

Perceptions of the Marriage and Parenthood Package 2013

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The Perception of Policies in Singapore Survey (POPS) is a series of short surveys conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies on issues of public interest. The series seeks to provide timely snapshots of stakeholders' perceptions of the impact of the policy area being investigated.

POPS (7) looked at the attitudes of married Singaporeans towards the 2013 package of Marriage & Parenthood (M&P) measures. The survey built on the POPS (2) survey that was conducted in 2009 on perceptions and attitudes towards the measures in the M&P Package 2008. The POPS (7) survey, which was conducted from July to September 2014, polled 2,000 married Singapore citizens and permanent residents, aged 21 to 49 years old, to understand their views on the adequacy of the 2013 M&P Package and whether the measures were conducive for childbearing decisions.

The POPS (7) survey found age differences in the perceptions of the 2013 M&P Package. Younger respondents were more likely than their older counterparts to consider the M&P Package as conducive to their own childbearing decisions and the specific measures influential on childbearing decisions of couples like themselves. As the older respondents, particularly those in their 40s, tended to have completed their family formation, they were less likely to view the package and measures as conducive or influential.

The rising age of first childbirth towards the age of 30 and the low levels of perceived conduciveness and influence of the package for those in the 40s seem to indicate that policy interventions would mainly have the greatest positive impact on those in their 30s. This is a relatively short window of potential policy effectiveness as it is less than a third of a woman's childbearing years (15 to 49). However, as larger cohorts of Singaporean women (those born after the shift to pro-natalist policies in 1987) reach their 30s in the next 10 years, there may be a boost in the number of births.

Men were generally more likely than women to indicate that the specific measures would influence them to have children. However, women whose spouses had experienced paternity and/or shared parental leave were more positive about these measures' influence on their fertility decisions. This suggests that Singaporean women may need help with reconciling conflicting expectations of career with the traditional role assumptions of motherhood and household responsibilities. Policy interventions that have the highest chances of having an effect on childbearing decisions should focus on what women want,

helping them resolve their conflicting roles. These can include facilitating women's return to work after childbirth and improving access to quality childcare.

Taking into consideration that the target audience is likely to be the younger age groups, the M&P Package should be publicised via channels they commonly use. As prior awareness of the measures appears to have a positive impact on respondents' perceptions of the measures, the focal point of the M&P Package should be increasing awareness and improving perceptions.

The full report of the Perception of Policies in Singapore Survey (POPS) (7): Perceptions of the Marriage & Parenthood Package 2013 is available [here](#).

Two other Op-Eds on Parenthood by IPS researchers are available on IPS Commons: [Give dads more work at home to boost birth rates](#); and [More support for stay-home mothers](#).

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