

## Couples delay tying the knot

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The number of people marrying in their early 20s or younger has plunged in the past decade.

More Singaporeans are better educated and study for longer periods before they start work. Many also want to establish their careers before they settle down.

Dr Mathew Mathews, senior research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, said: "People want to make sure they are sufficiently prepared, in terms of finances, before they tie the knot. More also want a longer courtship to be sure they are compatible."

In 2015, there were 1,606 grooms aged 24 and under - 26 per cent fewer than the 2,176 grooms in this age group in 2005.

Younger grooms made up 5.7 per cent of all grooms in 2015, according to the latest Statistics On Marriages And Divorces report.

As for women, there were 4,050 brides aged 24 and under in 2015, 33 per cent fewer than the 6,062 such brides in 2005. These young brides comprised 14.3 per cent of all brides in 2015.

Muslim brides and grooms made up a sizeable chunk of young couples. In 2015, Muslim brides accounted for 37 per cent of all brides, while Muslim grooms made up 41 per cent of all grooms aged 24 and under.

Mr Mohamed Khair Mohamed Noor, chief executive of SuChi Success, which runs marriage preparation courses for Malay couples, said the Malay-Muslim community frowns on premarital sex for religious and cultural reasons.

"Many parents urge their children not to wait too long to marry if they have started work and are dating," he said.

"They are afraid their children would have premarital sex, which is seen as bringing shame to the family. So they would urge their children to wed if they have been dating for one to two years."