Fertility Prospects in the Arab Region

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iPR [initiative in population research]

Table 1. Arab Region: Current Population Size (2009), and Availability of Survey Data

Country	*Population Size (millions)*	*Most Recent Survey*	
		Date	*Program*
Algeria	34.9	2002	PAPFAM
Morocco	32.0	2003	DHS/PAPFAM
Tunisia	10.3	2001	PAPFAM
Total	***77.2***		
Egypt	83.0	2008	DHS
Iraq	30.7	-	
Jordan	6.3	2007	DHS
Lebanon	4.2	2004	PAPFAM
Libya	6.4	2007	PAPFAM *
Palestine	4.3	2006-07	PAPFAM *
Sudan	42.3	2006	PAPFAM *
Syria	21.9	2001	PAPFAM
Total	***199.1***		
Bahrain	0.8	-	
Kuwait	3.0	-	
Oman	2.8	-	
Qatar	1.4	-	
Saudi Arabia	25.7	-	
U.A.E	4.6	-	
Yemen	23.6	2003	PAPFAM
Total	***61.9***		
Comoros	0.7	1996	DHS
Djibouti	0.9	2002	PAPFAM
Mauritania	3.3	-	
Somalia	9.1	-	
Total	***14.0***		
Arab Total	***352.2***		

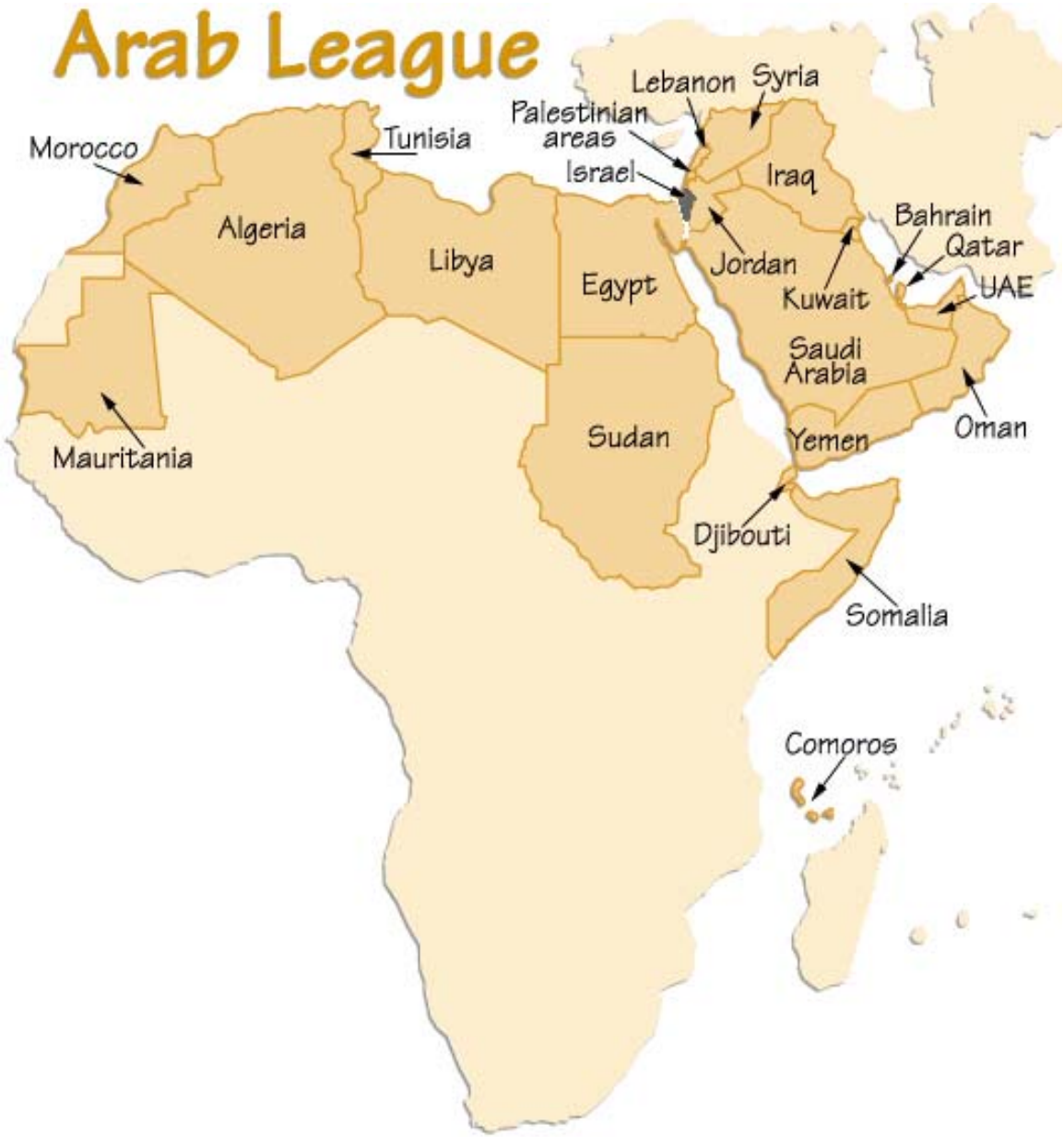
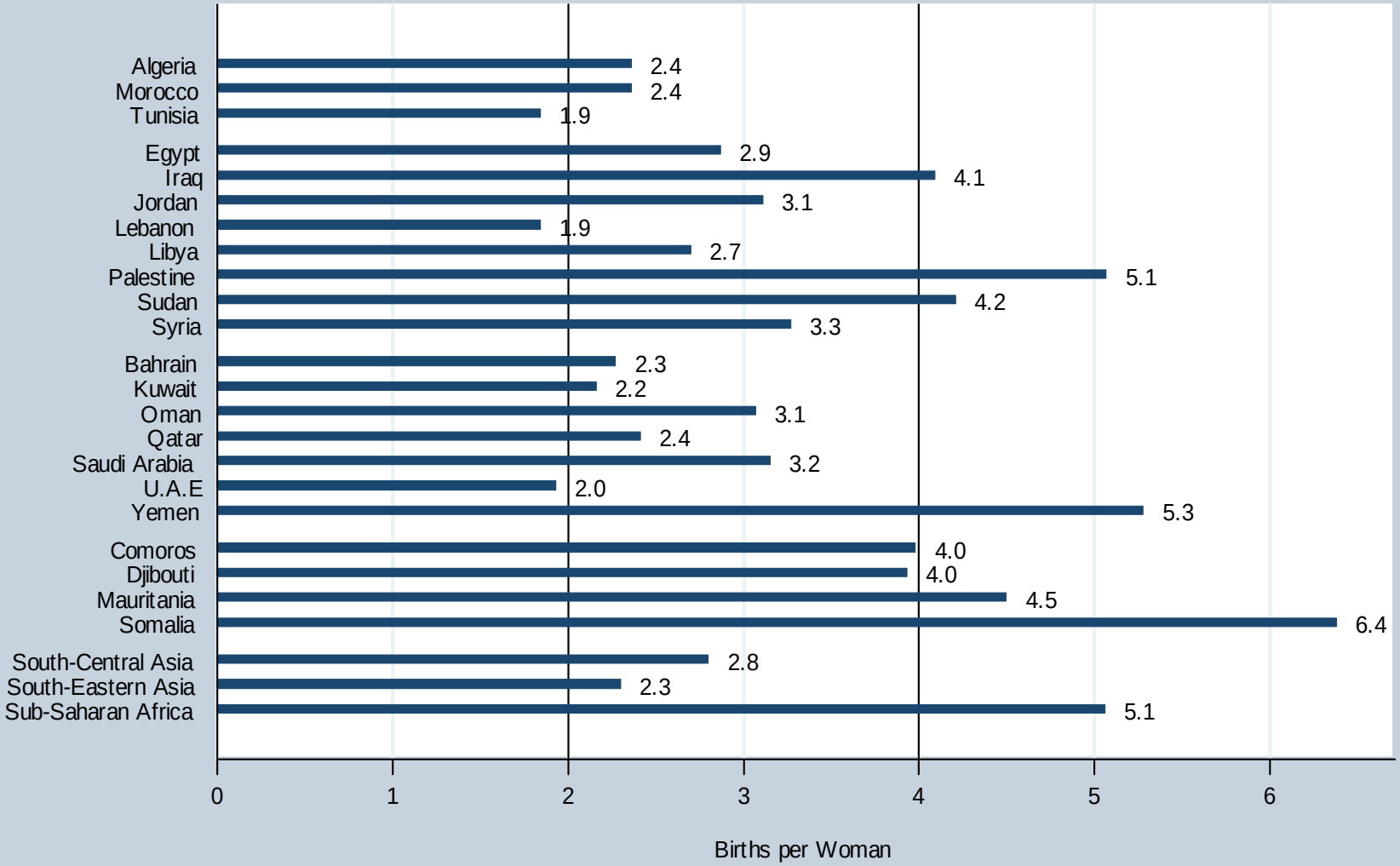

Arab League
Lebanon
Syria
Palestinian areas
Tunisia
Morocco
Israel
Iraq
Algeria
Bahrain
Qatar
Libya
Egypt
Jordan
Kuwait
UAE
Saudi Arabia
Sudan
Yemen
Oman
Mauritania
Djibouti
Somalia
Comoros

Table 2. Trends in the Total Fertility Rate 1950-55 - 2005-10

Country	*Total Fertility Rate*			*Decline in Total Fertility Rate (%)*		
	1950-55	*1980-85*	*2005-10*	*1950-1985*	*1980-2010*	*1950-2010*
Algeria	7.3	6.5	2.4	11	63	67
Morocco	7.2	5.4	2.4	25	56	67
Tunisia	6.9	4.9	1.9	29	62	73
Median	***7.2***	***5.4***	***2.4***	***25***	***62***	***67***
Egypt	6.4	5.5	2.9	13	48	55
Iraq	7.3	6.4	4.1	13	35	44
Jordan	7.4	6.8	3.1	8	54	58
Lebanon	5.7	3.9	1.9	32	52	68
Libya	6.9	7.2	2.7	-5	62	60
Palestine	7.4	7.0	5.1	5	27	31
Sudan	6.7	6.3	4.2	5	33	36
Syria	7.3	7.2	3.3	2	54	55
Median	***7.1***	***6.6***	***3.2***	***7***	***50***	***55***
Bahrain	7.0	4.6	2.3	34	51	67
Kuwait	7.2	4.9	2.2	33	55	70
Oman	7.2	7.2	3.1	0	57	57
Qatar	7.0	5.5	2.4	22	55	65
Saudi Arabia	7.2	7.0	3.2	2	55	56
U.A.E	7.0	5.2	2.0	25	63	72
Yemen	8.2	8.7	5.3	-6	39	35
Median	***7.2***	***5.4***	***2.4***	***22***	***55***	***65***
Comoros	6.0	7.1	4.0	-18	43	33
Djibouti	7.8	6.6	4.0	15	40	49
Mauritania	6.3	6.3	4.5	1	28	29
Somalia	7.3	6.7	6.4	8	5	12
Median	***6.8***	***6.6***	***4.3***	***4***	***34***	***31***
Arab median	***7.2***	***6.4***	***3.1***	***10***	***53***	***56***
Sub-Saharan Africa	6.6	6.6	5.1	-1	23	23
South-Central Asia	6.0	4.9	2.8	19	42	53
South-Eastern Asia	6.0	4.2	2.3	29	45	61

Figure 1: Total Fertility Rate, 2005-10



Source: UN 2009

Fertility Decline to Date in Arab Region

- Pre-decline fertility was higher than most other regions
- Majority of fertility decline has occurred since 1980-85
- Regional average (median) is 3.1 births per woman
- TFR < 2.5 in eight countries: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, and four Gulf states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, U.A.E.)
- TFR > 4.0 in eight countries: Iraq, Palestine, Sudan, Yemen, Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia

Further Decline: Opportunities and Constraints

Will consider :

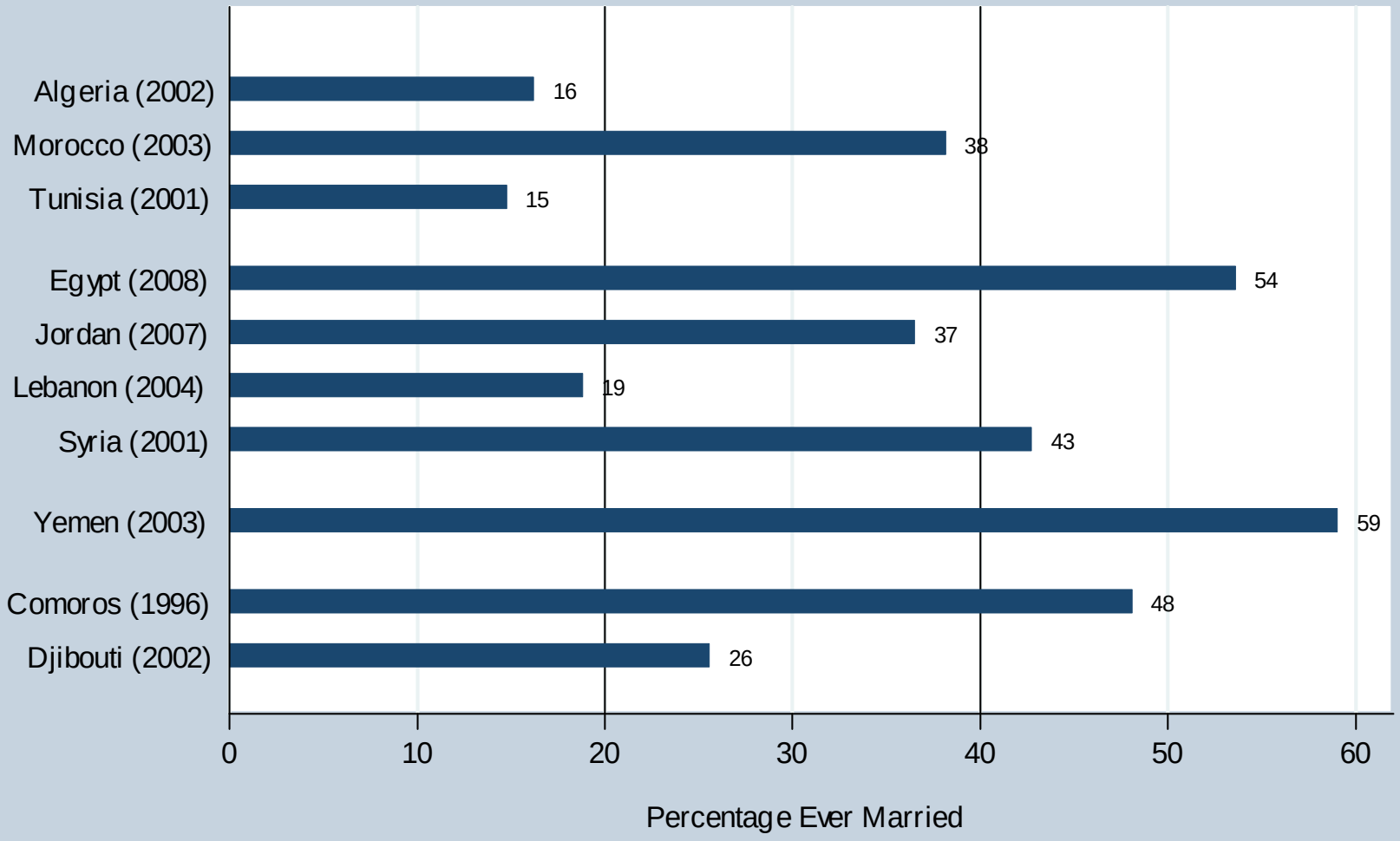
- Nuptiality [*exposure*]
- Fertility desires [*motives*]
- Birth control [*means*]

Nuptiality

Substantial changes in past few decades – sharp decline in percentage of women ever married before age 30.

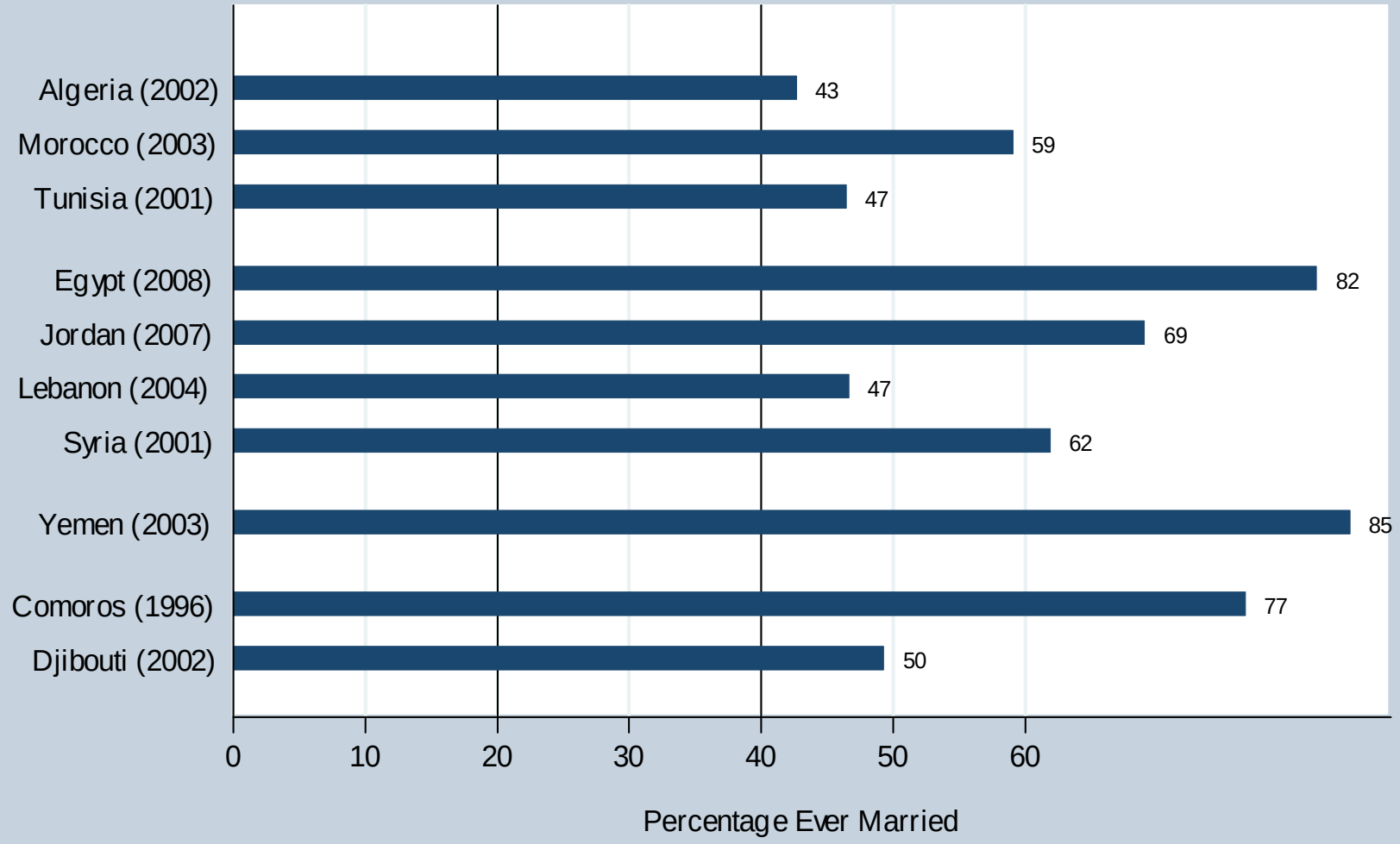
Major contributor to fertility decline to date – roughly one-half

Figure 2a: Percentage Ever Married, Women Aged 20-24



Source: DHS and PAPFAM surveys

Figure 2b: Percentage Ever Married, Women Aged 25-29



Source: DHS and PAPFAM surveys

Nuptiality: summary

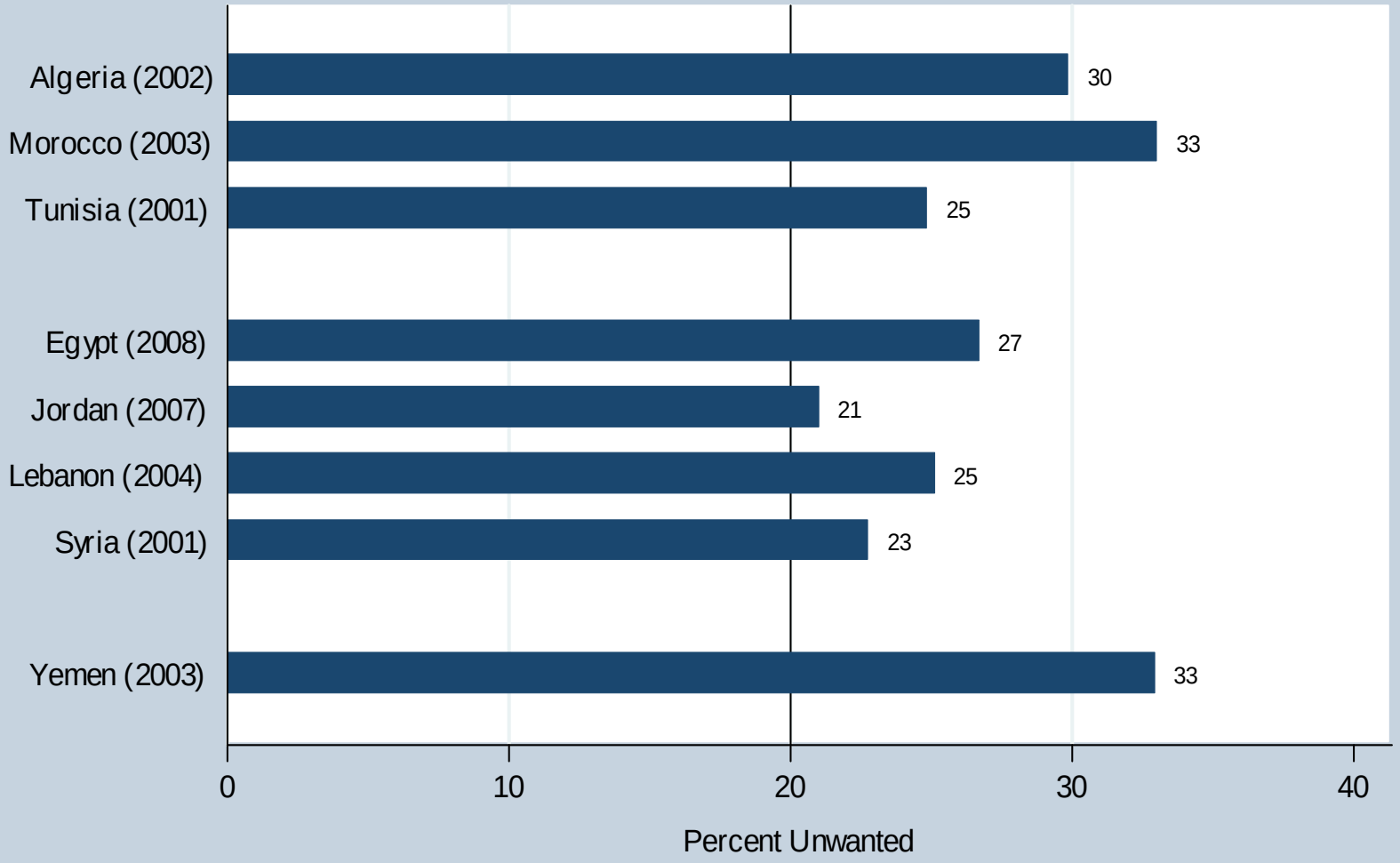
- Potential for nuptiality change to cause further fertility decline in many countries (Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Yemen).
- Late marriage or non-marriage?

Fertility Desires

Will examine:

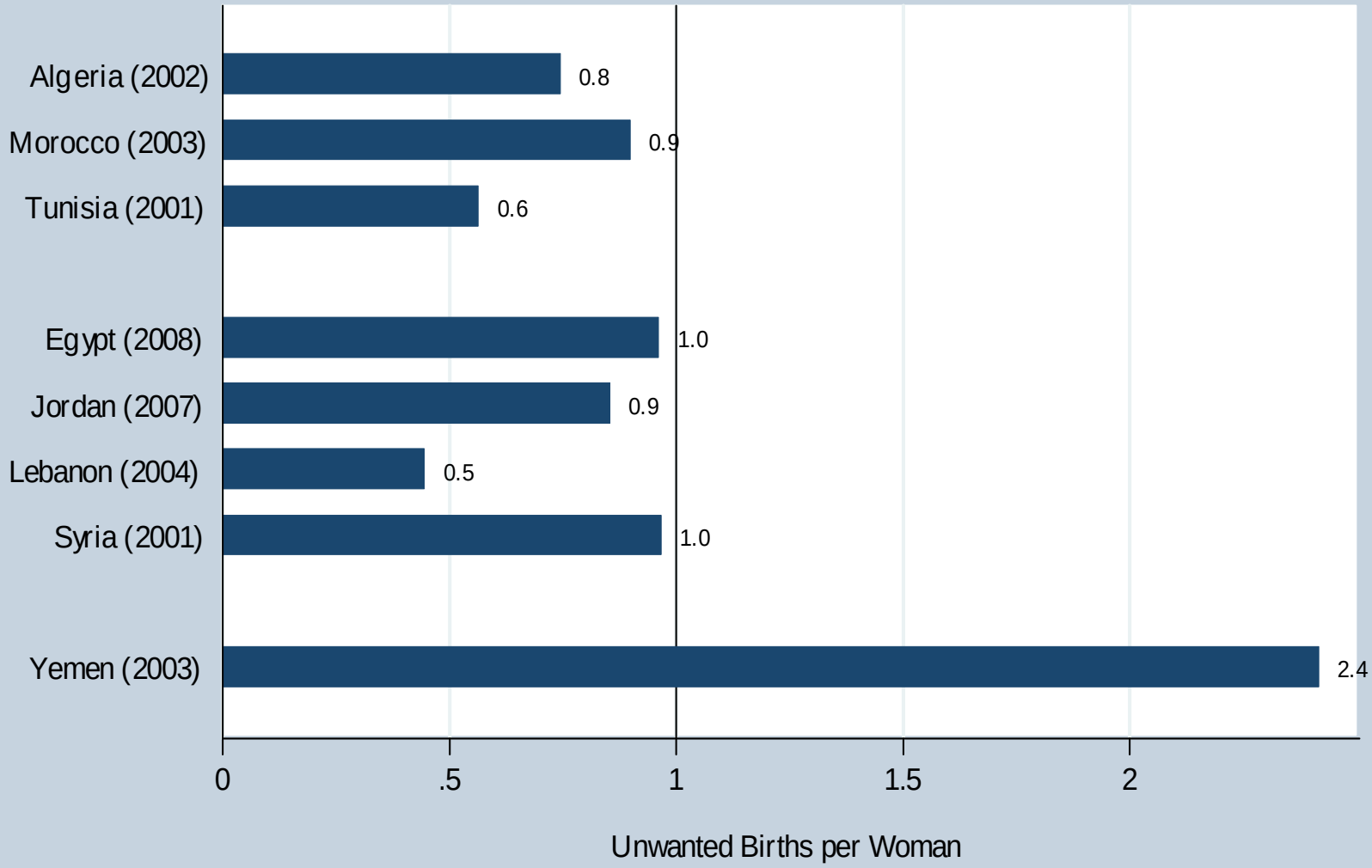
- Wanted and unwanted TFRs
- Ideal number of children
- Parity- and age-specific preferences

Figure 3: Percentage of Births Unwanted



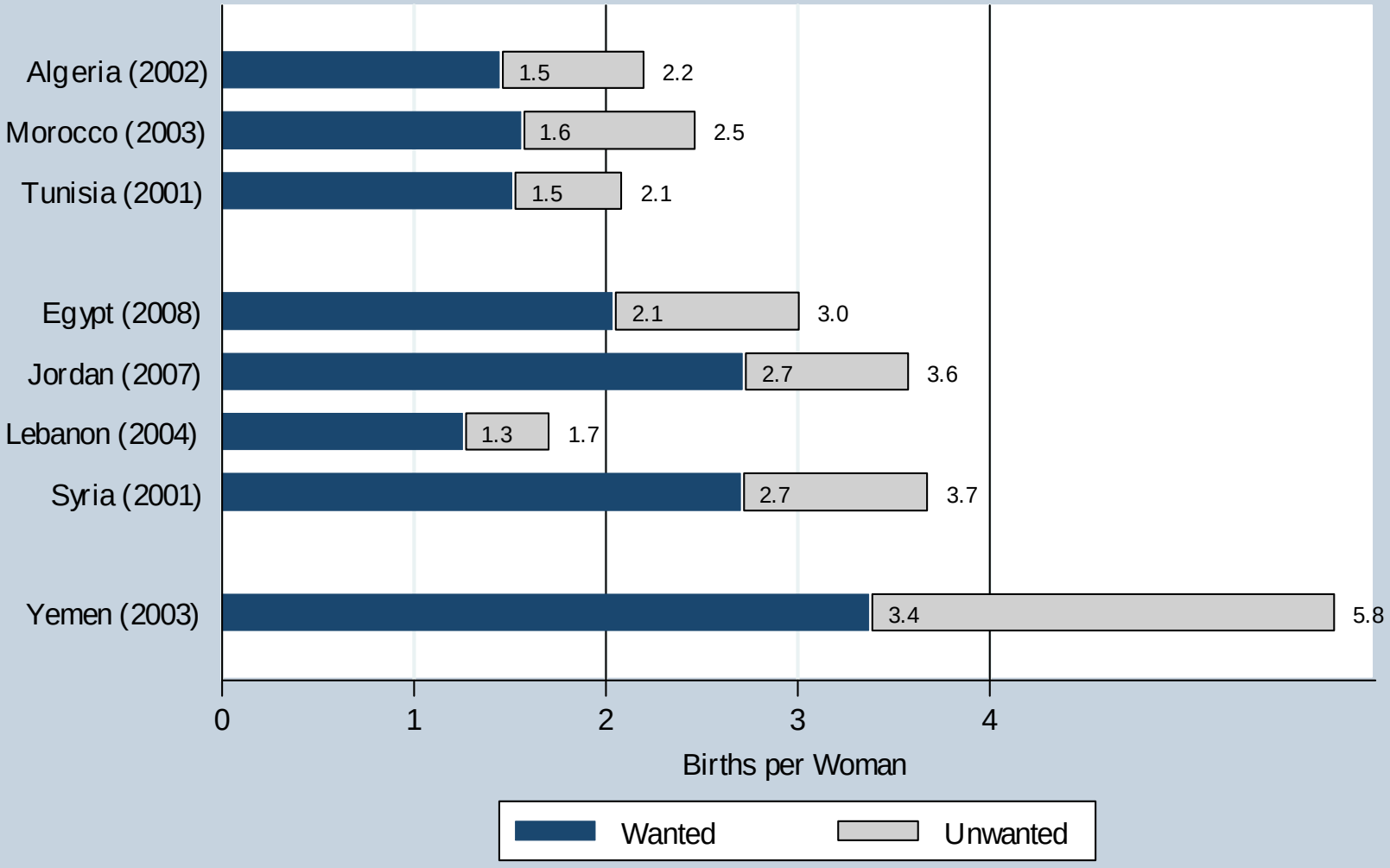
Note: Aggregate Prospective estimates, births during 36 months before survey

Figure 4: Unwanted Total Fertility Rate



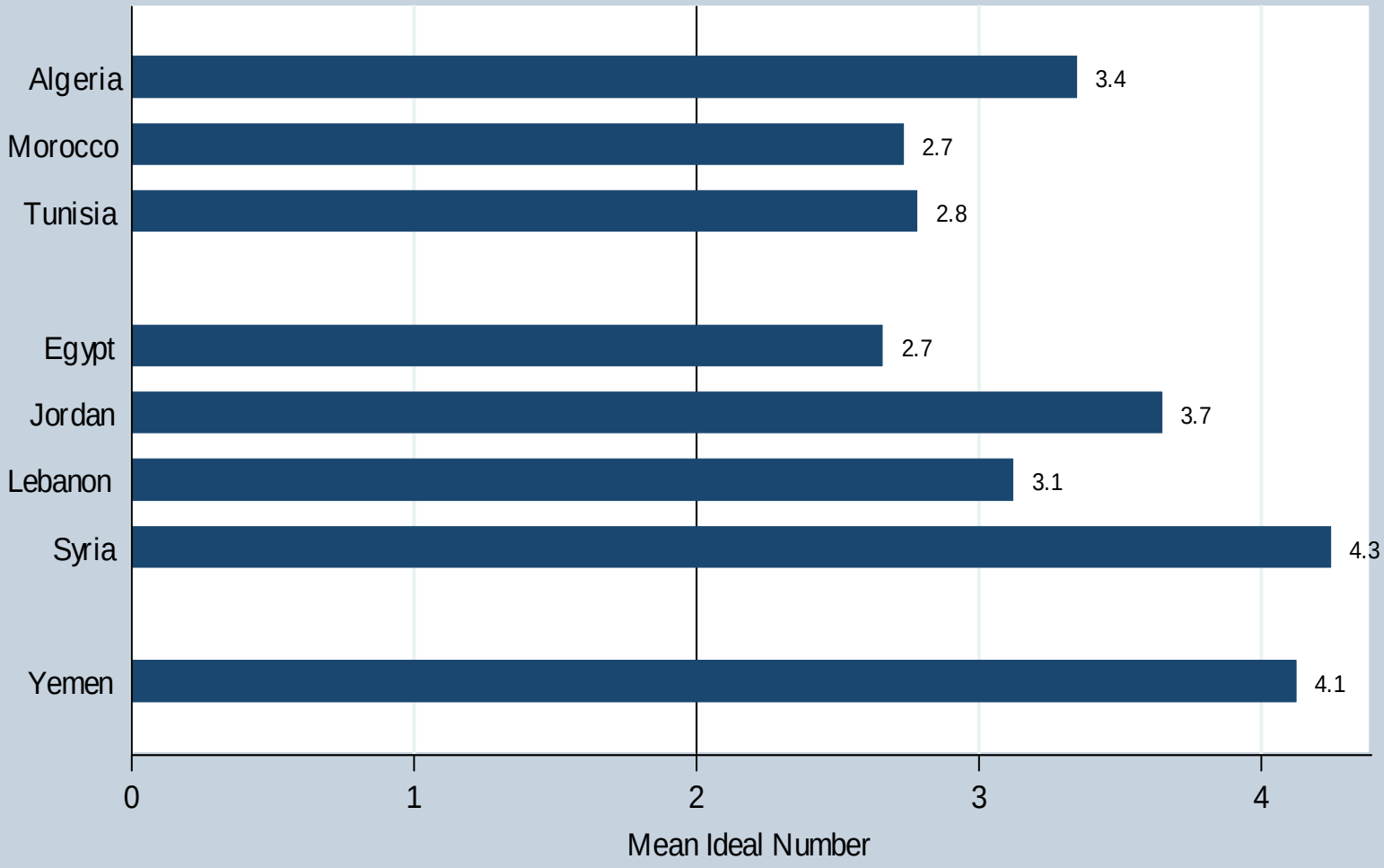
Note: Aggregate Prospective estimates, births during 36 months before survey

Figure 5: Total Fertility Rate and Components



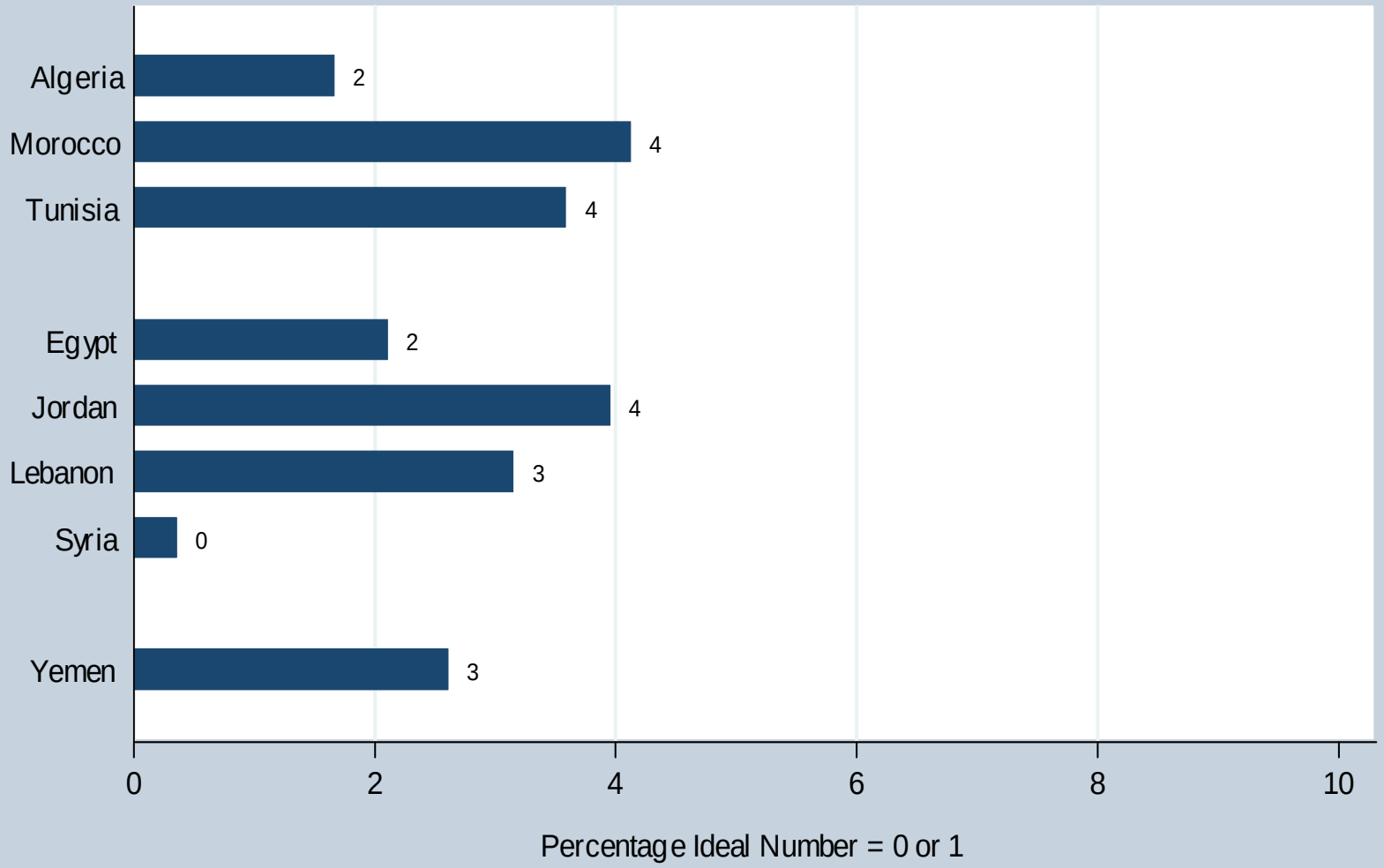
Note: Aggregate Prospective estimates, 36 months before survey

Figure 6: Ideal Number of Children, Women Age 20-29



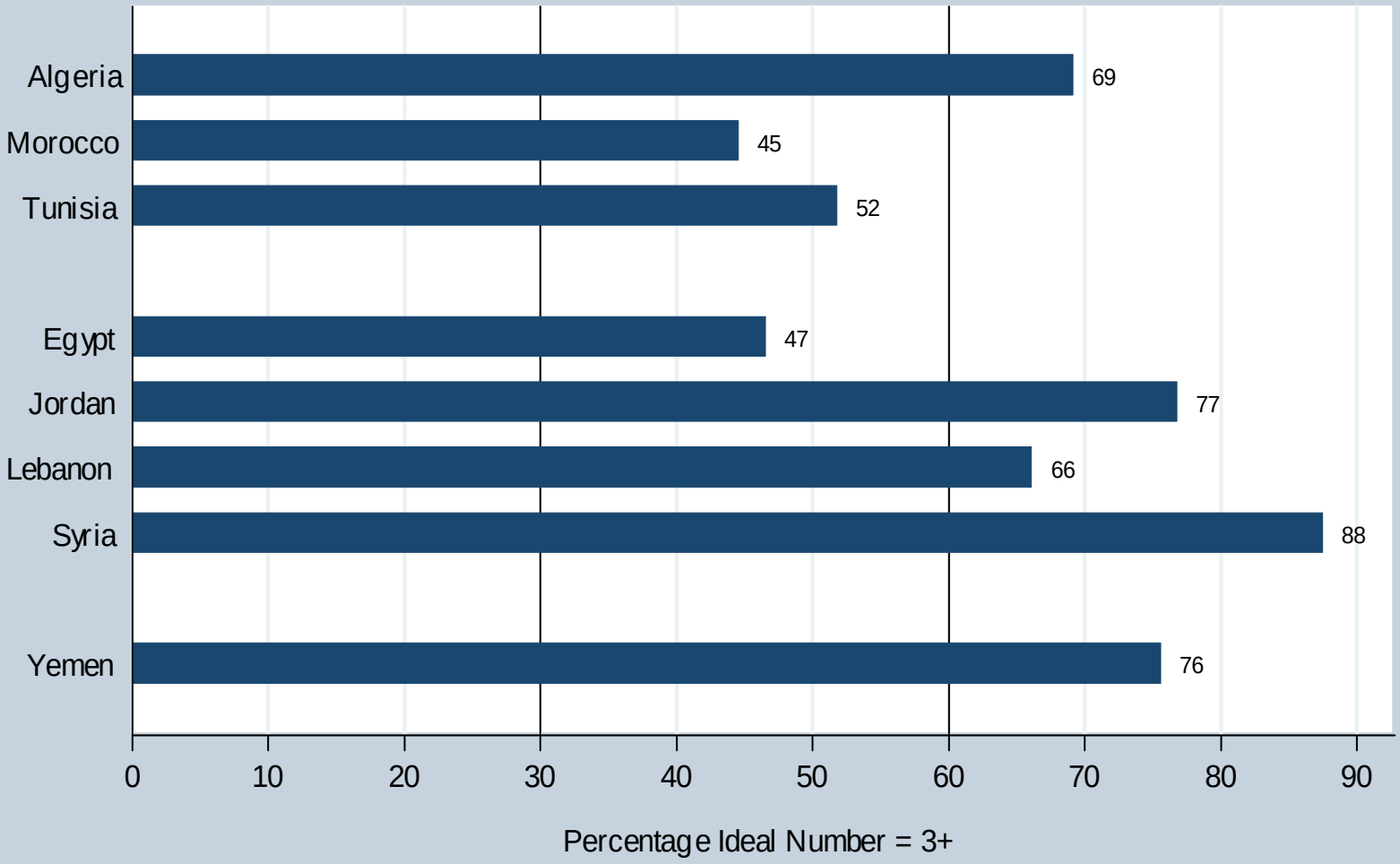
Note: among women who provide a numeric ideal

Figure 7a: Ideal Children = 0 or 1, Women Age 20-29



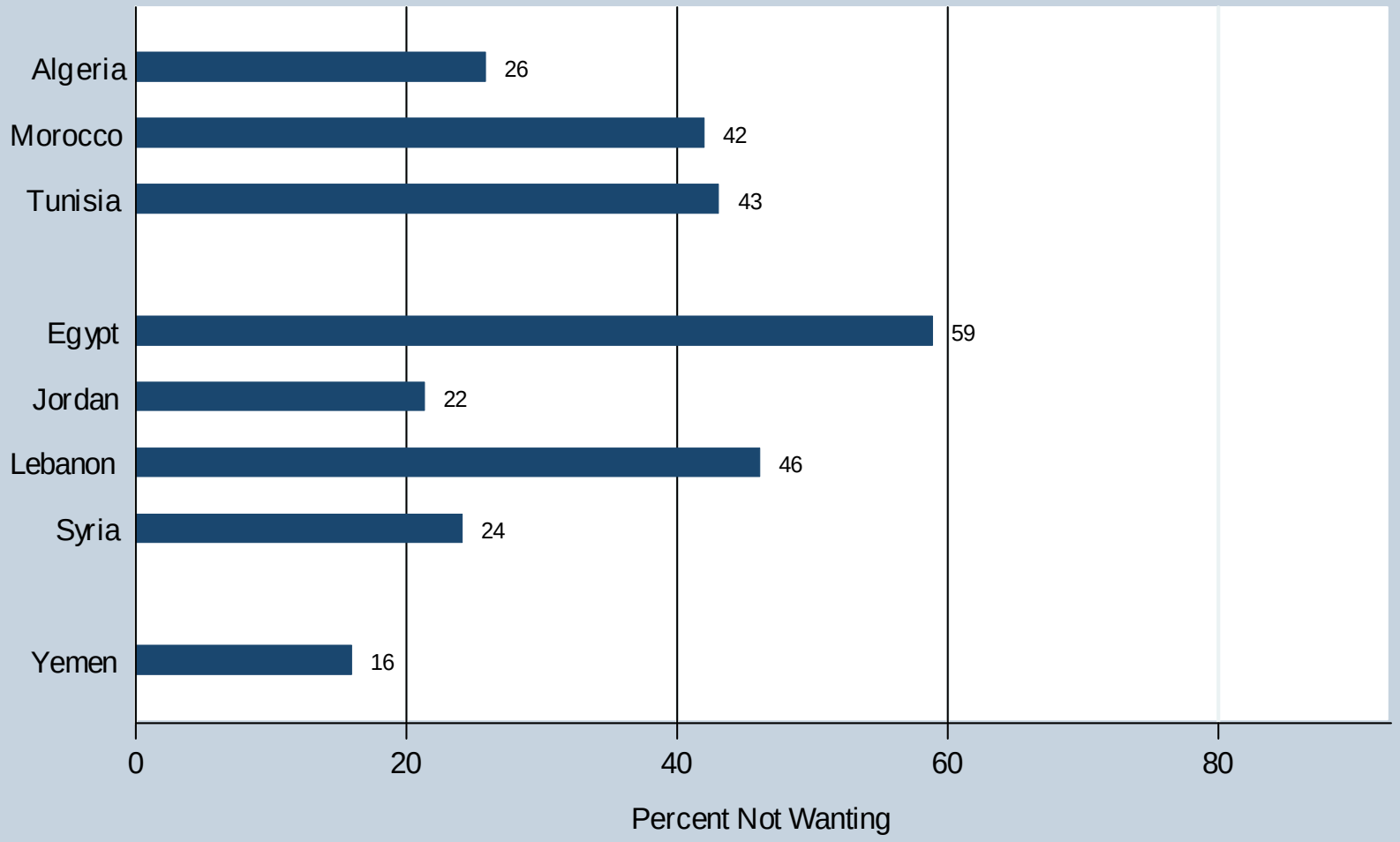
Note: among women who provide a numeric ideal

Figure 7b: Ideal Children = 3+, Women Age 20-29



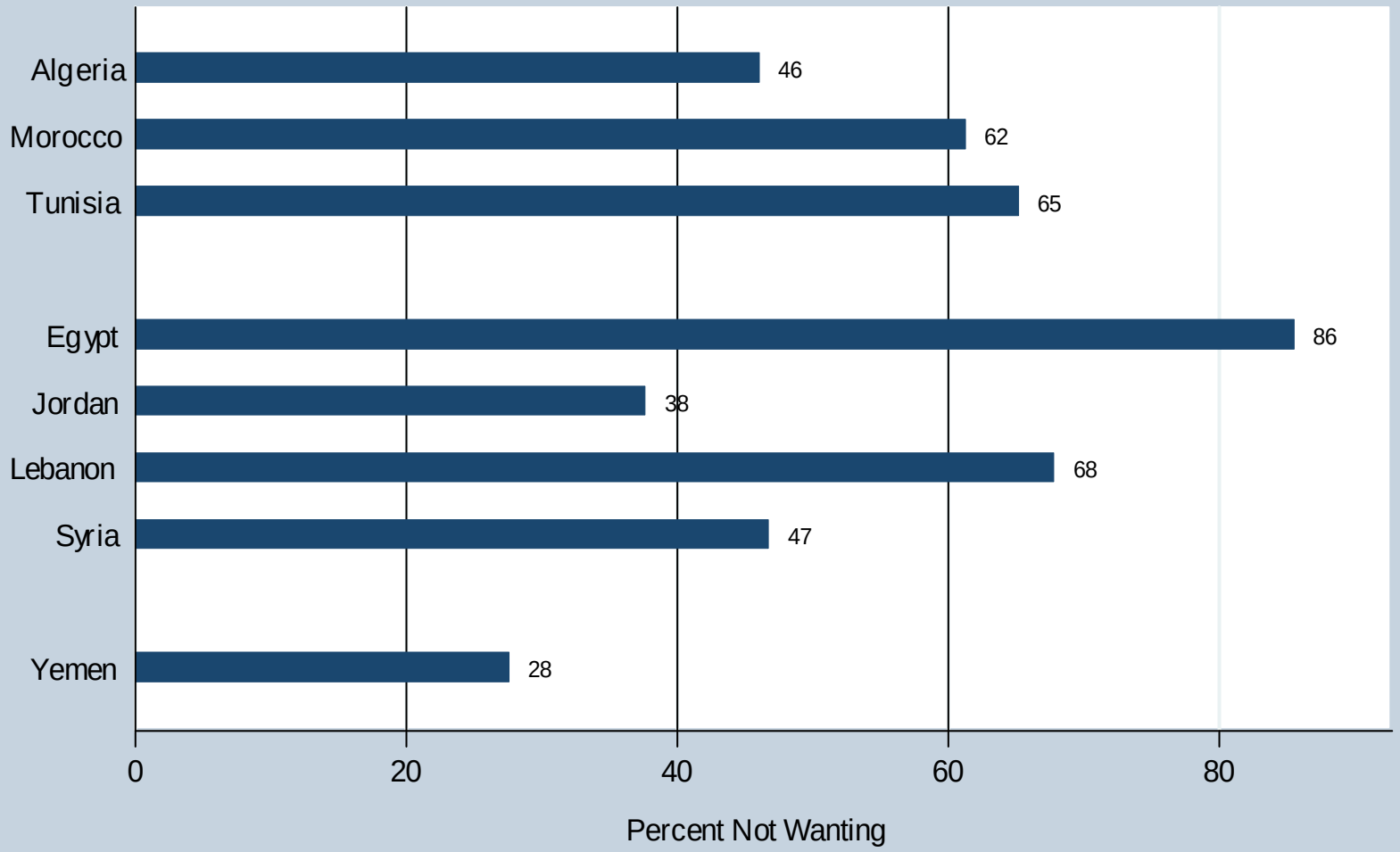
Note: among women who provide a numeric ideal

Figure 8a: Percentage Not Wanting Another Birth, Parity 2



Source: DHS and PAPFAM survey data

Figure 8b: Percentage Not Wanting Another Birth, Parity 3



Source: DHS and PAPFAM survey data

Fertility Desires: summary

- Moderately high unwanted fertility provides potential for further fertility decline

but . . .

- Ideals -- lack of attachment to small-family (two children)
- Preferences – less than one-half wish to stop at:
  - Two children
  - Ages 25 - 34

Birth Control

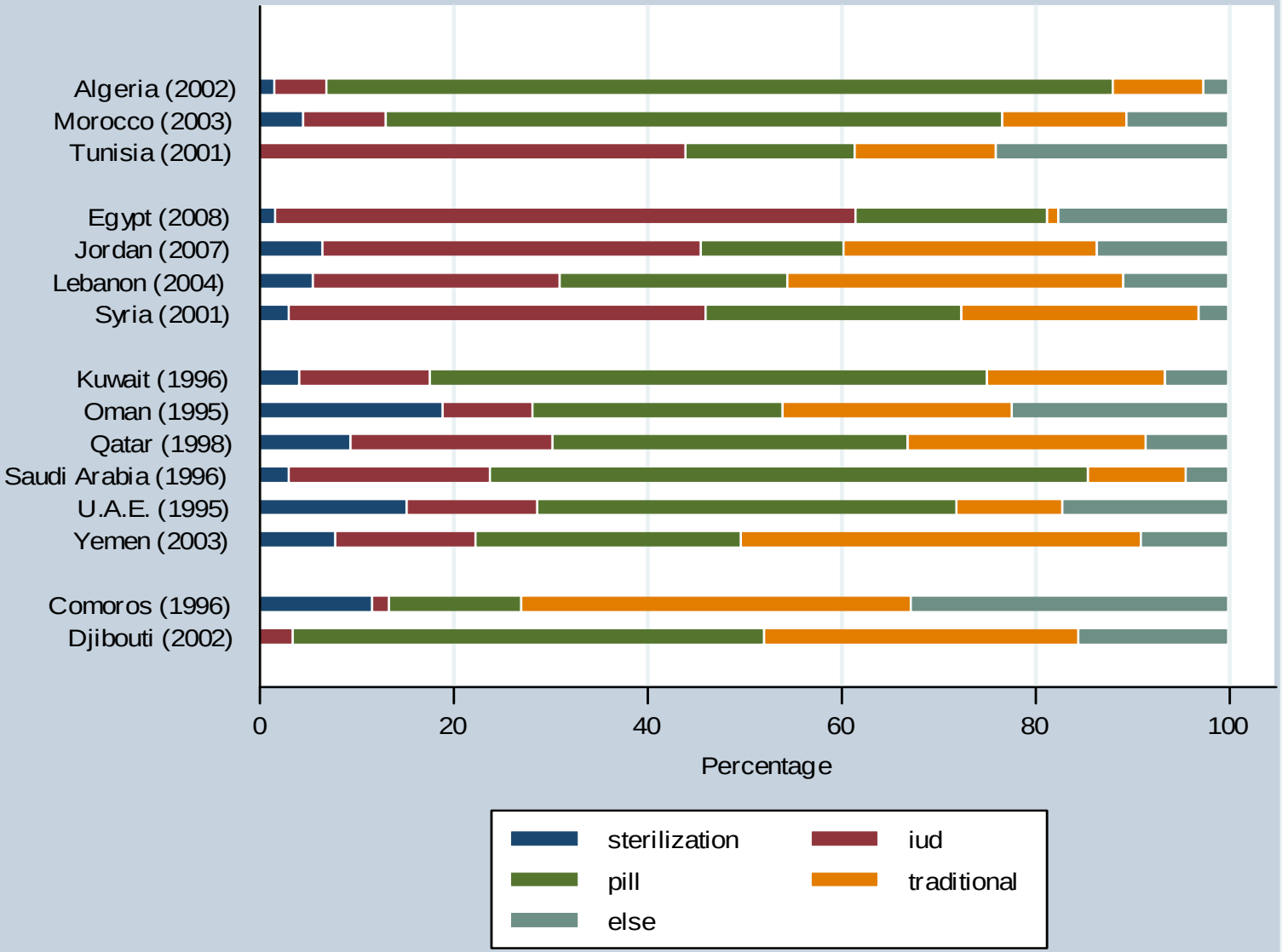
At issue is acceptability of means for effective termination of childbearing after a small number of children (e.g. two children)

- Sterilization
- Induced abortion

Neither method of birth control is commonly employed at present

And many reasons to assume this will continue to be the case . . .

Figure 9: Contraceptive Method Distribution



Source: DHS, PAPFAM, and Gulf Family Health surveys

Concluding Comments

Significant, and possibly robust, factors acting against the achievement of low fertility in the short-term in the Arab region:

- Two-child norm is not firmly and widely established
- Neither sterilization nor induced abortion are generally available as methods of birth control

Arguing to the contrary – sharp changes in nuptiality, and the potential for further such change.

Will low fertility in the Arab region be achieved via non-marriage?

Should not assume that most countries in the region will follow the pathways of Lebanon and Tunisia . . .