



World Fertility Patterns 2007

Introduction. The last decades of the twentieth century witnessed a major transformation in world fertility, total fertility fell from an average of 4.5 children per woman in 1970-1975 to 2.6 children per woman in 2000-2005. This change was driven mostly by developing countries whose fertility dropped by nearly half (from 5.4 to 2.9 children per woman) with the decline being less marked among the least developed countries where fertility remains high (their average fertility declined from 6.6 children per woman in 1970-1975 to 5.0 in 2000-2005). This chart presents some of the data available to assess the change in fertility taking place in the countries of the world. For each of the 195 countries or areas with at least 100,000 inhabitants in 2007, it displays available unadjusted data on total fertility, age-specific fertility and the mean age at childbearing for two points in time: the first as close as possible to 1970 and the second as close as possible to 2005. Data on total fertility for the world as a whole, the development groups and major areas are estimates referring to 1970-1975 and 2000-2005 derived from the 2006 *Revision of World Population Prospects*. The chart thus presents regional estimates of fertility change and part of the basic data underlying these estimates.

Data sources: The basic data at the country level were derived from various sources. For developed countries and some developing countries, measures of age-specific fertility were derived from information on births by age of mother obtained from civil registration systems achieving a level of coverage of at least 90 per cent. For developing countries whose civil registration systems achieved a coverage of births lower than 90 per cent or where there were no data from a civil registration system, age-specific fertility was obtained from surveys or censuses.

Data coverage: Among the 195 countries or areas considered, 173 have data referring to 1998 or later and they accounted for 96 per cent of the world population in 2005. For the other 22 countries or areas, the data presented refer to years ranging from 1991 to 1997. Among those 22 countries, only two are developed countries and 11 are least developed countries. Regarding availability of data for the earlier date, which is supposed to be as close to 1970 as possible, 138 countries, accounting for 68 per cent of the world population in 2005, have data referring to 1967-1975, of which 87 have data referring to 1970. For Cambodia and Niger the data refer to 1960, and for Grenada to 1964. For a further 39 countries, accounting for 31 per cent of the world population in 2005, the earliest data available refer to 1976 or later. This group includes India, whose earliest information refers to 1981. There are an additional 15 countries lacking data around 1970 but they account for just 0.8 per cent of the world population. All developed countries or areas have data close to 1970 (ranging from 1969 to 1975) except for the Channel Islands (1981).

Period covered: In many developed countries, fertility began declining as early as the nineteenth century and most had reached low levels of fertility by 1950. Indeed, fertility rose in many developed countries during parts of the period 1945-1965, as it recovered from the low levels reached during the Second World War. By the 1970s, however, fertility in developed countries was falling again. In the developing world, fertility levels remained high until the 1960s and began falling in most countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and some in Asia during the late 1960s. By the 1970s and early 1980s declining fertility was common in most developing countries outside of sub-Saharan Africa. In the latter, fertility started declining later, mostly in the late 1980s or the 1990s.

The data presented in this chart are intended to bracket the period of decline for most developing countries. However, the periods actually spanned by the earliest and latest data sets for each country or area vary considerably. Among the 195 countries or areas covered, 97 have data spanning intervals ranging from 30 to 35 years. This group includes all developed countries or areas except Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Channel Islands and Malta, as well as 23 countries and areas in Asia including China, 24 in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 9 in Africa. For a further 66 countries, the data span intervals ranging from 19 to 29 years, and in another 12, the data span intervals ranging from 10 to 18 years. Namibia exhibits a particularly short interval of 10 years with the most recent observation referring to 1988 and for Niger the interval is 44 years long. There are 15 countries or areas lacking data for two points in time.

Total fertility. Focusing on the 171 countries or areas with two observations and whose most recent data refer to a year between 1995 and 2006, total fertility varies between 0.85 children per woman in Macao, Special Administrative Region of China, in 2004 and 7.3 children per woman in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1995. Among the 45 developed countries in the group, total fertility varies between 1.2 and 2.0 children per woman, with only two countries having fertility levels outside that range: New Zealand with 2.1 children per woman in 2004 and Albania with 2.6 in 2001. Except for Albania, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Channel Islands, all developed countries have data for years ranging from 2002 and 2005. In 27 developed countries, fertility declined by between 0.2 and 0.4 children per decade since around 1970. The fastest decline among developed countries occurred in Albania, at 0.8 children per decade. In the 126 developing countries considered, all but 15 experienced a reduction of fertility averaging 0.4 children per decade or more. However, in Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea and Uganda, fertility hardly changed. According to the unadjusted data presented in this chart, 41 developing countries achieved reductions of fertility averaging one child per decade or more. As a result of fertility declines, total fertility in 66 of the developing countries considered was at or below 3 children per woman in the most recent date considered. Yet 30 countries in sub-Saharan Africa still exhibit a total fertility equal to or higher than 5 children per woman for the most recent date available.

The mean age at childbearing. The process of fertility decline brings about changes in the age distribution of childbearing. Usually fertility starts declining when women limit the size of their families by stopping childbearing earlier than their mothers did. Hence, fertility drops at older ages making the mean age at childbearing decrease. When fertility is already moderately low, a different process may be observed: women postpone childbearing thus reducing fertility at young ages and increasing the mean age at childbearing. Among the 42 developed countries whose recent data refer to 2000 or later years, eight show a decreasing mean age at childbearing and all are countries in transition. Among the rest, 22 exhibit an increase averaging at least half a year per decade. The mean age at childbearing is particularly high in the OECD developed countries. It has surpassed 30 years in eight of them: Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. In the 112 developing countries with two observations and recent data dating from 1995 to 2006, the mean age at childbearing has declined in 80 but in just 30 of them has the decline amounted to at least half a year per decade. Armenia has the lowest mean age at childbearing at 25.2 years and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya the highest, at 33.3 years. Among the 20 developing countries

with a mean age at childbearing higher than 30 years, 11 have experienced increases. Overall, the median value of the mean age at childbearing among the developing countries considered has decreased from 29.3 to 28.7 years. For developed countries the median values rose from 27.0 to 28.8 years.

Adolescent birth rate. Fertility levels among women aged 15-19 are an important indicator of the status of women, since women who bear children early in life often forego the opportunity to study or find employment away from home. Reducing the adolescent birth rate is one of the objectives included in the drive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Among developed countries, the adolescent birth rate is generally low but it varies between 4.9 and 4.3 births per 1000 women aged 15-19. Only three developed countries have an adolescent birth rate above 30: Bulgaria, Romania and the United States of America. In developing countries the range of variation of the adolescent birth rate is considerably larger: from 2.2 in the Republic of Korea to 200 in Gambia. The adolescent birth rate is particularly high (above 90 births per 1000 women aged 15-19) in at least 55 developing countries, 33 of which are in Africa, 15 in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 7 in Asia. In 32 developing countries, the adolescent birth rate is already below 30 births per 1000 women aged 15-19. Among the 122 developing countries with data for two points in time, the adolescent birth rate fell in 103. In 31 of them, the adolescent birth rate declined by at least 20 points per decade and in all but two of them the initial level of the adolescent birth rate had been above 90 births per 1000 women aged 15-19.

World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision, vol. I, Comprehensive Tables (United Nations publication, Sales No. 07.20.2)

Trends in total fertility, age patterns of fertility and timing of childbearing

Country or area	Total fertility per woman	Age-specific fertility rate (per 1000 women)										Mean age at childbearing	Total fertility per woman	Age-specific fertility rate (per 1000 women)										Mean age at childbearing
		15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	Year	15-19	20-24			25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	Year					
World	1970-1975	4.5	71	231	242	181	121	55	16	29.0	2000-2005	2.6	55	159	157	95	47	16	4	27.4				
More developed regions	1970-1975	2.1	41	147	147	80	36	10	1	27.0	2000-2005	1.6	24	74	95	81	35	6	0	28.2				
Less developed regions (excluding least developed countries)	1970-1975	5.2	70	254	272	219	153	75	22	29.6	2000-2005	2.6	47	164	160	87	41	14	4	27.2				
Least developed countries	1970-1975	6.6	150	289	289	246	186	100	39	29.4	2000-2005	5.0	130	237	228	184	124	61	22	28.5				
AFRICA	1970-1975	6.7	132	275	290	246	187	106	48	29.8	2000-2005	5.0	116	223	234	199	137	64	21	29.0				
Eastern Africa	1970-1975	7.0	126	297	311	270	219	125	57	30.2	2000-2005	5.6	120	255	253	219	158	82	34	29.4				
Burundi	1980	7.9	93	282	336	328	261	200	82	31.6	2002	5.6	30	200	260	200	120	30	31.4					
Comoros	1980	7.1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1994	5.1	66	196	237	246	164	78	29	30.4
Djibouti	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2002	4.2	27	114	176	211	167	97	53	32.7
Eritrea	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2000	5.2	85	199	214	213	183	102	51	30.9
Ethiopia	1981	6.8	115	273	299	264	225	125	65	30.6	2003	5.7	109	242	253	240	166	96	35	29.9				
Kenya	1969	7.6	132	331	337	294	223	135	68	30.2	2001	5.0	116	248	231	196	128	58	19	28.6				
Madagascar	1975	6.4	132	272	280	232	195	122	45	30.0	2001	5.4	154	256	239	195	144	76	19	28.5				
Malawi	1977	7.6	165	341	334	304	241	119	16	29.3	2003	6.1	160	291	252	222	162	88	38	28.9				
Mauritius	1972	3.4	50	189	191	130	88	4	28.4	2002	1.9	36	116	117	73	35	9	0	27.3					
Mozambique	1970	6.7	133	294	271	235	196	140	71	30.4	2001	5.6	185	252	235	191	142	76	47	28.7				
Réunion	1970	4.4	62	239	217	171	125	59	8	29.0	2003	2.4	37	104	107	62	21	1	28.7					
Rwanda	1978	8.7	49	302	405	377	309	198	91	32.0	2003	5.9	44	232	292	261	178	34	31	28.1				
Somalia	1975	7.0	58	248	321	293	256	132	89	31.8	2001	5.7	35	221	288	274	191	105	30	31.0				
Uganda	1969	7.1	198	341	322	253	189	87	35	28.5	2004	6.8	159	314	309	262	191	93	31	29.9				
United Republic of Tanzania	1971	7.1	152	336	325	263	200	102	43	29.3	2003	5.7	139	266	252	220	157	79	21	28.9				
Zambia	1980	7.2	153	318	323	289	225	115	17	29.3	2000	5.9	161	267	247	220	168	83	28	28.9				
Zimbabwe	1969	6.7	79	272	304	257	218	145	73	31.2	2004	3.9	101	205	179	143	90	46	12	28.2				
Middle Africa	1970-1975	6.5	177	289	272	218	155	100	42	28.9	2000-2005	6.2	189	293	269	227	159	81	24	28.3				
Angola	1970	6.7	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1996	6.9	146	319	291	261	204	100	35	29.3
Cameroon	1976	6.4	187	295	277	220	155	106	41	28.8	2002	5.2	141	242	236	200	137	58	18	28.4				
Central African Republic	1975	5.8	172	278	251	209	136	78	45	28.7	1993	5.2	157	234	232	196	123	61	27	28.4				
Chad	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2002	6.6	193	306	295	269	173	68	17	28.2
Congo	1974	7.0	156	305	305	255	203	122	52	29.7	2003	4.7	132	209	202	181	131	64	23	28.9				
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1971	6.3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1995	7.3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Equatorial Guinea	1983	5.6	147	280	264	191	142	60	38	28.5	2001	5.6	128	260	254	164	155	109	52	29.7				
Gabon	1970	4.5	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1998	4.3	144	193	178	176	101	48	11	28.0
Sao Tome and Principe	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2001	4.7	91	216	202	185	154	64	20	29.5
Northern Africa	1970-1975	6.5	74	242	314	268	211	98	37	30.5	2000-2005	3.2	37	174	148	92	35	9	29.6					
Algeria	1977	7.4	97	285	342	336	267	129	27	30.5	1998	2.4	6	59	119	134	105	43	9	32.1				
Egypt	1970	5.4	22	157	288	257	213	96	45	31.9	2003	3.2	48	182	195	129	65	20	3	27.9				
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1973	6.8	201	334	328	241	161	65	31	28.0	1993	4.1	7	74	181	229	193	109	24	33.3				
Morocco	1977	5.9	93	265	296	222	178	98	29	29.8	2002	2.6	35	110	129	126	81	32	6	29.7				
Sudan	1973	7.1	142	337	355	277	195	72	36	28.9	1992	4.5	51	169	214	212	161	66	37	30.8				
Tunisia	1970	6.1	46	254	302	273	206	96	40	30.7	1999	2.1	8	67	123	121	73	23	3	30.7				
Western Sahara	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Subsaharan Africa	1970-1975	5.6	114	220	208	170	140	77	28	29.3	2000-2005	2.9	70	143	145	109	71	30	10	28.3				
Botswana	1971	6.5	96	277	276	243	198	138	71	30.8	2001	3.3	51	149	135	128	105	62	24	30.3				
Lesotho	1975	5.8	102	268	258	233	173	94	30	29.7	2003	4.1	98	211	184	145	116	57	12	28.6				
Namibia	1988	5.9	204	282	252	172	168	82	28	28.3	1998	4.2	88	170	174	163	127	76	38	30.2				
South Africa	1980	4.2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2001	2.9	65	126	143	120	75	30	10	28.8
Swaziland	1976	6.8	168	318	311	264	198	96	14	..	1997	4.4	73	192	199	163	131	65	50	30.2				
Western Africa	1970-1975	7.0	172	289	283	239	164	104	54	29.3	2000													