

Relationships Australia | CUA
Relationships Indicators Survey 2008



Issues and concerns that Australians have in their relationships today



Acknowledgements

The 2008 Relationships Indicators Survey is a joint initiative of Relationships Australia and CUA (Credit Union Australia) based on data collected, analysed and reported by Woolcott Research Ltd. Design is by Design Direction.

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About Relationships Australia



For 60 years Relationships Australia has helped Australians to improve their wellbeing and make positive changes throughout their lives by building better relationships. We are one of Australia's largest community-based, not-for-profit organisations providing a wide range of relationship and family support services from over 130 locations across the country.

The 2008 Relationships Indicators Survey marks a decade since the first survey and for the first time, it has been undertaken in partnership with a sponsor. We very much appreciate the support of CUA as we celebrate our 60th anniversary in 2008 and the decade of the Relationships Indicators Survey.

About CUA (Credit Union Australia)

CUA is Australia's largest member-owned financial institution. With more than 400,000 members and over 70 branches across the country, we have been a part of the financial lives of a great number of Australians for many years.

CUA is passionate about working with the Australian community to make a change for the better. In 2008 we welcomed Relationships Australia as our national community partner investing in a three year partnership to support the wellbeing of Australian families. We are very proud to sponsor this critical research into relationships today through the 2008 survey.



Executive Summary

The findings of the 2008 Relationships Indicators Survey presented in this document portray a picture of Australian society in which social contact is a central part of a happy and healthy life.

Research method

The survey has been completed five times since 1998, with the previous survey conducted in 2006. The survey provides information regarding the main issues and concerns that Australians have in their relationships today.

The research was quantitative and consisted of 1,200 randomly selected telephone interviews amongst the general population at a national level. Prior to fieldwork a pilot stage was completed, and 30 of the pilot interviews were included in the final dataset.

A random sampling approach was used based on Random Digit Dialling. Quotas based on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) population figures were applied to State and Age to ensure a representative sample by these variables.

The profile of the sample remains comparable by State and Age to that achieved when the survey was last run in 2006. Given the importance of Gender in determining response to the kind of questions included, a broad quota based on the 2006 male/female split was applied.

Relationships today

The 2008 Relationships Indicators Survey highlights the fact that the vast majority of people have relationships of some kind - be they friendship, romantic or familial. Friendships in particular are highly important and for those who do not currently have a partner, are as sought after as a short-term or long-term relationship.

In terms of the type of partner relationship Australians are choosing, the proportion with a spouse or live in/de facto partner increased by 5% from 62% in 2006 to 67% in 2008. Although there was also an

increase in the proportion of respondents with a non-live in partner – it was a smaller increase of 3% (from 9% in 2006 to 12% in 2008).

Of other important relationships identified, over 80% had a close/best friend, or a sibling. Three quarters had a child and three in five had a parent. A third of the sample had a grandchild and a quarter had a grandparent.

Looking for a partner

Four in ten respondents currently not in a relationship were looking for some kind of relationship. Of these respondents, one in five was looking for friendship with a similar proportion looking for a long-term relationship and 5% looking for a short-term relationship.

Challenges in looking for a partner

There were three key themes in relation to the challenges people face in finding a partner: *there's no-one suitable; how do you meet people?*; and *lack of time*. Males were more likely to feel that *finding someone compatible/on the same wavelength* was a challenge. Females, on the other hand, were approximately twice as likely as males to report the following challenges: *finding appropriate places to meet people; people don't want to commit/take responsibility/selfish; lack of good people to meet/you just can't find them/gender ratio; lack of trust/people are suspicious/there's a lot of fakes, weirdos and emotional baggage*.

Reasons why people get married

Respondents were asked to choose from a list, the reasons why they thought people get married these days. The most common responses were *love* and *companionship*, followed by *to signify a lifelong commitment* and *security for children*. Approximately three quarters agreed that people get married *to make a public commitment to each other*. Two thirds of respondents felt that people get married for the *legal status/financial security* or because of *religious beliefs*, which was stronger for females (64%) than males (56%). Half of all respondents (50%) agreed that people get married as a *response to family pressure* – particularly females (53% compared to 45% males).

Reasons why people don't get married

When respondents were asked why they thought people don't get married nowadays, the main reason mentioned was because of a *bad previous experience*, with 95% of respondents currently separated or divorced agreeing with this reason. Eight in ten agreed that people don't get married because of reasons to do with commitment – either an *avoidance* of it or a belief that

strong commitment does not need marriage. Three quarters agreed that people don't get married because of *fear of making a mistake*, a *desire for a singles lifestyle* or due to a *fear of divorce*. Approximately half felt that people don't get married because it will *interfere with work and career*, because of a *desire for multiple relationships*, and because of a *desire for travel*.

Sexual relationships

Approximately six in ten considered that they were sexually active, a third that they weren't and one in ten declined to answer. When respondents were asked how 'satisfied' or 'unsatisfied' they were with this aspect of their life, 71% of all respondents said they were 'satisfied', a third were 'very satisfied', and one in ten was 'unsatisfied'.

Relationship problems

When asked to select from a list of factors that could negatively impact upon partner relationships, 68% of respondents had experienced *stress* and at least half of respondents said they had experienced *work pressures* and a *lack of time to spend with their partner*. *Financial insecurities or difficulties* were identified by 40%. Three in ten had experienced problems regarding *job insecurity, loss or unemployment* in a partner relationship.



Causes of relationship breakdown

When respondents were asked why they thought partner relationships break down, the responses could be categorised into two main themes: *internal issues* and *external influences*, with the majority of responses falling into the internal category. The three main internal issues were: *communication, commitment and expectations*. Key external influences identified as contributing to relationship breakdowns were *financial stress and work pressures*.

Reasons why older couples separate

All respondents were presented with the statement ‘statistics show an interesting trend for couples over 50 to separate’ – and asked to say why they thought this might be. The main reasons mentioned by a third of respondents were that couples over 50 only *stayed together for the kids* and that the couple had *grown apart* (32%). A quarter identified want a change as the main issue and approximately one in ten said *midlife crisis/feeling that life is too short* (13%) or *divorce is more accepted these days* (12%). A similar proportion said *so many options now/travell/new work opportunities/freedom* (9%) or *women are more financially secure/independent/feel they don't have to stay* (8%).

Impact of technology on relationships

All respondents were asked if the use of new communications technology such as the internet, mobile phones, email, SMS and cheaper long distance landline calls had a positive or a negative impact on their important relationships. Sixty-nine per cent said this technology has had a positive impact, including 58% of those aged 60 years and older. Only 9% felt such technology has had a negative impact on their important relationships, and two in ten felt it had no impact on their important relationships.

Community involvement

Respondents were asked whether they have as much to do with other people and members of the community around them, as they would like to. Although 60% said that they did, a sizeable proportion of 40% said that they didn't. The main barrier for respondents having as much contact as they would like was *work commitments*, followed by *family commitments*.

Increasing happiness and wellbeing

When asked what would improve their happiness and wellbeing, the main response mentioned by a quarter was *more money or better finances*. One quarter gave a response that is based on people, such as the *happiness or wellbeing of loved ones, improving relationships, more time with family/partner, being closer to family, having children or finding a partner*. *Better health* was identified by 8%. Respondents in metro areas were twice as likely as those in non-metro areas to want *closer or better relationships* and *less stress*.

A key finding: work, income and relationships

The experience of paid employment proves to be a negative force on relationships, regardless of income. Although the experience of unemployment impacts significantly on individual's lives and creates strain within relationships, what comes through strongly in this data is that there are also issues for those currently in employment.



Research Method

The Relationships Indicators Survey is based on a quantitative methodology. In August 2008 a random sample of n=1,200 national telephone interviews was conducted amongst the general population aged 18+.

Quotas based on ABS population figures were applied to State and Age to ensure a representative sample by these variables. In order to maintain comparability to the previous Relationships Indicators Survey conducted in 2006, a broad gender quota based on the 2006 male/female split was applied. The survey did not specifically seek to include non-English speaking respondents or to specifically identify Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander respondents.

To explore whether there were any cultural differences between those with parents born overseas and those whose parents were born in Australia, a new question was included in 2008 asking respondents where their mother and father were born. Overall, there was little difference in response between those with a parent born overseas and those with parents born in Australia.

While a broad diversity of cultural differences was represented in the sample, participants from non Anglo-Saxon cultural backgrounds were not sufficiently represented to enable significant cultural variables to be identified.



Research Findings

Relationships today

The majority of people have relationships of some kind - be they friendship, romantic or familial. Friendships in particular are highly important and for those who do not currently have a partner, are as sought after as a short-term or long-term relationship.

Overall, three quarters of survey respondents had a partner, which represents an increase of 4% from 2006. Just over half were married, and approximately 10% had a live in/de facto partner. The same proportion had a non-live in partner.

The vast majority had a close/best friend or a sibling (88%). Three quarters had a child and two thirds had a parent. A third had a grandchild and a quarter had a grandparent.

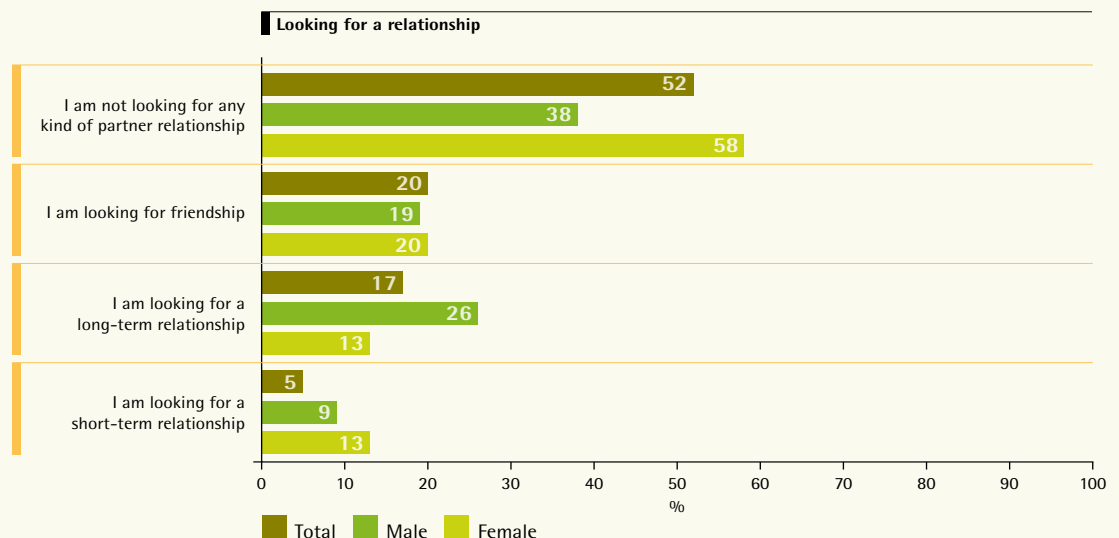
Looking for a partner

Four in ten respondents not currently in a relationship said they were looking for *some kind of relationship*, with males more likely to say this than females (54% compared to 36%).

The differences between males and females were more pronounced amongst those aged 60 years or more, with three quarters of females saying they were not looking for any kind of partner relationship compared to just below half of males.

Of all respondents, approximately one in five was *looking for a long-term relationship*, with twice as many males (26%) than females (13%) saying this. The differences between males and females were again more pronounced amongst those aged 60 years or more, with a quarter of males in this group saying they were *looking for a long-term relationship* compared to 1% of females in the same situation.

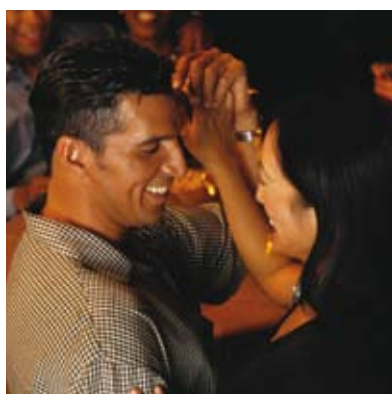
Five per cent were *looking for a short-term relationship*, increasing to a quarter of 18 to 24 year olds. Of all respondents, one in five was *looking for friendship*.



Challenges in finding a partner

There were three key themes in relation to the challenges people face in finding a partner:

- 'There's no-one suitable'
- 'How do you meet people?'
- 'I haven't got time'



'There's no-one suitable' covered the following responses:

- *Finding someone compatible/on the same wavelength*
- *People don't want to commit/take responsibility/selfish*
- *Too high expectations/choosy*
- *Lack of trust/people are suspicious/there's a lot of fakes, weirdos*
- *Emotional baggage*

'How do you meet people?' covered the following responses:

- *Finding appropriate places to meet people*
- *Lack of good people to meet/you just can't find them/gender ratio*
- *Lack of local community/no general socialising these days*
- *People stay at home/are isolated/use technology to communicate*

'I haven't got time' covered the following responses:

- *Lack of time*
- *People are too busy focussing on their career*

Males were more likely to feel that *finding someone compatible/on the same wavelength* was a challenge.

Females, on the other hand, were approximately twice as likely as males to report the following challenges:

- *Finding appropriate places to meet people*
- *People don't want to commit/take responsibility/selfish*
- *Lack of good people to meet/you just can't find them/gender ratio*
- *Lack of trust/people are suspicious/there's a lot of fakes, weirdos*
- *Emotional baggage*

Reasons why people get married

The main responses given for why people marry were *love, companionship, to signify a lifelong long commitment* and to provide *security for children*. *Security for children* was a key reason for females and was particularly important amongst respondents aged 25 to 39 years.

Those currently married or living with their partner were more positive relating to marriage and significantly more likely to say that people get married for *love, companionship, to signify a lifelong commitment* and *to make a public commitment to each other*.

Approximately three quarters agreed that people get married *to make a public commitment to each other* with females more likely to say this than males.

Two thirds of respondents felt that people get married for the *legal status/financial security* or because of *religious beliefs*, which was more of a consideration for females than males.

Half of all respondents agreed that people get married as a *response to family pressure* – particularly females (53% compared to 45%); and just under half because of a *desire for a special occasion*.

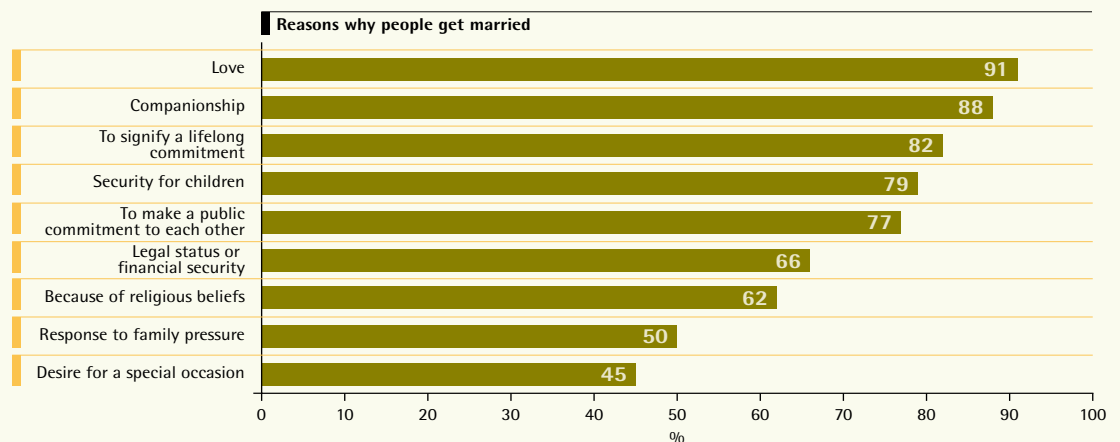
Respondents who were separated or divorced, were more likely to agree with two of the more pragmatic reasons why people get married, namely as *a response to family pressure* and *desire for a special occasion*.

Reasons why people get married

This question was previously included in the 2006 survey however the option *love* or *companionship* was added in 2008.

There was an increase in the following responses (of up to 18%) from 2006 to 2008:

- Legal status or financial security
- Because of religious beliefs
- Security for children



Reasons why people don't get married

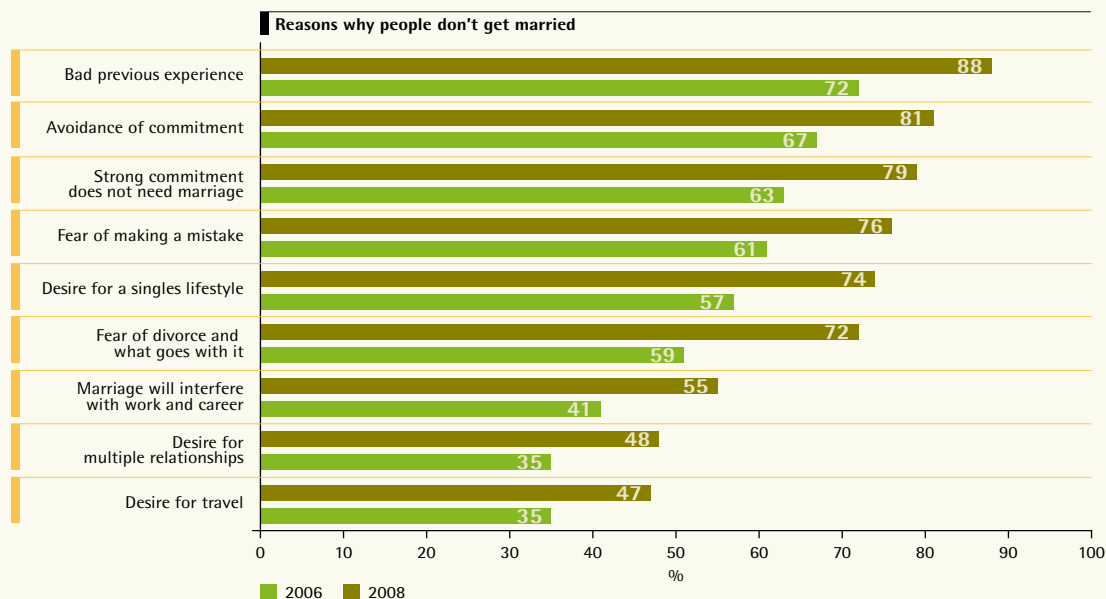
Nearly nine in ten respondents said the main reason people don't get married, is because of a *bad previous experience*.

Eight in ten indicated that people don't get married because of reasons to do with commitment – either an *avoidance* of it or a belief that *strong commitment does not need marriage*. Both these responses were higher amongst females than males.

Three quarters agreed that people don't get married because of *fear of making a mistake*, a *desire for a singles lifestyle* or due to a *fear of divorce*. Females were more likely to *fear making a mistake* than males.

Approximately half felt that people don't get married because it will *interfere with work and career* (55%) or because of a *desire for multiple relationships* (48%). This was particularly the case for those who had never married (65%). In addition, both these reasons were significantly higher amongst males than females with a difference of 9% and 8% respectively. Just under half of all respondents (47%) agreed that a *desire for travel* was a reason people don't get married.

This question was previously included in the 2006 survey, and each response category increased significantly in 2008.





Sexual relationships

Approximately six in ten (58%) considered themselves sexually active, a third (31%) said that they weren't and one in ten (11%) declined to answer.

Looking at the data by marital status, almost three quarters of those with a spouse or live in partner considered themselves to be sexually active, dropping to less than half of those who had never married and approximately a third of those who were separated or divorced.

Males were more likely to consider themselves to be sexually active than females and there was a clear pattern by age with likelihood to be sexually active decreasing with age.

There was a large difference by income – with almost eight in ten of those earning \$60,000 or more annually saying they were sexually active, compared to four in ten (42%) of those earning less.

Regardless of whether they were sexually active or not, all respondents were asked whether they were satisfied with this aspect of their life. Almost three quarters of the respondents (72%) were 'satisfied' with a third saying they were 'very satisfied'.

Approximately one in ten were unsatisfied with this aspect of their life.

The vast majority (86%) of those who were sexually active were satisfied with this aspect of their life, in comparison to 6% who were unsatisfied. People currently not sexually active were four times more likely to be 'unsatisfied'.

Interestingly, 62% of those not sexually active were also 'satisfied'.

There was also a large difference by partner status, eight in ten of those in a partner relationship said they were 'satisfied' compared to half of those not currently in a partner relationship, indicating that those who do not identify themselves as being in a partner relationship are less satisfied with their sex life than those who are.

Relationship problems

Survey results show that most respondents had experienced *stress* as the main factor to negatively impact on their partner relationships.

When cross-analysed by other issues, all the other factors correlate highly, suggesting that when these issues are present in a relationship, it is highly likely that the individuals involved feel stressed. This is particularly the case if there are issues with *work pressures, job insecurity, loss or unemployment, or violence or abuse*.

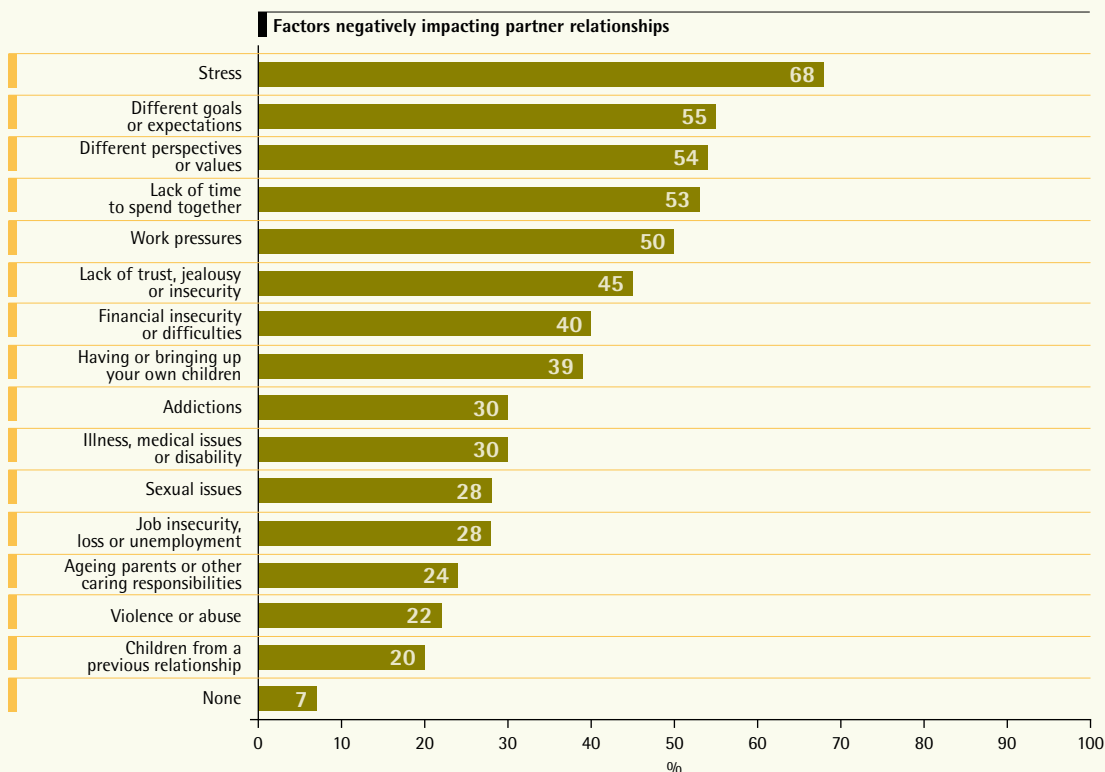
Half of all respondents had experienced *different goals or expectations, different perspectives or values, a lack of time to spend together* or the problem of *work pressures*.

Approximately four in ten had experienced *lack of trust, jealousy or insecurity, financial insecurity or difficulties* or problems with *having/bringing up their own children*.

Three in ten had experienced *addictions, illness, medical issues or disability, sexual issues or job insecurity, loss or unemployment*.

A quarter had experienced *ageing parents or other caring responsibilities* and one in five had experienced *violence or abuse, or issues related to children from a previous relationship*.

A continuing trend is shown across the 2006 and 2008 surveys identifying the three specific factors most negatively impacting on relationships - different goals or expectations, different perspectives or values and lack of time to spend together.







Looking at the data by marital status identifies a number of issues that seem to be central to a relationship breaking down. These issues include:

- Different perspectives or values
- Lack of trust, jealousy or insecurity
- Violence or abuse
- Different goals/expectations
- Addictions
- Sexual issues

The incidence of experiencing these particular issues is much higher amongst separated or divorced respondents than those currently married or in a de facto relationship.

There were also some differences by gender. Whilst females were more likely to report that they had experienced *stress*, problems *having or bringing up children* and *violence or abuse*, males were more likely to have experienced *sexual issues*.

The differences by age point to life stage having an influence on the incidence of experiencing particular issues. At the younger end of the spectrum, 18 to 24 years olds were more likely to have experienced *different goals or expectations*, *different perspectives or values* and a *lack of trust, jealousy or insecurity*.

Respondents in the middle segment of the age bracket, those aged 25 to 59 years, were more likely to have experienced *financial insecurity or difficulties* and *job insecurity, loss or unemployment*.

Whilst there is some overlap with the middle age segment, the older age segment (40 to 60 years) was more likely to have experienced *ageing parents or other caring responsibilities* (not including children) and issues with *children from previous relationships*.

Although the saying “money doesn’t make you happy” may have some truth, the analysis of *factors impacting negatively on partner relationships* data by income, suggests otherwise.

When respondents are split into two income groups – those with an annual income of less than \$60,000 and those with an income of \$60,000 or more - there is only one factor with a higher incidence amongst the higher income group. Nearly six in ten (57%) of the higher income group had experienced *work pressures*, compared to just under half (46%) of the lower income group. Nonetheless, the issue is surprisingly persistent across income levels.

When respondents are split into three income groups - those with an annual income of less than \$60,000, those with an income of \$60,000 to \$80,000, and those with an income of more than \$80,000 - comparing the bottom and top segments, again there is only one factor with a higher incidence amongst the higher income group.

Nearly six in ten (57%) of the higher income group had experienced *lack of time to spend together*, compared to half (51%) of the lower income group – again, still a high figure. Approximately half of the lower income segment (48%) had experienced *financial insecurity or difficulties*, compared to a third (35%) of the higher income segment. While clearly a key issue for lower income groups, a significant number of the higher income earners are not exempt from financial difficulties.

The lower income segment was also more likely to have experienced the following issues in a partner relationship:

- Illness, medical issues or disability
- Sexual issues
- Ageing parents or other caring responsibilities (not including children)



Causes of relationship breakdown

The main reasons why partner relationships break down fall into two main themes: *internal issues* and *external influences*, with the majority of responses falling into the internal category.

The three main *internal issues* were *communication*, *commitment* and *expectations*. With regards to the *external influences*, the main factors were *financial stress*, *work pressures* and *lack of trust*.

For separated or divorced respondents, *lack of trust* appears to be a key factor in relationship breakdown with almost twice as many saying this, compared to those currently in a spousal or de facto relationship.

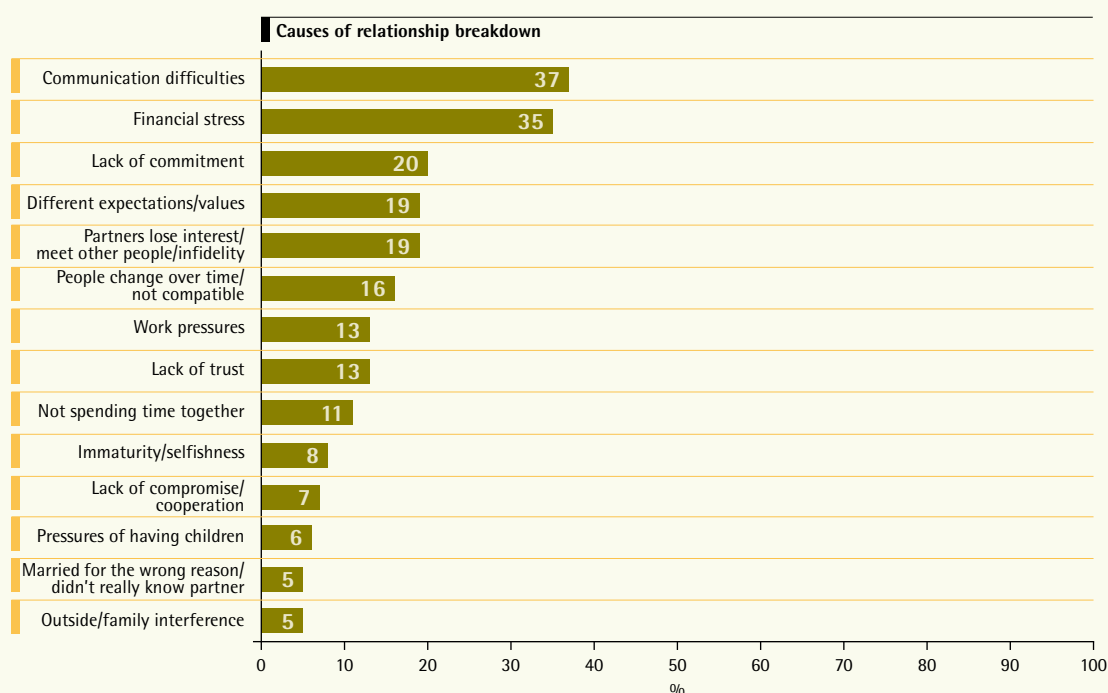
With regards to the *external influences*, *financial stress* was a key issue for couples. Whilst a third of all respondents cited this as a reason (35%), there was a significant difference between those currently in a couple compared to those who had never married (38% compared to 28%), which suggests that monetary concerns are negatively impacting on relationships.

The other key *external influences* were *work pressures* and *lack of trust*, which were both an issue for approximately one in ten

(13%). However, *lack of trust* does appear to be a key factor in relationship breakdown with almost twice as many separated or divorced respondents saying this compared to those currently in a spousal or de facto relationship (20% compared to 12%).

There was also a sense that relationships break down because one or both of the people in it change which manifests itself in the following issues that perhaps creep into the relationship as a result of people growing apart:

- Partners lose interest/meet other people/infidelity (19%)
- People change over time/not compatible (16%)
- Not spending time together (11%)
- Lack of compromise/cooperation (7%)



Reasons why older couples separate

In response to the statement “statistics show an interesting trend for couples over 50 to separate – why do you think this might be?” the main reasons identified were:

- People only stay together for the kids
- They grow apart
- They want a change

Females were significantly more likely to feel that the trend could be because *people only stay together for the kids*. In addition, females were almost twice as likely as males to refer to a *midlife crisis/feeling that life is too short*.

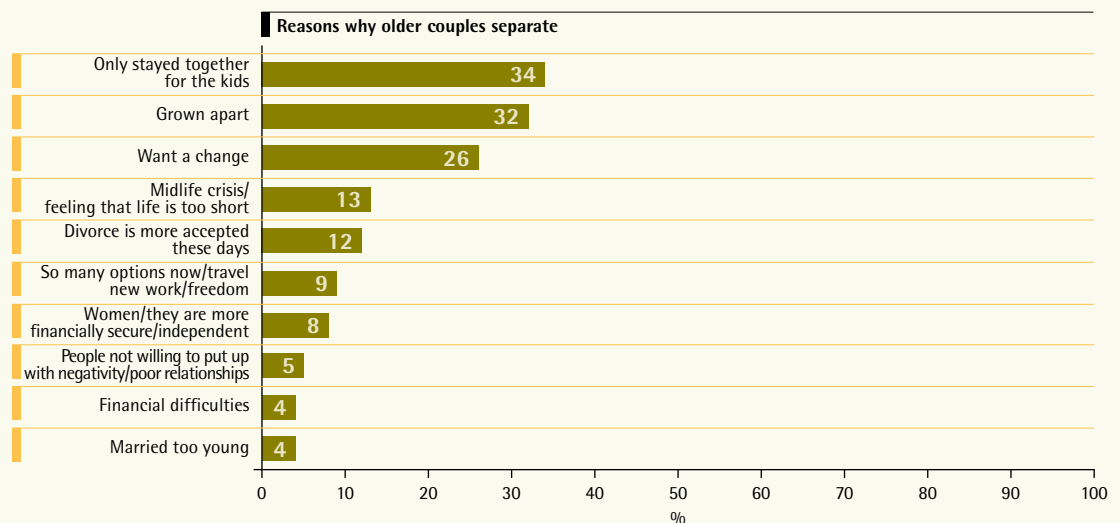
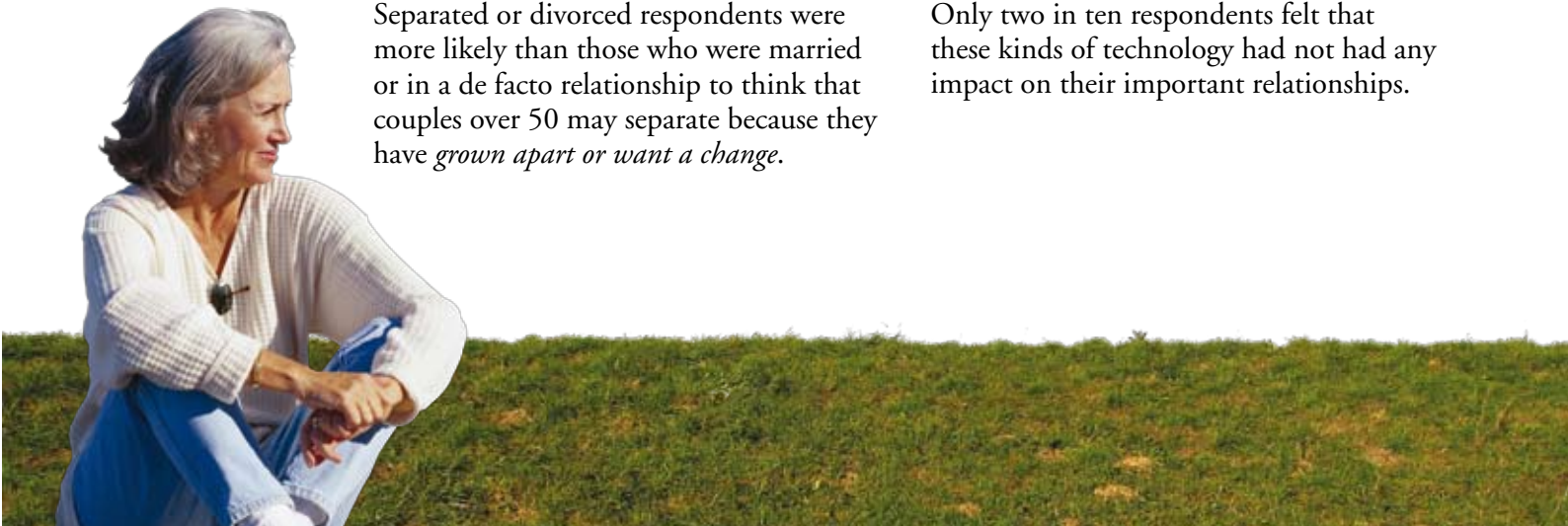
Separated or divorced respondents were more likely than those who were married or in a de facto relationship to think that couples over 50 may separate because they have *grown apart or want a change*.

Impact of technology on relationships

When asked their views about the impact of increased use of technology on relationships, the majority felt that this technology has had a positive impact. Interestingly, this positive response was given by 58% of those 60 years or older. Just 9% felt that technology has had more of a negative impact on their important relationships. The main reason given was that technology is *less personal*.

With regards to how communications technology has had a positive impact, the main response was that it enables people to *keep in touch* with friends and family.

Only two in ten respondents felt that these kinds of technology had not had any impact on their important relationships.



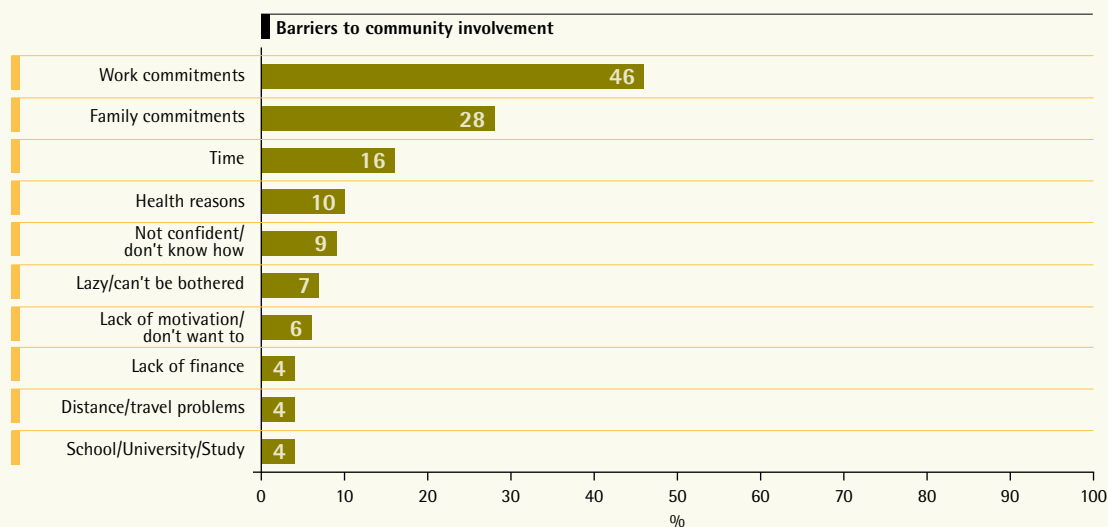
Community involvement

In terms of whether people have as much to do with other people and members of the community as they would like to, most said that they did. However, there was a sizeable proportion (40%) who said that they didn't.

Those aged 60 years or older were more likely to feel that they did have as much contact as they would like.

People in non-metro areas were more likely to say that they have as much to do with people and the community around them as they would like, compared with respondents in metro areas – 65% compared to 57%. Similarly, those not working full-time were more likely to feel this than those who do work full-time – 65% compared to 52%.

The main barrier for respondents having as much contact as they would like was *work commitments*, followed by *family commitments*. *Family commitments* were a particular issue for those aged 28 to 39 years. Approximately a sixth (16%) said that time was a factor and one in ten (10%) said *health reasons*. *Health* was a particular issue for respondents aged 60 years or more (27%).



Increasing happiness and wellbeing

All respondents were asked “what, if anything, is the one thing that would increase your current level of happiness or wellbeing?”

This was an open-ended question with responses coded.

The main factor that would increase current levels of happiness or wellbeing was *more money or better finances*. Overall, 5% said that *having a partner* would increase their happiness or wellbeing. However, this trebled to 15% of those currently not in a partner relationship.

Factors that would increase happiness or wellbeing

Respondents in metro areas were twice as likely as those in non-metro areas to want *closer or better relationships* and *less stress*. Males were nearly twice as likely as females to say that *a partner* would increase their happiness or wellbeing.

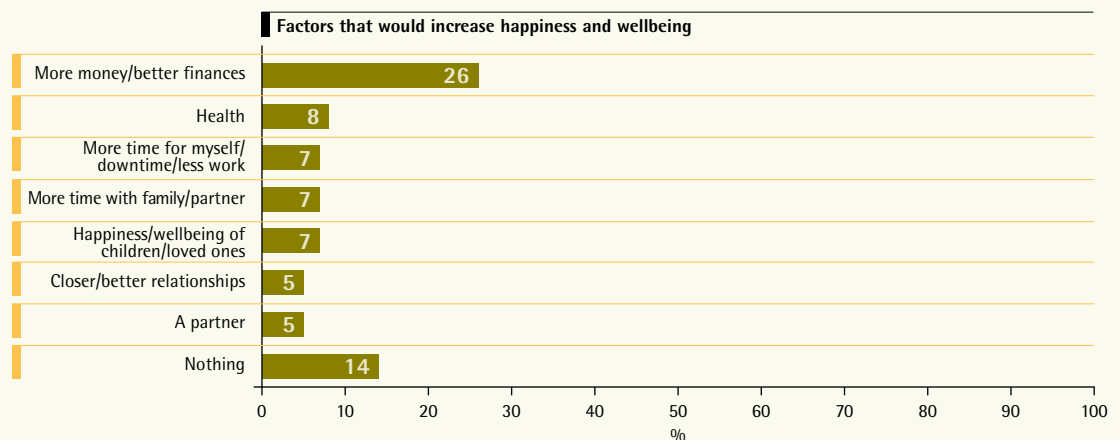
Those with a spouse or de facto partner were twice as likely as respondents with a non-live in partner to want *more time with their family and/or partner*.

More time with family/partner was mentioned by 13% of respondents earning more than \$80,000 annually, compared to 7% of those earning between \$60,000 and \$80,000, and just 3% of those earning less than \$60,000.

Twice as many respondents earning less than \$60,000 (12%) mentioned health as a factor that would increase happiness or wellbeing, compared to those earning more than this amount (5%).

More time for themselves/downtime/less work was mentioned by one in ten full-time employees (12%), compared to 7% of part-time employees and 3% of respondents in another employment situation.

Not surprisingly there was a strong correlation between age and health. Two in ten respondents aged 70 or older (22%) said that *health* was the factor that would increase their happiness or wellbeing. This decreased to 8% of those aged 50 to 59 years, 6% of those aged 35 to 39 years and 2% of the youngest age group (18 to 24 years).



A Key Finding: work, income and relationships

The experience of paid employment proves to be a negative force on relationships, regardless of income. Although the experience of unemployment impacts significantly on individual's lives and creates strain within relationships, what comes through strongly in this data is that there are also issues for those currently in employment.

Such issues appear to be widely spread with at least half of all respondents saying that they had experienced *work pressures* and *a lack of time to spend with their partner*. Three in ten had experienced problems regarding *job insecurity*, *loss or unemployment* in a partner relationship.

In addition, half believed that people don't get married because of a perception that it will *interfere with work and career*; and one in ten felt that one of the main challenges today in finding a partner is that *people are too busy focussing on their career* to meet people.

If issues surrounding employment are a barrier to meeting a future partner and are a negative force within partner relationships, it is unsurprising that *financial stress* and *work pressures* are key external influences contributing to relationship breakdown.







Survey Trends: 1998 to 2008

For the last decade, Relationships Australia has conducted the Indicators survey five times – in 1998, 2001, 2003, 2006 and 2008. Findings from the 1998 survey have been compared to the 2008 results to highlight significant trends over the past decade, regarding the main issues and concerns that Australians have with their relationships.

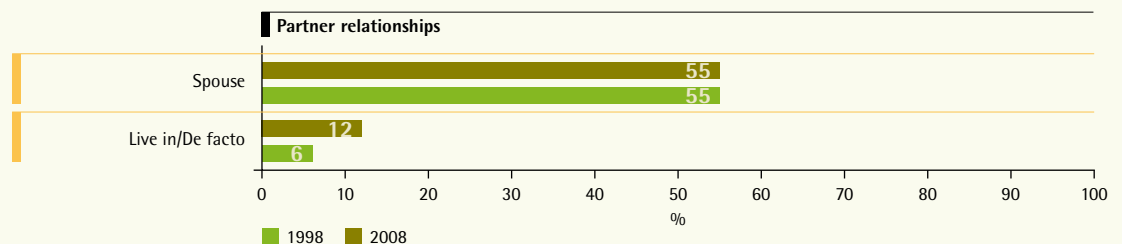
Partner relationships

Question:

2008: Which of the following relationships do you have at the moment?

1998: With which of these people do you have a relationship?

Marriage has remained the dominant form of partner relationship across the decade: in both the 1998 and 2008 surveys, a consistent 55% of respondents were involved in a spousal relationship. In 2008 however, the number of people in a live in/de facto relationship has doubled from 6% in 1998 to 12%.



Reasons why people get married

Question:

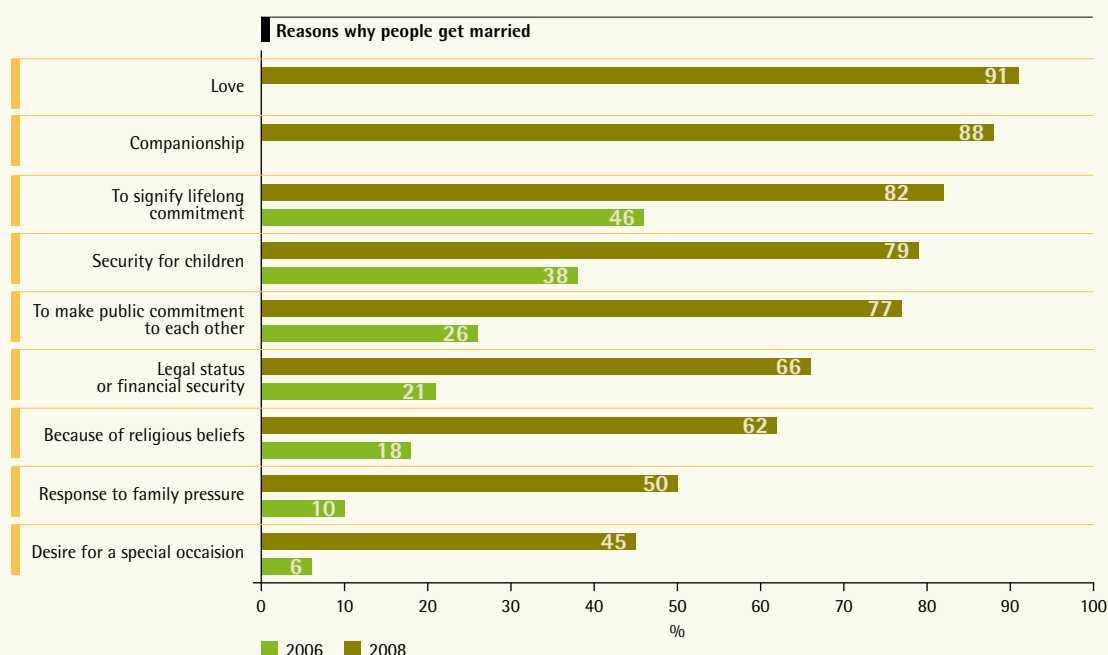
2008: Why do you think people get married nowadays?

1998: Thinking ahead to the year 2000, what will be the main reasons for people getting married?

This question was previously included in the 1998 survey however the responses *love* and *companionship* were added in 2008. In 1998, respondents were asked to nominate up to three reasons out of the seven listed factors which they thought would be the main reasons for people getting married, thinking ahead to the year 2000.

Although the numerical values of the responses vary between the 1998 and 2008 surveys, the comparison has revealed a trend in people's opinions about the factors affecting people's decision to get married.

Notwithstanding the addition of *love* and *companionship* responses in the 2008 survey, the top three reasons identified for people getting married remained: *to signify a lifelong commitment*; *security for children*; and *to make a public commitment to each other*.



Reasons why people don't get married

Question:

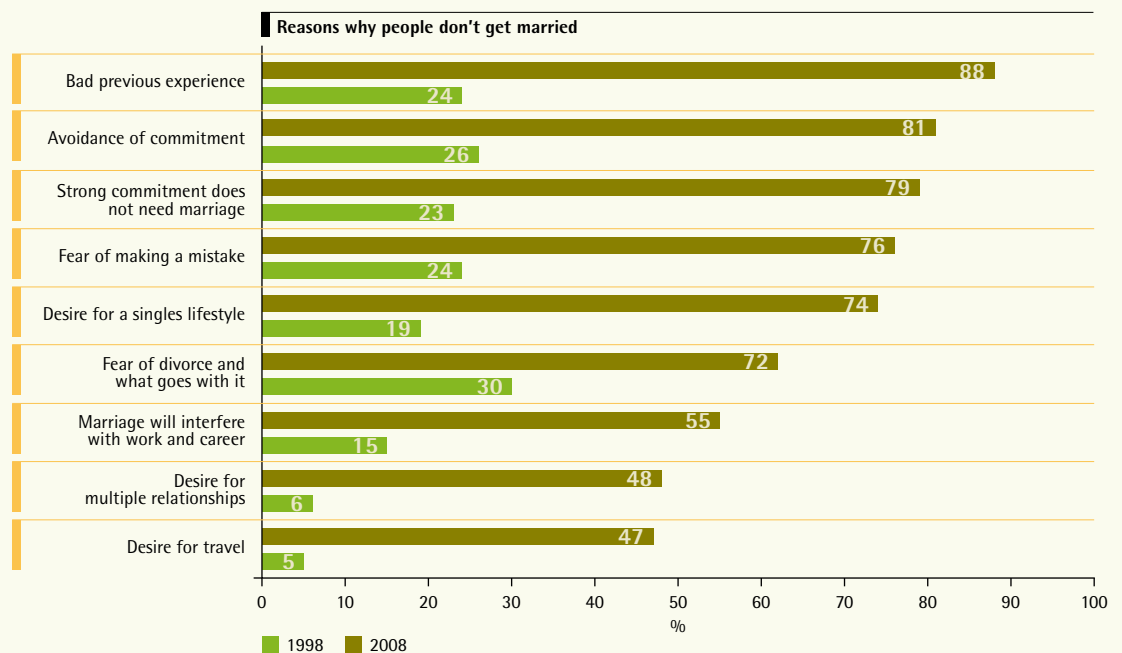
2008: Why do you think people don't get married nowadays?

1998: Thinking ahead to the year 2000, what will be the main reasons for people not getting married?

In 1998, respondents were asked to nominate up to three reasons from a list of nine reasons why people would not get married in the future. In 1998, *fear of divorce and what goes with it* (30%) were the highest ranking responses as the reasons people do not get married, followed by *avoidance of commitment* (26%).

However in 2008, the highest ranking response for why people don't get married was a *bad previous experience*, with *avoidance of commitment* remaining the second highest ranking.

The survey comparison shows that while people in 1998 were concerned about the consequences of divorce, in 2008 a *bad previous experience* - whether it be separation, divorce or other relationship problems - has negatively affected people's motivation to get married.



Relationship problems – now and then

Question:

2008: I am now going to read out a list of factors that other people have said have impacted upon their partner relationship. Which, if any, have you ever experienced in a relationship?

1998: Think about the single most difficult time you have experienced in any of your important relationships in recent years. Did any of the following contribute significantly to your difficulties?

In 1998, the pre-coded responses *alcohol and other drug issues* and *gambling* were independent codes. The 2008 survey combined the codes into *addictions such as alcohol, smoking, drugs or gambling*. *Work pressures* in 2008 were coded as *work or study demands* in 1998.

Notwithstanding the differences in numerical values and ranking order of the responses in the 1998 and the 2008 surveys, *work pressures/work or study demands*, *financial insecurity/difficulties* and *having/bringing up children* remained the top three highest ranking responses as factors that negatively impact relationships.

In 1998, *financial insecurity/difficulties* was the highest ranking response, which dropped to second highest ranking response in 2008 under *work pressures/work or study demands*.

