

A Comparative Evaluation of Data Quality in Thirty-Eight World Fertility Surveys



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NOTE

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The term "country" as used in the text of this publication also refers, as appropriate, to territories or areas.

PREFACE

This study, undertaken by the Population Division of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, is one in a series dealing with findings from World Fertility Survey data. As a revised and expanded version of Fertility Levels and Trends as Assessed from Twenty World Fertility Surveys (United Nations publication, 1983, ST/ESA/SER.R/50), it covers 38 World Fertility Surveys and emphasizes the assessment of data quality. A full discussion of comparative levels and trends in fertility based on the quality assessment provided here can be found in chapter 2 of Fertility Behaviour in the Context of Development: Evidence from the World Fertility Survey (United Nations publication, Sales No. 86.XIII.5). Conclusions about levels and trends in fertility are based on that comparative assessment of the WFS data.

This study is part of the final stage of a programme of international comparative analysis of data from the World Fertility Survey which is being undertaken by the Population Division in fulfillment of recommendations made by the Population Commission and with the financial support of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

The availability of comparable survey data from so many developing countries has provided the Population Division with a unique opportunity to develop a simple series of data quality checks which can be used to assess age and date reporting. Those checks involve both internal data comparisons as well as comparisons with other sources of data. They can easily be applied to similar surveys in the future. The assessment presented here provides a baseline for comparison when successive surveys are undertaken in all those countries participating in the World Fertility Survey programme whose data are reviewed here. In addition, surveys undertaken in other countries can be examined by using the data checks developed here, and their assessment can benefit from the experience gained in this analysis - in particular, the documentation of common types of non-sampling errors that recur in countries which share similar cultural traditions and/or similar levels of socio-economic development.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

The following symbols have been used in the tables throughout the report, unless otherwise specified:

Two dots (...) indicate that data are not available or are not separately reported.

A dash (--) indicates that the amount is nil or negligible.

A blank indicates that the item is not applicable.

A minus sign (-) before a number indicates a deficit or decrease, except as indicated.

Details and percentages in tables do not necessarily add to totals, because of rounding.

The following apply throughout the text and tables:

A full stop (.) is used to indicate decimals.

A comma (,) is used to distinguish thousands and millions.

A slash (/) indicates a 12-month period extending from one year to the next, e.g., 1970/71.

A hyphen (-) between dates representing years, e.g., 1971-1973, signifies the full period involved, including the beginning and end years.

*

The following abbreviations have been used in the text and tables:

WFS: World Fertility Survey

ISI: International Statistical Institute

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