

Survey sees more youths likely to shun marriage, bigger families

KUALA LUMPUR: A study on Malaysian youths' perception towards marriage and family size, found that only 41.8 per cent have plans for marriage.

The Tun Tan Cheng Lock Center for Social and Policy Studies (TCLC) of Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, in its latest study, found that almost a quarter of the Malaysian youths surveyed expressed reluctance to get married, whereas another 34.5 per cent feel unsure about the prospect of marriage.

The survey involved 485 respondents conducted online over two weeks comprising Malaysian youths aged between 18 and 35 of various ethnicities. While most of them are students from various Malaysian universities, some are working individuals.

"Among the respondents, females represent some 70 per cent, while males make up 30 per cent. Malays, Chinese, and Indians respectively represent 30 per cent, 62.3 per cent and 6.4 per cent. Bumiputra from Sabah and Sarawak represent 1.2 per cent.

"Among those with no plans to get married (23.7 per cent), the Chinese represents the largest group at 67.3 per cent. This is followed by the Malays (27.1 per cent), Indians (4.7 per cent) and Bumiputra of Sabah and Sarawak (0.9 per cent).

"When probed further, 41.1 per cent of the Malaysian youths indicate they do not subscribe to the idea that marriage will lead to happiness. Another 30 per cent are unsure that marriage will bring happiness," said a statement from TCLC, today.

Meanwhile, it said close to two-thirds of the youths believe that singlehood gives them more freedom in life and only as little as 10.7 per cent of the youths tended to be sceptical and rejected the idea.

Also contributing to the significant number of Malaysian youths who shun marriage said TCLC is the notion of financial strain brought about by marriage. This is agreed by close to two-thirds of those surveyed who believe that marriage increases financial commitment.

Only 14.3 per cent of them do not think financial burden will take a toll on them, it said.

TCLC said these findings are in tandem with others from this study that see just 27.1 per cent of the youths surveyed being in a relationship and 6.8 per cent married.

A good majority of them are single and without a partner, the survey found.

"As much as many of the Malaysian youths surveyed do not have plans to get married, a majority of them (72 per cent) think the ideal age to get married is between 26 and 30. This is

followed by the age range of 31-35 (17.4 per cent), considered to be the late period of youth," said TCLC.

It added that only a negligible number of them feel 20 years or below would make an appropriate age to get married.

Such preferences on the ideal age to get married do not vary too differently across various ethnic groups, it was found.

"Although 26-30 is the most preferred age range for marriage, it is worth noting that as many as 42.9 per cent of the youths disagree with the traditional view that people should marry at younger ages, saying it is no longer relevant in the current society. Merely 33.2 per cent subscribe to the traditional view," the survey found.

The study also found barely half of the Malaysian youths surveyed want to have children. While another 38.2 per cent are unsure about it, the remaining 14.5 per cent expressed no intention to have any child.

"In an interesting observation, although 61.7 per cent of the youths do not feel that marriage necessarily decreases the quality of their life, many have their worries when it comes to family planning.

"Among them, a personal capacity to cope with more responsibility as a result of marriage has become the most prominent factor to consider in determining their family size."

Besides, the survey revealed that 90.7 per cent of them were also of the view that being able to maintain a good standard of living is a vital factor to consider. This would mean striking a balance between family size and maintaining such things as the quality of housing, material conform, and wealth.

Also, the rising cost of living and the need to ensure life satisfaction, respectively, are drawing concern among most youths in the country. In other words, to counter the high cost of living, as well as to ensure happiness and wellbeing in life, one might consider having fewer children, it adds.

"In terms of the ideal number of children to have, from the perspective of the family's wellbeing, close to half of the youths would prefer just two. 18.9 per cent want three children, whereas 13.7 per cent prefer none.

"A big family with more than four children is least preferred by the youths surveyed," TCLC said.

It said going by ethnicity however, there seems to be some differences in terms of the ideal number of children to have.

"While most of the Chinese and Bumiputra (Sabah and Sarawak) youths surveyed would prefer to have two children, their Malay counterpart mostly prefer three. For Indians, their ideal number of children is divided between none and two".

As of 2019, the total fertility rate was fewer than 1.8 babies per woman, having dropped below the replacement level of 2.1 babies.

Malaysia may become an ageing nation by 2030, with people aged 60 years and above surpassing 15 per cent of the population, revealed The Department of Statistics Malaysia.

This will have an impact on the country's labour force and economy at large.

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2021/07/704430/survey-sees-more-youths-likely-shun-marriage-bigger-families>