

FERTILITY PREFERENCES

This chapter addresses three questions that allow an assessment of the need for contraception. Does the respondent want more children? If so, how long would she prefer to wait before the next child? If she could start afresh, how many children in all would she want? This chapter also examines the occurrence of unwanted or mistimed pregnancies and analyzes the effect that prevention of such pregnancies would have on the fertility rates. Because the underlying rationale of most family planning programmes is to give couples the freedom and ability to bear the number of children they want and to achieve the spacing of births they prefer, these are key issues for programme planners.

Interpretation of data on fertility preferences has always been the subject of controversy. Survey questions have been criticized on the grounds that answers are misleading because 1) they reflect unformed, ephemeral views, which are held with weak intensity and little conviction; and 2) they do not take into account the effect of social pressures or the attitudes of other family members, particularly the husband, who may exert a major influence on reproductive decisions. The first objection has greater force in noncontracepting societies where the idea of conscious reproductive choice may still be alien; preference data from these settings should be interpreted with caution. In societies with moderate to high levels of use, greater interpretive weight can be attached to the findings. The second objection is correct in principle. In practice, however, its importance is doubtful; for instance, the evidence from surveys in which both husbands and wives are interviewed suggests that there is no radical difference between the views of the two sexes.

The inclusion of women who are currently pregnant complicates the measurement of views on future childbearing. For these women, the question on desire for more children is rephrased to refer to desire for another child after the one that they are expecting. To take into account the way in which the preference variable is defined for pregnant women, the results are classified by number of living children, including the current pregnancy as equivalent to a living child.

7.1 DESIRE FOR MORE CHILDREN

Information on fertility preferences among currently married women is presented in Table 7.1. The table shows the potential need for contraceptive services for spacing as well as for limiting births. Until recently, concern for providing appropriate contraceptive methods to couples who wish to have no more children has overshadowed contraception for child spacing purposes. The interest in spacing has been reinforced by recent evidence that 1) short birth intervals are harmful to the welfare of children and mothers; 2) large numbers of couples wish to postpone childbearing by using contraception; and 3) there is a potential demand for contraception for spacing births in some countries where demand for limiting family size has not yet emerged.

Table 7.1 shows that the desire for more children is related to the number of living children women already have. Virtually all currently married women with no children want to have a child, eight in ten express the desire to have a child soon. As the number of living children increases, the desire to have children decreases. The percentage of women who want to space the birth of their next child (have another later) first rises with parity, up to parity two, then declines steadily with the rise in the number of living children. This pattern was also observed in the 1999 NDHS (NPC, 2000:88). However, it is striking that almost three-quarters of women with four living children (73 percent) want to have another child.

It is equally significant that 18 percent of all women want no more children. The desire to stop childbearing begins to appear when couples have had at least three living children. While only 2 percent

of childless women want no children, half of women who have had six or more children say they want to stop childbearing.

Irrespective of the number of living children, more than half of women (52 percent) either want to delay having another child or stop childbearing altogether. These women are potential contraceptive users for spacing or for limitation of fertility.

Table 7.1 Fertility preferences by number of living children

Percent distribution of currently married women by desire for children, according to number of living children, Nigeria 2003

Desire for children	Number of living children ¹							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
Have another soon ²	79.2	47.1	42.1	36.8	32.4	23.2	14.8	37.1
Have another later ³	10.5	43.8	46.2	42.6	36.7	29.5	19.1	33.8
Have another, undecided when	2.3	5.1	4.4	6.3	3.5	3.8	3.6	4.3
Undecided	0.9	0.5	0.7	2.7	3.5	3.7	3.9	2.3
Want no more	1.8	0.6	4.4	8.2	20.5	34.4	50.3	18.1
Sterilized ⁴	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.8	0.2
Declared infecund	5.1	2.4	2.2	3.2	3.0	4.4	7.1	3.9
Missing	0.3	0.5	0.0	0.1	0.0	1.0	0.4	0.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	491	902	871	776	701	608	986	5,336

¹ Includes current pregnancy

² Wants next birth within 2 years

³ Wants to delay next birth for 2 or more years

⁴ Includes both female and male sterilization

7.2 DESIRE TO LIMIT CHILDBEARING

Table 7.2 presents the percentage of currently married women who want no more children by number of living children and background characteristics. This table provides information about variations in the potential demand for fertility control.

The data show that the desire to limit childbearing is higher in urban than rural areas (22 and 17 percent, respectively) and varies with the number of living children. In urban areas, for example, one-third of women with four living children desire no more children. This compares with just 15 percent of women living in rural areas. There are no significant urban-rural differences in the desire to limit childbearing once women have had six or more children. At that parity, about half of women in both urban and rural areas want no more children.

There are large regional variations in the desire to limit childbearing. In general, the desire to limit childbearing is lowest in the North West (7 percent) and highest in the South East and South South regions (32 percent each). In the South West, even at parity four, half of all currently married women want no more children. In all the southern regions, the majority desire no more children once they have had five children. At parity six and above, eight in every ten women in the southern regions do not want any more children. In contrast, in the North West and North East, the majority of women do not wish to limit childbearing, irrespective of the number of living children they already have. This is especially true of women in the North West; in that region, just two out of every ten women with six or more children say that they want no more children.

Table 7.2 Desire to limit childbearing by background characteristics

Percentage of currently married women who want no more children, by number of living children and background characteristics, Nigeria 2003

Background characteristic	Number of living children ¹							All women
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
Residence								
Urban	0.0	0.0	5.1	12.5	34.1	46.0	49.4	21.8
Rural	2.5	0.9	4.1	6.5	15.2	29.2	51.8	16.7
Region								
North Central	0.0	0.0	7.2	7.3	31.8	46.6	61.9	24.1
North East	3.5	0.2	4.5	8.1	16.0	23.3	44.8	16.3
North West	2.2	0.9	1.3	3.0	8.2	10.4	20.7	6.5
South East	(0.0)	0.0	4.6	10.0	27.7	55.6	83.5	31.6
South South	(0.0)	0.0	3.7	12.3	16.7	53.8	80.6	31.6
South West	(0.0)	1.6	11.0	21.4	52.0	62.3	80.9	29.9
Education								
No education	2.8	0.8	4.1	7.7	15.4	22.8	40.5	15.0
Primary	0.0	0.0	4.8	8.9	19.1	44.1	65.4	25.8
Secondary	0.0	0.8	3.7	7.7	23.5	53.0	68.2	16.4
Higher	(0.0)	(0.0)	(9.1)	(14.3)	(76.2)	(49.9)	(81.0)	29.3
Wealth quintile								
Lowest	2.8	1.5	2.7	6.7	13.5	17.7	48.3	15.5
Second	1.2	0.2	5.9	7.0	12.5	27.8	49.6	16.1
Middle	3.7	0.3	3.2	5.1	15.6	38.8	46.3	17.3
Fourth	0.0	0.0	4.9	10.0	25.1	35.3	45.2	18.4
Highest	0.0	0.9	5.1	13.4	39.5	56.1	76.7	24.8
Total	1.8	0.6	4.4	8.3	20.8	34.4	51.0	18.3

Note: Women who have been sterilized are considered to want no more children. Figures in parentheses are based on 25-49 unweighted cases.

¹ Includes current pregnancy

In addition to regional differences, the desire to limit childbearing varies by education. Almost twice as many women with higher education as women with no education want to limit childbearing (29 percent versus 15 percent). The desire to limit childbearing increases with household economic status. For example, one in six women in households in the lowest wealth quintile wants to limit childbearing, compared with one in four women in households in the highest quintile.

Among women residing in urban areas and in the south and in the North Central region, among those with some education, and among those in the highest wealth quintile, parity five appears to be the threshold value at which a significant proportion begin to want no more children.

7.3 NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING

This section discusses the extent of need and potential demand for family planning services in Nigeria. Unmet need for family planning refers to fecund women who either wish to postpone the next birth (spacers) or who wish to stop childbearing altogether (limiters), but are not using a contraceptive method. Pregnant women are considered to have unmet need for spacing or limiting if their pregnancy was mistimed or unwanted, respectively. Similarly, amenorrhoeic women are classified as having unmet need if their last birth was mistimed or unwanted. Women who are currently using a family planning method are said to have a met need for family planning method. The total demand for family planning comprises those who fall in the met need and the unmet need categories.

Table 7.3 presents estimates for unmet need, met need, and total demand for family planning among currently married Nigerian women by background characteristics. The total demand for family planning among currently married women is 30 percent, and 43 percent of that demand is satisfied. The demand for spacing purposes is twice as high as the demand for limiting purposes (20 and 10 percent, respectively). Overall, less than one-fifth of currently married women have an unmet need for family planning (17 percent). Twelve percent have unmet need for spacing and 5 percent for limiting.

Unmet need does not vary much by age except for women age 45-49, who have the lowest unmet need. It is notable that up to age 34, virtually all unmet need for family planning is for spacing purposes. After age 35, most unmet need is for limiting childbearing. Total unmet need for family planning is highest in the South South region, where one-fourth of currently married women have unmet need for family planning, and lowest in the North West (11 percent). There are no rural-urban differentials nor does unmet need vary substantially by wealth quintile. However, it should be noted that among women in households in the lowest wealth quintile, only 32 percent of demand for family planning is satisfied, compared with 62 percent among women in households in the highest wealth quintile. No doubt, women in more economically advantaged households have the means to satisfy their family planning needs, unlike women in poorer households.

Table 7.4 shows the need for family planning among all women and women who are not currently married. As expected, unmet need for family planning is higher among currently married women (17 percent) and lower among all women (14 percent) and women who are not currently married (6 percent).

Table 7.3 Need for family planning among currently married women

Percentage of currently married women with unmet need for family planning, and with met need for family planning, and the total demand for family planning, by background characteristics, Nigeria 2003

Background characteristic	Unmet need for family planning ¹			Met need for family planning (currently using) ²			Total demand for family planning ³			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	13.9	0.6	14.6	4.1	0.2	4.3	18.0	0.9	18.9	22.9	545
20-24	16.1	0.3	16.4	9.3	0.2	9.4	25.4	0.4	25.8	36.5	911
25-29	16.0	1.1	17.1	15.3	0.8	16.1	31.2	1.9	33.2	48.5	1,146
30-34	13.9	5.3	19.1	8.8	4.8	13.6	22.7	10.0	32.7	41.5	848
35-39	8.1	10.1	18.1	5.2	11.1	16.3	13.3	21.2	34.5	47.4	763
40-44	5.3	14.1	19.3	2.5	12.7	15.1	7.7	26.7	34.4	43.9	619
45-49	2.4	9.0	11.4	1.2	7.6	8.9	3.6	16.7	20.3	43.7	504
Residence											
Urban	11.7	5.5	17.3	12.1	8.2	20.2	23.8	13.7	37.5	54.0	1,633
Rural	11.8	4.9	16.7	6.0	3.3	9.2	17.8	8.2	26.0	35.5	3,703
Region											
North Central	15.2	6.6	21.8	7.0	6.4	13.3	22.2	12.9	35.1	37.9	754
North East	13.1	5.0	18.1	2.8	1.4	4.2	15.9	6.4	22.3	19.0	1,122
North West	9.9	1.2	11.1	4.6	0.4	4.9	14.5	1.5	16.1	30.8	1,880
South East	9.0	10.0	18.9	12.3	10.2	22.5	21.2	20.2	41.4	54.3	368
South South	13.0	11.5	24.5	14.7	10.7	25.4	27.7	22.3	49.9	50.9	664
South West	11.3	5.9	17.2	19.1	13.6	32.7	30.4	19.5	49.9	65.6	548
Education											
No education	10.1	3.9	14.1	2.5	1.4	4.0	12.7	5.4	18.0	22.1	2,877
Primary	13.4	7.6	21.0	8.3	8.4	16.7	21.7	16.0	37.7	44.4	1,175
Secondary	15.8	4.9	20.7	18.1	8.0	26.1	33.9	12.9	46.8	55.8	1,046
Higher	6.6	8.1	14.7	24.1	12.8	36.9	30.7	20.9	51.7	71.5	238
Wealth quintile											
Lowest	11.3	3.6	14.9	3.8	3.1	6.9	15.1	6.8	21.8	31.8	1,150
Second	10.6	5.0	15.6	4.1	1.6	5.6	14.7	6.5	21.2	26.6	1,142
Middle	12.5	4.2	16.7	5.4	3.7	9.1	17.9	7.9	25.8	35.2	1,086
Fourth	13.0	6.9	19.9	8.8	4.7	13.5	21.8	11.6	33.4	40.3	957
Highest	11.9	6.2	18.0	18.4	11.6	30.0	30.3	17.8	48.0	62.4	1,002
Total	11.8	5.1	16.9	7.8	4.8	12.6	19.6	9.9	29.5	42.7	5,336

¹ *Unmet need for spacing* includes pregnant women whose pregnancy was mistimed, amenorrhoeic women who are not using family planning and whose last birth was mistimed, and fecund women who are neither pregnant nor amenorrhoeic and who are not using any method of family planning and say they want to wait two or more years for their next birth. Also included in unmet need for spacing are fecund women who are not using any method of family planning and say they are unsure whether they want another child or who want another child but are unsure when to have the birth unless they say it would not be a problem if they discovered they were pregnant in the next few weeks. *Unmet need for limiting* refers to pregnant women whose pregnancy was unwanted, amenorrhoeic women whose last child was unwanted, and fecund women who are neither pregnant nor amenorrhoeic and who are not using any method of family planning and who want no more children. Excluded from the unmet need category are pregnant and amenorrhoeic women who became pregnant while using a method (these women are in need of better contraception).

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. Note that the specific methods used are not taken into account here.

³ Nonusers who are pregnant or amenorrhoeic and women whose pregnancy was the result of a contraceptive failure are *not* included in the category of unmet need, but are included in the total demand for contraception (since they would have been using had their method not failed).

Table 7.4 Need for family planning among all women and among women who are not currently married

Percentage of all women and women who are not currently married with unmet need for family planning, and with met need for family planning, and the total demand for family planning, by background characteristics, Nigeria 2003

Background characteristic	Unmet need for family planning ¹			Met need for family planning (currently using) ²			Total demand for family planning ³			Percentage of demand satisfied	Number of women
	For spacing	For limiting	Total	For spacing	For limiting	Total	For spacing	For limiting	Total		
ALL WOMEN											
Age											
15-19	7.7	0.2	7.9	6.3	0.3	6.6	14.0	0.5	14.5	45.4	1,716
20-24	12.7	0.3	13.0	15.4	0.3	15.7	28.0	0.6	28.6	54.8	1,494
25-29	14.4	1.0	15.4	17.0	1.1	18.1	31.4	2.1	33.5	54.1	1,382
30-34	13.9	4.9	18.8	9.4	4.8	14.2	23.3	9.7	33.0	43.0	941
35-39	7.6	9.5	17.1	5.8	10.6	16.4	13.4	20.1	33.5	48.9	816
40-44	4.7	12.8	17.5	2.5	12.1	14.6	7.3	24.9	32.1	45.6	688
45-49	2.4	8.0	10.3	1.1	6.8	7.9	3.5	14.8	18.3	43.4	583
Residence											
Urban	8.9	3.5	12.5	13.7	5.6	19.3	22.7	9.1	31.8	60.8	2,629
Rural	10.5	3.7	14.2	7.4	2.6	10.1	18.0	6.4	24.3	41.4	4,991
Region											
North Central	12.3	4.6	16.8	7.2	5.0	12.2	19.5	9.6	29.0	42.0	1,121
North East	12.0	4.1	16.1	2.8	1.2	4.0	14.7	5.3	20.0	19.7	1,368
North West	9.0	1.1	10.0	4.2	0.6	4.8	13.2	1.6	14.9	32.5	2,095
South East	7.7	5.0	12.7	14.8	5.2	20.0	22.5	10.2	32.7	61.1	737
South South	10.7	6.0	16.8	18.0	6.0	24.0	28.8	12.0	40.7	58.8	1,342
South West	7.2	3.4	10.5	18.3	8.0	26.2	25.4	11.3	36.8	71.4	958
Education											
No education	9.8	3.6	13.4	2.5	1.6	4.0	12.2	5.2	17.4	23.2	3,171
Primary	11.2	5.6	16.8	7.5	6.3	13.8	18.8	11.8	30.6	45.2	1,628
Secondary	10.3	2.4	12.6	17.0	4.0	21.0	27.3	6.4	33.6	62.4	2,370
Higher	5.1	4.3	9.4	28.6	7.1	35.7	33.7	11.4	45.1	79.1	451
Total	10.0	3.7	13.6	9.6	3.7	13.3	19.6	7.3	26.9	49.3	7,620
WOMEN WHO ARE NOT CURRENTLY MARRIED											
Age											
15-19	4.8	0.0	4.8	7.4	0.3	7.6	12.2	0.3	12.4	61.3	1,171
20-24	7.3	0.4	7.6	24.9	0.6	25.5	32.2	0.9	33.1	77.0	583
25-29	6.6	0.3	6.8	25.6	2.3	28.0	32.2	2.6	34.8	80.4	236
30-34	14.2	1.4	15.7	14.4	5.3	19.7	28.6	6.7	35.3	55.7	93
35-39	0.9	1.8	2.7	13.8	3.3	17.1	14.7	5.1	19.8	86.4	53
40-44	0.0	1.1	1.1	3.1	7.1	10.2	3.1	8.2	11.3	90.2	69
45-49	2.3	1.3	3.6	0.5	1.5	2.1	2.8	2.9	5.7	36.5	79
Residence											
Urban	4.3	0.2	4.6	16.5	1.4	17.9	20.8	1.6	22.4	79.6	996
Rural	6.7	0.3	7.1	11.7	0.9	12.6	18.4	1.2	19.6	64.0	1,288
Region											
North Central	6.3	0.4	6.7	7.7	2.2	9.9	13.9	2.7	16.6	59.6	366
North East	6.8	0.3	7.1	2.6	0.0	2.6	9.4	0.3	9.7	27.0	245
North West	0.5	0.0	0.5	1.1	2.6	3.7	1.6	2.6	4.2	88.0	215
South East	6.5	0.0	6.5	17.3	0.2	17.5	23.8	0.2	24.0	72.8	369
South South	8.6	0.7	9.2	21.3	1.3	22.6	29.8	1.9	31.8	71.0	678
South West	1.7	0.0	1.7	17.1	0.4	17.5	18.8	0.4	19.2	91.2	411
Education											
No education	6.2	0.2	6.4	1.5	3.2	4.7	7.7	3.4	11.1	42.3	293
Primary	5.6	0.3	5.9	5.6	0.7	6.3	11.2	1.0	12.2	51.6	454
Secondary	6.0	0.4	6.3	16.2	0.8	17.0	22.1	1.2	23.3	72.9	1,324
Higher	3.4	0.0	3.4	33.5	0.7	34.2	37.0	0.7	37.7	90.8	213
Total	5.7	0.3	6.0	13.8	1.1	14.9	19.5	1.4	20.9	71.3	2,284

¹ *Unmet need for spacing* includes pregnant women whose pregnancy was mistimed, amenorrhoeic women who are not using family planning and whose last birth was mistimed, and fecund women who are neither pregnant nor amenorrhoeic and who are not using any method of family planning and say they want to wait two or more years for their next birth. Also included in unmet need for spacing are fecund women who are not using any method of family planning and say they are unsure whether they want another child or who want another child but are unsure when to have the birth unless they say it would not be a problem if they discovered they were pregnant in the next few weeks. *Unmet need for limiting* refers to pregnant women whose pregnancy was unwanted, amenorrhoeic women whose last child was unwanted, and fecund women who are neither pregnant nor amenorrhoeic and who are not using any method of family planning and who want no more children. Excluded from the unmet need category are pregnant and amenorrhoeic women who became pregnant while using a method (these women are in need of better contraception).

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. Note that the specific methods used are not taken into account here.

³ Nonusers who are pregnant or amenorrhoeic and women whose pregnancy was the result of a contraceptive failure are *not* included in the category of unmet need, but are included in the total demand for contraception (since they would have been using had their method not failed).

7.4 IDEAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN

This section discusses responses of women to inquiries about what they consider to be the ideal number of children. Respondents who had no children were asked how many children they would like to have if they could choose the number of children to have in their whole life. Those who had living children were asked about the number of children they would choose if they could start their childbearing again. Responses provide an indicator of future fertility, while the information supplied by the latter group also provides a measure of unwanted fertility.

Table 7.5 shows the distribution of respondents by ideal number of children and mean ideal number of children according to actual number of living children for all women and for all men. One in every nine women gave a non-numeric response¹ to the question on ideal number of children. In general, Nigerian women, irrespective of their number of living children, consider a large number of children ideal.

The ideal number of children is 6.7 for all women and 7.3 for currently married women. Almost two-thirds of all women consider five or more children to be ideal. Only 6 percent of women think three or less children is ideal.

Among all women, the mean ideal number of children increases with the number of living children, from 5.4 for those without any children to 8.6 among those with six or more children. Clearly, Nigerian women consider a large family to be desirable.

Nigerian men, on average, want even more children than Nigerian women. Indeed, men's mean ideal number of children is about two children more than that of women (8.6 versus 6.7). Currently married men report a mean ideal number of children that is three children more than the ideal of currently married women (10.6 versus 7.3). These findings are similar to those from the 1999 NDHS (NPC, 2000:95).

¹ Non-numeric responses include “it is up to God,” “any number,” and “don’t know.”

Table 7.5 Ideal number of children

Percent distribution of all women and all men by ideal number of children and mean ideal number of children for all women and for all men and for currently married women and for currently married men, according to number of living children, Nigeria 2003

Ideal number of children	Number of living children ¹							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
WOMEN								
0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
2	2.5	2.2	1.6	0.5	0.6	1.7	0.4	1.6
3	7.6	6.2	3.9	2.1	0.7	2.0	1.4	4.4
4	30.2	21.2	16.6	12.7	11.8	5.7	6.3	18.2
5	18.1	15.6	17.4	14.7	9.6	11.5	5.9	14.2
6+	34.5	44.9	51.2	57.7	65.6	63.6	68.2	50.7
Non-numeric responses	6.8	9.7	9.4	12.2	11.4	15.5	17.7	10.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	2,319	1,109	936	818	737	646	1,055	7,620
Mean ideal number of children for:²								
All women	5.4	6.3	6.6	7.0	7.5	7.6	8.6	6.7
Number	2,161	1,001	849	718	653	546	868	6,795
Currently married women	6.9	6.6	6.7	7.0	7.5	7.7	8.6	7.3
Number	431	805	786	678	621	510	806	4,638
MEN								
0	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.8
1	0.0	0.1	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
2	2.0	0.3	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	1.2
3	5.7	11.2	5.1	7.1	1.6	2.7	1.1	4.8
4	21.0	18.3	14.3	15.6	30.8	17.3	7.2	17.3
5	20.9	14.2	16.1	19.5	9.0	7.2	6.9	15.8
6+	39.4	37.6	39.9	45.0	41.9	56.7	58.1	44.6
Non-numeric responses	9.5	18.3	22.6	12.9	16.7	16.1	26.1	15.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of men	1,139	168	161	145	117	102	513	2,346
Mean ideal number of children for:²								
All men	6.7	7.3	8.3	9.6	9.3	10.2	13.4	8.6
Number	1,031	138	124	126	98	85	379	1,982
Currently married men	6.7	8.0	8.5	9.7	9.4	10.3	13.5	10.6
Number	80	105	116	122	95	83	371	972

¹ Includes current pregnancy

² Means are calculated excluding respondents giving non-numeric responses.

7.5 IDEAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN BY BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

Among both women and men, there are significant variations in mean ideal number of children by background characteristics (Table 7.6). The older the respondent, the more children they consider ideal; this is true across most background characteristics. However, even the youngest women (age 15-19), think the ideal family size is about six children (5.8). Rural women want one more child than urban women (7.0 versus 6.0). Women in the North West have the largest ideal number of children (8.6), followed by those in the North East (7.8). Women in the south, on the other hand, want fewer children than women in the north. The number is lowest in the South West (4.8).

Table 7.6 Mean ideal number of children by background characteristics

Mean ideal number of children for all women by current age and mean ideal number of children for all men, according to background characteristics, Nigeria 2003

Background characteristic	Current age: women							All women	All men
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49		
Residence									
Urban	5.5	5.6	5.7	6.4	6.6	7.0	7.1	6.0	6.6
Rural	6.0	6.6	7.0	7.4	8.1	8.0	8.1	7.0	9.8
Region									
North Central	5.2	6.0	6.1	6.4	7.1	6.9	7.6	6.2	8.0
North East	7.0	6.9	7.9	8.0	8.9	9.1	8.8	7.8	12.5
North West	7.4	8.2	8.5	9.3	9.6	9.1	9.4	8.6	12.8
South East	5.2	5.0	5.0	5.3	5.6	5.8	6.3	5.3	5.3
South South	5.0	5.1	5.3	5.7	5.9	7.0	6.9	5.5	6.7
South West	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.8	5.2	5.4	6.3	4.8	4.8
Education									
No education	7.5	7.8	8.4	8.7	9.1	8.7	8.6	8.3	14.4
Primary	5.9	6.5	6.5	6.6	7.2	7.1	6.8	6.6	9.0
Secondary	5.0	5.1	5.1	5.5	5.5	5.8	5.0	5.2	6.8
Higher	(5.0)	5.1	4.6	4.8	4.8	(5.6)	(5.3)	4.9	6.5
Wealth quintile									
Lowest	6.4	6.7	8.0	8.1	8.6	8.4	8.8	7.6	11.4
Second	6.3	7.0	7.4	7.8	8.5	8.3	8.4	7.4	11.6
Middle	6.3	6.9	7.0	7.4	8.0	8.6	7.7	7.1	9.6
Fourth	5.8	6.0	6.3	7.2	7.9	7.3	7.8	6.5	7.4
Highest	4.7	5.1	5.0	5.3	5.6	5.6	5.8	5.1	5.0
All women	5.8	6.2	6.5	7.1	7.5	7.7	7.8	6.7	na

Note: Figures in parentheses are based on 25-49 unweighted cases.
na = Not applicable

The ideal number of children declines as level of education and wealth quintile increase. For example, the mean ideal number of children is 4.9 among women with higher education, compared with 8.3 for women with no education. Similarly, women in households in the lowest wealth quintile want 7.6 children, compared with the 5.1 children for women living in households in the highest wealth quintile, a difference of 2.5 children. These findings are similar to those of the 1999 NDHS (NPC, 2000:97), which showed that ideal family size has a strong negative correlation with level of education.

Table 7.6 also presents the findings for men. As observed earlier, men, irrespective of background characteristics, want more children than women. Similar to women, the ideal family size among urban men is lower than among rural men (6.6 and 9.8, respectively). However, the differential for men between urban and rural ideal number of children (3.2 children) is larger than the differential for women (1 child). The magnitude of regional differences is also more pronounced for men than for women. Men in the North West want almost three times as many children as men in the South West (12.8 versus 4.8). Similar to women, the mean ideal number of children is lowest in the South West and South East and highest in the North West and North East.

Men's ideal number of children decreases as level of education and wealth quintile increase. For example, men without education want twice as many children as men with higher education (14.4 versus 6.5). In fact, men without education have the largest ideal family size among all the subgroups in the sample.

7.6 WANTED AND UNWANTED FERTILITY

In the 2003 NDHS, women were asked a series of questions for each child born in the preceding five years (and for any current pregnancy) to determine whether the particular pregnancy was planned, unplanned but wanted at a later time, or unwanted. These questions form a potentially powerful indicator of the degree to which couples successfully control childbearing. In addition, the data can be used to gauge the effect of the prevention of unwanted births on fertility.

The questions are demanding. The respondent is required to recall accurately her wishes at one or more points in the past five years and to report them honestly. The danger of rationalization is present and a previously unwanted pregnancy may well become a cherished child. Despite these potential problems, results from previous surveys have proved plausible. Respondents are clearly willing to report unwanted conceptions, although some after-the-fact rationalization probably occurs; the result is probably an underestimate of unwanted fertility.

In DHS surveys, these retrospective questions are asked independently of the questions on the desire for more children and total desired family size and have not been cross-edited at the data processing stage.

Table 7.7 shows the percent distribution of births in the five years preceding the survey by planning status of birth, according to birth order and mother's age at birth. Although more than eight in ten births were wanted at the time, one out of every six births was either not wanted at all or was wanted later (mistimed). There is no clear pattern in the percentage of births not wanted by birth order.

Birth order and mother's age at birth	Planning status of birth				Total	Number of births
	Wanted then	Wanted later	Wanted no more	Missing		
Birth order						
1	83.0	8.4	7.8	0.9	100.0	1,430
2	88.3	8.0	2.7	1.0	100.0	1,169
3	88.8	8.9	1.5	0.7	100.0	1,005
4+	83.0	10.6	5.6	0.7	100.0	3,483
Mother's age at birth						
<20	82.4	9.4	7.1	1.1	100.0	1,235
20-24	85.4	10.9	3.1	0.5	100.0	1,916
25-29	88.4	8.8	1.8	1.0	100.0	1,776
30-34	84.1	9.8	5.6	0.6	100.0	1,100
35-39	81.7	7.5	10.1	0.7	100.0	770
40-44	76.0	9.8	12.3	1.8	100.0	246
45-49	81.9	7.5	10.6	0.0	100.0	43
Total	84.7	9.5	5.0	0.8	100.0	7,087

7.7 WANTED FERTILITY RATES

Table 7.8 presents total wanted fertility rates and total fertility rates for the three years preceding the survey by background characteristics. Wanted fertility rates are calculated in the same manner as the conventional age-specific fertility rates presented in Chapter 4, except that births classified as unwanted are omitted from the numerator. The remainder is cumulated to form a total wanted fertility rate, which is analogous to the conventional TFR. A comparison of the two rates suggests the potential effect of the elimination of unwanted births.

The total wanted fertility rate is 5.3, which is 0.4 births less than the total fertility rate of 5.7. This difference implies a low level of unwanted births in Nigeria. However, there are some differences between wanted TFRs and actual TFRs across subgroups. For example, the difference between the two rates is lowest in the North West (0.1 child) and largest in the South South region (0.7 child).

7.8 IDEAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND UNMET NEED BY WOMEN'S STATUS

Table 7.9 shows women's ideal family size and their unmet need for family planning by the three indicators of women empowerment—number of decisions in which the respondent participates, number of reasons for which a woman can refuse to have sexual relations with her husband, and number of reasons for which the respondent feels a husband is justified in beating his wife (see Chapter 3).

The data indicate that the higher the status of women, the lower the ideal number of children. This is true regardless of indicator of women's status. However, the relationship between women's status indicators and unmet need for family planning is unclear.

Table 7.8 Wanted fertility rates

Total wanted fertility rates and total fertility rates for the three years preceding the survey, by background characteristics, Nigeria 2003

Background characteristic	Total wanted fertility rate	Total fertility rate
Residence		
Urban	4.6	4.9
Rural	5.7	6.1
Region		
North Central	5.2	5.7
North East	6.7	7.0
North West	6.6	6.7
South East	3.5	4.1
South South	3.9	4.6
South West	3.9	4.1
Education		
No education	6.5	6.7
Primary	5.7	6.3
Secondary	4.3	4.7
Higher	2.6	2.8
Wealth quintile		
Lowest	6.1	6.5
Second	5.9	6.3
Middle	5.4	5.7
Fourth	5.6	5.9
Highest	3.8	4.2
Total	5.3	5.7

Note: Rates are calculated based on births to women age 15-49 in the period 1-36 months preceding the survey. The total fertility rates are the same as those presented in Table 4.2.

Table 7.9 Ideal number of children and unmet need for family planning by women's status

Mean ideal number of children and unmet need for family planning, by women's status indicators, Nigeria 2003

Women's status indicator	Mean ideal number of children ¹	Number	Unmet need for family planning ²			Number of women
			For spacing	For limiting	Total	
Number of decisions in which woman has final say³						
0	8.1	1,791	11.8	2.6	14.4	2,136
1-2	7.3	1,564	12.6	5.0	17.6	1,799
3-4	6.1	643	13.3	8.6	21.9	709
5	6.3	640	8.1	9.7	17.8	692
Number of reasons to refuse sex with husband						
0	8.0	420	12.6	4.0	16.6	506
1-2	7.9	1,171	10.4	4.4	14.8	1,409
3-4	7.0	3,046	12.2	5.6	17.8	3,422
Number of reasons wife beating is justified						
0	6.4	1,493	11.5	5.5	16.9	1,632
1-2	7.5	998	9.6	5.2	14.8	1,135
3-4	7.3	761	16.1	4.4	20.5	878
5-6	8.1	1,386	11.4	5.1	16.4	1,691
Total	7.3	4,638	11.8	5.1	16.9	5,336

¹ Totals are calculated excluding the women giving non-numeric responses.

² See Table 7.3 for definition of unmet need for family planning.

³ Either by herself or jointly with others