

Perception of Policies in Singapore Survey
(POPS) (2): Survey on Marriage and
Parenthood (M&P) Package 2008

Report

September 2009

Acknowledgement

IPS is grateful to Tote Board and Singapore Pools for their support of this study.



Giving Hope. Improving Lives.

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Background..... | 1 |
| 2. Survey Methodology | 1 |
| 3. Findings | 2 |
| 3.1 Respondent Characteristics..... | 2 |
| 3.2 Reactions to M&P Package 2008..... | 5 |
| 3.2a Whether 2008 M&P Package made it conducive to having children..... | 6 |
| 3.2b Adequacy of Package | 10 |
| 3.2c Comparing 2008 and 2004 Packages | 12 |
| 3.2d Responses to Individual M&P Measures..... | 13 |
| 3.3 Impact of 2008/2009 Economic Crisis | 18 |
| 3.4 “Predicting” Future Childbearing..... | 20 |
| 4. Observations | 23 |
| 5. Bibliography | 25 |
| Annex A | 27 |
| Annex B | 29 |
| Annex C | 32 |
| Annex D | 33 |

1. **Background**

Extremely low Total Fertility Rates (TFR)¹ have prevailed in Singapore despite measures put in place by the government to engender a pro-family environment that support marriage and parenthood. What could be the reason for the conundrum? Are Singaporeans not receptive to such measures? Is it a question of their adequacy, or are other factors present, such as the recent economic crisis, that have affected responses to them?

In September 2009, the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) polled married Singapore citizens and permanent residents of reproductive ages, 20-49 years, to gather their views on the 2008 Marriage and Parenthood (M&P) package a year after its announcement and implementation. The 2008 M&P package is only the latest in a series of pro-natalist, pro-family measures introduced by the government to raise fertility in Singapore. Pro-natalist measures have been available since the late 1980s when the then anti-natalist policy was reversed. Measures such as the Baby Bonus and the Third Child Maternity Leave schemes were added on over the years. In 2004, the government undertook a “holistic” review of the existing measures and put together “a comprehensive new package of measures to support parenthood [that goes] well beyond financial incentives [and that] takes a holistic and coherent approach to help couples have and raise children” (MCYS Press Release, “New Package of Measures to Support Parenthood”, issued by the Steering Group on Population, 25 August 2004). The 2008 package introduced enhancements to the 2004 package.

2. **Survey Methodology**

The sample surveyed comprised Singapore citizens and permanent residents aged 20 through 49 years. Both men and women were included for study. A total of 2,010 persons were interviewed.

The sampling method used was multiple-stage random sampling with quota. In the first stage, all households in Singapore were grouped into Reticulated Units (RUs) with 200 households of the same house-type in each. A random sample of 100 RUs was selected. In the second stage, about 20 persons were selected from each selected RU.

In the sampling process, the age group 20-29 was over-sampled relative to their share in the population to ensure sufficient numbers for analysis. The share of the age group 40-49 was correspondingly reduced, while the share of

¹ Total Fertility Rate (TFR) “is the number of children a woman would bear if she experienced, at each age, the current period age-specific fertility rate (and she survived to the end of her reproductive cycle). In the absence of mortality, a TFR of 2.0 would equal replacement level fertility.” (Morgan and Hagewen 2005: 236)

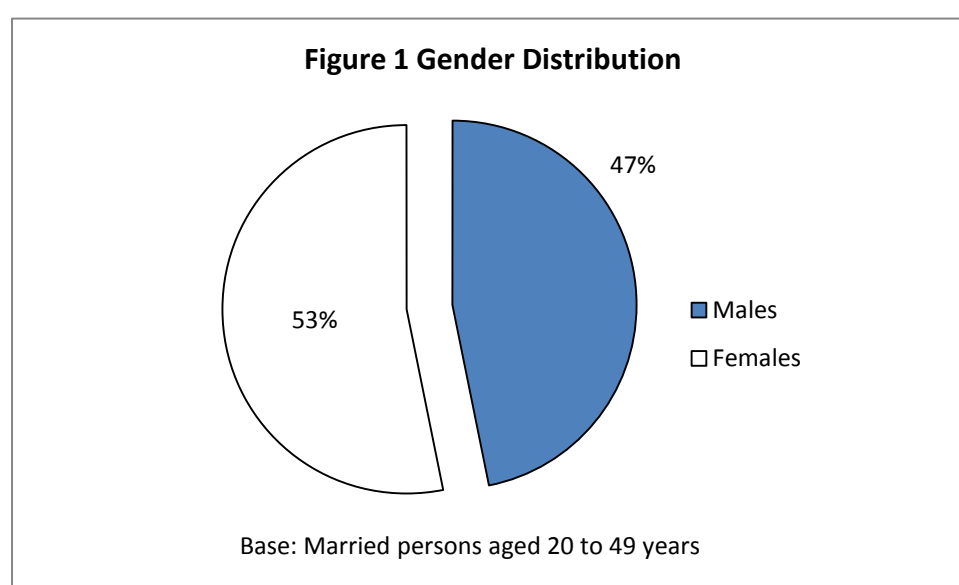
the age group 30-39 followed closely that of the resident population in Singapore. In the data analysis stage, weights were used in a three-way interlocking matrix (age*gender*ethnic group) so that the resultant distribution in terms of these three variables reflected their distributions in the population. Only the weighted results are presented in this report.

The fieldwork was carried out from 3 September to 29 September 2009.

3. Findings

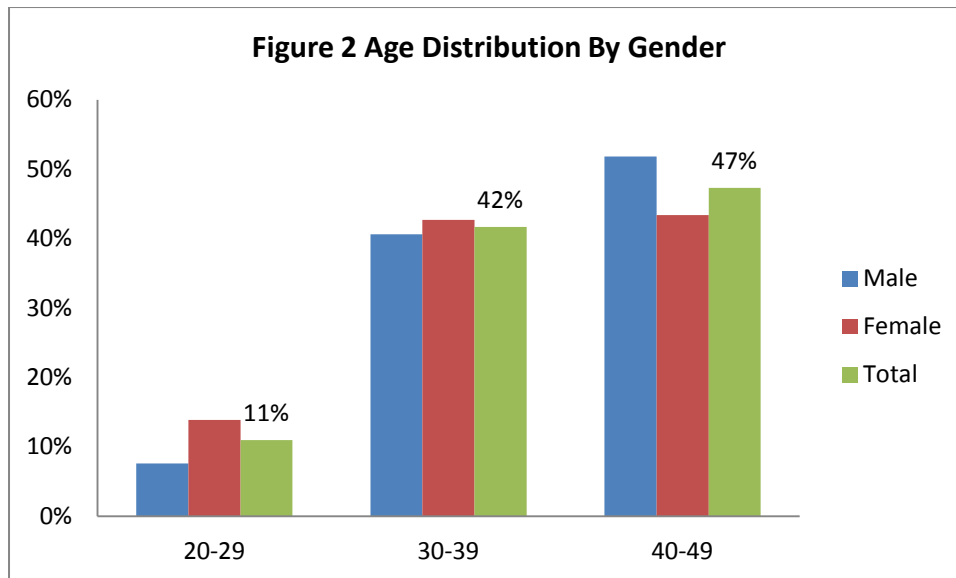
3.1 Respondent Characteristics

Figures 1 to 7 in this section present the profile of the group under study. As Figure 1 shows, there were slightly more females (53%) than males (47%).

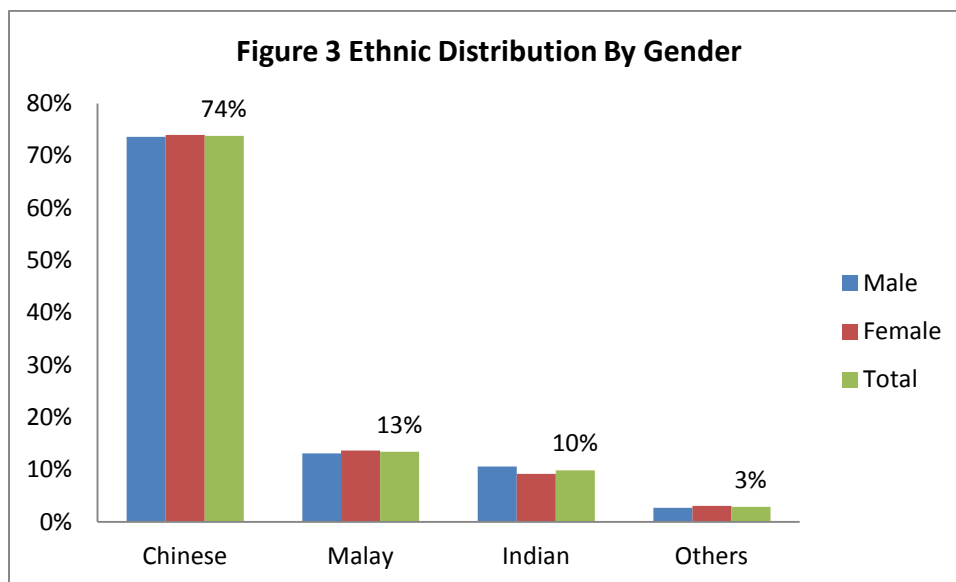


In terms of age, the largest age group was 40-49 (47%), followed closely by the 30-39 age group (42%); only 11% were aged 20-29 (Figure 2). Men outnumbered women in the age group 40-49, while the reverse was true in the younger age groups. The distribution was skewed towards the older age groups, and this would have implications for future births as fertility and childbearing are related to age².

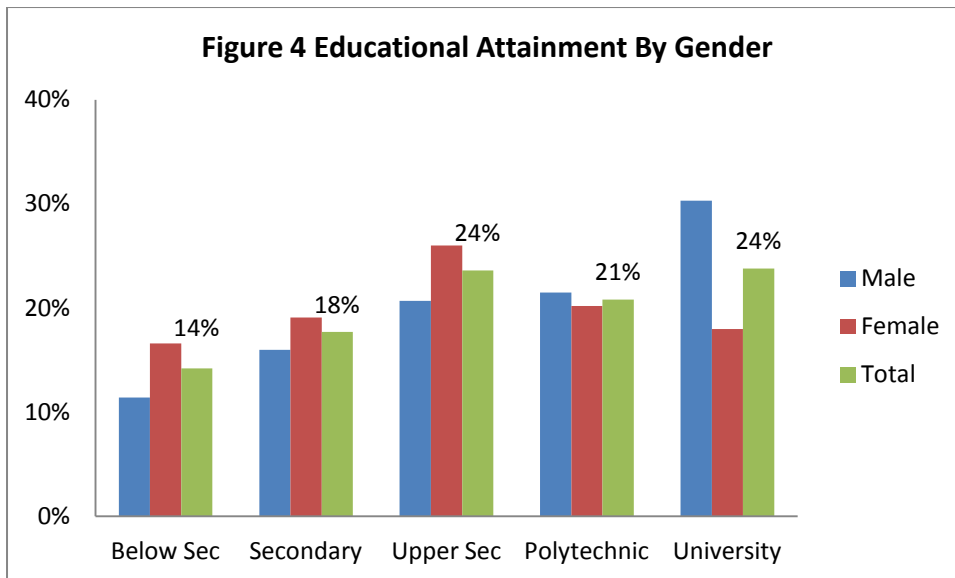
² Female fertility declines from age 30, and especially after age 35, and there are greater risks of miscarriage and other disorders (The Practice Committee American Society for Reproductive Medicine 2006: S248). It has also been observed that age has an effect on male fertility (Hassan and Killick 2003: 1526-1526).



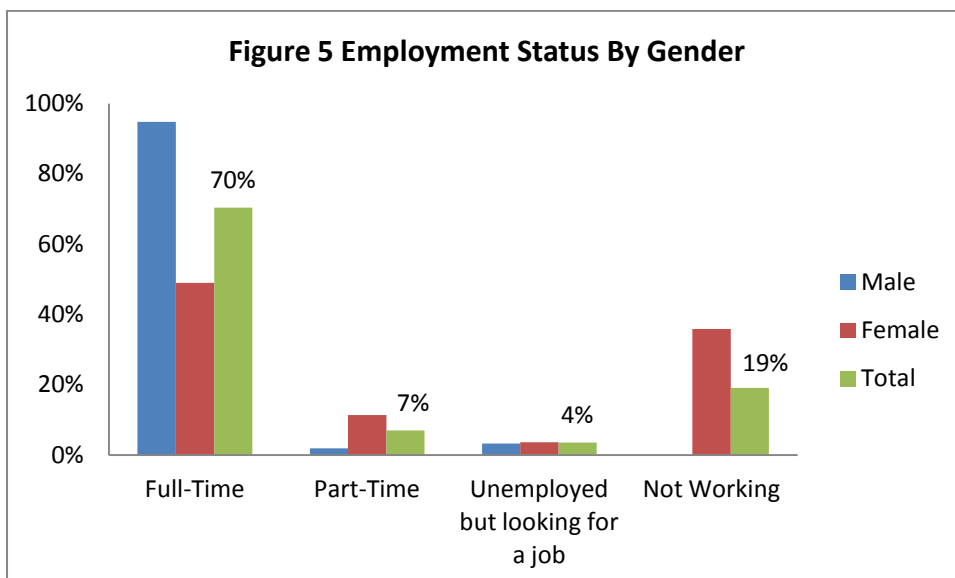
In terms of ethnicity, nearly three quarters (74%) were Chinese, 13% Malay, 10% Indian, with “Others” making up the remaining 3%.



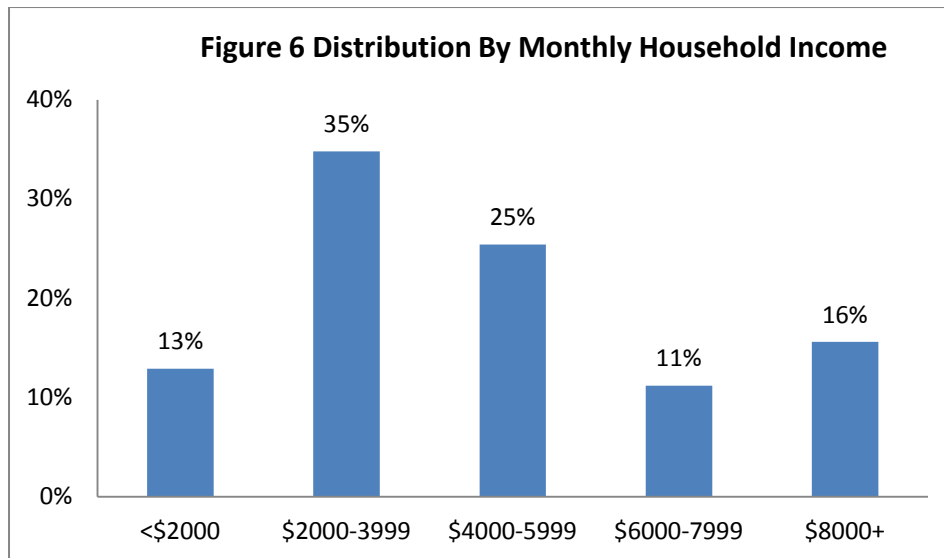
More than two thirds (69%) of the group under study had upper secondary and higher educational qualifications (Figure 4). Males had higher educational attainment compared to females in the sample.



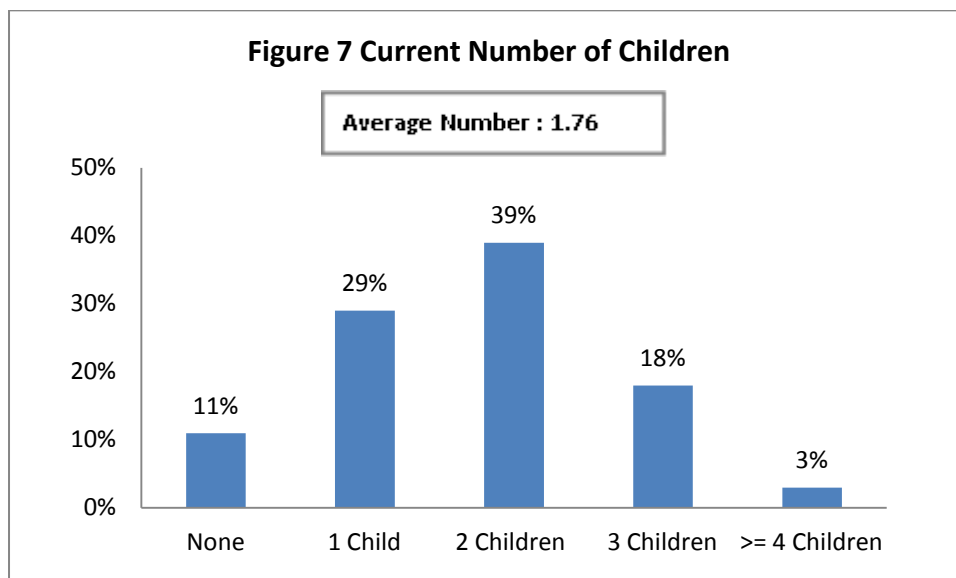
The data showed that the majority (77%) was employed at the time of study (despite the recession). While almost all of the males worked full-time, less than half of the females were similarly employed and they were much more likely to be economically inactive (Figure 5). Women were also significantly more likely than men to work part-time (11% compared to about 2%).



For monthly household incomes, the modal category, accounting for about 35%, was \$2000-\$3999 (Figure 6). This was followed by the \$4000-\$5999 income group (25%). Only 13% had below \$2000 per month. The median monthly household income was \$4,176.



On average, the group had 1.76 children each at the time of study (Figure 7). About 11% were childless while the rest had one child or more.



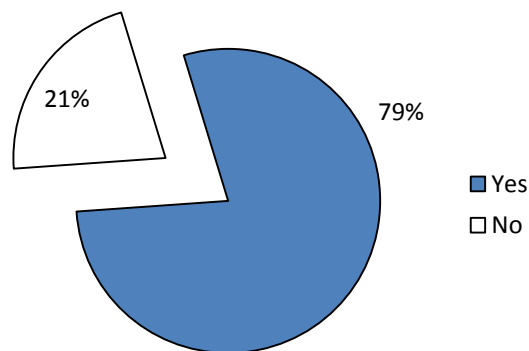
3.2 Reactions to M&P Package 2008

A primary objective of the survey was to examine the attitudes of Singaporeans towards the 2008 M&P measures. As mentioned in the introduction, could the lack of positive response, as measured by improvements in the TFR, be due to indifference towards the policy measures, or was it due to other factors, such as the economic crisis? This section sets out the findings on views or perceptions of the eligible population on the policy measures.

3.2a. Whether 2008 M&P Package made it Conducive to having Children

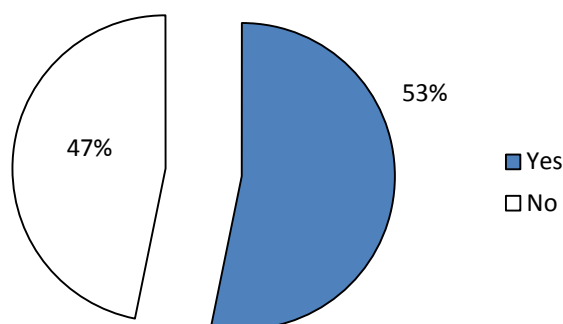
Overall, the study shows that reactions to the package were positive. The majority (79%) of the respondents felt that the package was conducive for Singaporean couples to consider having children (Figure 8). A smaller proportion, about half, indicated the package had made it more conducive for themselves to have children (Figure 9).

Figure 8 Whether 2008 M&P Package Has Made It Conducive For Singaporean Couples To Have Children



Base: Married persons aged 20 to 49 years

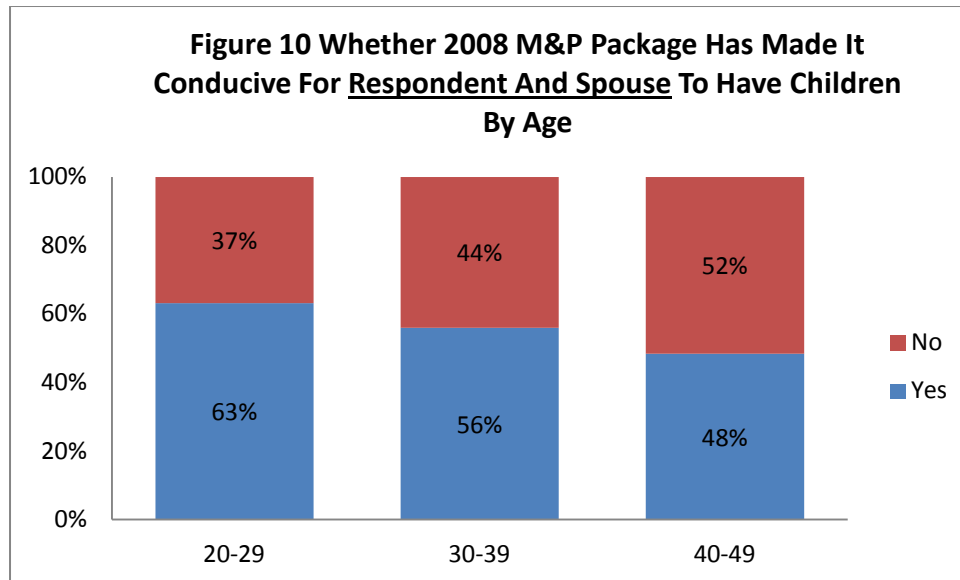
Figure 9 Whether 2008 M&P Package Has Made It Conducive For Respondent And Spouse To Have Children



Base: Married persons aged 20 to 49 years

The response was also observed to vary inversely with the age. Respondents in the twenties age group were more likely than older respondents to acknowledge that the package was conducive for Singaporean couples to have children. Likewise, they were more likely to respond positively with regard

to the impact of the package on themselves – 63% in the 20-29 age group compared to 56% of those aged 30-39 and 48% of those aged 40-49 (Figure 10).



Some possible explanations for the difference in responses may be that respondents who were in the forties age group already had two or more children while the youngest respondents were mostly childless or had only one child (Table 1). The former had mostly completed their families, i.e. they already had the number of children they wanted or more, whereas most of the latter were in the early stages of family formation and had yet to attain their desired family size (Table 2). It therefore augurs well that the majority in the youngest age group found the package conducive to their having children. Figure 11 shows respondents' reactions to the package by the number of children they had.

Table 1. Current Number Of Children By Age

| Number of Children | Age | | | Total |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------|
| | 20 to 29 years | 30 to 39 years | 40 to 49 years | |
| None | 40% | 10% | 4% | 11% |
| 1 Child | 41% | 36% | 20% | 29% |
| 2 Children | 16% | 41% | 43% | 39% |
| 3 or more Children | 3% | 13% | 33% | 21% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| | 221 | 839 | 951 | 2011 |

Table 2. Achievement Of Desired Number Of Children By Age

| Current and Planned Number of Children | Age | | | Total |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------|
| | 20 to 29 years | 30 to 39 years | 40 to 49 years | |
| Current Number > Planned Number | 1% | 3% | 4% | 3% |
| Current Number = Planned Number | 19% | 46% | 69% | 54% |
| Current Number < Planned Number | 81% | 51% | 28% | 43% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| | 221 | 839 | 950 | 2010 |

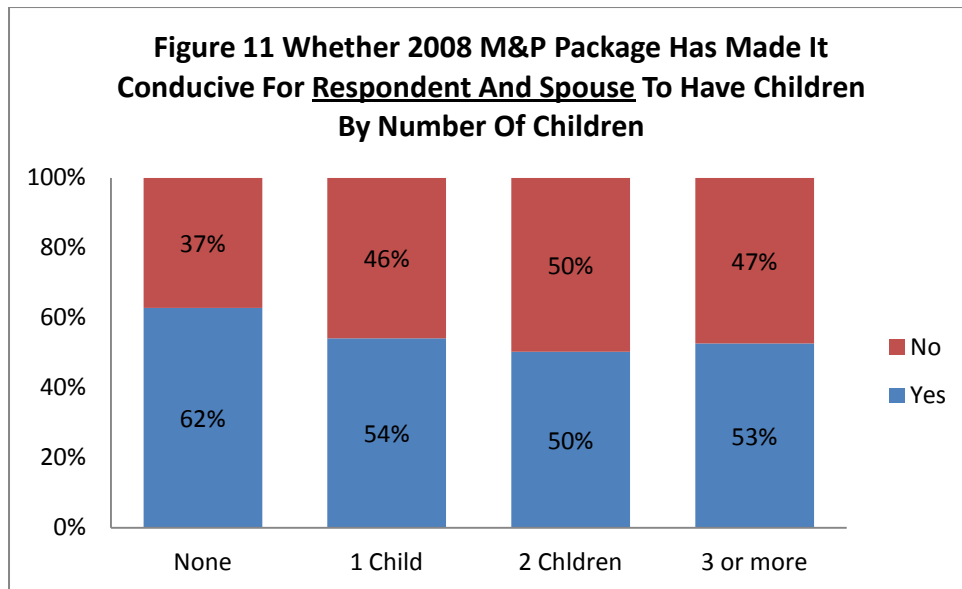
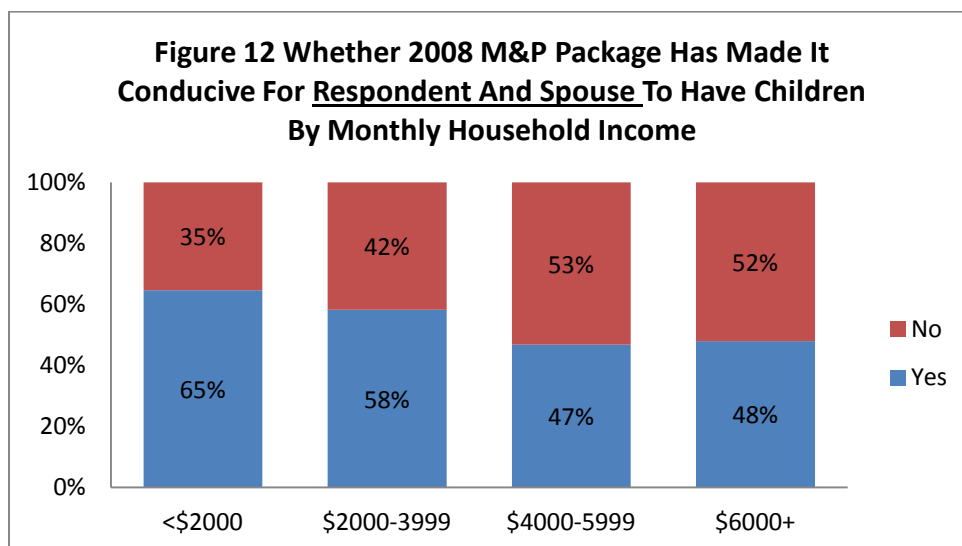
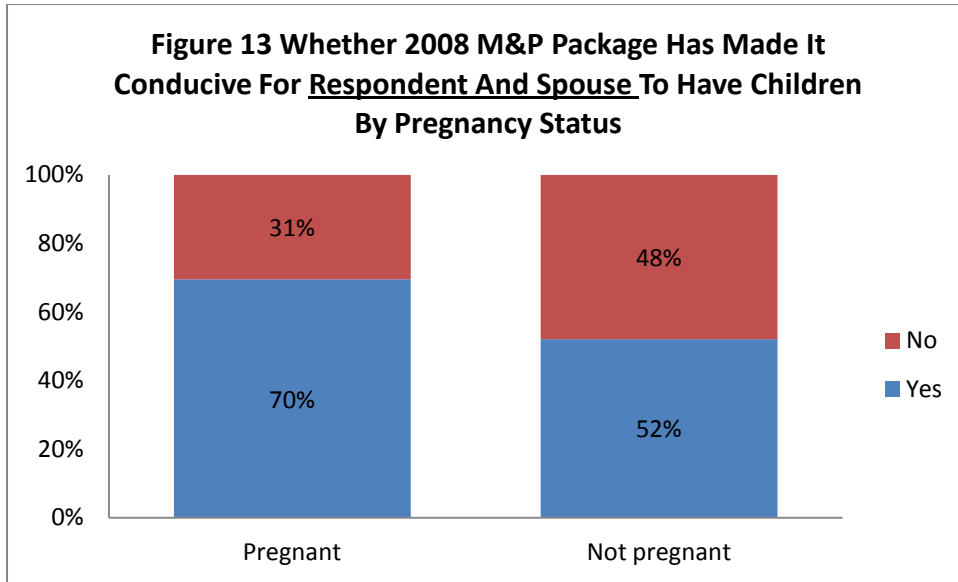


Figure 12 shows that the package appealed more to the lower income households than those with higher incomes. The higher proportion of positive responses among the lower income respondents could be due to the relative income/wealth effect i.e. the perceived value of the benefits to be derived from the package is likely to be higher for the lower income groups compared to those with higher income (even if the absolute amount might be the same or smaller).

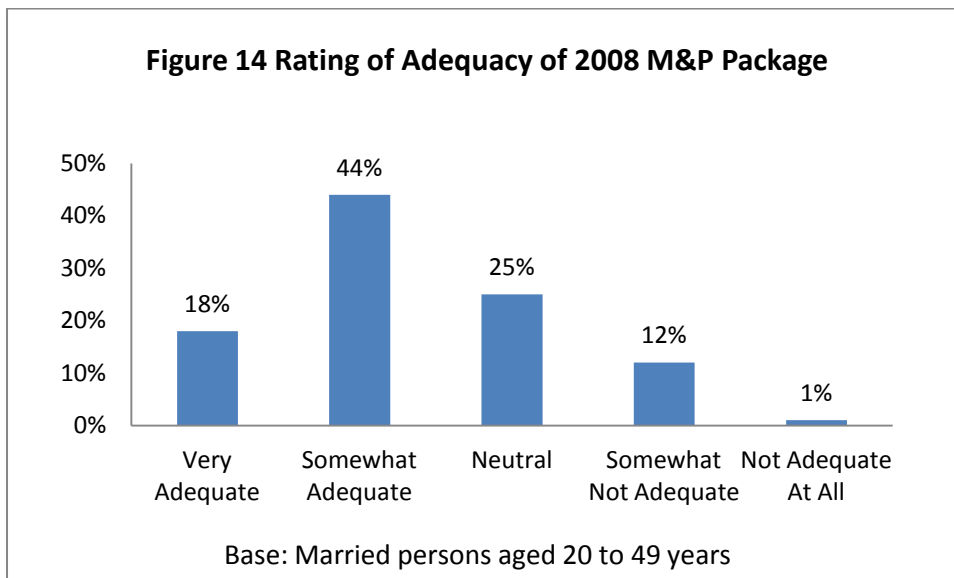


Respondents who were expecting a child also responded more positively than those who were not (Figure 13). It is possible that holding a positive view had contributed to the decision to have a child but it is impossible to determine the direction of causality with the available data.



3.2b Adequacy of Package

Respondents were also asked to rate the adequacy of the package. Figure 14 showed that the majority (62 percent) felt that it was very adequate or somewhat adequate. About a quarter were neutral. However, there remained 13% who felt that it was somewhat inadequate or not adequate at all.



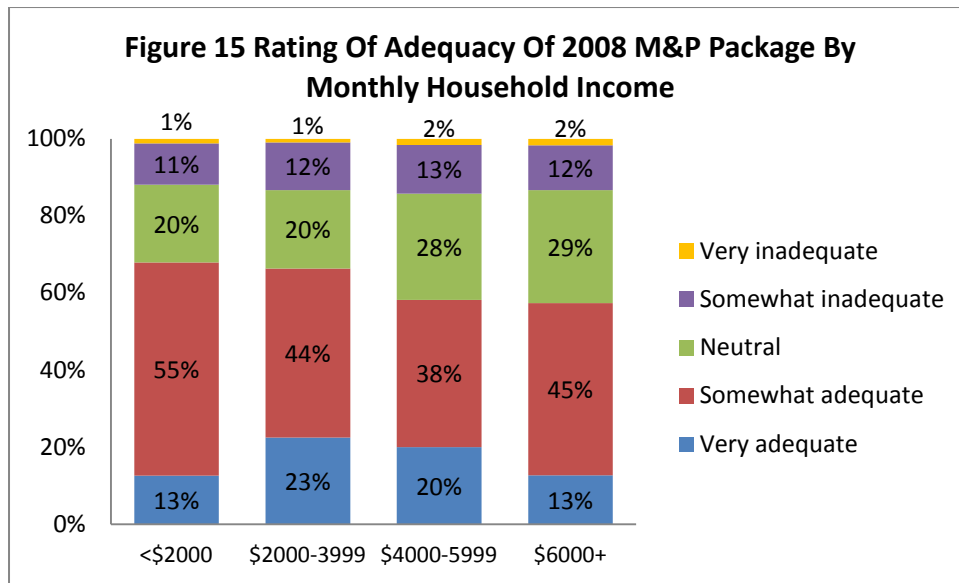
As was the case earlier, some age differences were observed within the sample surveyed. In Table 3, the youngest respondents, aged 20 to 29, were more likely to rate the package as “very adequate” whereas those aged 30 and older were more likely to report that the package was “somewhat not adequate or not adequate at all.” These differences could be due to the older respondents having experienced the cost of bringing up a child whereas the vast majority of

the youngest respondents had yet to have any children. Nevertheless, the higher positive response among the younger respondents is heartening as it could encourage them to have (more) children.

Table 3 Rating Of Adequacy Of 2008 M&P Package By Age

| | Age | | | Total |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------|
| | 20 To 29 Years | 30 To 39 Years | 40 To 49 Years | |
| Very Adequate | 23% | 18% | 16% | 18% |
| Somewhat Adequate | 40% | 45% | 44% | 44% |
| Neutral | 26% | 24% | 25% | 25% |
| Somewhat Not Adequate | 10% | 11% | 14% | 12% |
| Not Adequate At All | 1% | 2% | 1% | 1% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| | 221 | 837 | 950 | 2008 |

The relative income hypothesis can probably be used again to explain the more positive view of the lower-income respondents compared to the higher income respondents (Figure 15). The magnitude of the potential financial benefits offered by the package is probably larger relative to the incomes of the former as compared to the latter. As will be shown in the section on perceptions of individual measures below, measures such as the Enhanced Baby Bonus, Parenthood Tax Rebate, Medisave Maternity Package, etc, that affect the pockets of potential parents were more likely to be seen to be influential on childbearing decisions among the lower income groups.



Of the 13% who responded that the current package was inadequate, the two most common suggestions for improvement were for subsidies to be provided to cover education costs and for further improvements to be made to the Baby Bonus Scheme. Other suggestions for improvement can be found in Annex A.

3.2c Comparing 2008 and 2004 Packages

In general, those who knew about the 2004 package (54% of the respondents) thought that the 2008 package was an improvement over the earlier one (Table 4).

Table 4 Comparing 2008 And 2004 M&P Packages

| Ratings | Per Cent |
|------------------------------|----------|
| Better | 54% |
| About the same | 30% |
| Worse | 1% |
| Not aware of earlier package | 15% |

Base: Married persons aged 20 to 49 years

3.2d Responses to Individual M&P Measures

This sub-section examines responses to the individual measures in the 2008 M&P package. For each measure, respondents were first asked if they had heard or read about it, and then their view on whether the measure would influence couples like themselves to have children or to have more children. The latter was an indirect way of ascertaining whether respondents would be influenced by the measure since evidence elsewhere suggests that social desirability would dictate that parents would not want to be seen as having children on account of incentives. In the interview, show cards containing brief explanations of the measures (based on information in the official MCYS brochure) were shown to the respondents. For further details on the explanations of each measure please refer to Annex B.

Table 5 shows that the level of awareness of the specific measures varied widely. Nearly nine out of ten had heard or read about the extended maternity leave scheme and the Enhanced Baby Bonus Scheme as compared to only about one quarter to one third for the schemes relating to reproductive assistance. The lower level of awareness of the latter is probably because such measures are relevant only to a small segment of the population i.e. those with infertility issues³ and generally ignored.

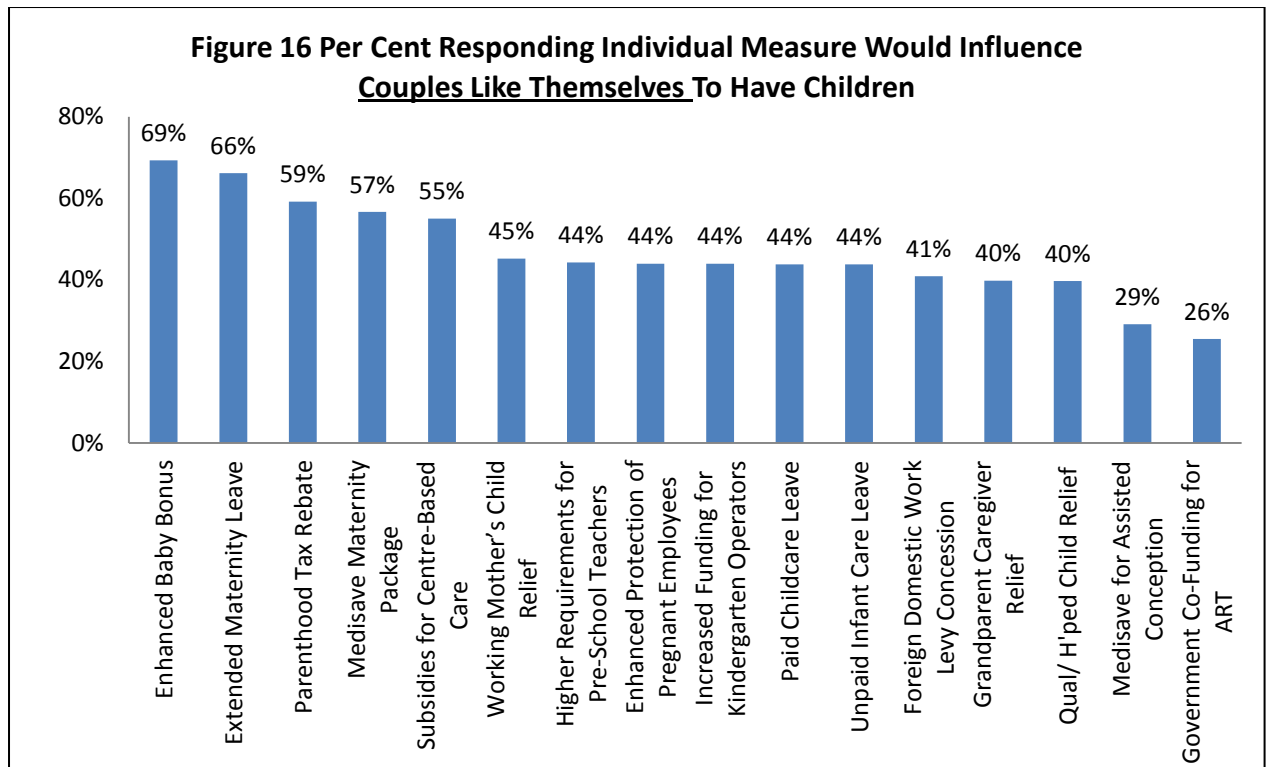
Table 5 Whether Respondent Heard Or Read About Individual Measure

| Measure | Yes response |
|--|--------------|
| 1 Extended Maternity Leave | 90% |
| 2 Enhanced Baby Bonus | 89% |
| 3 Parenthood Tax Rebate | 73% |
| 4 Paid Childcare Leave | 73% |
| 5 Medisave Maternity Package | 65% |
| 6 Subsidies for Centre-Based Infant Care and Childcare | 65% |
| 7 Qualifying Child Relief and Handicapped Child Relief | 53% |
| 8 Working Mother's Child Relief | 57% |
| 9 Enhanced Protection of Pregnant Employees | 54% |
| 10 Unpaid Infant Care Leave | 54% |
| 11 Foreign Domestic Work Levy Concession | 53% |

³ In Singapore, an estimated 15% of couples are affected by infertility (<http://www.singhealth.com.sg/PatientCare/ConditionsAndTreatments/Pages/MaleInfertility.aspx>, accessed 22 March 2010)

| Measure | Yes response (%) |
|---|------------------|
| 12 Grandparent Caregiver Relief | 49% |
| 13 Enhanced Quality of Kindergarten Education through Higher Educational and Qualification Requirements for Pre-School Teachers | 47% |
| 14 Enhanced Quality of Kindergarten Education through Increased funding for Kindergarten Operators | 46% |
| 15 Medisave for Assisted Conception Procedures | 33% |
| 16 Government Co-Funding for Assisted Reproduction Technology Treatment | 26% |

Figure 16 show the enhanced Baby Bonus Scheme to be the most influential in the opinion of Singaporeans of reproductive ages (for more details see Annex C). Nearly seven out of ten felt that it would influence couples like themselves to have a child or have more children. This was followed by the extended maternity leave (66%), the parenthood tax rebate (59%), the Medisave maternity package (57%) and subsidies for centre-based infant and childcare (55%). Taken together, these measures address the issues of time and financial costs as well as childcare support that are often cited as reasons for not having more children or even having a child at all (MCYS Media Release, "Findings of Public Consultations on Marriage and Parenthood, 15 July 2008, <http://www.nps.gov.sg/files/news/FindingsonPublicConsultationsonMarriageandParentho.pdf>, accessed 18 February 2010). These measures also cover wider segments of the population as compared to the other measures that had more limited application, e.g. those who employed maids in their households, those who had parents or parents-in-law to provide care for their children, or those who required assistance to conceive.



Again, responses were related to respondents' age, with the youngest respondents the most likely to assess each measure as potentially effective and the oldest respondents the least likely (Figure 17). As explained earlier, some possible explanations could be that the oldest respondents viewed themselves, and others like them, as too old to have children, being close to the end of their reproductive span, or having completed their families. It also suggests that more incentives might be required before the older respondents would be motivated to have any more children.

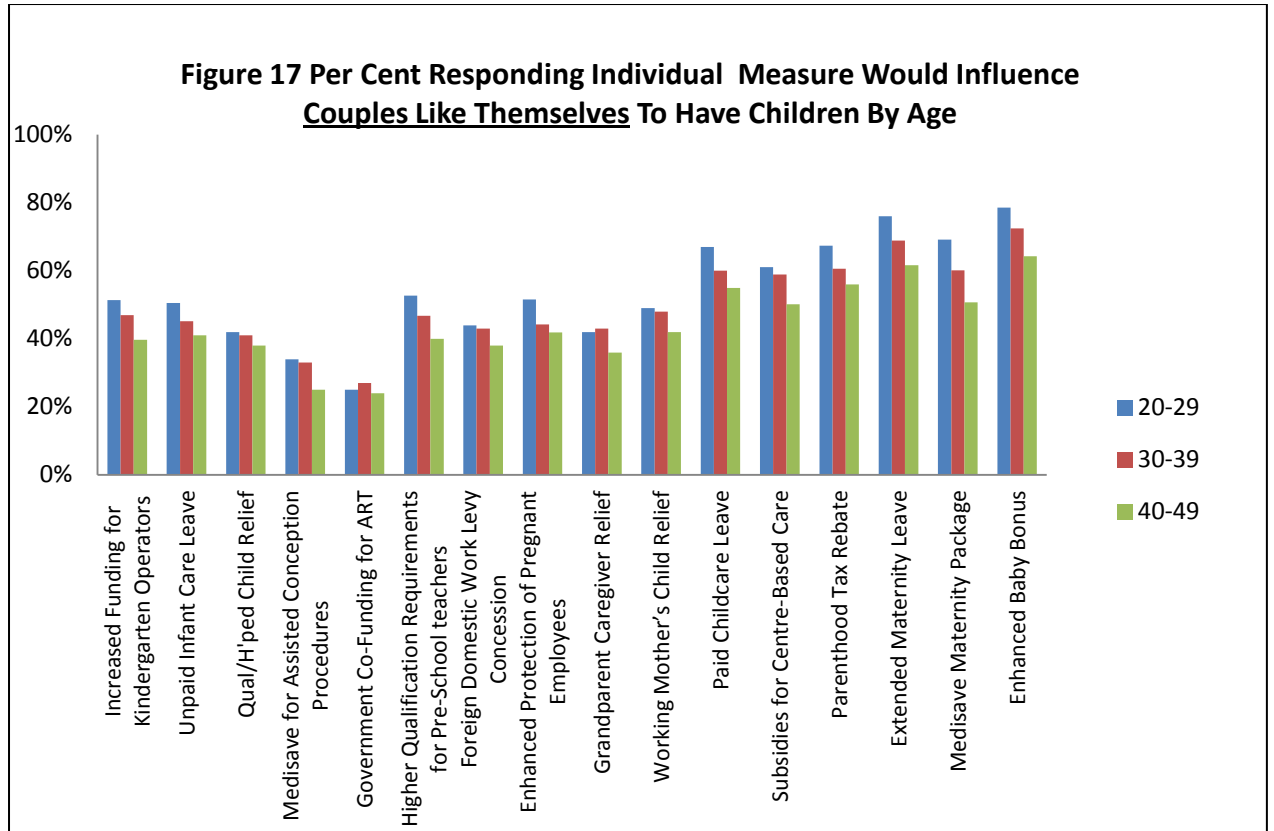
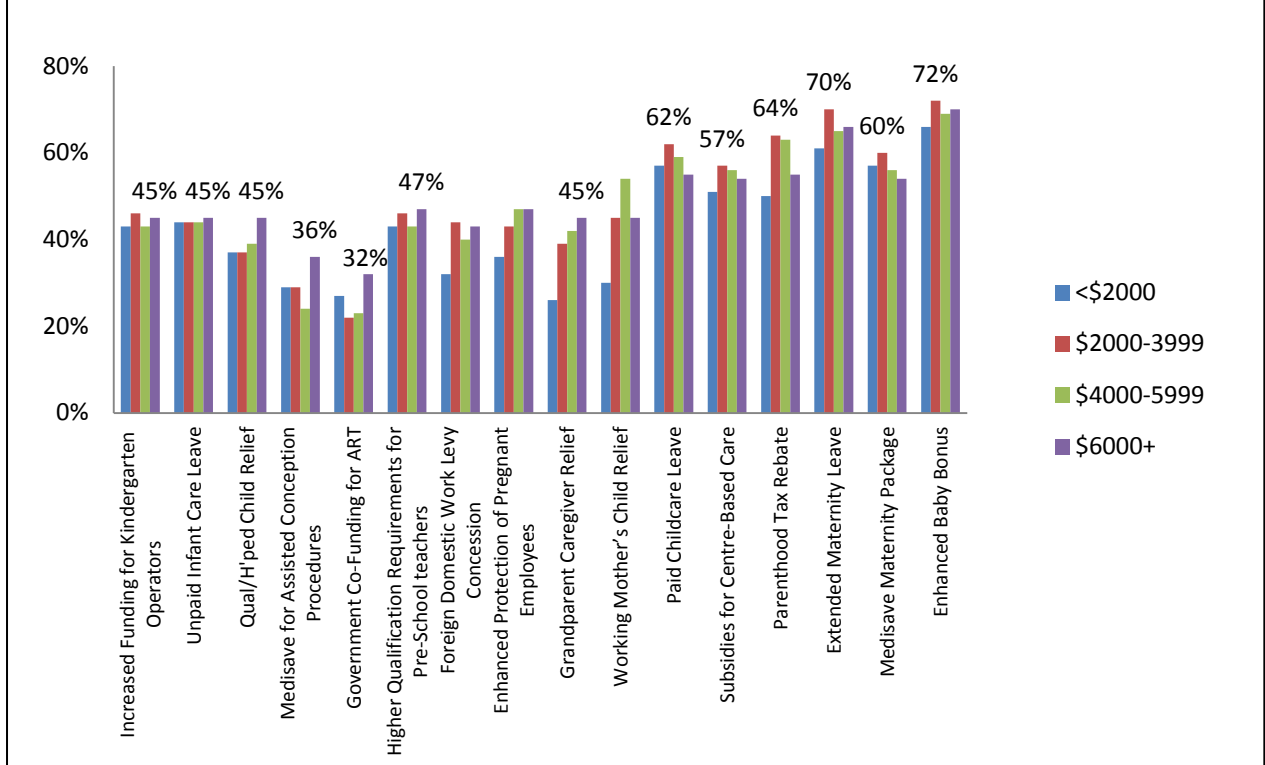
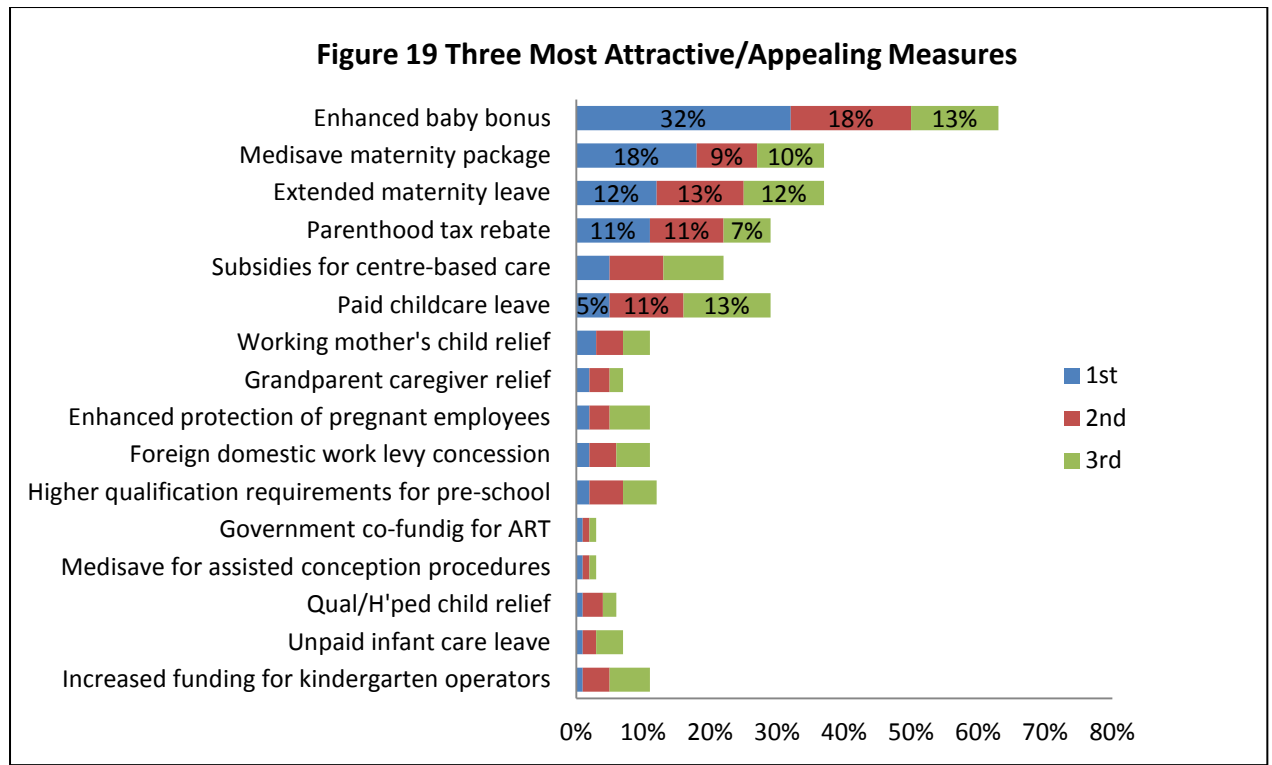


Figure 18 shows that the Baby Bonus Scheme, Medisave Maternity Package, Extended Maternity Leave, Parenthood Tax Rebates, Subsidies for centre-based infant and childcare, and Paid Childcare Leave appealed the most to respondents in the \$2000-3999 household income group. On the other hand, households with the highest monthly incomes (\$6000 and above) were more likely to select the measures affecting the quality of childcare centres, Grandparent Caregiver Relief and Qualified or Handicapped Child Relief.

Figure 18 Per Cent Responding Individual Measure Would Influence Couples Like Themselves To Have Children By Monthly Household Income



In the study, respondents were asked to identify three measures that were most attractive or appealing to them. As Figure 19 shows, the enhanced Baby Bonus Scheme was by far the most attractive, with 63% citing this measure as one of their three choices. In fact, this was the first choice for nearly one third of the respondents and the second choice for another 18% -- far exceeding the proportions choosing the other measures. Following in second place were the Medisave Maternity Package and the Extended Maternity Leave scheme, each cited by 37%. Paid childcare leave and the parenthood tax rebate followed next at about 28% each. Overall, it would appear that the measures that directly affect respondents financially (Baby Bonus Scheme, Medisave Maternity Package) and the leave measures were more appealing than other measures.



3.3 Impact of 2008/2009 Economic Crisis

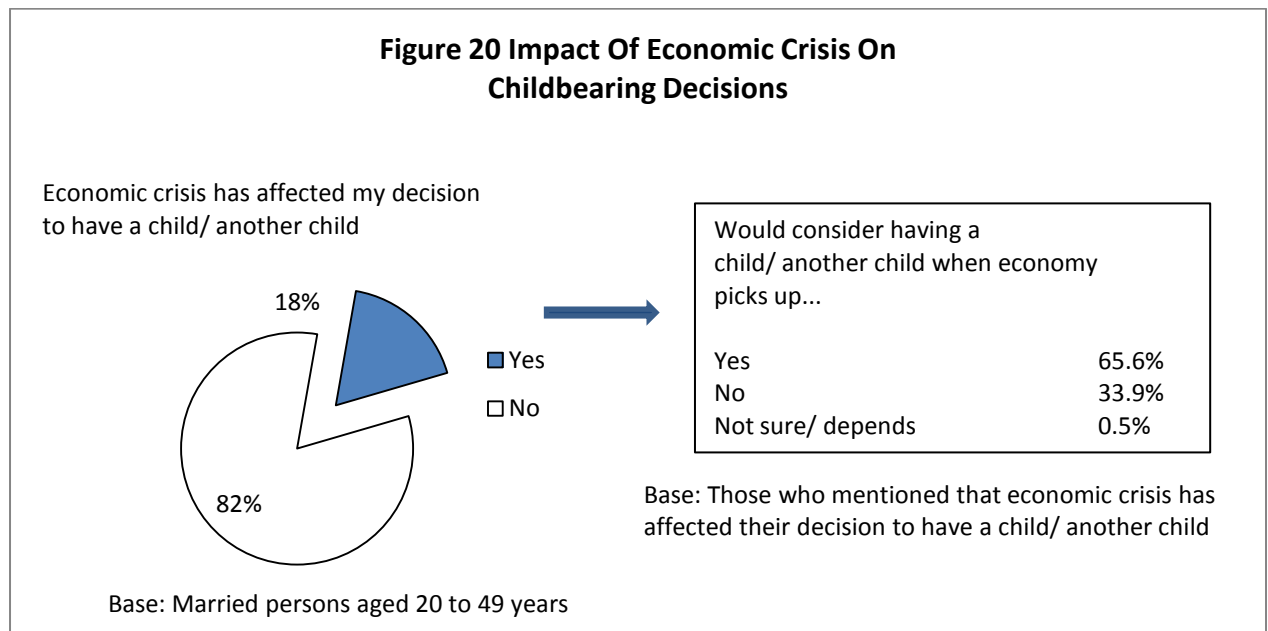
The global economic crisis that began around September 2008 had, to a certain degree, had an impact on the daily lives of married Singaporeans. For the respondents, this had meant taking furloughs, working shorter work weeks and in some cases retrenchment. Overall, half of the respondents had had at least one of these experiences. One third reported a reduction or total loss of income while 32% experienced reduction or loss of savings (Table 6).

Table 6 Impact Of 2008/2009 Economic Crisis On Respondent Or Spouse

| Whether Livelihood Had Been Affected | Yes | No |
|--------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Compulsory No Pay Leave | 10% | 90% |
| Shorter Work Week | 12% | 88 |
| Retrenchment | 6% | 94% |
| Reduced/No Income | 33% | 67% |
| Reduced/No Savings | 32% | 68% |
| Others | 2% | 98% |

Base: Married persons aged 20 to 49 years

Only 18%, however, reported that their childbearing decisions had been affected by the economic climate. The age group 30-39, those who were working and those with polytechnic diplomas were slightly over-represented compared to the overall sample.



Of those whose childbearing decisions had been affected, nearly two thirds would consider having a a/another child when the economy picked up (Figure 20). For the remaining one third, the main reasons for not considering having a child/another child were their age, the cost of living in Singapore and financial instability (Table 7).

Table 7 Main Reason For Not Intending To Have A Child/Another Child After The Financial Crisis (Based On Open-Ended Question)

| Main Reason | Per Cent |
|--|----------|
| Age factor/Too old | 39% |
| Cost of living/Standard of living too high | 37% |
| Financial problem/Financially Unstable/Income not enough | 22% |
| Job Security/Job is unstable | 3% |

Base: Those who would not consider having a child when the economy picks up.

3.4 “Predicting” Future Childbearing

This section presents the results of a multivariate analysis of the factors that are likely to influence respondents to have children in the future, based on their responses to whether the 2008 M&P package was conducive to their having children. Multivariate analysis controls for the effects of other identified variables on the relationship between independent and dependent variables and is an improvement over the bivariate results reported earlier.

In this study, logistic regression was used to identify social groups that were more or less likely to go on to have children. Logistic regression was used because of the dichotomous nature of the outcome or dependent variable (Hosmer and Lemeshow 1989). It measures the odds that respondents of a certain characteristic will fall into one of the two categories of the outcome variable (Demaris 1992:1-3). Further, it is able to test the level of statistical significance of the relationship between the dependent and independent variable. Odds ratios generated by the regression will be employed to analyse the likelihood of respondents responding that the M&P Package was conducive for couples like them to have children. Odds ratio values of “1 and higher” constitute a higher likelihood of the event occurring i.e. responding “yes”. Values below one signal a decrease likelihood of the event occurring. It should be noted that odds ratios are measures of association (and do not imply causality). In order to make sense of the odds ratios generated, a reference category is selected for each independent variable in the analysis. The ratios generated are interpreted with reference to the selected reference category. For example, the likelihood of males responding positively to the package are analysed with reference to the females (reference category).

Table 8 Logistic Regression Analysis (N=1968)

| Predictors | Dependent Variable: The Current Marriage And Parenthood Package <u>Is Conducive</u> For Respondent And Spouse To Have Children | | | | | |
|---|--|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | |
| | β | SE β | Odds Ratio | β | SE β | Odds Ratio |
| Gender (Female)^ Male | .216* | .092 | 1.241 | .148 | .106 | 1.160 |
| Age (40 – 49)^ 20 – 29 30 – 39 | .636*** .299** | .158 .097 | 1.890 1.349 | .532** .315** | .184 .109 | 1.702 1.370 |
| Ethnicity (Malay)^ Chinese Indian Others | -.284* .058 .406 | .136 .193 .319 | .753 1.060 1.500 | -.099 .195 .554 | .143 .202 .342 | .906 1.215 1.740 |
| Education (Some Secondary or less)^ Completed Secondary Upper Secondary Polytechnic University | | | | .227 .070 .135 .334 | .173 .179 .193 .204 | 1.255 1.073 1.145 1.396 |
| Number of Children (None)^ 1 Child 2 Children 3 or more | | | | -.247 -.298 -.114 | .176 .177 .197 | .781 .743 .892 |
| Monthly Household Income (\$1999 and below)^ \$2000 - \$3999 \$4000 - \$5999 \$6000 and above | | | | -.417* -.966*** -.949*** | .169 .191 .200 | .659 .381 .387 |
| Employment Status (Not working)^ Working | | | | .168 | .127 | 1.183 |

| Predictors | Dependent Variable: The Current Marriage And Parenthood Package <u>Is Conducive</u> For Respondent And Spouse To Have Children | | | | | |
|---|--|------------|------------|---------|------------|------------|
| | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | |
| | β | SE β | Odds Ratio | β | SE β | Odds Ratio |
| Economic Crisis (Not Affected)^ Affected | | | | .020 | .093 | 1.020 |
| Expecting/Spouse Expecting (No)^ Yes | | | | .524* | .207 | 1.689 |
| Citizenship (Permanent Resident)^ Singapore Citizen | | | | -.047 | .138 | .954 |
| Constant | .036 | | | .484 | | |
| χ^2 | 38.424 | | | 98.049 | | |
| df | 6 | | | 20 | | |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

^Reference category in brackets.

The observations reported here are for the full model, Model 2, in Table 8 only. The results show that the younger age groups (20-29 and 30-39) were significantly more likely than those aged 40-49 (reference category) to provide a positive response that the package was conducive. This corroborates with the findings in the bi-variate analysis presented earlier. That there were more positive responses from the younger respondents at the beginning and middle stages of their reproductive span are encouraging as it suggests that the message had reached these groups. Being younger, couples in this group have a longer time horizon and more opportunities to increase their family sizes and could translate to possible increases in overall fertility rate.

Respondents who had a spouse that was expecting or were themselves pregnant with a child were more likely than those who were not to be positive about the package. Preliminary descriptive analysis of these respondents found that they had these following characteristics:

- Age below 40;
- Have polytechnic diploma or university degree;
- Have \$6000 and above monthly household income;

- Have no children or only one child.

Higher income respondents were less likely than those with lower incomes to find the package conducive for them to have children, even after controlling for other independent variable including education. The result suggests that stronger incentives may be necessary. Similarly, those who already have children may require further motivation or assistance to increase their number of children.

The initial significance observed for gender and ethnicity in the partial model, Model 1, disappeared once the other variables were controlled for in the analysis.

4 Observations

The findings of POPS (2) suggest that a year following the introduction of the Marriage and Parenthood package in 2008, married Singaporeans and Permanent Residents in general had a favourable opinion of the new package. A majority (62%) said that the new package was adequate to meet Singaporeans' concerns about the burdens of procreation and child rearing (Figure 14). Overall, the awareness of the various measures available in the current package centred on the following four measures: the Extended Maternity Leave, the Enhanced Baby Bonus, and Parenthood Tax Rebate and Paid Childcare Leave (Table 5). Among the individual measures some were more attractive to the respondents than others. The top three measures were the Enhanced Baby Bonus, Parenthood Tax Rebate and Extended Maternity Leave. It was observed that one in five respondents (18%) reported that their childbearing decisions were affected by the economic crisis. This could have contributed to the continued decline in the TFR despite the enhanced measures offered in the M & P package.

The survey results suggest that the 2008 package appealed more to the younger age cohorts in the sample. The younger cohorts (20-29 and 30-39) were more likely to indicate that the current package made conditions more conducive to having children (Table 8). While this augurs well for the current package, it should be noted that the younger segment of the population, in particular the age cohort 20-29 only comprised 11 per cent of the total resident married population of the reported ages in 2005 (Department of Statistics 2006). This suggests that intervention through public education initiatives may be needed at earlier ages to get the younger cohorts to think about marriage.

The package was appealing for respondents with monthly incomes \$3,999 and below as compared with respondents in higher income brackets. As pointed out earlier, respondents in the higher wage bracket might have a different set of expectations with regard to childrearing that places pressure on them to provide

the best to their child. This might have had an indirect effect in raising their expectations resulting in over-preparation further delaying childbearing and negating any possible positive effects on their decision to have children that the current package might have otherwise provided.

The survey also gathered information on the demographic profile of those respondents who had indicated that they had chosen to remain childless. The group as a whole tended to be in the middle-age bracket (30-39). It comprised respondents with a polytechnic diploma or higher educational level. Several reasons were given for remaining childless. The two most common reasons were financial, e.g. too expensive or not affordable, and commitment/responsibility issues. While this group made up only a small portion (1%) of the population surveyed, it provided an insight into possible challenges that might be present when tackling the falling fertility rate of Singapore in the future.

One major criticism of the 2008 M&P package is its lack of clarity and support on the role of fathers within the family in Singapore. This was seen in the absence of any specific measures that would point to the importance and role of fathers in the parenting picture. More recently, a visiting foreign academic opined that it was because of the lack of sufficient government support of equitable parenting roles and men not taking up the child-rearing responsibilities that women were not wanting to have children (Tan 2010).

This view is not unfounded as research in the United Kingdom has shown that women whose husbands were more involved with childcare responsibilities were more likely to have children compared to those whose husbands were less involved (Schober 2007).

* * * * *

Bibliography

Centre of Assisted Reproduction, Singapore General Hospital. "Male Infertility."
Retrieved March 23, 2010

(<http://www.singhealth.com.sg/PatientCare/ConditionsAndTreatments/Pages/MaleInfertility.aspx>)

Demaris, A. 1992. *Logit Modeling: Practical Applications*. Sage University Paper Series on Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences, 07-086, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Hassan, M. A. M. and S. R. Killick. 2003. "Effect of male age on fertility: evidence for the decline in male fertility with increasing age." *Fertility and Sterility*, 79 (Supplement 3): 1520-1527.

Hosmer, D. W. and S. Lemeshow. 1989. *Applied Logistic Regression*. New York: Wiley.

Ministry of Community Development Youth and Sports (MCYS). 2008. "Findings of Public Consultations on Marriage and Parenthood." MCYS Media Release. Retrieved 18 February 2010.

(<http://www.nps.gov.sg/files/news/FindingsonPublicConsultationsonMarriageandParentho.pdf>).

Morgan, S. P. and K. J. Hagewen. 2005. "Fertility." Pp. 229-249 in *Handbook of Population*, edited by Dudley L. Poston and Michael Micklin. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

National Population Secretariat. 2008. "Government Doubles Budget to Provide More Support for Marriage and Parenthood." Press Release. Retrieved November 12, 2009

(<http://www.nps.gov.sg/files/news/Media%20release%2020%20Aug%202008%20-%20Enhanced%20M&P%20Package%20-%20final.pdf>)

The Practice Committee of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine. 2006. "Aging and infertility in women." *Fertility and Sterility*, 86 (Supplement 4): S248-S252.

Schober, P. 2007. "Inequality or total workload? How domestic work matters to childbearing among British dual-earner couples." Conference paper presented at British Panel Household Survey 2007. Retrieved November 23, 2009

<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/ERD/pressAndInformationOffice/newsAndEvents/archives/2007/DualIncomeCouplesResearch.aspx>)

Singapore Department of Statistics. 2009. *Population Trends 2009*. Singapore: Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade & Industry, Republic of Singapore.

_____. 2006. *General Household Survey 2005: Socio-Demographic and Economic Characteristics*. Singapore: Department of Statistics.

Tan, H. Y. 2010. "Want more babies? Fathers, please step up." *The Straits Times*, 12 May.

Yap, M. T. 2008. "Ultra-low fertility in Singapore." Pp. 160-180 in *Ultra Low Fertility in Pacific Asia: Trends, Causes and Policy Issues* edited by Gavin Jones, Paulin Tay-Straughan, and Angelique Chan. Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge.

Zakir, H. 2005. "Singapore birth rate hits an all-time low." *The Straits Times*, 17 September.

Annex A

Improvements Respondents Would Like To See In M&P Package

| Improvements Respondents Would Like To See In M&P Package (Open-ended Question) | | |
|---|---|-----|
| 1 | Subsidise/Reduce education fees/Provide free education | 23% |
| 2 | More cash incentive/Baby Bonus/Baby Bonus to be in single payment | 18% |
| 3 | Reduce/Subsidise medical fees/Allow use of Medisave | 9% |
| 4 | Provide long term benefit, solution/Extend benefit period | 7% |
| 5 | More subsidies/funding/More categories of benefits | 6% |
| 6 | More maternity leave/Flexible maternity leave | 5% |
| 7 | More childcare/Infant care leave/Raise age of child for childcare leave | 5% |
| 8 | Reduce/Subsidise cost of childcare/infant care/after school care centre | 5% |
| 9 | 5 days week/Shorter work week /Flexible working hours | 5% |
| 10 | Enhance standard of teachers/More quality childcare/after school care education | 4% |
| 11 | Reduce cost of necessities e.g. milk powder/clothes/transport | 4% |
| 12 | More childcare/Infant care centres/Longer operation hours/Flexible service | 3% |
| 13 | More paternity leave | 3% |
| 14 | Enforce measures (e.g. protection of pregnant employees, childcare leave) | 3% |
| 15 | Subsidise delivery cost/Pregnancy fee/Better hospital package | 3% |
| 16 | More tax relief/GST rebates | 3% |
| 17 | Free/Subsidise school text books/uniforms | 2% |
| 18 | Extend benefits to PR | 2% |
| 19 | Reduce foreign domestic worker levy /Increase age of child to 16 yrs to qualify for concession/Improve maid quality | 2% |
| 20 | Reduce cost of housing/Provide housing grants | 1% |
| 21 | Increase the amount of Children Development Account | 1% |

Improvements Respondents Would Like To See In M&P Package (Open-ended Question)

| | | |
|----|--|-----|
| 22 | Reduced education stress/Have exam leave for children having exams | 1% |
| 23 | Father should enjoy same benefits as mother | 1% |
| 24 | Others | 1% |
| 25 | No suggestions | 16% |

Base: Those who rated the M & P Package as inadequate

Annex B

Summary Of 2008 M&P Package

| Measure | What It means | Effective Date |
|--|--|-------------------------|
| Getting Married | | |
| Finding a Partner | SDU and SDS will merge to deliver enhanced services, while continuing to develop the private dating industry | 1 Jan 2009 |
| CPF housing Top-Up Grant | Singles Grant recipients who subsequently marry can enjoy a top-up grant to the prevailing CPF Housing Grant for Family | Existing |
| Having Children | | |
| Medisave Maternity Package | Medisave can be used to help pay for delivery and pre-delivery expenses | Existing |
| Government Co-Funding for Assisted Reproduction Technology (ART) Treatment | Government will Co-fund 50% of ART treatment received at the public hospitals, up to \$3,000 per treatment cycle, for a maximum of three cycles per Singaporean couple | 1 Sep 2008 |
| Medisave for Assisted Conception Procedures | Up to \$6,000, \$5,000 and \$4,000 can be used from Medisave for the 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd time respectively that Medisave is used for ACP | Existing |
| Raising and Caring for Children | | |
| Parenthood Tax Rebate (PTR) | Working parents can claim the PTR of \$5,000 for the 1 st child, \$10,000 for the 2 nd child, and \$20,000 per child for subsequent children | Year of Assessment 2009 |
| Qualifying Child Relief (QCR) and Handicapped Child Relief (HCR) | Working parents can claim \$4,000 per child under the QCR or \$5,500 per child under the HCR | Year of Assessment 2009 |
| Raising And Caring For Children (Cont'd) | | |
| Parenthood Tax | Working parents can claim the PTR of \$5,000 for the 1 st child, \$10,000 for the 2 nd child, and \$20,000 per | Year of Assessment |

| Measure | What It means | Effective Date |
|--|---|--|
| Rebate (PTR) | child for subsequent children | 2009 |
| Qualifying Child Relief (QCR) and Handicapped Child Relief (HCR) | Working parents can claim \$4,000 per child under the QCR or \$5,500 per child under the HCR | Year of Assessment 2009 |
| Working Mother's Child Relief (WMCR) | Working mothers can claim the WMCR at 15% of their earned income for the 1 st child, 20% for the 2 nd and 25% per child for all subsequent children | Year of Assessment 2009 |
| Grandparent Caregiver Relief (GCR) | Working mothers whose children aged 12 and below are cared for by grandparents can claim GCR of \$3,000 | Existing |
| Enhanced Baby Bonus | Parents can get a cash gift of \$4,000 for the 1 st and 2 nd child, and \$6,000 for the 3 rd and 4 th child Savings to the child's Children Development Account will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$6,000 for the 1 st and 2 nd child, up to \$12,000 for the 3 rd and 4 th child, and up to \$18,000 per child from the 5 th child | 1 Jan 2009 |
| Subsidies for centre-based infant care and child care | Working mothers will enjoy a monthly subsidy of up to \$600 for infant care and up to \$300 for childcare | 1 Jan 2009 |
| Enhanced quality of kindergarten Education | Recurrent funding for eligible kindergarten operators will be increased. Scholarships and bursaries will be awarded to help teachers to upgrade their professional qualifications | 1 Jan 2009 (for funding & scholarship) Existing (for bursaries) |
| Foreign Domestic Worker Levy Concession | Employers with a young child age below 12 or an elderly aged 65 and above staying in the same household can enjoy a \$95 levy concession | Existing |
| Work-Life Support | | |
| Extended Maternity Leave | Working mothers can enjoy longer maternity leave of 16 weeks | 1 Jan 2009 |
| Paid childcare leave | Working parents will get six days of paid childcare leave per year per parent if one has a child aged below seven years old | 1 Jan 2009 |

| Measure | What It means | Effective Date |
|--|--|----------------|
| Unpaid Infant Care Leave | Working parents will get six days of unpaid infant care leave per year per parent if one has a child aged below two years old | 1 Jan 2009 |
| Enhanced protection for pregnant employees | Employees will still receive maternity leave benefits if they are dismissed without sufficient cause within the last six months of pregnancy or retrenched within the last three months of pregnancy | 1 Jan 2009 |
| Work-Life Works! (WOW!) Fund | Organisations can tap into the WOW! Fund to subsidise costs of consultancy and training leading to implementation of better work-life strategies | Existing |

Annex C

Opinion On Whether Individual 2008 M&P Measure Would Influence Couples Like Themselves To Have Children/More Children

| | Measures | Yes | No | Not Sure |
|----|--|------------|-----------|-----------------|
| 1 | Enhanced Baby Bonus | 69% | 28% | 3% |
| 2 | Extended Maternity Leave | 66% | 31% | 3% |
| 3 | Parenthood Tax Rebate | 59% | 35% | 6% |
| 4 | Medisave Maternity Package | 57% | 38% | 5% |
| 5 | Subsidies for Centre-based Infant Care and Childcare | 55% | 40% | 5% |
| 6 | Working Mother's Child Relief | 45% | 47% | 8% |
| 7 | Enhanced Quality of Kindergarten Education through Higher Educational and Qualification Requirements for Pre-school Teachers | 44% | 48% | 8% |
| 8 | Enhanced Protection of Pregnant Employees | 44% | 48% | 8% |
| 9 | Enhanced Quality of Kindergarten Education through Increased funding for Kindergarten Operators | 44% | 47% | 9% |
| 10 | Paid Childcare Leave | 44% | 48% | 9% |
| 11 | Unpaid Infant Care Leave | 44% | 48% | 9% |
| 12 | Foreign Domestic Work Levy Concession | 41% | 51% | 8% |
| 13 | Grandparent Caregiver Relief | 40% | 50% | 10% |
| 14 | Qualifying Child Relief and Handicapped Child Relief | 40% | 52% | 8% |
| 15 | Medisave for Assisted Conception Procedures | 29% | 57% | 14% |
| 16 | Government Co-Funding for Assisted Reproduction Technology Treatment | 26% | 58% | 16% |

Annex D

Summary Of M&P Package 2004 And 2008

| Measure | 2004 | 2008 |
|--|--|--|
| Getting Married | | |
| CPF housing Top-Up Grant | Singles Grant recipients who subsequently marry can enjoy a top-up grant to the prevailing CPF Housing Grant for Family | Unchanged |
| Finding a Partner | - | SDU and SDS will merge to deliver enhanced services, while continuing to develop the private dating industry |
| Having Children | | |
| Medisave Maternity Package | Medisave can be used to help pay for delivery and pre-delivery expenses | Unchanged |
| Medisave for Assisted Conception Procedures | Up to \$6,000, \$5,000 and \$4,000 can be used from Medisave for the 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd time respectively that Medisave is used for ACP | Unchanged |
| Government Co-Funding for Assisted Reproduction Technology (ART) Treatment | - | Government will Co-fund 50% of ART treatment received at the public hospitals, up to \$3,000 per treatment cycle, for a maximum of three cycles per Singaporean couple |

| Measure | 2004 | 2008 |
|---|--|---|
| Raising and Caring for Children | | |
| Enhanced Baby Bonus Scheme | <p>Parents can get a cash gift of \$3,000 for the 1st and 2nd child, and \$6,000 for the 3rd and 4th child</p> <p>Savings to the child's Children Development Account will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$6,000 for 2nd child, up to \$12,000 for the 3rd and 4th child</p> | <p>Parents can get a cash gift of \$4,000 for the 1st and 2nd child, and \$6,000 for the 3rd and 4th child</p> <p>Savings to the child's Children Development Account will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$6,000 for the 1st and 2nd child, up to \$12,000 for the 3rd and 4th child, and up to \$18,000 per child from the 5th child onwards</p> |
| Parenthood Tax Rebate (PTR) | Working parents can claim the PTR of \$10,000 for the 2 nd child, and \$20,000 per child for subsequent children | Working parents can claim the PTR of \$5,000 for the 1 st child, \$10,000 for the 2 nd child, and \$20,000 per child for subsequent children |
| Working Mother's Child Relief (WMCR) | Working mothers can claim the WMCR at 5% of their earned income for the 1 st child, 15% for the 2 nd , 20% for the 3 rd , and 25% per child for all subsequent children | Working mothers can claim the WMCR at 15% of their earned income for the 1 st child, 20% for the 2 nd and 25% per child for all subsequent children |
| Foreign Domestic Worker Levy Concession | Employers with a young child age below 12 or an elderly aged 65 and above staying in the same household can enjoy a \$95 levy concession | Unchanged |
| Grandparent Caregiver Tax Relief | Working mothers whose children aged 12 and below are cared for by their grandparents can claim tax relief of \$3,000 | Unchanged |

| Measure | 2004 | 2008 |
|--|--|---|
| Raising And Caring For Children (Cont'd) | | |
| Subsidies for centre-based infant care and child care | Parents of Singapore Citizen infants, aged 2 to 18 months and attending licensed infant or child care centres, receive an infant care subsidy of up to \$400 per month | Working mothers will enjoy a monthly subsidy of up to \$600 and up to \$300 for infant care and childcare respectively |
| Enhanced quality of kindergarten education | - | Increased recurrent funding for eligible kindergarten operators Scholarships and bursaries awarded to help teachers to upgrade their professional qualifications |
| Qualifying Child Relief (QCR) and Handicapped Child Relief (HCR) | Working parents can claim \$2,000 per child under the QCR or \$3,500 per child under the HCR | Working parents can claim \$4,000 per child under the QCR or \$5,500 per child under the HCR |
| Measure | 2004 | 2008 |
| Work-Life Balance | | |
| Extended Maternity Leave | Working mothers can enjoy maternity leave of 12 weeks | Working mothers can enjoy longer maternity leave of 16 weeks |
| Paid childcare leave | Working parents will get two days of paid childcare leave per year per parent if one has a child aged below seven years old | Working parents will get six days of paid childcare leave per year per parent if one has a child aged below seven years old |
| Work-Life Works! (WOW!) Fund | Organisations can tap into the WOW! Fund to subsidise costs of consultancy and training leading to implementation of better work-life strategies | - |

| Measure | 2004 | 2008 |
|--|------|--|
| Work-Life Balance (Cont'd) | | |
| Unpaid Infant Care Leave | - | Working parents will get six days of unpaid infant care leave per year per parent if one has a child aged below two years old |
| Enhanced protection for pregnant employees | - | Employees will still receive maternity leave benefits if they are dismissed without sufficient cause within the last six months of pregnancy or retrenched within the last three months of pregnancy |

Sources:

Family and Community Development Town. 2009. "2008 Marriage and Parenthood Package 2008." Retrieved November 12, 2009 (<http://fcd.ecitizen.gov.sg/MarriageNParenthoodPackage>).

Lim, H.H. 2008. "Second Reading Speech by Mrs Lim Hwee Hua Senior Minister of State on The Income Tax (Amendment) Bill 2008." Retrieved November 12, 2009 (http://app.mof.gov.sg/newsroom_details.aspx?news_sid=20090930212793939150).

National Population Secretariat. 2008. "Findings of Public Consultations on Marriage and Parenthood." Press Release. 15 July 2008. Retrieved November 12, 2009 (<http://www.nps.gov.sg/files/news/FindingsonPublicConsultationsonMarriageandParentho.pdf>).

National Population Secretariat. 2008. "Government Doubles Budget to Provide More Support for Marriage and Parenthood." Press Release. Retrieved November 12, 2009 (<http://www.nps.gov.sg/files/news/Media%20release%2020%20Aug%202008%20-%20Enhanced%20M&P%20Package%20-%20final.pdf>).