RESULTS

Women's Characteristics and Extent of Mistiming

Fifty-five percent of mistimed pregnancies were mistimed by 24 months or less, 32% were mistimed by 25–60 months and 13% were mistimed by more than 60 months (Table 1). Pregnancies were disproportionately mistimed by more than three years among women younger than 20 (56%), never-married women (47%), black women (43%) and women for whom this birth was the first (42%). By contrast, more than half (58%) of mistimed pregnancies among women who had completed college were 12 months or less too early.

In our multivariate analyses, only age, marital status, and race were significantly associated with mistiming (Table 2). Teenagers’ pregnancies were mistimed by significantly more months than pregnancies among women in any other age-group (46 vs. 25–31 months), and pregnancies among women in their early 20s were mistimed by significantly more months than pregnancies among older women. Pregnancy mistiming was not significantly different between women in the two oldest age-groups.

Never-married women’s pregnancies were mistimed by significantly more months than formerly married women’s (39 vs. 29 months), and married women’s pregnancies were mistimed by significantly more months than formerly married women’s (35 vs. 29).

Black women’s pregnancies were mistimed by significantly more months than white women’s (38 vs. 32), but there were no significant differences in mistiming between black women or white women and women of other racial groups.

Maternal Characteristics and Intendedness

Sixty-nine percent of all pregnancies ending in a singleton live birth were reported as intended, 12% as moderately mistimed, 10% as seriously mistimed and 9% as unwanted (Table 3). Only 6% of intended pregnancies were among women younger than 20, compared with 14% of moderately mistimed and unwanted pregnancies and 47% of those that were seriously mistimed. Of the six pairwise comparisons between categories of intendedness, five revealed significant differences by women’s age; the exception was that the distributions of moderately mistimed and unwanted pregnancies were indistinguishable.

The results for marital status were similar to those for age: Only 14% of intended pregnancies were among never-married women, while 64% of seriously mistimed pregnancies and intermediate proportions of other categories were among this group. Again, the only comparison that was not significant was between moderately mistimed and unwanted pregnancies.

Sixty-six percent of pregnancies reported as seriously mistimed ended in first births. By comparison, first births accounted for 18% of unwanted pregnancies. About 40% of both intended and moderately mistimed pregnancies were first births; these were the only distributions that did not differ significantly from each other on this variable.

Significantly larger proportions of unwanted and seriously mistimed pregnancies than of others were among women living below 150% of the poverty level, women who...