PERCENTAGE OF EXTRA-MARITAL BIRTHS

DEFINITION AND COMPUTATION

Percentage of extra-marital births among all births is the proportion of live births whose parents, according to national law, were not married at the time of the birth. It is computed as the number of live births whose parents, according to national law, were not married at the time of the birth, divided by all live births and expressed in percentage terms.

SOURCES OF THE DATA

Data on live births by their mother’s marital status can be obtained from civil registration systems. Civil registration systems are considered the best source of information on live births by the mother’s marital status. However, some countries, especially those in the developing regions, either lack a civil registration system or have a registration system whose coverage is too incomplete to be utilized for statistical purposes. Civil registration systems are classified as “complete” if they cover 90 per cent or more of all live births taking place within a country or area.

Data derived from civil registration systems on the annual number of births by the mother’s marital status are reported by national statistical offices to the United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations regional commissions or other regional statistical units. The data are also taken from reports and other analytical publications produced by national statistical offices.

For each data point, information is provided on the source type (e.g., registration) and the source (usually denoted by an acronym). A description of each acronym is given in the table labelled "Sources".

COMMENTS AND LIMITATIONS

Estimates derived from civil registration systems are subject to limitations that depend on the completeness of birth registration. Notes are used to indicate any differences between the data presented and the definition of the percentage of extramarital births among all births given above.

DATA COVERAGE AND REFERENCE YEARS FOR THE DATA REPORTED

In World Fertility Report 2012 data are provided, when available, for three reference dates: the closest years to 1970 (period 1965 to 1989), 1995 (period 1990 to 1999) and the most recent available year after 1999. Detailed distributions for each indicator by
number of observations by reference dates are presented in the table labelled “Data availability”.

Data on the percentage of extra-marital births among all births are provided for 107 countries or areas of the world with a total population of 100,000 or more inhabitants in 2011. Data are available for all three reference dates for 64 countries or areas.

Suggested citation: