

ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study is to examine the changes in age at first birth among Malaysian women, based on data from the 1994/95 Malaysian Population and Family Survey. Trends and patterns of age at first birth across cohorts are analyzed by using selected socio-demographic variables. Pronounced differentials in age at first birth can be observed across women's educational level and premarital work experience. Age at first birth is lowest among the Malays, those with no schooling and living in rural areas, as well as those who did not work prior to marriage. Much of the differentials in age at first birth can be attributed to differentials in age at first marriage. The increase in the age at first birth across birth cohorts is most profound among the Indians, followed by the Malays and Chinese.

Spousal age difference and husband's educational level are significantly related to age at first birth. As in the case of wife's education, husband's education is positively correlated with the timing of first birth. However, age at first birth is inversely related with spousal age difference.

The report concludes with some discussions on the implications of rising age at first birth on the rate of population growth and family structure, as well as changes in the roles of the women. Suggestions are made to improve future studies on this topic.