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## The Impacts of Healthy Birth Spacing in Jordan

May 2013

Higher Population Council



# Presentation Outline

- Birth spacing and the Qur'an
- WHO recommendations and definition of intervals
- Benefits of healthy birth spacing
- Consequences of unhealthy birth spacing
- Relationship between birth intervals and health outcomes in Jordan
- Trends in birth spacing in Jordan
- Impacts of increasing birth intervals in Jordan
- Interventions to improve birth spacing in Jordan

# Birth Spacing and the Qur'an

(( وَحَمْلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا ))

سورة الأحقاف الآية (15)

“The period of pregnancy and weaning is thirty months”

(( وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ ))

سورة لقمان الآية (14)

“Weaning at two years of age”

# WHO Recommendations for Birth Spacing

## Recommendation for spacing after a live birth

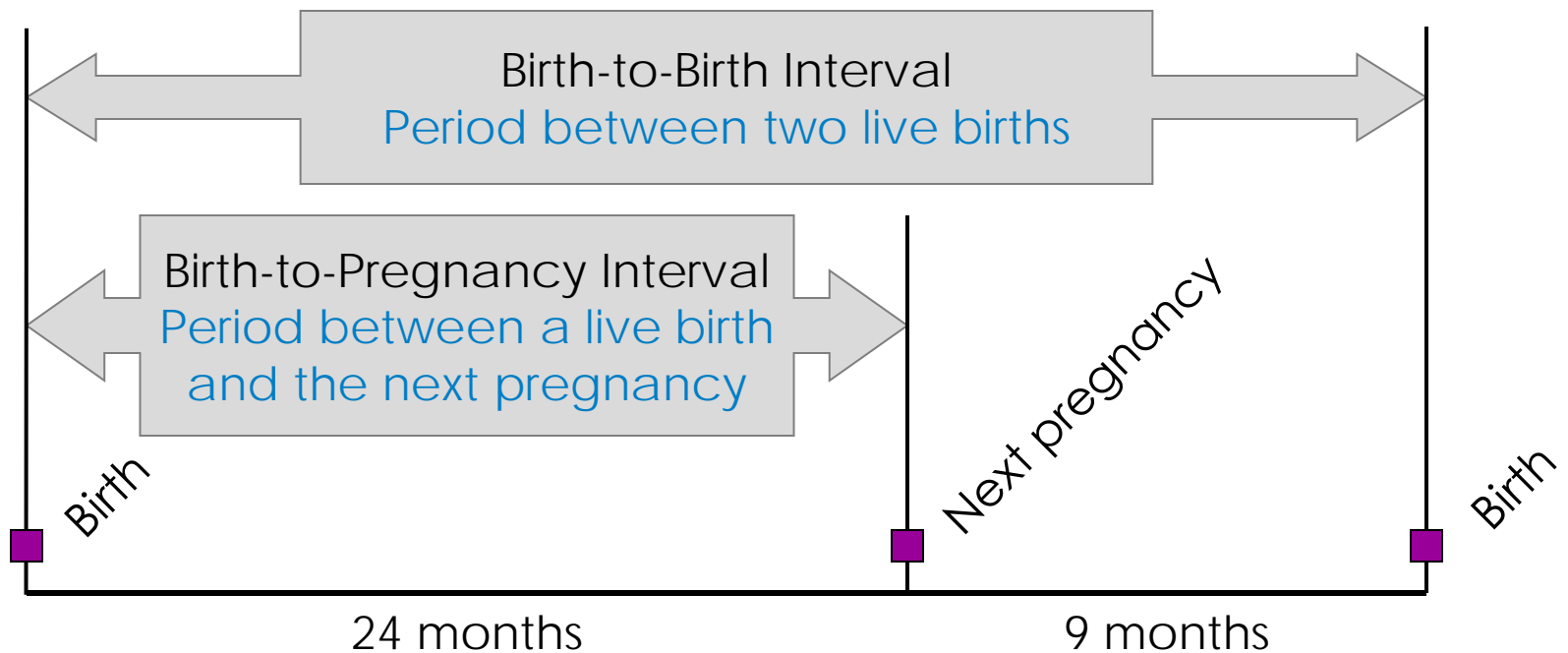
- After a live birth, the recommended interval before attempting the next pregnancy is at least 24 months in order to reduce the risk of adverse maternal, perinatal, and infant outcomes. In simple terms, couples are encouraged to wait to attempt a new pregnancy until after the 2nd birthday of their last child.

## Recommendation for spacing after a miscarriage

- After a miscarriage, the recommended minimum time to wait to attempt another pregnancy is at least six months in order to reduce the risk of adverse maternal and perinatal outcomes.

# Definitions

## Recommended Birth-to-Birth and Birth-to-Pregnancy Intervals



A 24-month birth-to-pregnancy interval is the approximate equivalent of a 33-month birth-to-birth interval.

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# Why is Birth Spacing Important?

When pregnancies are too close together

- Newborns can be born too soon, too small, or with a low birth weight
- Infants and children may not grow well and are more likely to die before age five years old
- Mothers may die in childbirth



# Who Benefits from Healthy Birth Spacing?

Newborns, infants, and children under five years old

Mothers

Men

Communities



# Benefits to Newborns, Infants, and Children Under Age Five

Reduces the risk of

- Pre-term births, low birth weight, small size for gestational age, and, in some populations, stunting or underweight conditions
- Death for newborns, infants, and children under age five

Allows young children to experience the substantial health benefits of breastfeeding for longer periods

Extending Service Delivery (ESD) Project. 2006. *Healthy Timing and Spacing of Pregnancies, A Pocket Guide for Health Practitioners, Program Managers, and Community Leaders.* Watertown, MA: Pathfinder International, USAID ESD Project.

Photo credit © 1995 Lamia Jaroudi



# Benefits to Mothers

Gives mothers more time to prepare physically, emotionally, and financially for their next pregnancy, if they choose to have one

Helps mothers avoid pregnancy-induced high blood pressure and associated complications like preeclampsia, obstructed and prolonged labor, iron-deficiency anemia, and maternal death

Provides mothers with enough time before becoming pregnant again to focus on their newborns, husbands, and other children

# Benefits to Fathers

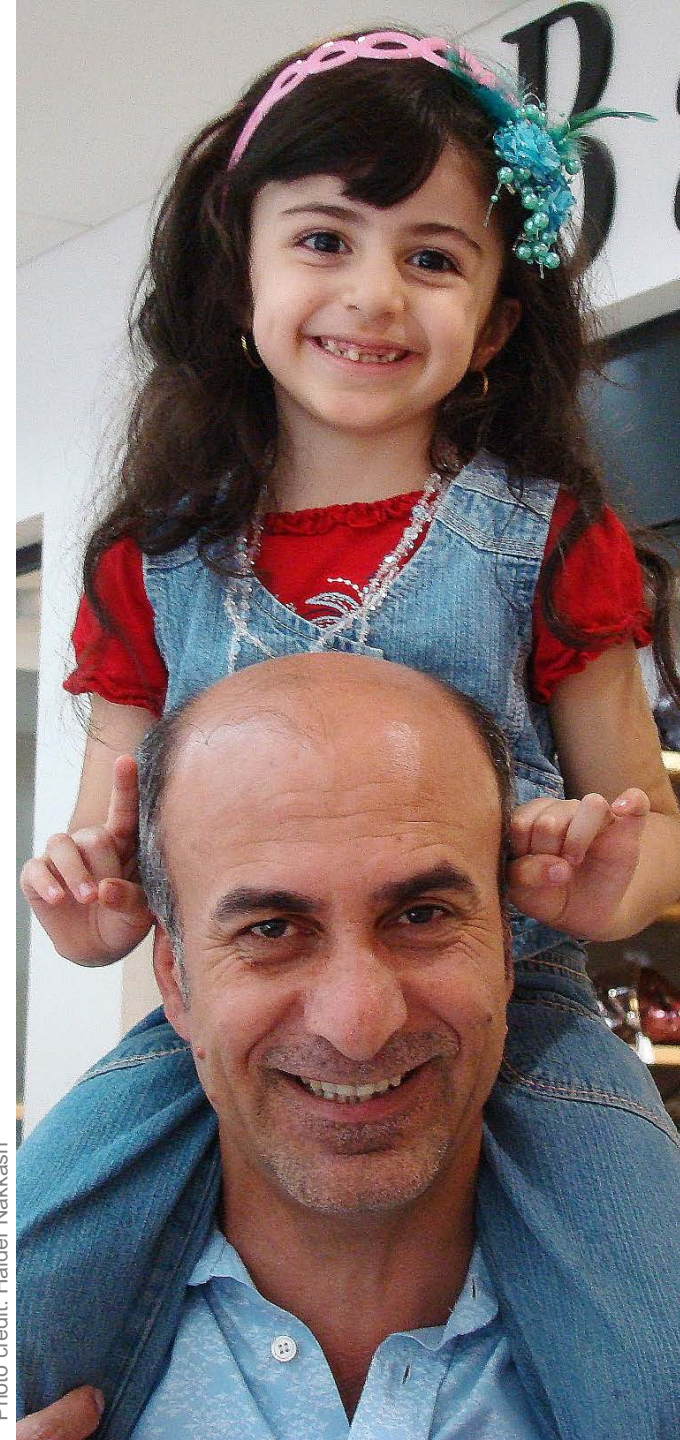
Helps fathers safeguard the health and well-being of their wives and children

Allows fathers time to plan financially and emotionally for their next child, if the couple chooses to have one

Contributes to a father's sense of satisfaction from supporting his wife in making decisions that are in the family's best interests

Extending Service Delivery (ESD) Project. 2006. *Healthy Timing and Spacing of Pregnancies, A Pocket Guide for Health Practitioners, Program Managers, and Community Leaders*. Watertown, MA: Pathfinder International, USAID ESD Project.

Photo credit: Haider Nakkash





# Benefits to Communities

Benefits communities because it reduces the incidence of death and illness among mothers, newborns, infants, and children

In doing so, it can contribute to poverty reduction and improve a community's quality of life



Photo credit: Mohammad-Khawaja

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# Impact of Unhealthy Birth Spacing on Children's Lives

Neonatal mortality

Postneonatal mortality

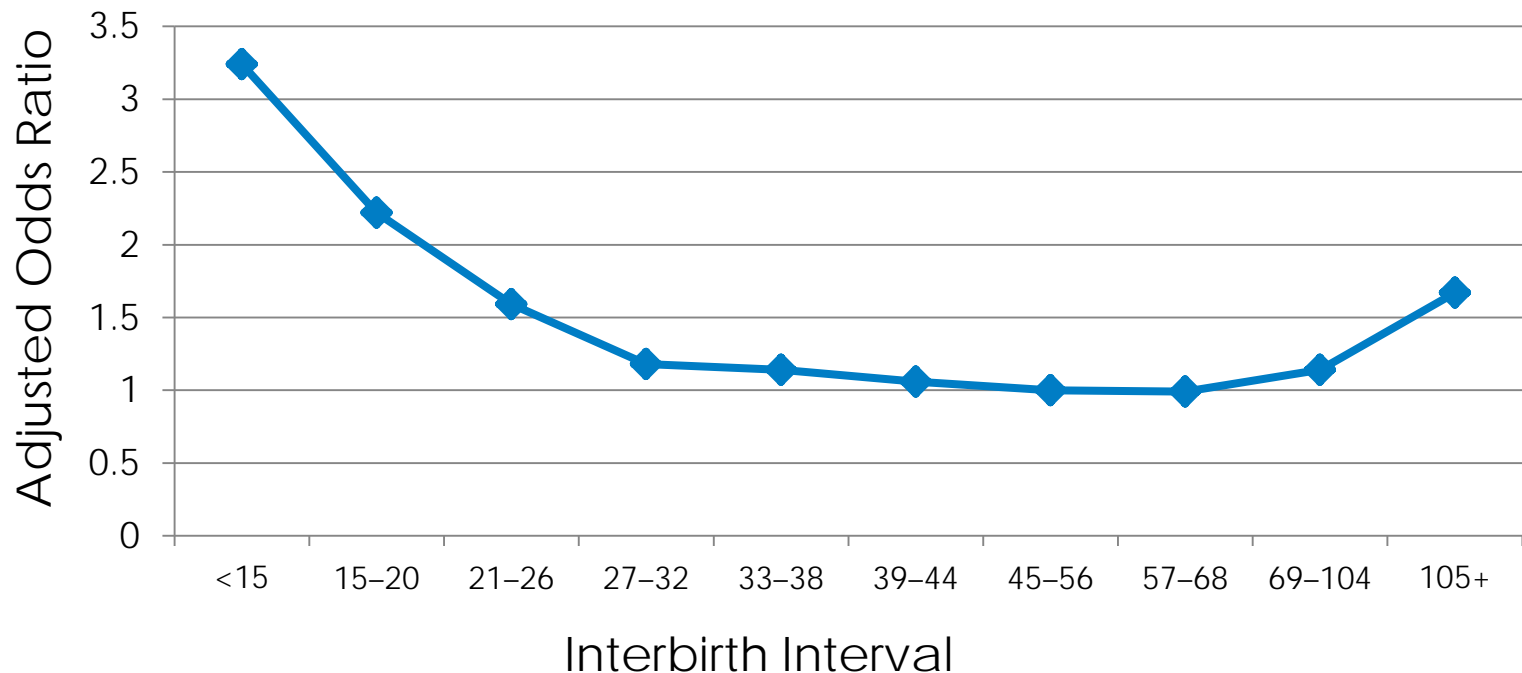
Under-five mortality

Photo credit: Jennifer Hayes



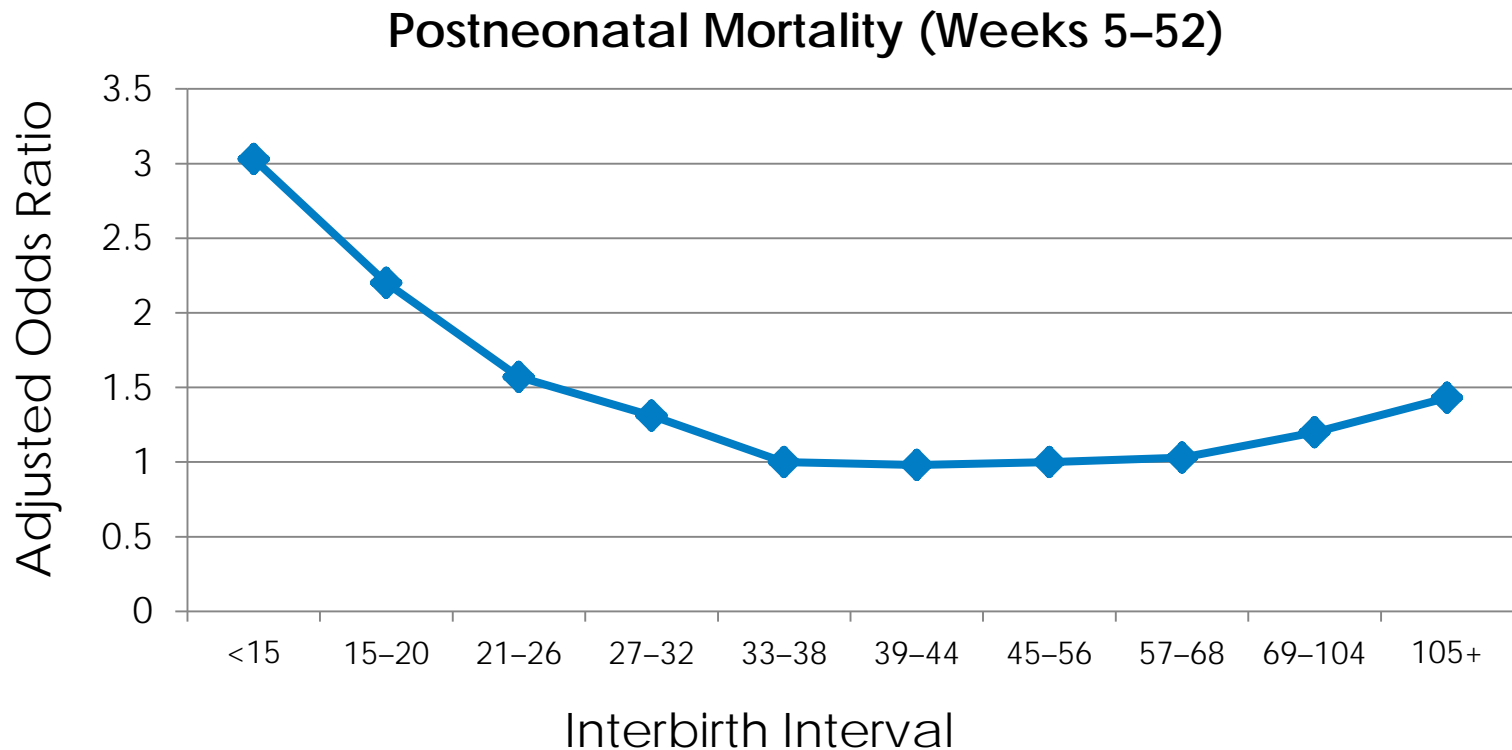
# Impact on Neonatal Mortality

## Neonatal Mortality (Weeks 2-4)



N = 17 p < .01

# Impact on Postneonatal Mortality



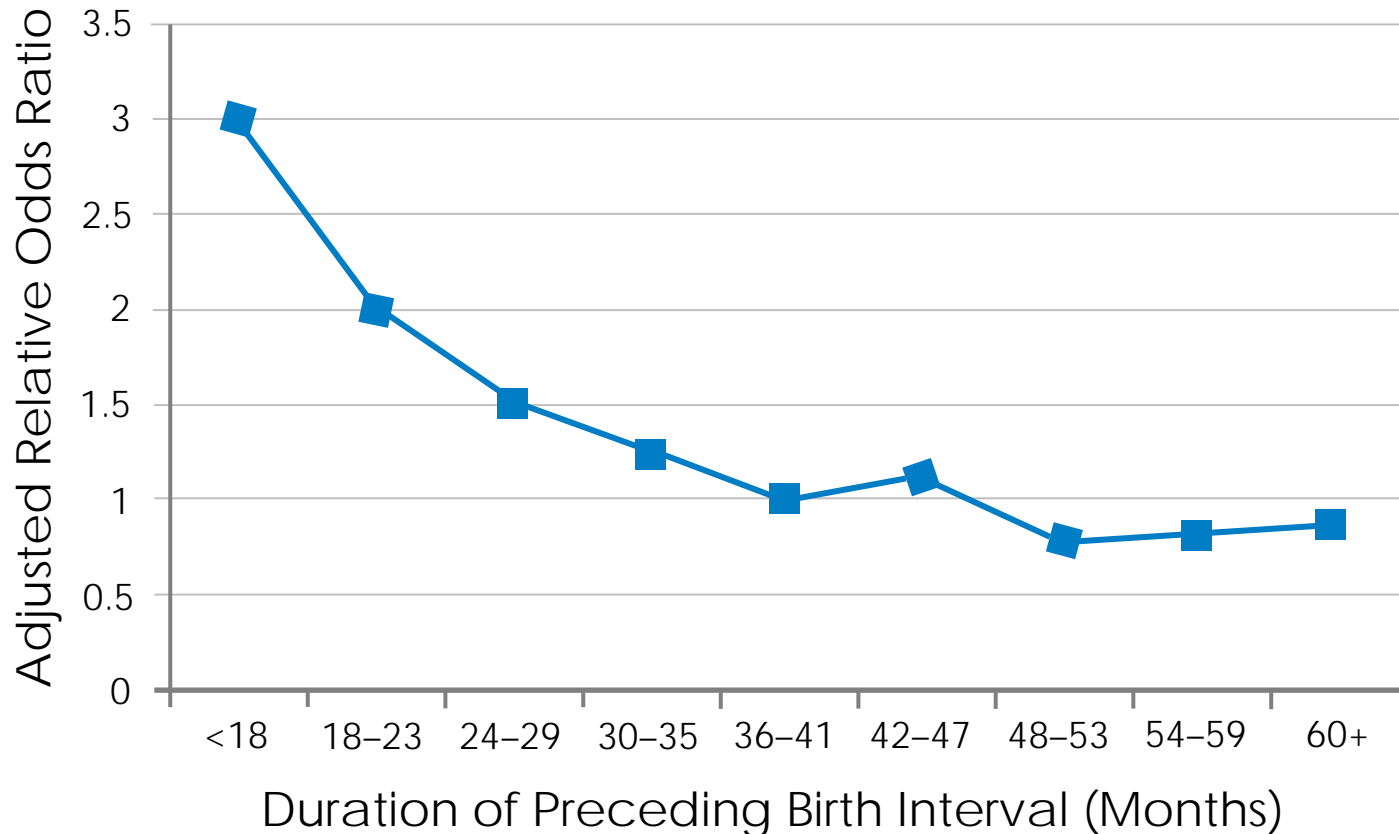
**N = 17 p < .01**

Rutstein, S. 2005. "Effects of Preceding Birth Intervals on Neonatal, Infant, and Under-five Years Mortality and Nutritional Status in Developing Countries: Evidence from the Demographic Health Surveys." *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics* 89: S7–S24.



# Impact on Mortality among Children Under Five Years Old

## Mortality among Children Under Five Years Old



Rutstein, S. 2005. "Effects of Preceding Birth Intervals on Neonatal, Infant, and Under-five Years Mortality and Nutritional Status in Developing Countries: Evidence from the Demographic Health Surveys." *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics* 89: S7-S24.

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# Relationship between Birth Intervals and Health Outcomes in Jordan

Neonatal mortality

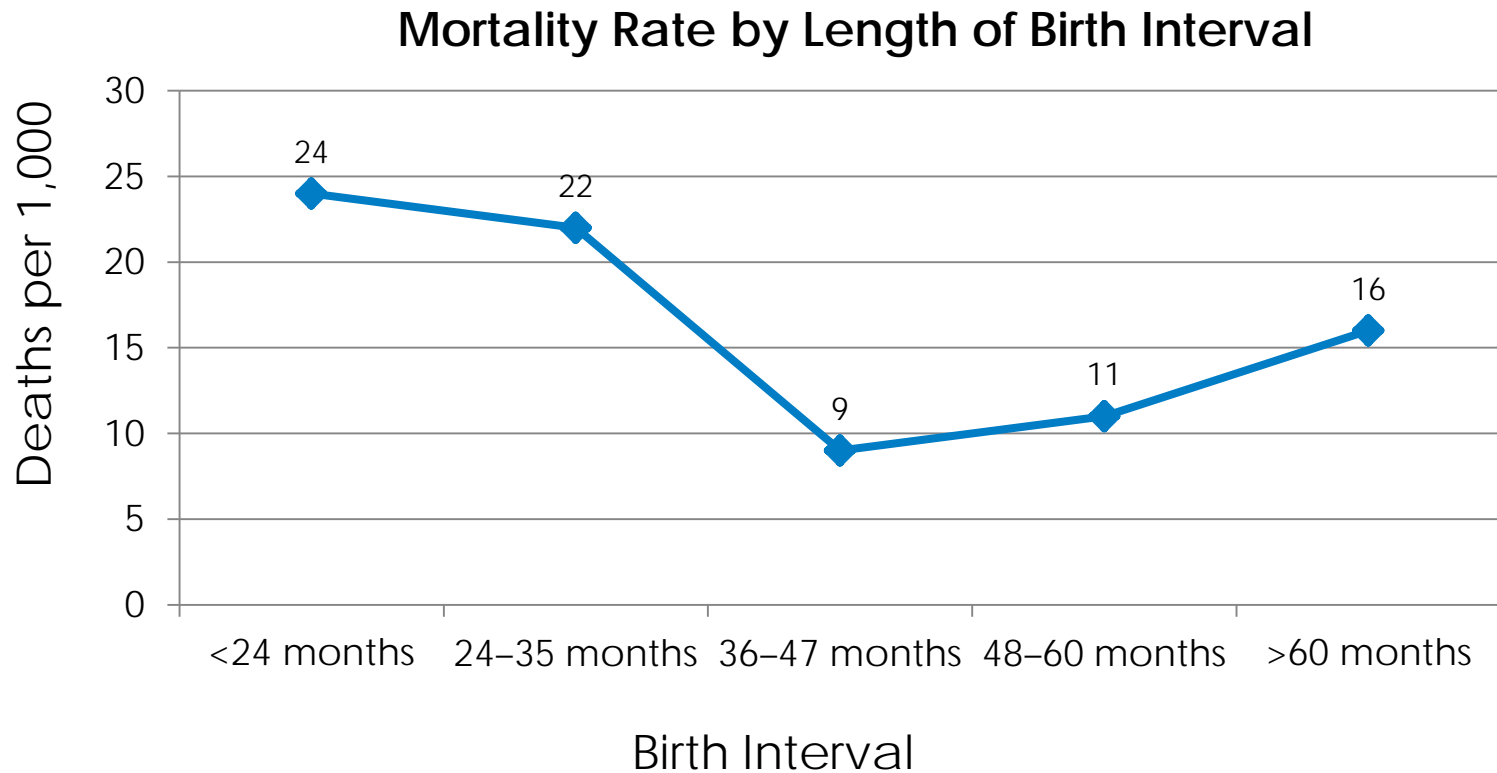
Infant mortality

Under-five mortality

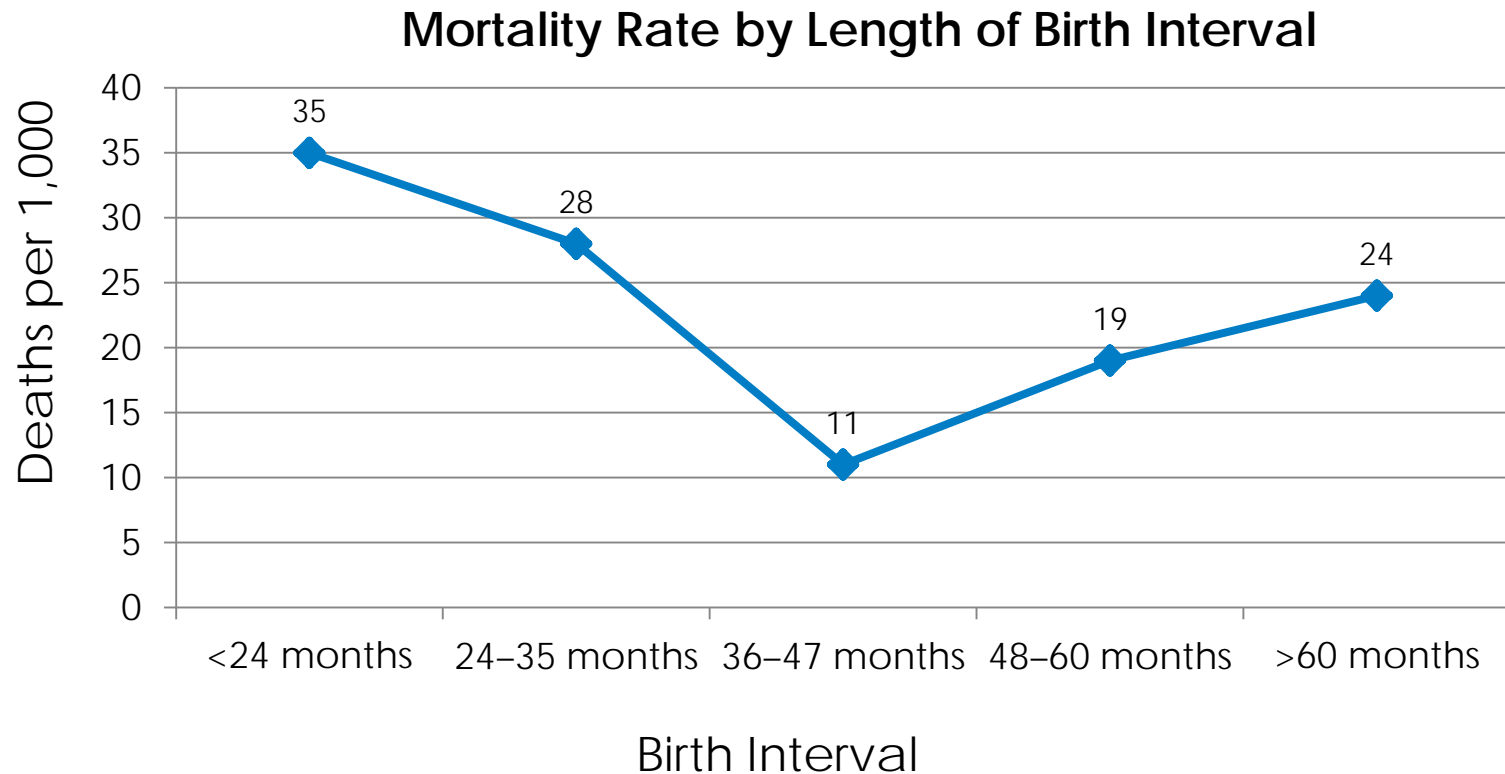
Photo credit: © Karen Kasmauski/Corbis



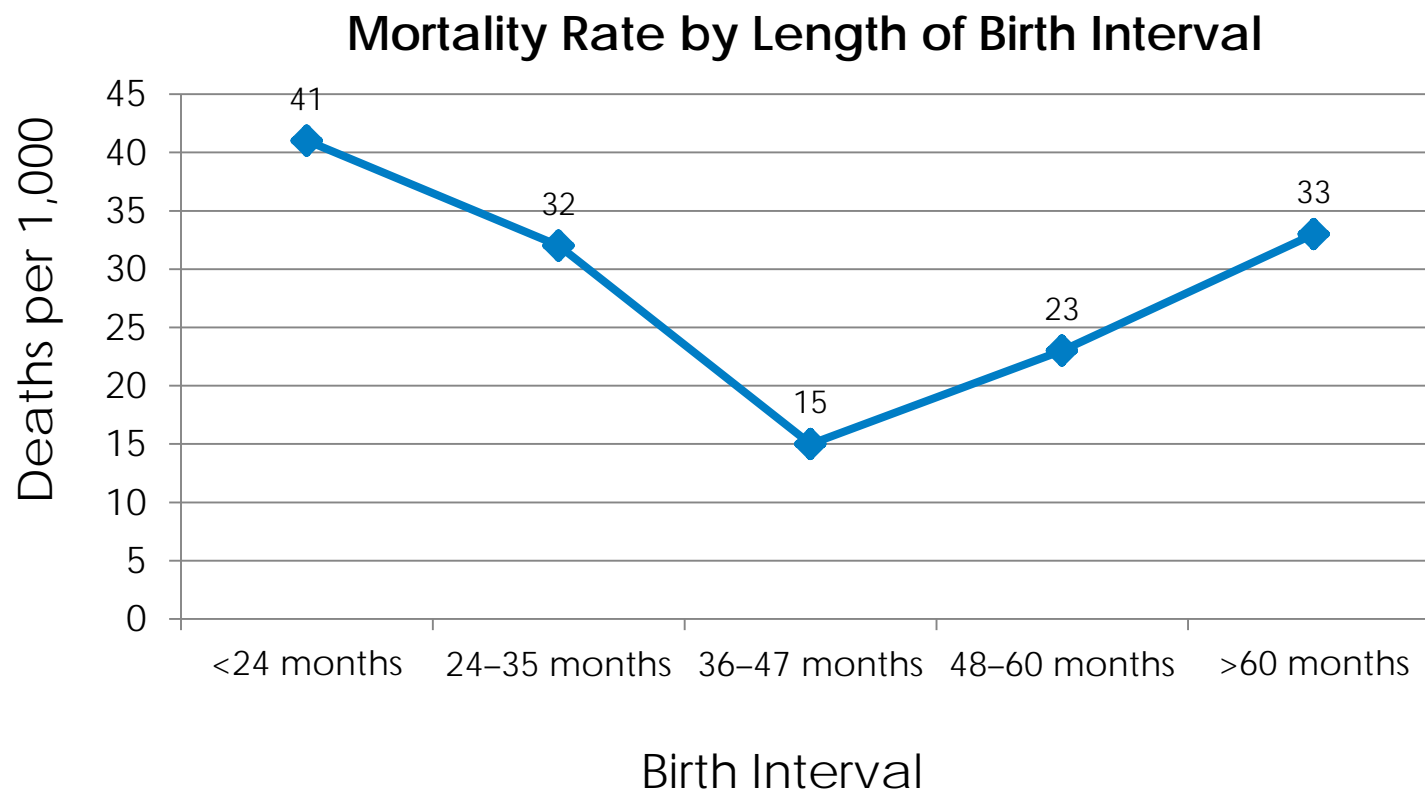
# Relationship between Birth Spacing and Neonatal Mortality



# Relationship between Birth Spacing and Infant Mortality



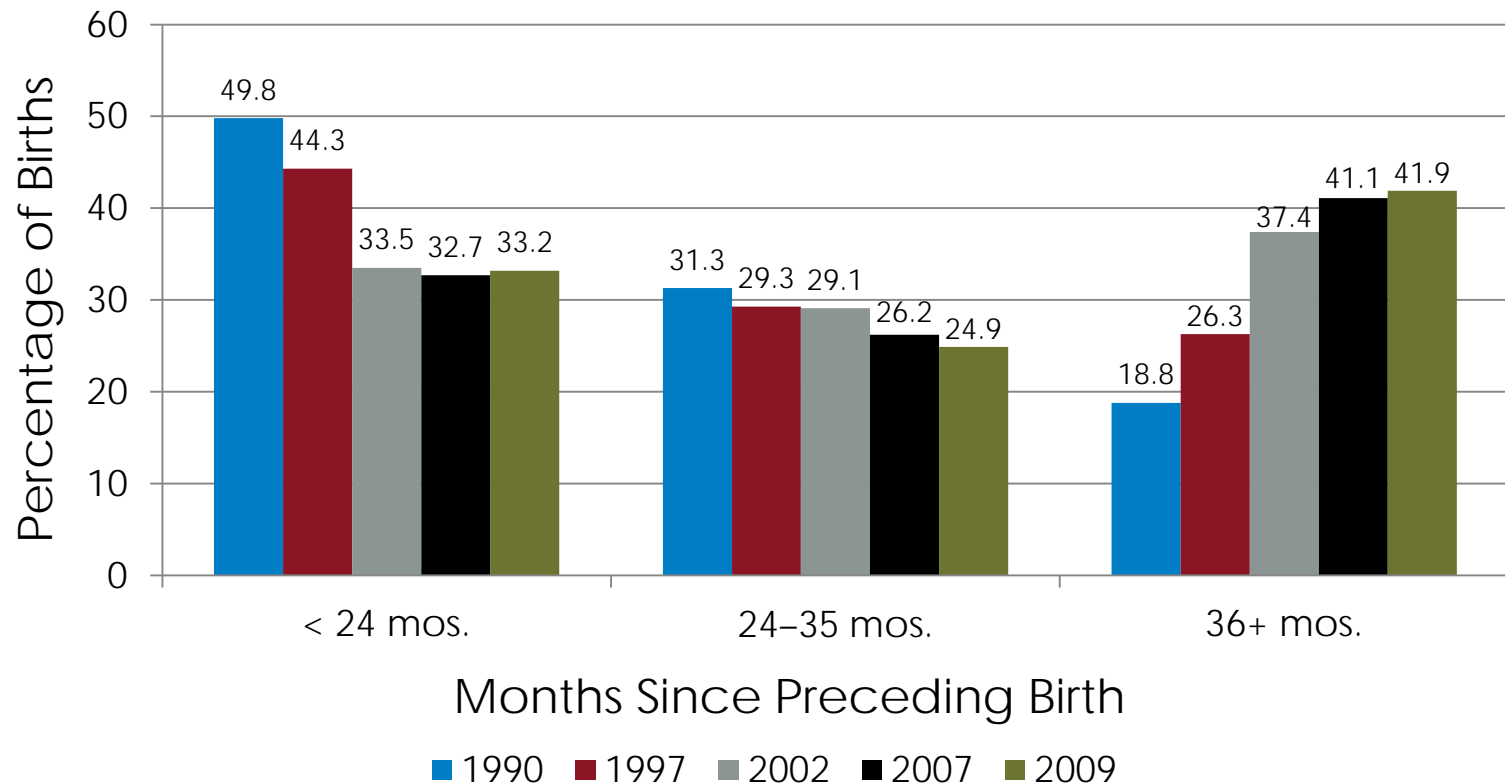
# Relationship between Birth Spacing and the Mortality of Children Under Five Years Old



# Presentation Outline

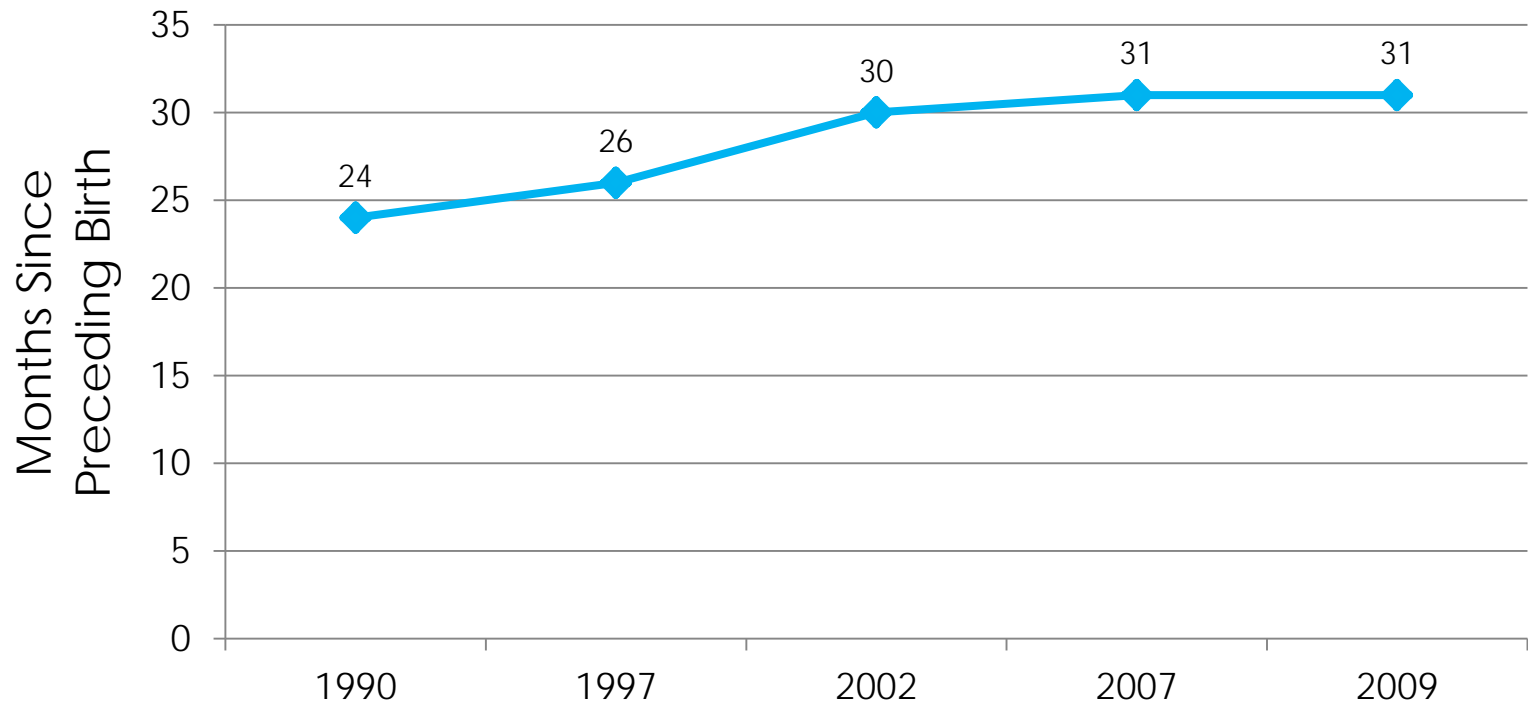
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# Trends in Length of Birth Interval

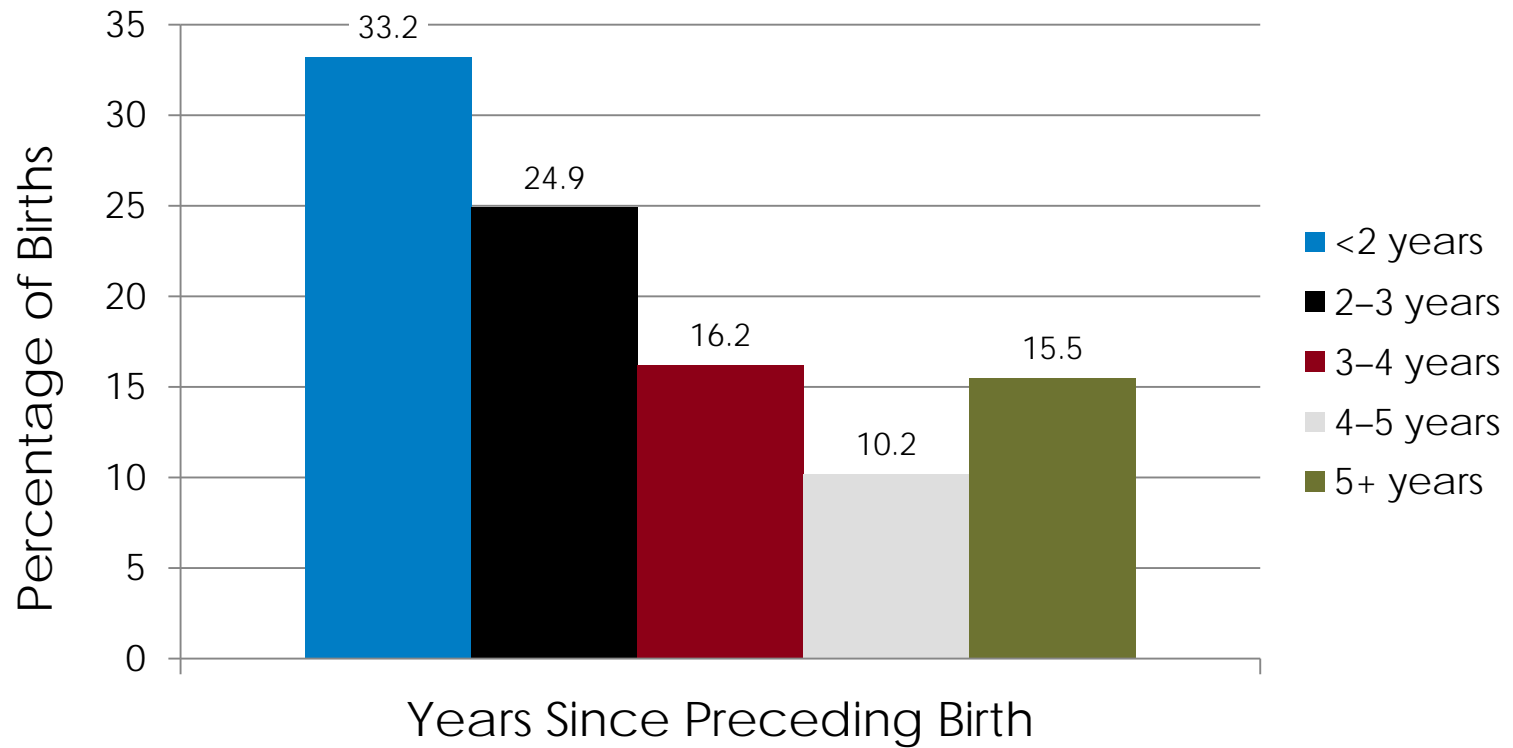




# Trends in Median Birth Interval



# Current Birth Intervals



# Median Birth Intervals by Background Characteristic

## Characteristic Related to Median Birth Interval

Characteristic	MBI	Characteristic	MBI
<b>Age</b>		<b>Wealth Quintile</b>	
15–19	18.7	Lowest	28.0
20–29	24.0	Second	29.4
30–39	35.8	Middle	31.7
40–49	48.7	Fourth	34.2
<b>Birth Order</b>		Highest	38.0
2–3	26.4	<b>Survival of Preceding Child</b>	
4–6	37.8	Living	31.6
7+	38.0	Dead	21.7

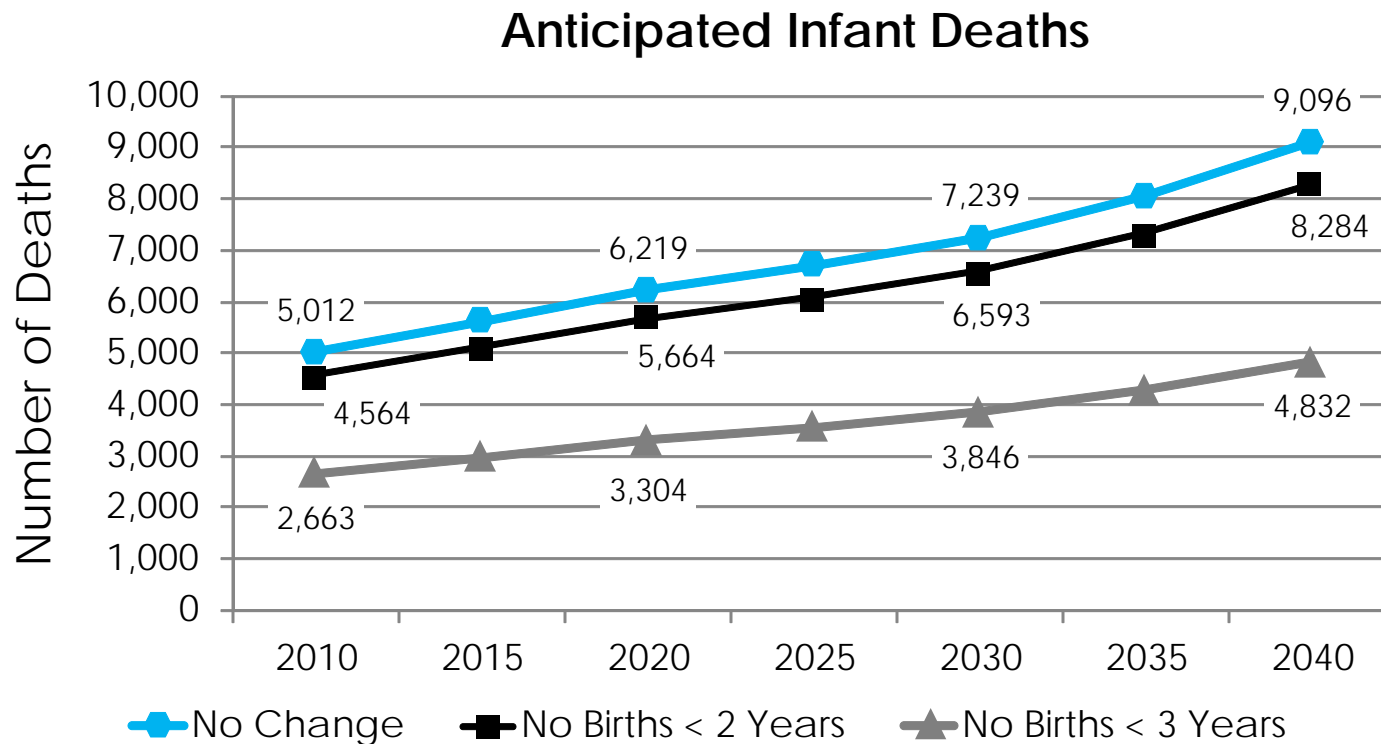
## Characteristic Not Related to Median Birth Interval

Characteristic	MBI	Characteristic	MBI
<b>Region</b>		<b>Education</b>	
Central	31.5	None	31.6
North	31.0	Elementary	28.4
South	30.4	Preparatory	33.8
<b>Badia Area</b>		Secondary	30.7
Badia	27.9	Higher	32.0
Other	31.7	<b>Sex of Preceding Child</b>	
<b>Residence</b>		Male	31.7
Urban	31.7	Female	30.7
Rural	29.6		

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# Impacts of Healthy Birth Spacing



# Infant Lives Saved through Healthy Birth Spacing

Scenario	Total Number of Infant Deaths (2010–2040)	Lives Saved (Difference from No Change Scenario)
No Change	211,329	0
No Births <2 Years	192,460	18,869
No Births <3 Years	112,266	99,064

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# Interventions

## Policy Environment

- Conduct advocacy with decisionmakers to gain their support of related policies and programs.



# Interventions

## Education

- Educate married women about the benefits of waiting at least 24 months before becoming pregnant again after a birth, and the health consequences of short birth intervals.
- Educate engaged and newly married couples about the benefits of healthy birth spacing and use of modern family planning methods.
- Educate all family members (e.g., husbands, mothers, mothers-in-law, children) about the benefits of healthy birth spacing.
- Engage the media and civil society to help raise the awareness of the benefits of birth spacing.

# Interventions

## Service Delivery

- Train healthcare providers on the benefits of healthy birth spacing and encourage them to counsel women of reproductive age on those benefits.
- Counsel women to shift to more effective modern family planning methods to avoid closely spaced births.
- Integrate and provide services to assist mothers in attaining healthy birth spacing.
- Allocate sufficient human and financial resources to ensure that women and men's contraceptives of choice are available when needed.

# Summary

More than one-half of all births in Jordan occur less than three years after the previous birth.

Neonatal, infant, and child mortality in Jordan is closely associated with the length of birth intervals, and extending the length of birth intervals will save the lives of infants and children.

Encouraging women to space births at least three years apart will improve maternal and child health and support healthy childhood development.

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# Thank You!

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Higher Population Council