

This chapter addresses the principal factors other than contraception that affect a woman's risk of becoming pregnant: nuptiality and sexual intercourse, postpartum amenorrhoea and abstinence from sexual relations, and menopause.

Marriage is a primary indication of the exposure of women to the risk of pregnancy and therefore is important for the understanding of fertility. Populations in which age at marriage is low tend to have high fertility and initiate childbearing at an early age. For this reason, there is an interest in age at marriage.

This chapter also includes information on more direct measures of the beginning of exposure to pregnancy and the level of exposure: age at first intercourse and the frequency of intercourse.

Finally, measures of several other proximate determinants of fertility that, like marriage and sexual intercourse, influence exposure to the risk of pregnancy are presented: duration of postpartum amenorrhoea, postpartum abstinence, and menopause.

6.1 MARITAL STATUS

Table 6.1 presents the percent distribution of women and men by current marital status. The proportion of never-married women declines sharply from 76 percent in the 15-19 year age group to 1 percent among women 45-49 years of age. Marriage is thus nearly universal in Zimbabwe. Fifty-six percent of women 15-49 and 43 percent of men 15-49 are currently married. These figures have remained fairly constant over the last decade.

Twenty-seven percent of women and 50 percent of men have never been married. One percent of women reported that they live with their partner, while 5 percent are divorced, 3 percent are separated, and 8 percent are widowed. Men reported that 2 percent live with their partner, while 2 percent are divorced, 2 percent are separated, and 1 percent are widowed.

Table 6.1 Current marital status								
Percent distribution of women and men by current marital status, according to age, Zimbabwe 2005-2006								
Age	Marital status						Total	Number
	Never married	Married	Living together	Divorced	Separated	Widowed		
WOMEN								
15-19	76.2	20.2	0.6	1.5	1.3	0.2	100.0	2,152
20-24	28.4	59.5	1.9	5.0	3.5	1.6	100.0	1,952
25-29	9.0	74.7	2.0	5.6	4.1	4.6	100.0	1,466
30-34	3.5	75.3	1.5	6.7	3.7	9.4	100.0	1,216
35-39	3.0	65.1	1.6	5.1	4.2	21.0	100.0	834
40-44	0.6	68.0	1.4	5.0	4.7	20.3	100.0	699
45-49	0.9	66.4	0.9	6.0	2.7	23.1	100.0	589
Total women 15-49	27.0	56.3	1.4	4.5	3.2	7.5	100.0	8,907
MEN								
15-19	99.3	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	100.0	1,899
20-24	75.5	19.7	1.6	1.1	2.1	0.0	100.0	1,459
25-29	29.0	60.3	3.8	3.3	2.9	0.8	100.0	1,082
30-34	6.6	81.1	4.5	3.7	2.7	1.4	100.0	882
35-39	4.5	83.8	3.8	2.6	2.0	3.2	100.0	663
40-44	2.0	84.3	4.1	1.2	2.9	5.4	100.0	469
45-49	1.3	86.1	4.1	1.6	2.1	4.9	100.0	409
Total men 15-49	49.6	43.2	2.4	1.7	1.8	1.3	100.0	6,863
Total men 15-54	47.5	45.1	2.6	1.7	1.8	1.4	100.0	7,175

6.2 POLYGYNY

Polygyny (the practice of having more than one wife) has implications for the frequency of exposure to sexual activity and therefore fertility. The extent of polygyny in Zimbabwe was measured by asking all currently married female respondents the question: “Besides yourself, how many other wives does your husband have?” For currently married men, the question was: “How many wives do you have?”

Number of Co-Wives and Wives

Table 6.2 shows the distribution of currently married women by the number of co-wives according to selected background characteristics. The majority of married women are in monogamous unions (84 percent), while 11 percent are in polygynous unions.

The proportion of women in polygynous unions increases with age, and rural women are almost three times as likely as urban women to be in a polygynous relationship (15 percent compared with 5 percent, respectively). There is substantial variation by province. Women in Mashonaland Central reported the highest prevalence of polygynous relationships (18 percent), while the lowest prevalence was reported in Bulawayo (2 percent).

Table 6.2 Number of co-wives and wives

Percent distribution of currently married women by number of co-wives, and percent distribution of currently married men by number of wives, according to background characteristics, Zimbabwe 2005-2006

Background characteristic	Women: number of co-wives				Total	Number of women	Men: number of wives			Total	Number of men
	0	1	2+	Missing			1	2+	Missing		
Age											
15-19	90.9	4.7	2.1	2.3	100.0	448	*	*	*	100.0	8
20-24	85.9	5.9	3.1	5.1	100.0	1,200	97.5	2.2	0.3	100.0	311
25-29	85.6	6.3	3.6	4.5	100.0	1,125	97.2	2.6	0.2	100.0	692
30-34	82.5	7.9	5.8	3.8	100.0	933	95.5	4.3	0.2	100.0	755
35-39	82.9	7.4	3.4	6.3	100.0	556	94.6	5.3	0.2	100.0	581
40-44	78.9	10.7	5.5	4.9	100.0	485	94.3	5.2	0.5	100.0	414
45-49	76.5	11.0	7.3	5.2	100.0	396	91.7	8.3	0.0	100.0	369
Residence											
Urban	89.0	3.7	1.4	6.0	100.0	1,742	97.0	2.8	0.2	100.0	1,271
Rural	81.4	9.1	5.7	3.9	100.0	3,401	94.1	5.6	0.2	100.0	1,861
Province											
Manicaland	83.1	7.3	7.0	2.6	100.0	599	93.6	6.4	0.0	100.0	335
Mashonaland Central	81.7	13.2	4.8	0.3	100.0	572	91.8	8.2	0.0	100.0	342
Mashonaland East	83.4	6.1	2.6	8.0	100.0	442	96.6	1.8	1.6	100.0	259
Mashonaland West	83.2	8.1	5.8	2.9	100.0	514	96.4	3.6	0.0	100.0	348
Matabeleland North	90.6	6.0	2.2	1.1	100.0	323	95.1	4.8	0.1	100.0	194
Matabeleland South	60.4	7.5	2.1	30.0	100.0	208	97.1	1.9	1.1	100.0	99
Midlands	83.1	10.8	3.9	2.3	100.0	728	93.7	6.3	0.0	100.0	446
Masvingo	83.1	6.6	7.7	2.6	100.0	697	96.5	3.2	0.4	100.0	352
Harare	90.4	2.6	1.5	5.5	100.0	760	96.3	3.7	0.0	100.0	574
Bulawayo	88.9	1.9	0.3	8.9	100.0	301	99.2	0.8	0.0	100.0	183
Education											
No education	67.7	19.2	9.1	4.0	100.0	276	83.3	16.7	0.0	100.0	61
Primary	81.4	8.6	6.1	4.0	100.0	1,910	92.7	7.3	0.0	100.0	874
Secondary	86.9	5.5	2.7	4.9	100.0	2,788	96.4	3.3	0.4	100.0	1,941
More than secondary	90.2	1.5	0.0	8.3	100.0	169	99.0	1.0	0.0	100.0	255
Wealth quintile											
Lowest	77.3	12.5	7.5	2.6	100.0	1,034	91.9	8.1	0.0	100.0	526
Second	83.5	8.0	4.7	3.9	100.0	998	92.7	6.9	0.4	100.0	539
Middle	82.0	7.6	5.7	4.7	100.0	906	96.4	3.3	0.2	100.0	424
Fourth	88.3	4.4	2.0	5.3	100.0	1,183	96.2	3.5	0.3	100.0	948
Highest	87.7	4.2	1.8	6.3	100.0	1,023	97.9	1.9	0.2	100.0	695
Total	83.9	7.2	4.2	4.6	100.0	5,143	94.9	4.9	0.2	100.0	3,419

Note: An asterisk indicates that a figure is based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases and has been suppressed

There is an inverse relationship between education and polygyny. A higher proportion of women with no education reported being in unions with co-wives (28 percent) compared with women who are educated. The difference is especially pronounced when compared with women with more than secondary education (2 percent). As expected, there is also an inverse relationship between wealth and polygyny. Women in the lowest wealth quintile are more likely to be in polygynous unions than women in the highest wealth quintile (20 percent compared with 6 percent, respectively).

The data for currently married men in Table 6.2 show that the majority of men age 15-49 reported they were in monogamous unions (95 percent), 5 percent of men are in polygynous unions. As with women, the proportion of men who reported that they were in polygynous unions increases with age.

There are substantial provincial variations in the distribution of men who are in polygynous unions, ranging from less than 1 percent in Bulawayo to 8 percent in Mashonaland Central. The differentials by province follow the same trends observed for women. Likewise, there is an inverse relationship between polygyny and education and wealth.

6.3 AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE

For most societies, marriage marks the point in a woman's life when childbearing first becomes socially acceptable. Women who marry early will, on average, have longer exposure to pregnancy and a greater number of lifetime births. Information on age at first marriage was obtained by asking all ever-married respondents the month and year they started living together with their first spouse.

Table 6.3 presents the percentages of both women and men who have ever married by selected exact ages and the median age at first marriage, according to current age. The median age at first marriage in Zimbabwe has risen slowly from 18.8 years among women age 45-49 to 19.5 years among women age 20-24 years (representing recent marital patterns). The proportion of women married by age 15 years declined from 10 percent among those age 45-49 years to 3 percent among women age 15-19 years. Overall, 58 percent of women in Zimbabwe currently age 25-49 years were married by age 20 years, and the median age of marriage for women in the same age group was 19.3 years. The same pattern was observed in the 1999 ZDHS.

Table 6.3 Age at first marriage								
Percentage of women and men who were first married by specific exact ages and median age at first marriage, according to current age, Zimbabwe 2005-2006								
Current age	Percentage first married by exact age:					Percentage never married	Number	Median age at first marriage
	15	18	20	22	25			
WOMEN								
15-19	2.6	na	na	na	na	76.2	2,152	a
20-24	4.6	33.6	56.0	na	na	28.4	1,952	19.5
25-29	5.4	29.4	54.1	73.1	86.6	9.0	1,466	19.6
30-34	9.0	33.3	56.8	74.3	87.5	3.5	1,216	19.4
35-39	8.0	31.9	52.7	71.5	84.6	3.0	834	19.7
40-44	9.3	43.2	67.4	81.6	91.3	0.6	699	18.5
45-49	10.4	38.0	64.3	80.1	91.5	0.9	589	18.8
20-49	7.0	33.8	57.2	na	na	11.3	6,755	19.4
25-49	7.9	33.9	57.7	75.2	87.7	4.3	4,803	19.3
MEN								
15-19	na	na	na	na	na	99.3	1,899	a
20-24	0.2	2.4	8.1	na	na	75.5	1,459	a
25-29	0.3	3.6	12.7	29.8	57.1	29.0	1,082	24.2
30-34	0.3	3.3	10.3	27.0	55.8	6.6	882	24.4
35-39	1.5	7.4	12.3	29.7	53.1	4.5	663	24.6
40-44	0.2	5.2	14.7	27.9	51.3	2.0	469	24.9
45-49	1.1	5.6	18.1	32.5	63.0	1.3	409	23.4
20-49	0.5	4.0	11.5	25.7	46.7	30.6	4,964	25.5
25-49	0.6	4.7	12.9	29.1	55.9	11.9	3,505	24.3
20-54	0.4	4.1	11.5	na	na	28.8	5,276	a
25-54	0.5	4.7	12.8	29.1	55.9	10.9	3,817	24.3

Note: The age at first marriage is defined as the age at which the respondent began living with her/his first spouse/partner.
na = Not applicable due to censoring
a = Omitted because less than 50 percent of the women married for the first time before reaching the beginning of the age group

Men tend to enter into marriage at a much later age than women. The median age at first marriage for men 25-49 years of age is 24.3 years, five years older than women in the same age group. Only 13 percent of men age 25-49 are married by the age of 20, compared with 58 percent of women in the same age group.

6.4 MEDIAN AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE

Tables 6.4.1 and 6.4.2 examine the median age at first marriage for women and men age 20-49 years, by background characteristics. The overall median age at first marriage observed for women age 25-49 is 19.3 years. Women in urban areas marry about one year later than those in rural areas. For women age 25-49, Mashonaland Central has the lowest median age at first marriage (18.4 years), while Bulawayo has the highest (20.9 years).

Background characteristic	Age						Women age 20-49	Women age 25-49
	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49		
Residence								
Urban	a	20.5	20.4	20.3	19.2	19.2	a	20.1
Rural	18.5	18.9	18.7	19.3	18.2	18.7	18.7	18.8
Province								
Manicaland	19.1	19.2	19.3	19.5	17.9	19.4	19.1	19.1
Mashonaland Central	17.8	18.6	18.1	18.3	18.8	17.8	18.2	18.4
Mashonaland East	19.2	18.8	19.3	20.0	18.3	18.1	19.0	19.0
Mashonaland West	18.0	19.1	18.9	19.3	17.3	18.3	18.5	18.6
Matabeleland North	a	20.0	19.0	20.0	19.5	19.0	19.7	19.6
Matabeleland South	a	20.4	20.4	21.4	19.9	19.6	a	20.3
Midlands	19.0	19.6	19.3	19.7	18.4	18.5	19.2	19.2
Masvingo	18.6	19.1	18.4	18.3	18.1	18.9	18.6	18.6
Harare	a	20.7	20.3	19.9	19.4	18.6	a	20.1
Bulawayo	a	21.1	21.4	21.1	20.5	20.5	a	20.9
Education								
No education	17.6	17.5	17.3	17.3	17.6	18.0	17.7	17.7
Primary	17.3	18.1	17.8	17.9	18.1	18.9	18.0	18.2
Secondary	a	20.1	20.0	20.7	19.8	19.8	a	20.2
More than secondary	a	23.1	21.9	24.8	21.6	23.3	a	22.7
Wealth quintile								
Lowest	17.7	18.6	18.2	18.5	18.4	18.6	18.2	18.5
Second	18.2	18.5	18.1	19.6	18.0	18.9	18.5	18.6
Middle	19.4	19.4	19.3	19.6	17.9	18.5	19.1	18.9
Fourth	19.7	20.1	19.8	19.6	18.6	18.8	19.6	19.6
Highest	a	20.8	20.6	20.9	19.5	19.4	a	20.5
Total	19.5	19.6	19.4	19.7	18.5	18.8	19.4	19.3

Note: The age at first marriage is defined as the age at which the respondent began living with her first spouse/partner. Figures in parentheses are based on 25-49 unweighted cases.
a = Omitted because less than 50 percent of the women married for the first time before reaching the beginning of the age group

Among women, there is a marked relationship between education and the median age at first marriage. The median age at first marriage for women age 25-49 years with no formal education is 17.7 years, compared with 22.7 years for those with more than a secondary education. Within education groups, age at first marriage has remained virtually constant since the 1999 ZDHS, with the exception of women with more than a secondary education, where the median age has decreased by almost one year. There is a positive correlation between age at first marriage and wealth. Women age 25-49 years in the lowest quintile marry two years earlier than women in the highest wealth quintile (18.5 years compared with 20.5 years, respectively).

The median age at first marriage for men 25-49 years is 24.3 years of age, which is five years later than women marry. Differences in the median age at first marriage among men by background characteristics are similar to those observed among women, as shown in Table 6.4.2.

Background characteristic	Age					Men age 25-49
	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	
Residence						
Urban	a	25.2	25.5	25.0	23.8	a
Rural	23.3	23.7	24.0	24.7	23.1	23.7
Province						
Manicaland	24.5	25.0	25.1	25.8	22.6	24.8
Mashonaland Central	22.5	23.3	22.7	23.7	22.9	22.8
Mashonaland East	24.3	23.6	26.0	22.9	23.9	24.1
Mashonaland West	22.9	24.4	24.2	23.5	21.7	23.4
Matabeleland North	24.0	23.6	24.8	25.0	24.5	24.2
Matabeleland South	(4.9)	25.8	24.6	25.4	24.9	a
Midlands	23.5	24.0	23.7	24.8	24.1	24.0
Masvingo	23.5	23.4	24.9	25.5	22.5	23.7
Harare	25.0	25.3	25.0	24.0	24.4	24.9
Bulawayo	a	25.2	27.9	25.8	24.3	a
Education						
No education	a	23.6	29.1	24.9	22.7	23.9
Primary	22.5	23.2	22.3	23.4	23.2	22.9
Secondary	24.3	24.7	24.9	25.2	23.9	24.6
More than secondary	a	25.2	26.3	26.5	23.9	a
Wealth quintile						
Lowest	22.2	23.1	23.3	23.4	22.2	22.7
Second	23.1	23.8	23.6	24.8	23.7	23.7
Middle	24.6	25.1	24.6	25.4	23.8	24.7
Fourth	24.4	24.8	24.6	24.9	23.1	24.5
Highest	a	25.0	26.4	25.2	24.1	a
Total	24.2	24.4	24.6	24.9	23.4	24.3

Note: The age at first marriage is defined as the age at which the respondent began living with his first spouse/partner. Figures in parentheses are based on 25-49 unweighted cases.
a = Omitted because less than 50 percent of the men married for the first time before reaching the beginning of the age group

6.5 AGE AT FIRST SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

Age at first marriage is generally used as a proxy for the beginning of exposure to the risk of pregnancy. However, the two events may not occur at the same time. Given the fact that some women are sexually active before marriage, the age at which women initiate sexual intercourse more precisely marks the beginning of their exposure to reproductive risks.

The percentage of women and men who had sexual intercourse by specific exact ages is presented in Table 6.5. The median age at first intercourse for women is 18 years for those currently age 40-49 years and 19 years for women age 20-39 years. Among women age 25-49, 9 percent had sexual intercourse by age 15 and 42 percent by age 18. By age 20 more than six in ten Zimbabwean women have had sexual intercourse (66 percent).

Zimbabwean men begin having sexual intercourse at a later age than women. Among men age 25-49, the median age at first intercourse is 20.2 years. In the same age group, 3 percent of men have had sexual intercourse by age 15 and 23 percent by age 18. By age 20 less than half of men have initiated sexual intercourse (47 percent).

Current age	Percentage who had first sexual intercourse by exact age:					Percentage who never had intercourse	Number	Median age at first intercourse
	15	18	20	22	25			
WOMEN								
15-19	4.9	na	na	na	na	67.9	2,152	a
20-24	5.8	37.0	65.7	na	na	16.5	1,952	18.8
25-29	6.8	38.2	61.6	78.3	89.3	3.4	1,466	18.9
30-34	8.5	38.4	62.8	79.1	87.2	0.6	1,216	18.9
35-39	10.3	42.4	65.4	80.8	88.9	0.6	834	18.6
40-44	9.9	51.3	78.1	88.6	93.9	0.1	699	17.9
45-49	12.3	49.6	72.6	85.5	91.2	0.2	589	18.0
20-49	8.0	40.8	66.1	na	na	5.7	6,755	18.7
25-49	9.0	42.3	66.3	81.3	89.6	1.3	4,803	18.6
MEN								
15-19	5.2	na	na	na	na	72.5	1,899	a
20-24	3.6	26.2	54.4	na	na	23.6	1,459	19.7
25-29	3.6	25.5	50.2	70.4	87.4	5.2	1,082	20.0
30-34	2.4	22.2	45.2	67.1	83.8	0.6	882	20.3
35-39	2.8	20.9	46.8	67.2	81.8	0.9	663	20.2
40-44	3.1	19.1	42.2	65.5	79.5	0.4	469	20.5
45-49	3.1	21.1	44.7	71.0	85.2	0.3	409	20.3
20-49	3.2	23.5	48.9	na	na	8.4	4,964	a
25-49	3.0	22.5	46.6	68.4	84.1	2.0	3,505	20.2
20-54	3.2	23.4	48.9	na	na	7.9	5,276	a
25-54	3.0	22.4	46.8	68.5	84.1	1.9	3,817	20.2

na = Not applicable due to censoring
a = Omitted because less than 50 percent of women (men) had sexual intercourse for the first time before reaching the beginning of the age group

6.6 MEDIAN AGE AT FIRST SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

Tables 6.6.1 and 6.6.2 present differentials in the median age at first sexual intercourse by background characteristics for women and men. Urban women age 25-49 have their first sexual intercourse about one year later than rural women. There is virtually no difference in when urban men and rural men in the same age group initiate sexual intercourse.

There are few differences by province among women and men. However, higher education is associated with delayed initiation of sexual intercourse among women age 25-49. Among women with no education, the median age for the initiation of sexual intercourse is much lower (16.8 years) than among women who have more than a secondary education (21.8 years). In contrast to women, educational attainment is not as strong of a factor for men. For men in all educational categories, the mean age at first sexual intercourse is about 20 years, with the exception of men who have more than a secondary education who delay first sexual intercourse by almost one year (20.9 years). As with education, wealth is more of a factor in delaying first sexual intercourse for women than it is for men.

Table 6.6.1 Median age at first intercourse: women								
Median age at first sexual intercourse among women age 20(25)-49, by current age, according to background characteristics, Zimbabwe 2005-2006								
Background characteristic	Age						Women age 20-49	Women age 25-49
	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49		
Residence								
Urban	19.9	19.7	19.8	18.9	18.5	18.6	19.5	19.3
Rural	18.1	18.4	18.3	18.3	17.5	17.8	18.1	18.1
Province								
Manicaland	19.0	18.6	18.9	18.6	17.1	18.3	18.5	18.4
Mashonaland Central	17.4	18.2	18.1	18.2	17.2	17.6	17.8	17.9
Mashonaland East	18.8	18.5	19.4	19.5	18.2	17.3	18.7	18.7
Mashonaland West	18.0	19.0	18.7	18.3	17.3	17.9	18.2	18.3
Matabeleland North	18.0	18.1	17.2	17.8	17.2	17.0	17.7	17.6
Matabeleland South	17.9	17.8	18.1	18.8	17.7	17.2	17.9	17.9
Midlands	18.6	18.6	18.8	18.3	18.2	17.3	18.5	18.4
Masvingo	18.5	19.2	18.9	18.4	18.0	18.7	18.6	18.7
Harare	a	20.5	20.3	19.2	19.2	18.8	19.9	19.8
Bulawayo	a	19.3	19.3	18.5	18.8	18.2	19.3	18.9
Education								
No education	17.2	17.5	16.3	16.6	16.7	17.2	16.9	16.8
Primary	17.1	17.5	17.6	17.2	17.6	17.9	17.5	17.6
Secondary	19.3	19.5	19.5	19.4	18.8	19.0	19.4	19.4
More than secondary	a	22.6	20.7	23.0	21.1	21.3	a	21.8
Wealth quintile								
Lowest	17.5	18.0	18.0	17.5	16.9	17.5	17.6	17.7
Second	17.9	18.1	17.9	18.4	17.2	18.1	17.9	18.0
Middle	19.0	18.8	18.7	18.5	17.7	17.6	18.5	18.3
Fourth	18.8	19.1	19.1	18.4	18.2	18.3	18.8	18.7
Highest	a	20.1	20.0	19.6	18.9	18.8	19.9	19.7
Total	18.8	18.9	18.9	18.6	17.9	18.0	18.7	18.6
a = Omitted because less than 50 percent of the women had intercourse for the first time before reaching the beginning of the age group								

Table 6.6.2 Median age at first intercourse: men

Median age at first sexual intercourse among men age 20(25)-49, by current age, according to background characteristics, Zimbabwe 2005-2006

Background characteristic	Age						Men age 20-49	Men age 25-49
	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49		
Residence								
Urban	19.9	19.9	20.4	20.3	20.3	20.6	a	20.3
Rural	19.5	20.1	20.2	20.2	20.6	20.1	a	20.2
Province								
Manicaland	a	20.5	20.7	20.0	21.9	20.2	a	20.6
Mashonaland Central	19.0	19.4	19.7	20.4	21.2	20.1	19.5	20.1
Mashonaland East	a	20.1	20.2	20.6	20.0	19.6	a	20.1
Mashonaland West	19.1	19.7	20.8	20.2	20.9	18.3	19.8	20.2
Matabeleland North	18.5	18.8	18.9	18.9	18.4	19.3	18.8	18.9
Matabeleland South	19.7	21.6	20.7	19.9	21.6	20.7	a	20.9
Midlands	19.8	20.1	20.8	20.6	20.3	20.7	a	20.5
Masvingo	a	20.0	20.3	21.0	20.6	20.4	a	20.4
Harare	a	20.1	20.2	20.1	20.5	20.5	a	20.2
Bulawayo	19.5	19.8	19.8	19.6	19.8	20.4	19.7	19.9
Education								
No education	17.0	20.6	19.4	19.3	20.2	20.7	a	20.4
Primary	18.9	19.7	20.0	19.2	20.3	20.2	19.7	20.0
Secondary	19.8	20.0	20.4	20.2	20.7	20.1	a	20.2
More than secondary	a	22.2	20.3	21.5	20.6	20.7	a	20.9
Wealth quintile								
Lowest	19.2	19.5	19.9	20.0	20.0	19.1	19.6	19.7
Second	19.3	20.3	20.2	20.4	20.8	20.2	a	20.3
Middle	19.6	20.2	20.4	19.9	21.5	19.9	a	20.3
Fourth	19.5	20.0	20.3	20.2	20.5	20.9	a	20.4
Highest	a	19.9	20.5	20.7	20.1	20.2	a	20.3
Total	19.7	20.0	20.3	20.2	20.5	20.3	a	20.2

a = Omitted because less than 50 percent of the men had intercourse for the first time before reaching the beginning of the age group

6.7 RECENT SEXUAL ACTIVITY

In the absence of effective contraception, the probability of becoming pregnant is highly dependent upon the frequency of intercourse. Information on sexual activity, therefore, can be used to refine measures of exposure to pregnancy. Men and women who have had sex were asked how long ago their last sexual activity occurred. Tables 6.7.1 and 6.7.2 show the distribution of women and men by recent sexual activity according to background characteristics.

Although eight in ten women age 15-49 years have ever had sexual intercourse (Table 6.5), not all those who have sex are currently sexually active. About half (48 percent) of all women age 15-49 were sexually active in the four weeks preceding the survey. Eighteen percent of women had been sexually active within the 12-month period prior to the survey, but not in the month prior to the interview, and 12 percent had not been sexually active for one or more years. Twenty-one percent of women had never had sexual intercourse. Recent sexual activity is higher among women between the ages of 25 and 34 years. Women in union are more likely to report recent sexual activity than women who are divorced, separated, widowed, or have never married. Women in rural areas and women with more than a secondary education are also more likely to report having sexual intercourse within the four weeks preceding the interview when compared with other subgroups. Among those who had sex within the four weeks preceding the survey there are variations by province, ranging from 36 percent among women in Bulawayo to 57 percent in Mashonaland Central.

Table 6.7.1 Recent sexual activity: women

Percent distribution of women by timing of last sexual intercourse, according to background characteristics, Zimbabwe 2005-2006

Background characteristic	Timing of last sexual intercourse				Never had sexual intercourse	Total	Number of women
	Within the past 4 weeks	Within 1 year ¹	One or more years	Missing			
Age							
15-19	17.0	11.3	2.6	1.3	67.9	100.0	2,152
20-24	49.6	23.3	7.8	2.8	16.5	100.0	1,952
25-29	65.9	19.1	9.6	2.0	3.4	100.0	1,466
30-34	64.4	20.2	13.1	1.7	0.6	100.0	1,216
35-39	54.2	20.4	22.5	2.2	0.6	100.0	834
40-44	56.1	18.0	24.5	1.4	0.1	100.0	699
45-49	51.1	16.7	30.1	1.8	0.2	100.0	589
Marital status							
Never married	3.7	11.3	7.4	0.9	76.7	100.0	2,404
Married or living together	78.5	18.2	1.7	1.6	0.0	100.0	5,143
Divorced/separated/widowed	7.5	30.2	57.3	4.9	0.0	100.0	1,360
Marital duration, married only once²							
0-4 years	75.8	20.9	0.6	2.4	0.2	100.0	1,348
5-9 years	80.7	16.9	0.8	1.5	0.0	100.0	1,151
10-14 years	81.0	15.6	1.5	1.9	0.0	100.0	677
15-19 years	77.6	18.4	2.6	1.4	0.0	100.0	514
20-24 years	80.8	15.1	3.4	0.7	0.0	100.0	322
25+ years	70.9	23.3	5.3	0.4	0.0	100.0	438
Married more than once	81.8	15.4	1.6	1.2	0.0	100.0	693
Residence							
Urban	46.1	13.7	12.4	1.4	26.3	100.0	3,502
Rural	48.4	21.1	11.3	2.2	17.1	100.0	5,405
Province							
Manicaland	42.0	20.9	14.8	3.1	19.2	100.0	1,043
Mashonaland Central	57.3	17.5	9.0	1.7	14.5	100.0	825
Mashonaland East	49.7	15.9	15.2	2.6	16.6	100.0	714
Mashonaland West	51.6	18.3	13.0	1.3	15.8	100.0	829
Matabeleland North	45.0	27.8	8.8	2.2	16.1	100.0	536
Matabeleland South	37.9	25.8	13.0	1.4	21.9	100.0	439
Midlands	53.5	14.6	9.8	1.3	20.9	100.0	1,193
Masvingo	45.8	21.9	10.0	2.5	19.9	100.0	1,137
Harare	48.1	11.0	12.0	1.5	27.5	100.0	1,492
Bulawayo	36.1	20.4	12.1	1.5	29.9	100.0	697
Education							
No education	48.3	25.5	23.0	2.3	0.9	100.0	380
Primary	51.2	21.1	13.6	2.3	11.8	100.0	2,902
Secondary	44.8	16.3	9.8	1.7	27.4	100.0	5,355
More than secondary	60.3	12.2	12.8	1.3	13.5	100.0	270
Wealth quintile							
Lowest	49.0	23.0	11.2	3.4	13.4	100.0	1,552
Second	50.9	20.8	10.5	2.0	15.8	100.0	1,500
Middle	44.5	21.7	12.3	1.8	19.7	100.0	1,546
Fourth	53.6	14.3	12.3	1.3	18.5	100.0	2,006
Highest	40.9	14.1	11.9	1.5	31.6	100.0	2,304
Total	47.5	18.2	11.7	1.9	20.7	100.0	8,907

¹ Excludes women who had sexual intercourse within the last 4 weeks² Excludes women who are not currently married

Table 6.7.2 Recent sexual activity: men

Percent distribution of men by timing of last sexual intercourse, according to background characteristics, Zimbabwe 2005-2006

Background characteristic	Timing of last sexual intercourse				Never had sexual intercourse	Total	Number of men
	Within the past 4 weeks	Within 1 year ¹	One or more years	Missing			
Age							
15-19	5.6	12.4	9.5	0.0	72.5	100.0	1,899
20-24	30.0	28.5	17.8	0.0	23.6	100.0	1,459
25-29	63.5	20.9	10.4	0.0	5.2	100.0	1,082
30-34	77.9	17.0	4.4	0.0	0.6	100.0	882
35-39	76.8	16.4	5.7	0.2	0.9	100.0	663
40-44	78.6	13.9	7.1	0.0	0.4	100.0	469
45-49	75.8	17.8	6.0	0.0	0.3	100.0	409
Marital status							
Never married	9.8	21.2	16.3	0.0	52.7	100.0	3,404
Married or living together	86.0	13.1	1.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	3,132
Divorced/separated/widowed	24.4	44.1	31.2	0.4	0.0	100.0	327
Marital duration, married only once²							
0-4 years	85.6	13.3	1.1	0.0	0.0	100.0	761
5-9 years	86.8	12.7	0.5	0.0	0.0	100.0	718
10-14 years	89.0	9.9	1.1	0.0	0.0	100.0	458
15-19 years	85.6	14.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	100.0	338
20-24 years	85.7	12.9	1.5	0.0	0.0	100.0	218
25+ years	81.5	15.8	2.7	0.0	0.0	100.0	132
Married more than once	84.1	14.8	1.1	0.0	0.0	100.0	507
Residence							
Urban	45.1	19.9	11.3	0.0	23.8	100.0	2,767
Rural	45.4	17.7	9.2	0.0	27.7	100.0	4,096
Province							
Manicaland	41.9	16.0	8.4	0.0	33.7	100.0	793
Mashonaland Central	49.5	18.2	11.0	0.2	21.1	100.0	681
Mashonaland East	41.5	16.7	10.8	0.0	30.9	100.0	570
Mashonaland West	47.5	20.0	11.0	0.0	21.5	100.0	691
Matabeleland North	50.1	23.1	5.8	0.0	20.9	100.0	416
Matabeleland South	38.8	14.6	9.7	0.0	36.8	100.0	306
Midlands	46.6	16.1	9.6	0.0	27.7	100.0	956
Masvingo	45.0	19.5	7.4	0.0	28.1	100.0	771
Harare	45.7	18.1	13.4	0.1	22.8	100.0	1,219
Bulawayo	42.4	27.2	9.0	0.0	21.3	100.0	460
Education							
No education	61.1	17.0	12.2	0.0	9.6	100.0	88
Primary	48.4	18.2	9.4	0.0	24.1	100.0	1,782
Secondary	42.3	19.0	10.2	0.0	28.5	100.0	4,588
More than secondary	61.7	16.3	10.1	0.3	11.5	100.0	405
Wealth quintile							
Lowest	52.4	16.2	8.8	0.0	22.6	100.0	1,042
Second	46.0	17.4	10.0	0.0	26.6	100.0	1,137
Middle	36.5	19.4	9.3	0.0	34.8	100.0	1,194
Fourth	48.3	19.7	10.2	0.0	21.7	100.0	1,892
Highest	43.0	19.0	11.1	0.1	26.8	100.0	1,599
Total 15-49	45.3	18.6	10.0	0.0	26.1	100.0	6,863
Total 15-54	46.7	18.4	9.9	0.0	25.0	100.0	7,175

¹ Excludes men who had sexual intercourse within the last 4 weeks

² Excludes men who are not currently married

Among men age 15-49, 45 percent had sex within the four weeks preceding the interview. Nineteen percent of men had been sexually active within the 12-month period prior to the survey, but not in the month prior to the interview, and 10 percent had not been sexually active for one or more years. Twenty-six percent of men had never had sexual intercourse. Recent sexual activity is high among men between 30 and 49 years of age. Provincial variations show that men in Matabeleland South reported the lowest percentage of recent sexual activity (39 percent), while men in Matabeleland North and Mashonaland Central reported the highest percentage of sexual activity (50 percent for both). More than six in ten men with no education (61 percent) and more than a secondary education (62 percent) reported recent sexual activity. Men in the lowest wealth quintile had a higher percentage of recent sexual activity (52 percent) compared with men in the highest wealth quintile (43 percent).

6.8 POSTPARTUM AMENORRHOEA, ABSTINENCE, AND INSUSCEPTIBILITY

Postpartum amenorrhoea refers to the interval between childbirth and the return of menstruation. During this period, the risk of pregnancy is greatly reduced. The duration of this protection from conception until after childbirth depends on the duration and intensity of breastfeeding and the length of time before the resumption of sexual intercourse. Women who gave birth during the three years prior to the survey were asked about their breastfeeding practices, the duration of amenorrhoea, and sexual abstinence. Women are considered insusceptible if they are not exposed to the risk of pregnancy, either because they are amenorrhoeic or are still abstaining from sex after birth. The results are shown in Table 6.8.

The period of postpartum amenorrhoea is considerably longer than the period of postpartum abstinence and is therefore the principal determinant of the length of postpartum insusceptibility (to the risk of pregnancy) in Zimbabwe. The median duration of amenorrhoea is 14.3 months, women abstain for a median of 2.3 months, and are insusceptible to pregnancy for a median of 15.6 months. All women are virtually insusceptible to pregnancy during the first two months after a birth, and both amenorrhoea and abstinence are important factors in their insusceptibility. However, starting from the second month after birth, the contribution of abstinence to the period of insusceptibility is greatly reduced as more women resume sexual relations. At 12-13 months after birth, more than six in ten (61 percent) are still amenorrhoeic, while only about one in 10 (12 percent) are still abstaining. The proportion of amenorrhoeic women drops sharply from 29 percent at 18-19 months postpartum to 8 percent at 24-25 months postpartum.

Table 6.8 Postpartum amenorrhoea, abstinence, and insusceptibility

Percentage of births in the three years preceding the survey for which mothers are postpartum amenorrhoeic, abstaining, and insusceptible, by number of months since birth, and median and mean durations, Zimbabwe 2005-2006

Months since birth	Percentage of births for which the mother is:			Number of births
	Amenorrhoeic	Abstaining	Insusceptible	
< 2	87.9	81.8	97.6	138
2-3	68.2	45.5	80.7	195
4-5	72.8	22.5	77.8	196
6-7	70.6	21.4	73.4	202
8-9	64.2	17.9	67.9	178
10-11	64.3	14.2	68.1	167
12-13	61.0	12.0	65.2	200
14-15	45.5	12.0	54.1	225
16-17	41.0	13.2	44.8	170
18-19	28.5	7.6	34.2	164
20-21	10.6	9.3	19.2	177
22-23	13.5	11.0	19.2	157
24-25	7.8	6.4	14.2	169
26-27	1.8	8.5	10.3	178
28-29	2.6	7.0	8.5	159
30-31	6.0	2.3	8.3	143
32-33	3.6	2.5	6.1	183
34-35	2.0	4.1	6.1	174
Total	37.2	16.3	43.0	3,174
Median	14.3	2.3	15.6	na
Mean	13.3	6.3	15.4	na

Note: Estimates are based on status at the time of the survey.
na = Not applicable

6.9 MEDIAN DURATION OF POSTPARTUM INSUSCEPTIBILITY BY BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

In the absence of contraception, variations in postpartum amenorrhoea and abstinence are the most important determinants of the interval between births and ultimately the completion of fertility.

Table 6.9 shows the median durations of postpartum amenorrhoea, abstinence and insusceptibility by selected background characteristics. Although the median number of months of postpartum amenorrhoea for women age 30-49 is four months longer than that for women age 15-29 (16.4 months compared with 12.4 months, respectively), postpartum abstinence does not vary much by age (2.2 and 2.4 months, respectively). Postpartum insusceptibility is about two months longer for older women compared with younger women (16.6 and 14.9 months, respectively). Women in rural areas have longer periods of amenorrhoea, sexual abstinence, and insusceptibility than women in urban areas. By province, Bulawayo and Matabeleland South have the shortest duration of postpartum amenorrhoea (8.3 and 8.8 months, respectively), while Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland West have the longest periods (16.4 and 16.7 months, respectively). Postpartum abstinence is shortest in Harare (less than one month) compared with other provinces, which range from 1.8 to 5.5 months. Overall, women in Harare have the shortest insusceptibility (13.2 months), while those in Mashonaland West have the longest (17.6 months).

Table 6.9 Median duration of amenorrhoea, postpartum abstinence, and postpartum insusceptibility				
Median number of months of postpartum amenorrhoea, postpartum abstinence, and postpartum insusceptibility following births in the three years preceding the survey, by background characteristics, Zimbabwe 2005-2006				
Background characteristic	Postpartum amenorrhoea	Postpartum abstinence	Postpartum insusceptibility	Number of births
Age				
15-29	12.4	2.4	14.9	2,237
30-49	16.4	2.2	16.6	937
Residence				
Urban	11.1	1.7	12.3	909
Rural	15.4	2.5	16.6	2,265
Province				
Manicaland	12.0	2.9	14.6	399
Mashonaland Central	16.4	1.8	16.8	349
Mashonaland East	14.3	2.2	14.8	260
Mashonaland West	16.7	2.3	17.6	306
Matabeleland North	12.7	5.5	15.6	204
Matabeleland South	8.8	3.1	15.3	146
Midlands	15.5	2.3	16.6	468
Masvingo	15.5	2.1	15.8	503
Harare	12.8	0.7	13.2	384
Bulawayo	8.3	2.3	16.6	155
Education				
No education	17.3	2.8	17.9	124
Primary	15.2	2.4	16.1	1,137
Secondary	13.4	2.3	15.1	1,834
More than secondary	3.4	0.5	3.4	80
Wealth quintile				
Lowest	15.3	2.6	16.2	784
Second	16.2	2.6	16.9	669
Middle	15.2	2.4	17.4	555
Fourth	13.1	2.0	15.0	675
Highest	10.6	1.4	11.2	491
Total	14.3	2.3	15.6	3,174

Note: Medians are based on current status.

Postpartum amenorrhoea, abstinence, and insusceptibility are inversely related to the mother's education. Postpartum amenorrhoea varies from 17.3 months for women with no education to 15.2 and 13.4 months, respectively, for those with only primary and secondary education, and 3.4 months for women with an educational level higher than secondary school. Similarly, the period of abstinence is 2.8 months for women with no education and 2.4 months each for those with a primary, and 2.3 months for those with secondary education, respectively. In contrast, it is less than one month (0.5 months) for women with more than secondary education. Women with no education have a median period of insusceptibility of 17.9 months, compared with 16.1 and 15.1 months for those with primary and secondary education, respectively, and 3.4 months for those with more than secondary education.

Women in the highest wealth quintile have shorter periods of postpartum amenorrhoea, abstinence, and insusceptibility compared with women in the lower wealth quintiles.

6.10 MENOPAUSE

The risk of pregnancy declines as age increases. The term infecundity denotes a process rather than a well-defined event; the risk of pregnancy declines with age as increasing proportions of women become infecund. Although the onset of infecundity is difficult to determine for an individual woman, there are ways of estimating it for a population. Table 6.10 presents data on menopause, an indicator of decreasing exposure to the risk of pregnancy for women age 30 years and over.

The percentage of women who have reached menopause refers to the population of women who are neither pregnant nor postpartum amenorrhoeic and have not had a menstrual period in the six months preceding the survey, or who report being menopausal. Table 6.10 shows that the proportion of menopausal women increases slightly with age from 4 percent among women age 30-34 to 38 percent among women age 48-49. Overall, 10 percent of women age 30-49 are menopausal.

Age	Percentage menopausal ¹	Number of women
30-34	4.0	1,216
35-39	5.9	834
40-41	10.1	280
42-43	10.0	311
44-45	16.9	246
46-47	26.7	255
48-49	37.6	195
Total	10.2	3,337

¹ Percentage of all women who are not pregnant and not postpartum amenorrhoeic whose last menstrual period occurred six or more months preceding the survey