7 | 36.9 | 39.3 | 53.7 | <.001 |
| | 55 or above | - | 33.9 | 27.6 | 31.1 | 42.0 | .002 |
| Marital status | Never married | - | 28.9 | 38.7 | 25.8 | 53.5 | <.001 |
| | Married/cohabiting | - | 43.9 | 34.8 | 37.5 | 49.2 | <.001 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed | - | 37.0 | 29.4 | 52.8 | 49.5 | <.001 |
| With Children | With children (<18) | - | 52.3 | 33.8 | 48.0 | 56.8 | <.001 |
| | No children (<18)[2] | - | 32.0 | 36.6 | 36.9 | 48.0 | <.001 |

Note 1 GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and with children under the age of 18. Note 2 A monotonic increasing trend.

## *Level of Stress in Achieving Work-Family balance*

14.18  Respondents who worked were asked to indicate the level of stress they experienced as a result of efforts to meet the competing demands of work and family life using a four-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = no stress at all to 4 = a great deal of stress).

14.19  In 2021, about half (51.1%) of the respondents who worked reported that it was very stressful (6.6%) or quite stressful (44.5%) trying to balance work and family life.  On the other hand, about half (48.9%) found that balancing work and family life was not stressful.

14.20  Across the years, the proportion of respondents reporting stress in achieving work-family balance increased from 44.7% in 2011 to 51.1% in 2021.

*Chart 14.8      Level of stress in achieving work-family balance across years*



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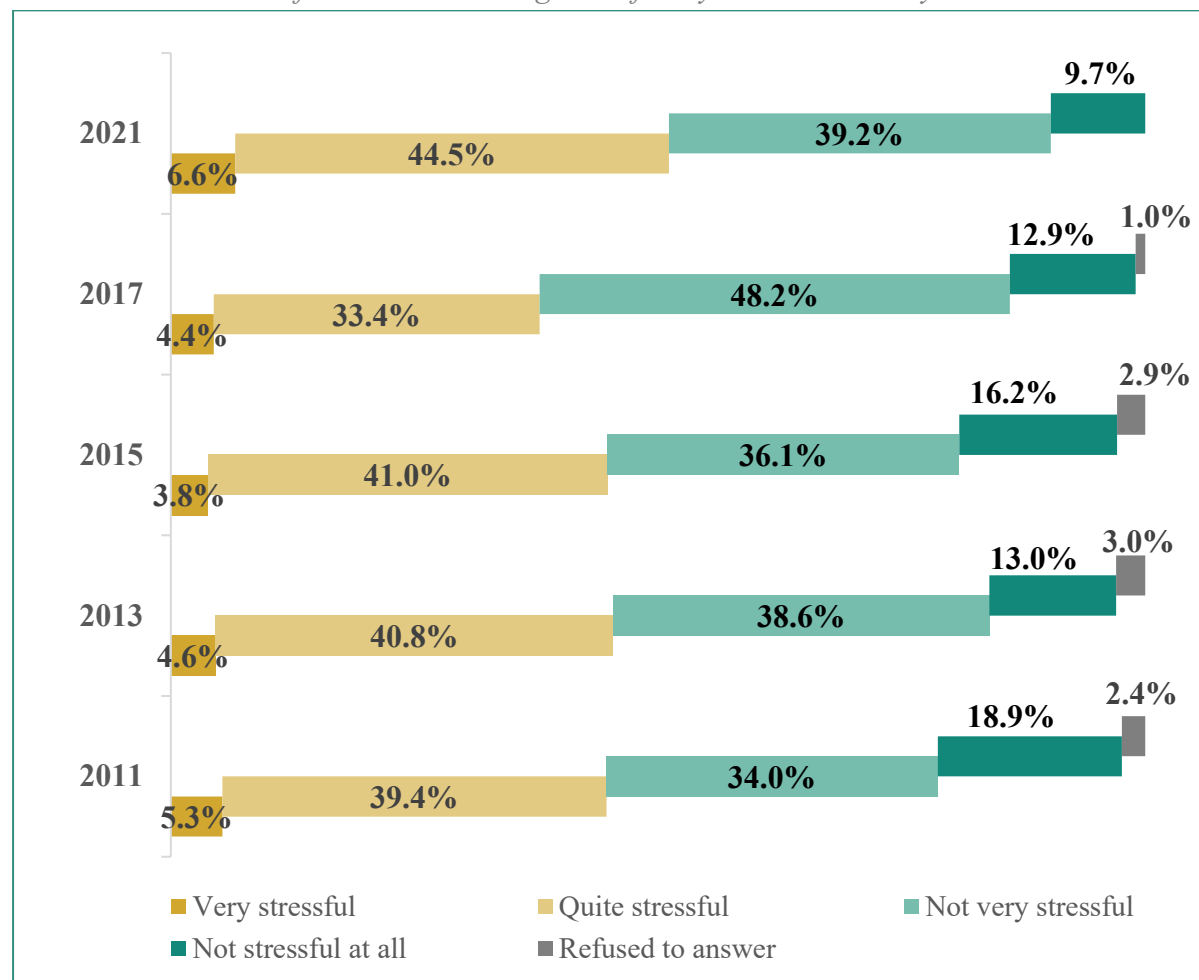
14.21   Details of the proportions of respondents who worked experienced stress (very stressful and quite stressful) in achieving a work-family balance were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and whether the respondents had children under the age of 18.

14.22   About half (51.1%) of the respondents who worked reported that it was very stressful or quite stressful to balance work and family life.  Compared with the other age groups, significantly higher proportions of respondents in the following groups experienced stress in achieving a work-family balance: aged 25 to 34 (54.9%), and aged 35 to 54 (55.2%) ($p < .001$).  No statistically significant differences were found between gender, marital status groups, and whether the respondents had children under the age of 18.

*Chart 14.9      Level of stress in achieving work-family balance by key demographics in 2021*
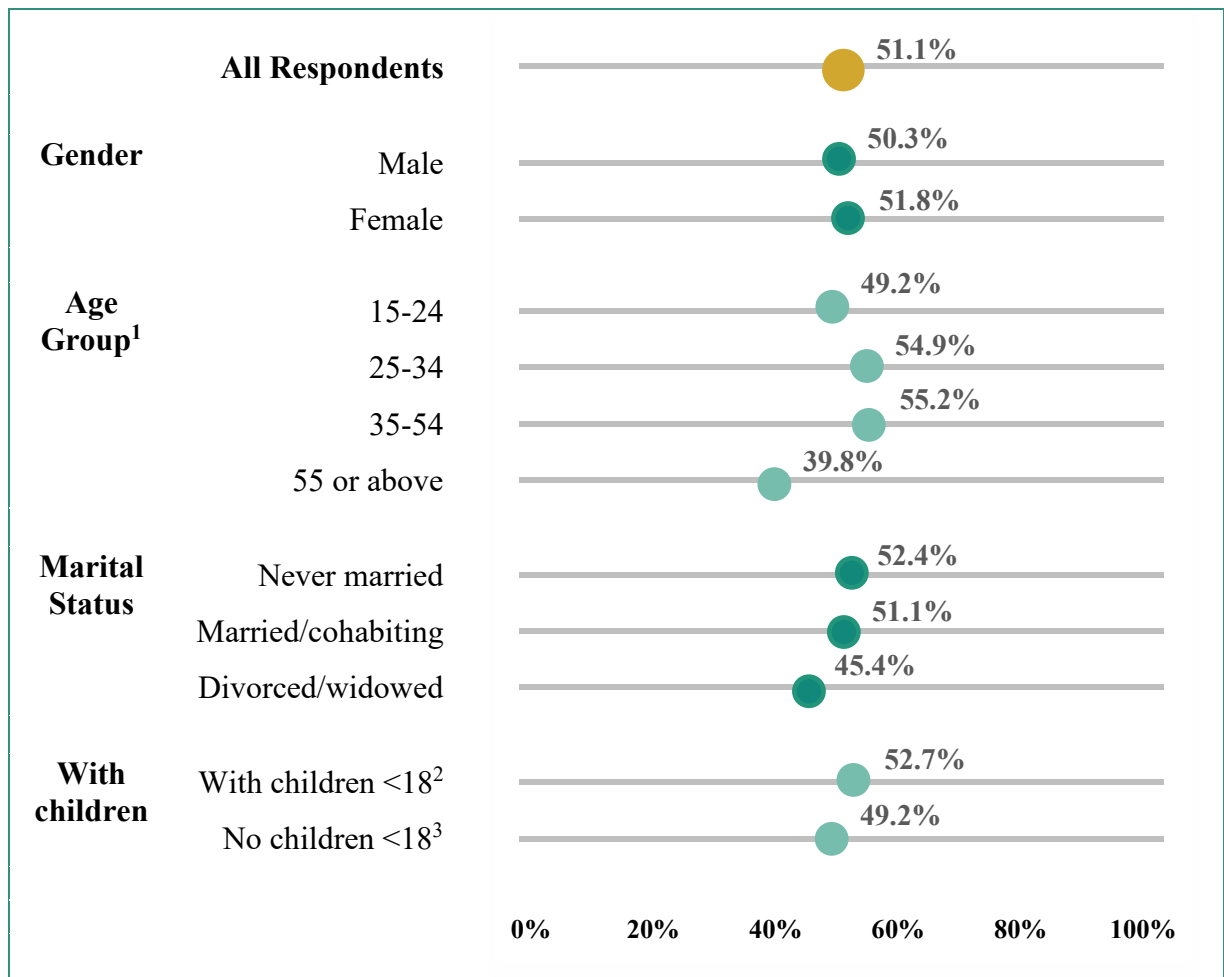
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **All Respondents** | 51.1% |
| **Gender** | Male | 50.3% |
| | Female | 51.8% |
| **Age Group**[1] | 15-24 | 49.2% |
| | 25-34 | 54.9% |
| | 35-54 | 55.2% |
| | 55 or above | 39.8% |
| **Marital Status** | Never married | 52.4% |
| | Married/cohabiting | 51.1% |
| | Divorced/widowed | 45.4% |
| **With children** | With children <18[2] | 52.7% |
| | No children <18[3] | 49.2% |

0%    20%    40%    60%    80%    100%

Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups
Note [2] "Respondents with children < 18" refers to those who had children under the age of 18.
Note [3] "Respondents with no children < 18" refers to those non-parent respondents or those parent respondents who had children aged 18 or above.

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14.23 The proportion of respondents who worked experiencing stress (very stressful and quite stressful) in achieving a work-family balance decreased from 44.7% in 2011 to 37.3% in 2017, then increased to 51.1% in 2021. Analysed by demographics, no monotonic increasing trends were observed.

*Chart 14.10    Level of stress in achieving work-family balance across years*

100.0%
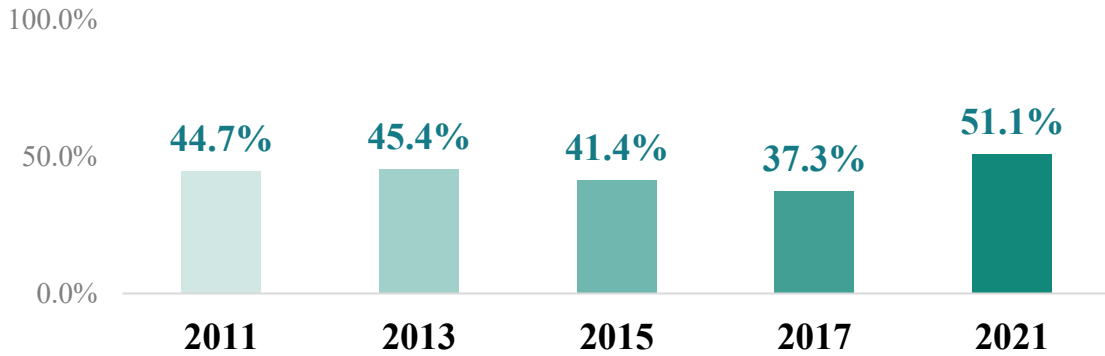


| % | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 45.9 | 48.1 | 45.2 | 37.8 | 50.3 | .090 |
| | Female | 43.0 | 41.8 | 36.5 | 36.8 | 51.8 | <.001 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | 37.4 | 29.8 | 23.1 | 28.5 | 49.2 | .046 |
| | 25-34 | 46.1 | 41.3 | 49.5 | 29.2 | 54.9 | .121 |
| | 35-54 | 48.4 | 51.5 | 43.6 | 43.9 | 55.2 | <.001 |
| | 55 or above | 30.7 | 37.4 | 28.7 | 34.2 | 39.8 | .049 |
| Marital status | Never married | 37.8 | 35.9 | 42.7 | 27.2 | 52.4 | .006 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 50.3 | 52.7 | 41.1 | 43.0 | 51.1 | .002 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed | 33.8 | 35.4 | 37.5 | 49.1 | 45.4 | .041 |
| With Children | With children (<18) | 0.0 | 61.3 | 43.9 | 54.3 | 58.8 | <.001 |
| | No children (<18) | 0.0 | 38.4 | 40.3 | 38.4 | 47.9 | .007 |

Note [1] GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and with children under the age of 18.

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## Satisfaction with Amount of Time Spent at Work and with Family

14.24 Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied).

14.25 In 2021, about half (48.6%) of the respondents who worked were satisfied or very satisfied with the amount of time they spent at work and with their family, whereas one in ten were dissatisfied.

14.26 Across the years, the proportion of respondents who were satisfied with the amount of time they spent at work and with their family dropped from 61.6% in 2011 to 48.6% in 2021.

*Chart 14.11    Satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family across years*



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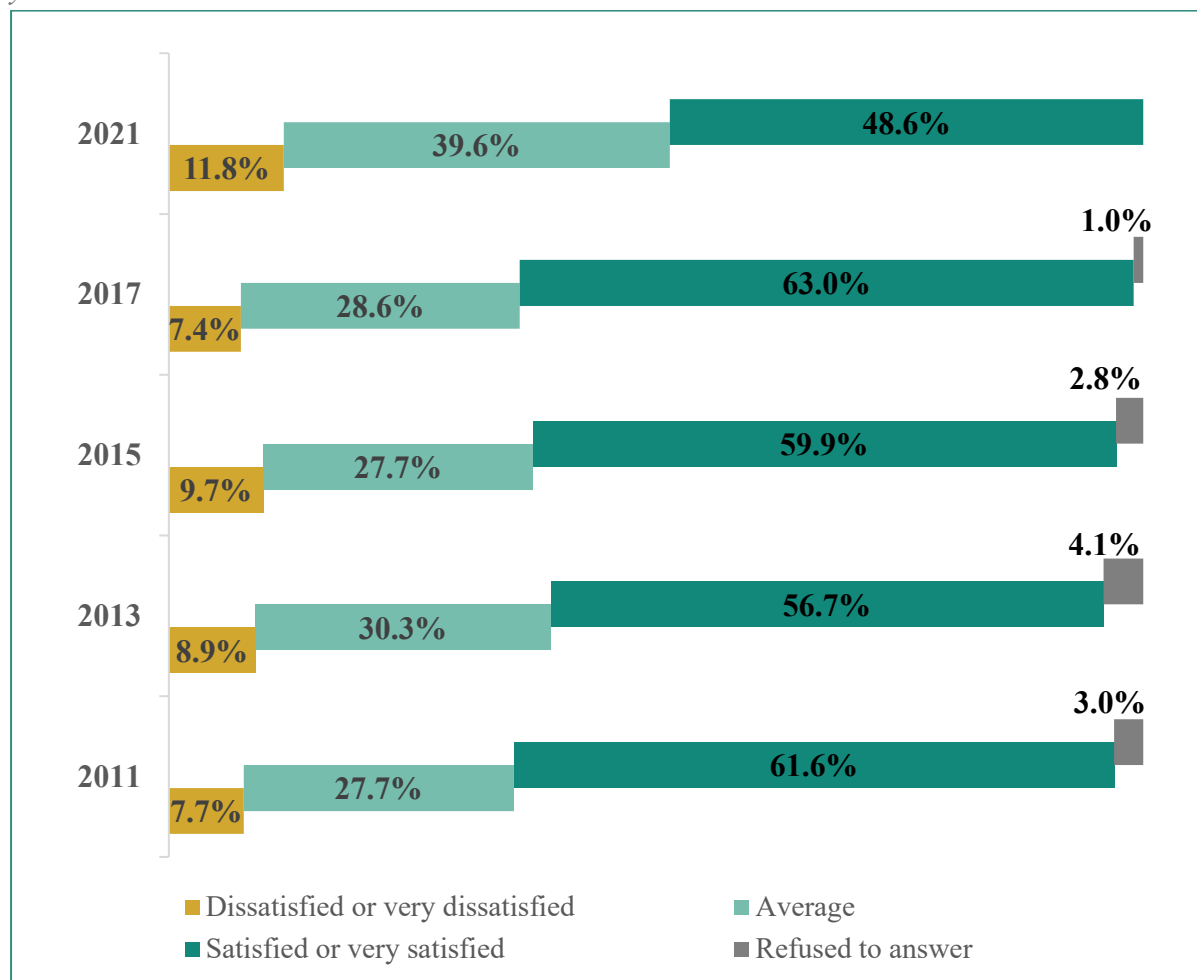
14.27 An index of level of satisfaction with time spent at work and with family was compiled. A higher score indicated more satisfaction with time spent at work and with family.

14.28 The mean score of level of satisfaction with time spent at work and with family was 3.37 out of 5. Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents in the following groups indicated a lower level of satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family: aged 15 to 24 (3.30), aged 35 to 54 (3.30), never been married (3.31), and with children under the age of 18 (3.31) ($ps <$ .05). There was no significant gender difference.

*Chart 14.12    Satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family by key demographics in 2021*
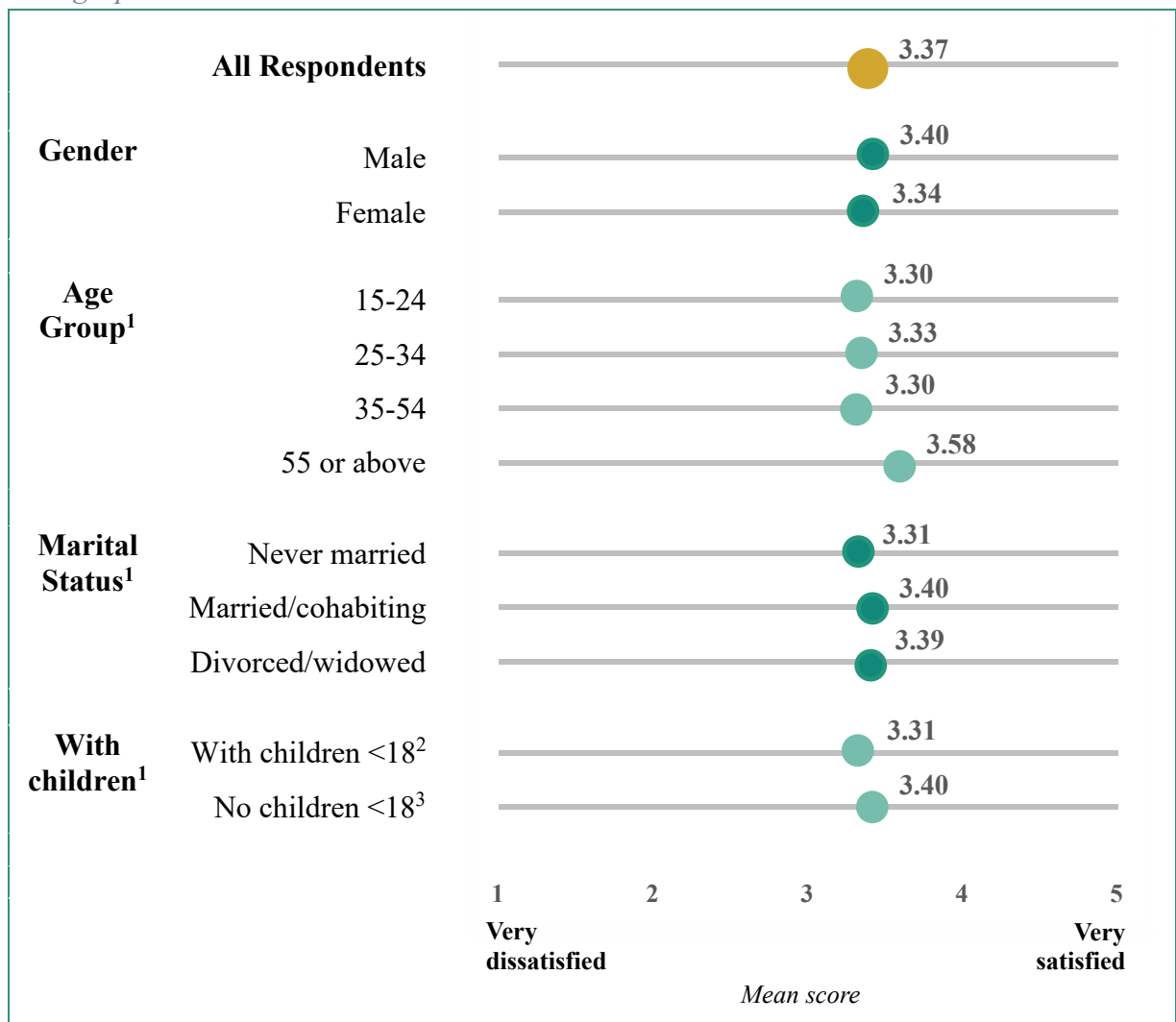
| | | Mean score |
|---|---|---|
| **All Respondents** | | 3.37 |
| **Gender** | Male | 3.40 |
| | Female | 3.34 |
| **Age Group**[1] | 15-24 | 3.30 |
| | 25-34 | 3.33 |
| | 35-54 | 3.30 |
| | 55 or above | 3.58 |
| **Marital Status**[1] | Never married | 3.31 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 3.40 |
| | Divorced/widowed | 3.39 |
| **With children**[1] | With children <18[2] | 3.31 |
| | No children <18[3] | 3.40 |

Scale: 1 (Very dissatisfied) to 5 (Very satisfied)

Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups
Note [2] "Respondents with children < 18" refers to those who had children under the age of 18.
Note [3] "Respondents with no children < 18" refers to those non-parent respondents or those parent respondents who had children aged 18 or above.

14.29 The mean score of satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family fluctuated between 3.44 and 3.52 from 2011 to 2017 and then dropped to 3.37 in 2021. A decreasing trend was observed from 2011 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p < .05$). Analysed by demographics, though significant differences were found in some mean scores across the years, no particular trend was observed.

*Chart 14.13    Satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family across years*
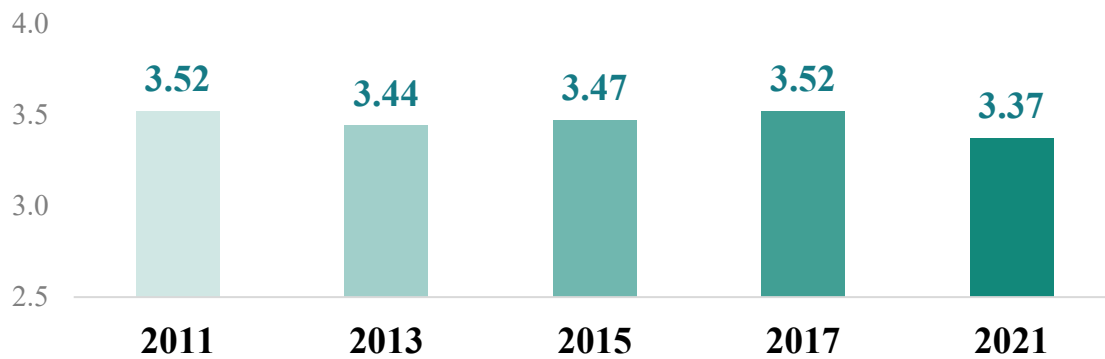


| | | **2011** | **2013** | **2015** | **2017** | **2021** | **p-value[1]** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 3.53 | 3.40 | 3.45 | 3.50 | 3.40 | .796 |
| | Female | 3.51 | 3.50 | 3.50 | 3.55 | 3.34 | .004 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | 3.41 | 3.60 | 3.66 | 3.56 | 3.30 | .423 |
| | 25-34 | 3.49 | 3.46 | 3.42 | 3.56 | 3.33 | .478 |
| | 35-54 | 3.54 | 3.39 | 3.46 | 3.48 | 3.30 | .004 |
| | 55 or above | 3.59 | 3.57 | 3.54 | 3.58 | 3.58 | .776 |
| Marital status | Never married | 3.47 | 3.49 | 3.51 | 3.63 | 3.31 | .008 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 3.55 | 3.43 | 3.43 | 3.46 | 3.40 | .409 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed | 3.61 | 3.38 | 3.53 | 3.41 | 3.39 | .277 |
| With Children | With children (<18) | - | 3.29 | 3.39 | 3.40 | 3.31 | .079 |
| | No children (<18) | - | 3.56 | 3.50 | 3.51 | 3.40 | .069 |

Note [1] GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and with children under the age of 18.

## *Satisfaction with Overall Working Conditions*

14.30   Respondents who worked were asked to rate their satisfaction with their overall working conditions on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied).

14.31   In 2021, about 44.1% of the respondents worked were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall working conditions, whereas one in ten were dissatisfied.

*Chart 14.14    Satisfaction with overall working conditions in 2021*



**Satisfaction with Work Life**

Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied **9.8%**

Average **46.1%**

Satisfied or very satisfied **44.1%**
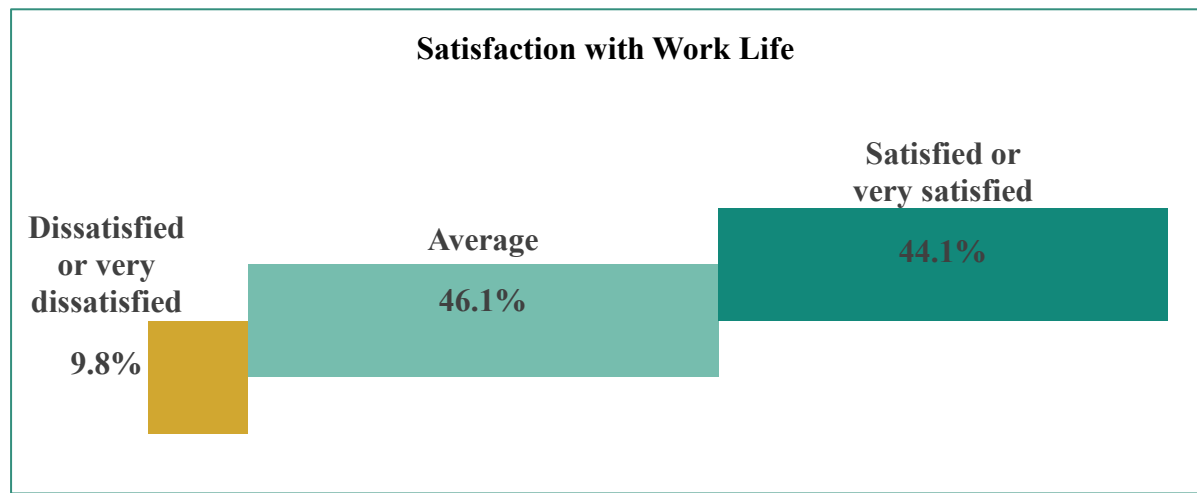
14.32   An index of satisfaction with overall working conditions was compiled.  A higher score indicated more satisfaction with overall working conditions.

14.33   The mean score of satisfaction with overall working conditions was 3.36 out of 5.  Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents in the following groups reported less satisfaction with overall working conditions: aged 15 to 24 (3.21), never been married (3.27), and divorced/widowed (3.27) ($ps < .05$).  No statistically significant differences were found between genders or between respondents with children under the age of 18.

Chart 14.15   Satisfaction with overall working conditions by key demographics in 2021
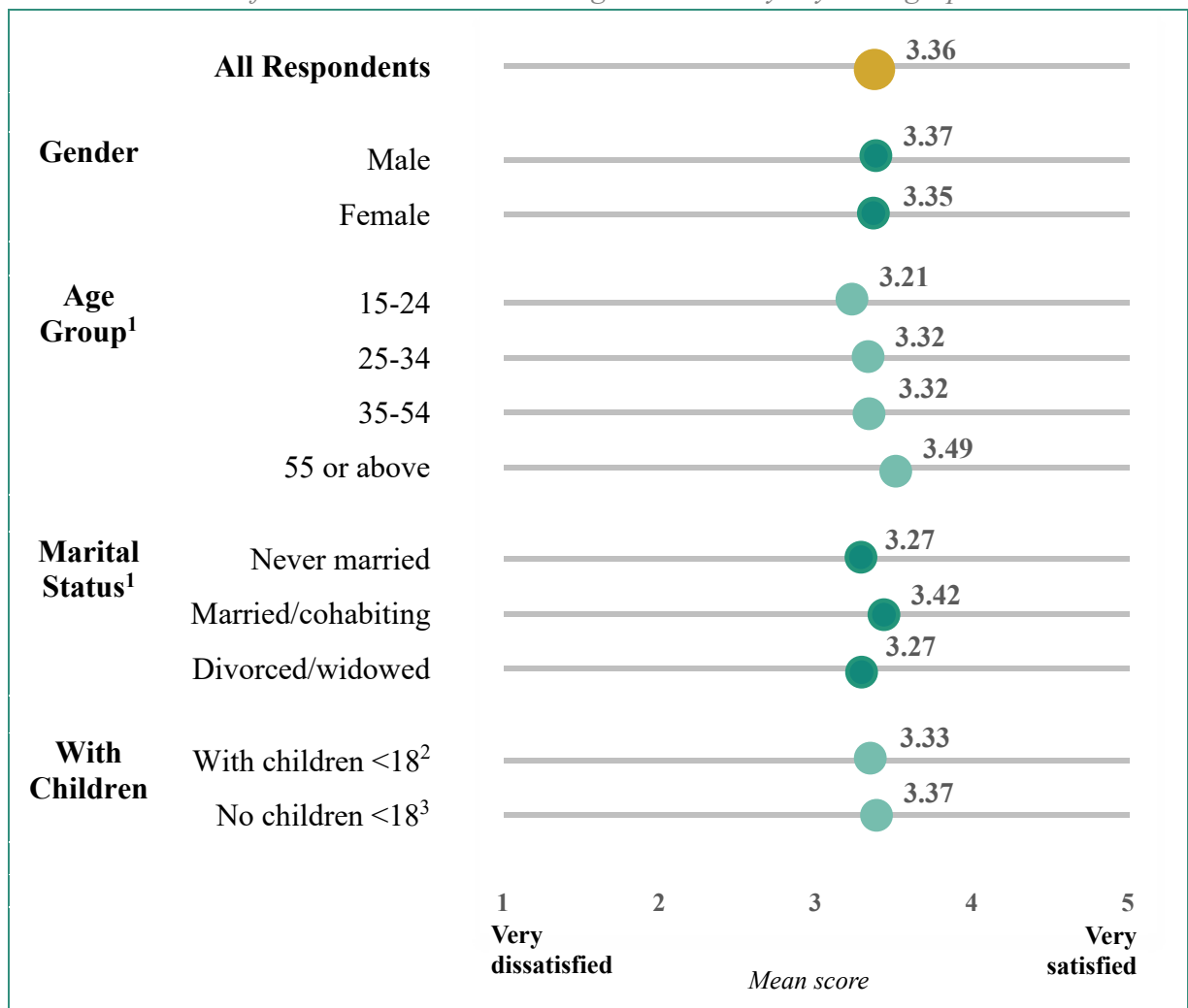
| Category | Group | Mean score |
|---|---|---|
| | All Respondents | 3.36 |
| Gender | Male | 3.37 |
| | Female | 3.35 |
| Age Group[1] | 15-24 | 3.21 |
| | 25-34 | 3.32 |
| | 35-54 | 3.32 |
| | 55 or above | 3.49 |
| Marital Status[1] | Never married | 3.27 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 3.42 |
| | Divorced/widowed | 3.27 |
| With Children | With children <18[2] | 3.33 |
| | No children <18[3] | 3.37 |

1 — Very dissatisfied     2     3  Mean score     4     5 — Very satisfied

Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups
Note [2] "Respondents with children < 18" refers to those who had children under the age of 18.
Note [3] "Respondents with no children < 18" refers to those non-parent respondents or those parent respondents who had children aged 18 or above.

## Family-friendly Policies and Practices

14.34 Respondents who worked were asked to list the family-friendly policies and practices adopted by their employers. In 2021, nearly half (47.0%) of the respondents who worked indicated that they had a five-day working week. Over one quarter (29.8%) stated that they had family leave (a holiday granted for fulfilling family responsibilities, such as arranging a funeral or attending Parents' Day).

14.35 Less than one quarter of the respondents who worked expressed that their employers offered flexible working hours (i.e. with a certain degree of restrictions, employees can choose when to start and finish their work) (24.9%), paternity leave that allowed more paid paternity leave for employees who have just become fathers than that required by law (22.6%), remote working/flexible working location/working from home (19.1%), additional paid maternity leave for employees who have just become mothers (more than 14 weeks of maternity leave) (14.6%), or flexible shift work (i.e. rotation of working hours / self-editing work schedule) (10.6%).

14.36 Furthermore, less than 10% of the respondents who worked indicated that their employers organised family activities for them (7.5%), allowed compressed working hours for employees to complete the prescribed total working hours per week in fewer working days (7.1%), or provided support services for childcare (2.9%).

14.37 It is worth noting that one quarter (25.0%) of the respondents expressed that no family-friendly policies and practices were adopted by their employers.

*Chart 14.16　Family-friendly policies and practices in 2021*

| Category | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Five-day work week | 47.0% |
| Family leave (a holiday granted for fulfilling family responsibilities such as arranging funeral or attending Parents' Day) | 29.8% |
| Flexible working hours | 24.9% |
| Paternity leave: allow more paid paternity leave for employees who have just become father than required by law | 22.6% |
| Remote work/ flexible working location/ work from home | 19.1% |
| Additional paid maternity leave for employees who have just become mother (more than 14 weeks of maternity leave) | 14.6% |
| Flexible shift work: rotation of working hours / self-editing work schedule | 10.6% |
| Family activities organised by the employer | 7.5% |
| Compressed working hours: allow employees to complete the prescribed total working hours per week in fewer working days | 7.1% |
| Support services for childcare | 2.9% |
| None of the above | 25.0% |

## *Views Collected from In-depth Discussions*

### *Work-family Balance*

14.38　The result of the questionnaire survey shows that work-family balance was harder to achieve especially for parents with children aged 18 or below.  8 participants who were full-time or part-time working parents with children aged 18 or below participated in the focus group discussion to express their difficulties and pressure, and the way to achieve work-family balance.

14.39　Focus group discussions were conducted to collect in-depth views with 23 parents to understand their difficulties and pressure on maintaining work-family balance, impacts of family relationship toward work-family balance, and family friendly measures adopted by their employers.

### *Difficulties and Pressure on Maintaining Work-family Balance*

14.40　Most of the participants who were parent expressed that they did not have much time taking care of their children due to their work.  During weekdays, parents could only spend 1 to 2 hours with their children after work, and the time was not sufficient.  During weekends, parents usually went outdoors with their children, but the children might still perceive that their parents did not stay with them long enough.

14.41　Some parent participants thought that they had less time to rest after having children, most of their times were spending with their spouse/partner and children.  It had been a long time without having me time or going out with friends.

14.42　Some participants who were mothers claimed that they wish to recruit foreign domestic helpers to share the burden of taking care of their children.  However, they did not recruit one yet, due to the COVID-19 pandemic which caused a higher cost of recruiting foreign domestic helpers (for example, booking epidemic-proof hotels for the worker, etc.) and the difficulty of getting the worker aboard.  In addition, some participants pointed out that kindergartens or nursing services for children aged below 2 were insufficient and difficult to apply, as such their family burden could not be reduced.

14.43　Some participants who were mothers shared that due to the work from home arrangement and educational arrangement of their children during the COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining work-family balance was much harder than working in an office.  Also, it was harder to organise the time for work, family and rest efficiently.  The income was also affected, and the financial burden had increased due to the decreases in workload caused by an extended time of taking care of children.

**Parent 16**

I have less time to sleep compared to the past when I did not have children. As most of my time is spent with my wife and children, I do not have much me time. It has been a long time for me to eat out and have fun with my friends. I am satisfied with my work and family. Every day, it is just a little bit rushed as I have to buy household necessities after work, have dinner at home, and play with kids.

During the period of working from home, I have to take care of my children and work at the same time. I could either reduce my time with my children and work more, or I could start my work when my husband takes care of our children after work. Work has deadlines and sometimes children will try to get your attention and I also need to do housework, so I think it is even harder than full-time work and it is pressured when I need to take care of my work, my home, and my children at the same time.

**Parent 21**

*Impacts of Family Relationship toward Work-Family Balance*

14.44  Some parent participants stated that the arguments with spouse/partner or other family members were related to work-family balance. For example, due to the overtime work, parents only had family time on weekends, this situation might cause arguments when their spouse/partner treasure family more.

14.45  Some participants who are mothers expressed that sometimes parents will ignore the needs of their children because of working. Even if work from home during the pandemic, parents would take care of their children after finished their work. Some partners thought that housework and childcare should be done first when parents are at home. However, it ignores the difficulties of work-family balance.

14.46  Two participants who were mothers claimed that their parents or parents-in-law have suggested them to quit their job and focus on raising their children. Even there was foreign domestic helper, older generation still believed that children taking care by their own mother is the most suitable solution and having domestic helper would increase the financial burden of the family. These arguments caused disputes between family members.

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*Family-friendly Measures*

14.47 Most parent participants found out that companies usually did not state the family friendly measures clearly. However, companies or supervisors usually allowed elastic working hour to facilitate parents to look after children or cope with emergence situation. Some companies allowed parents to bring their children to work place and allowed employees to work at office only on Monday to Thursday but working from home on Friday.

14.48 Most parent participants did not seek help from others on work-family balance, but only negotiated with family or ask family members to look after their children to reduce burden.

> I will argue with my spouse due to work. As I often work until night and overtime during weekend sometimes, my partner will be angry as she values family time on Sunday.

**Parent 18**

> I do part-time work and my family help taking care of my children, but my children are naughty, so my family still complain about it and hope I quit my job to focus on childcare. My family and I will argue about it. I wish to hire a foreign domestic helper, but my family members did not agree, as it will increase the family financial burden. My family believe that instead of hiring a domestic helper, I should quit my job and take care of children by myself.

**Parent 20**

> My company does not have clear instructions on working from home but has high flexibility. If my family or my kids have an emergency and I need to apply for work from home, permission can be given immediately. Besides, when my child was born, I only had three days of paternity leave for it, but on discussing it with my company, I could work at home for a few months at that time. Other than that, I am allowed to bring my child to the workplace as long as I can take care of him.

**Parent 16**

# 15. Theme 6 – Social Support Networks

## *Overview*

15.1 A social support network is a social structure made up of individuals such as family members, friends and peers, or organisations. Respondents' perceptions of social support were captured by the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), a 12-item scale with three 4-item subscales that is used to assess the level of perceived social support from family, friends, and others[23]. In addition, question items regarding awareness of and participation in family-related programmes were included.

15.2 The alphas of the total scale and the subscales were larger than 0.7, indicating a satisfactory level of reliability and internal consistency. Table 15.1 presents the dimensions and details of the respondents' social support networks.

*Table 15.1    Dimensions of Theme 6 – Social Support Networks*

| Theme | Dimensions | Year | | | | | No. of items | α | Index construct? | Single item? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | | | | |
| 6A | Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support | - | - | - | - | ☑ | 12 | > 0.7 | ☑ | - |
| 6B | Awareness of family-related programmes | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |
| 6C | Participation in family-related programmes | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |

## Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)

15.3    Respondents' perceptions of social support were captured by the MSPSS. Respondents rated perceived social support from family (four items), friends (four items), and significant others (four items) on a seven-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = extremely disagree to 7 = extremely agree). A significant other is understood to be any person of great importance to an individual's well-being and self-evaluation and refers to an individual who is or has been deeply influential in one's life, including members of one's family-of-origin and people encountered outside of family relations[24]. A score is calculated by the mean scores of all question items. A score of less than 3 on the MSPSS indicates a low level of social support, a score of between 3 and 5 indicates a moderate level of social support, and a score of more than 5 indicates a high level of social support.

15.4    In 2021, the patterns of social support from family and significant others were similar. Over half of the respondents reported a high level of social support from family (52.1%) and significant others (52.1%). About two fifths received a moderate level of support, and less than 5% received a low level of support. About 42.3% of the respondents received a high level of social support from friends, 53.3% received moderate support, and only 4.4% received a low level of support.

15.5    For the total score including family, friends and significant others, over half (51.8%) of the respondents reported a high level of support, 45.5% reported moderate support, and only 2.8% reported a low level of support.

*Chart 15.2    Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) in 2021*
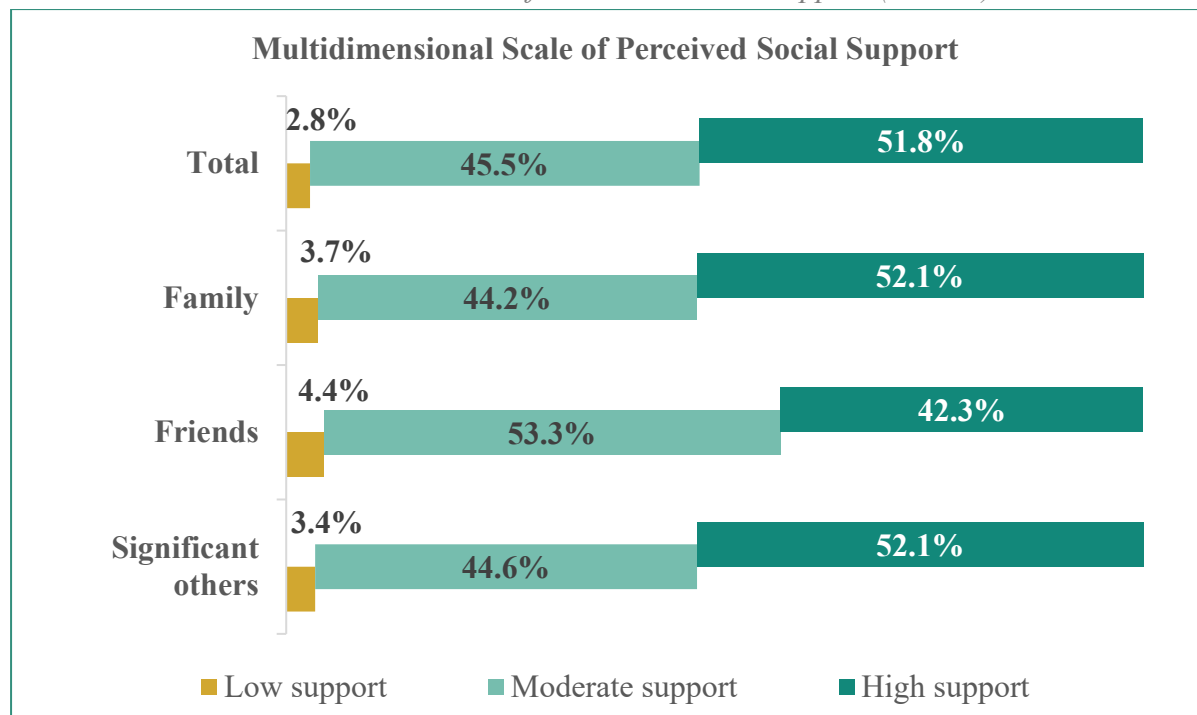
15.6    Higher scores on the MSPSS indicate higher levels of social support.  The mean score of perceived social support from family, friends, and significant others was 5.03 out of 7.  Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents in the following groups reported higher levels of social support: female (5.09), aged 15 to 24 (5.23), and married/cohabiting (5.22) ($ps < .05$).  No statistically significant difference was found between economic status groups.

*Chart 15.3      MSPSS – Total scale by key demographics in 2021*
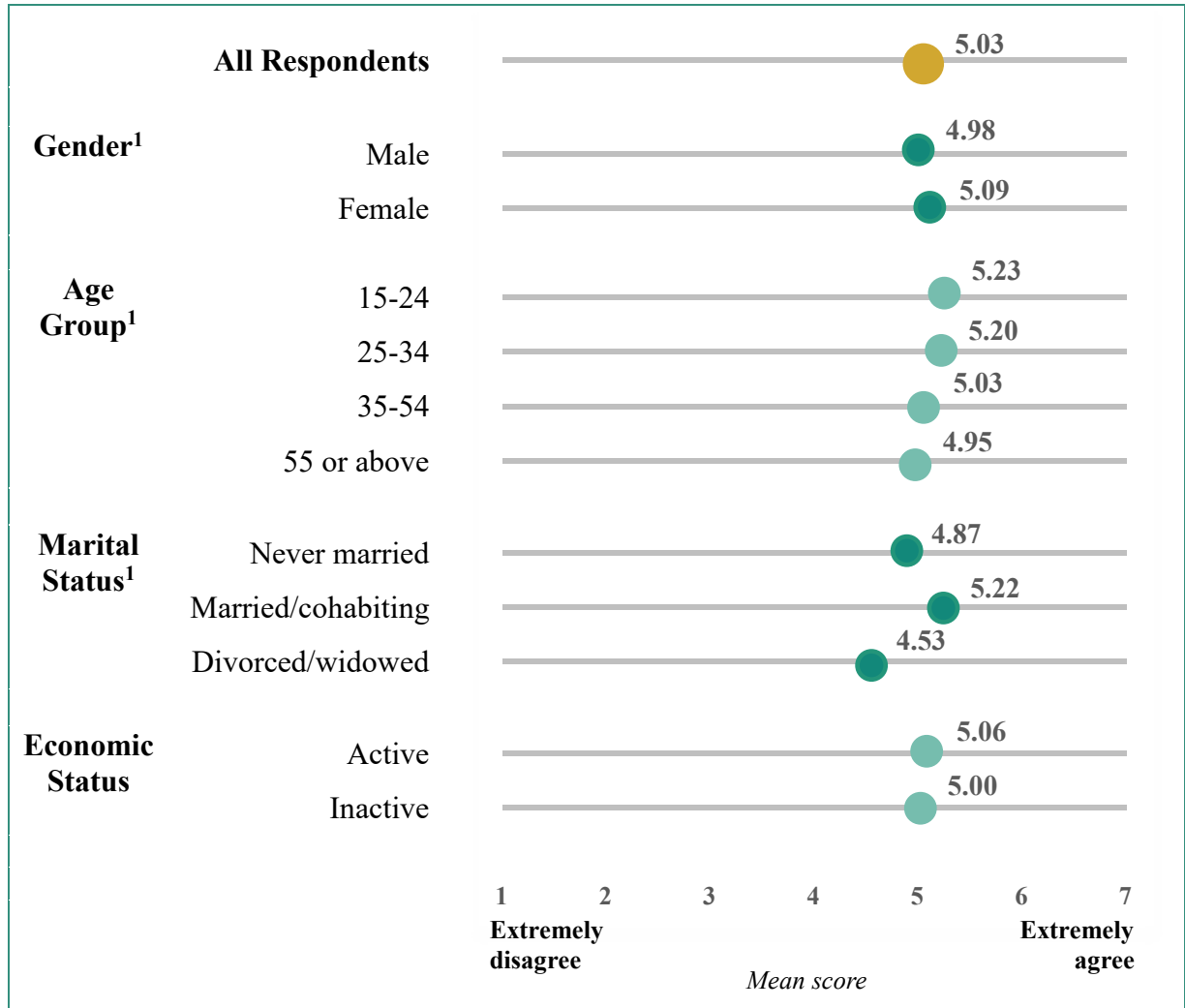
| | | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **All Respondents** | | 5.03 |
| **Gender[1]** | Male | 4.98 |
| | Female | 5.09 |
| **Age Group[1]** | 15-24 | 5.23 |
| | 25-34 | 5.20 |
| | 35-54 | 5.03 |
| | 55 or above | 4.95 |
| **Marital Status[1]** | Never married | 4.87 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 5.22 |
| | Divorced/widowed | 4.53 |
| **Economic Status** | Active | 5.06 |
| | Inactive | 5.00 |

Scale: 1 Extremely disagree — 7 Extremely agree
*Mean score*

Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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15.7 The mean score of perceived social support from family was 5.10 out of 7. Compared with those who had never been married (4.75) and those who were divorced/widowed (4.65), respondents who were married/cohabiting (5.37) received a higher level of social support from family ($p < .05$). No statistically significant differences were found between gender, age, and economic status groups.

*Chart 15.4    MSPSS – Family subscale by key demographics in 2021*
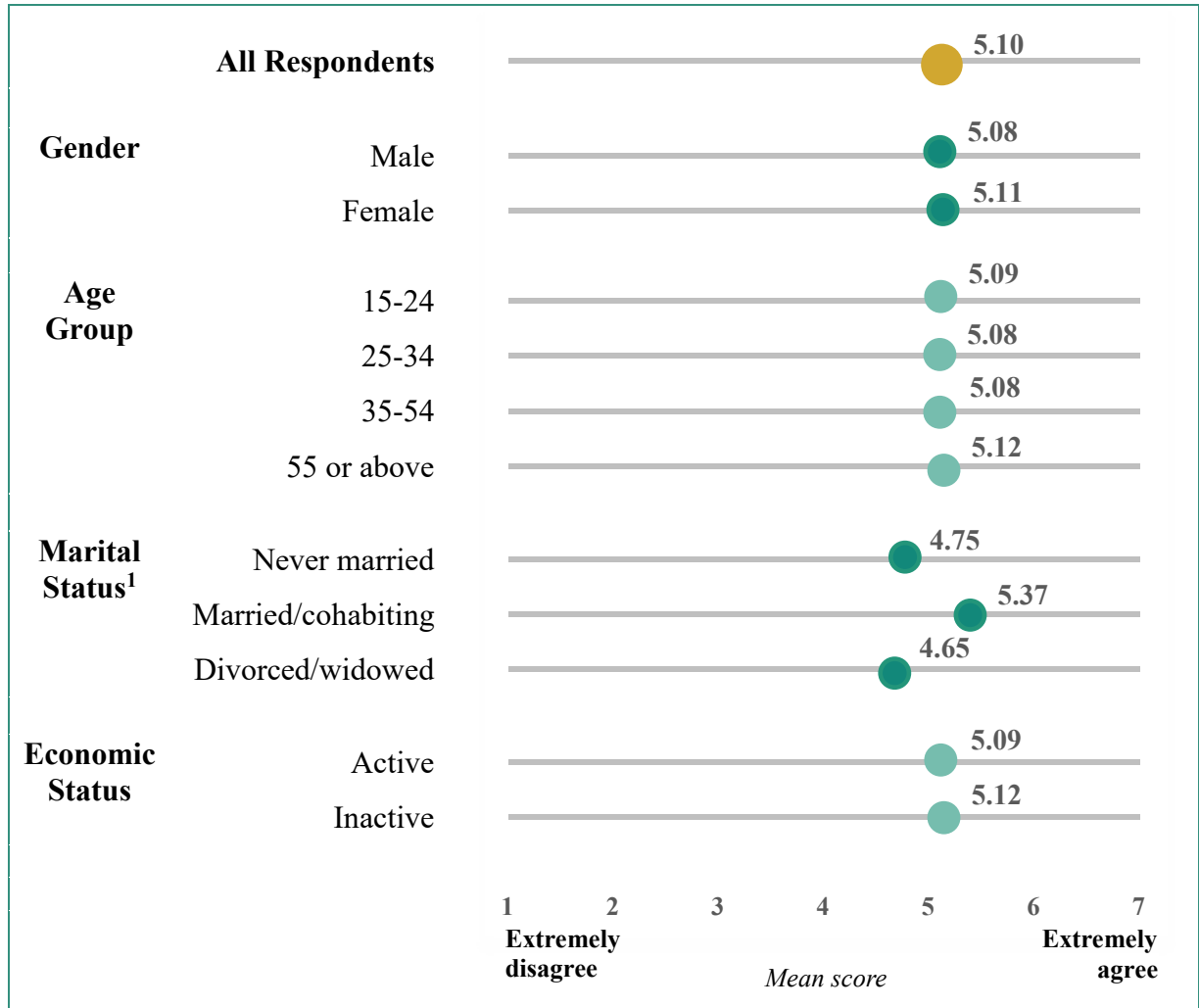
| | | Mean score |
|---|---|---|
| **All Respondents** | | 5.10 |
| **Gender** | Male | 5.08 |
| | Female | 5.11 |
| **Age Group** | 15-24 | 5.09 |
| | 25-34 | 5.08 |
| | 35-54 | 5.08 |
| | 55 or above | 5.12 |
| **Marital Status**[1] | Never married | 4.75 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 5.37 |
| | Divorced/widowed | 4.65 |
| **Economic Status** | Active | 5.09 |
| | Inactive | 5.12 |

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Extremely disagree          Extremely agree
*Mean score*

Note 1 Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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15.8    The mean score of perceived social support from friends was 4.89 out of 7. Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents in the following groups received a higher level of social support from friends: female (4.97), aged 15 to 24 (5.32), married/cohabiting (4.98), never been married (4.94), and economically active (4.98) ($ps < .05$).

*Chart 15.5      MSPSS – Friends subscale by key demographics in 2021*
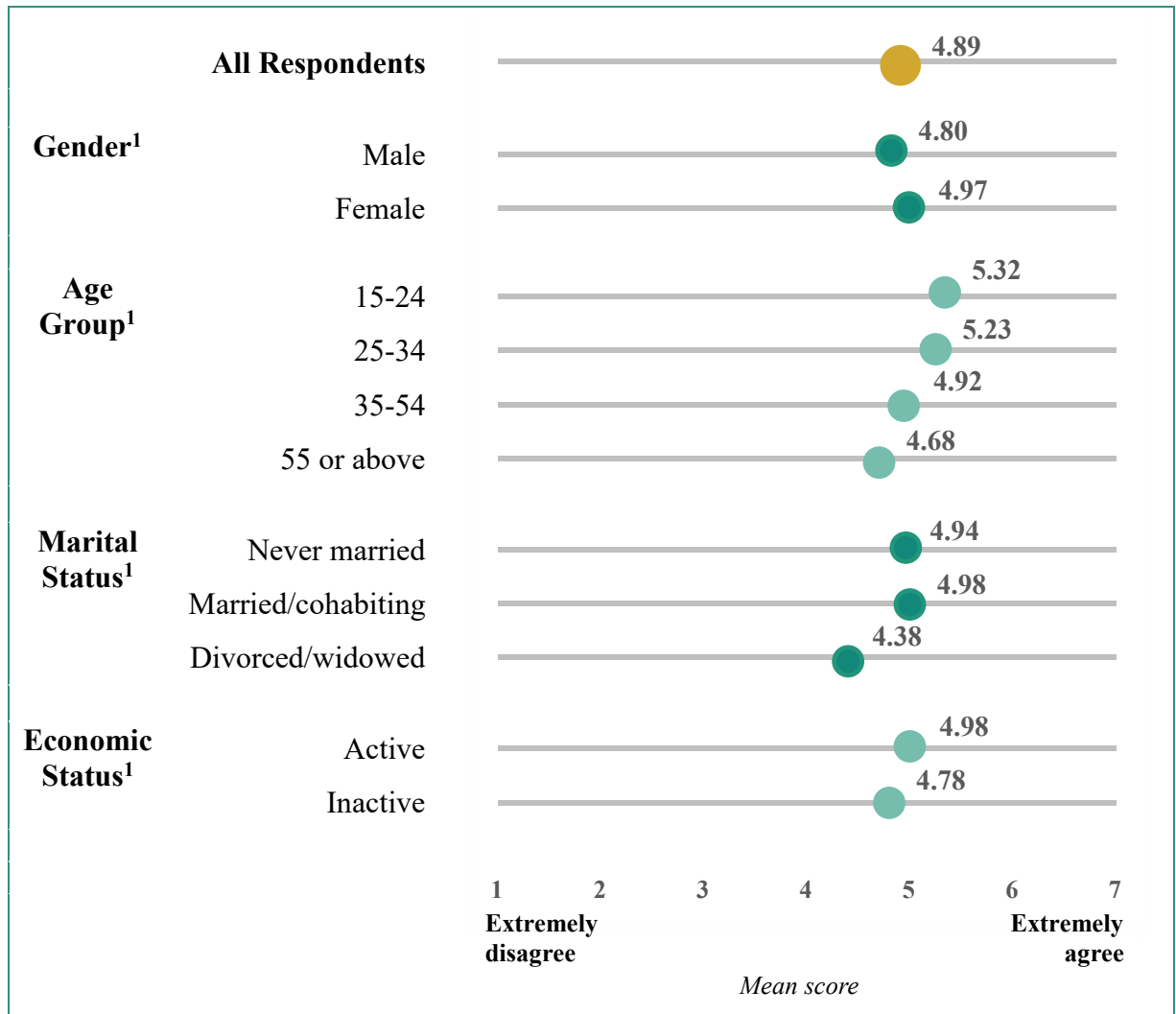


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

15.9    The mean score of perceived social support from significant others was 5.11 out of 7.  Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents in the following groups received a higher level of social support from significant others: female (5.17), aged 15 to 24 (5.27), aged 25 to 34 (5.29), and married/cohabiting (5.33) (*ps* < .05).  No statistically significant difference was found between economic status groups.

*Chart 15.6      MSPSS – Significant others subscale by key demographics in 2021*
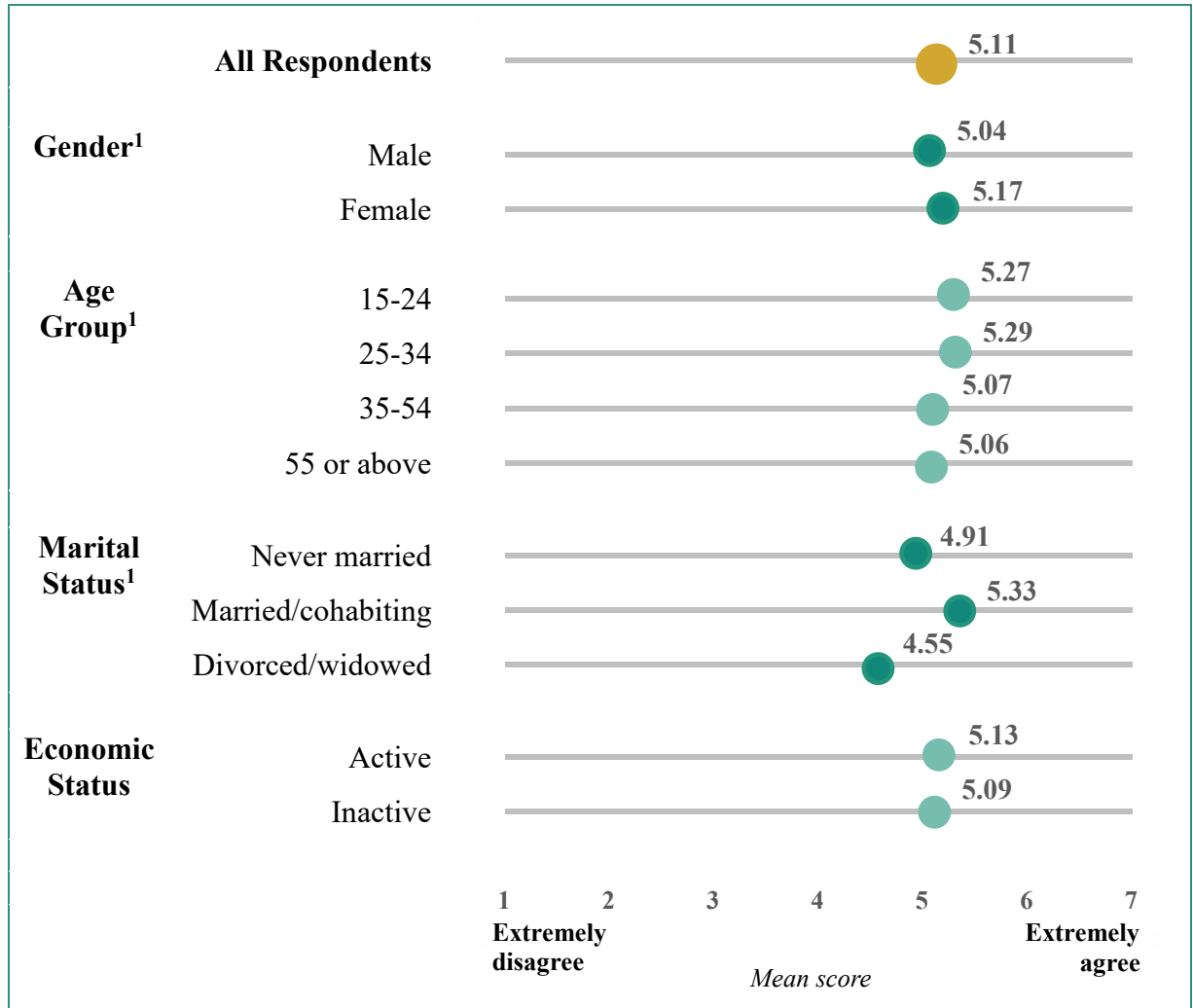


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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## *Awareness of Family-Related Programmes*

15.10 Respondents were asked to indicate their awareness of family-related promotional activities or programmes organised by the Government and/or nongovernmental organisations (NGOs).

15.11 In 2021, less than half of the respondents indicated that they were aware of family-related promotional activities or programmes organised by the Government (41.0%) or by NGOs or other organisations (43.6%).

*Chart 15.7      Awareness of family-related programmes in 2021*

| **Awareness of family-related activities/ programmes organised by the Government** | **Awareness of family-related activities/ programmes organised by NGOs or other organisations** |
|---|---|
| **41.0%** | **43.6%** |
| ■ Yes   ■ No | ■ Yes   ■ No |
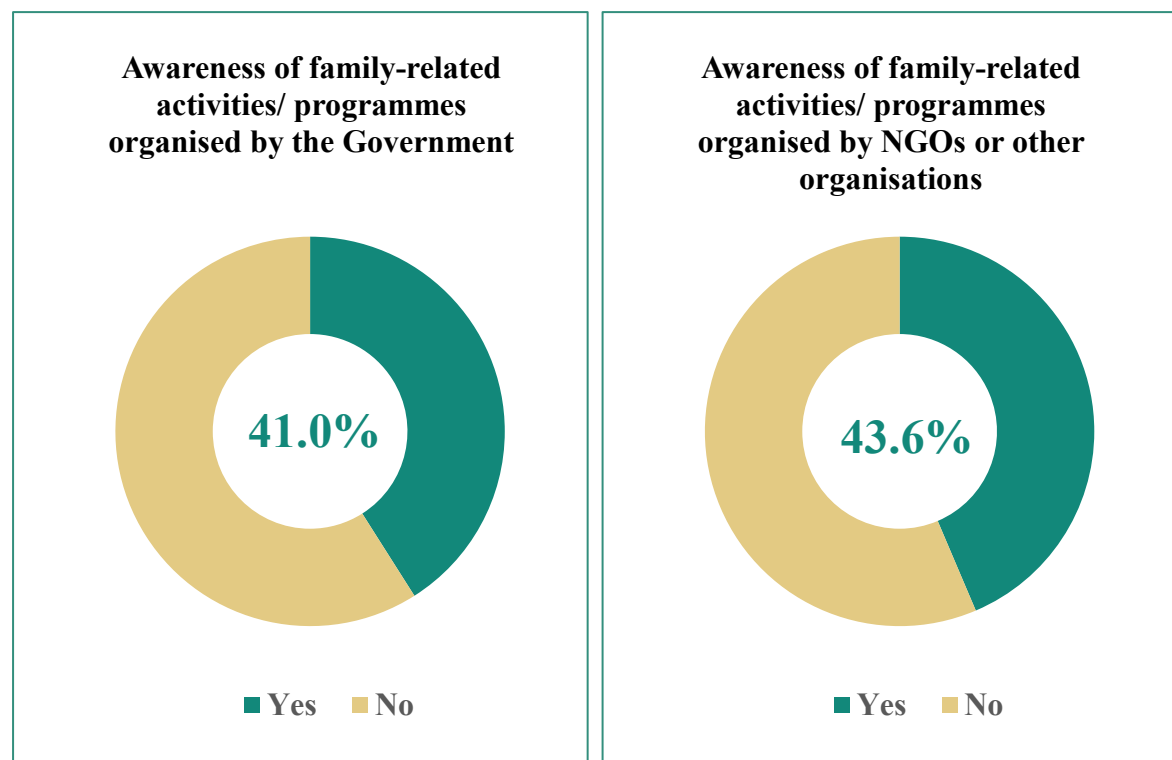
15.12  Details of the proportions of respondents who were aware of family-related promotional activities or programmes organised by the Government were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.

15.13  Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of respondents in the following groups were aware of family-related programmes organised by the Government: aged 35 to 54 (41.7%), aged 55 or above (43.8%), married/cohabiting (43.1%) and divorced/widowed (45.6%) ($ps < .05$). It is worth noting that younger generations or those who had never been married reported lower levels of awareness. No statistically significant differences were found between gender and economic status groups.

*Chart 15.8      Awareness of family-related programmes by the Government by key demographics in 2021*
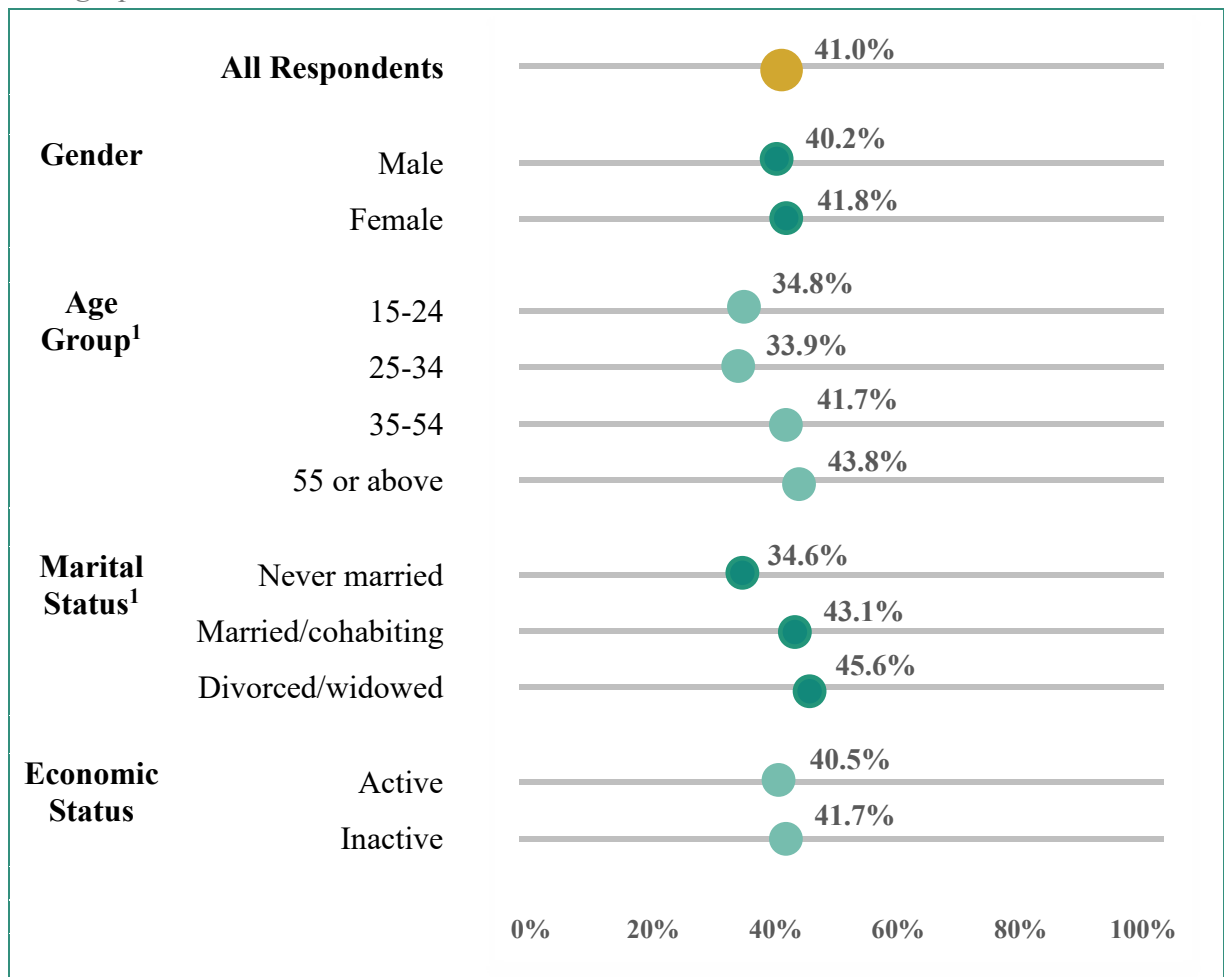


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **All Respondents** | 41.0% |
| **Gender** | Male | 40.2% |
| | Female | 41.8% |
| **Age Group[1]** | 15-24 | 34.8% |
| | 25-34 | 33.9% |
| | 35-54 | 41.7% |
| | 55 or above | 43.8% |
| **Marital Status[1]** | Never married | 34.6% |
| | Married/cohabiting | 43.1% |
| | Divorced/widowed | 45.6% |
| **Economic Status** | Active | 40.5% |
| | Inactive | 41.7% |

Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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15.14   Details of the proportions of respondents who were aware of family-related promotional activities or programmes organised by the NGOs or other organisations were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.

15.15   Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of respondents in the following groups were aware of family-related programmes organised by NGOs or other organisations: aged 35 to 54 (46.7%), aged 55 or above (44.4%), married/cohabiting (45.7%) and divorced/widowed (46.9%) ($ps < .05$).  It is worth noting that those aged 15 to 24 (40.2%), those aged 25 to 34 (35.3%) or those who had never been married (38.0%) reported lower levels of awareness.  No statistically significant differences were found between gender and economic status groups.

*Chart 15.9    Awareness of family-related programmes by the NGOs or other organisations by key demographics in 2021*
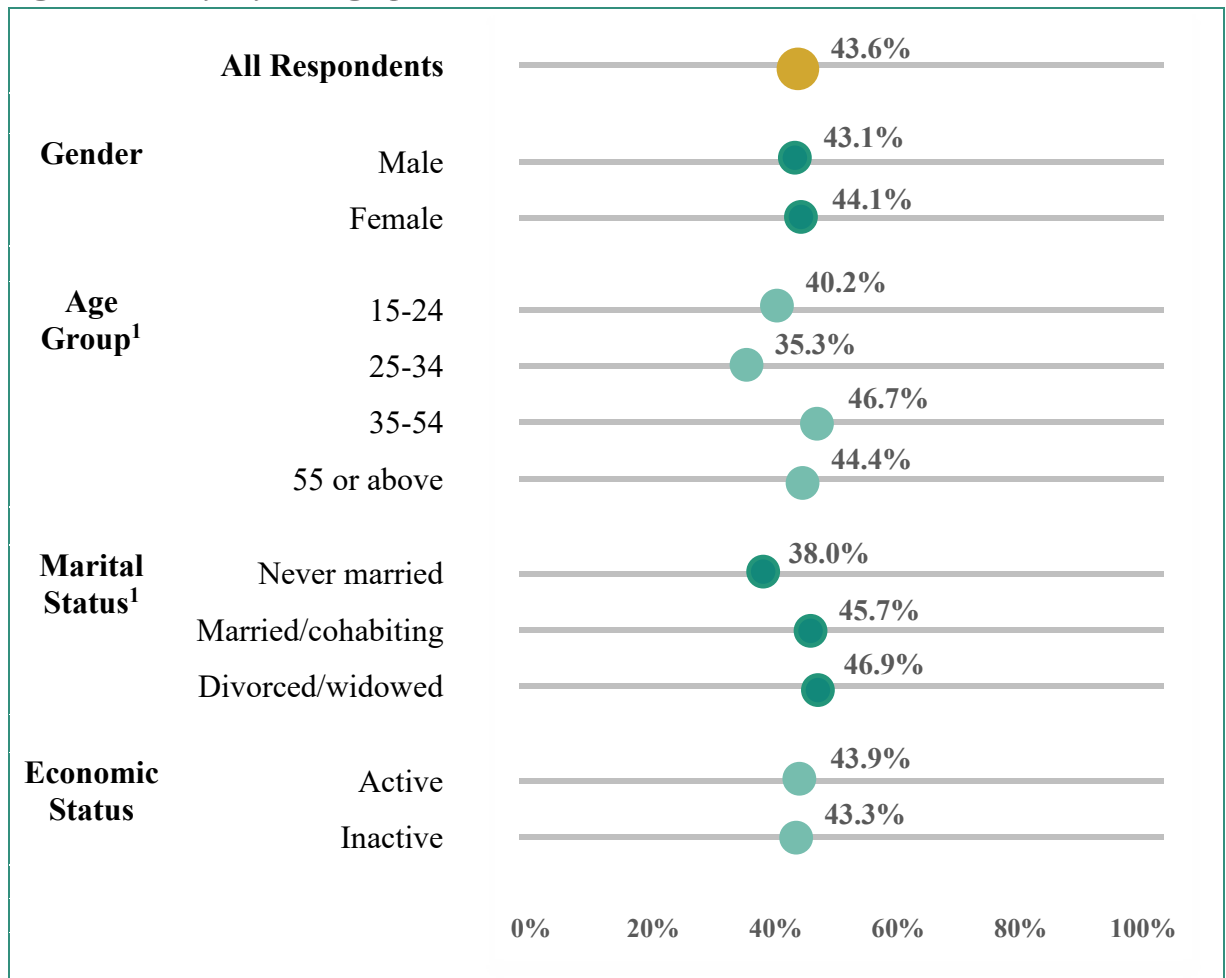


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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15.16    Details of the proportions of respondents who were aware of family-related promotional activities or programmes organised by the Government or by the NGOs or other organisations were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.

15.17    Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of respondents in the following groups were aware of family-related programmes organised by the Government or by the NGOs or other organisations: aged 35 to 54 (48.9%), aged 55 or above (48.6%), married/cohabiting (48.7%) and divorced/widowed (51.9%) (*ps* < .05).  It is worth noting that those aged 15 to 24 (42.7%), those aged 25 to 34 (38.0%) or those who had never been married (40.7%) reported lower levels of awareness. No statistically significant differences were found between gender and economic status groups.

*Chart 15.10    Awareness of family-related programmes by the Government or by the NGOs or other organisations by key demographics in 2021*



Note 1 Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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15.18　The proportion of respondents aware of family-related programmes increased from 47.5% in 2011 to 53.7% in 2015, then dropped to 30.2% in 2017 before rebounding to 46.8% in 2021.  Analysed by demographics, though significant differences were found in some mean scores across the years, no particular trend was observed.

*Chart 15.11　Awareness of family-related programmes across years*
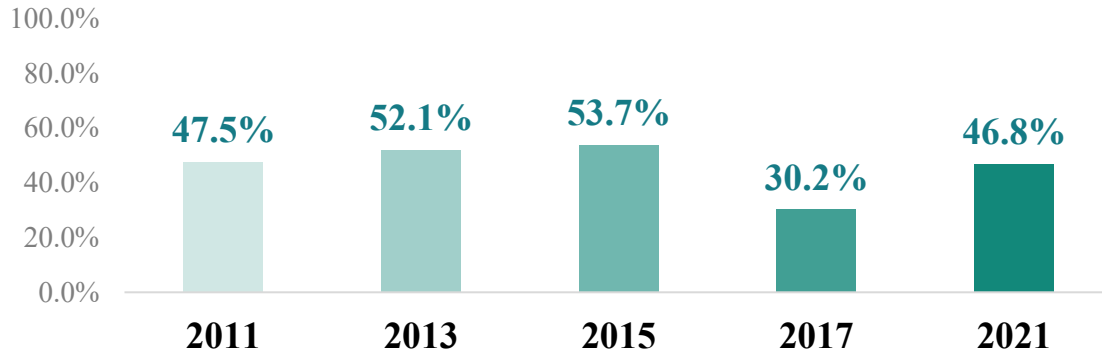


| % | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 48.3 | 52.4 | 53.5 | 31.6 | 45.6 | <.001 |
| | Female4 | 46.8 | 51.7 | 53.8 | 29.1 | 47.9 | <.001 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | 32.4 | 44.2 | 47.5 | 28.5 | 42.7 | .270 |
| | 25-34 | 47.3 | 52.5 | 52.3 | 27.5 | 38.0 | <.001 |
| | 35-54 | 54.0 | 57.5 | 58.4 | 28.0 | 48.9 | <.001 |
| | 55 or above | 46.2 | 48.5 | 51.6 | 34.2 | 48.6 | .243 |
| Marital status | Never married | 40.7 | 49.2 | 52.3 | 28.6 | 40.7 | <.001 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 52.7 | 53.4 | 55.9 | 31.3 | 48.7 | <.001 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed | 42.7 | 52.3 | 48.9 | 29.9 | 51.9 | .720 |
| Economic status | Economically active | 51.5 | 54.7 | 56.4 | 29.7 | 46.7 | <.001 |
| | Economically inactive | 44.0 | 49.7 | 51.4 | 30.8 | 46.9 | .015 |

Note 1 GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents.

## Participation in Family-Related Programmes

15.19 Respondents were asked whether they had participated in any family-related promotional activities or programmes organised by the Government and/or NGOs.

15.20 About 7.3% of the respondents indicated that they had participated in family-related programmes organised by the Government and/or NGOs. Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of respondents in the following groups reported that they had participated in family-related programmes organised by the Government and/or NGOs: aged 35 to 54 (11.4%), married/cohabiting (9.1%), and divorced/widowed (8.2%) ($ps < .05$). It is worth noting that younger generations or those who had never been married reported lower levels of participation. No statistically significant differences were found between gender and economic status groups.

*Chart 15.12   Participation in family-related programmes by the Government and/or NGOs by key demographics in 2021*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **All Respondents** | | 7.3% |
| **Gender** | Male | 7.4% |
| | Female | 7.1% |
| **Age Group**[1] | 15-24 | 3.6% |
| | 25-34 | 5.0% |
| | 35-54 | 11.4% |
| | 55 or above | 5.3% |
| **Marital Status**[1] | Never married | 3.1% |
| | Married/cohabiting | 9.1% |
| | Divorced/widowed | 8.2% |
| **Economic Status** | Active | 8.1% |
| | Inactive | 6.1% |

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%
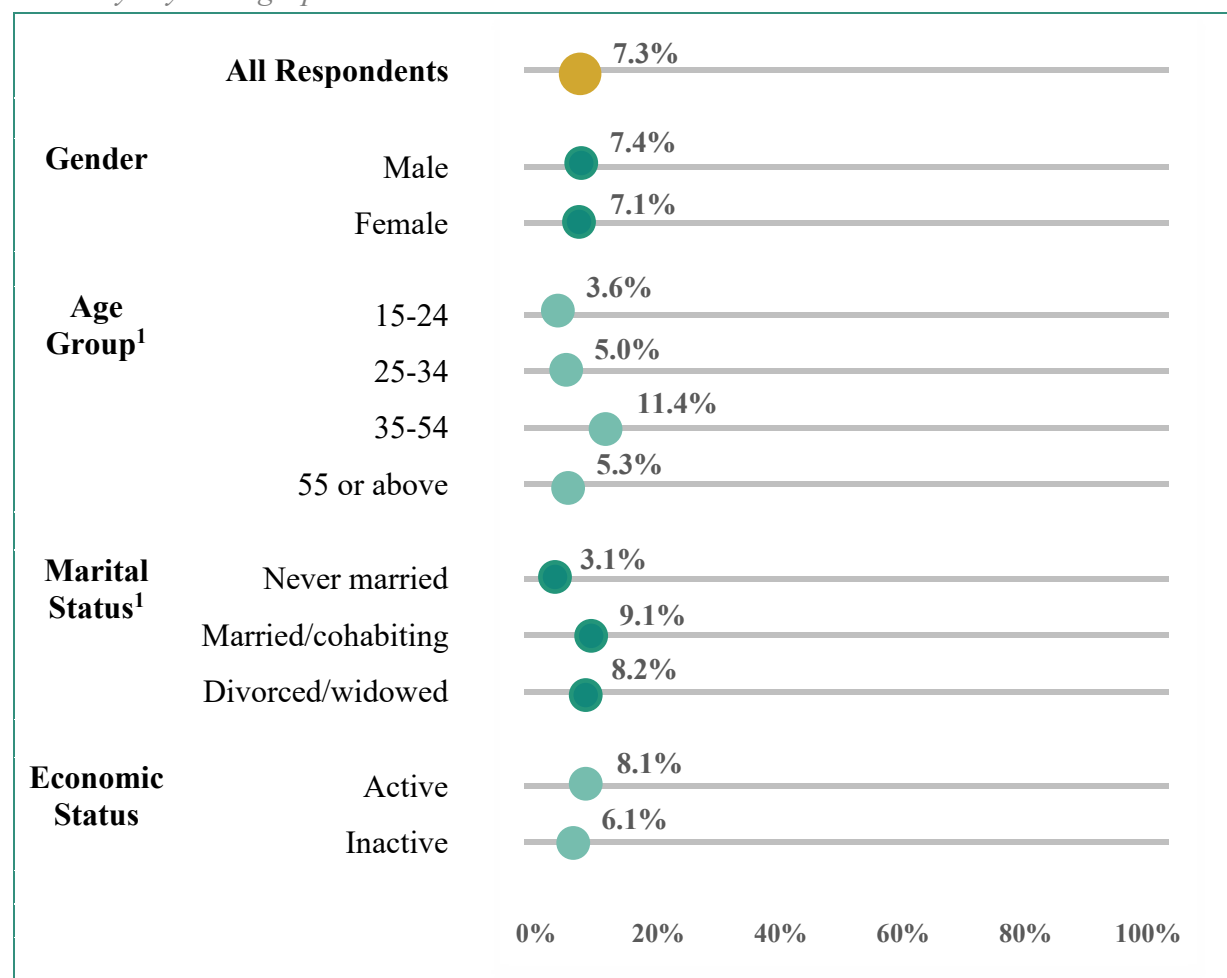
Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

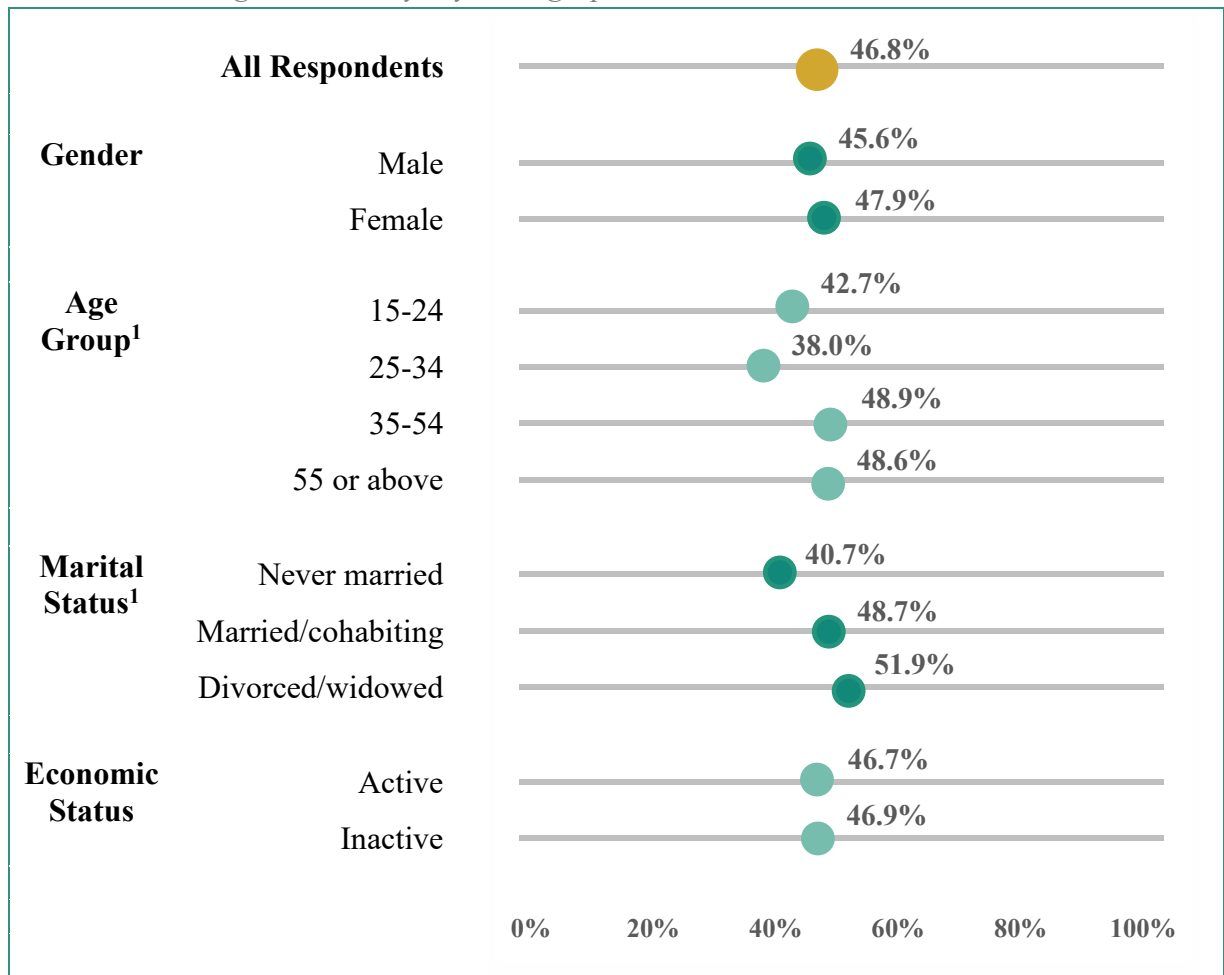15.21 The proportion of respondents participating in family-related programmes decreased from 10.9% in 2013 to 7.3% in 2021.  A decreasing trend was observed from 2013 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p < .05$).  Analysed by demographics, though significant differences were found in some mean scores across the years, no particular trend was observed.

*Chart 15.13    Participation in family-related programmes by the Government and/or NGOs or other organisations by key demographics in 2021*
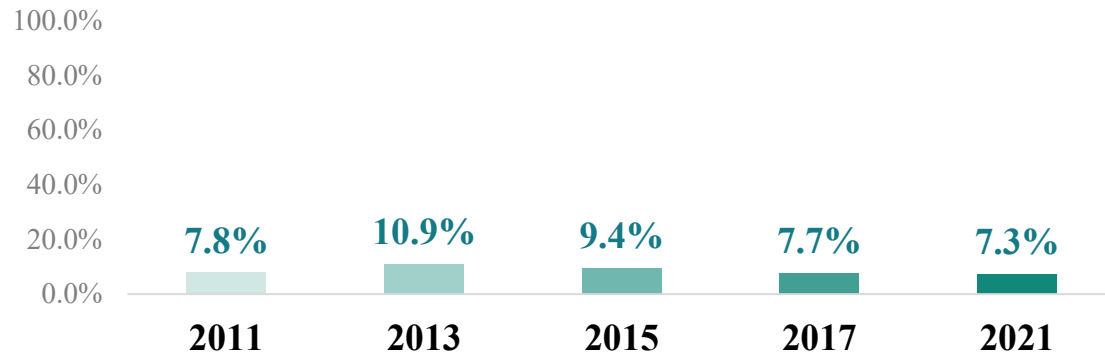


| % | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | p-value[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 6.6 | 9.8 | 8.9 | 7.3 | 7.4 | .937 |
| | Female | 8.9 | 11.8 | 9.8 | 7.8 | 7.1 | .002 |
| Age groups (years) | 15-24 | 2.8 | 4.7 | 9.7 | 7.7 | 3.6 | .366 |
| | 25-34 | 5.1 | 9.3 | 6.2 | 6.5 | 5.0 | .317 |
| | 35-54 | 10.5 | 14.6 | 10.4 | 7.4 | 11.4 | .517 |
| | 55 or above | 8.2 | 9.9 | 9.8 | 8.3 | 5.3 | .007 |
| Marital status | Never married | 3.7 | 5.1 | 7.0 | 6.5 | 3.1 | .491 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 9.8 | 13.3 | 10.8 | 8.5 | 9.1 | .044 |
| | Divorced/separated/widowed | 9.5 | 13.7 | 9.8 | 6.5 | 8.2 | .228 |
| Economic status | Economically active | 7.3 | 10.3 | 8.6 | 7.1 | 8.1 | .289 |
| | Economically inactive | 8.6 | 11.4 | 10.2 | 8.1 | 6.1 | .026 |

Note [1] GLM determines the differences in the mean scores across the years, controlling for the gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents.

## Views Collected from In-depth Discussions

### Family Activities Organised by the Government or NGOs or other organisations

15.22 Focus group discussions were conducted to collect in-depth views with 23 parents to learn about their views on participating in family-related activities or events.

15.23 Some of the parent participants indicated they had participated in family activities organised by schools or NGOs such as family trips or visits to different exhibitions. In particular, family activities organised by parent-teacher associations could help parents pay frequent attention to children's daily behaviours and emotional changes, discuss with teachers, and get along with other parents and classmates of their children.

15.24 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the past two years, some participants pointed out that the number of family activities organised were greatly reduced, resulting in low participation.

# 16. Theme 7 – Family Hierarchy

## Overview

16.1    Family hierarchy is proposed as a new theme as some of the reviewed family surveys covered related dimensions, such as household roles, domination, control, and power within a family.  Two questions were adopted to explore the respondents' household roles (i.e.  breadwinner and carer).  Respondents were asked whether they were the breadwinner of the family, whether there were members of their family who had a type of disadvantage, and whether they were the primary carer in the family.

16.2    In addition, four questions were used to examine household decision-making about financial, living, child, and care arrangements.  The extent of the respondents' participation in household activities (e.g.  dining with family, watching TV programmes or playing games, buying household goods together, joining family gatherings, etc.) was also assessed.

16.3    Table 16.1 presents the dimensions and details of respondents' family hierarchy.

*Table 16.1    Dimensions of Theme 7 – Family Hierarchy*

| Theme | Dimensions | Year | | | | | No. of items | α | Index construct? | Single item? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | | | | |
| 7A | Family role - breadwinner | - | - | - | - | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |
| 7B | Family role - carer | - | - | - | - | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |
| 7C | Family decision-making (financial, living, children, caring) | - | - | - | - | ☑ | 4 | - | - | ☑ |
| 7D | Frequency of participating in family activities | - | - | - | - | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |

## *Family Role - Breadwinner*

16.4    Respondents were asked whether they were the breadwinner of their family. About one third (35.2%) of the respondents reported that they had the highest income among family members.  About 30.0% indicated that they had an income, but it was not the highest among family members.  The remaining third (34.8%) of the respondents did not have any income.

*Chart 16.2     Family role – breadwinner in 2021*
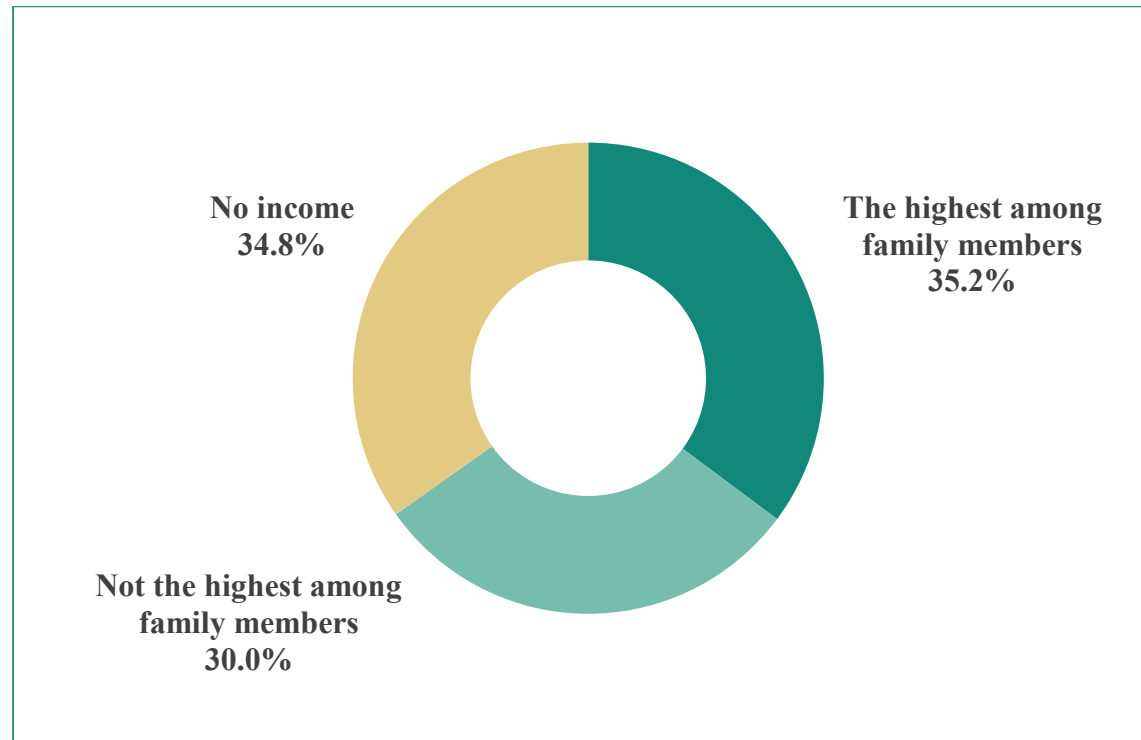
## Family Role - Carer

16.5    Respondents were asked whether there were any disadvantaged family members living in their household. About one third (34.7%) of the respondents indicated that there were family members with disadvantages living in their household. Among these households, 67.3% had family members with a chronic illness, 29.9% had elderly members with poor self-care ability, 12.6% had disabled persons, and 6.6% had children with special learning needs and learning disabilities.

16.6    Among the households with disadvantaged family members, 33.9% of the respondents were primary caregivers, and they were taking care of family members with a chronic illness (73.0%), elderly family members with poor self-care ability (25.8%), disabled persons (17.7%), and children with special learning needs and learning disabilities (13.2%).

*Chart 16.3    The disadvantaged types of family members in 2021*
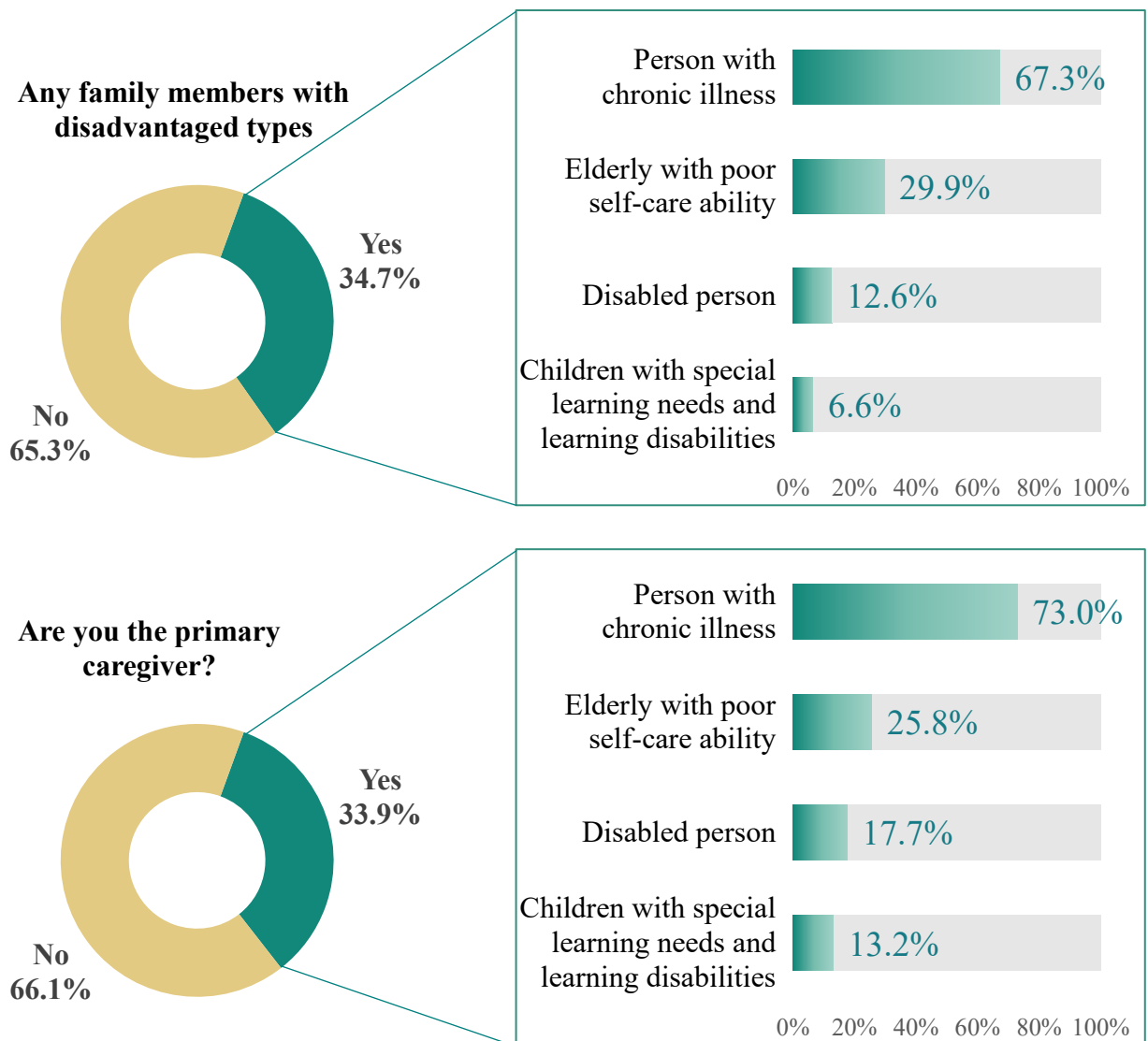
## *Family Decision-making*

16.7    Respondents were asked to rate their level of power in making four family-related decisions on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = I have no decision-making power to 5 = I have final decision-making power).

16.8    In 2021, less than half of the respondents expressed that they had more or final decision-making power in the family in relation to daily living (i.e. buying food, dining out, etc.) (48.5%), daily childcare (48.2%), major financial decisions (i.e. investment) (46.1%), and the daily care of elder family members living in the same household (37.4%).

*Chart 16.4    Family decision-making in 2021*
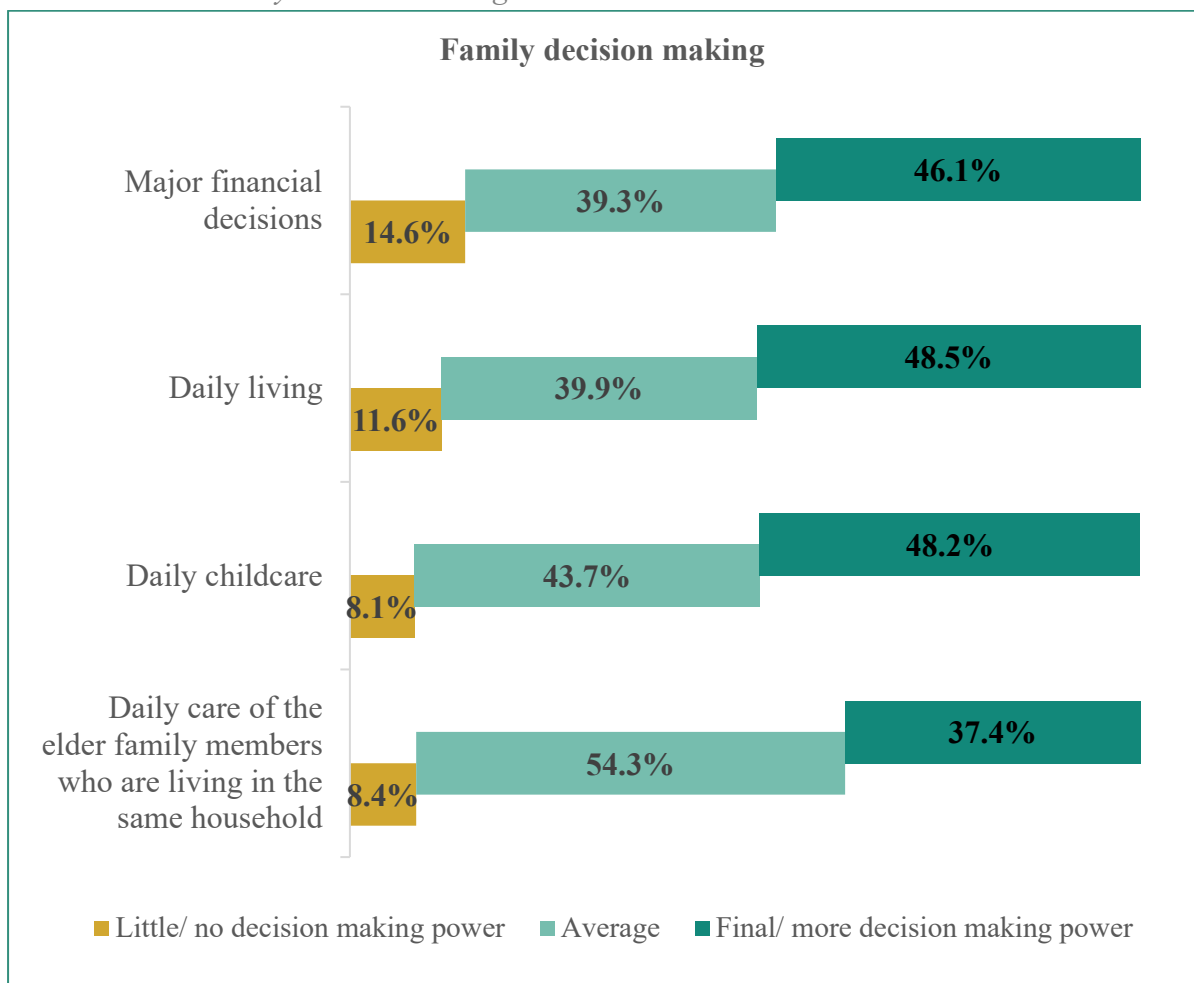
16.9    Details of the proportions of respondents who had final or more family decision-making power over major financial decisions (i.e. investment) were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.

16.10   About 46.1% of the respondents had final or more family decision-making power on major financial decisions. Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of respondents in the following groups had final or more family decision-making power over major financial decisions: male (51.9%), aged 35 to 54 (52.4%), aged 55 or above (51.0%), married/cohabiting (49.5%), divorced/widowed (57.1%), and economically active (51.2%) ($ps < .05$).

*Chart 16.5    Proportions of final or more family decision-making power over major financial decisions by key demographics in 2021*
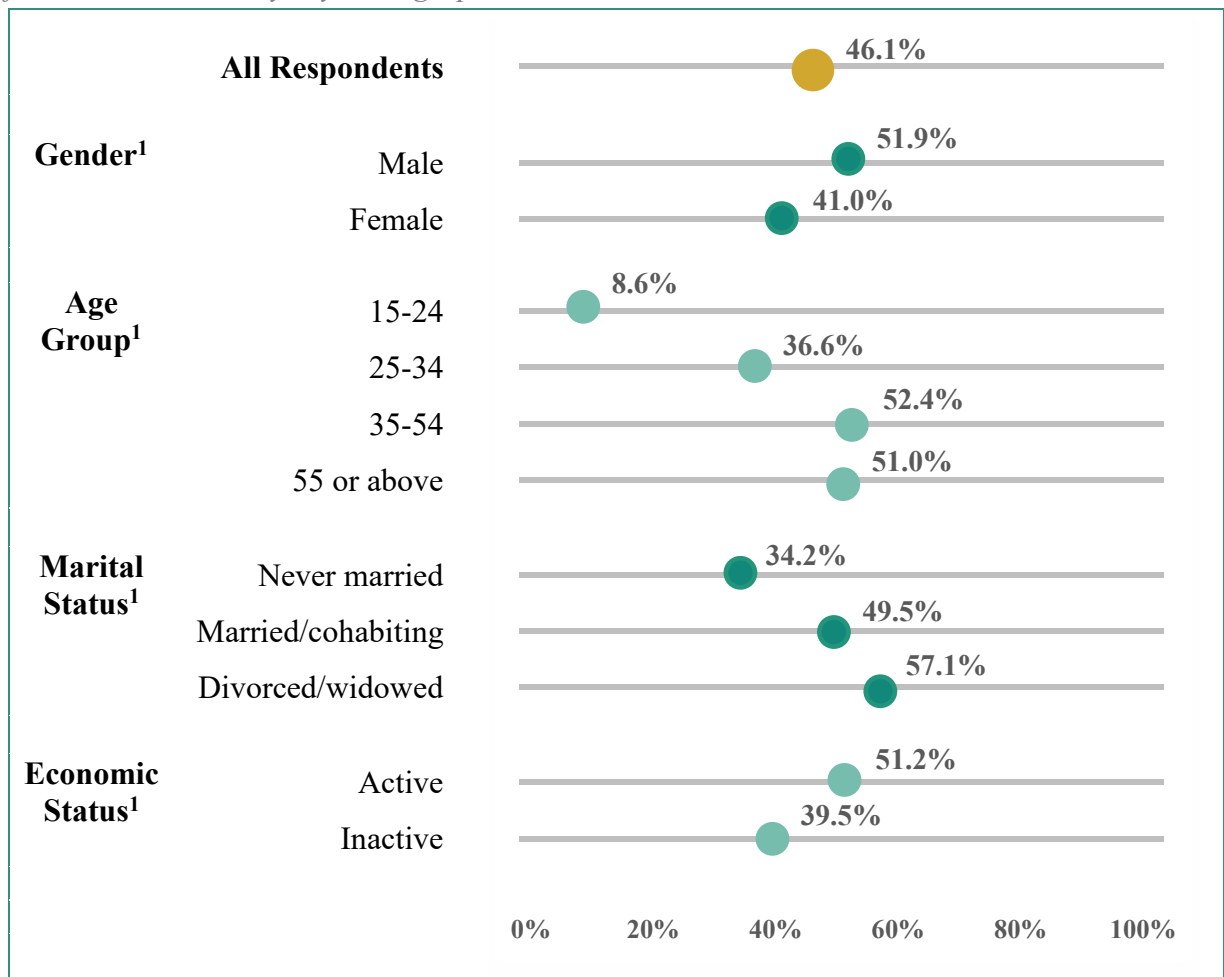


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

16.11    Details of the proportions of respondents who had final or more family decision-making power over daily living matters (i.e. buying food, dining out, etc.) were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.

16.12    About 48.5% of the respondents had final or more family decision-making power over daily living matters. Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of respondents in the following groups had final or more family decision-making power over daily living matters: female (63.0%), aged 35 to 54 (50.8%), aged 55 or above (55.6%), married/cohabiting (49.5%), divorced/widowed (70.2%), and economically inactive (54.0%) ($ps < .05$).

*Chart 16.6    Proportions of final or more family decision-making power over daily living by key demographics in 2021*
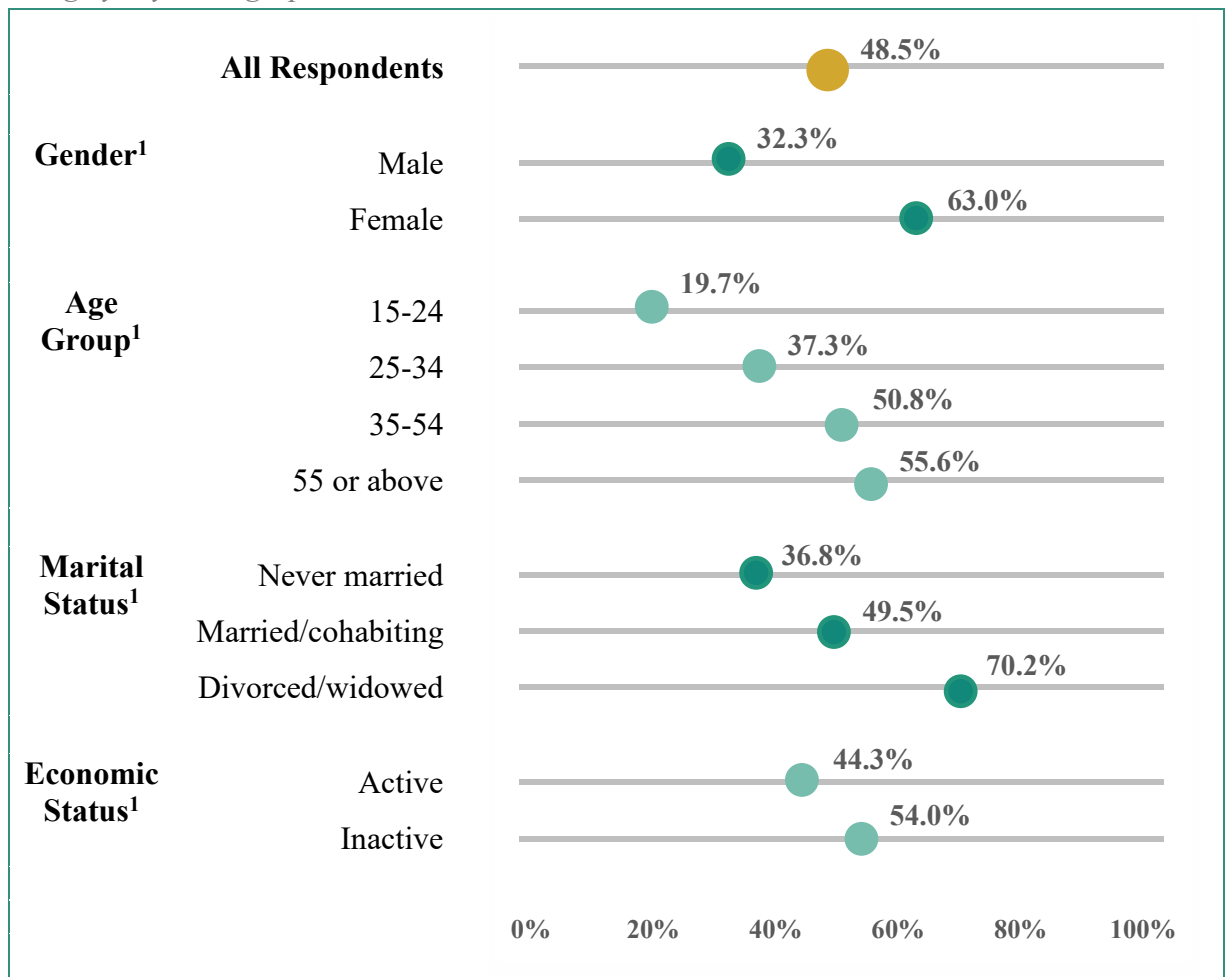


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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16.13 Details of the proportions of respondents who had final or more family decision-making power over daily childcare were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.

16.14 About 48.2% of the respondents had final or more family decision-making power over daily childcare. Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of respondents in the following groups had final or more family decision-making power over daily childcare: female (64.4%), aged 35 to 54 (59.8%), married/cohabiting (52.2%), and divorced/widowed (46.9%) (*ps* < .05). No statistically significant difference was found between economic status groups.

*Chart 16.7     Proportions of final or more family decision-making power over daily childcare by key demographics in 2021*
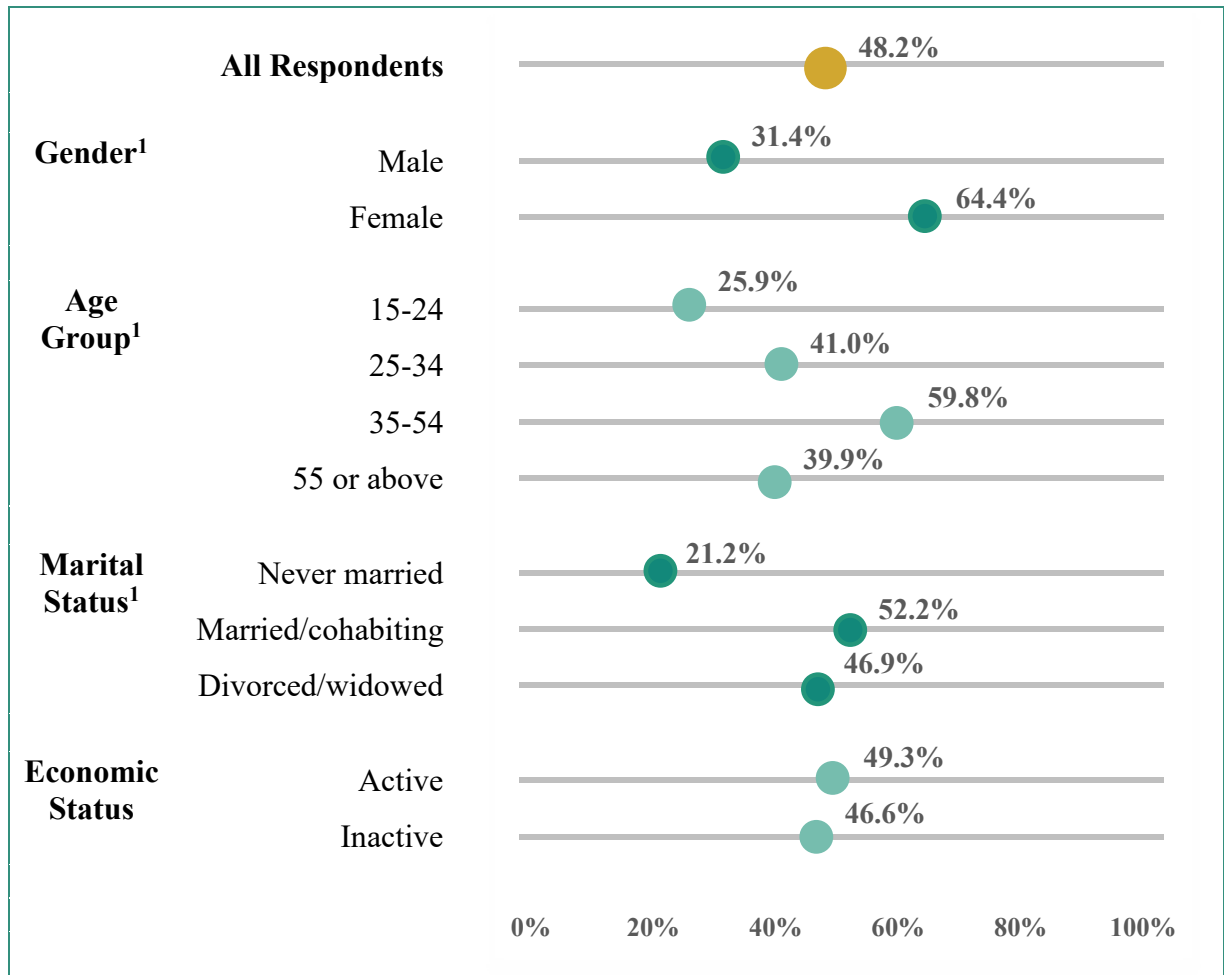


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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16.15 Details of the proportions of respondents who had final or more family decision-making power over the daily care of elder family members living in the same household were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.

16.16 About 37.4% of the respondents had final or more family decision-making power over the daily care of elder family members who were living in the same household. Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of respondents in the following groups had final or more family decision-making power over the daily care of elder family members living in the same household: female (41.7%), aged 35 to 54 (40.6%), aged 55 or above (42.1%), and married/cohabiting (41.1%) ($ps < .05$). No statistically significant difference was found between economic status groups.

Chart 16.8 *Proportions of final or more family decision-making power over daily care of elder family members living in the same household key demographics in 2021*
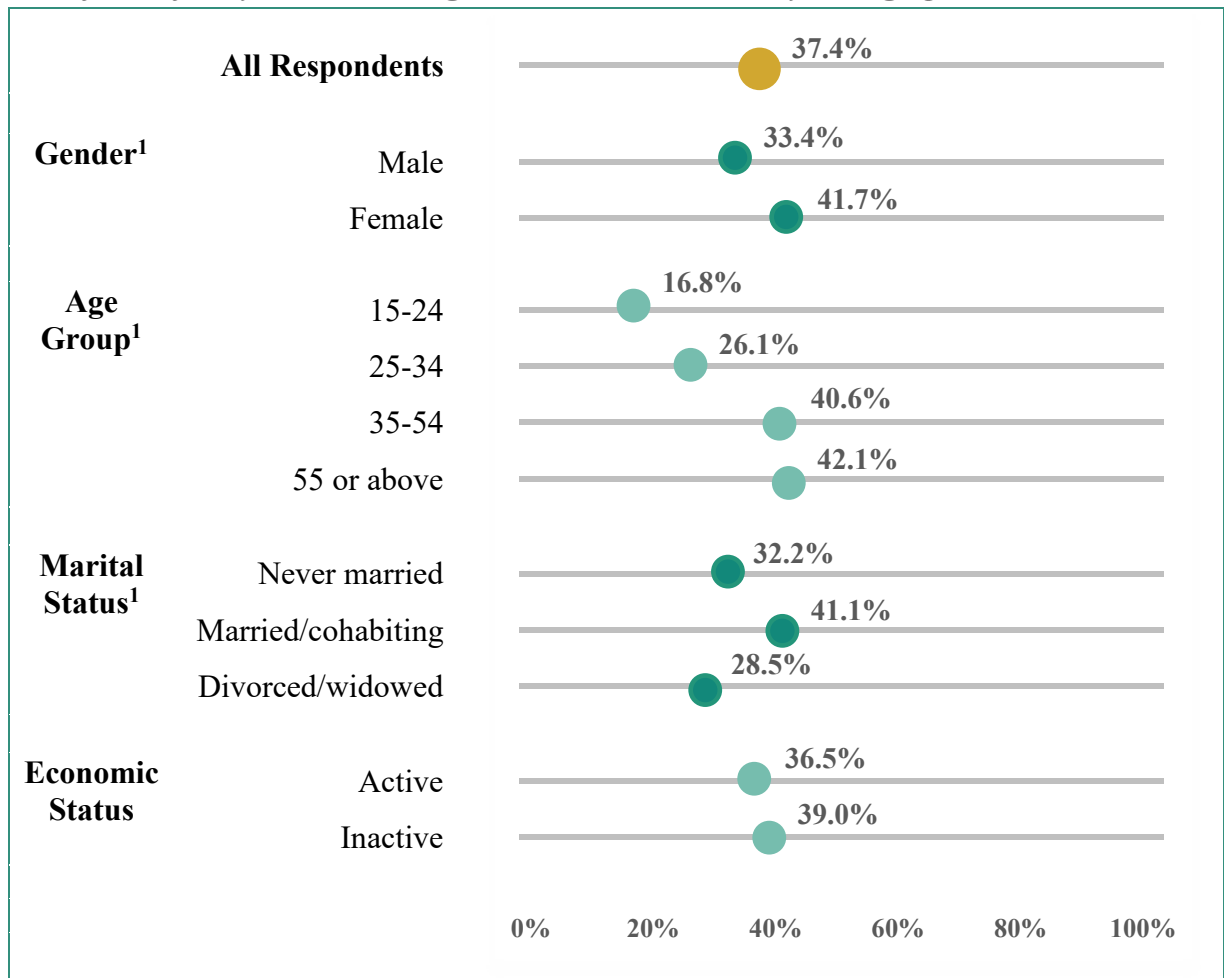


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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## *Frequency of Participating in Family Activities*

16.17    Respondents were asked to rate the frequency of their participation in family activities (i.e. dining with family, watching TV programmes or playing games, buying household goods together, joining family gatherings, etc.) on a four-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = almost never to 4 = frequently).

16.18    In 2021, 41.2% of the respondents indicated that they frequently participated in various family activities and 41.7% stated that they sometimes participated in such activities. About 13.0% expressed that they did not often participate in family activities, and 4.1% indicated that almost never did.

*Chart 16.9        Frequency of participating in family activities in 2021*

**Frequency of participating in family activities**

Almost never 4.1%

Not often 13.0%

Sometimes 41.7%

Frequently 41.2%
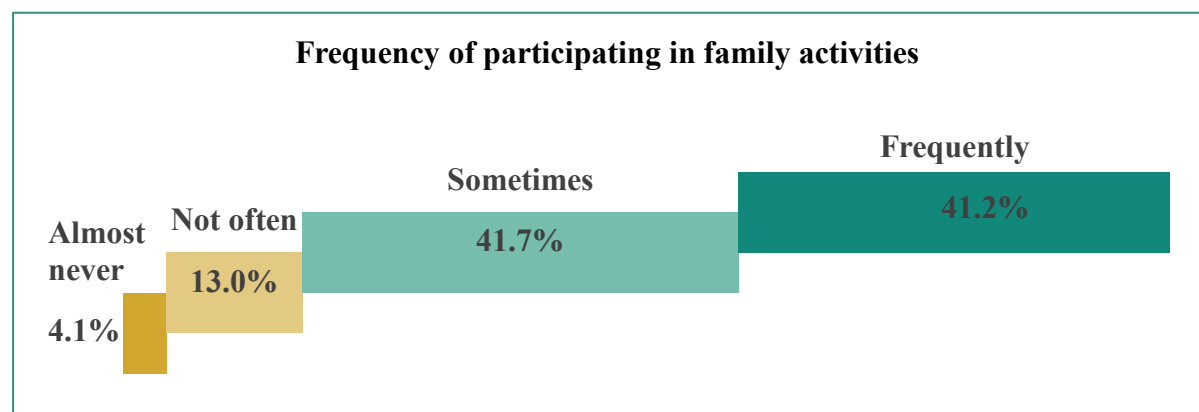
16.19    Details of the proportions of respondents in terms of frequency of participating in family activities were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.

16.20    About 82.9% of the respondents reported that they sometimes or frequently participated in family activities.  Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly lower proportions of respondents in the following groups sometimes or frequently participated in family activities: aged 55 or above (79.0%), divorced/widowed (64.3%), and economically inactive (80.1%) (*ps* < .05).  There was no significant gender difference.

*Chart 16.10    Frequency of participating in family activities by key demographics in 2021*
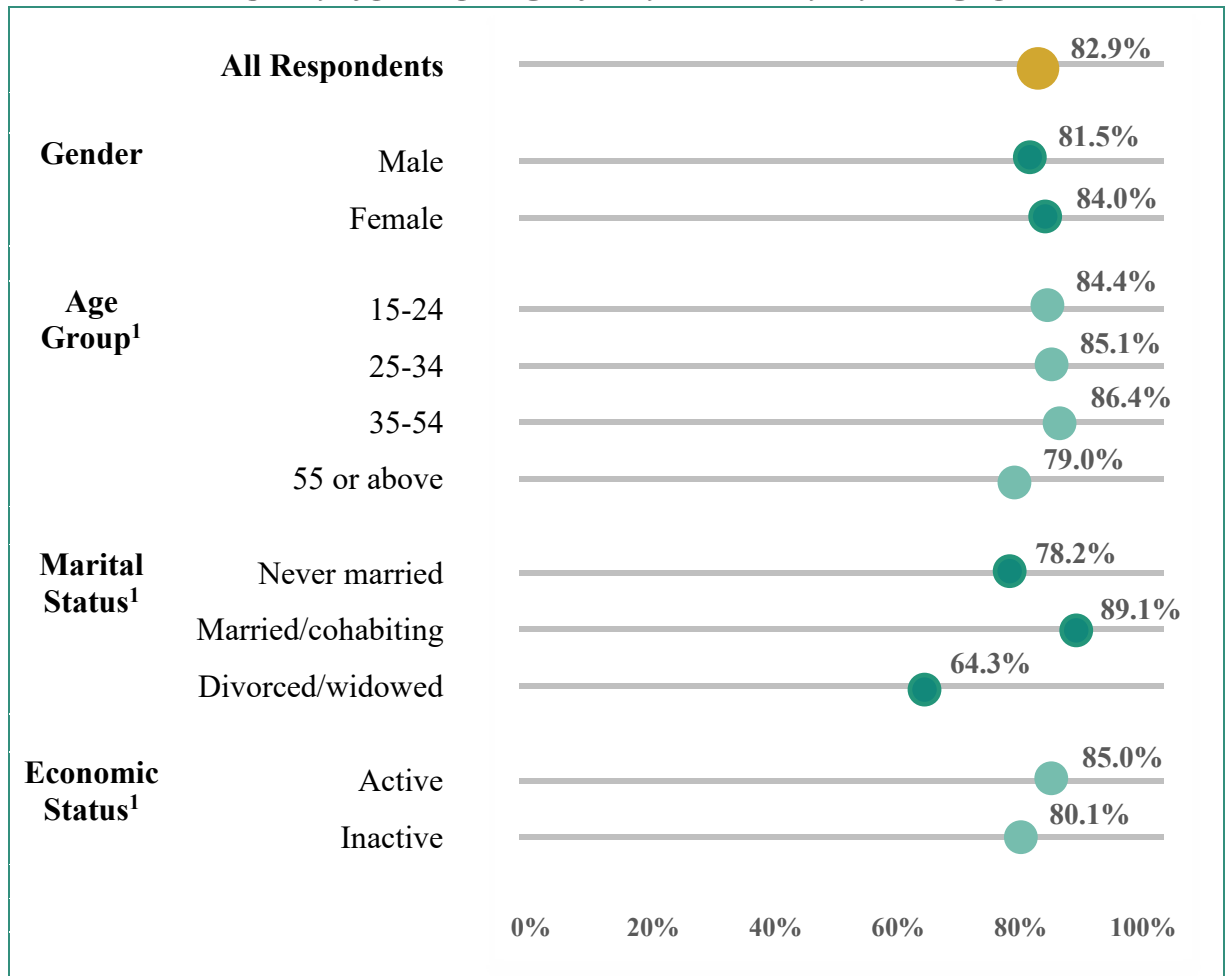


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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## Views Collected from In-depth Discussions

### Participation in Family Activities

16.21   Focus group discussions were conducted to collect in-depth views with 18 participants aged 15 to 29, 23 parents and eight grandparents to learn about their views on participating in family-related activities or events.

16.22   Most of the participants aged 15 to 29 shared that the most frequent family activities were eating out or shopping with their parents.  Some participants watched movies and travelled with their parents.  For the siblings, they would try to find out their common interests such as playing games or sports.

16.23   Most of the participants who were parents expressed that they would arrange various types of family activities for their children such as meal gatherings, shopping, hiking, cycling or playing sports, etc.  Some parent participants also mentioned that they would take their children to play in theme parks or participate in experiential learning activities such as farming and gardening to let their children to know more about nature.  Some participants shared that strong family bonds were essential for the social and emotional development of their children, and it also benefited to the well-being of the parents.  Further, shared meals and playing sports could help the families bond together.

16.24   Most of the participants who were grandparents claimed that most frequent family activities were dining or playing with their grandchildren in the park. However, some participants expressed that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, grandparents had less chances to meet with their children and grandchildren. Most of the grandparent participants spent their time with their grandchildren by dining at home or playing at home now.  Two participants claimed that they did not have chance to meet their grandchildren for two years.

# 17. Theme 8 – Quality of Life

## *Overview*

17.1   Quality of life is proposed as a new theme as most of the reviewed family surveys covered this area.  This dimension includes physical health, mental health, and level of happiness.  The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS-C) is a 4-item scale used to self-rate the happiness of respondents[25,26].  The Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4) is a 4-item scale used to screen for anxiety and depression.[27] The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) is a 5-item scale used to measure one's life satisfaction as a whole[28].  In addition to these scales, one question item was included to measure respondents' overall physical health.

17.2   The alphas of the three scales were larger than 0.7, indicating a satisfactory level of reliability and internal consistency.  Table 17.1 presents the dimensions and details of the respondents' quality of life.

*Table 17.1      Dimensions of Theme 8 – Quality of Life*

| Theme | Dimensions | Year | | | | | No. of items | α | Index construct? | Single item? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2021 | | | | |
| 8A | Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS-C) | - | - | - | ☑ | ☑ | 4 | > 0.7 | ☑ | - |
| 8B | Overall physical health | - | - | - | - | ☑ | 1 | - | - | ☑ |
| 8C | Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4) | - | - | - | - | ☑ | 4 | > 0.7 | ☑ | - |
| 8D | Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) | - | - | - | - | ☑ | 5 | > 0.7 | ☑ | - |

## Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS-C)

17.3    The SHS-C was used to assess the respondents' overall happiness. Respondents responded to two question items asking them to characterise themselves using both absolute ratings and ratings relative to peers, and two question items asking them to choose the best descriptions of their happiness; the items were rated on a seven-point Likert scale.

17.4    About two thirds (65.2%) of the respondents considered themselves to be very happy persons, whereas about 12.6% considered themselves not to be very happy persons.  Compared to most of their peers, about 59.3% considered themselves happier, whereas 14.7% considered themselves unhappier.

17.5    Regarding the item "Some people are generally very happy.  They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything", over half (54.8%) of the respondents agreed that this characterisation described a great deal about them, 27.5% did not provide comments, and 17.7% disagreed that this characterisation described them.

17.6    Regarding the item "Some people are generally not very happy.  Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be", over half (55.4%) of the respondents indicated that this characterisation did not describe them, 22.1% did not provide comments, and 22.5% agreed that this characterisation described a great deal about them.

*Chart 17.2      Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS-C) in 2021*

**In general, I consider myself:**

| Not a very happy person | Neutral | A very happy person |
|---|---|---|
| **12.6%** | **22.1%** | **65.2%** |

**Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself:**

| Less happy | Neutral | More happy |
|---|---|---|
| **14.7%** | **26.0%** | **59.3%** |

**Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterisation describe you?**

| Not at all | Neutral | A great deal |
|---|---|---|
| **17.7%** | **27.5%** | **54.8%** |

**Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterisation describe you?**

| Not at all | Neutral | A great deal |
|---|---|---|
| **55.4%** | **22.1%** | **22.5%** |

17.7 An SHS-C index was compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status. The last item is negatively worded and was reverse coded. A higher score indicated a higher level of happiness.

17.8 The mean score of SHS-C was 4.71 out of 7. Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents who were aged 55 or above (4.80) and those who were married/cohabiting (4.90) reported higher levels of happiness (ps < .05). No statistically significant differences were found between economic status group.

Chart 17.3    Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS-C) by key demographics in 2021
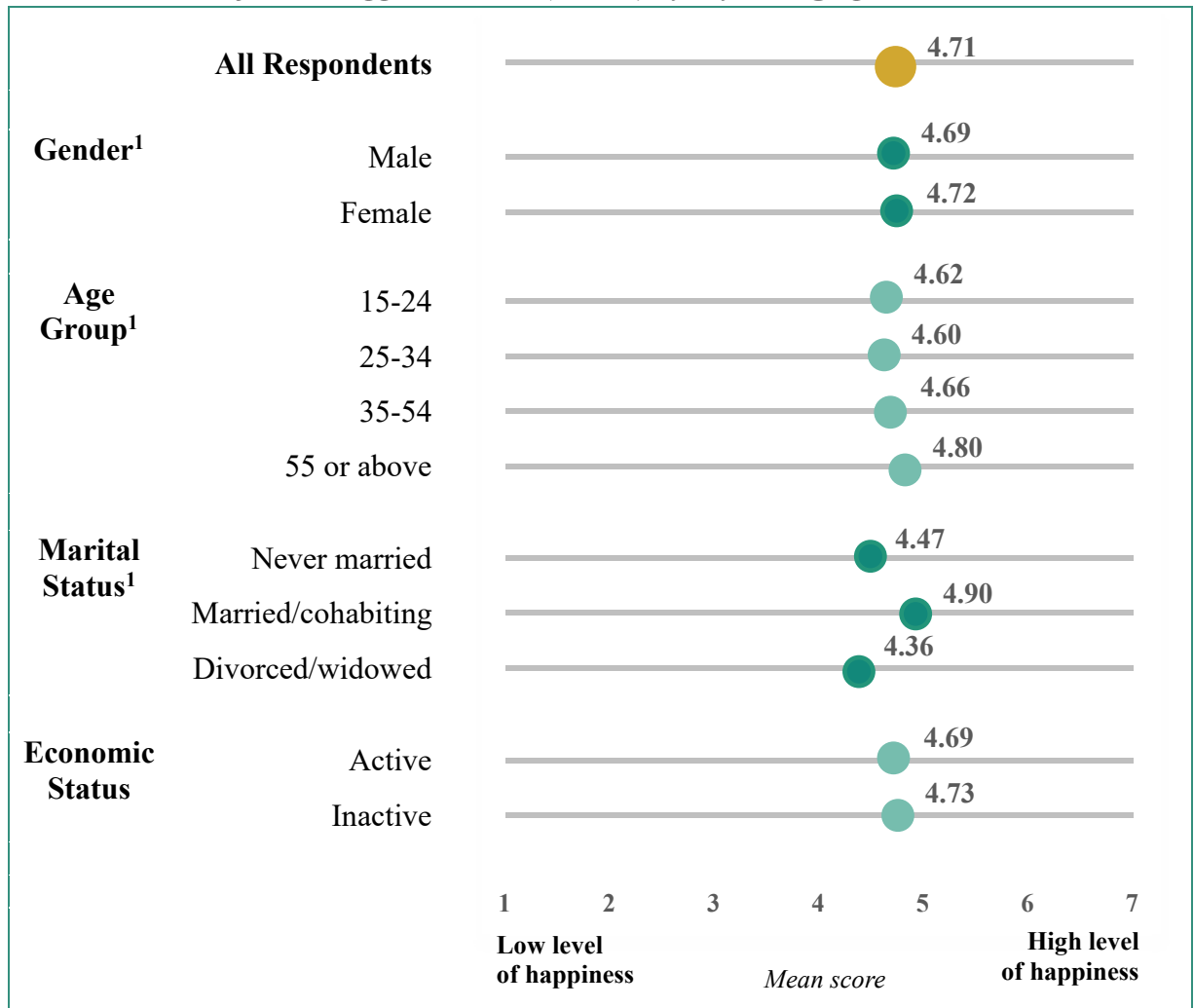


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

## *Overall Physical Health*

17.9  Respondents were asked to self-assess their overall physical health using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = excellent to 5 = poor).

17.10  In 2021, over half (56.6%) of the respondents perceived their physical health as either good (33.5%), very good (19.6%), or excellent (3.5%).  Over one third (38.3%) of the respondents indicated that their physical health was fair, whereas 5.1% indicated it was poor.

*Chart 17.4      Overall physical health in 2021*

17.11   An index of overall physical health was compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.  The item was reverse coded.  A higher score indicated better overall physical health.

17.12   The mean score of overall physical health was 2.78 out of 5.  Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents in the following groups reported better overall physical health: male (2.87), aged 15 to 24 (3.19), never been married (2.82), married/cohabiting (2.82), and economically active (2.85) (*ps* < .05).

*Chart 17.5      Overall physical health by key demographics in 2021*

| | | Mean score |
|---|---|---|
| **All Respondents** | | 2.78 |
| **Gender[1]** | Male | 2.87 |
| | Female | 2.70 |
| **Age Group[1]** | 15-24 | 3.19 |
| | 25-34 | 2.92 |
| | 35-54 | 2.82 |
| | 55 or above | 2.63 |
| **Marital Status[1]** | Never married | 2.82 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 2.82 |
| | Divorced/widowed | 2.51 |
| **Economic Status[1]** | Active | 2.85 |
| | Inactive | 2.69 |

Scale: 1 Excellent — 5 Poor

*Mean score*

Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

## *Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4)*

17.13 The 4-item PHQ-4 is a brief self-report questionnaire that consists of a 2-item anxiety scale (GAD-2) and a 2-item depression scale (PHQ-2). Each item asks about the frequency of anxiety and depressive symptoms in the past 2 weeks and is rated on a four-point Likert scale (ranging from 0 = not at all to 3 = nearly every day). A total score of 3 or above for GAD-2 and PHQ-2 indicates anxiety and depression symptoms, respectively.

17.14 A population-based study was conducted by the University of Hong Kong (School of Nursing and School of Public Health) from late-March to mid-April 2020 in Hong Kong with a random sample of 1,501 Chinese adults[29]. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the study results showed that one in seven respondents had anxiety symptoms (15.8%) and depressive symptoms (14.8%).

17.15 In the Family Survey 2021, nearly one in four (24.5%) of the respondents indicated that they had anxiety symptoms, and about one in five (20.5%) of the respondents expressed that they had depression symptoms. As a whole, about 14.7% of the respondents had both anxiety and depression symptoms, 9.8% had anxiety symptoms only, 5.8% had depression symptoms only, and 69.7% did not have any anxiety or depression symptoms.

17.16 With reference to the two representative large-scale population surveys, the results showed that the proportion of respondents with anxiety symptoms increased significantly from late 2021 to early 2022 which the fifth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has reached the peak during the fieldwork period.

*Chart 17.6      Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4) in 2021*
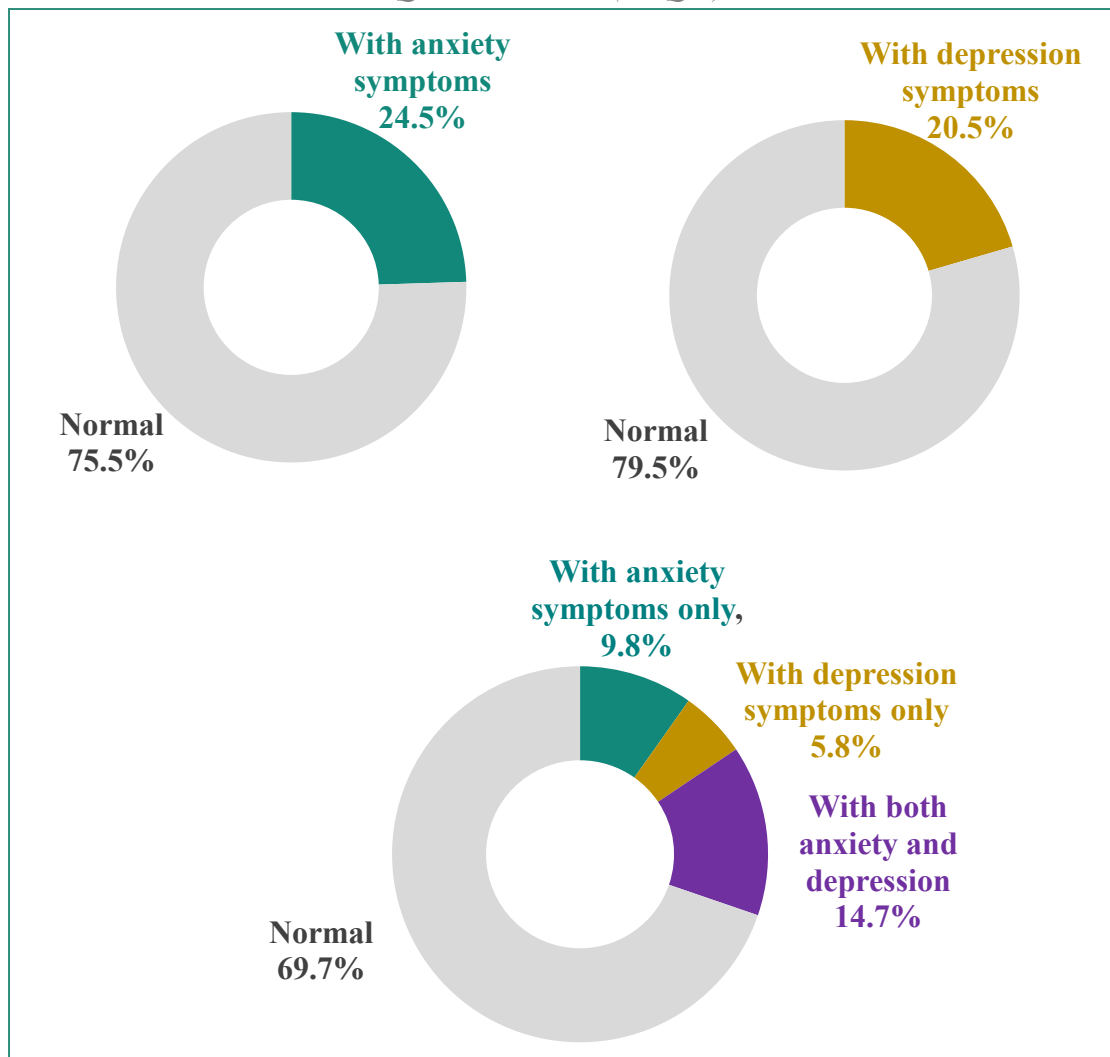
17.17 Details of the proportions of respondents with anxiety symptoms were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.

17.18 Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of respondents in the following groups had anxiety symptoms: female (27.5%), aged 15 to 24 (30.4%), aged 25 to 34 (31.7%), never been married (33.4%), divorced/widowed (28.7%), and economically active (26.1%) ($ps < .05$).

*Chart 17.7    Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4) – Anxiety by key demographics in 2021*
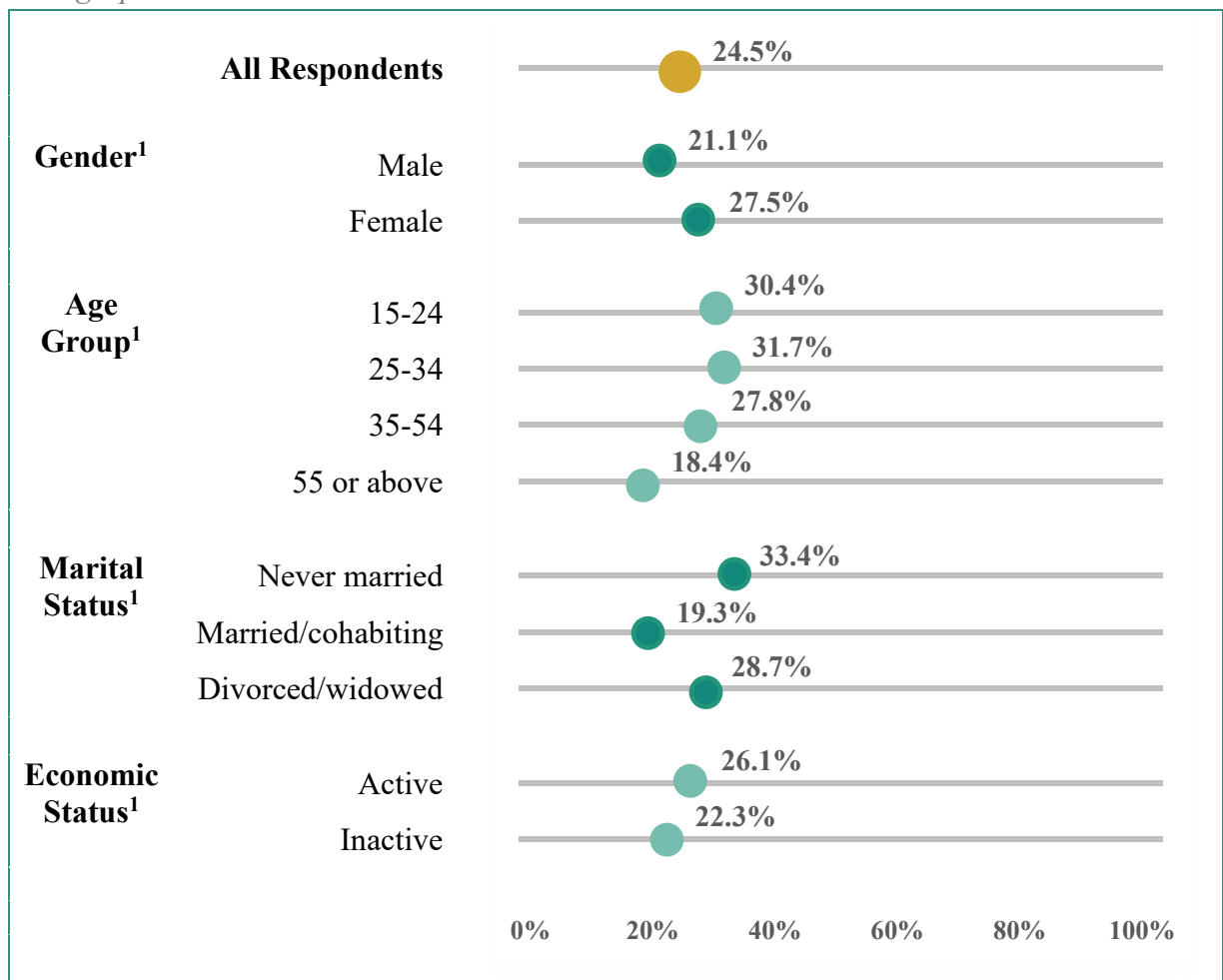


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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17.19    Details of the proportions of respondents with depression symptoms were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.

17.20    Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of respondents in the following groups had depression symptoms: female (22.5%), aged 15 to 24 (32.1%), aged 25 to 34 (29.1%), never been married (29.7%), and divorced/widowed (22.5%) ($ps < .05$).  No statistically significant difference was found between economic status groups.

*Chart 17.8    Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4) – Depression by key demographics in 2021*



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **All Respondents** | | 20.5% |
| **Gender[1]** | Male | 18.2% |
| | Female | 22.5% |
| **Age Group[1]** | 15-24 | 32.1% |
| | 25-34 | 29.1% |
| | 35-54 | 19.8% |
| | 55 or above | 16.2% |
| **Marital Status[1]** | Never married | 29.7% |
| | Married/cohabiting | 15.5% |
| | Divorced/widowed | 22.5% |
| **Economic Status** | Active | 20.1% |
| | Inactive | 21.0% |
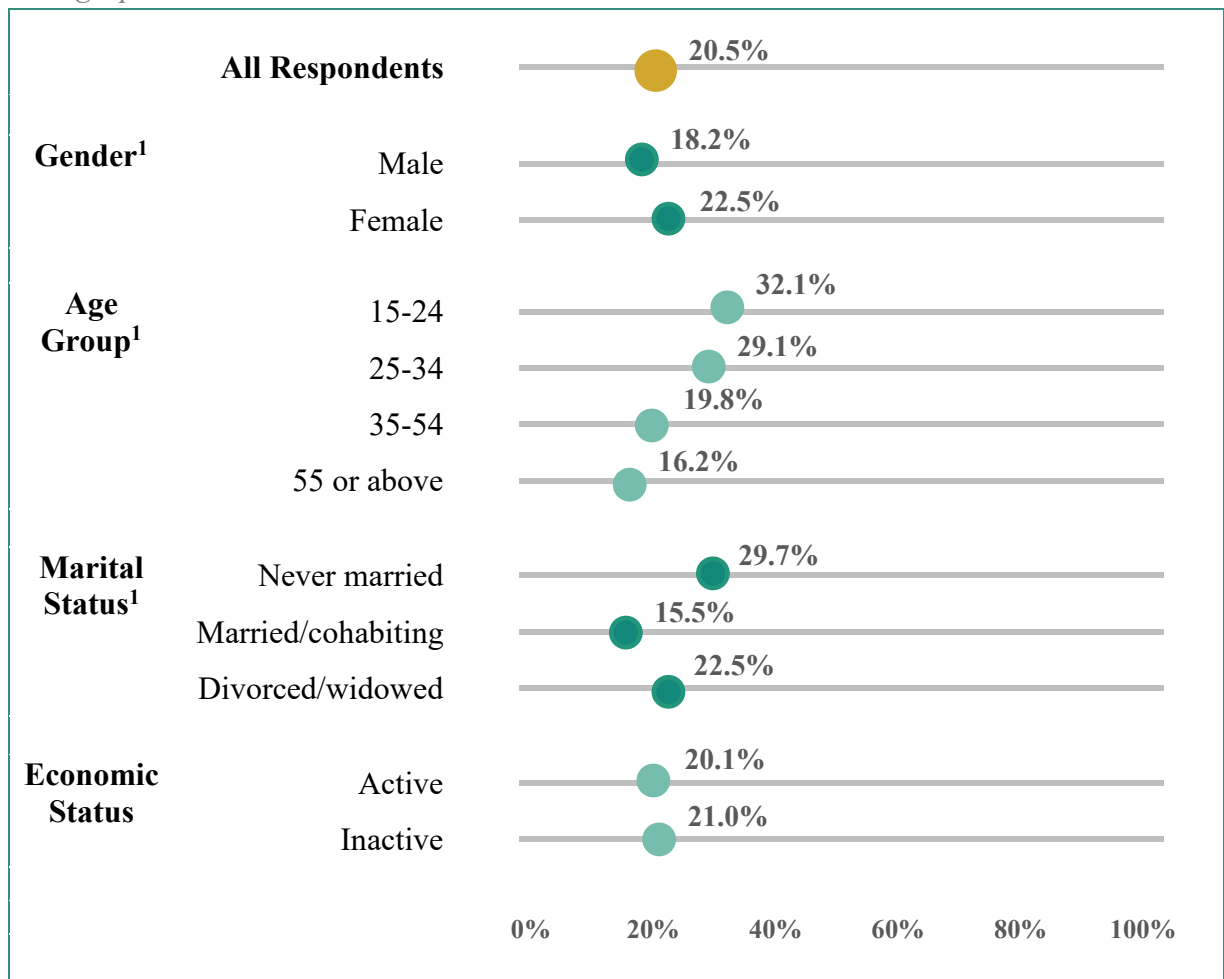
Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

17.21    Details of the proportions of respondents with either anxiety or depression symptoms were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.

17.22    Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of respondents in the following groups had either anxiety or depression symptoms: female (33.6%), aged 15 to 24 (42.3%), aged 25 to 34 (41.6%), never been married (41.9%), and divorced/widowed (34.6%) ($ps < .05$).  No statistically significant difference was found between economic status groups.

*Chart 17.9    Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4) – Anxiety and/or Depression by key demographics in 2021*
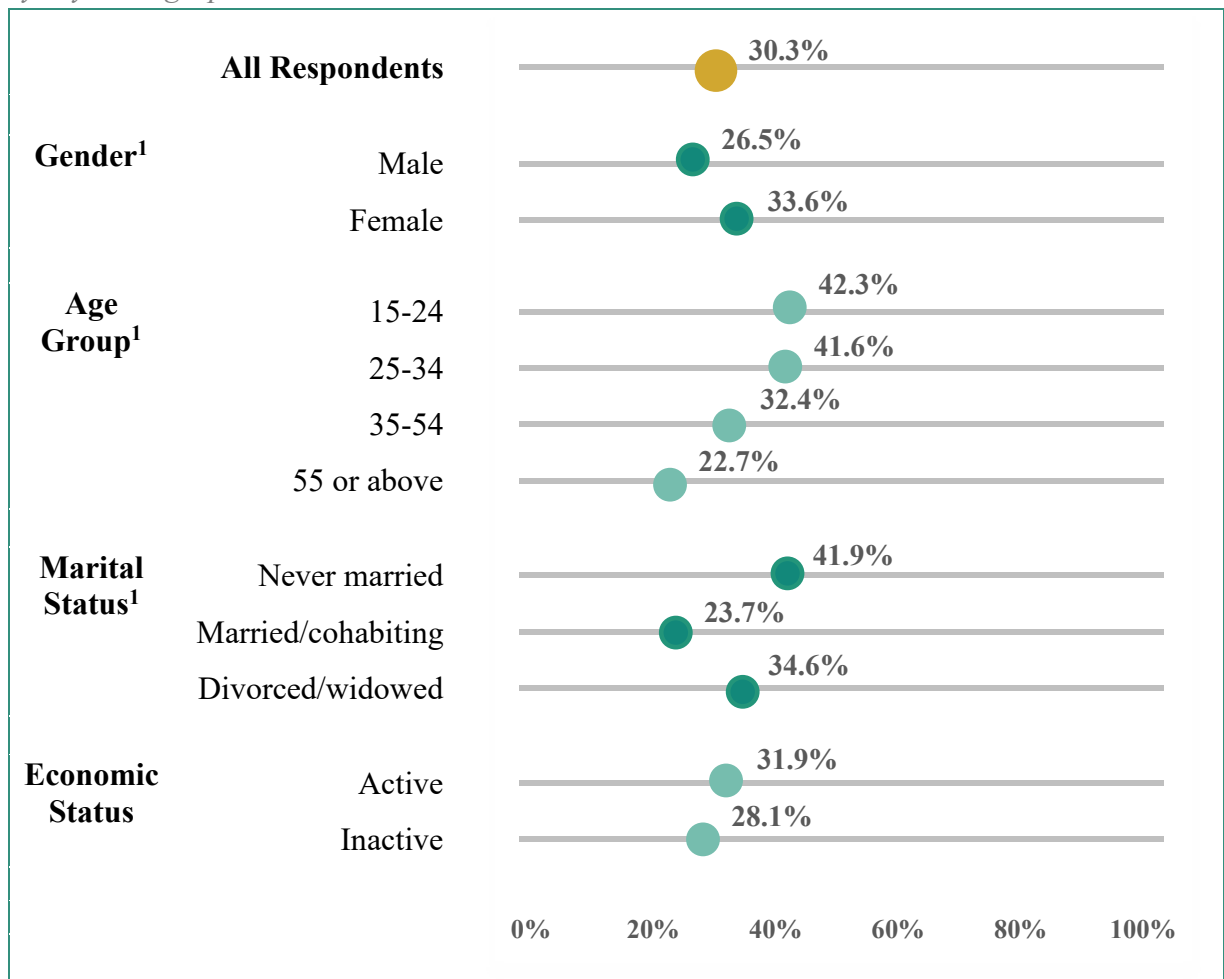


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

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## Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

17.23   The SWLS is a 5-item scale used to measure one's life satisfaction as a whole. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a seven-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).  The possible range of the SWLS is 5 to 35, with a score of 20 representing a neutral point on the scale.  Scores between 5 and 9 indicate that the respondent is extremely dissatisfied with life, whereas scores between 31 and 35 indicate that the respondent is extremely satisfied with life.

17.24   In 2021, over half (57.2%) of the respondents expressed that they were slightly satisfied (30.1%), satisfied (20.7%) or extremely satisfied (6.4%) with their lives.  On the other hand, about 30.2% of the respondents expressed that they were slightly dissatisfied (20.0%), dissatisfied (7.2%), or extremely dissatisfied (3.0%) with their lives.  About 12.6% of the respondents remained neutral.

*Chart 17.10     Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) in 2021*

17.25   An SWLS index was compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.  A higher score indicated more life satisfaction.

17.26   The mean score of the SWLS was 22.10 out of 35.  Compared with the other demographic groups, respondents in the following groups reported more life satisfaction: aged 55 or above (23.03), married/cohabiting (23.32), and economically inactive (22.57) ($ps < .05$).  There was no significant gender difference.

*Chart 17.11    Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) by key demographics in 2021*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **All Respondents** | | 22.10 |
| **Gender** | Male | 22.09 |
| | Female | 22.12 |
| **Age Group**[1] | 15-24 | 21.42 |
| | 25-34 | 20.42 |
| | 35-54 | 21.76 |
| | 55 or above | 23.03 |
| **Marital Status**[1] | Never married | 20.42 |
| | Married/cohabiting | 23.32 |
| | Divorced/widowed | 20.24 |
| **Economic Status**[1] | Active | 21.75 |
| | Inactive | 22.57 |

1  3  5  7  9  11  13  15  17  19  21  23  25  27  29  31  33  35

**Less life satisfaction**                  *Mean score*                  **More life satisfaction**

Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

17.27    Apart from the SWLS index, details of the proportions of respondents indicating dissatisfaction with life (with a score lower than 20) were compiled by key demographics, namely gender, age group, marital status, and economic activity status.

17.28    About 30.2% of the respondents reported life dissatisfaction.  Compared with the other demographic groups, significantly higher proportions of respondents in the following groups reported life dissatisfaction: aged 25 to 34 (41.0%), never been married (38.0%), divorced/widowed (44.0%), and economically active (32.4%) ($ps < .05$).  There was no significant gender difference.

*Chart 17.12    Proportion of life dissatisfaction by key demographics in 2021*
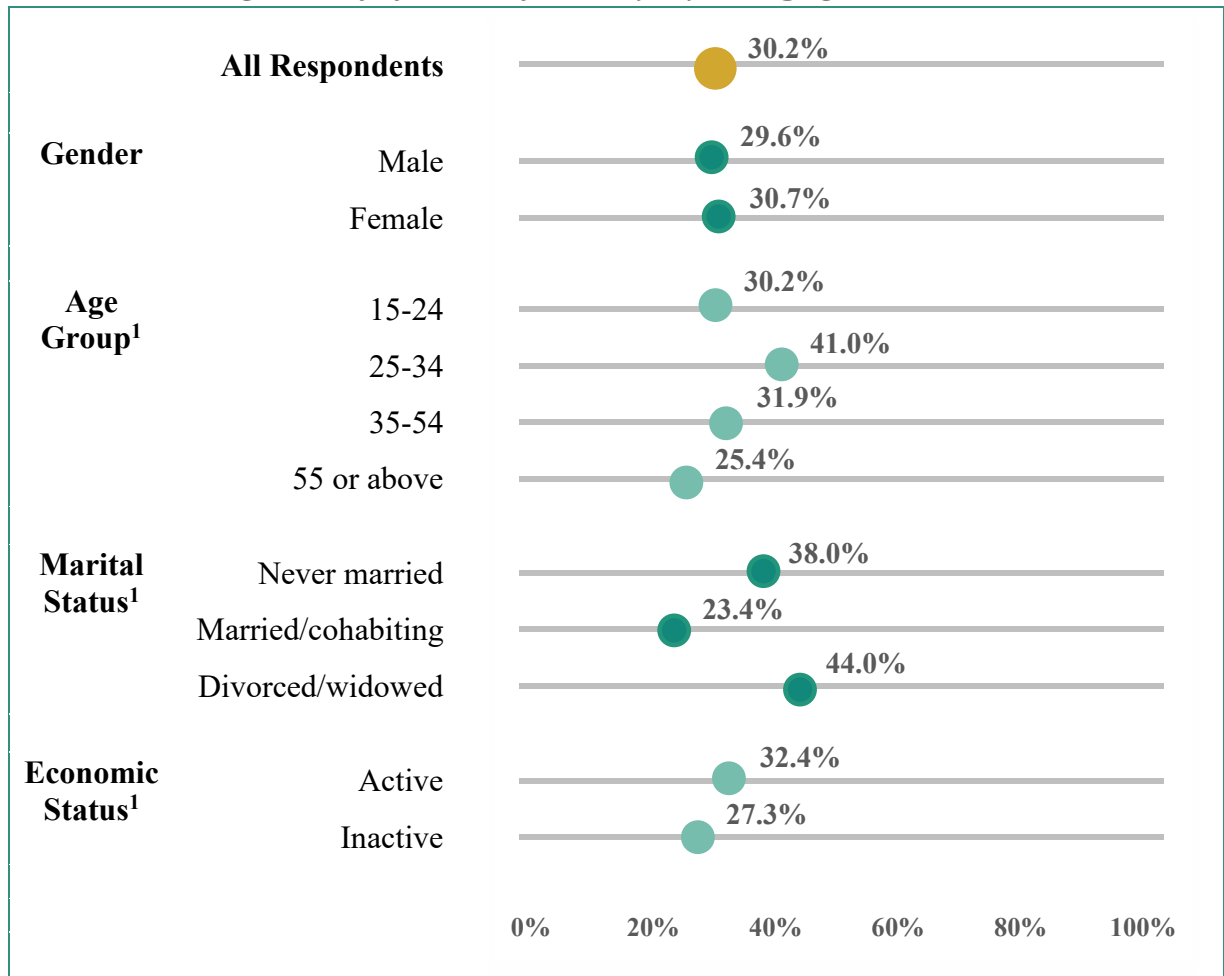


Note [1] Statistically significant differences between demographic groups

## Views Collected from In-depth Discussions

### Social Activities and Social Life

17.29　Focus group discussions were conducted to collect in-depth interviews with 18 participants aged 15 to 29, and eight grandparents to learn about their recent quality of life, social activities and social life.  Yet, under the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years, most of the views were related to the recent situations.

### Social Life of Young Participants Aged 15 to 18

17.30　Majority of the participants aged 15 to 18 indicated that they could maintain good relationships with their classmates during the COVID-19 pandemic, but their relationships with teachers seemed to be relatively distant.  Opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities such as internships, campus or company visit experiences or gatherings with new friends were also limited.

17.31　Moreover, most of them considered that due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the political environment in recent years, Hong Kong's employment outlook was uncertain, the unemployment rate was high, and there were many uncertain factors for future employment.　Even so, some participants believed that there could be positive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.　For instance, there were many transformations and changes in various industries, it might benefit the rise of certain emerging industries.

### Social Life of Young Participants Aged 19 to 29

17.32　Two of the participants who were students considered that the increasing number of online classes reduced in-person communication with classmates, therefore, largely affected interpersonal relationships.  They further explained that as there were fewer opportunities to participate in on-campus classes or activities, students were not able to communicate to one another so their connections with classmates were deteriorated.

17.33　Meanwhile, some of the participants who were employees believed that their relationship with people around were affected.　There had been frequent personnel changes at work, such as resignation due to career change or being fired, their relationship with colleagues were impacted.　Due to social distancing measures and the fear of being infected with COVID-19, many gatherings such as going to the party room or friend's houses were cancelled, hence, fewer opportunities to meet with friends.　On the other hand, some participants thought that the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had increased the connection between friends, as they would actively care about each other's health conditions or whether the anti-pandemic resources were sufficient.

*Social Life of Grandparents*

17.34    Some of the grandparent participants regarded that the COVID-19 pandemic caused negative impact to their social life.  It was opined that gatherings with their children and grandchildren were greatly reduced due to the potential risk of infections, many planned in-person activities or dining dates with friends or siblings were also cancelled due to social distancing measures.  As a result, the opportunities to meet with their loved ones in person had significantly reduced, making their relationships a bit distant.

17.35    Meanwhile, some grandparent participants pointed out that they tried new communication methods to stay connected with friends and families despite of the reduced opportunities to meet with them personally, including the usage of communication applications such as WhatsApp, FaceTime and Zoom to chat. They also stated that the COVID-19 pandemic also created common topics among them, resulting from more love and caring to each other.

# 18. In-depth Analyses

## *Correlation Analyses*

18.1    Correlational analyses between key indices were compiled with the control of age, gender, and educational attainment of the respondents. The Pearson correlation (r) is a statistical measure of the strength of how two variables are linearly related. Positive correlations refer to the score of one index increasing as the score of the other index increases, or the score of one index decreasing while the score of the other index decreases. The correlation coefficients at 0.90 or over demonstrate very strong positive correlation, a range from 0.60 to 0.89 demonstrate strong positive correlation, a range from 0.40 to 0.59 shows moderate positive correlation, and lower than 0.40 shows weak positive correlation.

*Positive correlation coefficients*

| | |
|---|---|
| ▨ | *0.90 to 1.00 (very strong positive correlation)* |
| ▨ | *0.60 to 0.89 (strong positive correlation)* |
| ▨ | *0.40 to 0.59 (moderate positive correlation)* |
| ▨ | *<0.40 (weak positive correlation)* |

18.2    The same token is applied for the negative correlations.

*Negative correlation coefficients*

| | |
|---|---|
| ▨ | *-0.90 to -1.00 (very strong negative correlation)* |
| ▨ | *-0.60 to -0.89 (strong negative correlation)* |
| ▨ | *-0.40 to -0.59 (moderate negative correlation)* |
| ▨ | *<-0.40 (weak negative correlation)* |

18.3    In particular, moderate positive correlations were observed between the scores of attitudes toward cohabitation and singlehood ($r = .590$, $p < .05$) and attitudes toward divorce and cohabitation ($r = .429$, $p < .05$).    A weak positive correlation was found between the scores of attitudes toward singlehood and divorce ($r = .336$, $p < .05$).    The results suggest that attitudes toward singlehood, cohabitation, and divorce were inter-related.

*Table 18.1    Correlations between attitudes toward singlehood, cohabitation and divorce*

|  | Attitudes toward singlehood | Attitudes toward cohabitation | Attitudes toward divorce |
|---|---|---|---|
| Attitudes toward singlehood | 1.00 | 0.590* | 0.336* |
| Attitudes toward cohabitation | - | 1.00 | 0.429* |
| Attitudes toward divorce | - | - | 1.00 |

\* $p < .05$

18.4    Correlation analyses were compiled with the key dimensions of family structure and other dimensions.    Table 18.2 presents the statistically significant results.    Very weak negative correlations were observed between the scores of attitudes toward singlehood and frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members ($r = -.049$, $p < .05$); the scores of attitudes toward singlehood and perceived social support ($r = -.075$, $p < .05$); the scores of attitudes toward cohabitation and frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members ($r = -.055$, $p < .05$); and the scores of attitudes toward cohabitation and life satisfaction ($r = -.051$, $p < .05$).

*Table 18.2    Correlations between family structure and other dimensions*

|  | Attitudes toward singlehood | Attitudes toward cohabitation | Attitudes toward divorce |
|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members | -0.049* | -0.055* | -0.023 |
| Perceived social support | -0.075* | -0.025 | 0.038 |
| Life satisfaction | -0.030 | -0.051* | 0.040 |

\* $p < .05$

18.5    Correlation analyses were compiled with the key dimensions of family functioning and other dimensions. Table 18.3 presents the statistically significant results. Weak to moderate positive correlations were observed between the scores of family functioning (i.e., CFAI scores and perceived overall family functioning) and satisfaction with family life (i.e., satisfaction with family life, satisfaction with the relationships with family members, frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members, and use of modern technologies to communicate with family members); the scores of family functioning and perceived social support; the scores of family functioning and frequency of participating in family activities; and the scores of family functioning and quality of life (i.e., level of happiness, overall physical health, and life satisfaction). In contrast, weak negative correlations were observed between the scores of family functioning and levels of anxiety and depression. In sum, the results indicated that better family functioning was correlated with more satisfaction with family life, better social support, more frequent participation in family activities, higher levels of happiness, better physical and mental health, and more life satisfaction.

*Table 18.3    Correlations between family functioning and other dimensions*

| | CFAI Mutuality | CFAI Communi-cation | CFAI Harmony | CFAI Parental Support | CFAI Parental Control | Overall family functioning |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Satisfaction with family life | 0.588* | 0.397* | 0.530* | 0.301* | 0.243* | 0.506* |
| Satisfaction with the relationships with family members | 0.563* | 0.384* | 0.507* | 0.314* | 0.250* | 0.472* |
| Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members | 0.250* | 0.207* | 0.156* | 0.118* | 0.062* | 0.205* |
| Frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members | 0.344* | 0.261* | 0.305* | 0.262* | 0.178* | 0.303* |
| Perceived social support | 0.542* | 0.344* | 0.476* | 0.320* | 0.204* | 0.381* |
| Frequency of participating in family activities | 0.411* | 0.321* | 0.378* | 0.301* | 0.183* | 0.350* |
| Happiness level | 0.461* | 0.298* | 0.413* | 0.270* | 0.215* | 0.388* |
| Perceived overall physical health | 0.296* | 0.171* | 0.183* | 0.132* | 0.152* | 0.266* |
| Anxiety level | -0.291* | -0.197* | -0.240* | -0.159* | -0.145* | -0.242* |
| Depression level | -0.315* | -0.223* | -0.273* | -0.183* | -0.152* | -0.273* |
| Life satisfaction | 0.452* | 0.295* | 0.376* | 0.232* | 0.164* | 0.378* |

* p < .05

18.6    Correlation analyses were compiled with the key dimensions of quality of life and other dimensions.  Table 18.4 presents the statistically significant results. Weak to moderate positive correlations were observed between the scores of quality of life (i.e., level of happiness, overall physical health, and life satisfaction) and satisfaction with family life (i.e., satisfaction with family life, satisfaction with the relationships with family members, frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members, frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members); the scores of quality of life and perceived social support, and the scores of quality of life and frequency of participating in family activities.

18.7    In sum, a better quality of life in terms of higher levels of happiness, better physical health, and more life satisfaction were correlated with more satisfaction with family life, better social support, and more frequent participation in family activities.  Similarly, lower levels of anxiety and depression were correlated with more satisfaction with family life, better social support, and more frequent participation in family activities.

*Table 18.4    Correlations between quality of life and other dimensions*

|  | Happiness level | Perceived overall physical health | Anxiety level | Depression level | Life satisfaction |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Satisfaction with family life | 0.476* | 0.293* | -0.271* | -0.311* | 0.511* |
| Satisfaction with the relationships with family members | 0.427* | 0.258* | -0.223* | -0.253* | 0.449* |
| Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members | 0.183* | 0.091* | -0.100* | -0.122* | 0.183* |
| Frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members | 0.269* | 0.185* | -0.124* | -0.159* | 0.280* |
| Perceived social support | 0.568* | 0.269* | -0.349* | -0.373* | 0.554* |
| Frequency of participating in family activities | 0.340* | 0.196* | -0.180* | -0.212* | 0.341* |

* $p < .05$

18.8    Among those respondents who were economically active, correlation analyses were compiled with the key dimensions of work-family balance and other dimensions. Table 18.5 presents the statistically significant results.

18.9    Weak positive correlations were observed between the scores of work-family balance (i.e., attitudes toward work-family balance, levels of difficulty and stress in achieving work-family balance, satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family, and satisfaction with overall working conditions) and satisfaction with family life (i.e., satisfaction with family life, satisfaction with the relationships with family members, frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members, frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members); the scores of work-family balance and perceived social support; the scores of work-family balance and frequency of participating in family activities; and the scores of work-family balance and quality of life (i.e., level of happiness, overall physical health, and life satisfaction).

18.10   In contrast, weak negative correlations were observed between the scores of work-family balance and levels of anxiety and depression. In sum, the results indicated that better work-family balance was correlated with more satisfaction with family life, better social support, more frequent participation in family activities, higher levels of happiness, better physical and mental health, and higher life satisfaction.

*Table 18.5*      *Correlations between work-family balance and other dimensions*

| | Attitudes toward work-family balance | Level of difficulty in achieving work-family balance | Level of stress in achieving work-family balance | Satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family | Satisfaction with overall working conditions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Satisfaction with family life | .153* | .193* | .191* | .244* | .267* |
| Satisfaction with the relationships with family members | .150* | .159* | .161* | .208* | .222* |
| Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members | .026 | .067* | .041 | .074* | .110* |
| Frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members | .084* | .055 | .061* | .113* | .130* |
| Perceived social support | .128* | .163* | .193* | .203* | .250* |
| Frequency of participating in family activities | .210* | .123* | .092* | .203* | .185* |
| Happiness level | .211* | .265* | .302* | .327* | .340* |
| Perceived overall physical health | .146* | .138* | .167* | .238* | .241* |
| Anxiety level | -.124* | -.255* | -.263* | -.267* | -.259* |
| Depression level | -.097* | -.228* | -.240* | -.258* | -.262* |
| Life satisfaction | .182* | .228* | .250 | .304* | .358* |

* p < .05

18.11   Among those parents with children under 18, correlation analyses were compiled with the key dimensions of parenthood and other dimensions. Table 18.6 presents the statistically significant results. For P-CDI, a higher score indicates poorer interaction between parent and child. Weak to moderate negative correlations were observed between the scores of P-CDI and satisfaction with family life, satisfaction with relationships with family members, perceived social support, frequency of participating in family activities, happiness level, perceived overall physical health, and life satisfaction. In contrast, weak positive correlations were observed between the scores of P-CDI and levels of anxiety and depression. In sum, the results indicate that better interaction between parent and child was correlated with more satisfaction with family life, better social support, more frequent participation in family activities, higher levels of happiness, better physical and mental health, and higher life satisfaction.

18.12   Regarding the levels of difficulty and parental stress, a higher score refers to lower levels of difficulty and stress in parenting. The results indicate that less difficulty and stress in parenting were correlated with more satisfaction with family life, better social support, more frequent participation in family activities, higher levels of happiness, better physical and mental health, and higher life satisfaction.

*Table 18.6      Correlations between parenthood and other dimensions*

| | Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction | Level of difficulty in parenting | Level of parental stress |
|---|---|---|---|
| Satisfaction with family life | -.317* | .272* | .273* |
| Satisfaction with the relationships with family members | -.275* | .262* | .237* |
| Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members | -.056 | .117* | .060 |
| Frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members | -.026 | .055 | .066 |
| Perceived social support | -.422* | .302* | .330* |
| Frequency of participating in family activities | -.145* | .105* | .097* |
| Happiness level | -.422* | .353* | .326* |
| Perceived overall physical health | -.125* | .123* | .106* |
| Anxiety level | .380* | -.336* | -.332* |
| Depression level | .331* | -.301* | -.290* |
| Life satisfaction | -.264* | .234* | .204* |

* p < .05

## Regression Analyses

18.13    Three research areas were identified, and regression analyses were performed to examine the associations between the dependent variables and explanatory variables. Prior to the regression analyses, multicollinearity analysis was performed among all independent variables to examine whether they were highly correlated in a multiple regression model. Multicollinearity exists when the explanatory variables are influencing each other, which creates problems in multiple regression models. A variance inflation factor (VIF) is a measure of the degree of multicollinearity in regression. All the VIF values of the explanatory variables were lower than the common cut-off threshold of 5.0[30] implying that multiple regression analyses could be compiled.

18.14    Apart from the significance of the regression models, an adjusted R-square ($R^2$) is presented to provide information about the goodness of fit of the model. Table 18.1 below summarises the details of the three research areas.

*Table 18.7    Three research areas for in-depth analyses*

| Areas | Explanatory variables |
|---|---|
| **Contributing factors to dysfunctional interaction between parent and child** | |
| Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction | -   Parenting (level of difficulty and stress) |
| | -   Parenting methods by respondent and their spouse/partner |
| | -   Perceived overall family functioning |
| | -   Satisfaction with family life, and relationships with family members |
| | -   Satisfaction with relationships with spouse and children |
| | -   Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members and frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members |
| | -   Perceived social support |
| | -   Mental health (anxiety and depression) |
| | -   Personal characteristics and household composition |
| **Factors affecting level of happiness** | |
| Subjective happiness | -   Perceived overall family functioning |
| | -   Satisfaction with family life, and relationships with family members |
| | -   Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members and frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members |
| | -   Physical and mental health (anxiety and depression) |
| | -   Family functioning (CFAI) |

| Areas | Explanatory variables |
|---|---|
| | - Perceived social support<br><br>- Personal characteristics and household composition |
| **Associations between family relationship and life satisfaction** | |
| Life satisfaction | - Perceived overall family functioning<br><br>- Satisfaction with family life, and relationships with family members<br><br>- Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members and frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members<br><br>- Physical and mental health (anxiety and depression)<br><br>- Family functioning (CFAI)<br><br>- Perceived social support<br><br>- Personal characteristics and household composition |

18.15 The dependent variables and labels used in the three research areas were as follows:

o Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction (P-CDI) (score ranges from 11 to 55, a higher score indicating poorer interaction between parent and child)
o Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS-C) (score ranges from 1 to 7, a higher score indicating a higher level of happiness)
o Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (score ranges from 5 to 35, a higher score indicating more life satisfaction)

18.16 The personal characteristics and the labels used in the three research areas were as follows:

o Gender (1 = male, 2 = female)
o Age (continuous)
o Marital status (1 = divorced/widowed, 2 = never married, 3 = married/cohabiting)
o Economic activity status (1 = inactive, 2 = active)
o Educational attainment (from 1 = no schooling to 8 = postgraduate education)
o Personal income (1 = no income, 2 = income from $5,000 to $19,999, 3 = $20,000 or more)
o Household composition (1 = nuclear family households, 2 = relative households, 3 = other households)
o Primary caregiver (1 = no, 2 = yes)

18.17 The explanatory variables and the labels used in the three research areas were as follows:

- Level of difficulty in parenting (1 = very difficult to 4 = not difficult at all, a higher score indicating a lower level of difficulty in parenting)
- Level of parental stress (1 = very stressful to 4 = not stressful at all, a higher score indicating a lower level of parental stress)
- Positive parenting (respondent) (0 = not adopted and 1 = adopted)
- Positive parenting (partner) (0 = not adopted and 1 = adopted)
- Psychological aggression (respondent) (0 = not adopted and 1 = adopted)
- Psychological aggression (partner) (0 = not adopted and 1 = adopted)
- Corporal punishment (respondent) (0 = not adopted and 1 = adopted)
- Corporal punishment (partner) (0 = not adopted and 1 = adopted)
- Perceived overall family functioning (1 = family does not function very well to 5 = family functions very well)
- Satisfaction with family life (1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied)
- Satisfaction with relationships with family members (1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied)
- Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members (1 = almost never to 4 = frequently)
- Frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members (1 = almost never to 4 = frequently)
- Level of anxiety (from 0 to 6, a higher score indicating more anxiety)
- Level of depression (from 0 to 6, a higher score indicating more depression)
- CFAI Mutuality (from 1 to 5, a higher score indicating better mutual support among family members)
- CFAI Communication (from 1 to 5, a higher score indicating better communication among family members)
- CFAI Harmony (from 1 to 5, a higher score indicating more harmonious behaviour in the family)
- CFAI Parental Support (from 1 to 5, a higher score indicating better parental support among family members)
- CFAI Parental Control (from 1 to 5, a higher score indicating less harsh parenting behaviour toward children)
- Perceived social support (from 1 to 7, a higher score indicating higher levels of social support)
- Perceived physical health (from 1 = very bad to 5 = excellent)
- Satisfaction with relationship with spouse (1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied)
- Satisfaction with relationship with children (1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied)

## Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction

18.18 Table 18.8 presents the multiple logistic regression results for the explanatory variables and personal characteristics predicting parent-child dysfunctional interaction. A significant logistic regression equation was found ($\chi 2 = 142.816$, $p < .001$), with a Nagelkerke $R^2$ of 44.1%.

18.19 The odds ratio (OR) is a measure of how strongly an event (dependent variable) is associated with an explanatory variable. The larger the odds ratio, the higher odds (chance) that the event will occur with the occurrence or increase in explanatory variable. Odds ratios smaller than one imply the event has lower chance of happening with the occurrence or increase in explanatory variable while odds ratios greater than one imply the event has higher chance of happening with the occurrence or increase in explanatory variable. The 95% confidence interval is a range of values that we have 95% confident that the odd ratios will lie within the range.

18.20 Parent respondents with children under the age of 18 were grouped as parental-child dysfunctional interaction (24.3%) and parent-child functional interaction (75.7%).

18.21 With the odd ratio of "low parental stress" smaller than one, the chance from happening parent-child dysfunctional interactions was lower for those parent respondents who had a lower level of parental stress. With the odd ratio of "level of anxiety" larger than one, the chance from happening parent-child dysfunctional interactions was higher for those parent respondents who had a higher level of anxiety.

18.22 Parent respondents with children under the age of 18 who had a higher level of parental stress, whose partners did not adopt positive parenting, who perceived worse overall family functioning and less satisfaction with relationships with children, and who had a higher level of anxiety had poorer parent-child interactions.

Table 18.8     Logistic regression analysis predicting parent-child dysfunctional interaction

| Variables | Odds ratio | (95% C.I.) |
|---|---|---|
| *Personal characteristics* | | |
| Gender (female) | 0.38** | (0.184, 0.783) |
| Age | 1.565* | (1.038, 2.359) |
| Marital status (divorced/widowed) | 0.899 | (0.187, 4.323) |
| Economic activity status (active) | 0.963 | (0.408, 2.27) |
| Educational attainment | 0.911 | (0.755, 1.099) |
| Personal income | 0.831 | (0.376, 1.837) |
| Household composition (relative households) | 1.001 | (0.378, 2.652) |
| Household composition (other households) | 1.429 | (0.16, 12.79) |
| Primary caregiver (yes) | 0.48 | (0.178, 1.294) |
| *Explanatory variables* | | |
| Lower level of difficulty in parenting | 0.943 | (0.495, 1.794) |
| Low parental stress | 0.462* | (0.233, 0.915) |
| Positive parenting (respondent) | 0.913 | (0.156, 5.337) |
| Positive parenting (partner) | 0.223* | (0.06, 0.83) |
| Psychological aggression (respondent) | 2.066 | (0.892, 4.786) |
| Psychological aggression (partner) | 0.68 | (0.317, 1.456) |
| Corporal punishment (respondent) | 0.977 | (0.411, 2.321) |
| Corporal punishment (partner) | 1.307 | (0.544, 3.14) |
| Perceived overall family functioning | 0.540** | (0.358, 0.813) |
| Satisfaction with family life | 0.89 | (0.483, 1.642) |
| Satisfaction with relationships with family members | 1.261 | (0.651, 2.442) |
| Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members | 1.155 | (0.743, 1.795) |
| Frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members | 1.212 | (0.801, 1.835) |
| Perceived social support | 0.723 | (0.474, 1.102) |
| Satisfaction with relationship with spouse | 1.196 | (0.737, 1.941) |
| Satisfaction with relationships with children | 0.377*** | (0.217, 0.654) |
| Perceived physical health | 0.968 | (0.675, 1.388) |
| Level of anxiety | 1.438* | (1.056, 1.959) |
| Level of depression | 0.924 | (0.667, 1.281) |
| Nagelkerke $R^2$ | 44.1% | |
| $\chi^2(28)$ | 142.816 | |

N = 412 parent respondents with children under the age of 18
Significance levels: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001.

## Subjective Happiness

18.23   Table 18.9 presents the multiple regression results regarding the explanatory variables and personal characteristics predicting subjective happiness. A higher score of the dependent variable indicates a higher level of happiness. A significant regression equation was found (F = 97.542, $p < .001$), with an adjusted $R^2$ of 52.7%.

18.24   The beta (B) in multiple linear regression implies the change in the dependent variable when there is a 1-unit increase in the explanatory variable. The standard error (SE) of the beta (B) is a statistic to measure the deviation in the estimation of B and a smaller SE(B) indicates a higher accuracy of the estimated B.

18.25   With a positive beta, a one unit increase in satisfaction with family life is associated with a 0.109 unit increase in the predicted subjective happiness. With a negative beta, a one unit increase in level of anxiety is associated with a 0.101 unit decrease in the predicted subjective happiness.

18.26   Subjective happiness was associated with a higher level of satisfaction with family life, better perceived physical health, better social support, less conflict behaviours among family members, and a lower level of anxiety and depression.

*Table 18.9     Multiple regression analysis predicting subjective happiness*

| Variables | B | SE (B) |
|---|---|---|
| *Personal characteristics* | | |
| Gender | 0.125*** | 0.035 |
| Age | 0.054*** | 0.014 |
| Marital status | 0.066* | 0.027 |
| Economic activity status | -0.048 | 0.08 |
| Educational attainment | 0.011 | 0.012 |
| Personal income | 0.045 | 0.047 |
| Household composition | 0.042 | 0.026 |
| Primary caregiver | 0.021 | 0.054 |
| *Explanatory variables* | | |
| Perceived overall family functioning | 0.046 | 0.025 |
| Satisfaction with family life | 0.109** | 0.034 |
| Satisfaction with the relationships with family members | 0.06 | 0.034 |
| Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members | 0.002 | 0.022 |
| Frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members | 0.004 | 0.021 |
| Perceived physical health | 0.243*** | 0.02 |
| Level of anxiety | -0.101*** | 0.018 |
| Level of depression | -0.122*** | 0.019 |
| CFAI Mutuality | 0.011 | 0.04 |
| CFAI Communication | 0.005 | 0.03 |
| CFAI Harmony | 0.096** | 0.035 |
| CFAI Parental Support | 0.011 | 0.025 |
| CFAI Parental Control | 0.015 | 0.024 |
| Perceived social support | 0.282*** | 0.022 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 52.7% ||
| F-test | 97.542 *** ||

N = 1,906 respondents.

B values are unstandardised regression coefficients and SE (B) values are standard errors for those coefficients.

Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

## Life Satisfaction

18.27 Table 18.10 presents the multiple regression results regarding the explanatory variables and personal characteristics predicting life satisfaction. A higher score indicates more life satisfaction. A significant regression equation was found (F = 84.608, $p < .001$), with an adjusted $R^2$ of 49.1%. A higher level of life satisfaction was associated with a higher level of satisfaction with family life, a higher level of satisfaction with relationship with family members, more frequent use of modern technologies to communicate with family members, better perceived physical health, better social support, less harsh parenting behaviours, and a lower level of anxiety and depression.

*Table 18.10    Multiple regression analysis predicting life satisfaction*

| Variables | B | SE (B) |
|---|---|---|
| *Personal characteristics* | | |
| Gender | 0.100 | 0.052 |
| Age | 0.119*** | 0.021 |
| Marital status | 0.096* | 0.041 |
| Economic activity status | -0.184 | 0.118 |
| Educational attainment | 0.018 | 0.017 |
| Personal income | 0.073 | 0.069 |
| Household composition | 0.029 | 0.038 |
| Primary caregiver | 0.053 | 0.079 |
| *Explanatory variables* | | |
| Perceived overall family functioning | 0.025 | 0.037 |
| Satisfaction with family life | 0.297*** | 0.05 |
| Satisfaction with the relationships with family members | 0.108* | 0.051 |
| Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members | -0.001 | 0.032 |
| Frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members | 0.061* | 0.031 |
| Perceived physical health | 0.354*** | 0.03 |
| Level of anxiety | -0.093*** | 0.027 |
| Level of depression | -0.174*** | 0.028 |
| CFAI Mutuality | 0.037 | 0.059 |
| CFAI Communication | -0.011 | 0.044 |
| CFAI Harmony | 0.028 | 0.052 |
| CFAI Parental Support | -0.022 | 0.036 |
| CFAI Parental Control | -0.097** | 0.036 |
| Perceived social support | 0.379*** | 0.032 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 49.1% | |
| F-test | 84.608 *** | |

N = 1,906 respondents.
B values are unstandardised regression coefficients and SE (B) values are standard errors for those coefficients.
Significance levels: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001.

# 19. Views Collected from Stakeholder Interviews

## *Overview*

19.1 Stakeholder interviews were conducted with the aim of soliciting professional views on family issues, including overall family situations and challenges, related family education (e.g. workshops on parenting and tri-parenting skills, premarital education, counselling services and couple communication programmes, childcare education, etc.), and contributing factors for promoting family harmony.

19.2 Stakeholders were recruited and categorised in three groups, namely representatives of social welfare organisations, scholars, and representatives of parental or family support groups. 10 in-depth interviews were conducted with these stakeholder groups, four with seven representatives of social welfare organisations, three with three scholars, and three with six representatives of parental or family support groups.

## *Overall Family Situations and Challenges*

### *Family Structure and Household Size*

19.3 Most of the stakeholders expressed that in past decades, most families in Hong Kong were nuclear families. Typically, a household consists of a couple and one to two children. The stakeholders stressed that a nuclear family is still the norm nowadays. One stakeholder added that families with foreign domestic helpers are regarded as a unique feature of family structure in Hong Kong.

19.4 Some stakeholders shared that family structure in Hong Kong is changing due to various reasons, such as family separation (i.e. divorce, cross-border marriages, migration), the housing environment, and economic factors. Family separation increases the risk of divorce, and an increase in the divorce rate across the years is undoubtedly associated with an increase in the number of single-parent families and one-person households. This has effects on family structure and household size.

19.5 Furthermore, housing in Hong Kong has been ranked as one of the least affordable in the world. With the surge in property prices and changing economic and social conditions in the past 20 years, couples might not be able to afford housing and may encounter economic hardship, which hinders their intention to have children or their desire to have more children. This affects family structure and household size.

When deciding about whether to get married, the first question that comes to many couples' minds is "Do we have somewhere to live together?" If the answer is no, then they would rather not get married. Even when a couple are married, they would have doubts about whether they can raise a child if they live in a flat with only 200 feet of space. This will definitely affect the birth rate and family composition.

**Stakeholder 13**

*Marriage and Birth Rates*

19.6    Most of the stakeholders observed a notable decrease in the marriage and birth rates. Some stakeholders shared that late marriage or being single is not unusual among the young generations. Marriage is no longer the only lifestyle choice in a society that is becoming increasing tolerant. Furthermore, both the representatives of social welfare organisations and the scholars indicated that the phenomenon of late marriage or being single can be attributed to the decline in the importance of marriage in the mindsets of the young generations. Despite free choice and social tolerance, the low marriage rate is leading to a low birth rate and will affect household structure and household size in a long run.

19.7    Representatives of the social welfare organisations stated that as marriage is not considered as important as in the past, couples would consider separation or divorce when their relationship worsens.

Divorce seems to already be not a big deal now. Couples' attitudes toward separation or divorce have become more acceptable. They think it is better to separate as soon as possible if they are not good together, even if they have children.

**Stakeholder 1**

19.8    The decline in the birth rate was a common fact recognised by most of the stakeholders. They shared that the childbirth decision is hindered by housing affordability; financial concerns, such as the high costs of raising a family, childcare, children's education, medical services, etc.; and parenting issues.

*Family Functioning*

19.9    Some stakeholders shared that there are some common factors, such as parenting issues, family violence, and in-law conflicts, that could have adverse effects on family relationships.   The representatives of parental or family support groups indicated that for families with children with special education needs (SEN), the family relationship is deeply affected by the behaviours and mental health of the SEN children as well as the mental health of the parents. Furthermore, families with SEN children are always suffering from high levels of parental and caring stress, resulting in poor family functioning.

> Many parents (parents with SEN children) are very helpless. They mostly suffer from tremendous stress and only have a few friends for support. Some parents, especially those who work in the service industry, can only spend a small amount of time on caring, and so they appear to be passive in following-up on the school performance and behaviours of their children.

**Stakeholder 2**

19.10   Some stakeholders indicated that the dual-career family lifestyle is becoming more common in our society and has created a unique set of challenges, including work-family imbalance, family role conflicts, and parental stress. Family functioning might be affected when dual-career parents encounter multiple-role stress.

*Overparenting*

19.11    Overparenting is the term now used to describe the situation of being extremely protective of children and extremely desperate for them to succeed in life.   One scholar was concerned that overparenting is becoming more common among young parents as a result of the keen competitive atmosphere of Hong Kong society.   Nowadays, most parents have detailed plans for their children's development and zero tolerance of their children's failures. Overparenting is believed to inhibit the development of children's self-care ability.

> Overparenting is quite common among middle-class parents in Hong Kong, maybe because many children are the only child in their family and their grandparents have great expectations of them being successful. In this situation, children nowadays seem to live in a greenhouse, with much care from their parents, grandparents, and even domestic helpers.

**Stakeholder 10**

19.12    While grandparenting is considered as common in Hong Kong, parenting issues have become more complicated, involving both parents and grandparents.  Some representatives of social welfare organisations observed that parents and grandparents might adopt different and contradictory parenting styles.  They opined that most parents and grandparents might not always seek consensus on how to raise the children, and this affects the children's development.

## *Views on Family Education*

### *Popularity of Family Education Courses or Workshops*

19.13    Stakeholders shared their views on family education courses or workshops, such as premarital and couple communication education, parenting education, and grandparenting education.

19.14    Regarding premarital and couple communication education, some stakeholders stated that these courses or workshops are not popular among typical couples, except for those with religious backgrounds.  Some stakeholders agreed that the preventive nature of premarital and couple communication education could help couples to understand each other, improve their communication techniques, and enable them to handle disputes in a more effective way.  Typical couples who have not yet encountered conflicts usually lack the intention to attend these courses or workshops.  Representatives of social welfare organisations expressed that the current activities organised for parents are not attractive, even though such activities are free of charge.  Moreover, the importance and effectiveness of premarital and couple communication education are not widely recognised by typical couples, regardless of family stage.

19.15    Nowadays, parenting education programmes especially focusing on enhancing children's behaviours have become more popular.  Parents can learn positive discipline techniques, develop communicative ways to maintain relationships with their children, and understand how children develop.  Some stakeholders shared that parenting activities are attractive to both typical parents and parents in need, even though there are charges for such activities.  However, as one representative of a social welfare organisation commented, the age of their children may affect parents' willingness to participate in the programmes held by schools.



For families with similar family backgrounds, parenting programmes organised for parents of primary one or two students would be very popular. But for those programmes which target parents of primary five or six students, the participation rate could drop dramatically.

**Stakeholder 7**

19.16    Likewise, some stakeholders commented that grandparenting education has become more popular as grandparents want to help couples to take care of their grandchildren.

## Implementation of Family Education

19.17    Some stakeholders indicated that typical family education courses or workshops are theory based or skill based, and parents can learn various family-related knowledge and techniques.  However, after the courses or workshops, parents may hardly apply the skills they have learnt to their family relationships with family members.  Even if the parents apply the learnt skills, the changes might not be effective without coaching.  Hence, some stakeholders suggested implementing family education in the future.  Courses or workshops should not only focus on family-related skills but also cater for couples' emotional needs.

19.18    Some representatives of social welfare organisations and parental or family support groups pointed out that some parents might be reluctant to apply the parenting skills they have learnt as they perceive that their parenting methods are inappropriate.  In family education courses or workshops, they suggested avoiding the adoption of an authoritative teaching style by parents.  For effective outcomes, peer sharing and group activities could be organised.

> Instead of theories and skills, many parents prefer listening to the stories of other parents with problems similar to the ones they encounter and paying attention to the tips given by them.

**Stakeholder 14**

19.19    One scholar proposed adopting a holistic approach in organising family education courses or workshops with the family as a whole.  Team-building activities should be designed as one of the elements that could engage all family members and encourage their participation.  These activities could enhance mutual understanding between family members and help them to understand the dynamics of their own family.

## *Factors Promoting Family Harmony*

### *Promotion of Work-Family Balance*

19.20    Some stakeholders emphasised that the existence of family issues could be attributed to the lack or low quality of communications among family members resulting from the imbalance between work and family life. Proper family-friendly employment practices should be implemented to balance parents' work commitments with their family responsibilities. It was also proposed that there should be more initiatives for supporting dual-career families, including increasing the scope of childcare services in terms of increasing service points and service hours, etc.

19.21    One stakeholder from a parental or family support group stated that the term "work-life balance" was well-known for promoting a balance between work and life. To emphasise family roles and responsibilities, it was proposed that the term "work-family balance" be used in family policy advocacy.

### *Promotion of Family Resilience*

19.22    Family resilience is the family's ability to maintain or resume effective functioning in overcoming significant life challenges. In order to promote and maintain family harmony, some stakeholders suggested strengthening family resilience to overcome external challenges, fostering mutuality in families, and enhancing the positive coping strategies of families through both offline and online educational programmes, family activities, and intervention programmes.

### *Showing Respect and Care among Family Members*

19.23    Stakeholders shared some examples that were beneficial for family relationships and thus enhanced family harmony. Regardless of family roles, family members should acknowledge each other's contributions to the family through shared gratitude. When family members have diverse views on family and social issues, they should be tolerant and show respect and care for each other. Furthermore, family members could explore building up connections with each other by developing common interests or participating in group activities.



Parents and children should know how to connect with each other by exploring their common interests. This could act as a breakthrough for family relationships, especially for those who have less interaction with each other.

**Stakeholder 11**

## Developing a Social Support Network for Parents

19.24    Some representatives of parental or family support groups stated that developing social support networks, such as online emotional support groups, school-based groups, and interest groups, is very effective.  Some parents with SEN children experience stress and complex emotions that might influence their family interactions and relationships.  Coping with SEN children can be exhausting and overwhelming.  When facing serious emotional difficulties, it would be helpful to meet others who have been there and experienced such difficulties previously.  Through a social support network, parents could share their experiences, exchange ideas and knowledge, and relieve emotions.  Furthermore, they might get help from each other when they encounter problems.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

Section IV

## 20. Conclusion

*Survey Findings and Trend Analyses*

20.1 The survey findings of the questionnaire survey and qualitative study constructed the family situations in Hong Kong under eight themes. Besides, general linear models were performed to determine the differences in mean scores across the years, controlling for gender, age, marital status, and economic activity status of the respondents.

*Family Structure*

*Reference Statistics*

20.2 According to C&SD in 2022[31], a notable decreasing trend in the number of marriages was observed from 58,369 in 2011 to 27,863 in 2020. There has been an increasing tendency toward marriage postponement or non-marriage in both genders. The median ages at first marriage for males and females increased from 31.2 and 28.9 in 2011 to 31.9 and 30.4 in 2020, respectively.

*Chart 20.1     Number of marriages (2011-2020)*



**Number of Marriages (2011-2020)**
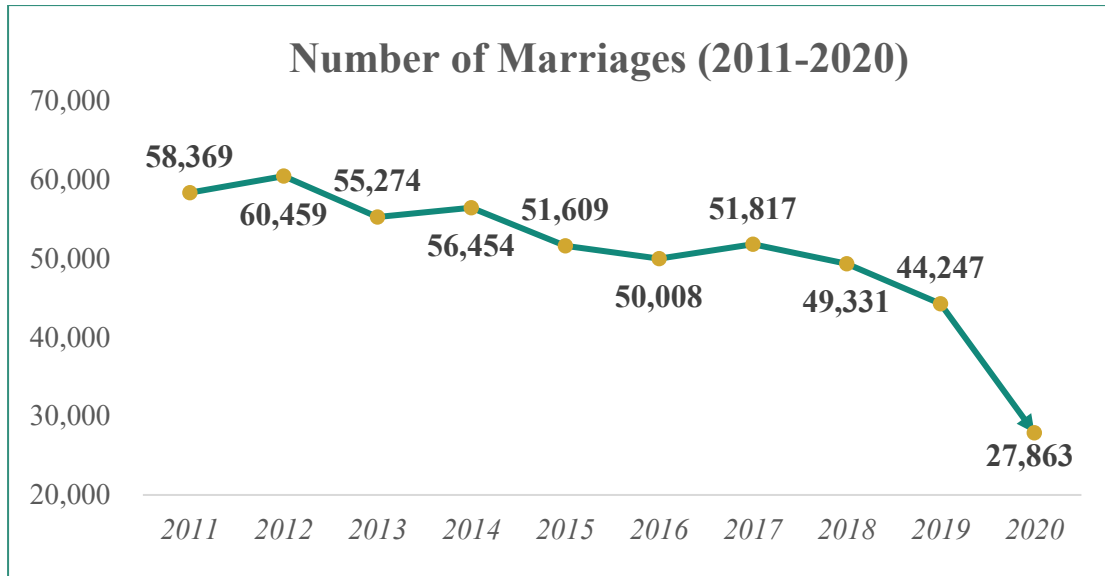
*Family Survey 2021*

20.3    Across the years, respondents began to hold more positive views toward singlehood, cohabitation, and divorce.

(1)    Household composition

About three quarters (75.3%) of the respondents were in nuclear family households.  About 15.0% of the respondents were classified as other households including one-person households (13.1%) and non-relative households (1.9%), and about one in ten (9.7%) were in households of relatives.

(2)    Attitudes toward singlehood

About two fifths (40.3%) of the respondents accepted the view of "being single and not having any plan to get married" whereas one in five respondents disagreed with this view.  Regarding the acceptance for a woman to have a child if she had no intention of getting married, the views were divided, with 30.1% agreeing and 30.4% disagreeing. Respondents aged 25-34 who had never been married demonstrated more positive views toward singlehood, significantly, compared to other demographic groups.

The mean scores of attitudes toward singlehood grew steadily from 2.89 in 2011 to 3.09 in 2021.  An increasing trend was observed across the years indicating that people tended to have more positive attitudes toward singlehood after controlling for the demographics of the respondents (p<.05).

(3)    Attitudes toward cohabitation

Over one-third of the respondents accepted the view of "cohabitation before marriage is a good idea" (39.8%) and "cohabitation without the intention of getting married" (37.9%). Respondents aged 25-34 and aged 15-24, who had never been married demonstrated more positive views toward cohabitation, significantly, compared to other demographic groups.

The mean scores of attitudes toward cohabitation grew from 3.03 in 2011 to 3.22 in 2021. An increasing trend was observed across the years indicating that people tended to have more positive attitudes toward cohabitation after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p<.05$).

(4)    Attitudes toward divorce

Over half (57.2%) of the respondents agreed that divorce was usually the best solution for a married couple who could not live together harmoniously provided they did not have children, whereas about one in ten (11.2%) disagreed. For the same situation but with children, about one-third (33.6%) agreed, whereas 21.2% disagreed. Female respondents and those who were economically active demonstrated more positive views toward divorce, significantly, compared to other demographic groups.

The mean scores of attitudes toward divorce fluctuated between 3.20 and 3.34 across the years, and the score was highest at 3.34 in 2021. An increasing trend was observed across the years indicating that people tended to have more positive attitudes toward divorce after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p<.05$).

20.4    Most of the participants in the focus group discussions considered it still ideal for couples to form a family. However, they accepted being single and cohabitation. The decision on cohabitation and marriage should be agreed between the couples. Hence, marriage is not a must nowadays. Participants had divided views on handling divorce when the couples had children.
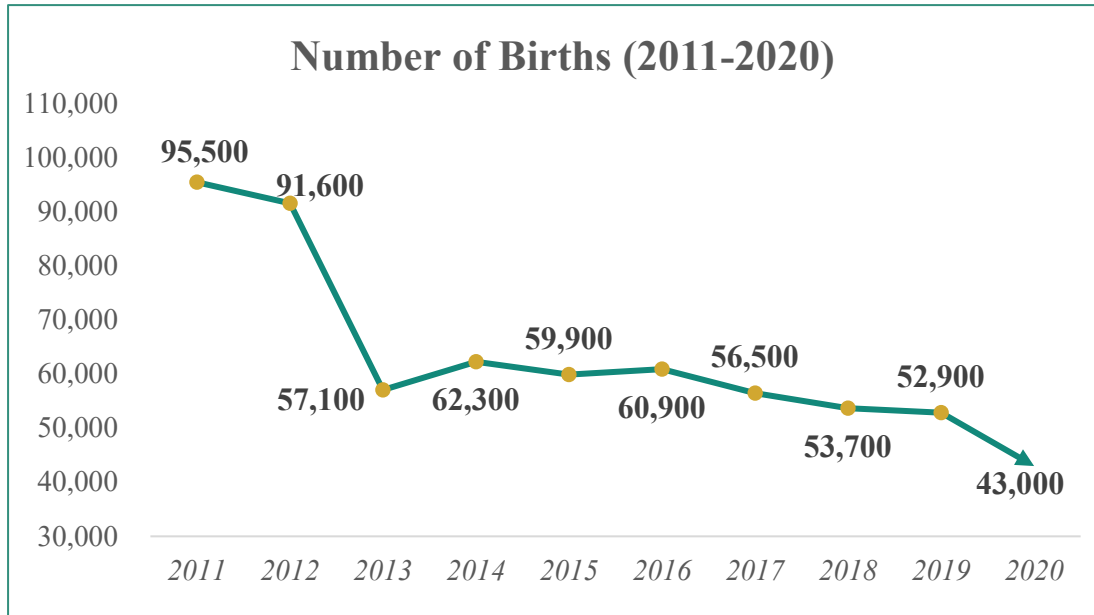
20.5    In sum, the marriage rate is dropping, and co-habitation and divorce are on the rise. Concepts of marriage and family are changing. Singlehood is altering our ideas of marriage and affects the family structure in society in the long term.

## Parenthood

### Reference Statistics

20.6    According to C&SD in 2021[32], a decreasing trend in the number of births was observed from 95,500 in 2011 to 43,000 in 2020. This decline has been attributed to women pursuing higher studies, later marriages, a higher proportion of people who prefer singlehood, increasing participation of women in the labour force, and the concern of health risks during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Chart 20.2    Number of births (2011-2020)*

**Number of Births (2011-2020)**

| Year | Value |
|------|-------|
| 2011 | 95,500 |
| 2012 | 91,600 |
| 2013 | 57,100 |
| 2014 | 62,300 |
| 2015 | 59,900 |
| 2016 | 60,900 |
| 2017 | 56,500 |
| 2018 | 53,700 |
| 2019 | 52,900 |
| 2020 | 43,000 |

*Family Survey 2021*

20.7    The survey results and trend analyses are summarised as follows:

(1)    Intention to have children

Among non-parent respondents, over two-thirds (68.6%) indicated that they were not very likely or not at all likely to have children in the future. It is worth noting that only one in four non-parent respondents aged 35-54 (24.3%) and who were married or cohabiting (27.2%) intended to have children in the future.

The intention to have children among non-parent respondents dropped from 58.0% in 2011 to 31.3% in 2021. A decreasing proportion was observed, suggesting the intention to have children is weakening after controlling for the demographics of the respondents (p<.05).

(2)    Desire to have more children

Among parent respondents aged 18 to 54 years, the majority (83.0%) indicated that they did not want to have more children, 11.7% had not yet decided, and only 5.3% wanted to have more children in the future. A significantly higher proportion of parent respondents aged between 25-34 (12.2%) wanted to have more children in the future.

The desire to have more children dropped from 9.1% in 2013 to 5.3% in 2021. Although no significant trend was observed, the proportions decreased gradually and at lower levels.

(3)    Parent-child Dysfunctional Interaction (P-CDI)

The Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction (P-CDI) survey is used to examine the extent to which parents feel satisfied with their children and their interactions with them. Among the parent respondents with children under the age of 18, about two thirds (65.4%) experienced typical stress such as the proper bonding and daily interactions with their children. One in ten (10.3%) experienced high stress in their parent-child interactions including feelings of disappointment and rejection by the child. About one quarter (24.3%) experienced clinically significant levels of stress that needed additional follow-up in their parent-child interactions including feelings of disappointment, rejection, or alienation by/from the child, or a lack of proper bonding with their children.

Those who were aged 55 or above, who were divorced or widowed, and those who were economically inactive indicated poorer interactions between parent and child.

(4)   Level of difficulty in parenting

Nearly two-thirds (66.7%) of the parent respondents with children under 18 encountered somewhat difficult and very difficult parenting. Those who were divorced or widowed indicated a higher level of difficulty in parenting, compared to those who were married or cohabiting.

(5)   Level of parental stress

Over two-thirds (69.9%) of the parent respondents with children under 18 indicated that they found parenting somewhat stressful or very stressful. Those who were divorced or widowed indicated a higher level of parental stress, compared to those who were married or cohabiting.

(6)   Parenting methods

The great majority of the respondents and their spouse or partner reported that they had adopted positive parenting methods with their children under 18 in the past year. However, over half of the respondents (55.8%) and their spouse or partner (54.0%) indicated that they had scolded or yelled at their children. About one quarter of the respondents (26.6%) and their spouse or partner (22.1%) used corporal punishment to discipline their children.

A higher proportion of female respondents indicated that they had scolded or yelled at their children to discipline them in the past year, compared to male respondents.

20.8   In the focus group discussions, all participants aged 15 to 29 agreed that having children was not a necessary stage of life; however, they had differing views on having children in the future. Factors affecting their intention to have children included the relationship with their spouse or partner, the financial burden, the educational system, the responsibility of taking care of the children, immigration trends, and political environment. Some participants who were parents stated that they were stressed by childcare and parenting.

20.9 Echoing a decreasing trend in the number of births in the past years, the intention to have children among non-parent respondents and the desire to have more children among parent respondents has dropped across the years. Those who were divorced or widowed (i.e., single parents) indicated a higher level of difficulty in parenting and a higher level of parental stress, resulting from poorer interaction between parent and child. Instead of positive parenting methods, some parents had adopted verbal aggression or corporal punishment to discipline their children in the past year.

*Family Functioning*

20.10 Across the years, perceived family functioning has deteriorated. The survey results and trend analyses are summarised as follows:

(1) CFAI mutuality

The mean scores of CFAI mutuality gradually dropped from 4.13 in 2013 to 3.97 in 2021. A decreasing trend was observed from 2013 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p<.05$). Although the scores gradually dropped, the respondents still experienced mutual support and love among family members.

(2) CFAI communication

The mean scores of CFAI communication dropped from 3.75 in 2013 to 3.51 in 2021. A decreasing trend was observed from 2013 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p<.05$), indicating that communication between family members has worsened over time.

(3) CFAI harmony

The mean scores of CFAI harmony fluctuated between 3.91 and 4.04 across the years. A decreasing trend was observed from 2015 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p<.05$). Although the scores gradually dropped, the respondents did not frequently experience conflict such as fighting and quarrelling among family members.

(4) CFAI parental support

The mean scores of CFAI parental support gradually decreased from 4.22 in 2013 to 4.05 in 2021. A decreasing trend was observed from 2013 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p<.05$). Although the scores gradually dropped, the respondents exhibited supportive behaviour among family members.

(5) CFAI parental control

The mean scores of CFAI parental control increased from 3.99 in 2011

to 4.19 in 2021. An increasing trend was observed from 2011 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents (p<.05), indicating that parents exercised fewer controlling acts on their children over time.

(6) Perceived overall family functioning

About two-thirds (66.7%) of the respondents considered their family to function very well. A neutral response was given by 28.4% respondents, and 4.8% felt that their family did not function well together and that they needed help. Respondents who were divorced or widowed, aged between 15-24, and those who had never been married reported worse family functioning compared to other demographic groups.

The mean scores of overall family functioning gradually dropped from 4.06 in 2011 to 3.90 in both 2017 and 2021. A decreasing trend was observed after controlling for the demographics of the respondents (p<.05) indicating that family functioning has weakened across the years.

(7) Conflict with family members

About 30.4% of the respondents expressed that they had had conflict with their spouse or partner sometimes or frequently in the past year. Less than a quarter had had conflict with their children (23.9%), parents (17.9%), and father or mother of spouse/partner (13.7%) sometimes or frequently in the past year.

In the past year, nearly one in two younger respondents aged 15-24 had had conflict with their spouse or partner sometimes or frequently, and nearly two in five parent respondents aged 24-34 had had conflict with their children sometimes or frequently. Significantly higher proportions of the respondents who were female, aged 15-24, and those who had never been married reported conflict with their parents, compared to other demographic groups.

20.11 Most of the participants in the focus group discussions were satisfied with their family relationships although there might be some conflict among family members. They considered that the most effective ways to resolve conflict was to adopt a positive and assertive approach. Family members should communicate with each other in a direct and honest manner without intentionally hurting each other's feelings.

20.12 Across the years, although respondents exhibited mutual support and love among family members, and parents exercised fewer controlling acts on their children when their children did not listen or follow their instructions, the communication between family members worsened and the conflict with family members increased. Hence, perceived overall family functioning has weakened across the years.

*Satisfaction with Family Life*

20.13   Across the years, respondents were generally satisfied with family life and relationships between family members and inter-generations.  The survey results and trend analyses are summarised as follows:

(1)   Satisfaction with family life

Less than three quarters (72.8%) of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their family life, whereas around 5.8% were not satisfied with their family life.  Respondents who were married or cohabiting indicated more satisfaction with family life, compared to those who had never been married or were divorced or widowed.

Though respondents were generally satisfied with family life, the mean scores gradually decreased from 3.97 in 2011 to 3.82 in 2021.  A decreasing trend was observed from 2011 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents (p<.05).

There were significant positive correlations between CFAI mutuality and satisfaction with life, and CFAI communication and satisfaction with family life.  The results indicate that the respondents reported better communication and support among family members, and more satisfaction with their family life.

(2)   Satisfaction with relationships with family members

About two-thirds (67.7%) of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their relationships between family members and inter-generations, whereas around 4.1% were not satisfied.  Over three quarters of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the relationships with their children (82.6%), parents (75.8%), and spouse or partner (75.1%), whereas less than 5% were not satisfied with their relationship.

Although respondents were generally satisfied with their relationships between family members and inter-generations, the mean scores gradually decreased from 3.88 in 2011 to 3.76 in 2021.  A decreasing trend was observed from 2011 to 2021 with the aforesaid family members and inter-generations respectively after controlling for the demographics of the respondents (p<.05).

There were significant positive correlations between CFAI mutuality and relationships between family members and inter-generations, and CFAI communication and relationships between family members and inter-generations.  The results indicate that the respondents reported better communication and support among family members, and more satisfaction with their relationships between family members and inter-generations.

(3)   Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members

Over half (54.3%) of the respondents sometimes or frequently talked about their personal concerns with family members and inter-generations, whereas about 30.3% and 15.4% expressed that they rarely or almost

never discussed personal concerns, respectively, with family members and inter-generations. Respondents who were married or cohabiting and those who had never been married indicated more frequency of talking with their family members and inter-generations about personal concerns, compared to those who were divorced or widowed.

The mean scores of frequency of discussing personal concerns with family members gradually decreased from 2.68 in 2011 to 2.41 in 2017, and flattened at 2.44 in 2021. This echoes the communication aspect of CFAI, in that communication between family members worsened across the years. A decreasing trend was observed from 2011 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p<.05$).

(4) Frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members

Over three quarters (76.8%) of the respondents sometimes or frequently communicated with family members including those of different generations via email, social networks, and instant messaging tools (e.g., SMS, WhatsApp). Respondents aged 55 or above, who were divorced or widowed, and those who were economically inactive indicated less frequency in using modern technology for communication with their family members and inter-generations, compared to other demographic groups.

With the rapid development of mobile devices, an increasing number of respondents used modern technologies (e.g., SMS, WhatsApp) to communicate with family members and inter-generations. The mean scores of the frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members increased from 1.90 in 2013 to 3.05 in 2021. An increasing trend was observed from 2013 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p<.05$).

(5) Communication with family members

Among the respondents with a spouse or partner, about two-thirds (67.2%) communicated with their partner about something important to them in a normal week, whereas 32.8% did not do so. About 36.9% and 20.8% of respondents stated that they would communicate with their mothers and fathers, respectively, about something important to them in a normal week.

20.14 Most of the participants in the focus group discussions were satisfied with the communication between family members. They considered that communication by instant-messaging tools enabled sharing of interesting activities or content on online family groups, and thus increased conversations between family members. On the other hand, it was noticeable that some parent participants who had children with special educational needs stressed the difficulties of communication with their children.

20.15    Across the years, respondents were generally satisfied with family life and relationships between family members and inter-generations; however, decreasing trends were observed. Respondents reported talking about personal issues less frequently with their parents, spouse or partner, family members, and inter-generations. A significant surge in the use of modern technology for communication with family members and inter-generations in 2021 was observed.

## *Balancing Work and Family*

20.16    Across the years, respondents encountered difficulties and stress in balancing work and family life. The survey results and trend analyses are summarised as follows:

(1)    Attitudes toward work-family balance

Differing views on attitudes toward work-family balance were collected. It was noticeable that about two-thirds (66.7%) of the respondents felt that they did not have the choice to reduce their work hours whereas 17.2% did not encounter this situation.

Respondents who were aged 25-34 and those who had children under 18 indicated a poorer work-family balance, compared to other demographic groups.

The mean scores of attitudes toward work-family balance dropped from 2.87 in 2011 to 2.71 in 2013, then increased to 2.98 in 2021. An increasing trend was observed from 2013 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents (p<.05), indicating that respondents' attitudes toward work-family balance have gradually improved.

(2)    Level of difficulty in achieving work-family balance

About half (50.6%) of the respondents at work reported that it was very difficult or quite difficult to balance work and family. Respondents who were female, aged 25 to 34, and aged 35 to 54 indicated more difficulty in the work-family balance.

The proportion of respondents who worked experiencing difficulties (very difficult and quite difficult) in achieving a work-family balance decreased from 38.1% in 2013 to 34.2% in 2017, then increased to 50.6% in 2021.

(3)    Level of stress in achieving work-family balance

About half (51.1%) of the respondents at work reported that it was very stressful or quite stressful to balance work and family. Respondents aged 25 to 34 and aged 35 to 54 indicated more stress in the work-family balance.

The proportion of respondents who worked experiencing stress (very

stressful and quite stressful) in achieving a work-family balance decreased from 44.7% in 2011 to 37.3% in 2017, then increased to 51.1% in 2021.

(4) Satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family

About half (48.6%) of the respondents at work were satisfied or very satisfied with amount of time spent at work and with family, whereas one in ten were dissatisfied. Respondents aged 15-24, aged 35-54, those who had never been married, and those who had children under 18 indicated lower levels of satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family, compared to other demographic groups.

The mean scores of level of satisfaction with time spent at work and with family fluctuated between 3.44 and 3.52 from 2011 to 2017, and dropped to 3.37 in 2021. A decreasing trend was observed from 2011 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p<.05$).

(5) Satisfaction with overall working conditions

About 44.1% of the respondents at work were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall working conditions, whereas one in ten were dissatisfied. Respondents aged 15-24, those who had never been married, and those who were divorced or widowed reported less satisfaction with their overall working conditions.

(6) Family-friendly policies and practices

Three quarters (75.0%) of the respondents thought that their employers provided family-friendly policies and practices in the workplace. The practices included a five-day work week (47.0%), family leave (29.8%), flexible working hours (24.9%), more paternity leave than statutory requirement (22.6%), remote work or flexible working location or work from home (19.1%), additional paid maternity leave (14.6%), flexible shift work (10.6%), family activities organised by the employers (7.5%), compressed working hours (7.1%), and support services for childcare (2.9%).

20.17 In the focus group discussions, most of the parent participants said that they did not have much time to take care of their children due to their work. Some stated that it had been a long time without 'me time' or going out with friends. Some parent participants felt that the arguments with their spouse or partner or with other family members were related to the work-family balance. Regarding family-friendly measures, most parent participants indicated that their companies did not usually state family-friendly measures clearly but most of the time their employers or supervisors provided flexibility in work to help them take care of their children.

20.18 Across the years, respondents encountered difficulties and stress in balancing work and family life. Although their attitudes toward work-family balance had

improved, their levels of satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family had decreased.  In addition, respondents who had children under 18 indicated a poorer work-family balance, more difficulty and stress in the work-family balance, and a lower level of satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family.

## *Social Support Networks*

20.19    The survey results and trend analyses are summarised as follows:

(1)    Multidimensional scale of perceived social support

Regarding social support from family, friends and significant others, over half (51.8%) of the respondents reported a high level of support, 45.5% moderate support, and only 2.8% low support.  Respondents who were female, aged 15-24, and who were married or cohabiting reported higher levels of social support.

(2)    Awareness of family-related programmes

Less than half of the respondents indicated that they were aware of family-related promotional activities or programmes organised by the government (41.0%) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or other organisations (43.6%).  It was noticeable that younger generations or those who had never been married reported lower levels of awareness.

The proportions of awareness of family-related programmes increased from 47.5% in 2011 to 53.7% in 2015, dropped to 30.2% in 2017 and rebounded to 46.8% in 2021.  No particular trend was observed.

(3)    Participation in family-related programmes

About 7.3% of the respondents indicated that they had participated in family-related programmes organised by the government or NGOs.  It was noticeable that younger generations or those who had never been married reported lower levels of participation.

The proportions of participation in family-related programmes decreased from 10.9% in 2013 to 7.3% in 2021.  A decreasing trend was observed from 2013 to 2021 after controlling for the demographics of the respondents ($p<.05$).

20.20    In the focus group discussions, some of the parent participants had participated in family activities organised by schools or NGOs such as family trips or visits to different exhibitions.  They said that family activities organised by parent-teacher associations could help parents pay attention to their children's daily behaviour and emotional changes, have discussions with teachers, and get to know other parents and classmates of their children.

20.21    Across the years, the awareness of family-related programmes organised by the

government and NGOs or other organisations remained steady; however, the proportion of participation in these programmes decreased from 2013 to 2021. Younger generations or those who had never been married reported lower levels of awareness and participation.

*Family Hierarchy*

20.22   The survey results and trend analyses are summarised as follows:

(1)   Family role as a carer

Among the households with disadvantaged family members, 33.9% of the respondents were primary caregivers, who took care of family members with chronic illness (73.0%), elderly with poor self-care ability (25.8%), disabled person (17.7%), and children with special learning needs and learning disabilities (13.2%).

(2)   Family decision-making

Less than half of the respondents felt that they had final or more decision-making power in the family over daily living (e.g., buying food, dining out; 48.5%), daily childcare (48.2%), major financial decisions (e.g., investments; 46.1%), and daily care of older family members living in the same household (37.4%).

Significantly higher proportions of the respondents who were male, aged 35-54, aged 55 or above, divorced or widowed, married or cohabiting, and were economically active had final or more family decision-making power on major financial decisions.

Significantly higher proportions of the respondents who were female, aged 35-54 and married or cohabiting had final or more family decision-making power over daily living, daily childcare, and daily care of older family members living in the same household.

(3)   Frequency of participating in family activities

Over three quarters of the respondents frequently (41.2%) and sometimes (41.7%) participated in various family activities (e.g., dining with family, watching TV programs or playing games, buying household goods together, and joining family gatherings).  About 13.0% stated that they did not often participate in family activities and 4.1% almost never did.

Significantly lower proportions of the respondents aged 55 or above, those who were divorced or widowed, and those who were economically inactive sometimes or frequently participated in family activities.

20.23   In the focus group discussions, most participants indicated that the most frequent family activities were eating out, shopping, hiking, gatherings, or playing sports.  Some parent participants felt that strong family bonds were

essential for the social and emotional development of their children and also benefited the well-being of parents. Furthermore, shared meals and playing sports could help families bond together.

20.24 Family activities are activities that a family does together in daily life. Participation and engagement in family activities helps create closeness and facilitates good family functioning.

## *Quality of Life*

20.25 The survey results and trend analyses are summarised as follows:

(1) Subjective happiness scale (SHS-C)

About two-thirds (65.2%) of the respondents considered themselves a very happy person and about 12.6% not a very happy person. Compared to most of their peers, about 59.3% considered themselves happier, whereas 14.7% not happier. Respondents who were aged 55 or above and who were married or cohabiting reported higher levels of happiness.

(2) Overall physical health

Over half (56.6%) of the respondents perceived that their physical health was in good (33.5%), very good (19.6%), or excellent (3.5%) condition. Over one-third (38.3%) of the respondents indicated that their physical health was in fair condition and 5.1% considered themselves in poor health.

(3) Patient health questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4)

Nearly one in four (24.5%) of the respondents indicated that they had anxiety symptoms and about one in five (20.5%) of respondents stated that they had depression symptoms. Of all the respondents, about 14.7% had both anxiety and depression symptoms, 9.8% had anxiety symptoms only, 5.8% had depression symptoms only, and 69.7% did not have any anxiety and depression symptoms.

Significantly higher proportions of respondents who were female, aged 15-24, or 25-34, those who had never been married, or who were divorced or widowed had either anxiety or depression symptoms.

(4) Satisfaction with life scale (SWLS)

Over half (57.2%) of the respondents expressed satisfaction with their lives, 30.2% were dissatisfied, and 12.6% remained neutral. Respondents aged 55 or above, who were married or cohabiting, and those who were economically inactive reported more life satisfaction.

20.26 The focus group discussions suggested that most of the participants aged 15 to

29 maintained good relationships with their friends; however, during the COVID-19 pandemic, their social lives were affected by the implementation of social distancing measures. Similarly, grandparent participants also considered that the COVID-19 pandemic had caused a negative impact on their life with the reduction of gatherings with family members and friends.

20.27 Regarding mental health, a population-based study was conducted by the University of Hong Kong (School of Nursing and School of Public Health) from late-March to mid-April 2020 in Hong Kong with a random sample of 1,501 Chinese adults[33]. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the study results showed that one in seven respondents had anxiety symptoms (15.8%) and depressive symptoms (14.8%). In the Family Survey 2021, nearly one in four (24.5%) of the respondents indicated that they had anxiety symptoms and about one in five (20.5%) of respondents felt that they had depression symptoms. With reference to the two representative large-scale population surveys, the results showed that the proportion of respondents with anxiety symptoms increased significantly from late 2021 to early 2022 which the fifth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has reached the peak during the fieldwork period.

20.28 Table 20.3 summarises the trend analyses of all dimensions of the eight themes.

*Table 20.3      Summary of trend analyses*

| Theme | Dimensions | No. of items | Year | Index | Trend | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Theme 1 – Family Structure | | | | | | |
| 1A | Household composition | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| 1B | Attitudes toward singlehood | 2 | 5 | ☑ | 📈 | An increasing trend – the mean scores increased from 2.89 in 2011 to 3.09 in 2021. |
| 1C | Attitudes toward cohabitation | 2 | 5 | ☑ | 📈 | An increasing trend – the mean scores increased from 3.03 in 2011 to 3.22 in 2021. |
| 1D | Attitudes toward divorce | 4 | 5 | ☑ | 📈 | An increasing trend – the mean scores fluctuated between 3.20 and 3.34 across the years; and the score reached the highest at 3.34 in 2021. |
| Theme 2 – Parenthood | | | | | | |
| 2A | Intention to have children | 1 | 5 | - | 📉 | A notable decreasing trend – the proportions dropped from 58.0% in 2011 to 31.3% in 2021. |
| 2B | Desire to have more children | 2 | 4 | - | No trend | - |

| Theme | Dimensions | No. of items | Year | Index | Trend | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2C | Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction (PCDI) | 12 | 1 | ☑ | - | - |
| 2D | Level of difficulty in parenting | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| 2E | Level of parental stress | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| 2F | Parenting methods | 6 | 1 | - | - | - |
| **Theme 3 – Family Functioning** | | | | | | |
| 3A | Chinese Family Assessment Instrument (CFAI) | | | | | |
| | *Mutuality* | 12 | 5 | ☑ | ↘ | A decreasing trend – the mean scores gradually dropped from 4.13 in 2013 to 3.97 in 2021. |
| | *Communication* | 9 | 5 | ☑ | ↘ | A decreasing trend – the mean scores dropped from 3.75 in 2013 to 3.51 in 2021. |
| | *Harmony* | 6 | 5 | ☑ | ↘ | A decreasing trend – the mean scores fluctuated between 3.91 and 4.04 across the years. |
| | *Parental support* | 3 | 5 | ☑ | ↘ | A decreasing trend – the mean scores gradually decreased from 4.22 in 2013 to 4.05 in 2021. |
| | *Parental control* | 3 | 5 | ☑ | ↗ | An increasing trend – the mean scores increased from 3.99 in 2011 to 4.19 in 2021 and parents exercised fewer controlling acts on their children. |
| 3B | Perceived overall family functioning | 1 | 5 | - | ↘ | A decreasing trend – the mean scores gradually dropped from 4.06 in 2011 to 3.90 in both 2017 and 2021. |
| 3C | Conflicts with family members | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| **Theme 4 – Satisfaction with Family Life** | | | | | | |
| 4A | Satisfaction with family life | 1 | 5 | - | ↘ | A decreasing trend – the mean scores gradually decreased from 3.97 in 2011 to 3.82 in 2021. |
| 4B | Satisfaction with the relationships with family members | 1 | 5 | - | ↘ | A decreasing trend – the mean scores gradually decreased from 3.88 in 2011 to 3.76 in 2021. |

| Theme | Dimensions | No. of items | Year | Index | Trend | Remarks |
|-------|-----------|--------------|------|-------|-------|---------|
| 4D | Frequency of talking about personal concerns with family members | 1 | 5 | - |  | A decreasing trend – the mean scores gradually decreased from 2.68 in 2011 to 2.41 in 2017, then flatted at 2.44 in 2021. |
| 4E | Frequency of use of modern technologies to communicate with family members | 1 | 4 | - |  | A notable increasing trend – the mean scores increased from 1.90 in 2013 to 3.05 in 2021. |
| 4F | Communication with family members | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Theme 5 – Work-Family Balance | | | | | | |
| 5A | Attitudes toward work-family balance | 6 | 4 | ☑ |  | An increasing trend – the mean scores dropped from 2.87 in 2011 to 2.71 in 2013, then increased to 2.98 in 2021. |
| 5B | Level of difficulty in achieving work-family balance | 1 | 4 | - |  | The proportion of experiencing difficulties decreased from 38.1% in 2013 to 34.2% in 2017, then increased to 50.6% in 2021. |
| 5C | Level of stress in achieving work-family balance | 1 | 5 | - |  | The proportion of experiencing stress decreased from 44.7% in 2011 to 37.3% in 2017, then increased to 51.1% in 2021. |
| 5D | Satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family | 1 | 5 | - |  | A decreasing trend – the mean scores fluctuated between 3.44 and 3.52 from 2011 to 2017, and a drop to 3.37 in 2021. |
| 5E | Satisfaction with overall working conditions | 1 | 2 | - | - | - |
| 5F | Family-friendly policies and practices | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Theme 6 – Social Support Networks | | | | | | |
| 6A | Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support | 12 | 1 | ☑ | - | - |
| 6B | Awareness of family-related programmes | 1 | 5 | - | No trend | - |
| 6C | Participation in family-related programmes | 1 | 5 | - |  | A decreasing trend – the proportions decreased from 10.9% in 2013 to 7.3% in 2021. |

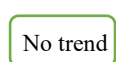| Theme | Dimensions | No. of items | Year | Index | Trend | Remarks |
|-------|-----------|--------------|------|-------|-------|---------|
| Theme 7 – Family Hierarchy | | | | | | |
| 7A | Family role - breadwinner | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| 7B | Family role - carer | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| 7C | Family decision-making | 4 | 1 | - | - | - |
| 7D | Frequency of participating in family activities | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Theme 8 – Quality of Life | | | | | | |
| 8A | Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS-C) | 4 | 2 | ☑ | - | - |
| 8B | Overall physical health | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| 8C | Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4) | 4 | 1 | ☑ | - | - |
| 8D | Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) | 5 | 1 | ☑ | - | - |

Legend for trend analyses:

| | Increasing trend or a significant surge in 2021 | | Decreasing trend or a significant drop in 2021 | No trend | No particular trend |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

# In-depth Analyses

## Correlation Analyses

20.29 Correlational analyses between key indices were compiled with the control of age, gender and educational attainment of the respondents. Table 20.4 summarises the correlation results.

*Table 20.4    Summary of results of correlation analyses*

| Dimensions | Key observations |
|---|---|
| Family functioning | Better family functioning was correlated with more satisfaction with family life, better social support, more frequent participation in family activities, higher levels of happiness, better physical and mental health, and more life satisfaction. |
| Quality of life | Better quality of life in terms of higher levels of happiness, better physical health, and more life satisfaction were correlated with more satisfaction with family life, better social support, and more frequent participation in family activities. |
| Anxiety and depression | Lower levels of anxiety and depression were correlated with more satisfaction with family life, better social support, and more frequent participation in family activities. |
| Work-family balance | Among those respondents who were economically active, better work-family balance was correlated with more satisfaction with family life, better social support, more frequent participation in family activities, higher levels of happiness, better physical and mental health, and more life satisfaction. |
| Interaction between parent and child | Among those parents with children under 18, better interaction between parent and child was correlated with more satisfaction with family life, better social support, more frequent participation in family activities, higher levels of happiness, better physical and mental health, and more life satisfaction. |
| Level of difficulty and stress in parenting | Among those parents with children under 18, less difficulty and stress in parenting were correlated with more satisfaction with family life, better social support, more frequent participation in family activities, higher levels of happiness, better physical and mental health, and more life satisfaction. |

## Regression Analyses

20.30    Three research areas were identified and regression analyses were performed to examine the associations between the dependent variables and explanatory variables.  The regression models were found to be significant with good fits. Table 20.5 summarises the regression results.

*Table 20.5       Regression Results of three research areas*

| Research areas | Dependent variables | Key observations |
|---|---|---|
| Contributing factors for dysfunctional interaction between parent and child | Parent-child dysfunctional interaction | Among parent respondents with children under 18, those with higher levels of parental stress, and without the adoption of positive parenting by partners, perceived worse overall family functioning and less satisfaction with the relationships with their children, had higher levels of anxiety, and poorer interactions between parent and child. |
| Factors affecting the level of happiness | Subjective happiness | Subjective happiness was associated with a higher level of satisfaction with family life, better perceived physical health, better social support, less conflict among family members, and lower levels of anxiety and depression. |
| Associations between family relationships and life satisfaction | Life satisfaction | Higher levels of life satisfaction were associated with higher levels of satisfaction with family life, higher levels of satisfaction with the relationships with family members, more frequent use of modern technology to communicate with family members, better perceived physical health, better social support, less harsh parenting behaviour, and lower levels of anxiety and depression. |

# 21. Recommendations

21.1 After reviewing the results of the Survey, trend analyses covering the results collected from the five Family Surveys (2021, 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2021) and in-depth analyses, some phenomena are identified.

(1) Changing of family structure

In recent years, there has been an increasing tendency toward marriage postponement or non-marriage in both genders, and the standardised percentages of married men and women dropped continuously from 1991 to 2020 [34]. Moreover, a decreasing trend on number of births was observed from 95,500 in 2011 to 43,000 in 2020. This decline has been attributed to women pursuing higher studies, late marriages, higher proportion of people who prefer singlehood, an increasing participation by women in the labour force, concern of health risks during COVID-19 pandemic, etc [35].

From 2011 to 2021, an increasing trend was observed in regard to attitudes toward singlehood, cohabitation and divorce. More people are choosing to embrace their singlehood, resulting in lower levels of motivation to get married and have children. . Concepts of marriage and family are changing. Singlehood is altering our ideas of marriages and affects the family structure in the society in long run.

(2) Deterioration in family functioning, family life and communication among family members

Family functioning refers to the frequency of normal family routines, effectiveness of family communication and problem solving, family cohesiveness and family harmony.

From 2011 to 2021, though respondents exhibited mutual support and love among family members and parents exercised fewer controlling acts on their children, the communication between family members worsened and the conflicts with family members existed. Hence, the perceived overall family functioning weakened across the years.

Furthermore, from 2011 to 2021, respondents were generally satisfied with family life and relationships between family members and inter-generations; however, the decreasing trends were observed. Respondents reported talking about personal issues less frequently with their parents, spouse/partner, family members, and inter-generations.

In sum, the perceived family functioning, satisfaction with family life, satisfaction with the relationships with family members, and frequency of talking about the personal concerns with family members had gradually deteriorated over time.

(3) Difficulties and stress in balancing work and family

In Family Survey 2021, respondents encountered difficulties and stress in balancing work and family in general. Though their attitudes toward work-family balance had improved in 2021, their level of satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family had decreased as compared from 2011 to 2021. In addition, respondents who had children under the age of 18 indicated poorer work-family balance, more difficulty and stress in achieving work-family balance, and lower level of satisfaction with amount of time spent at work and with family.

The dual-career family lifestyle is becoming more common in our society and has created a unique set of challenges, including work-family imbalance, family role conflicts, and parental stress.

(4)     Challenges of parenthood

In Family Survey 2021, among parent respondents with children under the age of 18, about one quarter were in clinically significant levels of stress that needed additional follow up, nearly two-thirds encountered somewhat difficult and very difficult in parenting, and over two-thirds were somewhat stressful and very stressful in parenting. Besides, those who were divorced/widowed (i.e. single parents) indicated higher level of difficulty in parenting and higher level of parental stress, resulting from poorer interaction between parent and child.

(5)     Deterioration in mental health

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic from late-March to mid-April 2020, one in seven respondents had anxiety symptoms (15.8%) and depressive symptoms (14.8%)[36]. In Family Survey 2021, nearly one in four (24.5%) of the respondents indicated that they had anxiety symptoms and about one in five (20.5%) of respondents expressed that they had depression symptoms. With reference to the two representative large-scale population surveys and adoption of the same instrument, the results showed that the proportions of respondents with anxiety and symptoms increased significantly from late 2021 to early 2022 which the fifth wave of COVID-19 pandemic has reached the peak during the fieldwork period.

21.2    Based on the identified phenomena, the following recommendations are proposed:

(1)     Create positive family dynamics

Family dynamics is one of the most critical factors that reflect the family relationship. Positive family dynamics is believed to not only enhance communication among family members but also better family functioning and satisfaction with family life.

It is recommended to organise campaigns of improving family relationship which aim to promote positive family dynamics, such as mutual social support, sharing of family roles and responsibilities as well

as caring each other with love and respect, etc.

(2) Promote responsible and happy parenthood

Parenthood is one of the major concerns for families in Hong Kong. It is not unusual that parents adopt divergent parenting approaches on taking care of children, resulting from unclear division of childcare responsibilities. Being parents in Hong Kong is not easy. With the rising trends of dual-career lifestyle and overparenting, many parents perceive difficulties and stress in parenting roles and responsibilities.

It is recommended to raise parents' awareness on the importance of responsible and happy parenthood:

○ *Responsible parenthood:* to build up positive parenting approaches, to share parenting responsibilities and to have reasonable expectations on children's development.

○ *Happy parenthood:* to have emotional awareness on dealing with parenting stress, to find some "me-time" for enjoying own life and to find own purpose and meaning of parenthood.

More sharing seminars should be organised in schools which conveys the abovementioned messages and invite parents as guest speakers to share their experiences on parenting.

(3) Promote work-family balance

Balance between work and family can be beneficial for both the employers and the employees. On the employer side, provision of family-friendly employment practices (FFEPs) can boost employee loyalty and raise staff morale. On the employee side, as revealed in the Survey, work-family balance is critical for participation of family activities, social support, satisfaction with family life and generally the level of life satisfaction.

It is thus recommended to continue to promote FFEPs in different companies and institutions, especially the SMEs. More campaigns should be organised to promote FFEPs and to introduce to companies and organisations the types of FFEPs they can formulate having regard to their sizes as well as human and financial resources.

Sharing seminars could also be conducted and invite companies and organizations with successful FFEPs to share their experiences on formulating and implementing FFEPs to other companies and organizations and to the public.

(4) Enhance family education

It is revealed in the Survey that family education courses or workshops, especially those for premarital and couple communication education, are

not quite popular among parents until family crisis appears.  The general perception is that only dysfunctional families or grass-root families are the target users of services related to family education.

It is recommended to promote more family education which aims to enhance better family functioning, to foster better family relationship and to prevent breakdown of family through various educational and promotional programmes.  These programmes could be designed for a wider range of target groups including families with higher socio-economic backgrounds.

More family-oriented programmes with team-building activities could be conducted.  Engaging all the family members in the programmes, the activities can help them create more family moments by walking through some meaningful tasks, guiding the family members to explore their own family dynamics and thus helping them learn how to get along with each other.

(5)     Promote mental health

Mental health is not just an individual problem, as mental health issues also have great impact for families.  Undoubtedly, enhancing support in mental health services to tackle mental health problems is vital and essential.

It is recommended that various public health campaigns be organised to educate the public including the signs and symptoms of distress, raise awareness and promote self-care, normalise distress, destigmatise mental health concerns, facilitate effective prevention and treatment strategies, and help people access mental health services, etc.  Furthermore, screening and referral systems are vitally important for specific high-risk populations.

(6)     Recommend the ways to improve future of family surveys

The findings of the Family Surveys provide useful information through which changes over time in people's attitudes and behaviour related to family can be monitored and studied.  The questions relating to the dimensions under the eight themes were found to be effective in collecting the required information.  It is recommended that all the question items in the Family Survey 2021 be kept for future surveys for trend monitoring.

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