

**The Consistency and Meaning of Fertility Intentions in Demographic and Health Surveys:
Results from follow-up studies in Ghana and Nepal**

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Abstract:

Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) are the largest source of data on reproductive intentions in developing countries. Questions on women want *a*/another child—and, if so, how soon—are important and widely used, for example in SDG measurements of demand satisfied by modern methods. However, we know surprisingly little about the qualitative meanings of these classical quantitative measures. This paper analyzes results from two novel mixed-methods follow-up studies nested within DHS surveys in Ghana and Nepal. Women were approached to be re-interviewed within a month of their DHS interview. Even within this short timeframe, we found that 10% and 15% of women in Nepal and Ghana, respectively, expressed a different overall fertility preference. When timing around the 2-year threshold is included, inconsistencies rose to 17% in Nepal and 34% in Ghana. We explore respondents' explanations for inconsistencies, the meaning of their reproductive intentions, and the overall implications of these findings.

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