

Late marriage, low birthrate, and more elderly to care for

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Taiwanese women are known for delaying marriage or seemingly choosing to stay single, depending on how you look at it. The average age of marriage for women in 2009 was 30 to 31. In 2010, 31 percent of women above the age of 15 were single, an all-time low for marriage, especially compared to the 7.3 percent of unmarried women in 2007.

The largely single status of Taiwan's most popular female entertainers is also worth noting; if their chosen predicament is not a direct reflection of society, then it certainly serves as either affirmation or a consolation for the unhitched woman. Lin Chi-ling, top supermodel and considered one of the most beautiful women in Taiwan, turns 37 this year without an engagement announcement in sight. Pop Princess Jolin Tsai, despite her youthful appearance, is also pushing 30 and single. The same status goes for famed artists like A-mei (38), Vivian Hsu (36), Christina Fan (35), Elva Hsiao (31) and many others.

On the other end of the public spectrum, both Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairwoman Tsai Ing-wen and former Vice President Annette Lu are single.

The Bureau of Health Promotion (BHP) under the Department of Health (DOH) named delaying marriage as the main cause in Taiwan's record low birth rate, the impact of which can be seen in empty pediatric wards, the declining number of nurseries, decreased kindergarten and elementary school enrollment and will very soon change the course of the nation's future.

To make matters worse, Taiwan's rapidly aging population has the Cabinet-level Council for Economic Planning and Development (CEPD) predicting a population of zero growth by 2022, a mere 11 years from now. Project onto that, an increasing prevalence of erratic weather brought by climate change, and you have a perilous situation of unprecedented proportions.

As the birth rate among married couples is much higher than those who never marry, instead of being pro-natalist, the government should be pro-marriage and consider finding suitable public spokespeople to promote the benefits of the age old institution and its essential role in society, especially in times of crisis.

Questions:

1. What are your opinions about late marriage in Taiwan?
2. In your opinions, is this a good or bad condition? Why? Are there any consequences of this condition?
3. Suppose you are the director of Department of Health, and the president ask you to encourage people get married and give birth earlier, what will you do?
4. As the aging population escalates and low birth rates witnessed, what do you suggest should be the solution to this very significant issue?
5. How many of you would like to get married early or late ? That is before 28 or after 28. Why?
6. Do you think unmarried celebrities in Taiwan have influence on the women's later marriage?
7. In your opinion, if women get old without getting married, but they want to have a child, what should they do?
8. Do you think pursuance of high educational qualifications or becoming a wealthy business woman or what factors might be responsible for women's late marriage?
9. Why this issue can be a problem in Taiwan or other Asia countries, but not in western countries? Is that effects of culture or any factors?
10. Can we attribute the problem of aging society and low birth rate to late marriage?