



# 2011 QATARI WOMEN SURVEY: Marriage and Fertility Patterns

Report of Findings

March, 2013

Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI)  
Qatar University  
P.O. Box 2713, Doha, Qatar



© 2013 by SESRI. All rights reserved.

However, this report may be freely quoted as long as the source is properly indicated.  
The following citation is suggested for this report:

Khan M. Nizam et al., 2011 Qatar Women Survey Report: Marriage and Fertility  
Patterns. Social and Economic Survey Research Institute. Qatar University,  
Doha, Qatar.

This report, published both in English and Arabic languages, is also available  
at: <http://sesri.qu.edu.qa/>

Additional information about the 2011 QWS may be obtained from:  
SESRI, Qatar University, P.O. Box 2713, Doha, Qatar. SESRI may also be reached by  
electronic mail at [sesri@qu.edu.qa](mailto:sesri@qu.edu.qa)

This report is published by:  
SESRI, Qatar University, P.O. Box 2713, Doha, Qatar.

First edition, 2013, Doha, Qatar

This report presents the main findings of the 2011 Qatar Women Survey (QWS), carried out by the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) of Qatar University. All phases of this project - planning, implementation, and report writing - were done by SESRI's professional staff. The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of SESRI or Qatar University.

**REPORT PREPARED BY:**

*M. Nizam Khan, Ph.D.*, Senior Researcher, SESRI, Qatar University

*Hanan Abdul-Rahim, Ph.D.*, Associate Director, SESRI, Qatar University

**CONTRIBUTED TO THE PREPARATION OF THE REPORT:**

*Kien Trung Le, Ph.D.*, Senior Researcher, SESRI, Qatar University

*Abdoulaye Diop, Ph.D.*, Head of Research, SESRI, Qatar University

*Darwish Al-Emadi, Ph.D.*, Director, SESRI, Qatar University

*Fatimah Ali A. Alkhaldi*, Research Assistant, SESRI, Qatar University

*Sara Ali Zikri*, Research Assistant, SESRI, Qatar University

*Mohammed Hassan Al Subaey*, Research Assistant, SESRI, Qatar University

*Semsia Al-Ali Mustafa*, Student Research Assistant, SESRI, Qatar University

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>SUMMARY OF FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Objectives of this Study .....	4
1.2 Survey Design .....	4
1.3 Sampling Weight .....	4
1.4 Instrument Development .....	5
1.5 Survey Administration .....	5
1.6 Sample Size, Non-Response and Sampling Error .....	6
1.7 Data Analysis .....	7
<b>CHAPTER 2: MARRIAGE PATTERNS .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	8
2.2 Husband's Marital Status at the Time of Wife's First Marriage Contract .....	9
2.3 Median Age at First Marriage Contract and Husband-Wife Age Differentials .....	10
2.4 Husband-Wife Educational Differentials .....	13
2.5 Gap between First Marriage Contract and Wedding .....	14
2.6 Who Initiated the First Marriage? .....	16
2.7 Post-wedding Living Arrangements .....	17
2.8 Respondent's Employment Status at the Time of First Marriage Contract .....	18
2.9 Consanguineous Marriage .....	20
<b>CHAPTER 3: FERTILITY PATTERNS .....</b>	<b>22</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	22
3.2 Children Ever Born .....	22
3.3 Median Average Age at First Childbirth .....	23
3.4 Gap between First Marriage Contract and First Childbirth .....	24
3.5 Modern Contraceptive Use .....	25
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>27</b>

# LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Table 1.6.1: Distribution of key characteristics of survey respondents.....	6
---	---

## CHAPTER 2: MARRIAGE PATTERNS

Figure 2.2.1: Husband's marital status at the time of the wife's first marriage contract (n=1135).....	9
Figure 2.2.2: Percentage of women first marrying previously-married men, by year of marriage contract (n=1112).....	9
Figure 2.2.3: Percentage of women first marrying previously-married men, by women's level of education (n=1134).....	10
Figure 2.3.1: Median age at first marriage contract and spousal age differentials, by year of contract (n=951).....	11
Figure 2.3.2: Distribution of couples by husband-wife age differentials (n=942).....	11
Figure 2.3.3: Median age at first marriage contract, by level of education (n=951).....	12
Figure 2.3.4: Median husband-wife age differentials at the time of marriage contract, by wife's level of education (n=942).....	12
Figure 2.4.1: Percentage of women whose level of education was at least one level higher than their husband's, by the marriage contract year (n=950).....	13
Figure 2.4.2: Wife's highest level of education completed compared to husband's highest level of education.....	14
Figure 2.5.1: Distribution of marriage contract-wedding gap (in days) (n=926).....	15
Figure 2.5.2: Median gap between first marriage & wedding (in days), by the marriage contract year (n=913).....	15
Figure 2.5.3: Median gap (in days) between first marriage & wedding, by wife's level of education.....	16
Figure 2.6.1: Percentage of marriages initiated by different intermediaries, by the marriage contract year (n=950).....	16
Figure 2.6.2: Percentage of family-arranged marriages, by women's level of education (n=969).....	17
Figure 2.7.1: Distribution of post-wedding living arrangements, by year of the marriage contract (n=879).....	17
Figure 2.7.2: Distribution of post-wedding living arrangements, by women's level of education (n=893).....	18
Figure 2.8.1: Distribution of respondent's employment status at the time of marriage contract (n=952).....	19
Figure 2.8.2: Respondent's employment status at the time marriage contract, by year of contract (n=952).....	19
Figure 2.9.1: Distribution of spouses by consanguinity (n=972).....	20

Figure 2.9.2: Distribution of spouses by consanguinity and year of the first marriage contract.....	21
Figure 2.9.3: Percentage of women who married close relatives (first and second cousin) by level of education (n=972).....	21

### CHAPTER 3: FERTILITY PATTERNS

Figure 3.2.1: Average number of children ever-born to ever-married women, by age group (n=1031).....	22
Figure 3.2.2: Average number of children ever-born to ever-married women aged 45-49, by their level of education (n=198).....	23
Figure 3.3.1: Median age of mother at first childbirth, by marriage cohort (n=830).....	24
Figure 3.3.2: Median age of mother at first childbirth, by respondent's level of education (n=845).....	24
Figure 3.4.1: Median gap between age at first marriage contract and first childbirth in years, by year of marriage (n=830).....	25
Figure 3.4.2: Median gap between first marriage contract and first childbirth in years, by respondent's level of education (n=829).....	25
Figure 3.5.1: Percentage of currently-married women who used modern birth control methods, by age group .....	26
Figure 3.5.2: "What is the main reason for not using any family planning methods?" .....	27

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This report presents the main findings of the “marriage and fertility patterns” modules of the 2011 Qatari Women Survey (QWS) conducted in May 2011. The main objective of this survey was to provide data on marriage, fertility and contemporary health issues of Qatari women. The planning and execution of the survey were done by the professional survey research team of the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) at Qatar University. However, the survey and report are the result of the efforts of many individuals and several organizations. I would like to express my appreciation to all individuals and organizations that contributed to the success of the survey. I would like to thank Dr. Abdoulaye Diop, Head of Research, for his efficient coordination of the survey, Dr. Elmogiera F. El Sayed Elawad, Manager of Survey Operations, and Abdolrahman Abdulaziz Rahmani, Project Assistant, for their work in administrating and managing the fieldwork, and Anis Miladi, Isam M. Abdelhameed & Ayman Al-Kahlout, Survey Research Technology Specialists, for their work on the programming of the survey. Special thanks are extended to all of the respondents who were interviewed for their time and willingness to provide the required information. I am grateful to all field staff whose support and dedication were paramount to the successful completion of this survey. I would like to thank all members of SESRI’s professional survey research team whose hard work made it possible to successfully complete this survey in a timely manner. Finally, I hope that this report contributes to the understanding of some important aspects of Qatari women’s lives and that the research findings presented here will be of use to policy makers and researchers alike.

*M. Nizam Khan, Ph.D.*  
Senior Researcher, SESRI  
Qatar University  
Doha, Qatar



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This report examines some key patterns of Qatari marriages and fertility. Data for this study come from a probability sample of 1,141 ever-married Qatari women aged 18-49 years, collected by the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) of Qatar University. Key findings of this study are discussed in this section while further details can be found in the full report that follows.

- **The median age at first marriage for women has been increasing:** The median age at first marriage for women and men in this survey was 20 and 24 years, respectively. Although men's age at first marriage has remained relatively stable over the years, women's median age at first marriage steadily increased from 15 years among pre-1985 marriages to 21 years among 2005-2011 marriages. The median age at first marriage is higher for women with higher levels of education.
- **Husband-wife age differentials at first marriage are decreasing:** Overall, husbands are 4 years older than their wives. Median spousal age differences have declined gradually over time (8 years for pre-1985 marriages and 3 years for 2005-2011 marriages). The median husband-wife age gap is lower among women who completed high school or higher levels of education than among those without a high school degree (4 years compared to 5 years).
- **The percentage of women with higher levels of education than their husbands has increased in recent years:** One third (33%) of women are more educated than their husbands. The extent of the gender disparity in education was lower for pre-1985 marriages (only 21%), but increased to 32 percent for 1985-1994 marriages and has remained at that level.
- **The percentage of women marrying previously-married men has declined over the years:** Overall, about 15 percent of the respondents (women who never married before) married previously-married men. However, this proportion was higher for women who married before 1985 (21%), after which it declined and stabilized at around 15 percent. The proportion of women marrying previously-married men is lower for women with higher levels of education.

- **The time gap between the first marriage contract (Aqd Qiran) and wedding has increased in recent years:** Overall half of the Qatari weddings take place about six months (180 days) after the first marriage contract. While 14 percent of weddings takes place on the day of the marriage contract, in 30 percent of marriages the wedding take place about one year or more after the marriage contract is signed. The median gap has increased steadily from 90 days for pre-1985 marriages to 210 days for 2005-2011 marriages. The median gap is higher for women who completed high school or higher levels of education (180 days) than for women with no high school degree (90 days).
- **The majority of marriages are still initiated by family:** A majority of Qatari marriages (75%) are initiated by family. However, there has been a decline in the proportion of family-initiated marriages over the years (81% for pre-1985 marriages compared to 72% for marriages from 2005-2011). The proportion of family-initiated marriages is lower among women with a high school degree (75%) or higher (71%) compared to women who did not complete their high school education (81%).
- **Co-residence with husband's family after the wedding is still popular:** Three-quarters of respondents indicated that they moved in with their in-laws after the wedding. Post-wedding co-residence with in-laws has increased in recent years despite some fluctuations. The proportion of couples living with their in-laws after the wedding first decreased from 80 percent for pre-1985 marriages to 67 percent for marriages from 1985-1994. After that it increased to 81 percent from 2005-2011. The proportion of couples living with their in-laws after the wedding is lower for women with a university degree (67%) than for those without a university degree (about 80%).
- **The prevalence of consanguineous marriages is still high and has increased in recent years:** Slightly less than half of the women interviewed (47%) were married to first or second cousins. There has been an increase in the prevalence of consanguineous marriages in recent years (43% of marriages from 1985-1994 compared to 53% of marriages from 2005-2011). The prevalence of consanguineous marriages is negatively correlated with the level of women's education.
- **The average number of births per woman is high:** Overall, among ever-married women aged 18-49 years, the average number of births is 3.5. Ever-married women aged 45-49 years, who can be considered to have completed childbearing, have an average of 4.9 children. Women with no high school degree have more children ever-born compared to women who completed secondary education and beyond.

- **Median age of mother at first childbirth is increasing:** The median age of mother at first childbirth is 21 years and it has increased over the years. The age at first birth of Qatari women was 18 years for those married in 1975-1984 while it was 23 years for those married in 2005-2011. The median age of mother at first childbirth is higher for women with higher levels of education.
- **Gap between the age at first marriage and first childbirth has decreased in recent years:** For 50 percent of the couples who married between 1975-1984, the first child was born 2 years after the marriage, the gap decreased to 1 year during 1995-2011. The gap was higher among women who did not complete a high school degree.
- **Use of modern contraceptive methods is common:** About half (47%) of currently married Qatari women reported ever using modern contraceptives and about one-third (32%) are currently using contraceptives. Those who do not use contraceptives most often report a desire for additional children (46%) or a concern about side effects (27%), rather than personal (13%) or family opposition (5%) to contraception as the reasons for non-use.

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Objectives of this Study

Qatar is undergoing rapid social change, economic development, and prosperity. This new era has brought many changes to the traditional lives and values of the Qatari people, especially with regard to the lives of Qatari women. The 2011 Qatari Women Survey (QWS) conducted by the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) of Qatar University was an attempt to understand the lives of Qatari women in terms of family formation, reproduction, and health awareness in the context of these changes. This report examines some key patterns of Qatari marriages and fertility based on data collected by the 2011 QWS.

## 1.2. Survey Design

The sampling frame of the 2011 Qatar Women Survey (QWS) comes from the Qatar General Electricity and Water Company (Kahramaa), covering all households in Qatar. The State of Qatar is divided into seven municipalities, each further divided into several zones. Each zone is considered an independent administrative stratum. After ordering the residences in each zone by location, a probability-based sample was drawn from each stratum. A respondent was randomly selected via two-stage sampling. In the first stage, households were randomly selected from each zone with proportionate stratification. In the second stage, for each household, from a roster of all ever married female household members between 18 and 49 years old one female household member was picked randomly. All eligible females in the rosters had the same chance of being selected at this stage.

## 1.3. Sampling Weight

The sampling weight in the data are constructed from three components: the base weights reflecting the sample selection probability; the adjustment factors to account for the non-response; and the calibration to make the survey results in line with the population estimates based on the 2010 Qatar Census.

#### **1.4. Instrument Development**

The instrument used for data collection was designed in English and later translated into standard Arabic by a professional translation organization. After the translation, the Arabic version was checked by researchers at SESRI who are fluent in both English and Arabic. Since data for this survey were collected using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interview) mode, a CAPI data capture and entry system was designed using the questionnaire. The questionnaire was pretested in April of 2011 with interviews of 50 ever-married Qatari women. Based on the data collected, observations in the field, and suggestions made by the pretest field team, necessary adjustments were made in the wording and translations of the questionnaire.

#### **1.5. Survey Administration**

This survey was administered using CAPI, a computer assisted data collection mode. The data for this survey were collected via face-to-face interviews and a laptop computer was used to capture the data using “Blaise” software, a CAPI programming module developed by Statistics Netherland.

All interviewers for this survey were females and all interviews were done in Arabic. During data collection, a male field supervisor first paid a visit to the selected household, talked to an adult household member, and explained the purpose of the study. If the household agreed to participate in the survey, then the supervisor introduced the interviewer to the household to start the interview. Interviewers first collected the names of all ever-married women aged 18-64 years by interviewing an adult household member and then entered all names into the computer using “Blaise”. Blaise then randomly picked one woman from the list for the interview. If the selected woman was not available for an interview at that time, a second appointment was made to interview her later. Up to three attempts were made to complete an interview. A consent form was read to the respondent before the interview. If the respondent declined to participate in the survey at any point during the interview, the interview was concluded immediately.

A total of 60 female field workers were recruited. All the interviewers recruited were non-Qatari Arabs, mainly from Sudan and Egypt. All interviewers underwent an intensive three-day training session, which included instructions on how to use the Blaise CAPI system, an explanation of each question, a discussion of how to conduct interviews, mock interviews, and some basic information about Qatari culture. All fieldwork and training were carried out by the Survey Operations Unit of SESRI. After data collection, all individual interviews are merged and saved in a single BLAISE data file. This data set was then cleaned, labeled, weighted, and saved in the Stata statistical software format for analysis.

Fieldwork for this survey was carried out between 2 May and 30 May 2011. On average, an interview took approximately 30 minutes.

## 1.6. Sample Size, Non-Response and Sampling Error

This report is based on a probability sample of 1,141 ever married Qatari women, and response rate for the survey was 68 percent. With this numbers of completes, the maximum sampling errors for a percentage are +/-2.96 percentage points. The calculation of this sampling error takes into account the design effects (i.e., the effects from weighting and stratification). One possible interpretation of the sampling errors is: if the survey is conducted 100 times using the exact same procedure, the sampling errors would include the "true value" in 95 out of the 100 surveys.

### Key Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Table 1.6.1 shows the characteristics of 1,141 respondents by their age, marital and employment status at the time of interview, year of first marriage contract, and highest level of education completed.

**Table 1.6.1: Distribution of key characteristics of survey respondents**

Characteristics	% (N=1,141)
<b>Age</b>	
18-24	14
25-29	18
30-34	19
35-39	16
40-44	17
45-49	16
All	100
<b>Current Marital Status</b>	
Married	88
Divorced	9
Widowed	3
All	100
<b>Year of First Marriage Contract (Aqd Qiran)</b>	
1975-1984	13
1985-1994	27
1995-2004	33
2005-2011	27
All	100
<b>Level of Schooling Completed</b>	
Did not complete high school	30
Completed high school	36
Completed university degree	34
All	100
<b>Current Employment Status</b>	
Employed	38
Not employed, but used to work before	15
Never worked	47
All	100

## 1.7. Data Analysis

Data in this report are presented using simple tabulations and graphs. Stata V.12 was used for all data management and analysis, and Excel was used for producing graphs. Most key data are presented against two important variables: the highest level of education attained by the woman at the time of the survey and the year of the woman's first marriage contract (marriage cohort). For analysis purposes, the highest level of education completed was divided into three categories: (1) did not complete high school; (2) completed high school; and (3) completed a university degree. Individuals who completed at least a four-year bachelor's degree program were included in the "completed university degree" group. Individuals who completed some years of college credit or an associate's degree but not a four-year bachelor's degree, were included with the "completed high school" group.

To capture changes in marriage and fertility patterns over time, marriage cohorts were divided into four groups: (1) 1975-84; (2) 1985-94; (3) 1995-2004, and (4) 2005-2011. Each period reflects pivotal points of important events generally regarded as having significantly affected the lives and values of the Qatari population, especially Qatari women. The 1970s is regarded as a milestone for education in Qatar. In 1973, Qatar's first national College of Education was founded with a separate campus for male and female students. In 1977, the College of Education was expanded to establish Qatar University. During the 1980s to late 1990s, Qatar witnessed steady and rapid increases in the participation of women in the labor force. The modern era of Qatar began in 1995 when the current Emir assumed power. This political transition came on the heels of the arrival of the internet and cable television in early 1990s amidst a steep increase in revenues related to the growth of hydrocarbon production in Qatar. Finally, by the middle of the first decade of the 2000s many significant laws had been passed that dramatically expanded the participation of Qatari women in society.

In all analyses, sampling weights were used to ensure the results obtained were representative of all ever-married women in Qatar. This report is organized into three chapters. This chapter described survey objectives and methods. Chapter 2 discusses marriage patterns, and chapter 3 examines patterns of fertility.

## CHAPTER 2: MARRIAGE PATTERNS

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter examines some key patterns of Qatari marriages based on data collected by the 2011 QWS. Although the 2011 QWS collected data on up to two marriages per respondent (first marriage and current marriage, if married more than once), this report is confined to an analysis of data from the respondent's first marriage.

This chapter is organized into nine sections. Section 2.2 discusses the husband's marital status at the time of the wife's first marriage contract. Section 2.3 describes the median age at first marriage. Section 2.4 describes spousal educational differentials. Section 2.5 explores the time gap between first marriage contract and the wedding ceremony. Section 2.6 describes the role of family and friends in the initiation of the first marriage, and section 2.7 provides information on post-wedding living arrangements. Section 2.8 describes employment status at the time of marriage contract. Section 2.9 discusses consanguineous marriage. To better understand the data presented in this chapter we recommend you review the brief overview of the Qatari marriage system described in the box insert. Those familiar with the system can continue on to section 2.2.

#### **The Qatari Marriage System: A brief Introduction**

Although Qatar is experiencing rapid social changes, it maintains many traditional institutions and much of its cultural heritage. Marriage and family are the two key Qatari institutions that still remain highly traditional. Qatar is a gender-segregated society, and Qatari social norms strictly limit interactions between men and women, with the exception of some very close family members. It is rare for Qatari men and women to know each other before their marriage contract, as an overwhelming majority of Qatari marriages are arranged through an extensive network of female relatives. Marriage between relatives, especially between first cousins, is common.

Qatari marriage involves several stages, starting with the "selection of partners", after which the "marriage contract or engagement" (Aqd Qiran) and the "wedding" take place, followed by the "consummation" of the marriage. In the first step, the groom's female relatives select a potential bride from a similar social standing. Upon her and her family's consent, marriage papers are signed (engagement), making the couple legally married. After the engagement (signing of the contract), some families allow the couple to share some supervised time. If the couple realizes after the engagement and before the wedding that they are incompatible for any reason, the engagement may be called off. If the couple thinks that they are compatible, only then are arrangements made for the next step, which is the wedding itself.

Marriage is consummated only after the wedding. The signing of the marriage contract and the wedding can take place on the same day or there can be a gap between the two. In recent years, the gap between the signing of the marriage contract and the wedding is thought to have increased, but until now no data have confirmed that perception. Indecision between the couple about whether or not they are compatible, rising wedding costs, and long waiting lists for popular marriage venues are thought to be the major reasons for this delay.

Marriage in Qatar is patrilocal. Under this system, a newly married woman usually moves away from her family of origin to her in-laws'/husband's house after the marriage. In the past, women did not have a say in any stage of the marriage process. Now a woman's consent is sought in most cases, and she can refuse at any time before the wedding if she does not like the selected groom. Many women now also participate in other decisions such as venue selection, wedding dress selection, and post-marital living arrangements. Increased levels of education among women, their participation in employment, as well as access to electronic media and cable/satellite TV are thought to have a deep impact on the marital choices of men and women in Qatar.



## 2.2. Husband's Marital Status at the Time of Wife's First Marriage Contract

Respondents were asked about their husband's marital status at the time of their first marriage contract. As shown in Figure 2.2.1, most Qatari women (85%) reported that their husbands were never-married at the time of their first marriage contract. About one in ten Qatari women (9%) married a currently-married man, and one in sixteen (6%) married a widowed or divorced man. In Qatar, it is legal for men to marry up to 4 wives.

**Figure 2.2.1: Husband's marital status at the time of the wife's first marriage contract (n=1135)**

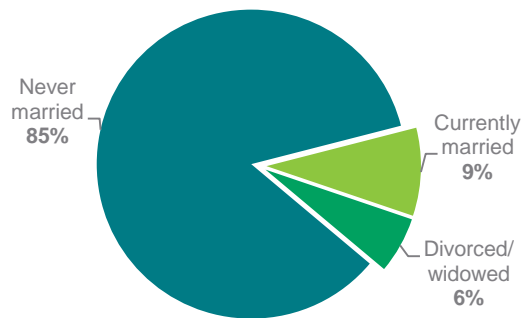
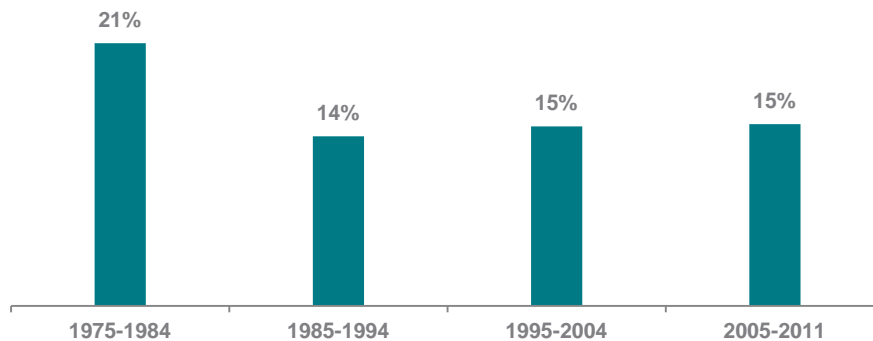


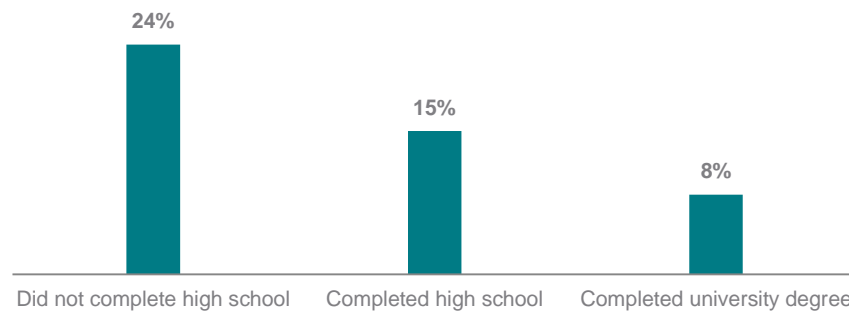
Figure 2.2.2 shows the percentage of women who first married previously-married (i.e. currently married or divorced/widowed) men by the year of the marriage contract signing. The data show a decrease in this percentage in recent years from 21 percent in pre-1985 marriages to approximately 15 percent beginning in 1985. Since then this percentage has remained stable.

**Figure 2.2.2: Percentage of women first marrying previously-married men, by year of marriage contract (n=1112)**



The percentage of women first marrying previously-married men declined with the increasing levels of women's education (Figure 2.2.3). Only eight percent of the women who completed a university degree married previously-married men. Women who completed a high school degree were twice as likely (15%) to do so, and women who did not complete high school were three times more likely (24%) to have married previously-married men than women who completed a university degree.

**Figure 2.2.3: Percentage of women first marrying previously-married men, by women's level of education (n=1134)**

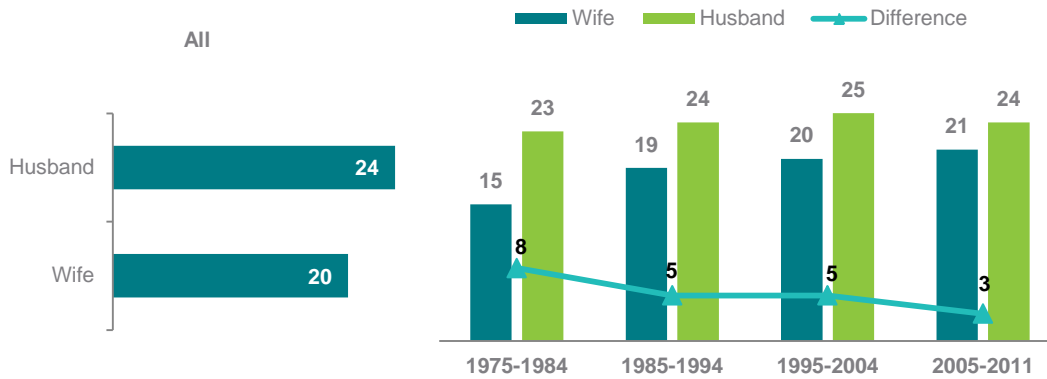


Since the majority of respondents married “previously-never married men”, and since it only makes sense to compare marriage patterns of men and women who never married before, the rest of the analysis in the remainder of the chapter is confined to those 972 women whose husbands had never been married at the time of the couple's marriage contract.

### 2.3. Median Age at First Marriage and Husband-Wife Age Differentials

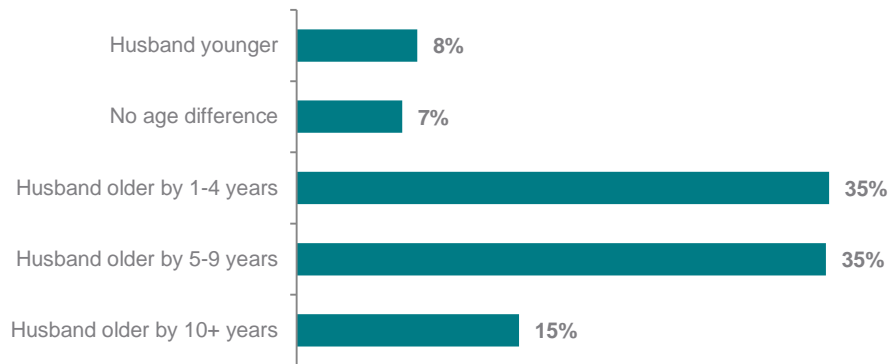
Overall, the median age at first marriage of women and men is about 20 and 24 years, respectively (Figure 2.3.1). However, there has been a steady increase over the years in women's age at first marriage, while the husband's age at first marriage remained relatively stable at 24 years. For example, women who married before 1985 had the median age at first marriage of 15 years, which increased to 21 for women who first married between 2005-2011. Overall, the average spousal age difference (husband's age minus the wife's age) is approximately 4 years. However, there is a steady decline in the spousal age difference over the years. In marriages that happened before 1985, husbands were about 8 years older than their wives. The age difference has declined to 3 years for marriages signed from 2005-2011 (see the line graph in Figure 2.3.1).

**Figure 2.3.1: Median age at first marriage contract and spousal age differentials, by year of marriage contract (n=951)**



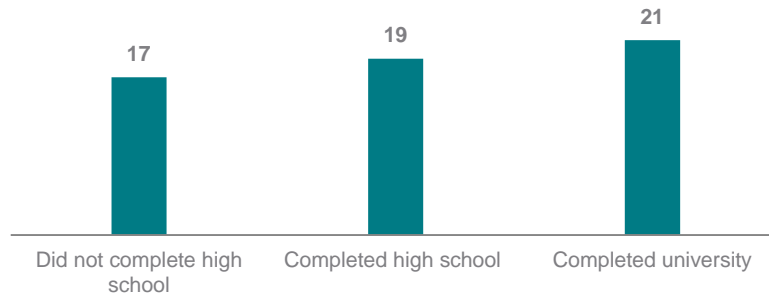
Fifteen percent of the respondents reported that their husbands were ten or more years older than them (Figure 2.3.2). Approximately one third of the women’s husbands were between five and nine years older, and another third of the husbands were one to four years older. In seven percent of the cases there was no age difference, while 8 percent of the women reported that their husbands were younger than them.

**Figure 2.3.2. Distributions of couples by husband-wife age differentials (n=942)**



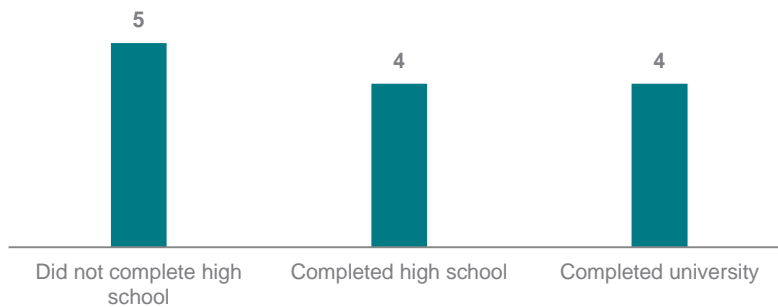
Respondent's median age at first marriage contract was higher at higher levels of education (Figure 2.3.3). It was 17 years for women with no high school degree, 19 years for women who completed a high school degree, and 21 years for women who completed a university degree.

**Figure 2.3.3: Median age at first marriage contract of the respondent, by level of education (n=951)**



The median spousal age difference at the time of first marriage contract was 5 years for women who did not complete their high school degree, and it was 4 years for those who did complete it, as well as for those who completed a university degree (Figure 2.3.4).

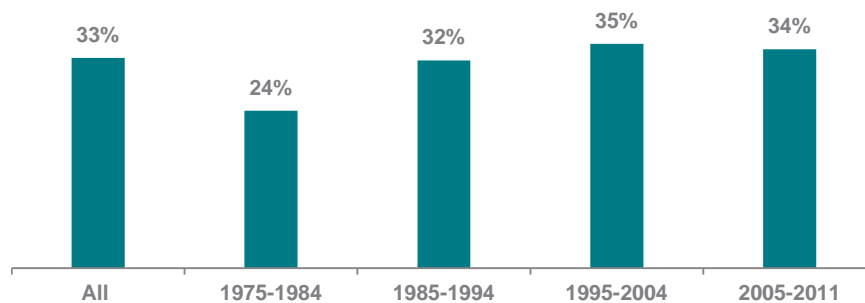
**Figure 2.3.4: Median husband-wife age differentials at the time of marriage contract, by wife's level of education (n=942)**



## 2.4. Husband-Wife Educational Differentials

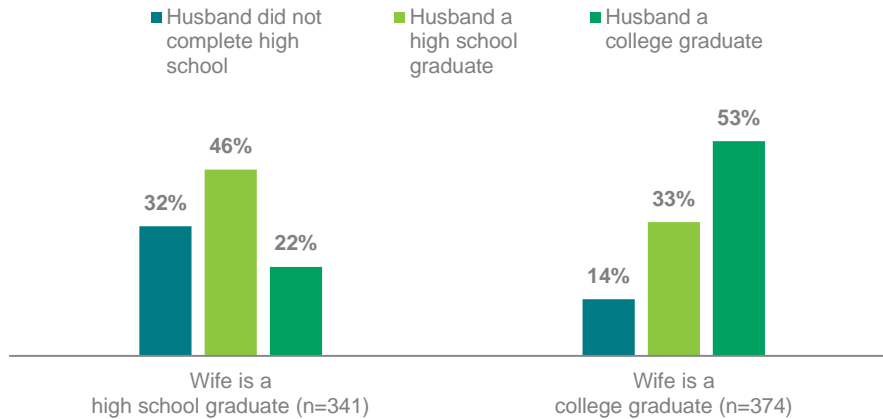
Figure 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 show the difference in education between husbands and wives at the time of marriage. Overall, in one third of the cases, the wife's education exceeded that of her husband by at least one level (Figure 2.4.1). Across marriage cohorts, this education gap increased consistently until 1995-2004. While the wife exceeded her husband in educational attainment in 24 percent of marriages contracted prior to 1985, this percentage reached 34 percent in recent time periods.

**Figure 2.4.1: Percentage of women whose level of education was at least one level higher than their husband's, by the marriage contract year (n=950)**



About one-third of women who completed a university degree married men who completed only a high school diploma (Figure 2.4.2). Fourteen percent of university educated women married men with less than a high school degree. For women, who completed a high school degree, about one third (32%) of them had husbands with less than a high school education.

**Figure 2.4.2: Wife's highest level of education completed, compared to husband's highest level of education**



## 2.5. Gap between the First Marriage Contract and Wedding<sup>1</sup>

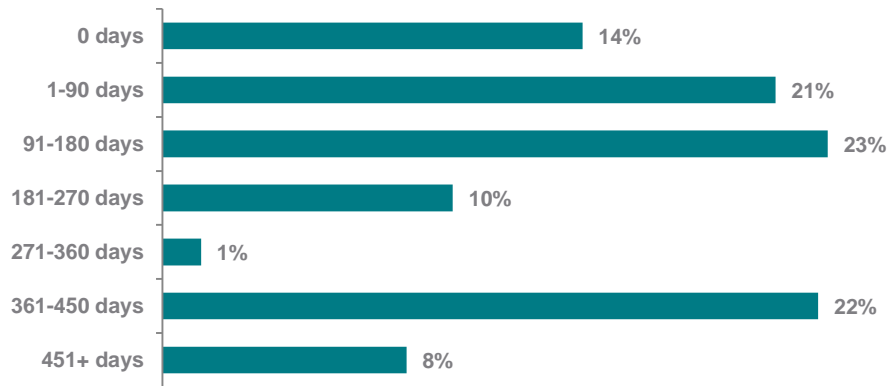
Information about the gap in time between the first marriage contract and the wedding was collected by asking the following two questions:

- i. "Did you have a wedding ceremony after your first Aqd Qiran?"
- ii. "How many years, months, and days after your first Aqd Qiran did the wedding ceremony take place?"

If the answer to the first question was "yes", the respondent was asked the second question. For this analysis, all time gap information was converted into days. In 14 percent of couples, the first marriage contract and the wedding took place on the same day, while in 30 percent of couples, it took about one year or more for the wedding to take place (Figure 2.5.1). More than half of the couples (54%) had their wedding within 1 to 270 days after the marriage contract.

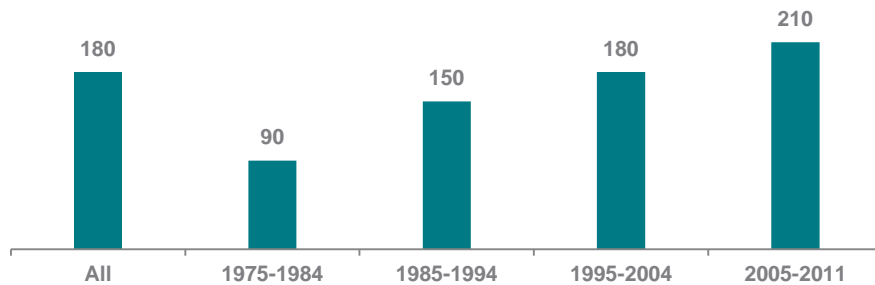
<sup>1</sup> Of all the respondents interviewed, 95% reported to have wedding, 3 percent was still waiting for the wedding, and for the rest 2%, either marriage contract was terminated or husband died before wedding.  
2011 Qatar Women Survey: Marriage and Fertility Patterns

**Figure 2.5.1: Distribution of marriage contract-wedding gap (in days) (n=926)**



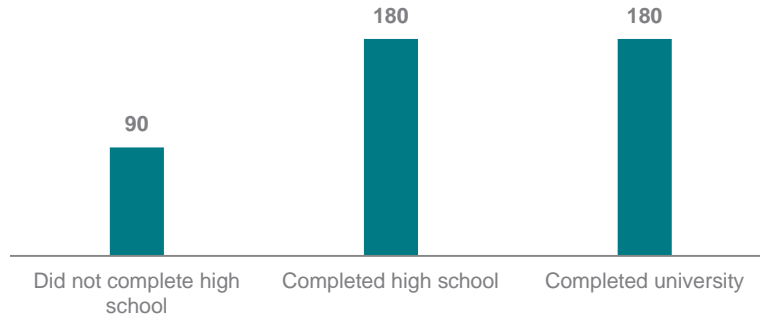
Overall, the median gap between the first marriage contract and the wedding is 180 days (Figure 2.5.2). However, after 1984, the average gap widened steadily. For pre-1985 marriages, the average gap was 90 days, while for marriages contracted between 2005-2011 it had increased to 210 days.

**Figure 2.5.2: Median gap between first marriage & wedding (in days), by the marriage contract year (n=913)**



The gap in time between the marriage contract and the wedding is higher for those women who completed secondary education and beyond (180 days), as opposed to those who did not complete a high school degree (90 days) (Figure 2.5.3).

**Figure 2.5.3: Median gap (in days) between marriage and wedding, by wife's level of education**



## 2.6. Who Initiated the First Marriage?

Respondents were asked whether their first marriage was initiated by family members, friends, or by their own choice. Figure 2.6.1 shows that the majority of all marriages (75%) were arranged by family, although there has been a slow, but steady decline in that percentage over the years. About 81 percent of the marriages contracted prior to 1985 were initiated by family. This amount decreased to 74 percent during 1985-1994 and remained at the same level during 1995-2004. In recent years, about 72 percent of marriages were initiated by family members.

**Figure 2.6.1: Percentage of marriages initiated by different intermediaries, by the marriage contract year (n=950)**

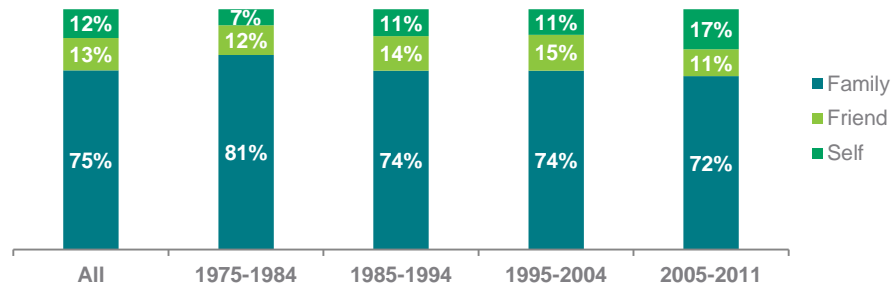
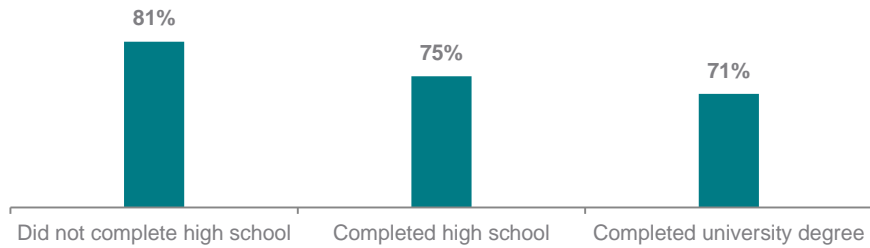




Figure 2.6.2 examines the relationship between the percentage of family-arranged marriages and the woman's level of education. Women who did not graduate from high school have the highest level of family-arranged marriages (81%). In contrast, 75 percent of those who completed high school and 71 percent of the women who completed a university degree had their marriages arranged by their family.

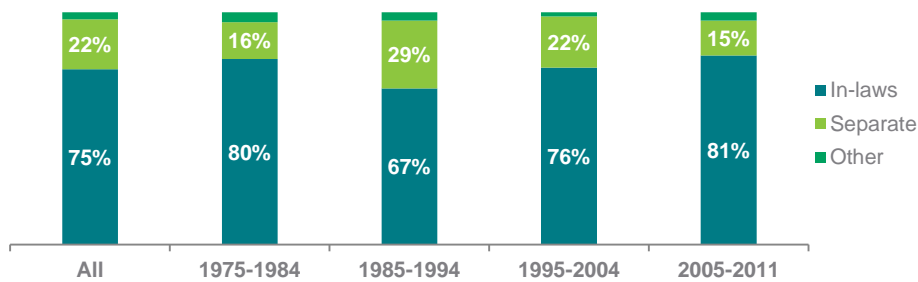
**Figure 2.6.2: Percentage of family-arranged marriages, by women's level of education (n=969)**



## 2.7. Post-wedding Living Arrangements

As mentioned before, usually women move to either husband's own residence or to the husband's parents' house after the wedding. In this survey, respondents were asked about their post-wedding living arrangements: did the couple live on their own or with their in-laws (husband's family)? The offered options were: (1) lived in a separate house, (2) lived together with in-laws, and (3) other. Three-quarters (75%) of the women indicated that they moved in with their in-laws after the wedding, while 22 percent report that they moved to a separate residence with their husbands (leftmost column of Figure 2.7.1).

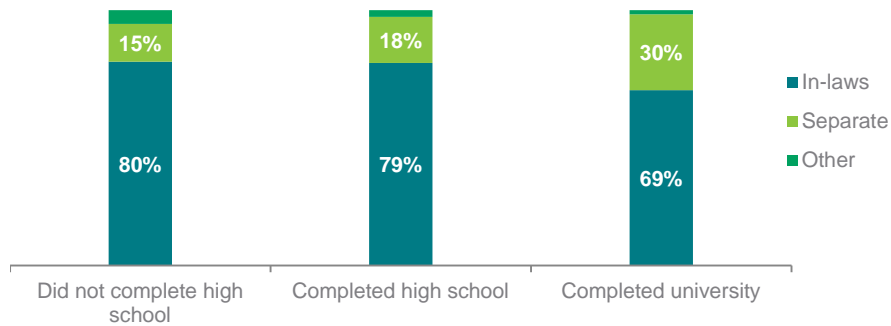
**Figure 2.7.1: Distribution of post-wedding living arrangements, by year of the marriage contract (n=879)\***



\* Note: The number for "other" categories is not shown. They vary between 2 to 4%

The percentage of women who moved in with their in-laws after the wedding has fluctuated over the years. This figure was 80 percent from 1975-1984, and decreased to 67 percent in the next marriage cohort (1985 – 1994). However, after the mid-90s co-residence with in-laws has increased consistently and persists through recent years. From 2005-2011, 81 percent of women lived with their in-laws after the wedding. Figure 2.7.2 shows the relationship between the type of post-nuptial living arrangements and a woman’s level of education. The proportion of women who moved to their in-laws’ house after the wedding is lower among women who hold a university degree (69%), as opposed to those with lower levels of education (about 80%).

**Figure 2.7 2: Distribution of post-wedding living arrangements, by women’s level of education (n=893)\***

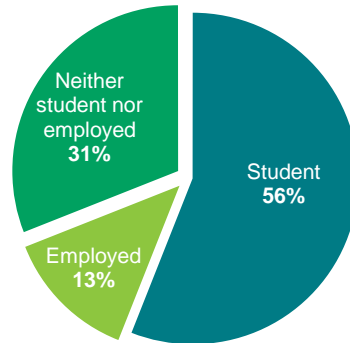


\* Note: Numbers for “other” categories are not shown. They vary between 2 to 5%.

## 2.8. Respondent’s Employment Status at the Time of First Marriage Contract

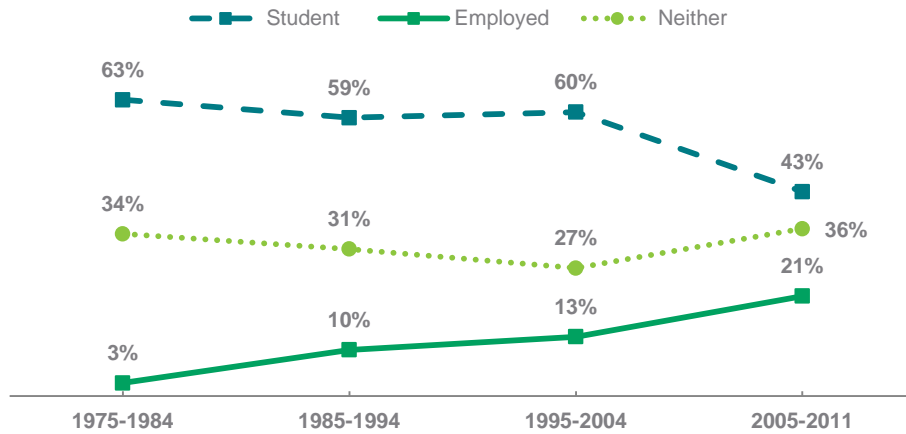
More than half of the respondents (56%) were students and 13 percent were employed at the time of their first marriage contract (Figure 2.8.1). The rest 31% were neither students nor employed when they signed a marriage contract.

**Figure 2.8.1: Distribution of respondent's employment status at the time of marriage contract (n=952)**



Employment status shows some clear changes across marriage cohorts (Figure 2.8.2). The percentage of women employed at the time of marriage increased steadily. While only 3 percent of the women who married before 1985 were employed, this figure increased to 21 percent for the women who first married in 2005-2011. The percentage of students at the time of the marriage contract decreased slowly until 1995-2004 (from 63% to 60%) before it declined sharply to 43 percent afterward.

**Figure 2.8.2: Respondent's employment status at the time marriage contract, by year of contract (n=952)**



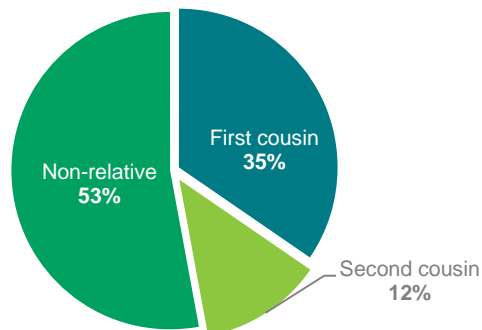
## 2.9. Consanguineous Marriage

Marriage between close relatives is widespread in Qatar, and it is a vital component of the Qatari social structure. In this study, respondents were asked if their husband was a blood relative. If the answer was “Yes”, the respondents were asked to specify the exact type of kin relationship using the following answer options:

1. Father's brother's son (*ibn al amm*)
2. Father's sister's son (*ibn al ammah*)
3. Mother's brother's son (*ibn al khal*)
4. Mother's sister's son (*ibn al khalah*)
5. Second cousin (father's side)
6. Second cousin (mother's side)

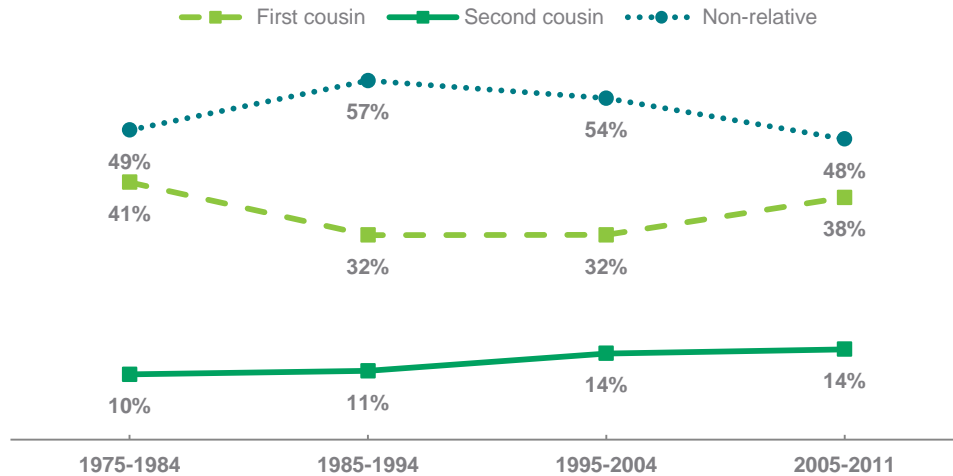
For this chapter, women are divided into three groups based on their relationship with their husband: (1) first cousin (options 1 through 4), (2) second cousin (option 5 and 6), and (3) non-relative. The data show that almost half of the women (47%) are related to their husbands by blood, primarily being married to their first cousins (35%) (Figure 2.9.1).

**Figure 2.9.1: Distribution of spouses by consanguinity (n=972)**



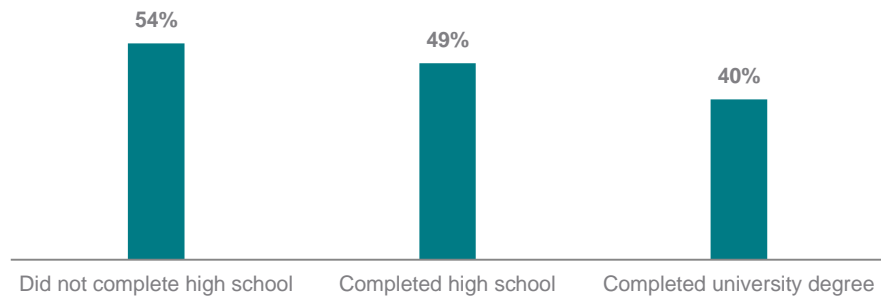
The data show some fluctuations in the percentage of consanguineous marriages over time (Figure 2.9.2). Namely, the percentage of marriages to first cousins decreased from 41 percent before 1985 to 32 percent from 1985 to 1994. The percentage remained at that level until 2004. It increased again to 38 percent from 2005 to 2011.

**Figure 2.9.2: Distribution of spouses by consanguinity and year of the first marriage contract**



The percentage of women who married close relatives (i.e. first or second cousins) decreased as the women's level of education increased (Figure 2.9.3). While 40 percent of the women with a university degree married close relatives, about half (49%) of the women with a high school degree and more than half (54%) of the women with below high school education married close relatives.

**Figure 2.9.3: Percentage of women who married close relatives (first and second cousin) by level of education (n=972)**



## CHAPTER 3: FERTILITY PATTERNS

### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter examines different measures related to the fertility of Qatari women. Fertility measures in this chapter are based on the self-reported birth histories of the respondents. Data were collected in two parts. First, each woman was asked a series of questions about the number of her children living with her, the number living elsewhere, and the number who had died. Next, for each live birth, she was asked to provide the name, sex, date of birth, and age.

This chapter is organized into several sections. Section 3.2 presents information on total live births per woman. Section 3.3 examines the woman's age at first childbirth. Section 3.4 discusses the gap in time between the first marriage and first childbirth. And finally, section 3.5 provides information on contraceptive use.

### 3.2. Children Ever Born (CEB)

The number of children ever born to a particular woman is a measure of her lifetime fertility experience up to the moment at which the data were collected. In this study, the average number of children ever-born was computed as the ratio of the number of children born alive to all ever-married women, as of the survey date, to the number of all ever-married women.

Figure 3.2.1 presents the distribution of the average number of children born alive across different age groups. Overall, the data indicate that ever-married Qatari women have an average of 3.5 children born alive. Women aged 18-24 gave birth to an average of one child, those in early thirties to 3.3 children, and those at the end of their reproductive life (age 45-49) to 4.9 children.

**Figure 3.2.1: Average number of children ever-born to ever-married women, by age group (n=1031)**

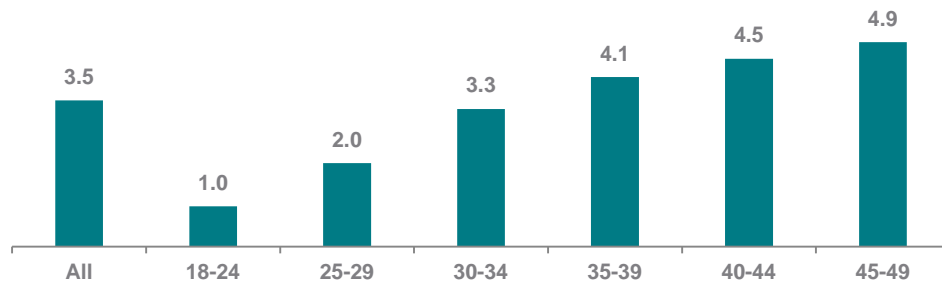
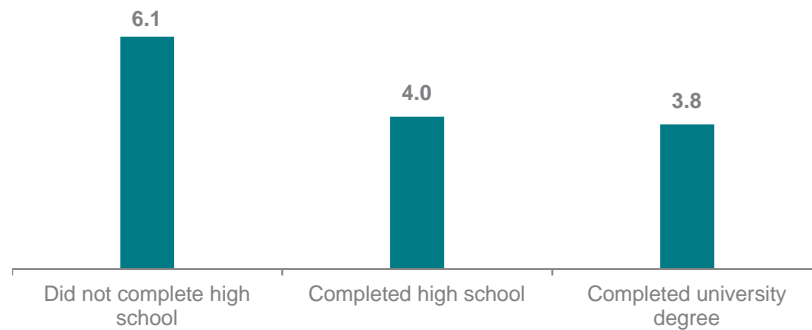


Figure 3.2.2 examines the relationship between the total number of CEB and women's education for women who aged 45 and older. In this figure, we limited our analysis to women aged 45 and above because using a cross section of data including younger women who have not completed their fertility would result in an underestimation of fertility. Among women who did not complete any high school degree, children ever-born was the highest (6.1 children), followed by women with a high school degree (4.0 children) and a university degree (3.8 children).

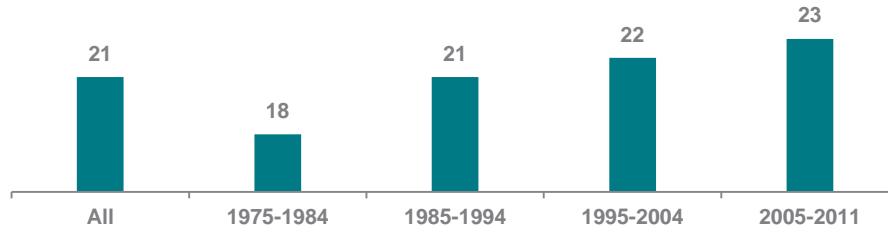
**Figure 3.2.2: Average number of children ever-born to ever-married women aged 45-49, by their level of education (n=198)**



### 3.3. Median Age at First Childbirth

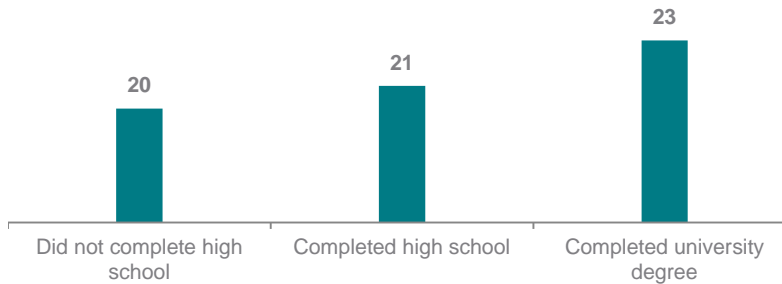
Figure 3.3.1 shows the trends in ever-married women's median age at first childbirth, among those who ever had a birth. Overall, the median age first childbirth is 21 and it has increased consistently over the years. For those who got married from 1975-1984 it was about 18 years. Since then the age at first childbirth has shown a continued rise. Women who first married between 2005-2011 had their first child approximately five years later than those married between 1975-1984.

**Figure 3.3.1: Median age of mother at first childbirth, by marriage cohort (n=830)**



Ever-married women's median age at first childbirth has increased with the increase in the level of women's education (Figure 3.3.2). It was 20 years for women with no high school degree, 21 for women who completed a high school degree, and 23 years for women who completed a university degree.

**Figure 3.3.2: Median age of mother at first childbirth, by respondent's level of education (n=845)**



### 3.4. Gap between First Marriage Contract and First Childbirth

To calculate gap between the first marriage contract and first childbirth, only those ever-married women are included who reported at least one live birth<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Ever-married women who are included to calculate median age at first marriage contract in figure 3.4.1 include all ever married women whether they reported any live births or not. Median age at first marriage for ever married women who reported at least one child birth are slightly different from the groups in figure 3.4.1.



Overall, the median gap between the first marriage contract and first childbirth is 2 years (Figure 3.4.1). It decreased from 2 years during 1975-1994 to 1 during 1995-2004, and then remained at that level from 2005-2011.

**Figure 3.4.1: Median gap between age at first marriage contract and first childbirth in years, by year of marriage (n=830)**

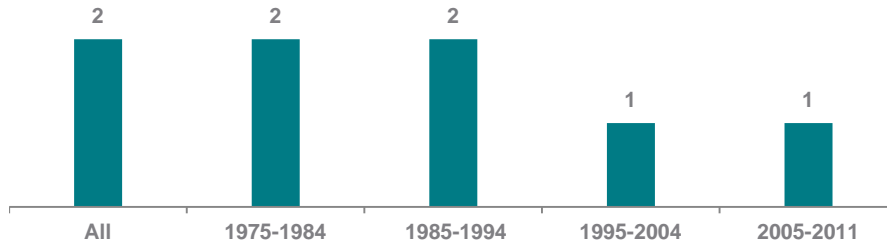
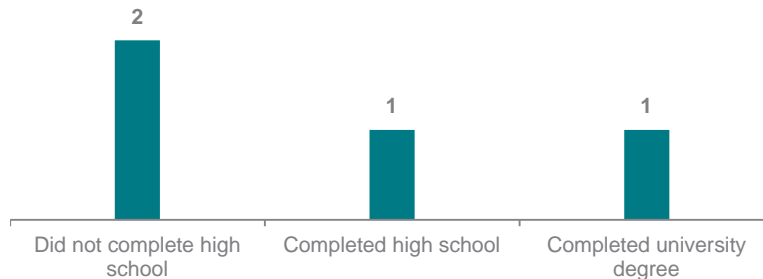


Figure 3.4.2 shows that the marriage contract-first childbirth gap was higher among women who did not complete high school education (2 years) compared to women who completed their high school education and beyond (1 year).

**Figure 3.4.2: Median gap between first marriage contract and first childbirth in years, by respondent's level of education (n=829)**

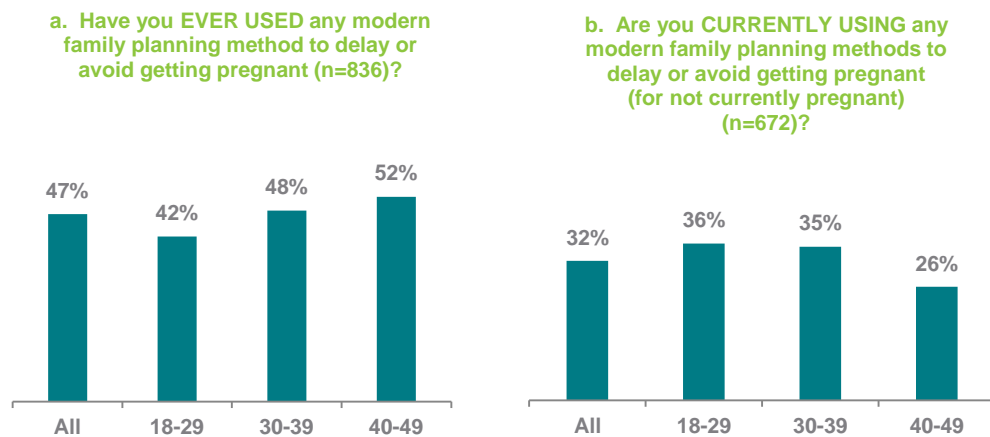


### 3.5. “Modern” Contraceptive Use

Questions about modern contraceptive use were asked only of currently married women. Respondents were asked about their use of any “modern birth control methods” rather than their use of any specific methods. Approximately half of the respondents (47%) said that they had used contraceptives at some time in their life (Figure 3.5.1a). The rate of ever using contraceptives is lower for the youngest age groups (42%) than for the oldest

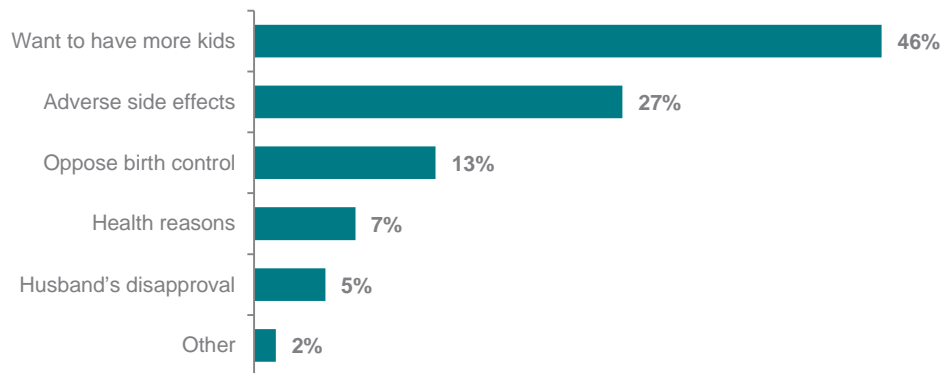
age groups (52%). Questions about current use of contraception were asked to only those currently married women who were not pregnant at the time of survey. About two-thirds of the respondents (32%) reported that they were currently using contraceptives (Figure 3.5.1b). While about one-quarter of the oldest respondents (40-49 years) reported to currently use contraceptives, it was slightly more than one-third for younger age groups (18-39 years).

**Figure 3.5.1: Percentage of currently-married women who used modern birth control methods, by age group**



Respondents who reported never using contraception (n=439) were asked about their main reasons for this decision. Personal reasons and social opposition (oppose birth control, husband's disapproval) to birth control methods were mentioned less frequently (18%) as a reason for not using contraception (Figure 3.5.2). Almost half of the respondents (46%) never used contraception because they wanted to have more children, while slightly more than one-quarter (27%) reported never using contraception because of a fear of adverse side effects.

**Figure 3.5.2: “What is the main reason for not using any family planning methods?”**



## CONCLUSION

Like other studies, this study also shows that age at first marriage of Qatari women has increased consistently in the last few decades. As expected, education and employment of women are positively correlated with age at first marriage of women. Some of the important features of the traditional marriage institution have not changed much despite rapid economic changes in the last few decades: the majority of marriages are still initiated by family, co-residence with in-laws after the wedding is still popular, and the prevalence of consanguineous marriages is still high. The gap between marriage contract and wedding has increased in the past few decades.

Although fertility of Qatari women is declining (Permanent Population Committee, 2009), the current level of fertility is still high. However current trends in some important determinants of fertility might lead to further decline in Qatari fertility: age at first marriage of women and marriage contract-consummation gap has increased consistently over the years. The narrowing gap between marriage and age at first childbirth may counter balance these fertility inhibiting trend to some extent.

The 2011 Qatar women survey and this study is a modest attempt to understand the marriage and fertility behaviors of Qatari women. More comprehensive studied are needed, given the importance of this behaviors and its implication for family and society.