



Births: Provisional Data for 2020

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Abstract

Objectives—This report presents provisional 2020 data on U.S. births. Births are shown by age and race and Hispanic origin of mother. Data on cesarean delivery and preterm births also are presented.

Methods—Data are based on 99.87% of all 2020 birth records received and processed by the National Center for Health Statistics as of February 11, 2021. Comparisons are made with final 2019 data and earlier years.

Results—The provisional number of births for the United States in 2020 was 3,605,201, down 4% from 2019. The general fertility rate was 55.8 births per 1,000 women aged 15–44, down 4% from 2019 to reach another record low for the United States. The total fertility rate was 1,637.5 births per 1,000 women in 2020, down 4% from 2019 to also reach another record low for the nation. In 2020, birth rates declined for women in all age groups 15–44 and were unchanged for adolescents aged 10–14 and women aged 45–49. The birth rate for teenagers aged 15–19 declined by 8% in 2020 to 15.3 births per 1,000 females; rates declined for both younger (aged 15–17) and older (aged 18–19) teenagers. The cesarean delivery rate rose to 31.8% in 2020; the low-risk cesarean delivery rate increased to 25.9%. The preterm birth rate declined to 10.09% in 2020, the first decline in the rate since 2014.

Keywords: birth rates • maternal and infant health • vital statistics • National Vital Statistics System

Introduction

This report from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is part of the National Vital Statistics System Rapid Release Quarterly Provisional Estimates. This series provides timely vital statistics for public health surveillance based on provisional data received and processed by NCHS as of a specified date. Estimates (quarterly and 12-month period ending with each quarter) for selected key vital statistics indicators are presented and released online through Quarterly Provisional Estimates (<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/nativity-dashboard.htm>). The series also includes reports that provide additional information on specific topics to help readers understand and interpret provisional natality and mortality data. Also, now available are provisional birth estimates developed to monitor health services utilization and maternal and infant outcomes that may be directly or indirectly impacted by COVID-19. Information is updated quarterly and is available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/covid-birth.htm>.

Using provisional birth data for the 12 months of 2020 (1), this report supplements the Quarterly Provisional Estimates for 2020 by presenting longer temporal trends in context and more detail (by race and Hispanic origin of the mother and by state of residence). Statistics from previous provisional reports have been shown to be consistent with the final statistics for the year (2,3). This report presents provisional data on births and birth rates and cesarean delivery and preterm birth rates for the United States in 2020. Information on prenatal care, low birthweight, and other

health utilization and maternal and infant risk factors is presented with final birth data for 2020.

Methods

The provisional estimates shown in this report are collected via the National Vital Statistics System (4). Findings are based on all birth records received and processed by NCHS for calendar year 2020 as of February 11, 2021; these records represent nearly 100% (99.87%) of registered births occurring in 2020. Comparisons in this report are based on the final data for 2019 and earlier years (3). Data for American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands were not available as of the release of the 2020 provisional birth file. Detailed information on reporting completeness and criteria may be found elsewhere (4,5).

Hispanic origin and race are reported separately on the birth certificate. Data shown by Hispanic origin include all persons of Hispanic origin of any race. Data for non-Hispanic persons are shown separately for each single-race group. Data by race are based on the revised standards issued by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 1997 (6). The race and Hispanic-origin groups shown are: non-Hispanic, single-race white; non-Hispanic, single-race black; non-Hispanic, single-race American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN); non-Hispanic, single-race Asian; non-Hispanic, single-race Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI); and Hispanic. For brevity, text references to race omit the term “single-race” (3).

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Table 1. Births and birth rates, by age of mother: United States, final 2019 and provisional 2020

[Data for 2020 were based on a continuous file of records received from the states. Rates were per 1,000 women in specified age group. Rates for all ages were the total number of births (regardless of the age of the mother) per 1,000 women aged 15–44. Populations estimated as of July 1]

Age of mother	2020		2019	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
All ages	3,605,201	55.8	3,747,540	58.3
10–14	1,765	0.2	1,787	0.2
15–19	157,548	15.3	171,674	16.7
15–17	38,459	6.3	41,081	6.7
18–19	119,089	28.8	130,593	31.1
20–24	663,732	62.8	704,342	66.6
25–29	1,022,033	90.0	1,078,097	93.7
30–34	1,067,798	94.8	1,089,281	98.3
35–39	562,833	51.7	572,598	52.8
40–44	120,278	11.8	120,152	12.0
45–54 ¹	9,214	0.9	9,609	0.9

¹The birth rate for women in this age group was computed by relating the number of births to women aged 45 and over to women aged 45–49 because most of the births in this group were to women aged 45–49.

SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, Natality.