

CHAPTER 6

FERTILITY PREFERENCES

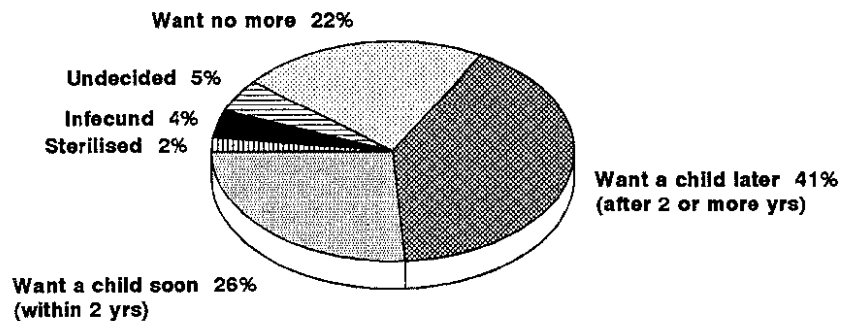
Several questions were asked in the ZDHS concerning women's fertility preferences. These questions dealt with: 1) whether the respondent wanted another child, 2) if so, how long she would like to wait to have the next child, and 3) how many children she would want in total if she could start afresh. The answers to these questions allow the estimation of levels of unmet need for family planning services either to limit or space births and of levels of unwanted fertility.

The value of the data on fertility preferences as a vehicle for predicting future fertility is questionable. Women's attitudes towards childbearing may not be fully formed and may change over time. Moreover, the data do not reflect the effects of social pressures or the attitudes of other family members, particularly the husband, who may have a major influence on reproductive decisions. Also, women need the means to fulfill their desires. However, on a macro level, data on fertility preferences can be useful as an indicator of the direction that future fertility may take.

6.1 Desire for More Children

In the ZDHS, currently married women were asked "Would you like to have (a/another) child or would you prefer not to have any (more) children?" Interviewers were instructed to alter the wording depending on whether the respondent already had children or not. If the woman was pregnant, she was asked

Figure 6.1
Fertility Preferences among
Currently Married Women 15-49



ZDHS 1992

if she wanted another child after the one she was expecting. Women who said they did want to have another child were then asked how long they would like to wait before the birth of the next child.

As Figure 6.1 shows, two-thirds of married women in Zambia want to have another child; however, most of these women (41 percent of all married women) want to wait two or more years before having their next birth. Over one-fifth (22 percent) of women do not want to have any more children. Thus, a majority of married women want to either space their next birth (want a child later) or limit childbearing altogether (want no more). These women can be considered to be *potentially* in need of family planning services.

Not surprisingly, the desire for more children declines noticeably as the number of living children increases (Table 6.1 and Figure 6.2). Thus, 77 percent of married women with no children want to have a child soon (within two years), whereas only 7 percent of women with six or more children want to have another soon.

Table 6.1 Fertility preferences by number of living children

Percent distribution of currently married women by desire for more children, according to number of living children, Zambia 1992

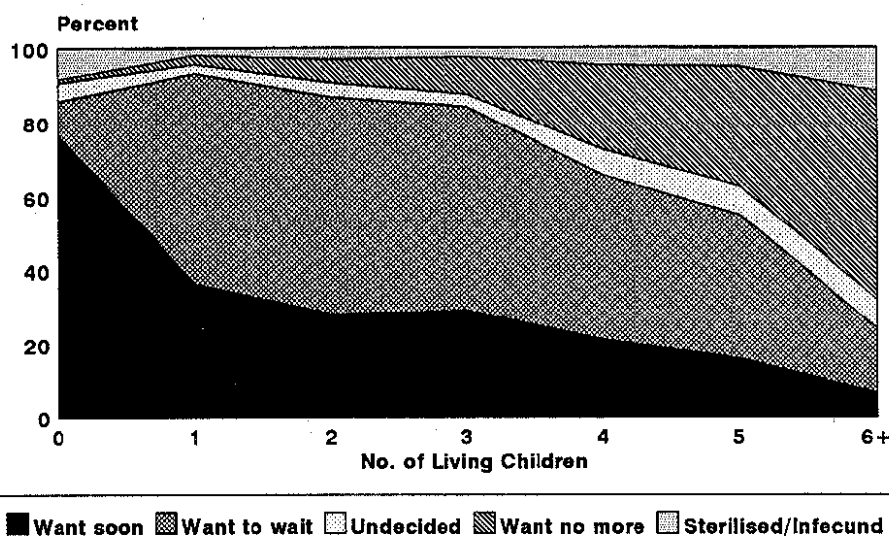
Desire for children	Number of living children ¹							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
Have another soon ²	76.9	36.4	28.3	29.1	21.1	16.1	6.9	26.3
Have another later ³	8.8	56.3	58.1	55.0	44.5	38.5	17.3	40.6
Have another, undecided when	3.0	1.1	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.9
Undecided	2.0	1.4	3.2	2.8	6.6	7.1	7.1	4.4
Wants no more	1.0	2.4	6.2	10.0	22.7	32.0	56.3	22.0
Sterilised	0.0	0.5	1.5	0.5	1.7	1.6	5.5	2.1
Declared infecund	8.2	1.3	1.6	2.0	3.0	3.4	6.0	3.5
Missing	0.0	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.2	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	321	822	712	614	481	428	1078	4457

¹Includes current pregnancy

²Wants next birth within 2 years

³Wants to delay next birth for 2 or more years

Figure 6.2
Fertility Preferences among Currently Married Women by Number of Living Children



ZDHS 1992

Table 6.2 Fertility preferences by age

Percent distribution of currently married women by desire for more children, according to age, Zambia 1992

Desire for children	Age of woman						Total	
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44		45-49
Have another soon ¹	32.2	31.6	29.1	27.4	21.4	16.9	8.3	26.3
Have another later ²	59.8	60.3	50.7	36.6	18.6	8.5	2.6	40.6
Have another, undecided when	1.9	1.2	0.5	0.4	0.6	1.5	1.0	0.9
Undecided	2.5	2.0	6.1	6.7	6.1	2.8	4.2	4.4
Wants no more	2.0	4.2	12.3	24.7	42.8	52.3	61.4	22.0
Sterilised	0.0	0.1	0.2	1.3	6.3	7.3	5.3	2.1
Declared infecund	1.1	0.4	0.9	2.8	4.2	10.4	16.9	3.5
Missing	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	526	989	943	755	537	412	295	4457

¹Wants next birth within 2 years

²Wants to delay next birth for 2 or more years

Table 6.2 shows similar data according to the age of the woman instead of the number of children. The desire to limit births rises rapidly with age, from two percent of married women age 15-19 to 61 percent of those age 45-49. Conversely, the desire to space births declines with age. In other words, the potential need for family planning services is greatest among older women for limiting childbearing and among

younger women for spacing births. The net effect of these two opposing patterns is that the proportion of women falling into one of these two groups is almost constant at about 60-64 percent of women.

The desire to stop childbearing shows little variation according to background characteristics of the respondents (see Table 6.3). Urban women are more likely than rural women to want to stop childbearing, especially those women with four or more children. Women in Copperbelt, North-Western and Lusaka Provinces are slightly more likely than women in other provinces to want to stop childbearing, while women in Western and Luapula Provinces appear to be somewhat more pronatalist. Women with either no education or secondary education are more likely than women with only primary education to want no more children; in other words, the data exhibit a U-shaped pattern of relationship. The positive effect of some primary education on fertility has been widely noted and may be due to enhanced means of support for more children. In any case, the differences in Zambia are small.

Table 6.3 Desire to limit (stop) childbearing

Percentage of currently married women who want no more children, by number of living children and selected background characteristics, Zambia 1992

Background characteristic	Number of living children ¹							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
Residence								
Urban	1.6	2.9	11.8	10.2	28.8	39.7	66.3	27.2
Rural	0.6	3.1	4.0	10.7	19.8	28.0	57.7	21.3
Province								
Central	(0.0)	2.9	4.6	10.9	(28.1)	(31.1)	66.0	24.3
Copperbelt	1.8	1.9	5.9	9.2	26.4	38.4	67.7	28.0
Eastern	2.0	4.6	9.8	21.2	(30.5)	(40.4)	62.8	24.4
Luapula	(0.0)	1.2	2.4	4.4	(10.7)	(27.9)	48.2	16.2
Lusaka	(2.6)	2.3	17.0	11.3	32.3	41.0	61.0	26.6
Northern	*	1.2	3.0	5.7	(20.6)	(29.0)	61.1	21.7
North-Western	*	(12.2)	(3.7)	(23.7)	(27.4)	(56.0)	61.4	26.9
Southern	0.0	4.6	7.2	7.7	16.8	21.2	59.7	23.0
Western	(0.0)	3.0	(2.0)	3.5	(15.6)	(11.7)	46.5	14.0
Education								
No education	2.0	6.0	7.1	13.0	24.3	31.6	58.9	29.3
Primary	0.5	2.1	4.0	8.0	18.0	28.2	61.0	21.5
Secondary+	1.8	3.1	16.2	16.7	43.0	56.7	72.6	27.1
Total	1.0	3.0	7.7	10.5	24.3	33.6	61.8	24.1

Note: Figures in parentheses are based on 25 to 49 women, while an asterisk means the figure is based on fewer than 25 women and has been suppressed. Women who have been sterilised are considered to want no more children.
¹Includes current pregnancy

6.2 Demand for Family Planning Services

Women who are currently married and who say either that they do not want any more children or that they want to wait two or more years before having another child, but are not using contraception, are considered to have an *unmet need* for family planning.¹ Women who are using family planning methods are

¹ For an exact description of the calculation, see footnote 1, Table 6.4.

said to have a *met need* for family planning. Women with unmet and met need constitute the *total demand* for family planning. Table 6.4 presents data on unmet need, met need and total demand for family planning, according to whether the need is for spacing or limiting births.

One-third of married Zambian women have an unmet need for family planning services, 21 percent for spacing purposes and 12 percent for limiting births. Combined with the 15 percent of married women who are currently using a contraceptive method, the total demand for family planning comprises almost half of the married women in Zambia. Thus, if all women who say they want to space or limit their children were to use methods, the contraceptive prevalence rate could be increased from 15 percent to 49 percent of married women. Presently, only one-third of the potential demand for family planning is being met (last column in Table 6.4).

Table 6.4 Need for family planning services

Percentage of currently married women with unmet need for family planning, met need for family planning, and the total demand for family planning services, by selected background characteristics, Zambia 1992

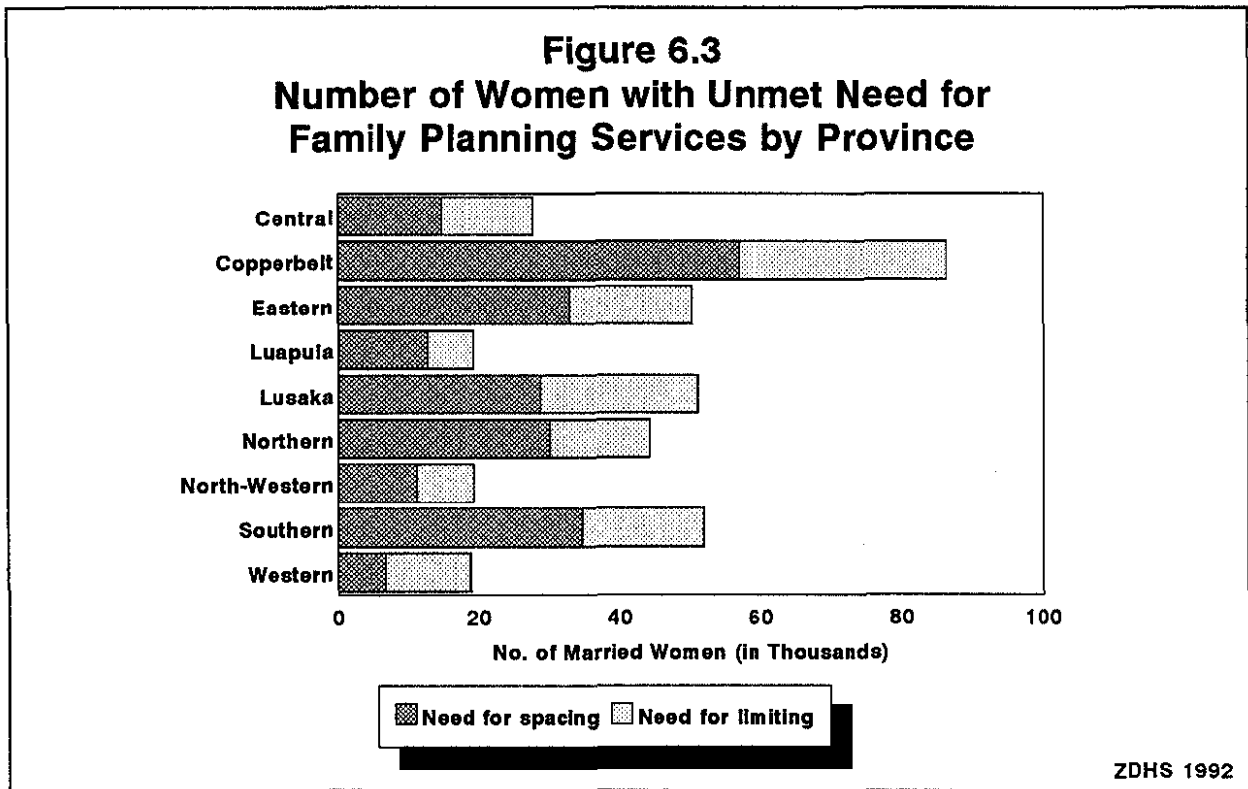
Background characteristic	Unmet need for family planning ¹			Met need for family planning (currently using) ²			Total demand for family planning			Percentage of demand satisfied	Number of women
	For spacing	For limiting	Total	For spacing	For limiting	Total	For spacing	For limiting	Total		
Age											
15-19	23.9	3.9	27.8	8.5	0.2	8.7	32.3	4.2	36.5	23.8	526
20-24	25.9	3.0	28.9	12.2	0.9	13.1	38.1	3.9	42.0	31.2	989
25-29	26.1	5.4	31.5	12.5	2.8	15.3	38.6	8.2	46.8	32.6	943
30-34	23.0	10.2	33.2	10.9	7.5	18.3	33.9	17.7	51.5	35.6	755
35-39	16.9	22.6	39.5	4.8	17.7	22.5	21.7	40.3	62.0	36.3	537
40-44	9.9	32.4	42.4	1.8	15.6	17.4	11.8	48.0	59.8	29.1	412
45-49	6.6	35.5	42.1	0.4	8.6	9.0	6.9	44.1	51.1	17.6	295
Residence											
Urban	22.3	12.1	34.4	11.5	9.2	20.8	33.9	21.3	55.2	37.7	2091
Rural	20.5	12.1	32.6	6.7	3.6	10.3	27.2	15.7	42.9	23.9	2366
Province											
Central	14.4	12.1	26.6	5.5	3.7	9.2	20.0	15.8	35.8	25.7	418
Copperbelt	26.2	13.1	39.3	11.2	7.7	19.0	37.4	20.9	58.3	32.5	1023
Eastern	23.6	11.6	35.1	6.0	3.7	9.7	29.5	15.3	44.8	21.6	536
Luapula	17.1	8.4	25.6	5.3	4.2	9.5	22.4	12.6	35.1	27.1	281
Lusaka	18.3	12.2	30.5	11.9	12.3	24.2	30.1	24.5	54.7	44.3	738
Northern	24.1	11.0	35.1	12.8	4.7	17.5	36.9	15.7	52.6	33.3	423
North-Western	20.3	14.1	34.5	5.7	4.7	10.4	26.1	18.8	44.9	23.1	124
Southern	25.0	12.2	37.1	4.7	3.8	8.5	29.7	15.9	45.6	18.6	673
Western	8.2	13.0	21.2	14.1	3.7	17.8	22.3	16.7	39.0	45.7	241
Education											
No education	17.3	17.3	34.6	3.8	4.2	8.0	21.1	21.4	42.6	18.7	864
Primary	22.9	11.9	34.7	8.5	4.2	12.8	31.4	16.1	47.5	26.9	2754
Secondary	22.4	7.8	30.2	15.1	11.9	27.1	37.5	19.8	57.2	47.3	745
Higher	6.5	4.7	11.2	20.5	37.9	58.5	27.0	42.6	69.6	83.9	93
Total	21.4	12.1	33.4	9.0	6.2	15.2	30.3	18.3	48.6	31.2	4457

¹Unmet need for *spacing* includes pregnant women whose pregnancy was mistimed, amenorrhoeic women whose last birth was mistimed, and 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 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, amenorrhoeic women whose last child was unwanted and women who are neither pregnant nor amenorrhoeic and who are not using any method of family planning and who want no more children.

²Using 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.

The overall unmet need for family planning increases with age. As expected, unmet need for spacing purposes is higher among younger women, while unmet need for limiting childbearing is higher among older women. There is almost no difference in the level of unmet need among urban and rural women, although it is highest among women in Copperbelt and Southern Provinces. Unmet need is higher among women with no education or only primary schooling than among better educated women. This is primarily due to the fact that much larger proportions of educated women are currently using family planning, leading to a larger percent of their demand being satisfied.

An estimate of the actual number of married women with unmet need for family planning services can be calculated by applying the proportions presented in Table 6.4 to the estimated number of women in Zambia. The results of this exercise indicate that approximately 350,000 married women in Zambia are in need of family planning services.² The number of women in need and the proportion in need for spacing and limiting purposes differ greatly by province (see Figure 6.3). Copperbelt Province has more women in need than any other province, both because it is the largest province and because it has the highest proportion of women with unmet need.



² This number was calculated as follows: the number of women in each province from the preliminary report for the 1990 census (Central Statistical Office, 1990a) was projected from 1990 to 1992 using the growth rates by province (also from the 1990 census report). The proportion of all women who are age 15-49 was calculated using similar data from the ZDHS and the proportion of women age 15-49 who are married was also calculated from ZDHS data. Then the proportions in need for spacing and limiting were applied to these numbers.

6.3 Ideal Family Size

In the ZDHS, information on what women feel is the ideal family size was elicited through two questions. Women 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 women who had children, the question was rephrased as follows: "If you could go back to the time 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?" Some women, especially those for whom fertility control is an unfamiliar concept, may have had difficulty in answering this hypothetical question.

The data in Table 6.5 indicate that the vast majority of women were able to give a numeric answer to this question; only 6 percent of women gave a non-numeric answer such as "it is up to God," "any number" or "does not know." Those who gave numeric responses generally want to have large families. Almost half (46 percent) of all respondents said they would choose to have six or more children, with an average of 5.8 children. There is a possibility that some women may report their actual number of children as their ideal number, since they may find it difficult to admit that they would not choose to have so many children if they could start afresh. Indeed, women who have fewer children do report smaller ideal family sizes than women with more children. For example, the average ideal family size is 5.2 among women with one child, compared to 7.2 among women with six or more children. Many of the women with fewer children are young and, to the extent that their fertility preferences do not increase over time and that they can realize their ideal number of children, fertility in Zambia may decline.

Table 6.5 Ideal number of children

Percent distribution of all women by ideal number of children and mean ideal number of children for all women and for currently married women, according to number of living children, Zambia 1992

Ideal number of children	Number of living children ¹							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
0	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.2
1	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.4	0.5	0.0	0.3	0.6
2	6.8	5.5	4.6	1.7	3.2	2.1	2.5	4.4
3	7.8	8.4	5.4	4.6	1.4	2.7	2.2	5.4
4	26.2	23.5	24.8	17.7	16.5	11.5	12.0	20.4
5	21.4	23.0	19.9	17.7	11.1	10.3	7.2	17.1
6+	31.6	33.9	41.3	51.9	61.0	65.6	64.6	45.8
Non-numeric response	5.3	4.8	2.9	6.0	6.1	7.4	11.2	6.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	1862	1280	900	741	574	497	1205	7060
Mean ideal number	5.1	5.2	5.4	6.1	6.2	6.6	7.2	5.8
Number of women	1764	1219	874	697	539	461	1070	6624
Mean for women in union	5.9	5.4	5.5	6.1	6.3	6.5	7.2	6.2
Number of women in union	297	778	694	576	455	396	963	4159

Note: The means exclude women who gave non-numeric responses.

¹Includes current pregnancy

Despite the fact that family size norms are large in Zambia, the data in Table 6.5 show evidence of unwanted fertility. For example, one-quarter of the women with six or more children said that they would ideally like to have fewer than 6 children.

Table 6.6 shows the mean ideal number of children for all women by age according to selected background characteristics. The mean ideal family size increases with age, from 5.1 among women age 15-19 to 8.0 among women age 45-49. At every age group, rural women have higher family size norms than urban women. This is reflected in the fact that women in Lusaka have the smallest ideal family sizes on average; women in Western and Northern Provinces have the highest. Ideal family size is negatively related to education level attained; women with no education have the highest family size desires, while women with secondary education have the smallest.

Background characteristic	Age of woman							Total
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	
Residence								
Urban	4.7	4.8	5.2	5.6	6.1	6.4	7.0	5.2
Rural	5.7	5.9	6.1	6.8	7.4	7.6	8.6	6.4
Province								
Central	5.4	5.6	5.7	6.2	(7.2)	(7.6)	*	6.0
Copperbelt	5.0	5.1	5.4	5.8	6.3	6.8	7.5	5.5
Eastern	4.5	4.8	5.2	5.8	(6.3)	(6.3)	(7.9)	5.3
Luapula	5.9	6.0	6.1	6.9	7.0	(8.2)	(8.4)	6.5
Lusaka	4.1	4.5	4.7	5.0	5.8	5.7	(5.3)	4.7
Northern	6.2	6.6	6.5	(7.1)	(7.3)	(7.9)	(7.9)	6.8
North-Western	5.3	5.5	5.7	6.1	(7.7)	*	*	6.0
Southern	5.2	5.5	5.9	6.7	7.1	7.4	(8.5)	6.0
Western	5.9	6.5	6.9	7.6	8.4	(9.3)	10.7	7.4
Education								
No education	5.6	5.9	6.6	7.0	7.2	7.6	8.6	6.8
Primary	5.3	5.6	5.9	6.4	7.3	7.3	7.9	6.0
Secondary+	4.4	4.5	4.7	4.8	5.2	5.1	*	4.6
Total	5.1	5.3	5.6	6.1	6.7	7.1	8.0	5.8

Note: Figures in parentheses are based on 25 to 49 women, while an asterisk means the figure is based on fewer than 25 women and has been suppressed.

6.4 Fertility Planning

There are two ways of estimating levels of unwanted fertility from ZDHS data. One is based on responses to a question on whether each birth in the five years before the survey was planned (wanted then), mistimed (wanted, but at a later time), or unwanted (wanted no more children). These data are likely to result in underestimates of unplanned childbearing, since women may rationalize unplanned births and declare them as planned once they are born. The other method of measuring unwanted fertility utilizes the data on ideal

family size to calculate "wanted" fertility rates. These too, may suffer from underestimation to the extent that women are unwilling to report an ideal family size lower than their actual family size.

Table 6.7 shows the percent distribution of births in the five years before the survey by whether the birth was wanted then, wanted later, or not wanted. Only 7 percent of recent births were reported to be unwanted, while 26 percent were reported as mistimed (wanted later). Fourth and higher births are more likely than first, second or third births to be unwanted. Similarly, a much larger proportion of births to older women are unwanted—almost 30 percent among women in their 40s.

Table 6.7 Fertility planning status

Percent distribution of births in the five years preceding the survey by fertility planning status, according to birth order and mother's age, Zambia 1992

Birth order and mother's age	Planning status of birth				Total	Number of births
	Wanted then	Wanted later	Wanted no more	Missing		
Birth order						
1	70.8	22.6	5.8	0.8	100.0	1597
2	72.4	23.9	2.9	0.8	100.0	1253
3	70.4	26.8	2.4	0.4	100.0	988
4+	59.5	28.2	11.3	1.0	100.0	3322
Age at birth						
<20	66.9	26.7	5.8	0.6	100.0	1516
20-24	70.0	26.1	3.0	0.9	100.0	2072
25-29	68.8	26.1	4.1	1.0	100.0	1590
30-34	60.6	28.7	9.8	0.9	100.0	1085
35-39	54.4	25.0	19.9	0.7	100.0	593
40-44	55.6	14.2	29.4	0.8	100.0	269
45-49	(61.3)	(10.3)	(28.4)	(0.0)	100.0	36
Total	65.8	26.0	7.4	0.8	100.0	7160

Note: Table includes current pregnancies.

Table 6.8 presents *wanted fertility rates*. 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 defined as 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.) This 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 the actual total fertility rate suggests the potential demographic impact of the elimination of unwanted births.

The wanted total fertility rate was 5.4 for Zambia as a whole, one child lower than the actual total fertility rate. Moreover, this difference of approximately one child between the wanted and actual total fertility rates is apparent for all categories of background characteristics. The only exception is among women in Western Province, where there appears to be less unwanted fertility than in other provinces.

Table 6.8 Wanted fertility rates

Total wanted fertility rates and total fertility rates for the three years preceding the survey, by selected background characteristics, Zambia 1992

Background characteristic	Total wanted fertility rate	Total fertility rate
Residence		
Urban	4.7	5.8
Rural	6.2	7.1
Region		
Copperbelt	5.0	6.2
Eastern, Central	5.7	6.8
Lusaka	4.5	5.5
Luapula, Northern	6.4	7.4
Southern	6.0	7.1
North-Western, Western	5.5	6.0
Education		
No education	6.3	7.1
Primary	5.7	6.8
Secondary+	3.9	4.9
Total	5.4	6.5

Note: Rates are based on births to women 15-49 in the period 1-36 months preceding the survey. The total fertility rates are the same as those presented in Table 3.3. Some provinces have been grouped together to increase sample sizes.