

IV. FERTILITY

The wealth of information available on fertility trends points to the decline in fertility in most parts of the world. Whereas most developed countries have completed the fertility transition and are experiencing below-replacement fertility levels, many developing countries, particularly in Africa and Asia, are still experiencing moderate to high levels of fertility. The extent of future growth in the world population will depend largely on the speed of fertility decline in these developing countries. Government policies to reduce fertility can bring about temporary changes in the age structure of populations that are beneficial for development and that facilitate investments in health and education and improve lives.

Globally, total fertility has declined from 4.4 children per woman in 1970–1975 to 2.5 children per woman in 2005–2010. As a result, among countries with at least 100,000 inhabitants in 2011, the number of countries with total fertility of four children per woman or greater has declined from 131 in 1970–1975 to 47 in 2005–2010 (United Nations, 2011b).

Among the 45 developed countries with at least 100,000 inhabitants in 2011, 42 had already reached below-replacement fertility in 1990–1995, and all had reached below replacement level fertility by 2005–2010, despite the fact that 35 developed countries have experienced slight increases in their fertility between 2000–2005 and 2005–2010. Fertility in developed countries as a group averaged at 1.6 children per woman in 2005–2010. Fertility has also continued to fall in the vast majority of developing countries, and 32 developing countries had already reached below replacement level fertility in 2005–2010. Yet, in 2005–2010, total fertility remained high at four children per woman or greater in 47 developing countries, including 26 countries where total fertility was five children per woman or greater (United Nations, 2011b).

Measures to lower fertility have included integrating family planning and safe motherhood programmes into primary health care systems, providing access to reproductive health services, promoting the responsibility of men in sexual and reproductive health, raising the minimum legal age at marriage, improving female education and employment opportunities, discouraging son preference, and providing low cost, safe and effective contraception.

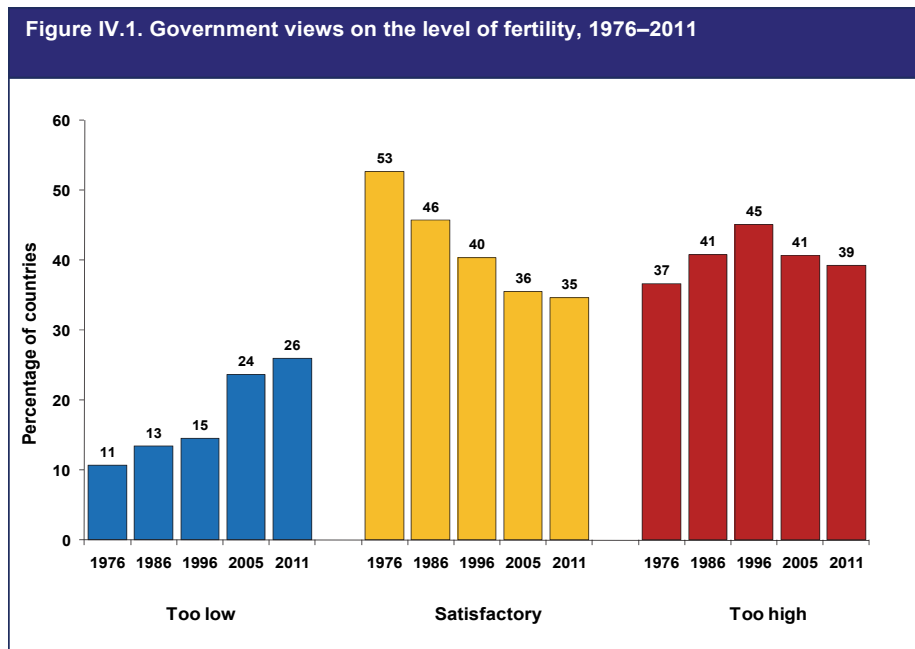
Alternatively, to raise fertility levels, Governments in many developed countries have used measures such as baby bonuses, family allowances, maternal, paternal and parental leave, subsidized child care, tax incentives, subsidized housing, flexible work schedules, and campaigns to promote the sharing of parenting and household work between spouses. Although a number of countries, mostly in Europe, that have adopted such measures have experienced modest increases in fertility between 2000–2005 and 2005–2010 (United Nations, 2011b), the implementation and effectiveness of such measures have been difficult to ascertain. A public opinion poll conducted by the European Union's Eurobarometer in 2004 revealed that 84 per cent of the men surveyed either had not taken parental leave or did not intend to do so, even when informed of their rights (European Commission, 2004). Another Eurobarometer survey in 2006 confirmed that women still undertook most household work (European Commission, 2007). In addition, a more recent review of parental leave policies in 21 countries noted that in

spite of such policies, the traditional gender roles in child care responsibilities persisted (Ray, Gornick and Schmitt, 2008). In Eastern Europe, the profound economic and political changes that followed the end of the communist era were accompanied by a sharp decline in fertility, resulting in some of the lowest fertility levels in the world. Political instability and uncertainty, accompanied with declining per capita income and living standards, contributed to major transformations in family formation and dissolution and reluctance to have children (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2002).

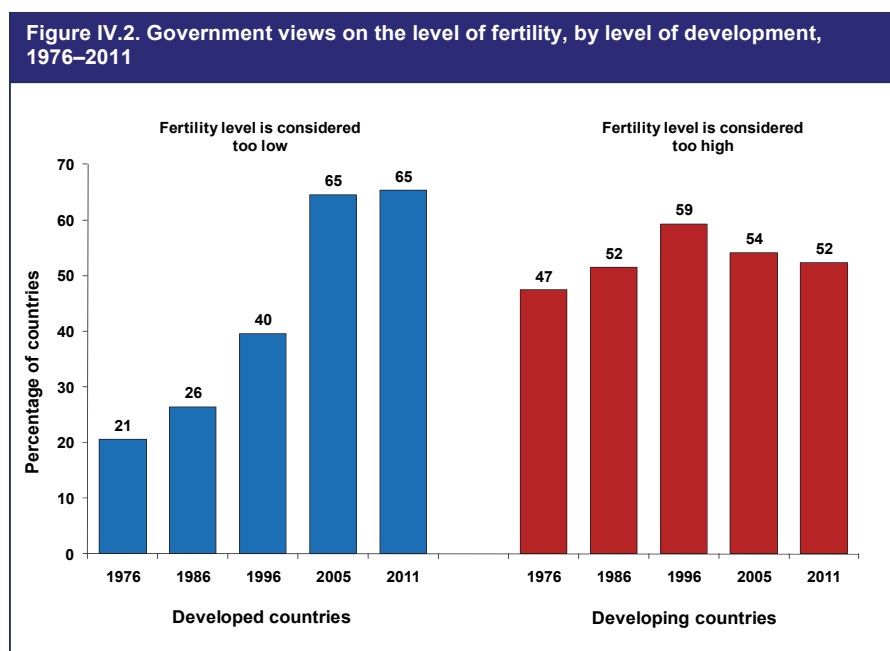
VIEWS ON FERTILITY

In contrast to mortality, where all Governments want to lower the level, there is considerable diversity of opinion around the world with respect to the level of fertility and the feasibility of intervention. The varying viewpoints related to fertility levels result mainly from the fact that individual countries are at different stages of the demographic transition.

In 2011, one out of four Governments in the world considered the level of fertility in their countries as too low (Table IV.1 and Figure IV.1). This proportion has been increasing steadily since the 1970s, from 11 per cent in 1976 to 26 per cent in 2011, as fertility levels worldwide have fallen. The increase in the proportion of Governments considering the level of fertility in their countries as too low has been accompanied by a steady decrease in the proportion considering the fertility level as satisfactory, which has declined from 53 per cent in 1976 to 35 per cent in 2011. Notably, during this period, the percentage of Governments that considered the level of fertility in their countries as too high has changed little, from 37 per cent in 1976 to 39 per cent in 2011.



As expected, Government views about the level of fertility differed markedly between developed and developing countries, consistent with varied levels of fertility. In 2011, about two thirds (65 per cent) of Governments of developed countries viewed the fertility level as too low, whereas about one-half (52 per cent) of Governments in developing countries still viewed the fertility level as too high (figure IV.2). Over time, the percentage of Governments that viewed the level of fertility in their countries as too low has been increasing in developed countries, from 21 per cent in 1976 to 65 per cent in 2005 and in 2011. In developing countries, the percentage of Governments that viewed the level of fertility as too high increased during mid-1970s to mid-1990s, from 47 per cent in 1976 to 59 per cent in 1996, and then declined gradually to 52 per cent in 2011. The trend in percentage of Governments that viewed the level of fertility as too high was most remarkable in least developed countries, where it increased steadily from 31 per cent in 1976 to 92 per cent in 2011, accompanied with a corresponding decline in the percentage that viewed the fertility level as satisfactory (table IV.1).

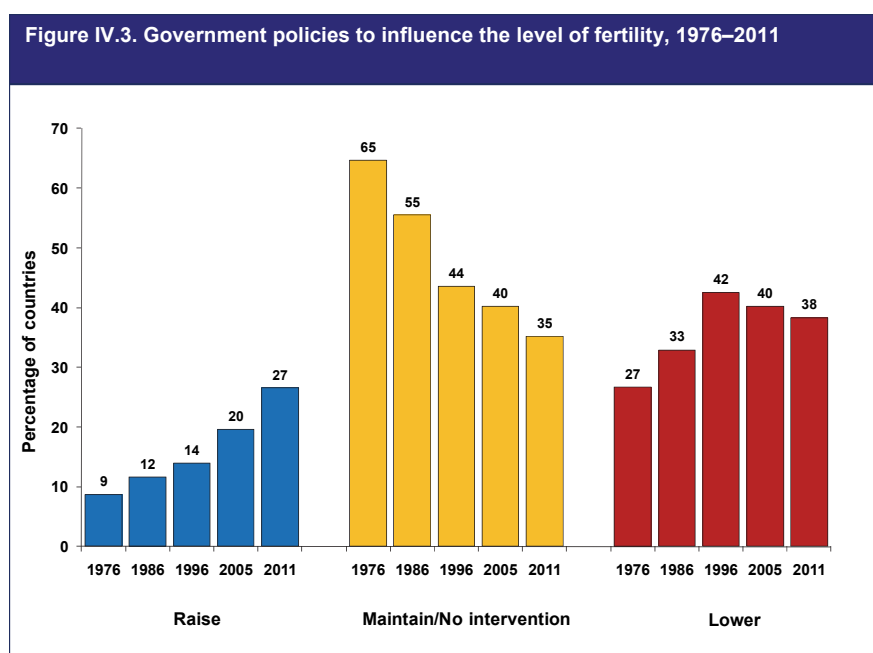


Africa and Europe exhibited the two extreme trends (table IV.1). In Africa, the percentage of Governments that viewed the fertility level as too high increased steadily, from 38 per cent in 1976 to 77 per cent in 1996 and remained around that level in 2011. In contrast, in Europe, the percentage of Governments that viewed the fertility level as too low increased steadily, from 24 per cent in 1976 to 66 per cent in 2011. Asia exhibited a mixed, middle picture, where the percentage of Governments that viewed the fertility level as too low increased steadily to 28 per cent in 2011, while the percentage that viewed it as too high has declined, although a sizeable proportion (36 per cent) of Governments still viewed the level of fertility in their countries as too high in 2011. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the percentage of Governments that considered the level of fertility in their countries as too high has declined drastically from 59 per cent in 1976 to 30 per cent in 2011, and much of this decline has been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the percentage that viewed the level of fertility as satisfactory.

POLICIES TO INFLUENCE FERTILITY

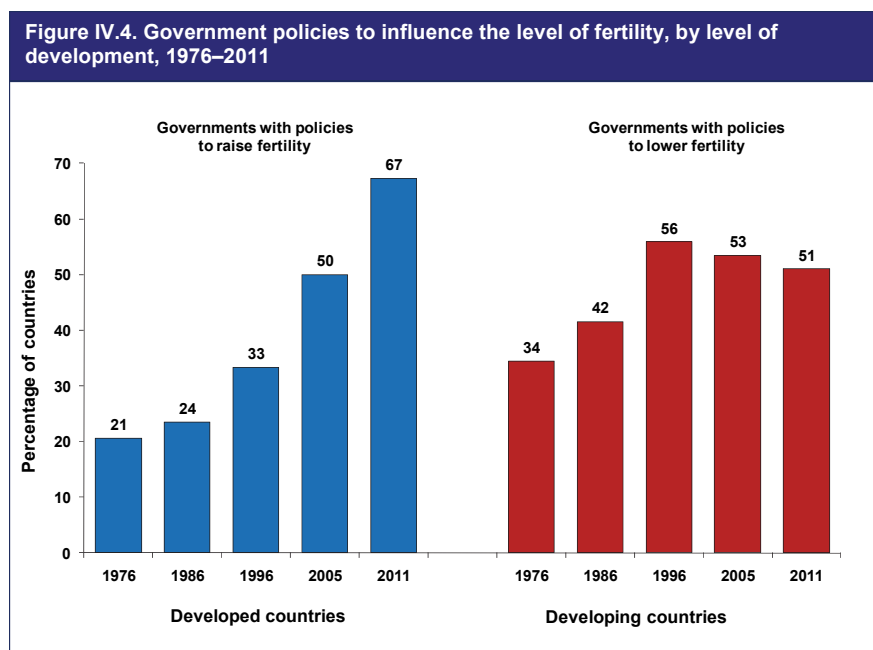
While most Governments that viewed the level of fertility in their countries as too low or too high in 2011 had implemented policies to modify it, in the past such dissatisfaction has not always translated into policy interventions. For instance, in 1976, Governments of 55 countries viewed the fertility level in their countries as too high, but only 40 had implemented policies to lower fertility (table IV.1, table IV.2). By way of comparison, in 2011, Governments of 77 countries viewed the fertility level as too high and 75 had policies to lower fertility.

In 2011, 27 per cent of Governments had policies to raise the level of fertility, 38 per cent had policies to lower it, and the remaining 35 per cent either had policies to maintain fertility at current levels or were not intervening to influence it (table IV.2, figure IV.3). While the percentage of Governments with policies to raise fertility has increased steadily from just 9 per cent in 1976 to 27 per cent in 2011, the percentage of Governments with policies to lower fertility increased from 27 per cent in 1976 to 42 per cent in 1996, and then declined somewhat to 38 per cent in 2011. During this time, the percentage of Governments that did not have policies to influence fertility has declined steadily from 52 per cent in 1976 to 18 per cent in 2011 (table IV.2).



As was the case with Government views on fertility, policies to influence the level of fertility varied markedly by level of development. By 2011, almost all Governments of developing countries that viewed the fertility level in their countries as too high had adopted policies to lower it. Similarly, in 2011, almost all Governments of developed countries that viewed the fertility level as too low had adopted policies to raise it (table IV.1, table IV.2).

Figure IV.4 presents trends in the percentage of Governments in developed countries that had policies to raise fertility and trends in the percentage of Governments in developing countries that had policies to lower fertility from mid-1970s to 2011. In 1976, only about one in every five developed-country Governments had policies to raise fertility, but by 2011 this proportion had risen steadily to two thirds. In contrast, in 1976, half of all developing-country Governments did not intervene to influence fertility and one in every three Governments had policies to lower fertility. By 2011, only 18 per cent of developing-country Governments did not intervene to influence fertility, whereas half had policies to lower fertility (table IV.2).



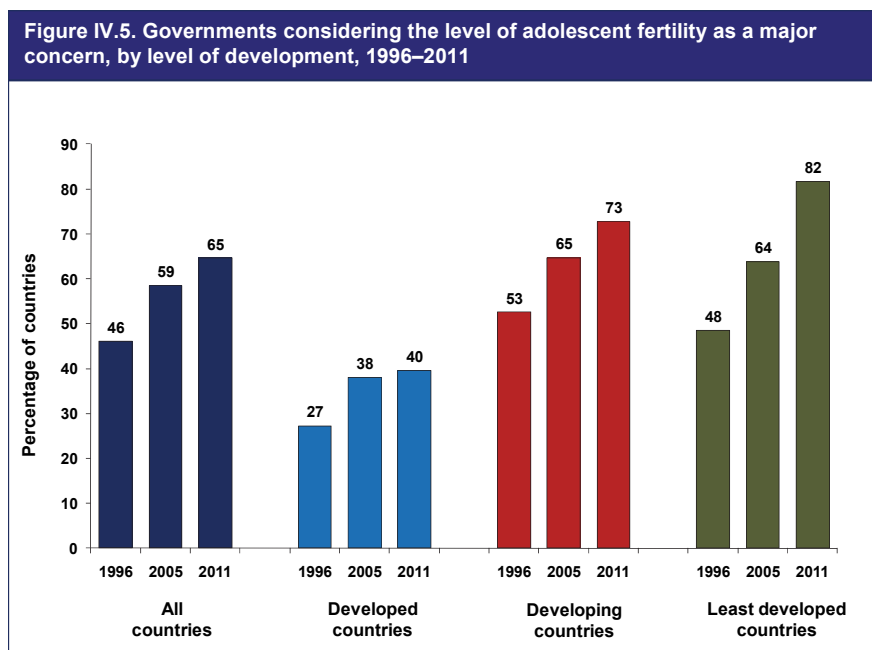
Since the mid-1970s, least developed countries have seen the most dramatic increase in the proportion of Governments that had policies to lower fertility, from just 14 per cent in 1976 to 80 per cent in 2011 (table IV.2). This increase has been accompanied by a corresponding decrease in the percentage of Governments in least developed countries that have no policies to influence fertility, from 79 per cent in 1976 to only 12 per cent in 2011.

One of the most significant developments in population policy in the wake of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development was the increase in the number of Governments in Africa that reported to have policies to reduce fertility. In 1976, 25 per cent of Governments in Africa had policies aimed at lowering fertility. This percentage increased to 68 per cent in 1996, and further to 74 per cent in 2005 and 72 per cent in 2011 (table IV.2). In Europe, on the contrary, the percentage of Governments that had policies to raise fertility has increased steadily from 24 per cent in 1976 to 70 per cent in 2011. The situation in Asia is mixed, where a considerable proportion of Governments, 36 per cent in 2011, continued to have policies to lower fertility, while the percentage that had policies to raise fertility increased from 5 per cent in 1976 to 30 per cent in 2011.

As evident above, in the past three to four decades, a growing number of Governments in developing countries with relatively high fertility levels have adopted policies to lower fertility. Whereas, faced with ever-declining, below-replacement fertility levels, Governments in developed countries have increasingly adopted family-friendly policies aimed at raising fertility.

ADOLESCENT FERTILITY

Early childbearing is associated with low educational attainment and poverty. Early childbearing also increases the risk of maternal death or physical impairment, and children born to young mothers tend to have higher levels of morbidity and mortality. Therefore, many Governments have expressed concern about high levels of adolescent fertility in their countries. Among the 195 Governments whose views regarding fertility among adolescents were known in 2011, 65 per cent expressed a major concern about the level of adolescent fertility in their countries, and an additional 28 per cent expressed a minor concern (table IV.3). Globally, the percentage of Governments expressing adolescent fertility as a major concern has risen steadily, from 46 per cent in 1996 to 65 per cent in 2011 (figure IV.5).



Since the mid-1990s, the proportion of Governments that viewed adolescent fertility as a major concern has been rising in both developed and developing countries. However, in 2011, Governments in developing countries were considerably more likely to consider adolescent fertility as a major concern than those in developed countries, 73 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively (table IV.3, figure IV.5). This proportion was still higher in least developed countries, at 82 per cent in 2011. All Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean viewed adolescent fertility in their countries as a major concern, followed by Africa (74 per cent), compared with only 40 per cent in Europe.

Policies and programmes to reduce adolescent fertility usually focus on supporting public facilities and non-governmental organizations that provide young people, whether in-school or out-of-school, training in life skills and appropriate information and education on reproductive and sexual health. Such programmes also include innovative educational approaches, including peer counselling for young people and orientation for parents, as well as strengthening education on reproductive and sexual health in non-formal settings, vocational training programmes and youth clubs (United Nations Population Fund, 2007).

Of the 194 countries with information available in 2011, 89 per cent of Governments had adopted policies and programmes to reduce adolescent fertility (table IV.4). In 2011, 93 per cent of developing-country Governments had policies and programmes to reduce adolescent fertility, compared with 77 per cent of developed-country Governments. As growing numbers of Governments have expressed concern about adolescent fertility, the number of Governments that had policies and programmes to reduce adolescent fertility has also risen in both developed and developing countries.

Chapter IV

Tables

Table IV.1. Government views on the level of fertility, 1976–2011

Year	By level of development							
	Number of countries				Percentage			
	<i>Too low</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Too high</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Too low</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Too high</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>World</i>								
1976	16	79	55	150	11	53	37	100
1986	22	75	67	164	13	46	41	100
1996	28	78	87	193	15	40	45	100
2005	46	69	79	194	24	36	41	100
2011	51	68	77	196	26	35	39	100
<i>More developed regions</i>								
1976	7	27	0	34	21	79	0	100
1986	9	25	0	34	26	74	0	100
1996	19	28	1	48	40	58	2	100
2005	31	17	0	48	65	35	0	100
2011	32	17	0	49	65	35	0	100
<i>Less developed regions</i>								
1976	9	52	55	116	8	45	47	100
1986	13	50	67	130	10	38	52	100
1996	9	50	86	145	6	34	59	100
2005	15	52	79	146	10	36	54	100
2011	19	51	77	147	13	35	52	100
<i>Least developed countries</i>								
1976	3	26	13	42	7	62	31	100
1986	2	20	26	48	4	42	54	100
1996	0	11	38	49	0	22	78	100
2005	0	6	44	50	0	12	88	100
2011	0	4	45	49	0	8	92	100

Table IV.1. (Continued)

Year	By major area							
	Number of countries				Percentage			
	<i>Too low</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Too high</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Too low</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Too high</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Africa</i>								
1976	5	25	18	48	10	52	38	100
1986	3	17	31	51	6	33	61	100
1996	1	11	41	53	2	21	77	100
2005	1	12	40	53	2	23	75	100
2011	1	11	42	54	2	20	78	100
<i>Asia</i>								
1976	2	18	17	37	5	49	46	100
1986	7	17	14	38	18	45	37	100
1996	7	20	19	46	15	43	41	100
2005	11	17	19	47	23	36	40	100
2011	13	17	17	47	28	36	36	100
<i>Europe</i>								
1976	7	22	0	29	24	76	0	100
1986	9	20	0	29	31	69	0	100
1996	18	24	1	43	42	56	2	100
2005	28	15	0	43	65	35	0	100
2011	29	15	0	44	66	34	0	100
<i>Latin America and the Caribbean</i>								
1976	2	9	16	27	7	33	59	100
1986	3	15	15	33	9	45	45	100
1996	1	14	18	33	3	42	55	100
2005	2	19	12	33	6	58	36	100
2011	3	20	10	33	9	61	30	100
<i>Northern America</i>								
1976	0	2	0	2	0	100	0	100
1986	0	2	0	2	0	100	0	100
1996	0	2	0	2	0	100	0	100
2005	1	1	0	2	50	50	0	100
2011	1	1	0	2	50	50	0	100
<i>Oceania</i>								
1976	0	3	4	7	0	43	57	100
1986	0	4	7	11	0	36	64	100
1996	1	7	8	16	6	44	50	100
2005	3	5	8	16	19	31	50	100
2011	4	4	8	16	25	25	50	100

Table IV.2. Government policies on the level of fertility, 1976–2011

Year	By level of development									
	Number of countries					Percentage				
	Raise	Maintain	Lower	No intervention	Total	Raise	Maintain	Lower	No intervention	Total
<i>World</i>										
1976	13	19	40	78	150	9	13	27	52	100
1986	19	16	54	75	164	12	10	33	46	100
1996	27	19	82	65	193	14	10	42	34	100
2005	38	31	78	47	194	20	16	40	24	100
2011	52	34	75	35	196	27	17	38	18	100
<i>More developed regions</i>										
1976	7	7	0	20	34	21	21	0	59	100
1986	8	6	0	20	34	24	18	0	59	100
1996	16	4	1	27	48	33	8	2	56	100
2005	24	8	0	16	48	50	17	0	33	100
2011	33	7	0	9	49	67	14	0	18	100
<i>Less developed regions</i>										
1976	6	12	40	58	116	5	10	34	50	100
1986	11	10	54	55	130	8	8	42	42	100
1996	11	15	81	38	145	8	10	56	26	100
2005	14	23	78	31	146	10	16	53	21	100
2011	19	27	75	26	147	13	18	51	18	100
<i>Least developed countries</i>										
1976	1	2	6	33	42	2	5	14	79	100
1986	2	4	15	27	48	4	8	31	56	100
1996	0	3	32	14	49	0	6	65	29	100
2005	0	3	38	9	50	0	6	76	18	100
2011	0	4	39	6	49	0	8	80	12	100

Table IV.2. (Continued)

Year	By major area									
	Number of countries					Percentage				
	Raise	Maintain	Lower	No intervention	Total	Raise	Maintain	Lower	No intervention	Total
<i>Africa</i>										
1976	2	2	12	32	48	4	4	25	67	100
1986	3	3	21	24	51	6	6	41	47	100
1996	2	3	36	12	53	4	6	68	23	100
2005	1	4	39	9	53	2	8	74	17	100
2011	1	5	39	9	54	2	9	72	17	100
<i>Asia</i>										
1976	2	9	14	12	37	5	24	38	32	100
1986	8	6	13	11	38	21	16	34	29	100
1996	7	9	19	11	46	15	20	41	24	100
2005	11	12	17	7	47	23	26	36	15	100
2011	14	12	17	4	47	30	26	36	9	100
<i>Europe</i>										
1976	7	7	0	15	29	24	24	0	52	100
1986	8	6	0	15	29	28	21	0	52	100
1996	16	4	1	22	43	37	9	2	51	100
2005	22	7	0	14	43	51	16	0	33	100
2011	31	6	0	7	44	70	14	0	16	100
<i>Latin America and the Caribbean</i>										
1976	2	0	10	15	27	7	0	37	56	100
1986	0	0	15	18	33	0	0	45	55	100
1996	1	0	18	14	33	3	0	55	42	100
2005	1	5	13	14	33	3	15	39	42	100
2011	3	7	11	12	33	9	21	33	36	100
<i>Northern America</i>										
1976	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	100	100
1986	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	100	100
1996	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	100	100
2005	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	100	100
2011	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	100	100
<i>Oceania</i>										
1976	0	1	4	2	7	0	14	57	29	100
1986	0	1	5	5	11	0	9	45	45	100
1996	1	3	8	4	16	6	19	50	25	100
2005	3	3	9	1	16	19	19	56	6	100
2011	3	4	8	1	16	19	25	50	6	100

Table IV.3. Government level of concern about adolescent fertility, 1996–2011

Year	By level of development							
	Number of countries				Percentage			
	Major concern	Minor concern	Not a concern	Total	Major concern	Minor concern	Not a concern	Total
<i>World</i>								
1996	59	39	30	128	46	30	23	100
2005	106	56	19	181	59	31	10	100
2011	126	54	15	195	65	28	8	100
<i>More developed regions</i>								
1996	9	12	12	33	27	36	36	100
2005	16	19	7	42	38	45	17	100
2011	19	20	9	48	40	42	19	100
<i>Less developed regions</i>								
1996	50	27	18	95	53	28	19	100
2005	90	37	12	139	65	27	9	100
2011	107	34	6	147	73	23	4	100
<i>Least developed countries</i>								
1996	16	9	8	33	48	27	24	100
2005	30	12	5	47	64	26	11	100
2011	40	9	0	49	82	18	0	100

Table IV.3. (Continued)

Year	By major area							
	Number of countries				Percentage			
	Major concern	Minor concern	Not a concern	Total	Major concern	Minor concern	Not a concern	Total
<i>Africa</i>								
1996	24	8	9	41	59	20	22	100
2005	32	15	5	52	62	29	10	100
2011	40	13	1	54	74	24	2	100
<i>Asia</i>								
1996	7	12	8	27	26	44	30	100
2005	20	15	7	42	48	36	17	100
2011	25	16	6	47	53	34	13	100
<i>Europe</i>								
1996	7	9	12	28	25	32	43	100
2005	13	17	7	37	35	46	19	100
2011	17	18	8	43	40	42	19	100
<i>Latin America and the Caribbean</i>								
1996	18	6	1	25	72	24	4	100
2005	30	3	0	33	91	9	0	100
2011	33	0	0	33	100	0	0	100
<i>Northern America</i>								
1996	1	1	0	2	50	50	0	100
2005	2	0	0	2	100	0	0	100
2011	1	1	0	2	50	50	0	100
<i>Oceania</i>								
1996	2	3	0	5	40	60	0	100
2005	9	6	0	15	60	40	0	100
2011	10	6	0	16	63	38	0	100

Table IV.4. Governments with policies to reduce adolescent fertility, 1996–2011

Year	By level of development					
	Number of countries			Percentage		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
<i>World</i>						
1996	76	51	127	60	40	100
2005	138	42	180	77	23	100
2011	173	21	194	89	11	100
<i>More developed regions</i>						
1996	16	15	31	52	48	100
2005	26	18	44	59	41	100
2011	37	11	48	77	23	100
<i>Less developed regions</i>						
1996	60	36	96	63	38	100
2005	112	24	136	82	18	100
2011	136	10	146	93	7	100
<i>Least developed countries</i>						
1996	18	12	30	60	40	100
2005	36	9	45	80	20	100
2011	48	0	48	100	0	100

Table IV.4. (Continued)

Year	By major area					
	Number of countries			Percentage		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
<i>Africa</i>						
1996	24	14	38	63	37	100
2005	40	10	50	80	20	100
2011	51	2	53	96	4	100
<i>Asia</i>						
1996	16	13	29	55	45	100
2005	31	12	43	72	28	100
2011	38	9	47	81	19	100
<i>Europe</i>						
1996	13	15	28	46	54	100
2005	22	17	39	56	44	100
2011	33	10	43	77	23	100
<i>Latin America and the Caribbean</i>						
1996	18	6	24	75	25	100
2005	31	0	31	100	0	100
2011	33	0	33	100	0	100
<i>Northern America</i>						
1996	2	0	2	100	0	100
2005	2	0	2	100	0	100
2011	2	0	2	100	0	100
<i>Oceania</i>						
1996	3	3	6	50	50	100
2005	12	3	15	80	20	100
2011	16	0	16	100	0	100

