

# Relationships Australia

## Relationships Indicators 1998 Survey Summary

Here are the five key findings in the 1998 Relationships Indicators, which is planned to be a biennial survey conducted by Relationships Australia into relationship patterns in Australia. For more details please contact the National Office.

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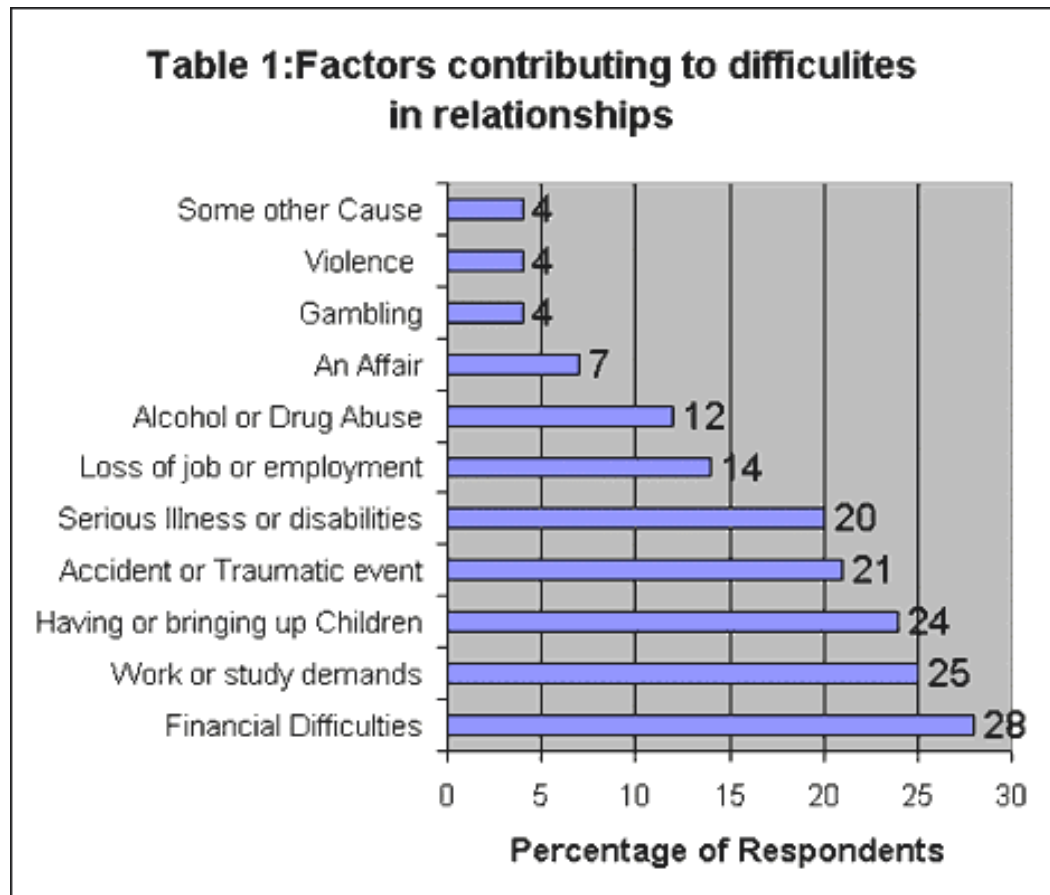
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### 1.0 Factors Contributing to Difficulties in Relationships

Three out of every four people have had major difficulties in their relationships in recent years. For people between the ages of 25 and 54 four out of five had had major difficulties in recent years. The groups most at risk of difficulty were single parents with children and people who were divorced or separated.

For people with children the demands of the parent child relationship and conflict over bringing up children is the major difficulty.

The findings show that having difficulties in relationships is normal. Many relationships do survive these difficulties and it is harder if you are on your own. This means that it is worth working on your relationship now so that you are supported through difficulties.



When trouble strikes in a relationship, help is needed not just for that problem but also to protect and strengthen family relationships, which are vital to support through the difficult times.

The factors are external social and economic factors, bad luck and life choices, such as having children or personal problems/behaviour of one or more family members, that can cause major difficulties in relationships. It is important to remember that difficulties often are seen in combination and affect each other.

The top five relationship factors that contribute to difficulties in the relationship were

1. Financial difficulties
2. Work or study demands
3. Raising Children
4. An Accident or Traumatic event
5. Serious Illness

## 2.0 Relationships People would like to improve

Men are committed to their relationships and more males than females said they would like to improve at least one of their relationships - intimate or familial. A similar level of concern by men about their relationships was found in a 1994 survey.

The Index also shows that the majority of Australians are committed to their relationships and want to improve them. 53% said they would like to improve at least one of their relationships.

The top five relationships identified as needing improvement were

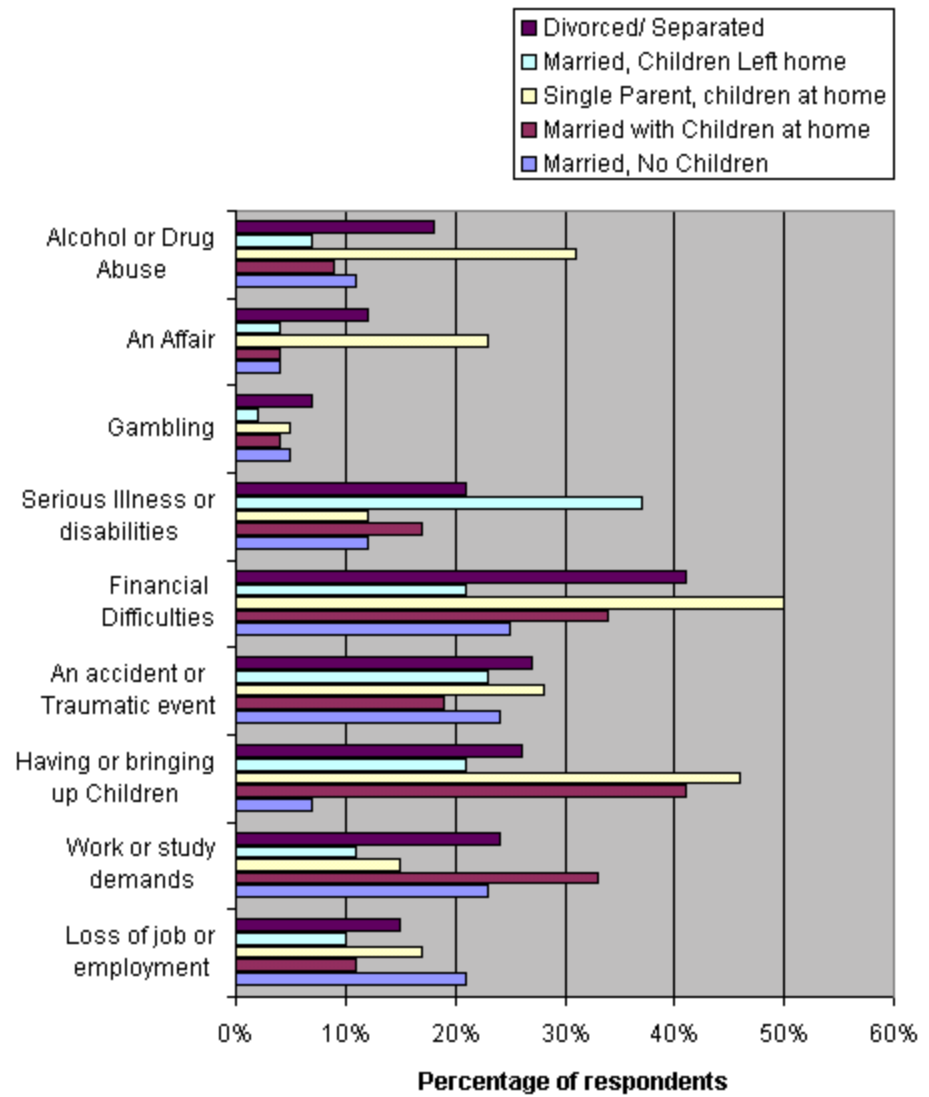
For men

- Brother/ Sister
- Wife and Mother
- Father
- Son
- Daughter

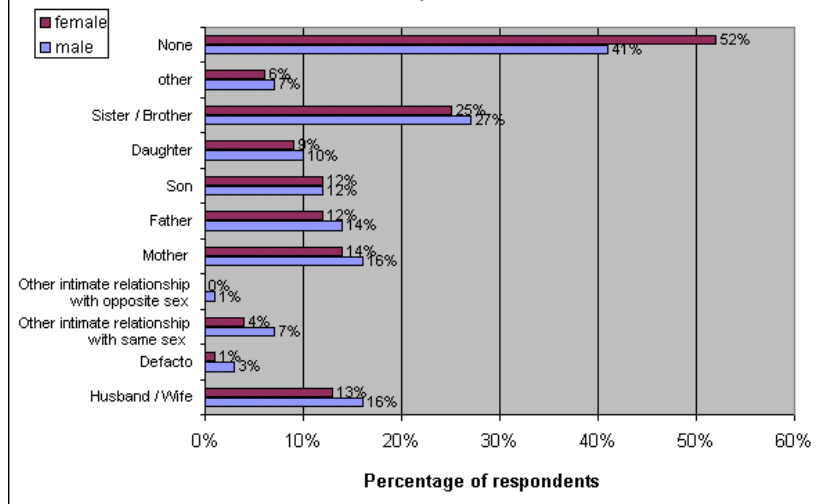
For women

- Brother/ sister
- Mother
- Husband
- Father
- Son

**Table 2: Factors Contributing to problems experienced in relationships**



**Table 3: Relationships that could be improved. Gender comparison**



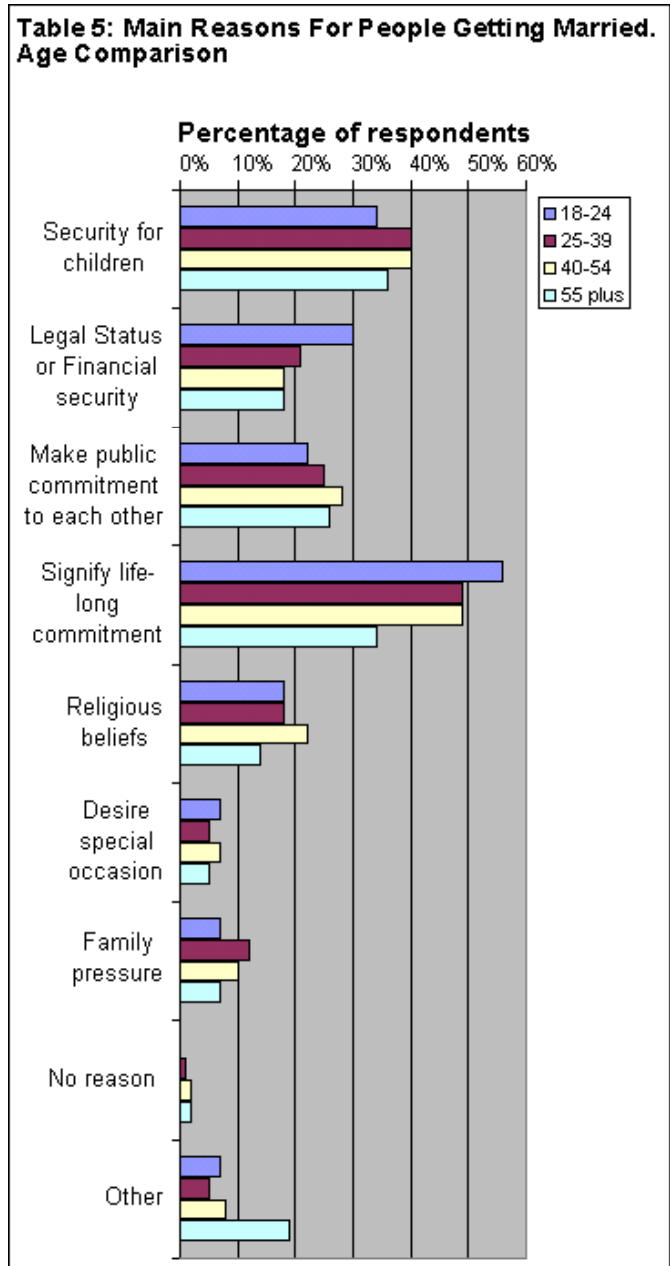
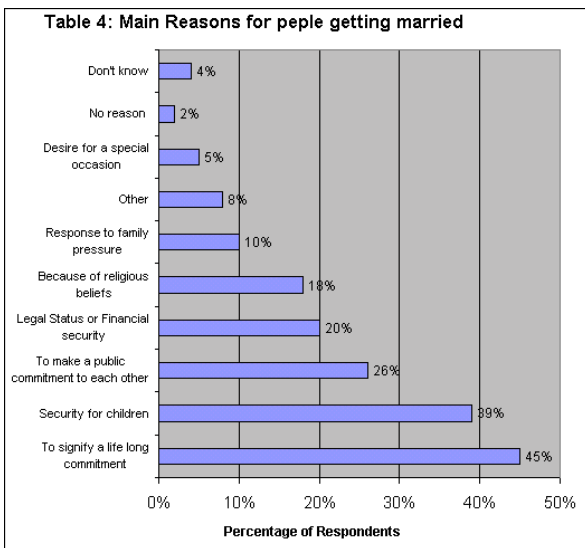
### 3.0 The Reasons Why People Get Married

Young people are committed to their relationships. The group that most strongly holds the belief that marriage is a life long commitment was 18 - 24 yr olds. Nearly half of 25 - 39 year olds hold this belief.

People over the age of 55 did not hold this belief very strongly and in fact for this group the main reason given was for security for the children. The main reasons for people getting married are shown in Table 4. Table 5 shows the reasons given by age groups.

The top five reasons for why people get married were

1. To signify a life-long commitment
2. Security for children
3. To make a public commitment
4. For legal status or financial security
5. Because of religious beliefs

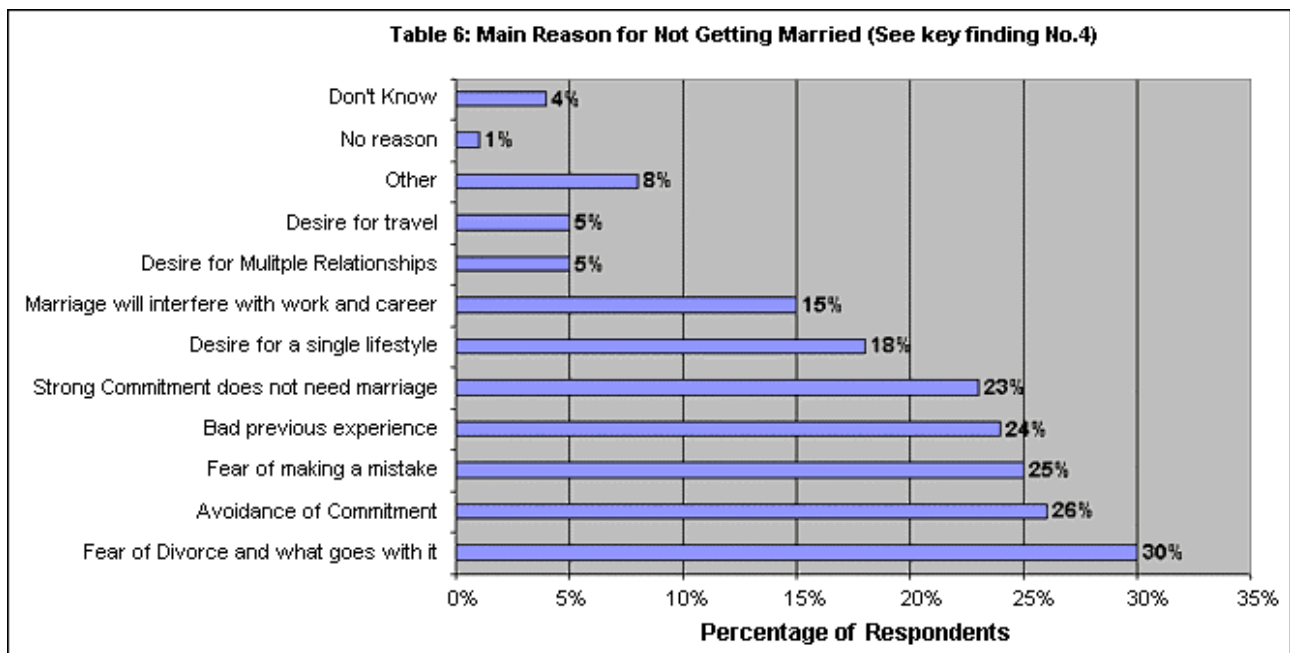


#### 4.0 Reasons people give for not getting married

People are worried by their own and others' bad experiences of marriage and believe that the main reasons for not getting married are

- fear of divorce and what goes with it
- avoidance of commitment
- fear of making a mistake
- bad previous experience

The results show that young people aged 18- 24 are the most worried.



#### 5.0 The group at highest risk of divorce

The 25-39 age group is an important group to understand. Australian Bureau of Statistics show that people aged 25 to 39 marry most and get divorced most. This group had the highest percentage of people who thought that their intimate relationship could be improved and interestingly they also were very high on wanting to improve their sibling relationships showing that their extended family is important to them too.

Four out of five 25 - 39 year olds have had major difficulties in their relationships and financial difficulties were a particularly high concern in their relationship. As a group they believe that marriage is a life long commitment and in thinking about marriage they fear divorce. This is given as a reason for not getting married and the 25 - 39 year olds have the highest proportion of defacto relationships in the Index.