

SURVEY FINDINGS ON SINGAPOREANS' SUPPORT FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS

RESEARCH SERIES

Research Series Paper No. 01/2016

RESEARCH SERIES

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Contents

LIST OF FIGURES	2
HIGHLIGHTS	4
SURVEY FINDINGS ON SINGAPOREANS' SUPPORT FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS	5
<i>Introduction.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Receiving support from family</i>	<i>5</i>
Family members as source of help for financial difficulties.....	5
Talking to family members when in trouble	7
Maintaining close ties with relatives outside the immediate family	9
Talking about private matters with relatives	11
Calling on relatives for help.....	13
<i>Receiving support from friends.....</i>	<i>14</i>
Having close friends to tell personal problems to	15
Having friends to talk with about private matters	17
Calling on friends for help	19
<i>Those with no financial and emotional support from immediate family and with no extended family or friend they could call on for help</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>22</i>
Majority of Singaporeans have some form of support from immediate or extended family or friends	22

LIST OF FIGURES

- Chart 1:** Proportion of Singaporeans that would turn to their family for help when faced with financial difficulties, 2009-2013
- Chart 2:** Proportion of Singaporeans that would turn to their family for help when faced with financial difficulties, 2009-2013 (by age group)
- Chart 3:** Proportion of Singaporeans that would turn to their family for help when faced with financial difficulties, 2009-2013 (by marital status)
- Chart 4:** Proportion of Singaporeans that would turn to their family for help when faced with financial difficulties, 2009-2013 (by household income)
- Chart 5:** Proportion of Singaporeans that would talk to one or more of their family members when they are in trouble, 2001-2013
- Chart 6:** Proportion of Singaporeans that would talk to one or more of their family members when they are in trouble, 2001-2013 (by age group)
- Chart 7:** Proportion of Singaporeans that would talk to one or more of their family members when they are in trouble, 2001-2013 (by marital status)
- Chart 8:** Proportion of Singaporeans that would talk to one or more of their family members when they are in trouble, 2001-2013 (by household income)
- Chart 9:** Proportion of Singaporeans that maintained close ties with their relatives outside of their immediate family, 2009-2013
- Chart 10:** Proportion of Singaporeans that maintained close ties with their relatives outside of their immediate family, 2009-2013 (by age group)
- Chart 11:** Proportion of Singaporeans that maintained close ties with their relatives outside of their immediate family, 2009-2013 (by household income)
- Chart 12:** Number of relatives Singaporeans felt at ease with such that they could talk about private matters, 2013
- Chart 13:** Number of relatives Singaporeans felt at ease with such that they could talk about private matters, 2013 (by age group)
- Chart 14:** Number of relatives Singaporeans felt at ease with such that they could talk about private matters, 2013 (by marital status)
- Chart 15:** Number of relatives Singaporeans felt close to such that they could call on them for help, 2013
- Chart 16:** Number of relatives Singaporeans felt close to such that they could call on them for help, 2013 (by age group)
- Chart 17:** Number of relatives Singaporeans felt close to such that they could call on them for help, 2013 (by marital status)
- Chart 18:** Proportion of Singaporeans that had close friends they could tell their personal problems to, 2013 (by age group)
- Chart 19:** Proportion of Singaporeans that had close friends they could tell their personal problems to, 2013 (by marital status)

Chart 20: Proportion of Singaporeans that had close friends they could tell their personal problems to, 2013 (by household income)

Chart 21: Number of friends Singaporeans felt at ease with such that they could talk about private matters, 2013

Chart 22: Number of friends Singaporeans felt at ease with such that they could talk about private matters, 2013 (by age group)

Chart 23: Number of friends Singaporeans felt at ease with such that they could talk about private matters, 2013 (by marital status)

Chart 24: Number of friends Singaporeans felt at ease with such that they could talk about private matters, 2013 (by household income)

Chart 25: Number of friends Singaporeans felt close to such that they could call on them for help, 2013

Chart 26: Number of friends Singaporeans felt close to such that they could call on them for help, 2013 (by age group)

Chart 27: Number of friends Singaporeans felt close to such that they could call on them for help, 2013 (by marital status)

Chart 28: Number of friends Singaporeans felt close to such that they could call on them for help, 2013 (by household income)

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Almost all Singaporeans receive support (such as emotional or financial support) from at least one of these main sources: the family (immediate and extended) and friends.
2. In 2013, Singaporeans received support from these main sources:
 - a. *Support from immediate family:* Over eight in ten Singaporeans indicated they will turn to their family members when faced with financial difficulties (83%) or when they are in trouble (83%).
 - b. *Support from extended family:* Eight in ten (80%) Singaporeans maintained close ties with their relatives outside their immediate family. Seven in ten (72%) Singaporeans felt that they had at least one relative they could talk with about private matters. Almost eight in ten (78%) Singaporeans felt that they had at least one relative they could call on for help.
 - c. *Support from friends:* Over eight in ten Singaporeans felt that they had close friends they could tell their personal problems to (82%), or felt they had at least one friend they could talk with about private matters (85%) or call on for help (85%).
3. Considering the levels of support in 2013, those who were aged 30 to 49 years or 60 years and above; divorced / separated / widowed; or from households with lower incomes, received relatively lower levels of support compared to other groups.
4. While the levels of support were generally high in 2013, comparisons with earlier data suggest that there has been some decline in family support. The proportion that would turn to their family members when faced with financial difficulties decreased slightly compared to 2009. A general decline was also observed in the proportion that would talk to their family members when they are in trouble.

SURVEY FINDINGS ON SINGAPOREANS' SUPPORT FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Introduction

1. This report provides an overview of the levels of support (such as emotional or financial support) Singaporeans received from their family and friends¹, covering trends and sub-group differences that are statistically significant.

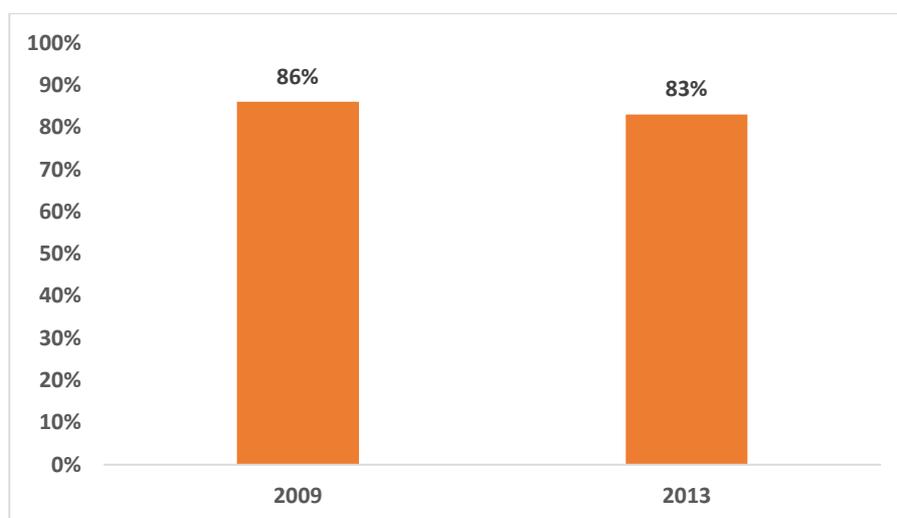
Receiving support from family

2. The majority of Singaporeans received some form of support from their family members, with more than 80% of them indicating that they would turn to their family members for financial or emotional support.

Family members as source of help for financial difficulties

3. In 2013, **eight in ten (83%) Singaporeans would turn to their family for help when faced with financial difficulties**². This proportion declined slightly from 2009 (86%).

Chart 1: Proportion of Singaporeans that would turn to their family for help when faced with financial difficulties, 2009-2013



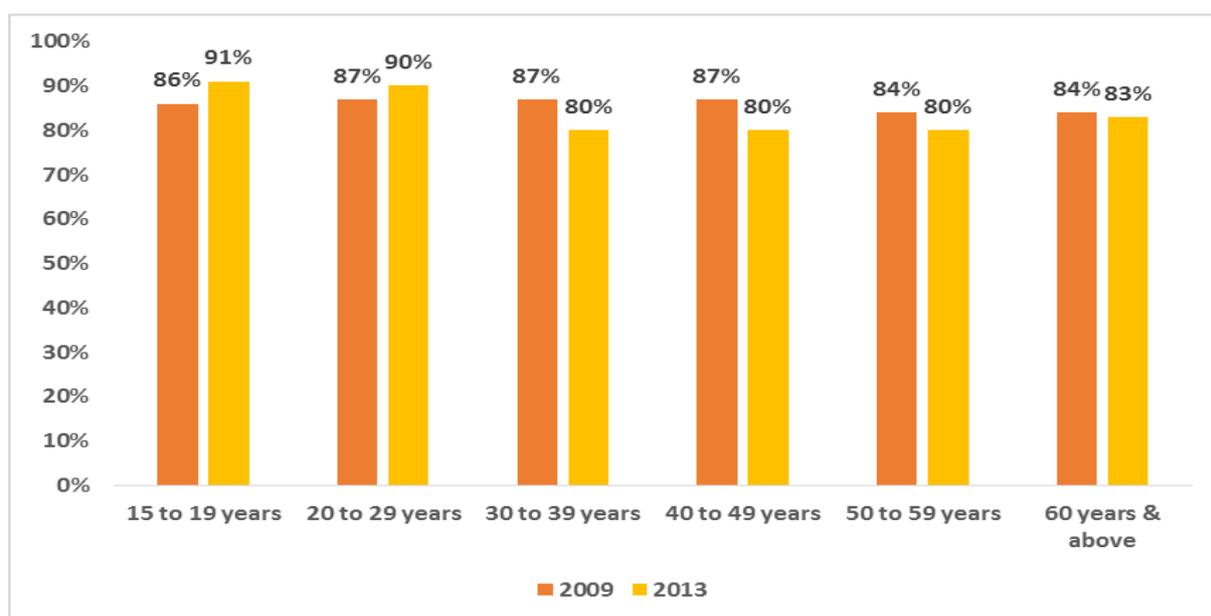
4. Although still generally high, a lower proportion of Singaporeans aged 30 years and above, divorced / separated / widowed, or with lower household incomes would turn to their family for help when faced with financial difficulties compared to other groups in 2013. In addition, the levels of support received by these groups (except for those aged 50 years and above) also declined in 2013 compared to 2009.

¹ This paper covers Singaporeans' perceptions of being able to turn to family (immediate or extended) and friends for support (e.g., financial or emotional support) based on data from MSF's Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans and not actual receipt of such support.

² This item was introduced in MSF's Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans in 2009.

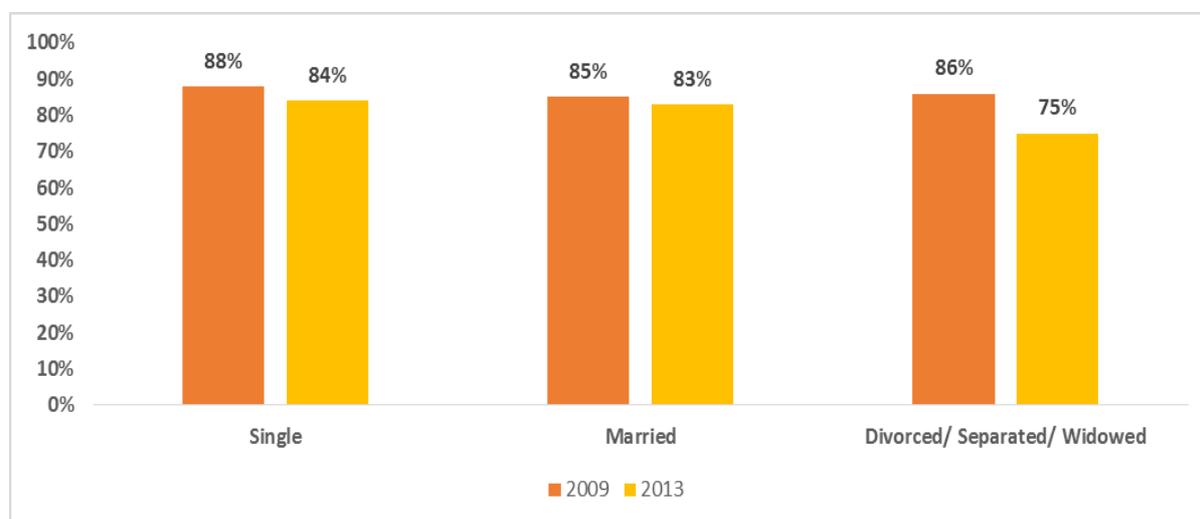
5. **A lower proportion of Singaporeans aged 30 years and above (80% each for those aged 30 to 39 years, 40 to 49 years and 50 to 59 years; 83% for those aged 60 years and above) would turn to their family for help when faced with financial difficulties** in 2013, compared to younger age groups (91% for those aged 15 to 19 years and 90% for those aged 20 to 29 years). For those aged 30 to 49 years, the proportions had decreased in 2013 compared to 2009.

Chart 2: Proportion of Singaporeans that would turn to their family for help when faced with financial difficulties, 2009-2013 (by age group)



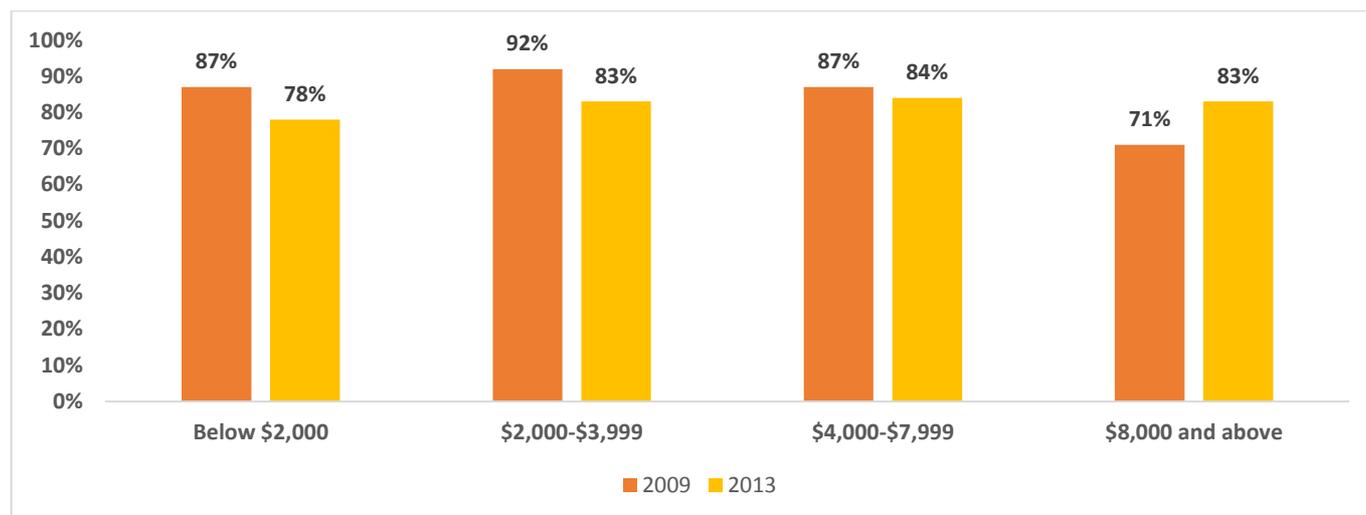
6. **A lower proportion of Singaporeans who were divorced / separated / widowed (75%) would turn to their family members for help when faced with financial difficulties** in 2013, compared to 84% for singles and 83% for married Singaporeans. The proportion for divorced / separated / widowed Singaporeans was also a decline of 11 percentage points from 86% in 2009.

Chart 3: Proportion of Singaporeans that would turn to their family for help when faced with financial difficulties, 2009-2013 (by marital status)



7. The proportion of Singaporeans who would turn to their family for help when faced with financial difficulties was lower for those with household incomes below \$2,000 (78%) in 2013, compared to those with higher household incomes (range from 83% to 84%). The proportions for those with household incomes below \$4,000 in 2013 had declined compared to those in 2009. In contrast, the proportion of Singaporeans with household incomes of \$8,000 and above that would turn to their family for help increased from 71% in 2009 to 83% in 2013.

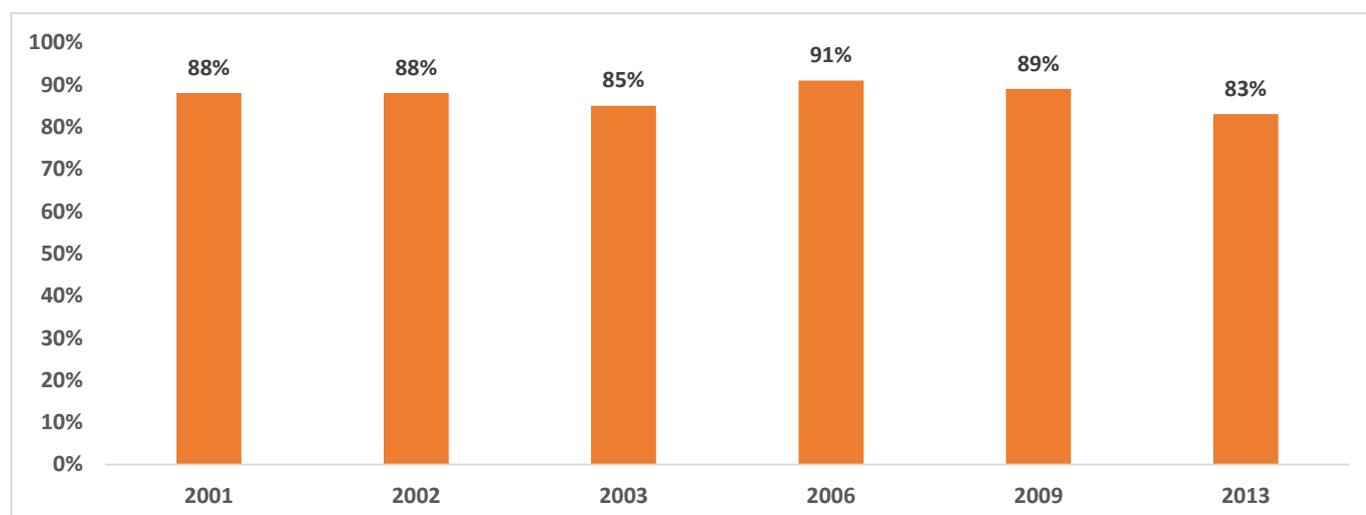
Chart 4: Proportion of Singaporeans that would turn to their family for help when faced with financial difficulties, 2009-2013 (by household income)



Talking to family members when in trouble

8. In 2013, **eight in ten (83%) Singaporeans would talk to their family members when in trouble**. Although there has been a general decline, the proportion has remained above 80%.

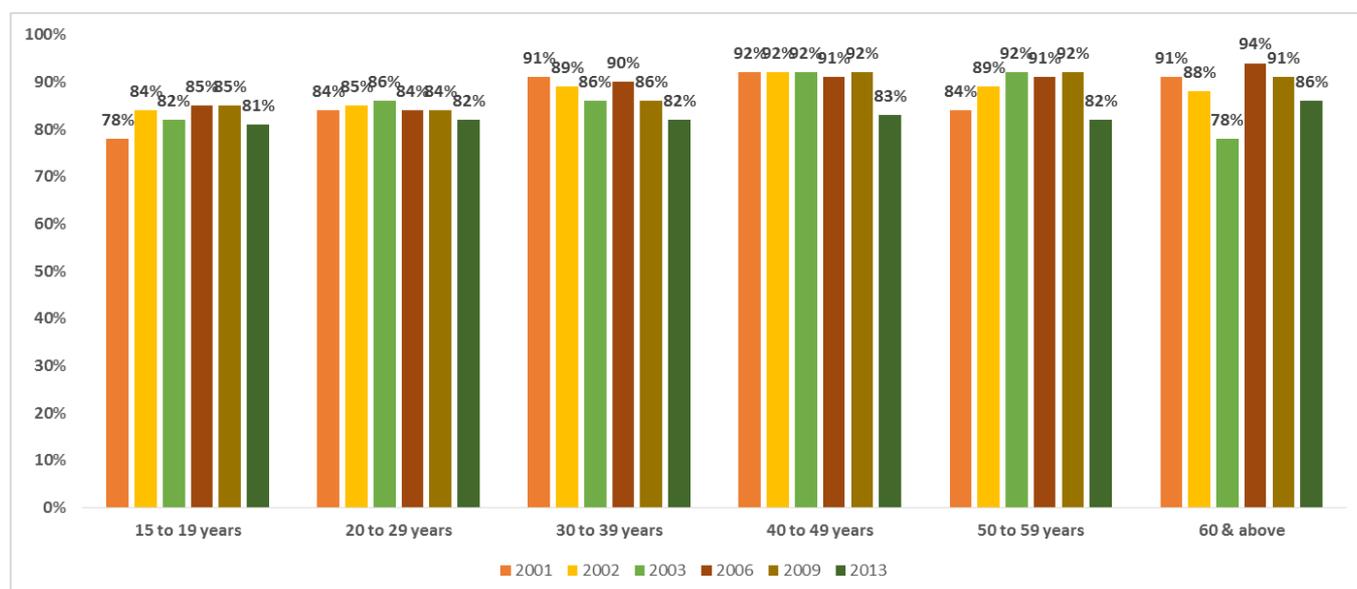
Chart 5: Proportion of Singaporeans that would talk to one or more of their family members when they are in trouble, 2001-2013



9. Singaporeans who were either single or divorced / separated / widowed, or with lower household incomes, had lower levels of emotional support from their family compared to other groups in 2013. Considering the trends since 2001, there were decreases in proportions in 2013 for Singaporeans aged 30 to 49 years or who were divorced / separated / widowed.

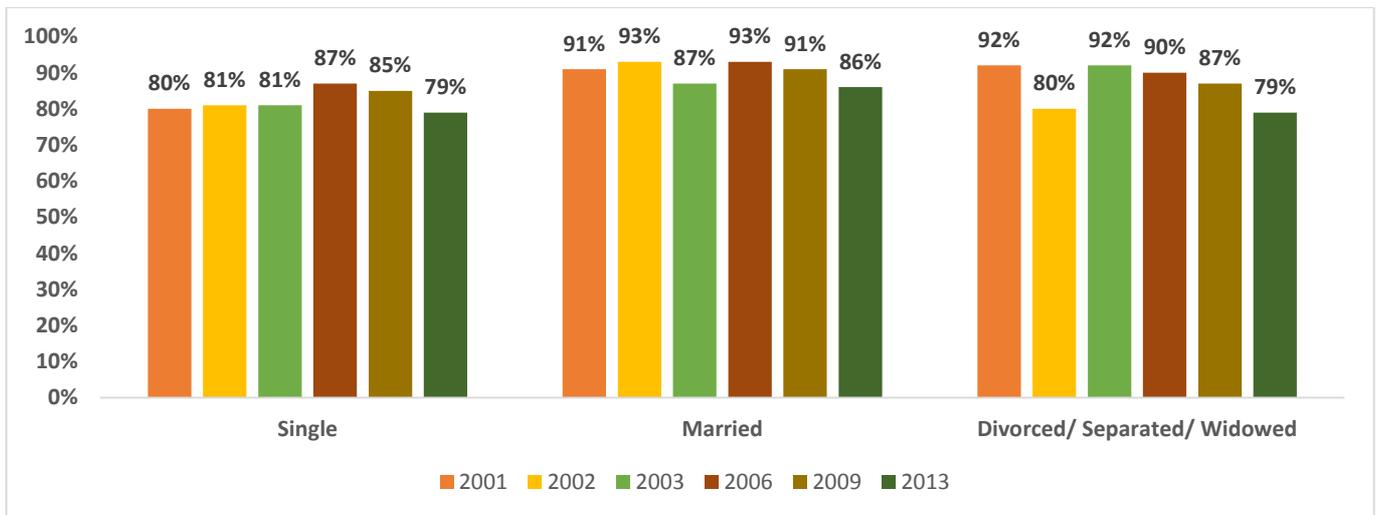
10. Considering the trends since 2001, the proportion of Singaporeans who would talk to their family members when in trouble decreased for those aged 40 to 49 years (83% in 2013, compared to 92% in 2009 and at least 90% prior to 2009). There was also a general decline for those aged 30 to 39 years (82% in 2013, compared to 86% and above in previous years).

Chart 6: Proportion of Singaporeans that would talk to one or more of their family members when they are in trouble, 2001-2013 (by age group)



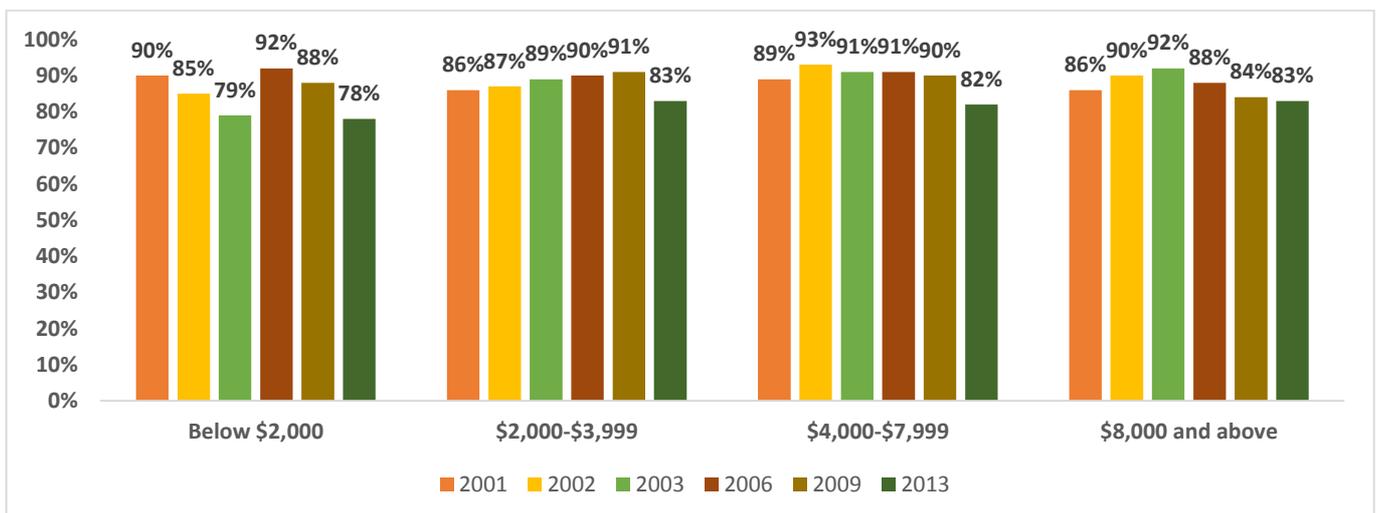
11. **A lower proportion of Singaporeans who were either single or divorced / separated / widowed (79%) would talk to their family members when they are in trouble in 2013, compared to 86% for married Singaporeans.** There was also a general decrease in the proportion for divorced / separated/ widowed Singaporeans from 2001 (92%).

Chart 7: Proportion of Singaporeans that would talk to one or more of their family members when they are in trouble, 2001-2013 (by marital status)



12. The proportion of Singaporeans that would talk to their family members when they are in trouble was lower for those with household incomes below \$2,000 (78%) in 2013, compared to those with higher household incomes (range from 82% to 83%). Considering the trends since 2001, the proportions of Singaporeans that would talk to their family members when in trouble decreased for those with household incomes of \$4,000 to \$7,999 (82% in 2013, compared to 89% and above in previous years).

Chart 8: Proportion of Singaporeans that would talk to one or more of their family members when they are in trouble, 2001-2013 (by household income)

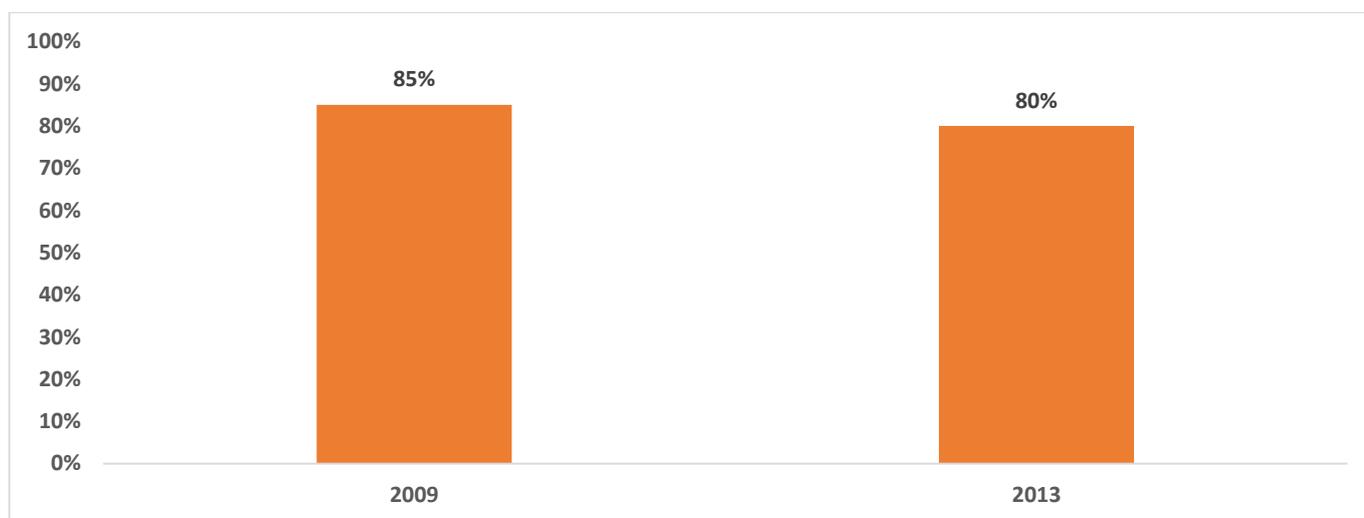


Maintaining close ties with relatives outside the immediate family

13. In 2013, the majority (80%) of Singaporeans maintained close ties with their relatives outside of their immediate family³, although there was a decrease of 5 percentage points from 2009 (85%).

³ This item was introduced in MSF's Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans in 2009.

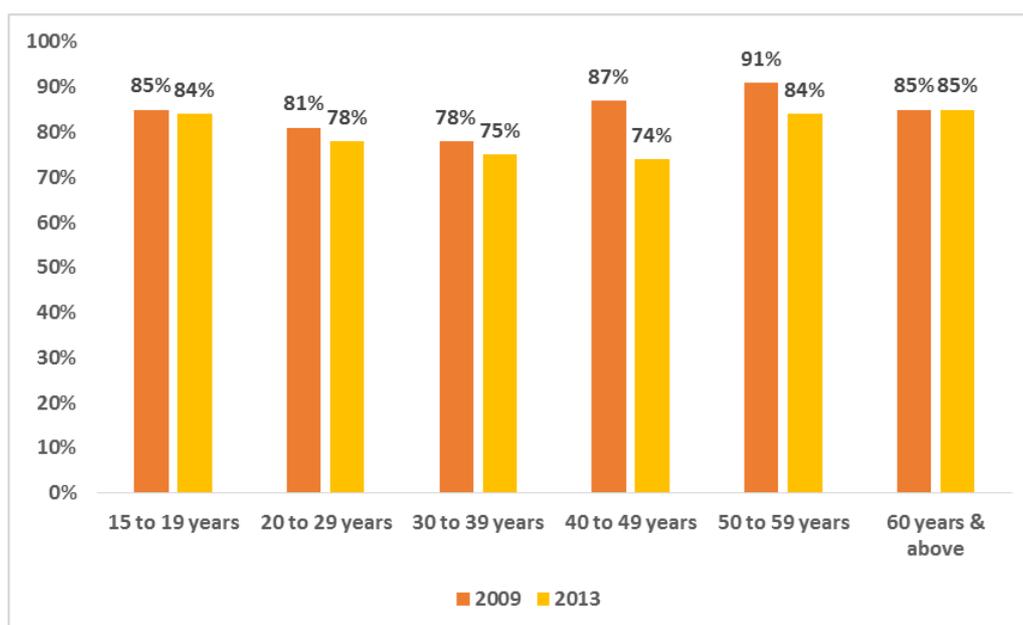
Chart 9: Proportion of Singaporeans that maintained close ties with their relatives outside of their immediate family, 2009-2013



14. In 2013, Singaporeans aged 20 to 49 years had lower proportions that maintained close ties with their relatives compared to other groups. Compared to 2009, the proportions of those aged 40 to 59 years or with household incomes of \$2,000 and above had decreased.

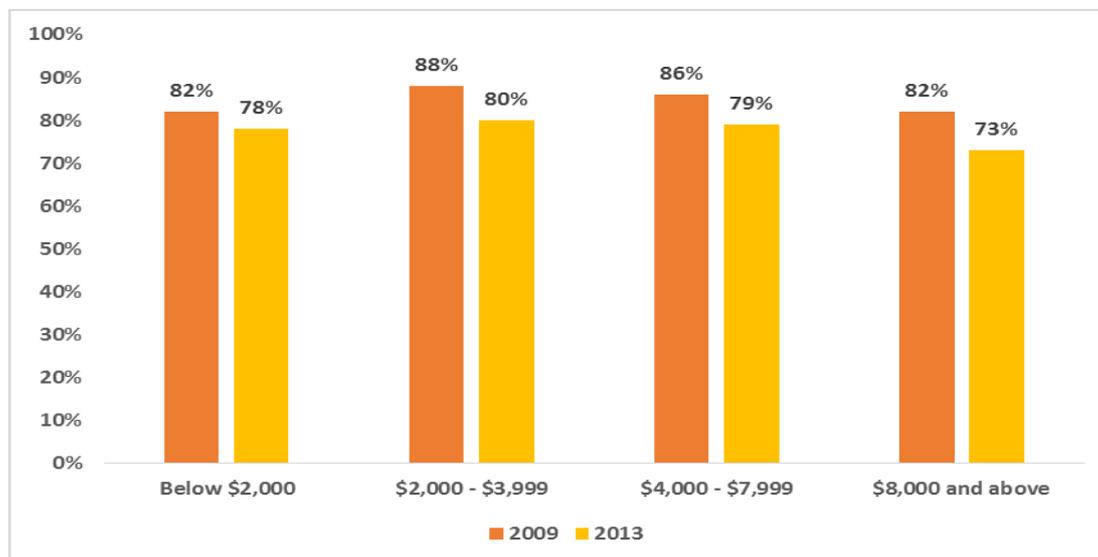
15. **A lower proportion of Singaporeans aged 20 to 49 years** (78% for those aged 20 to 29 years, 75% for those aged 30 to 39 years and 74% for those aged 40 to 49 years) **maintained close ties with their relatives** in 2013, compared to the younger and older age groups (range from 84% to 85%). Furthermore, for those aged 40 to 59 years, the proportions had decreased in 2013 compared to 2009.

Chart 10: Proportion of Singaporeans that maintained close ties with their relatives outside of their immediate family, 2009-2013 (by age group)



16. In 2013, the proportions that maintained close ties with their relatives decreased for Singaporeans with household incomes of \$2,000 and above, compared to 2009.

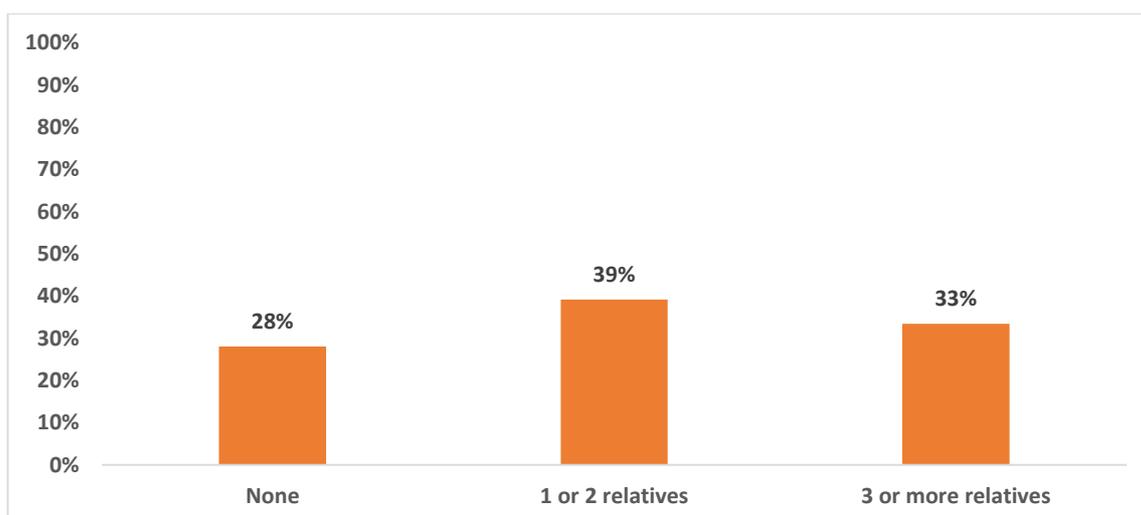
Chart 11: Proportion of Singaporeans that maintained close ties with their relatives outside of their immediate family, 2009-2013 (by household income)



Talking about private matters with relatives

17. In 2013, the majority (72%) of Singaporeans had at least one relative they could talk with about private matters⁴. About four in ten Singaporeans (39%) had one or two such relatives, while one in three Singaporeans (33%) had three or more such relatives.

Chart 12: Number of relatives Singaporeans felt at ease with such that they could talk about private matters, 2013

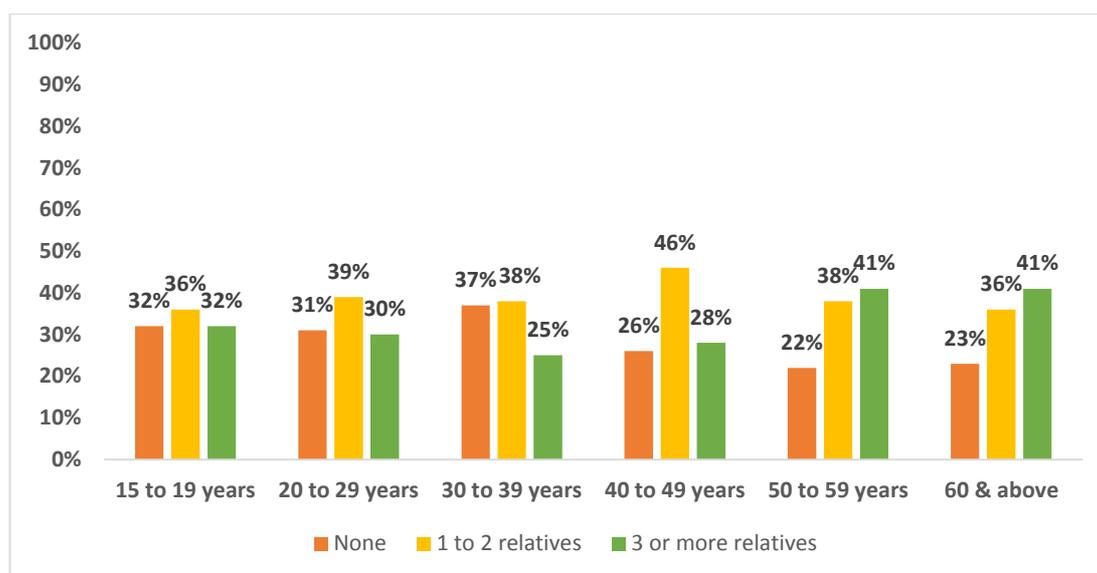


18. Lower proportions of Singaporeans aged 15 to 49 years, as well as those who were single or divorced / separated / widowed, had three or more relatives to talk with about private matters, compared to other groups in 2013.

⁴ This item was introduced in MSF's Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans in 2013.

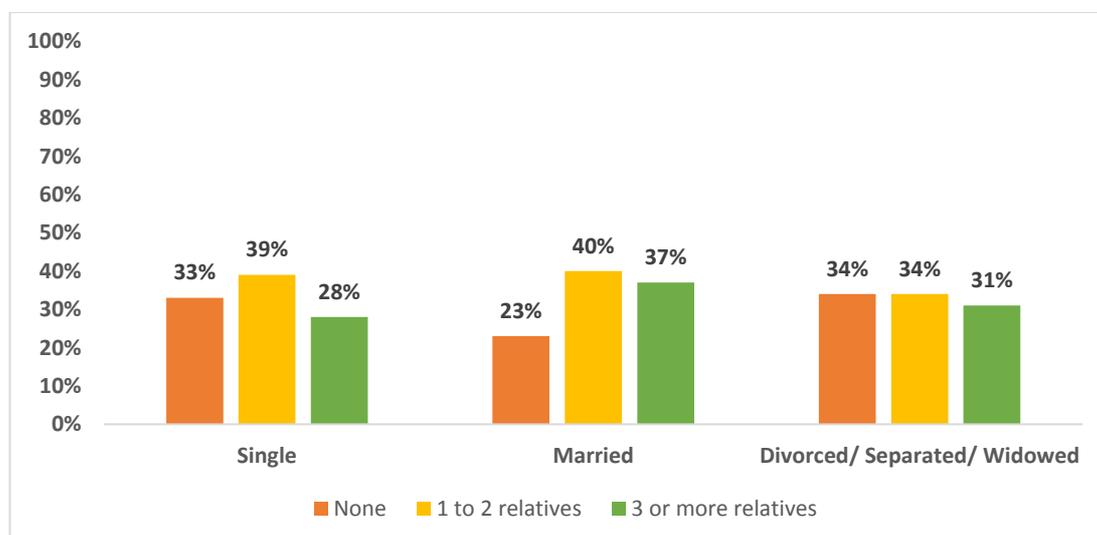
19. The proportions of Singaporeans that had three or more relatives to talk with about private matters were lower for those aged 15 to 49 years, compared to the older age groups (41% for those aged 50 years and above). Furthermore, the proportion with no relative to talk with about private matters for Singaporeans aged 30 to 39 years (37%) was higher than the other age groups (range from 22% to 32%).

Chart 13: Number of relatives Singaporeans felt at ease with such that they could talk about private matters, 2013 (by age group)



20. The proportions that had three or more relatives to talk with about private matters were lower for Singaporeans who were single (28%) or divorced / separated / widowed (31%) compared to married Singaporeans (37%). Furthermore, the proportions with no relative to talk with about private matters for single (33%) as well as divorced / separated / widowed (34%) Singaporeans were higher than that for married Singaporeans (23%).

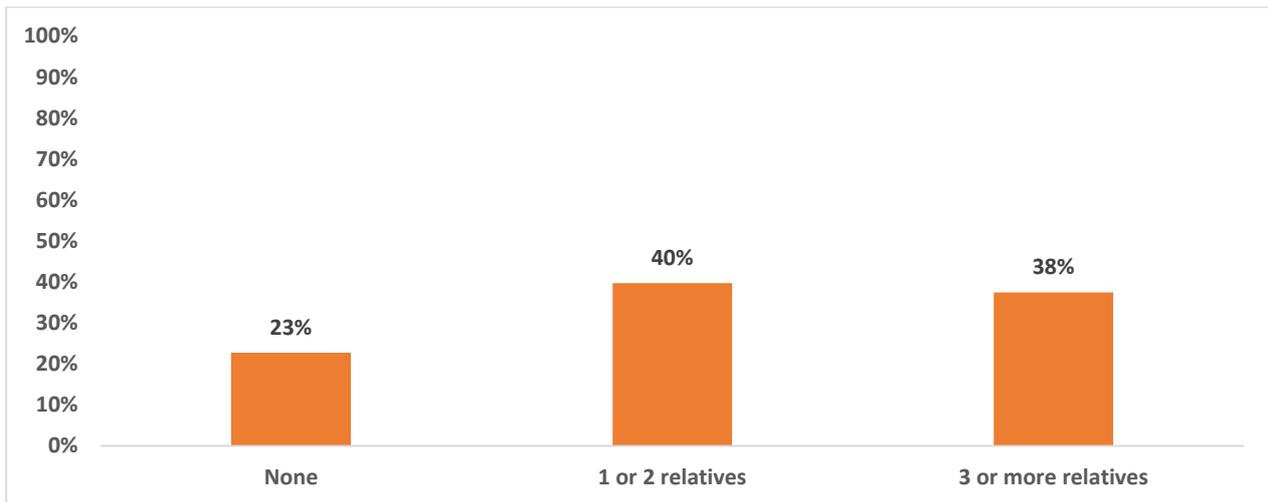
Chart 14: Number of relatives Singaporeans felt at ease with such that they could talk about private matters, 2013 (by marital status)



Calling on relatives for help

21. In 2013, **the majority of Singaporeans (78%) had at least one relative they could call on for help**⁵. Four in ten Singaporeans (40%) had one or two such relatives, while 38% had three or more such relatives.

Chart 15: Number of relatives Singaporeans felt close to such that they could call on them for help, 2013

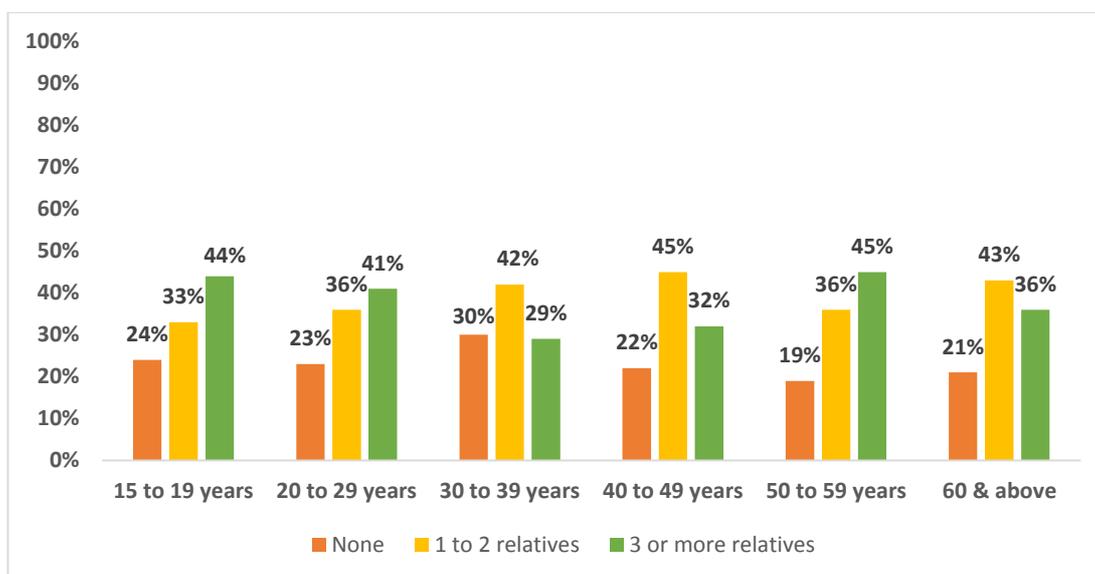


22. Lower proportions of Singaporeans aged 30 to 49 years, as well as those who were divorced / separated / widowed, had three or more relatives to call on for help compared to other groups in 2013.

23. In 2013, **a lower proportion of Singaporeans aged 30 to 49 years** (29% for those aged 30 to 39 years, and 32% for those aged 40 to 49 years) **had three or more relatives that they could call on for help**, compared to other age groups (range from 36% to 45%). Furthermore, the proportion with no relative that they could call on for help among those aged 30 to 39 years (30%) was higher than the other age groups (range from 19% to 24%).

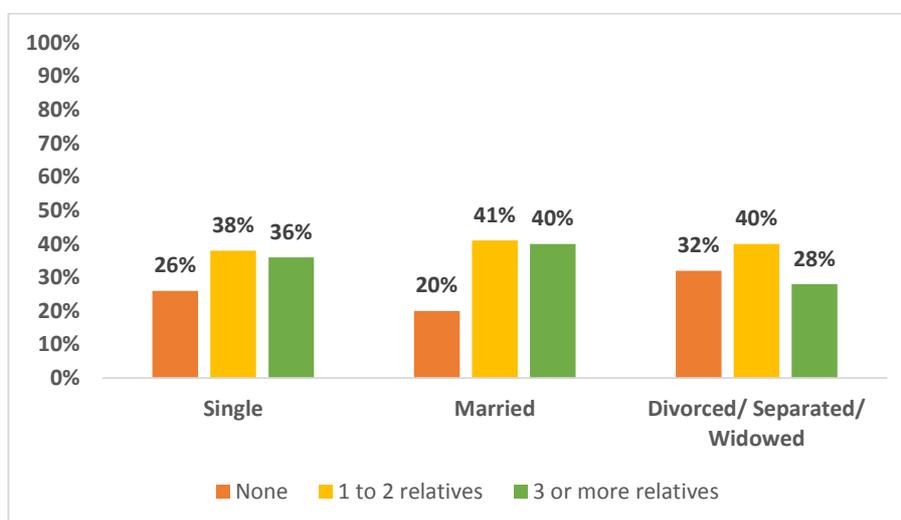
⁵ This item was introduced in MSF's Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans in 2013.

Chart 16: Number of relatives Singaporeans felt close to such that they could call on them for help, 2013 (by age group)



24. The proportion of Singaporeans who were divorced / separated / widowed (28%) who had three or more relatives they could call on for help was lower than that of single (36%) or married Singaporeans (40%) in 2013.

Chart 17: Number of relatives Singaporeans felt close to such that they could call on them for help, 2013 (by marital status)



Receiving support from friends

25. In addition to support from family (whether immediate or extended), it was observed that **the majority of Singaporeans also received some form of support from their friends**. These include having close friends to tell their personal problems to, and having friends to share private matters with or call on for help.

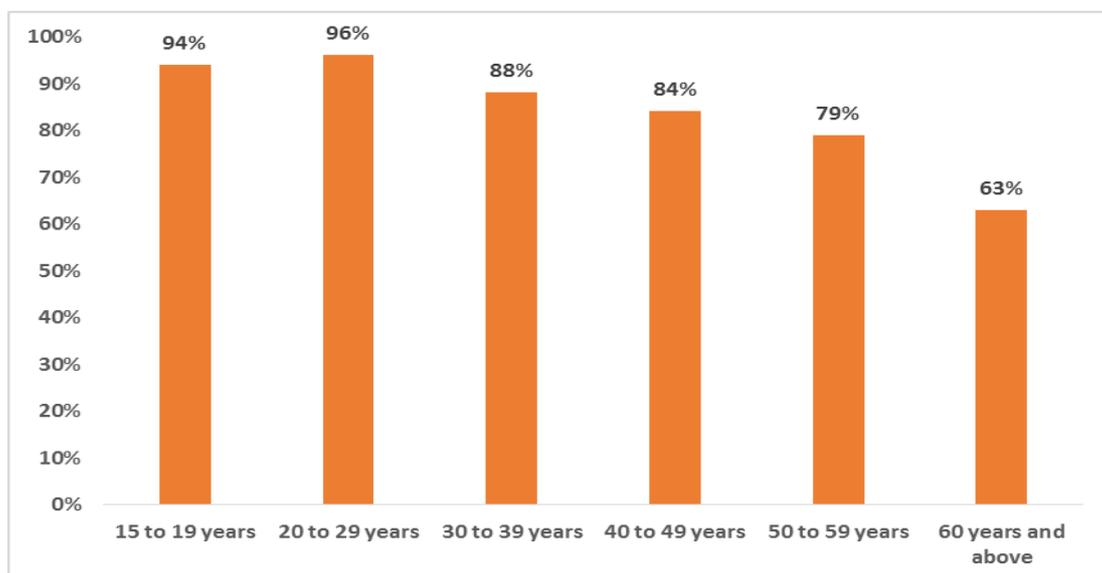
Having close friends to tell personal problems to

26. In 2013, the majority (82%) of Singaporeans had close friends they could tell their personal problems to⁶.

27. Lower proportions of Singaporeans aged 60 years and above, who were divorced / separated / widowed, or from households with lower incomes, had close friends they could tell their personal problems to, compared to other groups in 2013.

28. A lower proportion of Singaporeans aged 60 years and above had close friends they could tell their personal problems to (63%) compared to younger age groups (range from 79% to 94%) in 2013.

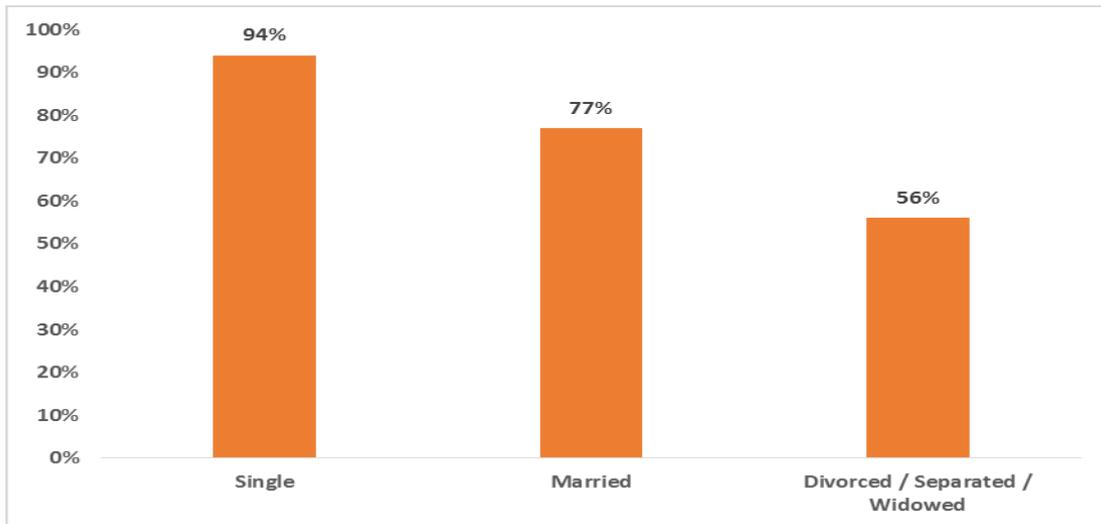
Chart 18: Proportion of Singaporeans that had close friends they could tell their personal problems to, 2013 (by age group)



29. Singaporeans who were divorced / separated / widowed had a lower proportion that had close friends they could tell their personal problems to (56%) compared to those who were married (77%) or single (94%).

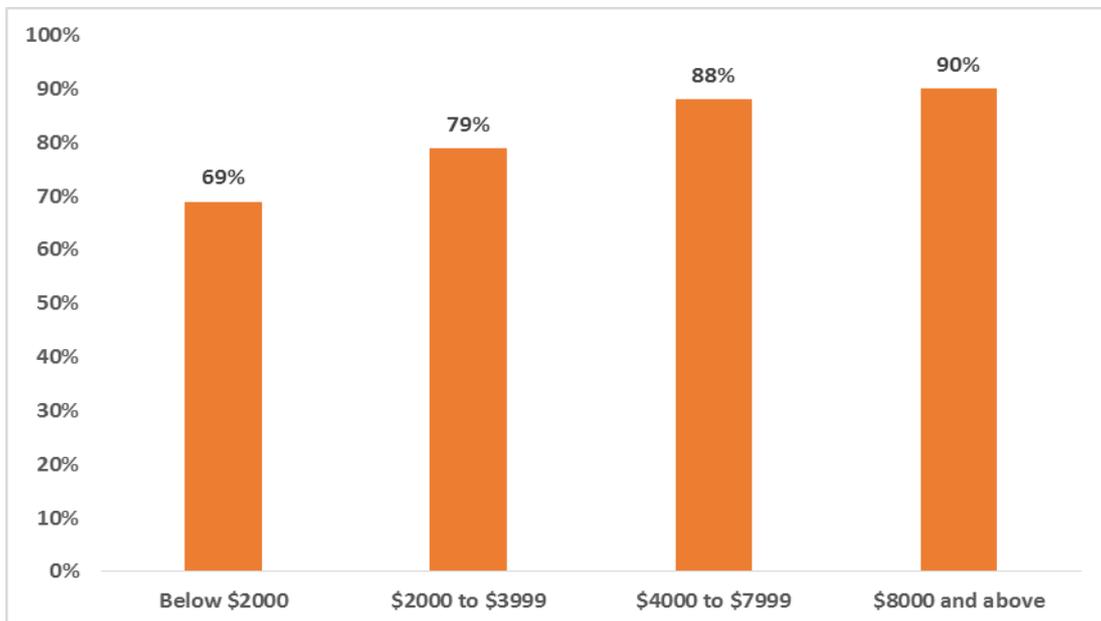
⁶ This item was introduced in MSF's Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans in 2013.

Chart 19: Proportion of Singaporeans that had close friends they could tell their personal problems to, 2013 (by marital status)



30. There was a lower proportion of Singaporeans with household incomes below \$2,000 that had close friends they could tell their personal problems to (69%), compared to those with higher household incomes (range from 79% to 90%).

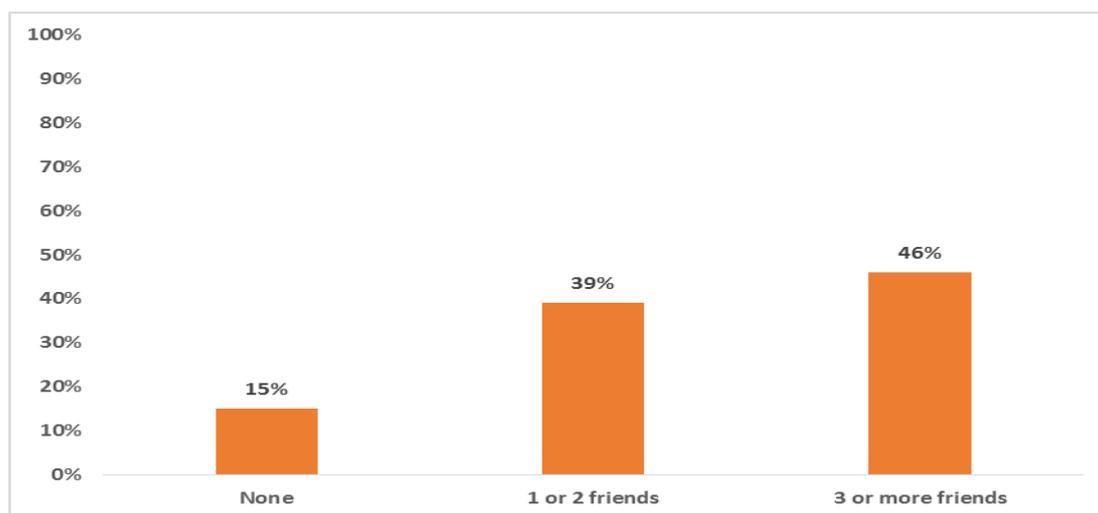
Chart 20: Proportion of Singaporeans that had close friends they could tell their personal problems to, 2013 (by household income)



Having friends to talk with about private matters⁷

31. In 2013, the majority (85%) of Singaporeans had at least one friend they could talk with about private matters⁸. Four in ten Singaporeans (39%) had one or two such friends, while 46% had three or more such friends.

Chart 21: Number of friends Singaporeans felt at ease with such that they could talk about private matters, 2013



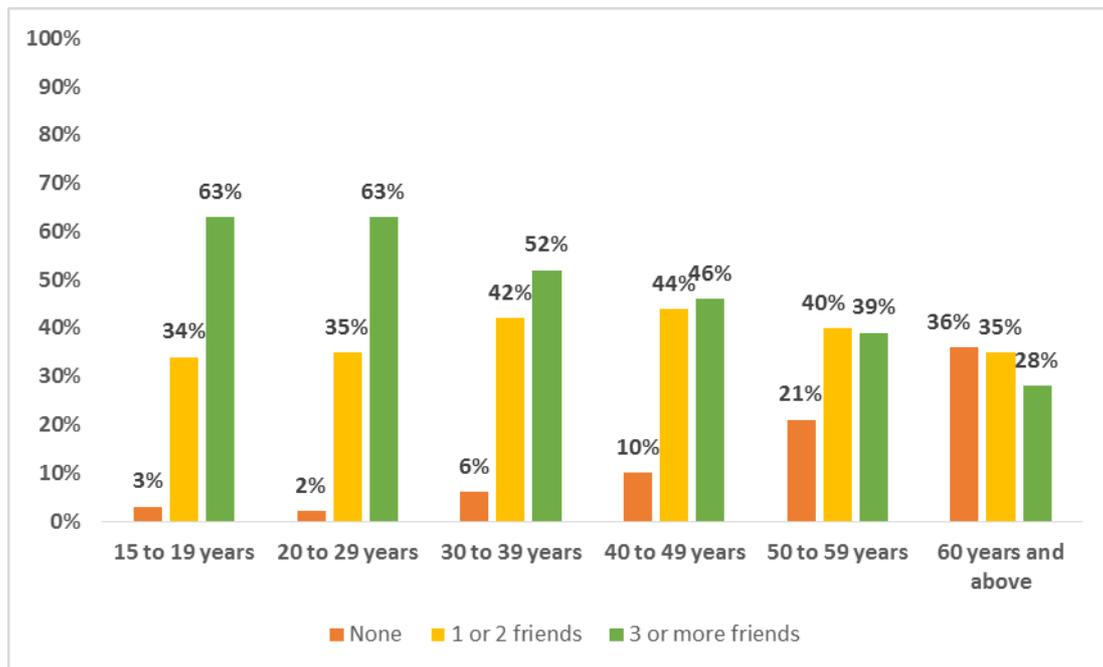
32. Lower proportions of Singaporeans aged 60 years and above, who were married or divorced / separated / widowed, or from households with lower incomes, had three or more friends they could talk with about private matters, compared to other groups in 2013.

33. The proportion of Singaporeans that had three or more friends they could talk with about private matters was lower for those aged 60 years and above (28%), compared to younger age groups (range from 39% to 63%). Furthermore, the proportion with no friend they could talk with about private matters for those aged 60 years and above (36%) was higher than those for younger age groups (range from 2% to 21%).

⁷ In MSF's Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans 2013, the terms 'private matters' and 'personal problems' were not defined i.e., respondents were free to interpret the terms in their own way. Given that the proportion that agreed they had three or more close friends they could tell their personal problems to (68%) was higher than the proportion that agreed they had three or more friends they could talk with about private matters (46%), it is possible that respondents felt 'private matters' required a higher level of trust or closeness, compared to 'personal problems'.

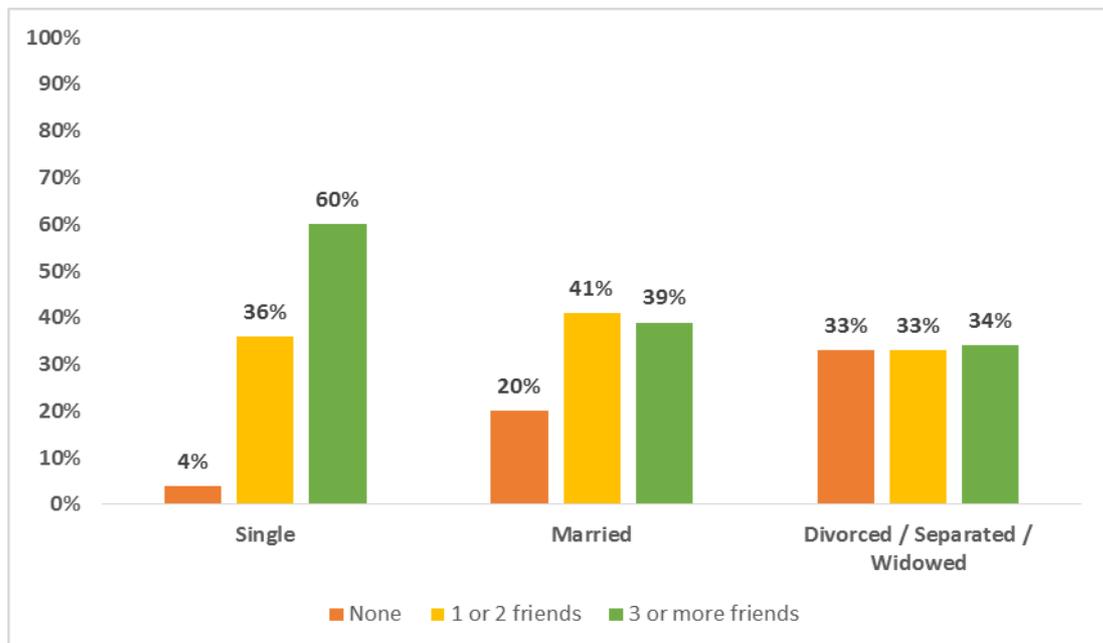
⁸ This item was introduced in MSF's Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans in 2013.

Chart 22: Number of friends Singaporeans felt at ease with such that they could talk about private matters, 2013 (by age group)



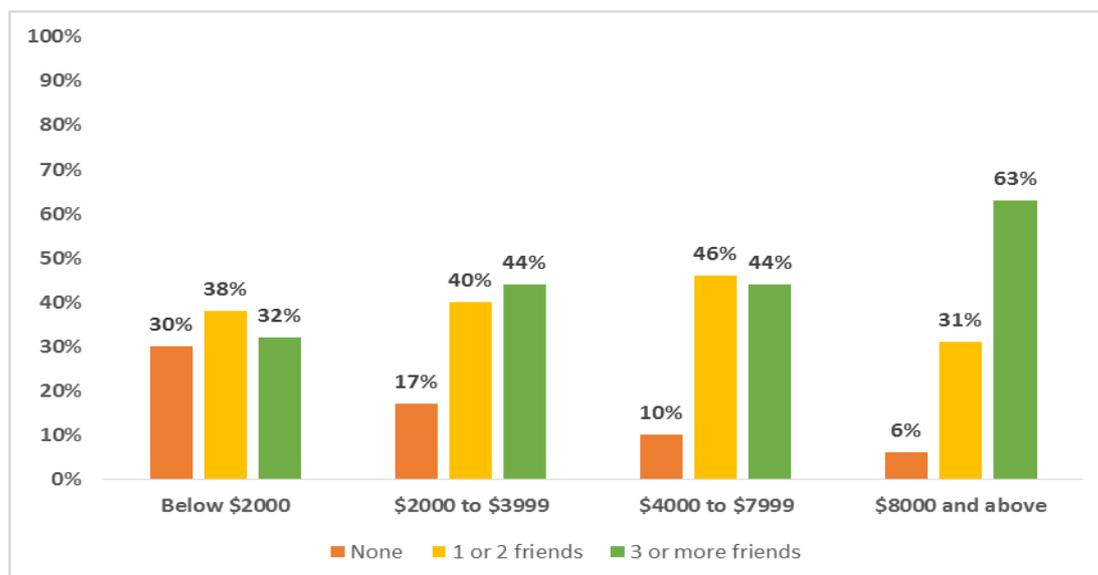
34. The proportions that had three or more friends they could talk with about private matters for Singaporeans who were married (39%) as well as divorced / separated / widowed (34%) were lower than those who were single (60%).

Chart 23: Number of friends Singaporeans felt at ease with such that they could talk about private matters, 2013 (by marital status)



35. **Almost one in three (32%) Singaporeans with household incomes below \$2,000 had three or more friends they could talk with about private matters;** this is a lower proportion compared to those with higher household incomes (range from 44% to 63%). Furthermore, the proportion with no friend they could talk with about private matters for those with household incomes below \$2,000 (30%) was higher than those with higher household incomes (range from 6% to 17%).

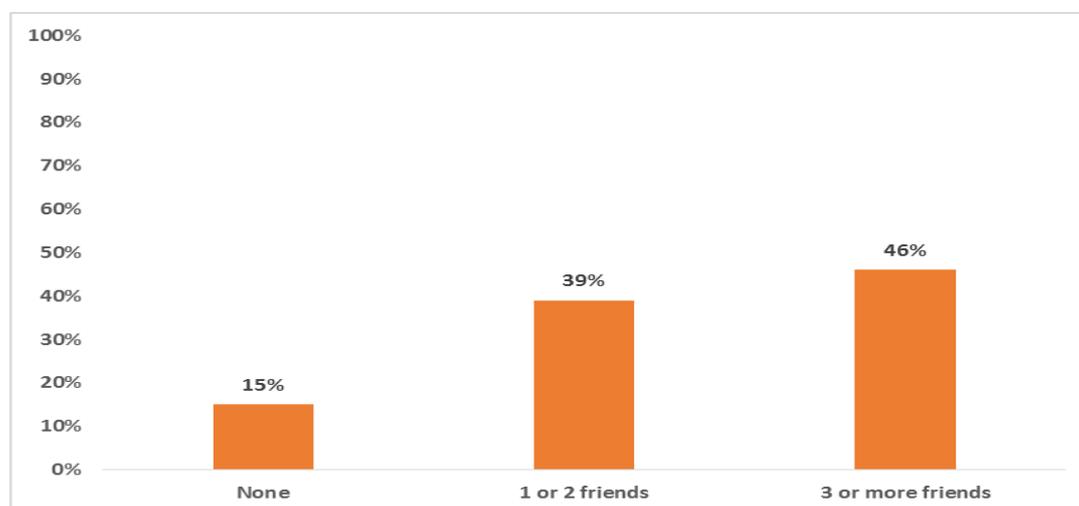
Chart 24: Number of friends Singaporeans felt at ease with such that they could talk about private matters, 2013 (by household income)



Calling on friends for help

36. In 2013, **the majority (85%) of Singaporeans had at least one friend they could call on for help⁹.** Four in ten (39%) Singaporeans had one or two such friends while 46% had three or more such friends.

Chart 25: Number of friends Singaporeans felt close to such that they could call on them for help, 2013

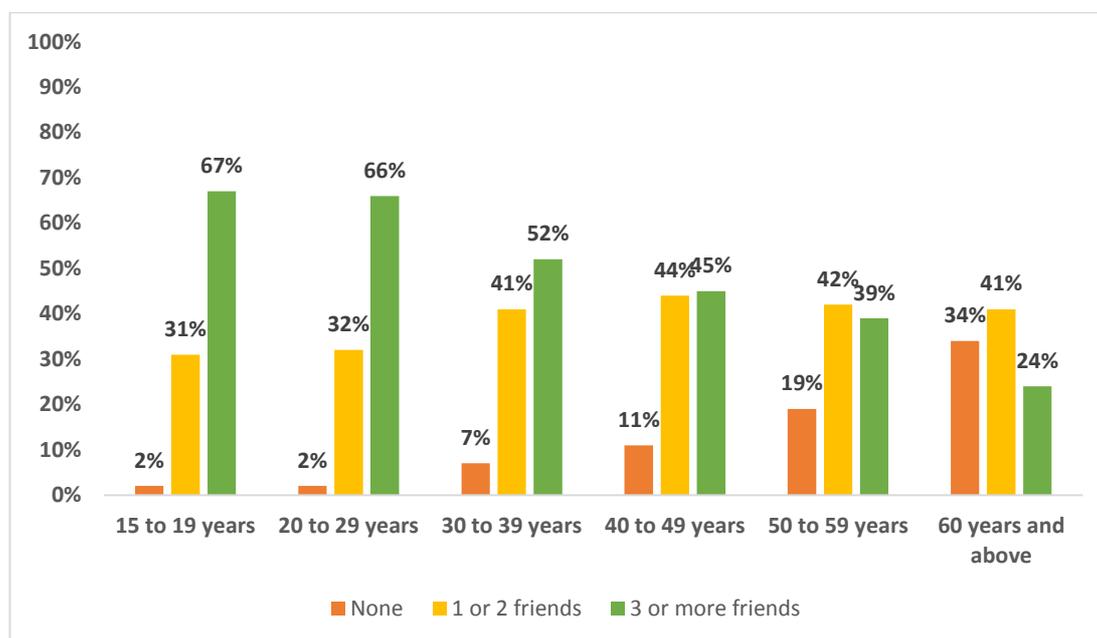


⁹ This item was introduced in MSF's Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans in 2013.

37. Lower proportions of Singaporeans aged 60 years and above, who were divorced / separated / widowed or from households with lower incomes, had three or more friends they could call on for help, compared to other groups in 2013.

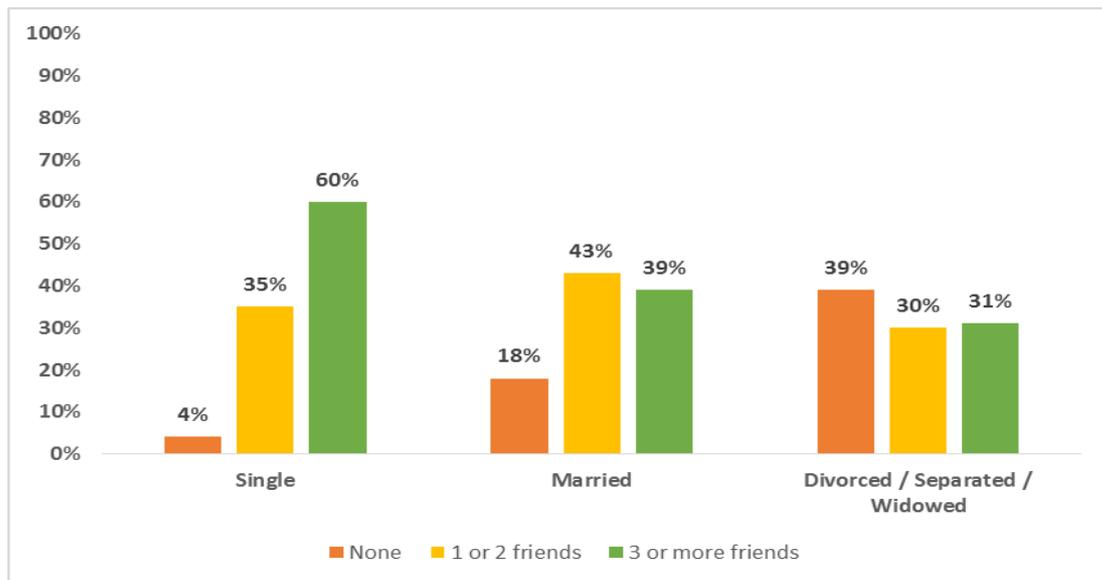
38. **One in four (24%) Singaporeans aged 60 years and above had three or more friends they could call on for help**; this is a lower proportion compared to younger age groups (range from 39% to 67%). Furthermore, the proportion with no friend they could call on for help for those aged 60 years and above (34%) was higher than those for younger age groups (range from 2% to 19%).

Chart 26: Number of friends Singaporeans felt close to such that they could call on them for help, 2013 (by age group)



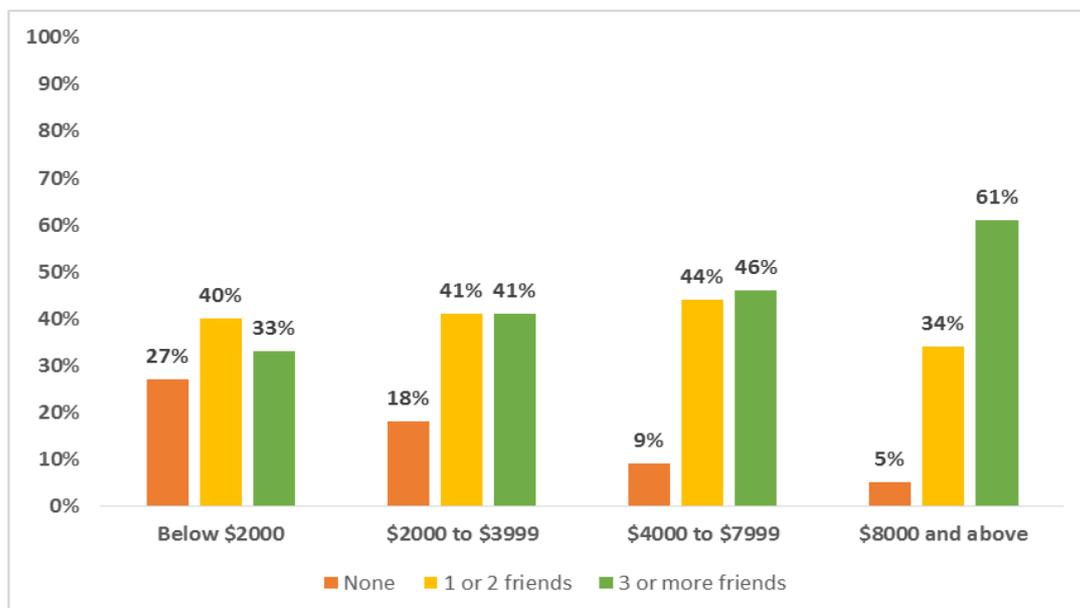
39. **The proportion of Singaporeans with three or more friends they could call on for help was lower for those who were divorced / separated / widowed (31%), compared to 60% for singles, and 39% for married Singaporeans.**

Chart 27: Number of friends Singaporeans felt close to such that they could call on them for help, 2013 (by marital status)



40. The proportion of those who had three or more friends they could call on for help was the lowest for Singaporeans with household incomes below \$2,000 (33%) compared to those with higher household incomes (range from 41% to 61%). Furthermore, the proportion with no friend they could call on for help for those with household incomes below \$2,000 (27%) was higher than those with higher household incomes (range from 5% to 18%).

Chart 28: Number of friends Singaporeans felt close to such that they could call on them for help, 2013 (by household income)



Those with no financial and emotional support from immediate family and with no extended family or friend they could call on for help

41. The findings outlined above indicate that almost all Singaporeans receive some form of support from at least one source: family (immediate or extended) or friends. Additional analyses were run to better understand whether Singaporeans had no support from all of these sources. In 2013, **a very small group of Singaporeans felt that they had no support from immediate and extended family, and friends**. The proportion of survey respondents that felt they had no financial or emotional support from family, as well as no extended family member or friend they could call on for help was less than 2%.

Conclusion

Majority of Singaporeans have some form of support from immediate or extended family or friends

42. This paper looked at these main sources of support, namely the family (immediate and extended) and friends. **It is evident that almost all Singaporeans received support from at least one of these main sources – the family (immediate and extended) and friends.**

43. Considering the levels of support in 2013, there were some groups of Singaporeans that received or expected to receive relatively lower levels of support, i.e., those who were (i) aged 30 to 49 years or aged 60 years and above; (ii) divorced / separated / widowed; and (iii) from households with lower incomes, compared to other groups.

44. While the levels of family support were generally high in 2013, they had declined compared to previous years. The proportion that would turn to their family members when faced with financial difficulties decreased slightly compared to 2009. A general decline was also observed in the proportion that would talk to their family members when they are in trouble.

Endnotes:

1. This paper covers findings from MSF's Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans. This survey covers Singaporean's attitudes towards a variety of topics such as marriage, family ties and financial and emotional support from the family. This survey was conducted annually from 2001 to 2003, and thereafter in 2006, 2009 and 2013. The 2013 survey was on a sample of 2,000 Singaporeans, and is nationally representative of the population. Key findings from this survey have been released in relevant publications such as the recent report "Ageing Families in Singapore".
2. This paper explicitly covers trends and relevant sub-group differences that are statistically significant. Related trends and sub-group differences that are not statistically significant are not included.