

Information on fertility preferences is of considerable importance to family planning programme planners because it allows an assessment of the need for contraception, whether for spacing or limiting births, and the extent of unwanted and mistimed pregnancies. Data on fertility preferences can also be useful as an indicator of the direction that future fertility may take.

The 2005-2006 ZDHS respondents were asked about whether they wanted more children and, if so, how long they would prefer to wait before the next child, and if they could start afresh, how many children they would want.

Interpretation of data on fertility preferences has always been the subject of some controversy. Critics consider it misleading because information gathered from women does not take into account the effect of social pressures or attitudes of other family members, particularly the husband, who may exert a major influence on reproductive decisions. Although this argument is valid in principle, its importance is doubtful in practice because 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.

7.1 FERTILITY PREFERENCES BY NUMBER OF LIVING CHILDREN

Table 7.1 presents fertility desires among currently married women and men by number of living children. The table takes the timing desired for the next birth into account in classifying women according to their fertility desires. Approximately half (49 percent) of married women in Zimbabwe would like to have another child. Among those women, 16 percent want a child within two years and 32 percent would prefer to wait two or more years before having their next birth. Forty-four percent of married women want no more children or have been sterilised. Thus, the majority of women (77 percent) want either to space their next birth or end childbearing altogether.

As expected, the desire for more children declines noticeably as the number of living children increases. Seventy-seven percent of married women with no children want to have a child soon (within two years), whereas only 2 percent of women with six or more children want to have another soon. Among women with three or more children, the desire to limit childbearing predominates with the proportion saying that they do not want another child increasing from 50 percent among women with three children to 77 percent among women with six or more children. Men's fertility preferences are similar to those of women.

Table 7.1 Fertility preferences by number of living children

Percent distribution of currently married women and currently married men by desire for children, according to number of living children, Zimbabwe 2005-2006

Desire for children	Number of living children ¹							Total 15-49 women/men	Total men 15-54
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+		
WOMEN									
Have another soon ²	77.1	19.0	14.1	10.6	6.5	8.6	2.4	15.6	na
Have another later ³	7.8	58.5	38.5	28.0	14.6	14.0	7.3	32.1	na
Have another, undecided when	1.9	1.6	1.7	0.6	1.0	0.4	0.3	1.2	na
Undecided	5.3	4.3	6.1	6.4	4.4	3.6	4.2	5.1	na
Want no more	1.0	15.3	37.8	50.1	68.2	68.2	77.0	42.3	na
Sterilised ⁴	0.0	0.1	1.0	2.8	4.1	4.2	5.5	2.1	na
Declared infecund	6.9	1.3	0.7	1.2	1.0	0.8	2.9	1.5	na
Missing	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	na
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	na
Number of women	276	1,228	1,299	825	585	398	532	5,143	na
MEN ⁵									
Have another soon ²	69.3	19.8	15.9	12.6	10.7	6.9	7.0	16.2	15.2
Have another later ³	14.4	65.9	43.0	38.5	25.6	24.9	21.0	40.5	38.0
Have another, undecided when	4.9	1.5	1.3	1.4	0.6	5.0	1.5	1.8	1.6
Undecided	1.9	1.8	5.4	4.3	5.1	2.5	5.5	4.0	3.9
Want no more	4.5	10.0	32.3	42.5	56.9	60.0	64.0	36.3	39.7
Declared infecund	1.1	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.7	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.6
Missing	3.9	0.9	1.7	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.6	1.0	1.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of men	130	717	768	583	353	260	322	3,132	3,419

na = Not applicable

¹ Includes current pregnancy for women

² Wants next birth within 2 years

³ Wants to delay next birth for 2 or more years

⁴ Includes both female and male sterilisation

⁵ Includes one additional child if any of the respondent's wives are currently pregnant

7.2 DESIRE TO LIMIT CHILDBEARING BY BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

Tables 7.2.1 and 7.2.2 present the percentage of currently married women and men who want no more children by number of living children and selected background characteristics. Table 7.2.1 shows a larger proportion of urban women (51 percent) than rural women (41 percent) want to stop childbearing. This is observed for all women with different numbers of living children. For example, 76 percent of urban women with three children say they do not want another child, compared with 42 percent of rural women with three children. The results suggest that urban women are more likely to begin to want to limit their family size at lower parities than rural women.

Differentials by province indicate that Bulawayo has the highest proportion of women who want no more children (63 percent), while Masvingo has the lowest (32 percent). It is interesting to note that women in Harare, an urban centre, did not show a strong preference for limiting childbearing; less than half of currently married women in Harare (48 percent) did not want another child, which is lower than some predominantly rural provinces.

Table 7.2.1 Desire to limit childbearing: women

Percentage of currently married women who want no more children, by number of living children and background characteristics, Zimbabwe 2005-2006

Background characteristic	Number of living children ¹							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
Residence								
Urban	1.7	19.1	54.1	75.6	90.9	92.2	88.6	51.1
Rural	0.7	12.8	27.5	41.8	65.5	67.3	81.6	41.0
Province								
Manicaland	0.0	11.4	22.5	45.7	60.5	70.4	85.6	39.8
Mashonaland Central	0.0	13.4	31.0	48.2	71.4	63.4	88.0	40.5
Mashonaland East	0.0	21.0	41.6	60.9	75.2	83.5	90.7	49.6
Mashonaland West	0.0	12.1	42.8	47.0	73.8	83.3	75.7	44.0
Matabeleland North	4.2	21.7	39.4	49.3	81.3	83.2	81.8	50.8
Matabeleland South	0.0	15.2	41.1	60.9	79.9	77.4	85.2	54.8
Midlands	1.1	12.8	36.2	50.0	62.4	73.8	82.8	43.6
Masvingo	0.0	6.7	19.0	28.3	61.4	44.1	74.3	31.8
Harare	0.0	17.6	49.5	74.3	91.3	86.6	95.9	47.6
Bulawayo	10.0	29.7	72.0	81.5	93.2	91.5	87.5	62.9
Education								
No education	0.0	43.1	30.9	22.7	52.5	66.7	67.3	54.8
Primary	1.5	8.4	27.8	39.8	68.4	66.9	86.7	45.7
Secondary	0.8	17.7	42.0	60.5	77.8	85.9	88.4	41.9
More than secondary	0.0	7.4	63.4	89.3	94.3	100.0	100.0	54.3
Wealth quintile								
Lowest	1.9	12.1	20.7	30.2	56.1	57.3	77.2	38.2
Second	0.0	8.1	28.3	39.4	60.9	64.2	77.9	38.4
Middle	0.7	17.8	27.3	45.6	72.1	79.5	89.0	42.6
Fourth	0.0	17.4	44.9	68.6	82.8	91.8	91.2	46.8
Highest	3.6	18.7	58.1	77.3	92.5	92.0	87.7	55.3
Total	1.0	15.4	38.8	53.0	72.4	72.4	82.6	44.4

Note: Women who have been sterilised are considered to want no more children.
¹ Includes current pregnancy

The percentage of women wanting no more children is positively associated with women's educational levels. More than six in ten women with more than a secondary education want to begin to limit childbearing when they have two children (63 percent), while the majority of women who never attended school do not express a desire to limit until they have four children (53 percent).

Fifty-eight percent of women in the highest wealth quintile want to begin to limit childbearing when they have two children, while a similar proportion in the lowest wealth quintile want to begin to limit childbearing when they have four children (56 percent).

Table 7.2.2 shows that 44 percent of men residing in urban areas want to limit their children, compared with 31 percent in rural areas. By province, Matabeleland South has the highest proportion of men who want no more children (54 percent), while Mashonaland Central has the lowest percentage (27 percent).

Table 7.2.2 Desire to limit childbearing: men

Percentage of currently married men who want no more children, by number of living children and background characteristics, Zimbabwe 2005-2006

Background characteristic	Number of living children ¹							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
Residence								
Urban	8.8	15.7	42.4	54.2	69.1	72.7	87.9	43.7
Rural	0.0	5.8	22.4	34.3	49.2	55.1	57.0	31.2
Province								
Manicaland	15.8	8.1	21.2	34.9	57.1	69.6	66.7	35.4
Mashonaland Central	0.0	4.3	19.3	31.1	61.1	59.8	53.4	27.4
Mashonaland East	0.0	1.7	32.8	51.8	53.3	78.8	75.8	39.9
Mashonaland West	0.0	6.0	29.3	39.4	58.2	64.6	52.6	32.1
Matabeleland North	0.0	11.0	33.5	40.1	44.3	50.5	43.8	32.9
Matabeleland South	0.0	50.4	41.1	48.7	58.0	87.3	76.7	54.4
Midlands	0.0	14.5	40.1	43.3	46.8	56.6	60.1	38.7
Masvingo	0.0	5.6	20.2	31.5	46.8	45.0	61.3	30.2
Harare	5.5	14.4	39.4	50.4	80.9	60.2	95.1	40.8
Bulawayo	15.4	10.6	43.8	59.6	53.6	49.3	85.3	42.2
Education								
No education	0.0	61.7	71.2	58.9	31.2	34.4	68.3	56.4
Primary	10.7	6.1	24.3	24.5	51.0	58.9	61.3	36.1
Secondary	1.8	10.4	33.9	42.8	59.5	61.8	64.3	34.2
More than secondary	5.4	15.2	36.4	80.8	67.1	74.7	100.0	47.7
Wealth quintile								
Lowest	0.0	2.7	13.8	23.6	27.7	34.2	50.5	24.2
Second	0.0	7.3	16.4	33.9	48.5	62.7	44.2	28.5
Middle	0.0	4.6	28.0	29.9	55.5	63.4	65.5	31.9
Fourth	1.8	12.6	34.4	57.0	69.6	73.4	87.8	41.6
Highest	13.5	16.9	48.3	51.5	70.6	69.6	87.3	46.8
Total men 15-49	4.5	10.0	32.3	42.5	56.9	60.0	64.0	36.3
Total men 15-54	5.1	10.1	33.0	43.9	59.8	63.0	67.2	39.7

Note: Men who have been sterilised or who state in response to the question about desire for children that their wife has been sterilised are considered to want no more children.
¹ Includes one additional child if any of the respondent's wives are currently pregnant

Overall, more than half of men with no education would like to limit their children (56 percent). For men, as with women, the desire to limit childbearing is positively associated with wealth. Almost half of men in the highest wealth quintile want to limit childbearing after having two children (48 percent) compared with one in seven (14 percent) in the lowest quintile.

7.3 NEED AND DEMAND FOR FAMILY PLANNING

The proportion of women who want to stop childbearing or who want to space their next birth is a crude measure of the extent of the need for family planning, given that not all of these women are exposed to the risk of pregnancy and some of them may already be using contraception. This section discusses the extent of need and the potential demand for family planning services. Women who want to postpone their next birth for two or more years or who want to stop childbearing all together but are not using a contraceptive method are said to have an unmet need for family planning. Pregnant women are considered to have an unmet need for spacing or limiting if their pregnancy was mistimed or unwanted. Similarly, amenorrhoeic women are categorized 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. The total demand for family planning services comprises those who fall in the met need and unmet need categories.

Tables 7.3.1 and 7.3.2 present data on unmet need, met need, and total demand for family planning for currently married women, all women, and women who are not currently married. These indicators help to evaluate the extent to which the family planning program in Zimbabwe is meeting the demand for services. The definitions of met need, unmet need, and total demand for family planning are further explained in Tables 7.3.1 and 7.3.2.

Table 7.3.1 Need and demand for family planning among currently married women

Percentage of currently married women with unmet need for family planning, percentage with met need for family planning, the total demand for family planning, and the percentage of demand for contraception that is satisfied, by background characteristics, Zimbabwe 2005-2006

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	16.9	1.8	18.7	30.4	6.3	36.7	47.3	8.1	55.4	66.3	448
20-24	10.6	2.1	12.7	49.1	12.5	61.6	60.7	14.7	75.5	83.2	1,200
25-29	6.8	3.1	9.9	44.0	26.3	70.3	51.3	29.4	80.8	87.7	1,125
30-34	5.6	6.3	11.9	29.4	38.7	68.1	35.4	45.3	80.8	85.2	933
35-39	4.4	7.6	11.9	15.8	48.3	64.1	20.5	55.9	76.4	84.4	556
40-44	5.2	10.8	16.0	3.7	51.2	54.9	9.0	62.2	71.2	77.5	485
45-49	3.0	11.0	13.9	0.8	35.8	36.6	3.8	47.2	51.0	72.7	396
Residence											
Urban	4.4	3.8	8.2	31.3	38.5	69.8	36.1	42.6	78.7	89.6	1,742
Rural	9.3	5.8	15.2	31.1	24.2	55.3	40.9	30.2	71.1	78.7	3,401
Province											
Manicaland	12.4	6.2	18.6	30.2	22.2	52.4	43.5	28.3	71.8	74.1	599
Mashonaland Central	8.3	3.7	12.0	33.9	27.5	61.4	42.2	31.4	73.6	83.7	572
Mashonaland East	5.8	5.4	11.2	31.1	32.9	64.0	37.5	38.3	75.8	85.2	442
Mashonaland West	6.4	4.1	10.5	32.1	29.9	62.0	39.3	34.0	73.3	85.6	514
Matabeleland North	7.7	13.0	20.7	19.1	26.6	45.7	27.3	39.9	67.2	69.2	323
Matabeleland South	9.8	10.7	20.5	18.0	29.2	47.2	28.9	39.8	68.8	70.3	208
Midlands	6.0	3.8	9.9	32.2	31.2	63.4	38.6	35.3	73.9	86.6	728
Masvingo	11.9	3.4	15.3	35.6	18.5	54.1	47.5	22.1	69.7	78.0	697
Harare	3.8	3.2	6.9	36.7	35.1	71.9	40.9	38.7	79.5	91.3	760
Bulawayo	4.2	7.0	11.2	21.7	45.3	67.0	26.7	52.3	79.0	85.8	301
Education											
No education	10.8	12.0	22.8	13.9	20.8	34.7	25.2	33.3	58.5	60.9	276
Primary	8.9	6.0	14.9	27.5	26.4	53.9	36.8	32.6	69.4	78.5	1,910
Secondary	6.8	4.1	10.9	35.3	30.6	66.0	42.6	34.9	77.5	86.0	2,788
More than secondary	3.1	1.3	4.4	32.2	46.2	78.4	36.0	47.5	83.5	94.7	169
Wealth quintile											
Lowest	13.6	6.6	20.2	29.4	18.6	48.0	43.9	25.5	69.4	71.0	1,034
Second	8.8	6.1	14.8	33.8	23.3	57.1	42.9	29.4	72.3	79.5	998
Middle	6.2	6.3	12.5	31.0	25.1	56.1	37.5	31.4	68.9	81.8	906
Fourth	5.8	3.6	9.4	32.7	33.7	66.5	38.7	37.7	76.4	87.7	1,183
Highest	4.0	3.6	7.6	28.8	43.3	72.1	33.3	47.0	80.2	90.5	1,023
Total	7.7	5.1	12.8	31.2	29.1	60.2	39.3	34.4	73.7	82.6	5,143

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 a better method of 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 total demand for contraception (since they would have been using had their method not failed).

Table 7.3.1 shows that 13 percent of currently married women have an unmet need for family planning services (8 percent for spacing and 5 percent for limiting births). Combined with 60 percent of married women who are currently using a contraceptive method, the total demand for family planning comprises almost three-quarters of married women in Zimbabwe. At present, about four-fifths of the potential demand for family planning is being met. Thus, if all married women who said they want to space or limit their children were to use family planning methods, the contraceptive prevalence rate could be increased from 60 percent to 74 percent.

Table 7.3.2 Need and demand for family planning for all women and for women who are not currently married

Percentage of all women and not currently married women with unmet need for family planning, percentage with met need for family planning, and the total demand for family planning, by background characteristics, Zimbabwe 2005-2006

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	4.3	0.4	4.7	8.2	1.6	9.7	12.5	1.9	14.4	67.6	2,152
20-24	7.1	1.3	8.4	34.1	9.7	43.8	41.9	11.1	53.0	84.1	1,952
25-29	5.4	2.6	8.0	37.4	24.6	62.0	43.5	27.2	70.7	88.7	1,466
30-34	4.3	5.4	9.8	24.5	34.0	58.5	29.1	39.7	68.8	85.8	1,216
35-39	2.9	5.3	8.2	11.0	38.7	49.7	14.0	44.1	58.1	85.9	834
40-44	3.8	8.2	12.0	2.8	40.2	43.1	6.7	48.5	55.2	78.3	699
45-49	2.0	7.7	9.7	0.7	29.1	29.8	2.7	37.1	39.8	75.7	589
Residence											
Urban	2.5	2.3	4.9	18.8	23.2	41.9	21.6	25.6	47.2	89.7	3,502
Rural	6.2	3.8	10.0	21.2	17.8	39.0	27.8	21.6	49.4	79.8	5,405
Province											
Manicaland	7.4	4.0	11.4	17.7	15.3	32.9	25.6	19.2	44.8	74.6	1,043
Mashonaland Central	6.0	2.6	8.6	25.0	20.8	45.7	31.0	23.5	54.5	84.2	825
Mashonaland East	3.9	3.4	7.2	21.8	22.2	44.0	26.0	25.5	51.6	86.0	714
Mashonaland West	4.0	3.2	7.2	22.3	22.5	44.9	26.8	25.7	52.5	86.3	829
Matabeleland North	5.8	8.3	14.1	13.9	17.6	31.5	20.2	26.1	46.3	69.6	536
Matabeleland South	5.0	5.5	10.5	12.2	18.1	30.3	17.8	23.5	41.3	74.6	439
Midlands	4.2	2.4	6.6	21.5	21.6	43.1	26.0	24.2	50.2	86.8	1,193
Masvingo	7.4	2.2	9.6	23.7	14.5	38.3	31.3	16.8	48.1	80.2	1,137
Harare	2.2	1.8	4.0	21.6	22.2	43.8	24.0	24.2	48.2	91.6	1,492
Bulawayo	2.4	3.3	5.6	13.9	24.1	38.0	16.6	27.3	43.9	87.2	697
Education											
No education	7.9	8.9	16.8	10.1	19.2	29.3	18.3	28.5	46.8	64.0	380
Primary	6.1	4.1	10.2	19.6	20.7	40.3	26.1	24.9	51.0	79.9	2,902
Secondary	3.9	2.4	6.3	21.1	18.8	39.9	25.4	21.3	46.6	86.4	5,355
More than secondary	2.4	0.8	3.2	24.0	33.7	57.7	26.8	34.5	61.3	94.7	270
Wealth quintile											
Lowest	9.5	4.5	14.0	21.5	14.3	35.8	31.7	19.1	50.8	72.5	1,552
Second	6.1	4.1	10.2	24.1	17.7	41.9	30.5	21.8	52.3	80.5	1,500
Middle	4.0	3.8	7.8	19.3	17.7	37.1	23.5	21.5	45.1	82.6	1,546
Fourth	3.8	2.7	6.4	22.0	24.1	46.1	26.0	27.0	53.1	87.9	2,006
Highest	2.1	1.8	3.9	16.0	22.8	38.8	18.3	24.6	42.9	90.9	2,304
Total	4.8	3.2	8.0	20.3	19.9	40.1	25.3	23.2	48.5	83.6	8,907

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Table 7.3.2—Continued

Percentage of all women and not currently married women with unmet need for family planning, percentage with met need for family planning, and the total demand for family planning, by background characteristics, Zimbabwe 2005-2006

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		
WOMEN NOT CURRENTLY MARRIED											
Age											
15-19	1.0	0.0	1.0	2.3	0.3	2.7	3.3	0.3	3.6	73.0	1,704
20-24	1.4	0.1	1.5	10.3	5.2	15.6	11.8	5.3	17.1	91.0	752
25-29	0.7	1.1	1.8	15.7	18.9	34.6	17.5	19.9	37.5	95.3	341
30-34	0.0	2.5	2.5	8.1	18.4	26.5	8.4	20.9	29.3	91.4	283
35-39	0.0	0.7	0.7	1.2	19.5	20.7	1.2	20.2	21.4	96.6	278
40-44	0.5	2.2	2.8	0.9	15.2	16.1	1.4	17.4	18.8	85.4	214
45-49	0.0	0.9	0.9	0.6	15.4	15.9	0.6	16.3	16.8	94.7	193
Residence											
Urban	0.7	0.9	1.6	6.3	8.0	14.3	7.2	8.9	16.0	90.3	1,760
Rural	0.9	0.3	1.2	4.4	6.8	11.2	5.4	7.1	12.5	90.6	2,004
Province											
Manicaland	0.6	1.0	1.7	0.8	5.9	6.7	1.4	7.0	8.4	80.1	444
Mashonaland Central	1.0	0.0	1.0	4.7	5.7	10.4	5.6	5.7	11.3	91.6	253
Mashonaland East	0.7	0.0	0.7	6.7	4.7	11.4	7.4	4.7	12.1	94.4	272
Mashonaland West	0.0	1.7	1.7	6.4	10.6	16.9	6.4	12.3	18.6	90.9	315
Matabeleland North	2.9	1.1	4.1	6.1	4.1	10.2	9.5	5.2	14.7	72.4	214
Matabeleland South	0.8	0.8	1.6	7.0	8.1	15.1	7.8	8.9	16.7	90.5	232
Midlands	1.4	0.2	1.6	4.6	6.6	11.3	6.3	6.8	13.2	88.1	465
Masvingo	0.2	0.2	0.4	4.9	8.3	13.1	5.6	8.5	14.0	97.1	440
Harare	0.6	0.4	1.0	5.8	8.8	14.6	6.5	9.1	15.6	93.6	732
Bulawayo	1.0	0.4	1.4	8.0	8.0	15.9	9.0	8.4	17.3	92.0	396
Education											
No education	0.0	0.8	0.8	0.0	14.8	14.8	0.0	15.6	15.6	94.9	104
Primary	0.7	0.5	1.3	4.4	9.7	14.0	5.4	10.2	15.6	91.9	993
Secondary	0.9	0.6	1.4	5.7	6.0	11.7	6.6	6.5	13.2	89.2	2,566
More than secondary	1.3	0.0	1.3	10.1	12.8	22.9	11.4	12.8	24.2	94.8	101
Wealth quintile											
Lowest	1.4	0.3	1.7	5.7	5.9	11.6	7.3	6.2	13.5	87.7	518
Second	0.8	0.1	0.9	4.9	6.6	11.5	5.7	6.7	12.4	92.6	501
Middle	0.9	0.3	1.2	2.8	7.3	10.2	3.8	7.6	11.4	89.3	640
Fourth	0.8	1.4	2.2	6.5	10.3	16.8	7.7	11.7	19.5	88.4	823
Highest	0.6	0.3	0.9	5.8	6.4	12.2	6.4	6.8	13.1	93.0	1,281
Total	0.8	0.5	1.4	5.3	7.4	12.7	6.3	7.9	14.2	90.4	3,764

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 2 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 a better method of contraception). Also excluded from the unmet need category for the all women panel are unmarried women who did not have sexual intercourse in the four weeks preceding the survey.

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 total demand for contraception (since they would have been using had their method not failed).

As expected, unmet need for spacing is higher among younger women, while unmet need for limiting childbearing is higher among older women, as shown in Table 7.3.1. There is a striking difference in unmet need between rural and urban areas, with urban areas at 8 percent and rural areas at 15 percent. Among the provinces, Matabeleland North and Matabeleland South have the highest unmet need (21 percent for both) and Harare has the lowest (7 percent). Unmet need in other provinces ranges between 10 percent and 19 percent. Unmet need is negatively associated with a woman's education; it is lower among women with at least some secondary schooling (11 percent or less) than among those with primary education (15 percent) or uneducated women (23 percent). Unmet need is also inversely associated with a woman's wealth status. Among women in the lowest wealth quintile, unmet need is 20 percent, while it is 8 percent among their counterparts in the highest wealth quintile.

The level of wealth is usually positively associated with the use of family planning services. Married women in the highest wealth quintile use family planning services more than those in the lowest wealth quintile (72 and 48 percent, respectively).

The need for family planning services for all women and women not currently married are presented in Table 7.3.2. The section on all women follows the trends of currently married women. The total family planning demand for all women is high, between 84 and 89 percent for each age group between 20 and 39 years. These age groups constitute women of childbearing age. The low level of unmet need among unmarried women is due to the fact that many are younger women who have not yet started their families.

7.4 IDEAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN

This section focuses on the respondent's ideal number of children, implicitly taking into account the number of children that the respondent already has. The women, regardless of marital status, were asked about the number of children they would choose to have if they could start afresh. Only currently married men were asked the same question. Respondents who had no children were asked, "If you could choose exactly the number of children to have in your whole life, how many would that be?" For respondents who had children the question was rephrased as follows: "If you could go back to the time when you did not have any children and could choose exactly the number of children to have in your whole life, how many would that be?" Responses to these questions are summarized in Table 7.4 for both women and men age 15-49.

The data in the top portion of Table 7.4 indicate that the majority of women were able to give a numeric answer to this hypothetical question. Only 1 percent gave a non-numeric answer such as, "it is up to God," "any number," or "I do not know." Table 7.4 shows that the total mean ideal number of children is 3.8 among all women. In general, men want slightly larger families than women. Among married women, the mean ideal number of children is 4.1, compared with 4.5 for married men. Seventy-three percent of all women in Zimbabwe would like to have four or fewer children, while 26 percent would like to have five or more children. For married men, 62 percent would like to have four or fewer children, while 35 percent would like to have five or more children.

In interpreting the findings in Table 7.4 it is important to remember that the actual and ideal number of children tend to be related. There are several reasons for this. First, to the extent that women are able to implement their fertility desires, women who want large families would achieve large families. Second, because women with large families are, on average, older women, they may prefer a greater number of children because of the attitudes towards childbearing to which they were exposed during the early stages of their reproductive lives. Last, some women may have difficulty admitting that they would prefer fewer children than they currently have if they could begin childbearing again. Such women are likely to report their actual number as their preferred number. Indeed, women who have fewer children do

report a smaller ideal number of children than women with more children. The mean ideal family size is 3.2 for all women with one child, compared with 6.4 among all women with six or more children.

The relationship between the actual and ideal number of children is also presented for men in Table 7.4. Men who have fewer children report a smaller ideal number of children than men with more children. For example, the average ideal family size is 3.6 for married men with one child, compared with 7.6 for men with six or more children. Interestingly, men in polygynous marriages want a much larger family than men in monogamous marriages (6.5 children and 4.3 children, respectively).

Table 7.4 Ideal number of children								
Percent distribution of all women 15-49 and all currently married men 15-49 by ideal number of children, and mean ideal number of children for all respondents and for currently married respondents, according to number of living children, Zimbabwe 2005-2006								
Desire for children	Number of living children ¹							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
ALL WOMEN²								
0	1.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.6	1.7	0.5	1.1
1	3.8	6.5	2.4	1.5	1.3	0.7	0.7	3.2
2	36.0	28.9	23.1	11.2	10.7	6.5	5.3	23.2
3	24.4	27.0	18.2	17.1	4.7	8.1	3.2	18.7
4	20.1	22.4	37.7	34.6	36.4	18.2	17.9	26.6
5	8.4	8.7	9.7	18.7	16.1	20.3	10.9	11.5
6+	4.2	4.9	7.8	15.3	29.0	43.0	57.6	14.5
Non-numeric responses	1.4	0.8	0.4	0.9	1.3	1.5	3.9	1.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of respondents	2,507	1,799	1,624	1,064	763	502	648	8,907
Mean ideal number of children for³:								
All women	3.0	3.2	3.6	4.1	4.6	5.3	6.4	3.8
Number	2,473	1,785	1,618	1,054	754	494	623	8,800
Currently married women	3.5	3.2	3.6	4.2	4.6	5.4	6.3	4.1
Number	266	1,218	1,292	819	577	391	511	5,074
CURRENTLY MARRIED MEN^{2,4}								
0	2.4	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.6
1	3.1	3.5	1.2	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.6	1.5
2	20.8	17.7	18.2	7.9	9.2	5.4	3.0	12.6
3	27.6	30.8	19.0	18.6	7.9	5.8	4.8	18.2
4	19.9	26.8	32.7	35.0	32.7	21.2	18.3	28.8
5	8.8	12.4	16.8	19.9	15.9	19.7	6.2	15.1
6+	10.1	6.3	8.7	15.4	30.2	43.9	60.5	20.1
Non-numeric responses	7.4	2.0	2.7	1.9	3.6	3.1	6.3	3.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of respondents	130	717	768	583	353	260	322	3,132
Mean ideal number of children for³:								
Currently married men	3.6	3.5	3.9	4.4	4.9	5.9	7.6	4.5
Number	120	702	747	571	341	252	301	3,035
Monogamous men	3.5	3.5	3.9	4.3	4.9	5.8	6.9	4.3
Number	116	677	703	527	306	210	219	2,759
Polygynous men	6.3	3.7	4.7	4.9	5.0	6.7	9.7	6.5
Number	4	25	43	44	34	42	82	275
¹ Includes current pregnancy for women								
² All women were asked questions about their ideal number of children; however, only married men were asked questions about their ideal number of children.								
³ Means are calculated excluding the women and men giving non-numeric responses.								
⁴ The number of living children includes one additional child if any of the respondent's wives are currently pregnant.								

7.5 MEAN IDEAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN BY BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

Table 7.5 shows the ideal number of children by age and background characteristics of all women and currently married men. Data in the table show that younger, better educated, and urban women are more likely to have fertility goals with fewer numbers of children. The mean ideal number of children increases with age from 3.1 among women age 15-19 to 5.7 among women 45-49. Women in rural areas have higher family size norms than those in urban areas (4.2 and 3.1 children, respectively). This is further reflected in the fact that women in Harare and Bulawayo have the smallest ideal family size norms (3.1 each). The ideal number of children for women in the remaining provinces is between 3.7 and 4.6 children.

Differentials in the ideal number of children among currently married men are also presented in Table 7.5. As with women, younger, better-educated, and urban men are more likely to have fertility goals that include fewer numbers of children. Men in Masvingo, Mashonaland Central, and Manicaland tend to want larger families (4.8 or more children), while those in Harare, Bulawayo, and Matabeleland South want 4.0 or fewer children.

Women and men in the highest wealth quintile prefer to have fewer numbers of children (3.1 and 3.6, respectively), while those in the lowest wealth quintile prefer to have more children (4.8 and 6.0, respectively).

7.6 FERTILITY PLANNING STATUS

The issue of unplanned and unwanted fertility was further investigated in the 2005-06 ZDHS by asking women who had births during the five years before the survey whether the births were wanted at the time (planned), wanted at a later time (mistimed), or not wanted at all (unwanted). The responses to those questions provide a measure of the degree to which Zimbabwean couples have been successful in controlling childbearing. In addition, the information can be used to estimate the effect on period fertility if unwanted pregnancies had been prevented.

Table 7.5 Mean ideal number of children¹

Mean ideal number of children for all women and currently married men age 15-49, by background characteristics, Zimbabwe 2005-2006

Background characteristic	Women		Men	
	Mean	Number of all women ¹	Mean	Number of currently married men ¹
Age				
15-19	3.1	2,133	*	6
20-24	3.2	1,936	3.8	302
25-29	3.6	1,458	4.1	676
30-34	4.0	1,204	4.3	740
35-39	4.4	818	4.5	567
40-44	5.2	684	5.3	396
45-49	5.7	569	5.7	347
Residence				
Urban	3.1	3,467	3.7	1,230
Rural	4.2	5,334	5.1	1,804
Province				
Manicaland	4.2	1,017	4.8	322
Mashonaland Central	4.0	815	5.3	340
Mashonaland East	3.7	712	4.2	253
Mashonaland West	3.8	817	4.3	328
Matabeleland North	3.9	534	4.6	182
Matabeleland South	3.7	422	4.0	94
Midlands	3.8	1,187	4.7	434
Masvingo	4.6	1,127	5.5	347
Harare	3.1	1,482	3.9	556
Bulawayo	3.1	688	3.8	178
Education				
No education	6.1	368	7.0	57
Primary	4.6	2,844	5.6	840
Secondary	3.3	5,322	4.1	1,891
More than secondary	2.8	268	3.6	246
Wealth quintile				
Lowest	4.8	1,521	6.0	506
Second	4.2	1,482	5.2	526
Middle	4.0	1,532	4.6	414
Fourth	3.4	1,991	4.1	917
Highest	3.1	2,273	3.6	670
Total	3.8	8,800	4.5	3,035

Note: An asterisk indicates that a figure is based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases and has been suppressed.

¹ Table is based on women and men with numeric responses.

The questions on the planning status of recent births required the female respondent to recall accurately her wishes at one or more points in the past five years and report them honestly. These questions are subject to recall and accuracy bias in remembering how she felt about a particular pregnancy. She also may not be willing to admit that she had not wanted a child at its conception. Conversely, if the child has become an economic or health burden, she may now claim that it was unwanted. Despite these potential problems of comprehension, recall, and truthfulness, results from previous surveys have yielded plausible responses, with the most probable effect of biases in the answers being net underestimation of the level of unwanted fertility.

Table 7.6 shows the distribution of births in the five years before the survey by whether a birth was wanted then, wanted later, or not wanted. Overall, 67 percent of all births were wanted at the time of conception, 20 percent were reported as mistimed (wanted later), and 13 percent were unwanted. The proportion of unwanted births is greater for births that are fourth order or more (22 percent) than that of first births (10 percent). Similarly, a much larger proportion of births to older women are unwanted than are those to younger women. Whereas about 8 percent of births to women age 20-24 years are unwanted, 39 percent of births to women 40-49 years are unwanted.

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	72.1	17.2	10.4	0.3	100.0	1,860
2	70.0	21.6	8.2	0.2	100.0	1,481
3	68.3	20.3	11.2	0.3	100.0	968
4+	55.1	22.8	21.8	0.3	100.0	1,511
Age at birth						
<20	65.0	21.4	13.3	0.3	100.0	1,205
20-24	69.4	22.2	8.2	0.2	100.0	1,937
25-29	69.5	19.2	11.1	0.3	100.0	1,319
30-34	64.5	18.3	17.0	0.1	100.0	809
35-39	61.5	16.9	21.6	0.0	100.0	368
40-44	43.7	16.2	39.0	1.2	100.0	164
45-49	38.2	17.9	39.4	4.6	100.0	19
Total	66.5	20.3	12.9	0.3	100.0	5,820

7.7 WANTED FERTILITY RATES

Using information on whether births occurring in the five years before the survey were wanted or not, a total "wanted" fertility rate has been calculated. This measure is calculated in the same manner as the conventional total fertility rate, except that unwanted births are excluded from the numerator. A birth is considered as wanted if the number of living children at the time of conception was less than the current ideal number of children as reported by the respondent. Wanted fertility rates express the level of fertility that theoretically would result if all unwanted births were prevented. Comparison of the actual fertility rate with the wanted rate indicates the potential demographic impact of eliminating unwanted births.

Table 7.7 shows that the wanted fertility rate among women for the three years preceding the survey was 3.3 children, compared with the actual average of 3.8 children. In other words, Zimbabwean women are currently having an average of 0.5 children more than they actually want. The table also shows that regardless of place of residence, level of education, and wealth quintile, the wanted fertility rate is lower than the total fertility rate.

Women in Matabeleland South have the largest gap of slightly more than one child. Women in this province would have an average of just under three rather than four children if unwanted births were prevented. Women with higher levels of education as well as those in the highest wealth quintile seem to be the most successful in achieving their fertility goal.

Table 7.7 Wanted fertility rates		
Total wanted fertility rates and total fertility rates for the three years preceding the survey, by background characteristics, Zimbabwe 2005-2006		
Background characteristic	Total wanted fertility rates	Total fertility rate
Residence		
Urban	2.3	2.6
Rural	3.9	4.6
Province		
Manicaland	3.7	4.2
Mashonaland Central	4.1	4.6
Mashonaland East	3.2	3.7
Mashonaland West	3.3	3.7
Matabeleland North	3.3	4.2
Matabeleland South	2.9	4.0
Midlands	3.7	4.2
Masvingo	4.3	4.9
Harare	2.2	2.5
Bulawayo	1.8	2.3
Education		
No education	5.2	5.8
Primary	3.8	4.5
Secondary	2.9	3.3
More than secondary	2.6	2.7
Wealth quintile		
Lowest	4.8	5.5
Second	3.9	4.8
Middle	3.5	4.0
Fourth	2.8	3.2
Highest	2.0	2.3
Total	3.3	3.8

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.