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**SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF AGE AT FIRST
MARRIAGE AMONG WOMEN IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA**

BY:

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the changing trend and differentials in age at first marriage among Malaysian women, based on data from the 1994 Malaysian Population and Family Survey. Trends and patterns of age at first marriage across cohorts are analysed in relation to a number of socio-demographic variables.

The salient findings of the study reveal that women's pre-marital work and education are the two most important factors influencing the timing of marriage of women in Peninsular Malaysia. Age at first marriage is still lowest among the Malays, the Muslims, those with no schooling and living in rural areas as well as those who did not work prior to marriage. Age at first marriage among Indian women has increased most profoundly as compared to the other two main ethnic groups. On the other hand, the age at first marriage among Chinese women has increased much more gradually during the last few decades. The probability of marrying before age 21 years is still highest for the Malays, those with no schooling and those from the rural areas, while the likelihood of marrying between the ages of 21-25 years is lowest for women with these characteristics. Spousal age difference is inversely related to age at first marriage of the women while husband's education is only modestly related to the age at first marriage of the women.

The important policy implications of the rising age at marriage are discussed. The report concludes with some recommendations for the formulation and implementation of programs to strengthen the marriage and family institutions.

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