

Contraceptive prevalence is rising and fertility is falling in Kenya, and the speed with which these changes are occurring suggests that Kenya has passed a turning point and entered a transition. In this paper the author explores these recent trends with data from the 1989 Kenya Demographic Health Survey and several other small-scale surveys and qualitative research studies. Underlying the changed contraceptive – fertility behaviour, there appears to have been a major shift in attitudes regarding desired family size. In the second part of the paper the earlier almost universally pessimistic predictions regarding fertility in Kenya, which now appear to have been wrong are considered. Since Kenya has emerged as a bellwether among sub-saharan African states, these earlier predictions are re-examined with a view to learning from their mistakes. It is concluded that incorrect theoretical paradigms and assumptions led to the erroneous results, rather more than incorrect data, or analysis.