

FERTILITY PREFERENCES AND UNMET NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING

7

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Information on the fertility preferences of men and women provides family planning programmes with an assessment of trends in ideal family size, the prevailing need for contraception, and the extent of unwanted and mistimed pregnancies. Data on fertility preferences can also be useful as an indicator of future fertility trends.

In the 2004 MDHS, women and men were asked a series of questions to ascertain their fertility preferences, including their desire to have another child, the length of time they would like to wait before having another child, and what they consider to be the ideal number of children. These data make it possible to quantify fertility preferences and, in combination with data on contraceptive use, allow estimation of the unmet need for family planning, for both spacing and limiting births.

Interpretation of results on fertility preferences is a matter of controversy because respondents' reported preferences are, in most cases, hypothetical and thus subject to change and rationalisation.

7.1 DESIRE FOR MORE CHILDREN

Men and women in the 2004 MDHS were asked, "Would you like to have (a/another) child or would you prefer not to have any (more) children?" For pregnant women the question started with, "After the child you are expecting now ...". Respondents who said they wanted to have (a/another) child were then asked how long they would like to wait before the birth of the next child.

Tables 7.1.1 and 7.1.2 show fertility desires among married women and men by the number of living children they currently have. Although slightly more than half of women and men (54 percent each) wanted another child, only 14 percent of women and 12 percent of men wanted a child soon. Thirty-eight percent of women and 40 percent of men wanted to have another child after two or more years. Thirty-five percent of women indicated that they wanted no more children and therefore wanted to limit the family size at its current level, and 6 percent had already been sterilised. Thirty-eight percent of men also report wanting no more children. The data indicate that a majority of women (79 percent) want to space their next birth or end childbearing altogether. These women are potentially in need of either a reversible or permanent method of family planning.

The desire to end childbearing increases with the number of living children, from 5 percent among married women with no children to 67 percent among women with six or more children. This pattern is similar to that for men. There has been no change in fertility preferences among currently married women since 2000, despite the fact that the proportion of married women who wanted to end childbearing rose from 25 percent in 1992 to 42 percent in 2000.

Table 7.1.1 Fertility preferences by number of living children: women

Percent distribution of currently married women by desire for children, according to number of living children, Malawi 2004

Desire for children	Number of living children ¹							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
Have another soon ²	76.3	21.1	12.8	10.3	6.6	3.3	1.4	14.0
Have another later ³	7.9	62.4	55.2	44.0	27.8	16.1	8.2	38.2
Have another, undecided when	3.9	2.9	1.5	1.2	1.7	0.7	0.2	1.6
Undecided	2.1	4.0	4.3	5.0	4.4	3.3	1.8	3.8
Want no more	5.0	8.5	23.0	34.7	50.3	63.6	67.3	35.0
Sterilised ⁴	0.1	0.2	1.6	3.8	7.4	11.3	19.2	5.9
Declared infecund	4.5	0.6	1.3	0.9	1.8	1.5	1.6	1.4
Missing	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of respondents	438	1,657	1,726	1,440	1,033	810	1,209	8,312

¹ Includes current pregnancy

² Wants next birth within 2 years

³ Wants to delay next birth for 2 or more years

⁴ Includes both female and male sterilisation

Table 7.1.2 Fertility preferences by number of living children: men

Percent distribution of currently married men by desire for children, according to number of living children, Malawi 2004

Desire for children	Number of living children							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
Have another soon ¹	35.1	12.4	15.5	12.9	7.0	6.6	3.7	11.8
Have another later ²	52.1	66.4	54.5	38.9	29.6	21.5	14.4	39.6
Have another, undecided when	4.5	3.6	3.3	0.8	2.7	2.2	0.9	2.4
Undecided	1.9	4.7	4.3	8.9	5.6	7.5	5.3	5.5
Want no more	5.8	12.3	22.4	36.5	52.5	57.7	70.8	38.4
Declared infecund	0.6	0.8	0.1	2.0	2.5	4.5	5.0	2.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of respondents	160	346	383	310	266	213	402	2,079

¹ Wants next birth within 2 years

² Wants to delay next birth for 2 or more years

7.2 DESIRE TO LIMIT CHILDBEARING BY BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

Table 7.2 shows the percentage of currently married women who want no more children by number of living children and background characteristics. Women living in urban areas are slightly more likely than women living in rural areas to want to stop childbearing (43 percent to 40 percent). This difference is more pronounced among those with 2-5 living children. Regional and district-level differentials are also notable. Currently married women in the Central Region are more likely to want to stop childbearing (45 percent) than those in the Northern or Southern Regions (38 percent each). Among districts, the proportion of women who want to stop childbearing ranges from 46 percent in Lilongwe to 29 percent in Mangochi. Blantyre, Kasungu, Salima, Thyolo, Mzimba, and Mulanje fall between 40-44 percent of women desiring no more children.

Table 7.2 *Desire to limit childbearing*

Percentage of currently married women who want no more children, by number of living children and background characteristics, Malawi 2004

Background characteristic	Number of living children ¹							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
Residence								
Urban	5.4	9.6	38.0	51.8	70.2	83.8	89.6	43.2
Rural	5.0	8.5	21.8	35.9	55.6	73.7	86.1	40.4
Region								
Northern	9.2	7.6	14.7	27.9	47.8	73.7	86.3	38.1
Central	4.5	9.0	28.0	40.8	67.1	78.7	89.7	45.0
Southern	4.7	8.8	24.7	39.2	52.7	71.6	83.2	38.0
District								
Blantyre	13.4	9.6	30.6	44.8	66.6	86.2	89.4	41.3
Kasungu	2.4	3.7	21.2	29.5	62.6	71.9	85.4	41.9
Machinga	0.0	8.5	20.2	17.4	40.2	61.2	78.0	32.1
Mangochi	4.4	7.0	14.2	30.2	27.1	47.5	72.3	28.7
Mzimba	14.1	6.2	15.1	32.4	46.2	77.3	88.0	39.5
Salima	0.0	8.6	16.8	34.8	57.5	74.9	95.4	40.2
Thyolo	6.8	10.8	26.6	39.8	59.0	70.8	85.6	40.3
Zomba	4.8	8.1	23.6	38.8	68.3	73.3	78.6	38.2
Lilongwe	4.0	8.3	32.5	46.4	73.4	86.5	94.1	45.9
Mulanje	2.2	6.0	29.0	47.1	69.2	83.8	93.0	44.3
Other districts	4.1	10.0	24.3	38.9	55.8	72.9	86.4	41.7
Education								
No education	9.9	14.7	26.2	35.7	50.7	69.2	84.4	49.8
Primary 1-4	5.1	6.7	21.5	32.9	59.1	73.3	84.6	38.7
Primary 5-8	4.3	6.4	22.8	40.5	62.0	82.5	91.9	38.4
Secondary+	0.0	11.9	32.8	57.5	72.5	85.1	83.1	32.3
Wealth quintile								
Lowest	4.7	8.8	27.7	32.8	52.5	70.4	85.3	40.1
Second	8.3	7.6	22.3	37.0	55.7	75.4	86.7	39.5
Middle	1.6	5.7	19.9	32.4	57.8	70.3	84.2	38.1
Fourth	5.7	10.4	18.5	37.5	54.9	71.2	85.7	40.4
Highest	5.0	11.4	36.0	52.7	66.8	90.0	91.8	46.5
Total	5.1	8.8	24.7	38.5	57.7	74.9	86.5	40.9

Note: Women who have been sterilised are considered to want no more children.

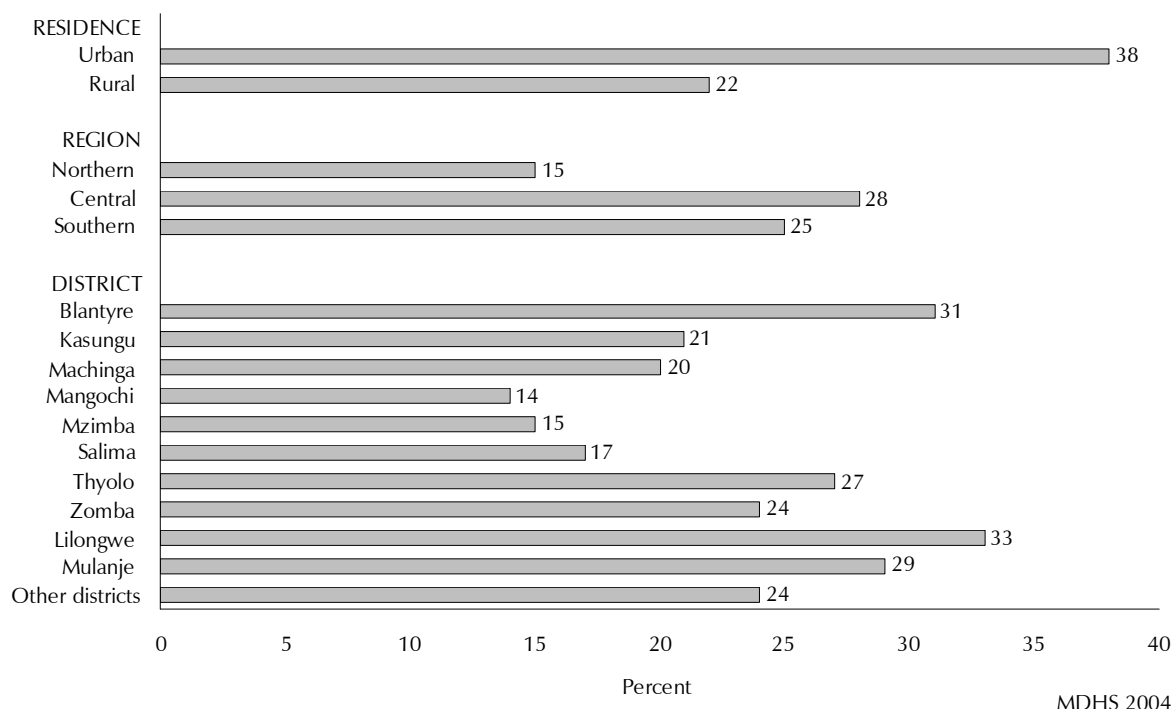
¹ Includes current pregnancy

The desire to limit childbearing appears to decline as the respondent's education increases; this is because more educated women have, on average, much lower fertility (i.e., lower average parity). As such, interpretation of the relationship between education level and fertility preferences needs to be based on comparisons within parity categories. For example, for women with 6 or more children, there are minimal educational differentials, but at parities 3-5, the desire to limit childbearing increases with women's education. There is no clear pattern with regard to the desire to limit childbearing by household wealth status, although women in the wealthiest quintile tend to be the most likely to report that they want to limit childbearing.

Figure 7.1 shows the percentage of women with two living children who want no additional children, according to urban-rural residence, region, district, and education level. Urban women, women in the Central and Southern Regions, and women with secondary or higher education are more likely than other women to want to stop childbearing. Women in Lilongwe, Blantyre,

Mulanje, and Thyolo are more likely than women in other districts to want to stop childbearing at parity two.

Figure 7.1 Percentage of Currently Married Women Who Have Two Children Who Want to End Childbearing



7.3 UNMET NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING

Women who say either that they do not want any more children or that they want to wait two or more years before having another child, but in both cases are not using contraception, are considered to have an unmet need for family planning. Women who are using family planning methods are said to have a met need for family planning. Women with unmet need and those with met need together constitute the total demand for family planning, which can be categorised according to whether the need is for spacing or limiting births.

Table 7.3 presents estimates of currently married women with unmet need, met need, and total demand for family planning services according to intention to space or limit births and by background characteristics. Twenty-eight percent of women have an unmet need for family planning services: 17 percent of women have an unmet need for spacing and 10 percent of women have an unmet need for limiting births. In Malawi the total demand¹ for family planning among married women is 62 percent. This is about the same level of demand observed in the 2000 MDHS data (60 percent). At present, 55 percent of the demand for family planning is satisfied.

¹ The total demand is comprised of unmet need and met need. The combination of unmet and met need is not always equal to the total demand (see footnote 3, Table 7.3).

Table 7.3 Need for family planning

Percentage of currently married women with unmet need for family planning, and with met need for family planning, and the total demand for family planning, by background characteristics, Malawi 2004

Background characteristic	Unmet need for family planning ¹			Met need for family planning (currently using) ²			Total demand for family planning ³			Percentage of demand satisfied	Number of women
	For spacing	For limiting	Total	For spacing	For limiting	Total	For spacing	For limiting	Total		
Age											
15-19	23.0	3.1	26.1	16.9	2.0	18.9	41.0	5.2	46.2	43.6	788
20-24	25.1	4.8	29.9	23.3	5.9	29.2	49.5	10.9	60.4	50.6	2,283
25-29	19.8	8.9	28.7	22.5	12.8	35.3	43.7	22.2	65.9	56.5	1,814
30-34	14.4	14.3	28.7	11.4	24.1	35.5	27.2	39.2	66.4	56.7	1,225
35-39	10.9	20.8	31.7	4.6	32.0	36.7	16.4	54.2	70.6	55.0	903
40-44	4.6	19.4	24.1	3.1	36.4	39.5	8.4	56.5	64.9	62.9	754
45-49	1.7	11.1	12.8	1.4	31.6	33.0	3.5	43.0	46.4	72.4	545
Residence											
Urban	13.3	9.7	23.0	15.8	21.4	37.2	29.7	32.2	61.9	62.8	1,337
Rural	18.0	10.5	28.5	15.4	16.2	31.6	34.6	27.1	61.7	53.8	6,975
Region											
Northern	15.9	7.2	23.1	22.2	19.0	41.2	41.0	26.9	68.0	66.0	1,087
Central	17.1	13.2	30.3	15.1	18.1	33.2	33.1	32.2	65.3	53.5	3,346
Southern	17.7	8.9	26.6	14.0	15.5	29.4	32.4	24.6	57.0	53.3	3,880
District											
Blantyre	13.7	7.5	21.2	15.9	20.6	36.5	30.0	28.2	58.2	63.6	643
Kasungu	13.9	12.5	26.4	19.8	18.6	38.4	35.8	31.4	67.1	60.7	385
Machinga	19.1	6.3	25.5	14.2	13.8	28.0	33.9	20.4	54.3	53.1	317
Mangochi	24.1	8.6	32.8	10.9	9.5	20.5	35.6	18.6	54.3	39.6	437
Mzimba	15.0	6.9	21.8	19.9	19.4	39.3	38.9	27.1	66.1	66.9	570
Salima	20.1	13.2	33.3	9.5	11.2	20.7	30.5	24.4	54.8	39.3	230
Thyolo	17.4	10.6	28.0	15.7	14.8	30.5	33.1	25.7	58.8	52.4	433
Zomba	17.5	8.4	25.9	16.0	15.9	32.0	34.7	24.7	59.4	56.4	436
Lilongwe	15.5	12.5	28.0	16.8	19.5	36.3	33.5	33.9	67.4	58.4	1,175
Mulanje	16.2	12.7	28.9	11.4	17.1	28.5	29.0	30.3	59.3	51.2	359
Other districts	18.1	11.0	29.1	15.1	16.9	32.1	34.0	28.2	62.2	53.2	3,326
Education											
No education	14.9	14.8	29.7	9.3	17.8	27.0	25.2	32.9	58.1	48.9	2,229
Primary 1-4	18.8	10.4	29.2	14.1	15.3	29.4	34.1	26.4	60.5	51.7	2,291
Primary 5-8	17.3	8.7	26.0	18.0	17.4	35.4	36.5	26.7	63.2	58.8	2,850
Secondary+	18.6	5.2	23.8	25.9	18.3	44.2	45.4	23.7	69.1	65.6	940
Wealth quintile											
Lowest	19.6	12.4	31.9	12.4	12.9	25.3	32.6	25.7	58.3	45.2	1,256
Second	18.8	11.0	29.7	13.5	14.4	27.9	33.5	25.5	59.0	49.7	1,787
Middle	18.4	9.9	28.3	16.1	14.3	30.4	35.9	24.7	60.7	53.4	1,851
Fourth	17.3	10.0	27.3	18.3	18.4	36.7	37.1	28.7	65.8	58.5	1,779
Highest	12.5	9.3	21.8	16.1	24.5	40.6	29.0	35.2	64.2	66.1	1,640
Total	17.2	10.4	27.6	15.5	17.0	32.5	33.8	27.9	61.7	55.2	8,312

¹ Unmet need for spacing includes pregnant women whose pregnancy was mistimed, amenorrhoeic women who are not using family planning and whose last birth was mistimed, and fecund women who are neither pregnant nor amenorrhoeic and who are not using any method of family planning and say they want to wait 2 or more years for their next birth. Also included in unmet need for spacing are fecund women who are not using any method of family planning and say they are unsure whether they want another child or who want another child but are unsure when to have the birth unless they say it would not be a problem if they discovered they were pregnant in the next few weeks. Unmet need for limiting refers to pregnant women whose pregnancy was unwanted, amenorrhoeic women whose last child was unwanted, and fecund women who are neither pregnant nor amenorrhoeic and who are not using any method of family planning and who want no more children. Excluded from the unmet need category are pregnant and amenorrhoeic women who became pregnant while using a method (these women are in need of a better method of contraception).

² Using for spacing is defined as women who are using some method of family planning and say they want to have another child or are undecided whether to have another. Using for limiting is defined as women who are using and who want no more children. Note that the specific methods used are not taken into account here.

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

Figure 7.2 illustrates the trend of unmet need, total demand, and demand satisfied for currently married women since the 1992 MDHS. The percentage of married women with unmet need for family planning has declined from 36 percent in 1992 to 28 percent in 2004, while the

total demand and percentage of demand satisfied has increased (26 percent in 1992 to 55 percent in 2004). Although there has been considerable progress, much more needs to be done to satisfy women's demand for family planning.

Figure 7.2 Trend in Unmet Need for Family Planning, Total Demand, and Percentage of Demand Satisfied, Malawi 1992, 2000, and 2004

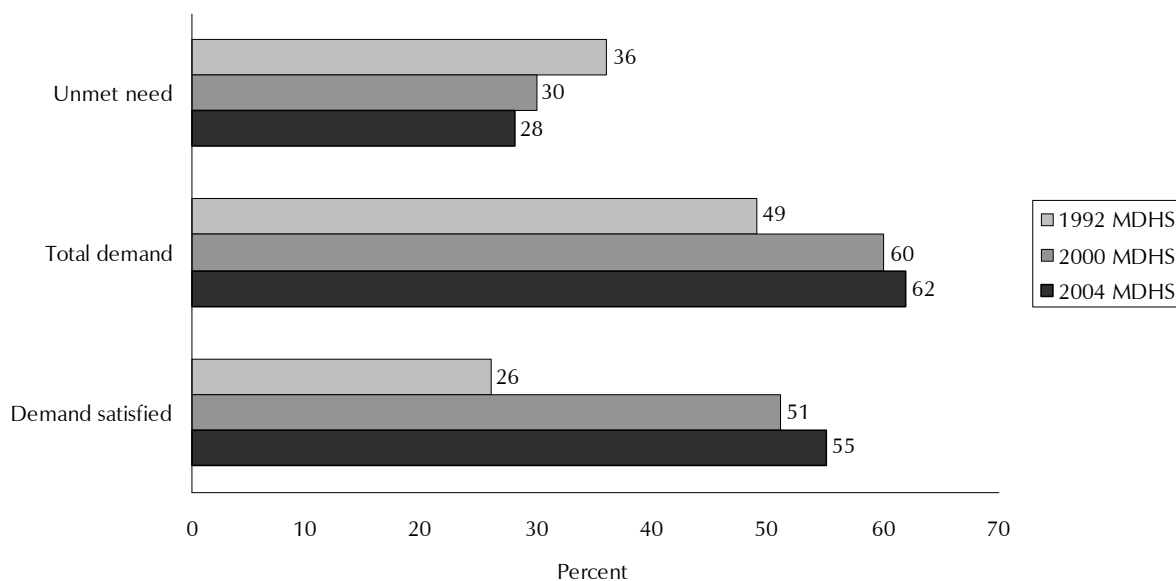


Table 7.3 shows that younger women have a higher unmet need for spacing births, while older women have a higher unmet need for limiting childbearing. While the overall demand for contraception is lowest among adolescents and women age 45-49 years, the percentage of demand satisfied is lowest among the adolescents (44 percent) and highest among women age 45-49 (72 percent). This indicates that young women are relatively underserved in Malawi.

Total unmet need for family planning services is greater among rural women (29 percent) than among urban women (23 percent). Unmet need is higher in the Central Region (30 percent) than in the Southern or Northern Regions (27 and 23 percent, respectively). There is no difference in the total demand for family planning services for rural and urban women (62 percent each), but urban women are more likely to have their demand satisfied than their rural counterparts (63 and 54 percent, respectively). The demand for family planning is higher among women in the Northern Region (68 percent) than among women in the Central and Southern Regions (65 and 57 percent, respectively). Sixty-six percent of women in the Northern Region have their demand satisfied compared with 54 percent of women in the Central Region and 53 percent in the Southern Region.

Unmet need is lower and met need is higher among women with some secondary or higher education when compared to women with less education. The overall demand for family planning services increases with the increasing level of education. Women with no education have a higher demand for family planning for limiting, while those with secondary or higher education have higher demand for family planning for spacing. The percentage of demand satisfied increases with the increasing level of education.

Among the districts, Salima and Mangochi have the highest levels of unmet need (33 percent) followed by Mulanje and other districts (29 percent). Total demand is highest among women in Kasungu and Lilongwe (67 percent each). Blantyre has the lowest unmet need (21 percent), while Machinga and Mangochi have the lowest levels of demand for family planning at 54 percent. The percentage of demand satisfied ranges from 39 percent in Salima to 67 percent in Mzimba.

7.4 IDEAL FAMILY SIZE

Information on what men and women believe to be their ideal family size was elicited through two questions. Respondents who had no children were asked, “If you could choose exactly the number of children to have in your whole life, how many would that be?” For respondents who had children, the question was rephrased as follows: “If you could go back to the time when you did not have any children and could choose exactly the number of children to have in your whole life, how many would that be?” Some respondents, especially those for whom fertility control is an unfamiliar concept, may have some difficulty in answering this hypothetical question.

The results presented in Table 7.4 indicate that nearly all respondents were able to give a numeric response to this question: only 3-4 percent of men and women gave non-numeric responses like, “up to God” or “any number.” Slightly more than one-third of women and men (35 percent and 37 percent, respectively) said they would choose to have four children. The proportion of women and men who indicated that they would choose to have four or fewer children in Malawi has increased over time. This proportion was 38 percent for women and 45 percent for men in 1992, 64 percent for women and 69 percent for men in 2000, and 67 percent for women and 71 percent for men in 2004.

Table 7.4 Ideal number of children

Percent distribution of all women and men by ideal number of children, and mean ideal number of children for all women and for currently married women, according to number of living children, Malawi 2004

Desire for children	Number of living children ¹							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
WOMEN								
0	2.8	0.5	0.8	0.4	1.8	1.1	2.7	1.4
1	2.7	3.3	0.6	0.9	0.3	0.3	0.1	1.4
2	30.3	21.9	13.3	7.0	4.5	3.6	2.8	14.3
3	20.4	23.2	18.4	14.5	5.3	6.0	4.2	15.0
4	29.5	34.8	45.7	44.3	40.4	23.2	22.1	35.1
5	7.2	9.1	11.4	18.8	21.0	24.7	13.2	13.5
6+	3.3	5.4	7.8	12.1	23.5	36.9	46.4	15.8
Non-numeric responses	3.7	1.7	2.0	2.1	3.2	4.1	8.4	3.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	2,277	2,116	2,060	1,678	1,206	950	1,411	11,698
Mean ideal number children for²:								
All women	3.1	3.4	3.8	4.2	4.6	5.2	5.6	4.1
Number	2,193	2,080	2,019	1,642	1,168	911	1,292	11,304
Currently married women	3.4	3.5	3.8	4.2	4.6	5.2	5.6	4.3
Number	417	1,629	1,691	1,405	1,001	783	1,104	8,030
MEN								
0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0	0.2	0.5
1	0.8	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.4
2	21.0	18.6	11.2	5.9	4.8	3.0	4.3	13.4
3	28.9	29.6	19.7	16.0	3.5	6.2	6.3	20.1
4	32.4	37.2	46.9	45.8	43.0	34.5	27.4	36.5
5	9.3	10.0	15.2	17.5	17.5	26.5	14.5	13.4
6+	4.0	2.4	5.5	8.7	20.0	25.8	36.6	11.3
Non-numeric responses	2.6	2.1	1.4	6.1	10.1	4.0	10.2	4.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of men	1,253	391	403	319	270	218	407	3,261
Mean ideal number children for²:								
All men	3.4	3.5	4.1	4.1	4.6	4.8	5.5	4.0
Number	1,221	383	398	300	242	210	366	3,119
Currently married men	3.3	3.5	4.1	4.1	4.6	4.8	5.5	4.3
Number	158	338	377	291	238	204	362	1,969

¹ Includes current pregnancy

² Means are calculated excluding women/men giving non-numeric responses.

Survey findings show that women's actual and ideal number of children are correlated. The average ideal family size among women with one child is 3.4 children, compared with 5.6 children among women with six or more children. There are two principal reasons for this pattern. First, to the extent that women are able to implement their fertility desires, women who want smaller families will tend to achieve smaller families. Second, some women may have difficulty admitting that they would have had fewer children if they could begin childbearing again. Such women are likely to report their actual number of children as their preferred number. Despite this tendency to rationalise, the 2004 MDHS data provide evidence of unwanted fertility; close to half (45 percent) of the women with six or more children said that ideally they would have liked fewer than six children.

In general, men and women want families of a similar size. Currently married women and men want on average 4.3 children. For both men and women, there has been a decline of one child in the ideal family size since 1992. The average ideal family size for all women in 1992 was 5.1 children, in 2000 it was 5.0 children, and in 2004 it was 4.1 children. For all men, changes over time in ideal family size is sharper: it is 5.2 children in 1992, 4.8 children in 2000, and 4.0 children in 2004.

Table 7.5.1 shows the mean ideal number of children for all women by age, according to background characteristics. The mean ideal family size increases with age, from 3.2 children for women age 15-19 to 5.3 children for women age 40-49. At every age, rural women have larger family size desires than urban women: the average ideal number of children in the rural areas is 4.2 children, compared to 3.4 children in urban areas. Small regional variations are observed in ideal family size. However, a woman's education is strongly related to her ideal family size: as the woman's level of education increases, her desired family size decreases. There is also a decline in ideal family size as wealth increases. All patterns observed for women hold true for men as well (Table 7.5.2).

At the district level, the average ideal number of children for women ranges from 3.5 children for women in Blantyre to 4.5 children for women in Mangochi. For men, the corresponding figures are 3.5 children in Lilongwe to 4.5 children in Salima.

Table 7.5.1 Mean ideal number of children by background characteristics: women

Mean ideal number of children for all women, by age and background characteristics, Malawi 2004

Background characteristic	Age							All women
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	
Residence								
Urban	2.8	3.2	3.4	3.7	4.1	4.3	4.9	3.4
Rural	3.3	3.7	4.1	4.6	5.0	5.5	5.3	4.2
Region								
Northern	3.2	3.7	4.1	4.8	5.0	6.0	5.7	4.2
Central	3.3	3.5	3.9	4.4	4.7	5.2	4.9	4.0
Southern	3.2	3.6	4.0	4.4	5.1	5.1	5.4	4.1
District								
Blantyre	2.8	3.3	3.4	3.8	4.1	4.4	4.2	3.5
Kasungu	3.3	3.8	4.3	4.6	4.8	5.0	5.2	4.2
Machinga	3.4	3.9	4.5	4.7	5.4	4.7	5.4	4.4
Mangochi	3.4	3.9	4.7	4.7	5.7	5.7	5.9	4.5
Mzimba	3.0	3.6	4.0	4.6	4.8	5.6	5.9	4.1
Salima	3.6	3.9	4.3	4.6	4.8	5.6	5.6	4.3
Thyolo	3.1	3.7	4.1	4.8	4.9	5.1	5.6	4.1
Zomba	2.9	3.5	3.9	4.4	5.5	5.0	5.2	3.9
Lilongwe	3.1	3.2	3.6	4.1	4.3	4.6	4.0	3.6
Mulanje	3.2	3.6	3.9	4.3	4.7	5.0	5.2	4.0
Other districts	3.4	3.7	4.1	4.7	5.0	5.7	5.5	4.2
Education								
No education	3.5	4.0	4.4	4.8	5.3	5.6	5.3	4.8
Primary 1-4	3.3	3.9	4.2	4.5	5.0	5.3	5.3	4.2
Primary 5-8	3.3	3.6	4.0	4.4	4.6	5.2	5.4	3.9
Secondary+	2.9	3.1	3.1	3.5	3.7	4.2	3.9	3.1
Wealth quintile								
Lowest	3.3	3.9	4.1	4.6	5.0	6.1	5.3	4.3
Second	3.5	3.9	4.3	4.7	5.4	5.3	5.3	4.3
Middle	3.4	3.7	4.3	4.6	5.0	5.5	5.3	4.2
Fourth	3.2	3.5	4.0	4.6	5.0	5.3	5.3	4.1
Highest	2.8	3.1	3.4	3.8	4.1	4.5	4.9	3.5
Total	3.2	3.6	4.0	4.5	4.9	5.3	5.3	4.1

Table 7.5.2 Mean ideal number of children by background characteristics: men

Mean ideal number of children for all men, by age and background characteristics, Malawi 2004

Background characteristic	Age							All men
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	
Residence								
Urban	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.7	3.8	4.0	4.8	3.5
Rural	3.5	3.5	4.0	4.3	4.6	4.9	5.2	4.1
Region								
Northern	3.5	3.6	4.2	4.8	4.2	4.6	5.6	4.2
Central	3.6	3.3	3.8	3.9	4.5	4.6	4.6	3.9
Southern	3.4	3.5	3.8	4.1	4.5	5.0	5.4	4.0
District								
Blantyre	3.1	3.0	3.3	3.8	3.9	4.5	5.2	3.6
Kasungu	4.1	3.3	3.7	4.5	4.4	5.7	5.0	4.2
Machinga	3.5	3.6	3.6	4.2	4.6	5.0	4.9	4.0
Mangochi	4.3	3.7	4.1	4.3	4.0	5.0	4.2	4.2
Mzimba	3.3	3.5	3.8	4.3	4.6	4.9	5.3	4.0
Salima	4.2	3.2	4.4	4.3	5.1	5.1	5.6	4.5
Thyolo	2.9	3.5	3.7	4.2	4.3	4.7	6.8	4.0
Zomba	3.1	3.8	3.6	3.8	3.8	5.1	4.6	3.9
Lilongwe	3.3	3.3	3.1	3.5	4.5	4.1	3.9	3.5
Mulanje	3.3	3.5	3.9	4.1	5.2	5.2	3.7	4.1
Other districts	3.6	3.6	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.8	5.5	4.3
Education								
No education	4.0	3.6	4.1	4.3	4.5	4.7	4.8	4.4
Primary 1-4	3.9	3.8	4.6	4.4	5.1	5.2	5.6	4.5
Primary 5-8	3.4	3.4	3.9	4.4	4.5	4.9	5.1	4.0
Secondary+	3.0	3.3	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.9	4.6	3.4
Wealth quintile								
Lowest	4.1	3.8	4.2	4.6	4.7	4.8	4.7	4.3
Second	3.5	3.6	4.7	4.5	4.6	5.2	6.0	4.3
Middle	3.6	3.6	3.9	4.3	4.8	5.1	5.2	4.2
Fourth	3.4	3.4	3.6	4.3	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.0
Highest	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.5	3.7	3.9	5.0	3.4
Total	3.5	3.5	3.9	4.1	4.5	4.8	5.1	4.0

7.5 WANTED AND UNWANTED FERTILITY

There are two main ways of looking at the issue of unwanted fertility. In the first approach, responses to a question about children born in the five years preceding the survey (and any current pregnancy) are used to determine whether the pregnancy was planned (wanted then), wanted but at a later time (mistimed), or unwanted (not wanted at all). The answers to these questions provide some insight into the degree to which couples are able to control fertility. The second approach is asking the respondents their ideal family size. The difference between the actual fertility and the ideal family size is a measure of unwanted fertility.

Table 7.6 shows the percent distribution of births (including current pregnancy) in the five years preceding the survey by fertility planning status, according to birth order and mother's age at

birth. Sixty percent of the births in the five years preceding the survey were wanted at the time of conception, 21 percent were wanted later, and 20 percent were not wanted at all. The percentage of unwanted or mistimed births increases from 27 percent for first order births to 51 percent of fourth or higher order births. The proportion of births that were not wanted at all tends to increase with the woman's age. The percentage of recent births that were not wanted increased from 14 percent in 1992 to 22 percent in 2000, then declined to 20 percent in 2004. Paradoxically, there was a substantial increase in the use of contraception between 1992 and 2000, compared with between 2000 and 2004.

Birth order and mother's age at birth	Planning status of birth				Total	Number of births
	Wanted then	Wanted later	Wanted no more	Missing		
Birth order						
1	72.5	13.4	13.9	0.2	100.0	2,862
2	63.8	22.8	13.3	0.1	100.0	2,506
3	60.2	24.5	15.0	0.3	100.0	1,949
4+	49.3	22.0	28.7	0.1	100.0	4,867
Age at birth						
<20	67.1	17.6	15.1	0.2	100.0	2,433
20-24	63.9	21.3	14.6	0.2	100.0	4,177
25-29	58.5	23.8	17.5	0.2	100.0	2,536
30-34	52.8	20.5	26.7	0.0	100.0	1,648
35-39	42.5	20.8	36.7	0.0	100.0	911
40-44	41.5	11.4	46.9	0.3	100.0	401
45-49	44.7	8.2	47.0	0.0	100.0	78
Total	59.5	20.5	19.9	0.1	100.0	12,183

Table 7.7 shows the total wanted fertility rates and total actual fertility rates for the three years preceding the survey, by selected background characteristics. The wanted fertility rate is calculated in the same manner as the total fertility rate, but unwanted births are excluded from the numerator. For this purpose, unwanted births are defined as those that exceed the number considered ideal by the respondent. (Women who did not report a numeric ideal family size were assumed to want all their births). The rate represents the level of fertility that would have prevailed in the three years preceding the survey if all unwanted births were prevented. A comparison of the total wanted fertility rate and the actual total fertility rate suggests the potential demographic impact of the elimination of unwanted births. The total wanted fertility rate is 4.9 births per woman for Malawi as a whole, more than one child lower than the actual total fertility rate (6.0 births). The difference between wanted and actual total fertility is greatest among those subgroups of women who have the greatest unmet need for fertility control: rural women, less educated women, and women in the Central Region. In Mangochi, Machinga, and Kasungu Districts, the gap between wanted and actual total fertility is 1.2 children, 1.2 children, and 1.5 children, respectively. These districts have the highest total wanted fertility rate and total fertility rate.

An examination of women's mean ideal number of children according to women's status shows that the ability of a woman to participate in household decisionmaking, her opinion on justifications for refusing sex with her husband, and her opinion on justifications for wife beating are not associated with her ideal family size (data not shown).

Table 7.7 Wanted fertility rates

Total wanted fertility rates and total fertility rates for the three years preceding the survey, by background characteristics, Malawi 2004

Background characteristic	Total wanted fertility rate	Total fertility rate
Residence		
Urban	3.3	4.2
Rural	5.2	6.4
Region		
Northern	5.0	5.6
Central	5.0	6.4
Southern	4.8	5.8
District		
Blantyre	3.4	4.8
Kasungu	5.5	7.0
Machinga	5.8	7.0
Mangochi	6.0	7.2
Mzimba	4.9	5.5
Salima	5.5	6.8
Thyolo	4.9	5.7
Zomba	4.5	5.3
Lilongwe	4.3	5.7
Mulanje	4.7	5.6
Other districts	5.1	6.3
Education		
No education	5.6	6.9
Primary 1-4	5.3	6.6
Primary 5-8	4.8	5.8
Secondary+	3.2	3.8
Wealth quintile		
Lowest	5.7	7.1
Second	5.6	7.0
Middle	5.2	6.5
Fourth	4.6	5.8
Highest	3.3	4.1
Total	4.9	6.0

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