Fertility Preference

Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey 2023-24 Key Findings

Introduction

Fertility preferences provide important insights into individuals and couples reproductive intentions and their ability to achieve their desired family size. These preferences influence fertility patterns, demand for family planning services, and population growth trends. Understanding whether women and men wish to have more children, the timing of future births, or their desire to limit childbearing is essential for assessing unmet need for contraception and informing reproductive health programmes.



This section summarizes fertility preferences among currently married women and men, including ideal family size and the extent to which recent births were wanted, mistimed, or unwanted.

Desire for another child

Among currently married individuals, women demonstrate a stronger preference to limit future childbearing than men

Women: Nearly half **(45%)** of currently married women want no more children. This rate is identical in both urban and rural areas.

Men: Men are generally less likely than women to want to stop childbearing with **34%** of urban men and **30%** of rural men want no more children

Women (Currently married)

Want no more children

Urban	Rural
45%	45%

Men (Currently married)

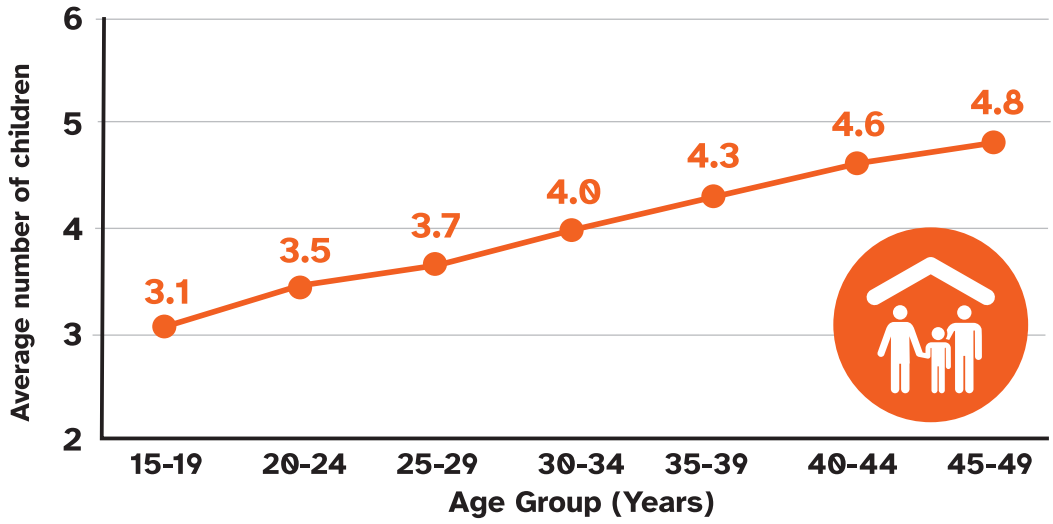
Want no more children

Urban	Rural
34%	30%

Ideal family size among women 15-49

The ideal family size varies based on age.

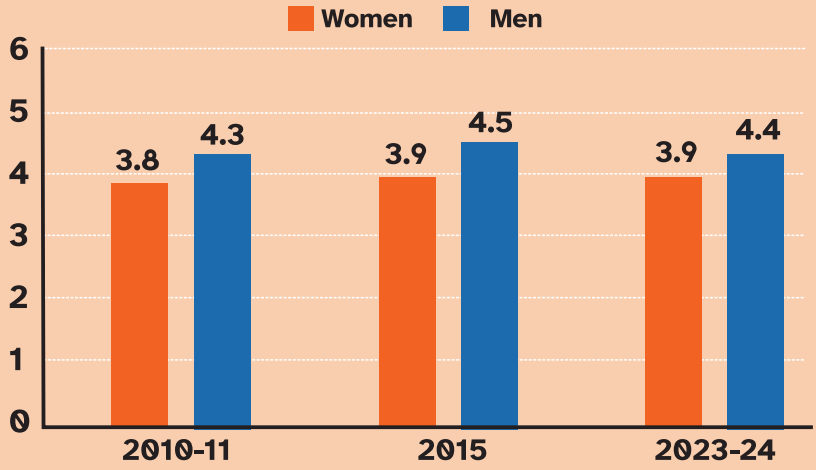
Ideal family size (Average number of children)



The ideal family size increases with age from **3.1 children** among women age 15-19 to **4.8 children** among women age 45-45.

Ideal family size: Women and Men age 15-49

On average, men want more children than women.
the mean ideal family size has remained stable over time.



Key Takeaways

Men consistently want more children than women.

Men's ideal family size ranges from **4.3 to 4.5** children.

Women's ideal family size is stable at **3.8 to 3.9** children.

Overall (2023-24):
Women: 3.9 Children
Men: 4.4 Children

Implication: Understanding ideal family size helps guide family planning programs to meet the reproductive goals and preferences of both women and men.

Ideal family size by province among women and men age 15-49

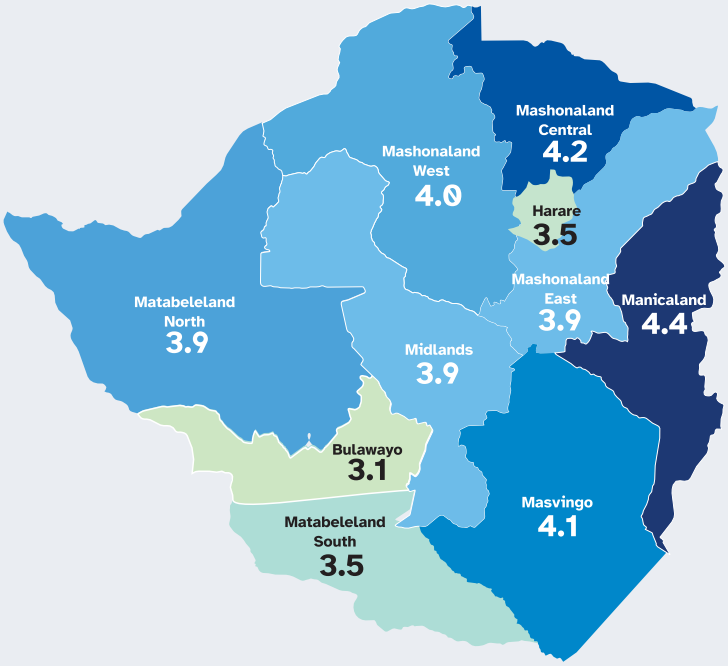
Ideal family size varies across provinces.
On average people want between 3.1 and 4,4 children.

Mean ideal number of children

3.1 — 4.4

Highest
Manicaland
4.4

Lowest
Bulawayo
3.1



Fertility Planning Status

Wanted, mistimed and unwanted pregnancies

Percent distribution of all pregnancy outcomes to women age 15-49 in the 3 years preceding the survey by planning status of the pregnancy

Overall, nearly

1 in 3

pregnancies are not planned ate the right time or not wanted at all.

wanted then

66.5%

of all pregnancy outcomes

wanted later

25.5%

of all pregnancy outcomes

wanted no more

8.0%

of all pregnancy outcomes

4,562

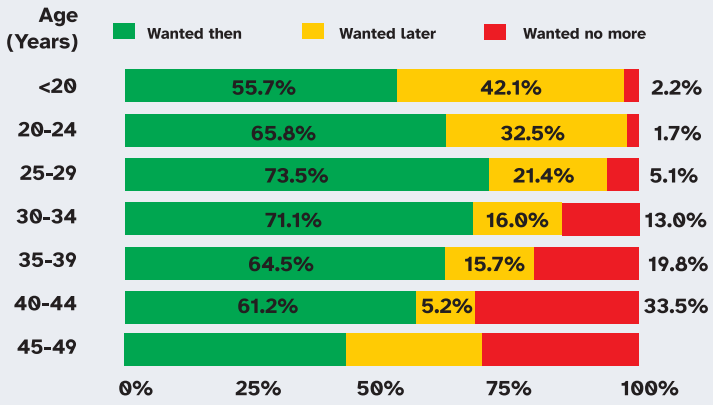
Total pregnancy outcomes

By birth order



1 in 5 high order births **(4+)** are unwanted

By mother's age at birth



Teen pregnancies **(<20)** are mostly mistimed **(42.1%)**

Older women **(40-44)**: **1 in 3** pregnancies are unwanted.

By pregnancy outcome type

Planning status varies by outcome

Most pregnancies are wanted, but a substantial proportion are mistimed or unwanted across all outcomes.

Pregnancy outcome	Wanted then	Wanted later	Wanted no more	Total (N)
Current pregnancies	63.8%	28.3%	7.9%	609
Live births	66.6%	25.6%	7.8%	3,389
Still births	51.4%	38.3%	10.3%	66
Miscarriages	71.7%	19.1%	9.2%	490
Abortions				7
Total	66.5%	25.5%	8.0%	4,562

Key Messages

33% of pregnancies are mistimed or unwanted

Young women (<20) experience high levels of mistimed pregnancies

High parity (4+) is linked to the highest levels of unwanted pregnancies.

Unwanted pregnancies increase steadily with age.

Family planning services can help reduce mistimed and unwanted pregnancies.

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