

8 Unmet Need, Never-married Women

Perhaps the most frequently heard criticism of the unmet need measure is that it has been confined largely to married women.¹⁰ This is an important limitation especially with the increasing interest in the needs of adolescents (Meekers, 1994). In response to this general concern, the authors have developed estimates for both never-married and formerly married women. Because of the data limitations of surveys outside of sub-Saharan Africa (the exclusion of samples of never-married women, the omission of questions on sexual activity, or concerns about the quality of such data¹¹), only the countries in this region are included for this analysis. In order to increase the coverage, those sub-Saharan countries from DHS-I not included in more recent surveys have also been added. Malawi and the Sudan are not represented because questions on sexual activity were not included in those surveys.

8.1 MEASUREMENT

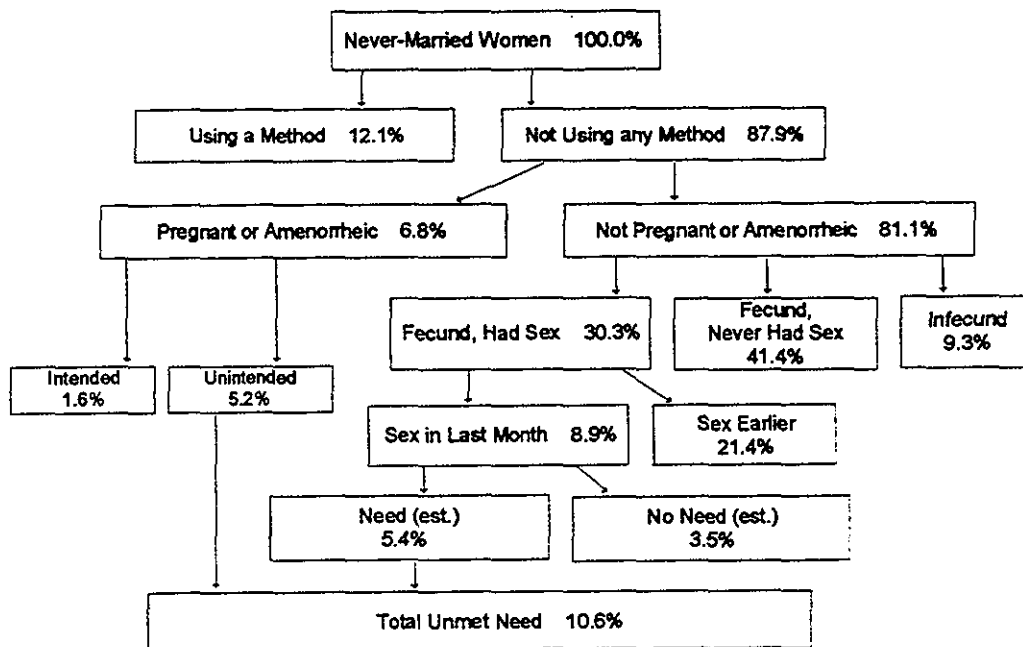
The measure of unmet need developed for never-married women has some similarities with that for married women (see Figure 8.1) However, since the question on reproductive intentions was not asked of unmarried women, spacing need cannot be differentiated from limiting need. Given the age composition of never-married women, it is safe to assume that most never-married women will want children eventually. The main difference is that for currently married women sexual activity is assumed and thus exposure to the risk of pregnancy for those who are fecund. This assumption is obviously inappropriate for never-married women,¹² many of whom have never had sex. Therefore, it is necessary to rely on the woman's report of the last time she had sex-

¹⁰ Estimates of unmet need for adolescent women in sub-Saharan Africa were prepared for and published by the Population Reference Bureau (Population Reference Bureau, 1992: 20).

¹¹ Concern about the quality of reports of sexual activity by never-married women relates primarily to Latin American countries where the prevalence appears much too low.

¹² It is inappropriate for some married women as well, but this is to some extent taken into account in the reasons for not intending to use.

Figure 8.1 Unmet need among never-married women: Kenya, 1993



ual intercourse if she reports ever having had sex. For the algorithm in Figure 8.1, never-married women who are neither pregnant nor amenorrheic are divided into those who are fecund with sexual experience, those who are fecund but have never had sex, and those considered infecund (mostly women who have not yet reached menarche). Women with sexual experience are then subdivided into those who reported having had sex in the past month and those who last had sex more than one month ago. This cutoff is admittedly arbitrary but it is consistent with the concept of a current status measure. To minimize this arbitrariness, a second estimate of unmet need that regards never-married women as exposed to risk who *ever* had sex is also presented.

One question in the DHS-I questionnaire permitted classifying women by their attitude toward the possibility of becoming pregnant in the near future. However, this question was not included in the DHS-II questionnaire. It is known from the DHS-I tabulations that an average of almost 50 percent of not pregnant, sexually active, unmarried nonusers across African countries said they would be happy or indifferent if they became pregnant in the next few weeks. It is difficult to evaluate the validity of such an attitude since it is based on a hypothetical question, but the distributions correspond roughly with the percentages of never-married women who recently had a baby who reported that it was intended. Anthropological literature also supports the proposition that the demonstration of fertility is regarded in some societies as relevant to marriageability (Orubuloye, 1987; Schapera, 1933). In any event, it seems completely inappropriate to assume that all sexually active never-married women are anxious to avoid pregnancy. For the DHS-I African countries, the direct question described above was used; for the DHS-II countries, one relies on the proportion of pregnancies to currently pregnant or amenorrheic women which they report as intended in contrast to mistimed or never wanted. Because of small samples of such women in some countries, regional averages of 32 percent for West Africa and 40 percent for East and Southern Africa are relied on.

8.2 ESTIMATES OF UNMET NEED AND DEMAND

The first item of interest is the types of exposure for never-married women (Table 8.1) and the proportions who report having had sex. Since this category consists of the current users, the

pregnant or amenorrheic women, and those in neither category, it is more efficient in Table 8.1 to examine the proportion who never had sex.¹³ The range in this percentage extends from a low of 12.7 percent in Botswana (where marriage is very late) to a high of 84.3 percent in Burundi. Sexually active women not using any method are most at risk. In this category, eight African countries exceed 10 percent and five countries have fewer than 5 percent. The overall average is just under 10 percent. An additional average of 13 percent are in this risk category but reported the most recent sex as more than a month earlier.

The summary estimates of unmet need and demand are shown in Table 8.2 and Figure 8.2. As noted earlier, two measures of need are shown which differ in whether the reported sexual experience is restricted to the past month or includes women who ever had sex. Women in Botswana and Namibia, where marriage is late, show the highest proportions in need by the current status (sex in last month) measure. Zambia is close behind. With the more liberal definition (ever had sex), half of the countries show unmet need estimates exceeding 20 percent. The corresponding averages across countries are 9 percent and 17 percent for the two definitions, respectively. The demand for family planning is highest in Botswana, Cameroon and Togo where the proportions using contraception are the highest.¹⁴ Cameroon and Togo show the highest and Zambia the lowest percentage of demand satisfied.

Because of the keen interest in the needs of adolescents, this same table of need and demand is shown separately for never-married teenagers and for those age 20-24 (Table 8.3). Because of higher rates of sexual activity among the older women, the unmet need percentages tend to be higher than for adolescents although this is offset to some extent by higher proportions using among the 20- to 24-year-olds. The average unmet need for teenagers is 8 percent and is 12 percent for women age 20-24.¹⁵

¹³ This excludes some women classified as infecund, but since they are mostly very young girls who have not yet experienced menarche, the effect is small.

¹⁴ Contraceptive use is high in Cameroon and in Togo partly because of the inclusion of prolonged abstinence. If not included, the estimate of contraceptive prevalence would be 30.0 percent in Cameroon and 26.4 percent in Togo.

¹⁵ Mali is excluded from this calculation because there is no demand evident.

Table 8.1 Exposure status: Never-married women

Percent distribution of never-married women by exposure status, Demographic and Health Surveys, 1987-1993

Country	Year of survey	Percent total	Using a method	Not using any method						Number of women
				Pregnant or amenorrheic ^a		Not pregnant or amenorrheic				
				Intended	Unintended	Infecund	Fecund			
							Never had sex	Sex more than one month ago	Had sex within last month	
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA										
Botswana	1988	100.0 ^c	27.3	5.5	10.9	3.6	12.7	20.4	17.8	2312
Burkina Faso	1993	100.0	5.8	0.6	1.8	25.5	52.7	7.4	6.1	855
Burundi	1987	100.0	0.6	0.2	1.4	10.7	84.3	2.5	0.2	1046
Cameroon	1991	100.0	33.9	2.0	4.1	7.8	33.8	10.4	8.0	720
Ghana	1993	100.0	16.3	0.3	2.2	8.8	33.1	24.1	15.1	875
Kenya	1993	100.0	12.1	1.6	5.2	9.3	41.4	21.4	8.9	2280
Liberia	1986	100.0	12.5	10.6	7.3	9.6 ^b	16.1	18.8	25.1	1123
Madagascar	1992	100.0	8.9	6.4	4.4	9.1	42.2	13.7	15.3	1679
Mali	1987	100.0	0.8	0.0	0.4	29.7	63.4	3.3	2.4	142
Namibia	1992	100.0	18.7	6.6	7.9	7.5	30.0	15.3	14.1	2783
Niger	1992	100.0	2.8	0.6	1.7	30.4	60.0	3.3	1.4	682
Nigeria	1990	100.0	15.2	0.9	0.9	7.9	51.3	10.8	13.1	1513
Rwanda	1992	100.0	1.7	0.7	2.4	14.5	73.7	5.7	1.3	2100
Senegal	1992-93	100.0	4.3	1.0	4.1	9.3	71.7	7.7	2.0	1578
Tanzania	1991-92	100.0	5.9	5.3	4.0	15.9	40.9	12.8	15.3	2261
Togo	1988	100.0	30.3	1.2	2.9	9.7	29.2	18.7	8.0	739
Uganda	1988-89	100.0	5.3	4.1	3.9	12.9	43.0	21.7	9.0	921
Zambia	1992	100.0	3.4	3.9	5.7	7.4	40.9	23.6	15.1	1791
Zimbabwe	1988	100.0	7.0	1.5	1.6	6.2	67.6	11.1	5.1	1133

^a Distribution of planning status for currently pregnant women is based on the distribution for amenorrheic women for Botswana, Burundi, Liberia, Mali, Togo, and Uganda. Estimate for Zimbabwe is based on the average figure for the region.

^b Estimate in Liberia based on the average figure for the region as derived from the distribution for the other countries.

^c Includes contraceptive failure (1.8%) among pregnant or amenorrheic women.

Table 8.2 Demand and unmet need: Never-married women

Unmet need and the demand for contraception among never-married women, Demographic and Health Surveys, 1987-1993

Country	Demand for contraception	Current use	Unmet need ^a	Percentage of demand satisfied	Unmet need ^b
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA					
Botswana	47.3 ^c	27.3	18.2	61.5	27.4
Burkina Faso	11.8	5.8	6.0	49.1	11.1
Burundi	2.1	0.6	1.5	28.6	1.9
Cameroon	43.4	33.9	9.5	78.1	16.5
Ghana	28.7	16.3	12.4	56.8	28.8
Kenya	22.7	12.1	10.6	53.3	23.4
Liberia	26.1	12.4	13.7	47.5	23.0
Madagascar	22.5	8.9	13.6	39.5	21.8
Mali	2.4	0.8	1.6	33.3	3.2
Namibia	35.1	18.7	16.4	53.3	25.6
Niger	5.4	2.8	2.6	52.0	4.8
Nigeria	24.9	15.2	9.7	61.0	17.1
Rwanda	4.8	1.7	3.1	35.4	6.6
Senegal	9.7	4.3	5.4	44.3	10.6
Tanzania	19.1	5.9	13.2	30.9	20.8
Togo	38.6	30.3	8.3	78.5	21.0
Uganda	13.9	5.3	8.6	38.1	22.0
Zambia	18.2	3.4	14.8	18.7	28.9
Zimbabwe	10.8	7.0	3.8	64.8	10.4

^a Estimated for fecund women who had sex within the last month or pregnant or amenorrheic women whose pregnancy was mistimed or unwanted.

^b Expanded to include fecund women who ever had sex or who are pregnant or amenorrheic and whose pregnancy was mistimed or unwanted.

^c Includes contraceptive failure among pregnant or amenorrheic women.

Figure 8.2 Total demand for family planning among never-married women in sub-Saharan countries, Demographic and Health Surveys, 1987-1993

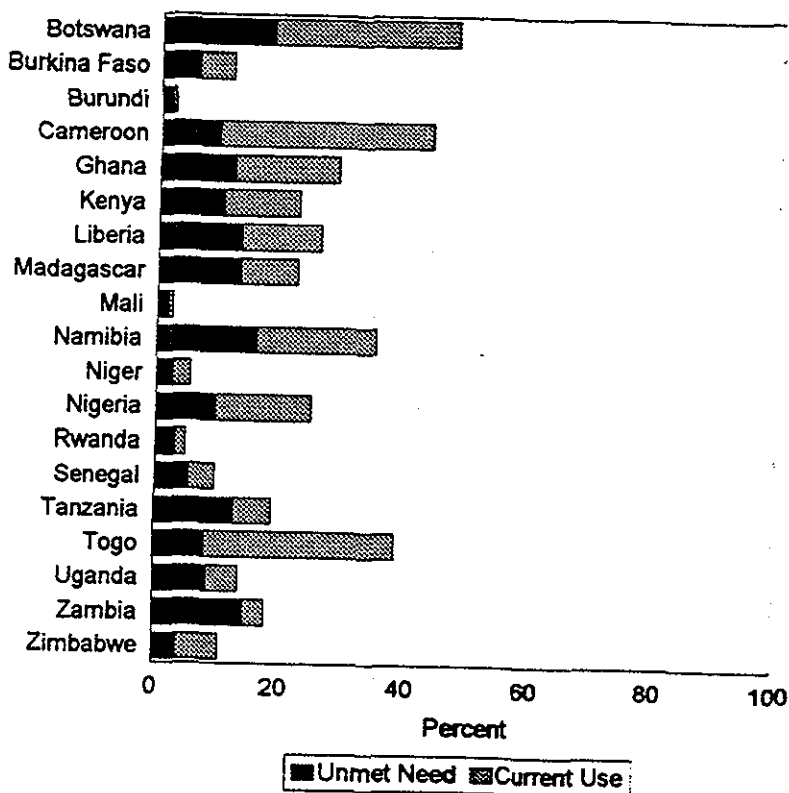


Table 8.3 Demand and unmet need by age groups: Never-married women

Unmet need and the demand for contraception among never-married women 15-19 and 20-24, Demographic and Health Surveys, 1987-1993

Country	Demand for contra-ception	Current use	Unmet need ¹	Percentage of demand satisfied	Unmet need ²
NEVER-MARRIED WOMEN 15-19 YEARS					
Botswana	36.6	14.5	21.2	42.3	34.2
Burkina Faso	9.2	3.6	5.6	39.1	9.3
Burundi	0.7	0.2	0.5	28.6	0.6
Cameroon	34.7	27.0	7.7	77.8	12.9
Ghana	22.7	11.1	11.6	48.9	24.9
Kenya	14.3	5.0	9.3	35.0	19.2
Liberia	19.7	7.0	12.7	35.5	23.0
Madagascar	17.7	5.6	12.1	31.6	16.7
Mali	2.7	0.9	1.8	33.3	2.2
Namibia	23.1	9.9	13.2	42.9	17.7
Niger	3.1	1.4	1.7	45.2	2.7
Nigeria	16.6	8.8	7.8	53.0	11.0
Rwanda	2.1	0.6	1.5	28.6	3.0
Senegal	4.7	1.4	3.3	29.8	5.0
Tanzania	14.3	2.8	11.5	19.6	16.6
Togo	31.8	23.3	8.5	73.3	19.1
Uganda	10.6	3.0	7.6	28.3	20.0
Zambia	15.6	1.6	14.0	10.2	25.3
Zimbabwe	6.6	3.4	3.2	51.5	7.5
NEVER-MARRIED WOMEN 20-24 YEARS					
Botswana	55.1	33.5	18.0	67.3	25.8
Burkina Faso	31.9	21.6	10.3	67.7	24.5
Burundi	4.2	0.9	3.3	21.4	4.4
Cameroon	67.7	57.1	10.6	84.3	19.8
Ghana	43.4	29.0	14.4	66.8	37.5
Kenya	33.0	19.8	13.2	60.0	31.4
Liberia	39.7	26.2	13.5	66.0	21.3
Madagascar	30.4	13.0	17.4	42.8	29.1
Mali	*	*	*	*	*
Namibia	41.8	22.8	19.0	54.5	31.5
Niger	14.6	8.5	6.1	58.2	12.9
Nigeria	37.3	24.2	13.1	64.9	27.9
Rwanda	7.2	2.3	4.9	31.9	9.9
Senegal	15.2	7.0	8.2	46.0	18.4
Tanzania	26.7	10.6	16.1	39.7	29.5
Togo	53.0	46.2	6.8	87.2	25.1
Uganda	25.2	12.1	13.1	48.0	32.0
Zambia	25.7	6.8	18.9	26.5	42.9
Zimbabwe	21.2	13.4	7.8	63.2	20.6

* Less than twenty cases

¹ Estimated for fecund women who had sex within the last month or pregnant or amenorrhic women whose pregnancy was mistimed or unwanted.

² Expanded to include fecund women who ever had sex or who are pregnant or amenorrhic and whose pregnancy was mistimed or unwanted.

8.3 COVARIATES OF CONTRACEPTIVE USE

Special interest attaches to the characteristics of never-married women who use contraception. Both residence and education are consistently related to contraceptive use in this population as well as for married women. Use is higher in urban than in rural areas in all the 19 African countries observed here and use rises consistently with education (except in Zimbabwe).

Also included is a measure of exposure to mass media, which is based on whether the women regularly listen to radio, watch television or read magazines or newspapers (Table 8.4).

The index shown here, which ranges from a score of 0 to 3, is the simple summation of whether they are exposed to these media. The assumption is that this index is a crude measure of exposure to modern ideas that might encourage fertility regulation. The association with contraceptive use is pronounced and consistent: for all countries except Mali there is a monotonic increase in use with media exposure. Considering how crude a measure this is (it reflects nothing about the content of the exposure) the association is impressive. Of course a multivariate analysis would be necessary to determine whether the association is a function of urban residence and/or education, but some additional tabulations (not shown) indicate a persistent effect.

Table 8.4 Use by residence, education and media exposure: Never-married women

Percent using any method for never-married women by urban-rural residence, education and exposure to mass media, Demographic and Health Surveys, 1987-1993

Country	Residence		Level of education			Media exposure			
	Urban	Rural	None	Primary	Secondary+	0	1	2	3
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA									
Botswana	36.6	23.5	17.0	24.7	36.1	17.0	30.2	-	-
Burkina Faso	9.0	3.8	2.3	3.8	17.6	2.4	6.2	9.4	12.4
Burundi	9.6	0.2	0.0	1.6	8.3	0.1	1.6	-	-
Cameroon	41.5	25.2	2.0	16.7	47.9	16.6	28.6	48.6	-
Ghana	17.7	14.7	7.3	9.6	18.8	7.2	12.7	18.2	31.0
Kenya	18.3	10.3	10.5	8.6	18.8	10.1	11.0	11.7	18.3
Liberia	16.9	5.9	0.0	4.5	28.7	3.9	15.6	-	-
Madagascar	16.8	3.8	2.2	3.3	18.2	3.6	9.8	14.1	24.1
Mali	2.4	0.0	0.6	1.4	0.0	0.8	0.8	-	-
Namibia	35.9	8.4	11.4	13.3	26.4	6.2	12.3	18.8	37.6
Niger	6.1	1.0	1.2	5.4	6.5	1.0	2.5	4.3	6.9
Nigeria	21.9	10.6	2.7	8.4	21.5	6.4	8.9	23.9	-
Rwanda	4.6	1.5	1.6	1.5	2.9	NA	-	-	-
Senegal	5.6	2.1	1.9	4.8	8.4	0.9	2.7	4.1	8.7
Tanzania	8.9	4.5	3.6	5.2	12.6	2.7	6.3	8.4	12.7
Togo	36.3	23.0	13.3	30.1	47.3	24.3	40.5	-	-
Uganda	12.1	3.8	1.4	2.9	15.3	3.1	8.7	-	-
Zambia	3.5	3.1	0.0	2.3	5.6	1.7	3.4	2.6	5.8
Zimbabwe	9.9	5.0	10.5	5.3	8.0	4.6	5.1	10.2	-

NA = Not available

- = All three media exposure questions not included