

## FERTILITY

The term 'fertility' is defined as the actual reproductive performance of a population. In other words, it is the number of live births that a population produces. As early as the 1970's Bermuda's fertility had fallen below replacement level; that is, Bermuda's women were having fewer daughters than were necessary to "replace" themselves in the population - a demographic trend that has characterized the populations of many western countries for the past two decades.

The 1991 census results indicate a continuation of the trend toward smaller family size, as women reported starting their families later and completing their fertility earlier than was even the case in 1980. In 1991 the number of children ever born to women aged between 15 and 64 years was 3% lower (31,738) than in 1980 (32,820) despite the fact that the number of women in this age group had increased by 15% from 17,700 to 20,290. Thus the number of mothers per 1,000 women declined from 691 to 662. This is shown in Table 1 which sets out summary measures for women aged 15 to 64 who were not attending school. For women of the childbearing ages 15 to 44 the number of children declined by 9% from 16,591 to 15,107 whilst that age group of females was 15% higher in 1991 than it was in 1980, increasing from 12,312 to 14,124; and, the number of mothers per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 declined from 618 to 569. Younger adult females, those between 15 and 29 years, actually declined in number by 3% and the number of children born to them fell quite substantially by 32%. The decline of fertility in the 1970's contributed to the smaller size of this birth cohort.

**Table 1**  
**Summary Measures for Women Aged 15 to 64<sup>1</sup> Not Attending School and Children Born Alive to These Women For Selected Age Groups**

Age Group	All Women <sup>1</sup>		All Women With Children		All Children Ever Born		Mothers per 1,000 Women		Children per 1,000 Women		Children per 1,000 Mothers	
	1991	1980	1991	1980	1991	1980	1991	1980	1991	1980	1991	1980
All Women	20,290	17,700	13,436	12,223	31,738	32,820	662	691	1,564	1,854	2,362	2,685
15 - 44	14,124	12,312	8,032	7,611	15,107	16,591	569	618	1,070	1,348	1,881	2,180
15 - 29	6,154	6,356	1,961	2,715	2,869	4,224	319	427	466	665	1,463	1,556
30 - 44	7,970	5,956	6,071	4,896	12,238	12,367	762	822	1,536	2,076	2,016	2,526
45 - 64	6,166	5,388	5,458	4,612	16,631	16,229	885	856	2,697	3,012	3,047	3,519

<sup>1</sup>Excludes women who did not state whether or not they had children.

The continued downward trend in fertility indicated by these figures is also evident in the movement toward a later onset of childbearing and an earlier completion thereof. Table 2 sets out women aged between 15 and 64 years who were not attending school by age at first live birth. The proportion entering motherhood in their teen years declined from 36% to 31% whilst those waiting until the latter half of their twenties increased from 18% to 22%. Those waiting as late as their thirties increased from 8% to 11%. The median age at first birth thus rose from 22.0 years to 22.7 years.

**Table 2**  
**Females Aged 15 - 64 Not Attending School by Age at First Live Birth**

Age at First Live Birth	Number		Percentage Distribution	
	1991	1980	1991	1980
Total	13,469	12,397	100	100
Under 20	4,123	4,410	31	36
20 - 24	4,802	4,453	36	36
25 - 29	2,937	2,257	22	18
30 - 34	1,106	752	8	6
35 & Over	340	233	3	2
Not Stated	161	292	1	2
Median Age at First Live Birth	22.7	22.0		

Table 3 displays age at last live birth for women aged between 45 and 64 years - women who had passed beyond their childbearing years. The shift to earlier completion of fertility during the intercensal period is quite evident. In 1991 half of women aged 45 to 64 years had their last child before the age of 30 whereas this was true for only 37% of that age group in 1980. Similarly, the proportion bearing children beyond age 34 was down from 30% to 20%. The median age at last live birth was down from 32.0 to 30.0 years of age.

**Table 3**  
**Females Aged 45 - 64 and Not Attending School by Age At Last Live Birth**

Age at Last Live Birth	Number		Percentage Distribution	
	1991	1980	1991	1980
Total	5,475	4,652	100	100
Under 20	201	162	4	3
20 - 24	834	486	15	10
25 - 29	1,705	1,129	31	24
30 - 34	1,567	1,369	29	29
35 - 39	856	968	16	21
40 & Over	218	393	4	9
Not Stated	94	145	2	3
Median Age at Last Live Birth	30.0	32.0		

Future more in-depth studies will reveal the effects of factors such as education, occupation and income on fertility. Studies indicate that there is an inverse relationship between fertility and these three variables; that is, generally, the higher a woman's level of education, occupation or income, the

fewer children she is likely to have. The census results have revealed a female population that is becoming more equipped educationally and is moving further up the corporate ladder. Both of these contribute to the delaying of childbirth. Also affecting the number of children a woman will have is the age at which she first marries, which is also affected by her level of education, her occupation and her income. Usually, the higher the level of these three variables, the later a woman is likely to marry. All of these relationships and their variations within sub-groups of the population will be explored more fully in subsequent studies.