



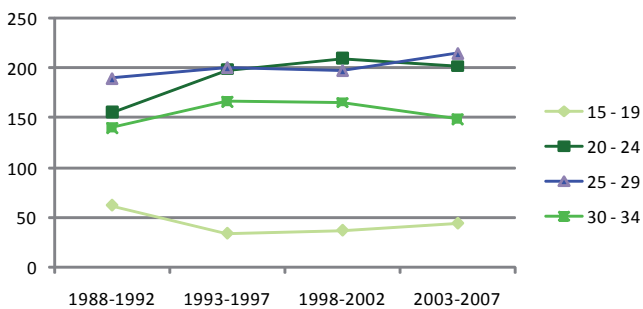
The 2007 Tuvalu DHS results indicate that on average, a Tuvaluan woman will have 3.9 children. There has been no significant change in fertility levels in different age groups during the past 20 years and the 2007 Tuvalu DHS recorded a slight increase from the fertility level of 3.7 recorded in the 2002 Census.

The fertility rate recorded in Funafuti (Total Fertility Rate [TFR] = 4.2) is considerably higher than that recorded in the outer islands (TFR = 3.7). Likewise, women who have completed some higher education have lower fertility rates than women with less education.

Trends in age-specific fertility rates

Although fertility levels have remained more or less stable in the past 20 years, there have been slight fluctuations. Rates for 2003-2007 are similar to those recorded for 1988-1992. The increases in fertility rates suggest that fertility control programmes may not have been entirely effective.

Trends in age-specific fertility rates



Family planning

Knowledge of at least one method of contraception is almost universal in Tuvalu and slightly more people knew of a variety of modern methods than traditional methods. Knowledge levels did not vary between men and women or by socio-economic factors such as education levels or wealth.

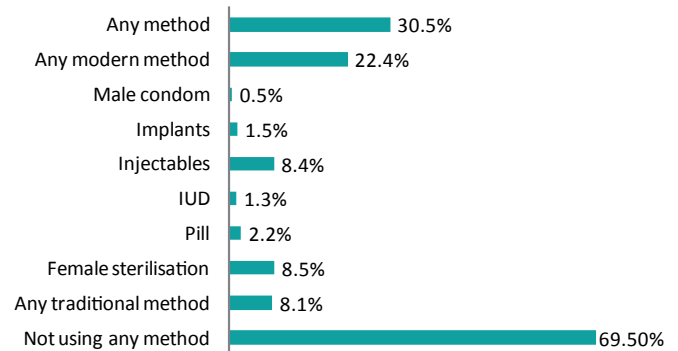
There appears to be some unmet need for family planning as the desired total fertility rate is 2.8 children per woman, compared with an actual fertility rate of 3.9 children per woman. Increased information and access to family planning information and methods could help avoid some unwanted and unplanned births.

Family planning: knowledge versus practice

Despite comprehensive knowledge of different methods of contraception, actual use of contraception is low. Although more than half of married women (64%) and the majority of married men (89%) reported that they had used some form of contraception at least once, far fewer people were using any contraceptive method at the time of the survey.

Current use of modern contraceptives by women (15-49 years) Thirty one per cent of currently married women are using any method of family planning. Of these women, 22% are using modern methods and 8% are using a traditional method. Use of contraception increases with age and the most commonly used methods amongst currently married women are sterilisation and injectables. Less than 1% of married and unmarried women reported using condoms.

Current use of contraceptives by married women age 15-49



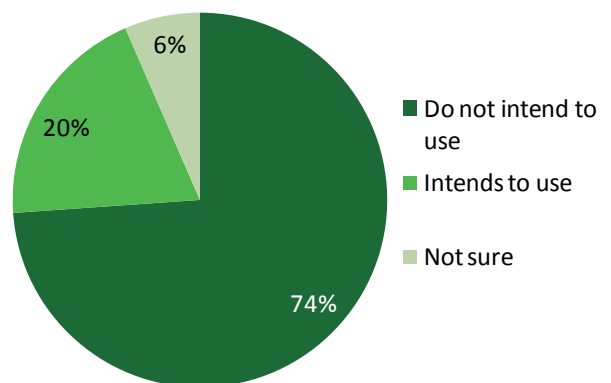
The survey results suggest that many women in Tuvalu start using a modern contraception method after they have their first child (27.5%). It appears that family planning is being used to control the period between births.

Most women who use contraception reported that they obtain it from the public sector, mainly from hospitals or health centres.

Intended future use of contraception

Less than a quarter of currently married women who are not currently using contraception intend to start using any contraceptive methods in the future. The two most common reasons women gave for not intending to use contraception were fear of side-effects and a desire to have as many children as possible.

Intended future use of contraception by married women age 15-49 not currently using modern contraception





Of those women who expressed a desire to use contraception in the future, the most popular methods were injectables (37%), along with periodic abstinence (17%) and the pill (16%).

People who are not currently using any contraception do not appear to be receiving family planning messages. Eighty per cent of non-users had not been contacted about family planning by field workers or discussed family planning when they visited a health facility in the 12 months preceding the survey. Women aged 15-24 and 30-34 were less likely to have had contact with field workers and to have discussed family planning than women in other age groups. The majority of Tuvaluans had, however, heard a family planning message on the radio.

Median age at first childbearing

The median age that a Tuvaluan woman will have her first child is 23.1 years. This implies that half of these women will have had at least one child by age 23. There is no significant difference between urban and rural areas in the age women commence childbearing.

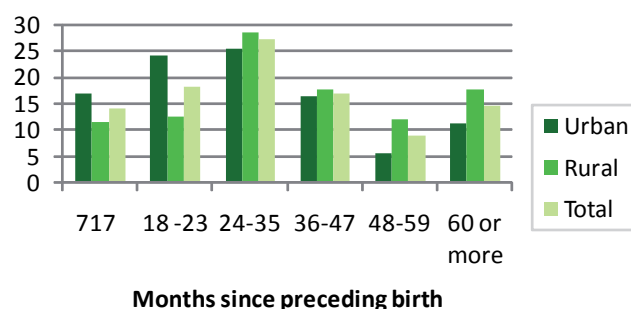
Age at first sexual intercourse

The median age at first sexual intercourse is considerably lower for men aged 25-49 (17.7) than for women (21.6). Although men tend to get married later than women, with 34% of men unmarried at age 25-29 compared with only 12% of women, men tend to be sexually active earlier. This trend suggests that young men are more likely than women to expose themselves to sexually transmitted diseases including HIV and AIDS.

Birth intervals

Children born too soon after a previous birth (less than 24 months), have an increased risk of health problems and infant mortality. The median length of time between births in Tuvalu is 31 months and one in three births occurs with an interval of 24 months from the previous birth. Birth intervals are considerably shorter for women in urban areas (27.6 months) than for their rural counterparts (35.2 months). Younger women also tend to have their children with shorter birth intervals than older women.

Distribution of non-first births in five years preceding survey by months since preceding birth



Teenage pregnancy and motherhood

About 8% of women aged between 15–19 years reported that they were either pregnant or had a child at the time of the survey. Of these women, 7% had a child and 1% were currently pregnant.

Policy note:

To come

*For more detailed information on fertility and family planning see chapters 4,5,6 and 7 in the 2007 Tuvalu DHS report

