



# The Transition to Lower Fertility in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Evidence from Recent Surveys

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# Outline

- Background
- Data sources
- Trends
  - Total (& age specific) Fertility Rate
  - Contraception
  - Marriage
- Conclusions



## Background – Palestinians in the WB & Gaza

- Prolonged occupation
- ...since '67 –
- **Massive socio-economic changes**
  - Wage labor & expansion of the market economy
  - Land expropriation – for Jewish settlement & road networks
  - Social fragmentation – dispersed families
  - Economic dependence – one-way trade
  - Individual affluence ...
    - Higher income -- & consumerism
    - Mass education
    - Better health
- **Mass mobilization & cycles of violence --**
  - Intifada I – 1987 until the '93 Oslo accords
  - Intifada II – 2000 until ?



## Palestinian fertility remained high ... especially in Gaza

- Despite substantial decline in mortality
- ... relatively high maternal education
- ... and other favorable social and economic conditions (urbanization, relative affluence)
- Sudden rise in fertility during Intifada I  
TFR 8.3 in Gaza in 1991  
Especially among the educated & young



# Two arguments

- Political fertility thesis
  - High desire for children because of the Arab-Israeli conflict
    - “Children are weapons against occupation”
  - Pro-natalist ideologies (Palestinian nationalist movement)
  - Persistent of early marriage
- Demand for labor
  - ...men in the Israeli labor market – and spill over
  - One wage earner is enough
  - Low opportunity costs for women



# Today --

- Describe recent changes in Palestinian fertility – in the context of prolonged conflict, rising impoverishment & economic hardship
- Questions:
  - Has there been a transition to lower fertility?
  - Was the change mainly due to contraceptive use or marriage?
  - Has there been a convergence of Gaza/West Bank fertility regimes?



## Data from 4 Household surveys undertaken by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

	Year	Number of Households interviewed	Number of ever married women (15-54)	Number of live births	Response Rate (%)
Demographic Survey (PCBS, 1997)	1995	15,683	16,204	78,49	97.2
Health Survey (PCBS, 1996)	1996	3,934	3,349*	--	98.2
Demographic & Health Survey (PCBS, 2000)	2000	6,349	5,729	26,07	94.0
Demographic & Health Survey (PCBS, 2004)	2004	5,799	4,972	22,48	88.2

\* In this survey, women aged 15-49 were interviewed



# Data for fertility estimation --

- Retrospective birth history
- Problems in
  - Omissions by mothers
  - Age misstatements by mothers
  - Shifting children birth dates backward by interviewers
- Fertility rates calculated for 5 years preceding the survey

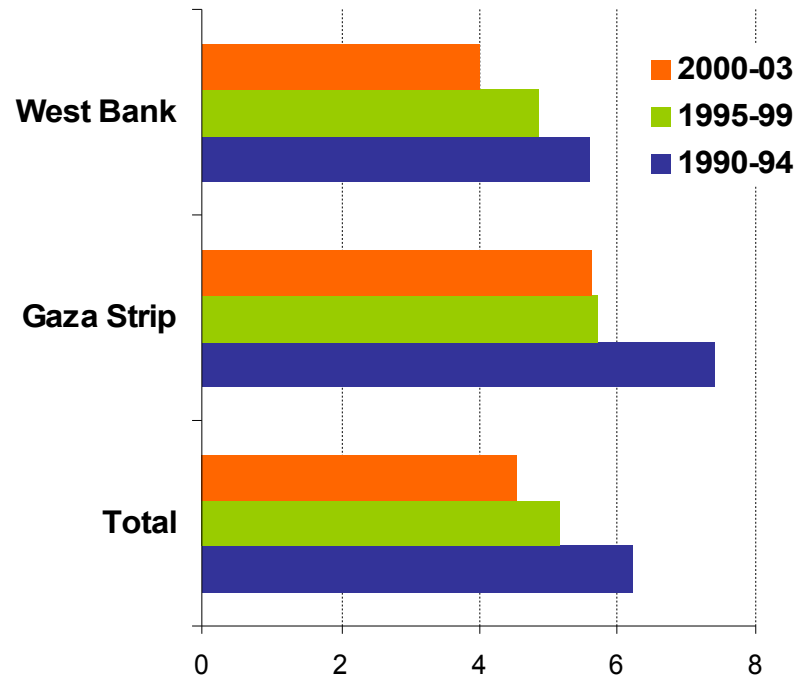




# Fertility Trends



# Fertility began to decline, especially in West Bank

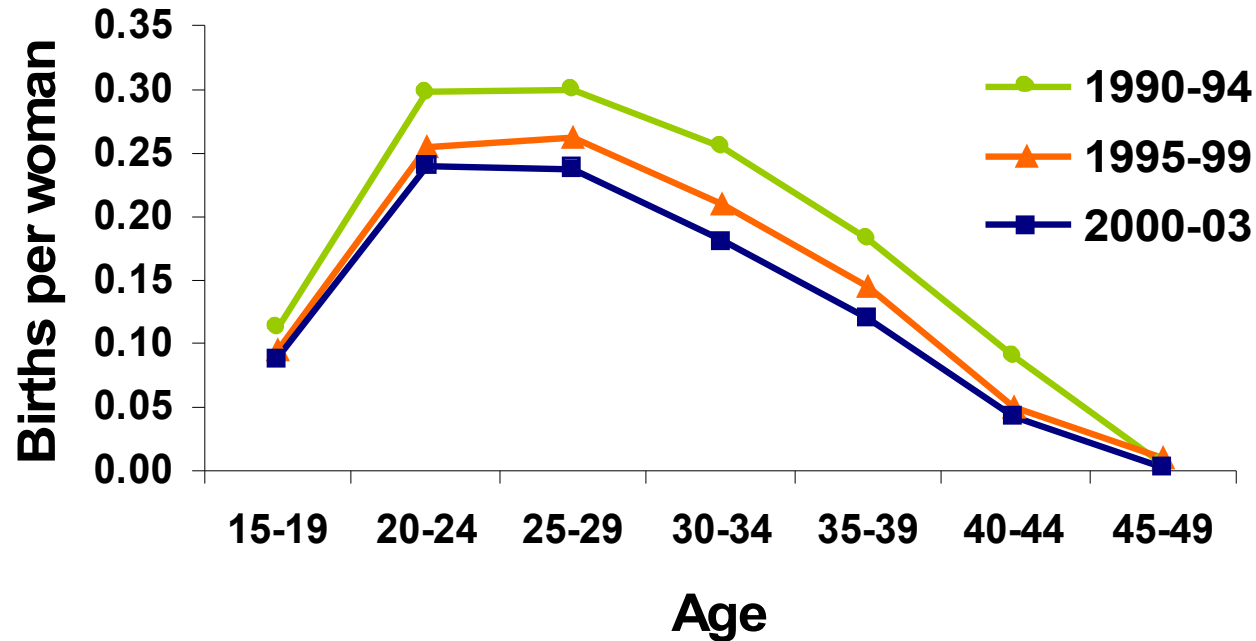


- Total decline in fertility from **6.23** birth per woman in 1990-94 to **4.56** birth per woman in 2000-03

- But, stalled in Gaza during the second Intifada

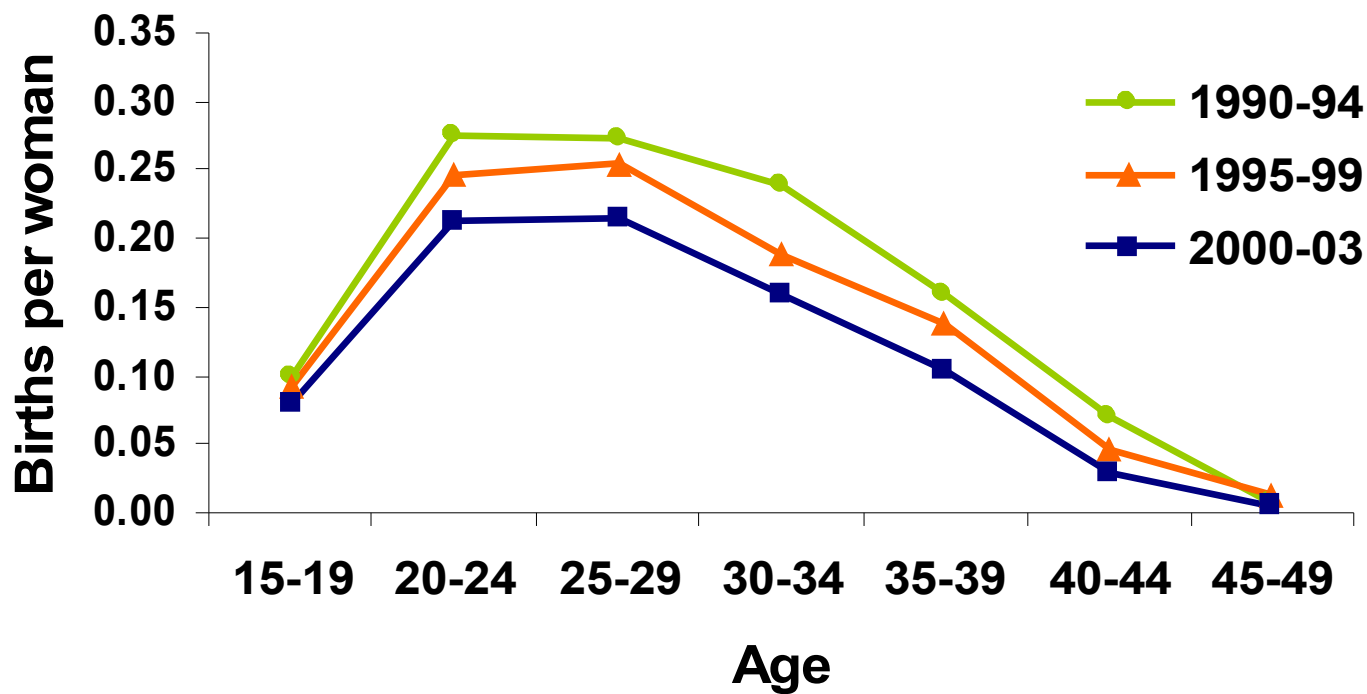


# The overall decline was consistent across age groups



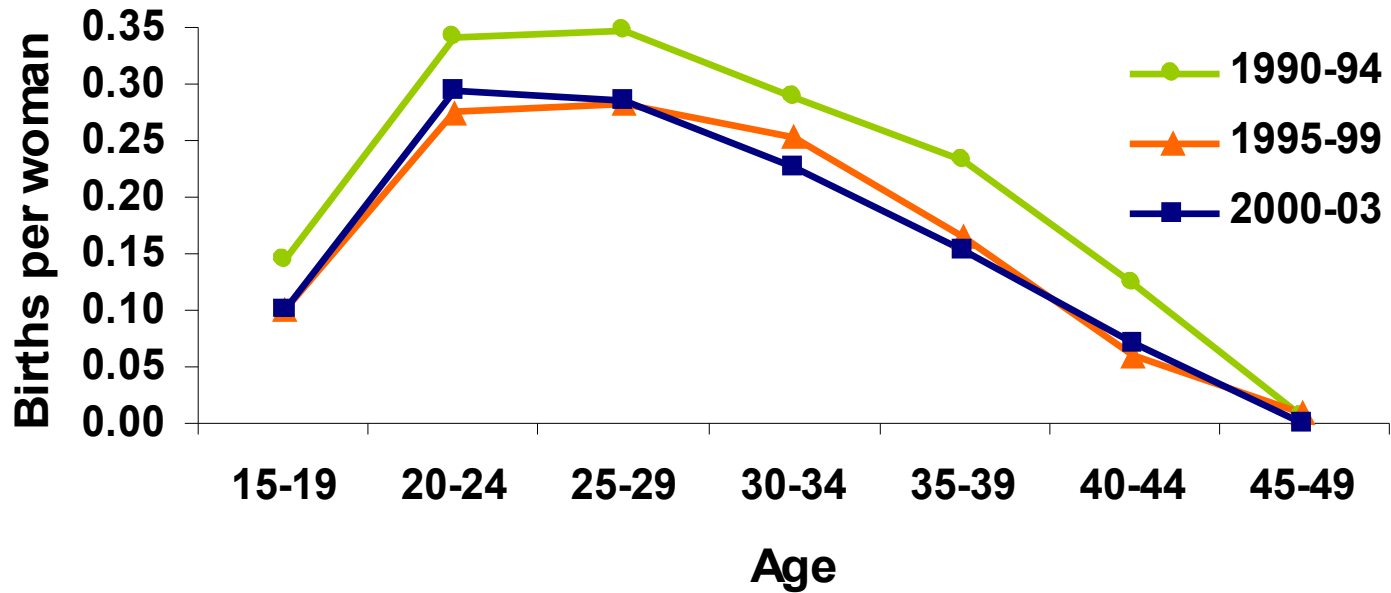


..especially in the West Bank





# Gaza Strip – a story of no change?

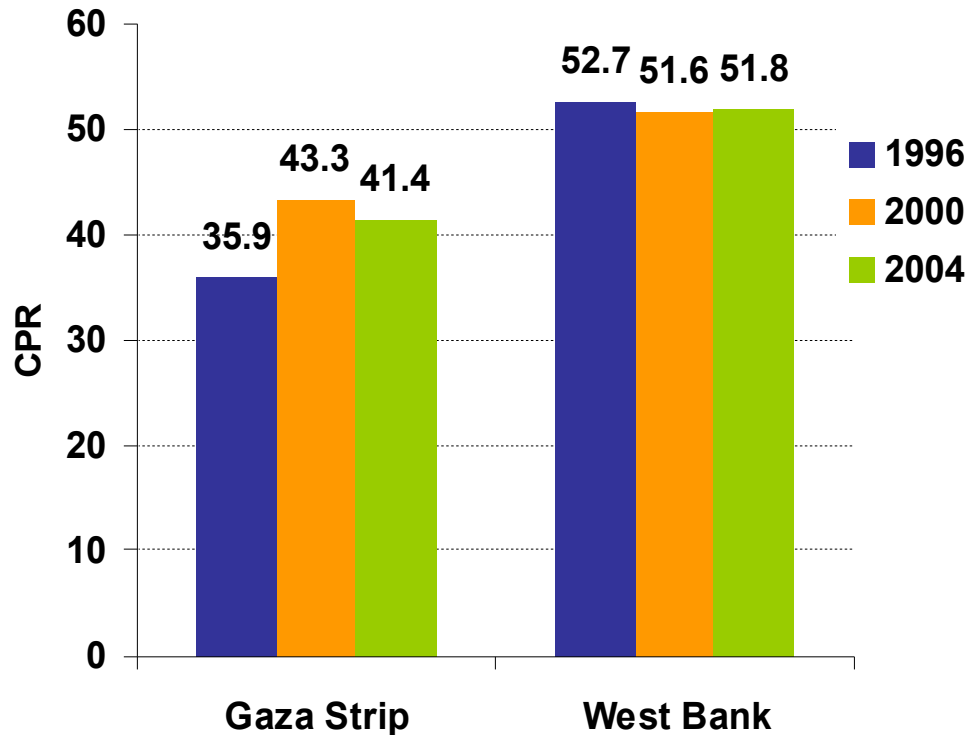




# Contraceptive Use



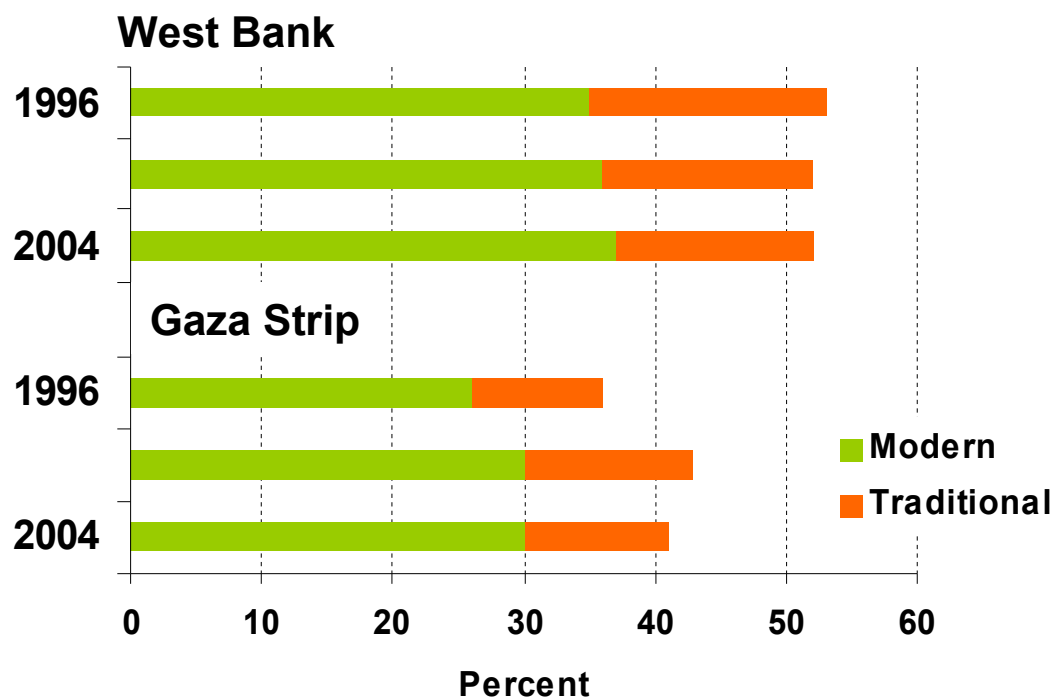
# CPR – higher in WB; no change



- In Gaza Strip overall contraceptive rate increased from 37% in 1996 to 43.3% in 2000 then decreased again to 41.4% in 2004
- In the West Bank overall contraceptive rate remained constant at about 52% during the period from 1996 to 2004



## Traditional methods high – little change

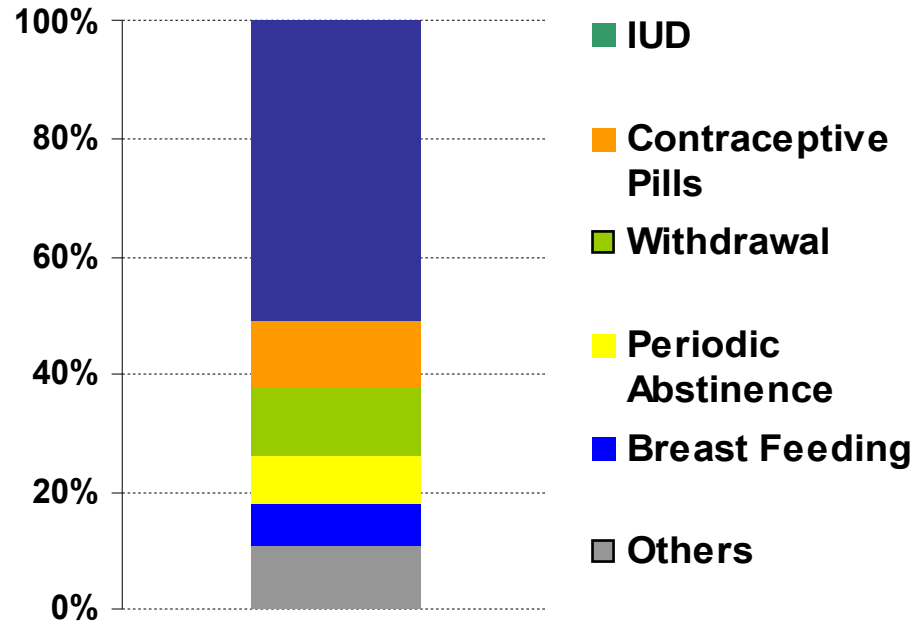


- Both modern & traditional methods are used at a higher rate in the West Bank
- Constant use of modern methods in West Bank
- Modern methods in Gaza only 4% increase since '96



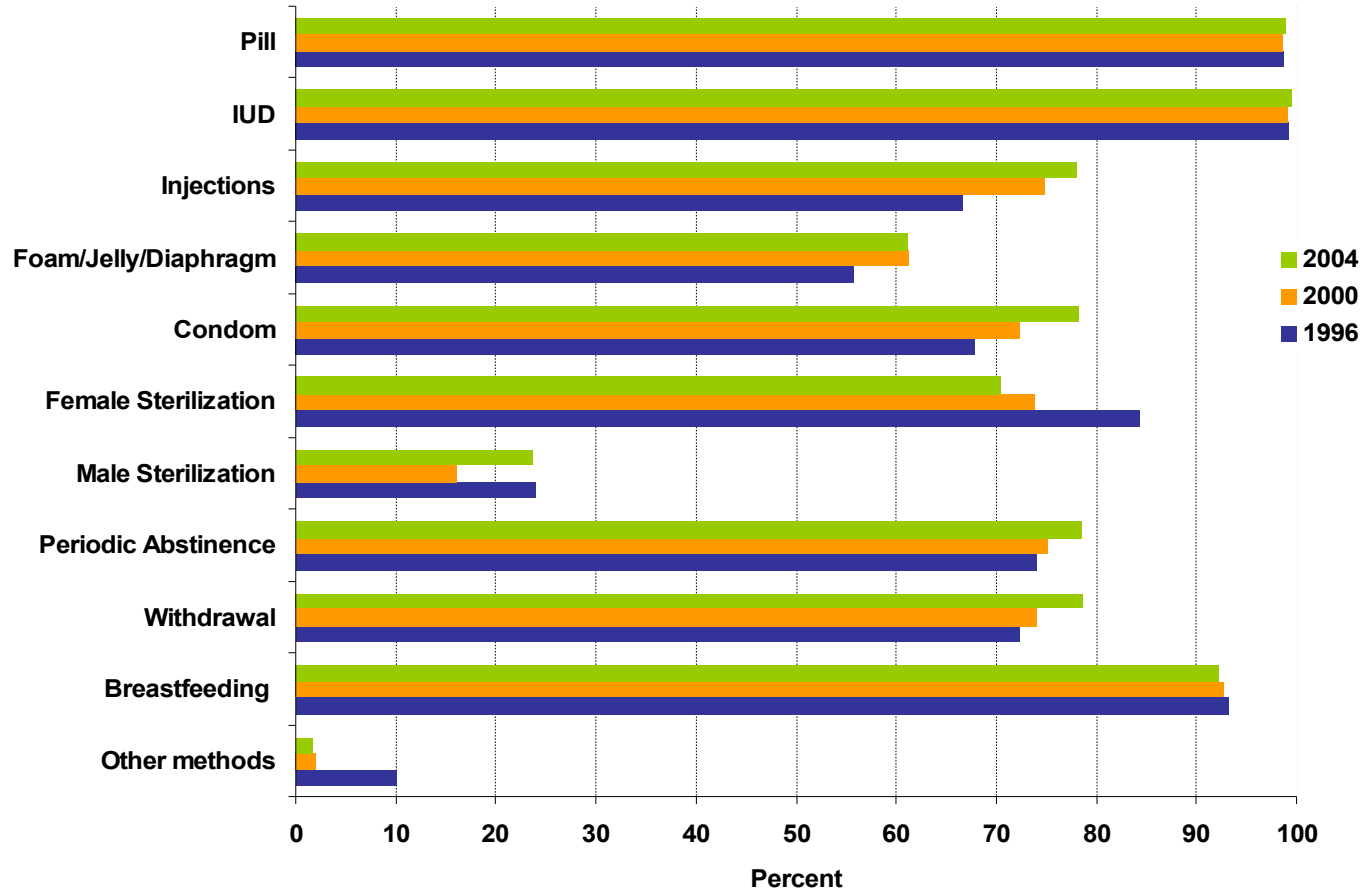


# The majority (51%) use IUD





# Knowledge is high – and increasing





## Conclusions --

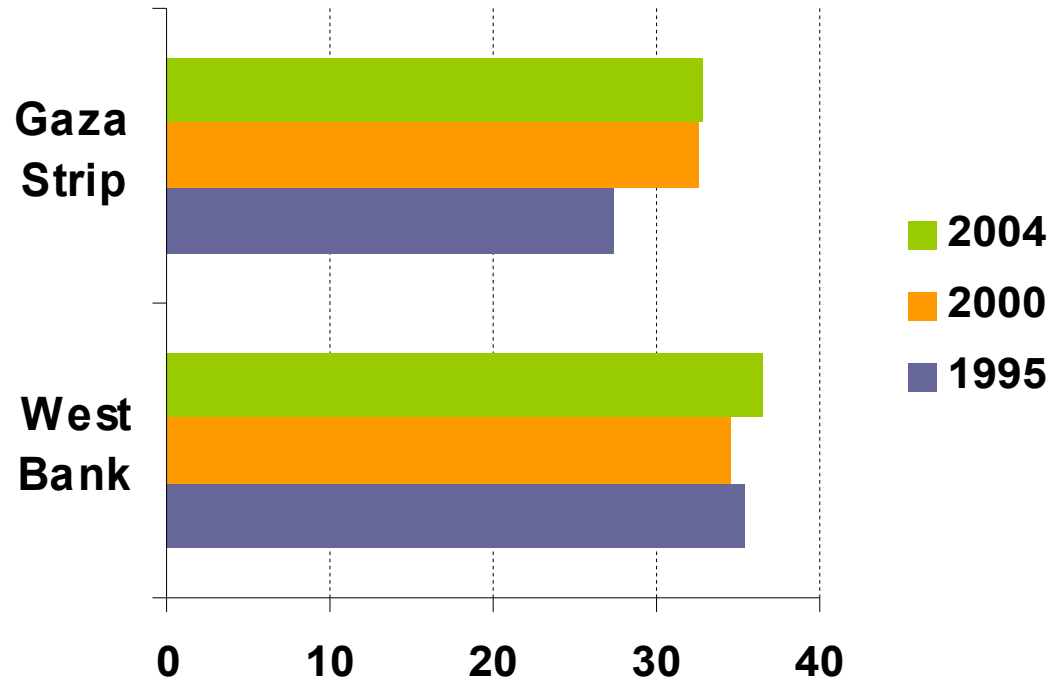
- Although fertility decreased, contraceptive use remained fairly constant
- Not a question of knowledge/education



# Marriage leading to lower fertility?



## More single women in West Bank



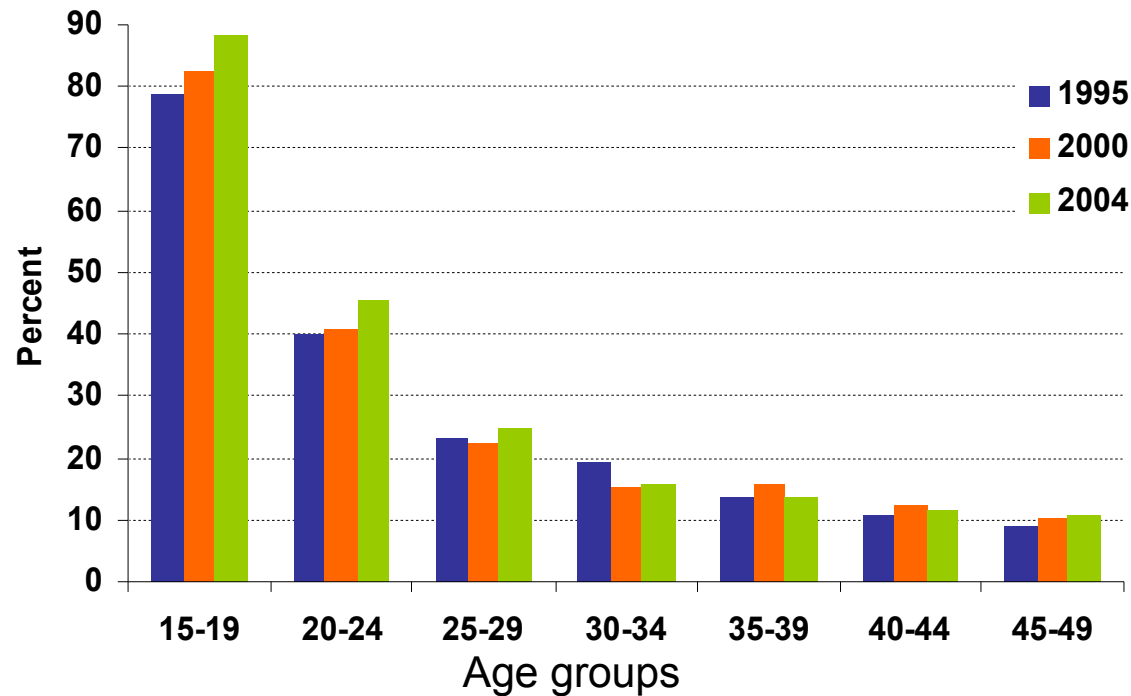
Percent of never married women

- West Bank 1 over 3 women has never been married (8% more than in Gaza Strip)
- Gaza Strip: Increased from **27.5%** in 1995 to **33%** in 2000, then remained stable



## Evidence of marriage postponement, especially for younger women (15-24 years)

### West Bank

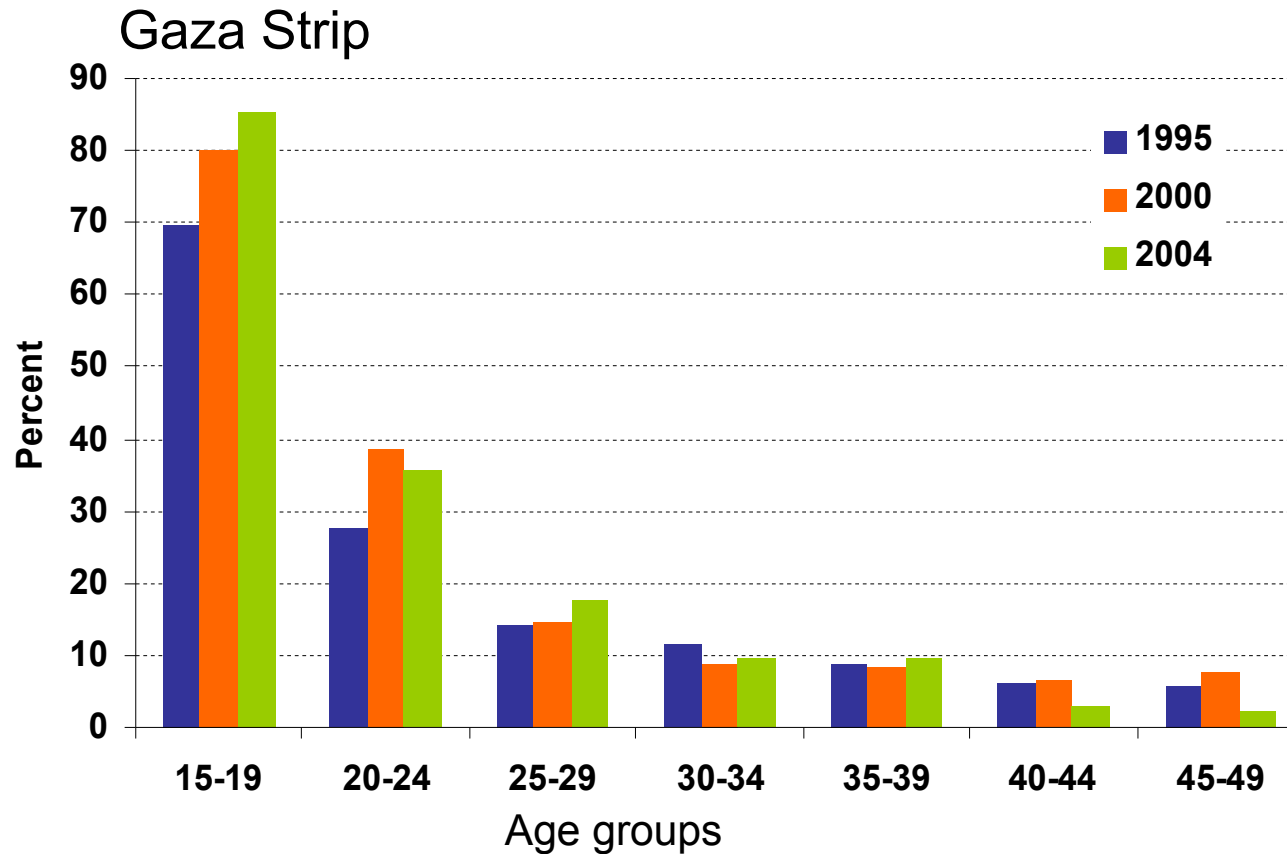


- 10% increase in the proportion of never married in the teen years

..and 5% for those aged 20-24



## The increase is larger in Gaza...

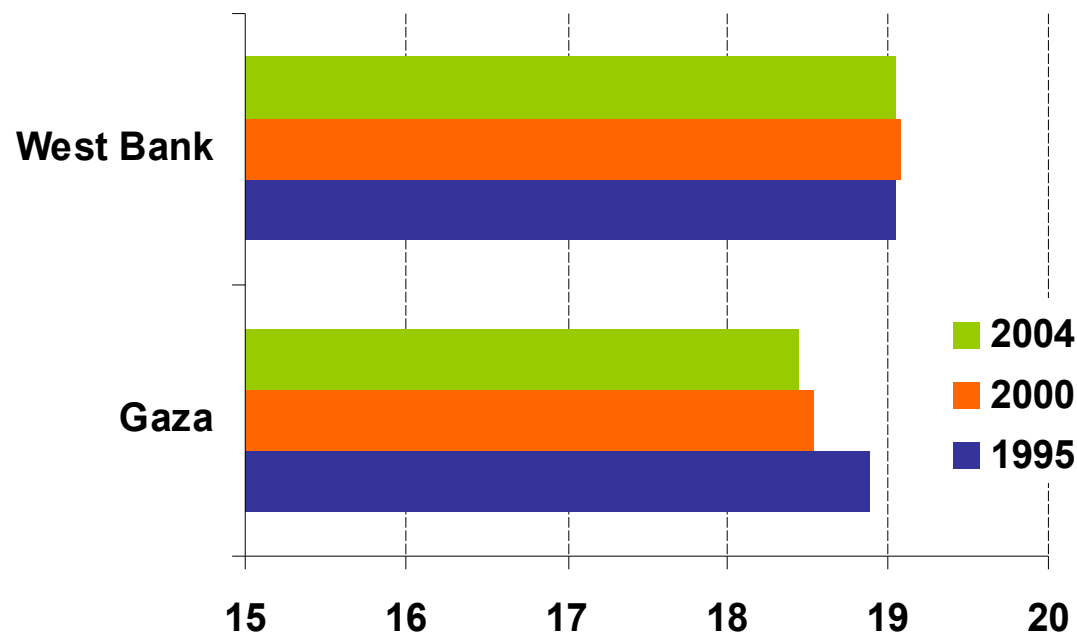


- ...but Gaza has lower proportions single at younger ages

- ...and 15% of teens were married in 2004



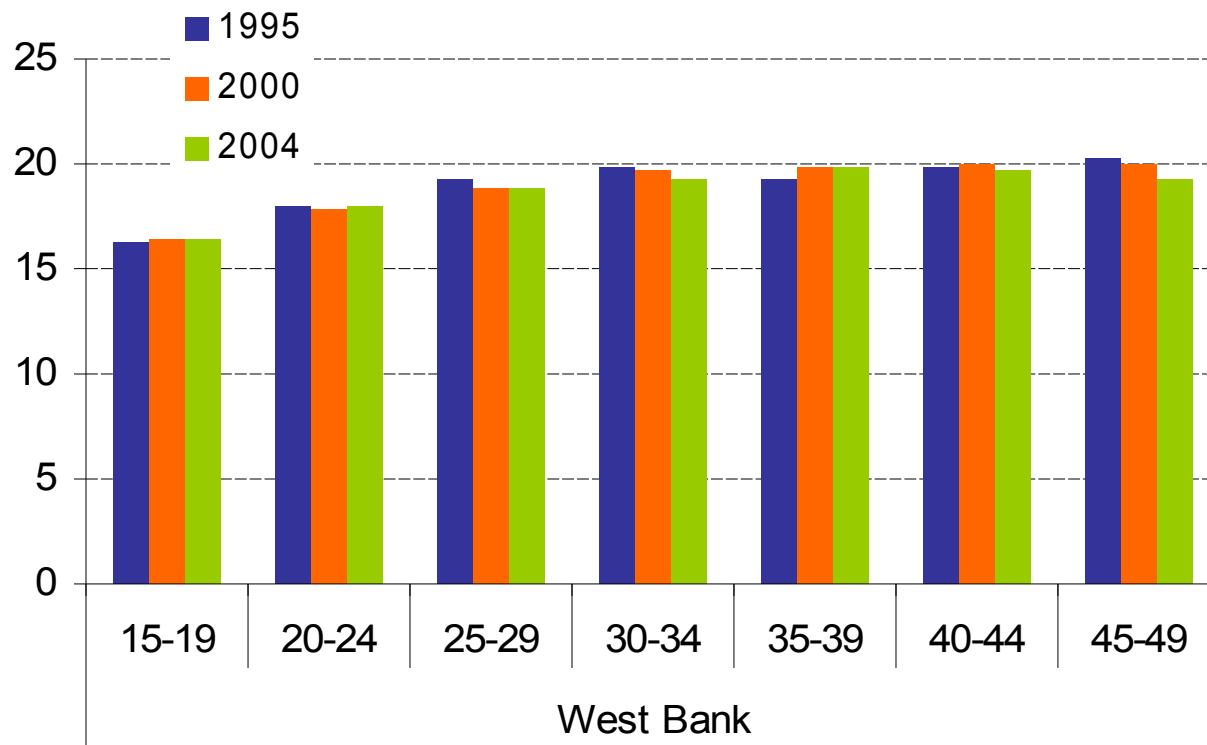
## Mean age at first marriage – no change; decreased in Gaza





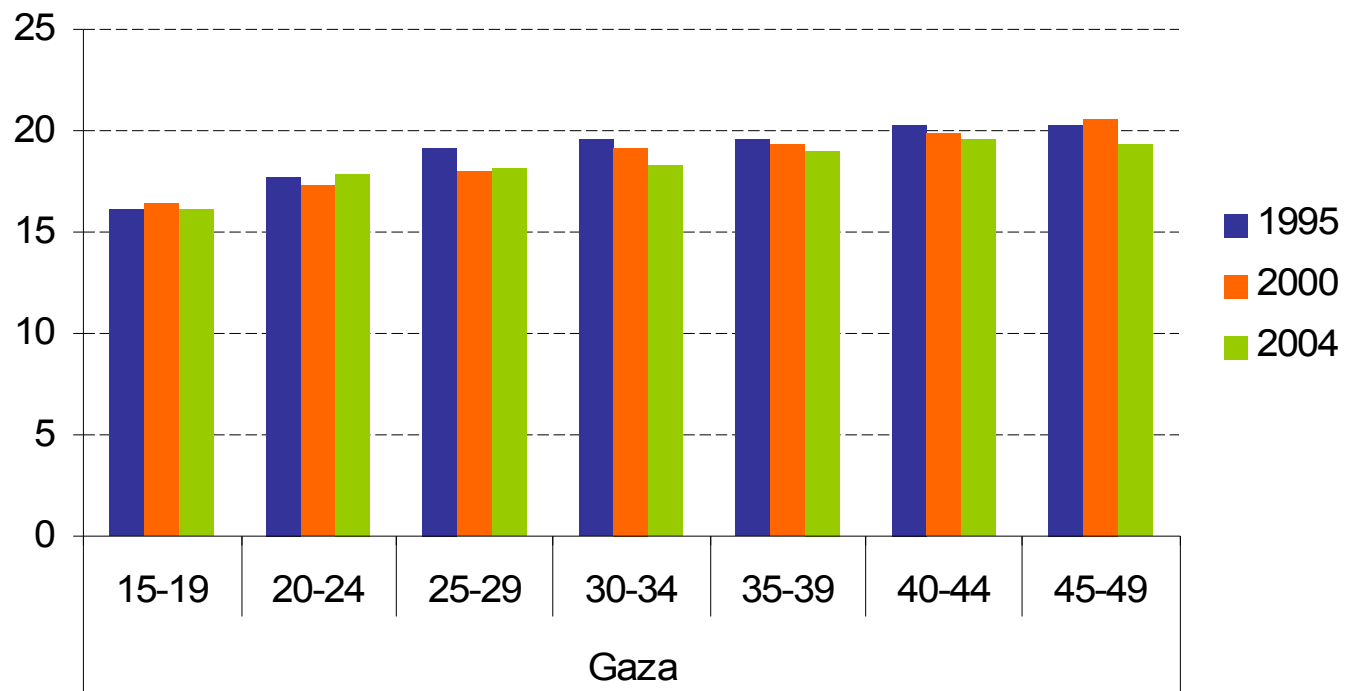


## Little change in the West Bank





## Age at marriage -- Gaza

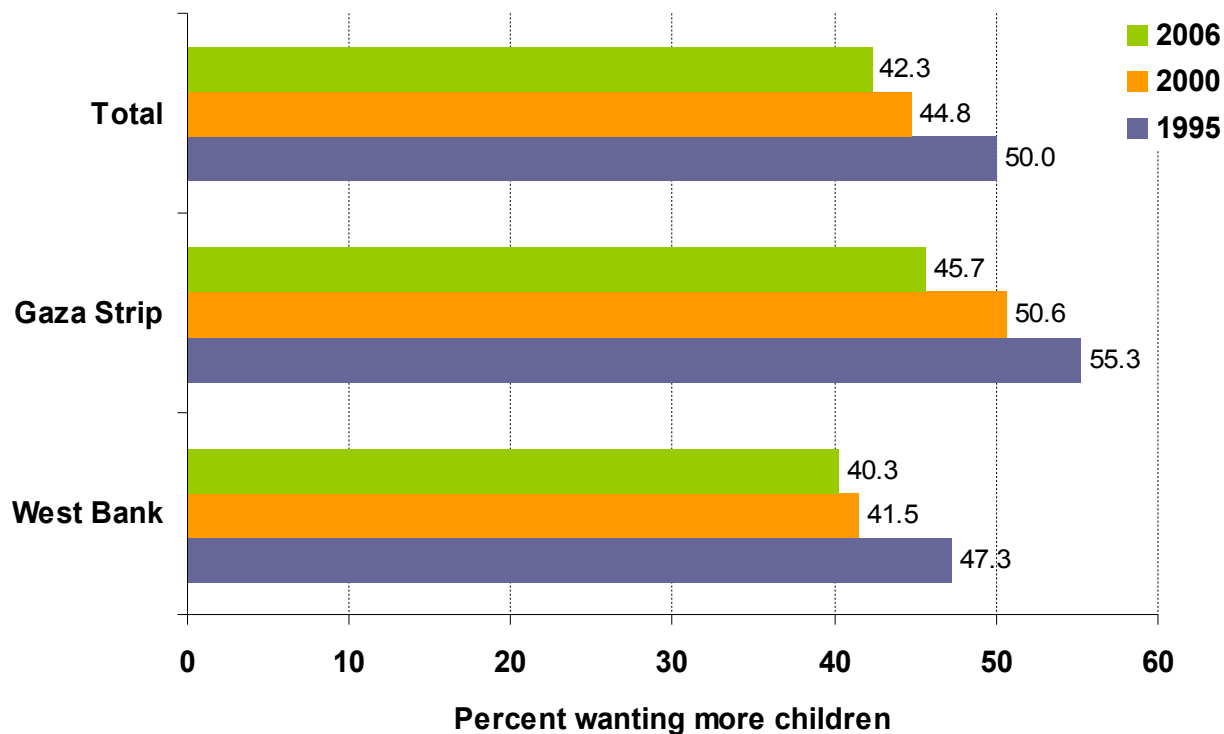




# Less desire for children?



## Yes -- both Gaza and West Bank



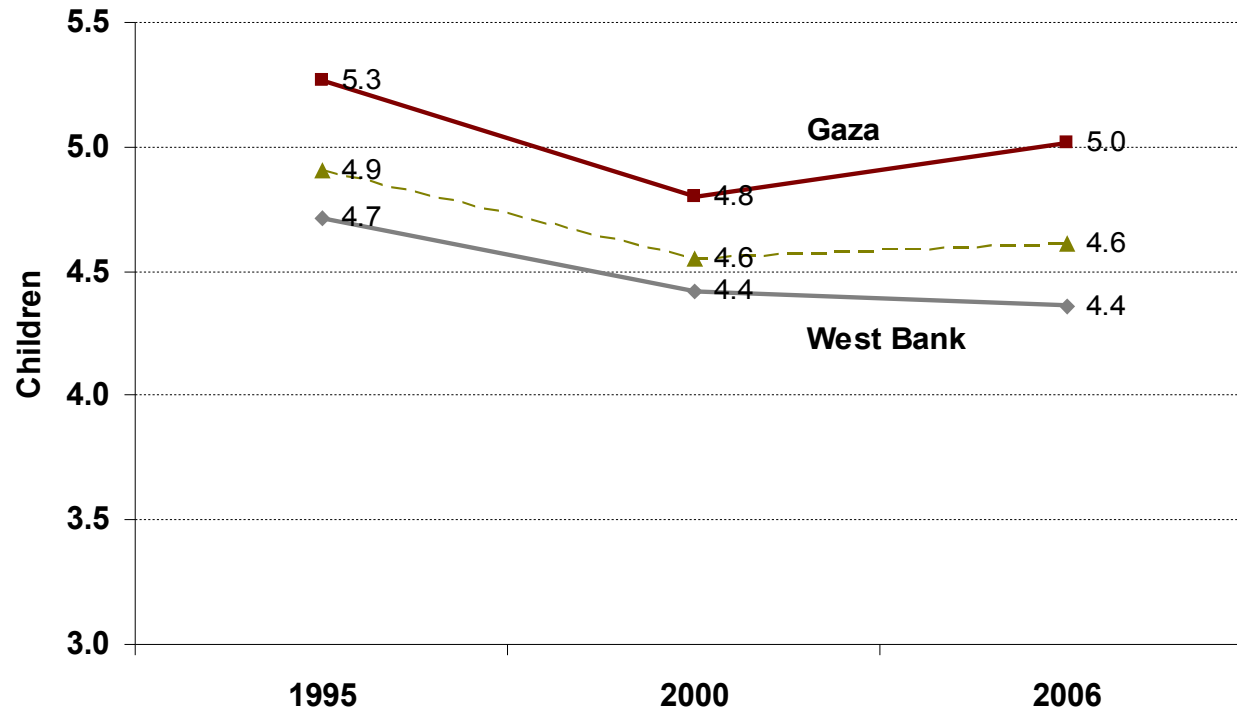
- More than half of women do NOT want any more children

- More desire for children in Gaza than the West Bank

- ...but faster change in Gaza



## High mean ideal family size – but declined



- ...slightly from 4.9 to 4.6 children
- Increased in Gaza to 5 during Intifada II
- '95: half wanted up to 4;
- '04: 62% did.



# Conclusions

- Fertility began to decline, especially in the West Bank
- The decline stalled in Gaza during Intifada II
- The decline was achieved by manipulation of nuptiality rather than marital fertility
  - Little change in contraceptive use
- High desire for children persists,
  - ...but less and less want more children
  - ...there is considerable unwanted pregnancy (50%) & high unmet need for family planning (one fourth of women)
- These data indicate that the fertility decline may accelerate in the future



Thank you!