require a polygynous man to be wife-specific in his answer, we do not know to which wife or wives the responses refer. Unfortunately, nothing can be done to correct this problem. Thus, in cases where this ambiguity may affect the results, we either carry out the analysis by type of marriage or include monogamous couples only.

To examine couples’ ideal number of children, contraceptive knowledge and modern method use, we constructed measures of these variables combining husbands’ and wives’ reporting. For instance, the measure of modern method use is a three-category variable showing the proportions of couples in which only the husband reports use, both spouses report use and only the wife reports use. This measure allows us both to show the level of agreement between spouses and to measure use separately for husbands and wives.

The analysis of the effects of fertility intentions on couples’ contraceptive behavior is restricted to fecund monogamous couples in which the wife was not pregnant at the time of the survey. (Couples are considered fecund if neither spouse reports that either partner is infertile.) Polygynous couples are excluded because men’s answers to the question about fertility intentions are not wife-specific.

A couple is defined as using a modern method of family planning if the wife reports current use of any method or (because women may underreport use of male methods, especially condoms) if the husband reports condom use. We used logistic regression analysis to examine the effects of fertility intentions on couples’ use of modern contraceptives; the results are presented as predicted proportions, to facilitate a comparison of the effects before and after controlling for other variables.13

### Results

#### Characteristics of Husbands and Wives

In some settings, the difference in the ages of husband and wife is a determinant of whether the spouses have similar reproductive preferences.14 In all 18 countries, husbands are typically older than their wives; the median age difference ranges from 2.7 years in Brazil to 12.2 years in Senegal (Table 2). Generally, the gap is widest in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Polygyny is evident in the 16 countries for which data are available on type of marriage. However, while polygyny is very common in Sub-Saharan Africa, its prevalence is negligible in other regions. On average, 23% of husbands and 29% of wives are in polygynous unions in Sub-Saharan Africa (not shown), but wide variations exist within the region: Polygyny is most prevalent in West African countries, which are predominantly Muslim.1 The relatively high prevalence of polygyny may account for the larger age gap between spouses in these countries, since women in societies where polygyny is common tend to marry at younger ages than their counterparts in societies where the practice is less prevalent.15

In every country, at least 80% of husbands are currently working. A substantial proportion of wives work, although wide variations exist between countries. More than 50% of wives are currently working in 10 countries, but in North Africa and Asia, the proportions are only 15–22%.

The literacy level among men varies considerably less than that of women, in all countries, but in North Africa and Asia, the proportions are only 15–22%.

#### Childbearing Goals

Although conventional wisdom suggests that men desire more children than women in developing countries, data that permit empirical, cross-cultural studies to verify this claim have only recently become available. A review of earlier studies, however, does not support this notion.16 And a recent study that examined male and female preferences using DHS data showed that except in some countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Husband’s age minus wife’s age (median)</th>
<th>% in polygynous union</th>
<th>% employed</th>
<th>% literate</th>
<th>% with ≥7 years of schooling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Burkina Faso</td>
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<td>53.7</td>
<td>98.9</td>
<td>62.2</td>
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<td>57.7</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>70.0</td>
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<td>13.3</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>93.2</td>
<td>85.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>29.1</td>
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<td>80.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>16.3</td>
<td>21.8</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>91.4</td>
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<td>45.3</td>
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<td>96.4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>17.1</td>
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</table>

Notes: Includes those who are legally married and those in a cohabiting union. For the number of couples, see Table 1. Data for men in polygynous unions are counted only once. u=unavailable.

*The procedure involves adding the constant to the parameter estimate for each category of joint fertility intentions and computing the antilog. For example, to calculate the unadjusted proportion shown in Table 6 for Burkina Faso under “Husband only wants no more,” we first ran a logistic regression examining the relationship between modern method use and joint fertility intentions with no controls. Then we obtained the predicted logit for the category by adding the constant value (-2.39003) to the parameter estimate (1.38299); the result was -1.00702. Dividing by one plus the antilog of this number (0.3653), and multiplying by 100 produced the reported proportion (26.8%). The weighted average of these predicted proportions, computed using the proportions shown in the first column of the table (11.9% for Burkina Faso), is the same as the overall proportion using modern methods obtained from a simple cross-tabulation of joint fertility intentions by use of modern methods. Similarly, the adjusted proportions are obtained from the results of a logistic regression including the control variables. But these proportions have been constrained to reproduce the proportion of women in the sample who were using contraceptives so that the overall proportions of couples using contraceptives are the same for the unadjusted and adjusted numbers. This involves changing only the regression constant and is done by solving for a constant value that will produce the desired overall proportion.

1Of the African countries included in our study, seven (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Senegal) are in West Africa, four (Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda) are in East Africa, and one each is in Central and Southern Africa (Central African Republic and Zimbabwe, respectively).