

FERTILITY PREFERENCES

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This chapter addresses the following questions, which allow an assessment of the need for contraception. Does the respondent want more children? If so, how long would she prefer to wait before the next child? If she could start afresh, how many children in all would she want? To what extent do unwanted or mistimed pregnancies occur? What effect would the prevention of such pregnancies have on the fertility rates?

Interpretation of data on fertility preferences has always been the subject of controversy. Survey questions have been criticized on the grounds that answers are misleading because: a) they reflect unformed, ephemeral views, which are held with weak intensity and little conviction; and b) they do not take into account the effect of social pressures or the attitudes of other family members, particularly the husband, who may exert a major influence on reproductive decisions.

Questions about fertility preferences were asked of women in half of the households in the sample of the TDHS-2003. Therefore, the total number of cases in the tables is different than that of tables in other chapters. For a detailed explanation see Appendix B.

8.1 Desire for More Children

In order to understand future fertility preferences, currently married women were asked: “Would you like to have another child or would you prefer not to have any more children?” If they did indeed want another child, they were asked: “How long would you like to wait from now before the birth of another child?” If the woman had not yet had any children, these questions were appropriately rephrased.

The inclusion of women who are currently pregnant complicates the measurement of views on future childbearing. For these women, the question on desire for more children was rephrased to refer to desire for another child *after* the one that they are expecting. To take into account the way in which the preference variable is defined for pregnant women, the results are classified by number of living children, including the current pregnancy as equivalent to a living child. In some cases, the answers of pregnant women with respect to preferred waiting time before the next birth may have included the remaining gestation period of the current pregnancy, and thus, may not be strictly comparable with the answers of non-pregnant women. Also, women who have been sterilized for contraceptive purposes were not asked about their desire for another child. However, for purposes of the fertility preference analysis, these women are classified as wanting no more children.

Table 8.1 presents the percentage distribution of currently married women by desire for more children according to the number of living children. The table shows the potential

need for contraceptive services for spacing as well as for limiting births. As Table 8.1 and Figure 8.1 show, 69 percent of currently married women expressed that they do not want to have more births in the future or were already sterilized for contraceptive purposes. Furthermore, 14 percent of the women stated that they want to wait for another birth at least two years. Therefore, about four out of every five currently married women can be regarded as in need of using family planning services either to avoid or to postpone childbearing. The proportion of currently married women who are undecided about having another child is only 3 percent. Findings from the previous TDHS-1998 show similar patterns, with slightly less desire to cease childbearing.

The desire for another child in the future decreases in relation to the increase in the number of living children. Among women with one living child, 67 percent want to have another child in the future. This percentage decreases rapidly to 12 percent among women with two children, 4 percent with three children and 3 percent with four or more children. The strong desire to stop childbearing appears when women have had two living children and remains at high levels at higher order parities.

Desire for more children	Number of living children ¹					Total
	0	1	2	3	4+	
Have another soon ²	70.4	17.9	3.9	1.2	2.0	9.9
Have another later ³	15.5	47.1	7.8	2.6	0.8	13.6
Have another, undecided when	2.8	1.9	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.9
Undecided	0.3	5.9	4.4	1.3	0.8	3.1
Want no more	1.5	25.5	76.4	80.8	80.4	63.4
Sterilized	0.0	0.0	4.1	9.5	12.1	5.7
Declared infecund	9.4	1.6	2.6	4.0	2.7	3.1
Missing	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	241	763	1,312	785	776	3,876

¹ Includes current pregnancy
² Wants next birth within 2 years
³ Wants to delay next birth for 2 or more years

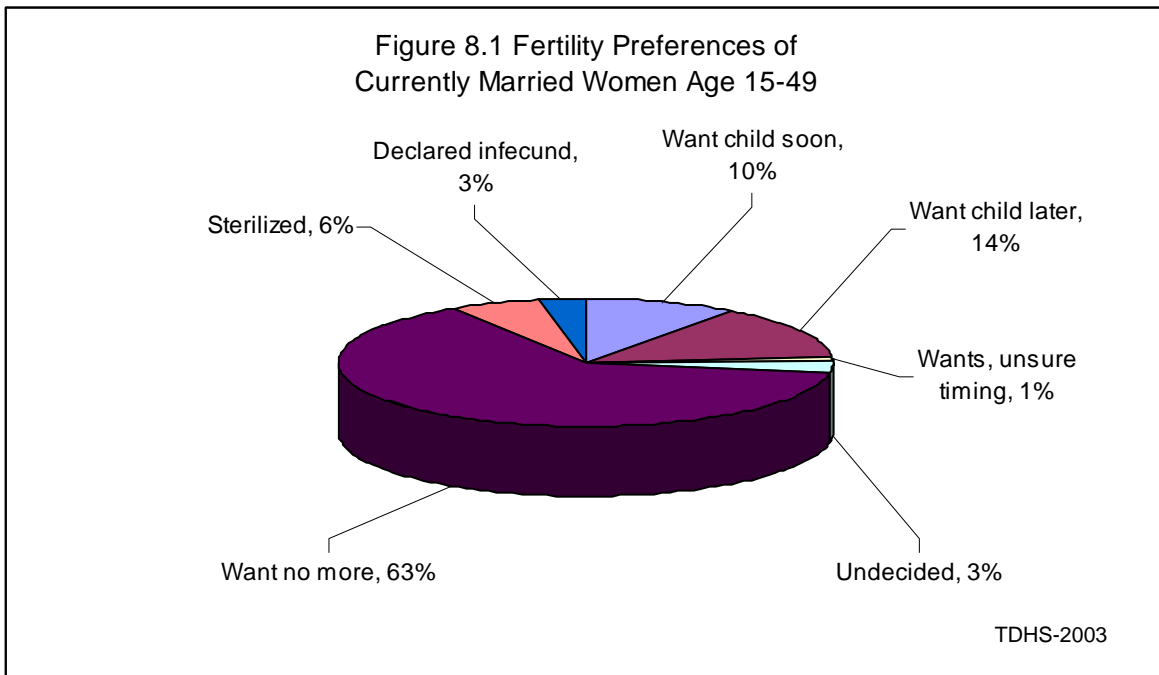


Table 8.2 presents the distribution of currently married women by the desire for more children according to current age. The proportion wanting more children decreases sharply with age. While 78 percent of women in the youngest cohort want more children, by age group 30-34, the proportion drops to only 19 percent. The desire to space births is concentrated among women under age 25. The proportion of women who prefer to limit childbearing increases rapidly with age, from 19 percent among women age 15-19 to 83 percent among women age 40-44.

Table 8.2 Fertility preference by age
Percent distribution of currently married women (subsample) by desire for more children, according to age, Turkey 2003

Desire for	Current age							Total
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	
More children								
Have another soon ¹	26.0	17.4	13.6	13.0	6.9	2.1	1.6	9.9
Have another later ²	46.0	46.8	23.2	5.8	1.8	0.3	0.0	13.6
Have another, undecided when	6.2	0.8	1.8	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.9
Undecided	2.5	5.0	7.3	3.7	1.6	0.1	0.2	3.1
Want no more	19.2	29.6	50.6	68.3	77.5	82.8	78.2	63.4
Sterilized	0.0	0.2	2.8	7.8	8.9	8.9	5.7	5.7
Declared infecund	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.7	2.8	5.1	13.5	3.1
Missing	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.6	0.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	119	540	698	716	690	640	473	3,876

¹ Wants next birth within 2 years
² Wants to delay next birth for 2 or more years

Table 8.3 presents the percentage of currently married women who want no more children by number of living children and background characteristics. The largest differences

in the proportions of currently married women who want to stop childbearing are observed for those with two children. Overall, the same proportion of urban and rural women wants to terminate childbearing. More women living in the North region (73 percent) desires to stop childbearing compared to those living in the East region (63 percent). The percentage of currently married women who want no more children further decreases to 61 percent in the Southeastern Anatolia.

Education is known to be negatively associated with the desire to stop childbearing. The proportion of women who want no more children decreases as the level of education increases (from 75 to 51 percent). However, the fact that the effect of education diminishes when these women are analyzed by their number of living children suggests that the reason uneducated or less educated women are more likely to want to stop childbearing is that they already have more children than the educated women. The same pattern was also noted in the TDHS-1998.

Table 8.3 Desire to limit (stop) childbearing						
Percentage of currently married women (subsample) who want no more children, by number of living children and selected background characteristics, Turkey 2003						
Background characteristic	Number of living children ¹					Total
	0	1	2	3	4+	
Residence						
Urban	1.5	27.8	81.8	92.1	93.6	69.2
Rural	1.5	17.5	76.6	86.8	91.0	69.2
Region						
West	0.8	32.0	85.7	91.4	96.4	70.0
South	(3.0)	17.8	79.8	87.9	94.0	68.6
Central	(2.6)	27.6	82.2	93.2	91.0	71.7
North	*	(22.6)	77.7	92.7	94.2	72.8
East	(1.6)	6.8	54.1	82.0	89.7	62.6
Selected NUTS 1 Regions						
Istanbul	0.0	31.2	84.3	95.1	98.6	68.1
Southeast Anatolia	*	2.3	45.1	(75.1)	89.5	60.8
Education						
No educ./Prim. incomp.	(6.1)	(21.8)	65.7	79.8	89.3	74.9
First level primary	1.0	22.5	81.5	91.5	94.6	72.3
Second level primary	1.4	28.8	81.3	94.9	100.0	61.1
High school and higher	0.0	30.4	88.7	*	*	50.5
Total	1.5	25.5	80.5	90.3	92.6	69.2

¹ Includes current pregnancy
Notes: Women who have been sterilized are considered to want no more children. Parentheses indicate that a figure is based on 25-49 unweighted cases. An asterisk indicates a figure is based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases and has been suppressed.

8.2 Need for Family Planning Services

This section discusses the extent of need and potential demand for family planning services. Unmet need for family planning refers to fecund women who either wish to postpone the next birth (spacers) or who wish to stop childbearing altogether (limiters), but are not using a contraceptive method. Pregnant women are considered to have an unmet need for spacing or limiting if their pregnancy was mistimed or unwanted, respectively. Similarly, amenorrhoeic women are classified as having unmet need if their last birth was mistimed or unwanted. Women who are currently using a family planning method are said to have a met need for family planning. The total demand for family planning services comprises those who fall in the met need and the unmet need categories.

Table 8.4 shows the percentage of currently married women with unmet need, met need and the total demand for family planning services by selected background characteristics. The total demand for family planning is 76 percent, and 92 percent of this demand is satisfied. The demand for limiting purposes is three times as high as the demand for spacing purposes (58 and 18 percent, respectively). Among all currently married women, the demand of 6 percent of women are not met. Total unmet need is lower than that recorded in TDHS-1993 (12 percent) and TDHS-1998 (10 percent), when the percentage of demand satisfied was 84 percent and 87 percent respectively.

Unmet need is higher among women age 15-29 and women living in rural residences. Unmet need by region varies from 3 percent of women in the West to 15 percent of women in the East. According to NUTS 1 regions, the lowest unmet need is in the West Anatolia and the highest is in Central East Anatolia. Since educated women are more likely to use a contraceptive method than uneducated women, unmet need decreases and the percentage of demand satisfied increases with increasing educational level.

8.3 Ideal Number of Children

Another attitudinal dimension of childbearing considered in the TDHS-2003 is the total number of children a woman would ideally like to have, if it were entirely up to her. Respondents who had no children were asked how many children they would like to have if they could choose the number of children to have in their whole life. Those who had living children were asked about the number of children they would choose if they could start their childbearing again.

There is usually a correlation observed between actual and ideal number of children. The reason is twofold. First, to the extent that women implement their preferences, those who want larger families tend to achieve larger families. Second, women may adjust their ideal number of children upwards as their actual number of children increases. It is also possible that women with large families have larger ideal sizes because of attitudes they acquired 20 or 30 years ago.

Table 8.4 Need for family planning services

Percentage of currently married women (subsample) with unmet need for family planning, met need for family planning, and the total demand for family planning services, by selected background characteristics, Turkey 2003

Background characteristic	Unmet need for family planning ¹			Met need for family planning ²			Total demand for family planning ³			Percentage of demand satisfied	Number of women
	For spacing	For limiting	Total	For spacing	For limiting	Total	For spacing	For limiting	Total		
Age											
15-19	11.7	3.9	15.6	40.5	7.5	48.0	56.5	12.2	68.8	77.3	119
20-24	8.7	2.5	11.2	39.0	20.1	59.2	50.5	23.9	74.4	84.9	555
25-29	3.0	3.0	6.0	30.2	43.1	73.3	34.3	46.7	81.0	92.6	717
30-34	0.7	3.7	4.3	12.5	64.9	77.4	13.7	69.3	83.0	94.8	748
35-39	0.7	4.0	4.7	5.2	73.2	78.4	6.0	78.0	84.0	94.4	726
40-44	0.1	4.3	4.3	0.7	69.3	70.0	0.8	73.6	74.4	94.2	705
45-49	0.0	4.6	4.6	1.1	47.4	48.5	1.1	51.9	53.0	91.4	507
Residence											
Urban	2.1	2.6	4.8	16.6	55.2	71.8	19.5	58.2	77.7	93.8	2,881
Rural	2.8	6.2	8.9	12.1	48.9	61.1	15.8	56.2	72.0	87.6	1,197
Region											
West	1.4	2.0	3.4	16.0	56.3	72.3	17.8	58.6	76.3	95.5	1,652
South	2.7	3.8	6.5	15.5	52.2	67.7	19.2	56.5	75.7	91.4	513
Central	2.2	2.2	4.4	14.3	58.6	72.9	17.6	60.8	78.4	94.4	962
North	1.0	5.1	6.1	13.8	53.6	67.4	15.4	59.5	74.8	91.9	298
East	5.0	9.4	14.5	15.4	39.1	54.4	21.9	50.5	72.4	80.0	653
NUTS 1 Regions											
İstanbul	1.4	2.4	3.8	19.1	55.8	74.8	21.1	58.2	79.2	95.2	715
West Marmara	0.4	3.7	4.1	17.2	63.1	80.3	17.7	67.4	85.1	95.2	178
Aegean	2.6	0.7	3.3	11.1	55.0	66.1	14.2	56.3	70.5	95.4	588
East Marmara	1.4	2.3	3.7	13.8	57.2	71.0	15.9	59.6	75.4	95.0	373
West Anatolia	1.2	1.1	2.3	15.7	62.6	78.3	17.3	63.7	81.0	97.1	413
Mediterranean	2.7	3.8	6.5	15.5	52.2	67.7	19.2	56.5	75.7	91.4	513
Central Anatolia	3.2	3.9	7.1	16.3	50.9	67.1	21.2	55.1	76.3	90.6	239
West Black Sea	0.7	3.2	3.9	13.1	58.6	71.8	14.2	62.6	76.8	94.9	254
East Black Sea	1.3	6.9	8.2	14.8	49.8	64.6	17.2	57.0	74.1	88.9	151
Northeast Anatolia	2.7	9.8	12.5	16.2	39.4	55.6	20.2	51.7	71.9	82.6	120
Central East Anatolia	5.9	10.9	16.8	14.5	39.4	53.8	22.3	52.6	74.9	77.6	201
Southeast Anatolia	5.4	8.4	13.8	15.6	38.8	54.4	22.2	48.9	71.1	80.6	332
Education											
No educ./Prim. incomplete	3.6	9.2	12.7	6.5	48.1	54.6	10.4	58.3	68.7	81.5	671
First level primary	2.0	3.0	4.9	13.4	57.5	70.9	16.2	61.2	77.4	93.6	2,327
Second level primary	2.5	1.8	4.3	24.2	50.0	74.2	27.5	51.9	79.4	94.6	830
High school and higher	1.6	1.9	3.5	26.8	39.5	66.3	29.8	41.8	71.6	95.1	249
Total	2.3	3.7	6.0	15.3	53.3	68.6	18.4	57.6	76.0	92.1	4,078

¹ Unmet need for *spacing* includes pregnant women whose pregnancy was mistimed, amenorrheic women whose last birth was mistimed, and women who are neither pregnant nor amenorrheic and who are not using any method of family planning but say they want to wait two or more years for their next birth. Also included in unmet need for spacing are women who are unsure whether they want another child or who want another child but are unsure when to have the birth. Unmet need for *limiting* refers to pregnant women whose pregnancy was unwanted, amenorrheic women whose last child was unwanted, and women who are neither pregnant nor amenorrheic and who are not using any method of family planning but want no more children. Excluded from the unmet need category are menopausal or infecund women.

² Using for *spacing* is defined as women who are using some method of family planning and say they want to have another child or are undecided whether to have another. Using for *limiting* is defined as women who are using and who want no more children. Note that the specific methods used are not taken into account here.

³ Total demand for family planning includes pregnant or amenorrheic women who became pregnant while using a method (method failure).

Despite the likelihood that some rationalization occurs in the determination of ideal number of children, respondents often state ideals that are lower than their actual number of surviving children. Table 8.5 shows the distribution of respondents by ideal number of children and mean ideal number of children according to actual number of living children.

Except for women with no children, there is a positive relationship between the actual and ideal number of children.

The mean ideal number of children is 2.5 for both ever-married and currently married women. The table indicates that most women want small families. The mean ideal number of children increases from 2.2 for women with one child to 3.1 for women with four or more children. More than half of the respondents (57 percent) stated two children as the ideal number while only 17 percent of women consider four or more children as ideal. The mean ideal number of children among currently married women has remained about the same for the last 3 surveys (2.4 in TDHS-1993 and 2.5 in TDHS-1998).

Ideal number of children	Number of living children ¹					Total
	0	1	2	3	4+	
0						
1	6.8	10.6	5.2	5.8	3.2	6.1
2	64.3	63.8	65.4	47.4	42.3	56.9
3	17.5	16.7	17.9	28.8	16.2	19.5
4	6.0	6.5	9.4	14.9	26.2	13.0
5	1.5	1.0	0.3	1.0	4.1	1.4
6+	2.7	0.1	0.5	0.9	5.1	1.5
Non-numeric response	0.8	0.3	0.7	0.8	2.4	1.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	266	831	1,369	809	803	4,078
Ever-married women						
Mean ideal number	2.4	2.2	2.3	2.6	3.1	2.5
Number of women	264	829	1,359	803	784	4,038
Currently married women						
Mean ideal number	2.4	2.2	2.3	2.6	3.1	2.5
Number of women	239	760	1,305	779	757	3,840

¹ Includes current pregnancy.
 Note: The means exclude women who gave non-numeric responses.

Table 8.6 presents the mean ideal number of children for ever-married women by age and selected background characteristics. The mean ideal number of children does not vary significantly by age. It is equal to or less than the overall mean up to age group 30-34 and for older ages, it is just above the overall mean (2.6 children). Although there is little difference by residence, some regional variations are apparent. The mean ideal number of children is lowest in West and Central regions while it is the highest in the East (2.3 children and 3.1 children, respectively). The mean ideal number of children is negatively correlated with education. Women with no or less education have higher ideal sizes. The difference between ever-married women with no education and those who have high school or higher education is nearly one child.

Table 8.6 Mean ideal number of children by background characteristics

Mean ideal number of children for currently married women (subsample) by age and selected background characteristics, Turkey 2003

Background characteristic	Current age							Total
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	
Residence								
Urban	2.3	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.5
Rural	(2.6)	2.4	2.5	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.7
Region								
West	(2.2)	2.3	2.1	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3
South	*	2.7	2.5	2.6	2.9	2.9	3.2	2.8
Central	(2.1)	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.3
North	*	(2.1)	(2.2)	(2.4)	2.5	2.7	(2.7)	2.5
East	(2.9)	2.8	2.7	3.1	3.7	3.3	3.6	3.1
Selected NUTS 1 Regions								
Istanbul	*	2.3	2.2	2.4	2.3	2.5	2.3	2.3
Southeast Anatolia	*	3.2	3.1	3.4	3.9	(3.4)	*	3.4
Education								
No educ./Prim. incomplete	*	3.0	2.9	3.3	3.5	2.9	3.1	3.1
First level primary	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.5
Second level primary	(2.3)	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.3
High school and higher	*	(2.0)	2.2	2.2	2.3	(2.4)	*	2.2
Total	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.5

Note: Parentheses indicate that a figure is based on 25-49 unweighted cases. An asterisk indicates a figure is based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases and has been suppressed.

8.4 Planning Status of Births

In TDHS-2003, ever-married women were asked a series of questions about each child born in the preceding five years and any current pregnancy, to determine whether the pregnancy was wanted then, wanted at a later time, or unwanted. These questions form a particularly powerful indicator of the degree to which couples successfully control childbearing; the data can also be used to gauge the effect on fertility of the prevention of unwanted births.

The questions on fertility planning are extremely demanding. The respondent is required to recall accurately her wishes at one or more points in time during the last five years and to report them clearly and honestly. The danger of rationalization is present; an unwanted conception may well become a cherished child. Despite these potential problems of comprehension, recall, and truthfulness, results from many surveys have proved surprisingly plausible. Respondents are willing to report unwanted conceptions, although some postpartum rationalization probably occurs. The results presented here are likely to underestimate the proportion of births that were unplanned at the time of conception.

Table 8.7 presents the percent distribution of births in the five years preceding the survey and current pregnancies by fertility planning status, according to birth order and mother's age at birth. Two in three births were wanted at the time of conception, an additional 14 percent were wanted but at a later time, and 20 percent were not wanted at all. Comparison with the TDHS-1998 indicates that birth planning patterns have not changed significantly.

Table 8.7 Fertility planning status
Percent distribution of births (including current pregnancy) in the five years preceding the survey by fertility planning status, according to birth order and mother's age at birth, Turkey 2003

	Wanted then	Wanted later	Not wanted	Missing	Total	Number of births ¹
Birth order¹						
1	88.7	10.2	0.9	0.2	100.0	1,567
2	67.4	24.3	7.6	0.4	100.0	1,269
3	53.4	14.8	31.2	0.5	100.0	725
4+	37.1	5.9	56.3	0.7	100.0	1,043
Age at birth						
<19	82.2	13.9	3.9	0	100.0	559
20-24	70.5	19.2	9.9	0.4	100.0	1,601
25-29	63.8	13.5	22.1	0.5	100.0	1,359
30-34	58.7	8.3	32.3	0.7	100.0	689
35-39	44.7	4.1	51.2	0.0	100.0	313
40-44	25.3	0.0	74.7	0.0	100.0	79
45-49	*	*	*	*	100.0	5
Total	65.6	13.9	20.1	0.4	100.0	4,604

¹ The birth order and number of births include current pregnancies.
Notes: This is a birth-based rather than a woman-based table and presented for all births of ever-married women instead of the sub-sample of women. An asterisk indicates a figure is based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases and has been suppressed.

Birth order is strongly associated with the planning status of birth. The proportion of births that were wanted at the time of conception decreases with increasing birth order, while the percentage not wanted at all increases. While 89 percent of first births were wanted at the time of conception, more than half of fourth order or higher order births were unwanted. The planning status of births is also associated with the age of mother. In general, older mothers tend to have a smaller percentage of children who are wanted at conception. The percentage of unwanted births increases with mother's age at birth.

Another way of measuring the extent of unwanted fertility is to estimate what the fertility rate would be if all unwanted births were avoided. This is known as the *wanted fertility rate* and is calculated in a similar manner as the total fertility rates presented in Chapter 4. The Lightbourne method of calculating a "wanted" birth is used for Table 8.8. Under the Lightbourne method, a birth is considered wanted if the number of living children at the time of conception was less than the current ideal number of children, as reported by the respondent. Births classified as unwanted according to the above definition are omitted from the numerator and the remainder is cumulated to form a wanted total fertility rate, which is analogous to the conventional fertility rate. This rate represents the level of fertility that theoretically would result if all unwanted births were prevented.

Table 8.8 Wanted fertility rates		
Total wanted fertility rates and total fertility rates for the three years preceding the survey by background characteristics, Turkey 2003		
Background characteristic	Total wanted fertility rate	Total fertility rate
Residence		
Urban	1.5	2.1
Rural	2.6	2.7
Region		
West	1.6	1.9
South	1.8	2.3
Central	1.3	1.9
North	1.3	1.9
East	1.9	3.7
Selected NUTS 1 Regions		
Istanbul	1.4	1.8
Southeast Anatolia	2.2	4.2
Education		
No education/Prim. incomplete	2.1	3.7
First level primary	1.9	2.4
Second level primary	1.2	1.8
High school and higher	1.0	1.4
Total	1.6	2.2
Note: The total wanted fertility rates were calculated based on information from women in the subsample only while the total fertility rates which are the same as those presented in Chapter 4 are based on the entire sample.		

The wanted total fertility rates are calculated for a sub-sample of ever-married women only. According to the results presented in Table 8.8, if all unwanted births were prevented, the total wanted fertility rate would be 1.6 children per woman, or 0.7 children less than the actual total fertility rate (27 percent lower than the actual fertility level). The total wanted fertility rate is lower than that recorded in TDHS-1998 (1.9 children) and TDHS-1993 (1.8 children). Table 8.8 also shows that the gap between actual and wanted fertility rates is highest among rural women, women living in the East region and women who have no education.