

Births: Final Data for 2008

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Abstract

Objectives—This report presents 2008 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 and Hispanic origin, marital status, attendant at birth, method of delivery, and infant characteristics (period of gestation, birthweight, and multiple births). Birth and fertility rates by age, live-birth order, race and Hispanic origin, and marital status also are presented. Selected data by mother's state of residence are shown, as well as data on 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 4.25 million births that occurred in 2008 are presented. Denominators for population-based rates are postcensal estimates derived from the U.S. 2000 census.

Results—A total of 4,247,694 births were registered in the United States in 2008, 2 percent less than in 2007. The general fertility rate declined 1 percent to 68.6 per 1,000. The teenage birth rate declined 2 percent to 41.5 per 1,000. Birth rates for women aged 20 to 39 years were down 1–3 percent, whereas the birth rate for women aged 40–44 rose to the highest level reported in more than 40 years. The total fertility rate declined 2 percent to 2,084.5 per 1,000 women. All measures of unmarried childbearing reached record levels—40.6 percent of births were to unmarried women in 2008. The cesarean delivery rate rose again to 32.3 percent. The preterm birth rate declined for the second consecutive year to 12.3 percent; the low birthweight rate was down very slightly. The twin birth rate increased 1 percent to 32.6 per 1,000; the triplet and higher-order multiple birth rate was stable.

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

Highlights

- A total of 4,247,694 **births** occurred to U.S. residents in 2008, a decline of 2 percent from the record number reported for 2007. Births were down among each of the largest race and Hispanic

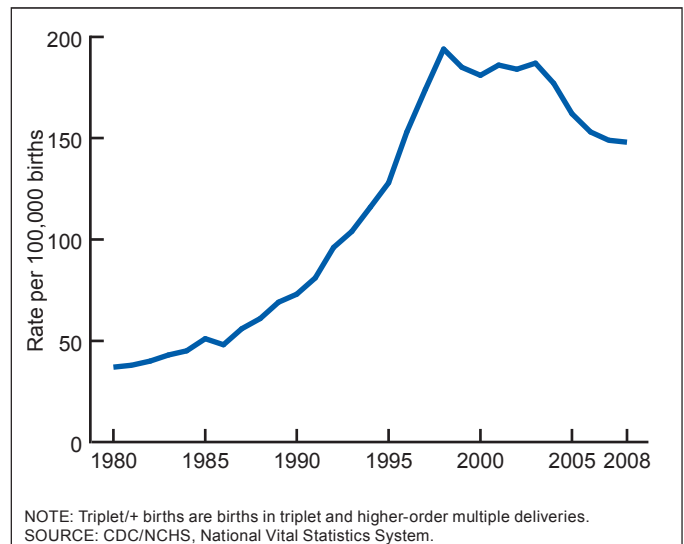


Figure 1. Triplet/+ birth rates: United States, 1980–2008

origin groups: non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, and Hispanic.

- The **general fertility rate** declined 1 percent to 68.6 births per 1,000 women aged 15–44 years. The **total fertility rate** declined 2 percent, to 2,084.5 per 1,000 women.
- **Birth rates decreased for women in all age groups** from 15 through 39 years but increased for women in their 40s in 2008 compared with 2007. The birth rate for women aged 40–44 was the highest reported in more than 40 years.
- The **birth rate for U.S. teenagers** aged 15–19 fell 2 percent in 2008, to 41.5 per 1,000, reversing a brief 2-year increase that had halted the long-term decline from 1991 through 2005. Rates declined for teenage subgroups aged 15–17 and 18–19 and for most race and Hispanic origin groups.
- **Childbearing by unmarried women** continued to rise in 2008. The number of births and the birth rate each increased 1 percent or less, while the percentage of births to unmarried women increased to 40.6 percent.

Table 3. Birth rates, by age of mother, live-birth order, and race of mother: United States, 2008

[Rates are 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	68.6	0.6	41.5	21.7	70.6	103.0	115.1	99.3	46.9	9.8	0.7
1st child	27.7	0.6	33.5	19.6	54.0	50.5	41.8	28.2	10.6	2.2	0.2
2nd child	21.6	0.0	6.8	1.9	14.0	34.2	38.1	34.3	15.3	2.8	0.2
3rd child	11.5	*	1.0	0.1	2.3	13.4	21.7	20.8	10.9	2.1	0.1
4th child	4.7	*	0.1	0.0	0.3	3.8	8.9	9.4	5.4	1.2	0.1
5th child	1.8	*	0.0	*	0.0	0.9	3.1	3.7	2.3	0.6	0.0
6th and 7th child	1.0	*	0.0	*	0.0	0.2	1.4	2.3	1.7	0.6	0.0
8th child and over	0.3	*	*	*	*	0.0	0.2	0.6	0.7	0.4	0.0
White	67.8	0.4	37.8	19.3	65.0	99.2	116.6	101.8	47.2	9.7	0.6
1st child	27.2	0.4	30.8	17.6	50.3	49.6	42.8	28.6	10.6	2.1	0.2
2nd child	21.7	0.0	6.1	1.6	12.6	33.3	39.4	35.3	15.3	2.7	0.2
3rd child	11.5	*	0.8	0.1	1.9	12.3	22.0	21.9	11.2	2.0	0.1
4th child	4.6	*	0.1	0.0	0.2	3.2	8.5	9.7	5.5	1.2	0.1
5th child	1.6	*	0.0	*	0.0	0.7	2.7	3.6	2.3	0.6	0.0
6th and 7th child	0.9	*	*	*	*	0.2	1.1	2.1	1.6	0.6	0.0
8th child and over	0.3	*	*	*	*	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.0
Black	71.9	1.4	63.4	35.2	105.6	132.3	107.2	75.6	37.0	8.9	0.6
1st child	28.5	1.4	50.1	31.4	78.1	58.7	28.9	16.2	6.9	1.7	0.1
2nd child	20.4	0.0	11.0	3.5	22.3	43.1	33.1	21.8	10.1	2.2	0.1
3rd child	12.3	*	2.0	0.3	4.5	20.5	23.9	17.5	8.7	1.9	0.1
4th child	5.9	*	0.3	0.0	0.6	7.3	12.3	9.9	5.2	1.3	0.1
5th child	2.6	*	0.0	*	0.1	2.1	5.4	5.0	2.6	0.7	0.1
6th and 7th child	1.7	*	*	*	*	0.6	3.3	3.8	2.3	0.7	0.1
8th child and over	0.5	*	*	*	*	0.0	0.5	1.2	1.1	0.4	0.0
American Indian or Alaska Native	64.6	0.9	58.4	32.5	96.6	115.6	94.4	63.8	28.8	6.4	0.4
1st child	23.2	0.9	45.3	28.8	69.5	45.4	19.7	9.5	3.8	0.7	*
2nd child	17.5	*	10.7	3.3	21.6	40.2	26.2	15.0	5.9	1.0	*
3rd child	11.5	*	2.1	0.3	4.8	20.1	23.2	14.5	6.3	1.1	*
4th child	6.4	*	0.2	*	0.6	7.6	14.3	10.9	4.7	1.0	*
5th child	3.1	*	*	*	*	1.8	6.7	6.7	3.4	0.8	*
6th and 7th child	2.2	*	*	*	*	0.5	3.9	5.6	3.2	1.1	*
8th child and over	0.7	*	*	*	*	*	0.4	1.6	1.6	0.6	*
Asian or Pacific Islander	71.3	0.2	16.2	7.9	28.4	64.4	120.1	126.8	66.8	15.2	1.2
1st child	32.7	0.2	13.3	7.2	22.3	39.0	66.1	51.9	19.6	4.0	0.4
2nd child	25.1	*	2.5	0.6	5.2	17.6	36.3	51.3	27.6	5.4	0.3
3rd child	8.8	*	0.3	*	0.8	5.6	11.5	15.8	12.6	3.1	0.2
4th child	2.9	*	0.0	*	*	1.7	4.0	4.8	4.3	1.4	0.1
5th child	1.0	*	*	*	*	0.5	1.4	1.7	1.4	0.6	0.1
6th and 7th child	0.6	*	*	*	*	0.1	0.7	1.0	0.9	0.4	0.1
8th child and over	0.2	*	*	*	*	*	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.0

0.0 Quantity more than zero but less than 0.05.

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

¹Birth rates are computed by relating births to women aged 45 and over to women aged 45–49; see "Technical Notes."

NOTES: Race and Hispanic origin are reported separately on birth certificates. Race categories are consistent with 1977 Office of Management and Budget standards. Thirty states reported multiple-race data for 2008 that were bridged to single-race categories for comparability with other states; see "Technical Notes." In this table, all women, including Hispanic women, are classified only according to their race; see "Technical Notes."