

Births: Final Data for 2003

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Abstract

Objectives—This report presents 2003 data on U.S. births according to a wide variety of characteristics. Data are presented for maternal demographic characteristics including age, live-birth order, race, Hispanic origin, marital status, and educational attainment; maternal characteristics (medical risk factors, weight gain, and tobacco and alcohol use); medical care utilization by pregnant women (prenatal care, obstetric procedures, complications of labor and/or delivery, attendant at birth, and method of delivery); and infant characteristics (period of gestation, birthweight, Apgar score, abnormal conditions, congenital anomalies, and multiple births). Also presented are birth and fertility rates by age, live-birth order, race, Hispanic origin, and marital status. Selected data by mother's State of residence are shown, as well as data on month and day of birth, sex ratio, and age of father. Trends in fertility patterns and maternal and infant characteristics are described and interpreted.

Methods—Descriptive tabulations of data reported on the birth certificates of the 4.09 million births that occurred in 2003 are presented. Denominators for population-based rates are derived from the U.S. 2000 census.

Results—In 2003 there were 4,089,950 live births reported in the United States, 2 percent more than the number in 2002. The crude birth rate (CBR) and general fertility rate (GFR) rose slightly. Childbearing among teenagers declined for the 12th straight year to another historic low. Birth rates for women aged 20–24 years also declined, whereas rates for women aged 25–44 years increased 2–6 percent, reaching highs not reported since the mid- to late 1960s. All measures of unmarried childbearing increased considerably in 2003, but smoking during pregnancy continued to decline. Timely initiation of prenatal care improved slightly. The cesarean delivery rate jumped another 5 percent to another all-time high, and the rate of vaginal birth after previous cesarean dropped 16 percent, an all-time low. Key measures of birth outcome—the percentages of preterm and low birthweight (LBW) births—rose. The twinning rate increased, but the rate of triplet and higher order multiple births was essentially stable.

Keywords: births • birth certificate • maternal and infant health • birth rates • maternal characteristics

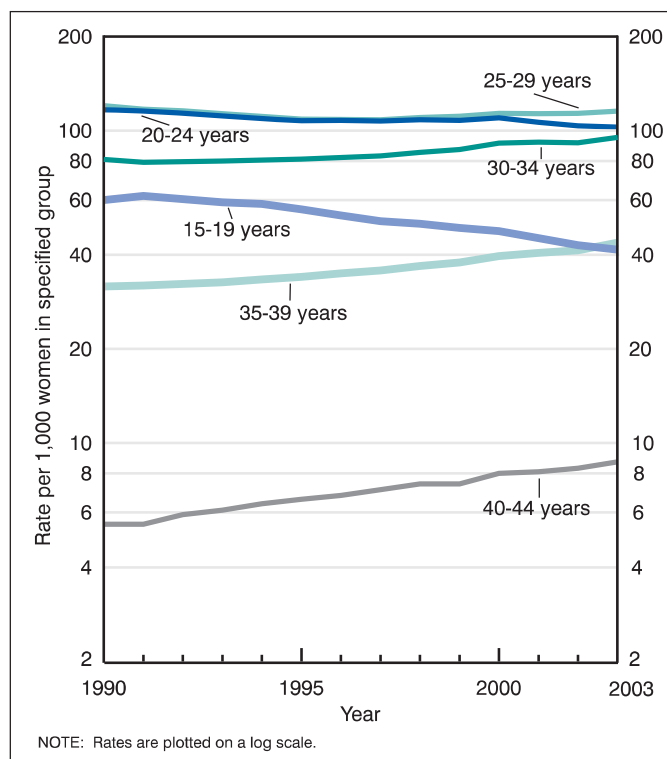


Figure 1. Birth rates by age of mother: United States, 1990–2003

Highlights

- In 2003, 4,089,950 births were registered in the United States, 2 percent more than in 2002. Births increased among non-Hispanic white, Hispanic, American Indian, and Asian or Pacific Islander (API) women but decreased among non-Hispanic black women.
- The 2003 **crude birth rate** for the United States increased 1 percent from 2002, to 14.1 live births per 1,000 total population. The **general fertility rate (GFR)** also increased, to 66.1 live births per

Table 3. Fertility rates and birth rates, by age of mother, live-birth order, and race of mother: United States, 2003

[Rates are live births per 1,000 women in specified age and racial group. Fertility rate computed by relating total births, regardless of age of mother, to women aged 15–44 years. Population estimated as of July 1. Live-birth order refers to number of children born alive to mother. Figures for live-birth order not stated are distributed]

Live-birth order and race of mother	Age of mother										
	15–44 years	10–14 years	15–19 years			20–24 years	25–29 years	30–34 years	35–39 years	40–44 years	45–49 years ¹
			Total	15–17 years	18–19 years						
All races	66.1	0.6	41.6	22.4	70.7	102.6	115.6	95.1	43.8	8.7	0.5
1st child	26.5	0.6	33.2	20.1	53.1	48.0	42.1	28.2	10.3	1.9	0.1
2d child	21.4	0.0	7.1	2.1	14.7	35.1	39.1	34.1	14.4	2.5	0.1
3d child	11.1	*	1.1	0.2	2.6	14.2	21.6	19.4	10.1	1.8	0.1
4th child	4.3	*	0.1	0.0	0.3	4.1	8.4	8.1	4.8	1.1	0.1
5th child	1.6	*	0.0	*	0.0	1.0	2.9	3.0	2.1	0.6	0.0
6th and 7th child	0.9	*	0.0	*	0.0	0.3	1.3	1.8	1.5	0.5	0.0
8th child and over	0.3	*	*	*	*	0.0	0.2	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.0
White	66.1	0.5	38.3	19.8	66.2	100.6	119.5	99.3	44.8	8.7	0.5
1st child	26.5	0.5	31.0	17.9	50.7	48.4	44.1	29.4	10.6	1.9	0.1
2d child	21.7	0.0	6.3	1.7	13.2	34.8	41.3	35.9	14.7	2.5	0.1
3d child	11.2	*	0.9	0.1	2.1	13.1	22.3	20.7	10.5	1.8	0.1
4th child	4.2	*	0.1	0.0	0.2	3.3	8.1	8.4	5.0	1.1	0.1
5th child	1.5	*	0.0	*	0.0	0.7	2.5	3.0	2.1	0.6	0.0
6th and 7th child	0.8	*	*	*	*	0.2	1.0	1.6	1.4	0.5	0.0
8th child and over	0.3	*	*	*	*	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.3	0.0
Black	66.3	1.6	63.8	38.2	103.7	126.1	100.4	66.5	33.2	7.7	0.5
1st child	25.1	1.5	49.0	33.6	73.0	50.2	25.4	14.8	6.4	1.4	0.1
2d child	19.4	0.0	12.0	4.2	24.3	42.1	31.4	20.4	9.3	1.9	0.1
3d child	11.7	*	2.4	0.4	5.5	22.1	22.7	15.0	7.8	1.7	0.1
4th child	5.5	*	0.3	0.0	0.8	8.3	11.8	8.0	4.5	1.1	0.1
5th child	2.4	*	0.0	*	0.1	2.6	5.3	4.0	2.3	0.6	0.0
6th and 7th child	1.6	*	*	*	*	0.8	3.2	3.2	2.0	0.6	0.0
8th child and over	0.5	*	*	*	*	0.0	0.6	1.1	1.0	0.4	0.0
American Indian ²	58.4	1.0	53.1	30.6	87.3	110.0	93.5	57.4	25.4	5.5	0.4
1st child	20.7	1.0	41.2	27.5	62.2	41.3	19.4	9.4	3.2	0.5	*
2d child	16.1	*	9.9	2.9	20.6	39.1	26.7	13.6	4.7	0.9	*
3d child	10.5	*	1.6	*	3.8	20.4	23.4	12.9	5.3	1.0	*
4th child	5.7	*	0.2	*	0.6	7.0	13.7	9.4	4.3	0.9	*
5th child	2.7	*	*	*	*	1.7	6.2	5.6	3.2	0.7	*
6th and 7th child	2.1	*	*	*	*	0.4	3.7	5.0	3.3	0.8	*
8th child and over	0.6	*	*	*	*	*	0.4	1.5	1.5	0.6	*
Asian or Pacific Islander	66.3	0.2	17.4	8.8	29.8	59.6	108.5	114.6	59.9	13.5	0.9
1st child	31.1	0.2	14.2	8.0	23.2	36.2	60.4	46.9	17.7	3.4	0.2
2d child	22.9	*	2.7	0.8	5.5	16.4	33.0	45.6	24.7	4.9	0.3
3d child	8.0	*	0.4	*	1.0	5.0	10.1	14.8	11.1	2.7	0.1
4th child	2.6	*	0.1	*	0.1	1.5	3.2	4.5	3.8	1.2	0.1
5th child	0.9	*	*	*	*	0.4	1.1	1.6	1.3	0.5	0.0
6th and 7th child	0.5	*	*	*	*	0.1	0.6	0.9	0.9	0.4	0.1
8th child and over	0.2	*	*	*	*	*	0.1	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.1

* Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision; based on fewer than 20 births in numerator.

0.0 Quantity more than zero but less than 0.05.

¹Birth rates computed by relating births to women aged 45–54 years to women aged 45–49 years.

²Includes births to Aleuts and Eskimos.

NOTES: Race and Hispanic origin are reported separately on birth certificates. Race categories are consistent with the 1977 Office of Management and Budget standards. In this table all women (including Hispanic women) are classified only according to their race; see "Technical Notes."