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Men and women's fertility differences in achieved fertility, expectations and intentions: a HILDA Survey based analysis

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The views expressed or any errors in the paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Minister for Family and Community Services, and can't be taken in any way as expressions of Government Policy.

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Introduction

As Australia has experienced sustained fertility decline over the last four decades, there has been public concern and debates about the implications of falling fertility and what to do to stabilise or reverse the fertility trend (Tsfaghiorghis 2004b). The issues of fertility, family support, and balancing family and work responsibilities are important, as demonstrated by the May 2004 and 2005 Federal Budgets. These Budgets increased assistance to families with dependent children to help them with the costs of raising children and balance work, family and rearing responsibilities.

Concerns about fertility are focused on period (cross-sectional) fertility, which is the fertility experience of different cohorts of women who gave birth in a particular year/ a given period. Period fertility is measured by age-specific-fertility rates and/or the total fertility rate. Previous research (Tsfaghiorghis 2004b), using the number of children ever born to women rather than period fertility rates, showed that though the completed fertility of Australian birth cohorts has fallen for successive birth cohorts, it has remained above replacement fertility levelⁱ.

This paper will contribute to the fertility debate by examining the congruence in future fertility desires and expectations between members of a couple. This comparative study of partners' future fertility desires and intentions is based on primary analysis of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey Waves 1-2 datasetsⁱⁱ. The author's previous research on women's fertility examined the associations between education, work and fertility, and trends in completed cohort fertility using HILDA survey data (Tsfaghiorghis 2004a&b). This paper complements the previous research by bringing differences in partners' future fertility desires and intentions into the picture.

The purposes of this paper are to:

- Undertake a comparative fertility study of men's and women's achieved fertility, expectations and intentions,
- Undertake fertility modelling to look at the various scenarios of the completed fertility rate for men and women with incomplete fertility, and
- For men and women who intended to have children (or more children), examine when they intended to have a child or the next child

There are limitations in using data on couples' fertility desires, expectations and intentions, as this study proposes to do. This is because fertility expectations and intentions may not be consistent with future fertility behaviour. A literature review (Tsfaghiorghis 2004b) found that (a) that one should be 'wary about attitudinal questions' (McDonald 2001) and (b) that young women in Australia and most western countries may have high expectations about the number of children they will have but their expectations and intentions may be modified with time as their expectations are tempered by experience, knowledge and institutional constraints (McDonald 2001, Van de kaa 1998). Despite these shortcomings, it is useful to analyse men and women's fertility desires, expectations and intentions to understand future fertility behaviour.

There is limited research into men's fertility intentions and decisions let alone couples. Most of the available research only relates to women. The Australian Institute of Family Studies in partnership with the Office for Women, Department of Family and Community Services, conducted for the first time a comprehensive survey on the fertility decisions of men and women to fill an existing gap in knowledge (AIFS 2004). The Fertility Decision Making Project collected information through telephone interviews on the fertility decision making of 3,200 men and women aged 20-39 years. It also collected, through self-completed questionnaires, information from 313 of the respondents' partners. The Fertility Making Project asked respondents about their partners' aspirations and expectations about having children and also collected this information directly from the small number of partners. Limited quantitative analysis was carried out on the information obtained from the small number of partners (AIFS 2004: 116-8). This did not provide a sufficiently large representative sample of couples, however, to enable the researchers to compare fertility desires and expectations of each partner in a couple.

What is the contribution of this study compared with that of the Fertility Making Project? This study will not cover fertility decision making either of individuals or members of a couple, as the HILDA Survey does not ask about fertility decisions. HILDA, however, does allow us to compare the fertility desires, expectations and intentions of each partner in a couple, since this information was collected in a face-to-face interview from each adult aged 18–55 years in all waves of the Survey. Because of the better data collection method and a larger sample size, the HILDA findings could be expected to be more reliable.

Fertility of women and their partners

To put a context to partners' fertility preferences their achieved fertility, as measured by the number of children ever born to each partner, is first considered. Though information on respondents aged 18-55 years was collected, the analysis in this and subsequent sections is limited to women aged 18-44 years and their partners. As women aged 45-55 years had completed their fertility, it is meaningless to analyse their fertility desires and expectations.

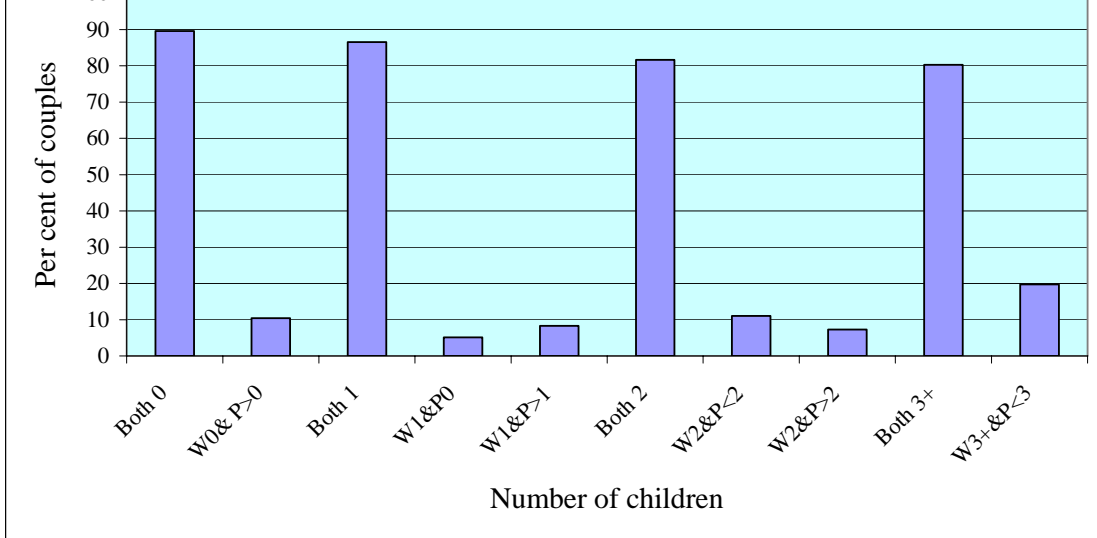
For the purpose of this analysis a weighted population of 2,313,900 currently partnered women aged 18-44 years from 2001 HILDA were matched to their current spouses/partners. Those in de facto relationships constituted 23.1 per cent of all couples. Though the majority of partners in relationships were married, the term women and partners are used throughout this paper instead of wives and husbandsⁱⁱⁱ.

Women were younger than their partners, by an average of 2.9 years; women's mean age was 33.8 years versus 36.7 years for partners. Those in de facto relationships were younger than those who were legally married. The mean age of women in de facto relationships was 29.3 years versus 35.2 years for married women. Mean ages for partners were 32.1 and 38.1 years, respectively.

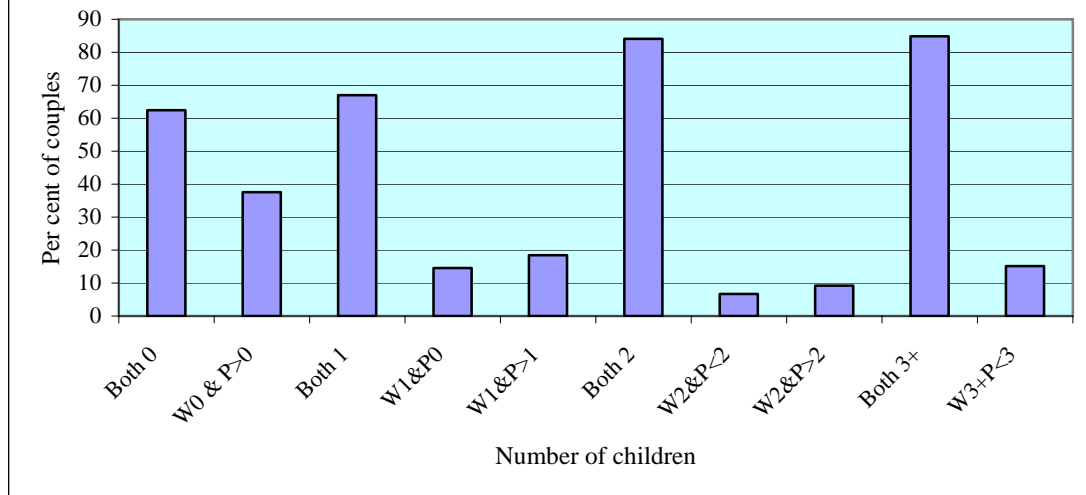
Figures 1 and 2 show whether women and their matched partners had born equal numbers of children. Comparing women aged 18-34 years and those aged 35-44 years shows that the proportion of couples where each has had the same number of children differs by women's age and number of children born. The proportion of couples having had the same number of children declines with the number of children for women aged 18-34 years while the reverse is true for women aged 35-44 years. Other salient results include:

- If women had no children or had only one child, the congruence on the number of children born (between women and partners) was much higher among the younger than the older women:
 - 90 per cent of women aged 18-34 years without children had partners with no children (Both 0) compared with 62 per cent of women aged 35-44 years with no children.
 - The proportion of women with one child who had partners with one child (Both 1) was 87 per cent for women aged 18-34 years and 67 per cent for those aged 35-44 years.
- The proportions of women with two children or three or more children who had partners with the same numbers of children (Both 2 or both 3+) were comparatively high irrespective of the age of the women.
- Where women had no children, a relatively high proportion had partners with children from previous relationships, 10 per cent of the 18-34 year olds and 38 per cent of the 35-44 year olds (W0 & P>1).
- Where women aged 18-34 year olds had one child, a small proportion of their partners had no children (W1 & P0), 5 per cent. This figure was 15 per cent of the 35-44 year olds.
- Similarly, a small proportion of women with two or more children had partners with fewer children or none at all (see Figures 1 & 2).

**Figure 1: Comparison of number of children born by women aged 18-34 years and their partners (%) : 2001
HILDA**



**Figure 2: Comparison of number of children born by women aged 35-44 years and over and their partners (%) : 2001
HILDA**



Desire to have children

HILDA also enables us to look at partners' congruence on their desires to have children or to have more children than they have already. Respondents aged 18-55 years were asked the question 'Would you like to have a child of your own/more children in the future?' Respondents were asked to pick a number ranging from 0, 'definitely would not like to have', to 10, 'definitely like'. The following categories were used to summarise the results: 0-2, 'definitely would not like', 3-5, 'would not like', 6-8, 'would like', and 9-10, 'would definitely like'.

Of the total 2, 282,600 women aged 18-44 years who responded to the question (Table 1 last column), 54 per cent definitely would not like to have a child/ more children in the future, 8 per cent would not like to have a child (more children) in the future. 11 per cent would like and 27 per cent would definitely like to have children.

The reason why women and their partners do not want to have a child/ more children in the future is because the majority of them had two or more children while the majority of those who wanted children had no children or only one child. For example, of all women with 0-2 scores 8.4 per cent had no children, 10.6 per cent had one child and 43.4 per cent had two or more children. Of those women who strongly wanted children (scores 9-10) 57.4 per cent had no children, 27.8 per cent had one child and 14.9 per cent had two or more children. Though this pattern holds by age group, the proportions of those who do not want children and with no children or one child as well as those who wanted children and with no children or one child were much higher for the 18-34 year olds than for the 35-44 year olds

The agreement between women and their partners desire to have children (or to have more children) in the future are shown by the percentages in the diagonal (bolded), which is high at the two extremes of the scores. In 46 per cent of all couples both women aged 18-44 years and their partners definitely would not like to have children in the future (scores of 0-2). Women and their partners who definitely would like to have children (scores 9-10) constituted 19 per cent of all the couples.

Table 1 also shows that there were small proportions of couples where partners of women who didn't want to have children (or to have more children (scores 5 or lower) definitely wanted children (score of 9-10) or would like to have children (scores 6-8), 3 and 4 per cent respectively. The reverse is also true; there were small proportions of couples where partners did not want to have children (scores 0-5), but their wives definitely wanted to have children or would like to have children, 4 and 4 per cent respectively. It is worth investigating if this is a signal of relationship problems – or may become a source of relationship problems in the future.

There is a strong statistical association between women and partners' desire to have children. However a strong association does not mean a strong agreement between members of a couple. Agreement is measured by an index Kappa. It equals 0 when the agreement equals that expected by chance, and 1.0 when there is perfect agreement. The stronger the agreement in a given pair of marginal distributions, the higher the Kappa value is. This paper used the index measure Kappa but models are useful for more detailed investigations of the structure of agreement and disagreement

(Agresti, 1990:365-7). While Kappa is used for nominal distributions, weighted Kappa is used for ordered categories, as the scores are ordered. The weighted Kappa value between women and partners' agreement on the desire to have children is 0.68. This means the difference between observed agreement and chance agreement (i.e. if ratings were statistically independent) is about 68 per cent of the maximum possible difference.

Table 1. Distribution of women aged 18-44 years and their partners (%) according to 'would you like to have children' scores: 2001 HILDA.

Women's scores	Partners' scores				Per cent of total couple
	0-2	3-5	6-8	9-10	
0-2	45.6	3.9	2.4	1.7	53.6
3-5	2.8	2.6	1.7	1.3	8.4
6-8	2.0	1.9	4.0	2.9	10.8
9-10	1.8	1.7	4.9	18.8	27.2
Per cent	52.2	10.2	12.9	24.7	2,282,599

Notes:

Population weighted analysis.

Sum of cell percentages adds up to 100 per cent.

LR Chi-Square test of association between women and partners' scores is highly significant, $p < 0.0001$.

Statistic	Value	ASE	95% Confidence limits	
Weighted Kappa	0.6811	0.0004	0.6804	0.6819

Table 2 presents mean scores of women aged 18–44 years and their partners on the question of 'would you like to have children in the future?' by age group of women and number of children ever born. For the sake of the analysis, mean scores of 4 or less are assumed to indicate lack of desire to have children while scores of 7 or more indicate strong desire to have a child/more children in the future.

Table 2 clearly shows that the desire to have children was strong only for women and their partners aged 18-34 years without a child or only one child, with mean scores of 8 and 7, respectively. If women aged 18-34 years and their partners had born two or more children, the desire to have more children is weak (mean score of 3). For women aged 35-44 years and their partners the desire to have a child or to have more children was weak irrespective of the number of children born. The differences between women and their partners were small, although partners tended to have less desire to have children than their wives, except for partners of women aged 35-44 years with 2 or more children. Those in de facto relationships had less desire to have children than married couples, possibly because they tended to be younger (Appendices Table 1).

Table 2. Would you like to have a child in the future: mean scores of women aged 18–44 years and partners by age group and number of children ever born? 2001 HILDA

Age group	Number of children ever born	Mean scores	
		Women	Partners
18-34	None	8.03	7.98
	One child	7.39	7.11
	Two or more children	3.03	2.99
	Mean	6.18	6.03
35-44	None	3.88	3.82
	One child	3.22	2.90
	Two or more children	0.99	1.14
	Mean	1.54	1.64

* Population weighted analysis.

Expectation of having children

Respondents aged 18-55 years were asked a follow up question ‘And how likely are you to have (a child/ more children) in the future?’ Like the first question, responses ranged between 0, ‘definitely not likely’, to 10, ‘definitely likely’.

Of all responding women aged 18-44 years, 33 per cent said they were likely to have a child/more children (scores 6 and above) in the future. Like the desire to have children, there was a mismatch between members of a couple in the perceived likelihood of having a child (or another child) (Table 3). The proportion of all couples where both women and their partners said that they were definitely not likely to have a child (or another child) was 54 per cent (row 1 and column 1). The proportion of all couples where both women and partners said they were definitely likely to have a child (another child), scores 9-10, was 19 per cent. However, a small proportion of women who said they were definitely likely to have children had partners who said that they were not likely to have children (scores of 5 and below). The same was true for partners who said that they were definitely likely to have children. In general there was a stronger agreement between women and partners on the likelihood of having children, weighted Kappa of 0.81, than the desire to have children, weighted Kappa of 0.68.

Table 3. Women’s scores and their partner’s scores (%) according to ‘how likely are you to have (a child/ more children) in the future?’ Women aged 18-44 years, 2001 HILDA.

Women’s scores	Partners’ scores				Per cent of total couples
	0-2	3-5	6-8	9-10	
0-2	54.2	2.4	1.3	0.4	58.2
3-5	2.3	3.9	1.5	0.8	8.6
6-8	0.8	1.4	5.0	2.2	9.4
9-10	0.5	1.1	3.7	18.5	23.8
Partners (%)	57.8	8.8	11.5	21.9	2,282,599

Notes:

Population weighted analysis.

Sum of cell percentages adds up to 100 per cent.

LR Chi-Square test of association between women and partners’ scores is highly significant, $p < 0.0001$.

Statistic	Value	ASE	95% Confidence limits	
Weighted Kappa	0.8118	0.0003	0.8112	0.8124

Most of the women who said that they were likely to have children in the future were in the younger age group. Of women who thought they were likely to have children (scores 6-10), 89 per cent were aged 18-34 years. Of women who said they were definitely likely to have children (scores 9-10) 92 per cent were in this age group.

When scores for women aged 18-34 years were matched against partner scores, the overall agreement between women and their partners was 74 per cent (Table 4). There

were a higher proportion of couples where both women and their partners said that they were definitely likely to have a child (or another child), 34 per cent, than where both women and their partners said that they were definitely not likely to have children, 26 per cent (Table 4). There were also 8 per cent of couples where both women and their partners said that they were likely to have children (scores 6-8). It is also evident from Table 4 that where a member of a couple said they were likely to have children (scores 6-8) a small proportion of partners said they were definitely likely to have children (scores 9-10).

Table 4. Comparison of women's scores against partner's' (%)by age of women on the question of 'how likely are you to have (a child/ more children) in the future?' 2001 HILDA.

Women's age/scores	Partners' scores				Per cent of total couples
	0-2	3-5	6-8	9-10	
18-34 years					
0-2	25.6	2.6	1.9	0.6	30.7
3-5	2.7	5.6	2.2	1.5	12.0
6-8	0.9	2.2	8.1	3.5	14.7
9-10	0.8	1.6	6.6	33.6	42.6
Per cent	30.1	11.9	18.8	39.2	1,173,121
35-44 years					
0-2	84.3	2.2	0.7	0.1	87.3
3-5	1.9	2.2	0.8	0.1	5.0
6-8	0.7	0.5	1.7	0.8	3.7
9-10	0.1	0.7	0.6	2.6	4.0
Per cent	87.0	5.5	3.8	3.7	1,109,478

Notes:

Population weighted analysis.

Sum of cell percentages adds up to 100 per cent.

LR Chi-Square test of association between women and partners' scores is highly significant, $p < 0.0001$.

Statistic	Value	ASE	95% Confidence limits	
Weighted Kappa				
18-34 years	0.7430	0.0004	0.7421	0.7439
35-44 years	0.7301	0.0008	0.7285	0.7318

Compared with women aged 18-34 years and their partners, the majority of women aged 35-44 years and their partners agreed that they were definitely not likely to have (more) children. In 84 per cent of all these couples women and their partners agreed that they were definitely not likely to have children (Table 4). By contrast, in only 3 per cent of all couples, both women and their partners said that they would definitely like to have children.

There was less congruence between the de facto partners than those legally married couples on the question of how likely are you to have children. The agreement between partners compared with that expected by chance was 59 per cent for the de facto and 80 per cent for the legally married couples.

Table 5 presents mean scores of the likelihood of having children in the future by age group of women and number of children ever born for women aged 18-44 years. As with the desire to have children, the expectation of having children is strong (mean scores of 7 to 8) only for women aged 18-34 years without children or with only one

child and their partners. Even for the younger age group the likelihood of having children for those who have had two or more children is weak (a mean score of less than 3). These results for couples are consistent with the AIFS (2004: 81-3) findings for men and women.

Table 5. Mean scores of expectation of having children in the future according to partners' age group and number of children ever born: 2001 HILDA.

Age group of women	Number of children ever born	Mean scores	
		Women	Partners
18-34	None	7.82	7.95
	One child	7.19	6.98
	Two or more children	2.65	2.61
	Mean	5.92	5.86
35-44	None	2.56	2.68
	One child	2.49	2.10
	Two or more children	0.52	0.58
	Mean	0.97	0.99

* Population weighted analysis.

Comparison of fertility desires and expectations

It is expected that higher fertility desires would be associated with higher fertility expectations. Table 6 sets out a cross tabulation of fertility desires (like to have more children) by likelihood of having a child (or more children) for women aged 18-44 years and for their partners. Slightly more than half of all women (52 per cent) definitely did not want to have children (scores 0-2) and also said that they were not definitely likely to have children (scores 0-2). 60 per cent of all women who did not want children also did not like to have children (scores 0-5). When we take women who said they would like to have children (scores 6-10), 3 per cent of all women would definitely like to have children (scores 9-10) and another 4 per cent would like to have children (scores 6-8) but did not expect to have children (scores 0-5). On the other hand, 2 per cent of women did not want to have (more) children (scores 0-5) but thought that they were likely to have children in the future (scores 6-10).

The lower panel of Table 6 gives the results for partners. The mismatches between fertility desires and expectations were higher for partners than for women. The agreement index, weighted Kappa, was 0.82 for women and 0.79 for partners. These results show strong agreement between fertility desires and expectations for both women and their partners but are far from a perfect agreement of 1.0.

Table 6. Comparisons between desire to have more children and expectation of having children for women aged 18-44 years and partners, 2001 HILDA.

Like to have more children	Likelihood of having a child or more children scores				Per cent of total couples
	0-2	3-5	6-9	9-10	
Women					
0-2	51.9	1.0	0.3	0.4	53.6
3-5	2.6	4.6	0.8	0.3	8.3
6-8	2.3	1.5	5.6	1.4	10.8
9-10	1.4	1.5	2.6	21.8	27.3
Per cent	58.2	8.6	9.4	23.8	2,282,599
Partners					
0-2	50.5	0.9	0.5	0.3	52.2
3-5	3.9	4.4	1.4	0.5	10.2
6-8	2.0	1.6	6.9	2.4	12.9
9-10	1.4	1.9	2.7	18.7	24.7
Per cent	57.8	8.8	11.5	21.9	2,282,599

Notes:

Population weighted analysis.

Sum of cell percentages adds up to 100 per cent.

Statistic	Value	ASE	95% Confidence limits	
Weighted Kappa				
Women	0.8196	0.0003	0.8190	0.8202
Partners	0.7900	0.0003	0.7894	0.7906

Intended number of children

The analysis that follows focuses on women who intended to have children, how many they intended to have and what their partners' intentions were.

Those who said they were likely to have children in the future (scores of 6 and above) were further asked to state the number of children they intended to have. Of the total 755,600 women aged 18-44 years who said they intended to have a child (or additional children), 12 per cent had partners who did not intend to have children,

- The analysis in Table 7 is restricted to women aged 18-44 years and their partners who both said they intend to have a child (or additional children). Table 7 shows that 69 per cent of couples who both intended to have a child or more children intended to have the same numbers of children (sum of the diagonal figures), i.e. 22 per cent intended to have one child or one more child, 34 per cent two and 11 per cent three or more children. It is evident from Table 7 that there was a significant mismatch between the number of children women and their partners intended to have. For example:

- In 10 per cent of couples women intended to have one child or one more child but their partners intended to have two or more children.
- Similarly in 8 per cent of couples partners intended to have one child or one more child but the women intended to have two or more children.

- In 8 per cent of couples partners intended to have two or more children but women intended to have one child or one more child, and
- In 8 per cent of couples partners intended to have two children and women intended to have three or more children

Comparisons of the marginal distributions in Table 7 shows that a higher proportion of women than partners intended to have one child or one more child while a higher proportion of partners than women intended to have two children. Compared with couples' agreement on desires and expectations of having children, the agreement between women and their partners on the numbers of intended children was weaker, as the weighted Kappa was only 0.54.

Table 7. Distribution of women aged 18-44 years and partners who said they were likely to have children by number of children they intended to have: 2001 HILDA.

No children intended by women	Number of children intended by partner			Per cent of total couple
	1	2	3+	
1	22.3	8.2	1.5	32.0
2	7.1	34.1	6.6	47.8
3+	0.6	8.4	11.2	20.2
Per cent	30.0	50.7	19.3	666,035

Notes:

Population weighted analysis.

Sum of cell percentages adds up to 100 per cent.

LR Chi-Square test of association between women and partners' scores is highly significant, $p < 0.0001$.

Statistic	Value	ASE	95% Confidence limits	
Weighted Kappa	0.5363	0.0009	0.5346	0.5380

I now look at all women aged 18-44 years who intended to have a child (more children) regardless of whether their partners also intended to have a child. Examining women's intentions to have a child (or more children) compared with their partners' intentions shows that the relationship between women and partners intended number of children depends on the woman's age and number of children born. Table 8 clearly shows that there was a high agreement between women aged 18-34 years and their partners if the women had no children and intended to have two children, with 74 per cent of these women and their partners agreeing in these cases.

The other results are as follows:

- If women without children intended to have only one child, in 55 per cent of cases their partners wanted two or more children.
- If women without children intended to have at least three children there was agreement with their partners in only 51 per cent of cases.
- There was a relatively high level of agreement if women with one child intended to have only one more child with 65 per cent of partners agreeing in this situation
- However if women with one child intended to have another two children, in 49 per cent of cases their partners intended to have only one more child or no more children. But if they intend to have three or more children, there was a high agreement with their partners.

- However if women aged 18-34 years had already had two or more children, in a significant proportion of cases their partners did not intend to have any more children (see bottom panel of Table 8).

Table 8. Comparison of numbers of children intended by women aged 18-34 years with that of their partners according to number of children born by women: 2001 HILDA.

Number of children born/ Intended number of children	Partners by intended number of children				Total
	None	1	2	3+	
No child					
1 child intended	8.9	36.1	47.9	7.1	37,230
2 children intended	4.8	6.0	73.8	15.4	244,373
3+ children intended	5.6	1.5	42.2	50.7	128,792
Total	5.4	7.3	61.6	25.7	410,395
One child					
1 child intended	14.3	64.7	19.1	1.9	108,648
2 children intended	7.2	41.8	43.6	7.5	53,973
3+ children intended	0.0	7.7	16.4	75.9	11,316
Total	11.1	53.9	26.5	8.5	173,936
2+ Children					
1 child intended	27.8	57.1	12.4	2.7	61,819
2 children intended	32.2	20.5	42.5	4.8	23,792
3+ children intended	32.5	41.7	0.0	25.8	2,786
Total	29.1	46.7	20.2	4.0	88,397

Population weighted analysis.

Row percentages add up to 100 %.

What is the common number of children women aged 18-44 years and their partners intend to have according to number of children ever born and age group? The distribution of women aged 18-44 years and partners by numbers of intended children according to number of children ever born and age group are shown in Figures 3 and 4 (the legend 'INCH' for the bar columns mean number of intended children). The salient results are:

- If women or partners had no children, the number of children commonly intended is two. This is irrespective of women's age.
 - Of women without children 60 per cent of those aged 18-34 years and 66 per cent of those aged 35-44 years intended to have two children.
 - The intention to have two children by those without children was higher for partners than for women in both age groups.
- If women and partners already have children (regardless of the number of children), the common number of additional children they intended to have was one.
- The proportion of women and their partners intending to have one child only or one more child increases with the number of children ever born and age of women (Figures 3 and 4).

- The proportions of women and partners that intended to have at least three children were relatively high among women aged 18-34 years and their partners without children.
- Of those with at least one child, a higher proportion of partners than women intended to have at least three children.

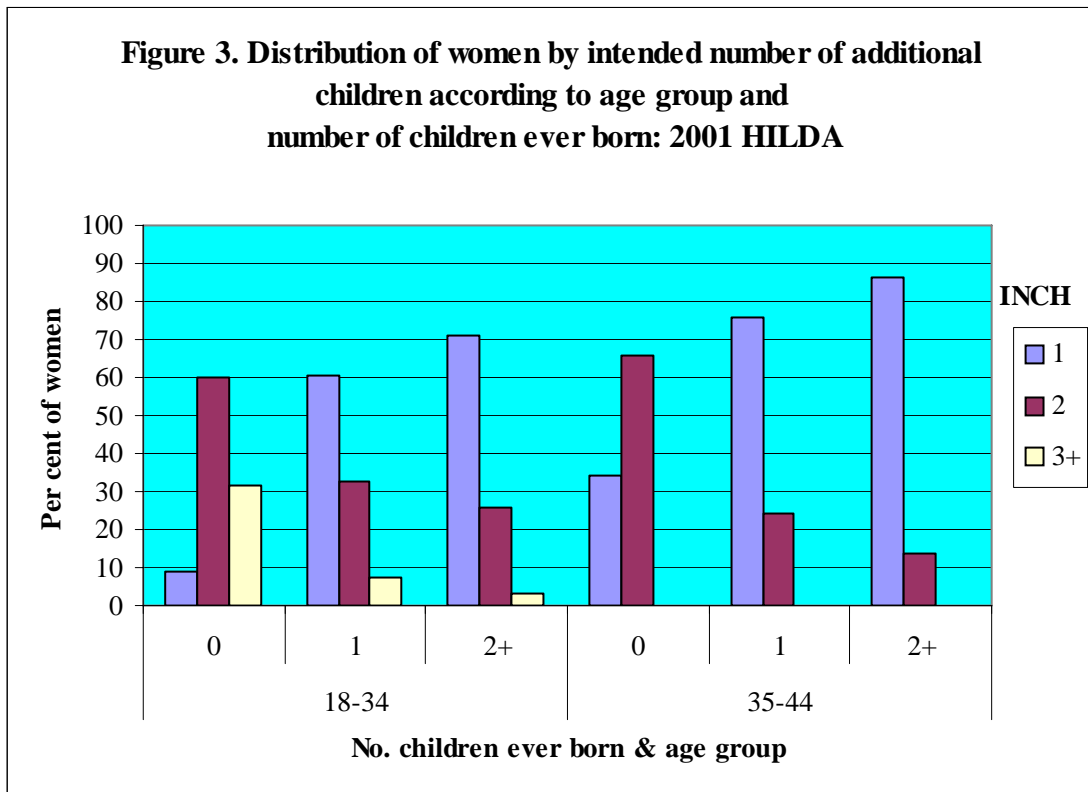
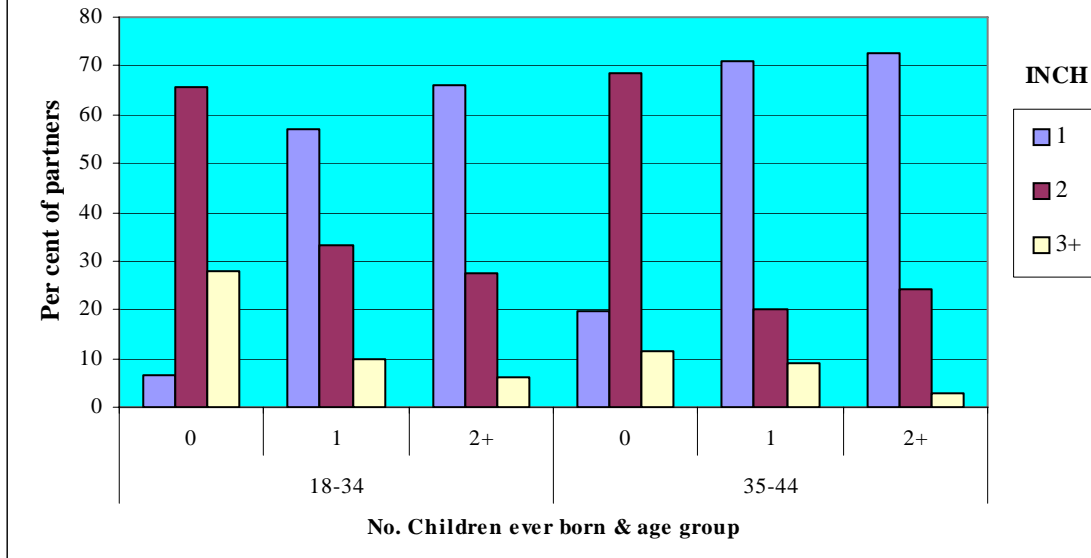


Figure 4. Distribution of partners according to intended number of additional children by number of children ever born and age group of women: 2001 HILDA



Expected completed fertility and childlessness

The distribution of women aged 18-44 years and their partners by numbers of intended children classified according to number of children ever born and age group can be used to estimate completed fertility^{iv} and lifetime childlessness^v for cohorts with currently incomplete fertility. The percentage of women and partners intending to have one child or additional children is given in column 2 and the mean number of intended children by women and partners who intended to have children is given in column 3.

Table 9 shows by age group the proportion of women that intended to have a child or additional children was 57.3 per cent for the 18-34 year olds and 7.5 per cent for the 35-44 year olds. Of women aged 18-34 years without children, 78.5 per cent intended to have children with the mean number of intended children being 2.32. The corresponding figures for the 18-34 year olds with one child were 69.9 per cent and 1.49 children, respectively. For women aged 35-44 years the proportion that intended to have children was 18.7 per cent for those who did not have a child and 22.7 per cent for those who had one child.

In general the proportions of partners intending to have children and the mean number of intended children are comparable with that of the women; 57.4 per cent of partners of 18-34 year old women and 7.2 per cent of the partners of 35-44 year old women intended to have children. However there were some differences between the sub-groups of women and partners. The proportions of those without children that intended to have children was higher for partners than for women in both age groups while the reverse is true for those with one child. The mean number of intended children according to number of children ever born tended to be higher for partners than for women, particularly for partners of women aged 35-44 years.

By combining information on numbers of children ever born with numbers of children intended, the levels of completed fertility and childlessness that would be achieved when each age group completes its fertility were estimated (Column 4). These figures were estimated on the assumption that those women and partners who intended to have more children would achieve their intended number of children in their remaining reproductive life span.

However there are important caveats to note. First the preceding analyses have shown a considerable mismatch between the number of children intended by women and their partners. So it is not correct to assume that each member of every couple would achieve their intended numbers of additional children given that in some couples each partner's intended numbers are different. Some women or partners may have fewer children than they intend to have while others may achieve their intentions despite their partners having different intentions. Second, the achievement of intentions may be more difficult for the 18-34 year olds than the 35-44 year olds, as a significant proportion of them may be in less stable relationships-. The proportion of couples in de facto relationships (which tend to be less stable than registered marriages) was 33.6 per cent for the 18-34 year olds and 12.1 per cent of the 35-44 year olds. However, it is also possible that the relationship may be legalised or may break up and they could move onto a more stable relationship and fulfil their fertility intentions.

Thus the estimates of completed fertility and childlessness given in the last two columns of Table 9 could only be taken as ideal for each group of women and partners. Expected completed fertility is shown for the groups of women and partners according to number of children ever born and overall by age group of women.

Women currently aged 18-34 years had on average 1.10 children. If their intended numbers of children materialise they would have 2.25 children when they complete their fertility. Though as a group the 18-34 year old women would achieve replacement fertility, those without children would not. The completed fertility of those currently aged 18-34 years without children would be 1.82 children, compared with 2.09 children for those with one child only. Similarly partners of women aged 18-34 years would as a group achieve replacement fertility, but partners with no children would not. However, this requires qualification. This does not mean that all those young couples without children would not achieve replacement fertility, as the majority of young women and their partners without children who intended to have children wanted more than two children. But those who do not want to have any children push down the completed fertility for the whole group.

As a group women aged 35–44 years and partners with no children would not even achieve one child. Both women and partners with only one child would fall much short of replacement fertility—they would have 1.3 children. This is presumably because the fertility intentions of this group are modified by their life experiences.

The estimates of the extent of lifetime childlessness for women and partners by age group are given in the last column. The extent of childlessness for women would increase from 7.3 per cent for those aged 35-44 years to 9.6 per cent for those aged 18-34 years. The corresponding figures for partners were 8.2 and 7.8 per cent.

Table 9. Percentage of women aged 18-44 years and their partners intending to have additional children, mean number of intended children, expected completed fertility and childlessness according to age group and number of children ever born: 2001 HILDA.

Age group/Number of children ever born	Percent intending to have children	Mean number of intended children	Expected completed fertility	Expected Childlessness (%)
18-34 years				
Women: MNCEB=1.10				
No child	78.5	2.32	1.82	
One child	69.9	1.49	2.09	
Two children	25.7	1.26	2.36	
Three or more children	16.2	1.50	3.73	
Total	57.3	2.01	2.25	9.6
Partner: MNCEB=1.15				
No child	81.7	2.32	1.89	
One child	68.4	1.56	2.07	
Two children	25.3	1.39	2.35	
Three or more children	14.2	1.47	3.81	
Total	57.4	2.00	2.30	7.8
35-44 years				
Women: MNCEB=2.27				
No child	18.7	1.66	0.31	
One child	22.7	1.24	1.28	
Two children	3.2	1.15	2.04	
Three or more children	3.9	1.12	3.54	
Total	7.5	1.31	2.37	7.3
Partner: MNCEB=2.26				
No child	20.0	2.40	0.48	
One child	18.4	1.42	1.26	
Two children	4.7	1.35	2.06	
Three or more children	2.5	1.43	3.57	
Total	7.2	1.68	2.38	8.2

Population weighted analysis.

Given the mismatch between women and partners on the numbers of children they intended to have, estimates of completed fertility for couples were undertaken using different assumptions as to whose fertility intentions (woman's or partner's) materialised so as to indicate the range of future fertility outcomes. Estimates of completed fertility are calculated according to women's age group and number of children ever born by each member of the couple. The following hypothetical assumptions of fertility intention outcomes were made to arrive at different scenarios of completed fertility:

- The couple had the number of children intended by the woman
- The couple had the number of children intended by the man
- The mean number of children the couple intended to have
- The fertility intentions of the member of the couple with the lower intentions materialises (Lower column in Table 10). Where the women's intentions are not congruent with their partners, the fertility outcome is determined by the number of children the person with the lower fertility intentions intends to have, and where they are congruent the number of children the couple intends to have..
- The fertility intentions of the member of the couple with the higher intentions materialises (Higher column). Where the woman's intentions are not congruent with their partner's, the fertility outcome is determined by the number of children the person with the higher fertility intentions intends to have, and where they are congruent, the number of children the couple intends to have.

The results in Table 10 are for couples with different combinations of numbers of children ever born and their share of all couples in an age group is shown (the last column of Table 10). These are

1. Couple without children
2. A couple with one child
3. Couple with two children
4. Couple with three children
5. Couple with four or more children
6. Woman without children and partner with one child or more children (woman=0 and partner μ 1 child)
7. Partner without children and woman with one child or more children (partner =0 and woman μ 1 child)
8. Woman with one child and partner with two or more children (Woman=1 & partner with μ 2 children).
9. Partner with one child and woman with two or more children (partner =1 & woman μ 2 children)
10. Other

While the majority of members of couples had born the same numbers of children, 16 per cent of women aged 18-34 years and their partners and 23 per cent of women aged 35-44 years and their partners had born different numbers of children (last column of Table 10). The figures in the table show the completed fertility of couples as a whole even for couples with different numbers of children.

The results in Table 10 show the following:

- If the couple had born the same numbers of children, the estimates of completed fertility are similar when based on the intentions of either the woman or the partner, i.e. members of a couple who had born the same numbers of children had similar intentions. For example, where the woman was aged 18-34 years and the couple had one child, the estimated completed fertility would be 2.08 children based on woman's intentions and 2.07 children based on partner intentions.
- By contrast if members of a couple had born different numbers of children, the estimates of completed fertility vary depending on each partners intentions. If a woman had fewer children than her partner then the estimate of completed fertility based on her partner's intention is lower than hers and vice versa. For example where a woman aged 18-34 years had no child and the partner had one child or more children, the estimate of completed fertility for the couple would be 3.25 children based on her intentions and 2.94 children based on her partner's intentions.
- Thus the estimate of completed fertility for couples where the woman was aged 18-34 years and without children would range from 1.56 children to 2.30 children.
- The estimate of completed fertility for couples that had one child and the woman was aged 18-34 years would range from 1.87 children to 2.27 children.
- The estimate of completed fertility for women aged 18-34 years and their partners, as a group, would be between 2.12 children and 2.60 children per couple.
- The estimate of completed fertility for women aged 35-44 years and their partners, as a group, would be between 2.46 children and 2.53 children per couple.
- Compared to couples with the same numbers of children, couples with different numbers would usually achieve higher levels of completed fertility. It appears partners with small numbers of children or without children are partnering with partners who had born large numbers of children. For example in 3.5 per cent of couples women aged 35-44 years without children had partners that on average had born 2.4 children.
- A final salient point is the substantial difference in completed fertility of couples that had born the same numbers of children according to age group of women. Regardless of which partners fertility intentions materialise couples where the woman was aged 35-44 years would achieve a much lower completed fertility than couples where the woman was aged 18-34 years, even though they had born equal numbers of children. This is because the fertility intentions of older couples are revised downwards due to their life circumstances and experience.

Table 10. Estimates of couples' completed fertility under different assumptions of numbers of children intended according to age group of women and number of children ever born by couple: 2001 HILDA.

Age group/ Number of children born by couple	Assumption based on - - - intentions					Per cent of couples
	Woman's	Partner's	Mean	Lower	Higher	
18-34 years						
Couple each						
Without children	1.79	1.85	1.82	1.56	2.30	39.85
With 1 child	2.08	2.07	2.07	1.87	2.27	18.40
With 2 children	2.30	2.26	2.28	2.18	2.38	17.14
With 3 children	3.17	3.18	3.17	3.10	3.25	6.15
With 4 or more children (4.55)	4.76	4.85	4.81	4.76	4.85	2.51
Woman =0 & Partner μ 1 child (1.83)	3.25	2.94	3.09	2.80	3.39	4.63
Partner =0 & Woman μ 1 child (1.78)	2.53	2.85	2.69	2.37	3.01	2.43
Woman =1 & Partner μ 2 children (2.6)	3.13	3.10	3.11	2.97	3.26	1.77
Partner=1 & Woman μ 2 children (2.59)	2.80	2.91	2.86	2.80	3.00	2.30
Other (3.33)	3.65	3.54	3.59	3.47	3.72	4.82
Group mean and total couples	2.31	2.32	2.32	2.12	2.60	1,178,433
35-44 years						
Couple each						
Without children	0.38	0.45	.041	0.31	0.52	5.83
With 1 child	1.31	1.32	1.31	1.22	1.41	8.95
With 2 children	2.04	2.06	2.05	2.03	2.07	32.86
With 3 children	3.03	3.02	3.02	3.01	3.03	19.05
With 4 or more children (4.38)	4.41	4.40	4.40	4.40	4.42	10.50
Woman =0 & Partner μ 1 child (2.38)	2.55	2.51	2.53	2.46	2.61	3.51
Partner =0 & Woman μ 1 child (1.88)	2.04	2.13	2.09	2.01	2.16	4.32
Woman =1 & Partner μ 2 children (2.81)	2.95	2.95	2.95	2.95	2.95	2.46
Partner=1 & Woman μ 2 children (2.76)	2.83	2.84	2.84	2.79	2.89	3.23
Other (3.19)	3.22	3.20	3.21	3.20	3.23	9.29
Group mean and total couples	2.49	2.50	2.49	2.46	2.53	1,135,511

The figures in brackets are the mean numbers of children born to the couple or the partner with the higher numbers of children.

Further inspection of the results for couples' who had born the same numbers of children show that estimates of completed fertility are only sensitive to the assumptions for those without children and with one child. For couples that had born two or three children each the estimates of completed fertility are only moderately higher than their achieved fertility because couples' presumably thought they had enough children.

For couples with different numbers of children, the completed fertility for the partners with the lower numbers of children is given in Appendices Table 2. Comparisons of Table 10 and Appendices Table 2 show that while couples with different numbers of children, as a whole, would achieve completed fertility much higher than two children; the partners with lower numbers of children would have completed fertility that would be much lower than two children in their current relationships.

- For example, the completed fertility for a woman aged 18-34 years without a child and a partner with more than one child would range between 0.97 children and 1.56 children.
- The completed fertility for partners with out a child and a woman aged 18-34 years with more than one child would range between 0.59 children and 1.23 children.
- The completed fertility for a woman aged 18-34 years with one child and a partner with two or more children would be between 1.37 children and 1.66 children.
- For couples with different numbers of children and where the woman was aged 35-44 years, the completed fertility of partners with the lower numbers of children is similar to their achieved fertility. For example, the completed fertility for a partner with one child and a woman aged 35-44 years with two or more children would be a little over one child

The fact that members of a couple with lower numbers of children would not achieve replacement fertility themselves is primarily because they are partnered to a member with higher numbers of children. While most couples with the same numbers of children were married once only, the majority of couples with different numbers of children were either in a de facto relationship or were married more than once (see appendices Table 3). If a partner without children is partnered to a member with one or more children, 55.8 per cent of them were in a de facto relationship and 8.3 per cent were married more than once if the woman is without children, and 51.6 per cent were in de facto relationship and 37.6 per cent were married more than once if the partner is without children.

When to have the next child?

In the 2002 HILDA Survey, women and partners who intended to have children were asked 'In which year do you intend to have (a/your next) child?' More than half of those who intended to have one child or two children were sure about which year they intended to have the next child, a relatively large proportion were not sure about the year but indicated the time range, while a small proportion were unable to answer the question (Table 11).

Table 11 presents the distribution of women aged 18-44 years and partners who intended to have children by when they intended to have them according to the intended numbers of children. Table 11 shows the following salient results:

- If women and partners intended to have one child (or one more child), 63 per cent of women and 59 per cent of partners specified 2002-05 as the year they intended to have the next child^{vi}. However, the proportion intending to have the next child in the next three years declines with numbers of intended children.
- If we combine those who said 'don't know but within the next two years' and those who specified 2002-05, 86.1 per cent of women and 83.2 per cent of partners who intended to have one child (or one more child) intended to have the next child in the next three years.
- The higher the number of intended children, the higher the proportions of women and partners who specified a longer duration or a vague answer as to when to have the next child, i.e. 2006 or later and 'don't know but within the next 3-10 years or unsure'.

In conclusion the time when women or partners intended to have the next child depends on the numbers of intended children. They are likely to intend to have the next child sooner rather than later (within the next three years) if they intend to have only one child (or one more child). Even for those who intended to have two or more children, however, about 60 per cent of both women and partners intended to have the next child sooner rather than later, that is, within the next three years.

The finding of this paper that if women or partners intend to have one child (or one more child) they intend to have the next child sooner rather than later is consistent with the AIFS' Fertility Making Decisions Project finding (2004: 93-5). In the AIFS study, about half of men and two-thirds of women aged 20-39 years who intended to have children expect to have their first child or one additional child within the next three years. The AIFS Survey did not ask the timeframe according to the numbers of intended children.

Table 11. Women aged 18-44 years and partners who intended to have additional children according to when they intend to have the next child and number of intended children: 2002 HILDA.

Year intended to have the next child	Women by intended number of children			Partners by intended number of children		
	1	2	3+	1	2	3+
2002-05	63.3	47.2	43.6	58.9	45.1	44.5
2006 or later	2.1	4.5	.6.6	1.8	9.0	3.4
Don't know but within next						
2 years	22.8	13.7	15.3	24.3	14.7	13.2
3-5 years	8.1	24.2	24.1	8.1	22.2	33.5
6+years/ unsure	3.7	10.4	10.4	6.9	9.0	5.4
Total	206,124	347,839	138,610	218,691	341,097	132,783

Population weighted analysis.

Column percentages add up 100 %.

For women aged 18-44 years and their partners who intend to have a child or to have another child the year in which they intend to have that child also depends on the number of children they already have. Table 12 shows the results for women and partners without children or with only one child. The key result is that if women or partners have no children, the year they intend to have their first child is farther away in the future than if they have one child already, irrespective of the number of children they intend to have. This probably reflects the fact that those without children are younger, have more potential years of childbearing ahead of them, have not yet formed stable relationships or have just formed such relationships. For example:

- The proportion of women without children who intended to have one child and specified the year they intended to have the child as 2002-05 was 48 per cent compared with 65.6 per cent of those who intended to have one more child but already had one child.
- These patterns hold also with increasing numbers of intended children for both women and partners, and
- A higher proportion of women and partners without children than those with one child said that they 'don't know but within the next 3-10 years' or 'unsure' when asked about which year they intended to have their first child.

These results confirm AIFS (2004: 94-5) finding that parents were more likely than non-parents to expect to have the next child within the next three years. The AIFS Report explained this difference by saying that non-parents tended to be younger and were more likely to be single. In this study, which deals only with couples, couples without children who intend to have children may be younger and have relationships of a shorter duration than couples with at least one child.. This could be investigated in further work using HILDA data.

Table 12. Women aged 18-44 years and partners' who intended to have children (or more children) by when they will have the next child according to number of children ever born and number of intended children: 2002 HILDA

Year to have next child	Wives by intended number of children			Partners by intended number of children		
	1	2	3+	1	2	3+
No children ever born =0						
2002-05	47.7	44.8	40.4	48.6	42.2	40.6
2006 or later	5.9	4.9	7.2	0.0	10.8	2.6
Don't know but within						
Next two years	29.4	10.8	15.7	31.9	13.0	12.8
Next 3-5 years	14.1	27.2	25.3	8.3	22.8	39.3
Next 6+ years/unsure	2.9	12.3	11.4	11.2	11.2	4.7
Total	46,810	272,730	126,933	46,482	274,207	112,091
No children ever born =1						
2002-05	65.6	51.3	73.1	56.6	55.0	81.5
2006 or later	1.4	4.0	0.0	1.4	0.0	10.0
Don't know but within						
Next two years	19.6	34.6	13.9	24.6	25.2	8.5
Next 3-5 years	8.9	10.1	13.0	10.4	19.8	0.0
Unsure	5.5	0.0	0.0	7.0	0.0	0.0
Total	113,400	51,865	9,494	117,695	51,162	15,591

Population weighted analysis.

Column percentages add up to 100 %.

Conclusion

The study found that there was a high level of agreement between women aged 18–44 years and their partners in their desire to have children. There was not a perfect agreement between women and partners in their desire to have children. In a small proportion of couples, for instance, women said they would definitely not like to have children, but their partners wanted to have children and vice versa.

Like the desire for children, there was a high level of agreement between members of a couple in the expectations of having children but the agreement also was not perfect. The level of agreement between members of a couple in the expectations of having children was greater than in the desire to have children.

It was found that the desire to have children and the perceived likelihood of having children in the future is only strong for 18-34 year old women and their partners without children or only one child.

Where women and their partners agreed that they were likely to have children in the future, there was a relatively high level of mismatch between women and their partners in the number of children they intended to have. When women's intended numbers of children were matched against their partners there was a higher level of agreement when the woman and her partner intended to have two children. The agreement between women and their partners on the numbers of intended children

was weaker than the agreement between partners on their desires and expectations of having children.

The relationship between women's and their partner's intended number of children depends on the women's age and number of children ever born. For women aged 18-34 years and their partners there was a high level of agreement between members of a couple where women without children intended to have two children and women with one child intended to have one more child.

The analysis also found that if women and partners who intended to have children had no children, the common number of children they intend to have is two, irrespective of the woman's age. However, if they already had one child, the common number of children they intend to have is one more child.

The estimation for those with incomplete fertility, based on their fertility intentions and children ever born, indicate that women and partners aged 18-34 and 35-44 years would each achieve replacement fertility (2.06 children or more) if they achieved their fertility intentions. As a group, however, women and partners without children would not achieve replacement fertility irrespective of age. However, this does not mean that all those young women and their partners without children would not achieve replacement fertility, as the results were pulled down by those who do not want to have children. The majority of young couples without children who intended to have children wanted to have more than two children. Women aged 35-44 years and partners with only one child, as a group, would also not achieve replacement fertility. An important caveat to this analysis, however, is that not all women and partners will achieve their fertility intentions, because of the level of mismatch between couples in this regard.

Because of the mismatch in fertility expectations and intentions between members of couples, different scenarios of fertility intentions were used to calculate possible estimates of couples' future completed fertility. The estimates were only sensitive to the assumptions for couples without children and with one child. For example, the estimates of completed fertility for couples without children and where the woman was aged 18-34 years would vary between 1.6 and 2.3 children per woman.

This study examined when in the future women and partners who intended to have a children intended to have the next child. The findings were that the year in which women or partners intend to have the next child is sooner rather than later (next three years) if they intend to have only one child (or one more child). It was also found that the year when women and partners without children intend have the next child is farther away into the future than if they have children.

Where there is a considerable mismatch between members of a couple in terms of desires, expectations and intentions to have children, this may indicate current or future problems with the stability and/or quality of their relationship. As the AIFS (2004) Survey found lack of stable relationships and secure and adequate income was an important factor in men and women not being able to have the children they wanted.

In terms of future analysis, the HILDA survey provides a great opportunity to study the congruence of partners' future fertility desires, expectations and intentions according to a broad range of demographic and socio-economic variables. Although the Survey did not collect information on how couples make fertility decisions, an insight from this study will throw some light on whether fertility intentions materialise and future courses of fertility. These factors will be investigated in a later paper.

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Appendices:

Table 1. Would you like to have a child in the future: mean scores of women aged 18–44 years and partners by age group and number of children ever born? 2001 HILDA

Age group	Number of children ever born	Mean scores	
		Women	Partners
Married			
18-34	None	8.42	8.39
	One child	7.55	7.37
	Two or more children	2.95	2.80
35-44	None	4.13	4.16
	One child	2.84	2.50
	Two or more children	0.91	1.10
De Facto			
18-34	None	7.68	7.60
	One child	6.75	6.19
	Two or more children	3.42	3.86
35-44	None	3.44	3.22
	One child	4.99	5.32
	Two or more children	1.92	1.66

* Population weighted analysis.

Table 2. Estimates of completed fertility for partners with the lower numbers of children under different assumptions of number of children intended according to age group of women: 2001 HILDA.

Age group/ Number of children born by each member of couple	Assumption based on - - - intentions					Per cent of total couples in age group
	Woman's	Partner's	Mean	Lower	Higher	
18-34 years						
Couple each with						
Woman =0 & Partner μ 1 child (1.83)	1.42	1.11	1.26	0.97	1.56	4.63
Partner =0 & Woman μ 1 child (1.78)	0.75	1.07	0.91	0.59	1.23	2.43
Woman =1 & Partner μ 2 children (2.6)	1.53	1.50	1.51	1.37	1.66	1.77
Partner=1 & Woman μ 2 children (2.59)	1.21	1.32	1.27	1.21	1.41	2.30
35-44 years						
Couple each with						
Woman =0 & Partner μ 1 child (2.38)	0.17	0.13	0.15	0.08	0.23	3.51
Partner =0 & Woman μ 1 child (1.88)	0.16	0.25	0.21	0.13	0.28	4.32
Woman =1 & Partner μ 2 children (2.81)	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.14	2.46
Partner=1 & Woman μ 2 children (2.76)	1.07	1.08	1.08	1.03	1.13	3.23

The figures in brackets are the mean numbers of children born to the the partner with the higher numbers of children.

Table 3. Marital status of women aged 18-44 years and partners by number of children ever born: 2001 HILDA

Couple type by number of children born	Marital status			Total couples	
	Married once	Married more than once	De facto	Number	Per cent
Without children	48.2	2.5	49.3	535,842	23.2
1 child	81.5	4.8	13.7	318,460	13.8
2 children	88.8	4.6	6.6	575,080	24.8
3 children	93.0	2.5	4.5	288,710	12.5
4 + children	95.3	3.4	1.3	148,813	6.4
Woman=0 & Partner μ 1 child	35.9	8.3	55.8	94,492	4.1
Partner=0 and Woman μ 1 child	10.8	37.6	51.6	77,712	3.4
Woman=1 & partner μ 2 children	53.3	15.5	31.1	48,792	2.1
Partner=1 & woman μ 2 children	22.1	38.8	39.1	63,722	2.7
Other	52.1	23.1	24.8	162,321	7.0
Total	69.4	7.5	23.1	2,313,944	100.0
Sub-total- rows 6-10	37.4	23.9	38.7	447,039	

ⁱ Replacement fertility level is defined as the number of births a woman would have by the end of her reproductive life if she experiences at each age the age-specific-fertility rates prevailing in a particular year/period. For Australia this level now stands at 2.06 children per woman.

ⁱⁱ The HILDA Survey collected the following relevant information for the study.

- Would you like to have a child of your own/more children in the future?
- And how likely are you to have child/more children in the future?
- How many more children do you intend to have?
- In which year do you intend to have (a/your next) child? (Wave 2 only)

ⁱⁱⁱ 0.8 per cent of partners of women were women.

^{iv} The completed fertility rate, as measured here, is the average number of children that a cohort of women has had over their reproductive lifetime.

^v The proportion of women aged 45-49 years that are childless usually measures the extent of childlessness in the population

^{vi} They were interviewed in the second half of 2002.