

## ABSTRACT

The present study describes and examines trends and differentials in cumulative fertility according to seven socio-economic factors based on data availability and findings from past studies. Data show that fertility is still on the declining trend among Malaysian women. The salient findings of the study reveal that fertility differentials in terms of number of children ever born persist between the following population subgroups: Malays and non-Malays; rural and urban; East region and other regions.

The high fertility among Malays is related to delayed termination in childbearing compared to other ethnic groups. Among the non-Malays, the fertility rate of Indian women are likely to fall below Chinese women in the future if the slowdown in the tempo of reproduction among the former persists. The increasing proportion of women not marrying has led to the continuing decline in family size among the Chinese and Indians.

The less educated women are showing signs of fertility decline whereas women with at least upper secondary education have shown gradual increase fertility after 10 years of marriage. Further research should be undertaken to examine the changing trend.

Ethnicity exerts a strong independent effect on the number of children ever born, even after controlling for age and age at first marriage. The effects of wife's and husband's education, place of residence and work pattern on the number of children ever born disappeared are attenuated by age and age at first marriage.