

Nearly half of singles in Singapore have never dated seriously: Study

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SINGAPORE: Nearly half of singles in Singapore have not dated seriously before, although most wanted to get married in the future, according to the results of a study published on Saturday (Jul 8).

Commissioned by the National Population and Talent Division (NPTD), the Marriage and Parenthood study aims to understand public attitudes and perceptions towards marriage and parenthood. The recent study polled 2,940 single and 2,861 married Singapore residents aged 21 to 45 years old between August and December last year.

Four out of 10 respondents who were single had never been in a serious relationship – defined as dating with a view towards marriage – while nearly six in 10 were currently not dating seriously.

However, about 83 per cent of single millennials (those aged between 21 and 35) indicated they planned to get married – down from 86 per cent in 2012, when the last survey was done.

The top reason cited by singles for not dating was not being able to find a partner, according to Dr Mathew Mathews, one of the research consultants for the survey.

MORE SINGLES COMFORTABLE WITH ONLINE DATING

Among those not dating seriously, 42 per cent said they prefer to leave dating to chance, the survey found.

More than 70 per cent of singles who were or had been in serious relationships said they had met their partner through friends, at school or the workplace.

However, an increasing number were comfortable with meeting a partner through online dating websites or apps – 43 per cent, more than double from 19 per cent in 2012.

Among singles who were or had dated seriously, 13 per cent met their partner through online channels, nearly double from 7 per cent in 2012.

“Singles have become more open to online dating and dating apps. Hopefully more singles will be proactive and take charge of their dating life, in a similar way as they do when pursuing their career or other personal interests,” Dr Mathews said.

MOST COUPLES WANT AT LEAST 2 CHILDREN

When asked about their ideal number of children, the majority – 92 per cent – of married respondents said they wanted two or more children, comparable to the 91 per cent in 2012.

Those who said they were unlikely to have children or have more children cited practical concerns such as financial cost, lack of good caregiving arrangements, and difficulties in managing work and family demands as among the top reasons.

The majority of respondents said the availability of flexible work arrangements would have made or have made it easier for them to start a family and have more children.

Among those with young children – both men and women – full-time work with flexible work arrangements was the most favoured option. The exception was when the child was still an infant, where about 38 per cent of female married respondents said they would prefer not to work.

“Employers should recognise that implementing family-friendly initiatives such as flexible work arrangements helps to attract and retain talent, as well as boost productivity in the long run. It also helps if co-workers could be more understanding when parents need to take time off from work to take care of their young child,” said Professor Paulin Straughan, who was also a research consultant for the study.

Almost all married respondents also agreed that fathers and mothers are equally important as caregivers for children, and 95 per cent agreed that both parents should share the responsibilities of the home equally.

However, most childcare responsibilities such as staying home with the child when he or she is sick, feeding and bathing the child, were still carried out by mothers.

On average, mothers reported spending 2.6 hours on domestic chores on a weekday, down from 3.7 hours in 2012, but almost twice that of the 1.5 hours spent by fathers.

“The Government will continue to support Singaporeans in fulfilling their aspirations to marry and have children, for example, through developing the dating landscape, helping young couples have faster and easier access to housing, encouraging greater work-life harmony including encouraging employers to provide flexible work arrangements, and improving pre-school support,” the NPTD said.