

Fertility of Omani Nationals in a Context of High Dependency on Foreign Labour

Findings from a Fertility Survey of Omani Households

Executive Summary Report, November 2020



جامعة قطر
QATAR UNIVERSITY



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November 2020

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This report presents some important highlights of the study “Fertility of Omani nationals in a context of high dependency of foreign labor” conducted by the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI), Qatar University. The survey focused on understanding the role played by proximate determinants of fertility, for example marriage, contraception, attitudes towards family planning, and family-decision making. The study also looked at remote determinants, i.e. socio-economic factors such as women’s age at marriage, education, employment status, relevant spousal characteristics, presence of domestic workers in the household and their support in rearing children. Administered in PAPI (Paper and Pencil Interview) mode, the survey was divided into two main parts. In the first part, a knowledgeable member of the household was interviewed to obtain information on key household features and basic socio-demographic characteristics of all members of the household. In the second part of the survey, ever-married women within the age group of 15-49 years were interviewed to learn about their reproductive patterns, contraception use and fertility preferences.

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INTRODUCTION

The Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) is an independent research organization at Qatar University. Since its inception in 2008, it has developed a strong survey-based infrastructure in order to provide high quality survey data for planning and research in the social and economic sectors. The data are intended to inform planners and decision makers as well as the academic community about current trends and changes.

In the last decades, despite pro-natalist policies, fertility of national populations in all GCC countries has declined. Change in fertility rates is a reflection of important economic and socio-demographic changes taking place in a particular society. However, knowledge of relevant trends and fertility determinants amongst Omanis is insufficient due to lack of data and research. Addressing this gap, SESRI conducted a fertility survey of Omani households in July-August 2019. The survey focused on understanding the role played by proximate determinants of fertility, for example marriage, contraception, attitudes towards family planning, and family-decision making. The study also looked at remote determinants, i.e. socio-economic factors such as women's age at marriage, education, employment status, relevant spousal characteristics, presence of domestic workers in the household and their support in rearing children. Finally, in order to allow comparison of survey results with other countries, including Arab nations, appropriate sections of the Demographic Health Survey were incorporated in SESRI's survey.

This report presents findings from the fertility survey that can be used to better understand changes in fertility patterns and to draw relevant policy conclusions. Details of the survey methodology can be found in the last section of the report.

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSEHOLDS

Key Findings:

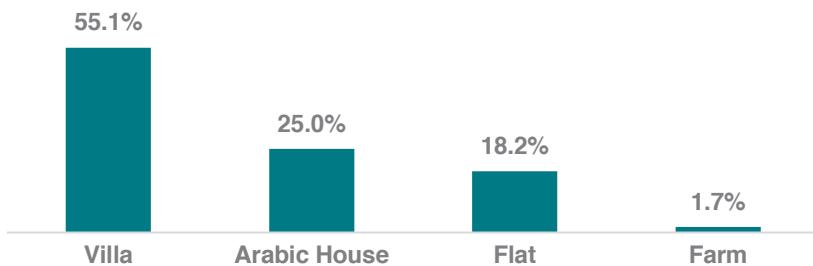
- 5 in 10 households live in privately-owned villas.
- Houses typically have 3 to 5 rooms.
- Virtually all households own a car, with 48 percent having 3 to 4 cars.
- Half of respondents have 1 domestic worker (including nannies), while 10 percent have 2 domestic workers.
- Mean size of a household is 3.5 members.
- Slightly more than two-fifth of the households (40.4 percent), have a total household monthly income of 800 to 900 Omani Riyals.

The fertility survey was divided into two main parts. In the first part, a knowledgeable member of the household was interviewed to obtain information on key household features and basic socio-demographic characteristics of all members of the household. This information is presented in the first two sections of the report. In the second part of the survey, ever-married women within the age group of 15-49 years were interviewed to learn about their reproductive patterns, contraception use and fertility preferences. Findings from this part are presented in the subsequent sections of the report.

The present section offers information on key household characteristics. These include: type of residence, ownership of residential property, number of rooms in each house, number of vehicles owned, total number of domestic workers and nannies, total number of household members, total household monthly income, and area of residence. A total of 750 households were surveyed. Findings from this section are indicative of the relative affluence Omani households enjoy in a rapidly growing, prosperous country.

Figure I-1 shows that majority of the households, 55.1 percent, are living in villas, while 25 percent live in Arabic style houses. Villas in Oman are generally modern, double- or triple-story, stand-alone houses. An Arabic house is an olden style, single-story house where rooms are situated around a private and open inner-space.

Figure I-1: Property Type



In more than three-quarters of the households, 76.9 percent, at least one household member has ownership of the present residence, as shown in Figure I-2. The remaining twenty-three percent (23.1%) stated that no member of the household owns the place of residence.

Figure I-2: Ownership of Property

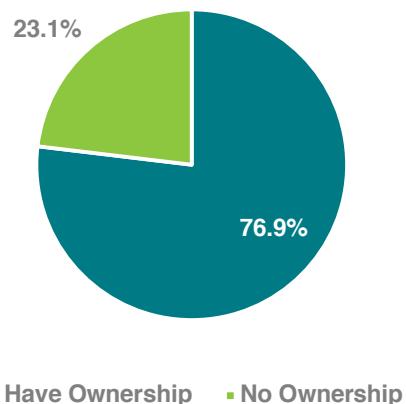


Figure I-3 presents the percentage distribution of houses by number of rooms. Majority of the households live in houses that have between three and six rooms. Roughly one-third of the houses have 4 rooms, while less than a quarter have 3 rooms. Approximately 5 percent (4.8%) of the houses have 2 rooms or lesser and approximately 4 percent of the houses have 9 rooms or more.

Figure I-3: Number of Rooms

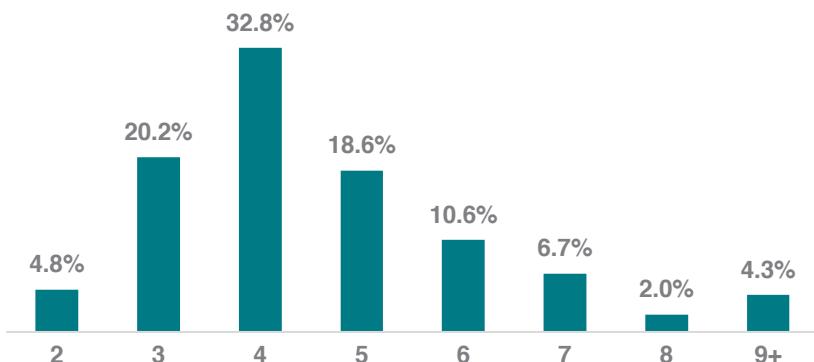
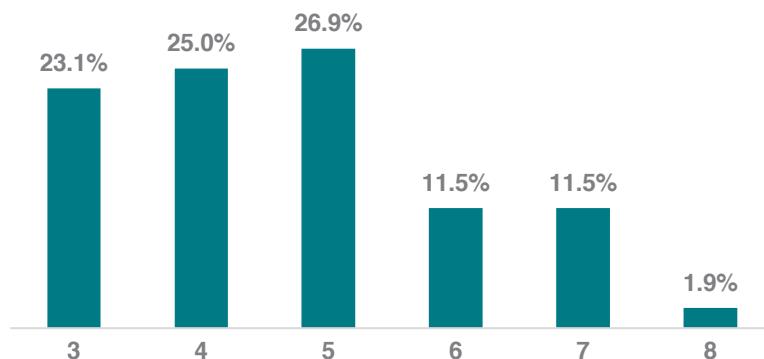


Figure I-4 presents the percentage distribution of households by total number of vehicles owned. Almost all households surveyed own a vehicle, with the greater majority having 3 or more. Specifically, 48 percent of the households own 3 to 4 vehicles, and 11.5 percent have 6. More than 13

percent of the households have 7 or more. Vehicles here include a saloon car, SUV, and pick-up truck.

Figure I-4: Number of Vehicles



Omani households are typically serviced by domestic workers and nannies. Figure I-5 illustrates the percentage distribution of households by total number of domestic workers in each house. Please note that this total includes number of domestic workers. Separate information on nannies is presented in Figure I-6. Overall, almost half of the households surveyed have one domestic worker, 10.5 percent have two workers, while 0.5 percent have three. Less than 1 percent of the houses have 3 or more domestic workers.

Figure I-5: Total Number of Domestic Workers

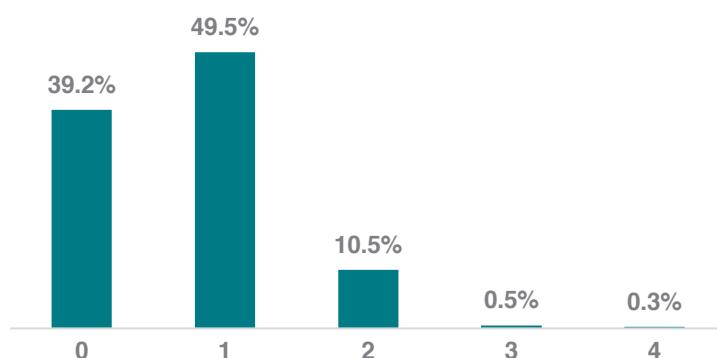


Figure I-6 specifically accounts for the number of nannies working in the households. The figure shows that majority of the households, 63.8 percent, indicated that they do not have any nannies. However, this might be because it is not a common practice in Oman to strictly divide household chores and babysitting responsibilities between domestic workers and nannies. Families typically hire domestic workers who also look after the children. That said, 35.9 percent of the households specified that they have one nanny and 0.3 percent said they have two.

Figure I-6: Number of nannies

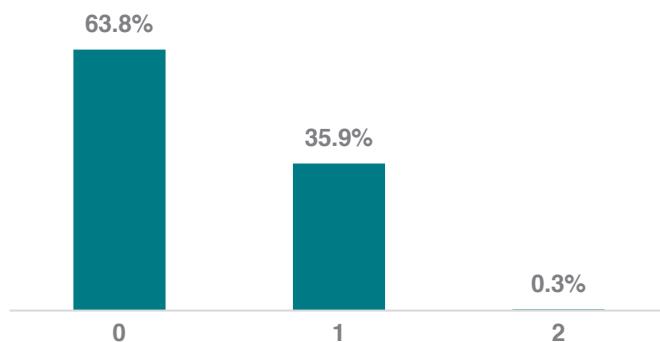


Figure I-7 presents information on household size. Majority of the households are big in size with roughly more than half consisting of 5 members or more. Almost one-third of the households (31.2%) have 5 to 6 members, whereas 10.5 percent of the households have 9 or more members. Only 15.5 percent of the households have 3 members. The mean size of a household is 3.5 members.

Figure I-7: Number of Household Members

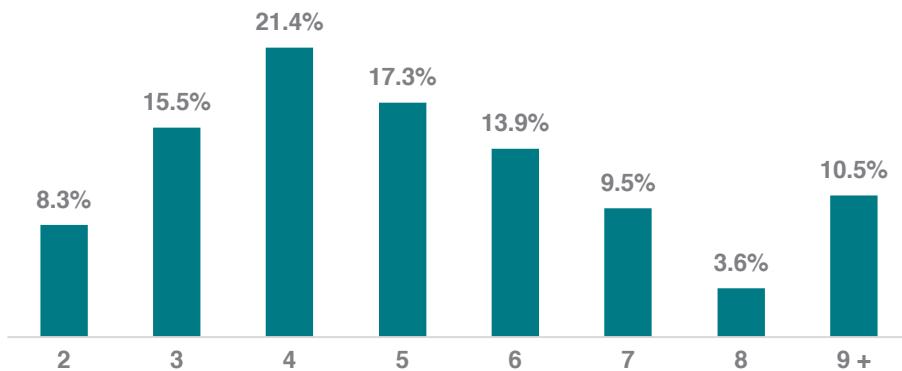
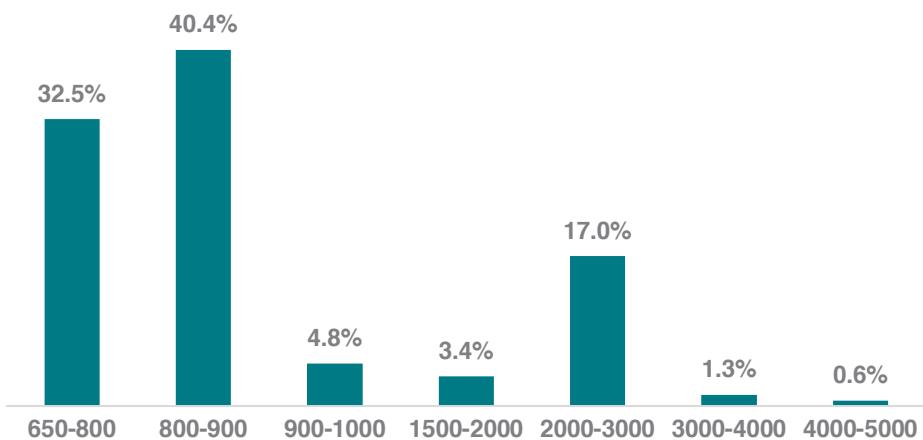


Figure I-8 illustrates the percentage distribution of households by total household monthly income. That is, the sum of the monthly income of all members of the household. This income distribution is a reflection of Oman's economy, with almost three-quarters of the households (72.9%) earning less than 900 Omani Riyals per month. The highest peak represents 40.4 percent of the households who have a total monthly income of 800 to less than 900 Omani Riyals. The second peak (32.5%) were households that reported a monthly income of 650 to less than 800 Omani Riyals. Seventeen percent of the households reported a total monthly income of 2000 to less than 3000 Omani Riyals. Less than 2 percent have an income that is between 3000 and less than 5000 Omani Riyals.

Figure I-8: Total Household Monthly Income



Note: Horizontal values are in Omani Riyals

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSEHOLD POPULATION

Key Findings:

- Almost 94 percent of the survey population is 49 years or younger.
- Females, 50.3 percent, slightly outnumber males, 49.7 percent.
- 44.2 percent of adults are currently married, while 5 in 10 have never been married.
- 21.5 percent have completed secondary school education, and 10.1 percent have earned a university degree.
- Slightly more than two-fifths of the adults are currently employed (42.7 percent), 11.4 percent are students, and 17.2 percent are unemployed but not seeking work.
- 63.5 percent of the household members have a monthly salary of 500-1000 Omani Riyals, while 22.8 percent earn 1001-2000 Omani Riyals per month.

This section details a number of basic socio-demographic characteristics of the total population of the survey households. The following information was sought from a knowledgeable member of the household about the people who usually live in the household and/or those who stayed there the night before the interview: age, sex, marital status (if 15 years old or older), highest level of education completed, work status (15 years or older), and current salary of each individual member of the house. The total number of persons living in the households at the time of the survey was 4386.

Table II-1 presents the percentage distribution of total household population by age and sex. The overwhelming majority of the survey household population are young with 94 percent of them aged 49 years and below. From this cohort, 33 percent are less than 14 years old, and 50.8 percent are between the ages of 15 – 49 years. In considering sex distribution, the total proportion of females, 50.3 percent, is slightly higher

than that of males, 49.7 percent. In terms of sex and age comparisons, males slightly outnumber females in the lower age ranges of 5 to 19 years old, with 15.1 percent males and 14 percent females. In the higher age ranges of 20 – 49 years, the proportion of women, 24.1 percent, is greater than that of men, 21.4 percent.

Table II-1: Total Household Population by Age and Sex

Age Group	Sex		
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
0 to 4	9.6	9.9	19.4
5 to 9	8.4	7.1	15.5
10 to 14	4.0	4.2	8.2
15 to 19	2.7	2.7	5.3
20 to 24	2.4	3.4	5.8
25 to 29	4.5	7.3	11.8
30 to 34	5.9	5.5	11.4
35 to 39	4.7	4.2	8.9
40 to 44	2.3	2.1	4.4
45 to 49	1.6	1.6	3.2
50 to 54	1.1	1.0	2.2
55 to 59	1.1	0.8	1.9
60 to 64	0.6	0.2	0.8
65 to 69	0.5	0.2	0.6
70 to 74	0.2	0.1	0.3
75 to 79	0.2	0	0.2
80 plus	0.1	0	0.1
Total	49.7%	50.3%	100%

Figure II-1 shows the marital status of individuals who are 15 years or older. Majority of adult Omanis, 51.7 percent, have never been married. The next highest proportion, 44.2 percent, is of those who are married. The figure also shows a very low rate of family breakdown with only 2.2 percent of the individuals reporting that they are divorced or separated. 0.3 percent have signed the marriage contract but are not living with their spouse yet.

Figure II-1: Marital Status (15 years or older)



Figure II-2 details the highest level of education completed by individual household members. Overall the findings show that 21.5 percent of Omanis having completed secondary school education and 24.3 percent of individuals holding some kind of higher education degree. Given that much of the population falls in the lower age ranges, we see that 20 percent have completed primary school, and 12.3 percent have finished preparatory school. Twenty-two percent have never attended any school; however, as education level was asked of all household members, this percentage includes those who are not in school-going age such as very young children.

Figure II-2: Educational Level

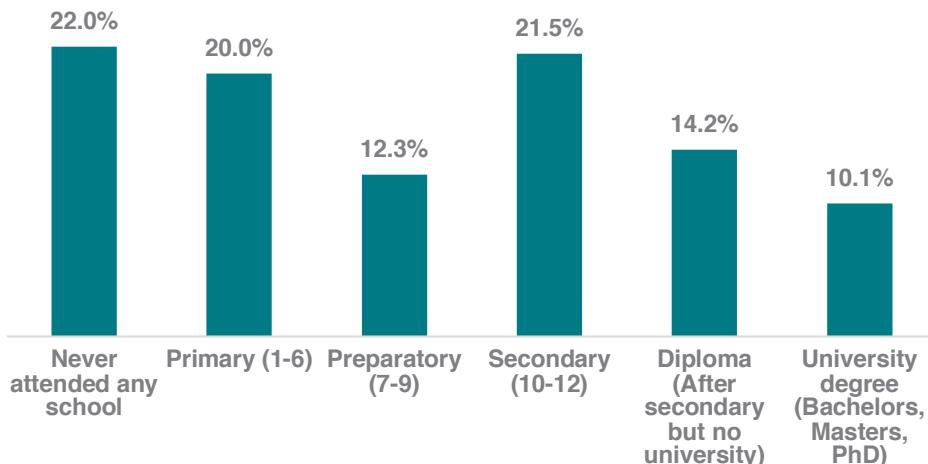


Figure II-3 presents the employment status of household population who are 15 years or older. A large proportion of the population, 42.7 percent, are working full time and 11.4 percent are students. A much smaller proportion, 17.2 percent, are not seeking work, whereas 13.2 percent are unemployed but looking for work. 3.5 percent have retired.

Figure II-3: Work Status

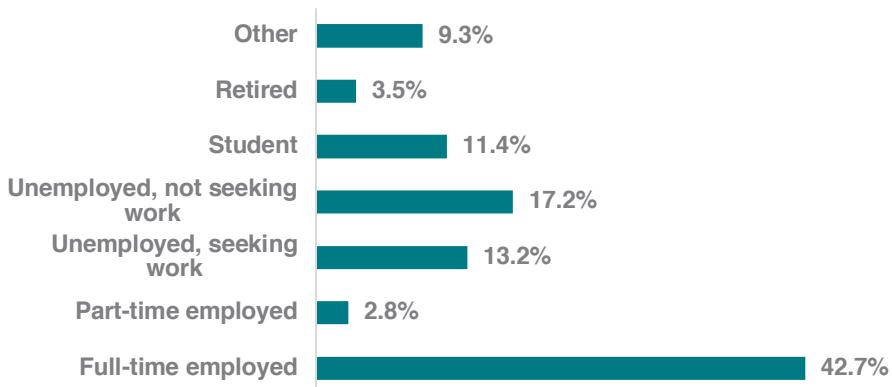
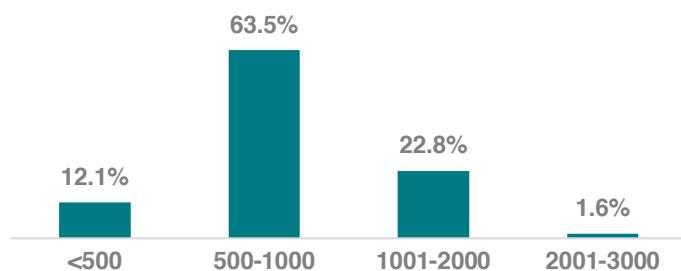


Figure II-4 is the percentage distribution of household population by monthly salary of household members. More than three-fifths of the population, 63.5 percent, have a monthly salary of 500 to 1000 Omani Riyals. Twelve percent are earning less than 500 Omani Riyals per month, while 22.8 percent have a monthly salary of 1001 to 2000 Omani Riyals. A much smaller proportion, 1.6 percent, earn between 2001 and 3000 Omani Riyals.

Figure II-4: Monthly Salary of Household Members



Note: Horizontal values are in Omani Riyals

III. BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Key Findings:

- 96.1 percent of ever-married women, between the ages of 15-49 years, are currently married, while only 2.5 percent are divorced.
- Women and men have similar levels of education.
- 37.7 percent of women have completed secondary school while 20.3 percent hold a university degree. 35.1 percent of husbands have completed secondary school while 22 percent hold a university degree.
- 31.5 percent of ever-married women are currently working full-time, and 36 percent are unemployed but not looking for work.
- Slightly more than three-fifth of the working women (62.7 percent) have a monthly salary of 500-1000 Omani Riyals, while 17.9 percent earn less than 500 Omani Riyals.
- 76.4 percent of husbands are currently working full-time, of which 63.2 percent earn 500-1000 Omani Riyals, and more than a quarter (27.3 percent) have a monthly salary of 1001-2000 Omani Riyals.

The sections that now follow are based on interviews with ever-married women within the age group of 15-49 years who participated in the second part of the survey, which dealt specifically with questions related to reproduction, contraception, and fertility. We start by first presenting in this section key background characteristics of the eligible women. These include ever-married women's age distribution, current marital status, level of education, women's employment status, women's current salary, husband's level of education, husband's employment status and husband's current salary. Total female household population was 2217 and total number of ever-married women was 990.

Figure III-1 shows the percentage distribution of women by age at last birthday. Majority of the women are 25 years or older (92.1%). There are

much fewer women (7.8 percent) in the younger age group of 20-24 years compared to the older age groups. From the age of 25 years and above, the percentage of women in the sample continues to decline across the age groups.

Figure III-1: Women's Current Age

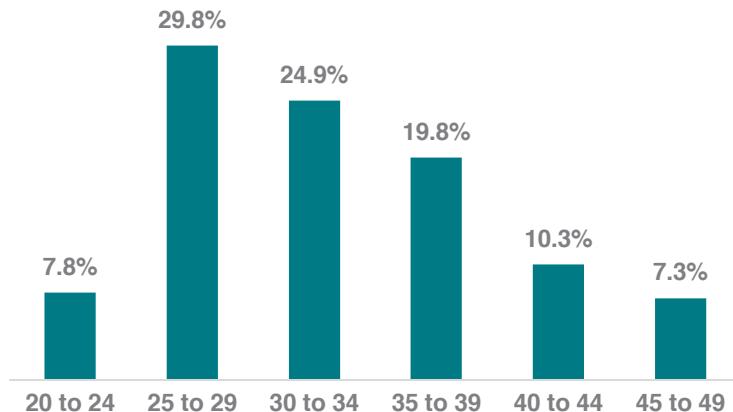


Figure III-2 presents the current marital status of ever-married women. Ninety-six percent of the ever-married women are still married. Divorce rate is quite low with only 2.5 percent of women divorced. Only 1.4 percent of ever-married women are widowed.

Figure III-2: Ever-married Women's Current Marital Status

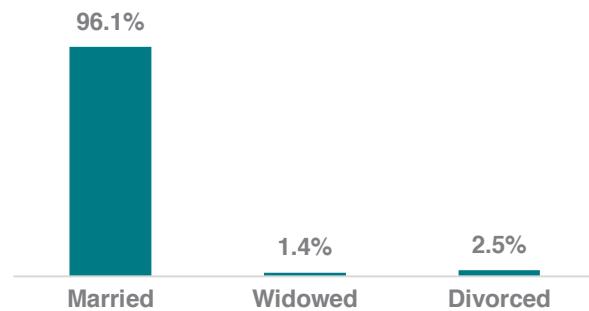
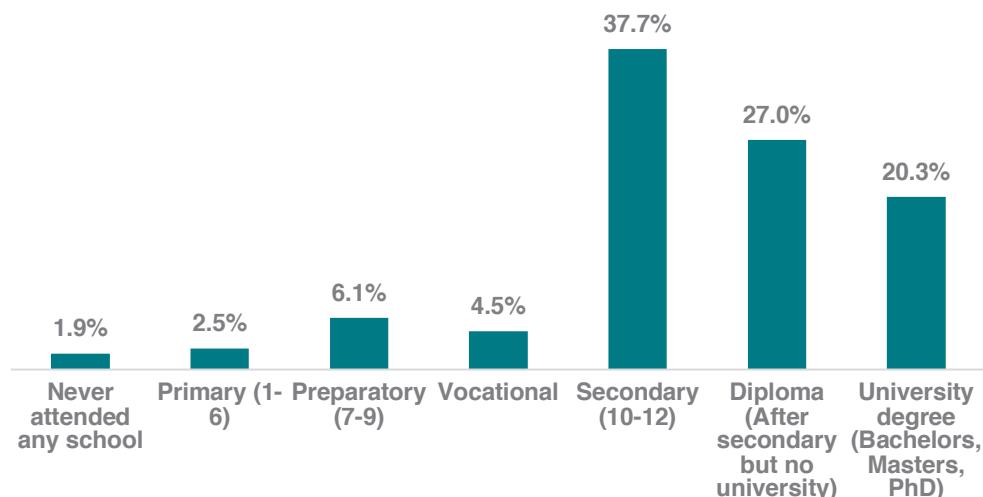


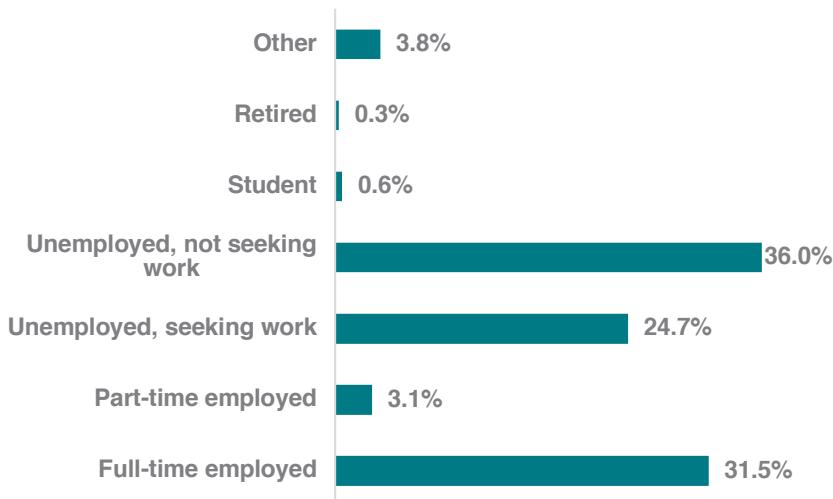
Figure III-3 illustrates the highest level of education completed by the eligible women. Overall, ever-married Omani women show good levels of educational attainment. Almost 40 percent have completed secondary school education (37.7%), while 20.3 percent hold a university degree. Only 2.5 percent have not attained beyond primary school education while a nominal 1.9 percent have not had any formal education.

Figure III-3: Women's Education Level



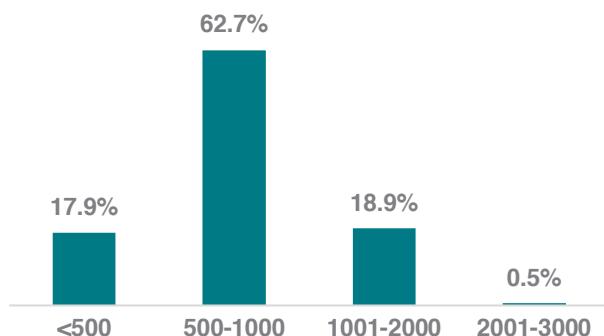
Given married Omani women's somewhat high levels of educational attainment, we see in Figure III-4 that almost one-third of the women, 31.5 percent, are working full-time. Slightly higher than one-third of the women, 36 percent, said that they are unemployed and not seeking work. Another quarter of women, 24.7 percent however are unemployed but looking for work, and 0.6 percent are students.

Figure III-4: Women's Employment Status



Women who are currently employed in full-time and part-time work (a total of 34.6 percent) were asked about their current monthly salary. As shown in Figure III-5, a little less than two-thirds of the women (62.7 percent) have a monthly salary of 500 to less than 1000 Omani Riyals. Almost one-fifth of women (17.9 percent) earn less than 500 Omani Riyals per month, while 18.9 percent earn 1001 to less than 2000 Omani Riyals. A much smaller percentage of women (0.5 percent) have a monthly salary of between 2001 and 3000 Omani Riyals.

Figure III-5: Women's Monthly Salary



Note: Horizontal values are in Omani Riyals

Women were also asked about their husbands' highest level of education completed. As shown in Figure III-6, majority of the women have educated spouses who have completed between secondary and university degree educational levels (90.8%). Specifically, 35.1 percent have completed vocational school while 22 percent hold a university degree. Only 0.8 percent of women said their husbands have never attended any school. In general, Omani women and men have somewhat similar levels of educational attainment.

Figure III-6: Husband's Education Level

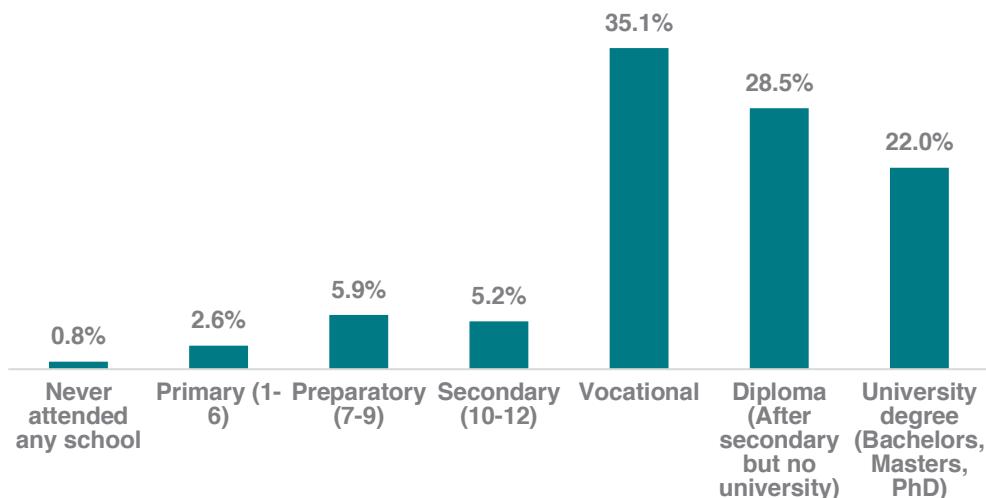
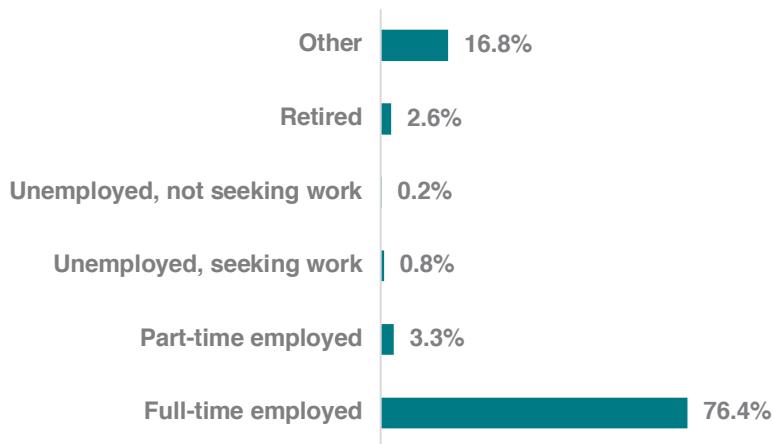


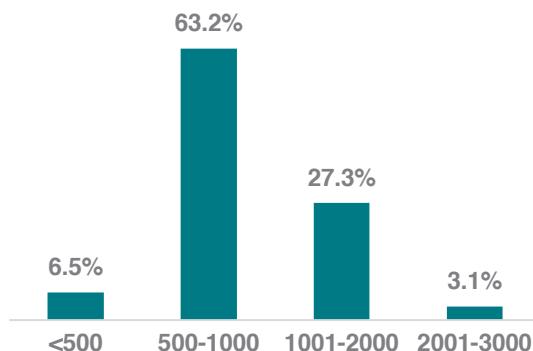
Figure III-7 provides information on husbands' current employment status. Majority of the women, 76.4 percent, have husbands who are working full time. Almost three percent are retired (2.6%), and a very small proportion of women, 1 percent, have husbands who are unemployed. When compared with women, men have a much lower unemployment ratio (those seeking work), 0.8 percent, while for women it is 24.7 percent. Also, percentage of women who are unemployed and not seeking work is, as expected, much higher than that of men (36 percent compared to 0.2 percent, respectively).

Figure III-7: Husband's Employment Status



The survey also asked women about the monthly salary of their husbands who are currently working in part-time or full-time work. As seen in Figure III-8, more than half of the women, 63.2 percent, have husbands whose monthly income is 500 to less than 1000 Omani Riyals, and more than a quarter, 27.3 percent, have husbands whose monthly salary is 1001 to less than 2000 Omani Riyals. Approximately three percent of women (3.1 percent) have spouses earning between 2001 and 3000 Omani Riyals. In general, men are earning much more than their wives, with 30.4 percent of men earning more than 1000 Omani Riyals per month, when compared to 19.4 percent of women in that income range.

Figure III-8: Husband's Monthly Salary



Note: Horizontal values are in Omani Riyals

IV. FERTILITY

Key Findings:

- Total fertility rate for the three years preceding the survey is 3.2 births per woman.
- Fertility is highest for women aged 25-29 years at a rate of 204 births per 1000 women. Fertility decreases to 104 births per 1000 women for the 35-39 age group.
- General fertility rate is 82 births per 1000 women and crude birth rate is 33 births per 1000 people.
- Working women are having fewer children (3.1) than non-working women (3.3).
- Mean number of children ever born to women age 40-49 is 4.0.

This section explores fertility patterns in Oman. Various measures of fertility are used that include current fertility rates, variation in fertility by selected background characteristics, mean number of children ever-born and living, and median age at first birth according to demographic background. This information is instrumental in assessing current and future fertility patterns in Oman. Data for these measures was taken from the birth history section of the questionnaire where complete details of all of a woman's living and dead children were collected, together with information on current pregnancy.

Table IV-1 presents current fertility rates in Oman. A number of indicators are used to express current fertility rates: age-specific rates, total fertility rate, general fertility rate and crude birth rate. Age-specific rates indicate the number of live births per 1000 women according to specific age groups. Total fertility rate is understood as the overall fertility rate, that is, the average number of children a woman would have if she lives through the ages of 15-49 years while having children at the observed age-specific rates. General fertility rate is the annual number of births per 1000 women of reproductive age 15-49 years in a given population. Crude birth rate represents the annual number of births in a given population per 1000 people. All of the above measures were calculated following standard

DHS calculations and for the three years preceding the survey in order to provide the most current estimates.

As seen in Table IV-1, fertility is highest in the age group of 25-29 years with 204 births per 1000 women. Fertility decreases to 104 births per 1000 women for age 35-39. At present, total fertility rate for Oman is 3.2 births per woman. This means that if current observed rates remain constant, an Omani woman would bear 3.2 children during her full childbearing years. Note that this number is actually lower than the average Omani woman's ideal number of children desired, which is 3.8. Ideal family size preferences are discussed in more detail in the next section.

Table IV-1 also provides data on general fertility rate and crude birth rate. The general fertility rate is 82 births per thousand women age 15-44. This means that for every 1000 Omani women, there will be approximately 82 children born. The crude birth rate is 33.6 births per thousand population. This translates into roughly 33 children born for every 1000 people in Oman.

**Table IV-1: Current Fertility Rates
(Age-specific rates, Total Fertility Rate, General Fertility Rate,
and Crude Birth Rate)**

Age group	Fertility rate
15-19	0
20-24	47
25-29	204
30-34	203
35-39	104
40-44	70
45-49	10
TFR (15-49)	3.2
GFR (15-49)	82
CBR	33.6

Note: Fertility rates are for the 3 years preceding the survey. Age-specific fertility rates are per 1000 women.

Rates for age group 45-49 may be slightly biased due to truncation.

TFR: Total Fertility Rate expressed per woman

GFR: General Fertility Rate expressed per 1,000 women age 15-49

CBR: Crude Birth Rate expressed per 1,000 population

Table IV-2 demonstrates variation in fertility rates according to background characteristics. Working women are having fewer children (3.1) than non-working women (3.3). Similarly, fertility rates vary by education levels, such that, women who are diploma/university degree holders have a lower fertility rate (2.3) than women who have only completed primary or preparatory school (3.3).

Table IV-2 also shows the percentage of currently-married women (age 15-49 years) who were pregnant at the time of the interview. This is another measure that is used as an indication of current fertility rate, in spite of any possibility of error that may arise when women are not aware of, or choose not to report first trimester pregnancies. The table shows that a lower number of working women (6.9 percent) were pregnant at the time of the interview, when compared to the number of non-working pregnant women (18.6 percent).

Lastly, Table IV-2 offers the mean number of children ever born (CEB) to women age 40-49. This measure is helpful in understanding cumulative fertility as it takes into account fertility patterns of women who are close to the end of their fertile period. This means that if fertility rates remain stable over time in a given population, then the CEB of women who are 40-49 years of age, will be similar to the TFR of that population. Hence, by comparing TFR and CEB (for Omani women age 40-49), we are able to see the degree and direction of change in fertility levels over the past few decades in Oman.

Looking at the table, in general, CEB levels are somewhat higher than TFR across most of the different background characteristics. A somewhat lower TFR suggests that fertility rates are in steady decline. In other words, women are having fewer children than they did a few decades ago.

Table IV-2: Fertility by Background Characteristics

Background Characteristics	Total Fertility Rate	Percentage of women age 15-49 currently pregnant	Mean number of children ever born to women age 40-49
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Working status			
Working	3.1	6.9	3.7
Not working	3.3	18.6	4.1
Education Level			
Never attended school	-	0.2	4.2
Primary/Preparatory	3.3	3.4	4.1
Secondary	3.6	8.3	3.9
Diploma/University	2.3	3.0	3.6
Total	3.2	24.8	4.0

Note: Total fertility rates are for the 3 years preceding the survey.

Table IV-3 presents the percentage distribution of ever-married women and currently married women across age groups by the total number of children ever born and those still living. The table provides an overview of change in family size across age groups and is useful in determining primary infertility, as well as percentage of children still alive.

As expected, the number of children Omani women are having steadily increases with age, from less than 1 child for women age 20-24 years old to 4.5 children for women age 45-49 years. On average, Omani women are giving birth to 2.4 children, of which 2.3 children are still alive. The probability that a woman may lose her child also increases with her age, as evidenced by the biggest difference between mean number of children ever-born (4.5), and mean number of living children (4.3) for women in the 45-49 age category. The table also shows that primary infertility (no children at all) is higher among younger women.

Table IV-3: Children Ever Born and Living

Age	Number of children ever born							Total	Number of women	Mean number of children ever born	Mean number of living
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+				
Ever-married Women											
20-24	60	34.0	6.0	0	0	0	0	100	50	0.48	0.46
25-29	14.7	39.8	31.9	11.5	1.1	1.1	0	100	191	1.503	1.476
30-34	4.4	14.5	39.0	28.9	11.3	1.9	0	100	159	2.396	2.340
35-39	0.8	7.9	24.4	37.8	25.2	3.15	0.8	100	127	2.984	2.913
40-44	3.0	3.0	10.6	28.8	31.8	12.1	10.6	100	66	3.894	3.621
45-49	0	0	4.3	21.3	29.8	29.8	14.9	100	47	4.511	4.298
Total	10.6	20.0	25.9	22.7	13.6	4.8	2.3	100	640	2.406	2.325
Currently Married Women											
20-24	60.0	34.0	6.0	0	0	0	0	100	50	0.48	0.46
25-29	14.0	39.8	32.3	11.8	1.1	1.1	0	100	186	1.522	1.495
30-34	4.5	13.4	39.5	29.3	11.5	1.9	0	100	157	2.408	2.357
35-39	0.9	7.6	25.4	35.6	26.3	3.4	0.9	100	118	3	2.924
40-44	3.3	1.7	11.7	30.0	30.0	13.3	10.0	100	60	3.883	3.617
45-49	0	0	4.6	18.2	31.8	31.8	13.6	100	44	4.545	4.318
Total	10.7	19.8	26.7	22.1	13.5	5.0	2.11	100	615	2.393	2.314

Table IV-4 shows the median age at first birth for ever-married women age 25-49 according to different demographic characteristics. The age at which childbearing begins is considered an important determinant of overall fertility levels. Delay in having the first child can lead to a decline in fertility. Looking at the table, there is no clear pattern for median age at first birth by age group.

Table IV-4: Median Age at First Birth for Women Age 25-49

Demographic characteristics	Median age at first birth
Age Group	
25-29	23
30-34	24
35-39	25.5
40-44	22
45-49	20
Working status	
Working	25
Not working	23
Education Level	
Never attended school	19
Primary/Preparatory	21
Secondary	24
Diploma/University	25
Total	24

V. FERTILITY PREFERENCES

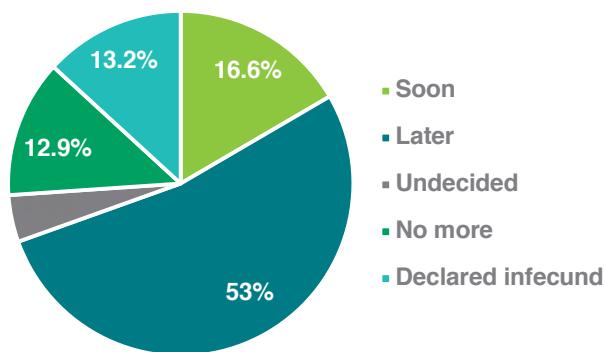
Key Findings:

- 7 in 10 currently married women would like to have another child, and 53 percent of them would like to delay this birth for two years or more.
- 2 in 10 women who already have 5 living children would like to have another child, while no woman with 6 or more children wants to have another child within the next two years.
- The mean ideal number of children for currently married women is 3.8.
- Women's working status has some impact on ideal number of children desired.
- More than half of the women expressed that their husbands share their ideal family size preferences, while 28.2 percent mentioned that their husbands would like to have more children.
- For 7 in 10 women, the sex of the child does not matter.

This section discusses married Omani women's fertility preferences in terms of their future fertility intentions and ideal number of children desired. Women's fertility preferences are also analyzed in relation to key socioeconomic characteristics such as, education level, working status and household income. This is followed by women's own understanding of whether they and their spouses share ideal family size goals, and lastly, data on child's gender preference is presented.

In order to understand future fertility preferences, currently married Omani women were asked if they would like to have any more children and how long would they like to wait before the birth of the next child. Figure V-1 shows that majority of the women, 69.6 percent, would like to have another child. Among these women, 16.6 percent would like to have another child in less than 2 years and 53 percent would prefer to delay for 2 years or more. Most of the remaining women, 26.1 percent, do not want to have any more children. Only 4.4 percent of the women said they were undecided about their fertility plan.

Figure V-1: Desire for More Children among Currently Married Women



Note: 'Soon' means next birth is preferred within 2 years, and 'later' means would like to delay next birth for 2 years or more.

In Table V-1, women's future fertility intentions are compared against the total number of living children they currently have. Looking at the table, it is clear that the higher the number of living children, the lower the desirability to have more children. Almost 9 in 10 women who have 2 children are planning to have another child, while 2 in 10 women with 5 living children would like to have another child. The desirability for more children falls even further for women who already have 6 or more living children, indicating among Omani women a lack of preference for having bigger families.

No woman with 6 or more children is planning to have another child soon. In terms of age gap between children, women who have 1 living child expressed desire to space the next birth, with 70.1 percent preferring to delay it for two years or more. Preference for spacing children with at least a two-year gap is lower among women with 3 or more children. Overall, out of the 706 women interviewed, majority of the women currently have 2 to 4 living children.

Table V-1: Women's Fertility Preferences by Number of Living Children

Child desirability	Total living children							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	Total
Soon ¹	11.1	20.6	19.4	20.2	8.8	5.0	0	16.6
Later ²	61.1	70.1	68.6	50.9	21.6	15.0	12.5	53.0
Undecided	0	4.1	3.3	1.7	7.8	15.0	12.5	4.4
No more	0	2.1	7.0	16.8	26.5	27.5	31.3	12.9
Declared infecund	27.8	3.1	1.7	10.4	35.3	37.5	43.8	13.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number of women	36	97	242	173	102	40	16	706

¹Would like to have next birth within two years

²Would like to delay next birth for two years or more

Table V-2 presents the percentage of women who stated that they do not want any more children by the number of living children they have and their working status. In general, there is a difference between working and non-working women in terms of their desire to limit childbearing – the more children the working women have, the more likely they are to express desire to limit childbearing compared to non-working women. This difference becomes particularly evident with women who have 6 or more living children, where all working women (100%) expressed desired to limit children, while only 25 percent of non-working women with 6 or more children reported so.

Table V-2: Desire to Limit Childbearing

Women's employment status	Number of living children							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
Not working	0	5.7	7.2	14.5	23.1	23.5	25.0	
Working	0	11.6	7.1	24.2	28.6	40.0	100	

After looking at women's future fertility preferences, we now consider women's ideal number of children. Ever-married women were asked, "*If you could go back to the time 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?*" Table V-3 shows the percentage distribution of ever-married women's ideal number of children according to total number of living children. Less than 1 out of 10 women, 8.5 percent, said their ideal number of children is 6 or more, while 39.5 percent said they prefer 4 children, and 14.5 percent mentioned that they would like to have 5 children.

Overall, the mean ideal number of children for currently married women is within the range of 3.3 for women with one child to 5.8 for women with 6 children or more. In comparing ideal number of children with total living children, the table shows that regardless of number of living children, women prefer having three to five children. For example, 73.9 percent of women with 3 children ideally would like to have 4 or more children, and 57.5 percent of women with 5 children stated that their ideal number of children was 5 or more.

Table V-3: Ideal Number of Children by Number of Living Children

Ideal Number of Children	Total Living Children								Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	Total	
1	0	0.9	1.2	1.1	0.9	0	0	0.9	
2	15.4	24.4	13.4	4.9	5.6	0	0	10.9	
3	35.9	38.3	36.4	20.1	4.7	5.0	0	25.6	
4	28.2	25.2	40.1	46.7	50.5	37.5	11.1	39.5	
5	15.4	9.6	6.9	21.2	23.4	27.5	0	14.5	
6+	5.1	1.7	2.0	6.0	15.0	30.0	88.9	8.5	
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	
Mean Ideal Number of Children									
Ever married mean	3.6	3.2	3.4	4	4.3	4.8	5.8	3.8	
Number of ever married women	0	7	82	192	296	109	64	750	
Currently married mean	3.6	3.3	3.4	4.0	4.3	4.8	5.8	3.8	
Number of currently married women	0	7	68	183	283	106	59	706	

Table V-4 presents differentials in mean ideal number of children for Omani women according to basic demographic characteristics such as age group, working status, education level and household income. Overall, older women prefer more children. The mean ideal number of children increases from 3.6 children among younger women to 4.6 children among older women. The results suggest that there is not much difference in preferred number of children between working (3.4) and non-working women (4.0).

With regards to education level, women with no formal education prefer more children than women who are educated. In considering household income, it appears that women in lower income households (total monthly income 350-800 Omani Riyals) prefer more children (4.4) compared to women living in households with higher monthly income (3.8 children for those in households with monthly income of 800-2,000 Omani Riyals and 3.6 for those in households with 2,000 or more Omani Riyals monthly income).

Table V-4: Mean Ideal Number of Children by Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Characteristics	Mean	Number of women
Age Group		
15-24	3.6	66
25-29	3.5	242
30-34	3.7	179
35-39	3.9	139
40-44	4.5	72
45-49	4.6	52
Working status		
Working	3.4	247
Not working	4.0	474
Education Level		
Never attended school	5.3	12
Primary/Preparatory	5.0	55
Vocational	4.5	29

Secondary	4.0	241
Diploma/University	3.4	303
Household Income		
350-800 OR	4.4	32
800-2000 OR	3.8	543
2000 OR or more	3.6	157

In Table V-5, husband's fertility preferences are compared with currently married women's ideal number of children. While the survey did not interview men directly, women were asked about their husbands' fertility preferences. In general, slightly more than half of the Omani women, 55.4 percent, felt that they and their husbands agree on the number of children that they would like to have. Less than a third, 28.2 percent, believed that their husbands preferred to have more children than they themselves wanted. Women whose ideal family size was between 2 and 4 children were more likely to say that they and their husbands preferred the same number of children. All women who themselves wanted one child said that their husband's preference is likewise for one child.

Table V-5: Husband's Fertility Preference by Wife's Ideal Number of Children

Husband's fertility preference	Women's ideal number of children						Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
Same number	100	64.7	63.9	54.4	39.6	45.8	55.4
More children	0	17.7	25.7	28.6	34.9	37.3	28.2
Fewer children	0	0	4.4	1.1	0	3.4	1.8
Missing	0	17.7	6.0	15.9	25.5	13.6	14.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number of currently married women	7	68	183	283	106	59	706

Figure V-2 shows whether currently married women are facing any pressure to have children. About 8 in 10 women stated that they do not feel pressured to have a child or to have more children.

Figure V-2: Pressure to Have Children

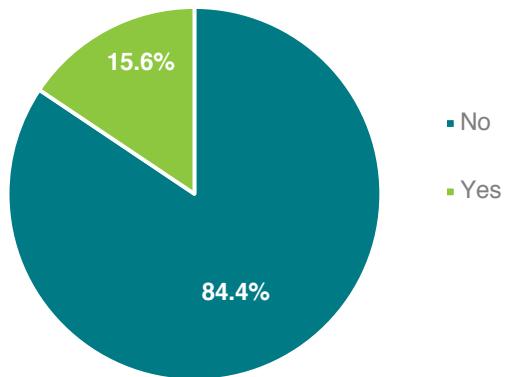
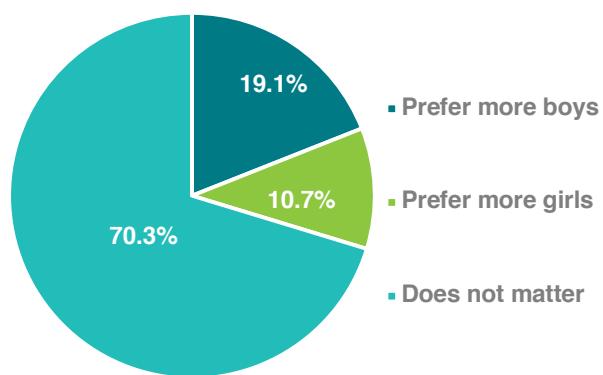


Figure V-3 considers child's sex preference among Omani women. The figure shows that for majority of the women, 70.3 percent, it does not matter whether they have a boy or a girl. Only about 19 percent prefer more boys than girls, while 10.7 percent prefer more girls than boys.

Figure V-3: Child's Sex Preference among Women



VI. FAMILY PLANNING

Key Findings:

- Women are largely aware of modern contraceptive methods, especially the male condom, the pill, and female sterilization.
- Most women also know about various traditional methods, with withdrawal being the most popularly known method.
- 4 in 10 currently married women are not using any kind of family planning methods.
- Women who do engage in family planning prefer to use the pill followed traditional methods.
- The use of any modern contraceptive method is more prevalent among women who are between 30 to 44 years old.
- 9 in 10 women are satisfied with the family planning method they are using.
- 9 in 10 currently married women are planning to use contraception in the future.
- Religious prohibition, husband's opposition and fear of side effects are the most frequently cited reasons for nonuse of family planning.

This section offers an assessment of currently married Omani women's use and nonuse of various modern and traditional family planning methods. It looks at both current use of family planning and possible future use. The section also elaborates on reasons for non-usage of contraceptive methods despite intentions to limit or stop childbearing. Lastly, Omani women's attitudes towards the use of contraception in early marriage are discussed.

Table VI-1 presents the percentage distribution of currently married women who have knowledge of various modern and traditional family planning methods. For each of the methods, women were asked whether

they had ever heard of it. If women were not able to recognize the name of the method, the interviewer read to them a standard description of the method and repeated the question. No further questions were asked to ascertain respondents' proper knowledge of the method. Hence, knowing a method here refers to having heard of the method.

Vast majority of the women are aware of many modern and traditional contraceptive methods as shown in Table VI-1. Nearly all of the women know about the male condom (99 percent) and the pill (96.1 percent). Nine out of 10 women are also aware of female sterilization (89.9 percent) and 88.1 percent have heard of injectables. The use of IUD is familiar to 78.6 percent of women while 69.8 percent have heard about male sterilization. In terms of traditional methods, majority of women are aware of them, with withdrawal being the most commonly mentioned method.

Table VI-1: Knowledge of Family Planning Methods

Modern Methods	Percent of women	Traditional Methods	Percent of women
Female sterilization	89.9	Rhythm	75.0
Male sterilization	69.8	Withdrawal	80.9
IUD	78.6	Prolonged breastfeeding	68.7
Injectables	88.1	Other	1.3
Pill	96.1		
Implants	63.2		
Male Condom	99		
Diaphragm	35.3		
Emergency contraception	50.6		

Currently married women were also asked about their present use of family planning methods. Overall, 4 in 10 Omani women are currently not using any contraceptive methods. Among the women who do use a contraceptive method, almost a third (30.7 percent) use the pill, 22.6 percent use condoms, while more than a third (35 percent) are practicing traditional methods to avoid pregnancy.

Figure VI-1: Current Use by Method

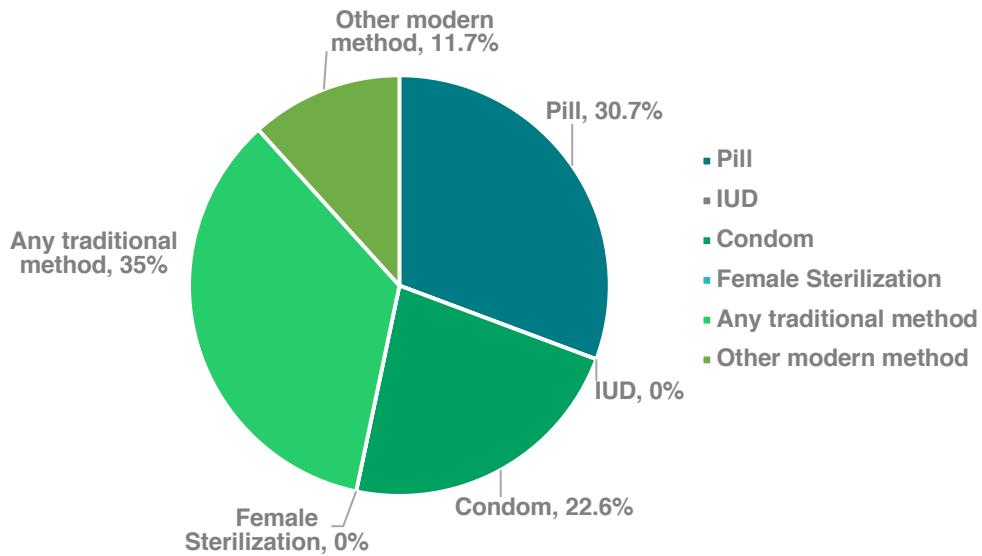


Table VI-2 breaks down the use of modern contraceptive methods by currently married women's age group. In general, the use of any modern contraceptive method is more prevalent among women who are between 30 to 39 years old. This pattern also holds true for women using the pill. While overall use of male condoms is much lower, it is younger women (25-39 cohort) that mainly report using this method for family planning. After the age of 44, use of contraception tends to drop most likely because many women are reaching menopause.

Table VI-2: Use of Modern Methods by Age Group

Age group	Any method	Any modern method	Female sterilization	Pill	IUD	Injectable	Implant	Male Condom	Diaphragm
20-24	3.0	1.5	0	1.5	0	0	0	0	0
25-29	23.1	16.9	0	6.6	0	2.1	0	9.9	0
30-34	37.4	32.4	0	17.9	0	2.2	2.8	14.5	0
35-39	33.1	25.2	0	15.8	0	0.7	3.6	7.2	0

40-44	20.8	20.8	0	15.3	0	2.8	0	4.2	0
45-49	17.3	13.5	0	9.6	0	1.9	0	1.9	0

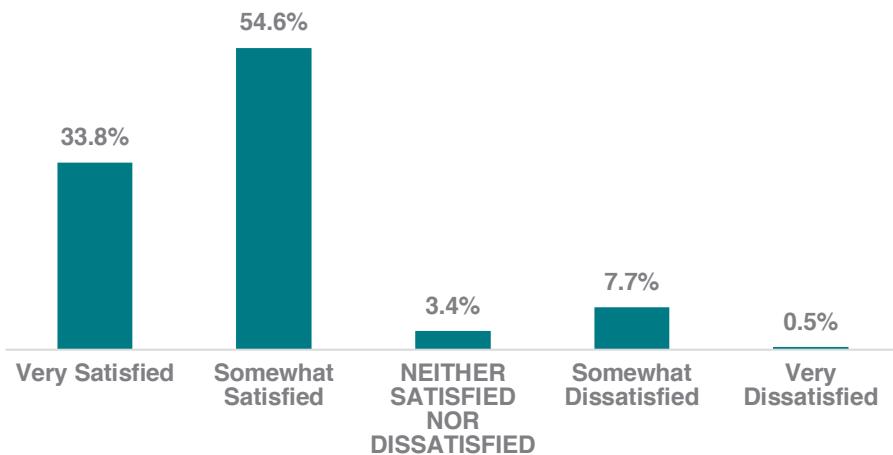
Table VI-3 details the use of traditional contraceptive methods by currently married women's age group. Traditional methods are less popular with younger women within the ages of 20 to 24 years. Overall, however, roughly half of women across 25-39 age groups are not using any modern or traditional method.

Table VI-3: Use of Traditional Methods by Age Group

Age group	Any traditional method	Rhythm	Withdrawal	Prolonged breastfeeding	Not using any modern or traditional method
20-24	1.5	1.5	0	0	16.7
25-29	14.9	5.0	6.2	6.6	51.1
30-34	13.4	6.7	5.0	3.9	51.5
35-39	12.2	9.4	4.3	3.6	46.2
40-44	1.4	1.4	0	0	28.3
45-49	5.8	3.9	0	3.9	27.7

Currently married women who are using any contraceptive method were also asked about their level of satisfaction with the method used. The results in Figure VI-2 show that majority of the women, 54.6 percent, are somewhat satisfied with their chosen method, while 33.8 percent are very satisfied. Only about 8 percent expressed dissatisfaction with the method they are using. Note that the middle 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' category was not read aloud to the respondents and was only selected if the respondent herself mentioned it.

Figure VI-2: Contraception Method Satisfaction Level



In addition to current use, women were asked whether in the future they will use any contraceptive method to delay or avoid pregnancy. Almost 9 in 10 women have plans to use contraceptive methods, as seen in Figure VI-3. This finding is in concurrence with the pattern of use reported earlier. Overall, family planning seems to be prevalent among Omani women.

Figure VI-3: Future Use of Contraception

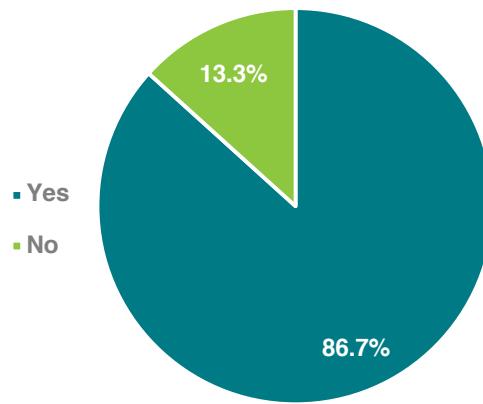
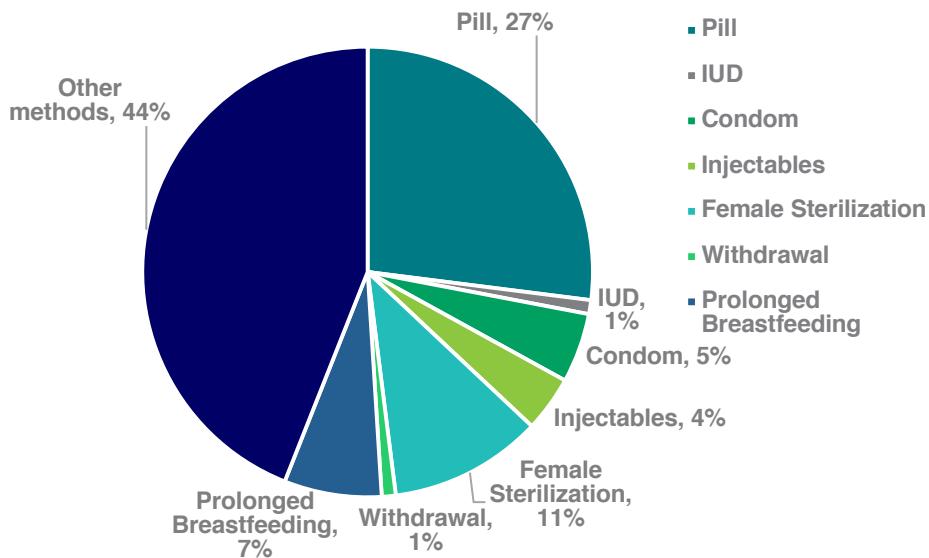


Figure VI-4: Which contraceptive method will you prefer to use?



The 86.7 percent of women who stated that they might use family planning in the future were asked about which method they would like to use. Their responses are illustrated in Figure VI-4. Once again, in line with results seen earlier, the pill and other methods were mentioned the most. The main difference is that while in terms of current use, women are more likely to be using the pill, when it comes to future use, methods other than the ones mentioned in the list were the preferred choice. Preference for male contraceptive device, condom, was quite low at 5 percent. One in 10 women said they would consider female sterilization.

The survey also sought to uncover the reasons behind non-usage of family planning among currently married Omani women. Hence, women who do not want another child or anymore children were asked about their reasons for not using family planning. The list of reasons given in the following two tables were not read out to the respondents. Instead, women were asked to openly describe their reasons for non-usage that were then coded based on categories from the DHS. These reasons are divided into four broad categories namely, fertility-related reasons, opposition to use, lack of knowledge and method-related reasons.

Table VI-4 presents the percent distribution of non-pregnant, currently married, nonusers among women who do not want another child soon, by reasons for nonuse. Around two thirds of the women, 67.9 percent, gave method-related reasons for not wanting to use family planning.

Table VI-4: Reasons for Nonuse (women not wanting another child soon)

Reasons	Percent of women
Fertility-Related Reasons	18.6
Not Having Sex	1.3
Infrequent Sex	5.3
Menopausal/Hysterectomy	0.0
Subfecund/Infecund	0.0
Not Menstruated Since Last Birth	0.0
Up to God/Fatalistic	12.0
Opposition to Use	42.6
Respondent Opposed	5.3
Husband Opposed	17.3
Others Opposed	1.3
Religious Prohibition	18.7
Knows No Method	0.0
Knows No Source	0.0
Method-related Reasons	25.3
Health Concerns	10.7
Fear of Side Effects	13.3
Lack of Access/Too Far	0.0
Costs Too Much	0.0
Preferred Method Not Available	0.0
No Method Available	0.0
Inconvenient to Use	1.3
Interferes with Body's Normal Processes	0.0
Other	13.3

The most important of which were health concerns (28.6 percent), fear of side effects (35.7 percent), and inconvenience of usage (3.6 percent). Only 17.9 percent of the women mentioned fertility-related reasons: having infrequent sex (14.3 percent) and not having sex (3.6). Half of the women (50 percent) mentioned religious prohibition as a reason, while almost half (46.4 percent) mentioned husband's opposition as the reason for nonuse of family planning methods.

Table VI-5 presents the percent distribution of non-pregnant, currently married, nonusers among women who do not want any more children, by reasons for nonuse. Majority of women (73.3 percent) stated that it is up to God/ fatalistic as their reason for nonuse. Three out of 10 women cited religious prohibition, while slightly more than a third of women, 36.7 percent, cited husband being opposed as a reason for nonuse. Another third (33.3 percent) mentioned infrequent sex, while one in five women cited fear of side effects as their reason for nonuse of family planning methods.

Table VI-5: Reasons for Nonuse (women not wanting anymore children)

Reasons	Percent of women
Fertility-Related Reasons	54.6
Not Having Sex	0
Infrequent Sex	15.2
Menopausal/Hysterectomy	6.1
Subfecund/Infecund	0
Not Menstruated Since Last Birth	0
Up To God/Fatalistic	33.3
Opposition to Use	30.3
Respondent Opposed	0
Husband Opposed	16.7
Others Opposed	0
Religious Prohibition	13.6
Knows No Method	0
Knows No Source	0
Method-related Reasons	12.1
Health Concerns	3.0

Fear Of Side Effects	9.1
Lack Of Access/Too Far	0
Costs Too Much	0
Preferred Method Not Available	0
No Method Available	0
Inconvenient To Use	0
Interferes With Body's Normal Processes	0
Other	3.0

The survey also measured attitudes toward family planning. All eligible women were asked whether they thought it was appropriate for a couple to use family planning before and after the first birth/pregnancy. Opposition to use of family planning before first birth was stronger. Figure VI-5 shows that the about half of Omani women find it appropriate for a couple to use family planning after their first birth (50.4 percent). However, majority of the women, 90.3 percent, consider it inappropriate for a newly married couple to use family planning before the first pregnancy, as shown in Figure VI-6.

Figure VI-5: Would you consider it appropriate for a couple to use family planning after the first birth?

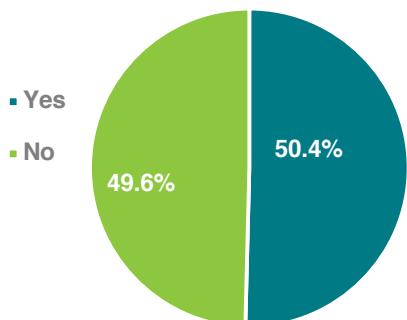
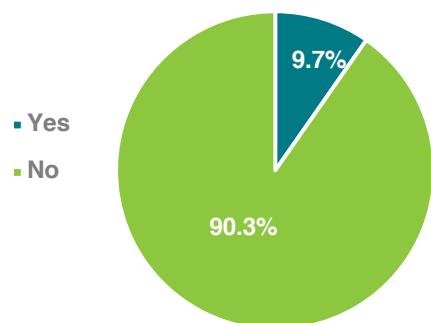


Figure VI-6: Would you consider it appropriate for a newly married couple to use family planning before the first pregnancy?



VII. MARRIAGE

Key Findings:

- Median age at first marriage is 23 years.
- Median age is highest, 24 years, for women who are currently 30-39 years old.
- The median age of marriage for women who never went to school is 18, which steadily increases to 24 for women who completed tertiary education.
- Median age at marriage for non-working women (22 years) is slightly higher than that of working women (24 years).
- Ideally, it is preferred that women marry between the ages of 20-25 years and men marry when they are 25-30 years old.

This section primarily deals with marriage, as it is an important determinant of fertility. It examines the impact of selected sociodemographic variables on median age at marriage. It also provides information on what Omani women consider an ideal age for women and men to marry.

Table VII-1 presents the current marital status of ever-married women by age group. Across the age groups, 90.3-97.8 percent of women are still married. As expected, percentage of widowed women is higher for women 40 years and older. Divorce seems to be almost equally spread out over age groups, appearing more common among oldest cohort of women (45-49 years of age) as well as the youngest (15-29).

Table VII-1: Current Marital Status of Ever-Married Women by Age Group

Age group	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Total
15-24	93.9	0	6.1	100

25-29	94.6	0	5.4	100
30-34	97.8	0	2.2	100
35-39	92.1	2.2	5.8	100
40-44	90.3	6.9	2.8	100
45-49	90.4	1.9	7.7	100
Total (15-49)	94.1	1.2	4.7	100

Table VII-2 shows women's median age at marriage according to current age groups. In this report, age at marriage is defined as the age when the woman first started to live with her husband. The median age at marriage is higher (24) for women who are currently between 30 to 39 years old. It is slightly lower (21-23) for women younger than 30 years of age. Women from the older age group (45-49) were youngest when they got married, with a median of 19 years. Overall median age at marriage is 23 years.

Table VII-2: Age at First Marriage

Age group	Median age at marriage	Number of women
15-24	21	66
25-29	23	233
30-34	24	161
35-39	24	107
40-44	21	55
45-49	19	44
Total	23	666

Note: All values in this table are for women married once only.

Table VII-3 compares age at marriage for ever-married Omani women by additional background characteristics. As expected, age at marriage increases with higher levels of education. The median age of marriage for women who never went to school is 18, and for women holding a diploma or university degree is 24 years. Working women are getting married at a slightly older age (24 years), than non-working women (22 years). In terms of household income, women in higher income homes are marrying at a slightly older age.

Table VII-3: Age at Marriage by Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Characteristics	Median Age at Marriage	Number of women
Education Level		
Never attended school	18	11
Primary/Preparatory	19	41
Vocational	20	24
Secondary	22	206
Diploma/University	24	282
Working status		
Working	24	218
Not working	22	422
Household Income		
350-800 OR	21	24
800-2000 OR	23	484
2000 OR or more	24	141

Note: All values in this table are for women married once only.

Figure VII-1 and Figure VII-2 display the percent distribution of women by what they consider the ideal age of marriage for girls and boys. In general, women prefer that males marry at an older age than females. For girls, the youngest preferred age of marriage mentioned is 18 and for boys it is 20. For women, ideal age of marriage is between 22-26 years and for men it is between 25-30 years old.

Figure VII-1: Ideal Age for a Girl to Marry

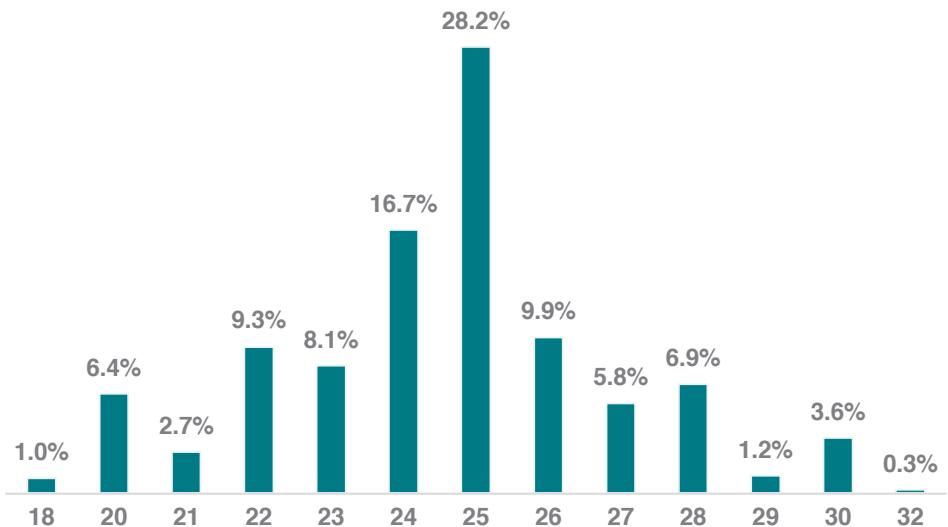
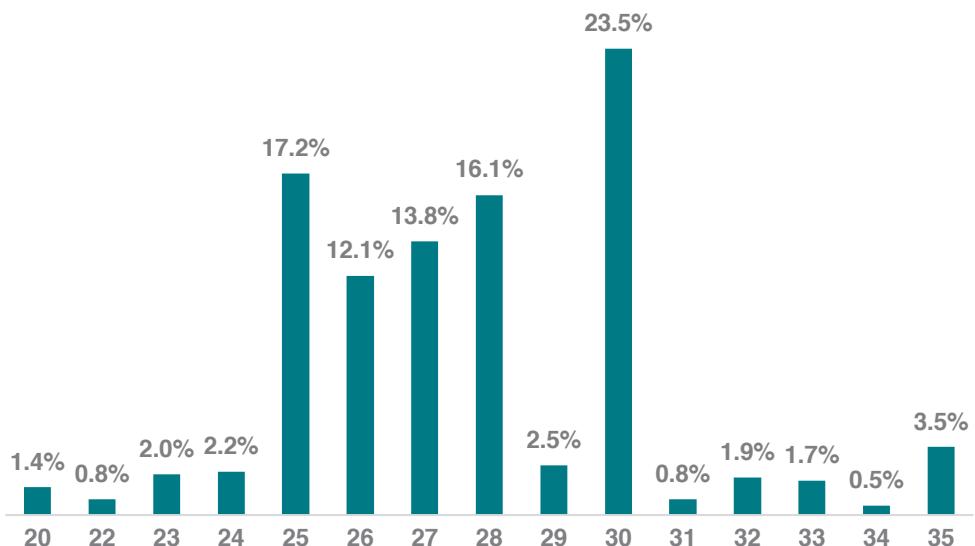


Figure VII-2: Ideal Age for a Boy to Marry



VIII. INFANT AND CHILD MORTALITY

Key Findings:

- Under-five year mortality for the ten-year period preceding the survey was 2.6 deaths per 1000 births. At this rate, approximately 1 in 370 children will die in Oman before they turn 5 years old.
- 8 in 10 early childhood deaths occur in Oman before a child's first birthday.
- Under-five mortality among boys is 1.6 deaths per 1000 births, and among girls it is 1.1 deaths per 1000 births.
- Infant mortality rate for non-working women (1.84 deaths per 1000 births) is somewhat higher than for working women (0.65 deaths per 1000 births).

This section presents findings on infant and child mortality rates in Oman. It also examines variation in early childhood deaths based on selected socioeconomic characteristics. These include sex of child, mother's age at birth, and mother's education level.

Mortality calculations are based on information collected in the birth history section of the survey where women were asked about all of their living and deceased children including those who passed away at early infancy. For each birth, the sex, month and year of birth, and current age or age at death was recorded. Mortality rates were calculated based on the following DHS definitions –

Neonatal mortality: the probability of dying within the first month of life;

Post neonatal mortality: the difference between infant and neonatal mortality;

Infant mortality: the probability of dying during the first year of life;

Child mortality: the probability of dying between the first and fifth birthday;

Under-five mortality: the probability of dying before the fifth birthday.

Table VIII-1 presents early childhood mortality rates for two selected periods, these are the first ten years preceding the survey, followed by 10 or more years after the survey. As shown in the table, under-five mortality rate for the ten-year period preceding the survey was 2.6 deaths per 1000 births. At this rate, 1 in 370 children will die in Oman before they turn 5. The neonatal mortality rate was 2.04 deaths per 1000 births and the infant mortality rate was 2.55 deaths per 1000 births, in the ten-year period before the survey. This means that 83 percent of early childhood deaths occur in Oman before a child turns 1 year old.

Table VIII-1: Early Childhood Mortality Rates

Years preceding the survey	Neonatal mortality	Post neonatal mortality	Infant mortality	Child mortality	Under-five mortality
0-9	1.4	1.0	1.9	0.2	1.9
10+	0.6	0.5	0.7	0	0.7
Total	2.04	1.42	2.55	0.23	2.6

Table VIII-2 looks at the relationship between early childhood mortality and two important variables, namely the sex of the child and mother's age at birth. Mortality rates are higher for boys than girls. For example, under-five mortality among boys is 1.6 deaths per 1000 births, and among girls, it is 1.0 deaths per 1000 births.

In considering mother's age at birth, the numbers show that early childhood mortality rates are higher for younger women within the ages of 20-29 years. However, this might be because women in this age group also have higher fertility rates as shown earlier in the 'Fertility' section of this report.

Table VIII-2: Early Childhood Mortality by Sex of Child and Mother's Age at Birth

	Neonatal mortality	Post neonatal mortality	Infant mortality	Child mortality	Under-five mortality
Child's sex					
Boy	1.2	0.9	1.6	0.2	1.6
Girl	0.9	0.6	1.0	0.1	1.0
Mother's age at birth*					
Less than 20	0	0	0	0	0
20-29	1.47	1.1	1.9	0.11	1.9
30-39	0.57	0.34	0.7	0.11	0.7
40-49	0	0	0	0	0

Note*: Due to some cases where necessary information on mother or child was missing, the mortality estimates given here for neonatal mortality by sex, and mortality estimates for mother's age at birth are slightly different than actual.

Table VIII-3 shows early childhood mortality rates by working status. The mortality rate for non-working women is higher than that for working women.

Table VIII-3: Early Childhood Mortality by Socioeconomic Characteristics

	Neonatal mortality	Post neonatal mortality	Infant mortality	Child mortality	Under-five mortality
Working Status					
Not Working	1.48	0.95	1.84	0.12	1.84
Working	0.47	0.41	0.65	0.12	0.65

Note: Due to missing information, mortality estimates may be a little different than actual.

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