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Trends in First Births to Older Mothers, 1970-79

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Highlights

More than 115,000 births in 1979 were to mothers in their thirties having their first child. This is 73 percent more than in 1975 (67,578 births) and more than twice as many as in 1970 (54,108 births). The increase in first-birth rates to these women has been just as dramatic. For example, the rate for women in their early thirties increased 66 percent, from 7.3 first births per 1,000 women aged 30-34 years in 1970 to 12.1 in 1979.

The steady increase in first-birth rates for women in their thirties has occurred at a time when birth rates for women of other ages and higher birth orders have generally fallen. The available data show clearly that first-birth rates for women in their teens and early twenties have declined considerably in recent years, although first-birth rates are still highest for women aged 20-24 years.

The proportion of women aged 25-29 who are unmarried has nearly doubled, increasing from 14.7 percent to 28.1 percent, in the 10-year period 1969-79. It is evident that large numbers of women have postponed marriage and motherhood to an unprecedented extent since the post-depression years of the 1930's. The proportion of women aged 25-29 years who are still childless has jumped sharply. For example, among women born in 1950 (the cohort of 1950), 25 percent had had no children as of the end of 1979 (at age 30), compared with just 14 percent for comparably aged women born 10 years earlier.

The desire of many women to complete their education and become established in a career appears to be an important factor in accounting for the high levels of postponed childbearing. In 1979, nearly half of the first-time mothers aged 30-34 years had completed 4 years or more of college, compared with just 28 percent in 1970. The estimated first-birth rate for these women increased nearly 60 percent between 1970 and 1979, from 19.1 first births per 1,000 women to 30.3.

Among all first births to mothers aged 30-34 years, 7.5 percent were of low birth weight, weighing less than 2,500 grams (5 pounds, 8 ounces), compared with 6.9 percent for all births regardless of age of mother or live-birth order. The proportion of low-birth-weight infants was much lower for births to women of the same age who had completed college (6.0 percent). First-time mothers from their mid-twenties to their mid-thirties are more likely than women of other ages to seek prenatal care early in pregnancy; in 1979, nearly 90 percent of 25-34-year-old mothers of first births began prenatal care in the first trimester.

The phenomenon of delayed childbearing has received growing attention in recent years. Interest has focused on the impact of delayed childbearing on completed fertility, on the socioeconomic characteristics of women who have delayed the start of their families, and on the health implications for mother and child. This report describes trends and differentials in first births and first-birth rates to older mothers as well as the demographic characteristics of these women and the health of their newborn children. The report focuses on trends in delayed childbearing since 1970 because the most substantial changes have occurred during this period. Some figures and tables show data for earlier years in order to place the recent changes in historical perspective.

Birth rates

First-birth rates for women aged 25-39 years have increased steadily since the early 1970's (figures 1 and 2 and table 1). The largest increases have been observed for women in their early thirties with the rate increasing 73 percent, from 7.0 first births per 1,000 women aged 30-34 years in 1972 to 12.1 in 1979. The rate for women aged 35-39 years rose by 33 percent during this period, from 1.8 to 2.4, while the increase for women 25-29 years was 29 percent, from 29.4 to 37.9.

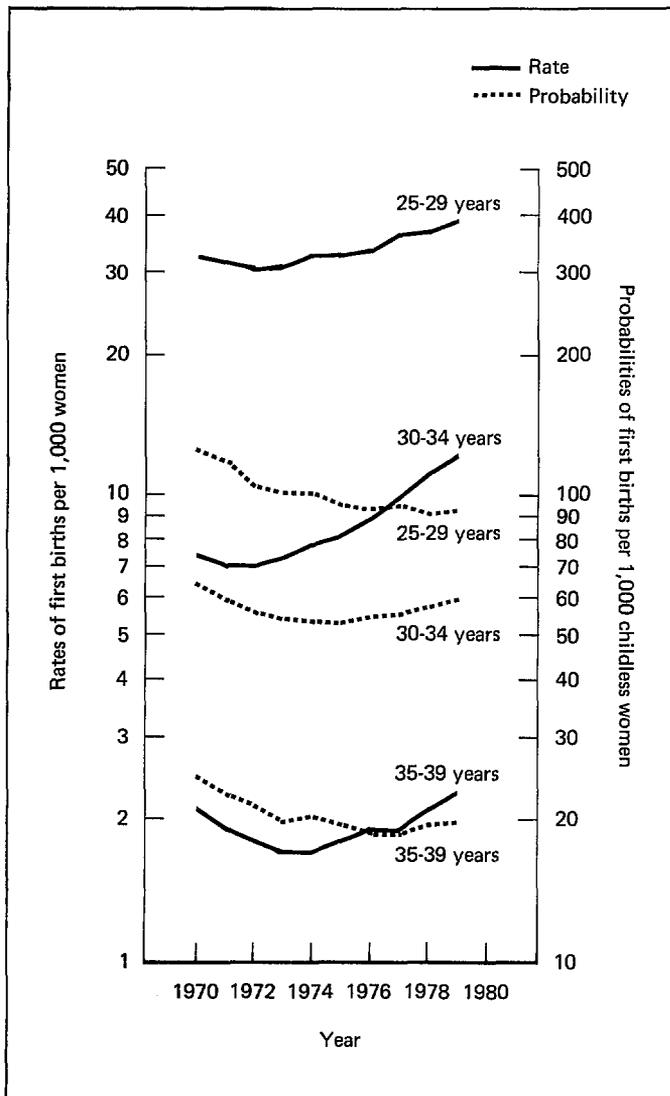


Figure 1. Rates and probabilities of first births to white women 25-39 years of age: United States, 1970-79

These increases occurred while first-birth rates for younger women aged 15-19 and 20-24 years were falling. The declines for women aged 20-24 years were substantial in the early 1970's; the rate fell from 78.2 in 1970 to 56.5 in 1973. Since 1973, the rates have ranged between 53.8 and 56.5 per 1,000. Rates for teenagers have dropped steadily during the 1970's except for a slight upturn in 1979. The rate of first births to women aged 40-44 years has been extremely low throughout the 1970's; the rate was 0.3 first births per 1,000 women in this age group for the years 1972-79.

The increases in first-birth rates for women in their thirties occurred during a period of otherwise generally declining fertility for these women (table 2). The overall reductions in their fertility are associated with substantial declines in higher order birth rates. Thus first births have grown as a proportion of total

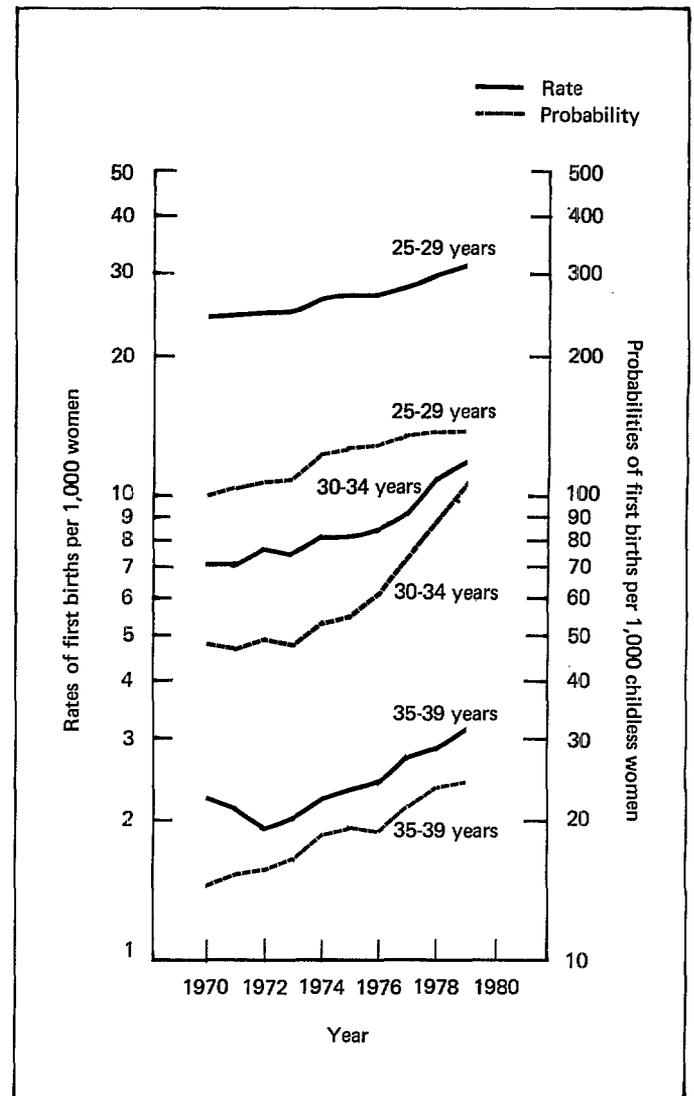


Figure 2. Rates and probabilities of first births to all other women 25-39 years of age: United States, 1970-79

births (table 3), and older mothers are accounting for an increasing share of both total and first births (tables 4 and 5). As a result of the rising first-birth rate combined with the growth in the total number of women in their thirties, the overall number of births to these women has increased since the mid-1970's (table 3).

If the birth rates are examined on a cohort basis, the pattern of delayed childbearing can be clarified. Women who were 20-24 years of age in the late 1960's and early 1970's were 25-29 in the middle 1970's and 30-34 by the late 1970's. The first-birth rates for women in their twenties declined most in the early 1970's. As a consequence, during the mid-to late 1970's, there was a growing population of women aged 25-29 and 30-34 who were still childless. Figure 3 shows that the proportion childless for white women aged 25 years, for example, increased

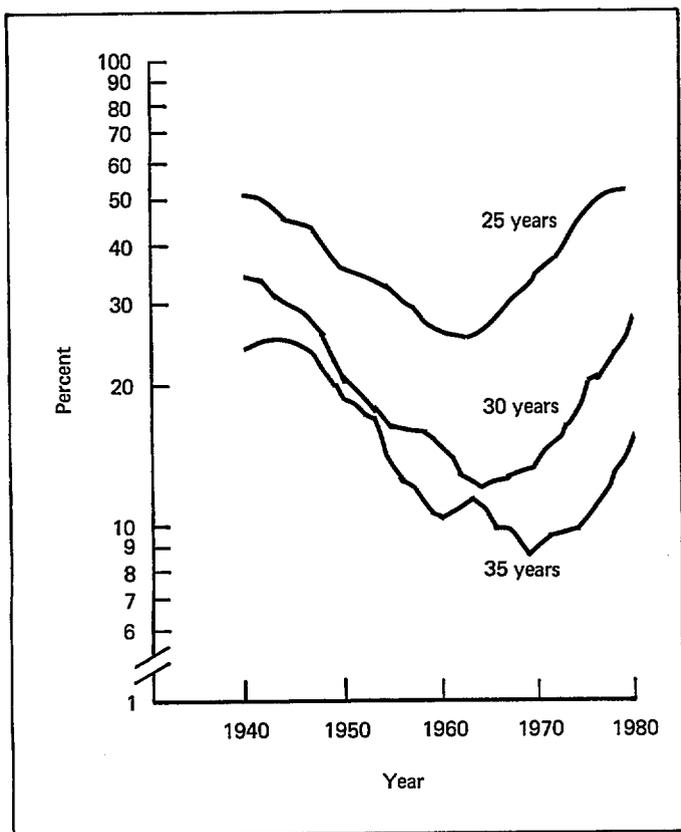


Figure 3. Percent of white women who are childless at exact ages 25, 30, and 35 years: United States, January 1, 1940-80

from 35 percent in 1970 to 52 percent in 1979; the increase in childlessness for white women at age 30 was even more striking, from 14 percent to 28 percent. Additionally, the total number of women in their early thirties increased by 43 percent from 1970 through 1979. This increase was more than that for any other age group, reflecting the aging of the large number of babies born in the years immediately following World War II. In the 1970's, therefore, the population of women aged 30-34 years was growing rapidly while the proportion of these women who were childless was increasing at an even faster pace. To put it another way, more women in their early thirties were more likely to be "at risk" of having their first birth than had been the case at any other time.

Figures 1 and 2 show first-birth rates and probabilities of first births. The first-birth rate is the number of first births per 1,000 women in the specified age-race group. Thus first births are related to *all* women regardless of their parity (the number of children they have had). The first-birth probability is the number of first births per 1,000 zero-parity (childless) women in the specified age-race group. It is a refinement of the first-birth rate in that it relates first births only to those women "at risk" of having a *first* birth.

An examination of figures 1-5 shows that there are considerable differences between white and all other women in the trends in birth probabilities and in the proportions childless, even though the trends in first-birth rates and the proportions unmarried are about the same. Thus the factors associated with the increases in the first-birth rates differ for the two racial groups. The discussion that follows therefore deals with the two populations separately. (Although the birth rates are available for white and black women, the birth probabilities and proportions childless are available only for white women and women of all other races combined.)

Birth rates, denoted in figure 1 by the solid lines, have risen for white women in the age groups 25-29, 30-34, and 35-39 years, with the largest increases for women 30-34 years. In addition, for white women in their thirties, there was a substantial increase in the proportion childless, the women "at risk" of having a first birth (figure 3). For example, in 1970 only 14.0 percent of white women aged 30 were childless and therefore at risk of having a first birth; by 1979, 25.9 percent of white women aged 30 were childless. Given these facts, it is clear that first-birth rates were bound to increase for white women in their thirties as long as the probabilities of first births for these women did not decline substantially.

Among white women aged 30-34 years, the first-birth probability declined from 1970 to 1975 and increased slightly thereafter through 1979 (figure 1). The probability in 1979, however, was not quite as high as it was in 1970. In other words, the proportion of eligible women who had a first birth in 1979 was lower than it was in 1970. Therefore, the increase in the first-birth rate for white women aged 30-34 years was due entirely to the increase in the proportion of women who were childless. If the first-birth probability for these women had increased uniformly during this period, the rate and number of first births would have risen even more.

In addition to the increase in the proportion of white women at risk of having a first birth at age 30, there was a large increase in the number of women in their early thirties. For example, the number of white women aged 30-34 years increased 43 percent from 5,042,368 in 1970 to 7,197,000 in 1979. The number of white women aged 20-24 years increased only 18 percent during this period (from 7,341,007 to 8,689,000). In summary, increases in the rates and numbers of first births for white women in their thirties are the result of the increases in the proportion of women at risk of having a first birth and the growth in the number of women in that age group.

First-birth rates and probabilities for women of all other races tell a different story. Figure 2 shows that the first-birth rates for all other women increased considerably, as did the rates for white women. How-

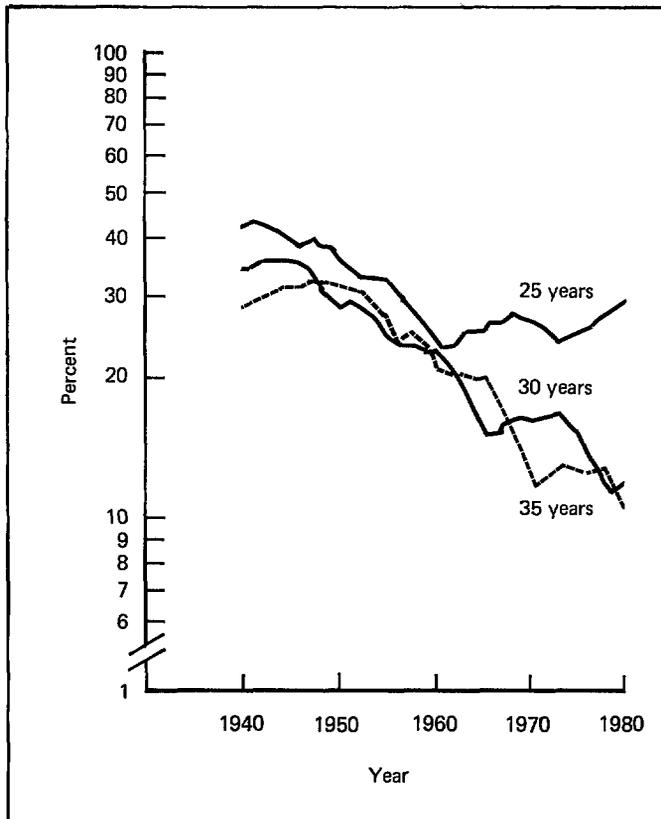


Figure 4. Percent of all other women who are childless at exact ages 25, 30, and 35 years: United States, January 1, 1940-80

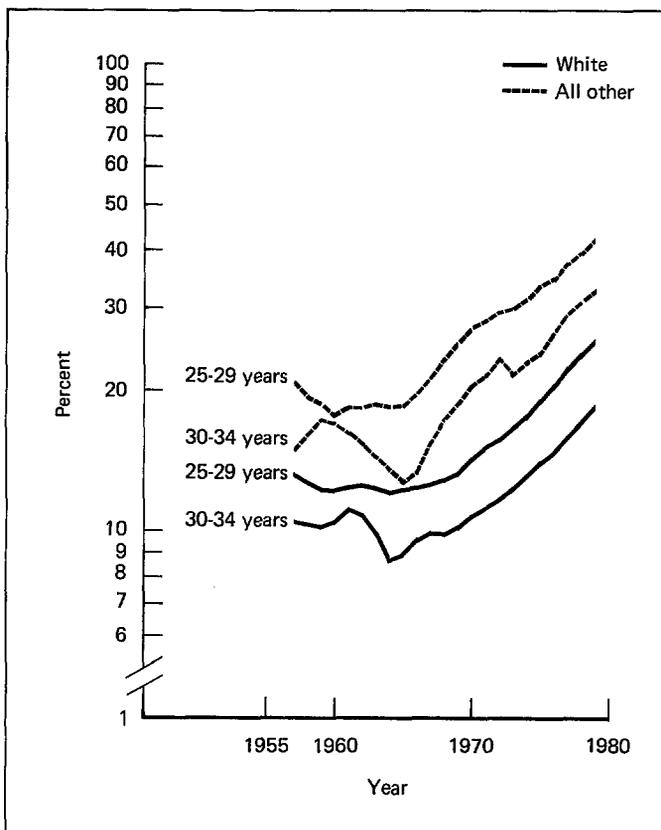


Figure 5. Percent of women unmarried at 25-29 and 30-34 years of age, by race: United States, 1957-79

ever, the first-birth probabilities for these women also increased sharply in contrast to the relative stability in the probabilities for white women. The probability for all other women aged 30-34 years increased at an even faster pace than did the first-birth rate. This reflects the fact that the incidence of childlessness among all other women 30 years of age and over declined during the 1970's (figure 4), also in contrast to the pattern shown for white women. For example, the proportion of women childless at age 30 years declined from 16.2 percent in 1970 to 11.8 percent in 1979. Thus relatively fewer women of all other races were at risk of having their first child while in their thirties.

Although the proportion of women at risk declined, the total number of all other women in their early thirties increased by 47 percent, from 792,278 in 1970 to 1,163,000 in 1979. The first-birth rate for these women increased, therefore, because of the sizable increase in the probability of first birth among eligible (zero-parity) women and the increase in the number of women. That is, the increase in first-birth probability among eligible women combined with the growth in the number of women was more than enough to compensate for the decline in the proportion of childless women.

Educational attainment of mother

Mothers giving birth to their first child at ages 25-39 years in 1979 were much better educated than were their counterparts in 1970 (table 6). The proportion of these mothers with college degrees in 1979 increased dramatically compared with 1970, with the largest gains measured for the oldest women in this group. Among first-time mothers 30-34 years of age, 47.8 percent had completed 4 years or more of college in 1979 compared with 28.3 percent in 1970. The proportion of college graduates among 35-39-year-old mothers increased from 22.0 percent in 1970 to 40.3 percent in 1979. Improvements were noted for both white and black mothers. While white women gained more in the proportion with 4 years or more of college, the increases were nearly the same for both white and black women when comparing women with 1 year or more of college.

The educational attainment of first-time mothers definitely improved during the 1970's. The question that arises is: Have first-birth rates for well-educated women risen as well or is the improved educational attainment of older first-time mothers simply a reflection of the generally improved educational attainment of the population since 1970? Estimated first-birth rates by age and educational attainment of mother are shown in table 7. It is evident that the first-birth rates for women 30-34 years of age in-

creased most for the best-educated women. The rate increased 59 percent, from 19.1 births per 1,000 women 30-34 years of age with 4 years or more of college in 1970 to 30.3 in 1979. The rate for women of the same age group with 1-3 years of college increased about 40 percent during this period.

By contrast, first-birth rates for women 25-29 years of age indicate that the best-educated among them are continuing to postpone motherhood. The rate for women with 4 years or more of college declined 14 percent, from 80.3 in 1970 to 69.1 in 1979. The rate for women aged 25-29 years with 1-3 years of college was virtually unchanged, while the rate for high school graduates in this age group increased 20 percent. The pattern of delayed childbearing is clearly shown by these rates: Well-educated women in their late twenties are continuing to delay motherhood while their counterparts in their thirties are having the first births they had postponed.

Low birth weight

In general, the incidence of low birth weight declines with age of mother, with births to mothers in their late twenties and early thirties most favored, and then increases thereafter. For example, in 1979, the percent of infants regardless of birth order weighing less than 2,500 grams (5 pounds, 8 ounces) was lowest for births to mothers 25-29 and 30-34 years of age, 5.9 percent, compared with the overall rate of low birth weight of 6.9 percent (table 8). When the comparison is restricted to first births, the ideal age of mother is 25-29 years. In 1979, 6.2 percent of first births to mothers in this age group were of low birth weight, compared with 7.4 percent for first births to women 30-34 years and 9.8 percent for first births to women 35-39 years (table 9).

There has been a long-term decline in the incidence of low birth weight by race, age of mother, and live-birth order. Among first births, the levels of low birth weight have declined most for babies born to women in their thirties. The overall decline in the percent low birth weight reflects not only the declines in the incidence for the subgroups but also a shift in the distribution of births to age of mother—live-birth order—educational attainment groups with lower proportions of low birth weight. This shift in the distribution accounts for about half of the decline in low birth weight between 1970 and 1979.

In previous years, great concern was expressed about the health aspects for both mother and child of giving birth for the first time after a woman's thir-

tieth birthday. In fact, as has been shown, these births were relatively few as recently as 1970. Because delayed childbearing was so uncommon, many of these women who did have their first child at older ages probably did not do so by choice but rather after many years of difficulty in conceiving and/or carrying a baby to term.

During the 1970's, an increasing proportion of women chose to delay motherhood and a growing percentage of those postponing childbearing were highly educated. There is evidence that the improved educational attainment of the older first-time mothers is associated with the sharper decline in the incidence of low birth weight among infants born to these mothers in comparison with other age groups. Data in table 10 show for first births in 1979 the proportions of low-birth-weight infants classified by educational attainment for mothers 20-39 years of age. The low-birth-weight levels were lowest for mothers with 16 or more years of schooling, 20-30 percent below the averages for all women in these age groups.

Prenatal care

To the extent that prenatal care initiated in the early months of pregnancy contributes to a lower risk of unfavorable pregnancy outcome, women giving birth for the first time at ages 25-39 years were much more likely to benefit than were women of other ages. Nearly 90 percent of first-time mothers aged 25-34 years in 1979 sought prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy, compared with 57 percent for teenagers and 80 percent for women 20-24 years old (table 11).

It has been shown elsewhere¹ that receipt of prenatal care is highly correlated with educational attainment of the mother. Therefore, it is not surprising that older first-time mothers, better educated than their younger counterparts, seek prenatal care very early in their pregnancies. Although women in their thirties face a higher risk of bearing infants with certain congenital anomalies than younger women do, the data on birth weight and prenatal care described here tend to suggest that delayed childbearing, because it is associated principally with well-educated women, carries fewer health risks now than perhaps was true a decade or more ago.

¹National Center for Health Statistics, S. Taffel: Prenatal care, United States, 1969-1975. *Vital and Health Statistics*. Series 21-No. 33, DHEW Pub. No. (PHS) 78-1911. Public Health Service, Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, Sept. 1978.

Table 1. Number and rate of first births to women 15-44 years of age, by race: United States, 1960 and 1970-79

Age of mother and race	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974	1973	1972	1971	1970	1960 ¹
Number											
15-19 years											
All races	425,282	418,711	430,622	431,219	451,586	462,107	454,684	473,260	485,158	498,388	396,664
White	307,075	302,975	312,280	314,341	329,151	337,677	334,933	347,954	359,646	374,042	323,054
All other	118,207	115,736	118,342	116,878	122,435	124,430	119,751	125,306	125,512	124,346	73,610
Black	108,397	106,299	109,195	107,996	114,000	116,007	111,598	117,629	118,134	117,228	68,014
20-24 years											
All races	576,379	545,778	544,194	517,376	516,528	517,467	492,607	531,945	613,822	652,530	471,036
White	485,865	461,890	463,468	442,079	442,849	445,835	425,532	460,291	536,746	575,594	426,768
All other	90,514	83,888	80,726	75,297	73,679	71,632	67,075	71,654	77,076	76,936	44,268
Black	76,272	70,499	68,691	63,857	63,004	61,044	56,746	61,085	66,454	67,092	40,955
25-29 years											
All races	348,493	322,587	310,507	288,086	269,688	257,569	226,685	217,992	210,852	212,102	141,422
White	306,885	284,299	275,569	255,774	239,412	229,962	203,644	195,748	189,442	190,860	128,356
All other	41,608	38,288	34,938	32,312	30,276	27,607	23,041	22,244	21,410	21,242	13,066
Black	27,975	25,298	23,804	22,000	20,297	18,385	15,104	14,844	14,556	15,060	12,063
30-34 years											
All races	100,435	88,091	76,485	63,396	56,677	52,897	46,434	42,863	41,822	42,404	50,410
White	86,621	76,270	66,319	55,023	48,794	45,481	40,346	36,798	36,152	36,902	45,370
All other	13,814	11,821	10,166	8,373	7,883	7,416	6,088	6,065	5,670	5,502	5,040
Black	8,032	6,937	6,203	5,145	4,895	4,603	3,727	3,755	3,622	3,822	4,652
35-39 years											
All races	16,462	14,290	12,766	11,654	10,901	10,433	9,639	9,954	10,640	11,704	19,712
White	13,609	11,784	10,494	9,688	9,056	8,722	8,158	8,523	9,080	10,078	17,704
All other	2,853	2,506	2,272	1,966	1,845	1,711	1,481	1,431	1,560	1,626	2,008
Black	1,771	1,542	1,467	1,274	1,169	1,067	921	893	1,060	1,162	1,859
40-44 years											
All races	1,904	1,751	1,674	1,666	1,671	1,782	1,798	1,998	2,286	2,442	4,270
White	1,579	1,429	1,362	1,391	1,361	1,498	1,517	1,763	1,988	2,152	3,842
All other	325	322	312	275	310	284	281	235	298	290	428
Black	202	201	189	178	214	175	184	154	210	220	401
Rate ²											
15-19 years											
All races	41.8	40.9	42.0	42.0	44.4	46.0	47.6	49.4	50.8	53.7	61.4
White	35.8	35.1	36.0	36.1	38.2	39.5	40.8	42.3	44.0	47.1	57.2
All other	72.6	71.5	74.3	74.1	78.9	82.4	86.8	90.6	91.2	93.1	91.1
Black	75.6	74.4	77.4	77.0	82.3	85.6	90.1	94.3	94.8	97.6	90.0
20-24 years											
All races	56.4	54.3	55.2	53.8	54.8	56.5	56.5	61.0	69.2	78.2	87.9
White	56.2	54.2	55.3	53.9	55.0	56.7	56.5	61.1	69.7	79.4	91.5
All other	57.6	55.0	54.9	53.3	53.8	54.6	56.2	60.6	65.6	70.0	63.5
Black	56.2	53.5	53.9	52.0	52.7	53.2	54.5	58.9	64.0	69.8	63.8
25-29 years											
All races	37.9	35.9	35.2	32.5	32.1	32.0	30.1	29.4	30.3	31.2	26.6
White	39.1	37.0	36.4	33.5	32.9	32.9	30.9	30.2	31.3	32.3	27.7
All other	30.7	29.3	27.8	26.7	26.8	26.2	24.5	24.2	24.1	24.0	18.8
Black	24.7	23.2	22.7	21.7	21.5	20.6	19.0	18.8	18.8	19.8	19.0
30-34 years											
All races	12.1	11.1	9.9	8.9	8.1	7.8	7.3	7.0	7.0	7.3	8.6
White	12.1	11.1	9.9	8.9	8.1	7.8	7.3	7.0	7.0	7.4	8.9
All other	11.9	10.9	9.9	8.6	8.3	8.2	7.3	7.4	7.0	7.0	6.9
Black	8.5	7.8	7.3	6.4	6.1	6.0	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.6	7.0

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 1. Number and rate of first births to women 15-44 years of age, by race: United States, 1960 and 1970-79—Con.

Age of mother and race	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974	1973	1972	1971	1970	1960 ¹
35-39 years Rate²											
All races	2.4	2.2	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.1	3.2
White	2.3	2.1	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.1	3.3
All other	3.1	2.8	2.7	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.0	1.9	2.1	2.2	2.9
Black	2.3	2.0	2.0	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.6	1.8	2.9
40-44 years											
All races	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.8
White	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.8
All other	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.7
Black	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.7

¹Births and birth rates for black women estimated from age-of-mother—live-birth-order distribution of births of all other races.

²First births per 1,000 women in specified group.

Table 2. Birth rates for women 25-44 years of age, by race: United States, 1960 and 1970-79

Age of mother and race	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974	1973	1972	1971	1970	1960 ¹
25-29 years											
All races	115.6	112.0	114.2	108.8	110.3	113.3	113.6	118.7	134.8	145.1	197.4
White	114.6	111.1	113.8	108.4	110.0	113.5	113.7	118.4	134.6	145.9	194.9
All other	121.2	117.3	116.5	111.6	112.1	112.3	113.3	120.9	135.7	140.1	214.6
Black	114.2	110.6	111.1	105.5	105.4	104.8	105.9	113.9	129.0	136.3	216.9
30-34 years											
All races	61.8	59.1	57.5	54.5	53.1	54.4	56.1	60.2	67.6	73.3	112.7
White	60.5	57.9	56.3	53.5	52.1	53.5	54.9	58.8	65.7	71.9	109.6
All other	70.3	66.7	64.8	60.7	59.7	60.7	63.9	69.4	79.6	82.5	135.6
Black	62.4	59.6	58.8	54.7	54.1	54.8	58.6	64.5	75.1	79.6	137.0
35-39 years											
All races	19.4	18.9	19.2	19.0	19.4	20.2	22.0	24.8	28.7	31.7	56.2
White	18.2	17.6	17.8	17.7	18.1	18.9	20.7	23.3	26.9	30.0	54.0
All other	27.5	27.0	27.5	27.0	27.6	28.9	31.0	34.9	40.2	42.2	74.2
Black	24.4	24.0	25.1	24.6	25.4	26.8	29.2	33.2	38.8	41.9	74.0
40-44 years											
All races	3.9	3.9	4.2	4.3	4.6	4.8	5.4	6.2	7.1	8.1	15.5
White	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.8	4.1	4.4	4.9	5.6	6.4	7.5	14.7
All other	6.5	6.5	6.9	7.0	7.6	7.6	8.7	10.0	11.7	12.6	22.0
Black	6.1	6.0	6.6	6.8	7.5	7.5	8.6	9.8	11.6	12.5	21.9

¹Rates for black women are estimated from age distribution of births of all other races.

Table 3. Number of live births to women 25-39 years of age and percent distribution by live-birth order, according to race: United States, 1960 and 1970-79

[Live-birth order refers to number of children born alive to mother. Figures for live-birth order not stated are distributed]

Age of mother, live-birth order, and race	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974	1973	1972	1971	1970	1960 ¹
25-29 years											
All races²											
	Number										
Live births	1,069,246	1,015,183	1,016,231	972,130	936,786	923,318	888,326	900,392	946,892	994,904	1,092,816
	Percent distribution										
All birth orders	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
First child	32.8	32.1	30.8	29.9	29.1	28.3	26.5	24.8	22.5	21.5	13.4
Second child	37.6	37.7	38.2	38.4	38.6	38.6	37.7	35.6	32.9	31.9	24.6
Third child	19.3	19.6	20.0	20.1	20.0	20.0	20.7	21.9	23.6	24.2	25.8
Fourth child	6.8	7.0	7.1	7.4	7.7	8.0	9.0	10.2	11.8	12.3	17.2
Fifth child or more . .	3.5	3.7	3.9	4.2	4.7	5.1	6.1	7.5	9.2	10.1	19.1
White											
	Number										
Live births	903,852	860,209	868,411	835,398	808,906	803,169	774,303	784,715	824,362	869,746	942,112
	Percent distribution										
All birth orders	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
First child	34.2	33.3	32.0	30.9	29.9	29.0	27.2	25.5	23.2	22.1	14.1
Second child	38.5	38.6	39.1	39.5	39.8	39.9	39.0	37.0	34.3	33.2	26.3
Third child	18.8	19.2	19.6	19.8	19.8	19.9	20.7	22.1	24.1	24.8	27.3
Fourth child	6.0	6.2	6.4	6.6	7.0	7.3	8.3	9.6	11.3	11.9	17.3
Fifth child or more . .	2.6	2.7	2.9	3.2	3.6	3.9	4.7	5.8	7.2	7.9	14.9
Black											
	Number										
Live births	130,145	121,613	117,685	108,124	100,966	95,138	91,049	93,957	101,236	105,084	137,918
	Percent distribution										
All birth orders	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
First child	21.6	21.0	20.5	20.6	20.4	19.6	17.9	16.5	14.6	14.5	8.7
Second child	32.8	32.5	32.5	31.4	30.2	29.1	26.9	24.7	22.7	21.5	13.8
Third child	24.0	23.6	23.6	23.3	22.4	22.1	22.0	21.1	21.3	20.1	16.4
Fourth child	12.2	12.8	12.6	12.9	13.7	14.0	14.8	15.6	16.1	16.2	16.7
Fifth child or more . .	9.3	10.1	10.8	11.8	13.3	15.2	18.3	22.0	25.3	27.7	44.3
30-34 years											
All races²											
	Number										
Live births	516,999	474,318	446,939	391,896	375,500	372,907	369,976	375,001	406,374	427,806	687,722
	Percent distribution										
All birth orders	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
First child	19.5	18.7	17.2	16.3	15.2	14.3	13.0	11.7	10.4	10.0	7.6
Second child	32.9	32.1	30.9	29.6	28.4	27.2	25.0	22.7	19.8	18.4	15.4
Third child	25.2	25.4	25.8	25.3	25.0	24.7	24.3	23.6	23.4	23.5	22.3
Fourth child	12.1	12.6	13.5	14.1	14.9	15.6	16.6	17.7	18.6	19.0	19.7
Fifth child or more . .	10.3	11.1	12.6	14.7	16.4	18.2	21.2	24.4	27.7	29.2	35.0
White											
	Number										
Live births	435,247	401,221	379,589	332,359	318,149	317,017	313,397	316,128	341,504	362,408	588,402
	Percent distribution										
All birth orders	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
First child	20.0	19.2	17.6	16.7	15.5	14.5	13.3	11.9	10.7	10.3	8.0
Second child	33.6	32.8	31.7	30.3	29.2	27.9	25.8	23.5	20.5	19.0	16.5
Third child	25.6	25.9	26.5	26.1	25.9	25.7	25.4	24.7	24.7	24.8	24.2
Fourth child	11.8	12.4	13.3	14.0	15.1	15.8	16.9	18.3	19.4	19.8	20.9
Fifth child or more . .	8.9	9.7	10.9	12.9	14.3	16.0	18.6	21.6	24.6	26.0	30.3

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 3. Number of live births to women 25-39 years of age and percent distribution by live-birth order, according to race: United States, 1960 and 1970-79—Con.

[Live-birth order refers to number of children born alive to mother. Figures for live-birth order not stated are distributed]

Age of mother, live-birth order, and race	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974	1973	1972	1971	1970	1960 ¹
30-34 years—Con.											
Black											
	Number										
Live births	59,136	53,491	50,468	44,596	43,567	42,900	44,566	47,316	53,312	54,484	90,942
	Percent distribution										
All birth orders	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
First child	13.7	13.1	12.4	11.7	11.4	10.9	9.0	8.3	6.9	7.1	5.1
Second child	26.2	25.0	23.5	22.5	20.7	19.3	17.0	15.4	13.5	12.7	9.1
Third child	24.1	23.4	22.6	21.0	19.9	18.7	17.7	16.5	15.9	14.6	11.5
Fourth child	15.5	15.8	16.0	15.9	15.5	15.6	15.6	15.0	15.1	14.9	12.6
Fifth child or more . .	20.5	22.8	25.5	28.9	32.6	35.5	40.7	44.9	48.7	50.7	61.8
35-39 years											
All races²											
	Number										
Live births	135,096	126,196	120,900	115,662	115,409	118,115	126,789	141,328	162,564	180,244	359,908
	Percent distribution										
All birth orders	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
First child	12.3	11.4	10.6	10.2	9.5	8.9	7.8	7.2	6.6	6.5	5.7
Second child	20.2	19.3	17.9	17.0	15.7	14.8	13.7	12.5	11.2	10.9	11.1
Third child	22.3	21.5	20.5	19.5	18.6	17.7	17.1	16.6	15.9	16.1	17.7
Fourth child	16.8	17.0	17.1	16.9	17.0	17.2	17.1	17.2	17.4	17.5	18.4
Fifth child or more . .	28.5	30.7	33.8	36.5	39.3	41.4	44.2	46.5	48.9	48.9	47.1
White											
	Number										
Live births	109,292	101,880	97,251	93,229	93,266	95,575	102,967	114,765	132,364	148,258	307,426
	Percent distribution										
All birth orders	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
First child	12.5	11.7	10.9	10.5	9.8	9.2	8.1	7.5	6.9	6.8	6.0
Second child	20.4	19.7	18.3	17.3	16.0	15.2	14.4	12.9	11.8	11.4	12.0
Third child	22.9	22.3	21.3	20.3	19.4	18.6	18.0	17.6	17.0	17.3	19.2
Fourth child	17.4	17.6	17.8	17.7	17.9	18.2	18.1	18.4	18.7	18.7	19.9
Fifth child or more . .	26.7	28.8	31.7	34.2	36.9	38.8	41.4	43.5	45.6	45.7	43.0
Black											
	Number										
Live births	19,264	18,340	18,467	17,514	17,579	18,250	19,652	22,196	25,610	27,420	48,181
	Percent distribution										
All birth orders	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
First child	9.2	8.5	8.0	7.4	6.7	5.9	5.0	4.2	4.2	4.3	3.9
Second child	16.4	14.9	14.0	12.9	11.7	11.2	9.0	8.9	7.3	7.5	6.4
Third child	18.4	17.2	16.1	14.9	13.9	12.5	11.8	11.1	10.0	9.8	8.9
Fourth child	15.7	15.1	14.9	14.0	13.4	12.8	12.6	11.9	11.3	11.2	10.4
Fifth child or more . .	40.4	44.3	47.0	51.0	54.3	57.6	61.6	63.9	67.2	67.3	70.5

¹Births for black women by age of mother and live-birth order estimated from distributions for all other births.

²Includes races other than white and black.

Table 4. Number of live births and percent distribution by age of mother, according to race: United States, 1960 and 1970-79

Age of mother and race	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974	1973	1972	1971	1970	1960
All races¹											
	Number										
Live births	3,494,398	3,333,279	3,326,632	3,167,788	3,144,198	3,159,958	3,136,965	3,258,411	3,555,970	3,731,386	4,257,850
	Percent distribution										
All ages	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 15 years	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2
15-19 years	15.7	16.3	16.8	17.6	18.5	18.8	19.3	18.9	17.7	17.3	13.8
20-24 years	34.0	34.2	34.5	34.5	34.8	35.1	35.1	36.0	38.1	38.0	33.5
25-29 years	30.6	30.5	30.5	30.7	29.8	29.2	28.3	27.6	26.6	26.7	25.7
30-34 years	14.8	14.2	13.4	12.4	11.9	11.8	11.8	11.5	11.4	11.5	16.2
35-39 years	3.9	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.7	4.0	4.3	4.6	4.8	8.5
40 years and over	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.3
White											
	Number										
Live births	2,808,420	2,681,116	2,691,070	2,567,614	2,551,996	2,575,792	2,551,030	2,655,558	2,919,746	3,091,264	3,600,744
	Percent distribution										
All ages	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 15 years	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
15-19 years	13.7	14.2	14.6	15.3	16.1	16.3	16.7	16.3	15.3	15.0	12.7
20-24 years	33.9	34.1	34.5	34.6	35.1	35.4	35.4	36.5	38.9	38.8	33.9
25-29 years	32.2	32.1	32.3	32.5	31.7	31.2	30.4	29.5	28.2	28.1	26.2
30-34 years	15.5	15.0	14.1	12.9	12.5	12.3	12.3	11.9	11.7	11.7	16.3
35-39 years	3.9	3.8	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.7	4.0	4.3	4.5	4.8	8.5
40 years and over	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.4	2.3
Black²											
	Number										
Live births	577,855	551,540	544,221	514,479	511,581	507,162	512,597	531,329	564,960	572,362	602,264
	Percent distribution										
All ages	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 15 years	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.3	0.7
15-19 years	26.4	27.4	28.5	29.9	31.5	32.4	32.9	32.4	30.4	30.0	19.6
20-24 years	35.7	35.7	35.1	34.8	34.4	34.3	34.1	34.1	35.0	34.5	31.5
25-29 years	22.5	22.0	21.6	21.0	19.7	18.8	17.8	17.7	17.9	18.4	22.9
30-34 years	10.2	9.7	9.3	8.7	8.5	8.5	8.7	8.9	9.4	9.5	15.1
35-39 years	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.6	3.8	4.2	4.5	4.8	8.0
40 years and over	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	2.2

¹Includes races other than white and black.

²Total births for 1960 is actual number; percent distribution by age of mother for black births in 1960 is assumed to be same as that for all other births.

Table 5. Number of first births and percent distribution by age of mother, according to race: United States, 1960 and 1970-79

Age of mother and race	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974	1973	1972	1971	1970	1960 ¹
All races²											
	Number										
First births	1,479,260	1,401,491	1,387,143	1,324,811	1,319,126	1,314,194	1,243,358	1,289,257	1,375,668	1,430,680	1,090,152
	Percent distribution										
All ages	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 20 years	29.4	30.6	31.8	33.4	35.1	36.1	37.5	37.6	36.1	35.6	37.0
20-24 years	39.0	38.9	39.2	39.1	39.2	39.4	39.6	41.3	44.6	45.6	43.2
25-29 years	23.6	23.0	22.4	21.7	20.4	19.6	18.2	16.9	15.3	14.8	13.0
30-34 years	6.8	6.3	5.5	4.8	4.3	4.0	3.7	3.3	3.0	3.0	4.6
35 years and over	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	2.2
White											
	Number										
First births	1,205,958	1,143,073	1,134,062	1,083,218	1,075,597	1,074,068	1,018,663	1,055,442	1,137,080	1,193,712	947,692
	Percent distribution										
All ages	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 20 years	25.8	26.9	27.9	29.5	31.1	31.9	33.3	33.4	32.0	31.7	34.3
20-24 years	40.3	40.4	40.9	40.8	41.2	41.5	41.8	43.6	47.2	48.2	45.0
25-29 years	25.4	24.9	24.3	23.6	22.3	21.4	20.0	18.5	16.7	16.0	13.5
30-34 years	7.2	6.7	5.8	5.1	4.5	4.2	4.0	3.5	3.2	3.1	4.8
35 years and over	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.3
Black											
	Number										
First births	228,473	216,446	215,676	206,729	210,432	208,151	195,083	205,090	210,928	211,468	131,702
	Percent distribution										
All ages	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 20 years	50.0	51.7	53.5	55.3	57.4	59.0	60.7	60.6	59.3	58.7	54.6
20-24 years	33.4	32.6	31.8	30.9	29.9	29.3	29.1	29.8	31.5	31.7	31.1
25-29 years	12.2	11.7	11.0	10.6	9.6	8.8	7.7	7.2	6.9	7.1	9.2
30-34 years	3.5	3.2	2.9	2.5	2.3	2.2	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.8	3.5
35 years and over	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.7	1.7

¹Births for black women by age of mother and live-birth order estimated from distributions of births for all other races.

²Includes races other than white and black.

Table 6. Number of first births to women 25-39 years of age and percent distribution by educational attainment of mother, according to race: Total reporting area, 1970, 1975, and 1979

[Figures for educational attainment not stated are included in totals but excluded from percent distribution]

Age of mother and years of school completed by mother	All races ¹			White			Black		
	1979 ²	1975 ³	1970 ⁴	1979 ²	1975 ³	1970 ⁴	1979 ²	1975 ³	1970 ⁴
25-29 years									
First births	276,754	195,284	137,688	245,502	173,778	124,720	23,093	15,545	9,532
Percent distribution									
All years of school completed	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
0-11 years	3.9	5.3	8.4	3.4	4.8	7.7	7.3	9.9	15.9
12 years	33.4	34.7	38.9	33.4	34.5	39.0	37.5	40.8	43.5
13-15 years	25.6	22.7	19.2	25.6	22.8	19.4	26.4	22.4	17.9
16 years or more	37.1	37.3	33.5	37.6	37.9	33.9	28.8	26.8	22.7
30-34 years									
First births	77,537	40,314	27,226	67,590	34,691	23,920	6,600	3,843	2,470
Percent distribution									
All years of school completed	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
0-11 years	4.5	8.7	14.0	3.9	8.0	13.3	8.7	15.8	21.6
12 years	27.6	33.3	41.8	27.1	33.3	42.3	35.8	39.1	41.8
13-15 years	20.1	18.0	15.9	20.0	18.3	16.2	22.1	17.2	13.8
16 years or more	47.8	39.9	28.3	48.9	40.3	28.2	33.4	28.0	22.8
35-39 years									
First births	12,562	7,846	7,638	10,441	6,531	6,606	1,460	913	790
Percent distribution									
All years of school completed	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
0-11 years	9.7	14.8	21.7	9.1	14.1	20.5	15.0	20.9	32.3
12 years	33.0	38.6	42.8	32.9	39.3	43.6	39.0	39.4	40.3
13-15 years	17.0	15.1	13.5	17.0	15.4	14.0	17.2	13.9	11.2
16 years or more	40.3	31.5	22.0	41.0	31.3	22.0	28.8	25.8	16.3

¹Includes races other than white and black.

²46 States and the District of Columbia in reporting area.

³42 States and the District of Columbia in reporting area.

⁴38 States in reporting area.

Table 7. Estimated first-birth rates by age and educational attainment of mother: United States, 1970, 1975, and 1979

[Rates are first births per 1,000 women in specified age and educational attainment group. See "Technical notes"]

Age of mother	Years of school completed by mother											
	0-11 years			12 years			13-15 years			16 years or more		
	1979	1975	1970	1979	1975	1970	1979	1975	1970	1979	1975	1970
20-24 years	42.2	40.0	44.9	71.8	69.9	93.0	47.1	45.1	73.3	39.6	40.1	81.1
25-29 years	9.8	9.4	10.0	30.4	24.5	25.3	43.5	42.2	43.3	69.1	64.4	80.3
30-34 years	3.1	3.1	3.7	7.6	5.9	6.3	13.4	9.8	9.6	30.3	20.1	19.1
35-39 years	1.1	1.0	1.3	1.7	1.5	1.9	2.6	2.1	2.7	6.0	4.8	5.0

Table 8. Percent of live births with low birth weight, by age of mother and race: United States, 1970, 1975, and 1979

[Low birth weight is defined as less than 2,500 grams (5 lb. 8 oz.) for 1979 and 2,500 grams or less for prior years]

Age of mother	All races ¹			White			Black		
	1979	1975	1970	1979	1975	1970	1979	1975	1970
All ages	6.9	7.4	7.9	5.8	6.3	6.8	12.6	13.1	13.9
Under 15 years	14.5	14.1	16.6	11.8	11.3	12.5	16.7	16.2	19.1
15-19 years	9.6	10.0	10.5	7.9	8.1	8.6	14.2	14.8	15.7
20-24 years	7.0	7.1	7.4	5.8	6.0	6.4	12.5	12.8	13.4
25-29 years	5.9	6.1	6.9	5.1	5.4	6.2	11.2	11.2	12.2
30-34 years	5.9	6.8	7.5	5.2	6.1	6.7	11.3	11.8	12.3
35-39 years	7.4	8.2	8.7	6.5	7.3	7.8	12.2	13.2	13.4
40 years and over	8.6	9.5	9.2	7.6	8.7	8.4	12.6	13.0	12.9

¹Includes races other than white and black.

Table 9. Percent of first births with low birth weight, by age of mother and race: United States, 1965, 1970, 1975, and 1979

[Low birth weight is defined as less than 2,500 grams (5 lb. 8 oz.) for 1979 and 2,500 grams or less for prior years]

Age of mother	All races ¹				White				Black			
	1979	1975	1970	1965	1979	1975	1970	1965	1979	1975	1970	1965
All ages	7.2	7.6	7.9	8.5	6.3	6.6	6.8	7.4	12.6	13.3	14.1	---
Under 15 years	14.2	13.8	16.4	18.1	11.5	11.2	12.5	12.4	16.4	15.8	18.7	---
15-19 years	8.8	9.2	9.5	9.6	7.4	7.7	8.0	8.0	12.9	13.7	14.5	---
20-24 years	6.5	6.6	6.7	7.3	5.6	5.8	6.0	6.6	11.7	12.4	12.9	---
25-29 years	6.2	6.4	7.0	7.9	5.7	5.9	6.5	7.3	11.8	12.3	13.1	---
30-34 years	7.4	8.1	8.6	10.3	6.7	7.5	8.0	9.7	13.9	14.3	15.2	---
35-39 years	9.8	10.3	11.7	12.5	9.0	9.3	10.8	11.7	16.2	18.1	19.0	---
40 years and over	10.4	12.6	12.9	13.6	9.1	11.4	12.3	12.9	20.5	21.8	14.5	---

¹Includes races other than white and black.

Table 10. Percent of first births with low birth weight to women 20-39 years of age, by educational attainment of mother: Total of 46 reporting States and the District of Columbia, 1979

[Low birth weight is defined as less than 2,500 grams (5 lb. 8 oz.)]

Age of mother	Years of school completed by mother						
	Total	0-8 years	9-11 years	12 years	13-15 years	16 years or more	Not stated
All ages	7.4	10.8	10.0	7.1	6.2	5.3	11.6
20-24 years	6.6	8.3	9.6	6.5	5.8	4.8	11.2
25-29 years	6.3	9.6	11.3	7.1	6.1	5.0	9.6
30-34 years	7.5	10.5	14.2	9.2	7.3	6.0	11.2
35-39 years	10.2	14.7	16.3	11.5	10.9	7.3	13.9

NOTE: Excludes data for California, New Mexico, Texas, and Washington, which did not require reporting of educational attainment of mother.

Table 11. Number of first births and percent distribution by month of pregnancy prenatal care began, according to age of mother and race: Total of 49 reporting States and the District of Columbia, 1979

Month of pregnancy prenatal care began and race	Age of mother						
	All ages	Under 20 years	20-24 years	25-29 years	30-34 years	35-39 years	40 years and over
All races¹							
	Number						
First births	1,468,884	431,753	572,395	346,514	99,901	16,369	1,952
	Percent distribution %						
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1st-2d month	51.5	31.4	54.3	66.6	67.5	62.7	53.9
3d month	25.0	25.8	26.1	23.0	22.3	22.6	23.9
4th-6th month	18.9	33.6	16.0	8.7	8.4	11.5	16.9
7th-9th month	3.6	7.1	2.8	1.4	1.5	2.2	3.7
No prenatal care	1.1	2.1	0.8	0.4	0.5	1.0	1.7
White							
	Number						
First births	1,196,975	308,169	482,452	305,089	86,125	13,527	1,613
	Percent distribution						
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1st-2d month	54.3	33.2	56.3	67.8	68.7	64.3	54.8
3d month	25.1	26.7	26.2	22.9	22.1	22.5	23.7
4th-6th month	16.6	31.6	14.5	7.9	7.6	10.5	16.7
7th-9th month	3.1	6.6	2.4	1.1	1.2	1.9	3.4
No prenatal care	0.9	1.9	0.7	0.3	0.4	0.8	1.5
Black							
	Number						
First births	228,195	114,106	76,142	27,936	8,027	1,771	213
	Percent distribution						
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1st-2d month	37.2	26.7	43.0	57.2	59.0	54.4	43.7
3d month	24.3	23.6	26.0	23.6	22.3	22.0	24.9
4th-6th month	30.2	38.9	24.8	15.2	14.2	17.8	20.8
7th-9th month	6.0	8.0	4.5	2.7	2.9	3.5	7.1
No prenatal care	2.2	2.8	1.7	1.3	1.6	2.3	3.6

¹Includes races other than white and black.

NOTE: Excludes data for New Mexico, which did not require reporting of month prenatal care began.

Symbols

- Data not available
- ... Category not applicable
- Quantity zero
- 0.0 Quantity more than zero but less than 0.05
- Z Quantity more than zero but less than 500 where numbers are rounded to thousands
- * Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision

Technical notes

Sources of data

Data shown in this report for the period 1972-79 are based on 100 percent of the birth certificates from States participating in the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program and on a 50-percent sample of births from all other States. Beginning in 1972, States providing data through the cooperative program were Florida, Maine, Missouri, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The following States were added in subsequent years: Michigan, Colorado, and New York (excluding New York City) in 1973; Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Oregon, and South Carolina in 1974; Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin in 1975; Alabama, Kentucky, Minnesota, Nevada, Texas, and West Virginia in 1976; Alaska, Idaho, Massachusetts, Ohio, and New York City in 1977; Indiana, Utah, and Washington in 1978; and Connecticut, Hawaii, Mississippi, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Wyoming in 1979. Data for 1965 and 1970-71 are based on a 50-percent sample of births.

Birth probabilities

Birth probabilities and proportions of women who are childless are derived from a specially prepared set of fertility tables for birth cohorts that are adjusted for underregistration of births and underenumeration of the population.² Since the data necessary to prepare these tables were not available for the black population separately, these data were prepared for the white population and for the population of all other races as a group. The trends in first-birth rates for black and all other women are relatively parallel since 1970, with the rates for black women running about 25 percent lower than the rates for all women other than white combined (table 1). While the birth probabilities and proportions childless are derived from the specially prepared tables, the birth rates shown in this report are the regularly published period fertility rates, which are available for black women separately.

²National Center for Health Statistics, R. L. Heuser: *Fertility Tables for Birth Cohorts by Color: United States, 1917-73*. DHEW Pub. No. (HRA) 76-1152. Health Resources Administration. Washington. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976.

Birth data for the black population in 1960

Although the total number of black births was tabulated for 1960, the distributions of these births by age of mother and live-birth order were not tabulated. It was necessary to estimate these distributions so that first-birth rates by age of mother could be computed. This was done by assuming that the distributions by age of mother and live-birth order were the same for black births as for all other births.

Birth rates by educational attainment

To compute first-birth rates by age and educational attainment of mother for this report, it was necessary to estimate first births by age and educational attainment of mother for the United States as a whole from the data reported by the States that included information on educational attainment on their birth certificates. This was done by inflating the figures by educational attainment and age of mother for the reporting States to the known totals for each age group for the entire United States. Thus, for example, the distribution of births by educational attainment for mothers aged 20-24 years for the reporting States was applied to the United States total number of births to mothers aged 20-24 years to yield the estimated number of births by educational attainment for this age group.

During the period covered by this report, the number of States reporting educational attainment increased from 38 in 1970, accounting for 67 percent of births in the United States, to 46 and the District of Columbia in 1979, accounting for 79 percent of total births. Therefore, the precision of the estimates for 1979 is probably greater than it is for 1970. It is believed, however, that the rates shown here are valid to illustrate the patterns of differentials discussed.

The population figures of women by educational attainment were derived from data published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.³

³U.S. Bureau of the Census: Educational attainment in the United States. *Current Population Reports*. Series P-20, Nos. 207, 295, and 356. Washington. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971, 1976, and 1980.

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