

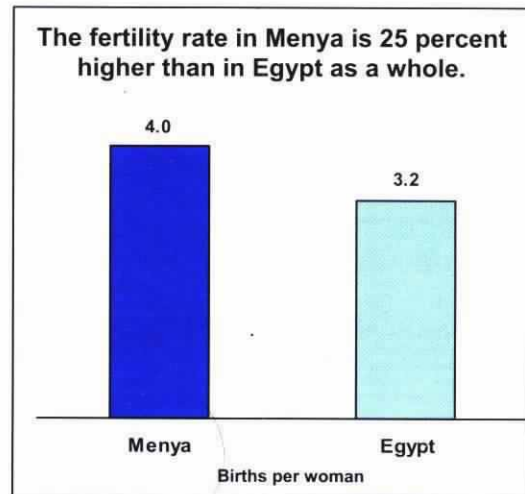
*In order to explore fertility levels and patterns, the 2003 EIDHS obtained detailed reproductive histories from respondents. In addition, questions were asked about the age at which women first marry and other key fertility determinants. Information also was collected on fertility preferences (wanted fertility) in order to gain insight into the likelihood of future fertility change.*

## WHAT IS THE CURRENT LEVEL OF FERTILITY? (Table 3.1)

The total fertility rate (TFR) provides a measure of the number of children a woman will bear during her lifetime if she has children at the rate prevailing over the three-year period prior to the EIDHS among women in the reproductive ages.

In Menya, the total fertility rate is 4 births per woman. Fertility in Menya is around 25 percent—or an average of 0.8 births—higher than the level for the entire country.

Within the governorate, there is a marked difference in the fertility behavior of urban women—who at current levels will give birth to an average of just under 3 children in their reproductive years—and



Age group	Urban	Rural	Total
15-19	37	97	86
20-24	157	255	231
25-29	169	235	221
30-34	113	146	139
35-39	82	90	88
40-44	31	35	34
45-49	0	6	4
TFR 15-49	2.9	4.3	4.0

rural women—who will have an average of 4.3 births before reaching their 50<sup>th</sup> birthday.

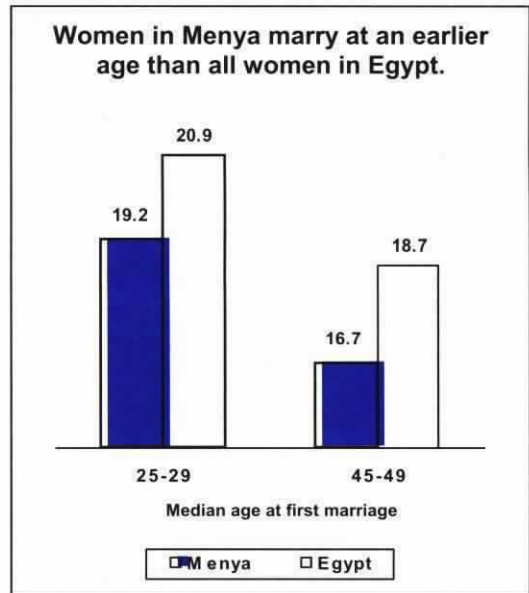
Examining the age-specific fertility rates, it is clear that the differences in rural and urban fertility are greater for women under age 35 than among older women. The differences are particularly large for women age 15-19. Rural women in that age group are giving birth at more than twice the rate of urban women in the same cohort.

## WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE MENYA’S FERTILITY LEVELS?

### AGE AT MARRIAGE (Table 3.2)

The age at which women first marry is among the most important proximate determinants of fertility. When women delay marriage, they shorten the period of exposure to pregnancy and, thus, ultimately reduce the number of children they will bear.

The chart to the right compares the median age at first marriage—the age by which 50 percent of women have married—for two cohorts of women, those 45-49 years of age who are nearing the end of their reproductive years and women 25-29 who are in the prime childbearing ages. The comparison documents a substantial change in the average age at marriage in Menya governorate. The median age at first marriage among women 25-29 is 19.2 years, 2.5 years higher than the median among the older women (16.7 years).



The comparison also highlights a narrowing of the gap in the median age at first marriage between women in Menya and other Egyptian women. The median age at first marriage among all Egyptian women ages 45-49 is two years higher than the median age for Menyan women in the same cohort. Among women age 25-29, differences in the age at first marriage are somewhat smaller. In this age group, women from Menya were an average of 1.7 years younger when they first married than women in Egypt as a whole.

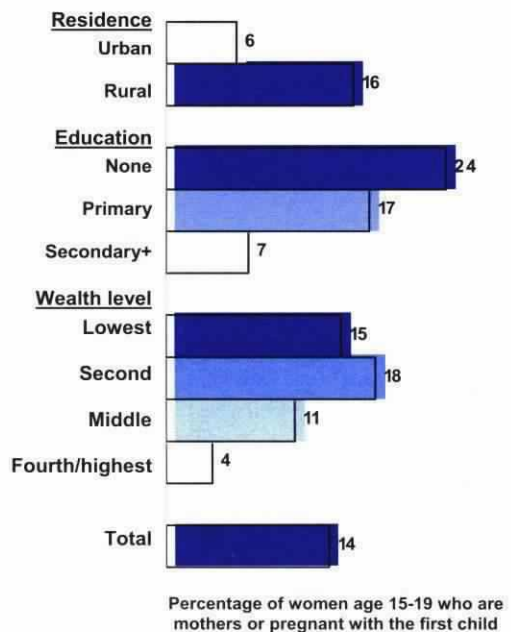
**TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND MOTHERHOOD** (Tables 3.3-3.4)

The trend to later marriage has resulted in an increase in the average age at which Menyan women first give birth. Among women 45-49, for example, almost 30 percent had their first child before they had reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. In contrast, among women age 20-24, only 18 percent had given birth before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

In addition to having a negative impact on fertility levels, the delay in the onset of childbearing has reduced the proportion of women exposed to the higher risks of morbidity and mortality associated with early childbearing. Nevertheless, in Menya, 14 percent of women in the 15-19 cohort had started childbearing at the time they were surveyed in the EIDHS. This is substantially higher than the level of teenage childbearing in Egypt as a whole (8 percent).

Teenage childbearing is more common in rural than in urban areas. Teenagers who have never been to school are more likely to get married at early age and start childbearing (24 percent have begun child bearing) than other teens. Differences across the wealth index are large,

**Teenage childbearing is lowest among teens in the wealthiest households and highest among teens who never attended school.**



with 15 percent of teens in the lowest quintile having started childbearing compared to 4 percent in the wealthiest quintile.

**BIRTH INTERVALS** (Table 3.5)

The period between two successive births is referred to as the birth interval. Shorter birth intervals are associated with higher fertility. Short birth intervals also place children and the mother at greater risk of illness and death.

*Short birth intervals place both the mother and her children at increased health risk. In Menya, average birth intervals are especially short—28 months or less—among women under age 30.*

In Menya, 61 percent of non-first births occurred within 3 years of a prior birth and, for a quarter of the births, the interval was less than 2 years. The median interval between successive births in Menya is 3.8 months shorter than the average birth interval among all Egyptian mothers (31.7 months and 35.5 months, respectively).

**PREMARITAL EXAMINATIONS** (Table 3.6)

The 2003 EIDHS was the first survey to ask women questions about the practice of seeing a medical provider for a premarital examination. Women in Menya were almost as likely as women in Egypt as a whole to have heard about the practice (79 percent and 82 percent, respectively). As is the case among all Egyptian women, few women in Menya report that they had been examined by a physician before their first marriage (1 percent).

**WHAT ARE WOMEN’S CHILDBEARING GOALS?**

**IDEAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN** (Table 3.7)

The EIDHS captured information on a woman’s lifetime childbearing goals by asking about the ideal number of children. The mean ideal number of children among currently married women in Menya—3.3 children—is 0.5 children more than the ideal number reported for married women in the country as a whole.

While the mean ideal number of children among Menyan women exceeds that of the average Egyptian woman, the survey also documents considerable excess fertility. Many women are having more children than they consider ideal; in fact, among women with four or more children, the mean ideal numbers of children falls consistently below the number of children the women have had.

Current family size	Menya	Egypt
None	2.6	2.6
1 child	2.7	2.4
2 children	2.9	2.5
3 children	3.3	2.8
4 children	3.5	3.2
5 children	3.7	3.4
6 children	4.0	3.8
Currently married women 15-49	3.3	2.8

**WANTED FERTILITY** (Table 3.8)

Wanted fertility is an estimate of the fertility rate that would be achieved if unwanted births are avoided (i.e., if all women were to achieve their childbearing goals). In Menya, the wanted fertility rate is 3 births per woman, 1 birth less than the actual fertility rate. Thus, if all unwanted births were avoided, the total fertility rate in Menya would decrease by 25 percent.

**DESIRE FOR ANOTHER CHILD** (Table 3.9)

In addition to the information on women's ideal fertility, the EIDHS obtained information on women's immediate childbearing preferences. More than 60 percent of currently married women would prefer not to have another birth or are sterilized, and 20 percent would like to delay any future birth for at least two years. Thus, these data also suggest a strong interest among the women in Menya in controlling fertility.