

CHAPTER 6

FERTILITY PREFERENCES

The subject of reproductive preferences is of fundamental importance for population policy and for family planning programs. Whether couples want to cease childbearing or delay the next pregnancy determines the demand for family planning and the potential impact on the rate of reproduction. In the YDMCHS, women were asked a series of questions to ascertain their fertility preferences, for example, their desire to have a (another) child and the length of time they want to wait before having a (another) child. The data on fertility preferences of women and contraceptive use allow estimation of the demand for spacing (have another child later) and limiting births (have no more children) and unmet need for family planning. Another indicator of fertility preferences, perhaps the most common measure of reproductive preference, is the number of children desired. A comparison of respondents' stated ideal family size and their past reproductive behavior provides a measure of excess fertility and the wanted total fertility rates.

6.1 Future Reproductive Preferences

In order to obtain information on future childbearing preferences, nonsterilized, currently married women were asked the question: "Would you like to have a (another) child or would you prefer not to have any (more) children?" The words in parentheses were used for women who had already given birth. For pregnant women, the question was prefixed by the wording, "After the child you are expecting, ...". Women who wanted additional children were then asked how long they would like to wait before the birth of their next child. The small number of sterilized women who were not asked questions on future reproductive preferences are considered to want no more children in the tabulations regarding fertility preferences.

Table 6.1 and Figure 6.1 show the future reproductive intentions of currently married women by number of living children (including any current pregnancy). Overall, almost half of women do not want any more children in future (including 2 percent who are sterilized), 22 percent want to delay having another child for at least two years, and 17 percent of women desire to have another child soon. Thus, 7 in 10 currently married women may be considered to have a potential need for family planning services either for spacing or limiting births. Fertility preferences have changed substantially since the 1991-92 YDMCHS survey; the proportion of women who want to cease childbearing has increased from 36 percent to 49 percent.

The desire for an additional child in the future is strongly related (negatively) to the number of living children a woman has. Eighty-four percent of women who have not yet begun childbearing want a birth, and an overwhelming majority of them want to have a birth soon. Less than one-third of women who have one child express a desire to have another child soon and almost half would like to wait at least two years. Beginning with women who have three children, the percentage wanting another child either soon or later decreases with the number of children. The proportion who want no more children (including women who are sterilized but excluding women who have declared themselves infecund) increases from 42 percent among women with three or more children to 82 percent among women with seven or more children.

Fertility preferences vary by women's age in a somewhat similar pattern as they vary by number of living children (see Table 6.2). As expected, some older women declare themselves infecund and those who have achieved their fertility desires are more likely to want to limit childbearing. Younger women tend to want to delay having another child if they want additional children, and both the percentages of women wanting a child soon and wanting a child later decrease with age.

Table 6.1 Fertility Preferences by number of children

Percent distribution of currently married women by desire for children, according to number of living children, Yemen 1997

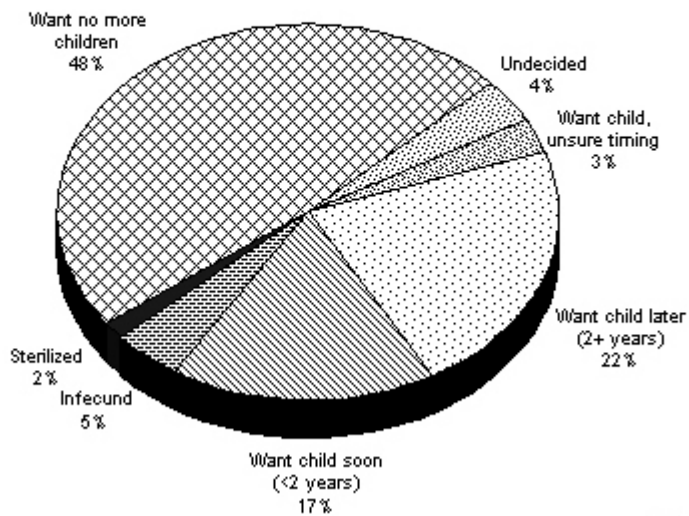
Desire for more children	Number of living children ¹								Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7+	
Have another soon ²	69.3	31.4	17.5	14.4	10.0	8.0	5.2	2.8	16.9
Have another later ³	11.5	45.5	44.9	30.8	25.5	16.5	12.2	4.4	21.8
Wants, unsure timing	3.3	3.7	4.2	4.2	3.9	2.8	1.8	1.0	2.8
Undecided	4.4	4.1	5.0	4.4	5.3	5.2	4.7	3.6	4.4
Wants no more	2.6	13.8	24.9	41.6	51.8	61.5	67.4	78.5	47.8
Sterilized	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.8	0.7	1.6	2.4	3.3	1.5
Declared infecund	8.5	0.9	3.0	3.6	2.6	4.2	6.3	6.0	4.5
Missing	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.4	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	915	1,152	1,125	1,112	1,041	982	944	2,515	9,786

¹Includes current pregnancy

²Want next birth within two years

³Want to delay next birth for two or more years

**Figure 6.1
Fertility Preferences of Currently Married Women 15-49**



YDMCHS-97

Table 6.2 Fertility preferences by age

Percent distribution of currently married women by desire for children, according to age, Yemen 1997

Desire for more children	Age of woman							Total
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	
Have another soon ¹	38.5	24.7	16.1	12.7	9.5	8.1	5.4	16.9
Have another later ²	37.8	39.5	28.5	17.0	8.7	2.6	1.7	21.8
Wants, unsure timing	2.6	3.8	3.8	3.2	2.5	1.1	0.7	2.8
Undecided	4.7	4.6	4.9	4.5	3.9	3.8	4.2	4.4
Wants no more	14.8	25.5	44.9	59.5	68.9	68.4	60.1	47.8
Sterilized	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.9	2.6	5.0	4.5	1.5
Declared infecund	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.9	3.6	11.1	23.1	4.5
Missing	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	1,063	1,902	1,855	1,585	1,637	999	746	9,786

¹ Want next birth within two years
² Want to delay next birth for two or more years

Table 6.3 presents the percentage of currently married women who want no more children, by number of living children and selected background characteristics. Urban women are more likely to report that they want to cease childbearing than rural women (55 percent versus 47 percent). Around half of women in the Mountainous and the Plateau and Desert regions and a little less in the Coastal region (44 percent) want no more children. Also, half of women who are illiterate, and around 40 percent of those with less than secondary education want to cease childbearing. The lowest percentage of women who want no more children by level of education is among women who have completed secondary school or have higher education (37 percent), probably because they marry later, start childbearing later and have not yet completed their family. These variations generally hold at each parity.

The bottom panel of Table 6.3 examines the relation of current family composition to desire to have no more children. Except for women with no children, the lowest percentage of women who want to stop child bearing are those who have children of only one gender (21 and 28 percent). More than half of women who have the same number of boys as girls, and around two-thirds of women with an unequal number of boys and girls want no more children. There are only slight differences by family composition in the percentage of women wanting no more children when they have one or two children. Fertility preferences differ dramatically by family composition when women have more than two children. Among women with three or more children, from 27 to 31 percent of those with girls only want no more children compared with 50 to 61 percent of those with boys only. The corresponding percentages for women with other family compositions are 39 to 83 percent. The percentages wanting no more children are higher when women have more boys than girls or have the same number of boys and girls.

6.2 Preferred Sex of Next Child

In the YDMCHS nonpregnant, currently married women who desired to have more children were asked whether they would prefer their next child to be a boy or a girl. Table 6.4 presents the results on preferred sex of next child by number of living children and number of sons.

Table 6.3 Want no more children by background characteristics

Percentage of currently married women who want no more children by number of living children and selected background characteristics, Yemen 1997

Background characteristic	Number of living children ¹								Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7+	
Residence									
Urban	1.5	16.6	29.5	53.2	60.2	73.2	79.8	88.8	55.3
Rural	3.1	13.0	23.8	37.8	49.6	59.8	66.9	79.7	47.3
Region									
Coastal	0.0	11.6	26.2	39.6	45.4	55.2	62.9	78.0	43.6
Mountainous	4.7	14.3	26.6	41.2	55.5	63.9	69.6	78.9	49.5
Plateau and Desert	2.9	14.9	24.2	44.7	54.1	66.1	73.2	85.1	51.9
Education									
Illiterate	3.0	11.6	22.3	39.8	51.2	62.6	68.9	81.6	51.1
Literate	2.8	16.3	38.9	48.4	47.4	58.2	(80.3)	80.9	40.9
Primary complete	2.7	18.5	32.0	51.4	61.9	66.5	*	(92.9)	39.0
Preparatory complete	(1.9)	24.3	(43.4)	(52.3)	(64.7)	*	*	*	40.7
Secondary complete+	(0.0)	24.7	22.5	60.4	(74.1)	*	*	*	36.8
Family composition									
No living children	2.8	19.0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	6.5
All boys	NA	11.5	23.3	49.9	61.3	(60.1)	*	*	28.4
All girls	NA	13.3	25.3	27.1	30.7	(31.3)	*	*	21.2
Boys = girls	NA	NA	27.1	48.5	56.5	64.4	69.3	79.9	54.8
Boys > girls	NA	NA	NA	44.4	55.7	65.3	76.0	83.2	70.2
Boys < girls	NA	NA	NA	39.4	47.9	64.3	65.0	81.4	67.3
Total	2.8	14.0	25.4	42.5	52.5	63.1	69.8	81.8	49.3

Note: Women who have been sterilized are considered to want no more children. Figures in parentheses are based on 25-49 unweighted cases, and an asterisk indicates that the figure is based on fewer than 25 cases and has been suppressed.

¹Includes current pregnancy

NA = Not applicable

There is a slight preference for sons when women have not started childbearing and it persists at higher family sizes. The majority of women report no gender preference for the first child, 44 percent say “either,” and 14 percent say they would accept “God’s will.” Women desire to have both boys and girls but, as family size increases, the desire to have a son increases more rapidly than the desire for a girl. For example, among women with one child, 57 percent of those who have no son would like their next child to be a boy while only 51 percent of women who have no daughter want a daughter. Among women with four children, 83 percent who do not have a son want a son while 64 percent of women with no daughter want a daughter. Proportions wanting an additional son among women who have one son are 28, 47, and 61 percent for women with two, three, and four children, respectively. Among women who have only one daughter, the proportions wanting an additional daughter are 10, 35, and 47 percent, respectively.

Table 6.4 Preferred sex of next child							
Percent distribution of currently married, nonpregnant women who want another child, by gender preference of next child, according to number of living children and sons, Yemen 1997							
Number of children and sons	Gender preference					Total	Number of women
	Son	Daughter	No preference	God's will	Missing/Other		
No children							
No sons	28.3	13.1	44.2	14.2	0.3	100.0	770
One child							
No sons	56.6	3.2	28.6	10.7	0.8	100.0	367
One son	8.0	51.2	29.1	11.7	0.0	100.0	366
Two children							
No sons	72.4	1.4	13.3	12.8	0.0	100.0	146
One son	28.1	9.5	41.1	20.5	0.9	100.0	271
Two sons	5.4	66.9	20.5	7.2	0.0	100.0	156
Three children							
No sons	76.4	0.0	7.0	16.6	0.0	100.0	65
One son	47.3	1.9	36.1	13.9	0.8	100.0	134
Two sons	14.7	35.3	36.9	12.7	0.4	100.0	181
Three sons	(0.0)	(83.4)	(11.3)	(5.3)	(0.0)	100.0	66
Four children							
No sons	82.6	2.9	12.7	1.8	0.0	100.0	38
One son	61.2	5.4	21.2	12.0	0.2	100.0	89
Two sons	28.4	6.3	41.0	24.3	0.0	100.0	99
Three sons	15.7	46.8	25.0	11.6	1.0	100.0	83
Four sons	12.4	64.1	11.4	12.1	0.0	100.0	19
Five children+							
No sons	86.4	0.0	10.6	3.0	0.0	100.0	25
One son	73.0	0.7	11.8	14.6	0.0	100.0	65
Two sons	39.2	2.2	40.4	18.3	0.0	100.0	110
Three sons	29.2	19.4	33.6	17.9	0.0	100.0	139
Four sons	20.3	26.4	43.7	8.5	1.1	100.0	104
Five sons or more	16.1	53.2	22.6	7.1	1.1	100.0	76
Family composition							
No living children	28.3	13.1	44.2	14.2	0.3	100.0	770
All boys	6.4	60.0	24.0	9.6	0.0	100.0	622
All girls	64.9	2.4	21.3	11.0	0.4	100.0	641
Boys = Girls	27.9	8.5	42.1	21.0	0.5	100.0	430
Boys > Girls	16.1	38.1	33.0	12.0	0.8	100.0	460
Boys < Girls	51.9	3.1	30.1	14.6	0.2	100.0	447
Total	32.6	21.2	32.4	13.3	0.3	100.0	3,369

Note: Figures in parentheses are based on 25-49 unweighted cases.

6.3 Need for Family Planning

One of the major concerns of family planning programs is to define the size of the potential demand for contraception and to identify women who are most in need of contraceptive services. Table 6.5 presents estimates of unmet need and met need for family planning services, and the total demand for services in Yemen as a whole and for various subgroups.

Table 6.5 Need for family planning services

Percentage of currently married women with unmet need, met need, and total demand for family planning services by selected background characteristics, Yemen 1997

Background characteristic	Unmet need for family planning ¹			Met need for family planning (currently using) ²			Total demand for family planning			Percentage of demand satisfied	Number of women
	For spacing	For limiting	Total	For spacing	For limiting	Total	For spacing	For limiting	Total		
Age											
15-19	27.3	4.9	32.3	6.5	2.1	8.6	33.9	7.0	40.9	21.1	1,063
20-24	27.9	8.1	36.0	12.2	6.5	18.7	40.1	14.7	54.7	34.2	1,902
25-29	21.5	20.2	41.7	11.8	12.4	24.2	33.2	32.7	65.9	36.7	1,855
30-34	17.5	27.4	44.9	6.9	18.0	24.8	24.3	45.4	69.8	35.6	1,585
35-39	9.0	33.3	42.3	3.2	22.6	25.8	12.2	55.9	68.0	37.8	1,637
40-44	3.2	34.9	38.1	1.5	20.0	21.5	4.7	54.9	59.6	36.0	999
45-49	1.3	24.1	25.3	0.8	13.9	14.7	2.1	37.9	40.1	36.8	746
Residence											
Urban	15.2	18.1	33.3	12.1	23.9	36.0	27.4	42.0	69.3	52.0	2,427
Rural	17.9	22.5	40.3	5.5	10.3	15.8	23.4	32.7	56.1	28.1	7,359
Region											
Coastal	17.3	18.9	36.1	6.3	10.8	17.2	23.6	29.7	53.3	32.2	2,226
Mountainous	16.2	24.3	40.5	5.0	9.9	14.9	21.2	34.2	55.4	26.9	2,952
Plateau and Desert	17.8	20.7	38.5	9.0	17.4	26.3	26.8	38.1	64.9	40.6	4,608
Education											
Illiterate	16.4	23.4	39.8	5.5	12.6	18.1	21.9	36.0	57.8	31.2	8,248
Literate	18.3	12.2	30.4	13.6	19.6	33.1	31.8	31.7	63.6	52.1	528
Primary complete	25.8	10.8	36.5	16.2	16.0	32.2	42.0	26.8	68.7	46.8	595
Preparatory complete	22.5	7.8	30.3	14.4	22.1	36.5	37.0	29.8	66.8	54.6	185
Secondary complete+	18.0	7.7	25.7	23.6	25.4	49.0	41.6	33.2	74.7	65.6	230
Total	17.2	21.4	38.6	7.2	13.6	20.8	24.4	35.0	59.4	35.0	9,786

¹ Unmet need for *spacing* includes pregnant women whose pregnancy was mistimed, amenorrheic women whose last birth was mistimed, and women who are neither pregnant nor amenorrheic and who are not using any method of family planning but say they want to wait two or more years for their next birth. Also included in unmet need for spacing are women who are unsure whether they want another child or who want another child but are unsure when to have the birth. Unmet need for *limiting* refers to pregnant women whose pregnancy was unwanted, amenorrheic women whose last child was unwanted, and women who are neither pregnant nor amenorrheic and who are not using any method of family planning but want no more children. Excluded from the unmet need category are menopausal or infecund women.

² Using for *spacing* is defined as women who are using some method of family planning and say they want to have another child or are undecided whether to have another. Using for *limiting* is defined as women who are using and who want no more children.

Unmet need for family planning (shown in columns 1-3 of Table 6.5) includes the following two groups of married women.

- (1) Women who are in need of family planning for *spacing* purposes. This group includes pregnant women whose pregnancy was mistimed (i.e., wanted later); amenorrheic women whose last birth was mistimed; women who are neither pregnant nor amenorrheic and who are not using any family planning method and say they want to wait two or more years for their next birth; and women who are unsure whether they want another child or who want another child but are unsure when to have the birth.

(2) Women who are in need of family planning for *limiting* purposes. This group includes pregnant woman whose pregnancy was unwanted; amenorrheic women whose last child was unwanted; and women who are neither pregnant nor amenorrheic and who are not using any family planning method and say they want no more children.

Menopausal and infecund women are excluded from the unmet need category.

Met need for family planning (shown in columns 4-6 of Table 6.5) includes women who are currently using contraception. Using for *spacing* purposes refers to women who are using a family planning method and say they want to have another child or are undecided whether to have another. Using for *limiting* purposes refers to women who are using a family planning method and want no more children.

The *total demand for family planning* (shown in columns 7-9 of Table 6.5) represents the sum of unmet need and met need. The percentage of the total demand that is satisfied is shown in column 10 of Table 6.5.

According to Table 6.5, the total unmet need in Yemen is 39 percent, 17 percent for spacing and 21 percent for limiting. Unmet need rises with age from 32 percent among women age 15-19 to 45 percent among women age 30-34 and then declines to 38 percent among women age 40-44. More important, is the difference in type of unmet need by age. Younger women who have not completed their family goals have higher unmet need for spacing while older women have higher unmet need for limiting. More than one-quarter (27-28 percent) of women under 25 have unmet for spacing while one-third of women age 35-39 and 40-44 have unmet for limiting. Unmet need for spacing and limiting is about the same among currently married women 25-29. Unmet need for limiting is higher among rural than urban women and among women living in the Mountainous region than in the other regions. There is no association between overall unmet need and level of education but there is a negative relationship between education and unmet need for limiting. Illiterate women have much higher unmet need for limiting (23 percent) than women who are literate or women who have completed some level of schooling (8-12 percent).

By age, total demand for family planning shows a pattern similar to that of unmet need, peaking at age 30-34 at 70 percent; however, by residence, the pattern is reversed. Urban women have a higher total demand for family planning than rural women because urban areas also have a higher level of met need. Total demand for family planning generally increases with level of education.

The percentage of demand satisfied shows a different pattern from that of total demand for some characteristics and a similar pattern for other characteristics. For women 15-19 only 21 percent of demand is satisfied while 34-38 percent of demand is satisfied for other women. Family planning demand is satisfied for half of urban women compared with 28 percent of rural women. By region, the percentage of demand satisfied is highest in the Plateau and Desert region (41 percent) and lowest in the Mountainous region (27 percent). By education, the pattern for demand satisfied is similar to the pattern for total demand for family planning. Total demand satisfied varies from one-third for illiterate women to two-thirds for women who have completed secondary or higher education.

6.4 Ideal Number of Children

Another attitudinal dimension of childbearing considered in this chapter is the total number of children a woman would ideally like to have, if it were left entirely up to her. Information on what women consider the ideal family size was elicited through two questions. Respondent were asked: "If you could go back to the time you did not have children and could choose exactly the number of children to have in your whole life, how many would that be?" The question was slightly modified for women who had no children

at the time of the interview. To answer the question, a woman must undertake the difficult task of considering in the abstract, and independent of her actual family size, the number of children she would choose to have.

The results in Table 6.6 indicate that a fairly large proportion (almost the same as in the 1991-92 survey) gave non-numeric responses to the question on ideal family size (30 percent). The larger the current family size the greater is the likelihood of women giving non-numeric responses. Around one-fourth of women with fewer than five children, around one-third of women with five to eight children, and almost 4 in 10 women with larger families gave non-numeric answers. The failure to give a definite numerical answer suggests either an absence of conscious consideration of family size, or a belief that God or fate determines for a couple the number of children they would have.

Table 6.6 Ideal number of children

Percent distribution of ever-married women by ideal number of children and mean ideal number of children for ever-married women and for currently married women, according to number of living children, Yemen 1997

Ideal number of children	Number of living children ¹											Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+	
0	2.6	2.0	3.4	4.3	4.6	4.9	5.5	4.9	4.8	5.7	5.3	4.1
1	2.3	3.2	2.0	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.1	1.4	1.7	1.6	0.5	1.7
2	20.9	16.3	17.3	11.1	11.7	11.9	10.7	9.1	10.3	9.1	6.2	12.9
3	6.1	8.3	7.2	8.9	3.4	4.1	4.7	3.3	4.2	3.9	4.1	5.6
4	23.1	24.6	24.2	19.6	24.2	13.6	9.9	13.8	13.8	13.9	13.9	18.6
5	5.8	6.7	6.0	7.9	5.0	10.1	4.5	3.2	4.1	5.3	4.3	5.9
6	7.5	9.1	8.5	11.1	11.9	10.7	15.6	9.2	7.0	7.7	10.3	10.0
7	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.7	1.9	1.6	2.1	6.2	0.8	0.9	0.5	1.8
8	1.4	1.2	1.9	2.5	2.6	4.0	5.0	5.1	9.7	3.9	2.9	3.4
9	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.6	0.9	0.7	3.1	0.7	0.6
10+	5.6	3.1	3.9	5.2	4.8	5.0	5.4	6.7	6.9	6.6	12.4	5.5
Non-numeric response	23.1	24.2	24.1	26.1	28.4	32.1	35.0	36.3	35.9	38.2	38.8	29.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	1,027	1,279	1,205	1,178	1,092	1,026	993	899	681	491	543	10,414
Mean ideal no. of children for ever-married women	4.1	4.0	4.0	4.4	4.4	4.6	4.9	5.1	5.0	4.8	5.6	4.5
Number of ever-married women	790	969	915	871	782	697	646	572	437	303	332	7,313
Mean ideal no. of children for currently married women	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.8	5.1	5.0	4.8	5.6	4.5
Number of currently married women	707	890	849	823	748	666	614	558	415	295	325	6,889

Note: Means are calculated by excluding women who gave non-numerical responses.

¹Includes current pregnancy

Overall, figures indicate that the mean number of children considered ideal is 4.5; about one-quarter of women consider four or five children the ideal number to have. Only 13 percent of women think two children are the ideal family size. A substantial proportion, about one-fifth, desire six or more children. Mean ideal family size reported in the current survey is almost one child lower than in the preceding survey. The proportion wanting two or fewer children has increased substantially (from 11 to 19 percent) and proportion desiring six or more has decreased slightly (from 27 to 21 percent).

Differentials in ideal family size by number of living children show ideal family size increases with actual number of children. Women with one or two children want around four children, women with six to nine children have an ideal family size around five, and women with 10 or more children want more than five children (5.6).

Table 6.7 shows the mean ideal number of children by age according to selected demographic characteristics. The ideal family size increases steadily from around 4.0 children for women under 25, to around 4.5 for women 25-34, and to 5.0 or more children for women over 35. On average, rural women want larger families (4.6 children) than urban women (4.1 children) but the gap is narrowing¹. The difference is 0.5 children compared with 1.2 children in the 1991-92 survey. There are small differences among the regions; the mean ideal number of children ranges from 4.4 to 4.7. Differences by level of education are greater but are decreasing. The difference in the mean ideal family size between illiterate women and women who have completed secondary or higher education is less than one child. It is encouraging to note that the mean ideal family size for illiterate women has decreased by one child since the 1991-92 survey.

Table 6.7 Mean ideal number of children by background characteristics

Mean ideal number of children for ever-married women, by age and selected background characteristics, Yemen 1997

Background characteristic	Age of woman							Total
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	
Residence								
Urban	3.6	3.7	3.9	4.2	4.3	4.6	5.2	4.1
Rural	4.0	4.3	4.5	4.9	4.9	5.5	5.0	4.6
Region								
Coastal	4.3	4.4	4.6	4.7	4.8	5.2	5.3	4.7
Mountainous	4.1	4.2	4.4	4.7	4.6	5.3	4.7	4.5
Plateau and Desert	3.6	4.0	4.3	4.6	4.8	5.3	5.1	4.4
Education								
Illiterate	4.0	4.2	4.5	4.7	4.8	5.3	5.1	4.6
Literate	3.3	3.9	4.1	4.8	4.5	(4.5)	*	4.0
Primary complete	3.5	3.9	4.1	4.3	4.6	*	*	4.0
Preparatory complete	3.8	3.7	3.7	(3.7)	(5.4)	*	*	3.9
Secondary complete+	*	3.7	3.6	4.4	(3.3)	*	*	3.8
Total	3.9	4.1	4.4	4.7	4.8	5.3	5.0	4.5

Note: Figures in parentheses are based on 25-49 unweighted cases; an asterisk indicates that figure is based on fewer than 25 cases and has been suppressed.

¹ In the 1991-92 survey, ideal family size for rural women was 5.6 children compared with 4.4 children for urban women.

Table 6.8 examines women's perceptions of their husband's desire for children compared with their own. The table presents the data separately for women who have discussed family planning with their husband, and those who have not. The question asked of currently married women was, "Do you think that your husband wants the same number of children that you want, or does he want more or fewer than you want?"

Table 6.8 Husband's preferred family size relative to that of the woman

Percent distribution of currently married women by their perception of their husband's preferred family size relative to their own by spousal communication about family size, according to selected background characteristics, Yemen 1997

Background characteristic	Have discussed family size with husband						Have not discussed family size with husband						Number of women	
	Both want same	Husband wants more	Husband wants fewer	Don't know	Missing	Total	Both want same	Husband wants more	Husband wants fewer	Don't know	Missing	Total		
Age														
15-19	46.9	41.8	10.0	1.3	0.0	100.0	568	11.7	16.6	3.2	68.4	0.2	100.0	487
20-24	42.7	45.7	8.0	3.6	0.0	100.0	1,141	11.8	27.9	4.7	55.5	0.0	100.0	753
25-29	44.4	45.4	7.7	2.5	0.0	100.0	1,102	15.3	30.6	3.2	50.9	0.0	100.0	746
30-34	43.1	43.8	9.3	3.8	0.0	100.0	935	14.7	30.9	4.0	50.4	0.0	100.0	640
35-39	45.9	44.3	8.2	1.6	0.0	100.0	912	16.2	25.4	6.5	51.5	0.4	100.0	717
40-44	41.1	47.0	8.5	3.4	0.0	100.0	511	17.5	22.7	5.6	54.2	0.0	100.0	485
45-49	46.2	43.2	8.6	1.6	0.3	100.0	378	15.5	24.5	6.0	54.0	0.0	100.0	361
Education														
Illiterate	41.9	47.1	8.0	2.9	0.0	100.0	4,486	13.6	26.9	4.5	54.9	0.1	100.0	3,724
Literate	55.8	32.0	10.7	1.5	0.0	100.0	350	19.5	24.7	3.5	52.3	0.0	100.0	177
Primary complete	53.5	33.0	11.2	2.3	0.0	100.0	398	17.3	20.2	5.5	57.0	0.0	100.0	190
Preparatory complete	48.0	39.3	10.5	2.2	0.0	100.0	137	38.0	13.5	11.3	37.2	0.0	100.0	47
Secondary complete+	53.9	36.9	8.3	0.9	0.0	100.0	179	38.6	18.9	10.6	31.9	0.0	100.0	51
Ideal number of children														
<3	46.6	42.2	8.9	2.2	0.0	100.0	1,133	17.7	28.2	6.5	47.6	0.0	100.0	651
3-4	51.8	37.6	8.6	1.9	0.1	100.0	1,552	17.9	25.3	5.2	51.7	0.0	100.0	827
5-6	45.4	45.4	7.3	1.8	0.0	100.0	941	16.2	28.6	2.2	52.7	0.3	100.0	648
7-9	46.3	46.6	5.5	1.7	0.0	100.0	312	16.0	20.8	2.8	60.4	0.0	100.0	256
10+	34.5	52.4	12.1	0.9	0.0	100.0	317	13.8	26.8	4.1	55.3	0.0	100.0	221
Non-numeric response	33.7	52.3	8.5	5.4	0.0	100.0	1,294	10.9	25.7	5.0	58.3	0.1	100.0	1,586
Total	44.2	44.6	8.5	2.7	0.0	100.0	5,549	14.6	26.2	4.7	54.4	0.1	100.0	4,188

Note: Exclude women for whom response to question of interspousal discussion on family size was missing.

Among women who have discussed family size with their husband, 44 percent report that they both want the same number of children; almost the same proportion report that their husband would like to have more children than they do; and less than 10 percent say their husband wants fewer children than they do. Differences by age are minimal; the major difference by education is between those who are illiterate and the rest of the population. Almost half of husbands of illiterate women compared with 32 to 39 percent of husbands of other women want more children than their wives.

There is a positive relationship between a woman's ideal family size and the husband wanting to have more children than his wife. This is seen most clearly regarding women with an ideal family size of 10 or more children—more than half reported that their husband wanted more children than they did.

Second, among women who have not discussed family size with their husband (see right panel of Table 6.8), not surprisingly, more than half of women report that they cannot say whether their husband wants more, fewer, or the same number of children as they do, 15 percent believe that they both want the same family size, and 26 percent think their husband wants more children than they do. A notable difference is by level of education. Women who have completed preparatory or higher levels of education are more likely than other women to report that their husband wants the same number of children as they do or fewer.

Table 6.9 Fertility planning status

Percent distribution of births in the five years preceding the survey (and current pregnancies) by fertility planning status, according to birth order and mother's age at birth, Yemen 1997

Birth order and mother's age at birth	Planning status of birth at conception				Total	Number of births ¹
	Wanted then	Wanted later	Not wanted	Missing		
Birth order						
1	83.3	14.3	2.0	0.4	100.0	2,233
2	68.4	26.1	4.7	0.7	100.0	1,970
3	58.9	31.3	9.2	0.7	100.0	1,691
4+	42.9	22.9	33.6	0.6	100.0	8,429
Age at birth						
<20	71.3	23.8	4.7	0.2	100.0	2,123
20-24	63.2	27.9	8.1	0.8	100.0	3,890
25-29	53.9	24.3	21.2	0.6	100.0	3,242
30-34	44.8	20.9	33.5	0.8	100.0	2,680
35-39	39.9	16.0	43.5	0.6	100.0	1,636
40-44	33.0	12.8	54.0	0.2	100.0	606
45-49	31.4	11.6	56.9	0.0	100.0	148
Total	54.6	23.0	21.8	0.6	100.0	14,324

¹ Includes current pregnancies

6.5 Wanted and Unwanted Fertility

Two approaches have been used to measure fertility planning in Yemen using the survey data. The first is based on responses to a question about the planning status of prior births, i.e., whether a birth was planned (wanted then), unplanned or wanted later (mistimed), or not wanted at all (unwanted). Measures based on these data are likely to underestimate unplanned and unwanted fertility because women may rationalize mistimed or unwanted pregnancies and declare them as wanted once the children are born.

The second approach to measuring fertility planning is to calculate what the fertility rate would be if all unwanted births were avoided. Women were asked a series of questions regarding all of their children born in the five years preceding the survey (and any current pregnancy), to determine whether each conception was planned, unplanned, or mistimed (wanted at a later time). The answer to these questions provide a potentially powerful indicator of the degree to which couples successfully control their fertility. Also this information can be used to gauge the effect of the prevention of unwanted births on period fertility rates.

Table 6.9 shows the percent distribution of births in the five years preceding the survey (and current pregnancies) by fertility planning status. More than one in five births² were reported to be unwanted, and almost the same proportion were mistimed (wanted later) and only 55 percent were wanted when they occurred. The percentage of births wanted later than when they occurred increases from 14 percent for first-order births to 31 percent for third-order births and then declines to 23 percent for fourth- or higher order births. With a mean ideal family size of around four for all age groups and all family sizes, it is not surprising that only a small proportion of births of order three or lower are unwanted. However, one-third of births of order four or higher order are considered to be unwanted by respondents.

The planning status of births is also affected by the age of the mother. In general, the older the mother the larger the percentage of children that are unwanted at conception; more than half of the births to women age 40 and older are unwanted.

Table 6.10 presents wanted fertility rate. The *wanted fertility rate* is calculated in the same manner as the total fertility rate, but unwanted births are excluded from the numerator. For this purpose, unwanted births are those which exceed the number considered ideal by the respondent. Women who did not report a numeric ideal family size were assumed to want all their births. The wanted fertility rate represents the level of fertility that would have prevailed in the three years preceding the survey if all unwanted births had been prevented. A comparison of the total wanted fertility rate and total fertility rate suggests the potential demographic impact of the elimination of unwanted births.

The total wanted fertility rate for Yemen is 4.6 children, roughly two children lower than the total fertility rate, or stated another way, the total wanted fertility rate is 71 percent of the observed total fertility rate. Overall, the gap between wanted and observed fertility is substantial and the ratio of wanted to total fertility varies in the narrow range of 0.66 to 0.83 for the categories shown in Table 6.10. It should be noted that the ratios total wanted fertility rate to total fertility rate of 0.80 and above pertain to the estimates based on a small number of cases.

Table 6.10 Wanted fertility rates

Total wanted fertility rates and total fertility rates for the three years preceding the survey, by selected background characteristics, Yemen 1997

Background characteristic	Total wanted fertility rate	Total fertility rate
Residence		
Urban	3.4	5.0
Rural	5.1	7.0
Region		
Coastal	4.6	5.8
Mountainous	4.7	6.8
Plateau and Desert	4.6	6.6
Education		
Illiterate	5.0	6.9
Literate	(3.8)	(5.7)
Primary complete	(3.7)	(4.6)
Preparatory complete	[2.2]	[3.2]
Secondary complete+	[2.6]	[3.1]
Total	4.6	6.5

Note: Rates are based on births to women 15-49 in the period 1-36 months preceding the survey. Fertility rates in parentheses are based on 500-599 women; fertility rates in square brackets are based on less than 500 women.

² In this discussion, the word birth includes current pregnancy.