FERTILITY AND FERTILITY PREFERENCES 4

A major objective of NFHS-3 is to provide detailed information on fertility levels, differentials, and trends. This chapter presents a description of current and past fertility, cumulative fertility and family size, birth order, birth intervals, age at first birth, and teenage pregnancy and motherhood. Also discussed are fertility preferences, the ideal and actual number of children, preference for sons or daughters, planning status of pregnancies, and wanted and actual total fertility rates. A major addition in NFHS-3 is the provision of information for men on fertility preferences, the ideal and actual number of children, and preference for sons or daughters. Also, data from the three rounds of NFHS surveys allow estimation of fertility trends.

Most of the fertility measures presented in this chapter are based on the complete birth histories collected from women age 15-49 years. Several measures and procedures were used to obtain complete and accurate reporting of births, deaths, and the timing of these events. First, women were asked a series of questions aimed at recording all the live births that had occurred in their lifetime. Second, for each live birth, information was collected on the age, sex, and survival status of the child. For dead children, age at death was recorded. Interviewers were given extensive training in probing techniques designed to help respondents report this information accurately. For example, interviewers were instructed to check any documents (such as horoscopes, school certificates, or vaccination cards) that might provide additional information on dates of birth, and to probe for any additional births in each birth interval in order to prevent the omission of births, especially of children who died soon after birth. Information was also collected on non-live births in the five years before the survey.

Despite these measures to improve data quality, NFHS-3 is subject to the same types of errors that are inherent in all retrospective sample surveys—namely, the omission of some births (especially births of children who died at a very young age) and the difficulty of determining the date of birth of each child accurately. These difficulties are likely to somewhat bias the estimates of fertility levels and trends.

4.1 FERTILITY LEVELS

NFHS-3 provides estimates of age-specific fertility rates (ASFR), total fertility rates (TFR), and crude birth rates (CBR) for the three-year period preceding the survey, which corresponds roughly to the period 2003-05. This three-year period was chosen as a compromise between the need to obtain recent information (suggesting the use of a short period closer to the survey date) and the need to reduce sampling variation and minimize problems related to displacement of births from recent years to earlier years (suggesting the use of a longer period). The ASFR for any specific age group is calculated by dividing the number of births to women in that age group during the period 1-36 months preceding the survey by the number of woman-years lived by women in that age group during the same three-year time period. The TFR is a summary measure, based on the ASFRs, that indicates the number of children a woman would bear during her reproductive years if she were to experience the ASFRs prevailing at the time of

the survey. Mathematically, the TFR is five times the sum of all the ASFRs for the five-year age groups. The CBR is defined as the annual number of births per 1,000 population.

Table 4.1 presents the trends in ASFR, TFR, and CBR from NFHS-1, NFHS-2, and NFHS-3. Based on estimates for the three-year period before NFHS-3, the CBR was 23.1 births per 1,000 population and the TFR was 2.7 births per woman. The CBR is 25.0 in rural areas and 18.8 in urban areas, slightly lower than 2004 CBR estimates of 25.9 in rural areas and 19.0 in urban areas from the Sample Registration System (Office of the Registrar General, 2006b). The total fertility rate is almost one child higher in rural areas (3.0) than in urban areas (2.1). Age-specific fertility rates are lower at all ages in urban areas than in rural areas. Seventy percent of urban total fertility and 63 percent of rural total fertility are concentrated in the prime childbearing ages 20-29. There is also a moderate amount of early childbearing at age 15-19. Fertility at age 15-19 accounts for 14 percent of total fertility in urban areas and 18 percent in rural areas. Fertility at ages 35 and older accounts for only 4 percent of total fertility in urban areas and 7 percent in rural areas.

Table 4.1 Current fertility

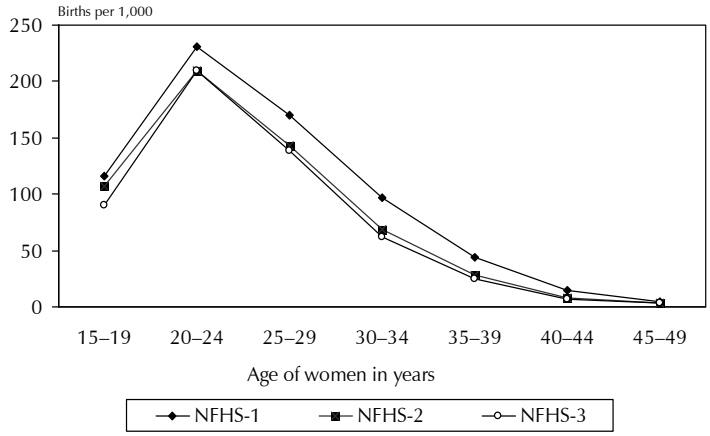
Age-specific and total fertility rates and crude birth rates from NFHS-3, NFHS-2, and NFHS-1 by residence, India

	NFHS-3			NFHS-2			NFHS-1		
Age	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
15-19	0.057	0.105	0.090	0.068	0.121	0.107	0.075	0.131	0.116
20-24	0.166	0.231	0.209	0.179	0.222	0.210	0.203	0.243	0.231
25-29	0.123	0.146	0.139	0.127	0.150	0.143	0.154	0.177	0.170
30-34	0.048	0.069	0.062	0.057	0.075	0.069	0.071	0.108	0.097
35-39	0.013	0.031	0.025	0.018	0.033	0.028	0.027	0.051	0.044
40-44	0.004	0.009	0.007	0.003	0.011	0.008	0.006	0.019	0.015
45-49	0.001	0.004	0.003	0.001	0.004	0.003	0.004	0.006	0.005
TFR 15-44	2.06	2.96	2.66	2.27	3.06	2.84	2.68	3.64	3.36
TFR 15-49	2.06	2.98	2.68	2.27	3.07	2.85	2.70	3.67	3.39
CBR	18.8	25.0	23.1	20.9	26.2	24.8	24.1	30.4	28.7

Note: Rates are for the period 1-36 months preceding the survey (approximately 1990-92 for NFHS-1, 1996-98 for NFHS-2, and 2003-05 for NFHS-3). Age-specific fertility rates are expressed per woman. Rates for the age group 45-49 might be slightly biased due to truncation.
TFR = Total fertility rate expressed per woman
CBR = Crude birth rate, expressed per 1,000 population

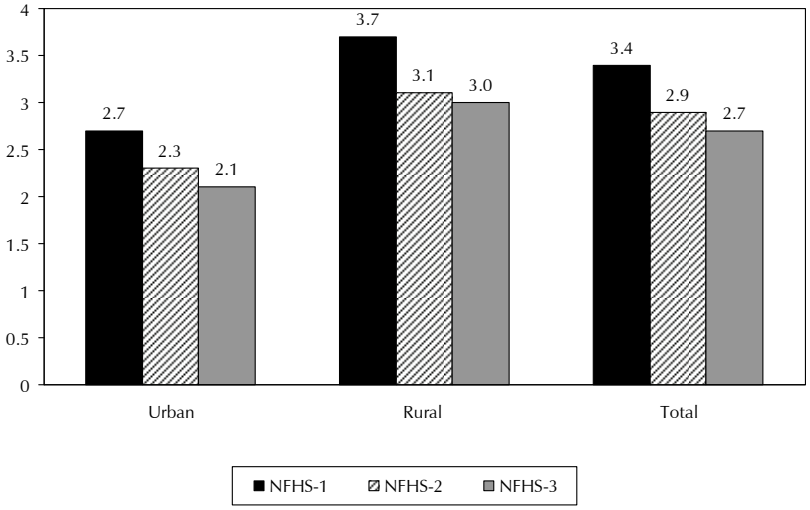
The CBR fell from 28.7 to 24.8 between NFHS-1 and NFHS-2, a decline of 14 percent in approximately six and one-half years. However, between NFHS-2 and NFHS-3, the CBR declined only half as fast, from 24.8 to 23.1 in almost the same time span. Between NFHS-1 and NFHS-2, the TFR fell by 0.54 children, from 3.39 to 2.85 (a decline of 16 percent). Between NFHS-2 and NFHS-3, the TFR however, declined by a meagre 0.17 children, from 2.85 to 2.68. Between NFHS-1 and NFHS-2, fertility fell mainly at ages 20 and above and very little at age 15-19 (Figure 4.1). Although fertility fell at ages 40-44 and 45-49, fertility at these ages was already very low in NFHS-1, so that fertility declines above age 40 had a negligible impact on the changes in the CBR and TFR between the two surveys. Between NFHS-2 and NFHS-3, the decline in ASFR was very small at all ages, with ASFR for women age 20-24 showing a very small increase in rural areas.

Figure 4.1 **Trends in Age-Specific Fertility Rates NFHS-1, NFHS-2, and NFHS-3**



The trend suggests a clear slowdown in fertility decline in the seven years between NFHS-2 and NFHS-3 compared with the earlier period between NFHS-1 and NFHS-2. This slowdown in fertility decline is mainly due to plateauing of fertility in rural areas (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 **Trends in Total Fertility Rates by Residence**



4.2 FERTILITY DIFFERENTIALS AND TRENDS

Table 4.2 shows variations in the total fertility rate, the percentage of women currently pregnant, and the mean number of children ever born to women age 40-49 by background characteristics. The TFR for India is 1.8 children higher for women with no education than for women with 12 or more years of education. The TFR for Muslims is 0.8 children higher than the TFR for Hindus, and both of these groups have higher fertility than other major religious groups. The Hindu-Muslim fertility differential in NFHS-3 is the same as it was in NFHS-2. By

caste/tribe, the TFR is 0.6 children higher for scheduled-caste women, 0.8 children higher for scheduled-tribe women, and 0.4 children higher for women belonging to other backward classes (OBC) than for women who do not belong to any of these groups.

Table 4.2 Fertility by background characteristics

Total fertility rate for the three years preceding the survey, percentage of women age 15-49 currently pregnant, and mean number of children ever born to women age 40-49 by background characteristics, India, 2005-06

Background characteristic	Total fertility rate	Percentage currently pregnant	Mean number of children ever born to women age 40-49 years
Residence			
Urban	2.06	3.9	3.36
Rural	2.98	5.8	4.33
Education			
No education	3.55	5.9	4.71
<5 years complete	2.45	4.4	3.64
5-7 years complete	2.51	5.2	3.52
8-9 years complete	2.23	4.9	2.97
10-11 years complete	2.08	4.4	2.63
12 or more years complete	1.80	4.1	2.15
Religion			
Hindu	2.59	5.0	3.91
Muslim	3.40	6.8	5.08
Christian	2.34	4.0	3.06
Sikh	1.95	3.0	3.29
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	2.25	3.5	3.67
Jain	(1.54)	1.6	2.96
Other	3.98	6.9	4.30
Caste/tribe			
Scheduled caste	2.92	5.6	4.45
Scheduled tribe	3.12	5.9	4.59
Other backward class	2.75	5.4	4.12
Other	2.35	4.4	3.52
Don't know	1.98	3.5	3.55
Wealth index			
Lowest	3.89	7.2	5.17
Second	3.17	6.2	4.70
Middle	2.58	5.0	4.15
Fourth	2.24	4.6	3.68
Highest	1.78	3.3	2.98
Total	2.68	5.2	4.00

Note: Total includes women with missing information on education, religion, and caste/tribe, who are not shown separately.
( ) Based on 125-249 unweighted woman-years of exposure.

The TFR decreases steeply by the household's wealth index, from 3.9 children for women living in households in the lowest wealth quintile to 1.8 children for women living in households in the highest wealth quintile. Fertility transitions in other countries have shown that fertility differentials typically diverge early in the transition and reconverge (though rarely completely) toward the end of the transition as fertility approaches the replacement level. NFHS-3 shows that India as a whole still has substantial fertility differentials with the largest differentials in TFR by the wealth index quintiles.

Overall, 5.2 percent of women age 15-49 are currently pregnant. The direction of differentials in the percentage of women who are currently pregnant generally parallels the direction of differentials in the TFR. The percentage of currently pregnant women is relatively high in rural areas and among women with no education, Muslims, scheduled tribes, and women living in households in the lowest wealth quintiles.

The last column of Table 4.2 shows the mean number of children ever born to women age 40-49 at the time of the survey. The average number of children ever born for these women, who are at the end of their childbearing years, is 4.0. The substantial decline in fertility in India over time is evident from the difference of 1.3 children between the average number of children for women who are currently in their forties and the number of children women would have in their lifetime if they were subject to the current age-specific fertility rates (the last column and first column of Table 4.2). In almost every case, the pattern of differentials in the mean number of children ever born parallels the pattern of differentials in the TFR. The differentials by religion are a partial exception. For example, Sikhs and Buddhists/Neo-Buddhists have a moderately high number of children at age 40-49, but the lowest TFR of any religious group. Such exceptions can occur because the mean number of children ever born at age 40-49 reflects fertility in the past, whereas the TFR only reflects fertility in the three years preceding the survey.

Table 4.3 shows fertility levels and trends in urban and rural areas of each state. There is a wide diversity of fertility levels among the states. Total fertility rates range from 1.8 in Goa, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu to 4.0 in Bihar (Figure 4.3). Eighteen of the 29 states have TFRs lower than the national TFR of 2.68. This skewed pattern occurs because the mean is strongly affected by the relatively high fertility in a handful of populous states in the northern half of the country—Bihar (with a TFR of 4.0), Uttar Pradesh (3.8), Rajasthan (3.2), and Madhya Pradesh (3.1). Jharkhand in the East Region and Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Nagaland in Northeast Region also have high fertility, with TFRs of 3.0 and above. Fertility is low in the West and South Regions, where all states except Gujarat (with a TFR of 2.4) have replacement level fertility of 2.1 or fewer children per woman. In addition to these states, three states in the North Region (Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, and Punjab) and Sikkim in the Northeast Region have attained replacement level fertility or lower. Eleven states have TFRs between 2.2 to 2.9.

Table 4.3 Fertility by residence and state

Age-specific and total fertility rates (TFR) and crude birth rates for NFHS-3, and TFRs for NFHS-2 and NFHS-1, for the three-year period preceding the survey, according to residence and state, India, 2005-06

State	NFHS-3 age-specific fertility rates							Total fertility rate 15-49			NFHS-3 crude birth rate
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	NFHS-3	NFHS-2	NFHS-1	
URBAN											
India	0.057	0.166	0.123	0.048	0.013	0.004	0.001	2.06	2.27	2.70	18.8
North											
Delhi	0.041	0.158	0.143	0.063	0.012	0.002	0.000	2.10	2.37	3.00	18.0
Haryana	0.045	0.192	0.127	0.052	0.018	(0.000)	(0.000)	2.17	2.24	3.14	18.7
Himachal Pradesh	0.023	0.122	0.115	0.042	0.012	0.000	*	1.57	1.74	2.03	14.6
Jammu & Kashmir	0.013	0.082	0.134	0.070	0.028	0.000	(0.000)	1.63	1.66	na	15.0
Punjab	0.033	0.151	0.147	0.037	0.009	0.000	(0.000)	1.88	1.79	2.48	17.7
Rajasthan	0.069	0.177	0.129	0.057	0.004	0.008	0.000	2.21	2.98	2.77	19.8
Uttaranchal	0.024	0.162	0.182	0.060	0.013	0.000	*	2.21	2.14	na	18.5
Central											
Chhattisgarh	0.058	0.141	0.113	0.035	0.008	0.000	(0.000)	1.78	2.12	na	17.1
Madhya Pradesh	0.053	0.209	0.153	0.071	0.015	0.006	0.009	2.58	2.68	na	22.1
Uttar Pradesh	0.059	0.207	0.199	0.084	0.032	0.010	0.000	2.95	2.91	na	23.5
East											
Bihar	0.065	0.209	0.178	0.068	0.028	0.022	(0.004)	2.87	2.61	na	23.5
Jharkhand	0.072	0.188	0.142	0.038	0.024	0.000	(0.000)	2.32	2.95	na	21.0
Orissa	0.055	0.137	0.111	0.060	0.009	0.006	(0.000)	1.89	2.19	2.53	17.7
West Bengal	0.059	0.124	0.086	0.032	0.010	0.006	0.000	1.59	1.69	2.14	14.3
Northeast											
Arunachal Pradesh	0.078	0.154	0.165	(0.105)	(0.000)	*	*	2.51	1.77	nc	26.3
Assam	0.049	0.096	0.077	0.050	0.014	0.000	(0.000)	1.43	1.50	2.53	13.6
Manipur	0.026	0.110	0.131	0.131	0.057	0.015	0.000	2.35	2.36	nc	21.6
Meghalaya	0.032	0.116	0.150	0.061	0.049	(0.023)	*	2.28	2.75	nc	21.1
Mizoram	0.054	0.156	0.150	0.091	0.041	0.007	(0.000)	2.50	2.37	nc	23.3
Nagaland	0.050	0.144	0.147	0.110	0.053	0.031	(0.000)	2.68	2.66	nc	23.8
Sikkim	0.028	0.094	0.071	0.056	0.007	(0.000)	*	1.29	Nc	na	13.5
Tripura	0.081	(0.104)	0.078	(0.064)	(0.006)	(0.000)	*	1.66	1.36	nc	17.8
West											
Goa	0.033	0.090	0.123	0.082	0.023	0.004	(0.000)	1.77	1.69	1.80	16.6
Gujarat	0.050	0.183	0.105	0.034	0.013	0.000	0.000	1.92	2.33	2.65	18.2
Maharashtra	0.064	0.165	0.111	0.033	0.008	0.001	0.001	1.91	2.24	2.54	18.2
South											
Andhra Pradesh	0.071	0.174	0.066	0.029	0.006	0.001	0.000	1.73	2.07	2.35	17.7
Karnataka	0.052	0.167	0.104	0.040	0.009	0.005	0.000	1.89	1.89	2.38	18.6
Kerala	0.022	0.113	0.143	0.056	0.012	0.000	0.000	1.73	1.51	1.78	15.4
Tamil Nadu	0.054	0.131	0.102	0.041	0.010	0.002	0.000	1.70	2.11	2.36	16.0
RURAL											
India	0.105	0.231	0.146	0.069	0.031	0.009	0.004	2.98	3.07	3.67	25.0
North											
Delhi	(0.038)	*	*	*	*	*	*	2.50	nc	nc	18.1
Haryana	0.082	0.274	0.127	0.054	0.022	0.016	(0.008)	2.92	3.13	4.32	23.7
Himachal Pradesh	0.027	0.193	0.125	0.043	0.007	0.001	0.000	1.98	2.18	3.07	18.8
Jammu & Kashmir	0.038	0.174	0.181	0.099	0.022	0.014	0.012	2.69	3.00	na	23.2
Punjab	0.038	0.204	0.123	0.037	0.008	0.003	0.000	2.06	2.42	3.09	19.2
Rajasthan	0.109	0.273	0.189	0.097	0.036	0.013	0.006	3.62	4.06	3.87	27.9
Uttaranchal	0.053	0.232	0.154	0.073	0.015	0.007	0.000	2.67	2.76	na	23.1
Central											
Chhattisgarh	0.103	0.214	0.144	0.067	0.031	0.012	0.005	2.88	2.95	na	24.2
Madhya Pradesh	0.112	0.265	0.155	0.075	0.043	0.009	0.009	3.34	3.73	na	26.0
Uttar Pradesh	0.109	0.289	0.216	0.123	0.062	0.022	0.005	4.13	4.39	na	30.9

Continued…

Table 4.3 Fertility by residence and state—*Continued*

State	NFHS-3 age-specific fertility rates							Total fertility rate 15-49			NFHS-3 crude birth rate
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	NFHS-3	NFHS-2	NFHS-1	
East											
Bihar	0.139	0.288	0.209	0.114	0.072	0.015	0.009	4.22	3.82	na	34.0
Jharkhand	0.139	0.235	0.173	0.100	0.045	0.018	(0.028)	3.69	2.72	na	28.8
Orissa	0.077	0.201	0.133	0.056	0.019	0.007	0.002	2.48	2.50	3.00	23.0
West Bengal	0.142	0.201	0.107	0.038	0.012	0.001	0.005	2.54	2.49	3.25	24.2
Northeast											
Arunachal Pradesh	0.067	0.190	0.166	0.117	0.069	(0.033)	(0.000)	3.21	2.68	4.38	23.4
Assam	0.094	0.167	0.138	0.076	0.046	0.010	0.000	2.65	2.39	3.68	23.9
Manipur	0.050	0.148	0.188	0.139	0.068	0.013	0.008	3.07	3.41	3.03	26.8
Meghalaya	0.062	0.219	0.215	0.166	0.118	0.067	(0.028)	4.38	5.16	3.80	31.0
Mizoram	0.099	0.192	0.155	0.133	0.049	(0.039)	*	3.33	3.47	(2.30)	26.6
Nagaland	0.065	0.189	0.221	0.156	0.130	0.047	(0.023)	4.15	4.06	3.60	30.1
Sikkim	0.067	0.156	0.117	0.064	0.028	0.012	(0.000)	2.22	2.87	na	19.2
Tripura	0.114	0.157	0.109	0.077	0.008	0.002	0.000	2.34	1.99	2.91	22.8
West											
Goa	0.013	0.081	0.135	0.095	0.033	0.007	0.000	1.81	1.83	1.99	16.7
Gujarat	0.084	0.242	0.157	0.059	0.015	0.003	0.000	2.80	3.03	3.17	24.3
Maharashtra	0.105	0.232	0.088	0.030	0.005	0.000	0.000	2.31	2.74	3.12	19.3
South											
Andhra Pradesh	0.114	0.166	0.054	0.017	0.010	0.004	0.000	1.82	2.32	2.67	16.8
Karnataka	0.107	0.179	0.099	0.040	0.011	0.001	0.000	2.19	2.25	3.08	20.2
Kerala	0.042	0.162	0.140	0.050	0.012	0.001	0.000	2.03	2.07	2.09	16.9
Tamil Nadu	0.058	0.171	0.115	0.029	0.007	0.000	0.000	1.90	2.23	2.54	16.8
TOTAL											
India	0.090	0.209	0.139	0.062	0.025	0.007	0.003	2.68	2.85	3.39	23.1
North											
Delhi	0.040	0.165	0.141	0.065	0.014	0.002	0.000	2.13	2.40	3.02	18.1
Haryana	0.072	0.248	0.127	0.054	0.021	0.011	0.005	2.69	2.88	3.99	22.1
Himachal Pradesh	0.027	0.186	0.124	0.043	0.008	0.001	0.000	1.94	2.14	2.97	18.3
Jammu & Kashmir	0.032	0.148	0.167	0.089	0.024	0.009	0.007	2.38	2.71	na	20.9
Punjab	0.036	0.184	0.132	0.037	0.008	0.002	0.000	1.99	2.21	2.92	18.6
Rajasthan	0.098	0.245	0.171	0.085	0.026	0.012	0.004	3.21	3.78	3.63	25.7
Uttaranchal	0.045	0.214	0.162	0.069	0.015	0.005	0.000	2.55	2.61	na	21.8
Central											
Chhattisgarh	0.092	0.197	0.137	0.059	0.025	0.010	0.004	2.62	2.79	na	22.7
Madhya Pradesh	0.096	0.248	0.154	0.074	0.035	0.008	0.009	3.12	3.43	na	24.9
Uttar Pradesh	0.096	0.268	0.212	0.112	0.053	0.019	0.003	3.82	4.06	na	29.1
East											
Bihar	0.128	0.274	0.204	0.106	0.065	0.016	0.008	4.00	3.70	na	32.4
Jharkhand	0.122	0.222	0.165	0.084	0.040	0.012	0.017	3.31	2.76	na	26.8
Orissa	0.073	0.190	0.129	0.057	0.017	0.006	0.002	2.37	2.46	2.92	22.1
West Bengal	0.121	0.178	0.101	0.036	0.012	0.003	0.003	2.27	2.29	2.92	21.2
Northeast											
Arunachal Pradesh	0.070	0.178	0.165	0.113	0.053	0.026	(0.000)	3.03	2.52	4.25	24.1
Assam	0.086	0.154	0.127	0.071	0.039	0.007	0.000	2.42	2.31	3.53	22.1
Manipur	0.043	0.136	0.169	0.136	0.064	0.013	0.005	2.83	3.04	2.76	25.0
Meghalaya	0.054	0.190	0.197	0.136	0.100	0.055	0.027	3.80	4.57	3.73	28.7
Mizoram	0.074	0.172	0.152	0.109	0.044	0.020	(0.000)	2.86	2.89	2.30	24.8
Nagaland	0.060	0.175	0.200	0.142	0.112	0.042	0.016	3.74	3.77	3.26	28.5
Sikkim	0.059	0.141	0.108	0.062	0.024	0.010	(0.000)	2.02	2.75	na	18.2
Tripura	0.109	0.147	0.103	0.075	0.007	0.002	0.000	2.22	1.87	2.67	21.9

Continued…

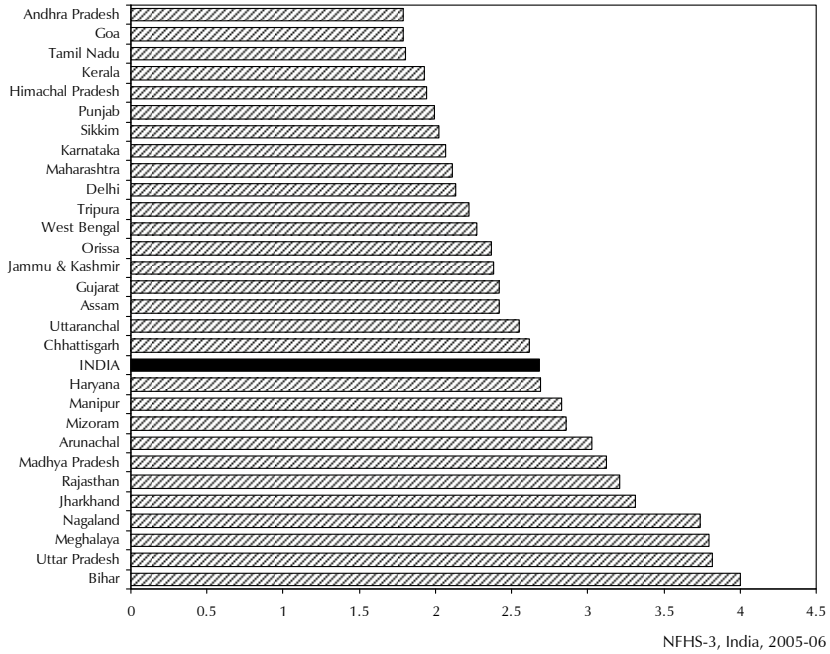
Table 4.3 Fertility by residence and state—*Continued*

State	NFHS-3 age-specific fertility rates							Total fertility rate 15-49			NFHS-3 crude birth rate
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	NFHS-3	NFHS-2	NFHS-1	
West											
Goa	0.025	0.086	0.128	0.087	0.027	0.005	0.000	1.79	1.77	1.90	16.7
Gujarat	0.070	0.217	0.133	0.048	0.014	0.002	0.000	2.42	2.72	2.99	21.7
Maharashtra	0.084	0.198	0.100	0.032	0.006	0.001	0.001	2.11	2.52	2.86	18.8
South											
Andhra Pradesh	0.098	0.168	0.058	0.021	0.009	0.003	0.000	1.79	2.25	2.59	17.1
Karnataka	0.086	0.175	0.101	0.040	0.010	0.002	0.000	2.07	2.13	2.85	19.6
Kerala	0.035	0.144	0.141	0.052	0.012	0.001	0.000	1.93	1.96	2.00	16.4
Tamil Nadu	0.056	0.151	0.109	0.034	0.008	0.001	0.000	1.80	2.19	2.48	16.4

Note: Age-specific fertility rates are expressed per woman.
( ) Based on 125-249 unweighted woman-years of exposure.
* Rate not shown; based on fewer than 125 unweighted woman-years of exposure.
na = Not applicable
nc = Not calculated because there are too few women

Table 4.3 also provides a comparison of fertility levels in rural and urban areas in each state. Overall, the urban areas of India have already reached the replacement level of fertility. Seventeen of the 29 states have replacement level fertility or lower in urban areas, including all states in the South and West Regions. TFRs are lower in urban than rural areas in all states. Urban TFRs vary from 1.3 in Sikkim to almost 3.0 in Uttar Pradesh. Urban TFRs are also relatively high in Bihar (2.9), Nagaland (2.7), and Madhya Pradesh (2.6). All states in the South and West Regions except Gujarat have replacement or near replacement level fertility in rural areas. Himachal Pradesh and Punjab have also attained replacement level fertility in rural areas.

Figure 4.3 **Total Fertility Rate by State**



NFHS-3, India, 2005-06

For India as a whole, the age-specific fertility rates are much higher in rural areas than in urban areas at all ages. The ratio of rural to urban fertility is lowest, but still substantial (1.2), at age 25-29. In both urban and rural areas, the peak age of childbearing is 20-24, with steadily declining fertility rates thereafter. In all states, the ASFRs are higher in rural areas than urban areas in almost all age groups. In urban areas, high fertility is still concentrated in the prime child bearing age 20-29 in most states. In rural areas also, nearly two-thirds of fertility is still concentrated in the prime childbearing age of 20-29 in most states. However, in rural areas, fertility is lower at age 25-29 than in teenage group 15-19 in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tripura and West Bengal due to the early age at marriage and childbearing in these states. In the states with comparative fertility information in both NFHS-1 and NFHS-3, the TFR fell over time in all states except four small northeastern states. The TFR was about the same in NFHS-1 and NFHS-3 in Manipur and Meghalaya, but the TFR was estimated to be higher in NFHS-3 than in NFHS-1 in Mizoram and Nagaland.

Fertility trends based on estimates from NFHS-1, NFHS-2, and NFHS-3 for the three-year period preceding each survey have already been discussed above. Table 4.4 shows fertility trends for five-year time periods preceding NFHS-3, estimated solely from NFHS-3 birth histories. It is not possible to show TFRs because of progressively greater age truncation as one goes back in time. In NFHS-3, birth histories were collected only for women age 15-49. This means, for example, that for the period 5-9 years preceding the survey it is not possible to compute an ASFR for age 45-49. Similarly, for the period 10-14 years preceding the survey, it is not possible to compute ASFRs for the oldest two age groups, and for the period 15-19 years preceding the survey, it is not possible to compute ASFRs for the oldest three age groups. Thus Table 4.4 shows only the truncated trends in ASFRs. Results are shown separately for urban and rural areas as well as for the entire country. These results show very substantial fertility declines in every age group from 10-14 years preceding the survey to 0-4 years preceding the survey in both urban and rural areas. In many cases, age-specific fertility declined by 50 percent or more.

Table 4.4 Trends in age-specific fertility rates

Age-specific fertility rates for five-year periods preceding the survey by mother's age at the time of the birth, according to residence, India, 2005-06

Age	Number of years preceding the survey			
	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19
URBAN				
15-19	0.063	0.092	0.118	0.121
20-24	0.173	0.204	0.231	0.241
25-29	0.125	0.141	0.166	0.181
30-34	0.050	0.065	0.078	[0.113]
35-39	0.015	0.023	[0.042]	u
40-44	0.004	[0.008]	u	u
45-49	[0.001]	u	u	u
RURAL				
15-19	0.113	0.160	0.183	0.175
20-24	0.235	0.268	0.282	0.276
25-29	0.152	0.184	0.213	0.213
30-34	0.074	0.104	0.133	[0.149]
35-39	0.033	0.056	[0.086]	u
40-44	0.010	[0.026]	u	u
45-49	[0.004]	u	u	u
TOTAL				
15-19	0.097	0.138	0.162	0.157
20-24	0.214	0.247	0.264	0.264
25-29	0.143	0.170	0.197	0.202
30-34	0.066	0.091	0.114	[0.136]
35-39	0.027	0.045	[0.070]	u
40-44	0.008	[0.019]	u	u
45-49	[0.003]	u	u	u

Note: Age-specific fertility rates are expressed per woman. Estimates in brackets are truncated.
u = Not available

For the periods 0-4 years and 5-9 years before the survey, it is possible to calculate truncated TFRs (more appropriately called cumulative fertility rates, or CFRs) for the age range 15-39, based on the ASFRs shown in Table 4.4. This is done by summing ASFRs for the age groups 15-19 through 35-39 and multiplying the sum by five. For India as a whole, CFR (15-39)

declined from 3.5 to 2.7 over the five-year period. The decline was 0.5 for urban areas and 0.8 for rural areas, indicating that fertility fell more rapidly in rural areas than in urban areas during the 10 years before the survey. It should be noted that these estimated fertility declines may exaggerate to some degree the magnitude of the decline between these two five-year periods, because there is considerable age misreporting in India which could result in displacement of births from the first five-year period into the second five-year period before the survey.

4.3 CHILDREN EVER BORN AND LIVING

The number of children a woman has ever borne is a cohort measure of fertility. Because it reflects fertility in the past, it provides a somewhat different picture of fertility levels, trends, and differentials than do period measures of fertility such as the CBR and the TFR. Table 4.5 shows the percent distribution of all women and currently married women by the number of children ever born (CEB). The table shows these distributions by the age of the woman at the time of the survey and also shows the mean number of children ever born and living children.

Table 4.5 Children ever born and living

Percent distribution of all women and currently married women by number of children ever born (CEB), and mean number of children ever born and living, according to age, India, 2005-06

Age	Number of children ever born											Total	Number of women	Mean number of CEB	Mean number of living children
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+				
ALL WOMEN															
15-19	87.9	9.2	2.5	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	24,811	0.15	0.14
20-24	39.0	25.1	22.9	9.4	2.7	0.8	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	22,779	1.15	1.06
25-29	12.5	15.4	30.5	21.6	11.9	5.4	2.1	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.0	100.0	20,417	2.34	2.14
30-34	5.5	8.6	26.9	23.9	14.9	10.2	5.4	2.9	1.2	0.4	0.2	100.0	17,656	3.12	2.80
35-39	4.0	6.2	23.1	23.3	16.2	10.9	6.8	4.6	2.6	1.3	0.9	100.0	15,866	3.57	3.14
40-44	3.4	5.4	19.1	21.7	18.1	12.0	8.0	4.8	3.5	2.1	1.8	100.0	13,049	3.90	3.35
45-49	3.3	5.0	15.8	20.6	18.5	12.7	9.2	6.0	4.0	2.5	2.5	100.0	9,807	4.14	3.48
Total	28.6	11.9	19.7	15.6	10.0	6.1	3.6	2.1	1.2	0.6	0.5	100.0	124,385	2.26	1.99
CURRENTLY MARRIED WOMEN															
15-19	56.1	33.4	9.1	1.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	6,726	0.56	0.51
20-24	18.6	33.2	30.6	12.6	3.6	1.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	16,782	1.53	1.41
25-29	6.6	15.8	32.7	23.2	12.8	5.8	2.3	0.7	0.1	0.0	0.0	100.0	18,540	2.51	2.30
30-34	3.2	8.3	27.3	24.6	15.4	10.6	5.7	3.0	1.2	0.5	0.2	100.0	16,459	3.23	2.90
35-39	2.4	5.5	23.4	23.6	16.6	11.3	7.1	4.9	2.8	1.4	1.0	100.0	14,492	3.68	3.24
40-44	2.0	4.8	19.2	21.8	18.5	12.4	8.3	5.0	3.8	2.3	1.9	100.0	11,605	4.01	3.45
45-49	2.0	4.4	15.9	20.8	18.9	13.1	9.2	6.2	4.2	2.6	2.6	100.0	8,484	4.24	3.58
Total	10.1	14.9	25.0	19.6	12.5	7.7	4.5	2.6	1.5	0.8	0.7	100.0	93,089	2.85	2.52

Among women age 15-49 in India, the mean number of children ever born is 2.26 for all women irrespective of marital status and 2.85 for currently married women. The mean number of children ever born increases steadily with age, reaching a high of 4.1 children for all women age 45-49 and 4.24 children for currently married women age 45-49. The table also shows that early childbearing is fairly common in India. Twelve percent of all women age 15-19 and 44 percent of currently married women age 15-19 have already had a child.

For women age 45-49, the number of children ever born is of particular interest because these women have virtually completed their childbearing. Among all women and currently married women in this age group, 21 percent have reached the end of childbearing with three children ever born and 19 percent have four children ever born. Almost one-fourth of women in this age group have had six or more live births. Only 2 percent of currently married women age 45-49 have never given birth. This suggests that primary infertility (which is the proportion of couples who are unable to have any children) is low in India.

Table 4.6 Birth order

Percent distribution of births during the three years preceding the survey by birth order, according to background characteristics, India, 2005-06, and percent distribution of births to ever-married women by birth order, NFHS-3, NFHS-2, and NFHS-1

Background characteristic	Birth order 1	2	3	4+	Total	Number of births
Mother's current age						
15-19	76.6	20.5	2.8	0.2	100.0	3,248
20-29	31.9	32.5	18.8	16.8	100.0	23,355
30-39	6.4	14.8	13.5	65.3	100.0	5,996
40-49	2.7	2.9	3.3	91.1	100.0	515
Residence						
Urban	37.4	32.3	14.1	16.3	100.0	8,357
Rural	29.1	26.1	16.7	28.1	100.0	24,757
Mother's education						
No education	20.1	21.2	18.0	40.7	100.0	15,989
<5 years complete	30.1	29.9	21.0	19.0	100.0	2,285
5-7 years complete	37.4	32.4	15.7	14.6	100.0	4,977
8-9 years complete	41.5	35.1	14.1	9.3	100.0	4,145
10-11 years complete	45.0	35.4	13.4	6.2	100.0	2,635
12 or more years complete	54.2	35.4	7.3	3.1	100.0	3,082
Religion						
Hindu	32.5	28.1	16.0	23.3	100.0	25,925
Muslim	24.1	24.2	16.6	35.1	100.0	5,616
Christian	34.4	32.0	15.5	18.2	100.0	663
Sikh	40.0	34.6	16.6	8.9	100.0	428
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	33.0	40.6	12.4	13.9	100.0	230
Jain	49.9	35.7	11.2	3.2	100.0	53
Other	23.0	16.6	10.9	49.5	100.0	167
Caste/tribe						
Scheduled caste	28.7	26.9	16.5	27.8	100.0	6,807
Scheduled tribe	26.3	22.2	16.4	35.1	100.0	3,161
Other backward class	31.4	26.9	16.5	25.2	100.0	13,366
Other	34.3	31.1	14.8	19.8	100.0	9,549
Don't know	39.0	27.9	15.1	18.1	100.0	122
Wealth index						
Lowest	20.7	21.0	16.4	41.9	100.0	8,331
Second	27.3	24.7	17.8	30.1	100.0	7,432
Middle	33.1	28.8	16.8	21.3	100.0	6,518
Fourth	36.8	32.7	16.0	14.6	100.0	6,032
Highest	45.9	36.2	11.5	6.4	100.0	4,802
Total	31.2	27.7	16.0	25.1	100.0	33,114
Births to ever-married women						
NFHS-3	31.2	27.7	16.0	25.1	100.0	33,104
NFHS-2	29.0	25.8	17.7	27.5	100.0	32,496
NFHS-1	27.6	23.9	17.6	30.9	100.0	37,916

Note: Total includes births with missing information on mother's education, religion and caste/tribe, who are not shown separately.

For all women age 15-49, the average number of dead children per woman is 0.27. For currently married women it is 0.33, implying that 12 percent of children ever born to currently married women have died. The proportion of children ever born who have died increases with women's age. For currently married women, the proportion of children ever born who have died increases from 8 percent at age 20-24 to 16 percent at age 45-49.

4.4 BIRTH ORDER

The distribution of births by birth order is yet another way to understand fertility. Table 4.6 shows the distribution of births during the three-year period before the survey by birth order for background characteristics. Overall, as expected, the proportion of births at each order is larger than the proportion at the next higher order. Thirty-one percent of all births are first-order births, 28 percent are second-order births, 16 percent are third-order births, and 25 percent are births of order four or higher.

Seventy-seven percent of births to mothers age 15-19 are of order one; by contrast, 65 percent of births to mothers age 30-39 are of order four or higher. The proportion of births that are of order four or higher is 16 percent in urban areas and 28 percent in rural areas. The proportion of births of order four or higher is particularly high for births to women with no education (41 percent), Muslim women (35 percent), and scheduled-tribe women (35 percent). The proportion of births of order four or higher is only 3 percent for women with 12 or more years of education. Forty-two percent of births to women in households in the lowest wealth quintile were of order four or higher, compared with just 6 percent of births to women in households in the highest wealth quintile. The decrease in fertility over time is evident from a comparison of the birth-order distribution in NFHS-1, NFHS-2, and NFHS-3 for ever-married women. The proportion of births of order four or higher decreased from 31 percent in NFHS-1 to 28 percent in NFHS-2 and 25 percent in NFHS-3.

4.5 BIRTH INTERVALS

A birth interval, defined as the length of time between two successive live births, indicates the pace of childbearing. Short birth intervals may adversely affect a mother's health and her children's chances of survival. Past research has shown that children born too close to a previous birth are at increased risk of dying. Recent research has shown that the optimal birth interval is 3-5 years for reducing neonatal and infant mortality (Rutstein, 2005) and achieving optimal nutrition outcomes. For child mortality, the longer the birth interval, the lower the risk, even for intervals of 48 months or more.

Table 4.7 shows the percent distribution of births during the five years preceding the survey by birth interval according to demographic and socioeconomic background characteristics. In India, 11 percent of births occur within 18 months of a previous birth and 28 percent occur within 24 months. More than 60 percent occur within three years of the previous birth. Only 28 percent have an optimal birth interval of 36-59 months.

The median closed birth interval in India is 31 months. The median closed birth interval for women age 15-19 is 25 months, which is substantially less than the median interval of 37 months for women age 30-39 and 40 months for women age 40-49. Very short birth interval for women age 15-19 at the time of the survey may result partly from a selection effect: Only women who have had two or more births are included in the table, and women age 15-19 with

more than one birth are likely to be more fecund than average. Given the finding that the median birth interval increases with mother's age, it is surprising that it does not also increase substantially with the order of the previous birth. Perhaps this is due to the absence of the selection effect just noted in the case of age. There may also be another type of selection effect operating: Mothers of higher-order births may be more fecund, on average, than mothers of lower-order births.

Table 4.7 Birth intervals

Percent distribution of births during the five years preceding the survey by interval since the preceding birth, and median number of months since the preceding birth, according to background characteristics, India, 2005-06

Background characteristic	Months since preceding birth						Total	Number of non-first order births	Median number of months since preceding birth
	7-17	18-23	24-35	36-47	48-59	60+			
Mother's current age									
15-19	22.5	23.0	41.6	10.6	2.2	0.1	100.0	788	24.9
20-29	12.9	18.4	36.4	18.9	7.6	5.8	100.0	25,449	29.0
30-39	8.0	11.9	27.7	20.4	12.5	19.5	100.0	11,742	36.8
40-49	6.0	10.2	25.0	19.2	13.1	26.6	100.0	1,237	40.0
Residence									
Urban	11.9	15.7	30.3	18.3	9.3	14.5	100.0	8,992	32.2
Rural	11.3	16.4	34.5	19.4	9.1	9.2	100.0	30,223	30.8
Mother's education									
No education	11.4	15.9	34.7	19.8	8.8	9.4	100.0	22,688	30.8
<5 years complete	9.7	16.4	34.9	19.3	9.9	9.9	100.0	2,888	31.3
5-7 years complete	12.6	17.1	33.3	18.4	8.7	9.9	100.0	5,172	30.4
8-9 years complete	12.5	17.9	32.6	18.1	8.4	10.5	100.0	3,877	30.3
10-11 years complete	11.4	17.1	31.1	17.0	9.8	13.6	100.0	2,350	31.7
12 or more years complete	9.4	13.8	25.7	18.3	13.4	19.3	100.0	2,240	36.5
Religion									
Hindu	11.2	16.5	33.7	19.2	9.3	10.1	100.0	30,181	31.1
Muslim	12.2	15.4	33.3	19.4	8.5	11.2	100.0	7,324	30.8
Christian	9.7	17.4	30.6	18.1	9.8	14.3	100.0	730	32.4
Sikh	19.5	16.8	26.8	15.6	8.6	12.6	100.0	429	29.6
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	13.4	12.7	42.4	16.1	6.7	8.7	100.0	240	30.2
Jain	3.5	9.9	22.8	22.7	16.8	24.4	100.0	41	41.6
Other	8.3	17.4	35.8	19.0	11.5	8.0	100.0	233	31.2
Caste/tribe									
Scheduled caste	12.0	16.1	35.0	18.8	9.0	9.0	100.0	8,403	30.4
Scheduled tribe	9.5	17.2	35.2	19.0	10.2	8.9	100.0	4,058	31.2
Other backward class	11.8	17.0	33.6	19.6	8.7	9.3	100.0	15,938	30.5
Other	11.1	15.0	31.8	18.8	9.5	13.7	100.0	10,548	32.5
Don't know	17.6	14.2	31.3	16.4	6.6	14.0	100.0	145	31.2
Wealth index									
Lowest	10.5	15.9	34.8	20.5	9.4	8.9	100.0	11,396	31.4
Second	11.4	16.1	35.2	20.0	8.9	8.3	100.0	9,398	30.7
Middle	12.0	18.0	34.8	17.7	8.1	9.4	100.0	7,644	29.8
Fourth	13.2	17.6	32.1	18.2	8.5	10.5	100.0	6,430	29.9
Highest	10.4	12.7	26.9	17.7	11.7	20.7	100.0	4,348	36.0
Birth order									
2-3	11.5	16.9	32.9	18.6	9.1	11.0	100.0	24,314	30.9
4-6	10.8	15.3	34.8	20.2	9.0	9.9	100.0	11,768	31.4
7+	13.1	15.5	33.8	19.4	10.0	8.3	100.0	3,133	31.0
Sex of preceding birth									
Male	10.8	16.3	33.6	19.3	9.4	10.5	100.0	18,973	31.3
Female	12.0	16.2	33.5	19.1	8.9	10.3	100.0	20,243	30.9
Survival of preceding birth									
Living	9.9	16.1	34.0	19.9	9.5	10.7	100.0	35,478	31.8
Dead	26.2	18.2	29.7	12.3	5.7	7.9	100.0	3,738	25.2
Total	11.4	16.3	33.6	19.2	9.1	10.4	100.0	39,215	31.1

Note: Total includes births with missing information on religion and caste/tribe, who are not shown separately. First-order births are excluded from the table. The interval for multiple births is the number of months since the preceding pregnancy that ended in a live birth.

The median birth interval is shorter if the previous child was a girl than if it was a boy, but the difference is only 0.4 months. This pattern is indicative of son preference. Birth intervals are much shorter if the previous child died (25 months) than if the previous child survived (32 months). In part, this reflects the shortening of postpartum amenorrhoea that occurs when the preceding child dies in infancy and breastfeeding stops prematurely. Women are also less likely to use temporary methods of contraception to postpone fertility if the previous child died and they want to replace the dead child. Since the use of temporary contraceptive methods is not common in India, the main effect is probably through prematurely terminated breastfeeding.

Table 4.8 Birth intervals by state

Percent distribution of births during the five years preceding the survey by interval since the preceding birth and median number of months since the preceding birth, according to state, India, 2005-06

State	Months since preceding birth						Total	Median number of months since preceding birth
	7-17	18-23	24-35	36-47	48-59	60+		
India	11.4	16.3	33.6	19.2	9.1	10.4	100.0	31.1
North								
Delhi	13.3	12.9	28.1	16.8	13.1	15.7	100.0	33.4
Haryana	14.3	15.4	33.7	18.8	8.6	9.2	100.0	30.4
Himachal Pradesh	16.2	16.2	32.7	15.8	8.6	10.6	100.0	29.9
Jammu & Kashmir	11.2	15.5	29.3	19.4	10.6	13.9	100.0	32.0
Punjab	17.8	17.1	29.9	16.0	7.3	11.9	100.0	29.7
Rajasthan	11.7	17.1	36.1	20.5	8.3	6.3	100.0	30.2
Uttaranchal	12.5	15.2	31.5	19.1	9.6	11.9	100.0	32.4
Central								
Chhattisgarh	8.9	14.4	34.3	18.2	12.6	11.7	100.0	33.0
Madhya Pradesh	12.2	18.4	36.6	18.6	7.5	6.8	100.0	29.2
Uttar Pradesh	13.0	17.2	34.2	18.3	8.6	8.7	100.0	29.8
East								
Bihar	11.6	16.9	34.5	20.5	8.4	8.0	100.0	29.9
Jharkhand	7.8	16.2	36.5	19.9	10.9	8.6	100.0	31.5
Orissa	8.5	14.2	33.3	21.8	11.3	10.9	100.0	33.8
West Bengal	9.0	12.6	30.0	19.0	11.7	17.6	100.0	35.2
Northeast								
Arunachal Pradesh	10.3	16.4	36.3	17.4	10.4	9.3	100.0	30.8
Assam	7.8	12.0	27.5	20.9	14.0	17.7	100.0	37.0
Manipur	6.5	13.4	31.7	18.8	15.5	14.0	100.0	35.4
Meghalaya	11.1	13.9	34.3	16.7	10.8	13.1	100.0	31.7
Mizoram	11.5	19.7	29.0	16.7	10.3	12.8	100.0	30.6
Nagaland	12.4	20.0	37.4	15.4	6.6	8.1	100.0	28.6
Sikkim	6.6	13.1	32.8	16.3	14.4	16.8	100.0	34.5
Tripura	7.2	13.4	24.7	18.9	13.7	22.2	100.0	39.0
West								
Goa	8.4	12.3	26.1	19.8	11.1	22.2	100.0	37.4
Gujarat	12.1	16.8	37.0	17.3	6.7	10.1	100.0	29.2
Maharashtra	10.1	15.0	33.8	19.9	8.7	12.5	100.0	31.9
South								
Andhra Pradesh	12.3	19.0	29.4	18.7	9.0	11.7	100.0	31.4
Karnataka	11.2	16.7	35.4	19.1	8.0	9.6	100.0	30.3
Kerala	5.9	12.9	20.6	21.3	12.7	26.5	100.0	41.2
Tamil Nadu	11.2	14.9	32.5	19.3	9.3	12.8	100.0	31.4

Note: First-order births are excluded from the table. The interval for multiple births is the number of months since the preceding pregnancy that ended in a live birth.

The median birth interval is slightly higher in urban areas (32 months) than in rural areas (31 months). Jain women have a much longer median birth interval than women of other religions. The median birth interval is also somewhat shorter for mothers from scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other backward classes than mothers of other castes. By education, the median birth interval varies only marginally (30-32 months) among mothers with no education and mothers with less than 12 years of education, but increases to 37 months for mothers with 12 or more years of education. The median birth interval by wealth index quintiles shows a weak J-shaped pattern. The median interval is much longer (36 months) for women in households in the highest wealth index quintile than for women in households in the first four wealth quintiles.

Table 4.8 shows how birth intervals vary among the states of India. The median interval since the preceding birth ranges from 29 months in Nagaland, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat to 41 months in Kerala. Other states with a median birth interval of 33 months or longer are Tripura, Goa, Assam, Manipur, West Bengal, Sikkim, Orissa, Delhi, and Chhattisgarh. In Kerala, 39 percent of births have an interval since the preceding birth of at least 48 months, compared with the national average of 20 percent of births.

4.6 Age at First Birth

The age at which women start childbearing is an important demographic determinant of fertility. A higher median age at first birth is an indicator of lower fertility. Table 4.9 shows the percentage of women who gave birth by specified exact ages, the percentage of women who have never given birth, and the median age at first birth by age of women. The median age at first birth for any group of women is defined in this table as the age by which half of all women in the group have had a first birth, rather than the age by which half of all mothers in the group have had a first birth. If the median age at first birth calculated for an age group lies above the lower limit of that age group, it is not valid because some younger women in the age group who have not yet had a first birth will not have reached the median age by the time of the survey. In such cases, the estimate of the median is not shown.

Table 4.9 Age at first birth

Percentage of women who gave birth by specific exact age and who have never given birth and median age at first birth by current age, India, 2005-06

	Percentage who gave birth by exact age					Percentage who have never given birth	Number of women	Median age at first birth
Current age	15	18	20	22	25			
15-19	1.2	na	na	na	na	87.9	24,811	nc
20-24	3.4	21.7	41.6	na	na	39.0	22,779	nc
25-29	5.0	29.1	50.7	67.2	82.0	12.5	20,417	19.9
30-34	5.8	31.0	54.5	71.3	85.2	5.5	17,656	19.6
35-39	5.9	32.2	54.6	72.1	85.9	4.0	15,866	19.6
40-44	5.3	31.1	54.1	72.2	86.5	3.4	13,049	19.6
45-49	4.6	26.9	47.7	67.7	85.2	3.3	9,807	20.2
Age 20-49	4.9	28.3	50.1	na	na	13.8	99,574	20.0
Age 25-49	5.4	30.2	52.6	70.1	84.7	6.4	76,795	19.8

na = Not applicable
nc = Not calculated because less than 50 percent of women had a birth before reaching the beginning of the age group

Five percent of women age 25-49 have given birth by age 15. The percentage who gave birth by age 15 decreases steadily from 6 percent among women age 35-39 to 1 percent among women age 15-19. The same pattern of decreases at younger ages is evident for every exact age at birth. Thirty percent of women age 25-49 gave birth before age 18 and 53 percent gave birth by age 20. By age 25, 85 percent of women age 25-49 have given birth. The median age at first birth is 20 for women age 20-49 in the country as a whole. As shown in the last column of the table, the median age at first birth is almost constant in the five-year age groups. Although the median cannot be calculated for the 20-24 age group, it is clear that the median age at first birth for this group will be somewhat higher than the median for women age 25-29.

Table 4.10 Median age at first birth

Median age at first birth among women age 20-49 years by current age according to background characteristics, India, 2005-06, and by current age for NFHS-2 and NFHS-1

	Current age						Women age	Women age
Background characteristic	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	20-49	25-49
Residence								
Urban	nc	21.5	20.9	20.5	20.6	21.0	nc	20.9
Rural	nc	19.4	19.1	19.2	19.2	19.9	19.5	19.3
Education								
No education	18.9	18.4	18.5	18.6	18.8	19.6	18.7	18.7
<5 years complete	19.5	18.8	19.0	19.0	19.0	19.8	19.1	19.0
5-7 years complete	nc	19.6	19.3	19.8	19.7	20.1	19.7	19.6
8-9 years complete	nc	20.8	20.7	20.7	20.7	21.3	nc	20.8
10-11 years complete	nc	21.7	21.6	21.7	22.1	22.3	nc	21.8
12 or more years complete	nc	nc	24.9	24.6	24.6	24.5	nc	24.8
Religion								
Hindu	nc	20.0	19.6	19.6	19.6	20.2	20.0	19.8
Muslim	nc	19.3	19.0	18.9	19.1	19.3	19.4	19.1
Christian	nc	22.2	23.1	22.3	22.2	23.1	nc	22.6
Sikh	nc	22.1	21.3	21.6	21.8	22.3	nc	21.8
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	nc	20.3	19.0	18.9	19.1	20.7	19.9	19.6
Jain	nc	23.9	23.0	22.1	22.2	21.5	nc	22.7
Other	19.7	19.7	19.0	19.8	21.7	20.6	19.9	20.0
Caste/tribe								
Scheduled caste	nc	19.2	18.9	18.8	18.9	19.4	19.3	19.0
Scheduled tribe	19.9	19.1	18.9	19.1	19.1	19.7	19.3	19.1
Other backward class	nc	19.7	19.5	19.4	19.5	20.2	19.8	19.6
Other	nc	21.0	20.4	20.4	20.4	20.8	nc	20.6
Don't know	nc	19.4	20.0	18.8	19.3	20.7	19.9	19.6
Wealth index								
Lowest	19.0	18.3	18.5	18.8	18.8	19.5	18.7	18.6
Second	19.4	18.8	18.7	18.6	18.8	19.4	18.9	18.8
Middle	nc	19.4	19.1	19.2	19.2	19.9	19.6	19.3
Fourth	nc	20.4	20.0	19.7	19.5	20.3	nc	20.0
Highest	nc	23.0	22.1	21.7	21.3	21.3	nc	22.0
Total	nc	19.9	19.6	19.6	19.6	20.2	20.0	19.8
NFHS-2 (1998-99)[1]	nc	19.6	19.3	19.4	19.3	19.5	19.6	19.4
NFHS-1 (1992-93)[1]	nc	19.5	19.4	19.3	19.3	19.4	19.6	19.4

Note: Total includes women with missing information on education, religion and caste/tribe, who are not shown separately.
nc = Not calculated because less than 50 percent of women had their first birth before reaching the beginning of the age group
[1] Never married women were assumed to have no live births.

Table 4.10 shows the median age at first birth by the current age of women, according to background characteristics. Among all women age 25-49, the median age at first birth is 1.6 years higher in urban areas than in rural areas. The median decreases consistently from age 25-29 to age 35-39 in urban areas. The median age at first birth is six years higher for women who have completed 12 and more years of schooling than for women with no education. The median is about the same for Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists/Neo-Buddhists, but it is considerably higher for Christians, Sikhs, and Jains. By caste/tribe, women from other backward classes have a median age at first birth that is about half a year higher than that of women from scheduled castes or scheduled tribes, and women belonging to none of these groups have the highest median (20.6 years). The median age at first birth increases steadily with wealth index quintiles. The median is more than three years higher for women in households in the highest wealth quintile than for women in households in the lowest wealth quintile.

4.7 TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND MOTHERHOOD

The marriage of girls at young ages in India leads to teenage pregnancy and motherhood. Young women who become pregnant and have births experience a number of health, social, economic, and emotional problems. In addition to the relatively high level of pregnancy complications among young mothers because of physiological immaturity, inexperience associated with child care practices also influences maternal and infant health. Moreover, an early start to childbearing greatly reduces the educational and employment opportunities of women and is associated with higher levels of fertility.

Table 4.11 shows the proportion of women age 15-19 who have had a live birth and women age 15-19 currently pregnant with their first child by background characteristics. The third column provides the percentage of women who have begun childbearing, which is the sum of the previous two percentages. Overall, 12 percent of women age 15-19 have become mothers and 4 percent of women age 15-19 are currently pregnant with their first child. This means that one in six women age 15-19 have begun childbearing. The percentage of women who have begun childbearing increases sharply with age, from 3 percent at age 15 to 36 percent at age 19.

Table 4.11 Teenage pregnancy and motherhood

Percentage of women age 15-19 who have had a live birth or who are pregnant with their first child, and percentage who have begun childbearing, by background characteristics, India, 2005-06

Background characteristic	Percentage who: Have had a live birth	Are pregnant with first child	Percentage who have begun childbearing	Number of women
Age				
15	1.3	1.2	2.5	4,814
16	4.1	2.3	6.4	5,237
17	8.6	3.8	12.5	4,801
18	17.9	6.1	24.0	5,606
19	29.7	6.1	35.7	4,353
Residence				
Urban	6.3	2.4	8.7	7,463
Rural	14.5	4.6	19.1	17,348
Education				
No education	25.9	6.6	32.6	5,375
<5 years complete	16.2	5.1	21.2	1,920
5-7 years complete	14.9	4.7	19.6	4,823
8-9 years complete	6.0	2.4	8.5	5,860
10-11 years complete	3.7	2.4	6.1	4,487
12 or more years complete	2.0	1.6	3.6	2,343
Marital status				
Never married	0.0	0.0	0.0	17,969
Currently married	43.9	14.4	58.2	6,726
Widowed/divorced/ separated/deserted	31.4	0.0	31.4	115
Religion				
Hindu	12.5	3.9	16.4	19,504
Muslim	11.6	4.4	16.0	3,996
Christian	5.7	2.9	8.6	526
Sikh	3.6	1.3	4.9	386
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	11.4	2.9	14.3	201
Jain	1.6	0.0	1.6	74
Other	15.5	5.0	20.4	111
Caste/tribe				
Scheduled caste	15.5	4.3	19.8	4,864
Scheduled tribe	16.0	5.1	21.1	2,117
Other backward class	12.0	4.0	16.0	10,020
Other	8.7	3.2	11.9	7,610
Don't know	12.8	4.7	17.6	98
Wealth index				
Lowest	19.2	6.0	25.3	4,432
Second	17.3	4.5	21.9	5,071
Middle	12.6	3.7	16.3	5,390
Fourth	8.2	3.5	11.7	5,181
Highest	3.3	1.8	5.1	4,738
Total	12.1	3.9	16.0	24,811

Note: Total includes women with missing information on education, religion and caste/tribe, who are not shown separately.

The proportion of women age 15-19 who have begun childbearing is more than twice as high in rural areas (19 percent) as in urban areas (9 percent). The level of teenage pregnancy and motherhood is 9 times higher among women with no education than among women with 12 or more years of education. More than one-quarter of women age 15-19 with no education have become mothers and almost one-third of them have begun childbearing.

Only a few never married women age 15-19 (less than 0.05 percent) reported a pregnancy or childbirth. However, 58 percent of married women age 15-19 have experienced motherhood or a current pregnancy. Almost one-third of women age 15-19 who are widowed, divorced, separated, or deserted have had a live birth. By religion, the level of teenage motherhood and pregnancy is higher for Hindu and Muslim women age 15-19 (16 percent) than for Buddhists/Neo-Buddhists (14 percent), Christians (9 percent), Sikhs (5 percent), and Jains (2 percent). The proportion of women age 15-19 who have begun childbearing is higher among women from scheduled castes (20 percent) and scheduled tribes (21 percent) than women from other backward classes (16 percent) and women who do not belong to any of these communities (12 percent). The level of teenage pregnancy and motherhood is five times as high for women in households with the lowest wealth index than for women in households with the highest wealth index.

Table 4.12 Teenage pregnancy and motherhood by state

Percentage of women age 15-19 who have had a live birth or who are pregnant with their first child and percentage who have begun childbearing, by state, India, 2005-06

State	Percentage who: Have had a live birth	Are pregnant with first child	Percentage who have begun childbearing
India	12.1	3.9	16.0
North			
Delhi	3.8	1.2	5.0
Haryana	7.5	4.6	12.1
Himachal Pradesh	2.1	0.9	3.1
Jammu & Kashmir	3.4	0.8	4.2
Punjab	3.6	1.9	5.5
Rajasthan	12.6	3.4	16.0
Uttaranchal	3.6	2.6	6.2
Central			
Chhattisgarh	11.2	3.4	14.6
Madhya Pradesh	10.6	3.0	13.6
Uttar Pradesh	11.2	3.1	14.3
East			
Bihar	19.3	5.7	25.0
Jharkhand	20.8	6.8	27.5
Orissa	10.4	4.1	14.4
West Bengal	19.3	6.0	25.3
Northeast			
Arunachal Pradesh	12.4	3.0	15.4
Assam	13.1	3.2	16.4
Manipur	5.2	2.1	7.3
Meghalaya	6.7	1.5	8.3
Mizoram	7.7	2.5	10.1
Nagaland	5.5	1.9	7.5
Sikkim	8.7	3.2	12.0
Tripura	14.0	4.5	18.5
West			
Goa	2.6	1.1	3.6
Gujarat	8.9	3.7	12.7
Maharashtra	11.0	2.9	13.8
South			
Andhra Pradesh	12.7	5.4	18.1
Karnataka	12.8	4.3	17.0
Kerala	2.9	2.9	5.8
Tamil Nadu	4.8	2.9	7.7

Table 4.12 shows the proportion of women age 15-19 who have had a live birth or who are currently pregnant with their first child by state. The proportion of women age 15-19 who have begun childbearing is highest in Jharkhand (28 percent), West Bengal (25 percent), and Bihar (25 percent), all in the East Region. The level of teenage childbearing is lowest (less than 5 percent) in Himachal Pradesh, Goa, and Jammu & Kashmir.

4.8 Desire for More Children

In order to obtain information on fertility preferences, NFHS-3 asked nonsterilized, currently married, nonpregnant women: 'Would you like to have (a/another) child or would you

prefer not to have any (more) children?' Pregnant women were asked, 'After the child you are expecting now, would you like to have another child or would you prefer not to have any more children?' Women who expressed a desire for additional children were asked how long they would like to wait before the birth of their next child. The survey also collected information on the ideal number of children by sex. In NFHS-3, all the above questions were also asked to men age 15-54.

Table 4.13 Fertility preferences by number of living children

Percent distribution of currently married women and currently married men age 15-49 by desire for children, according to number of living children, India, 2005-06

Desire for children	Number of living children[1]							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
				WOMEN				
Want another soon[2]	74.5	23.3	5.0	2.6	1.8	1.2	0.8	12.6
Want another later[3]	14.1	41.4	7.9	3.7	2.3	1.4	1.0	11.7
Want another, undecided when	2.4	2.9	0.9	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.2	1.2
Undecided	1.2	2.1	1.2	0.7	0.8	0.7	1.0	1.1
Want no more	2.1	21.8	36.7	31.1	37.4	46.1	61.4	32.1
Sterilized[4]	0.7	5.9	46.4	59.3	54.4	45.7	27.9	38.3
Declared infecund	4.8	2.5	1.7	2.0	3.0	4.4	7.5	2.8
Missing	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	7,797	15,920	26,318	20,153	11,710	5,825	5,366	93,089
				MEN				
Want another soon[2]	72.5	26.6	6.1	3.9	2.4	1.6	0.8	14.1
Want another later[3]	17.7	42.0	7.7	3.6	2.3	2.3	1.7	12.5
Want another, undecided when	3.1	1.7	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.8
Undecided	1.6	2.6	1.8	1.3	0.7	1.6	1.2	1.6
Want no more	2.5	23.2	58.2	59.6	67.7	71.0	82.1	50.5
Sterilized[5]	1.7	3.7	25.5	31.0	26.5	23.4	13.7	20.1
Declared infecund	0.8	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2
Missing	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of men	3,838	7,662	12,846	9,156	5,164	2,546	2,291	43,501

[1] Includes current pregnancy of woman/wife.
[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.
[5] Includes male sterilization and men who mention in response to the question about desire for children that their wife has been sterilized.

Table 4.13 shows future fertility preferences of currently married women and men age 15-49. The overall percentage who want no more children is similar for women and men. For currently married women, 32 percent say that they do not want any more children, an additional 38 percent cannot have another child because either the wife or the husband has been sterilized, and 3 percent say that they cannot get pregnant (that is, they are 'declared infecund'). Among men age 15-49, 51 percent do not want to have any more children and 20 percent reported that they or their wife/wives are sterilized or infecund. Twenty-six percent of women say they would like to have another child (13 percent within two years, 12 percent after waiting at least two years, and 1 percent undecided when). About the same proportion of men (27 percent) reported that they would like to have another child (14 percent within 2 years, 13 percent after waiting at least 2 years, and 1 percent undecided when).

The desire to stop childbearing increases rapidly with the number of living children. Only 3 percent of women with no living children say they do not want any children (the woman or her husband is sterilized or the woman says she wants no more children), compared with 83 percent

of women with two living children and 90 percent of women with three living children. Similar percentages for men are 4 percent with no living children, 84 percent with two living children, and 91 percent with three living children.

Table 4.14.1 Desire to limit childbearing: Women

Percentage of currently married women age 15-49 who want no more children by number of living children, according to background characteristics, India, 2005-06, and by number of living children, NFHS-2 and NFHS-1

Background characteristic	Number of living children[1]							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
Age								
15-24	0.5	11.2	64.4	76.2	82.5	90.8	88.6	31.5
25-34	2.0	36.2	86.5	89.2	90.2	91.5	92.2	77.5
35-49	18.1	73.5	93.1	95.0	93.7	92.0	88.4	89.8
Residence								
Urban	4.1	37.0	88.9	94.8	94.4	92.4	88.7	73.9
Rural	2.2	22.5	79.9	88.6	90.8	91.6	89.5	69.0
Education								
No education	3.8	21.2	73.3	87.1	90.5	91.0	89.0	72.6
<5 years complete	3.6	28.5	85.9	93.5	91.8	95.2	91.5	74.3
5-7 years complete	2.5	23.6	84.7	93.2	94.9	93.8	89.1	69.7
8-9 years complete	1.7	25.9	87.1	94.1	95.4	94.3	96.5	66.8
10-11 years complete	1.6	33.5	90.4	95.0	96.2	94.4	87.6	68.8
12 or more years complete	1.7	39.3	92.3	96.1	94.2	90.6	88.0	63.7
Religion								
Hindu	2.7	29.1	84.8	91.6	92.7	93.3	90.3	71.2
Muslim	2.9	14.3	66.2	81.1	86.8	86.6	87.2	64.3
Christian	1.2	30.6	86.7	88.7	89.2	82.8	83.4	70.1
Sikh	5.3	47.1	92.3	96.5	96.5	95.8	(96.1)	80.4
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	8.7	37.0	90.6	94.6	97.3	(89.9)	(98.9)	80.8
Jain	(3.9)	38.0	94.4	97.8	*	*	*	79.2
Other	0.4	6.3	71.2	69.5	79.7	73.3	89.6	56.6
Caste/tribe								
Scheduled caste	1.1	23.1	78.9	89.2	92.9	93.3	88.3	69.5
Scheduled tribe	3.5	18.2	74.3	86.9	90.1	90.8	89.7	65.9
Other backward class	2.6	22.3	82.3	90.2	91.2	90.9	91.4	69.9
Other	3.7	37.5	87.3	92.2	92.2	92.2	87.2	72.9
Don't know	(7.7)	37.1	93.5	94.3	(90.8)	*	*	76.8
Wealth index								
Lowest	3.0	16.2	65.1	82.0	88.5	89.6	88.8	65.0
Second	2.4	18.9	78.3	87.4	90.3	91.1	89.3	68.2
Middle	2.0	23.3	82.8	92.6	92.9	94.3	89.0	71.0
Fourth	2.8	28.1	86.8	93.6	94.0	92.3	92.1	72.8
Highest	3.7	42.2	91.6	95.4	95.1	94.5	86.7	74.7
Number of living sons[2]								
0	2.8	23.9	62.1	65.3	61.5	65.2	64.3	27.1
1	na	36.3	88.1	89.9	89.2	89.0	90.6	76.4
2	na	na	89.9	95.7	95.5	93.7	92.8	93.5
3	na	na	na	93.2	95.1	94.4	90.3	93.6
4+	na	na	na	na	93.0	94.1	88.6	90.7
Total	2.8	27.7	83.2	90.4	91.7	91.8	89.3	70.5
NFHS-2 (1998-99)	2.1	18.1	72.4	84.2	87.7	86.8	83.7	63.6
NFHS-1 (1992-93)	2.7	14.3	59.7	77.0	82.8	84.4	81.8	56.7

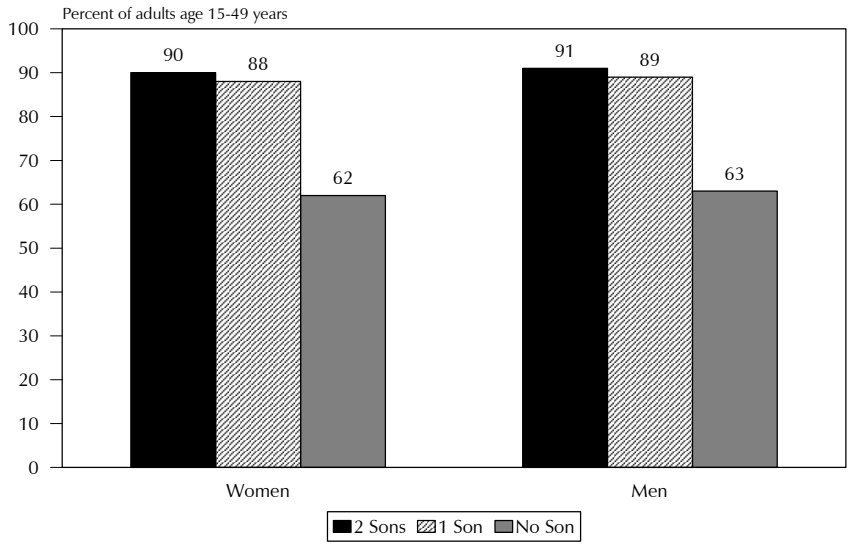
Note: Total includes women with missing information on education, religion and caste/tribe, who are not shown separately. Women who have been sterilized or whose husband has been sterilized are considered to want no more children.
( ) Based on 25-49 unweighted cases.
* Percentage not shown; based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases.
na = Not applicable
[1] Includes current pregnancy.
[2] Excludes pregnant women.

Table 4.14.1 provides information about differentials in women's desire to limit family size by background characteristics. Women who are sterilized (or whose husbands are sterilized) are included among those who say they want no more children. As expected, older women are

much more likely than younger women to want no more children. At age 15-24, only 32 percent of women want no more children. This percentage rises rapidly to 78 percent of women age 25-34 and 90 percent of women age 35-49. The proportion of women who want no more children is somewhat higher among urban women (74 percent) than among rural women (69 percent). The urban-rural differential is particularly large for women with one living child. There is no strong pattern by educational attainment overall, but the desire to stop childbearing increases steadily with the level of education for women with 1-3 children, with the exception of women with less than five years of education. The proportion of women with two living children who do not want to have any more children is much lower for Muslim women (66 percent) than for women in any other religious group. By caste/tribe, the percentage of women who do not want any more children is lower among women belonging to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other backward classes than for women in other caste/tribe groups. The percentage of women with two living children who want to stop childbearing increases from 65 percent for women in households in the lowest wealth quintile to 92 percent for women in households in the highest wealth quintile.

A strong preference for sons is evident from the responses of women with different numbers of sons and daughters. For every number of children, the percentage of women who want to stop childbearing is lowest if the woman does not have any sons. For example, among women with two living children, 90 percent want to stop childbearing if both their living children are sons and 88 percent want to stop childbearing if they have one son and one daughter (Figure 4.4). The proportion who do not want any more children decreases to 62 percent for women with two daughters and no sons. Nevertheless, the proportion of women with two daughters and no sons who want no additional children increased rapidly from 37 percent in NFHS-1 to 47 percent in NFHS-2 and 62 percent in NFHS-3 (data not shown).

Figure 4.4 Currently Married Women and Men with Two Children Who Want No More Children by Number of Sons



NFHS-3, India, 2005-06

Rapid changes in fertility preferences in the 13 years preceding NFHS-3 are shown in the last three rows of Table 4.14.1. During that period (from NFHS-1 to NFHS-3), the percentage of women with one living child who say they want no more children doubled from 14 percent to 28 percent. The percentage with two living children who want no more increased from 60 percent to 83 percent, indicating increasing acceptance of a two-child family.

Table 4.14.2 Desire to limit childbearing: Men

Percentage of currently married men age 15-49 who want no more children by number of living children, according to background characteristics, India, 2005-06

Background characteristic	Number of living children[1]							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
Age								
15-24	1.1	7.7	56.2	70.5	(83.8)	*	*	16.8
25-34	2.8	20.1	75.6	82.1	88.8	87.1	91.5	57.7
35-49	14.5	58.0	93.1	95.6	96.3	96.2	96.4	89.6
Residence								
Urban	4.7	32.1	88.0	92.9	95.0	94.7	96.1	71.3
Rural	4.0	23.5	80.9	89.5	93.9	94.3	95.7	70.3
Education								
No education	6.9	22.8	74.8	87.6	91.5	93.4	95.1	73.6
<5 years complete	4.1	20.6	81.6	91.5	95.0	95.2	96.7	73.4
5-7 years complete	3.7	18.2	82.8	92.4	94.6	95.0	97.1	69.0
8-9 years complete	2.5	21.9	81.7	89.4	94.5	96.1	94.8	66.5
10-11 years complete	6.5	33.5	88.7	91.4	98.2	94.6	95.1	72.5
12 or more years complete	2.7	36.9	90.4	93.7	96.9	93.4	99.7	69.2
Religion								
Hindu	4.1	28.5	85.1	91.4	94.8	95.6	96.3	71.2
Muslim	5.4	11.9	67.2	83.2	91.1	91.1	94.9	66.2
Christian	1.6	25.6	86.9	87.0	83.7	89.7	90.1	67.7
Sikh	(4.3)	42.3	92.1	98.0	99.2	*	*	78.4
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	(11.3)	22.2	93.3	94.8	100.0	*	*	79.5
Jain	*	(25.8)	83.8	(99.5)	*	*	a	70.1
Other	(0.4)	20.9	59.5	83.8	93.5	(81.5)	(86.2)	59.6
Caste/tribe								
Scheduled caste	4.3	22.9	79.9	90.0	93.8	95.2	96.8	70.0
Scheduled tribe	3.2	16.5	74.8	86.0	90.8	92.8	92.5	65.2
Other backward class	3.8	23.9	83.8	90.8	94.4	94.9	96.6	71.4
Other	5.1	33.6	86.7	92.2	95.3	93.5	95.5	71.5
Don't know	*	*	93.1	(87.2)	*	*	*	81.0
Wealth index								
Lowest	3.4	15.6	68.2	84.1	92.4	94.2	94.6	68.0
Second	3.3	18.4	78.9	89.2	94.3	93.6	96.6	70.5
Middle	4.8	22.2	83.1	91.9	93.2	96.9	94.7	70.2
Fourth	3.6	28.9	87.0	92.4	96.3	92.3	98.0	71.9
Highest	5.8	38.5	91.1	95.2	96.2	95.8	98.1	72.1
Number of living sons[2]								
0	4.2	21.2	63.3	59.6	61.0	55.9	70.2	26.6
1	na	37.0	89.1	91.0	93.7	93.3	96.3	77.5
2	na	na	91.4	97.5	98.5	98.6	98.5	95.8
3	na	na	na	91.4	97.5	98.5	98.6	98.5
4+	na	na	na	na	96.0	97.0	97.9	97.4
Total age 15-49	4.2	26.9	83.6	90.6	94.2	94.4	95.8	70.6
Age 50-54	33.1	90.8	97.0	99.0	99.3	98.4	96.4	96.1
Total age 15-54	5.0	29.4	84.6	91.5	94.9	95.0	95.9	72.9

Note: Total includes men with missing information on education, religion and caste/tribe, who are not shown separately. Men who have been sterilized or who mention in response to the question about desire for children that their wife has been sterilized are considered to want no more children.
( ) Based on 25-49 unweighted cases.
* Percentage not shown; based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases.
a = No cases
na = Not applicable
[1] Includes wife's current pregnancy.
[2] Excludes men whose wife is pregnant.

Overall, the table shows that in every population group, more than 60 percent of women with two or more living children want no more children. The table also shows that within each group, the proportion of women who want no more children rises sharply with the number of living children.

Table 4.14.2 shows similar patterns for the percentage of currently married men age 15-49 who want to stop childbearing. The percentage of men who want to stop childbearing increases with age. The percentage of men who do not want to have any more children is typically highest for men with 10 or more years of education. By caste/tribe, the percentage of men who do not want any more children is lowest for scheduled tribes for every number of living children and generally highest for men who do not belong to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other backward classes. The percentage of men with two living children who do not want to have any more children increases from 68 percent for men in households in the lowest wealth

Table 4.15.1 Desire to limit childbearing by state: Women

Percentage of currently married women age 15-49 who want no more children by number of living children, according to state, India, 2005-06

State	Number of living children[1]							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
India	2.8	27.7	83.2	90.4	91.7	91.8	89.3	70.5
North								
Delhi	3.5	35.7	91.6	94.7	95.3	96.6	99.2	77.0
Haryana	0.8	26.9	87.8	96.0	94.7	95.1	89.3	76.4
Himachal Pradesh	2.0	44.2	96.3	98.2	97.2	(97.9)	(97.7)	83.4
Jammu & Kashmir	2.8	15.6	77.6	90.5	95.6	94.6	94.1	73.7
Punjab	3.8	39.0	91.2	96.3	97.3	96.7	98.2	78.6
Rajasthan	1.3	14.6	72.8	86.2	93.2	92.9	95.1	67.2
Uttaranchal	5.2	23.1	86.3	93.4	92.2	95.4	91.1	75.2
Central								
Chhattisgarh	5.1	17.8	75.3	89.0	94.3	94.9	93.6	68.5
Madhya Pradesh	1.8	19.7	81.9	90.2	93.2	93.6	91.9	72.2
Uttar Pradesh	1.6	14.3	64.2	81.7	87.5	88.4	89.2	65.4
East								
Bihar	0.4	10.4	60.2	80.1	85.0	91.8	85.1	60.2
Jharkhand	1.2	15.3	64.3	82.4	87.9	88.2	84.3	59.5
Orissa	5.8	33.6	82.3	92.7	94.6	94.2	97.6	70.5
West Bengal	2.4	46.2	89.4	93.4	94.8	93.9	86.6	73.4
Northeast								
Arunachal Pradesh	3.4	20.6	72.2	81.2	86.7	82.5	86.9	63.8
Assam	3.6	32.4	82.9	90.5	91.2	91.3	92.5	69.0
Manipur	4.1	15.1	64.6	80.2	87.6	87.1	84.8	62.5
Meghalaya	0.0	7.1	36.0	50.3	58.5	58.9	64.2	40.3
Mizoram	(0.0)	7.9	43.0	77.9	84.4	92.0	86.3	57.6
Nagaland	6.8	20.5	57.8	71.0	83.6	81.5	85.7	63.7
Sikkim	1.4	58.4	95.8	98.0	95.4	100.0	99.2	81.3
Tripura	3.6	52.8	92.3	91.7	92.4	(82.3)	(76.9)	74.2
West								
Goa	1.5	31.3	82.5	89.8	96.0	90.6	*	61.3
Gujarat	3.2	27.6	85.7	92.6	91.4	91.3	92.8	72.4
Maharashtra	5.2	32.0	88.0	96.5	96.7	95.4	94.3	76.0
South								
Andhra Pradesh	2.9	25.7	91.5	94.3	95.0	92.4	77.9	72.9
Karnataka	3.0	37.3	88.4	93.9	94.2	96.6	87.8	74.3
Kerala	2.1	25.7	88.0	91.0	92.5	(91.7)	*	69.3
Tamil Nadu	7.4	37.7	94.6	98.6	99.6	94.8	(100.0)	78.0

Note: Women who have been sterilized or whose husband has been sterilized are considered to want no more children.
( ) Based on 25-49 unweighted cases.
* Percentage not shown; based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases.
[1] Includes current pregnancy.

quintile to 91 percent for men in households in the highest wealth quintile. A strong preference for sons is also found for men. For every number of children, the percentage of men who want to stop childbearing is lowest for men who do not have any sons.

Table 4.15.1 shows how fertility preferences among women vary by state. The proportion of women who want no more children, including those who are sterilized or whose husbands are sterilized, ranges from 40 percent in Meghalaya to 83 percent in Himachal Pradesh. More than 90 percent of women with two living children want to stop childbearing in Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Sikkim, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. All of these states except

Table 4.15.2 Desire to limit childbearing by state: Men

Percentage of currently married men age 15-49 who want no more children by number of living children, according to state, India, 2005-06

State	Number of living children[1]							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
India	4.2	26.9	83.6	90.6	94.2	94.4	95.8	70.6
North								
Delhi	3.7	25.0	88.7	96.3	95.1	(100.0)	97.7	71.1
Haryana	(8.4)	33.8	88.0	96.3	96.6	(97.1)	100.0	78.1
Himachal Pradesh	(0.0)	38.0	93.3	91.9	(95.4)	*	86.9	80.4
Jammu & Kashmir	(5.3)	16.8	68.8	88.3	97.1	(100.0)	100.0	69.2
Punjab	(2.1)	30.2	90.5	97.2	100.0	*	95.8	76.1
Rajasthan	1.2	9.7	71.3	87.2	90.1	93.2	97.0	65.9
Uttaranchal	13.5	24.9	91.8	91.7	94.7	(90.0)	90.7	72.9
Central								
Chhattisgarh	3.8	12.1	78.3	89.6	92.6	100.0	94.4	68.3
Madhya Pradesh	3.0	20.3	77.9	85.3	94.8	93.7	92.6	70.4
Uttar Pradesh	4.1	14.8	68.9	86.3	92.8	94.7	96.4	69.4
East								
Bihar	8.9	20.5	63.5	84.4	94.3	95.1	97.6	69.0
Jharkhand	3.0	16.2	67.8	84.0	91.6	93.3	94.4	63.5
Orissa	2.5	33.1	84.8	93.0	94.8	(97.6)	86.1	68.9
West Bengal	2.9	41.5	88.6	95.0	94.7	(100.0)	92.7	71.8
Northeast								
Arunachal Pradesh	(3.3)	20.8	70.3	78.8	89.4	*	(83.6)	62.7
Assam	0.9	19.7	80.5	88.6	93.4	(92.4)	(100.0)	64.5
Manipur	4.8	12.6	60.9	79.6	88.9	89.0	93.9	60.4
Meghalaya	(12.6)	12.8	38.6	40.0	(48.7)	*	(74.2)	38.5
Mizoram	(0.0)	6.7	36.8	62.1	80.3	*	*	48.0
Nagaland	12.4	18.9	53.1	66.5	70.9	81.1	86.9	58.6
Sikkim	(2.9)	37.5	91.3	98.4	(100.0)	*	*	71.3
Tripura	(9.8)	44.9	93.5	97.1	(100.0)	*	*	72.9
West								
Goa	10.1	29.0	75.9	89.6	85.6	88.9	63.7	55.2
Gujarat	5.1	25.5	82.5	87.0	93.8	89.2	100.0	68.1
Maharashtra	4.6	31.5	88.2	94.4	96.7	91.7	93.0	73.5
South								
Andhra Pradesh	5.0	29.4	92.9	95.3	98.2	94.8	95.4	74.2
Karnataka	3.8	35.9	86.8	92.0	96.4	95.6	95.4	72.0
Kerala	(2.4)	16.8	88.3	89.6	*	*	*	65.3
Tamil Nadu	4.5	34.6	95.8	97.1	98.7	(100.0)	*	76.3

Note: Men who have been sterilized or who mention in response to the question about desire for children that their wife has been sterilized are considered to want no more children.
( ) Based on 25-49 unweighted cases.
* Percentage not shown; based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases.
[1] Includes wife's current pregnancy.

Tripura have replacement level fertility or less. In other low fertility states (such as Goa, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Kerala) and also in Haryana, Uttaranchal, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam, and Gujarat, between 80 and 90 percent of women with two living children want to have no more children. The percentage of women with two living children who want to stop childbearing is lowest in Meghalaya (36 percent), Mizoram (43 percent), Nagaland (58 percent), and Bihar (60 percent).

Table 4.15.2 shows how the desire to stop childbearing among men varies by state. The proportion of men who want no more children ranges from 39 percent in Meghalaya to 80 percent in Himachal Pradesh. Overall, the pattern of variations across states in the desire to discontinue childbearing among men is similar to the pattern observed for women.

4.9 IDEAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN

To assess women's ideal number of children, NFHS-3 asked women age 15-49 and men age 15-54 the number of children they would like to have if they could start over again. Women and men with no children were asked, 'If you could choose exactly the number of children to have in your whole life, how many would that be?' Those who already had children were asked, '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 and men had difficulties in understanding these hypothetical questions, and hence the question often had to be repeated to ensure that the meaning was understood.

Table 4.16 shows the distribution of the ideal number of children stated by women and men age 15-49 according to the number of living children. More than two-thirds (69 percent) of women age 15-49 consider two or less to be the ideal number of children, and another 19 percent consider three to be ideal. Among men age 15-49, 73 percent consider two or less to be the ideal number of children, and 17 percent consider three to be ideal. Only 9 percent of women and 8 percent of men have an ideal number that is more than three children. Three percent of women and 2 percent of men were unable to give a numeric response to the question. Over time, there has been a substantial decrease in the proportion of ever-married women who consider three or more children to be ideal, from 50 percent in NFHS-1 to 42 percent in NFHS-2 and 33 percent in NFHS-3. Among all women who gave a numeric response in NFHS-3, the average number of children considered ideal is 2.3. For both women and men age 15-49, the average number of children considered ideal ranges from 2.0 for those who have no children to 2.8 or more for those who have four or more children. For ever-married women, the average ideal number of children decreased from 2.9 in NHFS-1 to 2.6 in NFHS-2 and 2.4 in NFHS-3.

Asking a question on ideal family size is sometimes criticized on the grounds that women tend to adjust their ideal family size upward as the number of their living children increases, in a process of rationalizing previously unwanted children as wanted. It is argued that the question on ideal family size may prompt many women to state the actual number of children they already have as their ideal. It is evident from Table 4.16, however, that this is not the case for many women in India. Among women with four children, for example, 72 percent state that fewer than four children would be ideal. Similarly, among women with three living children, 57 percent

Table 4.16 Ideal number of children

Percent distribution of women and men age 15-49 by ideal number of children, and mean ideal number of children, by number of living children, India, 2005-06, and percent distribution of ever-married women age 15-49 by ideal number of children, NFHS-3, NFHS-2 and NFHS-1

Ideal number of children	Ever-married and never married respondents: Number of living children[1] 0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	Total	Ever-married respondents: NFHS-3 (2005-06)	NFHS-2 (1998-99)	NFHS-1 (1992-93)
WOMEN											
0	2.3	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.3	1.0	0.1	0.1
1	15.9	17.2	5.7	3.0	1.3	1.0	0.4	8.7	6.5	4.5	3.1
2	64.5	65.4	76.3	52.7	42.3	30.2	19.5	59.3	57.8	47.0	37.0
3	10.3	12.1	12.6	33.3	27.5	34.9	33.4	19.0	21.7	24.7	28.8
4	2.9	2.9	2.9	6.9	21.9	21.2	29.2	7.6	8.9	12.7	14.9
5	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.8	1.7	6.1	4.9	1.1	1.3	2.5	3.6
6+	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.6	1.9	6.0	0.6	0.7	1.6	2.4
Non-numeric responses	3.7	1.2	1.2	2.1	3.4	3.5	5.5	2.6	2.1	6.9	10.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	34,112	17,056	27,746	21,324	12,394	6,139	5,615	124,385	98,923	90,303	89,777
Mean ideal number of children for[2]:											
All women	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.5	2.8	3.0	3.4	2.3	na	na	na
Number	32,848	16,848	27,400	20,886	11,970	5,921	5,306	121,181	na	na	na
Ever-married women	2.1	2.0	2.1	2.5	2.8	3.0	3.4	2.4	2.4	2.6	2.9
Number	8,516	16,835	27,396	20,884	11,969	5,921	5,306	96,827	96,827	84,035	80,713
Currently married women	2.1	2.0	2.1	2.5	2.8	3.0	3.4	2.4	2.4	2.7	2.9
Number	7,689	15,744	26,010	19,751	11,318	5,624	5,071	91,207	91,207	79,143	76,417
MEN											
0	2.1	1.0	0.6	1.7	2.0	1.7	2.2	1.6	1.2	na	na
1	13.5	16.0	6.0	2.8	1.8	0.8	0.5	9.2	6.5	na	na
2	66.9	66.3	75.1	50.9	43.3	30.1	26.3	61.8	58.7	na	na
3	11.3	12.0	13.4	33.9	26.1	33.4	30.5	17.4	21.2	na	na
4	3.3	3.0	3.2	7.5	21.1	21.9	22.5	6.5	8.4	na	na
5	0.5	0.6	0.5	1.5	2.7	7.2	5.9	1.2	1.6	na	na
6+	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.9	2.2	6.0	0.6	0.8	na	na
Non-numeric responses	2.1	1.0	0.9	1.4	2.0	2.6	6.0	1.8	1.6	na	na
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	na	na
Number of men	29,428	7,853	13,044	9,286	5,238	2,592	2,310	69,751	44,443	na	na
Mean ideal number of children for[2]:											
All men	2.0	2.0	2.2	2.5	2.8	3.1	3.3	2.2	na	na	na
Number	28,819	7,776	12,921	9,158	5,135	2,524	2,170	68,505	na	na	na
Ever-married men	2.1	2.0	2.2	2.5	2.8	3.1	3.3	2.4	2.4	na	na
Number	4,071	7,772	12,920	9,157	5,135	2,524	2,170	43,750	43,750	na	na
Currently married men	2.1	2.0	2.2	2.5	2.8	3.1	3.3	2.4	2.4	na	na
Number	3,791	7,592	12,725	9,033	5,061	2,479	2,154	42,834	42,834	na	na

na = Not applicable
[1] Includes current pregnancy for women or wife's current pregnancy for men.
[2] Means are calculated excluding respondents who gave non-numeric responses.

state that their ideal family size is smaller than three children. It is evident that a large proportion of women already have more children than they now consider ideal. This proportion may be taken as another indicator of surplus or unwanted fertility.

4.10 Sex Preference for Children

A strong preference for sons has been found to be pervasive in Indian society, affecting both attitudes and behaviour with respect to children and the choice regarding number and sex composition of children (Das Gupta et al., 2003; Mishra et al., 2004; Bhat and Zavier, 2003; Arnold et al., 1998, 2002; Arokiasamy, 2002; Clark, 2000; Pande and Astone, 2007). In NFHS-3, women age 15-49 and men age 15-54 who gave a numerical response to the question on the ideal number of children were also asked how many of these children they would like to be boys, how

many they would like to be girls, and for how many the sex would not matter. Tables 4.17.1 and 4.17.2 show the mean ideal number of sons and daughters, the percentage who desire more sons than daughters, the percentage who desire more daughters than sons, the percentage who desire at least one son, and the percentage who desire at least one daughter, according to background characteristics. The tables show a consistent preference for sons over daughters among both women and men. Overall, the average ideal family size of 2.3 children reported by women age 15-49 consists of 1.1 sons, 0.8 daughters, and 0.4 children of either sex. According to this measure of ideal family size, son preference has declined steadily from NFHS-1 to NFHS-3.

Table 4.17.1 Indicators of sex preference: Women

Mean ideal number of sons, daughters, and children of either sex for women age 15-49, percentage who want more sons than daughters, percentage who want more daughters than sons, percentage who want at least one son, and percentage who want at least one daughter by background characteristics, India, 2005-06, and totals for ever-married women age 15-49, NFHS-3, NFHS-2 and NFHS-1

Background characteristic	Mean number of: Sons	Daughters	Either sex	Percentage who want more sons than daughters	Percentage who want more daughters than sons	Percentage who want at least one son	Percentage who want at least one daughter	Number of women
Age								
15-19	0.9	0.7	0.4	15.8	2.7	71.9	70.2	23,886
20-29	1.0	0.8	0.4	20.5	2.6	75.6	72.1	42,440
30-39	1.2	0.9	0.3	25.8	2.6	81.0	76.8	32,765
40-49	1.3	0.9	0.4	28.2	2.4	81.3	77.7	22,052
Residence								
Urban	0.8	0.7	0.5	14.0	3.3	68.5	66.4	39,959
Rural	1.2	0.9	0.3	26.6	2.2	81.7	77.7	81,184
Education								
No education	1.4	1.0	0.3	34.6	2.0	86.6	82.4	48,762
<5 years complete	1.1	0.9	0.3	23.1	2.4	81.6	77.0	9,644
5-7 years complete	1.0	0.8	0.4	18.6	2.3	79.2	75.8	18,390
8-9 years complete	0.9	0.7	0.4	13.7	2.8	73.6	70.3	17,030
10-11 years complete	0.7	0.7	0.5	9.8	3.2	66.1	64.2	12,615
12 or more years complete	0.6	0.6	0.6	7.5	4.2	55.7	54.5	14,693
Marital status								
Never married	0.7	0.7	0.5	10.7	3.5	63.9	63.3	24,346
Currently married	1.2	0.9	0.4	25.5	2.3	81.0	77.0	91,179
Widowed/divorced/separated/deserted	1.1	0.8	0.4	22.9	2.7	77.2	72.3	5,618
Religion								
Hindu	1.0	0.8	0.4	22.3	2.4	77.0	73.5	98,115
Muslim	1.3	1.0	0.4	26.5	2.8	81.0	78.7	16,019
Christian	1.0	0.9	0.5	12.5	6.9	71.6	70.7	2,932
Sikh	0.9	0.7	0.4	16.8	1.6	73.1	65.4	2,094
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	0.9	0.8	0.3	15.5	3.9	78.6	77.1	1,004
Jain	0.7	0.7	0.6	6.2	5.3	59.8	61.1	404
Other	1.4	1.2	0.3	29.0	3.8	87.0	84.1	457
Caste/tribe								
Scheduled caste	1.1	0.9	0.3	25.4	2.3	80.7	77.3	22,592
Scheduled tribe	1.3	1.0	0.3	28.9	3.4	84.9	80.5	9,785
Other backward class	1.1	0.8	0.4	24.0	2.4	78.3	75.3	47,767
Other	0.9	0.8	0.4	17.3	2.8	72.7	69.1	40,002
Don't know	0.8	0.7	0.5	12.6	3.4	67.3	64.5	620
Wealth index								
Lowest	1.4	1.0	0.3	35.3	2.2	87.4	83.4	21,013
Second	1.3	0.9	0.3	29.0	1.9	84.4	80.5	22,953
Middle	1.1	0.8	0.4	22.5	2.3	79.6	75.9	24,452
Fourth	1.0	0.8	0.4	17.3	2.8	74.7	71.7	25,456
Highest	0.7	0.7	0.5	11.7	3.5	64.1	61.7	27,268
Total	1.1	0.8	0.4	22.4	2.6	77.4	74.0	121,143
Ever-married women								
NFHS-3 (2005-06)	1.2	0.9	0.4	25.4	2.4	80.7	76.7	96,796
NFHS-2 (1998-99)	1.4	1.0	0.3	33.2	2.2	85.1	80.1	82,939
NFHS-1 (1992-93)	1.6	1.1	0.2	41.4	2.6	90.0	84.6	80,466

Note: Table excludes women who gave non-numeric responses to the questions on ideal number of children or ideal number of sons or daughters. Total includes women with missing information on education, religion and caste/tribe, who are not shown separately.

Table 4.17.2 Indicators of sex preference: Men

Mean ideal number of sons, daughters, and children of either sex for men age 15-49, percentage who want more sons than daughters, percentage who want more daughters than sons, percentage who want at least one son, and percentage who want at least one daughter by background characteristics, India, 2005-06.

Background characteristic	Mean number of: Sons	Daughters	Either sex	Percentage who want more sons than daughters	Percentage who want more daughters than sons	Percentage who want at least one son	Percentage who want at least one daughter	Number of men
Age								
15-19	0.9	0.7	0.6	16.2	1.7	67.1	62.5	12,721
20-29	0.8	0.7	0.6	16.1	1.9	65.3	61.3	22,508
30-39	1.0	0.8	0.5	22.6	2.1	72.8	68.0	18,797
40-49	1.1	0.8	0.5	26.1	2.1	75.6	70.0	14,464
Residence								
Urban	0.8	0.6	0.7	13.6	2.1	61.8	58.2	25,137
Rural	1.1	0.8	0.5	23.7	1.8	74.6	69.3	43,353
Education								
No education	1.3	0.9	0.5	32.0	1.8	81.4	75.7	12,212
<5 years complete	1.1	0.8	0.5	26.7	2.6	76.5	70.3	6,911
5-7 years complete	1.0	0.8	0.5	22.0	2.1	75.2	70.6	11,321
8-9 years complete	0.9	0.7	0.5	18.6	1.6	70.5	65.8	14,156
10-11 years complete	0.8	0.6	0.6	13.4	2.0	64.2	60.0	10,235
12 or more years complete	0.6	0.5	0.7	10.6	2.0	55.4	52.0	13,642
Marital status								
Never married	0.8	0.6	0.6	13.6	1.8	61.9	57.7	24,747
Currently married	1.1	0.8	0.5	23.5	2.1	74.4	69.5	42,828
Widowed/divorced/separated/deserted	1.1	0.8	0.5	27.0	2.0	75.4	67.8	916
Religion								
Hindu	0.9	0.7	0.5	19.6	1.8	69.9	65.1	56,301
Muslim	1.1	0.8	0.6	25.0	2.4	73.1	68.8	8,398
Christian	0.9	0.8	0.7	15.2	4.9	65.1	61.5	1,502
Sikh	0.7	0.5	0.7	14.8	1.3	56.1	48.3	1,250
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	0.8	0.7	0.5	12.9	2.7	67.9	63.9	593
Jain	0.6	0.6	0.7	5.3	2.3	56.6	55.8	212
Other	1.3	1.2	0.4	22.7	11.4	79.4	78.8	225
Caste/tribe								
Scheduled caste	1.0	0.8	0.5	22.6	1.9	72.8	67.8	12,991
Scheduled tribe	1.2	0.9	0.4	27.0	3.0	81.7	76.4	5,572
Other backward class	1.0	0.7	0.6	20.8	1.7	69.7	65.3	26,825
Other	0.8	0.7	0.6	15.9	2.0	65.6	60.9	22,714
Don't know	0.8	0.6	0.6	12.8	0.4	64.2	57.3	172
Wealth index								
Lowest	1.3	0.9	0.4	33.1	2.0	82.1	76.3	10,715
Second	1.1	0.8	0.5	26.5	1.9	77.8	72.2	12,404
Middle	1.0	0.7	0.5	19.6	1.7	72.0	67.2	14,076
Fourth	0.8	0.7	0.6	15.4	2.1	66.4	62.7	15,257
Highest	0.7	0.6	0.7	11.0	2.1	56.9	53.1	16,039
Total age 15-49	1.0	0.7	0.6	20.0	2.0	69.9	65.2	68,490
Age 50-54	1.2	0.8	0.5	27.0	2.0	74.5	69.0	4,461
Total age 15-54	1.0	0.7	0.6	20.4	2.0	70.2	65.4	72,951
Total for ever-married men age 15-49	1.1	0.8	0.5	23.6	2.1	74.4	69.4	43,743

Note: Table excludes men who gave non-numeric responses to the questions on ideal number of children or ideal number of sons or daughters. Total includes men with missing information on education, religion and caste/tribe, who are not shown separately.

Twenty-two percent of women want more sons than daughters, but only 3 percent want more daughters than sons. Twenty percent of men want more sons than daughters, but only 2 percent want more daughters than sons. Despite the strong expressed preference for sons among both men and women, it is noteworthy that approximately three-quarters of women and men do not express a preference for either sons or daughters according to this measure.

The indicator on the percentage who want at least one son and at least one daughter exhibits the weakest son preference. Seventy-seven percent of women want at least one son among their children and nearly as many (74 percent) want at least one daughter. Among men

age 15-49, 70 percent want at least one son and 65 percent want at least one daughter. One reason that a substantial proportion of women and men want to have at least one daughter despite having a preference for sons is to fulfil the Hindu religious obligation of *kanyadan* (giving a daughter away at the time of her marriage), which is one of the acts that enable the parents to acquire the highest level of merit (*punya*).

Son preference is relatively weak among younger women and men, those in urban areas, those with more education, and those in households in the highest wealth quintiles. Son preference is somewhat weaker among Jain women and men than among those of other religions. Son preference does not vary much by caste/tribe.

Table 4.18 Indicators of sex preference by state

Mean ideal number of sons, daughters, and children of either sex, percentage who want more sons than daughters, and percentage who want more daughters than sons for women and men age 15-49, by state, India, 2005-06

	Women					Men				
	Mean ideal number of:			Percentage who want more sons than daughters	Percentage who want more daughters than sons	Mean ideal number of:			Percentage who want more sons than daughters	Percentage who want more daughters than sons
State	Sons	Daughters	Either sex			Sons	Daughters	Either sex		
India	1.1	0.8	0.4	22.4	2.6	1.0	0.7	0.6	20.0	2.0
North										
Delhi	0.7	0.6	0.7	11.7	2.1	0.7	0.5	0.8	11.7	1.5
Haryana	1.1	0.8	0.3	22.0	1.2	0.9	0.7	0.4	18.4	2.2
Himachal Pradesh	0.8	0.7	0.4	11.8	2.0	0.7	0.6	0.5	9.2	1.1
Jammu & Kashmir	1.1	0.8	0.4	23.4	3.1	1.1	0.8	0.5	23.9	2.2
Punjab	0.9	0.7	0.4	17.7	1.6	0.6	0.5	0.8	13.4	1.5
Rajasthan	1.4	1.0	0.3	34.3	1.5	1.2	0.9	0.5	24.0	1.8
Uttaranchal	1.0	0.8	0.5	20.7	2.1	0.8	0.6	0.7	13.6	1.3
Central										
Chhattisgarh	1.3	1.0	0.3	32.8	3.6	1.2	0.9	0.4	24.8	2.4
Madhya Pradesh	1.3	1.0	0.2	30.8	1.8	1.1	0.8	0.5	27.9	1.0
Uttar Pradesh	1.3	0.9	0.3	33.5	1.7	1.1	0.8	0.6	27.8	1.2
East										
Bihar	1.4	1.0	0.3	39.2	1.2	1.3	0.8	0.5	38.5	1.7
Jharkhand	1.2	0.9	0.4	28.1	2.3	1.1	0.9	0.6	24.6	3.7
Orissa	1.1	0.9	0.3	24.2	2.4	0.9	0.6	0.6	20.3	1.6
West Bengal	0.9	0.8	0.4	16.5	3.5	0.9	0.7	0.5	16.6	2.1
Northeast										
Arunachal Pradesh	1.5	1.2	0.2	28.3	5.0	1.5	1.1	0.3	30.3	3.2
Assam	1.1	0.8	0.4	24.1	2.1	0.9	0.7	0.6	17.9	2.8
Manipur	1.5	1.3	0.1	28.5	4.2	1.5	1.1	0.2	34.7	3.3
Meghalaya	1.5	1.6	0.2	11.9	17.0	1.4	1.3	0.3	21.5	13.5
Mizoram	1.9	1.8	0.0	29.0	22.7	2.1	1.7	0.0	43.5	14.7
Nagaland	1.5	1.4	0.4	21.4	9.8	1.6	1.3	0.5	28.4	5.0
Sikkim	0.8	0.7	0.3	15.5	5.9	1.0	0.8	0.3	17.1	4.2
Tripura	0.9	0.7	0.4	17.7	3.4	0.8	0.6	0.6	15.2	2.2
West										
Goa	0.7	0.6	0.7	8.7	4.1	0.8	0.7	0.5	11.4	2.1
Gujarat	0.9	0.7	0.5	22.7	2.3	1.0	0.8	0.5	20.0	1.6
Maharashtra	0.9	0.8	0.3	14.1	2.9	0.8	0.7	0.5	14.3	2.2
South										
Andhra Pradesh	0.8	0.7	0.6	9.3	2.6	0.8	0.7	0.7	12.0	2.0
Karnataka	0.8	0.8	0.4	11.6	4.6	0.9	0.7	0.5	12.7	2.7
Kerala	0.8	0.8	0.7	11.0	5.7	0.7	0.6	0.8	11.8	3.8
Tamil Nadu	0.7	0.6	0.6	5.7	3.1	0.6	0.5	0.8	7.9	1.8

Note: Table excludes women and men who gave non-numeric responses to the questions on ideal number of children or ideal number of sons or daughters.

Table 4.18 shows son preference attitudes among women and men age 15-49 by state. The overall ideal family size As indicated earlier, the mean ideal number of children for women is 2.3. The total ideal family size is low to moderate in all states. Only three states (Mizoram, Nagaland, and Meghalaya) have an ideal family size of more than three children. The mean ideal family size is almost as high in Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. The mean ideal number of children is around 2.3 or fewer in 18 of the 29 states.

According to the measures of sex preference in Table 4.18, son preference is evident among both women and men in every state. The only exception is a slight daughter preference expressed by women in Meghalaya, which a primarily a matriarchal and matrilineal state. Men in Meghalaya, however, express a weak preference for sons.

The strength of son preference varies substantially across the states. Son preference tends to be stronger among both women and men in the northern part of the country, especially in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan. Other states with a particularly high son preference include Arunachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Manipur, Jharkhand, and Jammu and Kashmir. The weakest son preference is found in the South and West Regions and parts of the Northeast Region. States with particularly low, but still discernible, son preference include Tamil Nadu, Goa, Kerala, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, and Delhi. In every state except Meghalaya and Mizoram, no more than 5 percent of men want more daughters than sons. In most states, the proportion of women who want more daughters than sons is slightly higher than the corresponding proportion for men. The preference for more sons than daughters ranges from 6 percent of women in Tamil Nadu to 39 percent in Bihar. Among men, the proportion ranges from 8 percent in Tamil Nadu to 44 percent in Mizoram.

4.11 FERTILITY PLANNING

For each child born in the five years before the survey and for each current pregnancy, NFHS-3 asked women whether the pregnancy was wanted at that time (planned), wanted at a later time (mistimed), or not wanted at all. Because a woman may retrospectively describe an unplanned pregnancy as one that was wanted at that time, responses to these questions may lead to an underestimation of unplanned childbearing. Nevertheless, this information provides a potentially powerful indicator of the degree to which couples successfully control childbearing. It should be noted that the proportion unplanned is influenced not

Table 4.19 Fertility planning status

Percent distribution of births in the five years preceding the survey (including current pregnancies) by planning status of the birth, according to birth order and mother's age at birth, India, 2005-06

Birth order/ mother's age at birth	Planning status of birth				Total	Number of births
	Wanted then	Wanted later	Wanted no more	Missing		
Birth order						
1	90.1	8.1	1.4	0.4	100.0	19,262
2	81.5	14.5	3.7	0.3	100.0	17,116
3	77.5	10.4	11.8	0.2	100.0	10,147
4+	64.0	7.1	28.7	0.2	100.0	16,341
Mother's age at birth[1]						
<20	85.2	11.9	2.5	0.3	100.0	13,073
20-24	81.6	11.5	6.6	0.3	100.0	25,769
25-29	76.4	8.6	14.7	0.2	100.0	15,202
30-34	69.4	5.9	24.6	0.2	100.0	6,161
35-39	60.5	3.1	36.4	0.0	100.0	2,108
40-44	50.1	3.1	46.5	0.4	100.0	482
45-49	71.5	0.9	27.6	0.0	100.0	71
Total	79.0	10.0	10.8	0.3	100.0	62,866

[1] For current pregnancy, estimated maternal age at birth.

only by whether, and how effectively, couples use contraception, but also by the couple's ideal family size.

Table 4.19 shows the percent distribution of births during the five years preceding the survey and current pregnancies according to fertility planning status. Twenty-one percent of all pregnancies that resulted in live births in the five years preceding the survey (including current pregnancies) were unplanned (that is, unwanted at the time the woman became pregnant). Ten percent were wanted later and 11 percent were not wanted at all. The proportion of births that were not wanted at all increases sharply by birth order of children, from just 1 percent for first-order births to 29 percent for births of order four and above. The proportion of births that were unplanned (mistimed or unwanted) is highest for births to women age 40-44 (50 percent) and lowest for births to women below age 20 (14 percent). Within the unplanned category, the proportion of births that were mistimed goes down and the proportion that were not wanted at all goes up with the age of the mother.

The impact of unwanted fertility can be measured by comparing the total wanted fertility rate with the total fertility rate (TFR). The total wanted fertility rate represents the level of fertility that theoretically would result if all unwanted births were prevented. A comparison of the TFR with the total wanted fertility rate indicates the potential demographic impact of the elimination of all unwanted births. The total wanted fertility rates presented in Table 4.20 are calculated in the same way as the TFR except that unwanted births are excluded from the numerator. In this case, a birth is considered unwanted if the number of living children at the time of conception was greater than or equal to the ideal number of children reported by the respondent at the time of the survey. Women who did not give a numeric response to the question on ideal number of children are assumed to have wanted all the births they had. The TFR and the total wanted fertility rates are calculated for the three years preceding the survey.

Overall, the total wanted fertility rate of 1.9 is lower by 0.8 child (i.e., by 30 percent) than the total fertility rate of 2.7. This means that if unwanted births could be eliminated, the TFR would drop to below the replacement level of fertility (1.9 children per woman). Women living in urban areas, educated women, Sikh, Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist, and Jain women, women not belonging to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, or other backward classes, and women in households in the highest wealth quintiles would have well under two children, on average, under

Table 4.20 Wanted fertility rates

Total wanted fertility rates and total fertility rates for the three years preceding the survey, by background characteristics, India, 2005-06

Background characteristic	Total wanted fertility rate	Total fertility rate
Residence		
Urban	1.6	2.1
Rural	2.1	3.0
Education		
No education	2.4	3.6
<5 years complete	1.8	2.5
5-7 years complete	1.9	2.5
8-9 years complete	1.7	2.2
10-11 years complete	1.7	2.1
12 or more years complete	1.6	1.8
Marital status		
Never married	0.0	0.0
Currently married	2.7	3.6
Widowed/divorced/ separated/deserted	1.1	1.4
Religion		
Hindu	1.9	2.6
Muslim	2.2	3.4
Christian	1.9	2.3
Sikh	1.5	1.9
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	1.7	2.2
Jain	(1.4)	(1.5)
Other	2.4	4.0
Caste/tribe		
Scheduled caste	2.0	2.9
Scheduled tribe	2.1	3.1
Other backward class	1.9	2.8
Other	1.7	2.3
Don't know	1.4	2.0
Wealth index		
Lowest	2.4	3.9
Second	2.1	3.2
Middle	1.8	2.6
Fourth	1.7	2.2
Highest	1.5	1.8
Total	1.9	2.7

Note: Total includes women with missing information on education, religion, and caste/tribe, who are not shown separately. The total fertility rates are the same as those presented in Table 4.2.
( ) Based on 125-249 woman-years of exposure

these circumstances. The difference between the total fertility rate and the total wanted fertility rate is larger for rural women (0.9 children) than for urban women (0.5 children). The difference is one child or larger for women with no education, Muslim women, women from scheduled tribes women, and women in households in the lowest two wealth quintiles. Because rural women and women with no education form a large proportion of the population, the TFR would drop substantially if their unwanted fertility could be eliminated.

Table 4.21 shows how the total wanted fertility rate vis-à-vis the total fertility rate varies by state. Total wanted fertility ranges from a very low level of 1.2 children per woman in Sikkim to 3.1 in Meghalaya. Among the major states, total wanted fertility is highest in Bihar (2.4 children per woman) and lowest in Tamil Nadu (1.4 children per woman). The difference between the total fertility rate and the total wanted fertility rate ranges from 0.1 children in Kerala to 1.6 children in Bihar. Aside from Bihar, the difference is one child or more in Uttar Pradesh (1.5), Jharkhand (1.2), and Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Nagaland (1.0 each).

Table 4.21 Wanted fertility rates by state

Total wanted fertility rates and total fertility rates for the three years preceding the survey, by state, India, 2005-06

State	Total wanted fertility rate	Total fertility rate
India	1.9	2.7
North		
Delhi	1.6	2.1
Haryana	2.1	2.7
Himachal Pradesh	1.5	1.9
Jammu & Kashmir	1.6	2.4
Punjab	1.5	2.0
Rajasthan	2.2	3.2
Uttaranchal	1.8	2.5
Central		
Chhattisgarh	2.1	2.6
Madhya Pradesh	2.1	3.1
Uttar Pradesh	2.3	3.8
East		
Bihar	2.4	4.0
Jharkhand	2.1	3.3
Orissa	1.8	2.4
West Bengal	1.7	2.3
Northeast		
Arunachal Pradesh	2.3	3.0
Assam	1.8	2.4
Manipur	2.3	2.8
Meghalaya	3.1	3.8
Mizoram	2.7	2.9
Nagaland	2.7	3.7
Sikkim	1.2	2.0
Tripura	1.6	2.2
West		
Goa	1.5	1.8
Gujarat	1.8	2.4
Maharashtra	1.7	2.1
South		
Andhra Pradesh	1.5	1.8
Karnataka	1.6	2.1
Kerala	1.8	1.9
Tamil Nadu	1.4	1.8

Note: The total fertility rates are the same as those presented in Table 4.3.