

Correlates of nonmarital births in the Philippines

M. Midea M. Kabamalan, University of the Philippines Population Institute
Lindy B. Williams, Cornell University

Extended Abstract

Nonmarital births have increased amidst slowly declining fertility in the Philippines. Based on published vital statistics data, nonmarital births comprise only two percent of all births in 1963. It increased to five percent by the end of the 1970s and the level increased to 17 percent in 2000. It further increased to 22 percent in 2004. Moreover, relative to marital births, increases in nonmarital births are more pronounced over time. The ratio of nonmarital births to marital births is estimated to be two nonmarital births for every 100 marital births in 1963. By the beginning of the 21st century, it is estimated to be 20 and by 2005, the ratio is 30 nonmarital births per 100 marital births.

There are several possible intertwined reasons for this trend. First, abortion remains illegal in the country (although abortions occur on the sly). Second, age at marriage is increasing and so is the percentage of the population who are cohabiting. Third, there is no divorce in the Philippines. Fourth, there might be a growing tolerance for children born out of wedlock. Children have long been viewed in the Philippines as “gifts from God” but this might be accompanied by increasing secularization. And fifth, there could be some other individual-level factors that are associated with nonmarital births like education (Upchurch, Lillard and Panis 2002), family structure while growing up (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994) and age.

The aims of this paper are modest. First, in view of the rising percentage of the population in cohabiting unions, we will estimate nonmarital births separately for the never married (single) from those who are cohabiting. Second, we will examine correlates of nonmarital births in the Philippines. Place of childhood residence, education, age at first sex are among the factors to be examined. We hypothesize that high education, exposure to living in urban areas in early childhood, and early initiation to sex are associated with nonmarital births. We use data from the national demographic and health surveys (NDHS) in 1998 and 2003 which are the best sources of data about fertility in the country.

No study about nonmarital births has been done in this Philippines and this paper is an attempt to address that gap.