

## ABSTRACT

This Study reveals that fertility levels in Guyana as in other Caribbean territories are affected by several main variables, union status, education, religion, urban and rural differences. It is also seen that the East Indians with their differing cultural habits exhibit a higher fertility than the Non-Indians.

Among the Non-Indians the largest proportion of women in the child-bearing age are in visiting relationships, followed closely by the married, with those in common-law unions being much less. The visiting unions occur mainly among the younger women under 25 years old, and contrary to popular belief, it is the stable married unions together with the common-law on some occasions, which reveal the highest fertility levels and the unstable visiting the lowest. Marriage is the norm among East Indian women with proportions married on par with European societies. There is a general inverse relationship between levels of education and fertility, with fertility decreasing with movement up the educational scale. A significant difference in fertility lies between those who have had higher education and those who have stopped at the primary level. The differences between East Indian and Non-Indian fertility are emphasised when examined in relation to religion. The Hindus and Moslems reveal a marked higher fertility than the Christian religions, while there is little differentiation among the latter. Urban versus rural influences prove to be exceedingly

significant causing very marked differences in fertility with urban family sizes being generally smaller, whether that of the East Indian or Non-Indian.

It is seen that in 1960 the Guyanese woman is having her first child at the same age as she did at the beginning of the century, an average 19.8 years, and has not moved towards delaying child-bearing. Many women except young married East Indian women take part significantly in child-bearing before entering a stable union. Thus these and other diverse factors contribute to the country's fertility levels.