



World Fertility Patterns 2009

Introduction: The last decades of the twentieth century witnessed a major transformation in world fertility: total fertility fell from an average of 4.7 children per woman in 1970-1975 to 2.6 children per woman in 2005-2010. This change was driven mostly by developing countries (excluding the least developed countries), whose fertility dropped by more than half (from 5.6 to 2.5 children per woman). The decline was less marked among the least developed countries where fertility remains high, with fertility having declined from 6.3 children per woman in 1970-1975 to 4.4 in 2005-2010. This chart presents some of the data available to assess the change in fertility taking place in countries of the world. For the 224 countries or areas for which data are available, it displays 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 showing the latest available data. Data on total fertility for the world as a whole, the development groups and major areas are estimates referring to 1970-1975 and 2005-2010 derived from the *2008 Revision of World Population Prospects*. The chart thus presents world and regional estimates of fertility change together with the actual data underlying those estimates.

Data sources: The data at the country level were derived from various sources. For developed countries and some developing countries, measures of 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 coverage of births lower than 90 per cent

or where there were no data from a civil registration system, fertility measures were obtained from surveys or censuses. Data in the chart are a subset of the fertility data contained in *World Fertility Data 2008*.

Data coverage: Among the countries or areas considered, 211 countries or areas have data referring to 2000 or later and they accounted for 98 per cent of the world population in 2008. For 12 other countries or areas, the most recent data presented refer to years ranging from 1994 to 1999. Among those 12 countries, only one is a developing country (Channel Islands) and five are least developed countries. Only one country in the chart (Saint Pierre and Miquelon) has no data available since 1994. For the first period, with data referring to dates as close as possible to 1970, 188 countries had data for the period 1966-1975, accounting for 94 per cent of the world population in 2008. For 117 countries data refer exactly to 1970. For Mali and the Niger the data refer to 1960, for Benin to 1961, for Cambodia to 1962 and for Chad to 1963. For a further 28 countries, accounting for 5 per cent of the world population in 2008, the earliest data available refer to the period between 1976 and 1994. Three countries in the chart have no data available for the period around 1970. Six countries or areas—Falkland Islands (Malvinas), Holy See, Isle of Man, Monaco, Pitcairn and Western Sahara—have no data on fertility for either period and are not included in the chart.

Period covered: In many developed countries, fertility began declining as early as the nineteenth century and most recorded low levels of fertility

long before 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, where fertility started declining later, mostly in the late 1980s or the 1990s. In the data presented the periods spanned by the earliest and latest data sets for each country or area vary considerably. Among the 224 countries or areas covered, 172 have data spanning intervals ranging from 30 to 39 years. For a further 34 countries, the data span intervals ranging from 20 to 29 years, and in another 10, the intervals span less than 20 years. For four countries the interval is longer than 39 years. In addition, four countries or areas, all with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants in 2008, have data for only one period.

Total fertility: Focusing on the 220 countries or areas with two observations, total fertility for the most recent year available varies between 1.0 child per woman in Macao, Special Administrative Region of China, in 2005 and 7.4 children per woman in Guinea-Bissau in 2000. Among the 45 developed countries with more than 100,000 inhabitants in 2008, total fertility varies between 1.2 and 2.0 children per woman, with only three countries having fertility levels outside that range: Iceland, New Zealand and the United States of America with close to 2.1 children per

woman in 2006. In 21 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 1.1 children per decade. Among the 150 developing countries with more than 100,000 inhabitants in 2008, all but 31 experienced a reduction of fertility averaging 0.4 children per decade or more, according to the unadjusted data presented in this chart. However, in seven least developed countries with current fertility levels above 6.0 children per woman, fertility has hardly changed and unadjusted data show no reduction or a reduction of less than 0.1 children per decade. In contrast, 46 developing countries achieved reductions of fertility averaging one child per decade or more. As a result of rapid fertility declines, total fertility in 72 of the developing countries considered was at or below 3.0 children per woman at the most recent date considered. Yet 31 of the 49 least developed countries still exhibit a total fertility equal or higher than 5.0 children per woman for the most recent date available.

The mean age at childbearing: The process of fertility decline is associated with 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 declines at older ages, beneath 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 younger ages and increasing the mean age at childbearing. Among the 45 developed countries with more than 100,000 inhabitants in 2008, 12 countries had

a mean age at childbearing surpassing 30 years. The oldest mothers in developed countries are in Ireland, whose mean age at childbearing was 31.1 years in 2006. Among developing countries, Bangladesh has the lowest mean age at childbearing, at 25.1 years in 2005, whereas the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has the highest at 35.8 years in 2002.

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 forgo the opportunity to study or find employment outside the home. Reducing the adolescent birth rate is also one of the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals. Among developed countries, the adolescent birth rate is generally low and varies between 4 and 41 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19. Only four developed countries have an adolescent birth rate above 30: Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine and the United States of America, which has the highest value of 41 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19. In developing countries the range of variation of the adolescent birth rate is considerably larger: from below 5 to over 190 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19. The highest rates are recorded in Chad, Mali and the Niger. The adolescent birth rate is particularly high (above 90 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19) in at least 50 developing countries, 31 of which are least developed countries. In 24 developing countries, the adolescent birth rate is lower than 20 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19.

¹ World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision, CD-ROM Edition—Extended Dataset in Excel and Access Formats
² World Fertility Data 2008, CD-ROM (United Nations publication, POPDB/Fer/2008).

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

Country or area	Year	Total fertility per woman	Age-specific fertility rate (per 1,000 women)								Mean age at child-bearing	Total fertility per woman	Age-specific fertility rate (per 1,000 women)								Mean age at child-bearing
			15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54			15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	
			(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)			(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	
WORLD	1970-1975	4.7	71	235	248	188	124	55	14	29.0	2005-2010	2.6	52	154	149	92	46	15	4	27.4	
More developed regions	1970-1975	2.3	39	148	147	80	36	10	1	27.1	2005-2010	1.6	21	69	99	90	40	8	0	28.8	
Less developed regions (excluding the least developed countries)	1970-1975	5.6	72	264	286	235	162	80	20	29.6	2005-2010	2.5	47	158	149	82	39	14	4	27.1	
Least developed countries	1970-1975	6.3	150	288	283	237	176	89	34	29.1	2005-2010	4.4	103	225	216	164	105	49	16	28.4	
AFRICA	1970-1975	6.5	136	299	302	252	179	90	35	29.3	2005-2010	4.6	103	216	227	185	122	53	17	28.8	
Eastern Africa	1970-1975	6.5	137	295	295	239	191	102	49	29.6	2005-2010	5.3	111	247	252	208	144	71	26	29.1	
Burundi	1970	6.1	51	252	299	273	218	108	26	30.7	2001	5.6	30	200	280	260	200	120	30	31.4	
Comoros	1966	5.9	107	269	274	228	169	75	59	29.8	2003	5.3	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Djibouti	1991	6.0	31	155	270	317	257	121	44	32.3	2000	4.2	27	114	176	211	167	97	53	32.7	
Eritrea	1994	6.1	116	240	267	245	207	113	41	30.3	2000	5.2	85	199	214	213	183	102	51	30.9	
Ethiopia	1969	5.8	163	287	264	188	150	64	34	28.4	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	1971	6.7	132	259	296	234	216	109	86	30.6	2005	6.3	178	288	264	220	165	98	48	29.1	
Mauritius	1970	3.8	59	192	210	147	114	38	5	28.8	2006	1.7	35	95	109	65	30	8	1	27.3	
Mayotte	1978	7.9	190	381	378	294	222	97	24	28.6	2004	4.5	106	204	211	177	128	53	10	28.2	
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	
Reunion	1970	4.4	62	239	217	171	125	59	8	29.0	2005	2.5	37	142	126	66	21	2	29.1		
Rwanda	1970	7.5	102	318	300	206	228	129	47	30.1	2006	5.5	49	291	224	246	203	105	27	28.8	
Seychelles	1970	5.5	68	300	260	234	162	79	5	29.2	2006	2.1	54	103	129	79	44	9	0	27.3	
Somalia	1975	7.0	58	248	321	293	256	132	89	31.8	2005	6.7	123	281	306	262	189	123	49	30.0	
Uganda	1969	7.1	198	341	322	253	189	87	35	28.5	2004	6.8	159	314	309	262	191	93	31	29.0	
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	1969	7.4	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2006	6.2	146	274	263	240	191	90	29	29.3
Zimbabwe	1969	6.7	79	272	304	257	218	145	73	31.2	2003	3.9	101	205	179	143	90	46	12	28.2	
Middle Africa	1970-1975	6.2	167	296	279	232	158	78	25	28.5	2005-2010	5.7	167	273	254	206	142	71	23	28.3	
Angola	1970	6.7	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2005	5.8	165	244	273	226	164	68	16	28.6
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	5.9	172	278	251	209	136	78	45	28.7	2002	5.2	133	220	221	191	145	80	41	29.4	
Chad	1963	5.1	162	268	218	159	122	60	26	28.0	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 Rep. of the Congo	1971	6.2	161	301	289	248	164	68	14	28.4	2006	6.3	124	260	271	270	201	95	37	29.9	
Equatorial Guinea	1983	6.0	185	298	274	198	143	59	34	28.0	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	1981	7.2	145	343	330	288	215	111	15	29.2	2001	4.7	91	216	202	185	154	64	20	29.5	
Northern Africa	1970-1975	6.2	99	283	318	258	182	75	26	29.4	2005-2010	2.9	32	132	168	137	79	27	7	29.3	
Algeria	1970	7.2	102	296	326	301	240	135	34	30.4	2006	2.3	4	151	111	129	109	48	2	32.3	
Egypt	1978	5.3	99	256	285	217	131	48	16	28.6	2006	3.1	37	158	205	129	77	22	0	28.6	
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1970	7.3	115	318	300	206	228	129	47	30.3	2006	2.5	49	291	224	246	203	105	27	28.8	
Morocco	1972	6.9	66	296	365	304	220	93	33	30.1	2005	2.3	18	93	119	116	77	32	10	30.5	
Sudan	1973	7.1	142	337	355	277	195	72	36	28.9	1997	4.9	72	187	233	227	158	77	31	30.4	
Tunisia	1970	6.1	46	254	302	274	206	96	40	30.7	2006	2.0	6	54	117	121	75	24	0	31.0	
Southern Africa	1970-1975	5.1	67	230	249	203	146	77	40	30.1	2005-2010	2.6	61	136	138	100	62	24	7	28.2	
Botswana	1971	6.5	96	277	276	243	198	138	71	30.8	2006	3.2	51	167	199	126	65	25	3	28.1	
Lesotho	1972	5.6	61	248	217	174	173														