

More couples got hitched last year to have Dragon babies

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More couples got hitched last year, while divorce cases also rose, according to government figures released yesterday.

Those who got married, could have tied the knot because they wanted to have

Dragon babies this year, population and sociology experts told my paper. Last year was the Year of the Rabbit.

Couples could have also avoided marriage in 2010, the Year of the Tiger, and got hitched the following year instead, said Dr Yap Mui Teng, a senior research fellow from the Institute of Policy Studies.

The Tiger Year in the Chinese zodiac system is considered less auspicious.

Last year, there were 27,258 marriages, up from 24,363 in 2010, according to figures released by the Singapore Department of Statistics. In 2009, there were 26,081 marriages, more than 2010.

Dr Yap noted that the jump in marriages could have been due to the spillover effect of postponed marriages from 2010.

She pointed out that the number of marriages in 2010 declined from that recorded in 2009.

"Some of those who didn't (get married) were possibly postponing their marriages because of economic conditions (then)," she explained.

Singapore was emerging from a downturn in 2010.

Dr Tan Ern Ser, a sociologist from the National University of Singapore, said the rising number of marriages could be due to growth in Singapore's resident population.

Apart from marriages, the number of divorces and annulments, as well as remarriages, also climbed.

There were 7,604 divorces last year, up from 7,338 in 2010.

Dr Tan said this could be due to a "value shift" in people's attitudes towards divorce and remarriage.

"A plausible explanation is that people are more inclined to emphasise the quality of relationships and marital satisfaction, giving these higher weightage," he said.

Dr Tan added that the benefits of choosing divorce and remarriage could outweigh the costs of staying in a less-than- satisfactory marriage these days.

He said it would also be interesting to find out if marriages between citizens and foreigners, and those between citizens and permanent residents, are more at risk of breaking up, as such data is not readily available.

Government figures showed that couples are marrying at a later age as well. The median age of first-time grooms inched up from 28.8 in 2001 to 30.1 last year. For first-time brides, the median age increased from 26.2 to 28.

The number of inter-ethnic marriages also rose from 13 per cent in 2001 to 20 per cent last year.

Dr Tan said this could be due to couples now viewing compatibility in terms of education, religion and lifestyle, rather than ethnicity.

Another reason for the rise could be related to more "international marriages between a Singaporean and a foreign partner", said Dr Yap.