- **Desire for another child:** Sixteen percent of currently married women age 15-49 want to have another child soon and 12 percent want to wait at least 2 years before having another child.
- Limiting child bearing: Sixty-one percent of currently married women in Sri Lanka want to limit child bearing: 47 percent want no more children and 14 percent have been sterilized.
- **Ideal Family:** Women currently want 2.5 on average children. as their ideal family size In the 2016 DHS.
- **Wanted Fertility:** The total wanted fertility rate (1.9) is lower than the current total fertility rate (2.2)

Information on fertility preferences can improve understanding of future fertility patterns, future demands for contraception, and provides information related to attitudes on fertility intentions and preferences. This chapter presents information on whether and when married women want more children or not, ideal family size, whether the last birth was wanted at the time, and a theoretical fertility rate if all unwanted births were prevented.

To analyze the attitudes regarding the desired number of children, ever-married women age 15-49 who were either not pregnant or unsure about their status were asked to set of questions to ascertain their fertility preferences: Would you like to have (a/ another) child or would you prefer not to have any (More) children? Women who were pregnant at the time of the survey were asked: After the child you are expecting now, would you like to have another child, or would you prefer not to have any more children? Women who indicated that they wanted another child were asked how long they would like to wait before the birth of the next child. Finally, women were asked about the total number of children they would like to have, if they were to start childbearing afresh.

7.1 DESIRE FOR MORE CHILDREN

Desire for another child

Women were asked whether they wanted more children and, if so, how long they would prefer to wait before the next child. Women who are sterilized are assumed not to want any more children

Currently married women were asked whether they wanted more children and, if so, how long they would prefer to wait before the next child. Women who are sterilized are assumed not to want any more children. Table 7.1 presents the percent distribution of currently married women age 15-49 by the desire for children, according to the number of living children. At the national level, thirty percent of the currently married women want to have another child, 16 percent wanted soon and 12 percent later on. However, the majority of currently married women (47 percent) indicated that they do not want to have more children than the ones they already have. If we add to this percentage, the 14 percent of women who are sterilized, over 61 percent of currently married women do not want more children at all (see Figure 7.1 below) are to respond to the needs expressed by these two numbers.



	Number of living Children								
esire for children	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	Total 15-4	
Have another soon ²	67.4	31.0	7.2	1.0	0.9	0.1	1.0	16.	
Have another later ³	8.4	32.5	7.6	2.0	0.8	0.7	0.0	12	
Have another, undecided when	3.0	4.1	1.5	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	1	
Undecided	10.8	4.1	4.5	2.1	1.3	0.3	2.7	4	
Want no more	3.2	24.0	69.5	51.1	43.5	40.5	53.2	47	
Sterilized⁴	0.2	0.9	6.4	39.3	43.3	49.1	40.6	14	
Declared infecund	5.1	1.4	0.8	0.8	1.2	0.5	0.2	1	
Missing	1.9	2.1	2.5	3.5	8.8	8.8	2.3	3	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100	
Number	1,437	4,259	6,746	3,688	799	251	76	17,2	

As with many statistics, the values presented above vary substantially according to the number of living children the woman had at the time of the survey. From Table 7.1 we can conclude that the desire to have another child (soon, later on or undecided when) is greater among the currently married women without children or with one child (79 percent and 68 respectively), compared to 16 percent or less among those with 2 or more children already. Similarly, among those who indicated that they do not want to have more children, the highest percentages are observed among those currently married women who already have two or more children or are already sterilized (76 percent among those with 2 or more children and 90 percent or more among those with 5 or more children, see Table 7.1 and Figure 7.2).

Figure 7.1 Desire for more children among currently married women



Figure 7.2 Percentage of currently married women who want no more children by number of living children



Note : women who have been sterilized are considered do want no more children.

Table 7.2 presents the percentage of currently married women who want no more children (including those who have already been sterilized) by the number of living children and according to background characteristics. In general, the differences in the percentage currently married women who do not want more children by background characteristics are relatively small, with a few exceptions. Women living in the estate areas are most likely not to want to have any more children (66 percent). By district, the percentage who do not want more children varies substantially, from just 34 percent in the district of Mannar to twice as many (69 percent) in Kagalle. The desire for no more children fluctuates between 59 percent and 64 percent across household wealth quintiles. By education the percentage of wanting no more children is highest (84 percent) among those with no education and lowest (47 percent) among currently married women with degree and above. This pattern is particularly found among currently married women with just one child. Similar differences are not observed among currently married women with three or more children.

The decisions of women with two or more children about not having any more children are pivotal to the achievement of the near-replacement fertility in Sri Lanka as documented in previous chapters. Almost 61 percent of the currently married women express their desire to have no more children, this number varies little across places of residence, education or wealth quintile. As figure 7.3 shows, in 8 districts, close to 80 percent of the currently married women with two children do not want to have more children.

Table 7.2 Desire to limit childbearing

Percentage of currently married women age 15-49 who want no more children, by number of living children, according to background characteristics, Sri Lanka 2016

	Number of living children							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	Total
Residence								
Urban	2.9	24.8	73.8	87.0	86.2	(90.2)	*	58.1
Rural	3.5	24.8	76.3	91.3	87.1	89.9	93.8	61.5
Estate	1.0	26.6	75.8	84.5	85.0	*	*	65.7
District								
Colombo	5.0	29.7	79.4	91.1	(93.7)	*	*	60.0
Gampaha	4.3	36.9	80.8	95.5	(91.8)	*	*	64.7
Kalutara	1.8	27.0	80.1	90.5	*	*	*	62.3
Kandy	3.1	27.9	73.4	91.4	94.0	*	*	61.2
Matale	(2.1)	18.0	75.7	95.6	*	*	*	62.0
Nuwaar Eliva	(19.7)	25.2	77.0	87.2	(81.1)	*	*	67.2
Galle	3.8	18.0	78.5	94.4	(93.6)	*	*	62.6
Matara	5.4	24.2	77.6	96.0	(90.4)	*	*	65.3
Hambantota	(0,0)	16.2	75.7	93.2	(76.3)	*	*	60.0
Jaffna	(0.0)	6.9	69.4	77.7	(62.1)	(86.7)	*	53.0
Mannar	(0.0)	5.0	40.3	47.0	28.0	(62.8)	*	33.6
Vayuniya	(0,0)	16.5	62.6	64.6	(54.4)	(02.0)	*	47.6
Mullaitiyu	(0.0)	21.6	72.5	04.0	(00.0)	*	*	47.0 64.6
Kilinoohohi	*	21.0	73.5	93.0	(90.9)	*	*	64.0
	(2,5)	13.0	71.0	91.5	(00.3)	(01.0)	*	04.2
Batticaloa	(2.5)	21.0	00.0 55.0	80.1 70.5	82.0	(81.0)	*	55.9
Ampara	2.8	14.0	55.3	78.5	/8./			49.6
Irincomalee	(0.0)	9.8	51.8	/6.8	(76.3)	^ +	^	50.0
Kurunegala	3.3	22.2	82.2	94.7	(96.9)	*	*	63.6
Puttlam	5.3	30.1	72.4	93.3	(90.5)	*	*	62.7
Anuradhapura	1.8	24.6	69.4	90.8	(90.8)	*	*	57.4
Polonnaruwa	(3.8)	32.0	72.1	90.7	*	*	*	64.0
Badulla	1.5	17.0	72.2	90.5	(87.1)	*	*	61.9
Moneragala	(0.0)	16.7	74.5	84.4	(97.4)	*	*	62.1
Ratnapura	3.1	22.2	78.7	94.8	(98.4)	*	*	60.7
Kegalle	0.0	32.5	88.2	93.3	*	*	*	68.9
Education								
No education	*	*	92.1	89.8	(90.3)	*	*	83.9
Passed Grade 1-5	(16.6)	54.9	84.9	90.2	82.8	91.7	(96.6)	81.2
Passed Grade 6-10	2.5	24.3	75.3	90.5	87.7	89.1	(91.9)	64.5
Passed G.C.E.(O/L) or	2.3	25.6	77.2	90.5	84.8	(84.8)	*	59.4
Passed G.C.E.(A/L)	3.5	22.2	73.0	89.8	94.4	*	*	51.6
Degree and above	3.8	19.8	77.2	88.4	*	*	*	46.7
Wealth guintile								
Lowest	3.0	25.4	73.4	88.5	86.0	89.8	92.4	64.3
Second	4 2	23.9	75.2	91.6	85.8	90.5	*	61.8
Middle	4.2 4.8	24.0	75.8	90.1	90.2	(84 9)	*	59.8
Fourth	т.0 1 Д	23.0	75.4	80.1	85.8	(0-1.0)	*	58.0
Highest	3.2	28.2	79.0	92.3	87.8	*	*	61.6
Total	3.3	24.9	75.9	90.3	86.8	89.6	93.7	61.1

Note: Women who have been sterilized are considered to want no more children.

¹ The number of living children includes the current pregnancy



Figure 7.3 Percentage of currently married women with two children who want no more children, by district Sri Lanka, 2016

7.2 IDEAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN

Ideal family size

Respondents with no children were asked, " if you could choose exactly the number of children to have in your whole life, how many would that be?"

Respondants who had children were asked: " if you could go back to the time when you did not have any children and could choose exactly the number of children to have in your whole life, how many would that be ?"



This section focuses on the respondents' ideal number of children, implicitly taking into account the number of children that the respondent already has. Ever-married women were asked about the number of children they would choose to have if they could start afresh, with no reference to any particular change in marital status. Respondents who had no children were asked "if you could choose exactly the number of children to have in your whole life, how many would that be?" Responses to these questions are summarized in Tables 7.3 and 7.4.

Table 7.3 Ideal number of children by number of living children

Percent distribution of ever-married women 15-49 by ideal number of children, and mean ideal number of children for all respondents and for currently married respondents, according to the number of living children, Sri Lanka 2016

		Number of living children						
Ideal number of children	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	Tota
0	3.7	3.9	4.0	5.4	8.2	7.6	15.3	4.5
1	8.4	9.1	3.5	1.9	1.7	1.6	0.8	4.9
2	55.9	58.9	51.6	20.5	13.7	8.4	4.5	44.6
3	22.9	21.8	28.6	50.8	19.2	26.5	11.9	30.5
4	6.4	4.0	9.6	14.5	45.0	13.8	15.3	10.7
5	1.2	1.2	1.9	5.4	6.7	31.5	12.7	3.1
6+	0.5	0.3	0.5	1.1	4.2	9.5	34.8	1.0
Non-numeric responses	0.9	0.9	0.3	0.4	1.3	1.0	4.8	0.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	1,551	4,634	7,039	3,847	873	271	87	18,302
Mean ideal number of children for: ²								
Ever-married	2.3	2.2	2.4	2.9	3.3	3.8	4.4	2.5
Number ever-married women	1,537	4,594	7,016	3,832	861	268	83	18,191
Currently married	2.3	2.2	2.5	2.9	3.3	3.8	4.4	2.5
Number of currently married	1,429	4,231	6,726	3,673	788	249	73	17,169

¹ The number of living children includes current pregnancy for women

² Means are calculated excluding respondents who gave non-numeric responses.

³ The number of living children includes one additional child if respondent's wife is pregnant (or if any wife is pregnant for men with more than one current wife).

According to the data given in Table 7.3, the mean ideal number of children for currently married women is 2.5. This mean value varies by the number of children a woman already has. It is lower among those couples without children or with just one living child (2.3 and 2.2 respectively) and much higher among those with greater number of living children (3.3 or greater for couples with 3 or more living children). Almost 45 percent women prefer to have two children and 31 percent prefer three children. The more children the respondents already have, the more children they consider ideal.

Background characteristic	Mean	Number of ever-married
		women
Age		
15-19	2.2	225
20-24	2.3	1,407
25-29	2.4	2,609
30-34	2.5	3,598
35-39	2.6	3,922
40-44	2.6	3,243
45-49	2.7	3,189
Residence		
Urban	2.6	2,818
Rural	2.5	14,665
Estate	2.5	709
District		
Colombo	2.5	1,700
Gampaha	2.4	1.826
Kalutara	2.5	1,102
Kandy	2.6	1,218
Matale	2.8	488
Nuwara Eliva	2.5	572
Galle	2.5	911
Matara	2.0	715
Hambantota	2.7	553
Jaffna	2.5	461
Mannar	2.8	81
Vavuniva	2.5	136
Mullaitivu	22	80
Kilinochchi	2.8	94
Batticaloa	2.9	53(
Ampara	2.8	731
Trincomalee	2.6	362
Kurunegala	2.0	1 591
Puttlam	2.4	.,00
Apuradhapura	2.4	98/
Polopparuwa	2.7	307
Badulla	2.1	733
Moneragala	2.0	100
Ratnanura	2.5	1 083
Kegalle	2.0	697
Education No education	27	280
Passed Grade 1-5	2.7	1 249
Passed Grade 6-10	2.5	۶.07/
Passed G C E (O/I) or equivalent	2.5	2 N2F
Passed G.C.E. (A/L) or equivalent	2.5	3,02
Degree and above	2.4	849
Wealth quintile	2.6	3 36
Second	2.0	3,307
Middle	2.5	3,077
Fourth	2.0	0,018 070 0
Highest	2.5	3,530
Total	2.5	18,191

Table 7.4 shows the mean ideal number of children for all ever-married women by background characteristics. Overall, the mean ideal number of children increases gradually with the age of the woman, from 2.2 children among women age 15-19 to 2.7 children among women age 45-49. There appears to be an association between the mean ideal number and the educational level of the woman; the higher the educational level, the lower the mean ideal children. For women with no education the mean ideal number is 2.7 children, compared to just 2.4 children among women with degree and above. Greater variation is observed in the mean ideal number of children by district. The range in this number goes from 2.1 in Kegalle to 2.9 in Batticaloa.

7.3 WANTED FERTILITY RATES

Wonted fertility rate

The number of children the avarage woman would have over the course of her lifetime if she bore children at current age-specific fertility rates, excluding unwanted births. A birth is considered wanted if the number of living children at the time of conception is lower than the ideal number of children cuurently reported by the respondent.

sample : British to women age 15-49 during the 3 years before the survey

The wanted fertility rate measures the potential demographic impact of avoiding unwanted births. The wanted fertility rate is calculated in the same manner as the conventional total fertility rate, except that unwanted births are excluded. A birth is considered wanted if the number of living children at the time of conception was less than the ideal number of children reported. The gap between wanted and actual fertility shows how successful women are in achieving their reproductive intentions. A comparison of the total wanted fertility rates and total fertility rates for the three years preceding the survey by background characteristics is presented in Table 7.5.

ackground characteristic	Total wanted fertility rates	Total fertility rate		
District				
Colombo	1.6	1.8		
Gampaha	1.6	1.8		
Kalutara	2.1	2.2		
Kandy	2.2	2.6		
Matale	1.7	1.9		
Nuwara Eliya	2.0	2.2		
Galle	1.9	2.1		
Matara	2.0	2.3		
Hambantota	1.6	1.9		
Jaffna	1.8	2.1		
Mannar	1.8	2.0		
Vavuniya	1.5	2.0		
Mullaitivu	1.5	2.0		
Kilinochchi	1.8	2.1		
Batticaloa	2.2	2.4		
Ampara	2.1	2.4		
Trincomalee	1 7	2.3		
Kurunegala	2.0	2.0		
Puttlam	1.8	2.1		
Apuradhapura	2 1	2.1		
Polopparuwa	2.1	2.7		
Badulla	2.5	2.5		
Manaragala	2.0	2.5		
Detreguia	1.0	2.4		
Karalla	1.7	1.8		
Regalie	2.2	2.0		
ducation				
No education	1.4	1.6		
Passed Grade 1-5	1.8	2.3		
Passed Grade 6-10	2.1	2.4		
Passed G.C.E.(O/L) or equivalent	1.9	2.1		
Passed G.C.E.(A/L) or equivalent	1.9	2.1		
Degree and above	1.9	2.0		
aalth quintila				
	1.0	0.0		
Lowest	1.8	2.2		
	1.8	2.1		
	1.7	2.0		
Fourth	1.6	1.9		
Highest	2.1	2.3		
otal	1.9	2.2		



Figure 7.4 Total wanted fertility rates and total fertility rates for the three years preceding the survey by district Sri Lanka 2016



Figure 7.4 provides a comparison of the total fertility rates (observed and wanted) indicating a wanted fertility corresponding to replacement or below replacement level. The lowest level of the total wanted fertility rate is observed in the districts of Vavuniya and Mullaitivu (1.5). There are no consistent variations in the total wanted fertility rate by levels of education or wealth quintile, besides the fact that the highest values are observed among the richest quintile (2.1) and among those women with primary education (1.8 children per woman). However, these differences should be seen with care since they can be within the confidence intervals of the sampling errors around the estimates