

# advancedata

FROM VITAL & HEALTH STATISTICS OF THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE | No. 10 August 12, 1977 | Public Health Service • Health Resources Administration

## Expected Size of Completed Family Among Currently Married Women 15-44 Years of Age: United States, 1973<sup>a</sup>

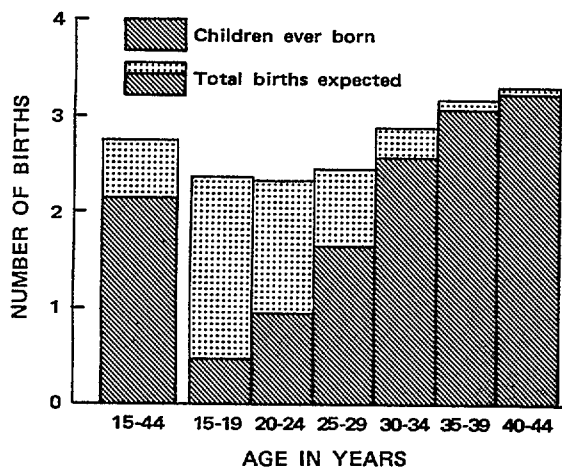
Currently married women aged 40-44, who are near the end of their childbearing period, expect to have an average of 3.3 children. But those aged 20-24, who are beginning their childbearing, expect an average of only 2.3 children. Although the younger women are less sure about their expectations than the older women, the statistics reflect definite age differences in birth expectations. If realized in actual fertility, Figure 1 shows that these differences will result in a significant decline in completed family size.

The expected decline in fertility is found in

nearly all subgroups of the population, even though there are different levels of expectations among these subgroups. For instance, the total number of births expected by currently married women decreases as education increases and as age at marriage increases. Also, Negro wives, Catholic wives, wives who participate more in religious activities, wives who are not in the labor force, and wives whose first child was born before marriage, expect more total births than other wives.

These and other findings presented in this report are from Cycle I of the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics. The NSFG was designed to provide information about fertility, family planning, and aspects of maternal and child health related to childbearing. Data on these topics were collected by personal interviews with about 9,800 women aged 15-44 years who had ever been married or who had children of their own living in the household. Interviews were conducted between July 1973 and February 1974, centering on September 1973. The statistics in this report refer to currently married women living in the conterminous United States, and are based on interviews with a representative sample of 7,566 such women. Further discussion of the survey design, definition of terms, and sampling variability are in the Technical Notes.

Figure 1. Average number of children ever born and total births expected per currently married woman 15-44 years old by age: United States, 1973



### RANGE OF BIRTH EXPECTATIONS

The number of births that women expect to have may not forecast future births accurately because women may change their minds, they

<sup>a</sup>Prepared by Gordon Scott Bonham, Ph.D., Division of Vital Statistics.

may not be able to have the expected births, or they may unintentionally have more births than expected. The NSFG allowed for some of these uncertainties in interviewing women on expectations. Wives were asked how many additional births they intended to have, if any, and how certain they were of achieving those intentions. Those who expressed uncertainty, about one-third of the total, were asked the minimum and maximum numbers they actually expected to have.

The range of births expected per 1,000 currently married women 15-44 years old is shown in table 1. Overall, women expected to have between 2,653 and 2,985 births per 1,000 women (or 2.7 and 3.0 births each) by the time they finish childbearing. Of these expected births, 2,180 (or 2.2 births each) have already occurred. The difference between minimum and maximum expected births decreases as age increases. Most of this difference is due to the higher proportion of expected births that have already occurred among older women and therefore present no uncertainty. About one-fourth of the minimum births expected by women 15-19 years old have occurred, and this proportion increases to almost 100 percent for women 40-44 years old.

Regardless of the certainty of her intentions, a central number of births was determined for each woman by a procedure described in the Technical Appendix. The central number of births expected by women in the sample population is between the minimum and maximum, although it is slightly closer to the minimum. This number increases with age, except for a statistically insignificant decrease between ages 15-19 and 20-24. The increase is not solely due to events associated with different stages of the life cycle. It also represents diversified birth expectations of different cohorts of women. Those aged 40-44 in 1973 had most of their children during the high fertility period of the 1950's and the early 1960's, often referred to as the "baby boom." However, women in their twenties in 1973 were starting their families during a period of low fertility. The age comparison in table 1 reflects the changes in fertility shown in table A. There is not much difference in the number of total births expected or children ever born by the time of the interview among women aged 30

or over between 1960 and 1973. However, there are dramatic changes for women under age 30. Wives 18-24 years old in 1973 expect to have an average of 0.8 children fewer by the time they complete childbearing than wives 18-24 years old in 1960 or 1965. Wives 25-29 years old in 1973 expect to have 1.0 fewer children than wives of a similar age in either 1960 or 1965. This expectation of smaller families is not unreasonable since they have already had an average of 0.5-0.8 fewer children than the wives of comparable age 8 to 13 years earlier.

### COMPARISON WITH OTHER DATA

Other surveys have collected data on birth expectations, as indicated in table A. Most notably, the U.S. Bureau of the Census asked about birth expectations in the June 1973 Current Population Survey (CPS). A comparison of the NSFG of 1973 with the CPS of 1973 is shown in table B. Except for wives 35-39 years old, the NSFG reports slightly higher birth expectations than the CPS does. While the differences are of demographic significance, they are approximately equal to the standard error of the differences, and thus not statistically significant. The small differences in the two estimates could be due to differences between the surveys in any or all of the following: 1) allowances for uncertainty in birth expectations in the NSFG, 2) characteristics of wives reporting, 3) dates of survey, 4) total content of the interview, or 5) categorization of marital status.

### BIRTHS DESIRED

The number of births that a woman would like (or desire) if she could have just the number she wanted, is shown in table 1. The number of births desired by wives of all ages is approximately equal to the central number of births they expect to have. However, wives under age 30 expect to have fewer births than they would like, while wives age 30 or older expect to have more births than they would like. These differences could be due to differential ability to control fertility, specific temporal conditions or

Table A. Average number of total births expected and children ever born per currently married woman 18-39 years old in selected years by age: United States, 1960-1973

Total births expected, children ever born and age	1960 <sup>a</sup>	1965 <sup>a</sup>	1967 <sup>b</sup>	1970 <sup>a</sup>	1971 <sup>b</sup>	1972 <sup>b</sup>	1973 <sup>c</sup>
<b>Total births expected</b>							
18-24 years old .....	3.1	3.1	2.9	2.6	2.4	2.3	2.3
25-29 years old .....	3.4	3.4	3.0	2.8	2.6	2.5	2.4
30-34 years old .....	3.3	3.6	3.3	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.9
35-39 years old .....	3.0	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.2	3.2
<b>Children ever born</b>							
18-24 years old .....	1.4	1.5	1.2	1.1	1.0	0.9	0.9
25-29 years old .....	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.1	1.9	1.8	1.7
30-34 years old .....	2.7	3.1	3.1	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.6
35-39 years old .....	2.7	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.1

<sup>a</sup>Figures are from the 1960 Growth of American Families Survey and the 1965 and 1970 National Fertility Surveys as reported in U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 263 (April 1974), table C.

<sup>b</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 269 (September 1974).

<sup>c</sup>National Survey of Family Growth.

Table B. Number of total births expected per 1,000 currently married women 18-39 years of age for the National Survey of Family Growth and the Current Population Survey: United States, 1973

Age	National Survey of Family Growth	Current Population Survey
18-39 years .....	2,674	2,639
18-24 years .....	2,320	2,262
25-29 years .....	2,445	2,387
30-34 years .....	2,879	2,804
35-39 years .....	3,183	3,234

Source: Data for the Current Population Survey is from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 265, "Fertility Expectations of American Women: June 1973," Washington. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974.

differential interpretations of expected and desired numbers of births. There is less variation by age of women in the number of births they desire than in the number of births they actually expect.

### TIMING OF BIRTHS

Table 2 shows that 78 percent of the total births expected by currently married women 15-44 years old have already occurred. This varies directly by age with wives under age 20

having borne 20 percent of their expected births, while wives age 40-44 have borne 99 percent of their expected births. Wives 15-19 years old expect to have 79 percent of their births by the time they are 20-24, while wives 20-24 years old at the date of the survey had only had 40 percent of their expected births by this same age. Similarly, wives 20-24 years old expected to have 85 percent of their total births by the time they are 25-29 while wives currently 25-29 years old have had 68 percent of their births. These observations suggest at least one of the following: 1) women who marry at younger ages, who predominate among women aged 15-19, have different patterns of childbearing than women who marry at slightly older ages, who are more numerous among women aged 20-24; 2) births among younger women are concentrated within a narrower time period than they were among older women; or 3) younger women do not have realistic expectations of the timing of their future births.

### VARIATIONS IN BIRTH EXPECTATIONS

Table 1 shows that Negro wives at all ages expect to have more total births than do white wives. However, the difference decreases from 1,111 births per 1,000 wives aged 40-44, to 140 births per 1,000 wives aged 15-19. The higher

total birth expectations of Negro wives is due to their already having had more children than white wives.

Table 3 shows that the fertility of wives of Spanish origin or descent is more similar to that of Negro wives than to white wives. Compared with wives of other origins or descents, Spanish wives expect to have almost 25 percent more total births. This is due to their already having more children and expecting more children in the future than wives of other origin.

The greater the education of currently married women, the fewer total births they expect. This pattern is similar for each age group. The timing of births, however, is different for women with different amounts of education. Except for those with 1-3 years of high school, the more educated women expect more births in the future than their less educated counterparts, and have had fewer births in the past.

Wives in the labor force expect fewer total births than wives not in the labor force. Those working full-time expect fewer total births than women working part-time. Women working full-time have also postponed a larger number of births than women either working part-time or who are not in the labor force.

Currently married women whose family income is 150 percent or more of the poverty threshold expect to have fewer total births than women whose family income is less than 150 percent of the poverty threshold. This pattern applies to all ages 20 years or older. There is no difference in birth expectations for women below the poverty threshold and those whose family income is 100-149 percent of the poverty threshold.

Roman Catholic wives expect to have more total births than Protestant wives. Protestant wives, in turn, expect to have more total births than Jewish wives or wives of other or no religious identification. There is no difference in the timing of the births for Catholic, Protestant and Jewish wives because the pattern is apparent in both categories—children ever born and additional births expected. Catholic and Protestant wives who participate more frequently in religious activities expect more total births by the end of their childbearing than do women of the same religious identification who participate less frequently.

The older the woman was at the time of her

first marriage, the fewer births she expects by the time she completes her childbearing. The difference between women married at ages 20 to 21 and those married at ages 22-24 years, however, is not statistically significant. The pattern of decreasing numbers of total births expected with increasing age at marriage is observed for most age groups. However, there is also a general pattern of increasing numbers of additional births expected with increasing age at marriage indicating a difference by age of marriage in the timing of childbearing.

The timing of the first birth in relationship to marriage affects the total number of children a woman expects to have. Women who had a premarital birth expect to have 699 more births per 1,000 women than those whose first birth occurred after marriage. Except for women 40-44 years old, there is no difference in the total number of births expected by wives whose first child was born within 8 months of marriage and those whose first child was born 8-14 months after marriage. However, women who waited 15 months or more for the birth of their first child have significantly lower total birth expectations than those having a birth sooner after marriage. Wives with no live births by the survey date expect fewer total births than wives with at least one birth, regardless of its timing.

For all ages, women using contraception expect the same number of total births as women not using contraception. However, women who are using contraception have already borne more children. At ages 30 or older women using contraception expect to have more total births than women not using contraception. Among women who report that they are not using contraception, sterile women have had more births than other women expect to have; sterile women are older than other women not using contraception. Women who were pregnant, post partum, or trying to become pregnant at the date of interview are predominantly in the early years of their childbearing. While they expect about the same number of total births as women not using contraceptives, they have borne fewer children. Women sterilized for contraceptive reasons, or whose husbands have been sterilized, have borne more children than any other group of contracepting or noncontracepting women expect to have.

Table 1. Number of currently married women 15-44 years old, number of children they have borne, minimum, maximum, and central number of births expected, and number of births desired per thousand, by race and age: United States, 1973

Race and age	Number of wives in thousands	Children ever born	Minimum births expected	Central number of births expected	Maximum births expected	Births desired
<u>All races</u>						
15-44 years.....	26,646	2,180	2,653	2,783	2,985	2,753
15-19 years.....	1,028	479	2,047	2,376	2,684	2,644
20-24 years.....	4,949	921	2,057	2,313	2,653	2,491
25-29 years.....	6,063	1,651	2,250	2,445	2,696	2,530
30-34 years.....	5,248	2,575	2,791	2,879	3,063	2,712
35-39 years.....	4,632	3,054	3,155	3,183	3,313	3,036
40-44 years.....	4,726	3,251	3,279	3,297	3,361	3,104
<u>White</u>						
15-44 years.....	24,249	2,139	2,607	2,737	2,933	2,749
15-19 years.....	915	438	2,022	2,358	2,672	2,621
20-24 years.....	4,469	875	2,025	2,283	2,612	2,484
25-29 years.....	5,579	1,614	2,208	2,406	2,651	2,523
30-34 years.....	4,768	2,523	2,737	2,821	2,998	2,688
35-39 years.....	4,199	3,041	3,130	3,157	3,281	3,049
40-44 years.....	4,320	3,172	3,198	3,215	3,276	3,119
<u>Negro</u>						
15-44 years.....	2,081	2,712	3,198	3,326	3,610	2,759
15-19 years.....	96	820	2,197	2,498	2,777	2,692
20-24 years.....	451	1,365	2,336	2,575	3,024	2,540
25-29 years.....	417	2,147	2,749	2,922	3,295	2,627
30-34 years.....	402	3,160	3,447	3,534	3,782	2,844
35-39 years.....	347	3,513	3,671	3,714	3,933	2,909
40-44 years.....	367	4,255	4,303	4,326	4,413	2,960

**SYMBOLS**

- Data not available..... ---
- Category not applicable..... ...
- Quantity zero..... -
- Quantity more than 0 but less than 0.05..... 0.0
- Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision..... \*

Table 2. Number of children already born, additional births expected by timing, and percent total of births expected per 1,000 currently married women 15-44 years old, by race and age: United States, 1973

Race and age	Children already born	Additional births expected			Total births expected	Percent total of births expected		
		Within 2 years	Within 5 years	In all future years		Already occurred	Completed within 2 years	Completed within 5 years
<u>All races</u>								
15-44 years.....	2,180	153	447	603	2,783	78	84	94
15-19 years.....	479	458	1,391	1,897	2,376	20	39	79
20-24 years.....	921	283	1,049	1,392	2,313	40	52	85
25-29 years.....	1,651	226	598	794	2,445	68	77	92
30-34 years.....	2,575	104	223	304	2,879	89	93	97
35-39 years.....	3,054	46	82	130	3,183	96	97	99
40-44 years.....	3,251	15	26	47	3,297	99	99	99
<u>White</u>								
15-44 years.....	2,139	151	444	599	2,737	78	84	94
15-19 years.....	438	467	1,406	1,920	2,358	19	38	78
20-24 years.....	875	286	1,065	1,408	2,283	38	51	85
25-29 years.....	1,614	224	594	793	2,406	67	76	92
30-34 years.....	2,532	100	207	289	2,821	90	93	97
35-39 years.....	3,041	43	76	116	3,157	96	98	99
40-44 years.....	3,172	14	23	43	3,215	99	99	99
<u>Negro</u>								
15-44 years.....	2,712	157	459	613	3,326	82	86	95
15-19 years.....	820	411	1,249	1,678	2,498	33	49	83
20-24 years.....	1,365	255	930	1,210	2,575	53	63	89
25-29 years.....	2,147	238	600	775	2,922	73	82	94
30-34 years.....	3,160	119	310	374	3,534	89	93	98
35-39 years.....	3,513	52	77	200	3,714	95	96	97
40-44 years.....	4,255	21	41	71	4,326	98	99	99

Table 3. Number of total births expected and children ever born per 1,000 currently married women 15-44 years old by age and by selected characteristics: United States, 1973

Selected characteristics	Total	Age in years					
		15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44
Total births expected							
All women .....	2,783	2,376	2,313	2,445	2,879	3,183	3,297
<u>Origin</u>							
Spanish .....	3,403	2,886	2,810	3,258	3,395	3,840	3,840
Other .....	2,741	2,324	2,279	2,394	2,854	3,118	3,267
<u>Education</u>							
Less than high school.....	3,686	2,715	3,134	3,279	3,658	3,861	4,214
High school: 1-3 years.....	3,148	2,262	2,559	2,877	3,365	3,565	3,654
High school: 4 years.....	2,669	2,393	2,276	2,380	2,839	3,065	3,023
College: 1-3 years.....	2,544	2,365	2,109	2,297	2,568	2,971	3,160
College: 4 years or more.....	2,302	---	1,931	2,115	2,317	2,385	2,898
<u>Labor force status</u>							
Not in labor force.....	2,942	2,397	2,479	2,634	3,032	3,348	3,480
In labor force.....	2,560	2,335	2,116	2,147	2,633	2,966	3,074
Working full-time.....	2,511	2,398	2,132	2,128	2,519	3,028	3,021
Working part-time.....	2,730	2,213	2,227	2,265	2,836	2,907	3,314
Not working.....	2,410	*1,455	1,508	1,961	2,766	2,760	2,791
<u>Poverty level income</u>							
Below poverty income.....	3,501	2,466	2,641	3,098	3,738	4,203	4,692
100-149 percent poverty income.....	3,564	2,319	2,363	3,230	3,930	4,477	4,799
150 percent poverty income or more.....	2,645	2,366	2,273	2,332	2,719	2,960	3,080
<u>Religion and religious participation</u>							
Protestant.....	2,710	2,246	2,260	2,402	2,798	3,088	3,198
More frequent.....	2,782	2,338	2,381	2,468	2,810	3,129	3,090
Less frequent.....	2,644	2,182	2,195	2,341	2,787	3,034	3,324
Roman Catholic.....	3,057	2,790	2,514	2,650	3,138	3,476	3,632
More frequent.....	3,225	2,804	2,626	2,725	3,284	3,630	3,795
Less frequent.....	2,840	2,782	2,409	2,563	2,929	3,251	3,330
Jewish.....	2,356	*3,040	1,569	2,094	2,058	2,583	2,771
Other or none.....	2,257	2,020	2,117	2,002	2,553	2,680	2,586
<u>Age at first marriage</u>							
Under 18 years.....	3,219	2,347	2,528	2,953	3,629	3,704	3,767
18-19 years.....	2,862	2,413	2,283	2,527	3,038	3,430	3,671
20-21 years.....	2,654	...	2,254	2,318	2,786	3,199	3,019
22-24 years.....	2,551	...	2,194	2,253	2,432	2,831	3,064
25-29 years.....	2,291	...	...	2,039	2,225	2,273	2,638
30 or more years.....	1,901	...	...	...	1,434	1,767	2,274
<u>Timing of first birth</u>							
Before marriage.....	3,672	2,358	3,131	3,279	3,889	4,140	4,481
After marriage.....	2,973	2,381	2,406	2,610	2,992	3,275	3,456
0-7 months.....	3,226	2,294	2,435	2,691	3,493	4,049	4,678
8-14 months.....	3,250	2,538	2,466	2,851	3,216	3,525	3,771
15 or more months.....	2,693	2,401	2,346	2,453	2,630	2,890	3,009
No live births.....	1,717	2,376	2,073	1,633	1,022	654	276
<u>Contraceptive status</u>							
Noncontraceptors.....	2,740	2,543	2,589	2,542	2,680	2,987	2,956
Pregnant, post partum, seeking pregnancy.....	2,727	2,635	2,665	2,685	2,734	3,084	3,144
Sterile.....	2,897	---	*409	2,118	2,520	3,152	3,044
Other.....	2,627	2,200	2,411	2,146	2,729	2,727	2,802
Contraceptors.....	2,801	2,251	2,202	2,406	2,948	3,267	3,503
Sterilization.....	3,328	*1,912	2,311	2,806	3,195	3,544	3,796
Pill, IUD.....	2,563	2,214	2,184	2,338	2,851	3,439	3,508
Other methods.....	2,752	2,450	2,233	2,307	2,839	2,859	3,257

Table 3. Number of total births expected and children ever born per 1,000 currently married women 15-44 years old by age and by selected characteristics: United States, 1973—con.

Selected characteristics	Total	Age in years					
		15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44
		Children ever born					
All women .....	2,180	479	921	1,651	2,575	3,054	3,251
<u>Origin</u>							
Spanish .....	2,641	*674	1,268	2,404	2,932	3,612	3,574
Other .....	2,149	459	897	1,604	2,558	2,998	3,233
<u>Education</u>							
Less than high school .....	3,210	810	1,832	2,627	3,358	3,640	4,146
High school: 1-3 years .....	2,707	587	1,694	2,434	3,133	3,424	3,617
High school: 4 years .....	2,072	342	835	1,719	2,584	2,959	2,976
College: 1-3 years .....	1,812	---	473	1,323	2,227	2,892	3,117
College: 4 years or more .....	1,470	---	*155	730	1,770	2,220	2,855
<u>Labor force status</u>							
Not in labor force .....	2,395	557	1,207	1,985	2,767	3,197	3,421
In labor force .....	1,877	324	580	1,124	2,267	2,865	3,042
Working full-time .....	1,731	282	498	1,042	2,153	2,908	2,983
Working part-time .....	2,239	*455	937	1,432	2,498	2,836	3,294
Not working .....	1,931	*89	*514	944	2,293	2,670	2,762
<u>Poverty level income</u>							
Below poverty income .....	2,734	579	1,150	2,101	3,488	3,975	4,557
100-149 percent poverty income .....	3,099	791	1,410	2,732	3,765	4,388	4,733
150 percent poverty income or more .....	2,043	407	837	1,531	2,399	2,836	3,041
<u>Religion and religious participation</u>							
Protestant .....	2,158	482	928	1,670	2,548	2,993	3,169
More frequent .....	2,287	551	959	1,747	2,546	3,040	3,041
Less frequent .....	2,039	434	912	1,599	2,550	2,932	3,318
Roman Catholic .....	2,359	*471	888	1,773	2,727	3,273	3,546
More frequent .....	2,525	*283	677	1,732	2,903	3,425	3,729
Less frequent .....	2,144	*589	1,089	1,820	2,475	3,051	3,209
Jewish .....	1,914	*540	*314	994	2,058	2,510	2,733
Other or none .....	1,467	*479	1,035	1,025	2,103	2,471	2,510
<u>Age at first marriage</u>							
Under 18 years .....	2,778	687	1,653	2,603	3,462	3,628	3,750
18-19 years .....	2,266	*218	1,007	2,019	2,838	3,361	3,652
20-21 years .....	1,999	...	512	1,503	2,591	3,106	2,976
22-24 years .....	1,825	...	*279	964	1,985	2,675	2,997
25-29 years .....	1,657	...	...	654	1,476	1,963	2,573
30 or more years .....	1,284	...	...	...	*333	1,108	1,950
<u>Timing of first birth</u>							
Before marriage .....	3,186	1,123	2,218	2,695	3,441	3,957	4,468
After marriage .....	2,626	1,154	1,474	2,036	2,761	3,181	3,424
0-7 months .....	2,842	1,128	1,602	2,278	3,387	3,952	4,651
8-14 months .....	2,966	1,139	1,561	2,361	3,039	3,419	3,733
15 or more months .....	2,317	1,228	1,325	1,774	2,309	2,806	2,980
No live births .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
<u>Contraceptive status</u>							
Noncontraceptors .....	1,825	*305	824	1,223	1,985	2,628	2,839
Pregnant, post partum, seeking pregnancy .....	1,056	348	780	1,088	1,401	1,822	1,866
Sterile .....	2,897	---	*409	2,118	2,520	3,152	3,044
Other .....	2,166	*93	1,031	1,388	2,474	2,521	2,728
Contraceptors .....	2,335	611	960	1,820	2,779	3,236	3,491
Sterilization .....	3,328	*1,912	2,311	2,806	3,195	3,544	3,796
Pill, IUD .....	1,832	621	872	1,669	2,647	3,390	3,506
Other methods .....	2,322	*503	830	1,542	2,558	2,811	3,247



TECHNICAL NOTES

**DESIGN OF THE SURVEY:** The National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), initiated in 1971, is designed to provide data on fertility, family planning, and related aspects of maternal and child health. Field work for Cycle I was carried out by the National Opinion Research Center in 1973 and early 1974 with September 13, 1973, as the midpoint of the interviewing.

A multistage probability sample of women in the noninstitutional population of the conterminous United States was used. The sample of women eligible for the NSFG was between the ages of 15 to 44 years, inclusive, were currently married or previously married or were never married but had natural children presently living in the household. A detailed description of the sample design will be presented in a forthcoming report "Sample Design, Estimation Procedures, and Variance Estimation for a National Survey of Family Growth."

**RELIABILITY OF ESTIMATES:** Since the statistics presented in this report are based on a sample, they may differ somewhat from the figures that would have been obtained if a complete census had been taken, using the same questionnaires, instructions, interviewing personnel, and field procedures. This chance difference between sample results and a complete count is referred to as sampling error. In addition, the results are also subject to nonsampling error due to respondent misreporting, data processing mistakes, and nonresponse. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain accurate measures of nonsampling errors. These types of errors were kept to a minimum by the quality control procedures and other methods incorporated into the survey design and administration.

Sampling error, or the extent to which samples may differ by chance from a complete count, is measured by a statistic called the standard error of estimate. Approximate standard errors for estimated numbers and ratios from this survey are shown in tables I and II.

The chances are about 68 out of 100 that an estimate from the sample would differ from a complete census by less than the standard error. The chances are about 95 out of 100 that the differences between the sample estimate and a

Table I. Approximate standard errors for estimated numbers of white and total women: 1973 National Survey of Family Growth

Size of estimate	Relative standard error	Standard error
50,000 .....	30.0	15,000
100,000 .....	21.2	21,000
200,000 .....	15.0	30,000
500,000 .....	9.5	47,000
1,000,000 .....	6.7	67,000
2,000,000 .....	4.8	95,000
5,000,000 .....	3.0	151,000
10,000,000 .....	2.2	216,000
20,000,000 .....	1.5	311,000

Table II. Estimated standard errors of the ratio of total births expected per 1,000 women: 1973 National Survey of Family Growth

Base of ratio	Estimated ratio				
	1,000	2,000	3,000	4,000	5,000
20,000 .....	232	531	826	1,121	1,416
50,000 .....	147	336	523	709	896
100,000 .....	104	238	370	502	634
200,000 .....	74	168	262	355	448
500,000 .....	47	107	166	225	284
1,000,000 .....	33	76	118	160	202
2,000,000 .....	24	54	84	114	144
5,000,000 .....	16	35	54	74	93
10,000,000 .....	12	26	40	54	68
20,000,000 .....	9	20	30	41	51

complete count would be less than twice the standard error. The relative standard error is the ratio of the standard error to the statistic being estimated. In this report, numbers and percentages which have a standard error that is more than 25 percent of the estimate itself are considered "unreliable." They are marked with an asterisk to caution the user but may be combined to make other types of comparisons of greater precision.

In this report, terms such as "similar" and "the same" mean that any observed difference between two estimates being compared is not statistically significant. Similarly, terms such as-

“greater,” “less,” “larger,” “smaller,” etc., indicate that the observed differences are statistically significant. The normal deviate test with a 0.5 level of significance was used to test all com-

parisons. Lack of comment in the text between any two statistics does *not* mean the difference was tested and found not to be significant.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

*Children ever born.*—The number of children born alive to a woman.

*Additional births expected.*—The number of children a woman expects to give birth to in the future, including current pregnancy, if applicable. Women who were sterile or married to sterile men were classified as expecting zero additional births. Those physically able to have births were asked whether they and their husbands intended to have any babies in the future and, if so, how many. Women who did not know whether they intended any future births, or did not know a particular number they intended to have, were asked for the smallest and largest numbers they expect to have. Women who reported a particular number of children they intended to have were asked how sure they were about having specifically that number. Those uncertain of having that specific number were asked for the maximum and minimum numbers they expect to have.

For each woman, there is a maximum, minimum and central number of additional births expected. If a woman reported a specific number she intended to have, that was considered the central number she expected. If she was sure about it, that was also the minimum and maximum number she expected. For a woman who was not sure of having her intended number, the smallest and largest numbers she expected were her minimum and maximum numbers, respectively. For a woman who did not report any specific number of intended future births, the average of the smallest and the largest numbers expected became her central expected number. In this report, discussion of additional births expected refers to the central number unless specifically identified otherwise. Further discussion of this topic will be given in a forthcoming report in Series 23 of *Vital and Health Statistics*.

*Total births expected.*—The number of children a woman expects to have by the time

she completes her childbearing. This number is the sum of the children ever born and the additional births expected. Minimum, maximum and central numbers of total births expected are calculated by using the minimum, maximum and central additional births expected. Unless specified otherwise, references to total births expected refer to the central number.

*Births desired.*—The number of children a woman would have if she could start life all over again and have just the number of children she wanted, knowing other things would have turned out just about the way they did for her and her husband.

*Age.*—The respondent's age at her last birthday before the interview.

*Age at first marriage.*—The woman's age at the time of her first marriage or commonlaw union.

*Contraceptive status.*—Women were classified as “noncontraceptors” if they were pregnant, post partum (last pregnancy terminated less than two months before interview) or they and their husbands were not using contraceptives because she was trying to become pregnant, they or their husbands were sterile for other than contraceptive reasons, or for some other reason. Women were classified as “contraceptors” if they or their husbands had had a sterilizing operation at least partly for contraceptive reasons, if they were using the pill, the IUD, or other methods of contraception.

*Education.*—The highest grade of regular school the woman had completed at the survey date.

*Labor Force Status.*—A woman is categorized as being in the labor force if she was working full-time or part-time, had a job but was not at work because of temporary illness, vacation, or a strike, or if she was unemployed, laid off, or looking for work. A woman is classified as working full-time if she works 35 or more hours a week.

*Marital Status.*—Marital status classifications are married, widowed, divorced, separated, or never married. Married persons include those who reported themselves as married or as informally married, such as living with a partner or commonlaw spouse. This classification includes those who are temporarily separated for reasons other than marital discord such as vacation, illness, or Armed Forces. Persons who are separated legally or informally for reasons of marital discord are classified as separated. All tables in this report are based upon currently married women or others whose marital status at the time of the interview was “married.”

*Poverty level.*—The poverty index ratio was calculated by dividing the total family income by the weighted average threshold income of nonfarm residents, head under 65, based on the poverty levels shown in the U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-60, No. 98, “Characteristics of the Low-Income Population, 1973,” table A-3. This definition takes into account the sex of the family head and the number of persons in the family. Total family income includes income from all sources for all members of the respondent’s family.

*Race.*—Classification by race of the woman interviewed, based on interviewer observation, was reported as Negro, white, or other.

*Religion and religious participation.*—Women were asked whether they were Protestant, Catholic, Jewish or something else. Protestant includes most of the Christian groups other than Roman Catholic. The “other” category includes non-Christian religions and no religion.

Protestant women are classified as having more frequent religious participation if they attend religious services twice a month or more, and having less frequent participation if attendance is once a month or less.

Catholic women are classified as having more frequent religious participation if they receive communion several times a year or more, and less frequent participation if they receive communion once a year or less. Sample reliability makes subclassification of Jewish or “other or none” religious categories by participation impractical.

*Spanish origin.*—A respondent was classified as being of Spanish origin if she reported her origin or descent as Mexican, Chicano, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or other Spanish.

*Timing of first birth.*—The first birth is classified as occurring before or after the first or only marriage. First births occurring after marriage are further classified by the number of months between marriage and the birth.

Previous issues of *Advance Data From Vital and Health Statistics*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>No. 1. Blood Pressure of Persons 6-74 Years of Age in the United States (Issued: October 18, 1976)</p> <p>No. 2. Hypertension: United States, 1974 (Issued: November 8, 1976)</p> <p>No. 3. Height and Weight of Adults 18-74 Years in the United States (Issued: November 19, 1976)</p> <p>No. 4. Prevalence of Dermatological Diseases Among Persons 1-74 Years of Age, United States (Issued: January 26, 1977)</p> <p>No. 5. A Comparison of Levels of Serum Cholesterol of Adults 18-74 Years of Age in the United States in 1960-62 and 1971-74 (Issued: February 22, 1977)</p> | <p>No. 6. Dietary Intake of Persons 1-74 Years of Age in the United States (Issued: March 30, 1977)</p> <p>No. 7. Total Serum Cholesterol Level of Adults 18-74 Years of Age in the United States in 1971-74 (Issued: May 25, 1977)</p> <p>No. 8. Total Serum Cholesterol Level of Children 4-17 Years of Age in the United States in 1971-74 (Issued: July 11, 1977)</p> <p>No. 9. Wanted and Unwanted Births Reported by Mothers 15-44 Years of Age in the United States in 1973 (Issued: August 10, 1977)</p> |
|--|--|

GPO 919-170

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE  
 Public Health Service  
 Health Resources Administration  
 National Center for Health Statistics  
 Center Building  
 3700 East-West Highway  
 Hyattsville, Maryland 20782

OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
 PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300

HRA 77-1250

POSTAGE AND FEES PAID  
 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEW  
 HEW 390

FIRST CLASS MAIL



To receive this publication regularly, contact  
 the National Center for Health Statistics by  
 calling 301-436-8500.