

many couples do not achieve the degree of control they wish. Some have more children than they want and can be classified in the "excess fertility" category; others fail to have their children when they want them and are described as "timing failures." More than half of U.S. couples reported one or another type of failure in 1965; 21 percent of all respondents acknowledged that at least one of their children was unwanted (15). (This must be regarded as an underestimate, since the questionnaire required that respondents characterize specific children already born as either wanted or unwanted.)

TABLE 6.—DESIRED FAMILY SIZE, BY RACE AND BY FERTILITY PLANNING STATUS, AS SHOWN BY A 1965 STUDY.¹

Desired number of children	Percentages of respondents who regard their fertility as completed			Percentages of respondents who desire more children		
	Total	White	Negro	Total	White	Negro
0-2	36.2	35.4	44.0	27.1	25.7	41.0
3	23.6	24.5	14.8	28.8	29.2	24.3
4	40.3	40.2	41.2	44.2	45.0	34.8

¹ Data from 13, table 7.

TABLE 7.—PERCENTAGES (BY AGE AND COLOR OF RESPONDENT) OF WOMEN WHO APPROVED OF FERTILITY CONTROL (INCLUDING THE RHYTHM METHOD) AND WERE USING OR EXPECTED TO USE SOME FORM OF CONTRACEPTIVE, AS SHOWN BY A 1965 STUDY.¹

Respondents	Percentages by age group			
	20-24 years	25-29 years	30-34 years	35-39 years
Approved of fertility control:				
White.....	95	97	95	93
Nonwhite.....	92	93	90	87
Were using or expected to use contraceptives:				
White.....	94	93	88	84
Nonwhite.....	96	90	84	71

¹ Data from 17a, tables 8 and 14.

While excess fertility is found among all socioeconomic groups, it is more acute among the poor, among nonwhites (the majority of whom are poor or near-poor), and among those with higher parity and less education. In spite of the similarity in family-size preferences in all socioeconomic groups, the poor and near-poor had a fertility rate from 1960 to 1965 of 152.5 births per 1000 women aged 15 to 44, as compared to 98.1 for the non-poor (20). And in spite of the expressed preference of almost all low-income parents for less than four children, nearly half of the children growing up in poverty in 1966 were members of families with five or more children under 18; moreover, the risk of poverty increased rapidly from 9 percent for one-child families to 42 percent for families with six or more children (21). In terms of poverty, the most significant demarcation appears to be at the three-child level—the average family size wanted by low-income as well as other American couples: more than one-quarter of all families with four or more children were living in poverty, and four out of ten were poor or near-poor. Their risk of poverty was two-and-a-half times that for families with three children or less (Table 8).

The 1965 National Fertility Study provides data on the percentage of unwanted births for each birth order, ranging from 5.7 percent of sixth and higher-order births. Application of these percentages to actual births, by birth order, in the years 1960 to 1965 yields an estimated average of 850,000 unwanted births annually in all socioeconomic groups. Combination of these data with Campbell's calculation of differential fertility rates shows that approximately 40 percent of births to poor and near-poor couples were unwanted by one or both parents in the years 1960 to 1965, as compared to 14 percent of births to non-poor couples (22). [This result appears consistent with the 1960 finding of an inverse relation between education and excess fertility, with 32 percent of white, and 43 percent of nonwhite, grade-school-educated wives reporting more children than they wanted (12, p. 364).]