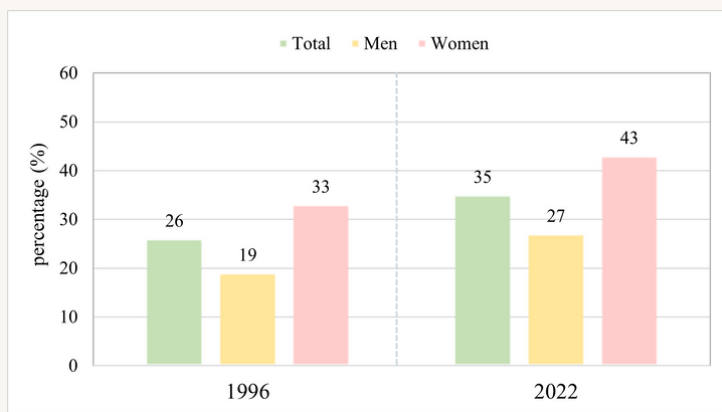


Singlehood Among Middle-Aged and Older Adults in Taiwan, 1996–2022

Huijing Wu & Yushan Lin

Taiwan has experienced rapid changes in population and family structure over the last few decades (Wang & Yang, 2019), such as declining marriage and fertility rates, increasing divorce rates, and an increasing aging population. The recent trend of increasing gray divorces in Western societies implies that older adults are now more likely to be single (Lin & Brown, 2012). Such adults without spouses or partners may be more disadvantaged in health, well-being, and caregiving (Carr & Utz, 2020). However, little is known about singlehood among older adults in Taiwan. This paper uses census data from Taiwan Ministry of the Interior to examine singlehood and marital status by gender and cities among Taiwanese adults aged 50 and older between 1996 and 2022.

Figure 1 : Percentage of Singlehood among Adults Aged 50+ in Taiwan, 1996-2022



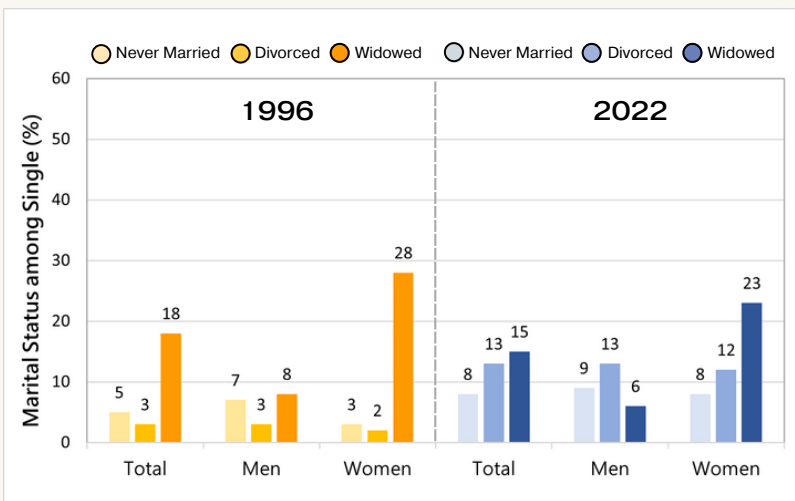
Note: The figures does not show the percentage of being married. The percentages of being single and married add to 100%.

Singlehood among Adults Aged 50 and Above, 1996–2022

- Overall, the proportion of single adults aged 50 and above increased from 26% of the total population in 1996 to 35% in 2022.
- The percentage of single men increased by roughly 8% between 1996 (18%) and 2022 (27%).
- The percentage of single women increased by nearly 10% between 1996 (33%) and 2022 (43%). Women also were found to be more commonly single than men.

Never Married, Divorced, and Widowed Adults Aged 50 and Above, 1996–2022

Figure 2: Percentage of Singlehood among Adults Aged 50+ by Marital Status in Taiwan, 1996-2022



Note: The figures does not show the percentage of married adults. The percentages of never married, divorce, wdiowed, and married adults add to 100%.

- The majority of single adults aged 50 and older were found to be widowed. However, the percentage of adults who had never married or had divorced increased over the past twenty years.
- The percentage of adults who had **never married** increased from 5% in 1996 to 8% in 2022.
- The percentage of **divorced** adults increased by 10% from 3% in 1996 to 13% in 2022.
- Generally, men were more likely to be never married than women. However, women showed a significant increase in being never married since 1996.
- The percentage of divorce was similar for men and women, increasing roughly 10% between 1996 and 2022 for men and women.
- Women were more likely to experience **widowhood** than men, although the percentage of widowhood slightly declined between 1996 and 2022.

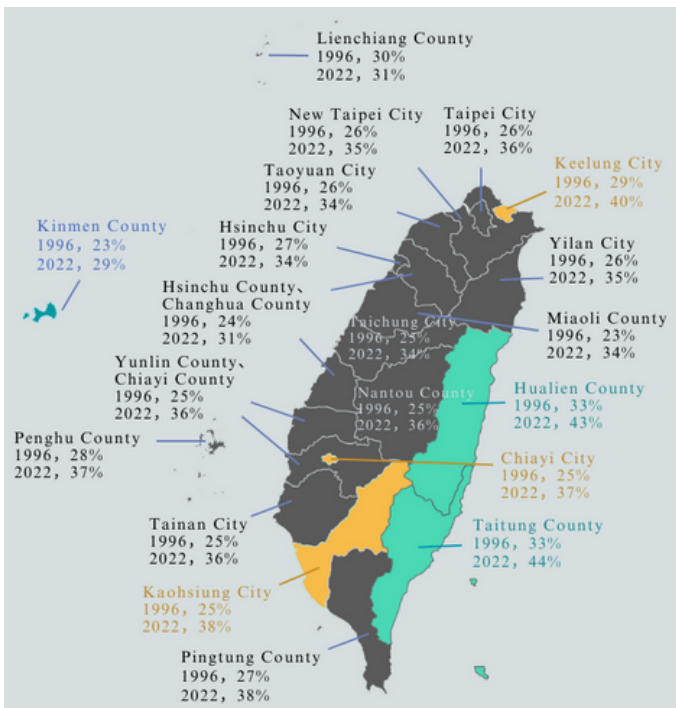


Figure 3 : Percentage of Singlehood among Adults Aged 50+ by cities in Taiwan, 1996-2022

- Hualien County (33% in 1996 and 43% in 2022) and Taitung County (33% in 1996 and 44% in 2022) demonstrated higher percentages of singlehood than other cities in Taiwan over the past 26 years.
- Keelung City, Kaohsiung City, and Chiayi City underwent a bigger increase (12%) in the proportion of single adults than that in other cities in Taiwan since 1996.

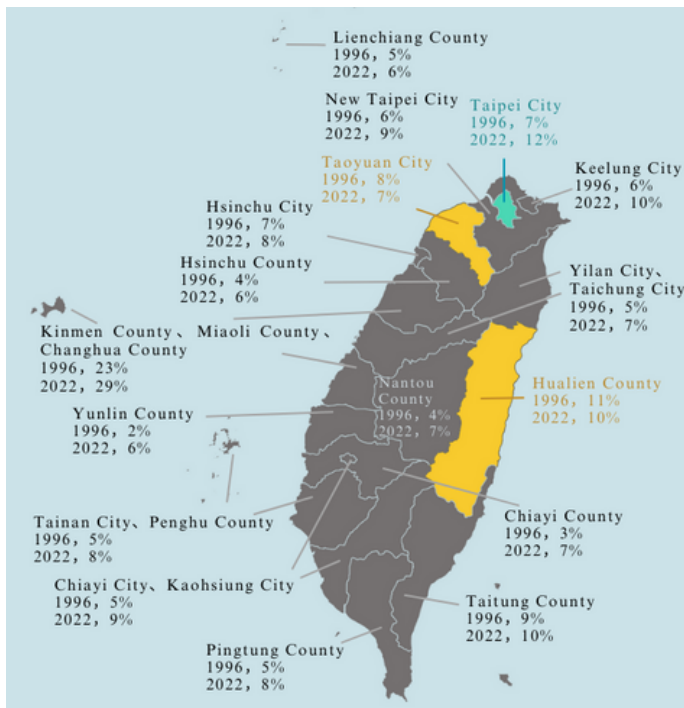


Figure 4 : Percentage of Never Married among Adults Aged 50+ by cities in Taiwan, 1996-2022

- Over the past few decades, the proportion of adults who had never married increased across cities in Taiwan, except in Hualien County and Taoyuan City, where a slight decline was observed between 1996 and 2022.
- In 1996, the highest percentage of adults who had never married was observed in Hualien County (11%), but in 2022, the same was observed in Taipei (12%).

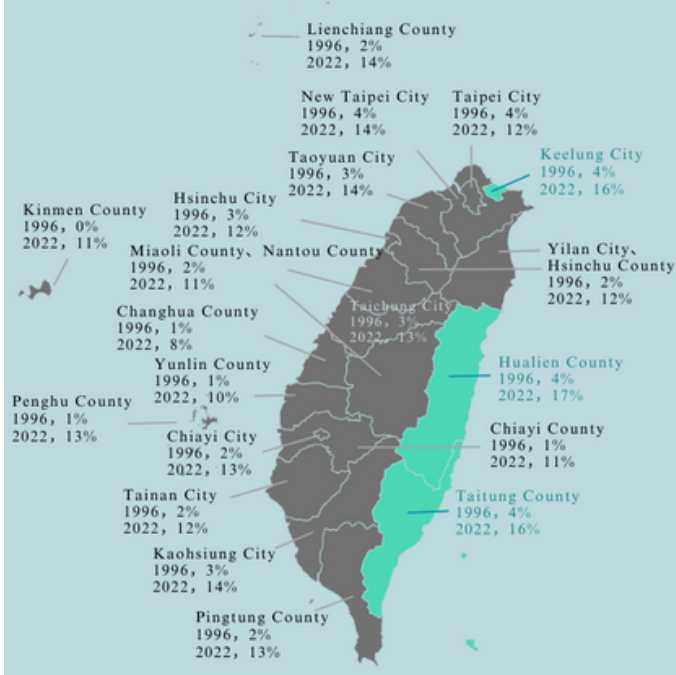


Figure 5 : Percentage of Divorced among Adults Aged 50+ by cities in Taiwan, 1996-2022

- Compared to adults who had never married, the percentage of divorced adults significantly increased across Taiwan over the past decades. The three highest percentages of divorce were found in Hualien County, Keelung City, and Taitung County.

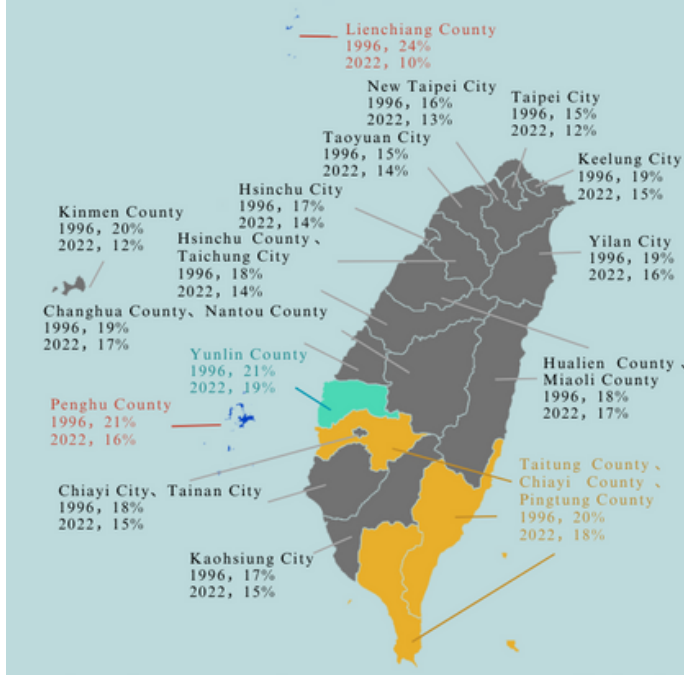


Figure 6 : Percentage of Widowed among Adults Aged 50+ by cities in Taiwan, 1996-2022

- Unlike the percentages of divorced adults or adults who had never married, the percentage of widowhood underwent a decline between 1996 and 2022.
- In 1996, the three highest percentages of widowhood were observed in Lienchiang County (24%), Penghu County (21%), and Yunlin County (21%).
- In 2022, Yunlin County had the highest percentage of widowhood at 19%, while Chiayi County, Pingtung County, and Taitung County all had identical percentages of 18%, making them the cities with the next highest rates of widowhood.

Reference

Brown, S. L., & Lin, I. F. (2012). The gray divorce revolution: Rising divorce among middle-aged and older adults, 1990–2010. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 67(6), 731-741.

Carr, D., & Utz, R. L. (2020). Families in later life: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82(1), 346-363.

Taiwan Ministry of the Interior. (1996). *Marital status over the age of 15 - By region and age*. <https://statist.moi.gov.tw/micst/stmain.jsp?sys=100>

Taiwan Ministry of the Interior. (2022). *Marital status over the age of 15 - By region and age*. <https://statist.moi.gov.tw/micst/stmain.jsp?sys=100>

Wang, Y. T., & Yang, W. S. (2019). Changes and trends in family structure in Taiwan, 1990 to 2010. *Journal of Family Issues*, 40(14), 1896-1911.